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A classic vintage

// **words** norman burns // **images** courtesy meyer shircore

It could be the display of fine wines. Or the striking original glass-blown sculptures on show.

Or the warm charcoal and almond gold tones in the reception area; all of these elements give Amex Corporation, a family-owned property development company, a classy new Subiaco headquarters from which to keep growing its business.

With more than 40 years in the business, Amex is involved in multiple developments in Queensland (its flagship project in the Ripley Valley, near Ipswich, will have around 6000 dwellings when finished) and Victoria, as well as Western Australia.

In WA, Amex Corporation's projects include the Tuart Ridge estate in Baldivis, with potential for 650 residential lots, and the in-the-pipeline Wellard project near Kwinana, which will have 500 residential lots.

Having outgrown its old Railway Road premises, Amex looked to move into 437 Roberts Road, a stunning building developed by QUBE Property Group and designed by Meyer Shircore Architect Design Director Mark Baker. The building also houses the Meyer Shircore office on the ground floor.

Amex corporation director, Cameron Shephard said its lease was expiring and believed the existing layout did not work very well.

"The new office is smaller but no less functional, so we have achieved a better layout in a smaller area," Mr Shephard said.

"We have always had contemporary and casual fit outs, but given this will be Amex's home for at least the next 10 years we want to up the standard somewhat to reflect the evolution of the firm. ▶



An office space that could be mistaken for that of a luxury boutique hotel or top-class restaurant, with an ingenious, subtle blend of design and materials



"We are a small boutique operation and therefore wanted to reflect this in the fit out - more intimate and stylish."

For Meyer Shircore senior interior designer, DeShanon Naoum the challenge was to create a unique environment for Amex and its valued clientele.

"DeShanon had to work hard on the Amex directors to get us to accept her proposed fit out; we are a very conservative bunch and the proposed design and finishes were more adventurous than we have been used to," Mr Shephard said.

"However, DeShanon was able to win our trust and we are glad she did... the fit out has been well received by staff and our visitors.

Miss Naoum says she had started off with a broad brief for something warm and inviting, a stark contrast to the clinical, ultra-modern look some businesses favour.

The result is an office space that could be mistaken for that of a luxury boutique hotel or top-class restaurant, with an ingenious, subtle blend of design and materials complemented by touches such as the wine display - a selection produced by Howard Park Wines made from grapes grown in the Shephard family vineyard.

"I wanted to keep the design really simple and focus on certain elements that could evolve and later transpire into a purposeful design. In this instance, form definitely followed function," says Miss Naoum.

"The use of travertine stone in the reception area creates a warm and inviting feel. The stone is natural, earthy and highly textured.

"Its application worked well with the surroundings and overall colour scheme."

A wraparound feature bulkhead incorporating charcoal and warm almond timber veneer separates the main reception from the workspace. The workspace consists of open plan workstations and management offices, which are located toward the back of the office.

The feature bulkhead cleverly conceals the division between the painted flush gyprock ceiling and the mineral fibre-grid ceiling. This helps break your line of sight and guide your focus onto the display cabinetry.

Carpet tiles, again running with a palette of black and warm almond gold tones lead into the workspace. Thought has gone into making this part of the overall design cohesive, streamlined and visually striking.

A gallery niche wall is the perfect medium to display the Shephard family's wines, something that must surely be a great icebreaker and catch the eye of every visitor when they come into the office.

"Our family has a small vineyard near Yallingup and has supplied fruit to Howard Park Wines for nearly 20 years. Howard Park makes us a small amount of wine under our own label - for family and friends to enjoy," Mr Shephard said.

"In keeping with the more intimate feel (of the office) we wanted to create,

THE TEAM






we thought a display of all the vintages back to 1993 might be a nice touch and DeShanon was able to incorporate this into a gallery just off the reception."

Effort too, has gone into giving the waiting area, enhanced with a custom-designed rug, that little extra something.

"We commissioned Glass Manifesto for the artwork required in reception and the gallery niche wall. The beautiful hand blown glass vases called the Goldfields Series, were a perfect addition to the fit out," Miss Naoum said.

"Each piece has multiple layers of gold and silver leaf, which is embedded through the centre of the glass."

Throughout the office, the Amex corporate logo acts as a decorative motif as seen on the frosted glass leading to the boardroom. The reception sign is made of brushed aluminium with the central diamond coated in a gold metallic finish, adding to the overall cohesive and classy aesthetic.

Every office needs storage space but again Miss Naoum opted for something other than just a cupboard with a substantial modular storage unit incorporating timber veneer panels and opaque glass sliding doors. These materials help soften the cabinet and create an aesthetically pleasing display.

Attention to detail carries through to the management offices. Each office comprises of individually custom-designed cabinetry, while the open plan workstation area is centred around a modular unit that is also highly configurable.

Even the executive washroom, fitted out with streamlined cabinetry, has the feel of a top hotel room en-suite.

The boardroom's coffered ceiling with cove lighting adds yet another touch of class. The boardroom also incorporates all the usual high-tech meeting aids.

The functional aspect of a small staff kitchenette clearly distinguishes the staff lunch area from the surrounding workspace, while the use of a paintable, textured wallpaper lends another classy touch to the overall scheme.

Miss Naoum said the design focuses on aesthetics and attention to detail, but it also embraces Amex's corporate identity.

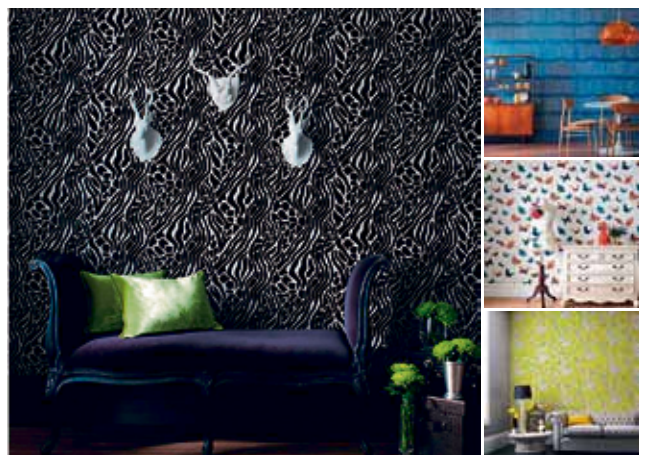
"I wanted to focus on running with this dual concept... a design that is sleek, streamlined and functional mixed with classic elements and natural mediums," Miss Naoum said. **BC**

Amex Corporation, (08) 9217 3600, www.amexcorp.com.au

Meyer Shircore and Associates, (08) 9381 8511, www.meyershircore.com.au

OSCAR WILDE ONCE SAID,
"ANYONE WHO LIVES WITHIN
THEIR MEANS SUFFERS FROM
A LACK OF IMAGINATION".
THAT WAS BEFORE...

Wall Candy
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255 Queen Victoria Street
North Fremantle WA 6159
Phone: (08) 9336 4455
Fax (08) 9336 4466

346 Beaufort Street
Highgate WA 6003
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Fax (08) 9328 3037

www.wallcandywallpaper.com.au
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