

CORPORATE

APPLE COMPUTERS

During the last decade, central business districts world-wide have steadily become afforested with a heavy growth of architecturally-neutral office towers, developer-built and designed for multiple occupancy.

The new 9-storey Price Waterhouse headquarters in central Melbourne rebels vividly against this anonymity and positively demands attention for its sole occupant. Entirely clad in aluminium sheeting with baked colour in metallic, vibrant hues of mauve, fresh green and charcoal, Bate, Smart and McCutcheon as architects have given the huge accounting firm a dramatic statement of their company's image — unafraid, progressive, zesty. This is an altogether unusual image for what might normally be considered to be a rather fusty type of profession, generally associated with bland and strictly functional offices, certainly not with zingy colours and unconventional materials.

The decision to forego the "safe" approach when constructing these new headquarters has placed Price Waterhouse at the head of a line of exceptional corporate buildings that stretches back to late last century.

The Victorians loved to erect ponderous edifices to their gods of commerce. A fine example comes from the hallowed halls of the Bank of England



in the City of London: solid, squat, with few openings breaking its outer wall — thus giving a powerful visual sense of security. Many of these late 19th century commercial buildings closely resembled one another, being stone-built mainly on the principle of a very large townhouse, perhaps 4 storeys in height at most and with a facade heavily adorned with classical references. By this similarity of design, little hint was given as to the individuality of their occupants.

One way to stand out from the crowd, literally, is to build upwards, and it was the architects of America's Great Lakes and Mid-West boom towns in the 1880s who first initiated much taller buildings. These not only became a very tangible symbol of the company within, but landmarks for the host city in their own right. Henry Hobson Richardson was one of the first to come to grips with the design of the tall office building and his monumental, Renaissance-inspired, 8-storey red granite-clad Marshall Field Warehouse, built in 1885, shows a scale never before attempted.

Richardson's work paved the way for the talents of Chicago-based Louis Sullivan and partner Dankmar Adler. Chicago was providing unequalled opportunities for architects

due to its rapid rebuilding after the 1871 fire disaster



which all but obliterated the then-premier commercial centre of the United States. Sullivan and Adler addressed the problems of multiple-storey buildings — support, vertical access — and applied newly developed technological devices to buildings such as St. Louis' Wainwright Building (1890) and their masterpiece, the Buffalo Guaranty Building of 1895. These buildings were able to reach unprecedented heights as a result of the use of steel beams to form a skeleton supporting floors and roof, with exterior cladding in masonry. Window treatments and Sullivan's characteristic finely-carved stonework emphasized these structural elements. The other vital development brought into play was the elevator — prior to this, few employees would climb more than five flights to their desks, so the lift allowed an immediate upwards expansion with, for example, Sullivan's Guaranty Building reaching 20 floors, an astonishing achievement for its time.

Newspaper head offices have always been designed to achieve maximum impact. The 1922 competition to design the new Chicago Tribune building drew extravagant statements from architects all over the world. The might-have-beens included Walter Gropius and Adolph

Meyer's series of adjoined glass and steel towers of differ-



ent heights and shapes, slashed with occasional horizontal balconies; a constructivist building, Adolf Loos' tongue-in-cheek entry — a single gigantic Doric column, and Bruno Taut's enormous pointed arch, within which the office floors were suspended. The winners were Raymond Hood and John Mead Howells, whose immense, ecclesiastical cathedral-tower bulks over Chicago today.

A little later, on the other side of the Atlantic, Ellis and Clarke's 1929 Daily Express building in Fleet Street achieved tremendous impact, despite a relative lack of height. By rounding the corners, utilising step-backs, cladding the entire building with a black and clear glass curtain wall and providing an extravagant, aluminium-decked foyer, Ellis and Clarke created a modernistic, exciting news-headquarters, worthy of a dozen Clark Kents.

The city of New York is synonymous with spectacular, individualistic skyscrapers, built before the 1929 Crash. The 70-storey RCA building atop the Rockefeller Centre was conceived by its architect John Weinreich as an enormous rectangular block fronting on one of its narrower ends. As the eye travels up the building, thin flakes appear to have broken away at varying heights, as if the building were a piece of slate set on edge, with the outer

IMAGERY

PRICE WATERHOUSE

lamina crumbling off. The base of this somewhat fragile-seeming structure is packed around with more solid-looking stacks, almost acting as wedges driven in as supports. And, of course, at ground level, the human observer, after the awe inspired by the scale of the heights above, is presented with the visual treats of the Rockefeller Plaza — with bronze Prometheus poised over a huge pool (an ice-rink in winter) and Lee Lawrie's dramatic polychrome triptych above the main entrance, depicting "Wisdom" "Light" and "Sound".

Further uptown, one finds the distinctive stainless-steel domed top and huge eagle head gargoyles of the Chrysler Building, enshrining the gleaming metal work of the company product — the all-American Chrysler car. The lobby area of the building is an exceptional treat, with its extraordinarily rich russet-red marble cladding and elevator doors and cabins inlaid in exotic veneers with brass trim.

Power companies in the United States gave full rein to their architects' imagination to provide their headquarters with a potent physical image of their services. Bley and Lyman's building for the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation was built in wide, low steps up to a central tower

fronted by the immense winged "Spirit of Light" figure in sculpted stainless steel — 8.5 metres high. The building was clad in brick with steel and black glass panels. Hoit, Price and Barns, for the Kansas City Power and Light Company building, surmounted the step-back tower with a carved stone cupola, fitted with orange-red lead-light windows and topped off with an angular cap in the same glass. At night, lit from within and without, this glowing, altar-like structure pulsed out its message to the power consumers of Kansas City. Perhaps it was this somewhat arcane effect that gave the set designers of "Ghost Busters" a few ideas for their final scenes.

In the early 1970s, the National Westminster Bank headquarters built in the City of London provided the ultimate statement of corporate identity. The inter-linked triple towers, each rising to a different height, demonstrate in cross-section the bank's own logo.

Closer to home, Sydney has some interesting examples of corporate cohesion. One of the handsomest art deco buildings in Sydney is the City Mutual Building on the corner of Bligh and Castlereagh Streets. This uses its corner site with some brilliance, giving prominence to the actual corner of the building, not to a flat surface. The

sharp angularity of the corner entrance (surmounted by a very fine bronze mural and clad in black marble, highly polished) is emphasised by the multiple V-shaped windows, knifing their way in vertical rows right up the facade of the building. In this case, one sees a statement of individuality by cleverly altering our normal expectations of where the entrance to a building — generally the main focus — should be.

In the 1980s, building upwards is no longer a guaranteed way to stand out from the crowd.

Certainly the height to which a company would have to aim to achieve distinction is prohibitive, and in light of the popularity of decentralization amongst corporate circles perhaps it is altogether irrelevant.

In sharp contrast to the "urbanisation" of the business world during the last century, companies are now looking to establish their headquarters "out of town" on sizeable pieces of dirt.

Once again architects can play a more significant role in the creation of corporate architectural imagery in the form of splendid and highly individual buildings. Free from prohibitive city prices and severe space and design restrictions, architects and their client companies are able to build modern day monuments to their own operations.

Apple Computers, although an "infant" multinational, is a company that is highly

image and status conscious, and as such commissioned one of Australia's most award winning architects to design their new "out of town" headquarters.

Peter Stronach, of Allen Jack and Cottier Architects, has designed an extraordinary edifice to the development of modern business and the evolution of the computer industry. Perched on a large hilltop site at Frenchs Forest, the building looks out over parklands to the city in the distance, and a wide sweep of the Northern Beaches.

In keeping with Apple's philosophy, the building's design goes to great lengths to cater to the needs of its employees — with spacious lounge and recreation areas, a restaurant making maximum use of natural light, landscaped surroundings and an adjacent training centre.

From the inception of Apple as a company, colour has played an important role in their imagery — the distinctive icon of the rainbow apple — minus bite — is the obvious example. Apple's headquarters in Frenchs Forest has utilized a vibrant colour scheme designed by George Freedman to isolate various functional areas.

Innovators in the computer, advertising and business field, Apple has extended their imagination into the field of architecture.



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FRANCES LAVERACK

APPLE COMPUTERS

PHOTOGRAPHY

JOHN GOLLINGS

Apple required headquarters in synchronicity with the computers they sell. That is, it had to be sophisticated, innovative and accessible. The building had to be as good as their advertising and also work as good advertising in itself.

For a company that has developed a strong reputation for innovation, the Apple Headquarters successfully translates that reputation into an architectural statement.









LEFT

The Apple 'Training Centre' is entirely different in design and construction to the rest of the headquarters – it stands apart as a strong statement of its independent function and a reminder of the almost ecclesiastical manner with which Apple views their training programs. The glass covered walkway acts as an architectural umbilical cord to the main building.

FAR LEFT

A view of the entry forecourt from Warringah Road demonstrates through use of colour, building materials and levels the multi-tiered function of Apple headquarters as office showroom and warehouse.





The entrance to the building at the eastern end is shaded by an adjustable grid of louvres.





LEFT

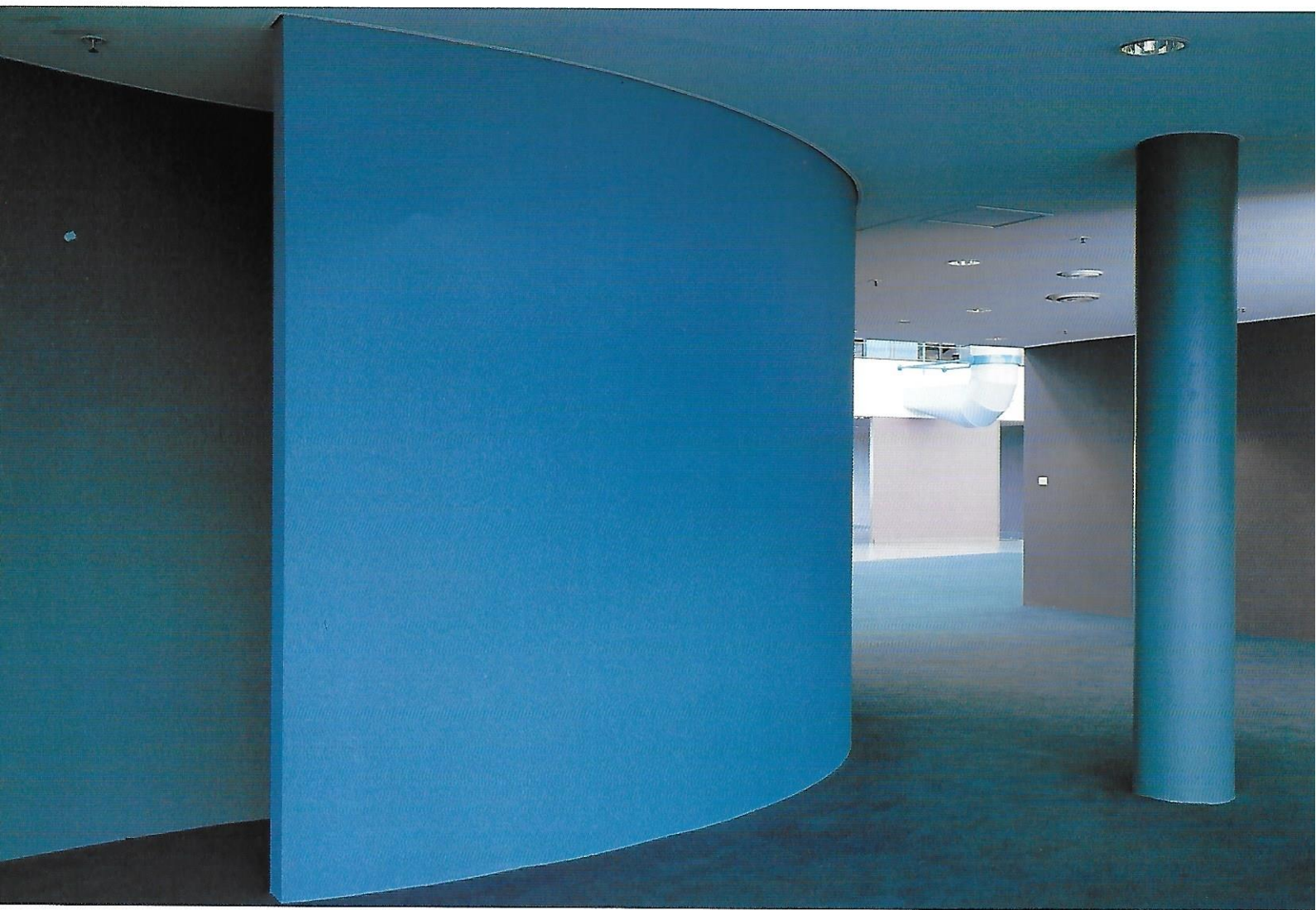
Within the atrium the building is centred around a wide 'street'. The mezzanine level which overlooks the curved paving of the 'street' houses the office accommodation consisting entirely of Ethospace office system from Herman Miller.

The structural elements and the air conditioning ducts within the atrium are accentuated as visual features by the use of a vibrant colour scheme.

FAR LEFT

The triangular balcony, the glass blocks and George Freedman's vivid use of colour combine to form an isolated 'still life' within the vast interior.

Aesthetics aside, the function of the wall was a primary consideration, the glass bricks flood the toilet block with natural light, and the balcony provides the tearoom with a view of the atrium.





The use of the curve form is prevalent throughout the building, serving to connect all the disparate areas and simultaneously reinforcing an underlying theme. The blue curve joins the staff recreation area to the atrium and the red curve contains an auditorium as well as leading the visitor towards the Demonstration Centres behind the glass brick walls.





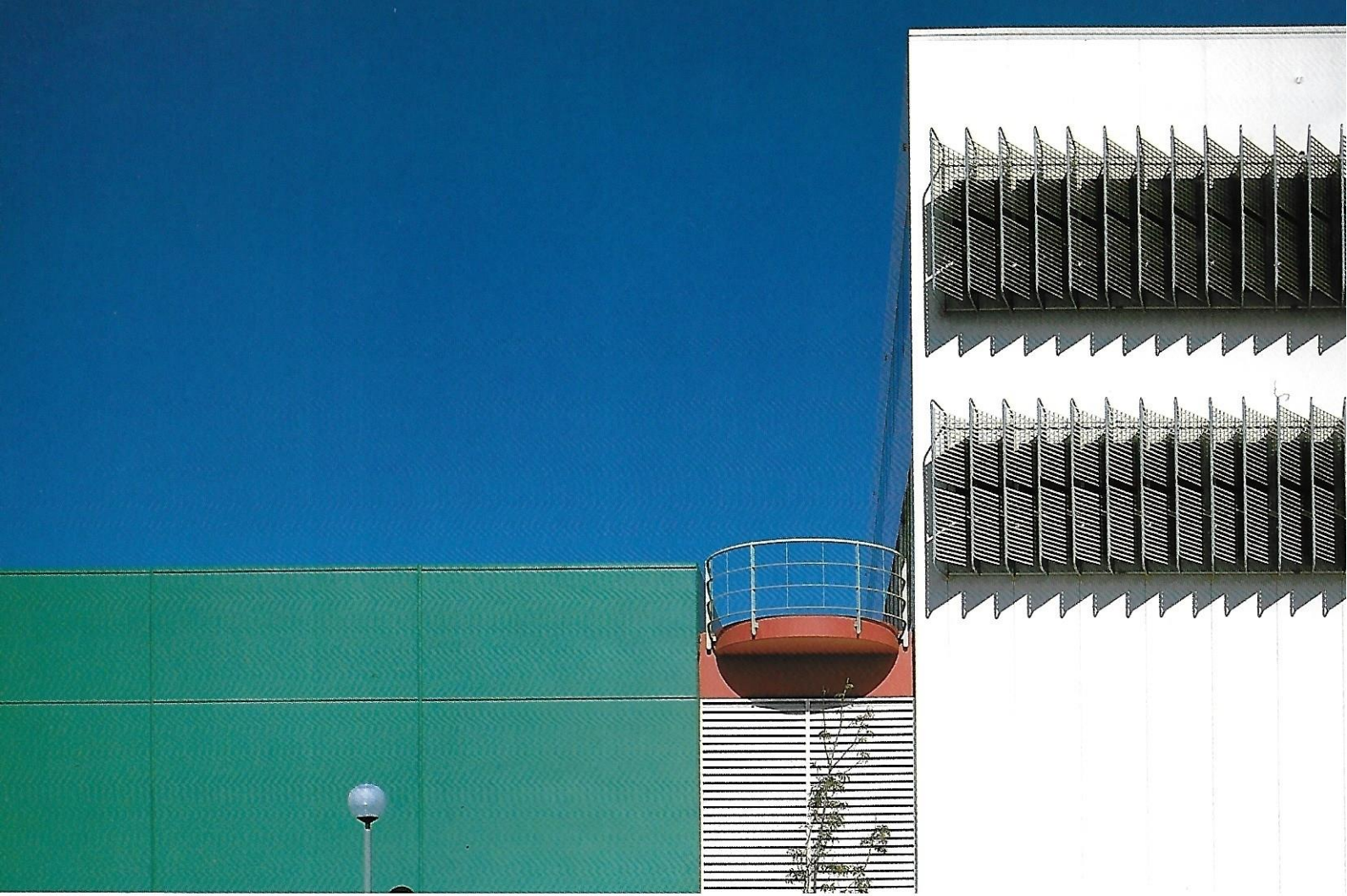
The reception desk continues the curve found throughout the building. The delineation between flooring materials defines the 'street' area of the atrium.

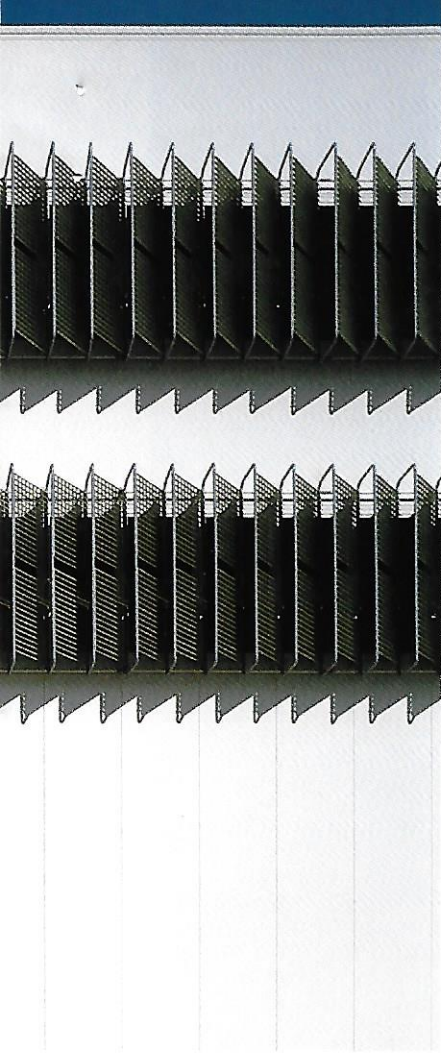


The waiting area adjacent to the reception desk features a curved wall which acts as an archaeological reminder of the Training Centre. The area is furnished with an Eames couch and a Noguchi coffee table – it's quite fitting that the headquarters of such an innovative company should feature so many pieces of furniture designed by one of this century's most innovative architects.

FAR LEFT

The cafeteria follows a serpentine wall of glass. The area is distinguished by its complete isolation from the various work areas. The entire dining area is furnished with classic Charles Eames plywood chairs.





The transition between the main office space and the warehouse (green) is punctuated by a curved red balcony.

The characteristic emphasising of structural details with bright colours is carried throughout the entire building. Here a solitary rainwater head and down pipe are painted a luminous yellow.