

VISION

ISSUE 36

OPEN BOOK

Rockdale Library, Sydney

COUNTER BALANCE

MONOLAB, Melbourne

Viridian
we ♥ glass

CONTENTS



04 OPEN BOOK

Rockdale Library, Sydney

Libraries are nothing if not about ideas. Suddenly there is a boom in a market segment where the future appeared cloudy at best. Sydney's Rockdale Council might not be the first, but its new library is among the best, as stellar social hub. Forget the sanctified, monastic world of dimly-lit study spaces, Rockdale Library appears and feels vibrant. A design of flowing, light-filled interconnecting spaces, bold glazing and inclusiveness is a rock-solid base upon which to build a neighbourhood.

The combination of Viridian PerformaTech™ and Viridian's acoustic products, ComfortHush™ and VLam Hush™, in a double-glazed units seal the deal by opening to the best and negating the worst aspects of a busy, main road location, nearby airport activity and high summer heat loads.



CLICK TO VISIT THE
ROCKDALE LIBRARY



24

COUNTER BALANCE

MONOLAB, Melbourne

Etched black glass makes a quietly brilliant appearance in a store where virtuoso Japanese arts and crafts are revealed. Counter tops and display 'islands' exhibiting crystalline lustre and depth directly assist this retailer's eye for clarity and elegance.

A sleek design program, bespoke crafts and willing client intersect where displays appear like polished basalt blocks or black crystal shards.



OPEN BOOK





Only a few years ago suburban libraries were on the verge of extinction. The world, it seemed, had passed by the printed word. Well, the wheel and word has turned. In almost no time every municipality has, or wants, to climb back on board the library bandwagon. As civic buildings go, they don't come with much more municipal grunt.

PROJECT

Rockdale Library, Sydney

DESIGN

CK Design International
in association with
Leffer Simes Architects and
Stevenson & Turner

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT

Kane Constructions Pty Ltd
Brewster Hjorth Architects

PRINCIPAL GLAZING

Viridian PerformaTech™
Viridian ComfortHush™

TEXT, IMAGES & FILM

Peter & Jenny Hyatt

The doomsdayers who predicted the end of the printed word were proven horribly wrong. Rather than one or the other, books and computers have joined forces. And it's involving a fine blend of everyone from Baby-Boomers through to New Millennials.

Seventeen kilometres to Sydney CBD, Rockdale has just acquired one of the city's finest libraries with an outdated facility on the remainder pile replaced by a best-seller.

Libraries are now considered a social glue-pot bringing together a broad demographic and ethnicity. The pressure on architects is to make their designs dance rather than fall asleep. It's a strategy with a direct bearing on how libraries are utilized. Are they active or passive?

Rather than a shy stance, Rockdale exhibits a free-form, athletic flow right across its three levels. Tall voids, study options, assorted meeting places and specialist nodes are all catered for in a library of complex pedigree.





Vision's Peter Hyatt spoke with Andrew Hjorth of Brewster Hjorth Architects about the design of a library to match changing community expectations:

VISION Whatever you may have achieved here, it's obviously given the community something significant.

ANDREW HJORTH It's really fantastic to visit and see the place full of people working away, reading, studying, socializing. That's what libraries are all about. It's great to see that.

The resurgence of libraries, not merely as places to retreat and retire, but as social hubs, is quite remarkable.

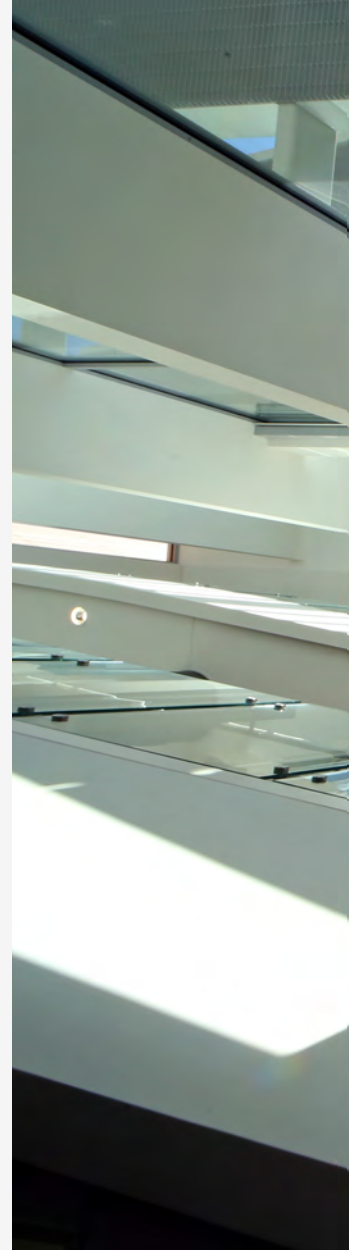
They're just like the latest Harry Potter novel. Almost everyone, and that means municipalities everywhere, want a standout library.

Any overarching aims?

I hope it says that libraries are fun, exciting, dynamic places. They're not boring rows of books. They're places where you can come and enjoy yourself. Architecture is not some sort of monument to the architect. It's a living, evolving entity which people enjoy for its own right. The architecture is only a part of making that work. It's the spaces, it's the people using it and the whole dynamic of the facility.

What were you able to bring to this project?

I've always had a passion for knowledge and reading. I think it's been a real privilege to be able to work on libraries. Our practice has been working over 20 years on library projects across New South Wales and into Queensland. I think we've learned a lot. I hope we put that back into each of the projects we work on.





Above and Left:

The main entry void contributes an elegant separation between structure and walled glazing to amplify the effects of spatial generosity. Various strategies including Viridian PerformaTech™ glazing and computer-controlled blinds mediate the harsh westerly sun.





What did the project teach you?

We've designed a lot of libraries so it's an evolving process. You learn from one project and you learn in many subtle ways. Here it's the subtleties of the design that are important. I think in this case it's probably the most vertical library we've done. There are lots of things about how we connected spaces, how we connected to the surrounds, how people move through and about this library that we'll take and use in future designs. Really, the important part of architecture is understanding those subtleties; understanding how people react and move through that type of building, is fundamental to its success.

It's a library with quite a complex design history.

We were engaged by the builder on a design development and construct contract. This meant we were engaged by the builder to follow on from the early phase of the design - much of which had been completed. We needed to finesse that. We also had to work with an interior designer to pull together all the interiors, to get the result you see here today.

“Rather than a shy stance, Rockdale exhibits a free-form, athletic flow right across its three levels. Tall voids, study options, assorted meeting places and specialist nodes are all catered for in a library of complex pedigree”

PETER HYATT, VISION





The glazed bridge connecting the library to the existing council chambers to the rear.

R

m Poetry

How did the aspect and orientation influence your response?

That simply poses additional challenges, both with the orientation of the building facing east west, with no possibility of getting north or south windows. You have to deal with that. If you want to activate the street, you've got to deal with having glass on the western façade, or the eastern façade. You're also sitting underneath the flight path and have a major highway next to the building. If you're going to achieve that light transparent building, selection of the glass becomes fundamental to that decision process.

How does this library vary from those of previous generations?

Libraries should be open, lively; they should be destinations. Those old-fashion libraries were places where you came, got your book, ran home and read it. Our modern libraries are community centers. People come into them, they use them as a resource in their own right. They may not be borrowing anything. They just might be using the space: meeting, socializing, reading. They are really community centers with books in them.





“Here it’s the subtleties of the design that are important. I think in this case it’s probably the most vertical library we’ve done. There are lots of things about how we connected spaces, how we connected to the surrounds, how people move through and about this library that we’ll take and use in future designs.”

ANDREW HJORTH, ARCHITECT



The top level break-out spaces shape a library of diverse study and meeting nodes.





Organic forms, beautifully lit
provide uplifting study spaces.

Tell me about some of the glazing strategies.

The glass used was double-glazed units. The western façade, the highway-facing units use Viridian PerformaTech™ where there's a large heat load - even with good sun shading. PerformaTech™ provided us with the performance we needed to overcome that heat load, and achieve our compliance requirements. That glass module includes laminated acoustic glass. The glazing is working hard thermally and acoustically to achieve what is required.

I like the idea that architects must fundamentally like people and reward them whenever they use a building. Buildings are really an opportunity to offer people a really pleasant experience.

I think that's fundamental to the success of architecture into the 21st century. Librarians have realized that these places aren't just repositories for books. They're really places for people to come and enjoy and to use. They're destinations for the local community. In a way it's where people come to sit, and to read. Creating that whole diversity of experience is a key to its success.

“Librarians have realized that these places aren't just repositories for books. They're really places for people to come and enjoy and to use. They're destinations for the local community.”

ANDREW HJORTH, ARCHITECT

Do you see glass as adding a special quality to the building without being flashy about it. There is some beautiful glass handsomely mediated with the louvres on the west.

It comes back to that notion of the community destination. Glass is really important in achieving that. You could have a box with no windows and you wouldn't achieve the same thing. You want to see all of the activities from the street. You want it to feel welcoming and vibrant as you're walking along the streets, so that main elevation is a very important part of the project.

People still need knowledge, they still need to socialize, they still need recreation and libraries are just evolving with the technologies to create different ways of providing those facilities. Not only that, Rockdale's also got a whole renaissance of residential quarters with lots of apartment buildings. They're places where the young kids can come and study away from home, where there's a bit more room, they can meet and socialize with their mates or study with their mates. There are those diverse levels that libraries are working at.

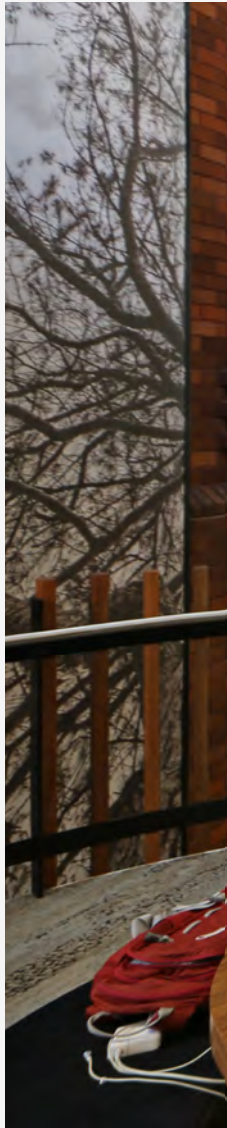
It's an interesting dynamic to balance places of reflection and study with the bright social mood. Glass really delivers the best of both worlds.

PerformaTech™ on the outside of the building provides a kind of clear armour if you like, while internally the study rooms use an acoustic glass. It's about using the right products and materials for the task, and so to have Viridian's input along the way was really critical in a result that went well beyond appearances. Being adjacent to one of Sydney's major roads, with overhead aircraft noise and Mascot Airport fairly close by, required a glazing system with the best possible thermal and acoustic properties.

Glazing permits an adventurous program of natural illumination without fear of thermal compromise.

“Libraries should be open, lively; they should be destinations”

ANDREW HJORTH, ARCHITECT





The rear municipal council office connection reveals a consistent library design language of inclusion rather than exclusion.



PROJECT

Rockdale Library,
New South Wales

DESIGN

CK Design International
in association with
Leffer Simes Architects and
Stevenson & Turner

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT

Kane Constructions Pty Ltd
Brewster Hjorth Architects

ENGINEER

Keith Patrick

FAÇADE AND STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING

Taylor, Thompson Whiting

**GLASS SUPPLIER
AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT**

Viridian

PRINCIPAL GLAZING

Western Elevation

Double-Glazed Unit

6 mm PerformaTech™ Clear 206
10 mm Argon
10.5 mm VLam Hush™

Eastern Elevation

Double-Glazed Unit

6.5 mm ComfortHush™ Neutral
12 mm Argon
6.5 mm VLam Hush™

Auto Doors

13.52 mm ComfortPlus™ Neutral

Skylights Double-Glazed Unit

13.52 mm ComfortPlus™ Neutral
with ScalaSeraphic™ 5 mm Dots
12 mm Argon
11.52 mm Clear

SIZE

2200 sqm

BUDGET

\$14,000,000



ROCKDALE LIBRARY

Ibrahim &
OPENING

COUNTER



BALANCE



MONOLAB







The Japanese specialty homewares store MONOLAB and Nexus Designs recently teamed to create a distinctive retail experience in Melbourne's up-market South Yarra. Running with the theme of 'Japanese Hand Made' products, the design brief called for a classy retail environment for household goods imported from 12 regions in Japan. The result is a space that sets the scene and stage for both products and something of their origins.

PROJECT
MONOLAB, Melbourne

INTERIOR DESIGNERS
Nexus Designs

PRINCIPAL GLAZING
Viridian ScalaMirage™ Rain
backpainted black

TEXT, IMAGES & FILM
Peter & Jenny Hyatt

Rather than the more familiar retail experience of noise, distraction and visual riot, Nexus has reined in materials, colour and complexity to one of assured authenticity.

The result is gallery-like. Natural timbers and monochrome materials sees Viridian's ScalaMirage™ – a geometric black glass etched with grey rain pattern – provide a durable yet delicate backdrop to showcase an assortment of high-end crafts. Nexus' choice of ScalaMirage™ is based on the firm's sense that it mirrored important elements of the Japanese landscape.

Nexus divided Monolab's 127 sqm store into three zones, each defined by its own circulation area. The first is the 'active zone' focused on traditional Furoshiki wrapping and childrens items, set on two four-metre-long benches and a suitable height to sit at. The second is the high-end gallery zone for the handmade brands individually defined on five separate timber plinths.



MONO LAB





ScalaMirage™ Rain
backpainted in black as
hero element and defining
in-store statement.



The island 'bench' as distinctive platform and plinth to celebrate Japanese crafts.



Traditional hanging fabric panels were lowered through the centre of the store to define the third zone and to create interest but also a visual divide between the two main retail sectors. These screens contrast the 'lab' ceiling of the exposed services deliberately left unfinished. The central area is the point-of-sale counter and feature product cube.

The fit-out of Viridian's ScalaMirage™ features an acid-etched glass. Two large islands in the store centre are clad in geometric 'Rain' pattern.

The firm's investigation of working with glass revealed that the application of a black backing allowed light to reflect and shine like a mirror.

Nexus Designs' lead designer for the project, Lucy Marczyk, spoke with Peter Hyatt about a design where restraint helps achieve the wow factor:

VISION Did you approach the store design with a half-formulated idea?

LUCY MARCZYK Everything in the store is unique and hand-crafted and really made with love. It was about ensuring each item is represented individually and very specially. The rain glass pattern really highlights those special products. When the store introduces new products into its range, they're showcased on that glass for their exclusivity. Japan produces some of the most innovative, whimsical and beautiful homewares in the world and that's where we really saw the rain glass as this whimsical take on Japanese landscape design.

Other than storefronts and display cases, glass is rarely this prominent in retail fit-out.

It allowed us to reveal and remind visitors once inside the store of the Japanese landscape. Glass elements here are of a large scale. They are sculptural elements made possible by such a special material. Rather than seeing glass as secondary to timber, we wanted it to be just as strong. The scale really allowed the glass to have its own special personality and very subtly talk about Japanese design and Japanese high-end fashion.

Was there a key project challenge?

We were really responding to a couple of elements. One was Monolab's products and how we displayed them in the very best way. This project is really a journey about working with the clients and how we could help their products achieve a great response. A lot of the products have history and a story with interesting techniques of manufacturing and it was really about describing those manufacturing techniques that we thought would be most interesting to the clients in South Yarra.

How did the Japanese design influence your approach?

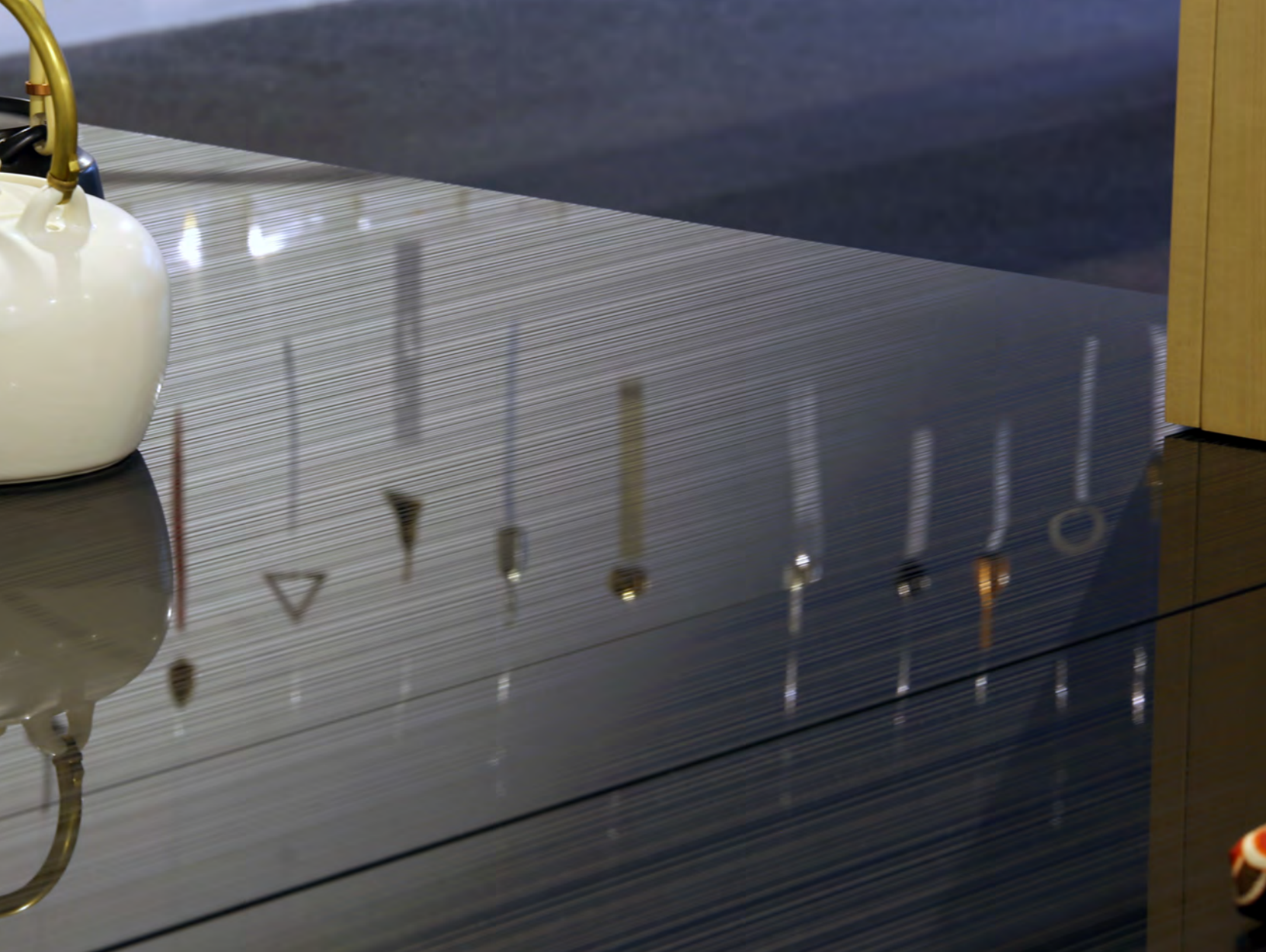
We wanted to incorporate typical Japanese design principles of simplicity and minimal use of materials. The striking etched glass idea instantly grabbed our imagination as representing the natural element of water which is so important in Japanese landscape design.

How important is it to understand the design need and to ask the right questions?

Yes, absolutely. When we were working in the project it was really about looking at typical Japanese elements in design and then looking back to our own philosophy and how those two were really quite a lot more aligned than I probably thought when we started. We kept to a restrained material and colour palettes of glass, timber, white and black.



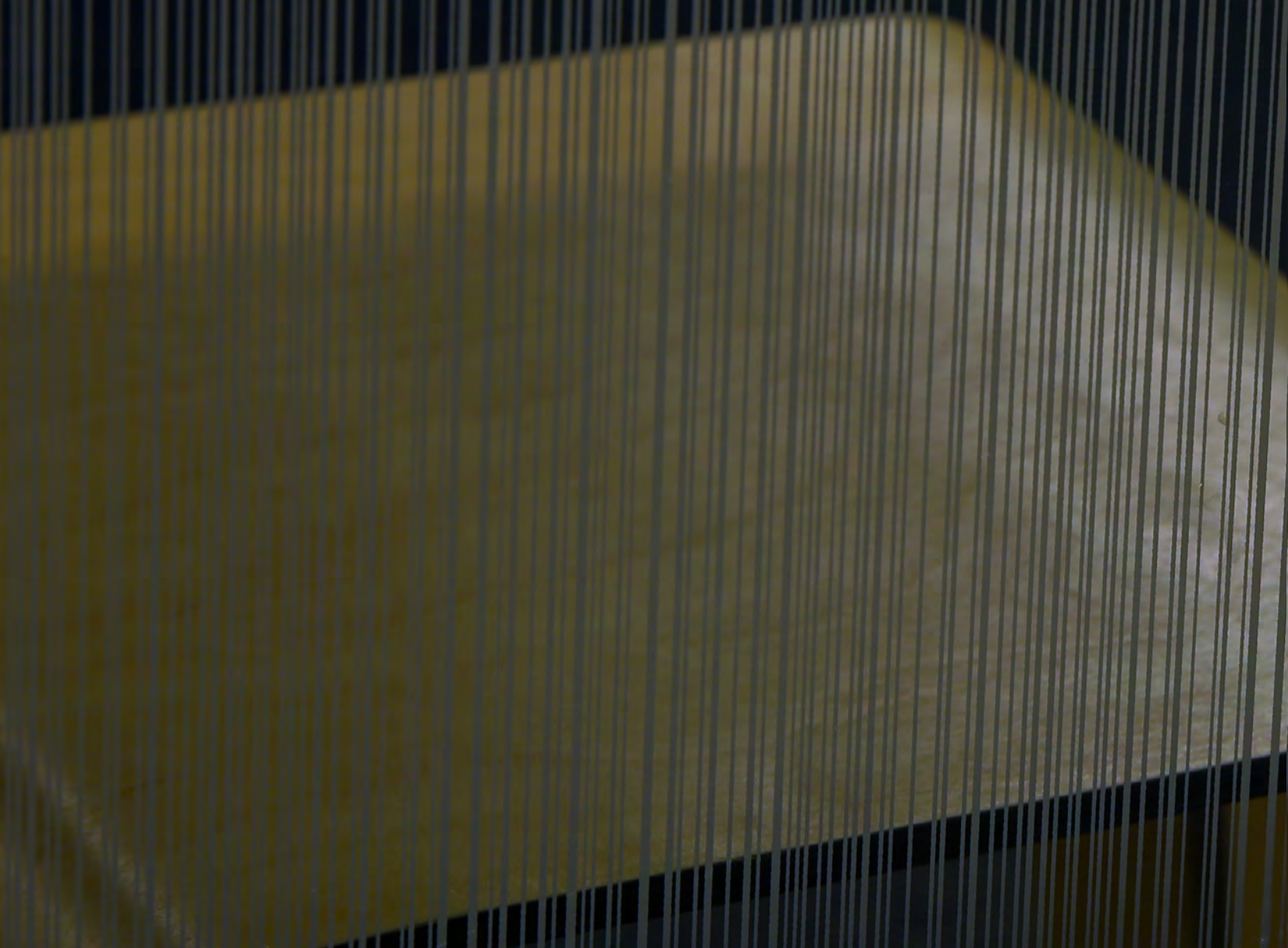
Glass bench-tops and walls provide a polished, water and granite-like finish of special delicacy and design strength.



“The striking etched glass idea instantly grabbed our imagination as representing the natural element of water which is so important in Japanese landscape design.”

LUCY MARCZYK, INTERIOR DESIGNER

As if sheeting rain, or pond overflow,
ScalaMirage™ provides an evocative,
authentic finish.







“The store is defined by a series of individual presentations and retail offerings. This is achieved by elevating and showcasing products on a series of glass and timber display ‘islands’.”

LUCY MARCZYK, INTERIOR DESIGNER



The connecting design overlay and simplified material palette performs a background role that permits the products to star.

We divided the store into three main zones. There are two zones on the left and the right using timber veneer and centrally, black mirrored glass. There are a range of products and one of those is Japanese handbags and each of those 12 different suppliers come from different areas and different regions in Japan.

Is a type of miniaturized 'town-plan' required in the way the whole store is designed and operates?

You're right in that there are clearly defined circulation zones and 'assembly points' that hopefully reward the visitor. The store is defined by a series of individual presentations and retail offerings. This is achieved by elevating and showcasing products on a series of glass and timber display 'islands'. There are timber elements on either side with central glass elements that form a pretty heroic monochrome backdrop.


How complicated is it to create visual and functional cohesion?

It is quite a large store. The test was to create retail excitement in that space by incorporating traditional, Japanese inspired elements. We used minimal materials and a fit-out that felt contemporary and high-end. There is a quiet subtlety to most Japanese design and so we selected materials consistent with that; materials which felt high-end and reflected the quality of the store's hand-made, hand-crafted products.

Can you explain a little more about bringing the interiors to life?

We wanted to provide scale to the display units and visually link the three separate retail zones. We wanted the various plinths to be seen as something really special. We wanted to express this store in a way that resembled and felt like a gallery space and high-end retail store. We definitely played around with scale and things like reflectivity.



A row of white ceramic coasters with a rain pattern, set against a background of dark, parallel lines. The coasters are arranged in a line, and the background consists of many thin, dark, parallel lines that create a sense of depth and texture. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the edges of the coasters and the texture of the background.

“Looking through Viridian’s etched glass range, we discovered their rain pattern. This instantly grabbed our imagination. It speaks of a traditional Japanese landscape element of water, or rain”

LUCY MARCZYK, INTERIOR DESIGNER





Your use of glass on counters and displays areas in this context is quite enriching.

When we were looking through our sample library, we looked into the glass section and thought, 'okay, that's shiny and a bit nice'. Looking through Viridian's etched glass range, we discovered their rain pattern. This instantly grabbed our imagination. It speaks of a traditional Japanese landscape element of water, or rain.

Once on that, we started to play around with the glass sample which was clear. It had this beautiful, linear rain pattern running through it. We experimented with paint samples and put those behind to resemble colour-back glass. With black paint behind it, the linear rain pattern became even clearer.

We discussed the idea with Viridian who were prepared to make-up an actual sample for us. When we first saw the sample it really said Issey Miyake. It had this reference to a high fashion Japanese designer and added to the story of what we were working with, so it felt like just the right material to use.

How else does the black backed glass contribute to the in-store experience?

We used the black backed glass because it reflected quite beautifully and it felt stylish and formal. The existing floor was actually black and we were trying to avoid replacing it when it was already in good condition. These black glass sculptural elements felt so much like Issey Miyake, as landscape and water elements and this really grew out of the black flooring.

Does the black rain pattern deliver anything else?

A material like glass really reiterates that idea that this is a lab. The glass is a little bit technical. It has a linear pattern through it. It does look like it's easy to clean, just like you would have in a lab, but it's a retail store.

The main materials we used in the store were timber and glass. The timber really gave the feeling of the hand made, crafted, with softness and warmth while glass added that layer of the technical, hygienic and slick. It was really a lab feeling we tried to create for this store.

Are there design elements unique to this kind of store?

We didn't want to scare people away who might not necessarily be looking for items made in Japan. It is really offering a retail experience. The products are grouped by regions and recognize certain specialized skills – paper, metal, china etc. On one hand we wanted to create calm and stillness, but at the same time, with a retail space you want buzz, excitement and visual interest.

PROJECT
MONOLAB, South Yarra,
Melbourne

CLIENT
Loft Alpha

INTERIOR DESIGNERS
Nexus Designs

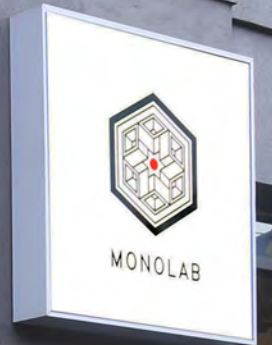
BUILDER/SHOPFITTER
Osiris Furniture

GLASS SUPPLIER AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT
Viridian

PRINCIPAL GLAZING
Viridian ScalaMirage™ Rain
backpainted black

SIZE
127 sqm

BUDGET
\$80,000



VIRIDIAN (Australia)

VICTORIA

Melbourne (03) 9562 9562
Mildura (03) 5021 2921
Morwell (03) 5134 3586

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney (02) 9756 2100
Albury (02) 6021 4333
Coffs Harbour (02) 6658 4500
Erskine Park 1800 810 403
Newcastle (02) 4940 3700
North Ryde 1800 810 403
Tamworth (02) 6763 3600
Wollongong (02) 4271 5888

QUEENSLAND

Brisbane (07) 3365 0500
Cairns (07) 4031 5777
Townsville (07) 4775 4099

TASMANIA

Hobart (03) 6245 0470
Devonport (03) 6424 1816

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Canberra (02) 6203 0500

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Adelaide (08) 8348 9200
Mt Gambier (08) 8721 0000

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Darwin (08) 8981 9411

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Nelson (03) 543 9077
Christchurch (03) 341 5007
Dunedin (03) 455 2280

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www.viridianglass.com

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viridian@csr.com.au

TEXT, IMAGES & FILM

Peter & Jenny Hyatt
www.hyattgallery.com.au

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Nexus Designs
www.nexusdesigns.com.au