

previous head office, Dudley House on Park Lane, was truly palatial. Grade II listed, the building was a combination of regal and formal public rooms, and a warren of small offices, nooks and crannies – overall an environment not conducive to business growth. The front entrance and reception area attracted passers-by who would often come in asking for room availability thinking it was another Park Lane hotel! Whilst we all look back with fondness at

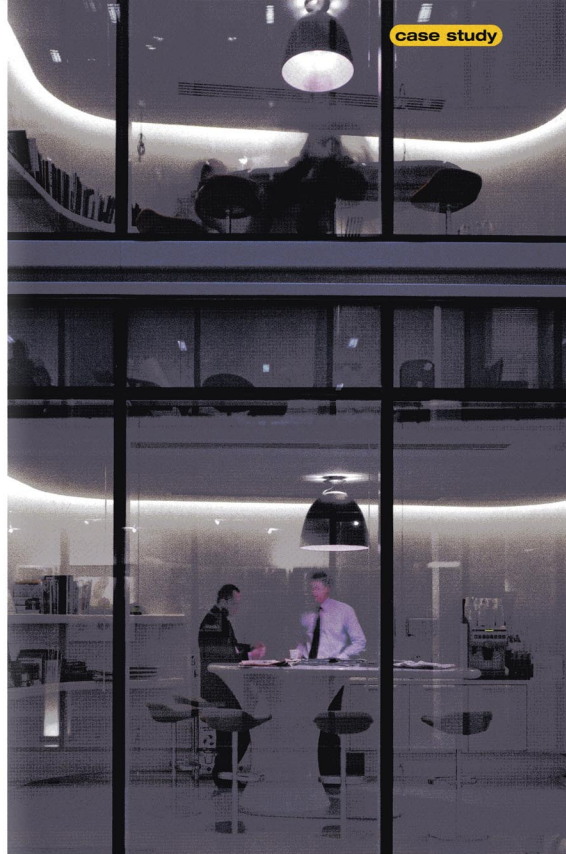
the grandeur of the old building, the reality is that it no longer served our purposes. Essentially, we'd out-grown it and it didn't reflect what Hammerson stood for, something we wanted to address with the move to the new building on Grosvenor Street.'

And what of the design? The winners of a design competition, architects Stiff + Trevillion were selected to work with Hammerson because their proposal was

shaped by a desire to reinterpret the impact and grand scale of the Dudley House public areas whilst dramatically improving the working environment for the building's users.

There were two distinct parts to the plan – the foyer, meeting and presentation spaces, and the office floors. Rather than separating these uses, their proposal sought to encourage a transparency between them. It was felt important that visitors to the building should see it in operation, and not just visit a suite of corporate meeting rooms. It was also hugely important to create the right environment for the wide-ranging visitors and client base.

Moving around the space at Grosvenor Street the reception area, meeting rooms, board room, exhibition area, and presentation spaces are articulated by a combination of lighting and surface creating an atmosphere that was influenced more by hotel and restaurant design than corporate office interiors. Materials were selected deliberately to reflect Hammerson's business so the components of large scale construction – concrete, glass, steel and stone – are presented on a grand scale as interior finishes. More conventional interior



requirements. 'Working with Dovetail, and using their expertise, the furniture was selected to complement and enhance the different ambience of each space, from open plan team areas to the cellular office and meeting rooms. Of particular importance though was spending some time with Dovetail, evolving the Knoll benches to better suit our IT needs. We're really pleased with the solution, and the distinct design of the Cygnus monitor arms really complement the overall aesthetic.'

To compensate for the loss of privacy plenty of quiet rooms and small meeting spaces are provided and a large, non-hierarchical staff restaurant has been created on the ground floor. Similarly, meeting rooms are designed to be flexible; they can be used for private dining and presentations as well, and each has a distinct and individual character. Indeed, flexibility and hospitality seem to have been paramount in the overall scheme, as Denise elaborates. 'Typically we have one event a week in the space, whether it's an AGM or corporate client entertainment, so we needed it to be flexible in how we deploy the space, moving walls and open receptions mean we can accommodate a large number of guests but, aside from that, the experience needs to be right. We've invested in a fully specified kitchen which not only caters for our staff throughout the day, but allows us to service large functions and provide fine dining for the events we're holding – and we've even been awarded an accolade from The Observer's Jay Rayner for the quality of our food.'

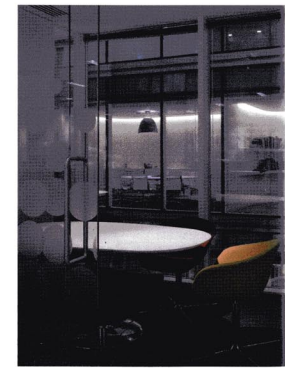
Moveable folding walls, and folding meeting tables mean that the space is

finishes such as timber, lacquer and Hi Macs are introduced throughout the meeting rooms.

The change in location has meant a change in working styles too as open plan working was not how Hammerson operated at their previous site – this enabling of teams to further integrate without the physical structural constraints being one of the reasons that a move was instigated. 'For some people there was an initial reluctance to move from cellular spaces to open plan working, but once they were here that feeling disappeared as they could see the benefit of working in such a lovely environment', reveals Denise. 'The project team, comprising primarily a cross-section

of the organisation and the FM and IT teams, was tasked with the objective of making the new building fully operational from day one. To achieve this we started a process of consultation and staff presentations on everything from floor plans to crockery and cutlery. Being only a short distance from the new site also helped as we were able to include the staff in site visits. From the outset we really wanted to mitigate any issues as early as possible and to ensure that no-one experienced too many surprises.'

As a contrast to Dudley House, cellular offices are minimal and the office areas have been planned around work benches that are grouped according to the internal teams'





impact of the building is the courageous use of art works. Permanent and bespoke sculptures have been commissioned but in addition to this there are some stunning canvases throughout the space. Initially an art curation company was employed to change the works on a regular basis, but with the appointment of a receptionist, who is a talented artist in her spare time, the procurement of art for the building moved in-house. The flexibility of the building and the spaciousness of the main building's reception area (Hammerson isn't the only occupier) allows the company to host art shows, exhibitions and private receptions on a regular basis.

Even a contingency from the London Philharmonic Orchestra has played there and when you see the space you realise that it couldn't be more perfect for these types of events.

What we really like about this interior is that it's intimate, but it's not claustrophobic. The sense of proportion, diverse industrial materials, colour schemes and some of the eye-teasing sight lines means that you feel far removed from some of the bland and unfortunately all too generic head office buildings that now exist.

But a building is a building, what about the people? As John Richards, CEO of Hammerson recently commented: 'There has been an immediate benefit in efficiency in the way groups work together, and there has been another noticeable but less tangible benefit from the move – there's an indefinable reinvigoration of the business.' Job done then ●

essential ingredients

- Client: • Hammerson
- Architect: • Stiff + Trevillion
020 8960 5550
- Furniture Supply: • Dovetail
020 7868 9000
- Systems Furniture: • Knoll International
020 7236 6655
- Seating: • Knoll International
020 7236 6655
- Meeting Room Furniture: • OPM
020 8316 6080
- Conference Room Furniture: • OPM
020 8316 6080
- Monitor Arms: • DPG/FormFittings
020 7251 7080

flexible and the project team clearly had a big influence on how the conference furniture was going to work with stackable and moveable tables, yet with cleverly integrated IT elements. Denise elaborates for us. 'The work that Dovetail and Stiff + Trevillion have done is excellent, and we're

very pleased with the overall aesthetic. The practical creativity of the fit-out and the furniture has allowed us to be continuously flexible with the space – this flexibility was a critical factor for us.'

Whilst not part of the design brief, part of the endearing quality of the overall