

By BRR senior writer Mike Hodge – 8 July 2009

# A Celebrated Home for Ideas

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# A Celebrated Home for Ideas:

## PUTTING THE BRAND INTO THE BUILDING

Super or otherwise, Auckland doesn't seem to grab many plaudits for the originality of its urban design. The good examples tend to be overshadowed by well-publicised Stalinesque apartment blocks and the apparent absence of any meaningful local body urban planning. All the more satisfying then for BRR when it recently managed to pick up two 2009 NZIA architectural awards for its distinctive, combined office and living space in Newmarket.

Cleverly designed by Architect Simon Twose as his first commercial building, this once-boring 1960's warehouse has been transformed into what Urbis Magazine writer Bill McKay refers to as **"a beautifully uncluttered exercise in space and light, an ethereal space that sets body and mind adrift."** Bill McKay goes on to describe the building as a **"slightly surreal experience physically, with a freshness and vitality of ideas that we just don't see enough of."**

For BRR proprietor Brian Richards, these comments sit very comfortably with his original intentions for the redesign of the building. "The design brief we gave to Simon for the building was that it needed to reflect our brand strategy business," says Brian. "We wanted to communicate the fresh strategic thinking we offer to our clients in addressing their business problems and opportunities. And in our business, if you have seen it before then it isn't an original brand."

**Hence the brief to Simon Twose was to deliver a building which would reflect 'a clean sheet of paper' with no preconceptions. "Our obsession with white was to make the point that our clients' brands are more important than our own," says Brian.**

The building has been much appreciated by BRR's clients and staff as a quiet, considered place away from the frenzied city environment, where ideas can percolate. "Whenever we try to make appointments to visit our clients at their offices, more often than not they prefer to come to us because of the ambient working environment."

Heading to an apartment one floor up after a hectic day in the office may not be everyone's idea of light relief. But for Brian and wife Brigitte, the apartment offers plenty of respite with restful, panoramic views over the Eastern suburbs and Hauraki Gulf. "With 26 shades of white," says Brigitte, "some might say our internal surroundings are boring, however, we see it as a blank canvas which we are continually refreshing with interesting objects and colourful people. For us, it's our very own Guggenheim with hardly a straight wall anywhere; a challenge to build but a real pleasure to live and work in."