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DESIGN ANNUAL / 2009



BEST AUSTRALIAN BUILDING

Ivy, Sydney

A new development in Sydney is turning heads.

THIS BUILDING PULLED ME away from a Krispy Kreme Doughnut shop. It's that good. There I was, wandering down George Street in downtown Sydney heading towards the glistening Krispy Kreme banner when a sway of bamboo caught my eye. The bamboo, stretching and waving from a deep balcony had the happy frenzy of Italian football fans leaning out of car windows as they hoot and too after a win. This building too has that same hollering enthusiasm, an exuberance and confidence that it's good, it's a winner. And like Italians, it also manages to remain elegant and sexy at the same time.

Designed by Woods Bagot in association with Merivale, Cornwell Design, Hecker Phelan and Guthrie, Ivy is an ambitious complex including nine boutique retail spaces, six bars, three specialist restaurants, a music venue, a function room for 1,000 people, a two-level office facility, two 500m² penthouses and a lifestyle complex comprising of a pool club and a day spa. Though Ivy sits in the midst of Sydney's CBD, its playful architecture has had the benefit of a programme geared towards entertainment and leisure. On a site surrounded by beige and glass office buildings, what Ivy does so well is to seamlessly rub shoulders with its corporate neighbours, articulating the same architectural language of height, proportion, and material, while simultaneously stepping out of the corporate mould and adding something different and fresh not just to the street but to the entire city.

This polite give and take means Ivy doesn't look out of place. She doesn't look like a bedazzled lass squinting and blinking, having found herself in last night's outfit in the bright daylight of the working week. Ivy, despite being described on the Woods Bagot website as "an escape from reality" is actually quite aware of its reality. It maintains an elegance that takes it from day to night, from boardroom to poolside.

Architecturally, this has been achieved with the playful structure of the street façade. Rather than a repeating line of columns thrusting upwards to cordon the building into manageable office window slots the Ivy's articulated structure takes a more languid approach with gigantic white rectangles interlocking, stretching, and pulling apart to create an energetic street façade that seems to mimic the scooting in and out of cars in the traffic, pedestrians hurrying, stopping, turning, darting into a shop. Still, this intertwined façade stays rigid, the white stone tipping its metaphorical hat to the other powerhouse buildings around, but then drawing in unusual and unexpected softer elements like candy-coloured yellow and white striped canopies and the bursts of greenery. The bright mass of bamboo contrasts with the white stone of the building and this green is continued in other landscaping features, from ivy creating delicate verdant fretwork to planted trees on balconies.

Inside, the interior design is just as competent, surprising and beautiful as the façade. With so many different elements to the complex, the interiors have been allowed to develop in a varied way, from rooms that continue the yellow and white theme set up outside to the caramel-coloured, textural 1950s-esque rooms in the penthouses.

Notable in the interiors is the fresh garden party-like green and white scheme that runs through many spaces. The green and white scheme draws the vertical landscaping inside, further removing the barriers between the interior and the outside, creating that sense of lightness and luxury. **Nicole Stock**

IVY, 330 - 340 GEORGE ST, SYDNEY.