



The Dental Quarter: Welcome to Hollywood!

By Shannon Meyerkort

The mark of a great designer is that they are able to take an old building, a difficult building, and instead of covering it up and making it uniform and new, they bring it back; highlight the original features and breathe new life into an old space.

Built in 1914, the Princess Theatre began life as a concert hall, hosting end-of-school concerts for local schools. By the 1920s, the Theatre was regularly showing films and featured an orchestra on Saturday nights. The Saturday matinee would include a cartoon, a feature and a serial, and as the children booed and cheered, the pressed tin ceiling would amplify the noise.

Fast-forward almost a century and that pressed tin which had been hidden behind a commercial ceiling and left to rust, has been rejuvenated and other heritage features of the building highlighted as part of a new dental practice designed by husband and wife team, Anthony and Natasha Connor from bespoke designers Ego Squared.

"The tenancy is on the first level of Old Theatre Lane in Claremont, part of the old Princess Theatre," explains Natasha. "We think where we've put the lab and plant room is the old projection room." Inspired by the building's cinematic history, the practice has been styled with a Hollywood theme, with Anthony sourcing

vintage headshots of actors such as Fred Astaire and Lauren Bacall and original movie posters to create a gallery-style feature wall in the waiting room.

This may be an unusual approach for a dental surgery, but it was exactly what practice owner, Dr Stephen Chan, was searching for. "I think we all fell in love with the history of the building," says Dr Chan. "So I started off with one goal in mind. To ensure that our patients feel comfortable and don't feel like they're in a typical dental clinical setting. I discussed my vision with several interior designers, however I wasn't really happy with their ideas which were all very 'clinical' and average. These days, no one goes out of their way for an 'average meal' so why should I want an 'average' design?"

"Very often, I notice similar patterns, materials or design traits with other designers, but what impressed me particularly about Ego Squared was their versatility in commercial design and that every design appeared completely different to the next. Everyone I spoke to only had positive experiences with Natasha and Anthony," he added. "It was a natural choice."

One of the more unusual features at Dental Quarters (a play on both dental terminology and the fact the building is located in the



Claremont Quarter) is an open sterilisation room, which has the dual function of creating more open space, but also removing one of the common problems experienced by staff. "I wanted a positive work flow for the staff," explains Dr Chan. "And knowing the sterilising room is usually a hot and claustrophobic area hidden away from clients, I really wanted it to feel open, clean and cool. It also keeps the staff on their toes to keep everything extra clean as the area is open to our clients."

Despite the age of the building, the fit-out brings together both the best of old and new. The old jarrah floorboards have been restored where possible and blended with new weathered jarrah floorboards where it wasn't. Where the pressed tin ceiling was unable to be salvaged, new dropped bulkheads create visual interest.



“The space was a little challenging as older buildings generally are,” says Natasha. “No two walls are square, damaged ceiling, warped floorboards, and a huge hole in the floor where an old spiral staircase used to be. But we were determined to do justice to the space. The worst thing you can see in a design is when something looks like it has been patched up, or not considered. Ego Squared is different - we can use those challenges to make the space its own.”

Dr Chan agrees, although he cautions people considering renovating an old building. “Old buildings have an unpredictable nature,” he says. “Disability access, plumbing limitations and council approval for the fit-out are all factors that can cause heartache for the unwary.”

But it is precisely the distinctive nature of the old theatre that makes the new practice unique and this has been highlighted by



Summary

The Practice

Principal	Dr Stephen Chan
The Practice	Dental Quarters
Type of Practice	General
Location	Claremont, Perth, Western Australia
Size	102 square metres
No of chairs	3

The Team

Design Company	Ego Squared Design Consultants Pty Ltd
Senior Designer	Anthony Connor
Construction	Dentpro

Equipment

Units	Sirona Sinus Treatment Centres
X-Ray	Sirona Heliodent DS Plus intra-oral x-ray units
OPG	Sirona XG5 Orthophos OPG system
Sterilising	Melag 43B 22 litre
Compressor	Cattani K300
Suction	Cattani Turbo Smart
Software	Dental4Windows

feature pendant lighting over the reception and open sterilisation room, and a glamorous antique French lounge suite. This is complemented with the use of Translucent Illume acrylic splash-backs, a new resin product which is iridescent and changes colour when you move past it.

“We are always looking for new products suitable for our projects,” says Natasha. “We don’t like using the same finishes or products even twice, we are constantly taking in the world around us - inspiration is everywhere.”

In the end, it was the original dream of Dr Chan and the versatility and vision of Ego Squared that has led to Dental Quarters being a creative and practical success.

“Ego Squared were able to translate everything I wanted into a visual masterpiece,” says Dr Chan. “I’m very impressed how the design team, graphic designer and builder worked together to ‘brand’ the practice and make it unique. The end product has been even better than I could even imagine.”

And as a result, the Princess Theatre will live on for another hundred years.

