

WARE MALCOMB

By Design

By Natalie Foxx

“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” So said Winston Spencer Churchill, who in addition to being one of the most important political figures of the Twentieth Century, was also a noted artist that was acutely aware of the effect of architectural design on human being. The psychological and emotional impact of a living or working environment can be one of the most overlooked ingredients in the minds of so many designers. This is most certainly not the case for Ted Heisler, Principal, Interior Architecture and Design, at the celebrated Ware Malcomb’s corporate headquarters in Irvine, California. Ware Malcomb is without doubt one of the most innovative and creative design companies in the world, and possesses a culture of creativity that expands the bounds of design ingenuity and functionality in all of their projects. It is no surprise that this company is now considered by many to be the standard to which others aspire. We recently probed the mind of Heisler to understand the interior design philosophy that has made Ware Malcomb such a force in the industry today.

ArtLA Magazine: Ware Malcomb designs spaces for a wide variety of different enterprises. As an Interior Design specialist, are you involved with each project from the initial design phase or do you apply the interior design aspects after construction?

TH: Ware Malcomb is typically involved with each project from the initial design phase in the strategic part of design. Our approach to the design is threefold:

Listening. Our project approach begins with placing an emphasis on the programming stage of the process, knowing that the success of the project rests on whether we listened carefully to understand our clients’ needs for the new office environment. Once we understand the functional requirements to achieve a “high performance” environment, we can implement a plan to express the client’s culture and brand in the space.

Envisioning. Once the program has been reviewed and approved, we review the overall goals of the project from aesthetics to



ABOVE: Niman & Associates Open Office. Photography by Benny Chan/Fotoworks.
BELOW: Niman & Associates Hallway. Photography by Benny Chan/Fotoworks.



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budget. We begin the process of creating the space that will work best for the client and provide sketches, elevations, and material boards so they can be involved in as much of the process as possible. We spend the time necessary to work and rework the design for an innovative solution. We make sure the client visually understands the space before it is built.

Implementation. Once the design is finalized we carefully document the project to be properly constructed. We take a leadership role to ensure that the project stays on course. We work as a team with the other professionals involved in the project, maintaining a proactive solution driven attitude to help deliver a successful project.

ArtLA Magazine: When working with each client, how do you balance the emotional and functional aspects of their requirements?

TH: We work to integrate the client's functional processes, employees' needs and technology to enhance employee performance and efficiency. We also look to incorporate the unique brand and culture in the design of the space. Keeping the balance between innovative designs and functionality is key in our design process.

At the commencement of a project, our team meets with the client and the project team to understand all objectives and requirements of all parties involved. While our design team is translating the project goals into a design, we pay careful attention to elements such as efficiency and functionality, schedule, and budgeting. Throughout the design process we regularly meet with the project team to ensure our design is meeting the emotional and functional goals of the overall project objectives.

ArtLA Magazine: Pertaining to the Niman and Associates project, how did you approach the design of the project?

TH: The project objective was to design a new and creative office space that encouraged employee collaboration. As an accounting firm, Niman and Associates wanted to bring more of their personality into the project. Our Ware Malcomb Los Angeles team designed a new space that not only encouraged collaboration, but also mobility, flexibility, integrated technology and sustainability.

This project included open workstations, private offices, a break room and conference/meeting rooms. Ware Malcomb's design

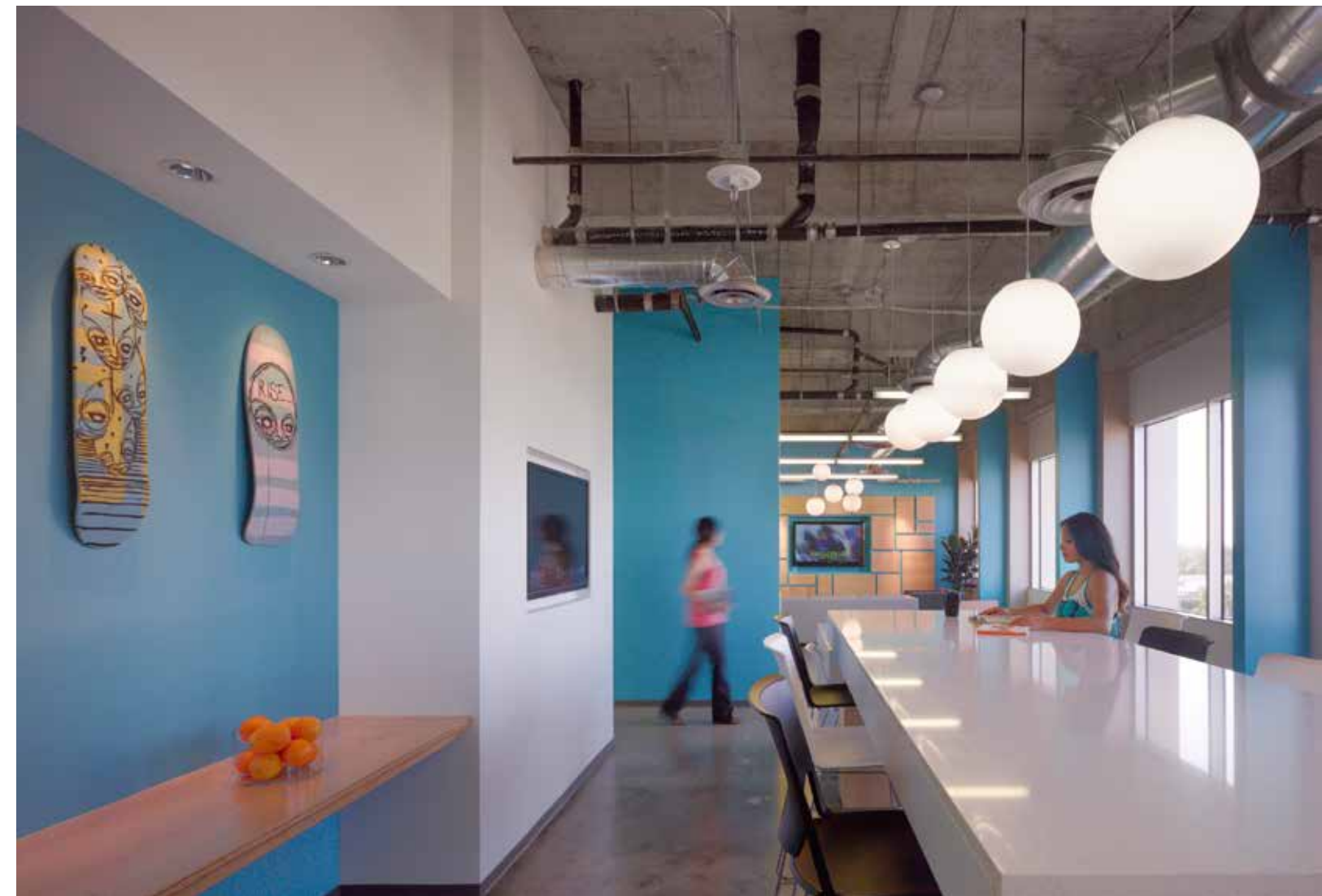
provides Niman & Associates with an authentic, collaborative environment that inspires innovation. The interiors of the office flow seamlessly into the exterior areas of the site, delivering flexibility and connection with nature. The overall result is a work environment that encourages engagement and community, supports health and well-being, and provides a variety of workplace options.

ArtLA Magazine: Given that "Techspace" is a facility that is home to many different companies, was the design focused on the culture of the locale? How did you fuse this

with the challenges of practicality that such a project would demand?

TH: The design concept behind the TechSpace project was representative of the Orange County location and the TechSpace brand. The main objectives were to design a contemporary work environment attracting a younger generation of professional entrepreneurs, provide a cool, creative space without compromising the budget, and incorporate centrally accessible common amenities to support the tenant work functions and create a social environment.

Tech Space Cafe. Photography by Benny Chan/Fotoworks.





Tech Space Lobby. Photography by Benny Chan/Fotoworks.

The design inspiration for the new space drew upon the casually sophisticated Southern California beach lifestyle. Color was used throughout the space to reflect California's modern and laid-back culture. As a form of visual way-finding and to create neighborhoods within the facility, the design of each floor centers on its own unique color scheme. These schemes included chaparral green walls to mirror California's terrain, bright orange accents to mimic year-round sunshine, and vivid blue representing the Pacific Ocean and California sky.

Surf boards and skate boards adorning the walls of the space further reinforce the young and hip culture TechSpace wanted to create. As the majority of TechSpace's users are Millennials who embrace non-traditional approaches to business, including alternative work environments, this flexible and dynamic facility supports emerging generational expectations for how and where work happens. The design also broadens the range of TechSpace's appeal to new users because it does not favor a specific interest or business type.

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Our Ware Malcomb Irvine team's biggest challenge was to stay within the allotted spending limit while also bringing TechSpace's vision to life. To maintain the project budget parameters, alternative finish and construction materials were incorporated that also served as creative design features. These included bare concrete floors and exposed exterior walls/columns, exposed ceilings combined with suspended acoustical ceilings, and 3Form acrylic panel designs that graphically emulated bubbles in the surf.

ArtLA Magazine: On the "United Rentals" project, you had to create a balance between designing a space that would attract the next generation of younger employees while communicating the company's corporate image to visiting shareholders. What were the design and psychological processes that you experienced in order to achieve this?

TH: In a typical full service interior design project like United Rentals, the project begins with a visioning session with key stakeholders and the project team. Ware Malcomb holds these sessions to clarify our clients' ideal vision for their office space and build consensus among key stakeholders. Our visioning session helps extract big picture information to utilize during the

design phase of a project. It is a process of exploring intangible concepts, such as brand identity and corporate culture, as well as understanding the desired look and feel of the building and space. In today's overcrowded marketplace, brand is a differentiator. Designing with a clear vision of our clients' strategic long-term goals proves to be a huge competitive advantage.

This visioning process reveals unique characteristics relating to brand, culture, personality and preferences of the organization. Information gathered is documented during the exercise to ensure clarity and consensus among all team members. The results are compiled into a report that serves as a reference tool throughout the design process and keeps the client's strategic goals a central focus throughout the project.

For the United Rentals project, the result of visioning was an innovative office space that introduced rich textures and a variety of materials balancing traditional elements with an updated, fresh look. Our Ware Malcomb Phoenix team had to find the perfect balance between creating a new, vibrant and collaborative environment while still keeping with the United Rentals corporate image.

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Collaboration zones were placed throughout the office for employees to enjoy including a large break room, training rooms, and smaller public seating areas. Providing an even more relaxed and comfortable space was an area known as “The Living Room,” which is located off the main conference area. It houses a small meeting table and casual lounge seating. In almost every room, technology is integrated through fully executed AV packages.

The executive wing features glass office fronts and glass walls separating each office. This allows executives to hold private calls in their office while still maintaining a sense of connectedness and collaboration. A coffee bar provides the executives a gathering place to congregate and take breaks. Centered in the middle of the wing is a prominent circular conference room, also made of glass, with curved sliding 3Form doors. The entire wing earned the name, “The Glass House.”

The design team worked side-by-side Ware Malcomb’s in-house branding studio, WM Branding, to infuse the United Rentals brand and culture into the new corporate headquarters. Communicating the story behind United Rentals’ history, core values, products and services are large graphic

displays along the walls, custom walnut art pieces, and flat-screen displays. Both visitors and employees alike are able to immerse themselves in the brand and embrace the corporate culture.

ArtLA Magazine: What have been the most challenging projects you have worked on?

TH: Depending on the project, various issues may arise concerning communication, a tight schedule and budget constraints. We believe the success of a project requires a team approach with communication as the cornerstone of the process. The challenges that arise can always be mitigated if they are clearly communicated from the beginning.

ArtLA Magazine: How do you source artwork for a project?

TH: When artwork is requested by the client/project, we collaborate with an art consultant to source pieces for the new space we are designing. We typically provide the art consultant with conceptual ideas such as style, color scheme and the elements that will be part of the environment we are aiming to achieve. The art consultant then selects pieces that fall within the criteria given. We assess what pieces we think fit

best, and then we share them with the client to ultimately select. When the final artwork has been selected, we work with the art consultant to figure out exactly where the pieces will be placed within the new space and collaborate with final framing and finish details.

ArtLA Magazine: How much of your work is in the virtual environment and how many changes occur during the physical translation of these designs?

TH: All of our designs begin in the virtual environment. The project process is an evolution of an idea, and the design is refined and evolved throughout that process. There may be slight changes during the physical translation of these designs, but all of the conceptual designs are based in the virtual environment.

If you would like more information on Ware Malcomb, please contact their Irvine office at 949.660.9128 or by visiting: <http://www.waremalcomb.com>.

United Rentals Break Room. Photography by Taylor Crothers.

