

Summer Real Estate
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SUMMER real estate

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The latest designs in Hollywood workspaces are meant to motivate and inspire

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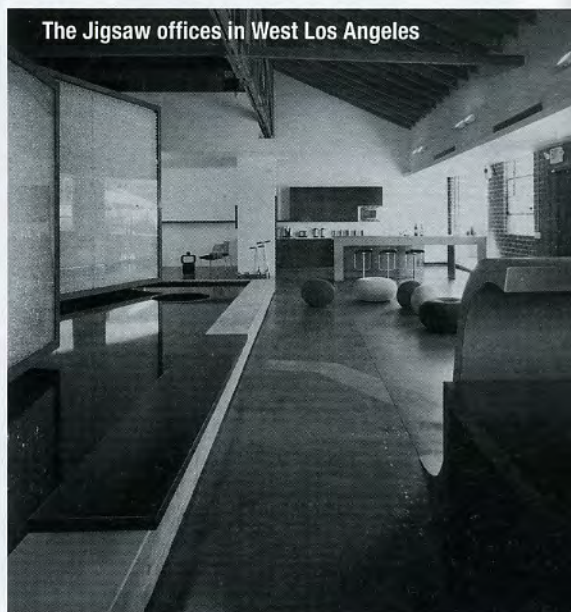


The Blur Studio warehouse

By Hillary Atkin



The lobby of HBO Films



The Jigsaw offices in West Los Angeles

SEQUELS AND REMAKES ASIDE, THE HOLLYWOOD community is one that thrives on — and appreciates — creativity, including in its workspaces. This appreciation gives architects and designers free reign to explore new concepts and innovative techniques; as a result, they are taking typical industry workspaces to an entirely different level.

Architect Todd Erlandson was recently called upon by Universal's Brand Group to design a new breed of conference room, a place where its staff could strategize and work together across divisions as well provide easy ways to inspire the thought process.

"It was about how to generate a process to get key personnel from different divisions to think outside the box," says Erlandson, a principal at Santa Monica-based (M)Arch. "We were inspired by a company called Ideo, which had researched and invented a new shopping cart in five days. It's about bringing people together, doing deep research and rolling out new ideas and taking those ideas and generating new projects at a fast pace."

The room is loosely based on a traditional conference room and features a white board and comfortable furniture that provides different ways of sitting — even places to lay

down — as well as a place for food. "It's a way of being in one room for a long time but trying to draw out different ways of thinking over that process," Erlandson says. "The architecture becomes a tool for developing new ideas, with aspects that make it easier to come up with new ideas and display them. It's like a laboratory in a way."

Meanwhile, at editorial company Jigsaw in West Los Angeles, architect Lawrence Scarpa of Pugh + Scarpa created glass walls filled with Ping-Pong balls for the firm's edit bays, as well as designed a large reflecting pool. Jigsaw's entry is purposefully through a kitchen/café area that acts as an informal think tank, where staff and clients can mix in a relaxed atmosphere while discussing important creative issues.

"Studies show daylight makes a big difference in productivity, hence the light being filtered through the glass walls," Scarpa says. "The idea of introducing water was because of its calming effect in a high-stress business. We created a still pool with a 6-foot-deep hole where water drains into a cylinder, creating the background noise of a waterfall, which relaxes you. Essentially, the space is a tension reliever."

At Blur Studio in Venice, which specializes

in motion graphics and animation, Erlandson focused on creating a home-away-from-home environment for the firm's employees, who often work long hours. "It's a fun place to be that provides a lot of amenities you might have at home — (things) like a kitchen, pool room, library and a place to screen what they're working on. Even though it's a 20,000-square-foot warehouse, the lights are low, and the materials are comfortable. (The workspace) really inspires a culture that keeps people energized and engaged."

For HBO Films' office in Century City, (M)Arch's goal was to infuse the lobby with inspirational material that brought in elements from the outside world to the corporate side of the entertainment business. The result? Interactive media kiosks hung from steel poles that enable the user to select various clips of upcoming HBO Films' product.

"The client came from New York and thought creativity was inspired by outside sources, like walking through Times Square to and from the office," Erlandson says. "He missed that in Los Angeles, going from the parking garage into the office. He wanted to infuse the office space with that level of intensity." ■