DEFINED ELEGANCE

A pragmatic yet elegant design for Deutsch Inc.'s LA office by Schwartz Architects defines the brand image of this leading advertising agency in the US. Design Today speaks with Frederic Schwartz to understand the strength that fosters the individuality of a creative workforce.

The work philosophy of this ad agency is communicated by the no-nonsense industrial aesthetic plan with...
Clear lines. Three THINK pods add buzz to the environment that promotes chance and planned interaction.
'LEANER, meaner, faster, smarter'—is Deutsch's victory chant. Having won the Ad Agency of the Year thrice in the last four years this advertising firm in the US is currently enjoying unprecedented success and growth. For their new headquarters in Los Angeles, the firm hired Schwartz Architects just after they completed Deutsch's 120,000 sq ft New York office. Expansion of its office space, saw an old industrial warehouse (previously used by the SCI-ARCH architecture school) transform into Deutsch's LA bureau.

In advertising, great ideas cross boundaries from broadcast and print to promotions. One of Deutsch's goals for this project was to make this philosophy come across through the space they occupy. Their motto—Leaner, meaner, faster, smarter—illuminates how the agency approaches every assignment, every client, every problem and ultimately addresses every solution.

It was therefore a collaborative objective to realise that philosophy through every aspect of the programming, design and building process. In keeping with the agency's motto, the design too had to romance the savvy, zappy creative streak of the employees. The key objective was to manifest the agency's work idiom in the design and operation of the built space, reinforcing the Deutsch brand: to create an environment that promotes chance and planned interaction between small and large groups, in informal and structured settings.

The predominant elements of design are contained within and revealed by the striking scale of a double volume reception

An open accessible plan allows the architecture to showcase the creative work environment made available
The Deutsch brand is communicated by its no-nonsense industrial aesthetic, clear plan, strong lines and buzz of the environment, showcasing people hard at work. This is reinforced by strategically located company logos—on the building's facade and the raw steel reception desk.

The designers opted for strong bones that support and promote varied activity. Flexibility of work practice is facilitated by the many and varied spaces for people to meet, present, or just work for a couple of hours. These include the conference rooms where sales pitches are made, the war rooms that seat 10 to 18, breakout spaces, small four to six person meeting rooms and THINK pods. These three THINK pods are translucent enclosures perched over metal frames that seem floating in the air. Inside these pods are vibrant big-sized seating cushions that make for pristine...
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relaxing zones. One of the functions of design elements is to enrich team spirit through an commune enriched environ. No ad agency space is successful without healthy interaction between creative teams. And Schwartz Architects does full justice to this prerequisite of energised space.

Creative interaction is promoted by reducing the personal workspaces of employees, and creating compelling shared spaces to support their needs. Floor circulation promotes chance interactions, and breakout spaces furnished with sofas and coffee tables encourage those encounters to develop into impromptu meetings. Casual interactions were also planned for by provision of a large café and common areas where outside vendors provide lunch for employees.

The LA office illustrates the brand identity of Deutsch, demonstrating their conviction and their ability to realise ideas for all who visit. Deutsch LA was designed and constructed in less than 10 months. The existing 1,000,000 sq ft building was gutted and the blank exterior facade was perforated with 50 new windows. The formerly solid supporting
walls were shored up. Office and workstation spaces for over 400 hundred employees were designed as well as three large conference rooms, four war rooms, three THINK pods, a café area, and a full video and sound editing suite. The predominant elements of the design are contained within and revealed by the striking double volume reception space, allowing the scale and personality of the place to be immediately perceived upon entry.

The energy of the Los Angeles team is reflected in the vital industrial aesthetic. The exposed framing and concrete floors of the existing industrial shell are animated by an extra-large, dynamic, open steel and concrete staircase, lines of blue runway lights, a field of orange-painted aluminum light fixtures and exposed ductwork, giving a richness, depth and colour to the space. Windows punched in the existing concrete building skin open the space to the outside. Strong lines created by planes of glazed office wall and reinforced by blue runway lights, define and connect the major open spaces. The THINK pods give dynamism to the expansive high-bay space that forms the Deutsch’s heart and centre.

The open, accessible plan allows the architecture to reveal the hardworking and energetic work environment made available to a creative staff. Breakout spaces marked by fields of orange aluminum lights and furnished with bold orange sofas, provide flashes of colour and allow for impromptu meetings. The office has a refined finish and acoustic privacy, yet it remains visually open.

The main focus, however, remains the double height ‘high bay space’ which has a sea of custom designed work cubes over which float the three glowing THINK pods. With over 250,000 sq ft of office space designed for Deutsch Inc. in New York, LA, Boston and Chicago, Schwartz Architects has helped one of the nation’s leading advertising agencies define their brand through an architecture that spells both pragmatism and elegance.

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