

schiaavello

CASE STUDY



Gray Puksand Studio: made by designers, for designers

Melbourne, Australia

Taking the next step –

Gray Puksand is one of Australia's leading architecture and design practices, responsible for the designs of a number of innovative and refined workspaces, homes and schools across the country. When the studio created its Melbourne office 12 years ago, it was one of the first open-plan workspaces around. And while the space aged well, after over a decade of use, Gray Puksand decided it was ready to take it to the next level and try some new things.

"It was no longer reflective of who we are," says Heidi Smith, partner and workspace lead at Gray Puksand. "We wanted a space that was more experimental; we wanted to walk the talk when it comes to our clients. We can't suggest clients make dramatic changes in their work styles unless we are doing the same thing, and showing that it works."

And so with that, Gray Puksand took on the role of both client and designer in order to bring new life to the office and to experiment with some researched workplace methods.

It was important to the company that they used the exact same process they would with any regular client, so the team got together and brainstormed what they wanted the space to be and how they wanted it to work. "It was really interesting workshopping my own team," Smith says. "I had 60 architects and interior designers with a whole lot of ideas and opinions, which resulted in a really creative approach. It allowed us to really open up to something different."



Krossi sit/stand work benches support movement in the workplace. Here, colleagues shift from sitting to standing positions at a touch of a button.

Spotlight on flexible desking –

With a pared-back palette of raw timbers, polished concrete and steel, the aesthetic is contemporary and understated, allowing Gray Puksand's people to be the ones to bring colour into the space. It also pushes the boundaries of what a workspace should be, with a design focused on agile working, catering to a broad range of working styles and educated experimentation.



The custom designed Splat Table enables people to shift between individual tasks and collaborative chats with employees working nearby.

The main experiment within the project was the Splat Table, a huge 5x5m table in an unconventional 'splattered' shape. Custom designed and manufactured by Schiavello, the table seats up to 16 people and is optimised for flexible and collaborative working. One section of the table accommodates fixed seating, while another features permanent computer screens that agile workers can plug a laptop or tablet into. Meanwhile, one wing is left completely bare – this is catered to meetings, collaborative work, or agile workers.

"The fact that Schiavello came on the journey with us and helped us create Splat was really exciting, and it's proved a success," Smith says. "We have all different work styles in our office, from completely agile workers through to fixed-desk workers, so Splat covers off on everything."

The sculptural table is a marked departure from the norm of rectilinear, sectioned-off workspaces and allows team members working on a common project to cluster together and share drawings and ideas with ease. Adding variance to agility, the space also includes regular fixed desking via Schiavello's Krossi sit/stand desks, and retreat spaces for quiet or solo time.

"From our experience, we know that open environments have a vibrancy about them, and while that's a good thing, you also need spaces where people are able to retreat and to have quiet time to focus," Smith explains. To cater to this is the 'hideout' – a little found space where you can be removed from the action without being completely locked in a room, as well as the 'king's view', which caters perfectly to agile workers, and a selection of cocooning solo booths.

A wise investment pays off –

“We’ve got a great relationship with Schiavello – I’ve been with Gray Puksand for 15 years, and actually, my very first project was with Schiavello,” Smith recalls. With over 50 years of hands-on experience in the design field and a 75,000sqm wholly self-owned manufacturing facility, Schiavello was able to easily produce a bespoke solution for the architecture studio, down to the exact specifications that were required and meeting Gray Puksand’s brief.

“Everything has come up really successful,” Smith says, and it hasn’t only benefited the Gray Puksand staff, but also their future clients. Due to the success of the Splat Table, Smith explains that Gray Puksand would have no hesitation in specifying something similar with Schiavello in its future projects. “It’s exciting to still be testing new ways of working, from which we can report back to our clients. It assists in us helping them make more informed decisions down the track. And that’s what’s happened here with Splat.”

And more so than being used, the spaces are being used as they are intended to be. Looking into the hideout, at times you will see the project team workshopping their work, with paper and drawings and samples all over the place, while at other times you see people in there in silence, sitting on their laptops, with headphones in and engaged in complete focus.

“I think the new space really allows us to express our personalities. We’ve always been a social and tight-knit group but there’s definitely to be more of a buzz about now, so I think it’s reflected well on our corporate culture,” Smith says.

Every element of the new office is built around supporting the methodologies espoused by Gray Puksand. From the consultative, collaborative process behind the design, to the range of spaces that support better design, this is a workplace by designers, for designers, and it’s already proven a dream workspace.



Interior design by Gray Puksand
Photography by Tatjana Plitt