

THE OFFICE

LEGAL CHAMBERS AREN'T USUALLY associated with bold colour and affability, but they're not all designed by Kennedy Nolan. Patrick Kennedy, principal at Kennedy Nolan, shares the firm's approach. **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE WORKSPACE?** 181 William Street Chambers is a new criminal barristers' chambers in the Melbourne CBD. Our approach was to soften the corporate edge of conventional legal environments, to step away from the familiar projection of the law as being expensive, prestigious and stuffy, and to make a space which could provide calm, softness and even a sense of refuge. **WHAT APPEALED TO YOU ABOUT THE PROJECT?** The group of barristers who approached us were interested in making an environment distinct from the conventional offering and this appealed to us. Their brief was for a workspace that had domestic qualities – something we like to bring to all

our projects. **WHAT DID YOUR ALTERATIONS TO THE ORIGINAL SPACE ENTAIL?** We were presented with a bare-bones environment: a concrete floor, a plasterboard division to the adjacent tenancy, and no ceiling to the exposed services. Our work included a complete fit-out incorporating partitions; ceiling linings; electrics, mechanics and hydraulics; wall and floor linings; fittings, fixtures and furniture; and window coverings. **PLEASE EXPLAIN THE MATERIAL AND COLOUR PALETTE** It's quite distinct and not conventional for a barristers' chambers, but reflects the clients' shared values. It was clear the space needed to be warm and nurturing rather than corporate, friendly rather than intimidating. We worked with a colour palette of rust, ochre and rich greens offset by timber, cork, felt and linen. The overall effect is visually and aurally soft, calming and quiet but also informal and approachable.

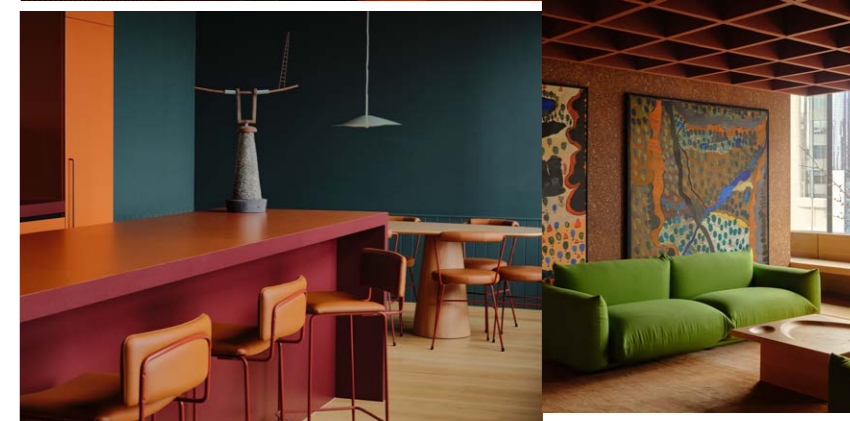
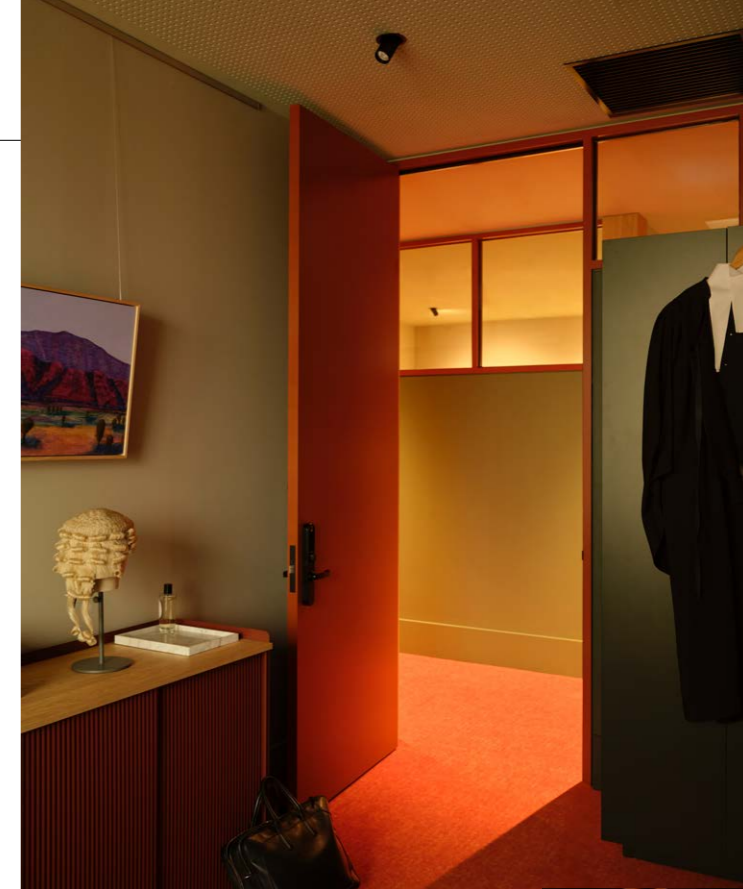
181 WILLIAM STREET CHAMBERS BY KENNEDY NOLAN CHALLENGES THE NOTION OF STUFFY LAW OFFICES.



Legal ease

Colour and compassion smooth the way at a new barristers' chambers in Melbourne. Photography SEAN FENNESSY

DESCRIBE THE COMPLETED SPACE While it's very much a workplace, the chambers also have a definite domestic quality – the sense of a refuge, a retreat from the harshness of the world. This feels useful for a workplace where the barristers put in long hours and where clients are often going through inconceivably stressful times. We love the way the various elements combine to make a pleasing whole, but one of our favourite features was provided by the clients: the beautiful paintings by Nancy Yukuwal McDinny in the reception space. They seem to encapsulate so much about William Street Chambers, but also elevate it in a way we couldn't have expected. **WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE SPACE?** The sensitive nature of the work done by criminal barristers presented both a challenge – to make an environment sensitive to the often stressful situations that many of the barristers' clients face. We were careful to avoid cues or symbols of institutional, corporate or legal settings, and focused on making the spaces quiet, soft, private and natural. They are dignified, but hopefully not intimidating. **DID THE BRIEF ENTAIL ANY WORKSPACE ESSENTIALS?** The brief included 26 separate chambers of varying size. Each barrister is a sole practitioner and therefore each individual chamber requires a high level of acoustic separation and privacy to protect client confidentiality. In addition to the individual chambers, there is a central reception zone and meeting room with a nearby shared staff lounge, kitchen and dining area. **WHICH DREAM OBJECT WOULD YOU BUY FOR THE SPACE RIGHT NOW?** We'd love to include some Hans Wegner 'Ox' chairs in Tan leather. We see these chairs facing the reception view of the surrounding buildings and St Patrick's Cathedral, giving distressed visitors somewhere to privately retreat in trying times. kennedynolan.com.au



Clockwise (from opposite) An individual chamber featuring an Akari floor lamp, Suzanna Vangelov artwork and Godfrey Hirst broadloom carpet. // Shades of red clay and eucalyptus green throughout emulate the Australian landscape. // Arflex 'Marengo' sofas and artworks by Nancy Yukuwal McDinny in reception. // The communal meeting room. // Patrick Kennedy and Rachel Nolan. // Expansive views from 25 floors up. // Laminex laminate in Kalamata and Moroccan Clay in the staff kitchen.

