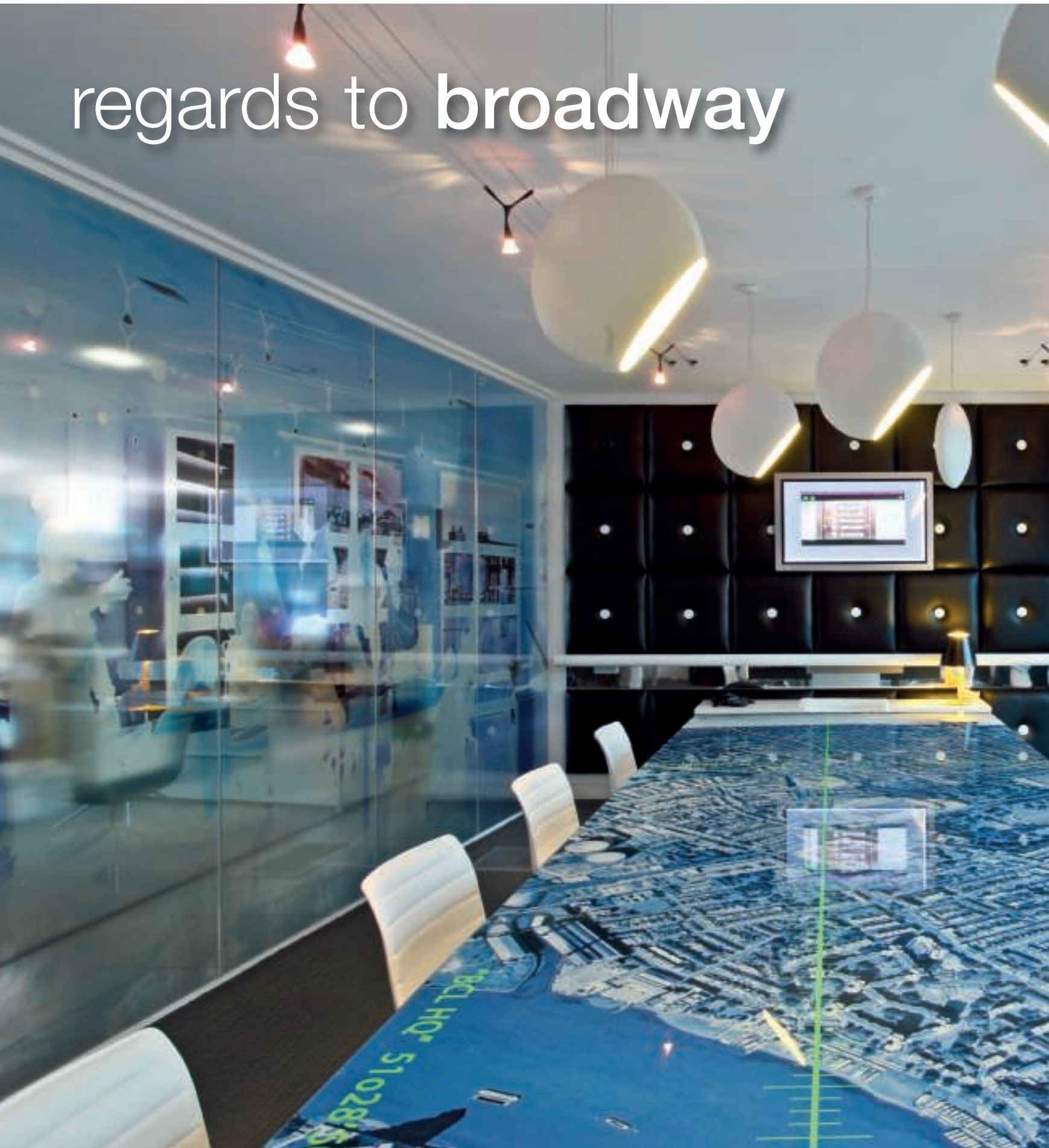


# regards to **broadway**





Ok, it may not be the bustling the centre of the Big Apple’s theatreland, but, on a warm, sunny day like today, Fulham Broadway feels like an ideal place to be.

Let’s face it, THAT Broadway would probably be all barging and shouting, energy-sapping heat and exhaust fumes. Fulham, on the other hand, is currently gently buzzing, all comfortable shirtsleeves and smiling faces to the sun. Here, Yaris hybrids take the place of yellow cabs. Yep, this will do us just fine.

The reason for our visit to this pleasant part of west London is that we have come to see the latest interior scheme undertaken by design consultancy Platform Group for leading marketing communications agency Billington Cartmell.

Billington Cartmell is an award-winning independent marketing communications agency, with clients including GSK, Morrisons, William Hill and Unilever. Also part of the Billington Cartmell group is broadcasting and ad agency Brave, who have recently produced multi-award winning work for Green & Blacks (including the Grand Prix for Marketing Society in 2006), and Closer, an experiential and live marketing agency.

This is no less than the fourth time that the Brighton-based design consultancy has been commissioned to design office space for Billington Cartmell in London’s Fulham Broadway.





▶▶▶▶▶ The previous design phase incorporated eye-catching features including a Zen waiting area and a meeting room styled like a country house billiard room.

Housed in the 300 sq m third floor, the interior makes best use of the unusual CZWG architecture. The space is light and airy, with rooflights bringing natural light deep into the plan.

Visitors enter a waiting area, known as the Zen Space, which features a 'lotus flower' interactive coffee table. This shiny black box houses an integral LCD screen which shows company projects as well as calming Zen images. This is surrounded by bespoke stools, while privacy is provided by lightweight room dividers. These screens were created specially for the project and feature gloss metal frames within which are suspended rods of extra thick bamboo. An additional screen, which separates the waiting area from an informal meeting space, has the same black gloss frame, but is glazed and incorporates a relaxing image of water lilies.

The main workspace itself has been kept as simple as possible. The galvanized raised floor has been left naked, giving the space an industrial feel. A vinyl 'runway' delineates the main circulation routes while softening the sound of footsteps. It is inset with

graphics from iconic video games including Pac-Man, Space Invaders and Galaxian (a personal favourite, second only to Defender!). Platform has worked within budgetary constraints to deliver a stylish solution that included specifying storage cabinets, desks and meeting tables from Ikea.

At the far end of the space, there's a floor-to-ceiling height frameless glass wall, screen-printed with bookshelves to make it resemble the library of a stately home. A 'secret' door leads into the billiards room, which acts as a meeting space.

Dominating this meeting space is a table, its glass top faced with a photorealistic image of a snooker table. An 'AV fireplace' housed in a lacquered storage unit enables Billington Cartmell staff to make presentations using the latest wireless technologies. Table lamps sourced add to the domestic feel.

An executive toy from the 1980's makes a surprise comeback thanks to an overhead installation of six Tom Dixon Mirror Ball lights. They have been arranged in a Newton's Cradle-style array, the last in the line angled as though it is about to crash into the others.

It's great to hear, in this financial climate, that Billington Cartmell is continuing to

expand. 'As Billington Cartmell grows we keep re-shuffling the space for them,' Platform's Max Eaglen explains. 'It's great that they ask to come back and come up with new ideas. It's not easy, they are quite challenging, but these are brilliant, fun projects to do. You have to be cost-sensitive.'

It is clear that Max and the team have a client here who is not afraid to wander from the often narrow path of corporate design. 'What tends to happen is that Ian (Billington) wants us to really go for it. He gives us a brief – of sorts, but I don't think he likes to steer us too much. He likes to let us have a bash first! Ideas then get discussed with the chief creative members here, and they feed back their opinions.

'It's always an advantage to work with creative clients, although sometimes you have to rein that creativity in. We start off being the creatives and end up being the voice of reason!'

One area that Platform has worked on previously is the reception space. This Piers Gough building certainly has plenty of character both from the outside and in, yet if there is a major challenge for any interior designer, it is here at reception.

Dominated by tight curves, the space certainly does not lend itself to wide expanses of Barcelona chairs or interactive▶▶▶▶▶

## case study



►►► coffee zones. We ask Max about the challenges behind phase four. 'To be honest, phase four was not that difficult,' Max confesses. 'Reception was difficult – due to a range of different issues. They wanted a cost-effective solution, but it is all curved walls and tight space. It was originally designed as a common area I think, with perhaps some time of security area there – but no-one wants to walk into a space and be confronted by a security guard.'

'We had previously done a tiny bit of cosmetic work on it as a temporary fix. We needed to get a secure storage area in there, we had to put some seating in there and also get a receptionist in, but pushed round towards the front of the building so that they were visible and could see people coming in. The whole thing was remodelled. It works far better now.'

'The idea of the padding on the walls comes from the fact that they are creatives

and they do often work in a mad way, so we've subtly taken that padded cell concept and twisted it – a play on 'you don't have to be mad to work here, but it helps'.

'We added black, green and white 'bar-coding' stripes throughout, the new finishes and updated the whole area. I think it feels a lot fresher.'

'The colours are part of a new corporate palette. We've used them extensively in reception and much more subtly in the re-designed boardroom space upstairs. There is a real nod towards retail here.'

This new boardroom is another major part of the phase four work. 'Probably the most challenging part of this space was that these meeting rooms get used all the time and if a meeting room is out of action you get a lot of frustrated creatives,' Max continues. 'We had to put some more, smaller meeting rooms downstairs to cope with that. We've now decided to keep those,

extra rooms because they are also in constant use now.'

The new boardroom scheme subtly nods towards James Bond with its sophistication. Drapes and cool lighting combine with yet more padded walls, while the centrepiece of the space is a large boardroom table featuring a fantastic graphic of west London from overhead, with GPS satellite positioning.

Further twists include a brilliant 'peel-off' felt digital clock and a large format graphic that encompasses the entire glazed wall of the room. We also can't help noticing the silver pistol lamp stands. Nice.

Before we make our leave, we manage to grab a few minutes of Ian Billington's valuable time, and ask him about his philosophy behind the workplace. 'We have 140 people here and I think we sometimes they need to be reminded that our customers come first,' Ian reveals, with reference to the new client-facing revamp. 'Everybody, from the receptionist onwards, is there to look after the customer. If anything gets in the way of our customer service, then I have a problem with it.'

'This should be a creative village, not a corporate monolith. I don't want a boring corporate space – it's not us. Some of the large projects that we are shown, where excess amounts of money are thrown away, all look the same. We do have corporate clients, financial clients and I do own a pin striped suit, but that's not what they want from an agency.'

This, however, is not a radical solution for the sake of it. The Billington Cartmell workplace makes you smile, turns your head and gets you thinking. Surely that is a perfect reflection of a design agency ●

## essential ingredients

Client:	• Billington Cartmell
Design & Planning:	• Platform 01273 723322
Main Contractor:	• Indigo Design & Build 01323 505533
Seating:	• Spatial (Arper chairs) 0141 353 9553
Carpets:	• Christy Carpets 01908 308777
Pendant Lights:	• Pottinger & Cole www.pottingerandcole.co.uk
Wall Lights:	• twentytwentyone 020 7837 1900
Clock:	• Flashwear 08454 632 861