



hall monitor

We're deep in the Clerkenwell jungle, chatting with BDGworkfutures Director Clive Hall. As is pretty much the norm nowadays, our conversation begins with the subject on everyone's mind: Strictly Come Dancing or X Factor? Only joshing, we are, of course discussing the current economic climate.

Clive, we're very glad to say, like ourselves, is not of the belief that we're all doomed. 'Who can say what's going to happen next year?' he asks. 'There is a little more uncertainty. We have had some really good years, but we never get complacent.'

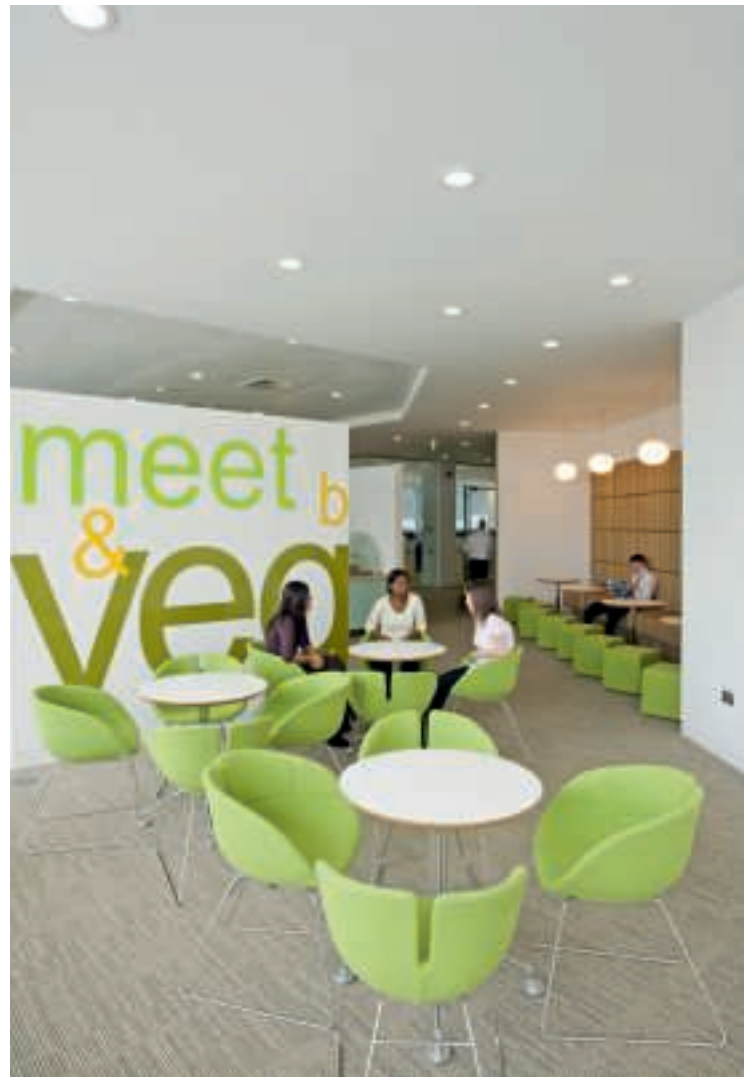
'If you look back since the new Millennium, then we've had some really good years, but we've also had some years that were quite hard work. It's always been a bit like that. Obviously, in this situation, if you forged some really strong bonds with clients and produced good work, then they will come back to you. That certainly helps.'

'It is quite hard now – and it is the first thing people talk about. But we will come out of this though. Things will change.'

We ask Clive whether this has, or will, change the way he approaches his work. 'I'm just trying to think of a client who has ever had just so much money to spend!' he smiles. 'The public sector work we've been involved with recently has become a significant part of our business, and certainly there you have to work quite hard going through the process to deliver the right solution. You might get a bit of chapter and verse from that sector, but you also get a lot of belief and passion. I really like that. They really care about who their spending will impact.'

'We recently finished work for The National Archives at Kew. There were a number of projects associated with that and I think, again, for them, it had to deliver value for money. That you expect from the public sector. I think we are also now seeing that same thing from all our clients. Siemens is a prime example; we worked on their headquarters in Frimley – and it was a great project – but we were constantly aware that there was a finite budget and we had to deliver and make it work.'

Clive has over 20 years experience in the design of working environments. He has extensive knowledge across a wide range of building types, understanding and realising their potential to deliver effective design solutions. He also has an in-depth understanding of and passion for the technical and regulatory elements of workplace >>>>



ringing I could prove I was a Cockney originally! I, like quite a lot of people I think, moved into this industry because I was quite good at art at school, and that pushed me towards design.

'I've always worked on the peripheries of both architecture and design I guess – which probably says I'm a specialist at neither! I've always been involved with architectural and design or surveying practices – my experience and background is very technical. I'd be the first to say that I'm maybe not the strongest creative designer, but it's great to work with some of the creatives that we've got because you can go through that refining process with them to achieve that great end result. I'm a bit more architecturally led than a lot of people in design. It's that technical understanding; if I see a piece of great design I say 'Great – but does it work?'

'It's really about getting that balance – where the detail supports the balance. That's where I really like to be. I do get involved much more in the stuff you might not see but that still really matters – how you get that duct through a wall! We've done several projects where you can't see the technical complexities of what's gone on – and that's really cool. Sometimes you just need to keep things really simple.'

Well, it certainly works for Clive. Last year he was rewarded by the practice with a Directorship, and has recently led the successful delivery of Southwark Council's amazing new 2,000 person offices (which, we sincerely hope, we can tell you much more about in a



future issue). So what drives BDG's newest Director? 'I think it's just about being fascinated by everything around you,' he suggests. 'I think a lot of designers are. If you're coming at it from a technical point of view I think you almost become borderline obsessive compulsive!'

Ah, so is Clive the sort of person who pulls every device in his home apart? 'I might be,' he replies mock sheepishly. 'You do question things though and you do get involved. You want to know how things work and what they are made of. You become fascinated in how things go together.'

When we ask what fascinates Clive outside of the office, he has to think – but only because, momentarily, he can't think of anything that doesn't fascinate him. 'Golf,' he eventually ventures, 'although I'm sure if I ever started I'd soon be hooked by that!'

We understand that Clive is a keen guitarist, and so decide it is only right and fitting to conclude our conversation with that most popular of Mix questions: what is the last album you bought? 'I did buy some Celtic stuff when I went up to Scotland a little while back,' he confides. 'But I got shouted at when I put it on in the car. Other than that, I won't be drawn.'

We can't believe that someone as cool and open as Clive has suddenly, on that most key of questions, denied us. Still, it's always good to keep 'em guessing. Muse? Arctic Monkeys? Tinchy Stryder? The Nolans?... ●