



Smooth Talking

If you forget all about football and cricket and indie music and subtitled detective shows on BBC4 and some other stuff, then our number one obsession of the moment is looking at what's in stuff. We're not talking about bins or other people's houses or anything - we're talking about labels on food and drink stuffs.

We've become strangely transfixed by what we devour, whether it's the salt content in a sandwich, the fat content of a pizza or the dizzying array of additives in just about everything else. We are, then, extremely happy to be in Portobello Dock to meet with the fantastically successful drinks and smoothies brand Innocent - and not just because our hosts direct us over to the giant fridges and tell us to help ourselves.

As we tuck into our Kiwi, Apple and Lime smoothie (that's two of our five-a-day, by the way) our hosts and guides for the morning - Innocent's John Durham and Stiff + Trevillion's Dan Campbell - tell us more about the new Fruit Towers and Innocent itself.



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of our market. Then it was about London, then England, then the British Isles, and now Europe – and in the last few weeks we’ve established ourselves as the Number One smoothie company in Europe. That’s quite a milestone for us.

‘This is really our third office – if you ignore the flats of the three founders back in 1998. We started in a small light industrial unit literally a block away from here – we’ve always been based in West London. Then we spent the last 10 years in another light industrial unit just off the Goldhawk Road – which was great for us. Over that period of 10 years we went from one unit, through to six units. When we first moved in to the first unit the guys thought ‘Oh my God, how are we ever going to fill this space? What have we done?’ Sure enough, as the company grew – we were doubling in terms of revenue and heads – we expanded through to the other units as neighbours moved out.

‘It was all on one level, a glorified shed – great! It was awful from the outside, on the inside it was all about us.’

The move to Portobello Docks – a regenerated part of West London developed by Derwent London – was triggered by two things; firstly, Innocent lease was up in the Goldhawk Estate – and the site itself is now being redeveloped, giving the company a firm date to work towards.

‘At the same time Innocent has continued to expand as a business and has also started to find that it was fighting with a number of elements to make the former space work as an office.

We move on to ask about the fantastic Portobello Docks site and the relationship between Innocent and Stiff + Trevillion. ‘We were slightly incumbent with this site because we developed the whole site for Derwent London,’ Dan reveals. ‘Off the back of that relationship we were put in the frame for a limited competition that these guys ran to find the architects that they wanted to work with to fit-out the building.

Off the back of that process we started working with Innocent.’

‘We worked with the pretty simple principle,’ John continues, ‘that we liked Derwent as a potential landlord, we trusted their views, they recommended Stiff + Trevillion as great guys to work with, and we obviously liked the building we had just become involved with. So it seemed to be a natural coming together of all those things – why not work with the same guys to make some changes.’

▶▶▶▶▶ For those who don’t know the now near-legendary story, Innocent was founded by three Cambridge graduates – Richard Reed, Adam Balon and Jon Wright – who were, at the time, working in consulting and advertising. In 1998, after spending six months working on smoothie recipes and £500 on fruit, the trio sold their drinks from a stall at a London music festival. People were asked to put their empty bottles in a ‘YES’ or ‘NO’ bin depending on whether they thought our intrepid trio

should quit their jobs to make smoothies full-time. At the end of the festival the ‘YES’ bin was full, with only three cups in the ‘NO’ bin. So, famously, they went to work the next day and resigned.

‘That story’s absolutely true,’ John confirms. ‘The three ‘NOs’ were from their mums I think! 12 years in, the growth has been pretty phenomenal. We’re a very different company now in terms of size and scale from the one that was started in West London. Back then that was really the size

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»»»»»»We did, however, check with them that they weren't going to be too precious – because from the outset we looked at this as a lot more than just a fit-out and knew that we would want to make some pretty significant changes. We had to establish whether they were really up for it and that they weren't going to be too straight corporate.'

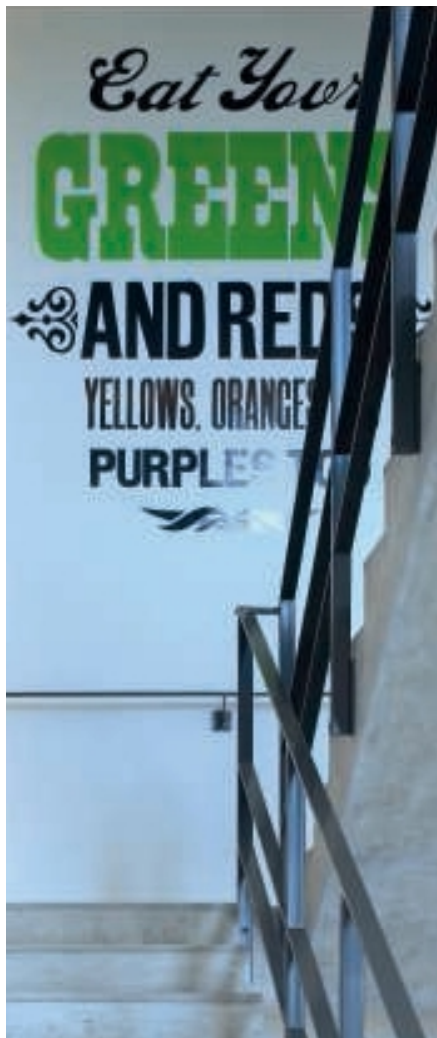
'I think one of our guys said, 'If anyone's going to screw up this building, it might as well be us!' Dan grins. 'It was a fabulous opportunity for us, obviously. To work with someone like Innocent is a great opportunity anyway, but the nice thing about this is it's closed the loop for us as well. We've taken this site from what it was originally – it was formally the Virgin headquarters and we re-masterplanned and redeveloped the entire Grade II listed site speculatively for Derwent – and to now close that loop and fit-out this building is great. It's very satisfying and a great story for us. Now you have this amazing site – not only this building, but the combination of the other existing buildings and the great mix of new tenants. This area of the borough needs regeneration and hopefully this site will act as something of a catalyst for this entire area.'

The 24,000 sq ft Canal Building – the new Fruit Towers – has been developed to reinforce the work and office culture established at the previous Innocent offices. The design challenge was to find a way to transfer the company's horizontal work culture into a six storey building. This has largely been achieved by the large open communal space on the ground floor, furnished with picnic benches, booths, table football and an archetypal English red telephone box. This space is large enough for the whole company to gather together – which happens at least once a week – and is positively buzzing throughout our visit.

This communal space was created by forming a large structural opening between the ground and first floor office areas. The heart of this space is a large, open 'family kitchen' where food and drink are provided for Innocent's people – and any visitors, both formal and informal (the company

actually welcomes and encourages us smoothie punters to come in and take a look).

Product development kitchens are given pride of place, situated behind large sliding oak framed glazed doors visible from the entrance and communal areas. The retained



section of first floor slab has been utilised to create an upper tier of meeting rooms that, whilst separated, remains very much a part of the main space. Alcoves and small rooms peel away to the sides providing facilities such as a library and informal work areas.

Innocent's main office spaces occupy the upper four floors. Each floor provides an

open plan office environment, furnished with bespoke Tom Dixon (a Portobello Docks neighbour, incidentally) work benches placed on Astroturf flooring, set around communal breakout spaces and clusters of meeting and quiet rooms. The Innocent brand, just as it is in the lower communal areas, is provided by the products themselves. It's actually quite hard to put into words, but the entire building simply feels Innocent. There is a continuity throughout the offices that smartly reinforces the company brand identity.

The top, fifth floor, contains a large communal meeting room, which doubles as a yoga suite, and a roof terrace which, we are told, is enthusiastically utilised for Friday evening drinks.

The fundamental principles of the space were to keep things open, mix people up and keep them close to each other, whilst also giving them space to escape. The result is a natural, creative buzz throughout.

Stiff + Trevillion has worked hard to preserve this personality and attitude, but has also sought to evolve the aesthetic to allow the company to 'grow up innocently'.

As is so often the case, we are woefully short of space to say all we want to about Innocent, Stiff + Trevillion's perfectly judged scheme and indeed our fantastic morning at Portobello Docks. It's not an easy thing to create a functional working environment that makes you want to smile – without becoming clichéd or gimmicky. The project team here has done just that – and a great deal of praise must also go to the guys who inhabit the space. The culture here is brilliant. Let's face it, any company who takes booking the barbecue as seriously as they do meeting rooms deserves plaudits.

Behind all this is the BREEAM 'good' building award, the dual circuits, the recycling facilities and the mixed mode cooling. Just like those three Uni mates envisaged 12 years back, Innocent works, as does its new home.

If we were the type of magazine to wear suits and ties and what have you, we'd have taken them off by now.

And we're healthier with it ●

essential ingredients |

Client • **Innocent Drinks** | Interior Design • **Stiff + Trevillion** 020 8960 5550

Systems Furniture • **Tom Dixon** 0207 183 9737

Astroturf • **Tiger Turf** 01299 253966

Hard Flooring • **Freudenberg** 01455 550000 / **Altro** 01462 489516

Lighting • **Modular / Davey Lighting / Tom Dixon**

Wall Tiles • **Original Style** 01392 473000

Fabrics • **Kvadrat** 0207 324 5555