



Calling card

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For Dojo's Bristol hub, BDG and Tollgard Studio create a workplace centred on art, artistry and place.

Image on previous page:
The underside of the statement staircase with soft seating with breakout space

Below:
Seating arranged for lecture presentations

“The reception is like a piece of art,” says Staffan Tollgard enthusiastically. The creative director of Tollgard Studio is referring to the entrance of the contact centre and training hub for technology company Dojo in Bristol, over two floors of the EQ building near Temple Meads station. This is the latest project where his residential design chops have been paired with the workplace expertise of BDG architecture + design. Back in that reception, with its daybed, oversized lamps and rounded, highly stylised seating and brace of coffee tables, it certainly does have a certain still life quality to it.

Tollgard plus Adam Childs, BDG’s creative director, have both travelled to give a tour of this, their latest creative collaboration, the two practices having successfully worked together previously on the headquarters of Dojo London office in the Brunel building in Paddington.

Childs continues the art theme. “There’s a dream-like quality to this watercolour piece here,” he says, indicating a piece by Will Barras behind the reception desk. “There’s scenes he’s depicting here of life and memories in Bristol.”

These local references were key to bringing the local area in, Childs explains: “We picked four different artists: Oshi, Andy Council, Epod and Will Barras, with four very distinct styles to tell multiple stories to connect the people here.” While elements such as the wooden flooring and the desking are the same as in the Brunel building, the brief here from Dojo COO Justin Haines was to create a contact centre that didn’t look like the usual typology, but instead create “a nice cool office where people will be happy taking calls,” Childs says. Finding a place to take those two fifteen-minute breaks and a lunch hour within



the working day was also key, hence the plethora of places to decompress or gather. These include a large table by Oshi, which features the artists signature as layered compositions next to the coffee bar – booth seating in caramel flanked by green tiles and, further along the floor, Ligne Roset seating in jewel tones of emerald and sapphire. The portrait of a woman by Epod stretches down from the sixth to the fifth floor. “It’s almost as if the art was here before the architecture,” Tollgard says. BDG’s insertion of a staircase is no slouch in the style stakes either, a sleek red and timber affair takes one downstairs to the Customer Immersion Zone. “Training was also very important, so an area where they could explore role playing was crucial,” Tollgard continues. Here staff can get to grips with the very terminals Dojo customers are dealing

with. Just as the presentation area on the upper floor is flexible enough to host a product demonstration, a film night or a Christmas party, so the space here can be easily transformed into a restaurant, a florist or other real-life scenario to further encourage empathy. Generous behind-the-scenes storage and stackable furniture are both key to the space’s versatility.

The contact centre workstations have an abundance of lockers. Staff rotate which seat they’re occupying on a weekly basis and the 7.5 hour shift patterns cover early mornings to early evenings with some technical support available later to serve Dojo’s 126,000+ businesses. That means there’s definitely the requirement to have that reassurance of somewhere to put their belongings.



“It’s almost as if the art was here before the architecture.”

Left: Reception area and front desk with watercolour mural

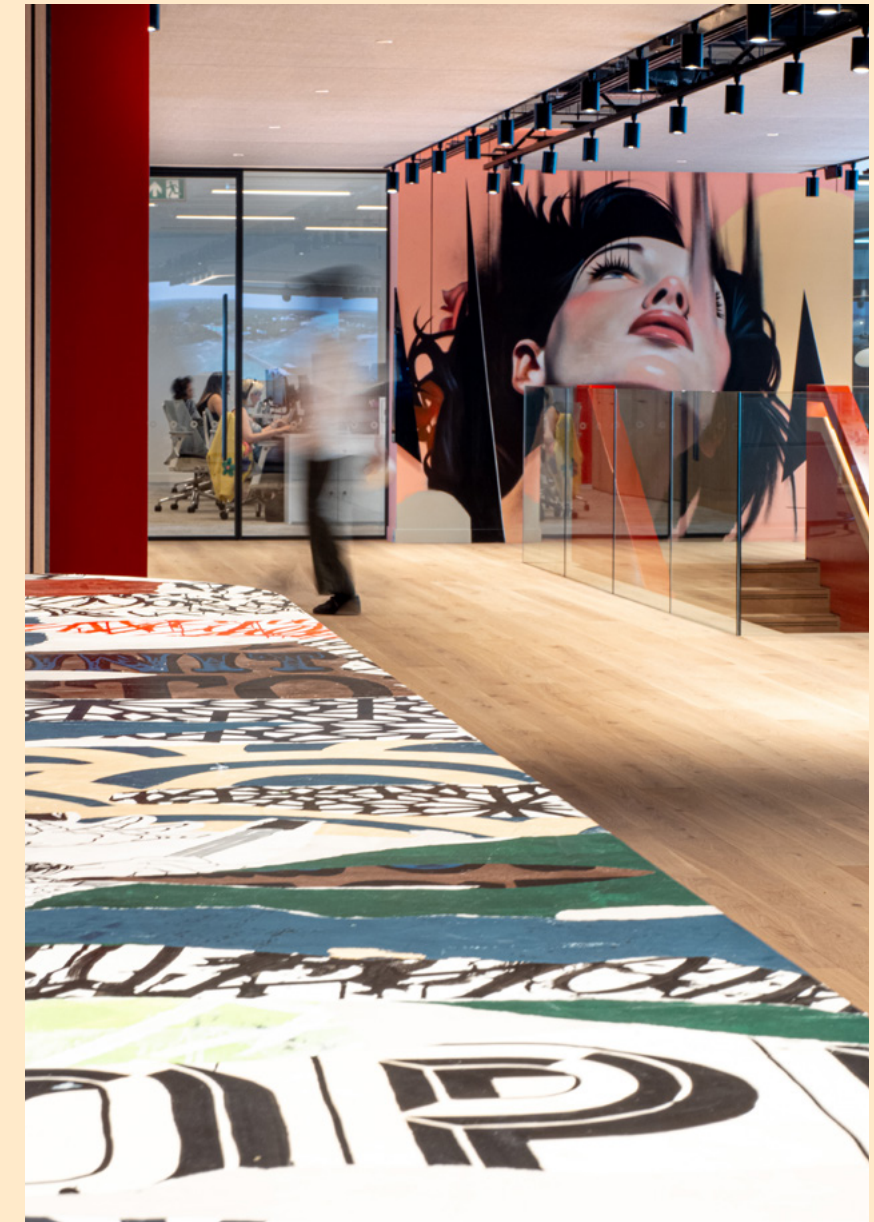
Centre: View from the top of the staircase

Right: Street art-style murals are commonplace throughout



Acoustics are crucial too, taking calls by its nature being a noisy business. To this end, there are acoustic wall treatments in both fabric and timber while the planters in between the banks of desks (over 400 in total) also provide a sound absorbing divide. But, says Childs, they are deliberately positioned at a height to be a “buffer, but not a visual divide”.

Walking down to one end of the building, there is a ‘tall zone’ of high stools and room to have standing meetings plus Vitra’s Dancing Wall, another element replicated from the Brunel building, to display information or write ideas. Individual high back chairs placed along the perimeter provide a moment of calm while one corner of each floor is given over to a cluster of them together. “It’s a place where you can be alone together,” says Childs. Here you can see Bristol landmarks such as Temple Church – colloquially known as the ‘wonky church’. “We thought about where the best views are and if we could make those available to everyone,” Childs says. This opportunity for respite is all part and parcel of the approach to wellness. There is also a mother’s room and a faith room, and efforts have also been made to cater for neurodivergence in terms of variations possible in lighting and acoustics.



Below:
Furry friends
welcome at
Dojo Bristol

The desking is punctuated with various permutations of meeting space from phone booths to one-on-one meeting rooms to multiple-person gathering places. Meeting room names take their cues from local landmarks such as Christmas Steps and Avon Gorge, and careful attention has been paid to materiality too. One room has a tactile wallpaper that looks like a painted

industrial wall while another, named the Darth Vader room (a nod to the original actor in the black mask, David Prowse, being a proud Bristolian) has an Op Art-like effect with segments of bright colour.

Perhaps the boldest material gesture is a brace of large meeting tables beautifully hewn from one specially selected tree from Denmark. “We kept the discrepancies as we wanted to show this is the real thing,” says Tollgard, exploring the wood’s grain and grooves as we sit on Vipp chairs placed on a Kasthall rug in the boardroom.

Childs talks about Dojo’s desire for happy people equating to happy customers and that certainly seems to be the case here. The design has carefully considered the nature of the jobs done in this Bristol base, incorporating some vibrant local touches as well as staying close to the Dojo brand.



Flooring

Havwoods
Tarkett
Forbo

Furniture

Knoll
Herman Miller
Vipp
Malte Gormsen
Vitra
Resident
Punt
Emeco
+Halle
&Tradition
Kasthall
Nikari
Ligne Roset
Tacchini
Desalto

Surfaces

Refelt
Kvadrat
Vtec
Londonart

Lighting

iGuzzini
Nemo
AND Light
Rubn
RBW
Anour
VIPP