

The people, the plan, the practice

Gary Bettis, Architectural Director of Dental Design and Planning Consultants Limited, explains how he turned a character building into a state-of-the-art dental practice

A designer's suggestions and recommendations on a project are not simply what dentists or designers find appealing or pleasing. Good quality design is engineered to appeal to your patient. A qualified designer is trained to analyse your professional needs and, with your input and guidance, craft visual expressions of your practice. This skill goes beyond the personal aesthetic and often deals with the psychology of creating an identity and patient perception, and is as individual to your practice as a fingerprint.

This is exemplified in one of our most recent projects, 'Hap Gill SmileStudio', Richmond. The practice has been created for Dr Hap Gill, an established and successful career-driven cosmetic dentist whose patient base includes celebrities and media types.

The dentist

Dr Hap Gill is the founder and director of Smile Studio™. He qualified as a dentist from Sheffield University in 1991 and started work as an associate doing vocational training in Windsor. He opened his first practice in 1997 where he operated as 90% NHS, the balance of his work made up of the odd composite filling or expensive crown.

In 1999 Hap attended an intensive course at the world-renowned Pankey Institute, in Florida. Dentists studying at the Institute are taught to be patient centred, which means treating patients as individuals, taking the time to carefully listen, and dedicating their efforts to eliminating discomfort (both physically and emotionally).

Since his visit Hap continues to promote this holistic approach to dentistry and has been instrumental in introducing the Pankey system to the UK. In October 2007 he lectured to 120 dentists on the subject of creating the 'perfect bite'. His passion for dentistry is ongoing – he is currently writing a book with Simon Riddle 'Teeth for Life'. Hap's speciality is about the aesthetic aspects of the mouth. He is at the forefront of



The sleek black reception desk and storage units are the focal point of the room

modern dentistry and is recognised internationally for his skills in aesthetic and reconstructive dentistry. He teaches these principles to both UK and US dentists. He is in much demand in the media and some of his work has been broadcast on television. He counts a number of celebrities, dentists and their families as his patients, some of who travel from all over the world to see him.

The new premises

Hap had been looking for a suitable property in the highly affluent suburb in Richmond for some time. This beautiful suburb presented him with the right demographic profile. He finally came across a handsome traditional brick building with large metal-framed portrait windows offering stunning views of the Thames.

The location was challenging. Twenty Water Lane was situated just off a main shopping high street and accessible via a steep and narrow cobbled slip road that led directly into the Thames. During particularly high tides the Thames laps against the side of the building just below the entrance, adding to its unique character. The footprint was small but Hap had set his sights on this charming property.

He contacted us in June 2007 for advice and I arranged to meet him at the premises to discuss his vision of converting the building into a cutting edge dental practice. I saw great potential; however the process of converting it into a dental practice would present technical challenges namely: disabled access, drainage and the loca-

tion of the air conditioning system. The existing floor plan was straightforward. The ground floor comprised an open plan office suite, with toilet facilities and stairwell at the rear serving a first floor self-contained residential flat.

Our design brief

Our brief was to create a practice that reflected Hap's commitment to providing the highest level of patient care in a unique environment. He wanted a modern, dynamic, technically advanced dental practice that appealed to his discerning patient base and reflected his holistic approach to dentistry. His accommodation requirements were two treatment rooms, a small Office/Consultation Room, a luxury WC, OPT X-ray room and Sterilisation Room.

Strategy

Exterior

The building was located within a Conservation Area thereby limiting the extent of any exterior alterations. The building shell consisted of solid 13" yellow stock brickwork with three infilled openings within the flank wall at ground floor level. These openings consisted of high level timber windows mounted onto plastered brickwork below. To increase the amount of light entering the premises we made the decision to remove the infill sections and replace them with large 'cirtal' windows that matched the style of the previous windows and conform to Conservation Area law.



Dr Hap Gill, founder and director of Smile Studio™

Design and construction

General layout

To keep construction costs to a minimum it made sense to retain as much of the existing structure whilst sub-dividing the open floor plan. The rectangular footprint presented us with an obvious solution. Visitors arriving at the practice would enter the combined Waiting and Reception Area at the front of the building. The Consultation Room, Treatment Rooms and Sterilisation Room would be located off a main corridor which ran adjacent to the back wall of the property. To deliver the ultimate private experience we incorporated an interconnecting door between the Hap's Consultation Room and his Treatment Room.

In order to facilitate cross infection control hatches were introduced into the walls of the Treatment Rooms allowing access the central Sterilisation Room. To maximise storage within the practice we buried full height cupboards within the newly built corridor wall. We retained the location of the WC at the rear of the premises in order to avoid any major plumbing alterations and associated costs.

Interior décor

We defined the interior using a colour palette of predominantly black and white. This may be considered an unusual approach for a dental practice – our inspiration came from his existing branding and our reading of Hap's personality.

We decided to paint the internal walls in a pure white finish to highlight the light and airy interior. This combined with black elements exuded easy elegance and sophistication. The design is precise, giving the space an orderly appearance that is intended to reflect Hap's commitment to perfection.

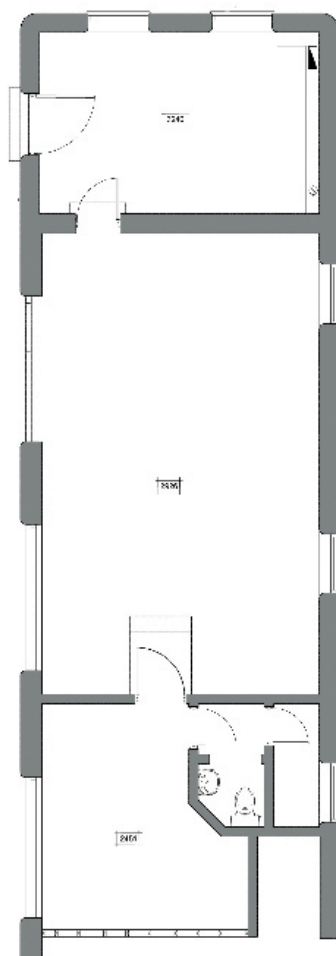
To add depth and variety we have combined matt and glossy surfaces. The sleek black reception desk and storage units are the focal point within the room. The black velvet fully upholstered 'Swan' chairs add a touch of luxury and soften the slick lines of the interior.

We continued the glossy black look into the Treatment Rooms. Black fronted dental cabinets against a backdrop of petrol blue gives these rooms their own distinctive look. Yellow light has been used as an accent to highlight specific areas – the horizontal niche behind reception and the ceiling slots within Hap's Treatment Room.

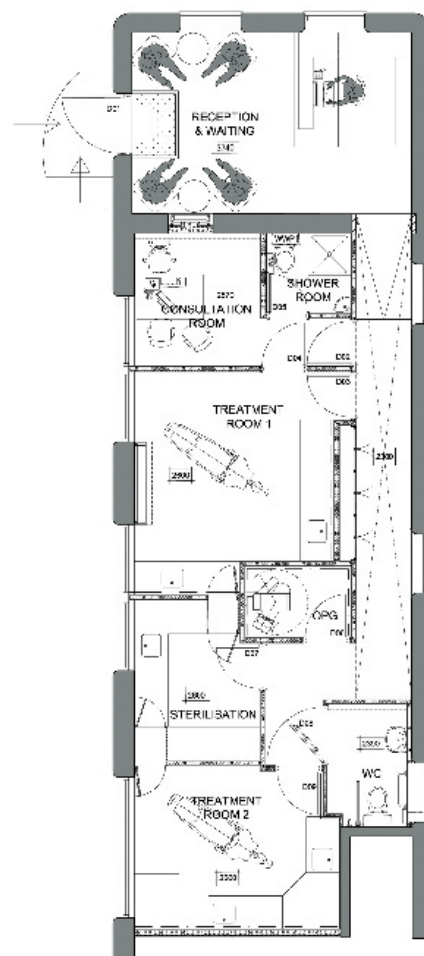
Within the WC the neatness of the horizontal wall tiles contrasts sharply with the sculptural oval sink that sits on a thick timber top. Yellow light spills out from a ceiling recess and is reflected in the mirror behind the sink.

Competitive tendering

Our design scheme respected Hap's budget – we



EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN





involved him in every design decision, from the selection of wall colours to the specification of each door handle.

Detailed drawings and schedules were prepared and issued to a selection of builders. This process, called 'competitive tendering', allows dentists to receive comparative building quotations giving detailed breakdowns of building costs, including labour and materials. Under this controlled and transparent process dentists are able to see what they are getting from each builder and for how much. Most importantly it enables them to compare build prices and select the most appropriate builder offering the best value for money. It also means that builders are unable to cut corners (re-designing the scheme to their benefit), overcharge or 'down-specify' the scheme with inferior quality products.

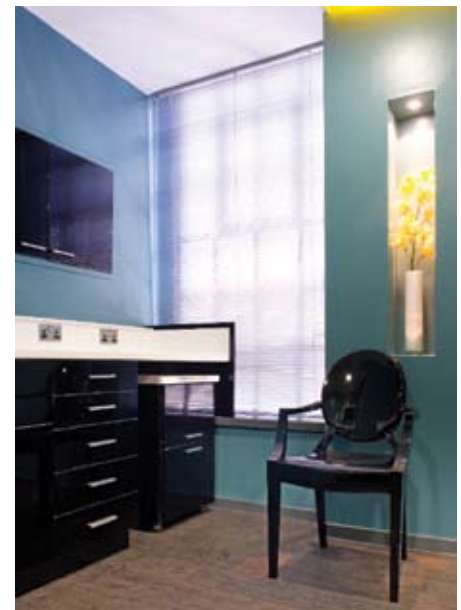
Having a pre-planned design package and a formal contract (with DDPC as 'Contract Administrator') ensured cost-certainty for Hap and a project that was delivered on time and within budget.

The end result

'Hap Gill Smile Studio', Richmond is a practice that is as dynamic and unique as Hap himself. It challenges the pre-conceived notions of how a dental practice should present itself. It is strikingly modern – yet at the same time calm, peaceful and intimate. Its design is all about contrasts: state of the art versus traditional, black versus white, straight versus curving.

Good design is not only about delivering eye-catching and unique solutions. It is about revealing the distinct personality of each client and the message they wish to impart. It is this that creates value in your patients' eyes by providing an exceptional customer experience and in turn ensures future growth.

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