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THE EVOLUTION OF OZDARE EDUCATION

After more than a decade of watching renovation shows like *The Block* and *Renovation Rescue*, it's fair to say that not many of us can resist a good old-fashioned makeover. Just like any house, every commercial space eventually needs a facelift, and nowhere is this truer than in the image-focused world of hair fashion. Australian distributor Ozdare, renowned for its youthful brand bank and always-fresh approach to training the next generation of stylists, have upped the ante with their latest feat: the relocation and transformation of their education headquarters in Melbourne.

It's out with the old and in with the new with this converted warehouse space in Collingwood that perfectly represents Ozdare brands Kevin Murphy, Eleven Australia and Ecoheads. Brimming with natural light, the space has a cool industrial edge and yet feels modern, clean and undoubtedly warm thanks to touches of wood and scattered pops of colour. Above all, the space has heart and puts you in the mood for grabbing a seat, catching up, and while you're at it, learning a thing or two.

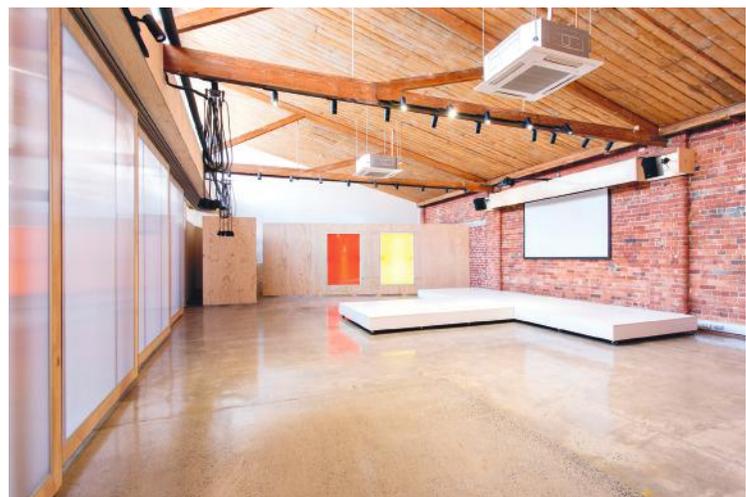
Boutique Melbourne design practice, Ridolfi Architecture, is the artist behind this canvas that has been designed for housing Ozdare's ever-growing education and training programs, photo and video shoots, business presentations, media events, and product launches. And so naturally, this shiny new space was designed with multiple functions in mind, and features panels inspired by Japanese Shoji screen doors that open up or minimise interior space depending on the occasion. "The spatial inspiration for the Academy came from 'Ercolano' in Italy, where big scale ancient ruins include an infinite number of different spaces," Ridolfi elaborates. But to be perfectly clear, there is nothing archaic about the new Ozdare Academy.



Amongst the seriousness of seminars, tutoring and learning, the space has an evidently youthful aesthetic, and appears to play on the ever-growing trend of creative workspaces pioneered by super-companies like Google. You won't find any cubicles or grey carpet here, with the Academy exuding a clear intention to balance education with plenty of fun and a little unwinding. Ozdare's aim to inspire and encourage creative thinking in those attending the Academy was the priority from day dot: "We wanted to create somewhere people wanted to come back to," says Rob Gattuso, Brand Director for Ozdare. And with one look at the built-from-scratch headquarters, they have hit the nail on the head.

Gattuso explains that the new education facility was built to not merely fill a desire for a more beautiful space, but to solve the problem that every business wishes they had: Ozdare had completely outgrown their old headquarters. With the new Academy spread over two levels, it doesn't take a genius to see just how much Ozdare education has expanded over the past few years. "The Academy is a space which is three times the size it was previously. This has meant the sessions can now hold more people and attendance has also increased three fold. The new space enables a diverse education offering including seminars, shoots and a space where clients can be creative," Gattuso says.

Since its opening late last year, the Ozdare Academy has already housed countless events, both hair and non-hair related, including photo shoots for Kevin Murphy and Eleven Australia, the American Crew All Star Challenge event, shoots



for the AHFAs, and the New Balance International launch, streamed live to New York. On the agenda for 2015 is a multitude of education sessions for Ozdare brands as well as business seminars lead by Antony Whitaker.

The youthful brands at Ozdare lend themselves to education that has a fresh and modern approach, where constant innovation is key, and where sharpening skill sets, pushing the boundaries of creativity and defining and redefining what it means to be a hairdresser is the pulse of the brands' belief systems. This weaves its way through the educational calendar which includes workshops on men's cutting, new cut and colour collections, editorial styling and long hair workshops.

The intensive education and especially the lengthy apprenticeship program in this country mean that Australians continue to produce some of the most competitive stylists in the world, something that became all too clear at this year's AHFAs, and Ozdare's latest venture represents and solidifies just how much support there is for hairdressers on local soil. "The Ozdare courses are continually adapting to current trends and we offer additional courses to complement standard hairdressing education," says Gattuso. "Ozdare education is not just limited to cutting and styling but also includes programs focusing on business, social media, photography and competition work, providing participants with a more holistic understanding."

It goes to show, sometimes you can judge a book by its cover, because Ozdare's new, larger-than-life Academy is the perfect pairing to its educational lineup. Contemporary, creative, smart, forward-thinking and even green (skylights, anyone?), Ozdare are proving themselves to be the cool kids of the hair world and so naturally, they've thought of everything.

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