

# **australian design review**

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com>)

Home (<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/>) • Interiors (<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/interior>)



**inside** SUBSCRIBE TODAY FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN!

inside  
EXTERIOR DESIGN REVIEWS  
READ THE SPECIAL TRIPLE ISSUE  
INTERIOR DESIGN REVIEWS  
INSIDE



Shares

# All Gussied Up

Dec 18, 2014

share 

Article by Online Editor

---

location – California, US

project – Act 4 Entertainment

design – Rios Clementi Hale Studios

text – Victoria Deger

photography – Dominique Vorillon

It is not often that the term ‘all gussied up’ can be used to denote a house without being disparaging. In the case of Act 4 Entertainment’s new offices, however, the term is aptly applied to the former home of 1949 Wimbledon tennis legend, Gussie Moran, who thrilled audiences with a sportswear range that included ruffled panties (hence the phrase – all gussied up).



(<http://stage.australiandesignreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/gussied-up-1.jpg>)

That said, the 1880s-built Queen Anne style house is far from plain, with Rios Clementi Hale Studios (RCHS) retaining the lively exterior as both an historical testament to the era and tribute to the former owner. Moreover, a streamer-like arrangement of bright perennials has been added to the front lawn, where it serves the community as a pedestrian-friendly, changing work of art.

The interior is high modern at its very best and, as it should be, given the calibre of client, his art collection and the design studio. Act 4 Entertainment is effectively owner David Johnson's vehicle for supporting social action. He is currently serving as Chair Emeritus of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) and it was under his co-chair that MOCA was revitalised, reorganised, newly directed and made debt-free, thanks to Johnson's raising of an endowment of more than US\$100 million.





(<http://stage.australiandesignreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/gussied-up-2.jpg>)

The collection housed in the offices is curated by Johnson to include significant work from Jenny Holzer, Sterling Ruby, Catherine Opie, Tim Rollins and K.O.S., Jonathan Monk and Lawrence Weiner – in short, an über wish-list of contemporary art. Add to this heady mix, the designer, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, which in 2007 was the recipient of the American Institute of Architects California Council's Firm Award – the organisation's highest honour – and the pattern for excellence emerges. The designers, encompassing architect, interior designer, landscaper and project designer, were tasked with creating offices for a multitude of needs within the single aesthetic of 'art gallery', without overly interfering with the historically relevant details.

RCHS senior associate, Aimee Less, explains: "Not only historically relevant, the house is very well-known, so we looked at how we could fuse the historic and contemporary in a streamlined way that would bring the art collection forward in the house." This was quite a difficult task given the plethora of small rooms making up the Queen Anne interior.



(<http://stage.australiandesignreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/gussied-up-4.jpg>)

“The house was very cluttered and dark, with spaces chopped up into less open spaces, so we looked at how to open the space up. [We wanted to] keep all the architectural detail, but declutter the environment to show the best parts of the structure,” says Less. This was further compounded by a multitude of line, form and features comprising: fireplaces, fireboxes, decorative mouldings, chair rails, newel posts, balustrades, spandrels and panelling. Where the exterior has been kept within boundaries of its historical period with a deep grey, the interior fuss has been visually removed by an overall bright white. It is, however, not a palette of white, but a constant shade realised in various materials, including glass, paint, laminate and Caesarstone.



Effectively, this allows the decorative forms to recede without interfering with historically significant elements. The fireboxes, for example, have been covered in white painted glass. An art museum quality lighting system has been installed throughout further highlighting white and, of course, the artworks.



(<http://stage.australiandesignreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/gussied-up-3.jpg>)

The original stained American white oak floor has been retained as a dark backdrop that is at once neutral and pleasingly tactile and warm. It also works exceptionally well with the bold choices RCHS has made, such as the reupholstering of four low-slung chairs from Johnson's private collection in Missoni's Fuchsia Shadow for the small meeting room. A round table, Big Trunk, by John Beck provides a fulcrum to the grouping, while MOCA-exhibited Sterling Ruby's 2008 painting *SP20*, is superbly placed at centre stage.

Having made an initial appearance in the foyer as upholstery for the bench seating (Canberra), Missoni fabric is again used for a pillow in Johnson's executive office, where the hot Arlequin pattern buzzes against the orange Arne sofa by Antonio Citterio, for B&B Italia. The sofa with a pair of Arne Jacobsen Swan chairs (Fritz Hansen) in deep plum (Divina from Kvadrat Maharam), define the relaxed portion

of this expanse, while a Gallotti and Radice Raj coffee table and designed Elios Simplice side tables by Antonio Citterio, for B&B Italia provide a visual core and edge softening tactic respectively. The room, however, is then further expanded by a large Roche Bobois desk and Eames boardroom chairs in a lively orange (Holly Hunt Leather). Presiding over this group is a four-panel inkjet work, *Untitled (Target Areas)* 2008 by Eide Einarsson.





(<http://stage.australiandesignreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/gussied-up-5.jpg>)

The conference room continues the introduction of colour through Eames Aluminium Group chairs (Herman Miller) upholstered in Schumacher leather in black, dusk and a custom fuchsia. The large square glass Judd table designed by

Oscar Buratti and Gabriele Buratti for Acerbis expands the colour of the chairs further for being transparent, while a blue, India Mahdavi designed, Vera Cruz table, for Ralph Pucci International, adds an element of quirk. Grounding the whole is *Untitled #54* by Blake Rayne and a fabulous 2006 collage and mixed media work, *Untitled*, by Josh Smith.

Cohesion of the highly contemporary interior aesthetics of the main and carriage house is delivered via a private courtyard, which functions as a sculptural form. Ostensibly a large (five-square metre) marble plinth that floats above a recessed water feature, the terrace is arranged with Richard Schultz's 1966 collection of furnishings in a fashion that suggests a sculptural garden. This aspect is brought home by Jonathan Monk's 2007 sculpture, *Complete Incomplete Open Cube (with inside resting on outside forever)* and Lawrence Weiner's *All The Above* textbased artwork on the outer wall of the house. It is this ability to converge such disparate aesthetics, in a way that is not only seamless, but reads as a deliberate starting point, that makes RCHS so richly deserving of its accolades.



## Conversation ● 0 comments

---

Add to this conversation

### LATEST COMMENTS

Kengo Kuma to chair international design competition for a sacred space

INSTAGRAM - @ausdesignreview  
(<https://www.instagram.com/ausdesignreview>)

Jesse Lockhart-Krause: This is a paid competition. 60-120€ per team. I won't be entering this competition due to this reason.

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com?p=75055>)

### Preach Café by De Simone Design

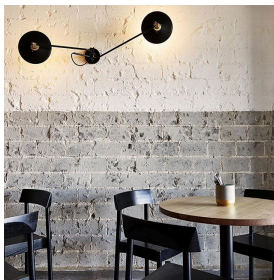
Roman: Looks great, if the food matches the surrounds it will be an experience not to miss.

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com?p=74937>)

### Building a place of welcome: the Guesthouse

Anonymous: Wow, very impressive work! The open day was extremely enjoyable too and had a wonderful atmosphere!

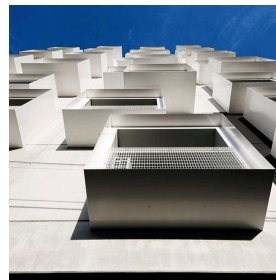
(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com?p=70028>)



(<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bs5LwAix3p>)

234 Likes

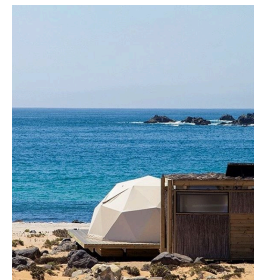
3 comments



(<https://www.instagram.com/p/BBo8MwVAn>)

138 Likes

1 comments



(<https://www.instagram.com/p/BBo8MwVAn>)

118 Likes

0 comments

About

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/about-us/>)

us/)

Advertise

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/advertise/>)

Contact

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/contact/>)

Sitemap (/sitemap.xml)

Terms

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/terms-conditions/>)

conditions/

Privacy

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/privacy-policy/>)

policy/)

Disclaimer

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/disclaimer/>)

Log In

(<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/log-in/>)

all content©2016