

# Gentrification within a Fitzroy warehouse

Rawness was part of the charm in this makeover, writes **Stephen Crafti**.

**T**he inner city is quickly being gentrified with new housing developments.

Boutique-style apartments, townhouses and infill housing form part of the mix. Milieu Property has been instrumental in this gentrification process.

When it bought a late Victorian warehouse in Harrison Lane, Fitzroy, a stone's throw from Nicholson Street, it decided to convert the red-brick two-storey building to studio-style offices for creatives.

Architectural practice Therefore Studio, which occupies one of the offices, designed the fit-out. "This part of Fitzroy is still fairly raw, as was the warehouse," says architect Alex Lake, director of Therefore Studio.

"We chanced upon the space after emailing a few people that I was looking for a new office - something that was fairly simple, but light," he says.

Milieu Property travelled to Tokyo and saw numerous creative ateliers where amenities, such as a kitchen, were shared.

"That model wasn't entirely



suited to this building, as the building is split over two levels and is only 200 square metres in area (100 hundred square metres on each floor). We could see the potential for smaller, more self-contained studios."

Handed the brief to transform

the warehouse, Therefore Studio literally gutted it and created new openings, internally and externally.

While the original timber trusses and stable-like door were retained, a floor-to-ceiling picture window was inserted into the western façade to frame the ivy-



The warehouse, left, was gutted and new openings created; as well as a studio-style conversion, above.

covered wall in the courtyard.

"The 'bones' of the warehouse were there. It was the interior that needed most attention," says Lake, who inserted glass-walled offices in the design.

Pale grey rubber floors (upstairs) and the original concrete floor appears in the kitchen below.

"I wanted the spaces to feel like ateliers rather than having a corporate feel," Lake says.

At ground level are three studios that connect to the central kitchen. Granite benches and oak joinery were refashioned from one of Milieu's display suites (for an apartment development) by Flack Studio.

With new glass doors leading to the cobblestone courtyard, the outdoors becomes as much the focus as the interior spaces.

So those using the warehouse, including Therefore Studio, web developers and a corporate motivational speaker, can enjoy using the shared amenities as though they are their own.

Originally designed as a cordial factory in the late 19th century, the warehouse, one of three that formed the development, is now broken up into five studios, varying in size from 25 to 55 square metres.

Lake's studio, the largest and on the first floor, features workstations and a high trestle-style bench for informal meetings and displaying plans.

Open steel shelves add to the minimal aesthetic at this office and the ground floor studios feature original highlight windows.

A shared meeting room, framed in glass, links the two studios on the first floor, as does a small kitchenette.

"The studios are relatively modest in size, but there's a sense of transparency that allows you to see from one side of the warehouse to the other," Lake says.

The approach to these studios is via a heavily-graffitied bluestone laneway.

Ideal for young creatives arriving at work on their bikes, or via the nearby tram, they don't come with off-street car parking.

"The environment is still fairly gritty, but that's part of its charm," Lake says