

McGREGOR CHARBONNEAU DESIGNS THE BULLDOG GROUP

... the upstart communications firm
discovers its new office
is its best marketing tool.

(Below) The state-of-the-art electronic design studio wanted to present a professional but relaxed atmosphere to its clients. Here, a lounge with bar provides artists or clients a chance to regroup or brainstorm.



Photography by Robert Burley/Design Archive



(Left) The creative studio, located at the back of Bulldog, offers a view of the landscaped terrace (beyond the glazing) and is positioned to comfortably accommodate future growth into an adjoining space.



(Above) The client agreed to abandon a finished ceiling in the space and, instead, purchased special dimmable lighting with the saved funds. The reception area bench seating is constructed of natural, raw, high-density construction board with a clear lacquer finish, and is wire-supported with the use of toggle bolts.

DESIGN TEAM:

LYNN MCGREGOR, YVONNE CHARBONNEAU

BUDGET:

\$18 PER SQUARE FOOT

LEATHER BENCH SEAT:

LOUIS INTERIORS

LINOLEUM FLOORING:

NAIRN ARMOURFLEXHAND PAINTED WALL FINISH: ETK PAINTING

LIGHTING CONSULTANT:

EUROLITE

MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS:

LEIPCIGER KAMINKER MITELMAN AND PARTNERS INC.

CREATING FOR TORONTO'S CREATIVE

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lients say that this office epitomizes what they're looking for both in terms of creativity and organization and seriousness and credibility,” says Christopher Strachan, the founding partner of The Bulldog Group Inc. Since its modest beginnings in 1991, the full-service marketing and communications company has grown to include two other partners, 18 Toronto employees and two associates in New York City. Much of Bulldog's expansion has to do with the way the company offers services typically unavailable through one shop. Bulldog's clients include Northern Telecom and Apple Canada. (They designed a multi-media kiosk that introduced the Newton computer at Toronto's Pearson International Airport.) “Our ability to integrate traditional and electronic media,” says Strachan, “gives us a price and creative advantage. Our people can work from graphic design to video to multimedia.”

It was the design of the new offices, completed last spring, that clinched an important contract to work with The New Media Group at Apple U.S. on its identity and promotion. Impressed with Bulldog's integration of its own graphics, in-house video and overall office design, Apple U.S. agreed to

sign on the fledgling company. “The design had a major and dramatic effect on our business,” asserts Strachan.

“In a million years we never would have guessed the impact that the design has had on our business and our clients”

After a two-hour briefing with the partners at Bulldog, Lynn McGregor and Yvonne Charbonneau of McGregor Charbonneau Design Consultants Inc. went away to meditate on a suitable design concept. They knew that the new, 3,000-square-foot offices should offer something warm and organic to counter the high-tech nature of computers. A palette of warm natural tones was composed. The reception area bench seating

was constructed of natural high-density construction board with a clear lacquer finish, and the same material was used for most of the millwork. For budgetary reasons, the client agreed to abandon a finished ceiling in the space and, with the money saved, purchased special dimmable lighting. The creative studio is an open, friendly space animated by graphics computers, plus assembly areas and designers working against deadline, encouraged by their favourite tracks of music. “Some briefings,” notes Strachan, reflecting on the relaxed atmosphere at Bulldog, “take place at the kitchen where we can look over press sheets or film when it comes back.” Other meetings are convened informally in the lounge area next to the offices of the creative directors so that all team members in the studio may easily contribute their thoughts. The deck is reserved for barbecuing.

For the future, there are plans to expand at Bulldog and, says Strachan, “there would be no question that McGregor Charbonneau would do it.” As well, there is work to be had at the firm. “We're always looking for designers who are very comfortable in computer design,” says Strachan, adding: “We're desperate for writers.” ■