

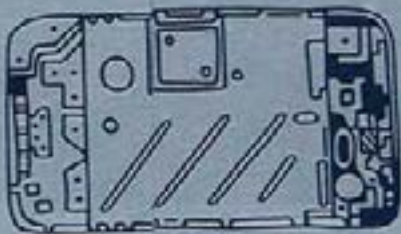
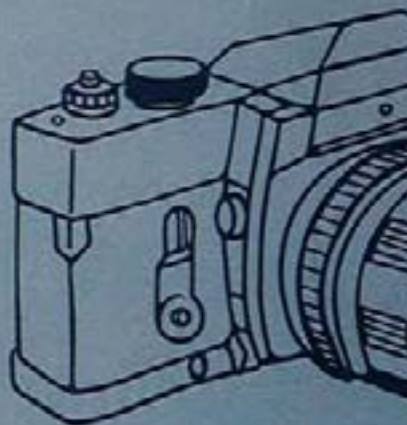
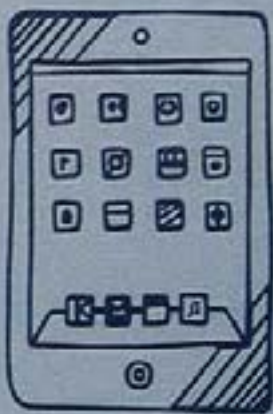
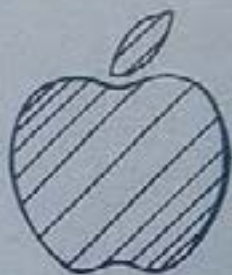
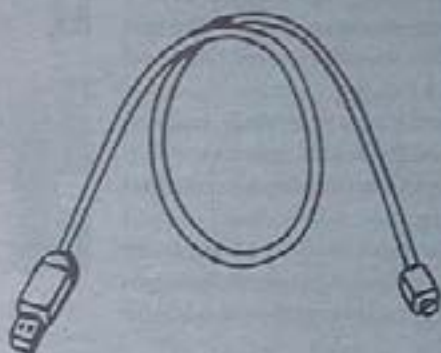
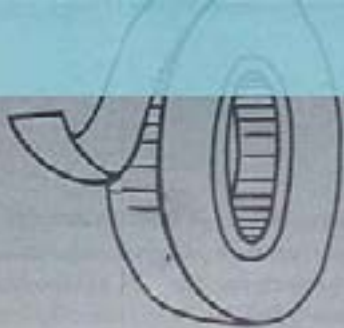
PROJECT N° 003

DUCT TAPE WORKSHOP

Nestled in the juncture between craftsmanship and gadgetry: a digital repair shop undergoes a highly eclectic and very hands-on design treatment.

WORDS | FEDERICO MONSALVE | PHOTOS | JEREMY TOTH

PROJECT NAME	Duct Tape Workshop	PROJECT TYPE	Retail and mixed-use
DESIGN	Material Creative	FLOOR AREA	200m ²
LOCATION	Powinity Central, Auckland		



DUCT TAPE'S motto, 'We fix anything digital', implies a certain resistance to the throwaway culture that surrounds so much of today's gadgetry. The company aims to fix things rather than automatically upgrade them and recycle (they sell and trade restored items) rather than dump them - expanding technology's ever-decreasing shelf life.

It was at this crossroads between the quick turnover of new machines and the 'old-school' expectations of longevity that the designers at Material Creative wanted to place the visual experience of this Ponsonby store.

"It was quite hard to marry the two so it made sense to reference this more through the technological side rather than purely materials and layout," says Olivia Harper who, with Toni Brandso, co-directs Material Creative.

"Also, the co-owners, Guang and Jia Han, were completely out of control," she continues with a grin. "Jia especially was so full of energy and great concepts that, every time we met, she had around 10 new ideas."

The most outlandish of them included building a Ghostbusters-styled backpack which, instead of suctioning malevolent forces, would project advertisements for the new



1. (Previous spread) Custom-made wallpaper features tools used in the workshop and a cameo of the owners' dog.
2. Open working areas add transparency to this locale. 3. Handcrafted displays and signage.
4. Retail area.

business. "Guang wanted to stand in the middle of the Queen and Customs streets intersection and project up onto all of the buildings for the passers-by!"

From spirited discussions, some more concepts began to emerge. "We came up with the name Duct Tape," says Harper, who says Material Creative is often approached for early business strategy and helping with the overall branding of small businesses.

The Chinese-born, New Zealand-born owners wanted something intrinsically meaningful to represent their brand - "we explained how in New Zealand people have this idea that anything can be fixed with duct tape," says Harper. "They loved it!"

Initially the Hans wanted something that was modern, while the designers' palette tended to veer toward recycled timbers. They compromised and agreed on the super slick, almost futuristic geometric patterns but incorporating hand-finished oak with brass bead detailing and



neon light. They wanted a large, curved, faceted desk to act as a centrepiece.

"We finished a full concept and drawings and showed it to the landlord and he wasn't pleased at all!" says Harper. "I opened his email and got the shock of my life!" Duct Tape is nestled in between a homewares/linen shop, designer furniture purveyors and an array of cafés and restaurants in the Ponsonby Central complex. The design had to be vetted by the landlord to ensure there was a common visual thread throughout the coveted retail conglomerate.

"We had to redesign and had less than three weeks to do so," says Brandso, "but having those boundaries meant we had to push things more and in different directions."

The result is a mixture of custom-made pieces and second-hand finds, a minimalist, curated mélange of objects and furniture from rescued vintage, French country, a British gentleman's lounge and the textures of 19th-century industrialist through to the slick and modern

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textures of metal panellings – and a touch of neon thrown in for good luck.

There's a conversation taking place between the industrial crafts of the past (such as the canvas and leather aprons and wooden drawers where library catalogues were housed) and high-tech elements of what, at one stage, was what the future was expected to look like.

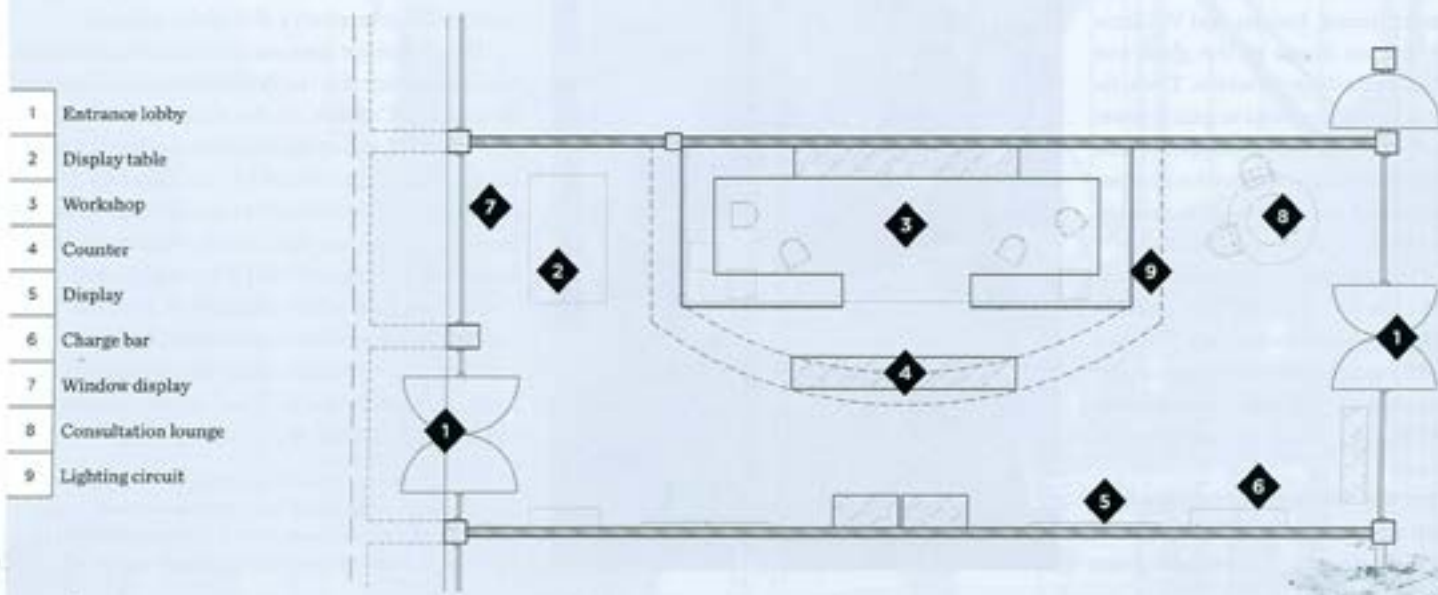
The most immediately noticeable contribution by the Material Creative team was a partition dividing the workshop from the rest of the store. "We wanted the workshop to be visible and central – people being able to see what was going on inside and how the technicians fix things," says Harper.

The solution came in the shape of a curved, metal-piping, like frame on the ceiling. At first sight, the piece, with its rings and decorative wheels (much like large mechanisms from an old clock), combine well with the geometric patterns of metal trusses that make up the internal architecture of this space. There is an air of New York loft mixed with industrial nostalgia.

The exposed filament bulbs screwed directly into the structure hint at something slightly more futuristic/steampunkish. From it hang a series of removable steel frames with steel mesh, which allow for the space to be reconfig-



FLOOR PLAN



DESIGN NOTES

We went to the designers at Material Creative Ltd. with an idea for a unique electronics repair and accessories store. We wanted a workshop that was open plan and industrially designed, and would enable customers to engage with the engineers throughout the repair by seeing everything completed step by step. We challenged the designers to integrate retail and repairs into one unique space.

The Material Creative girls expanded our idea into something that has never been seen before in New Zealand, and presented us with some fantastic and creative concepts. They made sure all our requests were incorporated into the final layout. They delivered originality with a mixture of vintage furniture and industrial steel framing. Throughout the design and fit-out process, Material Creative didn't just meet our needs but also brought lots of surprises, such as steel mesh to hang accessories and a specially designed wallpaper using our repair tools, electronic devices and @yen our dog's pictures! They are full of energy and move really quickly - during the whole project, they carefully managed the budget and kept open minds with all of our crazy ideas.

JIA HAN

PROJECT DETAILS

Client: Guang Han and Jia Han**Property owner:** Ponsonby Central - Andrew Davies**Design practice:** Material Creative.**Design team:** Liv Harper, Toni Brandso, Meng Gong**Builder:** Built Engineer/lighting/ESD:**Project manager:** Liv Harper**Subcontractors:** Vartec Industrial

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9. Gentleman's lounge aesthetic contrasted by the almost 'steampunk' feel of the hanging lamp by Ron Gilad.



and for privacy to be reached by hanging objects on it and ensure workshop tools always have a place to rest.

"This piece was also influenced by old workshops in New York – in particular, Roman and Williams offices in an old loft. An image of the glass and steelwork was what started the direction. Then Jia took off to Bangkok for the weekend to gather some inspiration from all the new retail/shopping malls popping up over there and came back with a number of images we referenced which helped us develop the final design of the workshop," says Harper.

Other touches include the wallpaper (custom-made by Scott Cleary of HMNI), which, reminiscent perhaps of Michael Craig Martin's 1970s' illustrations, quotes various objects and tools used in the trade. "We also included the owners' dog!" says Harper. "We love to personalise things where we can."

Towards the back of the store is a custom 'bar' where anyone can come and leave their precious pixel mirrors to recharge. The fluorescent green



boxes where the phones are inserted and handmade by Material Creative with the Harper's husband (he's a builder, which – helps heaps when she wants detailed jobs done well but in a hurry and under budget).

The diverse list goes on: the main reception is an old sawing table (ex-Boiler Room), handmade by Material Creative. At the back of the store, she finds a sort of industrialist spider – a hanging chair named Dear Ingo created by Ron Gilad for the Institute of Chicago and, luckily, Material Creative found it at a fraction of what it normally costs.

It's busy and wildly creative in part because Tape's eclectic aesthetic maintains a highly thought-out mood rather than a feeling of haphazard or cluttered. "It is," agrees Braun, "in the small details." ♦

5. The industrial palette of the warehouse-like interior is complemented by metal, neon and warm woods. 6. Material Creative's handmade safety

