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*Toni Brandso*

*(Far left) Nice Day's frontage viewed from Durham Lane. (Left) Pink-trimmed signage bolted to the brick exterior heralds this tiny café's trade. (Below) The very simple menu is set in tiles on the back wall.*



## NICE DAY

Small spaces call for daring solutions. Material Creative's **Toni Brandso** reveals how her studio packed strong design shots into an espresso-sized café.

*What was the original space like when you first laid eyes on it?*

We spotted the space on Trade Me, and fell in love. The exposed brick palette, the bay window, its location – nestled at the dead-end of Durham Lane (one of Auckland's only true laneways). It was all too good to be true. The space originally had a timber floor and white Gib wall. The floor plan had been made smaller by a secondary set of steps directly as one walked in through the front door. It was not ideal.

*It's a very small space with an unconventional shape. What kind of challenges did this present and how did you tackle them?*

We sketched quite a few iterations of the plan and came up with a scheme where the barista and the coffee machine would be the first things customers saw when they walked in the door. One of our biggest challenges was designing something unexpected and eye

catching. We decided tiling the prices into the wall would add a touch of humour and cement our place in the lane [Material Creative co-owns this space]. The ceiling is so high in the small space, we knew it could handle a bold colour palette; so we tiled the floors, walls and counter black. Finding a tiler who was willing to tile this small space was a feat; it took us over a month to find the right fit. We wanted the coffee machine to stand out amongst the sea of black so we had it sprayed fluoro pink. We had to give a colour sample (which we didn't have in the office) to the painter, in a rush, so we ended up supplying a Stabilo Pink high-lighter, and the painter did an amazing job of matching it.

*The tiling on the back wall is pretty special...*

One of us mentioned tiling the menu in a brainstorm we had early on, and we all loved the idea and ran with it. It seems to oppose every idea we have of a menu these days, and some

people still can't get their heads around the fact the prices aren't going to hike up any time soon – We love that it polarises people and makes them ask questions: “You can't change it,” they say. “What if the price of coffee goes up; what if you decide to sell something else?!”

*Effective lighting is essential here, not just aesthetically but also practically. You've gone for a statement Douglas and Bec piece that sits right within the space – what was the thinking behind that?*

The space originally had two ceiling-mounted standard fittings; it was just asking for a feature. Funnily enough, we actually had the light already made up for a styling job and it was the perfect fit for the café. We loved that we could give it a home where it would be appreciated. It's also such a statement when you're outside the café looking through the bay window. It draws you into the space. ♦