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NZ BUSINESS



HUNGRY FOR GROWTH

Tim Benest and James Tucker opened their first sandwich bar in the middle of the crash. They will have 13 by Christmas. How did they do it? P36

+ EXPORTING TO SOUTHEAST ASIA P26
NEW ZEALAND'S COOLEST OFFICE P10

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THE OFFICE

THE RESEARCH AGENCY

Here is New Zealand's best office.

With its glossy, black pebbled floor, arresting billboard entrance, billowing sheer curtains and glam fittings and furnishings, it's not hard to see why The Research Agency took the best office and workplace environment title at the 2010 Best Design Awards.

The beautiful swan, on central Auckland's High St, was actually an ugly duckling before the market research and strategy company decided to make it home. Partner Amber Coulter, who founded the firm with managing director Andrew Lewis in 2007 (both pictured here with fellow partner Cannon Bray), says the space looked like a squat from the film *Trainspotting* on first inspection.

Architect Jose Gutierrez's transformation of the space included tearing down walls that were blocking the site's generous natural light, which now filters through The Research Agency's massive logo sitting inside an empty metal billboard frame.

As well as the bold and beautiful, the space is home to the clever and quirky. Gadgets are cannily stowed to retain clean lines in the ultra-glamorous boardroom, for example, where heavily framed portraits of Auckland's founding fathers line the walls — photoshopped to feature modern details like iPhones and tattoos, of course.

— Caitlin Sykes

PHOTOGRAPHY: JANE USSHER