

# The Commercial Project



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# Johnson Partners by YSG

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Words by Aaron Grinter • Photography by Prue Ruscoe



Nefariously hidden away on the second level of the recently constructed Pavilion building on George Street, in the heart of Sydney's financial district, is the new office of executive recruitment firm Johnson Partners. As an ode to the opulent lairs of Roger Moore-era Bond villains, YSG utilises robust materials and earthy tones to satirise the conventional high-rise office.

Upon entry, one is greeted by a chiselled sandstone plaque instead of armed henchmen. Drawing inspiration from Ken Adams's set designs for the Bond films of the 1970s, YSG samples the lavish aesthetic of famous sets such as Scaramanga's island lair – set among sandstone cliffs in *The Man with The Golden Gun* – and the SPECTRE headquarters – burrowed within a hollowed-out volcano in *You Only Live Twice*. Natural stone, rounded timber, linen, velvet, resin and goat hair carpet are expertly utilised to create nonchalant, bordering on irreverent sophistication.

Although luxurious and fastidiously considered, the design resists formality, embracing the irony inherent in recruiting corporate executives from within a villain's lair. The design speaks to a self-awareness and intentionality in the company's vision, the dissolving of private offices and flattening of hierarchical spatiality embodying Johnson Partners's own ethos. Instead, dedicated spaces are open and interactive, with only three enclosed interview rooms (each glazed in black glass to provide privacy for potential candidates).



Crafted from rich materials and tones, the office emerges as a sophisticated and individualistic series of spaces.

Even these spaces blend and unfold into the whole design, the anthracite black, 80 per cent goat hair carpet seeping out of the rooms and up the surrounding columns, speaking to the egalitarian spirit of the company and the accompanying fluidness of the design. Although the broader spaces are open, the design is lightly touched by structure; the epitaphic plaque rests on a semi-permeable sandstone wall, permitting sunlight and buoying the edifice while still offering a buffer for staff working beyond.

Similarly, fenestrated half-moon walls create cushioning around discrete sets, such as the custom-made walnut-framed boardroom table, and an ochre linen curtain eclipses at a moment's notice to conceal private conversations around the limestone coffee table. Users are invited to fall languidly into the arc-shaped banquette lounge that defines the space, the tubular bolsters upholstered in the aptly named 'teddy' fabric providing soothing comfort. The Sahara sand-coloured Tiara Poesia wool carpet creeps up the back of the banquette, echoing this entrancing fluid motif elsewhere in the design.

Rejecting the overbearing fluorescence of typical offices, natural light is abundant, particularly in the workspaces and desks. Other areas, including the interview rooms, dial the lighting back, employing lamps, reflectors and indirect light to create comfortable, intimate settings. This attention to detail is further captured in the furnishings, much of it custom to the project, most notably the rounded triangular kitchen island bench, edged in rainforest-green Gardano quartzite and inlaid with dark green Marmoleum – a synecdoche of the triangular layout of the larger floor plan.

Peak embrace of the Bond-villain lair motif is found in the interview rooms, drawing inspiration from the Drax Industry Space Station in *Moonraker*. The ceiling – lined with vermiculate to balance acoustics – evokes the pitted surface of the moon, shadows cast by the angular light from the generous windows adding depth and texture. The rocky surface sharply hits the night-black walls in a way that makes one feel they are watching the lunar horizon eclipse the emptiness of space beyond. Tastefully futuristic elements scattered throughout complete the scene, including artwork, sculptures and satellite-shaped pendant lights orbiting spaceship-like above.

Plush furnishings, broad gestures and blunted corners abound at every turn, softening one's experience and offering an intoxicating whiskey-noir luxury that is a sharp relief from the sobriety of conventional corporate offices. Whether entering Johnson Partners for a discrete interview or thwarting a devious master plan, YSG's design offers the ideal backdrop, luxurious and bold in equal measure.

