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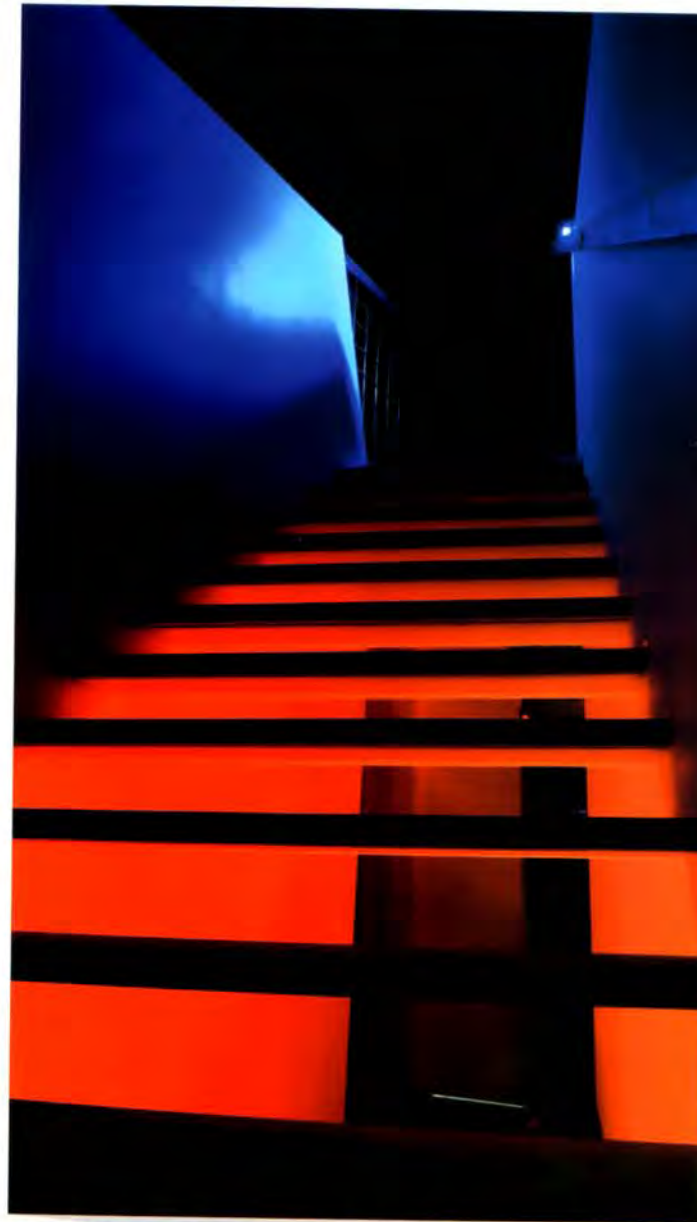
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The use of colour and design has never been used so boldly and so well as in the 5thCorner Technology Lounge, located in inner-city Brisbane. Here in this lounge and bar area, there is a Sonance THX certified, flush-mount surround sound set-up complimented by a 63-inch plasma.



THE *5thCorner* TECHNOLOGY LOUNGE



THIS CUSTOM INSTALLER'S SHOPFRONT IS LIKE SNATCHING A GLIMPSE INTO WHAT FUTURE SMART HOMES COULD LOOK LIKE — IF YOU WANT SOMETHING MODERN, SMART-WIRED, WITH AN EDGE, WRITES **PAMELA CONNELLAN**.

THE OWNERS OF 5THCORNER

Technology Lounge — Marc and Kelly Weijers — set out to create this effect. The lounge is a fully interactive experience for all those who enter, transcending the usual retail environment in many ways.

As you can see from our photos here, the lounge is impressively stylish, showing you just what can be achieved when smart technology teams up with cutting-edge design. Not that everyone would want their home to look like this — but it sure does open up the mind to all the possibilities!

The 5thCorner Technology Lounge includes a home theatre, a meeting room, a bar, three lounge rooms,

a bathroom, and a dining/entertaining room. In each of these rooms you can touch, feel, hear and see exactly what smart technology and home automation have to offer.

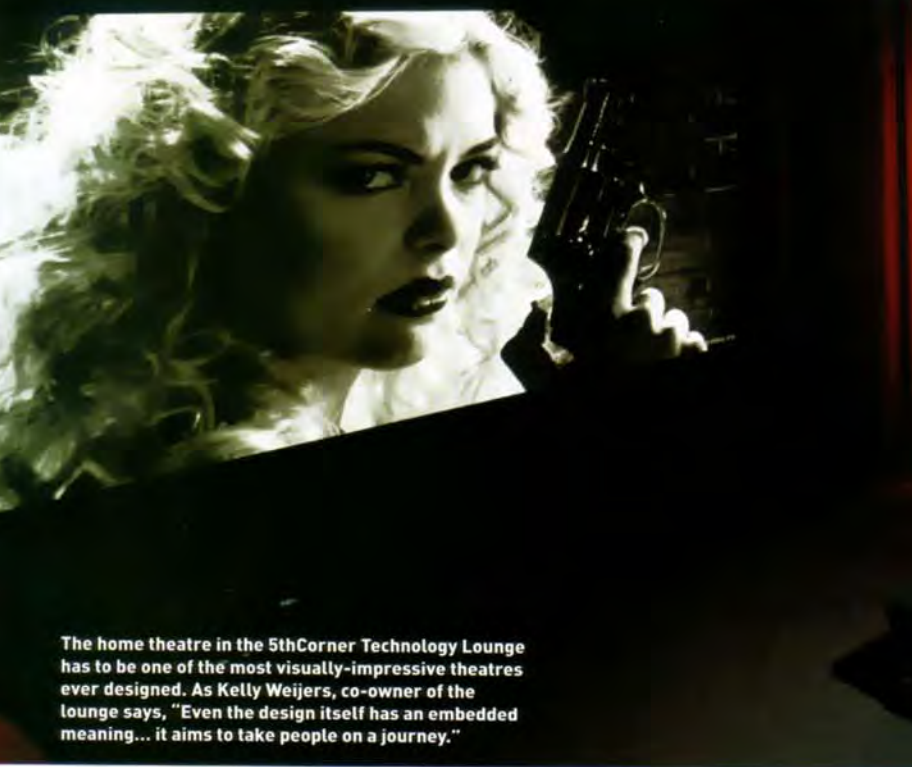
As Kelly Weijers says, "We wanted to create a place for customers to experience the benefits of audio visual and automation products, and also to have a boutique venue for functions and product launches."

Architecturally designed

All 400 square metres of the 5thCorner Technology Lounge is architecturally designed with the end result,

a fit-out that appeals to architects, designers and customers. The company itself provides a range of services to the Brisbane, Gold Coast and surrounding areas including the design, installation and support of everything from home theatres, distributed audio, lighting and home automation, touch screen control, plus security and surveillance systems.

By creating such a distinctive retail space, Kelly and Marc felt the sales process would become more efficient — as customers would be able to easily see, experience and therefore understand the technology available to them, making the decision process simpler.



The home theatre in the 5thCorner Technology Lounge has to be one of the most visually-impressive theatres ever designed. As Kelly Weijers, co-owner of the lounge says, "Even the design itself has an embedded meaning... it aims to take people on a journey."



The meeting room keeps up the theme of smart technology meets cutting-edge design. This room is minimalist in design, but everything is hidden away. With the touch of a button, motorised KEF speakers, a Screen Technics motorised projection screen and a projector lift emerge from the ceiling... plus a 42-inch plasma mounted on a motorised lift rises out of the joinery. Impressive...

"We didn't just want to create a showroom with a stack of technology mounted on a wall. We wanted to create a space that appreciates design, technology and the integration of the two," Kelly says.

"Even the design itself has an embedded meaning... it aims to take people on a journey — from the look of clean lines and a minimalist design in the lounge to the rawness of exposed i-beams and cable tray in the machine room — and of course everything in between," she adds.

For Kelly and Marc, the innovative lounge is not just about showcasing technology but all about "inspiring customers to really get involved in the integration process."

Kelly adds they also wanted to create something refreshing... something that hadn't been experienced before and something that showcased what they did in a "really cool way."

Live the concept

"Furthermore, we live by the concept, that everything you do is self-expression," she says, "and 5thCorner is all about being creative, different and fun — it only seemed fitting that the Technology Lounge oozed this. The fun side really comes into it because we can use it as a venue as well as our own private club... and it's a great way of getting people who previously didn't know about us... in the door and aware of us."

Kelly and Marc's business, 5thCorner, has been going for the past three and a half years but the new Technology Lounge only opened in March of this year. Already, the idea of such a high-tech custom installer space has been a big hit, but when asked if they will expand on this model with more stores, Kelly says they would prefer to concentrate on what they're doing because "it's such a human resource-intensive type of business and therefore not easy to duplicate."

Currently 5thCorner has eight staff, five of whom are in the technical area. Kelly says to get customers in, rather than advertising we focus on building relationships with people: "We do direct mail outs >>



Hidden in the walls are 'Sound Advance' speakers for the absolute in discreetness and a Clipsal DLT switch is used to control both the speakers and the lights for this area. Overall, lighting, home automation, distributed audio, home theatres and security systems — customers are able to try out all of these when they visit the 5thCorner Technology Lounge in Brisbane.



Even the bathroom adheres to the avant-garde style. With 'Soundlite' speakers that look like downlights, an LCD screen mounted behind the mirror, infrared taps and toilets with an LCD screen mounted behind the door so you can keep an eye on the surveillance cameras located inside and around the perimeter of the lounge. Co-owner Kelly Weijers adds, "As a gimmick, we've even got the toilets being flushed with a C-Bus DLT switch."



This is what co-owner of the 5thCorner Technology Lounge, Kelly Weijers, calls the 'Machine Room.' The centralised equipment rack is located here, plus the cable tray runs, fully exposed, across the ceiling. The wall dressed with graffiti also has camouflaged C-Bus and Starserve cabinets, so they can show people what the nuts and bolts of these systems look like.



and a bit of sponsorship. For example, we did the C-Bus lighting control system for *Big Brother* this year and last year. We do a lot of direct marketing to architects though – the key is repetition if you want to reinforce what you do.

"We also have nights where we ask architects and customers around – we did a product launch for Epson recently."

As far as training goes, Kelly says most of their main suppliers are fairly proactive with product training but she says they constantly find themselves working with products they've never worked with before, so a lot of learning happens on-the-job, it's not ideal but that's the nature of the technology industry and custom installation.

"Luckily the guys who work for us are passionate about this stuff, so they are constantly on the web learning about new products as well," she adds.

Kelly says the biggest trend she's seen recently is distributed audio: "I find it hard to do any system now that doesn't include the Sonos Music Distribution System – it's something everyone uses. Allowing music to be piped through the house is one thing, but giving everyone a cost effective way to sort and access it, is the key. There's no doubt the whole digital music thing is just going to get bigger and bigger – I can't wait for a well designed solution that links the music in your house with that in your car."

"Another trend is that people are starting to get savvy – they are stepping away from getting

absolutely everything for their home and more interested in getting what they really want and will use. In the past I think some people have been disappointed with broad solutions not tailored to them, but this is changing. When I'm dealing with architects and high-end customers, I'm finding there is a lot of negativity about this – getting a whole lot of product that you're never going to use. So we really try and focus our systems on exactly what each customer wants – our goal is to have them happy with the end result and therefore getting lots of use out of it so they tell their friends and we get lots of referrals."

When asked how they deal with the box movers, Kelly says: "If people want service, then they should come to us. Our reputation is on the line and we can't afford not to offer great service. The reality is though, you can't do low margin, good service and quality product – it's impossible. You can only have two out of the three – we've chosen quality and service – so naturally the price might not be as competitive as the discount stores.

"We've made the right choice though, in custom installation you're not just selling a box and because of this, we all know how important after-sales service is. Further still, unless you want to be calling out to the customer's house all the time because of product failure... then quality is just as important... so as you can see... it's the price that has to give to make the equation work," she adds. **SH**