

inside

# MY SPACE

**Mark Braddock**

Founder and creative director of Block Branding



PICTURE ROB DUNCAN

**Where did Block Branding start?** It was literally in my parents' pool room. It's been eight years now but over that time it's been a series of different businesses in a way because at the beginning it was just (my wife) Tanya and I. We were in Leederville for a while and employed three people and by the time we left Leedy there were five of us. Now there's 12 of us so our company feels like it's been a series of different businesses. Block Branding does brand development work so it's strategic consulting and execution, design and advertising.

**What were you doing before you started Block Branding?** Tanya and I started business in 2002 when we came back from living and working overseas, mainly in the US, for about eight years where I worked as an art director. I worked with Ogilvy in New York and then an agency called The Martin Agency in Richmond, Virginia. Tanya's background is in interior design and project management.

**Why did you decide to move back to Perth?** We'd move every two years, from Scotland and then to the US and within, and it got to the point in our careers where we were ready for our next step and we had to make our decision on whether we'd be in the US long term or not. We got sick of moving around so

much and not having permanency so we decided to come home and take it from there.

**Why did you choose this spot?** We wanted something that was interesting and some of the raw spaces would just cost too much to make serviceable, so we were just randomly driving around this area looking at another place around the corner and saw a for lease sign on Brisbane Street. It's an interesting little pocket of Perth because it's kind of forgotten. I like that mix of the area and it's not all gentrified and I think that really just makes it more interesting.

**How would you describe your office?** It is quite a bizarre building because it's originally an old Methodist church hall at the back. That's why it's got the bolted ceilings, but at some point in the 80s or 90s they added this block at the front that bears no relationship to the rest of the building, which I kind of like. We had to put a lot of the services in but all I wanted was an open space, not all quiet with cubicles. The area is open plan and we've put a shelf out the back and opened up the kitchen. It has a nice, casual feel to it. We have a lot of paper and a lot of stuff and it needs to be pinned up, so we wanted a space where we could embrace the chaos but at the same time function really well.

**What personal touches have you made?** What I like about the space is that somebody hasn't come in and designed it for us. It has been something that's organically grown around us. Tanya and I have never really wanted a reception that felt like it was a reception desk and it was kind of based on a lot of the places I used to work with in the US. It has a really nice kind of feeling that is like home. All the stuff here is our stuff, it's not stuff somebody else has bought for us. It's really avoiding that kind of corporate idea, as we were really keen to not have that. It's not exactly a dust-free atmosphere and it's freezing in winter but that becomes part of the personality of the business, which I think is really important.

**What's it like mixing family and business?** It's always been Tanya and I from the beginning. I don't think there's been much of a separation in personal life and work, they have blurred together pretty closely. We live five minutes up the road, our two kids go to school in Highgate. We're pretty fluid and mobile. The kids are always running around drawing on the floor, everybody knows the kids and the dog (Lucca). Again, I like it, it's part of what we wanted to do when we moved to Perth. **WB**

Interview: Jess Ruiz