

Sweet Cheil





It never fails to amaze us just how much local information you can find from your friendly taxi driver. It shouldn't surprise us really, after all these ladies and gents of the road are more useful and knowledgeable than any Rough Guide or Wikipedia when it comes to knowing their patch.

darren – surely Chertsey's finest cabbie – is an absolute font of knowledge when it comes to this leafy part of Surrey. In fact we haven't even got into his cab and he's already presenting us with a fine potted history and background to Hillswood Drive – our destination on this sunny autumn morning.

This will make a fine introduction to the feature, we muse.

We've come to Hillswood Drive, Chertsey to see the new UK home of Cheil. The address of Building 3000 is, on first reading, a little imposing – but Darren has everything well under control. We enter Hillswood Drive Business Park, past the grand home of Samsung Electronics UK (of which more a little later) aka Building 1000, and then further along the picturesque drive, catching glimpses of the now empty Foster-designed former home of EA Sports (Building 2000, we presume?) and through to a smart, concealed third building – 3000.

This serviced office building (although – and we mean this in the most positive possible way – it really doesn't look like a traditional serviced office) possesses a spacious, open main reception, and it is here that we meet with the interior designer of the new Cheil space, Malin Lindholm, together with Think Furniture's Tony King and Imperial Office Furniture's Martin Stimpson. Our trio of hosts guide us up to the first floor and into the Cheil facility.





►►►►► We begin by asking about Cheil itself and the background to the project here. 'Cheil used to be based down in the Samsung building,' Malin informs us. 'Cheil is the marketing agency for Samsung, and they quite simply expanded as an agency and so had to move out of that building.'

'There was an initial discussion about moving the entire Samsung organisation across to the EA Sports building, but they were too big and not as well planned, so it was decided to bring Cheil here as a separate organisation, but still of course within touching distance of Samsung.'

Malin, we discover, was appointed as the interior designer, having worked previously with One Agency – a new marketing agency created by Cheil earlier this year. 'I designed their office earlier this year,' Malin tells us, 'and Cheil contacted One Agency and brought me back to this office too.'

So, bearing in mind that this was previously serviced office space, how did it look to Malin on first sight? 'There were a lot of rooms and long corridors here,' she recalls. 'I don't think they were making the most of the natural light here.'

'Cheil wanted a modern, unconventional and unique-looking space – although their main client is still Samsung so there did have to be some degree of corporate design here. They did want something new and bright though – and they really like colour. I think it was quite refreshing for them, as a marketing agency, to step away from Samsung – to create their own identity.'

'The team here were working under the Samsung framework, almost as part of the Samsung brand,' Tony explains. 'They actually do agency work beyond Samsung, although certainly in the European arena they are very much the Samsung marketing

arm and with Samsung now touching so many products, in so many widespread markets, it makes sense to work with Cheil and channel the marketing through them.'

The new office space certainly has its own identity and personality, with – as Malin says – colour very much to the fore. Currently home to approaching 60 staff, some areas of the new Cheil home will, in the near future, be freed up to provide even greater facilities, as the creative and digital team within Cheil is expected to move into London to co-habit with One Agency.

We ask what the big initial challenges were here in 3000. 'Timeframe,' Malin immediately responds. 'The deadline was constantly being pushed. We initially had an extra three weeks, but that changed.'

'The goalposts were moved,' Tony confirms. 'This was right bang in the middle of the summer shutdowns and, from a design perspective, Malin and Cheil wanted to have very nicely designed products, of course – but it did become quite difficult to find such products within this new

timeframe. There were always certain things that they needed to be operational here, but we were able to wait a little longer for some of the other things. From an operational point of view it was imperative that all the benching and the task chairs were all in place, but certain elements – such as the meeting areas – almost became a phase II.'

'That was agreed at quite an early stage,' Malin explains. 'When the client came to us and told us that they had to be operational by this date – some two or three weeks earlier than originally expected, we did agree that we could get them in on time but it would very much be the basics – and everything else would have to be brought in as and when they could be delivered to us.'

We chat about the madness of manufacturers' summer shutdowns – even in this economic climate, which leads us back to Malin and Tony's predicament at having to source and acquire the right products, which would fit the design criteria – and find them quickly. The answer lay right here in the UK of course. ►►►►►





▶▶▶▶▶ ‘I don’t know how many days we spent looking around showrooms,’ Malin continues. ‘I certainly didn’t want to compromise on the design. I’m actually a set designer – that’s my background – and in that industry we turn things around in a matter of weeks, if not days. The whole point there is that the sets are designed to look like something, to look like they work – nothing is permanent. This has to work, and this was a real learning curve for me – working on interiors is very different, and you have to take into account these long, long leadtimes. You can’t push – and I’m used to pushing a little.’

Cue a beautiful British furniture manufacturer. ‘Fast-tracking has always been associated in the UK with low-end product,’ Imperial’s Martin admits. ‘We wanted to turn that on its head, and offer a mid- to upper-end product, but still offer it on the same fast-track that we do with the rest of our ranges. It’s really paying dividends for us. Another hidden aspect is that, with nearly every project, once it is done and dusted, there are always the ‘top ups’. It’s such a frustration with end users to complete a project and suddenly find that they need a couple of extra pedestals, for example, and have to wait four weeks for them! We can by-pass that – and that helps us a lot.’

The Imperial benching system indeed looks pristine throughout the open plan area here at Cheil – and, thanks to the fast-

track nature of the service, the agency was able to operate from them bang on schedule.

‘The advantage of having different phases is that you actually have a chance to consider things – to have a real look at how the space will look as you go along,’ Malin adds. ‘The fact that we had to get the basics in here allowed us to be even more creative as we went on. We did spend a good couple of weeks looking at how we could use materials – could we paint the glass? We looked at how we could work with paint and vinyl to transform the facade manifestations on the glass walls to the meeting rooms, and eventually we had a scenic painter come in. I think it has worked really well.’

The set designer in Malin is coming out here, we think. The paint she speaks of is applied to doors and surrounds, and adds a brilliant artistic, free edge to the space – as well as plenty of colour. Elsewhere, the beautifully landscape surroundings of the environment have been brought inside in the shape of a row of birch trees which line one side of the open plan office, positioned between the fully glazed cellular spaces.

The theme of birch trees is carried through to the dramatic curved wall to the other side of the space, whilst hidden beyond is the iSpa – a funky breakout, coffee and tea point.

Towards the back of the new Cheil home is a series of cool meeting rooms,

which again benefit from Malin’s artistic eye and love of colour, whilst at the other end of the office is a pair of larger meeting/boardroom facilities which, at first glance, carry exactly the same finishes and decoration. It is only when we look again that we see that the monotone scheme has been cleverly reversed from one to the other. Corporate bank it might not be – but contemporary marketing suite, it most certainly is.

As we make our way back through the office environment we see several more eye-catching design touches, including an impressive stepped display facility and some very cool ‘Domino’ breakout tables, complete with tiny switchable mosaic tiles as tops. Malin tells us she saw these colourful tables in a gallery in Berlin earlier this year and immediately wanted to use them for the office space. The tables are designed by designer/artist Thomas Pauz, who custom made them with a selection of colours to suit the interior.

The storage units throughout the space are also custom built, along with the step wall, the reception and the impressive curved wall by the kitchen, by Treend Construction, a construction company with a background in furniture making but also in set builds – meaning they were able to deliver on very short notice.

Our time is up, and we must make our way back to the Big Smoke. Now where did we put Kevin’s number? ●

essential ingredients |

Client • **Cheil** | Main Contractor • **The Interiors Group** 01932 779999
Furniture Supply • **Think Furniture** 0203 0511701

Systems Furniture • **Imperial Office Furniture** 01204 364602

Task Seating • **Interstuhl** 020 7250 1850

Meeting Room Tables • **Sagal** 020 7253 7390

Meeting Room Seating • **Dynamobel** 020 7490 0494

Bar Stools • **Allermuir** 020 7251 8059

Reception Furniture • **Connection** 020 7253 9877

Mobile Storage • **Imperial Office Furniture** 01204 364602

Storage wall • **Treend** 0208 508 8600