

PROJECT

project—Sum of Us  
practice—We are Huntly  
location—Prahran, Victoria  
text—Gillian Serisier  
photography—Sharyn  
Cairns



A photograph of a modern wellness center interior. The room features a long, continuous row of grey curtains that recede into the distance. In the foreground, there is a light-colored wooden bench. To the left, a window with a dark frame looks out onto greenery. The ceiling has track lighting. The word 'Wellness' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

# Wellness

A wellness centre that is as holistically designed as it is conceived, We Are Huntly's latest interior, Sum of Us, is a delight.





Conceptually the wellness centre is far from a six-pack gym. It is also, however, the polar opposite of the coolly clinical.

There is a very fine line being worked through this project to create a space that is warm, human and organic, but also refined. Foundational to this duality is the existing shell of the Victorian terrace, which We Are Huntly (WAH) has artfully curated into the new interior. Granted, functionality has driven the need to manipulate space to purpose within DA (development application) and access requirements, but what makes the project just that touch more gorgeous are the existing elements the designers have chosen to retain. This, and their incredibly light touch.

Conceptually the wellness centre is far from a six-pack gym. It is also, however, the polar opposite of the coolly clinical. Instead, the spaces are elegant and light, with gentle tones and a well-balanced relationship between sparsity and decoration.

Within this scenario, materiality plays a gentle role with subtle tonal shifts and soft pairings, such as with the curved timber veneer counter and timber flooring of the café on the ground floor. Or, the extremely beautiful wall of blue grey paint that uses a gentle ombre effect from ceiling to floor. "We had tradesmen paint large scale samples when we were getting the gradient right. We didn't want the blue to come down too fast and throw the space into shadow," says WAH director, Kylie Dorotic, who engaged artist Chris Waterston to come in from the end of the workday and work through to 6am the next morning to ensure a perfect finish.

This attention to detail and curved form remains a constant throughout with various iterations delivered through bespoke lighting, curved recesses and painted floor motifs. "The circle references the core [stomach muscles] as an icon; its subtle references connect throughout," says Dorotic. Illustrating this subtlety, the separate yoga loft is as simple as a narrow expanse facing a window of glowing light, while the floor is pale grey with a curved form spreading inwards from the window side.

A mirror and barre provide one wall, while a soft grey floor-to-ceiling curtain provides the other. As this is a multipurpose room, the curtain conceals equipment when it's not in use. It is a simple, yet elegant solution that doesn't have the look of functionality, but, rather, continues the residential overtone that pervades the whole.

As the name implies, Sum of Us is the joining of a group of practitioners offering different health modalities: yoga, Pilates, chiropractic, treatments and dietician etc. Their idea was for a wellness centre based on a holistic approach to people's health and well-being. As Dorotic explains, "It's a move away from a typical gym or physio to create a real haven where, when people come in, they feel like they are in an oasis." To this end, graphic design firm Pop & Pac created the branding, which then informed the conceptual frame of the design. "The idea of a sum of parts creating a whole - each space

**previous**—curving forms explore the concept of core. **opposite**—the magnificent carriage lamp was retained as was the cherubim detailing. **above**—hand painted ombre walls and bespoke lighting pieces.



is connected visually so that you get that thread and everything coming together, while each section has its own independent offer," says WAH associate and lead on the project, Charlotte Dethick.

The linking iconography of the circular motif is, however, not a pastiche or thematic token. Instead it is delivered in various forms. In the main reception and café, for example, it has been explored with a bespoke suspended feature light by Brett Coelho (Coelho & Co), who provided bespoke lighting solutions throughout. In this piece, a quartered circle in timber and powder-coated mesh creates shadow and light that shifts diurnally. Also in the café, a solid glowing wall light gives the storefront a visually humming night presence. Within the Pilates area, rooms are subtly divided by the same form as the pendant light, where separated quarters create high mesh arches.

"We're creating smaller zones within that space and framing the view - a subtle barrier that marks the spaces without dividing," says Dorotic.

One of the lovely appearances of the motif is in the practitioner washbasins. Inset with a curved

tile back (Inax, Yuki Boarder, Artedomus) and round light, the basins are elegant and, while not domestic, certainly not utilitarian. "We were very conscious of not putting in your average tap and basin. It's very much on show, so it had to feel beautiful and very much like you are in a day spa - continuing curves of the whole," says Dorotic.

This feeling pervades the house with the retention of some original features, such as the over-door cherub vignette and fabulous carriage pendant lamp. "The dancing cherubs created great personality and we didn't want to disrupt that," says Dorotic. The preservation of such details, while charming and wholly appropriate, was also purposeful, as Dethick explains. "The terrace had a residential overtone that we wanted to tap into. It made the space approachable and stepped away from the clinical feel that often comes with wellness centres." Moreover, it created the frame for contextualising the graphic. "We didn't want to disrupt that so our insertions are quite sympathetic to retaining the shell, and playing tribute to it. Our response was introduced through custom fittings and touch points throughout," she adds.

**opposite**—curved elements create zones without truncating the whole. **top**—Bespoke storage solutions created in consultation. **bottom**—Curved and inset wash basins and tiled surround.



Colour, while gentle, is richly varied. In the café the combination of muted blues, burnt orange and peach fabric, for example, is paired with baby pink and blue custom tables and stools by Osiris. Conversely, the treatment rooms harmonise a palette of greys with the original parquetry flooring and interesting treatment furniture such as Nordica chairs by Billiani (Hub), and Dowel Jones Half Hurdle stools. Group areas tend to a slightly crisper palette of white and grey, while the façade is a deep dark grey blue (Prestige Blue, Dulux). Bespoke table valances work at different treatment heights.

The centre is a delight. The rooms are appropriate and beautiful; functionality has been properly considered from both a practitioner and client perspective. But most impressive is the way the design has so completely engaged with the concept of the centre being holistic. The design reiterates the clients' core philosophy, connects modalities and creates a complete experience. And then there is the equipment - custom finished, beautiful and now completely contextualised by the WAH interior.

