



# IPG Mediabrands: Meet the Designers

Meet the designers of the impressive IPG Mediabrands project for an insight into design trends for the workspace.

Specialist Group recently worked alongside MCM on the impressive IPG Mediabrands headquarters in London. We meet the lead designers on the project, Terri Scott and Liana Hill, for their insights into this scheme and their thoughts on the wider interior fit out industry.



## Terri

joined MCM in 2012 and is responsible for leading projects from brief to completion. Terri heads up a tight-knit team and thrives on brainstorming and building concepts with them. She builds strong relationships with clients who know they can rely on her for anything.

### Terri Scott

Associate Director - MCM



## Liana

graduated with a BA (Hons) in Interior Architecture and Design and has been with MCM since 2013. Liana takes an active role across all aspects of projects - working with clients, contractors and internal teams, she is passionate about creating exciting spaces.

### Liana Hill

Associate - MCM

**Could you please tell us a bit about yourselves and how you both got into Architecture?**

**Terri:**

From a young age I was always creative, in terms of art and design through school. Originally, I did quite like the idea of doing architecture, but then after an Art foundation course, I discovered I definitely wanted to focus on interiors and from then on I went on to University to do Interior Architecture. It's always been something I have wanted to do.

**Liana:**

When I was a kid I would draw my little plans of housing and I asked my mum, 'oh wouldn't this be really good if I could do this as a job' and she was like 'actually you could!' My aunt is an interior designer as well. I had to do work experience when I was about 15 and I fell in love with it, so I then decided to study it at University.

**You are working on a lot of different buildings in the UK but what is your favourite UK building?**

**Terri:**

I don't really have a favourite building but in terms of buildings that I am drawn to it's the likes of Barking or Southbank centre like Hayward Gallery - buildings that are a bit more brutalist architecture. I think it's just having the contrast to the architecture that we see built today. When you're walking around those buildings, the proportions and just everything about them just feels a little bit overwhelming sometimes, which is interesting to be around.

**Liana:**

I really like The Gherkin, mainly because when I was at school, I did an Art project and we were studying different London landmarks and at the time it was quite a new building and yet all the things around it were quite old and traditional, so I really

liked the contrast and how modern The Gherkin looked in comparison. It was just really beautiful to photograph and to look at - it was something different to anything I had ever seen before when I was younger and was always just stuck in my mind.

**Outside of the UK, are there any buildings that have inspired you?**

**Terri:**

The building that comes to mind is the Jewish Museum in Berlin. When you arrive it's really striking in its shape and materials - it's like a zigzag. But then what always makes me remember it is the feeling that you get when you go inside, because the way they have designed it inside is obviously referencing the holocaust, so it makes you feel uncomfortable, emotional but then it has really striking dynamics. If you imagine going into a room and the walls are kind of falling in on you and then you might walk out into an open beautiful courtyard and

then you felt free, but then there was obviously this other part that had the horrible tunnel where you have just got the light at the top, and it was just overwhelmingly emotional. Yet it was still such impressive architecture - so beautifully done for the purpose of what he was trying to get across.

**Liana:**

For me the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, just because it's the tallest building in the world and I have actually visited it and it is just so amazing and you can't believe that it keeps going and going. We went up to the top as well to see the views and it's just really impressive.

**All professions change over time. What are you seeing as the key challenges in the Interior Design and Architecture industry?**

**Terri:**

I suppose lots of people would think similar things, but I think post pandemic people are tending to work from home more and reduce time in the office and we're finding that Mondays and Fridays are the quietest, so that's a challenge.

**Our clients are re-evaluating how much real estate they need and so we need to work alongside them to make sure that they are getting as much out of the space they have.**

**Liana:**

I think the draw to come in is a big issue - we need to give people a reason to come into the office and

actually be with their team and people they need to work with and not struggle to find a desk, which I think can be a problem in big companies with large teams who may have decided to downsize their office space.

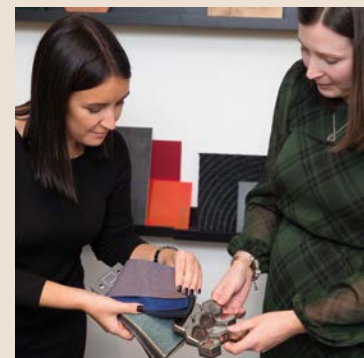
**You have worked on a large number of projects. Is there a particular project that you would rate as your greatest achievement to date?**

**Terri:**

For me, I love all of the projects I have worked on for different reasons, I just think you learn something new on every project that you end up bringing to the next one. Whether it's an experience, a lesson, a client journey or with a colleague, I'm just proud of all the clients and projects that I have worked on. I think IPG Mediabrands was really special, because it was large scale and we had a lot of different stakeholders that we needed to please and that was really exciting for us. Each of those brands within IPG wanted to have slightly different briefs, so then we had the flexibility to be really creative and design to their brand. Rather than it being a 100 sq. ft building that was an echo on every floor, we were able to have lots of different types of designs. So yes Mediabrands would be one I am most proud of at the moment, but that's not to say the next one I won't be saying the same thing, because I think you just learn different things.

**Liana:**

I would say the same in that it's hard to pick one, but I would probably say Havas HQ in Kings Cross is my favourite. It was not one of my first projects, but it was one of the biggest I had worked on and I learnt so much on that. It was one of the first projects the company had done in Revit, so I learnt on the job how to use Revit which at the time was really daunting. In terms of the building, it was quite a challenging building because of so many different agencies all going into the one building, so there was a lot of



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different requirements, and we were quite drastic and bold in the decisions we made with the design. There was a massive staircase that went through the entire building, which took a long time to get signed off and then get designed as well, so it sticks out in my mind. Even now it still stands out as a project even though it is 6 years old.

### Are you seeing any variations in clients' briefs for projects beyond London?

**Terri:**  
We have a couple of clients that we have worked with beyond London and the challenges are similar really. The only difference being when you work with clients in different locations, we need to respond to that locality, that team, different local regulations but also local culture. With some of our clients that's been really a strong part of the brief, but that's quite exciting for us as well, as it's our own challenge that we kind of embed ourselves in that location also.

### Carbon reduction, the climate crisis, sustainability are all at the top of conversation. At what point do you think sustainability issues can impact on your design solutions?

**Liana:**  
Right from the beginning of a project, so when we are taking the brief from the client and understanding what their requirements are. It's always in the back of our mind when we are designing

anyway, it doesn't matter what the client says, we will always go a certain level and if they want to push it then we will push it as far as they want to go.

**Terri:**  
It's like we have our own rule book of standards that we want to keep, and unless we get push back from the client and we are not allowed then we can change that. We would always initiate that conversation with the client even at pitch stage, on what is your company ambition because our response will need to be aligned with that and make sure we incorporate it from the outset and all the different design consultants need to be part of that journey. We recently became B Corp and that's something really key for us - it underpins every decision that we make for our clients, for our company and how we design and deliver our projects, so that's something that's running through the company consistently now and is something that we are proud of.

### Do you have any recent examples of clients really going for high sustainability goals for projects?

**Terri:**  
We have got a few clients that have had BREEAM or LEED certifications. One of our clients is going for Net Zero Carbon - it's ongoing and is an analysis of the stage 3 and 4 and it's been mainly M&E focused which is crazy because for some certifications like IPG Mediabrands, we had to go

through all our finishes schedule and change things, whether it was based on the embodied carbon, recyclable material or the light reflectance value. In contrast, with this Net Zero Carbon aim we didn't have to do any of that it was really just a few key things that we needed to tick and it was mainly about surfaces. So I feel like it's a bit blurry; we need to have our own standard to know that we are specifying the right materials, regardless of the certification or goal that the client has.

### The pandemic is behind us; however, it has been affecting design and building in the midterm, but can you see any lasting change from the pandemic happening?

**Terri:**  
After the pandemic obviously buildings are not as fully occupied as people are doing more agile working, so sometimes other users start using it. For one of our clients, they have their own clients now coming into the building and using their spaces. Therefore, for us that would be a different brief - what does this new client require in terms of type of space, security etc. So in a way we could possibly foresee that we need to think of buildings for a wider audience. This means they would be ready for our clients but then also for their collaborators and their clients, and then maybe buildings will be a bit more fluid in terms of who's coming in and out. That could then affect how we approach the design.

### How would you describe the theme of IPG Mediabrands?

**Liana:**  
The front of the building is the listed section, so we wanted to do some research into that part of building and the area in general because it was built in the early 1900s. We looked at the proximity to the train station and the trains at those times would have had rich deep colours in their upholstery and metal work. So, we wanted to bring those elements into the project and create a bit of contrast between that old part of the building and the new part as well and the client really liked the history and the background behind how it got to that concept.

**Terri:**  
It was a real story around the materials that we selected and the textures. All of the architecture in that area is something that we thought was very modern and very old, and it was that kind of contrast that we took in our finishes palette. In terms of the joinery, there were really beautiful veneers but then there was also mesh and metal work that referenced the railway. So it all had a story and a reason. Every time we specified something it always went back to the very early concept that the design team developed.



## A lot of the joinery helps structure the space and there are some really stand out joinery elements of this project.

### You worked with Specialist Group on IPG, how would you describe that working relationship?

**Terri:**  
It was fantastic, I think all of the joinery installed was very high quality and there were some real challenging pieces of installation. We love the UM red portal and it photographs really well but in terms of the design it was all different angles and different textures. I think it was a real challenge to do but the client is really happy and it's a great success.

**Liana:**  
There is some nice joinery on Level 7 and 8 as well, those spaces are some really wow spaces with the views and everything.

### What is your favourite part of the project?

**Terri:**  
I think my favourite is Level 7 and 8 because they are wow factor spaces and that is where all the employees migrate to, especially Level 7 because

it has got the terrace. But then Level 8 is just as special because that was designed around the client experience, it is for everybody but early on in the brief our client said that there are so many different clients coming into the building. From that we came up with a concept called 'flick of a switch' and it was the idea that there's lots of different agencies within IPG, every different agency had different clients in, and they wanted to have either lighting or technology to transform something so you can personalise it for those coming in. So there was a portal that we designed that changed colour and that leads you around to Level 8, so that whole journey is quite special. When you get to Level 8 there is so many different great spaces, there is an exhibition space that they can set up for their pitching, there's the chemistry space with a full height video wall. There's lots of different experiences there between the two levels of wow factor.

**Liana:**  
A space that we didn't necessarily intend to be a wow space, it just happened to get to that point was the lower ground space. That space went through quite a few rounds of value engineering and so we had to create some interesting ways to make it work but on a bit more of a budget on that floor. I think that was the one that surprised me the most looking into that space, because its

dark and doesn't get any natural light but the lighting was really cleverly placed, and it all worked really well.

### At Specialist Group we have Joinery, Glass and Metal, do you see any advantages in collaborating with a single source for all materials?

**Terri:**  
If it's a joinery package I think there is benefit in having all three of those together, because lots of joinery uses all of those materials and in terms of finalising the supplier detail, having that knowledge under one roof and developing that design together is beneficial.

### Beyond this year are you seeing any trends that you think will influence your projects that you're designing in the future?

**Terri:**  
We spoke about it earlier, how we design the buildings and who were designing them for just to think a bit wider and future proof building. This means that the client has the choice to flex and change them if they want their clients to do a takeover, if they want to create a pop up or something for the public, thinking a bit bigger so they're not as constrained. Obviously, sustainability is a big one and we are going to keep pushing for that, and with projects that we have completed already with BREAM, LEED and then the Net Zero to continue on that.

