


INTERIOR DESIGN[®]

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a new twist



for the love of cars

At a Los Angeles headquarters by M+M, edmunds.com restarts its engines

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Celebrating its 50th anniversary in a big way, a digital information behemoth, car data provider edmunds.com, moved across the street in Los Angeles. If the new headquarters, with its blazes of Ferrari red and bold gestures galore, presents a sense of déjà vu, that's because Chris and Sandra Mitchell were in the driver's seat for both projects. The previous HQ was completed when the couple were at Studios Architecture. They've since co-founded M+M Creative Studio, serving as CEO and president, respectively.

At first, edmunds.com CEO Avi Steinlauf's main reason for the relocation was more space, 133,000 square feet on two levels, plus a 10,000-square-foot central courtyard, an asymmetrical outdoor space that Chris Mitchell calls "the big hole in the building." Sheer numbers pale, however, in the face of the Mitchells' visual tour de force, aimed at impressing the car-guy clientele. It all starts in the reception area, where the desk's mirror-polished stainless steel is an ode to the chrome bumpers on old Cadillacs. Visitors look up to see a 2016 Corvette Stingray convertible, gleaming in silver with a crimson leather interior, mounted upside down on a turntable set into a huge round cutout in the ceiling. But the real punch line doesn't become clear until you walk up the stairs: On top of the same turntable, right side up, sits a 1966 Stingray in Nassau Blue, that year's most popular color.

Equally eye-catching is the U-shape floating staircase. The drywall underside is painted red to match the epoxy flooring right below. As for the



LEDs concealed in the stair's reveal, they're meant to evoke nighttime strip lighting on highways.

Gathering places aplenty populate the vast expanse of the lower level, as the conference rooms, the lounges, the multipurpose auditorium, and the café sprawl as far as the eye can see. "It's inclusive. People are meant to walk around," Sandra Mitchell says. "Upstairs is where they sit at their desks, and the right brain takes over."

Conference rooms up front are freestanding boxes. Their stoplight red is achieved with laminated glass, their "freeway lights" pattern made by hand-applying dots of opaque white film. Farther in, conference rooms align against the perimeter walls, and fronts are frosted glass patterned with clear dots. Each of the 32 rooms is named for a different car, naturally, from Audi to Volkswagen. Keeping track of room availability could have presented a traffic nightmare. But no chance of ➤

Previous spread: M+M Creative Studio parked coin-operated miniature Corvette Stingrays under the staircase that rises from the reception area at edmunds.com in Los Angeles.

Top: A round hole cut through the slab between the two levels allows for a turntable that displays not only a car on top but also an upside down car below. **Bottom:** Along a corridor, hand-painted graphics proclaim the year the company was founded as a publisher of booklets on car specifications.

Opposite top: In a lounge, 2,472 Matchbox cars mounted on acrylic blocks compose a logo. **Opposite bottom, from left:** Beneath it, vinyl upholsters the banquette. A breakout area features a 660-gallon custom aquarium.



a rush-hour snafu, since the Mitchells installed an electronic display board similar to those found in airports.

For less formal meetings, diverse seating areas are scattered along circulation routes and in other open areas. High-style options include high-backed red settees paired with blue swivel chairs. One particular lounge has pride of place, with a semi-circular booth, reminiscent of a '60's SoCal diner,



Opposite top: The reception desk is mirror-polished stainless steel. **Opposite bottom:** Over a corridor's settees by Jang Won Yoon, coves in drywall forms conceal LED fixtures.

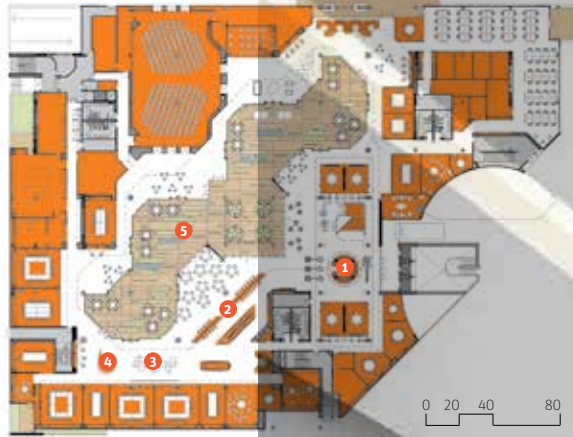
Top: Graphics from a Chrysler plant near Detroit inspired patterns in the café's epoxy flooring. **Bottom, from left:** Surfboards represent the nearby beaches. Laminated glass encloses conference rooms.

positioned for a view of goings-on in the courtyard. Unless, of course, you turn around to inspect the wall's edmunds.com logo made up of 2,472 Matchbox cars. Sent on a hunt for them, employees discovered a huge aftermarket in the L.A. area. "Matchbox cars are like Bitcoins in some places," Chris Mitchell says with a laugh.

Where do people congregate most? Around the food. The café is shiny, curvy, and mostly white, with green and yellow patterns in the epoxy floor inspired by a Chrysler plant outside Detroit. Near the stations for coffee and fro-yo stand the vending machines—one even dispenses Matchbox cars. Folks call this area the Hub, despite the fact that hubcaps are absent from the chrome wheels suspended in a dense cluster overhead. ➤



The slide combines stainless steel with polycarbonate.



- 1 RECEPTION
- 2 CAFÉ
- 3 LOUNGE
- 4 SLIDE
- 5 COURTYARD



"How's that for an alternate route to a latte?"



Opposite top, from left: Beyond the café, folding doors open to the central courtyard. Sectional seating by Mario Ruiz Design creates a lounge.

Opposite bottom: At the café's coffee station, LEDs glow above chrome wheels suspended from the ceiling by steel rods. **Top:** The slide descends nearly 15 feet, into a lounge. **Bottom:** Jehs + Laub chairs swivel in reception.

interiordesign.net/mplusm16 for 10 Qs With Chris and Sandra Mitchell

Bar stools at the café's twin counters overlook the adjacent lounge's taxi-yellow sectional. Beyond it spirals an adult-size slide. Yes, a slide, aka the Expressway. Employees cruise down through the tube, which is stainless steel on the bottom, capped by clear polycarbonate. "So no one flies off," Sandra Mitchell explains. How's that for an alternate route to a latte?

Back upstairs, where most of the 600 employees work, two break-out areas bookending the floor plate are notable for their huge aquariums. One, representing the West Coast, contains not only puffer fish but also scaled landmarks including L.A.'s Capitol Records building and Santa Monica Pier. In the East Coast counterpart, New York's Chrysler and Empire State Buildings appear in the aqueous cityscape.



All roads eventually lead back to reception, though. Here, swivel chairs provide prime viewing spots for videos of new models or test-track footage, all looped on a monitor that's framed by exhaust pipe. Under the staircase, a pair of coin-operated Corvettes for kids are parked. So the next generation of car enthusiasts can put the pedal to the metal. 🏎️

PROJECT TEAM

ERIN LINDLEY; SOUNIA GMIRA: M+M CREATIVE STUDIO. **LEWIS/SCHOEPLIN ARCHITECTS:** ARCHITECT OF RECORD. **CHERRY & MANDEL:** PROJECT MANAGER. **ARCHITECTURE & LIGHT:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT. **JOHN LABIB + ASSOCIATES STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS:** STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. **JOHN M. CRUIKSHANK CONSULTANTS:** CIVIL ENGINEER. **SYSKA HENNESSY GROUP:** MEP. **ARTCRAFTERS CABINETS:** WOODWORK. **CORPORATE CONTRACTORS:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR. **CIBOLA SYSTEMS:** AV CONSULTANT. **J.JONES ENTERTAINMENT CONSTRUCTION:** CORVETTE MECHANISM. **OFFICE OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE:** LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT. **METROPOLITAN WEST:** GRAPHIC PRODUCTION/INSTALLATION.

PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT FLOS: LINEAR FIXTURES (RECEPTION). **FLUXWERX ILLUMINATION:** LINEAR FIXTURES (HALL). **INNOVATIONS IN WALLCOVERINGS:** BANQUETTE UPHOLSTERY (LOUNGE), CHAIR UPHOLSTERY (RECEPTION). **ACRYLIC TANK MANUFACTURING:** CUSTOM AQUARIUM (BREAK-OUT AREA). **KEILHAUER:** CHAIRS, STOOLS (BREAK-OUT AREA, HALL). **COALESSE:** TABLES. **BERNHARDT DESIGN:** SOFAS (HALL). **LAPALMA:** STOOLS (CAFÉ). **TOM DIXON:** PENDANT FIXTURES. **DUPONT:** COUNTER MATERIAL. **NATURAL STRUCTURES:** CUSTOM SLIDE (LOUNGE). **NANA WALL SYSTEMS:** DOORS (COURTYARD). **JOQUER:** SOFA (LOUNGE). **DESIGNTEX:** SOFA FABRIC. **GKD-USA:** MESH PANELS. **KNOLL:** CHAIRS, TABLE (RECEPTION). **THROUGHOUT EDGE LIGHTING:** COVE FIXTURES. **TECH LIGHTING:** RECESSED CEILING FIXTURES. **INTERNATIONAL OFFICE CONCEPT:** STOREFRONT SYSTEM. **PULP STUDIO:** LAMINATED GLASS. **3M:** FROSTED DOTS. **INTERFACE:** CARPET TILE. **KEY RESIN COMPANY:** FLOORING. **BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.:** PAINT.



