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ISSN 1561-781-5



9 771561 781004

HK\$80
RMB80
US\$11

SWISH

Nike

Hong Kong SAR, China OpenUU

Photography by Nirut Benjanpot

For millennials, the running shoe is less about sports and more about attitude. In keeping with its reputation for being ahead of the curve, American sports apparel manufacturer Nike has been moving away from positioning their products as athletic wear. While naturally it still looks to the likes of footballers for endorsement, lately it has also been promoting itself as a lifestyle brand.

Nike's Hong Kong office has three storeys in Kowloon Bay. Early last year, the company realised it was quickly outgrowing its conference and meeting facilities, and looked to OpenUU to help transform 3,000sq ft on its 31/F – previously let out to its subsidiary, Cole Haan – into 'an inspirational place' while keeping its lower floors as-is for staff work areas. The brief was for a reception and lounge, plus one room that could facilitate video conferencing, and two smaller rooms for product demonstrations.

"Nike holds global meetings in Hong Kong where they need to accommodate up to 180 people at a time – they then break out into smaller groups," explains Kevin Lim, managing director with OpenUU. "We needed to provide seating and tables flexible enough for different activities. We understood that Nike was moving towards being more of a fashion and lifestyle brand, like streetwear, and we looked to Hurley, a skate brand, and Converse, Nike's neighbour, to inform our eventual design solution. In the end, we delivered a space that was casual rather than corporate."

The job was completed last August. OpenUU highlighted Nike's business philosophy wherever possible in the office. Movable partitions give the space flexibility and are finished in Nike fabrics and gym motifs. Sports markings on ballcourt-like timber flooring denote basketball and badminton playing-fields, while green Astroturf covers a number of furnishings and feature walls. Custom furniture includes workout plyometric boxes in bright hues; commonly used by cross trainers, these have been turned into seating options or platforms for speakers and exude a locker room vibe. Partitions with white chain link fence panelling add a streetscape feel. "We wanted to bring back Nike's DNA into its office," says Lim. "We designed the balcony [to be] like a soccer pitch with stadium seating."

Besides putting up walls featuring inspirational quotes by Nike's co-founder Bill Bowerman, OpenUU worked with Nike's graphics department and artists such as Mark Goss for the wall graphics and Vinti Andrew on a whimsical dog sculpture. "Mark did one of the elephants for a recent Swire exhibition in Hong Kong, while Vinti is a British artist who uses Nike fabrics and other donated goods to create his work," notes Lim.

By integrating Nike's branding into the office's public spaces, OpenUU has created a colourful and dynamic environment that, on all accounts, is a slam dunk.



