Conceived as having one foot in the boardroom and the other in the vineyard, Carr’s design for Treasury Wine Estates brings the vineyard to Collins Street.
With no previous client relationship the project was won through a tender that saw Carr reimagine the idea of a vineyard as a subtle flow of nuanced references without cliché or signature tropes. “The feeling is strongly emotive. As a means to connect the visitor to the vineyard, we emulated the feeling of a vineyard without thematic staging,” says Dan Cox, Carr director and project lead.

Key to the Carr exploration is a material palette that touches on the sensory elements of visiting a vineyard, where aroma, tactility and lighting coalesce towards the unique experience of place. As such, converse to Carr’s usual continuation of the base build materiality and mood, the shift between the marble of Bates Smart’s light and airy public spaces and Treasury Wine Estates’ (TWE) moody warmth, is pronounced. “We wanted a quality of fired earth to pervade the space, and give a sense of fire and warmth and earthy undertones to really emphasise breaking the threshold,” says Cox.

Distinctly different, the experience of stepping from marble to concrete is further marked by a shift in lighting, wall materiality and tone. Comprising a dark palette above a light floor, the ceiling of exposed utilities recedes as a matt black expanse (SonaSpray, Enviroflex). Walls of mid and light grey are given warmth through detailed areas of brick (Rustic Red, Robertson’s) and fine timber cabinetry (spotted gum, blackbutt and pine).

The reception is cool and relaxed, with low-rise seating in tones of caramel, grey and timber (Studio Pip sofa, Simon James Parallel armchair, Simon James Underline Café table, Resident Offset side table – all District). Here the first of the Carr interpretations of a vineyard is explored through a sculptural ceiling element that hints at both the arbores of vineyards and above-bar glass racks. The wine wall is similarly sculptural with purposeful geometric shifts that create and break rhythms across the timber grid. As the client is the overseer of a diverse range of vineyards, it was important that brand neutrality was conveyed and, as such, no branding is evident.

Glimpsed from reception, the team café space presents as a warm and inviting view into the breakout. Furnishings shift between comfortable and expansive café style seating (Plop small ottomans, Andreu World Reverse table – both Stylecraft; Sean...
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DAN COX
Dix Copine meeting table and Sean Dix Sprint chair – both Zenith) to built-in lounges and nooks with only a soft sage green added to the established palette. The plants, however, change the mood entirely with indoor plants displayed as houseplants rather than as an extension of the architecture. This is a good move and in keeping with international plant design that posits vegetation over specimen.

“With the plants we are trying to not create a block of form, but a loose domestic approach to give a sense of being at home,” says Cox. Beyond the client and visitor view line is a floorplate of some 5000 square metres and workstations for close to 450. Large vertical and horizontal timber beams are arranged within the space to break the areas into human scale, while ever so subtly referencing the pergolas of vineyards.

One of the only materials continued from the base build is the fluted glass of tenancy doors. Using this material for the threshold to the Barrel Room is quietly beautiful with the rippled glass registering the lit timber curves of the barrels as a soft gold undulation within the surrounding darkness. The Barrel Room itself is unabashedly the showstopper, with a lining of horizontal barrels subtly lit to give a warm golden glow. Part of the process towards concept was a series of workshops to understand what ‘one foot in the vineyard and one in the boardroom’ meant. For Carr, it became clear that the design role was not one of reinterpreting the language of a vineyard into a workspace, so much as getting the feeling of a vineyard. “The operating oak barrels give a pungent smell, which is expanded through sensory aspects of lighting so you are cognitively aware of your senses being activated. As soon as you step into that room you are transported to your own experience of a vineyard,” says Cox. Effectively, the room is used to tell the stories of the individual vineyards by immersing the clients within the experience of the vineyard without actually visiting the separate locations. Dark timber bar and stools (Resident high stool, District) continue the sumptuous mood, while the attached bottle shop, which functions as a private sales room and point of order for clients, additionally serves to demonstrate how the bottles will look on the shelf.

The line Carr has followed for TWE is fine, combining workplace, retail outlet, showroom and experience. The whole is neither confused nor overly siloed. Instead, it has, as intended, created a mood, a fine piece of storytelling and an immersive experience for clients. There is also something incredibly beautiful in the warmth it has given to the dark hues and timber.