



Michael Cheung at work in his office



Waiting room and reception



Consulting room



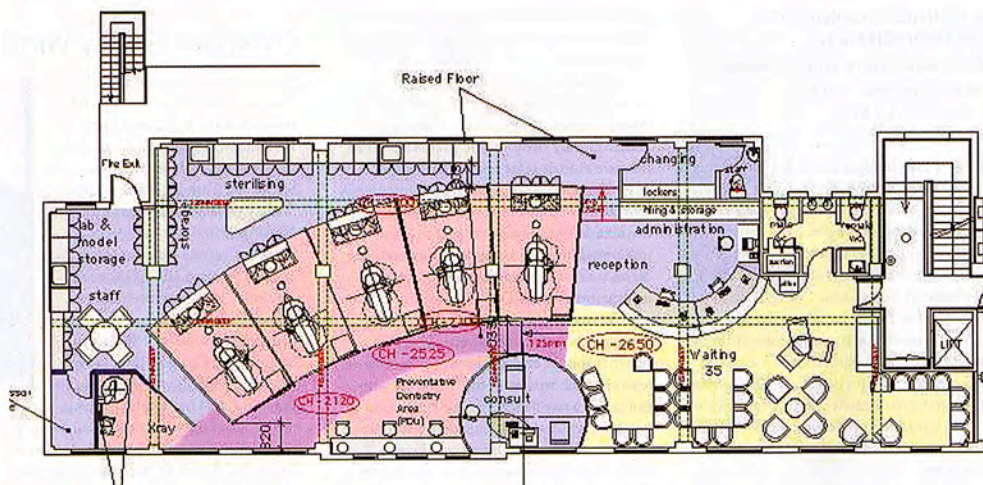
Walkway to surgeries



Rear of the surgeries leading to sterilisation area



Central sterilisation area



An avant-garde orthodontist

The editor visits Michael Cheung in his new practice designed by Richard Mitzman

IT is apparent that ownership of a Richard Mitzman designed practice is becoming a very definite "must have"; at least in the eyes of the more avant-garde practitioner. Make no mistake, it will cost a bob or two but in return you will be getting a unique, often gracious, and always intensely practical place to spend your working life. The envy of colleagues, and jaw-dropping astonishment from everyone else becomes commonplace, and in all probability there will be an increased value when the time comes to sell.

As most of us know by now, Richard Mitzman was once a dentist himself, but finding the work an insufficient outlet for his undoubted creative talent, he turned to architecture. Michael Cheung, his most recent client is also a man of many talents. As well as being a successful orthodontist – with strong beliefs in the NHS – I suspect there is also a strong entrepreneurial side to his nature. He has already literally built (and sold) a practice which incorporated for good measure a couple of shops and is now the owner of arguably the most spectacular "ortho" practice premises in the land.

Maple House in Slough, once HQ for the Prudential, has recently been gutted internally, leaving each floor a vast 2700 square feet of open space supported by just five slim pillars. As huge open spaces with no tiresome load-bearing walls make for the Mitzman idea of paradise, Michael Cheung acquired the second floor and commissioned Richard Mitzman.

A glance at the floor plan and illustrations will give some idea of the resulting creation. This "curvy crystal palace" of a practice, with frosted glass walls everywhere creates a breathtaking impression the instant one enters; and all the more so having just passed through the rather ordinary communal entrance to the whole Maple House complex.

A delicately curved reception desk, white comfy armchairs randomly positioned, a large flat screen "telly" – all make waiting no hardship at all if you arrive early or, heaven forbid, your "ortho man" happens to be running late.

An intriguing circular glass consulting room takes the eye – its curved sliding door runs like magic – and from here, stretching away seemingly the length of the building, is

an elegant glass-fronted crescent of five surgeries, sliding door entry for patients at the front and, for Mitzman *cognoscenti*, the now familiar "steri-walls" to the rear. Inside each, minimality and uniformity reign supreme, needless to say, emphasised further by the tasteful pastel shades of "acres" of unadorned wall space.

The service area, at the back of the practice so to speak, is spacious, with a staff area incorporated at one end and vast numbers of storage cupboards to swallow up all that clutter that orthodontists like to call study models!

Open planning necessarily makes for difficulty in controlling sounds and even in an "ortho" practice these are not unheard of! The noise of a patient gagging on overfilled impression trays, for instance, is not relished by those in the next surgery or waiting area. Michael Cheung has therefore installed a music system which he feels can be adjusted to drown unwanted noises, and says it can be "turned up" if necessary.

Maple House Orthodontics is a spectacular practice that will bring great satisfaction to its

owner, its creator and its visitors, but one does sometimes wonder how much longer such levels of minimalism will be in vogue.

In the clinical environment, of course, the somewhat utilitarian appearance of the modern dental surgery is further driven by the need for ever more absurd levels of infection control, that scorched earth campaign currently being waged against all known micro-organisms as well as the truly infinite numbers so far undiscovered.

If, however, common sense eventually prevails in this impossible ideal, and there is again room for a degree of personal individuality, then Mitzman practice owners should not be unduly worried. Carefully chosen pictures, ornaments, photos of the children, selected floor coverings, even perhaps a Steinway baby grand tucked away in the corner, will always look stylish in their wonderful surroundings. So far as the infrastructure of their practice goes, they will always – or certainly for many years to come – be the possessors of a meticulously planned, and deeply practical place in which to practise their dentistry.

Richard Mitzman moves to new offices

Richard Mitzman Architects has become a partnership and changed its name to Richard Mitzman + Yates Architects. The practice has moved to new offices: Unit 1, Primrose Mews, Sharpleshall Street, London NW1 8YW. Telephone: 020 7722 8525. Fax: 020 7449 0428. email: mail@richardmitzman.com Website: www.richardmitzman.com



Above: Richard with his new business partner Louise Yates (right) and Manisha Sonawane, the project architect for Michael Cheung's new orthodontic practice in Slough and the award-winning Advance Dental Clinic in Chelmsford



Left: Michael Cheung and his wife came up to London for the opening of Richard's new offices on December 1