

Life brought to girls' building

STEPHEN CRAFT

THE line between architecture and photography is completely blurred in this new development in Abbotsford.

Bringing together the talents of KUD Architects and artist Samantha Everton, the facade of 2 Girls Building is considerably more than manipulated photography on digitalised glass. "We wanted to integrate Samantha's art into the fabric of the building, not just create surface treatment," says architect Billy Kavellaris, director of KUD Architects.

Due for completion in mid-2013, 2 Girls Building — named after the two girls featured on the facade — will comprise three offices at ground level, together with 15 apartments and 15 rooftop lofts.

While the two girls are captured in digital glass by Everton in a baroque-style interior, the building's facade includes pressed concrete, designed to appear like the wallpaper used in Everton's images.

Drawers, which form part of Everton's living room scene, are also embossed in concrete on the facade, angled to draw you into this extraordinary composition. And instead of the usual signage, there's a three-storey-high steel-based



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lamp, complete with decorative shade in a Dali-like manner. The vitra panels cladding the top level are printed with the image of velvet drapes.

While some developers may have raised eyebrows at such a radical scheme, developer Peter Cahill, managing director of Domain Hill Property Group, was hooked from the first presentation. "I loved the idea of bringing art and architecture together. But I also know there's a market for

people looking for something quite different," says Cahill, who was reassured in his assessment of the property market when he released the Smith Street Lofts in Collingwood, an office/gallery development, a few years ago.

"Even at the height of the GFC, these offices sold in a few months. I'm still getting calls for people wanting similar spaces."

Everton's imagery extends to the double height foyer of the building. As well as her

In keeping with the artistic theme, the courtyards/lightwells in the Abbotsford development will feature "sculptural" trees, to be viewed from corridors, as well as from individual apartments.

Varying in area from 50 square metres for a one-bedroom apartment, to 130 square metres for a three-bedroom, two-storey loft with a rooftop terrace, the market, like the Smith Street offices, is creative, including architects, designers, artists, graphic designers and those in the IT industry.

And although Everton's images have a baroque-like quality, the interiors are sharp and contemporary. "There is a play on what's real and what's not. But the interiors are highly functional for contemporary living," says Kavellaris.

For KUD, this building not only provided the opportunity to push the boundaries of architecture, it also provided the vehicle to become involved from the artist's perspective. "There were times that Samantha became the architect and I took on a photographer's role," says Kavellaris.

Irrespective, the result is like public theatre, with the stage coming to life for future residents and those who will walk by.

photos, there's customised wallpaper from the living room where the two girls were photographed. A Victorian chaise longue and chandelier add to the ambience. And like the offices in Collingwood, the corridors at 2 Girls Building are 2.5 metres wide. "We wanted to include gallery spaces on each level, rather than just corridors leading to doors," says Cahill, who will seek out work from emerging artists, be it photography or art to show in these spaces.