



In designing its new offices, the Toronto-based Element Group cleverly used off-the-shelf construction materials to keep costs down. The eclectic result – a showpiece for the interior design firm’s clients – incorporates translucent corrugated fibreglass panels as wall partitions (left); V-splitters and energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs in a chandelier (top); and electrical conduit tubing as supports (above).

## EASY DOES IT

Challenged to design a funky workplace on a minuscule budget, the Toronto-based Element Group took the uses of conventional materials to a new level. But the long and narrow office – a mere 71 square metres on the second floor of a refurbished 19th-century warehouse – also called for an innovative approach to accommodate the interior design firm while acting as a showpiece for its clients.

The four designers employed inexpensive off-the-shelf construction components typically found at the local building supply store. They crafted subtle wall partitions from transparent corrugated fibreglass panels (commonly used for shed roofing) supported by electrical conduit tubing. The team fashioned a chandelier made entirely of V-splitters and energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, and hung it above a custom-made boardroom table. To maximize an airy and spacious feel, Element created “vented” drafting tables by stacking pre-painted MDF strips, with aluminum piping for spacers. Philippe Starck’s clear Ghost chairs round out the furnishings.

The eclectic result is a colourful interplay of transparency and light that feels much larger than its narrow confines would attest. And that’s the message Element wants to communicate to an increasingly budget-oriented clientele. “As rents increase, we have to fit clients in smaller spaces,” says principal Olga Mihailovich. “We’re trying to show them that they can have a suitable environment without spending an enormous amount of money. Using simple materials, we created this very stylish look.”

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