

SPACE

DERWENT
LONDON

winter two thousand and ten

issue number six

ANGEL BUILDING

WHITE COLLAR FACTORY

TEA BUILDING

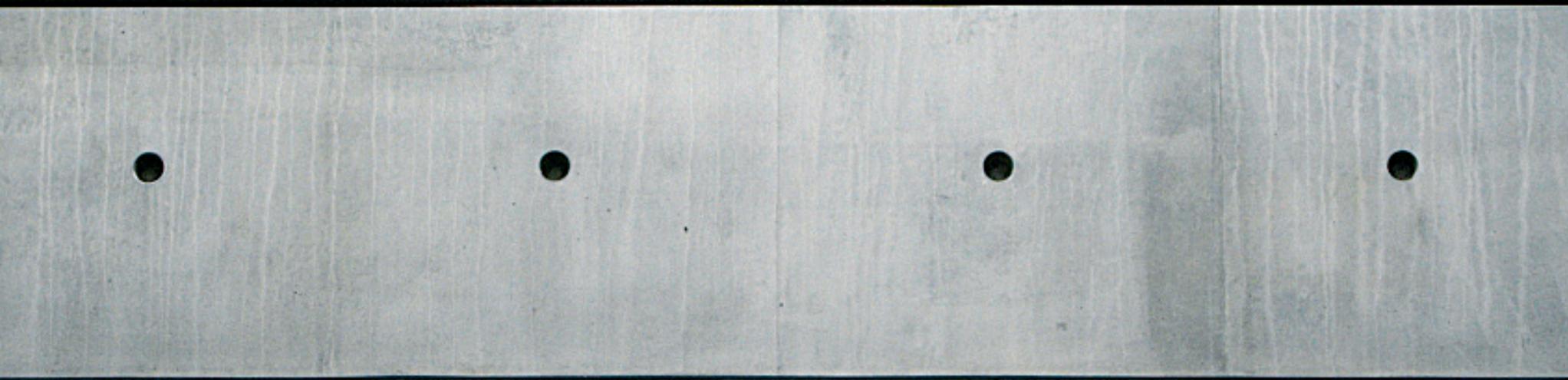
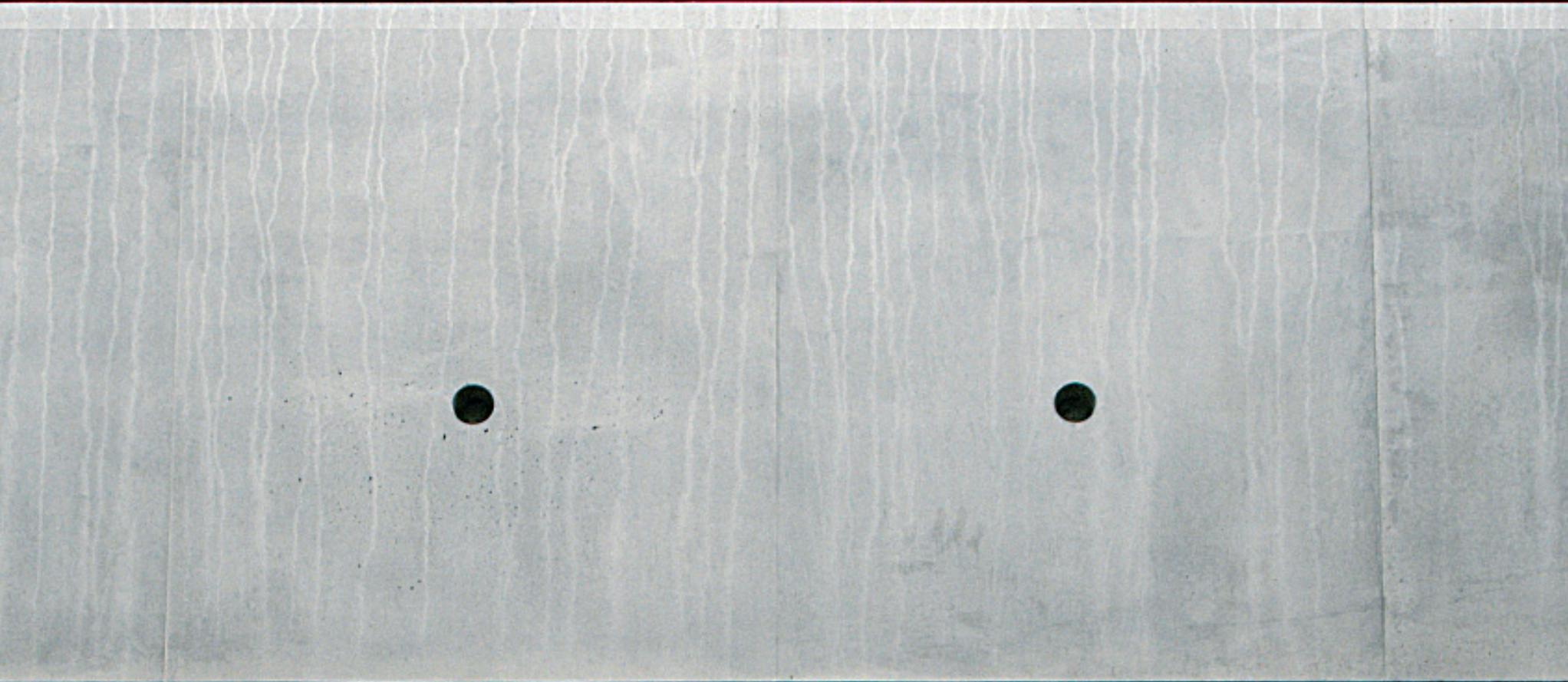
LOOKING AT FITZROVIA

TEENAGE CANCER TRUST

NEW LONDON ARCHITECTURE

ADAMS KARA TAYLOR

THE STORY OF DERWENT LONDON



WELCOME

TO SPACE

In this issue we take the wraps off our latest building, and one of our biggest yet: if we do say it ourselves, the Angel Building is a very ingenious and a radical transformation indeed, and with some important commissioned art. This latest tour round the world of Derwent London also takes in a new boutique hotel, and updates you on our current projects, clients, colleagues and design thinking across London. Finally, we are especially proud of having been able to help with the Teenage Cancer Trust's new building in Birmingham, described for us by Matthew Engel.

04 UPDATE We continue to attract exciting and forward-thinking companies to our spaces

06 ANGEL BUILDING A great new working address in EC1

18 WHITE COLLAR FACTORY Two upcoming projects that explain our thinking

26 TEA BUILDING What's going on? A hotel, restaurant, and more

30 LOOKING AT FITZROVIA Latest happenings in our largest village

34 TEENAGE CANCER TRUST Its fine new building in Birmingham by Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands

38 NEW LONDON ARCHITECTURE What it means for the capital

40 ADAMS KARA TAYLOR We profile the engineering wizards

42 THE STORY OF DERWENT LONDON Preview of Derwent London's new book

Cover:
Epic
by Teresita Fernandez
at The Angel Building

Left:
The Angel Building
Architect
Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

winter two thousand and ten

issue number six

design: studio myerscough

editorial: rebecca lesser /
simon silver

contributors: hugh pearman /
peter murray / matthew engel

photo and cgi credits:
valerie bennett /
matt chisnall / luke hayes /
richard learoyd / nina leen
time & life pictures /
lee mawdsley / rob parrish /
tim soar / wolfgang stuppy /
james winspear view /
ink / the neighbourhood

UPDATE

GENERATION NEXT

We continue to attract exciting and forward-thinking companies to our spaces despite the tough economic climate.

We are delighted to announce 89 lettings at the time of going to press in 2010, totalling 301,600 sq ft at £7.1m per annum.



New tenants include the venue owners and operators Barworks (7,500 sq ft at Suncourt House, N1), the global brand design consultancy Elmwood (3,400 sq ft at Fitzroy Street, W1), the associative marketing and sponsorship specialists brand Rapport (3,400 sq ft at Greencoat House, SW1)



and the marketing agency Orchestra (5,600 sq ft at Morelands, EC1).

CHARLOTTE BUILDING W1

One of the most talked-about new fashion and media hubs, the award-winning Charlotte Building is now fully occupied following the 7,400 sq ft let to online networking pioneers LinkedIn.



Fellow tenants include Converse, Unanimis, Icon Entertainment and Brandopus.



Designed by architects Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, it has won the RIBA for architectural excellence and the BCO Best Commercial Workplace London and South East award, both 2010.

WEST END REVIVAL

Continuing Derwent's plans for the regeneration of east Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road is the latest Derwent London acquisition, Central Cross, W1.

The building, at 18–30 Tottenham Court Road, currently occupies a freehold 2.1-acre site. The existing 251,000 sq ft office and retail building has potential to be vastly improved. Initial plans will concentrate on the main entrance and ground floor streetscape. The Central Cross property will be further rejuvenated by Crossrail and comprehensive upgrades to London Underground.



With existing retail poorly configured, this is a unique opportunity to redefine the area with exciting new retail outlets in an upgraded building. The architects ORMS are currently assessing the project.

DERWENT LONDON WEBSITE

The new Derwent London website designed by Made Thought is now up and running. Visit www.derwentlondon.com

ANGEL OF THE NORTH

Transforming the area close to Angel tube station, the striking, six-storey Angel Building (architects AHMM) was completed in September 2010.

Cancer Research UK now occupies just less than half the 263,000 sq ft building — a total of 126,000 sq ft.

For more information, visit www.angelbuilding.com



READY TO RECEIVE

A marble desk and a stunning mobile by the artist Dan Chadwick feature strongly in the new reception at 1, Grosvenor Place by Aedas Architects.



LONDON FOCUS

Derwent London's active schedule of refurbishments across the capital includes the following, currently on site and due for completion shortly, or recently completed:



Fitzroy and Maple, W1 (20,000 sq ft offices) and 9–10 Rathbone Place, W1 (12,000 sq ft offices, architect Sergison Bates) are both complete.

65 Whitfield Street, W1 (30,000 sq ft offices) is complete whilst 33 George Street, W1 (14,000 sq ft offices) is on site.

A comprehensive refurbishment is underway as part of the continuing improvement of the Fitzrovia estate at 170 Tottenham Court Road, W1 (30,000 sq ft offices, 12,000 sq ft residential). The next on-site refurbishments to begin will be 2–14 Pentonville Road, N1 (55,000 sq ft offices).

FUTURE VISION

The next generation of Derwent London spaces will include:

132–142 Hampstead Road, NW1 (architect AHMM) — planning application was submitted recently to transform this 230,000 sq ft warehouse space into a white-collar factory

featuring 233,000 sq ft office space and 32,000 sq ft of residential space.

The refurbishment and extension will include new "sky" floors boasting panoramic views.

City Road Estate, EC1 (architect AHMM) — planning application has been submitted for a new, 16-storey 220,000 sq ft office building.



This innovative office development, set around a new public square, will also follow the white-collar factory concept as seen in the last issue of Space.

80 Charlotte Street, W1 (architect MAKE) — design options are well underway to create a new office hub in this 1.4-acre site in the heart of Fitzrovia.

The planning application is due to be submitted by the end of 2010

Set in London's advertising heartland, it is currently occupied by Saatchi & Saatchi.

For further details please contact our leasing team: Celine Thompson, Joanna Buckley or Emily Prideaux on 020 7659 3000



Above:
Atrium with
Ian McChesney's
sculpture in
the foreground

Right:
View of a typical
lift lobby



WORDS: HUGH PEARMAN

THE ANGEL BUILDING

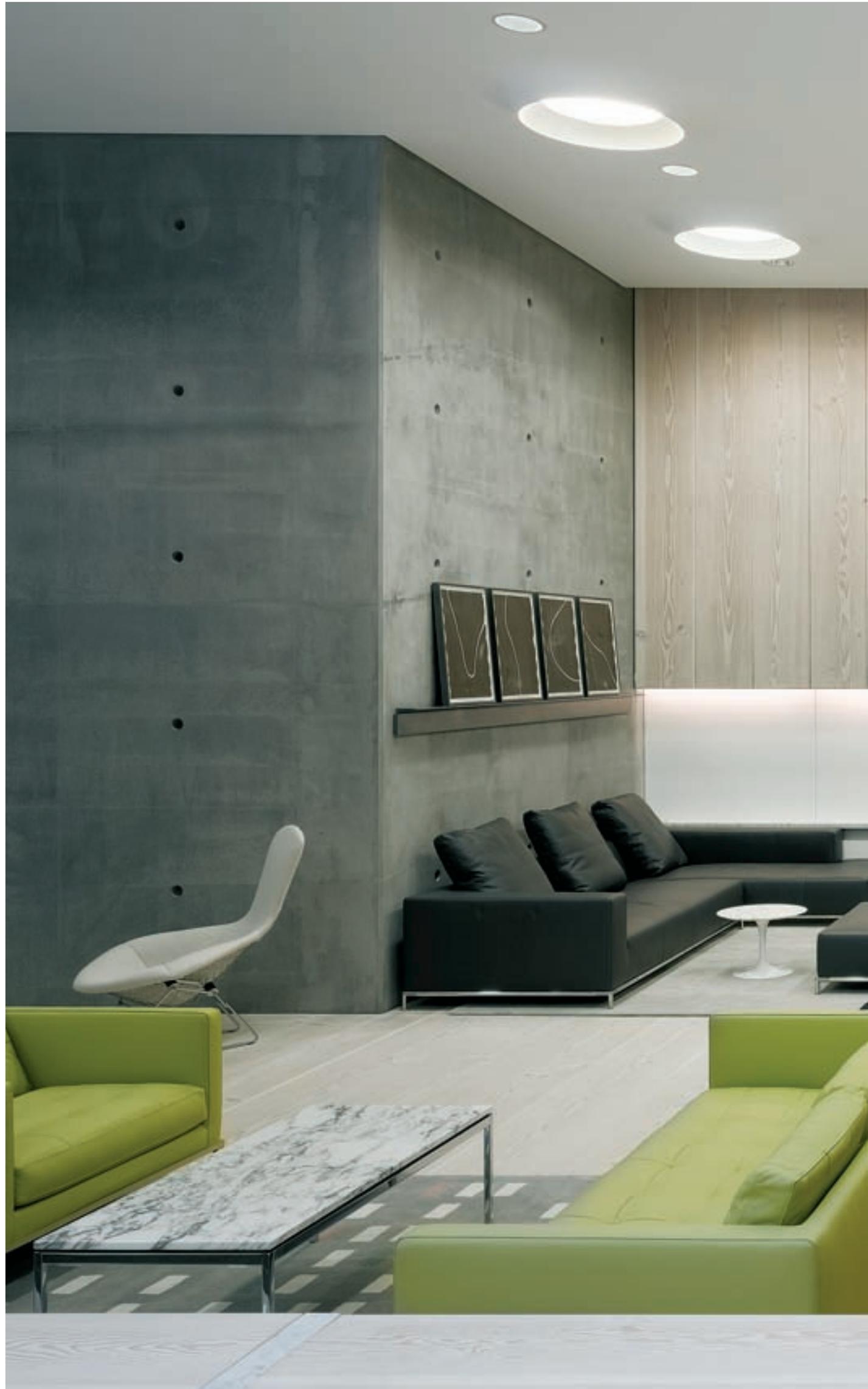
The Angel Building — just completed — is a very ingenious and radical transformation of a key site in EC1, and one of the most significant projects that Derwent London has undertaken. Started during the recent recession with the support of an important pre-let of approximately half the building to Cancer Research UK, it is an expression of faith in good-value, sustainable office construction.

KEY COMPLETION
THE ANGEL BUILDING

If you walk round the 263,000 sq ft building today, it's hard to remember what was here before: an early 1980s office block set well back from the street, part of a big redevelopment of this key traffic intersection, the Angel Centre — named after a one-time inn on the corner. The 1980s building anticipated road widening which never took place. How to put all this to rights?

The solution is an essentially new building, with 60 per cent more useful floorspace, which retains and extends the structural frame of the old one. This is important — why demolish just for the sake of it?

Right:
The main seating area
in reception with
art on the shelves
by Lewis Ronald.





Along with a raft of carbon and resource-saving measures ranging from intelligent low-energy lighting and regenerative-braking lifts to rainwater harvesting and bicycle provision, this structural re-use greatly improves the carbon footprint of the building and made it faster to build, so minimising disruption in the neighbourhood. It has a BREEAM rating of “Excellent”.

The building you see today is the result of intensive work by Derwent London’s development directors Simon Silver and Paul Williams, project manager David Thurston, with architects AHMM, engineers AKT and many others.

The building has been extended forward with a gently curving frontage to St. John Street EC1, the ancient thoroughfare leading down to Clerkenwell and Smithfield. Entirely reclad in a crisp new system modelled on some of the great modernist buildings of the mid 20th century, it also has an extra roof storey, set back to provide deep roof terraces, particularly on the south and west sides.

The views from up here across to the City of London are remarkable — and remarkably similar in feel to historic engravings made right here to record the terminus of the New River, a Jacobean water-supply canal that was in use while Shakespeare was still alive. Later the New River Company turned to property, built extensively in the area, and is these days part of Derwent London. So you could say the company has been active here for more than 400 years. These days the views are of rather taller buildings than the spires of city churches recorded back then. But now as then, it’s the close proximity to the commercial activity of London — the City to the east and south, and today Kings Cross St Pancras to the west — that counts.





Far left:
The "Angel Kitchen",
the in-house cafe with
art by Indre Serpytyte
entitled
A State of Silence (shirts)

Top:
View of the
fifth floor offices

Bottom:
Looking towards the
reception desk with
art by Sachiyo Nishiruma
in foreground entitled
Landscape / Fiction 4

What was previously a large open courtyard inside the building has yielded further expansion space, now centred on a lofty atrium finished in silky-smooth sculptural concrete (modernist master architects Louis Kahn and Tadao Ando are the inspiration here, say AHMM's Simon Allford and Ian McArdle).

The atrium is roofed in inflated 'pillows' of transparent ETFE foil, while its floor — along with many of the common areas — is finished in a grid-pattern of small white marble blocks based on a 1950s Venetian design by another influence, Carlo Scarpa.

The office floorplates are large, divisible, and capable of various open-plan and part-cellular layouts, all focusing on the hub of the atrium. Everyone in the building has access to the roof terraces. A café-restaurant on the ground floor corner, the Angel Kitchen, is a valuable staff benefit that also opens up to the public realm. It is run by the highly-regarded Good Eating Company.



KEY COMPLETION
THE ANGEL BUILDING

New perimeter landscaping by J+L Gibbons creates a cooler microclimate between street and building, with a mix of mature new trees and sculpted groundcover. The overall effect is to help reconnect the public and private realms in a way that had been missing for 25 years.

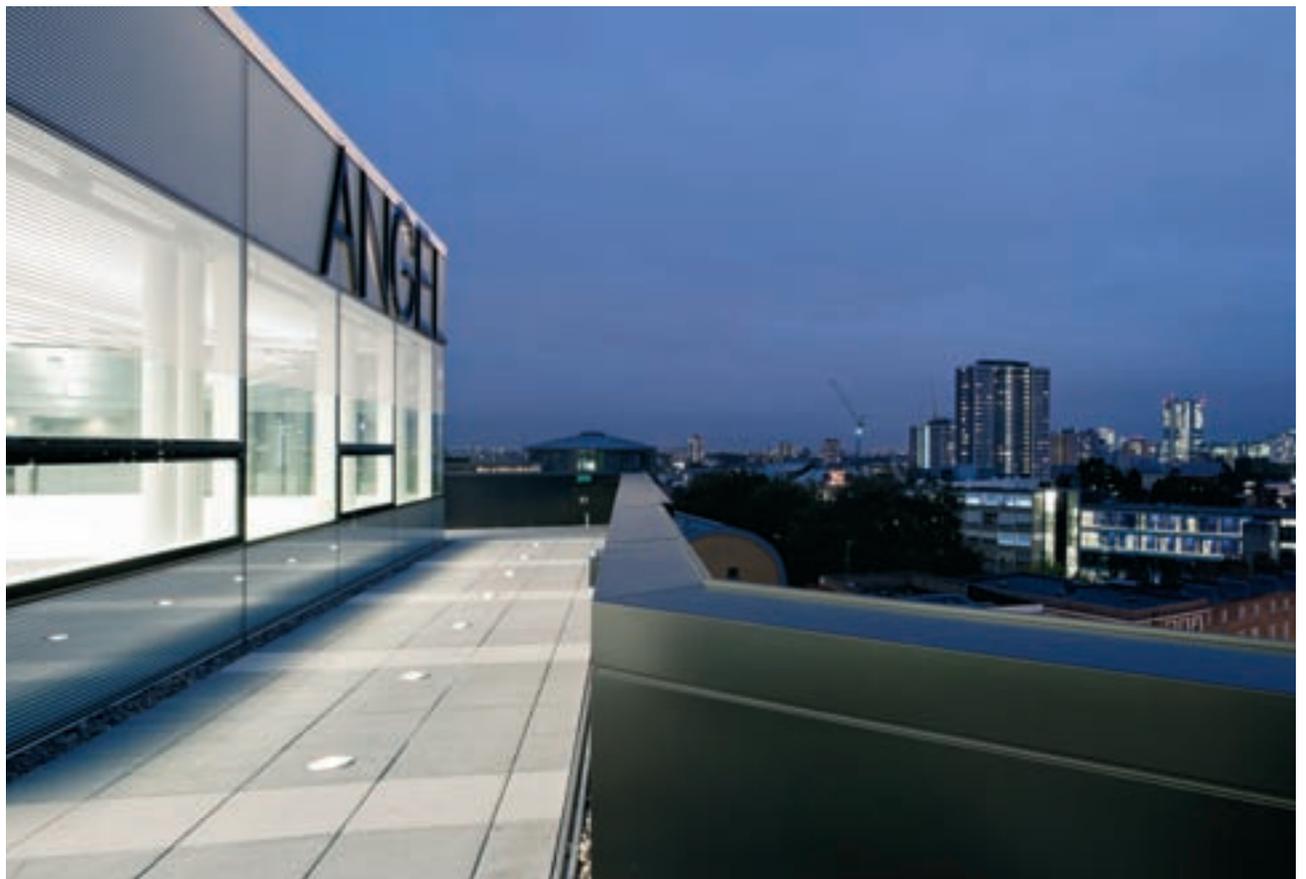
Over that period the neighbourhood has become one of London's liveliest villages, with its markets, independent shops, restaurants, theatres and cinemas and transport links making the Angel a social as well as a business focus, linking down St. John Street to the companion village of Clerkenwell.

Top:
Fifth floor terrace
with shaded
seating areas.

Bottom:
The Terrace
at Night

Far Right:
The main entrance
to the Angel Building
showing new landscaping
by J+L Gibbons.

www.angelbuilding.com







Teresita Fernandez
"Epic"



ART AT THE ANGEL BUILDING

Top:
Lewis Ronald
Untitled

Below:
Indre Serpytyte
State of Silence (shirts)



As in all its bigger projects, Derwent London has commissioned artists for the Angel Building, each of whom responds to the building in a highly individual way.

Teresita Fernández: Epic

To one side of the atrium is a large-scale work by the Brooklyn-based artist Teresita Fernández, called "Epic (August 21/Angel Building)". Looking like a cloud or swarm of tens of thousands of small objects, it is an act of implied movement, blurring boundaries between sculpture, installation and drawing. Fernández attaches each small piece of graphite to the wall with invisible magnets. As she describes it: "The lustrous, gem-like pieces cast what appear to be shadows that are actually soft graphite marks drawn directly on the wall. Object and process morph to become both the act of drawing and the finished mark, verb and noun. The entire dynamic composition recalls sweeping atmospheric clouds, grand natural phenomena or epic meteor events."

Ian McChesney: Out of the Strong

McChesney is an architect with a sculptural tendency. His piece — the focal point of the atrium — is a sculpture that is also useable furniture. Named "Out of the Strong Came Forth Sweetness" it takes the conventional requirement for reception-area seating, and turns it into something that is technically architecture, visually sculpture, and actually something between the two. McChesney responds to the height of the atrium by taking inspiration from an unlikely source: a spoonful of black treacle (the name is the biblical motto to be found on cans of Lyle's syrup). This viscous liquid pours off the spoon in a quite beautiful, almost motionless, cascade. McChesney takes the resulting form and inverts it. The spoon becomes the seating, a large oval bench finished in black leather hides. The pour of fluid becomes a tall, tapering forward-leaning black needle, made of polished carbon fibre.

Hales Gallery photography

Elsewhere, Derwent London has collaborated with the Hales Gallery — which happens to be a tenant of theirs in the Tea Building, Shoreditch — to present a collection of work by four photographers. The black and white pieces are by Robin Friend, Lewis Ronald, Indre Serpytyte, and Sachiyo Nishimura. Although obviously differing enormously in approach, these photographers all tackle subjects on both grand and intimate scales, from landscape to interiors. A special hanging system for the photographs has been developed with expert art framers John Jones.

www.lehmannmaupin.com
www.mcchesney.co.uk
www.halesgallery.com





WORDS: HUGH PEARMAN

WHITE COLLAR FACTORY UPDATE

Derwent London's research into a new kind of affordable no-frills workspace is now moving ahead with two large live projects, one new-build and one highly unusual conversion.

These are the fruits of the "White Collar Factory" initiative, developed by Derwent London with architects AHMM, engineers AKT and Arup, and cost consultants DLE, (see 'Space', Winter 2009 issue). The basic premise is to look to the industrial buildings of the past with their high ceilings, rugged exposed heat-regulating structure and natural ventilation — and, given how successful these can be when properly converted for office use, see how they can inform the office buildings of today.



INDUSTRY

The study came out of the recession: in belt-tightening times, with companies naturally seeking to reduce costs, it makes obvious sense to offer a good standard product that costs less to build, offers excellent value to rent and to run, but which is flexible enough to allow for higher specification add-ons such as full air-conditioning as and when.

The new-build project is in Derwent London's City Road Estate, a cluster of buildings south of the Old Street roundabout, right on the edge of the City. There, an existing group of time-expired 1960s slabs will be replaced by a sixteen-storey office building 50,500 sq ft of studio offices and 7,700 sq ft of residential. This literally stretches the WCF concept — which in studies tends to settle down at a five-storey height. But the thinking still works, and the project has been submitted for planning approval.

Right:
City Road proposals
by architects
Allford Hall Monaghan Morris





Moving ahead rather sooner is a scheme that is very different in every other way: the Hampstead Road development adjacent to the back of Euston Station. This 1970s former distribution warehouse and headquarters of BHS (formerly British Home Stores) was originally built in three phases. By adapting these, and adding a unifying new two-storey deck floating on top, some 233,000 sq ft of White Collar Factory space will be created. This is comparable with the Tea Building in Shoreditch, so plenty big enough for the kind of self-sustaining community that Derwent has the knack of attracting. This scheme — logical yet unorthodox at the same time — has now been submitted for planning and there is already interest from prospective tenants.

All being well, Hampstead Road should start on site in Autumn 2011, and the Old Street scheme towards the end of 2012. New types of workspace for changing times.

Left:
Hampstead Road
proposals by architects
Allford Hall Monaghan Morris





Hampstead Road
interior



City Road
entrance

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE WHITE COLLAR FACTORY IS TO OPTIMISE THE CLIMATE CONTROL BENEFITS OF THE BUILDING'S PASSIVE DESIGN (TALL CEILING, WELL INSULATED FAÇADE, EXPOSED MASS) AND TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF MECHANICAL AIR CONDITIONING REQUIRED. THE BUILDING IS NATURALLY VENTILATED AT THE PERIMETER WITH RADIANT SLABS PROVIDING COOLING.

1

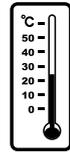
TALL CEILINGS



Increased flexibility of use: volume provides for retrofitting



Increased natural daylight penetration



Improved temperature comfort levels



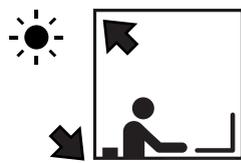
Efficient & even distribution of artificial lighting

2

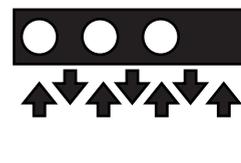
SMART SERVICING



Minimal provision i.e. no excessive 'kit'



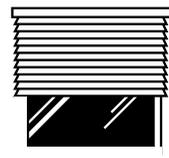
Maximum use of passive systems i.e. natural daylighting & ventilation



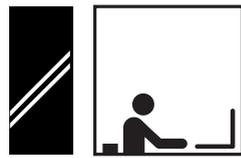
Radiant slab providing cooling

3

SIMPLE PASSIVE FACADE



Shading where necessary i.e. to south/east & west elevations depending on context



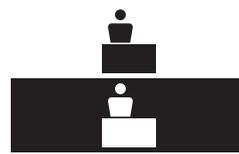
Openable windows controlled by users



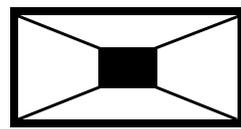
% of glazing varies to suit orientation i.e. more to the north, less to the south

4

FLEXIBLE FLOOR-PLATES



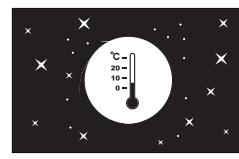
Potential for 2-way split tenancy per floor



Potential for optional voids between floors to connect tenancies

5

THERMAL-MASS STRUCTURE



Exposed concrete for thermal mass and night-time cooling



Minimise carbon footprint through use of GGBS concrete etc

TEA



PROJECT UPDATE

WORDS: HUGH PEARMAN

TEA BUILDING UPDATE

The Tea Building in Shoreditch is more than a mere building. Formerly tea warehouses as its name suggests, it is a complete city block, built in phases over many years in the early 20th century. These days, it is a community of creative industries, again built up in stages in the years since Derwent London first tackled the building. This is a place which never stands still. There are always changes afoot, and recently there have been some big ones.

The main entrance and internal “street” of the building (actually an original street that was later built over as the complex expanded) have been re-ordered by Derwent London’s Russell Durling working with the original architects, AHMM. There are new graphics by Morag Myerscough and art pieces by Andrew Bick and Ib Geertsen from the Hales and Rocket Galleries — both tenants in the building. Meanwhile another high-profile tenant, members’ club Shoreditch House, has opened Pizza East on the ground floor, now with a cavernous basement venue (“Concrete at Pizza East”) as well. Both make the most of the tough industrial aesthetic of the building.



Above & right:
Pizza East

Left:
Art-Tea series
by Morag Myerscough

But the biggest change is the opening of Shoreditch Rooms — a boutique hotel, again for Shoreditch House.

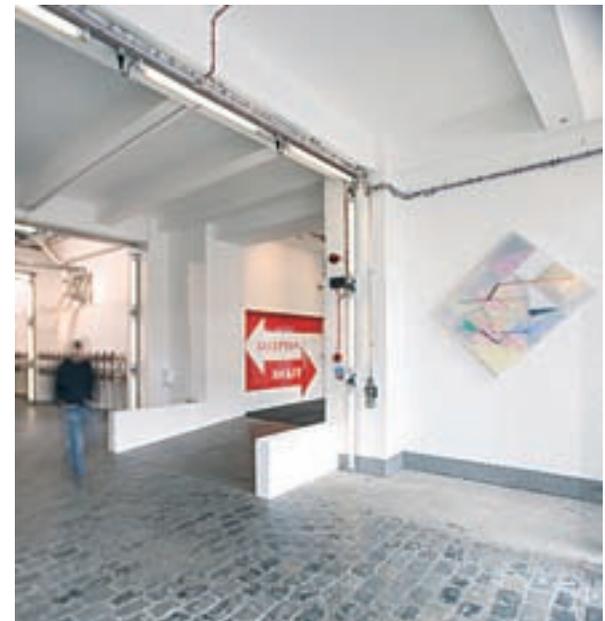
The former White Swan pub on the south-east corner of the complex, semi-derelict for years, has been extended vertically by Archer Architects — yes, another tenant — in the very different architectural language of oxidised steel.

The hotel, with 26 rooms in three sizes (counter intuitively called “Tiny” “Small” and “Small+” when even the smallest is of a decent size), has been running to capacity since it opened.

A new lift has been inserted exclusively for the hotel, which shares its foyer with Shoreditch House. At street level is a shop for the club’s “Cowshed” range of body products, with treatment rooms in the basement.

With three new floors, the hotel is twice the size of the old pub. It’s also handily right opposite the new Overground station of Shoreditch High Street, so very well connected. It’s a natural development of the club’s highly successful presence here.

www.teabuilding.co.uk

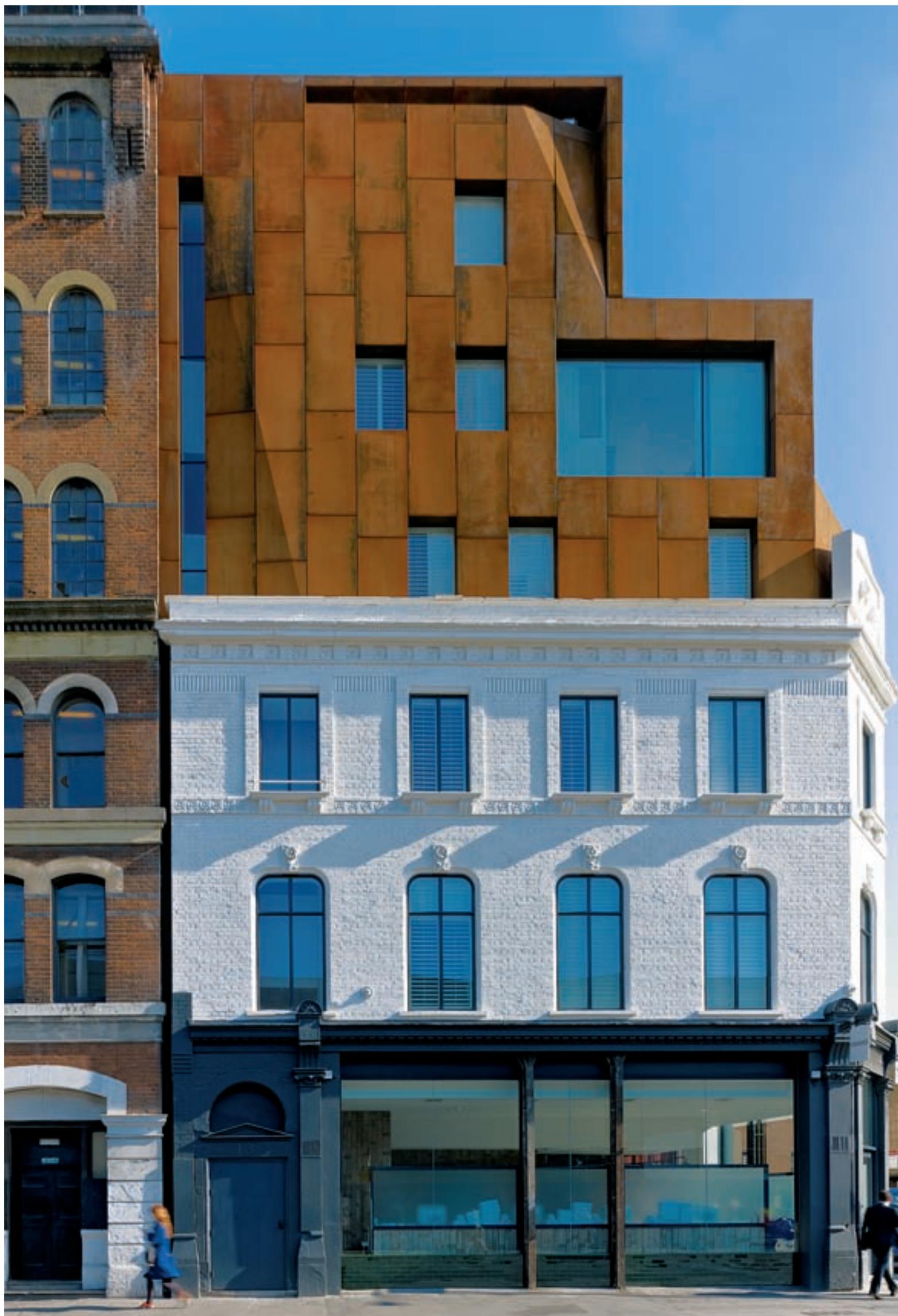


Above:
Artwork by Andrew Bick

Below:
Sculpture by Ib Geertsen

Top & middle:
The Internal Street
of the Tea Building

Bottom:
The exterior of Tea







PROJECT UPDATE

WORDS: HUGH PEARMAN

FITZROVIA UPDATE

With more than 30 buildings of all kinds in Fitzrovia, this represents Derwent London's largest single concentration of properties. A rolling programme of property upgrades is under way, all part of a long-term plan for this unique and characterful area.

A recent very successful refurbishment at 43 Whitfield Street, has rejuvenated this appealing 1950s corner building. Ben Adams Architects have provided good modern office space while celebrating original features such as its staircase. This is now the home for the London studio of Feilden Clegg Bradley Architects, Stirling Prize winners, and houses Derwent's Fitzrovia exhibition gallery.

Left:
The studios of
Feilden Clegg
Bradley Architects

PROJECT UPDATE
FITZROVIA

Nearby, another half dozen properties have also been much improved. 19—23 Fitzroy Street now has a refurbished ground floor, better shopfront and entrance, and new air-conditioning. A more fundamental upgrade has taken place at the south end of Fitzrovia, where a refurbished complex, 9—10 Rathbone Place, by architects Sergison Bates, backs onto Evelyn Yard behind, overlooked by the separate Courtyard Building and the award-winning Charlotte Building.

Elsewhere, architects Duggan Morris are under way with a light-touch upgrade to Maple Place and 12—16 Fitzroy Street behind — two buildings that can be let separately or linked internally if required.

As well as office and retail buildings, there is residential too.

For instance Derwent London has planning permission to convert a current brick office building, Suffolk House on Whitfield Place, into a residential block, designed by DSDHA Architects with an undulating roof extension.

An exciting prospect for the future is the Saatchi complex at the top end of Charlotte Street, involving a number of buildings and new public realm.

This will be submitted for planning before the end of 2010. In the meantime, there are plenty of options available for the creative-industries tenants that Derwent London habitually attracts to Fitzrovia.

Derwent's Fitzrovia Exhibition is open at 43 Whitfield Street, 10 — 11am Mon-Fri. All the latest proposals that the company has for the area are displayed here and are updated regularly.

Left & Right:
Early proposals for
80 Charlotte Street &
new Pocket Park

Below:
View of
Whitfield Street

Your
Fitzrovia







WORDS: MATTHEW ENGEL

TCT UNIT

This is the 14th Teenage Cancer Trust (TCT) unit, a striking aluminium-clad extension to the oncology ward at Birmingham Children's Hospital. No, not Britain's most beautiful setting — but perhaps TCT's most remarkable contribution yet to improving facilities for Britain's young cancer patients. Because they said it couldn't be done.

All views:
New TCT unit at
Birmingham
Children's Hospital
by architects
Lifschutz Davidson
Sandilands

Five years ago, my 13-year-old son Laurie died of a vile form of cancer.

He had been in Birmingham, where the staff were terrific — no one could have done more. But the ward was horrid: cramped, inadequate and infantile, completely inappropriate for older kids whose lives have suddenly been savaged by cancer and are desperate for a touch of normality. It made Laurie's situation avoidably worse.

When he died, my wife Hilary and I wanted to do SOMETHING. Groping in the dark, we discovered TCT, formed the Laurie Engel Fund under their aegis, and began raising money.

For what? We weren't quite sure. Conventional wisdom was that the hemmed-in Birmingham site was simply impossible.

In December 2005 I wrote an article in *The Guardian** telling Laurie's story. Two important people saw it. One was the then chief executive of the children's hospital, Paul O'Connor, who realised something had to be done. The other was my old schoolfriend, Derwent director Simon Silver.

So the search began for a solution.

The crucial breakthrough was the realisation that, with no room on the ground, the only way was up. The new unit, designed by Julian Gregson of Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, is built above the ambulance bay and slots into the old ward via a walkway. It is wonderfully imaginative.



TEENAGE CANCER TRUST

The unit opened in February this year. It seems to me like the Tardis: an astonishing use of space.

The kids and staff have told me heart-warming stories about how the mood of the patients has been transformed by the facilities, and the companionship.

The nicest tribute came from Mercy the cleaner: "It's loovely," she said.

Our work is not finished, though. The unit is not paid for yet. We want to ensure the unit looks as good in Year 5 as it did on Day 1, and that TCT has the biggest cash pile possible to move on to its other urgent projects.

But it has all been astonishing.

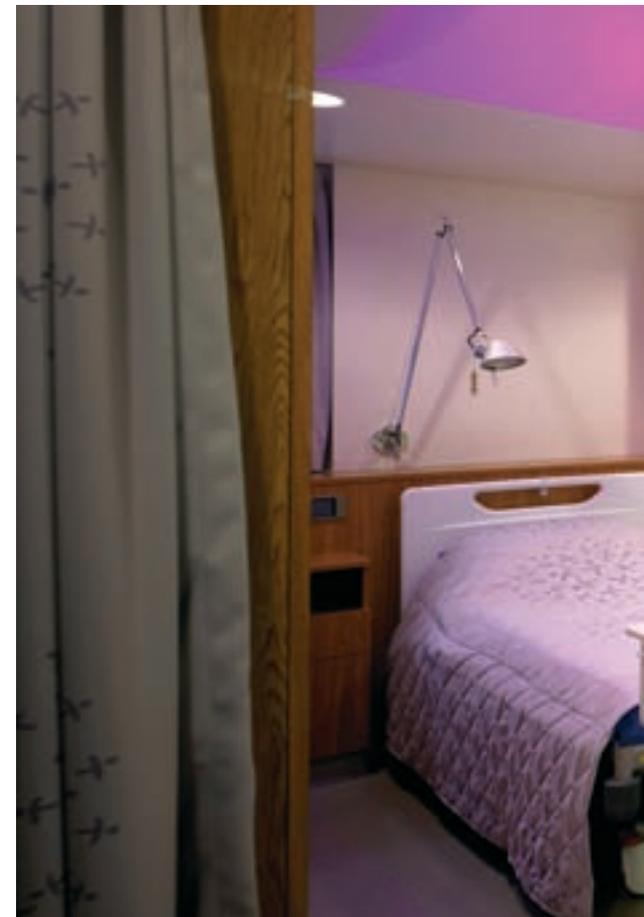
The Laurie Engel Fund's first target was £10,000.

A fundraising lunch organised by Derwent, in London this May took our fund over £1m.

We are hugely grateful.

Right:
Interiors
of TCT ward

www.laurieengelfund.org
www.teenagecancertrust.org



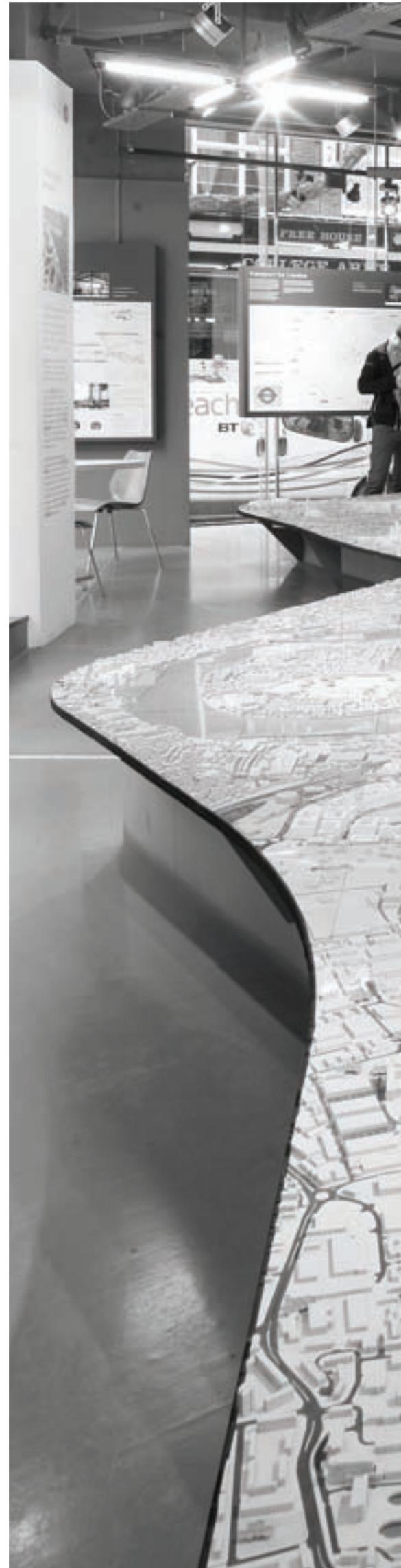




WORDS: PETER MURRAY

NLA

It is just five years ago that London won its bid for the Olympics. Five years since the bombings in the Tube and the day a red London bus was ripped asunder in Tavistock Square. That was the day we opened New London Architecture (NLA) at the Building Centre in Store Street.





My taxi driver had been complaining about the traffic; the news said there had been an electrical fault in the underground. As he accelerated from the lights at Woburn Place, the sort of unforgettable thump that I hadn't heard since the days when the IRA was active in London, confirmed our worst fears.

Looking back over the intervening years and the growth of the NLA as the centre for discussion and debate about planning and development issues in the capital, the memories of that heady day followed by numbing tragedy, reinforce my views about the resilience of London as a place and as a society.

At the NLA we illustrate through models and exhibitions what is happening in London in planning, architecture and development; we hold lectures, seminars, debates, networking events and discussions about related issues. We are supported financially by our members — of which Derwent London is one of the most generous. There is nowhere else in London where the wide range of professionals, public, planners and politicians can meet together to openly discuss issues of concern in 'neutral territory'.

As we face an uncertain future, with public sector cuts, increasing localism and the reorganisation of quangos like the Homes and Communities and London Development Agencies, the sort of discussion that regularly happen at NLA take on even greater significance.

The NLA is an exhibition and seminar space, but it also a complex network of the wide range of players who form our future environment, and those who ensure it maintains its pre-eminence as an international trading. In periods of change we need openness, debate, ideas and vision. Over the next five years this is just what we plan to provide.

Left:
Pipers Central London
model at NLA

Far left:
NLA Galleries at
the Building Centre

www.newlondonarchitecture.org

ADAMS KARA TAYLOR

It's hardly an understatement to say that structural and civil engineering lacks glamour — but, fortunately for Space readers, Adams Kara Taylor is the exception. Nicknamed “engineers to the stars” by the Architects' Journal, their much-envied client roster includes celebrated architects such as Simon Allford, Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid and Will Alsop, and leading developers such as Derwent London. They also work with bona fide stars too, such as Madonna, with whom they are currently building a mud-brick, concrete and timber school for girls in Malawi.

By reputation, Adams Kara Taylor (AKT) thinks more like designers than your common garden structural engineers. As such, they embrace the kind of intricate concepts that leave their peers scratching their heads; they succeed in making structures stand up that are so complex people said they could not be built, as well as for taking old structures and making them shiny and new again, all the while remaining painstakingly faithful to the architects' visions.

“Right from the beginning, we wanted to work with quality and innovation as key drivers,” says co-founder and partner Hanif Kara, who formed the company in 1995 with Robin Adams and Albert Williamson-Taylor.

“We never wanted to do the stuff that everybody else does well. We wanted to engage with the extremes, the coolest developers and architects — to go for big names but also young students; the ones who had the top end and the ones who were agile in their approach but also were thinking long term.”

But big names often tend to work with big names — and despite the trio's previous experience at YRM Anthony Hunt Associates, they were still perceived as newcomers. The breakthrough finally came in 2000 in the form of Will Alsop's renowned Peckham Library.

“They said it couldn't be built...”

smiles Kara, a phrase he repeats so often during our interview it begins to sound like a mantra.

Working with Derwent London was a long-held ambition:

“Derwent are right up there: star developers,”

says Kara. “It's not just about engineering: it's a lifestyle choice. You want your company to be part of their family — because you don't want to be dragged down to average.” Derwent and AKT have now collaborated on several projects, including the Charlotte Building and the Angel Building. “The people are wonderful,” says Kara. “They don't have hierarchical problems like some clients have. Some clients won't take a call from one of my guys as we are only engineers. But it's not like that with Derwent, they're very hands-on and strive for quality.”

Based in Clerkenwell, AKT has 140 staff of 36 nationalities, and works across the globe, from the USA to Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Its open-minded, meritocratic culture — young talent is actively nurtured and



encouraged — and global perspective in part reflects its founders' ethnic mix: Williamson-Taylor is black, Robin Adams is white and Kara is Indian.

But although AKT are in many ways a thoroughly modern company, Kara is quick to point out that they look just as much to the past for inspiration as to the future. "When we formed, our desire was to return to something very old," he says. "The British engineer was a craftsman, and was very knowledgeable about how things are made. Back in 1995 we felt that we, as engineers, were losing that. We were becoming too intellectual, as a result of not exporting much craft.

"What we needed to do was return to the basics, to understand how to weld and so on; to return to how to *make* buildings in order to *design* them a better way without ignoring the latest advanced digital tools that give us the edge."



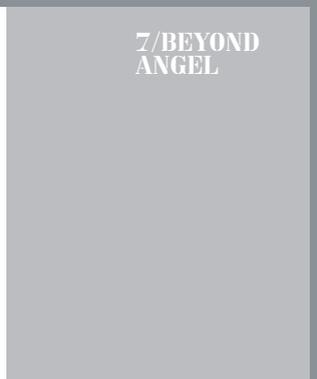
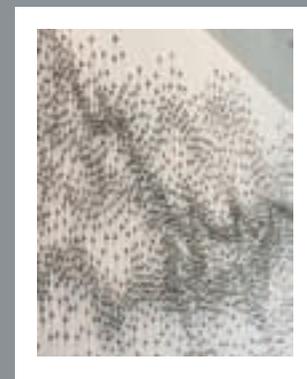
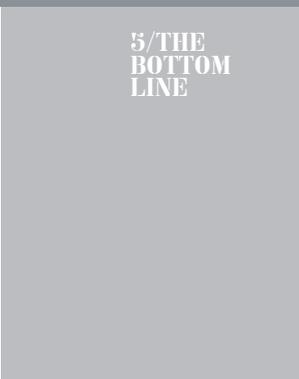
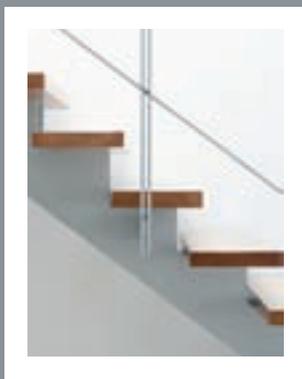
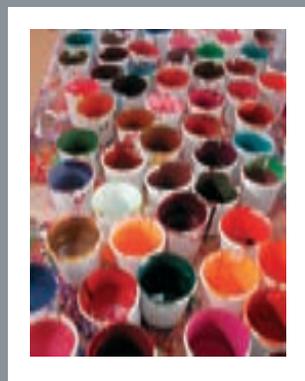
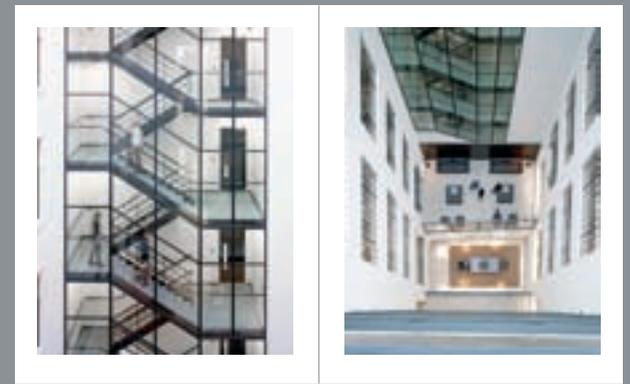
Above:
LSE Library

Top:
The Yellow Building,
Monsoon Accessorize
Head Office

Left:
UK Pavilion,
Expo 2010 Shanghai

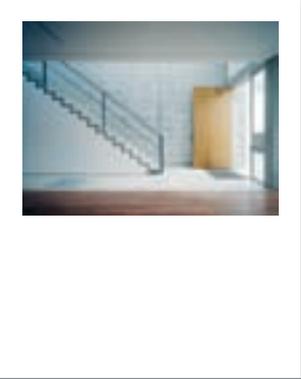
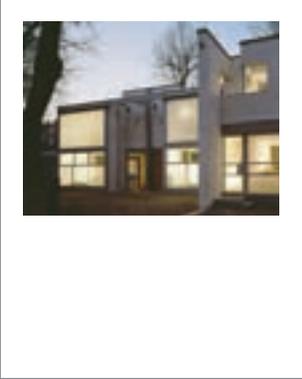
THE STORY OF DERWENT LONDON

A preview of Derwent London's forthcoming book 'The River and the Railway' designed by Cartlidge Levene due to be published in the new year.





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