

# 009

## SQUIRE & PARTNERS

By Hattie Hartman

Shortlisted for the Practice of the Year award, Squire & Partners has climbed three places to enter the AJ120 top 10 in the current table. No surprise for a practice whose pipeline is a Who's Who of London's most prestigious clients, from the Shell Centre to New Scotland Yard and Chelsea Barracks. A full 90 per cent of the current portfolio is London-based, of which 73 per cent is with repeat clients. Ranked number 43 in 2011 with 46 permanently employed qualified architects, Squire & Partners crossed the 100-architects threshold in 2014, more than doubling its employee count in just three years.

Henry Squire currently leads the practice with two other partners, while his father, practice founder Michael Squire, retains an active role as senior partner. Henry Squire cites one current challenge as 'maintaining a family atmosphere and a small practice feel'. The practice values sociability, with inclusive weekly design reviews on Friday mornings, summer days out and an annual three-day office trip – in 2013 everyone went to Istanbul. An in-house bar at St Chad's Place, adjacent to its office in King's Cross, is housed in a building refurbished by the practice's active development team.

Having outgrown its current premises, Squire & Partners purchased an existing building in Brixton last year which will be refurbished as its new 'creative hub'. Following upwards of 10 internal design charrettes exploring different aspects of the new office design from the reception area to the loos, the practice hired out Brixton's Ritzy Cinema for a presentation on the proposed design to all staff. The move is anticipated in late 2016.

When it comes to design ethos, the Squire mantra is 'Crafted architecture unique to place'. And this approach has won favour with many top London clients. Projects for Qatari Diar, Lend Lease, Berkeley Homes, Derwent and St George's will complete in the next two to three years.

Speaking to the AJ on the occasion of the practice's silver jubilee in 2002, Michael Squire observed: 'Materiality is a key theme: we don't suffer from the high-tech preoccupation with lightness. We use a lot of brick and stone, but in a modern way.' That remains just as true today. The practice has established a strong track record of

residential and commercial projects in central London conservation areas. Kingswood, a 13-unit luxury development on a prominent corner of Hans Place in Knightsbridge is a case in point, with discrete contemporary detailing using traditional rose-red brick. But Henry Squire is quick to rebuff the view that the practice's architecture is bland. 'Often when we present our work, people are surprised by what we're up to. Working in Westminster requires restraint; elsewhere we have more freedom,' he says.

He continues: 'We like our work to be a contemporary evolution of the cityscape, not something that has landed from outer space.'

Among the practice's more daring departures are the cylindrical 18-storey Art'otel (a revised scheme is currently in planning) clad in bronzed perforated aluminium, and Mayfair House (2013), a private house in the Mayfair conservation area clad in leaf-like metallic shingles.

On the international front, six buildings currently on site in Doha form part of Alliey and Morrison's Msheireb masterplan. Henry Squire explains his father's cautious approach to international expansion is because his grandfather had 'offices in every country between here and Singapore and went bust quite a few times. Dad was slightly scarred by that.' The practice is cautiously exploring opportunities abroad with clients who want carefully crafted buildings, not just a signature design. A residential project under way in St Petersburg and a recent competition win in Moscow might lead to further work in Russia.

As its 40th anniversary approaches next year, this is a practice we are going to hear a lot more from. Henry Squire notes that 'for many years our raison d'être was to become an established practice. Now we are trying to establish our identity as partners and we can start to embellish ourselves in terms of design. We've grown more confident expressing ourselves.'

**103**  
EMPLOYED  
ARCHITECTS

**41%**  
FEMALE  
ARCHITECTS

**12**  
2014  
POSITION

BERKELEY HOMES: 375 KENSINGTON HIGH STREET / SQUIRE & PARTNERS

