

This image The newly refurbished reception area has retained the original staircase, and features a reclaimed wood floor and a bench with laser-cut motifs

PROJECT 2

GREENCOAT HOUSE II, LONDON

Squire and Partners has made a triumphant return to an office building it worked on 14 years ago to transform it again to a location at the cutting-edge of design

WHAT GOES AROUND comes around: it rings true for London-based architecture practice Squire and Partners, after being invited to revisit its 2000 refurbishment of Greencoat House near London's Victoria station. The practice has completed the building's second transformation, after building owner Derwent London decided to upgrade the interiors to suit the needs of its new tenants, one of which is advertising firm VCCP, leasing the office and studio spaces. I met Tim Gledstone, partner at Squire and Partners, to take a look at the practice's latest refurbishment to the project, first worked on 14 years ago (see FX May 2001).

WORDS
BY EMILY
MARTIN

'Both Squire and Partners and Derwent London have grown and evolved over this time, as have the tenants at Greencoat House, changing from primarily TV to advertising and design,' explains Gledstone of the former Victorian depository. Having worked on the 2000 project and 2014 refurbishment, he says: 'This latest refurbishment reflects the evolution of the architect-developer relationship, as well as the tenants', but retains the building fabric and heritage as the main driving force.'

The building's industrial character continues to inspire the design scheme as seen when entering the reception area, with painted dark-grey steel beams, reclaimed timber floors and the beautiful original staircase as the design focal points. New furniture additions include folded black-metal benches with a laser-cut-motif detail drawn from the staircase, creating an over-all feel more like a gallery than a reception space. A dark steel reception desk and new signage is also designed to complement the industrial aesthetic.

The new and blue steel panels, which clad the lift reveals and feature rivets to further accentuate the industrial feel of the space. But I'm drawn back to the still magnificent staircase and ascend to the next level via its original woodblock floor, industrial beams and subtle >



design detailing between the treads; the key characteristics to visually summarise the building's fabric elements.

Upstairs corridors reveal vaulted concrete ceilings, which were exposed and highlighted with new linear suspended light fittings, with floor layouts working a 'circular space' around a central light well and new staggered gardens.

Transformed to become naturally ventilated semi-external terraces, accessed directly from office tenancies, each garden is furnished with bespoke planters and timber benches to provide a unique break-out space on each floor. 'The idea to create the gardens using the existing service lightwells provides each floor with its own "outdoor space" under a ETFE roof,' says Gledstone. 'Fan ventilation systems had previously been inserted into these wells, which meant we had to relocate the services to the roof of the building.'

Tenant VCCP commissioned interior architecture firm Spacelab to design its office space in collaboration with Squire and Partners, to complement the rest of the building's design scheme. Explains Gledstone: 'While Squire and Partners was the designer for the whole building refurbishment, we enjoyed the collaborative nature of the tenancy design. We worked alongside Spacelab to create spaces to work with the character of the building rather than them having their own identity, which doesn't relate to the overall aesthetic.'

Commissioned to deliver the new interior scheme – which included a reception refreshment area and large, open meeting space, meeting rooms, booths, soft seating, stand-up meeting rooms, tea points and dining benches – Spacelab's design scheme was also careful to enhance the industrial feel of the original building. Meeting rooms are designed as plywood boxes, which are dropped below ceiling level to appear like stand-alone installations. The resulting shadow gap enhances the vaulted brick ceilings and iron

PROJECT INFO

Client
Derwent London

Architect
Squire and Partners

VCCP's office interior design
Spacelab

Size
6,132 sq m

Duration
18 months

Cost
Confidential

columns of the existing interior, and serves as a homage to the historic structure.

The refurbishment work was done at weekends over a 12-month period. I ask, is there any scope for further work to be commissioned by the client? 'We are currently on site to create duplex office suites in a series of former House of Fraser loading bays,' says Gledstone. In addition Squire and Partners is exploring options for a network of basement spaces to be combined and converted into a health club.

'In 2020, Francis House – the building that connects Greencoat House to the office buildings in Greencoat Place – will become free for conversion, and we hope to continue the journey with Derwent London and complete the urban block that we started designing in the late Nineties.' **FX**
squireandpartners.com;
spacelab.co.uk

Above left and above top
The building's new staggered gardens in the lightwell provide unique break-outs on each floor

Above right Rivets in the lift's steel reveals enhance the building's industrial feel

Below A view down the original Victorian staircase, with wood block tread detail



MAIN SUPPLIERS

Lighting
Atrium
atrium.ltd.uk

Flooring
Floors of Old
floorsofold.co.uk
Watco UK
watco.co.uk

Signage
Sign Box
signbox.co.uk

Architectural Metalwork (including bespoke bench)
Excel Architectural Engineering
eae-ltd.co.uk

ETFE Roofing
Vector Foiltec
vector-foiltec.com