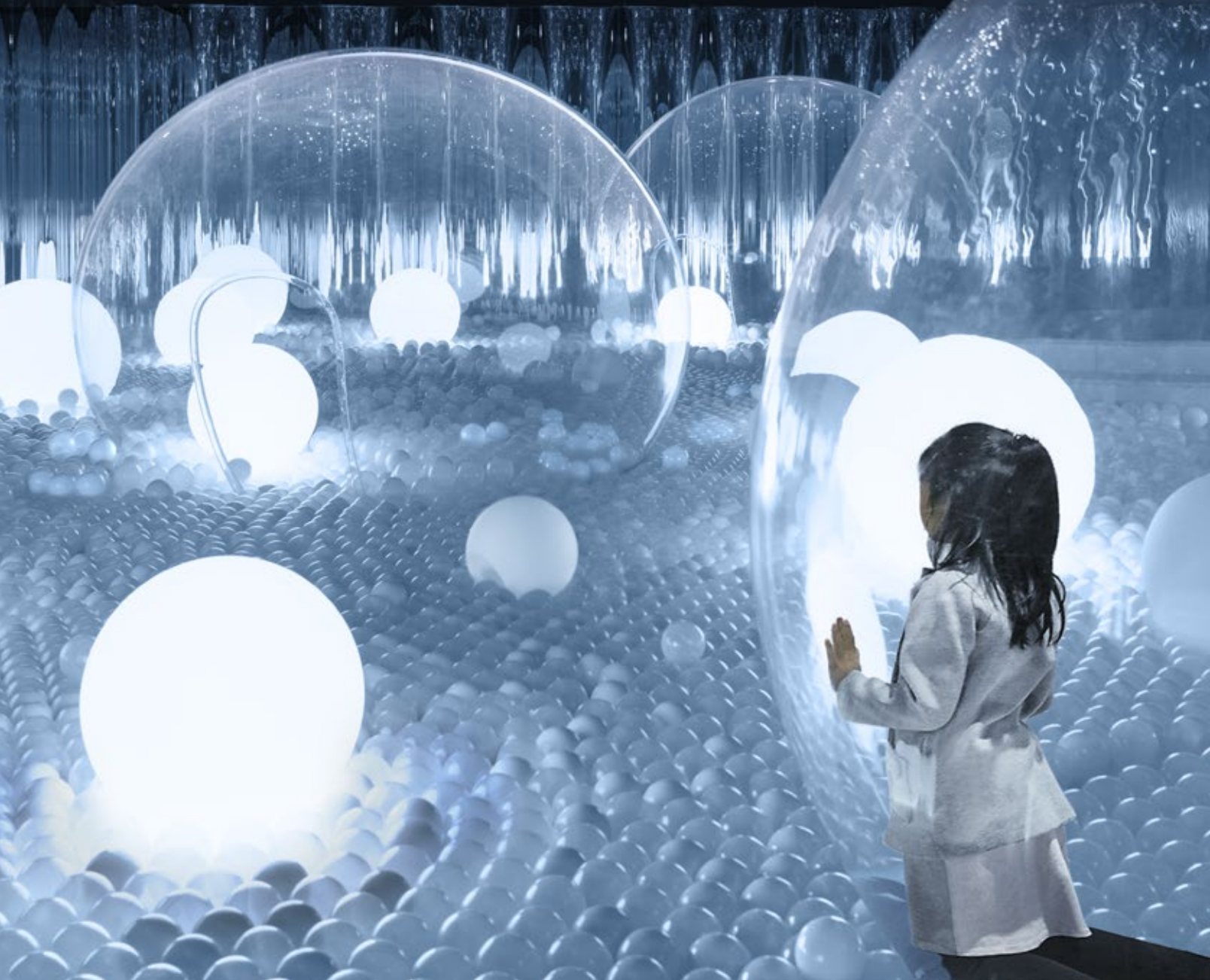


# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

JULY  
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out of this world



# an air of the past

*Squire and Partners transforms a cluster of historic London buildings into a contemporary mixed-use complex—and its office*

*text: giovanna dunmall  
photography: james jones*





If there was ever a project that shows how to pay tribute to a heritage building's past while propelling it into the present day, then the London office of Squire and Partners is a strong contender. The architecture firm repurposed a derelict annex of an 1870's former Bon Marché department store—and an adjoining Victorian Gothic former firehouse—into a mixed-use entity now collectively and aptly known as the Department Store. It contains Squire's new office, which had been located in a too-small modernist building with skyrocketing rents, along with public retail and dining spaces and a post office. The approach was respectful, focusing on craftsmanship, but also bold. Squire built an addition to the roof, punched through walls and



**Previous spread:** In London, Squire and Partners combined a former Bon Marché annex and an adjoining firehouse into a mixed-use complex housing its studio, with the ground-floor model shop displaying the firm's own balloon installation during the London Design Festival.

**Top:** The annex's early-1900's facade was updated with custom steel-framed windows and granite columns customized to replicate the originals. **Bottom:** A Ludwig Mies van der Rohe daybed furnishes Squire's reception area.

**Opposite top:** Crystal pendant globes hang above the firm's custom reception desk in glass, mahogany, and metal-resin composite. **Opposite bottom:** A custom brass handrail embellishes the existing mahogany main stairwell.

floors, left brickwork around doors raw and jagged, and exposed exquisite tile- and metalwork on the main staircase as well as the layers of paint, history, and graffiti that had accumulated over the decades in the city's rapidly gentrifying Brixton neighborhood.

"Knowing how much to intervene was the biggest challenge for us," head of interior design Maria Cheung says. "In the end, we agreed to a very simple set of rules: If it's existing, leave or reveal it, keep the mechanicals exposed so the original ceilings can be seen, and paint any new walls with just a base coat." Several times contractors asked the team, *Don't you want us to skim that wall and paint it?* The answer was always a firm *no*. Slowly, original brick- and woodwork, tile, marble, and terracotta elements were brought back to life. Throughout, the existing floor planks—teak, mahogany, and oak—were exposed, restored, and sealed.

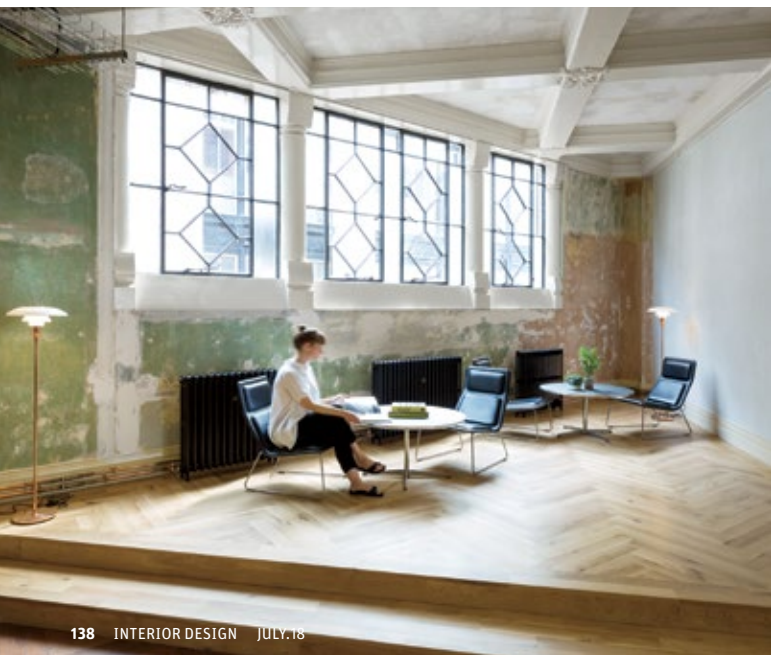
The 65,000-square-foot, five-story annex dates to 1906, when it was constructed in the Edwardian style to house Bon Marché's furnishings department. Inspired by the origins, the Squire team designed or sourced pieces with a department-store aesthetic or functionality everywhere possible. Display cabinets, credenzas, ornate railings, and even the modular plywood workstations with ample open storage have a sort of refined retail aura.

The greatest homage is paid on the ground level, with its steel-framed windows and patterned parquet flooring. There, the enormous reception desk was conceived as a haberdashery display. Instead of its 21-foot-long





"Knowing how much to intervene was the biggest challenge for us"



**Top:** Office areas are delineated by plywood desk and shelving systems, both custom.  
**Bottom:** Jasper Morrison chairs meet original teak flooring in a break-out area.  
**Opposite:** Wall art composed of two different shades of electrical tape accompanies Hans Wegner chairs in the illustration department. ➤





**Top, from left:** Polished powder-coated stainless-steel elevator doors. An original cast-iron staircase. Plywood flooring in one of Squire's restrooms digitally printed with a pattern by Eley Kishimoto. A new glass-and-steel dome topping the existing stone tower, now a private dining room. Custom glass pendant fixtures in the firm library. **Bottom, from left:** The stairwell's restored metal balustrade. Patina on original brickwork. A steel sliding door before refurbishment. Teak floor planks in the firm's workshop.

glass top showcasing handkerchiefs and ties, it's populated with tidy rows of maquettes of and awards from Squire projects. Local metal artisans Ian and Richard Abell of Based Upon fronted the desk with textured panels in their signature *tramozone*, a metal-resin composite.

Elsewhere in the complex, Squire called upon additional local and

fashion house Eley Kishimoto. Mark Eley and Wakako Kishimoto created several patterns derived from what Cheung says are "the beautiful details and motifs" they found in windows, tile, skylights, and metalwork. The patterns were then applied to large handmade rugs in the common areas, parquet flooring in the elevators, and, most originally, the brass-trimmed



international craftsmen for era-appropriate details, such as brass door handles, glass pendant fixtures, and sculptural installations. "We really sought to convey to people how interested we are in the making process—and how to make things well," partner Tim Gledstone adds.

Arguably the most compelling and original of these designer-maker collaborations was with London

plywood inserts used to mark any new thresholds created by the architects. Elsewhere, artistic handiwork was by Squire's own brood. Using black and gray electrical tape, members of the illustration department emblazoned one of its walls with a latticelike pattern derived from the framework of the rooftop's new dome.

The Squire team also cleared out an existing floor to make room for two ➤



private dining rooms used by Squire employees and available for rent by the public. One, double-height and furnished with Naoto Fukasawa armchairs, is topped with the aforementioned dome, it's early-1900's copper cupola now replaced with steel-framed green glass. Meals also take place in the penthouse addition, Squire's oak-framed pavilion with copper roof shingles referencing the original cupola.

Inside the penthouse, it's funky and comfy: A vibrant green rug patterned with an Eley Kishimoto oversize floral anchors a charcoal-gray sectional by Rodolfo Dordoni, and copper paneling adds shimmer and shine. At night, the space is Upstairs, a members-only bar and restaurant. By day, it's the Squire staff canteen, the myriad glass doors opening to a landscaped terrace—outfitted with a very modern-day ping-pong table. 🍷



**Top:** Paul Henningsen's lamp illuminates a stained-plywood alcove. **Bottom:** Granite pavers line the rooftop terrace off the penthouse addition.

**Opposite top:** Wooden floor planks salvaged from the building form a custom table in a private dining room.

**Opposite bottom:** A Rodolfo Dordoni sectional outfits the penthouse.

 [interiordesign.net/squireandpartners18](https://www.instagram.com/interiordesign.net/squireandpartners18) for more images of the project



**PROJECT TEAM**

**MICHAEL SQUIRE; TIM MUST; CATHERINE FARRELL; LAUREN CHUA; STEVE THORPE; SOPHIE ROBSON-DAVIES; ALICE ALDOUS:** SQUIRE AND PARTNERS. **COOLGARDENS LANDSCAPING:** LANDSCAPING CONSULTANT. **STUDIOFRACTAL:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT. **DAVIES MAGUIRE:** STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. **DSA ENGINEERING:** MEP. **JON DINGLE:** PLANNING CONSULTANT. **CARPENTER OAK; INTERIOR ID:** WOODWORK. **STONEFORCE:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

**PRODUCT SOURCES**

**FROM FRONT DOMUS TILES:** TILE (EXTERIOR). **NIS SIGNS:** CUSTOM SIGNAGE. **EUROMARBLE:** CUSTOM COLUMNS. **KNOLL:** DAYBED (RECEPTION). **MUNNA:** CHAIRS. **LAGUNA RUGS:** CUSTOM RUGS (RECEPTION, PENTHOUSE, DINING ROOM). **LOUIS POULSEN:** LAMPS (RECEPTION, BREAK-OUT AREA, ALCOVE). **OPUS MAGNUM:** CUSTOM WALL PANEL (RECEPTION), CUSTOM DESKS, SQUARE TABLE (OFFICE AREA), CUSTOM SHELVING (BREAK-OUT AREA), CUSTOM COCKTAIL TABLES (LOUNGE), CUSTOM TABLE (DINING ROOM). **LASVIT:** CUSTOM PENDANT FIXTURES (RECEPTION). **VITRA:** CHAIRS (OFFICE AREA). **CAPPELLINI:** CHAIRS (BREAK-OUT AREA). **FRITZ HANSEN:** TABLES. **CARL HANSEN & SØN:** CHAIRS (ILLUSTRATION DEPARTMENT, WORKSHOP). **MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC CORPORATION:** DOORS (ELEVATORS). **TUCHSCHMID:** CUSTOM DOME (TOWER). **JANUA:** TABLE (WORKSHOP). **SAMUEL HEATH:** DOOR PULL. **INTERVARI:** CUSTOM SHELVING (WORKSHOP), CUSTOM CREDENZAS (DINING ROOM), CUSTOM WALL PANELS (PENTHOUSE). **FERMOB:** TABLES, CHAIRS (TERRACE). **THROUGH VIADUCT FURNITURE:** CHAIRS (DINING ROOM). **MINOTTI:** SECTIONAL (PENTHOUSE). **STOVAX:** FIREPLACE. **THROUGHTOUT CRITTALL WINDOWS:** CUSTOM WINDOWS, CUSTOM DOORS. **ORIGINAL BTC:** CUSTOM PENDANT FIXTURES. **FLOS:** LINEAR FIXTURES.