





## PROJECT 2

## 6 Warwick Street, Soho

Squire and Partners set out to rework this Soho office building to reflect the area's inherent creativity and its past inhabitants with a new facade and interiors inspired by Soho habitué Francis Bacon and his fellow Colony Room Clubbers

WORDS  
BY ELLEN  
PEIRSON

IMAGES BY  
GARETH  
GARDNER

**HAVING** completed 30 Warwick Street in Soho, in 2006, Squire and Partners has recently turned its attention down the road, to 6 Warwick Street. For this building it has created a woven glazed brick facade, referencing the site's textile history and the area's inherent creative spirit.

Warwick Street has a rich history that goes way beyond Soho's current image as a party district. The air used to be filled with the creative, rebellious spirit of young British artists – establishing a place where misfits and outsiders could fit in. Scratch the surface of Warwick Street's pavements, and you'd find the paint splattered footprints of the artists and creatives who made Soho their home.

The site has always been a place of craft, going back to its days as home to the master fabric weaver, Holland and Sherry, when Francis Bacon and his contemporaries would wander the surrounding streets on their way to the Colony Room Club in Dean Street, a private members club for the heavy-drinking artist elite, co-founded by Bacon himself. To some the club was a symbol of Soho as a place of freedom – accepting men and women, all races, sexualities and appearances, in a post-war era when women had been told to return >



**PROJECT INFO**

<b>Client</b>
Royal London Mutual Insurance Society
<b>Architect</b>
Squire and Partners <i>squireandpartners.com</i>
<b>Completion</b>
March 2018
<b>Gross internal floor area</b>
Office: 1715 sq m
<b>Gross internal floor area</b>
Retail: 346 sq m
<b>Annual predicted CO2 emissions/sq m</b>
40.05 kg

to their domestic duties and pubs closed at 3pm. It cemented the district's position in London as a place that bred creativity, right up until the day it closed in 2008. This lost London element of Bohemia is where Squire and Partners' inspiration came for its refit of the Eighties' office block – hoping to reclaim at least a fraction of the creative spirit that The Colony Room Club brought to Soho area.

Squire and Partners took inspiration from the surreal nature of Bacon's work in order to mirror his erratic, eccentric life in Soho. In some respects Warwick Street is an attempt to build a new spiritual home for Bacon, in the wake of the Colony Room Club's demise. An irregular folded mansard roof creates an extra floor, sitting on top of the remodelled facade, in resonance with the individuality and creativity of the area and designed to emulate the skylight in the converted coach house in South Kensington where Bacon lived and painted.

This folded form is carried into the building and reflected in the reception desk, again in a nod to the definitive spirit of creativity and nonconformism in Soho. Also designed by Squire and Partners is an abstracted canvas clad in silver leaf in the reception space, inspired by Bacon, and created by the practice's in-house model shop. Tim Gledstone, partner at Squire and Partners says of the scheme: 'Traditional elements of the building, such as the facade, mansard roof and reception desk, evolve through these layers and emerge surreally enhanced, capturing Soho's playful and creative spirit.'

This vibrant history echoes through the walls of the Warwick Street building. Its previous post-modern façade (a movement steeped in rebellion), had created a closed-off building, disengaged from the streetscape. Squires and Partners has worked with this existing building to create a fluid connection between it and the public realm, adding an additional layer of intrigue with new facade in a woven, glazed Umbra Sawtooth brick. The woven texture is strict and angular, but softened and offset by the unpredictable but striking fired green glaze. It is a modern take on green Victorian glazed brick that is a Soho vernacular. >

**Previous page** The building has a new facade and an extra floor with a folded mansard roof

**Above** The woven brick appearance of the facade is repeated in the reception area

**Below** The new woven facade is in a fired green-glazed Umbra Sawtooth brick





**Above** The new folded mansard roof, styled on Bacon's studio, has created a ceiling of sloped planes

**Below** White terrazzo stairs and black balustrade are contrasted with gold-coloured tread edges and handrail

These green accents, between the stone spandrels, are a subtle nod to the area's textile heritage, while simultaneously animating the facade in both colour and form. By opening on up the facade with full-height window bays, retail units on the ground floor create an impact on the street, while the offices above are flooded with natural daylight. Beyond these statement design choices, the facade is subtly articulated, with inset brickwork surrounding window frames. Black metal balconies feature thin bars wrapped around them like sewing thread, mirroring the undulation in the woven



brickwork. Neither of these features seeks to overpower the texture of the characteristic green bricks.

Inside, the texture of the woven brick façade is continued in a feature wall, this time in white glazed Umbra Sawtooth brick, to suit the more monochromatic interior palette. This palette is continued throughout the communal areas of the building with a custom-made terrazzo flooring by Diespeker, sometimes straying with subtle gold accents and warm wooden textures in the stained and polished European oak timber panelling of the reception area. In the shared staircase, this colour palette comes to life with a statement gold handrail on the minimalist black balustrade and the gold nosing of the terrazzo stairs.

While not as nonconformist as the activities and spirit inside the old Colony Room Club, Squire and Partners has created something just as crafted and just as part of Soho. The spaces are modern, filled with light from the opened-up, remodelled facade and more akin to the activities they now accommodate. It is not avant-garde, it is not created for indulgence – but it doesn't pretend to be. What it is, like the Colony Club Room, is something different from the monotonous buildings of its type found in the area. It speaks to the area's heritage and spirit, with crafted bespoke interiors and careful, rigorous façade details. Even in its lack of drunken debauchery, we wonder if Francis Bacon would be at home in the mansard roof space emulative of his South Kensington studio? **FX**

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