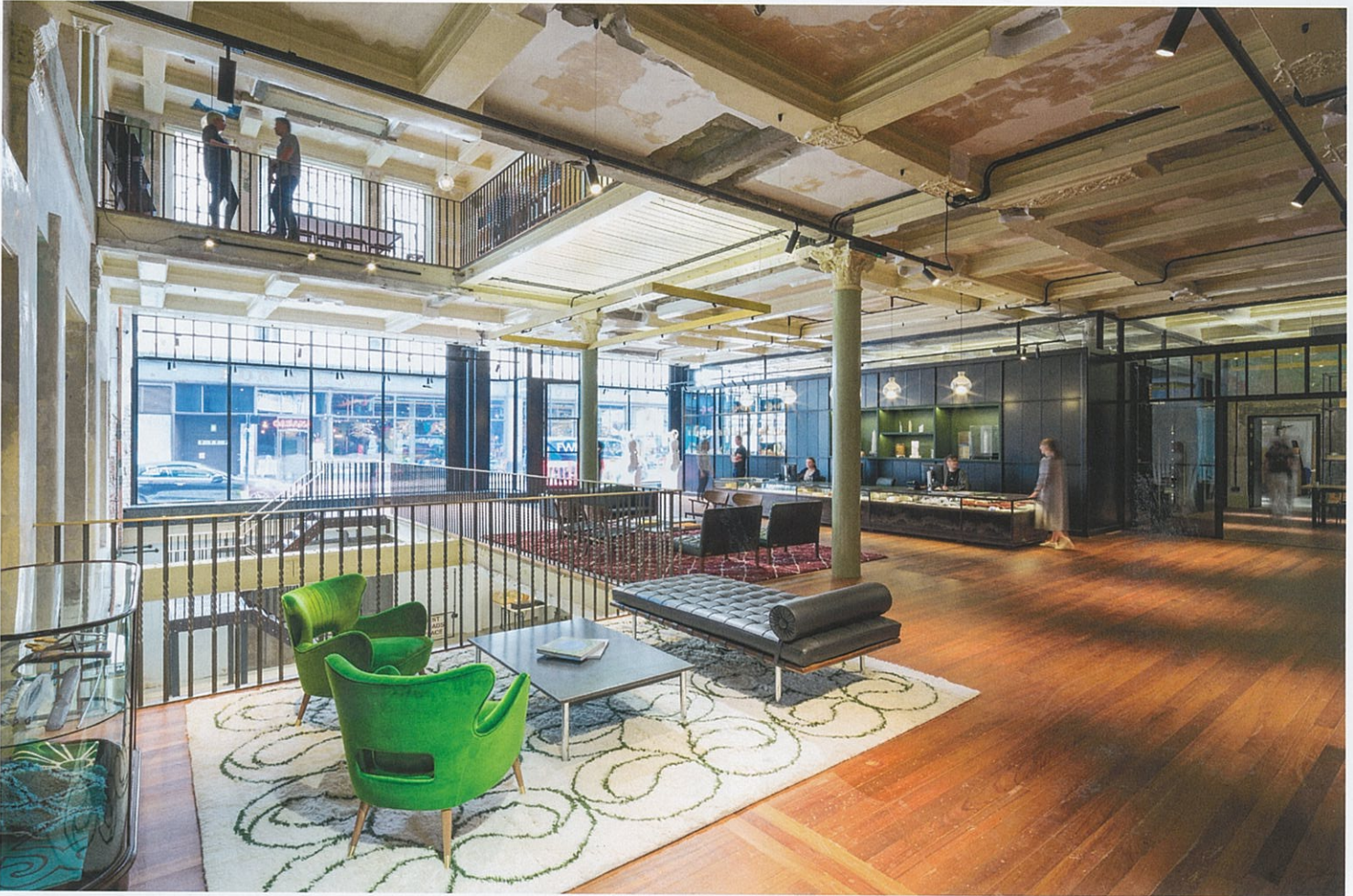




Super Store

The project we're on our way to visit is undoubtedly one of the most talked-about of the year. The previous evening, we happened to mention to a couple of design clients that we were heading into Brixton the following morning. 'Ooh, are you going to see the Department Store?' was the immediate response from both. We were delighted to answer, 'Yes we are!'



Left
Stunning period frontage

Top
Carefully selected, sympathetic furniture

Bottom
Fantastic social rooftop space



The Department Store has received unwavering critical acclaim and has already scooped a number of awards, including picking up the award for Large Commercial Interiors Project of the Year category at Mixology – so we already know this is going to be pretty special.

Leading design firm **Squire and Partners** purchased a dilapidated Edwardian department store in Brixton, and entirely reimagined the space. Collaborating with craftspeople and furniture makers, the design of the space has been informed by the existing fabric and layers of history, and provides an array of spaces for the various design disciplines within the practice, as well as a series of external creative and retail units.

Externally, the design reverses years of neglect – revealing original brickwork, stone, marble and terracotta – and reactivates the street level through animation and display. Squire and Partners' Director of Interiors, Maria Cheung, can tell us more about the building's amazing history, as well as Squire and Partners' own journey into Brixton. 'We were previously based in King's Cross,' Maria reveals. 'We were there for 15 years and we really just outgrew our premises. They were designed for about 80 people and over those 15 years we



This Page

Old meets new throughout this amazing building - including stunning contemporary work from local artists

Opposite

Feature spaces include the rooftop restaurant and bar, Making Room and model shop.



grew to 220! All the services and all our spaces had become really crammed, and King's Cross had become very expensive, so we decided to look further afield.

'One of the big things that Michael Squire was really keen on was that we stayed on the Victoria Line - a particularly efficient and well-connected line for a lot of our projects and clients. Our staff come from all sides of London - it's a slightly longer journey for those based further north but shorter for those based further south.

'Brixton is such a creative, lively area with incredible food, drink and social spaces.. We had looked at other areas, such as Vauxhall, but then we found this particular building and were intrigued by its potential to become a creative community hub. The building was derelict - and had been for a long time. One of the most charming things about it was that this was the first extension to the Bon Marche Department Store, directly opposite - we wanted

to keep that theme going, hence the name The Department Store.

'We really treat this now as a building with a lot of different departments as we work across several design disciplines. When we first arrived there were a number of local business that were interested in being part of the development - so we've also got a coffee roastery, vinyl store, restaurant and deli - and we moved the Post Office, who were originally a tenant, further along the street into a new more functional space. We worked hard to curate creative and community businesses to draw animation back to the building. From the get-go, we didn't want to just land in the space - we really wanted to be part of the community. So even when the building was under construction, we engaged with local makers and artists to create temporary galleries and installations, including and a skate park! We're active in our creative community, particularly with the Brixton Design Trail as part

of the London Design Festival, and have hosted events for London Craft Week and London Festival of Architecture here. We are still growing our local connections - our event space downstairs and Making Room on the ground floor are used by the local community - including schools and community groups, for workshops and meetings, which really helps us to be more connected to our area..'

Moving through the amazing, open ground floor reception space, we ask Maria about the concept behind the interior design here - although the name of the building and the nature of the building's fabric does give us something of a clue!

'We knew that doing the design for the entire office could be difficult - designing for 200 architects!' Maria grins. 'Right from the beginning we involved everyone - people were encouraged to pin up their aspirations for the new space and we then tried to incorporate as many of those

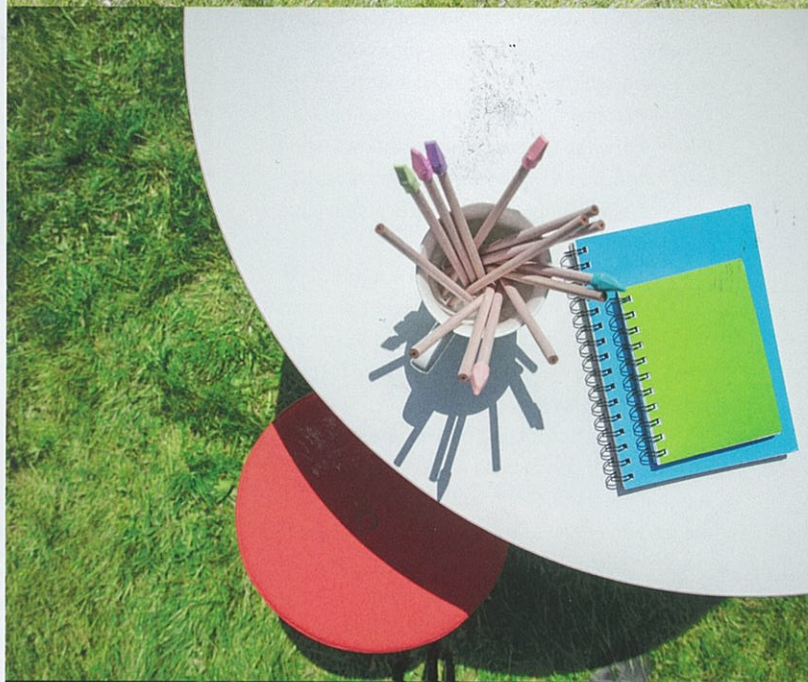
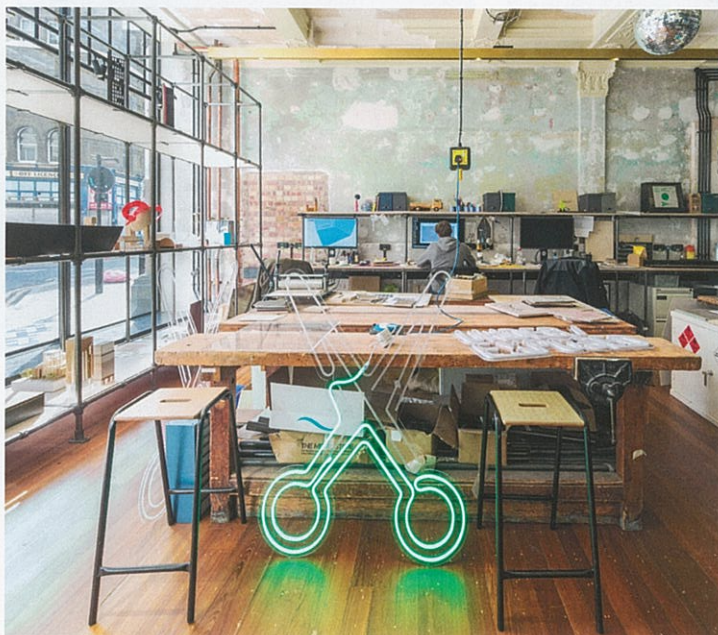


In Short

Squire and Partners is a British architectural firm, founded in 1976, and known for designing and executing buildings on key sites in London and internationally.

Leading workplace projects include headquarters for British fashion brand, Reiss, and the UK's largest public trade union, UNISON.

Hotel projects include the Bulgari Hotel & Residences and the boutique Rockwell Hotel.



PICNIK BY **TRIUMPH**FURNITURE.COM

☎ 01685 352222

✉ SALES@TRIUMPHFURNITURE.COM

Case Study | The Department Store

ideas as we could. Downstairs, for example, you'll see that there is a lot of bike storage, generous showers and changing areas and a dedicated drying room. Our model shop had always been in the basement at King's Cross and had no windows – they asked for sunlight and they now have a fully glazed shop frontage.

'We've really tried to keep the department store aesthetic throughout. The reception desk, for instance, we've designed as though it is a haberdashery counter. You can imagine that it could be displaying ties and handkerchiefs. The curated display is currently our journey of designing this building, but it will change over time.

'We knew from historic photographs that the original building had beautiful shop fronts with objects on display – with metal framed Crittall doors and windows. This was an important part of the façade, so we invited Crittall back to manufacture the new doors and windows – and then introduced a glazed wall into the reception space to offer glimpses from the reception into the model shop.'

As we make our way through the impressive model shop and making space, Maria tells us that the building was originally developed by James Smith – a man, we later discover, with a fairly extraordinary story.

James Smith of Tooting had no apparent desire or intention to build a department store. A printer by trade, Smith was also a proprietor of the Sportman newspaper and owned a racehorse called Roseberry. In 1876, Roseberry won an almost inconceivable double, by scooping the Cesarewitch and Cambridgeshire Stakes at Newmarket. The prize of £80,000 funded the construction of James 'Roseberry' Smith's foray into commerce, a department store in Brixton – which he called Bon Marche.

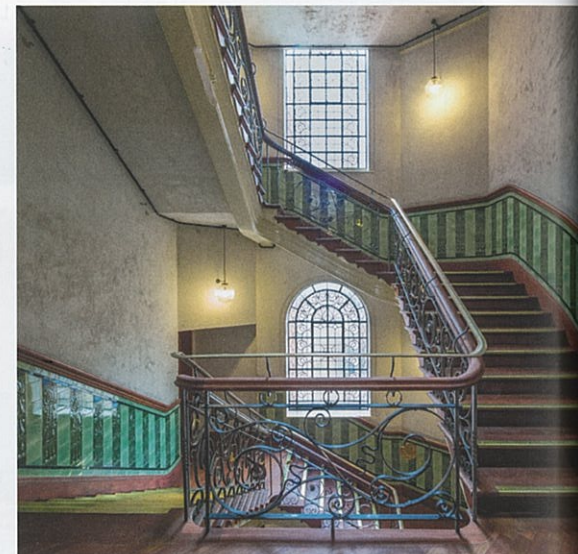
'We've named our top floor meeting room after him – it's called The Roseberry!' Maria tells us. 'This, in 1906, was the first extension of the Bon Marche – this was designed to be the furnishing department.

'The key strategic intervention here was to cut some voids to connect the different floors. We were over two floors in King's Cross and we are now over the basement, ground, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors here – so a much larger space. We created these voids and inserted a staircase to connect the floors. We talked a lot about what people needed from the space and were keen to create a sense of community – so we have a social space on the 4th floor, which during the working day is our staff bar and restaurant. We also have a list of about 3,000 local people who are members of the bar – grown from our local community, plus friends and family of the practice. They enjoy the rooftop restaurant and bar in the evenings and weekends – and we created a separate entrance, which is transformed

“

We knew that doing the design for the entire office could be difficult – designing for 200 architects!

”



Top
Stunning rooftop social space

2nd Top
Meeting rooms combine original features with modern elements and technology

Above & Left
Beautiful original features have been preserved and reworked – including bathrooms and staircases

in the evening, and a separate lift to differentiate public and private routes into the space.'

That's not all you will find on the 4th floor though. The new social rooftop level comprises a series of oak framed pavilions topped with copper shingle, and a crafted glass dome, which replaces a dilapidated existing cupola. It's an absolutely remarkable space, which acts as a stunning dining room.

Below

Squire and Partners designed their own furniture systems for the space

Bottom

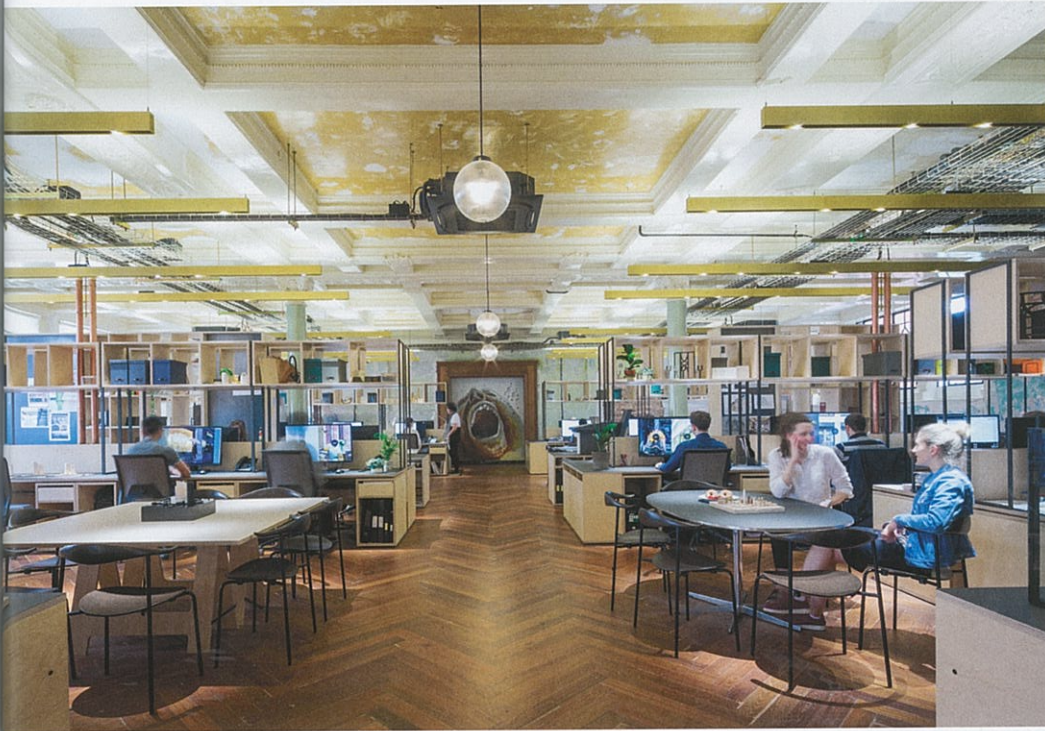
The furniture and finishes throughout are sympathetic to the building's original features

Original interior elements, such as mahogany and teak parquet flooring, a grand tiled staircase and a patina of colours documenting the building's history, have all been preserved, while particular attention was also paid to the furniture and furnishings brought into the new workspace. 'We spent a lot of time thinking about the furniture and were careful with our choices,' Maria continues. 'There are quite a few Carl Hansen pieces here because we were trying to imagine, during the period when this was a department store, what kind of iconic furniture pieces would have been on display – and a lot of these could easily have been. Carl Hansen & Son created special bronze plaques for each piece of furniture for The Department Store and resurrected one design out of their archives and produced it as a one-off for us.'

The main office workspaces celebrate the process of craft and making. Again, the furniture and finishes are sympathetic to the original fabric of the building. We're particularly intrigued by the simple yet brilliantly functional systems furniture, which features overhead tambours and, we are informed, was developed by the smart team at Squire and Partners themselves when they were unable to find anything suitable on the market.

Each working floor has its own cloakroom and a series of smart meeting rooms, each of which cleverly combines original features with modern finishes and technology.

There's much more about this space that we simply don't have the space for. We can see why this scheme has scooped so many awards – and why so many people continue to talk about it. ♦



Project Team

Client

Squire and Partners

Interior Design & Architecture

Squire and Partners

Flooring

Domus, Henry Booth

Furniture

Vitra, Knoll, Munna, Carl Hansen, Laguna, Janua, Opus Magnum, Minotti, Viaduct, Fermob, Interior ID, Based Upon, Hay, Naughtone, Benchmark, Day 2, Thonet, Arper, Cassina, Ercol, E15

Lighting

Lasvit, Flos, Original BTC, Louis Poulsen, The Urban Electric, Gubi, iGuzzini

