



club  
WORKSPACE

# Frames of Mind

You are probably aware of the changing face of the 'hip' borough of Shoreditch. Once seen as the über cool place where neighbouring City workers would never step into, it is now becoming known as an incubator for exciting fledging businesses – with tech very much at the heart of this transformation.

**T**o be honest, we find it a much more exciting place now than when it was seen as 'edgy'. Then again, we would – we do publish a workplace magazine after all!

Therefore, we were extremely keen when Mixology award-winning design firm **Squire & Partners** contacted us to take a look at the latest flexible workspace in the heart of Shoreditch. An incubator within an incubator!

**Workspace Group's** The Frames is a bespoke development tailored to small and creative businesses in the district. The five-storey building creates 80,000 sq ft of flexible workspace for London's new and growing companies, providing a total of 68 workspace and studio units to suit a variety of users, along with shared meeting rooms, breakout areas, tea points, cycle storage, shower facilities, a series of terrace spaces and a café.

Influenced by the characteristic warehouse vernacular of the surrounding South Shoreditch Conservation Area, the building envelope employs a palette of brick, metal and glass. Following the curved line of Phipp Street, with a series of brick columns punctuated by corten-clad window reveals, the design emphasises the vertical proportions of the structure.

The top two floors of the building are set back and feature twisted dark grey perforated aluminium fins, which reference the historical textile manufacturing history of the neighbourhood and double-up as solar shading.

Interiors at The Frames were designed to create a relaxed and comfortable aesthetic in contrast

to the raw industrial finishes of the building. Inspiration was drawn from traditional trades in Shoreditch, which included press-printing and furniture making, as well as textile manufacturing.

On entering the building, a striking mural by renowned street artist Mr Jago establishes a vibrant colourscape for the main ground floor reception, and acts as a backdrop to a folded perforated metal staircase. Named Aira Force Loop, the mural references Aira Force, a Cumbrian waterfall, and is an imagining of that natural feature within a designed urban space.

The language of raw materials and finishes found on the exterior continues inside the building, with polished concrete floors, exposed soffits, Corten-clad lift cores and that striking steel staircase.

A bespoke reception desk formed from raw polished steel with a dark oak top references the area's industrial heritage – although this forms more of a concierge hub than traditional corporate reception.

An open plan lounge for informal and social meetings is furnished with contemporary Scandinavian tables and seating, upholstered in grey or black textured fabrics with accents of orange and mustard to complement the artwork and the Corten steel of the lift lobbies and exterior.

The twisted metal fins on the outside of the building are carried through internally to create subtle partitions between the different spaces on the ground floor. Beyond the lounge space is a working area that comprises both open plan space and private desk booths. The bespoke design of



**THIS PAGE:** Private desk booths provide dedicated work zones within the open plan ground floor workspace.

the desk booths marries black stained ply with cork lining, and provides focused personal work zones.

Tables are metal framed, with reclaimed teak tops that will lighten over time, and seating includes the iconic Robin Day 675 chairs – upholstered in a special edition grey fabric as a nod to the textile history of the area. All furniture in this space is moveable for flexible working, functions and presentations, with a drop-down presentation screen incorporated into the ceiling design.

'The Frames is Workspace Group's first new build project, and presented the opportunity to do something a little different,' Maria Cheung, Director and Head of Interior Design at Squire & Partners, tells us. 'They are well known for providing commercial business units, but here they wanted to tap into elements of the coworking market – there are still individual units but these are supplemented with shared facilities throughout.'

'The development is pitched towards creative industries. From the outset we wanted to create a

building authentic to Shoreditch, which appealed to the local market.

'The island site presented challenges because it is surrounded on all sides by roads and has curved and angled aspects to it. The architect team had to consider where to locate the entrance to create an impact for the building's users, but would also work on a practical level for deliveries and drop-offs. Placing the entrance on the straight aspect of the Phipp Street elevation meant a larger, open reception space.

'Workspace Group were great clients to work with. The identity of the building was strong in the architectural language and we were keen to establish a joined-up aesthetic, which continued into the interior. You'll see perforated metal fins from the facade used to divide spaces on the ground floor, and raw finishes such as Corten used in the lift lobbies. In some cases we chose to soften the palette slightly, such as using concrete coloured tiles featuring Patricia Urquiola patterns.'

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*Workspace did want this to be an exemplar project – they wanted it to be something special in their portfolio, and so were willing to go the extra mile*  
 ”

## Project Team

### Client

Workspace Group

### Interior Design & Architecture

Squire & Partners

### Furniture Providers

Dodds & Shute

### Flooring Suppliers

Puur Floors Limited, Domus, Forbo Flooring, Rustoleum

### Surface Supplier

Domus

### Furniture Suppliers

Muuto, Heerinhuis, Bosc, Asiatic Rugs, Case Furniture, LampGras, Opus Magnum, Handvark, Vitra, Lightyears, Skandiums



MAGNUS OLESEN <sup>A</sup>/<sub>S</sub>  
by Coatworks

**MODEL 107**  
REBORN IN 2019  
SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL!



Image: Model 107 shown in oiled teak wood with Dunes and Savanne leather

### MODEL 107, 1956

Model 107 was designed in the 1950s and originally produced by Magnus Olesen in 1956. The details of the chair reflect the famous, classic design of the era - Danish Modern. The chair represents Ib Kofod-Larsen's approach at its best: designing a slightly chunky, comfortable lounge chair yet adding an elegant and light edge to it.



For info on Magnus Olesen products contact the Coatworks team.  
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**RIGHT:**  
The building's bull-nose profile marks the junction of Phipp Street, while vertical brick piers, Corten reveals and metal framed windows relate to the surrounding warehouse vernacular of the South Shoreditch Conservation Area.



'The client's ambition was for The Frames to be an exemplar project, and they were willing to go the extra mile to make bold choices. We shared the view that the design should avoid passing fashions to create something that would stand the test of time. Workplace Group had a set of guidelines for certain areas, but we were given freedom within those requirements to agree a strong concept outside of their usual model.

'We decided not to be overly formal with the reception space – to create a welcoming space that doesn't present physical barriers for tenants and their guests. Introducing colour via a double-height bespoke artwork by artist Mr Jago and textured raw materials, we establish an identity and avoid a bland corporate aesthetic.'

Heading up the metal staircase to the first floor, we find a smart open plan breakout space with workspace units beyond. There is also a spectacular glazed bridge, which links to a glass walled meeting room – with the vibrant artwork extending into the room to create an amazing feature wall. What is amazing is that, the closer you get to the mural, the more vibrant the colours become – and this is no more apparent than in the glazed meeting room.

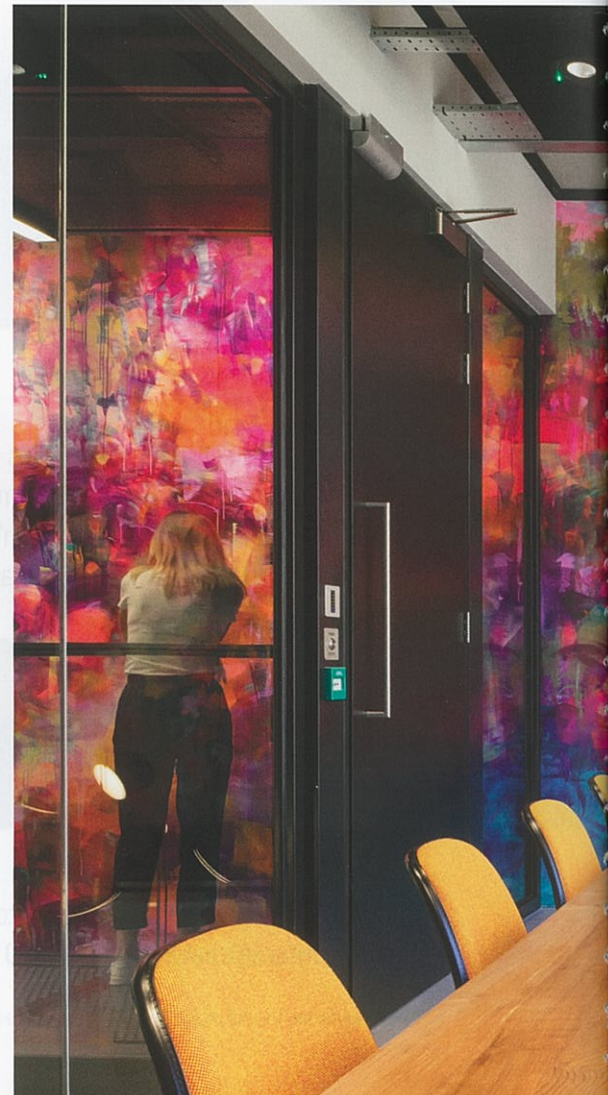
'On the face of it, this looks like a very simple room,' Maria points out. 'It's actually not a very big room – the glazing affords it a feeling of space. AV equipment is tucked away and we've intentionally used soft colours, timber finishes and warm lighting to create a domestic feel. The cupboards, which have trays and drawers you can pull out, were all made bespoke for this space. There are larger meeting rooms downstairs – but I think this is where you'd really like to bring your clients!'

The design of breakout spaces on all work floors is also light and comfortable, with soft furnishings set against concrete finishes and low pendant lights providing intimacy in seating areas.

“  
*We wanted to create a building that was very much 'of the area' and for people in this area*  
”



**ABOVE:** Breakout space and tea points are provided on each of the working floors.



## The Client



**WORKSPACE®**

Workspace Group PLC (formerly known as London Industrial PLC) was established in 1987 and has a portfolio of 18 small-unit, multi-tenanted estates.

Today, Workspace is a FTSE 250 Real Estate Investment Trust, which owns 68 properties across 3.6m sq ft in London.

Workspace provides a home to over 4,000 companies.

On the upper levels, workspace units feature concrete floors and ceilings, together with whitewashed walls to create a blank canvas for tenants here at The Frames. Shadows cast inside the rooms through the external perforated fins add a layer of visual interest to the spaces, and change throughout the day with the movement of the sun. We have to say that the materials and finishes make a nice change from the predominantly white spaces we've become all too used to seeing.

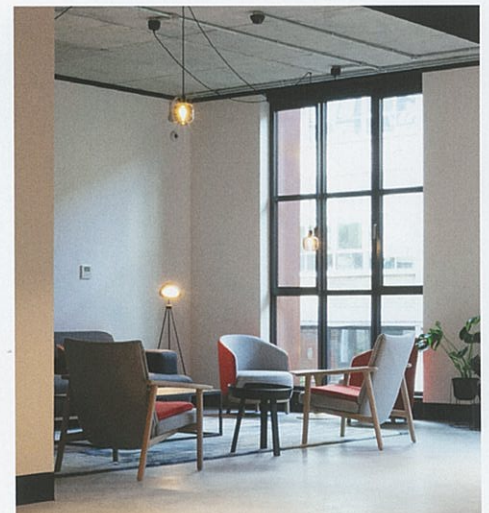
'There's a range of unit sizes,' Maria tells us. 'When we decided, quite early on, that we were going to go with an exposed finish, there was a lot of pressure on the contractor to execute it to a high standard – but they did a great job. The glazed screens to the communal walkways mean that

tenants have their own defined space, but feel part of something bigger at the same time.'

A strong graphic identity is used throughout the building to assist with wayfinding, created by Squire & Partners in collaboration with their sister branding company, Mammal.

We take a quick look at the currently bare basement floorplates – but they are so good we assume they'll soon be filled with more of Shoreditch's hungry young businesses.

The Frames isn't just a coworking space. This is something else altogether. There is a sense of elegance and maturity that is often lacking from shared workspace facilities. This is a place where young companies can grow – and grow-up at the same time. ♦



**ABOVE:** Soft furnishings contrast with the raw finishes of the breakout spaces, with low pendant lights bringing intimacy to the seating areas.

**LEFT:** The double-height mural in the reception lobby is carried into the first floor meeting room to create a feature wall.