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FIRST LOOK

Squire & Partners completes workspace next door to its own Brixton offices

18 AUGUST 2021 . BY FRAN WILLIAMS. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK HOBHOUSE, JIM STEPHENSON



1/32 Source: Jack Hobhouse

The Department Store Studios provides a mix of flexible workspace with serviced social and meeting areas as well as a bar, restaurant and screening room

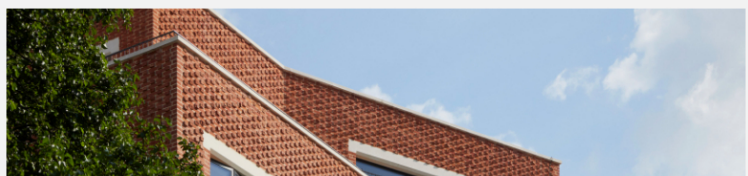
Squire & Partners design builds upon the Edwardian structure of the neighbouring Department Store building (which houses Squires' own offices) originally constructed in 1906 as an extension to the Brixton Bon Marché. The new brick building follows the corner boundary at the junction between Bellefields Road and Stockwell Avenue, meeting Squires' offices across a central cobbled courtyard centred around an oak tree.

Squires moved its 200-employee practice into the Brixton offices in 2017 after purchasing a dilapidated Edwardian department store. It reworked it as both its offices but also with the idea that it could provide a space to experiment, collaborate and showcase the work of some of its suppliers and the craftspeople it works with – as well as an events venue.

To contrast with the existing building, the façades for The Studios are textured with projecting brickwork of snapped bricks, which animate them in changing sunlight. A base band of dark engineering brick marks street level, softened by planting and outdoor seating.

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Large, faceted bay windows create a rhythm of reflections across the elevations, dark metal frames referencing the Department Store's industrial Crittall windows. Smooth concrete lintels frame these openings.



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The building's mass cuts back to the north and east, responding to the surrounding residential streets and creating landscaped roof terraces for its tenants. The workspace floors are accessed via a fully glazed reception on Bellefields Road and the restaurant entrance on Stockwell Avenue.

Inside, the studios feature a prefabricated CLT structural frame with exposed finishes throughout, offset by a smooth pale grey screed floor. 120m² of green roof and planted terraces aim to enhance local biodiversity while 28 PVs are in place to create renewable energy on site.

Workspaces have been designed in a 'loft style' with exposed services suspended from the timber ceiling. Soft furnishings are in colours inspired by the seasons while furniture is curated as a mixture of classic and contemporary pieces from suppliers including Carl Hansen, Ercol, &Tradition, Rawside and HAY.

At street level, the Members' Lounge provides a 'clubhouse'-style environment for member tenants or local freelance workers. This is separated from the restaurant through a metal screen. The restaurant in turn opens out on to the central cobbled courtyard which links The Studios with The Department Store.

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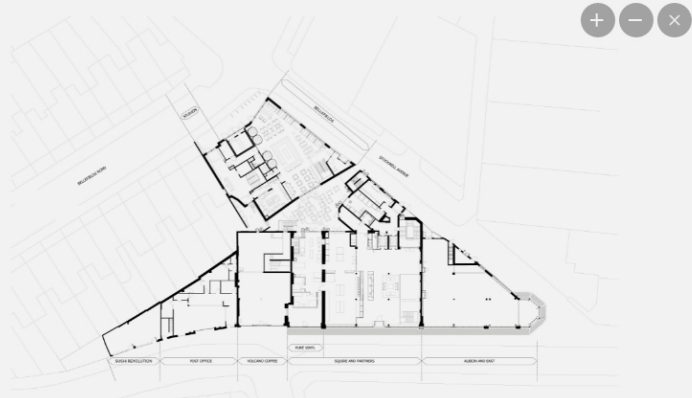
In January 2021, The Studios launched its first residency programme, building upon its local community work established at The Department Store via creative collaborations, mentoring and support for local organisations. The programme provided the chance for two Lambeth entrepreneurs between 18-30 years old to have free workspace for 12 months with access to mentoring.



Architect's view

We believe people are tired of conventional offices defined by standard industry benchmarks. The Department Store Studios is a loveable place to work, where people can work 'free range' in a generous space where they are part of a community which supports them to do more than just their jobs.

Michael Squire, senior partner, Squire & Partners



Project data

Start on site June 2019
Completion date August 2021
Gross internal floor area 2,349m²
Gross external area 2,590m²
Form of contract or procurement route Construction Management
Construction cost £7.9 million (Cat A fit-out)
Construction cost per m² £3,048
Architect Squire & Partners
Client Squire & Partners
Structural engineer Elliott Wood
M&E consultant DSA Engineering
Quantity surveyor Core 5
Interior design Squire and Partners
Planning consultant Jon Dingle
Transport consultant TTP Consulting
Landscape consultant Your London Florist
Acoustic consultant Clarke Saunders
Project manager Squire & Partners
Principal designer Squire & Partners
Approved building inspector HO Compliant
Main contractor Squire & Partners
CAD software used Revit

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