



Architecture
Today

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October 2017

Mixed-use

Níall McLaughlin
Architects: Tapestry

Forum

Will Alsop, Peter Baynes, George
Saumarez Smith, Peter Barber,
Alessandra Cianchetta

Works

Allford Hall Monaghan Morris,
Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

Focus

Interiors: Squire & Partners,
Simon Astridge Architecture
Workshop, Eric Parry Architects

ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | LEATHERSELLERS' HALL

Publication: Architecture Today
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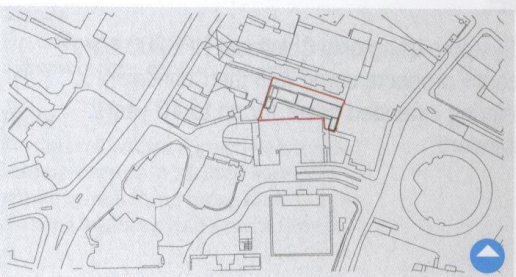
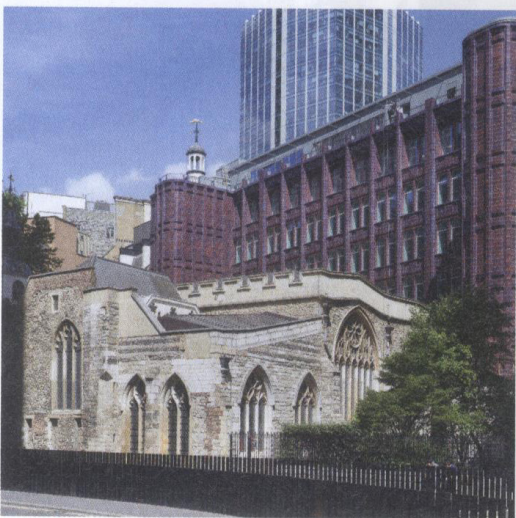
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Hidden Depths

Eric Parry Architects' Leathersellers' Hall integrates architectural invention with craft

Words
Ian Latham

Photos
Dirk Lindner



Left

The Leathersellers' Hall fills a narrow site between a retained facade on St Helen's Place and a new faience facade flanking St Helen's Bishopsgate.

The Central Stair Hall is animated by scagliola pilasters repurposed from the livery company's previous hall.

Right

The Leathersellers' Company occupies the ground and basement floors beneath five floors of lettable office space and a rooftop plant room.

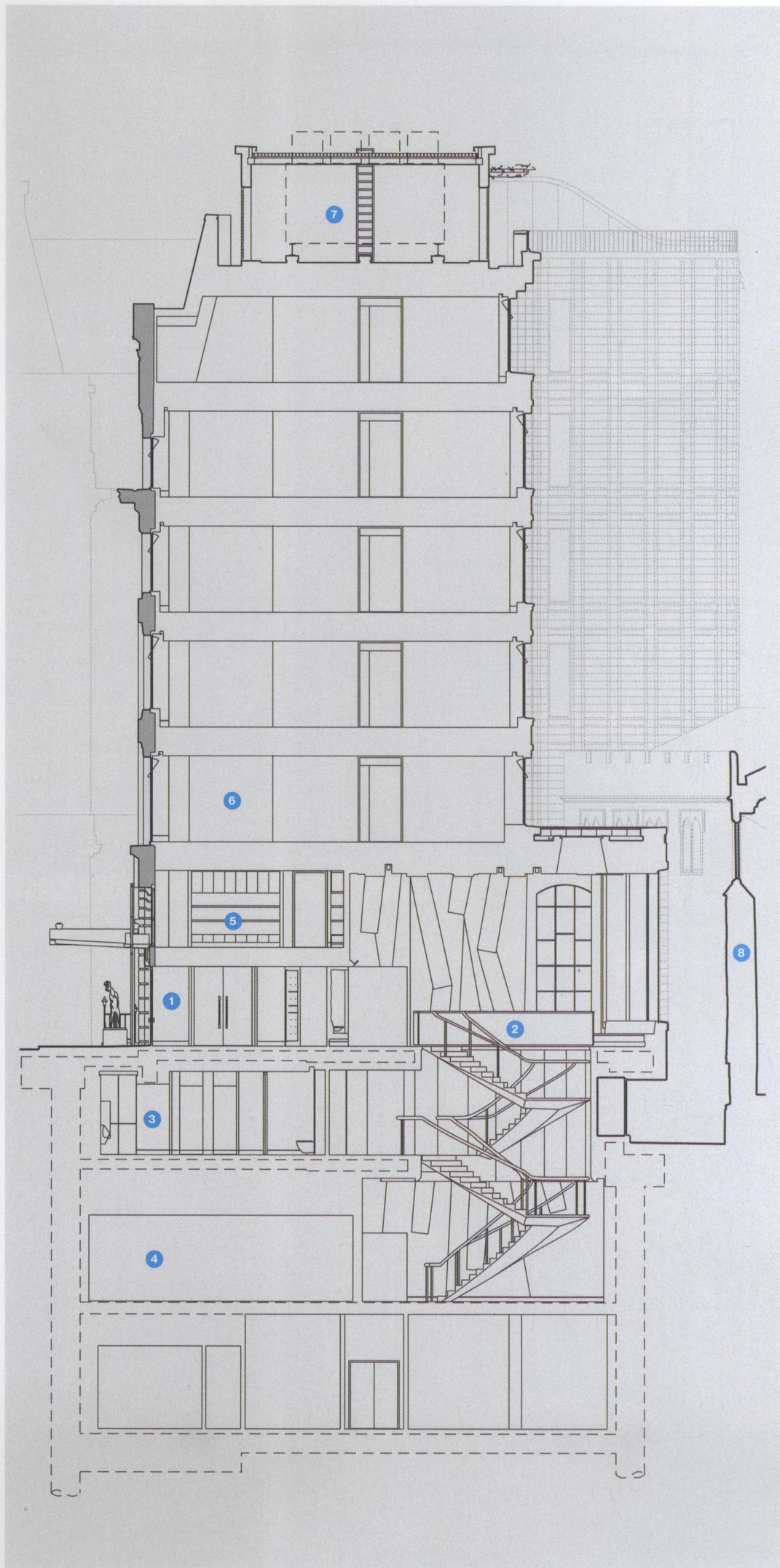
The Worshipful Company of Leathersellers occupied each of its six previous halls for an average of almost a century. Small wonder that the City of London's 15th-ranked livery company, which received its royal charter from Henry VI in 1444, sought a sense of history in its new premises. Designed by Eric Parry Architects, the project is a finely crafted showcase of exemplary artistic endeavour that should serve for many decades.

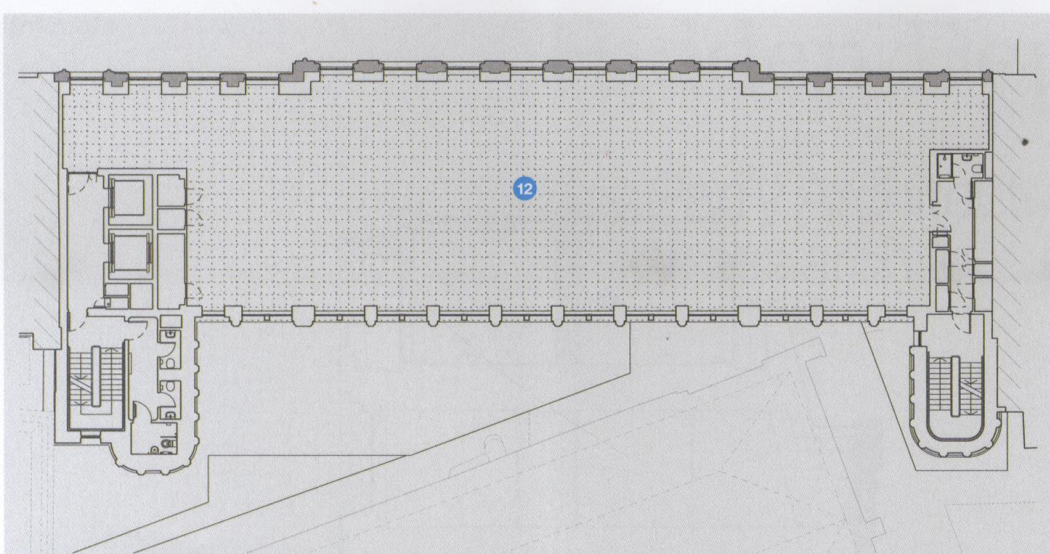
Set up to regulate leather merchants, the Company's activities are now primarily philanthropic, charitable and educational, funded by significant land-holdings in the vicinity. Brookfield, developer of Allies & Morrison's 40-storey 100 Bishopsgate tower that is rising nearby, tempted the Leathersellers from its 1920s premises on the north side of St Helen's Place — which it wanted to incorporate — by gifting the shell and core of a new building behind a retained facade across the street, within which the Leathersellers would fund the fit-out. Though constrained, the site offered space for the Company plus five lettable floors.

The Leathersellers' Company's wisdom in selecting Parry — whose track record includes burrowing new spaces next to the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, and an enthusiasm for artistic collaboration — has paid dividends, and it's clear that the client has embraced the process with enthusiasm. Confidently negotiating between tradition and invention, the Leathersellers' Hall contains modern light-filled spaces that evoke its long history in craft and trade.

Key

- 1 Entrance lobby off St Helen's Place
- 2 Central Stair Hall
- 3 Changing rooms
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Leathersellers' offices
- 6 Offices
- 7 Plant
- 8 St Helen's Church

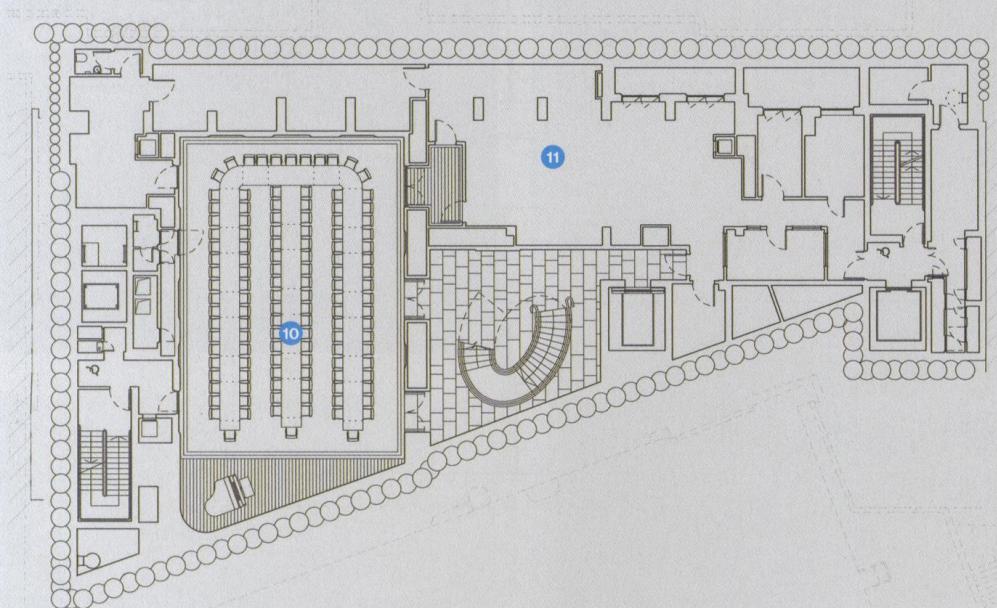




Typical office floor



Ground floor plan



Basement floor plan

Its fulcrum is a complex cantilevered concrete staircase, cast in-situ on a diagonal axis to acknowledge the splay of the room. Scagliola pilasters have been transferred from the previous Hall's Reception Room – where they behaved in an orderly manner – to the new triple-height Stair Hall, where they run riot across the walls and ceiling in the manner of the collapsing columns of Giulio Romano's 'Hall of the Giants' fresco at the Palazzo Te in Mantua. It's an indication of the client's confident relationship with Parry that this striking, almost wayward idea of supercharging already kitsch elements was implemented. The mauve colour of stair carpet and leather-lined shaft reference the first synthetic dye discovered in 1856 by William Perkin, a chemist and former master of the Company.

Opening off the Stair Hall, the light-filled Reception Room is contemporary in character, with a blue-and-white glass sculpture by American artist Dale Chihuly suspended over a circular bronze table on a jazzy carpet, both designed by Parry. Vitrines set into the walls display silver and leather artefacts, while four Jaan sofas are upholstered in black-and-white cowhide. A large window on the east side overlooks the side wall of the medieval church of St Helen, where a stained-glass window depicts former parishioner William Shakespeare.

Accessed from either the Reception Room or entrance lobby is The Court Room. A large table made of European walnut fills the space, while the enveloping walls are lined in American black walnut alternating with vertical slotted timber reeds. A 1950s Axminster carpet, woven for the previous Hall and depicting coats of arms and animals, has been adapted to fit. Other historic items include chandeliers, a portrait of Henry VI, who granted the Company its first Royal Charter, and the charters from 1444, 1604 and 1685, now conserved and held in frames by micro-magnets.

Key

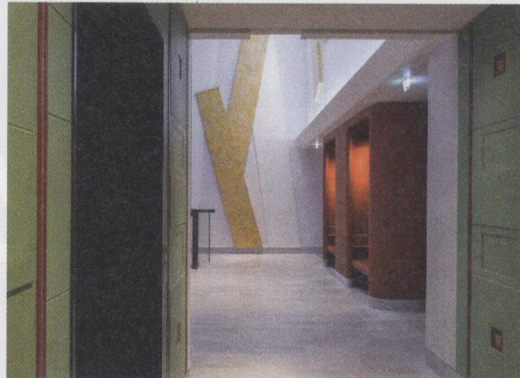
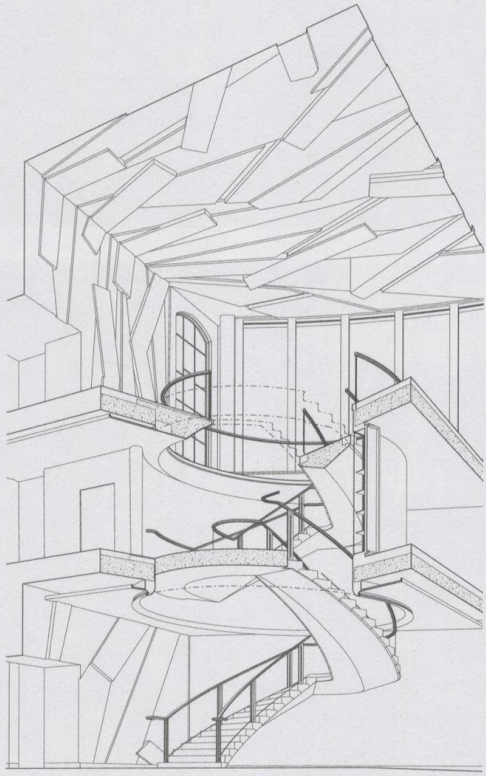
- 1 Entrance lobby and cloakroom
- 2 Central Stair Hall
- 3 Court Room
- 4 Reception Room
- 5 Library
- 6 Butler's Office
- 7 Leathersellers' office entrance
- 8 Office entrance
- 9 Terrace
- 10 Dining Hall
- 11 Kitchen
- 12 Lettable office space

Right

The generous Stair Hall serves to articulate the various facilities, opening to the Reception Room and providing views of the flank wall of the adjacent medieval church.

Below

Stair Hall cutaway perspective; leather-lined corridor between the Library and Stair Hall; Reception Room.



Right
Dining Hall and Court Room.

Below
Library and cantilevered entrance canopy.

Project team

Architect
Eric Parry Architects
Contractor
Multiplex Construction
Structural engineers
Price & Myers, Robert
Bird Group (St Helen's
Place)
Building services
Chapman BDSP, Hilson
Moran (St Helen's Place)
Lighting
DPA Lighting
Catering consultant
Keith Winton Design
Facade engineer
Arup Engineers
Client
The Leathersellers'
Company

Selected suppliers & subcontractors

Glass sculpture
Dale Chihuly
Hall tapestry
Victoria Crowe,
Dovecot Studio
Faience facade
Tichelaar, Szerelmey
Specialist joinery
Brown & Carroll
Bespoke leatherwork
Bill Amberg Studio
FF&E joinery
Luke Hughes
Entrance canopy
Chris Brammall
Exhibition cases
Goppion
Specialist carpets
Dixon Carpet Company
Timber floors
Schotten & Hansen
Plasterwork
Armourcoat, Hayles/Howe
Reception table
London Bronze Casting



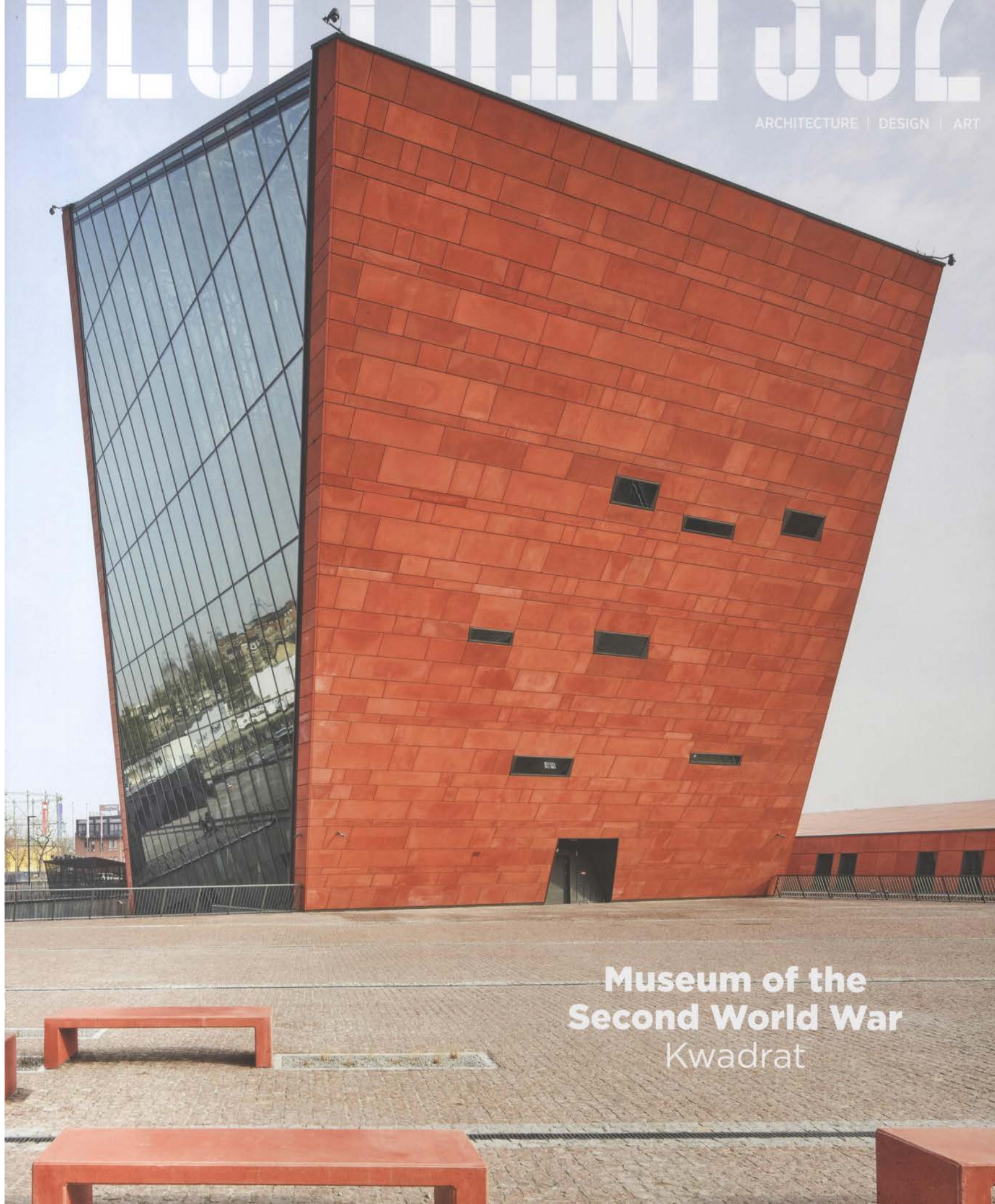
In front of the retained facade, a new entrance canopy, made in bronze with a vitreous soffit and referencing Jože Plečnik's furred gateway at Prague Castle, supports two flambeaux that can be lit for evening events. Flanking bronze statues of a ram and a roebuck, cast in 2000, came from the sixth Hall across the street, while the wrought-iron gates, made in 1878 by J Starkie Gardener, are from for the fifth Hall.

Floored in Massachusetts grey granite, the entrance lobby features a new cast-iron fireplace and lateral vitrines. A corridor lined with pale green and maroon leather-covered panels (some from the previous Hall, others matched by Bill Amberg) leads to the Library, an intimate space for meetings, lunches or reading. The oak-lined room incorporates the Colfe Library of 400 rare books in climate-controlled bookcases.

The central staircase leads down to the subterranean Dining Hall. Seating up to 120 people, it is lined in American walnut with a tapestry around the upper part of three walls. Designed by Victoria Crowe and woven at the Dovecot Studio in Edinburgh, the 42-metre-long artwork depicts leather trade history, from cave art to contemporary cutting techniques and ending with a plan of the new Hall superimposed on that of the first Hall. Addressing both the aesthetic and acoustic aspects of the space, the tapestry awas woven in panels by Naomi Robertson and her team over a three-year period. **▲**

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ARCHITECTURE | DESIGN | ART



**Museum of the
Second World War**
Kwadrat

ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | THE CHARTERHOUSE

Publication: Blueprint
Date: May 2017

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The Charterhouse, London

Eric Parry Architects

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A tucked-away charitable sanctuary is putting on a public face with a new entrance and rooms by **Eric Parry Architects**. After 400 years, the **Charterhouse**, which sits on the eponymous London square, has decided it is time to invest **£4.2m** in its future and welcome visitors to its medieval almshouse complex. By befriending the public, it hopes to sign up more 'friends'. Or as **Ann Kenrick, Master of the Charterhouse**, puts it: 'We are trying to spread the net and get more supporters, so that it will be through legacies and donations that the Charterhouse will thrive and survive.'

The institution is home to 40 Brothers — elderly gentlemen and women who are selected based on their needy circumstances and good behaviour. They inhabit a network of structures that date back to the **Black Death**. In 1348, the area became a burial ground, and 33 years later a Carthusian monastery was established there. It was turned into a charitable foundation by Thomas Sutton, late-Tudor England's wealthiest commoner, who in 1611 set up Charterhouse school and an almshouse for the old. The boys' (and now girls') school was relocated to Surrey in 1872.

Parry's changes are about 'revealing' rather than 'reinventing', he says. He has demoted the old medieval collegiate entrance with its porter's lodge to a private access because, 'you can't thrust schoolchildren and tourists through that little aperture'. Instead there are new wrought-iron gates and railings, with lettering along the top spelling out the Latin mottos of the Charterhouse's former owners.

Interestingly, Parry's first design for this new entrance was rejected by **Prince Charles**, who is a royal governor of the institution. A final design was agreed, and inside Parry has reworked not the Charterhouse's most recent building — a 1,030 sqm, £2.4m brick accommodation block by **Michael**

After 400 years, the Charterhouse has decided it is time to invest £4.2m in its future and welcome visitors

1 A new entrance replaces the former gate with porter's lodge to allow access for greater numbers

2 Cork flooring proved an obvious material for ease of use and continuity

Words by
Clare Dowdy

Hopkins & Partners — but a post-Second World War wing by **John Seely and Paul Paget** that replaced bomb damage. It's now become a bright learning centre for children.

The practice has also turned a narrow room off to the right of the new foyer into a museum. It's a space than has seen many incarnations. Previously it had been a meeting room, archive store and billiard room for the Brothers, a staff room for the Charterhouse school, a passageway in the Tudor mansions, and possibly a bowling alley. Before 1538, it was part of the Great Cloister of the Carthusian monastery. **Studio GuM** has designed the exhibition itself, which includes a skeletal victim of the Black Death. The square was once a plague mass grave, a fact that was only discovered in 2014 during **Crossrail** excavations.

Throughout Parry's reworking, cork flooring is ubiquitous. This is for reasons of continuity and practicality, Parry explains: 'The Charterhouse had existing cork flooring in these and other areas. The desire was for the public areas to be part of the rest of the fabric of the residential areas. For conservation reasons, we could not dig out the existing floor slabs and were limited to floor materials that would fit within a depth of 8mm, so sticking with cork seemed like a good solution!'

Outside, landscape architect **Todd Longstaffe-Gowan** has redesigned the half-hectare square, reinstating the early 18th-century layout of two diagonal pathways. Having previously been open only to key-holding square residents, it now gives access to the Crossrail station on the south side of the square. The square also has a pavilion designed by Longstaffe-Gowan.

With the arrival of the **Museum of London** in neighbouring Smithfield in 2022, this corner of the city will be firmly on the culture map. Whether that will suit the Brothers remains to be seen.