

TURNMILL

“You must put up a building which expresses the best of the society in which you live, and at the same time your hopes for the betterment of this society. You have a great responsibility and your building is not only for the people of your companies, it is much more for all people.”

Phyllis Lambert (The Seagram Building)

TURNMILL

63 Clerkenwell Road EC1

A DERWENT
LONDON
BUILDING

It has been a long journey from the time we appointed Piercy&Company to consider the redevelopment of Turnmill in 2006.

The original building, which was a former stable block for the Great Northern Railway, was built in 1886-87. Although loved in some quarters, in truth, it made a poor commercial building and its site, in our opinion, deserved a superior and more appropriate building for the 21st Century.

Derwent London, Piercy&Company and the rest of our professional team unanimously felt that a really fine replacement would make a more meaningful contribution to Turnmill's important surroundings. We realised that this might prove a long struggle but we believed passionately in our vision for a new building. We persevered throughout many disappointments and, five years later in 2011, eventually convinced Islington Council to grant us planning permission.

At the time of Piercy&Company's early design, we came across a rather wonderful brick produced by a 250-year old family-owned manufacturer in Denmark, called Petersen Tegl. We had already visited the factory several times before choosing a variety of grey stock bricks for our Pentonville Road project by

Stiff + Trevillion, which lies opposite our Angel Building, also in the Borough of Islington. It was on these visits we came across the Kolumba brick designed by Swiss Architect Peter Zumthor, for his wonderful Cologne project. It was this long elegant brick, reminiscent of those used by Frank Lloyd Wright on many of his residential projects, that gives this building its horizontal modernity and yet at the same time a timeless and partly classical aesthetic. The journeys to Petersen's and the many mock-ups we commissioned were fundamental to the success of the project.

From the moment the Kolumba brick was selected, Piercy&Company worked feverishly throwing themselves at the project, heart and soul. Of course enthusiasm alone is not enough and real talent is required, and thankfully, they had that in abundance. This building is now a testament to that skill.

Unsurprisingly, a building of this calibre attracted early attention and the entire office element was pre-let to Publicis Groupe. We naturally wish them every success in their new home.

Simon Silver
Director, Derwent London





Recessed entrance bay
along Turnmill Street

Previous page: Corner of
Clerkenwell Road & Turnmill Street



Deeply recessed reveals, set out radially on plan, adds rhythm and articulation to the brick grid

Previous page: Recessed glazed screen above the entrance





Textured brick detail
adjacent to neighbouring building
on Clerkenwell Road

Image overleaf: Curved bay
looking towards Farringdon Station
and St Paul's Cathedral





Signage hand cut in to bricks before firing

Left image: Radially chamfered window reveals create a series of vertical window bays, appearing solid and open depending on the viewing angle

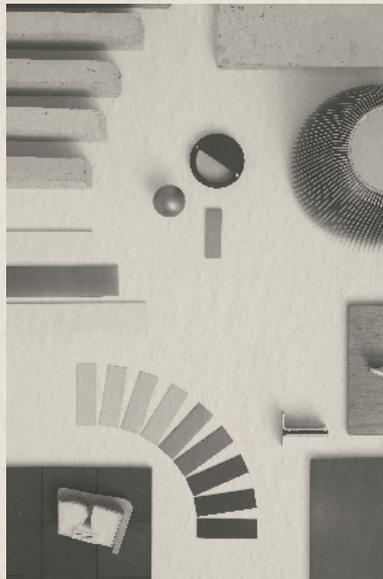
Image overleaf: One of four curved bays with far reaching panoramic views



Turnmill
A Clerkenwell Building

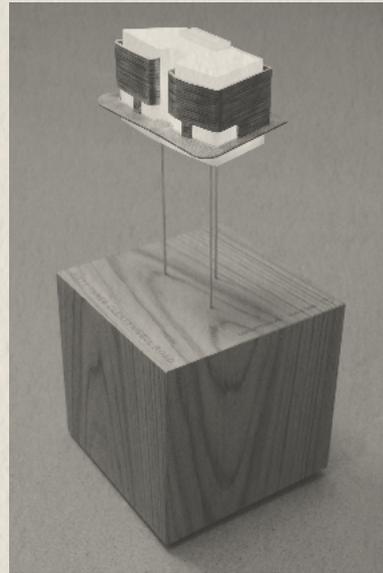
Endearingly expressive and eclectic, the urban fabric of Clerkenwell has witnessed many changes, both culturally and physically, over the centuries.

The industrial revolution played a significant role in designing the townscape: breweries, distilleries, print, clock and watch industries all moved in and built the generously proportioned, robust buildings, which Clerkenwell is renowned for. Although rational in their planning, these warehouses are far from utilitarian in their highly articulated and animated façades. Their façades advertise their affluence and success through architectural expression – opulent friezes, highly modelled parapets and decorative fenestration all combine to create a varied and rich townscape. It is the balance of these two qualities – inspirational internal spaces and ambitious decorative façades – which has sustained an extremely flexible and enduringly popular neighbourhood and latterly, attracted creative industries to Clerkenwell.



Material palette study

63 Clerkenwell Road was built in 1886-87 as a stable for the adjacent railway. More recently it had been used as office studios, a nightclub, a gym and restaurant.



Original concept model exhibited in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition

Originally, Derwent London commissioned Piercy&Company to refurbish the existing building, seeking to improve both the ground floor relationship with the street and the quality of internal spaces.

An extension was also proposed to replace the original roof. Planning permission for this scheme was granted in 2007, but detailed design revealed a series of complex and costly issues with the existing structure, which would have led to severely compromised spaces.

A Beautiful New Building

We all felt passionately that a new building would provide not only a significant opportunity to create a more expressive building but also one that would transform the nature of the corner site and the streets beyond. It was always our intention to create a Clerkenwell building; a building that responds to the distinctive, unique character of the area and a building that would age gracefully.

The concept is a tribute to both the historical fabric of Clerkenwell and its present day incarnation as the centre of London's creative media industries. The curved

plan form was a direct response to the movement of people around the busy site which is set to intensify as Farringdon Crossrail opens in 2018. Clerkenwell's quintessentially robust yet refined warehouse buildings provided a guiding template, while the concept is inspired by Barbara Hepworth's renowned sculpture 'Curved Form (Delphi)' comparing the vernacular of ancient and modern Greece. The skin on the outside of Hepworth's sculpture is textured and articulated, yet inside it is pure white. The hollow form at the centre of the sculpture inspired the idea of carving an entrance along Turnmill Street, this was a significant move both formally and as an organisational device on plan.

Petersen Kolumba Brick

As a studio we often find ourselves negotiating and embracing the complex relationship between new and old. For Turnmill we needed a very special façade material that was able to be both sensitive to its context and visually striking. Derwent London had previously collaborated with Petersen Tegl, the Danish brick makers, and was inspired by the handmade Roman format Petersen Kolumba brick. This special formal long brick worked extremely well with the concept of movement creating a horizontal emphasis across the façade and reflecting the sturdy masonry characteristic of the area.



One of 27 special angled handmade Kolumba bricks

It was essential to understand the process of making and firing the bricks and for this we visited Petersen many times. To achieve a varied and sympathetic palette to the neighbouring Old Sessions House we mixed three subtle tones of brick. Rather than adding materials to this beautiful brick we wanted to fully exploit the handmade nature of the surface. We used the brick on edge to create sills and soffits and other than the necessity to pre-cast the soffit, the brickwork was all handset. A range of special moulds were fabricated to create curved and angled bricks to achieve the complex geometry of the plan. The final layer of detail was to recess the mortar joints horizontally and fill the vertical joints. This emphasised the feeling of movement and created variation dependent on the height of the sun and depth of the mortar joint shadow.



Multiple brick textures along Clerkenwell Road

To create a more vertical fenestration pattern and add further articulation, the window reveals are deep and chamfered on plan, fanning out from the centre of the office floors to take advantage of the unusually panoramic views. En masse, the varied chamfers animate the façade and emphasise the solidity and character of the material.

On Turnmill Street, the brickwork continues inside through the curved entrance where it gives way to a palette of polished concrete, polished plaster and brass detailing. The double height reception space

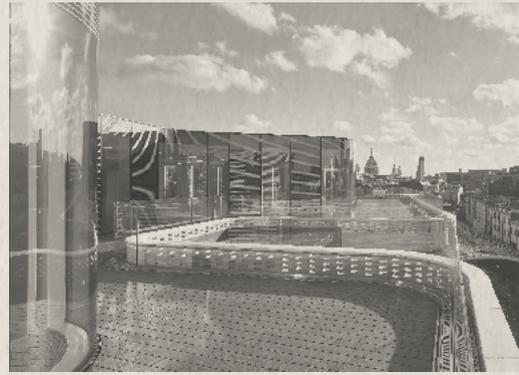
and glazed link above, separates the massing into two elements in order to preserve the established grain of Clerkenwell. The curves and inset glazed link create more informal and varied internal spaces, adding to the character and personality of the building. A continuous ribbon of external terrace celebrates the spectacular views from the set-back top floor and a similar arrangement of street level restaurants animates Turnmill Street and the junction with Clerkenwell Road.

Many of the fine details of the building repeat internally with curved reception walls, lifts and balustrades; the chamfered window reveals also appear within walnut cabinets in the washrooms. The offices have low level fresh air supply system similar to displacement ventilation coupled with openable windows. The lighting utilises a flexible track arrangement which is recessed into the soffit combining lighting and detection. Ground source heat pumps provide free heating/cooling throughout the year.

The simplicity of the form and composition have a familiarity which creates continuity with its neighbours, the warmth and tactility of the brick seems to have an endearing quality to people passing the building. Speculative commercial architecture can be unforgiving, it is measured in terms of efficiency and functionality. It has many established conventions and its success is often judged on compliance and neutrality. In many ways this is counter intuitive as we love to work in inspiring places and when you inherit a characterful old building, it is the inefficiencies and informalities that give the space its expression.

I think what makes Derwent London so successful is that they understand that form, space and atmosphere cannot arrive out of functionality and compliance. For them, substance and meaning arrives out of a commitment to design integrity and a passion for architecture.

Stuart Piercy
Director, Piercy&Company



Beautiful views over London from the wrap around fifth floor terrace





Solid white oiled oak reception
desk inspired by Barbara Hepworth

Previous page: Kolumba brick flows
around the double height reception and
out onto the Turnmill Street façade





Brushed brass handrail and curved
back painted glass in the lifts

Previous page: Palette of polished
plaster and concrete, Kolumba brick
and oak in the reception

View of St Paul's Cathedral
looking south through fifth floor
full height glazing

Image overleaf: Set back fifth floor
with wrap-around terrace









Team

Client

Derwent London

Architect

Piercy&Company

Structural Engineer

AKT II

MEPH

AECOM

Cost Consultant

AECOM

Project Manager

Jackson Coles

Façade Engineer

Montresor Partnership

Specialist Brickwork Consultant

Arup

Specialist Lighting Designer

Pritchard Themis

Planning Consultant

Gerald Eve

Main Contractor

McLaren Construction

Executive Architect

Veretec

Artisans

Brick Supplier

Petersen Tegl

Brickwork Subcontractor

Swift Brickwork Contractors

Reception Desk

Benchmark Furniture &
Bill Amberg Studio

Polished Screed Flooring

Lazenby

Building Identity & Signage

EverythingInBetween

Photography

Hufton + Crow

Exterior Kolumba brick flows internally through the entrance glazing

Previous page: Beautiful views over London from the wrap-around fifth floor terrace

“One must be entirely sensitive to the material that one is handling. One must yield to it in tiny details of execution, perhaps the handling of the surface or grain, and one must master it as a whole.”

Barbara Hepworth



Curved Form (Delphi)
Barbara Hepworth
The Hepworth Estate



DERWENT
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