

PORTFOLIO & SELECTED WORKS

O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops



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About



O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops is an architectural and design studio based in the UK, founded by James O'Brien and Joseph Van der Steen in 2015, with a broad range of projects in the UK and internationally.

The studio's work ranges from bespoke furniture and construction materials and systems, residential projects of all scales, to large-scale urban projects such as the phased redevelopment of large parts of The Rustaveli Theatre, National Theatre of Georgia and the development plan for the delegación of Iztacalco in Mexico City.

Our work is underpinned by a keen interest in how things are made and by a construction rationality in which materials and systems are explored to best suit the given needs of a project and place. We take a specific and empathetic approach to the places in which we work, and the people and landscape that form them. We are interested in the human aspects of architecture and construction and how the manner in which we think and build in rural and urban contexts is shaped by and in turn shapes the society of a place and people. We are interested in the idea of neighbourhood and what that means from an architectural and planning perspective as we move towards a decentralised, local form of sustainable dwelling.

The studio specialises in working in urban and rural contexts of historic and cultural importance, making sensitive

incisions into complex and difficult places and landscapes by working with local authorities and specialists to achieve unique results to specific briefs. As a studio, we are interested in the ecological and social sustainability of all of our projects, working closely with a range of consultants to develop projects that are sustainable in their execution as well as their inhabitation and use and to challenge how architectural and urban projects can help to shape socially resilient and diverse places in which to live.

The studio is based in the UK with offices in London and Devon.

James and Joseph were previously programme directors of the Interior Architecture & Design course at The British Higher School of Art & Design, Moscow (2015-2018) and ran a 5th year masters unit at the Moscow School of Architecture (2017-2018) where both courses addressed their preoccupations with materiality, structural rationality and the social implications of urban housing which form strong parts of their practice today.

Selected Projects - City



SKOLA, Rustaveli Theatre

Tbilisi, Georgia

Type: Renovation and re-use.

Sector: Commercial, private.

Status: Phase 1 complete; Phase 2 complete; Phase 3 and 4
Concept Design.

Budget: Undisclosed.

Opposite: A historic image of the Rustaveli Theatre from c. 1920.



The project for SKOLA is cultural renovation project consisting of 4 phases:

- 1.SKOLA Coffee & Wine – a café on the ground floor of the Theatre facing Rustaveli Avenue serving high quality coffee and local, Georgian wine;
- 2.SKOLA Restaurant in the basement;
- 3.SKOLA Creative Community Space – an event space in the old Kimerioni space;
- 4.SKOLA Studio for Experimental Education – a education centre for children and adults.

The intention for the project, and the clients, is to re-establish the basement space of the Theatre, and other unused spaces to create a broader and more varied collection of uses and events within the National Theatre of Georgia.

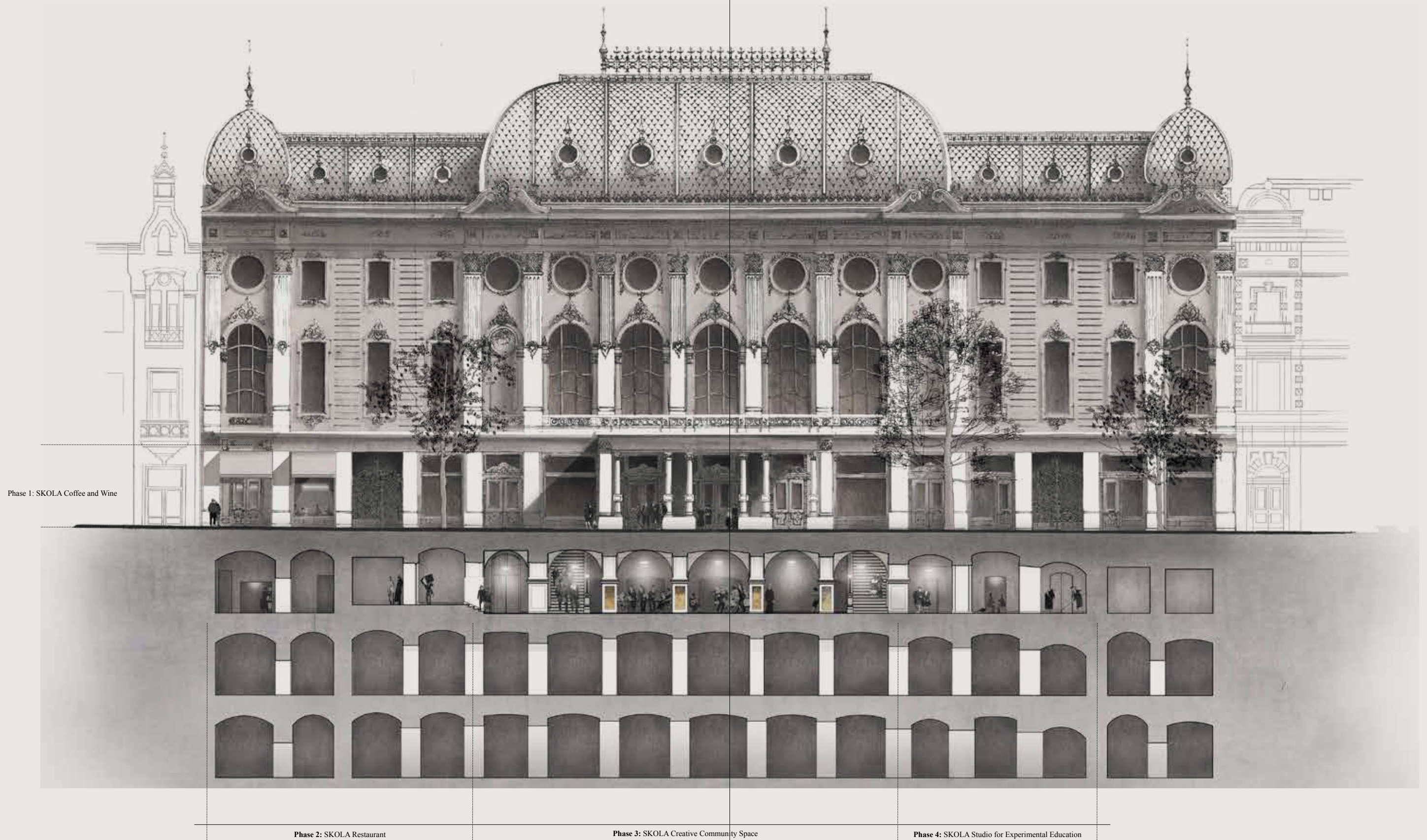
The basement of the theatre housed the famous Kimerioni restaurant, an avant-garde artistic café, between 1917-1921 and the murals of artists such as Lado Gudiashvili, Serge Sudeikin and David Kakabadze still adorn the walls. The Kimerioni was an informal space, accessed directly from the street, that served food and local wine, in which performance and art mixed with drinking and regularly animals wandering in off the street and

was the beating heart of Tbilisi's cultural scene at the time.

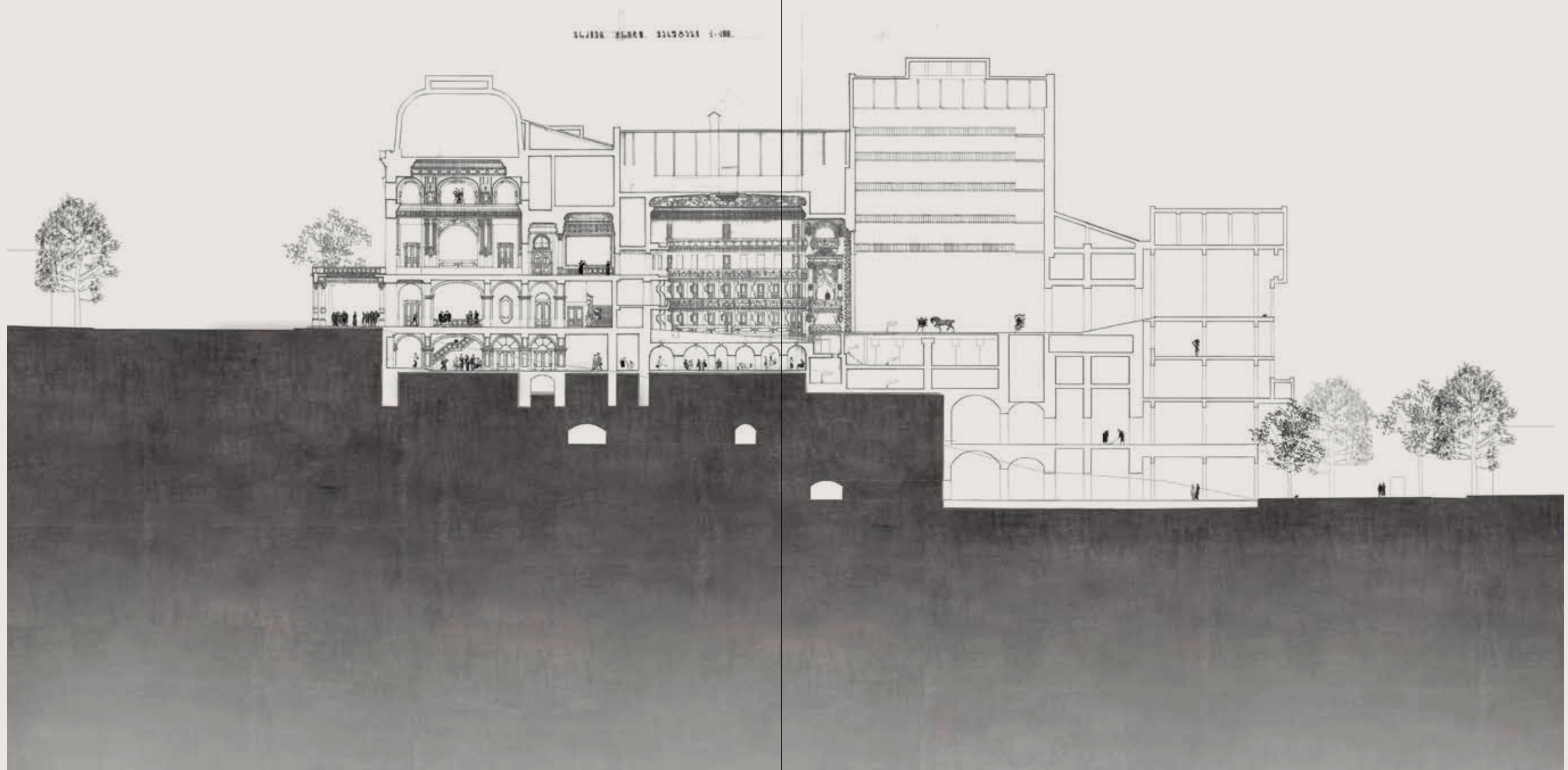
Building on the character and intentions of The Kimerioni and the artists who inhabited it, the project is to provide less formal uses that allow people to engage more easily with the Theatre itself and to provide a contemporary programme of events and spaces to serve Tbilisi's growing cultural and artistic community.

The project, through its programme and architecture, seeks to connect the theatre with an international culture of artistic endeavour that is built upon the strong Georgian cultural and artistic heritage and character.

Opposite: A historic image of the Kimerioni from c. 1920 of Serge Sudeikin and David Kakabadze enjoying a drink in one of the painted niches.



Above: Sectional elevation of the Rustaveli Theatre showing the active basement and the cafe at street level.



Above: Sectional study through the Rustaveli theatre showing the complex network of inhabited spaces and subterranean tunnels.

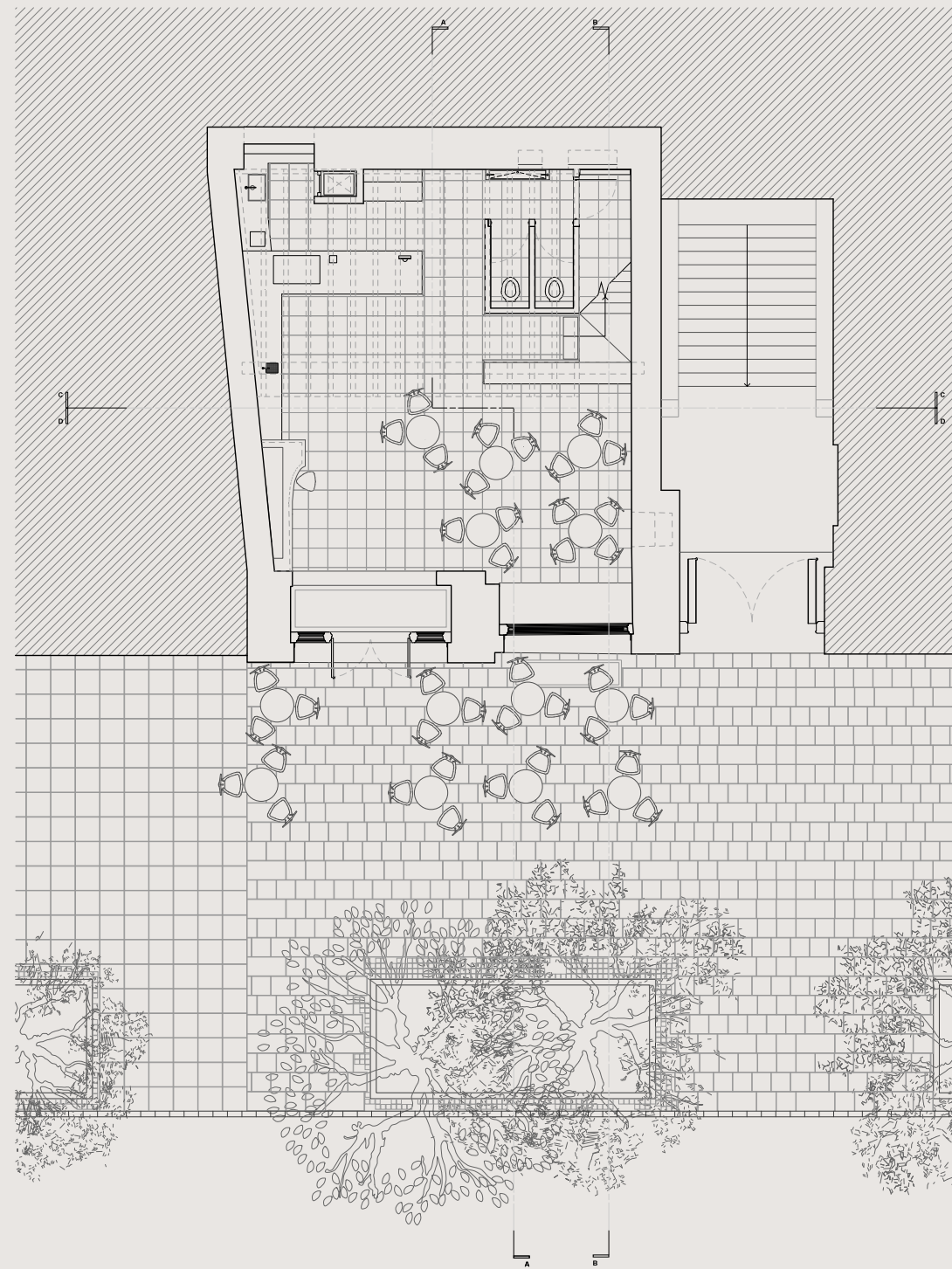
SKOLA Coffee & Wine

Tbilisi, Georgia

Type: Renovation and re-use.
Sector: Commercial, private.
Status: Opened December 2017.
Budget: Undisclosed.



Opposite: Interior view of SKOLA Coffee and Wine.









Moscow, Russia and London, United Kingdom

O'Brien Van der Steen Hunt

As the revolution raged in neighbouring Russia in 1917, down in the basement of a theatre in Tbilisi, Georgia, art stirred in the darkness. Originally built in 1887, the café in the basement of the Rustaveli National Theatre – named the Kimerioni, or 'chimera' – was, like many cafés across Europe at the time, a salon for avant-garde arts and culture. Artists fleeing the Russian Revolution found refuge here, with walls bristling with mythical creatures, beautiful dancers and garlands of vivid blossoms painted by Russian émigré Serge Sudeikin.

During the four short years of its lifetime – closing when Georgia succumbed to Soviet Russia in 1921 – the Kimerioni was 'the thriving, beating heart of the avant-garde movement in Georgia'. A hundred years after it first opened its doors to Tbilisi's artistic community, the Rustaveli Theatre hopes to resurrect its legacy as a setting for cultural dialogue and exchange. 'The intention is to provide less formal uses that allow people to engage more easily with the theatre itself', explains architect James O'Brien, one third of British practice O'Brien Van der Steen Hunt.

Founded in London by James O'Brien, Joseph van der Steen and James Hunt, O'Brien and Van der Steen are currently based in Moscow and teaching at the Moscow School of Architecture and the British Higher School of Arts & Design. 'Russia is a very stimulating place to be historically', O'Brien insists, 'even if there is something somewhat depressing about the rampant, mafioso corruption that shapes all social, political and architectural decision-making in Russia at the moment.'

Their clients at the Rustaveli Theatre, however, were looking for something different. The first phase of a project including re-establishing a restaurant and community space in the basement as well as an education studio, the Skola café on the ground floor showcases 'the best of Georgian skills, craft and culture'. The clients requested a space that wouldn't be out of place in London, Paris or New York: a design of an international standard.

But far from a bland, soulless bistro, the architects created a space deeply rooted in Georgian history and culture. The café is 'a place of gathering, of sharing food and wine', central to the local way of life. With walls coated in traditional *gaji* render and fitted with an intimate mezzanine up in the heights of the brick barrel-vaulted ceiling, the café creates an informal space, right on Rustaveli Avenue, for the discussion and celebration of arts and theatre.

Rather than the architecture taking centre stage, however, it is the café's furniture that steals the show. The architects started with a common stool from the Soviet era, or *taburetti*.

This surprisingly gentle, triangular-topped stool with rounded corners and three tapered legs looks more Alvar Aalto than Vladimir Tatlin. O'BYDSH's dining chair is a modern adaptation of this humble stool, preserving the same distinctive shape, made of the same light oak and crafted with foxtail joints in hardy mahogany. The chair embodies the DNA shared by the café's family of furniture, including a three-legged round table, long slender benches and simple stools, all constructed with the same tapered legs, the same beautiful joints, and from the same sandy oak.

Built-in furniture, such as the stunning wine cabinet (complete with curved cupboard doors and a matching ladder to reach the highest bottles), helps to modulate the small spaces and was 'a core part of the design process from the beginning'. The same oak is used in the joyfully robust joists that support the mezzanine – tapered at their tips like the chair legs below. 'Furniture and the interior are the natural extension of an architectural project – it tends to be the stuff you touch and engage with physically, so there is a natural relationship between the design of a building and the furniture that populates it.'

All carpentry was undertaken by four local joiners. Apart from the light fittings (manufactured in Germany), concrete tiles and timber joists (Russia), all elements were sourced from specialists in Georgia. 'We see a strong connection between the place in which a project – be it a building or a piece of furniture – will be made and the people who will make it, and how the project is conceived and thought about and then built', O'Brien continues. The architects spent a good deal of time in the workshops of artisans across Georgia, understanding craftsmen's methods, skills and materials.

As O'BYDSH embarked on this project, there was a tacit resignation that the high-quality craftsmanship desired by the architects and clients alike was going to be difficult in a post-Soviet state, with an artisan workforce slowly ravaged by the strains of communism. What this project proves is that a wealth of traditional skill and craftsmanship is hiding invisible in workshops all over Georgia, ripe for discovery by ambitious architects and their clients.

As Georgia embraces a closer relationship with the European Union – without severing economic and cultural ties with nearby Russia – this British practice offers an international approach to design of the Skola café (and the future phases to come), embodying an engagement with a broad, outward-looking, progressive community, in the same way the Kimerioni did one hundred years earlier. *Eleanor Beaumont*

area
Supporting emerging architects



Clockwise from top left: the Skola café on the ground floor of the Rustaveli National Theatre in Tbilisi, Georgia, has an intimate mezzanine level with a painted brick vaulted ceiling; all furniture – from chairs and tables to built-in cabinets – was designed by the architects; the tapered oak joists of the mezzanine echo the design of the furniture which was inspired by a common Soviet-era stool

Above: SKOLA Coffee & Wine featured in the Architectural Review Emerging Architects series under our previous name. July/August 2018.

Housing, Moscow

Baumanskaysa, Moscow, Russian federation.

Type: New build, competition.

Sector: Residential.

Status: Competition submission 2018

Budget: NA.

Area: 15,000m²

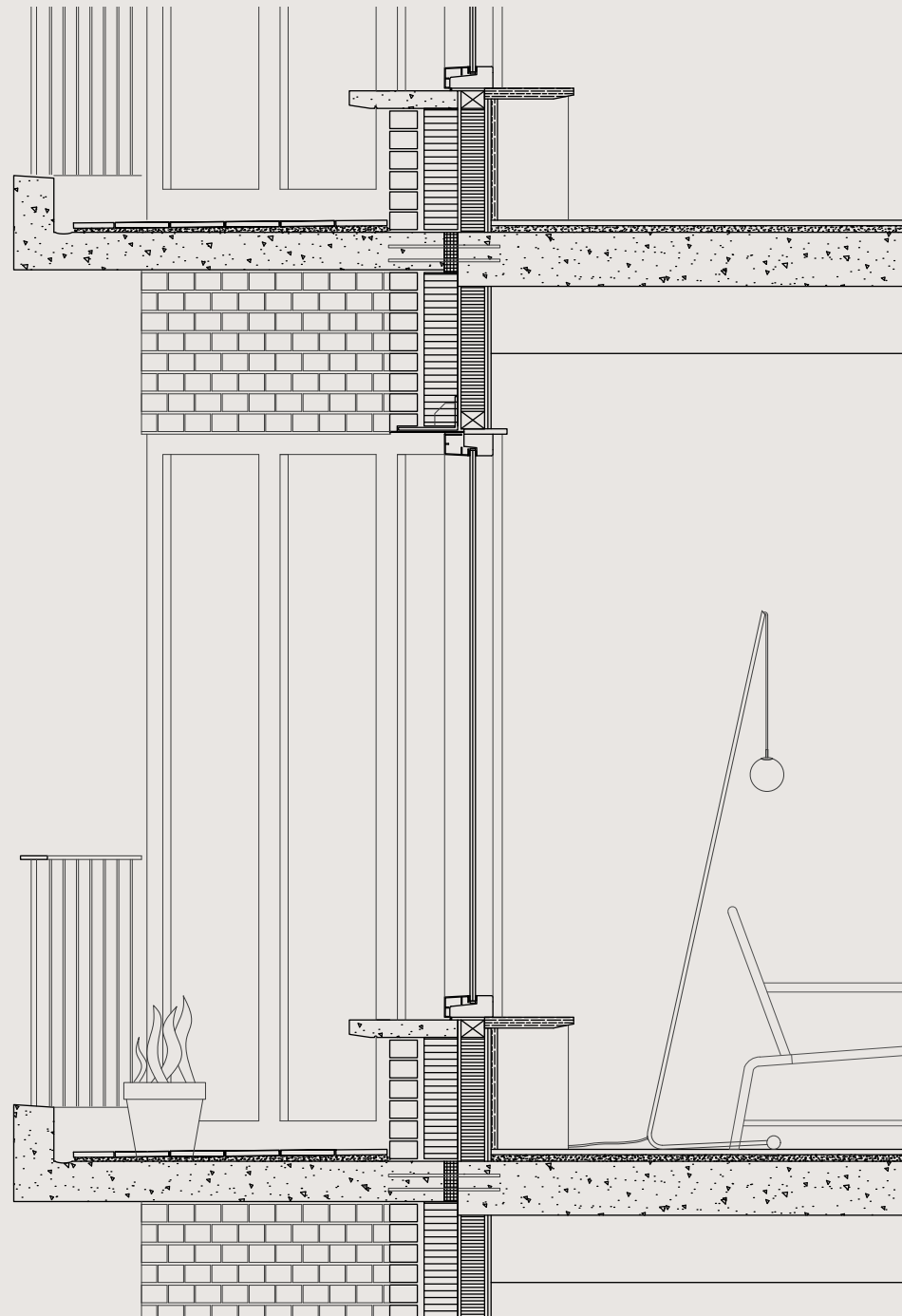
Opposite: Roof plan in context.

0 10 20 100m





Above: Exterior view looking down Basmany Street with the courtyard block addressing the street and forming the square with the public ground floor engendering both with activity. The concertina form creates a stepped and varied quality to the street and square, breaking down the scale of what is a large building.



Our initial response was to define what was meant by urban dwelling in the 21st Century, particularly in Moscow where some of the most extreme and radical experiments in relation to housing were undertaken and realised during the 20th Century? What was positive about them and what failed?

Through our research into the rich history of housing in Moscow and further afield in Russia we identified a number of precedents take on in our proposals: the clear urban hierarchy of the traditional courtyard blocks of the 19th Century and the density of dwelling and activity of this same type; the spatial efficiency, social idealism and technological innovation of the Constructivists of the early 20th Century; and the relative generosity (in comparison with the timber barrack-slums in Moscow prior to Khrushchev's intervention) of the 1960's pre-fab panel housing.

The block is pulled to the north of the site, creating a south facing square and defining the three other surrounding streets. The concertina plan facilitates an inner city density (222 per hectare) whilst also providing dual aspect views for flats that are only single sided. The central yard is open to the public, reinforcing a particular condition of Moscow that allows pedestrians to move through the city through yards rather than along roads. Overlooked by the apartments above, the courtyard includes amenity spaces for both the residents and ground floor nursery.

Programmatically, the courtyard block incorporates a wide set of uses addressing what we felt was a fundamental failure of much of the 20th Century planning in Russia in which mono-districts were prioritised with very little room for growth, a

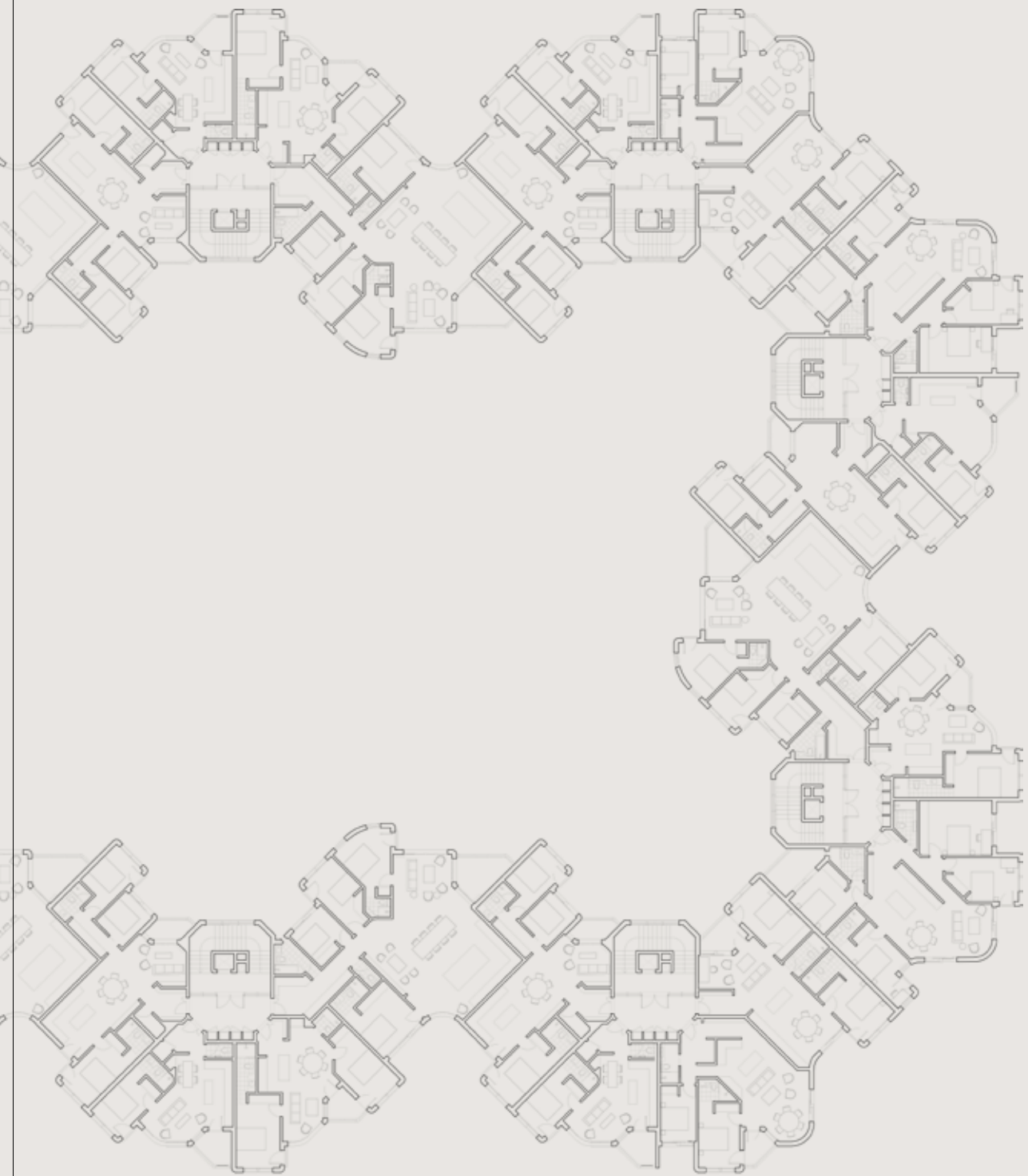
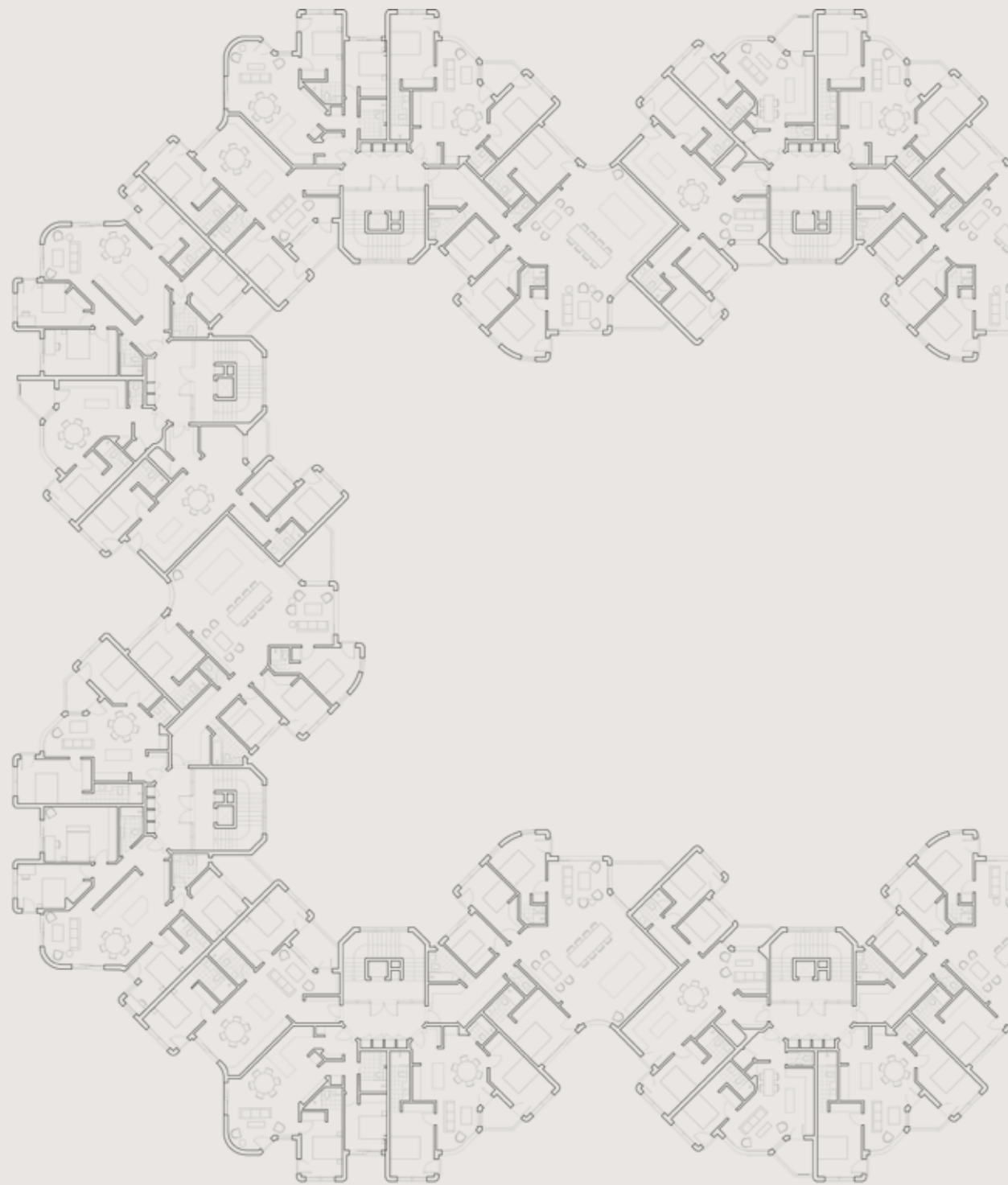
mix of use, inhabitation and activity. From a cafe, small studios, a nursery and a laundry to a market, public and semi-public uses are located on the ground floor to engender the square and street with activity. 50% of food and vegetables are produced on small holdings in villages around Moscow and brought into the city to sell in small local markets and the market on the ground floor will replace an existing one close to the site. The roof will house a variety of spaces suitable for small businesses or studios and community halls.

Each stair core provides access to 4 apartments with integrated storage spaces for prams, etc. to avoid clutter in the apartments and balconies. The mix of apartment types – from 1 - 4 bed – reflects the variety of requirements and aims to encourage families to continue residing in the city rather than moving to the suburbs and living amongst a mixed demographic of ages and incomes. All apartment types have a balcony that during winter can be closed to create a winter garden large centralised living spaces. Children's bedrooms are designed with integrated working spaces to reduce pressure on the main living spaces. Working spaces in the apartments and throughout the building aim to address the developing culture of flexi-work and integrate this into residential typologies.

Facade detail

Brick leaf;
Cavity;
Rigid insulation;
Cementitious board;
SFS system with rock wool insulation;
Two layers of plasterboard;
Internal timber window seat;
Aluminium timber composite windows.

Opposite: Technical detail through the living room & balcony/winter garden showing the facade as a usable element with window seats on the interior and exterior. The space is shown in summer with the removable timber framed glass screen in storage.



Above: Typical upper floor plan, apartment levels.



0 5 10 25m

Above: Transverse section through the new square, the courtyard block and the immediate context.



Above: Interior view of a 2 bed apartment with central living area, winter garden and balcony. The concertina form allows this single sided apartment to have a broad aspect in two directions.

Opposite: Apartment mix diagram and a detailed plan of a 2 bed apartment.





Iztacalco Development Plan

Mexico City, Mexico.

Type: Urban planning, new build, public space and civic infrastructure.

Sector: Residential, cultural, social, public.

Status: Initial investigation.

Budget: undisclosed.

Opposite: A typical street in Iztacalco – low density single dwellings with little or no commercial, civic or social space. Taken from a research photo-essay of Iztacalco by James O'Brien.



The development plan for Iztacalco aims to provide the framework by which the delegation of Mexico City will develop over the next 20 years. Iztacalco presents some unique issues alongside all of the common issues that Mexico City faces – water use, traffic congestion and the subsequent poor air quality, a lack of local green spaces, poor public transportation infrastructure and earthquake resilience – in that it is very centrally located but has a very low density of inhabitation and boosts the eldest average age of the city by quite a distance. The high age average age has meant that there is also very little economic activity or opportunities for new young families to make a comfortable living there.

The development plan is based around a series of key principles; collective housing, densification, health, education, a circular economy and resource capture, processing, distribution and use with the aim of creating social sustainability and urban resilience. Working in collaboration with a local Mexican studio, Oficina de Práctica Arquitectónica, O'Brien Van der Steen are responsible for developing the overall vision along these principles and identifying a strategy for the gradual implementation. Between OPA & O'BVdS, we will be overseeing a broad team of specialists during the course of the investigation, design and construction.

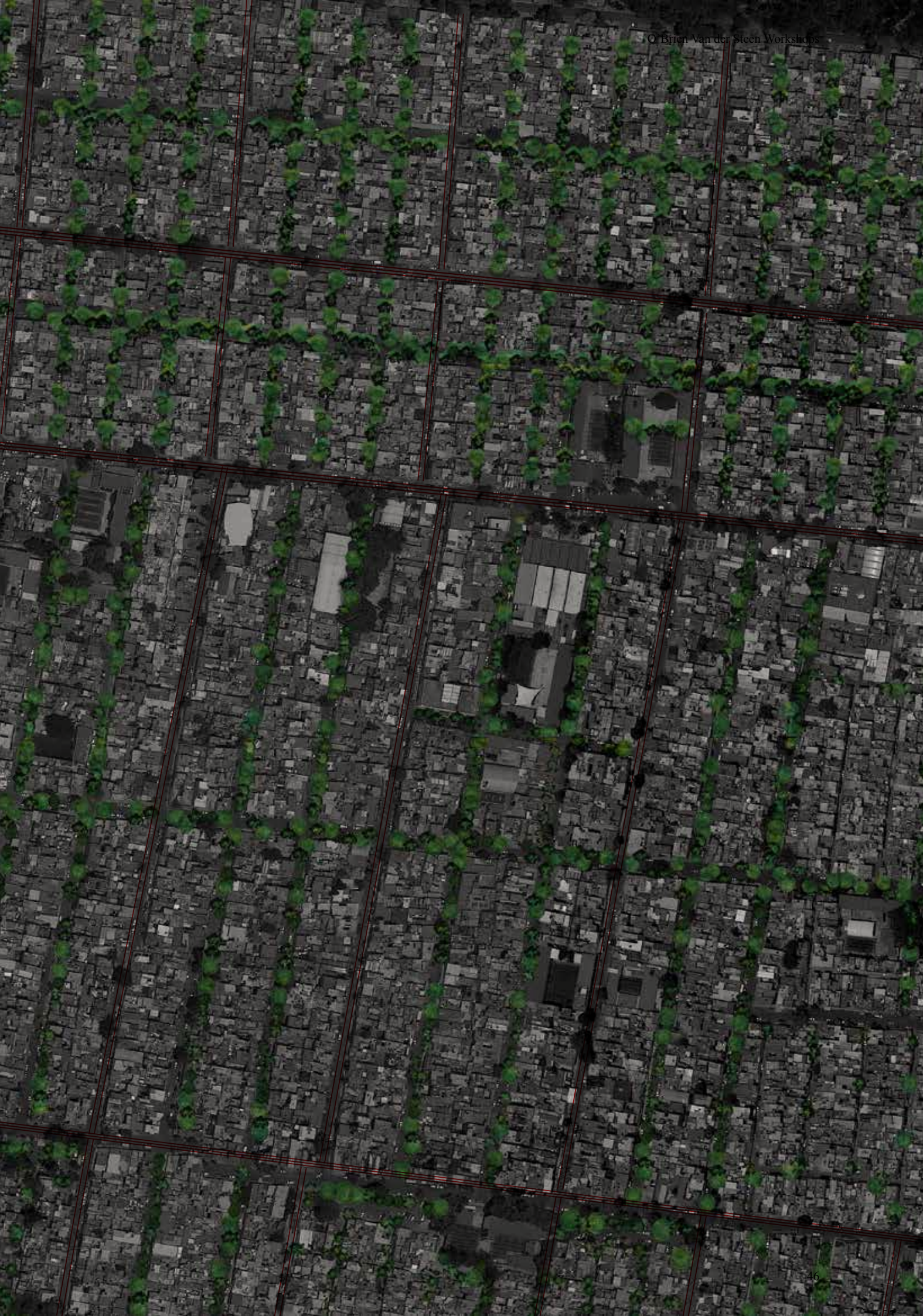
As part of the project, we are responsible for the development of a new form of housing typology that draws upon the ubiquitous and traditional *Casas de Vecindad* – Neighbourhood Houses – of the historic centre that allows for and facilitates a circular social economy within the building itself.

The project is currently in the initial research and investigation and we will be presenting the work to the Mexico City government at the end of 2019.

Opposite: A typical street in Iztacalco – small scale local economy (hair cuts) taking place from garages and on the street. Taken from a research photo-essay of Iztacalco by James O'Brien.



Above: The delegation of Iztacalco showing predominantly gridded streets of single dwellings comprising a very high percentage of the area.

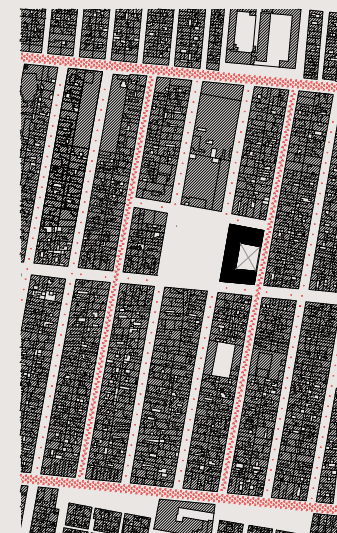


The principle elements of the development plan are to reintegrate public space and social infrastructure into the urban fabric of Iztacalco. The creation of ‘super-blocks’ restricts vehicular access to some streets, creating blocks of primarily pedestrian and cycle friendly spaces, allowing shops and markets to inhabit the outdoor spaces in the city and for the streets to be liberated from being clogged by cars.

Mexico City has severe air pollution issues with one of the worst air quality in the world. The reduction of car use, the creation of smaller scale, local economies that are accessible via foot or bicycle helps to reduce the pollution emitted by personal transport by reducing the size of the city, creating micro-districts and more humanly scaled neighbourhoods.

Each ‘super block’ would also serve as an independent water network with rain water captured and transferred to large tanks to be stored, cleaned and then re-distributed to the houses in the block. This would be done using small, local water purification plants, reducing the stress on the notoriously poor centralised water system in Mexico City, a hang-over from the Spanish colonisation.

Within each super block, a public plaza will be integrated into the urban fabric through the construction of a new typology of collective, inter-generational housing – Neighbourhood Houses – quadrupling the density to free portions of space for public plazas and parks. These neighbourhood houses will house the water purification plant as well as a communal kitchen and salon and small scale shops and services, providing not just a higher density of housing but also a centre point for local economic and social activity.



Opposite: Super-blocks of semi-pedestrianised streets (identified by the new trees creating shaded walkways) with primary vehicular routes maintained at the edges (the red lines).

Above: The traffic hierarchy and access scheme.



Las casas de vecindad (The Neighbourhood House)

Mexico City, Mexico.

Type: Research.

Sector: Residential.

Status: On-going.

Budget: N/A.

Opposite: A vecindad patio in Tepito, Mexico City c. 1935.



On-going research into the common place and traditional form of collective living from the 19th and first part of the 20th Century in the historic centre of Mexico City.

Las casas de vecindad, the most direct translation of which is neighbourhood houses, provided rudimentary accommodation to much of the lower class workforce in Mexico City based around central patios that formed extensions of the civic space in the city and provided a shared communal space for all the families living in the *vecindades*.

The small, tightly packed nature of the accommodation was offset by the centralised patio in which daily tasks such as baking, washing, cleaning and child care were carried out communally, easing the workload on the mothers of usually large, multi-generational families. The patios were open during the day, with tradesmen and sellers wandering in to sell their services and goods and were closed at night, create safe contained spaces within the traditional block form of the centre of Mexico City.

The research seeks to record and document the communal, multi-generational existence of the *vecindades* and their role in creating diverse and safe neighbourhood-scaled housing in a large and unforgiving city that contributes to the economic activity of the area as well as their role in the morphology of the historic centre of Mexico City.

Opposite: A plan of part of the historic centre of Mexico City with *casas de vecindad*, integrated into the urban fabric, highlighted in red. *Drawing:* O'Brien Van der Sten Workshops. *Information Source:* Reyes Meza, Arias 2015; *La vivienda colectiva en la construcción de la ciudad de México*; Barcelona.



Above: A *vecindad* patio in Tepito, Mexico City c. 1940. Source: INAH Mediateca.

Opposite: The morphology of a Mexico City block with various *casas de vecindad* comprising a large portion of it, creating a dense, vibrant and economically active neighbourhoods within the block. Source: Reyes Meza, Arias 2015; *La vivienda colectiva en la construcción de la ciudad de México*; Barcelona.





Khrushchevki: Adaptation for the future.

Malaya Ohkta, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

Type: Urban planning, regeneration, public space and civic infrastructure.

Sector: Residential, cultural, social, public.

Status: Presented to the chief architect of St. Petersburg.

Budget: N/A.

Workshop for Project Baltia magazine with students from Moscow and St. Petersburg led by James O'Brien & Joseph Van der Steen.

Opposite: Elevation showing the adapted block with winter gardens hung from a super structure placed on top of the existing block with two new floors above.



The idea for the renovation of the Malaya Ohkta Khrushchevki district is exactly that; a renovation – working with the existing community and the existing buildings in order to achieve a sense of continuity in urban regeneration rather than wiping the slate clean. Our proposal is based around 2 primary elements; the buildings themselves – bringing them up to contemporary living standards and increasing their size – and the landscape within which the buildings are set – working with planting and different ground conditions to enhance the sense of calm and quiet, to create a hierarchy of spaces relating to each quarter of the district and to emancipate it from the tyranny of the car.

The primary principles of the proposal are as follows:

1. Enhancement of the buildings as totalities and individual apartments on the exterior and interior.
2. The creation of a large open garden landscape within which the apartments sit.
3. The provision of communal, social spaces within the buildings themselves as well as the yards and gardens.

Working with the existing structure, the proposal is shaped by what is realistically possible; pre-fabricated extensions to the buildings are hung from a new 2 storey structure on the roof whilst bracing elements are added to ensure that no buckling of the existing facade occurs. The new spaces on the roof will house those who needed to move as part of the renovation, new apartments for sale to help fund the development and communal spaces allowing for social gathering and community activities. The development has become completely accessible to disabled people through the addition of lifts to every level and ramped access to the raised ground floor of the buildings.

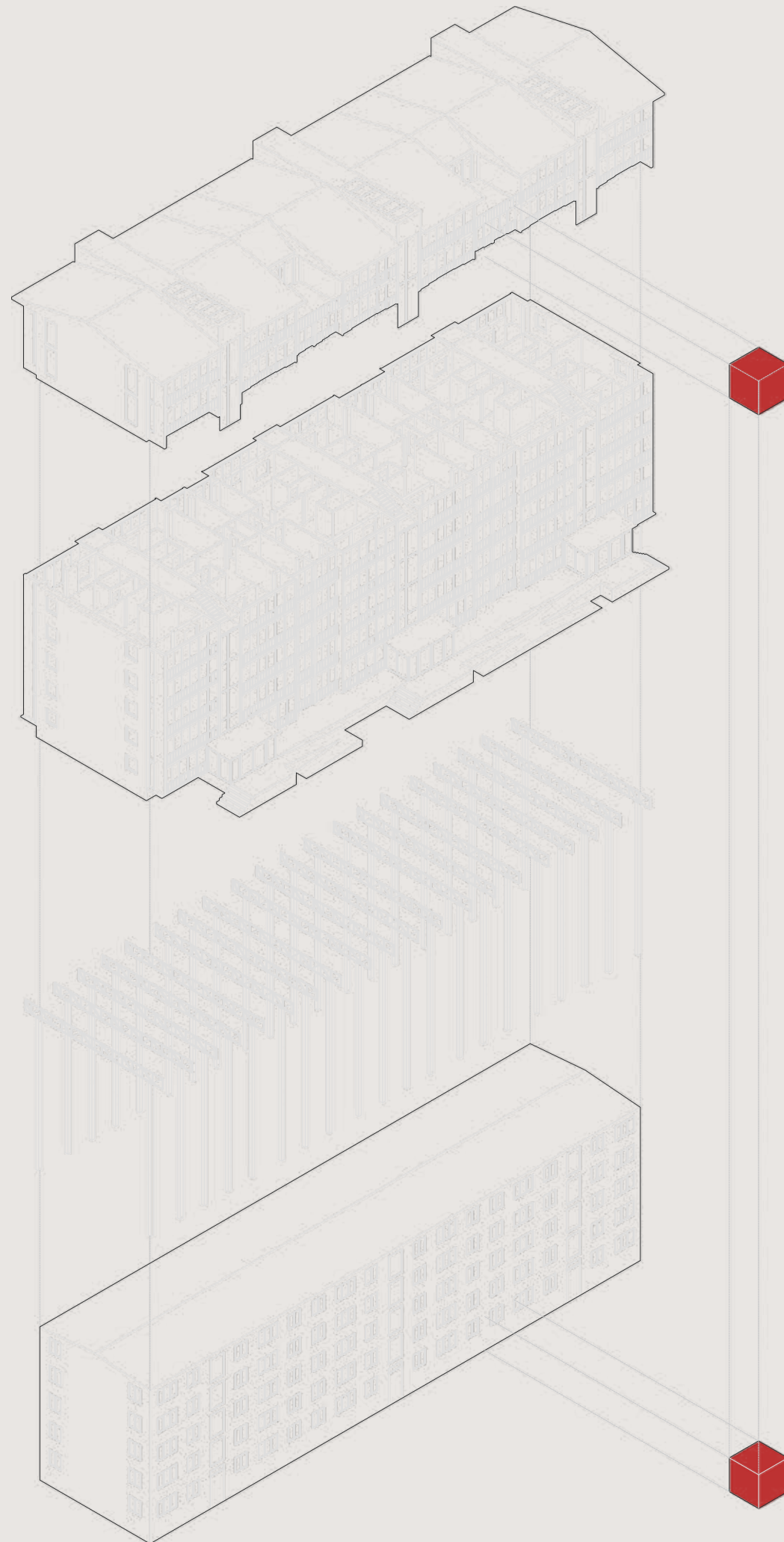
Novocherkassky Prospect will be resurfaced to calm traffic and to create a pedestrian friendly boulevard and Rijskaya Ulitsa will be extended into the project site connecting the banks of the River Neva with the heart of the quarter. The entrance to the site will be defined by a market place, replacing the existing *producti* and various other uses. Beyond this a public garden will run through the centre of the site. The façades facing onto Novocherkassky Prospect will be lined on the ground floor with small shops and offices with the residents of these old apartments being moved to new apartments on the roof.

The planting of the gardens, paths, parks, yards and courtyards has been specifically selected from local species and types that will ensure a vibrant and luscious landscape throughout the year and one that helps to clean the air within the district. The use of Cross Laminated Timber as the primary construction material allows for fast, high quality construction off site, minimising the disruption of the proposal and envisaging a sustainable use for the vast quantities of low-grade timber available in Russia.

The proposal aims to replace and renovate the parts of the district that are clearly not functioning well whilst working with, improving and enhancing the parts that are valued by the local community. Identifying the positive parts of the site – and there were plenty once you looked beyond the drab Soviet aesthetic – allowed us to focus our work on improving the district for both current and future residents as well as the wider city fabric.

Opposite: Site plan showing a quarter; a central garden playground, new landscaping and small ancillary buildings defined by the existing, renovated Soviet panel blocks.





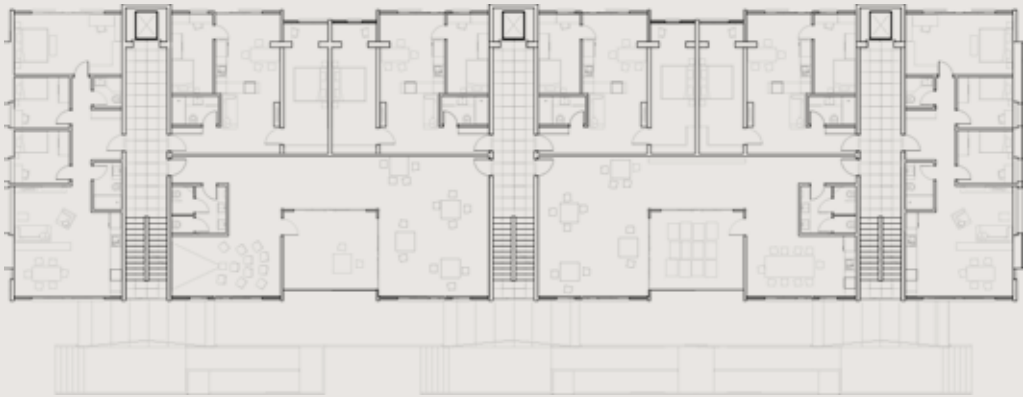
Above: Interior view of the new entrance lobbies, running through the buildings.

Opposite: Exploded isometric drawing showing the existing building, new superstructure, extended envelope and roof extensions.

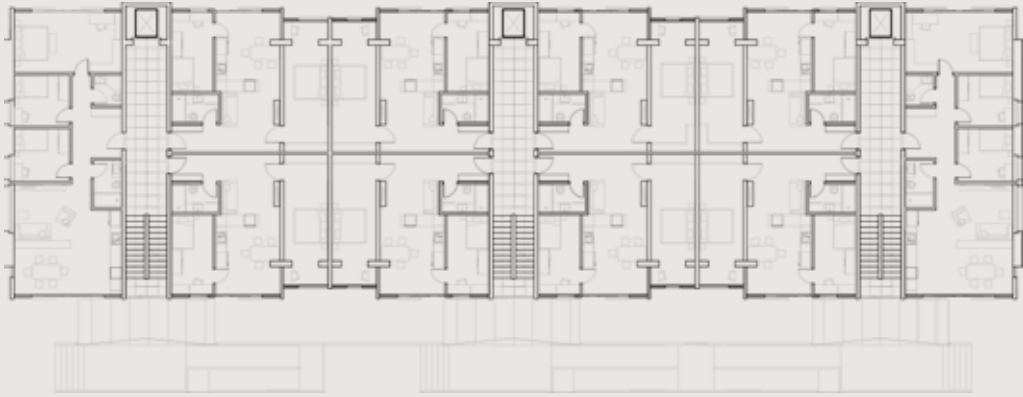


Above: Interior view of the living room of an apartment, with the new winter garden extending the living space.

Opposite: Floor plans. The red shaded areas show the extents of the new winter garden extensions and the access podiums to the existing buildings.



New seventh floor with apartments and communal spaces around rooftop patios.



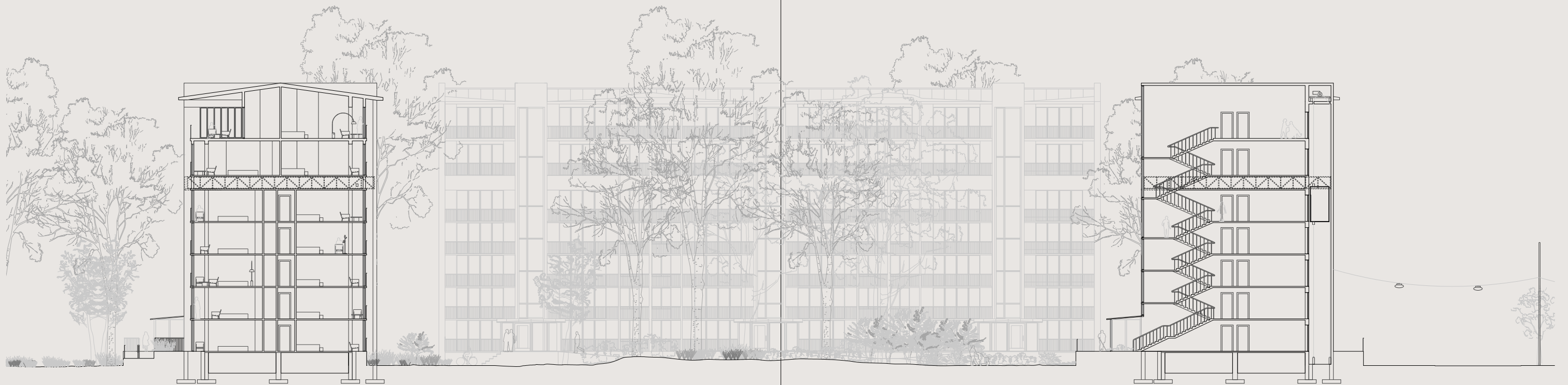
New sixth floor with new apartments.



Typical existing floor, renovated and extended.



Ground floor.



Opposite: Cross section through a quarter showing the additional structures to the existing blocks and the densely, lusciously planted garden between.



0 10 20 50 100

Above: Site plan of the Khrushchevki district in St. Petersburg showing small individual gardens between the large housing blocks and new small pavilions helping to define the spaces and create a neighbourly sense of scale and intimacy.



Usborne Mews

London, UK

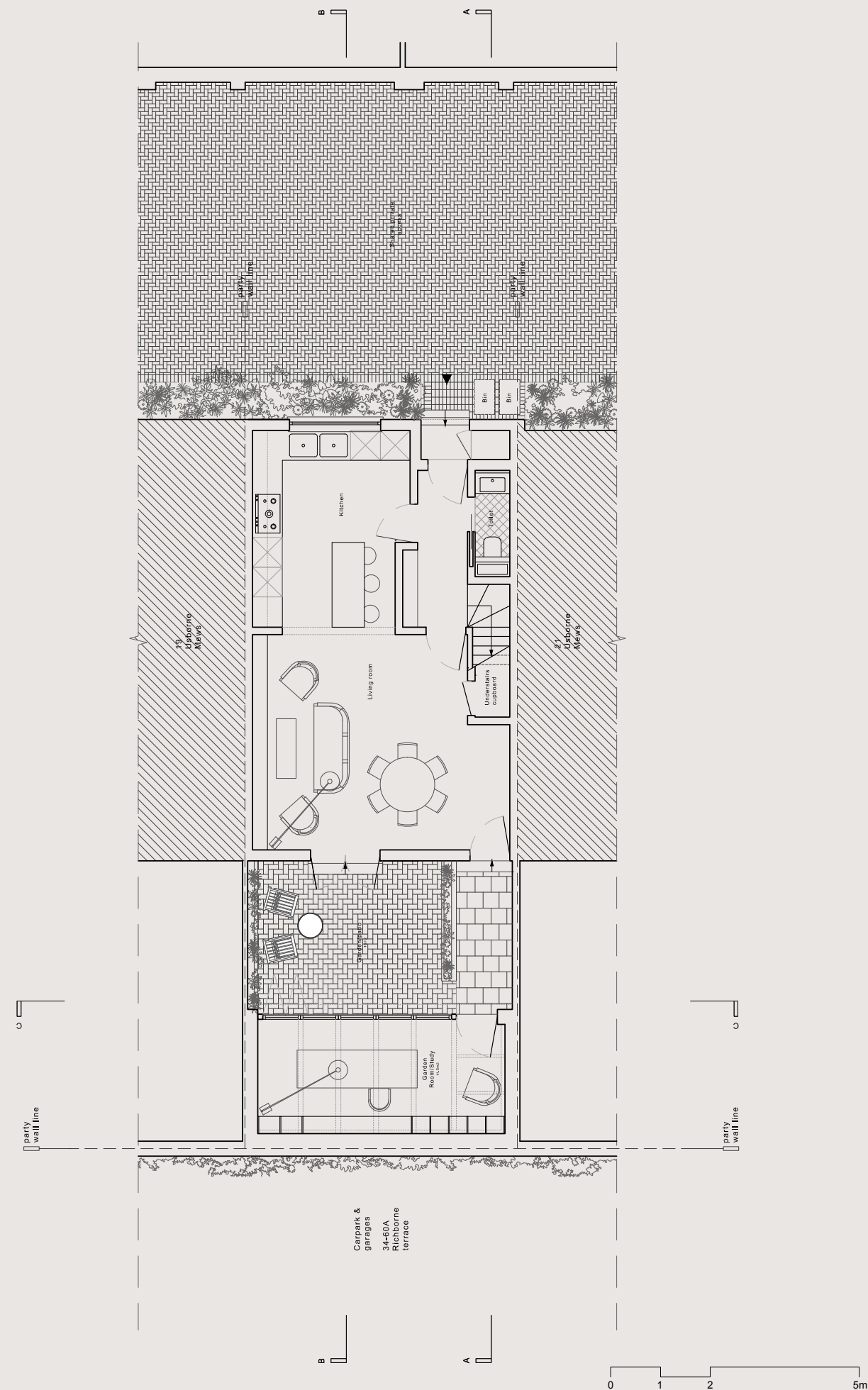
Type: Renovation and re-use.

Sector: Residential, private.

Status: Planning & technical design. Construction due to start July 2020.

Budget: Undisclosed.

Opposite: Usborne Mews.



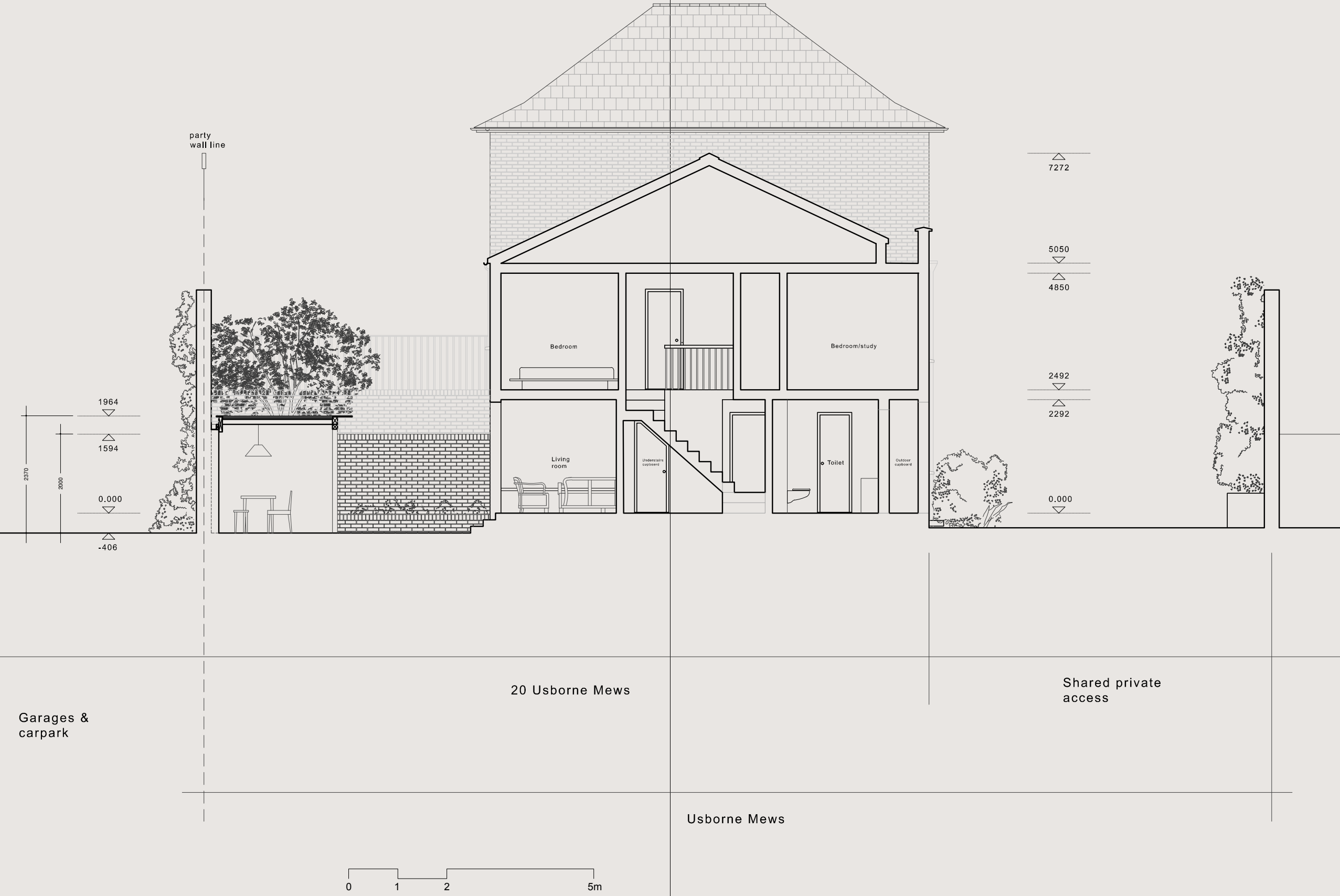
Usborne Mews is a small residential mews built on the land of the former Vauxhall bus and tram depot, Terminal House, in 1985. Number 20 has not been touched since it was built and the renovation seeks to upgrade the accommodation and provide higher quality living spaces which take advantage of the quietness and seclusion of the development.

The ground floor is completely opened up, creating one large living and kitchen space by removing the wall between the kitchen and living room and reorganising some of the storage cupboards to form partitions. A new kitchen with moveable island will be designed with bespoke finishes. The ground floor toilet is reinstated.

On the first floor, the two small bathrooms are knocked together to create one large family bathroom. New timber floors will be laid throughout with high performance acoustic insulation being fitted to the party walls. New double glazed timber frame windows will be fitted throughout the house.

In the small rear garden, the existing conservatory will be removed and replaced by a garden room of a similar size against the rear wall to form a home office. The central patio garden will create a stronger connection between the living room and outdoor space. The new garden room will be a simple but elegant timber frame with large glazed sliding doors and a sedum roof and will be nestled into the garden, greatly reducing its bulk and visibility. The timber fences along the boundary wall line in the garden will be replaced with brick walls, allowing only the flat sedum roof of the garden room to be seen from the neighbouring properties.

Opposite: Proposed ground floor plan and section.



Selected Projects - Rural

Ethno Qvevri House & Winery

Manavi, Georgia

Type: New build.
Sector: Light industrial, private.
Status: Technical design phase, construction due to start in May 2020.
Budget: Undisclosed.



Opposite: A view of the Ethno Qvevri House & Winery from below, looking up across the vineyard to the building and to the ancient Manavi Fortress on the top of the hill behind.



O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops were appointed by Ethno Wine to design and build a new Qvevri (traditional Georgian wine making process) House and Winery that reflected the wine makers ethos of using traditional and contemporary technologies and methods to make high quality, unique, artesian bio-wine. Our brief was to create a building that drew on the place, the culture and history of Georgian wine making, contemporary technologies and methods and was a reflection of the Ethno label.

The building is envisioned as one that is placed at the top of the site overlooking the valley, becoming a part of the landscape it sits within and commanding it without being over bearing. The building will be visible from the valley and the mountain top without becoming overtly expressive.

The production areas of the building are arranged along a thin slither of land before turning to locate a guest area on a flat plateau that is set down into the slope. The form of the building itself weaves along the landscape, following its contours and allowing a gradual change of level inside to reflect the different steps of the wine making process. Vines will be planted right up to the edge of the building, bringing building, landscape and the particularities of Georgian wine production into close harmony.

The use of rammed earth is intended to make use of a natural material available on site, creating a building of the ground, much as the wine and qvevri process is. The use of a natural set of materials reflects the ethos of Ethno whilst the use of a heavy materiality is derived from our wish to make a building that meets the controlled ambient temperatures and environments required for wine making in a passive manner rather than one achieved

with overly complex technological systems.

These principle ideas are intended to make a building that is both a part of and unique within its landscape, Georgian wine making and Manavi itself; a building that is both timeless and contemporary.

Opposite: Ground floor plan in context.



Above: Qvevri room.

Opposite: A 1:20 model of a courtyard between two production spaces.



Above: One of three courtyards that sit between the main production spaces, acting as places of rest and solace and where the building kinks in the landscape.



Above: Concept context model (1:500) showing the building in the landscape and its relationship to the natural forms of the site.



Proper Job Resource Centre

Chagford, Devon, UK.

Type: New build, charity

Sector: Commercial/light industrial

Status: Full planning application submitted, due for determination in Spring 2020.

Budget: £1,000,000 – 1,250,000.

Area: 1,000m²

CLT Design: URBAN

Opposite: Exterior view of the approach to the building and the front yard.



Proper Job Resource Centre is one the country's leading centres of innovation in recycling and reuse at a community level. For over 20 years it has been operating from the same site, just outside the town of Chagford in Dartmoor National Park, providing a valuable recycling and reuse service. In recent years it has expanded its offering, partly due to an increased awareness of environmental issues in the general population but primarily from their own desire promote an awareness of the issues surrounding waste disposal, and the necessity to dramatically reduce our impact on the environment through resource re-use.

This has been achieved through the introduction of educational workshops and programs, broadening the reach of the core message, and in the wider community through the Courtyard Cafe and a new up cycling and shop called Uptown, with of which act to boost the profile and message of Proper Job.

The proposals for a new facility on the Proper Job site, aim to consolidate its current offering within a fit for purpose and efficiently organised building, that retains the core ethos off the charity, but through intelligent planning allows for a more productive facility in terms of its capacity to accept, sort and redistribute waste and re-saleable items. Along side this, and building will have the capacity to hold educational workshops and talks, with dedicated workshop and office space available for use.

Opposite: Interior view of the sorting area and mezzanine behind.



Above: Site plan.

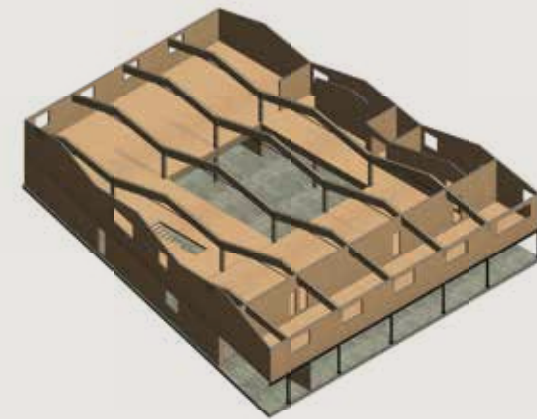
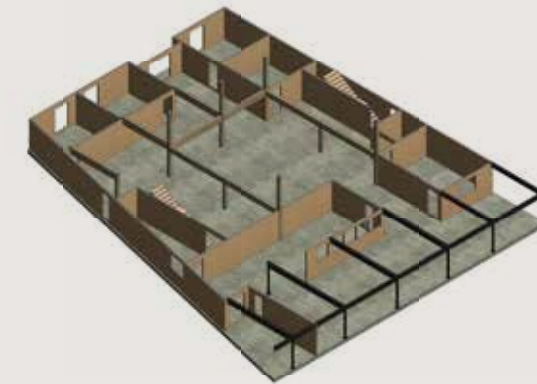


Above: Site model (1:500).



Above: Back garden and compost demonstration area.

Opposite: Structural design diagrams for CLT superstructure by EURBAN.





Gratnar Farm

Dartmoor National Park, UK.

Type: Renovation and rem-modelling.

Sector: Residential.

Status: Under construction.

Budget: Undisclosed.

Opposite: New porch with patent glazing and log store over the rear entrance from the central courtyard.



Opposite: 3D model of the handrail wrapping up the half landing set onto a 3D scan of the staircase.

A modest late Victorian farm house on the north of Dartmoor, Gratnar farm sits on the site of a much earlier Farmstead. In its recent history the house has undergone substantial change and alteration, most notably in the mid 1990's by Van der Steen Hall Architects.

We have been commissioned by the new owners to consolidate the house and landscape after 20 years of poor alterations.

The proposals use a substantial staircase and atrium/light well to tie the main house back together, opening up the ground floor to create a large entrance hall and dining room and the addition of a generous loft bedroom and bathroom. Additionally, a new open fireplace and chimney carved from local Blackenstone granite will form a central focus in the large, former pool room.

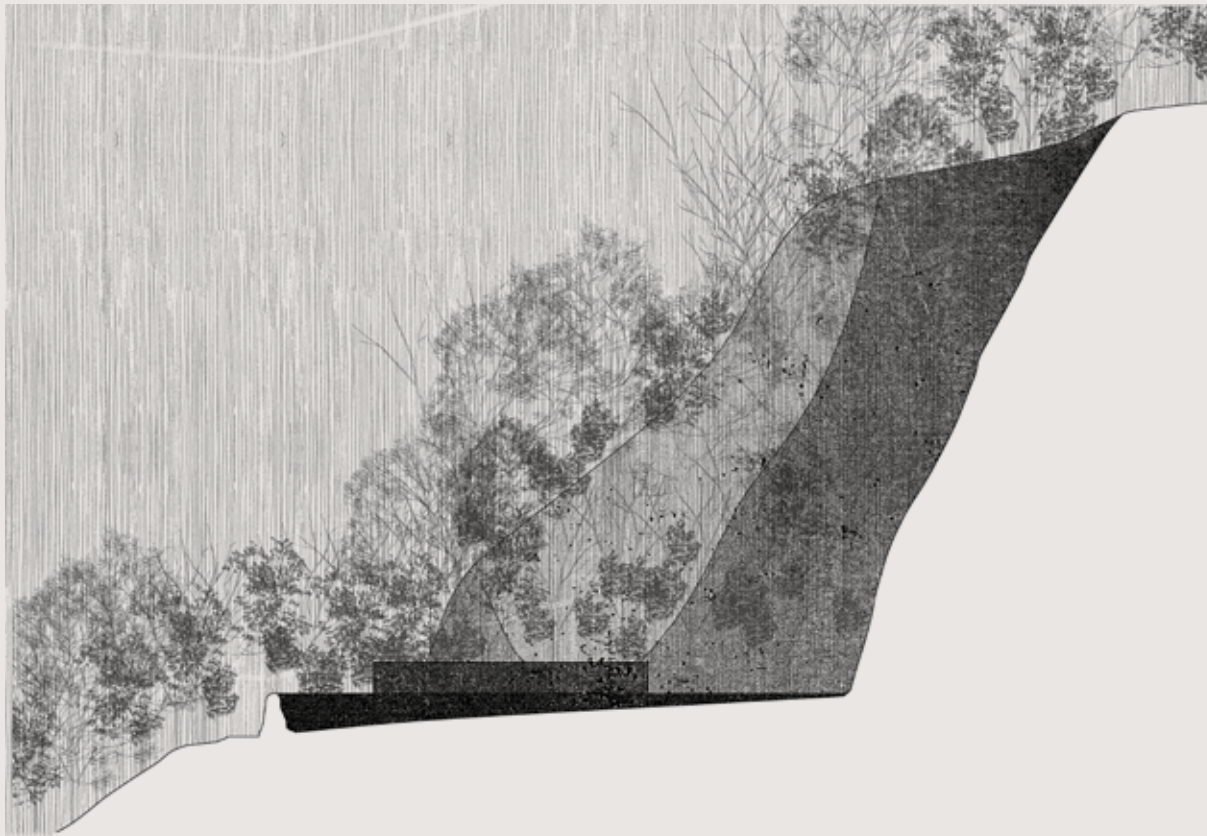
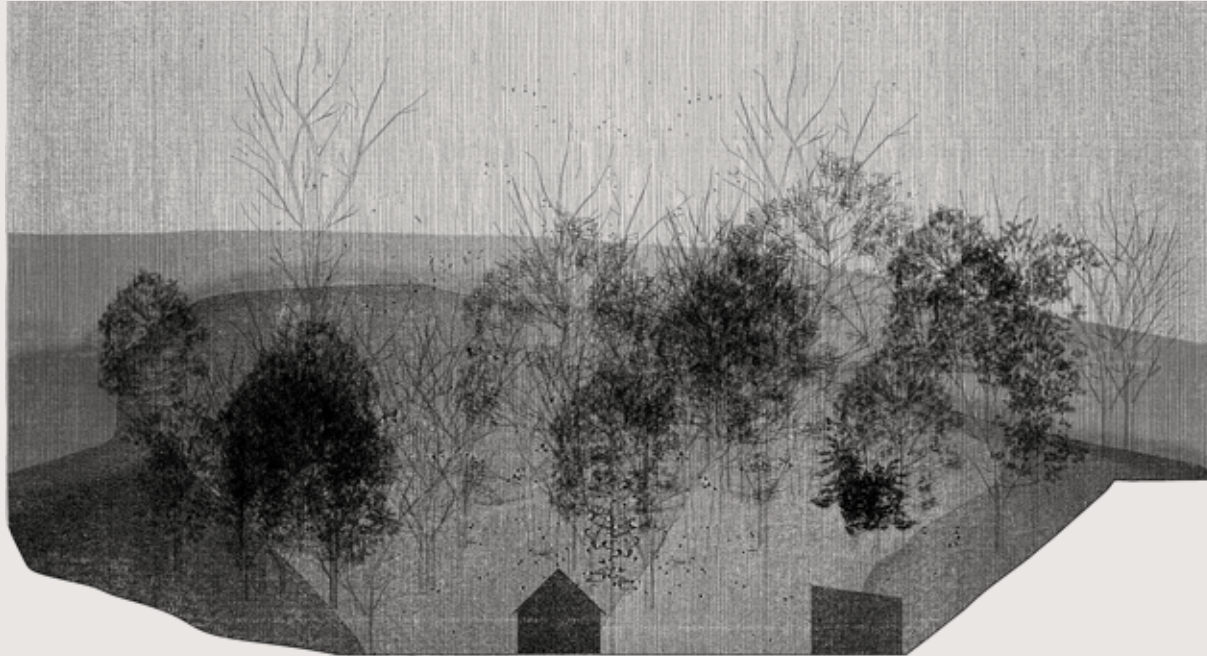
The landscape surrounding the house, that had been kept as almost suburban lawn, will be returned in large parts to wild flower meadow with chestnut fencing consolidating the boundary between the domestic and agricultural curtilage. A new natural swimming pool is to be gently placed in to the upper part of the walled garden, and a tennis court on the site of a former manège.

The farm sits within the Dartmoor National Park and we have worked closely with the DNPA planning officers and local consultants to ensure that the house and grounds are returned to their estate roots whilst providing the facilities and amenities the clients and their young family require.



Above: New granite surround and open fireplace.

Opposite: Stair under construction. Substructure and strings made of hard-wearing Sapele, to be painted. Handrails to be oak with a French polish finish.



Barytes Quarry Farmstead

Dartmoor National Park, UK.

Type: New build.

Sector: Residential & agricultural.

Status: Feasibility studies.

Budget: £160,000.

Opposite: Sectional studies of the new house within the steeply sloping site of the old Barytes mine.



A small house for a local young family with their own fencing and gate making business that served the local farming community across Dartmoor. The family wished to consolidate their dwelling to one location to help grow their business and ensure that, when they had to work at the weekends, their family was still all in one place. Taking reference from the traditional farmsteads of Dartmoor and the surrounding area, the site is conceived as one, working yard, house and garden defined and separated by the built form. The yard maintained the existing sheds and lock-ups with a large open area for working and loading of materials. The long drystone wall acts as the back of the house as well, with the corrugated metal roof coming down to meet the top of the wall as an agricultural building might, mitigating the impact of a 'dwelling' in the open countryside.

The house is set into the new wall the defines the working and residential areas, opening up to the south facing garden. The modest 3 bedroom dwelling, roughly 100m², provides 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms at either end of the house, with a central, open plan living area that includes the kitchen and dining areas. A fundamental requirement from the family was to be able to inhabit one space in the centre of the house with a strong connection to the outdoors, both physically and visually. The nature of the work of the clients and the weather on Dartmoor necessitated a series of service spaces, such as boot room, drying room, etc. in order to keep the house clean and tidy. A courtyard serves as entrance, outdoor storage for boots and overalls and wood store, leading to a entrance lobby and drying and wash room, allowing for the complete removal of all dirty boots and clothes before entering into the centre of the house. The house is constructed using cross laminated timber and will be heated using a wood burning stove and ground source heat pump utilising some of the old mine shafts that have now been capped off.

Opposite: Ground floor plan in context.



Selected Projects - Objects



SKOLA Furniture, Ironmongery & Lighting

Tbilisi, Georgia.

Type: Product and furniture design

Sector: Commercial

Status: Complete

Budget: N/A.

Opposite: Detail of bespoke oak dining chairs designed for SKOLA Coffee & Wine.
Made in Georgia.



As part of our commission for SKOLA in the Rustaveli Theatre, we developed a bespoke range of furniture and fittings consisting of chairs, tables, benches, stools, side tables, light fittings, door handles, switch plates and socket facing plates.

The furniture was based on the old *taburet* stool, a common 3-legged Soviet stool, common place in all Soviet countries. The triangular top and 3 legs of this simple piece of furniture provided the base for the range of furniture, that was refined and developed to provide unique and elegant furniture giving character to the café.

The furniture was made using local regional oak and fabricated by 3 different carpenters in Tbilisi with whom we developed the detailed design based on their local capacities and skills.

The ironmongery made use of the relatively low cost of materials and labour but a surprisingly high skill set of specialists. The brass accents of the ironmongery off set the natural tones of the furniture and floor.

Opposite: Bespoke oak dining chairs and tables designed for SKOLA Coffee & Wine. Made in Georgia.



Above & Opposite: Bespoke floor lamp designed for SKOLA Coffee & Wine and SKOLA Restaurant. Bent steel, painted black.



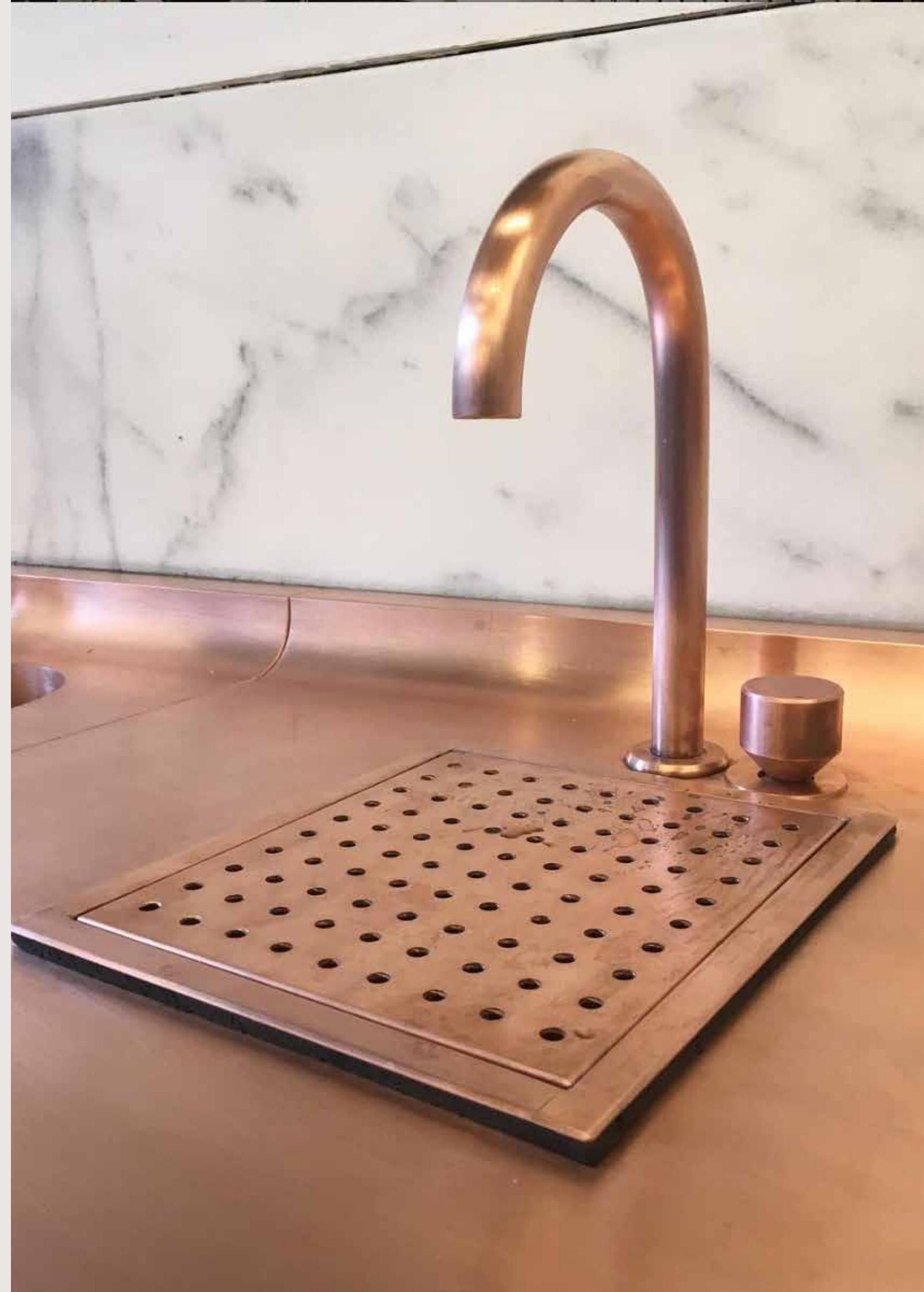


Above: Bespoke brass napkin holders.

Opposite: Bespoke brass door handles and toggle switch plates.



Above: Bespoke copper sink and hand towel holder.
Opposite: Bespoke copper water tap and drainage tray.





OMNITON Concrete Components

Moscow, Russian Federation.

Type: Product and Furniture design.
Sector: Commercial.
Status: Prototype and full production
Budget: Undisclosed.

Opposite: Elevational drawing of the facade panels (with copper filing additive) and mounting system.



OMNITON is an innovative and exciting new concrete product manufacturer in Moscow working with high-end concrete, developing techniques, products and finishes for an emerging market.

Our collaboration with Omniton began when we commissioned them to produce the flooring tiles for SKOLA Coffee and Wine in Tbilisi. The success of this collaboration led us to run a joint workshop for students in the British Higher School of Art and Design in Moscow, and since then we have been commissioned by the company to design a range of bespoke products and construction materials.

Some of these products, such as the tables, are now fully prototyped and available to buy, and other more complex products and systems are still in the development phase, such as the fire pits and facade systems.

Opposite: Round fire pit in red concrete with gas fired grill and copper serving bowl.



Above & Opposite: Heavy table in white concrete.



James O'Brien

BA(Hons), Prof Dip.

Alongside Joseph, James is responsible for the creative and practical direction of the studio, its leadership and is closely involved in the development of all projects from conception to completion and client liaison. James is also responsible for the development of the studio in Mexico City.

James is particularly interested in the sustainable social development of the city, in the relationship between society and the individual and the role of architecture and urbanism in mediating between the two. Through projects and research he explores the ideas of housing and the domestic in the city, urbanity and density and how architecture and particularly housing might play a prominent role in more diverse, vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods.

James is currently carrying out research a traditional form of urban collective housing in Mexico City called *vecindades*, meaning neighbourhood houses.

James graduated from The CASS School of Architecture in 2014 and gained professional experience in London and Mexico City before establishing O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops with Joseph in 2015. James has previously taught in Moscow as Programme Director (Interior Architecture & Design), The British Higher School of Art & Design and as 5th Year Masters Studio leader at the Moscow School of Architecture.

Joseph Van der Steen

BA, Prof Dip.

Alongside James, Joseph is responsible for the creative and practical direction of the studio and is closely involved in all aspects of the practice, the development of all projects at all stages and client liaison. Joseph, being from Devon, has very close connections to the work there and spends some time during the week in the Devon office.

Joseph previously worked for Studio Mumbai in India where his keen interest in the craft of making and the relationship between designing and making and between building and place was fostered and refined. He is particularly interested between the relationship between building and landscape, something that he has previously explored through numerous projects and forms the basis of much of the offices work in the sensitive and protected context of the Dartmoor National Park as well as within an urban context as well.

Joseph graduated from the CASS School of Architecture in 2014 and gained professional experience in Mumbai, London and Moscow before establishing O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops in 2015. Joseph has previously taught in Moscow as Programme Director (Interior Architecture & Design), The British Higher School of Art & Design and as 5th Year Masters Studio leader at the Moscow School of Architecture.

Associate

Nikolaus Klahre, BA(Hons), Prof Dip, ARB.

Nik joined O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops in 2019 as associate architect having previously worked for EAST architecture and landscape for five years on large-scale urban housing and landscape projects in London.

Nik graduated from The CASS School of Architecture in 2014. Previously he worked for practices in Switzerland and Denmark. Nik is a registered architect with the ARB.

Team (past & present)

Evgeniia Khashimova
Polina Muravinskaya
Ellie Cullen
Ilya Filipov
Sandy Vile

Consultant

Allen Van der Steen BA(Hons), RIBA, ARB, AABC.

During the last thirty six years Allen's practice has carried out over a thousand projects throughout Devon, Cornwall and Somerset and has extensive experience in the design of new buildings in sensitive areas and on sites of special interest, including historic building development and the conservation, repair and regeneration of existing buildings.

The practice has been awarded numerous National and Regional design and conservation awards in recognition of the quality of its work. Allen now works closely with O'Brien Van der Steen on a consulting basis providing expertise and guidance particularly in work through out the South West.

Photography credits

SKOLA Coffee and Wine - Nikolaus Klahre.
Profile image: Giorgi Shukakidze
All others - O'Brien Van der Steen Workshops

Devon studio

Our Devon studio is based in the bustling old stannary town of Chagford on the edge of Dartmoor and in the Dartmoor National Park in an old building facing onto the central town square.

All of our local projects to the south west are run from the Chagford studio and we have a full-time and permanent presence here offering full architectural services and construction inspection on all of our projects here.

We have a small workshop just outside the town that is used to make working and presentation models for the office with the intention of it becoming the centre point of the development and testing of our bespoke furniture and product ranges.

We work in close collaboration with Allen Van der Steen on most of our projects in Devon and particularly in the Dartmoor National Park. Allen has built up a reputation as the go-to architect in Devon during the 30 years that he has run his studio here prior to his retirement. His knowledge, expertise and assistance is a huge benefit to the studio in working in such challenging yet stimulating contexts as a the Dartmoor National Park.

O’Brien Van der Steen Workshops
56 The Square
Chagford
Devon
TQ13 8AE

London Studio

A 10 minute walk from Bethnal Green tube station, we are located in an old light industrial/ warehouse spaces from the Victorian-era in the bustling and vibrant East End of London where we share a studio with 2 other architects offices and a graphic designer.

The London studio is focused on the more urban projects in the office as well as some of the international work.

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www.obrienvandersteen.com