

Textural and tectonic

A love of natural materials and wine were the inspirations behind the award-winning renovation of a former London Postal Service building

Words James Cleland Photography Paul McAnearney Architects

This special project hails from the shores of Blighty and has won and placed in several awards and featured in several exhibitions, including the Architecture Foundation of London's Young Architect of the Year 2011.

The renovation of this building, which was once the central sorting and distribution office for south London, involved splitting the space into two luxury penthouse-style apartments and was the subject of an invitation-only design competition. Here, we feature one of the two apartments.

Owner Nicholas Jeffrey, new to city living,

desired a large-volume loft space, a space that was contemporary and functional. The owner's passions for natural materials and wine inspired Paul McAnearney Architects Ltd with its initial design brief, a brief that won the competition, allowing the company to see its creative vision come to fruition.

The design team dubbed its entry "Textonic", an amalgamation of textural and tectonic elements for the project's texture-focused design ethos and texturally varied natural surfaces as well as the project's focus on visual, tactile and sensory elements in both design and construction.

Use simple roller blinds for added privacy and insulation

The design was inspired by the original use of the building as part of the postal service. The textural representation of postal packages was reflected in the three 'bedroom boxes,' which are constructed with wonderfully aesthetic materials. The bronze timber casts that clad the master bedroom box were specially developed by the design team and have been articulated with maximum textural detailing. Wire-brushed and sand-blasted oak cladding treated with a caustic soda finish has been used in the secondary bedrooms.



Choose wide planks for a streamlined and robust finish

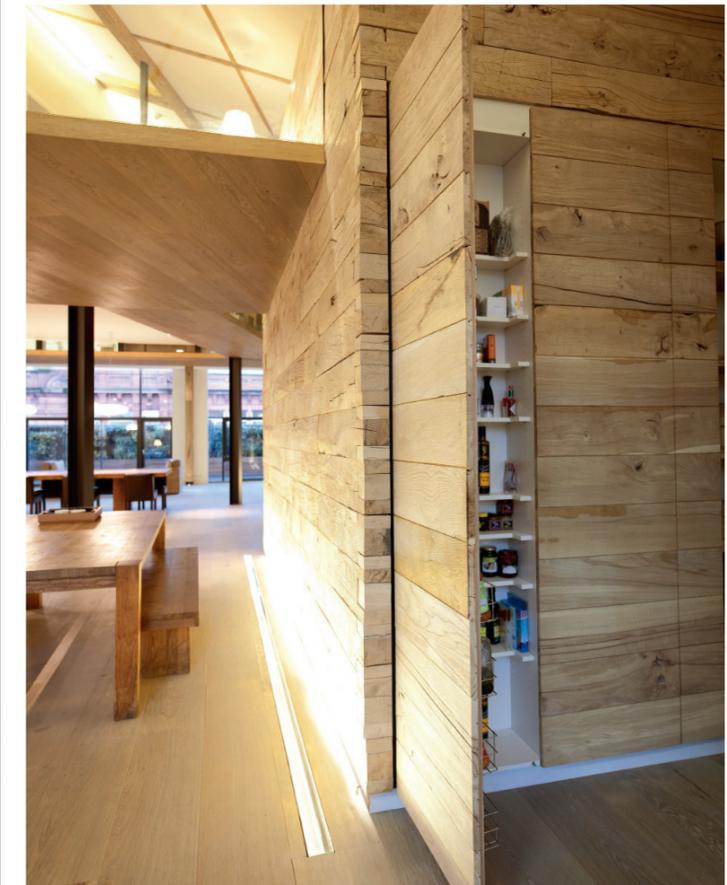
The beautifully appointed, extensive kitchen is a serious cook's dream

The boxes were erected within the large, double-height loft space and provide ample room for the master bedroom's walk-in wardrobe and ensuite as well as a shared bathroom.

The elaborate yet modestly sized private space gives precedence to a commodious, multifaceted living space containing a common living room, dining and formal dining areas. A capacious lounge and entertainment space as well as an extensive kitchen also feature. This

layout creates a robust living area well suited to contemplative relaxation as much as it is to entertaining and parties.

Above the private and public living areas, a suspended timber mezzanine provides ample room for office space and, as testament to the owner's Oenophilic proclivities, a floating wine cellar. This is a very personal and important detail for the owner and is one of the design team's favourite aspects of the renovation.



“The floating wine cellar ... we had some fun with this,” commented the team. “Wine is a big part of our client’s life, so we wanted to play on the idea of giving the wine this hierarchy by placing it at the apex of the house, awarding it an elevated position that’s unexpected but also making it a feature by displaying the bottles lengthways so you can view the shapes and labels rather than just seeing the dusty ends of the bottles.”

An outer terrace adjacent to the living room and master bedroom is accessed via large sliding glass doors and creates a transitional zone between inner and outer spaces. An exuberant and lush green wall garden creates a synergy with the natural environment that’s sorely lacking within many areas of London’s bustling inner-city urban landscape. This bastion of natural beauty also provides a much-needed inlet for natural

light, warming the interior with a soft, ambient light during daylight hours.

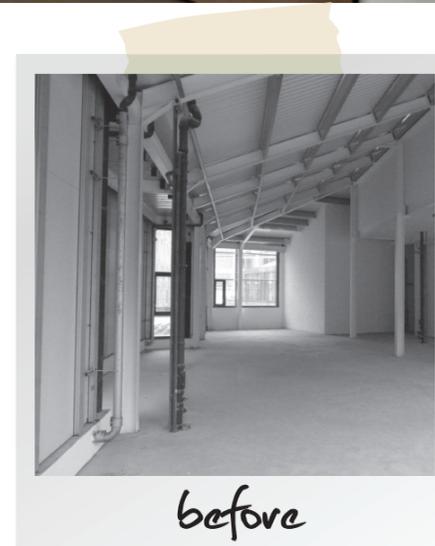
Special design considerations needed to be given to the apartment’s lighting philosophy. The system employed within the house utilises concealed light fittings, which results in creating a minimalistic solution. The lighting design provides numerous profiles that can then be tuned to a desired setting and saved. These settings can then be used in any of the spaces to complement the multiple uses of the apartment’s public areas during the day or at night.

Wherever possible, natural or reclaimed materials were used. The timber flooring was completely recycled as was the brick wall that divides the original floorplan into two apartments.

LED lighting was used heavily and underfloor heating and extra insulation have

been installed to increase the overall energy-efficiency, reducing the carbon footprint and environmental impact of the apartment.

When queried on the design team’s favourite features of this renovation, they said: “From day one, the client had expressed a fondness for natural materials, so we wanted to really push this by using new techniques to emphasise and enhance their aesthetic qualities. This contrasts with the stark white walls and planes that minimalist architecture normally has. One of the biggest criticisms of minimalism is that it can feel quite cold and sterile, so our competition entry centred on experimenting with natural materials to create a warmer minimalism. The design intent with all the natural materials is that they will change with wear, becoming more beautiful with time so it’s like a continuing story.” 



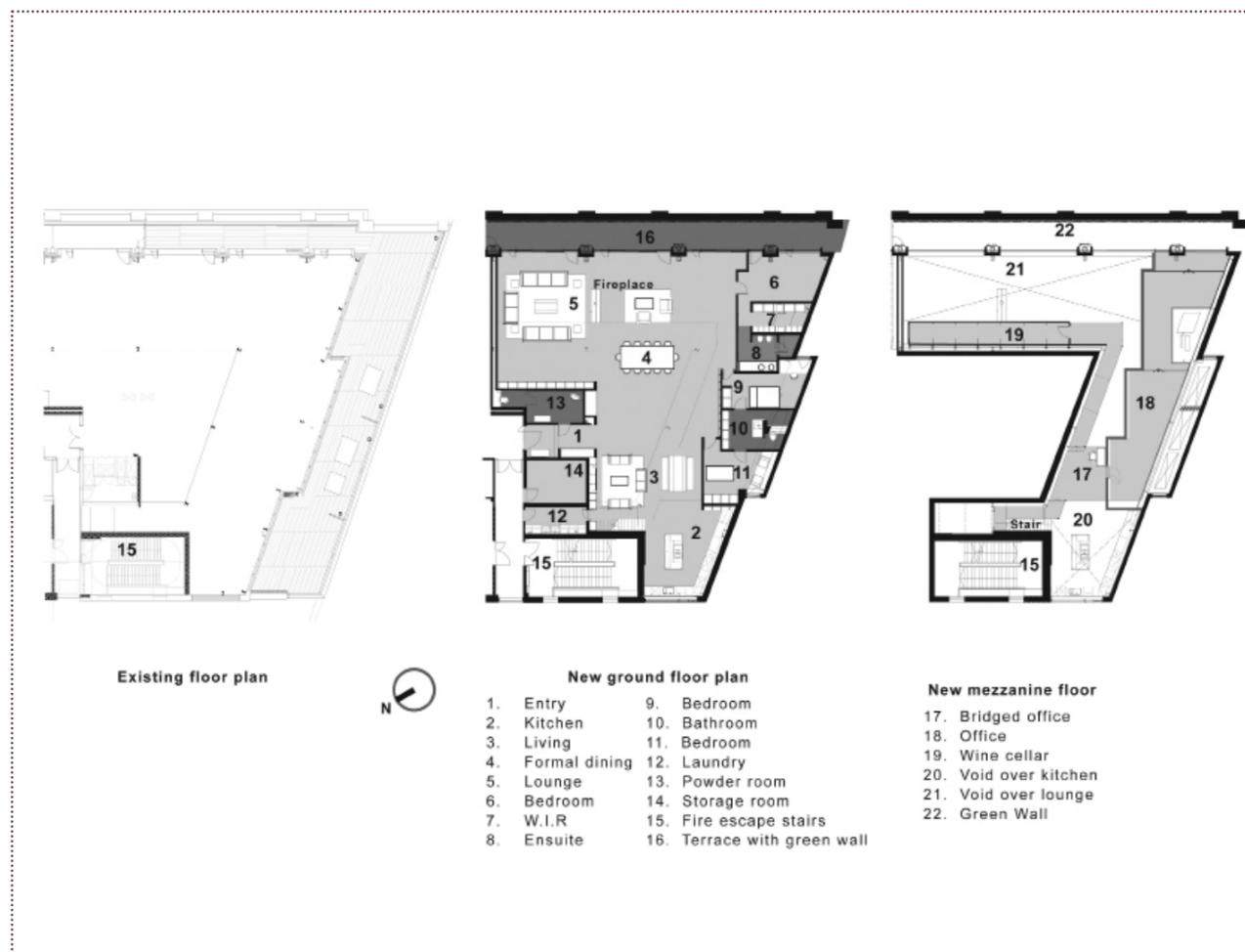
Main
Large sliding doors allow access to an outer terrace with a lush green wall garden; a rare find in a central London residence

Above right
In the kitchen, bespoke cabinetry conceals storage for appliances and pantry items

Below right
The guest bathroom features lava stone walls, a single pedestal basin and a unique ceiling-mounted spout



Display wine bottles lengthways to enable the labels to be easily read for selection



project particulars

This project was designed by
PAUL McANEARY ARCHITECTS LTD
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 Tel +44 2072 400 500
 Email info@paulmcanearly.com
 Web paulmcanearly.com

This project was built by
LIVING SPACE CONSTRUCTION

FLOORING
 300mm-wide engineered oak, sandblasted then olive- and white-oiled and finished in hard wax oil from The Plank Company, plankco.com

WALLS
Bedroom boxes: Two bedroom boxes are built out of 100mm-thick, wire-brushed and sand-blasted oak with a caustic soda finish from The Plank Company, plankco.com

Central bedroom box: Cast timber bronze developed by Paul McAnearly Architects — final product made by Black Isle Bronze, blackislebronze.co.uk

Guest WC: Lava stone feature wall in the guest WC made of lava cut into 10mm x 10mm strips from Palmalisa Zantedeschi Ltd, palmalisazantedeschi.it

Living area: Reclaimed London stock brick

Ensuite bathroom: Smooth and split-faced stone tiles from Direct Stone, directstone.co.uk

Other: All other walls painted in neutral warm tones by Farrow and Ball, farrow-ball.com

KITCHEN
Cabinetry and worktops: Bespoke by Quantum, quantumfittedfurniture.com
Sink: Franke, franke.co.uk

Sink tap and mixer: Dornbracht, dornbracht.com
Appliances: Gaggenau fridge-freezer, ovens, warming drawer, dishwasher, hob and teppanyaki grill, gaggenau.com

Wine-serving system: Enomatic, enomatic.co.uk
Boiling and filtered water tap: Quooker, quooker.co.uk
Extractor: Sub-Zero, westye.co.uk

MASTER ENSUITE BATHROOM
Basins: Villeroy & Boch, villeroy-boch.com
WC: Astro available from Aston Matthews, astonmatthews.co.uk
Showerhead and controls: Hansgrohe, hansgrohe.co.uk
Taps: Dornbracht, dornbracht.com

GUEST WASHROOM
Basin: Matteo Thun, matteothun.com
WC: Astro available from Aston Matthews, astonmatthews.co.uk
Ceiling-mounted spout: Frau J Collection from Signorini, signorinirubinetteria.it

OUTDOORS
 Green wall Plants supplied by Lizzie Taylor, designing-gardens.co.uk