

The value of volume

A new destination in Belgravia is an exemplar in reconsidered space, marrying restoration and modernisation says Russ Hamilton



Volume has long been a valuable, yet scarce asset in urban city centres. In London especially, space comes at a premium and it is rare you come across a building that has not yet been optimised. Completed in Autumn 2020, Farrells' sensitive and contemporary restoration at Belgravia's 'Pantechnicon' has breathed new life into the former warehouse and created new standards of volumetric design, fitting for today's retail and dining standards.

Appointed by Pantechnicon London Limited, Farrells began work on the scheme in 2015. The practices' approach enhanced the Pantechnicon's history by providing essential repairs and refurbishment of the Grade II listed building. Its classical frontage, a landmark in Belgravia, remains with its interior architecture and rear façade taking on a new lease of life.

Built in 1830 as an arts and crafts centre and subsequently an upmarket warehouse for local residents, the fire at the Pantechnicon in 1874 left just the front of the building and 20th century revisions of the back saw it closed in, leaving only small windows and a very non-descript façade. We had the opportunity reinvigorate the rear façade, which overlooks the recently upgraded Halkin Arcade. The look and feel of the new rear facade uses a warehouse aesthetic to reference its past whilst stepping in plan and against the skyline in a dynamic and modern way. The exten-

sion is clad in a glazed off-white brick, paying homage to the historical use of this material in London back courts whilst contrasting strongly with its neighbours London stock brick frontages.

As the volume and floor space ideas for each level of the Pantechnicon developed, and to work with existing service shafts, the idea of stepping the rear facade forward in a series of gentle steps evolved. A new cantilevered three storey rear extension was created to add substantial volume on each floor whilst the large-scale warehouse inspired windows flood the space with light. The tall stepping brick pilasters the arrangement and verticality of the front façade's classical pilaster columns and indented corning detail.

A new glazed pavilion on the 5th floor with an opening roof created a modern twist, whilst generating all important additional dining and terrace space. The expansion of the previously unused basement through the lowering of the floor level to increase the height and volume of the space has also created a series of new spaces extending all the way through to the under-pavement vault rooms. A calmness and clarity of spatial arrangement is evident with enhanced light and aspect throughout the building.

Our designs have carefully restored the building and celebrated its heritage, whilst enhancing its interiors for modern day use. By creating the rear extension and growing the volume of the >>>



Russ Hamilton is a design partner at Farrells



basement, the Pantechnicon now benefits from an additional 140 sqm of optimal dining and retail space. The rear façade especially, gives a new personality to building and enlivens the lower courtyard come day or night.

Now playing host to a brand-new concept store and dining experience, the Pantechnicon has been well received since its launch amongst locals and visitors to the famous Motcomb Street. With respect for its heritage, today Pantechnicon has been sensitively repurposed to meet the needs of the 21st Century, whilst creating a variety of dynamic spaces for its diverse range of occupiers.

The Edit on the ground floor showcases a curation of 150 Japanese and Nordic brands including handcrafted gifts and products. The Studio on the first floor is a large experiential space

where guests will be introduced to emerging brands, artists, creators and makers through workshops as well as retail and dining pop-ups.

On entering the building, guests are welcomed into Café Kitsuné (meaning 'fox' in Japanese). Overlooking Café Kitsuné and The Edit is an intimate but open gallery space hosting Sachi (meaning 'happiness' and 'fortune' in Japanese), a preview of the mainstay 100 seat Sachi restaurant, bar, cocktail lounge and street terrace on the lower ground floor, opening in Spring 2021. To the rear is a takeaway ground floor Kiosk serving rotating seasonal specialities typically enjoyed across the exciting local food scenes all over the Nordics and Japan.

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