

Refurbishment

Panter Hudspith brings a new lease of life as a cinema to a run-down office building

Sarah Wigglesworth
Architects upgrades studios for arts charity SPACE

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Panter Hudspith reconfigures a 1950s office building as a multi-screen cinema

Words

Ian Latham

Photos

Henrietta Williams

A run-down 1950s building in Crouch End, north London, comprising offices to the street and a factory to the rear, has been ingeniously transformed by Panter Hudspith Architects into a five-screen art-house venue for Picturehouse Cinemas. What had become a local eyesore, with short-term lets and a pavement-level parking undercroft, now engages vibrantly with the street, advertising this significant addition to the area's cultural offering.

The office building was stripped back to its concrete frame, which has been sandblasted and exposed throughout, re-clad externally, and a new supporting steel framework inserted. A concrete colonnade that marked the undercroft is now accentuated by full-height glazing to the open-plan ground floor, which houses the cinema entrance, ticketing and cafe.

Above the columns, a semi-translucent facade offers glimpses of the activities within, especially by night. The facade treatment, while appropriately evoking the age of 1950s cinema, was inspired by the shifting images of a cylindrical zoetrope, the precursor to projected film.

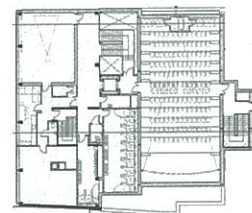
Below

The street facade (shown before/after) has been re-clad to enhance legibility.

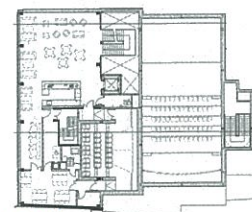


Below
Floor plans with existing structure shown in black.

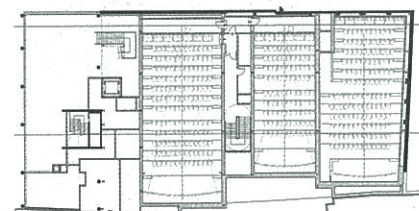
Below right
First-floor bar and restaurant; ground floor ticketing and cafe area. The ceilings were stripped back to their terracotta pot slabs, on which the new services were overlaid. The upper floor teak parquet was recycled from the demolition of the 1959 Scandinavian House on Cannon Street.



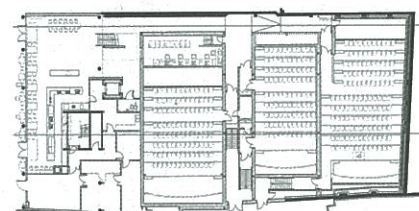
Second floor



First floor



Upper ground floor

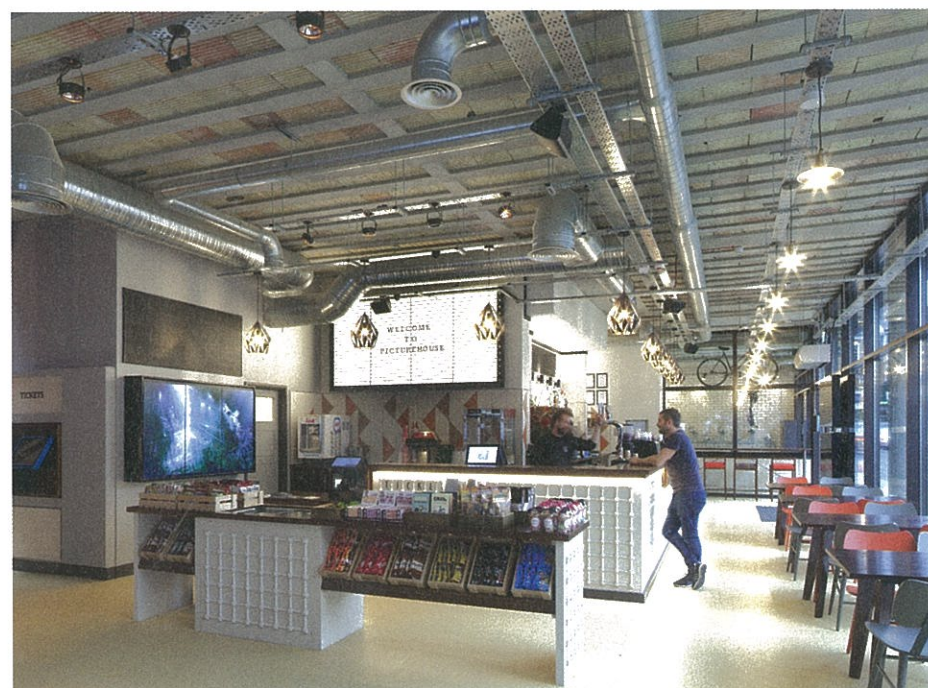


Ground floor

The former factory walls to the rear were retained and exposed internally where they align the circulation route to the three ground-level auditoria. Externally these volumes are planned and scaled to avoid overshadowing neighbouring houses, and the rear walls and services have been softened by a planted trellis wall system. Due to the constraints of the 50 by 100 metre site, and the need to envelop four auditoria and a screening room, the accommodation is stacked on several levels.

So that the upper spaces feel part of the overall internal realm, and to invite exploration, a self-supporting steel staircase has been inserted at the heart of the front-of-house area, bisected by a steelwork lattice based on abstract 1950s geometric patterns. The lattice provides the handrail, balustrade and support for a bespoke chandelier.

The stair is housed in a new top-glazed atrium, bridging the gap between the original office building and the factory behind, that brings daylight through the upper levels into the foyer and bar below.



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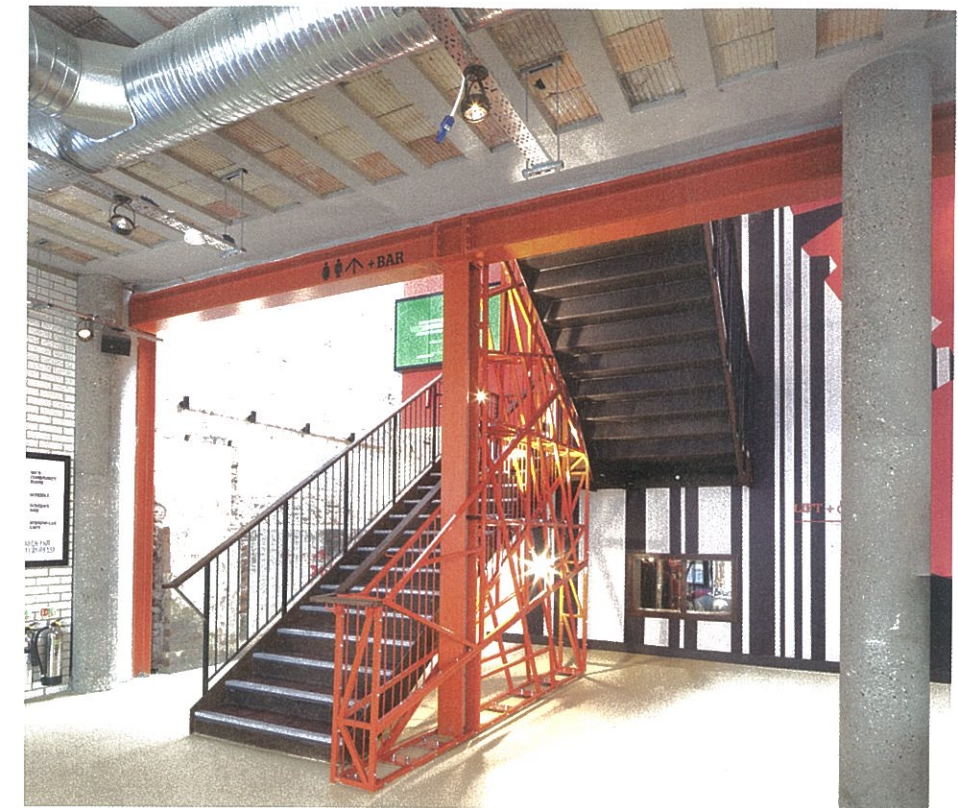
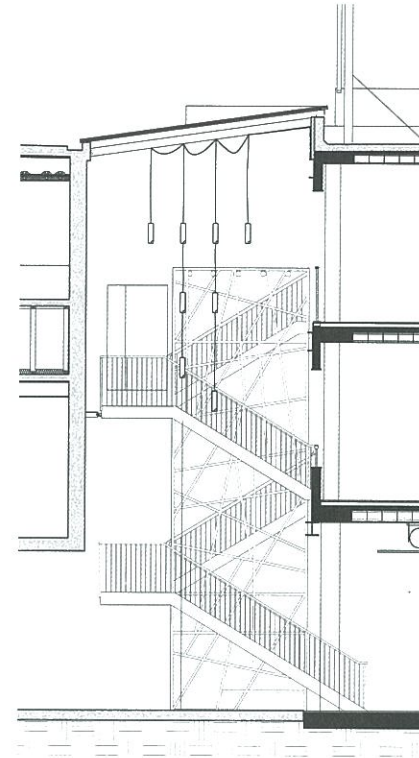


Right

A new lattice steel staircase structure has been inserted in the top-lit atrium space formed between the original office and factory buildings.

Below

A triple-height mural by Ben Nathan draws on local history and forms a backdrop to the new staircase; typical auditorium interior.



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The Picturehouse is among a chain of 20 cinemas owned since 2012 by major player Cineworld, so while it cannot claim to be 'independent', its 500 seats, five screens and state-of-the-art digital projection and sound as well as a 35mm projector will allow it to cater to a broad range of cinematic tastes.

Given the legacy of abandoned plans to exploit the cultural potential of nearby Hornsey Town Hall and Alexandra Palace (though the latter is finally in progress), the Picturehouse undoubtedly fills a void. However, there is local concern that the genuinely independent ArtHouse cinema just two doors away could be challenged by its glitzy new neighbour. Hopefully some mutual cooperation will ensue, but at the turn of the year both venues inevitably embraced the cinematic gift horse that was the new Star Wars movie. **A**

Project team

Architect
Panter Hudspeth
Costs/project manager
Whiles Partnership
Contractor
Phelans Construction
Structural engineer
Price & Myers
Acoustics
Sharps Redmore
Electrical
Locker Technical, DW
Mechanical
Lamont Projects, Panter Hudspeth
Client
Picturehouse Cinemas

Selected suppliers & subcontractors

Lighting
Industville, Chantelle Lighting, Universal Lighting Services
Shopfront glazing
GH, Comar
Kalwall facade
Structura
Sliding windows
Sapa Building Systems
Rooflights
Lonsdale
Zinc
VM Zinc
External render
Wetherby Render
Green wall trellis
Techni-Cable
Roofing
Sarnafil
Staircase
Steel Services
Sanitaryware
Duravit, Ideal Standard
Internal doors
Soundcraft Doors
Carpet tiles
Miliken
Tiles
Domus, Reed Harris
Insulation
Kingspan, Rockwool
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