

# FRAME

THE GREAT INDOORS

N°123 JUL — AUG 2018

**WORK. WHEREVER**



More like the kind seen in hotels than in workspaces, the reception desk is part of Stanton Williams' extension to Tintagel House.

# At Your Service

Dining, exercising, living, sleeping: co-working spaces are expanding their amenities exponentially.

Words  
LAUREN TEAGUE

**LONDON IS ONE OF** the most expensive cities in the world with regard to commercial real estate, so it's no surprise that co-working spaces have become so popular. An increasing number of companies – start-ups as well as established businesses – are choosing the benefits of flexibility and cross-company interaction that come from renting shared space and making the workplace both a community and a destination.

Located in Vauxhall on the south embankment of the Thames, Tintagel House is a prime example of today's shifting work-related climate. It represents a promising step forward for people looking for more from their work-space than nine-to-five access to a desk. The 12-storey office block occupies a former Metropolitan Police building erected in the 1960s. It offers a combination of affordable office space and shared facilities that together reach a new level of integration between work and hospitality.

The project was developed by The Office Group. With a portfolio of 33 properties (and counting), CEOs Charlie Green and Olly Olsen are not modest about their motives. 'In every other aspect of our lives, we seek the best environments,' says Green, 'yet for too long nobody addressed the place where we spend the majority of our waking hours. We're responding to a demand that's already there – one that's accelerating along with advances in technology – while learning about the wants and needs of our corporate occupiers.' He's referring to the 'complete package of services that enrich the experience and physical enjoyment of the space'. These include facilities for food and drink, health and wellness, and entertainment.

Unlike its competitors, The Office Group has foregone excessive branding, as well as an interior house style that might identify its various locations as links in a chain. Instead, each is unique, a strategy that gives users a feeling of complete ownership over the spaces they're inhabiting. Tintagel House was rejuvenated and extended by Stanton Williams Architects. Responsible for the interiors is Universal Design Studio, whose edgy raw aesthetic successfully balances the building's characteristic features.

Entering the building is more like walking into a hotel lobby than a workspace. A terrazzo-clad reception desk within the double-height entrance hall is part of Stanton Williams' extension, which announces the build-

ing to the busy street with a columned portico. Flooded with natural light, the ground floor is open to members of The Office Group and to the general public. A range of communal hospitality facilities at this level includes a gourmet café with an in-house chef and a gym with full-height windows and a view of the river. Linked by a circular atrium that bathes the entrance with light, the first two floors are open plan. An atmosphere of 'seeing and being seen' cautions members to be aware of the informality of the space and of whom they might meet when moving through the building.

Floors three through ten contain rather traditional working areas, largely composed of enclosed offices of different sizes. The careful organization of each level makes the most of the existing building's qualities. 'We found a lot to enjoy about the bare bones of the structure,' says Alan Stanton, cofounder of Stanton Williams. 'These kinds of 1960s buildings have very narrow floor plates, which results in an exceptional availability of daylight and natural ventilation.' The building's highly adaptable floor plans are flexible enough to meet the needs of individual tenants. A small executive suite on the eleventh floor (complete with bath and private bar) opens onto a roof terrace that offers an almost panoramic view of the river and central London. In converting the building's former plant room, which brought with it a series of upstand and downstand beams, Stanton Williams designed the executive suite out of necessity. 'We couldn't walk below the beams or step over them,' says Green, who says they used lateral thinking and came up with a sunken bath. After they installed the bath, 'the rest of the suite just fell into place'. It's proved to be, however, more popular than anticipated. An international client rented the suite for the whole of June. If it continues to be successful, The Office Group will consider using the concept in other projects.

People understand now more than ever that it's possible to work in less traditional ways. Vauxhall is undergoing massive regeneration, and despite the area's excellent transport links, Londoners relish the option provided by office developments that help them avoid travel to and from the city. Tintagel House is a community in itself, a place for getting together and sharing facilities, including amenities such as café, gym, workshop and event space. Members have everything they need in one location: a desirable alternative to negotiating the underground during rush hour twice daily and the reason why hospitality plays a key role in Universal Design Studio's strategy.

Generally speaking, people who use co-working spaces are more productive than conventional office workers. Universal Design Studio furnished the floors with breakout areas and kitchens, 'extras' that the team takes very seriously. 'Part of the fun with these types of spaces is exploring them,' says associate director Paul Gulati, who aims for 'serendipitous interim spaces' where people who may have never met otherwise come together. 'It might be a table in the middle of a room or a wide corridor that is inhabited differently every two hours,' he says. 'How many great ideas have you had in the five minutes it takes to walk from your desk to the coffee machine?' According to Gulati, areas that spawn inspiration 'encourage new hybrids of creative relationships to develop'.

There's no way for contemporary institutes and organizations to know what the future holds. In the meantime, what they want are loose-fit, easily adaptable buildings – informal environments that enhance human interaction and communication, two essentials for efficiency and creativity. ●

theofficegroup.co.uk  
universaldesignstudio.com  
stantonwilliams.com



## WORK

In addition to traditional working areas, the scheme includes the Forum Space, a breakout zone for hosting events and lunchtime talks.





## BREATHE

The roof terrace offers sweeping views of the river and central London.



## LIVE

Tintagel House includes a small executive apartment, a feature that's proved popular enough for The Office Group to consider including it in future projects.

*People understand now more than ever that it's possible to work in less traditional ways*