

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

Claire Curtice Publicists
mail@clairecurtice.co.uk
+44 (0) 7775 562 264

Mole

PRESS RELEASE

ZIGGURAT AND RHOMBOID, DESIGN DISTRICT, GREENWICH PENINSULA

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Mole Architects has completed two new purpose-built workspace buildings in London's Design District on Greenwich Peninsula. The newly-created pedestrian quarter, masterplanned by HNNA, features 16 architect-designed buildings and establishes a permanent home for creative industries – designers, artists, and makers of all types. The intentionally eclectic assortment of buildings is arranged along and connected by narrow alleyways leading into intimate courtyards and a new market square.

Studios, floors, or entire buildings are available to tenants – individuals or businesses – at low rates and flexible leases that help creative Londoners kickstart their enterprises after Covid in an interdependent and mutually supportive community.

Mole's two unique, highly sustainable buildings provide open plan, top-lit studio spaces. Both are constructed entirely from timber, with exposed beams and wooden ceilings imbuing the spaces with warmth and character, conveying the atmosphere of an old warehouse. The buildings are located along Phoenix Avenue, one facing the market square and the second on to a small square shared with adjacent buildings.

The architects were inspired by a 1950s photograph of two scientists working on fuel research on the buildings' site. Dressed in lab coats (his dark, hers white) and holding up instruments, there was palpable tension in the air. The two buildings play off against each other, the larger one heavy and solid, the smaller one with changing colours, like the flame of burning gas.

Internally, the two timber buildings share the same qualities, though distinctly different: the 784m² Ziggurat (C2) is a three-storey Corten-clad building providing six workspaces of varying sizes (from 15m² to 217m²). Dance company Clod Ensemble will occupy the upper floor, creating an expansive dance studio in the light-filled space under the building's sawtooth rooflights. The ground floor provides an industrial kitchen space serving Design District's Canteen (SelgasCano). The 580m² Rhomboid (D2) is a compact and angular dichroic structure with five workspaces (from 39m² to 133m²) over three floors; the upper floor, which is characterised by a butterfly roof, will be occupied by The Photography Foundation, a charity helping young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds gain long-term employment through the art of photography.

Both buildings are clad in metal. Ziggurat is clad in weathered steel laid diagonally to give the simple stepped form texture and weight, and an industrial quality reminiscent of the original gasholders. External shutters on its west side and fins on its east act to shield the upper floor windows from solar gain. Rhomboid's pyramidal profile aluminium cladding is painted in a metallic finish that changes with the light, and dichroic glass fins surround the windows and refract coloured light over the facades, inspired by the colours of a gas flame.

Mole has designed the two buildings to limit energy consumption, with consideration to both embodied energy use during construction, as well as limiting energy in-use. Ziggurat is designed around a hybrid glulam timber frame with structural cross-laminated timber (CLT) floors, stairs and lift shaft, with structural insulated panel (SIP) walls. The solid timber floor slabs are exposed on the soffit, with a raised floor distributing services. Rhomboid, which has achieved a BREEAM Excellent rating, has been constructed entirely with CLT. The timber construction has resulted in a 41 per cent saving of kgCO₂/m² for Ziggurat, and 48 per cent saving of kgCO₂/m² for the construction of Rhomboid compared to an equivalent concrete structure. This construction has not only reduced embodied energy, but led to a more efficient prefabricated construction process that lowered the time on site. The walls in both buildings are lined in a phase change material (PCM) board that contributes to the internal temperature control in hot weather, along with the external blinds and shutters. The distribution of windows and the shallow depth of the section ensure high levels of daylight and the ability to naturally ventilate the floors. The design was developed with M&E consultants Skelley & Couch, who thermally modelled the buildings to ensure the lightweight buildings perform as required.

Together the two buildings contribute to the vibrancy of Design District, fulfilling the client's brief to design a 'destination that will keep thinkers, makers and doers in the very place that brings their ideas to life.'

As construction of Design District nears completion this spring, the new tenants moving into Ziggurat and Rhomboid demonstrate the range of creative businesses that the new quarter aims to appeal to: from Helen Kirkum, the shoe-maker using reclaimed materials; to Clod Ensemble, the dance company creating provocative and original participation projects rooted in music and movement; to The Photography Foundation, which creates pathways to professional photography for less advantaged young adults. The team at Design District is installing a mix of tenants across the creative industries to establish an interdependent and mutually supportive community that will encompass 1,800 people when the district is fully occupied.

Meredith Bowles, Director, Mole Architects, said:

"Design District has been designed to work together; there are small spaces, shared spaces, larger units and co-working spaces, in recognition that creative businesses are not all the same. We've pictured the kinds of spaces that have served creative businesses well in the past, to create somewhere that meets the needs and desires of this industry. Our two buildings make use of top light, creating light-filled top floor studios: a sawtooth roof to Ziggurat and a butterfly roof for Rhomboid."

Helen Arvanitakis, Director, Design District, said:

"Working with a wide range of architects has resulted in multiple styles of building and types of space. This variety has helped us to attract an eclectic group of creative businesses who work and think in divergent ways. We are finding that this mix of businesses has created a unique environment for companies looking to shake things up after extended periods of working from home. Being a part of this wider creative community, just one minute from North Greenwich tube station and 20 minutes from London City airport, will help creative businesses at all scales to make great work, attract innovative clients and inspire brilliant teams."

**Press enquiries:**

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mail@clairecurtice.co.uk
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NOTES TO EDITORS

Location: Greenwich Peninsula
Client: Knight Dragon
Gross internal area: C2, 784m²; D2, 580m²
Schedule: Appointment Jan 2017; design phase Jan-Sept 2017; construction July 2018-Dec 2021
Architect: Mole Architects
Project architect: Hugh Craft, Associate and Project Architect
Masterplanner: HNNA
Contractor: Ardmore
Timber frame: B&K
Timber engineer: Enginuity
Structural engineer: WME
M&E: Skelly and Couch
Quantity surveyor: Artelia
Façade consultant: Optimise
Landscape architect: Shulze & Grasso
Photographs: © Taran Wilkhu © Nick Guttridge

Mole Architects

Founded by Meredith Bowles in 1997, Mole Architects combines innovation and individuality with a commitment to cutting-edge sustainability.

The practice has a reputation for 'green and gorgeous' buildings, as evidenced by one-off houses such as the Black House in the Cambridgeshire Fens (winner of the 2004 Manser Medal), and The Houseboat (winner of the 2017 Stephen Lawrence Prize).

Recent projects include multi-award winning Marmalade Lane, a council-led cohousing scheme for developers TOWN and residents of the K1 Co-housing group, in Orchard Park, Cambridge (2019), and postgraduate apartments and a health centre at Eddington, Cambridge (2018).

The practice has been the delivery architect for Living Architecture's houses, working as collaborator on The Balancing Barn with Dutch practice MVRDV; Dune House with Norwegian practice Jarmund Vigsnaes; and The Secular Retreat – Swiss architect and Pritzker Prize winner Peter Zumthor's first permanent UK building. Meredith was a key member of the delivery team for Peter Salter's award-winning Walmer Yard in Notting Hill.

molearchitects.co.uk



Design District

At the heart of Greenwich Peninsula, Design District is London's first permanent, purpose-built hub for the creative industries.

Conceived and developed by Knight Dragon, and designed by eight leading architects, Design District's collection of 16 unique buildings supports an ecosystem of 1,800 creatives, encompassing individual makers, ambitious start-ups, ground-breaking enterprises and industry leaders.

The closest Tube station is North Greenwich (30 metres). The Jubilee line (24-hour on Friday and Saturday), gets you to London Bridge in eight minutes and Waterloo in 11.

With affordable spaces, comprehensive facilities and flexible leases, everything is designed to help creative Londoners thrive.

designdistrict.co.uk

Greenwich Peninsula

Greenwich Peninsula is fast becoming the capital's most boldly modern landscape, with 15,000 new homes, 13,000 new jobs and 48 acres of open public space emerging over the coming years. Here, a community of thousands of pioneers have the opportunity to live in new riverside homes, work in a cutting-edge Design District and enjoy a new linear park, the Tide – all wrapped by the River Thames.

This is new London: a destination for modern urban living.

greenwichpeninsula.co.uk

Knight Dragon

Knight Dragon is an entrepreneurial urban regenerator and property developer. It creates places, builds properties and invests in related projects that bring new ideas and set new standards for urban living. The team uses creativity and collaboration to innovate. Backed by Dr Henry Cheng, Chairman of New World Development Company Ltd, and Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group Ltd, and led by entrepreneur Sammy Lee, Knight Dragon has a solid foundation and a global outlook. Its flagship project is Greenwich Peninsula in London, where the team is delivering a new district that encapsulates Knight Dragon's approach and expertise in creative placemaking.

knightdragon.com