



COOKE FAWCETT

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PRESS RELEASE

COCKPIT DEPTFORD: EMPOWERING LONDON'S CRAFT COMMUNITY

06/2024

Cooke Fawcett proudly announces the completion of its transformation of Cockpit Deptford, a centre for excellence in craft nestled in the heart of bustling Deptford since 2002. The redevelopment marks a significant milestone in the evolution of Cockpit, enhancing its public visibility while maintaining its core mission of providing affordable studio spaces for makers and craft businesses.

The intentionally robust loose-fit retrofit – which required precision planning to keep the building operational during construction – underscores Cooke Fawcett's commitment to preserving the building's unique character while integrating new spaces that foster collaboration and engagement between Cockpit's artisans and the broader public. The renovation not only revitalises a historic site but also reinforces Cockpit's pivotal role as a cultural and economic hub within London's Creative Enterprise Zones.

Situated within a retrofitted 1960s council office building alongside the historic railway viaduct on Creekside, Cockpit Deptford is the product of adaptive reuse and sustainable urban development. It is strategically located near Deptford High Street and the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Deptford is Cockpit's second site in London; its original studios remain in operation in Bloomsbury. Cockpit's mission extends beyond providing affordable studio spaces: it maintains vital relationships with the guilds, offers invaluable business support, and fosters community between its makers, with anchor tenants frequently mentoring emerging makers in the early stages of their careers, and 40 emerging makers joining every year through a bursary award. Together the two sites form London's centre for craft, housing and supporting the UK's largest, most diverse cluster of makers. The facility's expansion, including the addition of new studios and public-facing amenities, reflects Cockpit's enduring commitment to supporting artistic growth and entrepreneurial endeavours in the UK's thriving craft industry.

Cooke Fawcett's redevelopment has secured the future of Cockpit Deptford's facilities, which came under threat in 2015 when a site-wide, mixed-use development plan, Sun Wharf, was proposed with an option to subsume the studios and rebuild within a restrictive residential masterplan. Cockpit resisted, recognising the independence they would lose, commissioning Cooke Fawcett in 2019 to unlock the latent potential of their premises and create a stronger interface with the wider neighbourhood.

The project's success owes much to extensive community engagement and collaborative efforts with local authorities and funding partners. The support from Lewisham Council, the Mayor of London, who part funded the scheme through his Good Growth Fund, and various funding bodies underscores the shared vision of sustaining cultural spaces and fostering creative entrepreneurship in the city.

From the outset Cooke Fawcett worked closely with Cockpit Deptford's community of 60+ makers and micro-businesses to discern which qualities of the building were conducive to studio use, and to understand which kinds of spaces, facilities and equipment can be shared, and the level of privacy and ancillary provision – outdoor working, delivery, storage – required by its maker tenants.

Part new-build and part retrofit, the design weaves both elements through the existing concrete frame structure, preserving the building's modular plan and its existing 60 studios, reconfiguring spaces to create an additional five. The key architectural move is a dramatic 6m-wide opening-up of the 21m-long, 3.5m-high brick wall to the street, transforming what was previously an inaccessible, underused front yard into a new craft garden which serves as a welcoming gateway, housing a new public entrance, flexible educational spaces, a café and a revamped leatherworkers' hub. This gives Cockpit Deptford a permanent public presence for the first time, making it more open, active, inviting and accessible.

A new purpose-built 86m² annexe building has been erected at the rear of the site, in the former car park. The lean timber and breeze block structure with red corrugated Eternit elevations has tall ceilings and a linear plan to accommodate long planks of timber. One half will function as a woodworking and metal fabrication hub, providing makers with access to industrial cutting machinery. The other studio, currently occupied by renowned wood sculptor Eleanor Lakelin, is designed specifically for makers and fabricators working at scale who need to access outdoor space.

The redevelopment preserves the textures of the original building, reclaiming and restoring finishes such as the hardwood parquet flooring, introducing warmth with blush pink finishes to the doors and columns. All new elements, including the Meccano-style punched metal holes on the entrance elevation, speak of the site's light industrial heritage and embrace the spirit of 'Made at Cockpit', with a robust aesthetic rooted in practicality and flexibility.

Emphasising sustainability and future-proofing, the redevelopment incorporates MVHR ventilation, an air-source heat pump in the new wood studios, and passive ventilation throughout to meet energy targets of today and the future. Oversized radiators have been specified to facilitate a switch to heat pumps in the main building in a future phase.

Artistically, the project pays homage to Deptford's rich heritage and vibrant community spirit. The opening up of the site's Creekside wall presented an opportunity to reimagine the existing mural, 'Love over Gold' by local artist Gary Driscoll, which had adorned the wall since 1989. A new mural, 'Head, Heart, Hand' by Cockpit-resident artist Amber Khokhar, reinterprets the original mural's themes of inclusivity, prosperity and community resilience, celebrating the unsung heroes of Deptford's diverse community. Manufactured by ceramics experts Craven Dunnill Jackfield (Telford), the commission has enabled Khokhar to explore new fabrication techniques and develop her practice at an urban scale.

The new craft garden has been designed by award-winning designer and environmentalist Sebastian Cox. His furniture pieces crafted from oak and sweet chestnut are embedded into a textured landscape which emulates Deptford's Creekside flora and features rubble beds made from the waste remnants of the punched wall. The selected plants have a practical use in craft processes, including willow (*Salix purpurea*) used in basketry, madder (*Rubia tinctorum*) used in natural dyes, and flax (*Linum usitatissimum*).

The reconfigured ground floor offers clear sightlines to new public spaces, including a new café at the entrance with a serving hatch into the garden, and a new generous education space with a moveable partition for hosting a variety of events.

The café will be operated by Spring Café, established by a former Cockpit maker, now a successful local café proprietor. As well as providing a high-quality affordable menu, it will activate the education spaces and garden with public programming, with events ranging from workshops to evening seminars, in addition to Cockpit's growing National Saturday Club for 13- to 16-year-olds.

As Cockpit Deptford embraces its new identity as a vibrant community hub, Cooke Fawcett's thoughtful design interventions have not only preserved the past, but also paved the way for a dynamic and sustainable future, ensuring Cockpit Deptford remains a beacon of creativity and inspiration for generations to come.

Francis Fawcett, Director, Cooke Fawcett, said:

"This project is all about opening up Cockpit to the local community for the first time, providing makers with more spaces that support new kinds of practice. The design aspires to create a spatial and material experience for visitors which echoes that of the makers using the building. We have worked closely with the community of makers to really understand their priorities, and to unlock the potential of the underused leftover spaces in and around the building. Underpinning the design has always been an intention to make Cockpit feel welcoming and inviting in public areas, while improving and extending the facilities for makers. It is a lean and robust building which is first and foremost a space for making, and now for the first time welcomes everyone to learn and enjoy the new spaces."

Jonathan Burton, CEO, Cockpit, said:

"The redevelopment of the Cockpit Deptford site reinforces our sense of community, creating new spaces for our makers to meet, support and inspire each other as they develop their creative practice and businesses. Communicating the benefit of craft and creativity to a wider audience is also central to our mission, and our Craft Garden, Café and Education space allow us to now reach out and engage a new community, including those living and working close by, sharing the skills of our makers and highlighting the opportunities that craft can offer. We are extremely grateful to all our partners and supporters who have helped us realise this project."

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor, Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service, said:

"I welcome the completion of this project, which was supported by £1m in funding from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund."

"London's arts and cultural offer is a key attraction of the city, and the Mayor is committed to reversing the decline in affordable studio space and to tackling the barriers faced by Londoners who want to pursue opportunities in the creative industries. The redeveloped Cockpit will provide high quality, affordable studios and dedicated spaces for learning and collaboration, enabling Londoners from all backgrounds to develop their creative talents and helping to build a fairer and more prosperous London."

Press enquiries and image requests:

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Notes to editors:

Location:	18-22 Creekside, Deptford, London, SE8 3DZ
Site area:	1,800m ²
GIA:	1,000m ² (the building is a total of 2,500m ²)
Client:	Cockpit Arts
Total value:	£3.24 million
Construction value:	£1.95 million
Funders:	£2.3 million, Good Growth Fund. Other funders include the Stride Partnership and Cockpit patrons: Garfield Weston Foundation, The Foyle Foundation, City Bridge Trust, Cockayne Grants for the Arts and The Turners' Company. The Cockpit craft garden was also part-funded through a successful crowdfunding campaign.
Schedule:	Appointment: Sept 2019; Construction: Dec 2022-Dec 2023; Garden: June 2024
Architects:	Cooke Fawcett
Project architects:	Francis Fawcett, Andrew Gibbs
Structural engineer:	Momentum
Services engineer:	Max Fordham
Contractor:	Quinn London Ltd (QLL)
Project manager:	New Stages
Planning consultant:	The Planning Lab
QS:	Gardiner and Theobald
Access consultant:	Jane Simpson Access
Garden design:	Sebastian Cox
Planting design:	Imogen McAndrew
Gate manufacturer:	Cake Industries
Mural artist:	Amber Khokhar
Photographer:	© Peter Landers, © Max Creasy, @ Isabelle Young

Cooke Fawcett is a London-based architecture studio founded in 2015 by Oliver Cooke and Francis Fawcett, graduates of the University of Cambridge who worked together at Pritzker Prize-winning practice Herzog & de Meuron, in Basel and London. The practice works in the cultural, heritage, residential and commercial sectors. Projects are defined by a commitment to expanding and enhancing cultural and community life combined with a quality of craftsmanship.

Cockpit Deptford builds on a portfolio of maker infrastructure projects which includes the Concert Wall and The Peckham Observatory at Peckham car park for arts charity Bold Tendencies (2016-17); and CAST Arts Space for Cornubian Arts & Science Trust in Cornwall (2018).

Current projects include Mill House and Makers' Workshop, River Test, Hampshire (2024); the redevelopment of a former Victorian shop into two maisonettes, Gillespie Road, North London (2024); a deep retrofit of a 1930s property in Herne Hill, London (2024); and a new community building at Sunnyside Community Garden, a site in North London providing therapeutic horticulture for people with disabilities and those recovering from illness (2025).

www.cookefawcett.com
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Cockpit is a centre of excellence in contemporary craft and one of the top 100 UK social enterprises on the NatWest SE100 Index. For over 30 years, Cockpit has nurtured and supported craftspeople at the fragile, early stages of their careers.

The UK's only incubator for craft businesses, Cockpit is home to a community of over 170 independent creative businesses – metalsmiths, jewellers, weavers, woodturners and ceramicists – at two London sites. Thanks to funded studio space and in-house business coaching, Cockpit makers thrive, with many going on to become international leaders in their fields.

Bridging the gap between talent and opportunity, Cockpit's education and careers programmes open pathways into creative employment for young Londoners from all backgrounds.

Cockpit received the Prove It: Social Impact Award at the 2023 UK Social Enterprise Awards.

www.cockpitstudios.org

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