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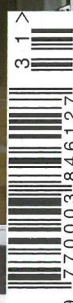
AJ

DELANCEY STREET

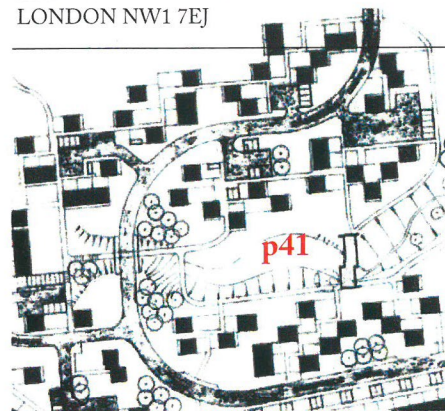
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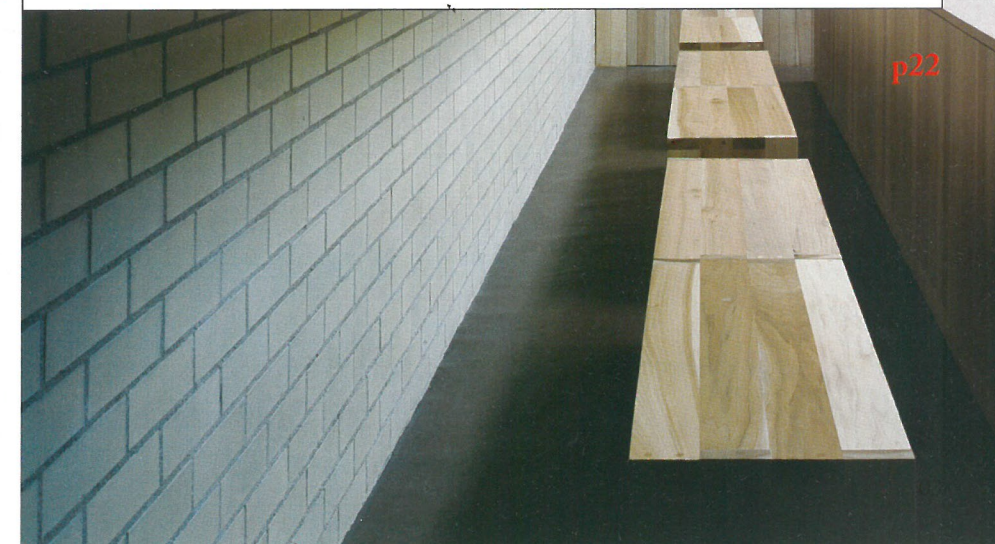
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'A WONDERFUL LITTLE BUILDING'

Burd Haward successfully navigates Camden's one-way system with this delightful concert venue and restaurant, says *Kieran Long*.
Photography by *Hélène Binet*

Camden in North London, home of the AJ, is one of the most mystifyingly messed up parts of the city centre. Beloved of goth teenagers and aspirant guitarists, it is in fact a down-at-heel area strangled by a ruinous one-way system. Camden's famed high street is a three-lane motorway. The result is low rents and low aspirations, despite the respectable Georgian and Victorian city fabric sitting just off the high street.

Camden's seediness is all the more confusing, when you realise how close it sits to John Nash-designed Park Village East, the picturesque suburb bordering Regent's Park. Park Village East is cut off from Camden by the same railway section that destroyed half of the Nash and James Pennethorne buildings.

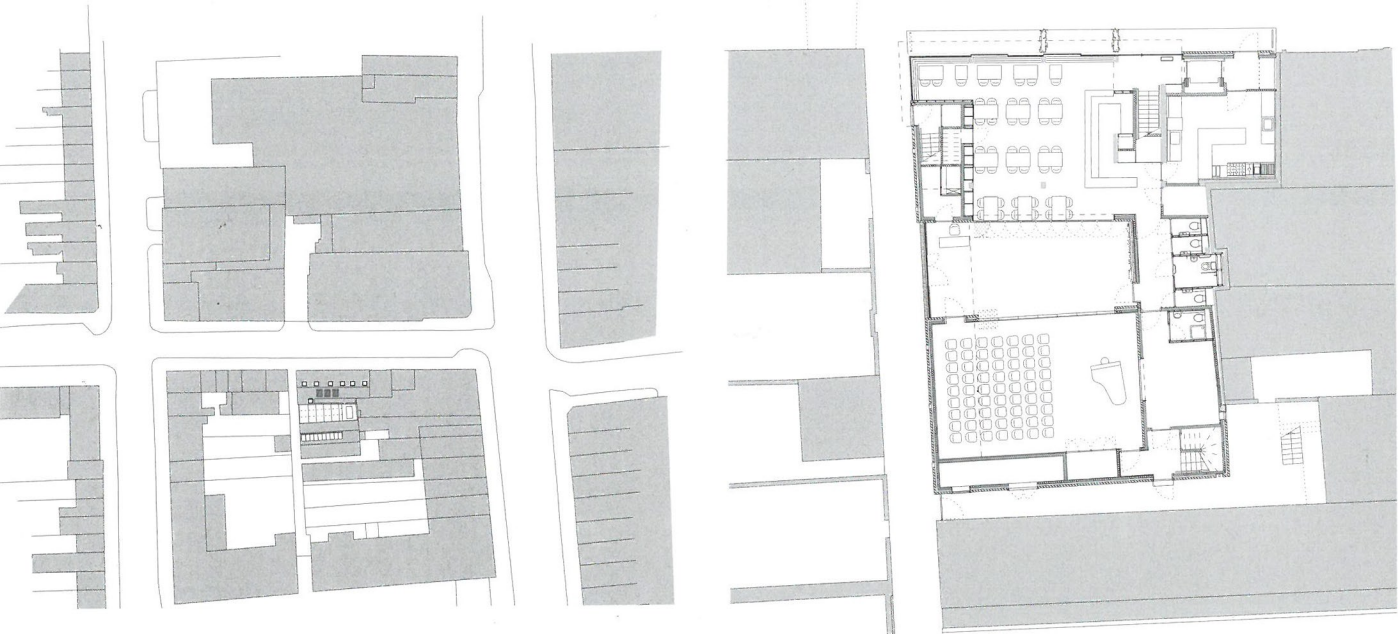
One of the main roads connecting these two worlds is Delancey Street, a busy artery of the aforementioned traffic system. Sitting at the Camden High Street end is The Forge, a recital room, and Caponata, a restaurant. In its architecture, the building tries to dignify the gritty Camden context, while taking its place alongside the rather grander Regent's Park end of the street.

This is the latest work by Burd Haward Architects, whose office is a 10-minute stroll away. Catherine Burd and Buddy Haward have been working together since 1998 and were named in the AJ's 40 Under 40 issue (AJ 16.06.05). Their work is quite diverse, but I would argue that with this project, they have found a character worth persevering with. The black brick exterior of the new 3-7 Delancey St has holes cut into it and is a tough-looking building facing the street that feels like part of a new/old London vernacular.

The architects were commissioned in 2005 by two young couples. One pair were musicians who wanted to fulfil a need in London for small-scale recital space for emerging artists. The other wanted to open a Sicilian restaurant. The site was occupied by three terraced houses which had gradually been joined together, with a building at the back that was once a blacksmith's workshop (hence The Forge). These buildings were generally in poor condition, and after a period spent trying to work with them, the option to demolish and start again was accepted.

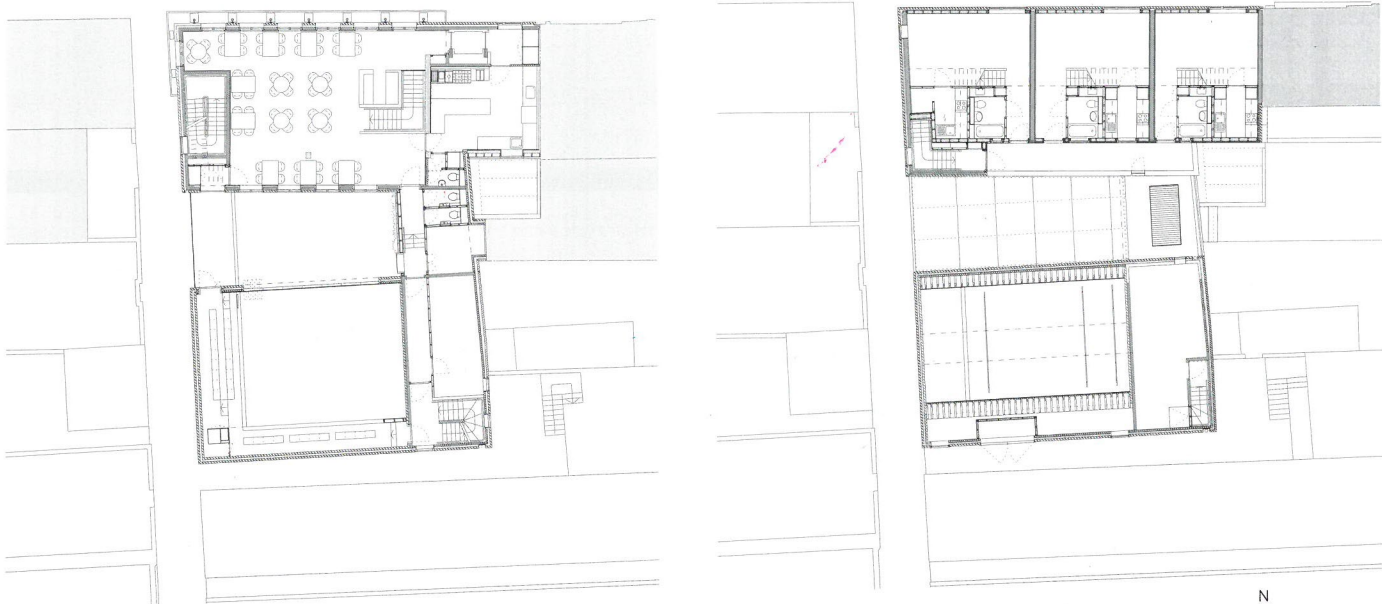
The basic layout is logical and squeezes >>





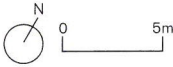
Street plan

Ground-floor plan



First-floor plan

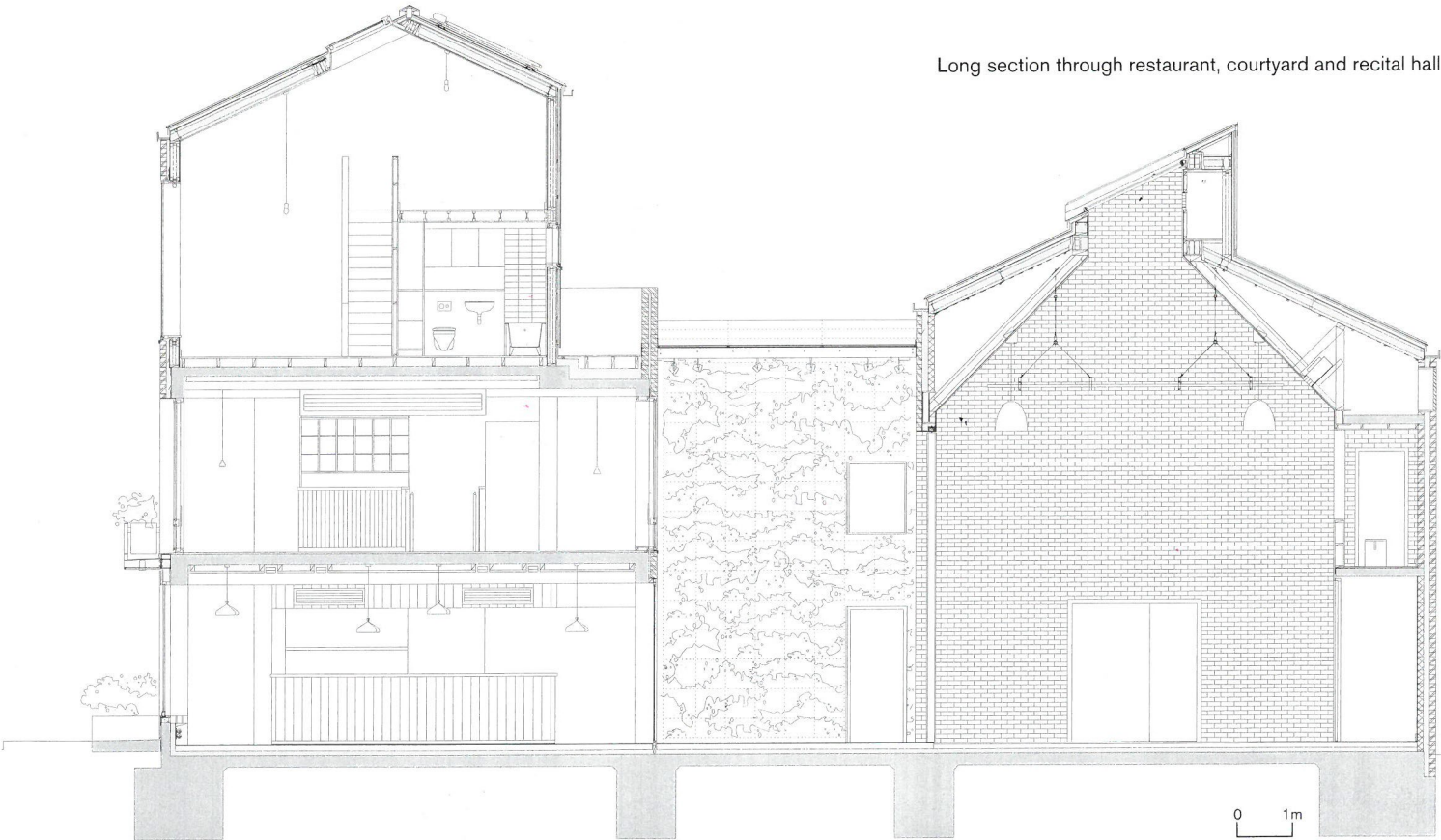
Second-floor plan



The elevation enlivens Delandey Street with a glazed strip at ground level

a lot from this tight site. At the back, furthest from the road, is the recital hall, clad in light brick and featuring a pitched roof with a skylight at its apex. At the front, in a dark brick-clad building, are two floors of restaurant, with three one-bedroom apartments on the top floor. Between these two volumes is a full-height glazed courtyard with one green wall, which accommodates the overspill from the restaurant and can act as a lobby for the recital room. Back-of-house elements (kitchen, green room, offices, storage, plant) are placed on the east side of the site, hard up against the backlands of the buildings on Camden High Street.

The structure of the ground and first floors of the front building is cast in situ concrete, expressed in columns on the ground floor and, charmingly, on the upper floor in the closely spaced members of the ceiling structure. On top of this concrete table are the two apartments, made from a lightweight engineered timber-framed wall structure, with large amounts of insulation. The whole >>



Long section through restaurant, courtyard and recital hall





This image The cast in situ concrete structure combines with the timber-lined and brick internal surfaces to present a robust materiality
Above right The green wall brings a unique atmosphere to the courtyard



thing is clad in dark brick with dyed lime mortar, with the pitched roof expressed on the prominent west elevation. This was something the architects had to fight for against the planners (due to the horizontal corning of the Georgian houses nearby).

The rear building is made of load-bearing masonry, filled with insulation, to achieve maximum acoustic separation (*see the commentary from Arup Acoustics on page 30*). The north-facing wall is a massive acoustic door that can be opened to connect the space of the recital hall with the restaurant. Inside, the hall (including the acoustic door) is lined in the same timber as the restaurant, but with a thinned emulsion wash lightening the timber in relation to the cream brickwork.

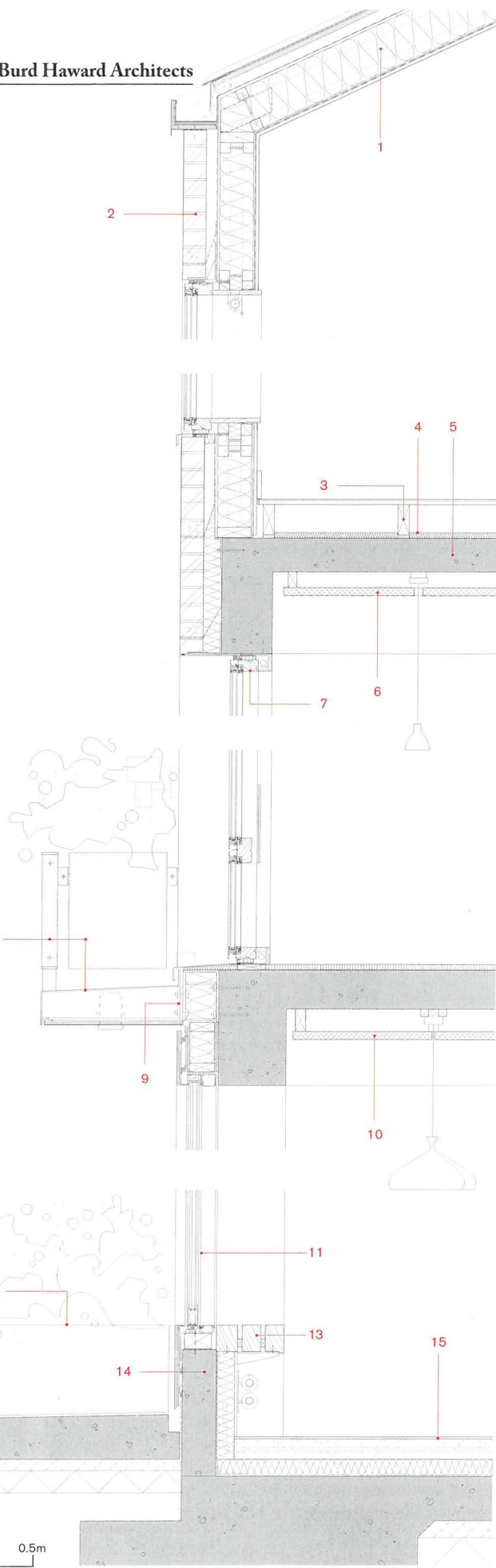
Environmentally, the building does things responsibly. Almost every space can be naturally ventilated (although they can be vented mechanically when an acoustically sealed environment is needed), and there is plenty of thermal mass in the building from

the concrete frame and brickwork. The green wall presumably helps the air quality, and is a really nice touch – it suprisingly doesn't feel gimmicky and gives the glazed courtyard an atmosphere of its own. There are also softwood timber linings, organic paints, woodwool ceiling coverings and timber-offcut parquet floors.

This is a wonderful little building, and the mix of programmes and the enthusiasm of the owners is infectious when you're there. There are some slight niggles. One is that the elevational treatment, with a band of glass at ground, recessed windows at first and fewer, oversized windows to the double-height apartments, makes the whole thing a little top heavy, quite the opposite of the taut Georgiana that it takes some of its inspiration from. It also felt to me that a too-large proportion of the plan was given over to servicing the building (two floors of kitchen, for instance, and the staircase that serves the apartments). But these are minor points. >>

Detail section through front elevation

1. Roof and wall build-ups, from exterior: vapour control layer; low vapour resistant external sheathing board; line of composite timber beams/studs (dotted line); full fill blown recycled cellulose insulation; internal sheathing board; breather membrane; plasterboard with skim finish to room side
2. Facing brickwork
3. Timber floor supports on acoustic cradles
4. Mineral wool insulation
5. In situ concrete slab
6. Fabric wrapped acoustic foam with cardboard backing secret fixed to painted sawn wood battens
7. Anodised aluminium and timber composite casement window with fixed glazing below
8. Painted steel balustrade, planter and balcony
9. Mild steel balcony structure
10. Woodwool slabs screw fixed to painted sawn wood battens
11. Aluminium framed sliding glass windows with double-glazed unit
12. Pre-weathered zinc-clad steel planters bolted to forecourt
13. Poplar bench on steel angle supports
14. RC upstand with liquid applied DPM
15. Ground-floor build-up, from top: resin flooring; floating sand cement screed; rigid insulation; liquid applied DPM (dashed line); ground bearing slab; blinding; hardcore



Above One of three apartments on the top floor
Above right The first floor of the restaurant
Right The courtyard situated between the recital room and the restaurant



In some ways, the servicing of the building expresses the kind of place it is – quite proper, hiding its dirty laundry, not at all raw. It has dignified, calm spaces.

There are also some real victories. One is the upper floor of the restaurant. Sitting on the first floor in a restaurant can feel like being away from the action, but the space is so well proportioned, the ceiling so beautiful,, and all but a couple of tables are by a window to the street, or to the courtyard.

Best of all, though, is the recital room; somewhere between modern chamber and church hall, it feels like a place of real possibility and potential. We are somehow used to seeing new venues of this size that are carved out of old ones – The Forge is custom-designed and is a nice antidote to these found spaces.

But the best of all is the pleasing layering of space, from busy Delancey Street to the shelter of the recital room. This is a careful response to the mess of Camden, bringing beauty, civility and culture to the place. ■

Below Acoustic doors separate the recital room from the courtyard
Right and opposited Cream brickwork and timber-lined walls soften the room's hard-edged aesthetic



Acoustic commentary: Raf Orlowski of Arup Acoustics

The recital room is the acoustic heart of the project, so it was important to select an effective geometry to provide an even sequence of early sound reflections together with sufficient volume to give ample reverberance. A rectangular plan offered good reflected sound and a double-height space with a pitched roof ensured sufficient volume. Low background noise is important for performance and recording, which suggested a heavy material for the envelope.

The architects were keen on natural ventilation throughout the building, but it became clear that natural ventilation in a noisy urban environment is not compatible with the acoustic requirements of a recital hall and recording studio. Mechanical ventilation with suitable sound attenuation was

necessary together with a heavy envelope. However, the opening top lights allow the building to be naturally ventilated between performances.

Surface finishes in the recital hall are hard and reflective to maintain reverberance – timber on the walls and floor, and cementitious boarding on the ceiling. For amplified music, where less reverberance is required, acoustic drapes can be deployed for absorption. Acoustics for diners also need close attention, so the spaces do not become too noisy. This problem is solved by applying powerful acoustic absorption on to the concrete ceilings. In the café, this is in the form of woodwool panels and in the restaurant, narrow woven fabric-covered acoustic panels are located between exposed concrete ribs.



Tender date January 2007
Start on site July 2007
Contract duration 21 months
Gross internal floor area 727m²
Form of contract JCT Standard Building Contract with Quantities 2005 (SBC05)
Total cost £2.53 million
Cost per m² £3,480
Client Calyx Property Ltd
Architect Burd Haward Architects
Structural engineer Arup
Services engineer Max Fordham
Quantity surveyor PSP Construction Consultants
Main contractor Crispin & Borst
Annual CO₂ emissions 49kg/m² (commercial), 29kg/m² (residential)