

# Truman Brewery Film School

The objective of the brief was to create a film school in central London located in between Spitalfields market and Brick Lane on the Old Truman Brewery site. The program is a complex mix of controlled production, post production and teaching space mixed in with public exhibition based program. A key focus was to integrate the building into the existing fabric by encouraging the integration of the general public with the scheme and its surrounding space. A clear opportunity was to enhance the existing public space that was heavily

used for events but often neglected outside of those times. London's outdoor public space is becoming increasingly privatised limiting its time of use as well as the cross section of public that use it. Therefore it became clear from an early stage that maintaining the spaces use by all members of the public as well as cultivating a twenty four hour program was of great importance.

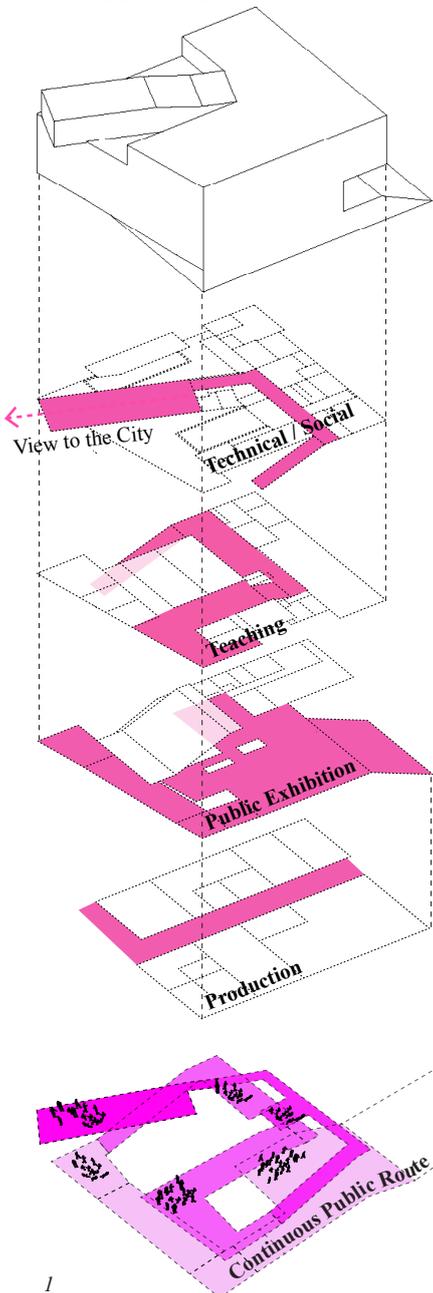
The site sits in a key area that highlights a clear divide within the city of London. To the west of the site the commercial centre is rapidly growing and taking over and dismantling the existing grain. To the east of the site is a post-industrial hinterland mixed with large areas of housing that hold a vast variety of cultures that make London such a vibrant mix. The project therefore has the opportunity to act as a catalyst to save this important space from the generic advance of the corporate city.

The area in its current form houses and has become a canvas for the creative industries and street culture in general. Brick lane and the Truman Brewery is well known for its surrounding graffiti and galleries. Many of the creative industries such as film production and graphic design have reacted to this by adopting the area as their base. The project seeks to enhance this by hybridising the film school with additional program such as retail and extra exhibition space within the main development, as well as adjacent live

work studio units. This will help to provide twenty four hour use throughout the whole site based around incubating the creative industries.

The concept behind the main scheme comes from an amalgamation of film theory and the conclusions drawn from the sites unique context and its relationship to two very different sides of London. Central to the project is a continuous space that starts in the 'grungy' public square and then wraps itself up, through and around the building to give a final view over the City of London to the 'Gherkin' and the advancing financial sector. The route relates to film theory by setting up a continuous sequence of scenes that can be differentiated through different scales of space, transition in lighting and differing relationships to views across the city. These views are crucial to each scene and have been selected and presented to the user to illustrate the varying character of the surrounding city grain enhancing the contextualisation of the project and the important position of the site.

The route also allows a mix between the very different requirements in program but also provides a space that can be hybridised in use for both the student and members of the public. Specific program such as a studio or post production suites have a particular set of requirements, the route that connects these programs offer a contrasting flexibility in use and



- 1> Overview showing the concept of the continuous route up through the building.
- 2> Overview of the development showing both the main film school, public space and additional live / work studios.
- 3> Visualisation of the public space and main entrance to the film school.
- 4> Section through the main exhibition space, route through the school and public space.

also does not define its user like some programs might (e.g. The green room is for students, the route is for all).

The scheme therefore is informed by its context and the complex relationships between program, user and their surrounding environment. This creates a building and urban intervention that challenges its user by closely analysing and responding to its context and use.

**Process**

The most crucial part of the process was to understand the complexities of the site and its context. The location was rich with multiple narratives to peruse as a driver for the building and urban intervention. Combining the understanding of the context with techniques used in film and film theory gave the project depth and meaning from the offset. By focusing the project on a strong concept all decisions throughout the design process could be assessed by this initial criteria keeping the ideas focused and strong.

The process was aided through a number of critiques and pier reviews. Explaining the scheme to a wider audience always helped to clarify the intentions as well as gain a broader understanding of what the scheme was trying to achieve, and different directions that it could be manipulated in. Design especially in the wider urban realm should be an amalgamation of views and opinions and



can often suffer when dictated to by one individual. Having open appraisals of the project helps it to become a more diverse body of thought from more than one point of view and creates a far richer end product.

**Conclusions**

Urban design is often considered to be the shaping of space between buildings, however what I have learnt throughout the design of this project is that the public realm can extend greatly into the enclosed spaces that form the building itself. By integrating the public into both the outside urban landscape and the continuous space of the interior, it has created a far richer experience with more boundaries and frictions in social

cohesion being entertained. Even with the program of the film school which is essentially quite a private building, there has been opportunities for the mix of student and public. However the project does not aim to appeal to all sections of society and all people. The scheme is aimed at the creative sector that has started to take hold in the Brick Lane area already. With the focus of user it becomes possible to start giving the proposed project a real identity that will cultivate this growing sector. Clarity in concept and the understanding of its diverse context and user marks the success of the scheme.

*Text and Images by Chris Evans, Part II, UWE*

