

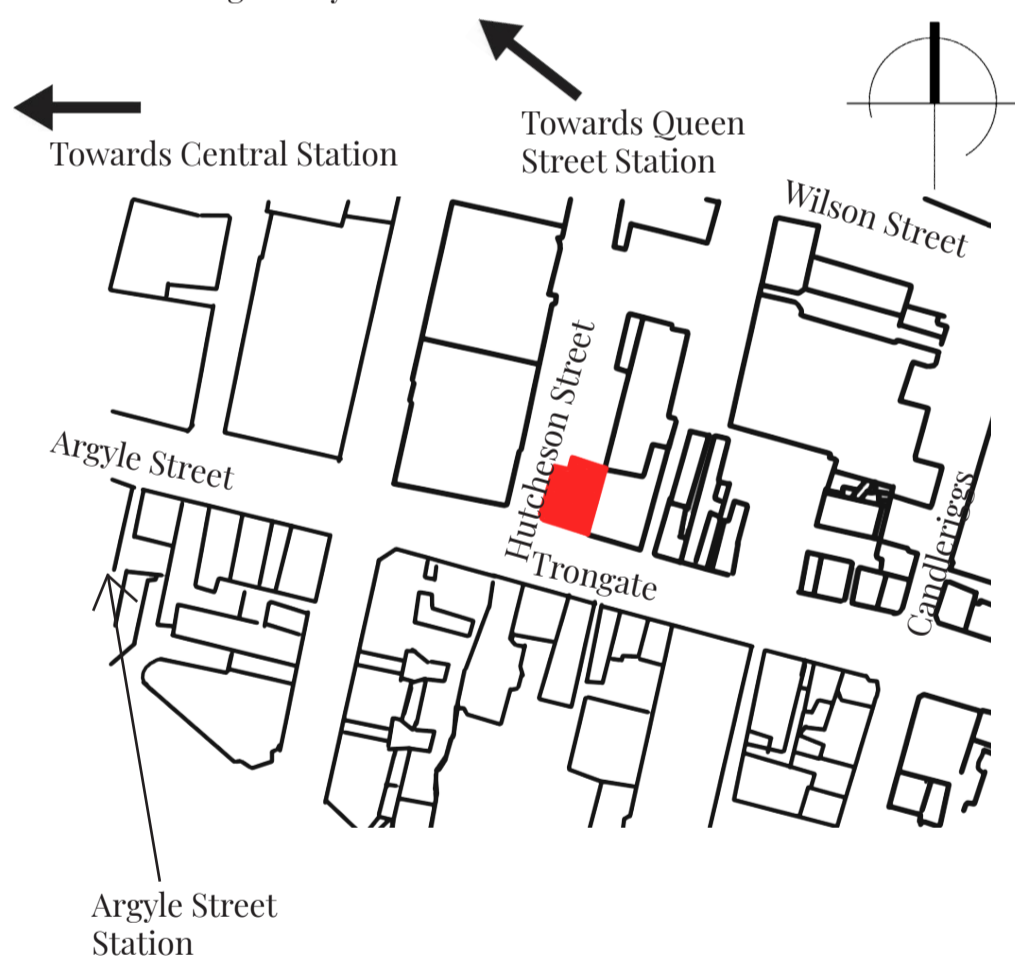
NEXUS CREATIVITY STUDIOS

Creativity Beyond Sight
GLASGOW
2026

Nexus Creativity Studios A space for creativity without limits. Design for Accessible Spaces Niamh Slevin



Located at 170 Trongate, on the corner of Trongate and Hutcheson Street in Glasgow city centre

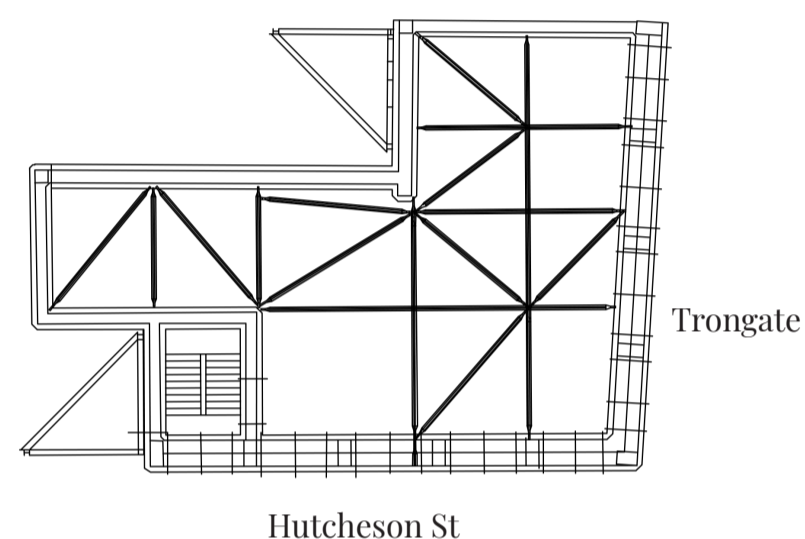


The building is a significant example of Glasgow's 19th-century commercial heritage. Constructed as a four-storey warehouse between 1856 and the 1860s, it likely features a cast-iron frame, painted ashlar stonework, and a façade characterized by pilasters, tripartite windows, and decorative cornices.

During the mid-19th century, this area was a hub for trade, warehousing, and manufacturing. Historical records show Allan Gardner, a straw-hat and bonnet manufacturer, operating from 168–170 Trongate, suggesting the building was used for storing and trading goods such as textiles and millinery.

Today, the building is on the Buildings at Risk Register and is classified as being in very poor condition, with only the ground floor occupied and the upper floors vacant. Despite its current state, it remains an important part of Glasgow's industrial and commercial history.

Nexus Creativity Studios is a creative centre in Glasgow city centre that rethinks how interior space is experienced beyond sight. The project responds to the need for more inclusive design by challenging visually led approaches and focusing instead on touch, material, sound and movement. It consists of five studios, each offering a different way of making and exploring creativity, supported by tactile navigation and clear material identities to aid orientation. The design takes an experimental, sensory-led approach that treats accessibility as a starting point for creativity rather than an add-on. It is relevant to this award for its inclusive, multi-sensory and exploratory interior approach



The building is located in Glasgow city centre, chosen for its strong transport connections and the large number of people who live, work, and travel through the city. The existing structure is a façade-retention project, with only the ground floor currently occupied, while the upper floors consist primarily of structural beams.

From the outset, I wanted to preserve and celebrate the building's history by retaining and conserving its existing character. At the same time, the project aims to highlight how visually impaired individuals often have to navigate a world that is not designed with their needs in mind.

A key objective of the design was to avoid creating a space that visibly "signals" disability. Instead, every design decision was carefully considered to ensure accessibility is seamlessly integrated into the building. This approach creates an inclusive environment that benefits all users while maintaining a strong architectural identity.

Users



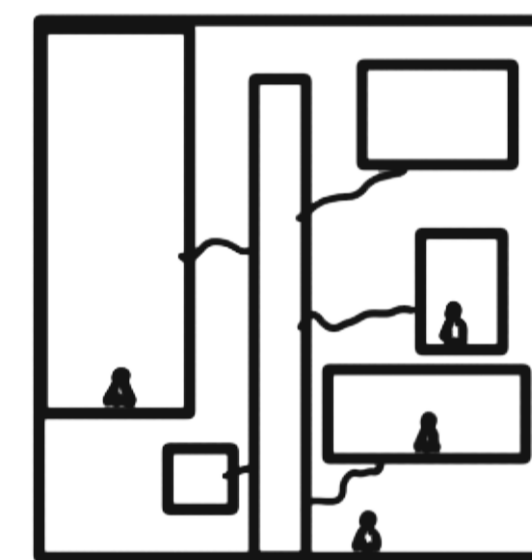
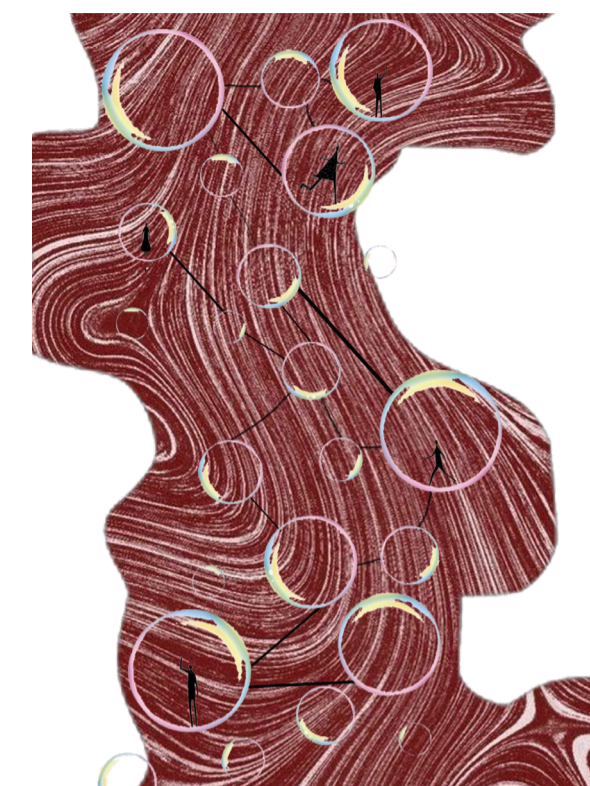
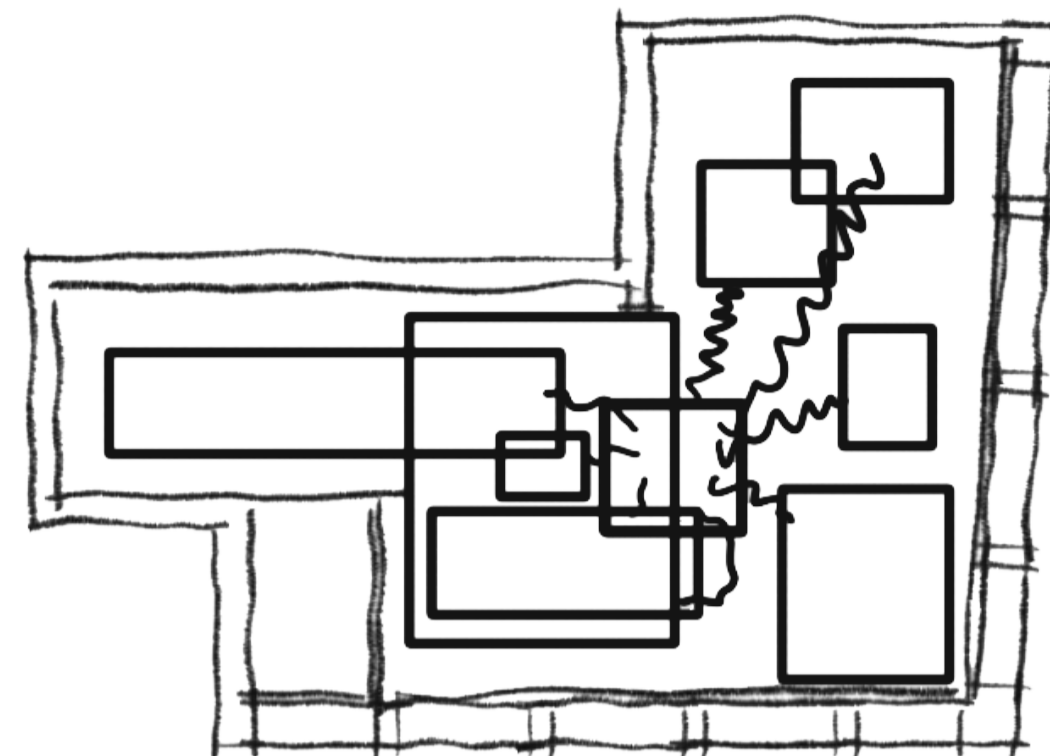
Peter, 29, recently lost partial sight due to a medical condition. A friend told him about support groups for people with visual impairments, but he's looking for something different, he doesn't want a typical support group and would prefer a more unique or engaging way to connect with others.



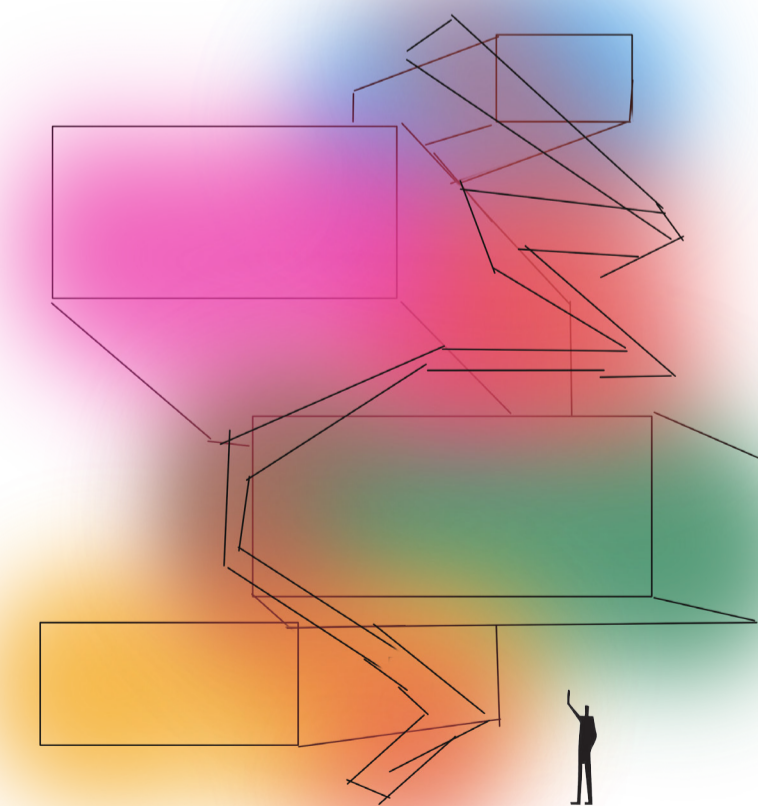
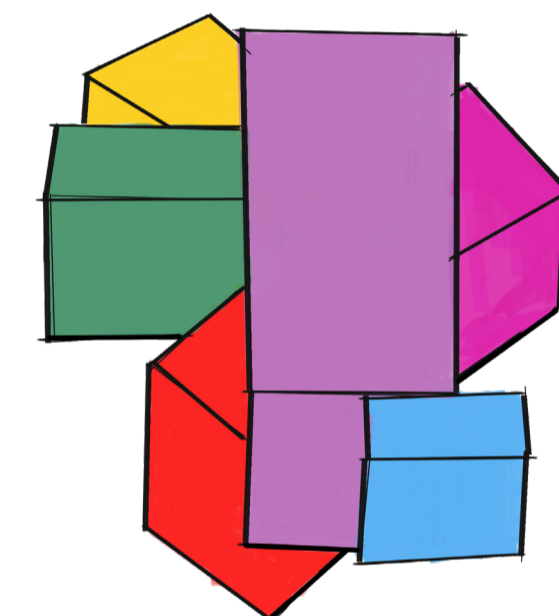
Imogen, 6, has been visually impaired since birth. Her mum, wants her to meet other people with similar abilities so they can share experiences. She also hopes Imogen can explore and develop her creativity in a space where she feels free to express herself.



George, 72, is a creative soul who loves painting. Since retiring, he has missed regular social interaction and is looking for a place where he can connect with others and share his creativity.

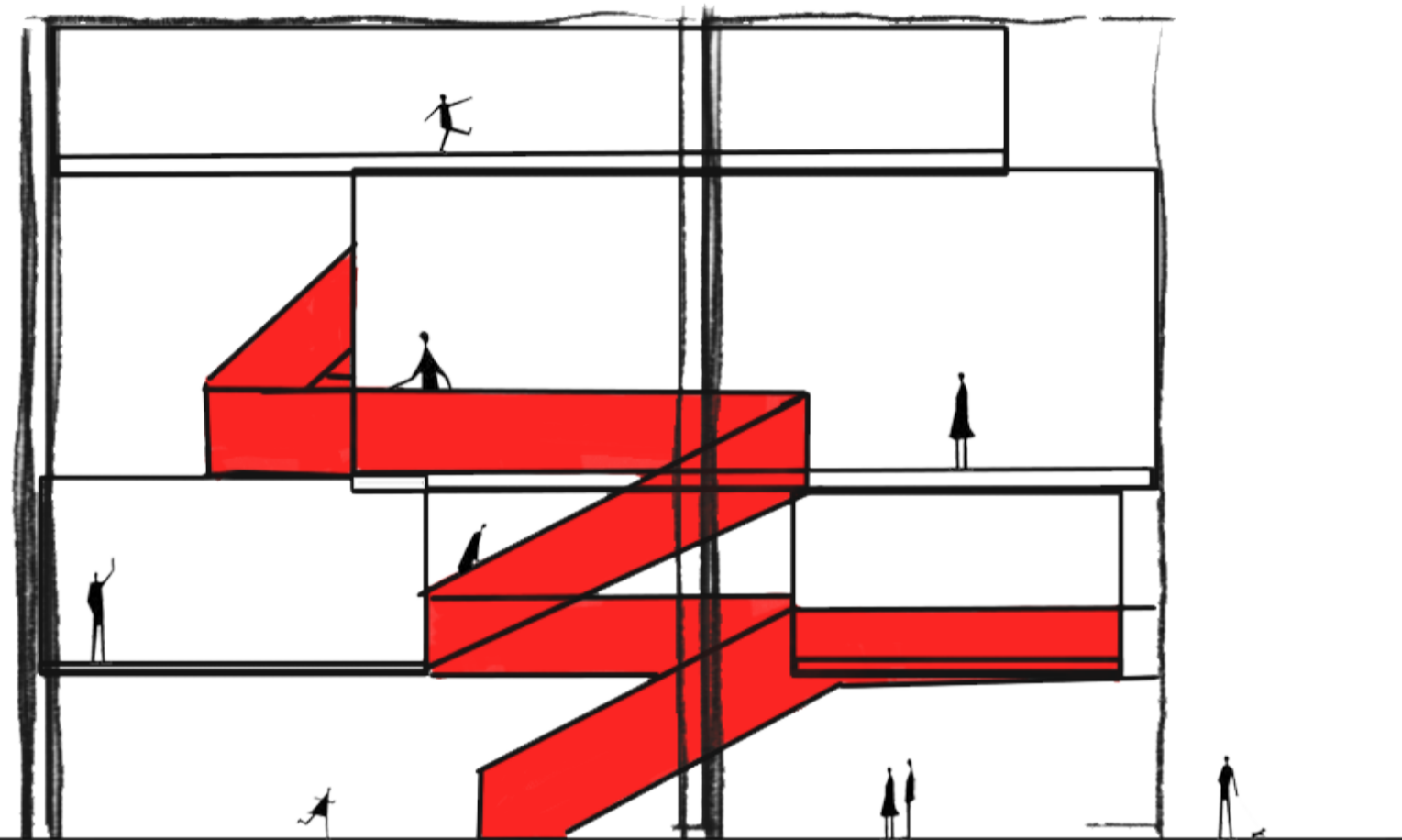


Thinking about what the space could look like in plan and elevation views



Initial ideas, diagrams & collage- thinking about how the users will travel in the space

Globally, over 2.2 billion individuals experience some degree of visual impairment. In Scotland, approximately 180,000 people, equivalent to 1 in 30, are affected. Healthcare professionals project that this figure will double by 2031.



A conceptual section- how could the users travel around the space. Wanting to make the travel up and down a major aspect of the space.

Nexus Creativity Studios is a creative center based in Glasgow city center, designed for visually impaired individuals, where creativity goes beyond sight. The space features five dedicated studios where people can explore, discover, and develop their creative abilities in an inclusive and supportive environment.

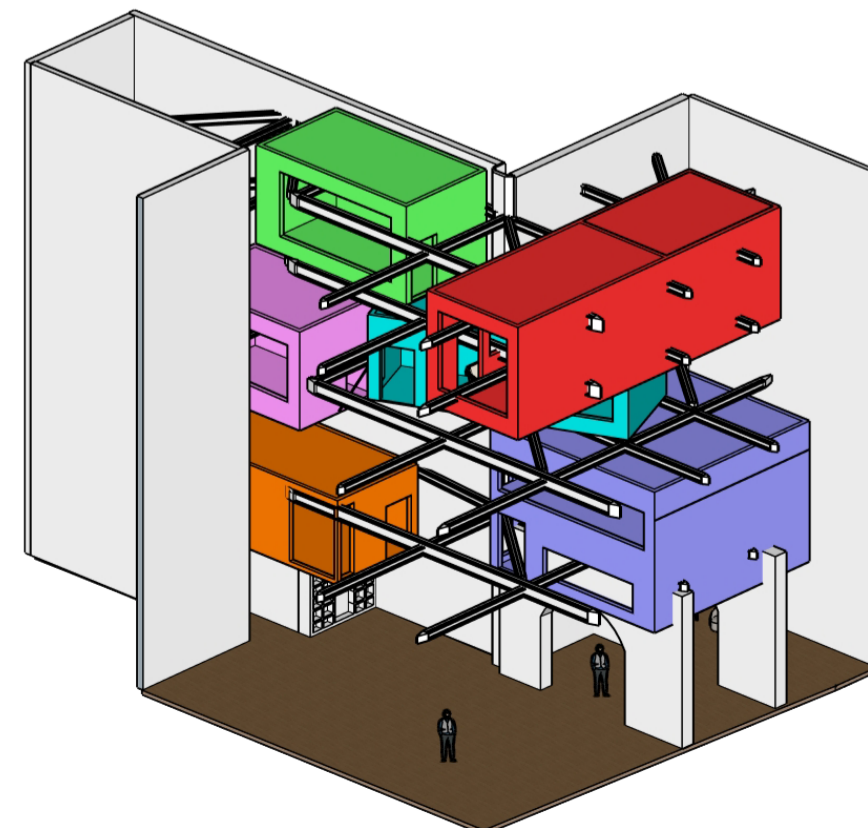
In Scotland, approximately 1 in 30 people live with a visual impairment, highlighting the need for accessible, inclusive, and thoughtfully designed creative spaces. Nexus responds to this need by removing barriers to participation and reimagining how creativity can be experienced beyond the visual.

The center offers a range of studios designed to support diverse forms of expression, encouraging creativity through sensory experiences such as touch, movement, and material exploration. These spaces are adaptable, allowing individuals to engage in ways that suit their abilities, interests, and confidence levels.

Creativity also plays a vital role in supporting mental health and wellbeing. Engaging in creative activities can reduce stress, improve mood, and provide a sense of purpose and achievement. For many, it offers a way to express thoughts and emotions that may be difficult to communicate otherwise, fostering resilience, confidence, and a stronger sense of identity.

At the heart of the center are five core values: curiosity, community, creativity, connection, and confidence. These principles guide every experience, empowering individuals to build skills, form meaningful relationships, and develop a strong sense of self through creative expression.

Nexus Creativity Studios is more than a place to make- it is a space to belong, to connect, and to grow.



View of the reception area and community space

Design Principles

Accessibility

Accessibility is at the core of the design. Clear circulation paths, tactile flooring, Braille signage, and auditory cues are integrated throughout the hub to ensure that all users, regardless of visual ability, can move safely and confidently. The layout anticipates potential obstacles and prioritizes ease of navigation, making the space inclusive and functional for everyone.

Contrast and Texture

High-contrast surfaces and a variety of textures are used to help users differentiate between floors, walls, furniture, and other key features. By strategically combining colour contrast, material finishes, and tactile surfaces, the design enhances spatial awareness and allows users to orient themselves independently, supporting both safety and comfort

Spatial Clarity

The hub is organized with spatial clarity in mind. Rooms, corridors, and activity zones are arranged logically, with intuitive transitions and clearly defined areas. Open layouts, subtle wayfinding cues, and deliberate circulation paths reduce confusion and create a sense of order, enabling users to navigate and interact with the environment with confidence

Sensory Engagement

Beyond visual design, the hub emphasizes a rich sensory experience. Sounds, scents, and tactile features are thoughtfully incorporated to engage multiple senses, creating an environment that is welcoming, stimulating, and memorable. This multi-sensory approach ensures that users can connect with and enjoy the space in diverse and meaningful ways.

Nexus Creativity Studios is built around five creative studios, five core values, and one shared objective. The name Nexus refers to a place where two or more points meet—a connection point. This concept reflects the project's aim to create a space where visually impaired individuals and creativity come together, fostering collaboration, innovation, and inclusion.

The logo is created from two opposing “V” shapes facing one another, forming a simple square-like form that represents connection and unity. This visual language reinforces the idea of Nexus as a meeting point where different people, ideas, and experiences come together. The use of the Roman numeral V, representing the number five, references the project's five studios and five core values, bringing together the key principles, purpose, and inclusive ethos of Nexus Creativity Studios.



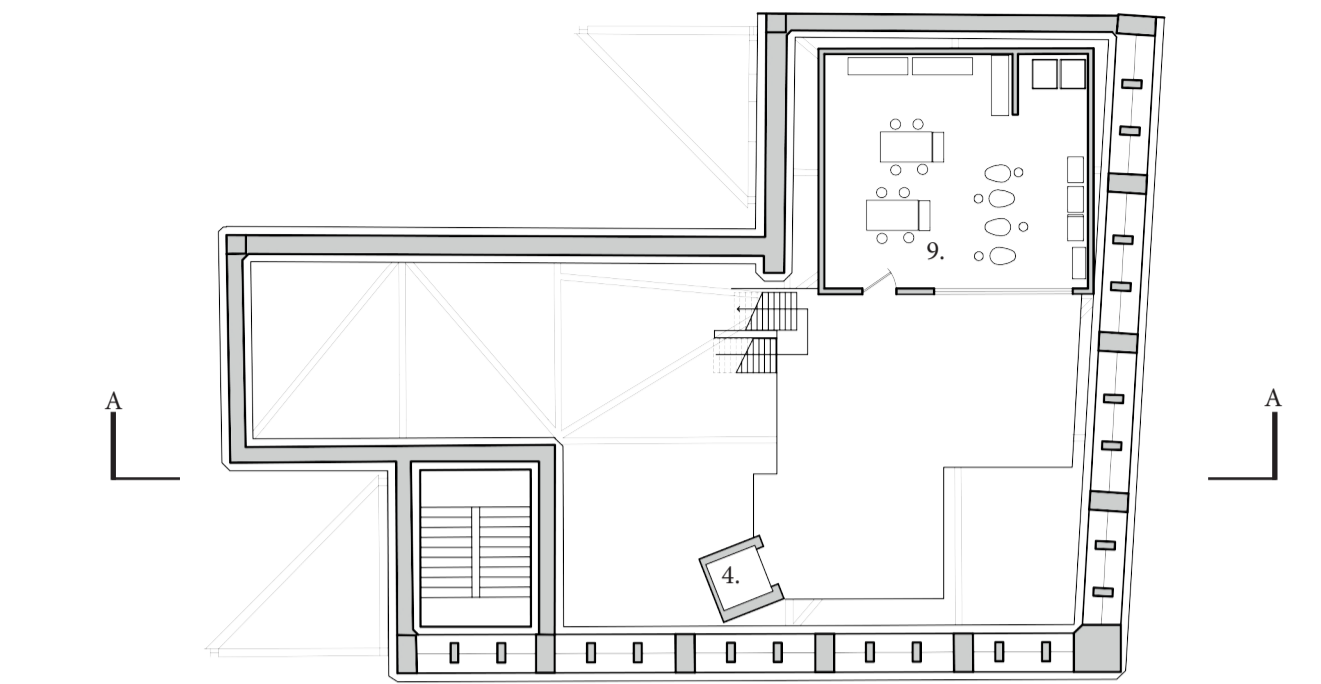
Logo



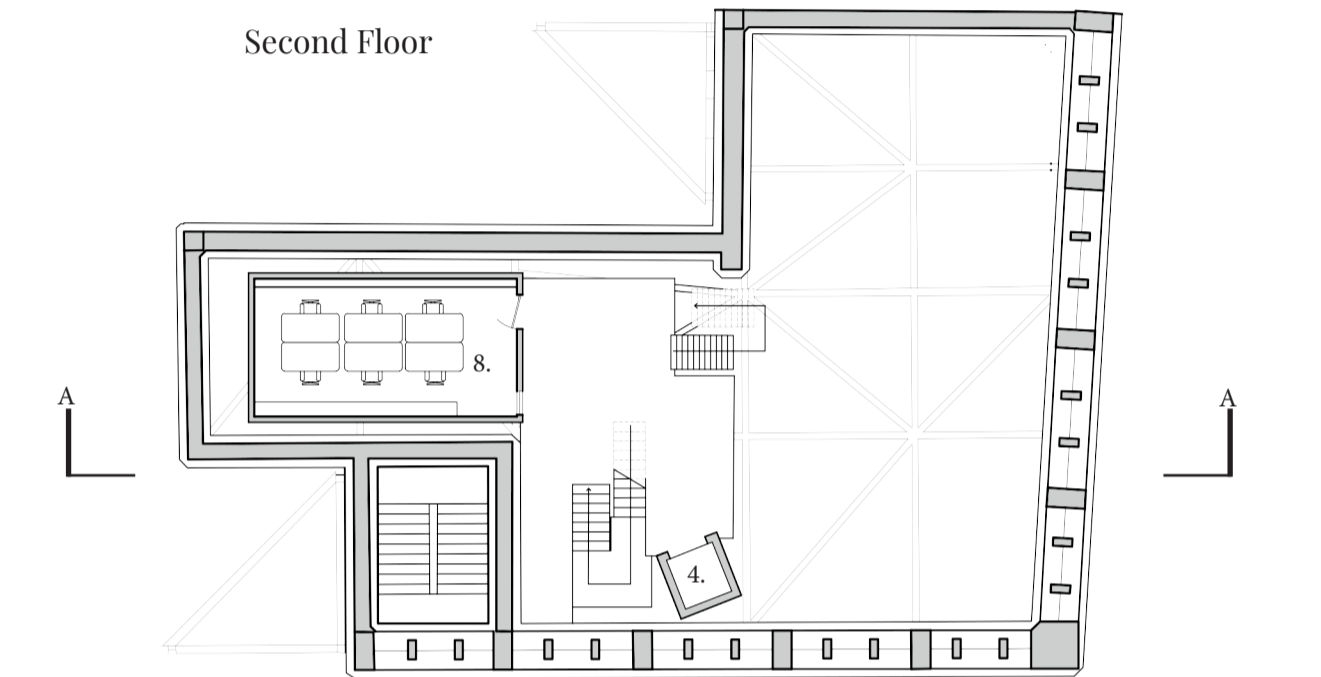
Core Values

Key

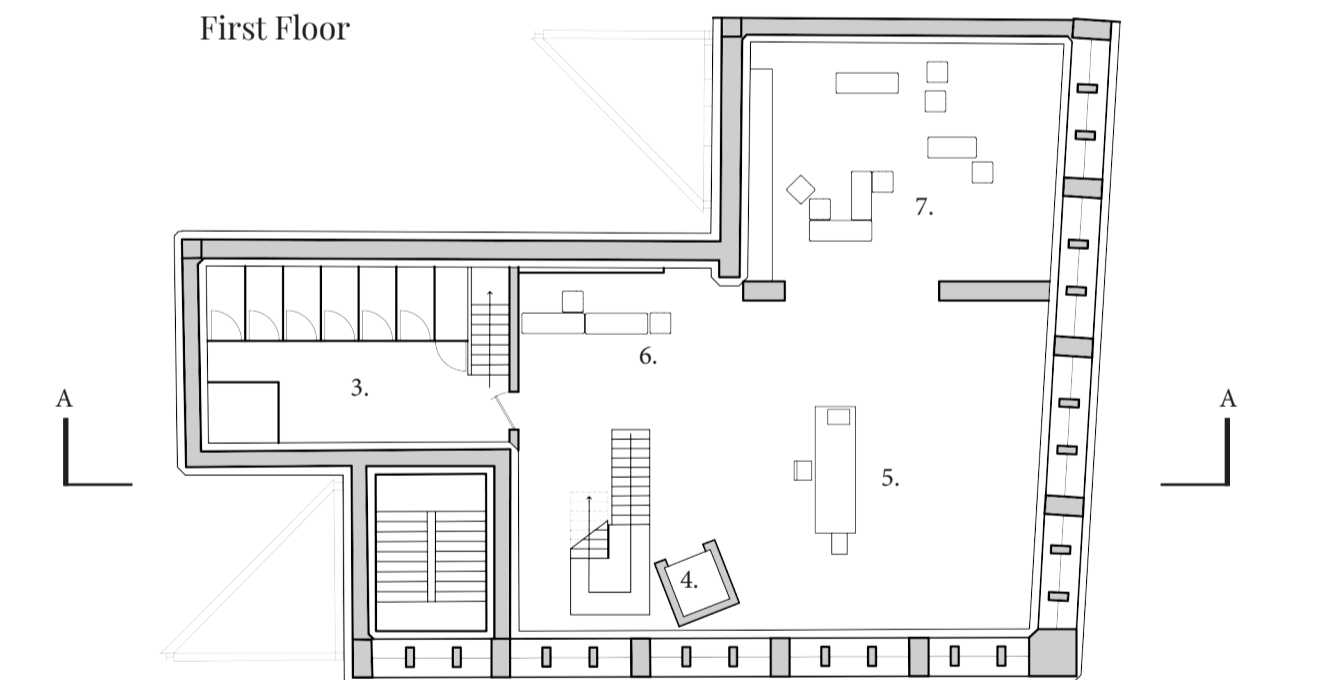
- 1. Staff Area
- 2. Maintenance Space
- 3. Toilets
- 4. Lift
- 5. Reception Area
- 6. Noticeboard Area
- 7. Breakout Space
- 8. Dabble Studio
- 9. Kiln Studio
- 10. Knit Studio
- 11. Canvas Studio
- 12. Bash Studio



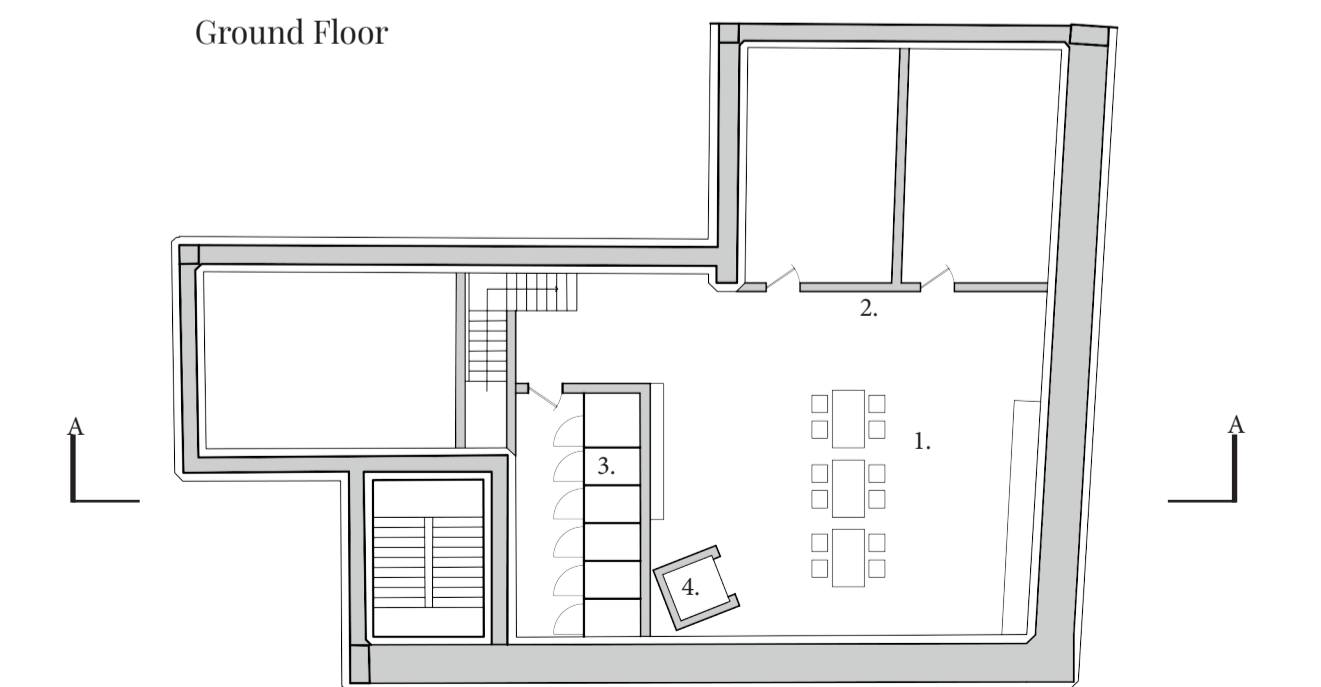
Second Floor



First Floor



Ground Floor



Basement Floor



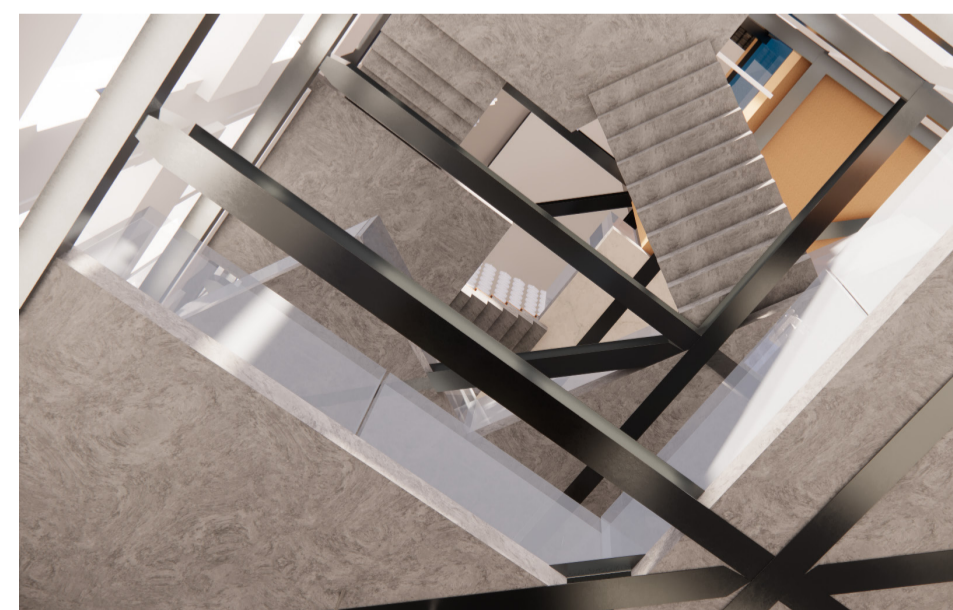
View of the noticeboard area



View of Dabble studio



View of the tactile way finding



View of the building looking up from the reception area



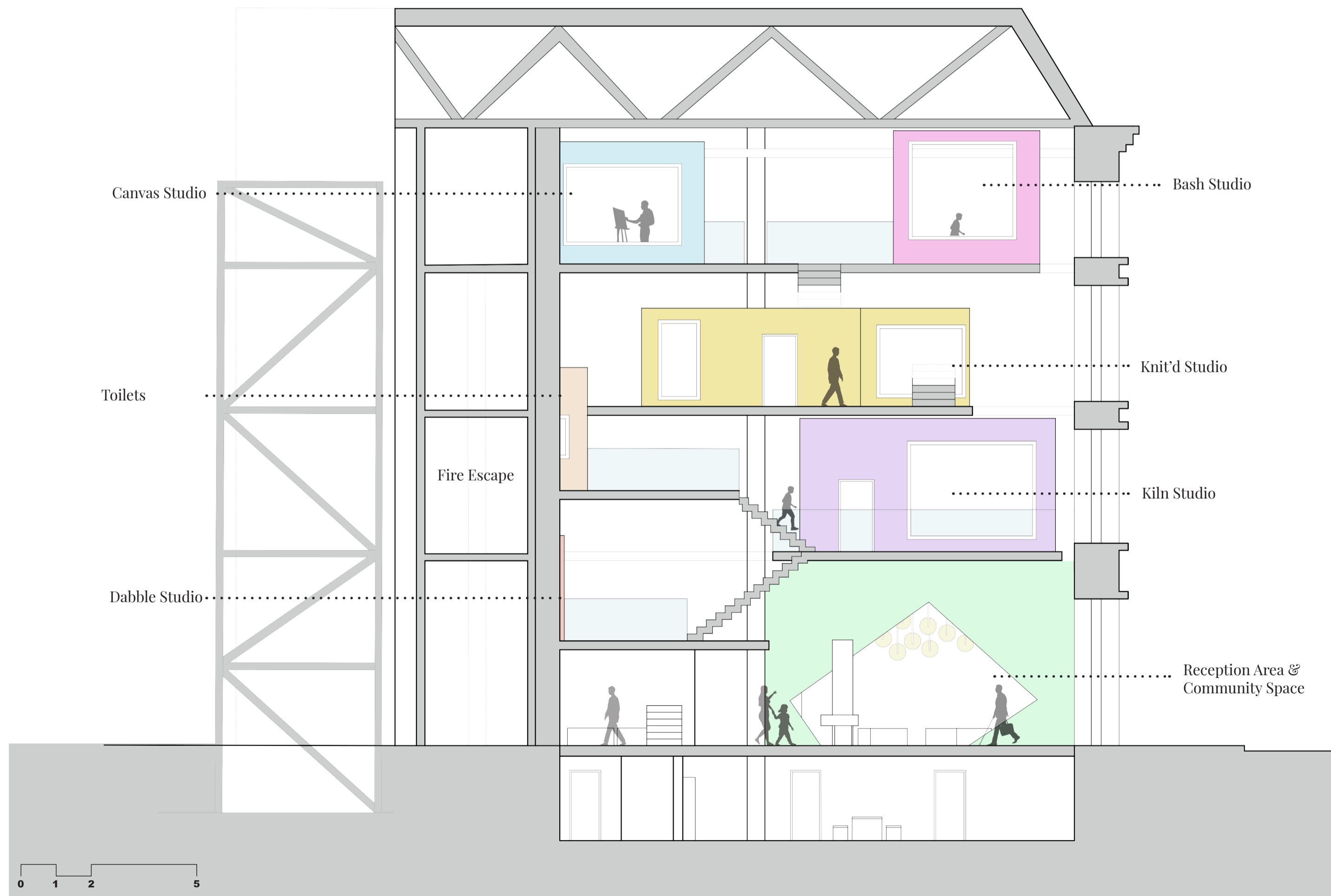
View of Knit'd studio



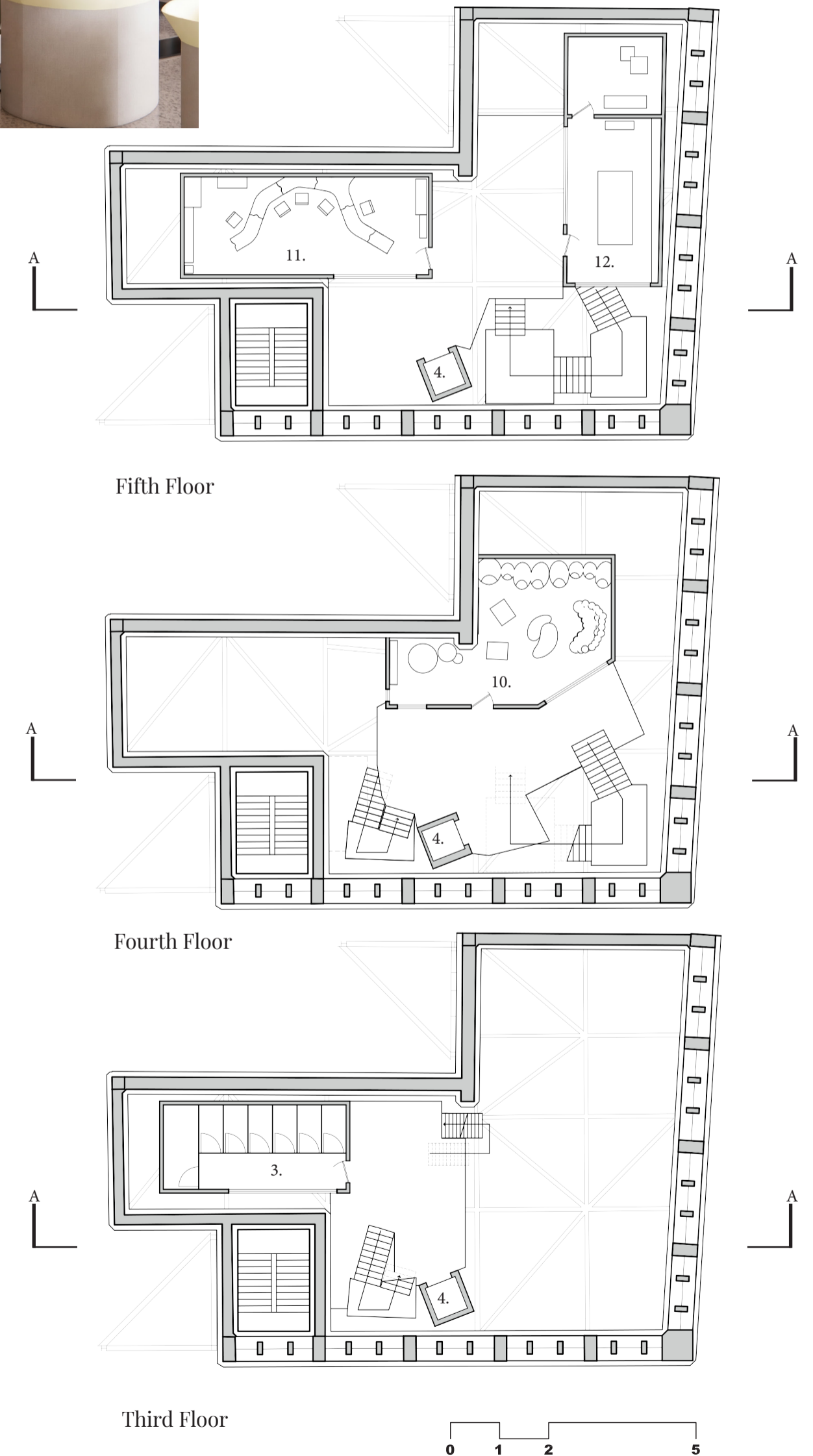
View of Kiln studio

Materiality plays an important role throughout the building, with each studio defined by a distinct wall finish to create a clear sense of identity and wayfinding. These material differences help users intuitively navigate the space while giving each studio its own atmosphere and character. Carefully selected materials are both functional and sensory, enhancing how the building is experienced and understood. Tactile floor plans are also provided in every space to support orientation and encourage independent movement throughout the building.

Each studio is clearly identified externally through large lettering to improve visibility and recognition, with Braille integrated throughout the whole building to ensure accessibility. Together, these elements create a legible, inclusive environment where navigation is supported through both tactile and visual cues.



Section AA



Together, these studios offer different pathways for creativity, allowing individuals to choose methods that best support their emotional and sensory needs. All studios are accessible to individuals and their "persons"—including carers, family members, or support workers—who can participate, assist, or simply provide support. The ground floor also includes a shared community space where visitors can sit, relax, and spend time, offering opportunities to meet others in similar situations or simply enjoy a calm space to socialise or be alone.



..... Bash Studio

The Create and Break Therapeutic Studio allows users to channel their emotions into making an object. Once completed, the piece is taken into a separate reflective space where it can be safely broken or deconstructed, symbolising emotional release and closure.



..... Canvas Studio

The Painting Studio provides a space for expressive painting and mixed media work, allowing individuals to explore colour, emotion, and gesture freely without restriction.



..... Knit'd Studio

The Soft Fabric Studio offers a comfortable, relaxed environment for knitting, crocheting, and felting, encouraging repetitive, calming processes that support mindfulness and focus.



..... Kiln Studio

The Pottery Studio supports hands-on making through wheel throwing and hand-building techniques, giving users a tactile and grounding creative experience.



..... Dabble Studio

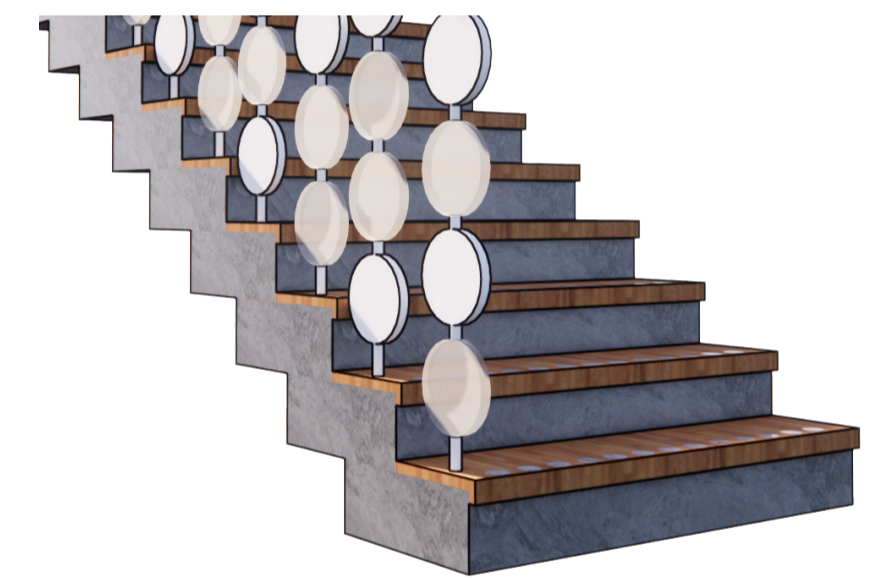
The Drawing and Mixed Media Studio is a flexible creative space where people can draw, sketch, scrapbook, collage, or explore any personal form of visual storytelling.



View of Canvas studio



Isometric of the whole space



Enscape view of detail

Perceptive of the studios

