

FASHION INCUBATOR

Repurposing outdated High Street buildings to bring creative industries in to the heart of communities

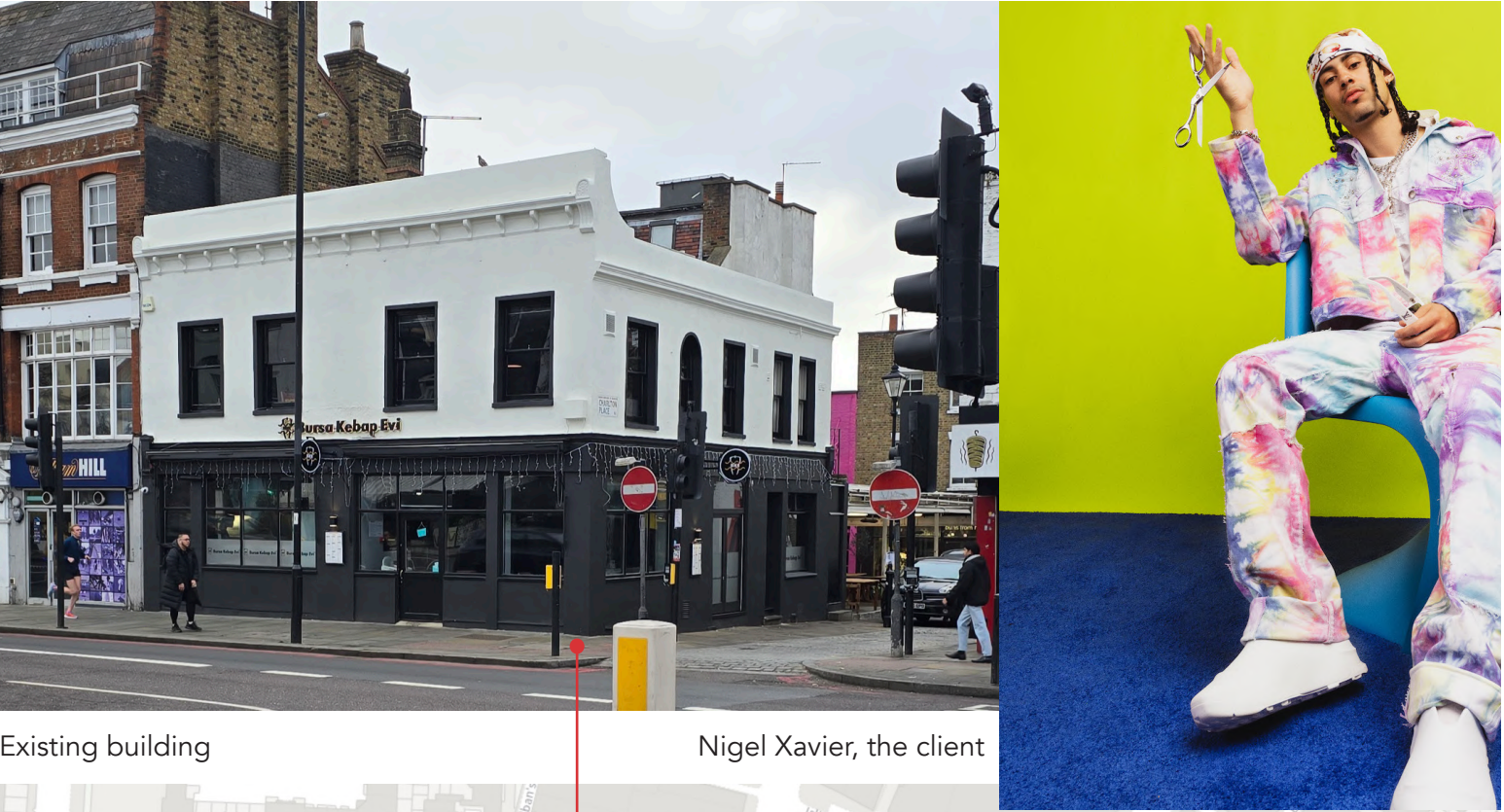
THE CASE FOR A FASHION HUB AT 341 UPPER STREET

This project transforms an existing building into a multifunctional Live/Work space for two emerging fashion graduates, supported by the designer Nigel Xavier—renowned for his upcycled streetwear and sustainable design ethos. The adaptive reuse strategy honors the building’s original structure while redefining it as a launchpad for creative careers.

The space integrates private living areas, fashion production studios, and a retail showroom, supporting both personal and professional growth. Core features include:

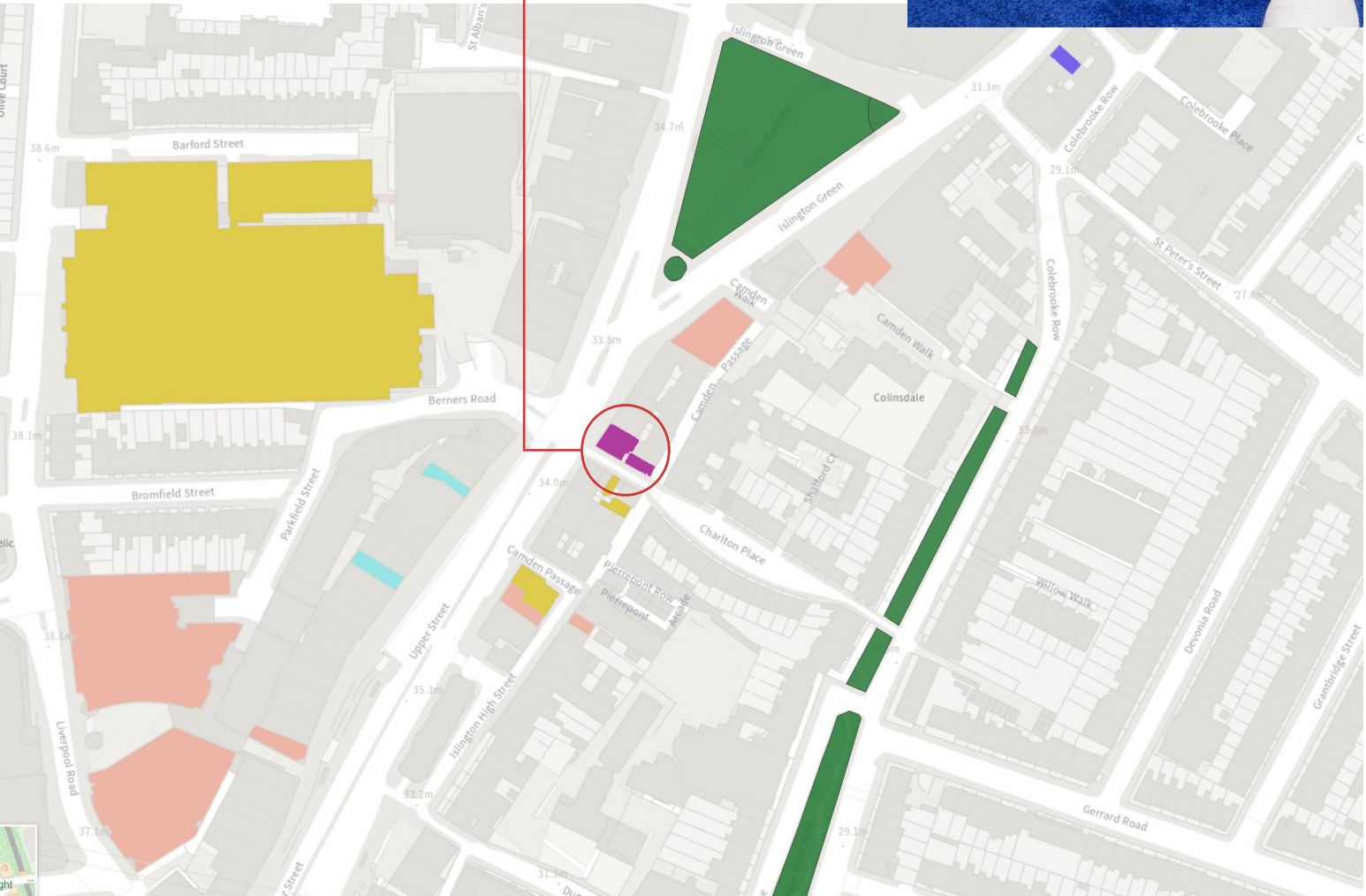
- LIVE/WORK HYBRID:** Individual living areas paired with workshops and a shared public-facing retail/display zone.
- SUSTAINABLE REUSE:** A material donation drop-off, flexible interiors, and finishes chosen for durability and circular design.
- COMMUNITY CONNECTION:** Public engagement is fostered through open retail access, events, and transparent design processes.
- FLEXIBLE, NEUTRAL DESIGN:** Annual rotation of residents requires adaptable layouts that prioritize function over personal style.
- EQUITABLE SPACE-SHARING:** The plan promotes balance between collaboration and privacy, ensuring fair access to resources.

The design celebrates the narrative of **REINVENTION**—of both space and materials—mirroring the spirit of streetwear and creative reuse, while empowering a new generation of fashion innovators.



Existing building

Nigel Xavier, the client

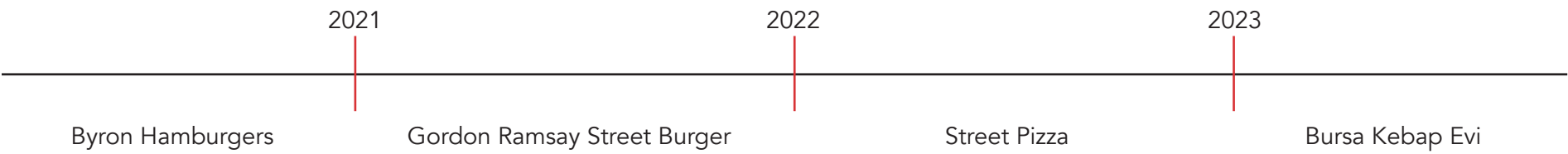


- Green areas
- Thrift clothes stores
- Cultural centers
- Clothes stores
- Atelier



WHY REINVENTION IS NECESSARY?

In the past five years, 341 Upper Street has undergone rapid commercial turnover shown at the timeline below. This frequent rebranding reflects the building’s struggle to establish a lasting and meaningful presence in the community. Despite its high-traffic location, none of these ventures sustained long-term engagement, suggesting the space lacked a clear identity or connection to local interests.



THIS CONTEXT PRESENTS A COMPELLING ARGUMENT FOR STRATEGIC REINVENTION

Located in the heart of Islington, a borough renowned for its **creative energy**, **fashion-forward residents**, and **eco-conscious values**, the building is uniquely positioned to serve a more culturally and socially relevant purpose. Upper Street draws young professionals, students, and creatives, many of whom are deeply invested in **sustainable living and design innovation**. The site’s dual access—facing the busy high street and backing onto Charlton Place and Camden Passage, known for vintage markets and independent shops—makes it ideal for a hybrid function that blends residency, production, and public engagement.

By transforming the space into a **fashion hub** supporting emerging designers, the project taps directly into local needs: it offers an inclusive, accessible platform for creative expression, fosters sustainable practices through upcycling, and creates a dynamic retail and event space that invites community interaction. Unlike the transient restaurant concepts that failed to root, this use aligns with the **area’s cultural fabric** and addresses a genuine gap—support for new talent and circular fashion economies.

Through thoughtful adaptive reuse, the project not only reclaims an underperforming building but **repositions it as a relevant, community-focused destination**. It restores purpose, creates opportunity, and strengthens the creative ecosystem that defines Islington.

The Street Fashion Start-Up Studio near Angel will attract a diverse mix of **VISITORS**:

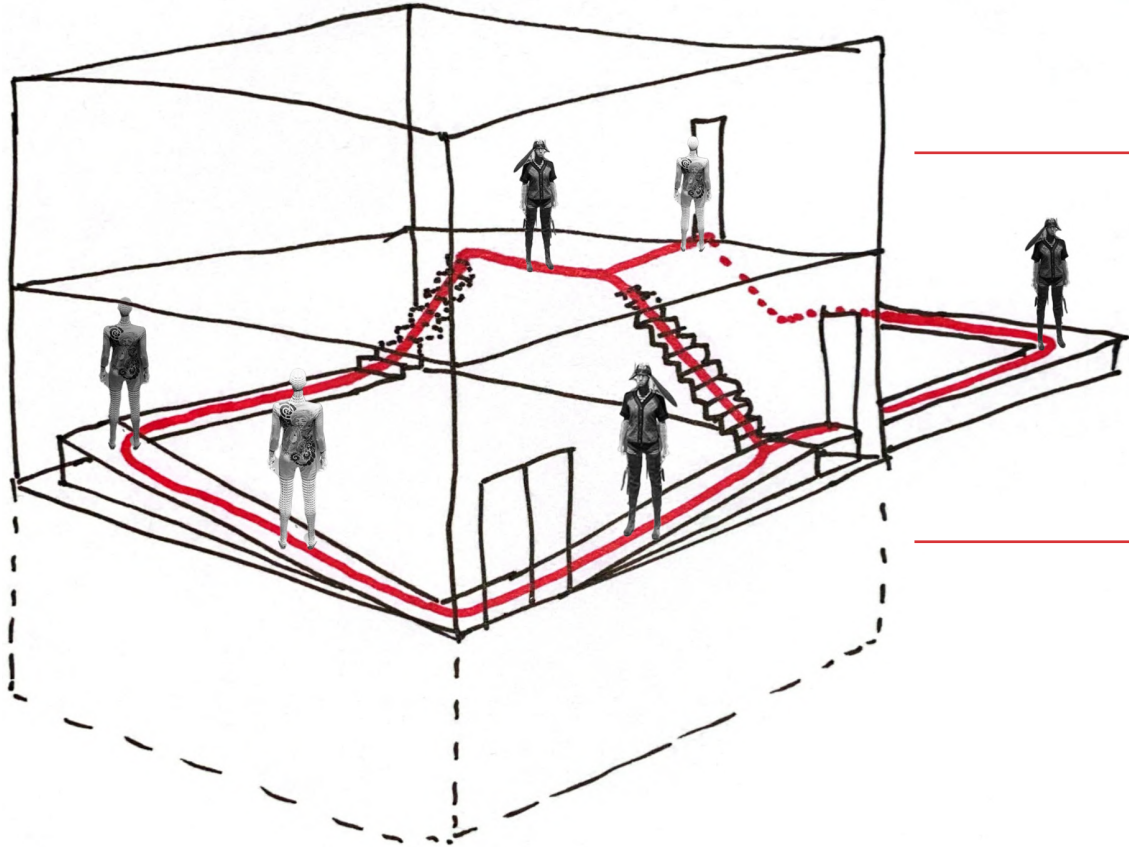
- Fashion Enthusiasts & Trendsetters
- Local Young Professionals & Londoners
- Tourists & International Shoppers
- Industry Professionals & Potential Clients
- Sustainability Advocates & Ethical Shoppers
- Event-Goers & Culture Seekers

OVERALL, this space would cater to an audience that **values exclusivity, craftsmanship, and sustainability**—people who want to discover emerging talent before they become mainstream. Events like **fashion shows, pop-ups, and styling workshops** will further attract a mix of creative professionals, fashion lovers, and ethical shoppers, making it a cultural hotspot rather than just a shop.

CONCEPT AND ITS SPATIAL RESOLUTION

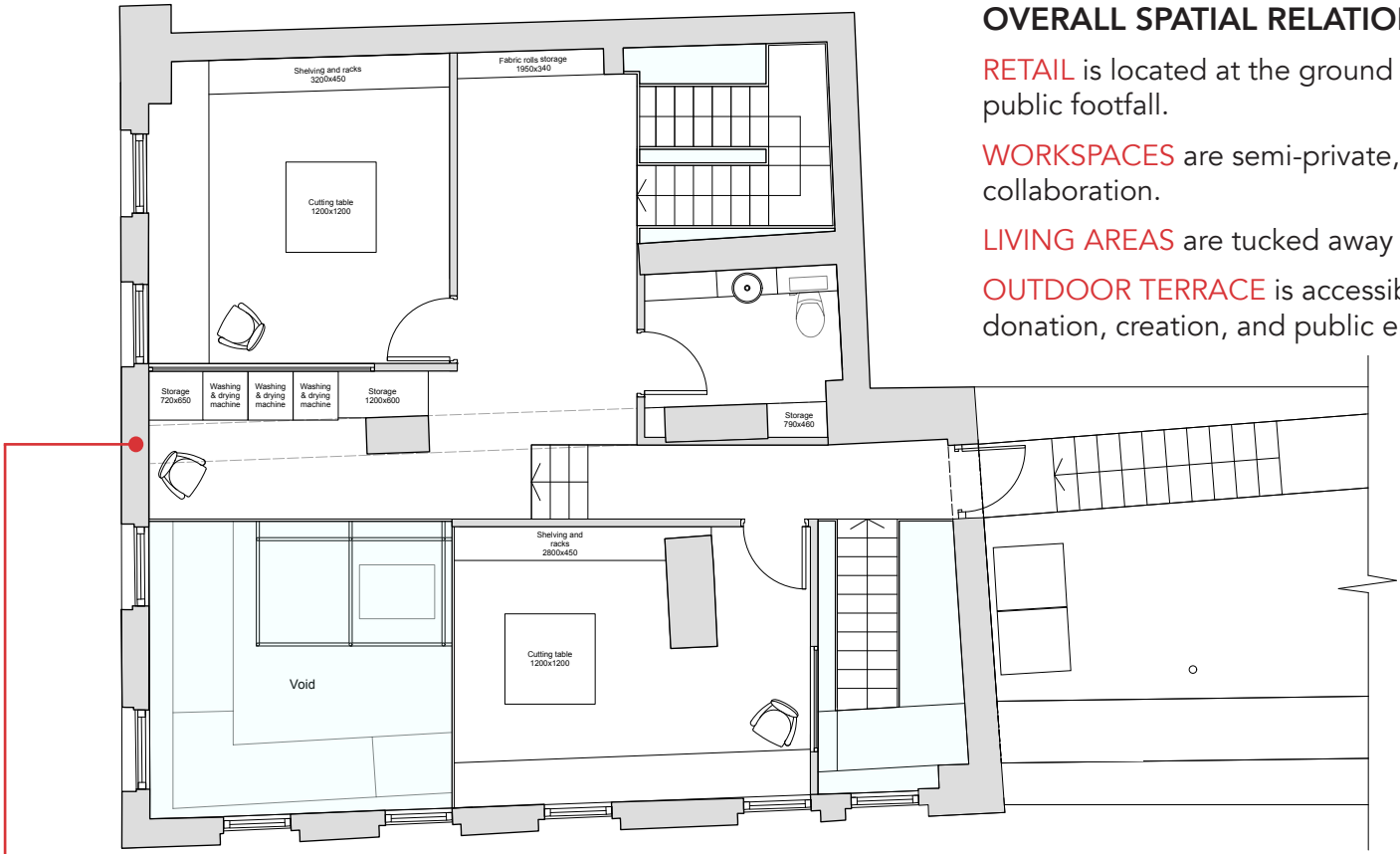


The interior design centers around a **CONTINUOUS RUNWAY** that flows along the building's perimeter, wrapping through its levels and weaving together the retail, work and outside spaces. This runway acts as both a physical and symbolic connector—guiding movement while embracing all who enter. As visitors step inside from the street, they immediately become part of the fashion narrative, walking the same path as the designers and their creations. The space transforms into a dynamic, immersive fashion hub where the boundary between creator, product, and audience dissolves—highlighting process, participation, and community in a welcoming, ever-evolving environment.



OVERALL SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS & FLOW:

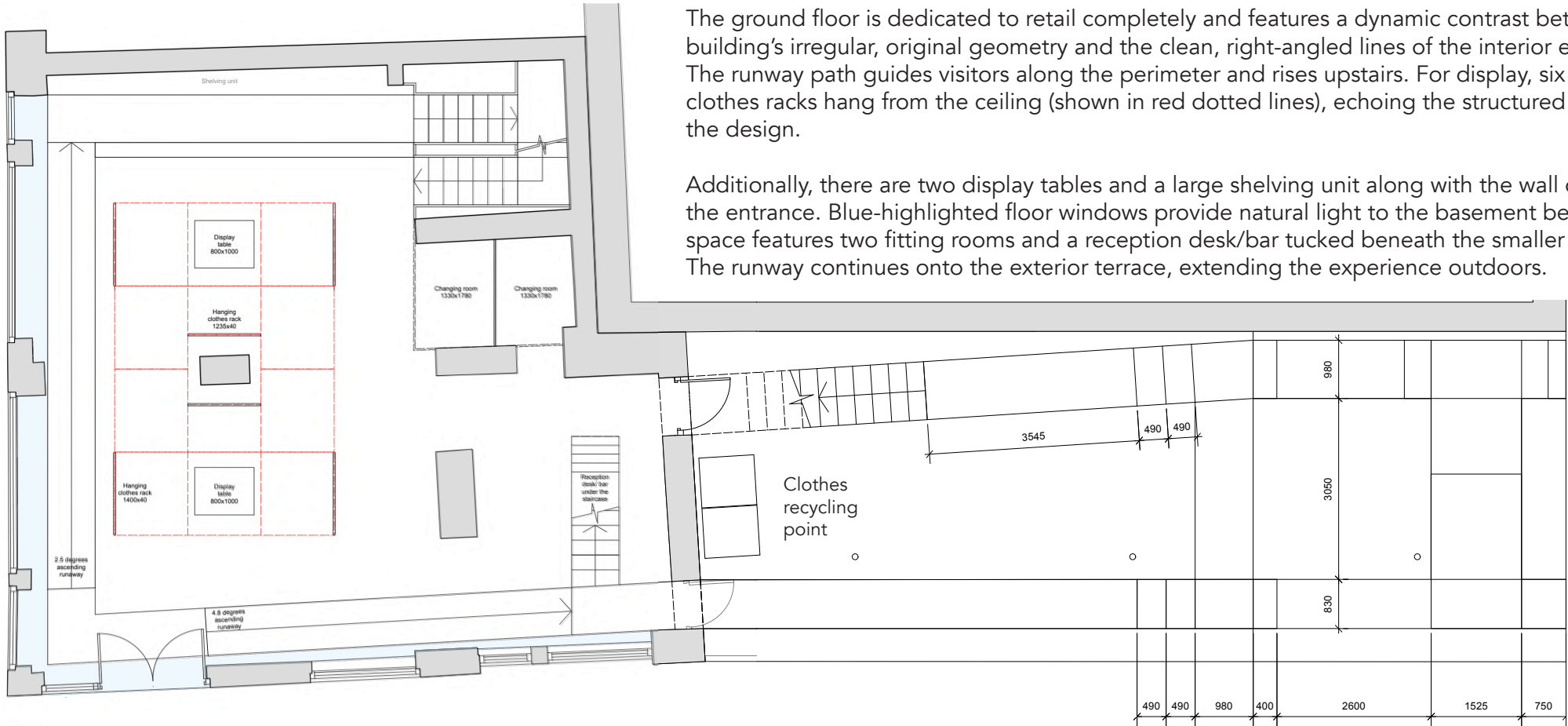
- RETAIL** is located at the ground floor with direct accessible entrance from the street to encourage public footfall.
- WORKSPACES** are semi-private, visually connected to the retail area for transparency and collaboration.
- LIVING AREAS** are tucked away for privacy and separation from public zones.
- OUTDOOR TERRACE** is accessible from both the retail and workspaces, promoting flow between donation, creation, and public engagement.



1st Floor Plan

The ground floor is dedicated to retail completely and features a dynamic contrast between the building's irregular, original geometry and the clean, right-angled lines of the interior elements. The runway path guides visitors along the perimeter and rises upstairs. For display, six horizontal clothes racks hang from the ceiling (shown in red dotted lines), echoing the structured rhythm of the design.

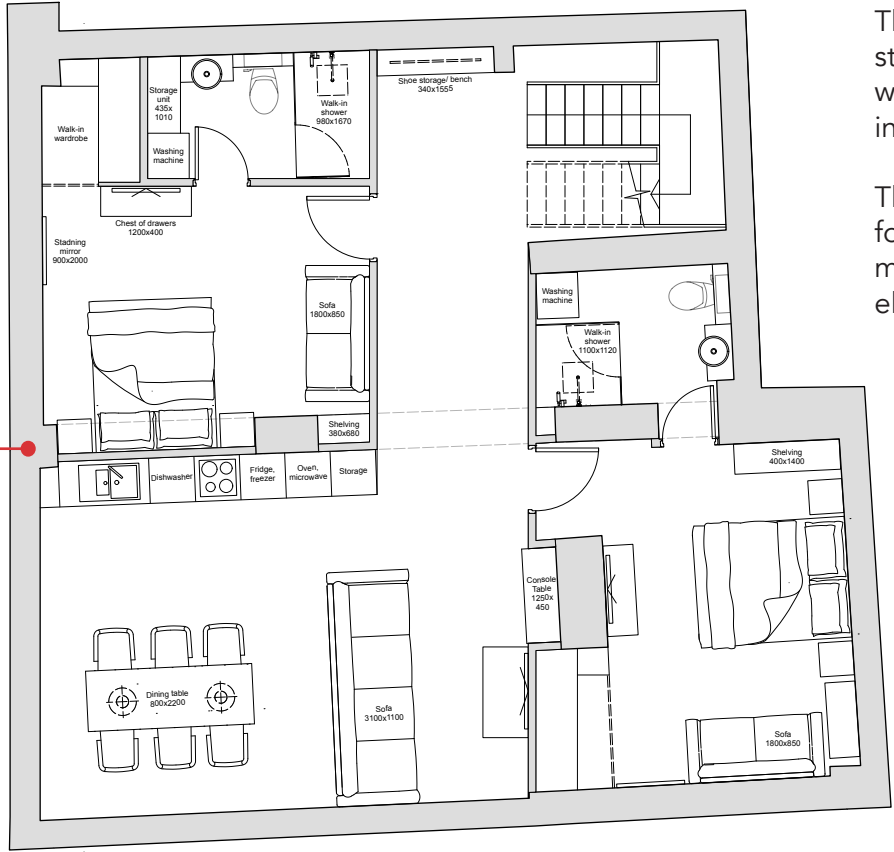
Additionally, there are two display tables and a large shelving unit along with the wall opposite the entrance. Blue-highlighted floor windows provide natural light to the basement below. The space features two fitting rooms and a reception desk/bar tucked beneath the smaller staircase. The runway continues onto the exterior terrace, extending the experience outdoors.



Ground Floor Plan

The basement contains all the living areas, both private and shared. Accessible through the main staircase, it starts with the entrance zone where the residents can store their coats and shoes. The wide corridor then leads to a large shared space with a kitchen, a dining table for 6 people to invite guests and a big sofa with a TV on the wall.

The bedrooms are almost identical, with generous wardrobes (which are especially needed for fashion designers), sofas and TVs, as well as en-suite bathrooms with showers and washing machines. All the rooms have access to sunlight through the ceiling windows located under the elevated podiums of the ground floor.



Basement Plan

MATERIALITY AND OVERALL QUALITIES

The project embraces a sustainable and functionally-driven material palette, harmonising aesthetic coherence with environmental responsibility. The material selection aligns with the overarching design concept by integrating textures and finishes that reflect both **industrial authenticity** and **conscious reuse**. All materials are evaluated through a life cycle lens, prioritising low embodied energy, reusability, and contribution to a closed-loop system — delivering a cohesive, future-forward interior.

Original brick is retained wherever possible to preserve the site’s historic character, minimising material waste. Reclaimed denim curtains, crafted in patchwork technique, repurpose discarded textiles, celebrating craftsmanship while reducing landfill impact.

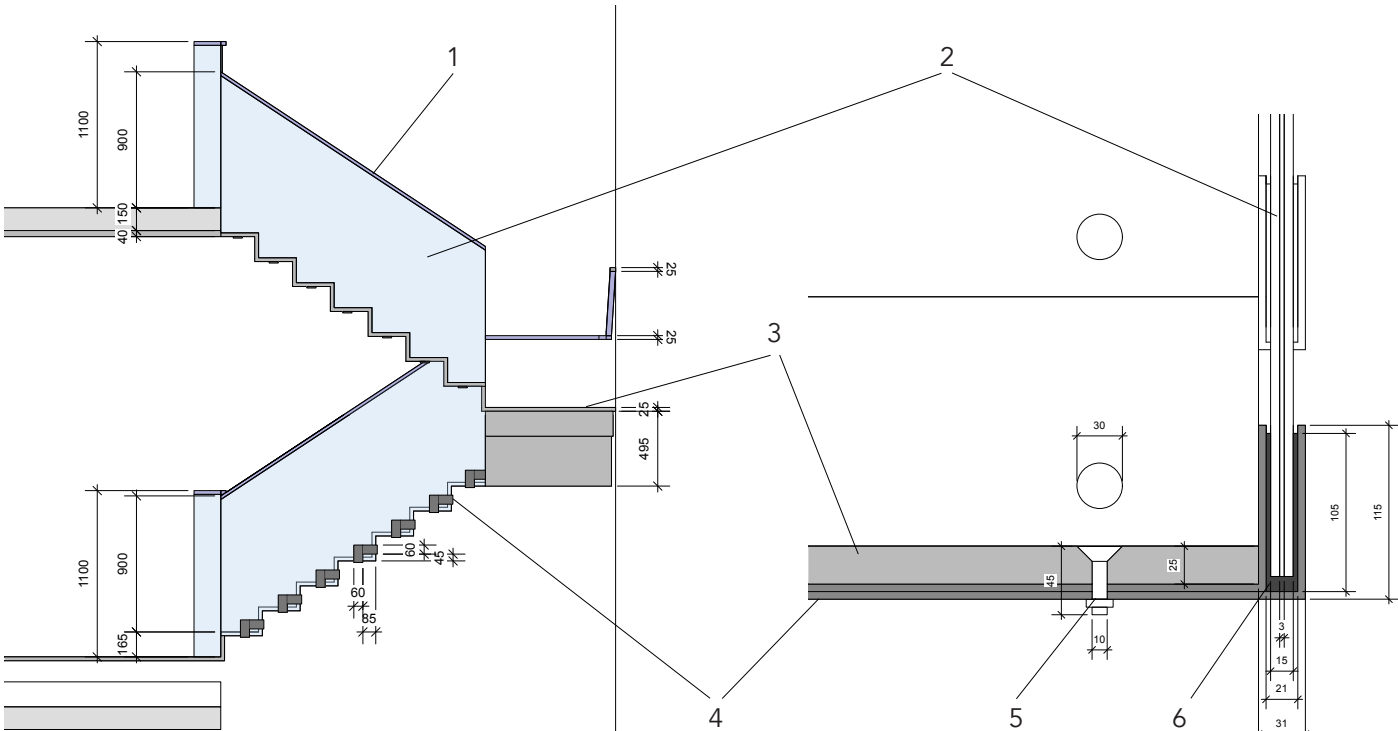
Aluminium is used extensively — in checker plates for stair treads and risers, and in tubular forms for clothing racks and shelving — chosen for its durability, lightweight properties, and infinite recyclability. Coloured glass balustrades enhance visual interest and light play, while supporting circular economy goals through full recyclability.

Natural timber materials, including birch hardwood and pine plywood, are responsibly sourced and used for the smaller staircase and bar, ensuring longevity and a warm contrast to industrial elements. Durat, a solid surface made of 50% recycled plastic, is selected for display tabletops for its high performance, recyclability, and minimal carbon footprint.



A defining feature of the main staircase (on the drawings below) is its spatial detachment. It is not anchored to the side walls, and its two halves are deliberately separated, creating an illusion of floating freely. At the midpoint, an asymmetrical landing extends outward, forming a subtle pocket where users can pause or make way for others, enhancing both functionality and spatial experience.

- 1 - square aluminium handrail in matte black powder coat
- 2 - 15 mm toughened laminated double glass balustrade
- 3 - Durbar steel stair tread 800 x 250 x 4.5
- 4 - stainless steel support element 60 x 5 mm
- 5 - countersunk bolt 45 x 10
- 6 - neoprene rubber 3 mm thick



Main Staircase Materiality

Main Staircase in Section

Step-balustrade junction in Section



Rendered 1st Floor Plan

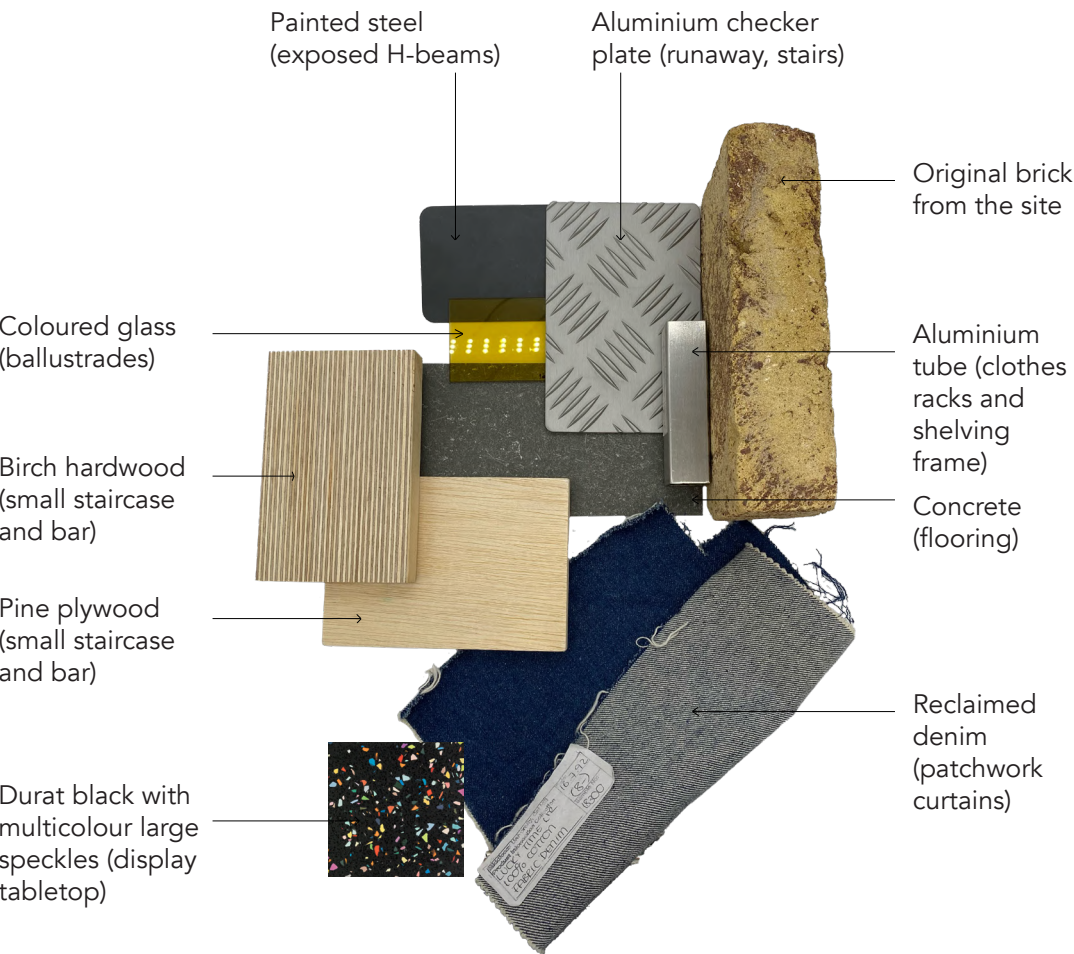
The 1st floor is dedicated to the work area with two individual workshops for work and meeting with clients featuring cutting tables and an extensive shelving units for materials and products storage. Additionally, there is a fabric rolls storage unit near the main staircase.

The washing station for reclaimed clothes is located across the former fire escape door to provide a linear pathway from the clothes collection point outside. Both interior staircases are separated from the walls which creates openness, making them appear almost floating in the air.

Most of the 1st floor is at the height of the existing structural beams, however one of the workshop floors (the lower one on the drawing) is lowered to create a feeling of irregularity in the eyes of the entering the building person seeing the workshops through the void opening up the space and making it double-height. The bathroom on this floor is intended for visitors and the designers themselves.



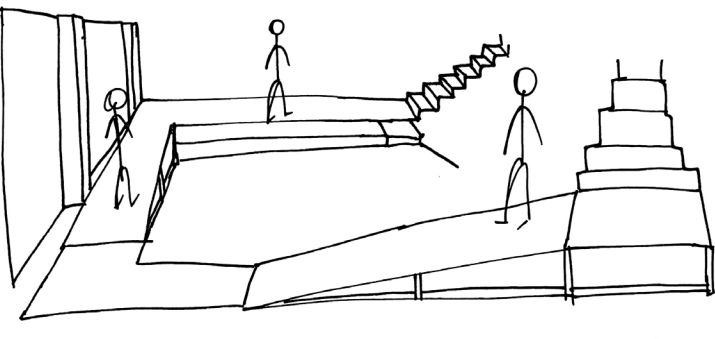
Rendered Ground Floor Plan



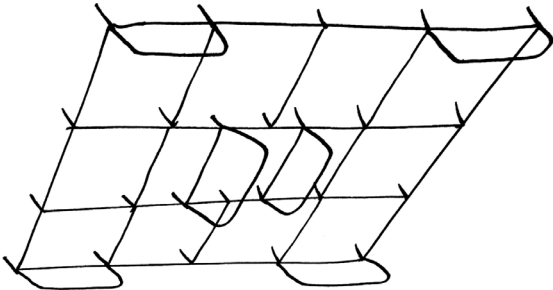
Rendered Basement Plan

- Aluminium checker plate
Checker Plate Full Sheet - Natural Aluminium (Unsleeved)
Brand: Rothley
- Aluminium tube
Easyfix Black Painted Aluminium Tube
Brand: Aluminium Warehouse
25mm x 25mm x 2500 mm
- Plexwood Birch is composed of end grain wood and wood with the grain layers, glued cross-wise
Brand: Plexwood
- Coloured glass Zink yellow
Brand: meandmyglass
6 mm thickness, cut to size
- Elliotis Pine Structural Grade Plywood
Unfinished
FSC certified
Brand: Arnold Laver
- Durat black with multicolour large speckles
D0060-52
Brand: Durat
100% recycleble, up tp 50% recycled

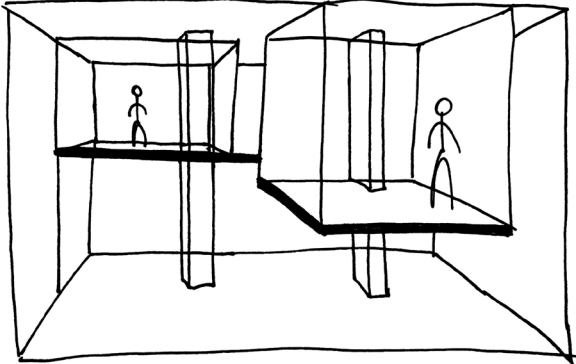
UNVEILING THE STORY WITHING THE BUILDING



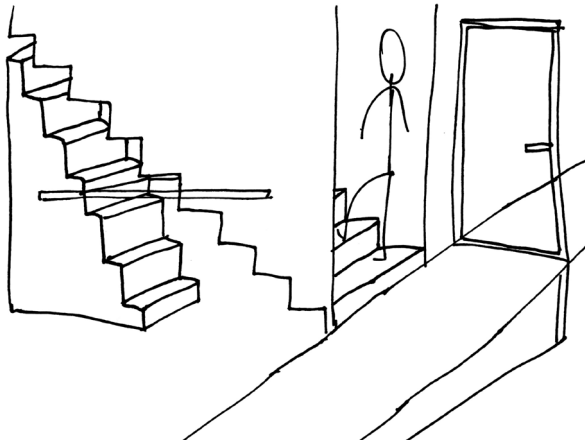
The inclined podiums landscape created within the space and staircases connected to them



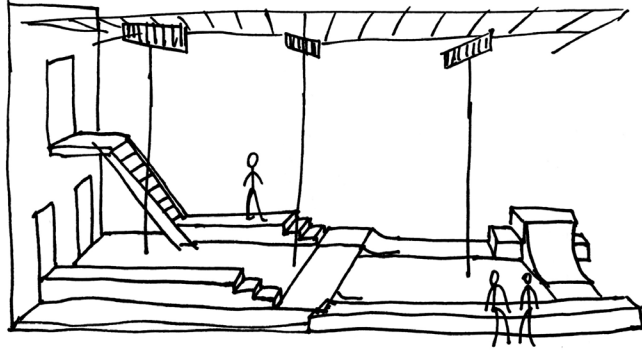
The hanging from the different ceiling levels clothes racks system shown in a simplified sketch



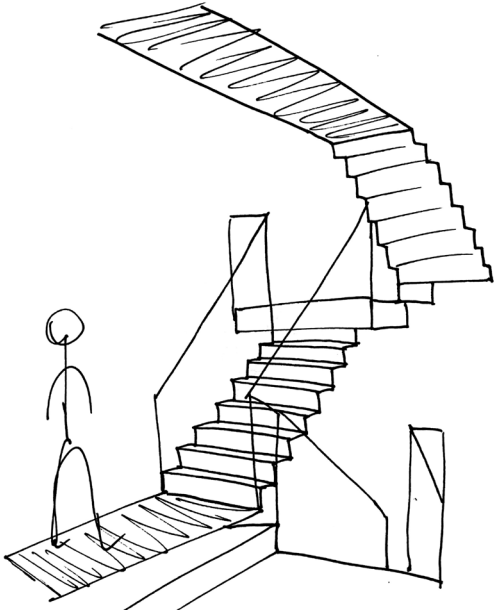
The shifted heights of the workshop floors highlight the irregularity of the space



The hidden and enclosed wooden staircase with a bar underneath it in a "squeezed stairs" shape



The terrace transformed into a skate park with the ramps to sit on and play around

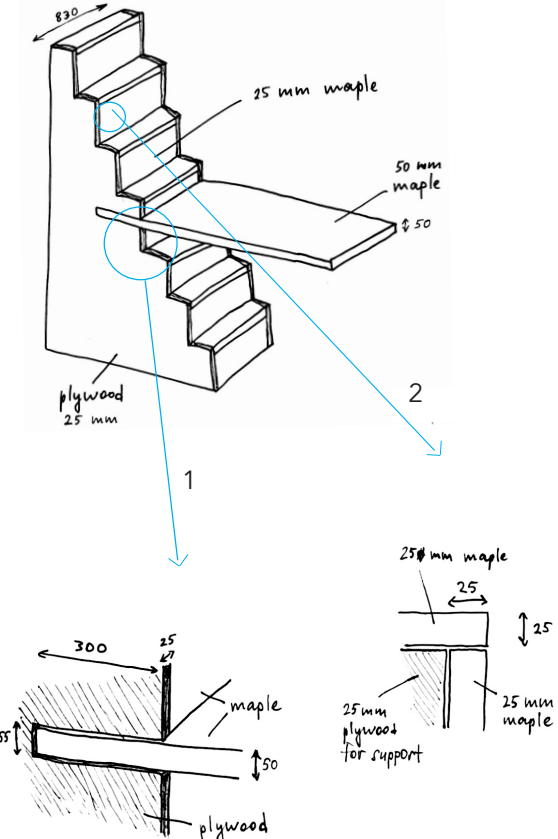


The main staircase lines continuing from the podium are doubled, while being shifted, on the ceiling



The custom hanging system, made entirely from recycled aluminium, combines sustainability with high adaptability. Suspended below different ceiling levels, a grid of horizontal tubes acts as a flexible framework for clothing racks, and integrated lighting.

The adjustable components—racks and lights—can be easily repositioned along the horizontal grid, allowing the space to shift between retail, display, and event modes without permanent alterations. This adaptability maximizes functionality while reducing material waste and visual clutter. By embedding reuse into both materials and spatial logic, the system supports evolving creative needs.



1 - Junction between an outer plywood sheet and maple tabletop
2 - Butt junction between maple "step" and "riser", which are stuck on inner plywood sheet on each side

Bar/ reception desk under the staircase - 3D view, elevation and joints details sketches.



DESIGN ADAPTABILITY AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The design integrates a central runway as both a spatial anchor and a tool for community engagement. It invites visitors into an inclusive fashion experience, blurring the line between audience and creator. The visual language follows a minimalistic industrial style, preserving existing brick walls and columns to celebrate the authenticity of the building. Intentionally misaligned volumes and shifting spatial elements introduce a dynamic rhythm, while linear metal tubes and track lighting add structure and functionality. Materials like glass enhance transparency and openness, reinforcing a sense of airiness. Finally, street culture is introduced through integrated skate ramps, providing the ground for interaction and supporting urban energy.

The ceiling windows positioned along and under the runaway allow the sunlight to enter the bedroom from the ground-floor windows:

