

diversifying ballet

ANNA LE BAS
CRITICAL REPORT

contents

Section 1 -
**BALLET...
THE ISSUES**
06-13

Introduction - **04-05**
A Gender Imbalance - **06-07**
To The Pointe (interview) - **09**
Beyond The Barre - **10-11**

Section 2 -
**CRITICAL
POSITION**
14-21

Critical Position - **12**
Key Philosophy: Inclusive
Design - **13**
Key Philosophy: Design
Activism - **14-15**
Case Studies - **16-19**

Section 3 -
**THE BRIEF &
BACKGROUND
INFORMATION**
22-51

The Brief & Exploratory
Question - **20-21**
The Site - **22-39**
Surrounding Area - **40-43**
Who, What, Why? - **44-49**

Section 4 -
CONCLUSION
52-65

Schedule of Accomodation - **53**
Key concepts - **60-63**

Section 5 -
APPENDIX
66-67

Appendix A - **66-67**

Section 6 -
REFERENCING
68-73

List of Images - **68-71**
Bibliography- **72-73**





Fig 8. Alfred EISENSTÄDT. 1936. Rehearsals at New York's School of American Ballet.



Fig 9. Black male ballet dancer 2. nd.

SECTION 1

ballet.. the issues

First recognized in the 15th century, ballet has been around for many centuries yet compared to many other dance forms remains relatively unchanged (Guest et al, 2020). Ballet has many issues with diversity through all aspects of society such as race, class and gender (Hickman, 2016). In an ever-changing modern world how could an interior allow ballet to adapt to a socially sustainable future?

ISSUES WITH RACE

The issue of racial and ethnic diversity in ballet has come into the spotlight in recent years after the media began to highlight the many overlooked discriminations in the industry. One key news story in 2018 was Ballet Black's collaboration with shoemaker Freed to create the UK's first pointe shoes in colours to match black and other darker skin tones (Winship, 2019). This resulted in a reaction from the public who were shocked that skin-toned pointe shoes didn't already exist. As a result of this news story, other issues were also brought to light such as the lack of skin-toned ballet tights but most importantly the overarching lack of ethnic diversity in the industry.

The audience for ballet has the sharpest divide in the minority representation within the performing arts field, where, in 2012, 80% of adult attendees were white (Hickman, 2016 : 11). One of the most significant barriers for ballet dancers of colour is the cost of training and performing as a professional dancer. 'Ballet is an expensive form to pursue and often is viewed more as a luxury than a career choice in low-income communities where many minority groups reside' (Hickman, 2016 : 16) .

... a gender imbalance

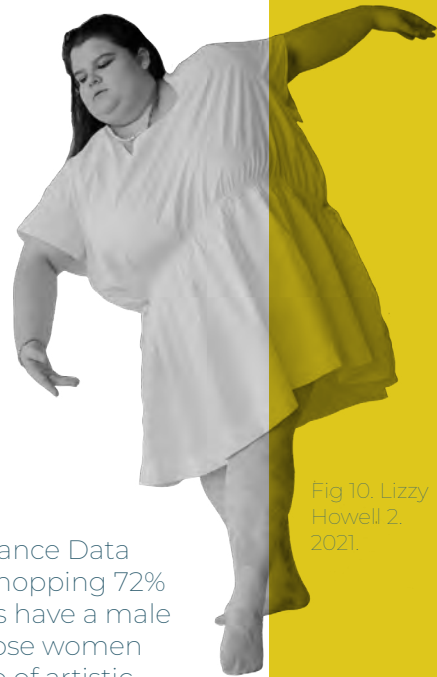


Fig 10. Lizzy Howell 2. 2021.

ISSUES WITH BODY STANDARDS

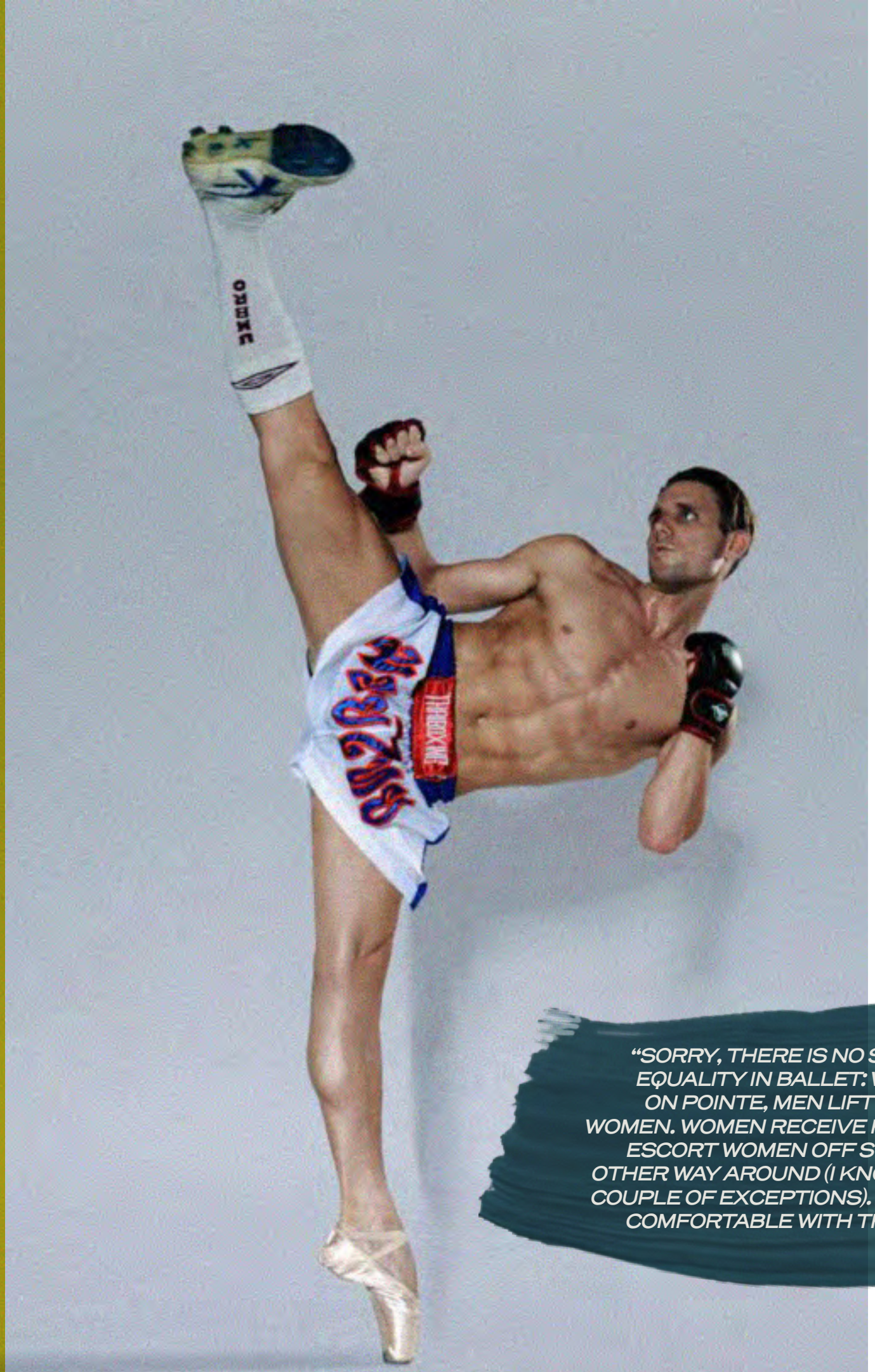
Historically, female dancers in ballet have not only been white but also have to conform to an unhealthily thin body standard. Prior to the twentieth century, curved or athletic body-types were celebrated as a sign of strength in ballet. However, this changed drastically when Russian choreographer George Balanchine began America's first ballet school: the New York City Ballet (Schultz, 2020). Balanchine selected dancers for his school based on their bodies. 'His fantasy included seeing prominent rib cages, spines, and other bones.' (Schultz, 2020). Ever since, the body standard for ballet dancers has remained unhealthily thin which has resulted in an epidemic of eating disorders and body-image issues in the industry. It is estimated that more than 15% of ballet dancers have an eating disorder (Arcelus et al, 2014).

ISSUES WITH SEXISM

Whilst ballet is clearly a female dominated sport there are a number of ways in which misogyny and sexism exist as an undercurrent in the industry.

According to the Dance Data Project (DDP), "a whopping 72% of ballet companies have a male artistic director. Those women who do get the title of artistic director earn only 68 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts." (Dance Data Project, 2019). Furthermore, DDP found that "in the 2018-19 ballet season, men choreographed 81% of all works performed by the top 50 ballet companies" (Dance Data Project, 2019).

On the contrary, misogyny in the industry also negatively impacts men too. Many boys growing up face bullying for being a dancer, in particular ballet. "If a boy wants to do something perceived as slightly feminine, they're perceived as weaker... It's not about being against dance, it's machoness." (Scher, 2019). A russian-American ballet choreographer, Alexei Ratmansky, recently posted a controversial tweet which read "Sorry, there is no such thing as equality in ballet: women dance on pointe, men lift and support women. Women receive flowers, men escort women off stage. Not the other way around (I know there are couple of exceptions). And I am very comfortable with that." (Mehta, 2021).



"SORRY, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS EQUALITY IN BALLET: WOMEN DANCE ON POINTE, MEN LIFT AND SUPPORT WOMEN. WOMEN RECEIVE FLOWERS, MEN ESCORT WOMEN OFF STAGE. NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND (I KNOW THERE ARE COUPLE OF EXCEPTIONS). AND I AM VERY COMFORTABLE WITH THAT." (Mehta, 2021).

Fig 11. Men can do pointe too. Tristan Peter. 2012



Fig 12. Photography by ASH. 2022. Katy Roy.

to the pointe ...

“

To gain further understanding of the challenge's ballet dancers face day-to-day I spoke to a ballet student who attends a renowned English Performing Arts school (see Appendix A).

Being a white female ballet dancer, Katy seems to fit the typical ballerina stereotype. However, she explains that she has still faced many setbacks beyond her control.

She explains, "I find that often being a shorter dancer means I miss out on opportunities due to specific requirements based on the look and aesthetic of a dancer."

In a recent case where she was selected to perform at The Swedish National Ballet she explains that "they were ruthless when narrowing down who could go. They cut out all girls over 5ft 6, the 'bustier girls', and those with recent injuries." To further this strict regime, Katy experienced a "sugar free rule and ban all sugar on

the premises" at the Swedish National Ballet School where she observed that "the very young students [had] become obsessed with what they are deprived" which presumably provokes an unhealthy relationship between dancers and their diets.

When asked if she believes the ballet industry should adapt to a changing modern world Katy said "There should be more support for the mental well-being of injured dancers, with less pressure on dancers to ignore pain and get on with it, rather than getting proper treatment and rest."

She also explains that there is a lot of pressure on students "to never make mistakes in both dance and what they say" which results in dancers feeling unable to stand up for themselves when faced with injustices.

How can ballet become more progressive if dancers feel they have no voice in the matter?

”

beyond the barre



Fig 13. Men in tutus. nd.

Whilst discussing these key issues it is important to highlight the intersectionality between them. Race, gender and class are not separate issues and often are experienced simultaneously by individuals of multiple minorities. For instance, “feminist theory and antiracist policy that is not grounded in an inter-sectional understanding of gender, race, and class can never adequately address the experiences of Black women,

or any other multiply burdened groups of people” (Costanza-Chock, 2020: 19).

Exploring these issues highlights just how many aspects of the ballet industry remain outdated and how many discriminations have (or up until recently) been overlooked. How could an interior help breakdown these barriers and diversify ballet?

INTERSECTIONALITY IS “THE INTERCONNECTED NATURE OF SOCIAL CATEGORISATIONS SUCH AS RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER, REGARDED AS CREATING OVERLAPPING AND INTERDEPENDENT SYSTEMS OF DISCRIMINATION OR DISADVANTAGE” (OXFORD DICTIONARY, 2023).



Fig 14. Dancers in motion. 2007. From : Camil Tulcan.

critical position

‘SUSTAINABLE DESIGN SHOULD NOT BE, AND WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LET IT BE, AN OPTIONAL EXTRA.’ (MOXON, 2012: 24)

As a designer I believe sustainability should be at the core of every design decision. Whether through the construction, materiality or role of a space, I trust that designers making responsible, sustainable choices can spur vital environmental and social benefits. However, in this project I would like to focus on social sustainability. Social sustainability is the method of “creating environments that support societies through changing social needs caused by demographic shifts” (Batchelor, 2017). I believe social sustainability is vital for a design to create a continually positive impact on the surrounding community and to ensure this the design decisions should be centred around the user and their needs. I intend to explore the ways in which a design could ultimately achieve social justice for marginalised members of a community.



Fig 15. Black male ballet dancer. *nd.*

Fig 16. Oil paint background. *nd.*

KEY PHILOSOPHY: INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Following the key principle of **user-centred design**, I intend to seek out new methods to creating the most **inclusive** and **‘barrier-free’** solutions possible. Linda Nussbaumer’s book *Inclusive Design, A Universal Need* discusses the ways in which inclusive design can benefit a total population.

She explains that inclusive design is achieved “by working with users to remove barriers in the social, technical, political, and economic processes underpinning building and design.” (Nussbaumer, 2012: 30) and outlines **the five key**

principles of inclusive interior design as:

1. **People** – Place people at the heart of the design process.
2. **Diversity** – Acknowledge diversity and difference
3. **Choice** – Offer choices where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users
4. **Flexibility** – Provides for flexibility in use.
5. **Convenience** – Design buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone

(Nussbaumer, 2012: 33)



Fig 17. Linda Nussbaumer. *ca 2007*

“‘BARRIER-FREE’ DESIGN MEANS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO AND THROUGH ARCHITECTURE FOR ALL PEOPLE. IT ALSO INCLUDES FUTURE-ORIENTED, INCLUSIVE AND ADAPTABLE FLOOR PLANS.” (BUILDING SOCIAL ECOLOGY, CA 2021).



Fig 18. Project PLT.E. *ca 2018.* From: Melika Dez

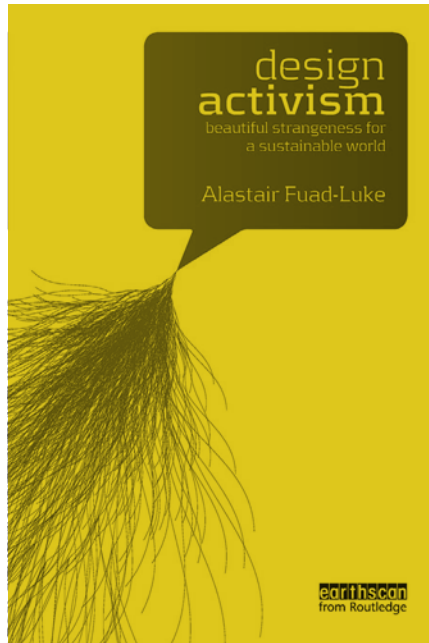


Fig 19. Design Activism by Alastair Fuad-Luke. 2009.



Fig 20. Alastair Fuad-Luke. ca 2022.

KEY PHILOSOPHY: DESIGN ACTIVISM

By exploring the crossover between social and environmental sustainability I align with Alastair Fuad-Luke's theory that 'design can seek genuine mutual benefits to humankind and nature' (Fuad-Luke, 2009: xxi). To further this exploration, I will look into the possibilities of design as a form of social activism. Alastair Fuad-Luke's *Design Activism: Beautiful Strangeness for a Sustainable World* explains that 'Design can ask 'what now?' and 'what next?'. Design can disturb current narratives. Design can rupture the present with counter-narratives. Design can contribute to reformist approaches. It has the ability to catalyse societal transformations.' (Fuad-Luke,

2009: xxi). Fuad-Luke's approach highlights the importance of progressive, unconventional design and its role in bringing about change. He furthers this idea with the concept of 'socially active design' in which "the focus of the design is society and its transformation to a more sustainable way of living, working and producing." (Fuad-Luke, 2009: 78). These principles of design could be particularly valuable in assisting the diversification of ballet and spreading the message of inclusivity. Could socially active design mirror the social activism within a new branch of ballet and disturb the current narratives of this traditional dance form?

DESIGN "HAS THE ABILITY TO CATALYSE SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATIONS."

(FUAD-LUKE, 2009: XXI)



One other valuable point Fuad-Luke makes is the idea of 'beautiful strangeness' which he describes as "a beauty that is not quite familiar, tinged with newness, ambiguity and intrigue" and "that serves all in society, healing society's divides" (Fuad-Luke, 2009: 188). As a result, I believe 'beautiful strangeness' should be the ultimate aim for a socially active design and could help direct a path for design activism.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Fuad-Luke states, "We need a beauty that does not 'de-future' but keeps options open for our grandchildren. We need a beauty that encourages new ideals, values and concept of humankind's 'growth', genuine human flourishing beyond the blinkered thinking of economic growth as 'progress'." (Fuad-Luke, 2009: 188).

Fig 21. Yladom-Boakye 2017. *Light Of The Lit Wick*. [oil on canvas].

PERMISSION STORE, TORONTO

CASE STUDY 01.



One example of a user-centred interior is new activewear boutique Permission, in Toronto, Canada. The boutique is designed to include people of all shapes, sizes, and backgrounds. The arched interior is “a celebration of curved forms”(Hague, 2020) which echo the body positive ethos of the brand whilst the “warm gradient of pinks and browns”(Hague, 2020) that shroud the entire store highlights the skin-toned inclusivity of the clothes sold within. At first glance the store appears to be an empty “grey blank slate” but upon entering the customer turns to realise the diverse range of skin-tones through which they can find one they identify with (Hague, 2020).

One other method in which design could be used as a form of activism is through the adaptive re-use of derelict buildings. Adaptive re-use is the architectural approach of reincarnating an abandoned existing building to “retain a sense of their previous existence while also providing an opportunity for the next” (Brooker and Stone, 2019: ix) and can be used as a way of changing the perceptions of a space which therefore could create possibilities for alternative users.



Fig 23. Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre. nd.

KUALA LUMPUR PERFORMING-ARTS CENTRE

CASE STUDY 02.

Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre designed by Baldip Singh Bhullar is a great example of how adaptive re-use can change the perceptions of a building and therefore its functions. Constructed in the British colonial era in Malaysia, the original architecture is a direct reference to its imperial past. Subsequently, the current architects worked to disconnect from the buildings past with new elements that “contrast strongly with the original building”(Brooker and Stone, 2019: 41). As a result, the deliberately neutral design “allows the performances within to reflect the pluralistic society of contemporary Malaysia.”(Brooker and Stone, 2019: 42). Following the principle of adaptive re-use with a similar approach could therefore be very useful in changing or widening the target audience for ballet through changing perceptions of the host-building.

“THE ORIGINAL BUILDING HAS BEEN RETAINED AS A TESTAMENT TO ITS TIME WHILE THE NEW ELEMENTS ARE CONTEMPORARY AND EXHIBIT THE FORWARD-THINKING MENTALITY OF THIS PROGRESSIVE COUNTRY.” (BROOKER AND STONE, 2019: 42)

GRANBY WINTER GARDEN

CASE STUDY 03.

Turner Prize-winning collective Assemble are known for their user-centred approach to design. One project of theirs that highlights this is the Granby Winter Garden in Liverpool, UK. The garden transforms two derelict terraced houses as part of a wider regeneration of one of the UK's most economically deprived areas (Crook, 2019).

Assemble's design strategy focused on the local community so the transformation of what is typically private space of a terraced home is now a "unique resource for creative community action, cultural production and exchange" (Assemble, 2019). Through involving the local community throughout the design process and by encouraging them to re-establish ownership of the space it promotes a message of social sustainability and shows the successes of designing with the user as a priority.



Fig 24. Granby Winter Garden community, ca. 2019



Fig 25. Granby Winter Garden visual, ca. 2019

In summary, I believe that design has a key role to play in establishing social justice and the most successful way of achieving this could be through following the principles of *user-centred, inclusive and socially active design* backed up with the architectural approach of adaptive-reuse as a way of changing the social pre-conceptions of a building.

“A UNIQUE RESOURCE FOR CREATIVE COMMUNITY ACTION, CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE”

(ASSEMBLE, 2019)



Fig 26. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancers, 2010. From : Andrew Eccles

EXPLORATORY QUESTION

how could the design of a ballet studio promote inclusivity?

Throughout this project I want to explore how a space can help in combatting the issues of diversity within the ballet industry. In an ever-changing world, how could ballet adapt to a socially sustainable future and how could the industry attract a new younger generation of viewer and a universal audience? As a result, the space needs to be as barrier free as possible and designed with the user as a priority.





the site

haggerston baths

For this inclusive design project, I'll be taking an architectural approach to reimagine the ways in which ballet is performed, viewed and participated in. The site for this ballet hub needs to be accessible to a diverse user group so an urban multi-cultural environment such as London was ideal to make maximum impact.

The chosen site is Grade II listed Haggerston Baths in Hackney, East London (Historic England, 2023). The

baths opened in 1904 and closed in 2000 due to need for extensive repairs and has remained derelict since. The baths had a main central pool as well as 91 slipper baths and 60 wash houses (Lookup London, 2016).

“Although the last use of the building was as a public swimming pool with gym, it can be seen that there were historically other additional uses. These have included music, dancing, theatre, boxing, meeting rooms,

offices and residential uses.” (Assessment of Haggerston Baths, ca. 2015).

The building has a grand feel with its impressive Edwardian baroque style façade (Historic England, 2023). The main pool space features a vast arched ceiling with a top-lit glazed roof and original amphitheatre style seating (Historic England, 2023). The entire Haggerston Baths have a footprint of approximately 2,200 sqm whilst the pool hall is approximately 480 sqm.

Fig 27. Simon Mooney, 2015. Haggerston Baths interior

SITE PROS

- Dramatic, open space which would be ideal for the performance area
- Hackney is an ethnically diverse borough so would be able to target a wide audience
- Good transport connections in the local area
- Swimming baths have historically been an important centre of community where people of all classes and genders would gather – so a new inclusive ballet hub keeps this core function of community



Fig 28. Gold Hind boat weathervane. 2016.

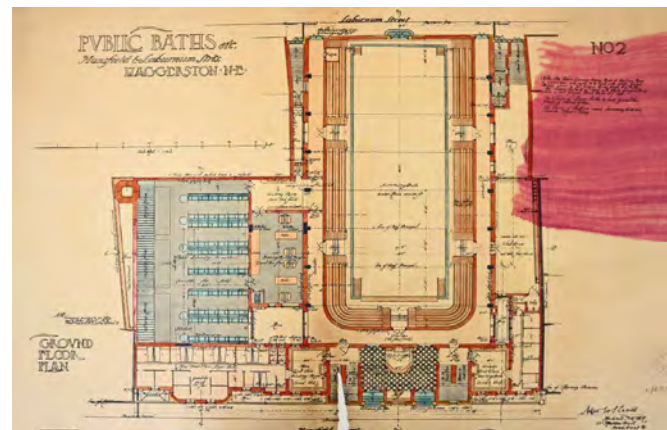


Fig 29. Original ground floor plan. 1904. From : Hackney Archives



Fig 30. Haggerston Baths exterior. ca. 2015.



Fig 33. Gendered main entrances. 2016.



Fig 31. Haggerston Baths main gala pool. ca. 2015.



Fig 34. Graffiti in the main pool. ca. 2015



Fig 32. Haggerston Baths west elevation. 2018. From : Donald Insall Architects.



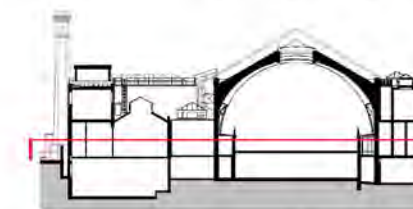
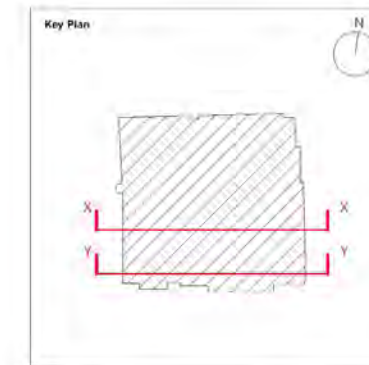
Fig 35. Swimmers Lane. 2022. Authors own image

SITE CONS

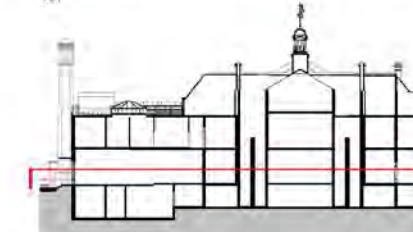
- Many areas of the space were originally segregated by gender (separate baths and waiting rooms) so references in signage etc. could be quite divisive
- The spaces within the building are either vast or small and cramped
- The current space has remained derelict since the bath's closure so many aspects of the building are in a deteriorating condition
- The site has no step-free access and needs many other adaptations to make it suitable for those with limited or restricted mobility

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Status

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Drawing Number		Revision
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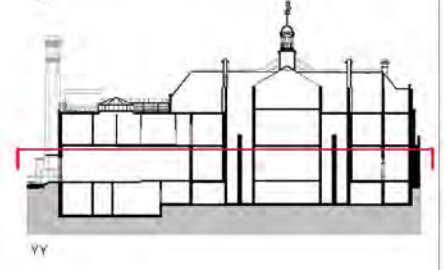
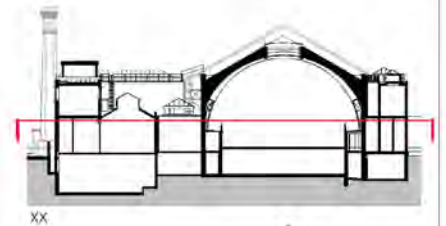
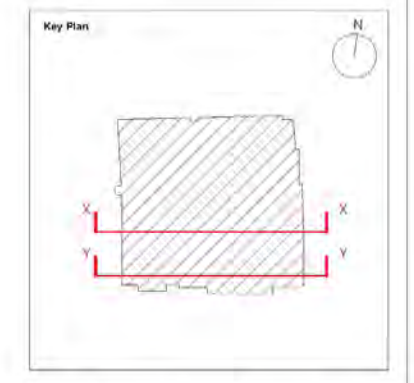


1 Existing Ground Floor Plan
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Fig 36. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing Ground Floor Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal

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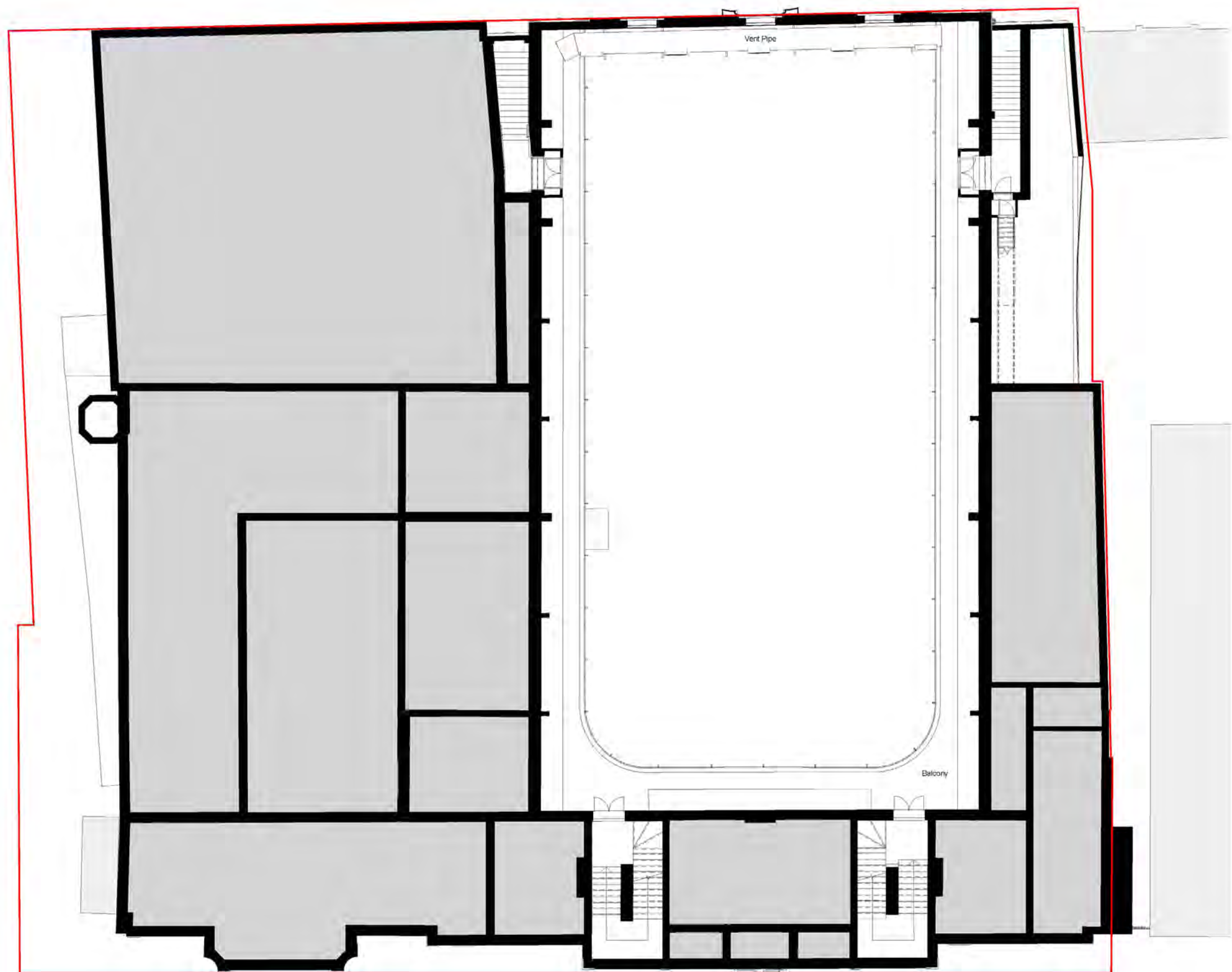
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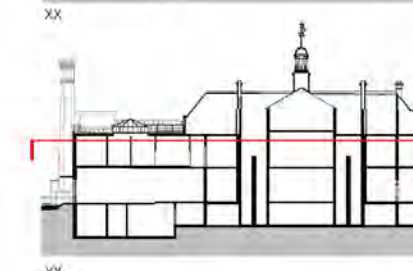
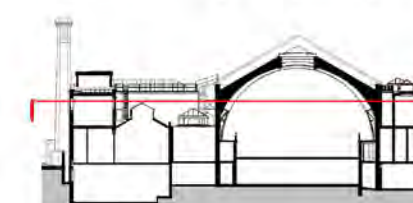
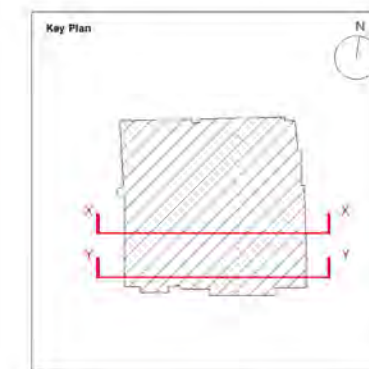


1 Existing Mezzanine Plan
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Fig 37. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing Mezzanine Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal

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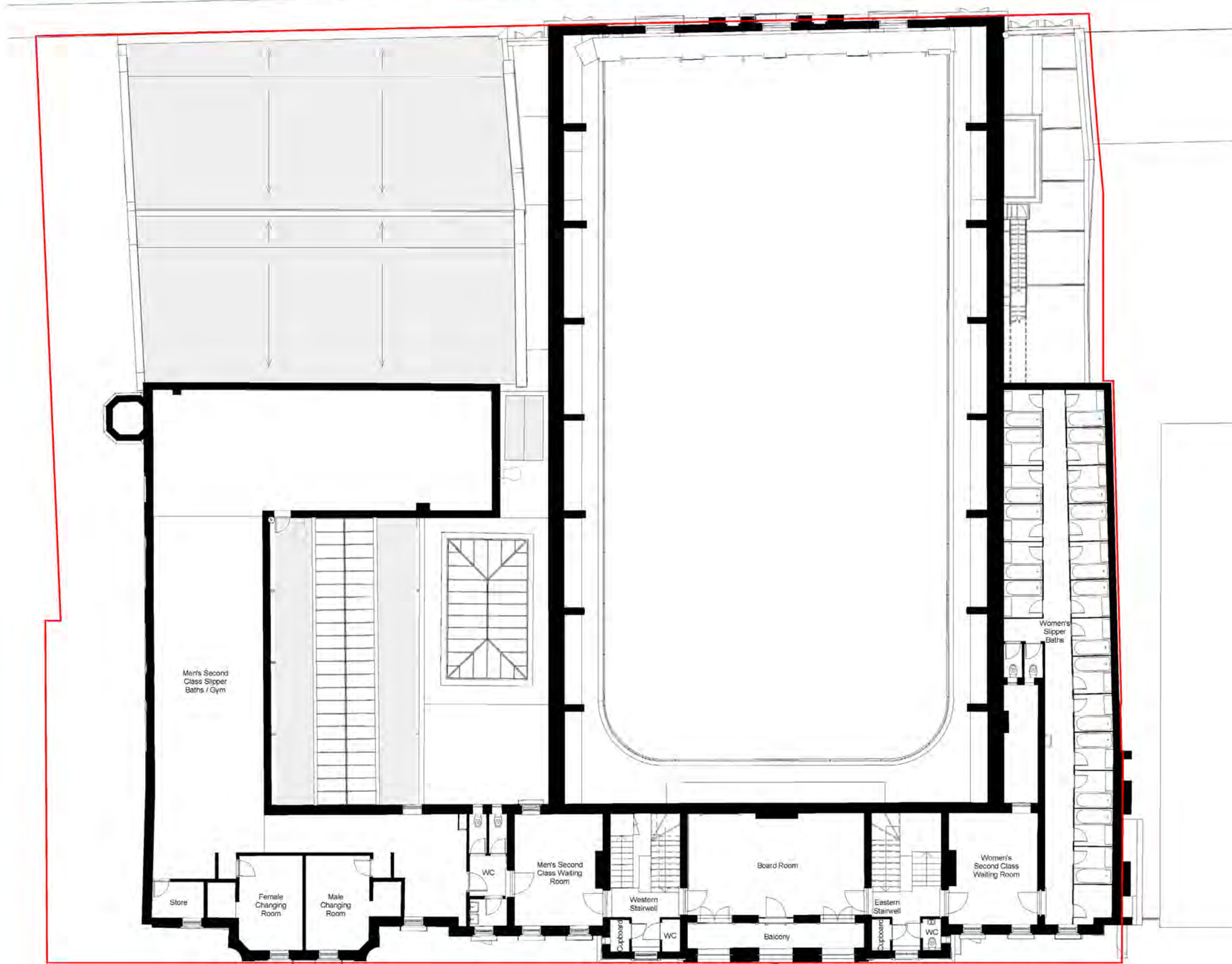
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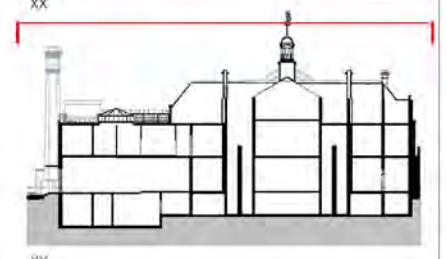
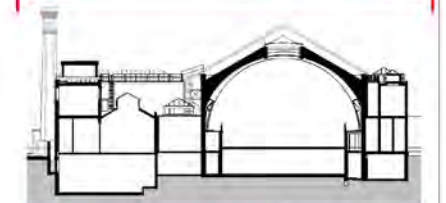
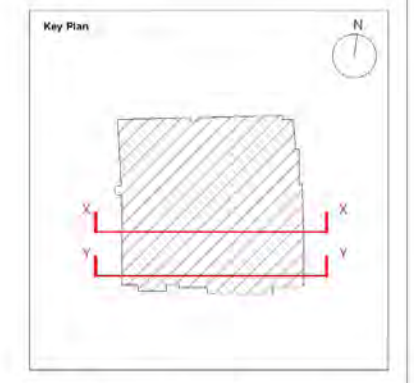


1 Existing First Floor Plan
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Fig 38. Squire and Partners, 2020. Existing First Floor Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal

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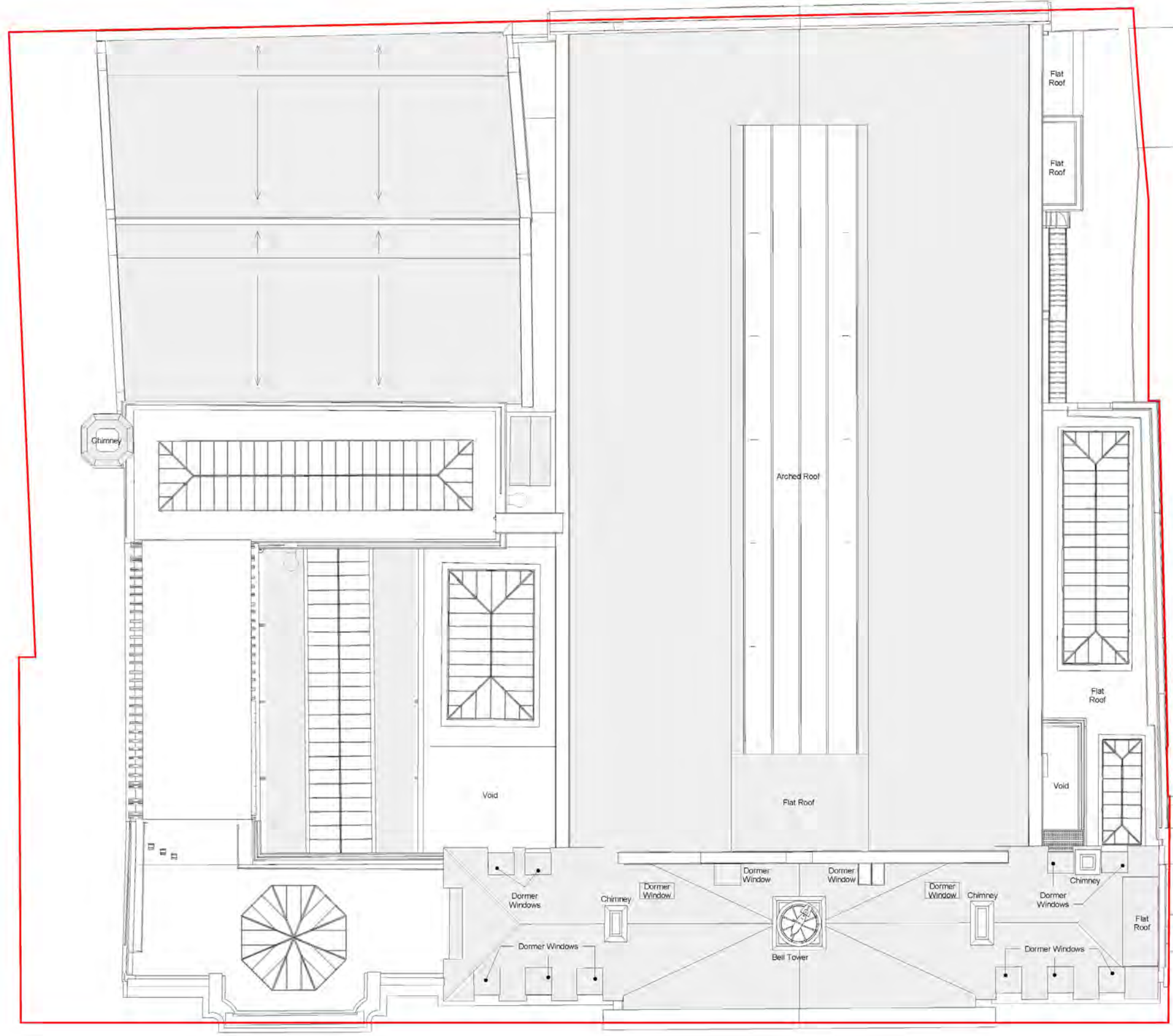
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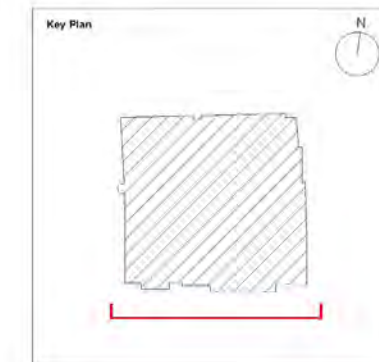


1 Existing Roof Plan
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Fig 39. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing Roof Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal

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NOTE:
Currently all windows are boarded up. For clarity we are showing the existing windows without boards.



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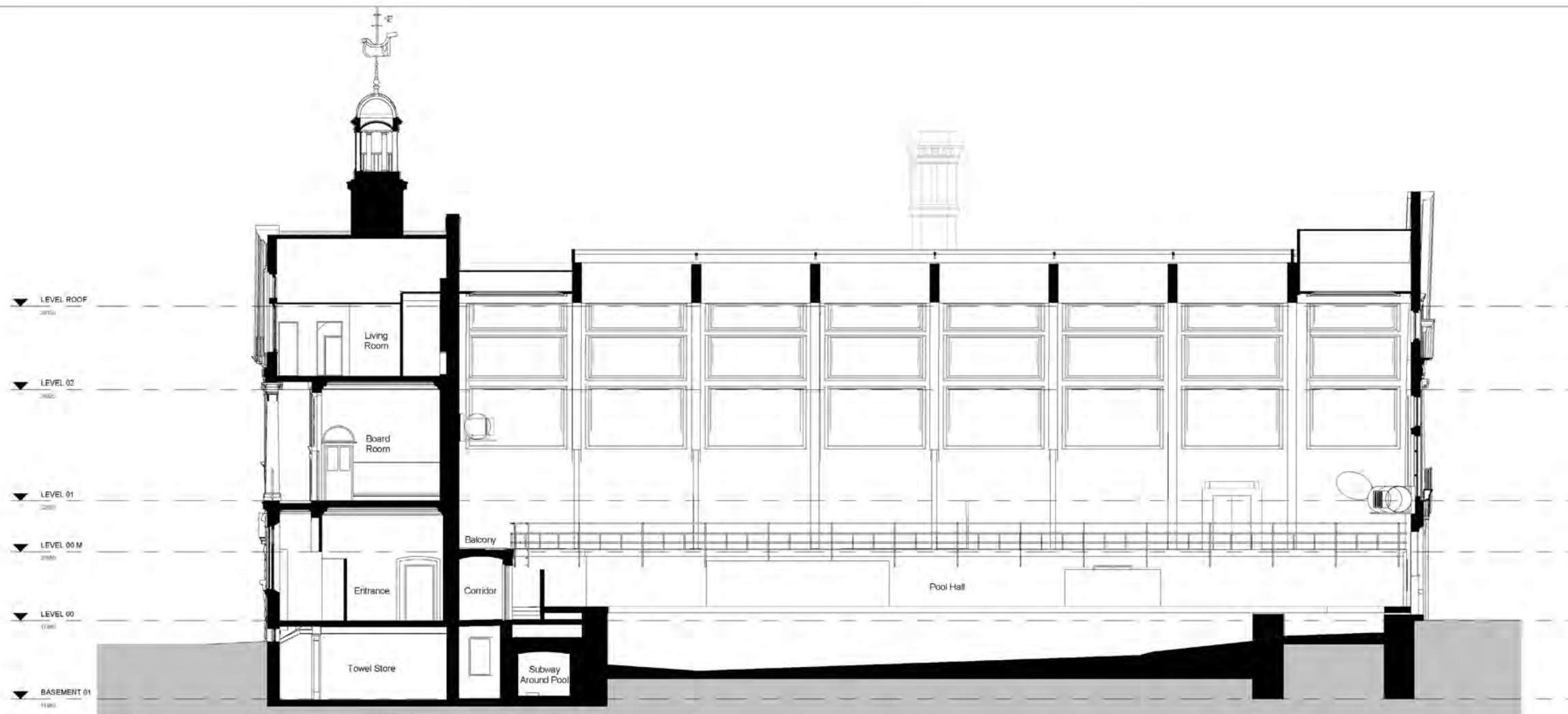
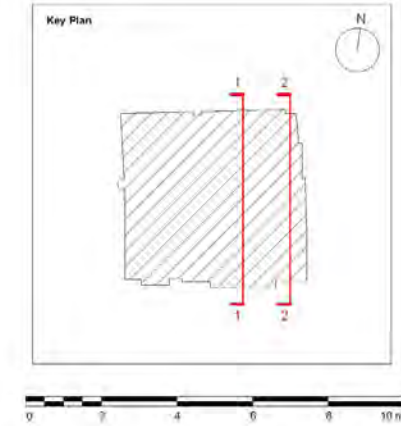
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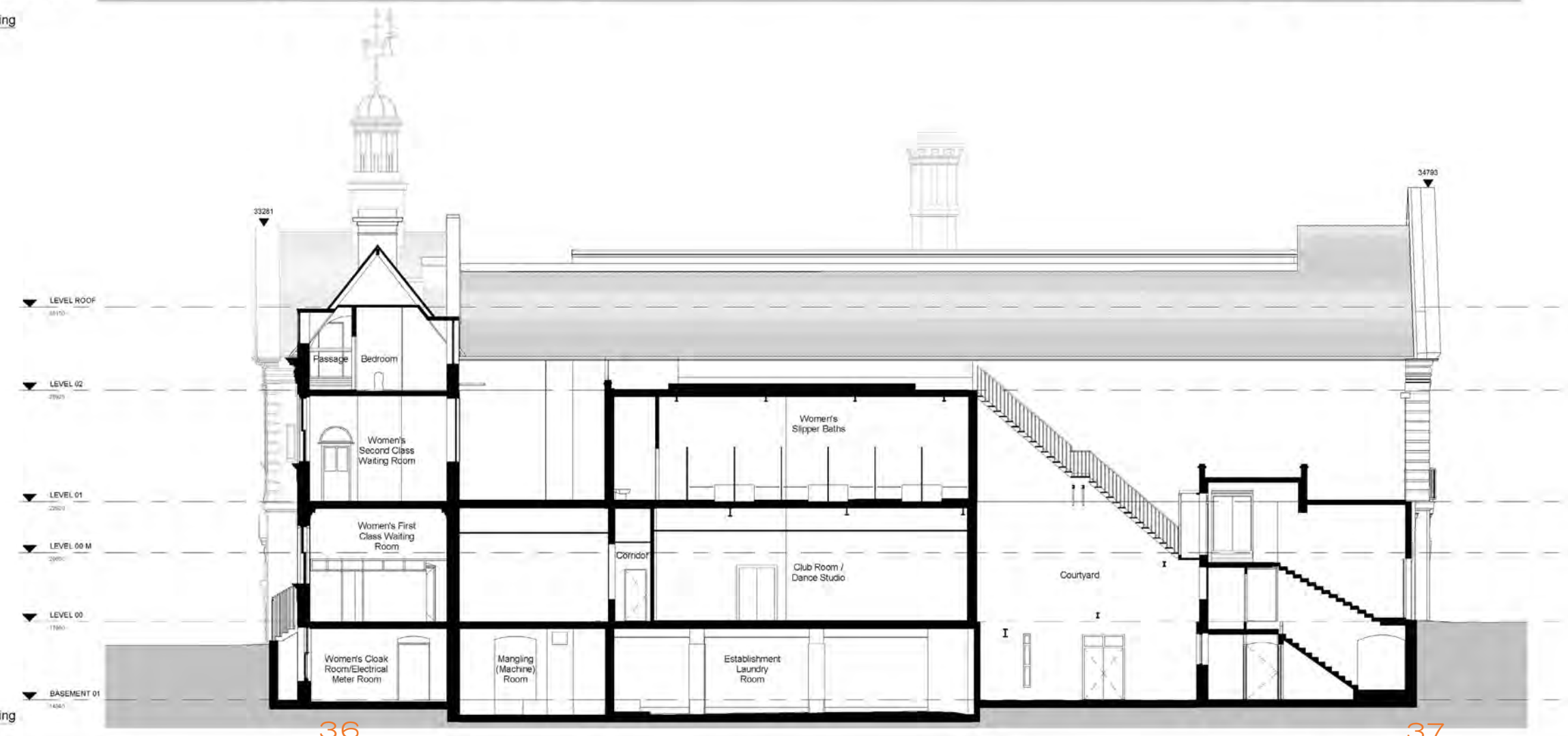
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1 Section 01 - Existing
1 : 100



2 Section 02 - Existing
1 : 100

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Project:
Haggerston Baths

Title:
Existing Sections South-North

Status:

Date	Scale @ ISO A1	Job Number
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17/01/2020	1 : 100	18099
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Drawing Number	Revision
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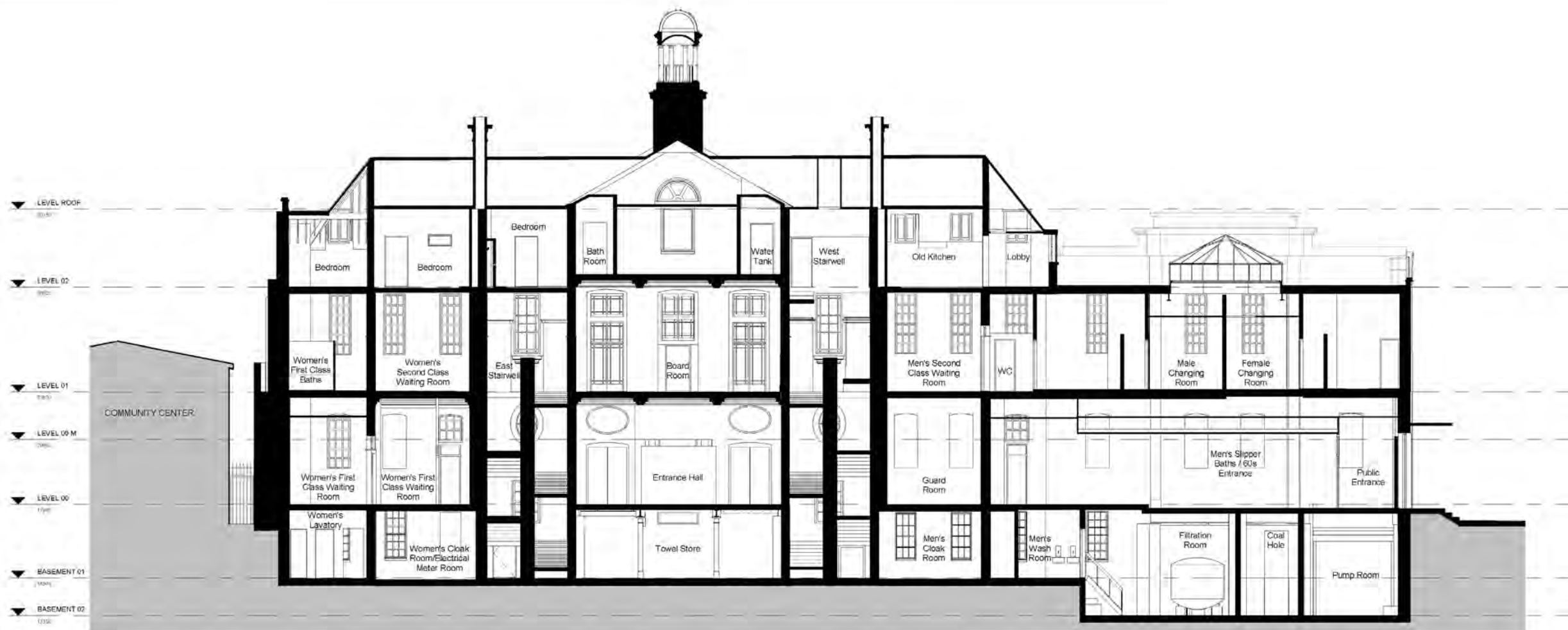
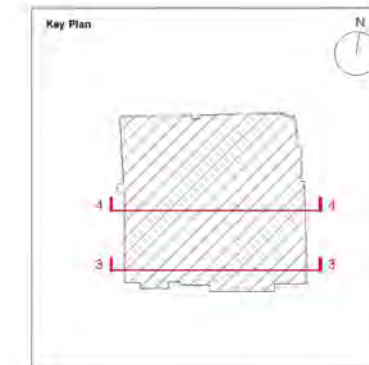
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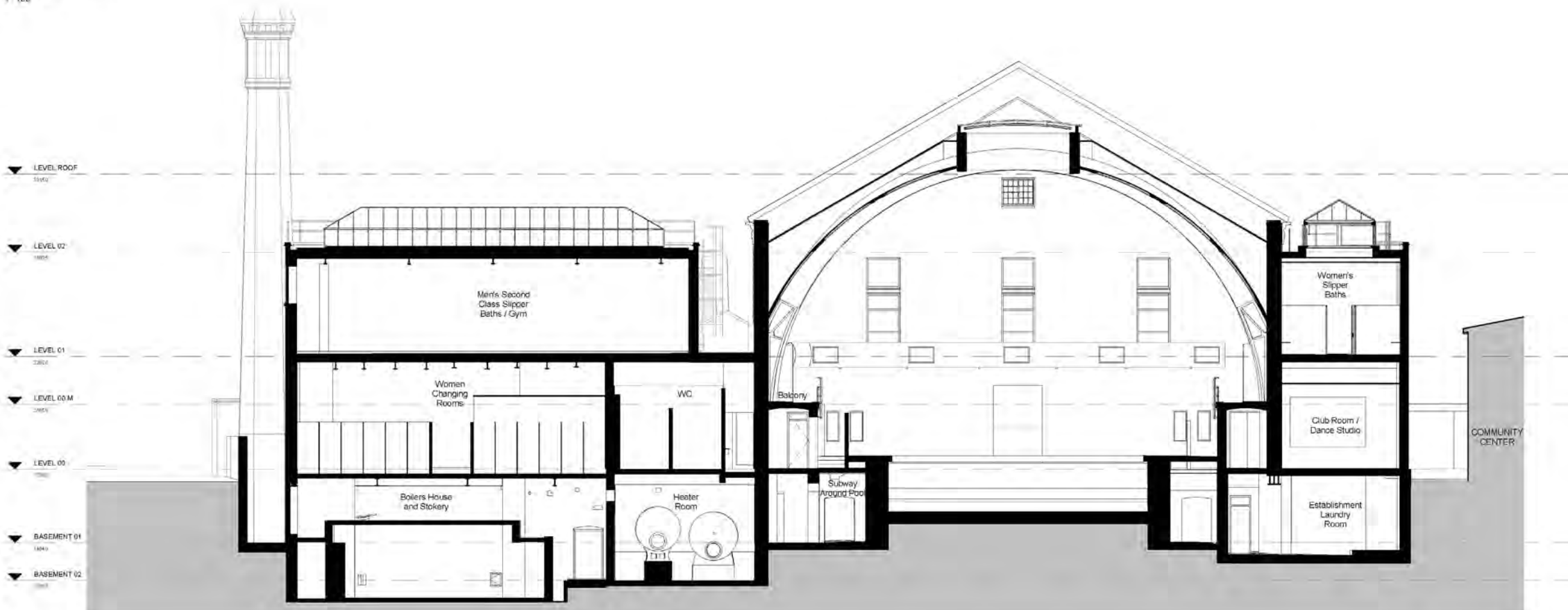
37

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1 Section 03 - Existing
1 : 100



2 Section 04 - Existing
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Project
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Title
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Status

Date	Scale @ ISO A1	Job Number
17/01/2020	1 : 100	18099
Drawing Number	Revision	
18099-SQP-XX-ZZ-DR-A-00012		

Fig 42. Squire and Partners. 2020. Section 04 - Existing. From : Hackney Planning Portal

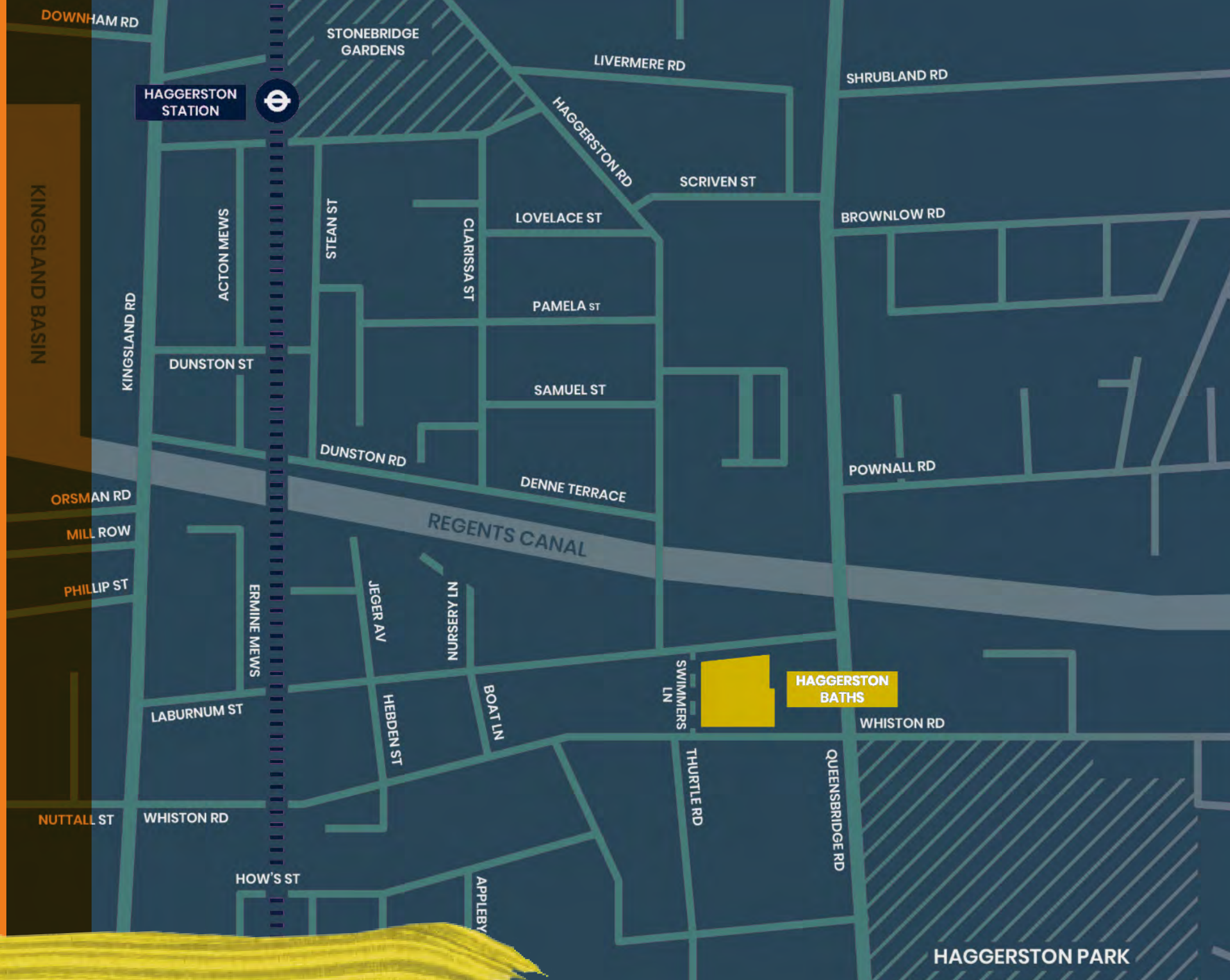


Fig 43. Haggerston Baths surrounding area. nd.

90% OF HACKNEY RESIDENTS SAY THAT "HACKNEY IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS GET ON WELL TOGETHER"

(HACKNEY.GOV.UK, 2020)

With such a diverse, multi-cultural local population the site is in an ideal location to attract an equally diverse range of dancers and audience members. High levels of deprivation in the area means that the project can directly help those with a lower socio-economic status participate, as a result assisting minorities who are prone to be in the bottom of the economic pyramid.

SURROUNDING AREA

HACKNEY, LONDON

Haggerston Baths is situated in the ward of Haggerston in the borough of Hackney, East London. The baths are located just south of Regents Canal and are surrounded by a range of residential and recreational buildings. Hackney is a diverse, multi-cultural borough "with significant 'Other White', Black and Turkish/Kurdish communities" (Hackney.gov.uk, 2020). 90% of Hackney residents say that "Hackney is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together" (Hackney.gov.uk, 2020). Over a third of Hackney residents were born outside the UK (Hackney.gov.uk, 2020).

However, Hackney also has some of the highest levels of inequality in London. For example, Hackney has the third highest rate of child poverty in the UK (Hackney.gov.uk, 2020) and in 2019 was the 22nd most deprived local authority in England.

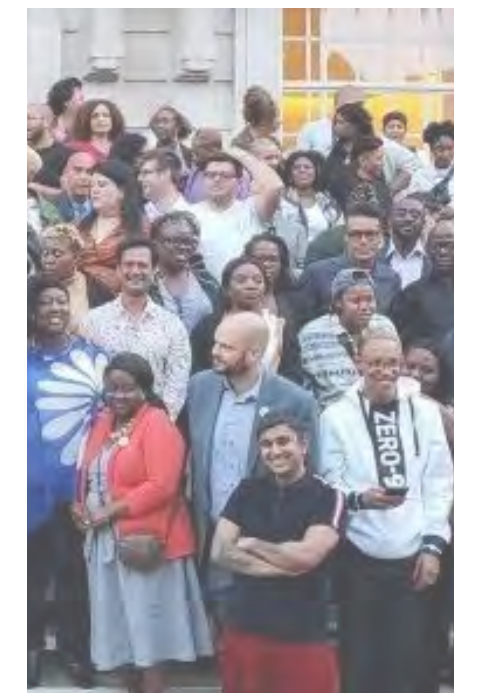


Fig 44. Hackney local community. nd. From : Hackney Council

'assemblée'

A BALLET TERM MEANING
'JOINED TOGETHER'

For the local community, it would be important that the space welcomed all, therefore the project needs to be designed in a barrier-free way to create the ultimate inclusive space. When Haggerston residents were invited to a public consultation on new possible uses of Haggerston Baths, 77% of attendees supported including public uses within the baths (Haggerston Baths Consultation, ca. 2020).

The strong sense of community in Haggerston was highlighted in 2009 with a project called 'I am here' at the empty Haggerston & Kingsland estate where photos of former residents were displayed on the boarded-up windows to raise the question of "Where, in this process [of redevelopment], are the people who live in these places to be found?" (I Am Here, 2014). As a result, this project put the user at the centre of the redesign and allowed the humanisation of what otherwise was a cold, neglected derelict building.



Fig 45. I Am Here project, ca. 2013.

WHO, WHAT, WHY?

To help diversify the ballet industry a bottom-up approach needs to be implemented so a space targeted at bringing in a diverse range of dancers should focus on the youngest generations. By providing funding to ethnic minorities who are often of lower socio-economic status this can allow them to consider a career in ballet that usually would not be an option due to the cost of training followed by the unstable financial nature of careers in the ballet industry.

When minorities perform on stage, it attracts a similarly diverse audience as these people feel represented. For example, when Misty Copeland (American Ballet Theatre's first black prima ballerina) dances at the American Ballet Theatre she "sells out every performance" (Hickman, 2016 : 39) and spiked a surge in ethnically diverse audience members (Hickman, 2016 : 39).



Fig 46. Mark Squires. nd. American Ballet Theatre's first black prima ballerina, Misty Copeland.



Fig 47. Footballers at a ballet class. 2012.

As a result, it is clearly beneficial to support those ethnic minorities in the training for their ballet careers so as to increase visibility and to positively influence and encourage a new diverse generation of ballet dancers.

Contrastingly, I would also like to focus this project on everyday people who might prefer to engage with ballet on an informal recreational or holistic basis and also to look at ways in which ballet could benefit people's mental and physical health.

One example of this is the benefits professional football players gain from participating

in ballet classes. Advantages of ballet training include flexibility, balance, strength and the ability to focus on precise movements whilst appearing graceful (balletbarres, nd). Highlighting these benefits could help encourage a new type of dancer. A dancer who has swapped the gym for a ballet class and whose newfound love for ballet is a relaxed yet passionate one.

Could a more casual approach to ballet participation help breakdown the strict, elitist stereotype and instead encourage a more unlikely audience? Could ballet become a part of everyday life?



Fig 48. Alice Sheppard, a disabled dancer and choreographer.

'BARRIER-FREE'

When designing a 'barrier-free' environment it is vital to design for those with physical and invisible disabilities. Physical adjustments to the building would therefore be important such as ramps and step-free access but also opens up a new question of how those with sensory impairments (such as deafness and blindness) could still enjoy participating in or watching ballet.



Fig 49. Authors own photo montage of men in ballet tutus. 2023.

BALLET FOR BLOKES

Swapping a gym session for a ballet class could also help specifically target men and help break down the masculine stereotypes within ballet. It could push the narrative that ballet is a sign of strength rather than weakness and that ballet can be equally masculine and feminine and no man should be shamed for enjoying ballet. As a result, the issue of a female dominated audience could also be combatted as "in 2012, almost two-thirds of ballet attendees were female" (art.gov, 2015).



Fig 50. Devyn Galindo. nd. *Butch Ballet*



Furthermore, how could a rebrand of ballet adapt the dance form to encourage a new generation? In recent decades there has been a steady drop in the attendance of arts activities where ballet, in particular, has dropped from 3.9% of all adults attending a ballet in 2002 to 2.7% in 2012 (Hickman, 2016 : 11). If this trend continues then without the audiences, companies cannot afford to train their ballet dancers

So, how can we encourage a new generation to watch the ballet and how could this help save the ballet industry?

finale

THE CONCLUSION

In response to the findings of this report, the core aims of this project will be to help diversify the ballet industry, rebrand ballet for a new generation of audience and encourage the general public to enjoy the health benefits of ballet as a part of everyday life.

As a result, the space should hopefully target all members of society and all dimensions of diversity to enhance all the great qualities and benefits of ballet whilst simultaneously tearing down the discriminations and prejudices in the current ballet industry. As reiterated by Fuad-Luke's words he says design "has the ability to catalyse societal transformations." (Fuad-Luke, 2009: xxi).

To achieve these aims the main functions of the space will be ...

- **AN INCLUSIVE BALLET SCHOOL** – barrier free dance studios and adjoining facilities designed to break down the current discriminations and prejudices in ballet
- **A BALLET PERFORMANCE SPACE** – a new way to view ballet that attracts a new more diverse younger audience
- **A BALLET GYM** – to bring fun back into ballet and encourage the general public to benefit from ballet too



Fig 53. Black female ballet dancer. *nd*



SCHEDULE OF ACCOMODATION

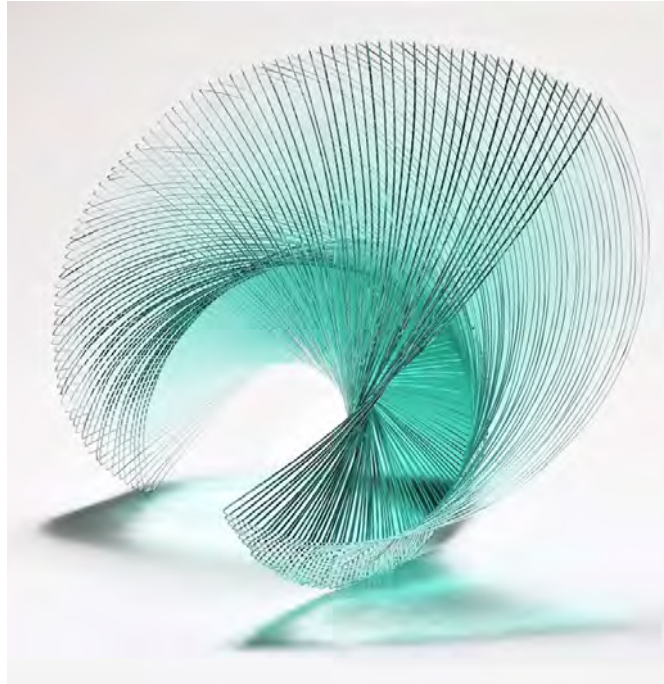


Fig 54. Niyoko IKUTA. 2020. *Ku -140 (Free Essence-140)* [laminated sheet glass].

Insights from the case study of the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre show the importance of architectural language in changing the preconceptions of a space. In the case of Haggerston Baths this same adaptive reuse approach could assist in breaking down the stereotype that ballet is for the elite few. The Edwardian characteristics of the baths although impressive and grand, could also appear to some as intimidating and imposing because it suggests an elite nature of wealth and classism. The architectural redesign of the baths will therefore aim to bring an informal, fun side to the ballet industry.

To create the ultimate inclusive design, I will take a socially active design approach to include and encourage people of any size or shape to participate in ballet. I want to take inspiration from the graceful fluid movements of a dancer's body and portray it through architectural adaptations in the space. One example of a comparable fluid form of art is Niyoko Ikuta's glass sculptures (figure. 54) which echo similarities to long-exposure images of ballerina's movements (figure. 55). Taking inspiration from these organic shapes will inform a key design idea of reflecting the body-positive and inclusive nature of the space through the architectural language.

'ARCHITECTURE OF THE BODY'



Fig 55. A ballerina in motion. *nd*

Fig 56. Julia Rendleman. 2020. Ava Holloway and Kennedy George. Black Lives Matter protest.



SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Studies have shown that individuals born between 1997 and 2012, known collectively as 'generation z', value inclusivity and diversity more than any other generation (Izea, 2021). Whilst gen z are also least likely to attend a ballet performance (arts.gov, 2015), there is clearly a need for diversification of ballet performers to encourage an equally diverse audience. To attract a new generation, I will also rethink the way ballet is currently physically viewed and how a new immersive performance space could reveal a fun side to ballet and become a form of social activism to educate on the current barriers within the industry.

"Ethnic audiences want to see representatives of their communities as performers and artists, along with deeper representations of their cultural traditions" (Grams, et al 2008, 144 cited in Hickman, 2016: 13) – another example of how showcasing diversity in the

performers could be a catalyst for a similarly diverse audience.

In 2020, during the Black Lives Matter protests, two teenage black ballerina's, Ava Holloway and Kennedy George, were photographed in front of a Confederate statue (Stump and Foster, 2020). The powerful image began to trend online and sparked a conversation about the lack of black dancers in ballet. This image highlights the potential of dance as a form of social activism or protest and as George explained, "You don't always have to be on the front line in all the rallies, but choosing your own art and expressing it through your gift is a great thing to do"(Stump and Foster, 2020).

What if an interior could protest the diversity issues within the ballet industry? What if the space encouraged the use of ballet as a form of activism?



Fig 57. Pearl Primus, American anthropologist, dancer, and choreographer. nd.

COMMUNITY

“WHY DO I DANCE? DANCE IS MY MEDICINE. IT’S THE SCREAM WHICH EASES FOR A WHILE THE TERRIBLE FRUSTRATION COMMON TO ALL HUMAN BEINGS WHO BECAUSE OF RACE, CREED, OR COLOR, ARE ‘INVISIBLE’. DANCE IS THE FIST WITH WHICH I FIGHT THE SICKENING IGNORANCE OF PREJUDICE.”

(PEARL PRIMUS, CITED IN EVELYN, 2020)

The ballet gym element of the project will also assist in diversifying ballet by enabling busy everyday people to participate. Promoting the mental and physical benefits of ballet could help encourage people to swap a gym session for a ballet class. Furthermore, without the strict ballet stereotypes the space should promote access for a diverse target market (compared to traditional ballet schools) and the lack of financial or time commitment to this ballet gym will make it more accessible to those of lower socio-economic status.



Fig 58. Lizzy Howell. nd.



Fig 59. Classical Indian Dance. nd.

Representing individual cultural traditions could be another way to increase inclusivity and represent members of different cultures in the local community. By creating a space for a diverse range of cultural dances, the Baths could become an exchange of traditions and a welcoming incentive to the space for the third of Hackney residents who were born outside the UK. Whilst there are many progressive dance forms (such as modern and contemporary) which are already prioritising social causes and diversity, I think it is important to also look at older, classical forms of dance and adapt them to fit an inclusive modern world. As a result, the space will focus firstly on classical ballet and secondly on other classical, older forms of international dance to bridge the gap between exclusive traditions and an inclusive future.

KEY CONCEPTS

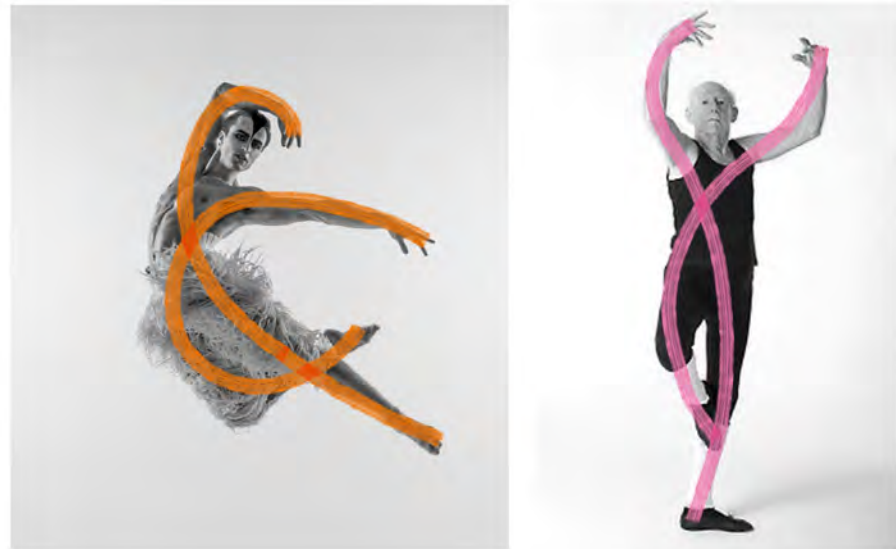


Fig 60. Authors own montage inspired by Kandinsky's study of movement

CONCEPT 01. ARCHITECTURE OF THE BODY

Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky published theories on abstract forms created by dance in his essay *Dance Curves*. The essay is accompanied by a series of abstract drawings relating to images of a modern dancer (Cady, 2016).

Using a similar approach I have experimented with creating curves and abstract shapes from existing photos of ballet dancers.

Further exploring these abstract shapes created from the 'architecture of the body' will help to develop a design theme within the space of organic shapes to contrast the pre-existing design language in Haggerston Baths.



Fig 61. Wassily Kandinsky's *Dance Curves*, nd.

ITS TIME TO BEND (AND FOLD) THE RULES

(COLLINS, 2019)

The PLIE Project features a series of works by artist Pauline Loctin. Loctin designed intricate origami pieces to match each dancer and setting.

Each piece represents the personality of each dancer or reflects the architecture of the location.

This project again highlights the crossover between dance and architecture and also pushes for change within the ballet industry with the message "its time to bend (and fold) the rules"(Collins, 2019).

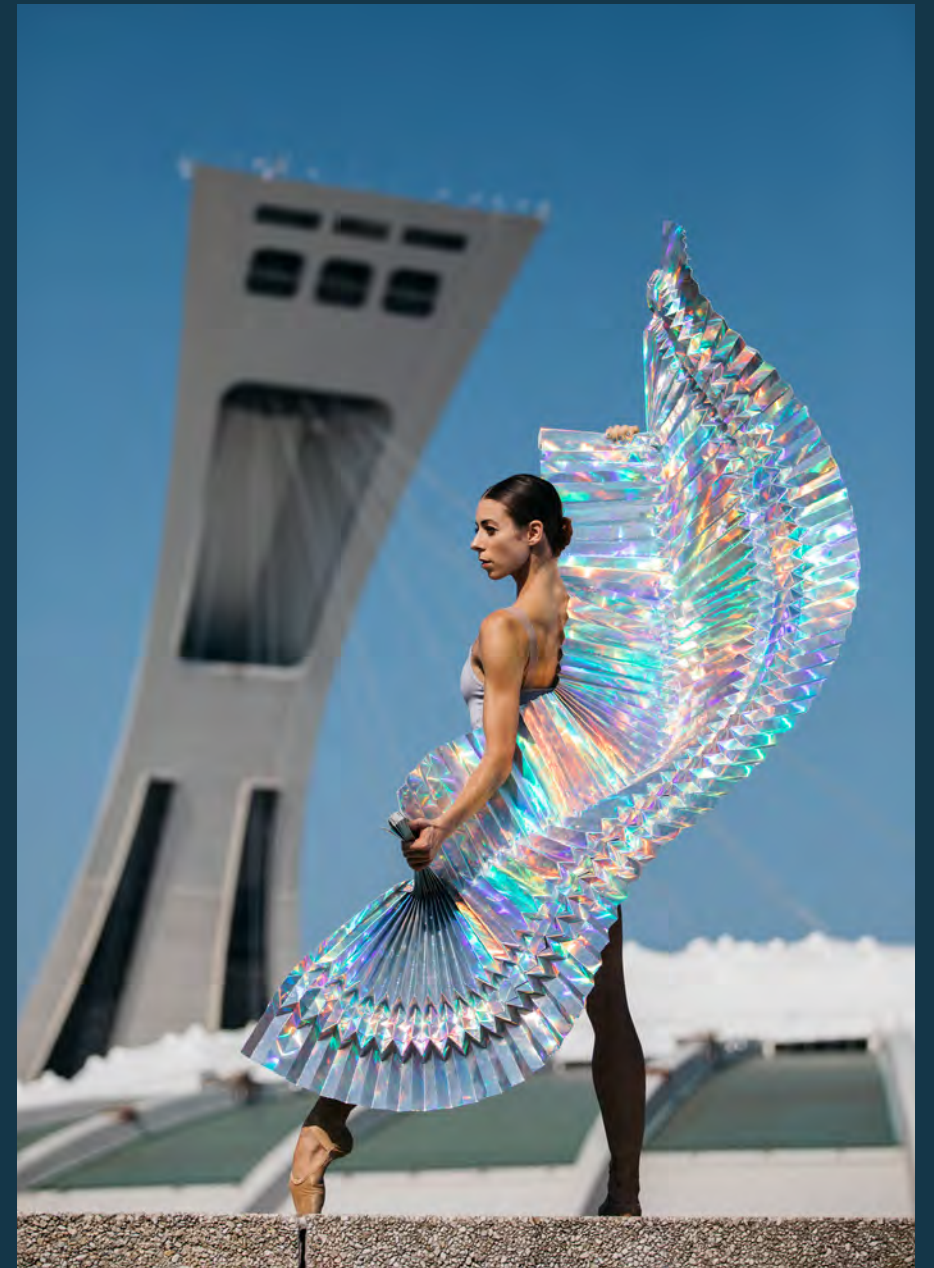


Fig 62. Melika Dez. 2018. PLIE Project 1



Fig 63. Melika Dez. 2018. PLIE Project 2



Fig 64. Melika Dez. 2018. PLIE Project 3

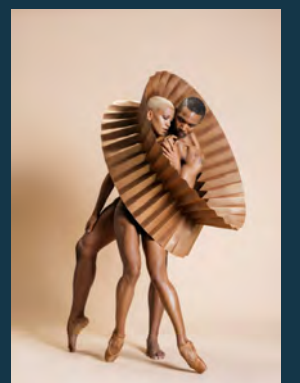
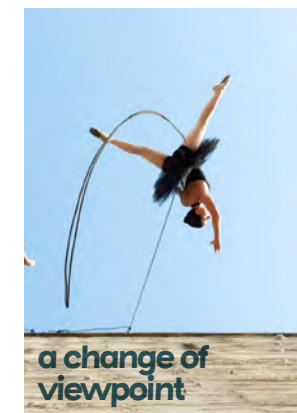
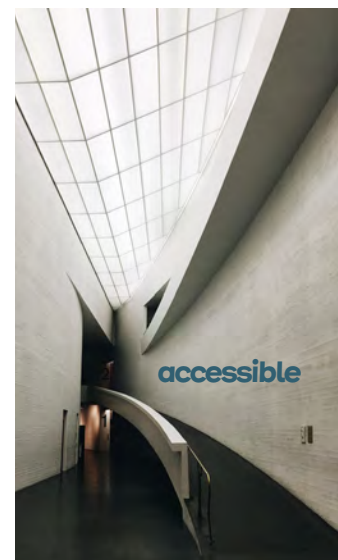
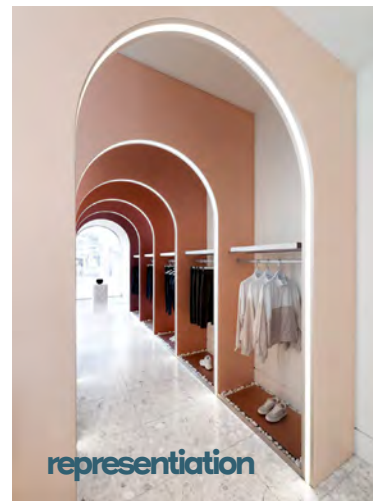


Fig 65. Melika Dez. 2018. PLIE Project 4

CONCEPT 02. INCLUSIVE DESIGN

To further promote the message of diversifying ballet, the interior design needs to reflect the inclusivity of the project. To explore this I will take inspiration from the diverse users of the space for example by representing all skin-tones in the space and also rethinking how ballet and the building are navigated to enable those with limited or restricted mobility to also participate.



CONCEPT 03. REINVENTING HOW WE VIEW BALLET

Another concept to explore in the design process is reinventing how ballet as a performance is viewed. Could technology help extend the possibilities of ballet and potentially encourage a younger audience?

Fig 70. *Digital Dance*
A dance performance using projection technology. 2015.
Fig 71. *Diversifying*
Black ballerina musical box. nd.
Fig 72. *Interactive*
Interactive technology dance performance. 2019. From : Romain Etienne
Fig 73. *A change of viewpoint*
Abselwing ballerina. 2021.

ballet... putting a spin on it

In an increasingly inter-connected, diverse world it seems that ballet has some catching up to do. If the ballet industry doesn't push harder for more inclusivity there is a danger that ballet as a whole could be left in the past.

However, this report has highlighted the benefits and potential of ballet to bring about positive social change. Through a rebrand of ballet and the spaces that host it, I believe there is a socially sustainable future of ballet.

"Design can disturb current narratives. Design can rupture the present with counter-narratives. Design can contribute to reformist approaches. It has the ability to catalyse societal transformations." (Fuad-Luke, 2009: xxi).



Fig. 74. Yiadom-Boakye 2018. *A Concentration* [oil on linen].

appendix a

Interview with Katy Roy *carried out over online correspondence on December 29th 2022*

Question 1. Why do you love ballet? What inspired you to become a dancer?

I really enjoy moving to music and portraying stories and emotions through this movement. I love that dance can make an audience feel a certain way and can entertain them, this is what motivates me to dance.

Question 2. In your time as a ballet dancer have you experienced any setbacks in the industry as a result of an aspect of your identity (race, ethnicity, age, size, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status or other)?

I find that often being a shorter dancer means I miss out on opportunities due to specific requirements based on the look and aesthetic of a dancer. Financially, dance is a very elitist industry and so, being able to afford extra things such as summer schools and big ballet competitions can really set advantaged dancers ahead. Being a male in the dance industry definitely has its benefits. As there are typically fewer men in schools and companies, there are less people fighting for the same roles and jobs. For females, it is almost expected that you won't get a good role and if you are lucky enough to get one, the smallest thing will result in it being taken away.

Question 3. ... If not have you noticed this in your peers?

Recently, I was chosen to go to Sweden with my school to perform in the nutcracker. As only 6 out of 17 girls could go, they were ruthless when narrowing down who could go. They cut out all girls over 5ft 6, the 'bustier girls', and those with recent injuries.

Question 4. Do you have any ideas on how ballet could attract a new younger audience (particularly to live performances)?

I think that by modernising the storylines of traditional ballets or creating new ballets based on popular films or TV shows, this could attract a younger audience. Even using modern music opposed to classical music could help to increase interest in ballet in a young audience.

Question 5. Do you think the ballet industry should change to adapt to the ever-changing modern world? If so how?

I absolutely think the ballet industry is very behind in terms of treatment of dancers and attitudes to body image. Poor treatment of dancers is still being passed down through generations of teachers and pupils so I think change would be most effective beginning in vocational schools. There should be more support for the mental well-being of injured dancers, with less pressure on dancers to ignore pain and get on with it, rather than getting proper treatment and rest. Dancers should also be educated on the importance of proper rest and a balanced diet. Schools such as The Swedish National Ballet school (that I just spent a couple of weeks at) enforce a sugar free rule and ban all sugar on the premises. I observed that this encourages the very young students to become obsessed with what they are deprived. There is a culture in dance schools and companies of relying on energy drinks, coffee and nicotine for energy, opposed to nutrition which definitely needs to change. Finally, dance teachers (who should be there to pass on knowledge and encourage students to be the best dancer they can be) often threaten students and place a lot of pressure on students to never make mistakes in both dance and what they say. This causes dancers to never stand up for themselves when faced with injustice or even abuse as the smallest action deemed "out of line" is held against us. This makes dance a very stressful environment, this is very unnecessary, especially for children as young as 11 in vocational schools.

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Figure 1. Lynette YIADOM-BOAKYE. 2015. *A Pixie and a Priest* [oil on canvas]. Available at : <https://sixtyinchesfromcenter.org/race-abstracted-thelma-golden-and-new-global-black-aesthetics/>

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Figure 2. Marty SOHL. ca. 2018. A ballet dancer leaping. Available at : <https://www.dance.nyc/for-audiences/community-calendar/view/ABT-Studio-Company-Performance/2018-04-18>

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PAGE 4-5

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Figure 7. Oil paint background. nd. Available at : https://bgfons.com/uploads/paint/paint_texture2105.jpg

PAGE 6-7

Figure 8. Alfred EISENSTAEDT. 1936. Rehearsals at New York's School of American Ballet. Available at : <https://www.vintag.es/2012/06/stunning-black-and-white-photographs-of.html>

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PAGE 8-9

Figure 10. Lizzy Howell 2. 2021. From : Emma Trim. Available at : <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/lizzy-howell-profile>

Figure 11. Men can do pointe too. 2012. Available at : <https://www.modelmayhem.com/portfolio/pic/27371703>

PAGE 10-11

Figure 12. Photography by ASH. 2022. *Katy Roy*. Available at : <https://www.instagram.com/p/>

PAGE 12-13

Figure 13. Men in tutus. nd. Available at : <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/b2/de/ef/>

Figure 14. Dancers in motion. 2007. From : Camil Tulcan. Available at : https://www.flickr.com/photos/camil_t/2050616069/

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Figure 17. Linda Nussbaumer. ca 2007. Available at : <https://connectbiz.com/2007/09/dr-linda-nussbaumer/>

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PAGE 16-17

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Figure 22. Permission Store, Toronto. 2020. From : Jeremie Warshafsky. Available at : <https://superfuture.com/2020/12/new-shops/toronto-permission-store-opening/>

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PAGE 20-21

Figure 24. Granby Winter Garden community. ca. 2019. Available at : <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/granby-winter-gardens>

Figure 25. Granby Winter Garden visual. ca. 2019. Available at : <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/granby-winter-gardens>

PAGE 22-23

Figure 26. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancers. 2010. From : Andrew Eccles. Available at : <https://www.flickr.com/photos/>

PAGE 24-25

Figure 27. Simon Mooney. 2015. Haggerston Baths Interior. From : Hackney Council. Available at : <https://thespaces.com/haggerston-baths-turned-multi-use-work-retail-hub/>

PAGE 26-27

Figure 28. Gold Hind boat weathervane. 2016. Available at : <https://lookup.london/haggerston-baths/>

Figure 29. Original ground floor plan. 1904. From : Hackney Archives. Available at : <https://developmentandhousing.hackney.gov.uk/planning/index>

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Figure 31. Haggerston Baths main gala pool. ca. 2015. Available at : <https://lovingdalston.co.uk/2017/11/all-hope-for-haggerston-baths->

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Figure 35. Swimmers Lane. 2022. Authors own image

PAGE 28-29

Figure 36. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing Ground Floor Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal. Available at : <https://developmentandhousing.hackney.gov.uk/planning/index>

PAGE 30-31

Figure 37. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing Mezzanine Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal. Available at : <https://developmentandhousing.hackney.gov.uk/planning/index>

PAGE 32-33

Figure 38. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing First Floor Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal. Available at : <https://developmentandhousing.hackney.gov.uk/planning/index>

PAGE 34-35

Figure 39. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing Roof Plan. From : Hackney Planning Portal. Available at : <https://developmentandhousing.hackney.gov.uk/planning/index>

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PAGE 36-37

Figure 40. Squire and Partners. 2020. Existing South Elevation. From : Hackney Planning Portal. Available at : <https://developmentandhousing.hackney.gov.uk/planning/index>

PAGE 38-39

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PAGE 40-41

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