

CRITICAL REPORT



Figure 1. Shellworks. 2019. Plastics made from shellfish waste.

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CRITICAL POSITION

As designers we not only have the opportunity but, I feel a moral obligation to transform and enhance sense of place for communities when tackling public space.



Figure 2. Assemble. 2012. Grandby Workshop visual.

By drawing on key philosophical theories and analysing social activation as a form of design, I wish to explore whether collaborative production can be used to bring about ecological and economical sustainability to communities where traditional industries are under threat.

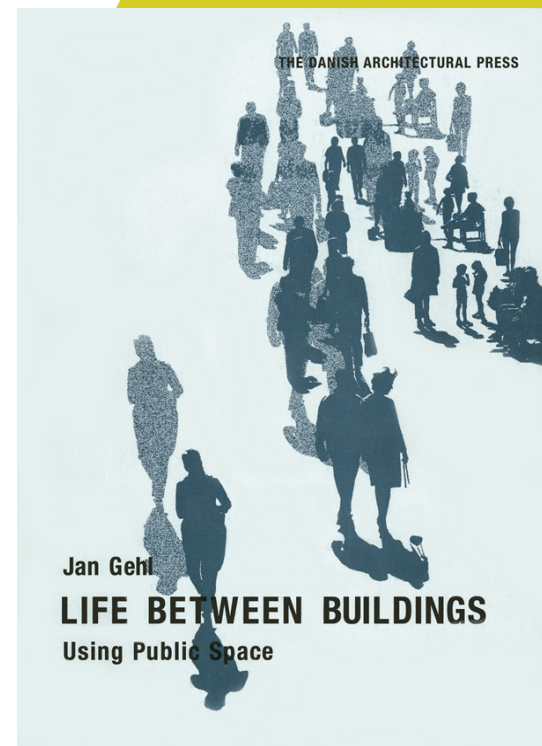
My critical position will be supported by the writings of Jan Gehl, Gaston Bachelard and Christian Norberg-Schulz and their theories on how we use public space, experience intimate places and the phenomenology of architecture.

I believe that all too often development of buildings, particularly those in areas that support tourism are developed at the expense of the wider community. I intend to question how design can better serve industrial communities, create opportunity and protect regional identity.

With interior architecture as my approach, I hope to use adaptive re-use to not only rejuvenate the building but also the community it will serve.

KEY PHILOSOPHIES

Figure 3. Gehl. 2001. Life Between Buildings.



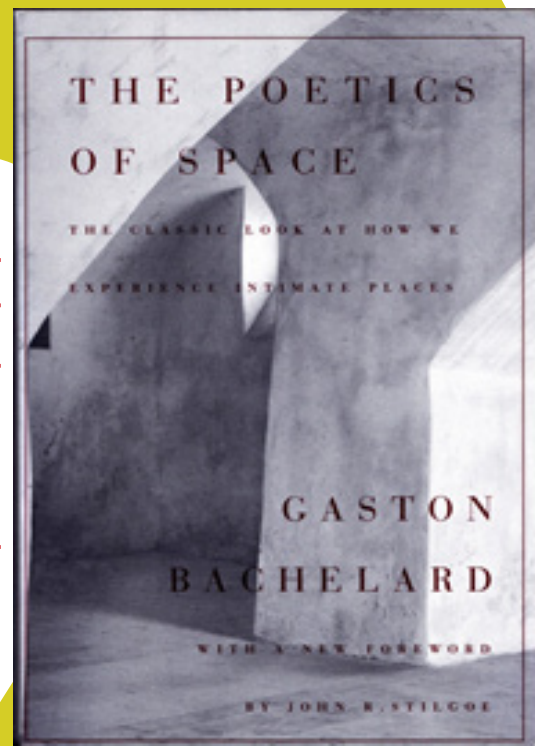
Throughout his architectural career Jehn Gehl has intently studied how architecture can better serve people. His research began in 1965 in Italy alongside his psychologist wife where they studied people in cities. They formed a unique insight and together developed key theories for more “human centred” approaches for urban planning (Story-Gehl, 2021).

In summary of Gehl’s “observations and investigations” it showed that “people and human activity are the greatest object of attention and interest” (Gehl, 2001, p.31) he discovered that:

Life in buildings and between buildings seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves (Gehl, 2001, p.31).

In the 30 years that have passed since Gehl’s first publication the message

Figure 4. Bachelard. 1964. The Poetics Of Space.



is clear “take good care of the life between your buildings” (Gehl, 2003, p.9).

Conversely Gaston Bachelard’s approach to space is that it is the building itself that has “the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (Bachelard, 1964, p.6). Despite this statement I would argue that Gehl and Bachelard’s core theories have more in common than first considered. Bachelard like Gehl considers the psychoanalytic approach to his subject matter but ultimately, I feel it is his application of phenomenology to architecture that strikes the most parallels to Gehl. He speaks of the deeply personal responses people have to buildings. By applying phenomenology to physical space, he feels that we must go “beyond the problems of description” (Bachelard, 1964, p.1). I feel Bachelard had less interest in the physicality of a building but was more consumed by its ability to nurture what it is to be human; to dream, to imagine and that for me perfectly ties into Gehl’s “human centred” design approach.

Figure 5. Norberg-Schulz. 1980. Genius Loci.



Phenomenology was more specifically applied to architecture by Christian Norberg-Schulz in “Genius loci” in which, not unlike Bachelard he touches upon the phenomenology of the daily environment but more-so he applies phenomenology to sense of place, he writes:

The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.18).

Like Ghel and Bachelard Norberg-Schulz is less concerned by the physical site. Instead, he seeks to unpick the antiquity of site to see how it can “protect and conserve the genius loci” but at the same time can “concretize its essence in ever new historical contexts” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.18).

3



Figure 6. Assemble. 2012. Assembling ‘The Yard House’.

Assemble are a multi-disciplinary collective working across architecture, urbanism and art. Celebrated for producing “poetically charged, socially diverse and resilient architecture” (Fitz and Ritter, 2017, p.11).

It is their design philosophy and work that I most align myself too.

I see there are clear affinities to Gehl’s “human centred” theories in the way Assemble practice. Most of their projects involve social space and provide various resources which help bring diverse communities together. They are described as architects who “hear and see voices, dreams and capabilities of others” (Fitz & Ritter, 2017, p.11). The quote makes me think of Bachelard’s conviction of the human imagination and how it is this that makes a space special. Perhaps what makes Assemble so successful is their ability provide space for people to dream, to imagine a better future by empowering them through their design? I wanted to unpack Assemble’s Goldsmiths art gallery project to not only explore this notion but to also see how they tackle adaptive reuse intended for public space within a historical context.

KEY CASE STUDIES

Figure 7. Assemble. 2018. Goldsmith CCA. Interior shot.

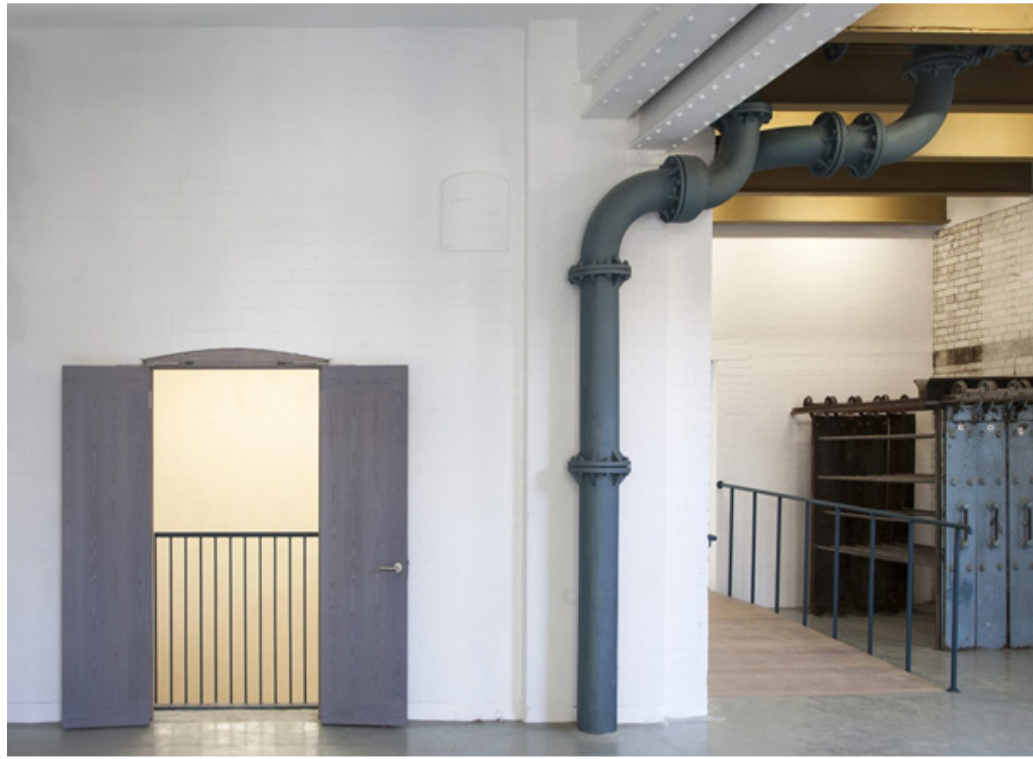


Figure 8. Assemble. 2018. Goldsmith CCA. Concept visual.



Figure 9. Assemble. 2018. Goldsmith CCA. Sectional model.



Figure 10. Assemble. 2018. Goldsmith CCA. Bespoke architectural elements.

KEY CASE STUDIES

Assemble were enlisted by Goldsmith University to transform a listed Victorian bathhouse and its infrastructural spaces into a new public art gallery (Fitz & Ritter, 2017, p.105). Situated adjacent to Deptford Town Hall, The Laurie Grove Baths has had a central role in Lewisham's cultural history and provided an important amenity for generations of local people until it closed in 1991 (Assemble, 2021a).

Assemble's approach sought to open the traditional back-of-house spaces to expose the more hidden aspect of Lewisham's social history to create new interfaces with the public (Assemble, 2021a). As ever Assemble, working with hands-on experimentation, also created several bespoke architectural elements which combined industrial materials found on site (Assemble, 2021a).

I perceive that Assemble's primary move of deciding to reorientate the building to share previously concealed areas with the public was very much about honouring the genius loci of the building. By doing this alongside reincorporating the new bespoke elements was indeed what Norberg-Schulz meant when he described concentrating a building's "essence in ever new historical context" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.18).

The 1000m2 building now accommodates seven new gallery spaces, a café, curators' studio and event space. This careful consideration to the schedule of accommodation by Assemble is hugely evocative of Gehl's guide to urban planning:

Integration of various activities and functions in and around public spaces allows the people involved to function together and to stimulate and inspire one another (Gehl, 2001, P.103).

Assemble's adaptive reuse of the bath house has almost certainly provided space for people to dream, to come together and to collaborate but what about design that brings about collaborative production to provide ecological and economic sustainability?

3.

Figure 11. Assemble. 2018. Goldsmith CCA. Exterior shot.



Grandby Street was once a lively high street and home to one of Liverpool's most diverse communities, but the demolition of all but four of Grandby's streets had left a once thriving community scattered (Fitz & Ritter, 2017, p.75).

In 2014 Assemble began to build upon the social activation that had already been engaged by the local residence by means of a community land trust (CLT) (Assemble, 2021b). Assemble worked with the CLT to not only achieve their dream of refurbishing the housing but also (through their support of public involvement) were able to provide public space with the provision of new work and enterprise opportunities (Assemble, 2021b). This phenomenal example of the power of collaborative action is what led to the ground-breaking Turner prize winning Granby workshop.

Set up by Assemble the workshop was a means of continuing to support the kind of creative, hands on activity that had brought such immense change in the area (Fitz & Ritter, 2017, p.86). The first range of products the workshop produced were a set of handmade features designed for the refurbished homes in Granby Street (Fitz & Ritter, 2017, p.85). The workshop has grown to the extent that it is now local employer and resource and is a sustainable business producing experimental ceramic products and architectural materials (Fitz & Ritter, 2017, p.85).

For me, this case study is hugely successful on so many levels by **“celebrating the value of an area’s architectural and cultural heritage”**

(Assemble, 2021b) Assemble were able to completely transform the way a community now live, and work-they certainly have “taken good care of the life between” (Gehl, 2003, p.9) their buildings.



Figure 12. Assemble. 2015. Grandby Workshop operations manager Sumuyya Khader.



Figure 13. Assemble. 2015. Grandby Workshop.



Figure 14. Assemble. 2015. Grandby Workshop. Turner winning prize exhibition.



Figure 15. Assemble. 2015. Grandby Workshop. Turner winning prize exhibition.

EXPLORATORY TOPIC

EXPLORATORY TOPIC

I set out to explore the struggling fishing industry in Newlyn, Cornwall. I want to see if providing space for collaborative production (like Assemble) could help in the "regeneration of an area's sociocultural fabric" (Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p.150) and what role food tourism could play in strengthening a region's industrial identity.

NEWLYN-A BRIEF HISTORY

First recorded as 'Nulyn' in 1279 as a seasonal fishing settlement (Newlyn Fish Trust, 2021) Newlyn as a place has always been defined by its fishing. From the 13th century onwards, Newlyn began to establish itself as an important location for fishing and maritime (Newlyn FISH Trust, 2021).

With the arrival of the railway in the 19th Century fishing in Newlyn became extremely lucrative and Newlyn made additions to its original small harbour turning it into a settlement of semi-urban proportions (Newlyn FISH Trust, 2021). Also deeply embedded into the fabric Newlyn is its famous School of Artists. They arrived in the later part of the 18th century and adopted the French Plein-air style of painting, captivated by the natural light and fisherman subjects of Newlyn (Corin, 1988, p.115).

As it stands today Newlyn is the largest fishing port in the UK in terms of tonnage. Its economy is still heavily reliant on fish and in 2019 the port landed 13,862 tonnes valued at £31.71m (Newlyn fish Trust, 2021).



Figure 17. Harris, E. (1880) *Bearded Fisherman* (oil on Canvas) Private collection.



Figure 18. Langley, W. (1904) *The Greeting* (oil on canvas) Private collection.



Figure 19. Langley, W. (1885) *Waiting for Boats* (oil on canvas). Private Collection.

Figure 16. Reynolds, A. (2018) *Untitled* (Oil on canvas) Private collection.



Figure 20. Lobster tails. 2019.

THE ISSUES

In my view there are several challenges Newlyn faces that I wish to address. One of which is its lack of opportunity for young people. Quite frankly without any young people to pass down such a unique set of skills to the industry will disappear.

Exportation issues caused by Brexit also pose a threat to the future of Newlyn with 80% of its catch ordinarily exported. The main reason for this is because historically the UK has a very unadventurous relationship with seafood compared to their European counterparts mainly sticking to Cod, Haddock, Tuna, Salmon and Prawns, 70-80% of which inexplicably comes from overseas! (Morrison, 2021).

Issues surrounding sustainability and fishing industry waste is a problem on a global scale. "Every year the global fisheries industry generates more than 20 million tonnes of by-products, most of which are squandered" (UVic.Cat, 2021). This issue is only ever going to become a more pressing issue for fishing communities like Newlyn.

Lastly, like all picturesque towns in Cornwall there is the threat of gentrification, which can be felt as a direct result of tourism. The issues surrounding tourism in Cornwall can be complex (it supports one in five jobs), nonetheless there is growing feeling that there is disparity between the tourist images generated of an area and the lived experience of its people (Hale, 2019, p.118). A feeling "that Cornwall is increasingly perceived as a place only to be consumed and exploited by tourists, rather than sustained for residents" (Hale, 2019, p.118) and with Cornwall being "exposed to the highest level of seasonal tourism activity in Britain, while simultaneously suffering the decline of its fishing and farming industries" (Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p.151) it is a sentiment I agree with.

Newlyn has so far remained somewhat resistant to the de-industrialisation suffered by St Ives, once Newlyn's rival is sadly now a ghost port, the smell of fresh fish replaced by the reek of fish and chips (Corin, 1988. p.121). Arguably, Newlyn is the last coastal port and town that has not suffered gentrification which for me feels incredibly important to preserve, nonetheless it will have to diversify to survive the many challenges it faces.

THE BRIEF

Can adaptive reuse be used to tackle the many issues threatening the fishing industry in Newlyn by the creation of a micro industry?



Figure 21. Old Man. Splash photography. 2021.



Figure 22. The Fisherman. Photography T. Kazakevičius. 2017.



Figure 23. Kid. Photography T. Wood. 2018.

Figure 24. Fishing nets. Photography R. Niebrugge. 2016.





Figure 25. Shellfish breakdown. Shellworks. 2019.



Figure 26. Stiffness and flexibility experimentation of material. Shellworks. 2019.

THE PROPOSAL

THE PROPOSAL

Through my design I want to tackle the issue of wasted shellfish by-products caused by the fishing industry and the lack of opportunity for young people. I plan to do this through encouraging food tourism and collaborative production.

My aim is to create a centre with two distinct functions. Firstly, will be to provide a space for fishermen to process and sell shellfish. Secondly to create a space that encourages tourists to embrace local food production to help stimulate a **“sustainable gastronomy and encourage the retention of a local food identity”** (Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p.158). I feel this could also help stem “the tide of perceived culinary homogenisation and dilution of regional distinctiveness” (Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p.153). I feel promotion and engagement with the lesser eaten species like shellfish can help promote more sustainable ways of enjoying seafood.



Figure 28. Shellworks processing lab. 2019.



Figure 27. Prawns. 2015.

Secondly the centre will also accommodate a processing workshop whereby (very much in the spirit of Assemble's Granby workshop) will support collaborative production by form of experimentation with the shellfish waste. Chitin, found in the shell of crustaceans is the second most abundant biopolymer in nature.

It can be turned into Chitosan which is a non-toxic, biodegradable and biocompatible polymer (Koli, J. et al. 2015, p.3). This is an incredibly diverse material which can be utilised for biofuel, plastics, wall renders and compost to name a few (Archer, 2004). The workshop will see new sustainable materials being produced and a micro industry created within the building which will become a local employer and supplier. This will allow young people to engage with a new and diverse way to keep the industrial heritage of fishing alive in Newlyn for many years to come.

THE FUNCTION AND USERS

The building must successfully deliver a mixture of both private and public space. Essentially the building will be part kitchen, processing plant and collaborative workshop. The space needs to provide enough practical space to enable fishermen to land shellfish to be processed with the intention of being eaten on site. Ideally this would be made practical enough to allow tourists and the general public to see how the shellfish gets processed.



THE FUNCTION + USERS

THE SITE

I felt it was essential for the site of my proposal to be near the harbour and have a link with fishing heritage for my design to succeed.

Newlyn film house is situated on The Coombe, was once a fish store and is positioned 240 metres from the harbour. The Coombe has long been home to fish stores, my argument is to bring the building back into a more historically correct context. The building has many traditional features and displays many original Cornish materials, it is arranged over 3 floors and provides me with a tremendous amount of potential.

THE CONCLUSION

By undertaking careful review of key philosophies and case studies there is for me a fundamental message that links them all- we must in design firstly consider what it means to be human. Whether like Bachelard it is contemplating how interior environment permits one to dream or like Assemble really considering how to empower the user and wider community. How this can be achieved not only in the interim but for many years to come. I have truly learnt just how powerful human centred design can be.

“To make practical towns and buildings is not enough. Architecture comes into being when a total environment is made visible.”
(Norberg-Schulz,1980, p.23).

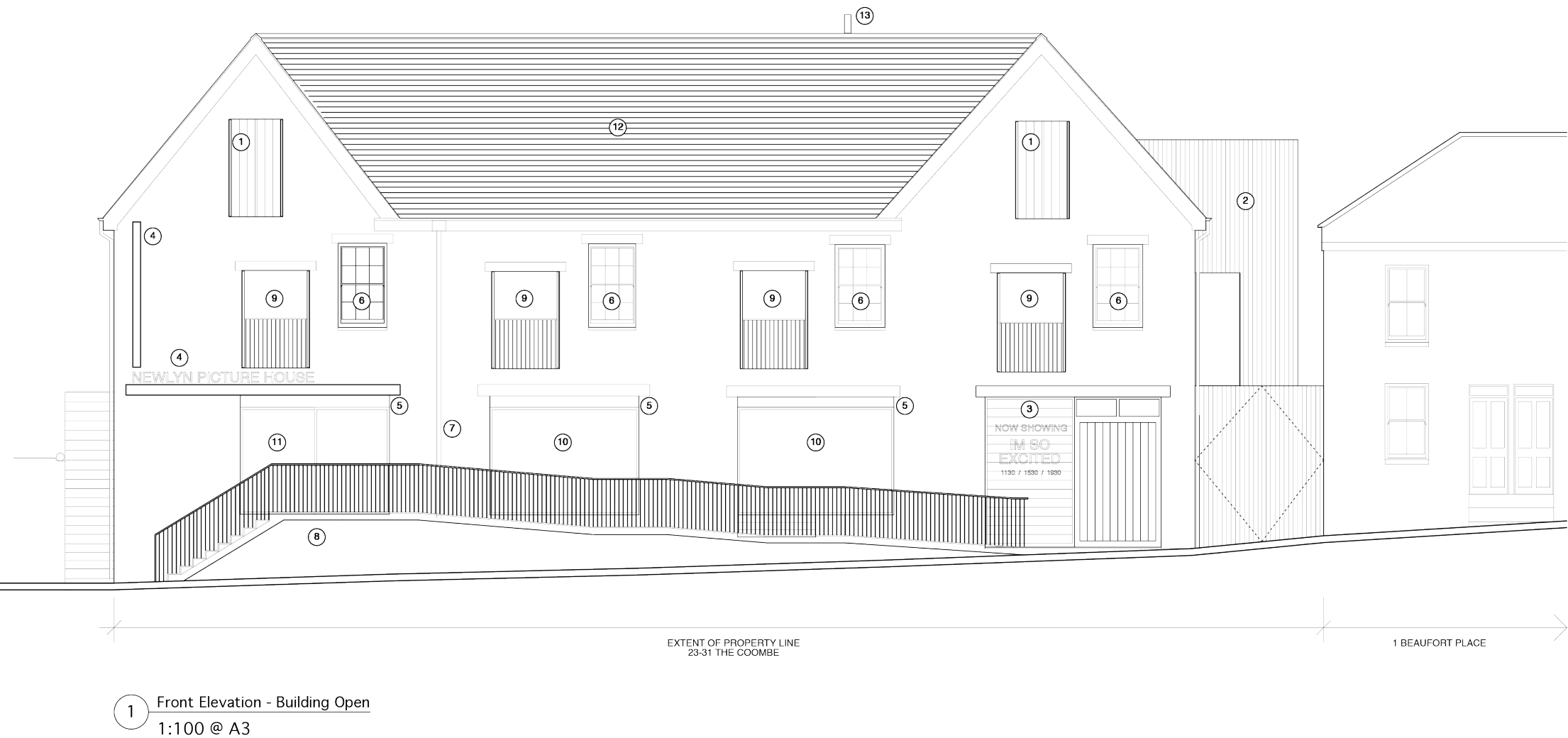


Figure 29. Front elevation. Newlyn Film House. 2013.

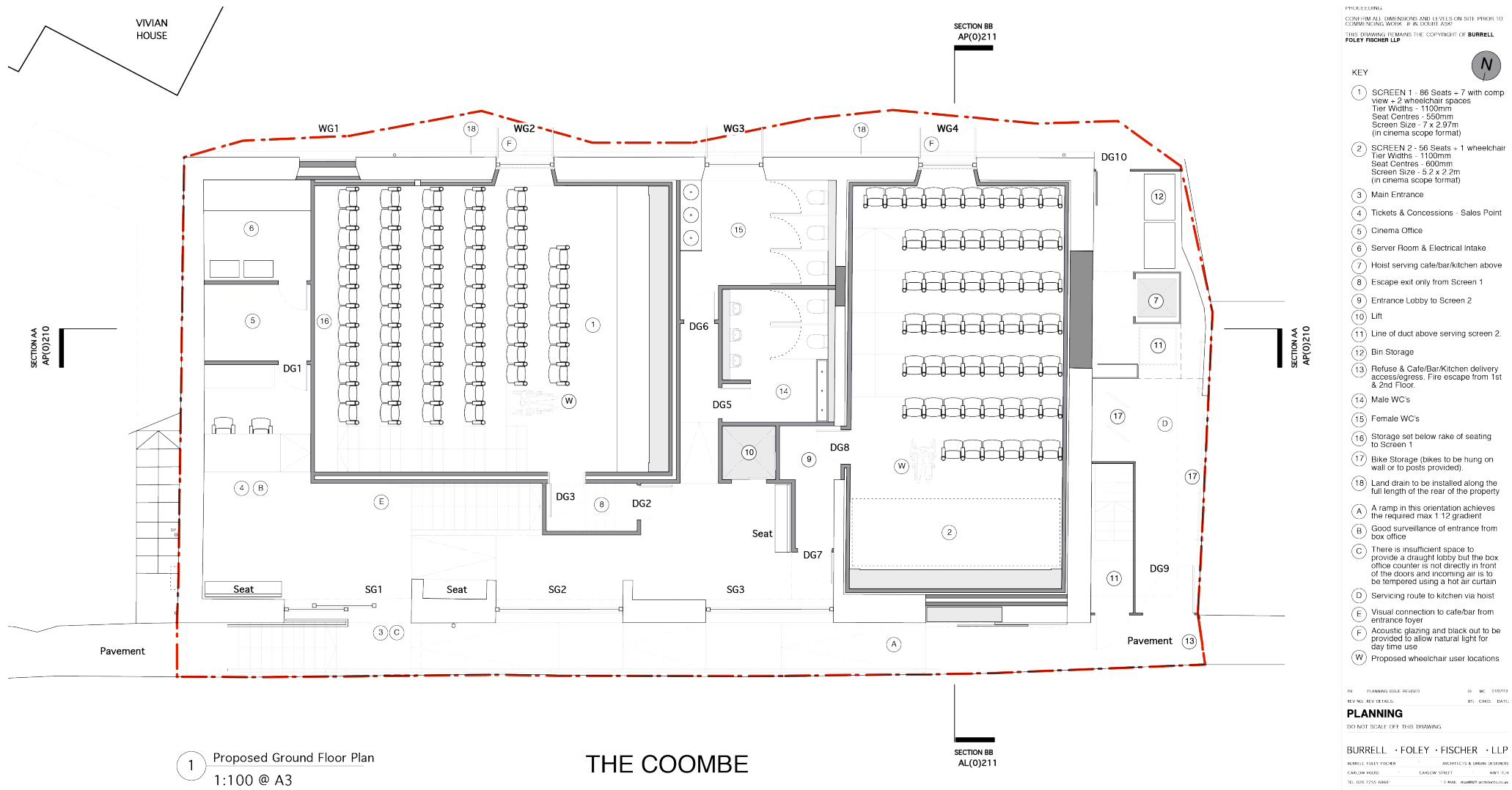


Figure 30. Ground floor plan. Newlyn Film House. 2013.

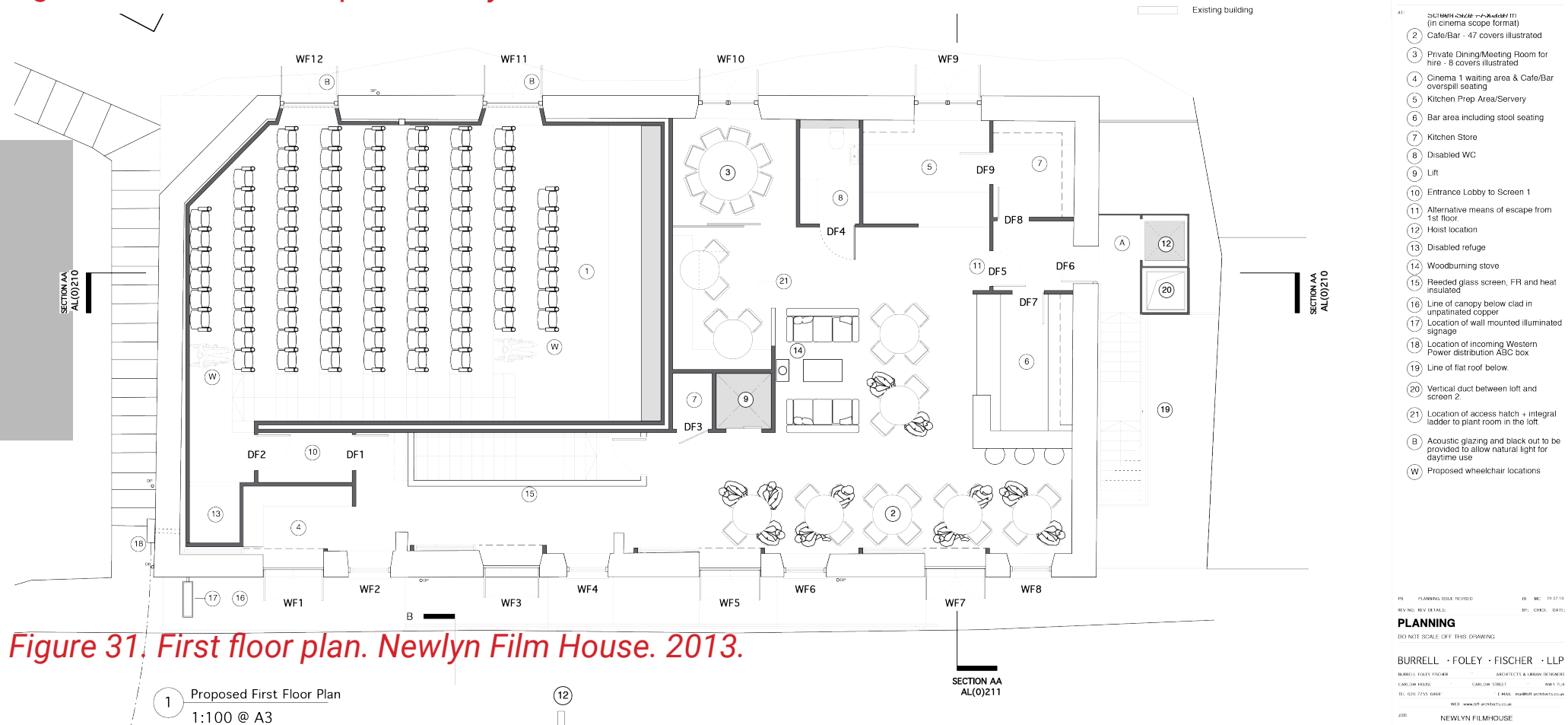


Figure 31. First floor plan. Newlyn Film House. 2013.

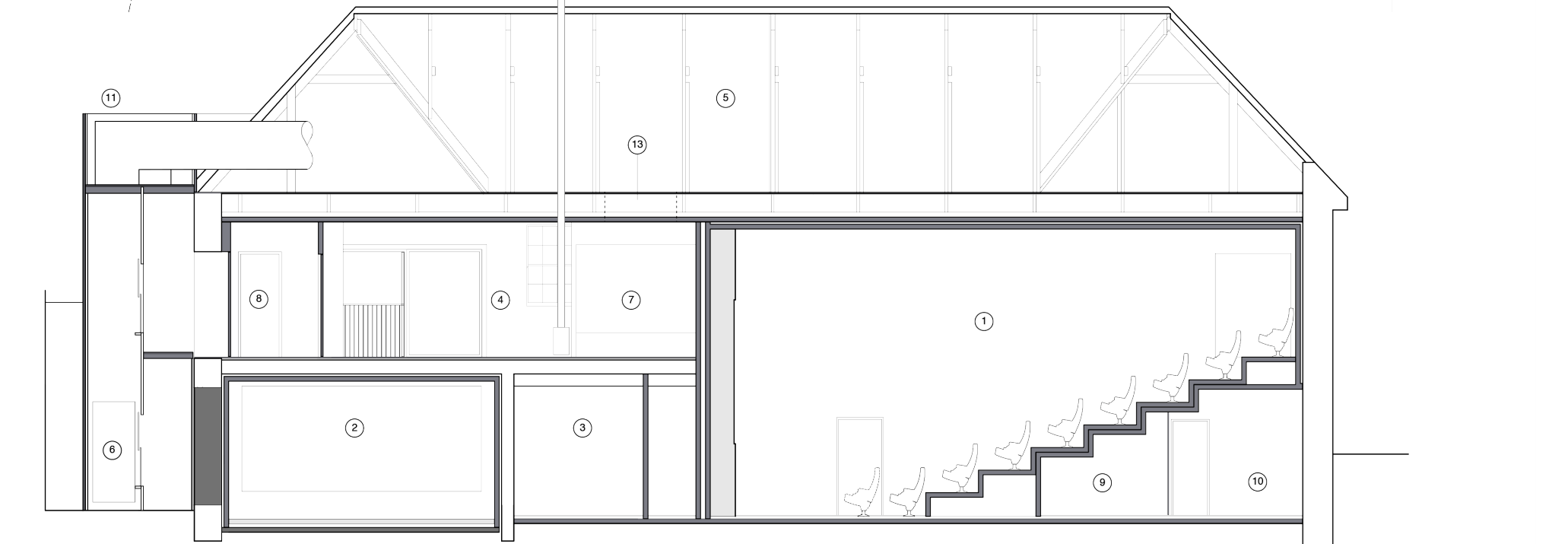


Figure 32. Section. Newlyn Film House. 2013.

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FIGURE 1. Shellworks. 2019. *Plastics made from shellfish waste*. Available from <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/02/22/shellworks-bioplastic-lobster-shell-design/>

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FIGURE 3. Gehl. 2001. *Life Between Buildings*. Available at <https://theglobalgrid.org/how-cities-come-alive-a-book-review-of-life-between-buildings/life-between-buildings/>

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FIGURE 16. Anita Reynolds. 2018. *Untitled*. Available at <https://www.newlynart-school.co.uk/courses/landscape-for-beginners/#>

FIGURE 17. Harris, E. (1880) *Bearded Fisherman (oil on canvas)* Private collection. Available at <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/11352/lot/4/>

FIGURE 18. Langley, W. (1904) *The Greeting (oil on canvas)* Private collection. Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Walter_Langley_-_The_Greeting_1904.jpg

FIGURE 19. Langley, W. (1885) *Waiting for Boats (oil on canvas)*. Private Collection. Available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=walter+langley+waiting+for+boats&title=Special:MediaSearch&go=Go&type=image>

FIGURE 20. Lobster tails. 2019. Available at <https://www.clubdelfuturo.com/2019/06/20/como-pueden-ayudar-las-conchas-de-mariscos-a-resolver-el-problema-de-los-residuos-plasticos/>

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FIGURE 21. *Old Man.* Unsplash photography. 2021. Available at <https://unsplash.com/s/photos/old-man>

FIGURE 22. *Figure 20. The Fisherman.* Photography T. Kazakevičius. 2017. Available at <https://www.lensculture.com/articles/tadas-kazakevicius-between-two-shores>

FIGURE 23. *Kid.* Photography T. Wood. 2018. Available at <https://brandonlowphotos.wordpress.com/2018/07/12/new-brighton-revisited-by-martin-parr-tom-wood-and-ken-grant/>

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FIGURE 28. *Shellworks processing lab.* 2019. Available at <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/191380/imperial-students-find-innovative-lobster-shell/>

FIGURE 29. *Front elevation.* Newlyn Cinema. 2013. Available at <https://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=MN7ERLFG0CQ00&activeTab=summary>

FIGURE 30. 2013. *Ground floor plan.* Newlyn Cinema. 2013. Available at <https://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=MN7ERLFG0CQ00&activeTab=summary>

FIGURE 31. *First floor plan.* Newlyn Cinema. 2013. Available at <https://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=MN7ERLFG0CQ00&activeTab=summary>

FIGURE 32. *Section.* Newlyn Cinema. 2013. Available at <https://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=MN7ERLFG0CQ00&activeTab=summary>