



FIRST LOOK

Orms riffs on the Art Deco spirit with retrofit of 1930s building

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RMS | 1 NEW OXFORD STREET

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Orms has completed the refurbishment and extension of Commonwealth House as a mixed-use scheme on behalf of TH Real Estate

Located at the juncture of New Oxford Street and High Holborn, Commonwealth House has been comprehensively refurbished and extended – but also reimagined by Orms – to create 8,800m² of Grade A office space and 1,140m² of retail space.

Orms drew on influences from the Art Deco and Art Moderne features of the original building, which was designed by architect and planner Henry Philip Cart de Lafontaine, as well as the architect's original drawings and the 1939 marketing brochure for the building.

A material palette of solus stone, brass, dark stained timber and ribbed glass has been used throughout. Externally, most strikingly, green hexagonal glazed tiles – sourced from Pyrolave in France – have been added to the façade of the new Clock Tower and the oriel windows on New Oxford Street, a feature originally proposed by de Lafontaine, but not implemented.



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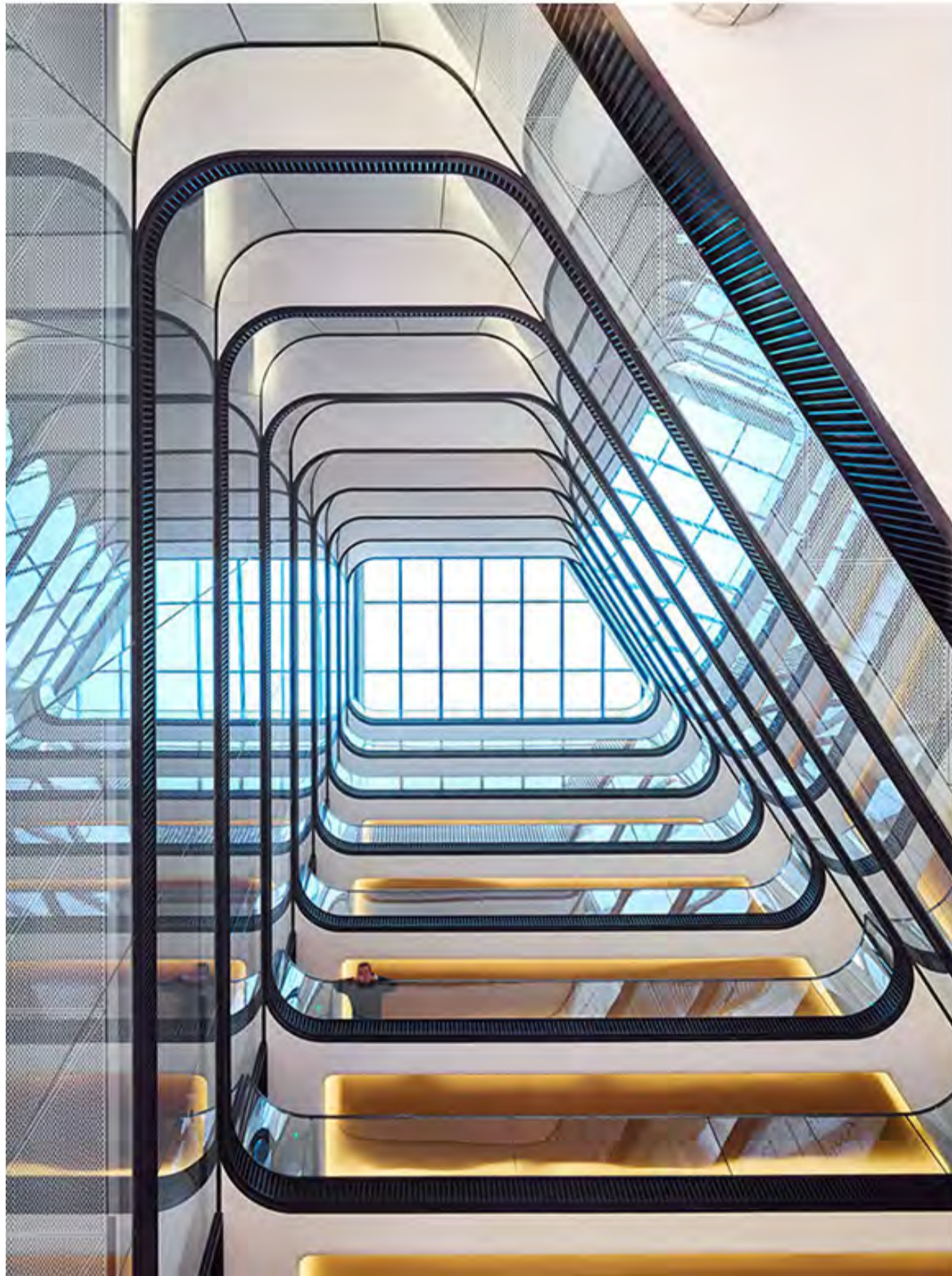
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Architect's view

TH Real Estate has owned Commonwealth House for 30 years and undertaken light refurbishment works during this time. With major regeneration of the Holborn area being driven by the arrival of Crossrail, the client concluded that a complete overhaul of the building was needed. Our design has sought to transform the familiar mid-town London landmark into a distinctive and stylish building as first envisaged by Lafontaine.

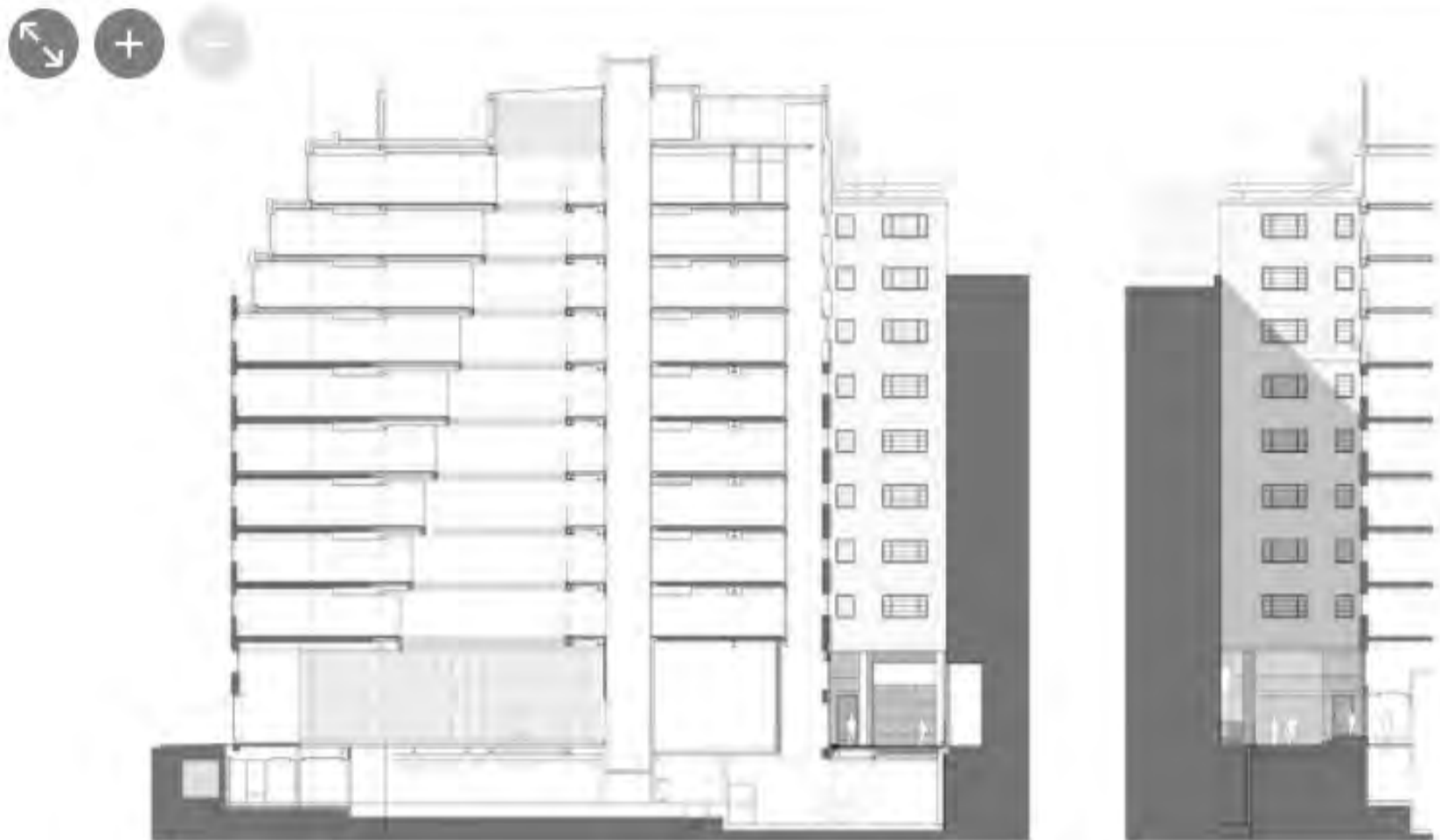
John McRae, director, Orms



Client's view

Our brief was to create a carefully considered piece of architecture that is not merely a superficial refurbishment, but one that is in keeping with the spirit of the original design and will help to secure the building's long-term future. In response Orms listened to us, listened to the building and through their research, uncovered documents and letters that informed our understanding of Lafontaine's original ambitions for the building.

Geoff Harris, head of development, TH Real Estate



Project data

Start on site 2015

Completion September 2017

Gross internal floor area 12,250 sq ft retail, 95,000 sq ft Grade A office space

Form of contract Design and Build with design team novated

Construction cost £38 million

Architect Orms

Client TH Real Estate and BA Pension Fund

Structural engineer AKT II

M&E consultant Long and Partners

QS Arcadis

Lighting consultant EQ2Light

Planning consultant DP9

Landscape consultant Robert Myers Associates

Acoustic consultant Sandy Brown Associates LLP

Project manager Arcadis

CDM coordinator RLF London

Approved building inspector MLM Building Control

Main contractor Mace

CAD software used Microstation



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