

# Art and craft

*A workshop for a London jewellery designer by DSDHA provides a focused yet convivial design and manufacturing environment*

Over the past 30 years London-based Alex Monroe has built an international reputation for designing and hand-making jewellery. Having completed the award-winning Snowfields Studio and Boutique for Monroe in 2012, DSDHA was appointed to design a second building for the jeweller to accommodate his burgeoning business.

Located on a narrow site between a pub and a shop on Tower Bridge Road in Southwark, the four-storey, steel-framed structure is wrapped in a steel rainscreen made from horizontal Cor-ten 'blades'. Intended to create a sense of rhythm and a moiré-like visual effect, the veiled facade allows passers-by to catch a glimpse of the jewellery making taking place within.

Birch-faced plywood is used to line the interior and fabricate a number of bespoke, built-in furniture pieces, including the jewellers' benches. These types of worktops are usually hinged towards the wall, writes DSDHA, however, in conversation with the client we designed a central island to accommodate all the workstations. This allows the jewellers to face each other, creating a more convivial atmosphere and controlling noise levels that are associated with people talking to each other across a room. The finely crafted metal staircase at the front of the building also acts as an acoustic device, making staff on each floor aware of the different activities taking place during the day. According to Monroe, both the staircase and workstation

arrangement have improved staff communication within the company. A roof terrace at the rear of the plan provides a refuge for the artisans, away from their intricate, close-focus work.

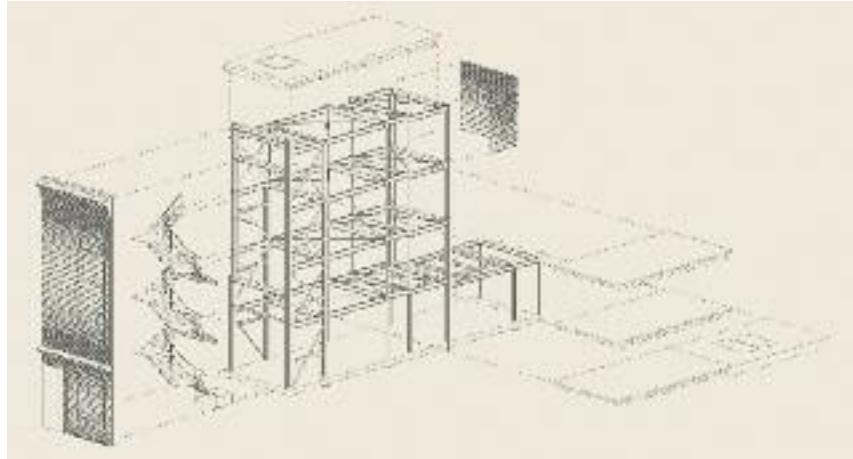
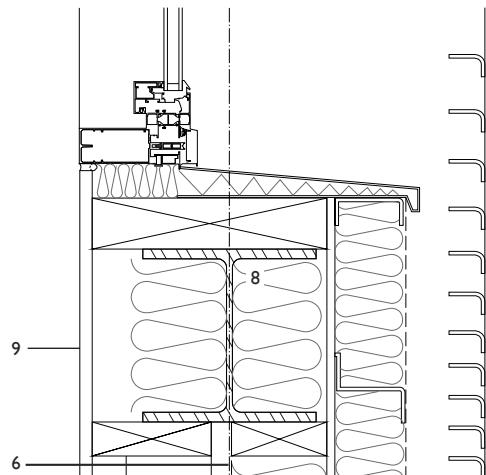
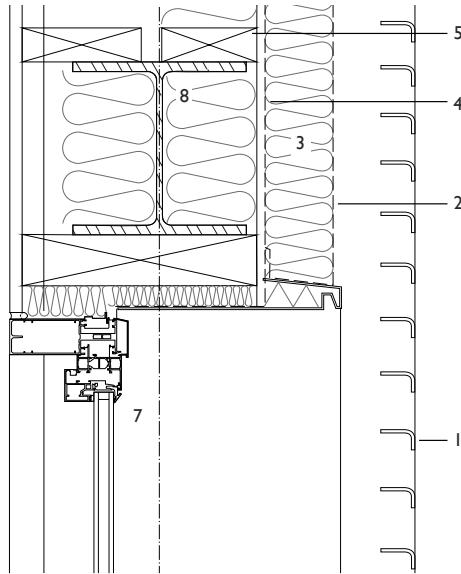
The narrowness and depth of the site (4.5x17 metres) necessitated careful evaluation of the massing and floor layouts to maximise daylighting. A large rooflight set within the rear terrace is designed to boost natural lighting in the

**OPPOSITE** Ground, first, second and third-floor plans.  
Key: 1 entrance lobby, 2 workshop, 3 toilet, 4 machine room, 5 kitchen/informal meeting, 6 accessible terrace, 7 web studio, 8 meeting room, 9 design studio; front elevation with louvred Cor-ten rainscreen.

**BETWEEN** Plywood lined workshop; a finely-crafted metal staircase links the four narrow floorplates.







ground-floor workshop. Artificial lighting is carefully modulated to meet the specific needs of each workspace. A system of ceiling tracks with adjustable downlighters is used in conjunction with evenly distributed linear luminaires. In addition, each workbench has its own adjustable desk lamp. Low-energy LED lamps with occupancy and daylight sensors are used throughout.

The building is naturally ventilated (except for the ground-floor workshop) with an opening rooflight above the main staircase promoting cross-ventilation. The supply and extract duct-work has been purposefully left exposed on the ground floor to show how the workshop is serviced. Underfloor heating is used in all the workspaces.

**ABOVE LEFT** Detail section through front facade. Key: 1 Cor-ten rainscreen cladding, 2 breather membrane, 3 rigid insulation, 4 WBP sheathing, 5 timber studs with mineral wool, 6 VCL, 7 double-glazed window, 8 steel frame, 9 birch-faced plywood lining.

**Credits** Architect: DSDHA, structure: Structure Workshop; services: Integration; qs: PT Projects; main contractor: Philian Construction; client: Alex Monroe; facade breather membrane: Serge Ferrari; Wicona curtain wall, sliding folding door, rear windows: Sapa Building Systems; bricks: Wienerberger.

