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# BUILDING STUDY

## 24 SAVILE ROW

### EPR ARCHITECTS



#### Brief

*Stephen Pey, associate director, EPR Architects*

Following a successful competition in 2012, EPR sought to reference Savile Row's rich character and culture of tailoring on this corner site by celebrating the arts and crafts heritage of the local area.

Early and continued collaboration between the architect and ceramic artist Kate Malone has resulted in a building adorned with 10,000 artist-designed, hand-glazed ceramic tiles positioned on a sand-cast bronze plinth. The building is a piece of art.

#### Data

**Start on site** June 2013  
**Completion date** 30 April 2015  
**Gross internal floor area** 2,906m<sup>2</sup>  
**Form of contract**  
 Design and Build  
**Construction cost** Undisclosed  
**Architect** EPR Architects  
**Clients** Aerium and Terrace Hill Group  
**Structural engineer** Capita Symonds  
**M&E engineer** Mecserve  
**Planning consultant** Rolfe Judd  
**Project manager** Terrace Hill Group  
**Cost consultant** McBains Cooper  
**Contractor** McLaren Construction  
**Transport** TTP Consulting  
**Environmental consultant** Mecserve  
**Right of light** Gordon Ingram Associates  
**Approved building inspector** HCD  
**CAD software used** MicroStation  
**Annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions** 16.6 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (estimate)

## BUILDING APPRAISAL

By Owen Pritchard  
Photography by Jim Stephenson

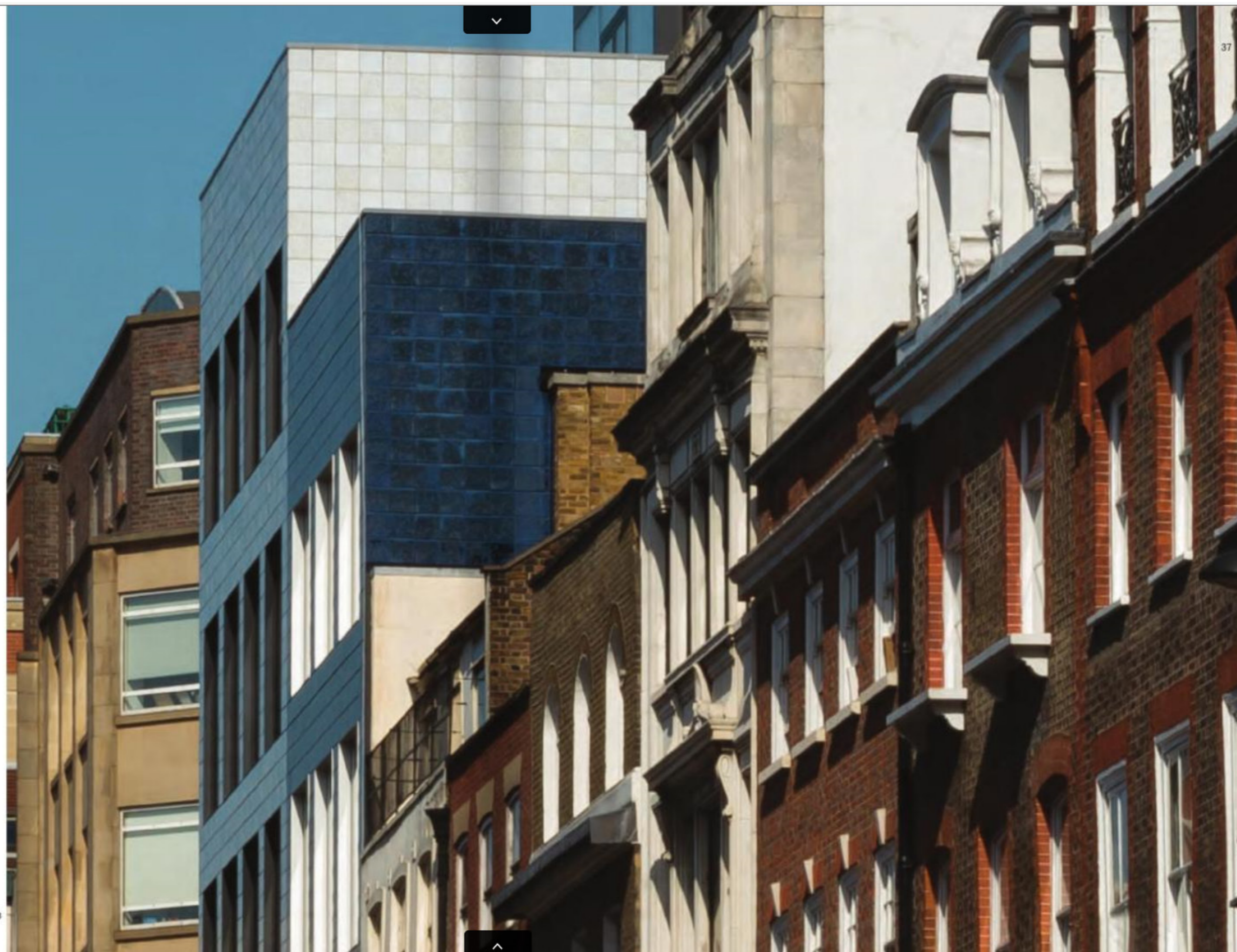
**S**avile Row is a brand and an institution. It was built in the 1730s as part of the Burlington Estate. Numbers 1 and 22-23 were designed by William Kent, architect of Stowe House and the Treasury buildings in Whitehall. A Savile Row suit is the pinnacle of tailoring; a bespoke suit will require about two to three months of work.

Tailoring is a craft – the opposite of what constitutes the process behind a run-of-the-mill office building, which often comprises a collage of products, specified on a budget, selected from a website and arranged on site. Despite the influence of tech companies such as Google and Facebook on workplace design, it could be argued that banality remains the norm.

At its southern end, Savile Row ends with the pomp and grandiosity of Burlington House, home of the Royal Academy, while its northern end terminates on Conduit Street, flanked to the east by a charmless concrete building and to the west by the new 24 Savile Row, designed by EPR Architects.

The practice was tasked with creating a seven-storey building that combined prime retail along Conduit Street with offices above. It replaces a 1980s mock-Georgian building, which Westminster Council was happy to see demolished. There are two principal facades, clad in 10,000 bespoke tiles designed by ceramicist Kate Malone, who previously worked with the practice on a project in Brighton and on the AJ's Reimagining Mayfair Charrette.

Conduit Street links to the grand sweep of Regent Street. Each building has an individual presence that flits between fussy ornamentation and post-war perfunctory.



EPR has added to this eccentric selection by dividing the facade in two, cladding half in white glazed tiles and half in a deep blue/black. Each tile was hand-glazed, then fired at 1,260°C in batches of 100 at Froyles, the same Surrey pottery yard Lutyens used.

There are three shades of white and one of the blue/black. After firing, each tile was given an index sticker defining its colour, and then designated a place on the facade. On site, the tiles were hand-set and gravity hung on to Kingspan integrated panels with aluminium rails and 'helping hand' brackets.

Viewed from the north, the plot now reads as two buildings, and the tonal differences across the facade reinforce the overlaid grids of the cladding and fenestration. Up close, each tile reveals its imperfections and unique patterning. The effect is like amoebas under a microscope or frost on a car windscreen, thanks to the depth of the glaze. Punched into the facade are large, recessed windows that provide reflectivity and transparency within its composition. The

architect has set up a hierarchy that plays a traditional game with perspective: the ground floor is characterised by large display windows for 743m<sup>2</sup> of retail space; above are dark windows stretching over the first and second floors; then two more storeys of tall windows with a glass tint; and a smaller set of windows on the fifth floor. Above, a recessed, zinc-clad floor on top is hidden from view on the street.

Along Savile Row the building has a different character; the site returns 90° from Conduit Street, then kinks in again as the street wraps around. The white tiles act as a vertical datum from which cantilevered bay windows are extruded. As the sun passes overhead, shadows are cast along

Up close, each tile reveals its imperfections and unique pattern

1. (opening spread) Cantilevered bay windows project from the Savile Row facade

2. (opening spread) The building occupies a corner plot between Savile Row and Conduit Street

3. (previous page) The building imposes its own geometry and order on a visually noisy streetscape

4. (below) Architect's perspective sketch

5. (opposite) The 10,000 tiles used on the facade were hand-glazed and hand-set



the facade, accentuating the relief of the protruding windows, which were formed using box and angle section frames before being bolted to the perimeter floor beams.

From the exterior this building announces itself – and the convergence of the two wealthy streets it occupies – with confidence, imposing its own hierarchies, geometry and order on to the corner of this convoluted and visually noisy streetscape.

The building is arranged around a 10m structural grid using slim 450mm-deep Westok cellular beams. This allowed the office floorplates to be largely column-free, the M&E concealed within the ceilings and floors. Most floors have windows facing north, east and west – they are bright and airy; the fit outs, if done well, will make the most of the generous spaces. Internally, the projecting windows make less sense. Vital extra space has been achieved in terms of square footage, but these bays don't offer an obvious practical purpose. It is possible they will become repositories for office detritus or plants that block out the light, or just be covered by blinds. There are a couple of balconies on the uppermost floors and the building incorporates a biosolar roof – EPR has found a lot of usable space on this tight site.

Offices comprise so much of our cities' building stock and are a building typology with a short lifespan – often destined to be torn down and replaced with a larger, more financially efficient building. The architectural value of office building depreciates rapidly. Historic England was applauded for listing 14 office buildings earlier this year, but the real question was whether this was enough.

In 1983 Frank Duffy called out architects for the poor quality of many office developments. 'Grubby competence, lack of interest in what the buildings are for, willingness to accept a half-baked economic reality are the basis for a level of banality which, en masse, is far more ugly than simple lack of talent or clumsiness in detailing,' he said.

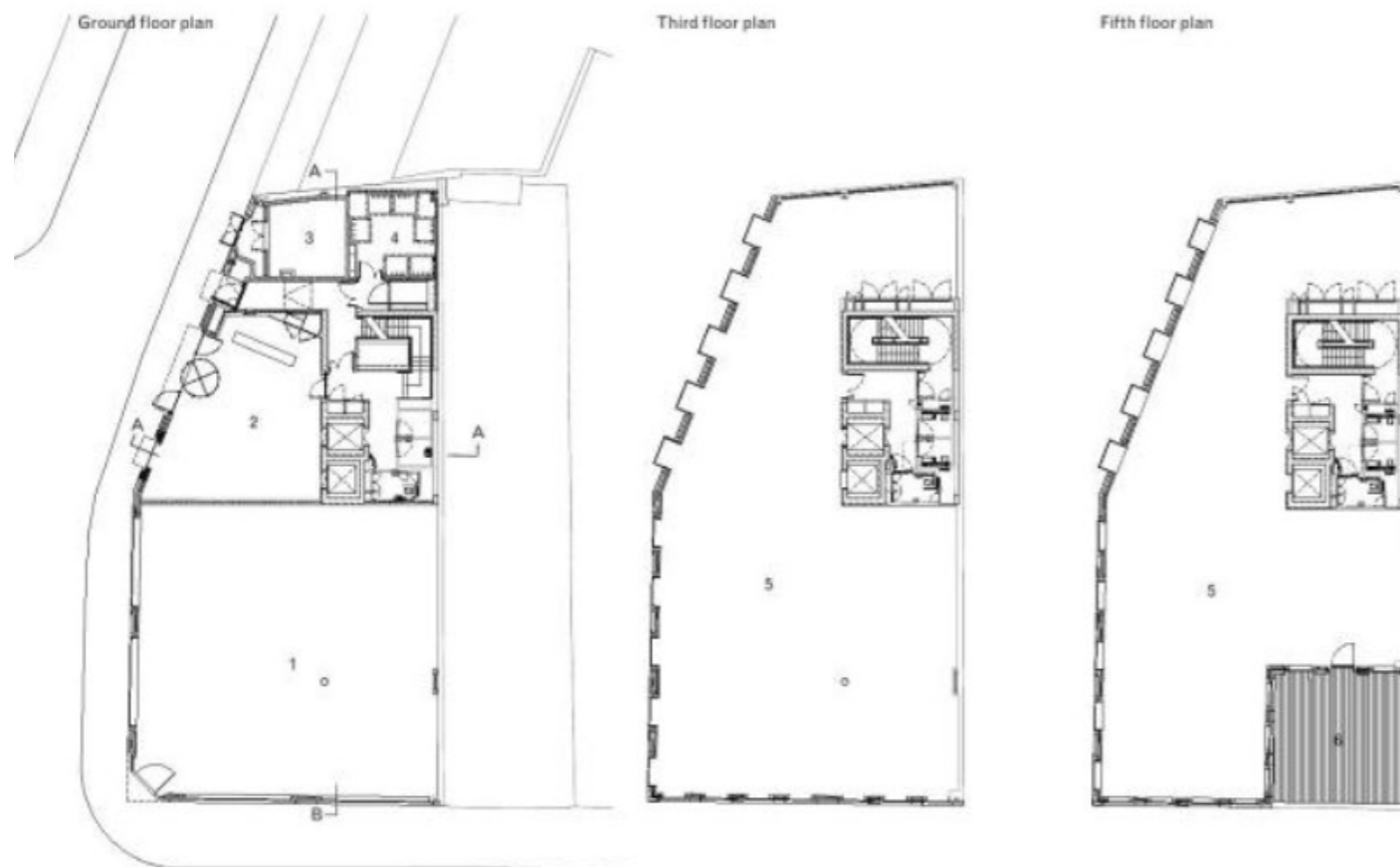
Over the past couple of years there have been a clutch of new office buildings in the capital that provide a convincing riposte to this 30-year-old accusation – Turnmills by Piercy & Co, Alphabeta by Studio RHE and 10-4 Pentonville Road by Stiff + Trevillion spring to mind. With an enlightened client who understands the value, in every sense of the word, that architects bring to a project and allows them to imbue what could be a banal project with craft and meaning, the office becomes a more vital and visible part of the city. EPR, with Kate Malone, has achieved this with aplomb. This is a building that adheres to a strict geometry at a macro scale and dissolves into artisanal chaos up-close. It gives Savile Row a contemporary bookend that acknowledges the street's traditions without resorting to pastiche.



Ground floor plan

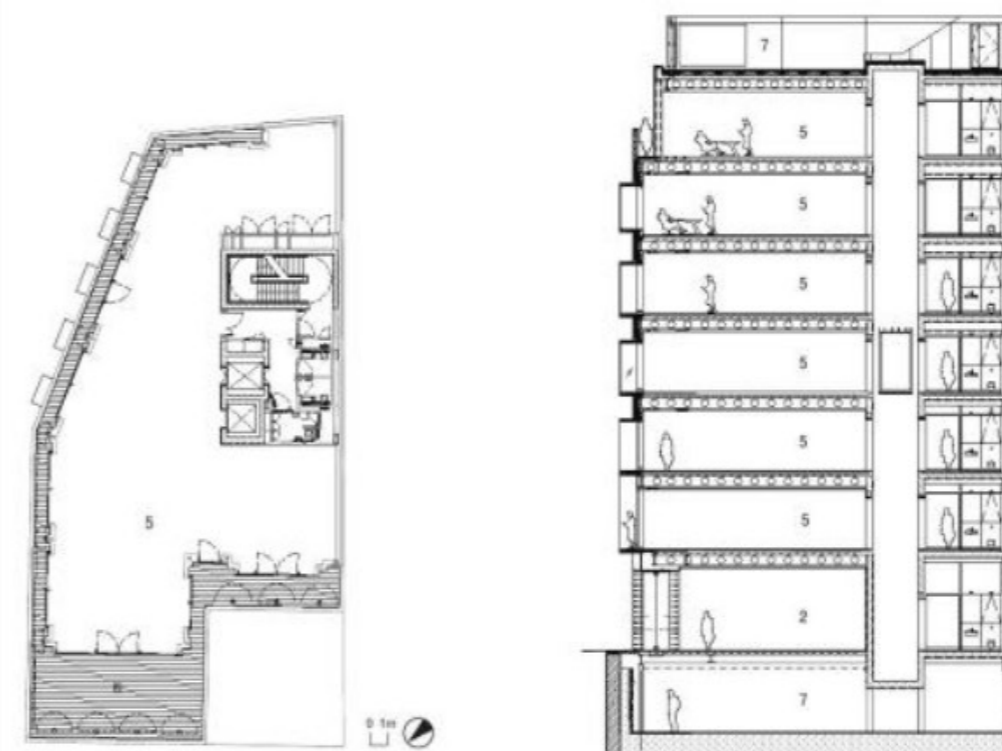
Third floor plan

Fifth floor plan



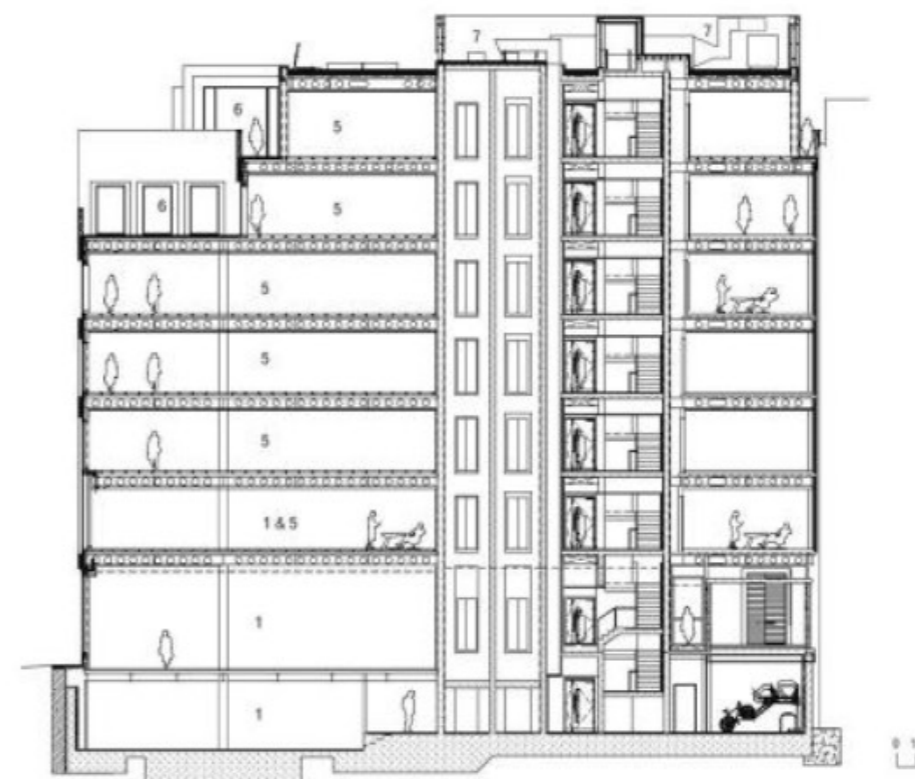
Sixth floor plan

Section AA



- 1. Retail
- 2. Office reception
- 3. Substation
- 4. Refuse
- 5. Office
- 6. Terrace
- 7. Plant

Section BB



- 6. (left) The offices look over the rooftops of Mayfair

## WORKING DETAIL

Stephen Pey, associate director,  
EPR Architects

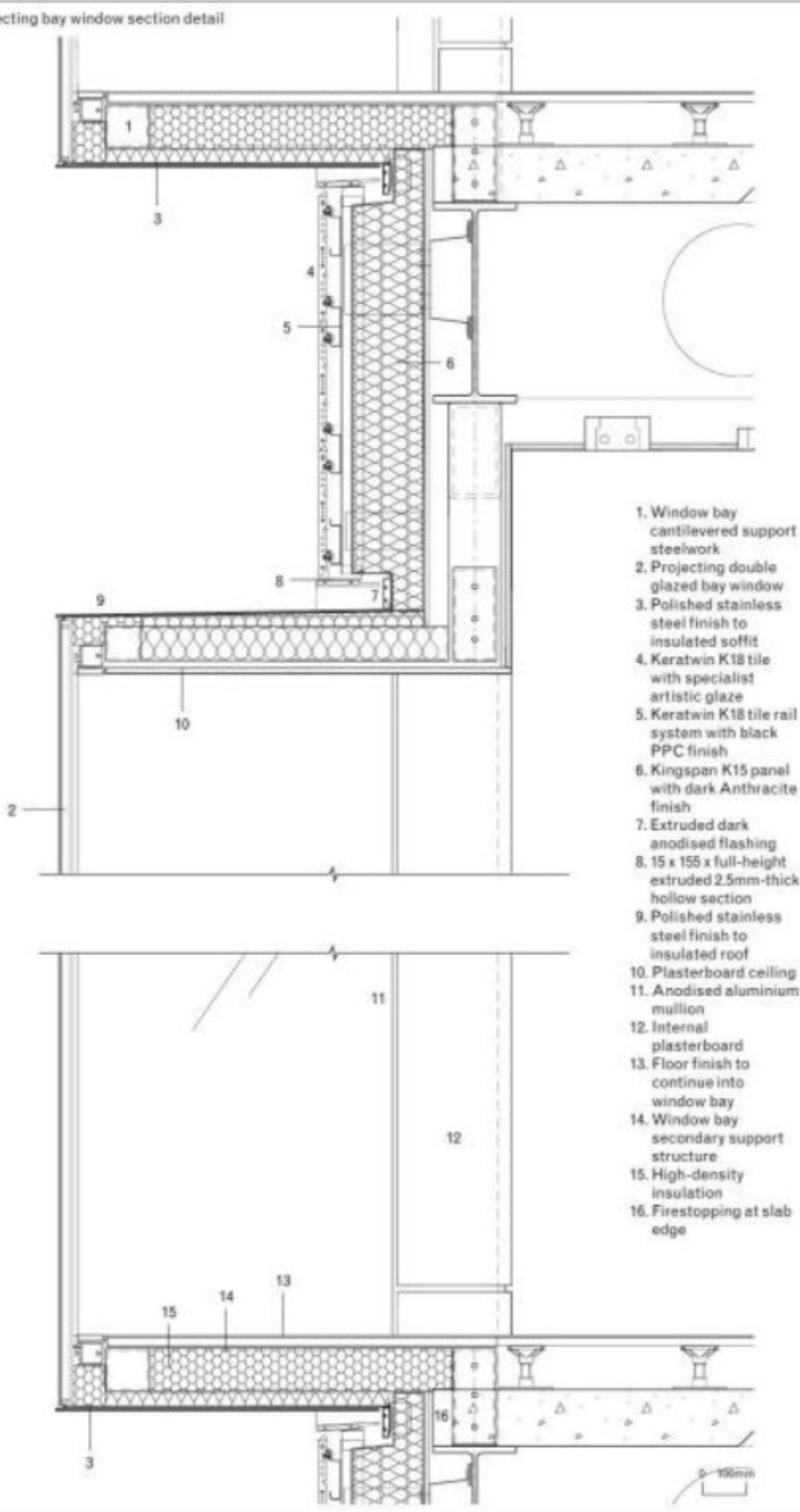
Lightness of structure and detail was paramount in our design intent for the projecting bay windows on Savile Row, which are double-height on first and second floors.

Structurally the windows consists of a cantilevered hollow section steel box frame at floor and head level, fixed back to the primary structure. Movement and installation tolerances were designed to lower limits to achieve a crisp detail. The double-glazed units extend full length and use the reflection of the glass and a ceramic frit to conceal the buildup behind. The structurally bonded glazing units, which form the bay perimeter with glass corner joints, are capped with a 5mm polished solid stainless-steel sheet to the roof and soffit. The floor level continues into the bay, providing extended views along Savile Row, and allows the user to glimpse the crystalline glazed tiles on the main facade from inside.

Bespoke extruded anodised aluminium sections act as the shore where the glazed ceramic tiles meet the windows. These are in a single 7m vertical piece to the double-height windows, and are recessed to add depth to the facade, framing the windows and lifting the hand-glazed crystalline tiles to the fore.



Projecting bay window section detail



## ARCHITECT'S VIEW

Stephen Pey, associate director,  
EPR Architects

The word 'bespoke' was invented in Savile Row, where suits were 'to be spoken for' by a specific client. We knew we had to create a bespoke building, featuring material and design quality to echo that tradition and create an artisan building for a special place within London. Like a Savile Row suit, the building should be formed of a simple 'cut' using the finest materials.

Art is integrated into the fabric of the building using a bespoke glazed ceramic tile on the main elevations, a collaboration with renowned ceramic artist Kate Malone. Crystalline glazes on the tile are effectively three-dimensional and come in four differing textures: three white and one black with blue crystals. The tiles reflect and refract daylight, capturing differing moods and subtly changing the appearance and tone of the building, depending on the weather and time of day.

The building sits on a sand-cast bronze plinth, which references in three dimensions the crystalline glazes, and was the result of further collaboration with Malone in conjunction with designer Michael Eden.

The Mayfair conservation area's natural grain is reflected in the use of ceramic tones within the facade treatment, preserving the historic plot widths that were created in the 1960s, when Savile Row was extended to meet Conduit Street.

The level of care and attention to detail in the craft and making of this building is a benchmark to which all our projects aspire.

7. The bay windows cast long shadows across the facade  
8. (near left) Projected windows on the east-facing facade seen from New Burlington Place

## ARTIST'S VIEW

Kate Malone, ceramic artist

I am a ceramist, specialising in hand-making decorative arts and large-scale public works. For 30 years my glaze research has centred around discovering new colours and surfaces, and in the past 20 years it has focused on high-temperature stoneware crystalline glazes. After climbing in temperature to 1,260°C, these glazes form crystals while cooling, and these seed and grow, creating surfaces that refract and reflect light – more responsive than normal glazes; more complicated to use than most glazes.

My initial response to Stephen Peys' request to develop black and white glazes for a facade project was to encourage him toward a more lively set of colours. Initial trials threw up amazing greens, golds, blues, greys but the 'Peys vision' for this building became clear with good reason.

We worked for 18 months testing hundreds of new glazes in my small glaze lab, with workshop manager Helen Evans under the watchful eye of Peys and his ever-increasing demand for purer surfaces. At these high temperatures, clay and glaze intermingle, making pure white glazes especially challenging to produce.

The facade Peys needed was 1,000m<sup>2</sup>; 11,000 tiles – too many for my London kilns. I searched to find someone to take on these notoriously difficult fluid and variable crystal glazes. I found Rich Miller of Froyle Tiles, a small artisan workshop producing hand-made tiles at high glaze temperatures. Tests in his kilns rendered positive responses. Rich was prepared to take this on. I was to be glaze supplier, Froyle would apply glaze and fire tiles.

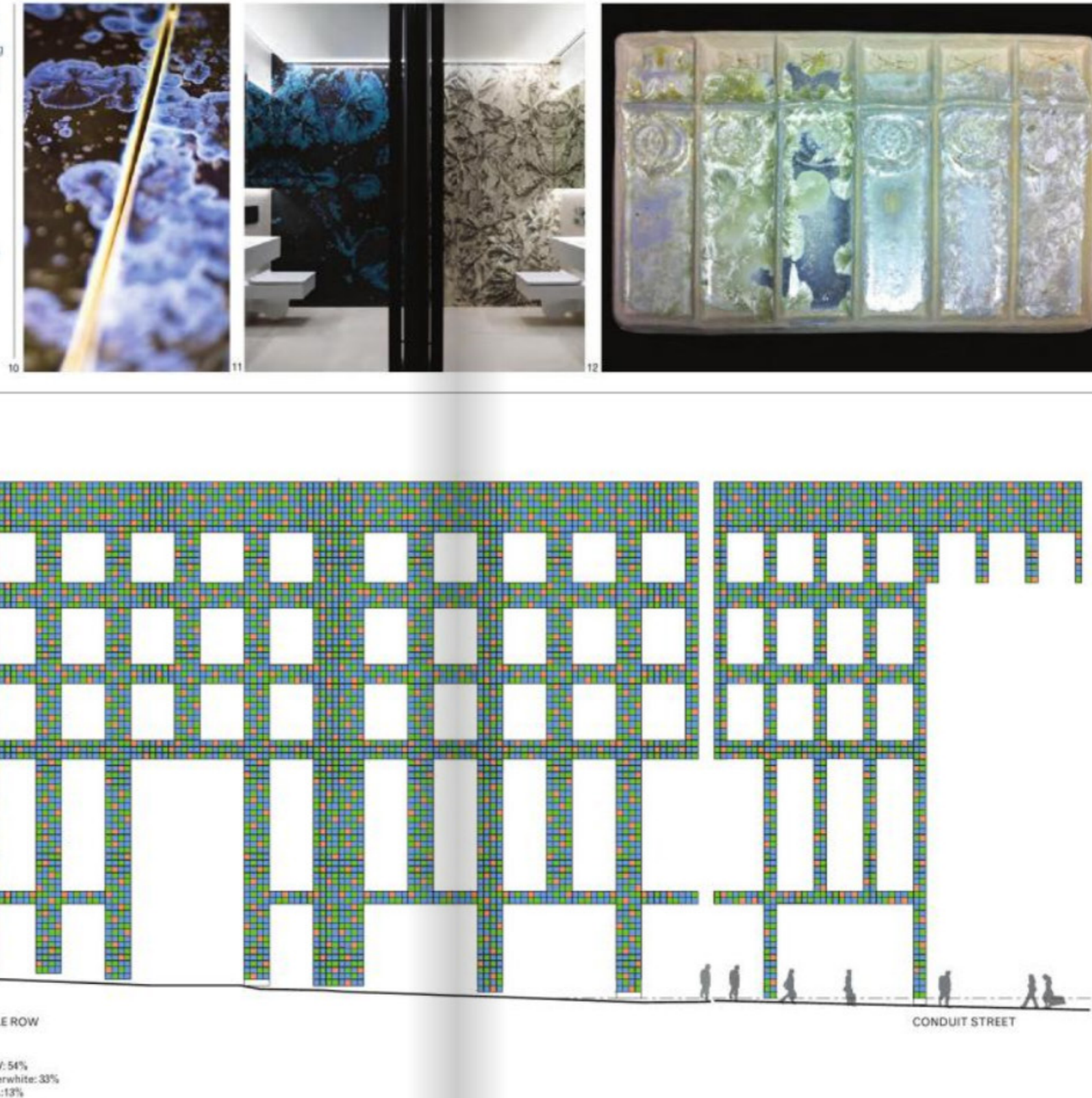
At my Balls Pond Studios we had the daunting task of hand-mixing 1,500 litres of my glazes – hand weighed (to 0.1 of a gram), hand sieved and kiln tested. The supply was mixed in six-litre batches, with staggered delivery to Froyle for freshness. Froyle carried out back-to-back five-day kiln firings of 100 tiles in rotation; firings rendered every tile covered in a thick matrix of extraordinary crystal glaze. Each tile was hand-glazed with hand-sponged edges, each set by hand perfectly level in the kiln. Some 20km of masking tape was applied and peeled

away; 200,000 holes poked with a stick to check for blockages. Each tile was handled nine times through the glazing and sorting, before being stored ready for hanging on the Savile Row facade.

This is a testimony to craft skill, attention to detail, and the hand. It was a great pleasure to work with the teams with such intensity and to a constant standard.

The vision of Stephen Peys and EPR, the climax of 30 years of my own research, the willingness of the teams to take pleasure in the craft of making, the confidence from planners, developers and architects, all made this a most extraordinary project.

The result is a sharp, modern and intensely crafted work of art that stands on the streets of London to glisten and delight the public ... a public work of craft.



9. (this image) Facade composition  
10. (top) The glaze of the blue/black tile  
11. WCs are decorated with large graphics depicting the patterns within the glaze  
12. A test panel of finishes developed during the research process

SAVILE ROW

■ 123W: 54%  
■ Superwhite: 33%  
■ 151A: 13%

CONDUIT STREET

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