

far from conservative



We've come to Millbank, once home to the iconic British engineering company Vickers, builders of the famous Supermarine Spitfire.



The building remains a distinctive landmark on the River Thames, a stone's throw away from Tate Britain. Rising to the 7th floor we find the new home of the leading architectural firm EPR Architects.

Having a long and distinguished track record, the hallmark of the practice, and key to its success since its founding, has been a commitment to the evolution of its work through creativity and innovation by successive generations. A commitment as alive today as ever.





▶▶▶▶▶ This is reflected in recent award winning projects such as its central London office and retail development, Cardinal Place in Victoria – a mix of shops and offices – and the Walton on Thames redevelopment, the Heart, featuring an impressive residential development above a new shopping centre. The current exciting portfolio of work includes Masterplans, residential, offices, hotels, leisure and latterly racecourses. Many of its projects draw on the skills in individual sectors and apply them to mixed use developments so prominent in the property portfolios of many of the country's leading developers. Whilst working throughout the UK and Ireland potential projects in Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East and China beckon.

One senses the spirit of optimism and creativity upon entering the 7th floor studio. Filled with light and commanding magnificent views in nearly every direction, the floor accommodates the whole studio, which has had a huge beneficial impact on staff. Associate Director Nigel Vogel tells us more. 'We were previously spread over four floors in our previous offices just off

Vauxhall Bridge Road 10 minutes from here. This meant that we were fragmented and communication between groups was surprisingly difficult. Now we are all together.

'Being on one floor like this not only overcomes this but feels more democratic,' Associate Director Zlatko Slijepcevic tells us. 'Even our own Chairman sits in the open plan office with a nice view of like everyone else. In fact we all sit at the same desks, which really fosters the idea of a single team.'

The company has also taken the 6th floor, which, as we will see later, features the company's reception space and client facing areas. As we walk through the 7th floor of the EPR London home though we can't help but notice the noise, or rather the lack of it. Was it the firm's Christmas party the night before ensuring that decibels are kept to a minimum? 'It is quiet here,' Zlatko confirms. 'We do have a studio atmosphere rather than an office. That's exactly what we wanted to create.'

'The furniture basically follows the building's shape. We didn't want to just go

with a standard arrangement of the workstations, we wanted to create a feeling of one team. We have three very big desks of 45m each really. These are of course not a single piece, but there is a continuous flow to the eye. Everybody is on a 1,600mm workspace and we have put in these clever infills which join the desks together and allow us to create the curve along each axis. This is very flexible and also means that if we ever want to move, we still have rectangular desks that we can reconfigure.

'Then we have small meeting areas to the middle and a small amount of filing. We also wanted social areas where our people can break from their desks and relax.'

'This Dynamobel furniture allows us to create large team areas and also allows us to be creative here. We can walk around very easily and it is also very good for teams and team working.'

'The building is basically a Y-shape,' Nigel takes over. 'The ceiling has been designed to follow the shape, as has the lighting and the furniture. The shape of the building certainly informed the layout of the desks. The services are all in the central ▶▶▶▶▶



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‘We have a spine under the desk that carries all the IT and cabling. This spine also allows the desks to be re-wired very easily.’



It is clear that EPR has embraced the unusual shape of the floorplate here rather than see it as an obstacle – as we would expect from a leading architectural firm. We ask whether Millbank presented any other major challenges. ‘As you know, this building was built in the 1960’s and is a listed modernist structure, and that is what we have tried to reinforce in the design,’ Zlatko tells us. ‘That listing helped us to be honest. This was all divided into small cellular offices – it was very 1980’s fit-out – and what we wanted to do was to open all that up and expose the concrete in here.

‘If we go down to the 6th floor, we have an area that we are going to sub-let to another tenant and this will give you a good idea of what this was like before, with just the partitions taken down’.

We head down to the 6th floor and the client meeting space. Although Zlatko is quick to point out that this is not really a reception in the classical sense. ‘It’s not really a reception – this is the first point of contact with visitors, but the person who works here multi-tasks.’

The space features a smart angular table – but not in the reception desk style – which is adorned with flowers. The Meeting Manager here acts as a hostess, providing a concierge service for visitors.

Flanking the smart, minimalist central space is a series of impressive meeting rooms, complete with Eames classics and state-of-the-art AV and conferencing facilities.

We should also mention that, as you walk into the 6th floor space, you are faced by a large, antique clock which, we are told, originally belonged to the firm’s founder, who was an avid collector of clocks.

Speaking of which, it is probably time for us to make our leave of this impressive and most definitely not conservative environment ●

essential ingredients

Client:	• EPR Architects
Design & Planning:	• EPR Architects 020 7932 7600
Systems Furniture:	• Dynamobel 020 7324 6199
Task Seating:	• Dynamobel 020 7324 6199
Meeting Room Seating:	• Eames by Vitra 020 7608 6200
Lighting:	• Zumtobel 020 8589 1800