

## **Work underway on new studio for PearsonLloyd**

Leading design agency invests in East London, retrofitting Victorian workshop block for new studio

After more than 20 years in operation, award-winning London design agency PearsonLloyd is about to begin a new chapter. In spring 2020, founders Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd will open their new home in Hackney, on land they purchased in 2017. In collaboration with Cassion Castle Architects, they are working on the restoration and repurposing of a neglected Victorian factory building – an ambitious and wide-ranging retrofit that will give the practice a reconsolidated office, workshop and archive.



The new studio will be a retrofit of a Victorian workshop block in Hackney, London.

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While a growing number of London's creative businesses are operated from rented, shared or flexible workspaces, Luke and Tom were determined to set down solid roots, buy a building, and actively invest in the architectural fabric of the city they've lived and worked in for over 20 years.

Since 2015, when the studio's growing business led PearsonLloyd to expand across two sites in Shoreditch and central Hackney, Luke and Tom have been looking for a site that could bring all studio functions under one roof once again and give PearsonLloyd a permanent home. After two decades in East London, having witnessed its 21st-century evolution first-hand, they were committed to remain part of the area's creative life.



Long-time Hackney residents PearsonLloyd are investing in the architectural fabric of the city.

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*"We have seen the area transform from cheap warehouse space rented by artists, to a mixed urban fabric blending art, start-ups, commerce and residential. We have always enjoyed and benefited from the energy of the area, sandwiched between the city to the south and residential to the north."*

– Tom Lloyd, co-founder, PearsonLloyd

They spent several years looking for a suitable property, eventually finding a site in Hackney up for auction. Three weeks later, it was theirs.



Archival image of the corner of Hackney Road.

Encompassing five former stables-turned-workshops, the site is located on Yorkton Street, which runs off Hackney Road towards Haggerston Park. The area has a long association with making, and historically was home to a succession of furniture makers, musical-instrument artisans, wood turners and more. Today, most of these have been replaced with residential units, and PearsonLloyd see their move as an opportunity to preserve and reinvigorate the area's design heritage.

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In the early 1990s – likely in response to fire damage – part of the original Victorian building was replaced with a modern utilitarian structure. When PearsonLloyd acquired the site, it offered 6,000 sq ft of functional but uninspiring space, spread over two floors.

*The building itself was a mess, with lots of overlaid alterations over the years. Our approach was to try to strip that all back to a few essential characteristics and to include as many existing features as possible. Aside from preserving the embodied energy, this means the interiors of this scheme will be much richer because the project is a refurbishment rather than a new build. The history of the building will be ever-present.”*

– Cassion Castle, founder, Cassion Castle Architects



The construction process will strip back the building to its few essential characteristics.

Many design studios and architects would have taken the easier (and often cheaper) route: simply knocking it down and starting again. But Luke and Tom agreed that the most sustainable, socially valuable and creatively interesting path

would be to work with the existing building – to preserve, enhance and adapt. Considering that, on average, a third to a half of a building’s carbon emissions are concentrated in the construction phase, the reuse of existing structures (and recycling of existing materials) is a vital step towards reducing the environmental impact of the construction industry.



Early drawing of PearsonLloyd's plans for Yorkton Street.

With this in mind, PearsonLloyd set about a comprehensive renovation that would deliver the tailor-made workspace they needed without wasting the energy already embedded in the structure.

*“The most important sustainability choice was not to knock down the building in the first place. Even though it takes more time and thought preserving what was quite a delicate Victorian structure, we really believe that it was the right decision. We have chosen to reuse as much material as we can from the building, including recycling the bricks, timbers and steel.”*

– Luke Pearson, co-founder, PearsonLloyd

In collaboration with Cassion Castle Architects, with whom Tom Lloyd has a 12-year working relationship (Castle designed his London home and Hampshire studio), PearsonLloyd have begun the processes of designing and building the new studio in collaboration. Through an evolving process of designing, experimenting and adapting, the project team are gradually reconciling the fabric of the original

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building with PearsonLloyd's needs as a practice. They are continuously trialling new approaches, responding to the structure as they take it apart and discover more about it – precisely the same methodology that PearsonLloyd applies to product and spatial design for their clients.

This adaptive approach represents a return to the way humans have built since the beginning of civilisation – not by wiping the slate clean and starting afresh each time, but by building on top of building, modifying and extending, gradually metamorphosing sites and then cities to create richly layered palimpsests of old and new.

This echoes Luke and Tom's vision for how the new studio will be used – as an active space for making, somewhere that is never static.

Work is underway and PearsonLloyd's new studio is scheduled to open in late spring 2020.



Archival image of the corner of Hackney Road.

## Notes to editors

For more information, images, site visits and interviews with Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd, please contact Rupert Evans-Harding at [rupert@zetteler.co.uk](mailto:rupert@zetteler.co.uk) or on +44 (0)20 3735 5855.

### **About PearsonLloyd**

Founded in London in 1997 by Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd, PearsonLloyd has spent over 20 years designing products, systems and environments for the home, workplace, transport and healthcare sectors. The studio's philosophy of user-focused, problem-solving design, its interest in the behavioural impact of products and places, and its ability to respond to a rapidly changing world, have earned it an enviable list of international clients – and won a consistent stream of awards over the years.

[pearsonlloyd.com](http://pearsonlloyd.com)

[instagram.com/pearsonlloyd](https://www.instagram.com/pearsonlloyd)

### **About Cassion Castle Architects**

Cassion Castle Architects is an award-winning architecture practice based in London. Founded in 2006 and led by Cassion Castle, we are dedicated to the creation of well-crafted, quality designs for both residential and commercial clients. A recent project of note is Chalk House: a 'Paragraph 79', zero-carbon house in the Kent downs, made from compressed chalk quarried from its own site. We are unusual in that we frequently provide a 'design and build' service where we not only provide traditional architectural services but also act as main contractor.

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