

ZETTELER

Opening the office

London comms agency redesigns HQ as a dynamic hub for community, charity and creativity



Zetteler's new space is designed to be flexible and enriching, with curtains on bookshelves allowing aesthetic and acoustic adjustments to be made easily. Photography by Taran Wilkhu.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a paradigm shift in the way we work. Both the look and culture of the office are transforming and although there are still some businesses holding out for a return to the old ways, others are exploring bold new workplace concepts.

As a communications agency specialising in the creative sector, Zetteler has been immersed in workspace design thinking for almost 10 years, from its early days as a small-scale PR outfit to its present-day stays as a multi-service communications agency.

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Reflecting over the pandemic, the company realised two things: new, more flexible ways of working have become not only viable, but optimal; there are exciting possibilities beyond the old convention of a single office serving a single business.



Studio Rhonda's design uses shifts in colour to break the space into distinctive zones.
Photography by Taran Wilkhu.

Rather than, say, taking on workspace two or three days a week, Zetteler has seized the opportunity to create a brand new space to serve both its own team and its wider community of start-ups, charities, journalists and creatives.

Building upon years of championing design and architecture projects, Zetteler has co-created its first fully purpose-designed space in Hackney, East London, in collaboration with the interiors visionary Rhonda Drakeford of Darkroom.

Taking an empty, open, industrial-style unit as a blank canvas (see notes to editors below for images of the space to start with), Zetteler and Studio Rhonda have created a light, colourful, multi-zone workspace that is warm and inspiring to spend time in. They have created a space that eschews the traditional banks of workstations in favour of a versatile, multifunctional layout. The new office meets the post-pandemic needs of the Zetteler team and the creative community alike, providing space for client meetings, strategy-planning sessions, journalist events and workshops whenever they need it.

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Designed for connection

Like many businesses in the wake of the pandemic, Zetteler has spent time rethinking its working environment and its needs as a team. The company swiftly adapted to remote working, operated continuously throughout lockdowns and was able to maintain productivity. However, they also found that working from home sacrificed the benefits of shared physical space when it came to deep-dive discussions, generating ideas together, and sparking those moments of unexpected inspiration that are essential to creative-sector businesses. The new office is designed to encourage precisely this, while freeing the team to work where and how best suits them.



HØLTE's kitchen units and integrated full-size fridge help enable the office to serve both as an everyday workspace and as a venue for meetings and events. Photography by Taran Wilkhu.

Located on the seventh floor of Regents' Studios, off Broadway Market, the 1,000 sqft workspace is divided into three zones, each with a different atmosphere and each suited to a different way of working. The main work area features a large wooden Max Table designed by Max Lamb for Hem, with Herman Miller Cosm chairs, along with a wall of curtain-concealable library shelving. A corridor leads past a bank of storage cupboards to a more relaxed, café-style space at the rear, with a corner sofa, smaller tables for lunching, and a kitchen by Zetteler's client and neighbour

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HØLTE. Between these two spaces is one of the most distinctive of the office's features – a purpose-built meeting space encased in walls of deep blue Valchromat and translucent glass bricks, that allow in dappled light while creating a sense of privacy.

Rhonda Drakeford's carefully chosen colour-ways help break the space down into its constituent zones. A colour shift from a cool duck-egg blue to a warmer sunny soft peach tone in the walls, floors and ceiling marks a change in ambiance between the main work area at the front and the more relaxed space at the rear, enhancing the sense of functional transition.



A considered layout and curated furniture allows different zones to serve a variety of work and social functions. Photography by Taran Wilkhu.

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Flexible, functional and for everyone

Ditching the outdated 9am–6pm pre-pandemic model, the new office is designed to be a flexible resource that the team can use as they need, as a space to work, hold meetings, host events – and to offer to Zetteler’s community of creatives, start-ups and charities that might be in need of a venue for a meeting, event or workspace.



Founder and director Sabine Zetteler. Photography by Taran Wilkhu.

“I want the space to offer both our own team and the wider creative community somewhere flexible, beautiful and functional where they can come and get together for whatever they need. Connecting people is a huge part of what we do. For the first time in our history, we’re in a position to properly invest in creating the ideal space – I want as many people to benefit from it as possible.”

– Sabine Zetteler, founder, Zetteler

Since completion, as well as serving the Zetteler team, the space has also been used by the [Architecture Foundation’s Young Trustees](#), hosted the birthday party for creative-sector equity campaign [Design Can](#), and provided a venue for activist art organisation [Lon-Art](#).

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Accessible, useful, beautiful and ethical design

Company founder Sabine Zetteler has severe conductive hearing loss, and open office spaces with hard floors and high ceilings create echo chambers that can be highly disruptive. Employing materials and partitions to create a deaf-friendly space was complicated by another priority – the need for the space to be vegan. This was a particular obstacle when it came to soft furnishings such as rugs and curtains, as most acoustic materials use animal-derived fabrics such as wool.

Working together, Rhonda and Sabine used the challenge as an opportunity to explore new possibilities in interior design, sourcing vegan alternatives to all materials: the paints for the walls, the fabrics for curtains – many materials which are thought to be vegan, but often involve animal-derived components in their manufacture especially in glues. Although this made the process more complicated than a standard workplace design, it inspired some out-of-the-box thinking about the relationship between values and design, and resulted in a proof of concept for the idea that a modern workplace can be styled to reflect the practical needs and moral outlook of its occupants.

Zetteler is now fully installed, and the team are relishing the benefits of the new hybrid working model that the new space has made possible. They are looking forward to seeing how it evolves over time to meet the changing needs of the community it was created to serve.



The main work area features a Max Table designed by Max Lamb for Hem, teamed with Cosm task chairs by Herman Miller. Photography by Taran Wiklhu.

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Notes to editors

For more information and images, to speak to Sabine Zetteler or Rhonda Drakeford, or to arrange a visit to Zetteler HQ, please contact emily@zetteler.co.uk.

Zetteler

Driven by the desire to build a better world, Zetteler discovers, shapes and shares stories that matter. Founded by Sabine Zetteler in 2012, the company works with select clients of all sizes across the global creative sector – in design, art, architecture, craft and beyond – helping individuals, brands and institutions through PR, strategy and film. Communications agency by name, community by nature, Zetteler believes that bringing people together is the most effective way to initiate real, meaningful and lasting change.

Turning 10 years old in 2022, the company now provides a full suite of consultancy, strategy, PR, editorial and filmmaking services to some of the most influential studios, institutions and projects in the creative sector. Recently, Zetteler has successfully launched Design District on Greenwich Peninsula – one of the most ambitious and innovative architectural projects to hit London in recent years.

zetteler.co.uk

Studio Rhonda

Founded by designer Rhonda Drakeford in 2018, Studio Rhonda specialises in the creation of joyful, functional and texturally rich interiors and exteriors for residential and commercial spaces. Characterised by a strong, skilled deployment of colour and pattern and fine balance of function and sensory surprise, the studio's work encompasses creative direction, styling, set design and bespoke furniture design.

studio-rhonda.com

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The starting point

Images of the workspace before the redesign

