

SWEAT WITH STYLE

STUDIO C102 TOOK ON THE DESIGN OF 1REBEL'S BOUTIQUE GYM AT ST MARY'S AXE, LONDON AND WON THE BATTLE OF INTERIOR VERSUS ARCHITECTURE



1REBEL IS A NEW CONCEPT IN THE GYM WORLD. ITS DARK, INDUSTRIAL VIBES, PULSATING MUSIC, HEADY MIX OF HEALTHY SNACKS AND INTENSE BUT ADAPTABLE APPROACH TO FITNESS AND EXERCISE HAS TURNED THE MARKET ON ITS HEAD. BASED ON THE NOTION THAT YOU 'PAY-AS-YOU-GO' FOR HOT AND COMPETITIVE GROUP CLASSES, 1REBEL IS A REFRESHING ALTERNATIVE TO WORKING OUT IN LONDON, WHERE PEOPLE ARE TIME POOR BUT STILL IN NEED OF A GOOD DOSE OF ENDORPHINS.

I was contacted -Studio c102 are the creative minds behind this impressive space -and invited to visit on an open night, where I would experience just what it means to be a 'Rebel' and get to see the design in all its glory. I must admit, on first entry, I was taken aback and a little intimidated too. I'm no stranger to a gym class but this slick operation [towels and water handed to you at the

front desk, copper-clad locker area bustling with those who knew what to do, juice shots given before class starts] caught me off guard as I meekly made my way downstairs to change and prepare for a 'reshape' class. Reshape is a very kind word they've used to describe the torture of the class that lay ahead of me. Interval training with 19 other sweaty maniacs who seemed to thrive in the darkened room, treadmills facing the mirror so you can see yourself struggle whilst in the most intense hill-sprint I have ever experienced.

Once into the swing of things, I really started to engage with and enjoy the whole surrounding. The exposed nature of the design made me feel more competitive [with myself]. It had a grimy edge that made you feel tougher, more powerful and I realised that Studio C102 had captured the very essence of 1Rebel in the cleverly managed design, using the existing elements of the building to their advantage...

1Rebel at St Mary's Axe, London, is 8,000sqft overall. Originally conceived as an office, the building has been stripped down and reconfigured into a contemporary, industrial space, which is balanced in luxury and theatrical glamour. Spread across two floors, Studio C102 began by exposing the architectural elements of the building to reveal the concrete ceiling, ductwork and pipes.

This unfinished look sits alongside reclaimed industrial light fittings from a communist-era Polish ceramics factory and a 1960's German cargo ship, and is mixed with unembellished raw materials such as unsealed steel which over time will gain a rusty patina.

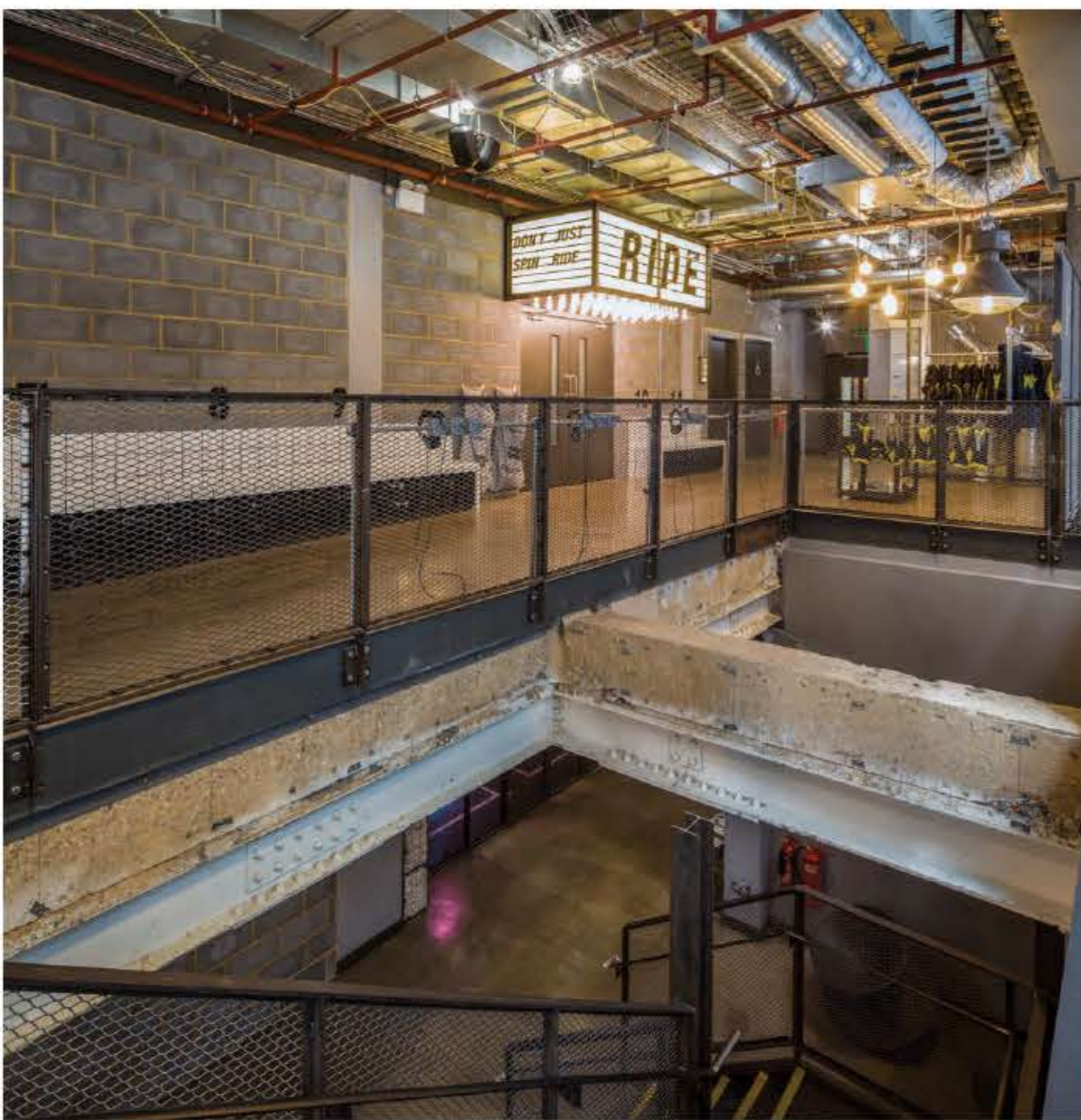
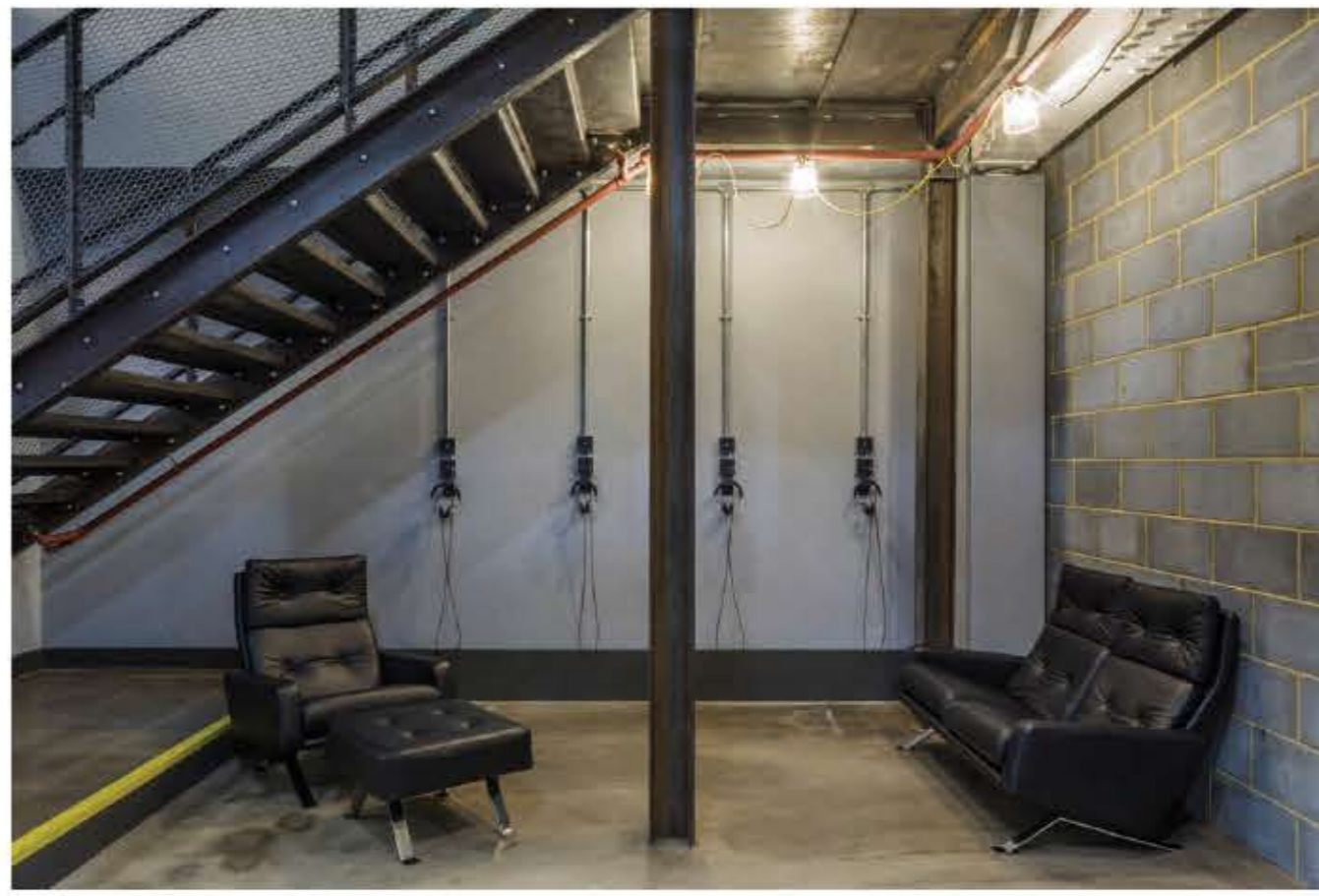
The shop front entrance to the gym stands at street level and leads you to the reception area and retail zone. A Roots & Bulbs juice bar, designed by k-studio, is situated at the entrance.

The floors' uneven and velvety texture has been created by pouring the concrete on different days, and is in keeping with the studio's design ethos of 'using modest materials in novel ways'. In contrast, a long bench made from white handcrafted tiles runs along the left hand side of the room and provides discreet storage for cycling shoes. Cinematic signs illuminate the entrance to the 'Ride' and 'Reshape' studios on the ground floor and basement. Sprayed stencilled signage has been used throughout the building, in keeping with the understated theme while contrasting with the glamorous, vintage twists. To continue the theatrical theme, both studio spaces have been designed as black boxes, entirely covered in black timber fibre acoustic insulation panels and recycled black rubber floors. To mimic the layout of a theatre, a raised podium has been added in the 'Ride' studio, while the exercise bikes sit on three different levels facing the podium. Projections hit the walls to create the experience of a night out, as workouts are accompanied by music, sometimes from a live band that joins the fitness instructor on the podium. The 'Reshape' studio in the basement features Georgian wired mirrors with steel frames and 1Rebel bespoke benches. Outside the studio Robin Day seating and Heatherwick 'spun' chairs provide a place to sit while listening to 1Rebel music playlist through built-in headphones hanging from the walls. Consistent with the gym's cool, edgy and urban style, Studio C102 have continued the pared back

industrial luxe design into the spacious changing rooms which contain heated handmade tiled benches and SMEG fridges with chilled towels for post workout. In the men's changing room Hollywood style vanity mirrors are paired with 1950s barbers chairs and a concrete lift shaft has been exposed, creating a juxtaposition between authenticity and design elements such as the galvanised steel finished lockers and LED filament bulbs in copper holders. The female changing rooms are softer with bespoke Deborah Bowness wallpaper and modern copper panelled lockers. Here, the LED filament bulbs hang from the ceiling in concrete holders in keeping with the concrete floors, which were left exposed before being sealed to give them a unique surface patina. Rain shower cubicles are formed from suspended panes of glass and contain powerful rain shower heads and fire hoses. Opposite the cubicles exposed copper pipes are used to heat the towels.

We asked Studio C102 a couple more questions about the space and the interior architecture. Here's what they said:

What did you want people to feel about the space upon entering 1Rebel?
We wanted to confound people's expectations of what a gym looks like. We began by creating a design language drawing on inspiration from



contemporary art and cutting-edge retail design, rather than the fitness sector. The final design is industrial, yet luxurious which places the visitor at centre stage

Did you experience any architectural restrictions? Did the building dictate the design to you at all?
Absolutely. The building shell was one of the key drivers of the design. We had an office shell over two odd-shaped floors, with existing voids linking the two to contend with. We began by exposing the architectural elements of the building to reveal the concrete ceiling, ductwork and pipes.

How do you feel 1Rebel sits within the St Mary's Axe area, as a piece of design?
Amongst the area's office buildings and corporate receptions we tried to enliven the street-scene with a truly active frontage that reveals not just the workings of the gym and juice-bar but also gives an insight as to how these buildings are constructed by leaving the structural elements exposed.

What is your design highlight of the interior?
It's very difficult to pick a single element, as the design language was to contrast and balance the stripped down, unfinished, building shell with more

glamorous elements such as the cinema canopy we designed to announce the entrance to the 'Ride' studio and the theatrical vanity areas.

Do you have any more plans to work with 1Rebel on other sites?
We are currently working on the second 1Rebel site, nearby, at Broadgate Circle.

www.studio-c102.com
Images courtesy of G. Gardner

