Palestra
Southwark, London SE1
DESIGNED TO BE A SYMBOL OF the commercial renaissance of London’s south-central business district, the £140m Palestra office building will house Transport for London later this year. Three years in the making, the 295,000-square-foot interior delivers 12 floors of flexible work space.

The design brief was to create a unique and dramatic landmark that would lead the way for other contemporary commercial offices in the area.

"Palestra fits the purpose," says Will Alsop, head of architects SMC Alsop. "I didn’t set out to design a landmark, but if Palestra becomes a landmark, then that is fantastic. My goal was to make this a space that works for both the workers and the people who live nearby or walk past the building. I believe that is exactly what we have achieved."

The building’s groundscraper, tilted base doubles as a walkway for pedestrians and is designed to create an immediate impact on commuters as they leave the underground station directly opposite. The distinctive floating block design, the use of colour and the pod-shaped recall unit on the ground floor all fit with Alsop’s belief that a commercial brief need not negate the creation of a building that is enjoyable to passers-by.

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