



88 Wood Street

London



With its unapologetic modern facade, the building combines a jagged profile in an elegant concrete frame ... oozing an airy spirit full of honesty but not lacking in bravado

Don Barker, Architecture Week

88 Wood Street demonstrates the potential for speculative commercial development that does not compromise on quality and enhances the public domain.

The site was formerly occupied by a 1920s telephone exchange – delays in securing the demolition of this building, combined with the onset of an economic recession in the 1990s, led to the cancellation of a scheme for a prestige banking headquarters. A larger scheme was designed in 1993–94, with speculative letting in mind.

This building is arranged as three linked blocks of office accommodation that step up from eight storeys on Wood Street, where the context includes two listed buildings, to 14 and finally 18 storeys to the west, responding to the taller built topography towards London Wall. The connections between blocks provides very a large floor area that can be easily subdivided. By using the extensive basement of the telephone exchange for the building plant, roof levels are kept largely free.

The office wings are constructed of in-situ concrete, contrasting with the lightweight, steel-framed service towers. The use of brilliant colour enhances their impact – air intakes and extracts at street level are also brightly coloured, contrasting with the neutrality of the occupied floors. The façades of the main office floors are glazed from floor to ceiling to maximise daylight and views – in addition, levels 8,12 and 16 lead directly onto roof terraces with spectacular views over the City.

Though built to a strict commercial budget, 88 Wood Street contains many innovative elements. Its triple-glazed façade is formed of single panels of highly transparent float glass. The inner faces of the external panes have a low emissivity coating which further reduces solar gain, while the cavity between the double glazed units and the third panel is fitted with motorised, integral horizontal blinds with perforated slats. Photocells on the roof monitor light conditions and adjust the angle of the blinds, thus minimising glare, heat gain and energy consumption.

Place

London, UK

Date

1993–1999

Client

Daiwa Europe Properties

Cost

£52 million

Area

33,073m²

Structural Engineer

Ove Arup & Partners

Services Engineer

Ove Arup & Partners

Quantity Surveyor

Gardiner & Theobald

Project Manager

D J Williams & Associates Ltd

Construction Manager

Laing Management Ltd

Main Contractor

Kajima/Laing Management Joint Venture

Fit-Out Contractor

Kajima/Hazama Joint Venture

Landscape Architect

Edward Hutchison

Awards

2002

The American Institute of Architects London/UK Chapter Excellence in Design Award Winner

2000

RIBA Award/Stirling Shortlist

Civic Trust Award

Royal Fine Art Commission Trust Award

Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Bovis/Lend Lease Award for Best Architectural Exhibit