A Craft Learning Hub in Brickfields

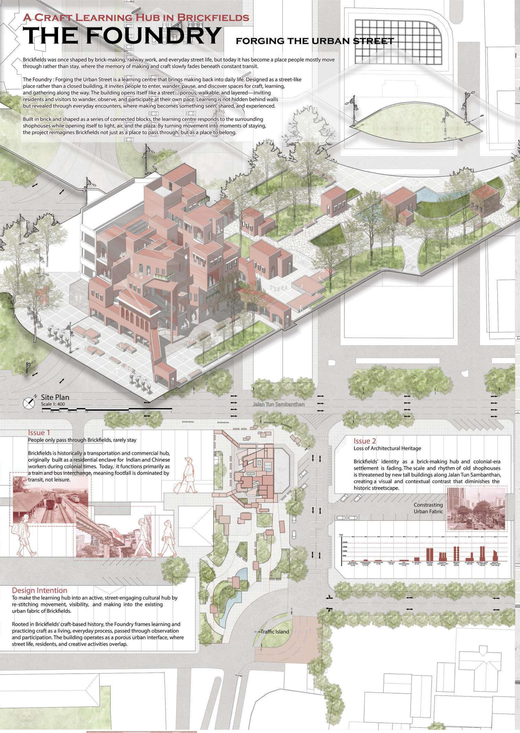
THE FOUNDRY

FORGING THE URBAN STREET

Brickfields was once shaped by brick-making, railway work, and everyday street life, but today it has become a place people mostly move through rather than stay, where the memory of making and craft slowly fades beneath constant transit.

The Foundry : Forging the Urban Street is a learning centre that brings making back into daily life. Designed as a street-like place rather than a closed building, it invites people to enter, wander, pause, and discover spaces for craft, learning, and gathering along the way. The building opens itself like a street — porous, walkable, and layered — inviting residents and visitors to wander, observe, and participate at their own pace. Learning is not hidden behind walls but revealed through everyday encounters, where making becomes something seen, shared, and experienced.

Built in brick and shaped as a series of connected blocks, the learning centre responds to the surrounding shophouses while opening itself to light, air, and the plaza. By turning movement into moments of staying, the project reimagines Brickfields not just as a place to pass through, but as a place to belong.



Site Plan
Scale 1: 400

Issue 1

People only pass through Brickfields, rarely stay

Brickfields is historically a transportation and commercial hub, originally built as a residential enclave for Indian and Chinese workers during colonial times. Today, it functions primarily as a train and bus interchange, meaning footfall is dominated by transit, not leisure.

Issue 2

Loss of Architectural Heritage

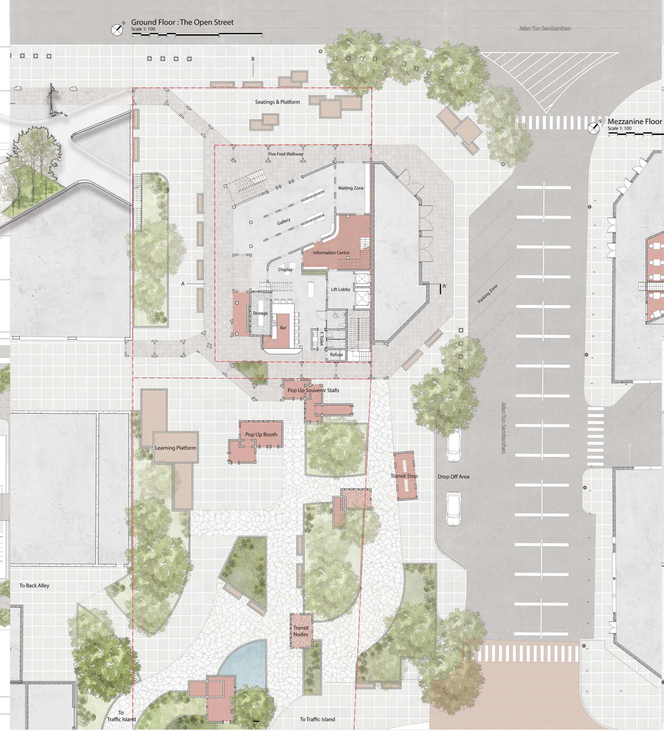
Brickfields' identity as a brick-making hub and colonial-era settlement is fading. The scale and rhythm of old shophouses is threatened by new tall buildings along Jalan Tun Sambanthan, creating a visual and contextual contrast that diminishes the historic streetscape.

Design Intention

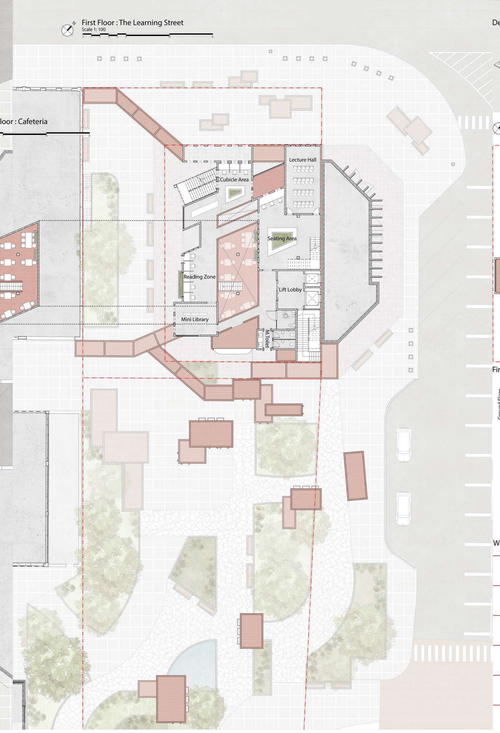
To make the learning hub into an active, street-engaging cultural hub by re-stitching movement, visibility, and making into the existing urban fabric of Brickfields.

Rooted in Brickfields' craft-based history, the Foundry frames learning and practicing craft as a living, everyday process, passed through observation and participation. The building operates as a porous urban interface, where street life, residents, and creative activities overlap.

Ground Floor : The Open Street
Scale 1: 100

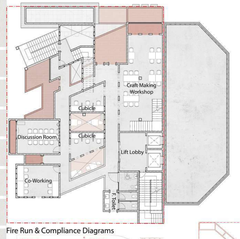


First Floor : The Learning Street
Scale 1: 100

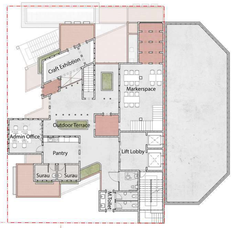


Design Development

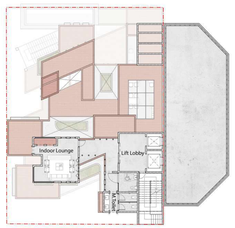
Second Floor : The Making Street
Scale 1: 100

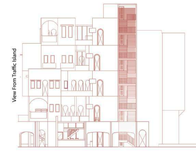


Third Floor : The Gallery of Process
Scale 1: 100



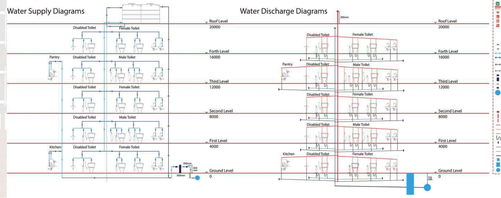
Forth Floor : The Common Room
Scale 1: 100

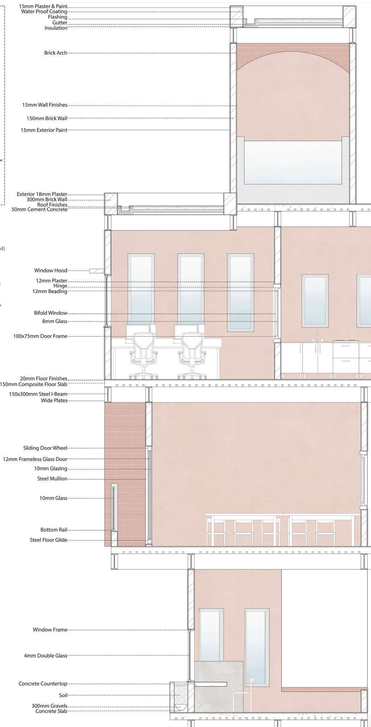




Fire Run & Compliance Diagrams

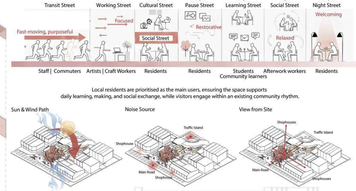
Water Supply Diagrams



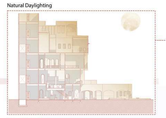


Floor-to-Roof Detail
Scale 1: 50

Target User Group



Natural Daylighting



Natural Ventilation

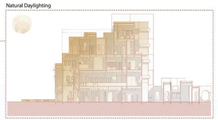
Sun & Wind Path

Noise Source

View from Site

Footprints of Life, Light, and Discovery

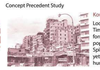
Natural Daylighting



Natural Ventilation

Design Concept

Concept Precedent Study



Kowloon Walled City
Location: Kowloon City, Hong Kong
Timeline: Demolished in 1993;
formerly one of the most densely populated places in the world
Spirit: An urban organism — chaotic yet self-sustaining; layered with human activity, adaptation, and resilience

Kowloon Walled City	Brickfields
Dense, organic growth over time	Compact, evolving urban fabric around KL Sentral
Self-built, informal structure	Adaptive reuse of old shophouses, layered development
High sense of community within chaos	Multicultural coexistence and everyday rituals
Spaces blur between public and private	Five-foot walkway and street edges are shared zones
Movement happens vertically and horizontally	Constant transit flow (pedestrians, trains)
Light and ventilation are negotiated spatially	Need to address comfort in dense urban fabric

Castelvecchio Museum, Verona (1956–64)

Location : Verona, Italy
Timeline : 1956–1964
Spirit : Interplay of Old and New – Respecting historic walls while creating new architectural gestures.

Layered Circulation & Visual Connectivity
Scarpa carefully guides visitors through a sequence of spaces, with ramps, staircases, and voids revealing glimpses of the museum at each turn.

Spatial Porosity & Engagement
The museum uses bridges, cut-outs, and visual axes to create internal-external connections, allowing light, shadow, and views to enhance experience.

It's a series of thresholds, passages, and moments that activate human interaction.

Materiality
Why Bricks?

Historical Continuity
After KL's 1881 fire and flood, British Resident pushed for rebuilding in brick and tile for safety; A landscape of clay pits , drying yards and kilns with rudimentary tracks the later informed the main spine (Jalan Tun Sambanthan)

Cultural Identity
Brick expresses the vernacular character of the neighborhood, linking the building to local architectural memory

Contextual Integration
Using brick allows the building to blend harmoniously with surrounding heritage structures, reinforcing the continuity of the street edge.

Observation:
In the Brickfield 2025 figure-ground map, the buildings are shown as positive space (pink filled), and the voids, streets, and walkways are negative space (white or empty).

The existing urban fabric shows dense clusters of built form punctuated by narrow streets and pathways, highlighting a rhythm of solid and void.

Conceptual Shift:
By studying how pedestrians move through the negative space, we can reinterpret positive (buildings) as experiential spaces that invite interaction, pause, and observation. Conversely, some traditionally negative spaces (streets, open plazas) become active, positive spaces when occupied by people with street life.

Section A-A'
Scale 1: 100

Section B-B'
Scale 1: 100

View From Jalan Tun Sambanthan
Scale 1: 200

View From Traffic Island
Scale 1: 200

View From Shophouses
Scale 1: 100