

## **The Collective - 1215 Fulton Street Design Statement**

### **The Site**

Brooklyn and New York City are undeniable architectural playgrounds. There are numerous opportunities to push the boundaries of architecture and at the same time, the city presents the challenge of building alongside so many great architects.

Our core inspiration is the site itself, the former home of The Slave Theater. A social gathering point, a nexus of black culture, and a place of activism and education, The Slave Theater has an incredible legacy. Our project's architectural design is based on these ideas, offering a space that will be as valuable to the surrounding neighborhood as it will be to The Collective's community.

In terms of design, The Slave Theater was an evident starting point and a recurrent reference. It served as our inspiration for collective spaces, as we searched for ways of preserving and paying tribute to its memory. It was important to us to preserve a sense of local identity, not only through the use of brick, but also with the design of the amenity spaces and entrance marquees, whose step motif is inspired by the original theater aesthetics. The brick surface is punctuated by a series of "theaters" - dramatic, glass-enclosed areas designed to fill the interiors with light, all the while revealing glimpses of shared space and cultural programs within. The project itself displays the numerous lives it hosts, showcasing The Collective's housing ideal. In a sense, we tried to maintain and develop the concept of this cultural space for a new way of living.

Rooftops are other element of inspiration and will become a key fixture in the space. This particular site in Brooklyn is situated in a way that offers lines of sight to the neighborhood, the borough and even New York City's skyline. This combined context and the value of its symbols is a clear goal of the project but in the end, in terms of inspiration, The Slave Theater held the most value and came through the most.

Rather than working in a process of addition and multiplication like many of our projects, this project was a process of subtraction, where each singular amenity space is carved out of the volume of the building. This allows for the originality of the typology to be punctually revealed in the facade, as alternative shapes "break" the regularity of the volumes and facades with their gridded window pattern. A certain curiosity is developed towards the building, where you can see something which stands out but and feel intrigued and invited into what is going on inside.

In addition to this, the floorplate of the site takes up several different plots and results in an overall shape that forces us to explore the building in unusual ways. It became necessary to develop a relationship with the surrounding buildings and all their different scales.

The brick is referential to New York City and Brooklyn's history. To stay within their character, we played with patterns, textures and colors, exploring their potential, in order to build something new from the existing identity of the context. After that, a method was established to apply materials according to type of space, which was meant to make the concept more evident: the red brick was used as the overall texture, normalizing the presence of the different buildings, while the white brick made the amenities stand out in the volumes. The white interiors created a homogeneous environment, meant to receive the varied individual identities of each future member and local visitor.

### **The Concept**

Informality of space is usually a driver in our practice's projects, in the sense that it motivates people to create their own habits. It's these "free" spaces that act as catalysts for individual patterns to take shape. Here, on Fulton Street, it is the communal public spaces that set up these opportunities. The building is designed as an open space concept, which will allow for performances and communal interactions to be viewed at the street level.

Co-living introduces a collective quality to spaces that are usually considered private. It allows areas such as atria and corridors to gain a more public perspective. We approached our circulation paths as recreational, using amenities to connect different levels and their uses, and building interest around the places they are located in the site.

These themes are so important that they even motivated the development of a nomenclature specific to this site, used to categorize different activities in very diverse scales and forms: the Fulton Playground, which puts varying levels of performance spaces in visual contact; the Sundeck, which connects two levels while taking advantage of the exterior views; Room 1001, which was developed as a more scenic spot; and the Halsey BBQ, which follows a communal kitchen area to an intimate rooftop garden.

Our brief from The Collective allowed us to consider the building as a city or a village at micro-scale. The freedom and inspiration we usually find in the public realm is transferred into amenity spaces and their particularities, which are consequently connected by street-like corridors. They all have contrasting dimensions, details and qualities and they all provide different services to the residents. Each of these amenities has a particular identity and design, to engage people in different ways, much like it would happen on city squares. Even the ground floor, which houses amenities such as a restaurant, bar, coworking/conference space and gym, are accessible to the public, acting as an extension of Bed-Stuy's urban fabric.

The private living spaces have a more standardized character, in contrast to the public amenities. It was important to create this contrast with the communal areas, spaces which allow different daily processes to take place. The amenities become opportunities to meet other people and engage with them in a multitude of ways. The circulation itself is designed to motivate exploration of the building and encounter people that live in different parts of the site. Consequently, each one of these dimensions is considered in completely different ways: the private as one's personal universe and the public as an environment where every corner can create new social experiences.

The result is a new idea of how a community can come together in a building.

1215 Fulton Street was a new exercise for our studio. We are used to flexibility when it comes to materials — we tend to opt for white surfaces that give us more freedom. With brick and its coursing, the limitations were much higher, and the design had to be in line with the concept, materiality and detail. This required an alternative process, one that is also more stimulating and pushed us to create a building that, although guided by numerous limitations, is able to create new social patterns inside.