

# Wallpaper\*

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## Pleasure principle

Smart Art for your eyes only

### Muse house

A well-fed writer's retreat

### First class

Join the freshmen at the Wallpaper\* University

### Changing rooms

Is the boutique hotel a bust?

### Torch bearers

The best of Brazil



The office apartment

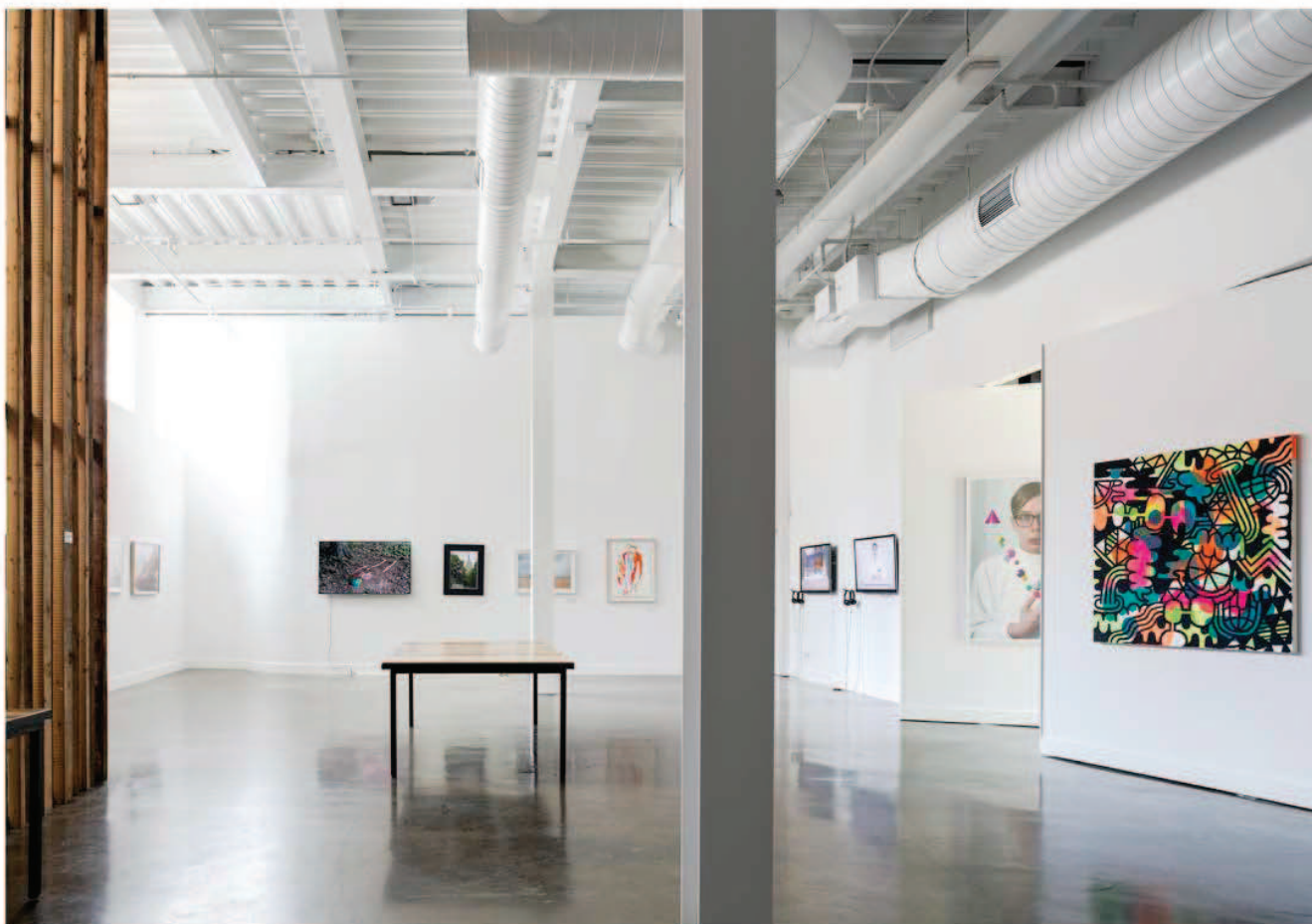
Vik Muniz's Romeo & Juliet

Thoroughbred tailoring

## Muscle mass

Inside the temple to Tom of Finland





# Crowd pleaser

Kickstarter puts the fun into crowd-funding with a new Brooklyn HQ where staff can graze in the solarium, glory in the gallery and graze on blueberries on the roof

A nondescript industrial block in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, is an unlikely choice when it comes to relocating a powerful digital enterprise, but Kickstarter has not earned its success by following any rule book. The crowd-funding authority – which this year celebrated its fifth birthday and clocked \$1bn earned in pledges since its inception – has not only moved its operations away from the hubbub of Manhattan, but has bought its own digs, a rarity in the start-up world.

‘I don’t think we knew how rare it was until people started saying, “Hey, only you and Google have a building,”’ says Kickstarter’s creator and chairman Perry Chen. ‘We’re young, but we’re thinking about things long term. We’ve really reinvested the success that we’ve had into this building. Other companies might have chosen to do other things with their resources, but we want to build a foundation for the things that we do. We wanted to move once and create a home.’

At 29,000 sq ft, Kickstarter’s new headquarters is a world away from the three narrow floors it previously occupied in a crumbling tenement building in Manhattan’s Lower East Side. The new HQ is located

KICKSTARTER’S GALLERY, USED TO EXHIBIT ARTWORKS AND PROJECTS IT HAS FUNDED, WITHIN ITS NEW HQ. A LANDMARK BUILDING RENOVATED BY ARCHITECT OLE SONDRÉSEN

Kickstarter  
has clocked over  
**\$1bn**  
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pledges  
since its inception

in the Eberhard Faber Pencil Factory Historic District, a complex of eight buildings that was constructed in the 1890s and given landmark status in 2008, a testament to Brooklyn’s industrial age. While some of the district’s buildings bear traits of the German Renaissance Revival style, and boast mouldings of large pencils flanking the topmost windows, Kickstarter’s two-storey acquisition was in much more disarray, having been gutted internally when its previous owner hoped to turn it into a high-rise hotel, and then abandoned it when those plans fell through. All that was left were the walls and a makeshift roof. There were no pencils on its red brick façade, only graffiti.

‘It was really raw,’ says architect Ole Søndresen, the New York-based Norwegian who oversaw the renovation. ‘There were holes in the roof and light tunnels coming down. There were puddles on the floor, pigeons flying around in the dark. It was really dramatic and magical. We wanted to try to keep as much of it as possible.’

Søndresen set out to repurpose what was salvageable. In addition to preserving the historic elements, such as original lintels, arches and bollards»



RIGHT, WHILE THE BUILDING'S LANDMARK STATUS IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS ON PUNCHING WINDOWS IN THE OUTER FAÇADE, AN INTERNAL COURTYARD, WITH WINDOW FRAMES CONSTRUCTED OUT OF RECYCLED ROOF TRUSSES, CREATES NATURAL LIGHT

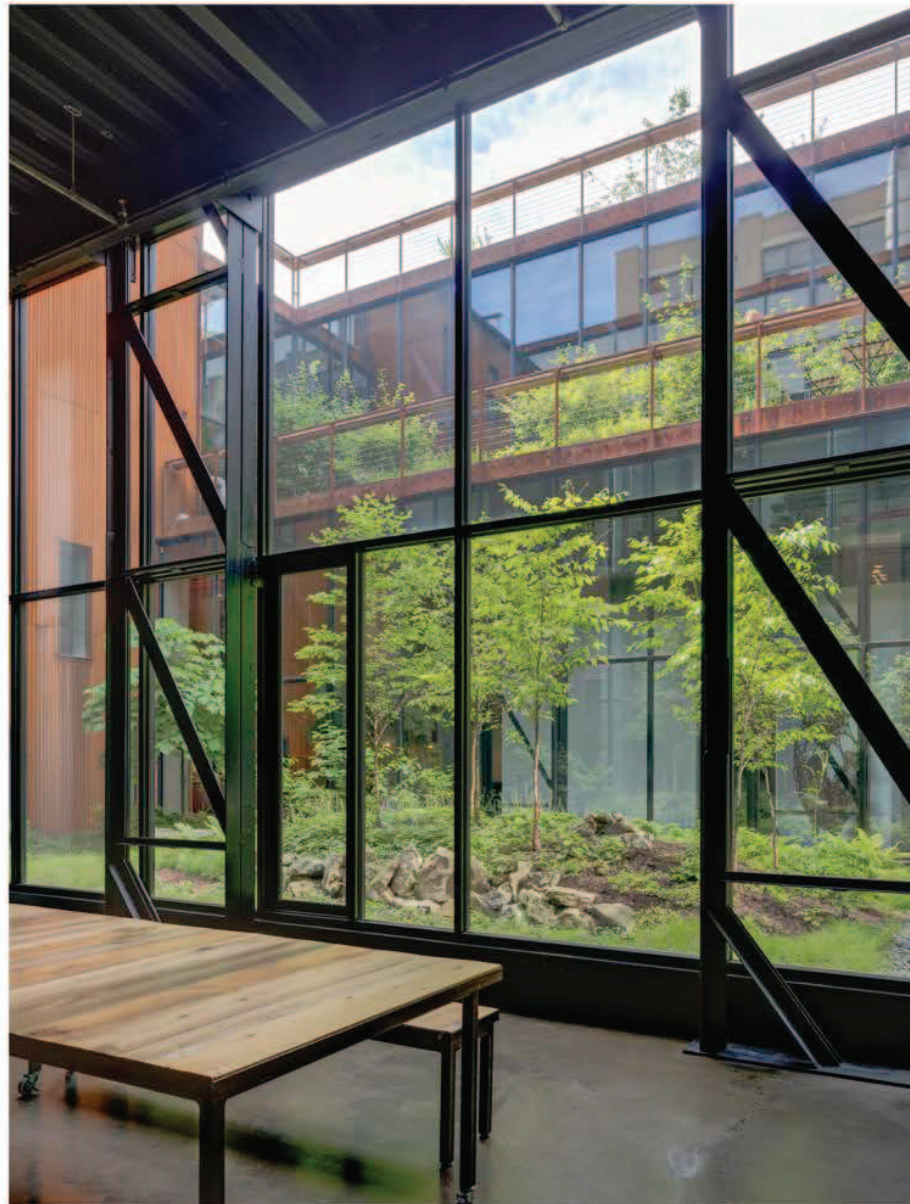
BELOW, LIBRARY FURNISHINGS INCLUDE WEATHERED LEATHER ARMCHAIRS AND CUSTOM-MADE LED READING LIGHTS

by the front entrance, he used the roof's industrial trusses to carve out an interior courtyard at the core of the building, enclosing it in glass on three sides and richly patinated Corten steel on the fourth.

'Making the window façades out of trusses required less additional structure to be brought in and fewer removals [from the site],' says the sustainably minded Sondresen. 'We had an engineer ensure that the trusses could hold up to the wind, and then we turned them upside down and on their side, and hung the window wall off of that. It's all been recycled.'

Kickstarter's workspace is unabashedly open plan. There are no private offices or desk delineations, even for company co-founder Yancey Strickler, who took over as CEO from Chen in January and sits in the heart of a row of long work tables. Although each employee is assigned a desk, they are free to find their optimal environment. Whether grafting at an individual study carrel in the library, sitting on a cushion in the wooden bleachers, claiming the meditation stone in the inner garden, or working their core on a balance board while stationed at a standing desk, there is somewhere for each of the 90 staff. A series of meeting rooms resembling cosy living areas, with midcentury-style loveseats and framed posters, allows small groups to work together, while more spacious conference rooms accommodate larger brainstorming sessions.

'We designed the space on account of the fact that everyone likes to work differently,' says Strickler. 'It's about how you do your best work. There are garden



people, library people, kitchen people and desk people. It's very clear. I know exactly where some people are going to be all day.'

The building's rooftop is a popular hideout for obvious reasons. It hosts a solarium, where people can recline in rattan lounge chairs and peer down at the main work hub; a gravel walking path that meanders around coastal pines and low beach plum trees; a fruit and vegetable garden where staff can graze freely on blueberries, tomatoes and kale while catching glimpses of the East River; and a flower garden where they can collect blossoms for their workspaces. A decked portion facilitates working outdoors and also allows for movie screenings when the sun goes down.

In the cellar there is a kitchen, where coconut water and bottled green teas are ready for the taking. There's also the diner, a seating area adorned with banquettes made from reclaimed wooden boards by woodworkers Ben and Hall Smyth. Named after the Williamsburg eaterie, Diner, it's a nod to where Chen and Strickler first met as waiter and customer respectively, back in 2005. The cellar houses a gallery,»





ABOVE, THE ROOFTOP SPACE INCLUDES A SOLARIUM WITH VIEWS DOWN INTO THE COURTYARD, AS WELL AS FLOWER, FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GARDENS

RIGHT, THE CEDAR-PANELLED THEATRE HAS PORCELAIN LED FIXTURES AND STRATEGICALLY PLACED INSULATION PANELS THAT ENSURE THE SPACE IS ACOUSTICALLY SOUND

Kickstarter's new headquarters has 8,500 sq ft of green space



too, and a 74-seat theatre, for screening new film projects, hosting musical performances and staging company presentations.

'The biggest impact of the move is that it has allowed us to have creators in the office much more often. It has made us more accessible, even though we are further out than we were before,' says Strickler. 'Kickstarter has become this engine of culture by helping to bring all this great stuff into the world. We're an organisation driven by encouraging creative projects and we want to be able to celebrate the projects in a more public way.'

Since moving in, the company has ramped up its public engagements by opening up its new home with an epic block party and its first art show in April. It also launched its fourth annual film festival honouring Kickstarter-funded films, staging events in Brooklyn in July and Los Angeles in September. Meanwhile, its collaboration with MoMA Design Store in May enabled 24 site-funded products to reach an extended customer base.

At this five-year juncture, the start-up continues to balance its inherently scrappy nature with the value of its achievements. 'Even though this office is really nice and people have good jobs, it's important not to get too comfortable,' stresses Strickler. 'I try to reinforce that to the team as often as I can. Don't get entitled. The berries can be taken away.'\*

[www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com); [www.olesondresen.com](http://www.olesondresen.com)