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Inside-Out | Outside-In Rethinking Boundaries in Architecture

HUB MADRID

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1 The immense skylight running the length of the room allows great daylight penetration



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The architects at ch+qs have succeeded in transforming an old car repair garage into a popular, friendly everyone-wants-to-work-here shared office co-op with a cool vibe. Located in central Madrid, Hub Madrid is a hive of activity where professionals come together for meetings and group collaboration sessions. The brainchild of a group of eight young entrepreneurs of varied nationalities and professional backgrounds who wanted to build the Madrid headquarters of The Hub, a global network operating in over 30 cities worldwide that offers timeshare offices for social entrepreneurs and innovators active in different sectors (anything from landscaping and communication consultancy to photography and design), it has already spawned the development of over 1,000 social initiatives in its first year of operation.

The members of Hub Madrid can use the space's facilities at a cost that varies based on the number of hours or the month chosen. The social enterprise's philosophy is all about promoting entrepreneurial projects that not only seek to make a profit, but also aim to have a positive impact on society, the environment or culture, and it decided that shared offices are a greener option as the space is more often occupied than traditional offices, which aren't used to their maximal capacity.

Positioned between Madrid's two main train stations, the building used to be a garden in its former life, as well as the head office of a coach line that linked the Norte and Atocha train stations, before becoming a garage, which fell into disrepair and had been left untouched since the 1940s. Seeing its unique location at the heart of the city and the fact that it was still largely intact, representatives of The Hub and the husband-and-wife duo of Josemaría de

Churtchaga and Cayetana de la Quadra-Salcedo, the founders of ch+qs, opted to leave it in its actual state instead of completely upgrading, refurbishing and refinishing the interiors—which meant keeping the paint peeling from the walls, scrapes and scratches, and giant skylight in the ceiling to show off the amazing patina that the building had acquired from years of use.

The idea was to retain the spirit of the past, the history of the place, all while reducing the impact on the environment. They explain, "To find a building and transform it from top to bottom is easy, and there are 1,000 examples of this in the capital. We wanted to re-invent it in harmony with the space that it was going to house, but without it losing its essence. We wanted to work more like archaeologists than architects. We have tried not to touch anything because the truly sustainable thing is not to build. If you don't build, you don't consume, you don't spend."

What did change, nonetheless, was the energy efficiency and economic sustainability of the space, as well as the introduction of recycling programmes. A radiant floor heating and cooling system was installed underneath the wooden floorboards to keep the space warm in winter and cool in summer. Energy usage is decreased through the use of daylighting from the skylight that fills the vast space with light, which provides most of the daytime illumination in the generously-sized central room that serves as the main collaboration and work

2 A chill-out work room with a bookcase made of wooden crates
3 The Hub's Innovation Lab 4 A meeting room with wooden crates doubling as storage lockers



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space, while smaller side rooms lined with recycled wool felt act as private meeting, media and work rooms where members bounce around ideas, reflect, unload energy and shake off stress. The furniture is entirely sustainable too, as it was donated by Hub members or found second hand, recovered from flea markets or the Internet, lending an eclectic yet comfortable, lived-in feel, and old wooden fruit crates were transformed into shelving, stools, tables and more.

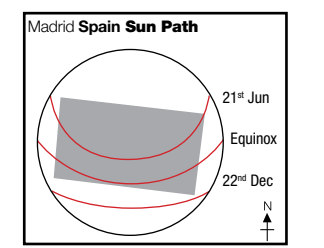
Rehabilitated by ch+qs from 2008 to 2009, Hub Madrid has become a blank canvas for professional inspiration and the nerve centre for entrepreneurs looking to make the world a better place. The architects say, "When we saw the garage, we got a strong impression; this space was a bubble in the most clogged area of Madrid-Centre. We wanted to explore a new way of intervening in and reusing the architectural heritage of the 20th century. We considered whether we would be able to not alter or obscure the layers of life in this space, virtually not even to design. What happens if we insulate only the roof, add a floor heating system under large planks of wood, don't paint the walls, and leave the old signs and defects? What happens if we almost don't buy anything new, if we call on the inhabitants of The Hub to donate their used furniture, if we add other retired furniture to give them another chance? But we needed some furniture, a kind of wildcard, so we ordered boxes, fruit boxes, which are also stools, supports, a ladder, a bookcase, lockers. And if we plant an orange tree in the old oil change pit?"

Churtichaga and Quadra-Salcedo therefore did not allow signs of the past to be erased, leaving 1960s insurance posters, license plates and fading management directives plastered on the walls, an oil inspection pit where mechanics once worked, which is now a small interior garden. Working with a budget of just €220,000, this became not only an aesthetic but financial necessity. "There were a lot of constraints but the main ones were the low budget and short time. We tried to take advantage of these constraints, and we reinforced the philosophy of upcycling, giving new life to old things, changing only what was strictly necessary," note the architects.

Much more than a shared workspace though, Hub Madrid, with its multi-functional capacity, has become the go-to space for cultural and social activities, presentations, seminars and courses in the neighbourhood, a way for a global community of people from every profession, background and culture to interact with each other, a multipurpose event and party space open to all. Its inspired spaces for meeting, working, innovating, learning and connecting borrow the best of a member's club, an innovation agency, a serviced office and a think-tank to create a different kind of environment. It provides the tools needed to grow and develop new ventures, places to access experience, knowledge, finance and markets and, above all, the possibility to experience and encounter a diverse group of creative, social-minded and environmentally-conscious individuals.

PROJECT DATA
Project Name
Hub Madrid
Location
Madrid, Spain
Completion
2010
Gross Floor Area
310 m²
Number of Rooms
12
Building Height
One storey (with mezzanine level in the large central room)
Client/Owner
Hub Madrid
Architecture Firm
ch+qs arquitectos
Principal Architects
Josemaría de Churtichaga; Cayetana de la Quadra-Salcedo
Main Contractor
Assuan S.L.
Mechanical & Electrical Engineer
NA

Civil Engineer
Josemaría de Churtichaga
Facilities Engineer
Jesus Conde
Images/Photos
Daniel Torrelló; ch+qs arquitectos



5 Mezzanine level with individual work stations 6 An orange tree sprouts from beneath the floorboards 7 Sections