

# Art of the Workplace

A Report on the Positive Impact of Arts and Culture in the Office Environment

**THE  
SCHOOL  
OF LIFE**

**Brookfield  
Properties**

Anna Ray, On Tenterhooks, 2021, 99 Bishopsgate



# Introduction

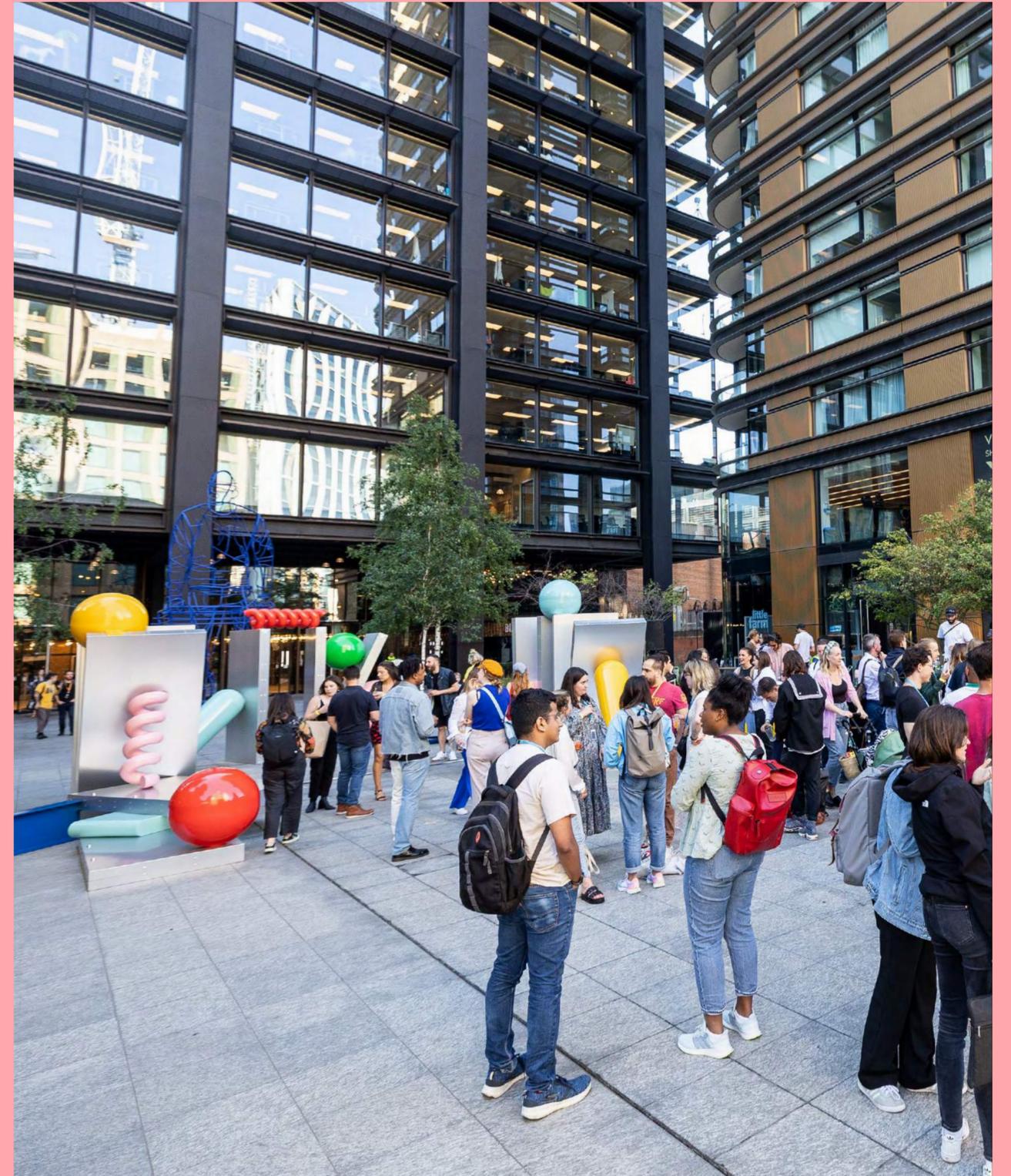
Dan Scanlon  
Executive Vice President  
Brookfield Properties

As a leading global developer and operator of real estate, Brookfield Properties believes in the unique ability of art and culture to transform spaces, bring people together and provide inspiration. We have continuously invested in the arts for over three decades, creating dynamic cultural and wellbeing programmes to animate our buildings and public spaces and stimulate engagement with those who occupy and visit them. Across our expansive portfolio, we have witnessed first-hand the positive impact this cultural enrichment provides and the connection it creates between our occupiers, the wider community, and the artists – creating moments of reflection, discussion and enjoyment.

It is with great pride that we partner with The School of Life, an incredibly well-respected thought leader on improving lives, to commission this research. We hope the findings and this report will help support

the business case for employers to invest in creating spaces and cultures that enrich their employees' lives – not just their productivity and creativity in the office, but their mental health and wellbeing as a whole – and aid future planning for office space and the surrounding workplace environment.

Dan Scanlon



Anna Lomax, Paradel, 2022, Principal Place

## Objectives

With this report, we examine how people feel about their work surroundings, and whether arts and culture can help to enrich working life.

Why examine the role of arts and culture in the workplace? For over 30 years, part of the Brookfield Properties' manifesto has been to transform the places we rush through to places we linger, gather and seek out – with the guiding principle that 'art creates places that work'.

Christian Ovonlen, Theatrical, 2022, 99 Bishopsgate



## Methodology

Perspectus Global, an independent research and insights agency, conducted an online survey of people based in the UK who work between two and four days in the office, and the rest of the time remotely.

The survey had 1,000 correspondents in London and 250 from each of the following cities: Birmingham, Leeds, Bristol, Sheffield, Newcastle, Glasgow, Nottingham, Cardiff

and Southampton. Those taking part worked in offices that ranged from highly-enriched, artfully decorated environments to lean spaces with little more than corporate branding on display. Similarly, there was a spectrum of experience when it came to cultural, wellbeing or social events: with some people enjoying these regularly at work, and some not at all.

Perspectus Global also conducted five in-depth interviews with experts and thought leaders in the area of the arts and working life.

The research project was run in partnership with The School of Life, with expert input and guidance from Dr. Craig Knight.

Christian Ovonlen, Botanical, 2022, Algate Tower



## Our Findings

*“Research has shown that there is no trade-off between wellbeing and productivity. The two variables correlate positively.”*

Dr. Craig Knight

One positive that has emerged from the tragedy of the Covid-19 pandemic is a new focus on what makes a ‘happy’ workplace — how we might rethink the office environment and working culture to better support humans flourishing.

Our findings suggest that workers want to work in spaces enriched by art, culture and wellness, which they believe promote creativity, contentment, socialising and learning. This is particularly true of the younger cohort of British workers.

**They show that art and culture matter.** People who enjoy an enriched office environment, which contains art displays

and embraces social wellbeing or cultural events, tend to feel more inspired in their work.

In this report we will explore three key themes that emerged from our findings:

1. **The Office Redrawn** – Art and Culture in the office, and its impact on workers
2. **Uncomfortable Truths** – What makes for a bad or good office experience
3. **Delineation of Home and Office** – Home working vs. Office working, and how employers can create spaces that their staff want to work in



Sophie Smallhorn, Assemblages 1, 2 & 3, 2022, 100 Bishopsgate

# Part 1 — The Office Redrawn

Art and culture in the office,  
and its impact on workers

Anton Alvarez, *The Remnants*, 2022, Artist in Residence at 100 Bishopsgate



Inspiration and motivation is about more than just targets and deadlines. In order to feel fully engaged in our work, we have to go about it with a strong sense of the overall purpose of even small, routine tasks that build into larger achievements.

The essayist Elaine Scarry once wrote that beauty is contagious. The more we see it, the more that we enjoy its presence, the more we wish to create beautiful things and grow the amount of beauty in the world. The same is almost certainly true for the inspiration and sense of achievement that we gain from gazing at works of art and enjoying beautifully-designed spaces. They

Carlos Penolver, The Pollination, 2021, Citypoint



are a lasting reminder of what is possible in life and they elevate our spirits when our own work comes calling.

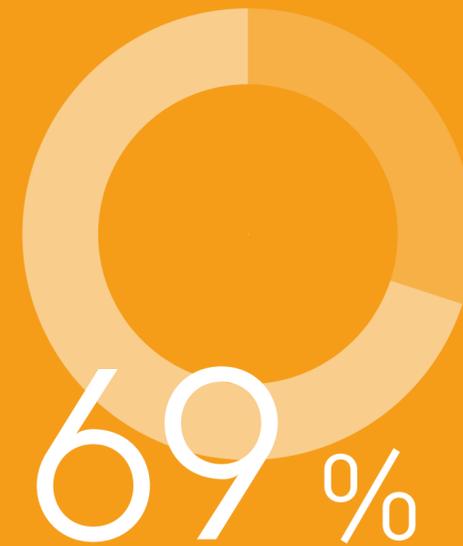
### Inspired Workers

We're currently facing what many are calling a Disengagement Crisis – with increasing numbers of workers feeling disconnected from their work (60 percent according to an August 2022 study<sup>1</sup>), resulting in a huge cost to UK businesses.

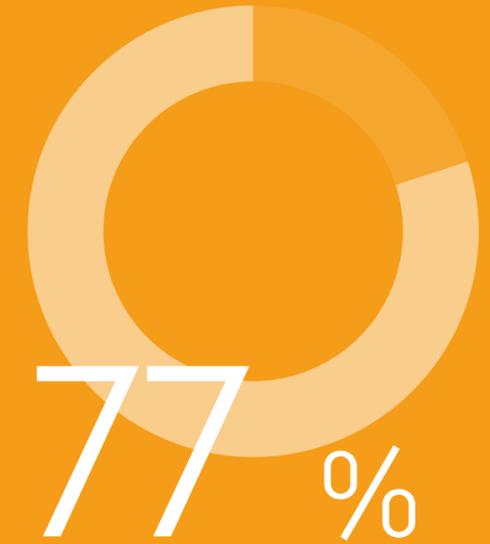
On the flipside, when employees feel inspired by the work they do, they have a sense of ownership, pride and commitment that boosts productivity and overall contentment.

We found that only 24 percent of workers feel inspired in their job. However, for those working in enriched offices this was much higher, at 39 percent.

The findings are similar when it comes to the social office environment. Of those who were exposed to a large range of cultural, wellbeing and social events at work, 34 percent strongly agreed they felt inspired by their jobs, compared to just 13 percent of those who had no such exposure.



69 percent of respondents agreed that having interesting and visually attractive art pieces in the workplace contributes to their wellbeing



77 percent of respondents agreed that having interesting social, cultural or wellbeing events in the workplace contributes to their wellbeing

## Part 1 — The Office Redrawn

The message is clear. If you want to have a workforce who feels engaged and inspired by their jobs, a key step is to **redraw the office**, making space for art and cultural and wellness events.

Create a space where people want to linger and mingle - and you will find people arrive in such spaces energised, with a renewed sense of the possible.

### Creative Workers

With the caveat that *feeling* creative doesn't necessarily tally with being creative, when we asked our respondents if their offices encouraged them to be creative in their work, only 18 percent strongly agreed.

Contrast this with those working in enriched spaces, with ready access to cultural or wellbeing events, and this number jumps to 32 percent. Fewer than 10 percent of those who work in lightly decorated or functional offices said their workspace inspired a sense of creative energy.

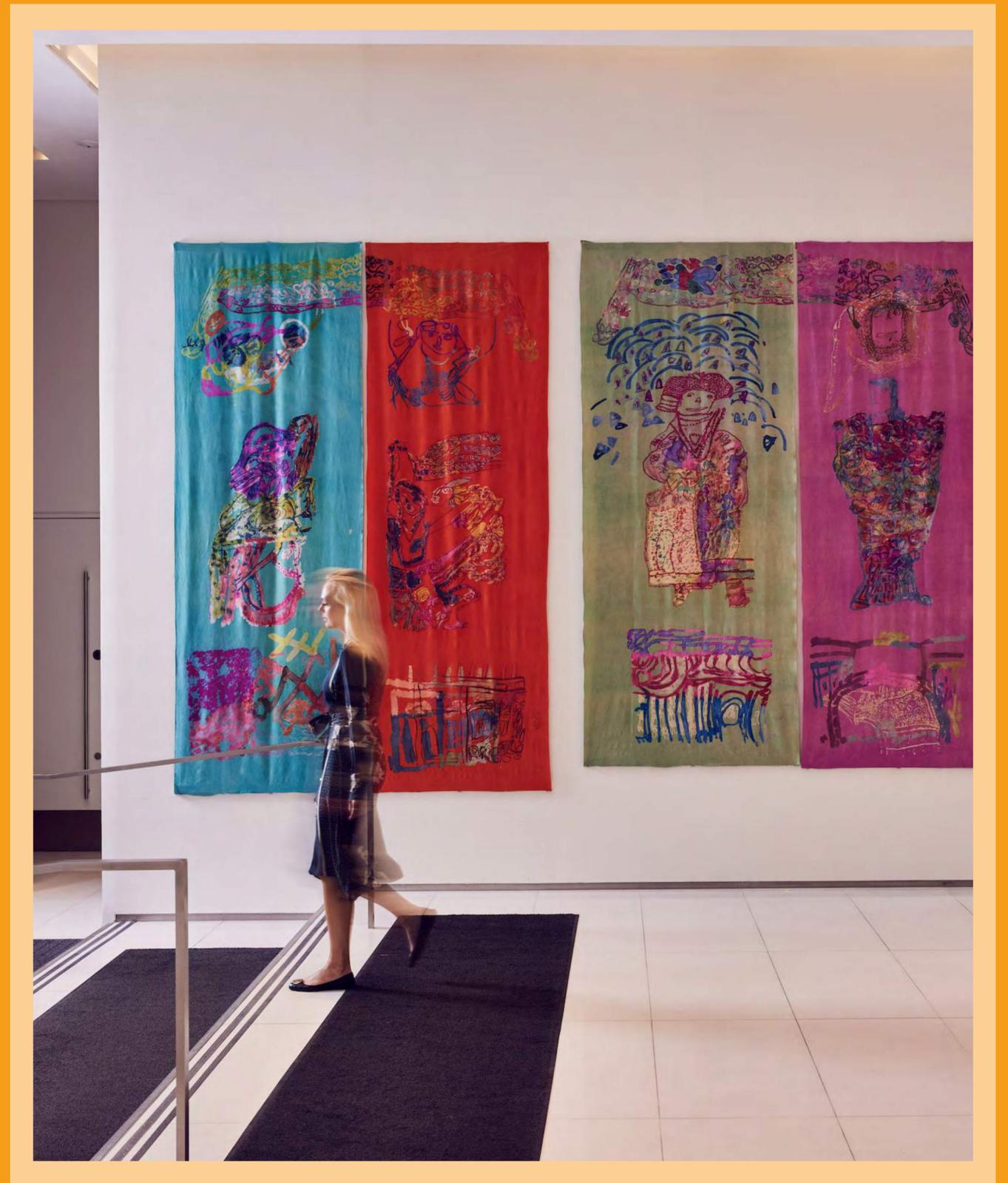
Interestingly, those who were exposed to some wellbeing events rather than a large number scored higher on the feeling that

their office made them creative. These findings tally with studies<sup>2</sup> that have shown that too much choice can be a bad thing, such as philosopher and socialist Renata Salecl's 2011 book, *The Tyranny of Choice* (2011)<sup>3</sup>.

Brush and Bubbles, 2022, Aldgate Tower



Christian Ovonlen, *Theatrical*, 2022, 99 Bishopsgate





## Corrie Jackson

Royal Bank of Canada  
Senior Curator

*“I feel that art is there to ask questions and having art around is therefore bound to increase creativity. Art makes you realise that working through things can have any number of answers, so if you are problem solving, having something there in the background is sure to be of some kind of assistance.”*

*We have art in offices around the world and I’m confident that it brings people together and makes people think differently.”*

# Sophie Smallhorn

Artist

*“I recently redesigned a cancer ward at Guy’s Hospital and changed the space around people and have seen first-hand the impact it had on patients. It’s clear that art and pleasant surroundings can change lives.*

*I have watched people interact with my sculptures in Brookfield Properties’ offices and I love the way that they become part of the space for people. The impact is much more profound than I think people realise - art makes places where people want to be. It seems natural to me, particularly if you want to be creative, that you have something creative around you, that will help.”*



## Part 2 — Uncomfortable Truths

What makes for a good or bad  
office experience



## Part 2 — Uncomfortable Truths

In an odd but quietly very important way, buildings ‘speak’ to us. Some buildings, streets and even whole cities seem to speak of chaos, aggression or overbearing pride; others seem to be whispering to us of calm or graceful dignity, generosity or gentleness.

Numerous studies have shown the impact that a built environment can have on a person’s mental health. Yet, still, there is a tendency to treat the space in which we live and work as simply functional. As if human needs and aspirations are as simple as an engineer’s equation that tells us the most cost-effective dimensions for a new window, without really taking time to consider the view it affords onto the world outside.

The Swiss architect Le Corbusier once described housing as a ‘machine for living in’, so great was his preoccupation with simplicity and efficiency of space. However, we know now – more and more – that human beings are complex, emotional creatures whose requirements exceed the nuts and bolts of what is necessary. The offices of the future must be more than machines for working in, they must cater to the rich inner life that we all possess.

What makes for a good office in 2022? According to a January 2022 article in CityScape<sup>4</sup>, employees demand relaxation and wellness spaces and outdoor and green spaces - a nod to the fact that good design and the ability to meet workers’ mental and physical needs is essential for the offices of today, and the future.

Matt Smith, Matt Smith 2022, 99 Bishopsgate



Yoga classes, 100 Bishopsgate





## Dr. Craig Knight

Founder of Identity Realization

*“When I think of lean offices, I think of the animal kingdom and zoos. If you look at biology studies, it doesn’t matter if you put a rat in a lean cage or a gorilla in a stark enclosure, they both suffer. If you think of Guy the Gorilla in a zoo in the 1950s he was just stuck in a concrete enclosure with people staring at him. When you put any animal in those kinds of spaces, they get stressed, they get anxious, they get aggressive. I think the same applies for humans in lean offices.*”

*Lean offices are a bad idea. If you spend money creating them, you may as well flush that money down the toilet because they will not help your productivity.*

*We found that using art as a form of enrichment has the capacity to boost productivity by up to 17 percent. If you use art as a vehicle to empower people at work, then productivity can increase by as much as 32 percent.”*

## Part 2 — Uncomfortable Truths

Backing this up, while less than four in ten (38 percent) of those polled strongly agreed that they like the atmosphere of their office, 63 percent of those with access to cultural, wellbeing or social events strongly agreed, showing that access to wellness activities improves appreciation of office space.

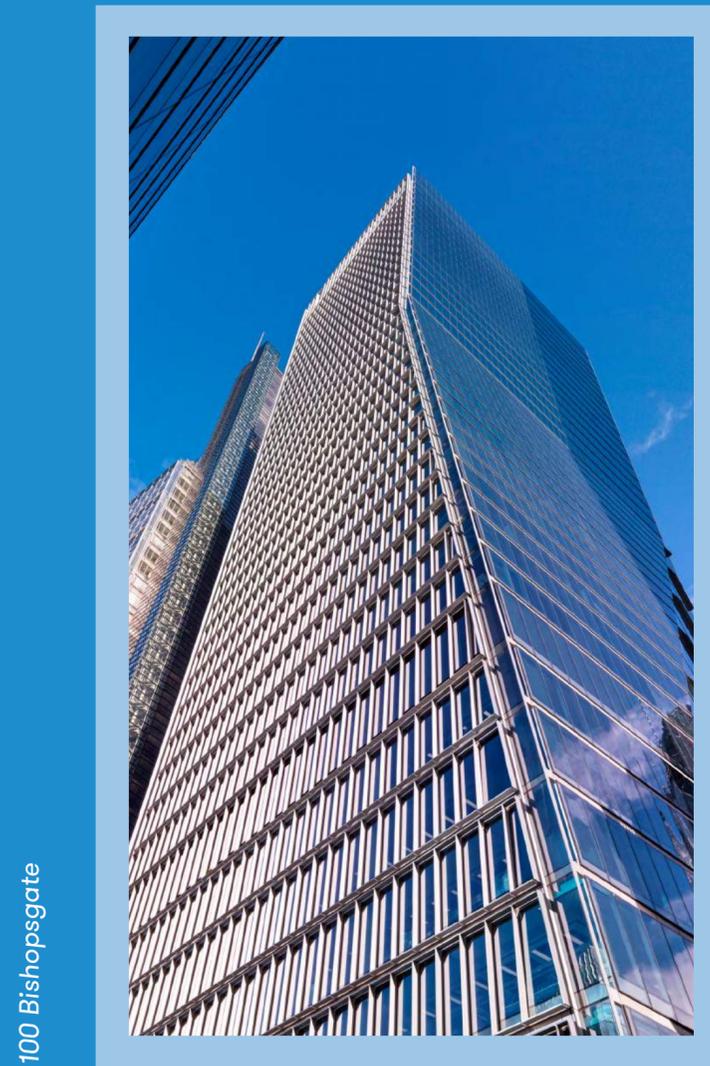
However, when we look at what makes for a bad office, aesthetics and functionality score highly.

In our survey, 41 percent of respondents claim their office is badly designed, with – yet again – those working in lean offices more likely to feel this way (50 percent). By contrast, only 34 percent of those in highly enriched offices felt this way.

37 percent of respondents said their workspace in the office was uncomfortable - which rose to 43 percent of people in lean offices, and dropped to 33 percent of those in highly enriched offices.

Bad office design has been shown in academic studies to diminish productivity and increase the stress levels of workers<sup>5</sup>. It's clear that good offices, which produce productive and relaxed staff, need to be carefully designed to give employees

comfortable, aesthetically pleasing surroundings, with activities and areas on offer to support wellbeing in all its guises.



# 64%

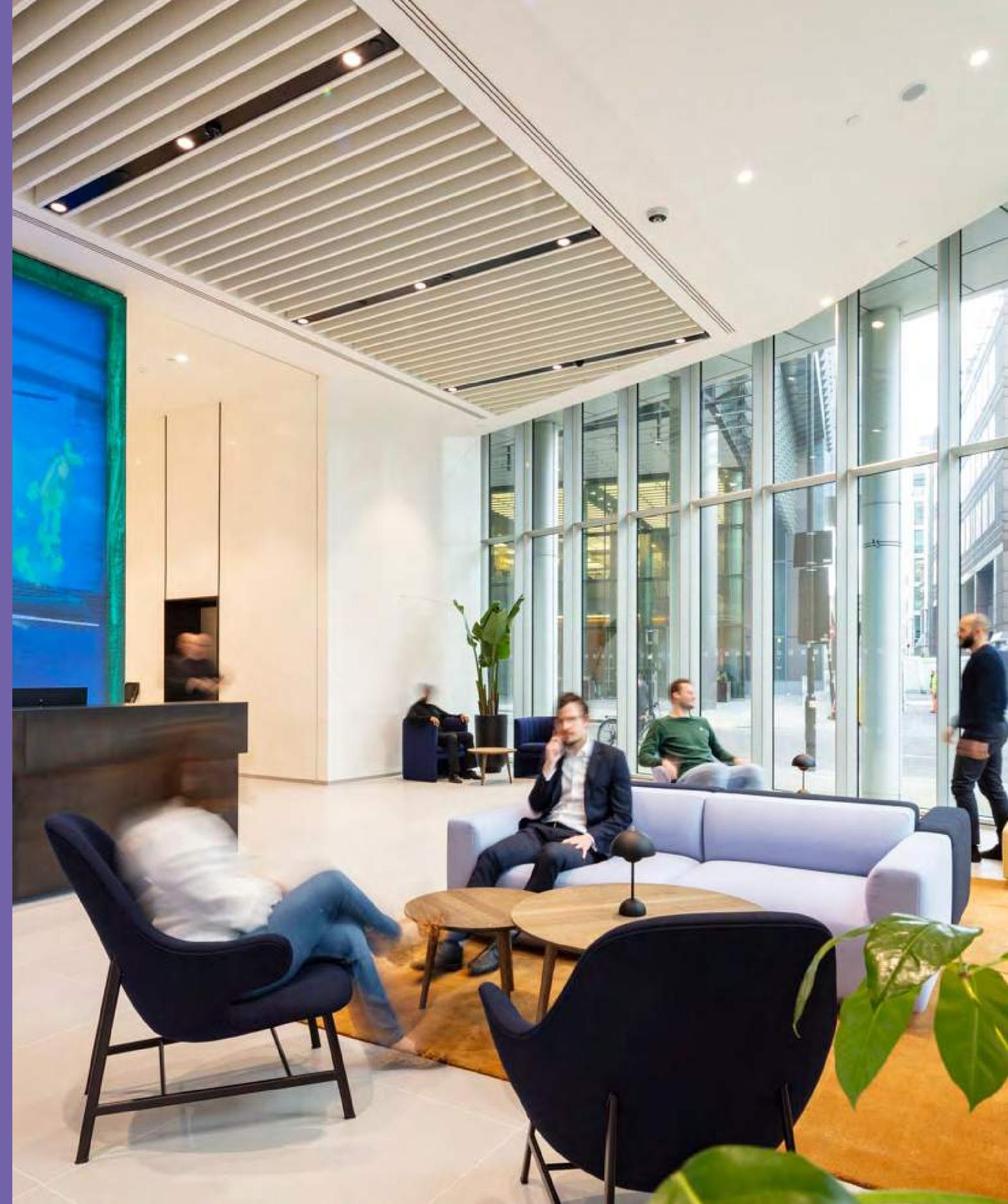
64 percent of workers agreed that cultural/ social events in the workplace help them work more effectively

# 67%

67 percent of respondents would be interested in having access to a wellbeing app in the workplace

## Part 3 — Delineation of Home and Office

Home working vs. office working,  
and how employers can create spaces  
that their staff want to work in



## The Home vs. The Office

With hybrid working now an option, and with GlobalData's August 2022 report revealing that hybrid roles in the UK rose by 31 percent in Q2 2022 (versus Q1)<sup>6</sup>, the benefits of being able to spend time in an office are worth exploring. Is it better to work in an office than from home? Our study provides a resounding answer to the question – 62 percent of respondents prefer working in an office to working from home – but it helps if it's the right kind of office.

Of those with highly enriched offices, 75 percent prefer their office to their home when it comes to working, compared to just 53 percent of those in more lean offices.

Additionally, 72 percent of those with access to a large number of cultural, social and wellness events would rather work from the office, compared to 48 percent who had no such offerings available to them.

### Age as a Factor in Home vs Office:

Contrary to the belief held by some business leaders that the Generation Z demographic doesn't want to work in the office<sup>7</sup>, this study found that 63 percent of those aged 18 to 29 said they preferred working in the office, fractionally more compared with overall respondents.

Also, the youngest cohort were most likely to strongly agree that their office provides a useful barrier for work/life balance, compared with the overall average.

In the age range of 18 to 29-year-olds, 80 percent said they enjoyed socialising with their colleagues (compared to an overall average of 77 percent), and 72 percent said

that working with their leaders inspired them (compared to 66 percent overall).

Far from being insular or uninterested in office life, the young people we spoke to

are expressing a large appetite for the dynamism and social benefits of collective working spaces.

We can speculate, as others have done<sup>8</sup>, that these results might point to the importance of in-person mentorship and the 'learning by osmosis' that occurs when someone is in the early stages of their career. (It is also possible that being more likely to have cramped accommodation, unfit for working, could also be a factor.<sup>9</sup>)

This key finding speaks to a very natural, instinctive desire for community, one that is rooted in the desire to share our experiences with others, to feel less alone in our joy or frustrations and to learn more about ourselves by having our thoughts and ideas challenged or validated by our peers.

Sofar Sounds, 30 Fenchurch



Algate Tower

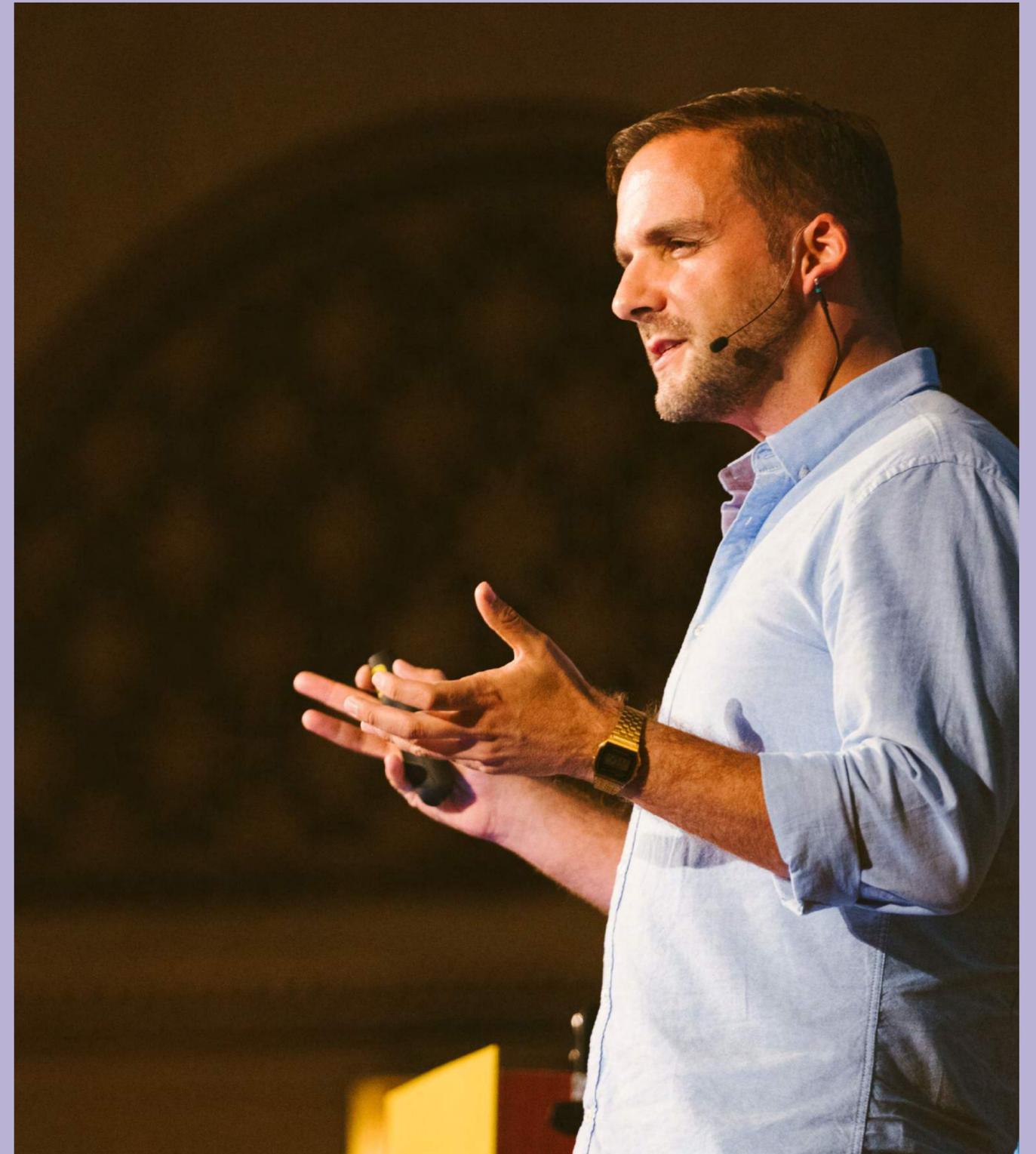


# Raul Aparici

The School of Life  
Head of Faculty

*“Having been into lots of offices and conducted many corporate cultural events, I’m not surprised to hear that more young people want to come into the office. There are so many reasons: comfort, especially for people that still live with their parents or have multiple flatmates. They want their own space.... I think others just crave human interaction and connections. And people believe that they might have more opportunities for networking, they can progress and learn quicker.*

*You can do a lot on video calls - but there is something about face-to-face interaction, that when you go back to it, you realise it is different and there is something about the connections we make that is important.”*



## Offices as Communities

There are few spaces in the world quite so old-fashioned or juxtaposed to the trends and lifestyles of the modern world as a monastery. One might imagine that, in an age of growing secularism and consumer pleasure, such spaces would have disappeared entirely. Yet, there are still thousands of such spaces dedicated to contemplation and worship all over the world.

What does this observation have to do with an office environment? Well, actually, rather a lot.

Emily Forgot, Kiosks, 2022, Citypoint



Hive, Summer Installation at Citypoint, 2022



Much like art galleries – those equally generous spaces dedicated to contemplation – the monastery speaks to our desire for a bounded space. An environment in which we are encouraged to feel inspired in certain ways and channel quite specific emotions, free from distraction.

Nothing stops us from enjoying art or thinking philosophically at home (indeed, many people do just that), but there will always come a time when we crave those spaces that are tailored perfectly for certain activities. The growth of hybrid working does not spell the end for the office, it simply

underlines those things that people most strongly desire from a work environment.

For some, it will be the social aspect and **sense of community** that can best be enjoyed face-to-face. Others might especially value an interior that has been designed to be as inspiring as possible. The challenge for us today is not found in explaining why offices are valuable, but identifying and amplifying what people value about them the most.

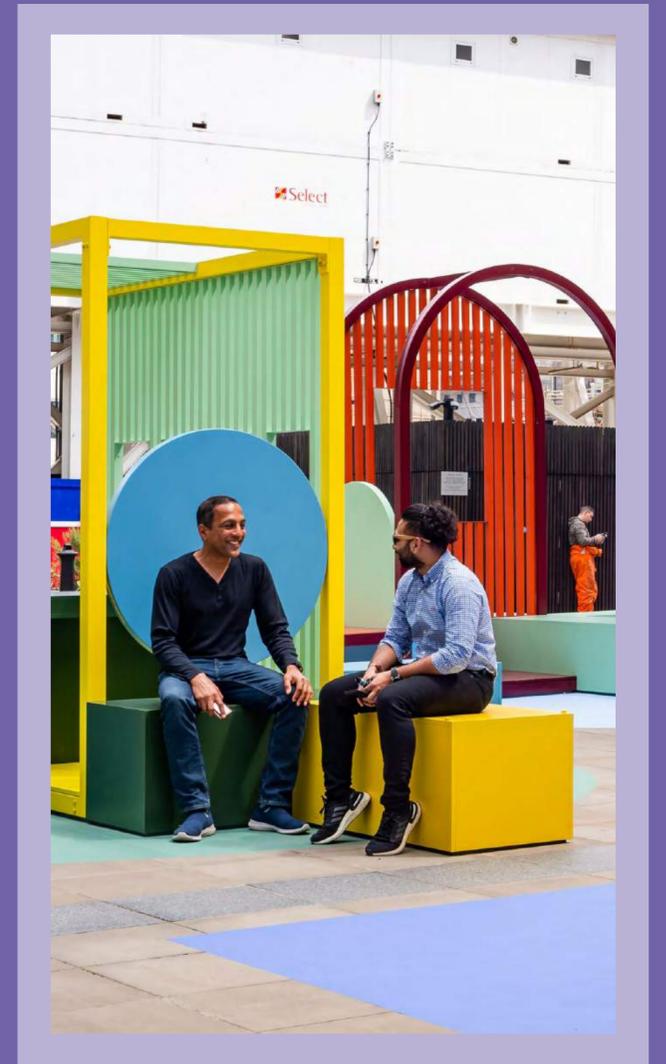
Offices are clearly not just about work – our study found that they are crucially important to many workers in fostering a sense of community and allowing them to socialise.

Three quarters of workers reported that they enjoyed being involved in the wider community of their office space. For those who already have a large number of cultural and social events available, this figure was higher (at 84 percent).

Overall, a large number of people (72 percent) said they felt motivated by the presence of their colleagues.

However, this number fell by 9 percent for those in lean offices, suggesting that the atmosphere and opportunities at work are also important.

Emily Forgot, Kiosks, 2022, Citypoint





## Saff Williams

Brookfield Properties  
Curatorial Director

*“Across Brookfield Properties’ portfolio, I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact that a culturally enriched environment can have on both occupiers and the wider community, and the importance of the use of art and culture to create a workspace that inspires and provides people with a sense of pride and increased levels of happiness.”*

## Work/Life Balance – and the office as a barrier

After an August 2022 study by Aviva that revealed UK workers were prioritising a good work-life balance over salary<sup>10</sup>, we wanted to examine what types of office spaces could help most in providing a useful barrier between work and wider life.

Whereas 76 percent of all respondents said that going into their office gave them a good physical and mental barrier that helped with work-life balance, the figure dropped to 66 percent for those working in lean offices, and to 57 percent for those

Emily Forgot, Bricolage, Principal Place



who had no access to cultural, social or wellness events.

On the flipside, 83 percent of those working in a highly enriched office environment, and 86 percent who had access to a wide range of events and activities said that their office provided a good barrier.

So to attract and retain staff who value work-life balance above everything else, businesses should take these findings into consideration when formulating what office life is like for their staff.

Anton Alvarez, The Remnants, 2022, 100  
Bishopsgate



Emily Forgot, Bricolage, 2022, Principal Place



## Conclusion

It's clear from the findings of this study that thoughtful art and well curated events in the workplace make people feel inspired, motivated and healthier than would otherwise be the case.

Equally clear is the observation that offices without any aesthetically-pleasing features or artwork – and no opportunity to attend nurturing and enriching events – have a negative impact on staff morale. These findings align with previous scientific studies and usefully add to the robust results.

In our current climate, it's vital that employers pay heed to these findings and create spaces that cater to their workers' needs – both physical and mental.

Rather than creating a home from home in reaction to our changed working patterns, offices should be spaces that inspire and generate an instinctive sense of purpose. Art and the nurturing practices of wellbeing form a central column in how this can be achieved.

The future success of office spaces – measured in terms of motivation, creativity and the fulfilment of its users – will require companies to foster art, culture and wellbeing as an integral part of the working environment.



Anne Lomax, Paradei, 2022, Principal Place



Brookfield Properties are committed to achieving this in their spaces and for their tenants by bringing our indoor and outdoor spaces to life through culture with the aim of connecting people and creating memorable experiences. These experiences allow for reflection on contemporary life in an urban environment. Brookfield Properties does so by building long term cultural partnerships and by working with emerging and contemporary artists that challenge conventional thinking and offer us a fresh perspective on life. Brookfield Properties' programming primarily focuses on the companies that occupy its spaces as well as the broader public, including other workers, residents and local communities,

and visitors. We know that art creates places that work; where people feel valued and where they will enjoy working, now and in the future.

## About The School of Life

The School of Life is a global organisation helping people lead more fulfilling lives. They are a collective of philosophers, psychotherapists and writers seeking to reclaim the wisdom of the past in order to improve the ways we live in the present and imagine a better future.

It aims to rethink ideas around the great themes of life — relationships, work, self-knowledge, socialising, calm and culture — to enable people to find greater self-understanding and connection.

The School of Life provides ideas and solutions through a range of channels, including classes, business workshops, therapy, our YouTube channel, App, books and products.

Learn more at [www.theschooloflife.com](http://www.theschooloflife.com)

## About Dr. Craig Knight

Dr Craig Knight is a Chartered, Registered, Psychologist, Board Director and business change advisor. He specializes in the psychology of leadership, design and performance. Published research by Dr. Knight and colleagues has signposted the potential for every organization to improve key variables such as wellbeing, effective intelligence and productivity by up to 45 percent, 19 percent and 32 percent respectively.

Craig's research throughout the pandemic points to a thriving hybrid workplace where even greater gains are possible. New working environments built on autonomy, trust and welfare offer a 30 percent performance differential over the methods of 2019. The new world presents a unique opportunity to develop harmonising and effective, people-based, business structures.

# Appendices

- <sup>1</sup> Robert Walters HR report August 2022 about The Great Disconnection and its cost to UK business, reported in sector press: <https://hrnews.co.uk/the-great-disconnection-costing-billions-2-in-3-disengaged-from-work/>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/the-mechanics-of-choice>  
[https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-018-0440-2?utm\\_medium=affiliate&utm\\_source=commission\\_junction&utm\\_campaign=CONR\\_PF018\\_ECOM\\_GL\\_PHSS\\_ALWYS\\_DEEPLINK&utm\\_content=textlink&utm\\_term=PID100024933&CJEVENT=cff1239e39d211ed82340b1f0a18050f](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-018-0440-2?utm_medium=affiliate&utm_source=commission_junction&utm_campaign=CONR_PF018_ECOM_GL_PHSS_ALWYS_DEEPLINK&utm_content=textlink&utm_term=PID100024933&CJEVENT=cff1239e39d211ed82340b1f0a18050f)  
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- <sup>3</sup> <http://renatasalecl.com/a-tyranny-of-choice/>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.cityscape-intelligence.com/commercial/office-space-heres-what-employees-want-2022>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/14725960810847459/full/html>;  
<https://repositorio.ul.pt/handle/10451/34741>; [https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/67323235/69ed2dc335c3e1f58d26ece3157e622dfdb2-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1663843347&Signature=bYlbQOuBi2Yt8ptY30NJI0RcM6W691cfTTsfZrdSBGE9pW~W7qYCcxGggX9Q-q~fnwvTrBWn04aJrZC-EkQf9quVhJtcascxCR6xa6pb5k1qtpBvridCby7DemEPzkZXDO6oMeYx81HVPRgYJ6-i41Ze75OgElqMkqjIn-0Yb6R~o68EWN9STaaUIrbLs8OLk5~oz5L-HiP3K3xrc9EsH1VS6kjk3SoSRtYQDAP~vhCTRru-ajghIT8Pxx4CtTr2QRiIEBBxe-QpNE4eQlq7rJuK5KOK1Mo-yKUPdTUfcscQBNt3A5js7Y1B0JHutTIJ5k7bll5NE8ph4KDurrtg\\_\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/67323235/69ed2dc335c3e1f58d26ece3157e622dfdb2-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1663843347&Signature=bYlbQOuBi2Yt8ptY30NJI0RcM6W691cfTTsfZrdSBGE9pW~W7qYCcxGggX9Q-q~fnwvTrBWn04aJrZC-EkQf9quVhJtcascxCR6xa6pb5k1qtpBvridCby7DemEPzkZXDO6oMeYx81HVPRgYJ6-i41Ze75OgElqMkqjIn-0Yb6R~o68EWN9STaaUIrbLs8OLk5~oz5L-HiP3K3xrc9EsH1VS6kjk3SoSRtYQDAP~vhCTRru-ajghIT8Pxx4CtTr2QRiIEBBxe-QpNE4eQlq7rJuK5KOK1Mo-yKUPdTUfcscQBNt3A5js7Y1B0JHutTIJ5k7bll5NE8ph4KDurrtg__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.globaldata.com/media/business-fundamentals/hybrid-roles-rose-31-q2-2022-q1-2022-finds-globaldata/>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/gen-z-work-five-days-office-173640467.html>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://fortune.com/2022/07/12/millennials-gen-z-should-return-to-office/>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.hrexchangenetwork.com/hr-talent-management/articles/gen-z-wants-to-go-back-to-the-office>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://www.aviva.com/newsroom/news-releases/2022/08/work-life-balance-overtakes-salary-post-pandemic/>