Butler’s Wharf tells a familiar story of London’s changing fortunes through trade, migration, art and reinvention. Creative spirit links the madness and the wane: from the pioneering signwriters swinging in the breeze above the jetty’s 19th century cargoes of tea and spice; through the energy of the dancers and filmmakers of the artists’ studios of the seventies; to the visionaries and developers behind its eighties’ transformation into a space for living and a new design district. Today, however, the jetty lacks purpose and identity.

Meandering routes through naturalised planting enhance the jetty’s subtle appeal and bring this London landmark and its history to life.

In reimagining a naturalised, resilient landscape of plants and weathered piers, contained within a playful meandering of recycled decks and planters, we create a framework that celebrates the views and activities of the jetty and integrates the riverside restaurants into the landscape. This biodiverse back dropping softens the boundaries between river and city, and celebrates what came before and what lies beneath.

Overview

Draw in, draw out - connect to the natural rhythm beneath your feet, take stock, centre and find your voice again

Butler’s Wharf Riverside Trust and envisaged a naturalised park creating the ‘place to pause and reflect’.
The irrigation system will allow the creation of atmospheric mist helping to blur the boundary between jetty and river.

Planting design
- Lush naturalistic planting is contained within the curves, varying in height and intensity with repeated elements for continuity and calm.
- Trees frame entrances, offering views through and beneath their open structure, while low hummocks and spheres of evergreen spill over the timber edges, anchoring the following ephemeral planting.
- Seasonality is key: from the freshness of new growth in spring, to summer airiness with a lightness of touch, fading into dusky autumn softness before structuring winter with evergreens and wood heath.
- A smudgy tonal palette has zesty highlights, sitting beneath the jetty and pumped up into the planters.

Planting and wayfinding, seating and lighting, are woven together to set the stage for a joyful narrative environment of hand-painted quotes and stories from the jetty’s past.

Technical considerations
- Modular components create decks, planters, benches, bars and bike stands.
- Lights and handrails are retained but the colours are coordinated with the overall design.
- Existing ‘nautical junk’ is enhanced by new vertical structures that provide support for planting and architectural framing for the jetty’s views.
- Meandering routes allow access for all and encourage a wide range of uses and activities while influencing an overall slowing of pace and renewed focus on surroundings.
- Vehicle access routes are retained.
- A biodiverse, naturalistic planting scheme will withstand the brackish conditions with minimal irrigation and maintenance needs.

Reuse, upcycle, save energy
- Lighting – existing lights are incorporated through colour; LED bulbs installed for efficiency improvement.
- Recycled materials – used in innovative ways to extend their lifespan.
- Solar-powered irrigation – we have identified several locations for a modest array of solar panels that would power a pump and timer system.

Irrigation solutions
1. Water is drawn from the river at low tide at the least brackish and desalinated through solar power before use in the planters.
2. Water run-off from hard surfaces is stored in containers beneath the jetty and pumped up into the planters.
3. A dedicated mains water connection is created.

Component flexibility
- Modular upcycled components allow the vertical structure connecting modular pressed-steel brackets.
- Together these can be configured in different radii, heights and orientations to create planters, decks, benches, bike stands, stools and chairs. The scope can be adjusted simply to suit varying conditions and budgets.

Planters are lined with recycled rubber, containing the water, and seed heads.

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