Alsop Architects
The Public
West Bromwich, UK

A light-weight box that covers a series of sculptural forms.

Contained within a simple rectilinear form, The Public was conceived as a "Box of Delights" offering a wide variety of spaces, forms, angles, curves, surfaces, vistas and atmospheres.

Located at the heart of the new town center for West Bromwich the building, with its large doors and through-routes, is an extension of the public town square.
The box envelope is punctured by a scattering of "jellybean" shaped windows that pierce the sides of the aluminium cladding.

Inside, simplicity of form gives way to complexity, with rugged, multi-faceted or curved forms appearing to balloon into the space, sitting on, or suspended from a table structure, with lifts cutting past them and a wandering, large-scale ramp linking the spaces.
These forms are containers for the many different functions in the building. There are, for example, "Pods" for displaying art, as well as a huge "Sock" containing two large galleries, an events space "Rock" and a "Pebble."

At the top of the building, suspended from the roof, a series of "Lily-Pads" – dish-shaped floors with brightly coloured interiors – will house creative workspaces.

In places, these structures break through the external shell of the building. The "Pebble" is clad externally in the same stainless steel cladding used internally.

The Theater, contained within the "Rock," is designed to serve the local community by accommodating a wide variety of functions.

Gallery visitors arrive at level 3 at the edge of an informal cluster of tubular steel trees which provide an introduction to the delights of the Galley experience. The trees, designed by Ben Kelly Design, incorporate a mass of displays, lights, projectors, input terminals and decorative panels.
After passing through the trees visitors arrive at the "Sock," a black sculptural form rising through three stories and dominating the North East end of the building. This accommodates the two temporary exhibition galleries - a white single story room at Level 3 and black two story room at Level 1.
The overall interior of The Public was designed as a bioclimatic space. The "Pod" structures make it possible to target energy into spaces where people gather, thus allowing a high degree of energy efficiency. Natural ventilation is used where possible.

Drawing courtesy Alsop Architects
Plan Level 00

Drawing courtesy Alsop Architects
Plan Level 0
Plan Mezzanine

Plan Level 2

Longitudinal Section

Cross Section

Total Area: 9,274 square meters
Completed: 2008

Clients:
CPlex 1998-2003
The Public Building Limited 2003-2006
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 2006-2008

Architects: Alsop Architects
Associate Architects: Flannery & de la Pole

Project Direction: DCA Consultancy Ltd
Construction Manager: ISG Interior Exterior
Project Manager & QS: Davis Langdon
Project Manager & QS (Fit Out): Sandwell MBC
Exhibition Designer: Ben Kelly Design
Services Engineer (Fit Out): White Young Green
Services Engineer: Battle McCarthy
Structural Engineer: Adams Kara Taylor

Alsop Architects arcspace features

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