

Coventry Phoenix Project, Coventry

By uncovering some of Coventry's ancient past, while creating two new public squares, two beautiful new gardens, plus housing, cafes and bars, the Phoenix Initiative aims to create a new focus for the city.

Overlaying the urban structure is an extensive public art programme. Each artwork is integral to the design and context of each new space and draws on local history and tradition to provide a new exciting urban

experience that is relevant and representative of Coventry's past, present and future.

The 3ha site links two major visitor attractions; Basil Spence's Cathedral and the Coventry Transport Museum. Our project regenerates a previously neglected part of the city by creating a series of connected new public spaces.



Masterplan by MJP

This is the most important regeneration project for Coventry since the city was re-built following its destruction during the blitz of the Second World War. A new journey has been created through the city to amplify Coventry's standing as the city of international peace and reconciliation, symbolised by the ruined and re-built cathedral. It capitalises on visitors from the Cathedral, providing a clearly defined pedestrian route with new destinations along the way that encourage people to stay longer in

the heart of the city and support local businesses.

The scheme has created major new interest in the area and has since attracted considerable further investment.



2004



1999

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- 1 The Journey by Rummey Design Associates
- 2 Aerial View 'After' - 2004
- 3 Aerial View 'Before' - 1999

Shortlisted for Stirling Prize 2004

Client: Coventry City Council

Completion: June 2003

Cost: £50m

Visitor Interpretation Centre Phoenix Project, Coventry

Our Visitor Interpretation Centre has the dual purpose of explaining the locality's rich history, as well as providing a meeting space for a Multi-Faith Group, an organisation set up to encourage understanding and co-operation between Coventry's diverse religious communities.

The building sits on the threshold of the masterplan's axial route and is flanked by two new gardens. The building has been designed to express the transparency and openness of its use. While having a

distinctly modern style, it adopts the same red sandstone employed in the original Benedictine Priory, and the adjacent Holy Trinity Church.

The remains of the priory's original 11th century north nave wall has been preserved, revealed and built upon to form the rear wall of the Centre.



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- 1 Visitors Centre - entrance and stairs down from Priory Garden
- 2 The ground is disengaged from the walls by a recess which glows blue at night

Priory Garden and Cloister Phoenix Project, Coventry

The Priory Garden and the Priory Cloister are both inspired by their setting on the site of Coventry's excavated 11th Century Priory Cathedral, that was destroyed during the Dissolution in the 16th Century.

The Priory Garden

Designed as a sunken garden, inserted into the excavated nave of the original Benedictine Priory, it features a new lawn punctuated by the foundations of the Priory and a floor sculpture by Chris Browne, depicting the Anglo Saxon landmark, Cofa's Tree, from which the name Coventry is believed to have derived. Visitors can enjoy elevated views of the garden from the timber walkway that links the nearby Holy Trinity Church with the new Visitor Interpretation Centre.

The Priory Cloister

The adjacent walled garden of the Priory Cloister, landscaped by Rummey Design Associates, has a quadrant of pleached lime trees that recall the simplicity and contemplative nature of a monastic cloister. Artist David Ward has created a sound installation that gives the impression that there are voices murmuring in the branches of the trees. Eight speaker columns set near the branches relay recordings from local people describing their life in Coventry.



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- 1 Priory Cloister with pleached limes and speakers by David Ward
- 2 Priory Garden - Cofa's Tree mosaic by Chris Browne
- 3 A vitrine in Priory Garden displaying works by Chris Browne
- 4 Priory Garden at dusk

Priory Place & Youell House Phoenix Project, Coventry

Priory Place

Priory Place is designed as a vibrant urban space surrounded by shops, bars and cafes with new housing above. It provides 84 apartments and 3000m² of retail space at ground level. The design uses a combination of materials which include white render, timber and local Red Sandstone. A water installation by the artist Susanna Heron, *Water Window*, evokes the medieval mill race, powered by the River Sherbourne, that now flows under the square.

Youell House

Our new building looks on to the new Priory Place and provides new supporting accommodation for the Cathedral. The new building is constructed over an undercroft within which the recently excavated archaeological remains of a monastic dormitory will be preserved and made accessible to the visiting public.



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- 1 Youell House within the context of Priory Place
- 2 Priory Place with *Waterwindow* and Visitors Centre behind
- 3 Millennium Causeway which links to Millennium Place

Millennium Place Phoenix Project, Coventry

The new Millennium Place is an extraordinary new public piazza for the City of Coventry.

It is fan shaped and is dominated by the twin stainless steel clad Whittle Arches (designed by MJP and Whitby Bird), which act as a landmark gateway to Millennium Place. It is a venue for open-air concerts and plays, offering opportunities for an Arts and Events programme, co-ordinated with events in the Cathedral and its environs.

It is bounded by our new extension and entrance to the Coventry Transport

Museum (CTM). A ramp along the edge of the space leads to a new glass bridge, designed in collaboration with the artist Alexander Beleschenko. This elegant spiralling structure threads its way through the existing trees of Lady Herbert's Garden and arrives at a new garden designed on the theme of international friendship.

The piazza has substantially increased the number of visitors to the museum. It was also shortlisted for the Gulbenkian Award for new museums.



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- 1 Looking towards Whittle Arches from the Spiral Ramp with Priory Place behind
- 2 Millennium Place with Time Zone Clock
- 3 The Ramp is dramatically lit at night
- 4 Coventry Transport Museum looks onto Millennium Place

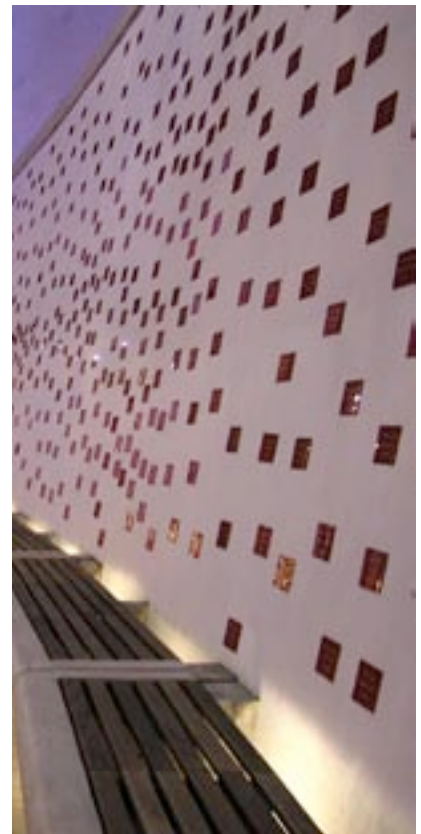
Public Art in Millennium Place Phoenix Project, Coventry

We have collaborated with International artists to create major art works. Belgian artist Francoise Schein's *Time Zone Clock* is set into the surface of the new square using LED lights to indicate the actual time in Coventry and that relates geographically to the 26 cities to which Coventry is twinned.

German artist, Jochen Gerz, has developed a 45m long *Public Bench* that sweeps along the northern edge of the

square. The people of Coventry were invited to give their name together with another name and a date of their choice to be printed on a plaque and mounted on the bench.

At the threshold of Lady Herbert's Garden, Gerz has installed the *Future Monument*, a glass obelisk surrounded by plaques bearing the names of the people of Coventry's former enemies who are now their friends.



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- 1 *Time Zone Clock* by Francoise Schein
- 2 *Public Bench* by Jochen Gerz
- 3 *Future Monument* by Jochen Gerz
- 4 *Future Monument* by Jochen Gerz

The Garden of International Friendship Phoenix Project, Coventry

This is a collaborative project between Rummey Design Associates and British artist Kate Whiteford. It represents, in landscape terms, Coventry's role as a City of International Peace and Reconciliation - a Garden of International Friendship. The garden sits at the north east edge of the masterplan site, adjacent to the recently restored Lady Herbert's Garden and the old city walls. The space is planted with a circular maze, which recalls the possibility that there was originally a maze depicted in early maps in the Benedictine Priory

grounds. This is flanked by a curved plinth, engraved with a text extracted from the Coventry *Mystery Plays*, by local writer David Morley.

The garden also includes lavender beds flanked by a red sandstone viewing platform, which supports a new glass bridge that spirals up from the new public square.



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- 1 *Priory Maze* by Kate Whiteford
- 2 The curved wall has an inset bronze text by local poet David Morley
- 3 The glass bridge spans the restored Lady Herbert's Garden