

Architectural press information about the redevelopment of the Whitworth



Whitworth Art Gallery redevelopment. Artist's Impression of Exterior View
Image courtesy: Whitworth Art Gallery, MUMA & Hayes Davidson

Extension

At the heart of this major project is the creation of an elegant glass, stainless steel and brick extension including two new wings which will extend into Whitworth Park from the back of the existing Whitworth Art Gallery building.

The wings will be connected by a glass promenade gallery that allows visitors to engage fully with the park, from both within the extension and the newly renovated existing galleries.

This increased exhibition and public space, which includes galleries, learning and study spaces, and a collections center will allow the gallery to show, share and care for its significant collection of over 55,000 historical and contemporary works including outstanding landscape works on paper by celebrated British and European artists, world textiles and wallpaper collections. The new extension will provide space for landscape works and large scale sculptures to be displayed and enable visitors to make connections between works on display and the surrounding landscape.

Café Wing

The café wing is a two-storey, cantilevered glass structure designed to sit alongside the trees in Whitworth Park. It houses a new café and Learning Studio, and its translucent façade is designed to sit gently within its park surroundings. MUMA have developed polished stainless steel glazing mullions designed to reflect trees and light such that the structure dissolves visually.

Ground Floor – Learning Studio

A light and spacious learning studio runs the length of the wing. Fully retractable doors and a covered area opening out onto the Art Garden (designed by Sarah Price co-designer of the 2012 Gardens at the Olympic Park in London and a Chelsea Flower Show gold medalist) where sculptures from the collection and artist commissions will be on display, allows the space to function as an indoor/outdoor art and learning area.

the Whitworth

First Floor – Café

An elegant, linear café will be situated alongside the trees in Whitworth Park on the first floor of the wing. The café will be open through the day and into the evening and will serve locally sourced, seasonal British food from a leading British chef.

Landscape Gallery Wing

This brick built, street-facing wing runs along Denmark Road and includes a new landscape gallery with views over the park from the first floor and a study centre at ground floor level. For the brick façade MUMA have developed a Whitworth blend of Northcot British brick and a brickwork pattern with a traditional textile slash work effect, inspired by the gallery's extensive textile collection.

Ground Floor – Lower Promenade

The lower promenade will have an entrance from Whitworth Park into the gallery. As visitors enter they will see a welcome desk and the new contemporary grand staircase echoing the historic Edwardian grand staircases being opened up within the original building, as well as a large lift to take visitors up to the main exhibition galleries at first floor level.

The stairwell will be a site for the display of large scale works from the collection, drawing the visitors up and into upper gallery spaces.

Ground Floor – Study Centre

At ground floor level, a study centre will house some of the most used works from the collections, in purpose-built accessible storage units. The study centre will have large tables forming a group study area and is designed to host sessions of up to 30 people. It will also have two dedicated study desks for individual research scholars.

Upper Promenade

The upper promenade with views over the art garden will allow visitors to move directly between the landscape gallery and café as well as access the newly renovated main exhibition galleries. Visitors will also be able to view textile conservation work taking place in a double height conservation space that is part of the public areas.

Landscape Gallery

The new landscape gallery is a double height gallery space, with a high level north facing window, which allows daylight into the space, and a grand window that overlooks the park. The technical specification of the space will allow for the display of large installations and artworks.

Orchard Garden

An Orchard Garden and wildflower area designed by Sarah Price will be created between the landscape gallery and the park wall – this will be a semi-public space entered from the gallery building that will offer a place for relaxation and reflection and support the Whitworth's work to promote the biodiversity of the park.

the Whitworth

Existing Gallery Refurbishment

The reorganisation and refurbishment of the existing 19th century building will reveal previously hidden architectural details including restoring the three original exhibition galleries, reintroduce the Grand Hall and grand Edwardian staircases to public circulation and create of a new state of the art, accessible collection storage area, an improved space for the shop and a new entrance to the gallery on Oxford Road.

Ground Floor

A new collection storage area utilizing passive environmental control methods will be created in the lower ground floor. This includes a public collections access area that will run alongside the lower promenade. The lower ground floor has been dedicated to this purpose to ensure that the collections are accessible to all visitors and also make use of the most environmentally stable part of the building to store the collections, so that no mechanical cooling or humidity control is required, lowering carbon consumption significantly.

Beside the lift and staircases up to the ground and first floors additional toilets, a family changing area, lockers and coat room will be created. The remaining lower ground floor areas will be reorganized to improve delivery areas, storage and staff facilities and create a new conservation studio.

First Floor

Extensive refurbishment and restoration of the existing gallery building includes the recovery of the form of three original barrel-ceiling exhibition galleries enabling the display of major, large scale exhibitions in this major suite of galleries. The circulation and flow of the building will also be transformed by the restoration of these galleries and by re-establishing a central sight-line through a large window in the central gallery into the park beyond.

The 1960s interiors of the existing Whitworth gallery spaces - some intimate and domestic and others with park views and grand volumes - are retained and restored. The grand Edwardian staircases, hidden from public view for more than 50 years, will be reintroduced into public areas, so that visitors will be able to move from the existing textile gallery up the stairs to the newly restored Grand Hall.

This space, on the first floor level overlooking the Oxford Road, currently staff offices and study rooms, is restored to its 1908 purpose as a Grand Hall.

With the original hammer-beam barrel ceiling and mahogany wall panelling, it will offer a light filled events space to accommodate public and private events, performance, screenings and workshops.

Oxford Road entrance and Sculpture Terrace

An additional £1.8 million grant has been agreed by Arts Council England to complete the refurbishment of the front of the building and the Oxford Road approach to the gallery. A Sculpture Terrace at the front of the gallery building will transform the present Oxford Road entrance and offer a major opportunity to display large scale outdoor works in sight of this busy thoroughfare. Further landscaping by Sarah Price, will soften the formality of the Whitworth's Edwardian frontage, reshaping the experience of arriving at the gallery's original entrance.

A new shop housed in the two wings of the existing foyer on the ground floor will offer an expanded range of art books, artists materials and specialist art magazines, while the other side will offer a wide range of bespoke gallery gifts and products sourced from artists and crafts people, all related to or influenced by the Whitworth's collections.

Carbon Consumption

MUMA have taken a passive approach to the environmental control of the gallery and collection storage area by rearranging the existing gallery space to take advantage of the environmental opportunities within the original fabric of the building and using earth tubes and ground source heat pumps that take advantage of the park location.

The gallery has therefore eliminated the need for high energy consumption mechanical cooling and humidity control devices. In this way the gallery will achieve its target of reducing overall carbon consumption by 10%, a significant achievement given that the building is increasing in area by a third and public areas increase by 100%.

The project has been made possible with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), The University of Manchester, Arts Council England (ACE), and grants from a number of other funders and individuals including the Clore Duffield Foundation, Friends of the Whitworth, The Headley Trust, The Granada Foundation, The Clothworkers' Foundation, The Wolfson Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement, The J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust, Pilgrim Trust and The Mercers Company.

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