

New Look Barbican



New Front Door

Following seven years of major refurbishment, the Barbican now has a fresh look, which complements its forward-thinking vision as Europe's largest arts centre. At a cost of £35million, the City of London Corporation has funded the refurbishment of much of the 20-acre site. The modernisation has been achieved economically and completed in time for the Barbican's 25th birthday celebrations. Award-winning architectural practice Allford Hall Monaghan Morris has restored and enhanced many of the original features designed by former architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon.

Finally the Barbican has its own front door on Silk Street, while Alex Hartley's new light wall installation in the main entrance captures the buzz inside.

Additionally, every venue has undergone major work, including the huge improvements to the acoustics in Barbican Hall.

The new entrance reinforces the Barbican's strong identity, as London's major arts centre, hosting visual art, theatre, music, dance, film, education all under one roof. The look is more faithful to the original design.

'Today, on the eve of the Barbican's 25th quarter-centenary, and his own final year, Tusa has completed a £35m refit that has remedied the acoustic, simplified the geography and created physical and intellectual cohesion.'

Norman Lebrecht, The Evening Standard



Model by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon

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Alex Hartley has created a light wall in the main entrance of the Barbican, which captures the dynamism and energy of the City's creative powerhouse. The new dramatic 22m moving, light wall installation was commissioned by Linklaters, the law firm directly opposite the Barbican. The themes play on the Barbican's iconic symbols.

AHMM has completely redesigned the signage to improve navigation around the Centre.

'With the exception of a limited amount of radical 'surgery', we worked with and made capital out of the qualities of the structure; its rugged consistency of finish; its massive scale and its long vistas'.

Peter Morris of AHMM

Whereas previous improvements tried to cover-up much of the 1970s building design, Peter Morris' practice has stripped back these latter additions, to reveal the simplicity of the strikingly original features and its unique, strong identity. Coloured uplighters make a feature of the original coffers.

In 2001, Barbican Hall underwent a major refurbishment at a cost of £75million, which has greatly improved the whole concert experience. Kirkegaard Associates radically improved the acoustics with striking acoustic reflectors designed by Caruso St John. At the same time, the air-conditioning system was upgraded and infrastructure was modernised, making the Hall fully flexible to host everything from multi-media concerts to dance and film.

Similar improvements to comfort and infrastructure were made to all the venues around the Centre. In 2002, Barbican Theatre was redeveloped at a cost of £4.5million.





In 2004, the Barbican Art Gallery reopened after a £2.3million redevelopment, which created an additional 140m of gallery space.



Cinema 1 was refurbished in 2005 with new seating, carpeting and light fittings.

The Barbican's greatly improved bars, restaurants and conference suite offer an urban retreat.

'We now have the right building and the right art. The spaces, and the events they host, now fit'.

Sir John Tusa, Barbican Managing Director

'Almost every building goes through a phase of looking profoundly unfashionable. Often it's because we have forgotten the original rationale. Frequently, the ideas, which informed the design, have fallen out of favour. But if buildings can make it through the 20-25 year hiatus, they often achieve a new understanding and appreciation. As we approach our 25th birthday in March 2007, we can see that the Barbican has some excellent qualities.'

Sir John Tusa, Barbican Managing Director





Beyond the arts programme

Over the past two decades, the Barbican has become the creative hub within London's financial district, providing a cultural oasis at the centre of a thriving metropolis. It is not only a platform for the world's greatest artists, but a conference venue, which actively supports the artistic endeavours, and a welcoming environment, overlooking gardens, the Lakeside and St Giles Cripplegate, the site of the annual firework display in the Mostly Mozart summer festival.

'Where the Barbican was once a little lost in a forgotten part of town, it is now in the heart of the fashionable east side, which seems absolutely right'. Wallpaper City Guide: London

The past ten years has seen an eastward shift for London's creative industries. The subsequent proliferation of bars, restaurants, galleries and venues has transformed the UK's financial centre into a flourishing residential and recreational district. With Smithfield and Clerkenwell to the west, booming Spitalfields, Hoxton and Shoreditch to the East, St Paul's, The Museum of London and Tate Modern to the south, the Barbican now finds itself in the midst of Europe's most exciting cultural quarter and a landmark attraction on the City's revitalised tourist trail.

'There is nothing like the architecture and planning of the Barbican Estate in scale, intelligence, engineering, ingenuity, quality of construction, urban landscaping and sheer abstract artistry anywhere else in Britain, and perhaps not in the world. A massive and multivalent architectural project that took decades to design and build has taken an equally long time to win recognition and familiarity in Londoners' minds. Long dismissed as a concatenation of brutalist concrete by those who lived outside its heroic walls, the Barbican has always been admired and respected by those it was built for. Today the estate is both fashionable and listed: Chamberlin, Powell and Bon can rest in peace.'

Jonathan Glancey, architectural journalist

A landmark



Born out of the aftermath of World War II bombings, which completely devastated the whole area, the Barbican grew up like a phoenix from the ashes. Created in the spirit of post-war Britain, it embodied modern, economical, tranquil urban design. The housing complex drew in over 4,000 residents to the City, at a time when the area was only considered a financial district.

The Barbican has now become an iconic landmark on the City's skyline.

To discover more about the Barbican's new look, history and 25th birthday celebrations, log on to:

www.barbican.org.uk/25. More information will be available in a special 25th birthday book from 21 February 2007.

