

# The Lighthouse, Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City

## Space title

The Education Workshop

## Location

Glasgow, Scotland

## Cost of project

Design and construction, £12 million; fittings & fixtures, £0.5 million

## Participants

Client, Glasgow 1999 Festival Company; Architects, Page and Park (Glasgow); Interior Designers, Javier Mariscal (Barcelona) and Sam Booth (Glasgow); Funders, Glasgow City Council, Scottish Enterprise Glasgow, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland, Scottish Arts Council, Strathclyde European Partnership.

## Timescale for the project

The idea of building an architecture centre in Glasgow was first proposed in 1994, when Dr Stuart Macdonald (now Director of the Lighthouse) worked as Senior Adviser for Strathclyde City Council. The project was approved during the Glasgow Design Festival in 1996 and work began on the building in January 1998. The Lighthouse opened in July 1999.

## Space location & dimensions

The Lighthouse is located in the centre of Glasgow, Scotland's largest city. The Education Workshop (250m<sup>2</sup>) is one of three dedicated learning spaces within the Education Centre (1,000m<sup>2</sup>) that occupies the whole of the second floor of the building; other spaces include the Young Designers' Gallery, an interactive gallery for children aged from three to eight (the Wee People's City), and an ICT centre.

## Summary of the project brief

The requirements of the Education Workshop were clear from the start: an accessible, multi-functional, flexible and inspirational space for learners of all ages to engage with architecture and design as a creative process.

The space should incorporate facilities for hands-on learning, e-learning and reflective learning as well as a dedicated, creative learning space for small children. It should provide display spaces for the work created on site and well-designed storage for art and design resources and for visiting school parties. In summary, in the words of Stuart Macdonald, 'a learning environment designed, built and furnished to the same standards of quality as any other space in the building as a whole'.

## Background to the project

Glasgow is the birthplace of architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh who designed the building in which the Lighthouse is housed. The creation of the Lighthouse was central to Glasgow's reign as UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999 and to the city's continuing cultural regeneration since then. The Lighthouse is the only architecture centre in Scotland, and is the largest architecture centre in the UK.

## The development process

The Education Centre was always seen as being central to the plans for the Lighthouse project, and teachers, educational bodies and educationalists were consulted in the early stages of the project's development.

The internal fit-out of the Education Centre was briefed by Stuart Macdonald, drawing on his own experience as an educator and adviser, and using the expertise of the wider team involved in planning Glasgow's tenure as the UK City of Architecture and Design.

## The outcome

The Education Workshop is a large, rectangular room with high windows along one side of the room providing good natural light. It can accommodate groups of up to 60 school-aged students working on practical art-making activities, or be converted into a lecture space for 80 adults. A bench running along the whole length of the windows houses Apple Mac computers; glass storage units display art work and architectural models. An overhead power track and wall-mounted sockets ensure that computers and electrical equipment can be used flexibly in the space.



## Features:

- A dedicated educational space central to the whole development of the building, both philosophically and physically
- The value of a site director with an educational background
- The value of purpose-built fittings and furniture
- The value of building display space into an education space, e.g. transparent display cases forming the walls of an internal room
- The benefit of close working between education and exhibition staff



The wall opposite the windows is fitted with full-length wooden cupboards used for storing tables, school bags, and art and design resources. The wood is solid and well finished. The sink area was made to order – by a firm specialising in fittings for prisons – constructed of industrial stainless steel and housing two sinks, one at ‘child height’ and the other for adults. There are large steel cupboards on either side of the sink and kitchen-style cupboards above.

At the far end of the Workshop is a glass-walled room used for meetings or quiet study. The walls of the room – which look onto the Workshop space and out onto the central areas of the Education Centre – are constructed as transparent cube-shaped display cases for art work created on site.

The education offices are easily accessible from the Workshop space, allowing for easy interaction between workshop participants and the education and technical support staff. The visibility of the space, and of the education staff within it, sends out a clear message about the accessibility and importance of education to the work of the Lighthouse as a whole.



In the four years since the Lighthouse opened, the Workshop space has worked well. Demand for computer-based work has increased well beyond the original plans, leading to the installation of Apple Macs in the Workshop and the purchase of a mobile computer trolley housing ten i-books, to supplement the facilities in the computer suite.

The Lighthouse receives more than 40,000 educational visitors per year, out of a total visitor figure of 150,000.

**Lessons learned**

- Learning has to be seen as integral to the purpose and layout of a building, and planned-in from the beginning of the design process
- Education spaces and staff must be visible to all visitors/users
- Education staff must work to foster a sense of ownership, so that users of the Centre respect the spaces, cleaning and tidying at the end of an activity

**Key factors**

- A director with a background in education
- A clear vision for the organisation, with education as part of the core mission
- An organisational commitment to education: at the Lighthouse, the education and exhibition staff together form a Lifelong Learning team and meet on a monthly basis to discuss plans and review priorities
- A management style which places education and exhibition/curatorial staff on an equal footing
- An exhibition space within the education space: at the Lighthouse, the Young Designers’ Gallery houses a range of exhibitions throughout the year
- A planning process that integrates the planning of exhibition programmes and education

‘... a learning environment designed, built and furnished to the same standards of quality as any other space in the building as a whole ...’

