



Brick type: Blue Smooth
Oslo White (supplied by Roben)

Project Architect: Ash Sakula Architects
Contractor: Apollo Group

Location: Luton

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UK Centre for Carnival Arts

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Supported by the East of England Development Agency, the £7.3 million UK Centre for Carnival Arts centre breaks new ground with its use of glued brickwork and demonstrates how brick can be used in a modern, creative and unique way.

The centre consists of two new buildings either side of a large courtyard, which has a continuous wall around it, part brick, part screen. Two large gates are the access points at either end of the courtyard allowing it to be transformed into a street as part of Luton's carnival route.

The larger of the two buildings houses performance areas, a workshop, teaching spaces and a café. The smaller building is home to offices, the national carnival archive, business units and a crèche. The courtyard is a place to relax and to perform as well as a new street for the carnival.

The architects Ash Sakula have reflected the spirit of carnival through their choice of materials to give a tactile, textural finish to mirror the vibrant, colourful and creative nature of carnival.

In total almost 65,000 bricks were used in the project. Forterra supplied 48,000 Wilnecote Blue Smooth engineering bricks which form a continuous wrap around the large building, broken only by the full height display windows. Around 16,600 Oslo White bricks, supplied by Roben, were used to create a 'graphic equaliser' pattern in the blue grey bricks either side of these windows.

Minimising the joint thickness was also important for the textile quality of the finish and was achieved by using an Omnific glue mortar, pioneered in the UK by Forterra.

In addition to being able to produce a 5mm joint, the glue also allows longer lengths of unbroken brickwork to be created than with conventional mortar. It also offers an added sustainability benefit as thin joint brickwork achieves better air-tightness than traditional brickwork.

The result is a unique building that like the art of carnival itself is strange, shambolic and magnificent.



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