

the Design Museum





Client

The Design Museum

Wayfinding Strategy and Design

Cartlidge Levene

Creative Partners

John Pawson, Fernando Gutiérrez

Contractor

Willmott Dixon

The art of designing a museum is one filled with expectation and promise. A rare and unique challenge for designers; none more so than when that museum is the new incarnation of the Design Museum, the venerable home of design in the UK, originally founded in 1989 by Sir Terence Conran.

We worked closely with wayfinding and signage designers Cartlidge Levene to produce wayfinding, placemaking and signage that enriches the character and personality of the museum's new home in South Kensington.





Following a £23 million transformation, the Design Museum moved to the formerly derelict, 10,000 sq m, Royal Commonwealth Institute building in Holland Park. To rejuvenate the building, the space was redesigned by architect John Pawson, and also took on a new identity created by Fernando Gutiérrez, and a wayfinding scheme developed by Cartlidge Levene.

Our brief was to produce the placemaking and signage to the high standards that Cartlidge Levene and The Design Museum demanded. Our delivery of these signs ensured that there was harmony between all aspects of the visitor journey and the building, while also delivering on the museum's aim to be a hub for "contemporary design and architecture and an international showcase of design skills".





The identity for the Design Museum is crisp and clean with the signage and wayfinding utilising the Schulbuch typeface and the seminal pictograms, designed by Otl Aicher in the 1970s.

With the scale and importance of the building in mind, developing the designs for this prestigious project, was undoubtedly one of the most demanding projects we have encountered in our 38-year history. Highlights included the Otl Aicher icons, which were made to provide both information and appear as an exhibit. This was achieved by making them from acrylic panels and placing them in folded metal holders, creating the feeling that the pictograms are framed objects on display. and the importance of the institution's new home.

Further design elements in the scheme included the external signage, flag poles, a series of engraved Corian panels, English oak lettering, manifestations and interactive touch screen displays that could be updated with each new exhibition. At every stage of development and refinement, we produced prototypes, with modifications and subtle refinements made along the way to ensure faithfulness to the original design intent, focussing on craft techniques that would complement the overall vision.





By paying homage to the character of the new building and the design heritage of the museum as an institution, the scheme delivers a narrative that segues into a portfolio of beautifully crafted signs that effortlessly creates a visually engaging and informative guide around the museum.

“The signs are the jewels of the building.”

Deyan Sudjic OBE
Director, the Design Museum



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