

Aytoun Street Library

Aytoun Street, 1993

Architect[s]: [Mills Beaumont Leavey Channon](#)

Area[s]: [Gay Village](#)

Theme[s]: [Contemporary Buildings](#) [Education](#)

The central location of the Aytoun Street library was chosen to allow easy access for users. Bordered by UMIST, Sheena Simon College and the gay village, the building is at a busy intersection of traffic routes, highlighting the university's prominent position as one of the leading academic institutions in Manchester, while also providing a powerful focal point for the area. The library works on many levels of complexity, with transparency and its spatial configuration central to its success. The form of the building responds sensitively to the existing street pattern, curving gracefully around the contours of the site, while at the same time unifying the buildings of the main campus to the rear. A high degree of transparency provides the interior with an ethereal quality, allowing light to penetrate deep into the building, presenting the user with a relaxed and pleasant work environment. When asked, the majority of its users considered the new library to be more conducive to concentration, and believed that the spacious atmosphere actually encouraged positive study.

Communiqué Offices

2 Canal Street, 1996

Area[s]: [Gay Village](#)

Theme[s]: [Contemporary Interiors](#)

Communiqué is an established PR company based in the bustling Canal Street area. The office refurbishment was integral to the company's drive to raise its market profile and provide a dynamic working environment. The architect has completely reworked the existing space in this four-storey warehouse building. The main focus of the scheme is the stairway linking all floors, providing dramatic viewpoints throughout the interior. A large spine wall divides the open-plan office in two, clearly separating public and private spaces. Large areas of flooring have been stripped back to reveal the steelwork of the original structure. The addition of conference rooms was a subtle and ingenious move - set back from the front facade, and linked to the main office space. Traditional industrial materials have been sandblasted and cleaned to reinvigorate their former robust qualities, complemented by pitch-pine timber and a bold use of colour. All the new insertions have their own distinct language and are instantly distinguishable from the existing structure, with the building's history echoing with its new use. The offices are an excellent example of their type, providing an elegant yet robust environment for the occupants.

Northwest Film Archive

Minshull Street, 1997

Architect[s]: [Mills Beaumont Leavey Channon](#)

Area[s]: [Gay Village](#)

Theme[s]: [Contemporary Interiors](#) [Grade II Listed](#)

This delightful addition to the entrance lobby to the Northwest Film Archive, easy to overlook due to its quiet and unassuming location, is just off Minshull Street in Minshull House. The original building is a grade-2 listed 1840s wharfside granary, previously home to the Manchester Metropolitan University's library. Owing to its relocation to the new Aytoun Street building there was considerable floor space vacant within the building. This provided an excellent opportunity to expand the archive. Its restrained box-entrance- with clear glazing projecting a formal (but inviting)

image to visitors - acts as a direct reference point to an otherwise largely anonymous building, ensuring unhindered access to the archive. This is also assisted by a paved ramp catering for wheelchair users. An in-situ concrete wall penetrates into the lobby, supporting the light steel-framed roof and successfully breaking down the divisions between the interior and exterior spaces. Two more external walls add support, enclosing the circular door below, reducing the entrance structure to a minimum. It succinctly highlights the architects' approach to detailing: elegance through simplicity combined with a sense of delight in the juxtaposition of new and old. Well worth a visit, though hard to find.

Prague Five

Canal Street, 1996

Area[s]: [Gay Village](#)

Theme[s]: [Bars and Cocktail Lounges](#) [Contemporary Interiors](#)

Prague Five is a popular place to be seen - day or night, gay or straight, it's a place to eat and drink, with music encompassing dance sounds and the blues. The original character of the interior has been allowed to speak for itself, with minimum intervention from the architects. The basement is exposed brickwork, apart from a wall above the raised dance platform that has been painted electric blue and sprinkled with gold stars. The bar is supported by a glass-block wall that is back-lit to cast out icy blue light, barely reflected in the hard stone floor. Furniture is designed for transience rather than comfort, with rectangular and circular tables resembling those of the picnic-bench and pub-garden variety. In comparison to the gothic space of the basement, the restaurant area on the ground floor is slightly more refined. Nestling under the brick-vaulted roof, high-back chairs (with stars punched out of their metal surface) and calm timber flooring adds to the convivial atmosphere. Stripped to the bare minimum, this is an almost timeless industrial aesthetic. Unlike some of the more stylised bars, Prague Five has the potential to transform itself to suit the appetite of the passing crowd.

Tribeca Bar and B.E.D.

Tribeca Bar and B.E.D.

Architect[s]: [Original Architect Unknown](#)

Area[s]: [Gay Village](#)

Theme[s]: [Bars and Cocktail Lounges](#) [Contemporary Interiors](#)

Manchester's ultimate lounge bar, with low couches tables and even beds. Shamelessly capitalising on the acronymic name of the hip, lower Manhattan district inhabited by Robert De Niro, Tribeca Bar (and its downstairs sheets and mattress haven B.E.D.) still manages to pull off an element of style and sophistication recognisable in its namesake. So-called because it is situated in a triangle below the canal, it's a swish lounge bar with low couches and tables and great cocktails in pitchers at the bar. To just lounge or be that little bit more intimate, Tribeca and B.E.D. are definitely somewhere to start and end your evening

Velvet

2 Canal Street

Architect[s]: [Original Architect Unknown](#)

Area[s]: [Gay Village](#)

Theme[s]: Bars and Cocktail Lounges Contemporary Interiors

A stylish bar and restaurant, small by definition, but with perfect designs and cutting edge technology. Definitely based around its name, it offers a standard range of drinks and food, but with an added class of service and décor. The main points of note are the televisions in the mens toilets and the goldfish swimming in the stairs