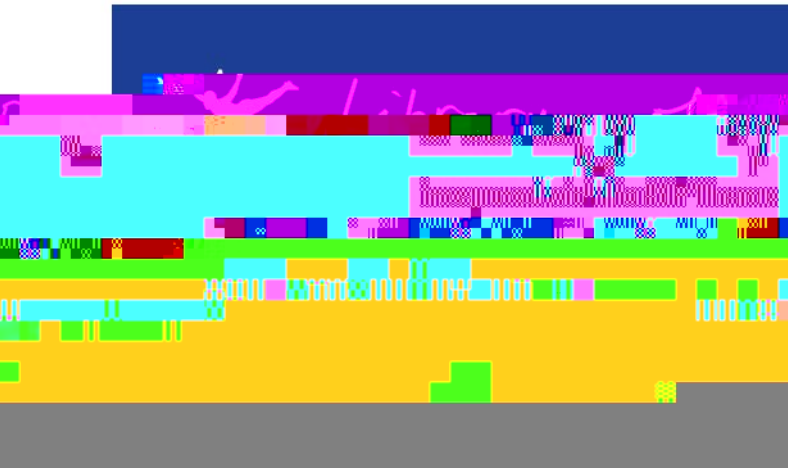




mecanoo

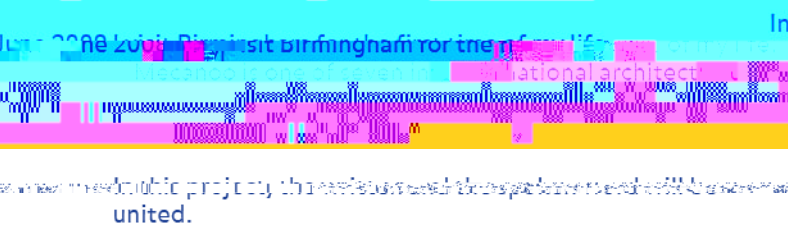


Birmingham



Room, the **Shakespeare Memorial Library**

Birmingham dates back to the year 1066. The very first Library of Birmingham is founded in 1827, along with the building house of the collection.



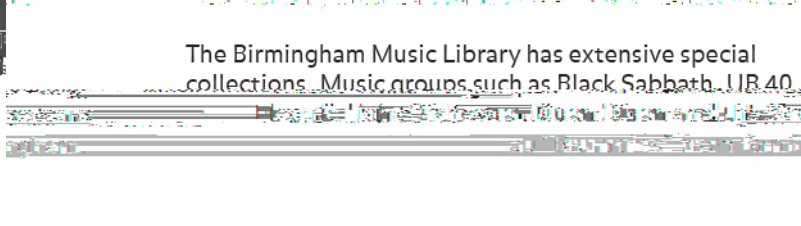
When the Victorian Library opens in 1892 at the Victoria Square, it is replaced by the Central Library building designed by the architect John Madin.

In 1974, the Victorian Library is replaced by the Central Library building designed by the architect John Madin. The Shakespeare Memorial Room is dismantled and stored. Twelve years later it is reassembled in the school.

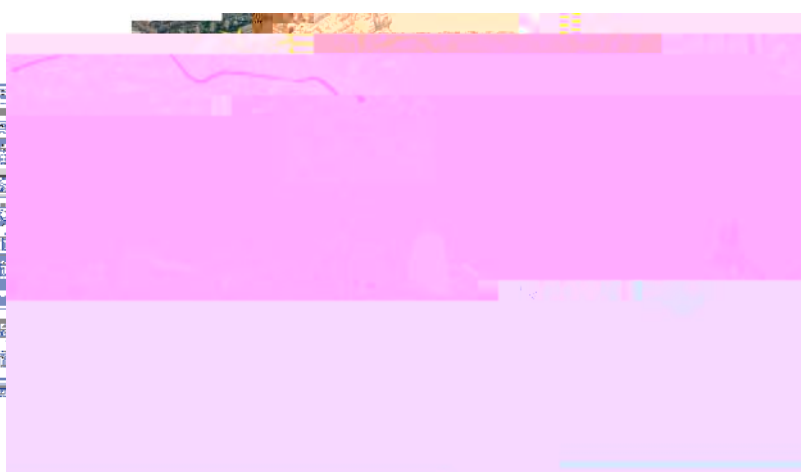
The client wants to select the best team to help them realize their ambitions for an innovative and world-class library. Birmingham is a multicultural British city of a one million people from very different backgrounds.

The Birmingham Music Library has extensive special collections. Music groups such as Black Sabbath, UB40, and the Rolling Stones are part of the collection.

For Birmingham



I meet library director Brian Gambles and his staff, he tells me that the library is a place where people can find books, music, and information. The library is a place where people can learn and grow.



The 'Red Line'

For three days my husband and I, dressed in walking shoes, walk through this city I've never seen before.

I observe and photograph everything that catches my eye in order to unravel the essence of the city and the people.

In the evening we go to a performance at the REP Theatre.

After the show we decide to follow the crowded and diverse

It connects the Bullingdon

I call this route the 'Red Line'

REP in Centenary Square.

REP in Centenary Square.

The rhythm

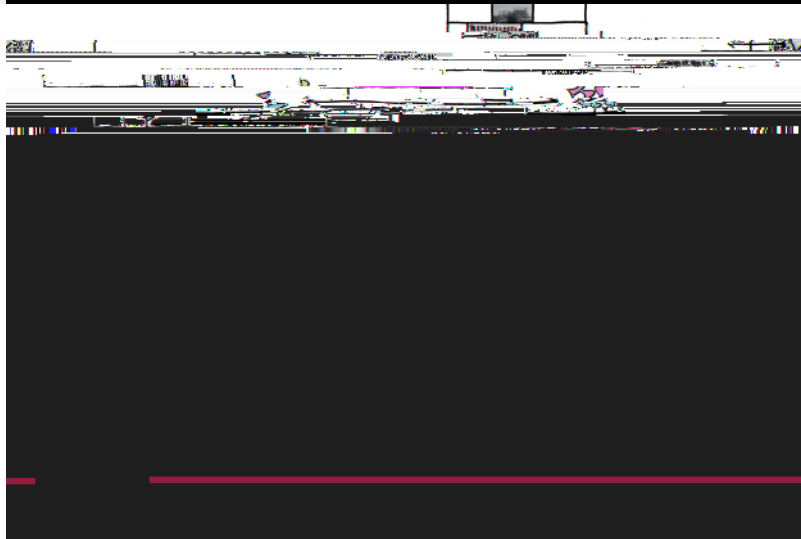
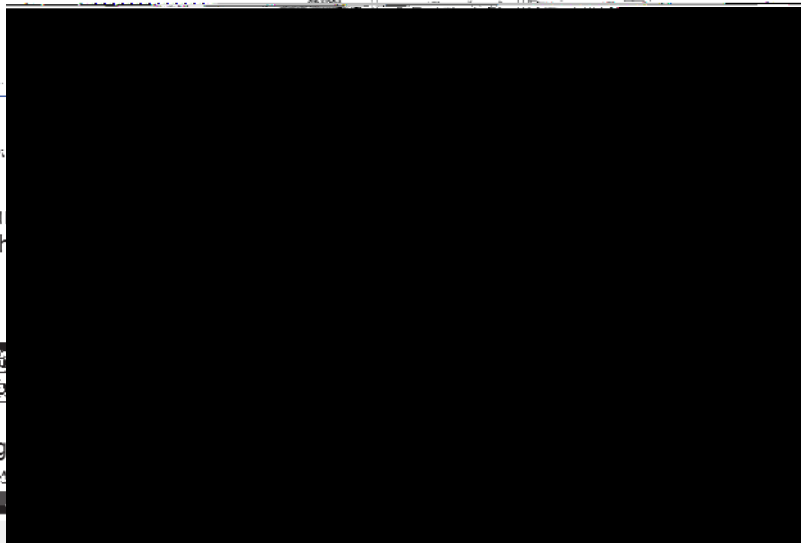
of a city's urban history

First, when following the Red Line, the entire architectural and urban history of Birmingham passes by like a film. The city breathes a rich industrial history: Gothic buildings from the 17th, 18th and early 19th century, Victorian

Classicist buildings such as Birmingham Town Hall from

Birmingham has more canals than Venice. These narrow canals were created in the 19th and 10th century in order

Also in this frame are buildings such as the Backsville



Dream

After three days my dream slowly starts to take shape.

Does the client expect us to make an icon?

Our dream is to create a People's Palace in this area.

From floor to the next
overlapping rotunda spaces
to create a circulation route.
How would you navigate

We imagine visitors moving from one level through interconnected and overlapping spaces that serve as the main vertical circulation route. Changing vistas and view lines unfold through the building.

On the lower levels the route continues below ground, nearly to the train tunnel that passes in front of the building, and resurfaces in Centenary Square. At this point this interior route crosses itself with the 'Red Line' route, creating a series of 'interior' junctions with the outside.

Team as a symphony orchestra

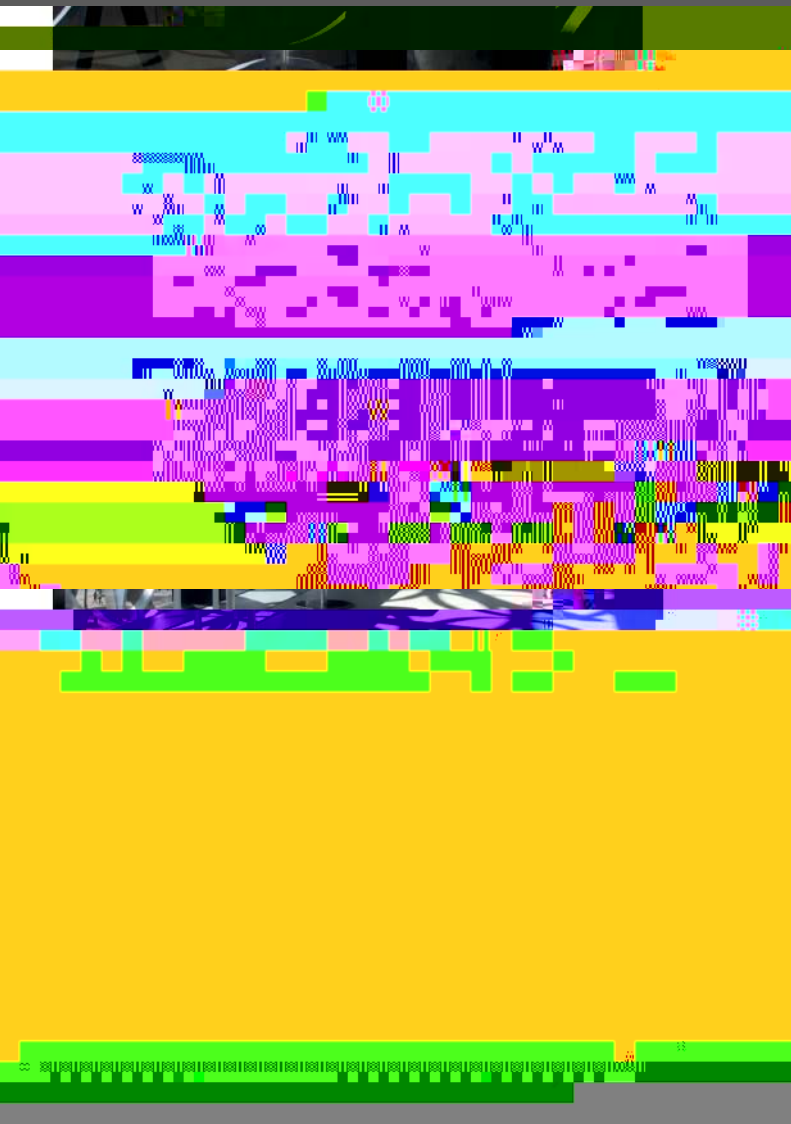
I feel confident. I trust that we can make a strong design.

The Mecanoo team can work together as a symphony orchestra and deliver with a progressive, estimated design.

The team's initial ideas came from a visit to

explains that building materials used to come from local sources - hence the many buildings made with red and blue bricks and the extensive use of steel.

Limestone was the material of choice to represent the international city in the 19th or 20th century. Examples of this can be found in the architecture of the city.



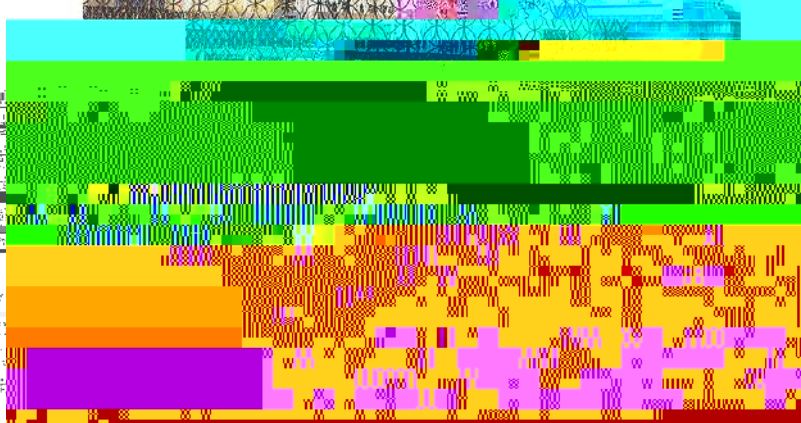


French signature in all public buildings, a
 1970s-80s style, 1970s-80s style



and lots of concrete.

A new central library forms the transition



...the most successful projects
 Birmingham becomes the conference
 centre of the UK, second only to London.

In 2008, Birmingham works on its fourth
 Big City Plan with the new library and the
 new central library forms the transition

...feel a great responsibility to bring every
 [f

Composition of three palazzo's

The three palazzo's are all on the sunny side of Centenary Square. We make a large inviting canopy at the entrance

We need many ground floors, so we introduce a ground

The stacking of the library volumes creates an opportunity for a different scale. The lower terrace - The Discovery Terrace - overlooks Centenary Square, and is the most public. In contrast, the upper terrace - The Secret Garden - has a more introverted, intimate atmosphere, reflecting its elevated position in the building. The sloping beds of the

indicated by a series of blue dots and lines, representing a path or sequence of events.

as an extension of the street, the library's journey is intended as a sequence of events and

Perceived interior journey

is the cross section

The layout of the library is organized for a sequence of events

reached directly by lift. This public lift with stairs featuring a Mecanoo Blue core forms a point of orientation to

els, no one sees anything to be

When the archives are buried in lower levels them. The archives of Birmingham are so

The most public functions are on the ground floor which simplifies the expected flow of 10,000 visitors per day



An ode to the circle

refined interlocking stories of industrial heritage. Jewel-

open weather, time of day and seasonal expression.

With its rotundas and its façade, the building is an ode to the circle: an archetypal form that embodies universal

The interior, bold and refined

any meetings we have with the enthusiastic and

is both flexible and timeless, bold and refined, as well as easy to maintain.

In the library the main materials and colours are natural stone, white ceramic flooring, oak, Mecanoo Blue, gold

Inside and outside we try to create a bold and refined

vision on the future interlocking

circles and shadows.

Francine Houben, Mecanoo architecten

July 2012

