



## Courtyard Centre for the Arts

**location:**  
Edgar Street, Hereford

The Courtyard is a centre for the arts serving Herefordshire and beyond. This is an excellent example of good modern architecture using a simple palette of building materials.

### Introduction

The Courtyard is Herefordshire's centre for the arts located in Edgar Street, Hereford. This vibrant arts centre is the result of an RIBA open design competition held in 1995 and was completed by Glenn Howells Architects in 1998. The building comprises two multi-function performance spaces, rehearsal space, an art gallery, public foyer areas with restaurant and bars together with backstage dressing rooms and offices. Glass, cast stone and oak endow the building with simplicity and clarity.



### Design process

The overall design concept of The Courtyard Arts Centre is based around two stone-clad boxes which have been separated to provide acoustic isolation between principal performance spaces. Glass, cast stone and oak are used to denote the three main elements of the building; front of house, performance spaces and backstage respectively.



By choosing a limited number of materials, the building becomes clear and legible and enables visitors to read and understand the space within its surroundings.

In order to realise the project, The Courtyard was awarded £3.75m from the Lottery Commission. The project also received funding from Hereford City Council and contributions from fund-raising events.

### Evaluation

Within the smaller box the rehearsal space is located over the studio theatre, again acoustically separated using a steel sprung floating floor. Particular care was taken in selecting the manufacturer and materials for the cast stone - each stone element of the building was specially made for the project in Stirlingshire from Skye sand and limestone.

A lightweight glass volume encloses the public foyer making the building clearly legible, creating a welcoming approach by placing the entrance, bar and restaurant on show.



A TermoDeck system has been used to harness and recirculate energy within the building. The glazed foyer and louvered canopy shades enable the building to take advantage of solar gain. The louvre panels were prefabricated from untreated American white oak and fixed with stainless steel pins to the steel framework. American white oak is also used to enclose the backstage building with privacy to dressing room windows provided by louvered panels, co-ordinated dimensionally with the stone and glass.

In addition to visitors to theatre productions, exhibitions and other performances, over 400 people visit the centre every week to attend classes and clubs. The building is a major part of the cultural fabric of the county and a testament to the success of the lottery funding system.

This is an excellent example of good modern architecture from a multi-award-winning international architect.

### **Key design features to look out for**

- Glass foyer - light, open and welcoming
- Design concept of two stone-clad boxes
- Simple palette of materials: Glass, cast stone and oak
- How the building relates to its surroundings, in particular the existing mature planting

### **Link and downloads**

- The Courtyard Centre for the Arts– [www.courtyard.org.uk](http://www.courtyard.org.uk)
- Glenn Howells Architects – [www.glennhowellsarchitects.co.uk](http://www.glennhowellsarchitects.co.uk)
- Herefordshire County Council – [www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)
- TermoDeck website – [www.termodeck.com/home.html](http://www.termodeck.com/home.html)
- Location map – [www.courtyard.org.uk/howtofindus/map](http://www.courtyard.org.uk/howtofindus/map)

### **Contact for further information**

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### Development team

Client: Herefordshire Council

Architect: Glenn Howells Architects.  
Acoustic Consultant: Acoustic Dimensions  
Quantity Surveyor: David Back Group  
Structural Engineer: Dewhurst McFarlane  
Service Engineer: Fulcrum Consulting  
Main Contractor: John Sisk & Son  
Theatre Consultant: Techplan International