



Dutch patterning of public space



Treating the floor as public art



Unusual features such as this colonnade in Hexham's market square, Northumberland, unique local identity



5.5.2 DISTINCTIVE PLACES

Strengthen local identity

Local distinctiveness and identity can be strengthened through design of the floorscape by:

- using local materials;
- retaining historical associations - such as the use of cranes as sculpture in London's Docklands, incorporating elements into the streetscape, such as old tram-lines or archeological foundations, or even converting a railway viaduct to a park (see the Bastille Viaduct case study on p.72);
- installing symbols or icons, such as imprints in the pavement, whether leaves or flowers of local trees in concrete slabs of the pavement, and treating the floor space as public art;
- involving the community, such as local pavers or tilers or organising a design competition at local schools, for example.

Plant local

Planting can define a space and its function. It can give direction or identity, separation or enclosure. Species can be selected to create different moods or character. The use of local or regional plant species indicates which part of the country you are in - and sustains greater biodiversity. Wherever possible, attractive and ecologically valuable existing vegetation should be protected, especially against utility providers and contractors. The planting of cherries in one block and ash in another tells you which street you are in. Trees, shrubs, groundcover, climbers and seasonal flowers can all be used to enhance distinctiveness. Seasonal interest can be achieved using all or only one of these elements. Edible fruit and nut bearing species will attract further wildlife.

Quality places are built to last

The specifications of materials and maintenance regimes must demonstrate high standards of visual attractiveness, durability and environmental performance. Materials affect user perception, and should be selected to relate to the intended traffic 'design speed' of a place. Loose gravel, for example, slows pedestrians and vehicles, while smooth surfaces allow for quicker passage.

<b>Meeting House Square, Temple Bar, Dublin: Injecting life with a vibrant new space</b>	
Location	Dublin's cultural quarter on the south side of the Liffey
Designer	Group 91
Developer	Temple Bar Properties
Project	Meeting House Square is flanked by the Irish Film Centre and Archive, The Gallery of Photography, The National Photographic Archive and School, The Ark Children's Centre and The Gaiety School of Acting with the Eden Restaurant below.
Details	All of the buildings on the square contribute to and provide innovative active frontages. The Ark is a children's cultural centre and comprises a theatre, galleries and workshops. The stage area its ground floor theatre opens out on to Meeting House Square as a raised performance area. When not in use the stage is concealed behind a dramatic door. The Photographic Centre comprises of two buildings - the Gallery of Photography and the National Photographic Archive and School. These two buildings combine to provide added interest in the Square when films are projected across from the Archive building on to the Gallery wall. The Eden Restaurant embraces the square by continuing the surface treatment from the square into the restaurant.
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