

The Sainsbury Building Worcester College, Oxford

Our project for Worcester College, Oxford, is an early and successful

example of our work in the area of student accommodation. The building forms a threshold between the private world of the College garden and the city outside.

The theme of an unfolding landscape characterises the College's gardens, in which the building is set. A serpentine lake seems to beckon the visitor from the College's main buildings towards the new building, which appears to be an island in the lake.

The scheme is conceived as a community of rooms set in groups around kitchens. The glazed, cabinet-like quality of the kitchens creates an open, sociable atmosphere in the shared parts of the building. In contrast, the bed-sitting rooms are designed for visual and acoustic privacy. The common room is positioned close to the water with its floor at punt level.



A sunken common room and terraces integrate the new building with the lake

'This light and joyful building makes several contributions to its setting and its occupants. It generates a sequence of spaces and framed views along the primary, diagonal axis of movement, which both reveal the building's organising geometry and enhance a sensual sequence from street to magical parkland. It forms a romantic focus at the end of the lake and actively integrates water and building through the disposition of terraces, ramps and routes. It reinterprets the traditional Oxbridge "staircase" and invents marvellously detailed sets of study bedrooms. The incredibly difficult task of successfully placing a new building in such a special setting has here been met with architectural distinction.'

Civic Trust Awards

'Calmly, it generates a sense of place, of individual identity within the institution. It is the essence of Romantic Pragmatism.' Peter Davey



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- 1 Shared kitchens overlook stairs to promote social interaction and security
- 2 Diagonal views are everywhere
- 3 The building is set in the landscape as a focus at the end of the lake
- 4 The common room occupies the corner and commands the terrace

Client Worcester College, Oxford

Completion 1983

Cost £1.1m