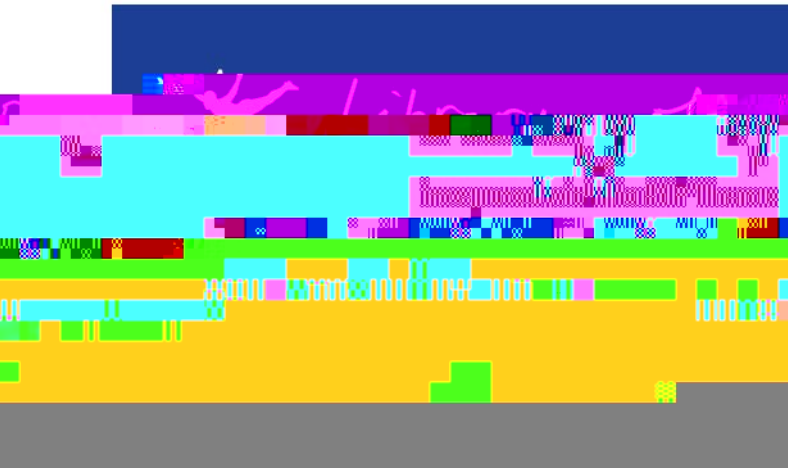




mecanoo



# Birmingham



## Shakespeare Memorial Library

Birmingham dates back to the year 1066. The very first Library of Birmingham was founded in 1809, along with the building housing the collection.



The Victorian Library opens in 1892 at Paradise Circus. When the Victorian Library opens in 1892, it is a grand building designed by the architect John Madin.

In 1974, the Victorian Library is replaced by the Central Library at Paradise Circus, a brutalist building designed by the architect John Madin.

The Shakespeare Memorial Room is dismantled and stored. Twelve years later it is reassembled in the new library.

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 million people from very different backgrounds.

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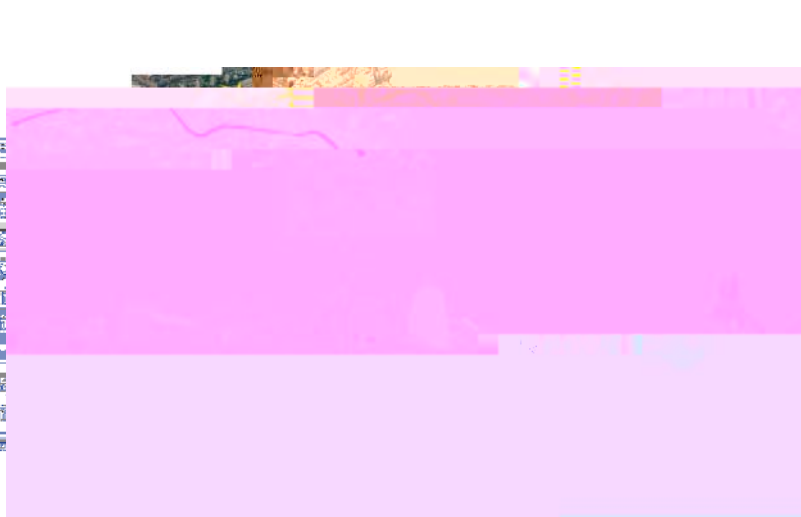
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## The 'Red Line'

For three days my husband and I on foot walk through this city I've never seen to 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 Bullring. I call this route the 'Red Line'.

REP in Centenary Square.

## The rhythm

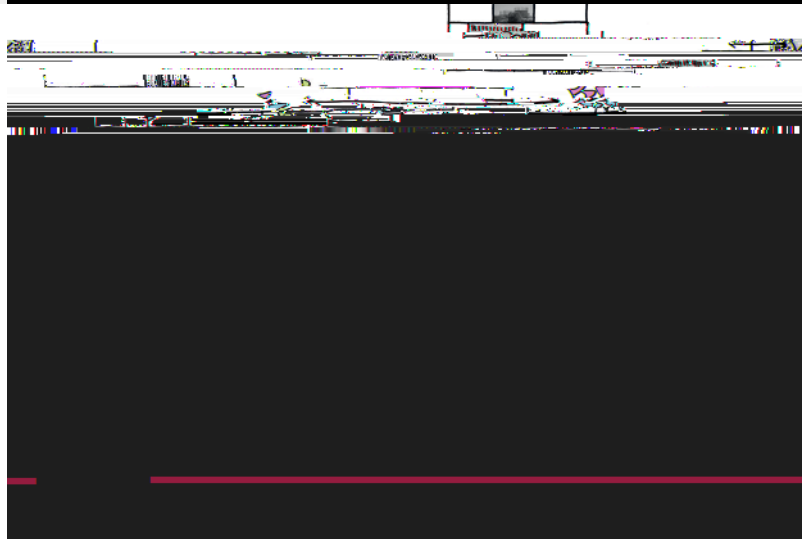
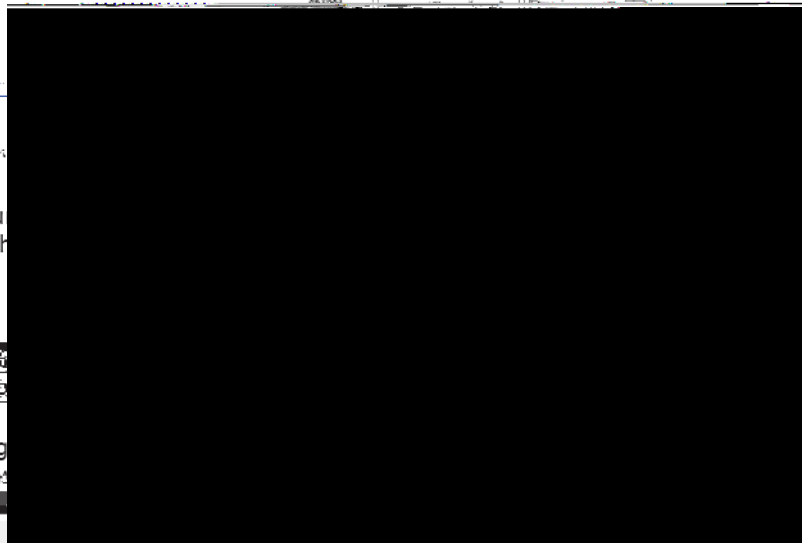
of a city's urban history

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

Birmingham

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, providing a series of the inner 'loop' to 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.

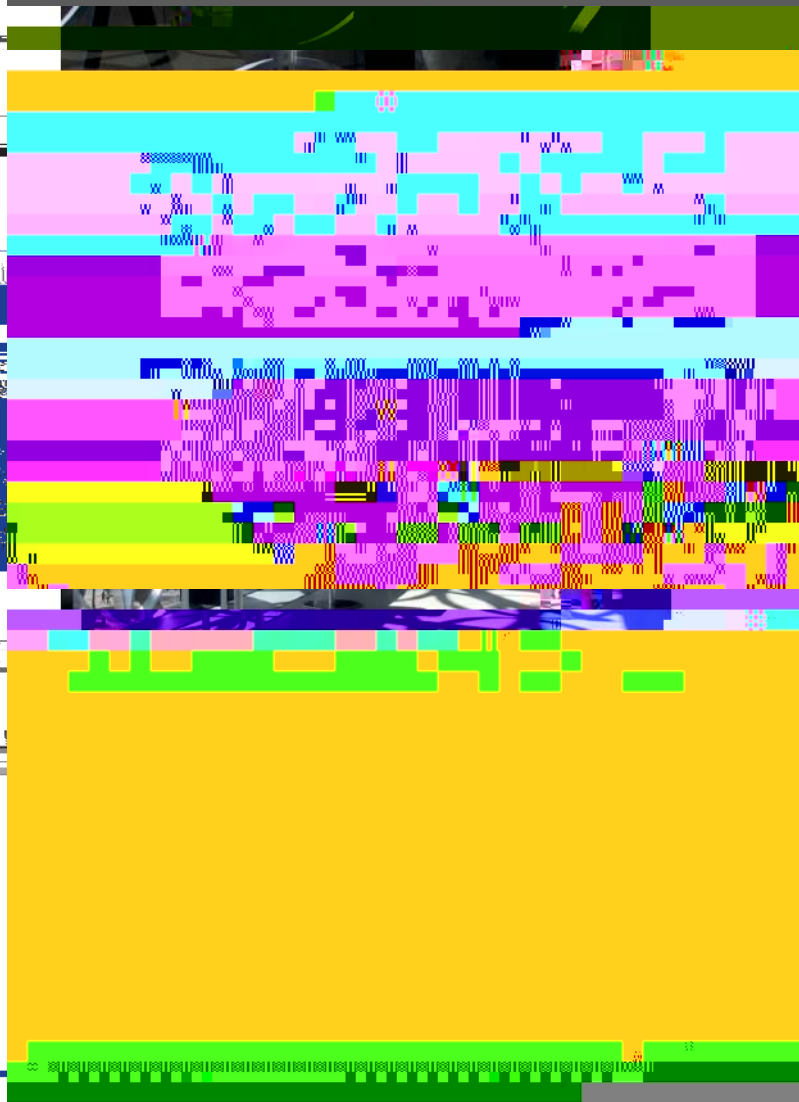
## The team's initial ideas came from a study

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 seen in the architecture of the White House.

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## The rhythm of the city:

...ille House, they will form an  
...azzo's along a square, each with its

Together with Baskerv  
ensemble of three pala

He told me that the project was actually a

... than ladies' toilets because the audience  
was mainly male!

But he can no longer make changes, no  
matter how many reasons there are to do  
so. Originally, the plan was to have a

a beautiful scene. This pond never came to

## the Repertory Theatre

e lunch with

In February 2009, I have

chitecture in

He tells me that he studied arc

t in

Because he was the only architect  
... Birmingham Theatre experience, he  
was commissioned in 1964 to design the  
theatre for one of the most influential

deep cleaning it and replacing the glass

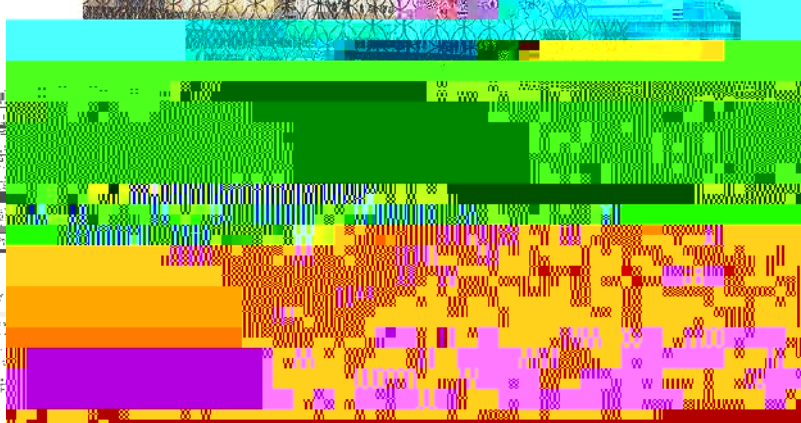


# new vision for Birmingham

French signature in all public buildings, a

and lots of concrete.

A new central library forms the transition



...this is indeed a successful project as 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

...feel a great responsibility to bring every

## 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

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

Perceived interior jo

## 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

lower levels, no one sees them are something to be

When the archives are buried in them. The archives of Birmingham

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 2017

