

Golden Square, Birmingham, 2008–2011

As part of the Capita Lovejoy team with BPN Architects, winners of the international design competition for a new £1.5m public square in the Jewellery Quarter.

November 2008–May 2010

Winning proposal for the Golden Square Competition, Birmingham. December 2009 – March 2010

Stage D design and report.

Collaboration with Capita Lovejoy and Bryant Priest Newman Architects.

"The £1.5m Golden Square will be one of the first new public spaces in Birmingham City Council's Big City Plan. Designed by Capita Lovejoy with architect Bryant Priest Newman and artist David Patten, the site is in the centre of the historic Jewellery Quarter — still the source of an estimated 40% of all jewellery manufactured in the UK. With some 1,500 businesses in the area, the public realm will take advantage of new digital media technology."

– www.bdonline.co.uk/

The design process has been informed by artist involvement since day one of the competition, and, just like the Jewellery Quarter itself, the possibilities of art have been as much in play as have any of the design professions.

Art is in the collaborative process that has got us this far. It is also thoroughly embedded in the future experiencing of the new place – in how the spatial organisation of the new public square aligns with the Jewellery Quarter's traditional material sources across the globe; in the referencing of how the Jewellery Quarter sits on Bunter sandstone above the the Keuper sandstone bed that led to a different sort of metal working in other parts of Birmingham; in the grilles that used to sit outside the local workshops to collect gold dust from the shoes of the workers as they set off for home at the end of the working day; in the referencing of lost streets and building plots; in the showcasing of today's designer-makers and the development of digital content for the future programming of the new public square; in the provision of an orchard space that replaces the old gardens forfeited in boom times for yet more workshop accommodation; in the wayfinding strategy; in the strapline "through art and artisan, by hammer and hand"; and so on.

Art is like the sparkle that catches the eye when passing the jeweller's shop window. Would we have wanted to badge the new public square with a lump of art? Art is in the "vibrant atmosphere which not only attracts people to work, live, play and visit but acts as a honey pot for creative businesses ranging from the current jewellery business base to arts and media" (Jewellery Quarter Regeneration Charter). To have prioritised stand-alone art over good place-making would have skirted with nostalgia and memorialised what has gone, stilted the atmosphere by freezing future possibilities at this particular moment in time, and suffocated the future generations of artists, designers and makers who will take forward the district's renaissance.