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'A Place Saturated With Ideas'

A more coherent and stronger campus image may require a return to first principles. One of the University's early architects, Eugene Rosenberg, "felt that art, design and architecture could fuse together to create a place saturated with ideas" [University of Warwick Teacher's Resource Pack, Sarah Shalgosky, 2006].

This ambition to create "a place saturated with ideas" provides the clue as to how the campus can be re-ordered and enriched into the future.

'A Place Saturated With Ideas' proposes to bring a bit of 'swagger [1]' to how the campus functions by:

- revealing what lies under the University's signature landscape context (Ardens Parkland: "Enclosed, gently rolling landscapes defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees");
- emphasising the primary internal routes (and re-stating the original grid a appropriate);
- offering bold solutions to the University's connections to neighbourhoods and highways;
- ensuring that the whole captures the University's bold future vision;
- providing a coherent experience for University users and visitors.

'A Place Saturated With Ideas' is an Art as Landscape/Landscape as Art strategy that uses the University's important Art Collection to inform 'serial vision' possibilities, what Gordon Cullen described as "a tool with which human imagination can begin to mould the city into a coherent drama" and provide better wayfinding.

This requires introducing a 'palette' of repeated elements throughout the campus to encourage recognition (of seeing something in the context of what's gone before) and anticipation (of seeing the next in the sequence). Recognition and anticipation rely on the repetition of similar characteristics that are specific to the University of Warwick applied differently at different locations, for example the larger scale at primary entrances and the smaller scale at less public places.

The 'palette' we are exploiting includes:

- intensities and densities to the gateways, nodes and gathering spaces of the campus
- the use of sandstone to express the underlying geology;
- a repeating set of angles taken from the letter 'W' in the University's original Charter and/or current logo;
- a mix of landscape elements that function as way-marker or pointer, as surface, as view, as boundary, as gradient, as screen, as lighting or as light itself;
- a strong 'active edge' that orders the different landscape elements and connects across public realm and highway; and

- referencing the 'colour field', 'figure/ground', and geometries in some of the earliest work in the University's Art Collection (to ensure that the "spaces you live and work in will be organised as intelligently and as beautifully as the spaces have been in some paintings." [Ad Reinhardt: 28th April 1946]).

By varying the surface, scale, and functionality of the palette at different locations, 'A Place Saturated With Ideas' becomes about way-marking, view, boundary, point of arrival, node, meeting place, gradient, event or activity, etc., to ensure a rich and mobile campus experience.

1. "[There's] something about having an architectural centre whose utility really is to uplift your spirits and to give you a focus and to be an emblem of your identity, and I have always thought that Warwick could do with a bit more of that [...] [it] makes people walk with more of a swagger..." Hugh Gaston Hall: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/knowledge/themes/01/idea_of_university

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