

## The Works and Artists

### ***Deep Fountain, Leopold Waelplaats, Anversa* Cristina Iglesias - Robbrecht and Daem, 1997-2006**

Commissioned in 1997 and unveiled in 2006, *Deep Fountain* is a sculpture executed by the Spanish artist Cristina Iglesias and placed in front of the staircase at the entrance to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. The project is the fruit of a collaborative effort with the architectural firm Robbrecht and Daem, which had been commissioned to reconfigure the layout of Leopold Waelplaats, the city square where the museum is located.

Leopold Waelplaats is the fulcrum of Antwerp's 19<sup>th</sup> century street grid, which criss-crosses it on the diagonal. Reorganisation of this square has improved traffic flow and created more space for pedestrians, with the construction of wide sidewalks. This new configuration has increased the distance between the atrium in front of the museum and the street grid. Iglesias conceived *Deep Fountain* to interpret the architects' desire to create a resting and waiting area in the square, a gathering spot where people could meet before or after their visit to the museum.

As indicated by the title, the work is a rectangular fountain measuring 37 x 17 metres. A total of 2700 tiles were used to line it. A trough cuts across the basin, which is decorated with branches and leaves in bas-relief that represent an obscure garden immersed in the water. The sculpture is also equipped with a mechanical device that alters the appearance and functions of the fountain in four phases: when the basin is full, the still water creates a large reflecting surface that mirrors the entire façade of the museum. Then the water moves and gradually drains down the trough in the middle of the basin. The plant motif on the bottom is revealed once the basin is emptied. Finally, the basin is slowly refilled until the water reaches the lip of the pool, recreating the initial mirror reflection of the building on its surface.

**Cristina Iglesias** was born in San Sebastian, Spain in 1956. She belongs to the generation of artists who transferred sculpture to the new genre of installation art between the end of the 1980's and early 1990's. In contrast with her "modernist" predecessors, Iglesias' work is largely figurative. It often evokes the female body, with its image being used with everyday objects such as furniture, rooms and buildings. Iglesias' preferred materials are cement, iron and glass with natural elements like bamboo, leaves and branches, which often cover the exterior of her works. Her solo exhibitions have been held at some of the world's most important museums, such as the Museum Ludwig in Cologne (2006), the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London and Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (2003), and the Museo Serralves de Arte Contemporáneo in Porto (2002). Iglesias represented her country at the Venice Biennale in 1993.

**Robbrecht en Daem Architecten** is an architectural firm founded in Ghent, Belgium in 1975 by the Belgian architects Hilde Daem and Paul Robbrecht.

Over the years, this duo has specialised in joint efforts with artists, constantly seeking a fusion of art and architecture. They have worked with such artists as Gerhard Richter, Isa Genzken, Raoul De Keyser, Cristina Iglesias, Juan Munoz and Franz West. They have built or restored numerous exhibition spaces, including Whitechapel in London, the Galleria Hauser and Wirth in Zurich, and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Amsterdam. Their participation at Documenta IX (1992) also marked a memorable milestone in their career, where they designed the two Aue Pavilions that are still used as exhibition spaces.

## The Works and Artists

### Photos

View of the fountain in front of the Royal Museum and detail of the orthogonal trough on the bottom.



## The Works and Artists

### *Folkestone Library, Folkestone* **David Adjaye - Chris Ofili, 1999-2002**

The Folkestone Library is located in a building constructed in 1888 in the city of Folkestone, Kent, England. One of the first public libraries to be founded in the United Kingdom, it not only continues to serve its original purpose but also as a meeting spot for the local community, housing an art gallery and café.

After being invited to renovate its entrance and ground floor at the end of the 1990's, architect David Adjaye recruited the assistance of artist Chris Ofili, who had already worked with him on other projects. Unlike other projects where artists and architects contribute to its realisation at different times, the Folkestone Library project, which was started in 1999 and completed in 2002, represented a truly joint effort.

By eliminating the pre-existing offices on the ground floor, Adjaye created a large new space that links the library to the road with a big atrium. Chris Ofili instead concentrated on creating a new design for the floor and walls to create a more welcoming entrance in the foyer of the Victorian building. The physical signs of the artist's participation are the brightly coloured, translucent glass filters decorated with Ofili's typical circular motifs, which lead the visitor from the entrance hall to the reading rooms and café. The interior of the building was also stripped of its original materials and redecorated with a series of raw wood panels that, while giving the building a more contemporary look, are in keeping with the historic nature of the site.

**David Adjaye** is one of Britain's best-known contemporary architects, creating buildings that exalt both the experience and function of architecture. Born in Tanzania in 1966, Adjaye founded his firm in 1994 and rapidly won recognition for the success of several of his bar, café and home remodelling projects, including the Elektra House (London, 2001) and Dirty House (London, 2002). In 2001 Adjaye Associates won the competition to design two Idea Stores. The Idea Store on Chrisp Street won the RIBA Building Award in 2005, and the next one at Whitechapel was one of the finalists for the Stirling Prize in 2006. Three major public buildings were opened in 2007 to great acclaim: Rivington Place, a new space for the visual arts created for Iniva and Autograph ABP at Shoreditch, the Stephen Lawrence Centre and the Bernie Grant Arts Centre. One of his most recent and most important projects at the international level is the new home of the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, which was opened in October 2007.

**Chris Ofili** was born in Manchester in 1968. After having studied art at the Chelsea School of Art in London and obtaining a Master's degree in painting at the Royal College of Art, he won a scholarship in 1992 for a trip to Zimbabwe. The descendant of an English family with Nigerian origins, this first trip to Africa prompted the artist to reconsider his identity and develop an extremely personal aesthetic that examines the peculiar aspects of African culture, its stereotypes, its collective imagination and its sensuality.

His art is rich in cultural references and popular material – from comics to black music – that Ofili combines ironically and innovatively, using painting as his principal means of expression. Beginning in the early 1990's, numerous group and solo shows have been dedicated to his work, introducing him to the international scene. He won the Turner Prize in 1998 and in 2003 was selected to represent Great Britain at the Venice Biennale that year.

## The Works and Artists

### Photos



## The Works and Artists

### ***Hybrid Muscle*, Chan Mai, Thailandia François Roche – Philippe Parreno, 2003**

*Hybrid Muscle* is a project created by the artist Philippe Parreno and the architect François Roche, together with the Paris studio R&Sie(n). Located inside *The Land*, a real village built at Chan Mai, near Sanpatong in northern Thailand, where the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija invited colleagues, architects, scholars and students in collaboration with the local university to build a place where people could live and create, *Hybrid Muscle* is a fully sustainable electric generator and power storage device because it is powered by animals. Its purpose is to provide electricity to *The Land* for work or recreational activities.

After being invited by his friend and colleague Tiravanija in 2001 to build a common space that could also be transformed into an exhibition space, Parreno signed up Roche and his studio R&Sie(n) to participate in the construction. Aesthetically, *Hybrid Muscle* resembles a strange cement platform, covered by sheets of inert plastic set in the middle of a big rice field. This strange structure stores electricity through the muscle power of an albino buffalo. The buffalo, which is tied to cables, lifts a two-tonne counterweight while it grazes freely in the field for hours, using a process that is identical to the one used in a dynamo. It transforms its motion into electricity that can power about ten light bulbs, a few portable computers and mobile telephones.

In a sort of dialogue between the artist and architect, the project, which was built and financed for a total of \$65,000, was realised with the intention that it initially be used as the set for Parreno's film *Boy from Mars* (2003-2005), and that the film would leave behind a permanent structure that could be used for social purposes and common life, contrary to almost all normal movie sets, which are typically destroyed.

**Philippe Parreno** was born in Oran, Algeria in 1964. A leading exponent of French art for years, he focuses more on potential and possible systems and methods of representation rather than on the object itself. "Open," unconventional models for presentation of a work and its interpretation make it possible to re-discuss the concept of exhibition and work of art, and the mechanisms for producing and communicating them. He has exhibited in major contemporary art museums, such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Kunstverein in Munich, the Center of Contemporary Art at Kitakyushu, Portikus in Frankfurt, the Kunstverein in Hamburg, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and Le Consortium in Dijon, and he has participated in numerous editions of the Venice Biennale, Lyon Biennial, Dakar Biennial and Sydney Biennial exhibitions.

**François Roche** was born in Paris in 1961. He graduated from the Versailles school of architecture in 1987. In 1989 he founded the architecture and design firm R&Sie(n) architecture with friends and colleagues such as Stephanie Lavaux and Jean Navarro. Over the past twenty years, the firm has distinguished itself for its research on new approaches to architecture, and it is currently focused on technological developments that might transform nature into a dynamic element of design. This organic approach serves as a point of contact and link between contexts, habitations and human relations. R&Sie(n) and Roche have participated at different exhibitions presented by such institutions as the Tate Modern in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and MIT in Boston.

In 1990, 1996 and 2000, R&Sie(n) represented France at the Venice Biennale of Architecture. François Roche is a professor at the Advanced Research Studio of Columbia University in New York.

**The Works and Artists**

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**The Works and Artists**



## The Works and Artists

### ***Laban Contemporary Dance Center, Londra*** **Herzog & de Meuron - Michael Craig-Martin, 2000-2003**

The Laban contemporary Dance Centre was opened in London in 2003. Dedicated to the memory of Rudolf Laban (1879-1958), considered one of the greatest pioneers of contemporary dance, the centre is one of the most important dance schools in the world. According to Laban, for whom dance had a therapeutic aim and should be accessible to everyone, the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron created a building equipped with a series of services that would enable anyone to go get a coffee, see a performance in the auditorium or simply attend lessons.

Located in Deptford Creek, on the River Thames, the centre immediately strikes visitors due to the revolutionary material used to clad its curved façades – a polycarbonate that can change hue according to the level of light absorbed. Over the course of the day, the building changes colour with shades that range from translucent white to turquoise to magenta. When darkness falls in the evening, it lights up from inside like a fluorescent, multi-coloured lantern. Thanks to the range of colours, chosen in collaboration with the artist Michael Craig-Martin, who had already collaborated with two architects to illuminate the chimney of the Tate Modern, the building was immediately nicknamed “the rainbow building.” The collaboration between Craig Martin and Herzog & de Meuron extended from the façade to the interior of the building, which the architects organised like a small urban space with roads, squares, common areas and private rooms.

Craig-Martin painted each one of the three corridors that form the basic skeleton of the construction around the central auditorium with a single tone of colour, while the doors and the other spaces were painted with garish colours. Finally, the interior and exterior walls of the auditorium were decorated by a monumental wall painting by the artist, his virtual signature on the building.

**Michael Craig-Martin** was born in Dublin in 1941. After earning an MFA at Yale University, he returned to Europe in the mid-1960’s to become one of the key figures in the first generation of British conceptual artists. Throughout his career, Craig-Martin has explored the linguistic and expressive character of common objects through a constant dialogue between art and reality. A Professor at Goldsmith’s College from 1974 to 1988 and then from 1994 to 2000, Craig-Martin played a key role for many artists affiliated with Young British Art, which emerged at the beginning of the 1990’s. His first retrospective was held at Whitechapel in London in 1989. The most recent retrospectives of his work have been held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (2006) and the Kunsthau in Brezgenz (2006). His permanent installations are found at Regents Place in London and at the British Council in Berlin, among other venues.

**Herzog & de Meuron** is an architectural firm founded in Basel in 1978 by architects Jacques Herzog (born in Basel on 19 April 1950) and Pierre de Meuron (born in Basel on 8 May 1950). These two architects graduated in 1975 from ETH in Zurich and Harvard University in Cambridge, respectively. The duo’s fame stems principally from their conversion of the Bankside electric power station in London into the Tate Modern (2000). In 2001 they won the Pritzker Prize, the highest honour awarded to architects. Their other projects include the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, which will be completed in 2010, the Allianz Arena in Munich (2005), the Forum Building in Barcelona (2004) and their work on museums, including the expansion of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2005) and construction of the Schaulager contemporary art centre (2003) near their hometown, Basel.

**The Works and Artists**

**Photos**



Two outdoor views of the Laban Contemporary Dance Centre

**The Works and Artists**



Two of the central corridors at the Laban Contemporary Dance Centre



## The Works and Artists

### ***Beijing National Stadium, Pechino*** **Herzog & de Meuron - Ai Weiwei, 2003-2008.**

The Beijing National Stadium recently hosted the opening and closing ceremonies and some of the competitions held during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The organisers of the Olympic Games had initially chosen the Guangdong Olympic Stadium, which had been built in 1999 for this purpose. However, it is located in Guangzhou (Canton), very far from the national capital. For this reason it was decided in 2002 to build a big, new stadium in Beijing. The Beijing National Stadium, which covers an area of 250,000 square metres, is 330 metres long, 220 metres wide and 69.2 metres high (including its roof). This work of architecture was built with the most innovative construction techniques while incorporating certain traditional and archaic motifs of one of the world's oldest civilisations.

Symbolically placed on the same axis as the Forbidden City, the stadium was chosen by the inhabitants of Beijing in a referendum held on the 13 projects submitted in the international design competition. The project, on which construction began in 2003 and was completed in early 2008, was designed by the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron in collaboration with the world-famous Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. In order to create a design that would have a close link with the history and customs of Chinese society, the two architects contacted the former Swiss ambassador to China, Uli Sigg, who is also one of the world's most important collectors of contemporary Chinese art. Sigg suggested that they contact Ai Weiwei. Ai Weiwei's vision and his profound knowledge of his country's culture resulted in the project's most distinctive feature – its roof, comprised by a dense grille of interwoven steel members. This form is inspired by the bird's nest, and specifically the swallow's nest, which represents a specific cultural reference to the Chinese people. They consider the nest to be a symbol of protection and good luck, as expressed by the ancient proverb: "Build your nest and you will attract the phoenix" (a metaphor of power and prosperity). Uli Sigg introduced Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron to Ai Weiwei without having a real project in mind. Only then, they learned about the competition for the National Stadium, Beijing. Very interesting is a conversation between Ai Weiwei and Jacques Herzog, that has been published in "Parkett" (n. 81, 2007), where they are talking about this time, when they first met.

**Ai Weiwei**, born in 1957, is considered the most famous living Chinese artist. He lives and works in Caochangdi, a village east of Beijing that has been absorbed by the capital in the course of its frenetic expansion, becoming another one of the city's overcrowded suburban satellite communities. After living for years in New York City, he returned to Beijing in 1993. His works range from paintings to black and white photographs and sculptures, of which the Han dynasty terracotta amphora sculptures are particularly famous. In spite of his participation on the Beijing National Stadium project, Ai Weiwei did not attend the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games. He has been a ferocious critic of the government for years, which he has never forgiven for having exiled his father, the poet Ai Qing, after he was designated an enemy of the state in 1958.

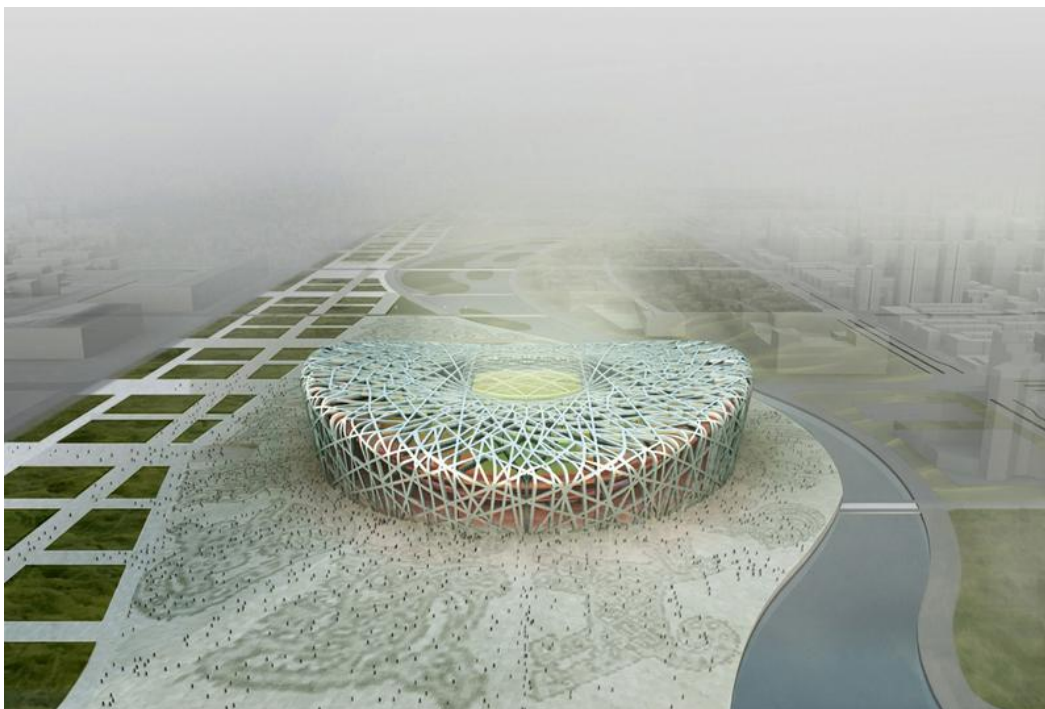
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## The Works and Artists

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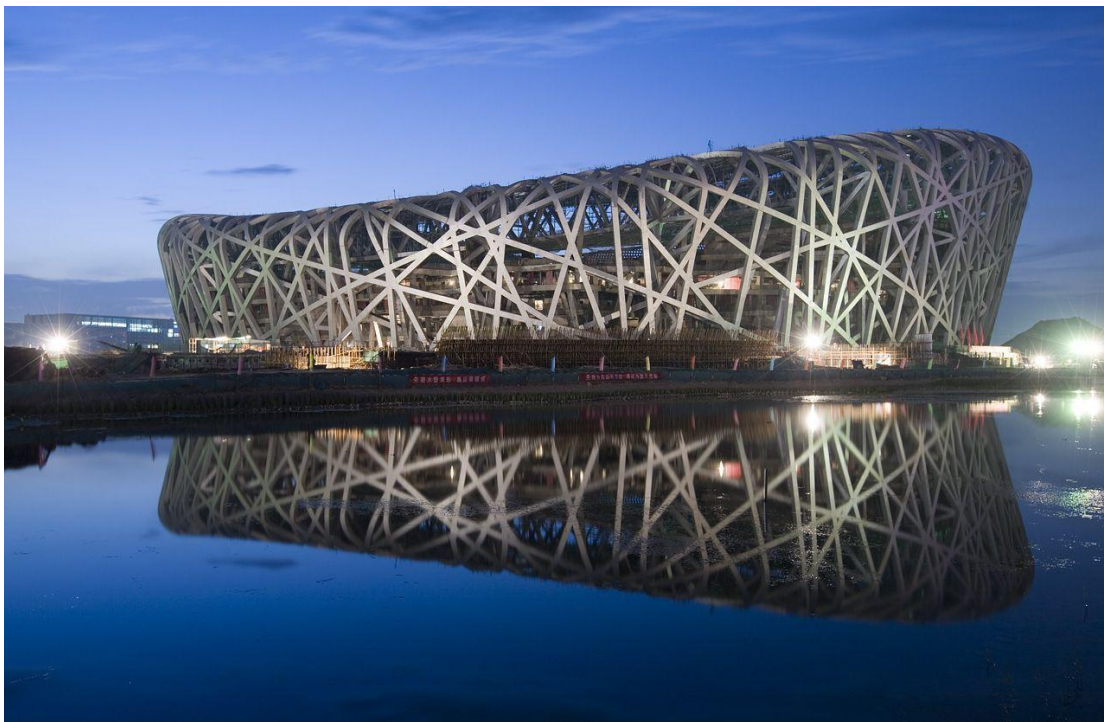
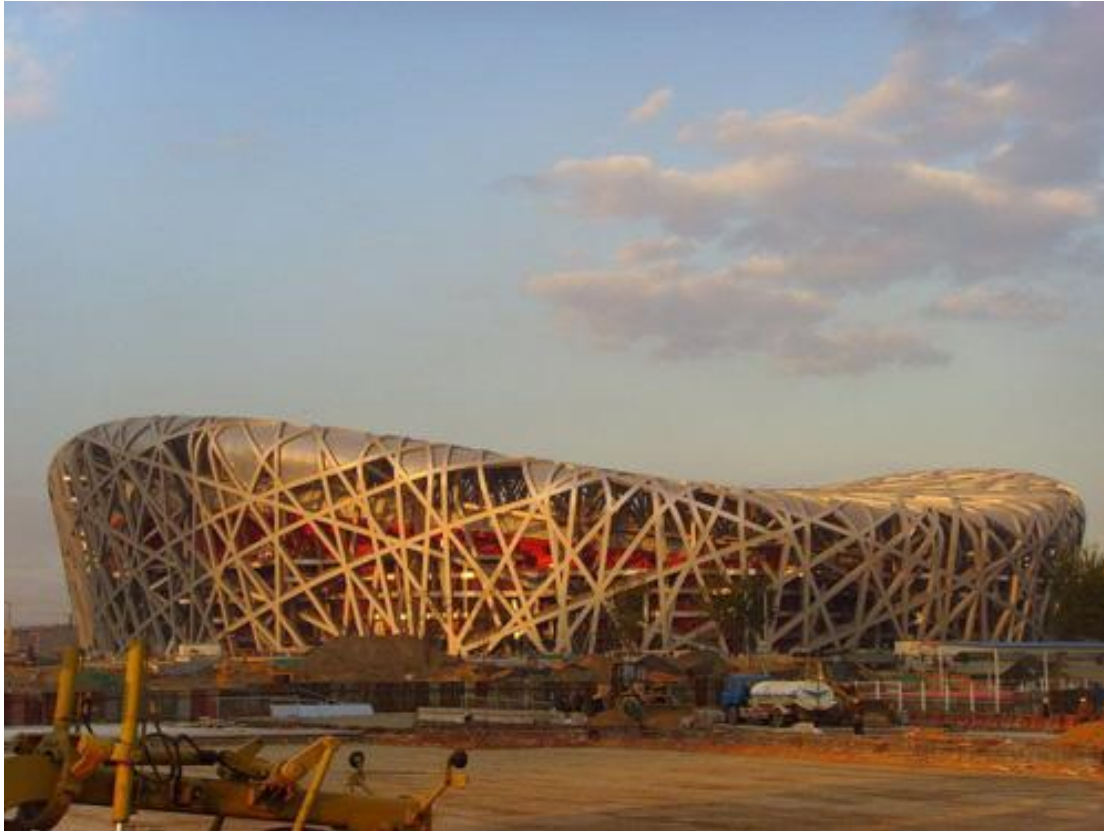
## Photos

Two different digital simulations of the Beijing National Stadium project



## The Works and Artists

The stadium at two different stages in the construction process.



## The Works and Artists

### *Stephen Lawrence Center, Londra* **David Adjaye - Chris Ofili, 2008**

The Stephen Lawrence Centre was opened on 7 February 2008 with a formal ceremony held at Deptford, south London, where the centre is located. Designed by the famous British architect David Adjaye and his firm, the Stephen Lawrence Centre is dedicated to the education of young people from families with modest economic means who wish to pursue a career in architecture and related fields, such as design or urban restoration. With a total space of 1,320 square metres, the building contains classrooms, meeting rooms, equipped studios, a specialised library and computer labs complete with the most innovative design software. Adjaye invited the artist Chris Ofili to participate on the project from its inception. Their conversations had a direct impact on the final design choices and overall atmosphere of the building. In practical terms, the artist focused his attention on the design of the windows for the majestic main façade. The windows that can be admired from inside and outside the building, and that illuminate the space that soars from the ground floor to the second floor, are engraved with one of the typical moiré patterns used by this English artist with African origins. Originally drawn on paper, these designs were then scanned on the computer and enlarged. The original pencil tracing on paper was replaced by a line of laminated metal engraved in the glass. The abstract form of the pattern fills the rhomboid shaped spaces, a direct allusion to the form of the building itself. It attributes the artist with a key role in “animating” the building through plays of light and shade that, by extending outside it as well, modify the perception of indoor and outdoor spaces.

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## The Works and Artists

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Two general views of the entrance to the Stephen Lawrence Centre at different times during the day.



**The Works and Artists**

Detail of one of the sides of the Stephen Lawrence Centre at dusk.

