

Bridgewater Basin Floating Islands

Location: Manchester, UK

Client: Manchester City Council

Objective: Habitat & Green space

Project in collaboration with:



Challenge:

Bridgewater Basin is a disused branch of the Rochdale Canal in central Manchester, situated outside Bridgewater Music Hall. It was devoid of healthy aquatic life and completely surrounded by vertical hard stone and concrete edging. The frequent fluctuations of water levels and the concrete edges made traditional sloped edge planting impossible in this urban location, thus limiting the basin's water quality, aesthetics and natural waterscape appeal.

Solution:

Working closely with Manchester City Council's Green Infrastructure team and with BDP Landscape Architects, a series of floating waterscape gardens was installed over two years. The project includes more than 20 varieties of aquatic plants and engaged with six different groups of volunteers to complete the process.



Overview of petal-shaped islands as seen from the Bridgewater building



Before



After



Before



After

The planting concept for the Bridgewater Basin explores the analogy of music, melody and symphony, contextualising with the Bridgewater Hall setting. It also illustrates the neurological phenomenon of synesthesia, in which sounds heard evoke thoughts of colour.

The plant species for the islands have been carefully selected to reflect the colours, the rhythm, the form, texture and movement associated with a musical composition. The plant composition is one with varying textures, shapes and bursts of colour to evoke the sense of spectacle that would come with a piece of music.



The planting and installation of the islands was done with the help of volunteers



“The project has provided us with the opportunity to increase the quality and functionality of a previously underused and aesthetically challenging piece of open water in the heart of the City.” - Dave Barlow, Manchester City Council



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