



Yuko Shiraishi's colour scheme inside the Media Centre

BUILDING IN TUNE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

The BBC Media Village is an environmentally friendly development and has been awarded an 'excellent' rating under BREEAM, the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, which assesses the environmental impact of buildings. The Media Village achieved this high rating for its energy-efficiency, its system for the collection and reuse of rainwater; its use of boilers with low emissions of polluting gases, its provision of a high-quality internal environment, its reuse of a brown-field site, its enhancement of the local ecology with wildlife-friendly planting and its provision of facilities to encourage the use of bicycles for commuting.

Part of the pollution control system is a 'green', sedum roof. Planted over the entrance block to the Broadcast Centre, the roof provides an insulating layer to keep in heat in the winter and let out cool air by evaporation in the summer. The roof creates an oasis for insects and wildlife, is low maintenance and absorbs pollutants and greenhouse gases from the heavy traffic on the nearby A40.

Bob Allies, of Allies and Morrison, explains the ideas behind the design.

"The old White City building was a hermetically sealed corporate HQ. The big change in our scheme is that we didn't want to cut ourselves off; we wanted to be more integrated with the community. So what we've done is turn things inside out, so our buildings face out to the rest of the world. The shops are on the outside (rather than inside, as in the old building) and all the perimeter buildings have doors facing onto the street. They are simple buildings, but the external spaces are engaging and significant places to be; real pieces of city, not just the space between buildings.

"The new buildings are of a similar material to the old one – aluminium – so, visually, the whole scheme seems to be integrated. But the new buildings are much more transparent – the glass isn't dark glass – so you can see much more.

"And the rhythm and proportions of the cladding, the air vents with their coloured panels by artist Yuko Shiraishi create a rich and subtle effect.

"Inside, they are quite big buildings and are flexible and open in the way they're used. All office floors open out onto three atria – these and the atria stairs become the centres of the way people move around the building. People can see each other and the spaces are easy to navigate and understand. The atria allow in sunlight, so there's a sense of daylight, of the sun moving and time passing by. We've successfully got rid of offices off corridors. Things are much more connected and visible."