

Brutalism Now conference

The View from The City

Charles Quick and James Arnold

Charles Quick Text slides 1 – 16 to be read while slide show runs

Introduce In Certain Places

ICP has commissioned temporary public arts projects in the city for the 15 years which reveal, test and challenge ideas of place

Beautiful and Brutal is a large-scale exhibition at the Harris Museum Art Gallery and library, which has a presence in all of its spaces, on all three floors. Co curated by James Arnold and I, it explores the many facets of the life of Preston bus station over the last fifty years

As well as mapping the architectural history of the building we have also examined and presented its social relationship with the city, including the campaign to save it and the many artists projects that have been inspired by it. this is what we will focus in this short presentation today.

Preston Bus Station and Car Park was opened in 1969 in the same year that astronauts landed on the moon. Young people at the time thought that it was like a giant spaceship which had landed in the middle of Preston. But this was not an alien structure that had arrived from another planet.

This was a piece of architecture, that was OF its place Preston, designed by the Preston architectural practice Building Design Partnership employing architects like its founder who had grown up in the city and surrounding area. Most of the components for the building were supplied by local companies while many of the people who worked on the construction were from Lancashire.

This aspirational and Futurist looking piece of architecture has continued to attract artists from Preston and elsewhere. They have worked in a broad range of media film music literature photograph to mention just some, to create work in it and in response to it. Whether it is spaceships landing on its top deck, or community passion plays in front of it, testing its future conversion to a new square, which will further enhance it as a cultural destination.

The people of Preston and further afield began to campaign to list Preston Bus Station in the early 2000's. In response to its imminent demolition for the new retail development Tithebarn. The momentum to save the building increased towards its eventual gaining a grade II listing on 23rd Sept 2013 at the third time of applying.

Ownership soon after transferred to Lancashire County Council.

Andrew Lloyd who ran the Save Preston Bus Station social media campaign that was the glue of the protest, posted 'The campaign was largely a decentralised and distributed effort consisting of artists, poets, photographers, songwriters, camera crews, journalists, architecture critics, photographers, PBS tourists, arts groups, academics, local supporters, heritage groups, letter writers, petition signers and countless others who kept the spotlight shining on the city's most famous building and vital transport hub'.

The campaign has also been commented on by the 20th Century Society saying 'Reflecting about this campaign, we have used not only conventional casework techniques but also celebrating the building in photography, art, drama, music, interventions and other cultural activities. Maybe there's a lesson in this for other present and future campaigns? Social networking and blogs have been very useful'

A couple of highlights being the parade through the streets of Preston behind our Ed Hall designed banner and the Heritage Alliance Heroes Award 2014 in London.

It certainly involved a large number of different people from different walks of life some of us who are here today. But the killer blow was the successful listing document written by Christina Malathouni and supported by the 20th Century Society and Heritage England

Preston has always had a disproportionate sense of ambition for a town/ city of its size and has constantly embraced the different and the desire to test the new. Where else in the world could you shut a recently renovated bus station on a Sunday morning so an artist could choreograph 32 double decker buses to a live sound track played through the new tannoy system on all nine floors or write the giant word people across the forecourt as a temporary monument to the important ingredient that PBS was created for the PEOPLE

Since its transfer of ownership and renovation PBS has taken on a new life in the city. Now better connected via its new square rather than its underpasses which have been symbolically filled up, it has come of age it's found its place and time, after an arduous journey.