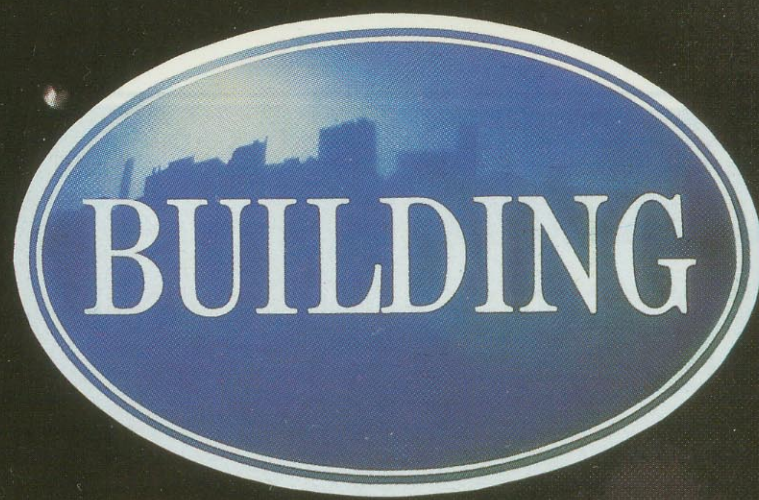


BUSINESS MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR



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FLOORING
SUPPLEMENT

Blackpool illuminated

Winter Gardens dazzle

GATESHEAD DECORATED

Princess Royal opens
garden festival

ROYALS DESERTED

Developers flee
from Docklands



FII
POI

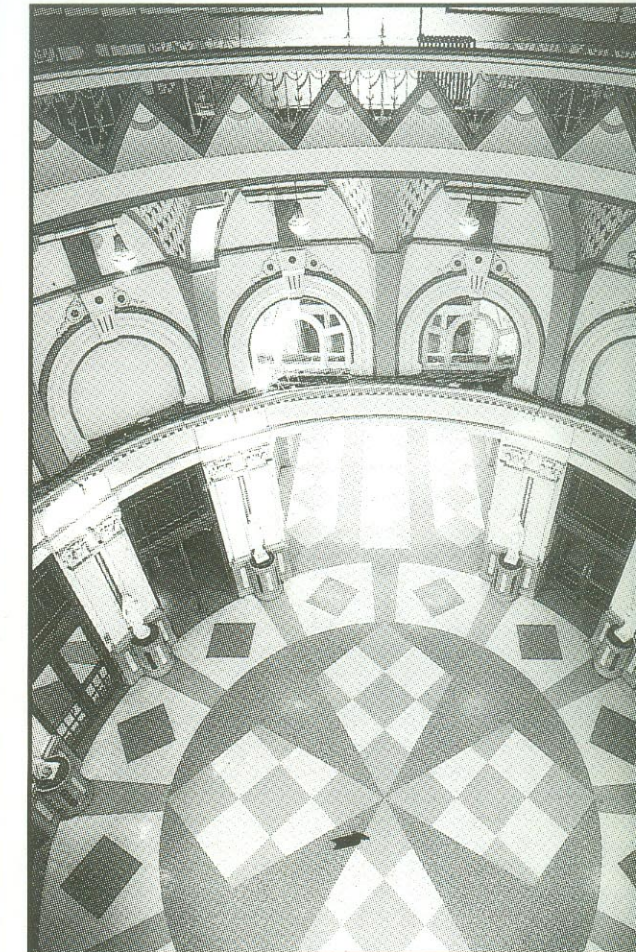
CASE STUDY

WINTER GARDENS, BLACKPOOL

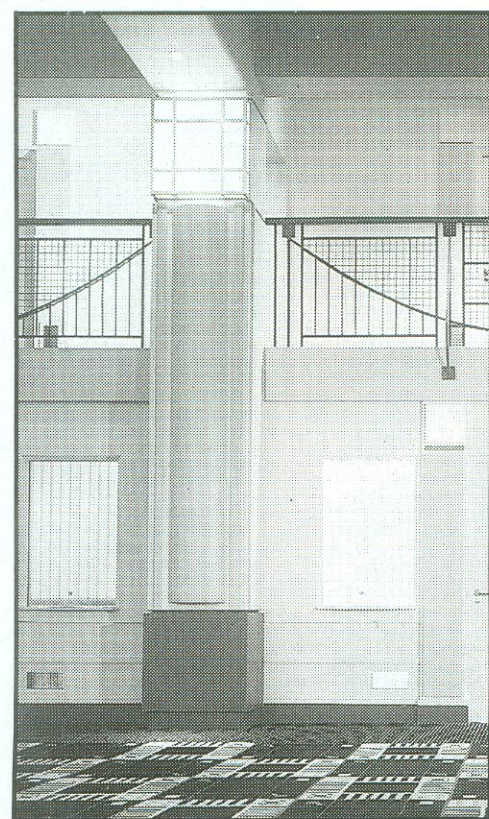


Colonnading shell columns.

After a major renovation operation the multipurpose Blackpool Winter Gardens complex can now hold its own over its competitors. Sarah Wharton reports on the transformation of this Northern landmark for holiday-makers.



The new rubber floor in the Rotunda (above) was produced by Harefield to Quigley's design. New colour schemes, lighting, signage and flooring feature (left) in the Floral Hall.



Art Deco features in the new foyer.

Lancashire hot

BLACKPOOL'S Winter Gardens, the refuge for generations of rain-soaked holiday-makers, has undergone a £1.6m transformation that makes the glitziest Las Vegas casino look low key.

A mind-blowing display of Classical columns, Art Deco balustrades and dazzling lighting lends the gardens a Vaudeville character in keeping with the spirit of the resort. A note of high

comedy is the use of crushed sea shells to line the walls.

It was time for a facelift, according to David Quigley of David Quigley Architects. Worried by the possibility of losing business to the new Birmingham International Conference Centre and the bright lights of London, the First Leisure Corporation, owner of the Blackpool Winter Gardens decided to spruce

up the neglected centre.

Quigley first envisaged the scheme while working at the Terry Farrell Partnership. When Quigley set up his own business, Farrell let him take the Winter Gardens project with him.

Quigley wanted to retain that seaside atmosphere of fantasy and escapism, which he says is summed up by the Brighton Pavilion. "The architecture borrowed styles from different

spot

continents; these flavours allowed visitors to escape the drudgery of everyday life."

Quigley's brief was to revitalise the whole of the Winter Gardens complex. The multipurpose centre includes the largest opera house in Europe, a conference centre, a ballroom, cafes and bars, the pavilion and a large exhibition area. It comprises approximately 1.5 ha of buildings accessible from the

main thoroughfare, the Floral Hall.

The Arena was the largest single contract in the two-and-a-half year refurbishment programme. Costing £500 000, it had to be completed in 12 weeks so as not to disrupt the bookings diary.

The Arena had to be flexible and had to create an atmosphere of expectation. The original entrance, he says, appeared "rather formidable". The room is below street level and had to be reached by a long flight of stairs. These were replaced with a more inviting broad winding staircase and, to encourage people to congregate on the stairs, the bar was placed on the intermediate landing.

The most striking aspect of

the existing room was a curved ceiling that contained lights following the same formation as the constellations of the stars. This was the only feature to be retained; everything below this level was demolished.

Quigley wanted to create "outside space inside". As the room has no natural daylight he decided to give it a night-time atmosphere. Lighting behind the cornice is used to give the effect of sunrise or sunset. The stars in the ceiling complete the illusion.

Careful use of lighting gives the impression of being in a courtyard. This was achieved by using lights to wash the surfaces, highlighting the structural features.

Most of the walls and internal surfaces were given the unusual

finish of Testa Terres – a resin-based render. Wyre, a local plastering firm, used crushed seashells to form an aggregate which was then mixed with resin, allowing the natural colours of the shells to be exposed.

The tall columns that define the main room are simply drainage pipes filled with builders' rubble to keep them upright and covered in the Testa Terres finish. The light at the top of the columns were made up from bits and pieces of other fittings.

For acoustic reasons, the floor had to be carpeted. To continue the outdoor theme it was designed with a terrazzo and marble tile pattern and produced by BMK.