

# Dark horse

Hat Projects' tough new Jerwood Gallery is an apt response to Hastings' robust working seafront, writes *James Pallister*. Photography by *Ioana Marinescu*

By dint of its shallow slope and lack of natural harbour, Hastings' large shale beach is home to Europe's largest fleet of beach-launched fishing boats. The town can now add to its list of attractions, amongst the arcades, fish and chip shops, and funicular railway a new public gallery. The Jerwood Gallery, designed by Hat Projects, is a privately funded project half the size of Turner Contemporary in Margate but a quarter of the cost.

Its permanent collection has a series of set-piece picture windows that look on to the beach. The practicalities of displaying artwork used to preclude large windows like this, but in the last decade or so, the big-view-out has become part of the modern gallery's repertoire.

This development was visible in pivotal projects at either ends of the noughties' public gallery boom

from the Tate Modern (2000), to Chipperfield's Hepworth Wakefield (2010) and changed our expectations of what galleries should do. Arguably, it started with the New Art Gallery Walsall, built in 1999 by a then fresh-faced Peter St John and Adam Caruso. Caruso St John's gallery eschewed windowless commercial galleries, and by building something with views not just of the artwork within but also of the city without, took visitors some way, to borrow from Brian O'Doherty, 'Beyond the White Cube'.

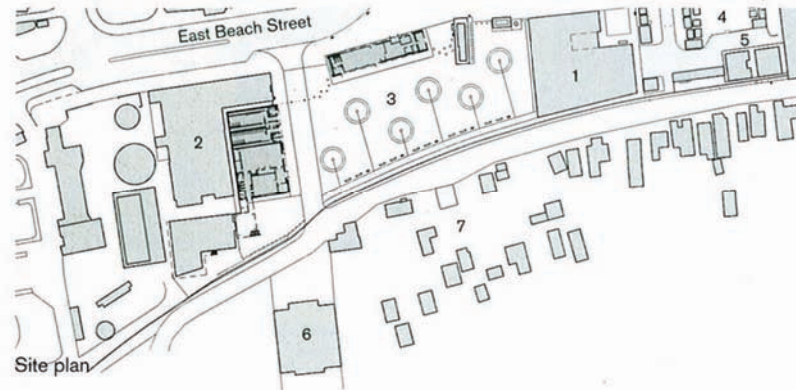
Designed by HAT Projects, the Jerwood Gallery displays 85 per cent of the Jerwood Foundation's collection and is the institution's largest capital project since pearl dealer John Jerwood founded it in 1977, with assistance from current chair, Alan Grieve. The gallery was a family job, as the practice is made of Grieve's son Tom and >>

Right The 2-3mm gaps between each stack-bonded tile shaped the setting out of the windows

## Legend

1. Jerwood Gallery
2. Amusement park
3. Stade
4. Historic net shops
5. Fish market
6. Lifeboat station
7. Working beach

0 20m N





First floor plan



Ground floor plan



**Top left** The main gallery space for contemporary work  
**Top right** Landing showing the beach in the distance  
**Bottom** A view on to the internal courtyard, with the street beyond

#### Legend

1. Foreshore gallery
2. Collection gallery
3. Reception
4. Shop
5. Foyer
6. External courtyard
7. Education space
8. Friends' room
9. Office
10. Lift
11. Art store
12. Store
13. Plant
14. WC
15. Café
16. Research room
17. Kitchen
18. Terrace
19. Baby change
20. Roof access stair
21. Sculpture by Benedict Carpenter



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Hana Loftus, who wrote the brief for the Jerwood Foundation.

The brief was for a gallery within striking distance of London; towns where the scale of collection would not be overwhelmed. Jerwood would provide the capital cost and the local authority would provide the land. Five local authorities were approached, all put forward sites, and Hastings won.

The Jerwood sits next to Hastings' characteristic net shops – black extruded sheds built to fix nets in – whose small plots combined with growth spurts has led to a mini wooden Manhattan. The gallery's oily exterior has an exquisite, iridescent finish, courtesy of a hand-glazed material more commonly used as rainscreen at your local McDonald's. 'We wanted the building to have this

civic presence, but it also [to not compete with the net shops] had to be subdued and not too flowery,' says Grieve. A thoroughness and attention to detail, apparent throughout, applies to the 2-3mm gaps between each stack-bonded tile that shaped the setting out of every door and window.

A large, sub-dividable space hosts recent work and a sequence of seven rooms displays the permanent collection. Grieve says the practice drew on precedents of galleries like Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and the Guggenheim, Venice to inform a 'grand domestic' feel in these well-proportioned spaces, whose floors are enlivened with natty orange terrazzo. A precast stair, just wide enough for two people to pass, takes you between levels and provides a pleasing



transition to the top-lit upper galleries.

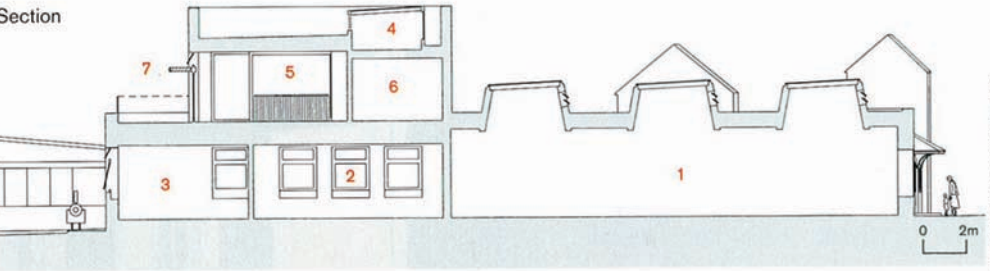
HAT felt strongly about sustainability and 60 per cent of the heating comes from 11 heat probes in the courtyard. Thermal massing is ramped up in the main gallery with a large exposed concrete soffit, two large coffers for natural ventilation, with a neat timber armature which holds the gallery's speakers, lighting and ventilation services; 'It's a simple, characterful solution,' says Grieve.

The large windows that look out to the town and beach are important to Grieve, who says they help mitigate against people being 'intimidated by an institutional feel. Views are what we thrive off!' There's certainly plenty of ways to look; to the shore, into the gallery, on to the street. An unintended consequence giving visitors a view out and connecting the gallery to the town is that the working parts of the beach are set up as a picturesque, with the power implications this entails.

After contemplating the idyllic scene of fishermen working on the boats, it's only when you get outside >>

**The gallery's oily exterior has an exquisite, iridescent finish**





you realise the old sea dogs are barely out of their teens and on-boat speakers pump out dubstep versions of Taio Cruz. In the nearby maritime museum, the ungainly stuffed albatross (shot in calm weather in the Atlantic – someone hasn't read their Coleridge) seems humorous and kitsch, the plaques on its porch that mark the deaths of fisherman in 1968, 1998, 2000, anything but.

There's only so far you can go with picturesque when things are still actually *working*. Which was precisely the fear of the fishermen who protested against the gallery, worried their trade would suffer. Bus tours used to visit the Stade, coming to buy their fish, but this can no longer happen now the gallery has replaced the coach park. Is this a public realm win, local

**Right** The exterior uses hand-glazed tiles and a timber blockwork structure  
**Below** View of the front of gallery with net shops in background

Legend

- 1. Foreshore gallery
- 2. Education space
- 3. Office
- 4. Plant
- 5. Café
- 6. Kitchen
- 7. Terrace

There's only so far you can take picturesque when things are still *working*

business loss? Grieve says not. 'Historically, the fishing fleet felt under-appreciated by the town and saw [the Jerwood] as another attempt to clean up the beach and drive them off. Now that it's built, it protects them. The uncertainty has gone.'

The Jerwood is a fantastic launch pad for HAT. At the time, Caruso St John's New Art Gallery was the largest built work of any architect under 40 and the project made the practice. Grieve and Loftus are similarly youthful, and the Jerwood should do the same for them.



COMMENT

*Tim Ronalds Architects completed a £2.75 million community building, café and public space (above) for Hastings Borough Council on the Hastings Stade, next to the Jerwood Gallery, as part of HAT Projects' masterplan. Tim Ronalds recalls his experience*

We knew generally what the form was going to be. The challenge was to connect it to the structures on the beach and in doing so bring the beach back up to the road. We wanted to use the cubic language of what was on the beach and use a more civic scale.

People like the way the brick changes colour in the light. It's also very tough: a hard terracotta-like brick that suits the demanding conditions. So many projects built today don't last. The older I get, the more preoccupied I am with buildings that survive.

The Stade Hall is heavily used: parties, art classes, dance classes, public meetings. It really is a public room. It has a black-boarded timber interior, and is clerestory lit with dark walls and floor.

The whole project was immensely difficult to get built. There were a lot of objections, primarily towards the Jerwood. Doing a public realm project is fraught with difficulty. There are a lot of people in seaside towns who don't like change of any kind and there was a general suspicion that the council were either mad or corrupt. It became very unpleasant at times, with people making physical threats, sending anonymous letters and talk of a 'Jewish plot' And then, of course, it's built and people ask, 'What was all the fuss about?'



Project data	
START ON SITE	June 2010
COMPLETION	January 2012
GROSS INTERNAL FLOOR AREA	1,260m <sup>2</sup>
FORM OF CONTRACT	JCT Traditional
TOTAL COST	£4 million (not including art collection)
COST PER SQUARE METRE	£2,619
ARCHITECT	HAT Projects
CLIENT	Jerwood Foundation
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	Momentum
QUANTITY SURVEYOR	Pierce Hill
ACCESS CONSULTANT	People Friendly Desig
SERVICES ENGINEER	Skelly & Couch
MAIN CONTRACTOR	Coniston Ltd
CURTAIN WALL GLAZING	Schueco
FRAMELESS GLAZING	Prima Systems
ALUMINIUM WINDOWS/DOORS	Schueco
FRAMELESS ROOFLIGHTS	ESB Services
ALUMINIUM FRAMED ROOFLIGHTS	Vitral
ROOF COVERING	Sarnafil
ZINC ROOFING	Rheinzink
GRANITE PAVING TO COURTYARD	Marshall
RUBBER FLOORING	Dalsouple
ACOUSTIC TIMBER LINING	Topakustik
INSULATION	Kingspan
RRECAST CONCRETE STAIRS	Ebor Concretes
OAK FLOORING	Reeve Flooring
BESPOKE TIMBER DOORS	DFC Joinery
TILES	Johnson Prismatics
RESIN FLOORING	Altro
POLISHED CONCRETE FLOOR	Contech Ltd
IRONMONGERY	Yannedis
LIGHTING	Deltalight; Erco; iGuzzini; Nimbus; Modular; Etap; Bega
ESTIMATED ANNUAL CO <sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS	27kgCO <sub>2</sub> /m <sup>2</sup>