

recently completed: **Grosvenor East, Manchester**

The 12,100 sqm new building for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University brings together a dynamic mix of the performing arts, journalism, and languages alongside the newly established Manchester Poetry Library, a cafe, public foyers, exhibition space and a 180-seat studio theatre. Situated on Manchester's Oxford Road corridor, Grosvenor East provides the university with spaces for teaching and learning, and a highly visible new cultural hub connected to the city.

Occupying a tight 2,600 sqm corner site, a sophisticated sectional design interlocks the building's complex programme either side of a central atrium that acts as an internal 'street', linking north and south sides of the campus. The ground floor of Grosvenor East is entirely open to the public and includes the theatre, poetry library and café. Mid-levels provide media students with state-of-the-art television and radio studios, and drama students have flexible rehearsal studios that can be bathed in daylight or completely blacked out. The building's upper levels are reserved for academic offices, classrooms and language laboratories.

An in-depth engagement and briefing process was undertaken to identify the many and often diverging requirements of this diverse group of building users, and understand needs for spatial, acoustic or secure separation. It is this rich mix of building users and their respective needs that has defined the architectural approach.

Also essential in the design development was the retention of a listed facade, all that remains of the 1830's Chorlton on Medlock Town Hall once on this site. The formal strength of the portico is exploited as the new building's primary entrance with door openings lengthened for step-free access.



This is a key site for Manchester Metropolitan University, both in terms of its high visibility and its location as a cornerstone to the campus around All Saint's Park.

A heavy masonry body of prefabricated glass reinforced concrete panels, with a lightweight copper-coloured metal framework to the windows and upper facade levels gives the building long-term solidity and permanence with a warm, decorative flourish. The building's massing is broken into a series of individual blocks, visible in the elevations and roof plan, that gradually increase in scale, culminating in the building's highest point on the corner of Oxford Road, facing back towards the city.

Energy use targets are set high for the scheme with an emphasis on a very high performing envelope achieving ratings well in excess of building regulations.

Grosvenor East is the first of several projects to be completed in Manchester by the practice. We now have a small but permanent presence in the city from where we will grow this portfolio, and we have recently been appointed to develop a masterplan for iD Manchester, a new research and innovation campus for developer Bruntwood and the University of Manchester.

Simon Fraser, Project Leader and Partner at Allies and Morrison said: *"I am delighted to see this project come to fruition, a high-quality piece of architecture for the All Saints Campus and a prominent site within the city. This latest addition to the practice's portfolio of buildings in Higher Education has been designed for longevity and adaptability, to serve Manchester Metropolitan University long into the future."*

Oliver Heywood, Project Director and Director at Allies and Morrison said: *"After a Covid-imposed hiatus, it is great to see Grosvenor East now buzzing with such an array of activity. Working closely with the University to really understand their brief allowed us to translate a long list of requests into a spatially efficient and handsome new building. By layering functions from 'public' to 'private', actors, creative writers, journalists, linguists, and academic staff can happily co-exist on this tight urban site."*

Charlotte Hodges, Project Architect and Associate Director at Allies and Morrison said: *"Working with the contractor from the early stages under a PCSA for the university client, and later working directly for the contractor, meant that as a team we were able to deliver the building to budget. Following completion our involvement continued, helping the university procure and coordinate the installation of two large-scale textile works in the atrium as well as the feature furniture and other associated artworks."*

Supported by our presence in Manchester, these strong and collaborative working relationships, right through from concept design to completion and beyond with both the university client and the contractor, have resulted in a high-quality building much enjoyed by students, staff and the public."



Professor Martyn Evans, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University, said: “Allies and Morrison enthusiastically embraced our brief for a highly flexible, fully inclusive multi-departmental building. Grosvenor East provides us with inspirational new home for the next generation of actors, writers, journalists and linguists. It supports the growing need for training in the expanding creative and media industries in the region, as well as providing a cultural hub within Manchester Metropolitan University which is connected to the city and students and staff can be proud of. We have already been delighted to welcome people into the outstanding new Manchester Poetry Library and to the first productions in our Manchester School of Theatre auditorium.”

Location	Cavendish Street, Manchester M15
Uses	180-seat black box studio theatre with retractable seat bank, fixed technical grid with catwalks and motor-controlled rolling beams. Dedicated Control Room. Associated workshop, wardrobe, prop/furniture store, theatre rack room, changing and dressing facilities, quick change and production office 100-seat performance / lecture space with retractable seating 2 movement studios 3 editing suites 8 specialist acoustically isolated studios 2 Television Studios 2 Radio Studios Poetry Library Cafe Language Labs Academic Offices TEAL and Scale-up Classrooms Social Spaces including roof terrace
Client	Manchester Metropolitan University
Status	Completed
Size	12,100 sqm GIA
Expertise	Architecture
Collaborators	Structure: Arup, Services: Arup, Cost: Turner and Townsend, Acoustic: Charcoalblue, Access: Turner and Townsend, Fire: Arup, Sustainability: Arup, Theatre: Charcoalblue, Planning: Turley, Project Manager: Turner and Townsend, Main contractor: Morgan Sindall

ABOUT ALLIES AND MORRISON

Allies and Morrison is a practice of architects and urbanists based in London, Cambridge and Manchester. We design beautiful buildings that have long life and can adapt over the generations. We also shape enduring places whether new pieces of city or settlements at any scale. All our projects are concerned with the crafting of every detail and the appreciation for the uniqueness of each context.