



Earth Sciences Building, University of Oxford

by WilkinsonEyre

Located on South Parks Road in a sensitive context, this new building of 7,100m² for the University of Oxford's Department of Earth Sciences has not only been designed to meet the academic requirements of the department, but also to signal to the wider public the interests and concerns of the users. This is achieved through a distinctive narrative wall, which is formed of horizontal bands of limestone carefully selected by geologists in the Department. This gives the building a strong geological 'identity' but also acts as a teaching aid and organisational device, dividing the stone-clad laboratory wing from the glazed office wing.

Integrated into the building is the specialist infrastructure required for ultra-clean geochemical laboratories, experimental petrology and large computational facilities, alongside more generic spaces for write-up and relaxation. Internally the building is structured around a simple relationship diagram of laboratory wing and office wing, divided by the narrative wall and with an atrium 'hinge' between.

The laboratory wing includes a series of specialist research spaces including metal-free labs for geochemistry – which at 345m² are the largest of their kind in the world. The ground floor contains undergraduate teaching and common areas, a library and lecture theatre.

Details

Location: Oxford, UK
Client: University of Oxford
Architect: WilkinsonEyre
Structural Engineer: Pell Frischmann
Services Engineer: Hoare Lea
Area: 7,100m²
Value: £29m
Completed: September 2010

Awards

ACE Engineering Excellence - Large
Structure Award 2011
Oxford Preservation Trust Award 2011