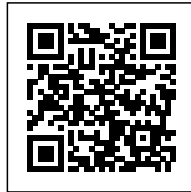




TOWN HOUSE KINGSTON: ENGAGEMENT AND DISCOVERY

Posted on July 16, 2021 by martabuges



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Imagine a place where reading, dance, performance, lectures, exhibitions, research and learning happily coexist, under one roof, and the door is open to everyone. This is the new Town House in Kingston. The juxtaposition of contemplative and active performative activities offers an imaginative approach to education as a process of engagement and discovery. Colonnades form welcoming meeting spaces at the edges. Interlocking volumes move vertically, connecting the building from ground to top. Activities are revealed to the passer by. There are no barriers.



We were inspired by the progressive educational vision presented to us in this brief, the 'open door'

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policy, the wish to connect with the community and the town, the rich interactive potential of the various uses, and the wish to make an open welcoming supportive environment for students and visitors. When we analyzed the nature of the spaces required we were excited by the fact that 50% of the space required is open plan. Our search therefore was to make an architecture which would reflect this openness.

Kingston Town House is an open-ended spatial framework offering both generosity and flexibility in allowing the culture of this building to grow and change. In order to achieve this, passive strategies are prioritized to ensure comfortable thermal, visual and acoustic environments, where possible. Active/mechanical servicing is employed only where spatial, architectural and contextual constraints demand it. The building achieves a rating of BREEAM Excellent.

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While the building feels permeable and transparent, environmental control is achieved through the use of 'colonnade' and 'ambulatory' elements. Recessed on three sides to form gardens and colonnades, the façades are open and transparent at the lower levels becoming more solid at the upper levels where shading is required. This colonnade plays a central civic role and establishes the important presence of this new University building within the public realm.

The public foreground of the building forms one of a series of new public spaces and revitalized

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landscapes which stretch along the full 200-meter length of the University frontage to Penrhyn Road. This concept follows the classical tradition of the "portico", emphasizing a primary frontal relationship with this most public thoroughfare connecting to Kingston Town Center. External terraces, walkways and balconies elevated above the street animate the façade and display the vibrant life of the university to the outside world. New and existing landscaping is integrated throughout, including the retention of existing trees, the planting of vines on the west façade, and a series of stepped roof gardens with both green and brown roof technology.



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The educational vision and ethos of this building is uniquely rich and progressive. Unexpected adjacencies are set up by virtue of the program given to us by the University. The library facility is twinned with dance studios, performance and event spaces. The building is a democratic open infrastructure, a labyrinth of interlocking volumes, maintaining the feeling of being in one unified environment where these opposites can happily co-exist. The 15m x 6m structure is 'elemental' and expressive making 'loft' type or 'workshop' type spaces. The building is a warehouse of ideas.

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