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HICKTON
Quality in Practice

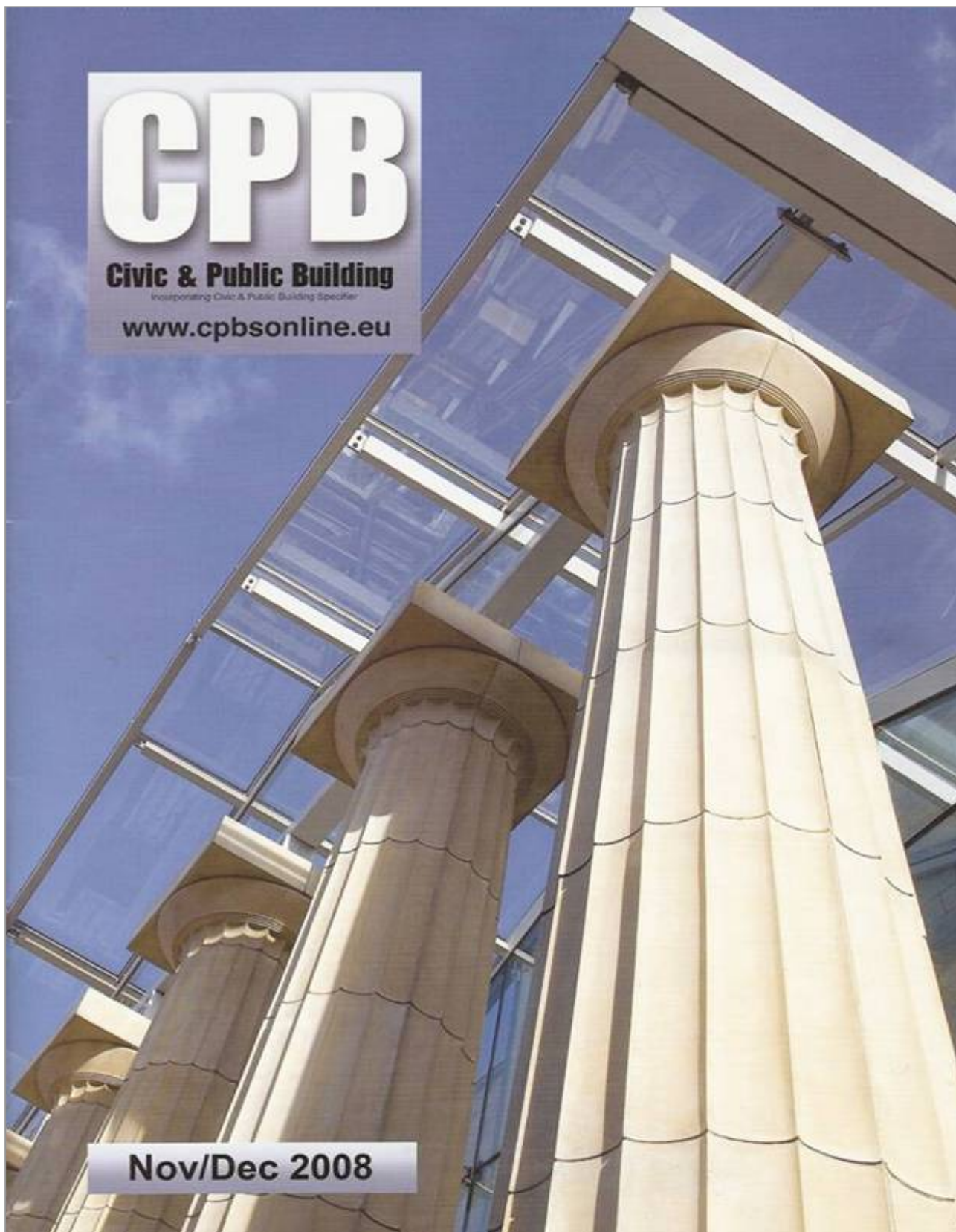
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Hickton has recently played an integral part in the construction of Curve, Leicester's new performing arts centre, the catalyst for the regeneration of Leicester.



Hickton Clerks of Works Help Create 'Inside Out' Theatre



Hickton were employed by Leicester City Council to inspect both the building, and mechanical elements of Curve, Leicester's new performing arts centre. Working closely with Bovis, the Contractors on site, Hickton ensured this prestigious project was completed to the required quality standards.

Leicester City Council along with its Project Manager on this development (Focus Consultants), commissioned the services from Hickton to ensure that specifications were correctly implemented so that this exciting project was built to the quality standards it deserved.

Hickton's building Clerk of Works, Neil Cooper, was based on site to undertake quality inspections, completing a weekly report on progress.

Neil explains: "This was an unusual build, which relied on the highest levels of workmanship and accuracy to ensure it fulfilled the original design requirements. We were delighted to be part of the team that delivered

this magnificent building."

The £62 million Centre, designed by world renowned architect Rafael Viñoly, is based in the heart of Leicester's new Cultural Quarter on Rutland Street. The state of the art theatre boasts two auditoria, one with up to 800 fixed seats whilst the other has up to 400 seats, providing a versatile smaller space, giving a total capacity of up to 1,200.

The stunning glass façade encloses a magnificent open plan foyer with views onto the café, bars, backstage area and across the stage. When the 32 tonne steel walls separating the stage and the foyer are lifted, the stage becomes visible from street level making it open to the public gaze. Dubbed 'the inside out theatre' the intention is that people in the street or foyer can see the whole production process as well as the final performance!

Completion to demanding requirements was vital to match Leicester City Council's high expectations. Layout and installation of the seating and performance areas had to be finished to rigorous standards and Hickton were

on site to ensure this happened as planned.

Martyn Woodhouse, Senior Project Manager at Bovis, explains: "It was extremely useful to have Hickton involved on this project as they were able to ensure every aspect of the build met the exacting standards of the client. It was also a refreshing change to have Clerks of Works who immediately established efficient and professional working relationship with our teams."

Curve is unusual in that it does not have supporting structural columns - everything is suspended from the roof. This includes the façade, seminar room, large rehearsal room and the heavy equipment needed in a modern performance venue. This means that at ground level there are no structural walls, just 5m high sheets of glass butted together to create a seamless transparent wall enabling people from the outside to see clearly into the building.

The roof itself is supported by four cores located at the corners of the central performance area. The fact that the glass façade is over 10m away from the cores and the



roof has to take so much weight meant that huge trusses, 5m deep, the longest being 90m, were used for the roof structure, with secondary beams spanning in between.

Another area that Hickton was closely involved with was preventing potential noise transmission from the auditoriums across the roof. Hickton worked as part of the team to ensure that the cores were acoustically isolated from the main structure. Working to extremely demanding tolerances was essential to achieve minimum noise transmission and Hickton were able to ensure the necessary level of workmanship was achieved.

Martyn Woodhouse explains: "Hickton was an invaluable help on site because they gave us independent feedback on all aspects of the build. Take for example subcontractors, where Hickton was able to give us accurate and timely feedback on standards, giving us advanced notice of any build quality issues before they became a problem."

Curve, which was opened by Her Majesty The Queen on the 4 December, is one of the most advanced theatres of its type in the UK. It is only one of a few in the world that incorporates a power-fly system that "flies" large objects through the auditoria using computer controlled winches in the roof space.

The building is run by Leicester Theatre Trust, a registered charity, and will embrace many different theatrical styles and cultures including musicals, drama, dance, shows for children and community performances.

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