The Lower Precinct

The ceramic tile mural, designed by Gordon Cullen, was commissioned in 1957 by the City Planning & Redevelopment Committee on the recommendation of Arthur Ling, chief architect to the corporation, to illustrate the spirit in which the reconfiguration of Coventry was undertaken. It was made by Carters of Poole and restored and relocated in 2002. One of the sections clearly depicts Coventry’s post war architecture including the Cathedral designed by Sir Basil Spence.

The section of Cullen’s mural that is shown on the front cover of this guide was used as a key reference point for the floor mural in the Arcade (right), in particular the choice of colours that Carters of Poole had used only one year earlier for the large abstract sections of the Lower Precinct mural.

The image below shows some of the sketches for the Arcade mural. These test murals, that use smaller ceramic tiles, can be found in the courtyard of the old Planning Office on Jordan Way. Although the water has been drained out of the remaining sunken pool, it is still possible to imagine the influence that this design would have had on the open areas of the precinct.

The Thriving Weeping Willow, situated at one end of the pool, is also a clear indication of how water and greenery might have been more fully integrated into the city centre.

Fountains

There is little known about the small fountain situated in the courtyard of the old Planning Office. Like the sunken pool, this fountain was most likely built as a prototype for a number of water features planned for the precincts and green areas of the city. Exactly how far these plans were developed and where the fountains were to be situated remains unknown.

The example shown in the image on the right shows the fountain jet placed off-centre. This asymmetry is in keeping with the floor design for the Arcades and similarly demonstrates how water features, like patterned tiles, stairs and car parks, allowed the city architects to be more experimental in their designs.

The Arcade floor tiles were completed in 1958, and The Planning Office courtyard on Jordan Way (1958), the Lower Precinct (Gordon Cullen, 1960). These formal arrangements of ceramic tiles can be found in the Shopping Arcade on Jordan Way. These works could be viewed from the offices of the city architects and discussed as the plans for the redevelopment were being completed.

The image below shows some of the sketches for the Arcade mural. These test murals, that use smaller ceramic tiles, can be found in the courtyard of the City Planning Offices on Jordan Way. These works could be viewed from the offices of the city architects and discussed as the plans for the redevelopment were being completed.

COVENTRY

Redevelopment

A new master plan for Coventry City Centre will guide the next 15-20 years of development and is intended to transform the city center. The master plan, which was unveiled in Millennium Place on November 16th 2013 resulted from a year-long collaboration between the architects, Coventry City Council and three private sector partners. The master plan vision is valued at more than 1 billion pounds.

Community input has been a critical component in helping to shape the master plan since the redevelopment plan was commissioned to create a new heart for the city. From the earliest design meetings, the people of Coventry articulated that they would like to see the city center become a new walkable environment with Venetian style canals, bridges, gondolas and a new bell tower, yet remain sensitve to the city’s history. The first draft of the master plan will be presented on the Millennium Screen in Millennium Place between November 15 – 31 December 2013: 07.30, 10.00, 12.30, 15.00, 17.30, 20.00, 22.30.