



REVIVING AN ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECE



Built between 1879 and 1881, Civic Court is an imposing Grade II-listed structure in the heart of Leeds, overlooking the Town Hall and one of the city's most popular landmarks, Millennium Square. Formerly the home of the Leeds School Board, the impressive building was recently transformed into office space for the city's growing workforce.

Many of the building's period features had been covered up and forgotten about during renovation work in the 1990s, so it was the job of Greens Decorating Contractors, together with lead contractor Estilo Interiors, to carefully and skilfully restore these historic features. Working under the supervision of English Heritage, over a period of three months a team of six used a range of Johnstone's Trade and PPG coatings to give the building a new lease of life.

THE GROUNDWORK

"Decades of neglect meant that every element, inside and out, required extensive preparation to ensure old substrates appeared brand new," said Freddie Tyne, director of Greens Decorating Contractors. "This included painstakingly removing decades of old paint from terracotta tiles that line the main entrance hallway and dismantling old suspended ceilings to reveal magnificent structural steel and timber work supporting the roof." The walls and ceilings also needed considerable filling and preparation, while fire protection and PPG protective coatings had to be applied to large areas of steelwork before decorative works using Johnstone's Trade Steel & Cladding paint could be carried out.

The team needed to retain the existing period woodwork – including ornate doors, architraves and handrails that had been lacquered and varnished multiple times over the years. These surfaces then required updating with a contemporary painted finish. To achieve this, they used dustless sanding to prepare all of the woodwork before painting could commence.

SIMPLE YET STRIKING

During consultations with English Heritage, it was decided that walls and ceilings would be painted in Brilliant White, while various shades of grey would be used for feature walls, skirtings, doors and architraves, and for newly exposed structural steelwork.

The team applied a total of 900 litres of Johnstone's Trade Covaplus to the walls and ceilings. Due to the ornate cornice work and plaster moulds, as well as the high vaulted ceilings throughout the building, the only option was spray application from aluminium access towers. Freddie added: "We chose HVLP spray application to minimise overspray, meaning other trades were able to work alongside us to ensure that deadlines were met." In some areas of the building, the team struggled with stains bleeding through the old cornices, but an effective solution was found with Johnstone's Trade Advanced Stain Block Primer and Johnstone's Ultra-High-Opacity Matt in problem areas.

Interior woodwork was painted with Johnstone's Trade Advanced Multi-Surface Primer, Aqua Water Based Undercoat and Aqua Water Based Satin. "As the colour scheme was limited, every element of joinery required razor-sharp cutting in and precision as any defects would be immediately obvious," said Freddie. "The client also had some concerns over the durability of a painted finish, so we carried out scratch testing and the results left them confident that the coatings we'd specified would stand the test of time."

Externally, the team prepared, primed, undercoated and glossed all of the joinery using Johnstone's Flexible system for maximum durability. Freddie explained: "Access from the roadside was difficult to say the least! It's a very busy city-centre corner site with huge amounts of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic at all times of day. It called for some very early mornings and late evenings to make sure the team working from fixed scaffolding and mobile towers stayed safe."

A ROARING SUCCESS

Civic Court is now worlds apart from the tired and dated building Greens Decorating Contractors was faced with when the team arrived on site. Their dedication and hard work has resulted in some of the most desirable office space available in the city centre of Leeds. Consequently, the project earned the company a nomination in the Commercial & Leisure category at the Johnstone's Trade Painter of the Year Awards.

Paul Farrell at Johnstone's Trade, said: "Greens worked around the clock to turn this former School Board Building into an exciting commercial hub and we're honoured to have our paints and coatings put to such good use. It was an impressive team effort and the modern yet classic colour scheme really allows the ornate features of the building to shine."

