

Image not found or type unknown



Saint Catherine's College

United Kingdom

Manor Road
South East (region) Oxfordshire (county) OX1 3UJ
Oxford

Commission

1956

Completion

1962

Original name

Saint Catherine's College

Other denominations

Catz

Original use

Housing/residence

Current use

Housing/residence

Architects

Arne Jacobsen

Concrete by reinforcement

Reinforced concrete

Construction method

Cast-in-place concrete, in-situ concrete, Precast concrete, precast element, Facade cladding

Architectural concrete

Architectural concrete

Structural types

One-dimensional/concrete frame, One-dimensional/[trussed] beam

Description

When Arne Jacobsen accepted the commission, he was under strict orders to respect all the traditions associated with British colleges. This had important architectural implications, both in terms of the program and in the layout and organization of the elements in the complex, referred to as “Catz”, which was the first building with a contemporary design on the formal and conservative Oxford campus.

The ‘college’ configuration might be considered an architectural typology in itself, with a layout arranged around quadrangles, or quads; their accumulation determines a large part of Oxford’s urban fabric. Catz is also organised around a quad, although the different elements of the program are split into two long parallel blocks for student housing, at the ends of which the dining room and the library are located, as independent buildings.

Although the complex is just a few minutes from the centre, because it is located at the edge of town, it is virtually immersed in a rural environment. The authors integrated the landscape into the design by opening one side of the quad, generating paths and cross-cutting relationships between the city and the landscape. In turn, the interstitial spaces incorporate gardens which interpret the English landscape tradition, with ponds located strategically to guarantee privacy for the programmatic elements that require it.

All of Jacobsen’s work shares a strict modulation, a preference for prefabrication, and a close relationship between structure and spatial and constructive systems. In this case, the extraordinary quality of the prefabricated concrete finishes, which take on an almost marble-like appearance, adds a remarkable slimness to the structural elements. In the Catz buildings, these load-bearing elements are what structures the spaces and defines the exterior image. In the case of the large halls of the dining room and the library, they also determine the interiors.

Links

[Proyectos 3+4](#)