



Design that delivers creative concepts

Albany public seating

An unusual request

We love the varied nature of what we're asked to do, and the design of a set of illuminated benches inspired by wrought iron railings for the courtyard of the old corn exchange in Liverpool was certainly one of our more interesting projects. The benches were to be the centrepiece of a mixed restaurant and housing development in one of the most historic parts of Liverpool city centre, and our client wanted to make a big statement. Well, three big statements, actually.

You may need to sit down

The project involved the development of three seating units that would be used by customers at the restaurants around the courtyard. The client wanted them to reference the beautiful railings that surround the courtyard, and incorporate the strong spiral motif that was repeated in the wrought iron work. The seating units also had to include downlighting to illuminate the flagstone floors at night. Oh, and they needed to be designed, built and installed in four months.

Pushing the boundaries

This was one project where safe choices were not an option. We needed to create bold design statements that would look particularly good at night, and use materials to deliver solutions that were both great to look at and also very practical. The design solution that gradually emerged was a set of glass reinforced plastic spiral mouldings, each in four sections, with stainless steel bulkheads between them. These were





supported on conical legs that got wider as the mouldings broadened out in the centre of the spiral.

Finally, the requirement to produce a dramatic lighting effect at night was met by adding led rope lights to the underside of the spirals, which directed a strong but very narrow band of light downwards onto the York stone surface of the courtyard.

Going the extra mile (or 300)

Although the primary part of the project was concept design, Crucible also carried out all the detail CAD modelling; arranged the tooling and manufacture of all the parts; ordered the rope lighting units; organised delivery to Liverpool and, in what we now recognise as a reckless act, agreed to install all three units during two very wet days in December. The result was spectacular and the courtyard garden went on to win two prestigious awards at the 2006 National Roses Design Awards held in Manchester.

As Andy Thompson, the architect for the overall project said:

“Crucible’s ability to think outside the box and push the practical boundaries of the project made sure that the end result was not only incredibly striking, but relatively easy to manufacture and install.

The design for the spiral seats was not only integral to the garden, but to the Rose Awards that have been bestowed on the project”.



About Crucible Design

Mike Ayre established Crucible Design Ltd in 1990. Crucible works across all areas of product design and development, with an emphasis on meeting specific client needs, including sales improvement, cost reduction, technical innovation and the sourcing of manufacturing partners.

This focus on the commercial benefits of good design has generated an excellent track record of successful projects and the practice has also won a number of design awards for appearance, innovation and technical expertise.

