

The Architectural Review

Nottingham Old Market Square case study: Q&A with Neil Porter

The founding partner of Gustafson Porter discusses lessons learned upgrading Nottingham's Old Market Square

What considerations are important when designing streetscapes incorporating active rail or tram lines?

At old market square we were aware that leaving the square open to the movements of the tram would leave unsafe and vulnerable edges. These would be most apparent when the city wished to place major events and diverse activities adjacent to the tram route. By placing raised seating terraces and a water feature at the edges of the square adjacent to the tram line we framed the pedestrian entrances into the square ensuring that people walking through, or using the centre of the space, did not randomly come into conflict with its presence. As a result these seating terraces have become a place where people wait for the trams and buses as they move around the city.



Old Market Square by Gustafson Porter

How would you set about redesigning a multi-transport public space to boost aesthetics, cultural activity and safety?

Routes through a square that connect it with the major pedestrian and vehicle routes of the surrounding city enable simple and safe road and tram crossings. These routes also lead to chance encounters, and encourage its use as a place to meet and socialise. Understanding the movement of sun and shade and topography, combined with an understanding of the natural movement routes, provides an understanding of where people wish to sit, wait, relax, perform and watch the world go by. Once these are known and the movement and settled areas of the square agreed, one can plan a flexible and layered approach to how cultural events, markets and installations occupy the square, creating a safe and popular destination within the city.



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