

2.0 Concept Narrative

The purpose of a concept narrative within the context of an interior design scheme, is to set out the basis of inspiration, meaning and a route for the design. It helps to ensure that there is a degree of intellectual rigour within the process, which can only deliver a better scheme.

A concept narrative can be based on any number of areas, or one key theme. For this project, we have chosen to consider the overall context of the project, the site, its history and its future, the faculty and its values, and touching on the artistic and literary inspiration in the Swansea Bay area.

The site's past is overwhelmingly industrial, and we cannot fail to pay heed to that in moving forward. While the building should be looking to the future, that industrial influence can be brought into the project in many ways, and will ultimately add a great deal of meaning to the spaces.

While a good deal of design will also be led by function, the concept narrative will provide a creative backbone for the scheme, making it a very important stage of the process.

Interpretation

There are various meanings to the word interpretation, although all revolve around the same principle. The Oxford English Dictionary provides several, however the most appropriate to this exercise seems to be:

“The way in which a thing ought to be interpreted; proper explanation; hence, signification, meaning.”

The important words here are ‘proper explanation, meaning’. Interpretation is used frequently in the context of museums and visitor experiences to inform, assist and map out the best way to communicate the story in an interesting and easily understood manner.

Within the context of this building, we hope to interpret the story of Swansea docks, the University and faculty through the approach to the interior design of the buildings, in a contemporary and subtle way that will add to the everyday experience of the buildings’ users.

2.1 Design Code

One of the core principles of good design is to create a seamless aesthetic between the building's architecture and its interior design. The architectural team prepared an extensive design code for the site, and it is therefore logical to revert to this as starting point for the concept narrative.

These are some of the key phrases that we feel particularly apply to the interiors:

- Reflects knowledge, leisure and learning.
- Design to be elegant, industrial, sympathetically modernised.
- Reclaimed and reshaped.
- Look to be 'modernised industrial heritage', robust masonry / glazing.
- Traditional but fresh.
- Urban community, vibrant human activity.
- Harmonious / subtle quirky / unique / individual.
- Not corporate or monotonous
- Variety of spaces



2.2 Site History

A visit to the site of the two new buildings in the middle of the last century would have revealed a very different environment. A highly industrialised port with coal being exported from the mines of the Welsh coalfields, steel, copper and other manufactured goods being loaded onto ships, whilst others were off-loading their cargoes of copper ore, pit props for the mines and many other goods. the Swansea valley was particularly synonymous for it's copper works, and Swansea became known as 'Copperopolis'.

As a transport hub, the Swansea Canal also provided an artery linking the docks with industries further up the valley. Later, the railways took over the movement of goods. This was an era before road transport came to dominate, and the railways were the key enabler in the growth of industry in this country.

Few buildings remain from the industrial era - many were temporary or simple in nature - no more than sheds to shelter the materials being shipped. Those that do remain, however, have seen new uses applied, and still offer a palette of simple and durable

materials to draw upon. In addition to this, the basic infrastructure of a harbour/dockside location provides further material. Granite nosings, cast iron capstans and more recent concrete defences are some examples. The latter shows a rhythm and pattern in its surface, designed to break up the energy contained in waves.

While we want to create a contemporary space the area is rich in history which can act as inspiration to a colourful palette and a use of honest and robust materials with a nod to the past but firmly rooted in the present, and indeed looking to the future.

The docks, once a booming place full of activity, employment, noise, dirt and pollution ultimately became a no go zone of dereliction and despair. Now the area is in a new phase of regeneration and re-birth and has already become a leisure and residential zone. This is now evolving further to once again make the area a place of employment and now education. The cycle of use is fascinating and further adds to the rich visual tapestry that can be drawn from this place.



2.3 A Colourful Past - and present

The inspiration to be drawn from the site's history is not just restricted to black and white imagery, dirty materials and sullen skies. There is much colour, texture and joy to be had in exploring the rich seam of the story of Swansea. We should not forget, either, the other associations such as literary ones - home to Swansea's most famous son - poet and author Dylan Thomas. There are plenty more as well.

Today, industry still exists, and provides interest - there is a glass recycling company not far from the site, for example. Shipping old and new, large and small continues to provide colourful imagery as well.

Though lovers be lost
love shall not.



-Dylan Thomas



2.4 Faculty Principles

FACE - Faculty of Architecture, Computing, Engineering & Faculty of Education & Communities (with the new model of education training and CPD, Yr Athrofa) represents a combination of studies that are not always seen together in the University environment. We believe that this, together with the course values, should be celebrated in the building's interior. Key principles that the University have highlighted include:

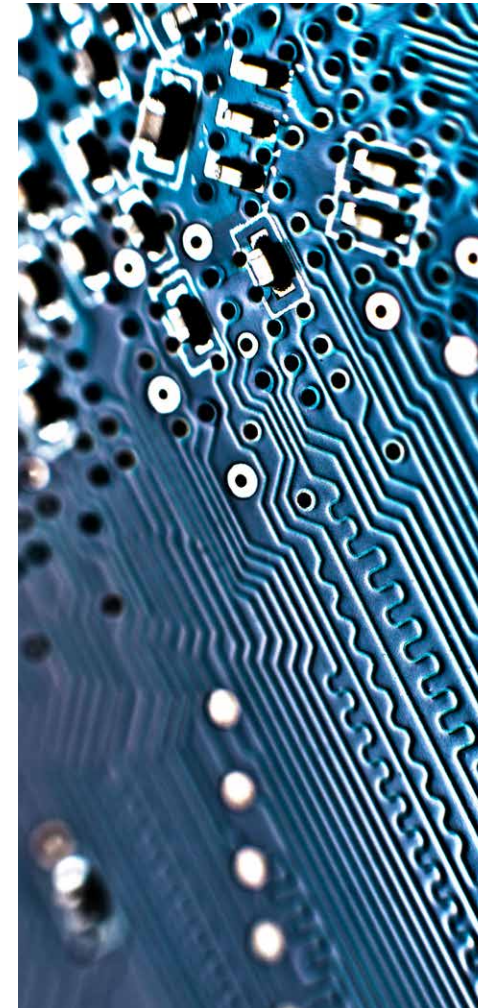
- Transforming education / transforming lives
- Industrially relevant learning experience
- Employability is at the heart of the courses
- Community / social engagement
- High quality
- Sustainability
- Encouraging enterprise
- Instilling Professional values to allow students to make a difference in society

We have drawn two key words from this, which we believe can help inform the scheme:

togetherness | connected

The state of being close to another person or other people

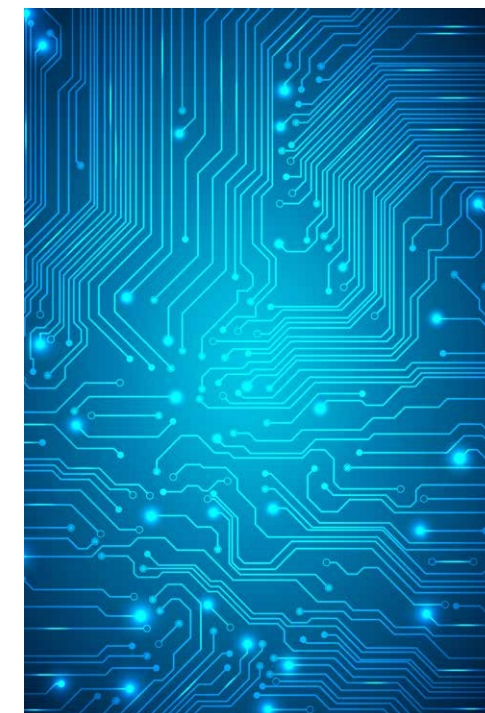
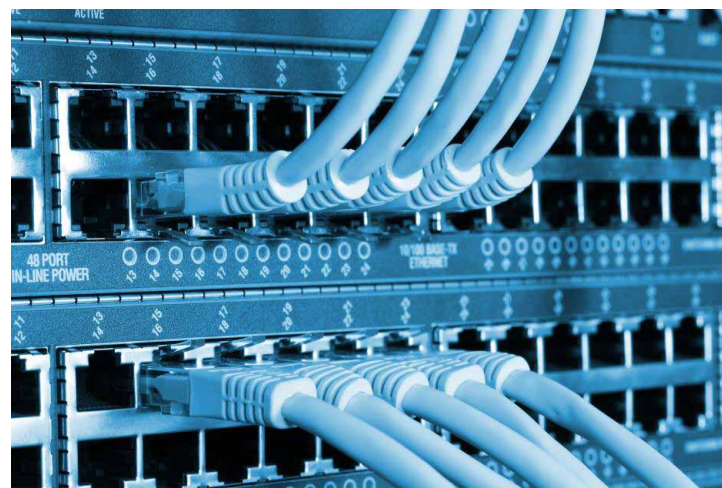
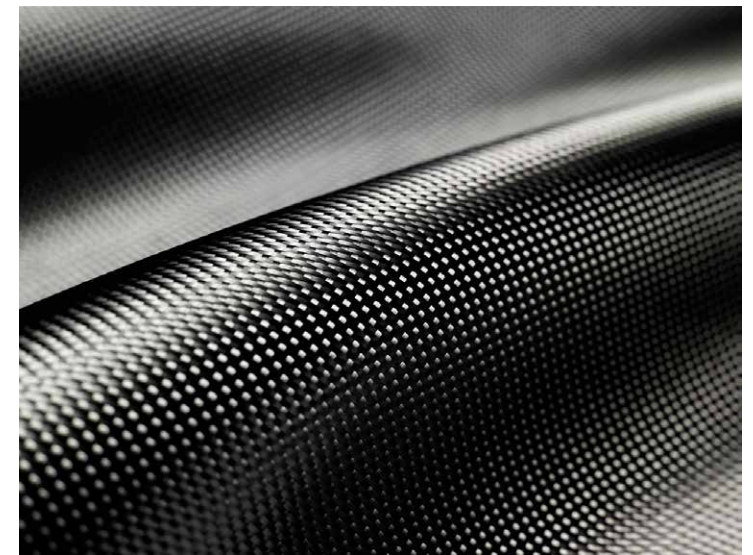
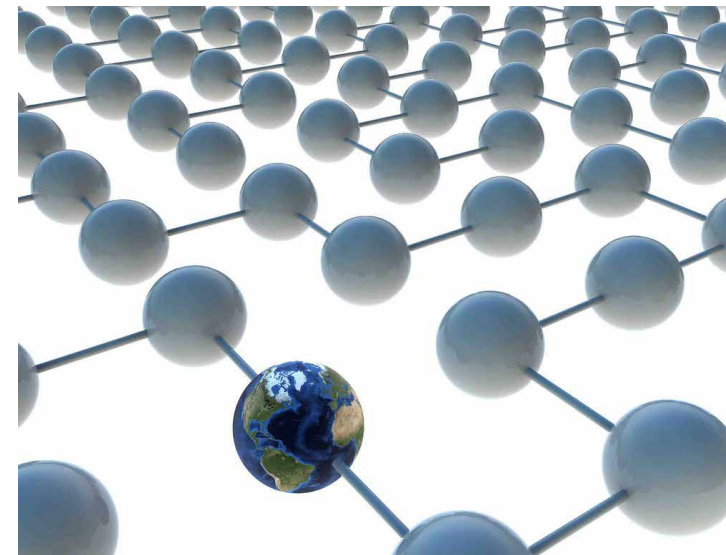
1. Bring together or into contact so that a real or notional link is established
2. Join together so as to provide access and communication
3. Associate or relate (something) in some respect



2.5 Faculty reference

The subjects to be taught in the new building offer a wealth of reference that can also be drawn upon - networks, high tech materials, patterns and advancing technology all present powerful visual imagery.

The building should reflect its activities, and this will happen through function, but could also be part of the aesthetic created.

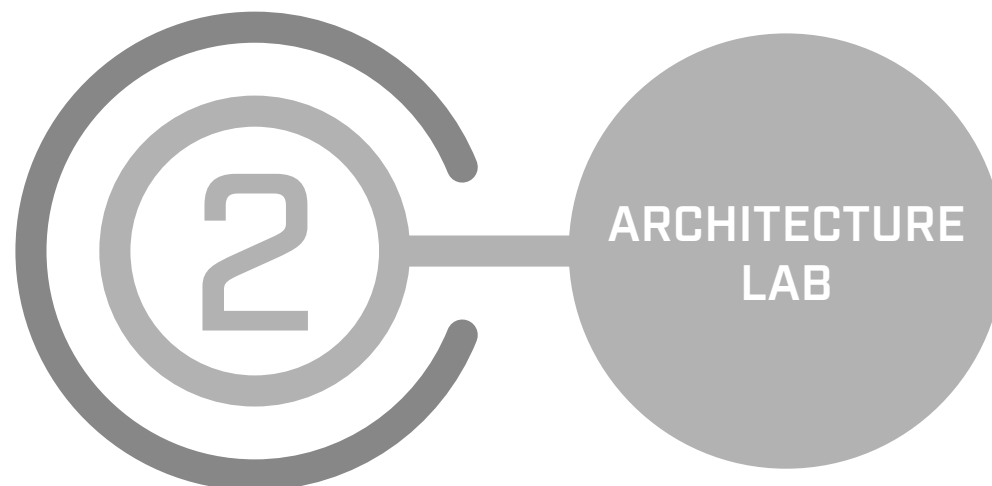


2.6 Graphic Forms

Many of the images presented in this section have very strong graphic elements - and the circle is a theme that appears frequently. Growth rings in the ends of pit props, guages, steam locomotive boilers and simple identifying graphics used on buildings around the docks - in common with many other dock locations. This could be used as a theme for graphics, signage and other artwork in the building.

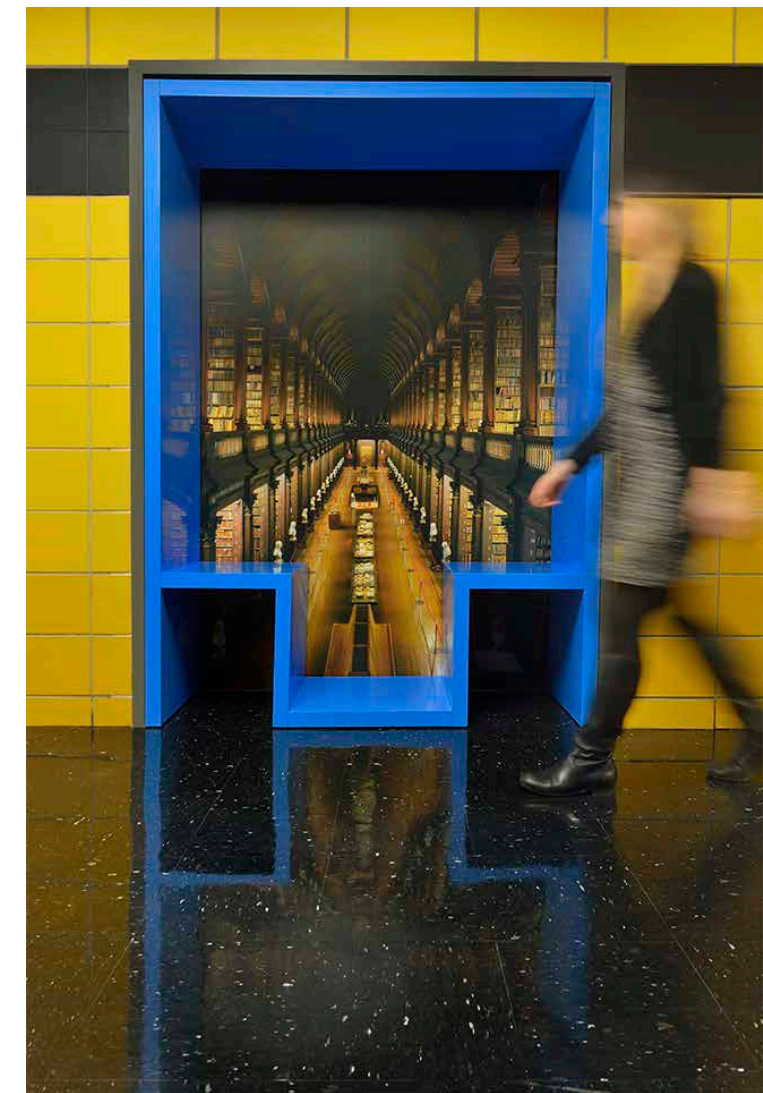
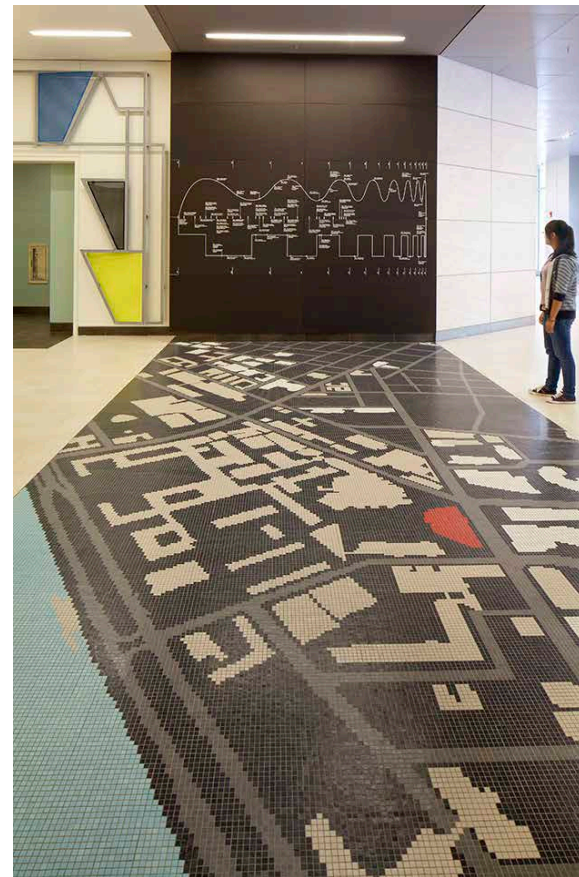
Furhermore, in the way shown below, this could be used to build on the theme of 'togetherness |= connected'. The typeface draws on reference from simple industrial graphics (refer to the level mark in the history section)

This presents a simple form that could be a unifying factor in many of the interior elements.





2.61 Graphics in all forms...



...in places you don't expect
them



CHARACTER IS WHAT YOU DO WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING

2.7 Design Outcomes

The following pages bring together the ideas shown in the previous pages, and present how this might start to develop into a design scheme.

This is presented in the following sections:

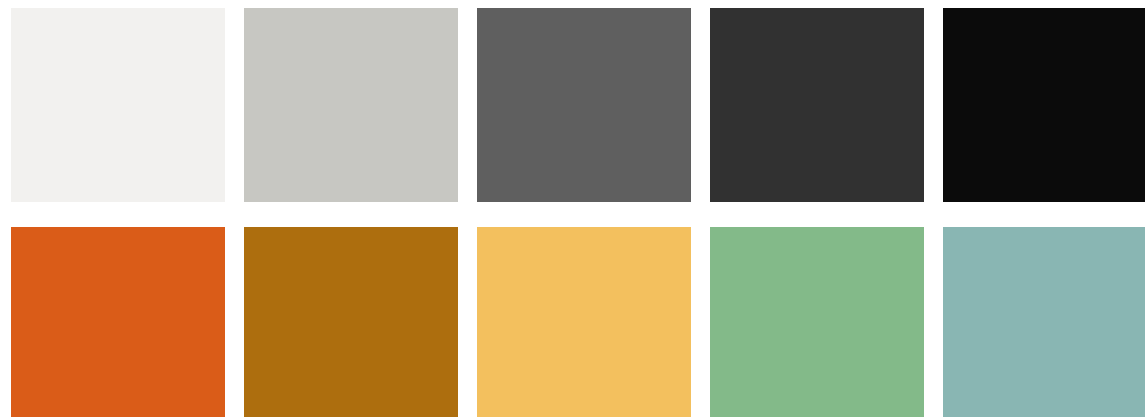
- 2.71 Colour
- 2.72 Materiality
- 2.73 Precedents

The precedents are a curated selection of images, aiming to bring together the best of the images reviewed so far, and as far as possible bringing the concept narrative together, although this can only truly happen in the final design scheme.

2.71 Colour

A palette of neutrals complemented by accent colours inspired by earthy minerals, the sea and sky, ships and cranes will come together to create a building that successfully carries the concept narrative into fruition, and connects the inside and outside of the building.

Use of neutrals for large areas will create a timeless and simple backdrop to accents used in artwork, graphics, signage, furniture and other fittings - all items that can change over time if desired.



2.72 Materiality

The emphasis here is on a base set of materials that are honest, simple and natural. Recycled, rugged and of the earth. At the same time these will be softened by warm and sound absorbing materials such as felt and cork.

Texture, colour and surface are inspired by minerals and timbers in the environment, worn and weathered by time.

The concept design will build on these and bring together a harmonious set of finishes that are fit for purpose and the design concept.



2.73 Precedents

WELCOMING



SIMPLE

PLACES

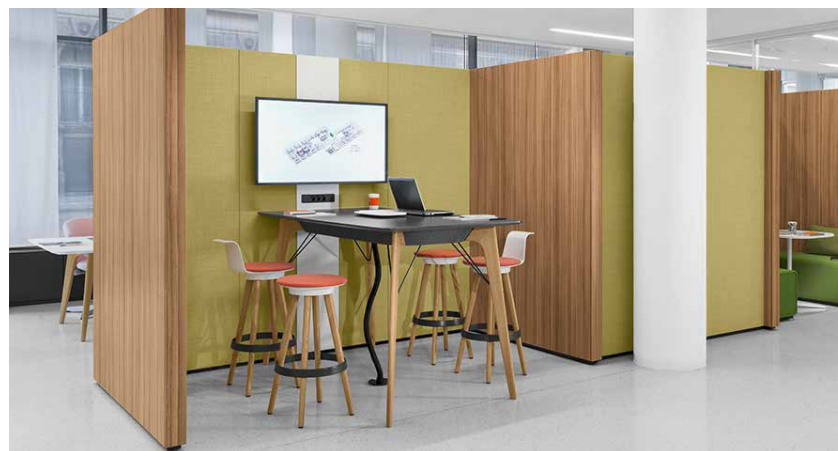
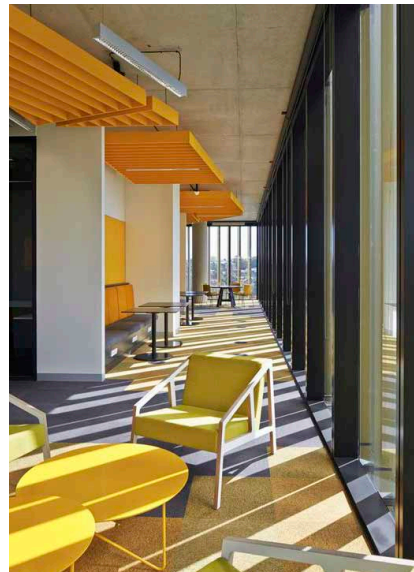


ZONING



2.73 Precedents

OPEN BUT PRIVATE



COLLABORATIVE



COLOUR



VARIETY OF SETTINGS



2.8 A Final Note About Brand

This document is designed to inform the interior design for the building. Interior design and branding can be aligned in different ways - a brand is not simply about the colours used in a logo, but includes the way an organisation conducts itself, the tone of voice it communicates with and its aspirations.

We believe that tying a building's finishes to its identity too closely can be restrictive, and furthermore buildings tend to change less often than brands do, and this is particularly significant for organisations that may not have the funding for regular internal refurbishments.

Good branding does present opportunities for coordinated graphic design within a building interior, and this has been demonstrated by the images in this document. It can be used to give the building a voice and personality, adding humour, identity and

a connection with which students can associate. A good brand is not necessarily reinforced by painting the interior of a building in a colour matching the logo, and neither does it benefit the building's design.

Branding and graphics are both outside of the scope of the interior design and architecture packages, however the narrative put forward in this document could be used to inform the processes to develop these, whether they be a new unique brand for SA1 or an extension to the family of the existing UWTSD identity.

It is worth noting that the design of the marketing material for the SA1 site has been developed in its own vein, however we understand this to only be related to these publications.