



Cloud Seminar Pod

Client: Queen Mary Hospital School of Medicine and Dentistry Year of Completion: 2005
Architect/Designer: Alsop and Partners Main Contractor/Customer: Laing O'Rourke

In an attempt to dispel the antiquated view of the science lab as pristine, insular and boring, Alsop Architects, with the help of Architen Landrell set about transforming the medical school building in east London's Whitechapel. Four strikingly unusual pods are suspended from the ceiling of a laboratory space, to ensure that no passerby can miss the university's meeting rooms.

Cloud pod, easily the smoothest most tranquil of the four suspended rooms, is an unusual approach to the teaching of science. This striking construction named Cloud after its appearance contains two meeting rooms for staff and students hung in the atrium of the centres Institute of Cell and Molecular Science.

Architen Landrell, commissioned by main contractor Laing O'Rourke, worked with specialist engineer Tensys, the design team of Alsop Architects and the clients engineer to meet the major challenges of developing the sculptural fabric structure and integrating it within the main building.

Clouds striking fabric membrane is relatively conventional, however. It was designed primarily to juxtapose with the Spiky pod adjacent to it and is unlike any of the others in shape, colour and texture.

Despite having the least complex geometry of all the pods, Cloud proved the most complicated to construct due to the need for sound insulation. Created in white, a colour which is very much lacking in the building as a whole, the pod was initially designed to be made from a series of hoops, clad with translucent inflatable pillows. However, the client's desire for high quality acoustics meant that the plans had to be dropped and a new plan had to be formulated. The result was a steel deck with four splayed legs supporting an external envelope made up of elliptical steel hoops clad with white tensile fabric. The acoustic requirements were satisfied by incorporating two layers of acoustic insulation, and by lining the interior with geometric shaped MDF panels to cope with the structures curvature. An elliptical window at one end looking down on the labs 12m below ensures Cloud maybe the most understated of the pods but should not be ignored as a commendable feat of fabric engineering.

Location:
Turner Street, London

Category:
Interior
Special Projects

Market Sector:
Health
Education

Scope Of Works:
Design
Engineering
Research and Development
Manufacture
Project Management
Install
Steelwork

Fabric Type:
PVC Glass Mesh - Natte

Function:
Sculptural/Decorative
Screening