



the 200 - seat Westminster Savings Credit Union Lecture Theatre

THE THEATRE AT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY'S CENTRAL CITY SURREY CAMPUS HAS WON THE INTERIOR DESIGNERS INSTITUTE'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE BRONZE MEDAL IN THE CATEGORY FOR HOTELS, PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL SPACES. THE 200 - SEAT WESTMINSTER SAVINGS CREDIT UNION LECTURE THEATRE IS THE RESULT OF A COLLABORATION BETWEEN OMICRON ARCHITECTURE ENGINEERING CONSTRUCTION LTD. AND RAVEN DESIGN.

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The project needed to be accomplished in phases to fast-track the design and construction to meet the University's target opening dates and student enrolment. Raven/Omicron then worked closely with SFU to develop both the functional program for the project and the subsequent design of each phase of the project. Phasing the project meant assembling a large and skilled design team that could hit the ground running. Raven's intimate knowledge of SFU's programs and facilities, including the Harbour Centre Campus, was a real asset to getting the project started effectively. Over the full course of the project, the Raven/Omicron team involved some 25 interior designers, architects, engineers and support staff to develop the documents and administer the contract between Bird Construction and SFU to build what you see today.

The project was not without its challenges. The first was how to help SFU develop a fast-track new university. To achieve this, SFU mobilized a Steering Committee of capable people to move the project forward to meet the schedule. Raven/Omicron worked closely with SFU to break the project down into manageable phases – Phase 1 fitted out the 14th and 15th floors of the Central City Tower for faculty and administrative offices. On the day that construction started on giving SFU's core team a home, the Raven/Omicron team turned to programming and designing the Phase 1B project. Providing a much-needed new 200-seat lecture theatre as early as possible meant that the design team sped up the Phase 1B Theatre Project while the Phase 1 B2 Campus package developed the design of the Mezzanine, Podium and Galleria 3 areas. No sooner were these areas developed than Phase 2

opposite page
top row from left: theatre seating area with porthole window;
ramp to SIAT black-box media rooms;
view into library;
far right: student study pits sunk into the raised flooring system;
second row: speaker's podium in the lecture theatre;
portal to Registrar and Student Information Centre;
library stack walls

was authorized to fit out Galleria Levels 4 and 5 in two additional phases. At the same time Raven also worked closely with the client to assist with furniture and undertook the graphics and signage design to make SFU cohesive and clear for students and visitors.

The second challenge was to create a vibrant and effective place for learning in Surrey Central City that would be uniquely SFU. Central City is an exuberant and stunning architectural design. Much of the building was left as a basic building shell of empty unfinished space that Raven and Omicron were asked to design into a new university for SFU.

Combining SFU's requirements for media-rich experimental spaces such as the School of Interactive Arts and Technology with a new focal library and learning spaces within a cohesive whole was the first design challenge. The second was to build on the design themes in the major common spaces, and insert new design elements unique to SFU – for example the "oar-lock" light portals that signal the entrance to major classrooms along the Galleria; the Library's curves, colours and ceiling-mounted fabric sails which make a deep internal space more lively and engaging; the gently arched wood ceilings and walls in the Galleria which unify and give a signature to the SFU space that perfectly complements the existing architecture developed by Bing Thom Architects.



The last challenge was to make the building visible, understandable and delightful. Walking around SFU Central City, no one would realize that the walking floor is actually raised above the concrete floor below it – by up to 24"! These raised floors not only provide a way for warm and cooled air to circulate freely below, they also provide an easy way to access the myriad of electrical, data and audio-visual cabling needed to run an infrastructure as complex as SFU. Here and there users will notice glass-covered display boxes built into the access-floor system, and the study pits in the Library, where people can literally see beneath the floor.

Each sector of public who uses the facility, including office workers, shoppers and students, can use the space without feeling like they are being intruded upon. Central City is terrific place to develop a university, a place where the life of the university and the life of the mall and the office complex are artfully merged by design - so that the sum is greater than all of the parts. The sheer distance between each part of

the complex helps office workers not feel spied on or students from being distracted by mall activities on floors below. The secret to the design is a strong sense of visual variety within overwhelming spaces filled with light.

The users' eyes and daily routes will tend to take them to places in the SFU floorplate where views of the Mezzanine, the Surrey context and the mountains beyond, and the shopping galleria below serve to refresh and renew the student and staff experience. The result is a vibrant and memorable place to learn.

Elements such as colour scheme and communal spaces were carefully thought out and executed. When the construction budget is challenging and some of the existing areas of the building do not receive natural light, the use of colour becomes very important. You will note the use of bright exciting colours throughout the campus to excite the human spirit for students, faculty and visitors alike.