Project Office is a design and research collaboration of staff and students. It is an architecture consultancy making ethical, social and resilient architecture. We work with like-minded communities, organisations and individuals.
Project Office has undertaken more than 25 projects, most within the Leeds City region. It offers a full architectural service that includes feasibility studies, design guides and design advocacy, research, fabrication and construction. Students and staff work together to produce design and research for organisations such as charities and community groups who are unable to afford standard architectural consultancy. Student participants are always paid for their time, either through the University currency of ‘credits’ awarded towards their degree, or financially working directly for Project Office. Project Office’s approach equips students with a fantastic learning experience relating to real world complexities through the vehicle of live projects, whilst simultaneously supporting the needs of socially conscious organisations.

Project Office is co-directed by:
Craig Stott  MEng, BArch, MA, ARB, FHEA
and
Simon Warren  BA(Hons), Dip(Arch), ARB, RIBA, SFHEA
Designers are well placed to challenge the contemporary paradigm of neoliberalism through their practice. It follows that design students should be exposed to these realities during their formal education. This is one of the reasons Project Office exists. For architectural education to remain relevant, students’ incredible talent and energy must be harnessed to critically address the societal, political and environmental issues facing humankind.

It follows that, if designers are able to decide to act as agents of change, then educational institutions can also choose an ethical and social position as a starting point for educational projects. Such ‘Anchor Institutions’ can “promote economic, social and cultural regeneration” by embedding themselves within their local community and working with regional partners to bridge the pedagogic gap between practice and academia. Thus the role of universities becomes one intent on advancing society for the greater good through the productive output of student endeavour, in addition to the classic creation and dispersion of knowledge.


“Over the last 8 years a partnership with Project Office has been a positive force for change and investment in our community. Working with committed staff and students we have created and delivered a large number of successful projects including small scale work – local landscaping ideas and initiatives, to the building of a new £750K community building. The effect of this work on the community and the community association has been to help transform the area, raise local people’s aspirations and create a safer environment. The partnership between Project Office and NWCA continues to flourish.”

“The benefits to New Wortley are clear, we have well developed plans that are truly community led and influenced, and access to a resource that allows us to dream big and deliver a vision of New Wortley as a successful thriving neighbourhood. This way of working really fits with our strengths based model – focusing on the assets and talents in the community.”

“The benefits to students is the chance to work on live projects that have a great chance to be delivered, learning about consultation with real people and understanding the challenges and opportunities.”

Bill Graham, Community Leader, New Wortley Community Association
Completed in May 2016, New Wortley Community Centre is the culmination of enthusiastic participation by local residents and volunteers with Leeds Beckett University. The process took over six years and involved 196 individuals including community members, professionals, and staff and students from Architecture, Landscape, Graphics, Cultural Studies, Product Design and Architectural Technology.

The outcomes are a result of an experimental co-design process where exposure to working professionally in multi-disciplinary environments equipped students with the necessary skillset for professional careers whilst simultaneously providing vital support for a third sector organisation.
The original high street has been deconstructed since the slum clearances of the 1960s. New Wortley no longer has a centre and lacks urban cohesiveness. The new centre is a small civic building that recreates an urban situation by fronting on to New Wortley’s main thoroughfare becoming a local landmark for the community and the start of re-establishing the high street building line.

Red brick and grey zinc remind people of the predominant material colours originally seen throughout the area. Large windows permit passers-by to see into the centre as a response to the invisibility of social life within the area.

The architectural concept, a ‘work of many hands’, underpins New Wortley Community Centre, where discrete elements have been the design responsibility of specific student participants. Project Office has managed and choreographed the work into a singular architectural statement.

The new building has proved a remarkable catalyst attracting a host of fresh users, volunteers and opportunities. Previously just 2 members of paid staff and 8 volunteers ran the organisation; today the centre has 21 members of paid staff and 53 volunteers. Consequently, NWCC now plays a pivotal role in the city’s most disadvantaged community.
In 2017 Project Office won the Live Projects Network Category at the SEED (Social Economic Environmental Design) Awards for the process underpinning the New Wortley Community Centre.

The award was collected at the SFI2017 (Structures for Inclusion 2017) Conference at Portland State University, Oregon. Project Office was also invited to present the ‘Story of New Wortley’ at the conference.

Professor Peter Slee, Leeds Beckett University Vice Chancellor said: “Everyone here at Leeds Beckett University is proud of the pioneering work of our University’s Project Office. Simon Warren and Craig Stott have led a talented team of students and staff in ground-breaking work. The New Wortley Community Centre is everything a building should be; functional, sustainable and beautiful. Their international award demonstrates very clearly the world class nature of the work undertaken at Leeds Beckett University.”
“The New Wortley Community Centre project has empowered all actors involved, realising their shared vision in a meaningful and sustainable way. Project Office was key to this success, coordinating the energy and potential of both the community and Leeds Beckett University. We commend their evolution and implementation of such a coherent design strategy in a complex and fluid context.”

SEED Network Awards Judging Panel 2017
Richmond Hill Primary School, widely recognised as forward thinking, resides within one of Leeds’ most disadvantaged areas. To further their Outdoor Learning Module the school sought to develop a parkour playground.

BA2 & 3 students tackled the design in groups, including planning an activity with school pupils determining requirements for their Parkour Playground. The completed work was exhibited at The Tetley Centre for Contemporary Art and Learning, attended by pupils, staff, students and the public.

The winning proposal, chosen for its clever way of achieving inclusive use was designed by students Tarran Coward-Willis, Alex Moriarty, Matthew Glegg, Daniel Peinado and Alex Rinder.
Pupil drawings and student design work

Exhibition of work at The Tetley

Photo by Graham Davey
“I had the privilege of working with Project Office on the Richmond Hill playground project. Our aim was for the children to act as ‘the Architect’; they formed a brief, made models and worked together to design their dream playground.”

“This was an invaluable experience which helped develop my drive and passion for architecture, understanding life’s economic and social realities and how they can be overcome through creative design and not seen as a hindrance.”

“This is now at the forefront of everything I do, throughout both university and my professional career.”

Alumna Laura Kershaw
Manor Park GP Surgery in Bramley intend on providing a place where healthcare, social care and third sector colleagues can collaborate and innovate to provide improved methods of treatment outside the non clinical environment.

BA2 students were set the task of designing a building that met all Manor Park’s needs whilst being flexible enough to host a range of activities and allow future development.

The design work will be used to support the client’s fund raising.

An initial sketch scheme by BA2 student Louis Smith
The School of Architecture runs a week long work placement programme for undergraduate students called ‘Speed Dating’. Many Leeds city region practices participate each year, including Project Office.

A group of BA2 & 3 students undertaking a Speed Dating work placement with Project Office devised an initial brief and concept design to aide SoCo’s fundraising for the next stage of the project.

“Just want to say how impressed we are with your designs, it far exceeded what we were expecting and you have presented us with a huge amount of work that we will be able to use, not to mention that we are seriously reconsidering the name of the project to use ‘Haus’”.

Kamran Rashid, Director SoCo Company

In the heart of Bradford’s historic Little Germany, the SoCo Company is establishing a hub for innovation and enterprise for start up companies and individuals.
Otley Courthouse is a community arts centre in a re-purposed nineteenth century magistrates court, run by volunteers.

Currently the Courthouse’s desired reach is limited by a lack of specialist facilities and a main auditorium of just 140 seats. BA2 students redesigned the town block in which the existing building sits to include a new 400-seat auditorium, exhibition gallery, and associated ancillary spaces. The ideas generated are now being discussed by the client with the local council.
Working closely with the client, BA2 students produced proposals for converting and extending a derelict sunbathing building, originally constructed in 1924, into the new home for Crescent Arts. In conjunction with Scarborough Council, this work is being developed into a feasibility study with grant funding by the Architectural Heritage Fund.

Crescent Arts supports and promotes contemporary visual arts and artists in Scarborough offering exhibitions, studio space, professional development, workshops, film screenings and artists’ talks.
“Project Office understands the education and nurturing of young talent, and does a good job to promote it by actively demonstrating the value of architecture.”

“Architecture, indeed, everything that is built, cannot help playing some kind of role in the lives of the people who use it.”

Alumnus Steven McCloy

Herman Hertzberger
ALUMNI PEDAGOGY

The institution’s association with its students is almost severed after graduation. By extending pedagogy, through a competition, Project Office explores new possibilities between the School of Architecture and its former students, linking academia and practice.

Competitions provide a valuable strategy within an educational setting as they expose the entrant to the canon of advancing architectural knowledge and empower them with the ability to challenge the establishment. Consequently, the architectural competition is a relevant tool to push the boundaries of architectural education, here of live project education, as it confronts the contradictions of advancing knowledge, experimentation and production of real work for a client.

As alumni competitions are framed in an educational setting, the learning outcomes of participants are of equal importance to the quality of entries. This methodology ensures continued pedagogical value in the transition between formal education and the profession. Recent alumni are vital and unencumbered fledgling professionals and through entering alumni competitions are provided a space to fly.

In addition to the two PhD studies Project Office supports, numerous research outputs are produced, a selection of which are listed below:


“There are a million ideas that can change the world, but if you don’t build it, it doesn’t exist.”

Cameron Sinclair
WHO WE ARE

SIMON WARREN
Project Office Co-Director

I am interested in the role of the architect. How do architects practice with ethical grace and respond to climate change and energy depletion imperatives? How should architects make their skills available to underrepresented communities so that they can make positive changes to their environments? I am currently working towards a PhD; the working title is ‘Live Project Pedagogy - Architecture in the Making’.

CRAIG STOTT
Project Office Co-Director

I am interested in the impact of ‘Live’ project learning within architectural education by establishing its value for both the students involved and the communities who act as client for the work undertaken. The intention is to utilise the power of student design to foster ecological and social sustainability in deprived communities through this pedagogic tool.

PROJECT OFFICE STAFF 2013-2017

Hanzla Ashgar / Part 2 Architectural Assistant
Graham Davey / Part 1 Architectural Assistant
Paul Hansell / Part 2 Architectural Assistant
Andrew Pye / Part 2 Architectural Assistant / Architect

STUDENTS
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Adam Lloyd
Alex Bingley
Alexander Moriarty
Alexander Spencer
Alexandra Rinder
Ali Jasim
Amy Ferguson
Andrew English
Anna Roslak
Ashley Murray
Barney Stonelake
Ben Regan
Ben Rimmer
Callum Bleasdale
Callum Hairsine
Krebs
Connor Buckler
Daniel Fox
Daniel Peinado
Daniel Wright
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Stuart Norman
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Thomas Ford
Thomas O’Callaghan
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Tristan Cox
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Chippendale Projects
Giddy Frog

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Ricky Adam

CLIENTS
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Richmond Hill Primary School
Crescent Arts
Manor Park Surgery
Otley Courthouse
SoCo Bradford

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 Jen Chalkley
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