

Scagliola columns, Manchester Central Library

Manchester Central Library was built from 1930 - 1934 to a design by E Vincent Harris. It is constructed in the form of a columned portico attached to a large rotunda with a domed roof, mimicking the architectural style of the Pantheon in Rome. It was closed in 2010 to allow for its complete renovation. At its heart is a large, circular reading room with a full height ceiling. The architect designed an ornate, gilded wrought iron structure that sits over the central counter. This sits on four malachite coloured scagliola columns and is topped by a four-sided clock. The building is listed Grade II*.



Heritage Project Contracts was appointed to carry out a number of conservation projects within the Library building including works to the scagliola columns. These had surface damage and required localised repair. The surface of each was carefully flatted back before a pigmented gypsum filler was used to fill any chips and scratches. The columns were then finished by application of a number of coats of linseed oil.

Scagliola is a composite substance made of gypsum, glue and natural pigments mixed together to imitate marble and other decorative stones. The technique became fashionable in 17th Century Tuscany as a cheap substitute for expensive stonework.

Works completed - January 2015
Main contractor - Laing O'Rourke

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GATES

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WINDOWS

GLAZING

LIGHTING

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SCULPTURE

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PROJECT

