

The Garden Of UnSpoken Words

A public reading room for social interactions

Location: The Malthouse, Tidmarsh Lane, Oxford City Centre

Budget: £5 million

Sector: Public/ Education

Core Clients: University of Oxford and Oxford City Council (funders)

Secondary Clients: The Bodleian Library Round Table

Brief Outline

The brief calls for the recognition and reflection of everyday **conflictual situations** relevant to the experience of Oxford today. Highlighting the opportunity that The Malthouse, situated between Oxford Station and City Centre, offers as the starting point for innovative interventions to the urban realm that promote positive change.

We are to propose a **socially supportive infrastructure** that **rehabilitates** the existing buildings on site, creating inspiring spaces and ethical affordances that **strengthen social interactions** whilst easing the broader conflict identified on a wider scale.

Project Overview:

The Garden of (Un)Spoken Words is a **public literary and social initiative** designed to cultivate meaningful conversations and interactions within **Oxford’s urban in-between spaces**. Drawing inspiration from the city’s rich literary heritage, the project connects with the Bodleian Libraries network to encourage **the exchange of written and spoken words between people**.

The initiative begins with the rehabilitation of The Malthouse—a historic University of Oxford site situated between Oxford Station and the City Centre. Furniture interventions, inspired by Charles and Ray Eames’ mid-century plywood designs, offers dynamic environments with **varying degrees of privacy**, fostering creativity, learning, reading, writing, and public engagement.

This project aims to increase the presence of these **conversational landscapes** across Oxford, improving people’s sense of ownership over the increasingly privatised ‘public’ spaces in the city.



Encouraging Social Interactions Through Literary Arts



Organic Eames Timber Shapes



84% Of older adults said they found it difficult to admit that they felt lonely.

16,096 One Person Households in Oxford

5,519 Lone Parent Families in Oxford

27% Of adults feel alone or lonely in the UK

Source: 2021 Oxford Census and Office for National Statistics

*'People who feel **loney** are likely to **talk** about it, if they get the **opportunity**'*

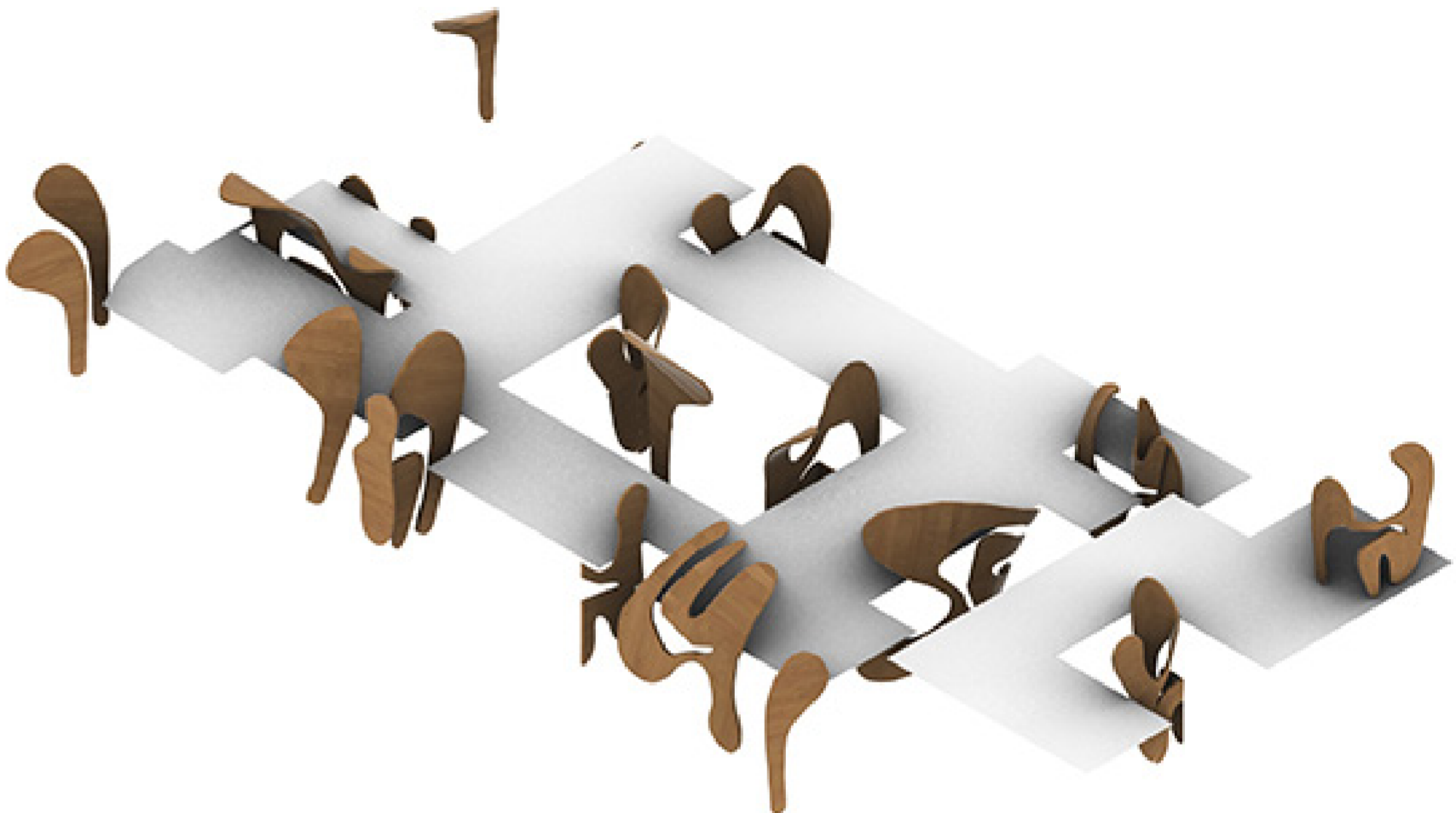
(Mental Health Foundation, 2022)



and her arms stretched out in front of her so as not to face into the back of the wardrobe. She took two or three steps – always always – against the tips of her fingers. She could not feel it.

“This must be thought Lucy, going folds of the coats as noticed that there v feet. “I wonder is the stooping down to feeling the hard, s wardrobe, she felt extremely cold. “Th on a step or two fur

Next moment she her face and hands v hard and rough and branches of trees!” that there was a light where the back of the long way off. Sometl A moment later she middle of a wood at night-time with snow under her feet and snowflakes falling through the air.



*“Literary art, and poems in particular, name things for us. sometimes **they** name what we feel- what we cannot express on our own”*

(Joan Cusacl Handler PHD. Poet and pyschologist)



1:100 Concept Model Inspired by the Eameses 1943 Plywood Sculpture.



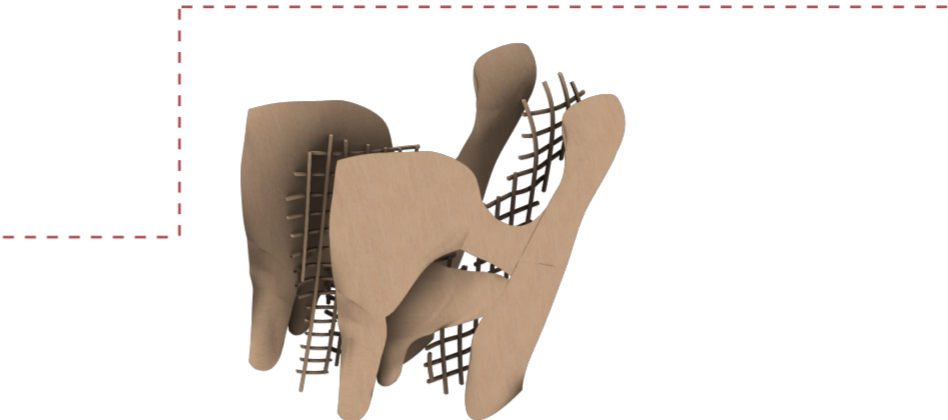
1:50 Model of Workshop Building on Site.



1:50 Model of Malthouse: Testing circulation and sub-divisions of spaces.



1:100 Model of Malthouse resolved design.

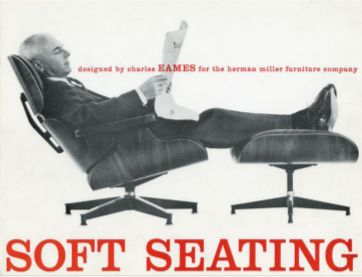


Structure of Eames Inspired Organic Shapes
Beneath the outer flexi-ply skin, the organic timber structures are comprised of a lattice structure of steam bent battens to allow for the 3 dimensional curvature.

Charles and Ray Eames
1943 Plywood Sculpture

Charles and Ray Eames worked to understand the constraints of plywood and also the possibilities of the material to eventually create **three-dimensional curved shapes**. This led to the development of the **ergonomic** plywood leg splint that was crucial for the use of U.S soldiers during the second world war.

Plywood played another crucial role in the war in terms of the development of aircraft and the creation of seamless fuselages. These references have largely informed the design development.



The Malthouse: Industrial Heritage

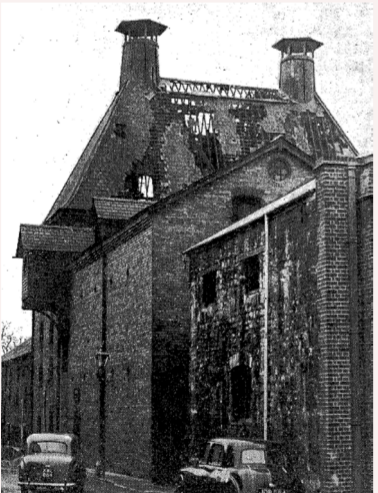
History of The Malthouse



Built in 1750
1940: Under ownership of Foxes Malting



1943 Morrells Brewery take over ownership of the Malthouse



1956 Significant damage to the building as a result of a fire



After the fire, Oxford University took over ownership and currently occupy the space with Estate Services



The Lion Brewery Gate



The Malthouse Brewery:
Prior to University of Oxford taking over the occupation and ownership of The Malthouse following the 1956 fire, the building was owned by the **Morrell family's business** for storing the malt for their beers. The family business brewed the beers around the corner at the **Lion Brewery**. The Lion Brewery was powered by a waterwheel situated on the **Castle Mill Stream**. However, in 2002 the site was redeveloped into 79 Luxury Apartments. **The Lion Brewery gate** and character of the building can still be seen today. Today, the Malthouse is used as office space for the Oxford University Estate Services, however upon speaking to the current users we discovered that the **lack of insulation use of outside space** does not foster an enjoyable experience of the building.



Site Visit: Battersea Power Station

The redevelopment of the Battersea Power Station offers precedence for a retrofit project that compliment the existing host building and incorporates materiality that relates to the building's industrial heritage. The Garden of UnSpoken Words similarly uses mild steel to compliment the existing red brick and create an industrial interior.



Site Materials

Connecting Through Written Words

The Inklings

The Inklings, a group of men studying at Oxford University between 1931 and 1949. Many of which went on to become well known authors. They would meet weekly and talk about their written works in progress, often addressing genres of **fantasy**.

1931

Edward Tangey Lear established a society called the Inklings at University College, University of Oxford where members would **read aloud** works in progress and give feedback to each other. Members of this society included C.S Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

1933

As Lear left the university, the group fell apart. But C.S. Lewis decided to start up another group at Magdalen College where they would meet in his **room** every Thursday evening and more casually on Tuesdays at the **Eagle and Child** pub.



1950

The first of C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia was published.

1954

J.R.R Tolkien's Lord of the Rings Published



1939

Charles William joined the group, who went on to become a crucial member of the group. Along with C.S. Lewis' older brother, Warren Lewis who said the Inklings **"were neither a club nor a literary society, though it partook of the nature of both"**.

1945

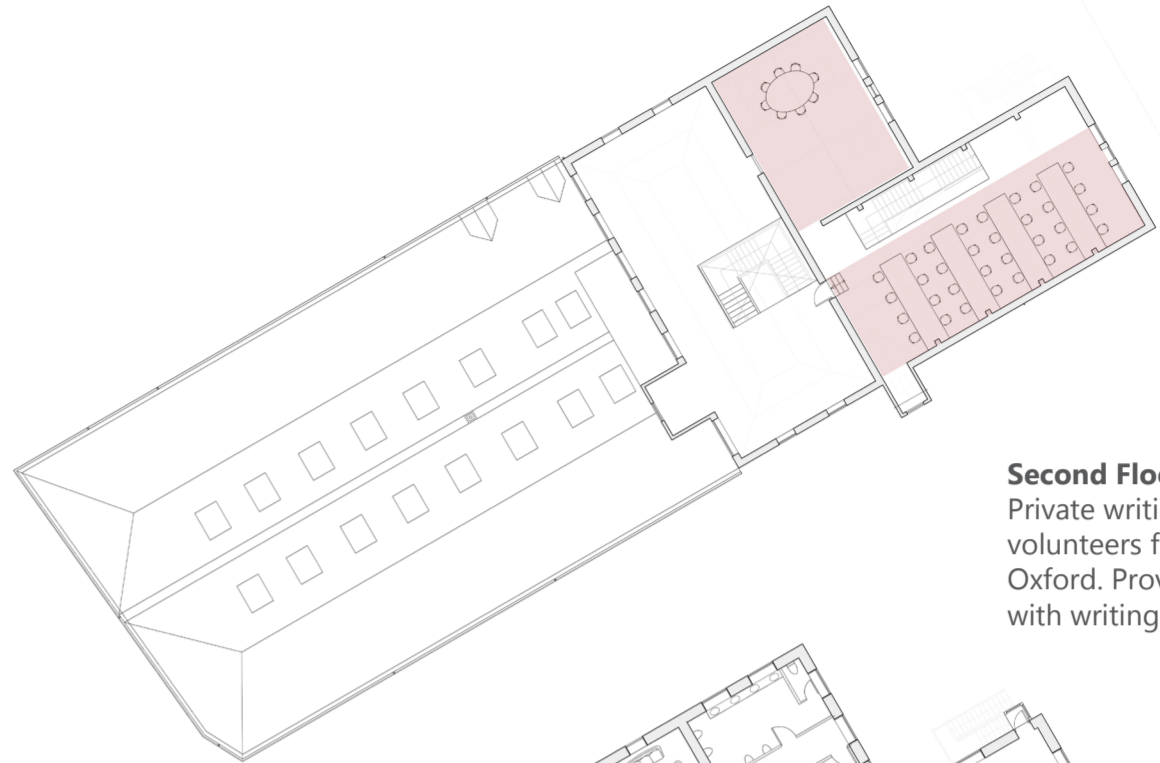
The end of the second world war and the passing of Charles Williams saw the beginning of the decline of the Inklings, interests in reading works aloud were reducing.

1949

The Inklings fell apart completely and longer met as a group regularly, though **friendships remained**.

1963

Lewis and Tolkien remained **good friends** until C.S. Lewis' passing in 1963. The Works of the inklings group left a lasting impact in shaping modern fanatsy in literature.



Second Floor:
Private writing spaces with academic volunteers from the University of Oxford. Providing help and advice with writing and editing.



First Floor:
Semi-Public small group and individual social writing and reading spaces



Ground Floor:
Public writing workshop spaces and social areas for small groups to gather and discuss written works in progress, much like the Inklings.

Key:
Public
Private



*"The beauty of the world is in the imagination that brings it to **life**"*
C.S.Lewis