



**visits4u Case Studies:  
Tate Modern  
London, United Kingdom**

## Tate Modern



### London, United Kingdom

**Title:** Accessible contemporary art

### Description

Among the numerous museums devoted to 20<sup>th</sup>- century and contemporary art, few have enjoyed an immediate success with the public comparable to London's Tate Modern. Opened in 2000, it hosts close to five million visitors annually. The project designed by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, transformed the Bankside power station into a unique and distinctive exhibition space. Set on the south bank of the Thames the Tate Modern once a “behemoth of heavy industry” with a soaring smokestack, is today an icon in the London landscape.

The two Swiss architects focused on careful preservation of the original building (built in the late 1950s) and decided to preserve the external brickwork, confining themselves to adding a two-story glass box and emptying the large interior, which consisted of two immense spaces: the boiler house and the turbine room. They converted almost 11,000 squares meters, making this work the biggest example ever attempted at the conversion of an industrial building into a museum.

## Becoming inclusive

### 1. Description

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### 2. Description of steps taken, changes and progress

Summarily, accessibility has been achieved by these interventions:

- There are twelve parking spaces for disabled visitors to Tate Modern, located on south side of the building, accessed via Park Street at the eastern end of the building
- There are five accessible entrances to the gallery
- Flat level access, ramps or lift to all areas.
- Wheelchairs, walkers & electric scooters available.
- Monthly BSL tours.
- Daily guided tours from guide with induction mic.
- Audio guide for visually impaired visitors, touch tours, braille guide.
- Ticket concessions for disabled people
- Ten wheelchairs and two electric scooters are available at the gallery.

### 3. Main stakeholders / actors

- The Client body (Directorate; Trustees; Senior staff in all departments)
- The Design Team (Architect; Landscape Architect; Engineers; Cost Consultant; Project Manager; Specialist Design Consultants)
- Wider consultant team involved with the Planning Application including the Planning, Environmental and Legal teams, (whose interests and responsibilities also place demands on the nature of the building)

- External Authorities (including but not limited to Southwark Borough Council officers; CABE; English Heritage; LAC; LDA ; EDFE etc )
- Business Disability Forum

## Results and Impact

Tate Modern has rated in the top five UK visitor attractions for accessibility. The hard work on disability awareness training and accessibility has been recognized in this way.

The economic impact on this area has significantly exceeded expectations.

- The estimated economic benefit of Tate Modern is around £100 million.
- Approximately 3,000 jobs have been created in London
- Tate Modern itself has created 467 jobs in addition to 283 during the construction phases. Currently 30% of those employed at Tate Modern come from the local area.
- The number of hotel and catering businesses in the local area has increased by 23%. This has led to an estimated 1800 new hotel and catering jobs in the Southwark area.
- Commercial development in Southwark has outpaced the London average as has the increase in the number of new businesses.
- Tate Modern has been one of the major factors in the regeneration of the South Bank and Bankside.

## Lessons learnt

The factors that contributed to the success of the museum beyond the excellent exhibitions, are a number of other factors like the architectural design and the feeling when entering the venue with the Turbine Hall acting as a continuation of public space and providing ease of orientation.; to smaller details like how and from where the staff were recruited and how they had been trained to help visitors and disabled people with respect and discretion to the tone of the wall texts in the galleries and the inclusive and varied ways. The museum struck a balance in its respect for both art and artists, and the public: it achieved excellence and access.

## Further information

<http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern>



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