



UOP Factory

Tadworth

The building, set in an open site, was pioneering as a model for interchangeable office, research and manufacturing units



Place
Tadworth, UK

Date
1973-74

Client
Universal Oil Products

Area
1,700m²

Architect
Piano + Rogers

Structural Engineer
Anthony Hunt Associates

Quantity Surveyor
Monk Dunstone Associates

Mechanical Services Engineer
Max Fordham

Landscape Design
Landscaping Design Partnership

Main Contractor
James Longley & Co. Ltd

Awards

1975
British Steel Corporation Structural Steel Design Award
RIBA Regional Award Commendation

Originally designed in 1969, this highly innovative project for UOP, a development with Zip-Up principles of flexibility, low cost, minimum maintenance and energy efficient applied to an industrial structure, had remained unbuilt. The company later returned to Piano + Rogers with a commission to build a factory on a new site at Tadworth.

A pragmatic approach produced what the brief demanded – a flexible, high-performance building with scope for growth and change. Internal divisions between offices, laboratories and manufacturing areas were achieved with full height, demountable glazed walls creating a feeling of spaciousness, affording long views throughout the facility and visual contact between employees working on different aspects

of the company's business. Only the stores area, containing highly flammable compounds, was hidden from view behind a two-hour fire wall. The use of large sandwich wall panels (6" thick), sealed with neoprene, on a steel frame made for rapid assembly of the basic envelope.

The building stood apart from the general run of industrial structures being built in Britain at this period. Its economy, generosity of space and sheer verve – the use of colour was striking – impressed and seemed to point the way towards a new industrial vernacular. The building, widely publicised, helped to establish the practice's reputation in the field of industrial building.

