

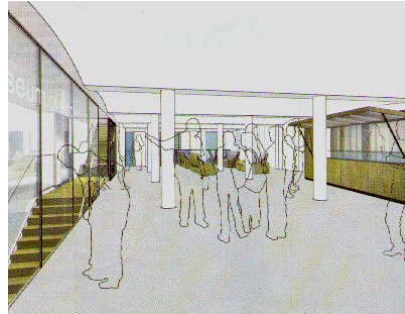
## Better access for modern art

**M**ichael French Associates recently assisted architects Block Architecture in alterations at Modern Art Oxford (formerly the Museum of Modern Art). Since it launched in 1965, the gallery has established an international reputation for the high quality of its pioneering programme of exhibitions and education and community events.

The museum is hidden away down a side street, isolated both from the colleges and the shopping centre of Oxford. The building was originally a brewery, which explains why the main floor level is raised above street level: it's at loading-dock height.

Before the alterations, the basement café was entered separately and was quite divorced from the rest of the building, while the

impressive industrial clarity of the upper gallery was cluttered with fire lobbies and could only be entered from the back.



A new stair now links all three levels and the ground floor has been recast as a foyer from where all the other activities are visible. The front façade has been opened up, with double-height openings to encourage passers-by to wander in.

Increasing accessibility is key to the changes. It's not just the physical barriers that have been addressed – the admission charge has also been abolished.

The project was relatively small (£200,000) and was funded by the Regional Arts Lottery. This meant that gallery director Andrew Nairne (recently arrived at Oxford from the new Dundee Contemporary Arts centre) could move fast. He admits that the £6 million scheme which had been discussed before he arrived was a dispiriting idea, not least because it would have meant

closing for a major period. He thought a "light touch" would be better and would achieve much of what was needed at a fraction of the cost.

The project was featured in *Building Design* magazine, January 2003.



## Bright smiles at Harvey Nicks

**L**und Osler, the dental health care specialist, has opened the first dental spa in the UK in Manchester's new Harvey Nichols store. **Michael French Associates** were appointed as Health and Safety Planning Supervisor for this project.

*Frank* magazine says: "Lund Osler is at the pinnacle of a new trend towards consumer-friendly dentistry . . . There's no buzzing of drills, no smell of minty mouthwash . . . just the sound of bubbling water from the aquarium, a white leather sofa, a helpful receptionist and a team of top dentists".

The project was completed in the summer.

## Party walls

**I**f you are having work done on a part of your property which adjoins your neighbour's, you will need to consider the Party Wall Act 1996.

This refers to walls, floors or ceilings shared with other properties. Before the owner can make changes to a party wall there is a specific legal process which needs to be followed.

The Planning Inspectorate offers

a free explanatory booklet for householders, *The Party Wall Act*, which can be obtained free of charge by telephoning 0870 1226 236.

If you need advice on party walls, then **Michael French Associates** can help, as they have considerable experience in this field of work, having been appointed as party wall surveyor on numerous occasions.

## An oasis of calm in Holland Park

A residential property in London's exclusive Holland Park area has been completely gutted and renovated. The architect for the project was Ian Hume of Totem Design Ltd and the quantity surveying work was carried out by **Michael French Associates**.



One of the most significant things the property owners did was to remove the floor above the front door. This created a double-height entrance hall, as well as an

extra source of natural light for the rest of the house. Another main feature of the design was a concrete staircase – an area of expertise for Ian Hume, who has an excellent reputation for his work with concrete.

The property was featured in *Elle Decoration* magazine in January this year: "An oasis of California modern-inspired calm . . . a blend of modernity, luxury and family."



*Michael French Associates would like to wish all their customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

## Do you need an Expert Witness?

If you have a building dispute arising from a problem with design matters, workmanship, quality of materials, and so on, then **Michael French Associates** can help. Michael French is an Expert Witness, approved and registered by the Law Society.

In the first instance, we can investigate the problem and prepare a preliminary report. Experience has shown that a well researched and professionally presented report in the early stages of a dispute often leads to a quicker resolution, thereby avoiding the need for court action.

However, should the matter proceed further, then we can prepare a full Expert Witness Report and present this to the court.

Michael French has been appointed on fifteen occasions over the last four years, to carry out Expert Reports in connection with Building Contract financial disputes or disputes in respect of specification, materials and workmanship. He has appeared in court six times as an Expert Witness in these matters over this period.

"I should be pleased to consider engaging the professional and expert services of Mr French again, should the need arise."  
*Nawal Kumrai, solicitor*

### Michael French Associates

3 Chiswick High Road  
London W4 2ND

E-mail: [mf@mfra.co.uk](mailto:mf@mfra.co.uk)  
Web site: [www.mfra.co.uk](http://www.mfra.co.uk)

Tel: 020 8995 0840  
Fax: 020 8995 7033  
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5						
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### ACROSS

- amount
- messenger
- border
- obligations
- part of a door
- measurer

### DOWN

- lodgings
- reason
- roof-covering
- mountain singer
- fop
- black-marketeer

Send in your solution by 16 January 2004. Correct solutions will be entered into a draw for a £20 Marks & Spencer's gift voucher.

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