





Weaving: An Industrial History

Weaving is a method of textile production in which two distinct sets of yarns are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric. Before the Industrial Revolution, weaving was a manual craft centered on wool. This efficiency dramatically changed after John Kay invented the flying shuttle in 1733. The shuttle and the picking stick sped up weaving, creating a subsequent shortage of thread and a surplus of weaving capacity.

The opening of the Bridgewater Canal in June 1761 facilitated the import of cotton into Manchesteran area rich in fast-flowing streams suitable for powering machinery. Mechanization quickly followed in spinning (spinning jenny, spinning mule), which ultimately led to a limitless supply of thread for the weaver.

Weaving the roof plant screen

Careful analysis of the site and its historic context led us to the core concept: weaving a screen to conceal the roof plant.

The screen has been crafted to visually engage with the neighbouring historic properties and the diverse architectural vocabulary of the neighbourhood, all while maintaining the contemporary approach of the existing host building.

The rooftop screen adopts a modern interpretation of folded fabric, displaying a clean surface treatment and a simple, contemporary form. Weaving the screen allows us to effectively conceal the unattractive and visually complex roof plant. The use of anodized aluminium sheets that matched the existing window frames colour of the host building, evokes the image of a semi-translucent veil, mitigating the visual impact and avoiding a heavy appearance atop the building.

This "weaving" allows us to effectively conceal the visually complex roof plant while referencing the site's history.

- Host Building & Materiality: We are proposing a perforated aluminium sheet on a triangular pitch with flats in an anodised finish, colour-matched to the existing window frames fro visual continuity, offering a lightweight, durable, and weather-resistant solution for rooftop exposure.

- The "Veil" Effect: The triangular pitch evokes a semi-translucent veil that complements the host building's crafted design, where angled panels already activate the façade.

- Transparency: The 58% open area is specifically selected to mitigate visual impact, avoiding a "heavy" or solid appearance atop the building. It balances visual concealment with necessary airflow for mechanical plant.

- Composition: A combination of three triangular pitches creates a dynamic profile, adding architectural interest to the roofline. It breaks up the massing to provide a contemporary, folded-fabric silhouette.

Conclusion:

The proposed plant screen represents more than a functional necessity; it is a contextual response to Manchester's industrial identity. By abstracting the logic of the loom into a contemporary architectural element, the design honors the area's history of textile production while addressing modern requirements for concealment and transparency. This "woven" veil ensures that the building's crown is as carefully considered as its street-level presence, creating a dynamic, light-weight addition that respects the past while firmly looking toward the future.



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