

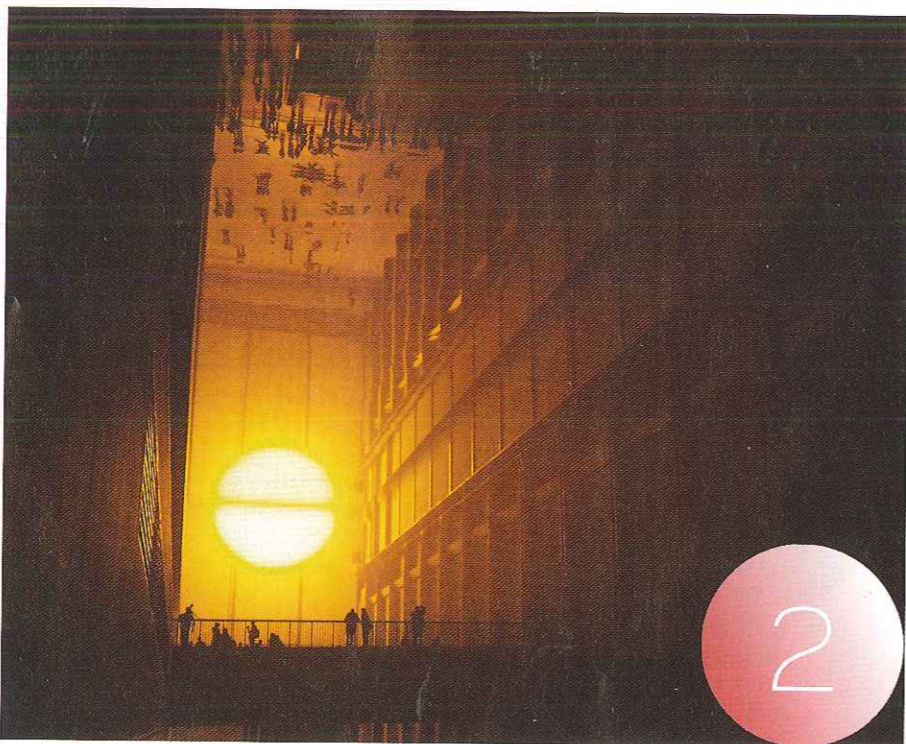
LONDON EYE (MILLENNIUM WHEEL)

Location London
Opened March 2000
Architect David Marks and Julia Barfield
Contractor Mace
Engineer Hollandia
Client developer British Airways
Budget £70m

One of the few millennium projects that can be truly termed iconic, the London Eye is the most financially successful millennium venture. It celebrated its 10th anniversary in March with an impressive array of statistics. With an average 3.75 million annual visitors, it is the most popular paid tourist attraction in the UK and one of the most visited in Europe. When it was built, its 135m height made it London's fourth tallest structure and the tallest observation wheel in the world. Although two others in China have since taken this crown, it is still the world's tallest cantilevered observation wheel.

Situated on the same riverside spot as the 1951 Festival of Britain, the wheel was able to benefit from the symbolic association with the last national celebration. Also, as a privately funded venture, it was able to sidestep much of the scrutiny that publicly financed millennium projects attracted. Its assembly became a spectator event in itself with each of its 32 capsules (one for each London borough) being delivered by barge, and the wheel itself being assembled flat on piled river platforms before being pulled into position over the course of several days.

Its initial five-year planning permission has since been made permanent.



TATE MODERN

Location London
Opened May 2000
Architect Herzog & de Meuron
Contractor Carillion
Engineer Arup
Developer Stanhope
Budget £134m

Last month the Tate Modern celebrated its 10th anniversary, probably partly by pausing to reflect how its success has exceeded all expectations. With an average of 5 million visitors a year, it is the world's most visited modern art gallery and vies with the British Museum and National Gallery for the title of London's most popular free tourist attraction. Along with the Millennium Bridge outside, it has also been the principal catalyst for the wholesale urban renewal of London's Bankside. This project proves conclusively that regeneration can be culturally as well as commercially led.

The Tate Modern occupies what was once Bankside Power Station, an imposing brick edifice designed by Giles Gilbert Scott between 1947 and 1957. In 1995, after lying empty for 14 years, a little-known Swiss practice called Herzog & de Meuron won an international competition to convert it into an art gallery. Its scheme is marked by simple functionalism and innovative adaptation with sensitive insertions and subtle alterations enhancing rather than competing with the original fabric. A rear pyramid extension is being planned by the same architect.



THE MILLENNIUM BRIDGE

Location London
Opened June 2000/February 2002
Architect Foster + Partners with Anthony Caro
Contractors Monberg Thorsen and Sir Robert McAlpine
Engineer Arup

Budget £18m (plus £5m for modifications)
 The Millennium Bridge was the first London Thames crossing since the completion of Tower Bridge in 1894. It was also the first ever pedestrian bridge built across the Thames. So even before its legendary wobble, this was one of the most high-profile and eagerly anticipated millennium projects of all. It is also one of the projects that yielded the greatest impact in terms of urban regeneration. Along with the nearby Tate Modern, it has played an enormous role in the rebirth of Bankside and provides a physical and a symbolic connection between St Paul's and the City and the previously disadvantaged areas south of the river.

The winning scheme of a competition organised by Southwark council in 1996, the bridge was conceived as a slender, sculptural "blade of light". Its shallow profile, assisted by its tensioned steel suspension cables splayed diagonally and positioned below deck level, was partially generated by the requirement not to impede river views. But this rigorous structural efficiency was to be its undoing – at least temporarily. When 90,000 people crossed the bridge on its opening day, high lateral vibrations caused it to sway unexpectedly and it was quickly closed. The problem was eventually resolved by the addition of an extensive passive dampening system and the bridge was re-opened two years later. It remains one of the most popular millennium projects. ©



MILLENNIUM DOME

Location London
Opened 1 January 2000
Architect Richard Rogers Partnership
Contractors Sir Robert McAlpine and Laing
Engineer Buro Happold
Client New Millennium Experience Company
Budget £789m

No other building symbolises the millennium as powerfully as the Dome. The centrepiece of the government's national celebrations, it was intended to mirror the success of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the 1851 Great Exhibition. Its abject failure to attract the predicted 12 million visitors and the controversy surrounding its eye-popping budget and overt association with New Labour ideology unleashed a media storm and a stigma that endures to this day.

However, with 6.5 million visitors, the year-long Millennium Experience exhibition it housed in 2000 was by far the most popular tourist attraction that year and the Dome itself was the catalyst for a huge programme of urban regeneration that included the Jubilee Line Extension and the transformation of the Greenwich Peninsula. More recently, it has been revamped as the O₂ Arena and enjoyed huge success as London's foremost entertainment complex. Even if its cultural legacy remains controversial, its enormous scale and distinctive PTFE canopy make it a significant architectural landmark.