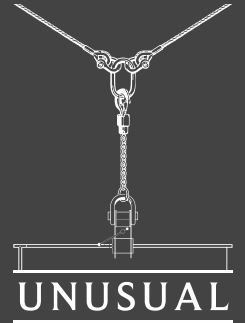
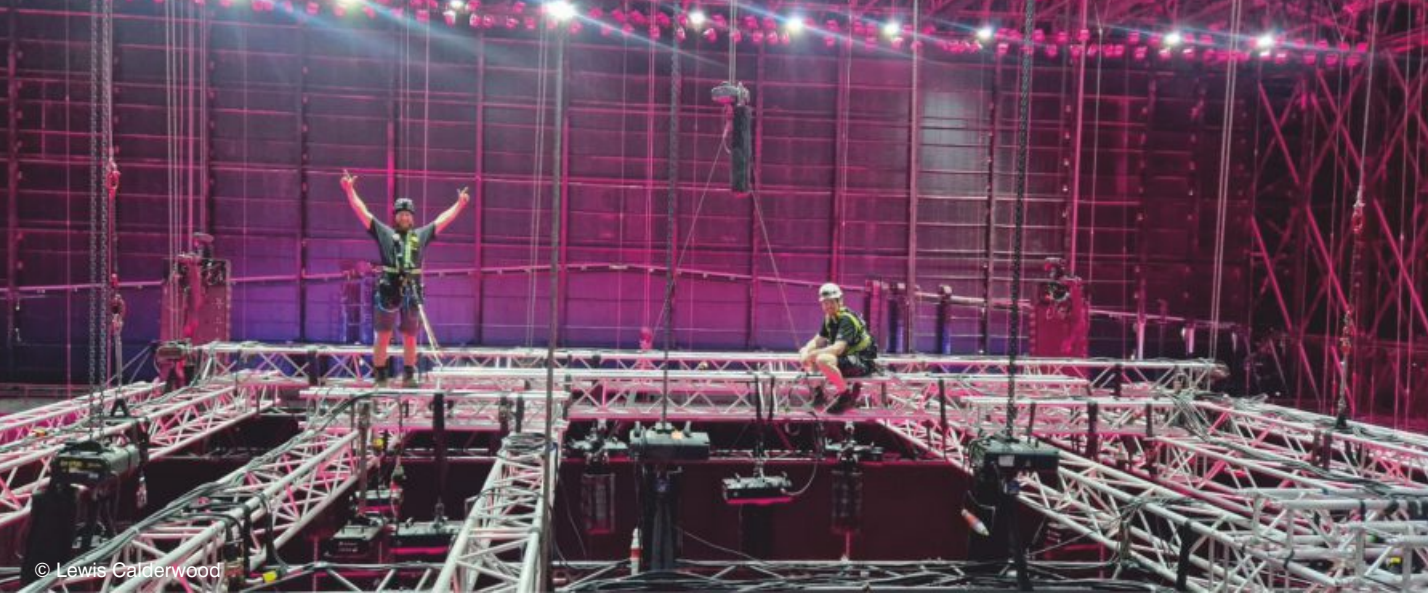


40
UNUSUAL
YEARS

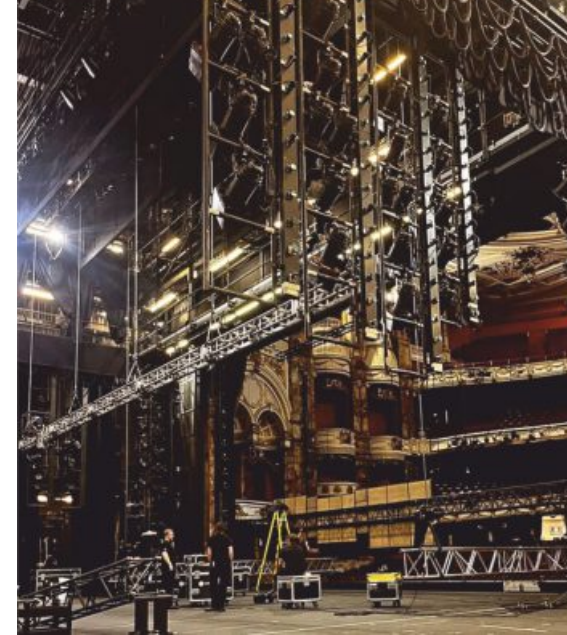



sales, service & engineered solutions



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© Manuel Harlan





THEATRE

MJ The Musical. © Johan Persson

London's West End and regional theatres are thriving. Research conducted by SOLT continues to demonstrate how important the sector is to the UK economy. For every £1 spent on a theatre ticket, an additional spend of £1.40 is generated in local economies. In short, theatre is not a 'nice to have', it is essential.

We've enjoyed bringing some stand-out new shows to the stage this past year, from the Olivier Award Winning Dorian Grey, and Sunset Boulevard to the phenomenal Stranger Things: First Shadow and Spirited Away. Our team of in-house design engineers and riggers have had their work cut out for them by these challenging productions, none more so than MJ the Musical which opened in March 2024 at London's Prince Edward Theatre.

The brief from production manager, Matt Towell was to design, supply and install the rigging and a full divert system in a space that could be described as 'tighter than Jacko's trousers'.

Unusual:

- came up with a solution that allowed for the flying items to clear each other. While the theatre has plenty of lifting capacity, the bar centres could not be placed at the usual 200mm spaces. In some places there was only 25mm between the flown items
- diverted every one of the 20 flown set pieces to ensure they landed on the stage in the desired position
- supplied an array of truss, motors and grid diverts
- removed and reinstated steelwork on one of the galleries to get the sliders out to trim, built motors and dead hang brackets for the scenic items and installed all the scenic elements
- produced the dead hangs and motors for the large LED screen positioned at the back of the set and helped create space behind the screen with a crawl truss and motors that would allow the electricians to get access if needed
- devised a solution to allow for the truss, motors, trolley beams and scenic pieces, some measuring up to 10m long, into the venue which has its load-in door downstage in the left wing, about 20ft above stage level.

"Over the last 20 years of working with Unusual on jobs like this, MJ has to be one of the smoothest fit ups ever, thanks to their seamless liaison with the other departments, expert handling of the crew and outstanding support from the guys in the yard. Unusual once again provided the first-class service we've come to expect and more."

Matt Towell, production manager, MJ the Musical





MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Skywalker Gibbon, Edinburgh Fringe Festival. © Adrian Bell

The time of displaying artwork or museum pieces inside glass cases or behind ropes holding audiences back from viewing such items up close are all but relegated to the past. Of course, there's a certain kudos to hanging works by traditional artists in beautiful museum spaces. But you'll just as likely find us lifting huge and incredible items – like the large wave turbine we hung at the Science Museum as part of its Energy Revolution exhibition.

Most would agree that modern art is different, created to tell a story of something much bigger than the work itself, and to be enjoyed, not just admired from a distance.

Today's artists are able to think far beyond the confines of space or material, thanks to the innovative rigging techniques we are able to employ. So, when we were asked to work with Australian artist Lisa Roet to showcase *Skywalker Gibbon* – a giant, inflatable ape at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, of course we said yes!

Skywalker Gibbon was to adorn the front of King's Hall, Newington, in Edinburgh, a 19th century church and Grade B listed building – home to *House of Oz*, a platform to showcase the depth and breadth of Australian talent.

Contracted by Adrian Bell, executive producer of Blu Fire, our team had to:

- devise a solution for installing the 20m wide by 6m tall artwork
- submit plans to the local council
- design a ground support system, drilled and fixed into the building
- worked with the artist's team to get the right fixings secured to the gibbon before we could attach to the building
- pull up the deflated gibbon and used the primary anchor points to fix it in place
- work with a team of local engineers who carried out a wind analysis and supplied calculations in order to have a procedure in place should the winds get too high to keep Skywalker inflated.

“Since the mid 90s when I first started working with Unusual it's been an utter delight. All it took was a simple phone call to get the wheels of expertise rolling on this intriguing and challenging project.”

Adrian Bell, executive producer, Blu Fire





ENGINEERING

Lightroom – The Moonwalkers: A Journey with Tom Hanks

Our work in the field of engineering and capital projects, doesn't just take place in theatrical venues or listed buildings; our expertise is called upon in stadiums, exhibition spaces, schools and construction sites. One very interesting and different application of our work can be seen in the form of a large blacked out cube in the basement of a building in London's Kings Cross.

Measuring 14m², *Lightroom* is the brainchild of 59 Productions in collaboration with Haworth Tompkins. It is an innovative space which uses revolutionary technology to allow creative minds to produce something completely unique.

Since launching in February 2023 with *Bigger & Closer (not smaller and further away)*, a collaboration with David Hockney, the venue has gone on to attract visitors with *The Moonwalkers: A Journey with Tom Hanks* and will welcome Hockney back until in June before welcoming the internationally acclaimed pianist Yuja Wang in September who will perform a repertoire of pieces inspired by her response to Hockney's artworks.

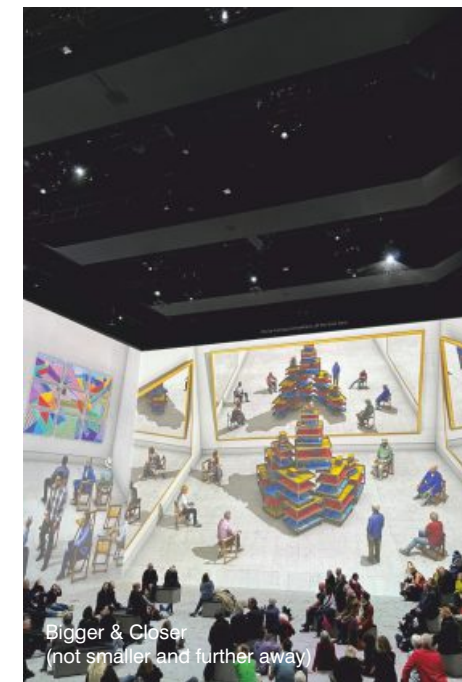
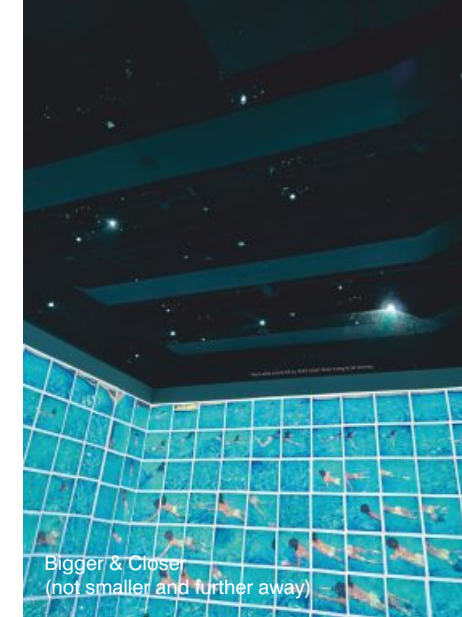
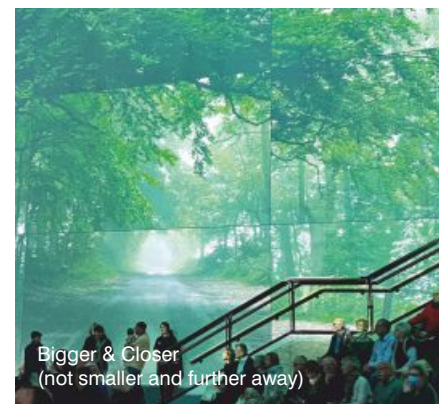
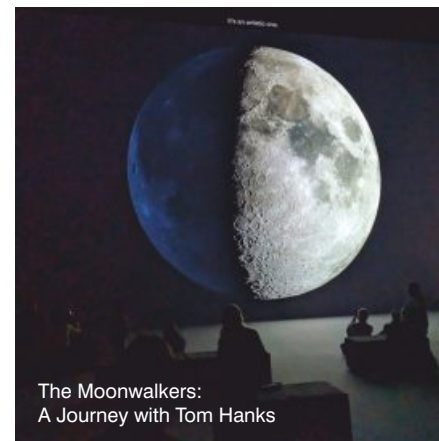
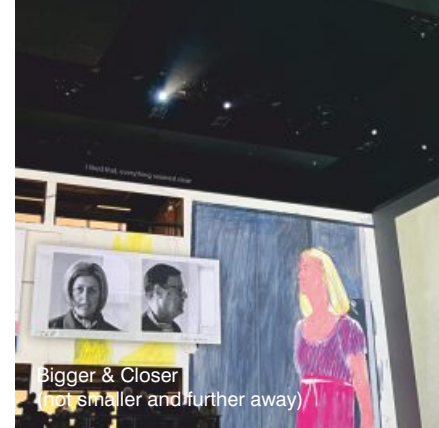
The venue itself is essentially an acoustically sealed box. All the spaces above *Lightroom* sit on 5 enormous, bow shaped girders. These in turn rest on large pillars and while there is a connection between the two, it is almost floating.

As a result, virtually no sound permeates into the office spaces above. However, this also meant that the space required a specially developed truss system that would wrap around the girders from which the lighting and sound could be hung.

The Unusual team played a pivotal part in the fabrication of the venue:

- spending a year working on the design before the principal contractors BORRAS (supported by structural engineers MNE) installed some Unusual designed ceiling brackets. Once these were installed our rigging team got to work
- developing a truss system that would wrap around the girders from which the lighting and sound systems could be hung
- installing the four wraparound truss rigs – all suspended from the concrete floor above
- put a large travelling beam rig in the lift well with two chain hoists on a trolley beam, to get the equipment required down into the space 9m below ground level
- building a series of large frames to accommodate the newly rolled out HOLOPLOT speaker system. These allow a visitor to *Lightroom* to hear one particular sound standing in one area of the space, but something completely different in another area.

We look forward to see what other works of art from across the centuries can be brought to life so vividly in this innovative space.



A large, ornate chandelier with many lights and crystals hangs from the ceiling of a stone hall. The chandelier is supported by a metal frame and is illuminated. The hall has stone walls with arches and a red patterned rug on the floor. The chandelier is reflected on the floor.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Lumiere Durham. © Matthew Andrews

As riggers, we love hanging things – the more elaborate the better. Over the years, we've hung all sorts – Christmas lights, Suffragette banners, giant stars from the top of one of the UAE's tallest buildings. We've even hung people! But one of our favourite events is the Lumiere Festival.

Ever since the first Lumiere in 2009, Unusual has been a key supplier in the delivery of specialist rigging and engineering for the festival in both Durham and London. Our engineers, riggers and technicians work with Artichoke's production teams to design solutions to the most complex projects, from working in delicate heritage environments such as Durham Cathedral to rigging artworks over the River Wear or across the historic medieval streets.

Working in an historic city such as Durham is always challenging, particularly when it involves working in and on protected buildings such as Durham Cathedral, where solutions to avoid any damage to infrastructure is paramount.

For Lumiere Durham 2023, we installed 9 artworks. We were responsible for:

- Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's extraordinary artwork *Pulse Topology* in the nave of Durham Cathedral which involved the installation of a moving truss system. This supported 4,500 lightbulbs, each programmed to respond to the heartbeats of the public, scanned from a sensor at ground level
- Ai Weiwei's *Illuminated Bottlerack* in the Cathedral's ancient Chapter House, which required a truss frame designed to suspend the artwork and protect the historical floor underneath
- installing a number of neon artworks, including Chila Burman's joyful new commission *Hurts So Good* comprising 44 separate pieces which required rigging across several buildings in Durham's Market Place including the Town Hall
- Aidan Moesby's *Emotional Weather*, a collection of five neons, 3 of which were installed by Unusual, on buildings and structures associated with travel around the city
- using our specialist skills for the installation of three artworks on Durham's River Wear: Anne Bean's neon text artwork *Reflect* was suspended over a section of wall on the riverbank and mirrored in the waters below; Anselm Reyle's *Untitled* suspended underneath Framwellgate Bridge; and the complex installation of Schuster + Mosely's *Body of Light* inspired by Isaac Newton's classic prism experiment
- installing catenaries across the South Bailey to suspend the Planetoids artwork by Pitaya.

“Unusual's breadth of knowledge and expertise is unrivalled in this area. Artichoke has worked with the company on almost every project we have produced and we trust them implicitly with our work.”

Anna Vinegrad, Artichoke





FILM & TV

Dune: Part Two

We've all heard the saying "it will be alright on the night" and those who work in the film and TV industry are all too aware of how important it is, when broadcasting events to a live audience of millions, that nothing goes wrong. We've worked on a number of events in recent years which are televised world-wide – often live, sometimes pre-recorded, but always with the expectation that there is no leeway for error - from the *Olivier Awards* and the *Eurovision Song Content* to ITV's *Saturday Night Takeaway* and *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here*.

It may come as a surprise to some but we've also been involved with some Hollywood blockbusters too – helping Tom Cruise climb the Burj Khalifa in *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol* was a particular highlight. Then, back in the summer of 2022, our team in Dubai received a job enquiry that didn't seem particularly out of the ordinary. Little did they know that 18 months later they'd be in the middle of the desert on the set of *Dune: Part 2*.

The epic science fiction film, produced by Legendary Pictures, directed by Denis Villeneuve and distributed by Warner Bros Pictures, is the sequel to *Dune* (2021). It follows Paul Atriedes as he unites with the Fremen people of the desert planet Arrakis to wage war against House Harkonnen. So far this year it has grossed over \$859.4 million making it the highest grossed film of 2024.


This project involved:

- supplying a rental of almost 2000m of truss in 30cm, 40cm and 52cm
- delivering this vast quantity of truss to the Liwa area of Abu Dhabi
- dealing with the constantly changing and increasing requirements on set – a very different experience on a movie set
- utilising our kit to create some very complex three dimensional structures that would not have been possible without the large variety of truss and motors in our inventory.

"The Unusual team were an extremely valuable resource to the grip and lighting departments during the production of the movie. They were very quick to react to our ever growing requirements and always extremely well spirited and helpful. I can't recommend Unusual Rigging & Engineering enough!"

Ian Mussell, key rigging grip, *Dune: Part 2*, Abu Dhabi unit





SPORTING EVENTS

Commonwealth Games Birmingham

Since the London 2012 Olympics, we've had the honour of being involved with every Olympic, Paralympic and Winter Olympic Games. While we're currently deep in preparations for Paris 2024 and, following that, Milan 2026, we're also proud to have made significant contributions to events like Wimbledon, Cheltenham Races and the FIFA World Cup.

It was a real honour to add the 2022 Commonwealth Games to this list – a particularly challenging, complex and substantial event.

With more than 20 venues, the brief was vast – we were in charge of rigging the opening and closing ceremonies as well as supplying venue rigging. This involved working with multiple organisations – Gary Beestone Events for the ceremonies and GL Events and ESG Events for venue rigging.

The Unusual team:

- attended 100s of meetings with the various contractors
- supplied all the rigging drawings, load-in drawings and rigging solutions for other contractors
- staggered the venue installations as much as possible so we could crew the jobs ourselves
- supplied over 1400 chain hoist and approximately 10400m of truss
- put in 180 motor points in the purpose-built aquatic centre which had no catwalks or roof access. All was done via climbing and rope access, working in a hot and humid roof space where temperatures reached 55°C
- installed all the lighting, audio, video, cameras, repeater screens, branding, banners and sponsorship signs
- hung drapes internally and externally to black out the venue.

“The rigging for the Commonwealth Games was incredibly challenging and I am so grateful to Unusual Rigging who went above and beyond to deliver a solution that was so key to the success of the event.”

Gary Beestone, Producer, Commonwealth Games
Opening and Closing Ceremonies





SERVICING, SALES & HIRE

We all know how vital it is to maintain a schedule of regular servicing and inspection of your equipment. Yet picking up the phone to book in that all-important task, somehow becomes the one item that keeps moving down on the to-do list.

We decided some time ago to make it our responsibility to help our customers keep on top of things. If you've bought or hired any kit from us, we will contact you when it's time to book a service or inspection. Not only that, but once it is completed, we'll update all the relevant information on a customer portal, making a note of any remedial action that might be needed. We've relegated long and complicated paper trails to history, having digitised every part of the process.

In the past, we faced challenges in providing comprehensive solutions for our clients. During inspections, we could offer advisories but lacked the resources to address them. Over the past year, we have expanded our services by establishing a remedial/engineering department. This new department, staffed with high-level engineering experts, offers follow-up services for remedial and refurbishment work identified during inspections, ensuring these areas are now effectively addressed.

Our warehouses are incredibly well stocked – if there's something you need for your next event or production, we will have it. Our customers have long compared our warehouse to an Aladdin's cave of rigging and automation equipment and this is set to become even more impressive as we transform our old office building into more warehouse space. The move into our new HQ and research centre in summer 2024 will free up more space to enhance our stock even further.

Our partnerships with suppliers and manufacturers like Doughty Engineering, Liftket, and Eurotruss continues as we enjoy working with like-minded companies who are equally dedicated to providing their customers with first class products and customer service.

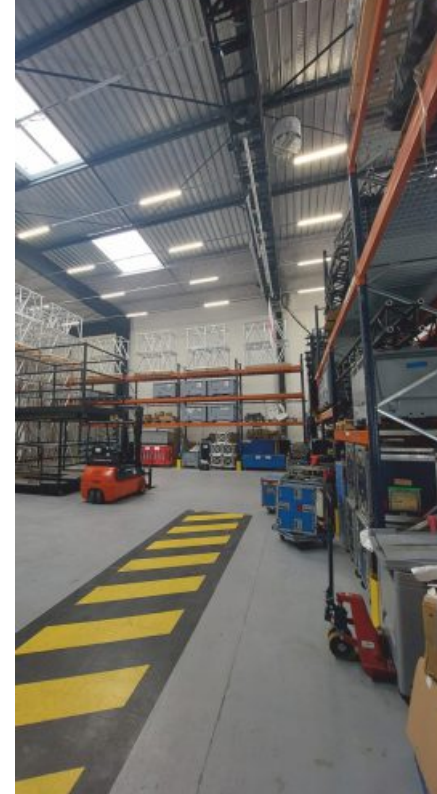


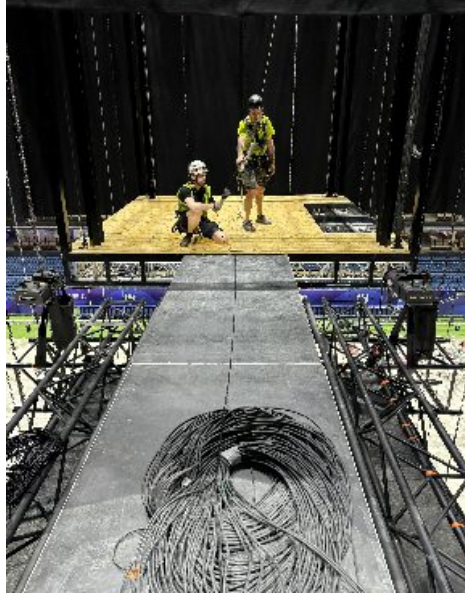
PEOPLE & RESOURCES

It's not the thousands of metres of truss in our warehouse that makes Unusual Rigging the success it is today – it's our people! Since the company was founded by Alan Jacobi (AJ) 40 years ago, the company's employees have always been at the heart of what we do. We are proud of our track record of employee retention and the career development we offer. Some of our team have been here for decades, others are just taking their first step on the career ladder but all have an equally important part to play in the running of Unusual.

We are now an 80+ strong team, working hard to ensure clear and robust governance of our wider community. We are proud to announce the opening of a Paris office, which is much more than an operational base and warehouse for our equipment; it symbolises our aspiration to enter the EU market post-Brexit. Meetings with industry colleagues – from local French production managers to US based companies with European branches for Paris 2024 contracts, highlight a shared sense of opportunity. We truly believe that we can make a significant impact and capture some market share beyond Paris, the opportunity of which, we will continue to review.

Meanwhile, this year marks the formal integration of Dubai-based Unusual Rigging & Engineering LLC within the group. Beyond Dubai, we are also servicing contracts for clients in the Saudi region as cultural and technological development grows exponentially.





HEALTH & SAFETY

Our Integrated Management System brings together the Quality Management System, Environmental Management System and Health and Safety Management System and manages them as one. Our QMS ensures that we do what we need to, in ensuring our products or services satisfy clients' requirements in a consistent way, whilst learning from problems that arise and use this feedback loop to continually improve our business. EMS manages the environmental risks of the business, including compliance with appropriate laws and minimising our environmental impact. OHSMS ensures we have control over and knowledge of, all hazards resulting from normal operations and abnormal situations, while continually improving our performance.

We are externally audited by SGS against the internationally recognised standards ISO 9001 (QMS), ISO 14001 (EMS) and ISO 45001 (OHSMS). This is something that clients are increasingly asking for. We are incredibly proud of our achievement and recognise the positive impact it has on our tender process, and in helping us stand out within our industry.



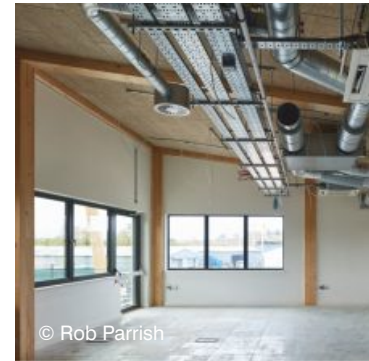
THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND ETHICAL CITIZENSHIP

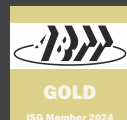
We have long been advocates of advancing the principles of the circular economy within our operations. It has always been our aim to prioritise sustainability with a strong focus on minimising waste, maximising resource efficiency and promoting the reuse and recycling of materials. We really believe that our innovative practices not only reduce our own environmental footprint, but also set a benchmark for sustainable practices in the industry. We want to show other businesses how they can thrive while fostering a circular economy business model. We are also keen to demonstrate that we are walking the walk, not just talking the talk. Afterall, it would be wrong for us to tell our customers what to do and yet not employ the same practices ourselves.

Summer 2024 therefore sees us move into our new headquarters and research centre. Built on our existing site in Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire, the design and construction of our new HQ reflect our strong commitment to accelerating the transition to a circular economic business model. This building exemplifies our dedication to becoming a net positive business in terms of Scope 1 and 2 emissions.

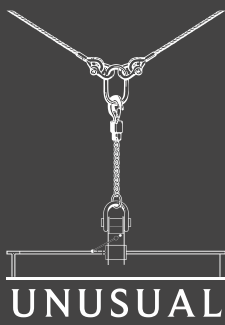
This commitment also aligns seamlessly with our ongoing journey toward ethical citizenship. Our *Psychology of Leadership* program, which explores what motivates people, is designed to create a community where everyone feels safe, trusted, and encouraged to thrive. This is something we want for all our colleagues and which will stand us in good stead for the future.

In 2024 we celebrate 40 unusual years. A journey which started in mud splattered Portacabins with a handful of staff, has grown into more than just a business. Unusual is a successful, pioneering company within the live production industry. More than that; Unusual demonstrates a mindset, an ethos and a journey of which we know our founder Alan Jacobi (AJ) would be proud.





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