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History of Fabrica

Opened in March 1996 in the deconsecrated Holy Trinity Church, Fabrica was established by a group of artists from Red Herring Studios in Brighton as a focus for contemporary visual art practice, with the support of South East Arts, Brighton Borough Council, The Foundation for Sport and the Arts, and the Chichester Diocese.

Holy Trinity church closed in 1985 and the Council intended the building for use as a museum of Brighton history. Ultimately that role was taken up elsewhere, and that's where the artists from Red Herring came in. The first exhibition took place in the newly named Fabrica in 1996.

The name Fabrica was chosen because of its association with making, blending the words fabricate in English and fabriquer in French. Additionally, Fabrica, with slight variations means factory in many European languages. The desire for Fabrica to be a place of creation was important to the founding artists.

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The Church

Holy Trinity Chapel was erected in 1817 by Thomas Read Kemp as a Dissenting Chapel for his newly founded religious sect. The original chapel, designed by Amon Wilds was only about half the length of the existing building and had a classical façade surmounted by a small square bell tower decorated by small equilateral triangles (symbols of the Trinity). The body of the chapel was lit by a lantern light in the centre. Kemp, however,

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was no great preacher and was anyway soon to be embroiled in the financial difficulties caused by his speculative developments to the west of Brighton. Consequently, he sold out to George Faithful, another important non-conformist. Faithful was one of the town's first MP's, but his association with Trinity was short-lived and he moved on in 1825 to the Trinity Presbyterian Chapel in Church Street. Trinity was then purchased from Faithful by Reverend Robert Anderson and his brother James in 1826.

Holy Trinity was a proprietary chapel that relied on renting its pews to raise income. It was, therefore, intended for the wealthy and fashionable, and was sufficiently popular to undergo alterations within two years of its consecration on 21st April, 1826. These alterations considerably lengthened the Church and removed the ecclesiastical eastern (in reality western) gallery. Aside from Anderson, the Church's best known incumbent was the well known preacher Reverend F.W Robertson who was here between 1847 and 1853. In 1869 the church was enlarged when the vestry in Duke Street was exchanged for land to allow a new Gothic chancel to be erected.

In 1878 the Anderson family's proprietary rights were bought by the congregation for £6,500 and alterations to the church were prepared. These were carried out in stages with the interior restored in 1882, and the exterior in 1886 when the present Gothic front and tower were added, along with the Gothic doors in Duke Street.

In the 20th century the congregation dwindled, apart from a brief renaissance under the charismatic Rev. R. J. Campbell between 1924-30. There were several attempts to close the church particularly in the 1950's, but it was only in November 1984 that the Pastoral Measure was introduced and the congregation held their final service on December 30th, 1985.