# Marcus Willcocks' innovative designs enhanced urban safety and community space



Marcus Willcocks, who has died aged 47 from leukaemia, was a pioneering designer whose work focused extensively on making public spaces safer through innovative design. For over a decade, he contributed significantly to Design Against Crime (DAC), a London-based project dedicated to reducing crime through socially responsive design practices. Joining DAC in 2010, he led projects across the UK and internationally that offered creative solutions to problems like bike theft and ATM tampering. His inventive approach included co-designing a chair to which handbags could be securely locked and a “Grippa Clip” to deter bag theft in social settings such as pubs and cafes.

Born in London to a schoolteacher mother and a graphic design business owner father, Marcus was educated at Chesham High School in Buckinghamshire before studying product design at Central Saint Martins (CSM), where he graduated in 2000. He remained at CSM as a designer and later as a senior research fellow, continuing his involvement with DAC when it was established as a research centre within the college. Over his career, Marcus developed a reputation for combining aesthetics with functionality, embodying the DAC ethos of creating designs that not only prevent crime but are also appealing and user-friendly.

Marcus's influence extended beyond crime prevention design. In 2015, he began working freelance as an urban design consultant for the Design Council and subsequently took a part-time senior urban designer role at Sustrans, a cycling charity. There, he helped communities analyse their environments and co-create design improvements that encouraged walking and cycling. His projects, like the recent enhancement of the Bristol to Bath railway path in collaboration with local residents, illustrate his commitment to crafting accessible, welcoming public spaces that inspire joy and engagement.

Beyond his professional work, Marcus was passionate about street art, playing a key role in organising The Graffiti Sessions, an international conference on the subject, and founding the Market Road Gallery in Islington as a hub for street artists. He also spearheaded the My Mural project for DAC, which facilitated collaboration between artists and residents to create public artworks that enriched urban environments.

Colleagues and collaborators recall Marcus as gentle yet resolute, deeply kind in spirit, and unwavering in his dedication to his values and work. His legacy includes not only his impactful designs but also his contribution to advancing socially conscious, inclusive urban design practices that foster safer and more vibrant communities.

Marcus is survived by his wife, sustainability expert Marta Salvà, whom he married in 2007, their two sons Joel and Ruben, his parents, and his sister Sara.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary), [[6]](https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/research-at-csm/design-against-crime/crime-and-justice), [[7]](https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/research-at-csm/design-against-crime)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary), [[4]](https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/csm-innovation/staff-consultancy-and-customised-training/design-against-crime), [[5]](https://www.arts.ac.uk/research/ual-staff-researchers/marcus-willcocks)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary), [[3]](https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/marcus-willcocks/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/sep/12/marcus-willcocks-obituary> - An obituary for Marcus Willcocks, a designer who passed away aged 47 from leukaemia. He worked at Design Against Crime, a London-based project aiming to create safer public spaces. Marcus co-designed anti-theft products like a chair to which handbags can be locked and a 'Grippa Clip' to deter bag theft in pubs and cafes. He was also a senior urban designer at Sustrans, promoting walking and cycling through design.
3. <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/marcus-willcocks/> - A profile of Marcus Willcocks, a Senior Urban Designer with Sustrans and Research Fellow in Design and Public Space at Central Saint Martins. He was an advisor on place-based collaborative, people- and planet-centered design, delivering award-winning projects for over two decades. His work included inclusive active mobility, design for healthier places, and social-safe neighborhoods.
4. <https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/csm-innovation/staff-consultancy-and-customised-training/design-against-crime> - Information about Design Against Crime at Central Saint Martins, a practice-led socially responsive design research agenda addressing crime through methodologies generated by 'social design'. The approach focuses on secure design that is user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing, aiming to reduce crime without compromising functionality or aesthetics.
5. <https://www.arts.ac.uk/research/ual-staff-researchers/marcus-willcocks> - Details about Marcus Willcocks, Research Fellow at Central Saint Martins, leading the Public Space strand of the Design Against Crime Research Centre. His work centers on connections between people and places, focusing on real-world applications of research learning and design practice to serve these relations better.
6. <https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/research-at-csm/design-against-crime/crime-and-justice> - An overview of the Crime and Justice theme within the Design Against Crime Research Lab at Central Saint Martins. The lab addresses crime prevention issues surrounding personal security, theft, youth violence, public safety, and social wellbeing through co-created design benchmarks and crime prevention strategies.
7. <https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/research-at-csm/design-against-crime> - Information about the Design Against Crime Research Lab at Central Saint Martins, focusing on socially responsive design and innovation. The lab delivers design against crime responses addressing personal security, theft, youth violence, public safety, and social wellbeing, aiming to create more sustainable communities.