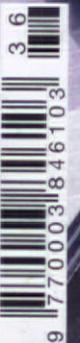


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ROBIN HOOD GARDENS IS A SLUM MASQUERADING AS THE AVANT-GARDE

By Kieran Long

Be honest. How many of you have actually been to the Robin Hood Gardens Estate?

Alison and Peter Smithson's East London housing development, completed in 1972 and consisting of two concrete slabs around a man-made hillock, is a profoundly grim place (*see Agenda, pages 10-11*). I worked next door to it for two years, and my memories are dominated by the 2m-high rampart-like acoustic wall that surrounds it, and the mean and dark stairwells providing access to the 'streets in the sky'.

I can't verify the feelings of its residents, but I share Pevsner's verdict that Robin Hood Gardens is 'ill-planned to the point of being inhumane'. The so-called streets are little different to any deck-access block of the era, the vertical circulation is awful, the facade is brutal and anonymous, and the balconies facing the central green space are too small to be useful.

One architect told me that it was walking around Robin Hood Gardens in the early '70s

that made him ask himself the era-defining question: 'My God, what have we done?' Robin Hood Gardens shows the ideas of two of the more sensitive British Modernists grinding to a halt, and lapsing into arrogance. It is the apotheosis of Modernist housing in this sense. The Smithsons claimed to be making a building that was characteristic of East London, but created a slum disguised as the avant-garde.

The Smithsons intended the place as a new typology, and it was expected that people would have to learn to live there. The Twentieth Century Society argues fatuously that, after 35 years of hellish social problems, Robin Hood Gardens' current occupiers have finally achieved what the Smithsons demanded. Congratulations to that Bengali community – you have met the expectations of Alison and Peter.

They have suffered enough. Knock it down, and let's be confident enough to imagine a place of character and quality at East India Dock.

CONTRIBUTORS



Satvinder Samra, whose work is featured on the Sketchbook on page 58, is co-founder of Sheffield-based Sauce Architecture and a lecturer at Sheffield University

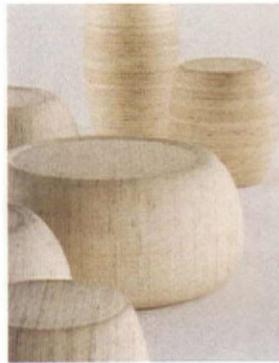


Peter Davey, who reviews a new and comprehensive translation of Muthesius' 'The English House' on pages 44-45, is the former editor of the Architectural Review



Andrew Lee, whose photographs of gm+ad's Hazelwood School feature in the Building Study on pages 25-31, is an architectural photographer based in Glasgow

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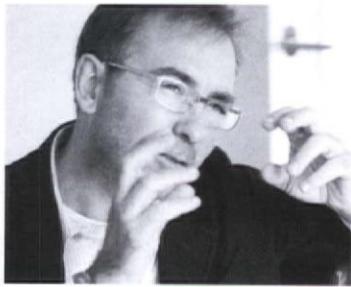
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- *RIBA Appointments – architects*
- *BBT – project architect*
- *Centurion – design managers*

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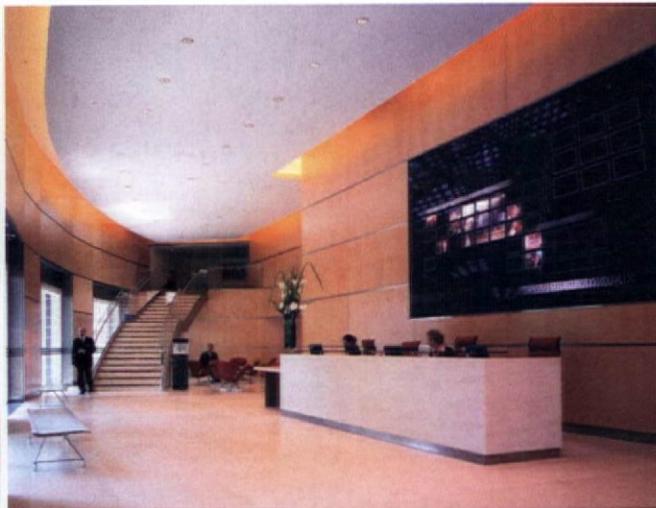
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FRIDAY 21 SEPTEMBER

- Sheppard Robson reaches final two in China comp
- **Aedas maintains strong financial position despite dip in profits**
- Herzog & de Meuron among Japanese art award winners
- Richard Murphy Architects wins mixed-use development at Jesus College, Cambridge



TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER

- Prime Minister doubles his 'Brown Town' pledge
- Howells wins green light for taller Bradford skyscraper scheme
- Section 106 affordable homes subject to delays, says report
- **Make's St Paul's Cathedral visitor centre nears completion (above)**

THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

- CABE urges government to adopt Building for Life criteria
- **Foster goes back to Yale to design new school of management campus**
- Zaha joins art luminaries in funding appeal to government
- Partnerships for Schools to review troubled BSF procurement process



MONDAY 24 SEPTEMBER

- Foster unveils extension to the Nou Camp – Europe's largest stadium
- 'Aquatic villages' proposed for Scotland's River Clyde
- John Dobson's Gateshead church to get long-awaited overhaul
- **2012 Olympics Athletes' Village masterplan unveiled (above)**



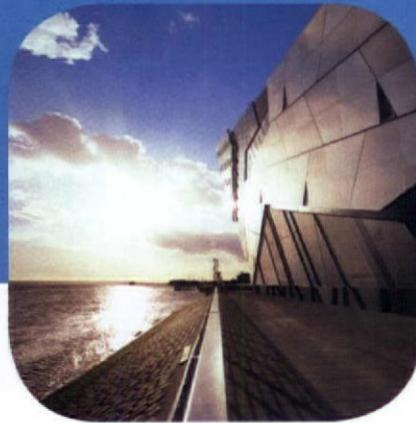
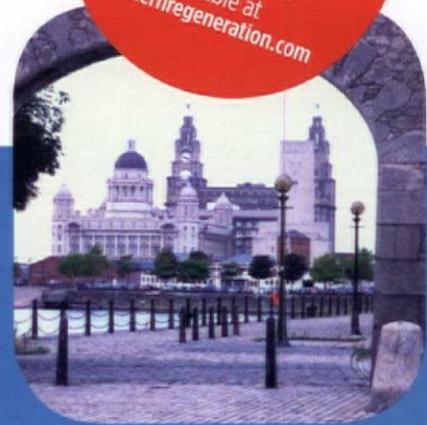
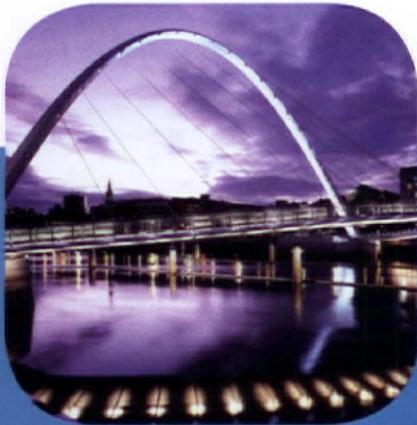
WEDNESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER

- Fears voiced that housing crisis will merge Bath and Bristol into a supercity
- Archaos launches largest ever survey of architectural students
- **Competition winner Surface Architects off Bedford School pavilion job (above)**
- Giant's Causeway visitor centre debacle takes another turn

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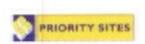


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THE ZERO-CARBON CRITERIA FOR ECO-TOWNS

- Homes should meet code for sustainable homes Level 6;
- eco-towns should use locally sourced and recycled materials;
- locally specific waste strategies should be used;
- high-quality transport links must be provided both within and between communities;
- tree cover and gardens can be used to reduce the urban heat island effect, reduce flash flooding, and help provide a home for wildlife;
- eco-towns should be of a scale and mix to be able to support their own secondary schools;
- there must be as much employment as possible within or easily accessible from the local area;
- local resource centres should be enabled and encouraged; and
- business support and development could reflect local heritage – redundant buildings can be suited to the creative industries.

Source: *The Town and Country Planning Association*

GORDON BROWN DUMPS ECO-TOWN

By Max Thompson

An 'exemplar' new settlement heralded as England's first potential eco-town has been abandoned by the government.

In May, then-chancellor Gordon Brown pledged to build five zero-carbon eco-towns should he become Prime Minister. Speaking at the Labour Party conference in Bournemouth on Monday, Brown doubled that pledge to 10 (*ajp* 24.09.07).

But it has emerged that Northstowe – a 9,500-home joint venture between English Partnerships and Gallagher Estates on the former Oakington Airfield just outside Cambridge – will not be one of them.

Brown had personally referred to Northstowe on the BBC's *Sunday AM* TV programme in May, and Northstowe was identified

by the government as one of two eco-town 'prototypes' in its *Homes of the Future* document published in July. The other is Cranbrook, outside Exeter in Devon.

But a spokesman from the Department of Communities and Local Government said: "We said that Northstowe would be an exemplar, but it will not be one of the 10 eco-towns. We will now be asking for expressions of interest for the new towns."

The 'expressions of interest' take the form of up to 30 bids from developers and local authorities vying for eco-town status for their developments.

Gideon Amos, chief executive of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), which is setting the zero-carbon criteria for eco-towns (*see panel*), confirmed that

a briefing session for the bidders would be held on 8 October, with applications due in by the end of October.

Two weeks ago, David Trippier, chairman of Cambridge Horizons – the body responsible for creating 50,000 new homes in Cambridge by 2016, wrote an open letter in *Cambridge Evening News* to housing minister Yvette Cooper asking her to clarify Northstowe's status.

Neither English Partnerships or Gallagher Estates was available for comment, but a spokesman from Cambridge Horizons said there was a 'general sense of disappointment' about the government's decision.



1.

ROBIN HOOD FACES EXECUTION

By Richard Vaughan

One of the UK's most controversial pieces of Modernist architecture, Alison and Peter Smithson's Robin Hood Gardens in Poplar, East London, could be in line for demolition.

English Partnerships (EP) and London-based firm Horden Cherry Lee have earmarked the site for redevelopment, in order to bring the community in line with the government's Decent Homes Standard.

Horden Cherry Lee has drawn up two options, one with Robin Hood Gardens, and the other without.

But it would cost a lot of money to retain the Smithsons' buildings, and it is likely that EP would prefer the cheaper option.

Stephen Cherry, practice partner of Horden Cherry Lee, says: 'To bring the apartments

up to the government's Decent Homes Standard would be very hard. 'We would have to completely strip back each apartment to the concrete, and we calculate that to re-do each unit up to Decent Homes Standard would cost £70,000 per unit.

'If we wanted to place the affordable housing elsewhere and turn the apartments into something where architects would want to live, it would be way, way beyond £100,000 per unit. It just simply wouldn't be viable.'

Cherry said his practice looked at every conceivable way of making the refurbishment of the buildings compatible with modern-day living, but that it was not feasible.

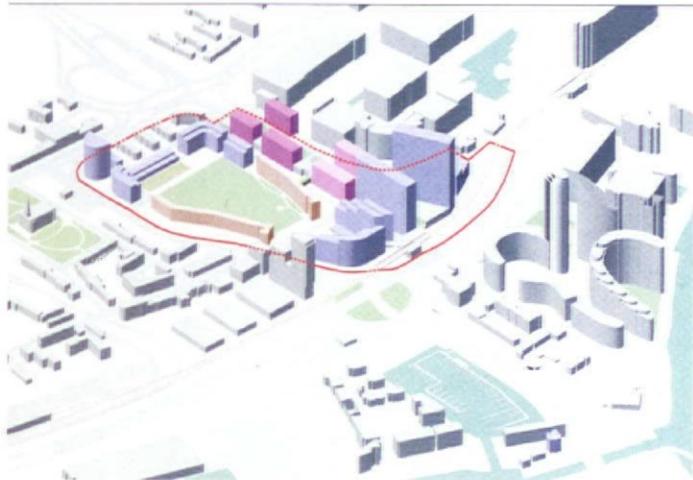
Built as a response to social housing projects such as Le

Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, the Brutalist building has since been held responsible for the social degradation and crime on the estate.

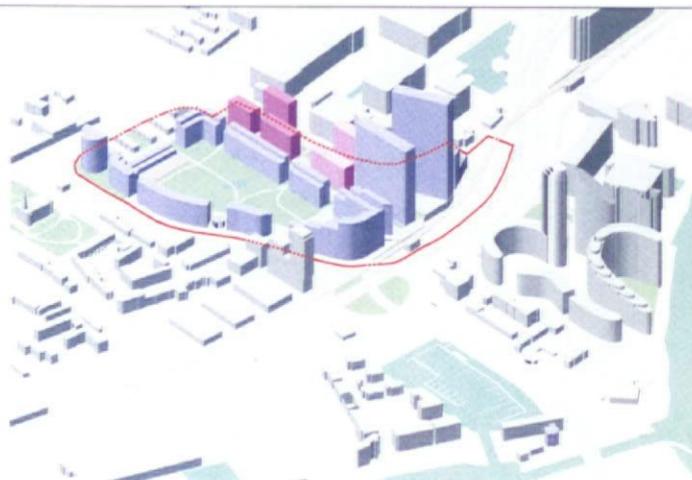
Patrick Hodgkinson, the designer behind London's Brunswick Centre, another Modernist housing estate, says: 'I have nothing good to say about [Robin Hood Gardens]. They were loathed by the people who lived in them then, and they are loathed still.'

But Hodgkinson's views are not universally supported, with some seeing the estate as a bold approach to social housing, and the Twentieth Century Society (C20) has put the buildings forward for listing.

According to the society, the buildings are of 'tremendous importance in a European context' and the site is



2.



3.

HOW THE TWO OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF ROBIN HOOD GARDENS COMPARE

	Option 1 (keep the estate)	Option 2 (demolition)
Housing	1,750 - 2,050 homes	2,500 - 3,000 homes
Open space	1.5ha	2ha
Commercial space (including shops, businesses and hotel)	33,500m ²	36,000m ²
Community and health	1,150m ²	1,650m ²
Education	2,700m ²	3,200m ²
Leisure	700m ²	700m ²

1. The troubled Robin Hood Gardens estate in Poplar, east London is regarded by many as an architectural failure

2 & 3 Horden Cherry Lee has drawn up two options for the site – retaining the estate (above left), or, more likely, demolishing it (above right)

now 'becoming the place it was always meant to be'.

C20 caseworker Jon Wright says: 'It is finally turning a corner, and becoming a success 30 years after it was completed. It would be a travesty if it were to be demolished.'

'There is a Bengali community there now, and it is organically growing into a place that the Smithsons had envisaged.'

Indeed, Peter Smithson himself once said that 'new typologies take a while for people to catch up with'.

But some of the Smithsons' most ardent fans think that Robin Hood Gardens is a failed experiment.

Jonathan Sergison, of Sergison Bates Architects, has written widely on the Smithsons, and says he would be 'horrified' if the buildings

were demolished, but he is well aware of the failings that the development throws up.

'It is a problematic building – a flawed masterpiece,' he says. 'As a concept it is very clear, but through the pressures the architects faced, it began to fail technically. They had to work to difficult density requirements, while there were also budgeting problems, which meant the overall scheme was meaner than they would have wished.'

But he is against demolition, and adds: 'There is no question there are problems, but these could be resolved. I'm sure any architect, no matter who they are, would replace it with something less good.'

Sergison adds: 'As a shared space it is excellent, there is some beautiful landscaping.'

However, according to EP director Steve Oakes, early

feedback from residents suggests they would be happy to see the buildings replaced.

Oakes says: 'We are trying to assemble a scheme larger than Robin Hood Gardens. It is an 8ha site, and it is easier to deliver the scheme if you remove the buildings.'

Many of those fighting to keep the Smithsons' buildings, not least C20, are pointing towards Urban Splash's Park Hill redevelopment in Sheffield as an exemplar for the future of Robin Hood Gardens.

Hawkins\Brown Architects and Studio Egret West are working with the trendy Manchester-based developer to sensitively rework the equally monolithic estate, providing the city with 867 apartments.

The scheme has been hailed as a huge success although the planning

application has only just been submitted. But, according to the Horden Cherry Lee team, the same could not be done at Robin Hood Gardens.

According to Stephen Cherry, the orientation and access routes of the Park Hill estate make it much easier to redevelop.

'I'm not saying it is impossible to refurbish the Smithsons' buildings, but it would be very difficult,' he says.

'Everything from the stairwells, which are far too tight, to the "streets in the sky" do not work as they should,' he says. 'There are many very odd spaces, particularly the central space with the large mound, which would also be listed if the C20 are successful.'

'It says a lot,' Cherry adds, 'that other Smithsons buildings are listed, but this never was.'



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1.



2.



3.

1 & 2. Neighbours who protested at the glass extension to this brick building in Essex are now considering Modern extensions of their own, according to pH+ Architects
3. The building before the extension

PH+ WINS OVER NIMBY NEIGHBOURS IN ESSEX

pH+ Architects has completed this unashamedly Modern addition to a 1980s Noddy home in in Wickford, Essex. The young, East London-based firm was originally asked to design a simple, pitched roof extension complete with uPVC windows to match the existing house. However practice founder, and AJ 40 Under 40 star, Andy Puncher 'politely' suggested the client had approached the wrong architects and instead showed 'a hastily prepared model' of how a new addition could 'blur the definition of garden and house'. Despite protests from the housebuilder, the neighbours and friends, the client went for the £50,000 scheme proposed by pH+ Architects. According to Puncher 'many of these dissenters are now considering Modern extensions of their own'.

By Richard Waite



The parties (from left): Zaha at the Royal Festival Hall; the AJ at Vitra; Artemide at Aram; Amanda Leveté's Drift Bench at Established; Urbantime at Tent; and the Something to Sit On winners with AJ editor Kieran Long at 100% Design

DESIGN PARTIES ROCK THE CAPITAL

By Will Hunter

With so many parties during the London Design Festival it's no surprise confusion sets in. A widespread misconception this year was that the festival began properly on Monday 17 September at the Royal Festival Hall, when Zaha Hadid was awarded the London Design Medal by Mayor Ken Livingstone. But this was mere foreplay to the AJ's bash the following evening at Vitra in Clerkenwell, where 200 luminaries sipped gins and discoursed on such topics as the role of architecture in a changing metropolis, and which Eames pieces our guests already had/were planning to buy soon.

Wednesday evening's festivities began at Scin, the Bermondsey-based materials library, which displayed a number of eco-friendly products, starting an eco-trend

which ran throughout the week. Then on to the Aram Store in Covent Garden, where product manufacturer Artemide shared 70 new ideas for the classic Anglepoise lamp, designed by RCA students. Following this was British furniture manufacturer Established & Sons' party, the event everybody was talking about ('will Stella McCartney be with husband, Established & Sons founder Alasdhair Willis? Will Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin pitch up like in 2006?' etc.). With the celebs tucked away in the VIP room, the furniture took centre stage. A dozen pieces – from Zaha's Aqua Table to Amanda Leveté's Drift Bench – were sculpted in marble and set atop plinths towering above guests' heads in a cavernous basement at the University of Westminster.

Thursday morning started early at Tent London (the show for emerging talent which replaces 100% East at Brick Lane's Truman Brewery). Architect Alex Haw won the first Urbantime competition, which encouraged the principles of Fast Architecture, as pioneered by John Norden of IDE Architecture. Haw unveiled an impressive temporary pavilion made from a series of CNC-routed timber-panels.

This was followed up with the AJ's second party of the week – a drinks reception at 100% Design on Thursday night, at which the winner of Something To Sit On, the AJ/Modus competition for architect-designed seating, was announced by AJ editor Kieran Long. The victors, Danish design duo Camilla Bendix

and Charlotte Budtz, will be featured in Designer Profile in October's *AJ Specification*.

Thursday continued with a smattering of parties: at Boffi's new store on the Brompton Road; then next door to the B&B Italia soirée (with guest of honour Zaha Hadid – does she ever sleep?). From there, around the corner to the Bisazza showroom on Sloane Avenue to meet Rossella Bisazza; across the road to the Rabih Hage Gallery, where I found my favourite piece of the week (*see Top Ten, right*); and finally the Trash Luxe party at Regent Street's Liberty store, where Marcus Fairs gathered work from designers 'who find beauty in unwanted materials' – more of the eco-trend.

Will Hunter is the editor of AJ Specification

LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

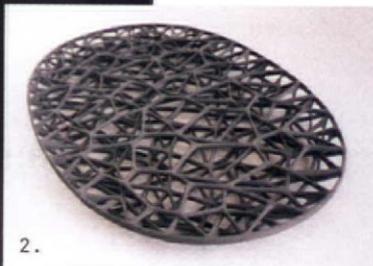


Events took over London landmarks, such as Tom Dixon's installation at Trafalgar Square (above)



WILL HUNTER'S LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL TOP TEN

Tears actually came to my eyes when I saw the AI Stool (1.) – it is so very beautiful. Created by UK-based designer Assa Ashuach, special software was used to calculate the structural form that would most efficiently carry the load of a 120kg person, although stools can be made for any weight. Other rapid prototyped products were showcased by the Dutch design group FOC (Freedom of Creation) at 100% Design (2.). See overleaf to continue the Top Ten.



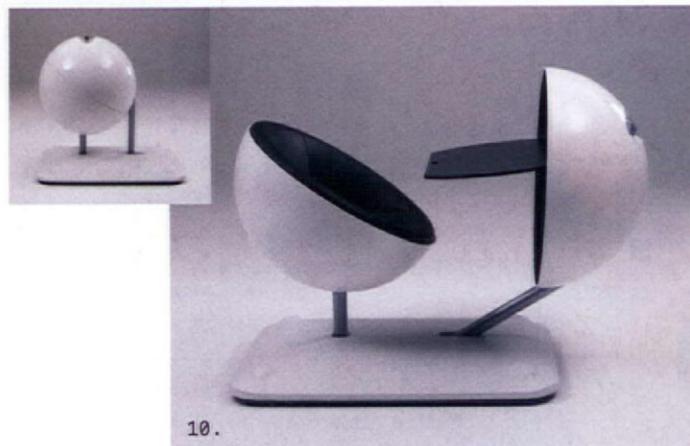
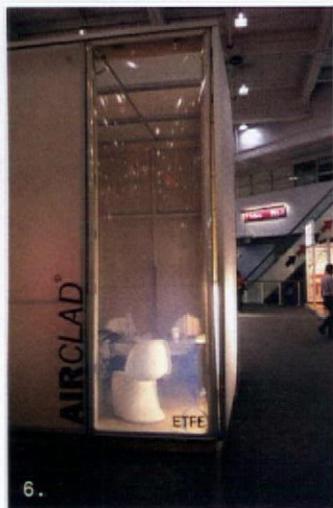
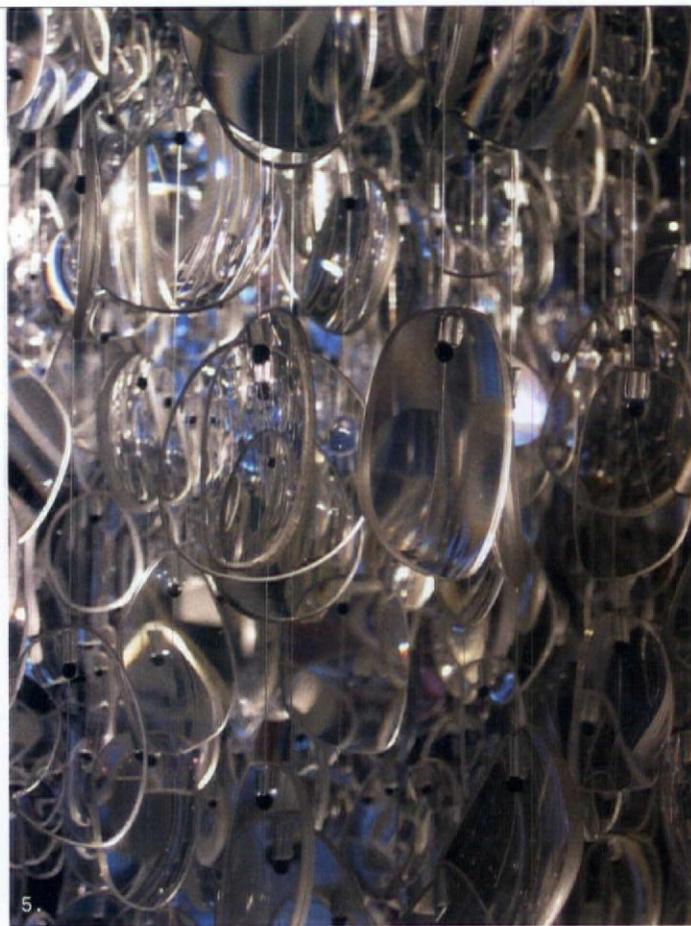
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LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

TOP TEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

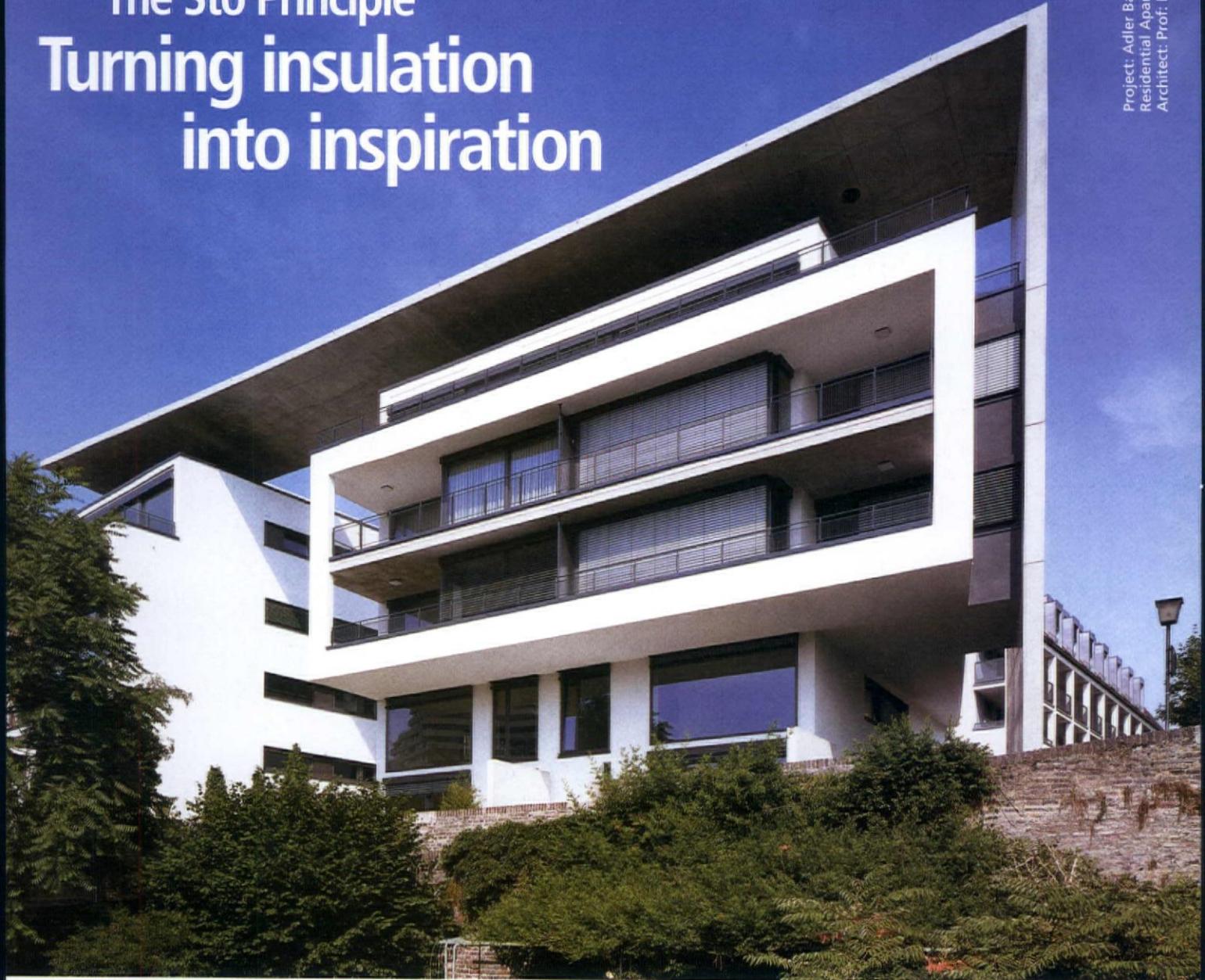
Concrete Blond (3.) exhibited patterned, textured concrete panels at Designersblock. Many chandeliers were on show: here is the White Chandelier (4.) by Innermost (at 100% Design) and Stuart Haygarth's chandelier (5.) made from spectacle lenses (at Trash Luxe). I spotted new airclad inflatable ETFE cladding from Inflate (6.) at 100% Detail.



Woody Chair (7), part of Autoban's collection, was launched at 100% Design. Ex-Box Chair (8.) by Giles Miller from Farm, which was shown at Tent, is made from cardboard boxes. Timber edges are increasingly being exposed; examples are these stools from 100% Design by Motley (9.). Michel Van Der Kley's Globus (10.) can be wheeled around and opened to work at. See the Top 50 at www.ajplus.co.uk

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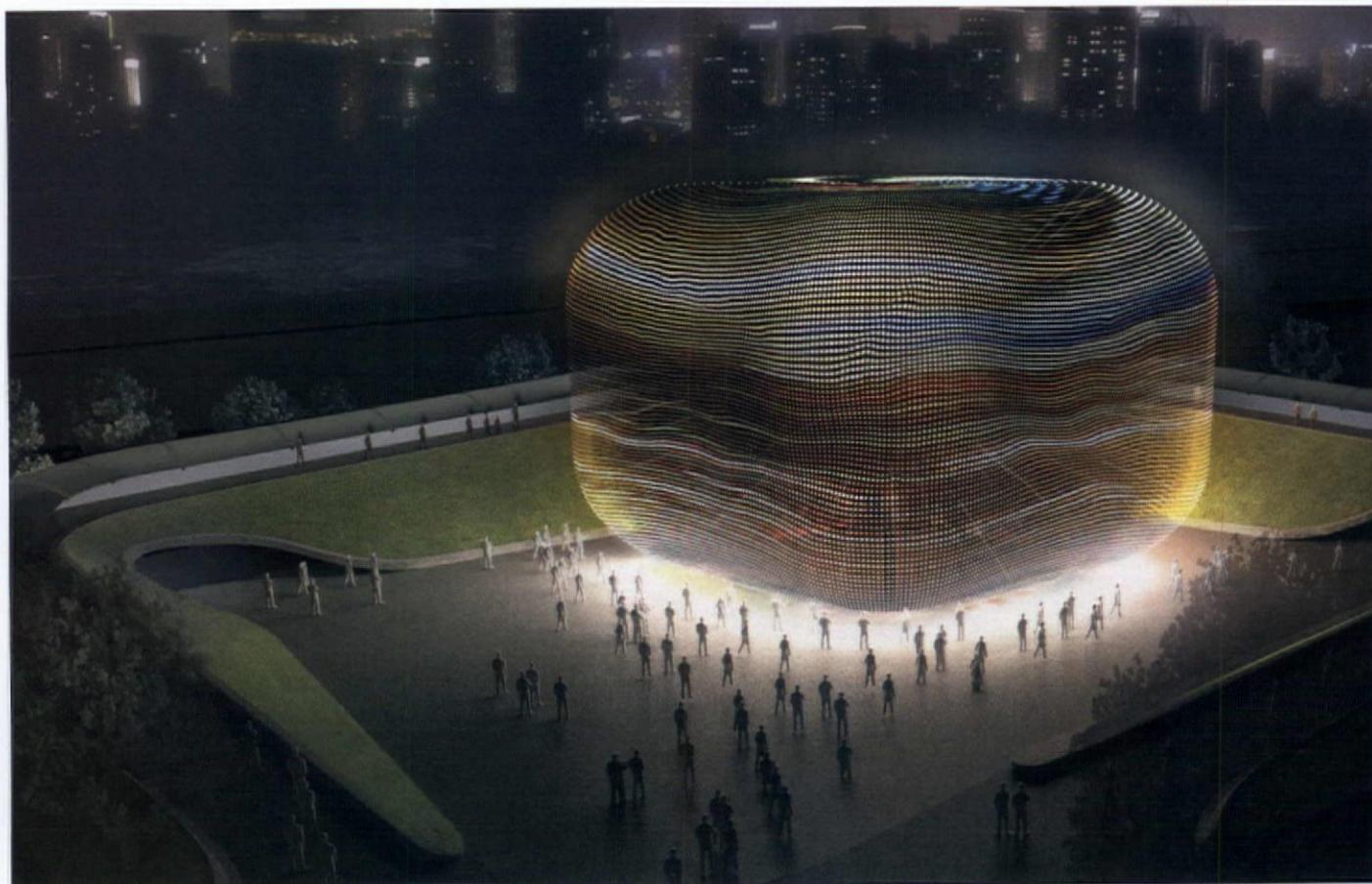
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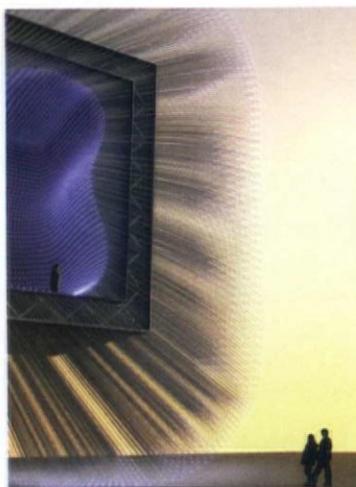


1.

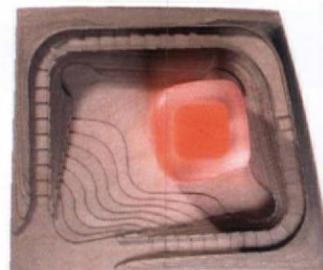
HEATHERWICK SELECTED FOR SHANGHAI EXPO

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has chosen a team led by Thomas Heatherwick to design the UK's pavilion at the Shanghai Expo in 2010. Drawn up in collaboration with engineer Adams Kara Taylor, exhibition and museum designer Casson Mann and environmental specialist Atelier Ten, the scheme was chosen following a high-profile contest featuring some of the country's biggest names. Among the unlucky finalists were Zaha Hadid, Marks Barfield, Avery Associates, Draw Architects and Eight – a team led by John McAslan which included Carmody Groarke, Nord, Surface, Project Orange and Brisac Gonzalez (AJ 26.07.07). Dubbed the 'Pavilion of Ideas', the winning design is reminiscent of a super-sized version of Heatherwick's spiky Sitooterie II summer house in Essex. Thousands of spines covering the pavilion will be tipped with tiny lights, which can be programmed to change colour and create a 'living patterned facade'. More than 40,000 visitors are expected every day at the pavilion during the six-month Expo.

By Richard Waite



2.

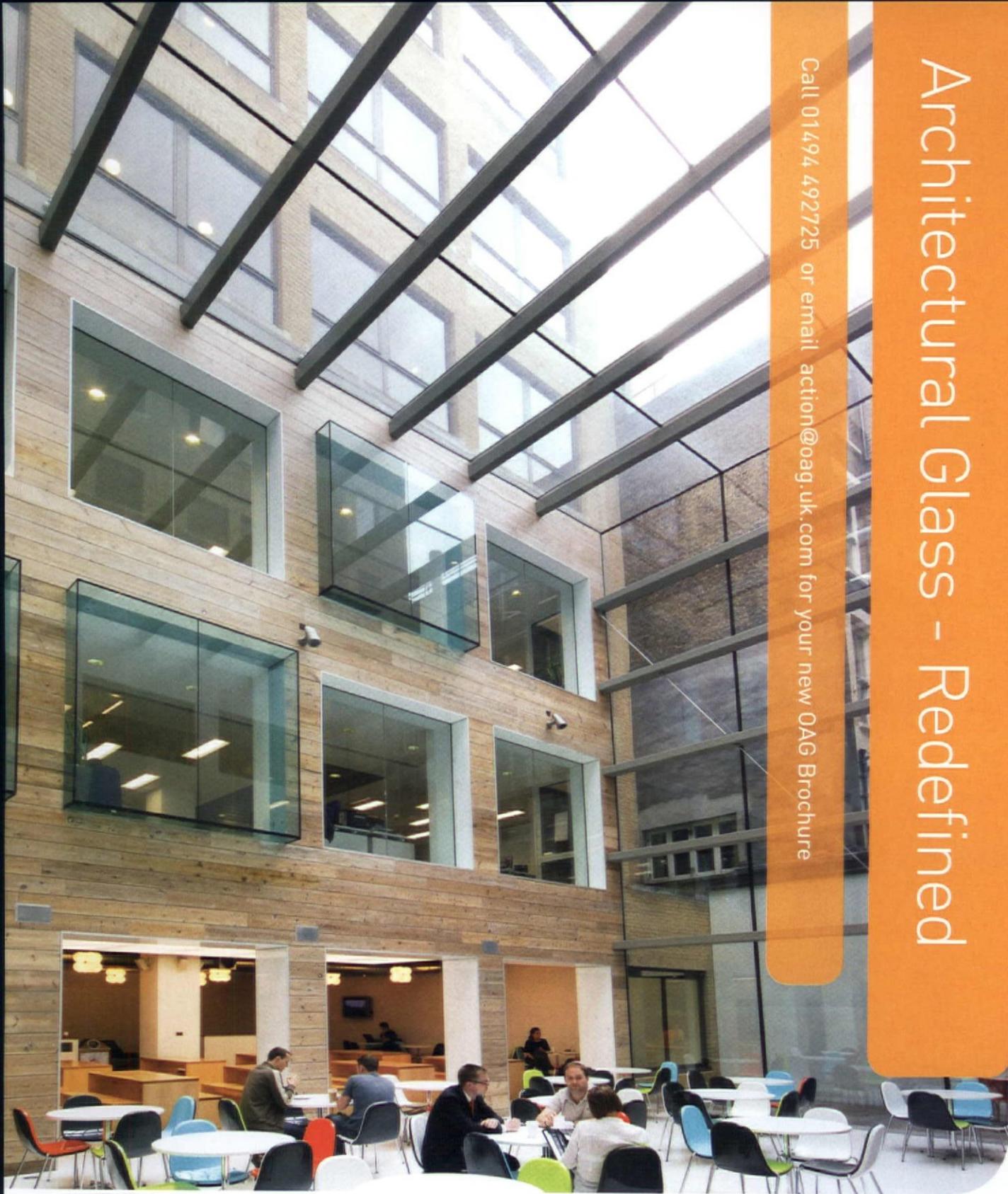


3.

1, 2 & 3. Heatherwick's Shanghai Expo pavilion will feature thousands of light-tipped spines

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ENQUIRY 14 ON CARD
WWW.AJPLUS.CO.UK/AJDIRECT

'Once we did a proposal with restaurateur Alan Yau for Battersea Power Station. Alan had this great idea to cross a nightclub with a restaurant and a brothel. It was a wild brief and extracted a wild proposal from us'

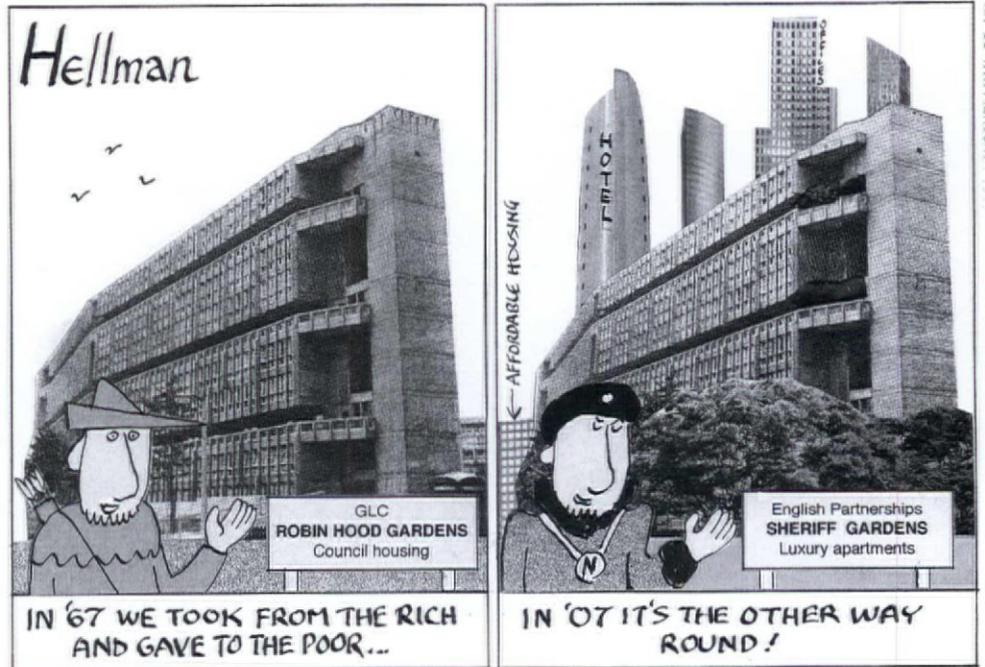
Amanda Leveté, *Observer*, 23.09.07

'Friday night, I veg on the sofa in front of the TV, watching the rugby and "The IT Crowd"'

Culture Secretary James Purnell. *Observer*, 23.09.07

'A meal is not just about eating – it's a discourse. Some of our meals go on for five hours'

Daniel Libeskind. *Observer*, 23.09.07



WWW.LOUTSHELLMAN.CO.UK

SWISS MISS

Last week's Building with Wood conference at Exeter University was a great occasion, but one speaker suffered some disappointment. Having travelled all the way from Switzerland, he was hoping to include a visit to **Louis Kahn's** Exeter Library. But that would be Exeter, New Hampshire, he was gently told – not Exeter in Devon.

GOING DUTCH

Amusing accents, cycling, 'liberal laws' and a good line in confectionery; it's easy to see why Holland never fails to delight. But yet another reason has now been added to the list: sensible working hours. Dropping a quick phone call to **Wiel Arets'** office in Amsterdam, one of Astragal's colleagues was told by a recorded voice that

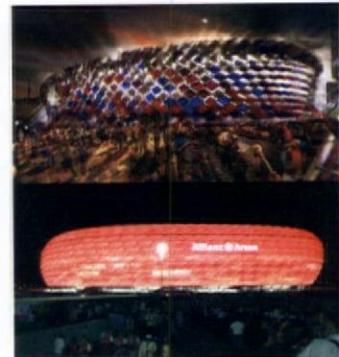
their opening hours are 'nine 'til five'. Perhaps we should follow the lead from our cousins in the Low Countries. How civilised...

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

It's not just **Norman Foster** who can take on bizarre projects in the former Soviet Union. Slick-haired Dutchman **Erick van Egeraat** contacted Astragal with the details of a scheme he has jumped on board – the creation of a huge Russian Federation-shaped island in the Black Sea. Russian president **Vladimir Putin**, who took a look at the designs, was apparently particularly interested in the technical details of the plan, with van Egeraat assuring him that the Dutch experience of reclaiming land from the sea would be extremely useful on the project. Good luck to him, Astragal says.

REPLICA FOOTBALL KIT

Separated at birth: Foster + Partners' project for Barcelona's new football stadium (*below*) and Munich's Allianz Arena, by Herzog & de Meuron (*bottom*). It's not just the diamond cladding that provokes comparison, it's the similar colours. Why the Catalan club went for an imitation of Herzog & de Meuron and not the real thing is anyone's guess.





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ENQUIRY 15 ON CARD
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LETTERS

TIMBER BOARDING IS JUST AN 'EMPTY' GREEN GESTURE

Cartwright Pickard and B+C Architectes' Bourbon Lane scheme looks great in the photographs (Building Study, AJ 20.09.07), but the large expanse of larch boarding makes me wonder what it will look like in a few years time and how Octavia Housing will maintain it.

Timber boarding has been the essential cliché in schemes for many years now and, travelling around London, nearly every project shows that, in reality, an architect's ideal of a sustainable material gradually weathering to a soft grey or whatever often becomes a mixture of brown, dirty grey and black; the latter often occurring where endgrain is beginning to deteriorate, and always where the urban air has shown its true content.

It is unfortunate that we are sacrificing durability of appearance and maintenance in the name of fake 'sustainability'.
John Bryer, London NW5

A MOUTHWATERING OFFERING FROM FAT

What an appropriate name for the practice that designed the restaurant and bakery at Heal's (Interiors, AJ 20.09.07). There is a hint of sugar icing in the candy pink finishes to FAT's restaurant space which already feels pretty naughty.

And then I just had to look at those scrumptious cupcakes by Peyton and Byrne to feel myself salivating. I expect that

everybody associated with the project, not to mention the users of the building, is pretty FAT by now.

Joanna Anderson, Birmingham

LONDON SUBURBS INSPIRE BOTH INTRIGUE AND SLOTH

I liked Andrew Mead's piece about the photography book by Mark Power on his visits to the end of the London Underground lines (Critic's choice, AJ 20.09.07). It sounds really intriguing, and I probably should buy a copy.

But even more pleasurable is that he makes all those places sound so unappetising. It reinforces both my prejudices and my sloth, knowing that I will be missing little if I refuse to venture outside Zone One.

Graham Young, London N1

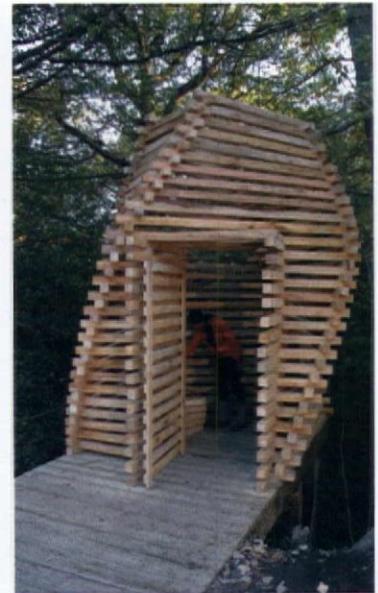
ADDENDUM

Atelier Ten was the environmental and M&E consultant on Cartwright Pickard and B+C Architectes' Bourbon Lane scheme (AJ 20.09.07).

Please address letters to: The Editor, The Architects' Journal, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ, fax 020 7391 3435, or email kaye.alexander@emap.com to arrive by 10am on the Monday before publication. The AJ reserves the right to edit letters.

AJ SMALL PROJECTS AWARDS 2008

There are now four weeks remaining in which to enter the AJ Small Projects Awards 2008, sponsored by Rambøll Whitbybird, with the deadline on Friday 26 October. These awards, for the best work produced for a built value of less than £250,000, will go to projects completed between 1 November 2006 and 1 November 2007 which are previously unpublished. To enter, please send details of the project, including credits, publication-quality images and costs, to: AJ Small Projects, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ, or email james.pallister@emap.com. Selected work will be published in The Architects' Journal in the new year, and then displayed in an exhibition at New London Architecture at the Building Centre, Store Street, London WC1. The awards will be judged by a distinguished panel and there will be up to £2,500 of cash prizes for the best work, supplied by Rambøll Whitbybird. Last year's winner was Paul Archer, for a house extension in London (pictured right). The runner-up was Sheffield School of Architecture, with its composting WC (far right).



GM+AD/ HAZELWOOD SCHOOL



1. 'Trail rails' allow the children to feel their way along the school's spine

IT HAD TO BE SECURE BUT NOT TOO SAFE – SO THE PUPILS COULD BE INDEPENDENT

By Johnny Rodger. Photography by Andrew Lee

Are gm+ad's Gordon Murray and Alan Dunlop going soft? These are the guys who have boldly taken hold of Glasgow's metropolitan notions of itself and given them a kicking. They've punctured the remaining order of the city's 200-year-old Blythswood grid by putting a baseball-cap roof on their Bewlays Hotel, which was completed in 2000; and a silvered titanium fist leans threateningly out over the road on their Spectrum office building. With their Radisson Hotel on Argyle Street they cocked a snook at the convention that a Glasgow building should only be four storeys high – 'that's just the maximum height of a Victorian fireman's ladder' jeers Dunlop. And they've laughed off the idea that only 'traditional' materials – 'sandstone, sandstone, and erm, sandstone' they say – can make a Glasgow style. Self-declared Mies Modernists, even their friends (such as writer and *Prospect* editor Penny Lewis) have described them as 'commercial architects' who are 'aggressive' and 'hard-nosed'.

But what have we here, with their latest completed project, Hazelwood School in the leafy suburb of Dumbreck on Glasgow's south side? A long, low building stretches across the green sward, wraps around mature trees to protect them from the axeman, and stays at ground level to avoid harming the neighbours' views. It is constructed of Siberian larch which will age and blend with the site, and the long sinuous curving walls are clad in – wait for it – 'traditional' Glasgow tenemental roof slate. Maybe they're not so tough after all, these guys, perhaps they're just karma chameleons, and when you get them out of the city...

Of course, the truth is that there is a very particular and challenging brief with this project – this is a school which caters for children with dual-sensory impairment – and a very specific site. It may well be that this is gm+ad's first school – indeed it is their first public building, and it is also the first commission they have won in competition – but they certainly rose to the challenge.

The site is a small parcel of green land which lies to the south-east of the corner of Bellahouston Park (one of the largest parks in the city). Bounded on the south and east by roads feeding the M8 motorway, the site has a row of stone villas as its neighbour to the north, and two late-'60s high-rise blocks to the north-west.

The most engaging part of the brief for this school is its students. Around 60 children between the ages of two and 18 attend. Most are deaf and blind, or blind and physically handicapped, and a few are partially sighted. The challenge was to create a secure place, but also to play down the institutional aspects of design and at the same time ensure that everything is not too safe, i.e. that the children can be provoked to independent and autonomous learning.

To move towards a solution of these intertwined problems of site, neighbours and clients, gm+ad spent over a year in consultation with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB); Scottish children's hospital the Yorkhill Children's Foundation; an ophthalmic specialist; and the parents of the children. From these conversations the practice learned about specific needs associated with the disabilities of the students –



2.

that, for example, some students can see above and others below certain horizons, while others can see only in zig-zagging patterns. At a certain point however, as Alan Dunlop stresses, one simply has to move to design – ‘if you looked at all of the possible difficulties a child might have, you could never make a mark on the page’.

What the practice came up with is a long sinuous plan, which extends east-west across the site, wrapping itself around the trees and leaving a large garden space on the south side. This plan is organised around the circulation space; a type of street which winds along with the classrooms on its north side and provides access to the gardens on the south.

The entrance to the school is on the north side, towards the west end. You enter into the large open space of a dining/ assembly hall, with the route to the classrooms snaking off to the east. What is immediately striking about this route is that there is a bulky irregular-shaped cork-clad wall running all along its north side. This is gm+ad’s response to what it felt was a need for tactile and sensory clues by which the children could orient themselves. This bulky sculptural element, which runs through the school like a spine, also provides much-needed cupboard space in its depths, which can be accessed by the doors which form its fascia. What is undoubtedly most interesting about this feature however, is that the cork finishes on it, and the changes in height and angle of its profile, allow it to perform as a sensory aid. The children can thus feel their way along (aided by use of a series of inlaid ‘trail rails’ at various heights) to the classroom to which they are headed.



3.

2. The long, low building, seen here from the north, wraps around mature trees

3. Facilities such as a hydrotherapy pool are housed at the far-west curved end of the school



4.

This storage wall is the most obvious of the sensory features which have been introduced in the promenade both around this building and out into the garden too. But a whole raft of subtle effects and changes – like adaptation of ceiling height, use of larger and smaller windows, rooflights, threshold markings on the floor and on the walls – let the children learn their own way. These elements arose from the consultation process, where the designers learned the importance of sensory adaptation and that subtle changes of light can register very importantly for people with vision-related disabilities.

Once the student has passed along the sensory wall to the right point, they can enter their classroom through a vestibule/cloakroom. The classrooms are all arranged on the north side to escape strong direct sunlight, but nonetheless their roofs are tilted up on glulam beams to allow maximum daylighting through large windows. These classrooms jut out from the north elevation in pairs, such that the elevation is broken down and individuated on that side. This creates a happy combination of effects. In the first place it means the classes are all individualised, and the children all have access out through a small protected courtyard between adjacent classes to the garden and playground on that side. In the second place it means the occupiers of the villas to the north, who were the strongest and most vociferous in their opposition to building on this green site, are not faced with a blank institutional wall, but rather with a set of house-sized blocks with timber elevations glimpsed through the trees.

At the far east end of the site, nearest to those villas, is the life-skills unit. This little block, again with larch walls and a zinc roof, consists of living quarters where the older students can experiment with living on their own – cooking, entertaining etc.

A walk from this unit round the outside to the south of the building lets you appreciate how the development blends with the site. The long curving slate-clad walls embrace the gardens, and a series of playgrounds between these walls are referred to by the architect as 'outdoor rooms'. At the far, west end of the building, a swooping curved 5m wall of slate encloses the 'big pieces of kit' necessary in such an institution: a gymnasium, and a hydrotherapy and swimming pool. This part of the building not only aims at being environmentally friendly, but also at participating in the local community. For in the evenings this section can be isolated from the rest of the complex, and used by external groups.

Dunlop expects that as the larch and the slate weather, and as the zinc roof patinates, the exterior forms of the building will become indistinguishable from the trees. Let's hope he's right, but this concern with the environment brings us back to our original question – has gm+ad gone soft? The cynical observer would deny the evidence of course: this sort of modest suburban nowhere-ville, they might say, is only the obverse of a macho downtown boosterism on the same capitalist gold coin. That's as might be. But whatever the political and social context and significance of gm+ad, Hazelwood School is an elegant and considerate response to a complex architectural problem.



- KEY
- 1 ADMINISTRATION
 - 2 HYDROTHERAPY POOL/GYM
 - 3 ENTRANCE/ASSEMBLY/PERFORMANCE SPACE
 - 4 DINING/ASSEMBLY/PERFORMANCE
 - 5 NURSERY
 - 6 GENERAL CLASSROOM
 - 7 SPECIALIST LEARNING AREA
 - 8 LIFE SKILLS UNIT

4. As the larch cladding weathers, it will start to blend in with its surroundings

5. Plan

5.

AJ 27.09.07



6.



7.

WRAPPING SENSORY CUES INTO THE SCHOOL DESIGN

I've been working with children with vision and hearing impairments for 13 years. When this project first started, the most important thing was to consider the type of children who would use the school; potentially, they're here from when they're infants until they're teenagers. Comparable schools which are successful – the Royal Blind School and Donaldson's College for the Deaf, both in Edinburgh – work with children in general areas rather than dividing everything up into classrooms. This emphasises real-life experience rather than class-based learning. There's also a focus on one-to-one learning; building confidence; and about moving through space safely. The idea of the sensory wall comes from other schools, but the architect did more with it here. The way it has been designed, there is a starting point; and students know what room they are going in to. It is very important to design in cues based on light, smell, and sound. Unlike other schools, which can have an echoing sound quality, here sound is softer. I have spoken to a number of parents who say the school is going particularly well.

Patrick Brown, family advisor, Sense Scotland

- 6. The main dining area at the entrance
- 7. A cork-clad sensory wall helps children to orient themselves around the school
- 8. Proposed section A-A

Cost summary

	Cost per m ² (£)	Percentage of total
SUBSTRUCTURE	237.00	11.13
SUPERSTRUCTURE		
Frame	93.76	4.41
Upper floors	0.97	0.50
Roof	243.81	11.5
External walls	65.87	3.09
Windows and external doors	78.17	3.67
Internal walls and partitions	15.78	0.74
Internal doors	35.21	1.65
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	533.57	25.07
INTERNAL FINISHES		
Wall finishes	102.73	4.83
Floor finishes	51.83	2.44
Ceiling finishes	51.77	2.43
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	206.33	9.69
FITTINGS AND FURNITURE	158.65	7.45
SERVICES	451.57	21.22
EXTERNAL WORKS		
Site works	202.88	9.53
Drainage installations	99.32	4.67
External services	9.34	0.44
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	311.55	14.64
PRELIMINARIES	259.77	12.20
TOTAL	2,128.43	100

Cost data provided by Thomas and Adamson

Credits

Tender date

Tender documents were issued on 1 July 2005 for return by 12 August 2005

Start on site date

30 January 2006

Contract duration

18 months

Practical completion

10 August 2007

Gross external floor area

2,666m²

Form of contract

JCT 98 Local Authority with Quantities with Contractor

Designed Portions

Total cost

£5.7 million

Client

Glasgow City Council

Architect

Gordon Murray and Alan Dunlop Architects: Alan Dunlop,

Gordon Murray, Stacey Phillips, Fergal Feeney, Murray

Thomson, Saidah Bojens

Structural engineer

Buro Happold

DDA advisor

Buro Happold

Landscape architect

City Design Cooperative

Acoustic consultant

RMP Acoustic Consultants

Quantity surveyor

Thomas and Adamson

Planning supervisor

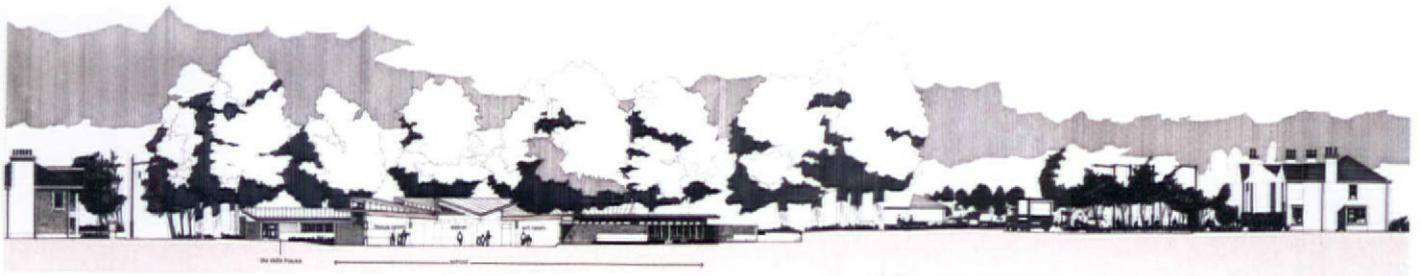
Gordon Murray and Alan Dunlop Architects

Main contractor

Sir Robert McAlpine

Sensory wall detailing

Elmwood (Glasgow)



8.

A 'SENSORY' WALL BACKED WITH STORAGE UNITS

In plan, the school forms a gentle curve around mature beech trees; the central corridor, following this curve, gives access to classrooms and widens in places to become a resource area. The layout is designed to serve the needs of its pupils.

One side of the corridor/resource area is glazed; the other side is designed to feature a 'sensory' wall which gives tactile clues to help the children locate themselves around the building. In previous establishments children had difficulty in negotiating clutter such as parked wheelchairs; the sensory wall is formed from the doors of a series of capacious storage units to accommodate such items, creating an obstacle-free path.

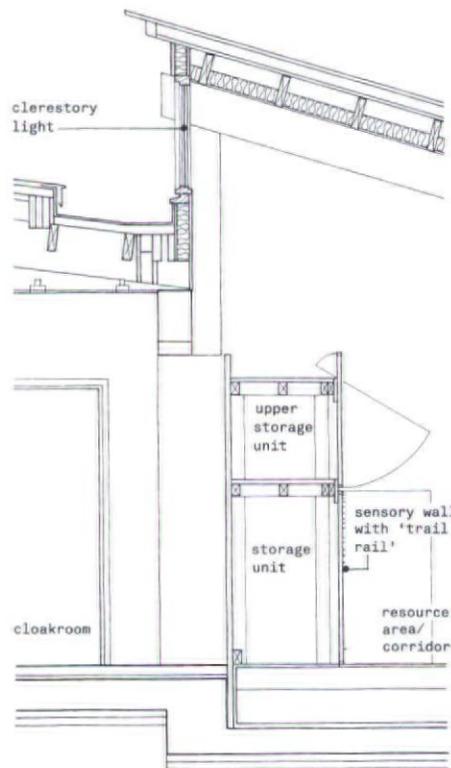
The cupboards are formed into bays that run between the wide openings to cloakrooms and classrooms. In plan each pair of doors is set at a slightly different angle, with 120mm recesses between them; the subtle variations in plane and form help the children to locate themselves. A horizontal 'trail rail', a guide used by running fingers along it, continues along all the doors and returns at openings. The trail rail consists of horizontal lengths of 9mm light oak beads, which are pinned and glued to the doors at different heights to accommodate children of all heights. The beads are set in cork wall covering which provides a contrast in feel and texture.

By Susan Dawson

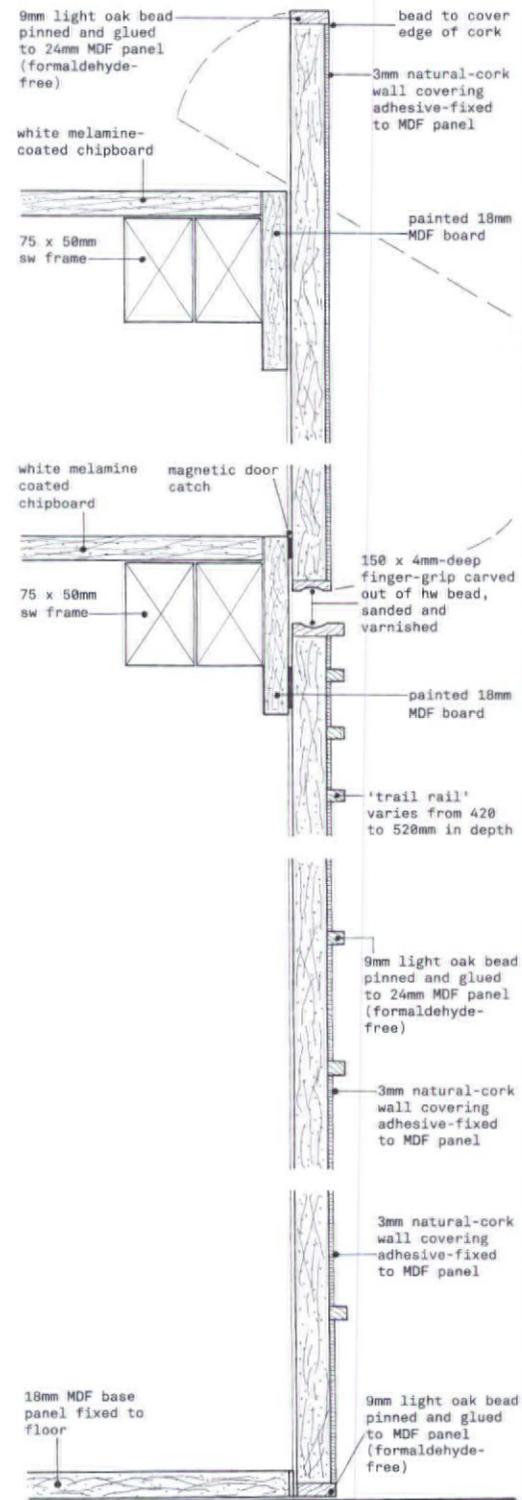
Note: all exposed surfaces finished with Class 1 fire-rated paint or translucent varnish

all doors held closed with magnetic closers

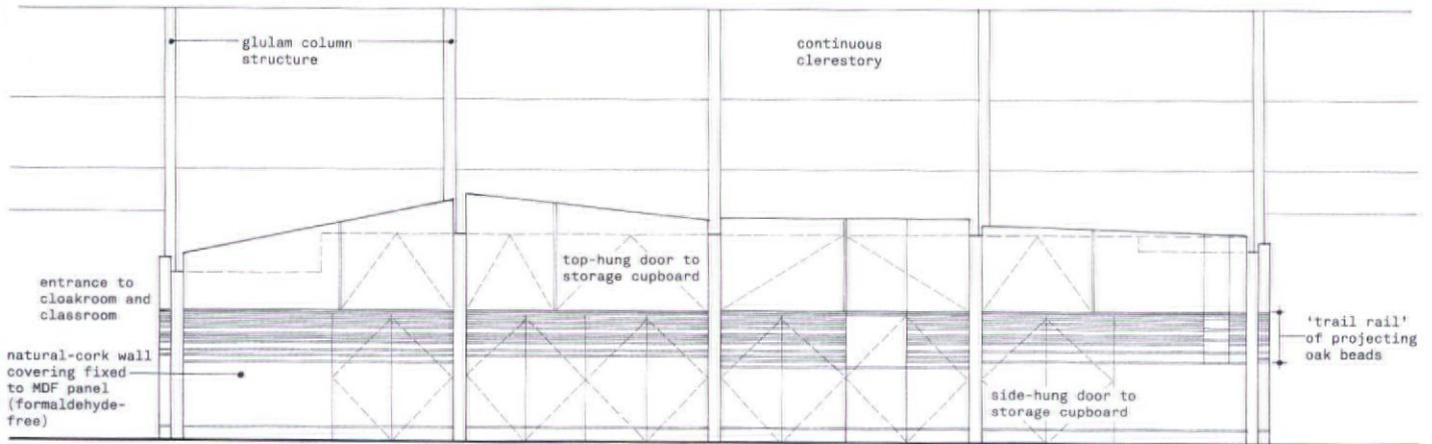
formaldehyde-free MDF used throughout



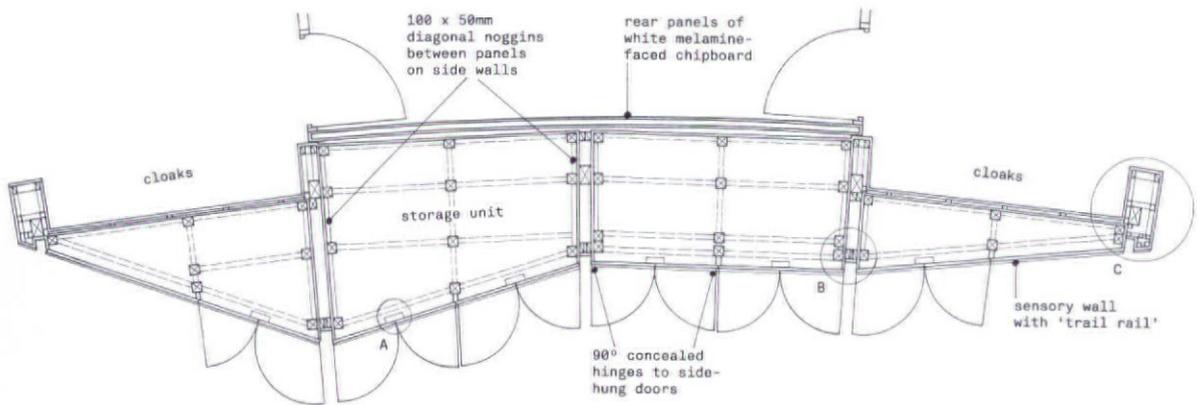
KEY SECTION THROUGH SENSORY WALL



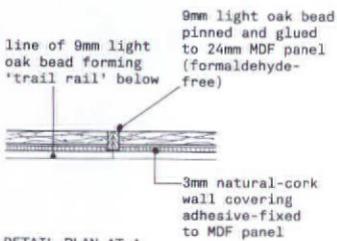
DETAIL SECTION THROUGH DOOR



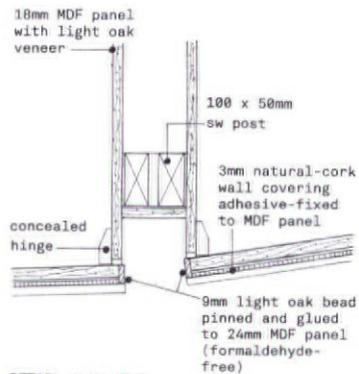
'ROLLED-OUT' ELEVATION OF TYPICAL SENSORY WALL BAY



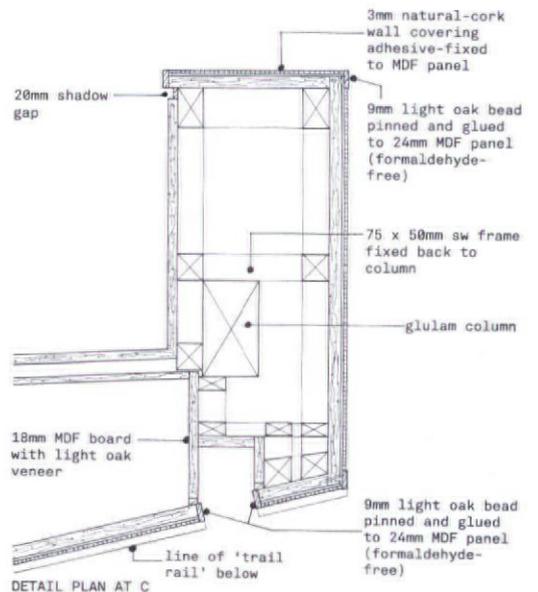
PLAN OF TYPICAL SENSORY WALL BAY



DETAIL PLAN AT A



DETAIL PLAN AT B



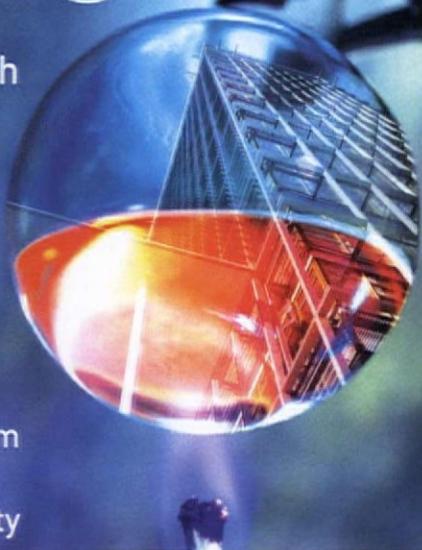
DETAIL PLAN AT C

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Open Meeting 2007

14 November 2007
London SE10

English Partnerships, the national regeneration agency, is holding its Annual Open Meeting in November. The meeting provides an opportunity to hear about the wide range of our activities and achievements during the last year. The programme will include presentations from a senior Government Minister and our executive team. If you would like to attend this meeting, please contact us by Friday 26 October to request a ticket.

Admission is by ticket only.
Register online at:
www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/openmeeting

Alternatively contact us on:
T 0845 603 8314
E openmeeting@englishpartnerships.co.uk


English Partnerships
The National Regeneration Agency

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Healthcare Estates Conference & Exhibition

16-17 October 2007, Harrogate International Centre

Quality, Safety, Sustainability.

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The IHEEM conference – Healthcare Estates is the largest conference and exhibition in the UK dedicated to the key issues associated with delivering quality, sustainability and safety in patient-centred healthcare environments.

The conference is organised by IHEEM with three major themes dealing with acute and primary healthcare and features best practice in P21, PFI and LIFT in parallel sessions.

The exhibition contains the displays of over 150 companies dedicated to presenting the latest equipment, technologies and techniques for application in healthcare environments.

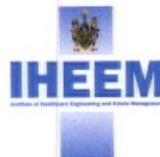
Acute & Primary Healthcare

Healthcare Estates features content dedicated to patient-centred environments in acute and primary healthcare facilities. It is the one event in the UK where everyone with responsibilities in these areas can meet to learn the latest initiatives, identify best practice and discuss the key issues of the day.

For the full conference programme and exhibitor list call the organiser's office or visit the website.

www.iheem.org.uk
www.healthcare-estates.com
Conference: 023 9282 3186
Exhibition: 01892 518877

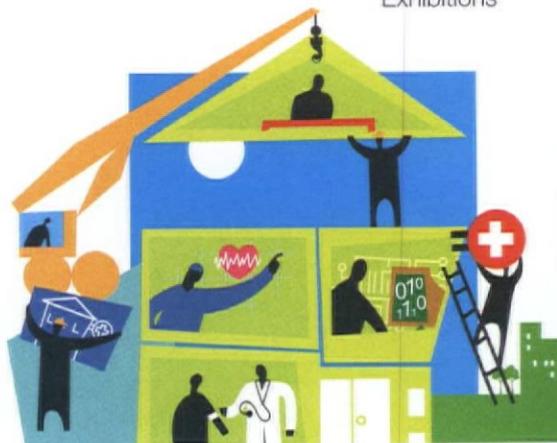
Organised by:



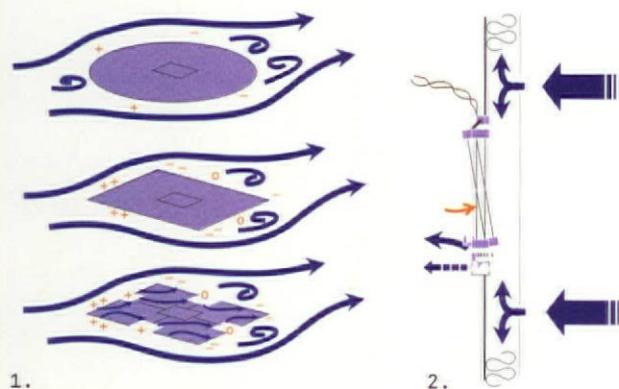
Exhibition organised by:



Step Exhibitions



ENQUIRY 21 ON CARD
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3.

1. Square tower forms are preferable for increasing wind pressure. Arup's Chris Twinn speaks about the effect of wind on tall-building design (see below)
2. Specialist trickle ventilators can be used to control wind speeds at operable windows
3. Zero-carbon seminar at BedZED (Events)

WHICH WAY DOES THE WIND BLOW FOR GREEN SKYSCRAPER DESIGN?

At 'City Development – Factoring in the Wind', Arup's one-day seminar at Tate Modern on 20 September, Arup director Chris Twinn focused on the role of wind in designing zero-carbon high-rise buildings. He noted that current best practice in towers still assumes mechanical ventilation, and that even towers designed with the possibility of natural ventilation – such as Fosters' CommerzBank and Swiss Re, have full back-up air-conditioning systems, which defeats the notion of an 'ecotower'.

According to Twinn, there is no reason why the principles which work on zero-carbon low-rise buildings on greenfield sites – natural ventilation; user-operated windows; internal temperature fluctuations up to 26°C; exposed thermal mass and night cooling; and 30 per cent maximum facade glazing – can't be applied to urban towers.

Upper floors of towers have the inherent advantages of

good daylight and availability of wind for natural cross-ventilation, yet key challenges include achieving cross-ventilation while retaining flexibility for tenant layouts – a problem at Swiss Re – and the design of operable windows so that air flow can be controlled. Technical solutions to these problems are available. Recent research on natural ventilation in high-rise residential towers undertaken at Arup's Hong Kong office can inform the commercial sector. A tower's floor plate could be naturally ventilated – in quadrants, say – allowing for increased flexibility. Specialist trickle ventilators, which are independent of wind pressure, have been developed in the Netherlands.

The commercial advantages of passive ventilation in towers are clear. Arup has estimated that smaller cores, reduced floor-to-floor heights and no area dedicated to plant rooms could lead to an increase from 65 per cent to

over 80 per cent of lettable space in a building. Carbon emissions could be reduced from current practice of approximately 60 to 25kWh/m²/yr.

Twinn also said that an ecotower might not necessarily look very different from a conventional one. It is the fundamental approach which will have to be different. He said that rather than developing a sophisticated double-skin facade, which reduces solar gain to within the capacity of an air-conditioning system, a multi-disciplinary design team, which runs the gamut from designer to facilities manager, must start from first principles, which were outlined in his presentation. 'Is the industry ready?' he asked.

EVENTS

Zero-Carbon Homes Seminar
29 September, 9.30am-4.30pm
 BedZED, Wallington, Surrey
www.bioregional.com

Running Your Own Practice
3 October, 9.30am-5.20pm
 Regent's College Conference Centre, Regent's Park, London NW1
riba.london@inst.riba.org

Health & Safety Update
4 October, 9.30am-12.30pm
 Building Centre, 26 Store Street, London WC1
riba.london@inst.riba.org

Designing for Climate Change
4 October, 1.15-5.00pm
 Bill Gething of Feilden Clegg Bradley is among the speakers
 New Hall, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge
jayne.ransom@inst.riba.org



A SIMPLE TOOLKIT IMPROVES THAI REFUGEE HOUSING

By Ruth Slavid

Burmese refugees living on the Thai border may soon find their standards of housing improving significantly, thanks to a project by two former students at the Architectural Association (AA). As part of a studio led by Simon Beames and Kenneth Fraser, Asif Khan and Julia King began researching the area – and in autumn 2006 they flew out to assess conditions there. There they found the Maela camp, which has housed a steady stream of refugees from Burma arriving over the past 20 years.

Because Thailand has not signed up to the UN charter on refugees, there is no United Nations presence at the nine camps along the Burmese border, which are helped by various NGOs. This means that there is no recognition that a more permanent form of housing has to be made available. Instead, the Thai government decrees that all buildings must remain temporary, banning, for example, concrete foundations.

NGOs supply bamboo to replace the houses annually. But this is not sustainable in the longer term. With 175,000 refugees living in the nine border camps, 1.5 million bamboo poles are needed every year. Already, says King, 'building materials are rationed out as if they are rice'.

And the houses are not satisfactory. When Khan and King surveyed residents of Maela, the main complaints were that the houses were too dark, and too hot in summer and too cold in winter. There was also a lack of air flow.

Another demand was for 'flexibility'. Khan and King were surprised when their interpreter produced this architectural

buzzword, but they soon came to understand what it meant. 'People need room for a bigger family, or even to move their house', says Khan. Because there is no culture of permanent building in the camps, those who started off in a poorly built shack are still living in a similar shack 10 or even 20 years later. Khan estimates that probably 20 per cent of the refugees could benefit from improved dwellings.

Having spent two weeks in the camps, King and Khan returned to the UK and prototyped a new foundation system, new joints and new roof designs, as well as carrying out larger-scale analyses of the arrangement of dwellings (*see opposite*). Then, having won an RIBA/John McAslan bursary (to support architects and engineers working in economically deprived areas) in January 2007, they returned to Thailand in May to try out their ideas.

Their solution was not to come up with a new house design, but to develop a 'toolkit' that could be used in locally designed houses. This addresses the problems of the government's restrictions on construction as well as the region's climatic conditions, which are hot and humid. This encourages both rot and termite attack, to both of which the standard building materials – bamboo, eucalyptus and teak leaves – are highly susceptible.

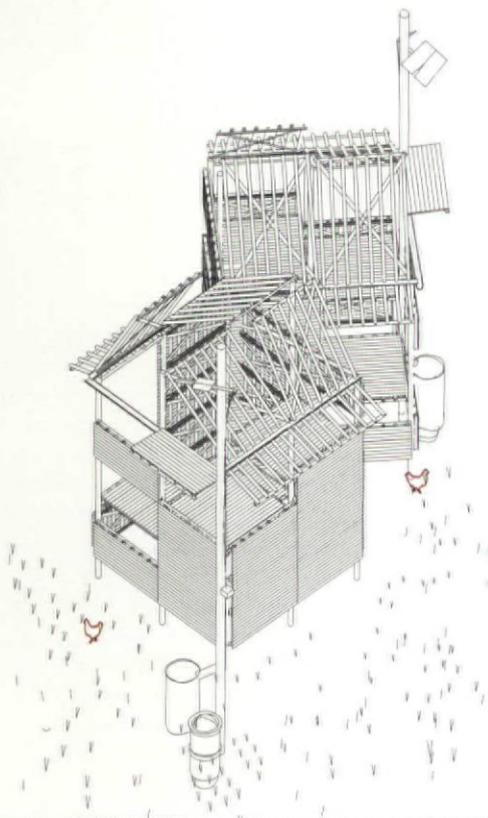
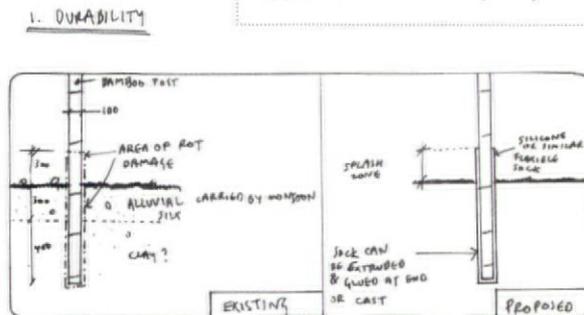
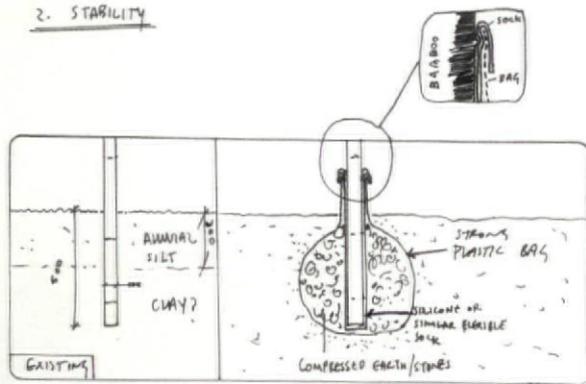
First Khan and King tackled the foundations. Although the refugees compact the soil, they do not install any drainage where the poles go in. This means that the structures can shift in heavy rain and they also become sodden.

Continued overleaf

THE DESIGN TOOLKIT FOCUSES ON FOUR KEY CONSTRUCTION ELEMENTS, SHOWN HERE.

FOUNDATIONS

Plastic bags filled with stones protect the bottoms of the structure's bamboo poles, preventing the foundations from shifting and guarding the poles from rot and termite attack. Concrete foundations are banned under a Thai government decree stating that all buildings in the camps must be temporary.

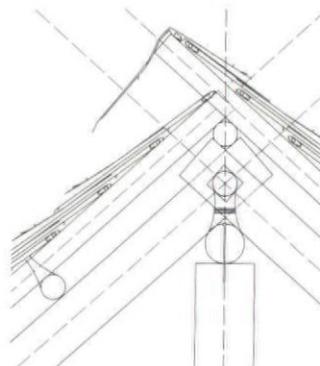
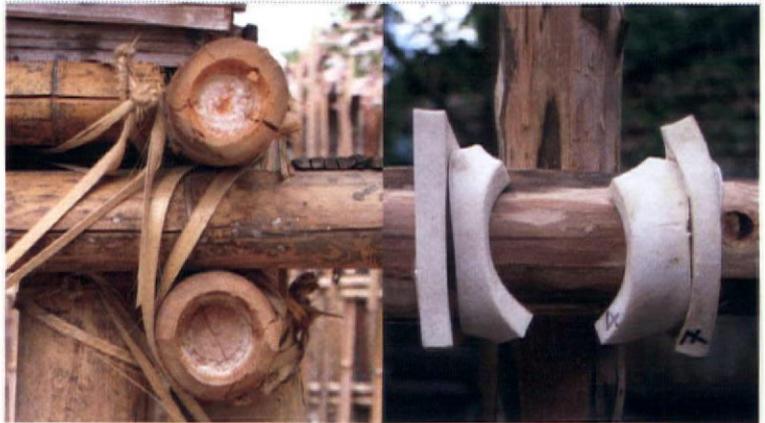


SITE LAYOUT

The housing should be grouped around 'infrastructure nodes'. These facilities will provide shared energy-generating solar panels, soak pits and party walls to save on costs and materials.

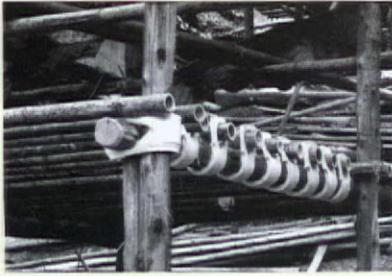
JOINTS

Sets of holes are punched into a flat sheet of silicon, which can be cut up and folded to create joints. These will eventually be made in rubber, which is cheaper. The refugees have been using bamboo strips (below left) which are too weak, and wire and nails are hard to come by in the refugee camps.

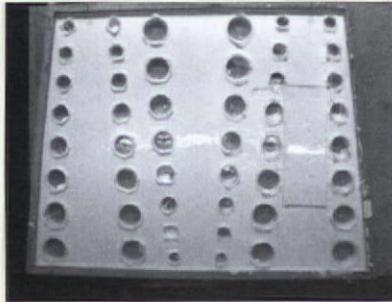


ROOFS

An asymmetric pitch, which opens at the top, improves light and ventilation, as well as allowing smoke from cooking to escape. The roof design was developed using the Ansys CFD simulation program and Ecotect illuminance analysis.



1.



2.

1 & 2. A set of silicone joints was formed from a perforated sheet and used on the test house
 3. All four jointing techniques - bamboo strips, wire fixings, nails and the silicone joints - were trialled on the house



3.

Khan and King's solution was to place the bottoms of the poles into plastic bags filled with stones. The idea is that in future these bags could be replaced by second-hand rubber from old bicycle tyres. On the test house, a slightly different approach has been used at the base of each pole.

The next area of approach was on the joints. Khan and King found that the commonly used technique of lashing bamboo poles together with thin strips of bamboo was the least durable solution and also the one that requires the highest skill level. Two other solutions often used, fixing with wire, and fixing with nails, are expensive and inflexible.

Khan and King came up with the idea of producing a joint in rubber, and tested a number with British company Bolton Rubber. They learned that, though a clever joint might work well mechanically, it would require too much manufacturing time and would be prohibitively expensive. Eventually, the pair came up with a 20mm-thick perforated sheet, which Bolton Rubber estimated could be made for 1p each. The prototypes used on site are of silicone sheet which was poured by hand at the AA.

King developed a new design for the roof using the Ansys CFD simulation programme, and Ecotect illuminance analysis. These showed that by giving the roof an asymmetric pitch, and by articulating it so that it can open at the top, both lighting and ventilation can be greatly improved.

Once back in Thailand, the pair developed an articulated roof with a local carpenter, and built it. This addressed issues of

light, airflow and cooling, and also a fourth issue - as a result of charcoal-fire cooking, respiratory illness is the main source of illness among children. The articulated roof allows the smoke to escape.

They also looked at the camps at a larger scale, proposing groupings of housing into 'infrastructure nodes' that could share solar panels, soak pits and other facilities, as well as having party walls that would save on materials. They analysed the development of the settlement including, rather rashly, chartering a plane to take aerial photography from which they could produce maps (this is a military zone).

So what next? Khan and King are waiting to hear from their contact in the NGO (the Thai Burma Border Consortium), Chris Clifford, about how their test hut weathered the monsoon. They may use their remaining bursary money either to go back to Thailand to carry out more studies or to kick-start manufacture of their joints.

In the meantime, Khan is rebuilding his own house and hopes in the future to move into product design and manufacture, while King is working with structural engineer Atelier One. Both have a keen interest in making things, which helped inspire their student project. With one billion people in the world living in bamboo housing, that work could turn out to be the most significant of their careers.

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ARCHITECTURE'S IN VOGUE WITH INDIE POPSTERS

My editor will probably point out that this isn't a music column, but I can't not mention Architecture in Helsinki. Currently enjoying a vogue, the boys and girls in this rather large indie pop band emanate, confusingly, not from any Aalto stable but from a lower-class suburb of Melbourne. They're a bit monotonous for my taste but hey, what about nominal solidarity?

On the other hand why isn't the ARB scampering after their air-conditioned coach demanding professional credentials? Or has the peripatetic ARB jobsworth in charge of enforcement succumbed to the siren sound and, forever forsaking the pleasures of Weymouth Street, clambered on board the tour bus?

Interestingly, instead of clicking on the section heads at www.architecturein.helsinki.com, you have to drag them into an OMA 'Delirious New York'-style cityscape before they will open. That took a while to figure out. But why Architecture? And why in Helsinki? The site remains sublimely uninterested in those topics, in the lad from ARB, or in the third-album rumblings of discontent from what's laughingly known as the music press.
sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com

PARTY LINE

Towards the end of standard form contracts are the dispute-resolution provisions, writes *Sue Lindsey*. It can pay to know at an early stage if they contain an arbitration clause. There is an optional one in the JCT forms, and they are also found in some standard terms of engagement, including, for example, the RIBA's SFA 99.

An arbitration clause is a contractual agreement between two parties to resolve their differences by that route. The rule of thumb is that arbitrations happen between the two contracting parties. This is very different from the position in litigation, where claimants can sue as many parties as they want, and the court is likely to hear related disputes at the same time. Courts support agreements between parties to arbitrate, and Section 9 of the Arbitration Act 1996 requires courts to stay litigation proceedings where one party wants to rely on its arbitration agreement.

So if, for example, an employer sues its contractor and architect, and the former has an arbitration clause and the latter does not, and the contractor applies to the court for a stay of the legal proceedings, the litigation will continue against the architect alone. This does not mean the employer cannot claim against the contractor, just that the claims will happen in separate

proceedings. There can be a fair amount of gamesmanship in working out who has an arbitration clause, who can be obliged to participate in multi-party proceedings, and hence who to fall out with at a particular time (and whose cooperation to retain for as long as possible).

Rarely, the reverse position can also arise, where a party applies to the court for an injunction to restrain arbitration proceedings. A recent case in the Technology and Construction Court (*Jarvis v Blue Circle*) appears to have been the first such case since the introduction of the 1996 Act. In reaching his decision, Mr Justice Jackson referred to a 1994 case, *University of Reading v Miller Construction*, which underlines the relevance of these issues for architects. The contractor started arbitration proceedings against its employer, the university. The university then sued the contractor together with its architect and engineer. The university sought, and obtained, an injunction restraining the arbitration. This allowed the university to have all its claims, including those against the consultants, dealt with together.

Jarvis v Blue Circle gave the court an opportunity to state the position on the granting of such injunctions after the 1996 Act. In summary, the court might very rarely grant an

injunction to restrain arbitration proceedings, if to do so does not cause injustice to the claimant in the arbitration, and if the continuation of the arbitration is oppressive, vexatious, unconscionable or an abuse of process. This is in sharp contrast to the obligation of the court under section 9 to stay legal proceedings where there is an arbitration clause, and is consistent with the policy behind the 1996 Act to promote arbitration.

So if faced with the possibility of concurrent proceedings, reckon on the arbitration continuing, and plot your course accordingly.

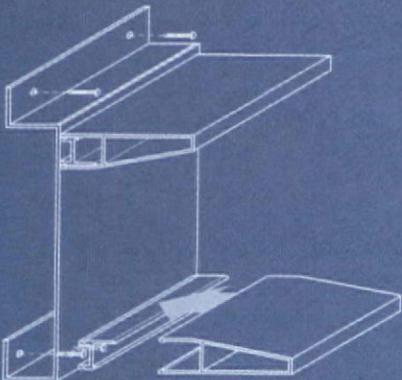
Sue Lindsey is a barrister at Crown Office Chambers in London. Visit www.crownofficechambers.com



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'I AM THE TYPE OF ARCHITECT WHO LIKES TO DO EVERYTHING BY HIMSELF'

—Wiel Arets

Dutch architect Wiel Arets, designer of the Academy of Arts and Architecture in Maastricht (1993) and former dean of Amsterdam's Berlage Institute, has turned to product design with Italian manufacturer Alessi. His Ilbagno Alessi Dot bathroom range was unveiled at this year's Milan Furniture Fair and brought to London Design Festival last week. Jaffer Kolb caught up with Arets at 100% Design in Earls Court, London, where the architect talked about the bathroom range, his practice, and his wife.

I guess the most natural place to start is with the reason you're here: this bathroom range for Alessi. How did the collaboration begin?

Alberto Alessi called me a few years ago to participate in the Tea and Coffee Towers project (2000), with a number of other architects. We designed a product that didn't stand on the table, but rather hung in an artificial glass piece. Afterwards, he asked us to design an espresso cup, and we responded by producing a rectangular piece. So we were in contact more and more, and Alessi finally approached me with a question: would we design a bathroom range?

As architects, in all our buildings we try and do as much as possible by ourselves. Obviously we design the house and the garden – but we also do all the furniture. So I was really interested in taking on this project.



I imagine the designer/manufacturer relationship is analogous to the architect/client relationship. What's your take?

From the beginning Alberto was all about having meetings with everyone involved. We were always accompanied by the directors of both Laufen and Oras. Oras produced the taps and Laufen the ceramics. I attended every meeting as well, which was good. We could be critical and get to know each other. They would react to anything immediately; the design process became quite elaborate and productive.

Because the manufacturers were at these meetings, we addressed problems in the details. For me things are always 'in the shop', I am the type of architect who wants to do everything himself. I am not just interested in the design and manufacturing, but also in details such as how we put together the catalogue.

What's interesting about Alessi is that they bring in people from the outside and keep asking you to work with them as long as they're interested in what you're doing. It's a fantastic deal – we can create a real line over a range of products.

In terms of our relationship with clients, in Holland we're working with two clients who have asked us to do 2,000 housing units over several properties. They find properties and contact us to ask if they should buy them. We decide if we can do something

interesting there. The process starts with these broad questions of our opinion of the site, but then get quite specific – about, for example, outfitting distinctive kitchens.

After the bathroom range, would you do a kitchen range?

Now, with our research in kitchens, maybe it'll be the other way around, and we'll approach Alberto to look at our designs. With these projects, it can go from one direction to the other.

Are issues of the differing scale between these ranges and your buildings important or irrelevant?

You have to be careful when you talk about scale. Whether I do a watch and think about things at 1/10 of a millimetre, or a building and think about scale in centimetres, it's all the same. It comes down to thinking about basic issues like beauty. I never design something to be beautiful. If it functions well, there's a moment when it becomes beautiful. Look around here at the design festival. Everyone is trying to design things that are beautiful.

With people it's the same – women who try to be beautiful are not interesting to me. You should meet my wife, you'll see what I'm talking about.

Is she very functional?

She functions very well. I'm extremely happy.

With products, I think you should aim to have a relationship with an object for a long time. A lot of people buy things that they plan to throw away, but I think that this is the wrong approach. Everything has to be considered. For example, in our bathroom range, the toilet-paper roll has the same diameter as the taps.

You get a lot of pleasure from putting on a new roll; it's a kind of pleasure that makes you extremely happy about the product.

'We imagine our range in the strangest situations – I want people to put a WC next to their bed'



1.



2.



ARCHENOVA/ARCAID

3.

1. & 2. Arets worked with ceramics producer Laufen to ensure perfectly flat surfaces for his IlbagnoSassini Dot bathroom range, 'to keep your glass of whisky on'

3. Wiel Arets' University Library Utrecht (2004)

So if you're an architect who likes to have so much control, was it hard to work on an interiors range that could fit into any environment and be potentially bastardised in some really poorly designed space?

That's a really, really important question. Usually people present these bathroom ranges in a bathroom condition. In our advertising, we put them in a museum and a library. We imagine these products in the strangest conditions. I want people to put a WC next to a bed, and a bath in their dining room. I would like to strengthen this idea that people think in unconventional ways.

And what if – and this is likely – they don't push those limits?

That's fine with me. That's the same with any building I design. When I finished my library (University Library, Utrecht, 2004), I realised that there would be 1,200 people studying and working there every day. I can't tell them to sit like this or do something like that. They use the space as they want.

I think when you make a building flexible, it lasts longer. I've been building for 15 or 16 years, and none of my buildings has ever been changed; not even separation walls have been shifted. When I'm involved in a project, I don't stop designing when the space opens. I'm involved for up to three or four years after people have started to use it. This is why we have a rather small office. I only want 40 people on commissions we're interested in.

This approach is the same as with the products I've designed. It took a long time to get the Alessi range out, but people will understand its strengths. I have a lot of trust in the buyers.

What about the people who use your buildings?

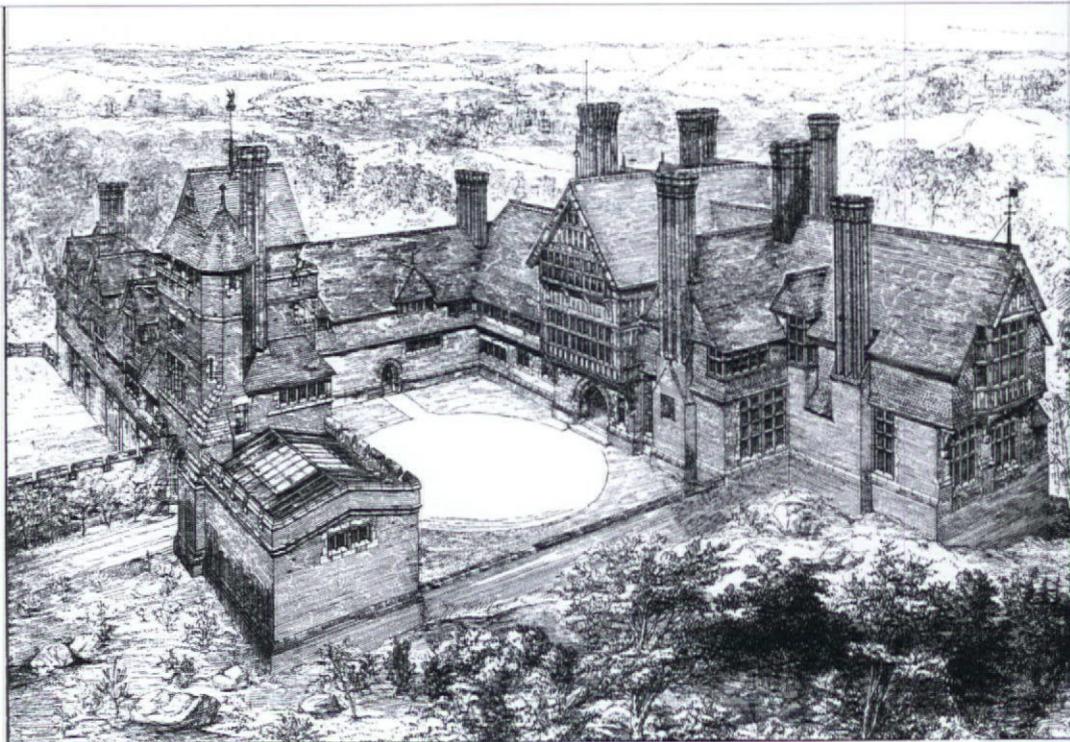
Definitely the people who use our buildings too. We did a football stadium in Holland (Stadium Euroborg in Groningen, 2006). It's not too big, and we tried to remove a lot of those barriers that you find at stadiums. The idea was that we wanted to make the space into a theatre. Everyone I talk to about it says themselves that it feels like a theatre – they get that experience.

REVIEW

BOOK

By Peter Davey

The English House.
By Hermann Muthesius.
Frances Lincoln, 2007.
768pp. £125



1.

Leaving out our own times (too close for objective judgement) Britain has scarcely ever been a world leader in architecture, except at the turn of the 19th century, when the Arts and Crafts movement and the English Free Style influenced architects from Tokyo to Toronto. This achievement (at least in domestic architecture) was brilliantly celebrated by Hermann Muthesius, an architect and attaché in the German embassy here from 1896 to 1904.

Muthesius studied a huge range of British technology and design, but his main enthusiasm was for houses, as testified by his three-volume *Das Englische Haus*, published in Berlin in 1904–1905. From garden gate to soap dish, it systematically analysed late-19th-century developments historically,

functionally, aesthetically and technologically.

Now it has finally been fully translated into English and reproduced in three volumes – following the original layout, using the original pictures. It becomes clear that Muthesius was far from an impartial observer. He was much influenced by John Ruskin, and William Morris was one of his heroes, so his commentaries on contemporary architecture start with people like Philip Webb and Norman Shaw and their new architectures free of historical stylism.

England was a strange and magical country for Muthesius because of its green landscapes, its individualism, its wealth, and its emphasis on houses rather than flats. He was a little troubled by the fact that the first blocks of leasehold flats

had begun to appear in London, but hoped that they were a product of special circumstances. Compared to flats, 'the most valuable gain from living in a private house is [the] closer contact with nature and the greater bodily and spiritual health which it brings'.

Muthesius's book largely celebrates the great explosion of middle-class houses in the second half of the 19th century – but not entirely, for he does glance at company towns like Bournville and Port Sunlight and at the emergent Garden City movement, in which 'social questions have been firmly linked to questions of art, and it must be said that this has been greatly to their advantage'.

After the historical and contemporary overviews of the first volume, the second concentrates on layout and

nature of the principal spaces of house and garden, with detailed discussions of construction and sanitation (the latter, with its scientific drainage and constant hot water, was much admired by Muthesius). The third volume is largely devoted to interiors, furniture and fittings and offers many curious insights – for instance, that trouser creases, much admired on the continent and created there by pressing, were in England the result of laying clothes flat in drawers, rather than hanging them up. Tallboys to house the clothes were kept in a dressing room 'always... attached to the master-bedroom in the English house'.

It is too easy to point to Muthesius's class bias. All changes in architecture are started for people with money. Muthesius saw in the British



2.



CRITIC'S CHOICE

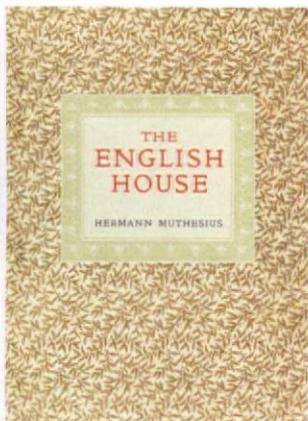
By Andrew Mead

'The object is to build for human beings in the same way that a tailor builds a suit of clothes round a certain body,' said *Basil Spence* – a key figure in post-war British architecture, who died in 1976. This quotation immediately catches your eye in a travelling exhibition on Spence, which is at his Swiss Cottage Library in London (*pictured*) until 6 October. The show has been developed by Glasgow's The Lighthouse with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, which holds the Spence archive.

It's modest, but offers more than first appears, because of its audio-visual elements – including testimony from one of the tenants of the demolished Queen Elizabeth tower block in the Gorbals, who says that moving there after living in tenements was like going to 'a six-star hotel on stilts'. Jonathan Glancey enthuses about the University of Sussex, while lesser-known buildings (the secondary schools) appear beside the inevitable Coventry Cathedral. The show travels later to Edinburgh, Thurso and Glasgow but is really just a taster for the major Spence exhibition at Edinburgh's Dean Gallery opening on 19 October (www.basilspence.org.uk).

With a high public profile in his lifetime, and serious international commissions, Spence was a forerunner of celebrity architects like Herzog & de Meuron and Zaha Hadid, whose work figures in filmmaker Neutral's *Moving Space* – the final show at the Architecture Foundation's Yard Gallery in London's Old Street, continuing until 13 October. Specialist in the use of digital animation to present architecture, Neutral produces some very slick packages indeed, as this reprise of its greatest hits makes clear (www.architecturefoundation.org.uk).

Herzog & de Meuron's Allianz Arena in Munich and Hadid's Cincinnati Arts Center get the Neutral treatment, in what are essentially advertisements – promotional and marketing tools for their clients, catering for short attention spans. But seen in succession, what they point up is the limits of the *visual* in communicating architecture. As that Spence quote about the human body suggests, all our senses are implicated. Neutral sells the product but trivialises it too. For forthcoming events visit www.ajplus.co.uk/diary



3.

1, 2 & 3. Norman Shaw was one of Muthesius' heroes – pictured is his Leyswood at Groombridge, Sussex (left). Arts and Crafts houses like Baillie Scott's Blackwell, Windermere (below), impressed Muthesius with their naturalness and functionality

the soaring flights of his imagination to the captivity of imitative design?' He hoped the 'retrogression' was merely a swing of the pendulum, but within a year of publication of the third volume, Lutyens, hailed by Muthesius as leader of the younger generation, produced Heathcote, his full-blown Mannerist Doric manifesto near Ilkley.

The height of the movement was brilliant but brief. We are extraordinarily lucky that Muthesius recorded it with such love – and that publisher Frances Lincoln and editor Dennis Sharp have brought the book back to life in English with an excellent translation by Janet Seligman and Stewart Spencer. It has taken a century, but Muthesius has been thanked by the English at last.

domestic architecture of his time a freedom and individuality that must have seemed almost revolutionary in the rigid authoritarian ethos of Wilhelmine Germany. He loved the Arts and Crafts atmosphere of naturalness, friendliness and functionality in which 'everything breathes simplicity, homeliness and rural freshness' instead of, as in Art Nouveau, 'a sham modernity expressing itself extravagantly in whimsical artificiality'.

The movement produced some of the most moving, innovative, practical and sensitive houses ever built, but when the book was published, the end was already in sight. Muthesius lamented Norman Shaw's conversion to full Palladianism at Bryanston (1895), asking 'what could have made the master return from



1.

BOOK

By *Elain Harwood*

The Practice of Modernism: Modern Architects and Urban Transformation, 1954-1972.

By John R Gold.
Routledge, 2007.
336pp. £29.99



2.

1 & 2. The collapse of Ronan Point (above left) and the problems of Cumbernauld town centre (above) are prominent in John Gold's rather downbeat book

A decade ago, John Gold's *The Experience of Modernism* offered a geographer's insight into the aspirations of the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) and post-war planners facing the rebuilding of Britain's slums and blitzed town centres (AJ 21.05.98). It was wide-ranging, fresh and challenging. This follow-up looks at Modernism's ascendant years, as cities like Birmingham and Glasgow were transformed with new centres and housing blocks, and Cumbernauld offered an alternative to the Garden City.

Only London escaped wholesale transformation – though there were isolated monuments such as Richard Seifert's Centre Point offices and Darbourne & Darke's Lillington Gardens housing in Pimlico. The end of this

euphoria came in 1968 with the collapse of a tower block in the Borough of Newham – Ronan Point. With it went the privileged financial conditions that enabled such projects, along with public confidence in architects, planners and other professionals.

The book is a counter to Nicholas Bullock's optimistic *Building the Post-War World* (AJ 17.04.03) by offering a critique of what went wrong. In Gold's world little went right, shown for instance in his account of central Ilford, still a sea of car parks 40 years after a new civic centre was proposed.

Gold is most illuminating on movements such as the MARS Group, wound up in 1957, and the Society for Promotion of Urban Renewal (SPUR) – a collaboration between architects and planners

in private practice and the public sector. SPUR's activities included an elaborate scheme in 1958 for a high-density centre of shops, offices and housing over Boston Manor Tube station. Its designers, chiefly Graeme Shankland and Peter Chamberlin, went on to plan London's Barbican estate, and to remodel swathes of central Liverpool. The story brings out Gold's meticulous research and background in urban geography.

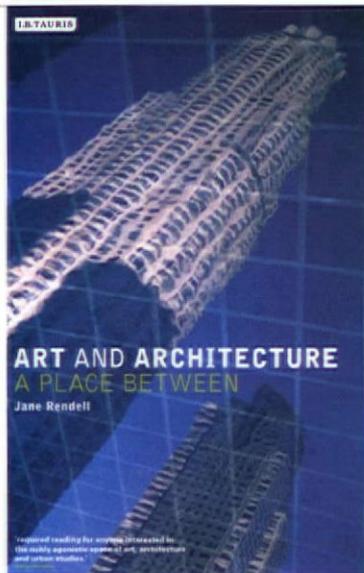
But Gold seems rather less happy in front of buildings. He has based his account where possible on interviews with the perpetrators, either conducted personally or sourced from the National Sound Archive. Architects' comments can be contradictory, with a dangerous emphasis given to the survivors; in practice Gold generally offers

a fresh critique of existing published sources and shows himself to be quite scarily well-read.

Yet it is disappointing to read another book about the failure of Cumbernauld's town centre, or the problems of Ivor Smith and Jack Lynn's Park Hill estate in Sheffield and Owen Luder's Tricorn Centre in Portsmouth. There was more to the 1950s and '60s. And why can't Gold acknowledge the successes, such as the new universities, or recognise the quality of the actual architecture?

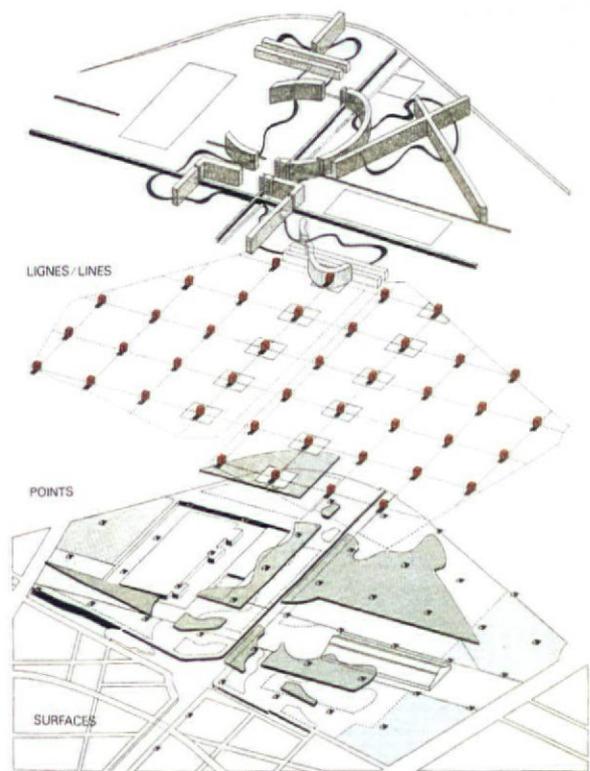
This is another book let down by Routledge's poor production values, but more depressing is the gloom with which Gold invests his subject.

Elain Harwood is a historian with English Heritage



1.

1 & 2. Jane Rendell's book includes persuasive readings of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin and Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette, Paris (above)



2.

BOOK

By Richard Williams

Art and Architecture:
A Place Between.

By Jane Rendell.

I B Tauris, 2006.

£18.99

This is a survey of a wide range of contemporary events, installations and interventions, assembled under the rubric of 'critical spatial practice'. Its theoretical reference points include Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, familiar to a generation of architecture students, but also the urban geographers David Harvey and Doreen Massey, and the art critic Rosalind Krauss. The cover recommendation comes from Rosalyn Deutsche, whose excellent book *Evictions* (AJ 02.10.97) was perhaps the first large-scale account of the topic.

Compared to Deutsche's book, Jane Rendell's is broader in scope and less episodic. It's admirably clear throughout. The account of Benjamin is exemplary, while her discussions of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish

Museum Berlin, Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial, Vienna, and Bernard Tschumi's Parc de La Villette, Paris, are detailed and persuasive. The book covers many less-well-known cases too – for example, a 1999 group show, 'In the Midst of Things', which took place in the model village of Bournville, replete with purple fountains and cabbages grown in chocolate.

But the book's breadth can be a weakness: a lot of the work Rendell describes is dull, or worse. I thought Sophie Calle's intervention at London's Freud Museum in 1999 – her wedding dress laid on his couch, her wig on a table in the hall – was trite and pretentious. The account of Lacaton and Vassal stripping out the Palais de Tokyo in Paris to create an

'architecture of omission' is worthy of Pseud's Corner in *Private Eye*. If these were 'critical spatial practices', to use Rendell's terminology, then the critique was apparent only to their authors.

I blame Robert Smithson. Probably the most overrated artist of his generation, he has been the subject of a most effective posthumous marketing campaign, which holds large parts of the art world in its thrall. In 1968 he came up with his 'site/nonsite dialectic', a blurb exhibited alongside some recent sculpture. Few critics thought much of it at the time, but for Rendell it underpins her notion of 'criticality'.

Unfortunately, Smithson's key work, the Spiral Jetty (1970), is about as 'critical' as a Mercedes-Benz. Rendell's picture of it isn't any of the

official views, but an aerial shot by the artists Cornford and Cross from 2002. This is presumably because Smithson's estate treats the jetty as a cash cow, charging exorbitantly for photo-reproduction rights. There's no criticality here, just an example of the art world making a killing.

Some openness about that and other material questions would have been welcome. I'd like to have known more too of the consumption of these works – the views of those who live with them, willingly or otherwise. The book reads very well overall, and is one of the few useful route maps to this burgeoning area of practice, but there's a little too much that's like art-world PR.

Richard Williams teaches at the University of Edinburgh

13th November 2007 – Wellcome Collection, London NW1

A black and white photograph showing the silhouettes of several people walking away from the camera down a modern, brightly lit hallway. The hallway has a high ceiling and large windows on the left side. The people are walking towards a bright opening at the end of the hallway, possibly a staircase or an exit. The overall atmosphere is one of movement and modern architecture.

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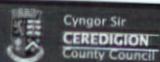
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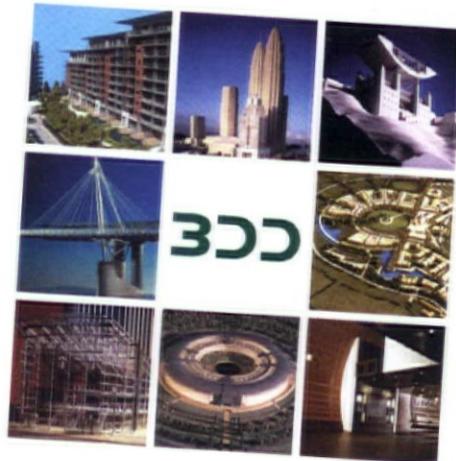
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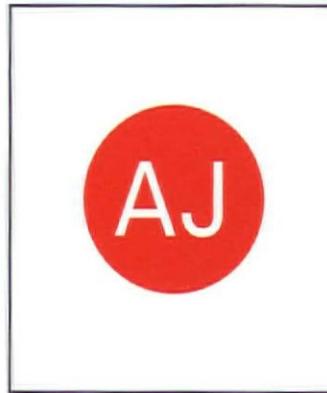
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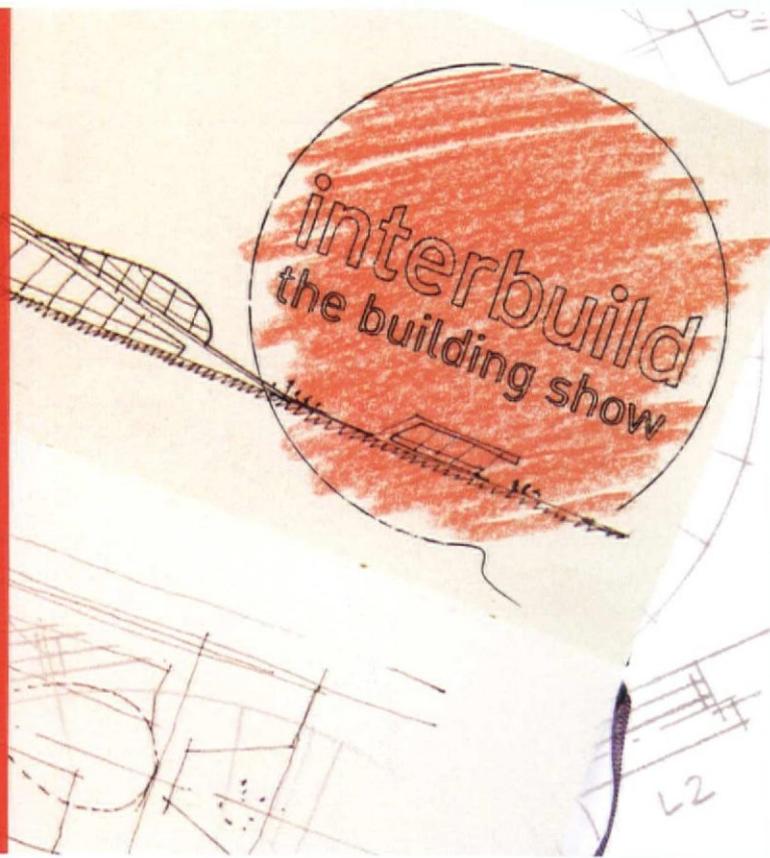
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Sketch image by Stuart Martin of WAM architects.

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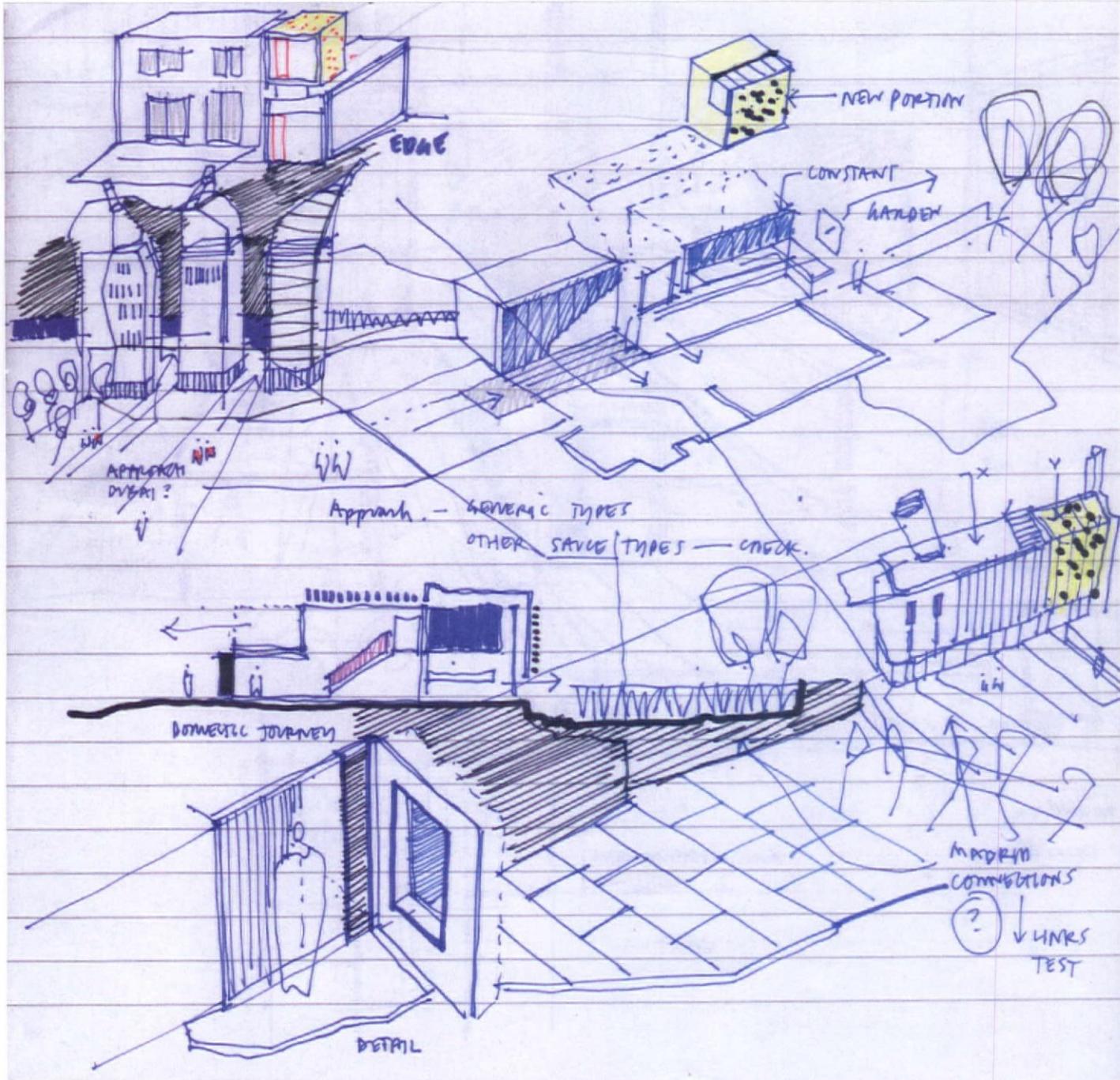
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Concept sketches for residential projects in Sheffield.
By Satwinder Samra, co-founder of Sauce Architecture and
a lecturer at Sheffield University

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The new revolutionary Satinjet shower system from Deva can save up to 50 per cent on water and energy while providing a luxurious and rejuvenating cleansing experience. The unique twin-jet technology of Satinjet sets it apart from all other shower systems available in the UK.

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'Kalwall on the Roof' is the latest publication from Stoakes Systems showing how architects have used highly insulating Kalwall diffused daylighting cladding and roofing system to create stunning roof solutions, without shadows, glare or any need for blinds. See www.stoakes.co.uk

CLAXTON BLINDS



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Claxton Blinds is one of the leading commercial window-blind companies in the UK, specialising in interior window projects for any requirement. Notable projects include Tower 42, the Canary Wharf Tower and the Citigroup Tower. For more information visit www.claxton-blinds.com

CORUS



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Colorcoat Prisma prefinished steel from Corus has been used on this distribution centre near Birmingham. The building has been clad using a Corus panels and profile system in a silver metallic colour. Colorcoat Prisma prefinished steel is backed by the Confidex Guarantee for up to 25 years.

SILENT GLISS



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The new Project Collection of fabrics from Silent Gliss includes 29 new fabrics and 17 of the most popular fabrics from the old Technical Collection. The book is extremely easy to use, with clear indications of solar coefficients, FR certifications, transparencies and application suitability.

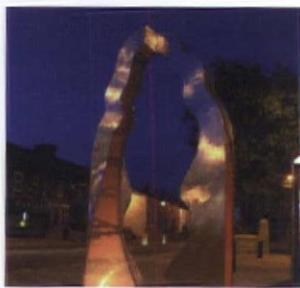
URBIS LIGHTING



AJ ENQUIRY 206

Urbis Lighting has supplied its Thylia luminaires to several areas in Sheffield as part of its city-centre masterplan regeneration project. All the Thylias are fitted with 150W or 70W CDM-T lamps, which produce a soft white glow at night. For more information see www.urbislighting.com

AQUILA DESIGN



AJ ENQUIRY 207

Aquila has supplied two of its Noctis 225 units to an illuminated sculpture for Tong Fold Local Centre in Bolton. Each individual unit is recessed into the base of each arm of the sculpture and is equipped with 12 colour-change LEDs. For more information see www.aquiladesign.co.uk

PITACS



AJ ENQUIRY 208

The three-dimensional effect of the new Coffer radiator from Aeon Radiator Heaven leads the eye straight to the centre of the design, with its fashionable, sharply defined square shape fitting comfortably with the up-to-the-moment design cues and clean-edged finishes of modern apartments and houses.

Alcove Sofa

Design: Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec



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