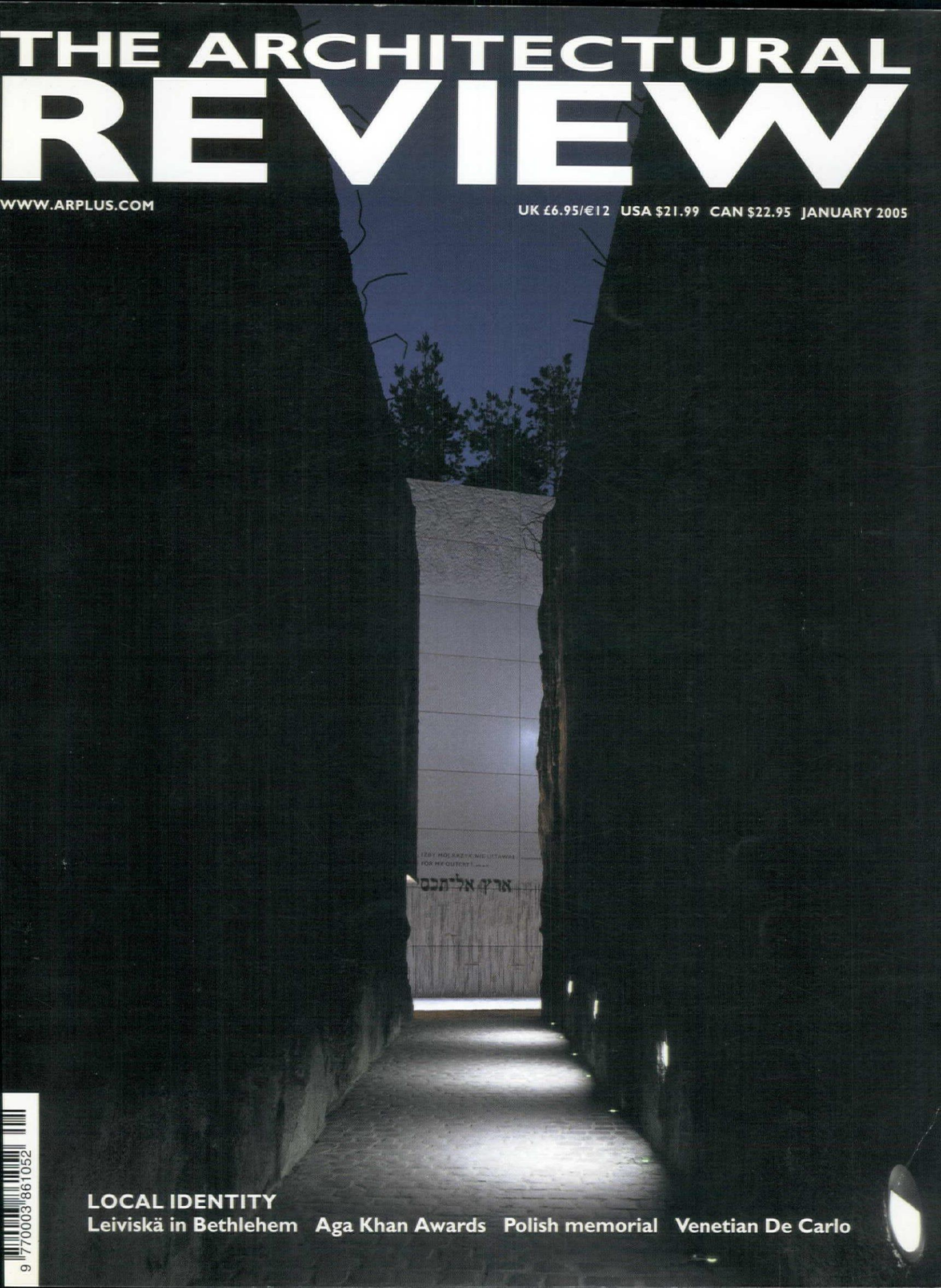
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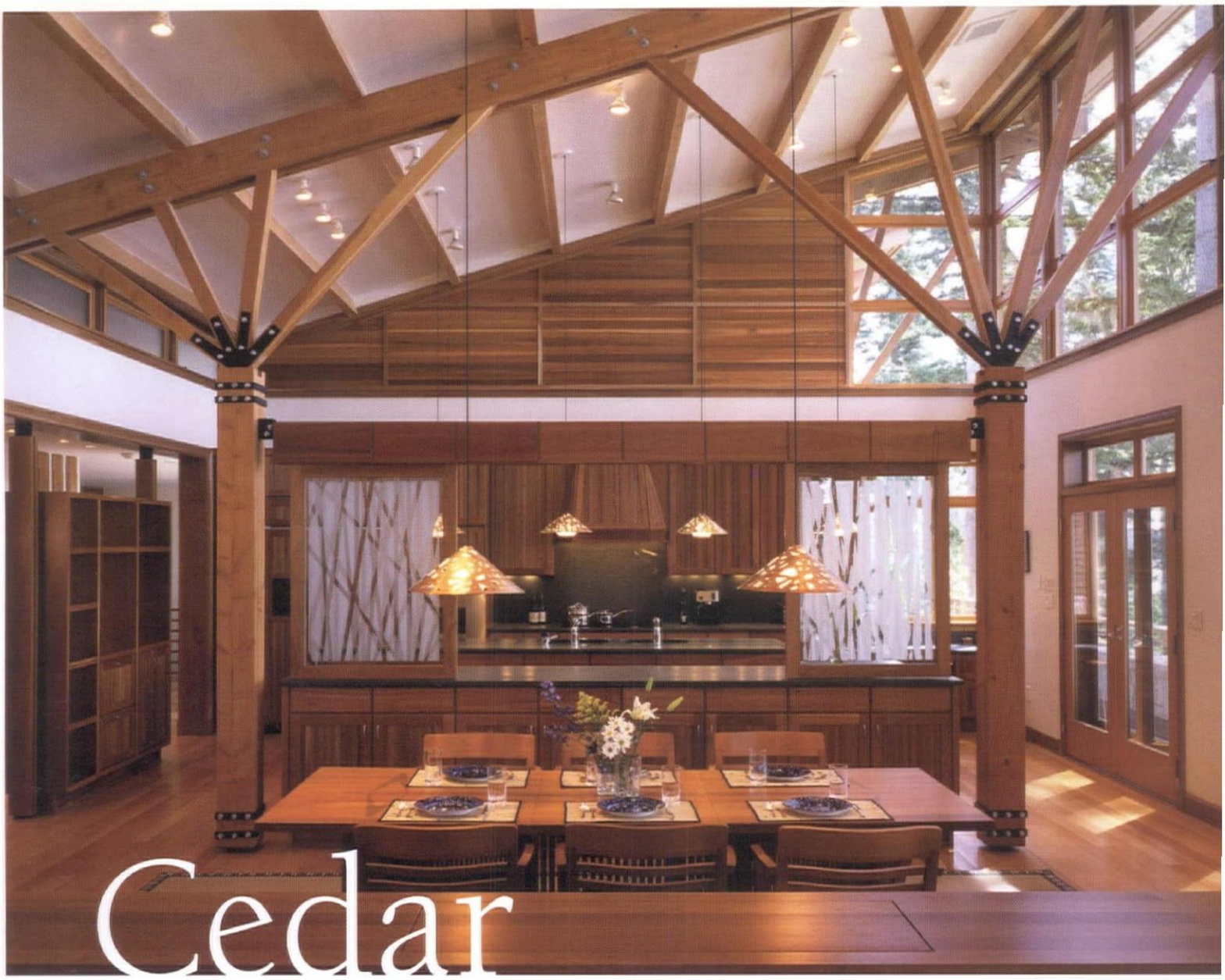
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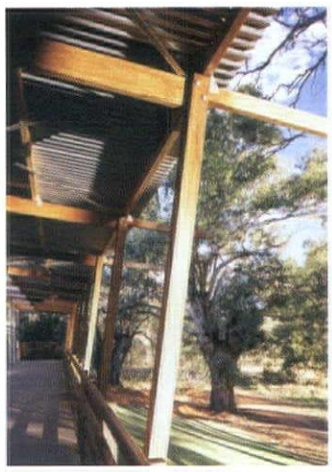
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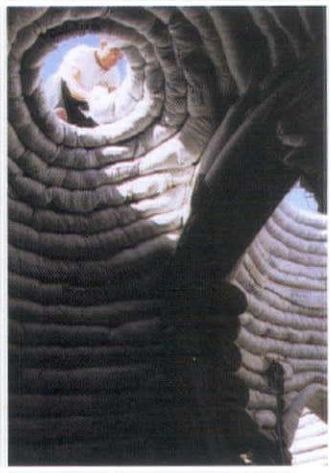
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Health centre, Wilcannia (p32)


Cultural centre, Bethlehem (p38)


Sandbag shelter prototypes (p72)

LOCAL IDENTITY

VIEW
17 Duchamp: just a flush in the pan; Design ≠ Art; Beyeler's ArchiSculpture

VIEW FROM WARSAW
26 By Christian Brensing

DESIGN REVIEW
28 Display system, Sunbury, England SHOPKIT DESIGNS

COMMENT
30 Architects must cherish the particular against a corrosive tide of globalization

LOCAL IDENTITY
32 Health centre, Wilcannia, Australia MERRIMA
38 Cultural centre, Bethlehem, Israel JUHA LEIVISKÄ
44 Lido, Venice, Italy GIANCARLO DE CARLO
48 Civic centre, Athlone, Ireland KEITH WILLIAMS ARCHITECTS
54 Cemetery, Belzec, Poland DDJM
58 Public art, City, London ARUP ASSOCIATES WITH SIMON PATTERSON

62 **AGA KHAN AWARDS 2004**
63 Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt SNØHETTA HAMZA CONSORTIUM
66 Primary school, Gando, Burkina Faso, West Africa DIÉBÉDO FRANCIS KÉRÉ
69 House, Büykhüsun, Ayvacik, Turkey HAN TÜMERTEKIN
70 Mosque restoration, Asnaf, Yemen MARYLENE BARRET WITH ABDULLAH AL-HADRAMI
72 Sandbag shelter prototypes CAL-EARTH INSTITUTE / NADER KHALILI
74 Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia CESAR PELLI & ASSOCIATES
76 Revitalization programme, Old City of Jerusalem, Israel WELFARE ASSOCIATION

HOUSE
80 House, Kobe, Japan HIROAKI OHTANI

PRODUCT REVIEW
84 Innovations in timber

BOOKS
88 Sensory design; expressing structure; the architect king; towards universality; Robert Smithson

DELIGHT
90 Urban park, Glendale, California, USA RIOS CLEMENTI HALE STUDIOS

COVER
54 Cemetery, Belzec, Poland DDJM Photographs by Wojciech Krynski

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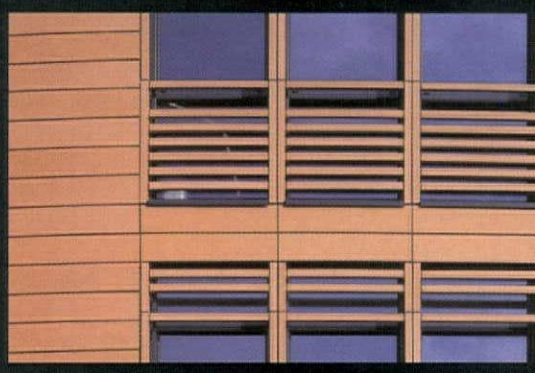
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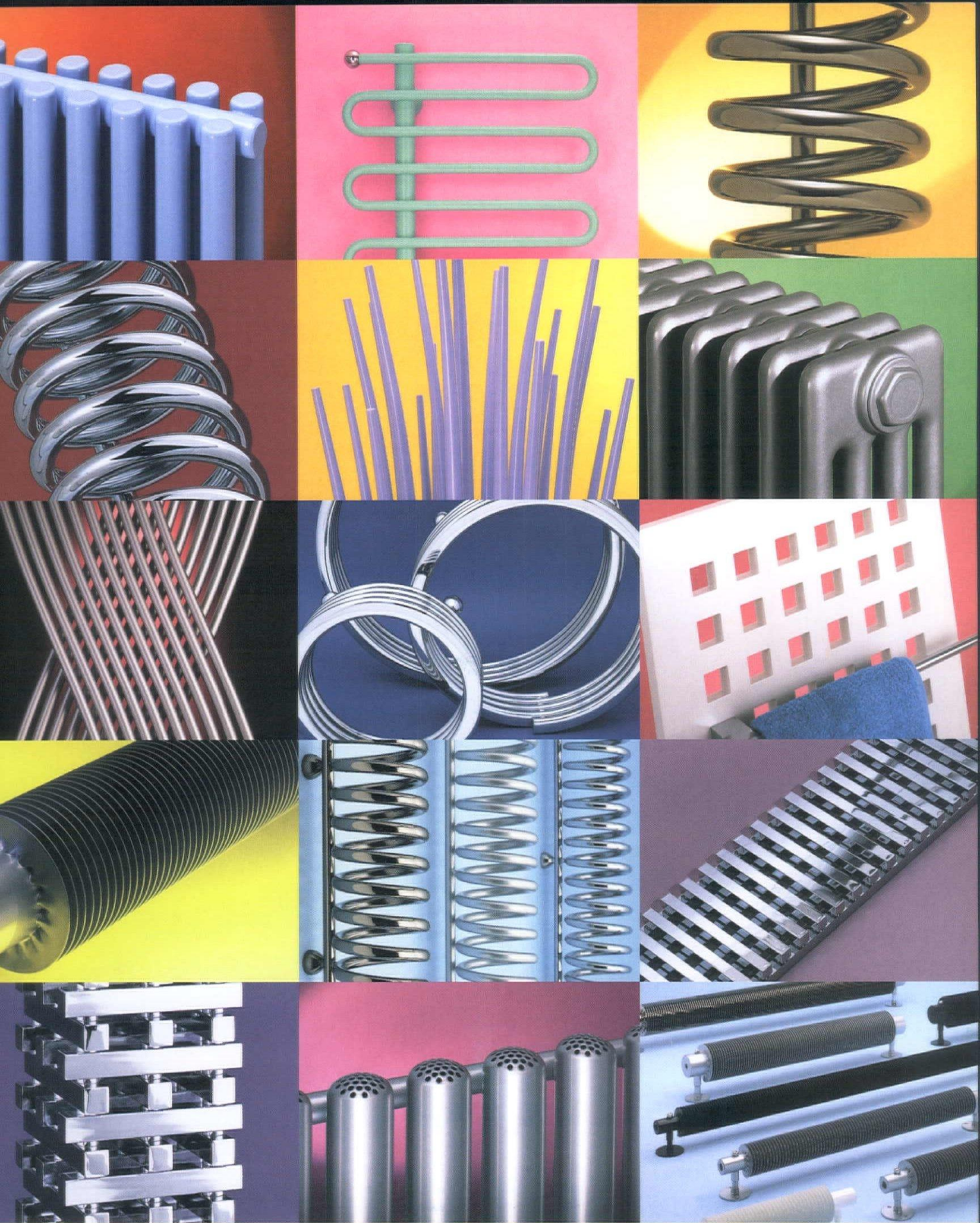
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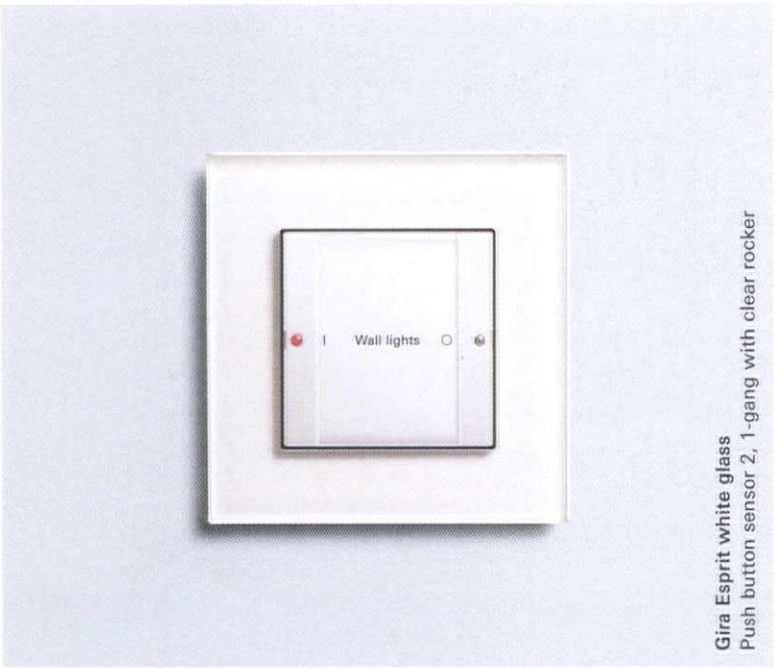


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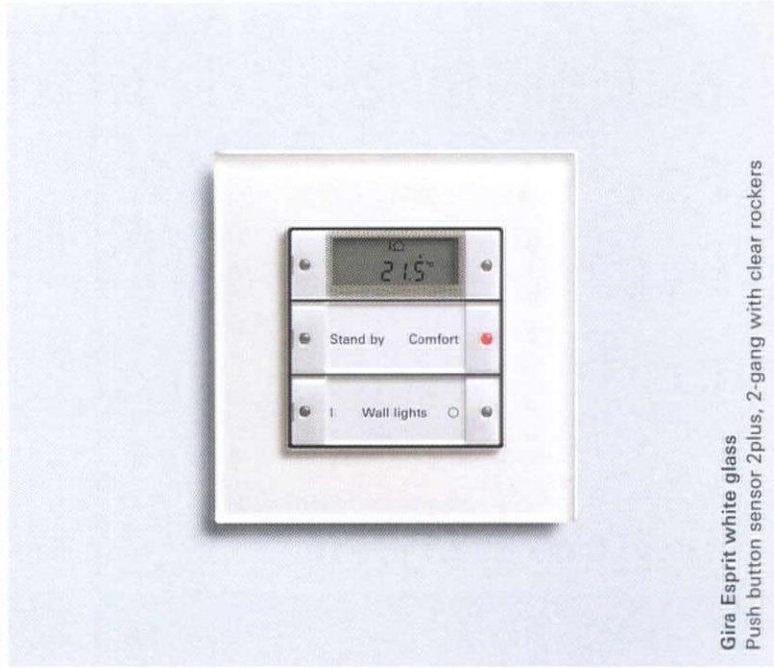
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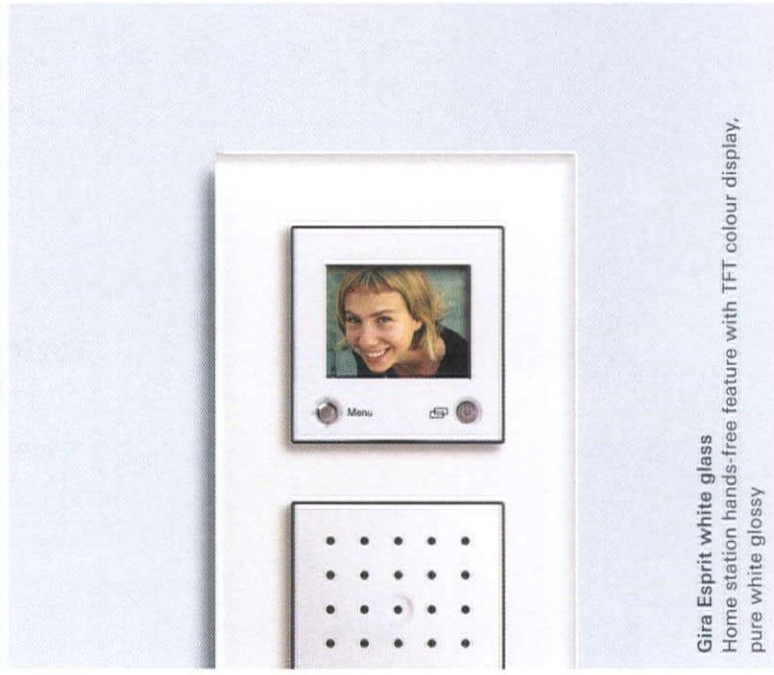
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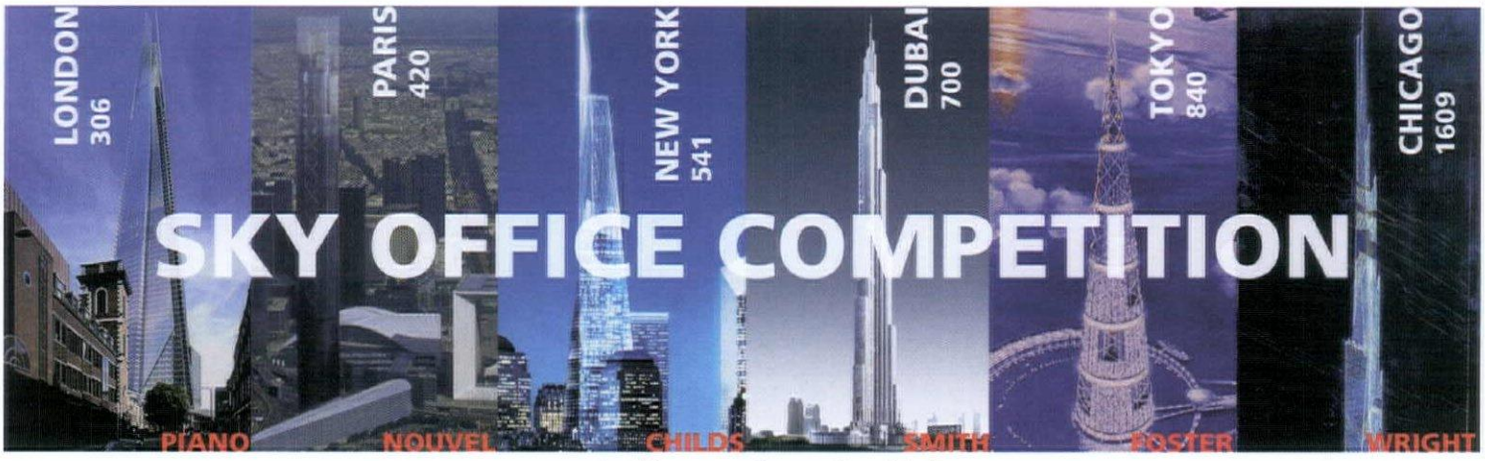
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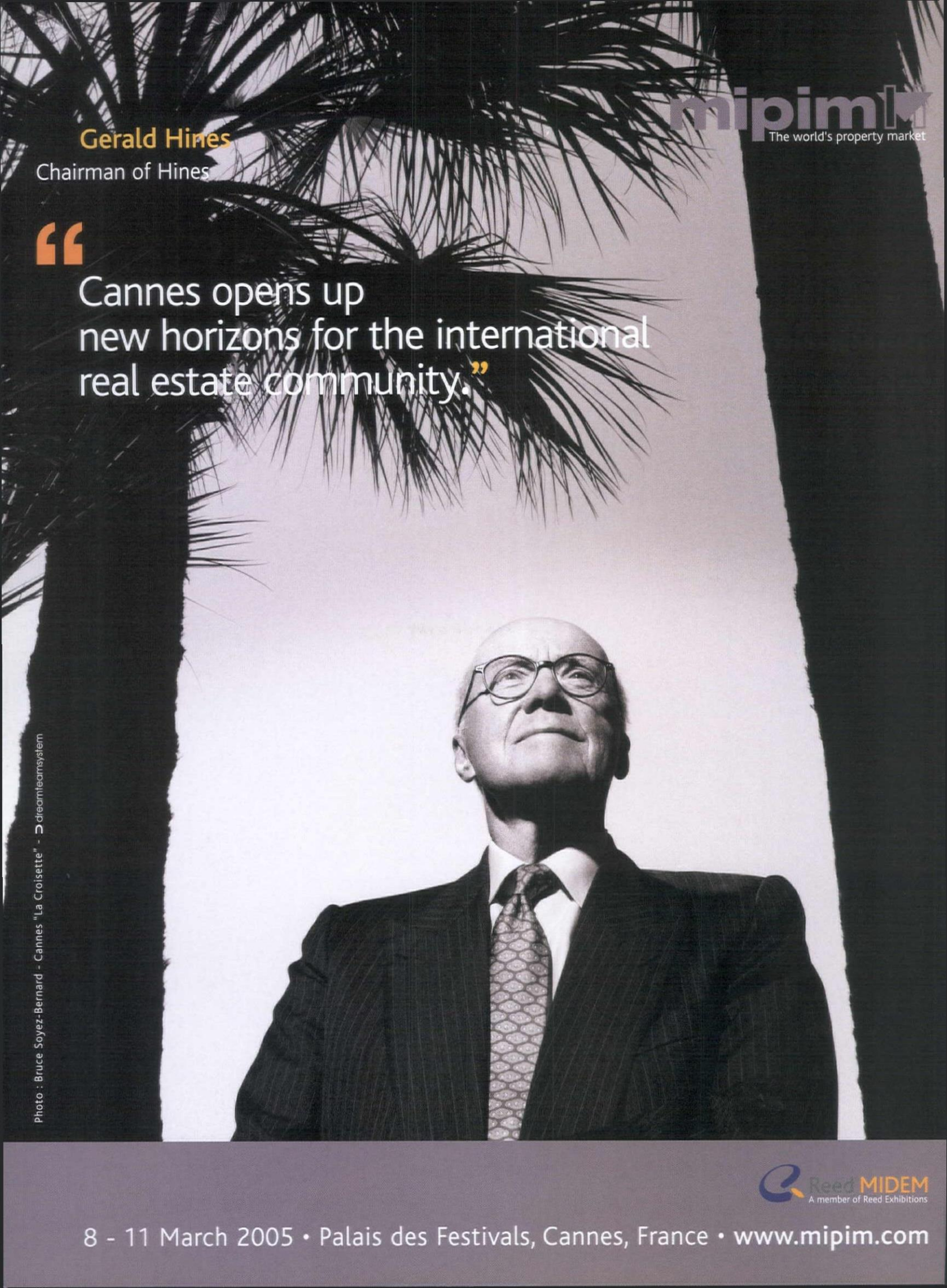
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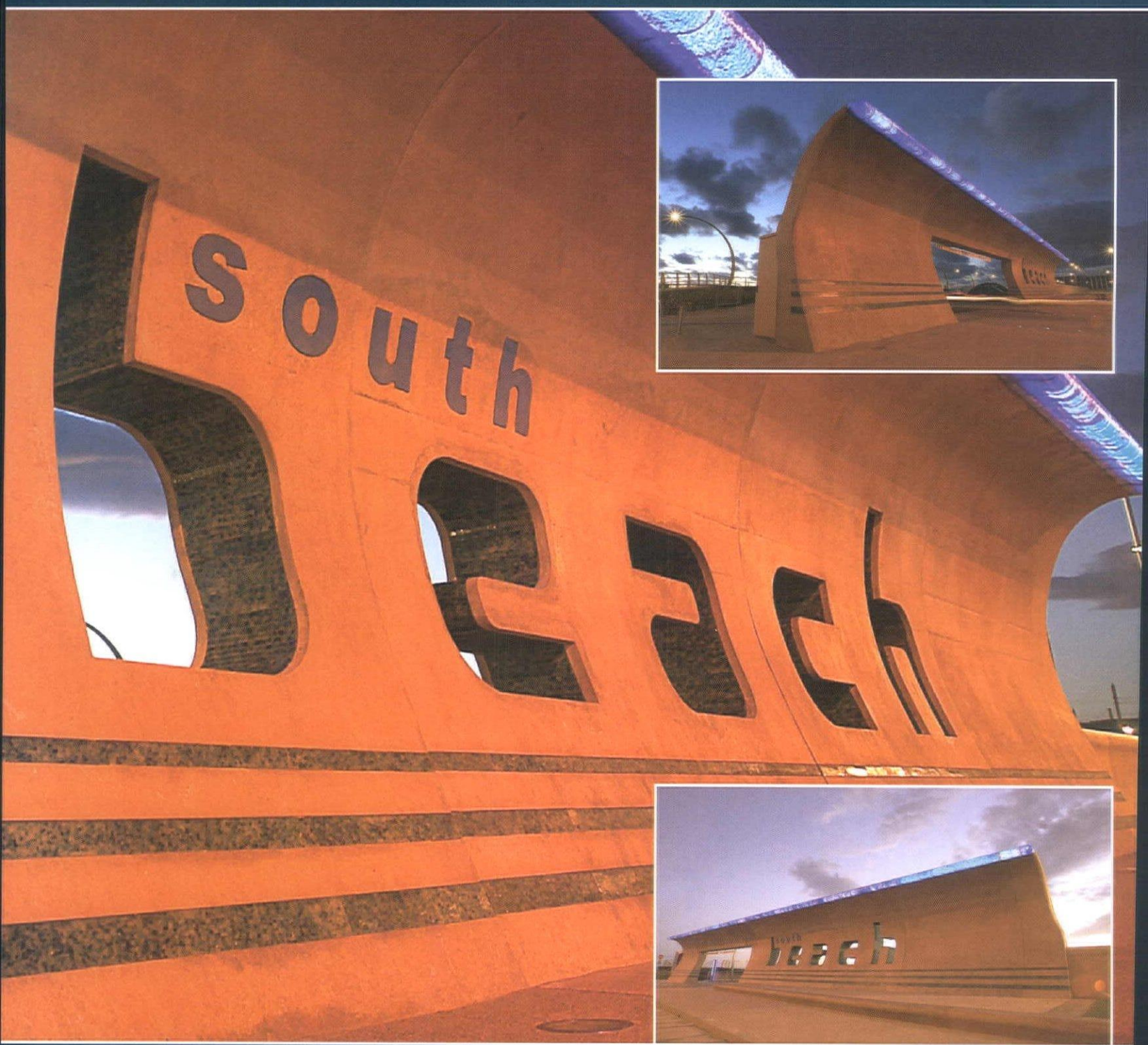
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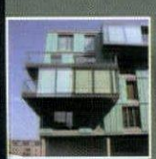
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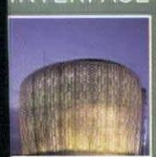
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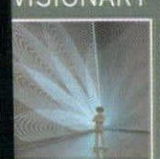
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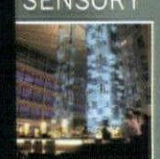
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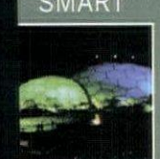
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The accompanying free exhibition of winning and commended entrants will be in the Florence Hall, RIBA until 6 March 2005.

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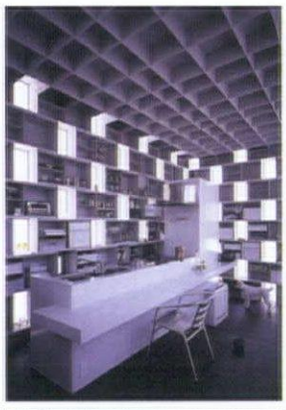
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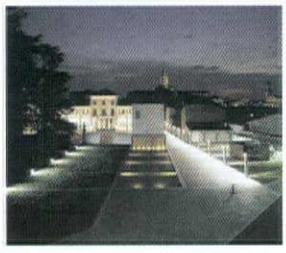
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Atelier Tekuto
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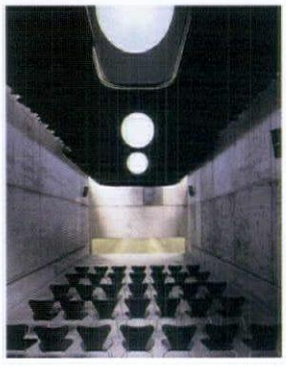
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Atelier Tekuto present their winning design for a compact and ingenious house on a street corner in Tokyo, made of steel box-like components welded together.

Marco Castelletti has had two projects selected at the ar+d awards 2004. He discusses his highly commended scheme for urban renewal around the Palazzo Arese in Cesano Maderno near Milan and his commended bathing establishment on the shores of Lake Segrino, near Como, Italy.

Chaired by Peter Davey





15 February

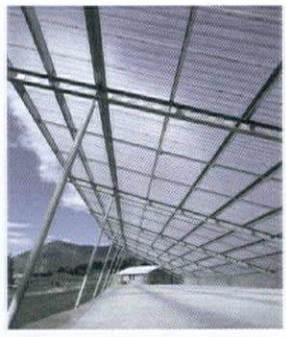
Ofis Arhitekti
Aparicio Fernández

6.30pm

Ofis Arhitekti talk about their recently completed and unashamedly contemporary extension to the renaissance City Museum in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Spanish architects Jesús Aparicio Guisado and Héctor Fernández-Elorza present their award winning architectural documentation centre and lecture theatre in Madrid, which is inserted into the arcades of an existing early 20th century building.

Chaired by Catherine Slessor





22 February

Architecture Workshop
Tezuka Architects

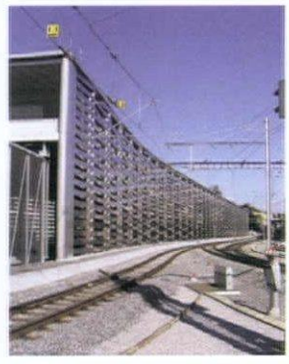
6.30pm

New Zealand practice Architecture Workshop have had their strikingly contemporary winery at Gibbston Valley, South Island, selected as an ar+d 2004 prizewinner. Christopher Kelly will present a selection of his practice's projects.

Tezuka Architects present their commended Museum of Natural Science, a building that responds to the climate of extremes found in Niigata, Japan, where the building can be buried in up to 7 metres of snow in winter. The tower is both location marker and lookout point.

Chaired by Paul Finch





1 March

PLOT
Smarch

6.30pm

PLOT have created an animated new topography by the sea outside Copenhagen which incorporates in its curves a youth club and storage for small boats as well as a wooden deck landscape. Julien De Smedt will discuss this winning project and other works by PLOT.

Swiss architects Smarch present their railway station in Worb, just outside Bern, which incorporates decorative concrete and steel elements despite the restrictions of a very narrow site.

Chaired by Paul Finch

Images from left:
above: House, Tokyo, Japan ©Atelier Tekuto
below: Urban renewal, Cesano Maderno, Italy ©Studio di Architettura Marco Castelletti
above: Museum extension, Ljubljana, Slovenia ©Ofis Arhitekti
below: Documentation centre and archives, Madrid, Spain ©Aparicio Fernández
above: Winery, Gibbston Valley, New Zealand ©Architecture Workshop
below: Museum of Natural Science, Niigata, Japan©Tezuka Architects
above: Youth Centre, Amager, Denmark ©PLOT
below: Railway Station, Worb, Switzerland ©Smarch

view

PHILIPPE STARCK MAKES AN EXHIBITION OF HIMSELF; OVERSIMPLIFYING THE DISCIPLINE OF DESIGN; ARCHISCULPTURE AT THE FONDATION BEYELER IN BASEL; DESIGN ≠ ART AT THE COOPER-HEWITT IN NEW YORK; AR WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD; ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP SETS STANDARD FOR ARCHITECTURAL WEB SITES; VIEW FROM WARSAW.

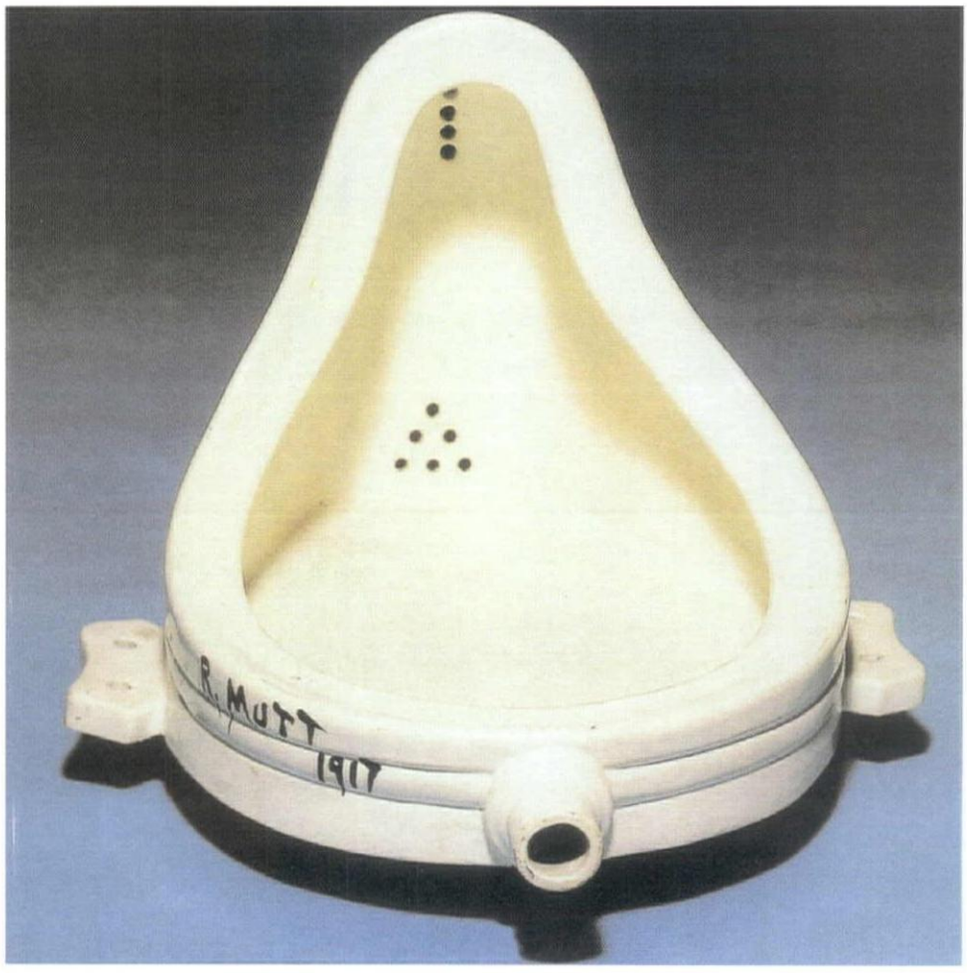
DESIGN: JUST A FLUSH IN THE PAN?

Last month two very strange things happened: in a poll of 500 art experts, Marcel Duchamp's famously displaced urinal was heralded as the most significant work of art of the twentieth century; while a week later, Philippe Starck succeeded in attracting over 500 international 'VIPs' to the unveiling of his latest monstrous work of markitecture: a new X-rated sanitary range and a three-storey lavatory pan embedded in the facade of Duravit's new Starck-designed design centre in Hornberg. So, what's going on? Are people taking design formalism too seriously? Has a pile of porcelain cubes and basins got anything in common with the work of Brancusi? Or, are Starck's visual associations as precarious as the sculptor's vertical totems?

Fortunately, even Philippe Starck is not pretentious enough to oversell his latest series of iconic dreams. Having designed the Duravit building in just half an hour, he has little to prove as a professional dreamer. His work is, he says, neither architecture or design, choosing instead to present his philosophy as part of a mission to kill the dark side of design: elitism. Unfortunately however, despite his own reluctance to overstate the significance of his work, the sycophantic questioning and posturing about the form of his latest sanitary range by members of the international design press would indicate that certain sections of the so-called elitist design world are very, very confused; design and style have always shared a thin boundary, however, over-popularizing design into something merely visual cheapens a discipline that at its best derives beauty from a rigorous and intellectually robust series of processes and decisions. The tendency to judge design purely on its immediate visual impact is, it seems, increasingly prevalent. As well as being ever-present in lifestyle catalogues and in shop windows, sexed-up designer crazed curators have more recently permeated some of our most respected art and cultural institutions. Public disputes at London's Design Museum, for example, has led to speculation that Terence Conran will follow James Dyson by lodging his resignation due to internal curatorial disputes, while last year's exhibition at the V&A, *Zoomorphic*, was a disappointing and ridiculous attempt to oversimplify similarities between architecture and nature. Norman Foster, I would contest, was not thinking about the flow of oxygen through coral when 30 St Mary Axe was conceived, any more than Will Alsop was thinking of Tunicates when designing the Rotterdam Central scheme; even the exhibition captions made a mockery of their thesis when describing Alsop's faceted goblets, that 'by chance these objects also resemble marine Invertebrates' – And? Your point is?

If institutions seek to increase public accessibility to previously so-called elitist subjects, the least they can do is give the popular-public credit for having more intelligence. Oversimplifying the discipline of design will not broaden the appeal of a subject. Instead ideas will be diluted, essential boundaries blurred, and greater confusion and scepticism of how design can really add quality and value will emerge.

Duchamp certainly changed the course of art, and challenged the way we view everyday objects. Formal beauty is now celebrated in even



Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917/1964, readymade porcelain urinal, 23.5 x 18 x 60cm. Milan, Collection Arturo Schwarz.



Installation art? Philippe Starck's exhibition for Duravit.









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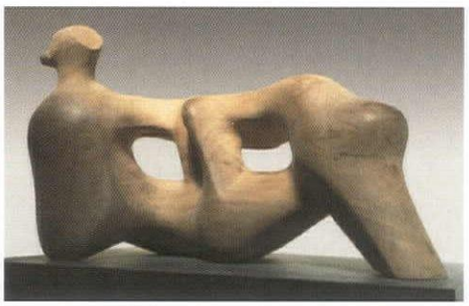
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the most utilitarian objects. However, having obligations far beyond those of the pure arts (fine, abstract and installation art alike), architecture and design should never be judged on appearances alone. Two exhibitions are currently tackling this complex issue, questioning the relationship between design and art: *ArchiSculpture* – curated by the Fondation Beyeler in Basel, Switzerland, and *Design ≠ Art*, curated by the Cooper-Hewitt Design Musuem in New York. But, have they succeeded where others have failed to say something new?

ROB GREGORY

ARCHISCULPTURE

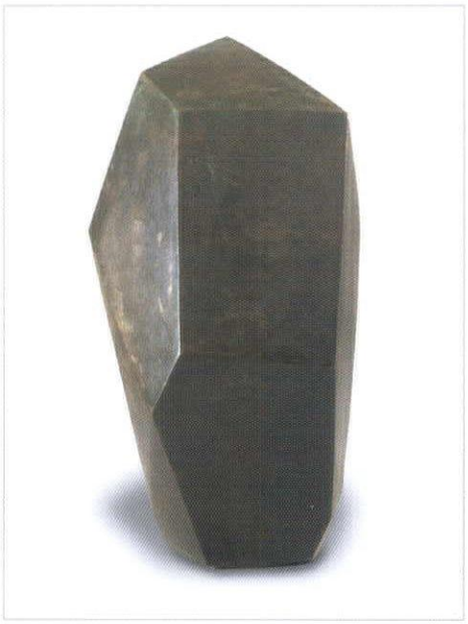
On first impression, some architects will find the Fondation Beyeler's current exhibition, *Archisculpture*, nonsensical. Drawing simplistic comparisons between Corbusier and Moore, Wright and Brancusi, Gehry and Tatlin, will, I suspect, inspire few. However, this exhibition is a must see. With an extensive collection of architectural models and sculptures displayed throughout Piano's fine Beyeler galleries, visitors cannot fail to be impressed by the curator's spectacular narrative; a complete architectural experience that traces architecture's relationship with art from 1784 to the present day. From Boullée to van Berkel, Gilly to Greg Lynn, the study of how architectural form has been determined is explored through a series of sculptural confrontations. Artworks are set against architectural models to demonstrate direct reciprocities between art and architecture, presenting a two hundred year history of form-finding rationale. Or at least that is what an architect may hope to discover. What actually emerges is something far less searching. Something less theoretical and sophisticated. Perhaps to its credit, unlike *Zoomorphic*, this exhibition makes little attempt to over-intellectualize its thesis. The relationships it highlights are far more impressionistic. Drawing out essences and moods in architectural form – more than rationale, theory or technique – it enriches the way that buildings can be understood as objects. The placement of crisp, exacting, and accurate architectural models next to more richly figured sculptures sets up curious tensions; tensions that demonstrate profoundly that beyond the iconic silhouette, materiality, texture, solid, void, shadow, luminance, and lustre – to name just a few of the many sensory constituents of a sculpture – are as fundamental to architecture as they are to sculpture.

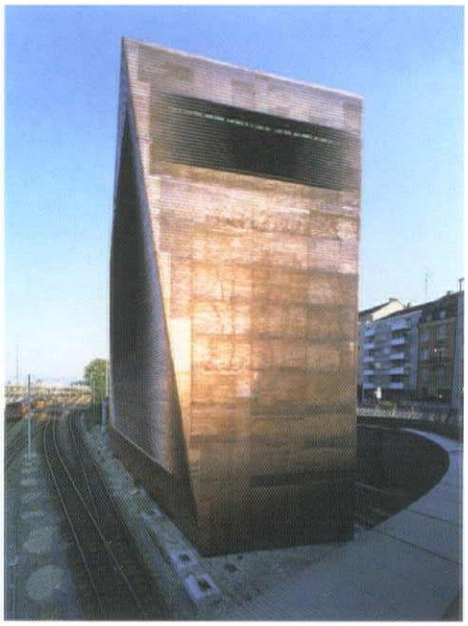


Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure: Holes*, 1976-1978.



Le Corbusier, *Notre-Dame-du-Haut Chapel*, 1950-1954.





Alberto Giacometti, *The Cube (Nocturnal Pavilion)*, 1933-1934 and Herzog & de Meuron's *Central Signal Box*, 1998-1999.

Through their direct juxtaposition with the sculptures, the abstracted representations of buildings in model form, perhaps more than the curators ever imagined, demonstrate how the term sculptural means far more than mere shape.

There is, of course, substantial theoretical content to the exhibition that is included in a beautifully illustrated catalogue. Organized in ten chapters, the curators consider Early History (Classical, Gothic and Baroque), the Triumph of Scale, The Conquest of Three-Dimensional Space (Cubism, De Stijl, and Bauhaus), The Discovery of Sculptural Form (Expressionism), Spirit Soul and Space (Steiner and Wittgenstein), The Age of Sculpture (1950-60 Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright), Sculpture, Path and Place (monuments and installations), Minimalism or the Love of the Box, The Sculpted City (Utopias), and Blob and Box (twenty-first century virtual reality). The essays and chapter introductions cover a lot of theoretical ground, highlighting many cross discipline comparisons; however, more interesting is how the exhibition clearly demonstrates that architecture is categorically not sculpture, subtly emphasizing significant differences (such as the notions of utlility, habitation, and scale). It also raises many contemporary issues relating to the formal extremes of boxes and blobs, and with the concluding chapter focusing on the sculptural opportunities offered by parametric modelling techniques, new dilemmas emerge. The proposition that a building has to be shapely and curvaceous to be sculptural should be rigorously challenged; blobs are after all no more sculptural than boxes. (I am sure van Doesburg could convincingly argue that point.) And, when considering the much-heralded creative potential of the computer, we should not lose sight of the fact that designers – *ie* human beings with human judgement – ultimately decide on the formal resolution of their buildings. Whether you derive form from screwing up newspaper, moulding plasticene, or running parametric modelling sequences, at some point the human eye decides, that is it! And the form is frozen. Balance, harmony, and proportion in composition will always be based on human sensibilities.

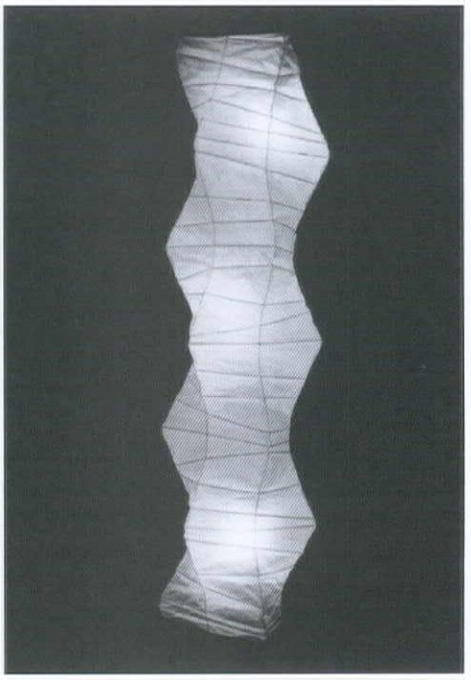
So, as the exhibition naturally comes full circle back to Boullée, we can conclude that the most profound relationship between architecture and sculpture is that both always have and always will rely on the inspired vision of creative designers.

ROB GREGORY

DESIGN ≠ ART

When Oscar Wilde pronounced that 'all beautiful things are made by those who strive to make something useful', he captured the essence of





Above left, Robert Rauschenberg, *Tire Lamp*. © Robert Rauschenberg/VAGA. Above right, Isamu Noguchi, *Prototype of Akari 33N Floor Lamp*. © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation.

utilitarian Modernism: a movement describing how contemporary artists, mainly sculptors, are inspired by archetypal functional forms with overtones of Bauhaus geometric simplicity. By mounting an exhibition of these furnishings by artists entitled *Design ≠ Art*, the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum poses a challenging question to viewers within the domestic splendour of its galleries in the former Andrew Carnegie mansion on New York's Fifth Avenue.

Far from a simple exercise demonstrating how sculpture may or may not also be furniture, table services or lamps, this accumulation of objects represents the work of 18 artists from the late 1960s to the present, each employing the language of Minimalism as a complex means to a different end. Though the curator, Barbara Bloemink, looks to Dadaism, De Stijl and Russian Constructivism as antecedents, one need only recall Picasso's revolutionary 1912 constructivist *Guitar* sculpture or David Smith's 1950s *Agricola* sculptures based on farm implements to recognize the interaction between fantasy and function. Though actual functionality is often in question here, wit is plentiful. For serious viewers, who bring imagination and memory to the displays, the potential of inhabiting a chair, say, or a bed adds to the show's enticement, much like children who can enter the make-believe world of the dollhouse. It is no accident that many of the forms are miniaturized.

While Donald Judd divided his pristine furniture from his pristine art (the straight-legged, squared-off desks, tables and chairs on view would never have been displayed in a gallery), Scott Burton saw his 'furniture-as-sculpture', albeit in luxurious stone or veneered wood, as pragmatic solutions. He once said of his chunky but elegant tables and seats of dark green granite that line West 51st Street: 'What office workers do in their lunch hour is more important than my pushing the limits of my self-expression'. His Adirondack lawn chair on view with its slatted back reminiscent of picket fences was designed as a cultural icon from America's past.

Richard Tuttle's 'total art' takes another direction, less industrial and more personal. His quirky wooden-strip light fixtures with moulded or frosted glass shades and his mobile-like chandeliers of hand-blown glass cylinders suspended from irregular wrought iron frames, possess the energy and complexity associated with sculpture as art. The same applies to other notable lamps in the show: Isamu Noguchi's *Akari* light sculpture merges Japanese and Western culture with seven *washi* paper cubes; and Robert Rauschenberg's discarded automobile tyre, *Tire Lamp*, with a rim of light from the interior, is typical of his found-object art.

Even with functional elements, design by artists is still only a microcosm of their larger art. For example, in a graduated set of nested porcelain plates by Dan Flavin, the painted undersides suffuse colour onto the white surfaces below, reminiscent of his 1992 fluorescent-light installation on the spiralling ramp of the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Perhaps the exhibition is best summed up by Joel Shapiro, whose table on view like Rachel Whiteread's daybed is cast from negative space. 'I am interested', he said, 'in any object that amplifies human possibility and transcends its form, regardless of whether it is furniture or art.'

PAULA DEITZ

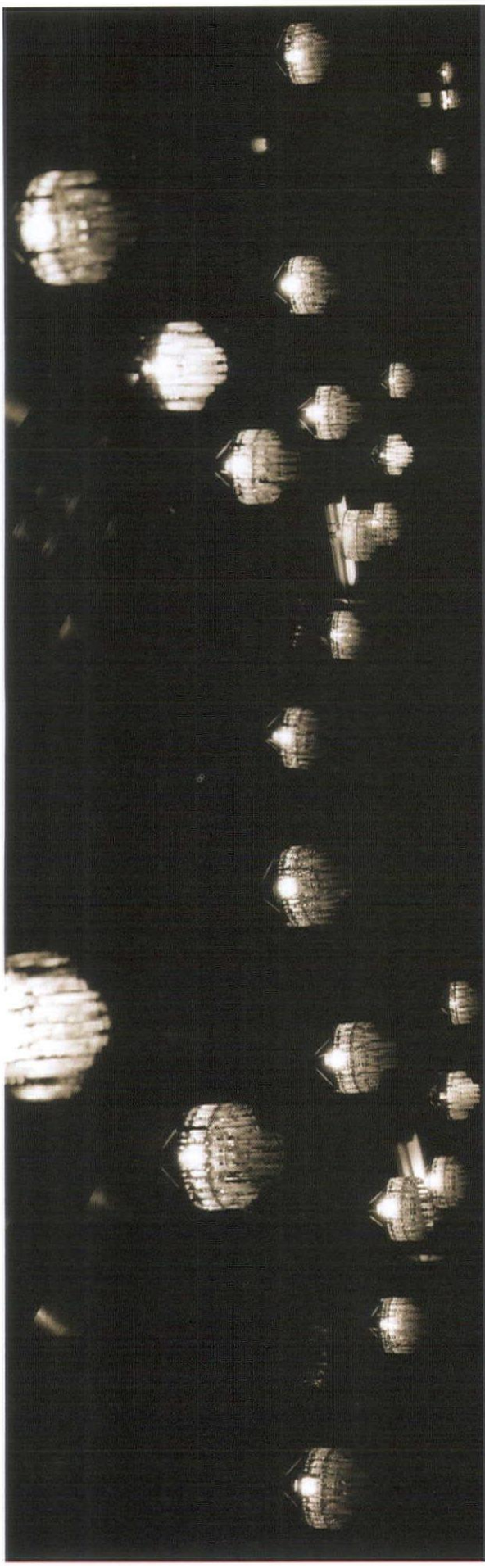
ArchiSculpture – Dialogues between Architecture and Sculpture from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day, *curated by Markus Brüderlin, runs at the Fondation Beyeler until 30 January 2005.*
Design ≠ Art – Functional Objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread, *curated by Barbara Bloemink, runs at the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum until 27 February 2005.*
Both exhibitions are supported by excellent illustrated catalogues.



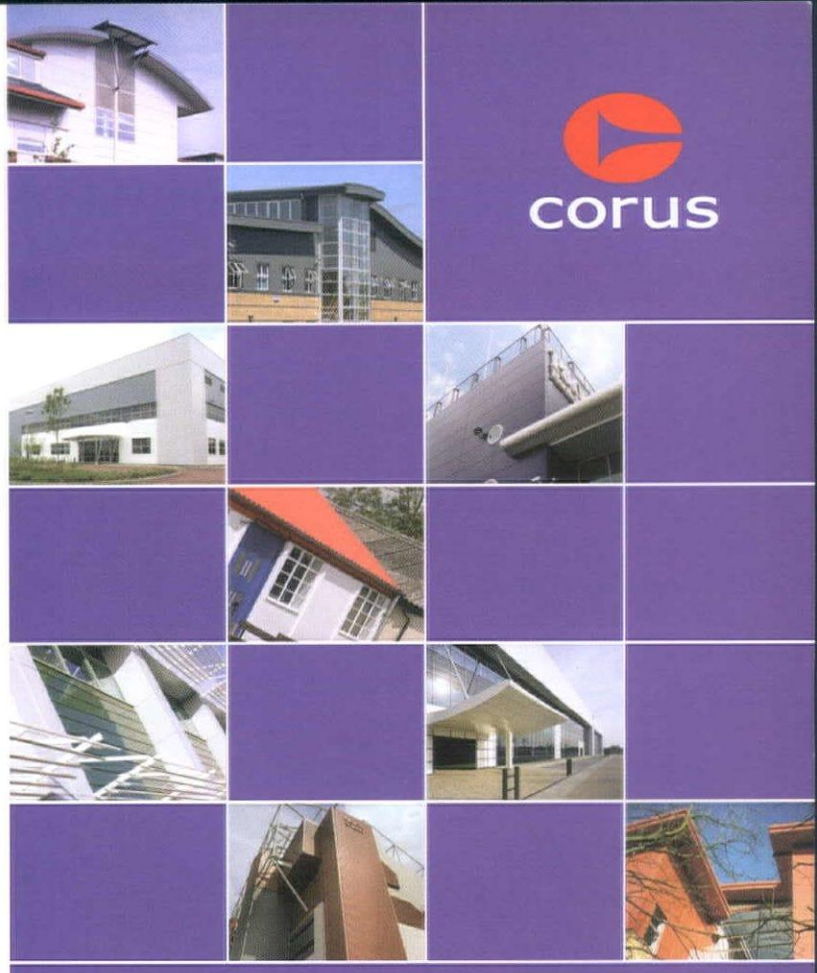
Joel Shapiro, *Bronze Table*. © 2003 Joel Shapiro/ARS.

AR IN IBP TRIUMPH

The AR has won the award for Best Non-Weekly Magazine in the International Building Press Awards which were held at the end of November. This is the second successive time the AR has won. The judges commented, 'This publication was consistently good with a rock solid editorial approach which demonstrated design standards of the highest order'. AR Managing Editor Catherine Slessor was presented with the coveted silver cup, supplied by award sponsors Wood for Good, which is now on proud display in the AR's trophy cabinet.



This dream-like and slightly disturbing image of disembodied chandeliers floating like jellyfish in a dark void forms part of *Kubrick's Parlour (... a space oddity)*, a solo exhibition by London-based artist and photographer Lucia Helenka. Currently showing until 12 January in the Gallery Space at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London, the show consists of a series of very large scale enigmatic black and white photographs with equally enigmatic titles such as *Luna Reefs, Hovercraft* (shown here) and *Paras*. Intrigued by notions of transience and transformation, Helenka invents a mysterious new world using existing architectural elements. The viewer is presented with spun around spaces that are recognisable, strangely familiar and yet unexperienced – like sets from classic sci-fi movies or a futuristic Baroque. Light fittings loom and swirl out of the darkness like UFOs and theatre ceilings grow glowing mushrooms. Produced without digital manipulation, isolated from their standard context, these images evoke ideas of hope and of dread, of things without visible means of support, like free spirits or refugees, beacons in the night of life...



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AR TRANSPARENCY CONFERENCE

The fourth annual Architectural Review conference will be held on 1 March 2005 at the RIBA, London.

Speakers include Michael Wigginton, Tim Macfarlane, Eva Jiricna, James Carpenter and Luke Lowings, Tony Hunt, and Werner Sobek. To register, tel: 020 7505 6044; fax: 020 7505 6001; email: *conferences@emap.com; www.artransparency.co.uk*

browser

Sutherland Lyall brings in the New Year with some refreshing sites to help clear away the Yuletide cobwebs.

Twinly talented

Sickening it is really. Ace New Zealand practice, Architecture Workshop, not only got lots of gongs last year – including a prize in our own ar+d awards – but it runs a pretty-much exemplary site at *www.archwksp.co.nz*. You could also try *www.architectureworkshop.co.nz* and you get the same result. They reckoned a shorter alternative version was a user-friendly idea. Quite right – and you can change the type size to suit the failings of your eyes. And it runs perfectly happily under Mozilla Firefox – the rather more secure alternative browser to Internet Explorer. And there is not a lot of irrelevant padding. Even the 'my thoughts' section (no they don't call it that), much beloved of architectural practices which fondly imagine that lots of 'deep' thinking will somehow improve numbers in the client list, even this is relatively cant-free – although there is an imaginative use of the hitherto unknown verb 'to image' which I take means to draw, depict or even design. Maybe their writer should take a look at *www.adrianjames.co.uk* for complete textual clarity and brevity. Too frequently simple and clear sites are vehicles for pretty ordinary architecture. That is absolutely not, I am happy to report, the case with the Architecture Workshop.

High jinks at Burlington House

The dear old Royal Academy has been the source of much amusement lately: president retiring early fed up with constant sniping from the back of the life class, one keeper running a separate account. Actually, given the way the RA operates, this was an extremely good and entirely straight idea but he still had to resign. Then the stupendously innovative exhibitions secretary, Norman Rosenthal, won last year's Alternative Miss World title and the chief executive handed in her notice soon after. No one knows whether this was related to Rosenthal's success but she was certainly fed up with the entire shower. You think of artists as being rather radical and forward looking. Not this lot. Still the institution has a web site at *www.rafocus.org.uk/architecture*. The interesting thing here, apart from the many interviews with famous architects, is the Forum. Among the rules you have to agree before participating is this: 'you warrant that you will not post any messages that are obscene, vulgar, sexually-orientated, threatening or otherwise violative of any laws. 'I looked up 'violative' on the net and the early search results were either to do with US dictionaries or were references to US Food and Drug Administration warnings. My spellchecker continues to highlight the word as a spelling mistake. Sadly this and the above 'vulgar and threatening' exclusion precluded any active participating but you kinder folk are sure to benefit from moving on the web waters with the minds and words of the great and good on various interesting architectural topics. Seriously. This is a nicely designed site with adjustable type sizes and a pretty clear navigation system. It's a tad wordy though.

Mother of invention

Accompanying the New York opening of the new, bigger and only perhaps better MoMA is its revived site, *www.moma.org*. This is effortlessly superior in the best sense. You can enlarge the text, the navigation seems straightforward and the online store has a nice selection of gifts 'of taste and distinction', which is to say the usual old rather good selection of things you might not otherwise have thought of buying had this not been the MoMA store. There is not quite as much about the rebuilding as you might hope for but it does have some terrific illustrated stuff about, for example, printing techniques. This is where the navigation only seems to be straightforward because I found the above prints section by accident and couldn't work out from the main index how to find it again, certainly not via the site's search engine. Still, here is a living icon of Modernism and a lot cheaper than the new $20 entrance charge for the real thing.

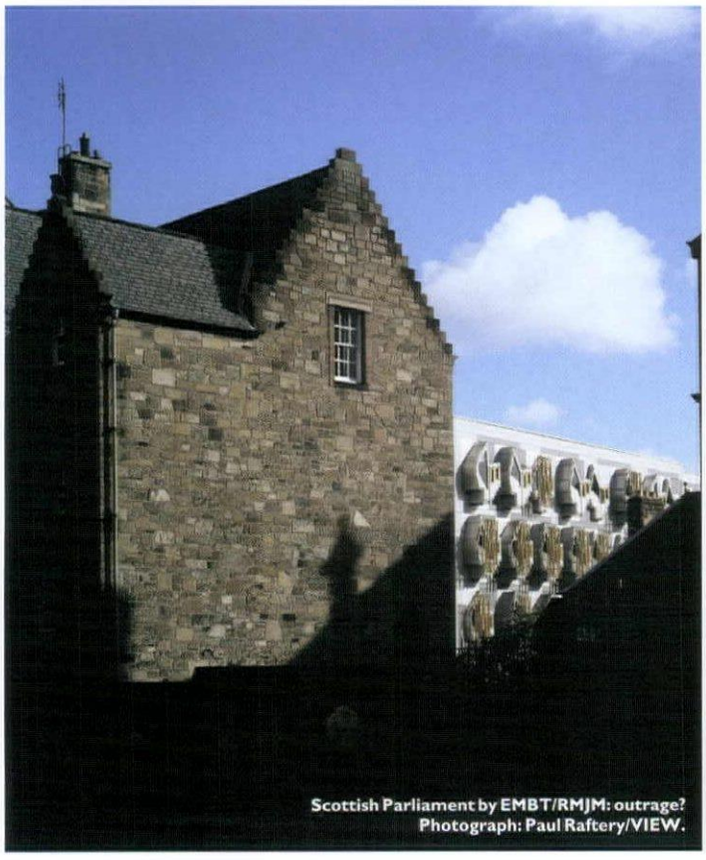
Local knowledge

You would be astonished if the web site of multi-Stirling Prize winner practice, Wilkinson Eyre, wasn't up to snuff. So no surprises then that its new version, designed by ID Media London, is pretty good indeed. My caveat is that the only way I could have known that ID Media had designed the site was to look all over the place. Eventually there it was discreetly at the bottom of the home page. Against current best practice guidelines, the text can't be altered in size but since it is not set as the three point Helvetica Roman so greatly favoured by architects who design their own sites there is less cause for complaint. Bucking the convention of a navigation strip down the left-hand side, the Wilkinson Eyre site has the basic navigation in a smallish grey rectangle at the bottom right corner with an arrow and the word 'menu'. The basic sections are 'Home', 'News', 'Projects', 'About Us', 'People' (with the normally lugubrious Wilkinson essaying a quite convincing smile) and 'Contact'. It's all nice and simple and there is not much in the way of laborious content. Naturally 'Projects' is the section you turn to and here things are arranged by building types. You can sort of search on date – but that is by date within each building category so it's not so useful. A nice touch is the little thumbnails which instantly pop up in the navigation box as you run down the categories. It is so fast that it represents an alternative search method – but it should be copied only by web designers who understand speed.

Shimmying for Denmark

Design review director at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Peter Stewart, suggested I take a look at the site of Danish architects 3XN whose housing he had admired. He found their cheerfully wacky site at the admirably brief address *www.3xN.dk*. If you take the Web seriously it is almost worthwhile changing your practice name to something short and easy like this. You can hear clients musing about which architect they should contact and going for the one with the shortest name. Perhaps. Whatever, Stewart was right about wacky. Yet that is the graphic stuff: the content is serious enough. The home page is a white page with a five line contents list up on the left and a brown blob in the middle. Naturally you start to stroke the blob and it suddenly expands and pulsates like the exposed viscera of a panting puppy. Move the cursor across it and you get glimpses of buildings between irregularly spaced vertical Venetian blinds. Persist and even click the mouse and the image takes up the whole space of the blob and you then get a kind of slide show. Fed up with dodging about like this you click on 'architecture' and the word oozes a little and gets bigger. Click on the word 'category' and a grid of brown dots shimmies into place, some of the dots bigger than the rest. You click on a bigger dot and the whole grid expands toward you and there is a little circular thumbnail. A circular thumbnail. Now there's a thing. But look, take a peek for yourself and enjoy the mastery of ooze, shimmy and bloop. In an architectural context of course.

Sutherland Lyall is at sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com



Scottish Parliament by EMBT/RMJM: outrage?
Photograph: Paul Raftery/VIEW.

letters

SCOTTISH OUTRAGE?

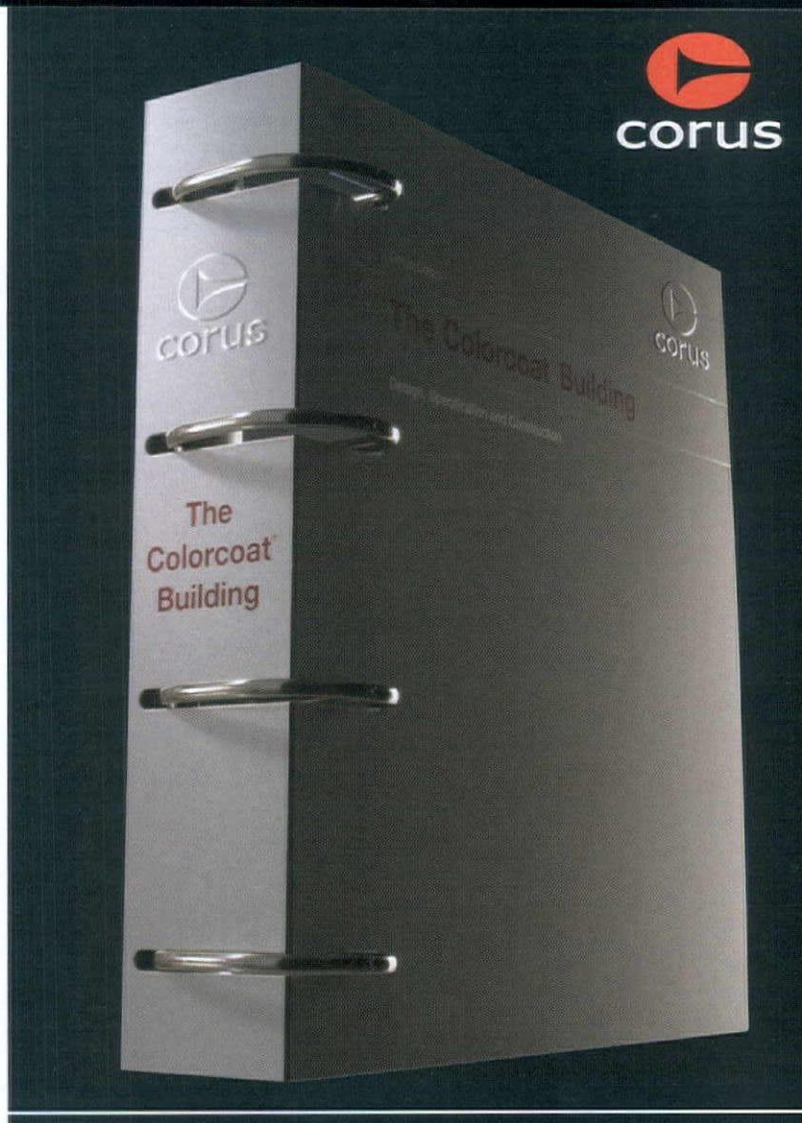
SIR: I would like to point out the unfortunate omission of the title 'Outrage' from the header of the feature on the new Scottish Parliament in this month's issue (AR November 2004). That the Scottish people have not taken to the streets by the thousand in violent protest at this obscenely irresponsible and most undemocratic £430 million squandering of their tax money, is quite remarkable.

While interesting in its origins and intentions, and certainly dexterous in its technical execution, what has resulted is an utterly dreadful building that is worthy of nothing but severe condemnation on multiple levels. It is a cankerous posthumous blot on the career of a very good architect, and Ms Slessor's gentle and rather pandering critique of it is quite disappointing.

On the upside, as a South African, I did enjoy the space given in the same issue to a couple of projects from my native country. I hope that we can look forward to further attention by AR to a fast-growing body of very interesting work happening in that part of the world.

Yours etc
JAMES KELLY
Santa Monica, CA, USA

Catherine Slessor replies: As a Scot in exile, I am proud that my fellow countrymen are reacting to their new parliament in such a mature and reflective way. Far from rioting, on my visit they were eagerly exploring the building and forming their own judgments about it. It certainly does not please everyone, and its cost is undoubtedly an issue for public concern, but it adds to the continuum of architecture in Edinburgh in a distinctive and dramatic way that would have hitherto been thought unthinkable. Time will tell if it does turn out to be a 'cankerous blot' or something rather better – a bold and enlightened assertion of national identity. My money's on the latter.



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Diary

AR'S CHOICE OF CURRENT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

For an expanded and constantly updated list, go to our website: www.arplus.com/exhibitions

JAPAN
ARCHLAB: NEW EXPERIMENTS IN ARCHITECTURE, ART AND THE CITY
Until 13 March
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
An exploration of visionary designs by architects from the 1950s to now, uncovering origins of radical approaches to architecture and urban planning that have changed perceptions of the city.
www.mori.art.museum

THE NETHERLANDS
MOROCCO
Until 17 April
De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam
Major exhibition featuring masterpieces from Moroccan museums and libraries, including the Volubilis excavations and Morocco's Royal and National Libraries.
www.nieuwekerk.nl

UNITED KINGDOM
EMERGING ARCHITECTURE
Until 6 March 2005
Royal Institute of British Architects, London
Lose yourself in a sumptuous maelstrom of young talent. This year's ar+d winners provide a feast for the senses.
www.architecture.com

SWISS MADE
Until 5 February
Royal Institute of British Architects, London
Bracing survey of work by contemporary Swiss architects including Diener & Diener, Peter Märkli and Peter Zumthor who have transformed the reputation of sleepy Switzerland into a cutting edge international force.

UNITED STATES
JOSEF AND ANN ALBERS: DESIGNS FOR LIVING
Until 27 February
Cooper-Hewitt, New York
First museum retrospective to chronicle the Albers' extraordinary designs for objects for domestic everyday living, from the couple's early years at the Bauhaus in the '20s, through to '50s America. Their aesthetic formed an enduring legacy, which, until now, has had little public exposure.

AR next month

TRANSPARENCY

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view



Proposed Olympic landmark tower at Les Batignolles, Paris, France. Designed by Yves Pagès, Benoît le Thierry d'Ennequin, Jean-François Blassel and Henry Bardsley.

MALTZAN MASTERPLAN

SIR: Congratulations on your recent issue of AR devoted to Canadian architecture (October 2004).

I wish to note, however, that Michael Maltzan Inc (MMA) is currently working on the masterplan for the Vancouver Art Gallery – not a building extension as published in the October issue. The Gallery chose MMA from 23 national and international architectural firms who submitted expressions of interest in undertaking the masterplanning project. MMA will present a final plan to the Gallery's Board of Trustees in early 2005.

Yours etc
JULIE-ANN BACKHOUSE
Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada

OLYMPIC BID

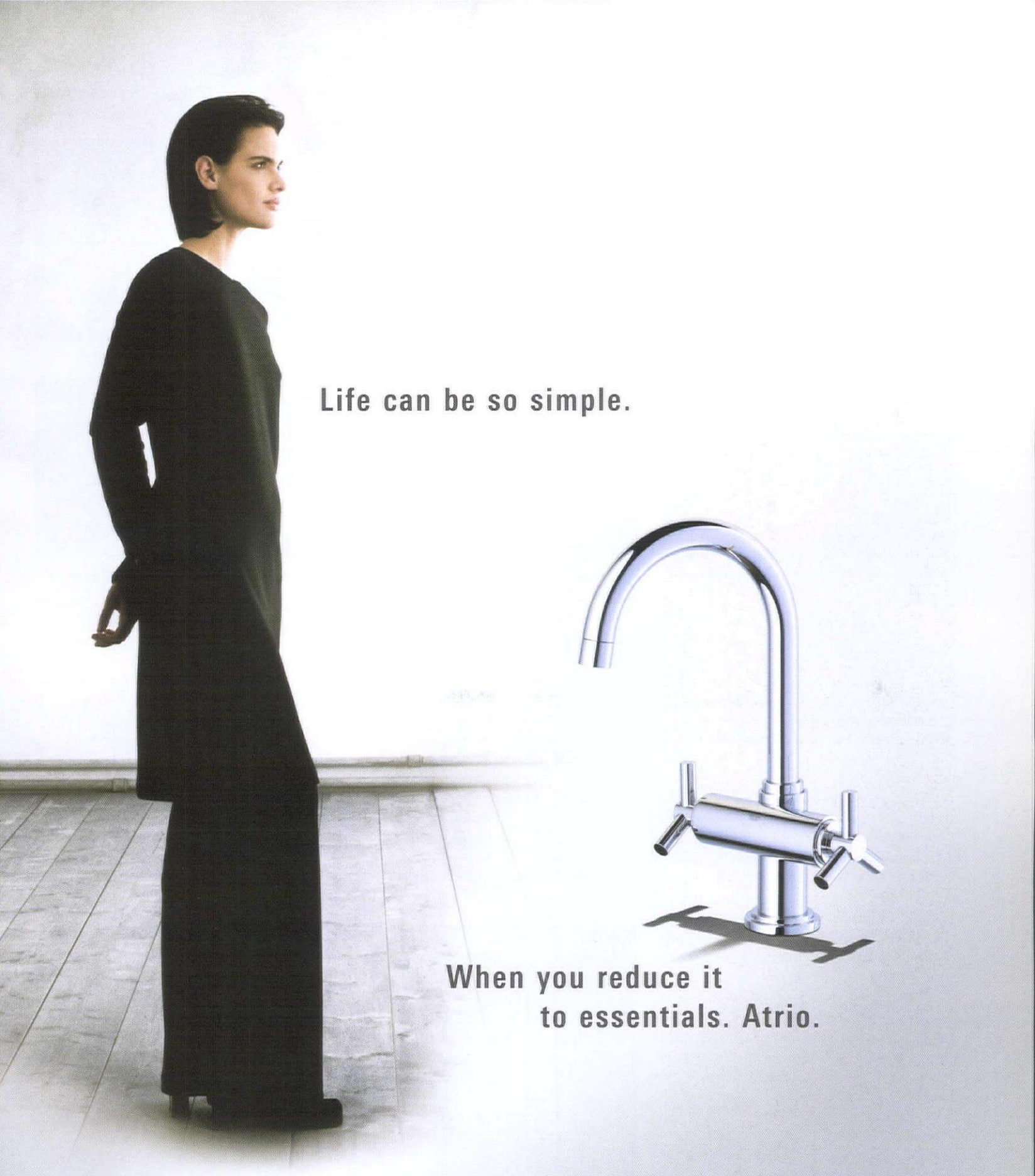
SIR: We've discovered with great pleasure and surprise that our design for the 'Repère olympique' in the Delight section of the November issue (p98). We are very grateful for this great honour. This section has been our favourite since our architectural schooldays.

We would like to point out that the core design team for this project actually includes Jean-François Blassel and Henry Bardsley (who are both architect/engineer, and also directors at RFR in Paris). For a very unfortunate reason, their names were partially omitted from the press material that has been sent out and that you must have used. We'd be very grateful if you could publish a small addendum in a forthcoming issue to give them the credit they deserve.

Yours etc
YVES PAGES and BENOIT LE THIERRY D'ENNEQUIN
Paris, France

erratum

Credits for the bus shelters (*Zuidtangent*), Schiphol/Haarlem, the Netherlands (AR November, p40) should read *Design*: VHP s+a+l with Dok industrial design. Maurice Nio was project manager before NIO Architects was established.

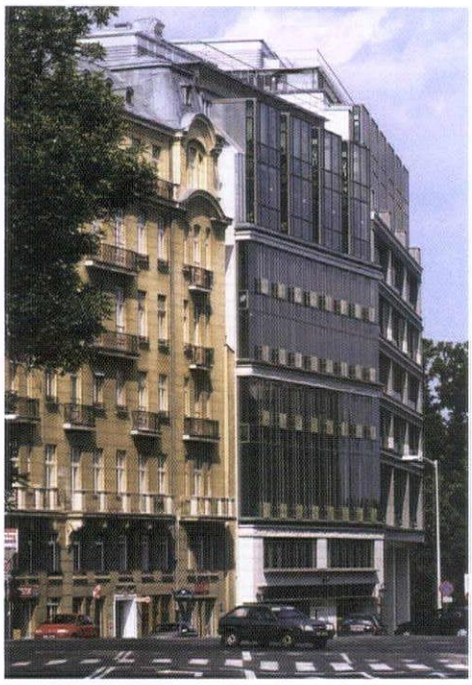


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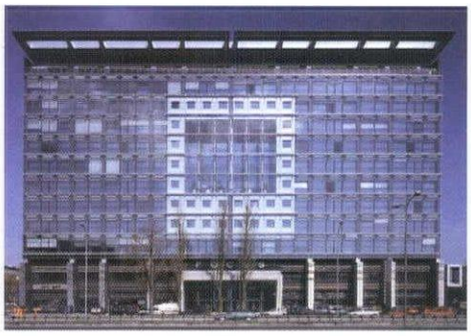
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The Gielda Building which houses the Stock Exchange.



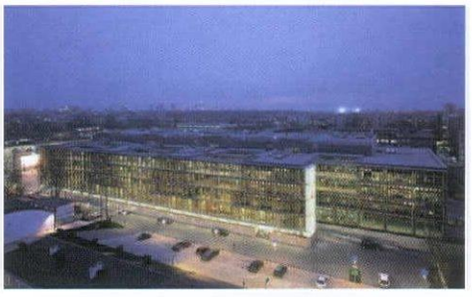
The Focus Building by Stefan Kurylowicz.



Headquarters of LOT, Poland's national airline.



Inside the Focus Building's courtyard.



Agora Building – home to *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper.

View from Warsaw

Fuelled by foreign investment, the battered Polish capital of Warsaw is experiencing a building boom, with often mixed results.

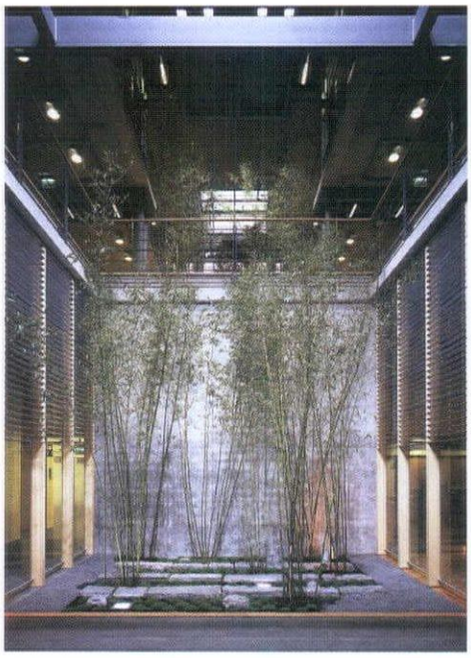
Last May, Poland, together with nine other former Eastern Bloc countries, joined the European Community. So ended a more than fifty year long period of enforced segregation from Western Europe. The Polish capital Warsaw with its 1.7m inhabitants has now fully regained its rightful place as one of central Europe's leading cities. However, even before this historic event, Warsaw had become the focal point of foreign investment into Poland. A city that was more or less completely destroyed during the Second World War and then painstakingly rebuilt in parts, Warsaw attracted a first wave of international investment soon after the collapse of the Communist regime in 1989. The signs of this quick boom are very apparent in Warsaw's fragmented skyline. Speculative developments such as Blue City reached for the sky, but manifested a highly questionable architecture in total violation of any existing masterplan.

From an urban point of view, Warsaw is still a fragmented city, lacking the definition which, in comparison, benefited the equally war-torn Berlin after the fall of the Wall. But even today only 15 per cent of Warsaw city embraces the current masterplan by the newly elected City Architect Michal Borowski. In the early 1990s, many architects and engineers flocked to Warsaw but left as markets began to dry up – only Arup remained for good, and are now the largest engineering office in Warsaw, currently some 90 strong.

Yet the boom for real estate is over, and the frenzy in lettings and spiralling rents has died down considerably. With a vacancy rate of 14.3 per cent and an average square metre price of €20, Warsaw is on a par with other cities such as Berlin or Prague. Today investors and architects are focusing on long-term gains, something that is beginning to improve the quality of architecture and urbanism.

This move can largely be attributed to the growing number of indigenous Polish architects rather than projects by foreign designers. Many Polish architects returned to their home country having spent years abroad as so-called emigrants during the Communist era. Stanislaw Fiszer, for example, spent a long time in France before he realized his first buildings in Warsaw. One of his latest is an office building tucked away in a courtyard near the Polish parliament. It bears all the hallmarks of a Post-Modernist interpretation of a historical facade, with architraves and lintels in cast aluminium.

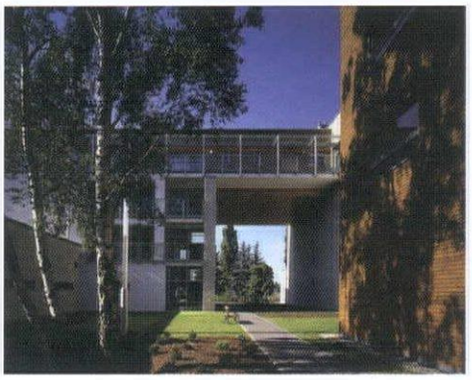
Budzynski & Badowski struggle with a similar stylistic legacy. Their brightly green patinated Court Building (1999) and University



Inside Agora Building, animated by louvres and planting.



Eco Park housing complex by Stefan Kurylowicz.

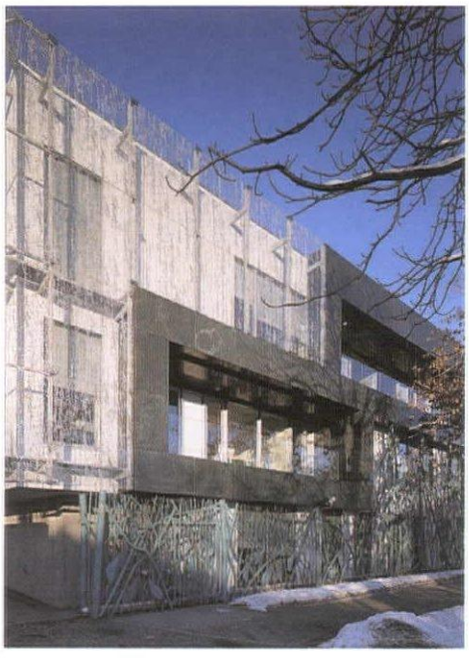


Eco Park: a typical example of new high-quality housing.

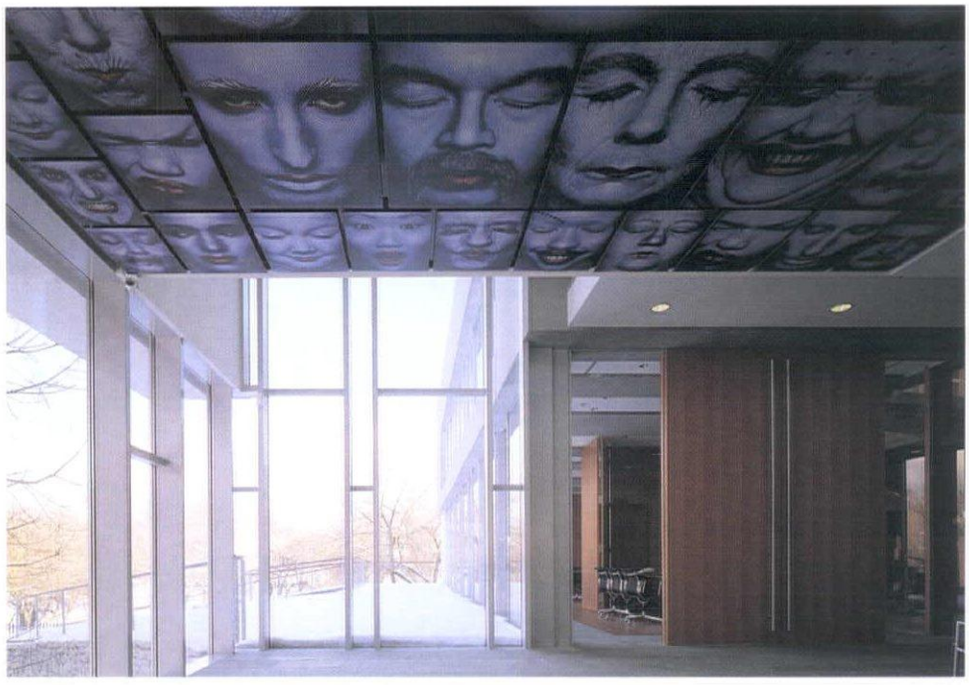
Library (2000) sport a peculiar fondness of decorative symbolism, anything from statues to embossed text blocks on the exterior. Here architecture is celebrated as a huge urban palimpsest where the building's function is communicated by the almost billboard character of the facade. Enormous sculptural elements, such as Classical columns, caryatids and landscaped gardens and roofs convey a feeling of heroic scale and these buildings are indeed huge (library 61 000sqm and court 45 000sqm) compared with the ordinary houses which surround them. The message is almost 'Learning from Warsaw'.

Sadly it is not difficult to find examples of prominent new buildings in conflict with historic relics. The Gielda Building, which houses the Stock Exchange on ul. Ksiazeca is just one example. Architects Stanislaw Fiszer and Andrzej M. Choldzynski's steel and glass facade faces a historic brick building, rendering it completely out of proportion. Just like the rigorous ING Bank building further up the street, the Stock Exchange sits uncomfortably in the urban fabric. It seems as if some Polish architects have not yet found their own architectural language, preferring instead to integrate elements from various sources in a watered-down pastiche of western European and American models.

However, this is not to say that all of Warsaw's new architecture fails to respond to its surroundings. The Focus Building (2000), presiding over the busy Armii Ludowej dual carriageway, is a good example of how an imposing modern structure can be integrated into Warsaw's urban fabric. Designed by Stefan Kurylowicz, the city's most prominent architects, this bold corporate building has an elegantly engineered glass and steel skin. The new headquarters for the Polish Airline LOT, near Warsaw Airport, is another of Kurylowicz's recent commissions. Here, the generally high quality of Polish workmanship pays off, and the result is a pristine, precise architecture. The only caveat is that the double facade runs around the building, so it is slightly difficult to imagine the stack effect of rising warm air being fully effective on the north facade.



Dutch embassy by van Egeraat. Photo by Christian Richters.



Van Egeraat's characteristically eclectic Dutch embassy interior. Photograph: Christian Richters.

So far, ecology does not yet play a major role in Polish architecture, but some recent projects, such as the Agora SA Building (2002) by JEMS Architekci, combine ecological awareness with innovative design. The building is occupied by Poland's most prestigious newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* and was designed in close cooperation with the future user. The extremely deep plan (40m) draws in daylight via its long southern facade and specially designed diagonal courtyards. Wooden louvres, balconies and terraces open up the building from the inside. Transparency and natural materials animate the egalitarian interior where circulation is of prime importance and the editor's office is not greatly different from any other.

Two other building sectors are flourishing in Warsaw. First, new accommodation is in such high demand that prospective buyers are forced to register on waiting lists and the overheated private housing market can command average prices of US$1200-1600 per sqm. The popular green field development Eco Park by Stefan Kurylowicz is a typical example of new, high quality housing – though the acronym 'Eco' should not be taken too literally. What you get for your money is a shell and core flat which you then have to wire up, and install the heating, kitchen and bathroom. (As a result, Polish DIY capabilities are extremely high.)

The second burgeoning sector is new embassy buildings and ambassadors' residences. Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Japan, South Korea are among the many countries that have either rebuilt their representations or, as in the case ot the French embassy dating back to the '60s, lavishly refurbished their properties. The newly completed Dutch embassy by Erick van Egeraat and Grupa 5 from Warsaw is one of the most architecturally conspicuous. In beautiful Lazienkowski Park, Egeraat and Grupa 5 have created an eclectic ensemble of the ambassador's residence and actual embassy. The architects play on the verdant setting by surrounding the estate with a green steel fence of stylized shrubs, while inside van Egeraat weaves his peculiar mix of Modernism and playful exuberance (much to the irritation of some staff). The new British embassy will be designed by Tony Fretton (AR November 2004).

As these projects demonstrate, Warsaw is increasingly becoming a showcase for foreign architects, fuelling the growing Polish passion for design. Norman Foster's Metropolitan Building (which secured the RIBA Worldwide Awards prize, AR July 2004) lies at the city's most prestigious Marshal Pilsudskiego Place. Foster, like German RKW Architects, is realizing projects that will set the tone for Warsaw's architectural future. A future that still looks bright, spurred on by the new EU membership and the relentless optimism of Warsaw's inhabitants. CHRISTIAN BRENSING


L N G
L N G

Shipshape solution

This bespoke display system adds drama to a historic collection of model ships.

Energy supply group BP has one of the world's largest shipping fleets, ferrying oil and gas around the globe. It also has a sizeable collection of model vessels – a scale model is commissioned when each new ship is procured. The collection is very valuable, with one model dating back to 1922. In 2003, BP began to consolidate its properties and businesses in south-east England and its shipping arm moved to new offices in Sunbury. The management did not want to relegate such an impressive collection to off-site storage, so commissioned Shopkit Designs to devise a new display system.

The models have flat-bottomed hulls and had previously been supported on brass upstands and housed in a variety of conventional display cases. Shopkit's new custom-designed system runs up the wall of a double-height atrium, so the ships appear to float in space, adding to the visual drama.

Models are stacked vertically, suspended on H-shaped cradles which lock into the existing brass upstands. The cradles are supported on four vertical cables running up from the floor to a new steel beam suspended between two existing circular columns. (As the atrium wall is non load-bearing, the display must derive support from the building structure.) The beam is attached to the columns by means of a specially designed clamping system and has two cantilevered outriggers that anchor the top of the tension cables.

Each of the H-frame cradles that supports the models has an adjustable collar that can be moved in two directions, to take account of variations in size (models currently range from 700mm to 2300mm long). This mechanism can also adapt to new models as these are commissioned. With the ships already attached, the beam and H-frame cradles were carefully hoisted into place. A glass and steel lectern at the base of the cables acts as a protective barrier and also carries graphics and specifications that can be read from floor level.

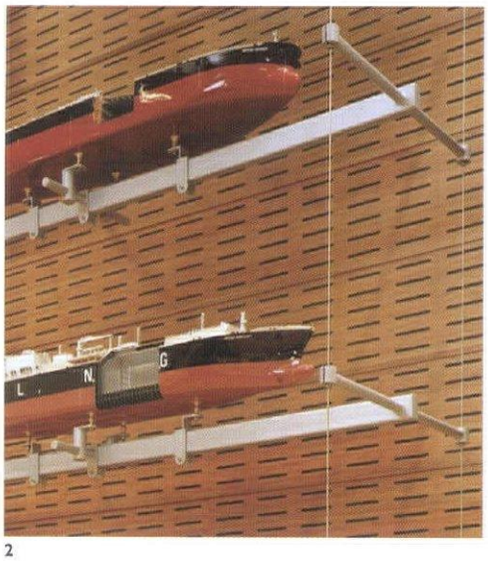
The system was pre-finished off site in an effort to minimize in-situ work and disruption. Manufacture took around five weeks and the system was installed over three evenings. Additional ships can be housed either in new glass and metal cabinets, or substituted for one of the cable-hung versions by simply unbolting the model from its cradle. Elegantly minimal yet highly functional, Shopkit's is a truly shipshape solution. C. S.

Designer
Shopkit Designs
Facilities management
Johnson Controls
Photographs
Paul Raftery

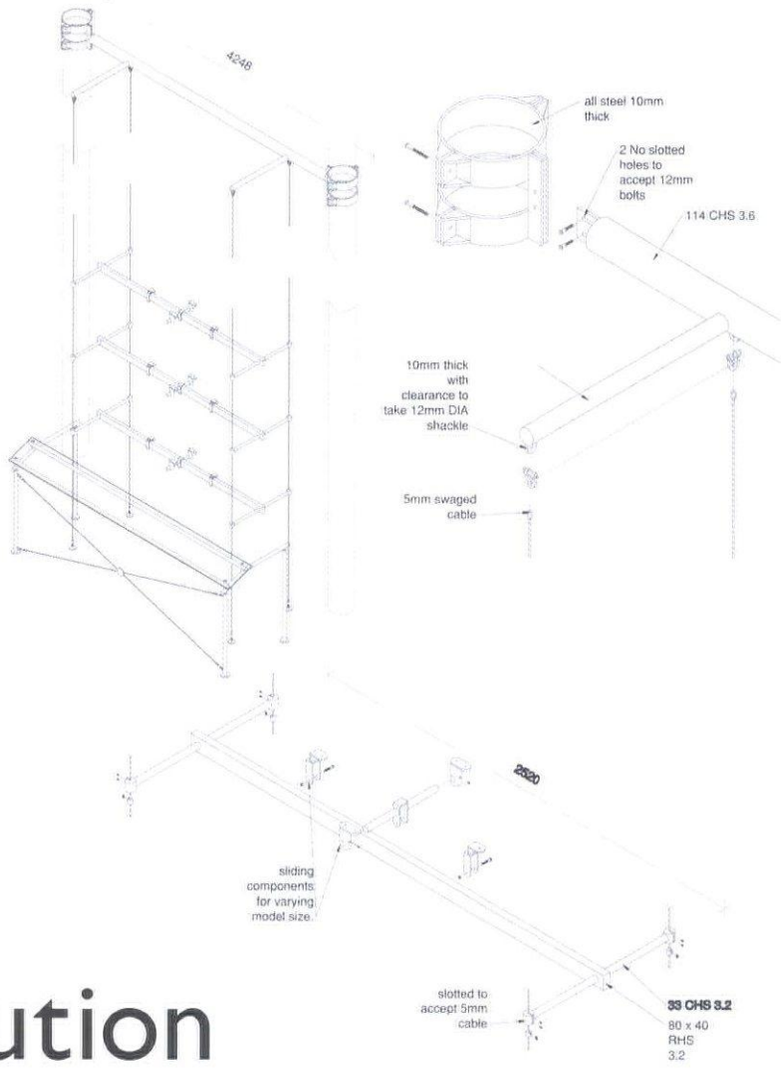


3

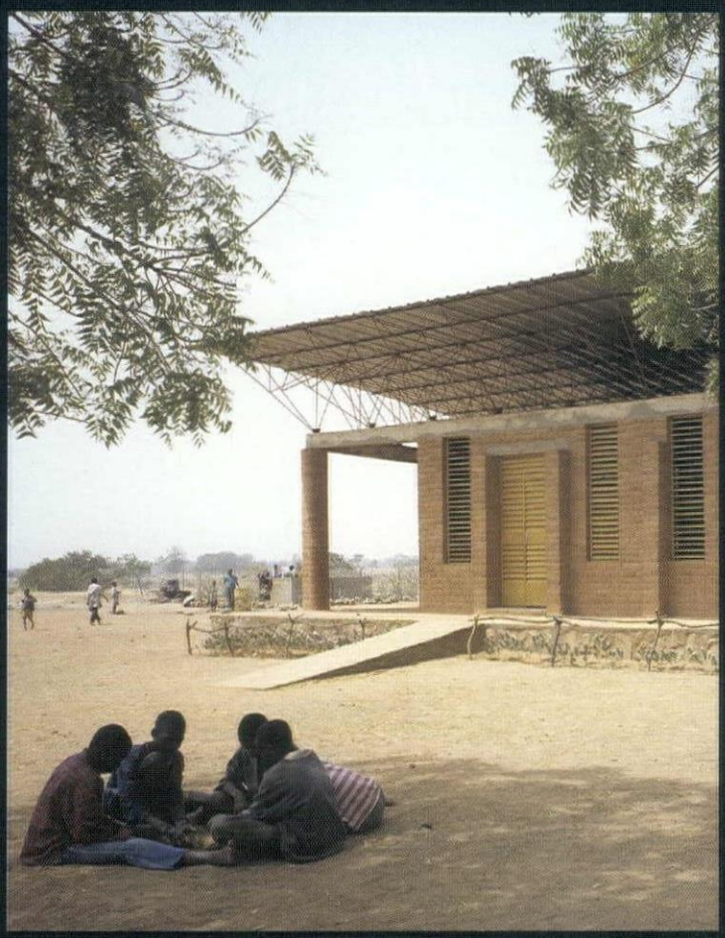
1
Slung from an ingenious system of cradles and tension wires, the model vessels appear to float in space.
2
Detail of H-frame cradle.
3
Detail of new display case.



2



DISPLAY SYSTEM, SUNBURY, ENGLAND
DESIGNER
SHOPKIT DESIGNS



The once rare and exotic have become commonplace. We no longer 'for lust of knowing what should not be known' take Flecker's Golden Road to Samarkand,[1] but arrive by 747 and find the city equipped with efficient trolleybuses; Machu Picchu is overrun by parties of well drilled hikers and littered with Kodak packaging; the sands of the empty quarter of Arabia are woven into ruts by the tracks of four-wheel-drive Toyotas. Only a very few places are obscure enough to avoid the influence of international travel, or rich enough to be able to resist being made into a one-night stop on the relentless tourist itinerary.

Almost all children (at least in the more prosperous areas of the world) play with the same toys, styled in North America or Europe and made by serf-like labour in the least well-off countries. Only a child of very poor parents (or very rich ones) can hope to escape from the scum of sentimental plastic washed up by the tide of the global economy. In entertainment, Hollywood rules, changes history and reduces the well-loved original characters of children's stories – Mowgli, Pooh Bear, Snow White, Dr Dolittle and the rest – into anodyne Californian suburbanites.

Food used to be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of a civilization. A range of hills or a river could divide radically different cuisines. Now, fast food throughout the world is tasteless American or over-spiced Asian. Fusion food in which elements of different cuisines are amalgamated (a potentially exciting idea) too often ends up as muddy mush, enlivened with the odd curl of ginger, or horseradish or a rocket leaf. Such ingredients are often grown in poor countries: out of season vegetables in Africa; poultry in South-East Asia, often taking land and resources from production of staple crops, and causing scarcity for local people.

The effects of anomie

In urban terms, this almost universal condition of anomie and indifference to the fate of others has resulted in the awful dreariness of North American cities. That culture has been exported wonderfully successfully. Planning by civil engineers concerned with little other than automobile convenience has resulted in the fractured fabrics of cities as different as Cairo, Cape Town, Seattle and Shanghai (though not much yet, thank goodness, in the ancient cities of Europe). Even when the road engineers have been caused to try to make a semblance of urbanity, as they have in places like Moscow and Peking, their contributions are just as divisive of traditional urban texture, but are decorated by floral central traffic reservations and kitsch balustrades.

If motorways carve apart the body of the city, car parks form a deadening rash over much that remains – atrophied and often expanding areas in which selfishness, litter and crime rule. Public urban space tends toward this condition of auto-desert, populated by the poor and dispossessed. Private space is increasingly defined by walls, armed guards and electronic surveillance. Here, power and money reside, girdled by steel and armed guards.

The ethos of such special areas is spreading. Increasingly, types of space that were traditionally parts of the public realm – markets, streets, squares, places of congregation and worship – are becoming private territories, ruled arbitrarily by private corporations with their own rules which, while not absolutely in contradiction to common law, erode individual freedom and enforce the rule of mediocrity.

IN PLACE

In cherishing the particular against a corrosive tide of globalization, architects can make the world a better place.

Such enclaves, set in a septic sea of civil engineering, are intended to provide the sense of place, of settled values and safety that is psychologically necessary for all of us. They work very well (in a way) for the reasonably well off, but they have nothing to offer to society as a whole: they are places of exclusion rather than inclusion; they seem to be safe in a world of increasing uncertainty and threatening squalor. More and more, the world seems to be tending towards the futures anticipated at the beginning of last century by writers like H. G. Wells and E. M. Forster[2] who suggested that the well off would live in places cosseted and protected by technology against nature, and against the horrifying working classes who turn into a separate, savage and violent race, waiting always for the collapse of the protective machines. Which happens with dire results.

Leading by example

Wells and Forster were of course reflecting on the chasmic class divisions of the society of Edwardian London, then the richest in the world. But today, the collapse of civil society (and the civic fabric) into adversely opposed factions seems almost as immanent in most developed countries. Bladerunner is just over the horizon.

Can architecture do anything to counteract the erosion of social and civic consciousness that the market seems to be driving so hard? Not much perhaps. But as Billie Tsien urged at the conference celebrating this cycle of Aga Khan awards (p62), your canoe tied to a tanker can make a difference to the big ship's course, if only you keep on paddling as hard as you can. The works of Tod Williams and Billie Tsien have, like those of the best of their contemporaries, shown how architecture can generously and gently suggest directions into which the massive tanker of the market can be turned. (It will not resist, as long as the good can be shown to be profitable.)

Architecture has to lead by example. Our profession is one of the few capable of imagining better physical futures for humanity. Too often, we become dull servants of big business or big bureaucracy. Too often, the most famous members of the profession become preoccupied by their own personalities, generating flashy images and huckstering iconic trademarks. Too often, architects lack understanding of the liberating opportunities offered by technology, and tend to choose its restrictive potential.

Architecture is not, nor ever has been, an autonomous art, as some claim. It is generated by the human need for shelter, for places in which we can engage with others and for places of celebration. The best architects, from the people who made Stonehenge to the most sensitive designers today, have always understood that we can call down divine fire, focus community, make a place for home.



The responsibility of helping to make the world generously appropriate for civilized human conduct is awesome, but it is, I suspect, the reason that drove almost all of us to become architects. It is up to us to rediscover (and in many ways reinvent) the particularness of the world and humanity's relationships to it: to help give everyone in society a physical sense of place, to find a locus for every individual in relation to the world. Aldo van Eyck urged many years ago that we must make places, not spaces. He was right.

PETER DAVEY

1 *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* by James Elroy Flecker (1913).
2 *The Time Machine*, H. G. Wells (1895); *The Machine Stops* by E. M. Forster (1909).

Cherishing the particular – left, primary school in Gando in Burkina Faso, by Diébédo Francis Kéré (p66), and above, a cemetery and memorial in Belzec, Poland, by DDJM (p54).



HEALTH CENTRE,
WILCANNIA, AUSTRALIA
ARCHITECT
MERRIMA

1
The new linear block of Wilcannia's health centre re-establishes a relationship with the Darling River, sacred to the native Barkinji people.

SITE SPECIFIC

A health centre in a small Australian township responds with great sensitivity to site and place.

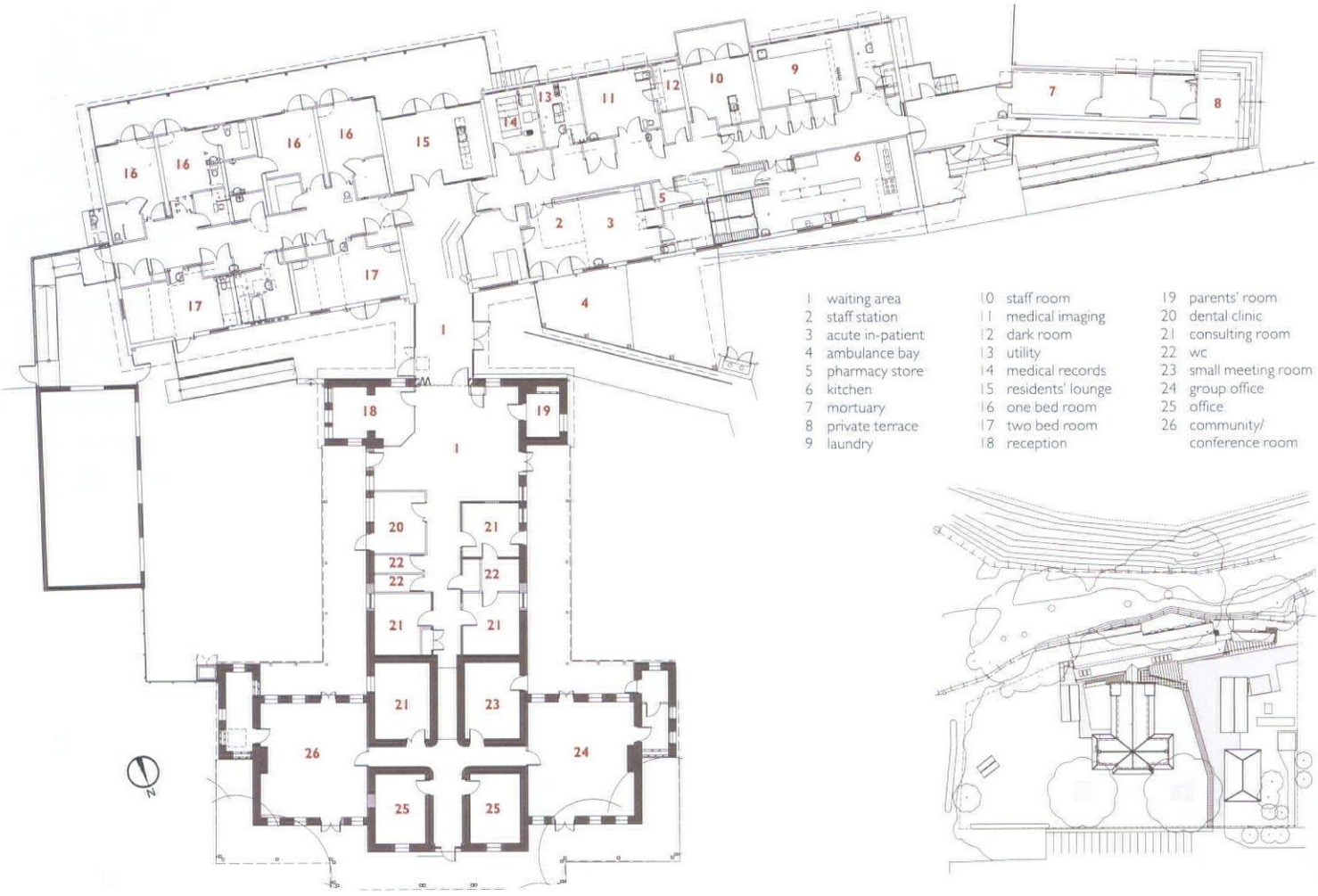
Founded in 1995, Merrima operates as a design unit within the New South Wales Government Architect's Office, specializing in buildings specifically for Aboriginal communities. The name can be translated as 'falling stars', alluding to the Aboriginal myth that deceased elders in the sky have the power to return in order to assist living communities. All Merrima's architects have their roots among Australia's indigenous peoples. Dillon Kombumerri, the unit's founding principal, is from Queensland's Yugembir Nation and has the distinction of being Australia's first professionally registered architect. Over time, he has been joined by a coterie of young architects and designers from other indigenous nations. It is a small, lively collaborative that aims to challenge the established design and cultural tenets that tend to surround dealings with native communities. Kombumerri and his partners not only design buildings, they also teach, lecture, mentor and travel, particularly in the US and Canada, to study projects and share experiences with other indigenous architects. Powerful and unsentimental, their work is characterized by a refreshing authenticity



of expression that responds to and reinterprets a sense of place, community and cultural identity, tempered by modern concerns. In an interview with Australian critic and commentator Davina Jackson, Kombumerri observes 'We're trying to achieve some kind of honesty in the contemporary expression of Aboriginal culture'.*

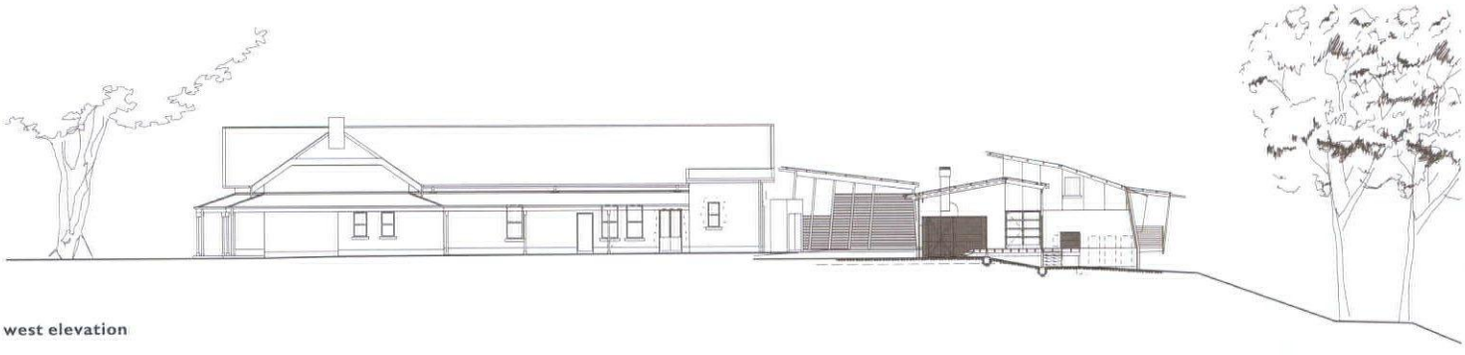
Historically, Australia's Aboriginal tribes were nomadic, adapting existing landforms for shelter or building very lightly and ephemerally on the ground. There is little physical or documented evidence of an architectural culture, but what does endure is a respect for and an intimacy with the land, climate and natural world, qualities that strongly inform Merrima's work. Since its inception, the collaborative has undertaken a range of projects for various NSW Government agencies, including health, arts and prison services. Its first project was a craft workshop for prisoners in a minimum security unit at Bathurst, near Sydney. Working closely with inmates, Merrima's design was based on the organic form of a goanna, a lizard-like creature sacred to the local Wiradjuri people. The external landscaping also incorporated a contemporary interpretation of the 'Burbang', the Wiradjuri male initiation ceremony for young males into manhood. Current built and ongoing projects in New South Wales include an Aboriginal Medical Service in Sydney and an Indigenous Art and Adult Studies Centre in Moree.

Though Merrima's projects tend to be modestly scaled, this suits a small team and offers an opportunity to engage more fully at every level of the design process, from client consultation to detailing. Shown here is an extension to a hospital in Wilcannia, a small township nearly 1000km to the north-west of Sydney on the Barrier Highway connecting Sydney with Adelaide. Established in the 1860s as a river trade centre, Wilcannia evolved rapidly along the Darling River, the source of its initial prosperity, but the subsequent decline of river transport in the 1930s reduced the population from over 3000 to its current level of 1000, of which 65 per cent is Aboriginal. The local inhabitants are the Barkinji or river people, who believe that the great Darling River was created by Barka, a mythical

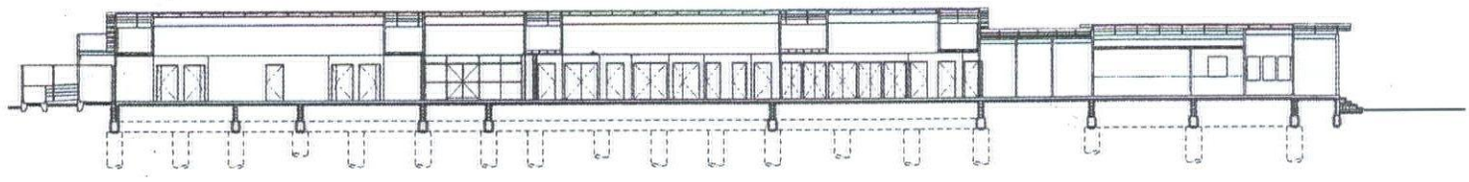


ground floor plan (scale approx 1:500)

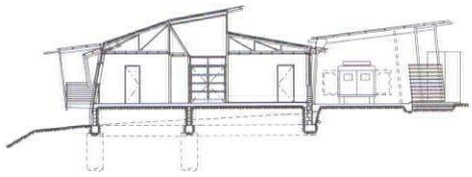
site plan



west elevation



long section



cross section

2
The original Victorian cottage hospital anchors the complex. On the right is the ambulance bay for the new wing.
3
The small mortuary is a self-contained pavilion with a screened external terrace for private gathering and mourning.



Health centre,
Wilcannia, Australia
ARCHITECT
Merrima

2



3

Health centre, Wilcannia, Australia

ARCHITECT
Merrima



4

4
Poised on a ridge and sitting lightly on the ground, the long linear wing seems part of the landscape.

Architect
Merrima Design Group, Sydney
Project team
Dillon Kombumerri, Kevin O'Brien, John Moschatos, Phil Senior
Structural and civil engineer
Vijay Badhwar
Interior designer
Alison Page
Landscape architect
Nicole Thompson
Photographs
Brett Boardman

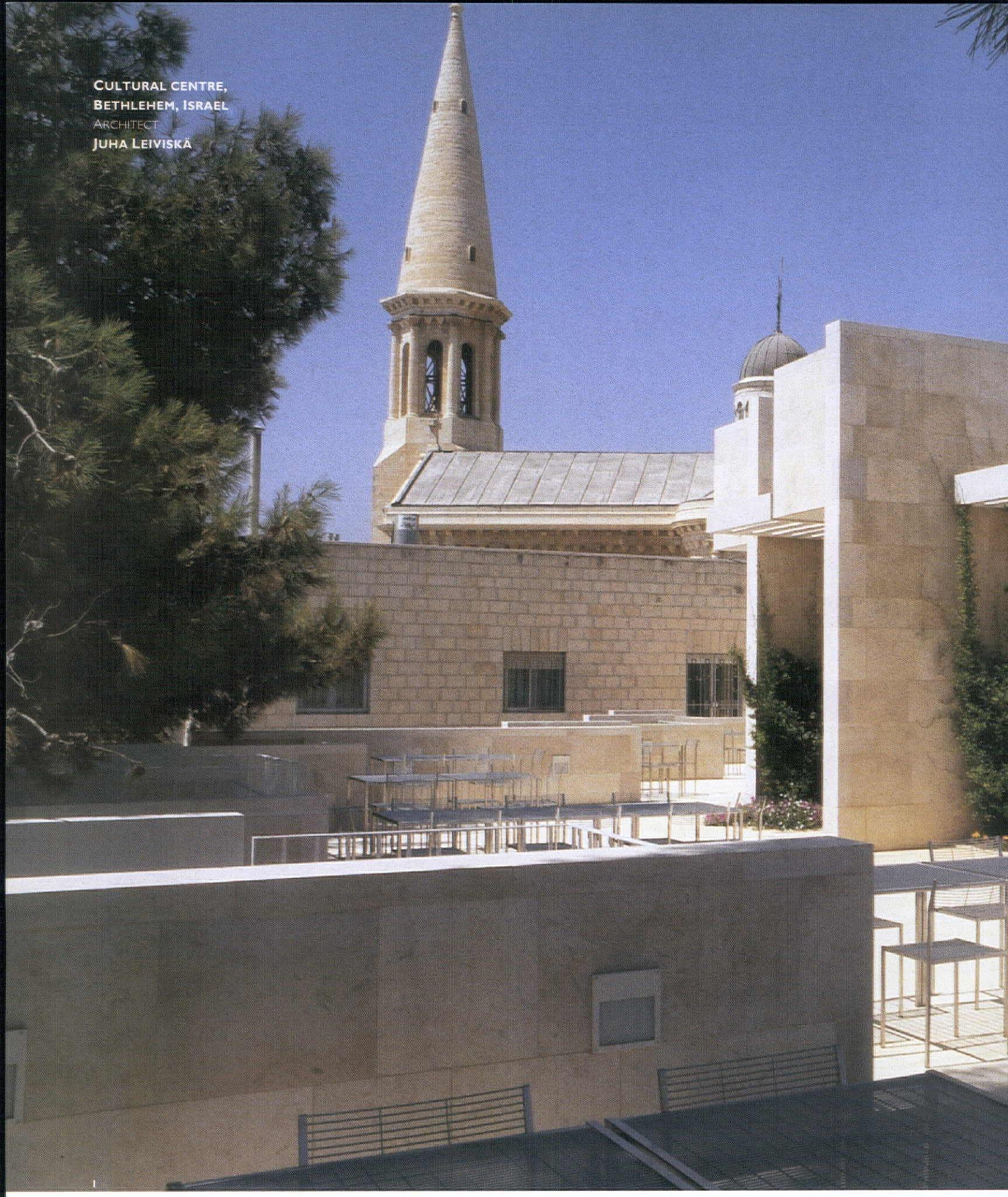
ancestral serpent, as it undulated across the land. The site lies on the edge of town, overlooking the broad sweep of the river. The new building grows out of the original Victorian cottage hospital which was intended to serve passing riverboat traffic. Built out of local white quartzite sandstone, it follows a simple but rigorous cruciform plan, a subconscious testament to the Victorian virtues of health, hygiene and religion. Though its unflinching symmetry, isolated location and regimented medical regime (which segregated Aboriginal patients) made the old hospital a place of foreboding, nonetheless it formed part of the cultural memory of the local community, who proved keen to preserve it when the time came for redevelopment. As the river has immense cultural and spiritual significance for the Barkinji, one of Merrima's principal aims was to reunite the site with the river as a revitalized place of healing and sanctuary. With its mixture of health facilities, social services and respite accommodation, the new complex readdresses and responds to both the current and future needs of the community. Through a series of extensive meetings and



briefings with a working party comprising, among others, community elders and government agencies, the design gradually evolved. The old building has been tactfully restored and a jumble of incremental additions removed so that the original Victorian structure is revealed in its stern glory once more. Now housing consulting rooms, offices and a dental clinic, this acts as an anchor for the new addition, a single-storey linear block poised on a ridge overlooking the river that snakes along the south-west edge of the site. Sitting lightly on the site, the long, low bar seems part of the topography, merging with and growing out of the land.

A shared reception and waiting area forms a fulcrum between the two parts. Bisected by a central spine, the new wing contains respite rooms and a patients' lounge at its east end (most with inspiring views over the river), with staff, kitchen and laundry rooms to the west. Generous timber-framed verandas extend the internal spaces into the landscape. The hospital's small mortuary is expressed as a separate, self-contained pavilion at the extreme west end of the new block, with an external terrace for private assembly and mourning. A strategy of passive environmental control underscores the project. Natural daylight and cross ventilation are exploited, and the thermal mass of locally-made bricks helps to heat and cool spaces. Hot summer and cold winter winds are moderated through the use of courtyards. The language of the two parts is very different – the squat stone villa with its fearful symmetry is counterpointed by the lightweight, organic character of the new block, with its angled walls, soaring metal roof and subtle merging of interior and exterior realms. Where the old hospital was hermetic and proscriptive, the new wing is fluid and permeable, an armature for the exploration of different possibilities, that connects and resonates with site and place. Yet both buildings are clearly of their time and part of an evolving sense of local identity. Rooted in culture and society, Merrima's finely tuned architecture decisively captures and makes manifest this sense. C. S.

* *Architectural Record*, December 2003, p86.



Cultural centre, Bethlehem, Israel
Architect
Juha Leiviskä

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

This cultural centre in Bethlehem sensitively connects with and invigorates the physical and social life of the town.





Building in the Holy Land is underscored by both the weight of ancient religions and the more unforgiving contemporary dynamics of conflict, politics and culture. Bethlehem, the site of Jesus' birth and one of the most sacred places in Christendom, is today a scrubby hillside town in Israel's West Bank, nominally under Palestinian jurisdiction as one of a disparate patchwork of autonomous Palestinian territories. Populated mainly by Muslims, with a Christian minority, it scrapes by on fitful bouts of religious tourism (it is also the birthplace of King David), but this has waned in the wake of recent Palestinian suicide bombing campaigns.

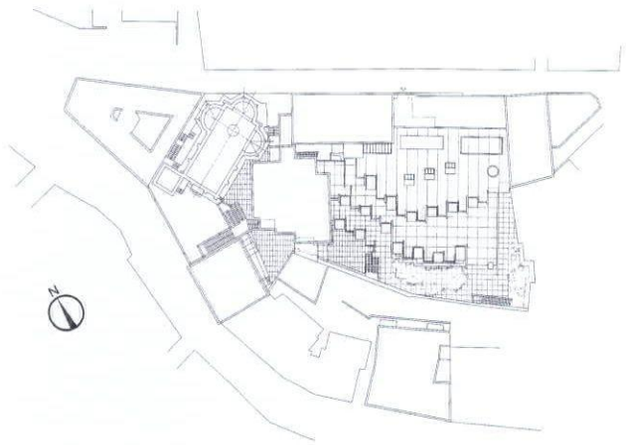
Though like much of the region, Bethlehem's wider future still remains uncertain, the turn of the millennium marked an important milestone in the town's history and set the authorities thinking about what they could do to upgrade Bethlehem's dilapidated infrastructure to improve conditions for the local population and also sustain and encourage tourism. As well as undertaking a programme of infrastructural improvements, the town's most important streets, alleys and squares have been renovated.

As part of this programme, Finnish architect Juha Leiviskä was invited to design an annexe to the Dar al-Kalima Academy in the centre of town. The Academy operates under the auspices of the local Finnish Lutheran church, but its remit is to promote connection and understanding between people of different religious and cultural backgrounds and support the folk culture of Palestine. These laudable aims have the wider backing of the Finnish Foreign Ministry which financed the project and oversaw a national architectural competition to find a suitable scheme.

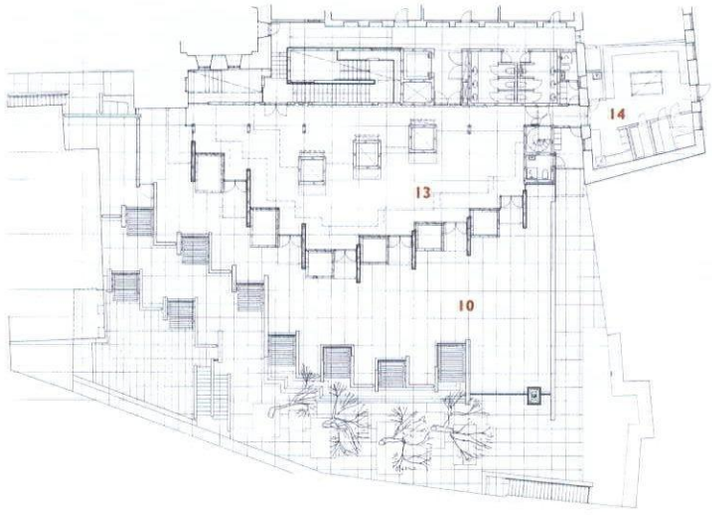
Leiviskä is known for his distinctively spare yet highly resonant architecture, much of it for religious programmes. His many churches succeed brilliantly in capturing a powerful sense of the numinous in a contemporary language. Here the challenge was to tactfully add to and enhance an existing complex shoehorned into a tight urban site dominated at the north end by the existing Lutheran church. Making a virtue out of adversity, Leiviskä exploits the height difference across the site to create a series of terraces that maintain and enhance connections between new and existing elements, so that in some ways, the scheme is like a town in microcosm, with a variety of places, spaces and views generated by the tight grain of the architecture.

Leiviskä admits to being influenced by the denseness and informality of the historic surroundings, qualities which permeate the form and organization of the new parts. Pale local sandstone is used to clad the crisp cubic volumes (its use in Bethlehem's historic core is obligatory), further underscoring the sense of place, though the way

1
Clad in pale local sandstone, the new cultural complex nestles into a tight urban site next to the Finnish Lutheran church.
2
The undulating topography of modern Bethlehem.

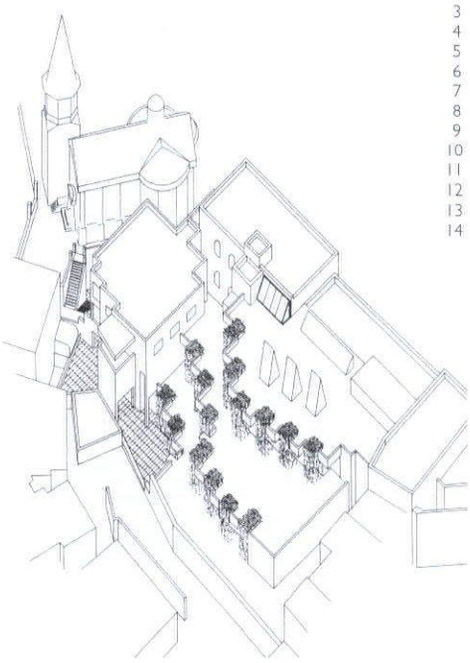


site plan

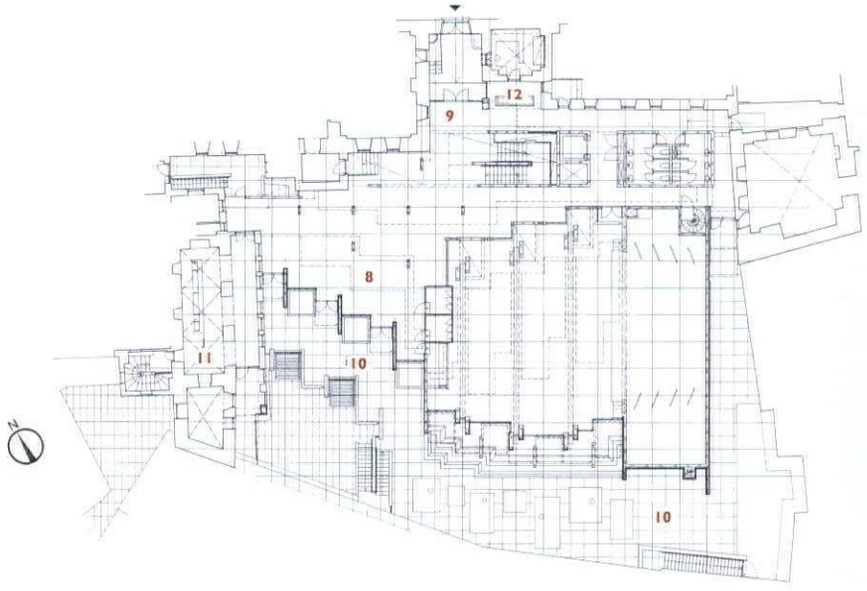


first floor

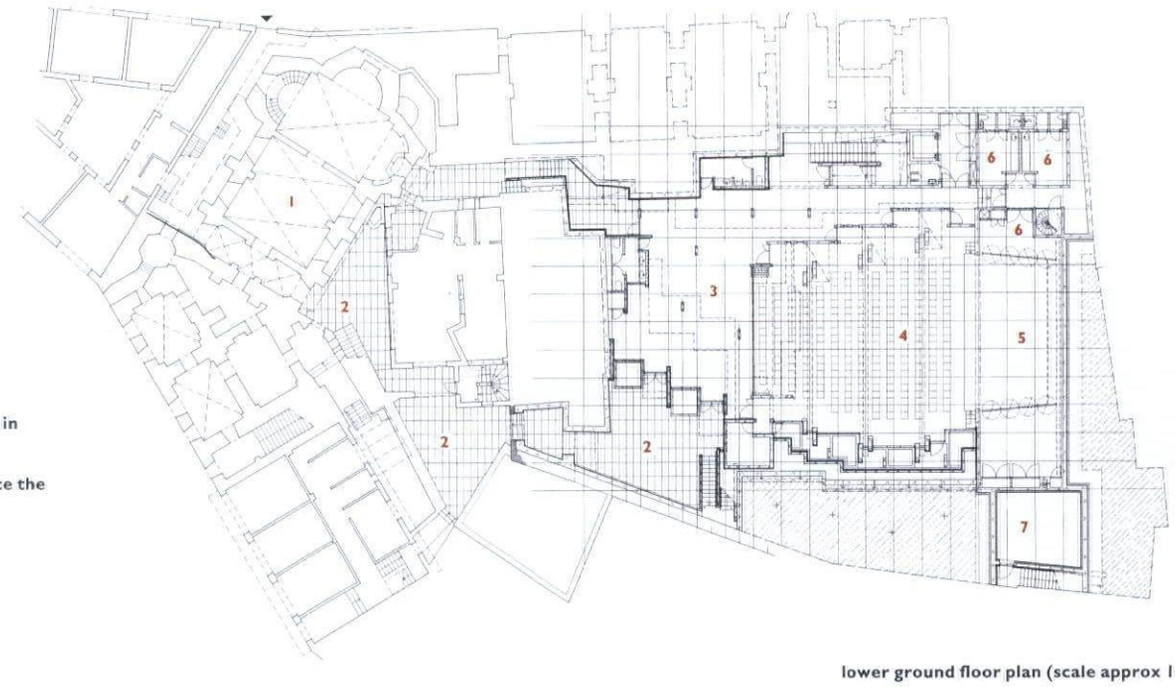
1 crypt of Lutheran church
2 courtyard
3 foyer
4 performance hall
5 stage
6 dressing rooms
7 technical facilities
8 lounge
9 entrance hall
10 terrace
11 bar
12 reception
13 restaurant
14 kitchen



axonometric projection



ground floor (entrance level)



lower ground floor plan (scale approx 1:500)

3
The crisp geometry of the extension resembles a town in microcosm.
4
Terraces extend and enhance the internal spaces.

CULTURAL CENTRE, BETHLEHEM, ISRAEL

ARCHITECT

JUHA LEIVISKÄ



3



4

in which Leiviskä applies it, as a thin facing skin, around 30mm thick rather than loadbearing blocks, is an innovation for the context. Leiviskä's sharp-edged stone is precisely cut and finely jointed, unlike massive, more traditional loadbearing structures.

The focus of the complex is a 300 seat hall for concerts, drama and meetings, giving the centre a new impetus for public performances and also encouraging general engagement with the life of the town. Sunk below the level of the original courtyard and entrance level, the hall is dug into the site. This resolves circulation problems by opening up a route below the old building to a group of small courtyards at the north end of the site. The route threads through and terminates in the crypt of the Lutheran church where the cultural centre was originally housed. Carving out and opening up spaces creates a fertile reciprocity between old and new, as well as rationalizing circulation for the entire complex. In a subtle sleight of hand, by pulling one edge of the hall back from the site border, Leiviskä also manages to preserve a quartet of ancient pine trees on the south-east edge of the site. The trees provide welcome shade to the hugger mugger geometry of cubic volumes and terraces.

The main entrance to the new building is on the east side, connecting with a lounge at intermediate level between the theatre below and a restaurant above. The volumes of the lounge and restaurant are progressively pulled back on their western edges, creating a staggered facade rhythmically animated by balconies and horizontal brise soleil, which throw a pattern of deep shadows across the stone and glass facades.

Each level connects with outside space, so dissolving the boundaries between interior and exterior, and alluding to the traditional form of Middle Eastern buildings, with their intimate internal realms, often animated by greenery and water. At the topmost restaurant level, the tall pine trees act as natural parasols, while planting is intended to trail up the fin-like wall projections to engulf the overhanging brise soleil, enhancing shade, filtering daylight and softening the building's orthogonal contours.

Internally, spaces are ascetically detailed with pale stone floors and walls. Blond wood furniture imparts an aura of calmness and Scandinavian civility. Glazed along its western side, the new performance hall is a dignified, double-height space that irresistibly recalls Leiviskä's simple, solemn church interiors, with cool white walls, tall windows, suspended light fittings, no seating rake and a small raised proscenium stage at one end. And though the religious connection may be obvious, it is also appropriate, since the new building physically adds to an existing church and hopefully, despite its deeply troubled and uncertain context, can act as greater unifying force for good. CATHERINE SLESSOR

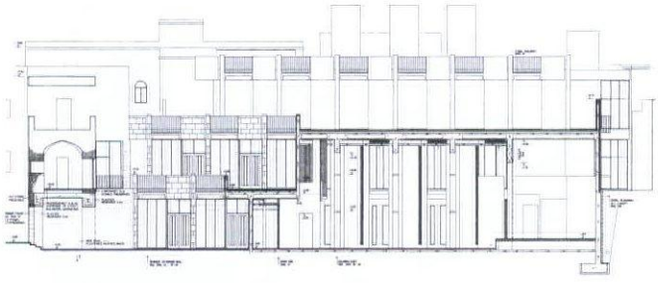
Architect
Juha Leiviskä
Photographs
Jari Heikkinen

CULTURAL CENTRE, BETHLEHEM, ISRAEL

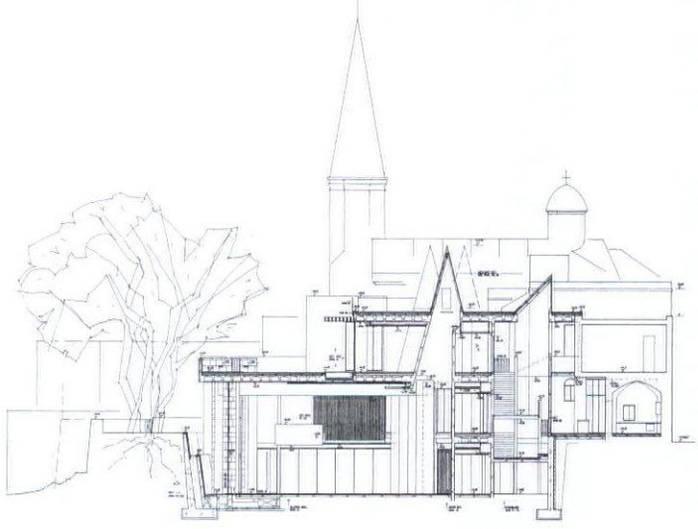
ARCHITECT

JUHA LEIVISKÄ

5
Greenery softens the stone.
6
The new performance hall, which can be used for a range of cultural and social activities.
7
The church-like interior.



long section



cross section



5



6



7



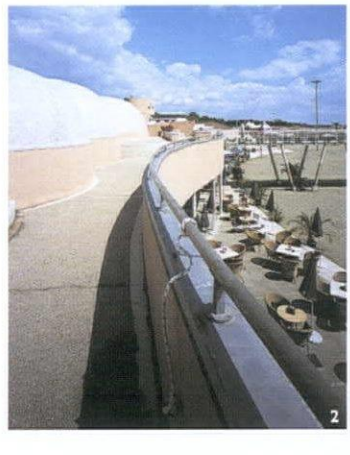
VENETIAN DOLCE VITA

Giancarlo De Carlo's new beach playground on Venice's Lido is a responsive and nourishing armature for many different kinds of public activities and pleasures.

The Lido in Venice is a strip of land dividing the lagoon from the Adriatic, just a short vaporetto ride from St Mark's. You arrive at the quay on one side to meet a front of shops, cafés and fast-food places. Ten minutes' walk past stately turn-of-the-century villas and hotels brings you across to beach and sea, the calm of the lagoon exchanged for the lap of waves, a slightly curving swathe of brown sand facing a wide blue horizon. To avoid the stagnant pollution of the lagoon, this is where Venetians come to swim, to lie about on the beach and to have a good time. There are many hotels and private interests along the beach, but the central area terminating the axial road across the Lido has long been public, the site of an array of bathing cabins in the nineteenth century and of much else since.

By 1999 it had reached a sorry and run-down state and a competition was held for a replacement. Giancarlo De Carlo won with a proposal for new facilities, borrowing the name Blue Moon from a night-club that had existed on the site in the *dolce vita* era of the 1950s. Although practical and commercial facilities such as bars and cafés provided a basis for the quantitative programme, the more essential need was to accentuate the transition between land and sea, providing places to linger and to dwell, for private intimacy as well as public spectacles such as music, dancing and open-air film shows. This is accomplished by an arrangement more a landscape than a building, which plays in a complex way with section as well as plan.

On the land side, the building announces itself through a 30m tower equipped with flag and viewing platform, a device to terminate the axis of the Viale Santa Maria Elisabeta which is the main drive across the Lido. The road makes a T-junction at the sea-front where De Carlo has carved out an exedra as entrance, roughly centred on the vehicle roundabout. From here, ramps and staircases lead on to a rotunda which provides a shady waiting area on the ground and a raised platform for dancing at



1
The boardwalk landscape, looking back from the pier to the landside and the skeletal rotunda.
2
Clusters of domes animate the upper level.
3
The rotunda anchors and marks the complex, its domed structure joining the other domes of Venice.



Lido, Venice, Italy
Architect
Giancarlo De Carlo

LIDO, VENICE, ITALY
ARCHITECT
GIANCARLO DE CARLO

the upper level, both centred on the tower. The dance platform is surmounted by an open dome in white-painted steel with a gently irregular structure, powerful as a definer of space without providing any weather protection whatsoever. It takes its place among other domes in Venice as the main architectural accent of the complex, and as the hub of activity at night when the beach is no longer the focus. Gardens on both sides provide a retreat from the glare and the music, allowing for more intimate moments. In the daytime, the ground floor of the rotunda is a small piazza, with a beach shop on the seaward side. The view of the sea is restricted to a narrow opening which leads past the bar and restaurant through to the beach, but there is also a generous flight of steps leading to the upper level.

The beach end of the complex is treated like a huge amphitheatre, with the ground floor of the building dropping into the sand in contour-like steps, and seating terraces on the roof repeating the same act of embrace. The terraces of the building also continue to both sides in open ranks of seating, used casually in the daytime by people reading, picnicking or just lying around. Near the focus a wooden platform rises out of the sand to offer a potential bandstand, but the culminating event geometrically is a joint in the pier that marks the complex from the sea side as the tower does from the land. Carried on a steel frame, the timber clad pier emerges from the roof terrace of the main building axial with the steps from the rotunda, descending a gentle slope with the beach. At the focal point it changes direction, meeting a staircase up from the sand. It runs from there to meet the edge of the sea with a circular platform, and apparently there are plans to add an even longer arm stretching out across the water which will allow for diving and access to boats.

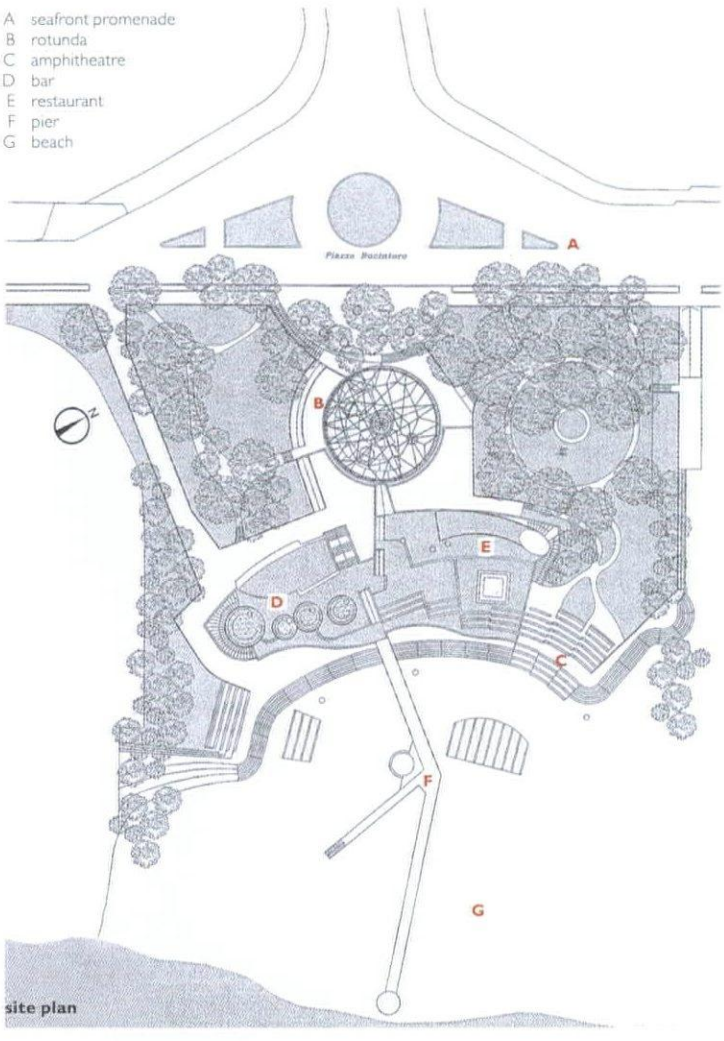
Apart from being a staple of seaside architecture, the pier provides an anchor for the whole composition, and at the larger scale it belongs to a series of piers or jetties that punctuate the Lido, marking key points. On arriving at the Blue Moon, it is hard to resist the temptation to walk through to the end just to explore the view out and back, and it seems unsurprising that, with the disappointment that it only just reaches the water, a longer one is proposed. In the Venetian summer sun, the pier has a second use, for its shadow across the beach becomes a place of refuge, and the area beneath its terminal platform has also become a favourite place for young men to hang about.

The crescent of building between the rotunda and the beach is the only true interior, containing a bar and a restaurant both of which overlook the beach, with services along the back edge. The bar has intimate seating areas, top lit and covered with small mosaic-clad domes, while the restaurant has a level-change across the floor to allow beachward views for those at the back. On the level above is another world: a complex roofscape of paved terraces, with numerous places to sit and lie. The little domes over the bar make more intimate corners and the elevated landscape resembles a promenade around the alleys of an old hill town.

Stylistically, the building will puzzle style classifiers and searchers for significance in shape and precedent, for there are many hints and few confirmations, but for students of De Carlo's work it reflects many longstanding concerns and has an obvious ancestry in his earlier works. The unsheltering dome with its irregular structure recalls the tower project of Siena: again a startlingly modern reinterpretation of a rather familiar idea. The terraces and ramps, ambiguous floors and play with levels recall his work at Urbino (AR October 2002). The layering of circles on a complex geometric system controlled by a regulating plan is typical of his more 'Baroque' later work.

But for me interest in this building is threefold: first, there is the articulation of a continuous layered landscape with well contrived routes and controlled views. Second, there is a skilful manipulation of scale so that the complex gains an identity at every level from a satellite view to a personal sitting bay. Third, and most important, there is the suggestiveness of the building for the user: take a seat here, lie down perhaps, get into a group, put a band here or a cinema screen there and everyone can turn to it. The place is pregnant with possibilities, inviting, full of hope. I trust its occupants will take the initiative and that its owners will let it develop the kind of life that was intended.

PETER BLUNDELL JONES



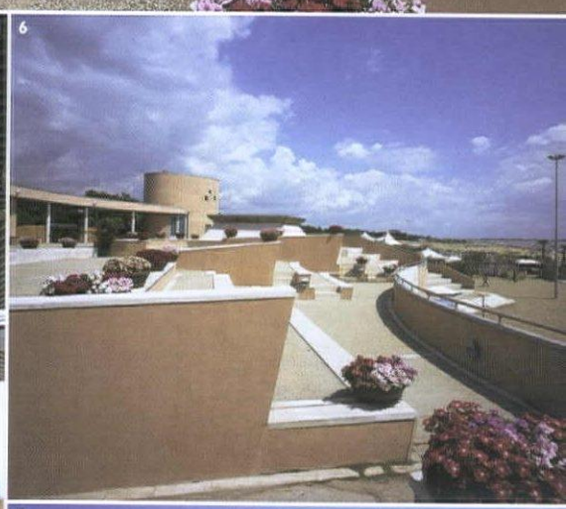
site plan

4
The complex is an armature for different sorts of activities.
5
The cool, arboreal grove under the boardwalk platform.
6
The curved amphitheatre, with its tiers of terraces for sitting and promenading, embraces the beach.
7
The end of the pier.

Architect
Giancarlo De Carlo
Photographs
Peter Blundell Jones


4


5


6


7

IRISH IDENTITY

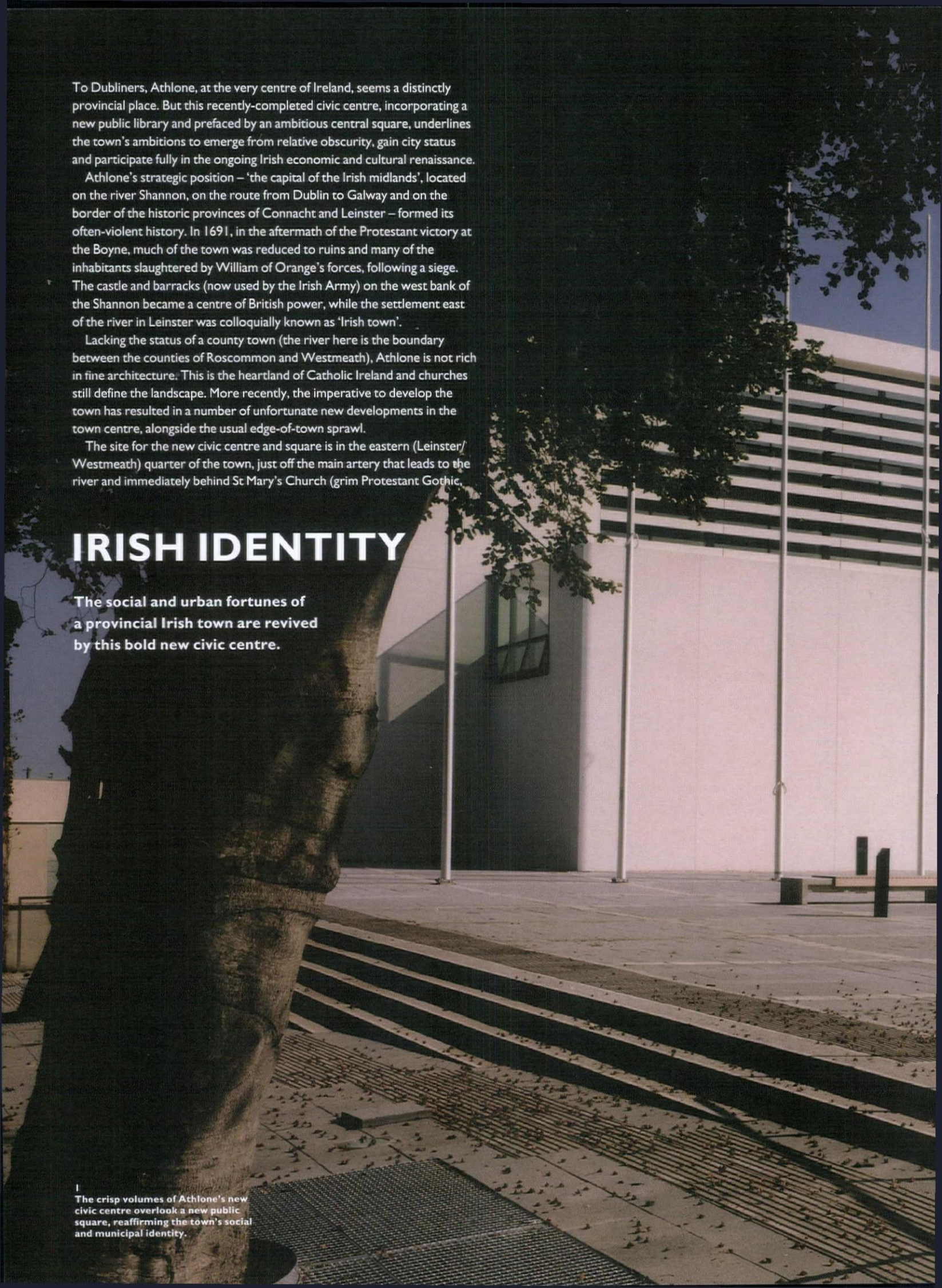
The social and urban fortunes of a provincial Irish town are revived by this bold new civic centre.

To Dubliners, Athlone, at the very centre of Ireland, seems a distinctly provincial place. But this recently-completed civic centre, incorporating a new public library and prefaced by an ambitious central square, underlines the town's ambitions to emerge from relative obscurity, gain city status and participate fully in the ongoing Irish economic and cultural renaissance.

Athlone's strategic position – 'the capital of the Irish midlands', located on the river Shannon, on the route from Dublin to Galway and on the border of the historic provinces of Connacht and Leinster – formed its often-violent history. In 1691, in the aftermath of the Protestant victory at the Boyne, much of the town was reduced to ruins and many of the inhabitants slaughtered by William of Orange's forces, following a siege. The castle and barracks (now used by the Irish Army) on the west bank of the Shannon became a centre of British power, while the settlement east of the river in Leinster was colloquially known as 'Irish town'.

Lacking the status of a county town (the river here is the boundary between the counties of Roscommon and Westmeath), Athlone is not rich in fine architecture. This is the heartland of Catholic Ireland and churches still define the landscape. More recently, the imperative to develop the town has resulted in a number of unfortunate new developments in the town centre, alongside the usual edge-of-town sprawl.

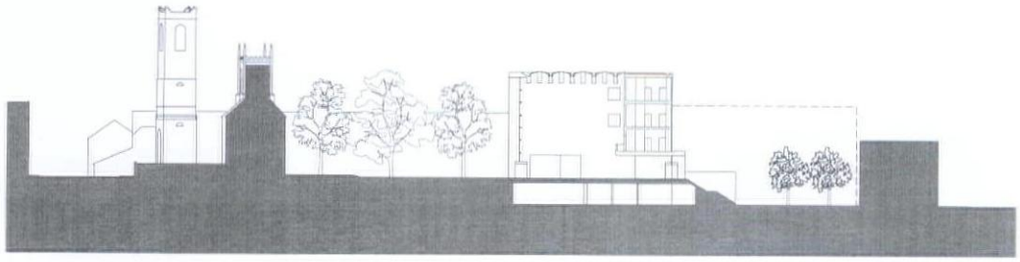
The site for the new civic centre and square is in the eastern (Leinster/ Westmeath) quarter of the town, just off the main artery that leads to the river and immediately behind St Mary's Church (grim Protestant Gothic,



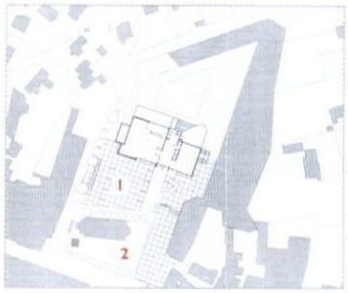
1
The crisp volumes of Athlone's new civic centre overlook a new public square, reaffirming the town's social and municipal identity.



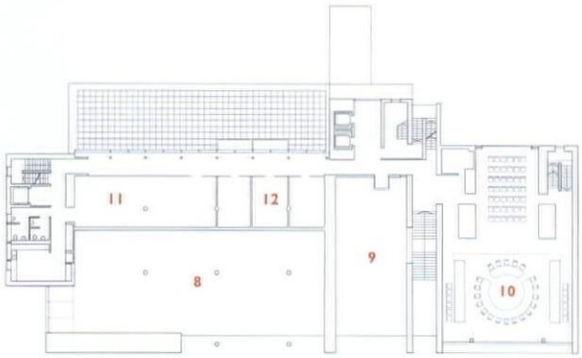
Civic centre, Athlone, Ireland
ARCHITECT
Keith Williams Architects



site section



site plan



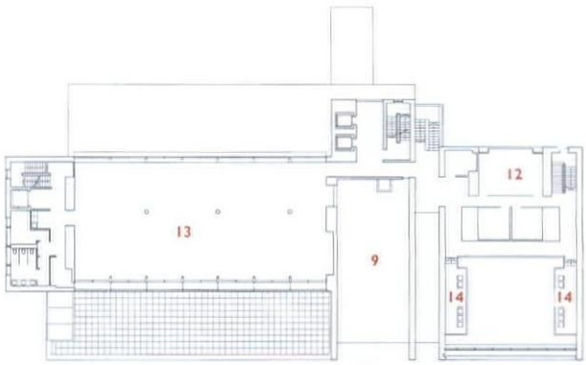
first floor



third floor



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:1000)



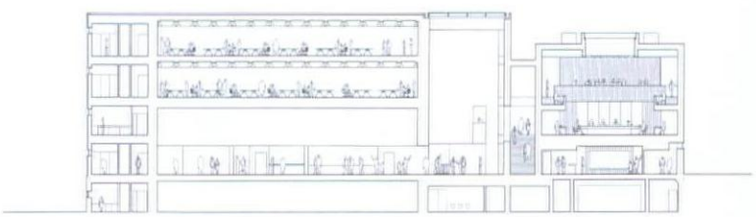
second floor

2, 3
A generous, luminous atrium space bisects the building and creates a modern public forum.
4
The forum forms a fulcrum between the one-stop shop (shown) and the library.
5
A heroically scaled staircase leads up to the council chamber.

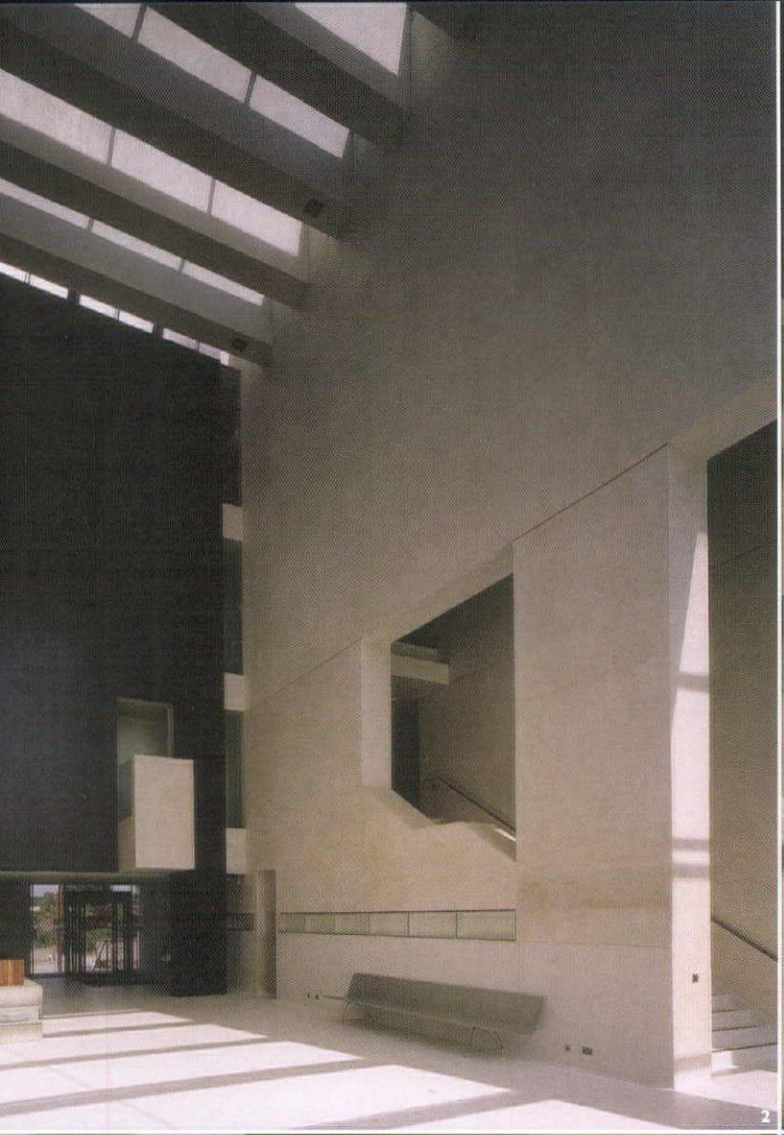
1 public square
2 St Mary's churchyard
3 foyer
4 main library
5 one-stop shop
6 void over children's library
7 library garden
8 void over library
9 void over foyer
10 council chamber
11 café
12 meeting rooms
13 offices
14 public gallery
15 roof terrace



cross section



long section



2



3

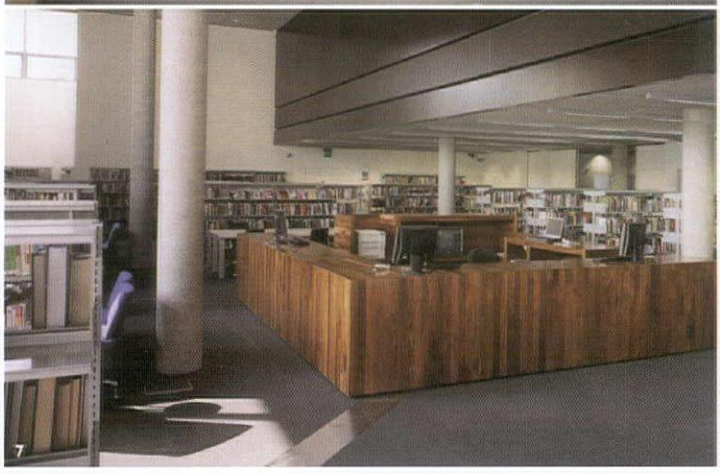


4



5





but a key historic landmark). A section of the ancient town wall – memories of the 1691 siege – traverses it. The site was created by demolishing the former council offices, an undistinguished house that was crudely extended in the 1970s, surrounded by run-down industrial premises. Ireland's National Buildings Agency had drawn up a masterplan for the site, within which Keith Williams Architects (KWA) worked. The brief was for a flagship regeneration project that was to be the new public face of Athlone. Around 70 staff work in the completed building which incorporates a council chamber, meeting rooms and offices, together with a one-stop shop for the public, and a public library to replace the very modest facility located in a former temperance hall.

The process of devolution and restructuring of local government in Ireland that generated the project has been under way for some years. Given the strength of the Irish architectural scene, it is not surprising that most of the commissions for new civic buildings across the country have gone to home-grown practices. The new civic offices at Tubbercurry, County Sligo, by McCullough Mulvin (AR May 2004) and the dramatic county hall at Dooradoyle, County Limerick (AR May 2004), by the young partnership of Bucholz McEvoy, are just some examples of an imaginative commissioning strategy.

The entire civic building programme of recent years has addressed a key issue: what form should a public building take in the twenty-first century? For Bucholz McEvoy at Dooradoyle, the lack of any historic context helped generate a radical form. KWA, in contrast, was faced with a town centre site close to venerated historic landmarks. Since the 1980s, of course, Irish architecture has been conspicuously contextual – the landmark Temple Bar development in Dublin (AR January 1993) was the work of architects such as Derek Tynan, O'Donnell and Tuomey, and Shay Cleary who were influenced by the urbanistic approach of Colin Rowe, James Stirling and Aldo Rossi.

Sensitive as it is to its context, KWA's Athlone project owes little to Irish exemplars, even of a recent vintage. If anything, indeed, the civic centre looks back to the international Modernist tradition that informed the work of an earlier generation of architects in Ireland and in Britain. Viewed from the new public square to the south, the building is a taut, formal composition that clearly expresses the functions it contains. The library occupies the wing to the left, with offices behind. A full-height foyer serves both this wing and the formal civic spaces located in the flanking eastern wing.

Most small towns in Ireland, including Athlone, are characterized by a preponderance of sombre grey render, though the recent fashion for painting up buildings in vivid colour has added an element of variety. Seeking to avoid the starkness of Meieresque all-white, Williams opted to clad the building in off-white terrazzo, a durable material that should withstand the distinctly damp local climate. The northern elevation of the building – the site falls away sharply on this side – is altogether more informal. Currently it addresses a parking area, but the ongoing implementation of the masterplan, which includes a major retail centre, will see a new square developed here, surrounded by housing.

The 18m high, top-lit central atrium space is essentially a big front door (and an extremely generous gesture in a building of 4200m²). Yet along with the new square, it is precisely the gesture that a town looking to enhance its status clearly needs. Internally, finishes are kept very simple, with unpainted plaster and fair-faced concrete providing a neutral aesthetic relieved by timber and good quality furnishings (furniture was specially selected by the architects.)

The main library space is a double-height volume facing south: fixed concrete louvres combat solar gain on those days when the sun shines on Athlone. The children's library and crèche, together with a specialist research library housing an outstanding collection of books about Ireland, are accommodated on the lower ground level to the north. The rare books library occupies a climate-controlled space while the remainder of the building is naturally ventilated, with opening windows where appropriate. Not ground-breaking in the Alsop/Adjaye sense, Athlone's new library is calm and well-organized, an agreeable place to browse or read. Moveable shelving allows for reconfiguration where necessary. Three floors of council offices and meeting rooms are slotted in above and behind the library. Well-lit, with views out to north and south, they are a cut above the typical local authority workspace.

To the south of the atrium, the one-stop shop serves local residents seeking advice on council services. Above is the double-height council chamber, normally seating 20 members. Fixed furniture and panelling are made of walnut, its rich texture offset by the austere concrete-beamed roof with a Kahnian central oculus. The public is admitted to a gallery on the floor above, while the roof terrace is reserved for members – a good place to observe the transformation of their town.

With a start on site late in 2002, the civic centre was recently handed over to its users. The public square was the last element in the scheme to be completed. Lengthy negotiations with the Church of Ireland rector were necessary before a narrow slice of church land was ceded to expand the square and to integrate St Mary's Church into the new public domain. The treatment of the surviving fragment of town wall was the subject of detailed discussions with Dùchas (the Irish equivalent of English Heritage). The great strength of the completed square is its simplicity and the absence of extraneous features.

Keith Williams's response to the challenge of creating a municipal monument for a new age is both confident and convincing, an assured performance that rejects both visual gimmickry and the tendency to sentimental nationalism that infuses, for example, the Wales Millennium Centre. Both architect and client deserve recognition for the fidelity with which this beacon of regeneration has been realized. KENNETH POWELL

Architect
Keith Williams Architects, London
Structural and services engineer
ARUP
Facade engineering
Buro Happold
Cost consultant
Davis Langdon PKS
Photographs
Eamonn O'Mahony

6
The welcoming informality of the one-stop shop at foyer level.
7
Main library.
8
Council chamber.



Cemetery, Belzec, Poland
Architect
DDJM



1



2



ASHES TO ASHES

Artists and architects collaborate to create a powerful, sobering memorial in Poland.

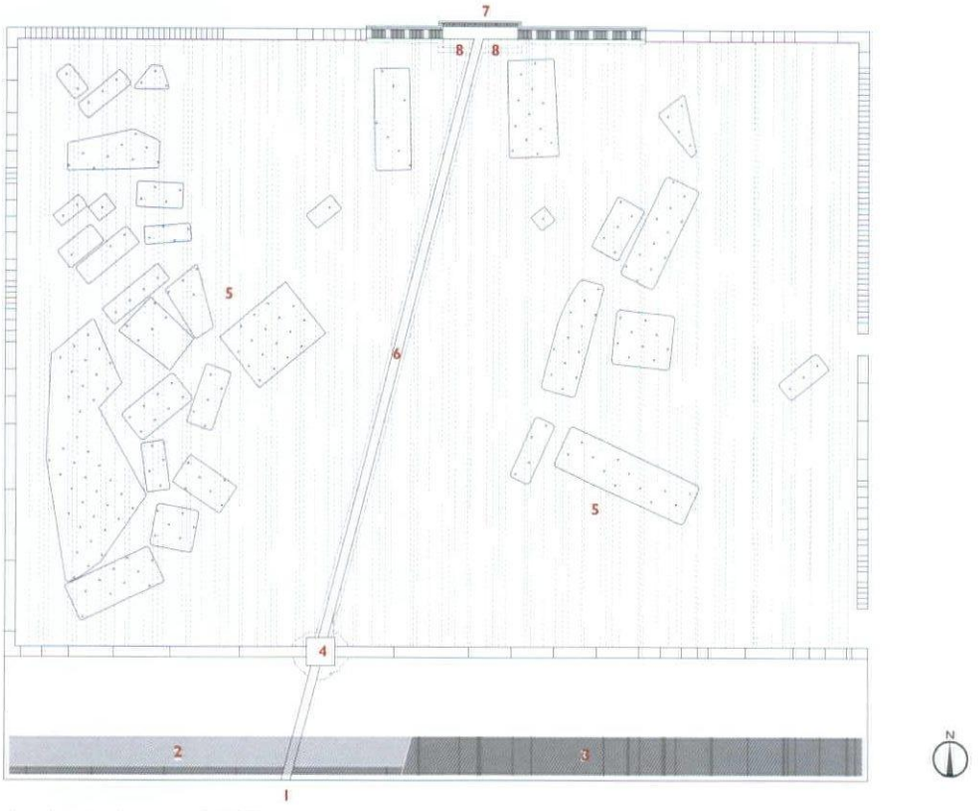
The Belzec Cemetery continues a powerful tradition of monuments that literally build upon the horror of past events. Instead of shying away from the scale of the atrocity – be it a killing field, a battlefield, the site of a massacre or in this case the site of a former Nazi death camp – such monuments reuse often vast areas of land in an attempt to freeze history, cast in stone the scale of lost life, and to make something strangely beautiful and moving from something that derives from absolute evil. Haunting and mysterious, such places use abstract expressionism to capture negative energy and transform it into something with new life. Avoiding conventional, religious or morbid symbolism, sculptors, fine artists, poets and architects trace lines of meaning within the landscape to plot their story through space.

Here in 1942, at Belzec, south west of Tomaszów Lubelski, a former Nazi work camp was turned into a six-hectare death camp. Almost unfathomably, during the 9-month period that year from March to December, over 600 000 people were murdered; Jews from the south Polish ghettos, Bohemia and Germany together with Poles accused of aiding the Jews were among the victims. Only two people ever escaped.

Following a design competition in 1997, sculptors Andrzej Solyga, Zdzislaw Pidek and Marcin Roszczyk set about transforming the six-hectare site in collaboration with architects from DDJM. Their developed competition-winning scheme comprised three elements: the monument, a museum building, and an exhibition.

The dominant form of the monument occupies most of the large rectangular site centring on an oblique crevice or path that dissects the monumental burial ground. The path cuts through the gently rising surface of the cemetery, a black ash burial field, within which mass graves are

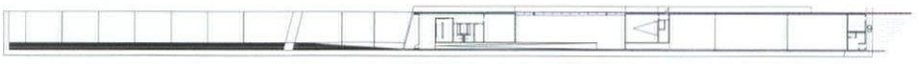
1
The cemetery museum building sits discretely behind the boundary wall.
2
Entering through the boundary wall the axial view is framed through the burial field toward the memorial wall.
3
The inlaid cast-iron relief, the Square, marks the entrance of the burial field.



site plan (scale approx 1:2000)



north/south section through burial field



plan of museum



section through museum building

4
Crevice leading to memorial wall.
5
Niche opposite memorial wall engraved with names of individuals killed.

1 entrance
2 ramp
3 museum building
4 the Square
5 burial ground
6 crevice
7 stone wall
8 niche

CEMETERY, BELZEC, POLAND

ARCHITECT
DDJM

marked as ghost-like territories with subtly differentiated grades of material (blast furnace slag mixed with cinders and barren soil). Defined at one end by the Square, a cast-iron relief set flush in the ground which marks the entrance to the burial ground, the path terminates in a monumental light-hued granite wall; a spatial sequence that engulfs visitors as they approach the wall, cutting through the burial field that rises to a dwarfing 9m height. Walking between concrete walls, cast against rough earth as shuttering and topped with buckling steel reinforcement bars, visitors disappear into the unknown in a symbolic journey that recalls the death of the thousands who were lost without trace. Passing thresholds that draw lines between life and death, most are reduced to silence before being confronted by the imposing granite screen wall. A structure that in its relief recalls the blood spilt and the familiar patina of bullet-peppered walls. Standing opposite this wall, polished concrete niches are covered with the names of victims. Names also frame the burial field as a low wall forms a horizontal stone frieze that chronologically lists Jewish communes recalling the sequence of transports.

With these powerful layers of meaning set within a muted yet dramatic reconstructed landscape, you could very easily miss the cemetery's museum building. Set in a low-lying 2m high structure that forms part of the southernmost boundary wall, the unadorned bunker-like structure cuts into the ground to contain, among a series of more conventional exhibition spaces, an empty and haunting reinforced-concrete Void-Hall; a space which resonates with the isolation, pain and ultimate death of millions of lost souls; and more specifically the hundreds of thousands of people who died on this very site. ROB GREGORY

Artists
Andrzej Solyga, Zdzislaw Pidek, Marcin Roszczyk
Architect
DDJM Biuro Architektoniczne: Marek Dunikowski, Piotr Czerwinski, Piotr Uherek
Photographs
Wojciech Krynski



4



5

MOON WALK

With artist Simon Patterson, Arup Associates lead us through the streets of London.

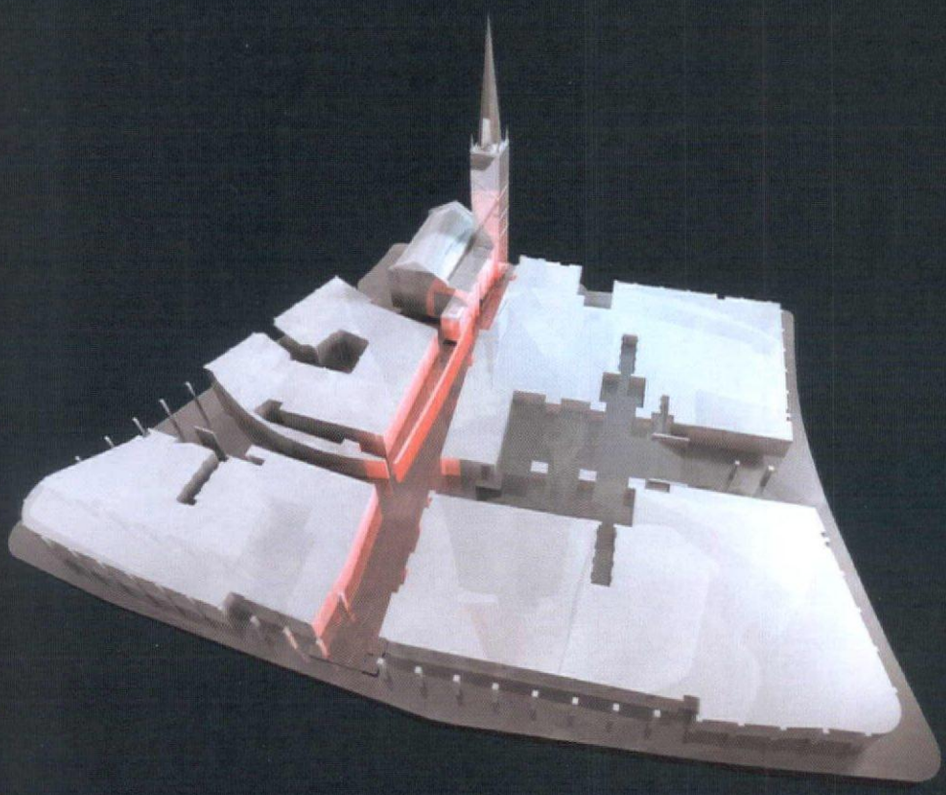
PUBLIC ART, CITY, LONDON
ARCHITECT
ARUP ASSOCIATES

It is rare to be given the opportunity to design a street. Particularly a new street, in the heart of the City of London; an area richly steeped in history, and haphazardly defined by a unique dense mediaeval web of streets. Such an opportunity, however, was given – or rather taken – by architects Arup Associates and artist Simon Patterson during the development of two new commercial office buildings for British Land.

While significant effort focused on the design of two new buildings that provide over 120 000sqm of lettable office space and incorporate a pioneering natural ventilation strategy, the consideration of a relatively small new urban space has made a surprising and disproportionate contribution to the successful resolution of the whole. While the two new buildings may on first impression appear to be relatively conventional commercial developments, closer inspection of their form and on-foot exploration of the 2.5-acre site, reveals higher civic aspirations. Despite the mass and commercially driven super scale, Arup Associates' manipulation of space gives back as much as the buildings' perceived bulk takes away; not only with the dramatic staggered central atrium, which supports the complex's environmental operation and creates a semi-private north-south route through the two buildings, but also more subtly through the creation of a narrow east-west alleyway: London's newest street. Going against the tendency that maximizes density and landlocks sites, the new route gives its neighbouring buildings space to breathe and true permeability. Slicing its way across the deep urban block, the narrow lane – uninspiringly christened Plantation Lane – links the more deliciously named Rood and Mincing lanes at either end. It also opens up new views to Wren's fine seventeenth-century St Margaret Pattens Church; a modest, almost incidental intervention that unquestioningly enriches this place's public realm.

A slight conflict, however, arises when we consider the treatment of the new spaces, as 'public art' enters centre stage. While the first moves of this strategy should be highly praised, the application of art seems slightly overworked. Despite challenging notions of public art by attempting to make place-art rather than object-art, the most discernible object – the screen – is unquestionably the project's weakest link, conceptually and tectonically. While the lunar super-graphic is bold, its immediate power is subverted by a modular panel

1
Plantation Lane: London's newest street focuses on Wren's seventeenth-century St Margaret Pattens Church.



 cut-away block diagram showing cruciform route (north-south running horizontally)

Tyburn
The Effra
Fleet
Walbrook
Fairlop Waters
Thirty Bicycles
Coldbe
Love Lane
Bear Street
Albert Bridge
Jubilee
Passage
Lane
Spelthorne
St Hermit's Hill

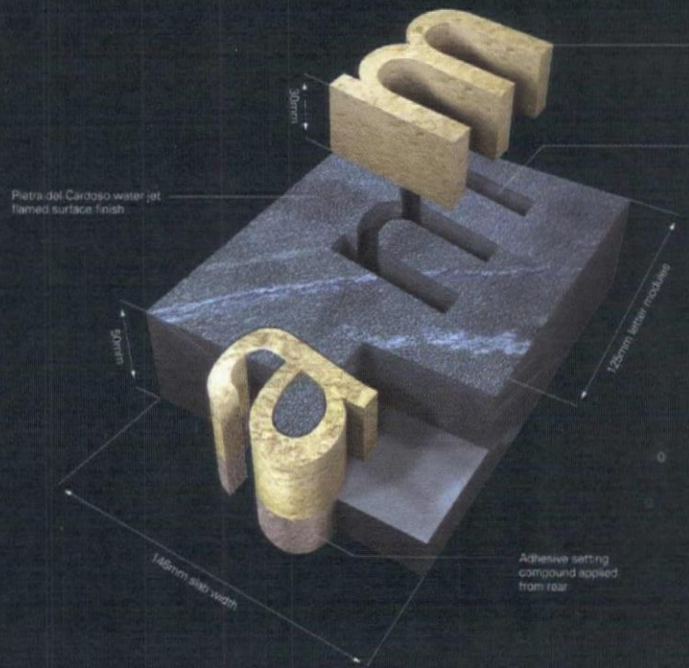


system; a system that recalls a clip-together touring exhibition stand made from standardized components, more than the qualities of an enduring work of public art. As the graphic turns the blunt corner, creating three or four avoidable and distracting details, you wonder if more finesse was required; more art than architect-tonics. While serving its practical purpose, screening the unsightly service yard and rear elevation of 51 Eastcheap, it is difficult to understand the object's place in the overall composition, without that is being explicitly told of the artist's conceptual leap; a leap between earth and cosmos, between everyday and eternity, and between ground embedded text which recalls the constant evolution of local history set against the distant unchanging view of the moon above. (Which oddly then begins to constantly change colour!) Less here, would certainly have given more. Perhaps when seen alongside London's other recent artist/architect collaboration between Foster and Caro, lessons begin to emerge about how far collaboration can be taken when disciplines merge to focus on an individual component.

Arup Associates, however, have done very well. They know this site well – having worked on this development for more than 20 years – and their contribution to the network of public and semi-private spaces should be applauded. They have certainly refined their ideas and have created a delightful new place, simplifying earlier propositions to cover the space with a barrel-vaulted roof. The refinement however should have been taken further. With the hard work done – having successfully shaped a new space with subtle and complex edge conditions, unified by a truly exquisite new ground plane – it is disappointing that the screen, while attempting to be special, is far from out of this world. ROB GREGORY

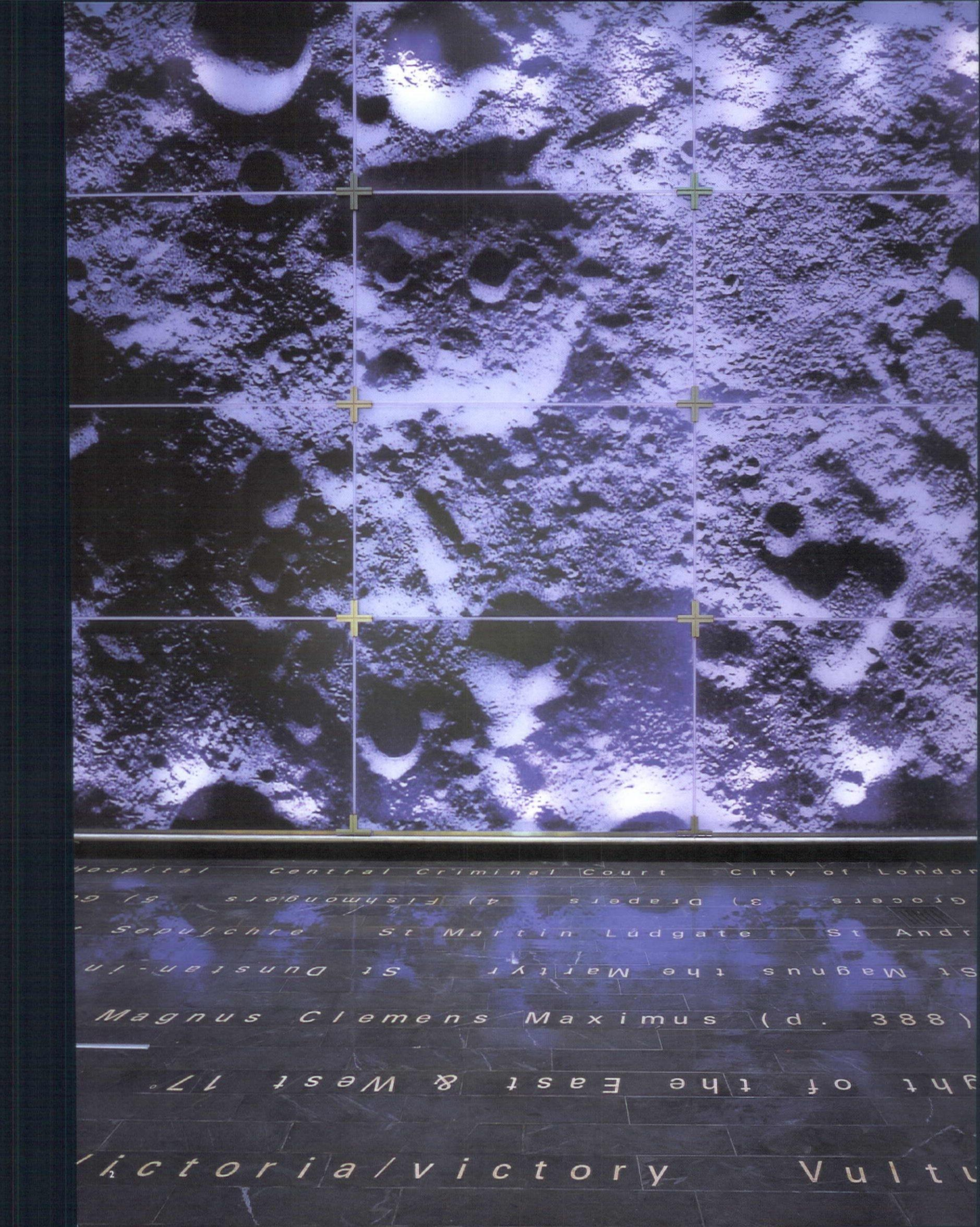
Architect
Arup Associates, London
Project team
Declan O'Carroll, Mick Brundle, Lee Hosking, Caroline King, Matthew Vaudin
Artist
Simon Patterson
Photographs
Christian Richters

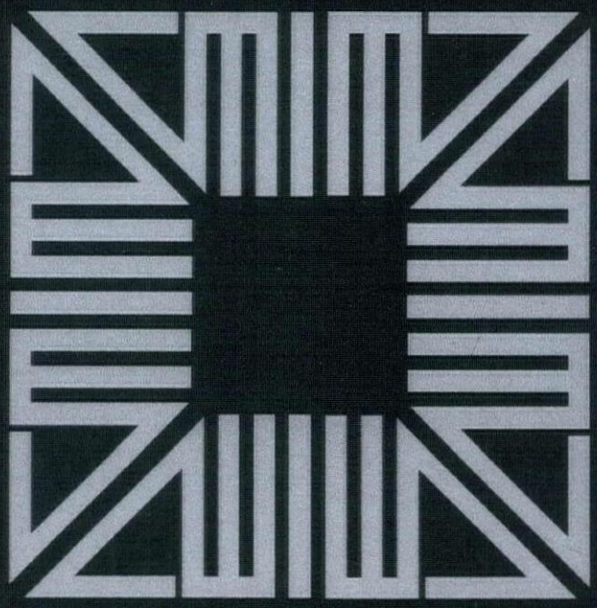
2
***Time and Tide*: Simon Patterson's first permanent site work seeks to compare earthly upheaval with celestial timelessness.**



detail of stonework

PUBLIC ART, CITY, LONDON
ARCHITECT
ARUP ASSOCIATES


Central Criminal Court
City of London
St Martin Ludgate
Magnus Clemens Maximus (d. 388)
victoria/victory



AGA KHAN AWARDS 2004

The triennial Aga Khan Awards for Architecture have become important ingredients of international architectural discussion. Offered for work in Islamic countries, or for Muslims in other parts of the world, the awards celebrate a wide spectrum of architecture, from work for the very poor to houses for the prosperous, from desert buildings to ones in the jungle, from small restorations to big commercial buildings. The awards are unique as they are given following expert on-site assessments of buildings that have been in use for at least a year. A distinguished independent international jury* reviews all work submitted and decides which projects should be assessed. In this, the Ninth cycle, 378 projects from 44 countries were nominated, out of which seven were judged worthy of an award.

The Steering Committee of the awards, chaired by the Aga, suggested some 'threshold criteria' for projects to be included in the final choice. These were 'contributing to established ways of doing things or extending boundaries in the field, making intelligent use of available resources and material and responding sensitively to the environment, and showing social and ethical responsibility with respect to individual and community self-determination'. Important factors to be considered were 'the symbolization of power and authority; the articulation of public and private spaces; issues of cultural identity and cultural representation; sensitivity to plurality; and constructive aspirations for individuals and societies'.

The jury was also asked to look out for projects that address the growing housing crises in most Muslim countries. Two award-winning projects in this year's cycle clearly respond to the request: the sandbag emergency shelters (p72) and the revitalization programme for the old city of Jerusalem (p76). The emergency shelters for the dispossessed are taken very much on trust: the proposal is ingenious and environmentally apt, but there is evidence that the houses have not found favour with users. More experiments are needed. The Jerusalem revitalization work has already shown its worth. Its award celebrates imagination, ingenuity, social commitment and political nous with a programme that helps knit past and future, public and private in ways that can continue to be developed.

The suggestion that symbolization of power should be explored accounts for the presence of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (opposite) and the Petronas Towers (p74) in the list of award winners. But whereas the outstanding library (a symbol of knowledge) would undoubtedly have been an award winner judged by any criteria, the presence of Petronas Towers is more puzzling. Doubtless it celebrates the power of money (and perhaps that of nationhood) but, though well made and for a while the tallest building in the world, it is scarcely remarkable, and its Islamic credentials seem a bit thin in practice (though its lavatories do face away from Mecca).

In complete contrast is the restoration of the Al-Abbas Mosque at Asnaf (p70). An ancient jewel on a dusty Yemeni hillside has been lovingly repolished and returned to its place in the centre of the community clearly 'contributing to established ways of doing things'. The other small building, the B2 house, Turkey (p69), is more difficult to place. It is well built with local materials and it exploits its splendid site to the full. But it is formally ungainly, and does not seem to be better than several holiday houses in the same country (some of which have already received Aga awards).

In its way, the school at Gando in Burkina Faso (p66) is perhaps as outstanding as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Both are built to serve academic communities; both have great understanding of available material resources and their tectonic potential; both sensitively respond to local climate, and both generate fine and appropriate spaces for study, ones in which relationships of individual to society are subtly nuanced. Both were made by architects of great passion and determination.

If the Awards are a bit patchy, all premiated schemes in their different ways respond imaginatively to the need to improve our relationships to the planet and each other. Almost all have much to teach. As a group, they show the great variety of the Muslim world and the plurality that Islamic culture at its best can engender. Other societies could begin to learn. P. D.

* Chaired by Farshid Moussavi (FOA, London). Other members: Ghada Amer (Egyptian artist), Hanif Kara (structural engineer, London), Rahul Mehrotra (architect, Bombay), Modjtaba Sadria (philosopher, Chuo University,Tokyo), Reinhard Schulze (professor of Islamic Studies, Bern University), Elías Torres Tur (architect, Barcelona), Billie Tsien (Williams & Tsien, architects, New York), Jafar Tukan (architect, Amman).

NOBLE VOLUME

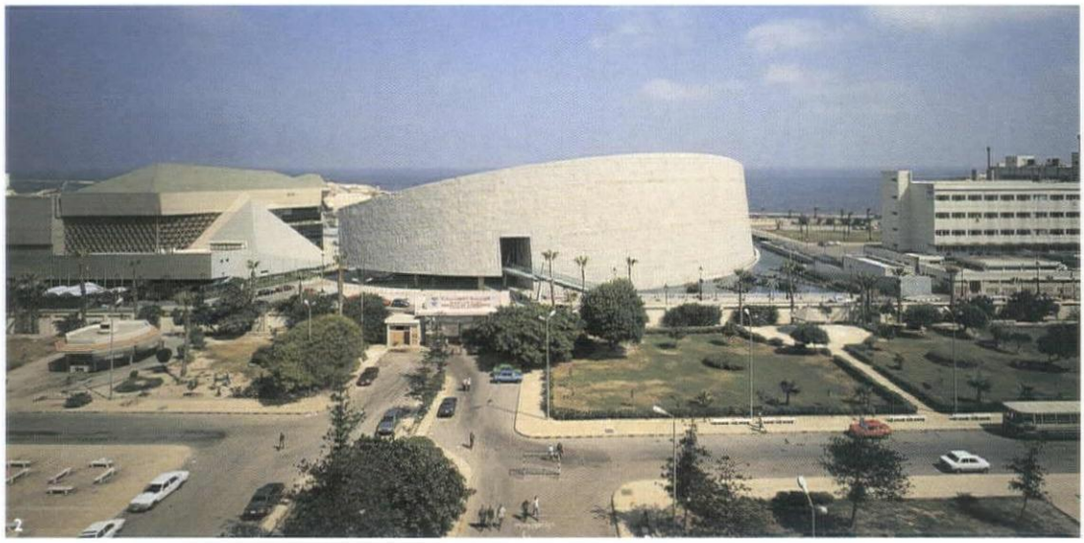
The heroic Great Library of Alexandria clearly merited an Aga Khan Award.

BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA, ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT
ARCHITECT
SNØHETTA HAMZA CONSORTIUM

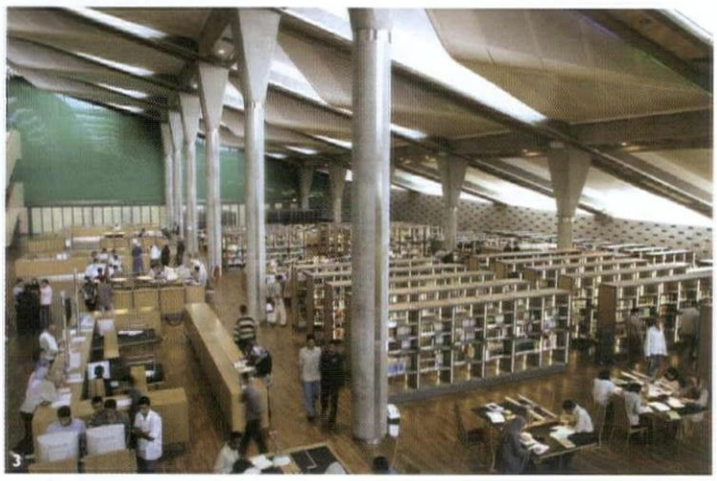
When a decent history of the architecture of the second half of the twentieth century comes to be written, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina will surely be recognized as one of the greatest buildings of the period. Its inception was remarkable. The University of Alexandria wanted a new library and decided to make a bid to create a memorial to the Great Library of antiquity. President Mubarak was inspired; he took the project up at national, and later global level. An international competition was held in 1989 and won by the virtually unknown Oslo-based practice Snøhetta. Few expected that much would come of it. The vast size of the project, unknown and inexperienced architects, titanic cash problems, the difficulties of Egyptian bureaucracy, all suggested that the scheme would simply fade away, or at best be monstrously transformed in the hands of a commercially successful firm of professional philistines.

But Mubarak and the local team persevered, raised the funds and ensured that the building was triumphantly opened in 2002, when it appeared very little different from the drawings submitted 13 years before. The architectural world caught its breath: here was a huge building of great quality that had been created with virtually no precedents and which could not be pigeon-holed under any stylistic label. In the most unlikely place, it had been executed with amazing tenacity by the architects and their collaborators, the local engineering specialists Hamza Associates. It admirably fulfilled the stringent demands of local planning authorities and of a very complex brief which, apart from the reading room, required huge stacks, seven research centres,





1
The great disc tilted towards the sea.
2
From south. Huge wall is covered in granite slabs incised with the scripts of the world.



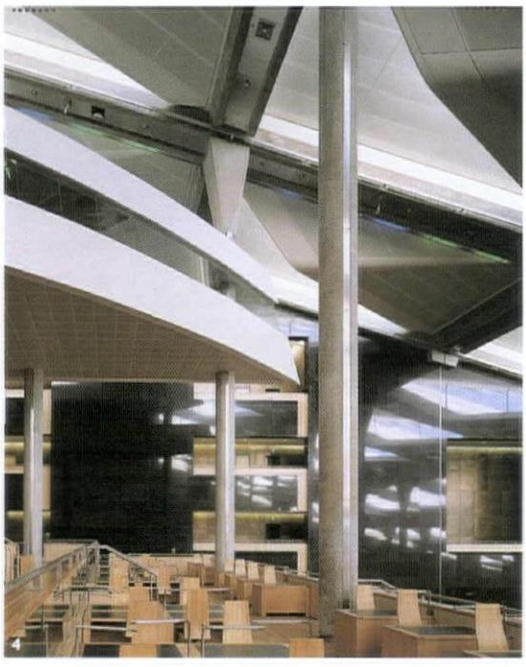
three galleries, a planetarium, six specialist libraries, offices, a cafeteria and much more.

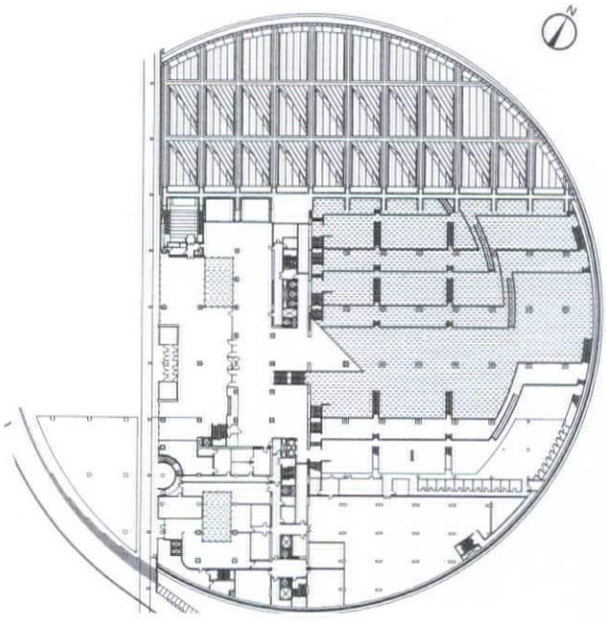
The tilted disc, which is so authoritatively yet gently inserted into the frenetic corniche architecture of the eastern harbour, is now an internationally recognized symbol and, according to some, is a symbol of the ancient Egyptian sun god Ra. But its form comes from basic functional and structural requirements. The urban planning height limit ensured that much of the bulk of the building had to be underground. To dig several stories down so near to the sea meant that a huge waterproof container had to be created. A circular form was the simplest way of making a structure that could resist underground pressures. Hence the circular plan of the great reading space and the toroidal form. The substructure is extraordinary, with tension piles under the shallow north side and compression ones under the heavy south side to prevent the imbalanced loading causing the whole thing to turn over backwards. The concrete diaphragm wall is the largest yet built, and has no expansion joints, but many measures for preventing water penetration.

In the reading room, eight terraces give human scale to the big volume. Slender, mosque-like concrete columns further modify the scale and support the glass roof, which is carefully designed to maximize north light while keeping the sun's rays out. Small elements of green and blue glass allow patches of these Islamic colours to move round the interior, following the sun. Detailing is generally immaculate, both here and elsewhere. The jury welcomed the way in which the library 'provides a model for bringing together the international community and encouraging cooperation and commitment from society as a whole'. Not only the international community benefits; new life attracted to Alexandria by the completion of the library has caused improvements in urban infrastructure and accommodation. The only problems seem to be the rather arid entrance piazza (which can presumably be improved by landscaping) and the building's popularity. Initially, when the library opened free, 18 000 visitors a day were cramming themselves in and interfering with the work of real users. A charging system for visitors has reluctantly had to be introduced, but entry is cheap, even at foreigners' rates. The place now works well as a scholarly instrument, even though it remains a bit crowded.

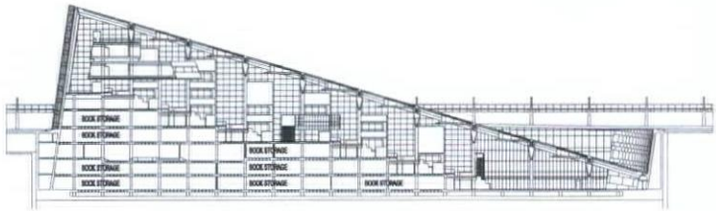
A more extensive description of the library is in AR September 2001.

Architect
Snøhetta Hamza Consortium, Egypt: Craig Dykers, Christoph Kapeller and Kjetil Trædal Thorsen, principal architects, Snøhetta AS, Norway; Mohamed Sharkass, head of architecture, Hamza Associates, Egypt
Photographs
Christian Richters





entrance level (scale approx 1:1700)



south-north section

Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt
Architect
Snøhetta Hamza Consortium



3
Library has been known to receive 18 000 visitors a day.
4
Study rooms hover in the great space.
5
Columns reminiscent of religious structures are streaked with blue and green light which moves with the sun. Direct sunlight is prevented from entering the reading room.



LEARNING FROM THE EARTH

This innovative building sets a standard for all dry West Africa.

PRIMARY SCHOOL, GANDO, BURKINA FASO, WEST AFRICA
ARCHITECT
DIÉBÉDO FRANCIS KÉRÉ

The primary school at Gando in Burkina Faso has been created by imagination, energy and determination. Diébédo Francis Kéré was the first person from his poverty-stricken West African village ever to have gone to university, and it was when he was an architectural student in Berlin that he conceived the idea of building a village school to replace the old one, which was decaying, dark and climatically inappropriate, so it was little used, and the village continued to slumber slowly downhill.

Kéré set about raising money for the new building with a campaign in Germany, *Schulbausteine für Gando*, that provided enough for him to set the project in train. It was essential that building should be undertaken by the 3000 villagers themselves, and that it could be created out of cheap, readily available materials. In plan, the school consists of three classrooms arranged under a generously overhanging rectangular roof. Between the classrooms are covered but unwalled spaces that can be used as play and outdoor teaching areas.

Walls are made of earth blocks manufactured using local raw material and simple hand-powered machines. A continuous concrete ring beam, cast in situ, links the classrooms and is supported at each end on columns of earth blocks (edges are rounded to prevent accidents). The ring provides a structural base for the roof of corrugated metal sheeting and for the classroom ceilings that are made of earth blocks similar to those used in the walls. Concrete ceiling joists span from side to side of the ring beam, and the blocks are supported on reinforcing bars suspended between them. The joists also provide a base for the space frame that supports the roof. (It was essential to make a lightweight roof structure to avoid the use of cranes, which

1, 2
School has three classrooms, covered by generous roof, allowing play and outdoor teaching spaces between solid volumes.
3
Construction in detail.

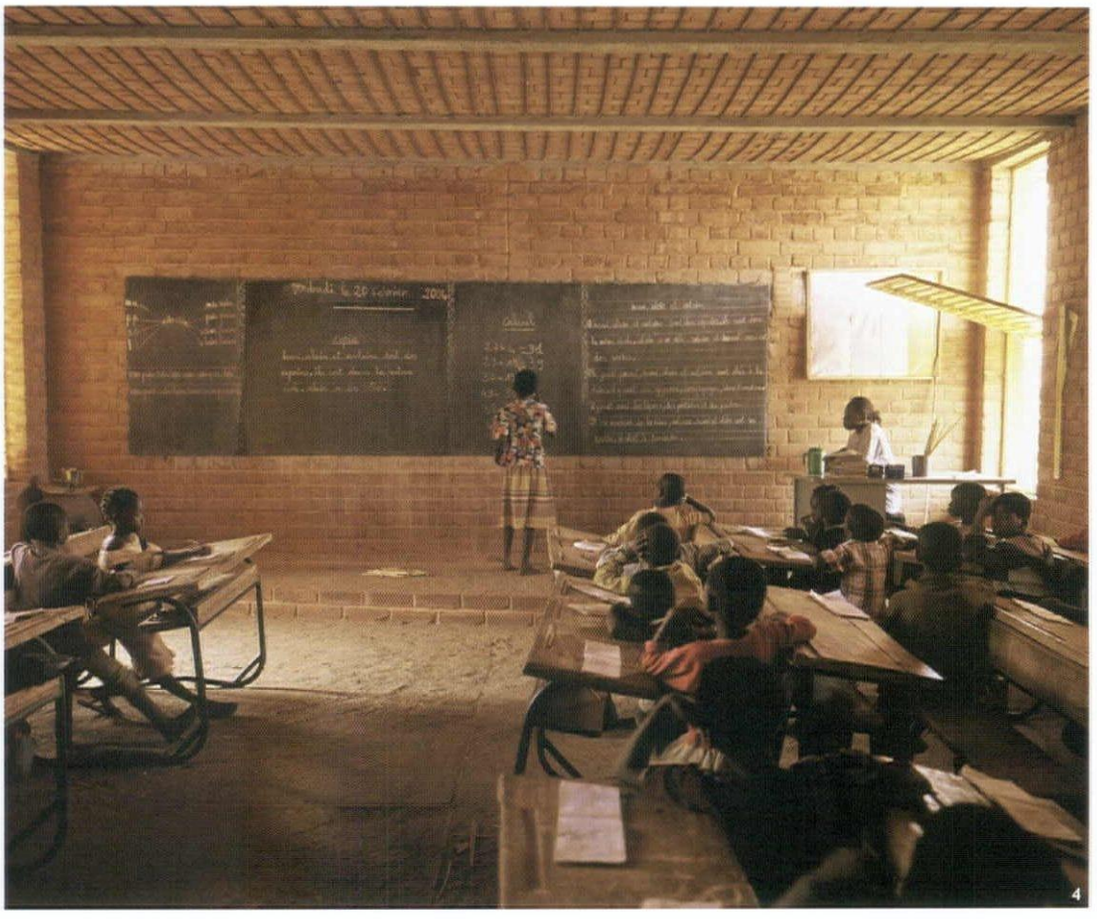


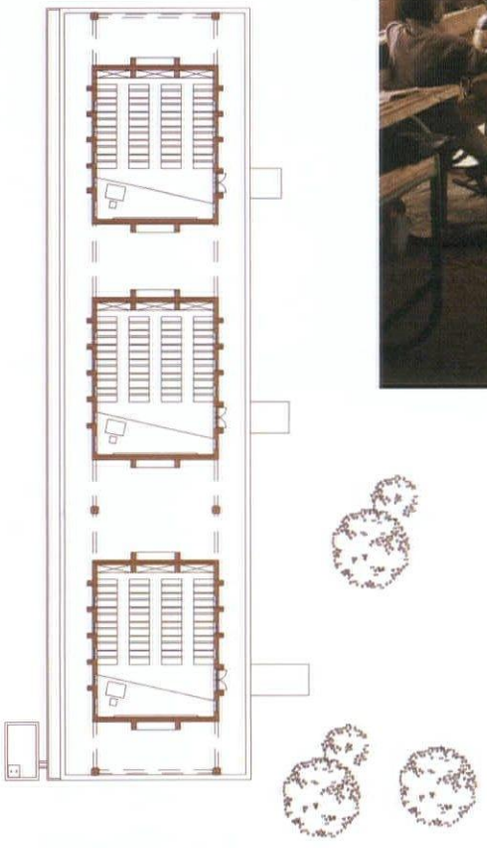
2



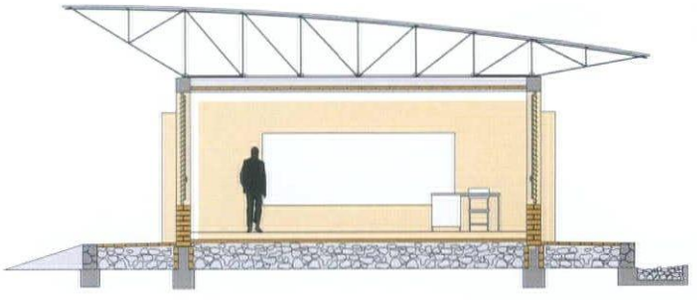
3

PRIMARY SCHOOL, GANDO, BURKINA FASO, WEST AFRICA
ARCHITECT
DIÉBÉDO FRANCIS KÉRÉ





plan (scale approx 1:670)



cross section

would have been totally uneconomic.) The frame was made from reinforcing bars, bent and welded together on site and erected in sections by a few people. Very little timber has been used because hardwood is difficult to obtain, and it is subject to termite attack, so doors and window shutters are prefabricated in steel, components made by Burkina Faso smiths.

The heavy blockwork walls and ceilings, and the beaten earth floors provide thermal mass and reduce temperature fluctuations. The metal roof protects the earth block elements from rain, and it shades the ceilings; the space between roof and ceilings acts as a wind channel, providing a degree of cooling to the ceiling blocks. Shutters of large windows on both sides of the classrooms can be opened, admitting light and air. The whole atmosphere is completely different from that of the dark and musty original school.

The cost was under US$30 000. Additional works (such as the lavatory block, fencing for the vegetable garden and a well) were partly funded by the Danish agency for Development Assistance. The only potentially serious problem appears to be undersizing of the ceiling bars; ceilings are beginning to sag, a tendency not helped by some of the pupils who use the steel shutters as ladders to climb up into the roof space. But the difficulty will doubtless be overcome and, propelled by Kéré's enormous and infectious enthusiasm, the school should become a development model for the whole area.

Architect
Diébédo Francis Kéré, Burkina Faso
Photographs
Siméon Duchoud

4
Classroom ceilings are formed by precast concrete beams spanning from perimeter, which themselves bear ordinary reinforcing bars that carry heavy earth blocks. Only worrying problem is that bars are beginning to sag already.

HOUSE, BÜYKHÜSUN, AYVACIK, TURKEY
ARCHITECT
HAN TÜMERTEKIN

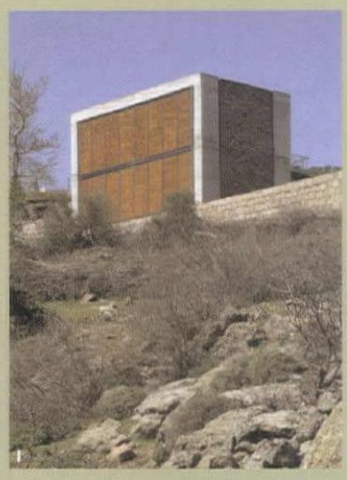
OPEN HOUSE

This house captures nature and landscape in multiple frames defining the site's ancient atmosphere.

The B2 holiday house by Han Tümertekin, in a hamlet in north-western Anatolia, is for two brothers who wanted a refuge in which to contemplate the natural world and escape from business life. The rectangular box stands on a terrace outside the village, and has magnificent views southwards over traditional dry landscape towards the Aegean Sea.

B2 is simple in concept. The terrace is carved out of a site that slopes steeply southward towards the sea below. On the ground floor is a long rectangular living room with a kitchenette forming part of the 1.2m deep utility wall. Above, the rectangle is divided to provide two bedrooms, each with a tiny bathroom set in the utility zone over the kitchenette. South walls are formed of large sliding floor-to-ceiling windows with, outside them, folding panels of local reeds in aluminium frames. In winter or at night, the reeds form an outer skin; at other times, they can be folded back as panels to frame the view. The notion of framing the natural with human-made is echoed in various ways throughout the design, principally in the east and west end walls, where panels of local rubble are framed by the load-bearing in-situ concrete box structure. Curiously, there is no internal stair. To avoid compromising the spaces, the brothers were prepared to have an external one, a steel structure with timber treads, on the north side of the concrete and masonry box.

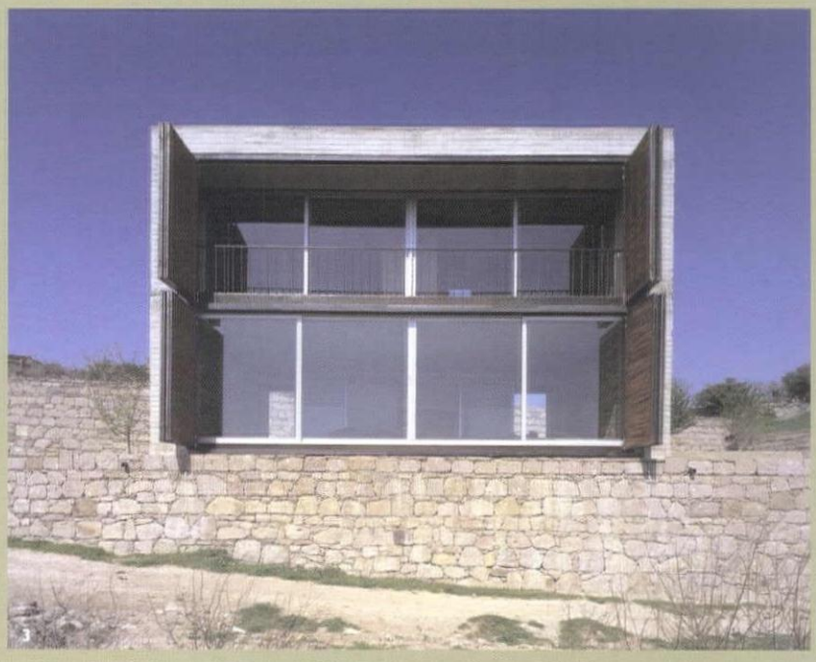
With a flimsy stair, inconvenient to use and clumsily added to the massive but elegant box, it is hard to see why the house was given an award. An award-winning building is intended to act as a model. The jury was much impressed by the ways in which 'the house functions as an apparatus for perceiving nature', by the fact that it was designed to be built by local labour, and by the way in which materials were chosen to be in sympathy with vernacular buildings. But many new Mediterranean holiday houses have all these qualities. That said, the south-facing internal spaces are beautifully honed.

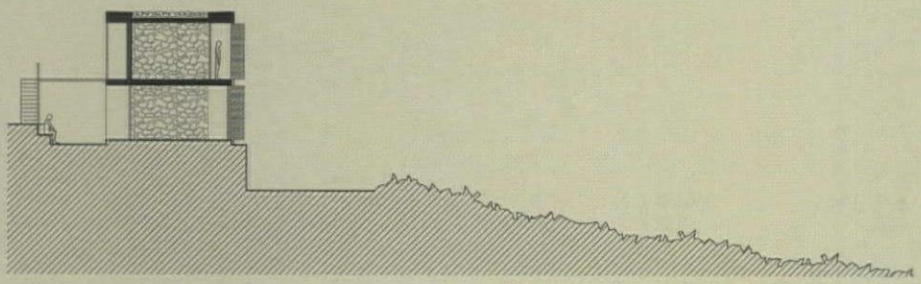




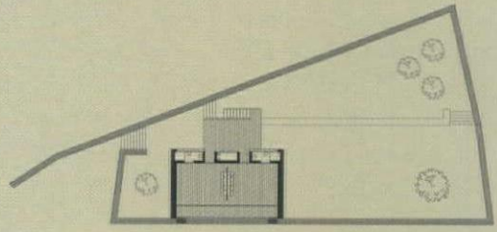
Architect
Han Tümertekin, Turkey
Project team
Han Tümertekin, Eylem Erdinc, Hakan Sengün, Hayriye Sözen, Ahmet Önder

1
House closed.
2
Counterpoint: inside and out.
3
House open.

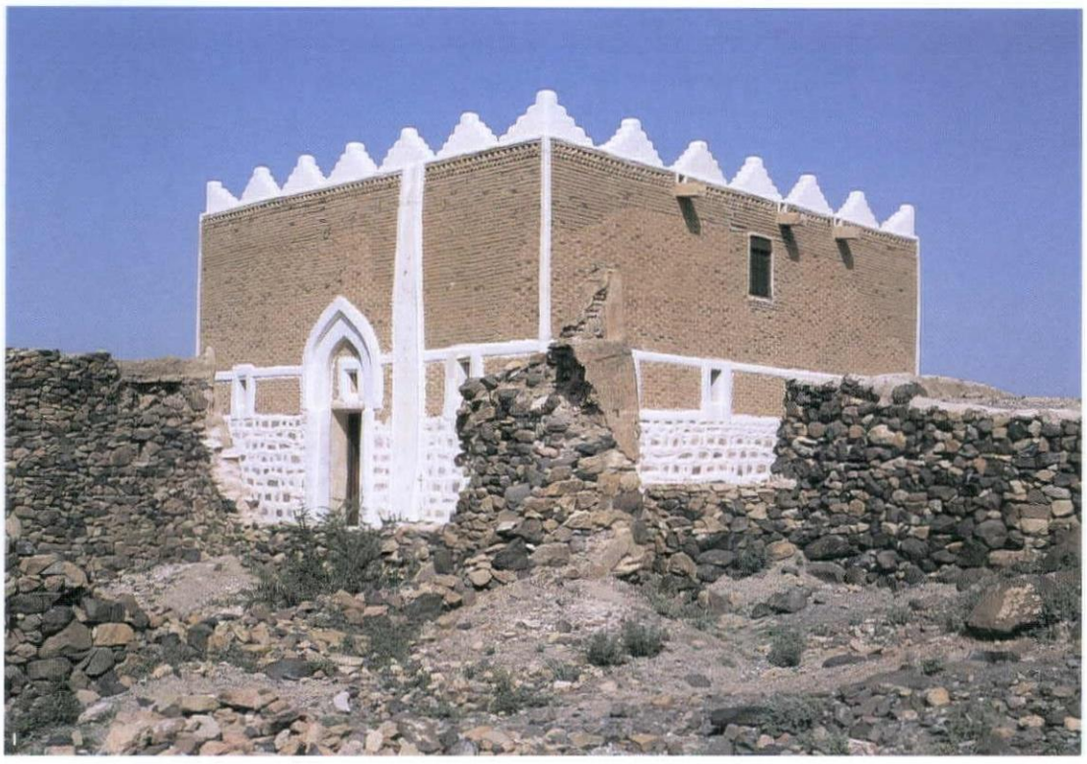




cross section



upper floor plan (scale approx 1:650)



MOSQUE RESTORATION, NR ASNAF, YEMEN
ARCHITECT
MARYLÈNE BARRET WITH ABDULLAH AL-HADRAMI

The Aga's Awards have always recognized exemplary restorations because they link present and past, and by restoring fine old buildings we have models for judging the quality of contemporary work. This award cycle honours a tiny mosque, set by itself in arid country some 40km south-west of Sana'a, capital of the Yemen. Nearly 900 years old, it is almost cubic, built of local stone and brick with a timber ceiling and roof supported on six stone columns, four of which are pre-Islamic. The ceiling is the glory of the building. In complete contrast to the walls, which are extremely plain externally, it is formed of wooden coffers which are richly decorated in gold, red, black and white tempera.

In the early '80s, the Al-Abbas Mosque was in terrible condition. A hole in the roof allowed water to soak parts of the ceiling; the timber structure from which the coffers were suspended was decaying. Even at a time of severe political unrest, the Yemeni government determined to restore the building. Working with the Centre Français d'Etudes Yéménites, the government arranged for the ceiling to be dismantled and transported to the museum in Sana'a, where cleaning and restoration were undertaken by a local team under François de Bazelaire. In the event, only a small part (0.5 per cent) of the coffering had to be completely replaced. Patterns were faithfully repainted (though some areas were simply cleaned to show the state of the ceiling before restoration), and new wood was left undecorated.

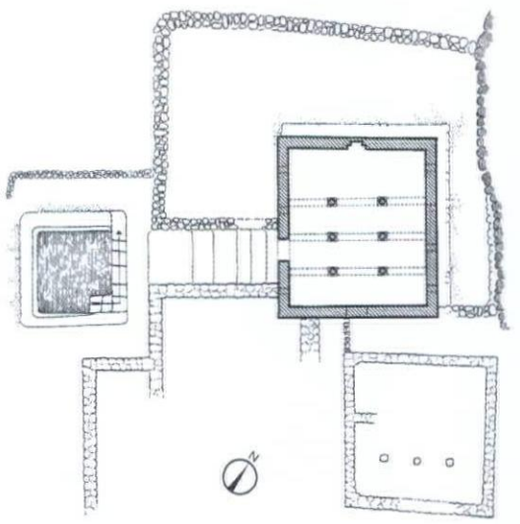
At the same time, repairs to the structure and masonry were set in hand by Abdullah al-Hadrami (who had previously won an Aga Khan Award for his contributions to the Old City of Sana'a, AR November 1995). He believes that traditional methods should be used wherever possible. Previous erroneous repairs to the masonry were demolished and replaced with new bricks of similar size and composition to the original ones. The roof structure was repaired and a new covering of *qudad* was applied (the traditional waterproofing composition is made of one part lime to three of volcanic aggregate compacted and smoothed, then daubed with warm animal fat). Crenellations (merlons) on the perimeter of the roof were repaired or rebuilt. The *mihrab* (Mecca facing niche) was restored with decorations similar to those of the ceiling.

The ceiling's suspension structure was reinforced and re-supported, and the inside of the attic between ceiling and roof was plastered to prevent dust falling on the ceiling. Then the coffers were returned to the mosque row by row and fixed in place. After ten years, one of the most ancient and splendid interiors of Arabia had been brought to life again. The jury commended the way the restoration principles set a standard for work on other ancient buildings in the area, and the fact that, since renovation, the mosque has again become a focus for the local community.

Architect
Marylène Barret with Abdullah al-Hadrami
Photographs
Murat German

MOSQUE RESCUED

Painstaking care at a time of violence and deep political unrest has restored this tiny mosque as a centre for its community.

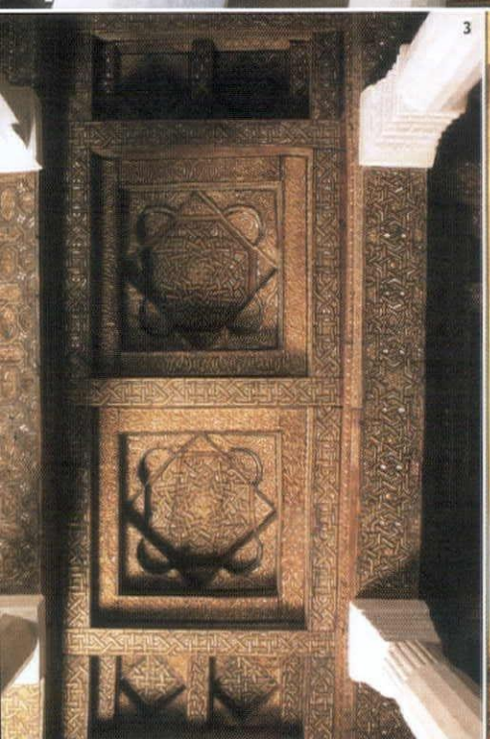


plan (scale approx 1:300)

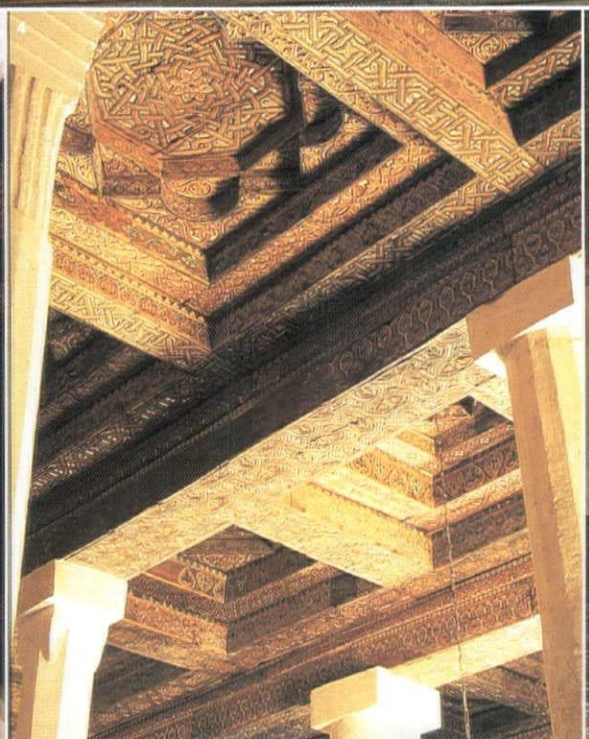
1
Outside is completely restored with stone base topped by brick structure, itself crested with merlons.
2, 3, 4
Ceiling was removed to Sana'a for restoration and returned coffer by coffer. Columns are original, some pre-Islamic.
5
Mihrab restored with same decoration as ceiling.



2



3



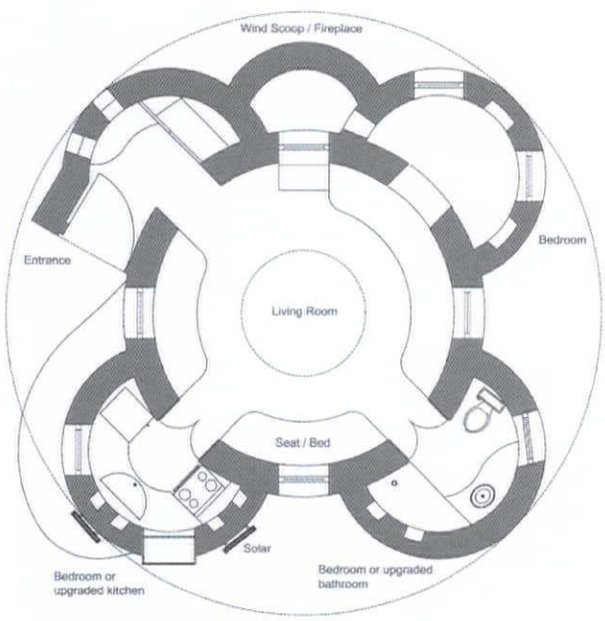
4



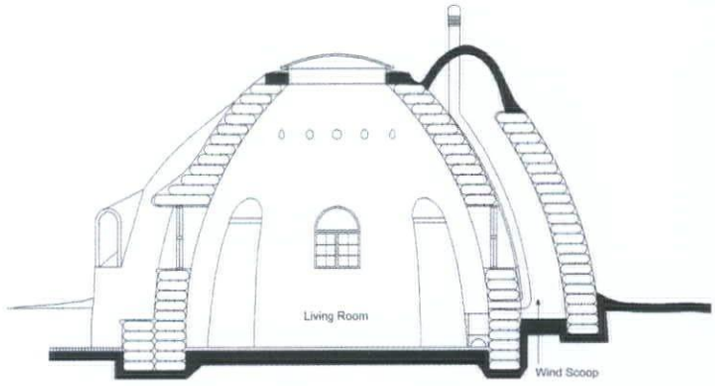
5

SANDBAG REFUGE

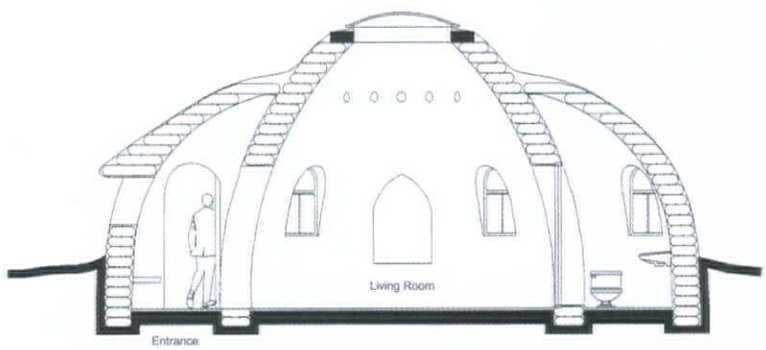
A system for housing displaced and poor people is made of universally available materials.



plan (scale approx 1:120)



section through wind scoop



section through entrance and lavatory

Up to now, the Aga Khan Awards have been given for completed buildings, assessed after some time in use. The sole exception is in this cycle – a prototype temporary housing system made from sandbags. It was invented by Nader Khalili, an Iranian architect who set up the California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture (Cal-Earth) in 1991.

Khalili's aim was to generate a system that can be used anywhere, erected with totally unskilled labour, and which is sustainable in environmental terms. It had to have thermal mass to overcome the problems of tents in difficult climates and be quick to build (traditional mud bricks take time to prepare and cure, and suitable earth is far from generally available).

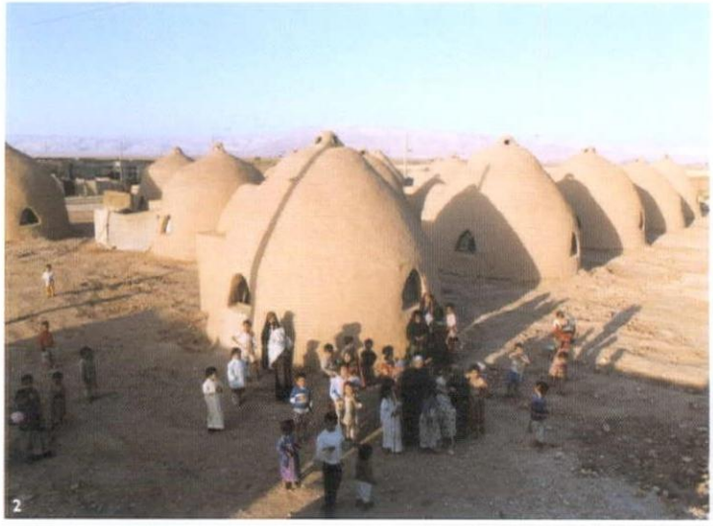
In essence, the Cal-Earth system consists of long tubes of fabric (artificial or natural) that are normally used to make sacks. Any earth from the site can be used as fill, with or without natural stabilizers like cement, asphalt emulsion and lime. Amateurs can easily fill the tubes using simple agricultural tools, after which bags are arranged in a spiral that is gradually corbelled inwards as it ascends to form a dome. Ancillary spaces made in the same way can be added to the focal dome. Openings in walls are made as arches, or created as windows by inserting sections of large plastic tube at right angles to the coiled tubes.

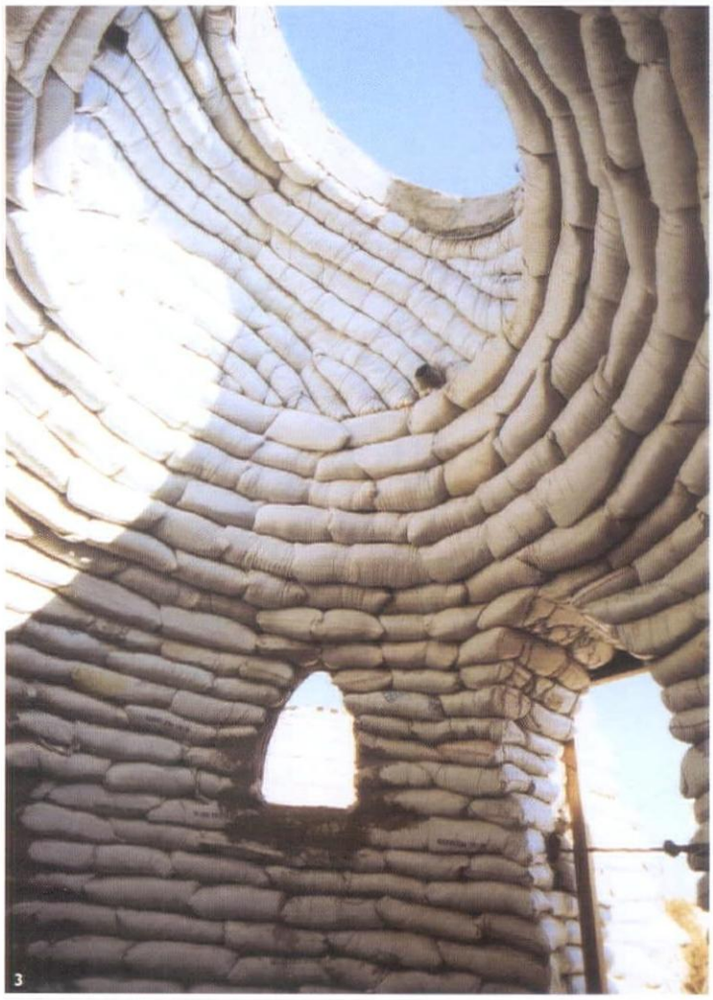
Ordinary galvanized barbed wire can be used between the tubes to provide reinforcement, and to make the structures resistant to earthquakes. Domes can be made permanent (or at least semi-permanent) by rendering them with mud, plaster or other locally available substances. Temporary structures, using organic sack fabric, simply revert to the earth when they are no longer needed (the barbed wire can be re-used).

Experimental structures have been created in places as far apart as Chile and Canada, and the system has even been contemplated by NASA for use on the moon. The only scheme that involved more than a few structures was built in Iran in 1994 to house Iraqi refugees who had fled from Saddam. An examination of the project by the United Nations Development Programme found that it was not popular with the refugees, who disliked the circular space and objected to the temporary nature of the structures. But many people have trained at Cal-Earth and carry the techniques all over the world: further experiments are needed.

Architect
Cal-Earth Institute, US: Nader Khalili (concept and design), Iliona Outram (project manager)

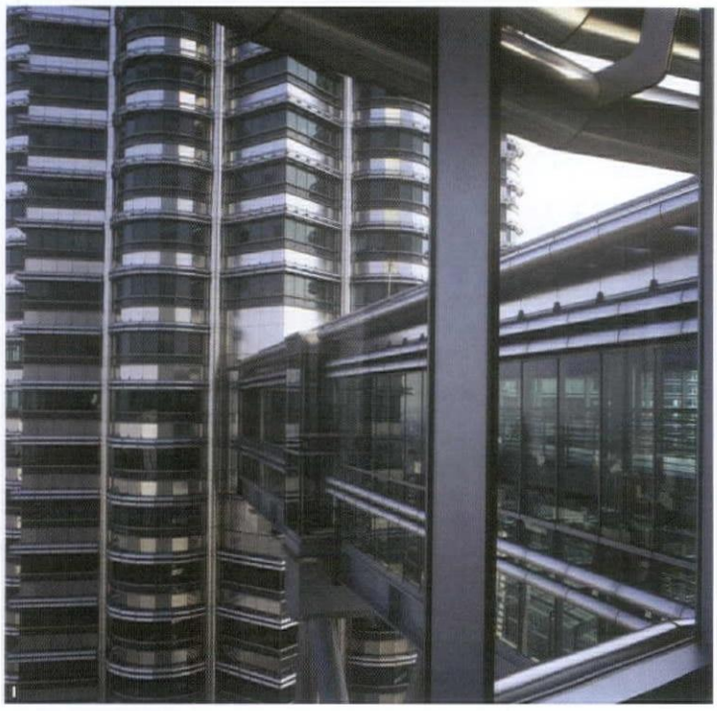
SANDBAG SHELTER PROTOTYPES
ARCHITECT
CAL-EARTH INSTITUTE, NADER KHALILI, USA







1
Experimental structures in California.
2
The scheme for Iraqi refugees in Iran, now destroyed.
3
Closing the dome.
4
Under construction.



TOWER POWER

At last, a huge commercial complex wins an Aga Khan Award.

For years, the Aga Khan Awards organization has been searching for examples of modern commercial and industrial buildings for Muslim communities. Several have been celebrated in the past, but undoubtedly, Cesar Pelli's Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur form the most dramatic commercial complex to achieve an award so far. The brief required the towers to incorporate advanced technology while symbolizing local and national aspirations; Pelli says that he was asked to make a 'Malaysian building'. For a while, the towers jointly enjoyed that most ephemeral of distinctions, the world's tallest building (ironically, on the very day of the Aga Khan Award ceremony in Delhi last month, news arrived that the title had passed to a tower in Taiwan).

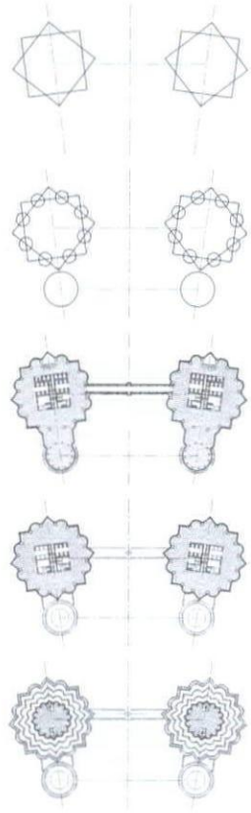
The Petronas development dominates the new business centre of the Malaysian capital; each tower has 88 floors and they are joined by a double-height bridge at 41st and 42nd floors. Conical spires on top support pinnacles that enabled the towers to obtain the coveted height record. The towers are joined by a plinth containing lobby, the concert hall of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and a retail and leisure complex with shopping malls, cafés, restaurants, library, art gallery and an interactive science discovery centre. The plinth comes down to the ground as arcades, reminiscent of the traditional 5ft ways formed in front of the shophouses of south-east Asia (see for instance AR December 2002).

To try to generate an architecture appropriate for a very large modern complex, yet which responds to Malaysian tradition, the architects generated the basic tower plans by rotating two interlocking squares to generate an eight-pointed star, a traditional Islamic motif. This was modified by putting semi-circles in the re-entrant angles, and further modified by tapering the towers towards the top with six set-backs, somewhat reminiscent on a huge scale of the forms of some Hindu temples. The basic structure of the towers is formed by a ring of 16 cylindrical columns made of high strength concrete connected by arched ring beams. They taper gradually as they rise from a base diameter of 2.4m and, as they approach the top, they are inclined inwards to come together under the pinnacles. A 23m square concrete core contains services and vertical circulation (lifts are double-deckers to reduce waiting times and the footprint of the shafts).

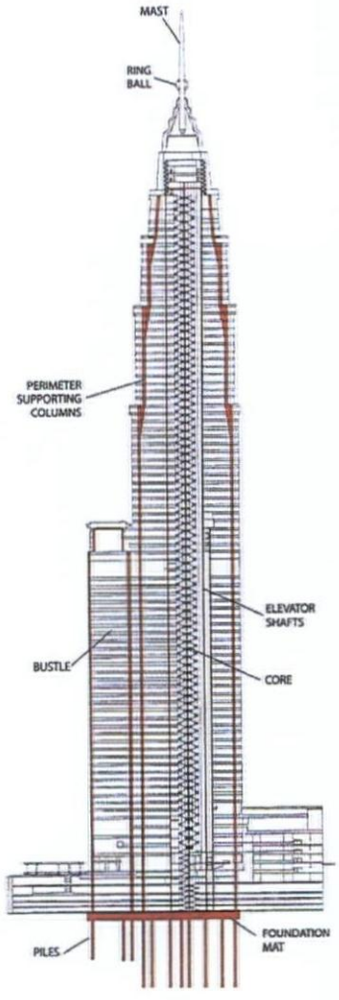
Cladding is of stainless steel and laminated, tinted, heat reducing glass. Each floor has decorative stainless-steel brise-soleil to cut down glare, but it is difficult to believe that these eyebrows do much to cut down heat gain (15 per cent reduction is the official figure). The main means of controlling internal climate is an air-conditioning system that uses heat energy from exhaust ventilation to power cooling and dehumidifying of air drawn into the building; this is claimed to reduce electrical consumption for climate control by 50 per cent.

The towers are not entirely successful at the lower levels, where they do little or nothing to integrate a confused urban structure. But surveys of popular opinion in Kuala Lumpur have shown that the Petronas complex is widely regarded as a symbol of the city and the nation, like Sydney Opera House and the Eiffel Tower. The main reasons given for liking the towers are because they are mixed use, tall, and incorporate advanced technology. Their intended Islamic character is little perceived and, though someone has suggested that the corrugated carapace has some resemblance to that of the Mughal Qutub Minar tower in Delhi, Pelli denies any direct influence, and few can see the symbolic significance of the plan diagram in the completed building.

Architect
Cesar Pelli & Associates, USA
Project team
Cesar Pelli, Fred Clarke, Jon Pickard, Larry Ng, KLCC Behrard Architectural Division, Adamson Associates, Balmori Associates, NR Associates
Photographs
Kamran Adle



development of plan form



diagrammatic section



PETRONAS TOWERS, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
ARCHITECT
CESAR PELLI & ASSOCIATES

1
Double-deck bridge between towers at 41st and 42nd levels.
2
Towers dominate downtown Kuala Lumpur's business district.

The Old City of Jerusalem is one of the most ancient human settlements to have remained in continuous use (it is far older than Rome for instance), and its interleaved layers of successive cultures form an immensely rich texture, with elements ranging from the earliest times to the present. The Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent provided the city with a wall and divided it into quarters, Jewish, Arab and Christian (in topographical terms, the Temple Mount is the fourth quarter). Over 90 per cent of the people living in the Arab and Christian quarters are Palestinians.

The city's fabric has suffered much from neglect, inappropriate use and inadequate services. Overcrowding has become very serious, particularly since 1995, when Israeli law demanded that natives of Jerusalem living outside the city must return to it to keep their identification papers. Such has been the pressure for space that original vaults and domes have been destroyed so that properties could expand vertically, often using incompatible materials. Usually, shared kitchen and lavatory facilities were overstrained and badly installed, causing serious problems to human and building health.

In response, the Welfare Association (Ta'awoun), a Geneva-based NGO set up to support Palestinians in developing areas, opened a Jerusalem office, the Old City of Jerusalem Revitalisation Programme (OCJRP). It has a programme for rehabilitation of the old city. There is no attempt to restore a whole area, but selected interventions have been made throughout the urban fabric in the hope that, gradually, everywhere will benefit. By the end of 2003, 96 families, 60 shops and 12 institutions (including parts of the Department of Islamic Waqf, and the Al-Quds University) had been included in the programme.

A survey showed which elements were most in need. Building types included public centres like mosques, churches, *madrasas* (religious schools) and hostels, some of which retain their original functions, while others are put to new use. Existing housing, either in two-

1
Al-Madrasa al-Manjakkiya is now used as offices of the Jerusalem Department of Islamic Awqaf.
2
The texture of old Jerusalem.
3
Work includes small details of cityscape as well as renovation of major buildings.
4
Dar Al-Aytam Al-Islamiyya Complex with golden Dome of the Rock on horizon.

CIVIC MOSAIC

A series of particular initiatives to regenerate the life and texture of old Jerusalem.

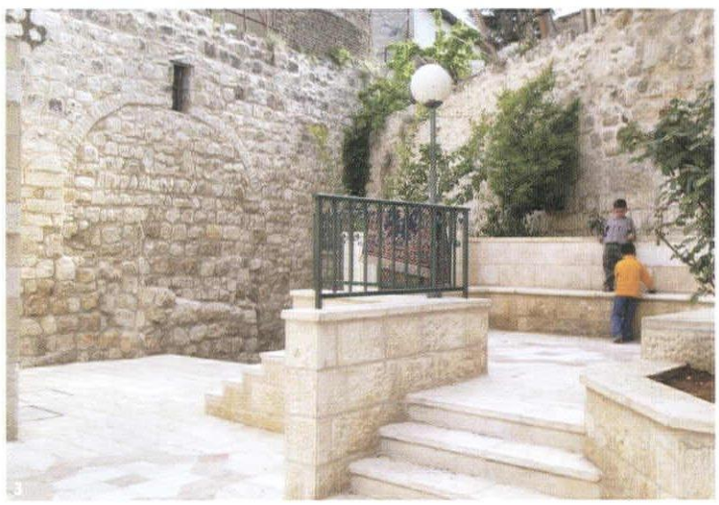


plan of completed and proposed works

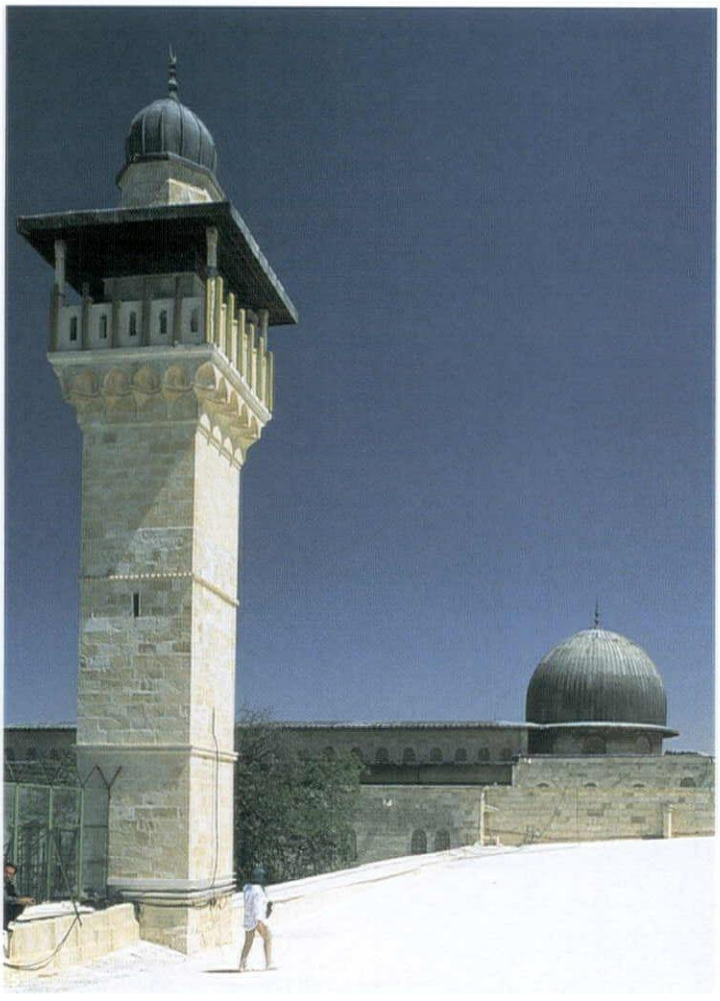
REVITALIZATION PROGRAMME, OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM, ISRAEL
ORGANIZER
WELFARE ASSOCIATION

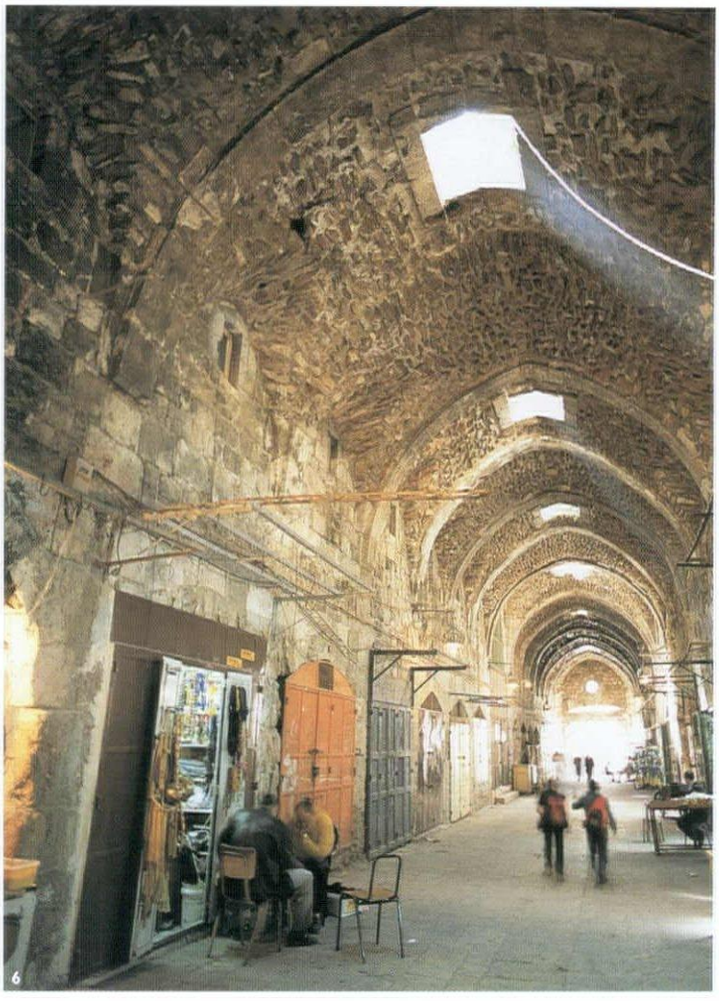












REVITALIZATION PROGRAMME,
OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM, ISRAEL
ORGANIZERS
WELFARE ASSOCIATION

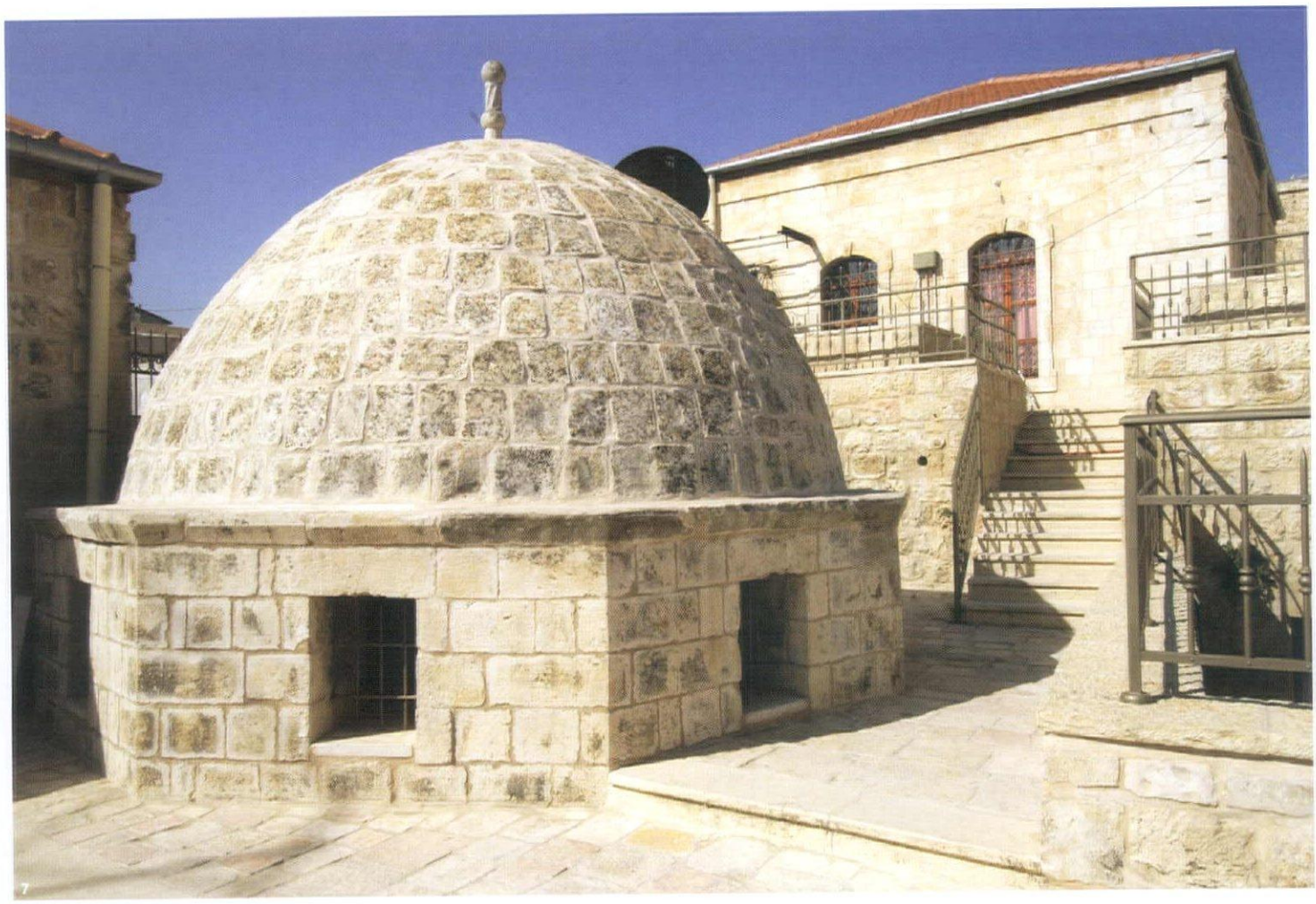
and three-storey street-facing blocks, or traditional *hosh* (groups of households grouped round courtyards), has been improved by providing separate lavatories and kitchens. Geometrical problems were very complex, and not made simpler by the fact that residents usually had to continue to live in their houses while work was going on because hiring alternative accommodation would be impossibly expensive. Work varies in duration from a few months for a house to years for major public complexes such as improvements to the Burj al Laqlaq, which were started in 1996 and continue today.

Political problems have added to OCJRP's difficulties. Delivery of materials and access for site staff have always been problematic. Originally, contractors and craftsmen came not only from Jerusalem, but other parts of Palestine. Erection of Israel's controversial security barrier has greatly reduced accessibility from the occupied territories, so more expensive labour has to be hired within the city itself. But the programme has provided jobs and training for workers and professional people. It has founded an outreach and participation scheme that has raised occupants' consciousness of their extraordinary environment.

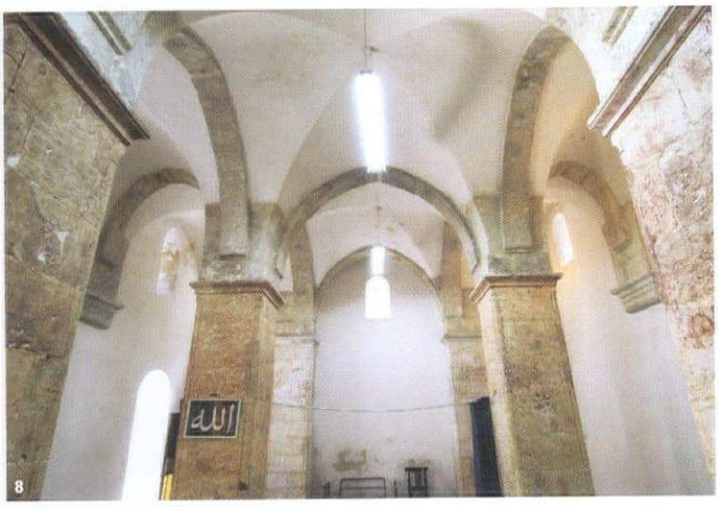
As Michael Sorkin, the Award technical assessor, stressed in his report, the project's strength 'lies in its ability to combine the loving care of a peerless historic environment with devoted attention to Jerusalem as a living environment that must be adapted to a range of human needs'.

Architect
Welfare Association: Hisham Qaddumi, Ismael el Zabri, Shadia Touqan

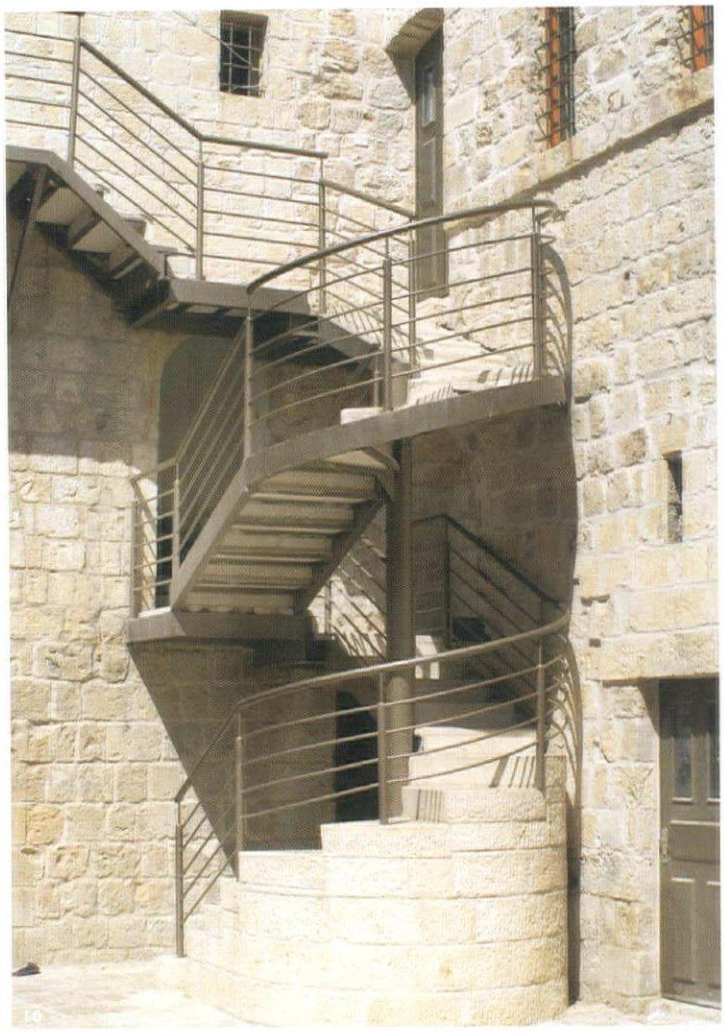
5
Silver dome of Al Aqsa Mosque dominates perspective of roof of its library (now being rehabilitated). Fakhriyya minaret to left.
6
Renovated souk.
7
Details of Dar Al-Aytam Al-Islamiyya Complex, which now houses an industrial school and an academic one.
8
In Al-Malawiyya Mosque, previously unknown spaces below ground were restored and used.
9
Al Buraq Restaurant converted from old stable.
10
Additions to old structures are as a rule capable of being dismantled.



7



8



10



9


ar house

HOUSE, KOBE, JAPAN
ARCHITECT
HIROAKI OHTANI

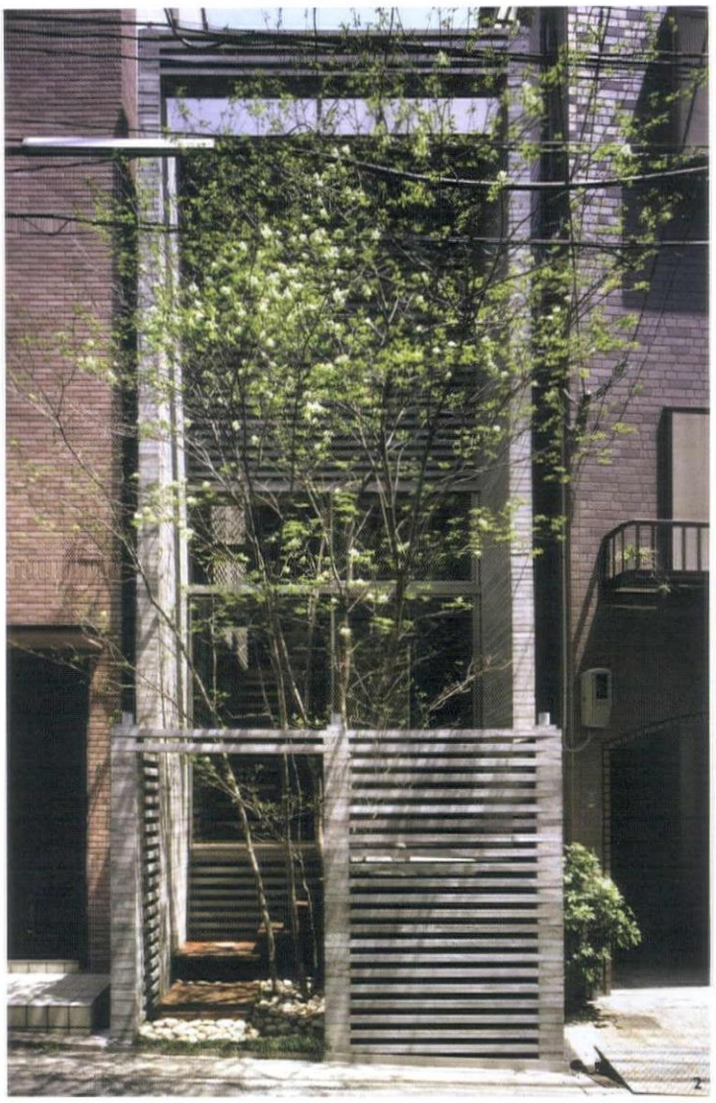
Concrete casket

This family house maximizes a tight urban site to create a dramatic internal realm.

When designing houses for their own use, architects are usually more able to succumb to the pleasures and perils of self-expression with sometimes intriguing, sometimes dismaying results. This new house in Kobe falls into the former category. Building any sort of dwelling in Japan's overcrowded cities is a challenge, met here with no little ingenuity by Hiroaki Ohtani, who has designed and built a house for himself and his family in the heart of Kobe. Ohtani found a characteristically tight site, only 33sqm in footprint and barely 3m wide, hemmed in between two existing houses. The lack of space and limited access precluded the use of elaborate construction equipment, so the programme assumed an even more formidable dimension.

Ohtani's response was to create an exquisitely ascetic concrete and timber casket that slots precisely into the cramped space. Within this domestic receptacle are spaces for study, sleeping, washing, living and dining stacked up with the precision of a Chinese puzzle and linked by disarmingly vertiginous flights of stairs seemingly hijacked from the illusionistic imagination of M. C. Escher.

To maximize every scrap of space, the house is set back slightly from the street, creating a tiny enclosed entrance patio planted with a single tree, signifying the boundary of a private domain. Horizontal concrete slats wrap around the patio and frame a huge glazed opening cut into the street frontage. The slatted fence and tree conspired to screen the interior of the house from the attentions of the street.



The sleeping floor is raised slightly above street level with a dining cum study room and bathroom sunk slightly below it. The topmost floor contains an integrated living and kitchen space, its soaring volume illuminated by the glazed street facade and an opening cut into the roof above the staircase that filters shafts of light into the long deep plan. A smaller (but steeper) secondary staircase leads up from the living area to a roof terrace.

Because site conditions limited mechanical construction, Ohtani used pre-stressed concrete strips laid horizontally by hand to form the enclosing walls. The technique recalls log cabin

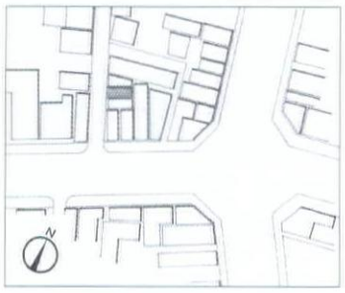
1
Occupying a sliver of space in central Kobe, the house is tightly hemmed in by its neighbours.
2
A tree and slatted fence demarcate the private realm.

HOUSE, KOBE, JAPAN

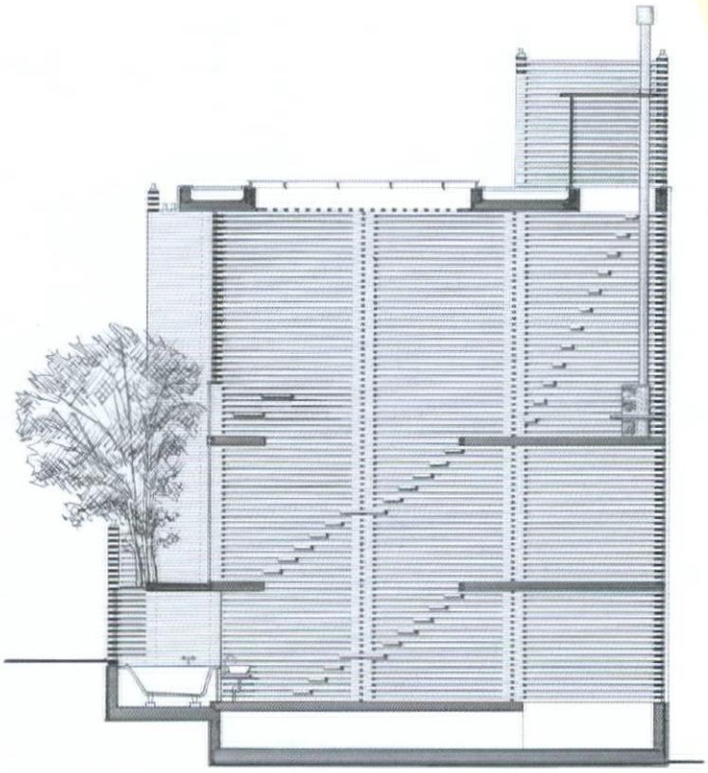
ARCHITECT

HIROAKI OHTANI

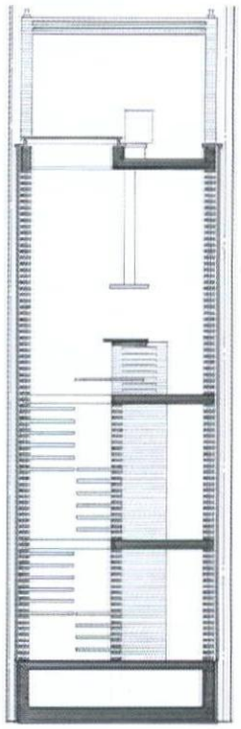
1 bathroom
2 dining/study
3 bedroom
4 kitchen
5 living
6 stairs to terrace



site plan



long section



cross section

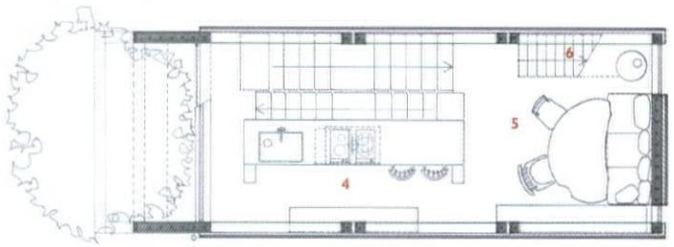
building (walls are constructed with no vertical members) and traditional Japanese structures which employ horizontal strips of timber. Stair treads, shelves and other fixtures and fittings are simply slotted in between the precast members.

Within this slatted concrete box, everything is pared down to its utter minimum. Stairs, for instance, are simply a series of timber treads without the pesky encumbrance of risers, balustrades or handrails. This certainly contrives to open up the interior and encourage spatial interpenetration, but vertical circulation is not for the faint-hearted (Ohtani and his wife have a six year old daughter who must be especially fearless).

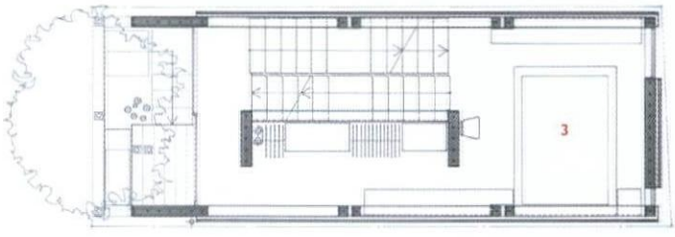
Warm timber floors and furniture set off the slightly austere concrete walls, so the entire house has a powerful elemental quality derived from a limited palette of materials animated by the play of light. Ohtani consciously rejects the clutter of the world; as he puts it 'Lack of things can create a rich lifestyle', and his admirable if somewhat rigorous personal proscriptions include not owning a car, television, microwave, curtain, fax and 'a large refrigerator'. His ingenious little house, which in its use of space and materials has lessons for building on tight urban sites everywhere, is an eloquent manifestation of this philosophy.

PHOEBE CHOW

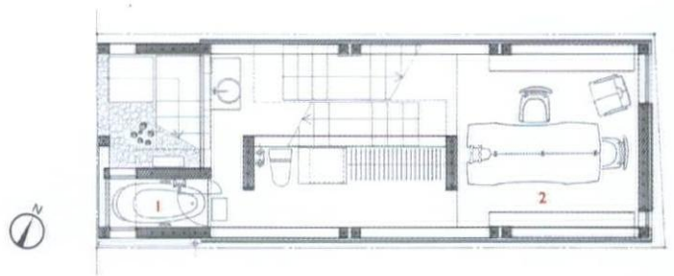
Architect
Hiroaki Ohtani
Photographs
Kouji Okamoto



first floor



ground floor (entrance level)

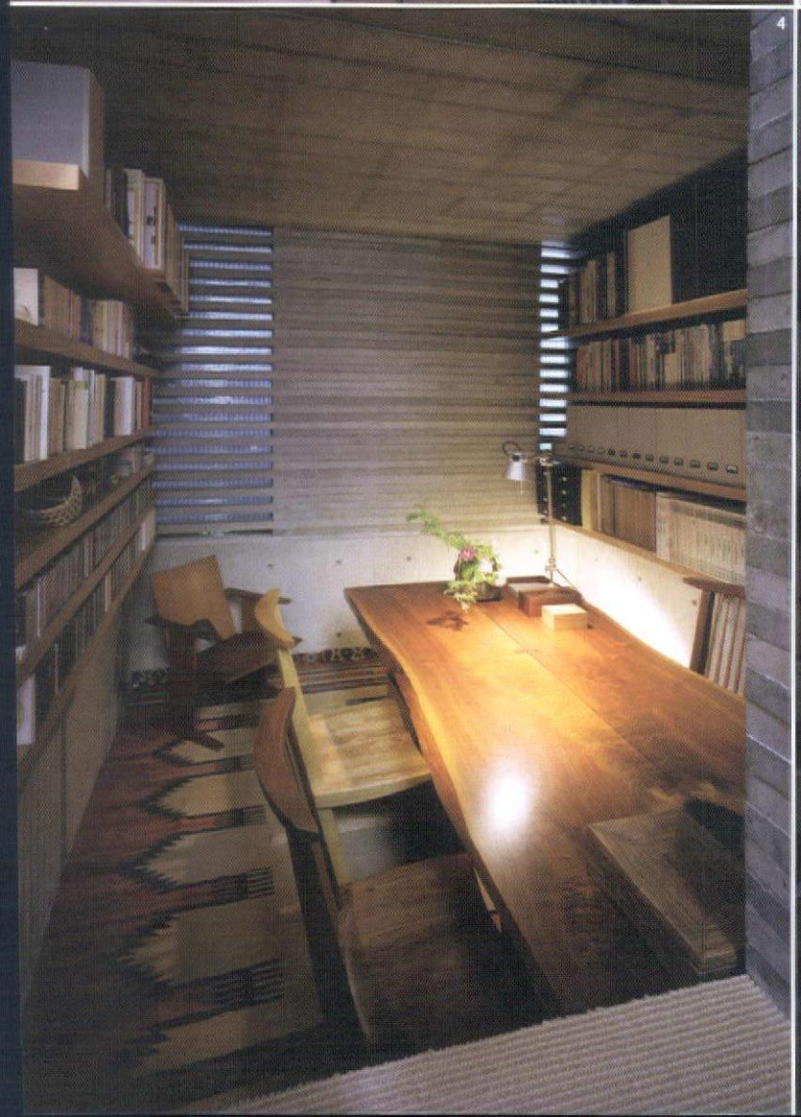


lower ground floor plan (scale approx 1:125)

3
The long narrow volume of the interior is gently washed with light.
4
Formal dining and study space on the lower ground floor.
5
Living area, with staircase leading up to the roof terrace.
6
Minimal stairs are simply slotted into the concrete walls.

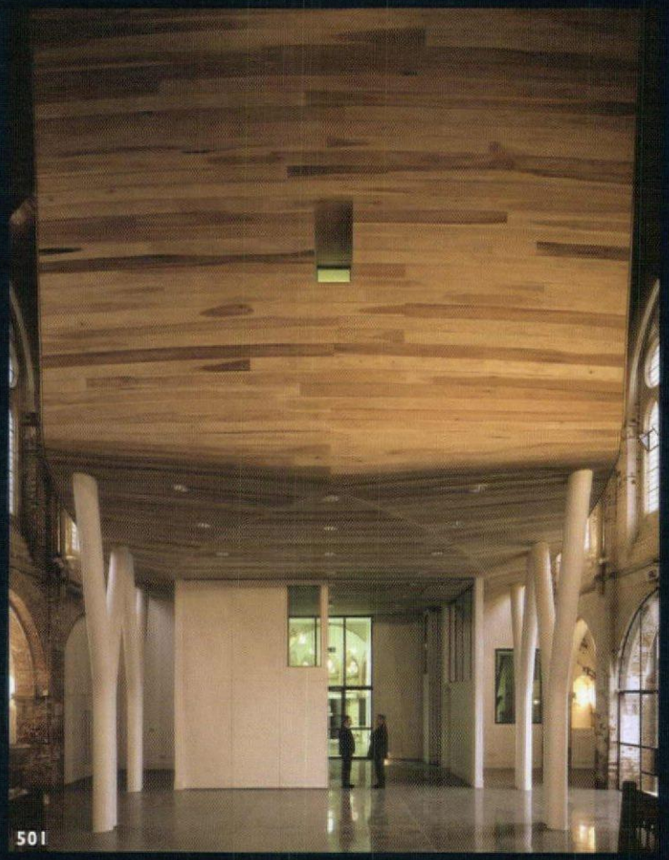

3


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4


6

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501

Rob Gregory reviews a number of recent applications of timber.

501 AMERICAN TULIPWOOD

American Tulipwood (Liriodendron tulipifera), supplied by Rochester-based Morgan's Timber Yard, was used to clad this award-winning intervention in an east London community church. Chosen by architect Matthew Lloyd for its blond appearance, the timber, more commonly known as yellow poplar, was an affordable alternative to the initial proposal to use green oak. The timber is also well suited to forming gentle curves and was installed by Beamfast.

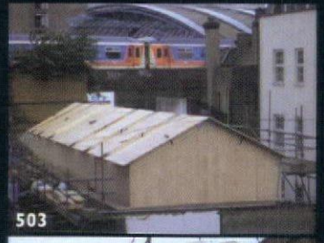
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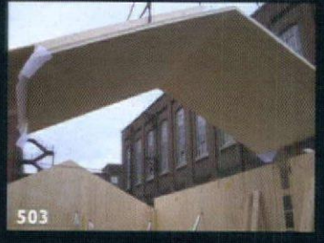
502 LILLEHEDEN

The recently completed Kingsmead Primary School by Bristol-based White Design incorporates a distinctive glulaminated frame supplied by Lilleheden. The dominant modular system alludes to the structure's potential for future expansion from seven to 11 classrooms. The use of timber throughout – which includes bamboo flooring and cedar cladding – responds to the aspiration to make the school into an exemplar of sustainable design and construction, with the design team working closely with main contractor Willmott Dixon.

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502


503


503

503 FINNFOREST MERK GMBH

The Leno Building system from Finnforest Merk GmbH – as seen here in London's Waterloo – is a flexible and adaptable prefabricated construction system. The panelized system incorporates large units that while achieving high loading capacities dramatically reduce construction time.

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504

504 CONSTRUCTIONAL TIMBER
Thirteen solid timber arched frames, manufactured by Constructional Timber, form the centrepiece to Alec French's recently completed Lambourne-Sheepdrove Biodiversity Centre. Fabricated from 300x300mm sections of home grown Douglas fir, each section was individually machined and stabilized by Douglas fir purlins and braces.

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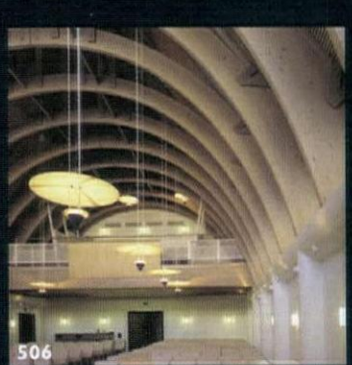
505 ENGLISH OAK
English Oak was used extensively throughout Michael Hopkins & Partners' award-winning Norwich Cathedral visitors' centre. Having received the Gold Award in the 2004 Wood Awards, the scheme is an exemplary demonstration of how new and old can coexist, with timber being expertly used both structurally (fabricated by Constructional Timber) and for internal finishes.

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505

506 FINNFOREST GLULAM
Finnforest Glulam has been used by architect Hannele Arantola for Maria's Chapel in Levi, Finland. The structures offer lightweight, efficient and distinctive solutions for mid-span situations.

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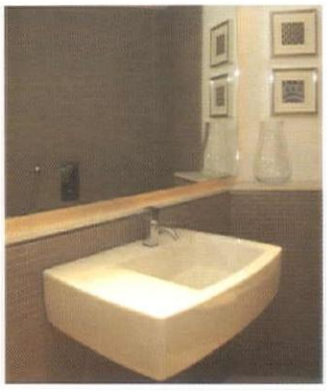
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Potter & Soar

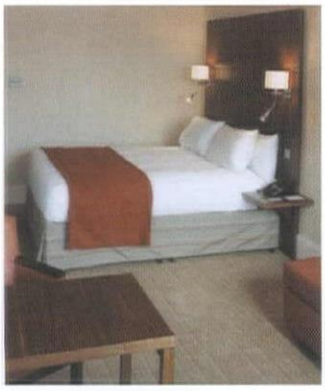
Potter & Soar, the UK's leading manufacturer of architectural wire mesh, has recently launched Solaris, an innovative pre-crimped wire mesh pattern that combines a vertical crimped weave with flat horizontal wires to create a slatted Venetian blind effect. Solaris offers excellent sun-screening properties, preventing direct sun penetration while still allowing excellent air flow to ensure adequate ventilation. It can also resist the elements, as the flat louvre wire mesh provides enhanced protection from driving wind and rain, compared with other similar materials and products.



901 www.arplus.com/enq.html

John Sydney

John Sydney's growth in the luxury new build sector continues apace. The firm's latest project is a development of luxury, residential apartments in London's Kentish Town. Working with Waterlines Suppliers and developer, the PES Group, it supplied its Elite and JS_ range of contemporary brassware for the ensuite shower and individual bathrooms. Products supplied include wall mounted basin mixers, bath fillers and shower mixers. The John Sydney brand is synonymous with a stylish design and superior finish across its comprehensive product range, qualities epitomized here.



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O'Donnell

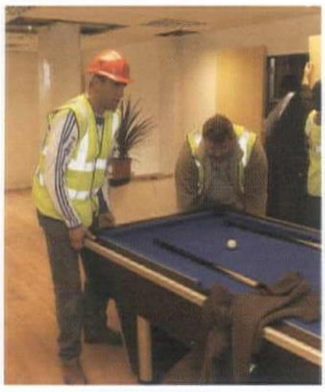
Irish contract furniture makers O'Donnell supplied customized bedroom furniture for a luxury hotel in London's Shoreditch. Working with hotel interiors specialists RPW Design, O'Donnell supplied all the bedroom casegoods in quality crown-cut walnut veneers and introduced innovative techniques in manufacturing items that blended different materials, such as glass, stainless steel, wood and fabric. Highlights include an eye-catching headboard that can adapt to fit king, queen and twin-bed arrangements, plus leather covered chaises longues that double as daybeds if required.



903 www.arplus.com/enq.html

Armourcoat

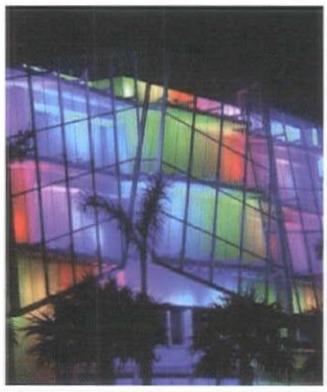
Armourcoat Surface Finishes have announced the introduction of a technical CD-ROM. It is the most comprehensive polished plaster reference tool for architects. Designed as a central source of information, and to simplify the specification process, the CD contains a wealth of product information including substrate requirements, product technical data, building specification sheets together with care and maintenance advice. It also includes a Specification Wizard which can help construct a building specification document.



904 www.arplus.com/enq.html

Armstrong Ceilings

Footballer turned film star, Vinnie Jones, featured in the first of the new series of 'With a little help from my friends', the popular television series. Vinnie's task was to save 100 year old Bedmond FC which faced closure because of the poor state of its facilities. Vinnie enlisted the help of his old school friends and the support of companies such as Armstrong Ceilings. The old ceiling tiles, installed on an ancient black grid, were replaced with 110 sqm of Armstrong Dune Tegular tiles.



905 www.arplus.com/enq.html

The Parkside Group

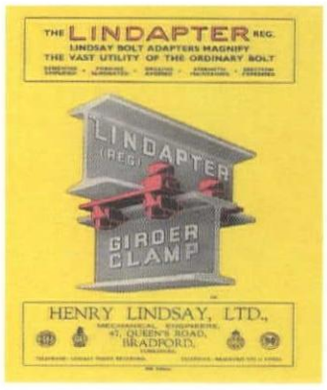
Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems are comprehensive purpose-dedicated suites of extruded aluminium profiles and interacting components. Designed for glazed facades and roofing, new build and refurbishment, COMAR'S experience, product performance, research and development, and design maintain its trusted position at the forefront of aluminium system technology. For cladding and curtain walling, COMAR offers the specifiers a choice of high-tech solutions: COMAR 2 Window System, and COMAR 6 Curtain Walling / Glass Roofing.



906 www.arplus.com/enq.html

Stone Age

Manufacturing cut stone has become increasingly important to Stone Age, and staircases are a particular speciality. Stone for staircases is not only beautiful but also a practical choice as many stones are extremely durable. Entrance steps are one of the most popular applications providing a formal focal point which sets the tone for the rest of the building. One such assignment, recently completed by Stone Age, was an outdoor staircase for a property in Bath, using 50mm stone with bull-nosed edges and a bush-hammered surface.



907 www.arplus.com/enq.html

Lindapter International

Celebrating 70 years of success, Lindapter continues to answer steelwork connection problems. With experienced engineers on hand to advise, Lindapter products have been used on numerous projects spanning the globe. Better equipped than ever to handle non-standard applications, Lindapter's technical support back-up service will carry out site visits and meetings with engineers to get precise requirements. The range includes support systems for the suspension of services from steelwork, and the Hollo-Bolt, ideal for fixing blind or to hollow section steelwork.

SENSE OF PLACES

SENSORY DESIGN

By Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2004. $29.95 paperback, $82.95 cloth bound

Sensory Design is an excellent book, although I have to admit to being slightly confused by its title. Initially, I expected a rather prosaic discussion of why designers should concentrate as much on, for example, smell and soundscapes as vision and form. True, the book does exactly this in chapters called 'Sensory Cues' and 'Sensory Schematics', offering methods of understanding and designing architecture based on the full range of human senses. But there is so much more besides.

In fact, it's as much 'Poetics of Space' and 'Phenomenology of Perception' as 'Sensory Design'. Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty have been merged with Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Freud and Jung to create a literary, poetic and scientific analysis of how and why we experience spaces and places in the way we do. This involves personal memory and cultural grounding, as well as perception and sensory experience; sense in this instance notably including the expanded notion of hapticity, regarding touch, muscular tension, spatial compression and expansion, and awareness of temperature and humidity. The authors' train of thought is wide-ranging and engaging, all the while bringing us back to hard facts concerning real design elements like material, light, colour, threshold and decoration.

This is a serious body of work, and a rewarding object of study. Following a methodical path, the authors move from theoretical grounding (the difficult early chapters), to applied understanding (the most interesting middle chapters), and practical advice on how we could all design better buildings and places. Lip service is paid to Steven Holl, Herzog and de Meuron, Juhani Pallasmaa and Peter Zumthor, so we instinctively know we are in safe hands. Students of architecture and urban design should read it, and it has the empirical content to be relevant to planning authorities and the formation of their legislation. *Sensory Design* is an important and thoroughly considered design polemic. BOBBY OPEN

SKYSCRAPER DELIGHT

EXPRESSING STRUCTURE – THE TECHNOLOGY OF LARGE-SCALE BUILDINGS

By Virginia Fairweather. Basel: Birkhäuser. 2004. €65

This book, although it doesn't say so, is actually a monograph on the work of the American engineers Thornton-Thomasetti, formerly of the famous American firm Lev Zetlin & Associates.

The introduction discusses 'Expressed Structure and Building Technology in Design'. Among major works mentioned are two in Hong Kong – the Bank of China and Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (neither covered in detail in the book since they were not engineered by Thornton-Thomasetti) and the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur. This section refers back to Louis Sullivan who said, 'form ever followed function and this is the law [...] the shape, form, outward expression, design or whatever we may choose, of the tall office building should in the very nature of things follow the function of the building'. The introduction goes on to stress collaboration between engineers and architects to achieve the most efficient elegant and 'correct' form. It is good to read that this philosophy is now prevalent in the USA where until recently, with certain exceptions, structure has been driven largely by cost and speed of construction

The next section is the introduction to 'Skyscrapers' with eight case studies, one in Shanghai, one in Kuala Lumpur, and the remainder in the USA. These case studies are fascinating with a mass of detail including diagrams, working details and construction photographs. They include a comprehensive text and provide invaluable insight into the business of designing tall buildings.

'Large Interior Spaces' follows and again concentrates on structures, some I have to say more interesting than others, but again with structural diagrams and construction photographs.

'Long-Span Structures' is the title of the third section of the book. Long span yes, mainly in steel, but an absence of lightness of touch in the European sense. One does not see the genius of a Peter Rice/Arups, a Marc Mimram, a Jörg Schlaich or other well-known European engineers.

I started off inclined to dislike this book as its initial section is somewhat of a PR exercise. However, the book is worthwhile for the section on skyscrapers alone (particularly the section on the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur which includes details of the Skybridge).

Thornton-Thomasetti obviously have a large and deserved reputation which was unknown at least to me. For any designer interested in the technology of tall buildings this book is a very useful addition to our knowledge and will, I think, enhance their reputation in Europe for their engineering skills and collaborative attitude to designing with architects and others.

TONY HUNT

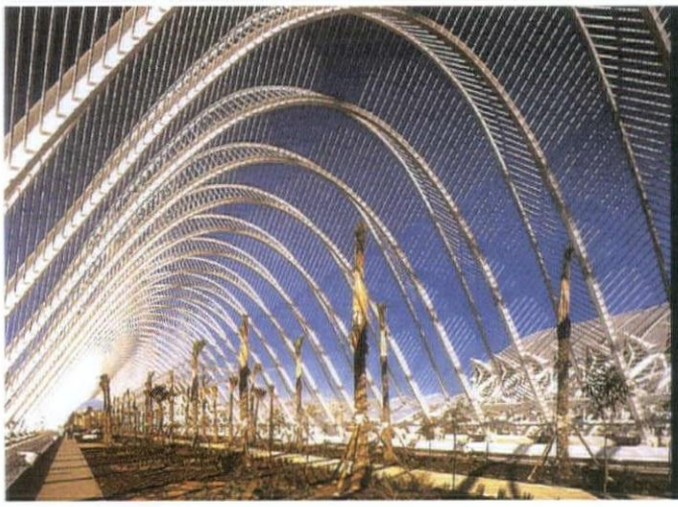
ARTIST WHO LOST AMERICA

THE ARCHITECT KING: GEORGE III AND THE CULTURE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

By David Watkin. London: Royal Collection Enterprises. 2004. £30

George III's accession to the throne in 1760 prompted much national rejoicing. Young, intelligent and attractive, he had been born in England (unlike his two predecessors), was educated, and genuinely curious about the arts and sciences, not least architecture, for his teacher had been William Chambers (1723-96), no less, and the new king was an accomplished architectural draughtsman. Later, he was to collaborate with the leading architects of his day, and initiated several major projects that led to the formation of the King's Library (the basis of the British Library today) and the Royal Academy. It was in his reign too that the novel idea of uniting various government departments in one building was realized with the building (completed 1796) of Chambers' noble Somerset House.

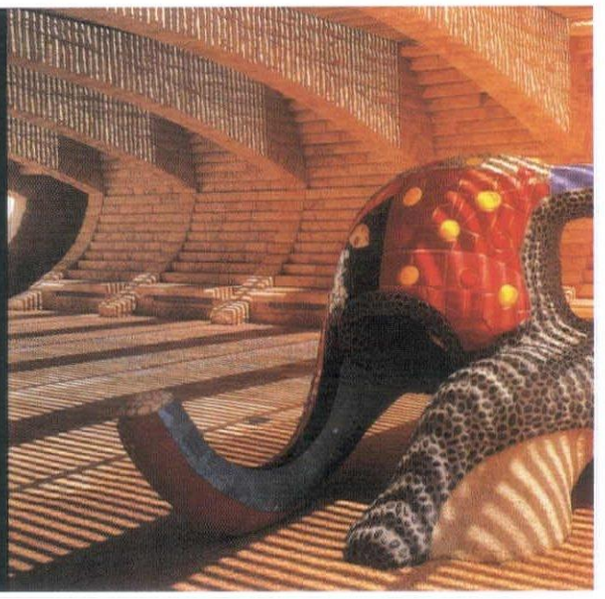
One of the problems with Anglocentric historians is that they fail to acknowledge (or else play down) the close connection between Britain and Germany before 1837: George III was not only King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, but



Is he an architect, an engineer or a sculptor? Does it matter? *Santiago Calatrava, The Complete Works* by Alexander Tzonis, Rizzoli International Publications, 2005, £49.99, attempts to answer none of these questions but elegantly tries to catalogue the oeuvre with excellent images of striated light. This is Calatrava's winter garden in the City of Arts and Sciences in his home town, Valencia. Some drawings (but not enough).

Elector of Hanover, and therefore a major figure in the Holy Roman Empire. When he married (1761) Princess Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818), that connection became closer, for she had family connections with several European courts. Watkins correctly observes all this, and shows how the royal couple influenced garden-design and taste in England and in Germany. He demonstrates that the king-elector, with his interest in manufacturing, discoveries, and agriculture, was a key figure in the Age of Improvement, a significant patron of both the sciences and the arts.

This beautifully-illustrated, intelligently-argued, and handsome book is a delight, opening many fruitful avenues for future investigation. Footnotes are where they are accessible, at the bottom of the pages, and the general quality of presentation is excellent. This is a fine and illuminating production. JAMES STEVENS CURL



Striated light in Noah's Ark, Jerusalem Zoo by Mario Botta and Niki de Saint Phalle. A remarkably light-hearted work by Botta, that master of the serious (and often portentous) architectural statement, shows his playful side which, as the most recent monograph shows, is not as reticent as it might sometimes seem (think for instance of his wonderful floating section of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane – AR February 2000). Recent work is assembled with great thoroughness in *Mario Botta, Light and Gravity, Architecture 1993-2003*, ed Gabriele Cappellato, Prestel, Munich etc, 2004, £42.

SEEN THROUGH DE STIJL

TOWARDS UNIVERSALITY – LE CORBUSIER, MIES AND DE STIJL

By Richard Padovan. London: Spon Press. 2004. £28

Towards Universality – Le Corbusier, Mies and De Stijl sets out, as its title implies, to offer new insights into the dark heart of 1920s Modernism, but ends up as a near perfect demonstration of the gaping methodological void that an ever expanding literature still does not fill. Richard Padovan brings considerable knowledge and erudition to the task, but his insights, perceptions and discoveries flounder because his methodological basis is simply inadequate to the territory he enters.

Outwardly that is to ground the 'notoriously elusive … De Stijl phenomenon' in its context, Le Corbusier's encounter with the group in 1923-24, and by characterizing Mies as the most consummate architectural heir to its endeavours. He unfolds his hypotheses in eight thematically linked but discrete essays, concluding with a 12 point manifesto which 'might be placed beside … van Doesburg's 1924 manifesto, "Towards a Representational Architecture"'. In this, with the aid of such dated slogans as 'long life … loose fit', he hopes to take architecture beyond 'the striving for the universal' which was 'glory, but ultimately the downfall of 1920s modernism'.

In the teleological assumption that historical analysis can help to shape the future lies the first methodological flaw. If De Stijl is really a 'shy beast' as he characterizes it – rather than a ragbag of assumptions and prejudices whose 'shyness' results from their inherent contradictions, his final ambition helps him to pick aspects of it to pin down. A second problem which shows the gulf between his erudition and his effect lies in his treatment of language. With great precision he analyses De Stijl distortions of the Dutch language, but he misses the glaringly obvious point that words evoke meanings which elude control. Padovan approvingly quotes the Smithsons; ironically though perhaps not coincidentally they assumed their writing had pinpoint accuracy when it had nothing of the sort.

Padovan is at his best when venturing off piste, such as his cogent case for the importance of the mathematical theories of J. L. M. Lauweriks on Le Corbusier and Mies, a discussion that alone makes the book worth reading. But perhaps stemming from the old and flawed assumption that history is only justified as a basis for theory, he largely sticks to a core of canonic texts, buildings and writers, a fixed repertoire for their analysis, such as proportionally-governed '*tracés regulateurs*' to compare paintings by Mondrian and Corb, and a view that words, forms and ideas have direct correspondence. These flaws make a mutely eloquent case for the urgency of methodological developments for the study of even orthodox modernism.

JEREMY MELVIN

ANGELS ON THE HEAD OF A PIN

MIRROR-TRAVELS: ROBERT SMITHSON AND HISTORY

By Jennifer L. Roberts. London: Yale University Press. 2004. £30

Assistant Harvard lecturer, Jennifer L. Roberts' book is strictly for contemporary academics. It reads rather like a candidate's essay for entry to membership of the US academic inner clerisy via an elaborately obscure text on an almost impenetrably dull topic. I could be wrong but the latter seems to be about a possible relationship between Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and the nearby site of the driving of the *Golden Spike* in 1869, the joining-up of the east and west tracks of the first US transcontinental railway.

Roberts is one of those people who infinitely prefers prolixity and repetition to clarity and precision; the use of non-*Shorter Oxford* words at crucial parts of sentences which renders them meaningless without extensive use of internet dictionaries; and a mind-gnawing earnestness. As a fairly conscientious reviewer I have to confess that I started skimming after the first couple of chapters so the rest of the book may be a model of clarity – and even grippingly interesting.

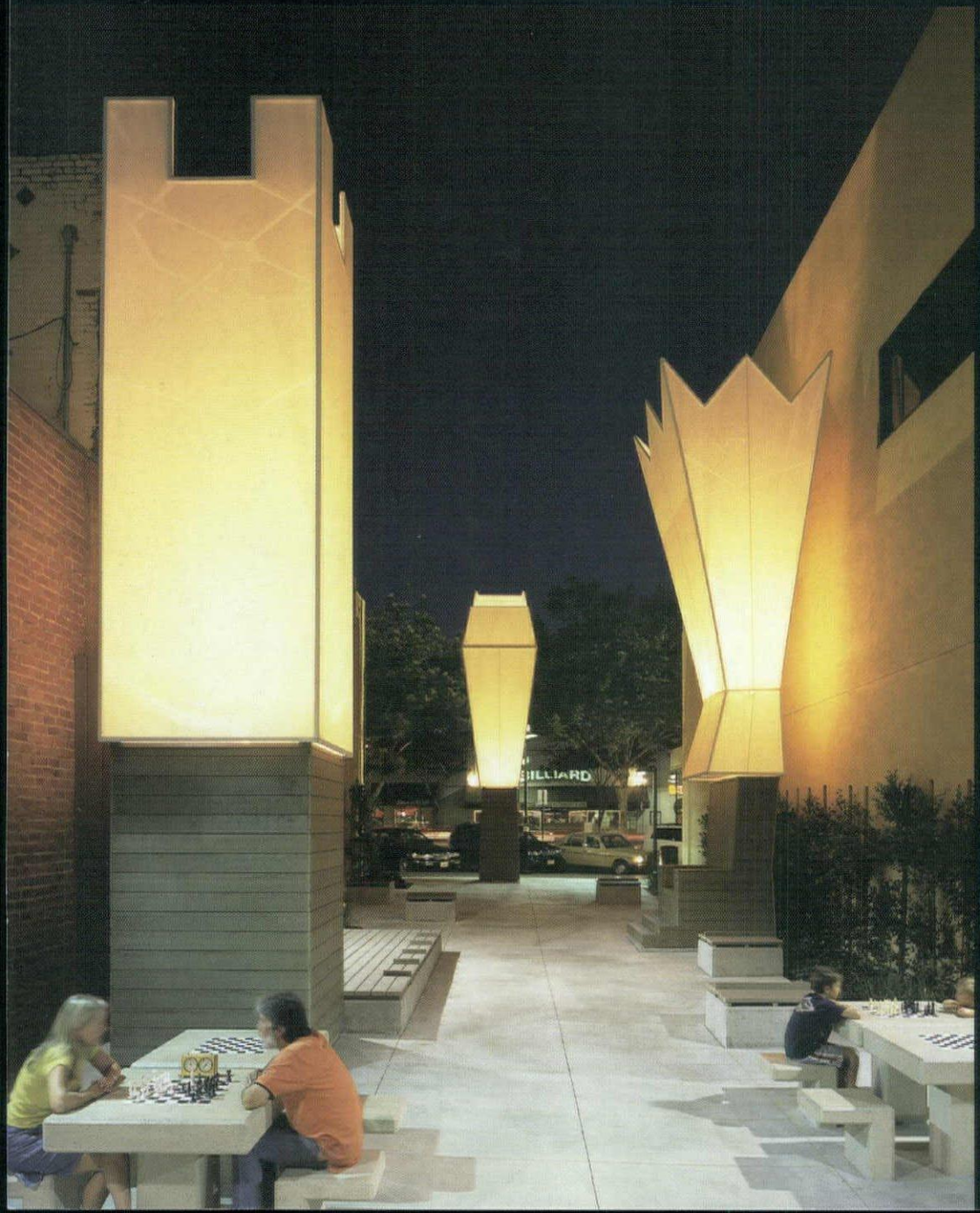
It's a bit unfair to take bits out of context but towards the end of the book where you look for some kind of conclusion, Roberts writes: 'We might say that the *Jetty* performs a centennial counter-reenactment here, reenacting not the timelessness and universal product of labour, the *Golden Spike*, but rather that which the *Golden Spike* model of history must repress – the duration, extension, and materiality of that labour. The *Jetty* provides a form of rescue of the time that went into the railroad's construction, and thus poses a monumental rejoinder to the goings-on a few miles away at the Golden Spike National Historic Site [on Promontory Summit]. It functions as the *Spike*'s supplement, as if the spiral, sprawling out into the lake, were a plume made up of all the interstitial time that was being swept out of the way by the punctuated temporality at Promontory'. On the other hand, since the *Spiral Jetty* is located 15 minutes away down a winding dirt track – and since Smithson, otherwise a prolific correspondent, says nothing to this effect, maybe not. SUTHERLAND LYALL

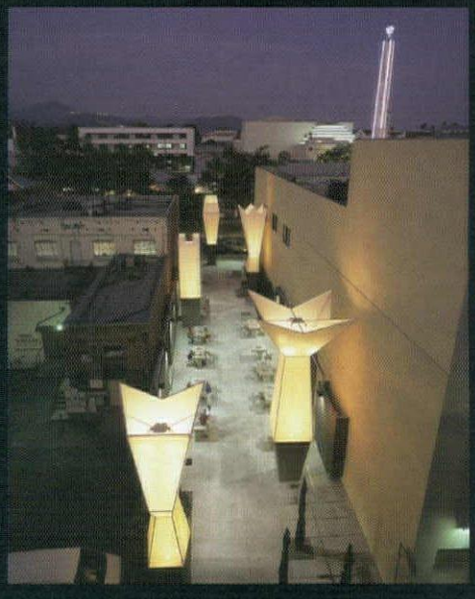
Book reviews from this and recent issues of The Architectural Review can now be seen on our website at www.arplus.com and the books can be ordered online, many at special discount.

THIS IMAGINATIVE NEW URBAN PARK IN CALIFORNIA IS INSPIRED BY THE LORE AND RITUALS OF CHESS.

Chess, that most ancient and cerebral of games, has proved an unlikely catalyst for a new urban park in that most modern and uncerebral of places, California. Designed by Rios Clementi Hale Studios and inspired by the history, lore, evolutions and rituals of chess and its pieces, the Chess Park transforms an unremarkable downtown pedestrian precinct in the city of Glendale into a place of social (and cerebral) interaction. The plan of the park is based on the strategic movements made in chess, with 16 inlaid chess tables provided for al fresco games in the balmy Californian climate (Glendale Chess Club was part of the client group). Five giant light towers animate and mark the length of the park, their abstract profiles based on the form of chess pieces (king, queen, rook, knight and pawn), but tempered by other influences such as the delicate paper lanterns of Isamu Noguchi and Brancusi's powerful sculptures. Each 28ft high tower has a hollow base that can be used for storage, signage or seating and each is topped with synthetic canvas that gently palpitates with light, bathing the park in a warm glow after dark.

Different pieces demarcate different functions. The King Tower, for instance, acts as a giant story-telling throne for performances and book readings, while the Rook Tower provides storage and technical support for events. The Queen Tower presides over the chessboard zone, with its ranks of concrete tables inlaid with black and white tiles, and also acts as sentinel and symbol for the Glendale Chess Club. Concrete benches provide seating for local workers to enjoy lunches and coffee breaks, while cypress trees form a buffer to the park precinct. Lush, low maintenance shrubbery and white-flowering perennials add flashes of texture and greenery, softening the man-made elements. Both imaginative and inviting, this thoughtful transformation adds to the social and intellectual life of the city. C. S.





Photographs: Tom Bonner