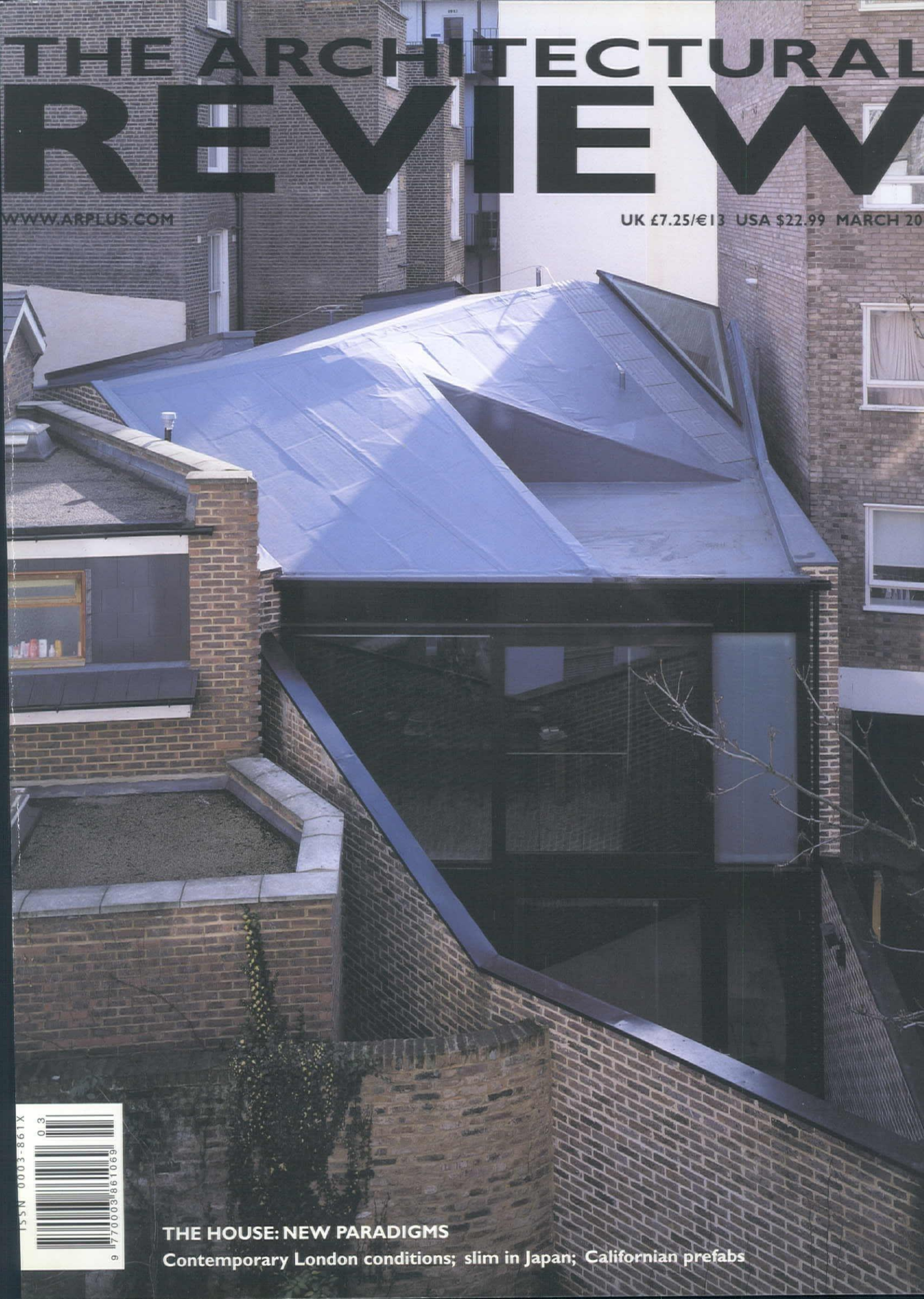
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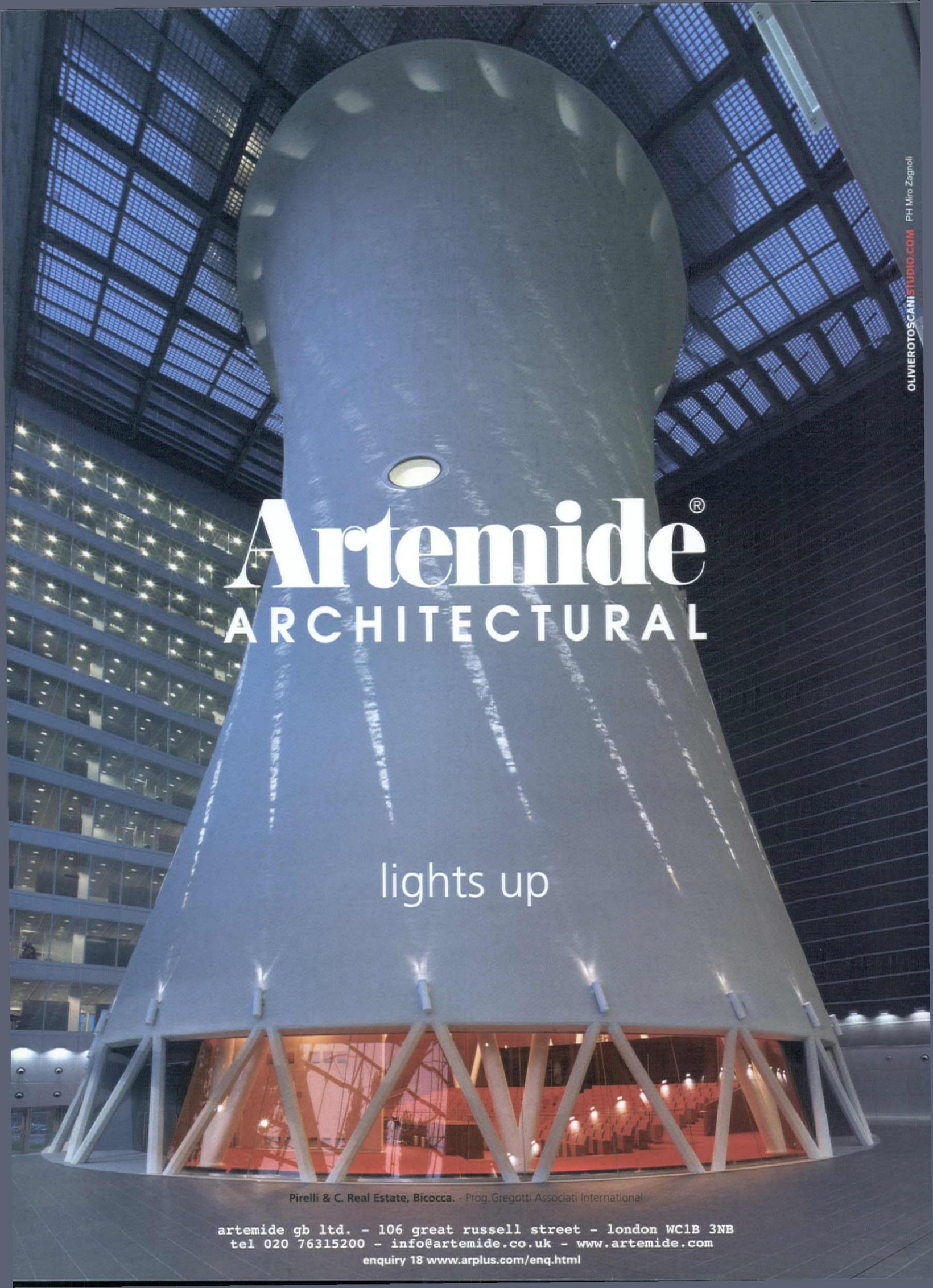


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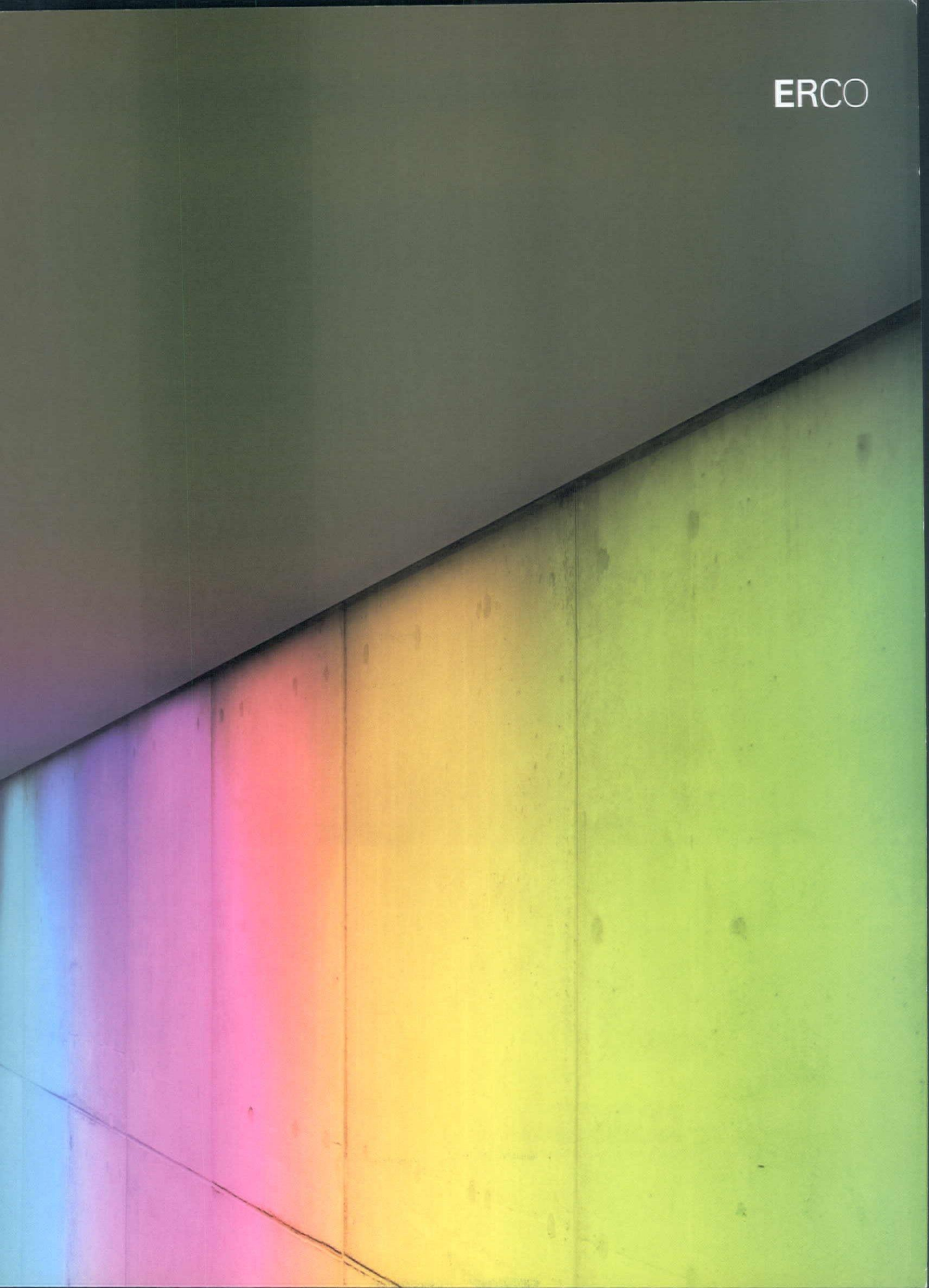
38 House, Notting Hill, London CARUSO ST JOHN ARCHITECTS Photograph by Ioana Marinescu

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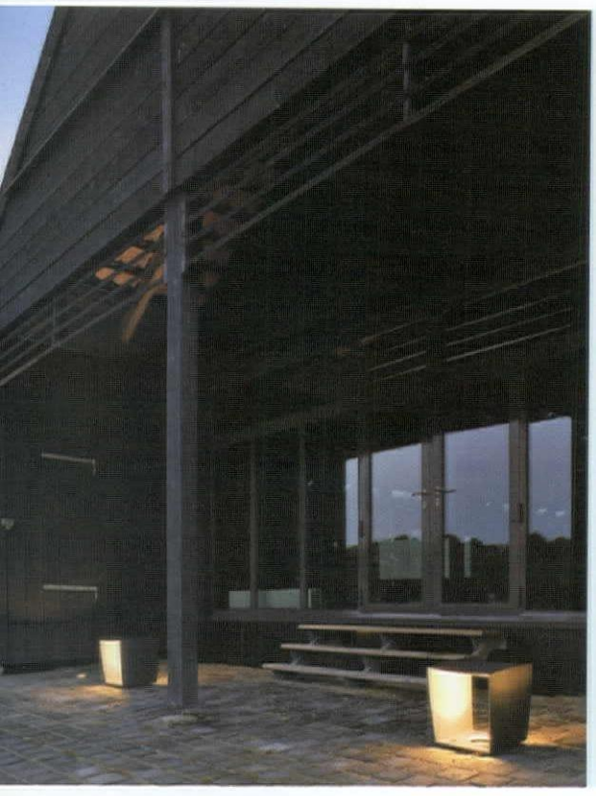
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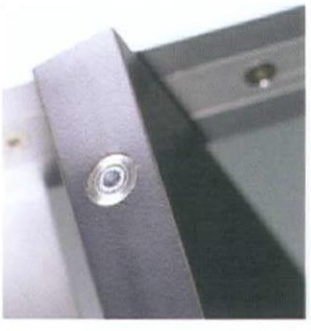


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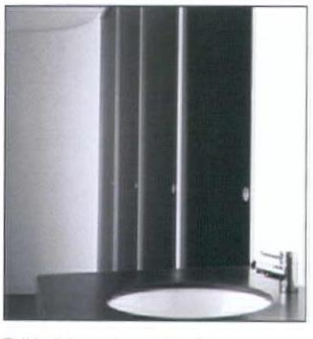
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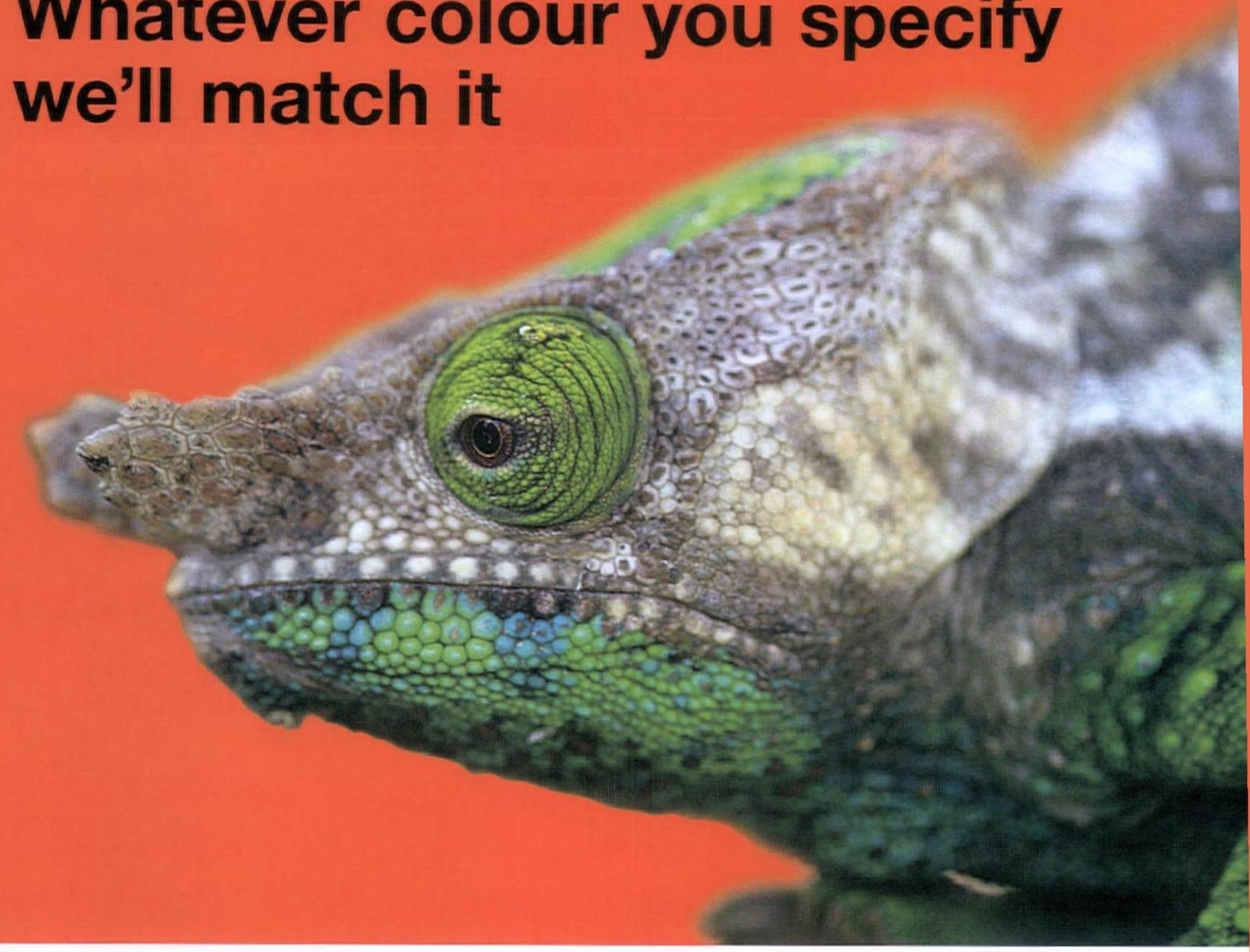
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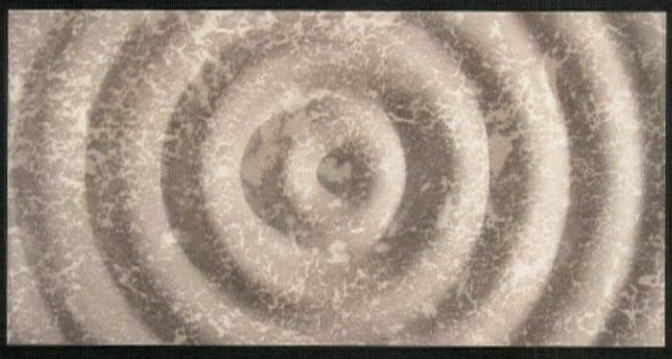
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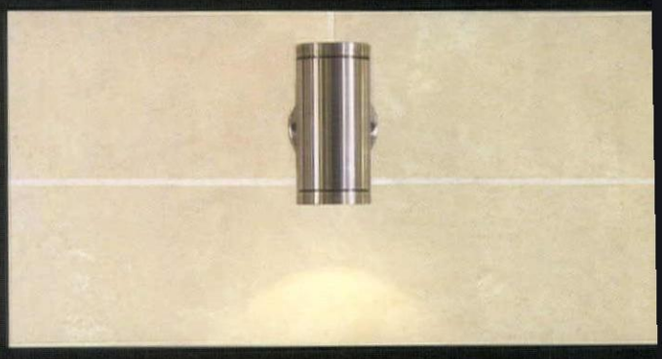






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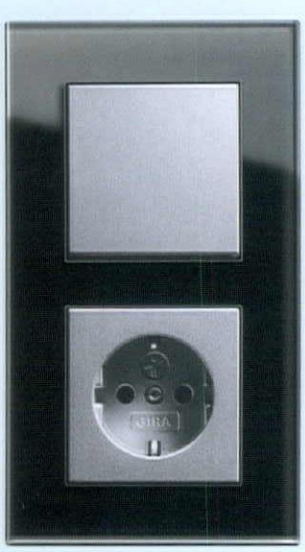
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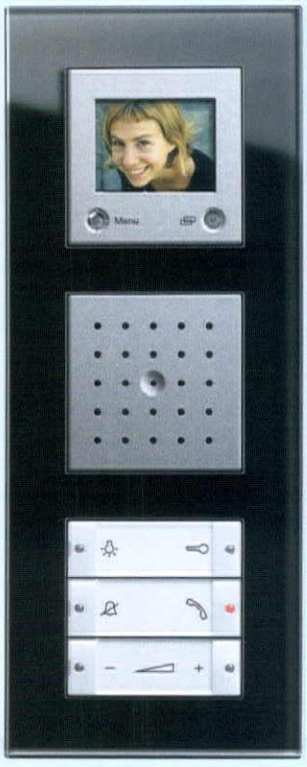
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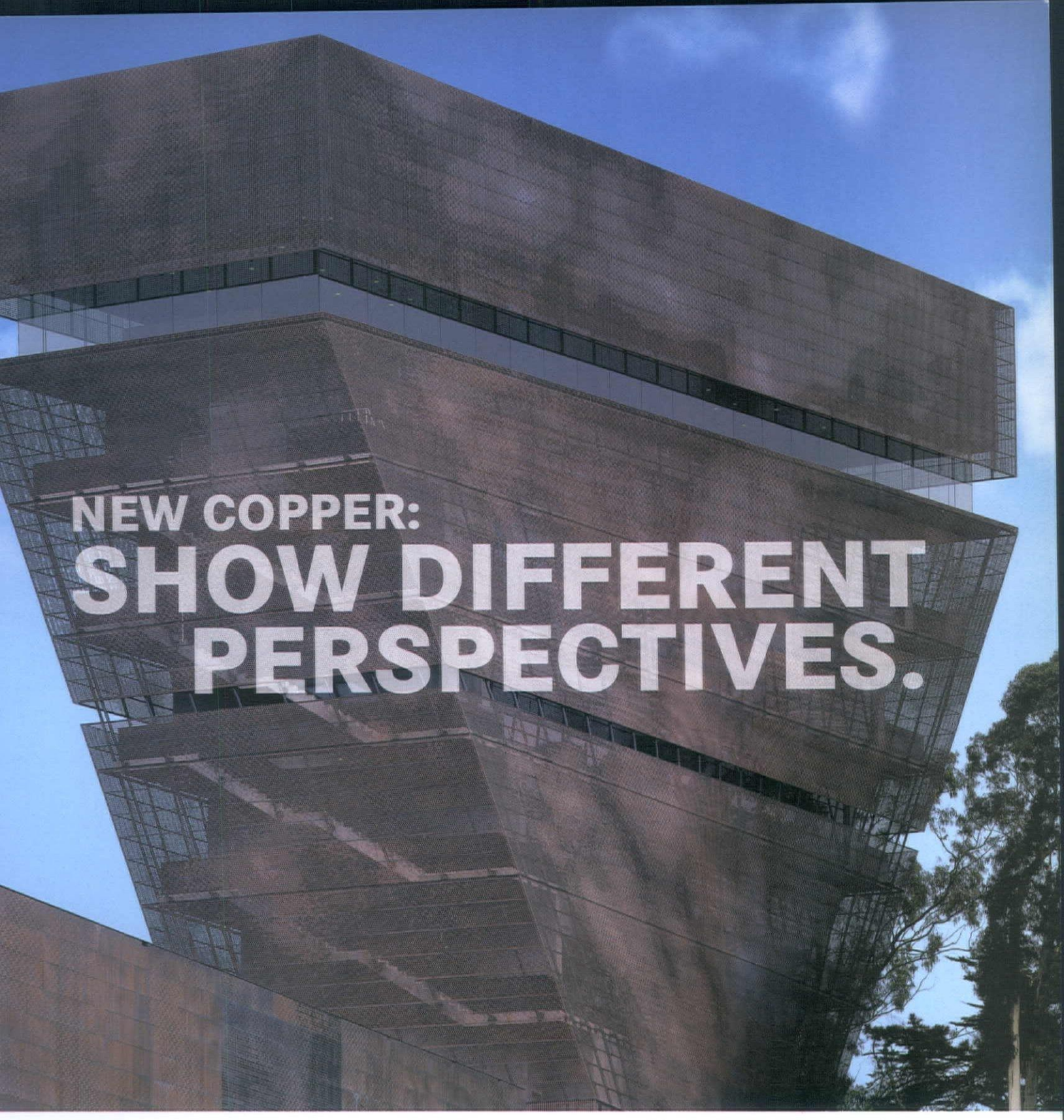
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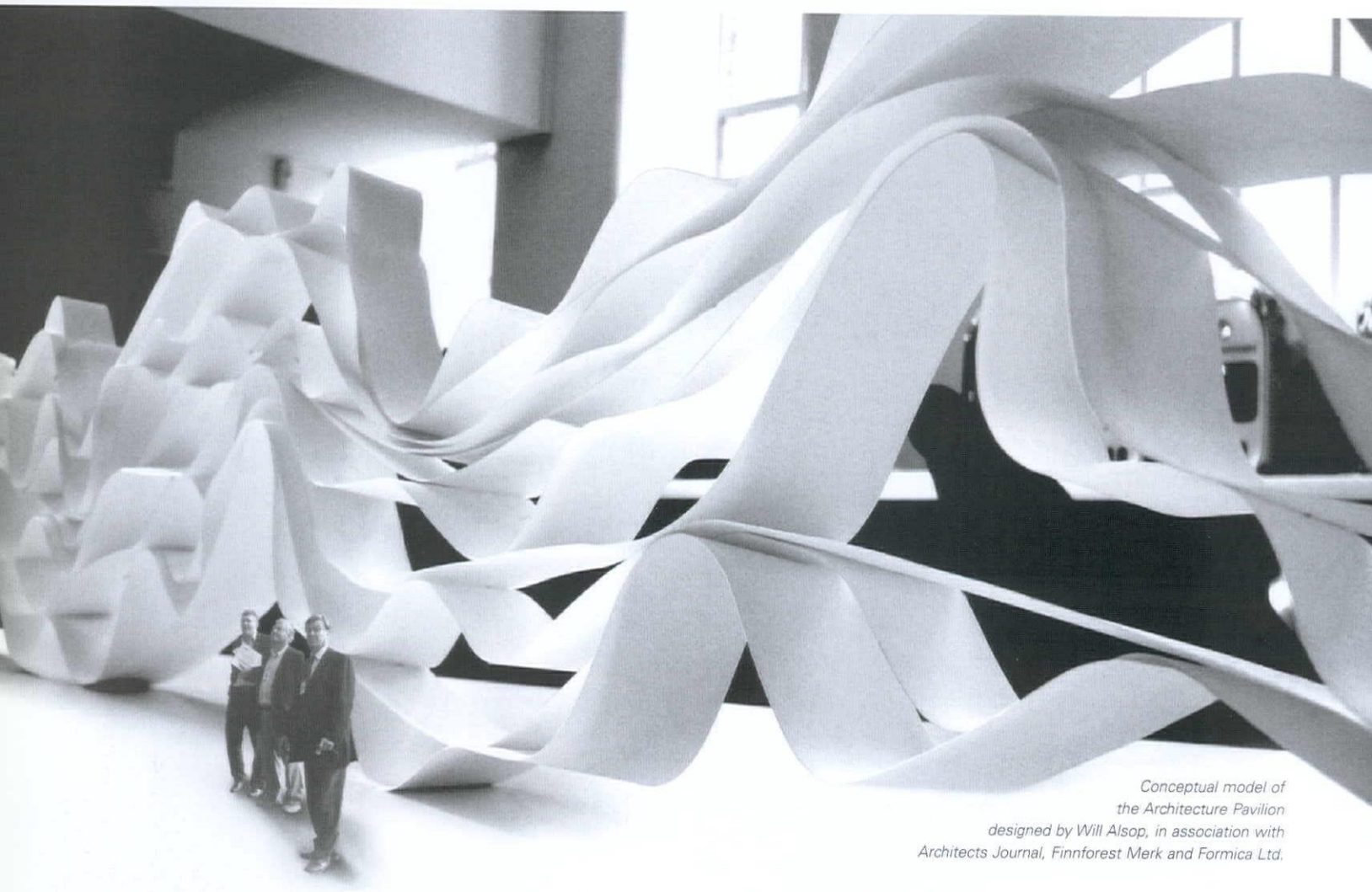


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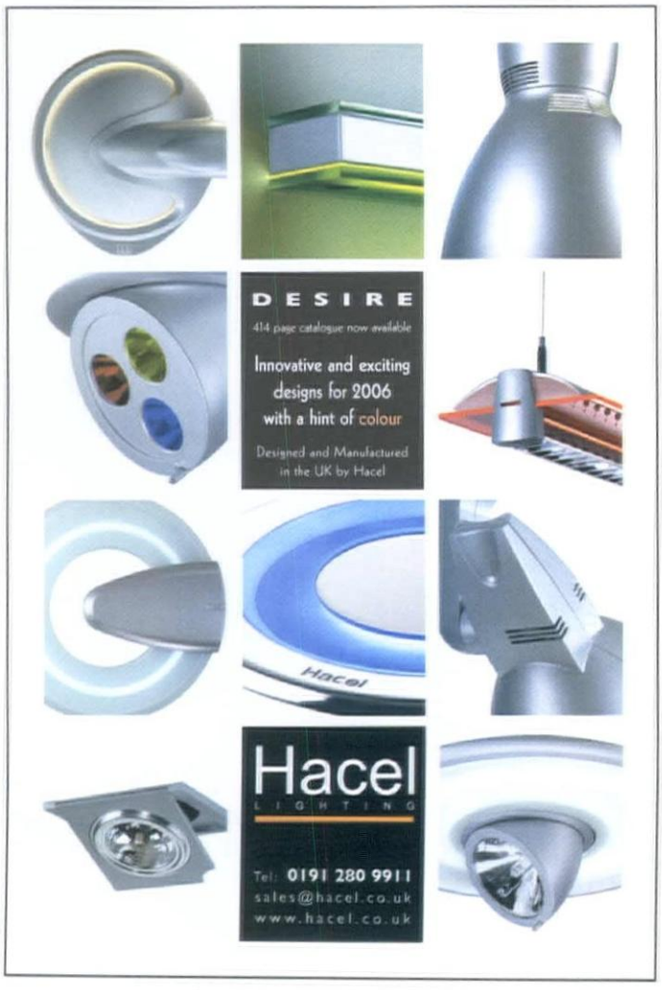
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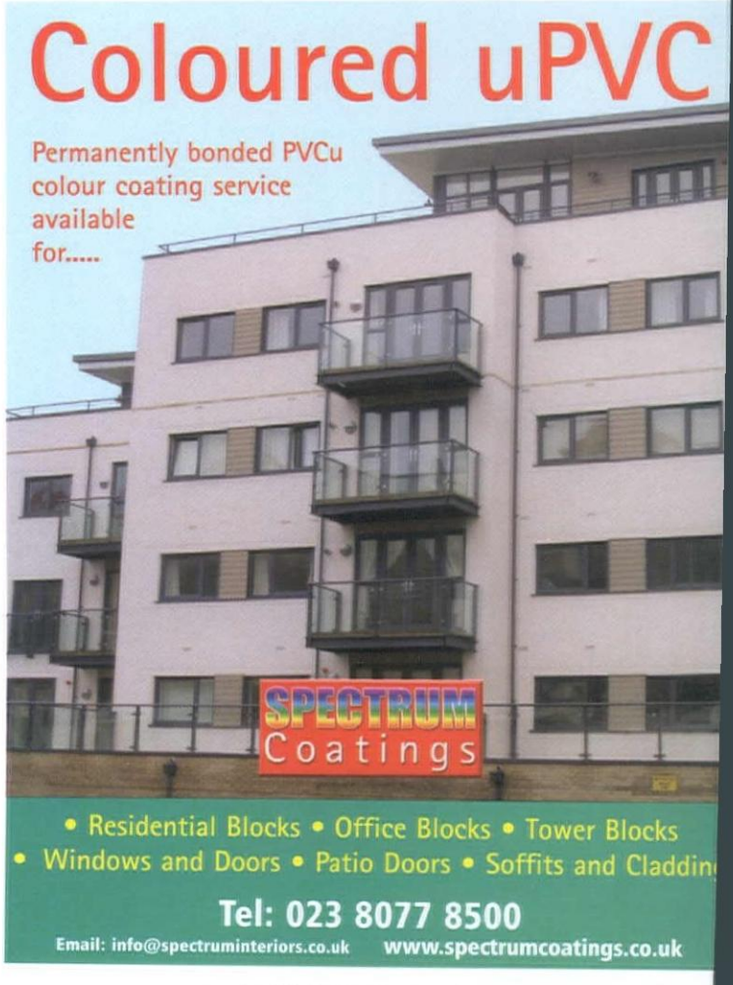
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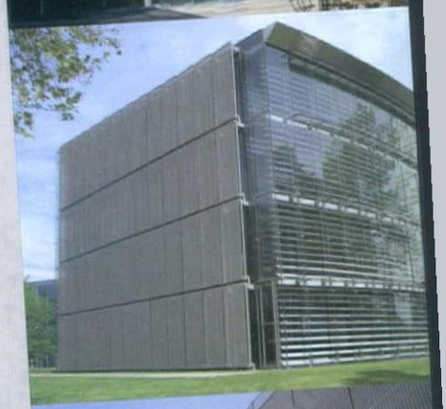
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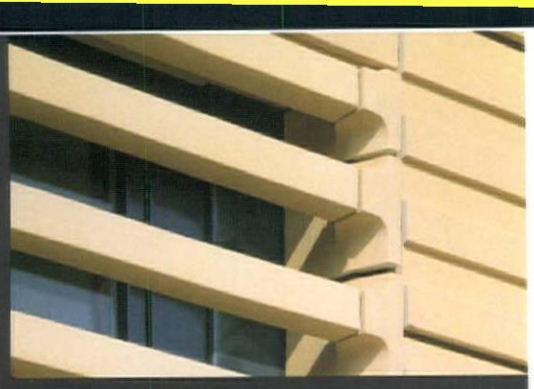
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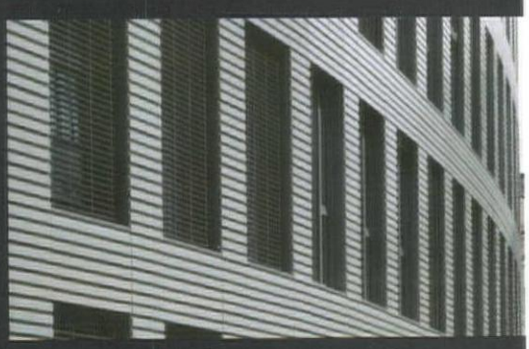
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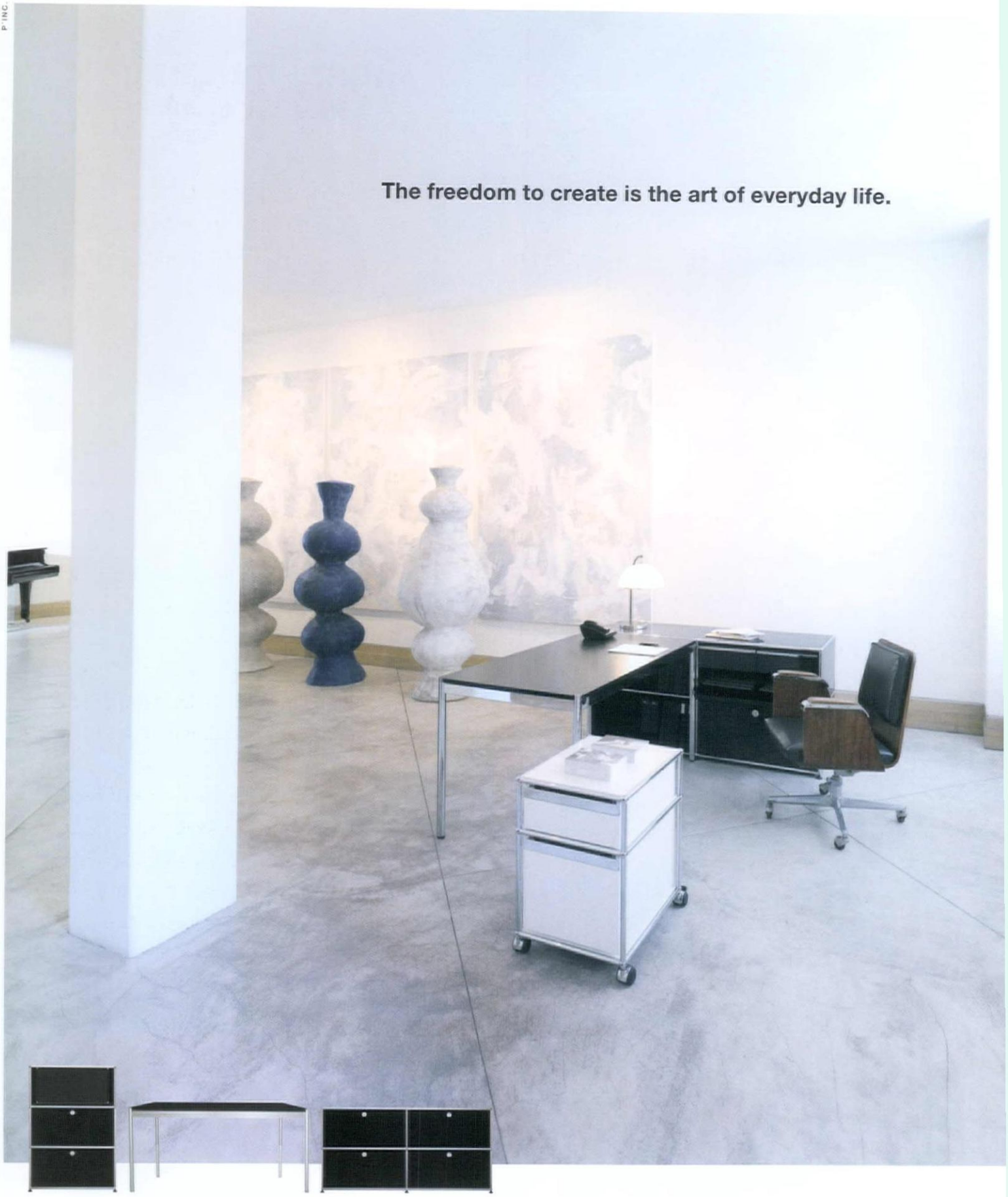
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A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME

In his just-published *Manifesto for a cinematic architecture*,* the teacher Pascal Schöning describes how such an architecture 'aims to dissolve or expose the concept of a static material world through a buzz of constant change', and that it 'reveals the illusiveness of the house as a reliable and constant factor, and shifts the focus instead to life and narrative processes. Perhaps the house can only be an enabler of life narration itself'. This presents a nice problem for any architectural publication in attempting, on the one hand, to avoid showing what Schöning would think of as 'an endless repetition of solid-state modernist buildings', but on the other conveying architectural intention rather than the streams of consciousness which constitute the buildings' clients and users. The static nature of architecture itself, and its inevitable magazine representation as just that, cries out for the addition of movement and change. How, one may ask, can one represent life and even spatiality in a two-dimensional form, by definition frozen in time and space? For comparison, Schöning cites the Jean-Luc Godard aphorism that film is 'truth 24 times a second'.

The answer, such as it is, must be that it is the viewer/reader who completes the picture. They will do so in different ways depending on their individual histories, and what they notice when they look. Cineastes will recognise this proposition from the world of French film criticism, in which even modest studio formula films occasionally achieve interest on the basis of the individual perception by each character of events which the audience is assumed to 'read' collectively. The same basic conditions may be treated in quite different ways, for example as farce or tragedy, as Woody Allen's 'Melinda and Melinda' recently showed: farce is the tragedy that happens to outsiders; tragedy is the farce that happens to you. The screenplay (cf plan and section) takes you down one path or the other.

Just as cineastes will view a film in a different way to cinema's regular public, so architects viewing the work of another on the printed page bring their own architectural memories and opinions to what they see. Those reactions are unlikely to replicate the experiences of non-architects who inhabit most houses. (Nor are they the same as would occur as the result of a physical visit, when sensual response comes into play.) They are what they are, and may result in inspiration or merely the logging of visual information. For architectural magazines there are elements of 'how did they do that?' and indeed 'why did they do that?' in the presentation, which publication of the diagram, plan and section attempts to address. It is absolutely right that these representations are only a part of the story and cannot be the whole of it, any more than the house or apartment can be the whole story of an individual's life. On the other hand, as architecture is inextricably linked with memory, the idea of the house looms large in the life of the architect, as much, say, as early trips to the cinema play in the life of the film director. 'Cinema Paradiso' was essentially about coming home. PAUL FINCH

* Architectural Association, 2006



Model of the GCC, now taking shape.

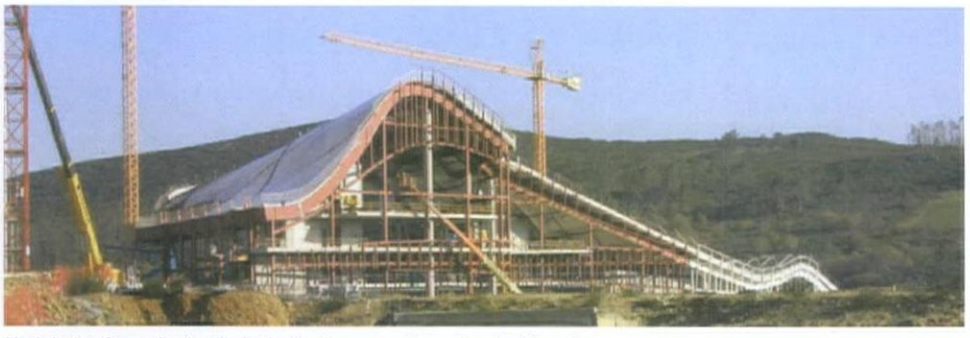


The evolving site at Mont Gaiás.



Photographs: Matthew Ford

The Hemeroteca under construction.



Undulating forms both mimic the landscape and are absorbed into it.

SANTIAGO'S SECOND SHRINE

The first phase of Peter Eisenman's ambitious Galician City of Culture is nearing completion.

'Build it and they will come' was a mantra that worked well for Santiago de Compostela in the Middle Ages when a chapel, and then a cathedral, were erected round the purported relics of St James, Spain's patron saint. Millions of pilgrims trudged over mountains in search of redemption, and exercise fanatics still stream in along the well-marked Camino de Santiago. The secular counterpart of that shrine, the Galician City of Culture (GCC), is under construction on a neighbouring hilltop. Peter Eisenman won the 1999 competition with a complex of six buildings that resemble a giant earthwork cut into Mont Gaiás. It was scheduled for completion in 2004 at a cost of $175 million. The Hemeroteca – a periodicals archive – will open later this year; the library, history museum, and administrative offices have been framed; the music theatre and new technologies building have yet to break ground, and the final cost is anyone's guess. When will it be done, and will St Peter draw the crowds as effectively as the Blessed Frank Gehry in Bilbao, or that other Santiago in Valencia?

It's an interesting question, for the explosion of inventive architecture in Spain – well chronicled in an exhibition now at MoMA in New York – owes much to the example of the Bilbao Guggenheim (AR December 1997). There, the goals were well defined: an icon that would regenerate a derelict waterfront, forging a new identity for a decayed industrial city and drawing tourists. It succeeded beyond all expectations and the $100 million price tag has been covered many times over. Maybe this strategy only works once; cultural icons, from the Sydney Opera House to the Pompidou, do not generally lend themselves to replication. Calatrava has exhausted his inspiration in the bloated opera house in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and its double in Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences. Barcelona's new Diagonal complex is inhumanly scaled and dispersed, in contrast to EMBT's Santa Caterina Market, which is knitted into the urban fabric (AR November 2005). Jean Nouvel's vertiginous, glossy red addition to Madrid's Reina Sofia Museum (AR February 2006) seems too overwrought for its place and its purpose. The wineries of La Rioja may have better luck with their commissions to Gehry, Hadid, Rogers, Foster and other star architects.



Hedjuk's twin towers will function as reception centre.

In contrast, Eisenman's complex is an anti-monument, designed not to thrill but to be absorbed into the landscape, and so be a good neighbour to the medieval World Heritage Site. Happily, that should reduce its appeal to bus tours, and leave it for Galicians, and solitary visitors, who may acquire virtue by walking here. (A plenary indulgence could be offered as an incentive to Post Modernists.) The architect's promise of 'a magic mountain' traversed by tree-lined paths is at least five years away, even if the new provincial government moves briskly to realise the vision of its former president, Manuel Fraga Iribarne. The first stage is encouraging. Twin towers, one of granite the other of steel and glass, rise from the edge of the escarpment. They were designed by the late John Hejduk for a botanical garden and will now serve as a reception centre. The Hemeroteca is faced in quartz, and the attempt to disguise steel columns as masonry using clip-on panels is as unconvincing as Richard Meier's similarly misguided effort at the LA Getty Center. However, it gets much better within. Covered walkways lead to an uplifting architectural promenade. A long gallery overlooks the spacious reading room and researchers' carrels. Sculptured parapets, stairs, and a bowed soffit contribute to an organic flow of space and a dynamic sense of movement.

The arcane geometry of the complex (a transposition of the medieval town plan overlaid with a grid that is deformed by topography and lines of force) is traced in the paving, walls, and in ceiling cuts that house strip lighting. Eisenman's intellectualised programme is enriched by its sensuous, tactile qualities, in a way his earlier work was not. The City of Culture has affinities to earlier plans – including the unrealised Emory Center for the Arts – to deploy buildings like the fingers of a hand, separate, yet linked. You can imagine the final iteration of buildings that swoop and turn within a lushly planted park in this green and pleasant land. It's a prospect to tempt every architectural pilgrim.

MICHAEL WEBB

obituary

VIKTOR MELNIKOV 1914 – 2006

Following the death of the 91 year old artist, Viktor Melnikov, who will now lead the campaign to save his father's seminal home in central Moscow?



Viktor Melnikov standing in front of his 'father's wall', with Konstantin's portrait of his wife asleep.

I was fortunate enough to meet Viktor Melnikov twice; both times at home, and both times within and surrounded by an extensive collection of his father's work – the frustrated Russian Constructivist architect, Konstantin Melnikov (1890–1974). Viktor himself, of course, was not without his own identity, being a respected artist in his own right, sharing the platform with his father in a centenary exhibition at Moscow's Central House of Artists in 1990. He was, however, as always, more keen to talk about Konstantin, his much-cherished father.

Sitting at his dining room table, it was impossible not to be moved by his father's tangible presence; not only experienced through the apparently endless collection of artefacts, models and drawings – many of which were unique and previously unseen – but also through the spaces themselves; rooms that were frozen in time, and kept under Konstantin's watchful eye, observing at all times from a portrait that had taken his place at the head of the table. Throughout our conversations, the question that echoed with most resonance was, what could he have become? ... as Viktor described the architect's life in exile. Today, the echoes are amplified and seem to be asking, without Viktor, what will become of his home?

While iconic in form, the Melnikovs' house was very much the Melnikovs' home. It should be preserved in this way. As the manifest dream of a pioneering architect, built from fees earned during the design and construction of his famous Soviet clubhouses, it remained his dream home throughout his life. Viktor too, lived out his life in this place, and even after over 75 years of occupation, and despite his vastly diminished eyesight, he continued to describe the ability of the spaces to reveal new and apparently endless subtle qualities. Formed by two intersecting cylinders the house remains unique today, and contains spaces of unrivalled plasticity.

Within the principal living room, the walls were adorned with the work of father and son. The so-called father's wall focusing on Konstantin's portrait of his wife sleeping in her first floor bedroom; the son's wall on Viktor's portrait of his father – both featuring the house's distinctive diamond shaped windows. As the passing years reduced the age gap between father and son, Viktor recalled how they grew to become close friends; a relationship that, for the time being at least, lives on in this powerful and harmonious spatial co-existence.

But, what now? With many well-recorded family disputes, the destiny of the Melnikov house is far from certain. While reports confirm that the house and archive have been left to the Russian State, through a will being executed by Viktor's daughter Ekaterina, his youngest daughter Elena is still staking her claim, despite having lost an appeal lodged in December last year. Only a matter of hours after Viktor's death, Elena is alleged to have arrived at the house with four armed guards and two lawyers, demanding that the house be closed up, accusing her old sister of stealing the archive. Clearly if the authorities remain indifferent to their responsibility to help preserve a sustainable future for the house, and, if the family don't destroy it between themselves, the house may come under increasing pressure from opportunistic and unscrupulous private investors.

Unfortunately, in the not too distant past, Viktor was convinced that the government would prefer to see the house destroyed. This, of course, must not be allowed to happen. As an encapsulation of one of the world's most distinguished architects, the Melnikov house must be saved. ROB GREGORY

Ekaterina Melnikov can be contacted on + 7 (495) 241-1873.

For further information please write to: info@maps-moscow.com or visit the Moscow Architectural Preservation Society at www.maps-moscow.com. Photographs: Rob Gregory.



Konstantin Melnikov's portrait remains at head of table.



The studio that the father and son once shared.

erratum

In the review of Perriand at the Pompidou (AR February, p80) the bottom right caption should read: Perriand's own dining room, as exhibited at the Paris Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in 1928.

MIPIM 2006

The MIPIM Architectural Review Future Project Awards, now in their fourth year, recognise the role that design quality plays in the creation of successful developments. This is not just a matter of designing a good building, but thinking about how it works in its urban (or sometimes rural) context; it is about thinking in the round. Featured on this page are the category winners. This year's judges were Simon Allford of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, architect; Hinrich Schumacher of Ingenhoven & Partner, architect; Peter Stewart of PSCPA, planning and architecture consultant; and Roger Zogolovitch, architect and developer. Chairman was AR editor Paul Finch. The quality of the winning and commended schemes was at least as high as in previous years, possibly a little higher. If you are attending MIPIM (14 to 17 March, in Cannes), come to the AR symposium on the afternoon of Wednesday 15 March, and hear from the winning architects on what informed their design thinking. All the entries are exhibited in the Palais during the MIPIM show.

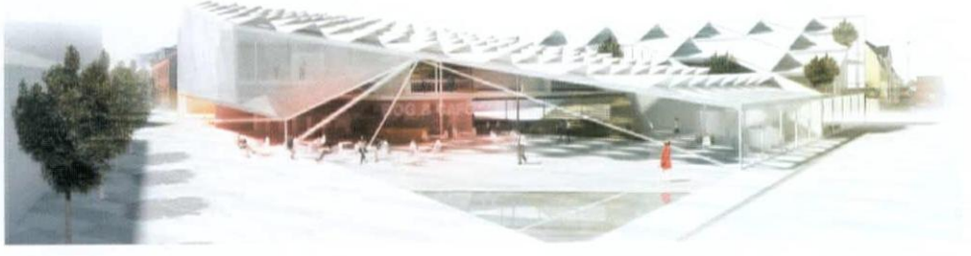


Overall winner, and winner of the **masterplanned communities** category sponsored by Lend Lease was Nabil Gholam Architecture and Planning, for Doha Gardens, Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Client: Rikaz. This residential project in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, was designed by the Lebanese architect Nabil Gholam. It comprises 188 units on four hectares. This is, said the judges, high quality architecture, a very elegant design. One judge commented, 'You see a clarity in the presentation which makes you confident that the same clarity lies behind the design'. Another judge enthused: 'The design offers spaces between the buildings which create a sense of place and while you enjoy the generosity of space in the apartments you feel that even if planned at greater density, the basic proposition still worked and could be applied elsewhere'. Highly commended: Alsop Architects, Ian Simpson Architects, FAT, shedkm and de Metz Architects, for New Islington, Manchester, UK. Clients: Urban Splash, Manchester City Council and English Partnerships. Commended: Aedas, for West Kowloon Cultural Development, Hong Kong, China. Client: Sunny Development (Sino Land, the Wharf Holdings and Chinese Estates Holdings).



The **retail and leisure** category, sponsored by Chapman Taylor, was won by The Jerde Partnership, for the Zlote Tarasy centre, Warsaw, Poland. Client: Ing Real Estate. The judges were struck by the bravura nature of this retail-led mixed-use development comprising 225 000sqm on 3.2ha. Intended as a contribution to the restoration of Warsaw's urban identity, the scale of this development echoes the scale of nearby buildings and preserves the locality's monumental character. It has a striking grid shell roof at its core supported on steel 'trees' which is surrounded by more conventional office and retail buildings. The judges wished to note that the merits of the scheme also meant that a notion of urbanism and regeneration implies the acceptance of large-scale internalised environments. Highly commended were T+T Design for Entre Deux, Maastricht, The Netherlands. Client: AM Development. Commended was Arkitekturavaerkstedet for the Covered Market, Copenhagen. Client: City of Copenhagen.





The **residential** category, sponsored by *The Architects' Journal*, was won by 3XN for its Nordhavnen-Residences, Nordhavnen, Copenhagen. Client: SQ. This housing proposal for docklands on the edge of Copenhagen comprises 22 000sqm conceived as 'a pile of plates'. The stack of plates effect is created by changing the orientation of each of the ellipses from floor to floor. The habitable floor plans remain circular in each building and have a common centre point. The buildings are on a deck, with parking below. Highly commended was Shedkm for Chimney Pot Park, Langworthy, Salford, UK. Client: Urban Splash, Salford City Council & English Partnerships.

Architect 3XN also won the **offices** category, sponsored by Zumtobel Staff, with a bank building in Middelfart, Denmark. Client: Middelfart Savings Bank. This Danish bank has all the conventional spaces including a public ground floor with tellers – and in this case a café, bookshop and estate agent. Other functions of the bank are accessed via almost processional staircases to three terraces set back to one side of the building. A roof based on a diagonal grid shelters this topography of office floors and provides almost clear views over the nearby harbour. Commended was Manuelle Gautrand Architects, for an office building in St-Etienne, France. Client: Cogedim and JFP Participation. Commended was Mario Cucinella Architects for the Malaspina Business Park, Pioltello, Milan. Client: Pirelli Real Estate.

The **local revitalisation** category, sponsored by Kent County Council, was won by Arkitekturvaerkstedet/landskabsvaerkstedet for its New Garden Village, Fano, Denmark. Client: Fano Art Museum. This design proposes a new garden village in which the traditional roadside village is given new short streets off it as fingers so that each new house faces more or less open countryside. Varying in size from 25sqm to 350sqm with none exactly the same, the countryside elevations would have windows and timber panelling, while lime-washed plaster would face the street. Commended were FaulknerBrowns for the Wakefield Waterfront, West Yorkshire, UK. Client: CTP St James. And Helin & Co Architects for the conversion of the municipal prison in Kakola, Turku, Finland.



The **big urban projects** category, sponsored by Argent, was won by Grimshaw for the Fulton Street Transit Center, New York. Client: Metropolitan Transportation Authority. This development (co-designed with Arup), now under construction, rationalises a conjunction of six interlinked stations that accommodate nine subway lines. This number will increase to 12 as a result of the streamlining that the new transit centre will bring. It will also establish new connections to commuter trains and ferries, contributing significantly to the regeneration of lower Manhattan. There were two commended projects. The first, by Schmidt Hammer Lassen, is the Spiladós masterplan and CCH Building-Music Box, East Harbour, Reykjavik, Iceland. The second, by Dixon Jones, is the Exhibition Road project, London, UK. Client was the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.





Winner of the **tall buildings** category, sponsored by URS, was WOHA Architects, for The Met, South Sathorn Rd, Bangkok, Thailand. Client: Pebble Bay. The judges were struck by the relative simplicity of this proposal despite its significant scale. This design is for a building whose every horizontal surface is covered with planting. In addition, green creeper screens rise the full 230m of this 66 floor apartment building. It is arranged as two vertical slabs connected by service and access units with rooms facing either north or south. Cross ventilation is achieved by cutting big rectangular holes in the elevations so that flats have access to light and air on at least three sides. Commended was Skidmore, Owings & Merrill for the Al-Rajhi Bank HQ, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

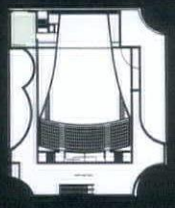
The **innovation** category, sponsored by *Estates Gazette*, was won by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, for the Bridging the Rift Research Facility, Wadi Araba, Israel/Jordan Border. Client was the Bridging the Rift Foundation. The research labs are located around the lecture hall, dining room and library. In the harsh desert environment, a very heavy concrete heat sink wall encloses three sides with a side wide cavity under the ground level slab serving as a plenum for cool air which is drawn through the building by a tall vented chimney. The judges noted that environmental strategy is more convincing than any other they had seen. It is doing its job properly in every way. Commended were Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects, for the Manitoba Hydro Corporate HQ, Manitoba, Canada.

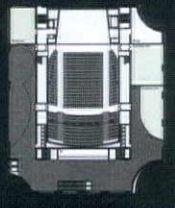


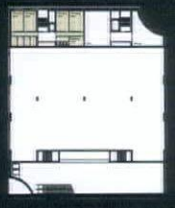


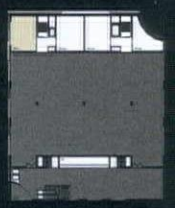
CROWNING GLORY

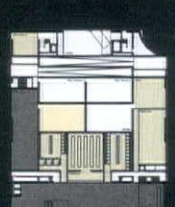
Caruso St John Architects, who feature in this issue with their Brick House (p38), have recently won an international competition to build a £25m Centre for Tourism and Culture in the Swiss Italian resort town of Ascona. Succeeding over shortlisted participants, Zaha Hadid and Peter Märkli, their design was chosen for its response to Ascona's unique setting, and for its interplay of forms that recall subtleties of Ticino's Baroque tradition.
Sited at the threshold between the town's dense historic core and the larger more evenly scaled twentieth-century extension, the new centre will bring significance to the site and provide a crown to the distinctive townscape.
The programme includes art spaces and an auditorium, set among a series of extensive public foyers, raised above the level of the town. Fusing the practice's interest in extending the meaning and interpretation of known and familiar forms, the auditorium and foyers share an unusually close spatial character, articulated by a series of frozen concrete drapes. Hanging from the upper reaches of the foyers, these fluted concrete forms frame spectacular views of the town and landscape beyond, and give the building a distinctive silhouette; an optical presence that will change with the passing hours as sunlight strikes the white marble aggregate that will appear on the finely tooled surfaces. Internally, a more measured series of drapes will provide a gentle focus toward the stage and modify the buildings space's acoustic character. ROB GREGORY

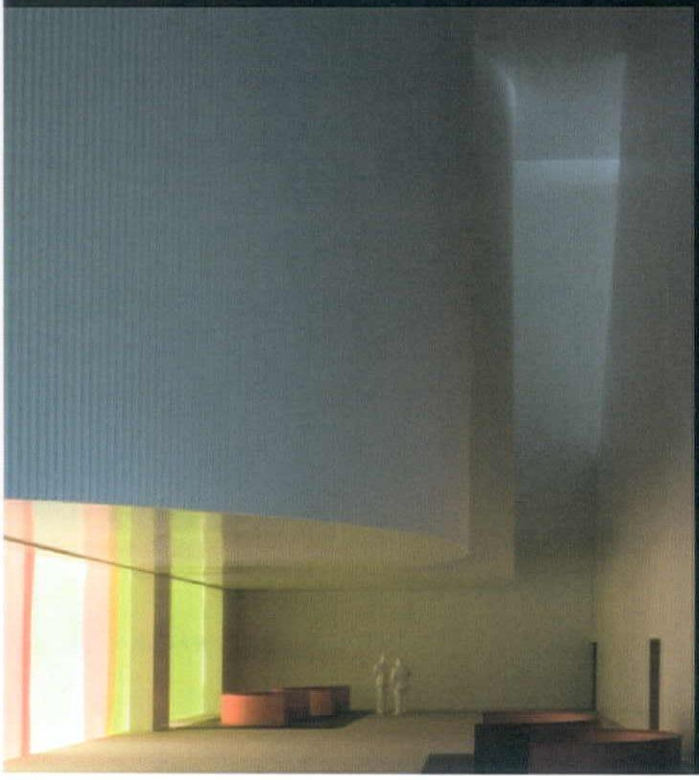












Peter Cook

Peter Cook samples buildings by Morphosis, Rafael Moneo and Frank Gehry in his Grand Tour of Los Angeles.



A respectable Grand Tour in the eighteenth century might well have included a place of worship, a place of celebration and one of general day-to-day activity – exactly what is on offer in a twenty-first century downtown of Los Angeles that seems to be increasingly self-confident. Moreover, the pedigree of three new buildings has been established by the significance of the architects, two of whom are locals.

The latest of the three is the Caltrans (California Transport Authority) headquarters by Morphosis (AR July 2005); to see it while its sage, Thom Mayne, is still rubbing his eyes with delight at winning the Pritzker, gives you an added incentive to weigh up the merits of such architecture.

An essay in 'skinning', 'sheathing' or 'folding' (basically a related action), its self-confidence lies in the consequentiality of the components and an unswerving determination to keep it simple and keep it tough. It represents an amazing trajectory forward from the early houses and restaurants that played a dangerous (but frequently elegant) game of 'dare', between an extreme consciousness of material and patina against extreme edginess of placement. Now Thom wraps away: less dependent on eye-catching thrusts than his project in Klagenfurt, and clearly revving-up in anticipation of his next pair of city buildings in San Francisco (AR October 2005) and New York.

So the superimposition of strips: lit strips, concertina-ed strips and revelatory strips seem inevitable, even flattering the relatively dumb internal fit-out of the offices (not by Morphosis).

To my surprise, it is the reverse proposition that underlies Rafael Moneo's cathedral up the street (AR March 2003). A year earlier, its barn-like exterior had failed to entice me in and I tend to find his work uninspiring. How foolish; as soon as I did enter and was enticed past, or across, or below the various manifestations within, I realised that he really understands the theatre of cathedrals – an almost forgotten art. Through the slightly schmaltzy porch, and up towards a giant panel, the light decreases, the golden panel amazes and close to it you take a sharp turn to the right and into the big barn. Onyx layers take the place of the traditional stained glass, the floor slopes this way and that, more onyx swathes serve to delight and play deceptive optical tricks with the wall banners since they are (almost) the colour of the walls. Beyond all this, a series of side-chapels rise up into troughs of tailored light. The ghost of Sigurd Lewerentz there somewhere? Strange that Moneo has a preoccupation with twentieth-century Scandinavia, which also crops up in the Madrid railway station. But there are even stronger ghosts of the Gothic language of revealed and encased natural light.

The crypt is an embarrassment, and I hear that the architects were leaned upon by the donor-conscious clergy, though once outside and still within the courtyard walls, you are reminded by the sunshine, and the calm and totally assumed faith of Spanish Catholicism, that this is still a Mexicano city. Across the street to check out Frank Gehry enjoying himself with the Disney Concert Hall (AR March 2004), where you can almost hear him and Esa-Pekka Salonen (the Philharmonic's conductor) chuckling over the result as they record Frank's voice as part of a Salonen composition.

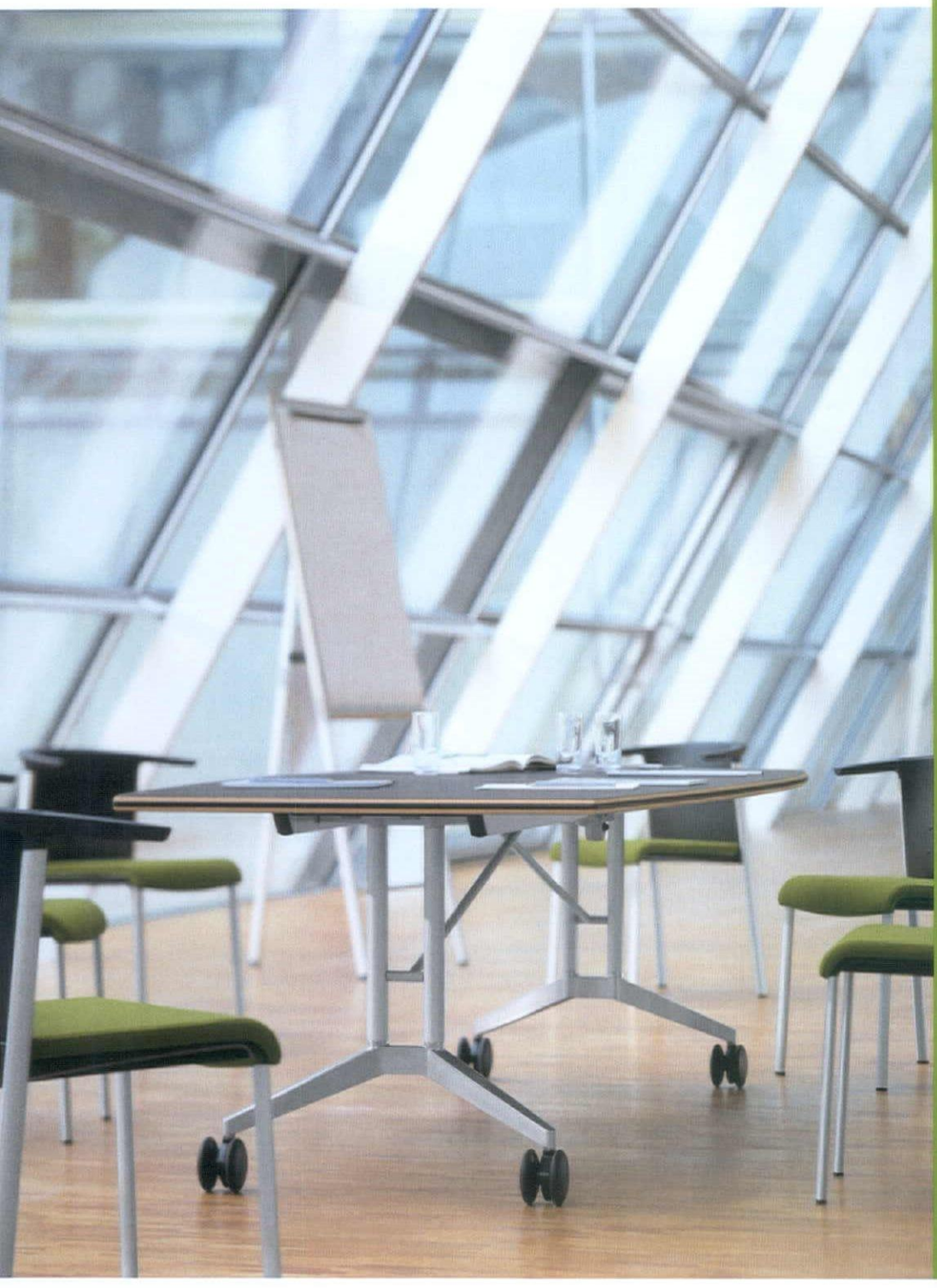
Not that things were always a giggle: the apparent light-heartedness was bought over many years of to-ing and fro-ing with the funding and clients. In the end, though, its carcass is clearly more exquisitely poised and finished than Bilbao, and the theatrics are as cleverly programmed as those across the street. The foyers begin relatively ordinarily (by Gehry's standards), but as you meander upwards the spaces, the related solids and the revealed lanterns become more and more seductive. All that before the hall itself, which has some of the spirit of the Berlin Philharmonie even as it stretches itself against the shoe-box formula while peeking out at the sky.

So it dawns upon you that this city of dreams can be worked upon by master architects through a process of moving you through enticement, revelation, decoy, story-line. An architecture that parallels the wily ways of master film-makers.

But it also reminds me not to rely on lazy prejudices: Los Angeles is no longer just charming ticky-tacky but becoming now a serious city; serious architects whose mannerisms are not yours can, on form, remind you why others bother with them; and all those chirpy transport officials, overtly surprised and pleased to be in a quality building, are merely getting a little bit of the payoff that architecture was supposed to be about: namely, delight.

Wilkhahn

Confair. (Design: wiege, Fritz Frenkler, Justus Kolberg, folding table Andreas Störiko)



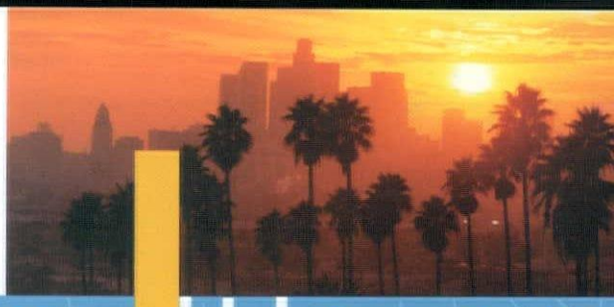
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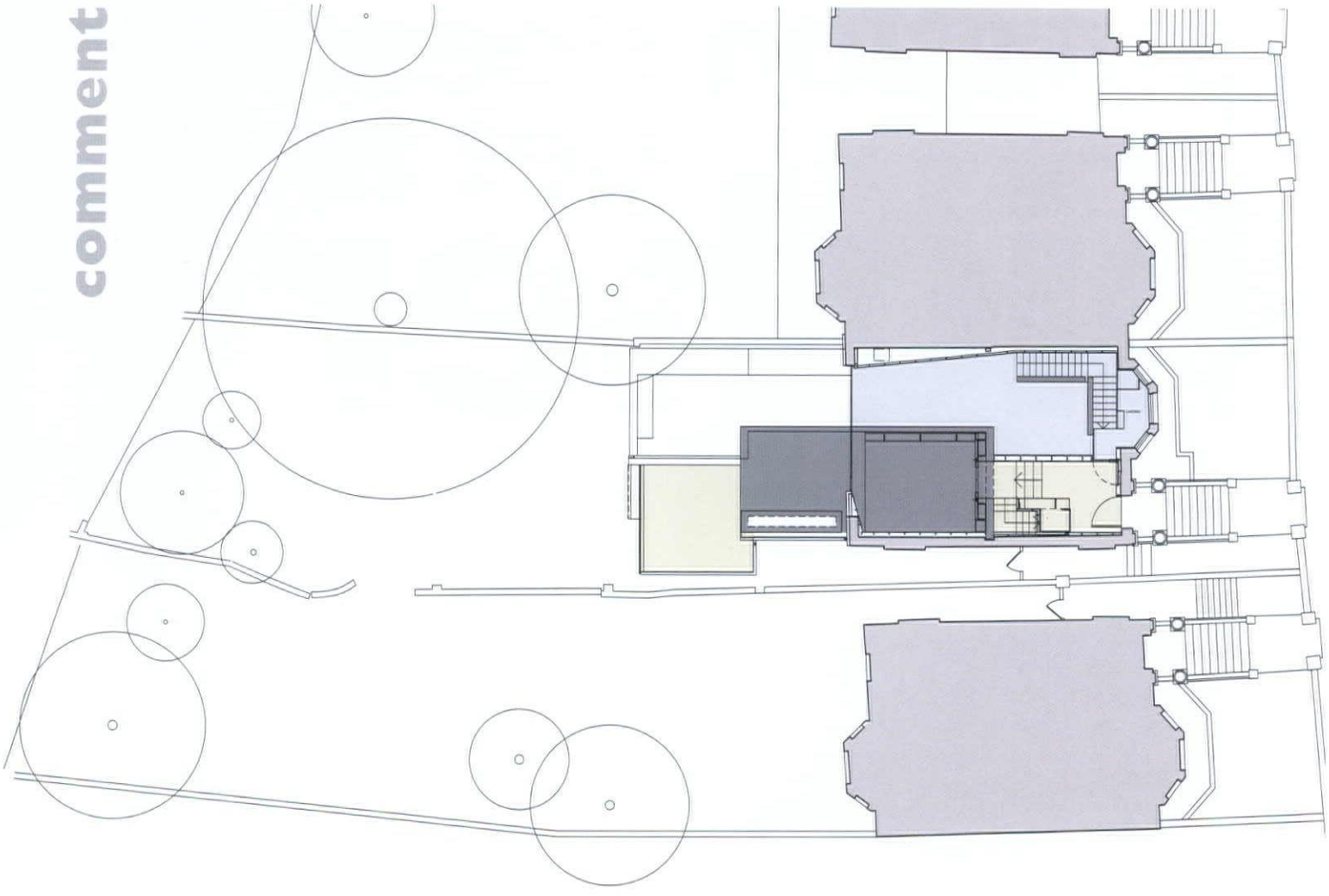
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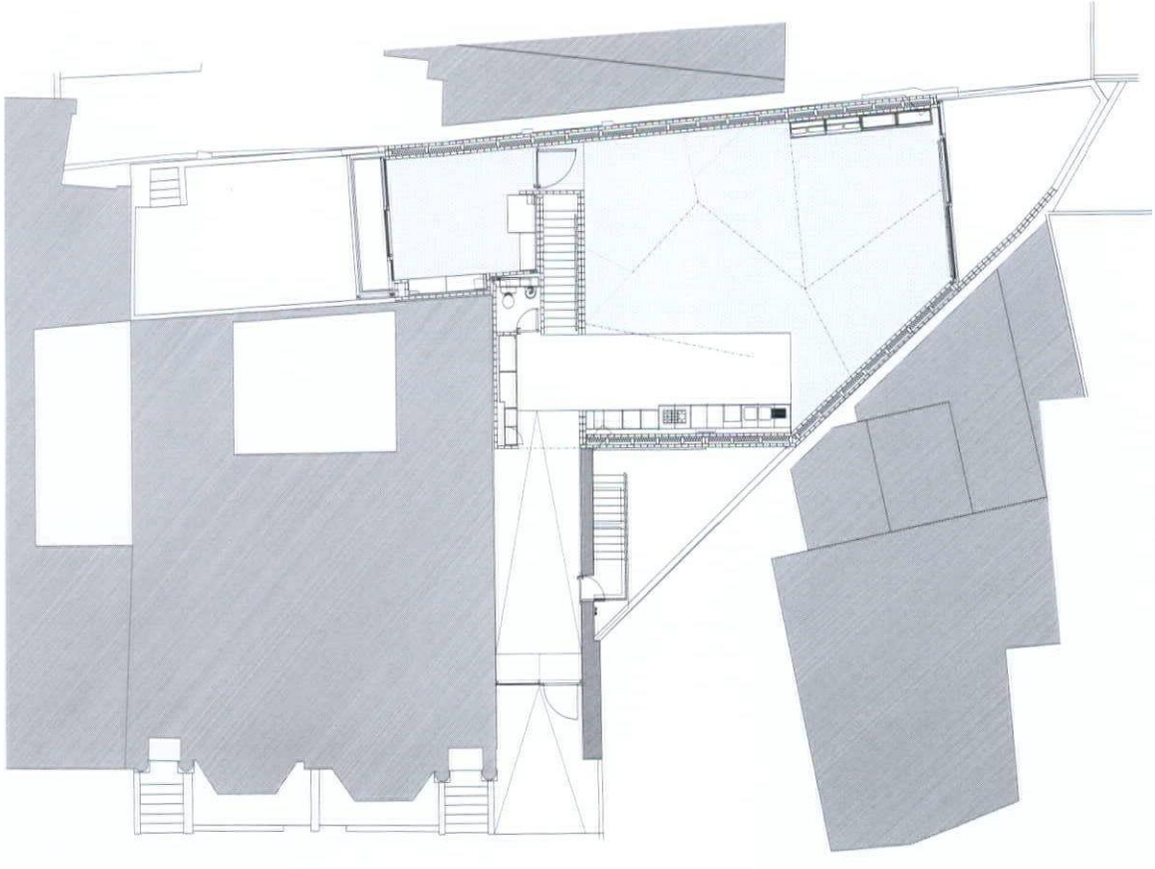
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Capital conditions: as these three London homes demonstrate, it is possible to find a place to dwell in the city, with Prewett Bizley's 99sqm end of terrace in Newington Green (right); Jamie Fobert's 294sqm reconfiguration of a semi-detached Victorian villa in Primrose Hill (top); and Caruso St John's almost invisible 390sqm Brick House, shoe-horned into a tight site in Notting Hill (above); all illustrated at 1:250.

How do we find a place in which to dwell? In dense cities what options are available, apart from terrace, villa, or the ubiquitous (not-so) luxury apartment? As the market continues to frustrate, discerning residents are increasingly looking elsewhere, no longer willing to accept what is on offer from youthful, enthusiastic, commission paid estate agents; those who enjoy well proportioned suits, contemporary ties, and recently refurbished minds.

In cities like London there are many poorly converted houses from which to choose: those that are either inadequate for family life – with little space to swing a child – or those that have been greedily carved up into contorted and unsatisfactory flats, with acoustically adjoined neighbours. There are also plenty of overpriced, so-called executive apartments, complete with micro balconies, fan-assisted bathrooms and extortionate mis-management fees. Such dissatisfaction should of course come as little surprise, with a tiny proportion of our homes being architect designed. What is surprising, however, is that people continue to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on fundamentally flawed products. Unlike any other commodity, time and time again poorly designed, inadequate and unsustainable developments are sell outs; simultaneously making huge profits for developers and a huge mess of our cities.

Yet when it comes to the issue of domestic bliss, architects can help people to realise their dreams in more ways than is immediately obvious. Furthermore, compared with the mark-up prices charged by volume house builders, an architect's services are also relatively cheap, while bringing a more significant added value to long-term property investments. Long before the house-warming party, before proud owners embark on their new spatially lubricated lifestyles – even, on occasions, before a site is found – architects can bring vision and promise to impossible sites and hostile urban situations.

In recent years Japan has led the private market of commissioned one-off city-centre houses. As illustrated in Small in Japan (AR Sept 2005), there are many fine examples where the architect and client's vision have proved extremely effective in optimising site, type and technique. In this issue Atelier Tekuto's razor sharp slim house (p56), is another exciting response to Tokyo's unique morphology. Other countries too are beginning to raise their game, through the lateral thinking of architects who seek to challenge convention with strategies that either conform or challenge local planning restrictions; exemplified in this issue by Titus Bernhard's gabion house in Germany (p58), and Fearon Hay Architects' curious agro-industrial living shed in New Zealand (p62), both of which interpret planning codes in their own ways (albeit in non-urban contexts). We begin, however, with a trilogy of projects based in London; a city not widely known for its contribution to the evolution of the private home.

Challenging types: responding to patterns of urban life

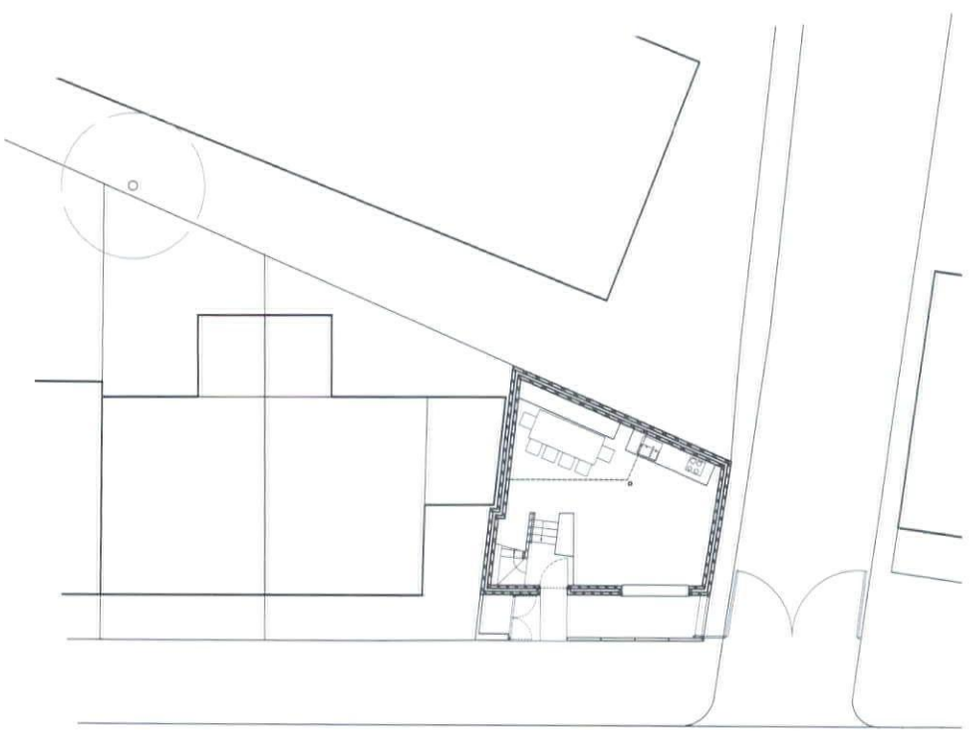
Unlike Tokyo or LA, London is more widely recognised for its contribution to collective forms of housing; the terraces and squares of Nash, and more recently through the modern movements of Lubetkin, Lasdun, Neave Brown, and Powell and Moya. There are, of course, a number of exemplary private homes, past and present, such as those by Michael Hopkins (AR Dec 1977) and John Winter (AR Sept 1981). However, in this issue, an attempt has been made to consider less conspicuous examples; examples that are arguably more realistic, attainable and applicable to generic urban conditions.

The projects selected represent a reasonable range of cost and scale, with Graham Bizley's modest 99sqm end of terrace (below and p50), Jamie Fobert's 294sqm refurbishment in Primrose Hill (top left and p46), and Caruso St John's exquisite 380sqm four bedroom Brick House (bottom left and p38). Distinct in form, all three address a consistent set of concerns, seeking radical alternatives to the options available on the market, with Graham Bizley refusing to take his first step on the property ladder by purchasing a low grade pokey flat (choosing instead to build his own house at an equivalent cost), and both Fobert and Caruso St John's clients seeking a new scale of domestic space, that is neither open plan nor conventionally cellular. All three also consider the changing nature of the city, demonstrating how to optimise space, light and views, on apparently unworkable sites or within forlorn existing properties.

Whether refurbishing or building from new, it is possible to make a place in which to dwell, and as this representative array of new homes shows, it is not a case of keeping up with the Joneses. Instead, in each case, these new homes show the Joneses, the Chans and the Schmidts how it should be done; how to eke out a place in the city where tailor-made, bespoke homes can be created; and how to beat the market by not having to conform to overpriced, tasteless, rip-off-and-run speculative developments. ROB GREGORY

Making a place to dwell

Finding a place within the city: how architects are reconfiguring the urban home.



To make an extraordinary material special, is banal. To heighten one's awareness of a humble material like brick, is poetic.
Adam Caruso, *Sigurd Lewerentz and a Material Basis of Form*, 1997

The clients for this house, who continue to live between London and New York, had become increasingly frustrated by the limitations of their five-bedroom Victorian home in Notting Hill. Unlike their 500 square metre loft in New York's grit-chic Soho, their cellular multi-storey London terrace was not conducive to the communal family life that they wanted to perpetuate. For Caruso St John, therefore, the brief was clear; the family wanted a spacious London home, preferably with all the living spaces on one floor, where, quite literally, they could not avoid one another. With two children who were rapidly growing up, and the inherent complications of living on both sides of the Atlantic, it was important that when this family came together in one place they could occupy a space that would focus and encourage interaction.

As an equivalent to their New York neighbourhood, the Westbourne Grove area of Notting Hill was a given, providing a familiar and lively 24/7 location, with a wide variety of residential streets in which to retreat. The nature of the site, however, was less defined, and a number of locations were considered over an 18-month period, including a loft-like space in a commercial building, coolly situated above an ice-rink. Eventually, however, this curious, but not uncommon, residual end-of-terrace plot was found. With an existing consent the potential of the site was secure in terms of planning; however, it was not as cheap as it would have been if the existing mechanic's workshop was the only consented use. Nevertheless, the client approved the acquisition of the site and Caruso St John set about reimagining the contorted and overlooked plot with an alternative strategy to the domestic courtyard scheme that had been given planning permission.

While the courtyard type presented a fascinating planning format that Caruso St John may well have enjoyed working with, the site was considered too small for a centralised courtyard scheme. As Caruso recalls, the balance between the size of the courtyard and the depth of the plan soon became problematic, leading almost inevitably to the strategic decision to pull the accommodation into the heart of the site and to provide minor courts in the three residual corners of the triangular plot. Despite not having an established type with which to work, this proposition proved equally stimulating as a design exercise giving Caruso St John the opportunity to extend a number of their own preoccupations; here, focusing on the broad nature and variety of domestic spaces by extending what Caruso calls their understanding of a material basis for form, most explicitly revealed through their admiration for, and interpretation of, the work of Lewerentz.

While the figure ground of this home was inverted to place voids at the periphery and a solid at the centre, the internal spaces remained focused on a single centralised volume; the space for unavoidable interaction. Through the resolution of scale, form and geometry, this space has given the home a unique identity, and a curiously eccentric sense of centredness, flanked to the south by a separate study and underpinned by the cellular spaces below.



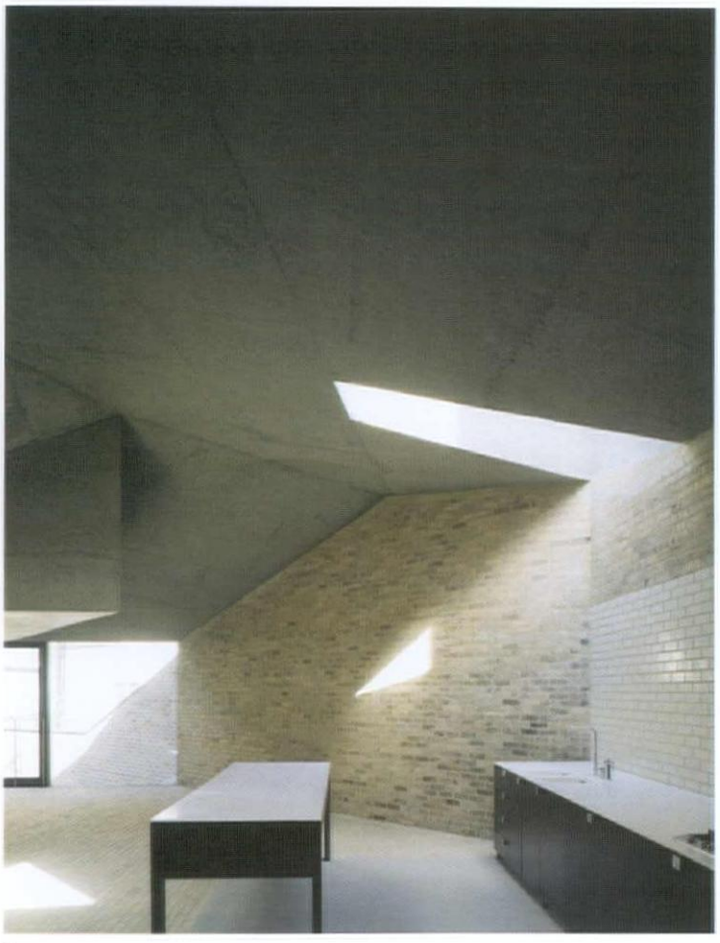
MODERN ROMANCE

Hidden love: beyond an anonymous Victorian arched carriageway, Caruso St John bring New-Romanticism to the heart of Notting Hill.

HOUSE, NOTTING HILL,
LONDON, UK
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CARUSO ST JOHN ARCHITECTS



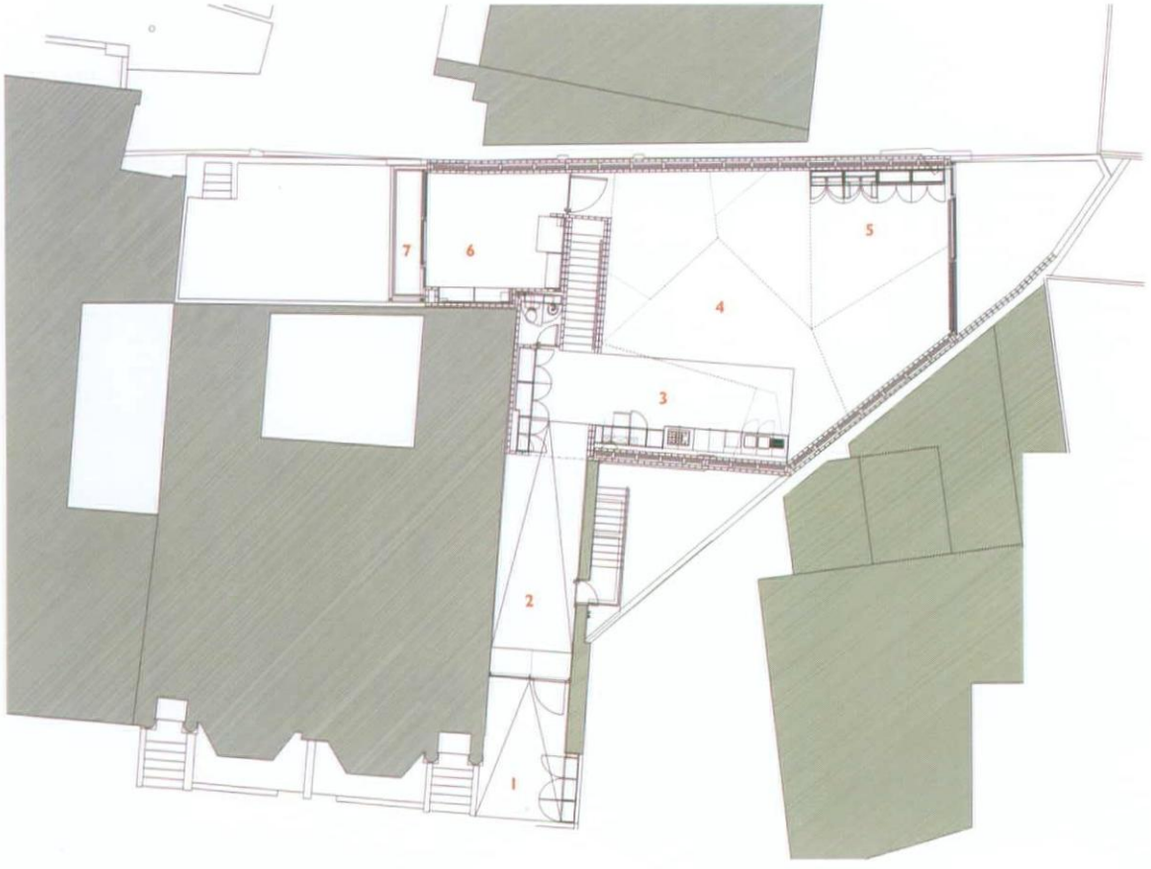
1
Entered through an existing carriageway ...
2
... the Brick House focuses on this extensive living room likened by one recent visitor to an Italian *cortile*.



3

Consistent with their emerging oeuvre, this space is unique. Formally and spatially it is an unbalanced composition, set within an envelope that has no elevations and a plan that does not rely on spatial sequences from any particular domestic type. Somewhat surprisingly, for a practice that actively seeks to place their work within a historic continuum, this house is almost entirely without precedent, and while the notion of active form-finding is something that Caruso St John would no doubt be uncomfortable with, this is without dispute a sculpted building and a compelling object (albeit buried deep within the fabric of an as found urban condition). In form, it certainly is not, despite its loosely adopted description, a derivative of a dome. So, when you re-read Caruso's 1998 essay, 'The Tyranny of the New' , in which he stated that '... it is doubtful whether completely new forms can exist ...', how then have Caruso St John allowed themselves to be so creative; dare we say, inventive? Having actively avoided formal novelty and unnecessary reinvention, it is not unreasonable to ask what logic or justification has informed the manipulation of this principal space.

On first impressions, the faceted concrete shell could be seen by some to come dangerously close to a strain of determined formalism from which the practice would instinctively recoil, as they characteristically retreat from any mode of architectural classification. Fortunately, however, as you would hope and expect from one of the UK's most thought-provoking practices, the architects do have a strong theoretical basis for this building, reassuringly based on solid and well ordered principles of construction, cost and buildability, rather than vague and poorly communicated notions of phenomenology. The success of this space is consistent with the architects' strongly held belief that the art of building has nothing at all to do with virtuosity, but everything to do with the all-pervasive, existential character of the whole.

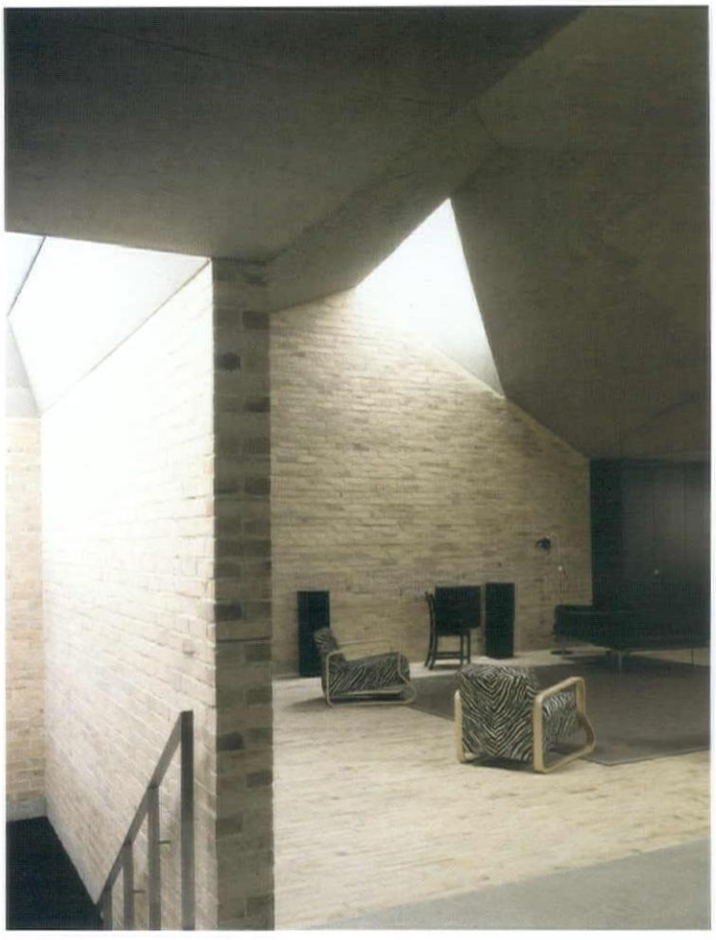


1 entrance
2 ramp
3 kitchen
4 living room
5 dining room
6 study
7 balcony
8 hall
9 master bedroom
10 master bathroom
11 bedrooms
12 utility
13 plant
14 courtyards

 upper ground entrance level plan

Since their rise to prominence with the Walsall Art Gallery (AR May 2000), Caruso St John have been at the forefront of a generation of contemporary British architects whose work thrives on the notion of specificity; principally through the exploitation and amplification of as found conditions, be they found typologies, found localities, found material finishes, or more recently, the reapplication of found ornamentation. The formal justification of this structure, therefore, within the context of this site and the inherent nature of these chosen materials, sets their work above the criticisms that could easily be pinned on architects with less robust philosophies; those whose work is wilful, self-referential, and largely irrelevant to any form of progressive and connected discourse. In opposition to the false promise of networks and simultaneous virtual realities, Caruso has stated that 'a more radical formal strategy is one that considers and represents the existing and the known', rather than one that operates in a void-like tabula rasa, or worse still, cyber-space. In this instance, therefore, when considering the derivation of this form, we should consider the existing to be the site, and the known to be the chosen technology of construction.

Caruso St John's starting point on this site was an unapologetic homage to Lewerentz's seminal Church of St Peter, in Klippan. Complete with tapering brick barrel vaults, brick walls, and brick niches, they sought to reapply the tectonic eloquence that had made the material assembly and formal intensity of Lewerentz's characterful spaces virtually inseparable. Unfortunately, however, on this site and within the agreed budget, this strategy could not be pursued; the brick vaults were not only prohibitively expensive, but also proved too difficult to resolve formally against the junction with a dining area that was to be lower and more intimate. Within the geometric constraints of this site, a more malleable roof form was required; so, instead of



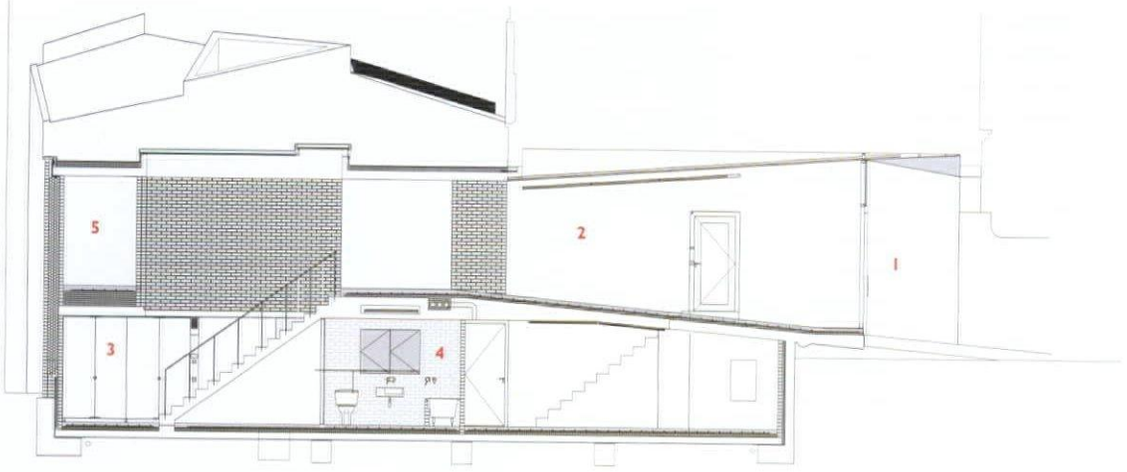
4



lower ground level plan

3
In the principal living space, load-bearing brick walls, a glazed brick splash-back, and a brick slip floor combine with resonant coherence ...
4
... while throughout the house concrete is expressed in one of three ways; flat surfaces being left as struck, sloping soffits bush hammered, and vertical reveals and stair risers ground smooth; each revealing unique qualities as the aggregate is exposed in different ways.

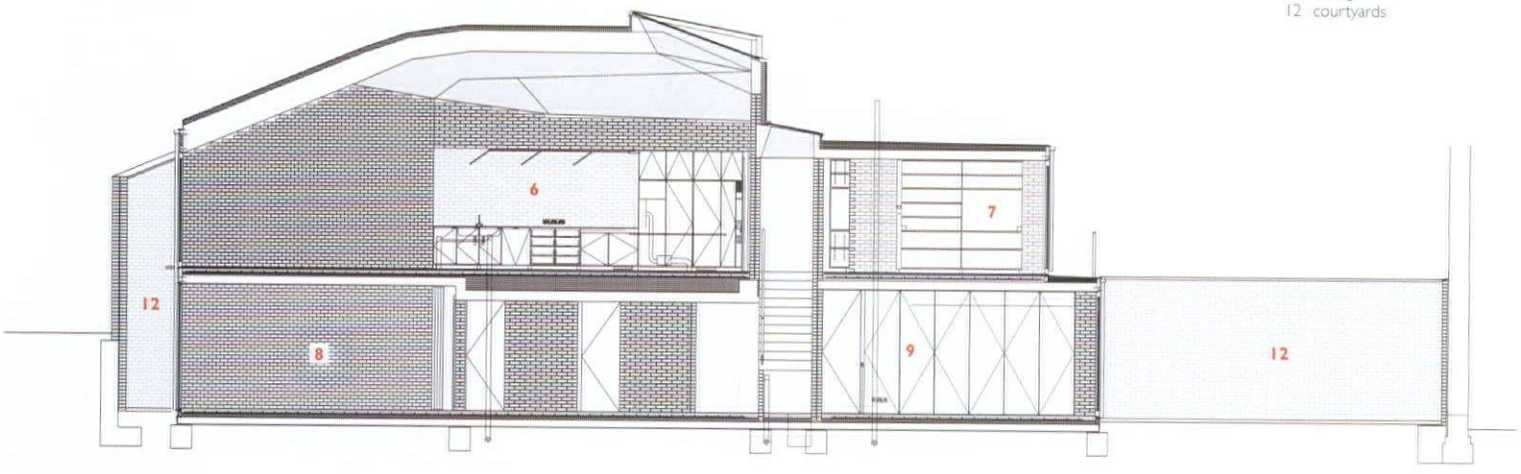
HOUSE, NOTTING HILL, LONDON, UK
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CARUSO ST JOHN ARCHITECTS



5
The dining area sits beneath the concrete depression; a formal gesture that is expressed externally, to lock the distinctive roofscape into its immediate context.
6
Fire-clay bricks (more commonly used in the London Underground) were used internally; subtly lighter in tone than the over-burnt stock bricks used externally.
7
The southerly courtyard, viewed from within the master bedroom.

section looking north

1 entrance
2 ramp
3 hall
4 master bathroom
5 route to study
6 kitchen
7 study
8 bedroom
9 master bedroom
10 living room
11 dining room
12 courtyards

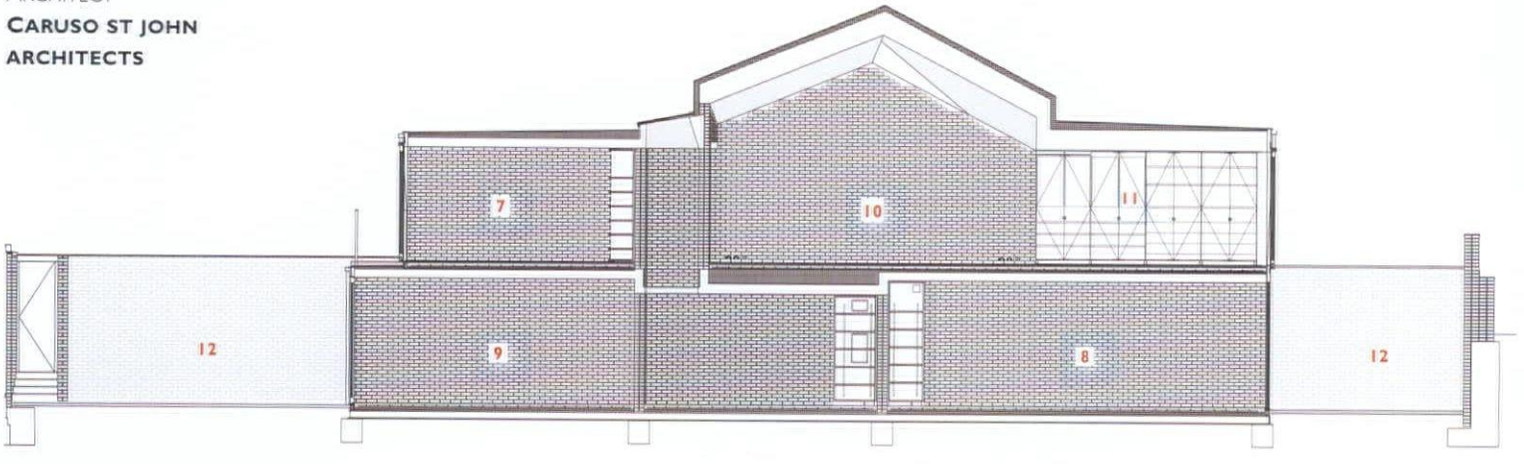


section looking east

House, Notting Hill, London, UK

Architect

Caruso St John Architects



section looking west



5



6



7

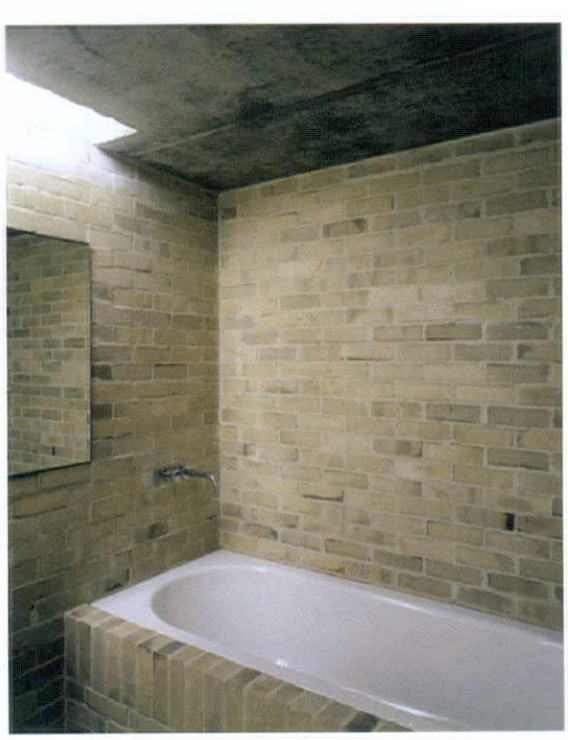
stubbornly forcing the vaulted forms to fit, the depression above the dining area became the starting point for their new strategy, and by extending a series of similar irregular facets the dome-like soffit was re-formed. This decision simplified the integration of rooflights, which would have been problematic to accommodate within the vaults, by simply extending and articulating the structural folds in three places. It also rationalised the material order of the house as a whole, by distinguishing between the use of concrete in the horizontal and load-bearing brick in the vertical. This, together with the elimination of the brick niches, gave the space a more resonant coherence, where structure, material and light combine effortlessly within a single unified volume. Of course, the process was far from effortless.

The pursuit of simplicity is a complicated process, and as such you sense that Caruso St John's promotion of the humble brick was fraught with philosophical conundrums. In every corner the details have been heavily governed, so much so, that to use a mixed metaphor, a critical eye can almost hear the details groan as the interrogation continues; If Lewerentz never cut a brick, how can that raking detail between the wall and the concrete roof be rightly resolved? As an expression of truth to form, are brick slips permissible on a floor that needs to optimise underfloor heating? And, when is a load-bearing wall not a load-bearing wall, when revealed to be only one brick thick by a door that is ajar? But surely, to re-address these questions would be a waste of energy; as with any onlooker considering the dynamics of an intense love affair, even if it is with a brick, why add to the angst?

Considering the hours that are likely to have been spent agonising over each and every junction, it is time to enjoy the fruits of their labour. And, if poetry is what we are seeking, our reading of the spaces should be as sensitively considered as the manner in which they have been composed. Is this building perfect? Almost, perhaps. But then, as the relatively young Caruso noted in 1997, 'I have been to a very small number of buildings that are almost perfect ... the perfect buildings that I have seen are the work of old men'. For us then, a prolonged debate could become an inconclusive and subjective process; a mixture of theoretical interpretation and intuitive reaction. For the client, however, the reality of this home, and whether it is near perfect or not, is a matter of shaping a new way of life; building, dwelling and thinking combined. Through the creation of this home it is clear that the family have already begun to tune in to their architects' romantic turn of phrase. They are already enjoying the detail of the brick-modular socket plates, the branching conduit lighting, and the switch plates integrated in the door frames; a pleasure that will no doubt grow as they inhabit the spaces; as they learn not to scratch their legs as they climb into the brick encased bath tub; and, as they let music fill the space, lie on the warm brick-slip floor and try to pinpoint the virtually invisible ionisation smoke detectors set within the constellations of their new concrete sky. ROB GREGORY

Architect
Caruso St John Archtects, London
Adam Caruso, Peter St John,
Rod Heyes (project architect),
Lorenzo de Chiffre, James Payne, Tim Collett
Structural engineer
Price & Myers, London
Photographs
Ioana Marinescu, 1, 4, 5, 10, 11
Hélène Binet, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9

8
Perhaps the most monastic space? The brick-encased bathtub.
9, 10, 11
Throughout the house, detail is controlled and quietly well mannered; with load-bearing brick walls expressed with two-brick reveals; planted-on door frames with integrated control switches; and stained spruce joinery throughout. The branching conduit light fittings were derived from Lewerentz's flower kiosk at the Malmö cemetery.



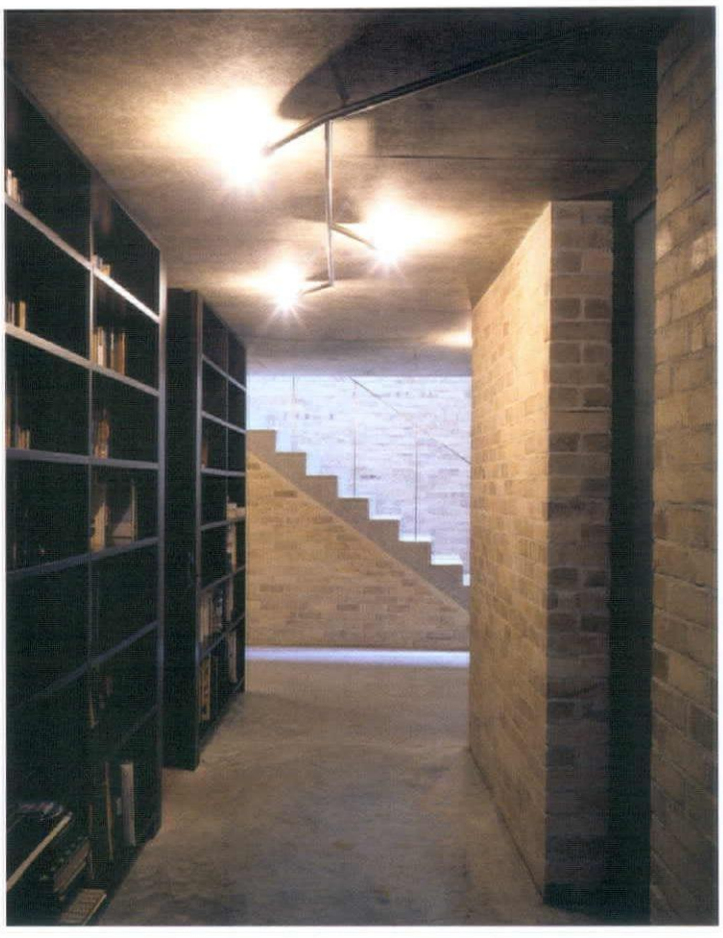
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9



10



11

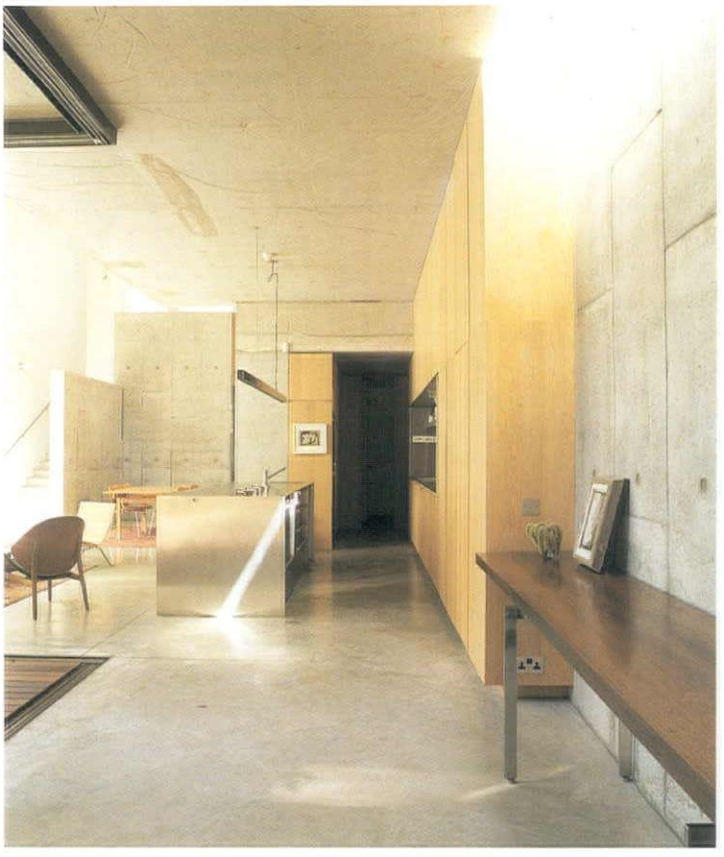


INNER REALM

With a combined interest in the sculptural use of concrete and the process of making domestic rooms, Jamie Fobert creates a new family home within the shell of a not so humble Victorian terrace.

Jamie Fobert is known to most for his award-winning Anderson House, set deep within a central London Edwardian block (AR April 2004). With no elevations, and conforming to no particular domestic type, comparisons could easily be made between that house and Caruso St John's Brick House (p38). There are also formal and material similarities with this, his latest domestic project in London. Fobert, however, prefers to sever unnecessary and casual associations, choosing instead to begin by discussing his client and his site; the two practical fixes that make projects of this sort specific and rooted.

When Fobert met the client, the site had already been found; a decrepit four-storey semi-detached Victorian villa. The clients had, however, had less success finding an architect, despite having considered a number of Fobert's distinguished contemporaries. As a successful artist partnership, they were a discerning pair, looking for more than reputation and style. Despite having seen his robust concrete installations for Aveda they were initially unsure about the use of in-situ concrete in a domestic setting. However, following a visit to the Anderson House they were more open to his distinctive aesthetic. Fobert's successful appointment may also have been due to his ability to quickly address the practical and aspirational problems of the brief; those concerning the structural movement of the existing fabric, and the social movement of the client's dynamic young family.



Despite formal preoccupations, inspired by the work Chillida and Morandi (AR May 2005), Fobert recognises that architects can only bring so much to a project. With a refreshing openness when describing his design rationale, he adopts what he calls a roll-with-it attitude that makes the most of how things actually are; how the condition of an existing structure may focus his attention on site,

1
The living room is defined by a new concrete insertion, and an oblique plaster wall; angled to conceal a new concrete pier the plaster wall also frames the garden view and incorporates a low-level fireplace.
2
In the inner court, glazed screens slide away from the re-entrant corner. Purpose built joinery features throughout, made from engineered oak panels manufactured by Stia.



long section



short section

and how a fabrication process may be exploited to bring out inherent material characteristics. He is the first to admit, therefore, that the latent potential of his architectural approach can only be fully realised in response to specifics of site and brief. Form is as much a means to an end, as an end in itself, and in consideration of this site and this family Fobert set about generating a distinctive and specifically shaped concrete figure; a compelling object in its own right, that would reinforce and support the decrepit structure; open up and connect upper and lower ground floors – to creating the desired scale of spaces; and reorder the spatial sequencing – to break up the traditional arrangement of front room, back room and rear extension.

The figure is described by Fobert as a concrete table, that slides into the existing structure. It contains a snug on entrance level, and envelops the principal living space below, extending beyond the line of the existing lower ground floor. Articulated with the lustre and creases of the Anderson House, the concrete figure extends and folds in a manner reminiscent of his earlier free-standing installations. It is, however, much more than a pure object of contemplation; structurally the concrete is used to tie the perimeter walls together, and spatially it creates a strong longitudinal emphasis to connect house and garden.

The spatial ordering of the house was a key consideration, based on the client's frustration with the format of London's traditional domestic types. While cellular spaces were permissible on the upper levels, with traditionally scaled bedrooms and bathrooms arranged around an exquisite and highly efficient winding stair, the living spaces needed to respond to the clients' desire for expansive space; serving as the focus for family life, where the children's homework and music practice could co-exist with cooking and entertaining.

Throughout, circulation responds to the distinct duality in scale, with the upper-ground level lobby serving two purposes. For guests, it is the main point of arrival, with an axial view to the garden via the snug, while for the family (who generally enter at the lower level), it forms part of their daily route; not as a threshold to the outside world, but between two stairs and two domestic realms; a place of linkage and transition between living rooms below and private rooms above. Illuminated by a crowning rooflight, the principal stair is also latent with sculptural intention, demonstrating Fobert's reading of Cubist composition. With a staggered arrangement of screen walls, concealed and revealed views play with movement and abstract composition, adding a further twist to this delightful family home. ROB GREGORY

Architect
Jamie Fobert Architects, London
Jamie Fobert, Kevin Allsop, Liza Thomson Farrell, Michael Gollings, Pierre Maré, Hoi Chi Ng, Emily Roberts, Tessa Schaap
Photographs
Sue Barr



6

4
The tightly winding stair responds to the more intimate scale of private rooms ...
5
... while the upper level lobby is broader, providing an axial view via the snug to connect house with garden.
6
The second floor bathroom incorporates 600 x 50mm Dutch wall tiles.
7
The lower ground garden room has a window seat set level with the lawn beyond.
8
Externally a concrete pier divides the inner and outer courts.

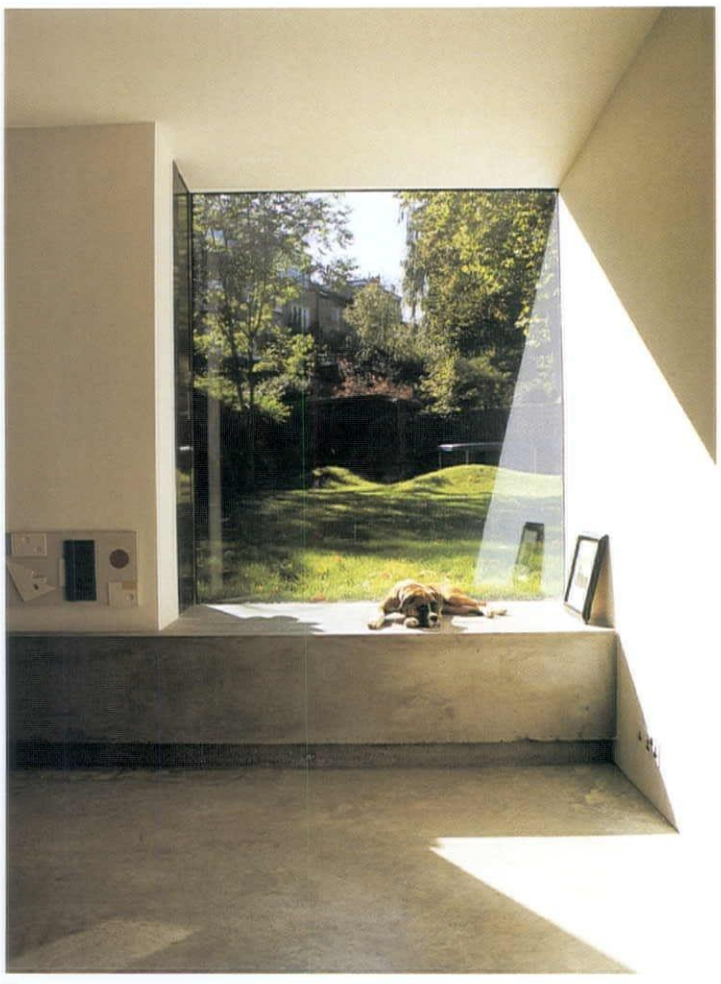


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5

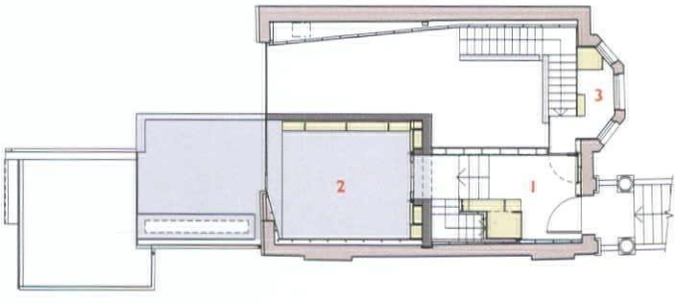
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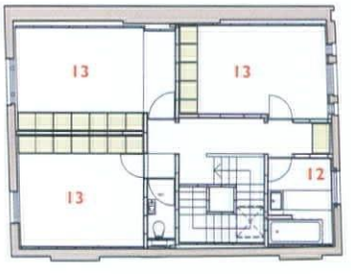
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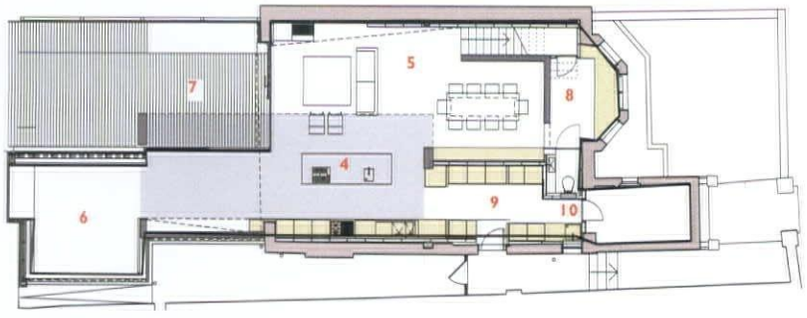
upper ground floor plan (entrance level)

1 upper entrance lobby
2 snug
3 landing
4 kitchen
5 living room
6 garden room
7 inner court
8 study
9 lower entrance lobby
10 utility room/store
11 master bedroom
12 bathroom
13 bedroom

colour code:
Mid grey – existing walls
light & dark grey – concrete table
green – joinery



second floor plan



lower ground floor plan (entrance level)



first floor plan

1
The Bizley house makes a significant contribution to the streetscape ...
2
... while creating its own unique and surprisingly spacious internal environment.
3
The douglas fir and birch faced ply stair, hand built by the architects ...
4
... leading to the live/work studio on the second floor, with its panoramic deep set window.
5
Storage helps spaces function efficiently, such as the large unit at the base of the stair.

PLOTTING A FUTURE

Prewett Bizley's house serves as a useful bookend, not only to this north London terrace, but also as the third example in our study of capital conditions.

As Prewett Bizley's first built work, this distinctive end-of-terrace has been made very much their own, providing a home for founding partner Graham Bizley, and a base for the fledgling practice co-founded with Robert Prewett. The site was found after three years of failed searches, bids, and planning inquiries. Weary of the process, but with considerable experience, instinct took over when Bizley saw the site. Minutes after raising a hand at auction, and despite having had no contact with the local planning authority, he had become the proud owner of 60sqm of London real estate. A perfect site for a young architect – an overgrown and apparently hopeless tapering plot, with many practical limitations.

For Bizley, inherent constraints were welcome, and very much the making of the project. Despite his understandable enthusiasm to make a mark (initially pursuing Cor-Ten and concrete options), an understanding and interpretation of planning codes, and a close working relationship with his own budget (funded through a personal mortgage) made certain decisions inevitable. The form of the building, in plan and section at least, has been shaped by rights to light obligations; and the absence of any windows to the rear avoids issues of overlooking and fire spread. Many more considered moves were made, such as the internal disposition of spaces, which break with convention; by sandwiching the most private rooms between two principal live/work spaces, and by placing a drying room at the top of a self-ventilating stair tower (supplied with warm air that passes through high level internal windows set above the top-lit dining area). Expressing spaces through the fenestration, the architects also sought to avoid the distracting effect of the intermediate scale, choosing to focus on extremes of large and small gestures by articulating a solid wall with an apparently haphazard arrangement of punched-out windows; with each specifically located and detailed according to the spaces they serve. Externally, other questions were addressed, such as, how the building should address the street, with a practical threshold that avoids alienating gates and screens.

It is, however, the interior that deserves the closest inspection, given the wide variety of spaces produced within a plan that is essentially only one room deep. The plan's effectiveness is achieved through the detailed resolution of the stair; through the integration

HOUSE, NEWINGTON GREEN, LONDON, UK
ARCHITECT
PREWETT BIZLEY

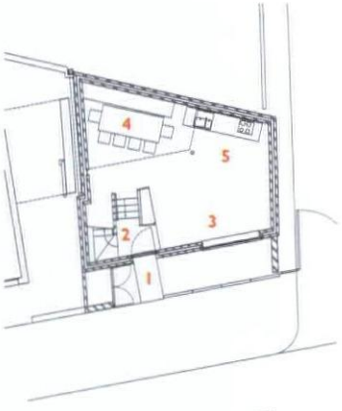
of built-in storage, particularly at the base of the stair where subtle thresholds exist; and through the spatial duality orchestrated by the glazed rear court, which opens the interiors to the sky, and adheres to one of Christopher Alexander's key pattern book directives, by allowing the occupants to observe their own back wall.

Without excessive expression, a skilful level of detailing is seen throughout, from staircase and storage, to window linings – each with integrated blinds. Despite the inevitability of the first moves, this modest 99sqm house is full of ideas. We wait to see how many of these early preoccupations will emerge through the practice's future work. ROB GREGORY

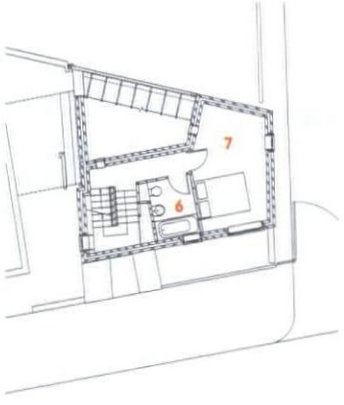
Architect
Prewett Bizley, London
Photographs
Kilian O'Sullivan



2



ground floor plan



first floor plan



second floor plan

1 entrance
2 landing
3 living
4 dining
5 kitchen
6 bathroom
7 bedroom
8 live/work
9 drying room
10 roof terrace



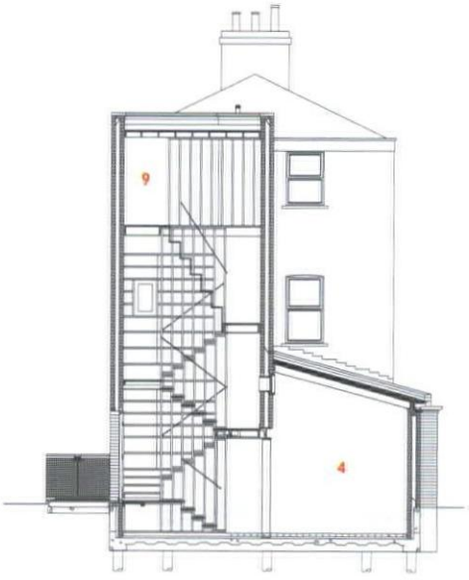
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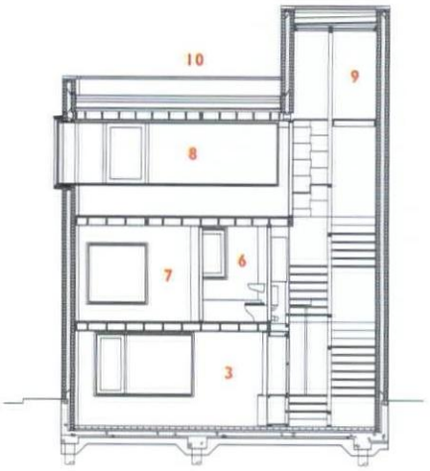
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5



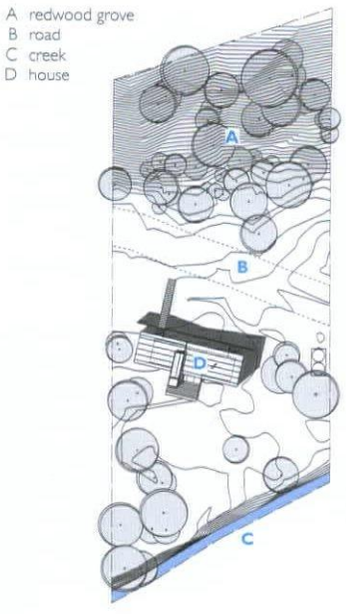
short section



long section

TREADING LIGHTLY

This holiday house in Big Sur is a highly tactful and inventive response to stringent local environmental regulations.



site plan



1

Big Sur, a rocky outcrop on the shore of central California, is a magical place with two distinct personalities. Visitors speed along the winding coast highway, pausing at overlook points to admire the spectacle of towering cliffs, surf-lashed rocks, rolling hills and meadows. Most residents live out of public view in canyons that slash through the hills and provide access to stony beaches. Unplanned bohemian communities flourish amid this wild natural beauty. A Bay Area family bought a plot of land and camped there with their children for decades before commissioning Fougeron Architecture to design a modest, comfortable house that would reunite three generations, while giving each individual their own personal space.

New construction near Big Sur is stringently regulated, and the architect spent nearly four years dealing with ten different agencies before being granted a permit. The look of the house was never an issue for the county or the Coastal Commission, but rather its impact on the environment, and its avoidance of seismic faults and the habitat of protected species. Setbacks and the amount of night-time illumination were precisely specified, and the builders had to drill 500 feet down into bedrock to secure drinking water.

Fougeron immersed herself in the spirit of place, noting the course of the sun, and getting a feeling for the land, before sketching her design. 'I didn't want the house to loom too large or look as though it had flown in from another galaxy,' she explains. 'It needed to reach for the sky because the sun drops below the edge of the canyon in the early afternoon. At night, it's completely dark outside and you can gaze up to the stars through the high windows.'

The house is set back from a dirt road behind a screen of cedar battens, closed at the centre to conceal bathrooms and kitchen, and feathering out to either side. A thin butterfly roof seems to float over a deep clerestory of ribbed channel glass, and is supported at one end by two slender bowed steel columns.

The house is raised nearly a metre off the ground to reduce its impact on the land and protect it from flooding if the nearby creek overflows. The rear facade is much bolder and open to nature. An expansive corner window and a projecting glass bay that serves as

HOUSE, BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA, USA
ARCHITECT
ANNE FOUGERON

2



3



4

1
Screened by a veil of cedar battens, the house is cradled in a deep canyon.
2
Volumes are slightly elevated to protect from flooding.
3
Roof oversails to enclose tall, veranda-like spaces.
4
Detail of cedar screen.

a solarium cut through copper-clad walls.

A grey stuccoed stair tower containing a steel moment frame anchors the house, structurally and visually. A ramp leads to the entry. Bedrooms at either end bracket the communal space, which rises full height to cable-braced fir joists. The transparency and the high ceilings of the living area are accentuated by a snug inglenook with benches flanking a fireplace. Stairs ascend to a slatted mezzanine gallery that contains a library, overlooks the double-height master bedroom, and leads to a room of bunk beds for visiting children. On both levels, spaces are interwoven and interconnected through glazed openings or over a glass balustrade. Mitered corner windows dissolve the structure and open it to the canyon. The steel-framed glass bay opens onto a deck, from which you step down into the wilderness and its abundant wild life, or walk a mile to the beach.

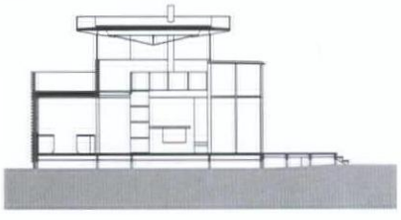
The house is so well composed that it neither competes with nor is overpowered by the canyon. An earth-toned, radiant-heated concrete floor, yellow cedar joinery and anigre panelling warm the interior. The cast glass pixellates the foliage and its channels create a vertical rhythm, almost concealing the delicate steel rods that support the roof. The details are refined without being precious, and there's an intelligent mix of standard and custom components.

It is easy to see the influence of Pierre Chareau's Maison de Verre in Paris and Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses, but Fougeron has brought her own experience and artistry to this elegant retreat. She was born in Paris, but has spent most of her life in the United States, and opened her office in San Francisco in 1986. Best-known for a much grander urban house in Palo Alto, she is currently working on two public libraries, a loft remodelling, and a house-studio.
MICHAEL WEBB

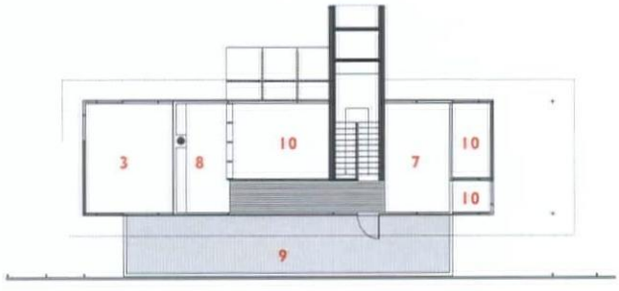
Architect
Fougeron Architecture, San Francisco
Photographs
Richard Barnes

5
Upper level spaces are connected by a walkway.
6
Sitting lightly in nature – the Big Sur life.
7
The focal inglenook.
8
Detail of upper level library and roof structure.

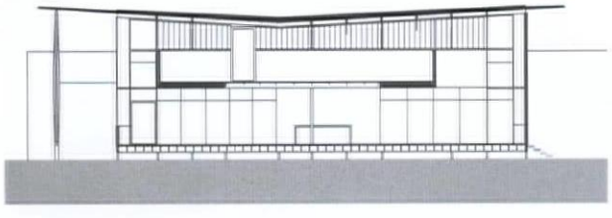
1 entrance
2 car port
3 bedroom
4 bathroom
5 kitchen
6 living/dining
7 sleeping loft
8 library
9 deck
10 void



cross section



first floor



long section



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:200)



5

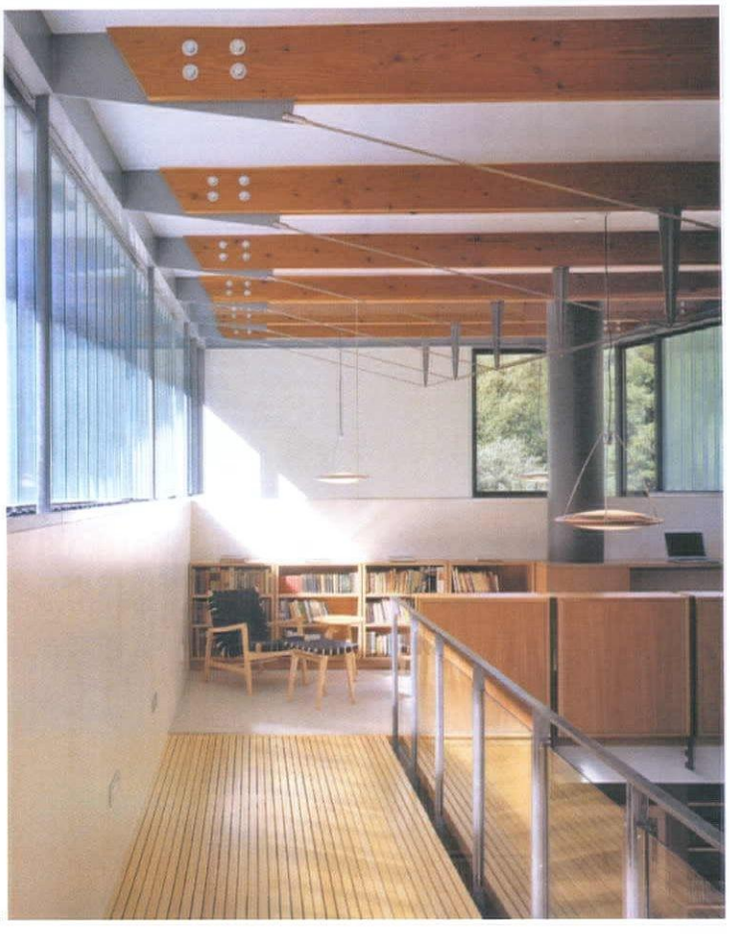
HOUSE, BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA, USA
ARCHITECT
ANNE FOUGERON



6



7



8

HOUSE, TOKYO, JAPAN
ARCHITECT
ATELIER TEKUTO

Even by Japanese domestic standards, as explored in a recent AR special issue (AR September 2005), this house by Atelier Tekuto is an astonishing triumph over conditions that most clients and architects would reasonably regard as unbuildable. Occupying barely the width of a flowerbed, it is a poetic yet practical response to the exigencies of Tokyo's planning and building laws. The clients, a young married couple, managed to acquire an elongated sliver of land (around 59sqm) sandwiched between an existing low rise block of flats and a vacant plot that will eventually host an as yet unbuilt neighbour. On the street frontage the site is 3.2m wide, but tapers down along its length to just under a metre. Compacting an already restricted footprint, local building regulations also required a 0.5m setback from all site boundaries. Most flowerbeds are more generously proportioned.

With projects such as the Cell Brick House which was premiated in the last but one AR Awards for Emerging Architecture cycle (AR December 2004), Yasuhiro Yamashita (principal of Atelier Tekuto) is acquiring a reputation for inventive, urban micro-dwellings. Here, his response is to exploit and translate the super elongated form of the site into a slim, streamlined structure, like an anorexic tent or an aeroplane wing sliced up and set on its end. As the setback proscription did not apply to subterranean volumes, extra space is created by embedding an entire storey underground. The outcome is a tapering double-height volume of living, dining and kitchen, with a bathroom economically tucked into the narrow end. Sleeping quarters are set aloft on an upper deck under the narrow peak of the roof (like a lancet arch) which gently decreases in height along the length of the site. The tapered end of the house is just wide enough to accommodate a back door leading to a pocket size patch of ground with a single tree that could conceivably qualify as Tokyo's smallest garden.

In such a confined setting, lightness is all. Glazing is confined to the street frontage, but light is also admitted through the delicately translucent polycarbonate skin (a modern take on traditional rice paper) that envelops the rest of the house. The upper sleeping floor is fabricated from expanded metal mesh, through which light can percolate, and the interior is predominantly white (white walls, white floors, white stairs, white fittings) to promote the general illusion of spaciousness.

Clearly such an offbeat domestic environment is not to everyone's taste, yet it shows what can be done in the teeth of physical and bureaucratic restrictions and somehow it works. The potentially claustrophobic narrowness of the interior is mitigated by not only its height, but also by the physical and visual lightness of the polycarbonate skin.

Yamashita is fond of giving his house projects lyrical titles and this one rejoices under the soubriquet 'Lucky Drops', alluding to the Japanese version of keeping the best for last. Hence a leftover site, that might be thought the last place for any sort of development, is ingeniously colonised and transformed into the setting for a modern domestic idyll. C. S.

Architect
Atelier Tekuto, Tokyo
Photographs
Makoto Yoshida

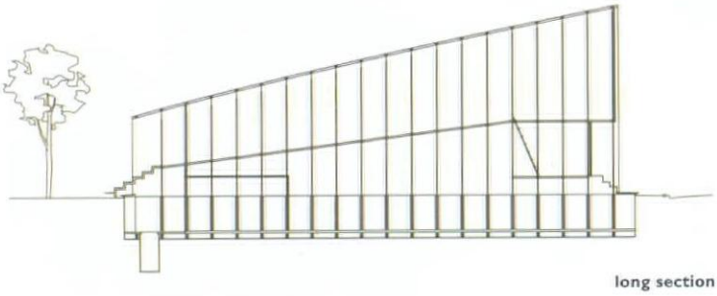


1

ORIENTAL MINIATURE

Barely the width of a flowerbed, this urban micro house is compact even by Japanese standards.

1
The sliver-like house is wrapped in a translucent polycarbonate skin.
2
Street frontage.
3
Ladder to sleeping loft.
4
Long, thin living space.
5
The flowerbed width site.



long section



2

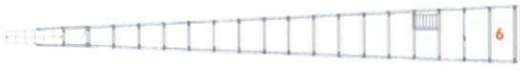


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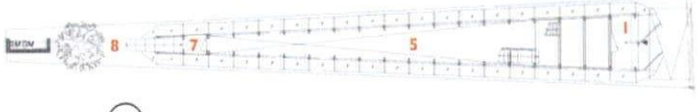


4

1 entrance
2 living
3 kitchen
4 bathroom
5 void
6 sleeping loft
7 back door
8 garden

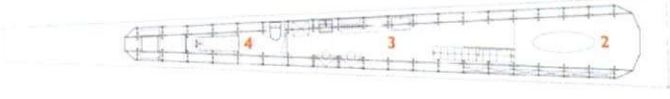


first floor





ground floor



lower ground floor plan (scale approx 1:250)



5



1

CAGED IN?

Inventive house solutions are not restricted to dense urban conditions, as this suburban example demonstrates, making a mockery of local planning codes.

Clearly antagonised by 'banal local design statutes' that were apparently 'incapable of advancing architectural culture', architect Titus Bernhard is proud of the message that this house has brought to the inhabitants of Augsburg in south-east Germany. As part of a mission to challenge convention, this curious gabion house was devised to undermine and exploit the sort of prescriptive rules and regulations that, when ignorantly enforced by the visually illiterate, achieve little more than to perpetuate mediocrity.

Bernhard's client specifically asked him to design a house in this area; however, from his descriptions of its overcrowded and characterless environment, you sense that the architect would probably have preferred to build elsewhere. Nevertheless, after considering the site he saw an opportunity to make a positive statement; an opportunity to make a small contribution to a broader issue by stimulating debate and raising suburban aspirations. With hindsight, however, it is fair to say that both architect and client had completely underestimated the strength of feeling that existed.

The codes specified footprint and silhouette, limiting the house to a 9x9m plot and stipulating a regular pyramidal roof. Bernhard took these as his starting point, building right up to the limit within a square floor plan, and working with the traditional pitched roof form. He sought to make the house unique through its detailed execution and distinctive use of materials; he also distorted the roof with an eccentrically placed peak, yielding to a large tree and providing what he refers to as an 'inhabitable sculpture' for his client. The distinctive gabion rain screen encases the concrete superstructure, and contains local Dolomite stone. With 70 per cent of facade costs met by participating firms, approximately 40 000 stones were used to fill the 365 hand-filled cages; weighing an astonishing 28 tonnes.

While the house may on first impressions appear to be a bit of a one-liner, relying solely on its novel use of hanging gabions, the architect does allude to a number of more subtle gestures.



2

1
The Gabion house: breaking all the rules?
2
From the street the number of windows is minimised ...
3
... while from the garden extensive areas of glazing link house with garden.

HOUSE, AUGSBURG, GERMANY
ARCHITECT
TITUS BERNHARD



In contrast to its rough exterior, the interior spaces are flooded with light, and are crisply detailed, with three habitable floors and a basement compressed within the building's two-storey carcass. Entering into an open plan living/kitchen/dining space, each of the three levels is connected by two offset voids. These, with specifically located windows, allow the changing seasons to animate the internal spaces, resulting in the modest 128sqm house feeling significantly bigger that its form suggests; to neighbouring onlookers, however, the house was far from inconspicuous.

During construction there were many disputes, with approximately 80 per cent of people being against its completion. The nature of the facades, and the stone clad roof were particularly contentious, and the architect and client engaged in extensive disputes with the authorities, drawing the attention of the Mayor.

Eventually, however, opinion did change, following an open day that attracted, literally, coach loads of interested observers as if drawn to a caged freak show. With guided tours by the client and architect, people were invited to acquaint themselves with the house and with this many became more sympathetic to its strong image. Bernhard too seems to have changed his opinion of the neighbouring community.

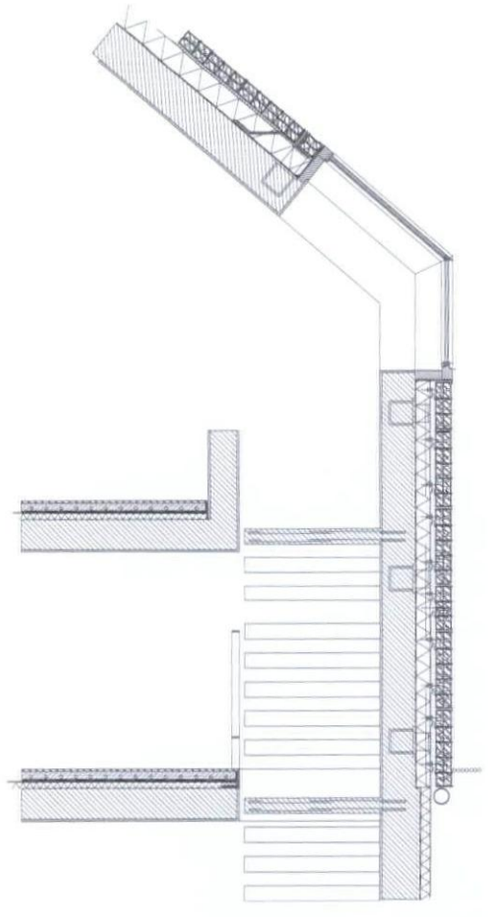
ROB GREGORY

Architect
Titus Bernhard, Augsburg
Photographs
Christian Richters

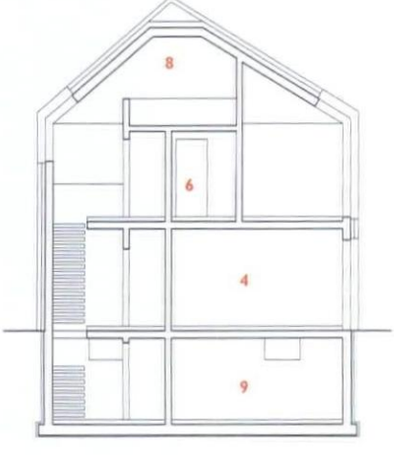
4
Each level is linked by double-height volumes.
5
The stair leads directly from the entrance ...
6
... and extends in section to the roof level above.
7
Cellular spaces also exploit natural light.

HOUSE, AUGSBURG, GERMANY

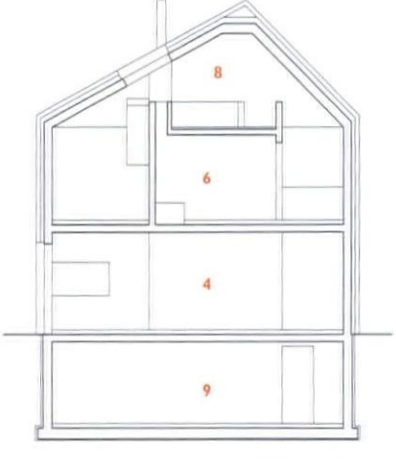
ARCHITECT
TITUS BERNHARD



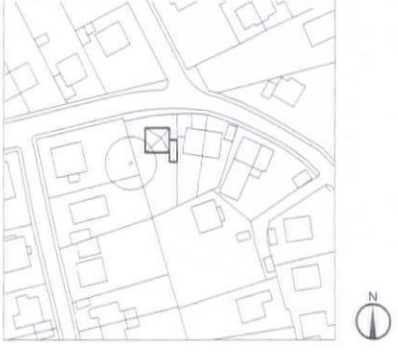
indicative detail



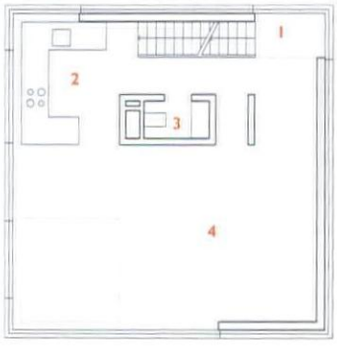
north-south section



east-west section



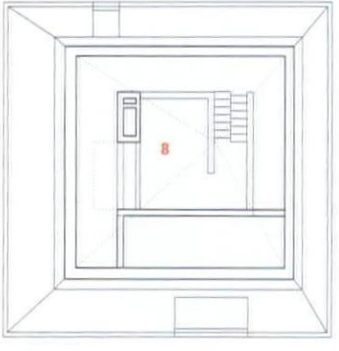
location plan



ground floor plan



first floor plan



attic floor plan

1 entrance
2 kitchen
3 lavatory
4 living
5 gallery
6 bathroom
7 bedroom
8 guest room
9 basement



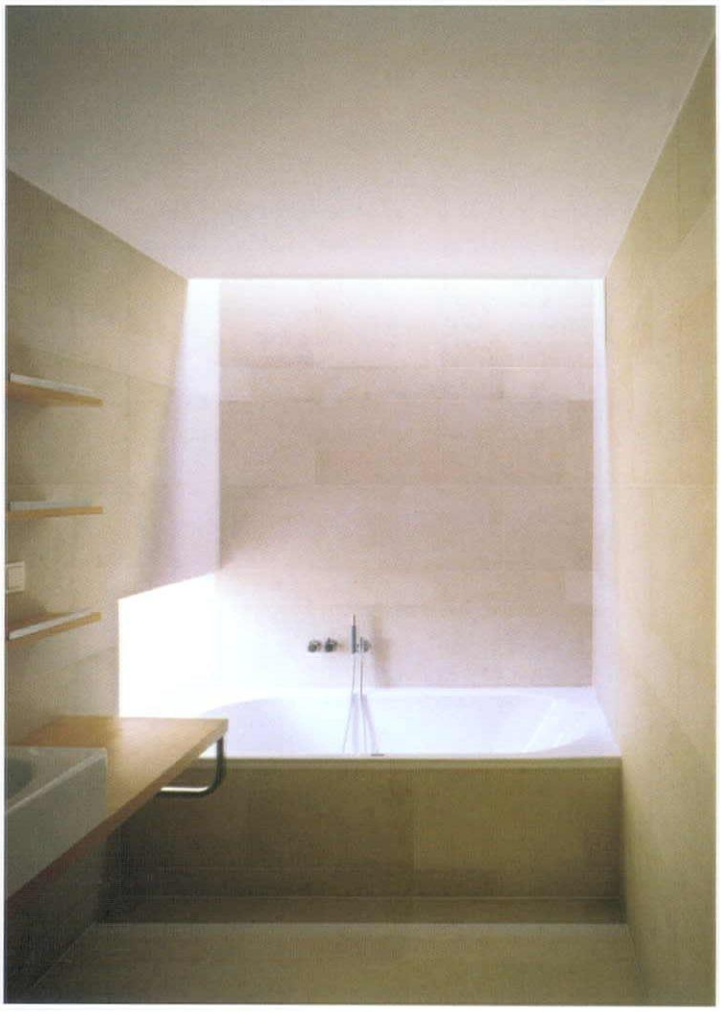
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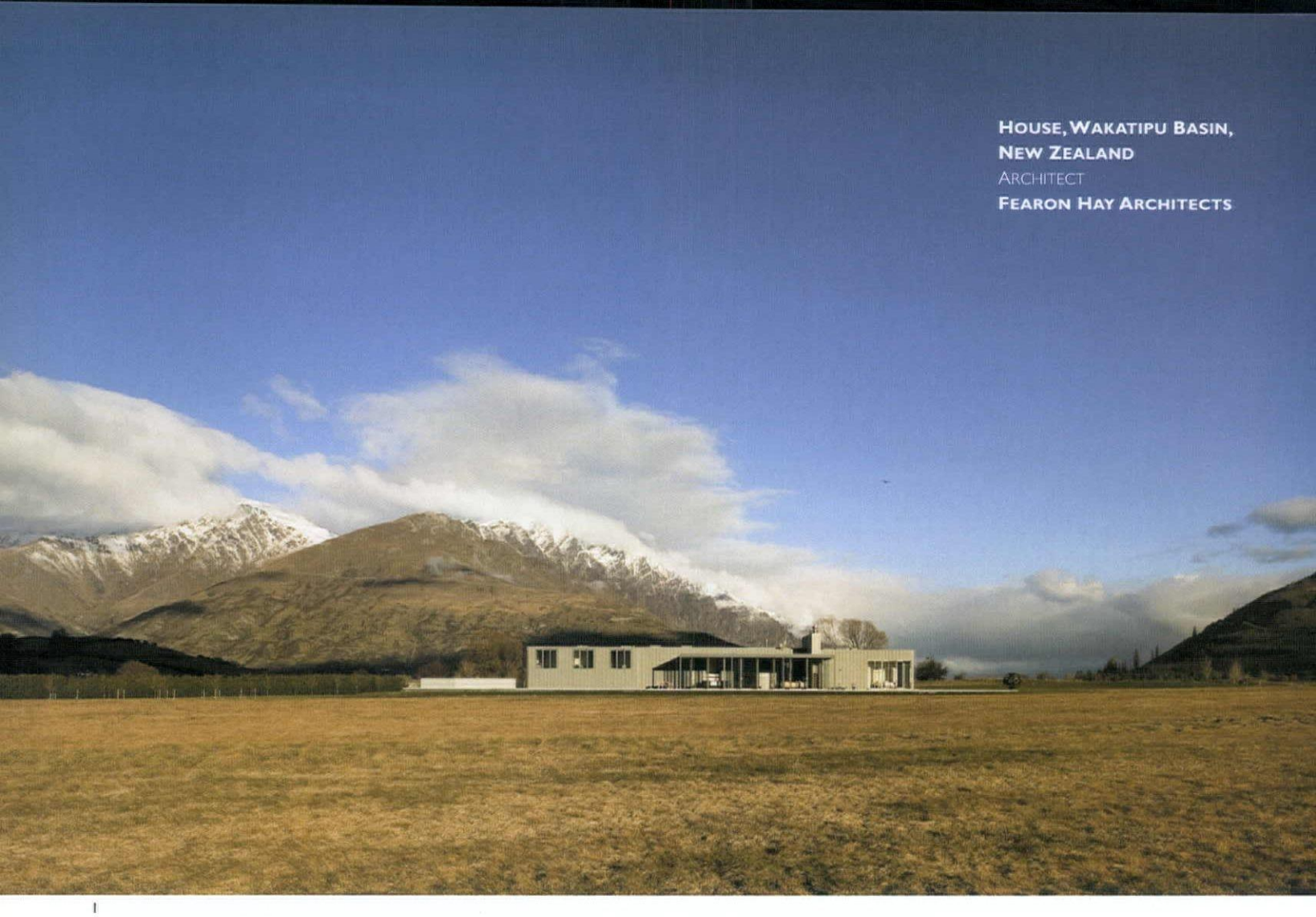
5



6



7



House, Wakatipu Basin, New Zealand
Architect
Fearon Hay Architects

1

SENSING PLACE

In alpine New Zealand, this house reinterprets the sobriety and simplicity of local rural buildings.



site plan

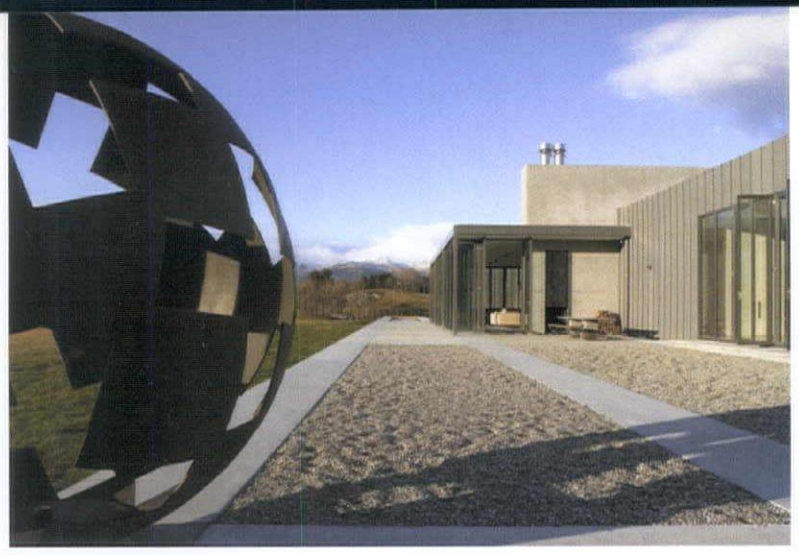
New Zealand's Southern Alps form a towering backbone to the long land mass of South Island. At the southern end of the Alps lies Lake Wakatipu, a great Z-shaped slash of water that wraps around a glacial basin on its north edge. Traditionally, the basin has been used for pastoral farming, but more recently, as the alpine region has grown in popularity, large rural landholdings have been subdivided and sold and farm buildings supplanted by individual houses. There are concerns that such cosy domestication is undermining the tough, rural character of the landscape, so this new dwelling adopts the vernacular argot of local farm buildings as opposed to the more conspicuous enunciation of the trophy house.

The site consists of two flat paddocks bounded on their southern edge by the eroded path of the Shotover River. On three sides are breathtaking vistas of snow-dusted mountain ranges. Clad in a sombre skin of folded, pre-weathered zinc, the house is a set of simple, orthogonal volumes that could, from a distance, be easily taken for some kind of barn or outhouse. The zinc cladding homogenises the building mass and full-height vertical joints set up a basic rhythm for the fenestration. As an elemental composition in metal and glass, it has a haiku-like directness.

The functional farming/industrial aesthetic is most explicitly articulated on the inscrutable south (non-sunny) side of the house. Here, the zinc skin is at its most impermeable and inscrutable, but to the north (sunny) side the house opens up through a glazed, steel-framed loggia that extends the main living space and frames views northwards to Coronet Peak. A concrete and gravel apron forms a datum for the zinc box and the internal floor level and external terrace are slightly elevated above this anchoring plane.

Living room and loggia form the focus of the internal arrangement, with the master

1
Austere and unassuming, the house resembles a farm building.
2, 3
Terrace and loggia on north (sunny) side.
4
Light and views animate loggia.
5
Volumes are wrapped in a folded zinc skin.



2



4



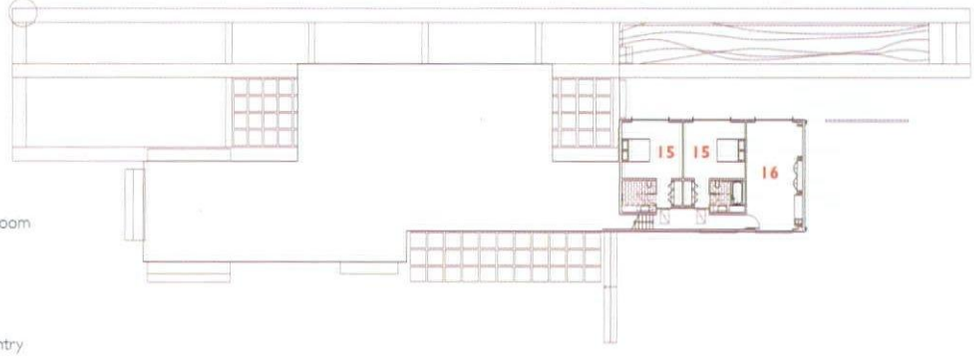
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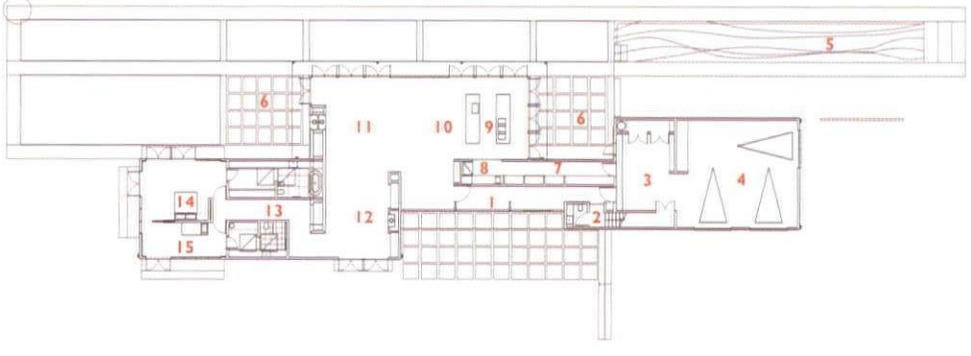
bedroom and a generously proportioned library set deferentially to one side of this main volume. A pair of secondary bedrooms and a studio are economically hoisted over the void of the adjacent garage, otherwise interiors revel in tall, 3.8m high ceilings to ensure maximum penetration of light and maximum viewing potential of mountain peaks and ridgelines. Conceding to the much greater and grander presence of nature, this is a house that knows its place, in more ways than one. C. S.

Architect
Fearon Hay Architects, Auckland
Photographs
Patrick Reynolds



1 entrance
2 powder room
3 storage
4 garage
5 pool
6 terrace
7 laundry
8 butler pantry
9 kitchen
10 dining
11 living
12 library
13 hall
14 master bedroom
15 bedroom
16 studio

upper floor



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:500)

Constructing a one-off residence is a costly, messy, and time-consuming process, which is why, for the past ninety years, progressive architects have dreamed of standardised modern houses built on a production line like cars and aircraft. Le Corbusier's 1914 Citrohan house was an early sketch. Buckminster Fuller dedicated twenty years to refining his cylindrical aluminium Dymaxion house, only to abandon the project in 1946, just as production in a Kansas aircraft plant was about to begin. Jean Prouvé manufactured two prototypes of a tropical house that were air-shipped to French West Africa in 1951 (AR December 2005), but he, too, was soon out of business.

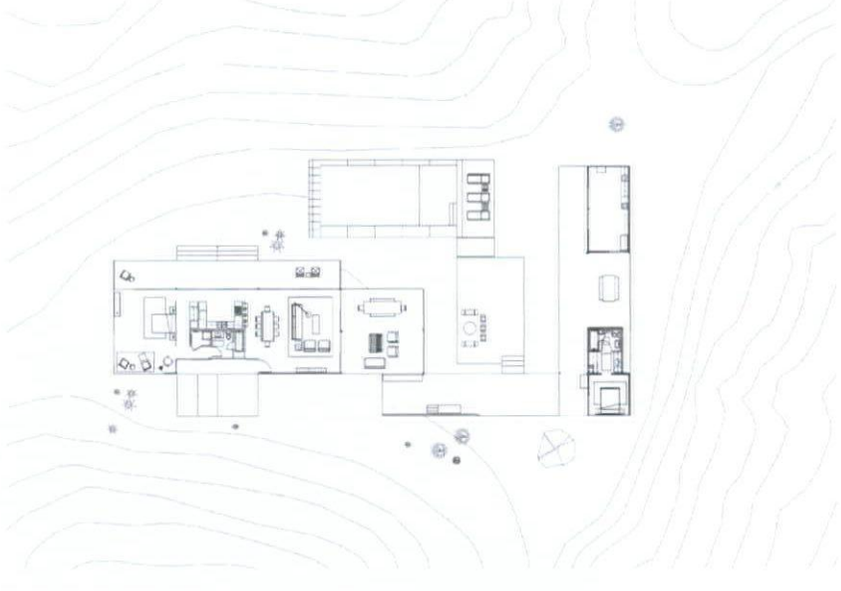
Prefabrication is commonplace in the building industries of Sweden, Japan, and the US but the product is usually an ersatz historicism. Only the humble trailer home has enjoyed commercial success as an unadorned steel module. However, the goal of making good design more affordable by rationalising construction has always remained in view, and there has been a surge of activity in the US over the past three years. Consumer magazines have hosted design competitions, promoted prize-winning models, and found firms to produce them. In San Francisco, Michelle Kaufmann could barely afford to build a simple house on-site for herself and her husband, but is now producing two factory-built versions of that one-off structure. In LA, Jennifer Siegal's Office of Mobile Design is developing innovative solutions and the partnership of Linda Taalman and Alan Koch has just completed its first prefabricated iT house. This sleek aluminium-framed glass pavilion can be customised with one of several artist-designed vinyl skins, which provide shade, privacy, and a distinctive signature.

Now, the LA design-build firm of Marmol Radziner, best-known for its restoration of classic modern houses by Neutra, Schindler and John Lautner, has joined in the quest. To show potential buyers what they can expect, Leo Marmol experimented on himself and his wife. Their recently completed weekend house in Desert Hot Springs was fabricated by a company that specialises in commercial work, and it doubles as a prototype for the houses that they will soon be manufacturing themselves in a factory in Vernon in south-central LA. If you didn't know it had been trucked in as a set of 10 modules that were lowered into place with a mobile crane and bolted together, you'd think it was one of the sleek, minimalist houses the firm builds on-site.

'Prefabrication is not an end in itself but a means of creating an affordable modern living environment,' insists Marmol. A path leads up a gentle rise from the detached car port to a flight of shallow steps and recessed entry. Low-slung silvery boxes and covered decks are mounted on a recessed concrete foundation and the delicacy of the steel posts and glazing bars contribute to the illusion that the house is floating over the desert floor. Expansive windows open the interior up to long vistas and walkways frame the mountains. A rubber membrane creates a thermal barrier between the metal cladding and wood-lined interior.

Modules for living

The advantages of prefabrication have yet to be translated into decent architecture, but in California, cradle of the modern house, experimentation goes on to provide elegant, economical dwellings that have a viability beyond the prototype stage.



Desert House floor plan (scale approx 1:500)

1
The prototypical Desert House, designed for Leo Marmol and his wife, that shows prospective buyers what to expect.
2
Elegantly minimal, but entirely prefabricated.



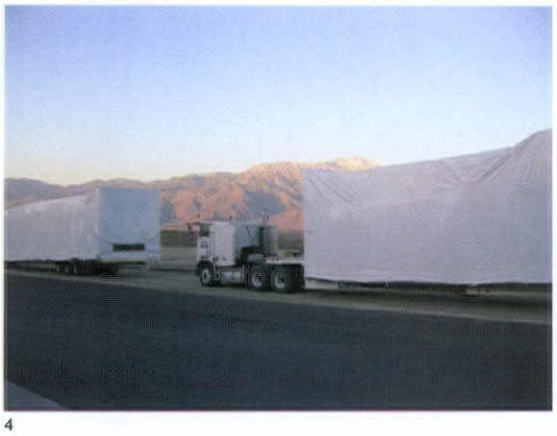
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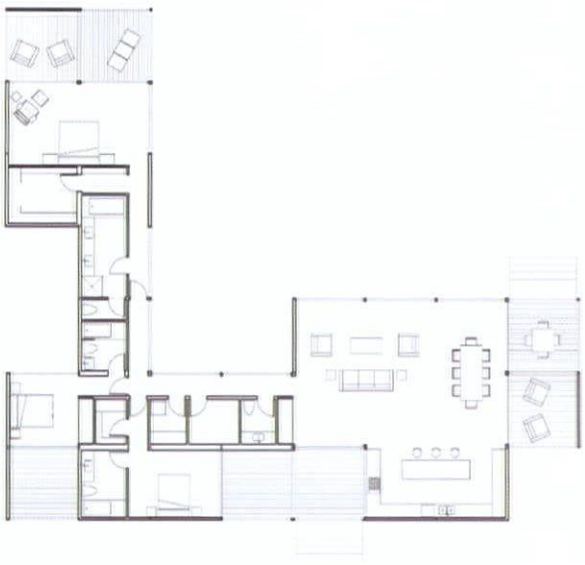


3



4

3
Desert House under construction.
4
Trucking in the prefabricated modules.
5
The Desert House extends California's modern house lineage.
6
Luxe living, achieved through intelligent economy of design and construction.



deluxe model: 8 modules $630 100



advanced model: 6 modules $465 700

An entry hall separates the master bedroom from the kitchen-dining-living area, which opens onto a covered terrace and pool. A walkway leads to the guest bedroom and a detached studio, which are set at an angle to the main house. In its lightness and fusion of indoors and outdoors, it evokes Neutra's sixty-year-old Kaufman house, which the firm restored in the mid 1990s.

In planning their prefab menu of four basic models, ranging in size from 61 to 242sqm plus extensive deck areas, Marmol Radziner tried to avoid the mistakes that have bedevilled other attempts at standardisation. By creating modules rather than a kit of posts and panels, they can undertake ninety per cent of the fabrication in their factory. The recycled steel frames assure rigidity and minimise the need for solid walls. The size of the modules (17m long and about 4m square), is the largest volume allowed on California highways without costly waivers. Wiring, plumbing and cabinetry are built in, and the web site (*www.marmolradzinerprefab.com*) allows buyers to upgrade the standard offerings of equipment, flooring, and colours. They can build their own foundations, secure permits and pick up the modules at the factory door, or turn everything over to the architects for a comprehensive service. Cost for full assembly is around $2700 per sqm, which comes in at the midpoint between the least expensive prefab offerings and the ground-up houses this firm builds.

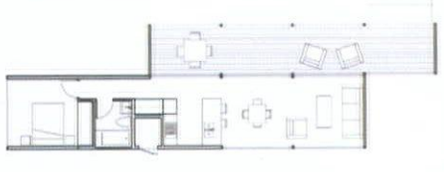
For the customer, this system of prefabrication is like ordering a car, selecting colours and options, then coming back a few months later and driving it away. That's a big saving in time, hassle and cost, and the final price is set in advance. The best of the prefabricated houses are environmentally friendly, save on the waste of materials and site traffic, and minimise the inconvenience of construction to neighbours. But their impact on the housebuilding market is likely to be minimal until a major developer decides to embrace this intelligent, economical alternative to current archaic practices. MICHAEL WEBB



intermediate model: 3 modules $295 000



intermediate model: 3 modules $295 000



basic model: 2 modules $215 000

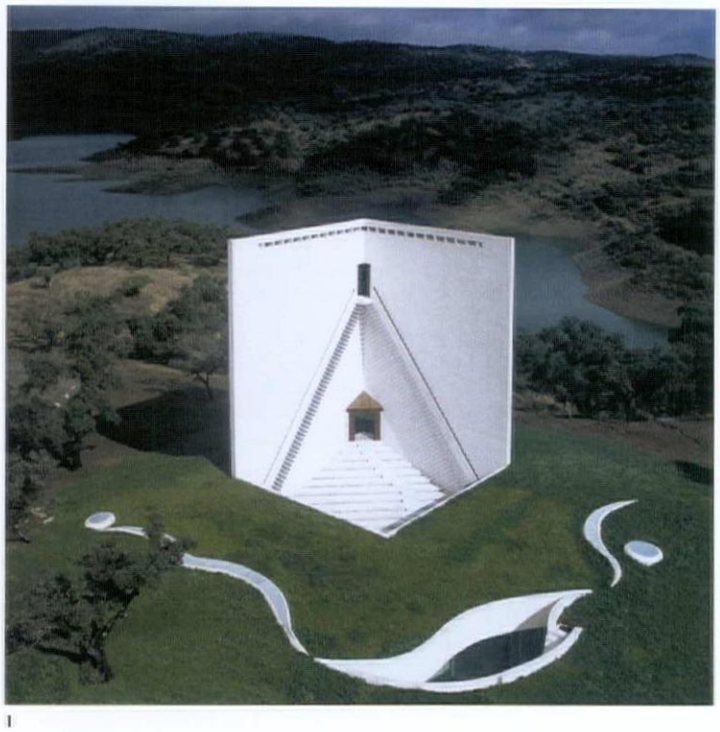
All photographs by David Glomb except 3 & 4



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1

HOUSE OF RETREAT

Completed some 30 years after its conception, this remarkable rural house in Andalusia by Emilio Ambasz resonates with place, tradition and nature in a way that has wider lessons for amodern, ecologically responsive architecture. Peter Buchanan considers its significance.

It was one of the most compelling architectural images of its time. Two tall white walls rising from a green sea of grass like sails to capture breezes and reflect the sun down into, or shade it from, a sunken courtyard. Beyond this, the curving rooflights of subterranean rooms trailed away like a watery wake. Except for the conspicuous walls, the 'House near Cordoba' hid itself, the better to emphasise its relationship to the primal elements of sun, sky, stars and wind above, as well as those of the enveloping earth and the water that burbled within its walls. First designed in 1975, premiated as a Progressive Architecture Project Award winner in 1980 and widely published since, it was the design that first brought Emilio Ambasz to international attention as an architect.

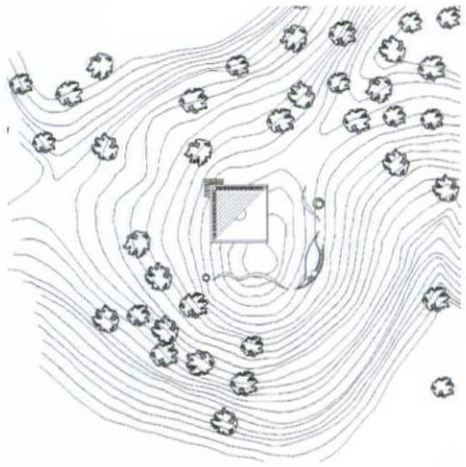
Yet not everybody got it. Many remain baffled by looking at the images rather than imagining the promised experience of the protracted ritual of approach and entry, the shifting light and mood within the court as the hours and seasons pass, and the poetry of opening up to the multi-sensorial magic. Such potential enchantments explain why Ambasz was loath to acknowledge that the project remained unrealised. Building it now presented the challenge of surpassing a dream undiminished by decades of being unattained. This he has achieved by constructing the house (with Felipe Palomino González as local executive architect) in an idyllic, Andalusian Arcadia. Here it is placed with utmost precision in relation to views and solar orientation, so as to draw the landscape and ambient elements into relationship with itself.

The house crowns a headland projecting into a manmade lake in the Sierra de Seville, a range of low, verdant mountains dotted with evergreen oaks. It lies in a 600-hectare estate populated by fighting bulls and beef cattle, a rare breed of Spanish horses, dark grey pigs for acorn-fed, wine-dark ham, wild boar and deer. Especially in spring, with wild flowers in profusion, it epitomises one aspect of the Andalusia that fed the dreams of paradise of the Moors of the Alhambra. As the road dips into a valley, the house appears on the ridge opposite. It then disappears from view on the drive that snakes up to it to reappear right before you as the road crests the ridge. Ahead two tall white walls rising from grass and ancient olive trees meet at a right angle that points towards those arriving. Set angled across the base of the corner is an ornately carved dark wooden door-case with matching doors. Above, towards the top of the walls and folded around the corner, is a similarly carved enclosed wooden balcony derived from those of Hispano-Islamic tradition.

Crossing the threshold

Passing through the doors, you find yourself standing above the corner of a sunken and diagonally oriented square patio as the two walls, now seen as extending upwards from the patio's two closest sides, form a gigantic gesture of open-handed offering. They gesticulate to the panoramic view, across the sunken house and its grassy roof, towards the lake a little distance away and the mountains beyond. Below this view, a shady arcade edges the two far sides of the patio and fanning downwards into it are broad steps, the last of which diagonally bisects the patio and edges a semicircular pool that marks its centre.

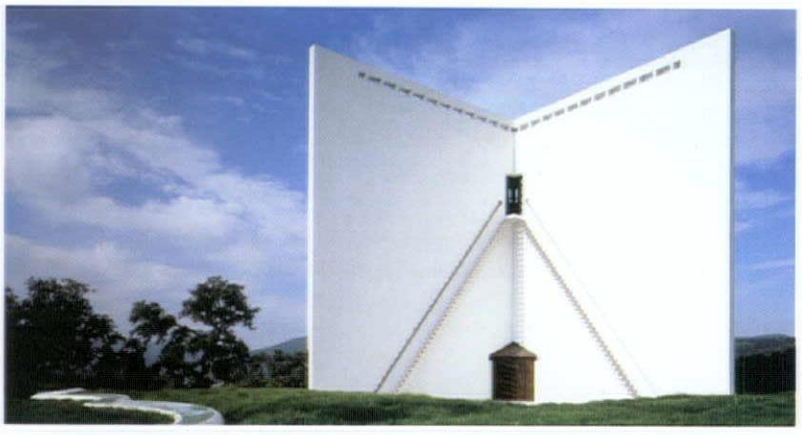
Like the doors and balcony behind you, the heavy dark wooden beams spanning over the cylindrical columns of the arcade are traditional in form with carved corbelled brackets and wrought iron straps. Contrasting with the ornateness or heavy bulk of the wooden elements, almost everything else, such as the plastered walls and cylindrical columns, is smooth and white giving a Mediterranean sharp-edged contrast between blinding light and deep shade. The patio floor, like that of the ambulatory behind the arcade and the interior visible through the glazing beyond, is in smooth white marble lightly streaked in grey. So are the slabs edging the broad steps of white marble chippings, within which sit shorter slabs of intermediate steps defining a slightly curving descent that lands to one side of the pool. Other visible elements are in crisply minimal grey-painted steel. They include the frames of the glazing and sliding doors, some tubular columns, and most conspicuously, the cantilevered treads of steep stairs that climb each of the tall walls to the entrance of the balcony projecting out over the entrance doors. Pervading the space and contributing greatly



site plan

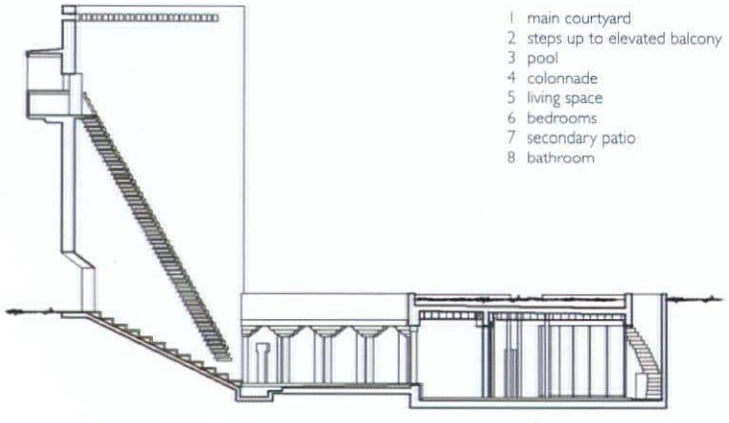


1
The house is its Arcadian setting.
2
The bold composition is crowned by a carved wooden balcony with Moorish resonances.



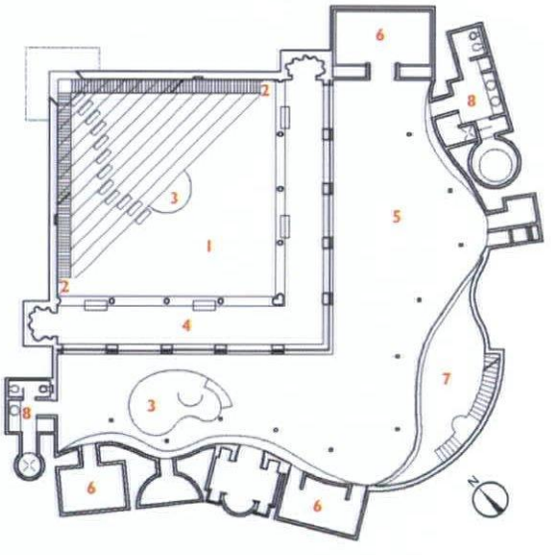
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3
Great white walls extend into the landscape like a welcoming hand or open book.
4
Most of the house is buried underground, with rooflights cut into the terrain.
5
The walls enclose a central courtyard. Staircases of astonishing precipitousness lead up to the balcony.
6
Detail of staircase.

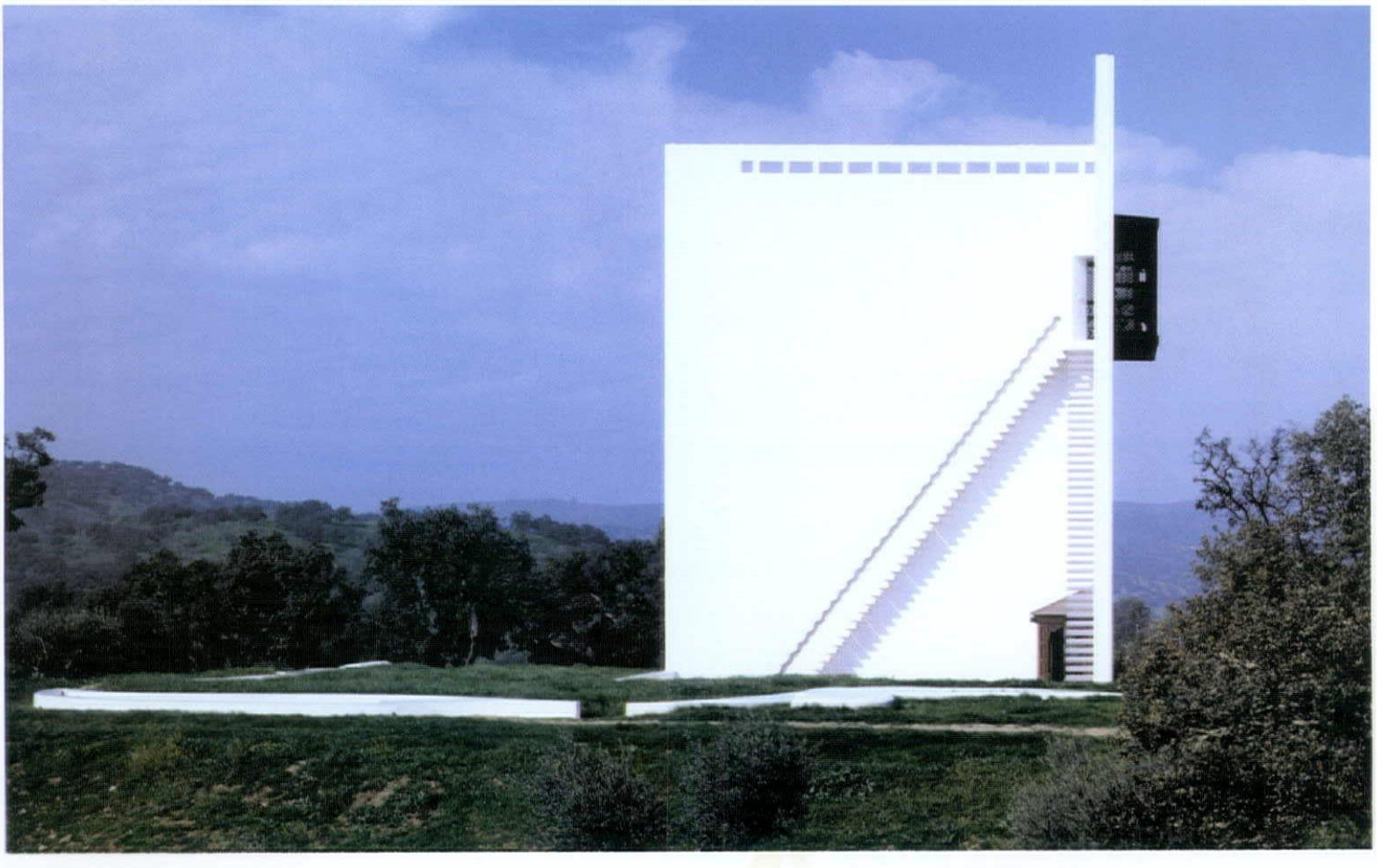


1 main courtyard
2 steps up to elevated balcony
3 pool
4 colonnade
5 living space
6 bedrooms
7 secondary patio
8 bathroom

diagonal cross section



main lower level plan (scale approx 1:750)



4

to its cool, contemplative atmosphere is the soft murmur of water that you later discover rushes down runnels in the recessed handrails of the stairs to the balcony. As a delta calms the flow of a river into the sea, the broadening stairs and curving route slow your descent. Time seems to slow and you are apt to reach the patio floor in alert silence, greeted by the pool, inviting a cooling splash of hands and face. This patio is the serene heart of the house. Here, in an all-season outdoor living room, are sunny spots on chilly mornings and, in the heat of the day, cool shade from the tall walls that reach up to embrace the stars at night.

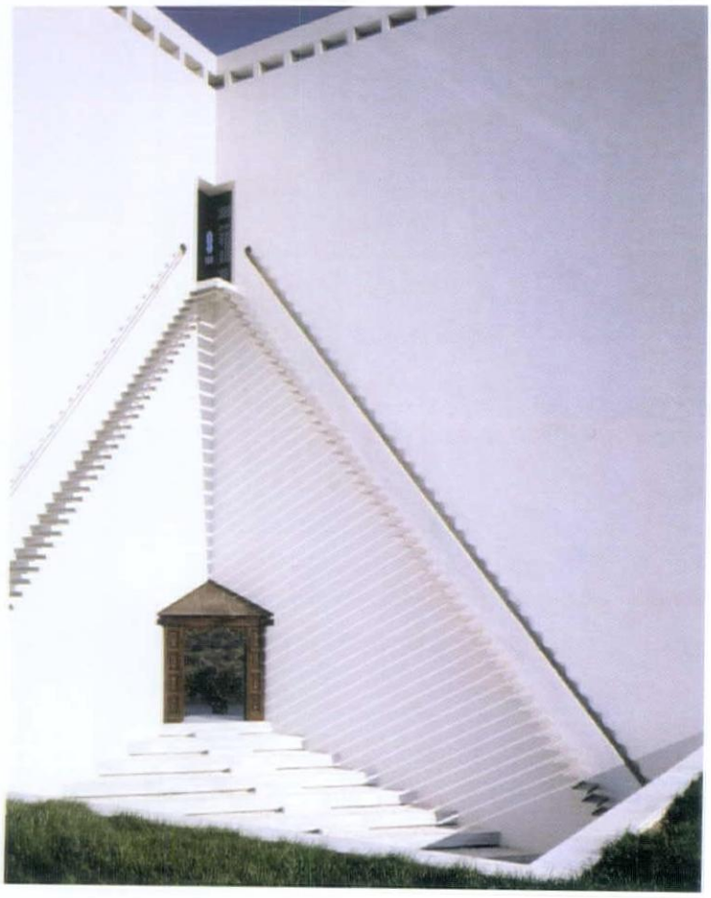
Opening into it through sliding glass doors, a large L-shaped living-dining room folds round the patio ambulatory. Across the room, as another source of light and views, more glass doors edge a small secondary patio, its curves contrasting with the orthogonality of the main one. Elsewhere along the back wall of the main room, doors open into toplit bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen, all set deep in the earth in the manner of cell-like caves. Mainly for security, but also to temper the bright glare from the patios, electrically operated perforated aluminium shutters, hidden when not in use, can protect the glazing. As Ambasz's project title *Casa de Retiro Espiritual* makes explicit, the house is a spiritual retreat. Isolated on its estate, it withdraws below the ground. At a further remove are the bedrooms (for the deepest of dreams) and bathrooms (oozing Orientalist sensuality); and further removed, while also connecting back with the landscape, is the elevated balcony. Like those throughout the Islamic world and following a traditional Andalusian pattern, this is enclosed in a lattice of turned wooden spindles, giving privacy and shade while admitting the breeze. Though offering magnificent views of the lake and estate (if you stand and open portions of it), it is meditatively introvert in character, a place to lounge and read and occasionally get up to enjoy the view, perhaps of a sunset reflected in the lake and touching the tall walls with a rosy tint.

This is a house like no other, yet is full of familiar resonances, particularly local. Some may see Andalusian precedent in the whitewashed mountain dwellings of gypsy troglodytes. But more relevant is earlier Arabic and Moorish precedent, from which derive the patio form and carved wooden elements. The house's languidly dreamy and contemplative atmosphere recalls that of the Alhambra (in whose gardens are also stairs with water channels in the balustrades, though Ambasz only discovered these long after the house was originally conceived). The house is still unfurnished, but it is easy to imagine it furnished Arab-style with only carpets and cushions for languid lounging, especially around the kidney-shaped conversation pit in one arm of the main room. Indeed, patterned ceramic tiles, cool in colour and to the touch (or the soft-coloured glass tiles originally envisaged), would be splendid in the interior. And the elevated balcony recalls both the harem *mashrabiya* and *chattri* of Islamic tradition, a place you expect to find a pasha smoking his hookah and listening to poetry or music from a favourite concubine. But too intoxicating an experience, however administered, would be ill-advised: the long steep flights of steps are scary to descend, even when clinging to the handrail hidden in the water runnel recess.

Modern eclecticism

Designed in the heyday of eclectic-historicist Post-Modernism, the house shares some of its concerns, such as with ritual and historical motifs. But formally the house is abstractly modern and the traditional elements are used unmodified with unabashed directness instead of, as in Post Modernism, cartoon-like with sniggering irony. Most architects would be too nervous of the judgment of their peers to have risked using these elements, which the timidly conformist might judge kitsch.

To clarify in what ways the house is modern, and yet not at all, a fruitful if surprising comparison can be made with Villa Savoye, in which allusions to Classical precedent (Palladio's Villa Rotunda et al) were so oblique as to become obvious only much later, unlike the historic references here. Villa Savoye was also designed around a processional route through a courtyard that terminates in an elevated, framed view of the landscape. But Savoye's route shows off its architecture, while



5



6



7

this route is more ritualistic in provoking different psychological moods, bringing awareness of the inner self as well as the architecture. Also, Savoye's ramp climbs through its centre to reach a taut, thin-skinned Modernist composition hovering lightly above the landscape, while here the route skirts the centre as it descends into a heavily earthbound subterranean dwelling that is as archaic as it is contemporary. And whereas Savoye's spatial emphasis is centrifugal and horizontal as attention is swept outwards to a continuous eye-level slice of landscape, here the interior spatial emphasis is centripetally inwards to the patio where the vertical dominates as it links the enveloping earth and overarching sky, with the pool marking an axis mundi.[1] Finally, though both houses were commissioned for entertaining (Corb's as a chic setting for a smart Parisian set on their country weekends), Ambasz's concern is more with the timeless (both being unplaceable within and slowing time) as a refuge for contemplative and intimate reclusion.

Although such comparisons might be revealing, negative comment is largely irrelevant to architecture as original and particular to the client's predilections as this. Yet when confronted by such a work, part of the process by which architects might digest its lessons is to ponder what, had they ever got this far, might they now do differently. For instance, what if the patio ambulatory was wider to accommodate more furniture and be itself more habitable, as in Hispano-American tradition? What if the balcony too was slightly wider and the opening parts extended low enough to be looked out of from easy chairs? What if alternate squares of paving in the patio's centre and the marble chippings in the broad stairs leading into it were cobbled with grey river pebbles as is typical in Seville, so softening the glare and emphasising the outdoor nature of the space, as well as its roots in tradition? But with such changes it becomes another house, not the fulfilment of Ambasz's dream.

Green ideals

Ambasz and some critics claim his architectural approach to be green. This is because it seeks harmony with nature, returning to it, as planted berms and roofs, as much as possible of the site area, and because of the high levels of insulation that result. Hence, though the house has back-up air-conditioning plant, both it and heating are proving unnecessary.[2] Yet there is more to greenness than verdant roofs and energy savings.

When this house was first projected, a green ideal was the autonomous house, isolated and self-sufficient in its own productive garden or estate. But as a prototypical solution this is now seen as wasteful, not least in energy expended in commuting, and as reinforcing the social isolation that the green agenda deems problematic. Today the green ideal is connection not isolation, dwelling in a 'compact city' of mixed, multi-use neighbourhoods, with local facilities and strong community ties.[3] Also sought is the 're-enchantment of the earth', encouraging us to open up to engage with it in harmony, instead of detachedly exploiting it. So the green agenda seeks communion with others and with nature to provide the joys, succour and meaning that will help wean us from the desperate consumption through which we distract ourselves from modernity's lingering legacy of alienation and meaninglessness.

Besides ecological and technical measures, sustainability requires changes to our cultural representation of and psychological responses to the world. It is in relation to this that Ambasz's house has significance beyond that of an exceptional one-off: it points forwards, as well as backwards, as a harbinger that vividly evokes a crucial dimension of a more complete green architecture of the future. It may not offer connection with community, yet it is an enchanted setting for intimate communion, with a few others, but most especially with an intensified sense of both the inner self that it draws outwards and the distant cosmos that it draws down into its centre. PETER BUCHANAN

1 Villa Savoye also greets those arriving with a basin, a ceramic wash-hand sink, to wash off the dirt of travel or outdoors, a symbolic rinsing away and disconnecting with the earth before rising to elevated airy realms. In contrast, in this chthonic realm the pool is a vestigial *impluvium* (too vestigial, perhaps), which in Roman and Arabic prototypes collected rain from the heavens above and served almost as a mysterious eye to the earth below. In Ambasz's house, to dip a hand into the water is not to dissociate from the earth's dirt but rather a reverential genuflection to the earth.

2 Even in the exceptional heat of summer 2003, when Seville reached nearly 50°C, the unfinished house remained an equable 23°C; and when winter temperatures fell to 6°C the house remained at 18°C despite still being unenclosed by glazing.

3 Ambasz has built an office building whose planted roof terraces form a stepped verdant extension to a park in central Fukuoka, Japan.

Photographs
Fernando Alba, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10; Michele Alassio, 1, 7, 11; Valeria Carullo/ARCAID, 9



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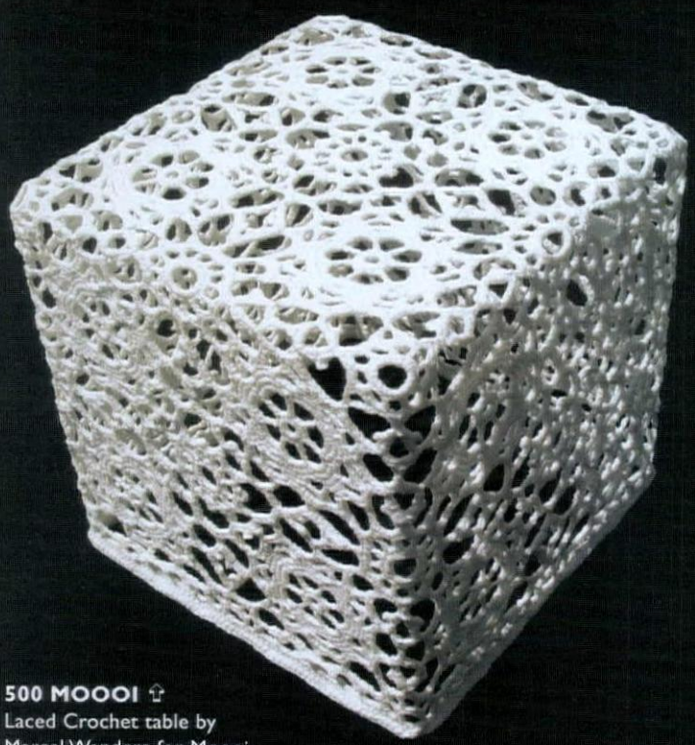


9





7
The balcony offers breathtaking views.
8
The house evokes languid Oriental sensuality, here envisaged by the Victorian artist John Frederick Lewis. © Tate, London 2006.
9
Termination of the ramp at Corb's Villa Savoye.
10
The secluded principal courtyard.
11
A secondary patio brings light into the subterranean realm.



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Stockholm's Furniture Fair is a beacon of civilised Nordic values that illuminate a dreary time of year. Established names rub shoulders with the talents of tomorrow in the Greenhouse, a special section for students and newly qualified designers. Catherine Slessor heads north.

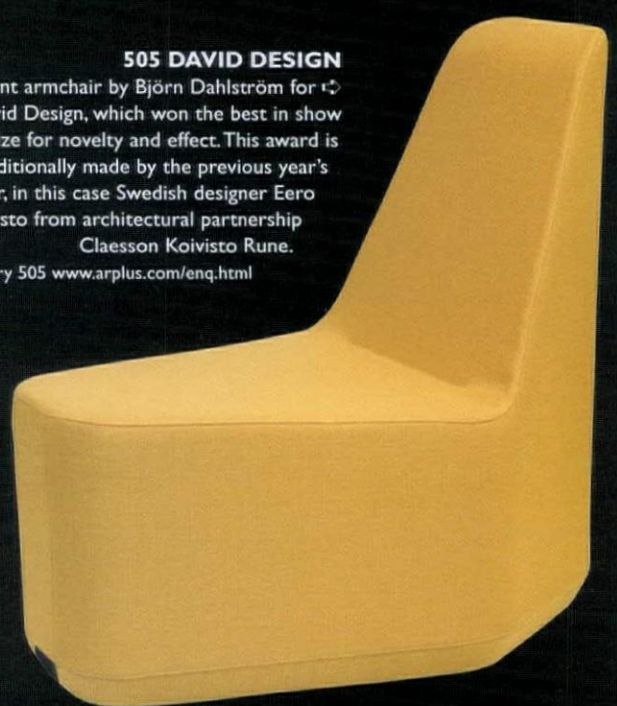


503 GREENHOUSE ⇧
Overview of the Greenhouse section of the Fair, which mixed independent emerging designers with work by talented students.
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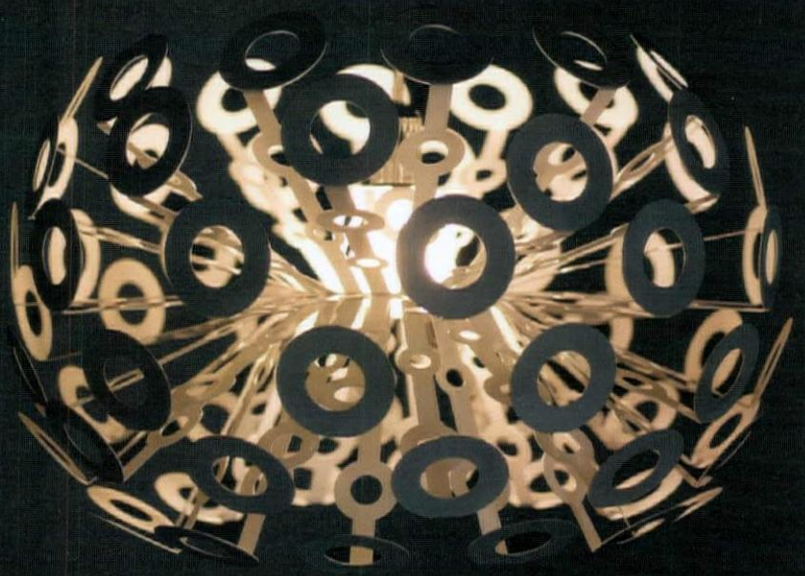
504 PETER ANDERSSON ⇧
Tilt by Peter Andersson, a curious, mutant demi rocking chair that won the fair's award for most innovative piece of individual furniture.
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505 DAVID DESIGN
Brent armchair by Björn Dahlström for David Design ⇨, which won the best in show prize for novelty and effect. This award is traditionally made by the previous year's winner, in this case Swedish designer Eero Koivisto from architectural partnership Claesson Koivisto Rune.
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506 GAMPLUSFRATESI ⇧
Lace table from Gamplusfratesi, an intriguing fusion of lace and moulded glassfibre which combines traditional skills with modern manufacturing techniques. Part of the Greenhouse show.
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511 TINNA GUNNARSDÓTTIR
⇨ Showing in the Greenhouse event, the playful Fluga range of garden stools and tables by emerging Icelandic designer Tinna Gunnarsdóttir mixes plywood, mirror steel and aluminium.
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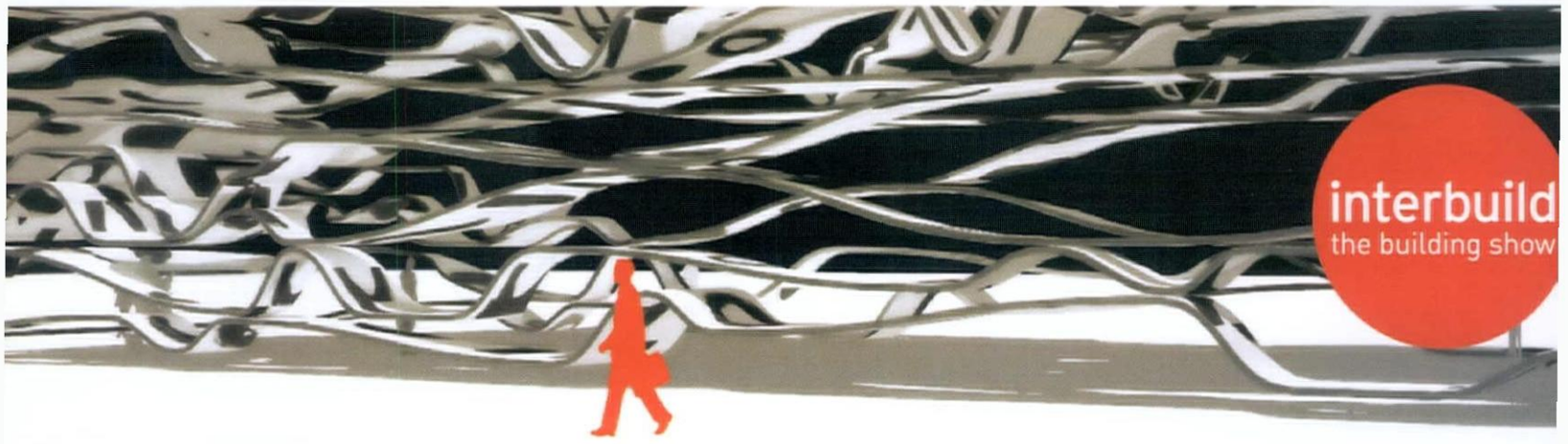
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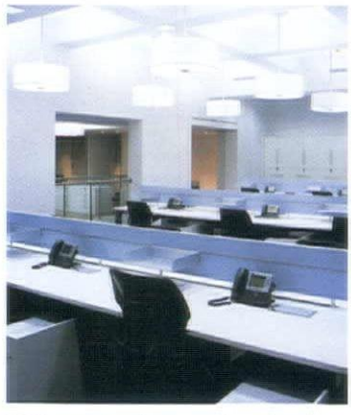
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Concord:marlin

With the new Lytebeam LED Emergency kit, Concord:marlin now leads the way in innovative track-mounted LED emergency solutions. For the first time ever using LED technology, it is possible to provide a discrete emergency lighting solution powered from mains 240V track, which complies with ICEL emergency requirements. No other product on the market can compete with this design-led solution – a three-hour, non-maintained emergency lighting component, totally integrated with the Lytebeam architectural direct/indirect track system.

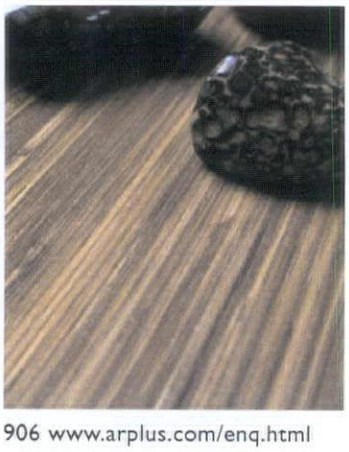
904 www.arplus.com/enq.html



Beyon

Beyon have supplied all the beams, storage and bespoke units, via Wagstaff Office Interiors, to the HQ of London General and London Central Transport in Merton, designed by Penson. The former pub was run-down externally and internally. The fabric and general amendments to the layout of the building over the years ultimately created an extremely complicated and claustrophobic environment, which Penson had the challenging task of turning around into a clean, open stimulating office environment.

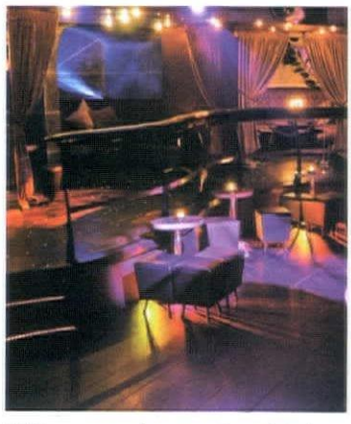
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Formica

Naturelle, a brand new surface finish designed to enhance the realism and appeal of Woodgrains, has been added to the Formica high pressure laminate range. Naturelle offers designers and specifiers a matte velvety-feel and meets the demand for a soft dry-wax look, adding that perfect touch to modern, straight-grained woodgrain laminates. Naturelle was introduced as part of the new 'Range Additions 2006' selection, which complements and extends 'The Collection' from Formica Limited.

906 www.arplus.com/enq.html



Armourcoat

Soho's Shadow Lounge has provided a dramatic showcase for Armourcoat polished plaster. The legendary London nightclub has undertaken a considerable refurbishment programme, to create a spectacular clubbing environment with an emphasis on quality and comfort. The club's owners, Soho Clubs + Bars, wanted to update the club to meet the expectations of its private members and customers. With concept design and refurbishment co-ordinated by interior designer, Jamie Alcock, the venue was transformed with the application of over 250m² of custom effect polished plaster.

907 www.arplus.com/enq.html

NUMINOUS UTZON

BAGSVÆRD CHURCH, JØRN UTZON LOGBOOK VOL II

By Torsten Bløndal & Jørn Utzon. Hellerup: Edition Bløndal. 2005. DKK350

Jørn Utzon's buildings are at last getting the kind of publication they deserve. Bagsværd is the second volume in the *Jørn Utzon Logbook* series published by Edition Bløndal and, with great finesse, it analyses the architect's most moving fully completed building (Sydney's interiors never having been executed, though that may at last be in the process of correction).

Bagsværd church is very strange indeed. It sits in the middle of the belt of high quality suburbia that stretches north along the Sound from Copenhagen. Its unremarkable site next to the main street is modified by a birch grove, so you first see it from the car park through trees, when its impervious strange shape and expressed precast concrete structure make it almost seem like an agricultural building marooned amid new development. Closer examination reveals that architectural talent of high order has been at work: there is a strong flavour of Japan in the careful ordering of the courts and flank walls, and a Nordic sensibility in use of materials. Inside, light from the sky, reflected and transmuted by the famous ceiling, emphasises the altar while the wide volume is gently filled with luminance from Soanian chutes that make north and south walls bright without detracting from gentle stress on the sacred table. All is white, grey or pale wood. It is a northern, democratic, twentieth-century interpretation of the Baroque spirit, and one of the very finest numinous spaces created in the last 100 years.

Utzon's inspirations are multifarious. Helge Hjertholm, one of his assistants, called Bagsværd 'a hamlet of courtyard houses' which draws on his experiences of North Africa, and perhaps the complicated yard-like spaces of northern Scandinavian farms. Japanese, specifically Shinto, echoes are to be found in the handling of the structure with its repetitive use of portals to celebrate routes. In a most perceptive essay, Richard Weston sees reflections on Chinese and Hanseatic traditions in the stepped gables of the exterior. But the biggest surprise is Utzon's admission that the ceiling, with its billowing curves and great slot of light was inspired by seeing light fall between huge rolls of clouds over a Hawaiian beach. Utzon is one of the very few architects with sufficient sense of abstraction and judgment to be able to translate the power of natural phenomena almost direct into buildings (others' attempts to do so usually end up in kitsch fiasco).

But, as Weston points out, what separates Utzon from architects 'who deploy references in a manner deliberately intended to recall their putative sources is that [he] is pre-eminently a builder, not a designer'. Though he does not spell it out, Utzon is as clearly devoted as Pugin was to the notion that if architecture is to celebrate spirituality, it must be honest in itself (though the modern Dane is to our eyes more successful in this than the nineteenth-century neo-Goth).

Weston's is one of three excellent analytical essays in the book; Martin Schwartz's contribution on light is memorably thoughtful, and Bo Mortensen's description of the acoustics is essential for a proper understanding of the church. Other short texts are by the architect and his colleagues.

The format of the book makes you work hard. There are no captions to the evocative photographs (except where another building is being discussed). Drawings are unlabelled, except for a note of scale; it took me ages to find a north point (which seems to have been included by accident); a site plan would have been helpful.

But after much turning from text to drawings to images and back again, the building takes form in your mind. If only more architectural book-making in which the architect is involved with production could be like this – clear, unaggressive, evocative, perceptive – we might start to make a much more civilised world than that encouraged by the simplistic, flashy handling of the work of contemporary super-stars in most contemporary publication.

PETER DAVEY

ARCHIGRAM ASSESSED

ARCHIGRAM, ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT ARCHITECTURE

By Simon Sadler. London: MIT Press. 2005. £22.95 (paperback only)

A monograph appraisal of the Archigram group has long been awaited, as the work of the group itself continues to be published and repackaged across the world. The group's ideas, and the 1990s travelling show which marked the re-emergence of Archigram ideas as powerful influencers on contemporary architecture, have now been placed in a cultural and architectural context by an English author far too young to have fallen under the spell either of Archigram or of the 1960s – at least first time round.

Simon Sadler cut his teeth on the cultural avant garde of the 1960s and '70s with his well received book, *The Situationist City*. Now teaching in California, he started to research Archigram at the Open University in 1994; clearly this is to some extent a labour of love. The story and context he assesses is split into four parts, broadly chronological, and each judiciously illustrated, mainly from the diaspora which is the Archigram archive (moves are afoot to digitise and combine it in one place). It is not a warts and all publication, eschewing the personal in favour of analysing the broad cultural movements which paralleled or post-date Archigram, launched let us remember in 1961 – pre-Beatles, pre Harold Wilson's first Labour government, even (just) pre-dating *Private Eye*.

Sadler, an admirer of the achievements and legacies of the group, is far from uncritical. He points to the weaknesses and contradictions in some of its work and the attitudes it represented. He cites contemporary criticism, which increased as the glory years of the '60s began to fade. Praise and criticism alike are properly footnoted.

For those who are familiar with the work of Archigram, this monograph will put its project into a wider European context. For others it will act as an excellent introduction, providing ample evidence for the welcome awarding of the RIBA Gold Medal in 2002. Partly through their built and unbuilt work, and just as much through their subsequent teaching, the members of Archigram were responsible for an architectural movement which refused admirably to fall into the dreary pigeon-holes of British political and cultural establishments of the era. New Left students distrusted the debt to US-led technology, ecologists were dismayed at the ethos of personal fun, old Moderns were always suspicious of the fantasy graphics. They missed the point; Sadler doesn't.

PAUL FINCH

BARRICADE POLITICS

AGAINST THE WALL

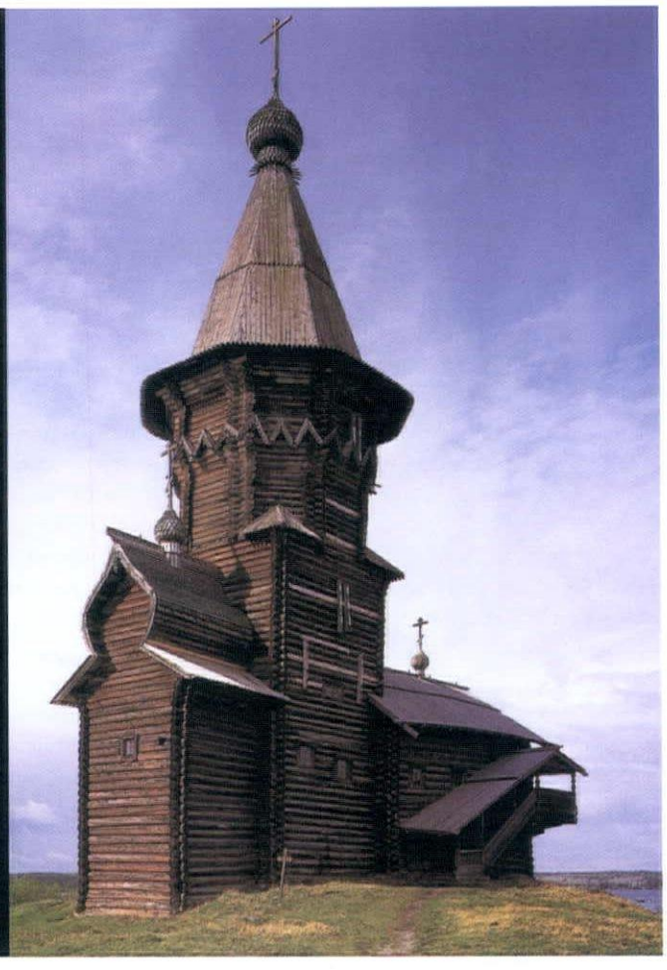
Edited by Michael Sorkin. London: The New Press. 2005. £10.99

The cover page of the Arts and Leisure section of the *New York Times* on the first day of the new year, was dominated by an article by Nicolai Ouroussoff on the security barrier that attempts to separate Israel and the Israeli settlements within the West Bank from the areas of Palestinian administration. Titled 'A Line in the Sand', it considers an emerging debate on 'the nature of space and the consequences for architectural theory' raised by this obstruction; a debate between the architect Eyal Weizman, who sees it as a criminal act of architecture, and Simon Navez, an Israeli general, who sees it as 'simplistic and vulgar' and seeks in the writings of Deleuze and the Situationists a more effective means of separation and erasure. It is troubling to find this discussion in the Arts and Leisure section of one of the world's most influential papers. What kind of editorial decision could place this tragic and intractable condition on the arts pages? Such trivial intellectualising may only

serve to confuse and mask what for Palestine's West Bank is a profoundly destructive act.

I had a similar reaction to the essay collection *Against the Wall* edited by Michael Sorkin, in which Eyal Weizman is one of the more substantial voices. This is a valuable yet uneven and slightly disappointing compilation. There are a number of texts that could be essential reading for anyone seeking an understanding of both the politics and the pain of the project; Stephanie Koury on legalities and illegalities; Suad Amiry and Tom Kay on living with and within the barrier; Anita Vitullo on the devastating impact on the Palestinian economy, and Oren Yiftachel, Haim Yacobi and Sari Hanafi on the history that has led to its creation. These are interrupted by essays that attempt to generalise, either by looking at other barriers – the US Mexico border fence – or by theorising, with the help of such as Levi Straus and the Internet. They prevent the key essays from building to a comprehensive picture of the circumstance. The aftertaste is a sense of academic chatter rather than foreboding over the grave consequences that must follow.

ALAN BALFOUR



The Russian Orthodox Church of the Assumption in Kondopoga, from *Architecture in Wood: A World History*, by Will Pryce, London: Thames & Hudson, 2005, £39.95. Dating from around 1774, the church's distinctive pyramidal roof indicates that it was built by the *raskolniki*, or Old Believers who, following an Orthodox schism, fled north and established churches away from the Patriarch's authority in Moscow. From ancient Japanese Buddhist temples and medieval half-timbering to Cape Cod shingle houses and Renzo Piano's reinterpretation of Kanak tradition in New Caledonia, this sumptuously illustrated tome displays an impressive geographical, cultural and chronological reach. A compact glossary assists with technical understanding and though more drawings might have been welcome, you are left in awe of the myriad of imaginative uses to which timber can be put.

BRUNEL'S TESTAMENT

BRUNEL: THE MAN WHO BUILT THE WORLD

By Steven Brindle (introduction by Dan Cruickshank). London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 2005. £25

This year, the 200th anniversary of I. K. Brunel's birthday, will witness yet another surge in popular interest in the man who the British public recognise as second only to Churchill in greatness. Why this should be so can only be that, like Churchill, he changed our world, and his legacy is just as tangible today as it was 150 years ago.

There are many books, both to read and as reference on the great Victorians, and Brindle's book neatly bridges a gap, serving as reference and inspiration as well as being a good read – albeit too large and heavy to take on holiday. Its lavish contemporary illustrations, with beautiful photography, foldout drawings, sections and paintings give one a sense of being in the archives. Brindle brings a refreshing quality to a story already well told, and combined with the illustrations, it makes one long for more. The text is neither overly technical nor learned and is perfectly capable of being read by anyone with an interest in Brunel, the period or in engineering in general. However, one weakness is that, for those who would like to delve deeper, it lacks any sourced references.

The book breaks down into eight substantial chapters which carry the story by focusing on father and son; his early life in London and Bristol; family life; his office team; his professional life and legacy; and a major chapter each on railways, bridges and ships. This format makes the story compelling and easily comprehensible, but in the process, Brindle begins to see his subject in the context of the projects rather than of the time and, irritatingly, finds it surprising that 'while furiously busy with the design of his railways he should have found time to think about a completely different subject [ship design]'. That Brunel was not alone in seeking to change the world and assist his fellow men in maintaining their regional, if not national, superiority should not be in question. Brunel's testament is that he found the answers and delivered, often far in excess of what might have been expected. If one could return to those times it would not just be to witness Brunel meeting with his fellow engineers, but also to be at meetings with the directors of the GWR, and the merchant families, artists and musicians with whom he also spent time. (His wife's family, as the book points out, was singularly cultivated.)

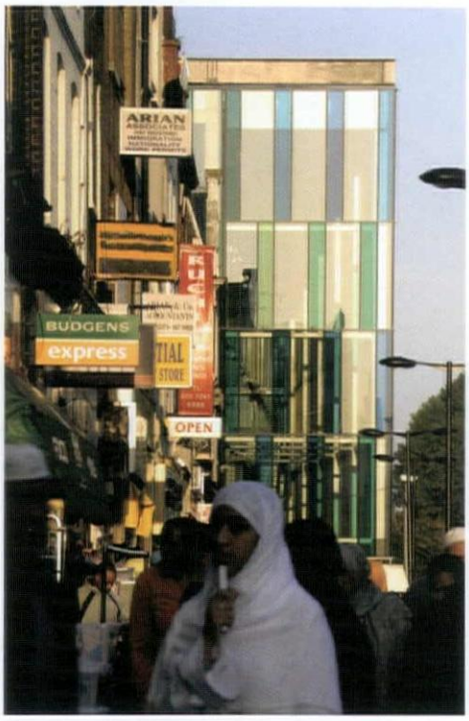
In writing about people such as Brunel there is a tendency to pigeonhole them as either one thing or another, suggesting that because he was involved in muck and brass he may have lacked more refined tastes. The fact that he could deal with contractors in a more than robust manner might suggest that he was less sensitive to the world and people around him. Brindle's book goes some way to resolving this but, of necessity, dwells on the hugely busy life he led in building his legacy, and in the process, misses again the opportunity to describe his life in the manner that was so beautifully achieved by Kate Colquhoun in her story of Joseph Paxton. Perhaps this will be addressed later in the year as further books are published.

The book has an introduction by Dan Cruickshank which one imagines may advance its sales. Unfortunately, however, it dwells far too intensely on the world of architectural critique and while deserving, is somewhat misplaced. I suggest that you skip it.

This is a book for anybody who loves engineering – it can be read in part or in whole and is a worthy addition to any library.

MARK WHITBY

Book reviews from 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.



PUTTING BUILDINGS IN THEIR PLACE

David Adjaye, the Tanzanian-born (1966) London-based architect, has produced some notable houses and apartments; his practice has flowered recently with a series of public building projects. Ten of them, ranging from an upgrade of the Nobel Peace Center, a pavilion at the Venice Biennale, an arts centre in Denver and a brace of libraries in London, are the subject of a good exhibition in what was founded as the Whitechapel Art Gallery, has generally been known as the Whitechapel Gallery, but now refers to itself simply as Whitechapel, thereby appropriating in an arts-colonialist sort of way the entire area in which it is located. Too trendy by half.

That description was one which might have been applied to Adjaye himself not so long ago, when he was described by a staff enthusiast as 'not an architect – a brand'. Perhaps it was more tongue-in-cheek than it sounded, but it didn't do the Adjaye much good because it placed him in that dreaded category: the fashionable architect. Happily, the work on show proves (a) that his career will not be limited to designing dwellings for artists and the mediocracy; and (b) that he can produce thoughtful responses not merely to the formal programme of a project, but to its mainly urban context. He will, however, have to enjoy (or put up with) the surrounding baggage that is being hung on him as a young, gifted and black architect who works in London's East End. Whatever he does in the public arena, it is not enough for it to be (merely) good architecture.

On 11 March an associated exhibition event takes place, called: 'Multicultural architecture – How can architects respond to our multicultural cities?' What is this supposed to mean? More security?

The excellent accompanying exhibition catalogue/book (*David Adjaye: Making Public Buildings*, Thames and Hudson, £29.95) has as its sub-title 'Specificity; Customization; Imbrication', which is banal description dressed up in theoretical language. Aren't all public buildings specific? Aren't they all customised? Aren't they all 'imbricated' – overlapping to you and me. The critical essays in the book provide more overload, in which design decisions are accorded the status of philosophical discovery only, one suspects, because of who the architect is. Change the practice name on the title block (middle-aged white commercial firm) and the applause would probably fade.

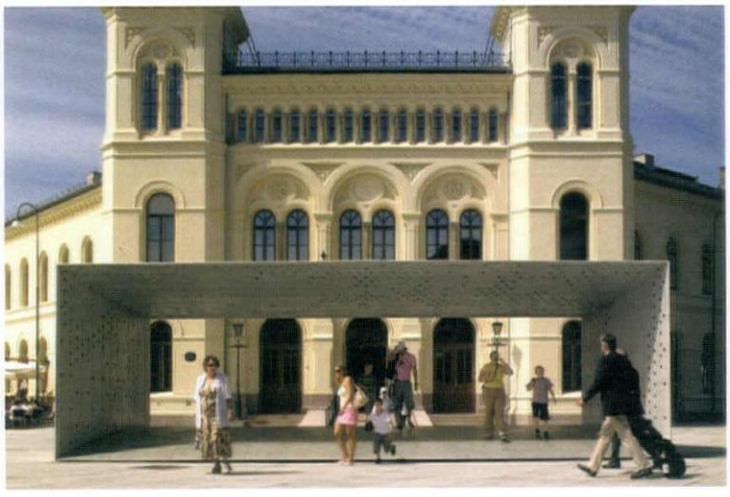
However, one can certainly recommend a visit to the exhibition, a read of the book and a visit to some of the content, which is only a few minutes' walk away from the gallery. The Ideas Store, for example, is on Whitechapel Road, and is given an appropriately good showing in the exhibition since it is the most important and complex work Adjaye has yet completed. For once, the hip name is appropriate, since although much of the building is a library, that is by no means the only function, and to call it a library would have been a misnomer. The local authority client wanted a multi-use building and the architect has responded with verve, incorporating a semi enclosed-escalator which works on the street and with the building.

My cavil about overloading the work with symbolic significance because of its inevitable relationship to space is illustrated by the fact that this building follows a simpler version in Chrisp Street, rather further away. That project explored volume, light, cladding and colour, and is a very clear prototype for the more complex later building. Both are on the street, and both have an automatic relationship to their surroundings; some of the moves in respect of entrance are obvious; some less so. In neither case can the building be said to be a public space project as such, but in both the surrounding urban context and grain have been considered. That makes for competent architecture.

What comes across in the exhibition, and is elaborated in the book, is the range of inspirations which inform the work – in particular objects and fabrics from various parts of Africa which sometimes act as metaphors for the resulting buildings. The one-line descriptions of the relevance of these inspirations are excellent: a Ghanaian textile is 'parallel bars occupied on a rhythmic basis'; a comb is 'a disc, a square and a screen within an everyday object'; on a Sierra Leone mask, 'a repeated unit changes size to match the geometry of the surface'. We also get the palette of materials (and colours), and a refreshingly large number of hand-drawn diagrams/analysis sketches which precede the very clear plans and sections. These suggest an architect working in the round, sometimes focusing on the object and sometimes more on context, neither in an obviously formulaic way.

So: an architect with a wider range of references than many contemporaries, who did his apprenticeships with Souto de Moura and Chipperfield after time at the Royal College of Art, and who has plenty to offer on the strength of this show, including his first US building to be completed soon. His strengths appear to be an intuitive, artistic sensibility in respect of atmosphere, materials and colour, allied to conventional architectural skills. His RCA dissertation, incidentally, concerned 'Sacred place and the tea ceremony in Japan'. Perhaps that's what multi-culturalism really means: being interested in, and understanding, more than your own back yard. PAUL FINCH

Top: the Ideas Store, Whitechapel is within walking distance of the exhibition and is the practice's most complex completed building to date.
Right: the canopy structure at the Nobel Peace Center, Oslo. The unpolished aluminium surface includes a pattern of holes representing the world's land masses, best seen from inside the building.



browser

Sutherland Lyall frolics lamb-like among the meadows of cyber blogs.

Captain's blog

This month we look mostly at blogs (it just turned out that way). Architects like looking at (and showing) buildings they admire – and sounding off about them. What better way than to start up a blog? The common characteristic of the blogs noted here is their freshness, their little regard for taxonomic exactitude, and the way they engender that great feeling that you are merging with the innovative end of the great architectural arcana. Don't forget Google's *www.blogsearch.google.com* or *www.search.blogger.com* for more.

Getting to grips

As you might expect, Interactive Architecture dot Org is at *www.interactivearchitecture.org*. It's one of those blogs which is difficult to distinguish from a standard website. The clue is the persistent use in the text of the first person singular. The 'I' in question is Ruairi Glynn, a graduate of Plymouth University's MediaLab Arts who works at the Bartlett school of architecture. His aim, once you have got through the verbal convolutions at the beginning, is about the possibilities involved in merging digital virtuality with materiality – to use the latter word in a sense unfamiliar to many architecture dominees. At least I think that's what the site is about. It is one of those ambitions which addles the brains of grant providers and enables bright people to get on with playing around with stuff. Not that there is any evidence that Glynn is working the academic system thus. His general manifesto cleverly takes the form of an interview with him – by the HMC MediaLab Organisation, which is to be found at *www.HMCMedialab.org*. Like all good blogs, you search and leave Glynn's site with a very satisfying sense of incompleteness. It is partly to do with the fact that the range of subjects is so broad; you want to have soaked up at least one before you go. It is also to do with the wonderful images and the comfortably long list of hyperlinks and previous 'issues' – which go back to April last year but still involve a huge amount of viewing. Ominously, Glynn declares an interest in transience. Hope it's only in transient architecture.

Overload, overload

Among the many pleasures of *www.inhabitat.com* is the armchair which converts into an electric double hob. I don't want to say anything about the design of this US blog beyond observing that if designers insist on doing everything – including the headlines – in various difficult-to-differentiate shades of pale green, then you are likely to lose your audience. Donning some thick spectacles I managed to make out the explanatory subtitle 'future-forward design for the world you inhabit'. Disregarding the probable tautology at the beginning of this enigmatic heading, I clicked on 'Architecture' and started scrolling down after the first building. And scrolled down and down and down. Here is a smörgåsbord of buildings. Previous months (as with Interactive, the site goes back to last April) are not as well stocked. But this blog represents a substantial archive of (mostly) really interesting and sometimes mildly mad architecture and building. At the risk of piles of letters of denunciation, I note that this seems to be an almost all-women site and that it is committed to the ideology of the Bauhaus – though, happily, this latter scarcely affects the architecturally omnivorous nature of the former.

One in the eye

No, we haven't suddenly dropped our strict standards with the Eye Candy blog at *http://eyecandy-webcandy.blogspot.com/*. This is actually 'a pic a week from our weekly e-zine' according to the sub-heading, which urges you to sign up for the free weekly email. I did that but, not wanting to wait a week for the first one, I simply scrolled down and, like Inhabit, here is a stream of current architecture that I think represents the current back catalogue. Although the orientation of the site looks European, this is the production of 'Eric KCMO, Mid-West, United States'. He is saying no more than that. It has been set up as an extension of a five-year-old free weekly email: 'It is our intention to raise the level of design by exposing ourselves to the examples set by others (both good and bad)'. So there you have it. There is a list of hyperlinks and you can view previous posts by name as well as scrolling. Nice.

This is not a pipe

My schoolboy German isn't good enough to establish whether Dasparkhotel at *www.dasparkhotel.net/index.php* is a joke or not. A Parkhotel room is a section of one of those giant concrete storm water pipes with a rooflight, a built-in bench and a plywood door. Ranged side by side in the local park they form, I suppose, the parkhotel which would be used during the summer months at Ottensheim on the Danube by such as passengers, culture travellers and people 'escaping everyday life'. The most apparent infrastructure lacuna is the bathroom arrangement, but since the Japanese seem to have sorted this out in their capsule hotels (surely the parent of this idea) maybe mine is a flawed vision of night-time ply doors flapping open to reveal happy campers in dressing gowns and sponge bags milling around in search of a hearty tooth clean. And more.

Sutherland Lyall is at sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com

diary

AR'S CHOICE OF INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

DENMARK
BASELITZ: PAINTER
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek
Until 6 June
Retrospective of German artist Georg Baselitz from the art museum that gave him his first Danish show in the early 1980s and which has tracked his career ever since.
www.louisiana.dk

FRANCE
RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP: ZENTRUM PAUL KLEE
La Galerie d'Architecture, Paris
Until 1 April
Exhibition exploring the thinking behind Renzo Piano Building Workshop's recently completed Paul Klee Musuem in Bern (AR August 2005). The building draws inspiration from both Klee's work and the site topography.
www.galerie-architecture.fr

GERMANY
UN STUDIO: EVOLUTION OF SPACE
Deutsches Architektur Museum, Frankfurt
Until 30 April
Major show of the work of Dutch architectural duo Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos. Projects such as the Moebius House and forthcoming Mercedes Benz Museum in Stuttgart embody an intelligent preoccupation with digital form making.
www.dam-online.de

UK
PREFABULOUS LONDON: THE A-Z OF MODERN CITY HOMES
Building Centre, London
Until 18 March
Case studies of imaginative new housing projects around London that aim to challenge convention and explain modern construction methods such as modules and panels in concrete, steel and timber.
www.buildingcentretrust.org

USA
DADA
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
Until 14 May
The bumper Dada exhibition which was originally shown at the Pompidou Centre in Paris gets welcome transatlantic exposure. Themed around the sextet of cities in which Dada was manifest to varying degrees (Zurich, Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, New York, and Paris), this complex and compelling show features a myriad of painters, poets and provocateurs.
www.nga.gov

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delight



Photographs: Edmund Sumner/VIEW

Those who thought the Winter Olympics were all about slithering rapidly across ice or snow wearing a condom or sequins, might be reassured by the more culturally refined caperings of this year's Snow Show staged in the Italian alpine resort of Sestriere, as an adjunct to (and possibly distraction from) the Games. Curated by New York-based Lance Fung, the show reprises the successful formula of previous years, staged in the more refrigerated climes of Finland (AR March 2004), in which teams of architects and artists collaborate to create temporary structures out of ice and snow. Within certain practical limits, imagination can take flight with extraordinary results. This time, the Torino Olympic Committee provided funding with Regione Piedmont and London's Albion Gallery.

Though the photographs here convey an appropriate sense of artistic serenity, actually bringing to life the vision of people such as Daniel Buren, Yoko Ono, Norman Foster and Arata Isozaki was fraught with difficulties. Fung's construction team of students working and local contractors was confronted with yo-yoing temperatures, varying weather conditions (lack of snow, too much snow) and a cast iron deadline. One day's sun could melt three feet of snow, wiping out a day's work.

Ultimately human endeavour overcame nature to make a dramatic mark on the winter landscape. Lebbeus Woods, working with Kiki Smith, designed Looking Glass (main picture), a frozen pond with fibre optic cables which emit swirling trails of light, like the tracks of phantom skaters. Slide Meeting (bottom left) by Williams & Tsien and Carsten Holler is a geometric bunker penetrated by chutes for high speed sledging. Norman Foster's personal passion for cross-country skiing inspires Where Are You (middle), a sculpted snow dial with the global co-ordinates for his London office designed in collaboration with Spanish artist Jaume Plensa. By contrast, Yoko Ono's Penal Colony (far right) produced with fellow Japanese Arata Isozaki is an austere and oppressive grey labyrinth. From fantasy to nightmare, the Snow Show (*www.thesnowshow.com*) celebrates the creative potential of the white stuff and perks up the winter scene. It runs until 19 March. C. S.





