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**Production Manager**  
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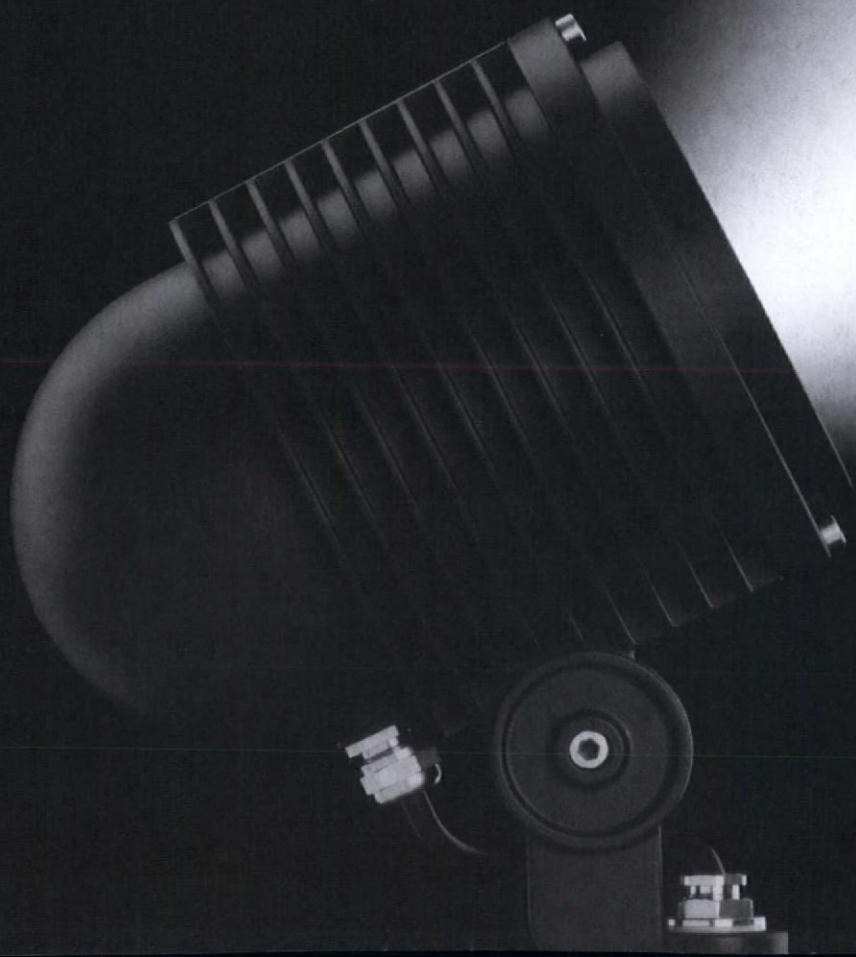


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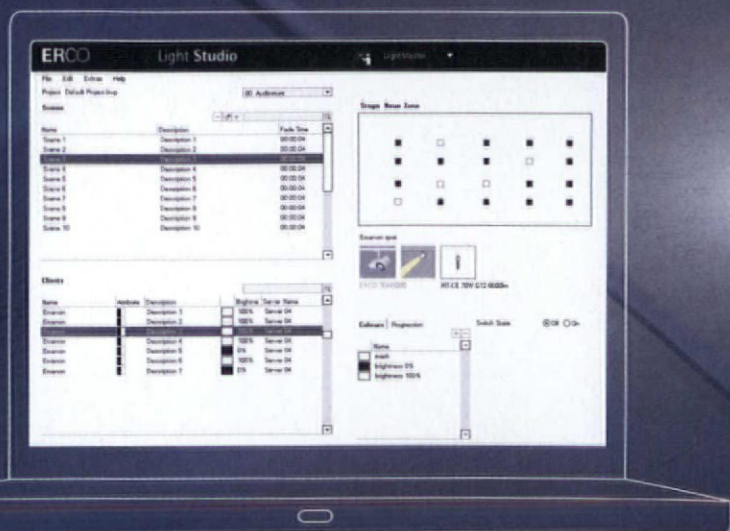
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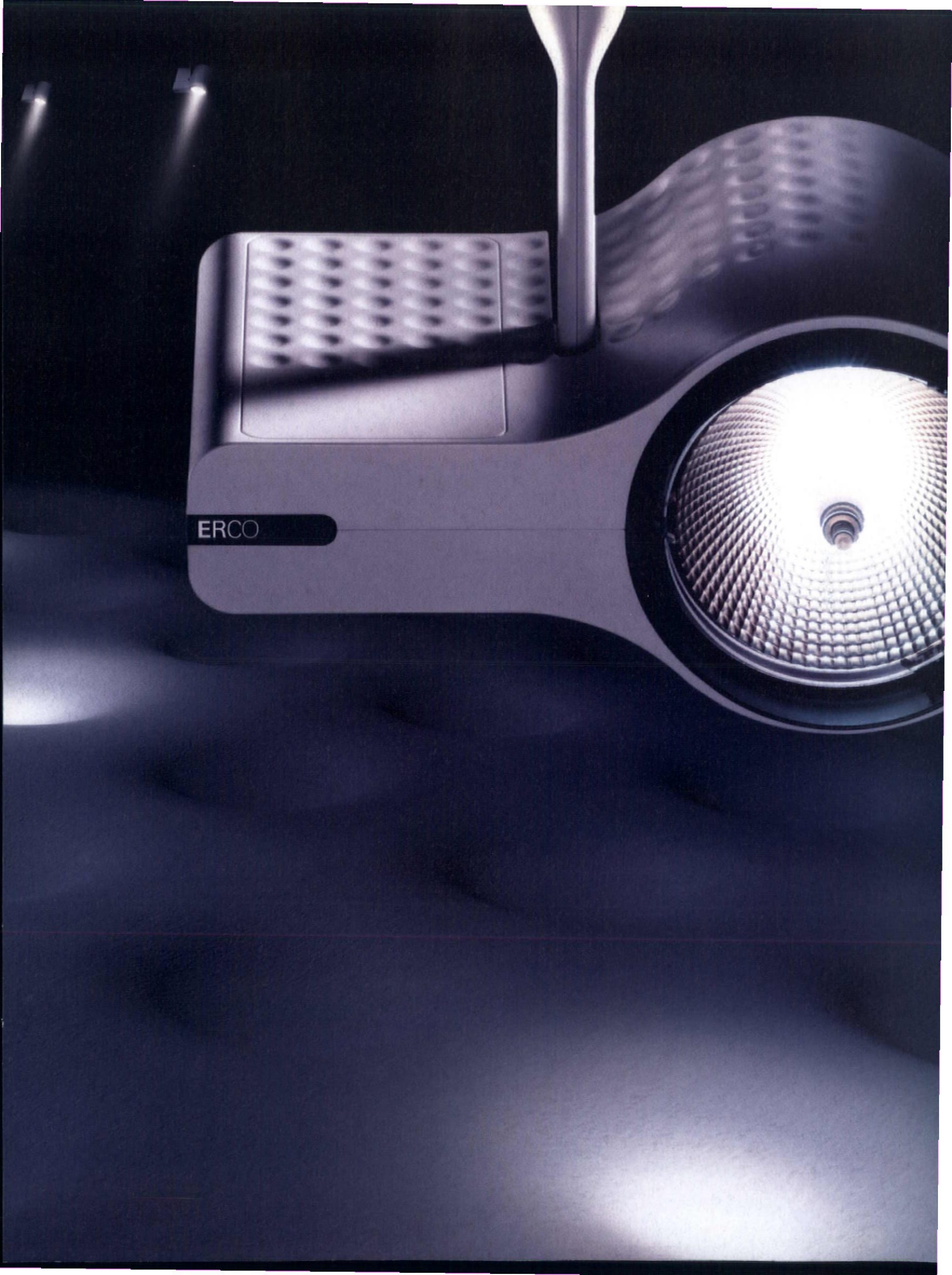
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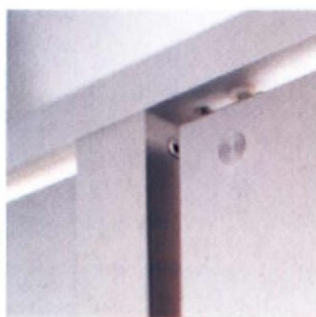


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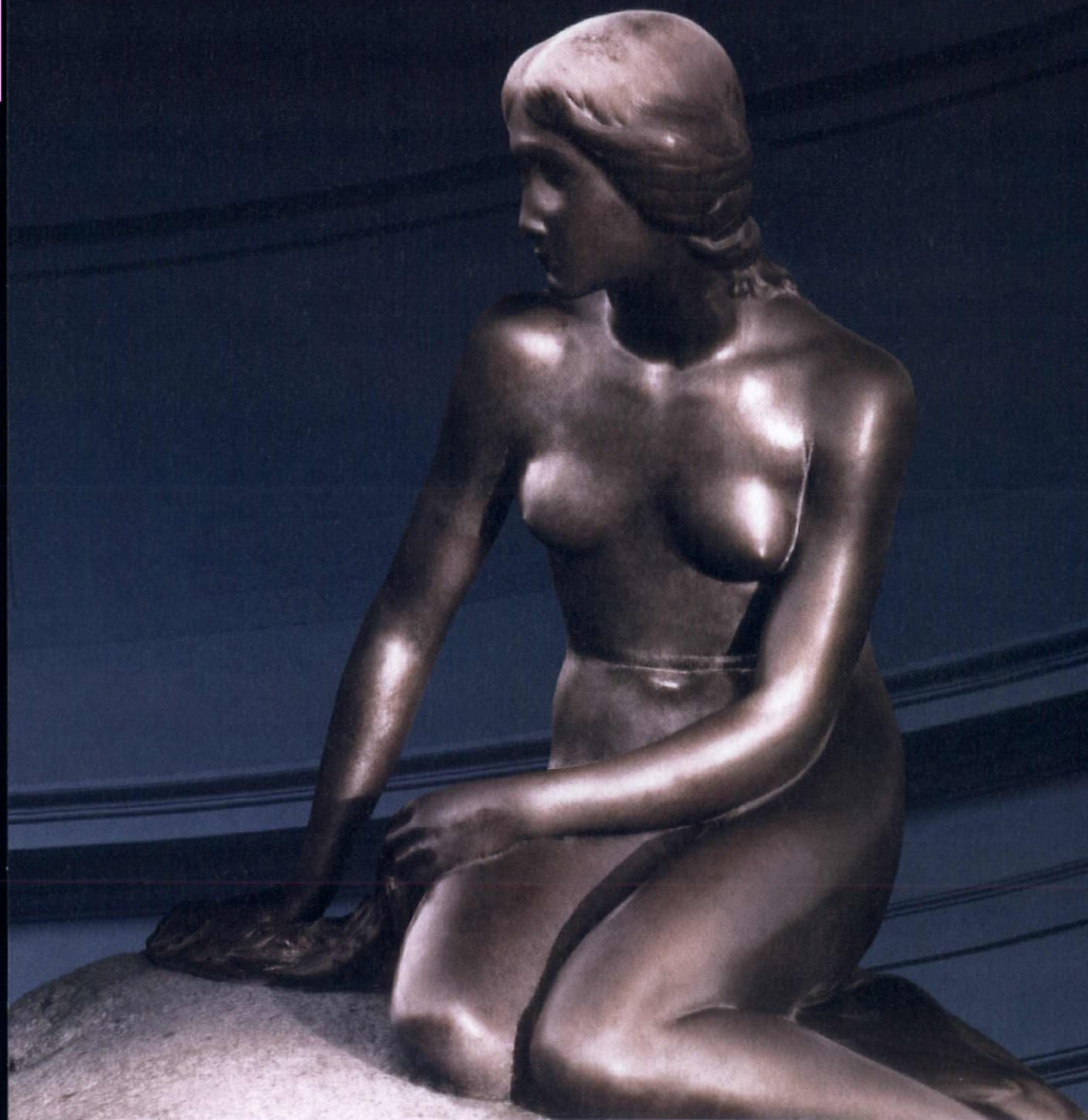


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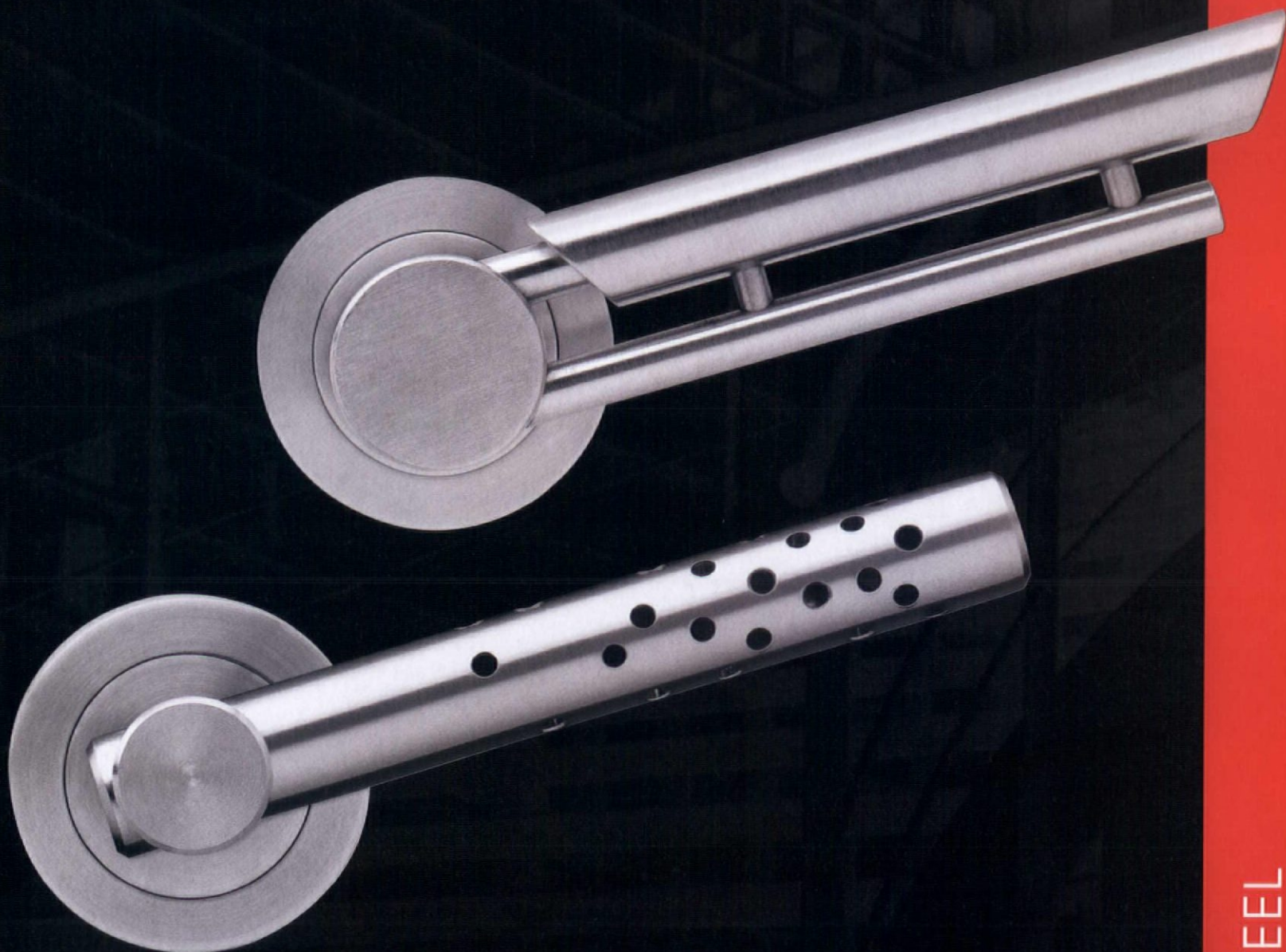
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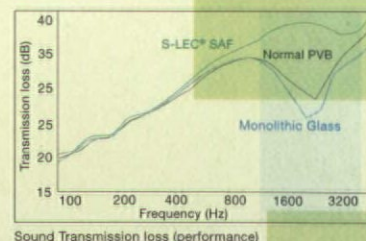
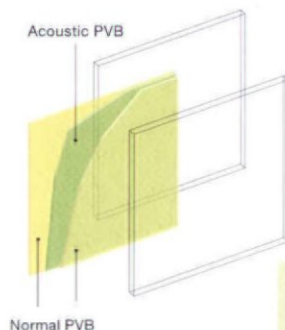
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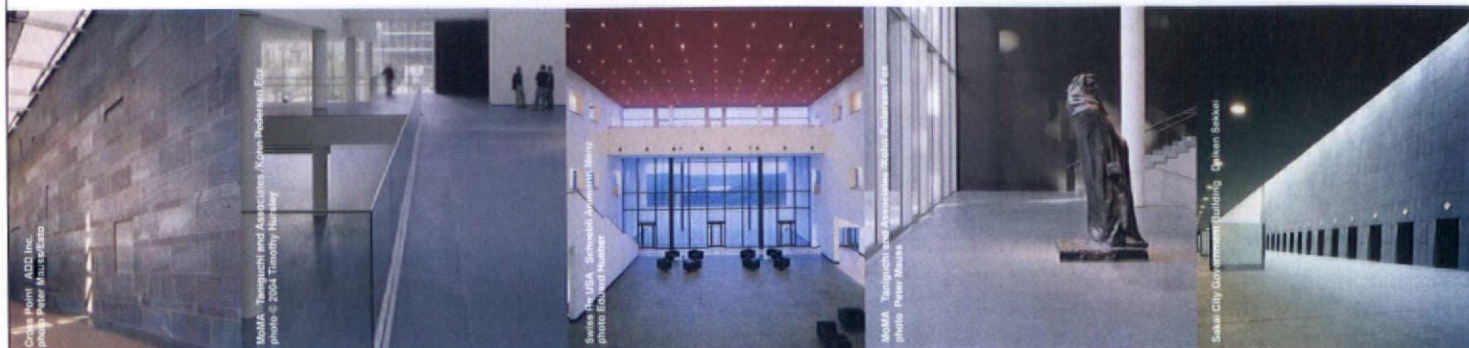
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# lex, walsall, international architecture competition

Urban Splash has big plans at Walsall Waterfront and is already on site with Phase One. We are now holding a RIBA competition to find the most exciting practice with the best ideas for our new site, Lex.

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Urban Splash is already working with SMC Alsop, shedkm, Feix and Merlin and Grant Associates and we want the successful designer to deliver more world class architecture in Walsall.

For more information and a copy of the brief, contact the RIBA competitions office or visit [www.lexwalsall.co.uk](http://www.lexwalsall.co.uk)

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Fax: +44 (0)113 246 0744  
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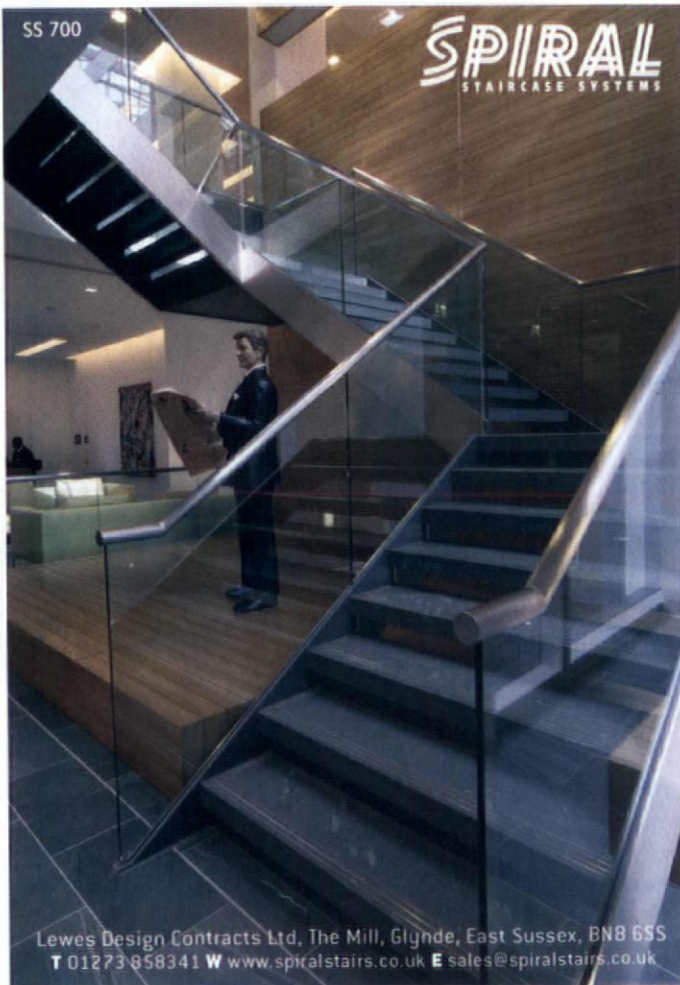
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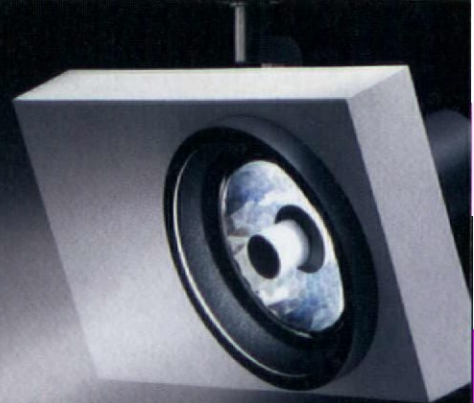
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# view

THE RIBA PRESIDENT'S MEDAL CRITS POINT UP THE NEED FOR GOOD VERBAL DELIVERY; PETER COOK DISCOVERS THAT THE ARCHITECTURAL GENERATION GAME IS FULL OF BOTH DELIGHTS AND PITFALLS; VISIONARY ARCHITECTURE CRITIC, EDITOR AND WRITER MARTIN PAWLEY REMEMBERED.

## INEXTRICABLY LINKED

The United States is suffering from the inevitable role of being the most powerful country in the world; that is the fate of empires. Yet this is an 'empire' of an unusual sort. It involves neither conquest nor subjugation of the sort familiar to the Romans or, for that matter, the British. It is true that it involves the pursuit of economic interest, by military means if that interest is threatened for non-trading reasons; it is also true that the Pax Americana has involved a cultural hegemony which has provoked resistance from both religious and cultural opponents (all those new French words trying to be hip). On the other hand, in any considered perspective, the US can scarcely be said to be warlike. It was, initially, a reluctant participant in the two great twentieth-century conflicts, no doubt heeding Thomas Jefferson's sage advice to avoid Continental wars and entanglements; and it has been extraordinarily generous in terms of the financial and moral support it has given across the globe, particularly to Europe and Japan, in the wake of the Second World War.

For a country that has, in many ways, been so idealistic about the world, there are now disappointments in the way it has veered wildly from (for example) running rather loose airport security regimes to something resembling a mania. Nor has it yet come to terms with the fact that its own attitude to the warring parties in the Middle East, fuelled by Christian fundamentalism, is contributing heavily to the problem rather than a solution. Rarely has there been such an example of how American 'can do' turns into 'can't do' for all the wrong reasons. Again, the burden of imperial might is that a world-view results in actions rather than mere observation, for good or ill.

It is all the more encouraging, therefore, that in at least one cultural regard, the US has embraced warmly the experience of others after a long period of suspicion nurtured by protectionist professional registration. In the case of architecture, it is now not uncommon for buildings in the US to be designed by architects from overseas, something which has scarcely happened in the history of the country. While the US experienced the post-Bauhaus attentions of émigré European architects from the 1930s onwards, they produced work in America as Americans – symbolically represented by Walter Gropius' Pan-Am building in Manhattan. Now architects from Europe and Japan, as shown in this issue of AR, are increasingly in evidence in US cities, matching the expansion of US firms in Europe and beyond. This is a welcome sign of a political and cultural maturity that one should expect from a global leader. **PAUL FINCH**

## LOST FOR WORDS

**This year's RIBA President's Medal Crits showed the importance of good verbal delivery.**

RIBA President, Sunand Prasad, began the 3rd annual RIBA President's Medal crits by introducing this year's RIBA Royal Gold

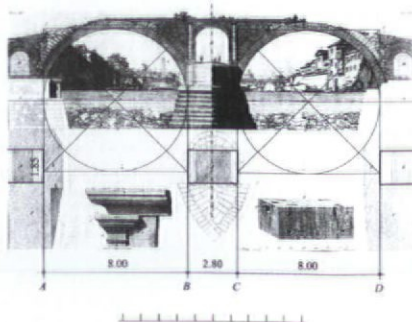
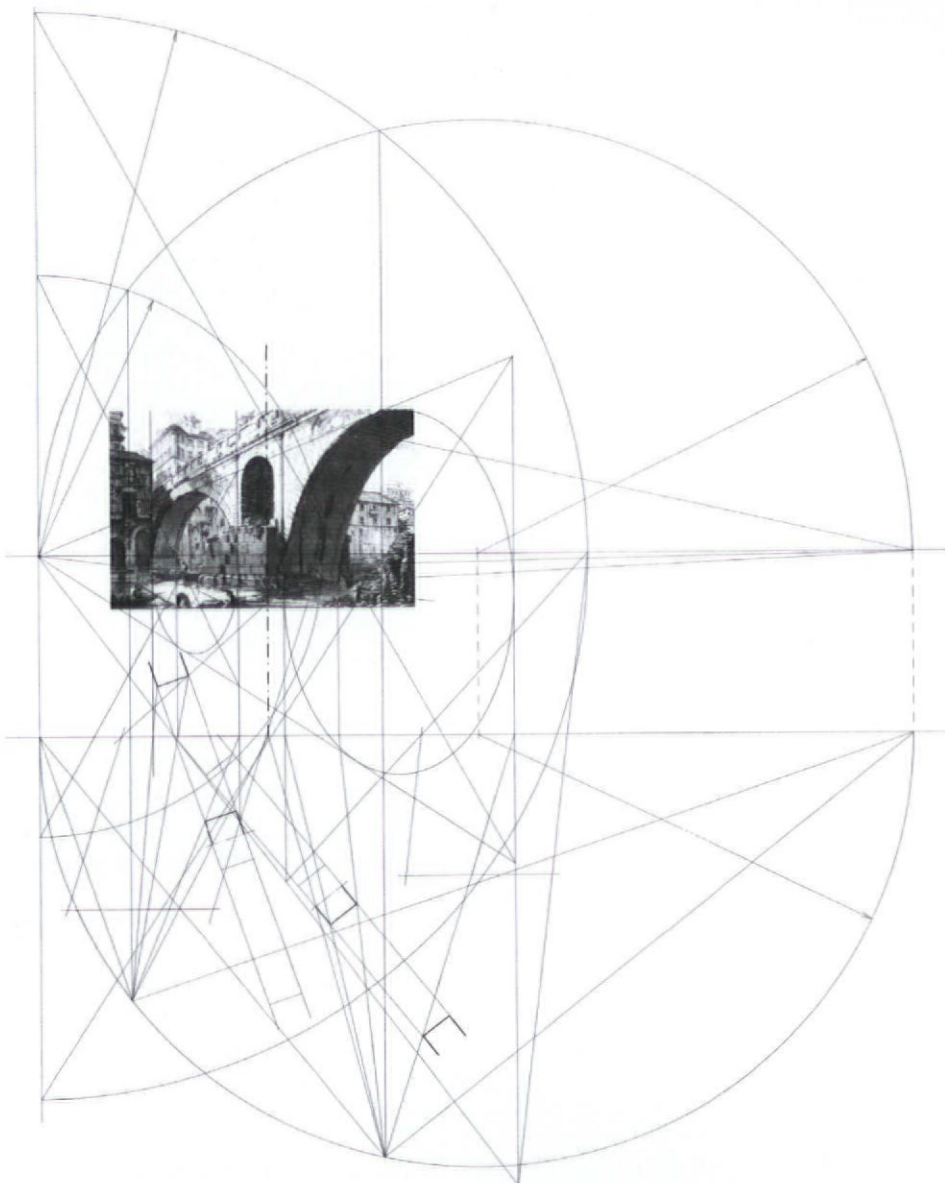
Medallist, Edward Cullinan. It was a busy week of Gold Medal events that seemed to both invigorate and fatigue the 76 year old architect (AR March 2008, p32). Interestingly, while acknowledging Cullinan's focus on practicalities of construction and use, Prasad made a point of repeating the architect's statement that architecture is very much part of the 'what it looks like game'. In saying this,

it was as if Prasad had anticipated what was about to unfold, as Cullinan was invited to crit the work of this year's top students.

Throughout his celebrated 40-year career Cullinan has been one of an increasingly rare breed of architects who continue to make a significant contribution to both architectural education and practice: formally, by teaching in universities; entertainingly, by lecturing with his faithful overhead projector pens. And practically, by leading by example through his hands-on, sleeves rolled up, this-is-how-you-do-it approach. As such, Cullinan makes an excellent critic, bringing an insightful commentary without giving any sense of having something to prove. With his relaxed manner, when compared with previous crits by Toyo Ito and Harry Guger, Cullinan's approach was less formal and more natural, with his generous avuncular manner putting everyone at immediate ease. Unfortunately, however, Ted's familiarity may have taken a critical edge off the proceedings, as both bronze and silver medallists grossly undersold their fine work, giving lacklustre verbal presentations that were in one case unfocused and in the other inaudible and incomprehensible.

The quality of the bronze and silver medal presentations was clearly a disappointment to Cullinan, giving both students a brief reprimand and offering advice on how to simplify their verbal delivery. Making the most of the occasion, however, he soon refocused on the positive and led a conversation that repeatedly acknowledged the extremely high quality of the students' drawn work. The work was without doubt exceptional, and even this year's Dissertation medallist Joanna Rapp from the University of Westminster, produced a series of fine drawings as part of her thorough and revealing analysis and reconstruction of Piranesi's multiple view-point perspectives, (seen left).

Amandine Kastler from the Architectural Association followed on, presenting her Cabinet of Curiosities that explored how an



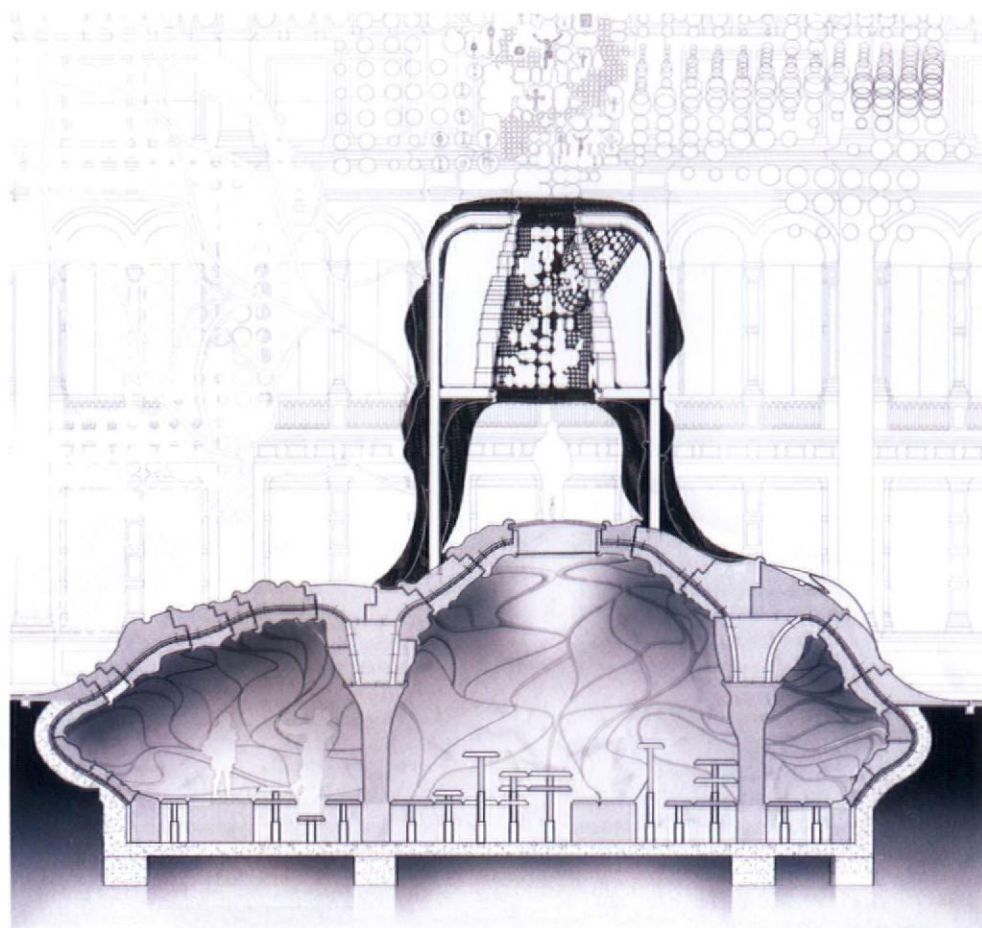
Medals galore: left to right, Joanna Rapp, Dissertation Medallist; Steve Westcott, Silver Medallist; Edward Cullinan, Royal Gold Medallist; Sunand Prasad, RIBA President; Amandine Kastler, Bronze Medallist.



Amandine Kastler's *Cabinet of Curiosities* at the V&A ...

ornamental language could be developed through a material exploration, as part of a proposal for a new gallery in the Victoria and Albert Museum. And Steve Westcott from the Bartlett School of Architecture drew the presentations to a close with his exploration of how collecting as a facilitator of knowledge could be used to influence space and form, with proposals for a Perceptual Observatory at Greenwich, east London.

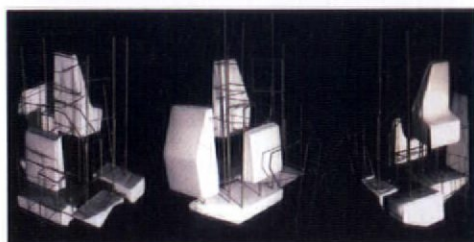
Without exception the students' drawings were exquisite, demonstrating that there is no truth in accusations that today's graduates have lost any sense of how to craft beautifully balanced compositions and renderings.



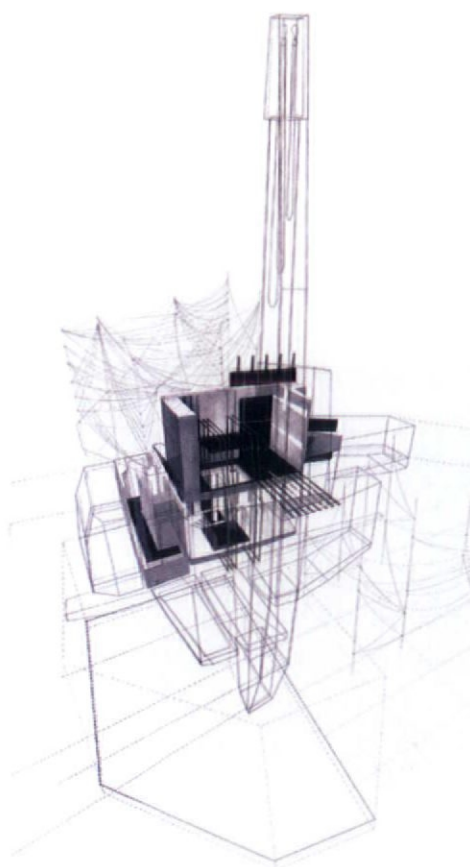
... a space to store stone figurative sculptures and sacred silver objects.



Westcott's Silver Medal winning Perceptual Observatory.



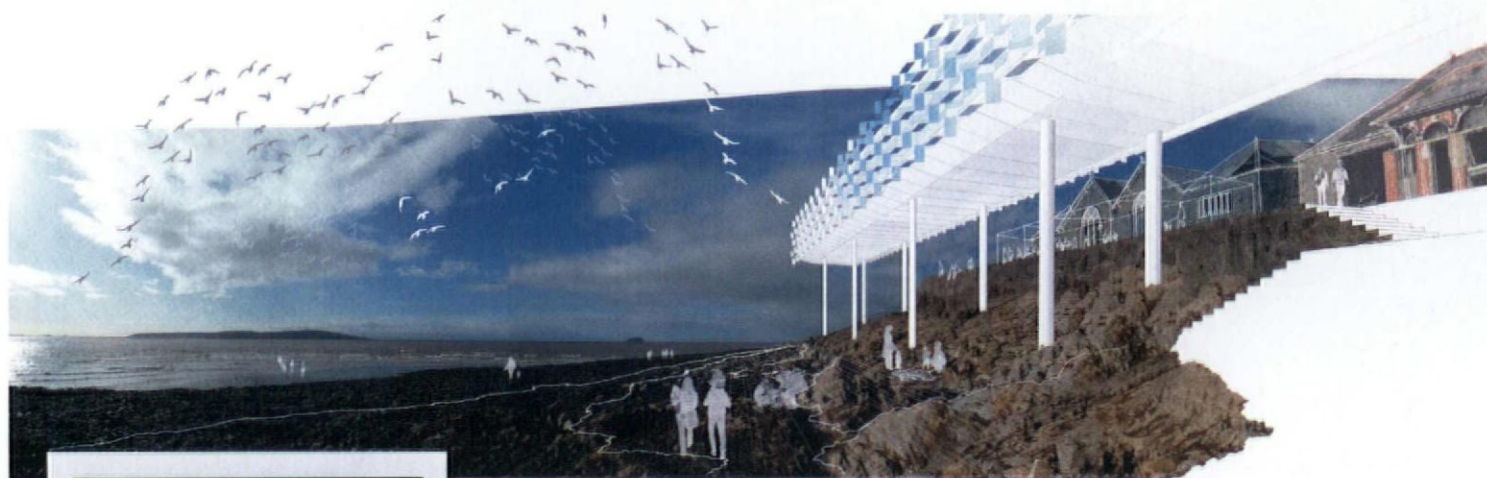
Westcott's models and drawings show great sensitivity.



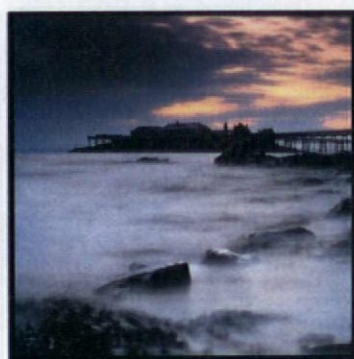
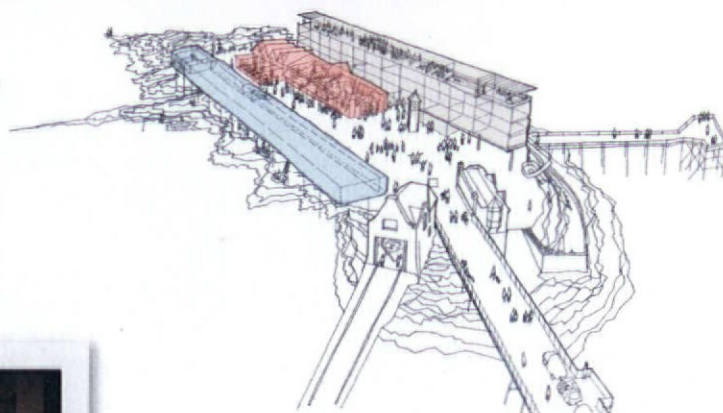
However, what was disappointing (as has been said of previous President's Medal crits AR May 2006 and AR April 2007), was that provision should have been made for the students to present full-size originals, including models, in a proper pin-up format.

The discipline of this essential process would almost certainly have produced more engaging presentations, and allowed this occasion to be as significant as it should be. Sitting down like news readers behind a desk with a laptop, is no way to engage an audience or make an adequate representation of months of hard work.

Perhaps the whole process needs to be reconsidered? As today's media is becoming increasingly sophisticated, there is an ever increasing need to work harder on the art of verbal presentation, both in academia and in practice. With public consultation and formal Design Review presentations becoming more widely used throughout the industry, perhaps the actual judging process of this award should also be changed to include crits as part of the selection process, recognising a key skill for any practising architect. Giving such significant awards on the strength of printed media remains a significant flaw. ROB GREGORY



Above: Levitate's strategy focuses on three priorities (panning left to right), restoring access to the island's natural sea-scape; replacing concrete decks with elevated pavilions; and working with existing buildings. Polaroids: images of existing condition by Bradley Wilford. Right: bird's-eye sketch. Below: view from existing colonnade to horizon.



## WISH YOU WERE HERE

### Levitate win with Urban Splash.

Levitate's competition-winning strategy for Weston-super-Mare's Birnbeck Island focuses on rebalancing the nature of this unique habitat. Addressing issues that face many historic piers, an RIBA competition was launched that attracted 95 international entries. Six teams were short-listed, including AOC, FLACQ, Pierre D'Avoine with White Young Green, Richards Partington, and MOH. Following a second stage interview, the London- and Bristol-based practice Levitate was selected as the winner.

The architect proposed a series of moves that would re-balance development on the island, focusing on relationships between nature and the manmade. Effectively undressing the island by removing concrete decks, Birnbeck's distinctive rock will be revealed as the most important physical feature. Two new linear buildings (suitable for leisure accommodation) will then be placed where decks previously stood, rising above the horizon to maintain stunning 360 degree views, allowing environmental elements to return as the site's dominant force. Horizontal forms accentuate the dynamic action of Bristol Channel's huge 15m tidal range.



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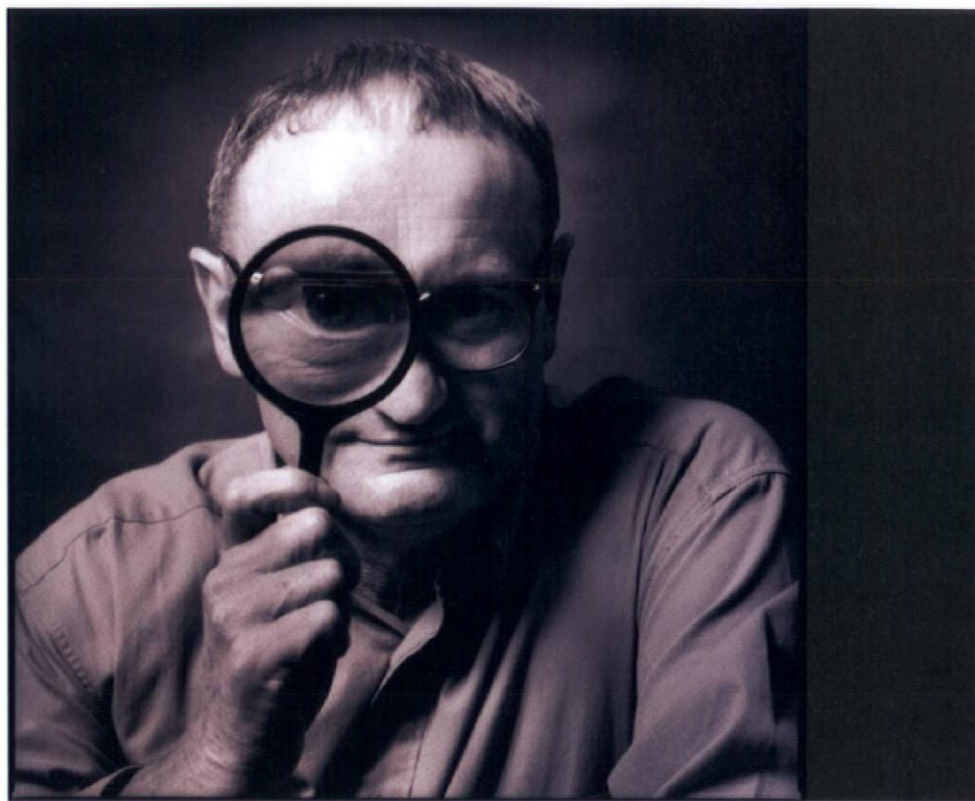
## obituary

## MARTIN PAWLEY 1938-2008

Martin Pawley was a brave, outspoken critic of a kind that is extremely rare in the field of architecture. Others might produce the occasional combative piece, but only Pawley kept it up consistently throughout his whole career. The timid and the dull, the comfortable and the complacent, the short-sighted and the backward-lookers – none was safe while he was active. And he was always active, as a prolific writer in various registers from the pithy 400 word column to the major, paradigm-shifting book. Architectural journalists are often content to stay in the comfort zone, celebrating good work and conforming to mainstream or fashionable taste. Pawley didn't have a comfort zone. He often returned to favourite themes – technology transfer, a contempt for 'restorationism', an apocalyptic vision of the urban future – but always there was some new insight or provocation. He told me that he could never start a piece, no matter how pressing the deadline, until that new angle was clear in his mind. Everything he wrote was worth reading, whether for its fresh insights or its sheer entertainment value.

He was born in Borehamwood in 1938 and received his architectural education at Oxford Polytechnic, the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and the Architectural Association. Deciding early on that architectural practice was not for him, he started dabbling in journalism. While at the AA he edited the still well-remembered *Ghost Dance Times* until school principal Alvin Boyarsky decided that the paper was too disrespectful even for that progressive school. Falling out with people in superior positions was to become something of a habit. Pawley was one of nature's freelancers, although he held several permanent posts, including news editor of *The Architects' Journal*, editor of *World Architecture* and a two-year stint as editor of *Building Design*.

In the 1970s he spent some time in the US as a teacher – at Cornell, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York State, Florida A&M University and UCLA. He was the kind of teacher that gets his students out building buildings rather than just fantasising in the studio. In 1976, his Rensselaer students built a house from locally sourced waste materials such as tin cans and cardboard newsprint cores, with a wall of bottles instead of windows. Like so many of Pawley's ideas it was way ahead of its time, making today's local authority recycling paraphernalia look over-elaborate and pointless. His scepticism about green architecture was not of the head-in-the-sand variety but came from an impatience with



Photograph: David Banks

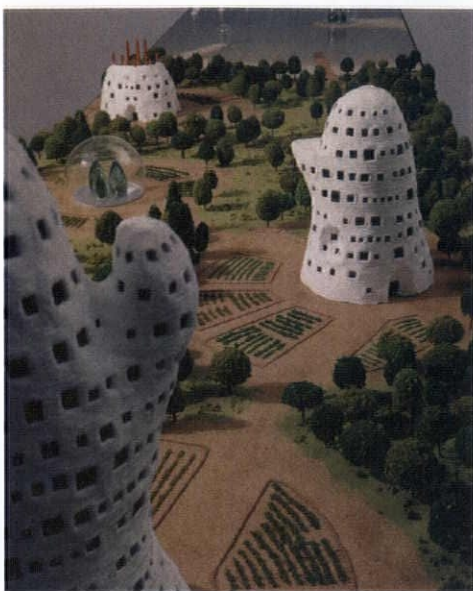
backward-looking policies that turned against technology rather than embracing it.

By 1978 he had already written three books about housing and a fourth, called *The Private Future*, in which he presented an extraordinarily prescient vision of a time when drugs, pornography and the virtual world would take the place of actual social encounters. In 1998 he updated the vision in *Terminal Architecture*, which begins with a dark fable about travellers to a future Britain. All the public infrastructure is in ruins and the inhabitants live in tiny car-like one-person pods with hologram interiors. Perhaps that future will become reality too. By titling his previous book *Theory and Design in the Second Machine Age* (1990), Pawley had made a typically bold claim to the mantle of Reyner Banham, who had died two years before. The comparison with Banham is an obvious one and few would object to the claim but, as David Jenkins says in his introduction to the recently published collected writings (AR March, p94), Pawley's world is much less optimistic than Banham's. That vision of a loveless future, with everybody sleeping in their cars, is deeply ambiguous.

The books – 16 of them in all, including biographies of Buckminster Fuller and Eva Jiricna – constitute an impressive body of work, but most people will remember his journalism best. He was architecture correspondent of the *Guardian* in the late '80s, and from 1989 to 1995 he was a regular contributor to the BBC2 arts programme *The Late Show*, setting a standard of rigour in the treatment of modern architecture

on television that sadly has not since been maintained. His regular columns, including an uninterrupted run of 505 for the weekly *The Architects' Journal*, were essential reading for anyone wishing to keep up with, or ahead of, the debates of the time. He always took the side of modernity and progress against historicism and tradition, so he was generally sympathetic to High-Tech, suspicious of Post-Modernism and contemptuous of the Prince of Wales's conservatism. And yet he was no partisan and always appreciated original work, whatever its provenance. When Terry Farrell built a little tent-roofed post-modern-classicist shop in Covent Garden, he applauded it for its combination of ironic style with clever technology. And when he interviewed Quinlan Terry, he was respectful of that arch-traditionalist's professionalism. Martin was a friendly person, generously offering, for example, to take an unexpected visitor out for a sail on his beloved boat, even with a deadline pressing that day. Not surprisingly, he was great conversationalist and a tough arguer. It wasn't easy to change his mind and, as in his writing, he would use all his powers of rhetoric to change yours. I remember an occasion on a journalists' trip to Berlin when the PR people treated us to a concert at the Philharmonie: a pretty Mozart Symphony followed by Shostakovich's powerful Leningrad Symphony, written in 1941. Which did you prefer? was the inevitable question from Martin afterwards. The wrong answer (Mozart) would have elicited a snort of contempt.

COLIN DAVIES



Terunobu Fujimori's fantastical project for high-rise buildings in Tokyo enrobed in heavy plaster cladding.

## Peter Cook

**The architectural generation game is full of both delights and pitfalls.**

'What can be done about us 40-year-olds?' It seemed an odd question, coming as it did from an active, upwardly mobile Harvard graduate about to return to a thriving corner of Asia where he would be landing somewhere near the top of a powerful company. Yet maybe the inquiry masked another hidden question in his mind. He was planning to return home from a highly charged and intriguing corner of the West Coast architectural world, where office and faculty conversations had been about design, theory, invention and tectonics at a very elevated level. Was mere professional success where it was at?

He started to develop the conversation along a familiar line: namely that certain generations are hyper-conscious of the identity, the fame and the achievements of the generation just in front of them. After all, in architecture (unlike commerce), you can respectably begin to burst out into the sunlight in your late forties, just as you can respectably still be a postgraduate student or a 'back-room boy' in your mid-thirties. Yet as operational offices get bigger and the academic system gets more formal, the current generation of twenty-somethings are far more skilled at 'positioning' than we ever were. The right school, the right teacher, girlfriend/boyfriend, suit/dress/magazine subscription, suburb/buzzwords/mobile ... the list is endless. The corollary of such positioning is its timing. This lucky (or is it unlucky?) breed seems to know when to (quoting an old adage) 'put away childish things'. This generates

a constant, nagging concern as to whether or not they are managing to strike the right markers at the right time.

Sitting just a year or four behind a brilliant generation must be an infuriating situation – in Vienna after Carl Schorske's<sup>1</sup> *'fin-de-siècle'*? In Chicago after Mies? In Pennsylvania after Louis Kahn? Or what about London now – after 'High-Tech'? And what will be left after the heroic period of digitalism: when Greg Lynn, Lars Spuybroek and the gang are writing their memoirs and every tatty kid can do a morpher in first year?

As I entered architecture (at the tender age of 16, and therefore usefully uneducated), we were made fully aware that we were the generation that 'hadn't had to go into the army'. No regrets there. So we were by definition a bunch of boring, unchallenged kids. The anarchy of the British art-school scene coupled with a wonderfully untrained sense of 'non-time' (and in Cedric Price's more educated head, 'non-place'), enabled us often to fail to notice an opportunity even if it stared us in the face. Along with this we made funny, useless-useful friends, did silly projects for no money, invented non-journals with deliberately bad printing, and could (in a roundabout way) claim the fatherhood and motherhood of Great British Grunge.

In its defence – and in a most cost-ineffective, time-inefficient way – it fed a natural, lazy/eager lateral thought process. I passed the 40 mark almost without noticing it, less acknowledged than when I'd been 30 or than I would be at 50.

My worried friend had, on the other hand, played on the American academic scene,

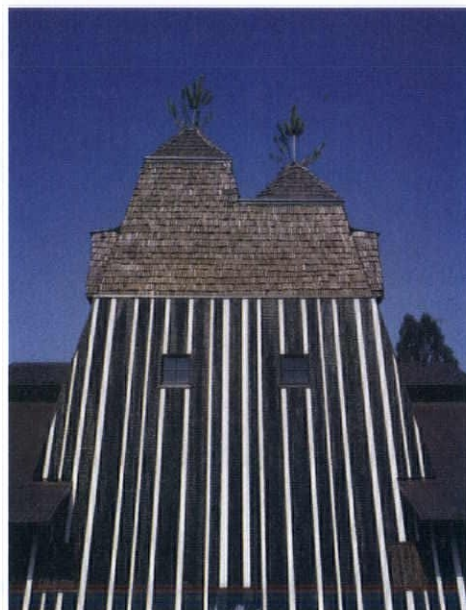
where the dreaded 'tenure track' system kicks in. Effectively, you have to make sure you keep your nose clean, quote the right references, attend tedious conferences, write unnecessary papers and be nice to old (and young) farts. All deemed to be more important than creating something new or setting course on an original path of inspiration.

Horrific parallels occur in offices – and most of us hate them. The 'clean nose', or another nose of a certain hue, sits on the end of a mobile face that can smile this way or that and try to tack into the wind with the ultimate aim of making 'forward' career moves.

The irony is that architecture has an irritating – NO ! I mean DELIGHTFUL – habit of lurching both forward and round-and-round in a quite different way from predictable business plans. Rather more like the conduct of a war, where a rainstorm or a misinterpreted signal can throw the whole thing – or the syndrome described a few years ago by Alan Watkins<sup>2</sup> as the 'cock-up theory of politics'. Such lurching has its own dynamic and dimension. If my friend has this 40-year-old worry, there are others who used to have the pre/post computer literacy worry, others the 'have you built?' paranoia. Substitute: virginity loss/site experience/metric conversion/sustainability ethic, etc etc etc.

Architecture is not recommended for the potentially paranoid, though some of the apparently most forceful and confident of my friends have secret doubts and never feel that their building is quite as good as it might have been. But, covered by the power of their trajectory, their determination tells them that the next building will be better. And so it sometimes is.

Here, for once, is the value of history, biographies or gossip. There is the example of Sigurd Lewerentz, whose architectural career apparently came to an end in early middle age when he ran a metal window company, only to pick up brilliantly decades later, taking him into his nineties. Or more recently Bernard Tschumi. After publishing the 'Manhattan Transcripts' he could have continued as a conceptual architect-artist, but he then started to build (and brilliantly run) the Columbia architecture school. Or more recently still, who would dare categorise or predict the next moves from Terunobu Fujimori? Is he craftsman, historicist, funster, provocateur or true inventor? Was he ever worried at 40? What does it matter.



Bonkers but brilliant – Fujimori's Hot Spring House uses traditional *yakisugi* or charred cedar boards.

<sup>1</sup> Karl Schorske's book *Fin de Siècle Vienna* became a wonderful, chatty, readable cult document in the late 1980s that brought together an overview of the interdependent creativity of architects, artists, writers and psychologists around 1900.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Watkins wrote this in his period as political correspondent at the *Observer*, later moving to the *Independent on Sunday*.



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## comment

If you have ever tuned into a home improvement channel on American cable TV, you would know it is wrong to suggest that Americans can't build. Equipped, bearded and ready to rock, what Chuck Key can't do with his supercharged carbide and titanium tipped router is not worth knowing. With ample space, bountiful stock piles, and power tools on steroids, even the humble self-builder is equipped to complete ambitious projects. What can be said, however, and what the process of putting together this issue has revealed, is that America's enthusiastic, energetic and optimistic can-do attitude has in recent years been stifled by negative, risk averse forces that haunt both the clients that commission buildings and the construction industry that builds them.

Writing recently in the *New York Times*, Nicolai Ouroussoff highlighted the contradictory opinions that exist. Speaking specifically about New York's stifled condition, while for decades many have complained about the 'soul-sapping buildings churned out by anonymous corporate offices', there are also those who seem hell bent on making the so-called 'starchitect' an object of ridicule, jumping on and amplifying beyond any reason bad news stories of cost overruns and contractual difficulties that on more anonymous projects would be overlooked. While on occasion it is justifiable to stamp out cynical architectural egomania, as seen in the *New York Times*' criticism of Calatrava's design for the Ground Zero transport hub, described as 'a monument to the architect's ego', this month the AR features projects that make the most of the skills and interests of their overseas designers. These include Renzo Piano, whose *New York Times* building successfully challenges the conventions of high-rise office development (p42); SANAA's New Museum, that brings a bit of Japanese asceticism to the Bowery (p52); David Adjaye's Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver (p60), that is as radical as the art it houses; and four university buildings by Hopkins Architects (p78) that demonstrate the curious feedback loop, whereby the doyen of English High-Tech repatriates lessons learnt from Louis Kahn and Mies van der Rohe.

Without exception, when discussing each of the featured projects with the principal architects on the ground, consistent concerns emerge. Unless challenged, clients and contractors will tend to revert to standard details, tried and tested techniques, and conventional products. Finesse is often ruled out if robust, durable and maintenance-free items can be specified, with the ubiquitous American washroom, even in the most exclusive establishments, being fitted out with robust sanitaryware and chrome pipes, valves and cisterns, of such size and weight that they look as though they would survive a nuclear war. Bespoke is almost a swear word.

What is universally praised, however, is the role of the architect of record, who facilitates and streamlines the process of working in a foreign context. This not only means that architects like SANAA can relieve themselves of the need to trawl through local building regulation documents, but on a more practical level, it also allows them to operate on the ground with incredibly streamlined teams. The New Museum, for instance, was run by two relatively young architects working out of their Manhattan apartment. On both this

project and the Glass Museum in Toledo (AR November 2006), Gensler provided the executive muscle, as clients often specify and propose architects who have a proven track record in the production of construction documentation and working behind the scenes.

In conversation with Toshihiro Oki, the project architect of SANAA, criticisms were levelled against contractors who often try to dumb down the original design. In the New Museum, the architect had to explain that the light fittings were positioned above the ceiling panels in order to create an uncluttered soffit, when the contractor suggested it would be more practical to have the fluorescent tubes hanging beneath. God really is in the details, as Mies wryly noted (another famous émigré who redefined the American architectural scene).

At the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, David Adjaye had to work hard to convince the local mindset of the viability and desirability of (actually quite modest) technical innovation. His use of a proprietary insulation panel as light transmitting inner wall (mimicking Japanese rice paper) had, needless to say, never been done before and so did not compute with local building codes. Likewise the simple idea of the public being able to walk on a rooflight. But Adjaye's quiet persistence, together with the backing of Davis Partnership, his local architectural team, who had cut their teeth on Daniel Libeskind's Denver Art Museum, eventually won round the sceptics and achieved the desired effect. Client support was also crucial. It's notable that most of the projects in this issue are for cultural institutions, where a more open-minded approach and willingness to take risks acts as a spur to architectural imagination. Never underestimate the importance of enlightened patronage.

Another key issue is environmental sustainability. The American LEED programme sets targets and benchmarks, but this reactive, box-ticking culture does not encourage architecture to be rethought in a more fundamental way, from first principles. The US still has space to build, cheap energy, and a historic sense of omnipotence, so why should it change? It might appear an insurmountable task, turning around this massive and self-satisfied tanker, but if the world's largest and most voracious consumer can't reprioritise, then we're all heading for hell in a handcart.

Brit Probst of Davis Partnership, who worked with Adjaye on the MCA, is optimistic that the effect of foreign architects working in the US will ultimately prove to be a positive one, changing preconceptions and gradually raising the bar for both architects and contractors. 'At present, the American construction industry is one giant builder's merchants', he says, perhaps subconsciously thinking of Chuck and his power tools. Only by challenging existing notions of pre-packaged design, unimaginative construction techniques and complacent attitudes to sustainability, can things hope to move forward, and maybe outsiders are the right people to shake things up. As Paul Finch notes (p31), it is a tribute to America's political and cultural maturity that it can entertain and encourage architects from Europe and Japan, but it must also be hoped that beyond the sprinkling of superstar fairydust, this reciprocity has more profound repercussions. THE EDITORS

# CAN DO, WILL DO



SANAA's New Museum attempts to bring Japanese rigour to New York. Photograph: Christian Richters.



# Renzo Piano

## THE GRAY LADY

The Renzo Piano Building Workshop extends its reach in the United States, designing its first high-rise tower, in Manhattan.

OFFICE TOWER,  
NEW YORK, USA  
ARCHITECT  
**RENZO PIANO**  
BUILDING WORKSHOP



The newspaper's distinctive font is written large above the 8th Avenue entrance — formed by black sleeves that cloak the building's ceramic sun-screen.

Renzo Piano needs little introduction. Since the 1970s, he has been one of the most influential forces behind the best of European High-Tech. While thoroughly Italian, epitomising many of the nation's best traits (charisma, passion and finesse), Piano is a truly global architect, attracting an impressive range of clients from across the world. The latest is The New York Times Company, who chose Piano over Gehry, Foster and Pelli to design their new headquarters in Manhattan. In response, Piano has produced an understated building that reflects aspects of his own character, as well as those of his client's – the American daily newspaper nicknamed the Gray Lady for its staid appearance and style. Situated at the junction of 8th Avenue and West 41st Street, the New York Times Building makes an extremely significant contribution, not only to Piano's own portfolio as his first true high-rise tower (and precursor to his forthcoming 'Shard of Glass' in London), but also to the evolution of the skyscraper in the context of Manhattan, challenging a number of conventions by being the first of its kind.

Ever since Piano emerged as one half of what he now refers to as the Beaubourg 'bad-boys' – attracting praise and criticism as the imported team, designing a largely imported building – the Genoa-born architect has operated internationally, establishing his first office in Paris. While the prospect of cultural and language barriers may have deterred others, Piano has learnt that when working in a foreign context, make or break issues rarely relate to differences in the nature of places. Rather, they have more to do with differences in the

nature of individuals, and in how key project partners relate to each other. Measurable difficulties in the resolution of technical challenges and site specificity are generally resolvable, whereas fundamental differences between architect and client can be less easy. For Piano, therefore, the feasibility stage of a project is an essential starting point in the process, not only measuring practical constraints and opportunities, but also testing the client/architect relationship.

In this, it is the client's attitude to a single word that has become one of Piano's most important design stimulants. Impossible! Impossibile! Unmöglich! Onmogelijk! Impossível! However it is said this word resonates in Piano's mind. Repeating it in the language of each of his many host nations, he recalls moments when he has been able to size up the client's ambition and trust. Think of any Piano building and there have been many 'that's impossible' moments. On Kansai it related to the ability to produce the distinctive curved structure – that eventually required European technologies; on the Menil Collection, most people said those wonderfully distinctive ferro-concrete louvres were impossible. The building may never have taken the form it did were it not for the client (Dominique Schlumberger de Menil – daughter of physicist Conrad Schlumberger) who fully supported Piano's faith in the material that Nervi (and subsequently Piano himself) had made boats from.

In New York, while Piano cannot point to a specific I-word moment, in almost every aspect the client's support for unconventional ideas enabled him to produce a building that, despite its relatively

## OFFICE TOWER, NEW YORK, USA

ARCHITECT

RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP

2





2, 3  
From the west and south, the tower's bi-axial plan gives each orientation a different profile.

4  
The building comprises a tower and podium punctuated by a landscaped courtyard. On the 14th floor, the New York Times has a double-height common room.

unremarkable appearance (as expressed by those who wanted Gehry's flamboyance) is like no other high-rise on the island.

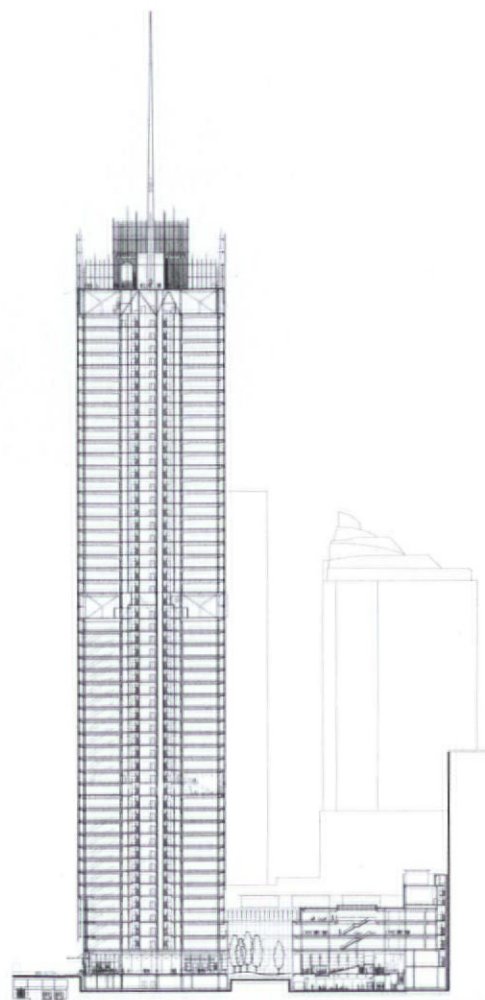
The client wanted a unique piece of architecture, and the brief called for it to be explicitly European, stating that the manner in which the building met the street was a key consideration. Piano believes he was chosen for this reason, and addressed this strategic desire through the building's general arrangement, with a fully-glazed foyer, garden and auditorium that successfully create a sequence of civic spaces that lead directly from the busy and at times hostile New York streets. Throughout the building convention continues to be challenged. At its heart, interiors are not dominated by the sort of typical office partitions that Jacques Tati parodied in his masterful comment on the dehumanising effects of modern architecture, *Playtime*. Nor are prime corner locations saved for private management offices. Instead, low level furniture allows users to take advantage of long views to the fully-glazed perimeter walls.

At the corners interconnecting stairs (another quiet victory for innovation) reduce reliance on lifts, while break-out areas create greater opportunity for interaction between workers; for those, that is, who manage to resist the temptation to slope off to the dramatic and expansive 14th floor double-height canteen-cum-common room that overlooks and offers respite from the busy newsroom below, nicknamed the Bakery due to its 24/7 mode of operation. Unlike typical New York offices, the cladding is also a first, responding

## OFFICE TOWER, NEW YORK, USA

ARCHITECT

RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP



east/west cross section

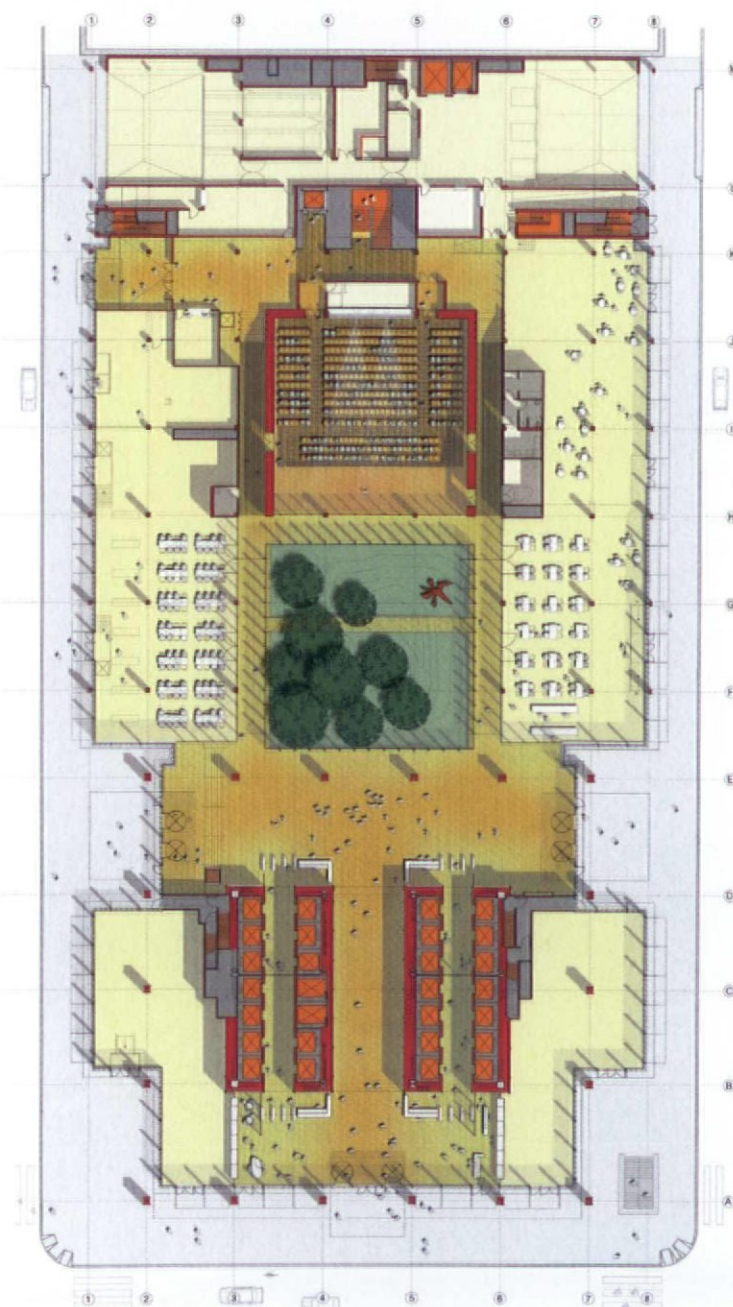


5

5 Two orange lift cores flank the central entrance hall, creating a route through the foyer that leads from 8th Avenue to the landscaped courtyard.

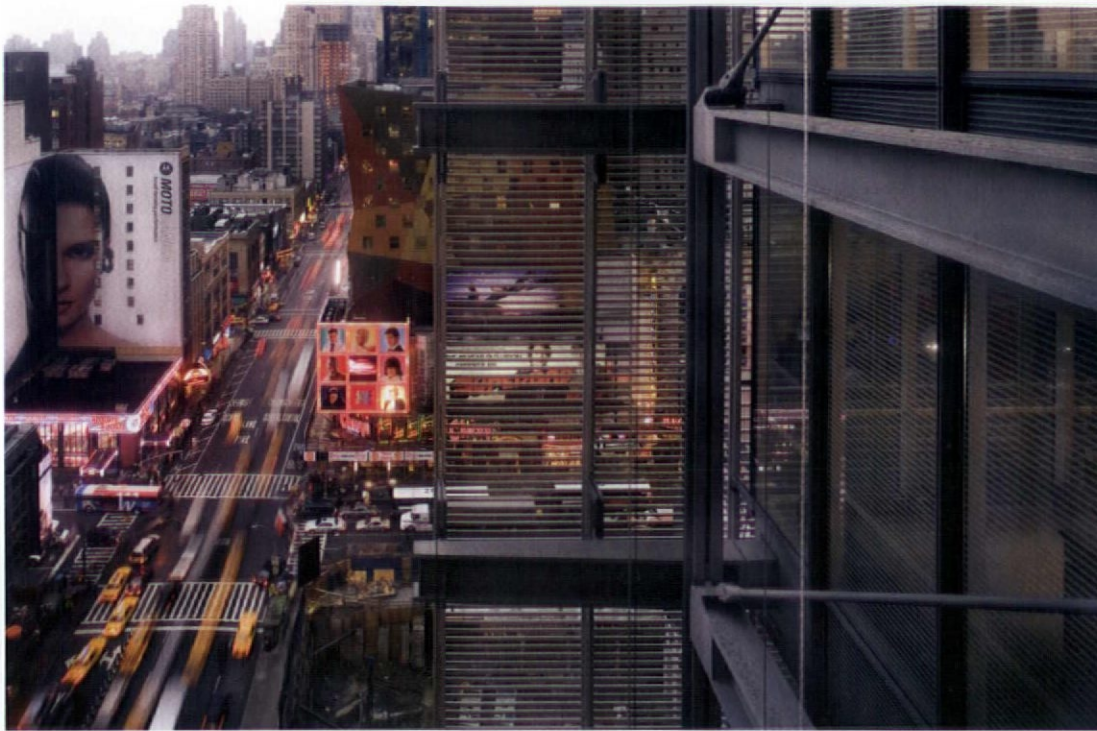
6 Inaccessible, but providing a visual focus, the landscape includes an undulating lawn and silver birch trees.

7 On the 14th floor, the New York Times common room is described by its architect as a type of elevated public square.



ground floor plan, with foyer, garden, auditorium and retail





8

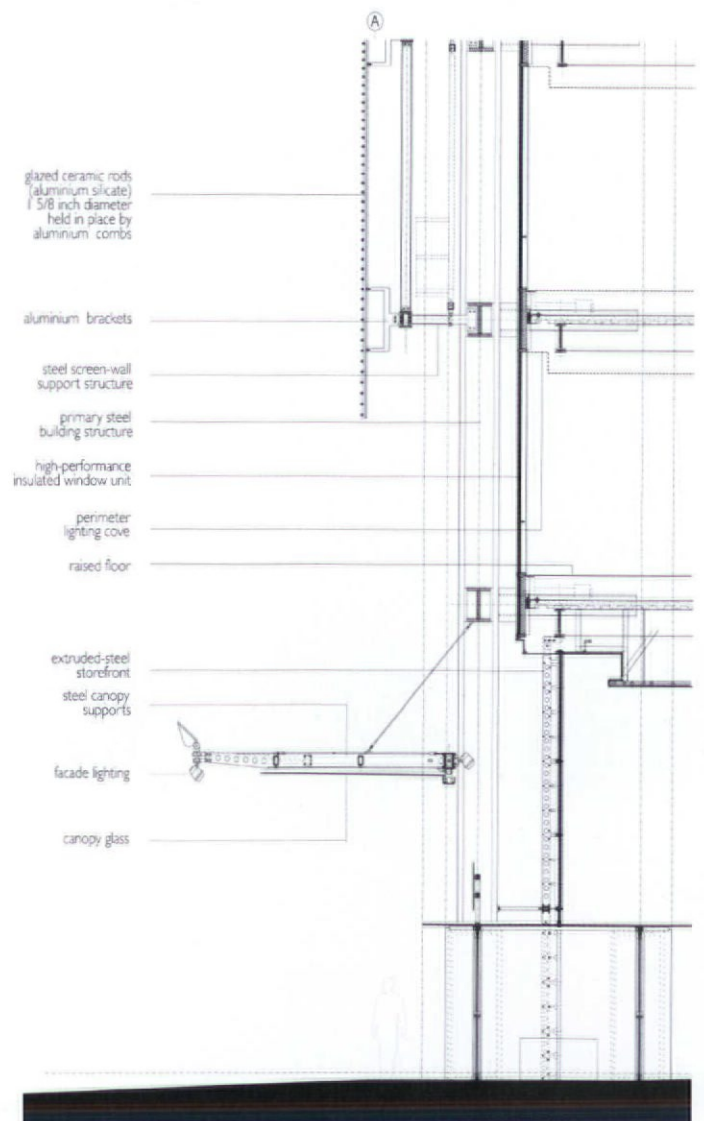
8  
On the north and south facades, corners cut back to give open diagonal views, seen here looking north up 8th Avenue.  
9  
In the common room, the double-height space accentuates the openness of the building's fully glazed facade.

**OFFICE TOWER, NEW YORK, USA**  
ARCHITECT  
**RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP**

to Piano's ongoing mission to produce buildings that operate as naturally as possible, with crystal clear low iron glass providing unrivalled daylight penetration. And holding all this up is the city's first fully expressed, unclad, high-rise steel frame (it is fire protected using advanced intumescent paint technology more commonly specified for use on oil rigs).

The most striking feature, however, is the building's tubular shading system, one of the few elements of Piano's design that was momentarily considered by some to be impossible. Originally priced at a prohibitive \$50 per rod, the design team eventually found a German manufacturer who could make tubes by adapting technologies that normally produce the ceramic insulation discs seen on pylons and at electricity substations. They produced them for \$8 each, bringing the package back on budget and allowing Piano to extend his trademark interest in developing devices or pieces that can be repeated in linear arrays; in this case with hundreds of thousands of ceramic tubes that create the building's 52-storey static Venetian blinds. Providing shade, while maintaining views, the screens also create magical optical effects, particularly when struck by low level light at the beginning and end of the day, taking on and amplifying the hues of whatever climatic atmosphere exists.

Piano's interest in the repeated component clearly has its roots in the founding principles of High-Tech economies of scale. Today, less concerned with image and style, Piano modestly describes this interest as a tactic that minimises the risk of falling foul of the tragedy of Architecture; namely that if you get it wrong, it's wrong for ever. In order to minimise this risk, as his architecture has become increasingly rich and distant from basic High-Tech, the buildings continue to comprise a series of pieces that can be tested and refined in isolation in order to ensure the best overall effect. The skill, of course, then comes through the process of integration, reuniting all of these near-perfect components into a harmonious



detailed section through entrance canopy and glazed ceramic sun-screen





10

whole, which is where Piano's judgement and masterful hand is most clearly in evidence.

Seen in context, many readings emerge that respond to shifts in scale as viewpoints change. As an object in space, simple lines and a bi-axial silhouette give it a specific orientation that marks its proximity to one of the busiest interchanges in the city, sitting opposite the Port Authority Bus Terminal. As you approach, more subtlety is revealed, with increasing levels of articulation via familiar High-Tech modes of expression, from cross-bracing and secondary structural frames, to pin-joints and expressive brackets. The manner in which the huge steel columns touch the ground is, perhaps, the only notable moment of disappointment, with no articulation or recognition of any form of base. How the base of the building works as a piece of city compensates for this, giving the city's most famous publication (and the tenants that occupy the uppermost floors) a much-needed new public face.

In the coming years, the paper's well-known motto, 'All the News That's Fit to Print' may need to be updated, as the media's reliance on paper is set to diminish. Conscious of this inevitability, this building was in many ways commissioned to help anchor the people who produce the paper in the city that they predominantly serve, giving them a more permanent and prominent home.

Piano has a great deal of affection for this building, and exhibits his natural paternal instinct by cautiously suggesting that the Gray Lady may take some time to find her place in the city. Fittingly, when seen in the distinctively hazy New York sunset, the Gray Lady is already revealing her more sensitive side, as the distinguished ridges in her skin produce a subtly pink blush. ROB GREGORY

## OFFICE TOWER, NEW YORK, USA

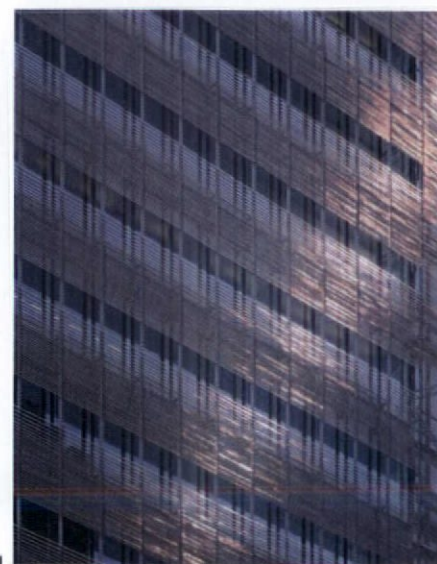
ARCHITECT  
**RENZO PIANO**  
BUILDING WORKSHOP

10 The expansive newsroom, nicknamed the Bakery due to its perpetual 24/7 mode of operation, is necessarily deep in plan due to client requirements. Communication between reporters and the quality of a potentially dingy environment is improved by a double-height central light well.

11 The ceramic Venetian blinds reflect the changing hues of the sky.

12 Unlike a typical New York skyscraper, connecting stairs promote interaction and exercise, and corner space is not given over to management offices. Instead, break out desks offer spectacular views, and a horizontal fire screen is neatly incorporated.

**Architect**  
Renzo Piano Building Workshop, Paris  
with FXFowle Architects, PC, New York  
**Structural engineer**  
Thornton Tomasetti  
**Interiors**  
Gensler Associates  
**Photographs**  
Michel Denancé, 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12  
Nic Lehoux, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10



11



# BOXING CLEVER

Japanese rigour comes to New York's Lower East Side.

Transparency and refinement are the hallmarks of SANAA, the partnership of Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, which won acclaim for their shimmering glass facades in Tokyo, and their crystalline art museums in Kanazawa and Toledo (AR November 2006). Even the Almere Arts Centre (AR October 2007), which adds concrete to the mix, has a cool, pristine quality. At first sight, SANAA's New Museum of Contemporary Art in lower Manhattan seems a radical departure. A stack of six sharp-edged boxes, shifted off axis, and clad in expanded aluminium mesh rise 54m from the Bowery; a raw response to a street that was once a byword for poverty. As you approach, this metallic Cubist sculpture quietly mutates into a vertical cluster of galleries and meeting spaces that engage each other and the city at every level. The permeability of the mesh and the way it captures every shift of light seem apt metaphors for the dynamic art this institution fosters.

Founded thirty years ago, the New Museum outgrew its old home in Soho – which by 2001 had become a prettified shopping mall for tourists – and sold the property to acquire a site in a grittier neighbourhood to the east, and build the first ground-up art museum below midtown. Over the next two and a half years, the board considered the work of Abalos & Herreros, Adjaye Associates, Gigon/ Guyer, and Reiser + Umemoto, before selecting SANAA's proposal.



## MUSEUM, NEW YORK, USA

ARCHITECT

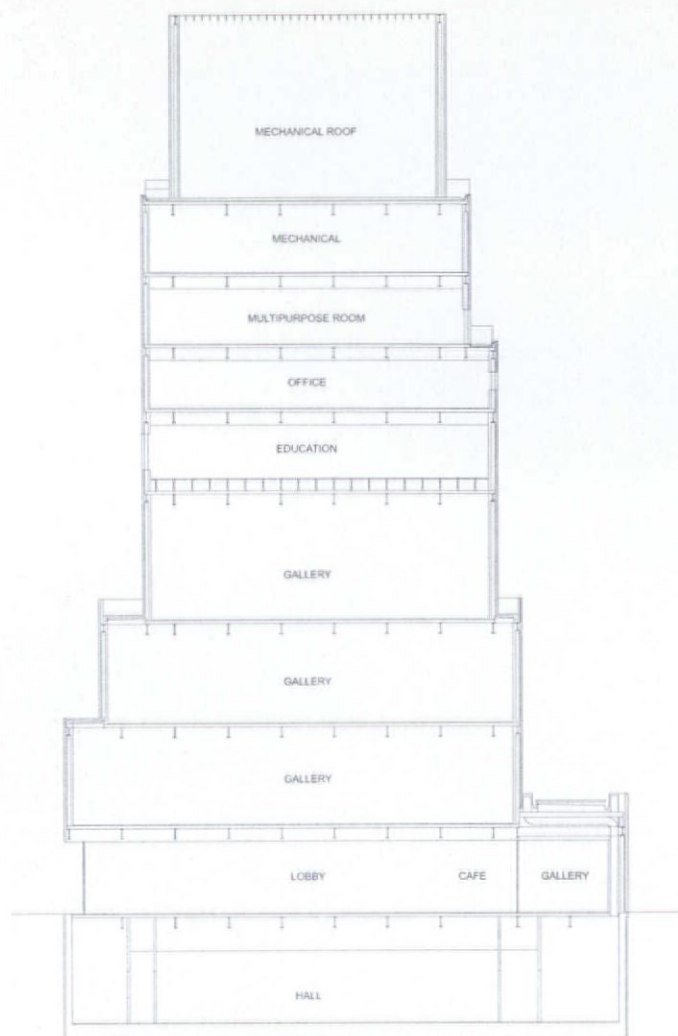
SANAA



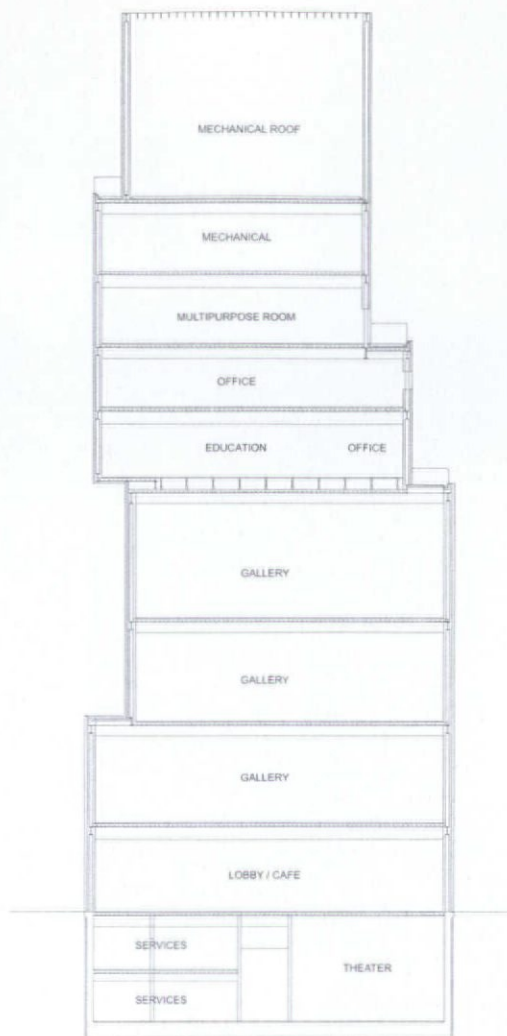
1  
The new  
building towers  
over the mess  
and dislocation  
of the Bowery.  
2  
Stacked and  
staggered  
boxes recall  
New York's  
stepped-back  
towers.  
3  
At night,  
the stacked  
volumes seem  
even more  
precipitous.



4  
The entire building is swathed in a rough veil of aluminium mesh.  
5  
Blind walls loom over street.  
6  
Entrance hall. The mesh cladding is reprised in the museum's shop.



long section

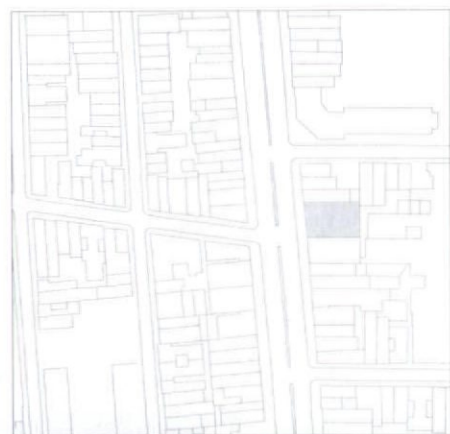


cross section

## MUSEUM, NEW YORK, USA

ARCHITECT

**SANAA**



site plan

This was a team effort, to which all 30 members of the office were invited to contribute ideas. Though the first scheme went through four iterations and was reduced in size before it was finalised, it stayed true to the core idea.

The concept of staggered boxes was inspired by the New York tradition of stepped-back towers, and by the desire to pull natural light into every space on a tightly confined site. Skylights on different sides of the building complement the varied fenestration and give each gallery a distinct character. The mesh, originally developed in the UK as reinforcement for roadways and poured concrete slabs, was selected for its durability and economy. Tall panels are clipped to extruded aluminium brackets, allowing for expansion and contraction, while creating the illusion of a seamless skin that unifies the discrete volumes. It also serves as a sun screen and thermal barrier that can easily be hosed down.

As in Zaha Hadid's Rosenthal Center in Cincinnati (AR July 2003) which has a similar programme and urban context, the ground floor of the New Museum is treated as an extension of the pavement. The street wall is fully glazed, and the service core divides the public spaces to the south from a loading dock on the north side, allowing visitors to watch art works being brought in. An undulating mesh screen supports bookshelves within a retail area and there's an open café and



**MUSEUM, NEW YORK,  
USA**

ARCHITECT  
**SANAA**

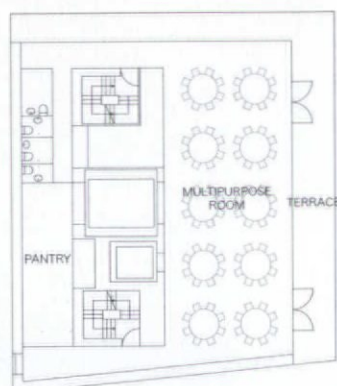
7 Typical gallery space. The vigour and informality of the artworks animate the austere interiors.

8 Long toplit gallery at ground floor level.

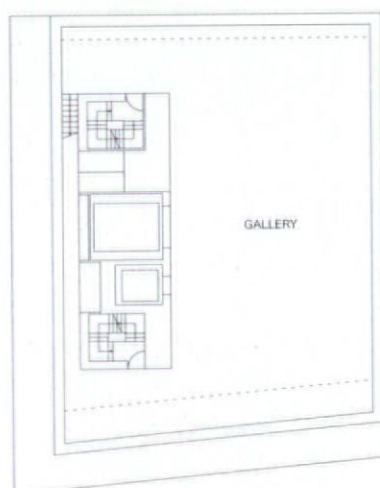
9 *Black and White, Gray Ascending* video installation by Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, a collective of two Korean artists.



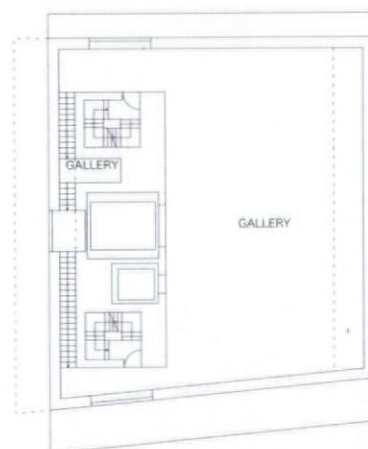
fifth floor



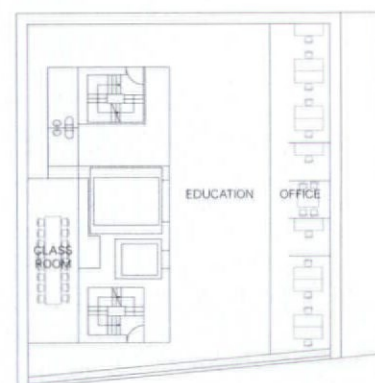
sixth floor



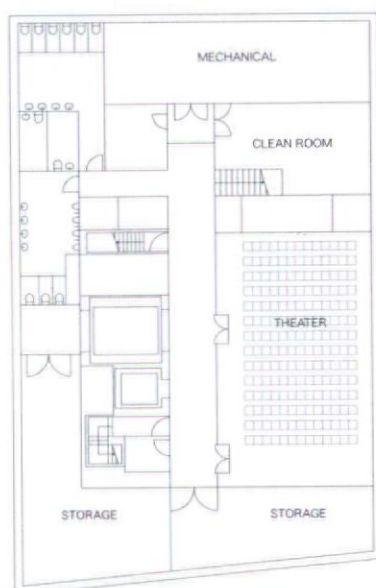
second floor



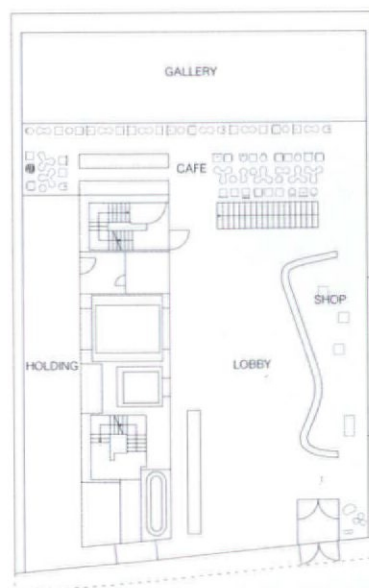
third floor



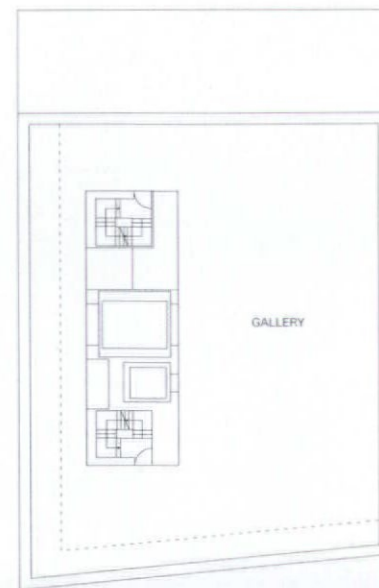
fourth floor



56 | 4 lower ground floor

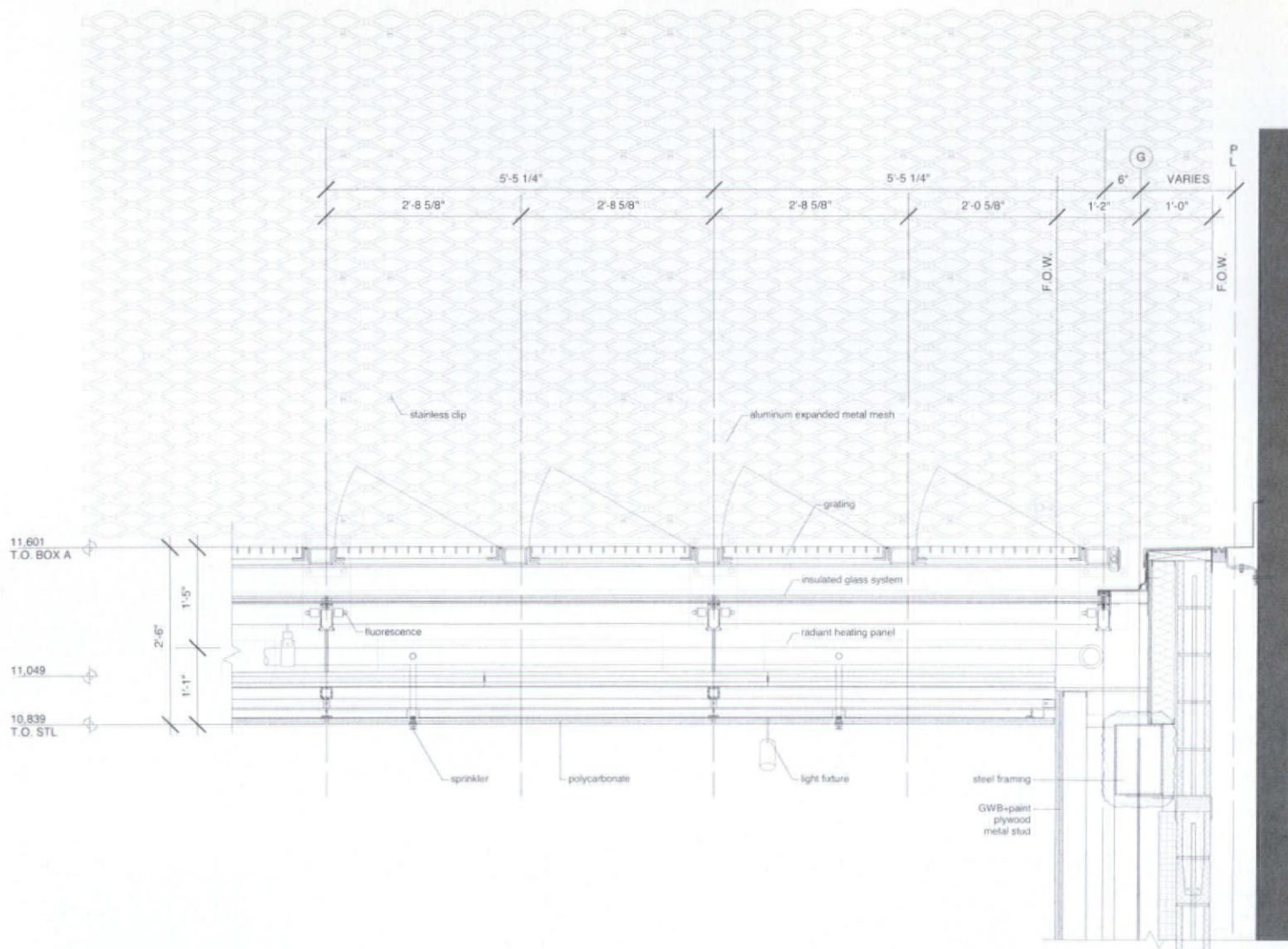


ground floor plan (scale approx 1:500)



first floor





## MUSEUM, NEW YORK, USA

ARCHITECT

**SANAA**

detailed roof and wall section through second floor gallery

glass-walled gallery to the rear. Green lifts and vividly tiled lavatories play off the monochromatic palette of the interiors, which, like clothes, come to life only when they are inhabited. Ceiling ducts are partially concealed by wire mesh and structural steel beams are exposed. The museum is almost as rough-edged as a Lower East Side studio, and though the art may be demanding, it's introduced with a refreshing sense of informality in an area where few locals are likely to have visited an art museum.

At basement level there's a 188-seat theatre – a white box with movable seating and a sprung floor for dance – and above are the three principal galleries, each occupying an entire floor. On plan, they range from 600 down to 300sqm, while the ceiling heights increase from 5.5 to 7.5m as you ascend. Those variations give each of the well-proportioned, column-free spaces its own personality and this is enhanced by the varied orientation of the skylights, which are filtered by metal grids and polycarbonate panels beneath the glass. A dramatic sweep of stairs links the three levels and opens onto a tall shaft of space that challenges the ingenuity of artists and curators. Educational spaces occupy the fifth level, offices are on the sixth, and the seventh level is an events space that leads out onto a roof terrace and an exciting panorama of lower Manhattan. The port and sweatshops that once employed teeming masses of immigrants are long gone, but the monumental buildings and bridges are a reminder of the city's industrious past. **MICHAEL WEBB**

### 10

Lavatories are decorated with vivid pixelated tiling.

### 11

Mesh cladding filters and veils the city.

### 12, 13

Fourth floor terrace with views of the Lower East Side.

### 14

The museum's inaugural show, *Unmonumental*, explores concepts of sculptural assemblage.

### Architect

Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa/  
SANAA, Tokyo

### Executive architect

Gensler, New York

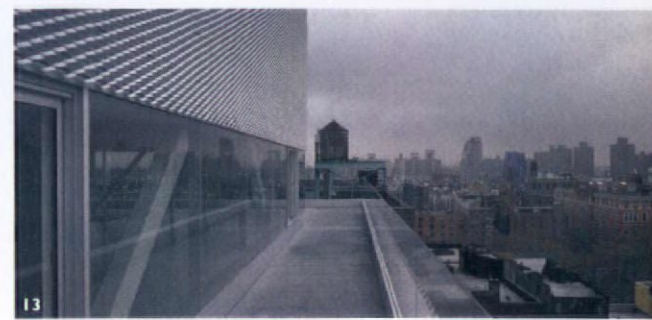
### Structural engineers

Simpson Gumpertz & Heger;  
Guy Nordenson and Associates

### Photographs

Christian Richters





ART MUSEUM, DENVER,  
COLORADO, USA  
ARCHITECT  
ADJAYE ASSOCIATES





2

Lying at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Denver inhabits a particularly potent interface of geography and topography. Here, the horizontal meets the vertical, as the mind-blowing spaces of the High Plains collide with the backbone of America. And here, exactly a mile above sea level, Denver's sprawling grid tames and rationalises the prairies. Spawned by the Gold Rush of the mid nineteenth century, it was the original frontier town, thriving on gambling, saloons, cattle and goods trading. In the '70s and '80s it grew prosperous during the energy crisis (older readers may recall *Dynasty*, the Denver-set TV soap), but tumbling oil prices in the mid '80s delivered an exogenous shock to the local economy that still reverberates in the spectre of parcels of land cleared for development that never happened.

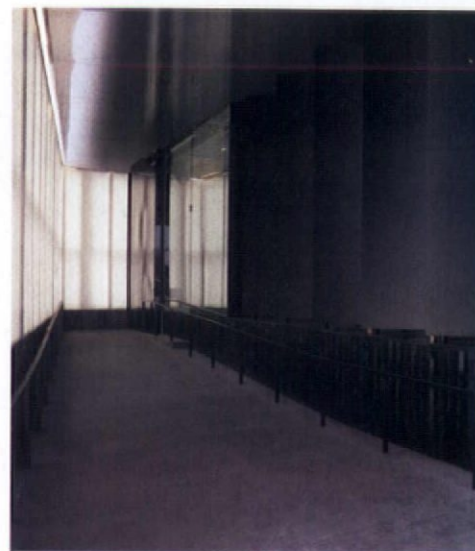
Things are better these days, as manifest by the anonymous towers springing up in the CBD like slick, corporate bindweed. And true to its pioneer spirit, Denver is not afraid to embrace big gesture architecture, recently hiring Daniel Libeskind to design an extension for the Denver Museum of Art, the city's most venerable art institution. But the outcome of such ambition can be sensory overload. Libeskind's building forms part of a cultural nucleus, just across the road from Michael Graves' City Library (hardcore mid '90s Po-Mo) and a new residential development by Peter Eisenman. Between them they generate such an intense force field of architectural egos you fear the space time continuum may implode.

Into this city of big ideas and big skies comes David Adjaye, another out-of-towner, whose recently completed Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver (MCA) is his first public building in the US and marks a pivotal point on an intriguing career trajectory. To date, London has been Adjaye's primary theatre of operations, specifically, the

## ART INCUBATOR

Denver's new MCA celebrates radical art and architecture.

- 1 The taut box is wrapped in black glass with an inner layer of light filtering insulation (Monopan).
- 2 The new MCA forms part of an emerging neighbourhood in Denver's Downtown. Note the Rockies in the distance.
- 3 Entrance 'tunnel' showing the effect of light on the milkily translucent Monopan.



3



4

grungy, contradictory exuberance of its metamorphosing East End, where he has choreographed a series of private houses and public buildings. Underpinning these projects is a rigorous engagement with a contemporary language of abstraction, but this is also crucially tempered by the compression and dislocation of London's unique physical and social fabric. In terms of building scale and city terrain, the MCA signifies a challenging transition from the familiar, as the dense, grimy, forcing house of London gives way to Denver's spaced outness. Add to this the logistical learning curve of working in the USA and there appears ample potential for the nuances of Adjaye's architecture to get lost in translation. So how do you control the making of a building over 4000 miles from home? One decisive move was to hook up with local firm Davis Partnership, who were also executive architects for the Libeskind project. Paradoxically, Adjaye's thoughtful, restrained approach with its emphasis on the innate qualities of materials and how things meld and fit together proved just as technically challenging as Libeskind's hectic geometries, but the local team hung in there and helped Adjaye tactfully push expectations and boundaries.

The design of the external facade is a case in point. The building is wrapped in an outer skin of black glass and an inner layer of translucent insulation which filters Denver's strong, clear, *altiplano* light with gorgeous subtlety, like a Japanese rice paper screen. Because the gallery spaces are, of necessity, hermetic boxes, Adjaye wanted the interstitial promenade between the galleries and the external wall to have a different character; admitting light and, occasionally, views. So he appropriated Monopan for the inner skin, a proprietary insulation material more commonly used on the roofs of delivery trucks. It's not rice paper (more like tough white sack) but does the job beautifully; the translucent walls seem organically alive with light. It also gives the seamlessly sleek facade a surprising and seductive depth, redolent of marble or looking into deep water (the museum's guide describes it as 'black milk'). Beyond the phenomenology, it's also practical. The Monopan panels can simply be

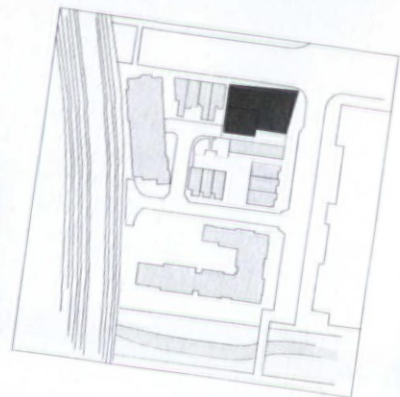


5

**ART MUSEUM, DENVER,  
COLORADO, USA**  
ARCHITECT  
**ADJAYE ASSOCIATES**



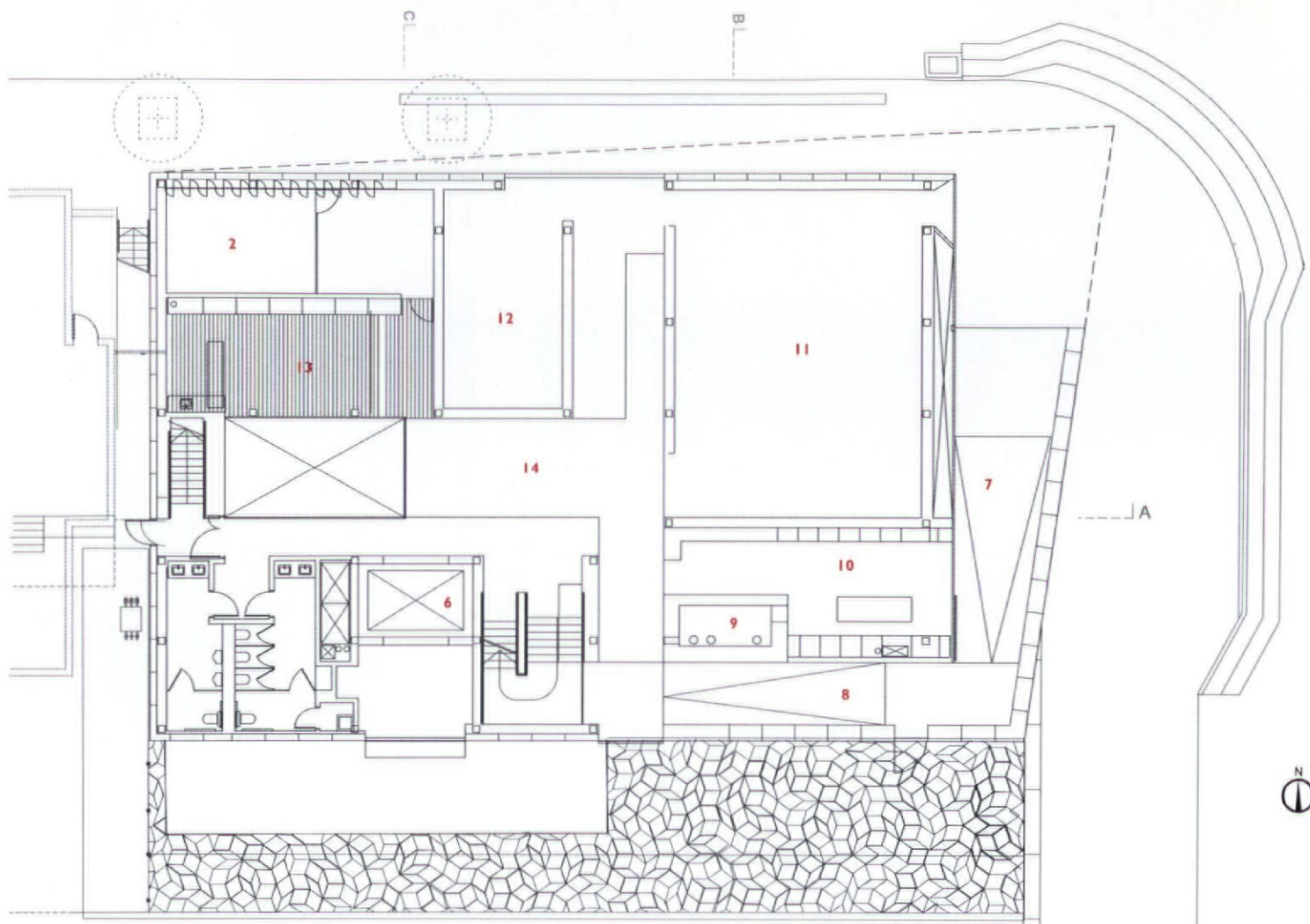
6



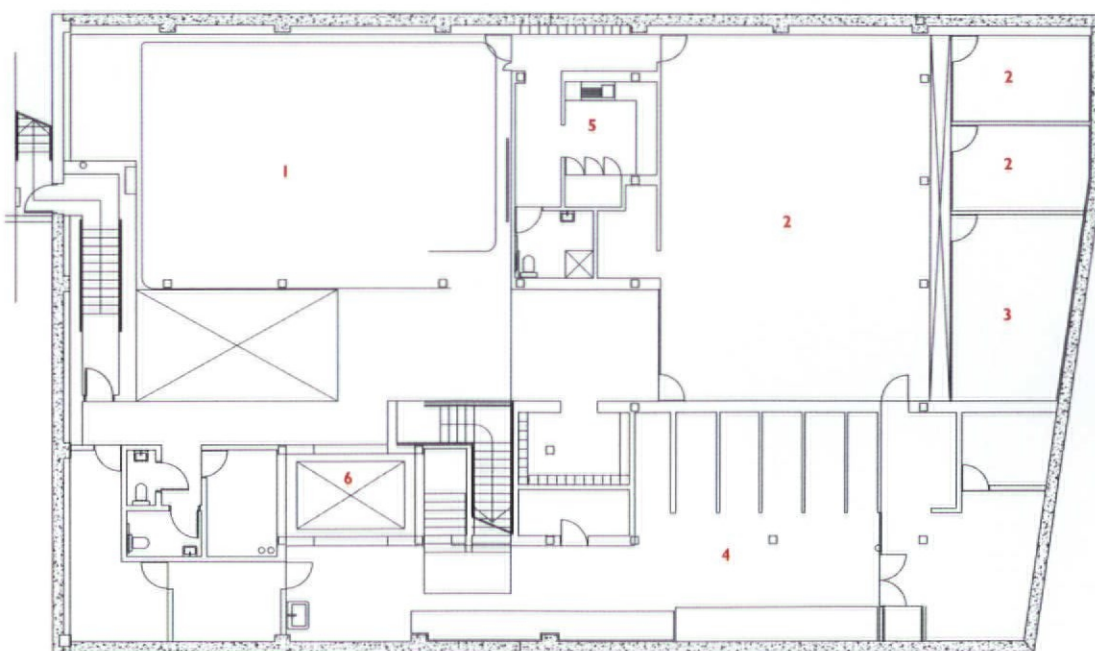
site plan

4  
Photographic  
works gallery on  
ground floor.  
5  
The library is a  
sensuous womb  
lined with ipe  
hardwood.  
6  
Museum shop  
(the ceiling is  
now adorned  
with blue  
perspex fins).  
7  
The great toplit  
central chasm.

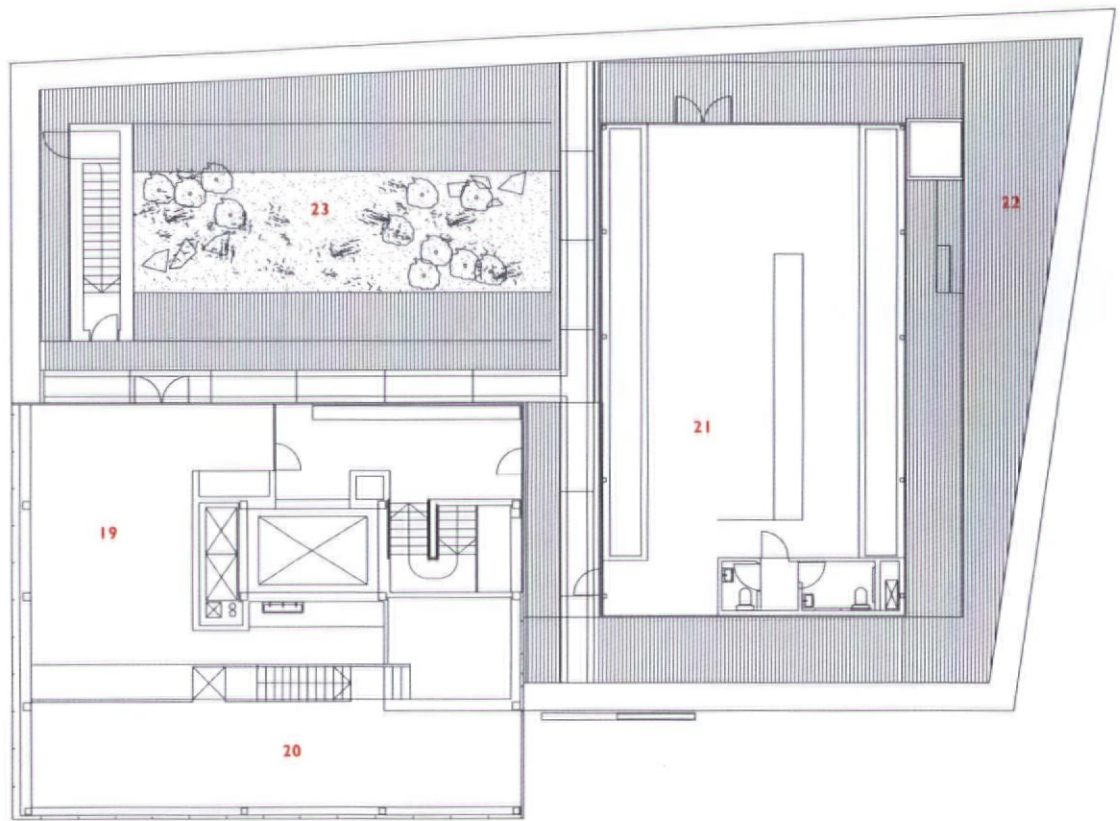




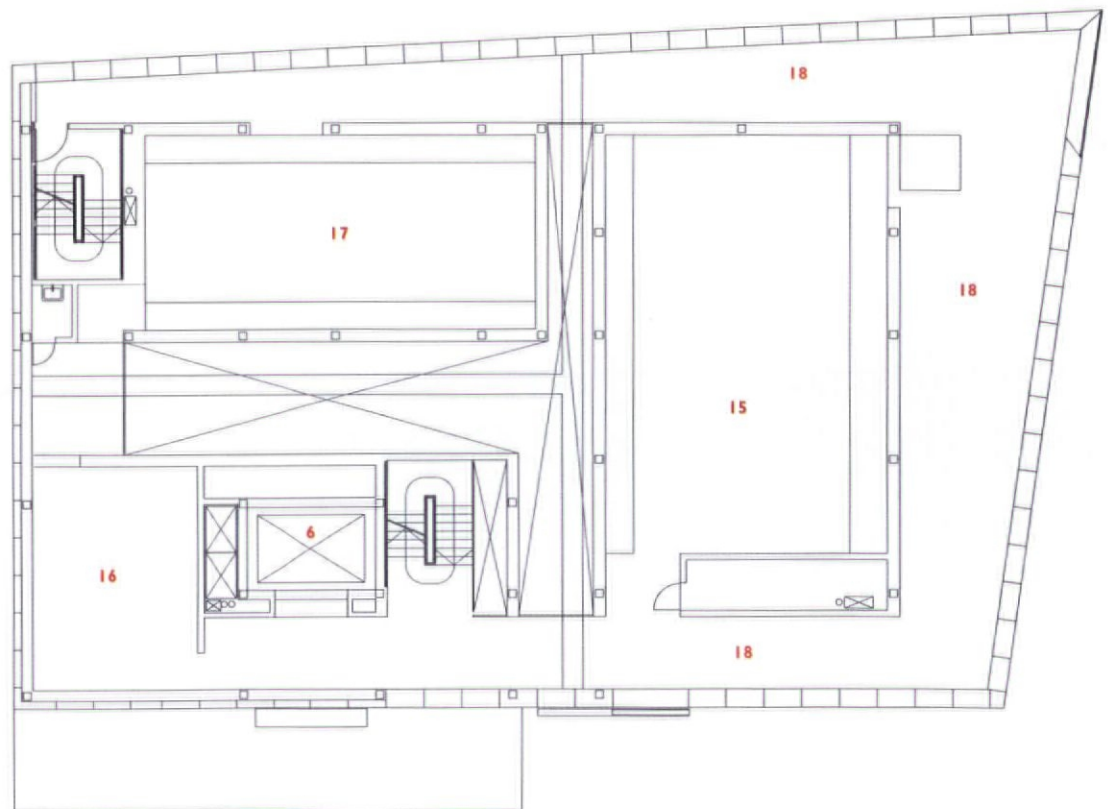
ground floor plan (scale approx 1:250)



- 1 education area
- 2 office
- 3 conference room
- 4 art storage
- 5 kitchen
- 6 lift
- 7 entrance tunnel
- 8 entrance ramp
- 9 tickets/information
- 10 shop
- 11 photography gallery
- 12 new media gallery
- 13 library
- 14 central chasm
- 15 large works gallery
- 16 project gallery
- 17 paper works gallery
- 18 promenade/informal gallery space
- 19 children's room
- 20 beanbag space
- 21 café
- 22 terrace
- 23 roof garden



roof plan





8

## ART MUSEUM, DENVER, COLORADO, USA

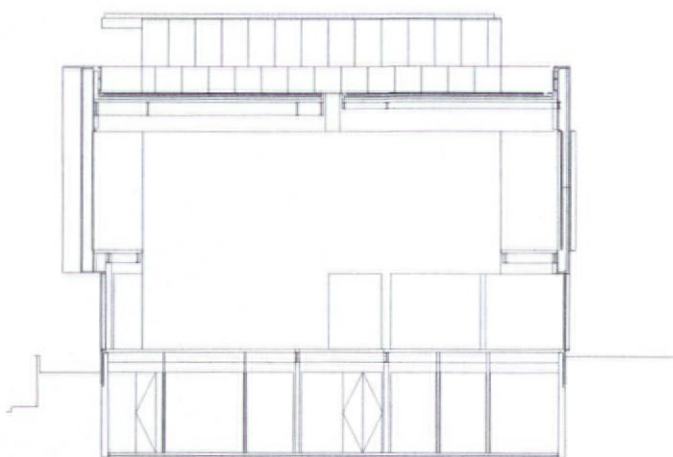
ARCHITECT

ADJAYE ASSOCIATES

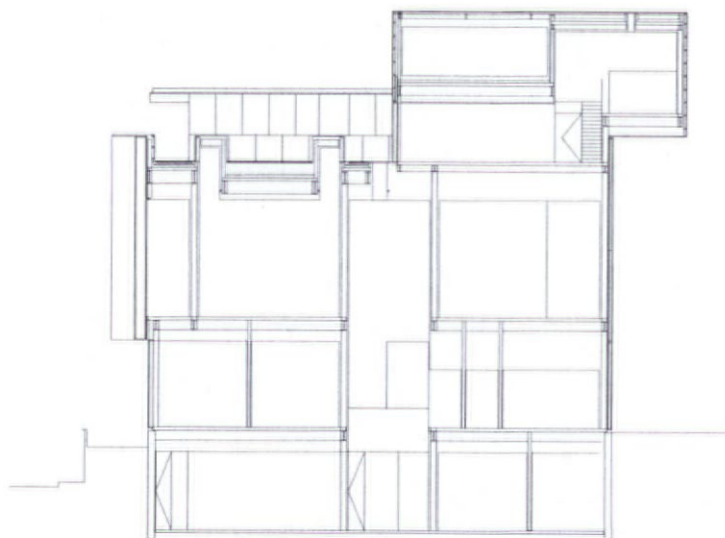
slid out to allow the glass to be cleaned and the insulation helps in the building's quest for sustainable credentials (it is gold LEED certified).<sup>1</sup>

In America's notoriously risk-averse construction culture, using a material in this way presented challenges (detailing, performance, fire safety, will-it-fly), but the quiet persistence and technical skill of the architectural team convinced local officialdom. The backing of an enlightened patron was also crucial. As Adjaye observes from his experience of working in the US, unlike corporate clients, who want things safely flattened out, cultural institutions are generally more receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things.

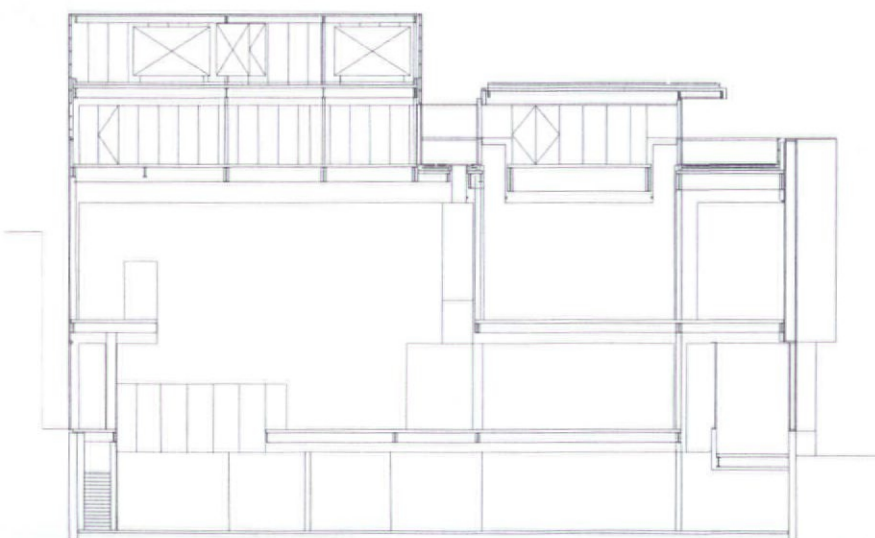
Founded in 1996 and originally housed in a remodelled fish market, the MCA is Denver's first and only museum for contemporary art, but it has no permanent collection, operating on the European *kunsthalle* model by providing a set of different spaces for periodic colonisation by artists. So rather than being a static armature for a collection, it has a more flexible, improvisational character, and its new building is deliberately conceived as an incubator for experimentation and exploration. Adjaye's collaborations with contemporary artists in London have given him an insight into how creative people live and work, and the MCA is clearly informed by these encounters, enabling him to make and sustain resonant connections between art and architecture.



cross section



cross section



long section



9



10

8

Galleries are simple hermetic white boxes. Light infuses the insulation wall in the promenade space beyond.

9

Children's centre on the roof.

10

Beanbag hanging out space for kids.

11

The chasm is lit by slots of roof glazing that you can walk on.





12

In 2003, a site was donated for a new building<sup>2</sup> in the lower downtown area, near the city's station. Formerly on its uppers, this neighbourhood is changing fast, as new blocks of loft apartments attract people back to the centre of town and reinvigorate the urban condition. Adjaye's original competition-winning<sup>3</sup> drawings showed the museum in isolation on its corner site, but now it has neighbours on two sides. Unlike the ritualised monumentality of the civic core, this more modest urban setting is still evolving, and Adjaye's building forms an important point of anchorage and gravity in a fluctuating milieu.

In what might be read as a subconscious echo of Denver's plains/mountains interface, the museum explores strong formal and experiential contrasts. From the street it reads as a dark, horizontal element, reinforced by the bands of glazing and the timber-clad roof loggia. Yet inside it has a dizzying verticality and glacial whiteness. The sealed boxes of the galleries enclose and define a soaring central chasm lit by narrow slots of roof glazing. Part of the ground floor is also pulled away offering glimpses into the education area at lower ground level.

Experientially, the interior is structured around alternate poles of compression and release. As you promenade around the galleries, locked together like a Chinese puzzle, you keep reconnecting with the light and space of the void. There is no prescribed route, as each gallery is a self-contained experience, but the building's dominant verticality reinforces a sense of upward momentum. You can drift, cherry pick, or forgo the art entirely and head for the roof from where the great sprawl of Denver unfolds across the plains and the razorbacked Rockies shimmer with snow. The roof is habitable amalgam of café, garden, observation deck and children's room and you can walk on the toughened fritted strips of roof light glass, to the astonishment of those at ground level four floors below.

The quintet of galleries make up a kind of spatial nougat, varying in scale from a typical domestic living room to a double-height salon. On my visit the smallest was being used for a video installation by Taiwanese artist Yu-Cheng Chou, while the largest had been dramatically lined with mirrors by sculptor David Altmejd to enhance his giant anthropomorphic pieces made from broken fragments of reflective glass. Galleries are

simple and neutral – white walled boxes with black concrete floors – but Adjaye's tastes also extend to more sensuous fare. Rich *ipe* hardwood lines the library and café, the shop has a ceiling of blue perspex fins, while curtains of thick green felt seal off galleries when not in use. The building sits on a low rusticated base of boardmarked concrete painted glossy black, like Goth nail varnish, and mirrored panels animate the undercroft of the prominent corner entrance. From his time spent in Japan studying traditional architecture, Adjaye is conscious of how a particular ensemble of materials can have presence and control space.

Given the lively, work-in-progress nature of the art and the institution it serves, the building is as well made as it probably needs to be. There are some roughish edges, but I. M. Pei style finesse would clearly be out of place here. Contemporary art is multivalent, quixotic, provocative, sometimes scruffy, sometimes polished and infinitely adaptable. In Denver it has got the building it deserves. CATHERINE SLESSOR

1. Leadership in Environmental Design, though Adjaye is sceptical of the US 'box-ticking' culture in order to achieve an appropriate level of environmentally conscious design.

2. The MCA receives no public funding, so its budget of \$18.9 million was raised exclusively through private donors. The site, worth \$1.5 million, was gifted by Mark Falcone and Ellen Bruss, members of the MCA's Board of Trustees.

3. In 2004 Adjaye won an invited competition; other participants were TEN Arquitectos with Humphries Poli Architects; Snøhetta; Rick Joy Architects; Predock Frane; and Gluckman Mayner Architects.

#### Architect

Adjaye Associates,  
London

#### Associate architect

Davis Partnership  
Architects, Denver

#### Photographs

Ed Reeve

#### ART MUSEUM, DENVER, COLORADO, USA

ARCHITECT

ADJAYE ASSOCIATES



13

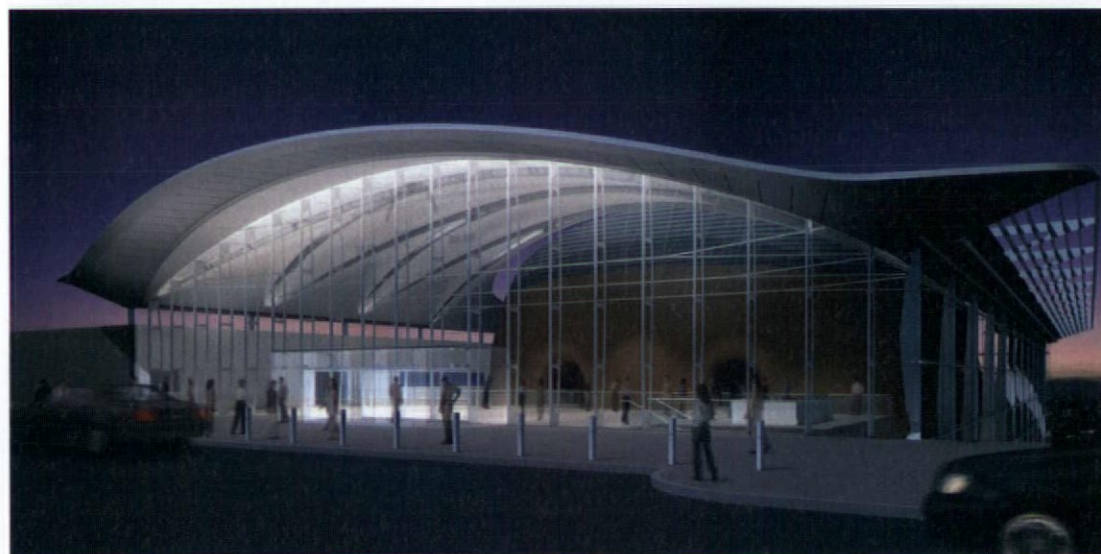


12  
The roof is the  
building's 'fifth  
elevation', a convivial  
amalgam of café,  
garden, kids' centre  
and observatory.

13  
The café.

14  
Rooftop glazing to  
the chasm below.

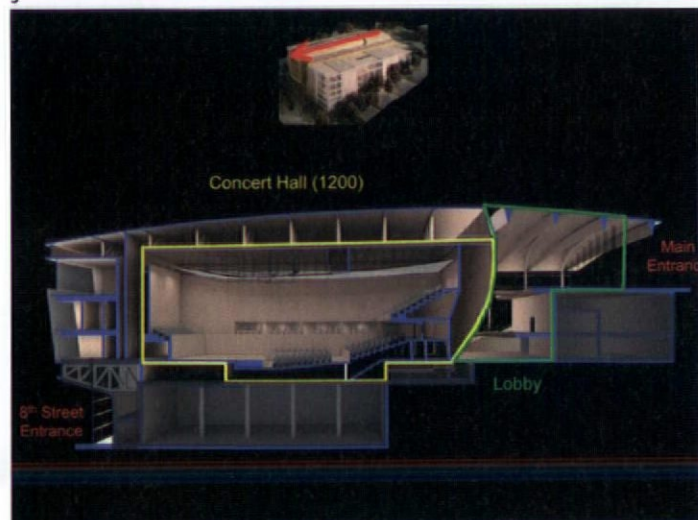
As these up and coming projects demonstrate, the creative ferment of overseas architects working in the US looks set to continue. Some, such as Zaha Hadid's new art museum for Michigan State University (p72) are still on the drawing board, fresh from a competition win, while others, such as Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in San Francisco (p76) and Nicholas Grimshaw's new performing arts centre for the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (p70), are nearly complete. Significantly, all are for cultural or educational client bodies who are perhaps willing to take more risks with the kind of buildings they want. It does not mean that American architects are not up to the job, but sometimes a more adventurous non-local sensibility can suggest and see through more innovative ways of doing things.



- 1 Model showing the two long wings bunkered into the hillside.
- 2 Main entrance at the top of the hill.
- 3 Long section through the concert hall.
- 4 The timber-clad volume floats in space, wrapped in a glass wall.
- 5 Interior of concert hall.

2

3



## GRIMSHAW

PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE, TROY, NEW YORK, USA

Founded in 1824 'for the purpose of instructing persons ... in the application of science to the common purposes of life', the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is one of the most venerable science universities in the US. From its leafy campus at Troy in upstate New York it exports science and technology graduates to the world.

In 2001 Grimshaw won a competition for Rensselaer's Experimental Media and Performing Arts Centre (EMPAC), which is due to open later this year. Conceived as a point of intersection between artists and researchers in science and technology, the \$142 million centre aims to consolidate Rensselaer's reputation for excellence and experimentation in the electronic arts. Under one roof it will host intercollegiate



4

competitions and exchanges, house shows and concerts, and provide a state of the art venue for international performers.

Positioned on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River, the building exploits its sloping site by bringing together the huge volumes of the 1200 seat concert hall and 400 seat theatre and partly sinking them into the hill. In a predominantly low-rise campus, this helps to minimise bulk. The arrangement also creates a labyrinth of interstitial and promenading spaces around the main volumes which are loosely enclosed in a glazed box to cultivate a sense of connection with the wider world. In addition it helps with acoustic separation.

Wrapped in a moulded hull faced with cedar strips, the curved volume of the large concert hall resembles a great boat docked in the hillside. Designed to accommodate orchestras as well as electronically-generated sound and video projection, the concert hall is configured traditionally, as a long narrow room. Supported on a delicate web of stainless-steel cables, its innovative acoustic ceiling consists of fabric panels less than one millimetre thick. Running parallel with the concert hall on its south side, a secondary rectangular wing contains digital studios and shields the glazed box from heat gain. A rippling roof lightly envelops the entire composition. C. S.



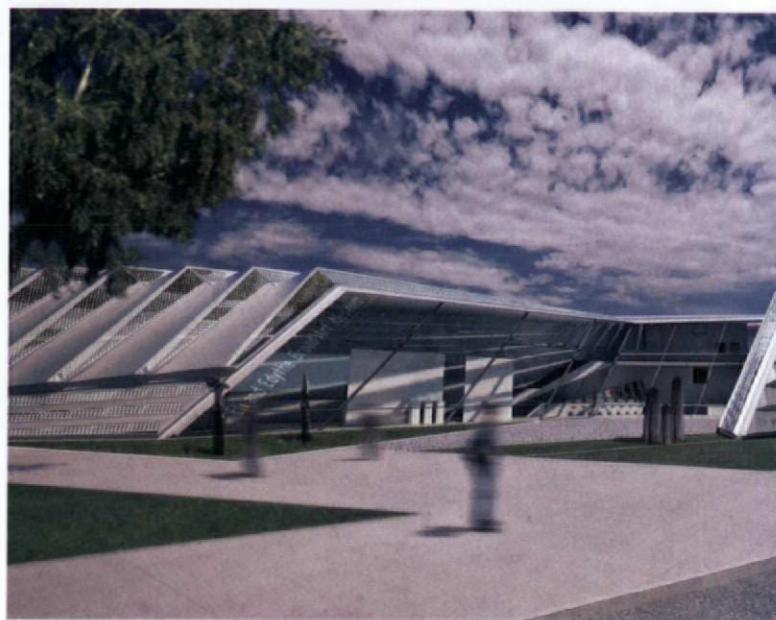
5



It's been five years since Zaha Hadid's first blistering foray into America with the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati (AR July 2003), a project that confounded received opinion and demonstrated that she could actually build. Confirmed earlier this year, her second US venture is a new art museum on the campus of Michigan State University. Wealthy philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad (who also put up funding for Renzo Piano's recent extension to the LA Museum of Contemporary Art) contributed \$26 million toward this new \$40 million building. Hadid prevailed from a shortlist that hedged its bets between the avant-garde and the corporate (Morphosis, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Kohn Pedersen Fox and Randall Stout).

Due to complete in 2010, the museum will house the university's art collection in 18 000sq ft of exhibition space, together with an education centre, theatre, offices and café. Though both Hadid's American projects have similar art museum programmes, Michigan forms an intriguing contrast with Cincinnati. Where the latter was a proscriptive urban condition (a tight corner site which obliged her to build up), the Michigan campus is sprawling and low rise, so the new building has room to spread out and be a discrete, self-referential object. Nonetheless, it responds to local cues from the movements across and along the site, picking up the loose ends of the suburban fabric and interweaving them into a 'landscape carpet'. 'We really wanted the museum to be a crossroads – between the city and the campus, and between the various facilities of MSU,' says Hadid. The angular, dynamic form explores the idea of being shaped and compressed by this movement, emphasised by a patched facade made up of concertinaed panels. Consciously or not, the petrified striations of the steel and glass pleats resemble an Issey Miyake fabric (Hadid is one of the Japanese designer's most enthusiastic clients). Inside, the pleated profile can be clearly apprehended, acting as a means of transmitting and diffusing light.

The building surges against the west end of the site, rising up to address an urban square and Berkeley Hall beyond. From this prow-like tip it cranks and shifts in scale along its length, tapering and descending to meet, embrace and partly enclose a sculpture garden to the east. More inhabited sculpture than building, it will present another challenge to America's notoriously conservative and risk-averse construction industry. But though Michigan is very far from the more technically responsive milieu of Germany, buoyed by imaginative patronage and her growing reputation, Hadid should be able to generate enough momentum to see it through. C. S.



2



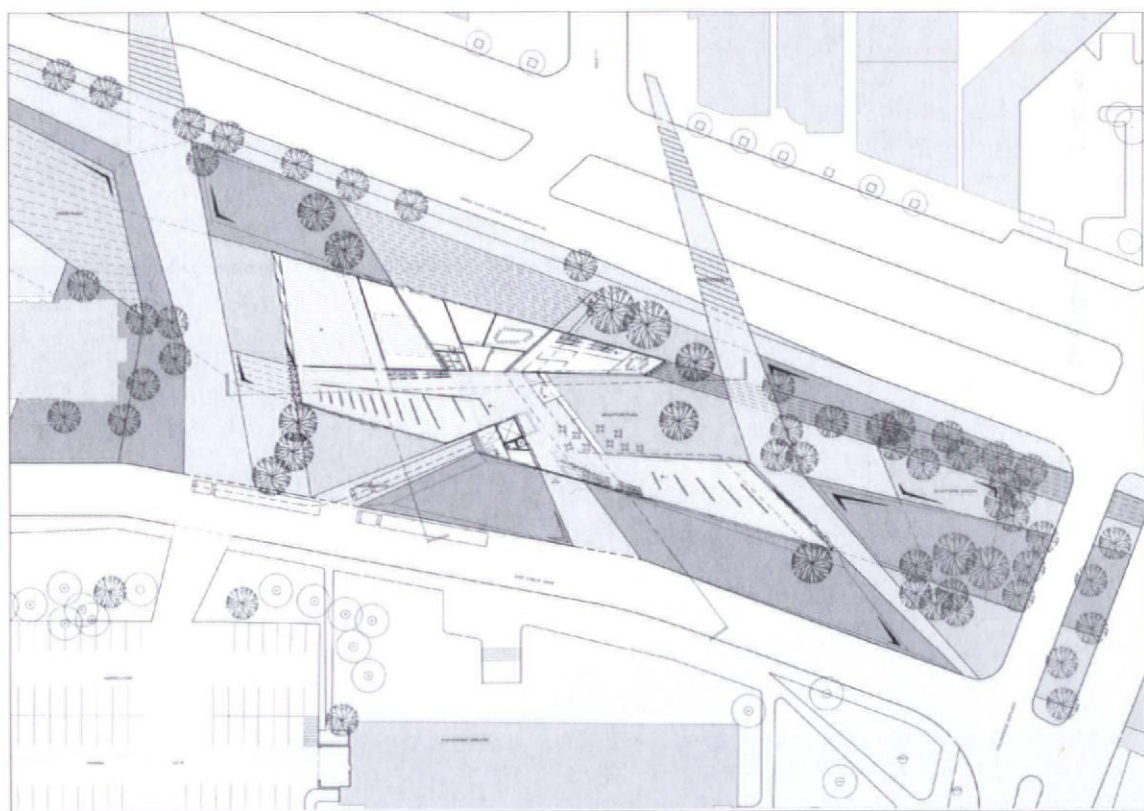
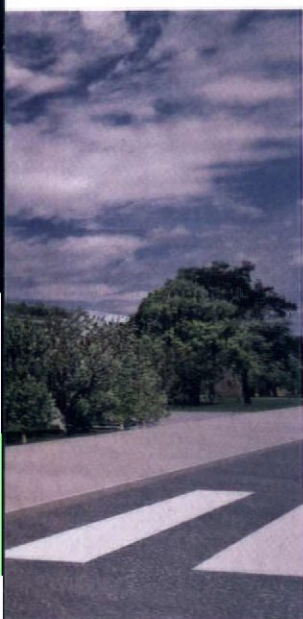
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## HADID

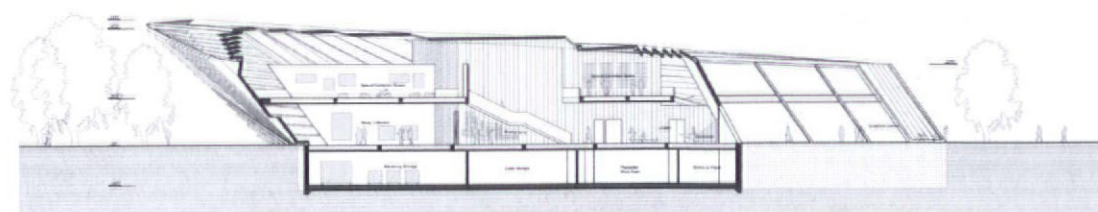
ART MUSEUM, EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN, USA



4

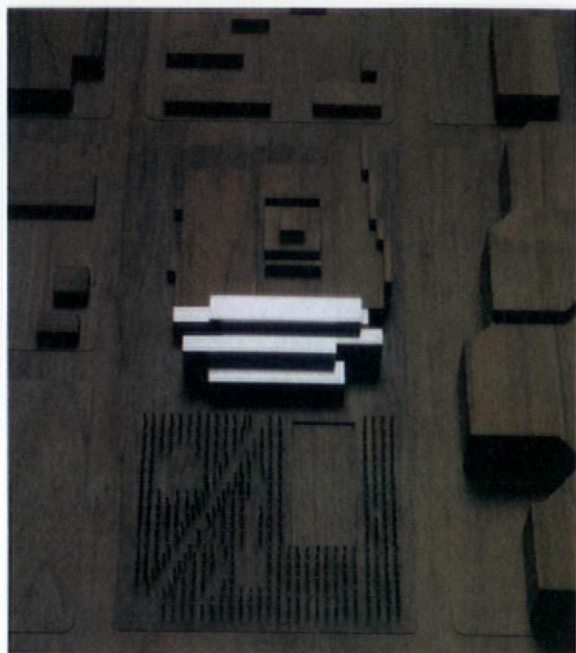


ground floor plan (scale approx 1:1250)



long section

- 1 The museum in its campus context.
- 2 The east end forks to enclose and define a sculpture garden.
- 3 Detail of the pleated steel and glass facade.
- 4 Typical gallery space.



## CHIPPERFIELD

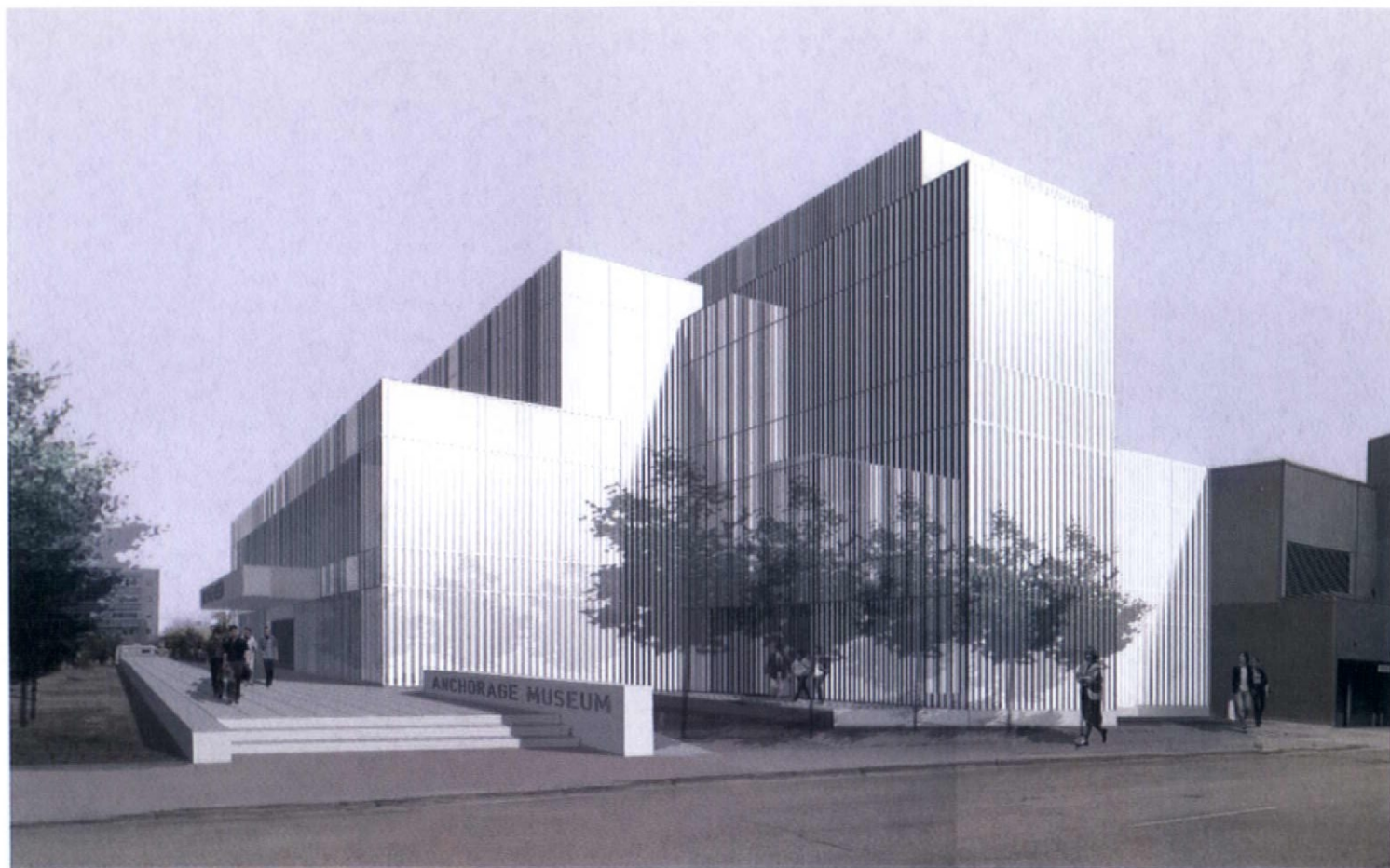
TWO MUSEUMS, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA,  
AND ST LOUIS, MISSOURI, USA

David Chipperfield's most recently completed Museum, the Museum of Modern Literature in Marbach, won the 2007 Stirling Prize (AR October 2007), responding well to a complicated brief, on a difficult site, in a specifically German architectural style. It is with great anticipation therefore, that we await the completion of these two new Museum projects soon to complete in the United States.

Due for completion in 2009, the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center in Alaska (this page) will provide an additional 7000sqm of accommodation as part of an ambitious expansion of existing facilities. Responding to the shortcomings of the existing, the new building will provide a new principal entrance, with a new facade facing downtown Anchorage. It will also provide essential space for the repatriation of the Smithsonian Alaskan collection. Comprising a series of vertically modulated block forms, and enveloped in a fritted glass skin with mirrored strips, the building will reflect the sky and the surrounding mountains. By contrast, interiors will have a greater range of finishes, with an exposed concrete structure, articulated with different colours and materials to give each space its own identity.

Some 3000 miles away, and due for completion one year later, the Saint Louis Art Museum (opposite page) also deals with the issue of expansion, providing 9000sqm additional exhibition and support space to that currently accommodated in the Museum's three existing buildings. Taking advantage of the museum's extraordinary setting as a pavilion in the park, the low-lying building comprises four wings that extend into the landscape, providing permanent and temporary exhibition spaces and public facilities. Described by Chipperfield, the building will emerge 'as a dark shape from the trees', with a facade that is composed of full-height concrete, glass and metal panels. Internally, the treatment of natural light was a key driver, with a white concrete-coffered ceiling that will span the entire gallery level, giving the interiors a luminous tectonic. R. G.



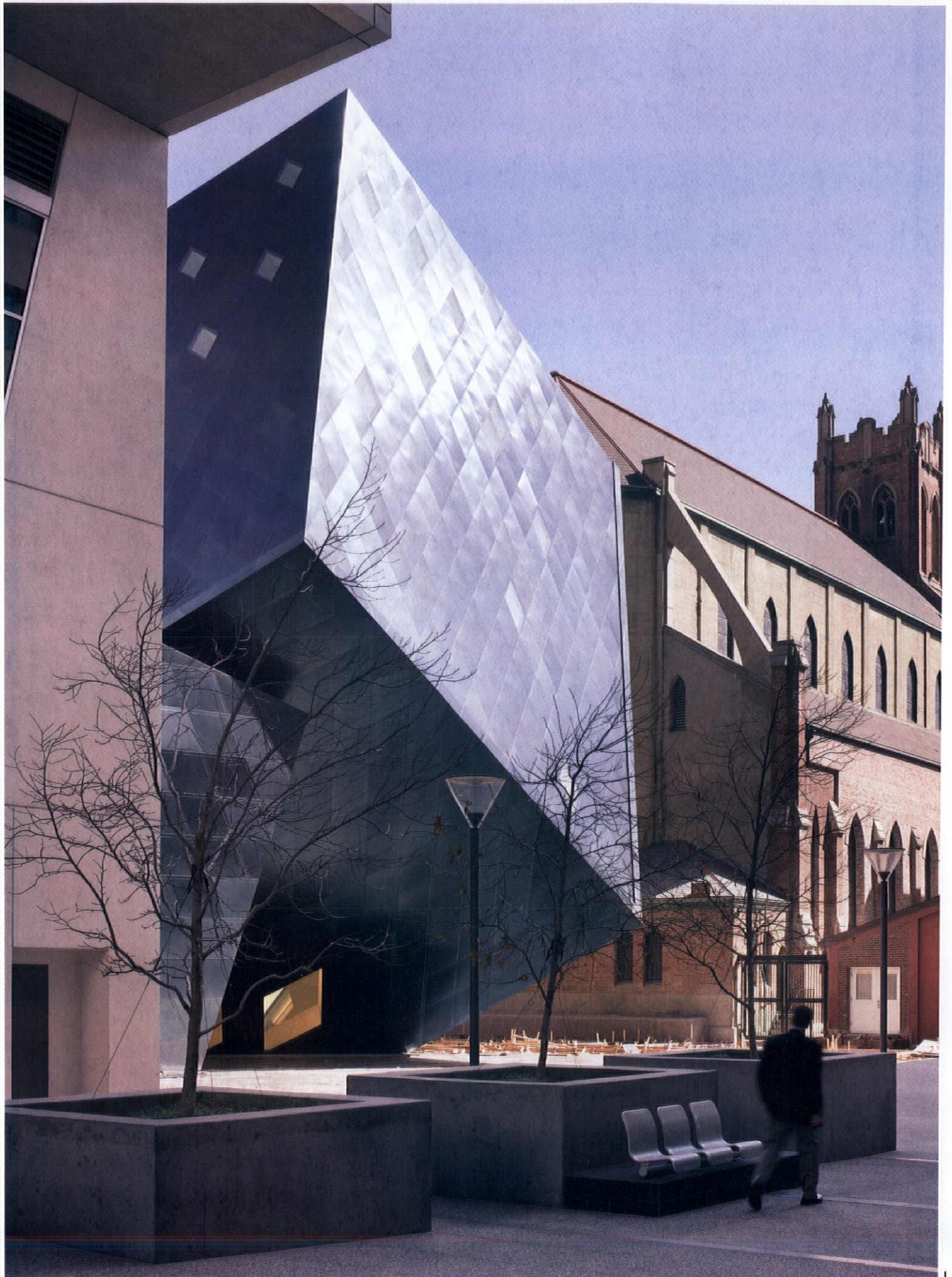


2



3

- 1 Model showing DCA's addition to the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center.
- 2 The linear forms are articulated with vertical mirrored fritting that will reflect the Anchorage sky.
- 3 By contrast, St Louis Art Museum sits within a landscaped setting.





2

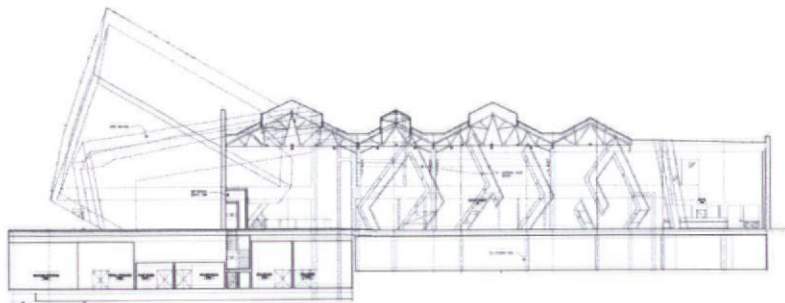
# LIBESKIND

JEWISH MUSEUM, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA

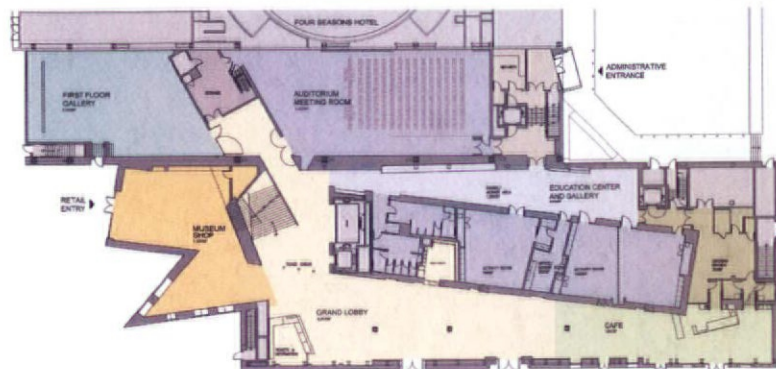
One of the key points the client is keen to convey is that Daniel Libeskind was not a world famous starchitect (their term) when commissioned to design this building in 1998. In the intervening decade the author's identity has become something of a focus for the project. The next and perhaps more interesting issue is that this building is also lauded for its contribution to San Francisco's increased interest in the conservation of existing buildings. Working within the shell of Willis Polk's 1907 Jessie Street Power Station, the retention of what is proudly described as the only Beaux Arts facade south of Market, has led some people to suggest that city's heritage lobby grew out of interest generated by the preservation of this particular building.

In reality, however, very little has actually been preserved, other than the facade. The building has in effect been entirely rebuilt, including a replica roof with modified and repositioned trusses that appear as stubby remnants either side of Libeskind's bold intervention. How do we know that these trusses are actually in their original location? Should we even care? Who knows? Another significant disappointment is a failure of the scheme to engage with the fenestration of the retained facade that could, if handled differently, have given more potency to the dramatic and otherwise successful grand lobby. Instead this space is dominated by Libeskind's trademark aesthetic that seems applicable to any situation from art gallery to student common room, regardless of context or claims that this building is laden with Jewish symbolism.

Beyond such criticisms, however, that relate to an attitude of how to deal with existing buildings, if we ignore the uncomfortable relationship between new and fake-old for a moment, the new Libeskind spaces are a delight. Fittingly the spatial climax relates to the most conspicuous external addition, with a lofty special events gallery occupying space inside the rotated cubic that sits in left-over space behind the adjacent church. The entrance lobby, as pictured below, is also a successful point of orientation, as long as you ignore those truncated steel trusses overhead. R. G.

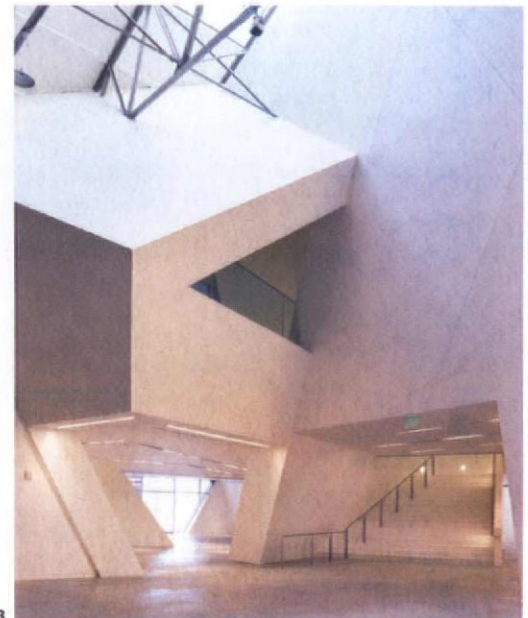


long section



ground floor plan

- 1 Although appearing grey in this image, Libeskind's new forms are clad in a blue metallic skin.
- 2 The grand lobby occupies space between new and old.
- 3 Orientation point in foyer.



3



process

# REPATRIATING INNOVATION

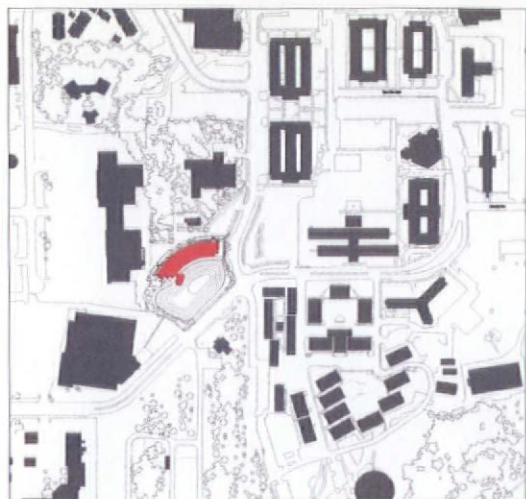


Within the UK, Hopkins' work is familiar to many. What is less well known, however, is how over recent years the practice has extended its reach across the world. Establishing the firm with wife Patty in 1976, founding partner Michael Hopkins led the practice to pioneer a specific English strain of High-Tech. Following this came a period when Michael Hopkins & Partners acquired an inaccurate reputation for only being interested in top-end high-budget work, following a series of prestigious commissions for venerable British establishment clients such as Buckingham Palace, Central Government and the Royal Academy. This era has now passed, however, and a renamed and restructured Hopkins

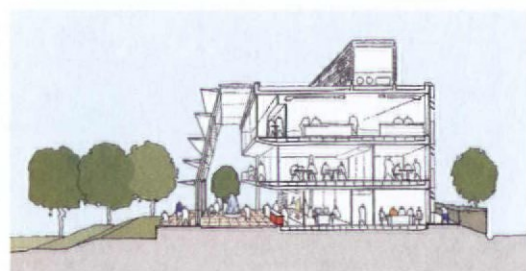
Architects now has a more diverse team of home-grown co-directors who are attracting a broader range of clients.

The first significant step change came with the architect's Jubilee Campus at Nottingham University (AR February 2000), where on a tight budget, working with timber cladding and galvanised steel, the practice reasserted itself as true architectural pioneer and English eccentric, with a curious building that has echoes of Schlumberger, the David Mellor shop and Bedfont Lakes combined. In part, this commission led to the projects featured in this survey that focuses on Hopkins Architects' most recent move into America, to work on buildings for four of America's leading academic institutions.

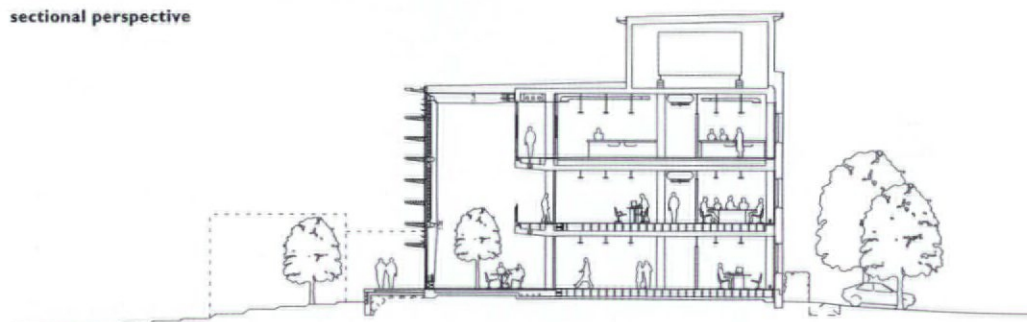
Previous page:  
the Applied  
Research  
Building at the  
Northern Arizona  
University was  
completed last  
year.



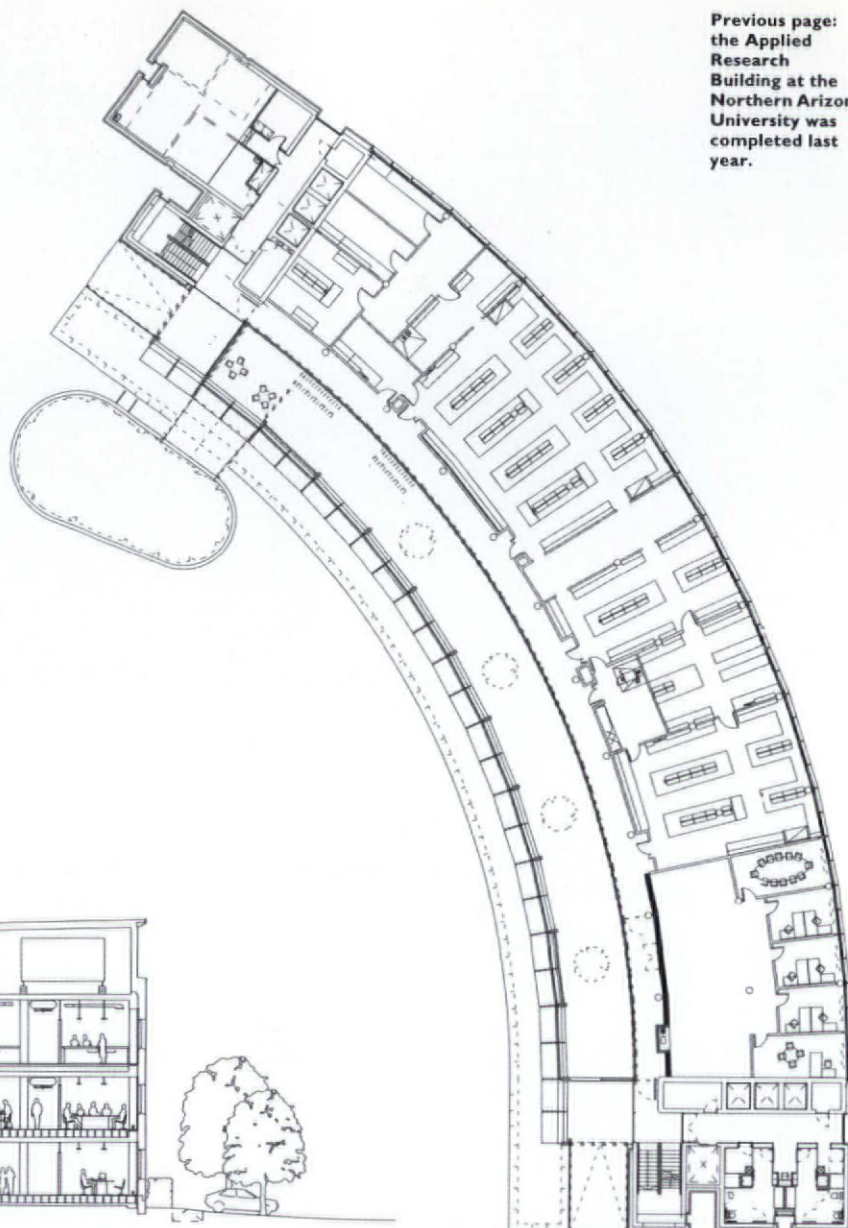
site plan



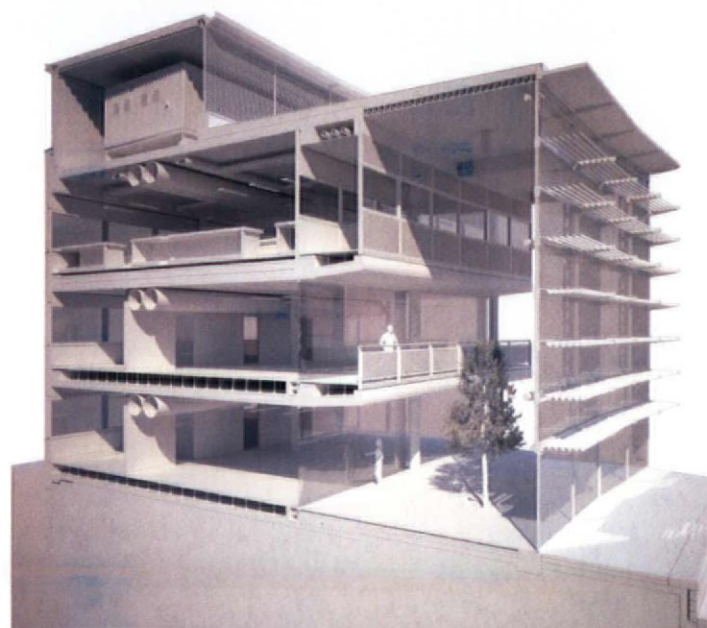
sectional perspective



cross section



typical plan (scale approx 1:500)

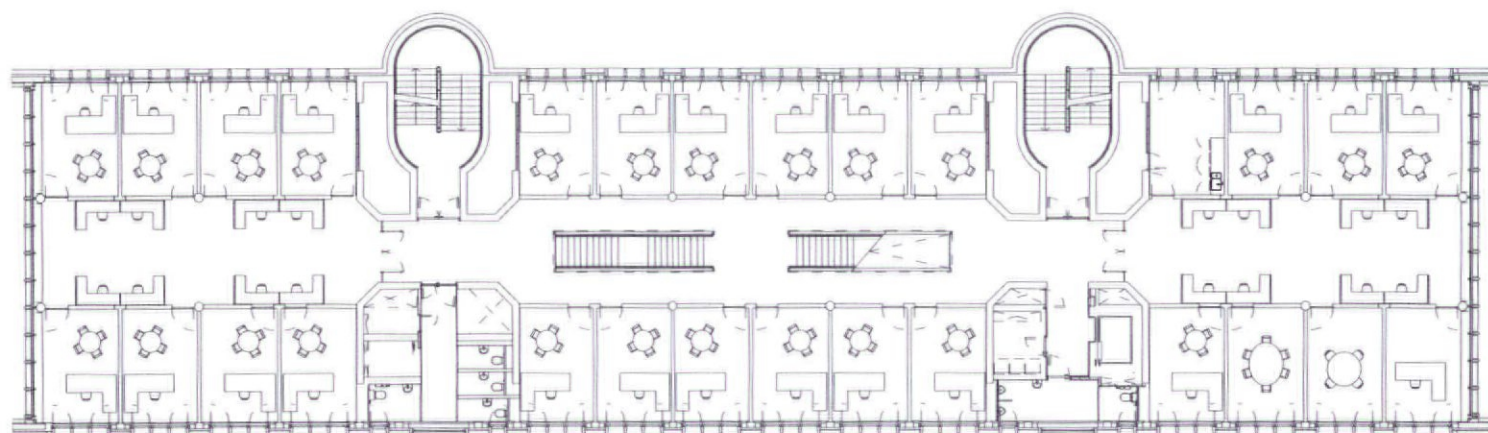
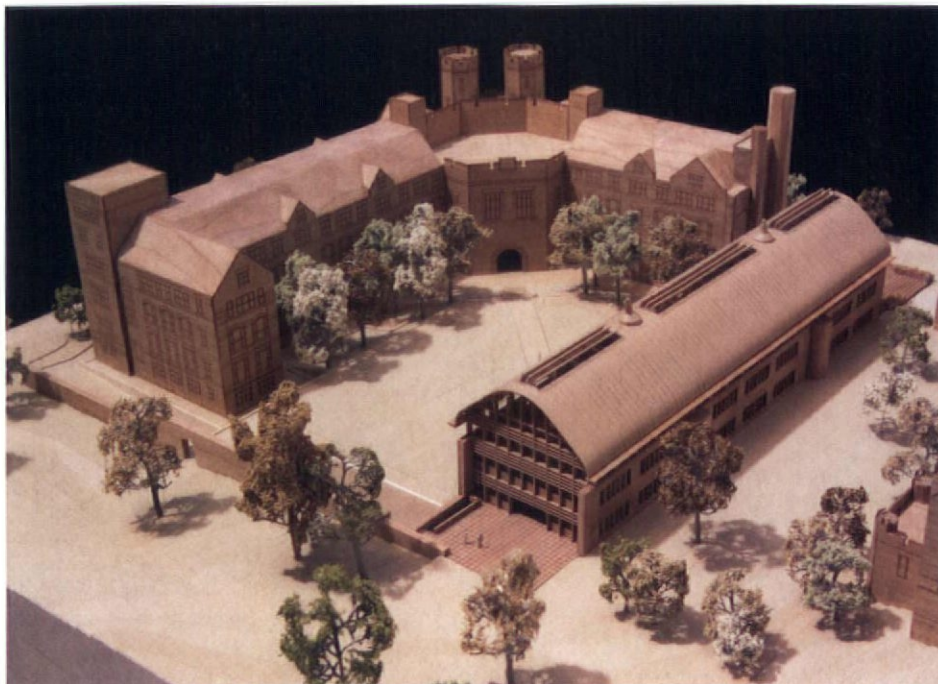


This tranche of work had two triggers, Bob Stern's invitation to Michael Hopkins to teach at Yale, and Jubilee Campus client Chris Jagger's introduction to work in Arizona. This led to four separate commissions across the country with a 6500sqm Applied Research Building at the Northern Arizona University at Flagstaff, completed last year; the 6500sqm School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, due for completion later this year; a pair of new collegiate dormitories, totalling 22 000sqm at Rice University, scheduled to complete in 2009; and a 25 000sqm chemistry building at Princeton University that will open in 2010.

Across such a range of scales, programmes and locations, it would be spurious to try to draw too many direct comparisons. However, in conversation with directors Bill Taylor, Andy Barnett and Mike Taylor and project director Henry Kong, a number of key themes emerge, all of which focus on the issue of how to manage risk and innovation, with all four projects having at least one key component that risk averse clients and design teams would traditionally avoid. At Arizona this related to the building's actual anatomy, with Hopkins proposing a large south-facing atrium; at Yale, to an integrated and holistic environmental strategy, with an adiabatic air-handling system



site plan

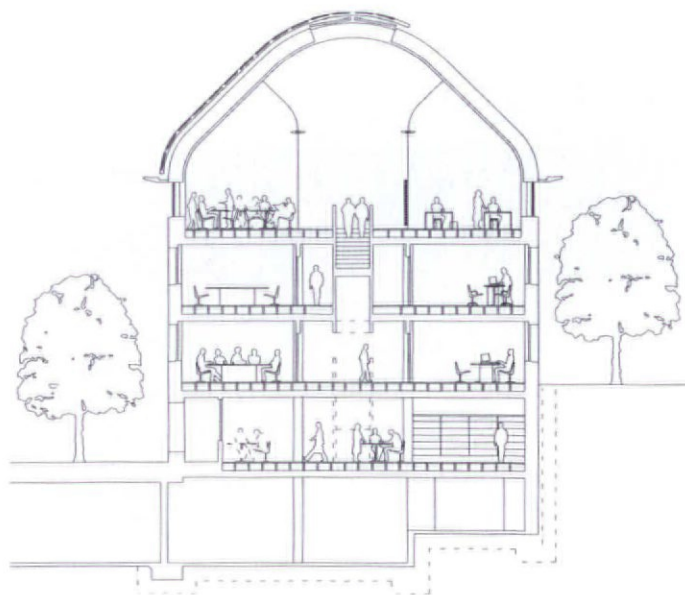


typical plan (scale approx 1:350)

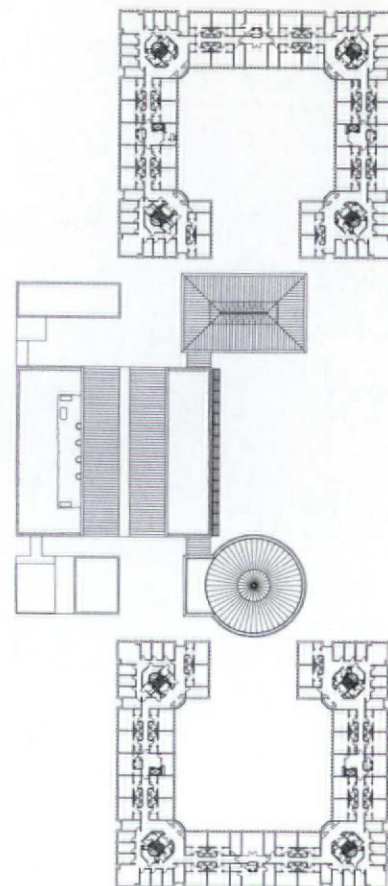
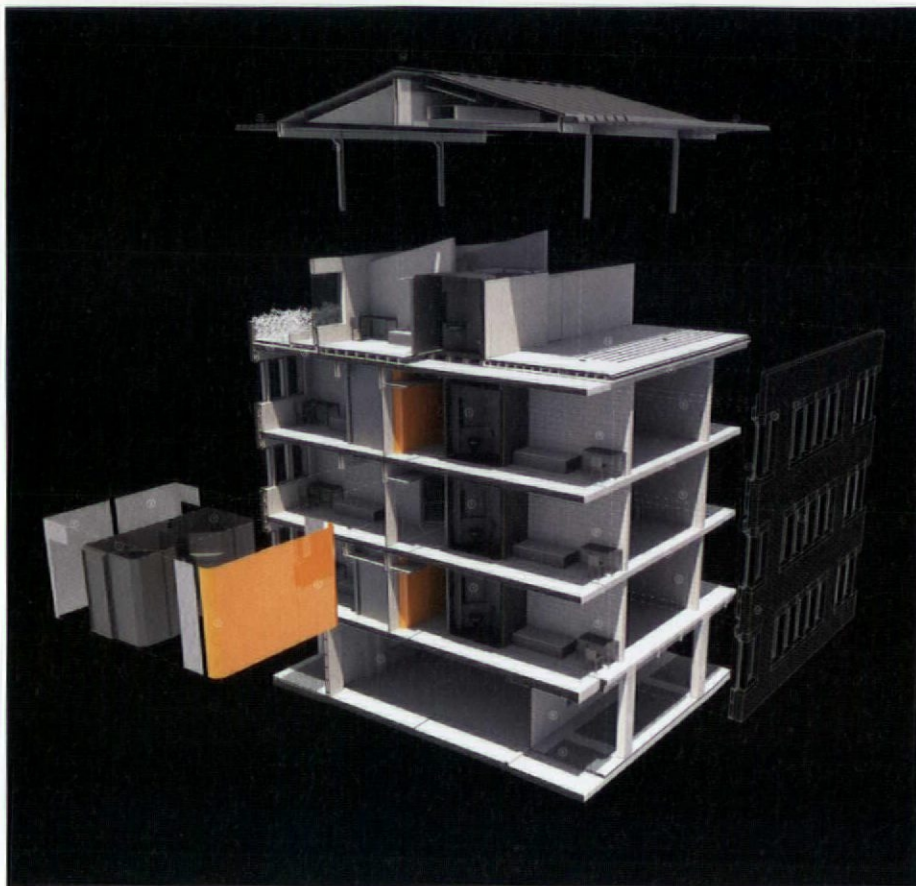
in place of traditional air conditioning; at Rice to a mixed mode of traditional and revolutionary construction techniques. And at Princeton, this related to their proposals for a socio/programmatic innovation that challenged long established relationships between the chemistry laboratories and their respective write-up spaces.

The Applied Research Building at Arizona is now complete, and has been awarded Platinum Certification by the US Green Building Council (the highest rating for sustainability under the LEED programme), and while a three-storey south-facing atrium that captures winter sun and serves as a thermal buffer is not necessarily a new idea, it took time for the architect to convince the project board that this strategy should be adopted. However, as noted by Mike Taylor, it is clear that American clients are becoming increasingly interested in sustainability and are prepared to employ architects who can bring specific expertise of integrated engineering approaches.

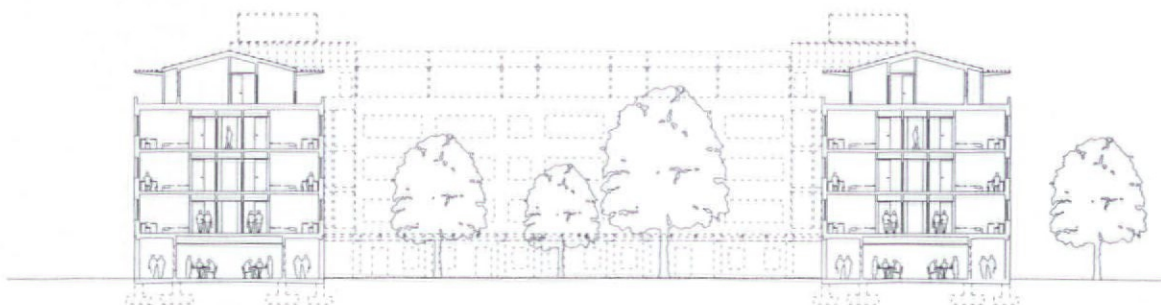
Pure engineering, however, is never enough, which is where the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale demonstrates how an architectural language can be developed to express a building's unique relationship to site and programme; here, employing local sandstone to create two parallel walls that unite the campus quad,



cross section

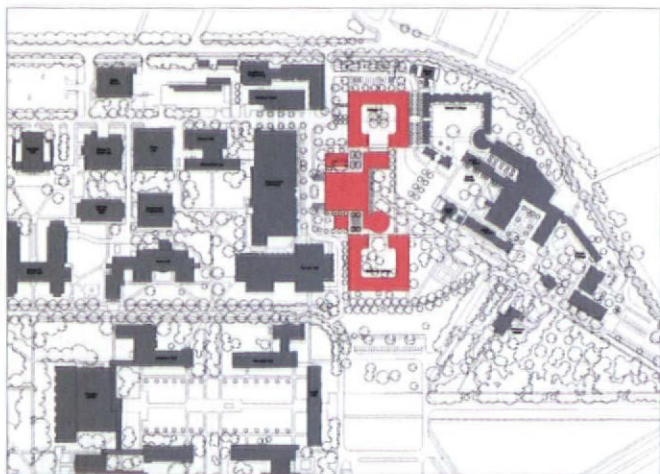


typical plan (scale approx 1:2000)



cross section

The North College redevelopment at Rice University combines old and new techniques with lime mortar brickwork, exposed concrete soffits and prefabricated fibreglass bathroom pods.

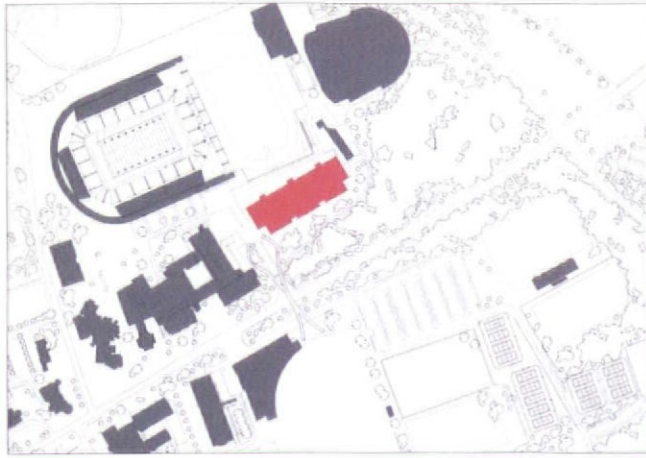


site plan

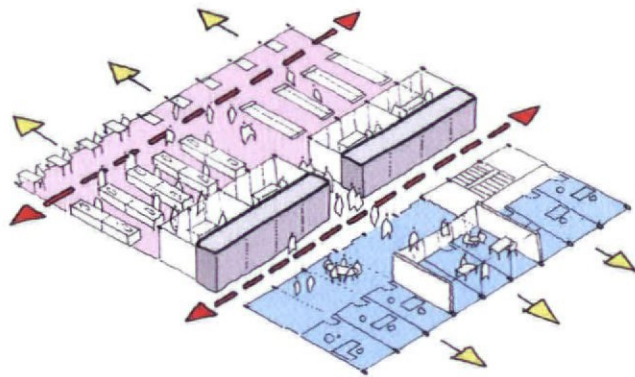
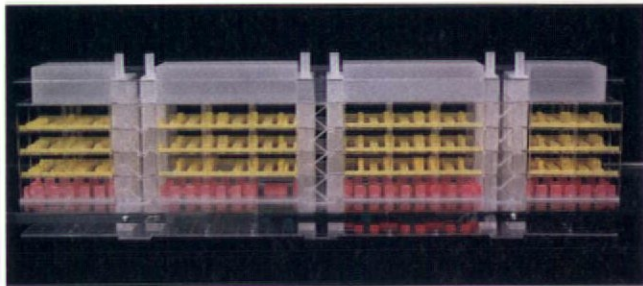
while opening up views to the mature wooded landscape from the school's attic storey Environment Centre. Set within a dramatic glulam timber structure, this gently curved form will eventually be clad with solid pv panels to the south, and an array of glass-embedded pvs along the length of the convex roof light ridge.

At Rice, set within the context of its axial 1930s campus plan, and in response to the many finely detailed brick buildings on site, Hopkins have created two new college dormitories that create their own landscaped enclosures. Arranged around separate dining halls and a shared catering core, the plan extends the campus grain to preserve precious green space. Working within the traditional format of shared double rooms, innovation has come with mixed mode construction, combining traditional masonry construction and exposed concrete soffits, with state of the art fibreglass prefabrication bathroom pods.

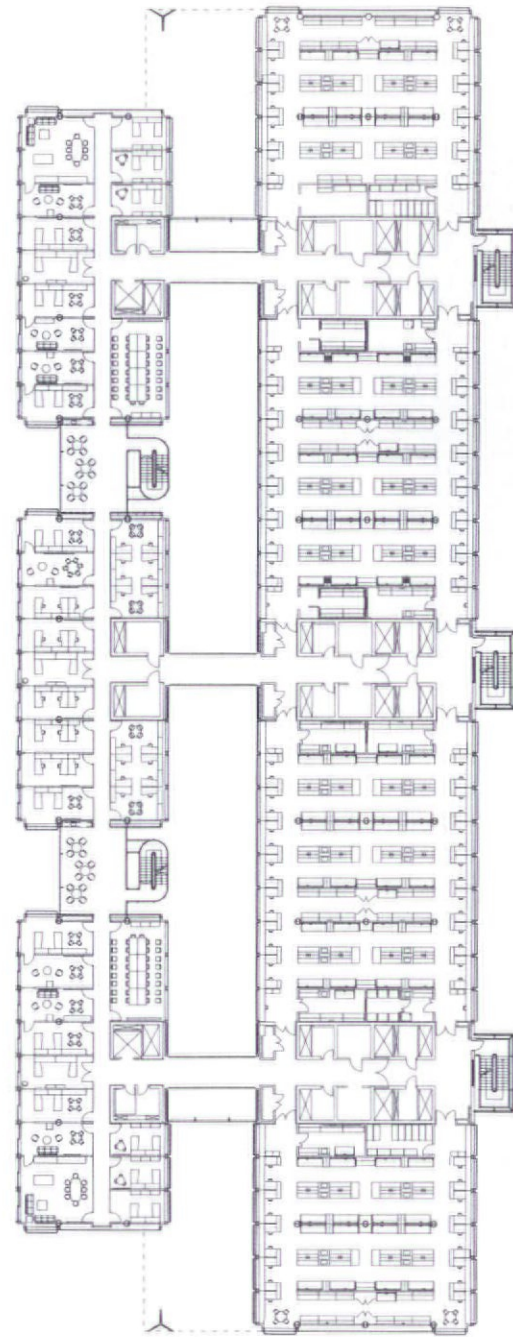
Most recently, the practice's New Chemistry Building in Princeton expresses each component of the programme with clarity, arranged in a plan that vastly reduces endless comings and goings between



site plan



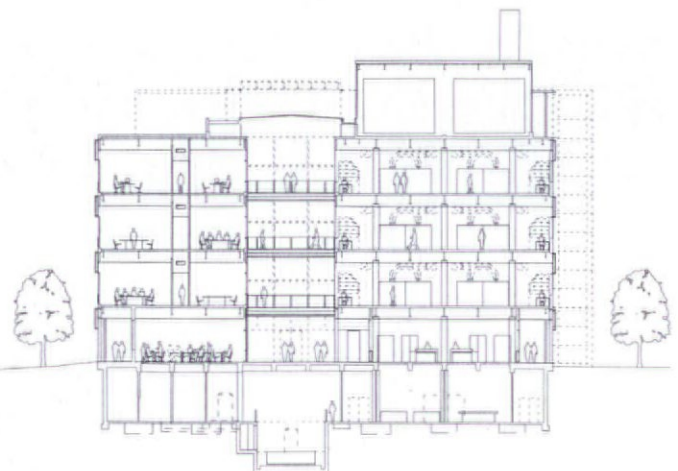
organisational diagram



typical plan (scale approx 1:700)

research and writing up, by providing combined lab and desk bases in one block, and traditional offices in another. All of which are served by transverse cores that maximise perimeter desk space to optimise views and reduce reliance on artificial light.

In consideration of all these projects, it is interesting to note that throughout the practice's 30 year history, the influence of Louis Kahn and Mies van der Rohe can still be seen. In many ways Hopkins are now replaying key lessons learnt from these masters, in a process that is giving America institutions confidence to innovate and go against conventions of mediocrity and architectural dumbing down. Working with excellent architects of record, who ensure local regulations are met, Hopkins demonstrate that decent buildings can be produced that combine essential qualities of robust and well mannered tectonics with first rate logical planning that distinguishes the served from the servant. Hopkins of course would be first to recognise that they did not invent these principles. Rather they took them from America in the '70s, and are now simply repatriating the same essential truths. ROB GREGORY



cross section

'The revenge of the American colonists ... an invasion more of vandals than of Goths' was the response of one prominent member of the British architectural establishment to the arrival of large American practices in London back in the 1980s. London was threatened with a rash of 'quite unsuitable buildings'. Two decades on, practices with American origins such as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Kohn Pedersen Fox and HOK seem to have put down firm roots in London. It's hard, indeed, to categorise such firms as 'American', any more than Foster + Partners is 'British' – all are players in a global market. According to Lee Polisano, world president of New York and London-based KPF, 'roughly a third of our work is in London, a third in the USA and a third in the Middle East and Asia'. The staff of KPF's London office, like that of Foster's or Rogers Stirk Harbour's, is highly cosmopolitan – Americans form a small minority. Far from imposing American ways on Europe, SOM, KPF, HOK and others have striven to establish a distinctive approach to design that can respond to the character of a London conservation area or the environmentally demanding ethos of Germany and the Netherlands.

However, when the AR asked a number of prominent London-based US practice directors to comment on the current American scene in its international context, the continuing cultural divide between America and Europe rapidly became a focus for discussion. Former RIBA president, AA-trained Paul Hyett of HKS International, the US practice's London-based arm, believes 'US architects are good at delivery. The Europeans are often preoccupied by design. I think the Americans sometimes get frustrated by what they see as our determination to reinvent the wheel'. Larry Malcic, design director of HOK's London office, equally believes that American schools of architecture are good at preparing people to deliver a service. 'The stress on hand-crafting, as in many classic High-Tech buildings, is very British. Americans seem more concerned about the big idea – maybe it goes back to the dominance in the past of the Beaux Arts tradition in the USA. You can't imagine a building like Rogers' Lloyd's, with its enormous beauty of detail, being commissioned in America. There is a sense in which European architects see themselves as artists in a way many Americans don't. Maybe it's a reflection of the way the USA received the ideas of the Bauhaus from people like Gropius, Mies and Breuer – there is an emphasis on practical utility in the Bauhaus philosophy'. One might express this as an examination question: 'American architects suppress detail, Europeans celebrate it'. Discuss.

The architectural dialogue between Europe and America extends back, of course, to the eighteenth century. And the British impact on American architecture in the last fifty years has been reinforced by distinguished Britons who have taught in US schools – Peter

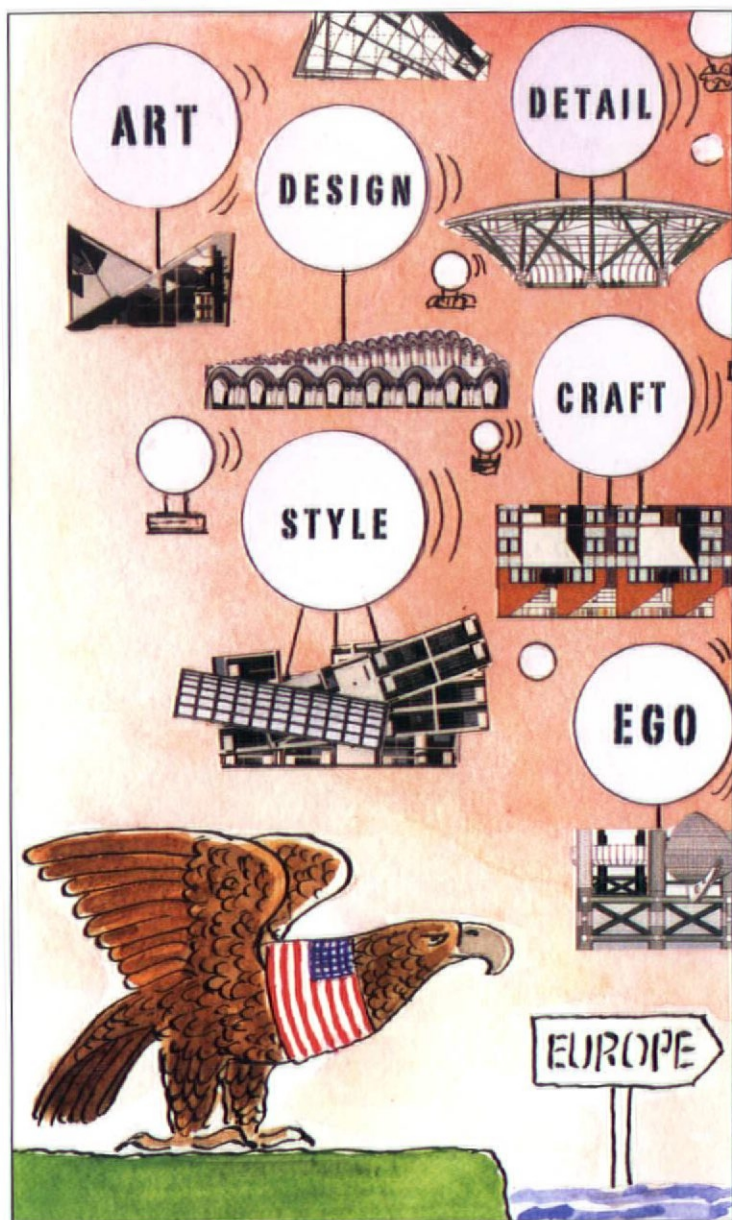
Shepherd, Colin Rowe and James Stirling, for example. Britain still supplies a steady stream of teachers to US academia. The interaction between leading schools in Britain and the USA is dynamic: Mohsen Mostafavi, former chairman of the AA, now runs the graduate design school at Harvard. There is still a widespread perception in Europe that the USA is a deeply parochial nation, with large numbers of people who have never acquired a passport or even left their home state. Certainly the Americans have their own way of doing things: the competition system, for example, has never been popular in the USA.

America is a land of litigation and large practices, such as Gensler, employ their own legal teams. The ethos of client-oriented service in American architecture is strong. Suppressing stylistic expression in favour of practical efficiency is not seen as necessarily bad. As Christopher Johnson, British by birth but managing principal of Gensler's London operation (and formerly with SOM) comments, 'Anonymity is not always a negative quality – the client comes first, not the ego of the architect'. Gensler has 10 offices outside the USA, mostly in Asia, but there is a common philosophy of design – 'it's not a matter of dictation, more of fruitful intercommunication between the offices, with directors often pursuing their own specialisms', Johnson says. 'We have an element of team spirit that the British don't entirely warm to but I think it is part of a delivery culture.' HOK has 26 offices internationally, but Larry Malcic insists that each has its own way of doing things. He is particularly proud of the way that the London office has acclimatised itself, working on landmark historic buildings such as the Foreign Office and British Museum as well as major new-build projects.

Large practices such as HOK and KPF, often categorised as 'commercial' – somehow the term still has a negative ring in Britain – are just one element in a rich and varied architectural scene in the USA. Fay Jones and Samuel Mockbee were both regional architects with a social conscience. The typical American practice – and there are proportionally far fewer architects in the USA than in most European countries – is small and locally centred. As innovative designers, however, Steven Holl, Greg Lynn, Diller & Scofidio, Thom Mayne, Antoine Predock and others stand comparison with leading-edge European practices. It's perhaps unfortunate that none of them has built in Britain and that the only British building by Frank Gehry is a small cancer clinic in Scotland (a one-off that reflects Gehry's friendship with architect and critic Charles Jencks). By contrast, critically-acclaimed British architects such as David Chipperfield and Zaha Hadid have a number of jobs in the USA, while the American operations of Foster, Rogers, Grimshaw and Hopkins are booming. London-based classicist Demetri Porphyrios, who has taught for many

# AMERICAN CONNECTION

In the first of an occasional series, Kenneth Powell talks to a group of leading architects about the state of practice in their home country and further afield. The series, in association with Keim Paints, begins with the United States.



years in America, has recently completed a new college at Princeton University – and that says something about the genuine pluralism of the USA. Would a British university commission a residential complex in the Gothic style by a US architect? Both Santiago Calatrava and Daniel Libeskind now make their homes in New York, where input from European architects – Renzo Piano and Herzog & de Meuron, for example – has given a new energy to a local scene which, a few years ago, had a distinctly tired feel. The commission to Yoshio Taniguchi to design the major expansion of New York's MoMA (AR February 2005), the great shrine of American Modernism, surely suggests anything but a parochial outlook?

New York is, of course, not typical America – to some extent, it is hardly part of the USA at all. But every big American city seems to be commissioning an iconic cultural building from a European star – so much for the idea of American protectionism/parochialism. The simple fact is that Europe and America are engaged in a process of cross-fertilisation that extends across a broad cultural scene, including architecture, and transcends political differences. This process extends beyond issues of style to those of practical and technical innovation. Paul Hyett argues, for example, that new thinking about hospital design is largely coming from Europe, supplementing the huge resources of know-how held by American practices working in the field. And of course the debate on sustainability and low-energy

design has barely taken off in the USA, thanks to the blinkered intransigence of the Bush administration.

The cultural divisions between America and Europe extend back a long time. After the Second World War, the USA was characterised by a culture of free enterprise dominated by big business, while European nations retained a statist ethos – in the 1950s and '60s the London County Council ran what was arguably Britain's most significant architectural practice. The Thatcherite revolution in Britain eroded that ethos and the rise of London as a global financial capital has been accompanied by the adoption of American norms in office design that have not found acceptance in, say, Germany or the Netherlands. Fast-track construction and the use of standardised components have revolutionised the British scene in the last 20 years. The impression that America is the land of 'can do', which so impressed the young Norman Foster back in the early '60s, remains strong. But the greatness of America equally lies in its openness to new ideas, wherever they originate. Thomas Jefferson advised Americans to avoid the contagion of European ways but his compatriots have largely ignored his injunctions. You might ask whether, beyond the work of a select band of regional practitioners, there is any longer a distinct 'American' architecture, or whether America has simply played a key role in forming a new architecture for a global society. KENNETH POWELL

**HOUSE, KRONBERG IM  
TAUNUS, GERMANY**

ARCHITECT

**MEIXNER SCHLÜTER WENDT**

*Honi soit qui mal y pense* – when the authorities demanded a traditional German gable roof for a new family home in the leafy suburbs of Frankfurt, architects Meixner Schlüter Wendt returned the volley tongue-in-cheek. Though the roof's gradient is conventional, its formal expression is far from ordinary, sparking off a sculptural architecture based on principles of positive-negative. The site is a sloping orchard overlooking a valley and the architects wanted to retain something of this natural beauty. So instead of designing a solid building with traditional walls they divided the structure horizontally into three zones: the invisible 'ground floor' dug deep into the hill, the so-called 'garden floor' running as a visual extension of the orchard right through the building, and the floating 'top floor' on stilts above.

Each concrete floor slab can be interpreted as an extended topography of the rising ground contour, and as a result the garden and top floors are split level. Thus each slab is the negative imprint of the ground condition and the garden appears to run right through the house as all external ground-floor walls are made of glass. This allows uninterrupted views from and into the open plan living quarters of hall, kitchen, dining and living area. Slender pilotis punctuate the tectonic of the structural frame, a device that echoes Corb's villas. However, unlike the structure of classic Modernist houses, the weighty top floor is in stark contrast to the dematerialised ground floor.

## Off the radar

**More Stealth Bomber than house, this new dwelling is a challenge to convention.**



# ar house



! The heavy, angular volume of the upper level hovers over a lightweight glass-enclosed base.

As the authorities proscribed a traditional roof line, Haus Flohr has a strong abstract cubic shape, its angular edges clad in a defensive black metal sheeting. The entire top floor is turned into a hermetic wedge housing the bedroom and bathrooms of the five family members over a split level. Interestingly the plan and the arrangement of the private quarters is remarkably straightforward and does not reflect the complex geometry of the section. At this point, the different possible readings of the house overlap as the architects toy with the ambivalence of form: does the top floor resemble a traditional pitched roof or a Stealth Bomber?

This strategy of ambiguous perception is well rehearsed by Meixner Schlüter Wendt. Their repertoire of architectural manoeuvres includes cunning play with the notions of in and outside, light and dark, as well as open and closed spaces. All these question and transform our predetermined notions of space. Previous projects have deciphered and deconstructed familiar building types, such as a house, church or houseboat. The conventional is questioned by irregular cuts, vistas, clusters of building mass, divisions and unexpected omissions.

At Haus Flohr the most startling display of this is in the kinetic porch roof that can be raised like flaps in an aeroplane wing. In a 'normal' house the roof is usually the place for gutters and the drainpipes, but no such profane devices can be spotted here as aerodynamics trumps utility. The south-facing adjustable flaps function as a sunshade and daylight control for the unprotected glazed box of the garden floor. And metaphorically, they stabilise the building in the event of any architectural turbulence.

CHRISTIAN BRENSING

#### Architect

Meixner Schlüter Wendt, Frankfurt-am-Main

#### Photographs

Christoph Kraneburg

#### HOUSE, KRONBERG IM TAUNUS, GERMANY

ARCHITECT

MEIXNER SCHLÜTER WENDT

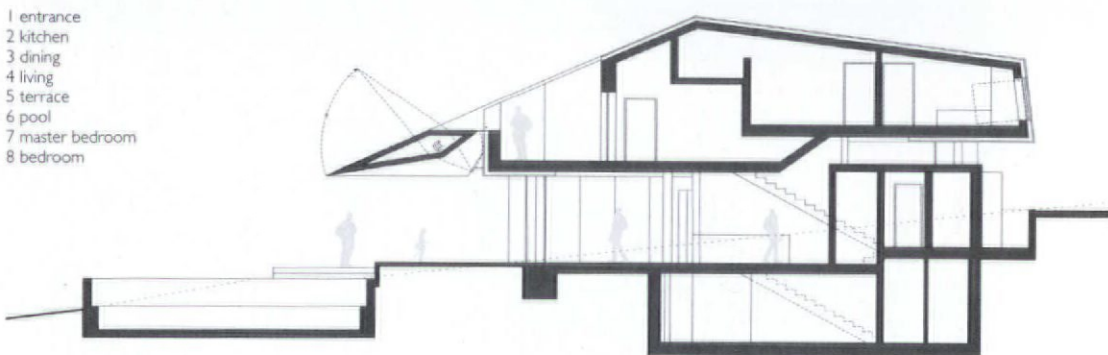


2



3

- 1 entrance
- 2 kitchen
- 3 dining
- 4 living
- 5 terrace
- 6 pool
- 7 master bedroom
- 8 bedroom



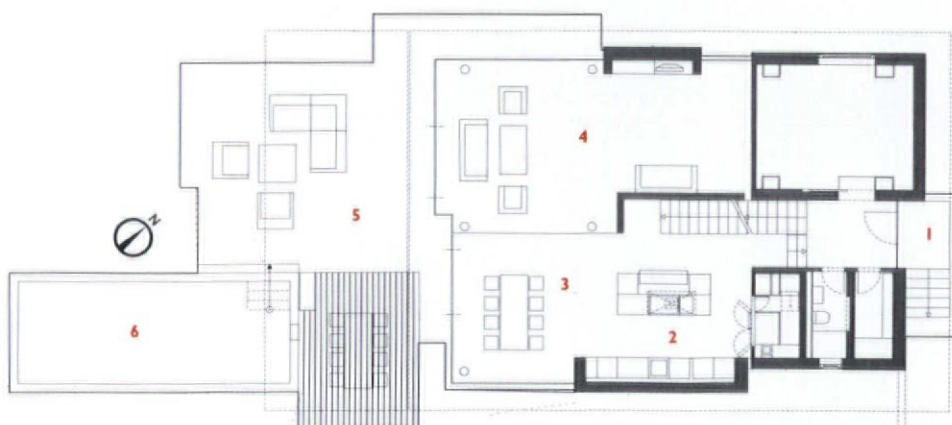
long section



site plan



upper level plan



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:250)

2, 3  
Sources of inspiration  
– vernacular dwellings  
and the Stealth Bomber.

4  
An architecture of  
extreme polarities.

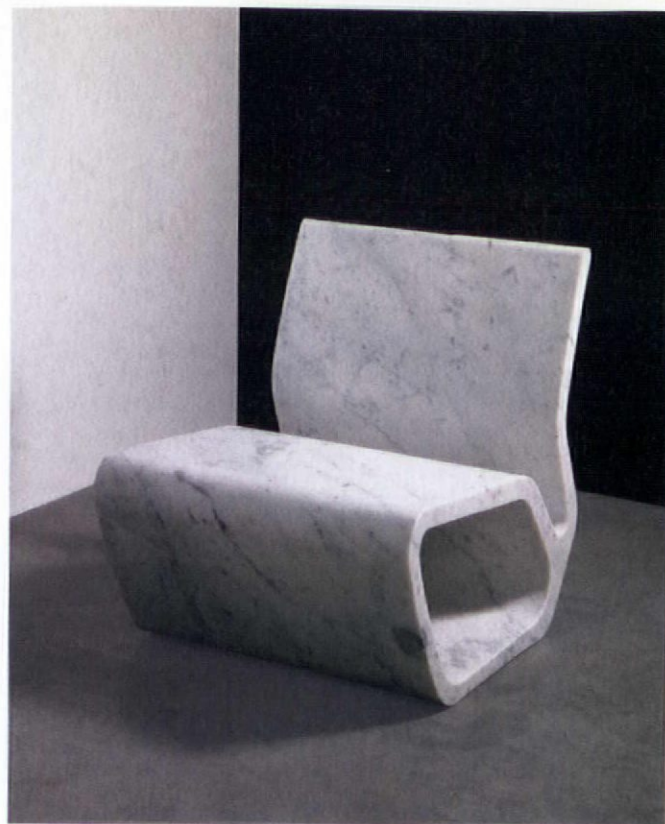
5  
The upper volume  
contains sleeping  
quarters and bathrooms.

6  
The ground floor is given  
over to living, dining and  
cooking.



In the early sixteenth century it took Michelangelo three years to chisel and wrest the muscular form of David from its obstinate casing of Carrera marble. Purchased at vast expense by the city authorities, the huge block had been languishing in Florence's cathedral workshop for 25 years and was widely considered to be unworkable. Happily for art history, Michelangelo proved everyone wrong.

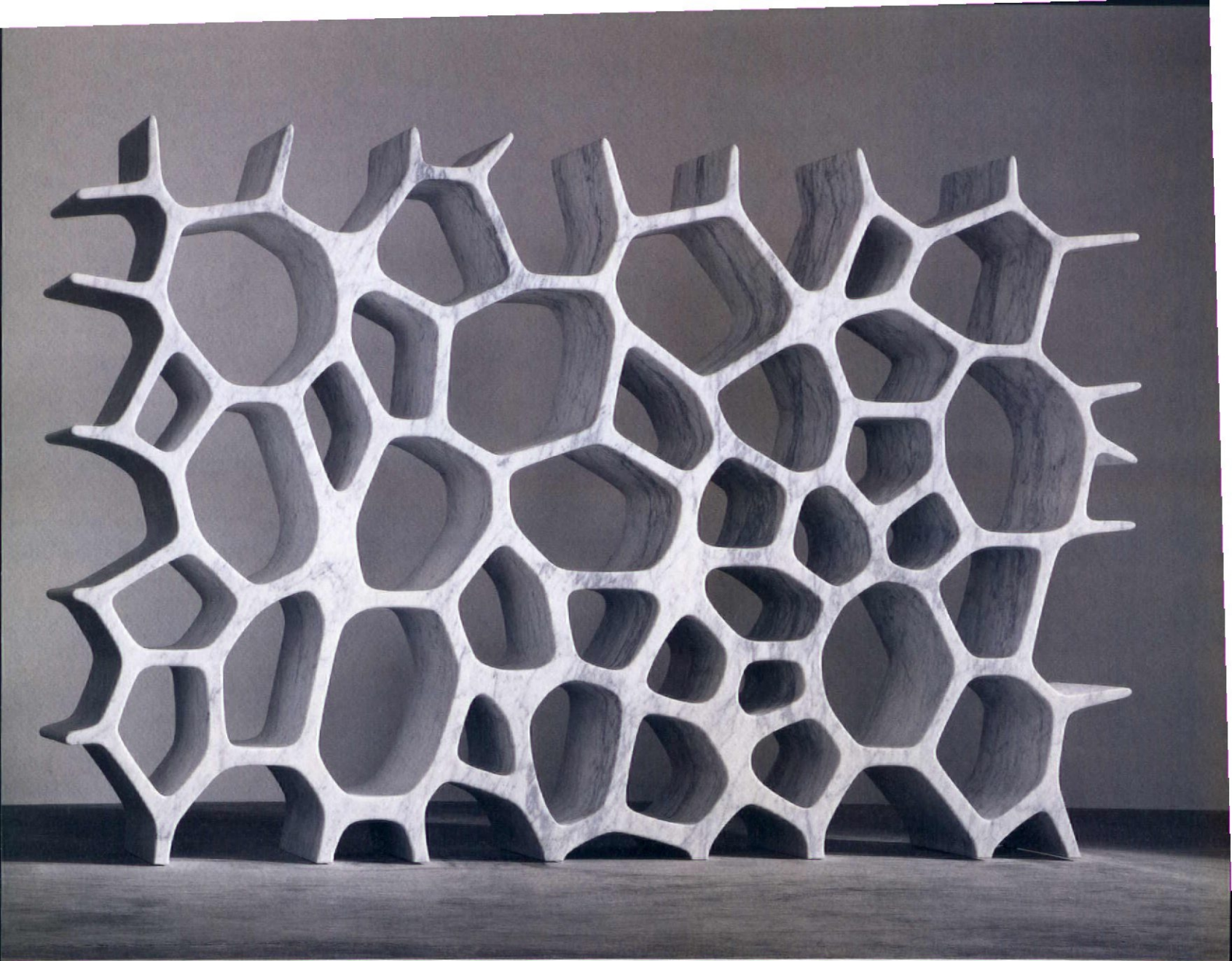
Comparing Australian uber-designer Marc Newson with the Renaissance maestro is perhaps a step too far, but Newson has achieved a similar alchemy of crafting sinuous contours from living rock, albeit heavily abetted by the technology of the time and the skills of Italian craftsmen. His latest series of experimental domestic sculptures ('furniture' is way too mundane a term for it) are simply cut from solid lumps of Carrera or Bardiglio marble and then lovingly smoothed, finished and polished. And that's it. No joints, no fiddling, no cheating, no bits stuck on; just the sensuous pleasure of unbroken lines and the cool, veined weightiness of the marble.



## Stone age

Marc Newson's extraordinary marble furniture is an alchemy that coaxes sensuous line from solid stone.





Newson enjoys periodically testing the capacities of materials and processes. Such 'out there' research advances his accumulation of knowledge and shapes his view of design. More usually associated with a plastic fantastic ethos of Dan Dare streamlining, punky citrus colours, surfing and air travel, here the dude gets serious. It's just him and the stone. Understandably, the selection of the right block is crucial. The marble must be perfect, with no flaws or faults that might split or deform when worked. The speed and accuracy of the cutting process would astound his Renaissance predecessors. Diamond coated wire scythes through the stone as if it were cheese, and out pops a freshly minted Newson. Though it all sounds effortless, it involves precise judgement, manual skill and an intuitive understanding of the material. Wastage is high; a 30 ton block of marble yields a half-ton table.

Commissioned by Larry Gagosian, global galleriste and modern-day Medici, the collection of extruded tables, chairs and honeycombed shelving was first shown in his New York salon and is now in London until mid April. Naturally all pieces are strictly single figure limited editions with eye-watering price tags, but given the enduring qualities of marble, they are definitely built to last. CATHERINE SLESSOR



**Opposite page top:** Extruded Chair in white Carrara marble; **left:** Extruded Table in grey Bardiglio marble; **bottom:** Extruded Table 1. All are cut from single blocks. **This page top:** Voroni Shelf in white Carrara marble; **bottom:** polishing and finishing in the Italian workshop.

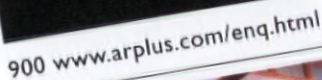
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## Häfele

## Häfele

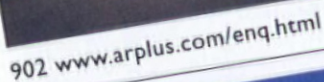
Architectural ironmongery, hardware and fittings specialist Häfele has launched a suite of services for architects, specifiers, installers and project managers called Project 360°. These support services extend from design for furniture and interior décor through hardware supply and on to full project management. Documentation back-up includes planning manuals; seminars for planners; tendering texts; application examples in both UK and Europe; CAD software support; and Häfele's TEC Services which cover a range of standards and educational support.



**Corus**

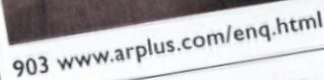
**Corus**

Corus Colorcoat Prisma® pre-finished steel has been used for the wall cladding of one of Scotland's leading training providers, GTG. The 18 500m<sup>2</sup> centre has been designed by Opfer Logan Architects and according to Project Architect, David Wilson, 'We wanted a certain aesthetic to the exterior and using Colorcoat Prisma® helped achieve this. The second, very important, factor was the long term guarantee offered on the Corus product'. Corus Colorcoat Prisma® offers the comprehensive Confidex® Guarantee for up to 25 years exclusive to Corus.



**Dorma**

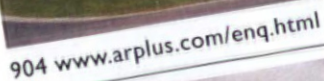
**DORMA** effectively reinvented the future of lightweight movable walls with the MOVEO® system. At around half the weight of most conventional alternatives – and with a huge range of finishes – it is the first radical alternative system since movable walls first appeared. MOVEO® has excellent sound insulation properties and can be installed either as new fit, or for refurbishment projects where movable partitions could not previously be considered because of structural limitations.



**Tile of Spain**

The new Urbana range of Porcelain, semi-polished floor tiles from Tile of Spain member DIAGO features subtle, linear, metallic striations and is available in four colours. The medium format 42.5cm<sup>2</sup> tiles are complemented by smaller formats including 21x42.5cm and 2.5x42.5cm decorative listels (borders).

[www.diago.com](http://www.diago.com)



**Schüco**

**Schüco**

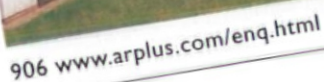
The first UK installation of an aluminium sliding window system plays a crucial role in a contemporary property development centred round the Grade II listed, 18th-century Clyne Castle in Swansea. Holder Mathias Architects were asked to maximise the views of the castle and Swansea Bay. Their response was a series of futuristic residential properties, seven of which include a single large rectangular window. The Schüco RS 70 HPS HI sliding window system was specified because it delivers unbeatable performance.



## Reynaers

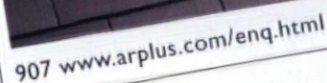
**Reynaers**

Reynaers' CW50 SC curtain-walling system played a key part in the creation of a Sainsbury's at the heart of the regeneration of Maidenhead centre. The building features Reynaers CW50 SC curtain wall facade and roof system. The CW50 SC was selected as it provides designers with unlimited creative freedom, allowing maximum entrance of light into a building. This is because the structurally clamped system permits any combination of vertical and inclined planes, and the integration of different types of vents, creating a seamless facade with no exterior capping required.



## Levolux

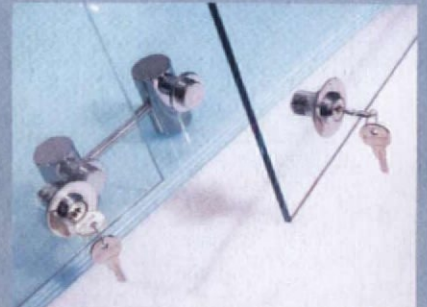
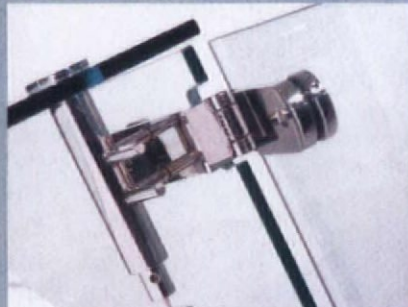
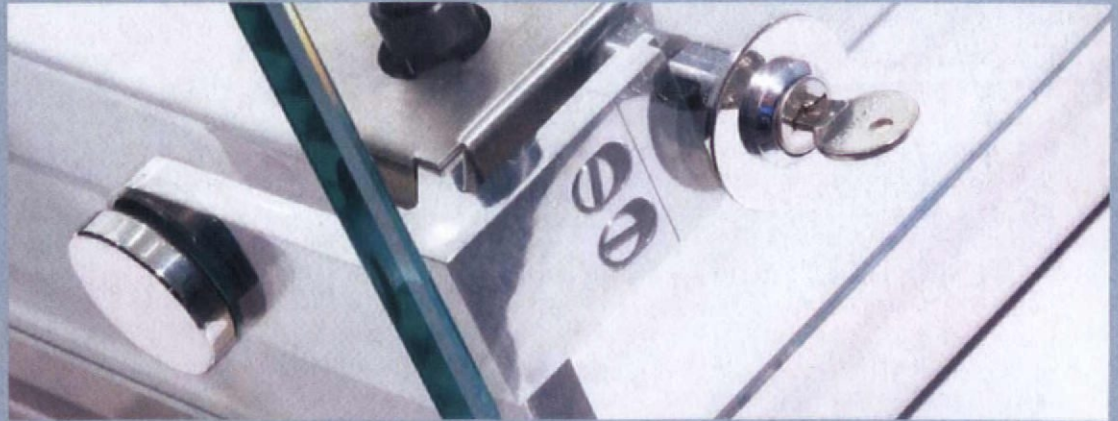
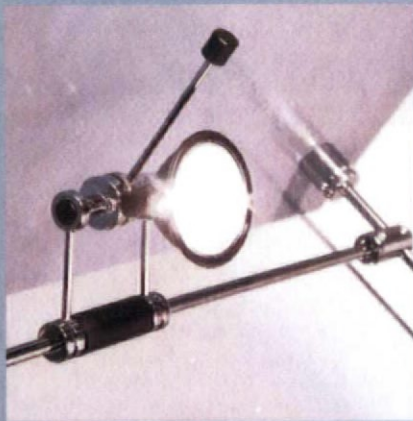
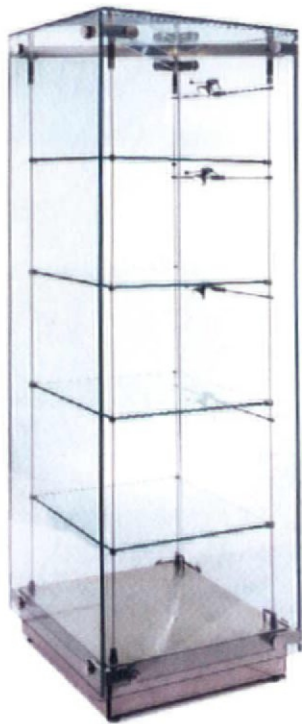
**Levolux**  
A new £24 million secondary school has chosen Levolux's innovative sun screening system to keep lesson time cool for nearly 1000 pupils. The custom-designed shading, featuring large energy screens and vertical blade louvres along with an area of horizontal fins and walkway, has been installed at Cardinal Hume Catholic School in Gateshead. Constructed predominantly over two storeys on a Greenfield site, with a five floor tower on one side, the 10 000m<sup>2</sup> landmark school also boasts the latest technology and a multi-use games area.



**Marley Eternit**

**Marley Eternit** is expanding its Hawkins clay plain tiles range, manufactured in Staffordshire since the 19th century, with a new colour; Blue Smooth. This heritage, combined with the most modern firing techniques, gives a unique colour range, of four colours, Staffordshire Blue, Staffordshire Mixture, Dark Heather and Blue Smooth. Marley Eternit, known for its environmental innovations, achieves an 'A' rating for its clay plain roof tiles in the BRE's 'Green Guide to Specification', enabling specifiers to obtain environmental credits for buildings under the BREEAM and Eco Homes schemes.

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# reviews

## OLYMPIC FLAME

### OLYMPIC CITIES: CITY AGENDAS, PLANNING AND THE WORLD GAMES, 1896-2012

Edited by John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold.  
London: Routledge, 2007. £24.99

This series of essays is the Olympics without the sporting endeavour, the thrill of competition and the international media circus. Instead the focus is on the way those responsible for cities relate to and use this extraordinary event. Written by geographers and urbanists, we are taken through the history of the Games, the birth of the modern spectacle in 1896 courtesy of Pierre de Coubertin, and then a serial analysis of cities' approach to the present day.

There is no obvious pattern except the evolution of general requirements guarded by the International Olympic Committee. In some years there has been strong competition to stage the Games, in others less so. There are different approaches to containing costs and attracting commercial sponsorship with American cities – Los Angeles and Atlanta – standing out in their use of existing facilities and thereby controlling costs. They were also particularly successful in attracting sponsorship so that, allegedly, the Games made a profit. One lingering general question, however, is how income and expenditure is attributed and accounted for. What is city improvement and what costs are specifically Games related? This is a particularly apposite issue for the 2012 Games. What is clear is that the preparation for the 1976 Montreal Games was spectacularly elaborate and costly, and is the given example of what to avoid.

The Games get tangled up in nations' search for international prestige and international rivalry. The sensitivities surrounding the 1936 Berlin Games, the tragedy of Munich in 1972, and the Moscow and Los Angeles boycotts of 1980 and 1984 indicate such tensions and turmoil. It is of course the competitors whose massive endeavours can suffer in such circumstances.

For London what comes through is the influence of Barcelona in using the Games as the spark for wholesale regeneration and the influence of Richard Rogers, closely involved in Barcelona, in London's ambitions. Barcelona's determination as a city to express its resurgence and release from the Franco regime, and winning the right to stage the Games in 1992 being integral to this, is now totemic. This seems to be becoming a key feature in Olympic related objectives and is certainly being played out in London. So what we now have – and this is clearly shown through these essays – are three Olympic

strands: containing costs, city regeneration and international prestige. Different cities, and countries give these strands different weights with Beijing, for example, seemingly determined to demonstrate that this is to be China's century and it begins with the Games.

It seems clear that for London 2012 we are trying to cover all three strands but without the political confidence and the exposition to clearly set out that the modern Olympics has multiple goals. This means sorting out and spelling out many times what funds are paying for what, what benefits are short term and what are on a longer timescale. It is also a pity that we shoot ourselves in the foot by raiding Lottery funds destined for equally good causes. The chapter on London is somewhat downbeat with irrelevant references to the experience of other *grand projets* such as the Dome and Canary Wharf. But overall these essays, though earnest, certainly add to the insights about this most extraordinary touring spectacle.

ERIC SORENSEN

## DUBAI DISSECTED

### WINDTOWER

By Anne Coles and Peter Jackson with a Foreword by HRH The Prince of Wales.  
London: Stacey International, 2007. £35

This is a beautifully illustrated book on Bastakiya, the old quarter of Dubai, in which Coles, a social geographer, and Jackson, an architect, provide clear insights into the social structures and environmental factors that created its architecture.

Their surveys were made in the early 1970s just before the original inhabitants started to leave and the bulldozers arrived. At that time the traditional seasonal migration from ground floor rooms to roofs and the lay-out of the houses with specific uses for the different rooms were still part of everyday life. Fortunately demolition was halted halfway through and recently Australian environmental engineers using sophisticated techniques have been able to show that windtower houses can efficiently produce comfortable living conditions.

The book begins with the historical development of Dubai and the political forces that brought the founding merchant families of Bastakiya from Persia in the late nineteenth century. Initially they lived in palm houses with simple timber-framed windtowers beside the creek, but by the end of the century they were constructing masonry houses with windtowers on the Persian pattern. Uniquely, Coles has been able to record the details of everyday life in these houses through talking to the women of the families.

The architecture of seven magnificent windtower houses is presented in clear and detailed drawings, with drawn scales. Of special note is the house of Mohammed Sharif Bukhash for although it was demolished in 1985 it was the basis of the wind tunnel experiments. These experiments showed that the direction of the windtowers enabled the air currents to be caught with minimal turbulence, and this air was distributed so that it clung at a low level to the walls of a room precisely where people sat cross legged on the floor, leaning against the walls.

Traditional construction materials and techniques are described. The *areesh* houses which efficiently use every part of the palm tree to provide shelter, privacy and ventilation; the masonry houses with the qualities and uses for the different varieties of stone, the lime and gypsum renders and the various timbers available.

The future of the Bastakiya may appear to be secure, but alarmingly there are rumours that its future is shortly to be placed in the hands of a large international development company with little sympathy for historic buildings. I can only hope that this book and the dedication of local architects and their supporters will ensure that the precious cultural heritage represented by Bastakiya will not be destroyed. ARCHIE WALLS

## CAPITAL CARTOGRAPHY

### MAPPING LONDON: MAKING SENSE OF THE CITY

By Simon Foxell. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007. £39.95

I found this a very satisfying and enjoyable book. The subtitle suggests that it is earnestly trying to make 'sense of the city' but, as the contents reveal page after page of a wonderful collection of plans and part-plans, the project is instead thankfully given over to the sheer fun and pleasure of seeing how differently this great city's plan form has been read, and depicted with such variety, over the ages. Etchers, transport planners, cartoonists, politicians, artists, sociographers, and now of course endless computer buffs, all have had their go – and there are no doubt many more plans of London not shown here. Everyone has their 'mental-map' stories of cab rides, impossible bus maps, and frequent head scratching as to which way is north and which is south along the meandering River Thames. Trying to 'make sense of London' will no doubt keep future generations busy – and even as I write, I have a meeting with Deputy Mayor Nicky Gavron, Transport for

London planners and cartographers to have yet another go.

The book is very well produced, the accompanying text always brief but appropriate and well-observed, and the plans and maps themselves just so gripping and entertaining. Well, to me they are anyway; one of my favourite pastimes is to study maps – perhaps one which some might think a bit nerdish, but I consider anyone who shares the interest to be in the best of company – namely that of the great naturalist/geographer W. G. Hoskins who put so well into words the happy consequences of catching this particular bug in *The Making of the English Landscape* in 1973. 'There are certain sheets of the 1-inch Ordnance Survey maps which one can sit down and read like a book for hours on end, with growing pleasure and imaginative excitement. One dwells upon the infinite variety of the place names ... the delicate nerve-like complexity of roads and lanes, the siting of villages and hamlets ... one dissects such a map mentally, piece by piece, and in doing so learns a good deal about local history whether or not one knows the (place) itself.'

It seems Hoskins' words form the best of recommendations for this book, which also can be read for hours on end with pleasure and 'even excitement' as it is a virtual treasure trove in maps of the world's most interesting city.

TERRY FARRELL

## GKC'S ABC

### GILLESPIE, KIDD + COIA: ARCHITECTURE 1956-1987

Edited by Johnny Rodger. Glasgow:  
The Lighthouse. 2007. £25

This weighty tome, and associated exhibition at The Lighthouse in Glasgow, mark the culmination of the so-called 'Gillespie Kidd + Coia Project'. The remit for this Lottery-funded enterprise has been to redress the paucity of available material on the practice, and endeavour to confer upon it the '... recognition it deserves'. This laudable ambition has spawned an extensive programme including a website, outreach education workshops and the cataloguing and conserving of a substantial Gillespie, Kidd + Coia (GKC) archive. Certainly the contribution of Andy MacMillan and Isi Metzstein (GKC's garrulous principal partners) to Scotland's cultural renaissance is remarkable – not only in terms of establishing a recognisably Modernist legacy of built work but also in promoting architecture as an ennobling, socially responsive profession.

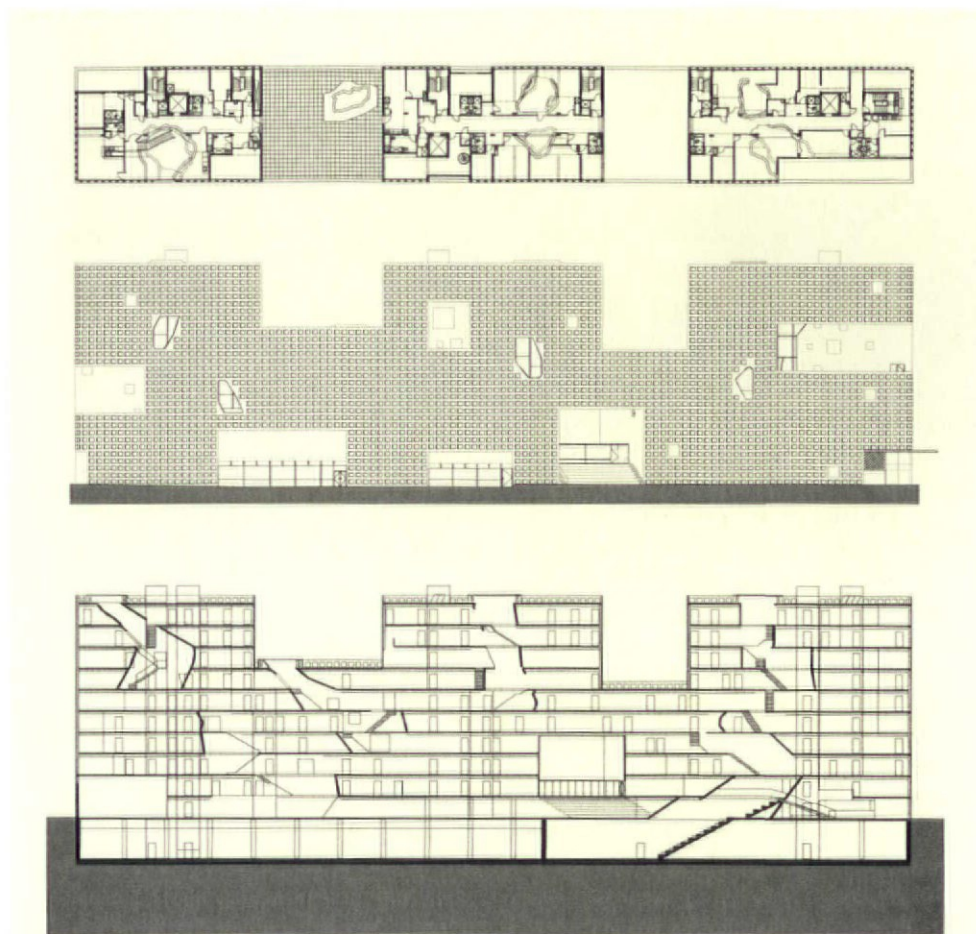
Both MacMillan and Metzstein have been intimately involved with education and were Professors of Architecture (at Glasgow

and Edinburgh, respectively). Although their pedagogic approach could instil either inspiration or intimidation (sometimes in equal measure), no one could doubt their commitment to the promotion of humanist values. Indeed, the late James Stirling praised their work as a 'unique mix of Corb and Aalto'.

This worthy book has much to commend it but, somewhat surprisingly, does not include illustrations of the exhibition's pristine models or computer-generated renderings or transcripts of the filmed interviews. The project focuses on the period 1956-1987 and much of the work will be unfamiliar to many. Scotland's post-war era is often characterised as astringent and banal; however, much of GKC's oeuvre appears remarkably contemporary and will resonate with a generation of much younger architects. The Round Riding sheltered housing (1967) at Dumbarton, for example, would not look out of place in the portfolios of, say, Sergison Bates or Caruso St John.

This book is a fitting (if overly reverential) testament to the struggle of two tenacious but talented practitioners whose significant legacy has been overlooked for too long. My principal cavil is that in presenting such a sepia-tinted retrospective, it glosses over the perilous current condition of so many surviving GKC buildings. The then controversial decision to list a number of their projects (primarily the churches and schools), sadly, has not been sufficient to reverse the wanton neglect suffered by various high profile buildings such as the seminary at Cardross. One can only hope that the re-evaluation engendered by the 'Gillespie Kidd + Coia Project' may indeed prove an exercise of enduring merit. MARK COUSINS

Book reviews from *The Architectural Review* can now be seen on our website at [www.arplus.com](http://www.arplus.com) and the books can be ordered online, many at a special discount.



At last, a book on architecture that recognises the importance of drawings. *Key Contemporary Buildings – Plans Sections and Elevations*, by Rob Gregory, London, Laurence King 2008, £28, really does what it says on the tin. Nearly a hundred memorable recent buildings are structured according to plan type and illustrated with specially redrawn plans, sections and elevations, all with proper scales and north points and all on a free CD. A thoughtful and inspiring primer to current architecture. Shown here is Steven Holl's Simmons Hall at MIT.

# reviews



Yeah baby – a performance happening in the late '60s.

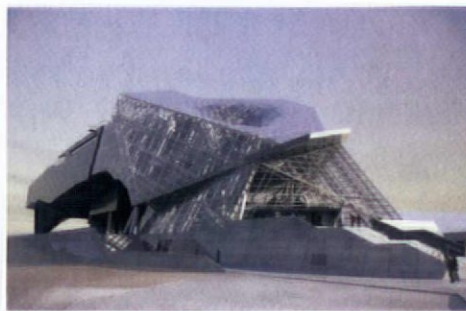
## BEYOND THE BLUE

**Chronicling 40 years of provocation, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Austria's favourite radicals, chill out at the MAK.**

In 1968 Wolf D. Prix, aged 26, Helmut Swiczinsky, 24, and Michael Holzer, 25, founded Coop Himmelb(l)au in Vienna. It was a heady year, steeped in political and artistic ferment, pseudo sciences and avant-garde happenings. From the Paris riots to Pop Art, if you were young and living in Western Europe, anything seemed possible. Revolution was only a shot away, with a post-1945 generation in creative overdrive shaping what could, or might, be. Old dress codes and social taboos gave way to a 'new' future, one that would be more socially minded, sexually enlightened and tolerant of differences, fuelled by hallucinatory drugs and contraceptives. Britain led a fashion and music revolution, while continental Europe gave birth to radical politics.

Coop Himmelb(l)au was one of the first architectural practices to give themselves an anonymous title (as opposed to partner names), and the humorous double-meanings that could be read into it said much about the group's head-space at the time. 'Coop' is also 'Co-operative'; 'Himmelb(l)au' could be either 'Blau', as in 'Blue', or 'Bau', as in 'Build', thus spawning 'Blue Heaven' or 'Building Heaven'. A subconscious ideal? 'Coop Himmelblau is not a colour but an idea, of creating architecture with fantasy, as buoyant and variable as clouds', waxed the partners lyrically in 1968.

Forty years on, the bunch of dreamy radicals is now a trans-global concern, with bases in Vienna and Los Angeles. Spanning the four decades, this



Musée des Confluences in Lyons, still ongoing.

major retrospective was custom designed for the MAK, not only as a chronicle of their development, but also as a spatial pleasure. Entering an artificially lit hall between two stepped tribunals, the visitor is confronted by an enormous podium at eye level assembled from milky green glass-topped light tables. On these are mounted 306 architectural models depicting a selection of 115 completed, unrealised or half completed projects.

This is a real showman's show. Between film screenings, light tables wink and blink in colour sequences to a soundtrack of waves crashing, wind, storms, birdsong, and what sounds like an army of vacuum cleaners, but which is more likely to be jumbo jets taking off. Welcome to the Coop Himmelb(l)au global city, possibly somewhere in contemporary Asia, populated by spotlight towers, low flying bunkers and spidery stick-structures. Frame supports in the shape of cranes, teepees, silos and snakes curve and slope in every direction.

The film starts with a close-up of pawns and knights, 'Architecture today could be compared with playing chess', says the voice-over. I'm reminded of John Brunner's 1966 sci-fi novel, *Squares of the City*, about urban class warfare in South America, which also drew on the analogy of chess. The sound track labels 1968 'a year of explosions'. To emphasise the point, a spaceship lifts off from Cape Canaveral. 'To satisfy emotions one must provoke emotion,' and the partners describe how, 'TV pictures from the Paris protests fascinated us ... the possibilities ... to make architecture which is not stable, which can change.'

As an experiment, Coop Himmelb(l)au began drawing with closed eyes, to free them from preconceptions. These were evocatively known as 'hair drawings'. With eyes wide open they then reinterpreted the fine line scribbles as architecture in one of the first Deconstructive design processes (nowadays called mapping and carried out with fractal software). 'If, using our "hair drawings", we can be free at this moment, perhaps we can free architecture,' they mused. Forked lightning flashes across an ominously black sky and a young Muhammed Ali is shown fighting in the ring. He symbolises 'a fighter who

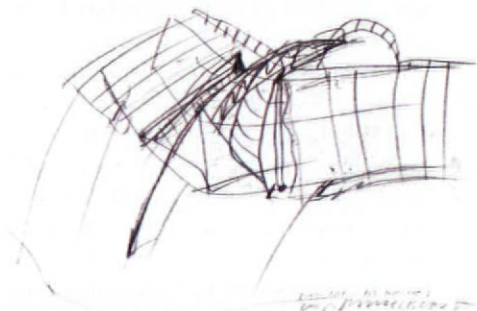


Coop get corporate – BMW Welt in Munich.

is not free, is in the box, but who uses strategies to be free'. This is an emotive film manifesto, casting architects as romantic freedom fighters with 'feelings'.

Encircling the internal hall a more detailed display disseminates just three of the practice's most recent projects – Musée des Confluences, Lyons (2001-2010), the BMW Welt, Munich (2001-2007), and the European Central Bank, Frankfurt am Main (2003-2011). Here the format is more conventional with large models, drawings and explanatory texts. On the opposite wall, which wraps around the auditorium, four horizontal running lines of photographs illustrate four distinctive eras. 1966 to 1986 is characterised by pneumatic, temporary and experimental structures, more art installations and performances than actual buildings. Between 1986 and 1994, skeleton frames and wind sails become real projects; for instance, the 1986 Seitenberg Printshop in Vienna. From 1994 to 2003 ideas take concrete form, become solid and structured, as manifest by the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, 1995. In the most recent phase, 2003-2007, the workload and architecture shifts to reflect larger and more corporately oriented commissions from assorted commercial and cultural institutions.

Forty years is a long time and continual revolution is as difficult to maintain as eternal youth. Before Coop Himmelb(l)au, Günter Behnisch showed how, by attracting fresh young talent, a design studio could continually regenerate itself, while the partners grew greyer and more eminent by the decade. Coop Himmelb(l)au's design strategies have,



Sketch for the famous rooftop legal offices in Vienna.

apparently, not changed. The message remains the same, but has become more refined with the availability of software and hardware unimaginable in '68, outside the pages of Isaac Asimov or Stanislaw Lem.

Walking out of the exhibition it's a shock to find myself in Vienna, the imperial capital of faded pomp and ceremony. In Coop Himmelb(l)au's home city there is nothing comparable to any of their projects. I am reminded of the dialectic belief that everything contains the seeds of its own destruction or, in other words, revolutionaries grow from bourgeois roots. 'When it (architecture) is cold it should be as cold as ice, when hot, then as hot as flames ... we want architecture that has more, that has blood ... life or death.' Despite now being a global enterprise, Coop Himmelb(l)au have choreographed an event which is distinctly Austrian – morbid, idealistic and dramatic.

LAYLA DAWSON

At the MAK, Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna, Austria, until 11 May [www.makcenter.org](http://www.makcenter.org)

Catalogue: *COOP HIMMELB(L)AU, Beyond The Blue*, Prestel, Munich, 2007, English/German, €39.90 [www.prestel.com](http://www.prestel.com)

## browser

**Sutherland Lyall has a cyber spring in his step as he tours the electronic universe.**

**Methinks he doth protest too much**

Coming across Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think*, was a Keatsian 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' moment. But regular readers may remember that long before that epiphany, this column had developed an affection for Adrian James' minimalist one-page, three column site whose short text started out with a declaration which ran something like 'We love doing architecture'. Three columns and a single page was distinctly proto-Krug territory. But I remember wondering how James' site would cope with a bigger portfolio. Now he has acquired several associates and a lot more clients than in those carefree days. And so here is a new website courtesy of Cambridge designers Commun ([www.commundesign.com](http://www.commundesign.com)). Here it is, at [www.adrianjames.com](http://www.adrianjames.com). I can understand the practice's quiet satisfaction at having crossed the line into track-record territory. But really, what do you do with the change from an expression of joy in the activity of doing architecture to the loud, italicised boast: 'We design truly outstanding buildings'. The trouble with such strident assertions is that doubt immediately enters the auditor's mind and the response is 'Oh yeah?' Also there's a self-powered slide show. Sometimes these awful invocations of mind-numbing architecture school lectures are tolerable but

mostly, as here, they remove from visitors any sense of being in control of what they are surfing. It's nice, of course, to see the inclusion of a Skype number. Better still you click on the number and up comes your own Skype window which in seconds is busy dialling the once-web-saintly Adrian James. But we'll have to wait until Ade and his associates get really comfortable with having a serious portfolio. Then they'll have cooled it, agreed to allow others to decide how fantastic is their architecture – and revert to being joyful about doing the oldest profession but one.

**More can be more**

After all this column's Less-Is-More-ing I have to resort to this Dadaist (actually it's Picabia's) aphorism, 'The head is round in order that thought may change direction' because here is a site from Eric Moorhouse of 'transdisciplinary' German practice, 3DELUXE at [www.3deluxe.de](http://www.3deluxe.de) which is as elaborate and clever as you could wish but whose navigation is pretty clear. Admittedly for non-Germans you have to click on the non-intuitive translation box on the home page navigation strip marked 'EN'. Alternatively don't bother reading the German text but remember that 'zurück' in a box means 'back'. The architecture is swoopy and Zaha-esque – think Asymptote / Antoine Predock / Gehry. The technology of such things as divertable air flaps in the leading edges of waterboard kites is quite sophisticated. And ... dammit, serpents in paradise, I'm stuck in the 'Access to press' area with not a *zurück* in sight. Still, there is a mood music background. And movies.

**Blurpppp, sqwadge, arrrrrch**

I mention that 3DELUXE's sound is quite good because a couple of months ago I urged architects to think about making their sites a more rounded experience via the use of sound. I cited those ground-breaking late '50s Canadian Film Board animations that deployed letters and numbers doing silly things accompanied by sophisticated clicks and clacks. But as an old web-watching friend of mine points out, sound and music need that nice discrimination which architects deploy when choosing door handles and the client's cutlery and even Ceramica Flaminia's loos at [www.ceramicaflaminia.it](http://www.ceramicaflaminia.it). But. The Ceramica Flaminia music. It was 'composed' surely on the computer equivalent of the Stylophone. The web designers know it's crap: they have installed a 'cancel-music' button. This doesn't stop the loud squeak that sounds when you roll over a menu item. It's peep, squeeep, rather than Canadian Film Board blurrp, blach, squuuuurrh sounds. For noises and music hire a musician.

Sutherland Lyall is at [sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com](mailto:sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com)

## diary

AR'S CHOICE OF INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS FROM [WWW.ARPLUS.COM](http://WWW.ARPLUS.COM)

**AUSTRIA**

OSKAR KOKOSCHKA:  
EXILE AND NEW HOME 1934-1980  
Albertina, Vienna  
11 April - 13 July

Major show of the most important later works of Expressionist artist Oskar Kokoschka. The exhibition focuses on his years of emigration (he fled Austria after being deemed a degenerate by the Nazis) and his search for a new country in which to live and work. He became a British citizen in 1946, only reverting to Austrian citizenship in 1978.  
[www.albertina.at](http://www.albertina.at)

**FRANCE**

YONA FRIEDMAN  
Arc en Rêve Centre d'Architecture, Bordeaux  
Until 1 June  
Hungarian-born Yona Friedman is celebrated as both an architectural theorist and visionary designer. With Frei Otto et al, Friedman founded GEAM (Group for the Study of Mobile Architecture). This intriguing retrospective analyses his creative evolution and rehabilitates his work in France.  
[www.arcenreve.com](http://www.arcenreve.com)

**UNITED KINGDOM**

SHELL GUIDES:  
SURREALISM, MODERNISM, TOURISM  
Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture (MoDA), Middlesex University, Barnet, London  
Until 2 November  
In the 1930s, the editor of the Shell County Guides, John Betjeman, gathered together a cabal of young artists and authors to propel the British guide book into a new era of writing, imagery and design. Paul and John Nash, Robert Byron and John Piper were some of the talents recruited to the cause. Today, the Shell Guides remain the most modern and comprehensive guide to Britain, and this thoughtful exhibition traces their history, drawing on former AR editor J. M. Richards' collection at MoDA.  
[www.moda.mdx.ac.uk](http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk)

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

ECOLOGY. DESIGN. SYNERGY  
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh  
Until 25 May  
Exhibition looking at the collaboration between Behnisch Architekten and Transsolar Climate Engineering to develop and realise environmentally responsible design. Together they have produced a body of work that transforms urban spaces and work environments, with a bit of planet saving on the side. Local Pittsburgh audiences will doubtless swoon in admiration at their winning RiverParc project for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.  
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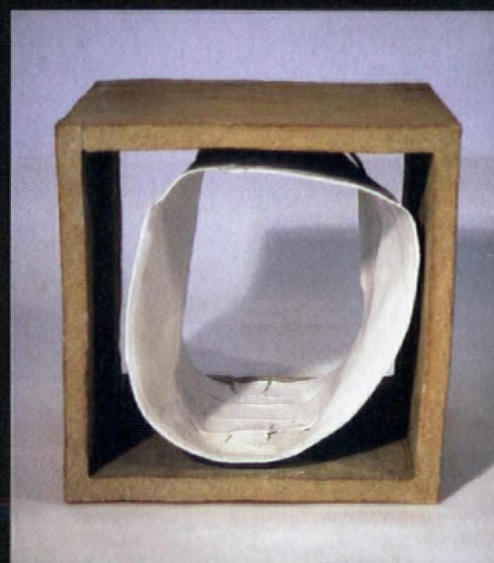
# delight



## SOME ARCHITECTS SUBVERT ARTISTIC AMBITIONS; ANNE CLAXTON, ARCHITECT TURNED CERAMICIST, FULFILS THEM.

Parallels between architecture and art are common. Architects should fully engage in the act of doing as well as the act of designing, as disciplines are mutually inclusive. In other fields, artistic expression emerges once a broad range of skills have been mastered, as classically trained musicians and painters often react to formal training when developing individual style.

The same can be said of architects. However, while the drawings and paintings of Laurie Chetwood, Stanley Saitowitz and Will Alsop may reflect elements of built work, few would describe individual pieces as works of art for contemplation in their own right. Many architects dabble but few totally engage, so Anne Claxton is something of an exception, producing works that fully translate interest in architectonic space, proportion, light and shadow. Finely crafted work exhibits process, contrasting properties of high fired crank clay and porcelain. With clay fired to recall qualities of Bath stone, the fragility of lining materials produces interiors with distinctly different qualities. In recent work, gold leaf is used as a lining, setting in permanent form the occasional effect of sunlight striking the reveals of Bath's Georgian windows. ROB GREGORY [www.anneclaxton.co.uk](http://www.anneclaxton.co.uk)





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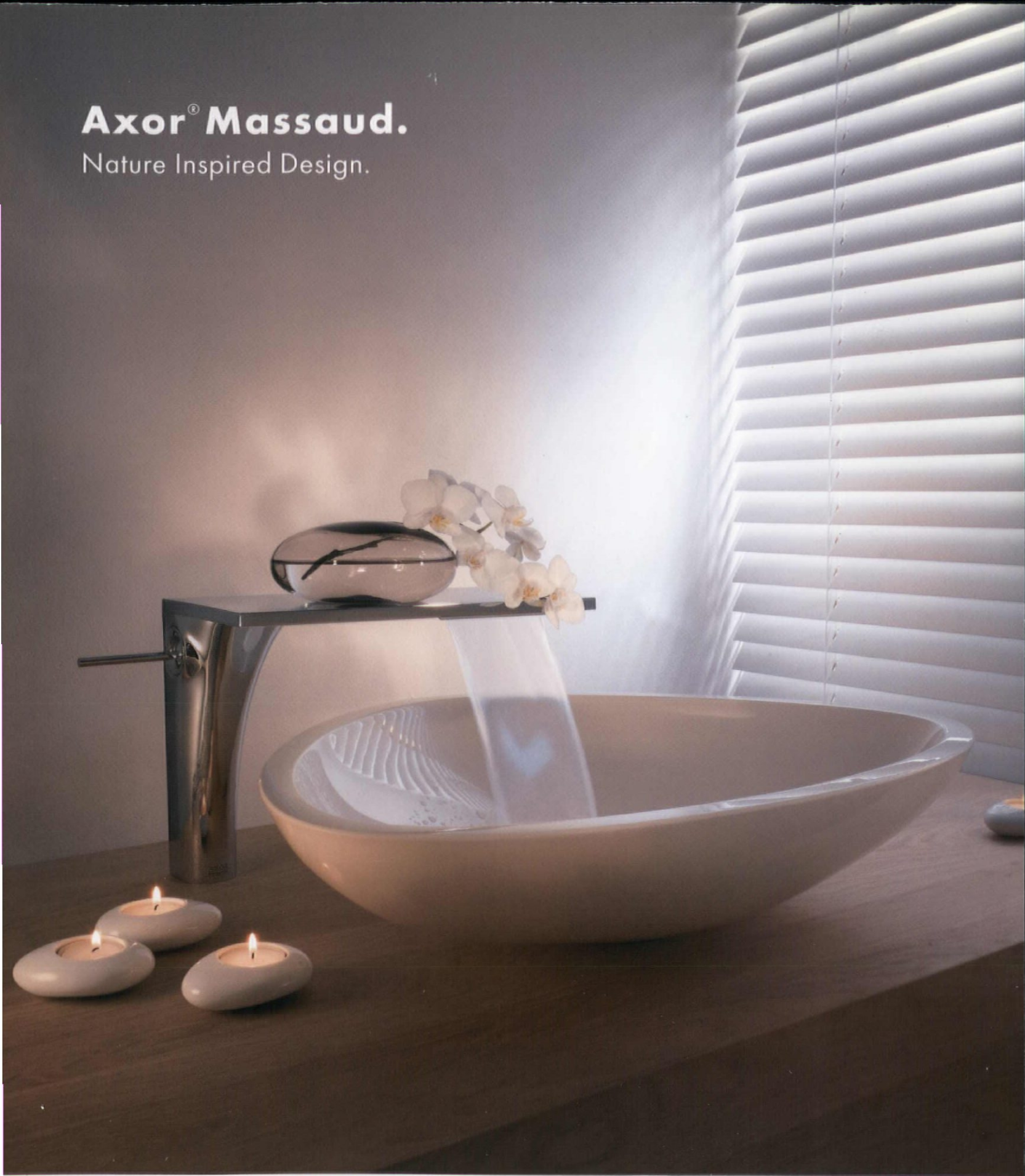
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