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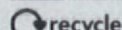
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The Architectural Review (ISSN 0003-861X) is published monthly for \$199 per year by Emap. Royal Mail International c/o Smartmail, 140 58th Street, Suite 2B, Brooklyn, NY 11220-2521. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn NY and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to The Architectural Review, c/o PSMJ Resources Inc, PO Box 95120, Newton, MA 02495.

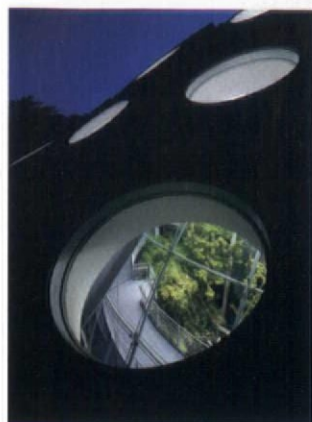


circulation 20 733 (audit issue May 2008)



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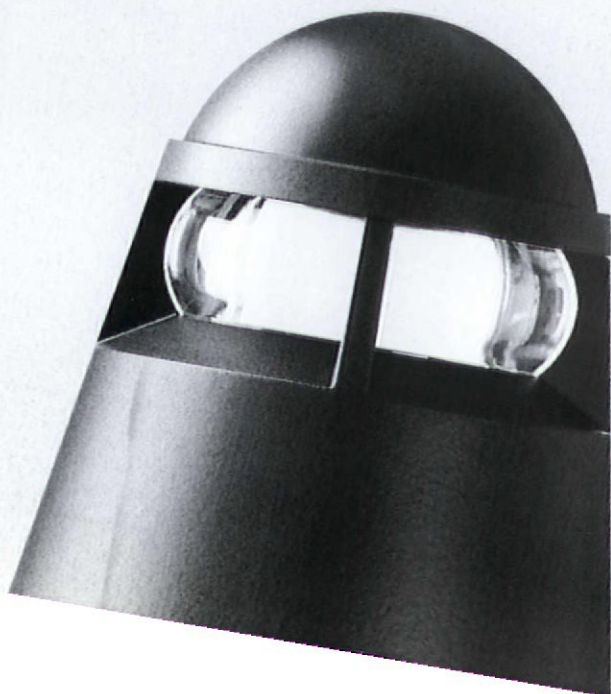
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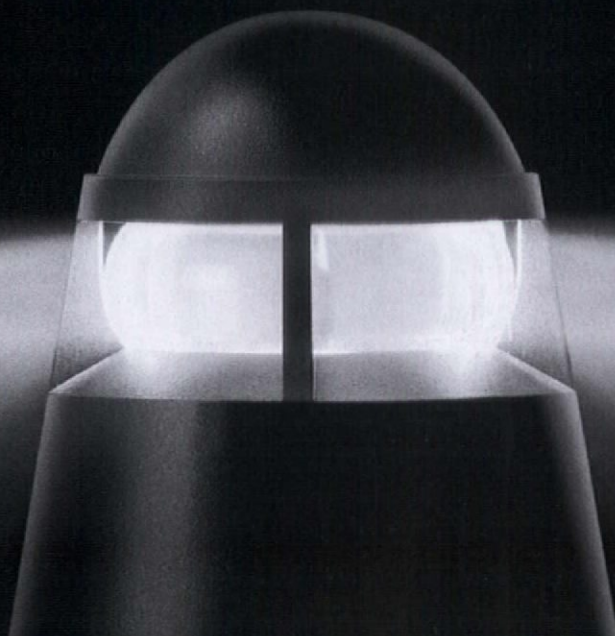
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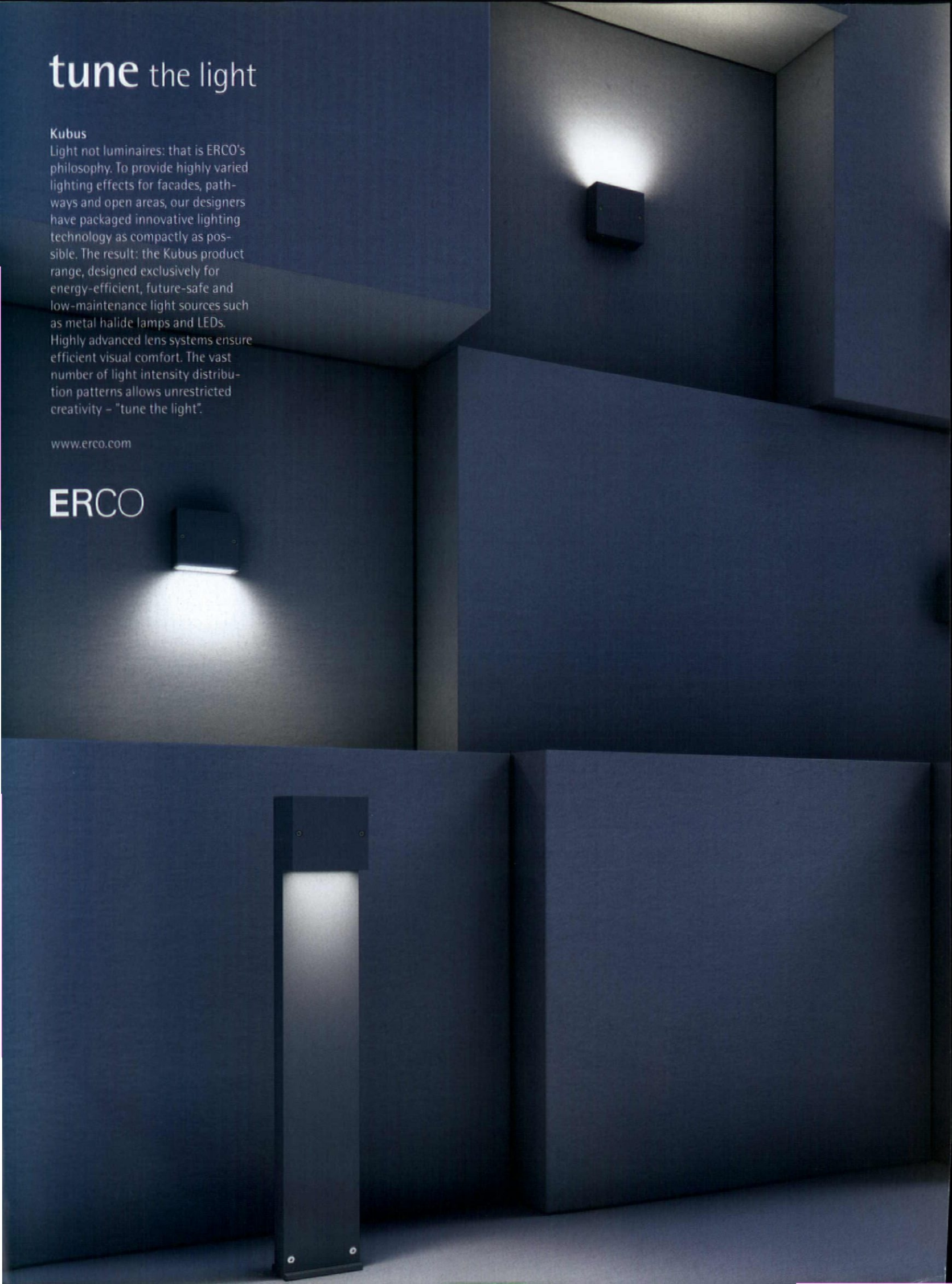
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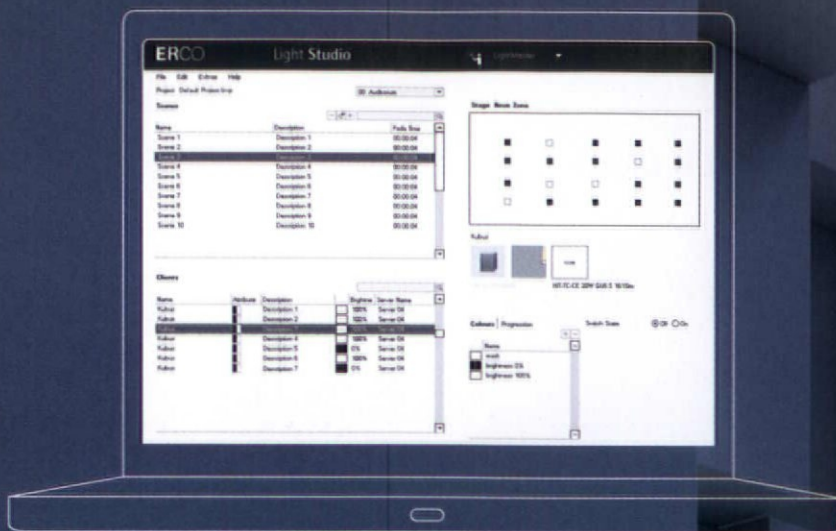
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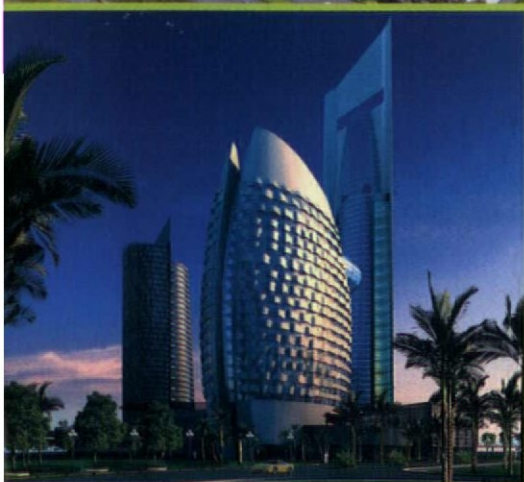
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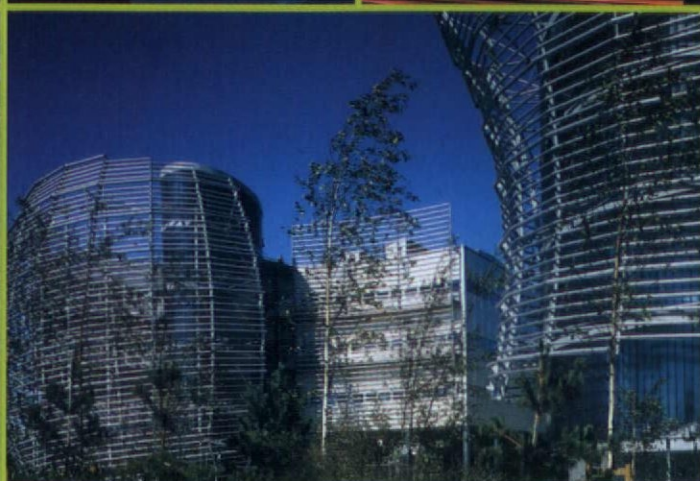
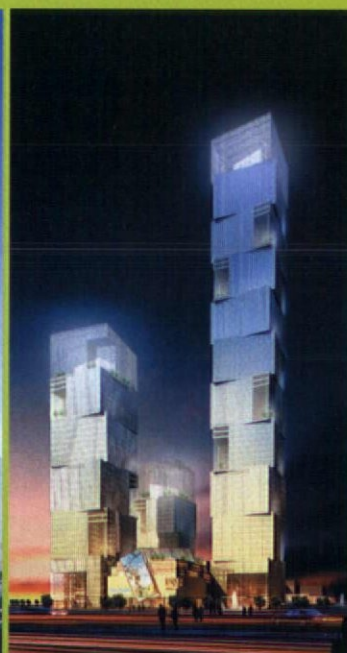
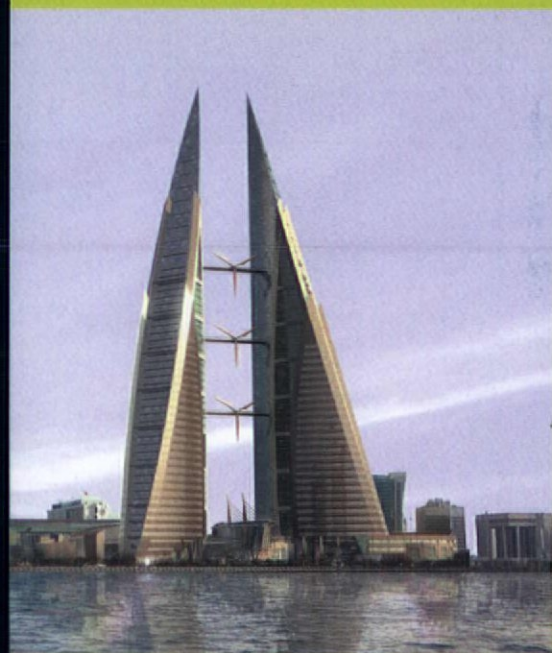
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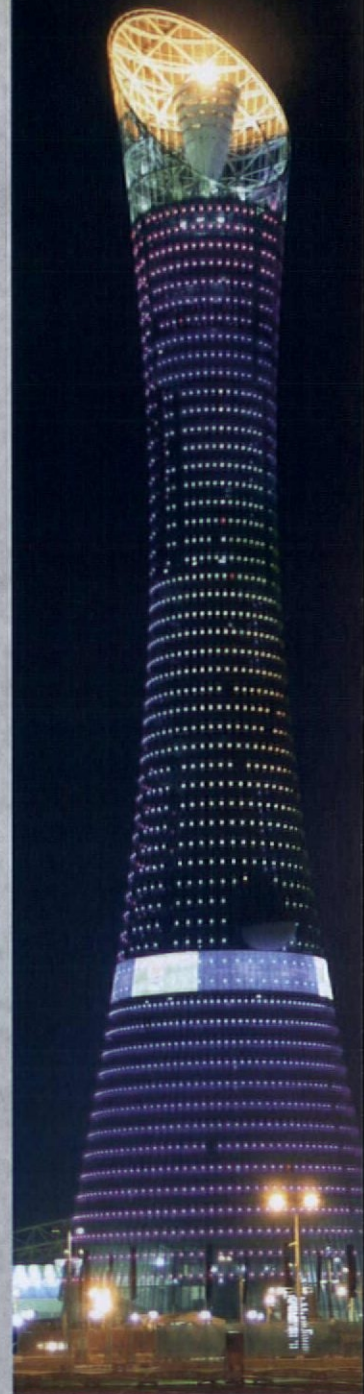
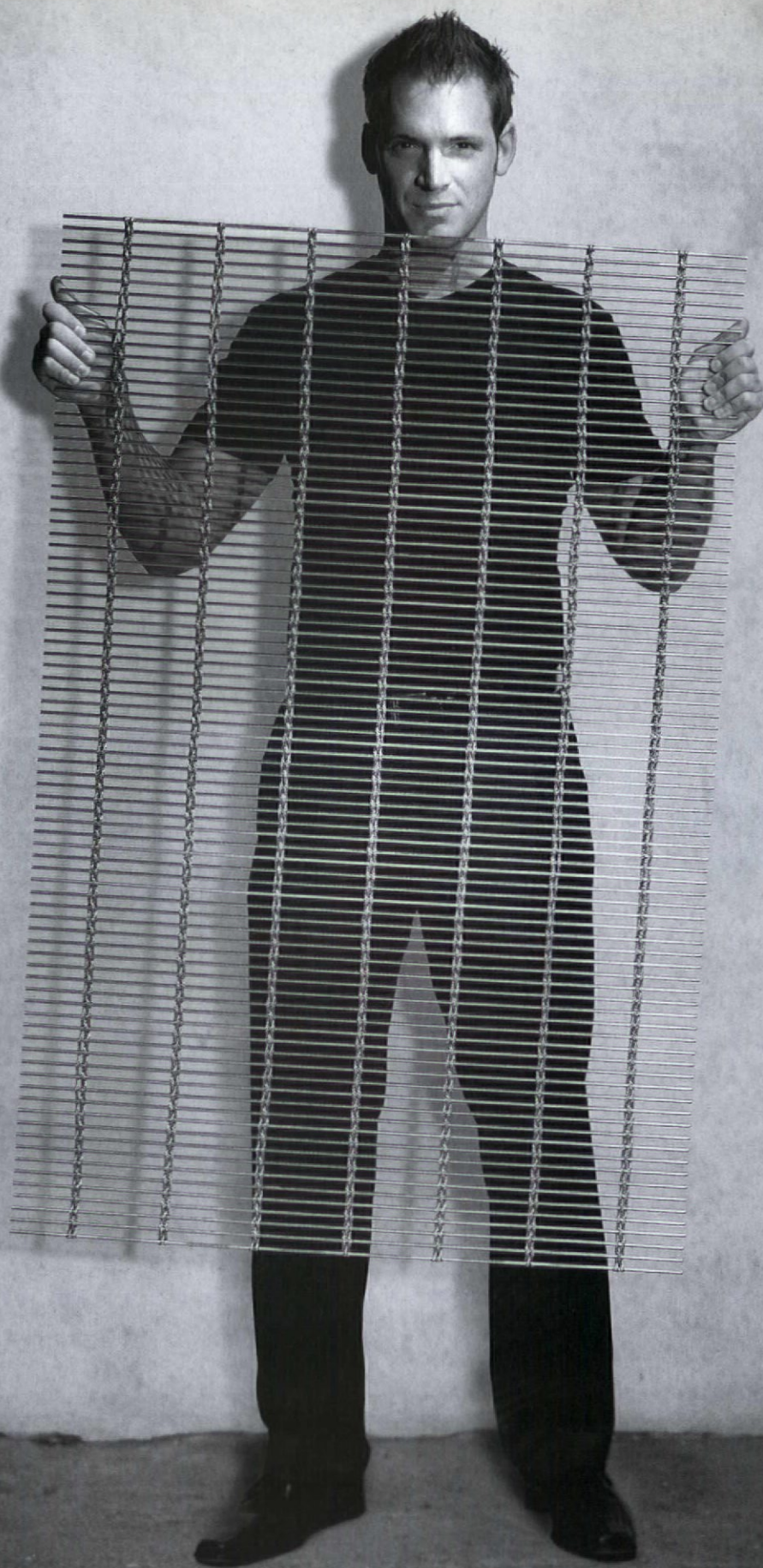
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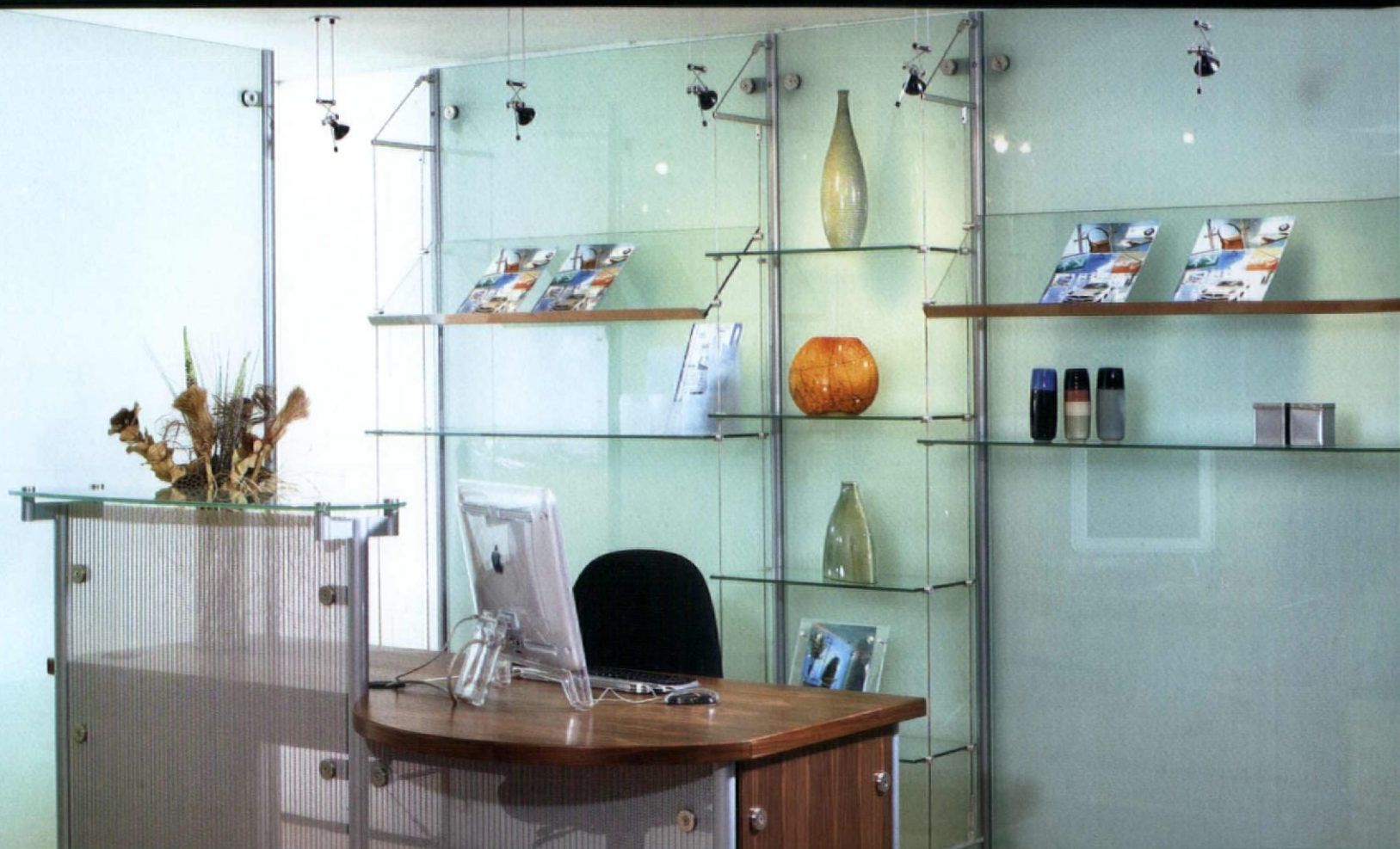
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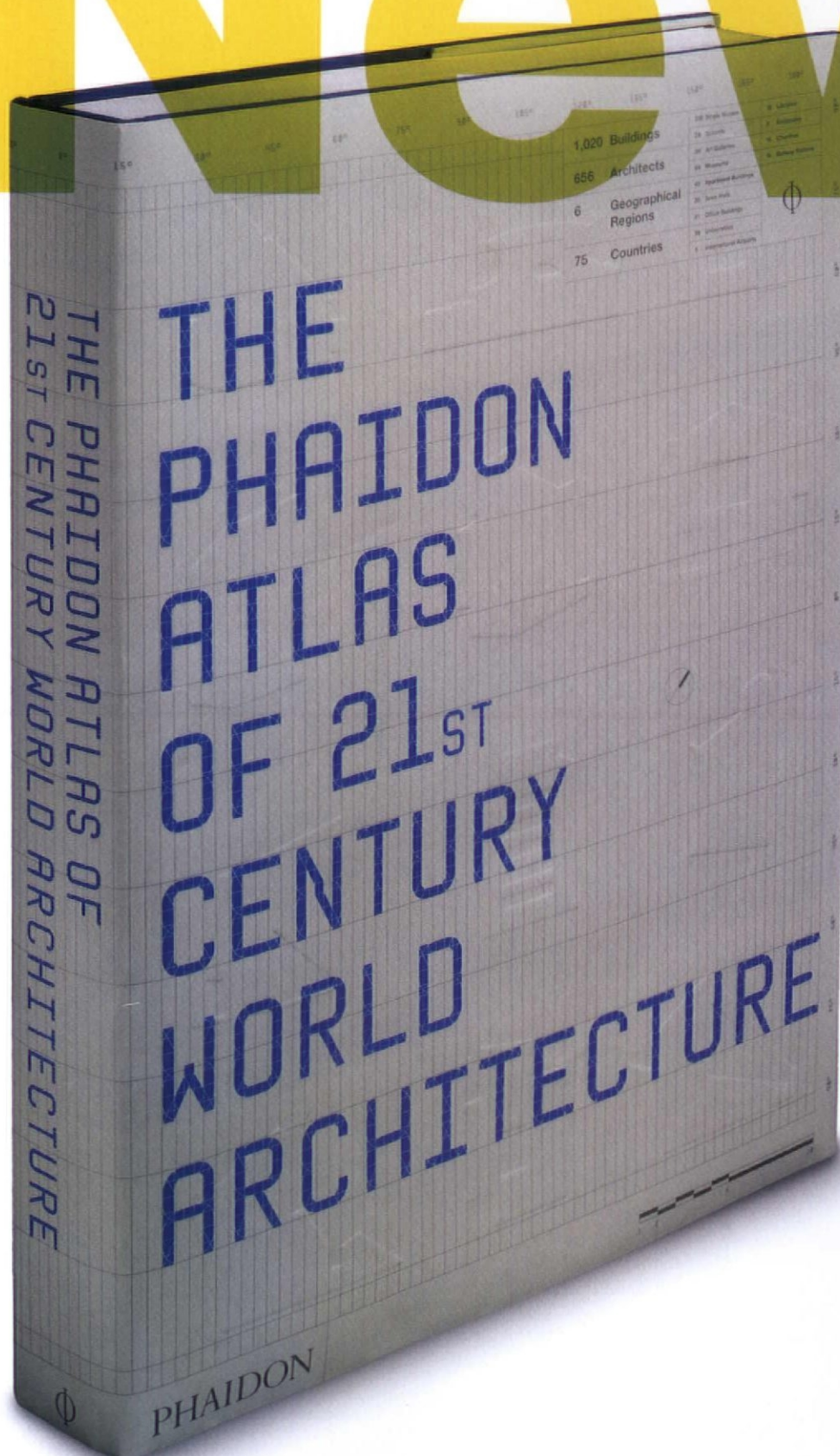
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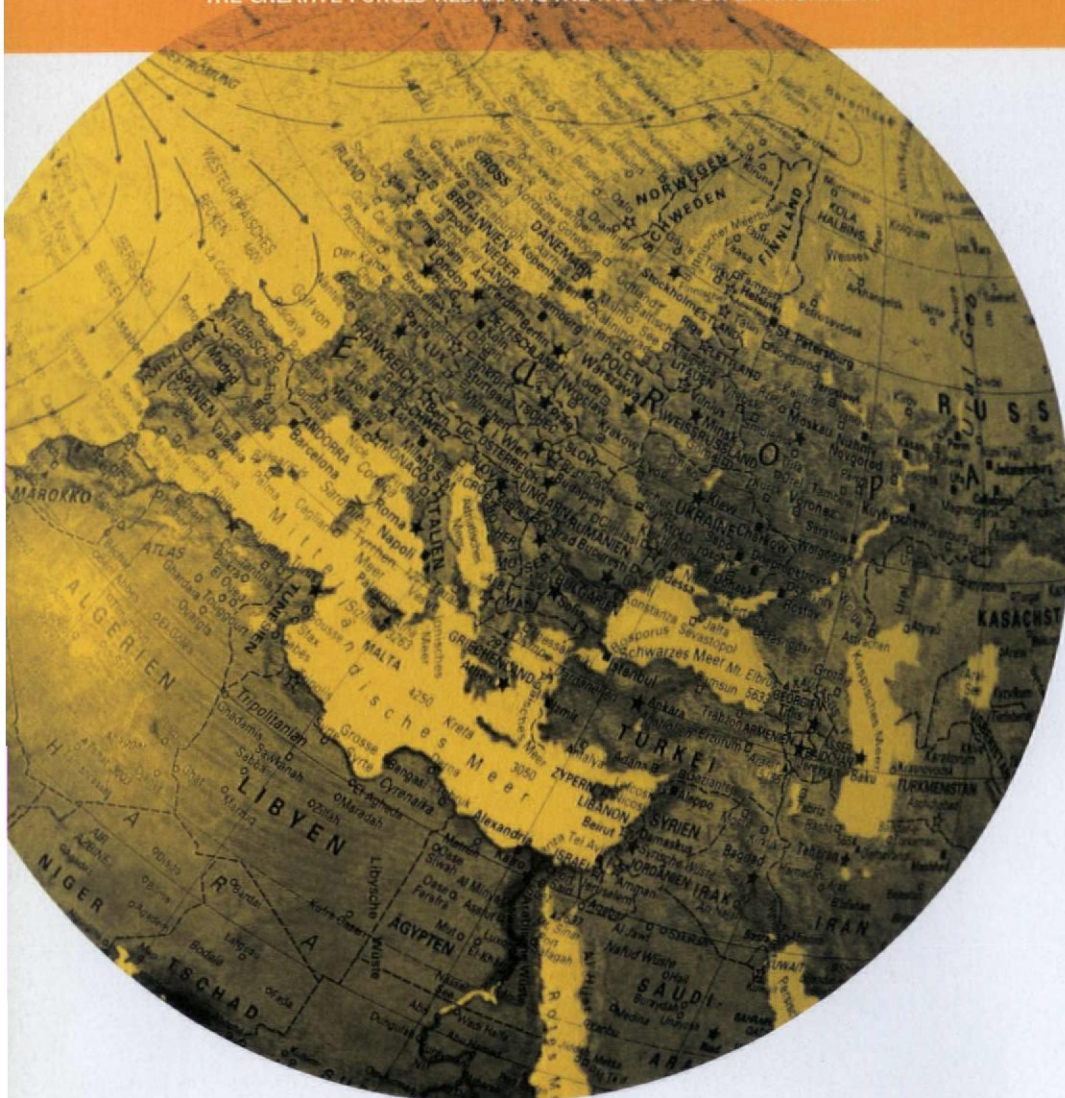
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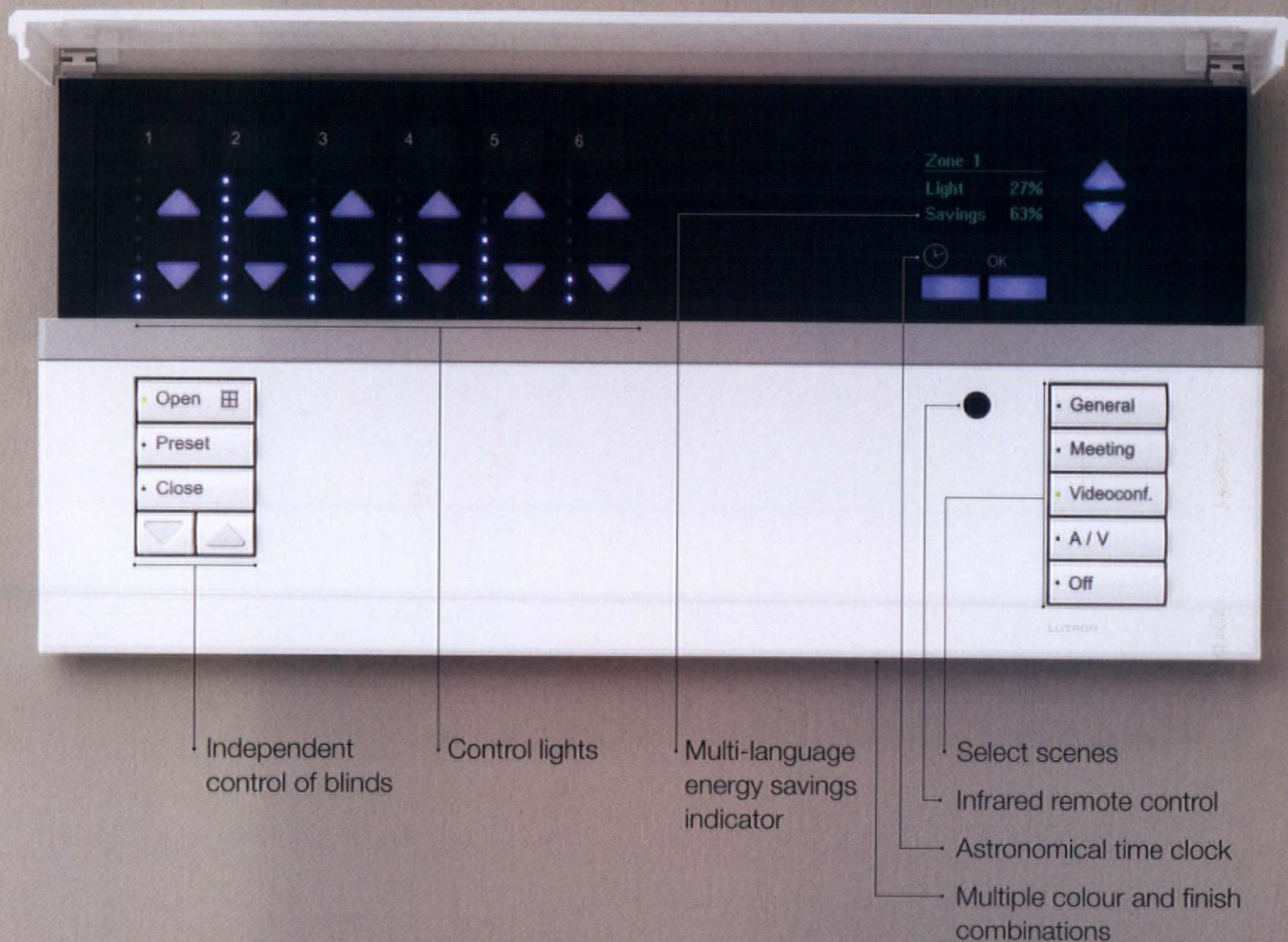
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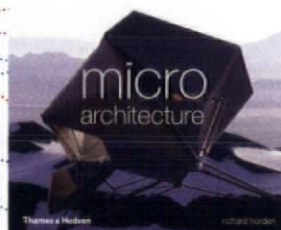
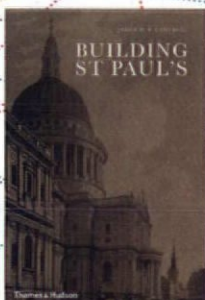
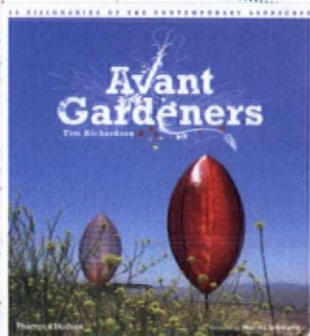
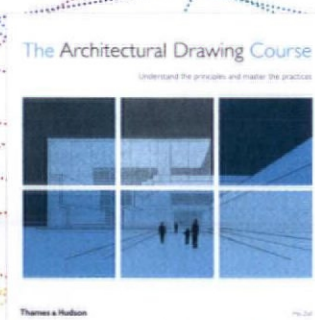
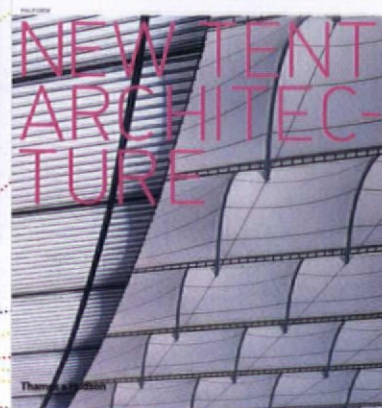
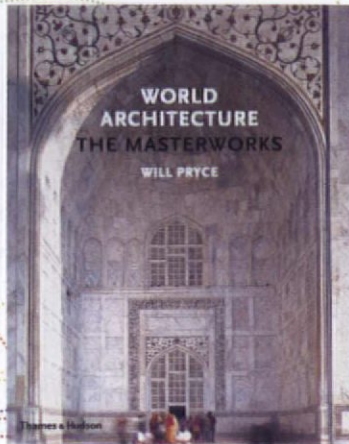
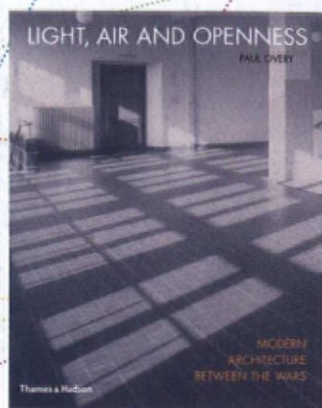
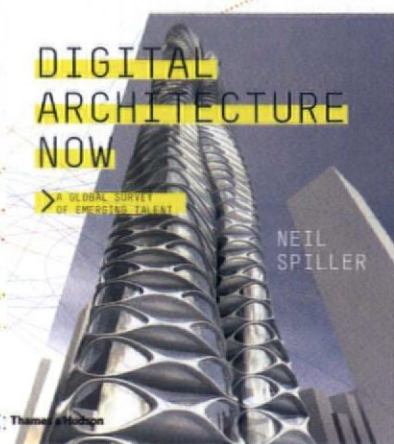
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The French Tennis Federation is thus launching an international architecture competition, having received approval from the Paris City Council. A request for applications was published this week, as a result of which four teams of architects will be selected to submit a project to the jury. The selected project will have to meet the functional requirements of the FFT as well as the urban, architectural and environmental demands which the Porte d'Auteuil imposes.

**For more information regarding the international architecture competition, please contact the project manager for the FFT:**

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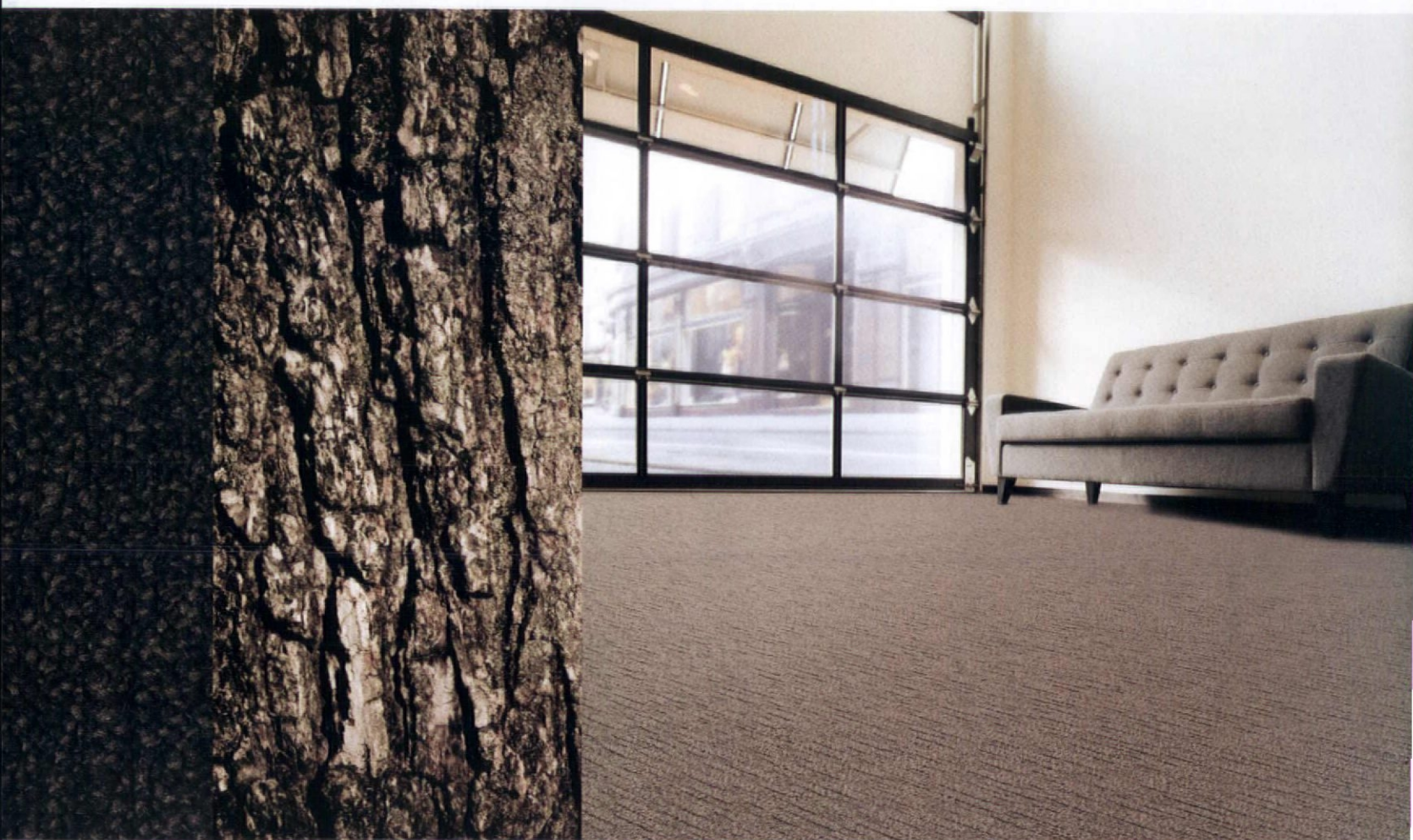


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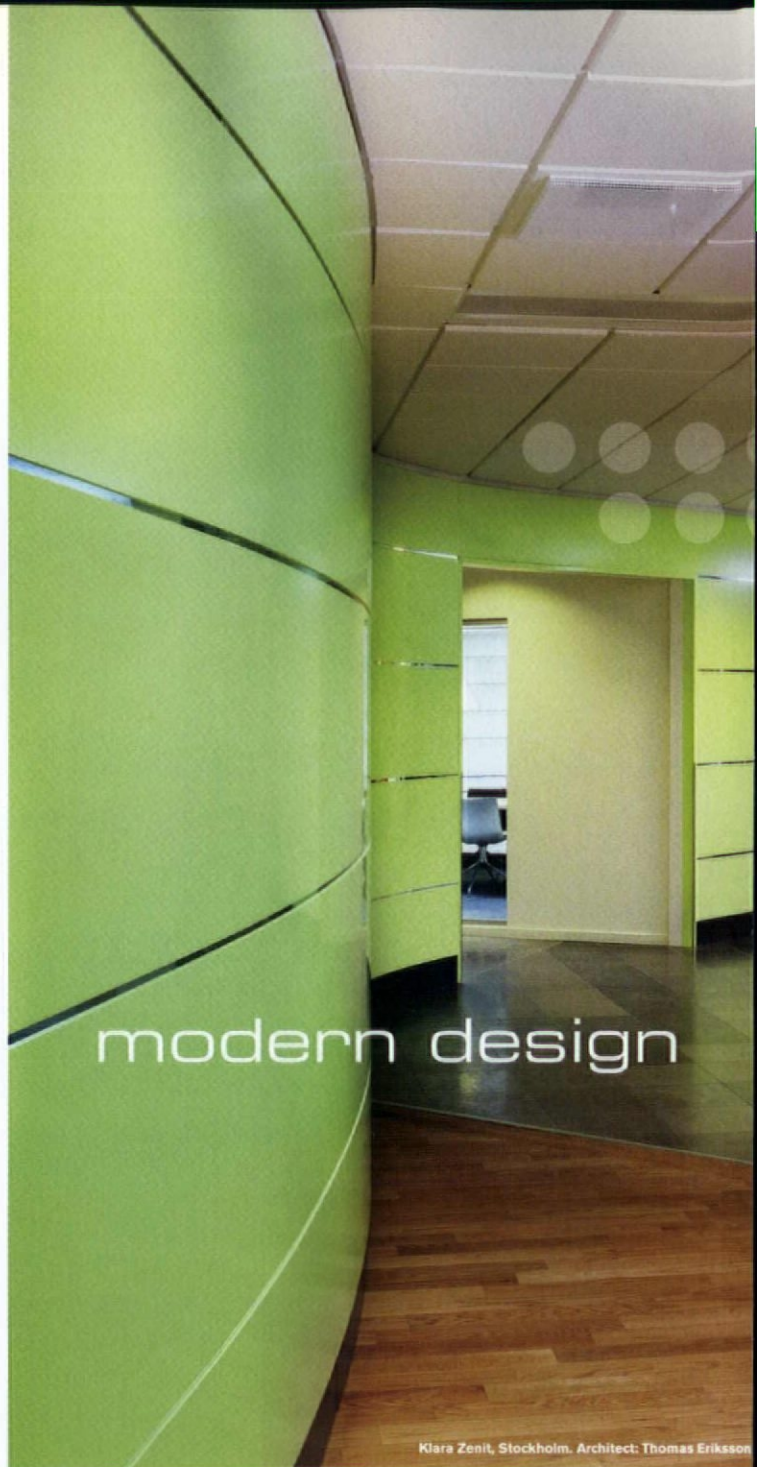
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Through presentations and discussions at its 10th Urban Planning Symposium, Sharjah, the capital of the Sharjah Emirate, aims to learn from, and share its own experiences with, planners and policy makers from other parts of the world, about planning and policy mechanisms that have proven to be effective in addressing wicked problems.

SUPS 10 is the latest in a series of symposia that began in 1997 and are held under the patronage of **His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Sharjah.**

SUPS 10 will take place from Nov. 23rd-25th at the American University Sharjah and is co-organized by Sharjah Directorate of Public Works, American University of Sharjah, and University of Sharjah.

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# view

ALVARO SIZA WINS THE ROYAL GOLD MEDAL; RIBA STIRLING PRIZE GOES TO ACCORDIA HOUSING BY FCB STUDIO, ALISON BROOKS AND MACCREANOR LAVINGTON; COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS' STUDENT COMPETITION COMES ROUND AGAIN; JUDGING THE AR AWARDS FOR EMERGING ARCHITECTURE.

## MAKING ECONOMY WORK

The dislocation of the world's financial systems, brought about by the abject failure of bankers, auditors and regulators in the 'developed world', will have architectural consequences likely to be complex rather than simple. For one thing, the financial crisis is by no means universal; the announcement of yet another tallest tower in the world project, in Dubai, is a reminder that there is plenty of investment cash available in the Gulf and points east. Hence the rush of consultants from Europe, the US and Japan to expand their presence in the oil zone. It is also true that some major projects in countries heavily affected by the credit crunch will proceed, either because they are too far advanced to stop, or because refinancing has taken place courtesy of the financial institutions of developing countries. That is true, for example, of several office towers in central London. And if the sums make sense, some developers and investors will carry on building in the expectation that, by the time their buildings are completed, the market will have turned and their developments will be able to command premium rents.

Having said that, it is also inevitable that those clients still in need of new or refurbished buildings will expect to pay less, either for construction or in rent, and this in turn will put pressure on architects to minimise costs wherever the financial situation is tight. This raises the question of how architects approach the issue of cost, a subject which raises hackles among creative designers if they feel their ideas are being wilfully diluted or destroyed. Generally speaking they do not like the idea, any more than clients do, of being identified with 'cheap' buildings.

The underlying question, however, is not whether a building is cheap in construction cost terms, but whether it represents good value. The curious way in which architects are rewarded for their work does not help here. If an architect ingeniously reduces the cost of a building compared to an industry benchmark, the reward is generally to be paid less. But simple mathematics tells us that quite modest reductions in construction cost would justify a huge increase in fees for the designer who has managed to make the savings – provided those savings have maintained value rather than reduced it. At a time of financial constraint, the way money is deployed on a project becomes more sensitive. What architects need to explain to clients is that economising on design brainpower is not an intelligent way to proceed; on the contrary, the way to get smarter, cheaper buildings is to exploit that brainpower so that constructionally and structurally, less does more. **PAUL FINCH**





Siza designed the Serpentine Pavilion with Edouardo Souto de Moura and Cecil Balmond in 2005, with typical deftness and responsiveness to context. Photo: James Brittain.

#### ROYAL GOLD MEDAL FOR ALVARO SIZA

While some may say it has been a long time coming, you can be sure that Álvaro Siza has not been waiting for the phone to ring. While his office confirms he is delighted with the news, the 75-year-old Portuguese architect is just getting on with his job. Having recently had the privilege to meet him, it can be said with confidence that Siza is a rarity in this profession. Despite the magnitude of his architectural influence, unlike less significant designers, Siza does not over intellectualise or theorise about his work. He

simply builds it, and in conversation says things like, 'I wasn't sure until it was built', and 'we had to resolve that detail on site'. This is not to undersell his work; it is simply his manner, speaking as he does in his smoky English, directly and to the point.

It is to be hoped that this year's RIBA President's Medallists learn from his example, when, next February, they will be given the opportunity to have him cast his critical eye over their work. Most architects would leap at the chance to have Siza pass judgment on their talents so it is essential (unlike last year,

AR April 2007) that this year's top students rise to the challenge and take time to present their work in the most straightforward and unpretentious manner.

When he collects his medal and addresses the RIBA next year, Siza will no doubt speak clearly and directly to a capacity crowd, revealing the simple truths about his work. But, better still (and for those who can't attend), a short trip to Porto comes highly recommended; the architect's home city, where some of his finest work is close at hand. Projects like the Boa Nova Restaurant (tea house) and Leça de Palmeira, on



the coast, and the School of Architecture and Serralves Institute in town, all show his expert skills to great effect, as he equalises internal and external spatial pressures in a fine compositional balance. **ROB GREGORY**

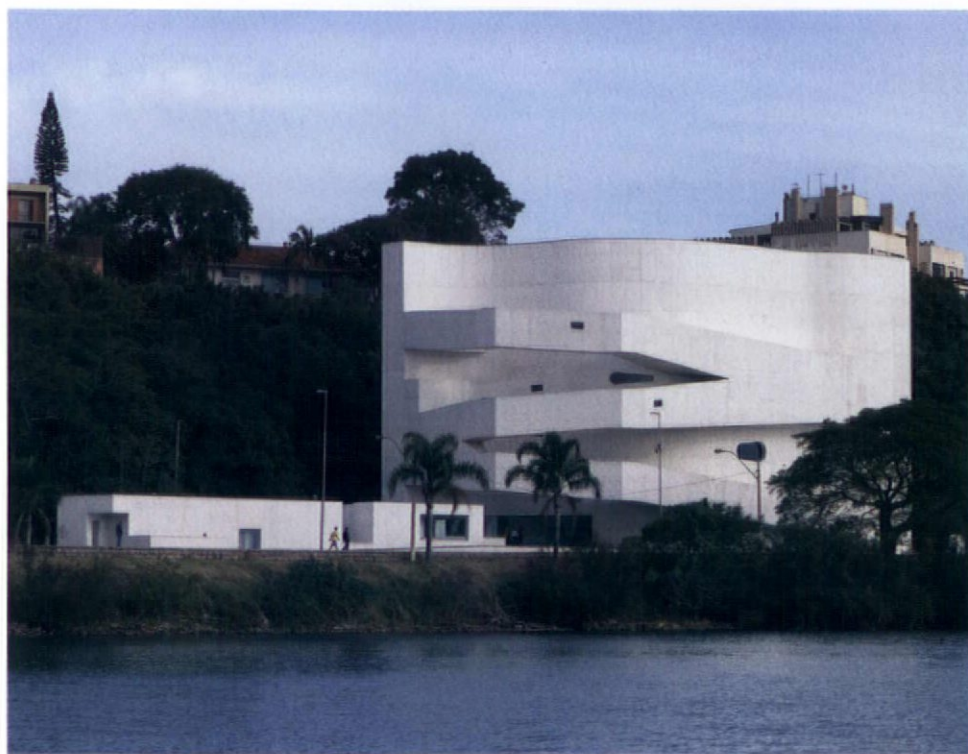
## HOUSING WINS STIRLING

A housing development has won the RIBA Stirling Prize for the best building of the year, the first time that this building type has been successful. Accordia, located on the edge of Cambridge city centre, was masterplanned by FCB Studios who also designed buildings along with Alison Brooks Architects and MacCreanor Lavington. There was some controversy over the award, for the first phase of the project which includes no social housing element (that will come in later phases).

With prices ranging from £250 000 for a one-bedroom apartment to well over £1 million for six-bedroom houses, the development is unlikely to be replicated in the near future, though its reinterpretation of the front-to-back relationship and the traditional British housing street could be applied to more economical projects. There has also been universal praise for the landscape treatment for the development by Andrew Grant.

## URBANISM IN LIVERPOOL

Liverpool's past, present and future sets the context for a two-day symposium (25 to 27 November) that explores new thinking about urbanism and urban design – and includes a debate entitled 'Corb: Hero or Villain?', chaired by AR editor Paul Finch. Speakers at the symposium include Anne Power (LSE), Peter Head (Arup), Herbert Girardet (World Future Council) and RIBA president Sunand Prasad. With talks, debates, study tours around the city and a private view of *Le Corbusier – The Art of Architecture*, the symposium culminates



Alvaro Siza's art museum in Porto Alegre, Brazil (AR September 2008). Photo: Duccio Malagamba.

with the Urbanism Awards 2009. Tickets and information from the Academy of Urbanism, telephone +44 (0)207 251 8777, or email [Liverpool@academyofurbanism.org.uk](mailto:Liverpool@academyofurbanism.org.uk)

## AR AWARDS 2008 JUDGED

The tenth AR Awards for Emerging Architects were judged in London on 23 September. This year's jury comprised Sheila O'Donnell (Dublin), Sou Fujimoto (Tokyo), Edouard François (Paris), Sir Peter Cook and Peter Davey (London), and Paul Finch who was jury chair.

More than 430 entries were received from 50 countries, and 25 were selected for publication in next month's AR. Three winners will share the £15 000 prize money, through the generous

support of Buro Happold and Wilkhahn. The results will be announced on 27 November at the RIBA, where all the selected projects will be on exhibition for three months. Details of the AR Awards/RIBA Trust spring 2009 lectures will be announced soon.

## MEMORIAL COMPETITION

Memory is the theme of the eighth student design competition organised by the Commonwealth Association of Architects, which will be judged in 2010. The formal title of the competition (which is supported by The Architectural Review) is 'A memorial to a memorable event; making manifest the memory'. Students are invited to propose a memorial on a real site appropriate to the real event being marked, then to design a physical point of reference, along with a public facility where relevant material connected to the event can be accessed.

Further details on [www.comarchitect.org](http://www.comarchitect.org)

## 2009 MIPIM/AR FUTURE PROJECT AWARDS

Friday 21 November is the deadline for entries to the 2009 MIPIM/Architectural Review Future Project Awards. There are eight categories, all entries will be exhibited at the show (on the London stand), and every entry will be illustrated in the awards catalogue which is distributed to every MIPIM attendee in the delegate pack. The Awards dinner will take place on Wednesday 11 March. More details on [www.arplus.com](http://www.arplus.com)



AR judges at work on this year's Emerging Architecture Awards. Left to right: Peter Davey, Sheila O'Donnell, Sou Fujimoto, Sir Peter Cook, Paul Finch (chair) and Edouard François. The awards are in their 10th year.





Adalberto Libera's Rome Auditorium scheme, 1935.

## Peter Cook

**Let's be serious – let's be dogmatic.**

As I sit writing this, I briefly turn away from the deep doom and gloom of the televised headlines, wondering if there will be anything left of our 'way of life' (or way of paying for it) by the time the piece reaches the press.

It is received wisdom that in times of little building, there is a period of reassessment and a certain shift of creativity. There is even the opportunity for the academies to lure some pretty talented people back into teaching – at least until things rev up again – stimulating a rebirth of objective discussion, with new speculations that are not dependent upon clients or tight schedules. Speculations of the mind as well as manners – so a good period for the regeneration of architecture as a culture.

Just before the gloom got going, the Venice Architecture Biennale (as always) acted as a charming entr'acte where we could indulge in and gossip about the architecture that was, in director Aaron Betsky's terms, 'beyond architecture'. Though what we saw didn't really go far beyond that which any reasonably active lecture-goer and magazine-sniffer has already seen: just bigger, more plasticky or vegetal and accompanied by the punters themselves.

Using Venice as a point of cultural definition also involves the much-maligned 'national' pavilions and you can never help the instinct to make a beeline for your own mother ship. So Shock! Horror! Despair!

Sadness! Distaste! Misery! Misery! Misery! At a level of pretension that leaves one gasping, the British Pavilion takes seriousness to a new dimension of Cromwellian piety. While legitimately criticising the banalities of consumer-commercial British housing of the last twenty years the curator, Ellis Woodman, presents a show of quite deliberate interpretational mannerism as to make his real intention very clear: under the mantle of reasoned thinking this is actually a show of Puritan zeal, where guru Tony Fretton is for once outmanoeuvred by Sergison Bates who ponderously come across as even grimmer than their familiar grim.

For those who have a pictorial memory, the architecture of Fascist Italy comes immediately to mind. Indeed, the stripped-down presentation accentuates this impression. Friends from other places kept referring to it as 'dry', but had no need to recall a history of tedium and architectural whinge that occurs from time-to-time on the British scene: the deliberately dull accompanied by the pious drone – *the architecture of the wagged finger*. Thank God that history suggests these periods are usually followed by a moment of Great British Invention and playfulness.

But by night, one was drawn to a semi-secret institution on the 'official fringe' of the Biennale, where Robert White's 'Dark Side Club' (conceived two years ago by Odile Decq and Paul Finch) has developed into being both heavy duty and the stuff of coercive gossip. He threw open the first night to Patrik Schumacher to introduce eight of the Parametric Fraternity. In a different way, they too droned on one after another, picking away at the procedures and niceties of parametric design. With glazed eyes and (often) with a level of pedantry that is not the ideal fare at 1.30 in the morning (but probably not at midday either), they presented with their own style of piety and missionary zeal. Admittedly there were some figures who are surely more there for the ride, such as Plasma Studio who quickly reveal themselves as bit-of-this-and-bit-of-that designers at heart, just as de Rijke Marsh Morgan do in the British Pavilion – good enough to do without curatorial strictures.

It was fascinating to hear several of the speakers lay heavy emphasis on their adherence to Schumacher's 'Parametricist Manifesto'. To quote: 'Parametric variations trigger gestalt-catastrophies'. Now if that is a good idea, we want to see where it gets us. What can happen creatively not just methodologically.

Buffeted by the British Dogma on the one side and the Para-Dogma on the other side one crept away totally flattened.

There was a definite intention on the part of the Schumacher kids to put the rest of us



Housing block in Finsbury, London, by Sergison Bates.



Deliberately dull? Sergison Bates in Venice.

into the box of 'too old to understand, too Modernist to matter, too tired to listen, too loose to concentrate upon THE WORD'. Yet as an admirer of Bruno Taut's 'Glass Chain' I observe that there was a certain canny *inclusiveness* in his list of correspondents; but instead of preaching they rejoiced.

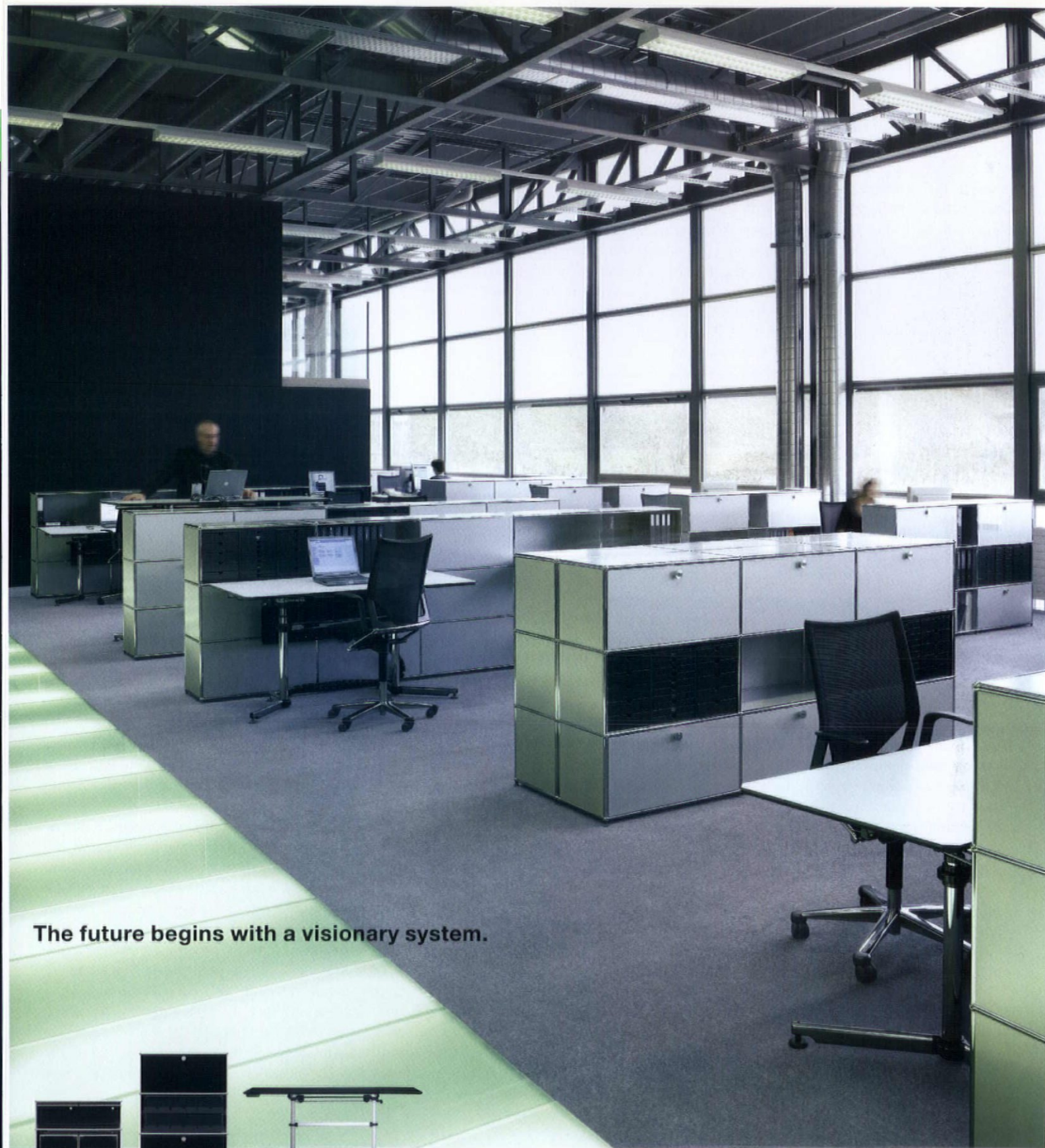
So here we are, things are grim outside and we are having our brows beaten just at the time when we need to freshen up.

Back from Venice, back from the head-beating, I return to drawing, designing or pontificating myself. In the end, despite the parallels of the Dogmatic Method, I recognise the fundamental difference between the two positions. If Woodman wants to restrict, Schumacher (I hope) wants to extend the power and scope of architecture, so I'm on his side (if he would let me be), even if I think that he has a tedious way of going about it.

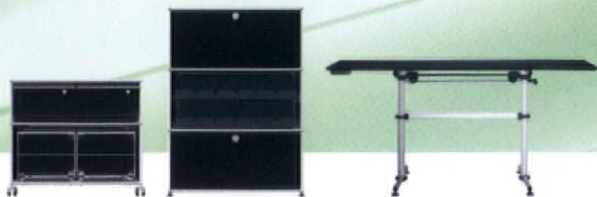
The verbiage of the Manifesto is arcane – maybe it sounds cleverer that way. The historical danger is that some crappy and verbose second-rate writer comes along, popularises it, steals the thunder and everyone misses the point. My own gang has been lucky to be bred by Reyner Banham and skilfully interpreted by Tony Vidler and Mark Wigley, whereas the Para-camp followers are momentarily too fragile, too inarticulate.

Plus a naughty thought: that the most interesting and discriminating of those who use parametrics (including some names that I often mention in this column) were not there that night.





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## comment

What price the natural world? A mature plane tree in London's Berkeley Square was recently 'valued' at £750 000, making it the most expensive specimen in the city. Factors in the calculation of its worth included age (it dates from the nineteenth century), size, location, condition and importance in the landscape ensemble of the square. Ascribing a monetary value to a tree as an estate agent would to a house might seem absurd, but it makes the point that the historic presence of nature, especially in cities, is precious. And if putting a price tag on it is the only way to bring this truth home to landowners, developers and councils, all shiftily eyeing their chainsaws, then perhaps it does not seem so unhinged.

Yet in a saga that echoes the wider despoiling of the global environment, trees in London are under increasing assault. Estimates suggest that over 40 000 were culled in the last five years. Shockingly, nearly half of those were consigned to municipal woodchippers by an implacable alliance of insurance agents spooked by subsidence claims and pettifogging borough councils that see leaves as a public nuisance and branches as a potential liability. Depressingly, such attitudes have come to epitomise the current strained relationship between humankind and the natural world. Now, for the first time in history, more people live in towns than in the countryside, and this has fuelled a general sense of alienation towards nature. The passive neglect and active destruction of the environment can be seen as being indirectly linked to this sense of detachment and anomie. If people lose touch with nature, they no longer acknowledge its importance or care about its fate.

Yet as history shows, the consequences of environmental degradation can topple civilisations. As Peter Buchanan points out,<sup>1</sup> the fertile crescent of Mesopotamia withered to a desert as salts leached by irrigation sterilised its once abundant fields. Imperial Rome's North African breadbasket turned into the Sahara, Spain's rainfall was reduced by the rapacious felling of its forests to build ships, while in ancient Greece, overgrazing and olive roots destroyed its soil. At the time, such catastrophes were geographically limited, so their effects were contained, but the current environmental crisis is of well documented global proportions. From pole to melting pole it impacts upon and implicates both the developed and developing worlds.

The rise of ecological awareness and environmentalism has put landscape, and our responses to it, squarely back centre stage. Reclaimed from the margins of watercolour feyness, it is now an effective and evangelising force. Landscape has always figured prominently in human cultural imagination, oscillating between a real place and the representation of it as promulgated by artists and writers. Yet throughout history, the appropriation of land and the taming of landscape – for agriculture, building, hunting, recreation, waste disposal, or manicured just-so for the gentry's pleasure – has been motivated by ideology. Power, money and politics have always trailed in its wake, so it's a tough call to try to wrest it back for some nebulous greater good. How, then, might ideas about landscape become a force for reconciliation and progress in these dislocated times?

Landscape has traditionally designated terrain that is not urbanised, but this convention is being rapidly usurped, as the city becomes understood as an ecosystem in its own right and the countryside falls prey to corruption and delinquency. Neither could exist without the

other and an understanding of their symbiotic dependence chisels away at the simplistic polarity of the urban and the rural. Today, with the environment imperilled, traditional canons of scenic beauty are being rewritten. Ecology now coexists with engineering and moral meaning has assumed renewed significance. This has implications for cities as well as the countryside. As James Corner observes, there is now 'a deep concern with landscape's conceptual scope; with its capacity to theorize sites, territories, ecosystems, networks and infrastructures and to organize larger urban fields. In particular, thematics of organization, dynamic interaction, ecology and technique point to a looser, emergent urbanism more akin to the real complexity of cities and offering an alternative to the rigid mechanisms of central planning'.<sup>2</sup> The complexity of the metabolism that drives the modern city demands a conflation of professional disciplines into a new synthetic art capable of addressing the challenges of the urban ecosystem with critical insight and imaginative depth. This new and evolving field of landscape urbanism breaks down the traditional rigid disciplines of the architect, planner and landscape architect in favour of a more fluid, hybrid form of collaboration and practice. The outcome of such collaborations suggests new approaches to the integration of landscape and buildings. Beyond their civic roles, spaces such as parks, esplanades, gardens and greenways can also function as important ecological vessels and pathways, creating and sustaining a healthy urban infrastructure. Rather than being self-contained and self-satisfied interventions surrounded by a flimsy veil of 'landscaping', buildings can be re-conceived as part of a much wider urban ecology, or become the landscape itself, as witnessed by the topographic experiments of Foreign Office, Diller and Scofidio, MVRDV *et al.* In this issue, for instance, Renzo Piano transforms the huge roof of the California Academy of Sciences (p32) into a living, thriving plot of the local flora and fauna. In Hamburg, EMBT nimbly implant spaces and weave linkages on the former tabula rasa of the city's rotting docklands (p42). And in Venice, Gustafson Porter reclaim an abandoned and overgrown site in the outer reaches of the Arsenale and transmute it into an allegorical quest for paradise and enlightenment (p54).

So more than ever, landscape has a role to play in shaping the future of human civilisation, mediating between place and modernity, nature and artifice, permanence and transience. As Kenneth Frampton concludes: 'The dystopia of the megalopolis is already an irreversible historical fact: it has long since installed a new life, not to say a new nature ... I would submit that instead we need to conceive of a remedial landscape that is capable of playing a critical and compensatory role in relation to the ongoing destructive commodification of our man-made world'.<sup>3</sup> Every surface of the earth contains the possibility of manipulation by human hand, so the potential clearly exists for a new generation of landscape practitioners to investigate, challenge, reinvigorate and reconfigure existing realities and to act as a transformative resistance against the forces of environmental homogenisation and degradation. And you thought it was just about trees. CATHERINE SLESSOR

1. Essay by Peter Buchanan 'Invitation to the Dance: Sustainability and the Expanded Realm of Design' from *Nature, Landscape and Building for Sustainability*, edited by William S. Saunders, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p114.

2. Essay by James Corner 'Terra Fluxus', from *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, edited by Charles Waldheim, New York: Princeton University Press, 2006, p23.

3. 'Towards an Urban Landscape', *Columbia Documents* no 4, 1994, pp83-93.

# FORCE OF NATURE





The natural world celebrated  
and disseminated at Renzo  
Piano's new California  
Academy of Sciences.  
Photograph: Tim Griffith.





In 1969 Renzo Piano staged an exhibition at London's Architectural Association, *Architectural Experiment*. His early work drew sharp but prophetic criticism from Monica Pidgeon, editor of *Architectural Design*. In a review entitled 'Piece by Piece', she suggested that the various pieces produced by this young architect might well, one day, amount to something far more substantial. Almost 40 years on, Piano recalls this prophecy fondly. The observation has become his 'natural legacy' recognising his predisposition to break a design problem into component parts, each addressed in order to optimise specific technical performance, while contributing something less measurable (yet equally important) to the building's overall character. Early work, he says, was all about the component, most explicitly pieced together at Beaubourg (AR May 1977). By Piano's own admission, however, the Menil Collection a decade later (AR March 1987) was the first building that genuinely reached a harmonious level of resolution. Since then, learning from nature, he has finessed and mastered the art of how to make buildings holistic entities that are greater than the sum of their component parts.

Piano's latest project extends his interest in how to build organically (in the fullest sense of the word), learning from lessons of nature and avoiding the sort of mimicry that can lead designers astray, with a tree-like structure here or a contrived form there: 'stupid shapes', says Piano, 'produced by pressing stupid buttons on stupid computers'. Here, with trademark finesse, he has very eloquently translated the language of

## PIECE BY PIECE

Renzo Piano's new California Academy of Sciences, in San Francisco, creates harmony between nature and the manmade.

**ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,  
CALIFORNIA, USA**  
ARCHITECT  
**RENZO PIANO**  
BUILDING WORKSHOP







1  
Piano's new temple  
to knowledge  
respects the  
memory of the  
original Academy  
buildings.  
2  
The canopy, seen  
here over the  
garden entrance to  
the north, alludes to  
leaves of a tree.  
3  
The CAS sits  
directly opposite  
Herzog &  
de Meuron's  
asymmetrical  
de Young Museum in  
Golden Gate Park.



3





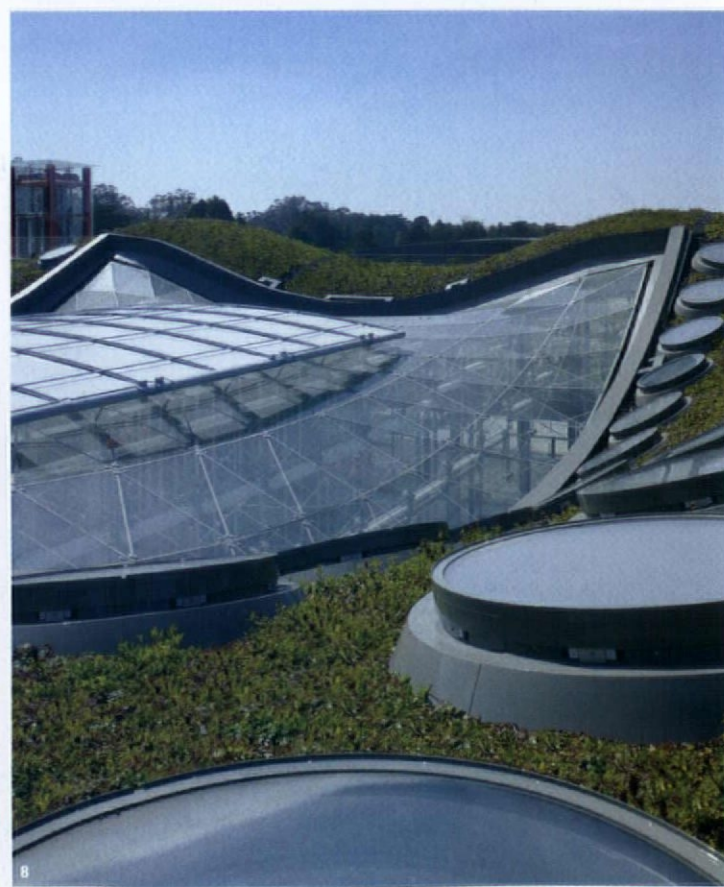
the Academy's former Beaux Arts ensemble, through the creation of a lightweight temple of knowledge.

The new California Academy of Sciences replaces a curious precinct of 12 buildings (built between 1916 and 1976) that were damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. (The institution was victim of the same fate as that experienced by the de Young Museum that sits opposite, AR October 2005.) Compressed into a rectangular footprint around an external piazza, the Academy's original buildings were consistent in expression with the formal landscape in which they sat. In replacing them (unlike Herzog & de Meuron who did everything they could to break the static symmetry of the old museum they replaced with their elongated, twisted and distorted copper box), Piano showed more respect for the conservative undercurrent that still exists in many American institutions. This conservatism stems, he says, from

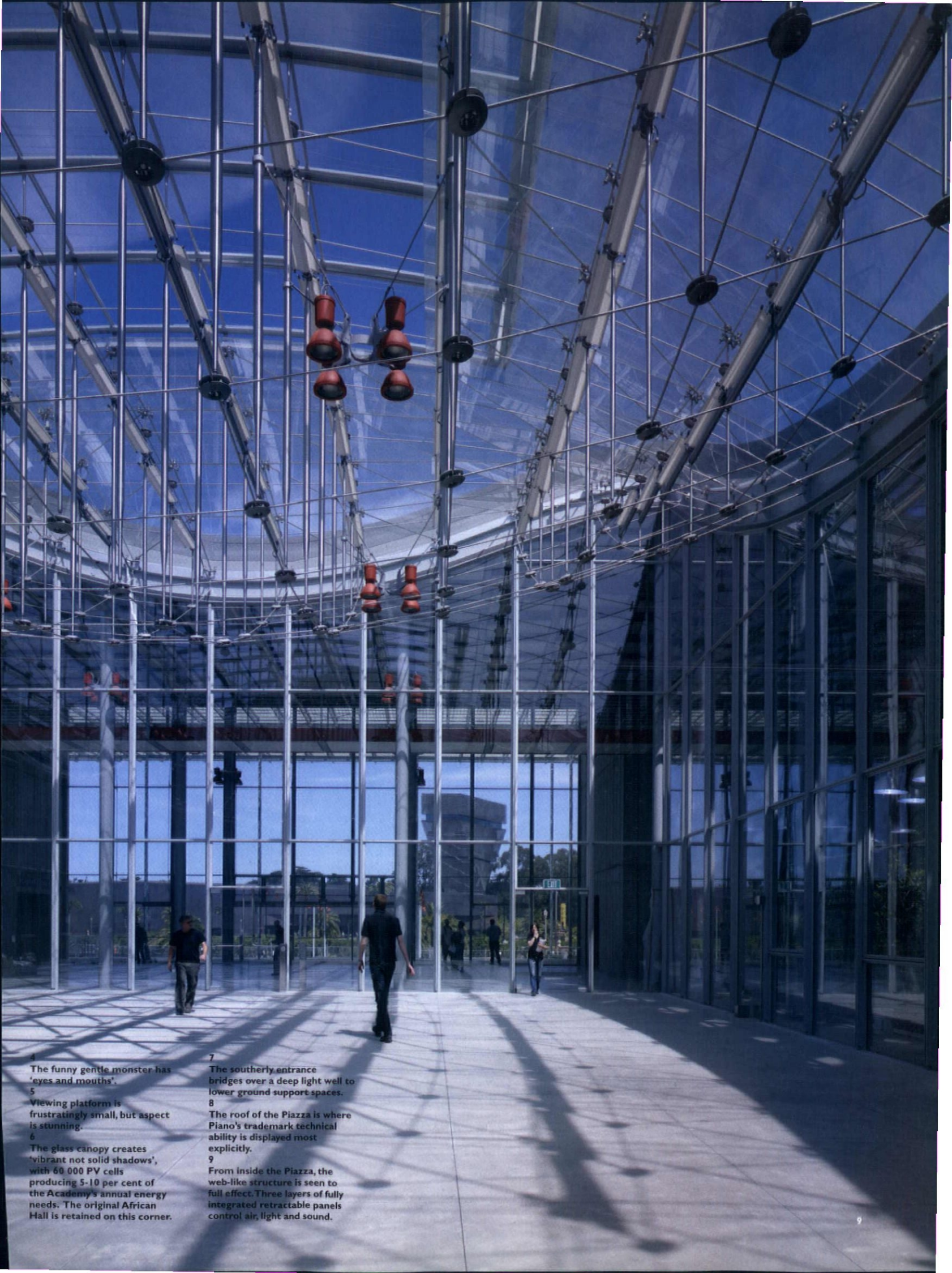
#### ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, CALIFORNIA, USA

ARCHITECT

**RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP**







4 The funny gentle monster has 'eyes and mouths'.

5 Viewing platform is frustratingly small, but aspect is stunning.

6 The glass canopy creates 'vibrant not solid shadows', with 60,000 PV cells producing 5-10 per cent of the Academy's annual energy needs. The original African Hall is retained on this corner.

7 The southerly entrance bridges over a deep light well to lower ground support spaces.

8 The roof of the Piazza is where Piano's trademark technical ability is displayed most explicitly.

9 From inside the Piazza, the web-like structure is seen to full effect. Three layers of fully integrated retractable panels control air, light and sound.



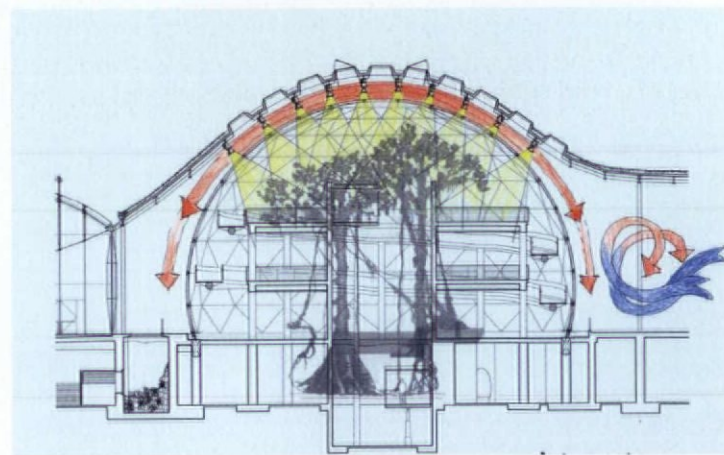


a tendency that 'a culture without roots builds them by evoking the past', reverting to the use of Classical motifs to bring dignity and trustworthiness to their (relatively) youthful organisations.

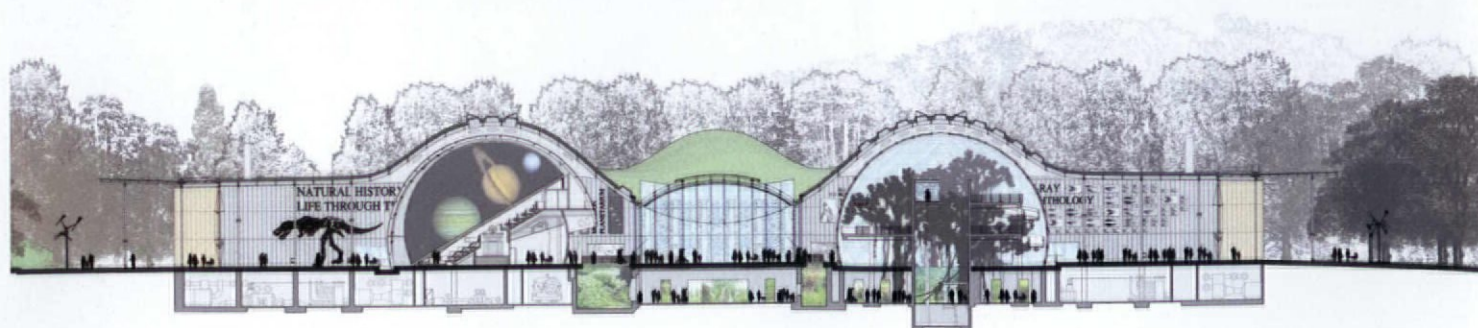
As such Piano's building, in plan at least, replicates that which existed before. In section, however, the architect loosens up, permitting the spherical Planetarium Dome and the Rainforest Biosphere to breach and distort the strict horizontal datum he established as sacrosanct in memory of the original 36-foot high buildings. With the two main volumes rising high, a wave of disturbance flows through the roof plane, sweeping down to its lowest point in Piano's stunning new piazza, with its web-like steel and glass structure. Through this measured playfulness, Piano has added just enough theatricality and character to what is an extremely serious institution, avoiding vulgar visitor attraction gimmickry, while creating a building that both he and his nine-year-old son see more as a 'funny gentle monster'.

Piano won the commission after 'loitering' around the Academy for a couple of days (this time with his daughter), when invited by the client to pitch for the job. Unlike others who flew in with plans, sections, models and movies, Piano had no preconceptions. Instead he spent time in the Academy and gardens, where he observed the nature of the place and the nature of the client. After doing so, he rolled up his sleeves and produced the definitive sketch that posed the definitive question: 'Can

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detailed section through Rainforest Biosphere





10

The Piazza is principal orientation device, here linking through to Planetarium.

11

Spaces around the two spherical exhibits are used as generous exhibition halls.

12

Planetarium 'floats' above Aquarium exhibit.





we cut a piece of native Californian habitat out of the ground, elevate it and put the building underneath?' The answer was, of course, yes. But how was it to be achieved?

Working with the client body, first led by scientist John Patrick Kociolek (expert in diatoms) and subsequently by educationalist Greg Farrington, Piano and his team had access to all the expert consultants they could possibly need. A collaboration ensued. Running a controlled experiment on a nearby site with the same microclimate as Golden Gate Park, 20 to 25 native species were grown in unirrigated organic baskets. Eventually, five species were identified and selected that could flourish in these conditions, bringing with them butterflies and birds. As a result, the roof surface hosts about 1.7 million plants, growing in 50 000, 6-inch deep, biodegradable coconut husk trays.

This elevated habitat is intended to be the first exhibit that visitors encounter, rising up through a distinctive red lift tower (circulation is colour-coded throughout) to a (disappointingly small) viewing deck. From here, however, despite the frustration of being hemmed in, the full wonder of the one-hectare roof is revealed in all its surreal glory. If visited at dusk, or as Piano says 'at the Magritte time, when the day goes away', visitors may be lucky enough to witness the funny gentle monster coming to life, as its circular rooflights glow and flare like nostrils, acting as the creature's 'eyes and mouths'; a phrase on the front page of *Mon Quotidien*, the French children's newspaper (proudly waved in Piano's hand before his son returns from school), under the headline: 'Everything in this Museum is Ecological'.

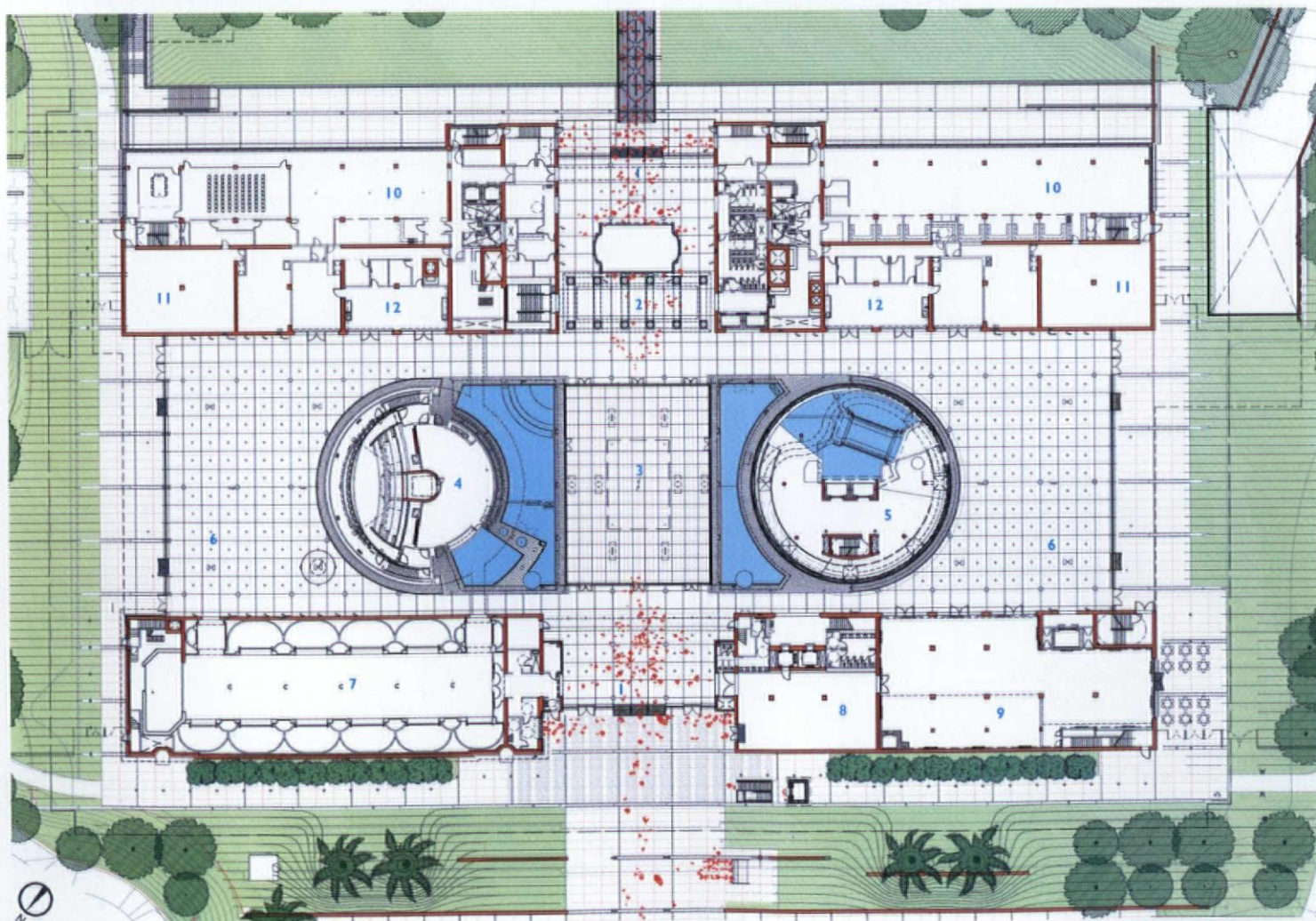
As Piano frequently asserts, however, this building is not just about the roof. Nor is it just about how to create an informative and exhilarating



13

- 1 lobby
- 2 Steinhart
- 3 Piazza
- 4 Planetarium
- 5 Rainforest
- 6 exhibit floor
- 7 African Hall
- 8 shop
- 9 auditorium/restaurant
- 10 research
- 11 collections
- 12 public lab

**ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,  
CALIFORNIA, USA**  
ARCHITECT  
**RENZO PIANO BUILDING  
WORKSHOP**







13  
Where the  
Rainforest  
Biosphere distorts  
the horizontal roof  
plane, scale-like  
acoustic panels  
effortlessly shift in  
geometry.  
14  
Inside the  
Biosphere, a living  
Rainforest has been  
created, including  
a tree canopy  
walkway.



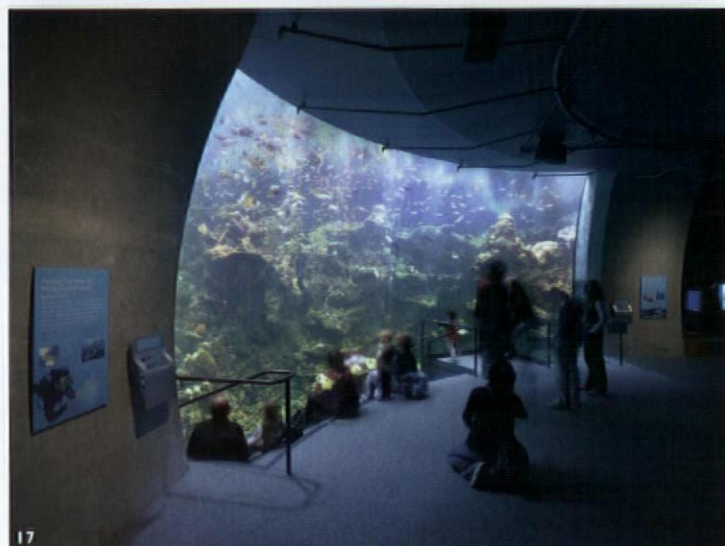
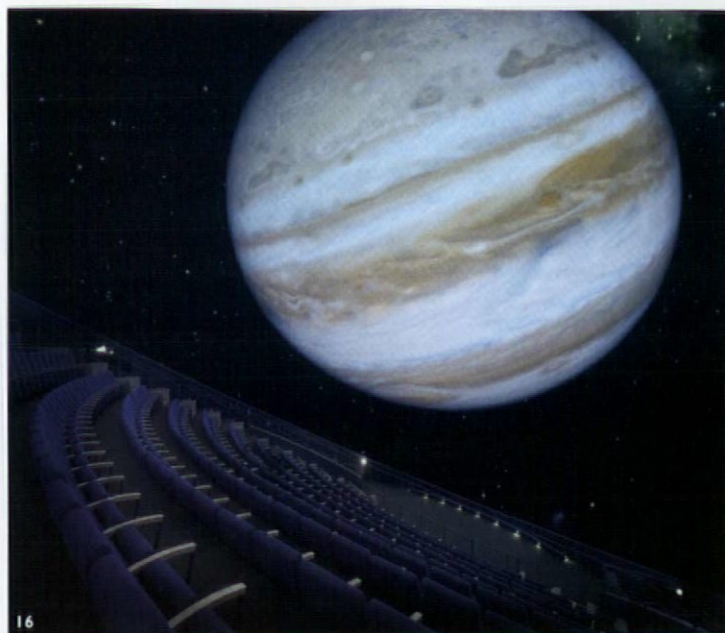


visitor attraction. It plays host to hundreds of Academy scientists who work in naturally ventilated laboratories and offices along the south face. It also plays host to 38 000 live animals and over 20 million research specimens, all of which need very specific conditions in which to survive. Combining a hard-working institution with a science museum-cum-fun palace-cum-zoo, shows Piano's expertise and apparently effortless design resolution at its best, synthesising potentially conflicting ideas with finesse, grace and charm.

As a visitor attraction it is welcoming and clear, easy to navigate and extremely well connected with its natural setting. It is daylit and bright. As a research centre it is functional and adaptable, and will no doubt attract many more of the world's leading scientists (and specimens). And as a form of organism in itself, it is efficient and sustainable, recently being given LEED Platinum status; no easy task for such a large and heavily controlled building.

As a piece of architecture it is readable on many levels. As a piece of restoration, it successfully incorporates a number of existing fragments into a balanced whole, including African Hall, North American (California) Hall and the entrance to the Steinhart Aquarium. As a piece of sophisticated engineering it delicately resists any threat from future earthquakes. All this occurs through architectural expression that will surely appeal to those from all architectural faiths and none. There are moments of theatrical delight – diving deep into the watery basement to witness the world's deepest living coral reef display, or rising beyond the canopy of its internal rainforest onto the world's largest living roof – all arranged and contained in a refined, classical High-Tech envelope.

Now 72, Piano is clearly still enjoying his work, enthused by the opportunity to teach a new generation about how architecture can responsibly and authentically learn from nature, capturing its essence without resort to pointless mimicry or meaningless forms. Returning to his son's paper, he can barely contain his excitement. 'This will touch the imagination of the next generation, teaching them not just to answer necessity, but also to explore a language of architecture that expresses our emotional needs.' ROB GREGORY



## ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, CALIFORNIA, USA

ARCHITECT

RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP

### Architect

Renzo Piano Building  
Workshop, Paris

### Architect of Record

Stantec Architecture, San  
Francisco (formerly Chong  
Partners Architecture)

### Engineering consultant

Arup

### Landscape consultant

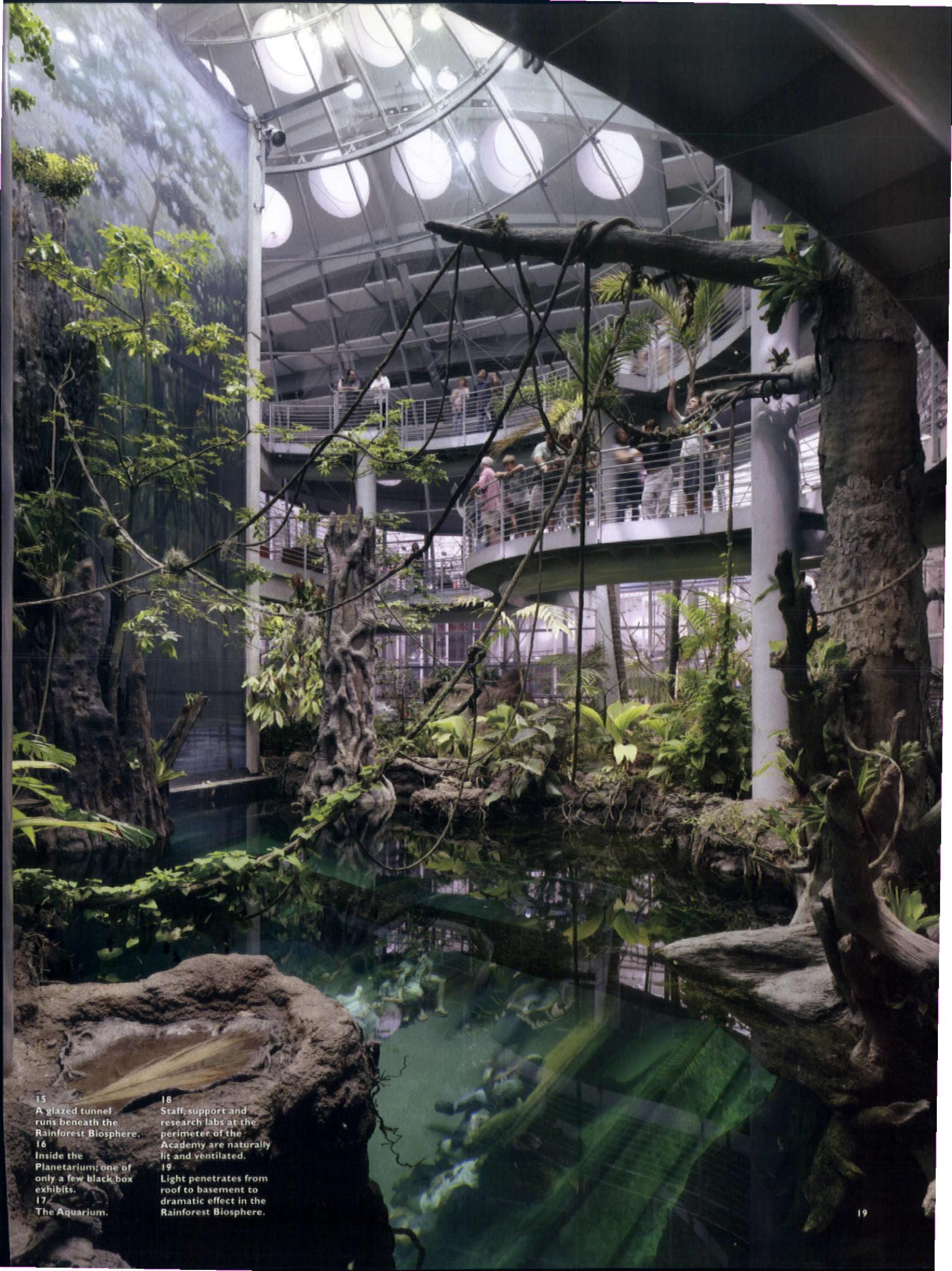
SWA Group

### Photographs

Tim Griffith







15  
A glazed tunnel  
runs beneath the  
Rainforest Biosphere.  
16  
Inside the  
Planetarium; one of  
only a few black box  
exhibits.  
17  
The Aquarium.

18  
Staff, support and  
research labs at the  
perimeter of the  
Academy are naturally  
lit and ventilated.  
19  
Light penetrates from  
roof to basement to  
dramatic effect in the  
Rainforest Biosphere.



URBAN LANDSCAPE,  
HAMBURG, GERMANY  
ARCHITECT  
EMBT







2

# HAMBURG ARABESQUE

Hamburg's docklands are being rapidly recast as a thriving new city, enlivened by EMBT's vigorous urban landscaping.

Currently less than halfway completed, Hamburg's HafenCity (AR April 2006) is a bold plan to transform its docklands, where sailing ships used to unload exotic wares from all corners of the world, into a twenty-first century city centre. Here, in the historic cradle of Hamburg's wealth and influence as a Hanseatic trading centre, there will be apartment blocks, schools, museums, trading and shipping companies, software firms, advertising agencies and theatre companies.

Hamburg's river port was once the scene of backbreaking work and heart-breaking farewells, but now ancient mariners such as Vasco da Gama and Marco Polo would be surprised to find themselves in such a transformed setting, let alone to see their names now gracing HafenCity's two central squares. The preserved red brick, glazed tiles, copper hoods and slate roofs of the Speicherstadt – the assembly of five-storey nineteenth-century warehouses on the old riverbank – form the backdrop to rows of individual plots, sold by the city to private developers, who in turn have commissioned architects such as Chipperfield, Störmer, Ingenhoven, GMP and Hadi Teherani. The usual forms and finishes have been skilfully manipulated, but in the global bazaar of materials and technologies, what can give a virgin site, developed from barren port terminal wastelands, a geographically unique character?

This is where landscape comes in. The design of the spaces between the buildings becomes the genius loci glue, the lines joining up the dots, while also attempting to articulate and define a sense of place. How else can the public distinguish between Rotterdam, London's Docklands, Auckland, Sydney, Manhattan's East River frontages, or Dubai?

EMBT emerged the winners of an open competition, held by the Hamburg authorities in 2002, to transform the west half of the proposed overall harbour project. This covers Sandtorhafen and Grasbrookhafen quaysides, both harbour heads (with terraces, footbridges, and decks to yacht moorings), together with the public squares between blocks. Individual buildings are linked by a continuous elevated walkway, 3m



1 Grey northern skies lower over EMBT's manic Mediterranean twirlings.

2 Marco Polo terrace, at the western end of the former docks of Grasbrookhafen.

3 Interspersed with green areas, pale hard surfaces reflect cool light.

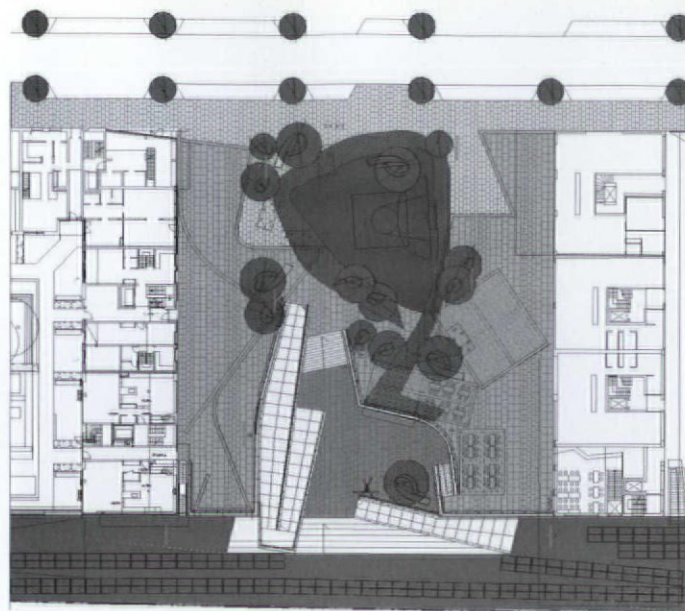
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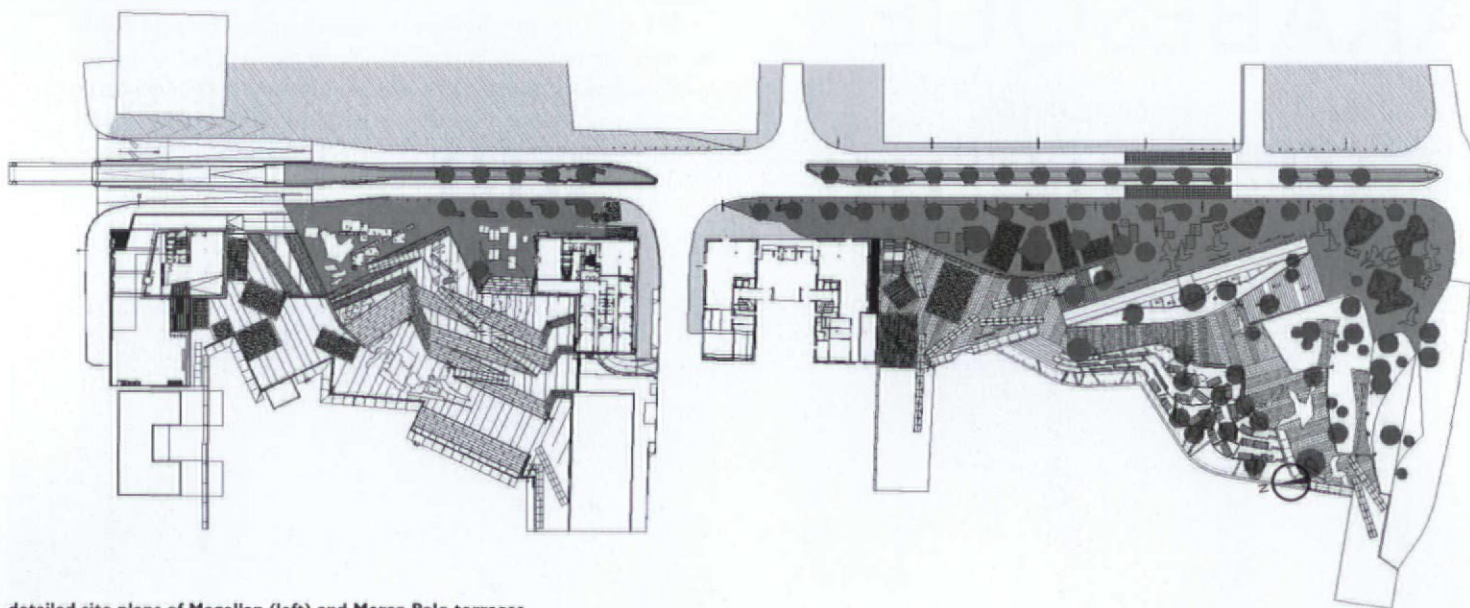
high. This forms part of the storm flood precautions, along with fully enclosed basements and ground level garages behind steel watertight storm doors and dykes.

As a port environment is essentially one of hard surfaces, EMBT have made sparing use of greenery. Historically, in these heavy industrial regions, texture came from uneven cobbles, various sizes of paving, natural stone, brickwork and half timbered buildings, tropical hardwood buffers to the docks, and the ironwork necessary for securing large vessels, mooring rings, anchor chains, cranes, pontoons and gangway constructions.

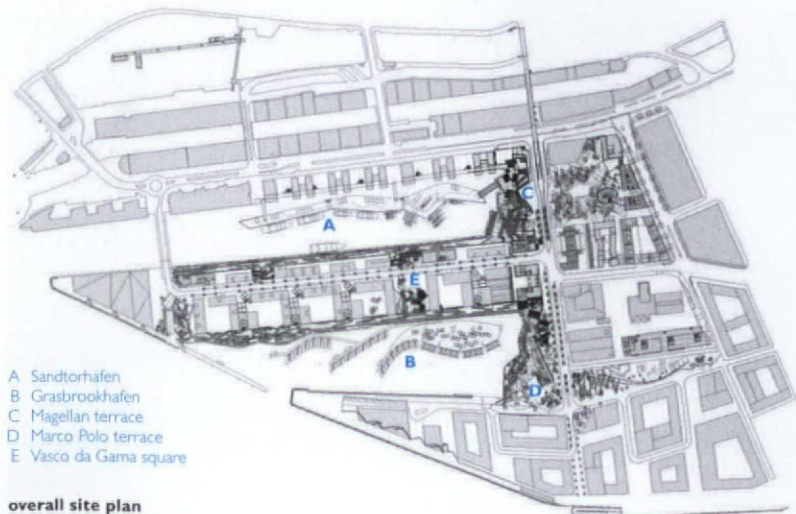
EMBT's more florid designs concentrate on providing a stage set for lunchtime and evening jinks during the week, as well as HafenCity's weekend *flâneurs*. A variety of hard surfaces are employed – precast concrete and bleached timber decking, or oiled rich brown planking, for footbridges, kiosks and pontoons. To maximise light in a wan Northern climate, white surfaces reflect every ray that penetrates autumn or winter cloud cover, also increasing temperatures on the ground by at least a couple of degrees on sunny spring and summer days. Pedestrians promenade over a higgledy-piggledy carpet of diverse finishes, from grey and white arabesque patterns marked out in fixed aggregates, to brilliant white paving flags in an interlocking jigsaw pattern, and brick inlays put together like patchwork rugs.



detailed site plan of Vasco da Gama square



detailed site plans of Magellan (left) and Marco Polo terraces



- A Sandtorhafen
- B Grasbrookhafen
- C Magellan terrace
- D Marco Polo terrace
- E Vasco da Gama square

overall site plan

4 The HafenCity site prior to redevelopment.  
5, 6 Vasco da Gama square, which creates a new public space between blocks.

7, 8 Freeform, freestanding elements combine with a variety of materials and textures.







5



6



7

**URBAN LANDSCAPE,  
HAMBURG, GERMANY**  
ARCHITECT  
EMBT



8





9

# URBAN LANDSCAPE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

ARCHITECT

EMBT

Metres of grey tubular spaghetti, and flat profiled steel strips, in freeform arcs, swirl in the air, as if frozen in a hectic dance. Their practical purpose is to house lighting and also act as handrails, rubbish bins, basketball dunking areas, poles for banners and flags. There is also a running fish motif. Bordering on kitsch, these impressionistic shoals, looking more filleted than fleshy, come in all sizes as terracotta brick reliefs in shades of red, brown and yellow, swimming along the grey brick walls of the promenade.

Shallow steps, ramps and terraces, in smooth white or exposed aggregate, together with prefabricated concrete panels and rougher stone paving, slope or fall down to the wharf edges. Fixed furniture includes playful morphic seating forms, resembling melted plates, or picnic benches from which the quay-bound public can view the water (and those with higher disposable incomes messing about on boats).

Small clusters of trees, plugged into asphalt surfaces at street level, within ribbons of grass, or planted on floating elements at water level, will be seasonal reminders, like clocks with cyclic changing hues. A waterside promenade is likely to be flooded, two or three times annually, but otherwise it will be colonised by outdoor cafés and restaurants, furnished in cold weather with terrace heaters. In contrast to the building plots, nothing is static or regimented. Constant fluid movement underscores EMBT's swirling, twirling, acrobatic forms. The rounded, over-dimensioned kerb to the water's edge, which tilts upwards to help prevent cyclists, online skaters, skateboarders and small children from accidentally falling into the oily docks and which drops to the water in vertical folds, like an exercise in origami, is the only heavyweight reminder of the labour intensive industries and the grittier aspects of former port activities.

Yet despite all the Mediterranean floridity, one of the salient features of this new terrain is its inclusivity: the opportunity it affords the old, unemployed, or those on low incomes, to take part in public life. There is a free gravel bed for games of *boules*, playground equipment, and a soft landing matted ball games area. Everywhere there are steps or benches for sitting, or even lying in the sun. In an increasingly paranoid urban realm, 'unwanted elements' are constantly sifted out and people are now often obliged to pay in order to justify their presence, or even simply to sit and rest. Reserved Hamburg is not easygoing Barcelona, but EMBT have tried to bring a more socially cohesive and welcoming spirit to these cooler Northern climes. LAYLA DAWSON



10



11

9  
Magellan terrace at  
the western end of  
Sandtorhafen docks.  
10, 12  
Quayside landscaping  
combines new trees  
and rippling seating.  
11  
Brickwork patterns  
of the original  
warehouses find  
echoes in the new  
scheme of things.

Architect  
Miralles Tagliabue EMBT, Barcelona  
Executive landscape architect  
WES & Partner Landscape Architects, Hamburg  
Photographs  
Roland Halbe







I was privileged to be a weekend guest at Portrack recently, and took the opportunity of wandering the garden on my own, having already heard Charles Jencks' explanation for everything. Strangely, the power of words became more telling when I couldn't hear Charles' voice. There are still words, on slabs of stone, mostly, or on banners hung from trees. The landscape combines with these words in a magic way. It puts me in mind of Thomas Love Peacock's descriptions of landscape, as in 'Headlong Hall': '... but it was reserved for the exclusive genius of the present time to invent the noble art of picturesque gardening, which has given, as it were, a new tint to the complexion of nature, and a new outline, to the physiognomy of the universe'.

The English invention of the picturesque garden can be seen as a major contribution to world culture: it deploys the prime English quality of good form in the prime English style, which is that it should be invisible, and never referred to in words. Artifice there is in abundance, but it looks as if this is nature's own artifice. It looks natural. Now Charles Jencks, inspired by his late lamented wife Maggie Keswick, has gone further. He manipulates the landscape, glorying in the artifice, digging out ponds and piling up the material to form mounds. It is artifice, indeed, but the grass that grows on the mounds is real. And, when it rains, or gets frosty, or snows, it remains 'the place beneath', and is reintegrated into the natural landscape. So, more clearly than before, through vivid contrasts and juxtapositions, landscape, while remaining in one sense inert, becomes in another sense a fluid material, a means even of expressing ideas.

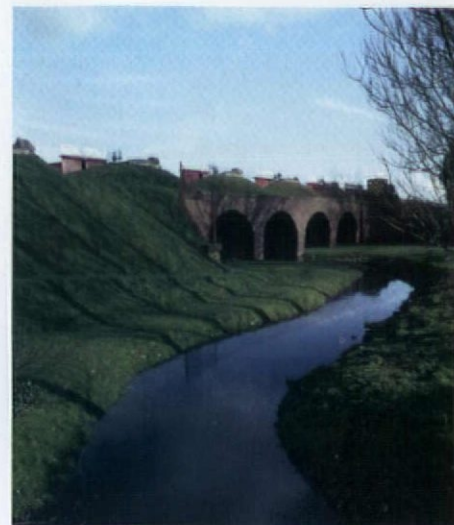
And these ideas, sparked by a few words, are about man's place in nature, and so man's place in the cosmos. We are so used to thinking of landscape as natural, that we tend to extend the nature we know indefinitely, while the landscape that is so familiar to us is really just the girl next door. When we consider that the biosphere, the habitable part of the world, is nothing but a thin shell, a mile or so thick, approximating to the surface of the earth, this nature becomes tiny. In cosmological terms, in relation to the cosmos, it is minute. Yet the cosmos is also

1  
The 4-Arch Bridge,  
1840-2004 – Worthies  
march along with  
Nature.

2  
The 17 Worthies  
as railroad cars,  
moundettes and figures.

3  
The Bloodline under  
construction, banners  
to the left, signifiers  
of the other history of  
Scotland.

4  
The Bum Walk frames  
the landscape rising  
in continuity from the  
moundettes.

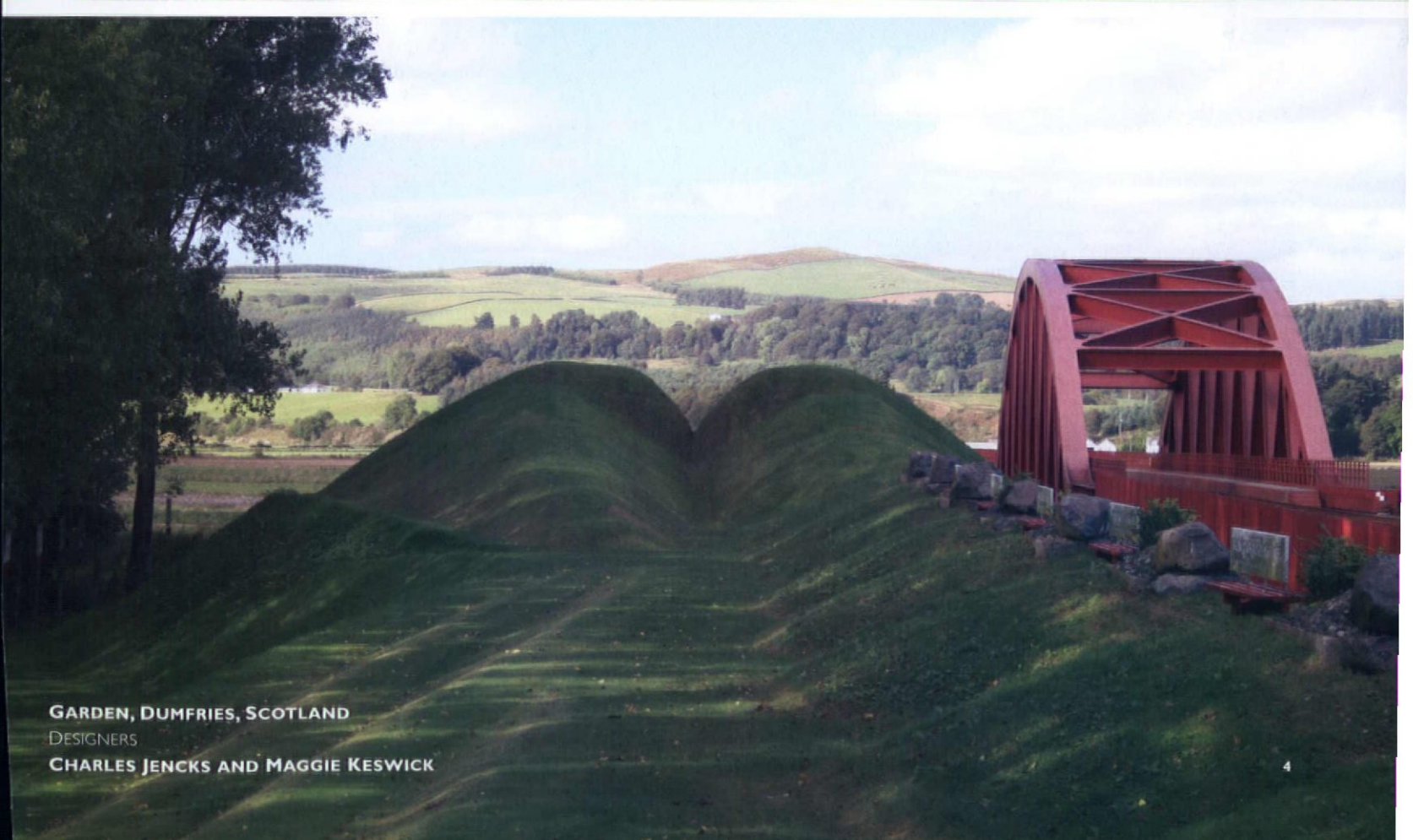


# HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Garden of Cosmic Speculation, designed by Charles Jencks and Maggie Keswick at their Scottish home, has been described as one of the most important garden designs of recent decades. Robert Maxwell reviews the garden and the book describing its creation.







**GARDEN, DUMFRIES, SCOTLAND**  
 DESIGNERS  
**CHARLES JENCKS AND MAGGIE KESWICK**



natural, it consists, as far as we know, of the same material, the same elements, that we learned at school.

But it is also mysterious. We cannot as yet account for the presumed weight of the universe, and to explain what we know we have had to hypothesise an invisible dark matter, only fathomed through its effect on light. And that alone is not enough to account for the theoretical weight of the universe: we have had to presume the existence of another element, which we call dark energy, for which no physical evidence exists.

In a further complication, the more we know about the forces inside the atom, the more mysterious matter becomes. There are a surprising number of sub-atomic particles, most of them short-lived, and again it is difficult to account for the weight of things; this is why so much is riding on the so-called Higgs boson, whose existence has been hypothesised, and whose discovery would allow us to derive the weight of matter more satisfactorily.

It is this wider framing of 'nature' that Charles Jencks wishes to bring to our attention; and where better to do this than in the heart of the countryside, or rather, of a garden, where nature dominates but at the same time can be subverted. So we arrive at the Garden of Cosmic Speculation,\* the title of Charles Jencks' book, the essence of which will be to discover 'a new grammar of landscape design to bring out the basic elements of nature that recent science has found to underlie the cosmos'.

At the origin of the design is a reflection of the basic character of the Scottish lowlands – low hills grazed by animals – which led to a geometry of curves. But the first major task was to drain a swamp, and this led to a discovery of the power of the machine, and to the principle of piling up the excavated material to form mounds, and to the possibility of combining the ups and downs by the use of spirals and writhing forms, and so they were off (Maggie and Charles) on a path that was to have many convolutions.

They started with the water, now enlarged to become a small lake, and by building a promontory into it created two dragons – a Land Dragon and a Water Dragon. So metaphor was to engulf the whole programme. A major idea of life as the enjoyment of the senses became a theme that would give rise to the Garden of Common Sense (the Kitchen Garden), the Garden of the Six Senses, the tennis court as the Sense of Fair Play,



5

5 Arch-truss and the large crane on the River Nith.

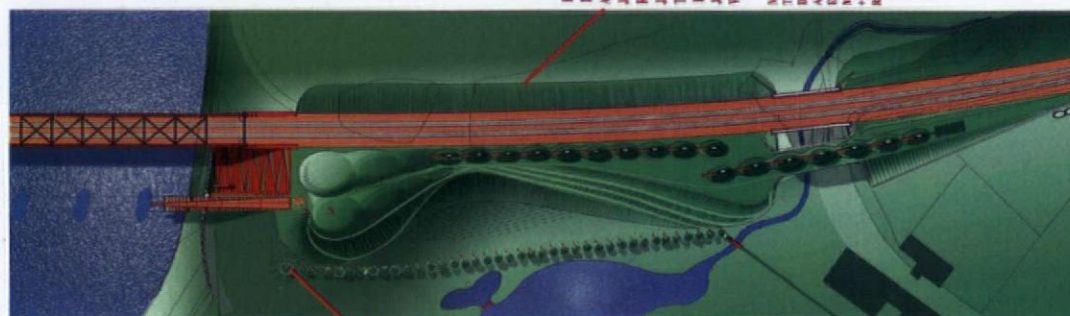
6 Open Day 2007 overlooking the Cantilever Bridge, to the left, and Rail Garden.

7 Worthy I – Francis Hutcheson 1694-1746: 'That action is best, which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest number'. Note the train passing behind.

**GARDEN, DUMFRIES, SCOTLAND**  
DESIGNERS  
**CHARLES JENCKS AND MAGGIE KESWICK**

### The Scottish Enlightenment

1694 Francis Hutcheson  
1711 David Hume  
1723 Adam Smith  
1726 James Hume  
1726 Robert Adam  
1726 James Watt  
1757 Thomas Telford  
1759 Robert Burns  
1762 James Butler  
1771 Walter Scott  
1786 Mary Stewart  
1789 T. B. Macaulay  
1790 David Livingstone  
1803 David Carnegie  
1803 John MacGillivray  
1803 Margaret Mackintosh  
1803 + C. R. Mackintosh  
1808 Robert Watt  
1872



### The Bloodline

1694 Francis Hutcheson  
1711 David Hume  
1723 Adam Smith  
1726 James Hume  
1726 Robert Adam  
1726 James Watt  
1757 Thomas Telford  
1759 Robert Burns  
1762 James Butler  
1771 Walter Scott  
1786 Mary Stewart  
1789 T. B. Macaulay  
1790 David Livingstone  
1803 David Carnegie  
1803 John MacGillivray  
1803 Margaret Mackintosh  
1803 + C. R. Mackintosh  
1808 Robert Watt  
1872



### The High and Low Road

The Enlightenment is set against The Bloodline as two views of Scottish history. At the top, small mounds carry the signs of Enlightenment thinkers and the 17 figures are conceived as railcars pulled by the engine at the front – 'the train of progress'. The row of poplar trees, bottom, holds red aluminium signs with important dates and names, events and massacres, that punctuated Scottish history. The bridge, left, was designed along with engineers Scott Wilson to relate to the seven red bridges of Portrack, and the cantilevered bridge, to its right, was converted from the remains of the previous one.









**GARDEN, DUMFRIES,  
SCOTLAND**  
DESIGNERS  
**CHARLES JENCKS AND  
MAGGIE KESWICK**



8



9

the wood where the crows quarrelled almost every evening as Taking Leave of Your Senses, and The Nonsense.

The Nonsense was a construction: a mock-up of part of James Stirling's Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, rescued from oblivion and put to use as a parable of No Sense, with the addition of words by Baudelaire (*La Nature est un temple, ou de vivants piliers/ laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles*), the first of many episodes where words are seeded into the visitor's experience of the landscape. The book has memorable shots of The Nonsense being visited by Leon Krier, and later by Stirling and Paolozzi, making one regret that their conversation has been lost.

Words, letters, signs, symbols should reverberate throughout a landscape, an idea common to Chinese Gardens and poet-gardeners such as Ian Hamilton Finlay. So says Jencks (page 44), and there can be no doubt that Hamilton Finlay has provided a model for Portrack. In his garden at Little Sparta, a cottage is ennobled with four Corinthian pilasters and the words: To Apollo – His Music, His Missiles, His Muses. The Chinese influence is also obvious in the choice of bright red as the colour for many insertions into the landscape, as with the Jumping Bridge (page 140) or the columns in Quark Walk.

Quark Walk is my own favourite episode. It has been so named partly for its intrinsic sound, as is obvious from there being no equivalent Lepton Walk (Quarks and Leptons are part of the initial division of sub-atomic particles, more or less equal and opposite, but Lepton Walk sounds like a suburb of Edinburgh). Quark Walk leads from Crow Wood, which contains The Nonsense) to the Jumping Bridge and Slug Lakes, and it follows the path of a stream (a burn, in this neck of the woods). Wooden stumps painted bright red form quasi-temples where the equations of inter-atomic maths are written.

The garden's most striking episode must be the combination of Slug Lakes and the associated mounds: Snake Mound and Snail Mound. It is quite an experience to walk between the lakes on a grass-covered embankment, to feel simultaneously one's performance as player in a Landscape Folly, and one's experience as a child of nature. It is this image which has reappeared in Jencks' design for the land behind the Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, and which has reappeared again in his proposal for Portello Park in Milan. But the most disturbing episode must be the construction called Cascading Universe, which combines a mound, a lake and a garden of forking paths, all constructed as a set of joining steps, leading up to a building, indubitably modern in style. The ascent does remind one rather of those Mexican pyramids where you simply have to keep your head. (See the aerial photograph on pages 242-243.) Here also there is a pond, but it is more constrained by the land forms containing it, elaborated by knife-like metal blades, and it ends up as a brooding presence. Moreover, it is all deeply symbolic of the universe, its age measured in units of time going from fractions of a second to billions of years. There are stone fragments weirdly reminiscent of parts of the body,



10

and water channels that suggest the world is splitting up. I escaped from this set piece with a sense of relief.

More reassuring is the part of the garden which adjoins the railway track from Dumfries to Glasgow, where trains pass at frequent intervals. Charles was able to negotiate with the rail company to redesign their bridge over the River Nith, to conserve part of the abandoned bridge as a cantilever, and to help construct a series of small mounds in a row, as if they were wagons pulled by a locomotive, and even to put in place a real locomotive at their head. With all the steelwork painted the same red as the Jumping Bridge, it falls into the language of the garden, and constitutes The Garden of Scottish Worthies, a record of the Enlightenment.

The small mounds carry the signs of Enlightenment thinkers pulled by the 'train of progress', while the row of poplar trees holds red aluminium signs with important dates, names, events and massacres that punctuated Scottish history, a story that Charles calls The Bloodline. It becomes the Low Road ('You take the Low Road, I'll take the High Road, I'll be in Scotland afore you'). The events of the history of a few hundred years are less disturbing, if more 'real', than the billions of years covered in the Cascading Universe, and the result is a sense of relaxation, in spite of the bloodshed and strife actually commemorated. I have said nothing about many other episodes: the metal models of atoms and double helixes that adorn the Garden of the Six Senses and DNA, the Black Hole Terrace, the Symmetry Break Terrace, the Linear Paradise Garden, the Willow Twist, where moss first refused to grow, then grew in abundance. There is something genuinely poetic about the words used in these names.

The story of the garden becomes a kind of record of family history, as well as a creation of the mind. Perhaps the most enjoyable feature for the ordinary visitor is the many gates designed to celebrate some aspect of science: these are all strangely beautiful. If you missed it, the book is also something special, well designed and laid out, with wonderful images. The picture on page 26 has a radiant Maggie flanked by a younger Frank Gehry and an even younger Michael Graves, enough in itself to make the book a compulsive buy. ROBERT MAXWELL

\* Charles Jencks, *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation*, London: Francis Lincoln, 2003

**Designer**  
Charles Jencks  
**River Nith Bridge**  
Charles Jencks with  
Scott Wilson/Mike Hackney  
**Main contractor**  
Carillion/Andrew Stocks  
**Photography**  
Charles Jencks



11





8  
Poplar Shadows  
Interact with Worthies  
—syncopated rhythms.

9  
Margaret MacDonald 1869-  
1933 and C. R. Mackintosh  
1868-1928: 'Nothing could  
be more perfect than  
sitting where I was this  
morning, only you did not  
come to meet me at the  
end of the tunnel.'

10  
View through the  
poplars to the lakes.

11  
The red grammar of the  
Quark Walk relates to  
the seven red bridges.

12  
Footbridge to garden,  
one of the eight red  
bridges at Portrack.







Among the over hyped froth and flummery of this year's Venice Biennale, landscape architect Gustafson Porter's garden in the Arsenale was a rare instance of thoughtfulness that connected with more resonant forces than the curatorial flavour *du jour*. Despite much of the Biennale being staged in the Giardini, Venice's agreeable main public gardens, the art of landscape design and its potential for transforming both buildings and the public realm continues to be largely overlooked by curators, committees and contributors. So Aaron Betsky's commissioning of Gustafson Porter to create the first significant external landscape installation for the Biennale in its history was long overdue.

Betsky's brief drew on a phrase from Voltaire's *Candide*, '*il faut cultiver notre jardin*', referring to how we cultivate our own garden (the French *jardin secret* alludes to the private part of the soul), or tend our affairs in the wider world. To achieve this requires wisdom and the desire to seek it out, yet this can often be a double-edged sword.

One of Gustafson Porter's starting points was the allegory illustrated by Tiepolo's *The Scourge of the Serpents*, in Venice's Accademia which employs the infamous Biblical serpent as a metaphor for voyage, discovery and self-knowledge. In the perpetual struggle between good and evil, the snake embodies both. In *Towards Paradise*, Gustafson Porter seek 'through allegory to tell a tale, a voyage of awareness and discovery. A voyage that seeks to question and provoke, in order that we may be able to tend our affairs.'

Perhaps more than most historic cities, Venice is plagued

by a persistent melancholy, the physical relics of its past serving only to emphasise its decline as an imperial power. In their sixteenth-century pomp, the great naval yards of the Arsenale turned out a galleon a day, but are now sparsely populated by rusting *vaporetti* and motor boats. The sheds of the Corderie have long been abandoned by the ropemakers and now form a stage set for the follies of art and architecture.

Tucked away at the Arsenale's north-east corner, marking the point at which the docks meet the lagoon, is the site of a former Benedictine nunnery, the Convento delle Vergini, Santa Maria in Gerusalemme. Established in 1239 it was demolished nearly 600 years later in 1830 and its former precincts allowed to run wild, morphing through time and neglect into a dense, untamed thicket of brambles and ivy encrusted trees. This potent and slightly sinister locale formed the site of Gustafson Porter's allegorical voyage, made manifest through a triumvirate of garden spaces tactfully carved into the existing overgrown landscape.

The start of the journey is signposted by hexagonal sentry tower, a curious remnant of the Arsenale's original fortifications. Here, on the far edge of the former naval yard, there is a sense of stillness and abandonment, of leaving the man-made, earthly world behind. White gravel paths lead into the site, passing through the unruly tangle of planting and shaded by a stand of London plane trees. The paths wend into a rustic outhouse, its exterior densely carpeted with ivy, its chthonic interior resembling a gloomy wayside chapel. This is the Store Room, signifying Remembrance.



2

## LANDSCAPE INSTALLATION, VENICE, ITALY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

GUSTAFSON PORTER/  
GUSTAFSON GUTHRIE NICHOL

# PARADISE FOUND

This garden of earthly delights was one  
of the rare hits of the Venice Biennale.

1  
The road to  
Enlightenment  
leads through  
an abundant  
vegetable garden,  
a memory of the  
convent's former  
allotments.

2  
The ivy clad  
Store Room.

3  
Tiepolo's *The  
Scourge of the  
Serpents*, circa  
1735, which  
now hangs  
in the Venice  
Accademia.

3





**LANDSCAPE INSTALLATION,  
VENICE, ITALY**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

**GUSTAFSON PORTER/  
GUSTAFSON GUTHRIE NICHOL**

Walls are covered in a screed of Latin bearing the names of shamefully extinct flora and fauna. Letters are starkly etched white on black and illuminated by flickering lights, like votive candles.

Studies of historical maps revealed that formal gardens and vegetable allotments were once located within the convent grounds. The second phase of the sequence, Nourishment, alludes to this narrative of organised cultivation and the abundance of the plant world which provides sustenance for both body and soul. A rectilinear layout imitates the

original allotments, with rows of plants lush with fruit and vegetables inviting sampling by visitors. Simple timber benches provide points of rest and the chance to contemplate nature's riotous bounty.

The sequence culminates in a secret garden of Enlightenment, a clearing in the depths of the undergrowth connected to the other enclaves by pergola-framed paths. From the dark compression of these conduits you suddenly emerge into the light, propelled into an elongated, ovoid space with an array of gently undulating, grass-covered berms at its heart. Though intended as a tranquil place for reflection, with a sprinkling of white bean bag chairs to assist the meditative process, it also contains the most dramatic aspect of the landscape sequence. Amid the



4 The profusion of nature in the vegetable garden. The hexagonal tower in the distance is a relic from the Arsenale's original fortifications.

5 Inside, the Store Room walls are etched with the names of extinct flora and fauna.





*Hyomys swinhonis*

*Xenodactylus concolor*

*Chaetopt*

*Aphana*

*Elimia clausa*  
*Leptoxis clipeata*  
*Carelia cochlea*  
*Partula compacta*  
*Macroscincus coctei*  
*Porphyrio coerulescens*  
*Geocapromys columbianus*  
*Cyanea comata*  
*Rhachis comorensis*  
*Leptoxis connata*

*Gila crassicauda*  
*autodontha consimilis*  
*Partula crassilabris*  
*Partulina crassa*  
*matogyrus crassilabris*  
*Amatra crassilabrum*  
*upaniopsis crassivalvis*  
*Agrotis criniger*  
*Melicope cruciata*  
*cadolobus crassilabris*

*Placostylus cuneatus*  
*Shorea cuspidata*  
*Cyanea cylindrica*  
*Thylacinus cynidictus*  
*Partula cylindrica*  
*Nesoryzomys*  
*Rhinichthys*  
*Sinployea decemlineata*  
*Achatinella*  
*Hanleya*

*Pleurobema avellanum*  
*Mergus australis*  
*Sierrititia balserensis*  
*Haplochromis bartoni*  
*Dromalus baudinianus*  
*Dusicyon australis*  
*Xystichromis bayoni*  
*Cynometra beddomei*  
*Lophopsittacus bensoni*  
*Carelia bicolor*  
*Partula attenuata*  
*Bulweria bifax*  
*Helenodiscus bilamellata*  
*Partula bilineata*  
*Gazella bilkis*

*Porphyrio albus*  
*matogyrus alcoviensis*  
*Nesillas aldabrana*  
*Coregonus alpenae*  
*Lepidomeda altivelis*  
*Lottia alveus*  
*Rhyacophila amabilis*  
*ambusia amstadensis*  
*Notropis amecae*  
*matogyrus amnicoloides*  
*Notomys amplius*  
*Carelia ancephila*  
*Podiceps andinus*  
*Pleurobema alpinum*  
*endlandia angustifolia*

*Pteropus bru*  
*Rhyncogonius*  
*Falco bub*  
*Achatinella l*  
*Exarra busta*  
*Achatinella*  
*Clappia cal*  
*Partula call*  
*Gomidesia cam*  
*Advena cam*  
*Caloprymnus e*  
*Licinia cal*  
*Sinployea e*  
*Turnagra ca*  
*Turnelasmus e*



tree canopies, thin veils of white fabric languidly billow and waft in the breeze, moored in place by giant helium weather balloons. At times, these tantalising, impromptu clouds float high enough to be seen from the garden entrance, creating a sense of intrigue and drawing visitors on into the most remote part of the site.

Tensile fabric design specialists Architen Landrell helped to develop, fabricate and install the canopy and balloon structure which was erected at lightning speed in just a week. Local bylaws prohibited large-scale mechanical excavation of the site, so the shallow helical ground bankers that anchor the structure were installed by hand in the existing vegetation, causing as little disruption as possible. To minimise the visual impact of the rigging, 3mm diameter dyneema (a superstrong, lightweight, polyethylene fibre) was used, coated in a discreet, dark sheathing.

Venice is not an obviously verdant city, but rather is full of secret gardens enclosed and hidden by high walls. Set in an out-of-the-way site, and at first inspection a sight somewhat daunting in its wildness, *Towards Paradise* adds to that historic continuum of secret places, slowly and sensuously unfolding to reveal a tranquil, light-filled heart. In the febrile atmosphere of the Biennale, it made for a welcome change of pace, and proved a salient reminder of the power of nature, time and place, those immemorial forces that touch and shape human existence. CATHERINE SLESSOR

The Venice Biennale runs until 23 November [www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)

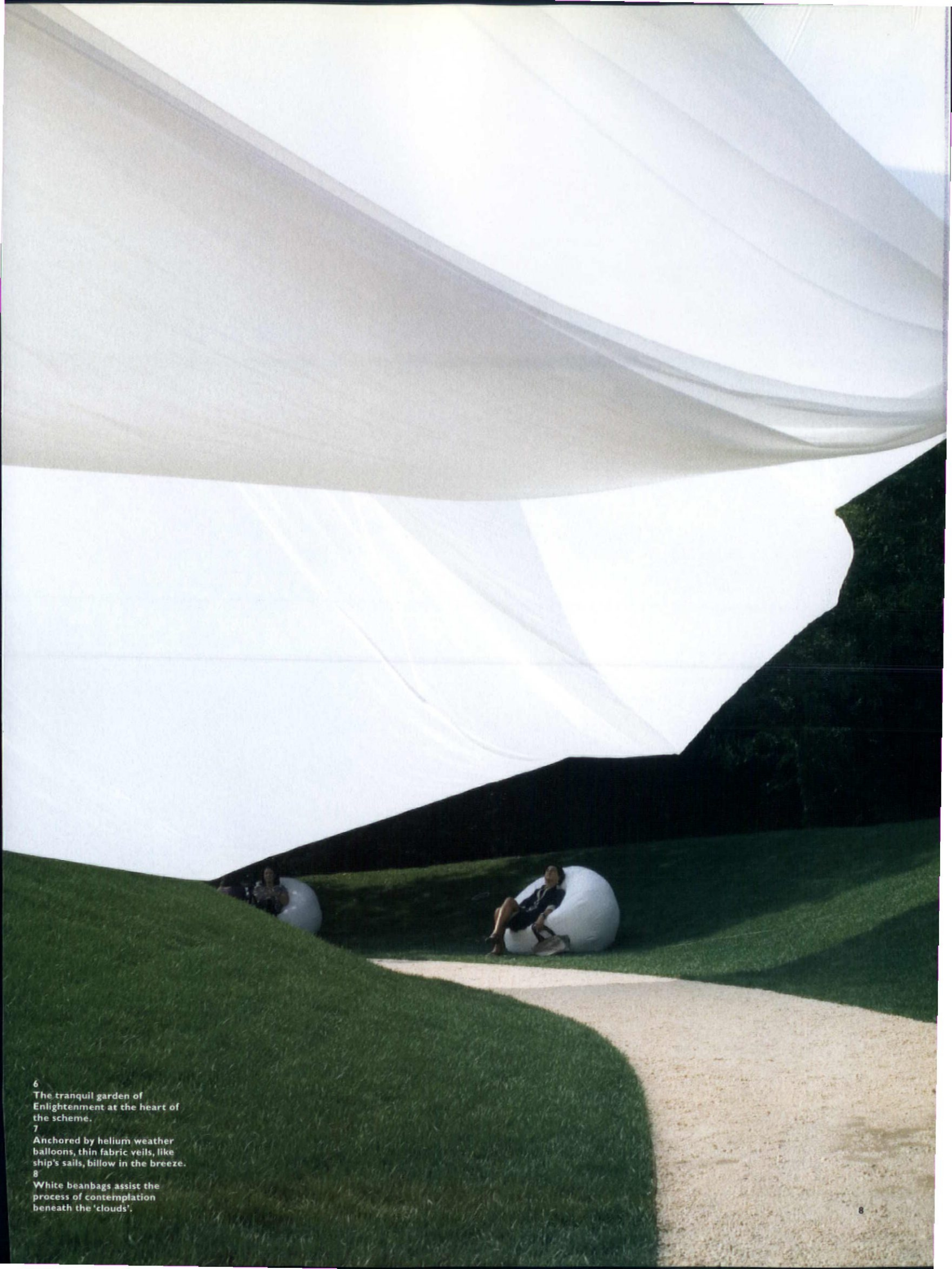
**Landscape architect**  
Gustafson Porter, London and  
Gustafson Guthrie Nichol, Seattle  
**Structural engineer**  
Atelier One  
**Tensile structure**  
Architen Landrell  
**Lighting design**  
RIDC Reggiani  
**Photographs**  
Grant Smith (except no 3)



**LANDSCAPE INSTALLATION, VENICE, ITALY**  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
**GUSTAFSON PORTER/GUSTAFSON GUTHRIE NICHOL**








6  
The tranquil garden of  
Enlightenment at the heart of  
the scheme.

7  
Anchored by helium weather  
balloons, thin fabric veils, like  
ship's sails, billow in the breeze.

8  
White beanbags assist the  
process of contemplation  
beneath the 'clouds'.





Soaring 18m above  
the ground, the  
walkway weaves in  
and out of an ancient  
tree canopy.

TREETOP WALKWAY  
KEW, LONDON  
ARCHITECT  
MARKS BARFIELD ARCHITECTS



# TOP OF THE COPSE

**A dramatic new treetop walkway at London's Kew Gardens brings nature vividly and vertiginously to life.**

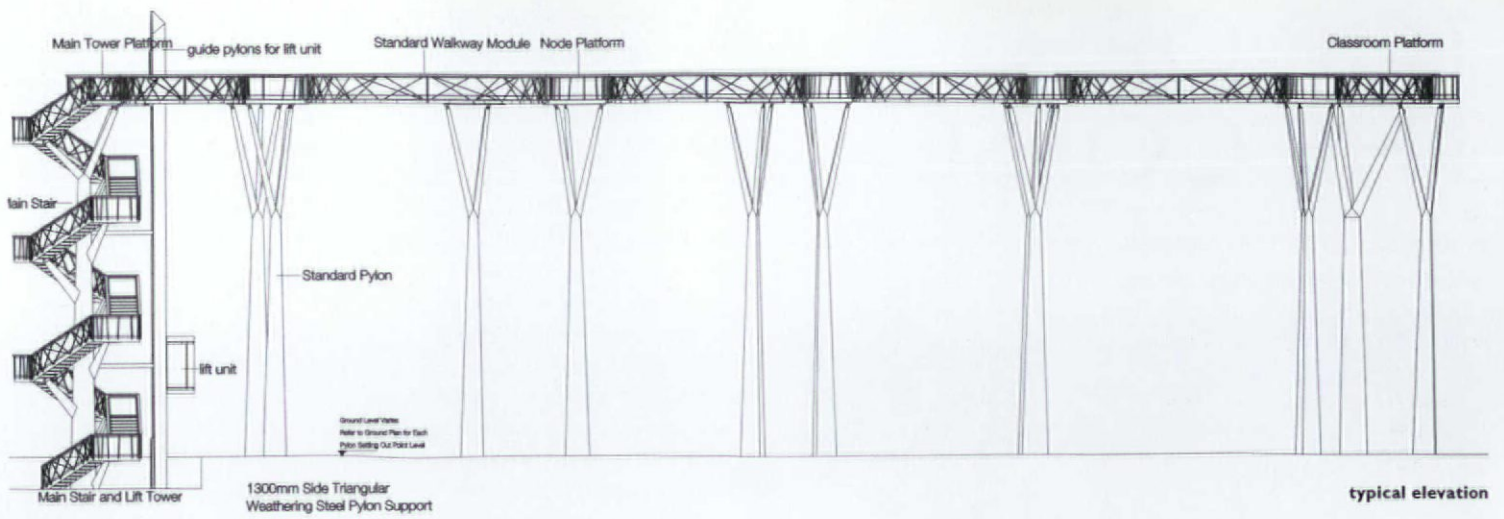
In the pantheon of European botanic gardens, Kew occupies an especially privileged position. From its origins as the grounds of Henry VII's palace at Richmond, it was established as a botanic garden in 1759. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, Kew is also a leading exponent of horticultural research, conservation and education.

The latest salvo in Kew's educational mission was completed earlier this year. If the appreciation of landscape might be seen as a passive and slightly genteel pursuit, this new treetop walkway by Marks Barfield Architects adds an

energetic frisson to proceedings. Supported on slim trifurcated pylons, an implausibly diaphanous mesh platform soars 18m above the ground, cranking zantly around a verdant canopy of mature sweet chestnuts, limes and broad leafed oaks planted by Capability Brown in the 1770s. Not only does this vertiginous vantage point give you a bird's-eye view of Kew, but it also brings you (literally) closer to nature as you brush past trees over 200 years old, eyeballing squirrels and, more incongruously, green ring-necked parakeets, descendants





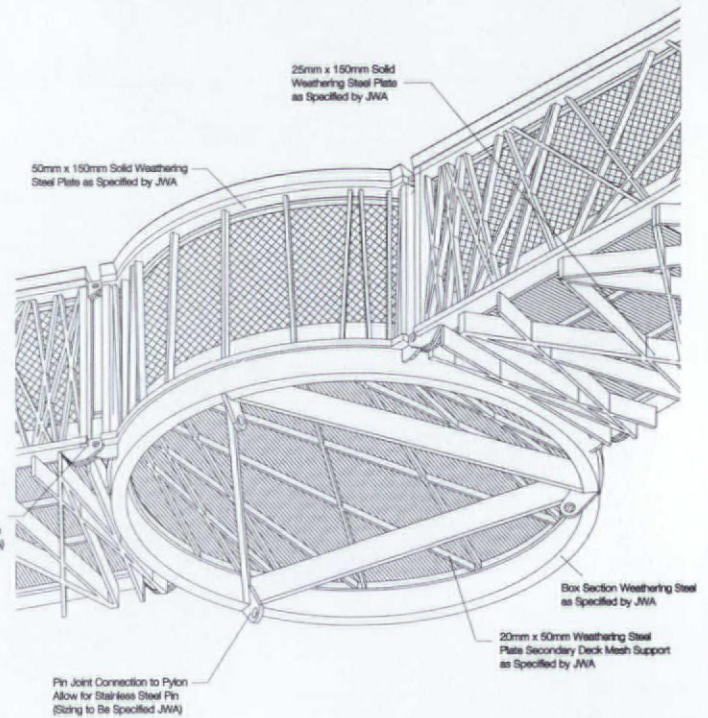


typical elevation

**TREETOP WALKWAY, KEW, LONDON**  
 ARCHITECT  
**MARKS BARFIELD ARCHITECTS**



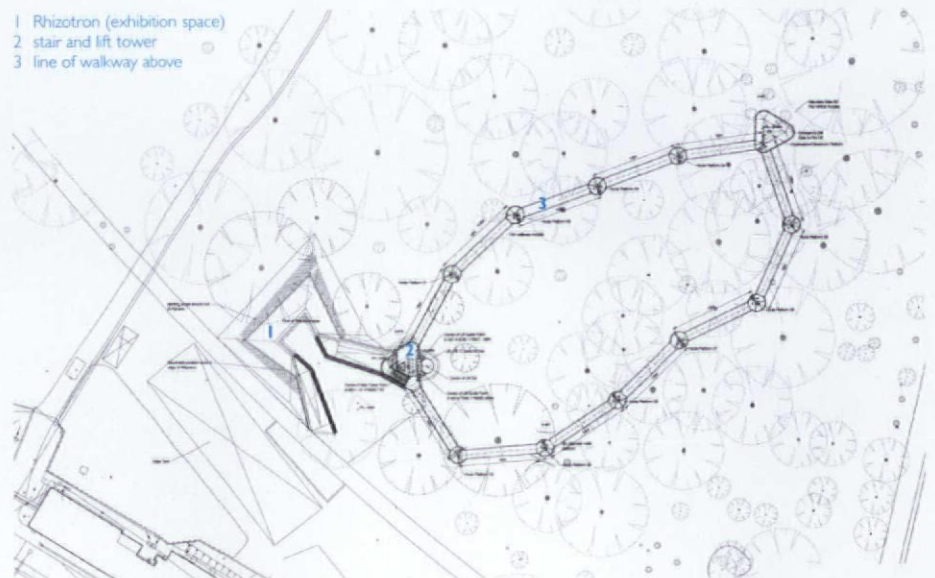
location plan



detail of platform and walkway structure



2



site plan



of escaped cage birds that have established raucous colonies in south-west London.

Appropriately arboreal, both in its form and the ochrous, bark-like patina of its rusting steel plate structure, the entire installation is dedicated to trees, from their roots to tips. The Rhizotron, a compact exhibition bunker exploring the ecology of tree root systems, prefaces the 108 steps to the dizzy heights of the canopy (a sleek, hydraulic lift capsule is due to be installed). Walkway truss modules are linked by nodal platforms that allow you to pause and savour the breathtaking vistas. A classroom-sized platform halfway along its 200m length can accommodate groups of up to 35.

Structure and balustrade are integrated, using the Fibonacci sequence of numbers (which underlies certain growth patterns in nature), to establish the setting out of the main structural elements. Engineer Jane Wernick worked with Marks Barfield to create a Fibonacci grid along each walkway truss, with a higher density of elements at the truss ends where vertical loads are most concentrated. The resulting structural lattice has a surprising delicacy, reinforced by the slender steel pylons that rise through the copse like lissom tree trunks.

Another challenge was the positioning of the foundation piles. These extend between 12 and 18m below ground, threaded through a complex system of ancient tree roots. A radar survey of the subterranean landscape was used to pinpoint safe locations.

Marks Barfield also designed the London Eye, so this latest project might be seen as adding to their repertoire of superscale structures-with-a-view. Yet in both cases the structures are meticulously engineered and tread tactfully on historic sites, enhancing appreciation of the existing landscape. From the top of Capability Brown's copse, Kew (and London) has never looked so good. CATHERINE SLESSOR

**Architect**  
Marks Barfield Architects, London  
**Structural engineer**  
Jane Wernick Associates  
**Photographs**  
Peter Durant

2  
Trifurcated pylons of weathering steel plate support the diaphanous walkway structure.

3  
Some young visitors, clearly not afraid of heights.

4  
Vistas to Kew and far beyond.



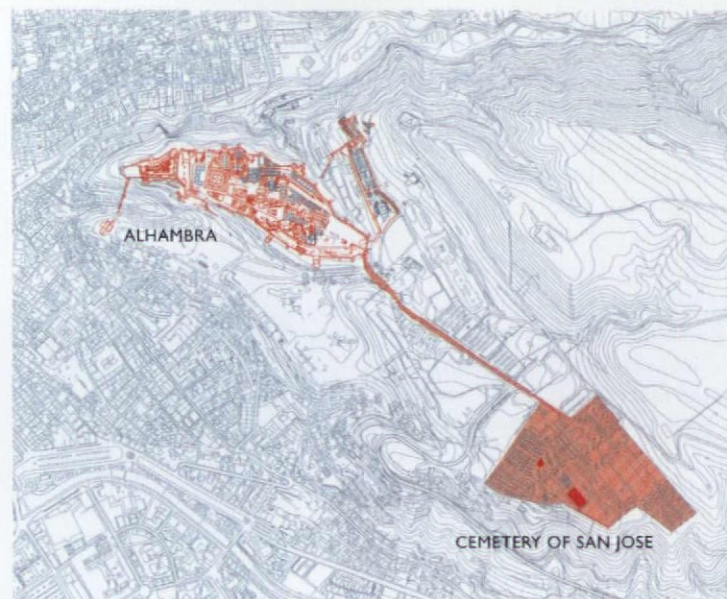


Compared with the gloomy Gothic reticence or municipal tedium of most northern European cemeteries, Mediterranean necropolises, especially those in Spain and Italy, seem to delight in picturesque excess. Doubtless this reflects the competing visions of Protestant and Catholic worship, which at its most extreme pits Calvinist asceticism against illuminated Madonnas. Yet the modern cemetery remains a difficult proposition, awkwardly straddling the margins between landscape and architecture.

Set in a hillside site near the Alhambra, the necropolis of San José is one of Granada's oldest cemeteries. Here, local architects Yolanda Brasa Seco and Eduardo Jiménez Artacho were asked to make a series of subtle new interventions within the existing historic grounds. These take the form of cuts, excavations and new gardens that aim to re-articulate and rediscover an ancient hilltop route that connected the Alhambra with the Alixares Palace, a former Moorish bastion that once stood on the site.

The first and simplest move is to incise a series of large apertures into a stretch of the high perimeter wall enclosing the south-west edge of the cemetery. In places the wall thickens to become a columbarium, a honeycombed structure containing niches for cremated remains. The effect of opening up the wall is to bring light into a formerly cloistered and oppressive corner of the cemetery, as well as framing heart-stopping views over the city and snow capped mountains of the Cerro del Sol beyond. Framed in thick Corten steel, the apertures are simple, gutsy insertions that recall Richard Serra's famous experiments with the same material. The patina of rust also speaks evocatively and poignantly of the passage of time.

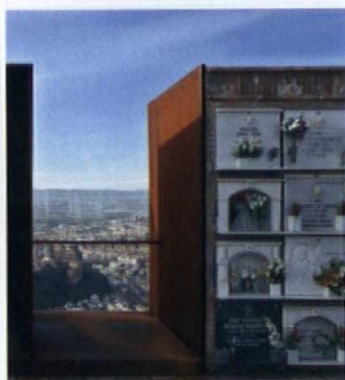
The reconfigured Alixares Garden marks the geographically highest point in the cemetery and incorporates archaeological fragments from the former palace. A shallow reflecting pond, also in dark Corten steel, alludes to the palace's original pool, discovered in archaeological investigations of the site. A plain timber platform



location plan

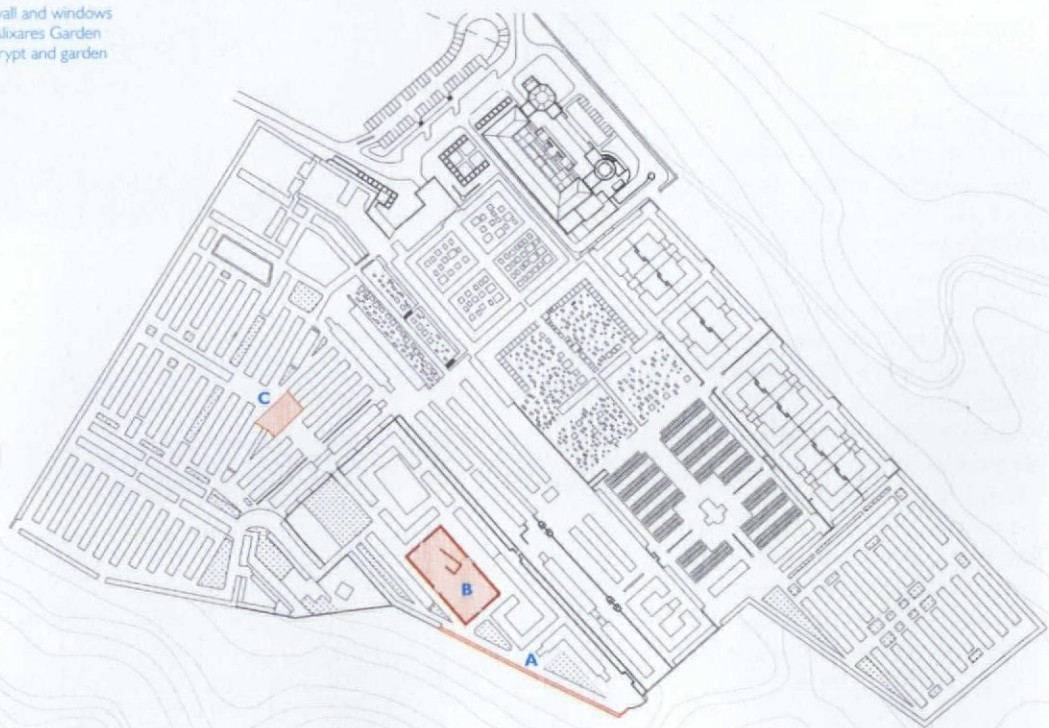
# GARDEN OF ETERNITY

New interventions in a Spanish cemetery engender a powerful sense of place.



1, 2  
New Corten framed apertures are carved into part of the cemetery's perimeter wall, opening up the formerly cloistered columbarium to light and views.

- A wall and windows
- B Alixares Garden
- C crypt and garden



site plan

**CEMETERY LANDSCAPING,  
GRANADA, SPAIN**  
ARCHITECT  
**JIMÉNEZ BRASA ARCHITECTS**

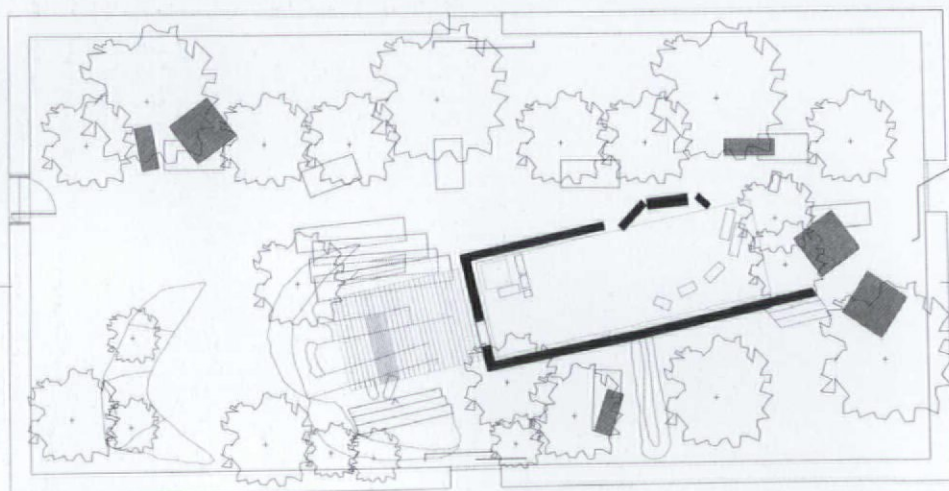




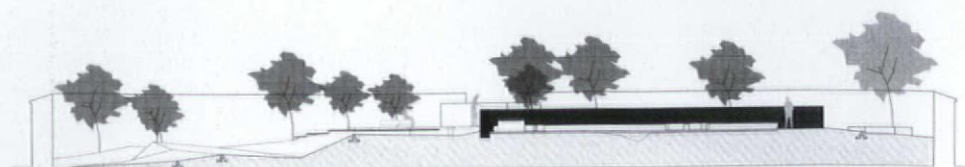




3



plan of Alixares Garden



cross section through Alixares Garden

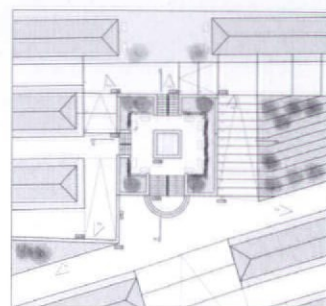
and bench adjoin the pool, providing a point of respite and contemplation. Ancient stones, gnarled olive trees and dark, spindly yews pepper the landscape of the white walled garden.

If the wall and garden are fundamentally extrovert in nature, underpinned by notions of opening up and reconnecting with the city, the final new element generates quite the opposite sensation. Partially embedded in the hillside is a small, angular crypt, fashioned from rough boardmarked concrete. The structure flares out into two angular prongs that form chasm-like entrances to a subterranean chamber. Inside, the glow from a lone striplight set in the rear wall is reflected in a row of alternately opaque and clear glass fins. The crypt is also a topographic presence, becoming part of the landscape. Its roof is

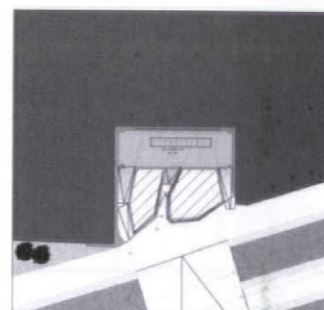




garden level



intermediate level



plan at crypt level

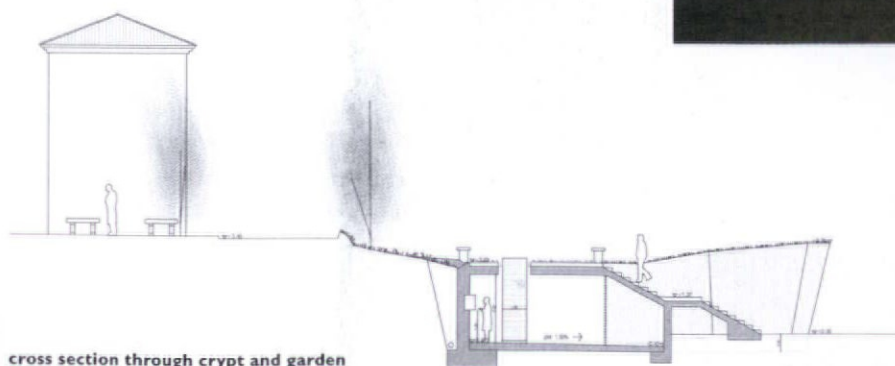
a manicured lawn, surrounding a new, formal garden.

Consciously of their time, but not conspicuously so, Jiménez Brasa's series of simple, subtle moves brings a revived spirit of tranquility and contemplation to this historic city of the dead. C. S.

**Architect**  
Jiménez Brasa Architects, Granada  
**Photographs**  
Fernando Alda

**CEMETERY  
LANDSCAPING,  
GRANADA, SPAIN**  
ARCHITECT  
**JIMÉNEZ BRASA  
ARCHITECTS**

- 3  
The new pool and platform in the Alixares Garden.  
4  
Rooftop garden on top of the crypt.  
5  
The angular concrete crypt.



cross section through crypt and garden



4



5



Singapore is competing for status as a global destination. Under pressure from rapidly emerging Chinese cities, the island country is pulling out all the stops: last month saw the world's first floodlit Formula One race, with lamps installed every four metres of the five-kilometre track, bringing the event in sync with the world's prime time TV audiences and avoiding the almost unbearable conditions of midday tropical climate. Elsewhere, vast infrastructure projects mark the city's growing ambitions with the reclamation of hundreds of hectares of land to provide valuable waterside sites for both public and private development.

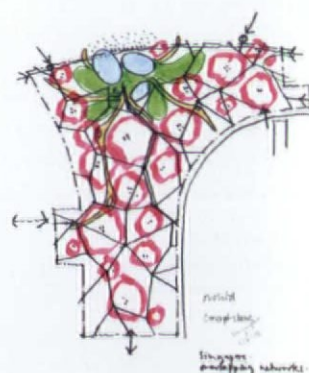
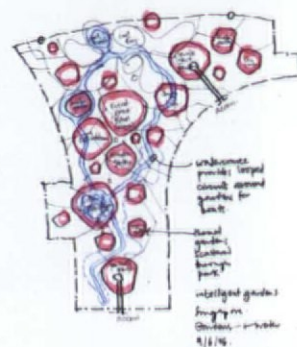
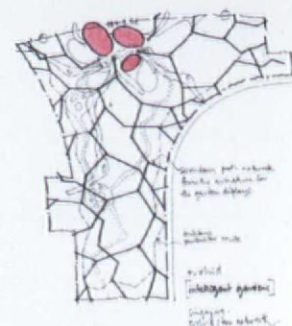
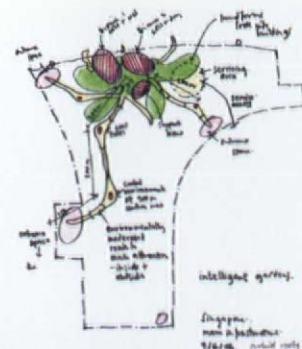
In 2006, Grant Associates (landscape architects of the 2008 Stirling Prize winning

Accordia housing development in Cambridge) assembled an impressive team which won the competition to design one of Singapore's most ambitious projects, the Gardens by the Bay, Marina South, on one such reclaimed site. The project is not a high-density group of high-rise buildings, however, but rather a high-density, high-rise and extremely intensive landscape park, commissioned by the country's National Parks Board.

Working with architect Wilkinson Eyre, structural engineer Atelier One, environmental engineer Atelier Ten, interpretation consultants Land, quantity surveyor Davis Langdon & Seah, and infrastructure consultants Meinhardt, founder of Grant Associates Andrew Grant took

inspiration from the orchid, the plant that has become emblematic of Singapore itself.

Orchids are epiphytic, that is a plant that grows above the ground surface, using other plants or objects for support in order to reach positions where the light is better or where they can avoid competition for light. Grant explains the evolution of his masterplan with five key diagrams related to the orchid: the garden takes root on a piece of new infrastructure and grows towards the city; leaves (earthworks) and roots (water, energy, communication systems) and shoots (paths, roads and links) create an integrated network across the park, into which beautiful flowers (feature/theme gardens) emerge at key intersections.



# SINGAPORE SUPERNATURE

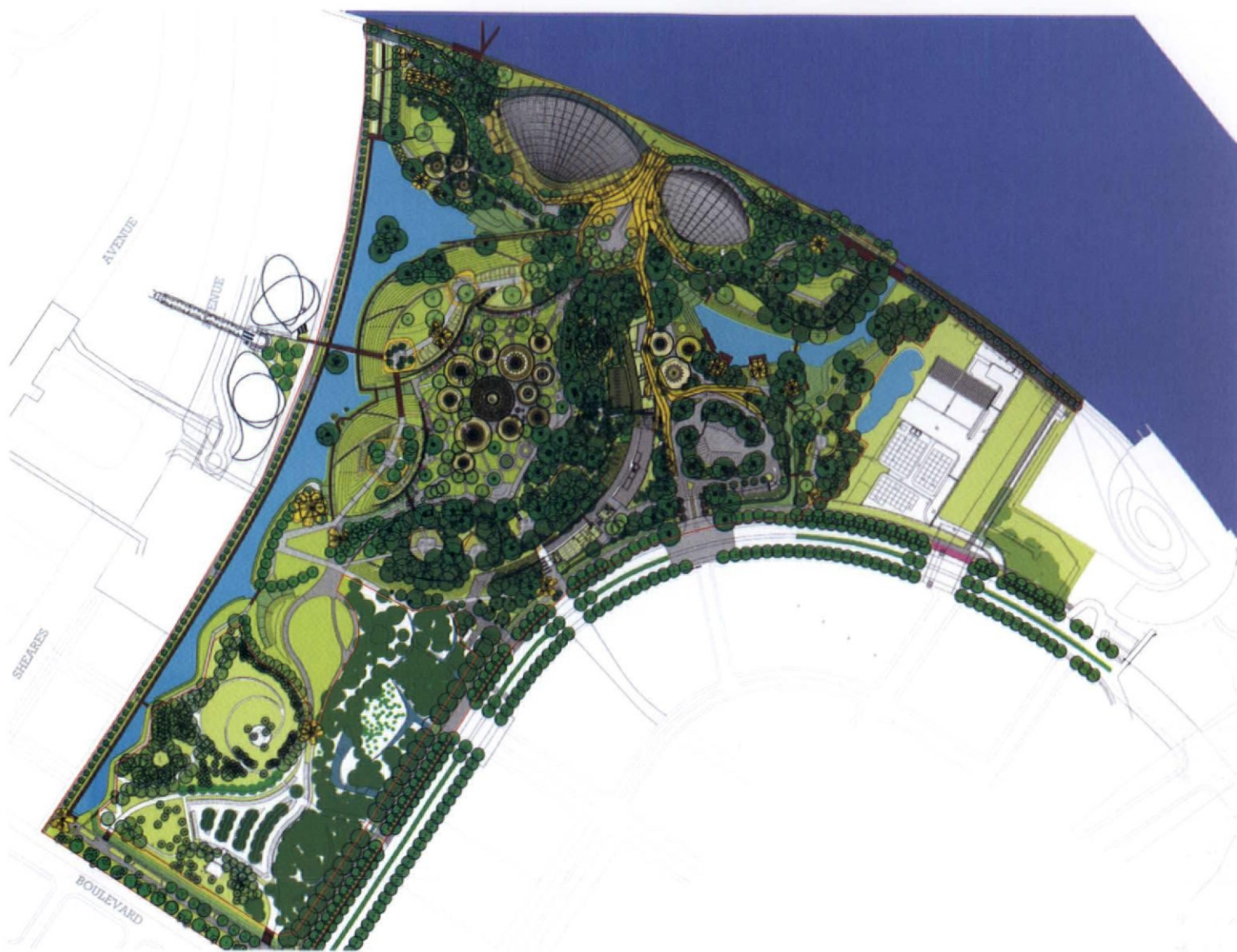
Despite huge land values, Singapore prioritises landscape, setting aside hundreds of hectares of reclaimed land for public gardens.

1 & 5  
Green Wall and Sunken Garden. As part of Grant Associates' masterplan, these two earthworks extend into the garden.  
2  
Andrew Grant's sequential masterplan sketches describe his concept of leaf shoots and roots.



process

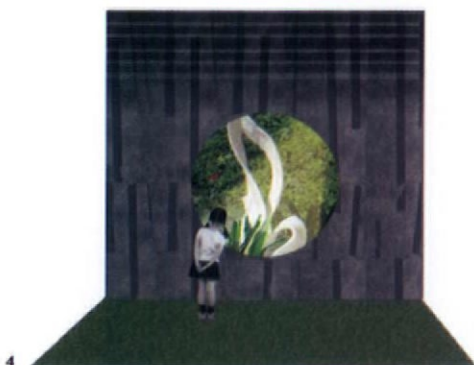




3

3  
The final masterplan,  
showing Wilkinson Eyre's  
conservatories to the  
north.

4  
The covered walkway  
provides essential shelter  
and opportunity for secret  
sunken gardens.

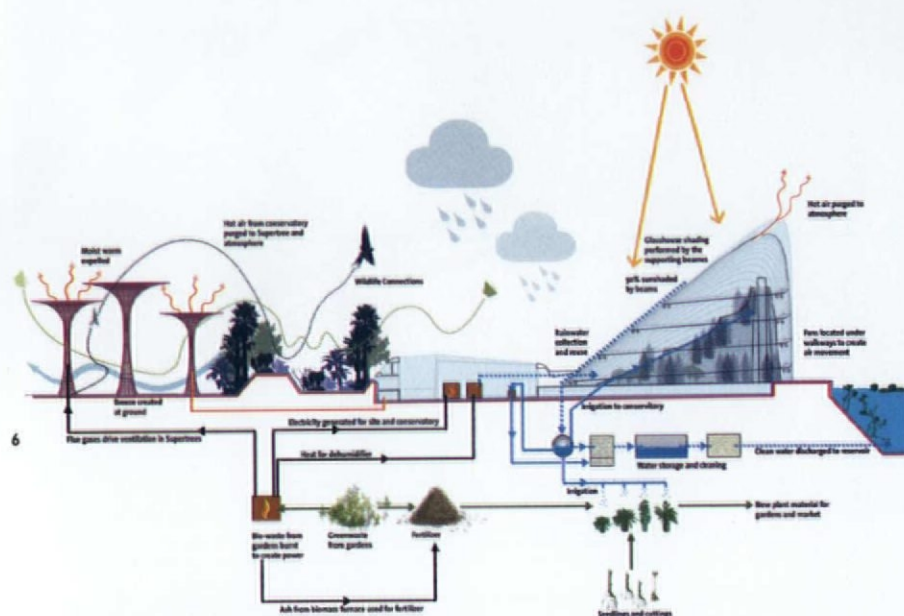


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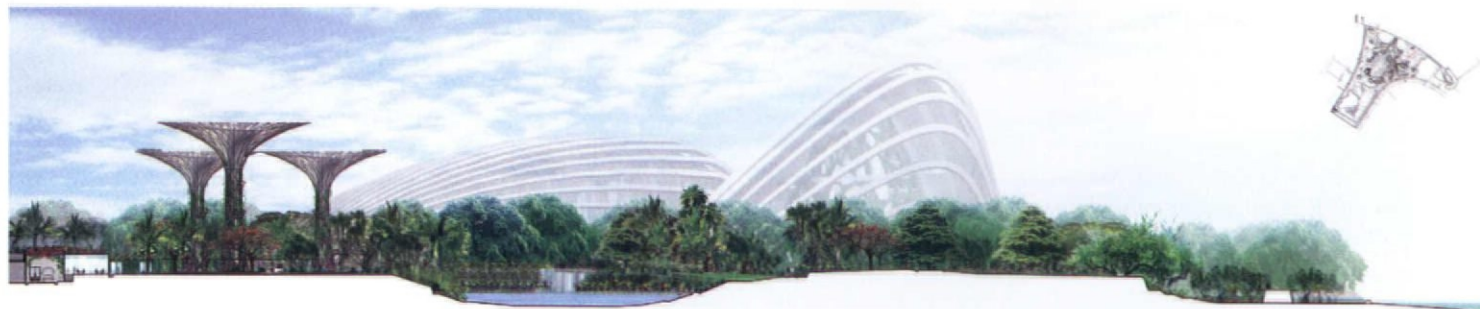


5









north-south section through arrivals area



PLANTS AND PLANET

NATURE'S BALANCE



Rising between 25 and 50 metres high, and loosely inspired by the visionary scenes of Studio Ghibli, the 'supertrees' are the most prominent landscape feature, described by Grant as a fusion of nature, art and technology. Conceived as vertical tropical gardens, dripping with ferns, orchids and climbers, they also act as the environmental engines for the gardens, equipped with photovoltaics, solar thermal collectors, rainwater harvesting devices and venting ducts.

Work on the 54 hectare park is proceeding at breakneck speed. Starting on site just six months after the competition result was announced, the team are busily preparing tender documentation, with a completion target at the end of 2010, and a public opening planned in 2011. ROB GREGORY



The villa of Horace Walpole in Twickenham, acquired in 1747, started life in 1698 as a 'shapeless little box', Chopped Straw Hall, which he renamed Strawberry Hill. The design of house and naturalistic landscape setting was one of the earliest Picturesque ensembles in England, and in Walpole's time, Strawberry Hill received many visitors. Today, however, both house and garden are relatively little known or visited, and it is no longer possible to experience this garden in its original conception because much has been altered or developed. Listed in 2002 by the World Monuments Fund as one of the hundred most endangered buildings in the world, the Strawberry Hill Trust has commissioned the Landscape Agency and Inskip + Jenkins Architects to prepare a conservation plan to restore the house and what remains of the garden, reinstating a context for Walpole's Gothic villa; the project will restore the Prior's Garden, recreate the 'theatrical' border and replant The Grove. This article interprets the original Strawberry Hill in relation to aesthetic theory expressed in Walpole's *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (1771),<sup>1</sup> leading the reader through a virtual tour by means of contemporaneous illustrations and demonstrating how the 'sister arts – poetry, painting and gardening, or the science of landscape' combined to make a building and landscape setting that was sublime, painterly and Picturesque.

Walpole's *History* was the first attempt to chronicle the evolution of gardens and played a significant role in the development of landscape aesthetics.<sup>2</sup> In it he claims the 'natural style' of garden as indisputably English, a claim that has distorted perceptions of garden history down the centuries.<sup>3</sup> He attributes the beginning of the naturalistic style to John Milton's description of the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost* (1667) as the first garden laid out in the English Landscape style and he heaps praise on William Kent as Milton's successor in his ability to envision pictorial qualities in landscape, declaring in what has become one of the most famous quotations in garden history, 'He leaped the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden'.<sup>4</sup> Walpole's influential essay, based on the theories of Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Alexander Pope (1688-1744), is contemporaneous with the construction and expansion of Strawberry Hill.<sup>5</sup>

#### Nature and informality – Addison, Pope, Vanbrugh, Kent

Pursuit of nature and rejection of formality became essential tenets of English garden style. Theory and practice of landscape painting played a significant role in development of garden aesthetics. Theories, expressed in Addison's *Spectator* essays, including 'The Pleasures of the Imagination' (1712) and Pope's *Epistle IV. To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington: Of the Use of Riches* (1731), endorsed 'the simplicity of unadorned nature'. Pope, in his *Guardian* essay (1713)<sup>6</sup> severely criticised Baroque layouts as stylised, uniform and geometrical with planting severely manicured into architectural forms, with elaborate fountains, water features and very formal statuary. Promoting irregular beauty through his poetry, Pope became one of the main proponents of respecting 'the Genius of the place', advocating style in garden design that worked with nature rather than imposed geometrical patterns. John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) was an early promoter of informal landscape and the associative quality of ruins through their link to history, connections with painting and their picturesque appeal to the senses.<sup>7</sup> At Blenheim, Vanbrugh prefigured the Picturesque in the fusion of landscape, architecture and the appeal of ruins. For the composition of a particular scene (towards Woodstock Manor) he advocated principles of landscape painting – the

use of light and shade, perspective and the appropriate disposition of objects – as a focal point sympathetic to the natural contours. In an oft-quoted memorandum to the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough he petitioned for the retention of the old ruined manor, 'So that all the Buildings left, (which is only the Habitable Part and the Chapell) might Appear in two Risings amongst 'em, it wou'd make One of the Most Agreeable Objects that the best of the Landskip Painters can invent'.<sup>8</sup>

Pope and Kent did much to promote the new taste for informal landscape, introducing eye-catcher buildings with scenographic qualities and iconographic meaning. The transition from Baroque to informal naturalistic landscape was complete by mid-century parallel to a similar progression in architecture with Classical Palladian replacing Baroque. However, the progression was not linear, and both large and small irregular landscape parks and gardens existed side-by-side with formal gardens throughout much of the period.

#### Strawberry Hill and Walpole's choice of Gothic

Not everyone followed prevailing fashion and Horace Walpole flouted current taste creating a Gothic villa in a complementary landscape setting: 'As my castle is so diminutive, I give myself a Burlington-air, and say, that as Chiswick is a model of Grecian architecture, Strawberry Hill is to be so of Gothic'.<sup>9</sup> Strawberry Hill, however, was no forerunner of archaeologically correct nineteenth-century Gothic Revival. Rather, Walpole chose Gothic for its associative connotations, as a means of expressing an idealised past where the context evokes a Gothic 'cloistered' experience through a structured essay in associative thought (fig 1). Strawberry Hill is a prime example of an associative, autobiographical site, where the man, the 'little Gothic castle' and the landscape are inextricably linked. Expressing the views, ideas and opinions of the self-styled arbiter of taste on landscape aesthetics, taste and culture, the landscape is a personal story. His statement in the *History*, with its implied criticism of contemporary professional landscape designers, sets out his ethos: 'In general it is probably true, that the possessor, if he has any taste, must be the designer of his own improvements. He sees the situation in all seasons of the year, at all times of the day. He knows where beauty will not clash with convenience, and observes in his silent walks and accidental rides a thousand hints that might escape a person who in a few days sketches out a pretty picture, but had not the leisure to examine the details and relations of every part'.<sup>10</sup> Walpole's landscape would be in contrast to the building and would enhance 'the gay variety of scene' which he had singled out for praise in Pope's garden. He exclaims in a letter to Horace Mann, a diplomat at the court of Florence with whom he corresponded for 40 years, "'You suppose my garden is to be Gothic too!'" That can't be; Gothic is merely architecture; and as one has a satisfaction in imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one's house, so one's garden, on the contrary, is to be nothing but riant, and the gaiety of nature'.<sup>11</sup>

It is first necessary to understand the cultural significance of the suburban villa in relation to Walpole's occupancy for part of the year. Far from dynastic seats of ostentatious display, the villa was a pleasurable retreat from the city and a place of retirement from public life and of enjoyment and relaxation for the owner and his circle; at Twickenham, Walpole, like Pope before him, was at leisure to indulge his theories on garden design at his semi-rural retreat on the banks of the Thames. Walpole's own words best describe his delight on acquiring

# STRAWBERRY HILL

'I am going to build a little Gothic Castle', declared Horace Walpole as he began work on Strawberry Hill.

Marion Harney considers the history of the house and its garden, one of the greatest Picturesque ensembles.





1. Richard Bentley, 'View of Strawberry Hill', 1753 watercolour. 2. William Pars, 'View of Richmond Hill and Mr Pope's House from the Terrass at Strawberry Hill', 1772 watercolour.

the small house at Strawberry Hill and it is interesting to note that from the outset he enhanced the pastoral scene of his 'little new farm' by purchasing sheep of a particular hue and he describes the picture in art historical terms as a 'study', with the prospect, not the building, as the most important feature.

'The house is so small, that I can send it to you in a letter to look at: the prospect is as delightful as possible, commanding the river, the town and Richmond Park; and being situated on a hill that descends to the Thames through two or three little meadows, where I have some Turkish sheep and two cows, all studied in their colours for becoming the view'<sup>12</sup> (fig 2).

Documentary evidence points to elements being designed by Walpole as soon as he acquired the five acre site, taking advantage of the natural topography and exploiting its borrowed prospects. Chosen for its proximity to the River Thames, 'an open country is but a canvas on which the landscape might be designed'. By 1753 Walpole had acquired more than 14 acres, begun to Gothicise the house and to introduce structural planting to frame the villa: 'the living landscape was chastened or polished, not transformed' by screening unwanted views, concealing buildings and prospects that interfered with the larger picture and creating new vistas and borrowed views where desirable.<sup>13</sup>

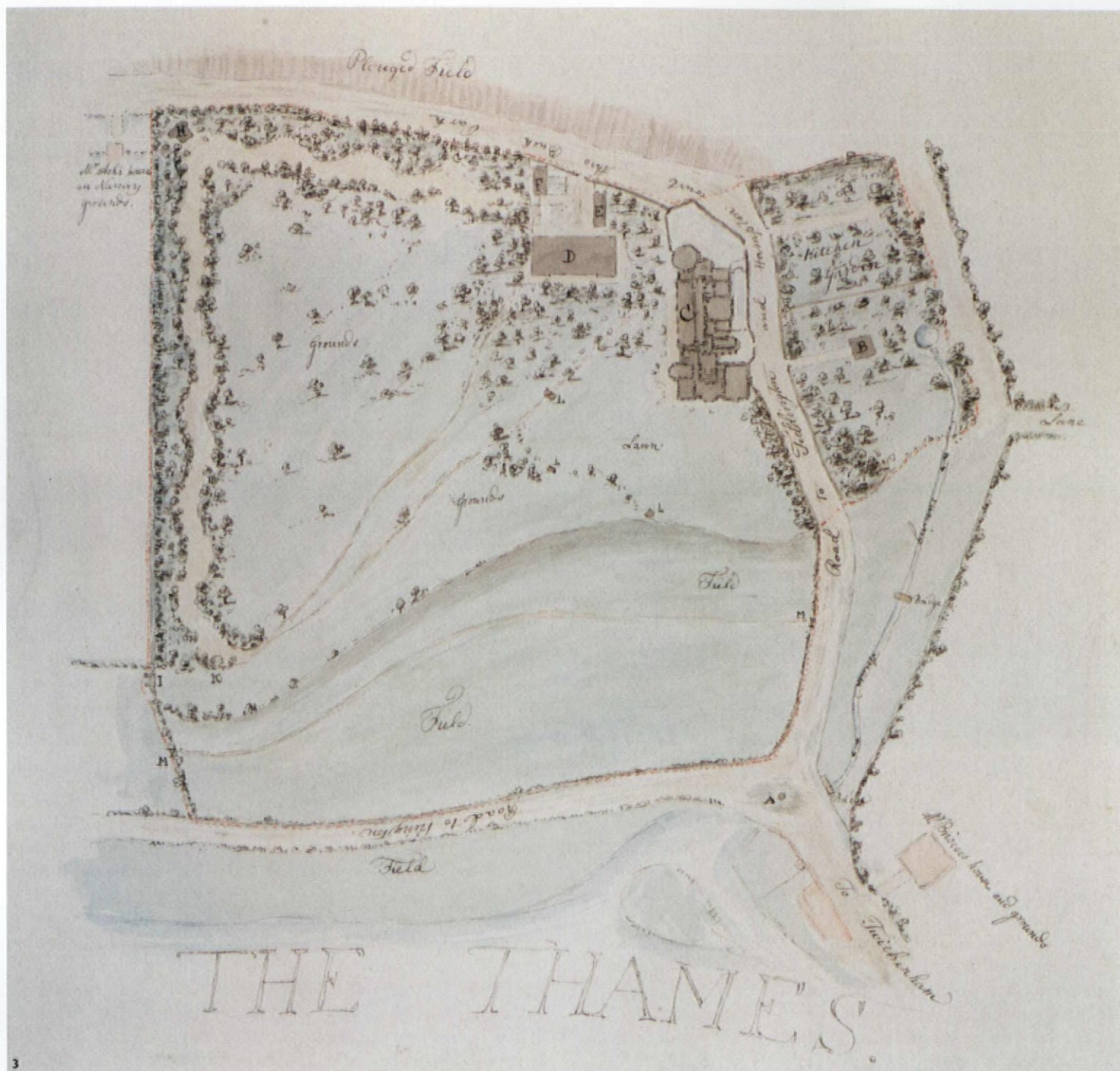
Walpole wrote to Mann again in 1753 enclosing a plan of the site drawn by Bentley (now lost) when he had expanded the house and most of the designed landscape was in place. The later estate plan (c1793) illustrates the completed garden and is useful for reconstructing what would have been a delightful picturesque fusion of naturalistic gardening and the informality associated with Gothic architecture (fig 3). The only significant work to the topography of the site was the construction of a natural terrace to take advantage of the borrowed prospect into the surrounding countryside.

'The enclosed enchanted little landscape, then is Strawberry Hill ... This view of the castle is what I have just finished, and is the only side that will be regular.'<sup>14</sup> Directly before it is an open grove through which you see a field which is bounded by a serpentine wood of all kind of trees and flowering shrubs and flowers. The lawn before the house is situated on the top of small hill, from whence to the left you see the town and church of Twickenham encircling a turn of the river, that looks exactly like a seaport in miniature. The opposite shore is a most delicious meadow, bounded by Richmond Hill which loses itself in the noble woods of the park to the end of the prospect on the right, where is another turn of the river and the suburbs of Kingston as luckily placed as Twickenham is on the left; and a natural terrace on the brow of my hill, with meadows of my own down to the river, commands both extremities. Is this not a tolerable prospect? You must figure that all this is perpetually enlivened by a navigation of boats and barges, and by a road below my terrace, with coaches, post-chaises, wagons, and horsemen constantly in motion, and the fields speckled



2





with cows, horses, and sheep. Now you shall walk into the house ...' (fig 4).<sup>15</sup> This commentary is interesting as it suggests Pope's influence in 'Consulting the Genius of the Place' to have been of primary importance and the building seems a secondary consideration. When Walpole insists in the History that the 'chief beauty of all gardens, prospect and fortunate points of view', and, 'animated prospect, is the theatre that will always be the most frequented', he obviously had Strawberry Hill in mind. All the ingredients of Pope and Addison's theories are here, irregularity of natural landscape, borrowed views, spontaneity, movement and constant variety in the scene.

#### **Walking the circuit**

The eighteenth-century visitor would have first viewed the picturesque Gothic castle from the road: 'the approach to the house through lofty trees, the embattled walls overgrown with ivy, the spiry pinnacles, the grave air of the building, give it all the appearance of an old abbey'.<sup>16</sup> Monastic and religious medieval associations increased as the visitor approached the Oratory and the Abbot's or Prior's garden

seen through a Gothic screen. For privacy and security Walpole screened the house from the Teddington Road with an embattled wall in keeping with the Gothic character of the building (fig 5). The wall also enclosed and sheltered the Prior's Garden taking the form of a Hortus Conclusus, an enclosed medieval garden with deep historical and biblical associations (fig 6). Imaginatively, references to the 'Prior's' garden would have set the scene for the Gothic interior (fig 7). They also fulfilled Walpole's stated preference for an 'old fashioned' formal garden near to the house for reasons of convenience, a methodology later adopted by the 'father of modern gardening' Humphry Repton (1752-1818).<sup>17</sup> Walpole believed isolating the house was a 'defect': 'Sheltered and even close walks in so very uncertain climate as ours, are comforts ill exchanged for the few picturesque days that we enjoy: and whenever a family can purloin a warm and even something of an old fashioned garden from the landscape designed for them by the undertaker in fashion, without interfering with the bigger picture, they will find satisfaction on those days that do not invite strangers to come and see their improvements'.<sup>18</sup>





3. Anon (attributed to Walpole) 'Plan of Strawberry Hill', c1793. From *A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole*, 1784 (Walpole's extra illustrated copy), A, Oblique. B, Cottage. C, Gothic Mansion. D, New Offices. E, Greenhouse. F, Printing house. G, Iron-gate. H, Chapel. I, Gothic-gate. K, Shellbench. L, Common Bench. M, Common Gate.

4. J. H. Muntz, 'View of Twickenham from Strawberry Hill', c1758. From *A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole*, 1784 (Walpole's extra illustrated copy).

5. J. C. Barrow, 'West view of Strawberry Hill', from *A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole*, 1784 (extra illustrated copy owned by Richard Bull).

6. Engraved by Godfrey after Pars, 'View of Prior's Garden at Strawberry Hill'. From *A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole*, 1784.



narrate a moral story. Walpole also used associative, emblematic and iconographic elements to create pictorial effects that were carefully contrived to evoke 'moods' in landscape. The interior of Walpole's villa juxtaposed classical artefacts with Gothic and he used the same approach in the garden using elements which he appreciated for their poetic, metaphorical and philosophical associations. The visitor would have glimpses and alternating views of landscape outside the garden and various architectural elements, structures and planting. The Gothic gate was the first medieval incident encountered, 'Strawberry is in the most perfect beauty, the verdure exquisite, and the shades venerably extended. I have made a Gothic gateway to the garden, the piers of which are of artificial stone and very respectable.<sup>19</sup> The round tower is finished and magnificent; and the state bedchamber proceeds fast – for as you must know the little villa is grown into a superb castle' (fig 8).<sup>20</sup>

The Gothic style of the gate connecting the garden, through association, to the castle, embattled wall, Prior's Garden, and other structures, the Chapel in the Woods and the later collegiate Gothic of the New Offices. The chapel came next in the sequence and sat sombrely in woods in the south section of the circuit surrounded by weeping willows and other melancholic planting (fig 7). Classical artefacts encountered on the circuit included a 'large antique sarcophagus in marble, with bas-reliefs', and 'two ossuary' recalling, through associative meaning, episodes from the classics and Arcadian landscapes.<sup>21</sup> The allusion to classical antiquity and literature and themes of love and transformation are evident in placing 'the sleeping Morpheus in plaster', and 'Bernini's Apollo and Daphne<sup>22</sup> in bronze', characters from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as the next scenes.<sup>23</sup> The 'extraordinary large brainstone', in contrast, provokes thoughts of rusticity and Walpole's interest in antiquarian studies. The next episode was the oak Shell bench designed by Bentley and based on Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* which was oriented to the River Thames and surrounding landscape.<sup>24</sup> The visitor emerged, after experiencing a series of contrasting scenes, moods and episodes, associative incidents and character areas, with an increasing sense of theatre, into the dramatic expanse of the spacious Open Grove where the walk terminated and where perspective views of the villa provided the closing sequence (fig 9).

### Colour, scent and the creation of moods

The creation of moods was particularly essential for evoking emotional response, and Addison refers specifically to the romance genre and its

Visitors would have then participated in a guided tour by the housekeeper (or Walpole himself if they were important enough) of the antiquarian contents of the interior, eventually emerging, after experiencing a series of Gothic spaces, from the 'gloomth' of the monastic interior with an increasing sense of history, into the 'greenth' of the garden. Exiting through the Great Cloister, an open, arched outdoor room which functioned as the connection between the interior and exterior, the viewer would meet the expansive views of the sweeping Great Lawn, Open Grove, and Serpentine Wood.

Walpole created a series of character areas linking discrete but interrelated features by a sinuous path that wended its way around the southern and western extremities of the site, connecting the buildings to the furthestmost features in the landscape. He frequently refers to walking his 'circuit' suggesting that it was designed to be experienced in a particular sequence. Dense planting concealed each episode from the next and added the essential components of intricacy, variety and surprise. The serpentine path gave opportunities for framed pictorial compositions as well as giving the illusion of an unending journey, while the poetic incidents gave at the same time the opposite impression of small-scale, seclusion and intimacy and possibilities for reflection and contemplation. The gardens projected by Pope followed the classical literary tradition in using art, architecture and idealised landscape as a background for narrative which would set the scene, as in a theatre, against which to illustrate an episode from antiquity or



associational qualities. 'In short, our Souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion, and we walk about like the Enchanted Hero of a Romance, who sees beautiful Castles, Woods and Meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling of Birds, and the purling of Streams; but upon the finishing of some secret Spell, the fantastick Scene breaks up, and the disconsolate Knight finds himself on a barren Heath, or in a solitary Desart'.<sup>25</sup>

This quotation encapsulates Horace Walpole's view of the world and his imagination in constructing Strawberry Hill as architecture of association where he could live out his fantasy while observers would reflect on the character of the man and his links to British history.

Walpole employed visual effects and used spatial devices to give a series of differently framed views and picturesque episodes. As visitors made the winding walk they continually had parallaxic visions of the Gothic castle, experiencing oblique glimpses and encountering multiple perspectives of the southern and eastern facades through sparsely planted trees and clumps grouped in the manner of Kent to add interest and break up the wide expanse of lawn. Walpole singles out the invention of the ha-ha for particular praise as the 'capital stroke' which enabled the garden designer to carry out Pope's poetical vision of 'calling in the country' and this device was employed on the southern perimeter boundary to separate unobtrusively the designed landscape from the fields and woods beyond.<sup>26</sup> Wherever Walpole had to erect fencing for practical purposes he used simple rustic materials and screened them with planting.

The selection of planting for evoking moods was an essential tool of eighteenth-century gardeners and Walpole would have used poetic principles to make transitions from 'gloomth', with enclosed, dense evergreen, emerging into open spaces of contrasting light and shade. In a letter to Montagu in November 1755, Walpole describes how planting could be picturesque; 'above all cypresses which, I think, are my chief passion: there is nothing so picturesque when they stand two or three in a clump upon a little hillock or rising above low shrubs, and

particularly near buildings. There is another bit of picture of which I am fond, and that is, a larch or a spruce fir planted behind a weeping willow, and shooting upwards as the willow depends. I think for courts about a house or winter gardens, almond trees mixed with evergreens, particularly with Scots firs have a pretty effect, before anything else comes out; whereas almond trees, being generally planted among other trees, and being in bloom before other trees have leaves, have no ground to show the beauty of their blossoms'.<sup>27</sup>

Walpole describes the feeling engendered by experiencing colour, inhaling scents and their capacity for triggering his imagination, 'I am just come from the garden in the most oriental of all evenings, and from breathing odours beyond those of Araby. The acacias, which the Arabians have the sense to worship, are covered with blossoms, the honeysuckles dangle from every tree in festoons, the syringas are thickets of sweets, and the newcut hay of the field in the garden tempers the balmy gales with simple freshness while a thousand sky-rockets launched into the air at Ranelagh or Marylebone illuminate the scene and give it an air of Haroun Alraschid's paradise'.<sup>28</sup> Addison elucidates on this pleasure, 'Thus if there arises a Fragrancy of Smells or Perfumes, they heighten the Pleasures of the Imagination, and make even the Colours and Verdure of the Landskip appear more agreeable; for the Ideas of both Senses recommend each other, and are pleasanter together, when they enter the Mind separately: as the different Colours of a Picture, when they are well disposed, set off one another, and receive an additional Beauty from the Advantage of their Situation'.<sup>29</sup> Walpole frequently mentions the 'pleasure of lilac, jonquil and hyacinth season' and lilacs are one of the most mentioned species in his correspondence<sup>30</sup> as one of his chief passions declaring, 'I came hither yesterday, and am transported, like you, with the beauty of the country; ay, and with its perfumed air too. The lilac-tide scents even the insides of the rooms'.<sup>31</sup> The River Thames plays a significant philosophical, emblematic and ideological role in Walpole's choice of site as it flowed through Twickenham, associated as it is with British history and culture, Parliament, the heart of London and Windsor Castle.<sup>32</sup>

Walpole was influential in the Picturesque movement; 'Every journey is made through a succession of pictures' and this applied to natural scenery and landscaped gardens alike.<sup>33</sup> Although some might argue that there was little coherence to his designed landscape, it is apparent Walpole consciously used the principles of landscape composition and associative theory to good effect in that each distinct element suggested a particular association. At Strawberry Hill he articulated the earlier theories of Vanbrugh, Addison and Pope, drawing them together in *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, adhering to Pope's statement that, 'all gardening is landscape painting', composing picturesque scenes and episodes and applying painting techniques to naturalistic landscape design. *The History* influenced gardening internationally and the concept



7. Engraved by Godfrey after Pars, 'A View of the Chapel in the Garden at Strawberry Hill'. From *A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole*, 1784.  
8. Edward Edwards, 'Gate at Strawberry Hill'. From *A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole*, 1784 (Walpole's extra illustrated copy).  
9. Paul Sandby, 'Strawberry Hill from Southeast', 1769 watercolour.







of designing for a particular place, mindful of topographical qualities, borrowed views, and inherent character of a site. Together, Pope's precept of 'genius of the place' and Walpole's 'spirit of the landscape,' led directly to the later Picturesque theories of William Gilpin (1724-1804), Uvedale Price (1747-1829), Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824) and Humphry Repton. MARION HARNEY

Marion Harney is Director of Studies MSc Conservation of Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes University of Bath, and she would like to thank Professor Vaughan Hart and Dr Michael Forsyth for their help in the preparation of this article.

1. All quotations are from *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (1771), New York: Ursus, 1995.
2. In some respects, Walpole's book distorted perceptions of garden history through his insistence that the English garden style had reached its epitome at the time he was writing and that it was a purely English phenomenon, with no foreign influences – a perception that historians are still trying to rectify.
3. His polemic linked the development of the 'English Taste in Gardening' with the British constitution and the notion of political liberty enshrined within that constitution. Walpole's patriotism is politically motivated and he discounts foreign influences, disparages the notion of antecedents and classical precedents, insisting on English national Whig credentials.
4. Kent was the most prolific and well known garden designer of the early eighteenth century.
5. Walpole does not develop his own theory; instead he expands and reinterprets earlier theories and is responsible for disseminating them to a wider audience. As with *Anecdotes of Painting*, his *History* relies on research carried out by George Vertue whose notebooks Walpole purchased from his widow.
6. 'On Gardens', *The Guardian*, No 173, 29 September 1713, published in *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope*, Ault, N. (Editor), Oxford (1936), pp145-51.
7. For a full explanation of Vanbrugh's interest in association in landscape see Hart, V., *Sir John Vanbrugh: Storyteller in Stone*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
8. 'REASONS OFFER'D FOR PRESERVING SOME PART OF THE OLD MANOUR' of 11 JUNE 1709' sent to the Duchess of Marlborough. Transcribed from British Library Additional MS 61353, nos 62-63, Appendix 1, p252, Hart, V., *Sir John Vanbrugh: Storyteller in Stone* (2008).
9. Walpole consistently used the term Grecian to denote Classical architecture.
10. *History*, p58.
11. Correspondence, H. W. to Mann, 27 April 1753, Vol 20, p372.
12. Correspondence, H. W. to Mann, 5 June 1747, Vol 19, p414.

13. *History*, p45.
14. The view, also lost, was of the south side towards the north-east with the picturesque villa and the River Thames juxtaposed to demonstrate their proximity.
15. Correspondence, H. W. to Mann, 12 June 1753, Vol 20, p380.
16. Ferrar, J., *Tour from Dublin to London in 1795 through the Isle of Anglesea, Bangor, Conwy ... and Kensington*, Dublin, 1796.
17. Humphry Repton was delighted by Strawberry Hill and admired Walpole's *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, remarking that although Walpole claimed to be writing a history, 'in his lively and ingenious manner', Walpole had given, 'both the history and the rules of art better than any other theorists'. *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, London, 1803, p160. Repton also advocated 'specialised gardens' which he referred to as 'episodes'.
18. *History*, p50.
19. The piers, designed by James Essex, were copied from the Tomb of Bishop Luda.
20. Correspondence, H. W. to Mann, 11 June 1771, Vol 23, p311.
21. A description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole, 1784, p84.
22. Walpole would have seen this in the Galleria Borghese, Rome, during his Grand Tour with the poet Thomas Gray 1739-41.
23. The placement of the Bernini sculpture as an incident in the route surrounded by laurel undoubtedly reminded visitors of the fate of Daphne who metamorphosed into laurel to escape her pursuer Apollo.
24. Aphrodite in Greek mythology, linked to the themes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for she too was similarly 'transformed' on the shore at Paphos, Cyprus.
25. Addison & Steele, *The Spectator*, Vol 3, No 412, 24 June 1712, Smith, G. (Ed.), London: Dent, 1963, pp283-4.
26. *History*, p42. The haka is a sunken ditch forming an invisible boundary so as not to interrupt the view. Despite Walpole claims that it was an English innovation, it originated in France and the technical aspects were described in Dezallier d'Argenville's *La théorie et la pratique du jardinage* (1709).
27. Correspondence, H. W. to Montagu, 8 November 1755, Vol 9, pp177-178.
28. Correspondence, H. W. to Montagu, 10 June 1765, Vol 10, p156.
29. Addison & Steele, *The Spectator*, Volume 3, No 412, Monday 23 June, 1712, Smith, G. (Ed.), London: Dent, 1963, p282.
30. Correspondence, Cole to H. W., 16 May 1782, Vol 2, p318.
31. Correspondence, H. W. to Conway, 21 May 1784, Vol 39, p411.
32. Although beyond the scope of this article, Windsor Castle (where Walpole lodged prior to purchasing Strawberry Hill) and the River Thames are significant to the development and design of his own Gothic Castle and landscape.
33. *History*, p56.

Illustrations courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.



# IDEAS FOR LONDON

This summer's London Festival of Architecture featured two urban design workshops which examined the potential of two 'lost' quarters in London. As with the 2006 Biennale which examined Farringdon (AR September 2006), developers were invited to join design teams and demonstrate a range of skills to those who might need them and to encourage new collaborations. Both the Euston Road and Somers Town, on the northern fringe of the Central Activities Zone, and Southwark's Guy's Hospital site, need urban design attention. These are the ideas of the developer/architect teams who took part. Historical information was provided by Alan Baxter Associates and the workshops were organised by Lee Mallett and Roger Zogolovitch with help from Jeremy Melvin.

## Somers Town

Deprivation in Somers Town ranks highly on the national scale. Crime, unemployment and ethnic tensions have heightened problems in the neighbourhood, claustrophobically sandwiched between two main London termini.

Considering its prime location, this bottled-up deprivation would be inexplicable were it not for the fact that Camden Council owns nearly all of Somers Town and has promoted one economic class there – the poor. The council is struggling to produce 'sustainable'

lives for its occupants on typically limited resources. The underlying value and quality of the asset is considerable and would, in normal circumstances, help to underwrite the resources required. If a private landlord owned and operated this neighbourhood in this way, would we be happy? Can Camden take advantage of the improvements being made by the developer Argent around King's Cross?



the area is neglected despite its centrality

Create a place where the community and commuters live, work and recreate together



1. 3000 new trees in Somers Town
2. Introduce the best pedestrian and cycle environment
3. Make more of Chilton Street and Drummond Street Markets
4. Create a new central public space in Somers Town
5. Integrate three of the most important train stations in the UK
6. Re-connect Somers Town
7. Turn the estates into diverse neighbourhoods

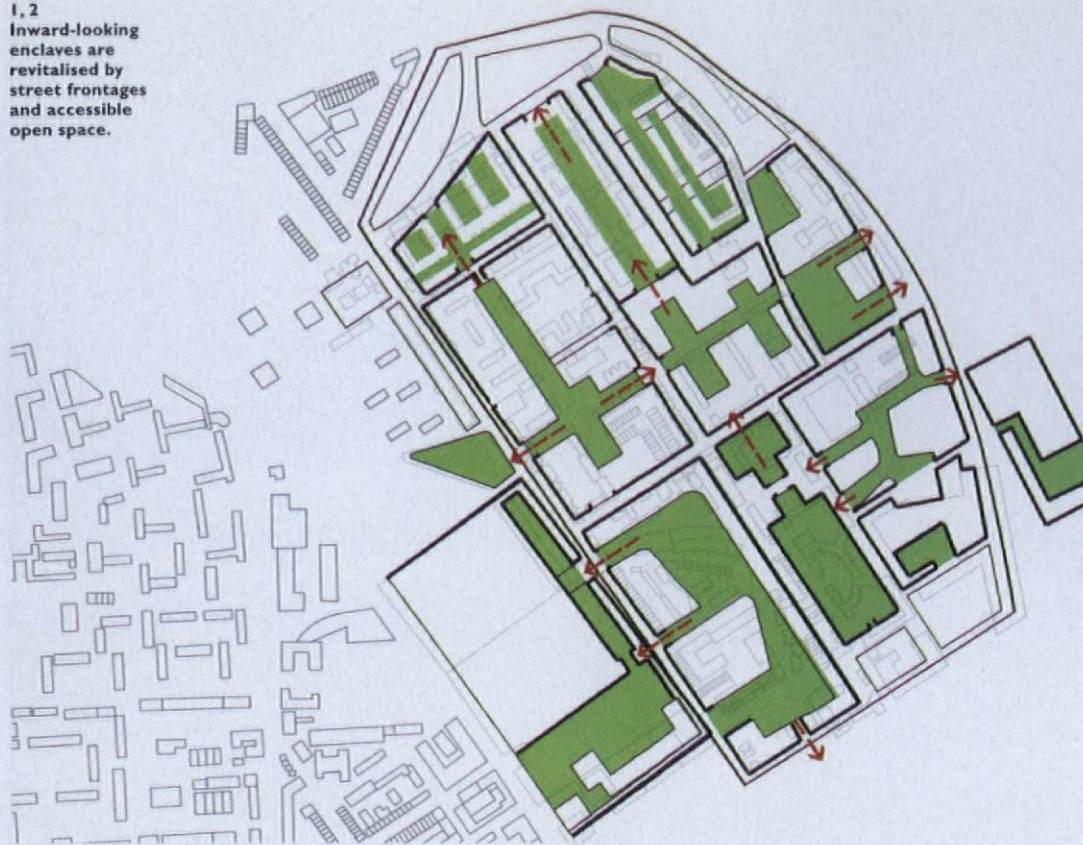
### IVG Asticus with Farrells and IDEA Architecture

Seven propositions aim to rediscover, reveal and reconnect the area, encouraging new diversity so creating a more balanced community. The context for these was to break up the broad swathe of London deprivation contained in mono-cultural council estates that run along the north side of Marylebone and Euston Roads, and further east alongside City Road.

In Somers Town itself, new shared surfaces would help to prioritise pedestrians and cycles, while the planting of 3000 new trees, the reanimation of local markets in Chilton Street and Drummond Street, a major new central public space and the reconnection of the area to its stations would help bring new life and banish Somers Town's self-imposed isolation.



1, 2  
Inward-looking  
enclaves are  
revitalised by  
street frontages  
and accessible  
open space.



reconnecting the townscape

## Manhattan Loft with S333

S333 and Manhattan Loft also picked up on the 'enclave urbanism' idea. Harry Handelsman made an impassioned plea for a more mixed community as a way of encouraging investment and improvements.

S333's vision works at two scales and two speeds, exploiting the Euston Station transformation and Wellcome's proposals for a bio-medical centre north of the British Library. A larger-scale transformation of the public realm and development opportunities with a slower procurement, as well as smaller and more rapid transformation – of street frontages that don't address the street and preclude individualism, or spaces that neglect users – could define new points of interest. These would encourage clusters of activity, based round the grid and enclave. A growing synergy between living and workspace and local and city-wide investment would result.

1, 2







### Argent and Farebrother with FLACQ, and with Mossessian & Partners/Le Consortium UK/New Patrons/Space Syntax

Argent and mid-town property consultant Farebrother worked with two teams of designers. FLACQ's brief was to look at interventions on the Euston Road that would impact on Somers Town, learning from set pieces like Nash's Regent's Park Crescent and Farrell's Tottenham Court Road/Euston Road ideas.

Get rid of the sterilising bus concourse in front of the station, make more of the gardens around St Pancras church on the south side, perhaps remove some buildings on the south side in exchange for a higher density

development that would help to create a new Euston Square Gardens spreading over the Euston Road, increasing north-south connectivity.

And why not tear down the walls around the British Library's piazza, and showcase the library with a new bookshop, café and events building on the prominent south-west corner of this underused space.

Mossessian & Partners worked with French public art consultants and Space Syntax to find ideas that would unravel the 'labyrinth' of Somers Town.

Somers Town is imprisoned behind the physical barriers of Euston Road and the stations. Socially, it has a strong but insular community. Translating these

values to new developments could benefit both new and old. Economically high-density development in Somers Town could raise values in the area and provide additional housing.

Some sort of 'mediation' is needed between these issues, hence Mossessian's work with its partners to promote a new approach to public art, commissioned by residents, which responds to their needs.

The work might resolve an architectural/urban design issue

or address a social tension – but the collaboration involved opens up the lines of communication that enable things to happen. A vital function.

Micro-scale interventions to improve the public realm included canopies and wider pavements on Chilton Street.

3, 4, 5  
The Mossessian approach unlocks the Somers Town 'maze'.

6, 7  
FLACQ open up both sides of Euston Road as new places.

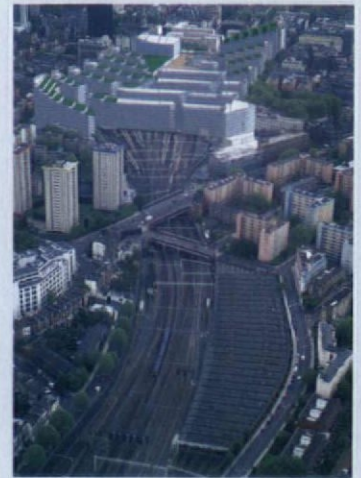




## Sydney & London Properties with Atkins Global

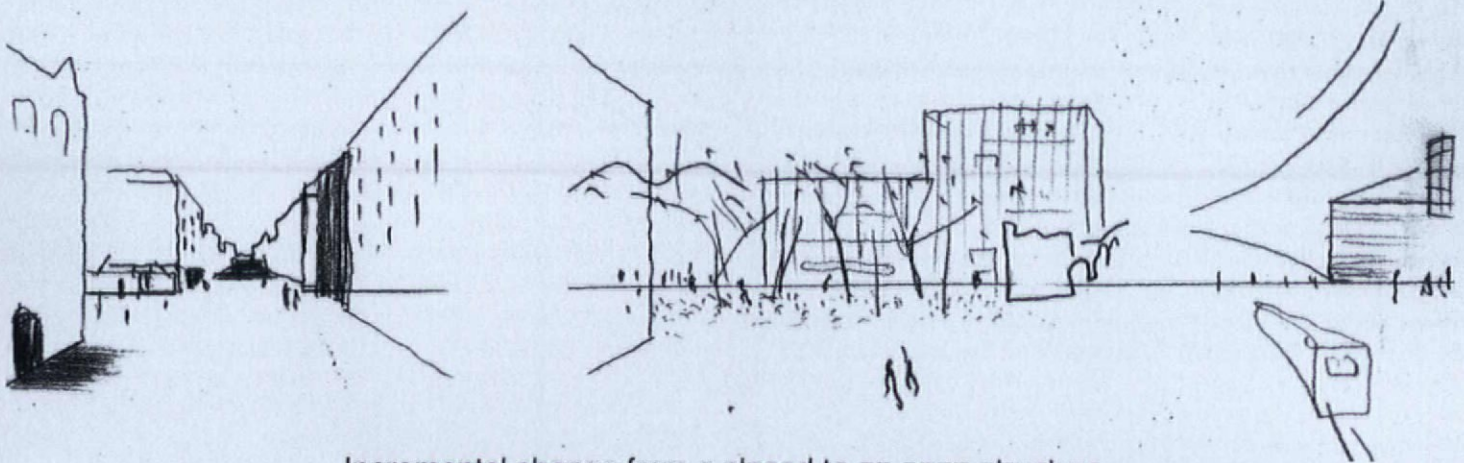
Speaking of greater potential, like British Land, this Cardiff-based investor/developer has a vested interest in Euston Station. It owns the buildings which now front the station and is pursuing with Atkins a vision for its total redevelopment. A regimented series of large glazed mixed-use blocks and spaces sits astride the length of the station, with terraced green roofs, either side of a central public realm.

It would be interesting to see how this mega-scheme could be used to generate improvements in the surrounding areas.



8, 9  
Gigantic block structures march along the rail route.

In its present hubristic form its hermetic international character would generate value (if there was any development finance about), but precisely how would it enhance the sustainability of Somers Town?



Incremental change from a closed to an open structure

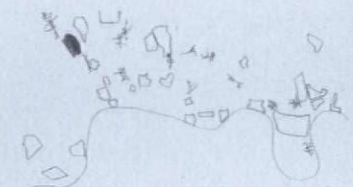
## CORE (City Office Real Estate) and Witherford Watson Mann

The enclave is London's DNA – the capital is, romantically, a collection of 'villages'. Somers Town was a contemporary of neighbouring Camden, Kentish and Penton, but its identity became trapped between scything railway viaducts and the Euston Road.

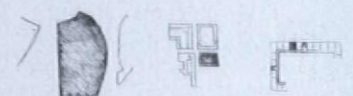
This 'enclave' character is transmitted to the built form at the smaller scale of block and apartment. In fact, we all live in various scales of enclaves.

How then to begin to erode the enclave's exclusivity to restore connectivity? Modest interventions at three scales – the plot, the street, the edge – carried out in careful consultation might win support. At the plot level, there is little external private space in Somers Town's courts and yards, so why not sacrifice some public space and divide it into private spaces for individual use – vegetable gardens, a paddling pool, a ping pong table – a more private sociability, relieving the enforced public regimen.

Two streets in the area, Chalton and Phoenix, already have some diversity and this could be encouraged, but kept focused spatially, with new workspaces and spaces for active play. It is the 1970s housing schemes on the northern and eastern edges that most reinforce the enclave. 'We'd ask if it isn't time to remove a few blocks with care, opening up Chalton Street to Oakley Square, or to make a proper route through Polygon Road to Goods Way and the new public spaces at King's Cross,' say WWM.



Enclave London



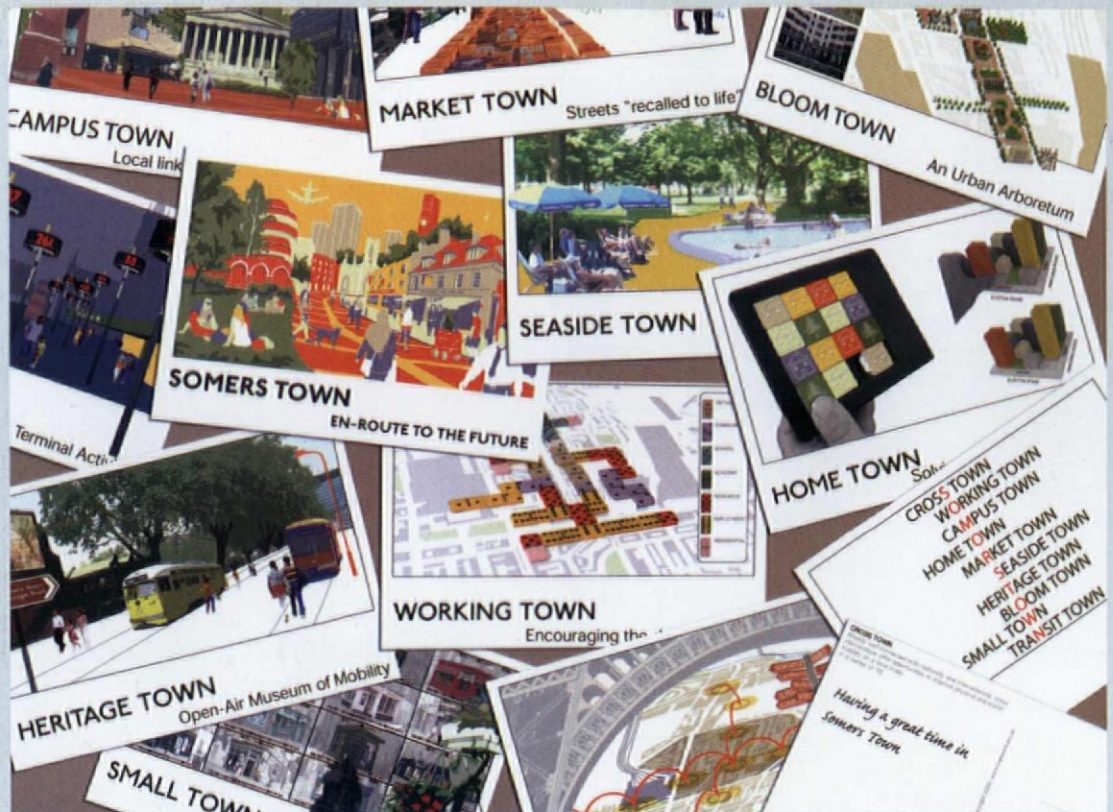
Enclave design at 3 scales



## British Land with Metropolitan Workshop

British Land is Network Rail's preferred bidder on the redevelopment of Euston Station, with Foreign Office Architects, and will have to negotiate planning permission with Camden. This exercise with Metropolitan Workshop was a useful dry run.

Ten themes that might inform a future masterplan, stemming from its historical, physical and social characteristics, were developed – CroSs Town: making the most of the area's unbeatable connections to improve social mobility; WOrrking Town: complementary adjacent land uses to stitch the area back into the city's fabric, helping the transition from school to higher level, to research and then employment; CaMpus Town: a science-based academy to link UCL, the Wellcome Trust and local schools; Home Town: in an area where 75 per cent of housing is social-rented, mixing tenures is essential; MaRket Town: encourage footfall from the stations using markets; SeaSide Town: build a lido!; HeriTage Town: ... or an open-air museum celebrating transport heritage; BloOm Town: ... and an urban arboretum running through the area; Small ToWn:



corners (of which Somers Town has 315) should be used for shops, not CCTV; TraNsit Town: get the stations on Euston Road to make more of a statement about the destinations and origins of travellers using a light installation on the Euston Road displaying the numbers of people arriving in the capital.

10  
etropolitan Workshop  
explore the potential parallel  
lives of a vibrant new London  
quarter.

11



## RTKL

International practice RTKL, unhindered by a developer partner, were required to imagine how the global development community might respond to Somers Town in the absence of local residents and planning restrictions. Their scheme resembled Foster + Partners' 1990s rejected designs for Rosehaugh Stanhope's King's Cross scheme – a large central green space with surrounding blocks of mixed-use development.

11  
RTKL make one big move to  
transform the existing.

The central space hooks together three main routes of desire that drive this location – to the east, St Pancras/King's Cross as the point of embarkation for European centres; central London to the south, via the entrance to Euston Station; and Camden town centre and Regent's Park to the north-west.

A valuable exercise in dispensing with politically-correct nostrums and a reminder of the necessity to contemplate the iconoclastic before you can verify a site's real potential.



Guy's Hospital is owned by a National Health Trust and has commissioned BDP to explore possible improvements to the estate. The hospital has occupied the site for 500 years during which time it has become disintegrated from the surrounding Southwark hinterland, exacerbating the barriers between the rest of Southwark and the river.

Access to the Shard and a new London Bridge Station, the river and the City, through the recreation of more pleasant north-south routes at grade, could restore Southwark's historic relation to the north bank's larger economy and help extend the regeneration Tate Modern has catalysed.

# Guy's Hospital



the site is complex and little known by most landowners



12

## Solid Space with Toh Shimazaki Architecture and ORMS

The obvious response to the arrival of the Shard is to increase density at Guy's, which already contains its own distinctive tower, and to generate more elevated space for the hospital while clearing the ground for a more useful public realm that serves Southwark better.

Toh Shimazaki and ORMS wanted to reflect the increasingly 24-hour activity around the station and the hospital, helping to reinvent a seamless health service that enables patients to move from GP surgery to diagnostics and treatment much more quickly, threaded into the medieval street pattern in higher-rise buildings.

Restored permeability and a 24/7 environment will be accommodated in a 'forest' echoing the primeval woods now submerged in Southwark's boggy tidal flat, acting as a beacon for the site at ground, rail and higher levels, distinguished by its canopy of trees and towers poking up through the canopy. Beneath it patients can walk and enjoy the environment, above, looking out over London as they convalesce.



13

12, 13  
The new element in the urban landscape is Renzo Piano's 'Shard' tower.





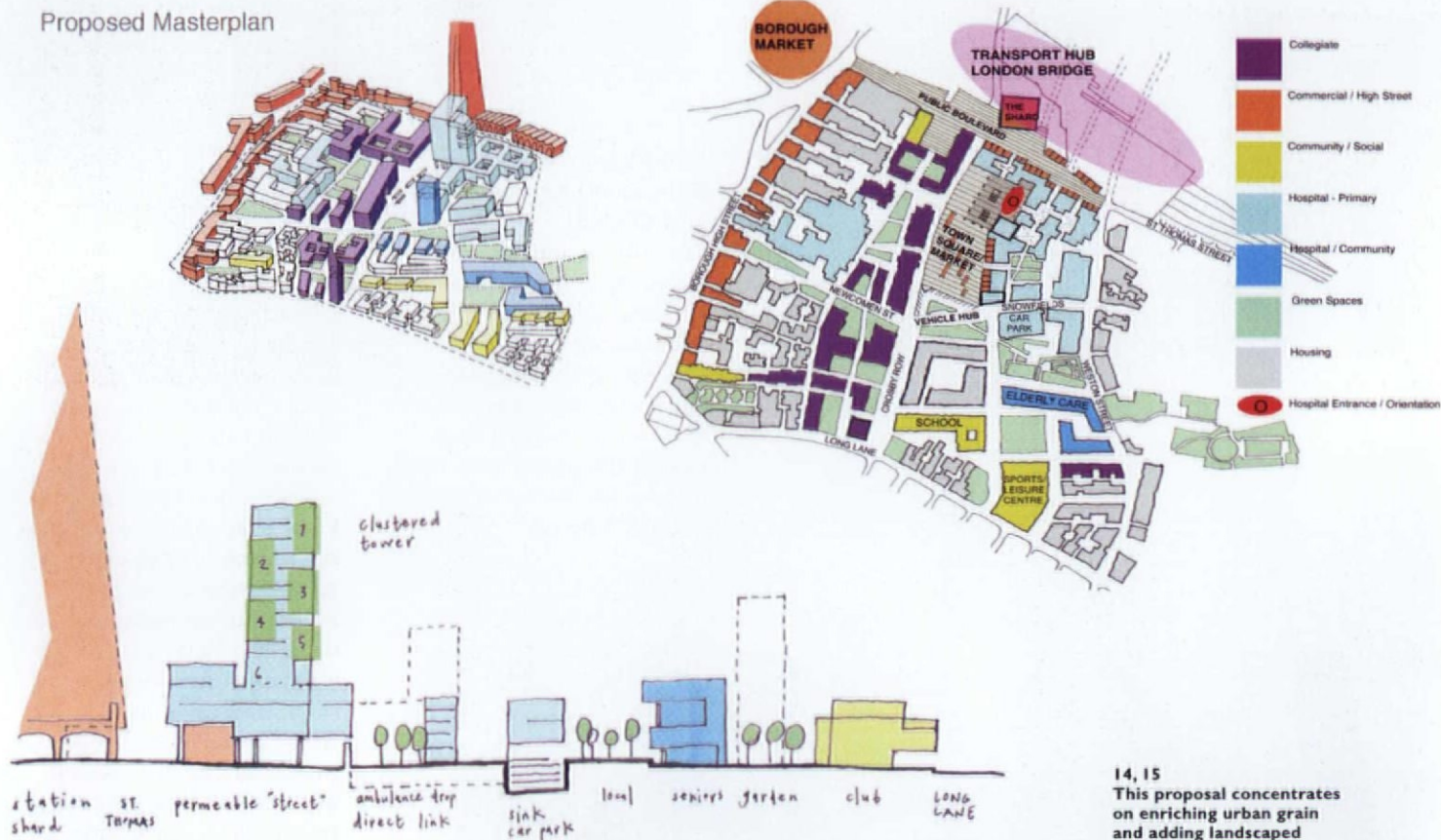
14



15

### Proposed Masterplan

#### Proposed Masterplan



14, 15

This proposal concentrates on enriching urban grain and adding landscaped public space.

#### Site Section

### Dorrington with DSDHA and Glenn Howells Architects

Guy's can be the catalyst which repairs and revitalises this part of the city, as part of a wider urban grain that links special places and green spaces across south London between Tower Bridge and Bermondsey, to the

western edge of Waterloo.

The 'urban yards', the former coaching inns, on Borough High Street, where pilgrims gathered before travelling in groups to Canterbury, inspire this team's approach to humanise Guy's spaces and places.

Three key public spaces define a masterplan. The existing

collegiate gardens articulate a new identity for King's College while a new town square becomes the arrival and market square of the hospital, and a recuperative square is created at the southern end of the site as a focus for older people's housing and amenity for schools on Long Lane.

This new permeability is extended up Guy's Tower, focused on preventative care in the community, with vertical gardens carved into the tower. A humanised public realm transforms the area through incremental change.



## Cathedral Group with AHMM

AHMM and Cathedral asked what the future of healthcare might look like and who will be Guy's users 50 years from now. On current trends you'll be 99 before you check out, which suggests a new approach to healthcare is needed.

Also Guy's is very much a part of the central London property market so it seems perverse to ignore potential land values. AHMM's scheme extracts resources from Guy's transformation into a new and vibrant enclave for a rave generation of oldies.

Gynaecologists, dentists, dispensing chemists, ear, nose and throat specialists are moved into a new 'health' mall next door at the foot of the Shard. If you need extra servicing (anaesthetic supplied), take the dedicated hospital train to a new and efficient low-rise hospital in the Thames Gateway, releasing the rest of Guy's for further capital-generating uses.

The listed element of Guy's can become a 'prestige' apartment block for Saga ravers who prefer to party-out their autumn years close to healthcare that'll keep them up for it, while shopping on nearby Borough High Street.

It's unlikely that consent for a block like Guy's Tower would ever be granted again so AHMM keep it for its ugly oddity and property values and give it a radical makeover, as they do with the reopened routes through the site. History is bunk and why go quietly?



16

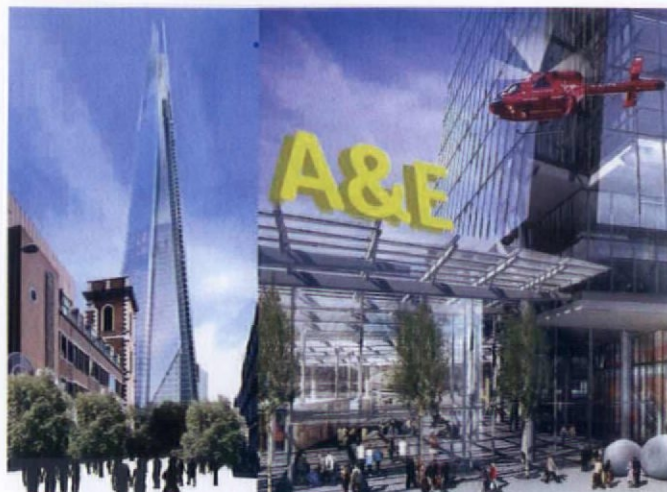


17

16, 17  
The hospital as residential accommodation.

18, 19  
New images for a mobile NHS.

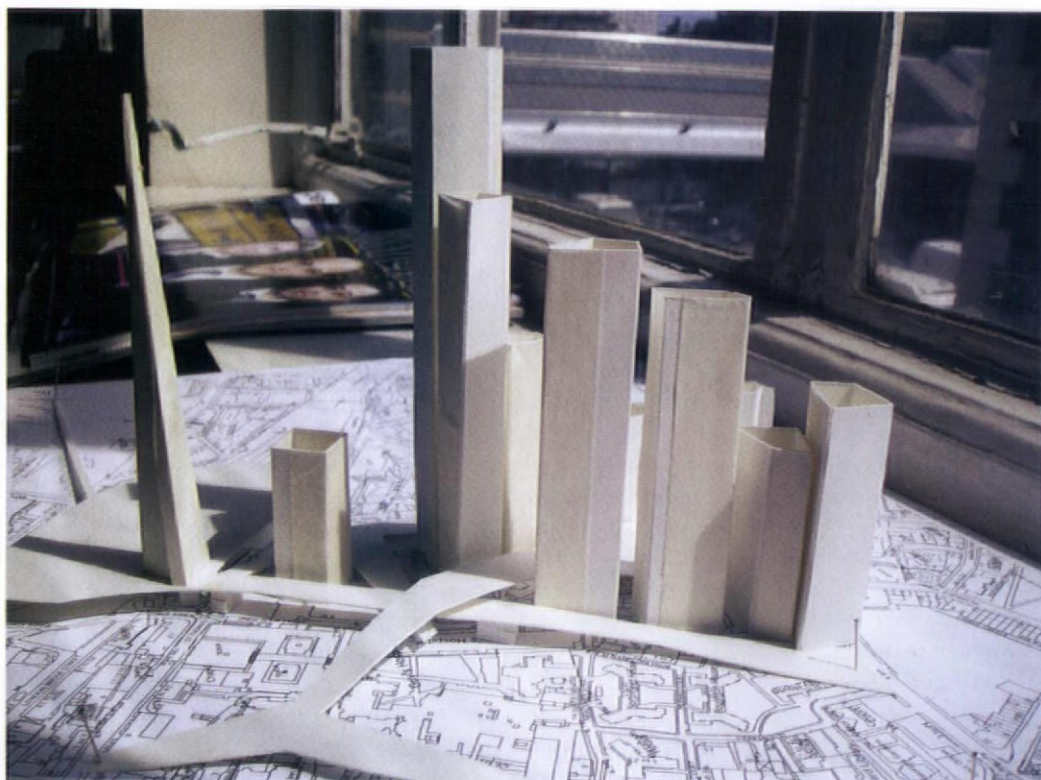
20  
Density in new high-rise buildings is balanced by horizontal connectivity.



18



19



20

## First Base with Carl Turner Architects and SpaceCraft Architects

A site as large as Guy's with thousands of workers is a major urban generator of activity. A new angular interweaved three-dimensional ground plane of greened public realm, reflecting lines of desire, provides dramatic elevated pleasant routes for Guy's workers and locals amid a denser cluster of slender towers.

The increased density delivers greater value enabling the concept. A north-south route immediately to the rear of the Borough High St western site edge would draw shoppers into Guy's, while diagonal south-east, north-west routes, and one north-south to London Bridge and the river would connect Southwark's hinterland to the burgeoning South Bank, dominated by the Shard.



Why, someone is sure to ask every so often, doesn't the UK housebuilding industry take a leaf out of the books of their colleagues in the construction industry, and apply the lessons of an integrated approach to land assembly, design, procurement, construction and marketing which has served office developers like Stanhope so well? The answer, of course, is that until very recently private sector housing has been – literally – a cottage industry, focusing on greenfield sites at relatively low densities.

Urban housing was traditionally seen as the preserve of the public sector, with a few notable exceptions like Urban Splash and St George; provided in recent years by RSLs (Registered Social Landlords), sometimes in consort with private developers, who have tended to reinvent the wheel for each successive site – perhaps understandably, given the memories of aggressively marketed system-building in the 1960s.

Enter First Base, a company with Stanhope genes in its lineage, which saw no reason why the savings in construction cost and delivery time, and increases in quality secured in the commercial sector should not be achieved in housing too, given an equivalent analysis of the product. Enter, too, AHMM, commissioned by First Base to undertake an R & D study which would deliver such an analysis. This formed the basis for a successful bid for English Partnerships' LWI (London-Wide Initiative) scheme, which provides sites in regeneration areas for 'key worker' housing.

At Adelaide Wharf, roughly half of the flats are allocated on this basis, with market sale and RSL rent splitting the rest. But the basis of their

finance is radically different from the 'shared equity' norm. Instead of purchasing a proportion of the leasehold, and paying rent on the rest, purchasers effectively get a flat for half the market price, and recoup a progressively increasing proportion of the added value on resale, up to a maximum of 60 per cent by the sixth year. English Partnerships reinvests the remainder: a virtuous circle, provided property prices do not ... er ... fall – although in fairness the opening of the East London Line extension is likely to produce a real increase in values, rather than an inflationary bubble.

AHMM's studies examined structural and facade systems for blocks ranging from four to 12 storeys. At six storeys, Adelaide Wharf could accept a wide range of options, but volumetric construction was rejected in spite of the practice's earlier experience with Raines Court for the Peabody Trust. This makes sense. However ingeniously you stack the boxes, in multi-storey construction they inevitably end up as fixed-plan units with deck access. And it costs money to transport air.

So the chosen construction system is effectively a hybrid, capitalising on prefabrication where it offers real advantages. Bathroom pods for factory quality finish. In-situ wide span slabs with blade columns to give maximum planning flexibility. And room-width, storey-height cladding panels – effectively curtain walling with an added skin of vertical larch strips between windows disguising the panel joints. Result: a scaffold-free site with a bespoke Design and Build GMP (Guaranteed Maximum Price) contract period of just 20 months.

Fast track construction delivery, then, but how about the second strand of the 'Stanhope way': quality? AHMM's chosen building typology – a

# A CLASS OF ITS OWN

This housing development in East London will be the subject of a seminar, hosted by the AR, which will be filmed, edited and made available on the web in the New Year. Readers are invited to submit questions or comments for discussion at the seminar ([julia.dawson@emap.com](mailto:julia.dawson@emap.com)).

## THE PARTNER

First Base was one of three development partners English Partnerships selected to work with on the London-Wide Initiative (LWI), a government-backed scheme which enables key workers to buy their own homes.

They immediately struck me as an innovative and creative partner and I was keen to see how and what they would deliver. With the land value being invested in the scheme and section 106 planning obligations approached on a partnership basis, Adelaide Wharf gave First Base the opportunity to think quite broadly in terms of the creative quality of the scheme.

As the first scheme to be completed under the LWI, Adelaide Wharf definitely had an important role to play and I think ably

demonstrates that affordable housing schemes do not need to compromise on design. The relationship between affordable and private housing was well thought through, with matching specifications for private and LWI units and only minimal modifications for the Registered Social Landlord social housing.

Taking into account the relatively constrained nature of the site, the balance between the development and open space is particularly well-conceived. At the official opening of Adelaide Wharf, the then Minister for Housing, Yvette Cooper MP, described it as 'both beautiful inside and outside' and I think the courtyard and children's playground can take much credit for the 'outside'.

The joint-venture approach also delivered a high level of sustainability, with complex installations such as the centralised heating plant system

contributing to the development achieving the government's EcoHomes rating of 'Excellent'.

Fundamentally, Adelaide Wharf achieved the aspirations for LWI. Targeted and creative marketing by First Base resulted in all 41 affordable units being sold to key workers within 48 hours.

It has also created more than 600sqm of affordable work space. Such an element may have been resisted in the normal negotiations concerning a development of this nature but, from the outset, English Partnerships saw LWI creating more than housing.

Based on all the positive commentary received on its completion, it is no surprise that the project has gone on to win two prestigious RIBA Awards.

STEPHEN OAKES,  
ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS



1  
Hung balconies provide an instantly recognisable signature for the development.





## THE ARCHITECT

An understanding of the impact of time on architecture underpinned all our work on Adelaide Wharf. It affected our strategies in concept and detail and I hope it will inform the theatre of the building's daily life.

Programme suggested the radical reworking of the parameters of an existing planning consent. The desire to achieve strategic design flexibility in terms of tenure and flat types defined the simple stacking strategy, the step-backs to the ends and the provision of three tenures: private, shared ownership and social. Importantly the architectural expression is 'blind' to this.

Time informed the detail strategy. To speed up delivery the building employs standardised roll-out reinforcement while its blade columns allow for future as yet unimagined adaptations. Consideration of time (and quality) informed the decisions to go to Grays in Essex for kitchens, Poland for bathroom pods and the Czech Republic for the cladding. The desire to 'lose' the joint in the unitised panel, itself necessitated by time, suggested the use and staggering of the larch boarding adding depth, shadow and material richness to an industrial process.

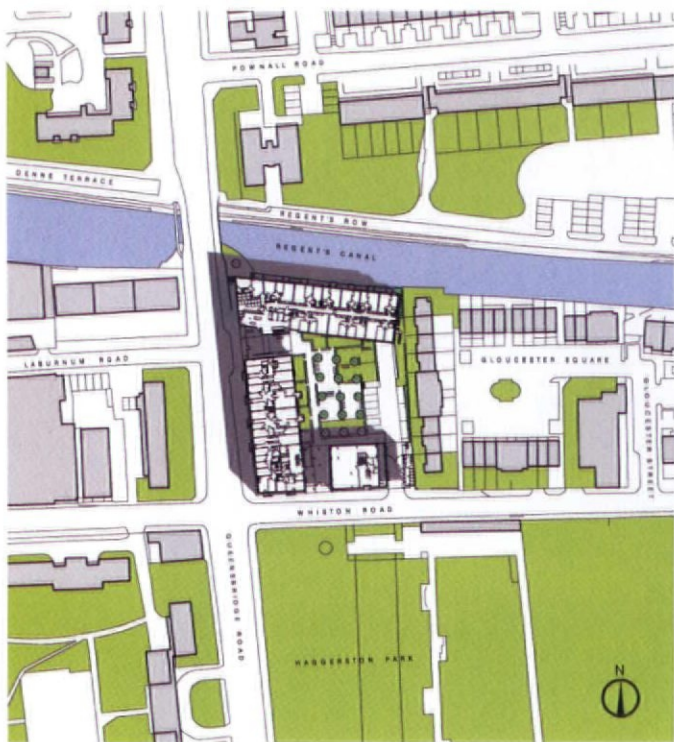
Time savings on site helped fund the super generous balconies; an expression of the shared commitment to adding volume and amenity to the ambitions of quality execution and best case space standards. The fact that the unitised cladding can carry no load and requires unobstructed installation further assisted the case for hanging the balconies.

So an awareness of time as a design parameter served the architecture well in consideration and construction. I also believe that the resulting design and layout will further heighten the residents' awareness of the pleasures of time passing: as the light moves from street to court, from entrance cut to unfolded staircase, and from the interior world of the apartment onto a private yet publicly celebrated balcony. But the building is only a year old, so only time will tell.

SIMON ALLFORD,  
ALLFORD HALL MONAGHAN MORRIS

2, 3  
The courtyard elevations are 'blind' as to form of ownership, part-ownership or tenancy.





the private block faces north onto the canal; the social housing is south-facing

'tenure blind' linear block with internal corridor access and single aspect flats – cannot be faulted for sheer efficiency of provision. It means that the craned-in, rooftop-mounted boiler can serve heat-exchangers to individual flats through risers along the corridor, and that the stair and lift clusters are economically distributed. However, with a quarter of the block 'social' rented, and of these mostly three-bed family units, this configuration flies in the face of received management wisdom; though fortunately the RSL flats are not 'pepperpotted' throughout the block, which would have made for an operational nightmare.

The original planning consent for the site showed a lumpen perimeter building, facing the Regent's Canal on the north, a busy road to the west, a large park across an equally busy road to the south, and much lower development to the east. AHMM have rationalised this into a U-shaped block with the open side to the east (and increased the number of units in the process). Market sale flats front the canal, key worker flats fill the west side and the rest of the north side, and rented flats take up the south side. Each corner knuckle houses lifts and stairs; one set serving the market/key worker residents, the other, RSL tenants.

Corridor access is mitigated by the clear glazing at each end; side and roof lighting to the stairways, with a particularly clever staggered flight stair to the private flats (freely acknowledged as a steal from Lubetkin); high quality carpeting; specially commissioned wall coverings to the stairwells, and a generous width to the corridor itself. This last feature worked well for recent private developments by Glenn Howells and Lifschutz Davidson. Whether it will do so for the RSL flats is a matter for conjecture. A recent visitor found children playing cricket in the corridor: although there is the park across the road, parents are understandably reluctant to let their children cross busy traffic to play.

The high quality detailing and finish of the common parts is carried through into the design of the individual flats. These are as 'tenure blind'



two-bedroom, market, 67sqm



three-bedroom, private, 90sqm



one-bedroom, market, 44sqm



one-bedroom, affordable, 47sqm



two-bedroom, affordable, 66sqm



as the entrenched attitudes of the RSL partner would allow. Inevitably, the architects' proposal for top quality wood floors throughout was vetoed by Family Mosaic in their flats (as were fitted kitchen appliances) in favour of carpet, on 'maintenance' grounds; disregarding the fact that a floor which can be ground down six times is bound to be more cost-effective than carpet (the wood block floors at the Golden Lane estate are still going strong after 50 years).

However, equal standards are maintained in kitchens, bathrooms, ironmongery, planning and space provision; and, in particular, the balconies, hung from gantries taking the load back to the blade columns. At first sight, this is a bit of self-indulgent structural whoopee. In fact, it is the first attempt to rethink an iconic feature of the Modern Movement since its pioneers tacitly admitted this was the one area where you could have a little decorative fun.

Recessed or cantilevered, balconies have always been prone to restricted depth, water penetration, thermal movement, cold bridging and structural failure. By taking the load externally, and pin-jointing the units to the cladding panels, all these problems are resolved; really generous areas are freed up for residents' use, and flat plan variations are unhampered in a highly elegant solution, both structurally and visually. Like the double-height entrance areas and the multicoloured postboxes, they're jolly, they're colourful and they work.

It's an interesting package. AHMM and First Base have put together an intriguing suite of propositions about the typology of urban housing, and the way it could be most efficiently delivered. Such rigour is unusual in the housing field, but it carries its own penalties. If, as seems likely, AHMM's model is taken forward on the Candy brothers' Chelsea Barracks site, something may well have to give, and the first casualty could be the externally imposed notion that housing typologies are universally applicable across all tenures, household structures and income groups. And not before time, maybe. STEPHEN MULLIN

*Questions and comments for further discussion at the seminar: [julia.dawson@emap.com](mailto:julia.dawson@emap.com)*

#### Architect

Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

#### Structural engineer

Adams Kara Taylor

#### Main contractor

Bovis Lend Lease

#### Photographs

Timothy Soar

## THE CLIENT

When we launched First Base our aims were, and remain, far-reaching and ambitious: we wanted to transform the way properties are built, marrying design with function, while creating balanced and sustainable communities. Adelaide Wharf presented us with a unique opportunity to showcase this innovative approach.

As with all of our schemes, design was instrumental to the development's success. We were determined to achieve consistently high standards of quality across the mix of tenures from key worker and socially rented to open market homes. And we believe the community created

at Adelaide Wharf proves that a truly mixed-tenure approach is the right solution for building homes in urban areas.

When we took on the scheme with English Partnerships, we both felt the approved plans for the site could not deliver against our vision for Adelaide Wharf. To address this challenge we worked with architects, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM), to go back to basics on a redesign, ensuring that it would not only maximise the number of homes but also create the right combination of shared spaces with cutting-edge sustainability standards. Our approach to working hand-in-hand with AHMM ensured that design was integrated into the plans from the very beginning.

In delivering this development we also wanted to bring forward new construction expertise. Taking lessons from the commercial sector, modern construction methods (eg. bathroom pods and unitised facade systems) were used, highlighting how effectively these techniques translate to the residential market. Adapting this innovative approach not only produced a consistent, high quality finish but also reduced overall development costs and delivery times by 20 per cent.

So what, specifically, makes the design special? For us, it is all about place-making and taking a broader view about the use of a building. Design is not just about how a development looks from the exterior; we must also consider

the layout of the apartments, the incorporation of natural light and the look and feel of the materials used. All of these factors contribute to how people now live and work at Adelaide Wharf.

There is also an important point to make about partnerships in creating exceptional design. Working with English Partnerships on the first London-Wide Initiative development has provided a unique opportunity to share our expertise – a model which we believe should play a key role in improving the future delivery of well-designed, sustainable homes and create more groundbreaking projects like Adelaide Wharf.

ELLIOT LIPTON,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, FIRST BASE



4

4  
The clever stairwell exploits light and views.

5

5  
Private units overlook water but are north-facing.







# reviews

## ENERGY AND OPTIMISM

### SAARINEN'S QUEST: A MEMOIR

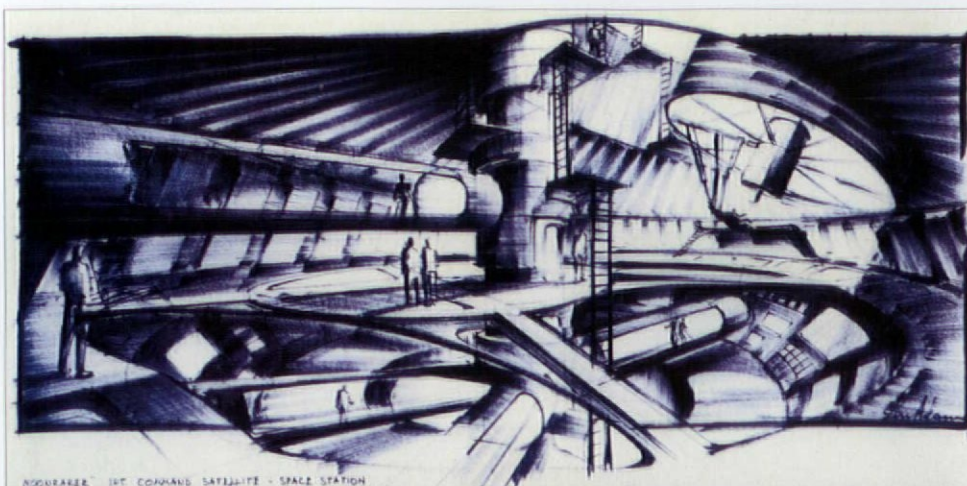
By Richard Knight. San Francisco: William Stout. 2008. \$40

Distinctions between the studio and the workshop are often difficult to define, but with their implied references to work of the individual and contribution of the group they are central to the descriptions of architectural practice. This book vividly outlines the differences and benefits of both that were fundamental in shaping one particular internationally significant practice. The work of Eero Saarinen, long overlooked by architectural scholarship because of an apparent felicitousness that resulted from preoccupations with the 'style for the job' and criticisms by Banham and others, has more recently attracted renewed attention. This book complements that focus by offering distinctly 'inside views' from an author who worked in the office at arguably its most creative and productive time.

Eero Saarinen's office, housed in a series of modest buildings close to Cranbrook in the wealthy Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills, was a powerhouse of ideas, invention and advanced design concepts. In the short time that he practised – less than a 15-year period terminated abruptly by his sudden death from a brain tumour – Eero Saarinen designed an extraordinary portfolio of work. Wright's book reveals the daily grind and obvious joy of working in an office where an incredible amount of new and highly innovative work was not only drawn by hand, but also developed by crossing back and forth between studio and workshop. The construction of prototypes tested ideas with large-scale models while provoking corporate clients to consider radically different materials, new ideas and experimental constructional systems.

Knight, an architect who was hired by Saarinen in 1957, was also an avid photographer, and in this book he combines insights and images in unpretentious ways to portray Eero, his extraordinary energy and commitment to design and the exceptional team he assembled. It was a team that also included Kevin Roche, Robert Venturi, Cesar Pelli, Anthony Lumsden, Glen Paulsen and Balthazar Korab to name just a few. This book provides a welcome glimpse of an inspiring way of working that successfully rekindles the extraordinary optimism of post-Second World War Modernism in America. At the same time it brings to mind the current workplaces of Foster, Rogers, Grimshaw and others who went to study in America as graduate students in the sixties, and were inspired by this formidable energy, optimism and enthusiasm.

BRIAN CARTER



Ken Adam became best known as the set designer for the James Bond series (pictured here: a set from *Moonraker*, 1979). But as a new book by Adam and Christopher Frayling amply demonstrates, his creative life began and continued beyond Bond. *Ken Adam Designs The Movies* (Thames & Hudson, £32 hardback) is a visual feast with concise anecdotal commentary. From *Dr Strangelove* to *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* to *The Madness of King George*, Adam's flair for visualisation suggests an architectural intelligence, while as designer for the first seven Bond films, he made his mark in a way unlikely to be repeated.

## POETIC ANALOGY

### TREVOR DANNATT WORKS AND WORDS

By Roger Stonehouse. London: Black Dog Publishing. 2008. £29.95

Few can claim to have played such a distinguished role in English architecture as Trevor Dannatt: sole survivor of the Festival Hall team, last secretary of the MARS Group, editor of the *Architects' Year Book* and much else. He even played a vital role in preventing Wren's Royal Naval Hospital falling into the hands of the private sector. This book records and analyses his fifty years of practice.

The nature and thoughtful quality of Dannatt's work is clear from the sections into which this book is organised – running from Hearth, Domestication and House through to Worship, Institution and Exhibition. Each is preceded by a short essay followed by building summaries. In addition, there are introductory essays by Roger Stonehouse and Dannatt and a section containing the latter's writings.

Scattered throughout this book are quotations from a passage in T. S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' – part of which, in his 1969 RIBA lecture, Dannatt used to summarise his approach to architecture. Referring to this passage, Stonehouse writes, 'There can be no more precise a description of (Dannatt's) intentions in bringing an architectural/technical order to his buildings, to the whole and to the parts, nor of the order and propriety he seeks ...'

Eliot's *Four Quartets* – of which 'Little Gidding' is part – draws on a musical analogy and it is

intriguing to see it now applied to architecture. Just occasionally, this application seems to over-complicate Dannatt's designs. But there are plenty of exceptions. Among these, the shop for Primavera (1955) was magical in its simplicity; the setting for the Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Whitechapel (1958) was brilliance on a shoestring; and the mosque in Riyadh (1975) embodies a rare spirituality.

This book is a timely celebration of a distinguished body of work. It is also a reminder of a gentler age in which, from very modest beginnings, a small office could work to a huge variety of briefs, crafting work of real quality and providing settings which have enriched the lives of many. And it differs from so many current monographs in that it is not a means for practice promotion but an exposition of a particular line of thought. PETER CAROLIN

## DOMESTIC QUALITIES

### THE NEW MALAYSIAN HOUSE

By Robert Powell. Photographs by Albert Lim. Singapore: Periplus Editions. 2008. \$49.95

Robert Powell has led many lives. Having started out as an architect in the north-east of England he moved to Singapore in the 1980s and became a lecturer in the National University of Singapore (NUS). He then drifted into writing and served as an editor of *Singapore Architect* before going on to write more than twenty books on architecture in South-East Asia.

In 1992 he was asked by Lena Lim, the proprietor of Select Books, a radical bookshop and publishing house in Singapore, to help her



produce a book on new houses in South-East Asia. This appeared in 1993 under the title *The Asian House* and was the first book to take a broad overview of new architectural developments across the region. It was an instant success and spawned a further five similar books including the much acclaimed *Tropical Asian House* of 1996. All six books focused exclusively on private single-family houses, a fact which Powell defends on the grounds that these act as a barometer for new architectural trends, and together featured more than a hundred projects in seven countries.

The books were designed by Ko Hui Huy who had early produced the radical layouts for Concept Media's Geoffrey Bawa monograph of 1986. Their appeal lay in the illustrations – expressive plans, all hand-drawn by Powell's NUS students and attractive photographs – and in the short and informative texts. In the early days Powell took most of his own photographs but he later relied more and more on a Singaporean photographer called Albert Lim.

The explicit illustrations made the houses accessible to non-specialists and the texts carried sufficient authority and information to satisfy professional and academic readers. The books helped to establish Singapore as a centre for architectural publishing and were important in kick-starting a debate about modern regional architecture in *Monsoon Asia*.

Bob Powell left Singapore in 2003 and returned to the UK, while Lena Lim sold Select Books in 2004 and retired from publishing: it seemed that there would be no more 'Asian House' books. But happily Bob has now returned to add a volume on recent Malaysian architecture to the stable. The publisher is new – Peripus Editions of Singapore – but Albert Lim is once again behind the lens. And some of the featured architects are familiar – Ernesto Bedmar, Chang Soo Khian, Kerry Hill and Jimmy Lim.

The new book has a larger format and is rather more slickly produced than its predecessors. Drawings, sadly, play a much smaller role – there are fewer of them and they're often quite small and difficult to cross-reference – whereas the photographs are more impressive than ever and are beautifully reproduced. The formula is unchanged: Powell begins with an introductory essay in which he sets the scene and offers a few critical comments about the present state of Malaysian architecture, before launching into a review of 25 projects, grouped under five headings.

The selected projects suggest that 'Singapore Sleek' still holds sway in suburban Kuala Lumpur where, with their usual professional élan, Bedmar, Chan and Hill are busy peppering the hillsides with super-elegant air-conditioned palazzi. The really interesting designs, however, come from a younger trio of architects, who

each seem to be experimenting, after their own fashion, with more eco-friendly ways to achieve comfort in a tropical climate: Lim Teng Ngiam's cascading terraces under delicately propped canopy roofs promise light and airy comfort; Kevin Low's 'Louvre Box' is a reworking of a traditional *kampung* house, while his 'mud houses' at Rawang use adobe walls under simple modern steel canopies; Ng Seksan recycles his old office and bachelor pad to create an intriguing town house for his growing family and builds an elegant jungle shelter to serve as their weekend retreat.

Once again we must thank Bob Powell for having ferreted out so many interesting houses for our delectation and for keeping us informed about what is happening in a faraway land. Which country will he turn to next?

DAVID ROBSON

#### STROKES OF GENIUS

##### PIETRO DA CORTONA AND ROMAN BAROQUE ARCHITECTURE

By Jörg Martin Merz. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 2008. £45

This is the first modern comprehensive monograph on this marvellous architect, equal in genius to Bernini and Borromini, though less well known. A beautifully illustrated work of massive documentary scholarship, it incorporates Anthony Blunt's draft for his own never completed book on Cortona. The importance to Cortona of his paper reconstruction of the ancient Roman Sanctuary to the Goddess of Fortune at Palestrina is stressed by Merz, author of a stimulating book of 2001 on its influence from Brunelleschi to the present day. Merz shows that this hillside assembly of terraces, ramps, and exedras, a piece of landscape architecture which it is still thrilling to visit, influenced designs by Cortona such as his Villa del Pigneto Sacchetti, Rome (1626). This terraced villa on a sloping site was ruinous by the late-seventeenth century, though was drawn by William Chambers in c1750 and inspired stage designs and architectural *capricci*.

His SS Luca e Martina (1634), one of the first curved fronts in Baroque Rome, has closely packed columns in the Composite order, probably in tribute to that of the adjacent Arch of Septimius Severus, a point not mentioned by Merz. His dramatic church of S Maria in Via Lata (1658) in the Corso, Rome, has a two-storeyed facade, each with an open loggia, the upper being a huge arch like an imperial box overlooking a circus, for this was a papal commission, the popes seen as successors to the emperors.

Cortona's S Maria della Pace has a semi-oval portico like a half-temple which influenced Wren, Archer, Gibbs, and, Merz tells us, the First

Church of Christ Scientist, Boston, Mass (1904-06). A gifted town planner, Cortona carried the facade on to the sides of the piazza-like boxes in a theatre, with streets approached through doorways resembling stage openings. As a painter, Cortona's masterpieces are the sensational ceiling of the Palazzo Barberini, seemingly open to the sky, and the Planetary Rooms in the Palazzo Pitti. Merz suggests that the success of this master of drama in architecture and painting was achieved through reliance on strokes of genius rather than on long-term development. DAVID WATKIN

#### THEORY AND PRACTICE

##### JOSEP LLUÍS SERT: THE ARCHITECT OF URBAN DESIGN, 1953-1969

Edited by Eric Mumford and Hashim Sarkis. London: Yale University Press. 2008. £30

Josep Lluís Sert (1901-1983) occupies an interesting position in the history of architecture and urban design. As a young man he attended the CIAM 2 meeting, held in Frankfurt in 1929. There, among others, he met Le Corbusier, Mies and Gropius and began an involvement with the organisation that lasted almost until its demise at the famous/notorious Otterlo meeting in 1959. He was its president from 1947 to 1956. Like so many of his contemporaries he followed a path from his European birthplace, Barcelona – where he was educated and began his architectural practice – to the United States. In his case the catalyst for the move across the Atlantic was Franco's victory in the Spanish civil war. Like many of the others he became a leading figure in architectural education in America. From 1953 to 1969 he was dean of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard. The present book derives from a conference and exhibition held in 2003 to mark the 50th anniversary of his appointment.

Like most records of conferences, the contributions here are diverse in content and quality. The emphasis is on Sert's work as both a teacher and practitioner of urban design. This is an original viewpoint and his architectural work is well covered elsewhere. Cumulatively, there is much interesting information and comment, although major themes remain more implied than revealed. It is disappointing that the relationship between the urban pedagogy of GSD and the contemporary debates – even battles – that were waged within CIAM are not explored in any real depth. As a younger generation – most particularly the members Team 10 – were challenging the founding principles of CIAM, Sert could be represented as fighting a rearguard action from Harvard. The structure of the courses he developed and the series of conferences that he organised proposed an implicit alternative to the emerging ideas of



## reviews

the young Europeans. Sert occupied a unique position in the midst of all of this and it would have been useful if this had been explored. The tenor of the book is surprisingly uncritical in the light of the wider debates regarding urbanism that have preoccupied both pedagogy and practice in the quarter of a century since Sert's death. His realised urban projects are described in generally admiring tones, with no attempt to revisit them in the light of more recent perspectives. DEAN HAWKES

### OVER HERE AND THERE

#### ARCHITECTURE AND THE 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP': THE AMERICAN INFLUENCE ON POST-WAR BRITISH ARCHITECTURE

By Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr. London: Routledge. 2008. £55

I enjoyed this book: it takes a very positive view of the United States, and its influence on the United Kingdom, and is fair about the influences that this country had on the States. The authors clearly enjoy both places. There is a long bibliography, they have done their homework, the book is well balanced and objective, and well edited. It is a must for architectural libraries.

Of course, it is particularly enjoyable as a history of the immediate past, dealing with a period that one has oneself lived through. The only criticisms I have are fairly minor ones: my memory of Reyner Banham is that he respected Colin Rowe, as did Rowe Banham; they were each careful about the other, and were seen as the poles of a dialectic: Banham strong on empirical facts, Rowe perhaps unduly sensitive to architectural form. Rowe's influence was largely due to the importance he gave to theory, about which Banham was disdainful. I enjoyed Banham's use of the Moulton bicycle, but also liked the way he learned to drive a car in order to thoroughly understand Los Angeles. The book has a stunning photograph of Banham riding his small cycle across the dry bed of a lake in California.

In dealing with the important influence of Llewellyn Davies, Fraser ignores the vital role played by John Weeks. He was the designer in that office; his hand is evident in the building for London Zoo and the hospital at Northwick Park, and it was he who went to the US to look for models for a planning grid premised on the car. Milton Keynes is the most successful of all the New Towns, probably because of its situation halfway between London and Birmingham.

There is plenty of fascinating detail. Did you know that Berthold Lubetkin had a statue of Lenin (a bust, perhaps?) erected in London;

then quietly dismantled it and buried it under an Islington school playground?

The most successful aspect of the book is the way it deals with the Smithsons, and their search for perennial values, in the wake of Louis Kahn. Considering how their influence evaporated after the Economist Building, there is a tragic aspect to their loss of commissions, and this section of the narrative I found quite moving. Denise Scott Brown took Peter's remark that Port Grimaud is almost all right, and came up with Main Street is almost all right, and she has been a feisty influence on Robert Venturi all through. On the other hand, the search for perennial values is still strong, as can be seen in the quiet work of David Chipperfield, Tony Fretton and Eric Parry, none of whom gets a look-in here. In dealing with an ongoing story, you have to draw the line somewhere. ROBERT MAXWELL

### DUTCH COURAGE

#### THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONTINUITY

By Lars Spuybroek. Rotterdam: V2/NAi Publishing. 2008. €18.50

Here is a book by a contemporary Dutch architect-theorist that, unusually for this genre, slowly makes its way towards some kind of intelligible conclusion. It comes in the form of Spuybroek's uncharacteristically clear announcement that he is 'one hundred per cent Digital Arts and Crafts', believing that similar motivation, thought and effort to those which craftsmen once applied to the construction of buildings should now be used in devising and experimenting with digital architecture.

The rest of the book is in effect a description of how he arrived here, because it consists mainly of essays and interviews published over the last 10 years strung together in the approximate order of their original appearance. It's a problematical format for a manifesto like this: first, it tends to repetition, as Spuybroek says much the same thing to different (although, one imagines, similar) audiences of European groupies, in that Frankenstein dialect of architecture teacher-theorist offshore English that looks as if it ought to make sense but actually conveys very little. You can pick out the ideas and some of them are very strong ones – the suggestion that a building can have the innate dynamism of a dancer, for example – but you have to work harder to get there than the actual complexity of the argument justifies. Second, the colloquial nature of interviews encourages short, anecdotal asides that do little to help the author present a disciplined, structured argument; it's too tempting to go off and say something clever or simply to recall an experiment that worked or went wrong,

Unsurprisingly, his paper models with their strippy, strappy tentacles or their soggy crystals are good enough to make his points better and there, rather than in the words, one understands what he is saying about structure and ornament.

Revealing, though, for British readers of this book is the engaging sense of astonishment when Spuybroek encounters the Gothic Revival and its aftermath: hence the remark quoted above and his subsequent observation that he 'can't see anything wrong' with Ruskin. Indeed; but this only comes about because Europeans are apparently taught about someone called Semper instead of Pugin and the Gilbert Scotts.

TIMOTHY BRITAIN-CATLIN

### EXEMPLARY RECORD

#### THOMAS HOPE: REGENCY DESIGNER

Edited by David Watkin and Philip Hewat-Jaboor. London: Yale University Press for The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts. 2008. £50

Thomas Hope (1769-1831) was one of the major figures in the Arts of Regency England, and this sumptuous and massive book at last does justice to his life and work (although Watkin pioneered twentieth-century appreciation of Hope in his *Thomas Hope and the Neo-Classical Idea*, decently published by John Murray in 1968, regrettably with only black-and-white illustrations). Hope was central to English manifestations of Neo-Classicism, and was himself interesting as a writer, as a collector, as a designer, and as a patron: now, in this ravishingly beautiful volume, where splendid and plentiful colour-plates demonstrate Hope's astoundingly robust taste, we can appreciate the originality and inventiveness of this cosmopolitan and civilised virtuoso as never before.

Hope designed two remarkable houses for his own collections. At Duchess Street, Portland Place, London, he altered and enlarged (1799-1804 and 1819) a building designed by Robert Adam (1728-92), adding a picture-gallery decorated in a Neo-Classical style, a sculpture-gallery, another picture-gallery in the Greek style, a Hindoo Room, an Egyptian Revival Room (with furniture in an extraordinarily powerful Graeco-Egyptian style designed by himself), a Flaxman Room to show off works by John Flaxman (1755-1826), and various other rooms for the display of Greek vases. These interiors were published in *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). Like the house for Sir John Soane (1753-1837), the building was open to the public, and played no small part in popularising Neo-Classicism (the picture-gallery was one of the earliest English interiors to be articulated with the Greek Doric Order). The



other house was The Deepdene, near Dorking, Surrey, enlarged with the assistance of William Atkinson (c1773-1839) in 1818-19 and 1823 in an asymmetrical Picturesque Classical manner. Both houses, unfortunately, were demolished long ago, yet they were as interesting as some of the finest Neo-Classical houses anywhere in Europe. Hope was also a catalyst for the Greek Revival: in 1804 his *Observations on the Plans and Elevations ... for Downing College ...* discredited the Roman proposals of James Wyatt (1746-1813) in favour of the Greek style, and the result was William Wilkins's (1778-1839) buildings of 1807-20.

Hope's flair as a furniture-designer rivals that of the great German masters Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) and Franz Leopold (Leo) Karl von Klenze (1784-1864): he was influenced by the work of Charles Percier-Bassant (1764-1838) and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine (1762-1853). On almost every page of this superb book one finds visual connections with the best of what was going on in Europe at the time. Beautifully written and painstakingly researched, this magnificently comprehensive, marvellously illustrated, and handsomely designed study of Hope's work served as the catalogue to the exhibition held at the Victoria & Albert Museum in June. All involved in its production are to be warmly congratulated. JAMES STEVENS CURL

## THE MASTER AT WORK

### BUILDING ST PAUL'S

By James W. P. Campbell. London: Thames and Hudson. 2008. £12.95

### THE ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN AT ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD: A COMPLETE CATALOGUE

By Anthony Geraghty. Aldershot: Lund Humphries. 2008. £75

*Building St Paul's* reads like a cultural detective novel beginning with an event that takes place on 26 October 1708 when, a few days after Wren's 76th birthday, a small group of friends, led by Wren's son Christopher, deputising for his father, now too frail to climb the scaffolding or risk the dangerous basket hoist, gather on the scaffolding high above the city skyline to lay the last stone in the lantern of St Paul's. There was still work to be done, but this small private ceremony, omitted from the official records, may be, the author speculates, 'an indication of the tensions between the architect and the commissioners that were soon to break out into open hostilities'. As the story unfolds it was a minefield of political intrigue and corruption that eventually led to the brilliant and incorruptible architect's dismissal as Surveyor-General in 1718.



Queensland played a prominent role at the Venice Biennale, organising the Australian pavilion and promoting the state's impressive variety of architecture. This house, by Bark, features in *Place Makers*, a book to accompany an exhibition of Queensland architecture at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane until 23 November. Featuring 22 architects, the publication suggests that tropical architecture has moved far from its colonial connotations, and is finding a true place in regional architectural vocabulary. Book details from [www.australianartbooks.com.au](http://www.australianartbooks.com.au)

By the time of this ceremony, Wren had been engaged on the Cathedral in one capacity or another for over 45 years. 'He was one of the few people alive who had seen the laying of the foundation stone thirty-three years before. Kings and queens had come and gone, and the original master craftsman, the deans and bishops had all since passed away.' But what no one doubted at this point was that the Cathedral was a remarkable achievement. Campbell describes life on a late seventeenth-century building site in London with winters so cold that the Thames froze over several times. He describes the workers' day-to-day responsibilities and how some were poorly paid while others became millionaires on the side. He also unravels the complicated tangle of the Cathedral's finances and the struggles for money that at one time threatened to undermine the whole enterprise.

In *The Architectural Drawings of Sir Christopher Wren*, Anthony Geraghty has assembled a wonderful catalogue of the complete collection of nearly 500 drawings from Wren's office now housed in All Souls College, Oxford. Geraghty reveals how Wren set about designing one of the largest buildings in Christendom, while rebuilding 50 of the City's parish churches, following the Great Fire, as well as creating some of England's best loved public buildings including Hampton Court, the Royal Navy Hospital at Greenwich and the library at Trinity College, Cambridge. He also introduces us to Wren's office, his team of assistants and draughtsmen, including the young Nicholas Hawksmoor who spent the first 20 years of his professional life there.

By far England's most famous architect and one of its finest draughtsmen, as well as a brilliant scientist and mathematician, Wren is one of the few architects who can be named by most members of the public. Even during his lifetime he was famous, and his reputation, then as now, rested chiefly on his achievement at St Paul's. But the Cathedral was formidably expensive. According to the accounts for 1716, the cost of construction was £721,552 – a huge amount of money in the early eighteenth century, all the more extraordinary when one realises that the country had been on the verge of bankruptcy for decades on account of the wars with France. Funding the project had been a major problem throughout the works, with several raids on the Coal Tax to help bail it out. Based on the earliest available economic data for the GDP and per capita GDP data, dated 1830 (a century later than the final accounts), the construction costs equates in today's terms to between £2 to £2.5 billion. A staggering sum, but cheap at the price when you realise that Wembley cost £757 million and Terminal 5 £4.3 billion. Which of these three buildings, over the centuries, will turn out to have provided the greatest pleasure?

Two absorbing books to read about the speculative nature of artistic endeavour in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English architectural scene. RICHARD REID

These and other AR book reviews can be viewed at [www.arplus.com](http://www.arplus.com) and the books can be ordered online, many at a special discount.



# reviews

Happy young Modernists frolicking on the roof of the Marseilles Unité in the 1950s.



## SWERVE AND CHUTZPAH

**The genius of Corb in its many manifestations comes to Liverpool.**

'My friend M. Le Corbusier is an amateur architect and professional painter,' Fernand Léger once remarked. Indeed Paris discovered Le Corbusier, or Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, as he was in 1917, as a painter, when he and Amédée Ozenfant launched an art movement, Purism, in their manifesto *Après Le Cubisme* and journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*. That Corbusier was an artist in every pictorial, plastic and tectonic field, is abundantly conveyed in this exhibition. Its three sections – Contexts, Privacy and Publicity, and Built Art – display a panorama of dazzling achievement in craftwork, drawing, painting, sculpture, furniture, polemics, interiors, architecture, and the design of cities. Le Corbusier was a prodigy who made everything look insouciant and effortless, leaving you wondering 'Why can't it always be like this?' Too easy? Certainly, too easily assumed to be easily repeated in a compromising world of trimmers and dimwits. Or rather, too difficult? Too heroic (or too reckless) to relate to real cities, too much theorems of cities, 'pure creations of mind'?

This exhibition attempts no such interrogations; it is pure celebration of genius and as such, a joy to explore. There are models, drawings and photographs, films with vanguard friends in Paris and by the sea; there are page-by-page videos of sketchbooks, and digital simulations of unbuilt cities and interiors; but also real artifacts – watches from his studentship in Switzerland with L'Éplattenier, lively folk pottery, tables and chairs co-designed with Charlotte Perriand; and his paintings: nature-studies, Purist still-lives of 'type-

objects', to (after the example of Surrealism) those erotic metamorphoses of bodies and '*objets à réaction poétique*' from which emerged motifs for Corbusier's restlessly evolving architecture. His astonishing knack for swerve – and *chutzpah* – is seen here in a page from *Precisions*, where, after his flight over Brazilian rivers, he extols 'the law of meander' (hailed again in *The Poem Of The Right-Angle*). Yet that was in 1931, only two years after he deplored the erratic 'pack-donkey's way' in *The City Of Tomorrow and Its Planning*.

Corbusier's dialectical *chutzpah* is the star here. For while the first part displays his ardour for rationalism – for machines, type objects, his concrete 'Dom-ino' frame, and his Apollonian vision of a *Ville Radieuse* – the second opens onto those extraordinary Dionysian vegetal/anatomic hybrids which he and Joseph Savina sculpted in painted wood in the '40s and '50s. Beyond them rises the strange hyperbolic tent of his 1958 Philips Pavilion – a synthesis of numerical series and acute expressivity in a spatial analogue of Xenakis' music *Metastasis*. Shown alongside is the phantom-show that was projected within the pavilion. With no commentary but Varese's electronic sounds, a sequence of images, from savage masks to atom bombs, flicker through an enigmatic allegory. Minatory, even apocalyptic, they question the liberal optimism of 'the family of man' (a UNESCO theme of the time, from the 1955 photography exhibition curated at MoMA by Edward Steichen), and cast a shadow on postwar technology, an inward glance from 'the age of anxiety'.

This exhibition comes to London in January; but there is good reason to view it in Liverpool; for it affords a chance to visit Lutyens' crypt for the Catholic cathedral. Indeed, beneath Lutyens' austere vaults of brick and stone, Corbusier's

works provoke ironic reflections. For whereas the model of the Maison Dom-ino states a concrete theorem of cantilevers to refute everything orated by the arch, the model of the Maisons Jaoul, with its Catalan (albeit concrete) vaults, makes remarkable accord with Lutyens' mighty masonry, which looms over the exhibits with surprising resonance as they culminate in Ronchamp and Chandigarh. At the end, the RIBA displays photographs to show Corbusier's influence in Britain. Yet, what is 'influence', if merely among epigones? Moreover, they miss a local point. For, in 1950, nowhere in Britain was Corbusier more understood than in the circle around Colin Rowe at Liverpool University, from among whom would emerge the critic Robert Maxwell and the architect James Stirling. If Liverpool wants to maintain the momentum of this exhibition, its next show should be Stirling. BRIAN HATTON

Le Corbusier – The Art of Architecture, The Crypt, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool, until 18 January 2009. Also at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, from 18 February until 24 May 2009.

## browser

**Sutherland Lyall finishes polishing his conkers and finds new cyber chestnuts.**

### Sam Strangelove

Strangeharvest at [www.strangeharvest.com](http://www.strangeharvest.com) is Sam Jacobs' site. Jacobs is partner in that great maverick architectural practice FAT. This is a collection of musings, images, ideas and, well, a whole bunch of terrific stuff, some like this on the setting up of a pretentious shop by a fashionable guru: 'Who knew it was possible for Alain de Botton to become an even more ridiculous and despicable figure'. There is the full version of the classic video ad, 'Telly Savalas Looks at Birmingham'. And there is Jacobs' cutout model of his design for a grave for Mies accompanied by an unfinished essay titled 'Sorry Mies'. Jacobs is one of the best architectural essayists going and his nose for incisive writing and design from others is acute. And cute. Fellow partner Charles Holland has his independent blog, *Fantastic Journal*, at <http://fantasticjournal.blogspot.com> of which more later.

### Fatboys slim

It would be churlish not to also look at the FAT boys' site at <http://fashionarchitecturetaste.com>. Like the design of Strangeharvest this has a slim, simple and immediately understandable navigation laid out there on the uncluttered home page. You can even download the practice brochure so there's no confusion of function here. They seem to be pointing out that websites aren't brochures but if you want a brochure, click here and print out one of our graphics print designer



prepared earlier. Back in the Web and on the home page, click on, say, 'architecture' and up comes a five column-wide grid of representative images which, with the click of a mouse, blossom out into bigger and more explanatory images plus descriptions. Clicking on these bigger pix produces full-screen images. It's not so clear how you get back but you eventually work out that you use your browser buttons rather than the site's. A fancy Flashed-up site this isn't. But it does the job: it lets you get at the content painlessly. It doesn't hurt, of course, that you are likely to be really keen to see the FAT work in more detail.

### The clear alpine air

Slim seems to work for the young Italian practice of Giacomo and Riccarda Guidotti at [www.guidottiarchitetti.com](http://www.guidottiarchitetti.com). Their home page couldn't be simpler: it has the practice name, the fact that they are architects, some current news and four headings. Clicking 'atelier' produces images and CVs of a surly Giacomo and a quizzically smiling Riccarda. Click 'progetti' (the four headings remain throughout) and you have the choice of 'concorsi', 'progetti' and 'realizzazioni'. Click on a discreet 'apri' under the minimal text and further and better particulars emerge. OK, this is a young practice and there aren't all that many projects. In time-honoured fashion the list is salted with projects done in earlier times, perhaps freelance or in the offices of others. But hey, all young practices do that. The other two headings are the self-explanatory 'pubblicazioni' and the semi-redundant 'contatti'. They could probably have put the contact information on the home page and dropped the map – although they operate in a town north of Lugano in the Alps and for once it's quite useful. But that's caviling because here is as simple and effective a website as you could want. It's Don't Make Me Think navigation, there's no practice 'philosophy' – the precisely detailed *progetti* speaks volumes, and it's not overburdened with words. A lot of new practices feel they have to make an elaborate show, to big up a necessarily thin portfolio with yards of verbal and visual pomp. Clients see right through that. If they don't they may not be the sort of clients with whom you want to spend the next two or three years.

### Homespun philosophy

So you've worked out what you want the website to do: amuse, irritate, impress, intimidate, display intense competence, whatever. Then your web designer has to work out the most direct way of showing off your wares. And how to get back to the home page. Then they have to process the images and text and maybe data so that they will appear in the shortest imaginable time. Of course there's a lot more of this head work before you call in a graphic designer to do the last 10 per cent: the graphic decorations. Hold it there,

what's that about irritate as an objective? That, plainly, is what some website proprietors go out of their way to do. Here are some of the big no-nos: *Sincerity ooze*: I won't embarrass the authors by naming them, but imagine yourself with a couple of million to spend on building and reading stuff like this – 'By showing a complete commitment to their projects NNN have won a loyal following of discerning clients to whom the highest standards in contemporary spatial design are paramount'. Pass the bag.

*Practice philosophies*: Best characterised by that Hamlet line 'The lady doth protest too much'. Most clients won't have heard of Derrida and most sensible people will start worrying when you talk about on time on cost. Whatever happened to 'We love doing architecture'?

*Slideshows*: give it a rest people – they look (a): nerdily obsessive-compulsive; (b): control freaky when, at this early stage at least, you want to look cooperative and collaborative. Text which is sideways, coloured not-black ie grey or some other light colour, small and not adjustable in size. Make your readers squint and do contortions: maybe you'll do that with the architecture too.

*Slow loading*: take no excuses, get a smarter web designer.

*Special effects*: I'm looking at one here which shimmies scarily when you move on to the next image. About anything is possible but remember that old Browser adage, 'Just because you can, it doesn't mean you have to'.

*DII*: How do you like the idea of web designers doing architecture? Just don't ...

### Happily mad but efficient

The Coop Himmelb(l)au site is at [www.coop-himmelblau.at](http://www.coop-himmelblau.at). This practice has been doing brilliant small-scale stuff for decades and now they've hit the big time – especially with the BMW delivery centre at Munich but now with half a dozen big arts centres and the European Bank. The website has a conventional black background but because they have used a collaboration of three different web specialists working intelligently you can easily read everything – not always possible with white on black. Navigation is precise and clear as are the practice structure diagrams. The practice philosophy is, sadly, the usual wordy (four page) number. But of course it's the design you want to look at and here, dammit, you get slide shows. I'm not *au fait* with techniques of displaying images but I'm beginning to think that the main purpose of slide shows is to disguise slow uploading techniques. While you drum your fingers waiting, the program is scrabbling around in the background hoisting the next image from the electronic soup. Or maybe it's just that even the wonderful Coop people are actually industry-standard control freaks.

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## diary

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

### AUSTRIA

#### THE MAKING OF ARCHITECTURE

Architektzentrum Wien, Vienna

Until 2 February 2009

A welcome exhibition devoted to the very different ways in which architects use their various tools, from the pencil to the computer. Some 20 offices were researched including: Alvar Aalto, Lina Bo Bardi, Atelier Bow-Wow, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Antoni Gaudí, The Jerde Partnership, Steven Holl Architects, Lacaton & Vassal, Charlotte Perriand, SOM, UNStudio and Venturi Scott Brown. [www.azw.at](http://www.azw.at)

### DENMARK

#### LIVING THE MODERN – AUSTRALIAN ARCHITECTURE

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek

Until 30 November

This exhibition of modern housing in Australia features 48 buildings from 1990 to 2007. Primary concerns involve the balance of public and private spaces, site-specific architecture, and the use of alternative energy sources to create successful homes in the different parts of Australia. [www.louisiana.dk](http://www.louisiana.dk)

### NETHERLANDS

#### CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH AND THE GERMAN ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE

The Hermitage, Amsterdam

Until 1 January 2009

The Hermitage Amsterdam is ending its stay on Nieuwe Herengracht with a remarkable finale. For the first time ever all the works by Caspar David Friedrich from the collection of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg will be loaned for a special exhibition focusing on this renowned German artist. His paintings and drawings form the focus of the exhibition, but are also augmented by works by contemporaries, predecessors and followers. [www.hermitage.nl/en/](http://www.hermitage.nl/en/)

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### ANDY WARHOL: OTHER VOICES, OTHER ROOMS

Hayward Gallery, London

Until 1 January 2009

No artist living in the second half of the twentieth century has made a deeper impression on popular culture and consciousness than Andy Warhol. The Hayward presents a major exhibition that brings a fresh perspective to his art, showing works from the '50s to the '80s, including films, paintings, installations and archive material. [www.hayward.org.uk](http://www.hayward.org.uk)

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**MALCOLM CAMPBELL MAY HAVE RACED ON ITS BEACH. IF SHE DIDN'T FLY OVER, AMY JOHNSON CERTAINLY VISITED. TODAY, SEA TRACTOR III TAKES A MORE LEISURELY APPROACH, FERRYING VISITORS FROM DEVON'S MAINLAND TO BURGH ISLAND HOTEL.**

Visiting Devon's Burgh Island Hotel is a delightful experience, fundamentally linked to its landscape, climate and situation. Amplifying the fact that domestic holidaymakers have learnt to grin and bear with British weather, as visitors rumble across the sand, Burgh Island's site's physical

remoteness adds to the ritual for hotel guests, encapsulating the very notion of English eccentricity to perfection.

Naturally, as a guest, Belgian detective Hercule Poirot didn't appreciate the gag as he nervously held onto hat and moustache as he and his loyal

associate Captain Hastings took their place on Sea Tractor III; the curious machine that transports guests through up to two metres of sea, crossing the 300 metres causeway.

This moment was of course fiction, but the journey itself remains a fact. And while the television dramatisation makers got most of the detail right, Sea Tractor III did not exist in the 1930s. In that era, an earlier chain-driven tractor existed, subsequently replaced in 1968, when Robert Jackson, a pioneer of the British Nuclear industry, was commissioned to design a replacement. As current owners Tony Orchard and Deborah Clark recount, 'Averting the possibility of Burgh Island becoming a future Three Mile Island, Jackson eschewed the nuclear option and chose a hydraulic mechanism rather than the previous two generations of chain drives with tracks'.



In 2004, as part of Orchard and Clark's £2.5m programme of investment, Sea Tractor III was relaunched (left). Approaching its 40th birthday, its hydraulic system was completely overhauled and its box-like passenger carriage was rebuilt, ensuring many more years of happy haphazard transit. Today, while we are assured that hotel staff would never gossip about contemporary guests, historic visitors included Edward VIII, Wallis Simpson, Agatha Christie, Noel Coward, Gertie Lawrence, Nancy Cunard, Jessie Matthews, George Formby, R. J. Mitchell, Churchill and Eisenhower. All of whom, we should assume, were transported in similar style. **ROB GREGORY**

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