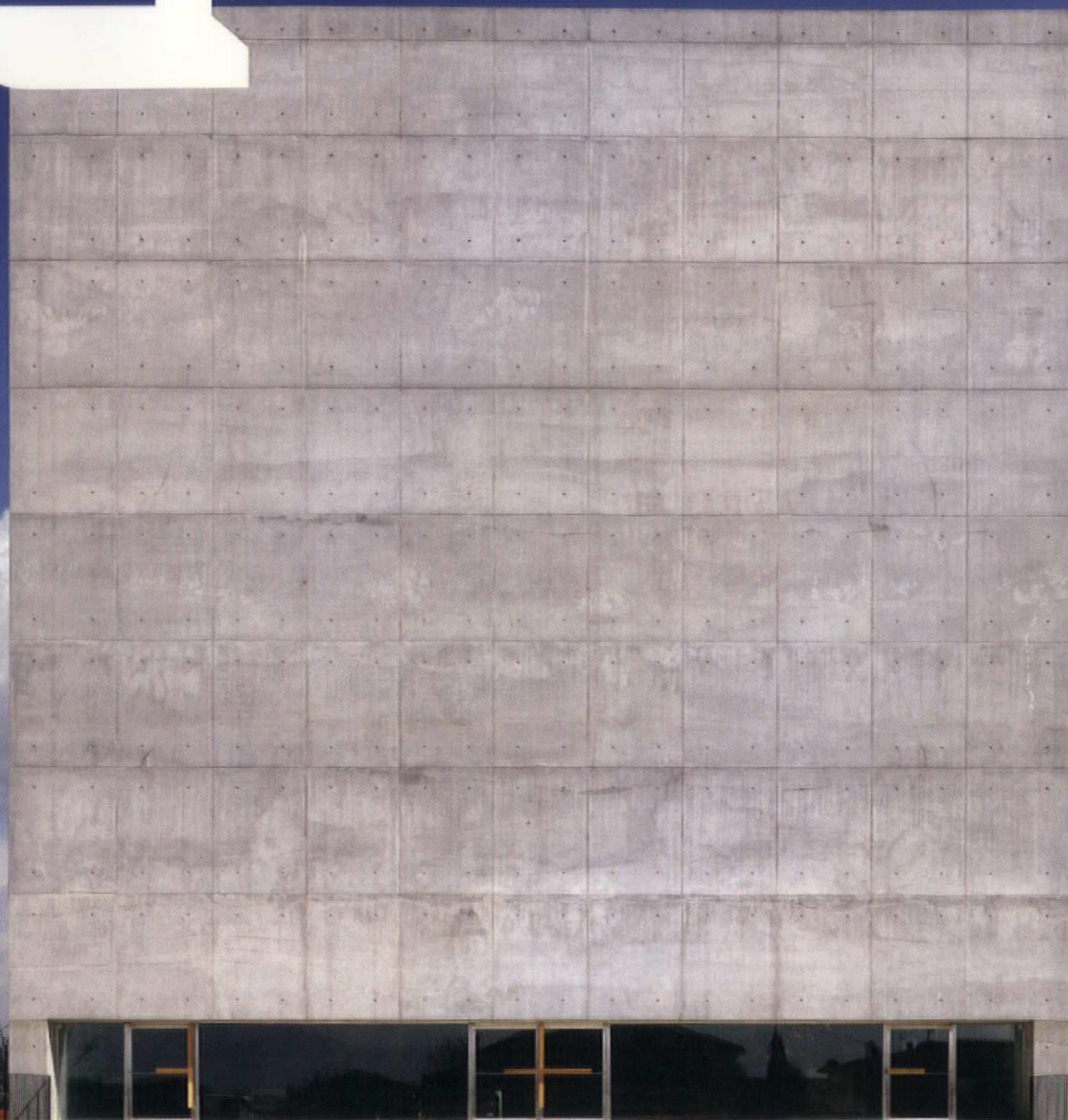


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Cover Stefano Topuntoli

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Jakob + MacFarlane Architects

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Toshiko Mori

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O'Donnell + Tuomey

Sean O'Casey Community Centre,

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Marquez Architekten

Library, Berlin-Köpenick, Germany

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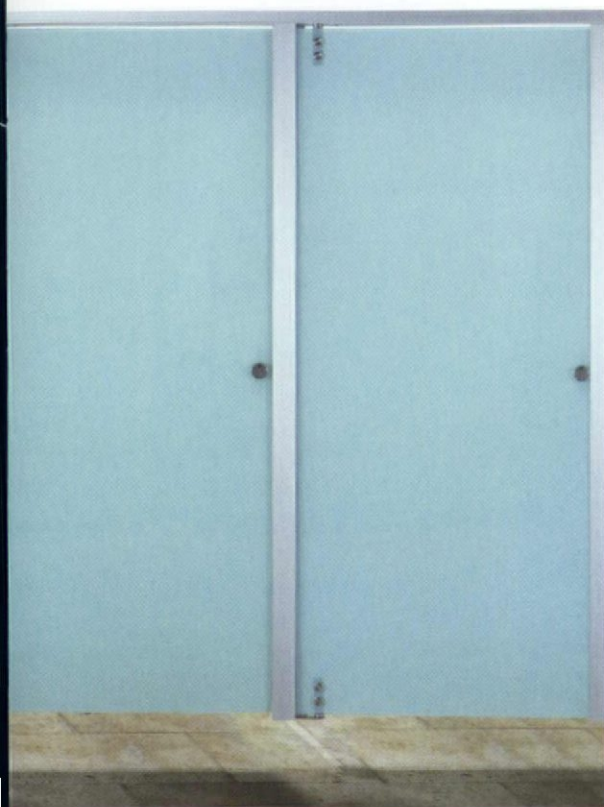
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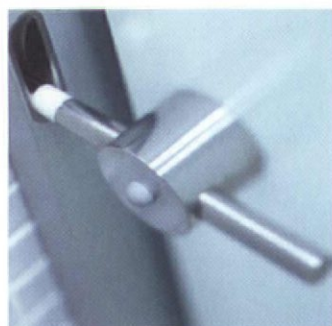
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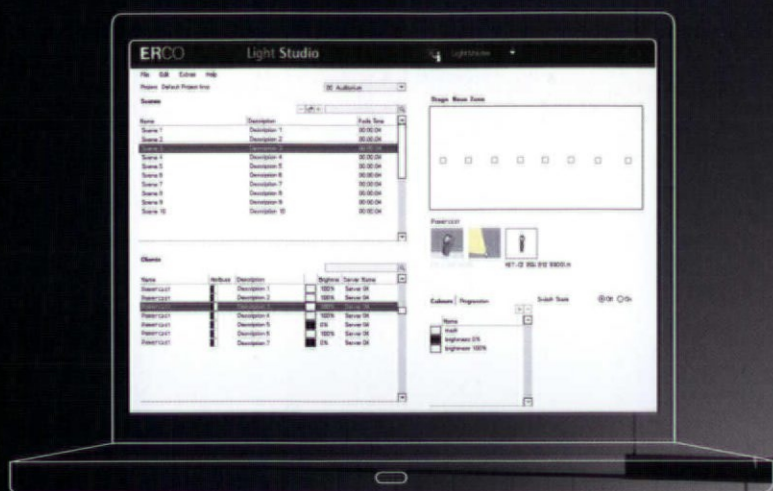
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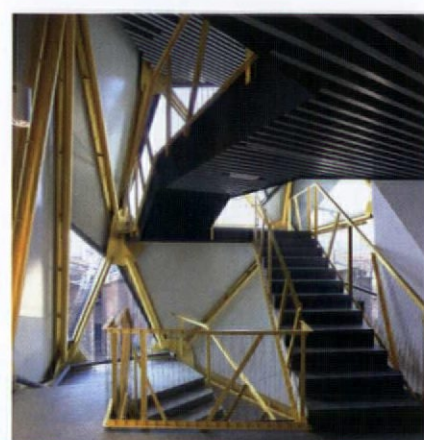
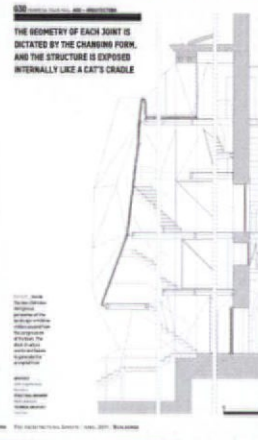
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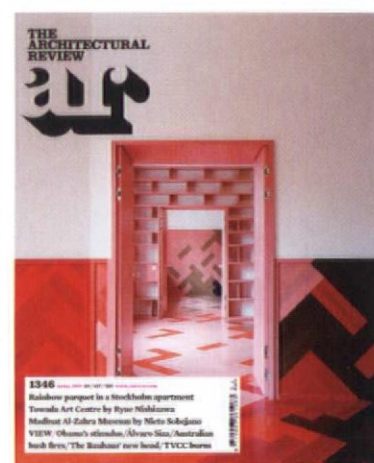
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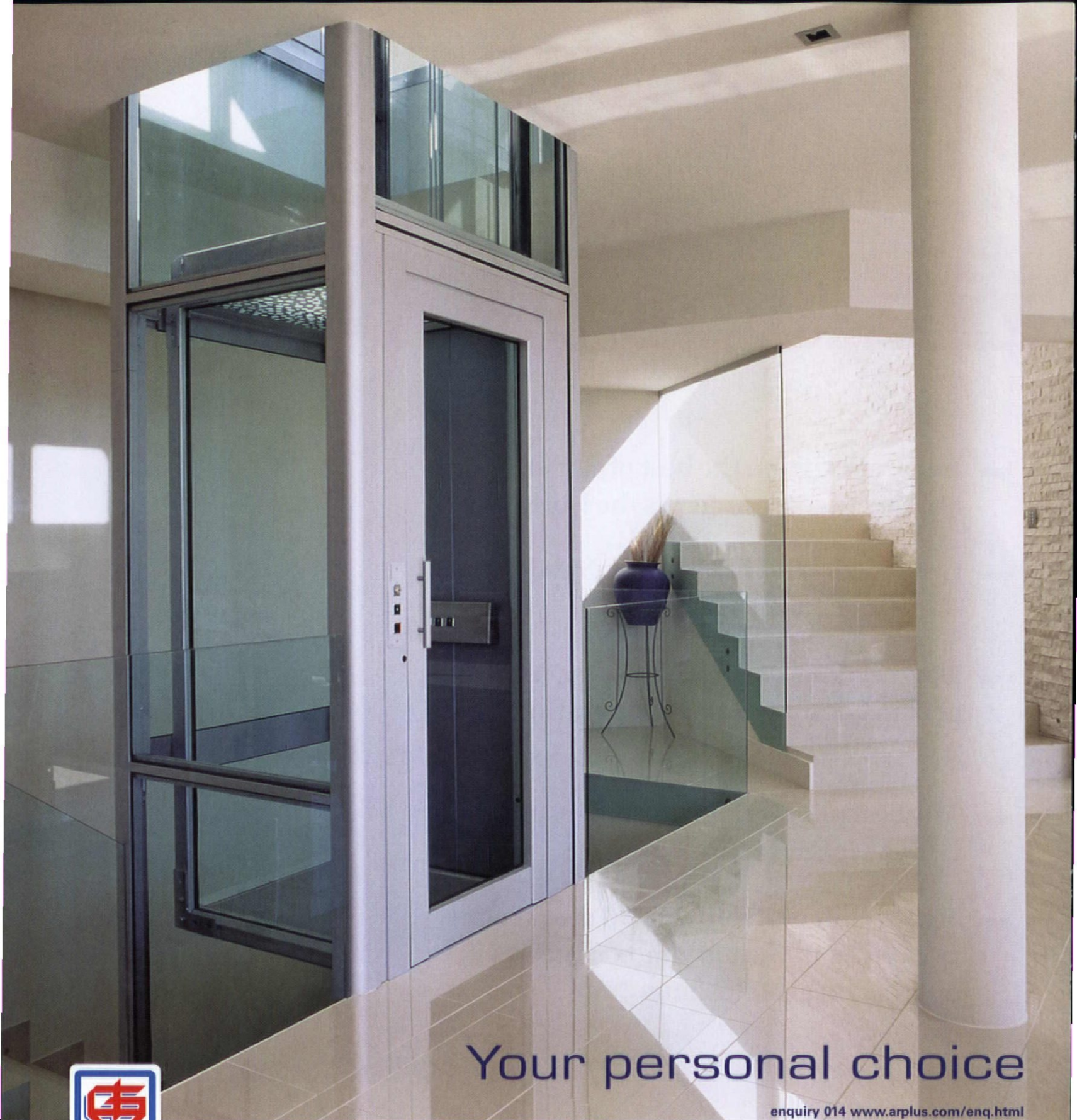
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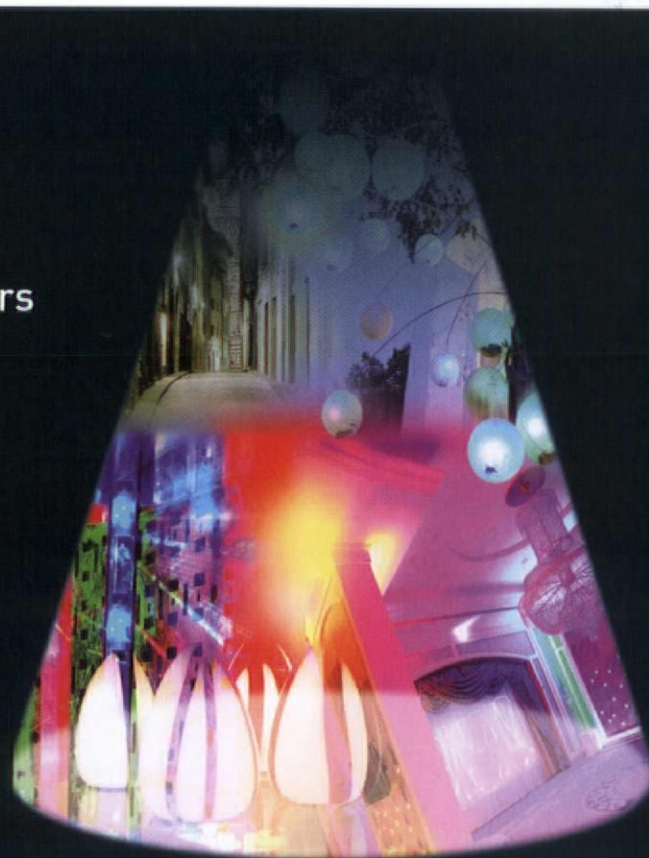
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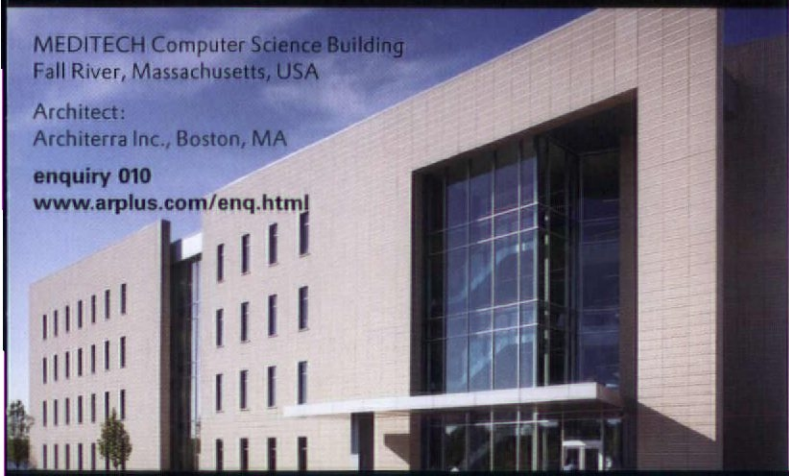
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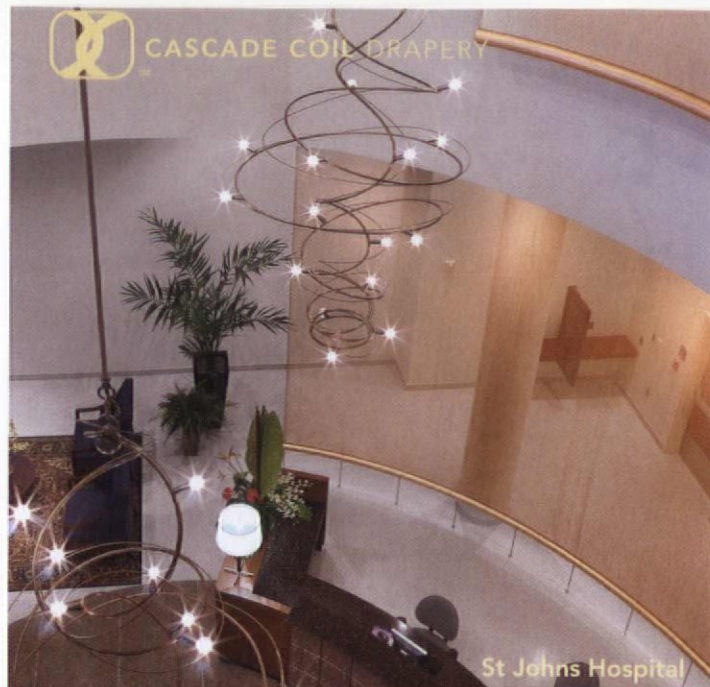
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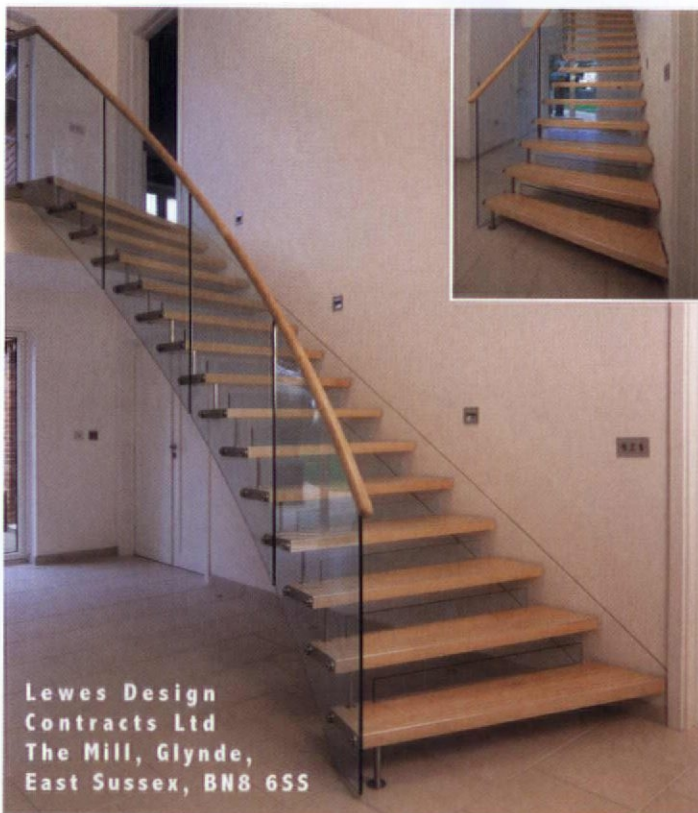
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*Alan is one of the greatest architectural historians working today, author of the essential architectural and cultural history of Berlin in English – Berlin: The Politics of Order, first published in 1990. He is now professor and dean at the College of Architecture at Georgia Tech. He writes for us on the history of the Neues Museum in Berlin*

*Peter Davey is a former editor of the AR and has a Finnish knighthood*

*Rowan is the architecture critic of the Evening Standard newspaper in London, and former director of the Architecture Foundation*

*Christine Murray is deputy editor of the AR's sister magazine, The Architects' Journal, and interviewed fellow Canadian Phyllis Lambert*

*Kester is reader in architecture at the University of Westminster, London, and, among other things, is the author of a book about Irish practice O'Donnell + Tuomey*

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LONDON, UK

# Pritzker laureate Zumthor on why he's no saint – and no service provider

ROB GREGORY

**Ten years ago, Peter Zumthor bewildered his RIBA lecture audience with a refusal to discuss his buildings. ('Visit them,' he said.) Last month, the Swiss architect and 2009 Pritzker Prize winner returned without the poetry, jazz music, soft lights or slides of solid colour to discuss his work in a more direct way. Rob Gregory speaks to him**

**The AR** Was this purposefully a very different sort of lecture?

**Peter Zumthor** My lectures have become very personal. I stopped reading my texts, which instead could be published. I now lecture with no 'mask' or media filter at all, so you can see where our stuff comes from. I like to show how much the people in my team enjoy working as we do, in this family setting; or at least in this non-commercial setting. I think it is important to be genuine, in a world where communications advisors put up facades.

**AR** Your work appeals to a broad range of architects and some may say you hold a very enviable position, with great clients. How would you like your work to be interpreted by those who have little choice but to take on the kind of commercial projects you actively avoid?

**PZ** I hope that by showing the way we work, I can give courage to those people not to give up. 25 years ago we didn't have much money. We would say: 'Do we have enough to take the train this week, or do we wait until someone pays us?' I don't know where [commercial] pressure comes from. People won't starve, so just work. I never made a contact phone call for networking, or asked for any publication. When we started in Switzerland – Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, all these people together at the same time – we just did our own thing, with passion.

I don't know how long we can go on with artificiality. At certain schools, some students say: 'Yeah, I've been trained. Not only to design, but also in marketing and selling myself.' It's ridiculous. People are not stupid enough to fall for masquerades. I hope our way of working gives people hope.

**AR** You use the word 'courage' and in his introduction to your lecture, Charles Jencks spoke of authorship, which is growing rare as architects increasingly become servants.

**PZ** Yes – service providers. I am an author and function like a writer or composer. No one is writing my string quartet for me. This is something precious; an author has to author.

With authorship, you take responsibility. You say: 'This is me; this is the best I can do.' This is another reason why I stopped doing theoretical, abstract lectures – so I don't get labelled: 'Oh, he is a bastard. He lives like a saint in the mountains. He doesn't have sex. He works all day and prays all night' – all these stupid things. I like people to see how it really is. When you listen to a lecture like this, there is no doubt and no mystery.

**AR** When showing photographs of your team, you named them all. When discussing your work you said: 'This drawing already knew x, y and z,' and 'these cross-sections don't yet know a, b or c.' This showed how close you are to your team and drawings. How do you work with your team? Do they wait for you to direct them?

**PZ** No, it is more open. We work together. At the beginning, I come with a sketch, and we talk. We talk about the idea, and we talk about how to start. Somebody starts with a model. As I walk through the office, I pass all the work. I say: 'If you hang stuff on the wall, or put a model in my way, you don't have to ask me to look at it, because I will see it.' I will understand immediately what is happening. I will come back and say: 'Hey, did you see this? Go over

there. Did you see that drawing? What do you think?' Then we discuss; sometimes we get some more people – four, five, six or seven of us.

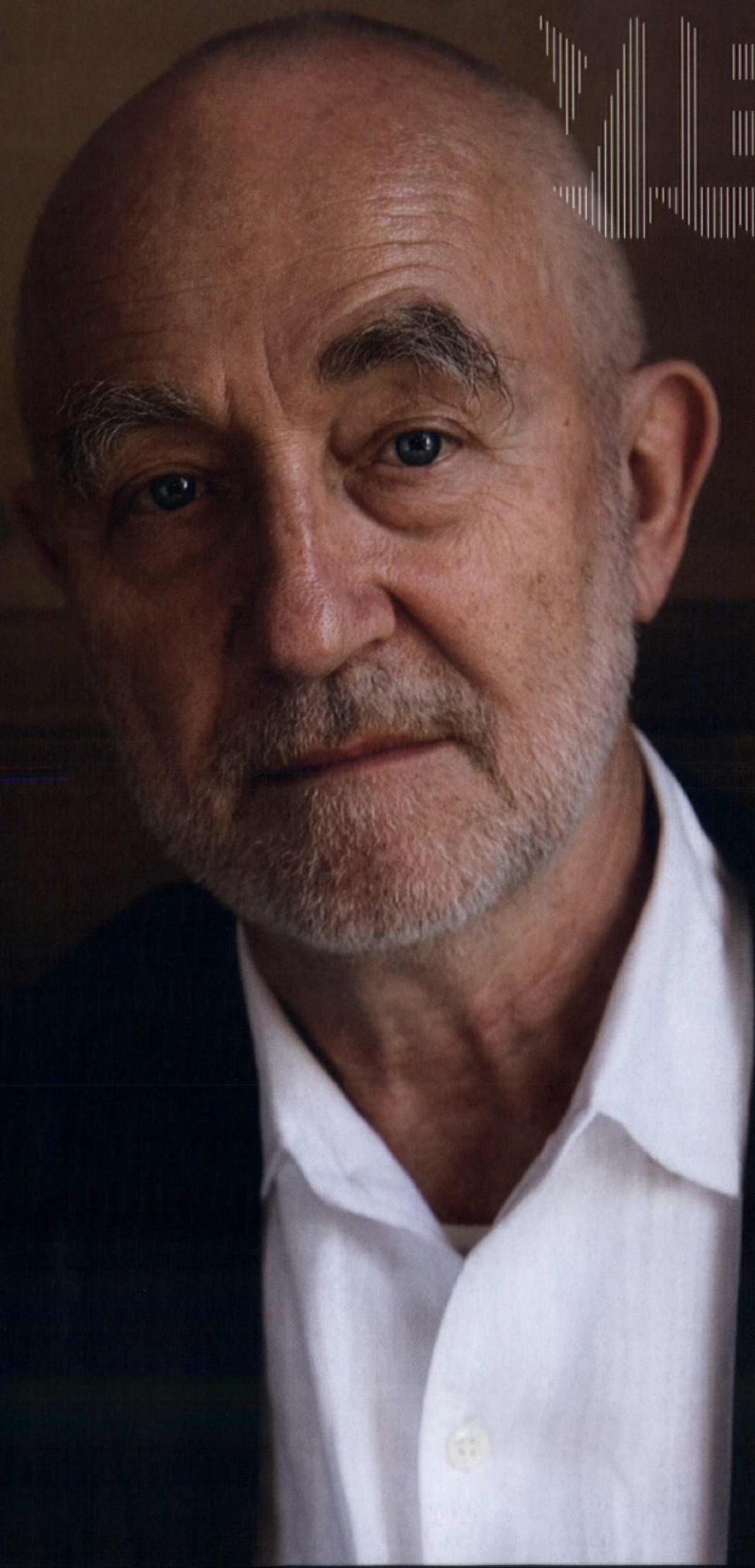
I am good at giving a structure to our talks, and not discussing everything at the same time. I will say: 'Guys, we are not discussing colours now! We are discussing this, then this, then this.' If you find yourself drawing and drawing and drawing, I say: 'Drop your pencil, get up and go for a walk.' Sometimes, you have to look for the right form and everything is clear. Other times, nothing is clear, and you fumble around. So I say: 'Stop. I can see that we need to talk.' We talk in a group, where we have several opinions. I cut off all academic, theoretical arguments. I get other people in, even the secretary, and ask: 'Would you like a hotel bedroom with a bed like this, or like this? What do you think is better?' When she says: 'This one,' the other architect wants to defend his version. I have to tell him to shut up. It is very down-to-earth. People who come to the office think it will be an amazing theoretical experience, like university. Not at all.

**AR** You showed drawings of the Diocesan Museum in Cologne, Germany, that illustrated your struggle to find a solution. Was that an occasion when you needed to go for a walk?

**PZ** Yes. Sometimes, if you're too close to it, you don't see anything. And sometimes you don't even know if there is a solution. Is there a solution when you make a museum with a small part on the ground level and the major part above an old church? There is no model. I wanted to illustrate how we came to the solution.



VIEW





**AR** Your lecture challenged the assumption that you look back to archaic technologies. When talking about sailmakers, you said: 'It's a dead profession. Old skills. Move on.' Despite this, inventiveness and continuity coexist in your work.

**PZ** I want to make good buildings. When I have an idea, I look at what can help. [When researching the charred interior of the Bruder Klaus Field Chapel near Cologne,] I went to charcoal makers because I thought they would know, but they didn't know anything. It was a romantic notion. I had to go to a completely different person: a chimney sweep.

**So I don't care whether I find solutions in the Iron Age or in the future. To be innovative is an object of modernism.**

**AR** When talking about Cologne modern art museum you said: 'This is how I met the site,' as if it was a personality you had to spend time with, to get acquainted. Do you demand the same relationship of your clients? You said you could never work for a board.

**PZ** Exactly. It can be a group, but you have to feel a genuine wish to do something good together. You cannot order a piece of architecture from me. It has nothing to do with shopping and it's not about giving me enough money. I cannot work that way – I just say no.

**AR** Do wealthy clients frequently approach you?

**PZ** Once in a while, someone rich will come. I am having lunch at the Dorchester with a sheikh from Qatar who wants to build a little city. He has been after me for seven years. Slowly, I think he and the people

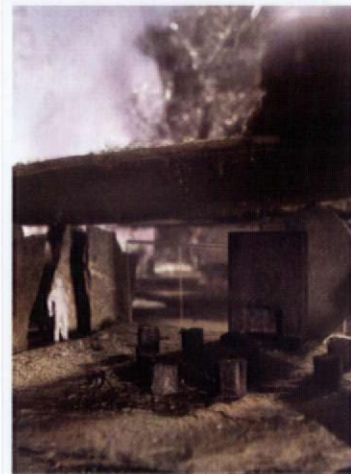
around him are OK, so now I will talk to him, give him a chance.

**AR** You are working on a little house in the UK. Can you talk more about this project?

**PZ** It's a nice idea. The client said: 'We have this idea, like The Landmark Trust, with contemporary architecture.' Living Architecture is the name of the institution, and they have commissioned five or six houses by different architects. We start to build next year. I like what they are doing, it is accessible. Anyone can go there and spend time relaxing or working; it's a retreat for a concentrated workshop.

**AR** In similar spirit to your office? A place to live and work?

**PZ** Yes, that's right!



These early designs are for Zumthor's Living Architecture project in Devon. The home's form is inspired by scattered stones







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OSLO, NORWAY

# Farewell to Norway's greatest architect: Sverre Fehn, 1924-2009

PETER DAVEY



The most memorable pavilion in the Venice Giardini, where they hold the art and architecture biennales, is the Nordic Pavilion (above). Its elegant white concrete roof grid, made with members that seem impossibly slender, hovers in the landscape, contrasting with the trees surrounding it. Yet nature and the man-made are intimately related, for several trees grow through the building and, at one corner, the grid is bifurcated to draw back from a fine old lime.

The pavilion, completed in 1962, was designed by Sverre Fehn, then a little-known Norwegian architect. It was

an early demonstration of Fehn's belief that building on a pristine site 'is an attack by our culture on nature'. As a result, **he tried to make buildings 'that will make people more aware of the beauty of the setting' – a very Norwegian sentiment.**

Fehn was born in Kongsberg, south-west of Oslo, in 1924 and trained in the capital under modernist pioneer Arne Korsmo, graduating in 1949. He travelled extensively then worked for two years in Paris for Jean Prouvé, meeting Le Corbusier and members of Team X. Back in Scandinavia, he was one of the founders of PAGON (Progressive

Architects' Group, Oslo, Norway), which extolled a rather austere, industrialised form of modernism. Fehn set up practice in 1954 and won the competition for the Norwegian Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Exhibition – in some ways, a timber predecessor of the Venice building.

Exhibition and museum design were a major part of Fehn's work, starting with the Hamar Bispegaard museum. Fehn believed that 'only by manifesting the present can you make the past talk'. So, when working with old buildings, Fehn never tried to mimic past

work, instead preserving it carefully while being bold in introducing new elements that complement and reveal the old.

Other museums followed, sometimes without historical context, like the Norwegian Glacier Museum at Fjærland, which he built on the western ice-scraped plain below Jostedal glacier and which features a roof that becomes a viewing platform. Fehn was fascinated by horizons, and the platform is both a metaphor and an observatory for the dramatic landscape.

Museums were balanced by a flow of family houses – the finest was perhaps Villa Busk at Bamble, on Norway's south-east coast, overlooking the sea.

Most of Fehn's projects were in forested suburbs or countryside, and only towards the end of his life did he build in the city. His last two projects were both in Oslo: an extension to the architectural museum and the headquarters of a publishing company (AR February 2009). Both are sensitive and imaginative insertions into the urban fabric. Inside, each is bathed in what the Venetians called 'Scandinavian light': calm and almost shadowless. They make a notable conclusion to a career devoted to creating serene and memorable places. Fehn died on February 23, loaded with honours, including the 1997 Pritzker Prize.



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# Humanitarian laws regarding buildings are being unravelled in Gaza

ROBERT BEVAN

In late 2005 when, ahead of a general election, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdrew unilaterally to the perimeter of Gaza (dragging the strip's illegal Israeli settlers along with it), the question remained of what to do with the settler synagogues. Israel considered demolishing them itself – a controversial proposal backed by the Israeli High Court of Justice – before the decision was reversed and the buildings abandoned to their fate. As symbols of the occupation of Gaza, the empty shells were attacked by returning Palestinians.

The episode prompted renewed debate about international law regarding the fate of cities and buildings in war – principally, the measures contained with the Hague (1907 and 1954) and Geneva (1949 and 1977) Conventions on conduct during armed struggle.

Events in the Israel-Palestine conflict usually focus the mind on these things. Singling out Israel for scrutiny again and again for its actions leads to accusations of anti-Semitism, but it is the conscious and complex ways in which the state singlemindedly manipulates architecture and town planning as part of its war effort that tugs one back to examine Israel's actions.

The building of Jewish-only settlements to house hundreds of thousands of people on

occupied land, the demolition of Palestinian homes as a collective punishment, the reckless shelling of civilian areas and Palestinian heritage, the destruction of nascent state institutions such as Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound – these are all ways in which Israel has repeatedly flouted, and continues to flout, international law in pursuit of three-dimensional 'facts on the ground' to legitimate its post-1967 land grab.

Three years after the IDF's withdrawal from Gaza, and ahead of another election, we have Operation Cast Lead, leaving 1,314 dead, 5,300 injured and some 21,000 left homeless (all these figures are disputed). What happened to the built environment in the West Bank during the last *Intifada* has happened again in Gaza.

Schools, mosques, police stations, government offices, Gaza's largest flour mill and biggest cement plant and some 200 factories are among the buildings destroyed. According to *The Art Newspaper*, the medieval Al-Zeitoun quarter of Gaza City has been largely destroyed, the Antiquities Museum damaged and many archaeological sites put at risk.

These structures – both public and private – were not owned by Hamas. Despite Israeli arguments that Hamas

has blurred the boundaries between terrorist organisation and government, the elected Hamas politicians do not own Gaza's public infrastructure or the Parliament building – the Palestinian people do.

Now Israel is refusing to let the building materials needed to repair houses, schools and health facilities pass through Gaza's borders. That's in addition, points out Christopher Gunness, spokesperson for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), to an estimated US\$ 93 million (£65 million) worth of the UNRWA's construction projects in Gaza stopped by bombardments and blockades since 2007. Such measures mean that the fragmented spaces of the occupied territories remain ghettos – and that word is used advisedly – not a functional nation state.

The attention of the international community has focused on the proportionality of the Israeli response to Hamas rockets. The rockets have also provided Israel with the premise it needs to further circumvent other aspects of international humanitarian laws, specifically as they relate to the built environment.

This should not come as a surprise. After all, this is a country whose senior army officers are comfortable interrogating philosophical



texts by Deleuze, Guattari and Debord. Architect Eyal Weizman has documented how these readings have generated useful spatial tactics like 'walking through walls' – the practice of blasting a path through the walls of Palestinian homes rather than using the street, as the residents of the historic West Bank city of Nablus found to their cost in April 2002.

The international law division (ILD) of the army advises on what is legitimate in terms of targets and tactics. It has argued that, contrary to established rules of engagement,





A Palestinian walks past an unfinished building at a construction site in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip

it is acceptable to target civilian buildings as long as the people inside are warned first by bullets being fired at their roofs. **ILD advisors have also, according to liberal Israeli daily paper Haaretz, reinterpreted the IDF's rule book to allow more housing demolitions and the grubbing up of agricultural land. Gaza, like the West Bank, has been used as a laboratory of environmental repression.**

The ILD's head, Pnina Sharvit-Baruch, has now been appointed to an academic position at Tel Aviv University. Academic opponents of her appointment have been

threatened with funding cuts by the Israeli government, but some spoke out. Orna Ben-Naftali, dean of law at the College of Management in the city of Rishon Letzion, was quoted in *Haaretz* as saying: 'A situation is created in which the majority of adult men in Gaza and the majority of the buildings can be treated as legitimate targets. The law has actually been stood on its head.' International law, Ben-Naftali argues, has been bankrupted.

Another army consultant, Israeli philosopher Asa Kasher, is co-author of the Israeli army's

Code of Conduct, its ethical handbook. He has argued that the Geneva Conventions are no longer relevant in an age of terrorism, an age where rockets are fired from within and to civilian areas. 'The Geneva Conventions are based on hundreds of years of tradition of the fair rules of combat,' Kasher has been reported as saying. 'They were appropriate for classic warfare, where one army fought another. But in our time the whole business of rules has been pushed aside.'

But Kasher is wrong. The Geneva and Hague Conventions were framed precisely because wars had moved from battlefield set pieces to, in the industrial age, conflicts that engulf towns and non-combatants with bombardment from the air, heavy artillery and gunboats. These conventions are designed to protect people, their cultural and religious heritage and their civic infrastructure from attack where there is a confused mingling of civilian and soldier. The rise of terrorism has not changed this.

The 2005 debate over the strip's empty synagogues and the real-time targeting discussions that take place between field command and military lawyers shows there is a full awareness of the nuances of these humanitarian laws. It is just that the country's leaders have, for the past 40 years and more, chosen to flout them. Now Israel appears prepared to unravel them altogether.

Daniel Reisner, former head of the ILD, puts it thus: 'What we are seeing now is a revision of international law. If you do something for long enough, the world will accept it.'

**Robert Bevan is the author of *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (Reaktion, 2005)**

REUTERS/IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA



## A fresh take on the fish market

CATHERINE SLESSOR

www.gadarchitecture.com

The city-centre fish market may be a dying breed, but here in Istanbul, it jerks back to life with this new building in the Beşiktaş district by Turkish firm Global Architectural Development (GAD). The triangular site is enclosed by a steel-framed structure that arcs down into three tapering supports to create

a column-free space. With a 1970s vibe inside and out, display counters are lined with gaudy mosaics and a multitude of light bulbs hang from red cables. A soft glow illuminates the piscatorial produce lusciously arrayed on steel salvers crafted by local artisans. Beats the chill cabinet any day.





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NAIROBI, KENYA

# How to design hygienic toilets for 2.6bn people

SHELI LEVENSON

www.peepoople.com

A child dies every 15 seconds from contaminated water. Four years ago, Swedish architect and academic Anders Wilhelmson began a pioneering project addressing the lack of adequate sanitation, experienced by 2.6 billion people globally, which spreads deadly diseases among the most impoverished of the world's population.

Wilhelmson's brainchild is the Peepoo bag, a single-use biodegradable sack which functions as a portable personal toilet. The bag is lined with a layer of gauze to avoid contact with bodily fluids and, once sealed, remains odour-free for up to 24 hours. It is a sanitation solution that eliminates the need for water, reducing the spread of lethal pathogens contained within excrement. It is also a welcome alternative for women and children who are at risk if they go out to use public toilets at night.

A professor of architecture, Wilhelmson taught a course on growth and city development at Sweden's Royal University College of Fine Arts. 'When you're out studying cities,' he explains, 'you realise that about 60 per cent of them are slums or informal settlements. Everything is difficult in those areas. But housing they could make,

electricity is easy to get, water you can get – but sanitation seemed to be very difficult to manage, even on an individual basis. Nobody cares. So I said to myself: "Why are architects concerned about buildings when sanitation is more important? Why not pursue this?"

After conceiving the idea in 2005, Wilhelmson put together a team of experts comprising engineers, bioplastics experts and industrial designers to investigate the possibilities. The result is a product that is self-sanitising and can act as fertiliser after use. Due to a thin lining of urea inside the bag, all pathogens are broken down and the bag becomes a source of nutrients for the soil. Encouraged by the findings of a year's worth of research, Wilhelmson founded the company Peepoople AB, before applying for a patent in 2007. Field tests began in 2008 and Peepoople began promoting the product through the likes of the World Health Organisation and the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation (UNSGAB).

The project's initial launch coincided with the UN-declared International Year of Sanitation in 2008, an effort to solve the sanitation crisis and achieve the

**Our profession should be resourceful in using its range of skills to solve problems beyond the built environment**



Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability, which entails halving the number of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015. 'That seems very unrealistic today,' says Wilhelmson. 'We are modest about what we believe we can achieve. But in the long run, we're talking hundreds of millions.'

Field tests were successfully carried out in December in Kibera (pictured above), Africa's largest slum, which houses one million people in around two square miles of Nairobi, Kenya. 300 people used the Peepoo bag for a month before completing questionnaires and attending focus groups. Peepoople is now in talks to establish

long-term funding and production is expected to begin by the end of this year.

'As architects, we have to tackle problems,' explains Wilhelmson. 'Architecture is engagement. And you could take a share of your time to be engaged in major problems.' Is it that not enough people care? 'We need to care more, that's for sure,' he replies. Ultimately, Wilhelmson believes that the Western world has a lot to learn, in the event we face our own crises in years to come. 'Since we are engaged in these areas, we learn a lot which we can use for tackling problems at home. Their need could be the answer to our problems as well.'



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LONDON, UK

# From the Seagram Building to the big screen: Lambert retains her fighting spirit

CHRISTINE MURRAY

www.cca.qc.ca

'I don't think I'm a legend,' snaps architectural philanthropist Phyllis Lambert with her trademark sharp tongue. 'I just have work to do, and there's more to be done.'

I meet Lambert at the Architectural Association (AA) in London, where the charmingly brash 82-year-old, once described by American architect Peter Eisenman as a 'force of nature', has commandeered AA director Brett Steele's office for our interview, where she sits, impatiently sipping a cappuccino.

She's in London to introduce a short film about her life – *Citizen Lambert: Joan of Architecture* (2007), directed by Teri Wehn-Damisch – which is screening at the AA after we speak. The film paints Lambert as a kind of architecture superhero: world-leading patron and developer, saviour of vast swathes of dilapidated city, inveterate collector of architectural artefacts, and founder of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), the research centre and museum which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

Central to the film is the story of Lambert as the newly-divorced 28-year-old daughter of Canadian whisky baron Samuel Bronfman, who threatened to disown her father

if he didn't hire Mies van der Rohe to design his new Seagram Building in Manhattan. Lambert was named director of planning on the project, and the building opened in 1958.

The octogenarian Lambert is no less phenomenal than her precocious 28-year-old self. With her close-cropped brown hair, Kohl-lined eyes and tailored suit, she looks at least 20 years younger than she should. There's also a restlessness to Lambert, as though she is constantly fighting to contain her energy and ideas. She speaks in intermittent blurts, worrying her sugar packet and cup with her hands, placing them to one side, then moving them back again.

We begin by discussing her relationship with Mies (Lambert is currently writing a book about the Seagram Building, due to be published in 2010). She had no architectural training when she first worked with him, and the experience was formative.

**'To build a marvellous building in the city – especially in 1954, when it was the beginning of a new idea about what architecture could be – it was a fantastic thing to be able to do,'** says Lambert.

The experience led her to study architecture, first at Yale University, and then at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where Mies

was head of school. 'First of all, I was the client,' says Lambert, who earned her Masters in 1963, 'then I was the student.'

It was a great partnership: Mies played mentor to Lambert, while Lambert used her influence to further his career, recommending him as architect for both the Toronto-Dominion Centre (1967-1969) and Montreal's Westmount Square (1967). But their relationship also went beyond mentor or client. 'Mies was not exactly a person you hit on the back and said, "Hey old boy, how are you?"' Lambert says, laughing. 'He was a fairly formal person, but we were friends, as much as he was friends with anybody.'

Mies' influence left a mark on Lambert's early buildings, especially her Saidye Bronfman Centre in Montreal (1968). Other completed projects include her role as architect (with Gene Summers) and developer of the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles and as client and consulting architect of the CCA building in Montreal (with architect Peter Rose).

If her projects as a practicing architect are few, it's because soon after graduating, Lambert transformed into an activist-cum-philanthropist, using her vast inherited wealth to meddle in conservation. 'When I was taking courses in urban history, I saw the cities around me –

Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati – where great buildings were being knocked down, and it just seemed like such a waste. At some point, I had to decide what I was going to do.'

Lambert founded *Héritage Montréal* in 1975, a non-profit organisation dedicated to urban conservation. In 1979, she helped save the Milton-Parc neighbourhood in Montreal from demolition and founded a non-profit housing cooperative.

'Milton-Parc was already partially demolished, but there were some very strong people living there who were anarchists,' says Lambert. 'We helped them form a society and purchase all the buildings and renovate them. And I've kept doing that.' Lambert is currently involved in the privately-funded regeneration of low-income neighbourhoods in Montreal, as well as a project to revitalise the city's downtown west quarter.

'It's not to save old buildings,' Lambert says irately, when I suggest as much – she has a short fuse for wrong-headed ideas. 'It's about saving a quality of life. Buildings represent that. I don't think anything should be knocked down unless it has to be.'

'So many people look at buildings as objects, but they're not objects, they're part of the city,' she adds. 'And cities are made up of wonderful places



and not so wonderful places.'

Of all her disparate achievements, I ask Lambert what she would like to be remembered for, but she waves the question away. 'I just love what I'm doing,' she says. 'I find it exciting.'

'I love what the CCA is doing. We have these superb collections, which in our early years we made exhibitions with, but now we're discussing things, with shows like *Sense of the City*; 1973; *Sorry, Out of Gas*; and *Actions: What You Can Do With the City*,' says Lambert, who seems to address every topic of conversation with equal passion.

As we prepare to leave for the screening, I ask Lambert if she thinks the economic crisis will be good for architecture. 'Who knows? What's happening in New York is terrible...' she begins, but then seems to change her mind.

'It was wonderful last time, because it got rid of all those lousy developers,' she says, pausing. 'What it does do is give time for people to work, if they can feed themselves. Certainly, during the war Mies was able to work on a lot of projects, because no one was building.'

And then our time is up. Lambert 'Joan of Architecture' is off, out the door and down the stairs, to where her life, rewritten as legend, is about to unfurl on the AA screen.





NAPLES, ITALY

# Monsters from outer space, disguised as a cloud of carbon emissions, creep ever closer to the earth while we carry on as usual

ADRIAN HORNSBY



During his American presidency (1981-89), Ronald Reagan mused repeatedly on how easily the world would come together if faced with an invasion of monsters from outer space. A quarter of a century later, Reagan's monster is perhaps finally coming into view – not in the form of an extraterrestrial aggressor, but as an awesome cloud of our own emissions.

Climate change is out there, breathing global doom, and, sure enough, it is urging nations to rally round and act as one. We gather, we talk, we convene world experts. We place our faith in the Kyoto Protocol, and now, as architects and urbanists, in Kyoto of the Cities – an idea launched at a conference of the same name held in Naples at the end of March.

The notion of a binding universal threat was inculcated in the opening address by Crispin Tickell, a leading environmentalist who outlined ecological armageddon before concluding that we are all microbes upon the surface of an apple. Well and good, but an awful blow was then dealt to Reagan's theory of monster-inspired unity. What emerged from the following presentations was less the sense of a coherent organised response, and much more that of miscellaneous acts of scrambling, dreaming and catalepsy.

Particularly difficult to synthesise was the broad, if passionate gloom of Tickell and other government-side actors, and the minutiae of practitioners operating within their individual fields. Franco Becchis, scientific director at the Fondazione per l'Ambiente, memorably delved deep into the pricing arcana of CHP (combined heat and power) to surmise that it was a 'black box'. On the other hand, Fabio Grazi of the Centre International de Recherche sur l'Environnement et le Développement used a black box of his own to demonstrate a 0.05 per cent gain in GDP against the BAU (business-as-usual) scenario by 2067 if we densify the city by 40 per cent today. Among streams of graphs and predictions lurked an unmistakable dataphilia – much of it primarily seemed for

the simple joy of creating complex-cloud graphics. How any of this might link together was almost too dangerous to ask.

On one side of a difficult chasm were ideas, mostly coming out of academic institutions and think tanks. On the other were stories of those working in implementation, where failures abound not because of technical shortcomings, but because it's so hard to make things change.

The fear that the world will sail, business-as-usual in spite of all the rhetoric, direct into the jaws of the climate change monster, permeated the conference. Tickell – himself a senior advisor to successive UK prime ministers – spoke of 'the relative failure of governments', while at the same time crying, 'let's not kid ourselves this can be left to the whims of the market'. Investor lock-in was identified as a significant impediment to change, whereby the vast volumes of capital required to build our current energy, waste and transport infrastructure rather demand that we continue using it.

To some extent, while we delight in talking climate change but continue in our love for the motor car, for the five-pound flight, for power on tap, for low-rise residential, for buying and discarding cheap things, for all foods in all seasons, there are problems. The befuddling of facts with ideologies is no small barrier. Bill Watts, senior partner at Max Fordham Consulting Engineers, coolly noted that the biggest step towards improving a building's environmental performance is usually just good management. It is one thing to contemplate technologies for tomorrow, but there is a commitment gap if we cannot even read meters and turn off lights today.



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# Shape-itecture is dead. In Cannes they debate the low-carbon future

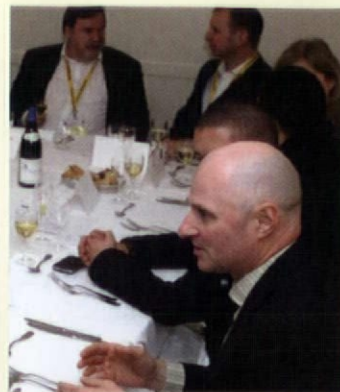
RORY OLCAYTO

The end of 'shape-itecture' and 'iconitis'. Community-driven developments. Loose-fit office design. A return to medieval building techniques and making green design a client's must-have. These were just some of the topics discussed at the AR/Protek roundtable at the MIPIM property fair in Cannes in March.

The focus was tall buildings, but the debate soon mutated into a free-for-all on how the recession and climate change might reshape the profession. Stephen Reinke of Woods Bagot wondered if Dubai, badly hit by the global downturn, might soon resemble the ending of *Planet of the Apes*, which shows the Statue of Liberty half-buried in sand. 'Will we see the tip of the Burj poking out of the desert? I don't

think so. But the architecture in the Gulf might just become a bit more rational, and the urbanism a bit more connected. Shape-itecture is dead.'

Lebanese architect Nabil Gholam said environmentally aware developers were emerging in Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who were no longer afflicted by 'iconitis'. Karen Cook of KPF said projects such as Foster + Partners' under-construction zero-carbon Masdar City in Abu Dhabi were evidence of the shift from shapemaking towards 'quality urban placemaking'. Clients are responding to ideas about habitation, according to Cook, where before the visual image was king. But Cook was unsure of the project's impact on office



design. 'You can't save the world by making one office building greener... you have to fundamentally change the whole idea of thousands of people working together in a building.' Allford Hall Monaghan Morris director Simon Allford suggested a loose-fit approach to office design. 'Create big, raw spaces and put in the M&E and other services only when the building is let. We need to design buildings we can add to.'

Backing Allford, developer Roger Zogolovitch called for architects to lead a new approach to development. 'Most people feel most comfortable in their own neighbourhood. We need a mechanism to allow a community to invest in their own place - to create genuinely mixed-use environments.'

Architect Joumana Arida called on architects to eschew technology-based solutions in the drive for low-energy design, while RIBA president Sunand Prasad urged the profession to calibrate existing stock ahead of energy-conscious new-build ideas. Then Alex Tosetti of engineer URS issued a warning: 'There is now only one concern for architects: low-carbon design. If that is not your starting point, we're all doomed.'

## AWARDS

# Copper in Architecture Awards

CATHERINE SLESSOR

www.copperinfo.co.uk/arch

The 2009 European Copper in Architecture Awards have just been launched. These biannual awards recognise architectural excellence and celebrate the use of copper and its alloys, such as bronze and brass.

The last two decades have

seen the transformation of the awards from a UK-based programme into a major, design-led event for projects across Europe (AR November 2007).

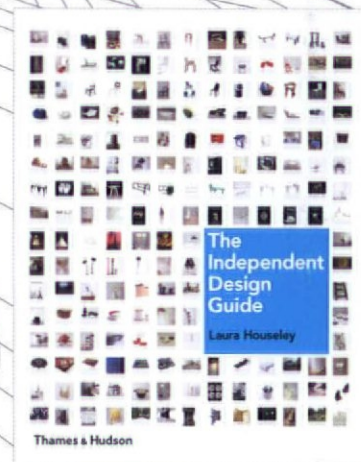
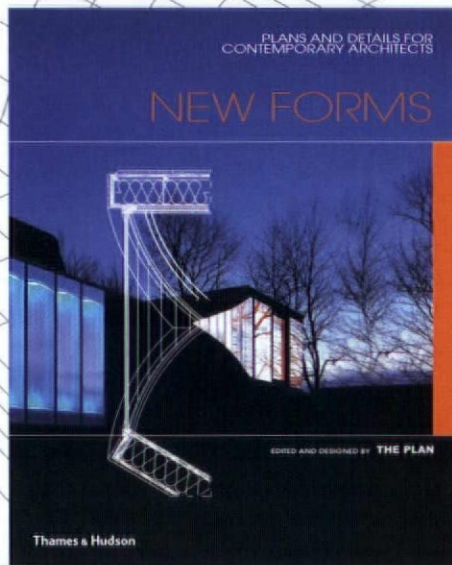
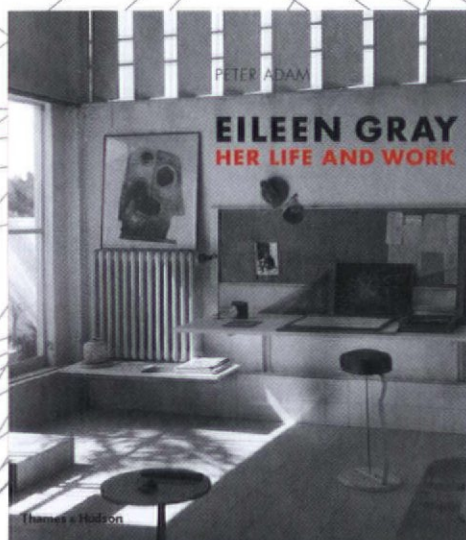
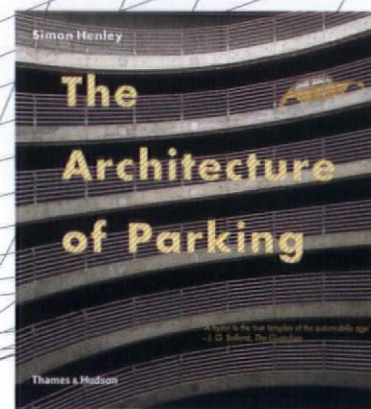
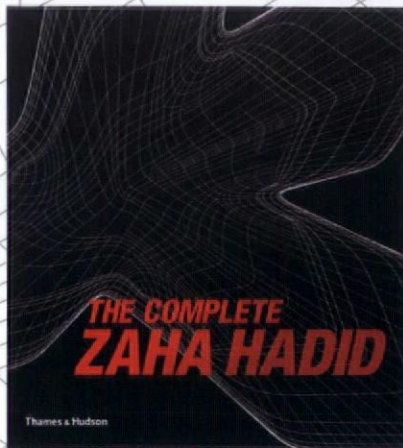
This evolution reflects the increasing popularity of copper

from an aesthetic, technical and environmental standpoint. Winning and shortlisted projects will be featured in a special issue of the AR, which will be available at the World Architecture Festival (WAF), due to be held in Barcelona

during November. Entries will be judged by a panel of architects chaired by Paul Finch, editor emeritus of the *Architectural Review* and programme director of WAF. The closing date for entries is 31 May.



# Sixty years of making a splash



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### Gira InfoTerminal Touch

The Gira InfoTerminal Touch controls and automates intelligent building technology from the Gira Instabus KNX/EIB system. The 5.7" TFT touch display is easy and intuitive to operate and the user menu is freely definable. Convenient: the device is network-capable, meaning for example that news services in RSS 2.0 format can be subscribed to and fault messages can be sent per e-mail. Awarded the red dot and Plus X awards. More information can be found at: [www.gira.com/infoterminaltouch](http://www.gira.com/infoterminaltouch)

Fig.: Gira InfoTerminal Touch, glass black





# BUILDINGS

## 036

PAGE 058

ELEANOR AND WILSON  
GREATBATCH PAVILION

LOCATION BUFFALO,  
NEW YORK, USA

ARCHITECT TOSHIKO MORI

Former chair of architecture at Harvard, Toshiko Mori's pavilion uses minimal styling to sensitively frame this prairie-style visitor complex

## 037

PAGE 062

SEAN O'CASEY  
COMMUNITY CENTRE

LOCATION DUBLIN, IRELAND

ARCHITECT O'DONNELL  
+ TUOMEY

## 039

PAGE 078

JUVET LANDSCAPE HOTEL

LOCATION GUDBRANDSJUVE,  
NORDDAL, NORWAY

ARCHITECT JENSEN & SKOVVIG

## 038

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KÖPENICK LIBRARY

LOCATION BERLIN-KÖPENICK,  
GERMANY

ARCHITECT BRUNO FIORETTI  
MARQUEZ ARCHITEKTEN

## 040

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NEUES MUSEUM

LOCATION BERLIN, GERMANY

ARCHITECT DAVID  
CHIPPERFIELD ARCHITECTS

## 035

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PUBLIC HOUSING

LOCATION PARIS, FRANCE

ARCHITECT JAKOB +  
MACFARLANE ARCHITECTS

## 034

PAGE 040

SAN GIACOMO CHURCH

LOCATION FOLIGNO,  
UMBRIA, ITALY

ARCHITECT MASSIMILIANO E  
DORIANA FUKSAS STUDIO

Fuksas works his artistic flair to create a modest yet awe-inspiring church, with a visual simplicity that belies its structural complexity



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034

**SAN GIACOMO CHURCH**

LOCATION

**FOLIGNO, UMBRIA, ITALY**

ARCHITECT

**MASSIMILIANO E DORIANA  
FUKSAS STUDIO**

WRITER

**ROB GREGORY**

PHOTOGRAPHY

**STEFANO TOPUNTOLI**







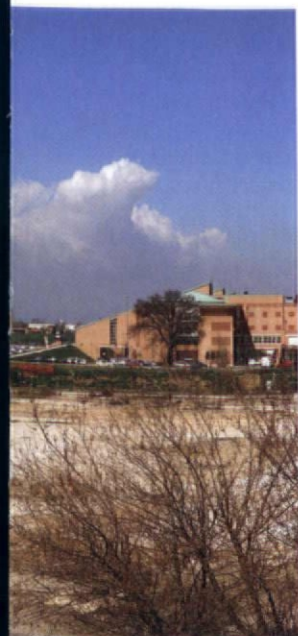


**I WAS TIRED OF SEEING  
SO MUCH GLASS. IN MILAN,  
THERE WAS SO MUCH STEEL  
AND ALUMINIUM. SO I SAID:  
'I WANT TO BUILD A WALL'**

MASSIMILIANO FUKSAS







Previous page\_ With the Apennines to the south and east, San Giacomo sits in stark contrast to the Umbria's distinctive topography

Above\_ Still in its scrubby landscape, the buildings comprise two principal volumes: the cubic church and the parish complex

Left\_ The church's principal west front bears none of the structural tracery more commonly associated with ecclesiastic architecture

'This church will stand as a strong and innovative landmark... a symbol for the rebirth of the city and the territory after the earthquake' (2001).

This citation from the competition jury for the new San Giacomo Church in Foligno, in the Italian region of Umbria, has even greater significance today. In 1997, the region was devastated by an earthquake. Ten people were killed and many of Umbria's monuments and works of art were destroyed. Little did the jury know that, eight years later, just 18 days before the church's ceremonial inauguration, the region would be struck by another disaster of even greater magnitude.

The latest earthquake, which took place in early April, has killed many more people. With the death toll continuing to rise beyond 275 as the AR goes to press, the events will inevitably stir up mixed emotions among the congregation of this church. Many of them lost their homes in the 1997 earthquake and occupied this site in temporary accommodation. 'It was like a little town, for old people who lived without houses,' recalled an elderly local gentleman who joined our tour of the new building.

Forced to settle here, somewhat out on a limb, the homeless hundreds pulled together and formed a new congregation. This continued to thrive, outgrowing space available in the original and now restored San Giacomo church; a delightful structure in the old town that dates from 1402. Since then, the area has become the part of the town's westerly expansion, and in building a church this featureless site may, in normal circumstances, have invited architect Massimiliano Fuksas' trademark flamboyance. Fittingly, however, the completed building sees Fuksas in a more reflective, sombre mood, which has resulted in one of his most laconic buildings to date. When asked about the recent earthquake, he remains equally

succinct, saying, 'it is a disaster of incredible dimension'.

Designed while Fuksas' 2005 New Milan Trade Fair building was on site, were it not for his acknowledged unpredictability, it would be hard to explain how a single architect could produce two buildings of such contrasting character. The Trade Fair is a slick and highly resolved essay in high-tech expressionism, with a fluid glass veil linking vast convention halls and the sort of vital statistics that read like the ultimate architectural Top Trumps winner: surface area, 46,000m<sup>2</sup>; structural nodes, 32,000m<sup>2</sup>; glazed rhomboid frames, 38,929m<sup>2</sup>. In stark contrast, San Giacomo Church comprises two simple boxes, with a surface area of 1,293m<sup>2</sup> and no visible nodes. And while the architectural and technical challenge may seem insignificant by comparison, building this relatively modest church in such specific social circumstances has been a profound experience for Fuksas. 'I was tired of seeing so much glass,' he recalls. 'In Milan, there was so much steel and aluminium. So I said: "I want to build a wall."'

After the 1997 earthquake, such was the need among the community, it was clear that a new church was required in Foligno. The bishop ran an international competition, won by Fuksas. His design has hardly changed since, partly due to the sophistication of the bishop's brief and partly due to the clarity of Fuksas' concept. Comprising two principal elements, the cubic church measures 30 x 22.5m in plan and rises 25.8m high. Adjacent to this, the rectangular parish complex measures 52.4 x 12 x 8.3m high and contains sacristy, spaces for the pastoral ministry and the priest's house. Both elements are raised 1,500mm above grade, physically elevating the floor level above the landscape and hinting at the building's elevated civic status.

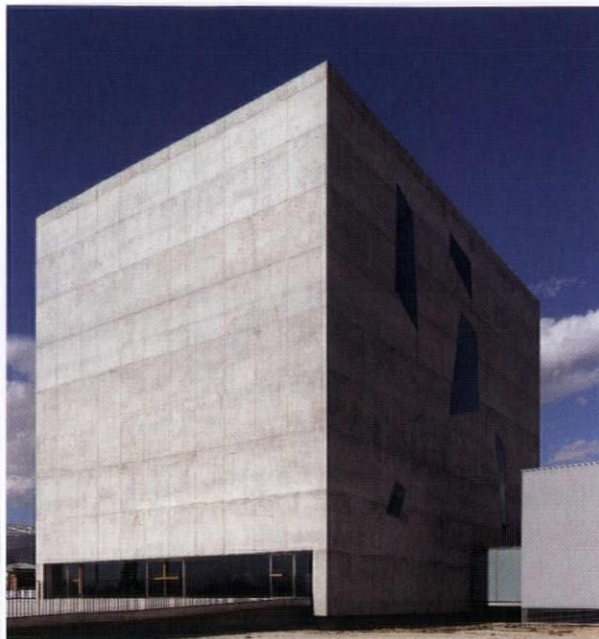
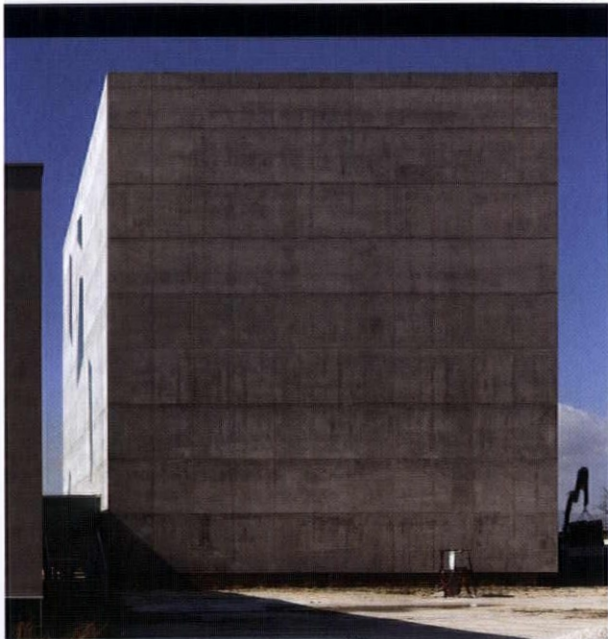
Approaching the entrance, rising up the gently inclined concrete apron, the exterior gives little away.

Some may notice the trapezoidal windows set flush within the flanking walls, described by Fuksas as cannons that fire light deep into the interior, but on axis all that welcomes the visitor is an expressionless, low-lying slot; a technical tour de force in itself. The facade screens the building's tectonic reality. As Fuksas puts it: 'You have to come inside. Outside, you don't fully understand. You may have some impression, but I am not a high-tech architect and I didn't want to explain the structural performance of the building – which is very high-performing indeed.' Without the sort of structural tracery more commonly associated with traditional ecclesiastical architecture, the building's complex structural matrix is concealed within the depth of the blind 800mm walls. On the west front, this comprises a regular grid of 'openings' filled with lightweight permanent formwork (600mm of rigid insulation) and encapsulated in a fair-faced concrete skin. To the north and south, a more intricate web was spun to accommodate Fuksas' visionary light cannons. 'I didn't want people to watch the technical performance of the building,' he said. 'Just standing in the space should be enough to create awe.'

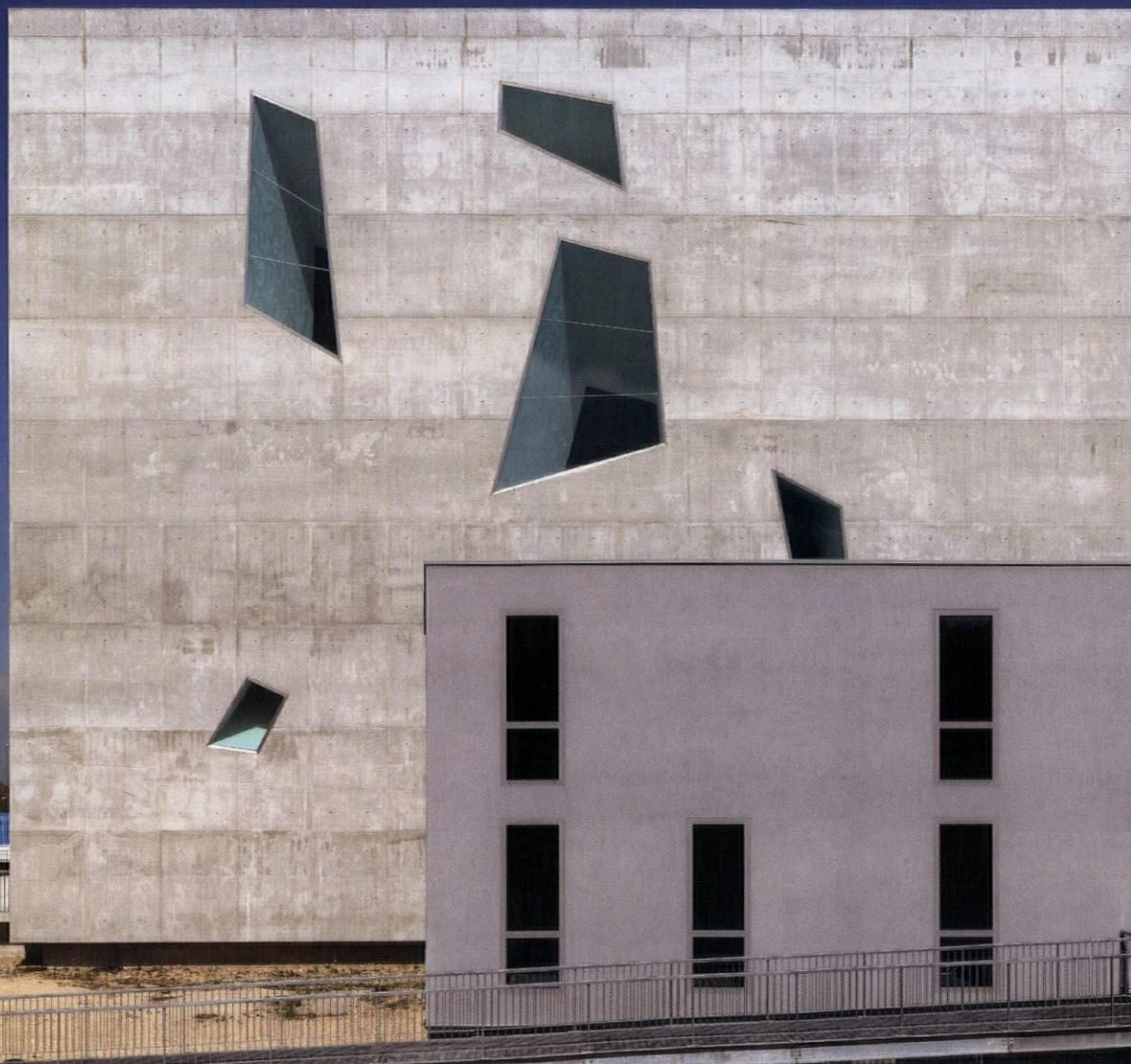
Once inside, the clarity of Fuksas' original concept remains true to his competition-winning perspective drawings, with an inner box suspended within the outer – a concept that derives from the traditional basilica format of nave and aisles. This has been reconfigured in the round, and is described by Fuksas as, 'a total rethinking of the church and its relationship with the faithful'. Rising up the ramp, entering a perimeter ambulatory, and reaching the heart of the house, is a progression that, in Fuksas' mind, enacts the mystery of faith, passing through and under a number of screens from one type of reality to another.

Despite the simplicity of the diagram, the ambience of the two spaces is surprisingly distinct. Lit —



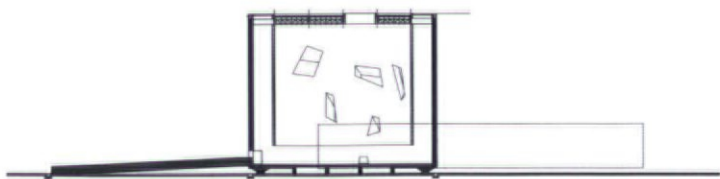


Far left\_ The east elevation is completely blank and will be used during outdoor services as a huge projection screen  
Left\_ On the oblique from the south-west, the day chapel links church and parish complex  
Below\_ Both structures are raised 1,500mm above grade and are accessed via gently inclined ramps

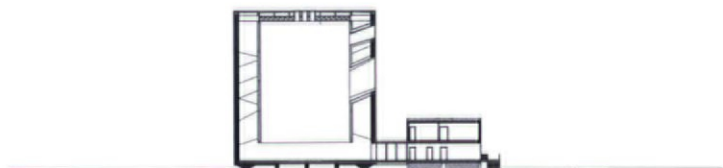




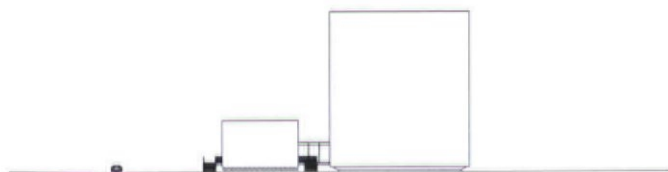
section looking north



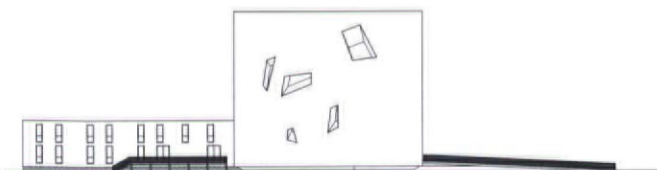
section looking east



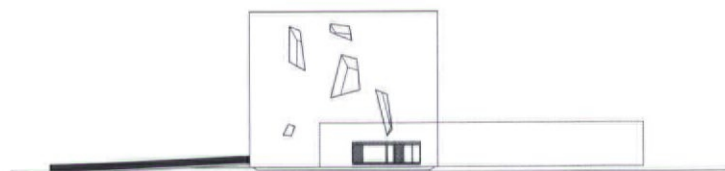
east elevation



north elevation




south elevation



west elevation



by rooflights, the perimeter 'aisle' is a bright, dramatically proportioned space. Strong directional light gives each aisle its own mood and, at a more detailed level, as the angle of light striking the walls changes, subtleties in the surface texture are revealed, amplifying the difference between the hand-finished inner skin and the cast concrete boundary. Unlike the outer box that bears on the ground, the inner box is suspended from above, apparently supported by the irregular light cannons. In reality, however, the whole element is supported by a steel framework finished in lightweight sprayed concrete. The box hovers slightly higher than the building's entrance slot, casting a subtle shadow on the floor that defines the church's centralised place of worship. Within this nave, Fuksas designed all the lighting and furniture, with elegant oak pews and prayer rails that can be arranged in any configuration around an informal chancel, defined by a single-step plinth and the more robustly designed altar, lectern and bishop's chair, carved from solid pietra caciotta, a local soft stone which, once cut, hardens to form a tougher, marble-like finish. Three simple slots above this space provide a trinity of light rays that scan around the nave during the day, while the distorted light cannons add their own drama.

The missing and essential component on our tour was the congregation for whom this structure was built. Meeting the elderly gentleman who recalled the community's temporary residential compound communicated something of the local people's pride in this new building. Standing as it does with such defiance, set against the backdrop of the Apennine mountains that trace the trajectory of the geological fault line, there is a palpable sense that this building, more than anticipated, will indeed become a powerful and much-loved symbol of the rebirth and resilience of this community. 

**ARCHITECT**  
Massimiliano e Doriana  
Fuksas Studio  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**  
Ing. Gilberto Sarti  
**SERVICES ENGINEER**  
Al Engineering  
**MAIN CONTRACTOR**  
Ediltecnica Spa

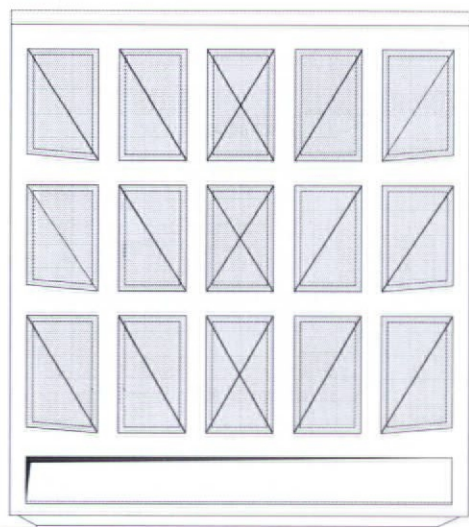


**YOU HAVE TO COME INSIDE.  
OUTSIDE, YOU DON'T FULLY  
UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURAL  
PERFORMANCE OF THE BUILDING**

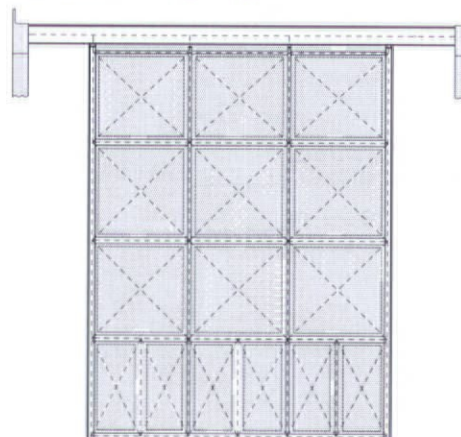
MASSIMILIANO FUKSAS

Right\_ The central space is lit in three ways: a trinity of slots in the ceiling, 10 light cannons, and suspended Fukas-designed lamps. The nave-and-aisle format has been reconfigured in the round, with a darker perimeter 'aisle' and a centralised chancel-cum-nave. Note that only one light cannon falls below the datum of the nave's suspended wall

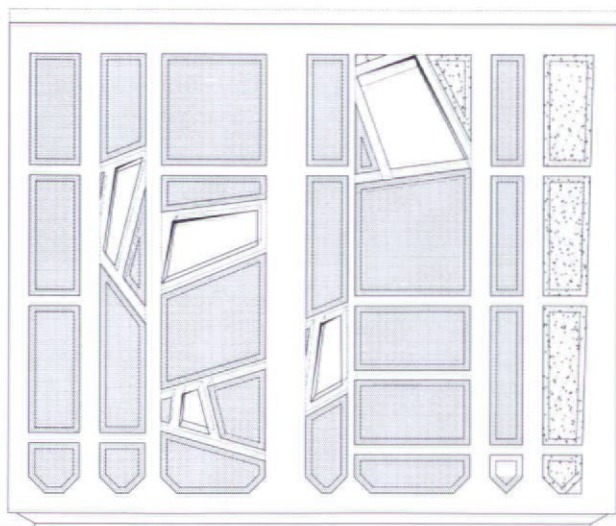
west elevation



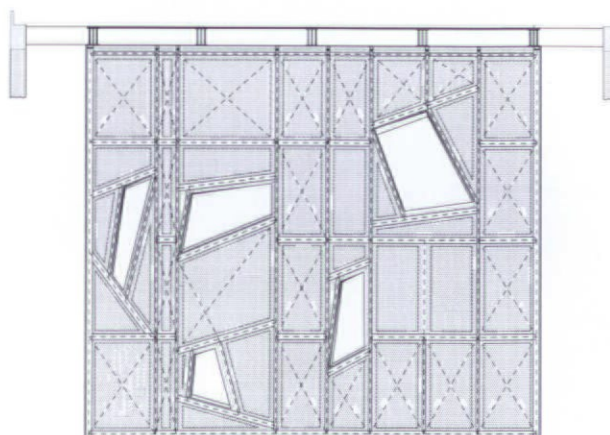
internal elevation (east-west)



elevation



internal elevation (north)

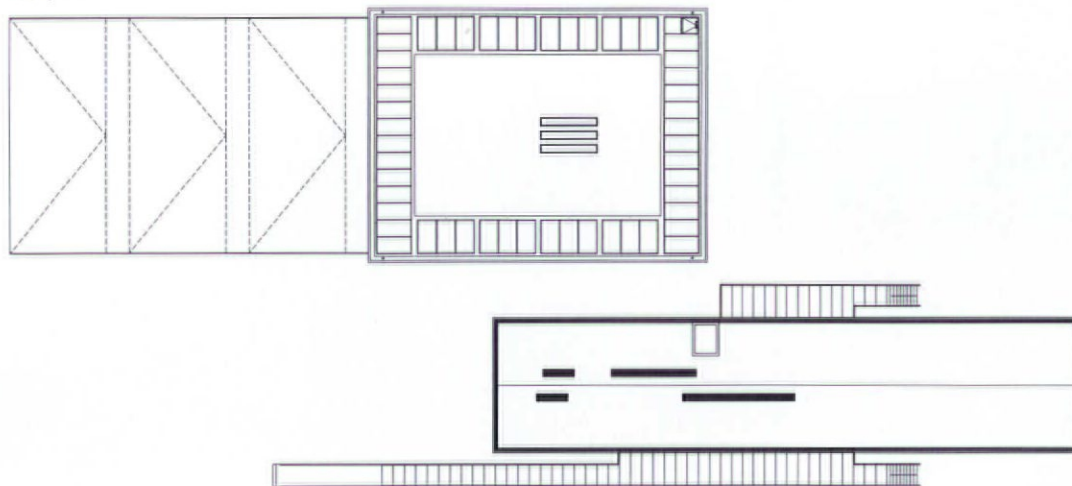




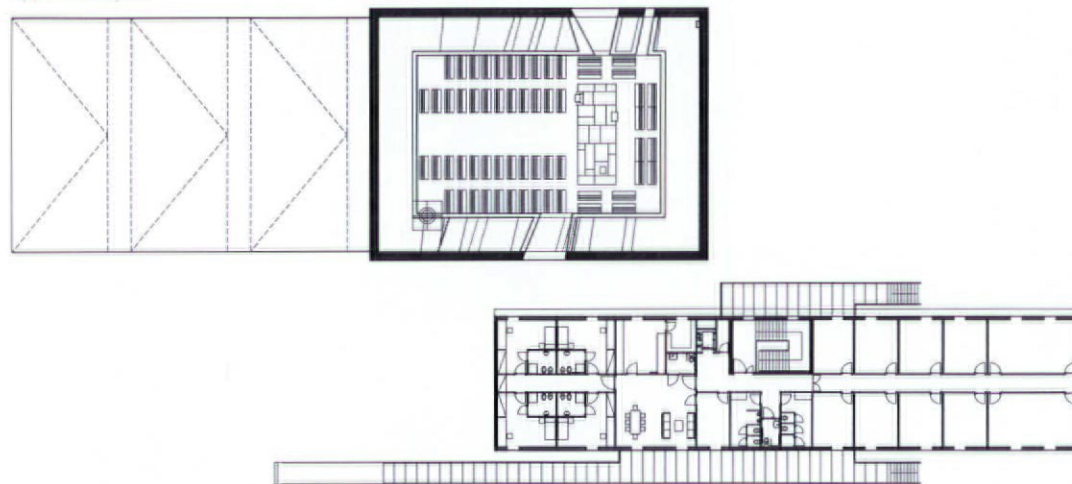




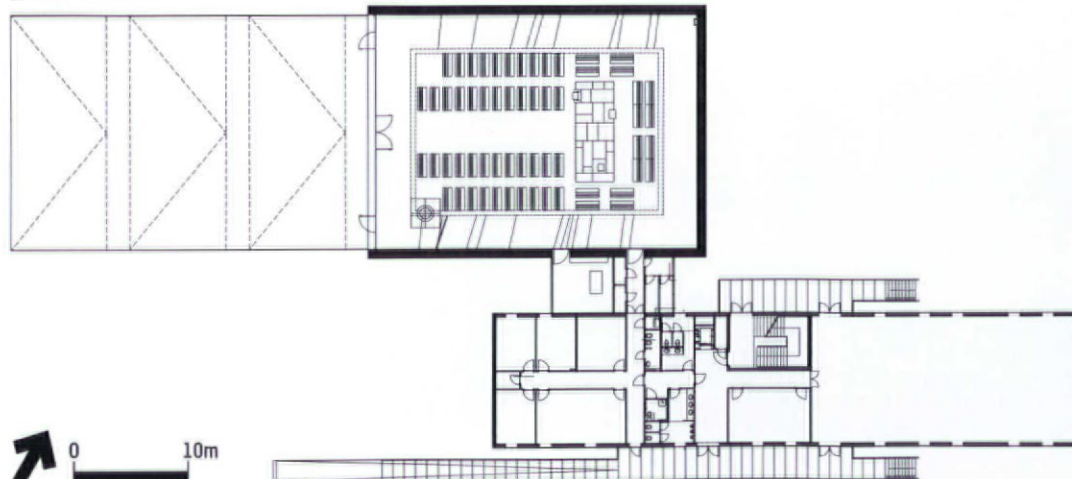
roof plan



upper-level plan



ground-floor plan



Right\_ The light cannons not only bring dramatic shafts of light into the space, but also give glimpses of Umbria's blue skies  
Far right\_ The ambience shifts between 'nave' and 'aisle' as light reacts differently against the rough hand-finished render and the smoother fair-faced concrete  
Below\_ Fuskas designed all the furniture and light fittings in the church







ROB GREGORY







035

**PUBLIC HOUSING**

LOCATION

**PARIS, FRANCE**

ARCHITECT

**JAKOB + MACFARLANE**

**ARCHITECTS**

WRITER

**CATHERINE SLESSOR**

PHOTOGRAPHY

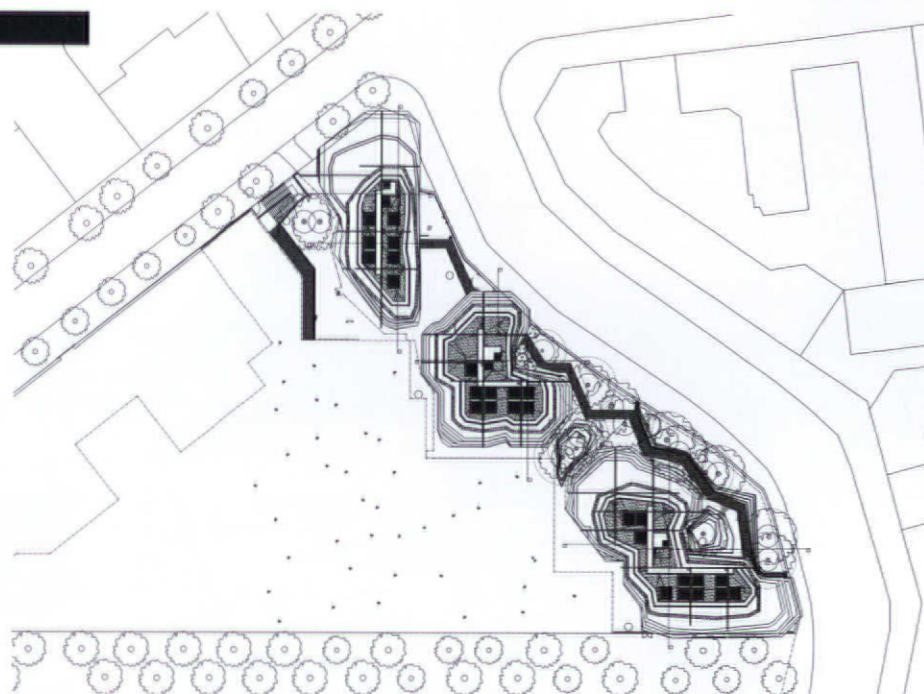
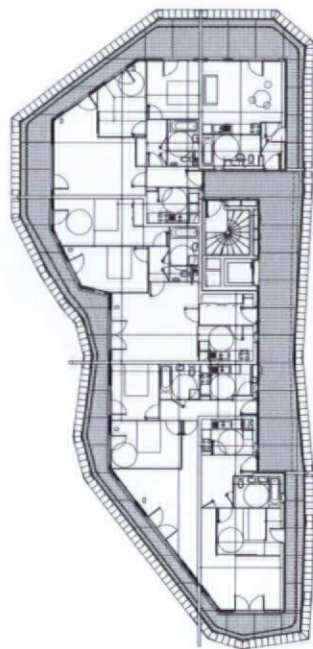
**PAUL RAFTERY**



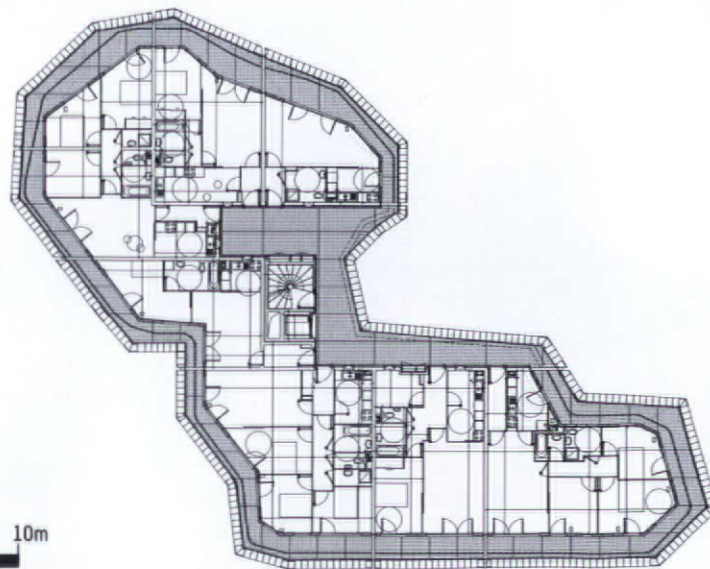




typical upper-level plan



site plan



Previous page\_  
Contoured like  
beehives, the softly  
curved forms of the  
new housing scheme  
are a distinctive  
presence in the  
Parisian cityscape  
Opposite\_ A rampart-  
like wall encloses  
and defines the  
north-east edge  
of the site. Parking  
is underneath  
the blocks and the  
sinuous forms defer  
to ancient trees







‘The trouble with social housing,’ muses Brendan MacFarlane, ‘is that it’s not evolving as a building type.’ It’s a bright spring day and we’re standing on a fifth-floor balcony of Jakob + MacFarlane’s new social housing complex in the 19th arrondissement of Paris. To the east, are the barracks-on-steroids of Belleville; to the south, tourist Paris and the dome of Sacré Coeur. MacFarlane’s observation is nothing new, but it’s a shaming fact that public housing still tends to get short shrift when it comes to investment of resources and architectural imagination. In Paris, the consequences of corralling people into marginalised *banlieues* continue to be revisited on planners, politicians and civil society. But how to change things? ‘We need new sorts of housing that can address issues such as altered family structures and environmental concerns,’ opines MacFarlane, a touch evangelically. ‘But even if people feel some generosity of spirit in the buildings

they inhabit, that would be a start. Tough places breed toughness.’ We contemplate the looming barracks of Belleville in chastened silence.

A drop in a murky ocean it may be, but MacFarlane’s new scheme is an attempt to propel a neglected building type a few rungs up the evolutionary ladder. It is formally inventive, its trio of six-storey blocks contoured like giant beehives. It has a generosity of spirit in the way space is used and proportioned, and in the relationship between private and communal areas. And it embraces environmental awareness both actively, with solar panels on the roof set to provide 65 per cent of the hot water supply, and passively, through factors such as orientation, shading and materials. Less familiar is its system of winter gardens, which employs curtains, like sweet wrappers, to envelop the facades, opening up large, perimeter balconies for use in colder months.

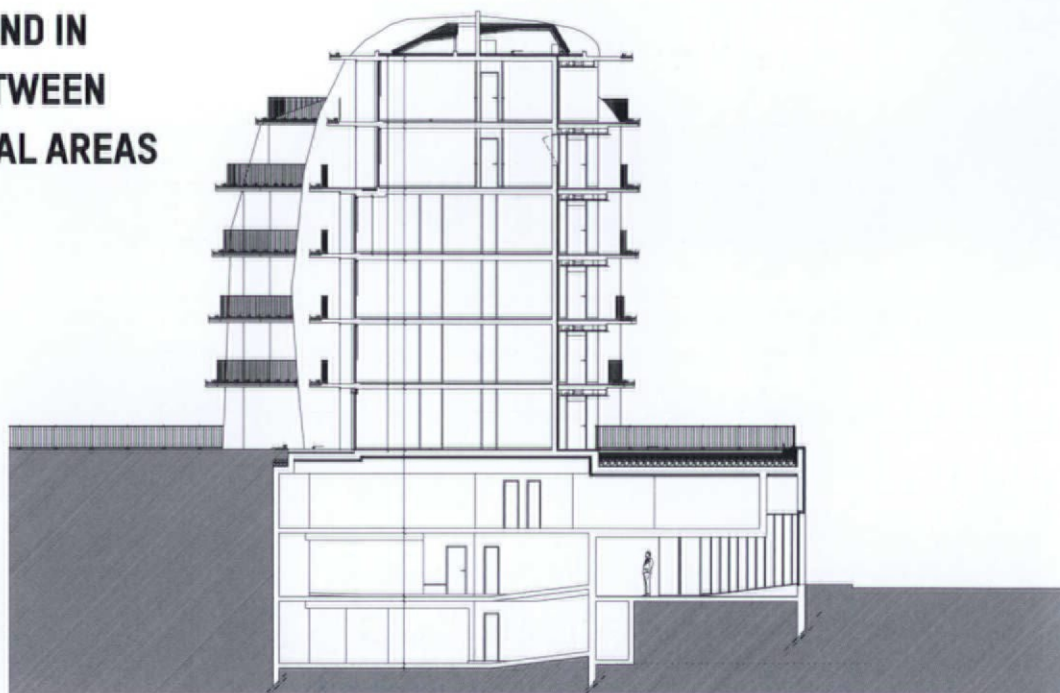
Despite previous failings, the current French system of procuring and designing public housing does

not always recoil from unorthodox thinking. Projects over a certain value are subject to design competitions and this was how Jakob + MacFarlane found themselves in the 19th arrondissement, a change from their Docks de Paris locale and programme (017, AR February 2009). Here, the brief was for 100 flats (including a proportion for disabled users), with parking and shops at street level. The budget was 14 million euros for a 6,600m<sup>2</sup> scheme, which MacFarlane says is ‘slightly above average’ for this sort of project. The roughly triangular site used to contain the Herold Hospital, a 19th-century institution demolished in the 1980s. Since then, the overall site has been gradually redeveloped, with a mid-rise block of flats for the elderly and a crèche. Jakob + MacFarlane’s plot completes the picture and the final flourish will be the transformation of the leftover portion into allotments and a park.

The land allocated for the housing is a narrow strip bounded on its north-east side by a winding road. —



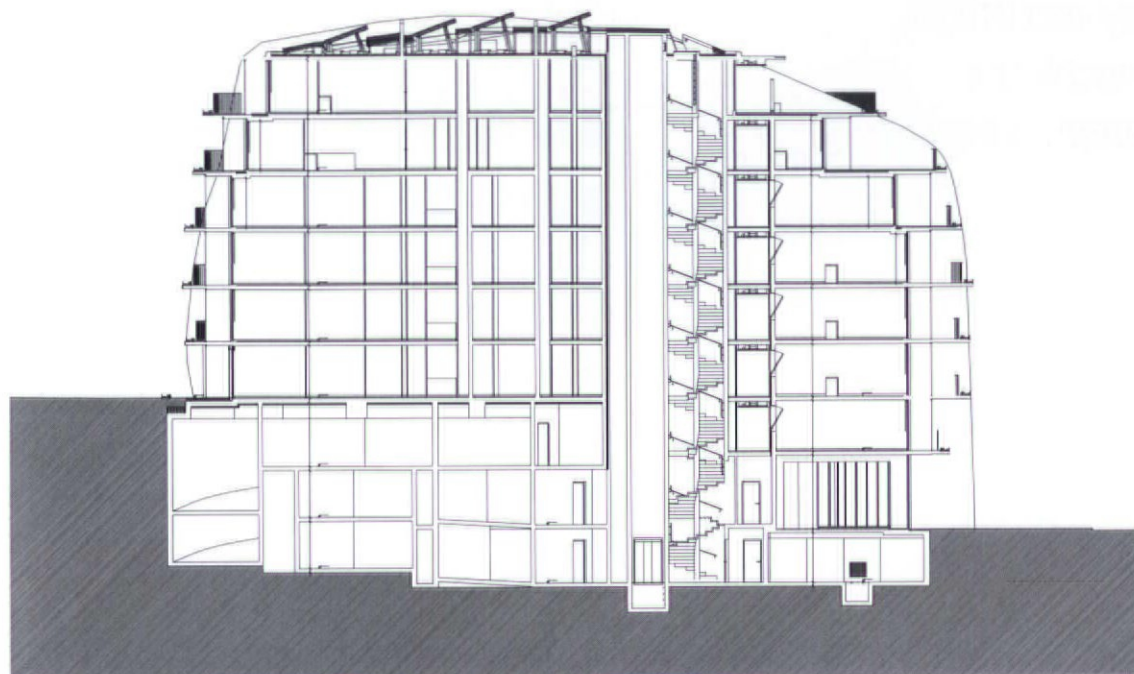
**IT HAS A GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT  
IN THE WAY SPACE IS USED  
AND PROPORTIONED, AND IN  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL AREAS**



typical cross section







typical long section

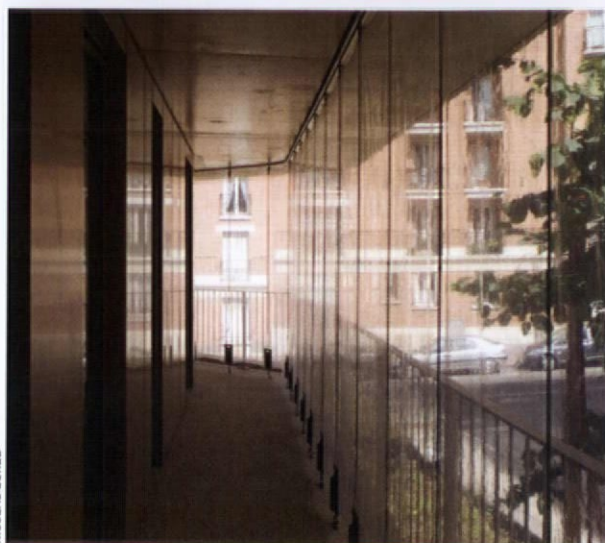
Below\_ Extensive perimeter balconies enhance each apartment. Facades are also animated by the random pattern of the winter garden curtains. The scrubby foreground is due to be transformed into a public park





**THE EFFECT IS LIKE BEING IN  
A BIOHAZARD TENT BUT THE  
SYSTEM DOES HAVE A PRACTICAL  
PAYBACK BY EXTENDING  
THE INTERNAL SPACES**

Below\_ Winter garden  
curtains are stowed  
when not in use  
Top right\_ Typical  
apartment interior  
with Belleville in  
the distance  
Right\_ Inside  
a winter garden,  
with curtains  
drawn and fixed  
Below right\_  
Balcony edges  
are automatically  
irrigated to encourage  
plant growth

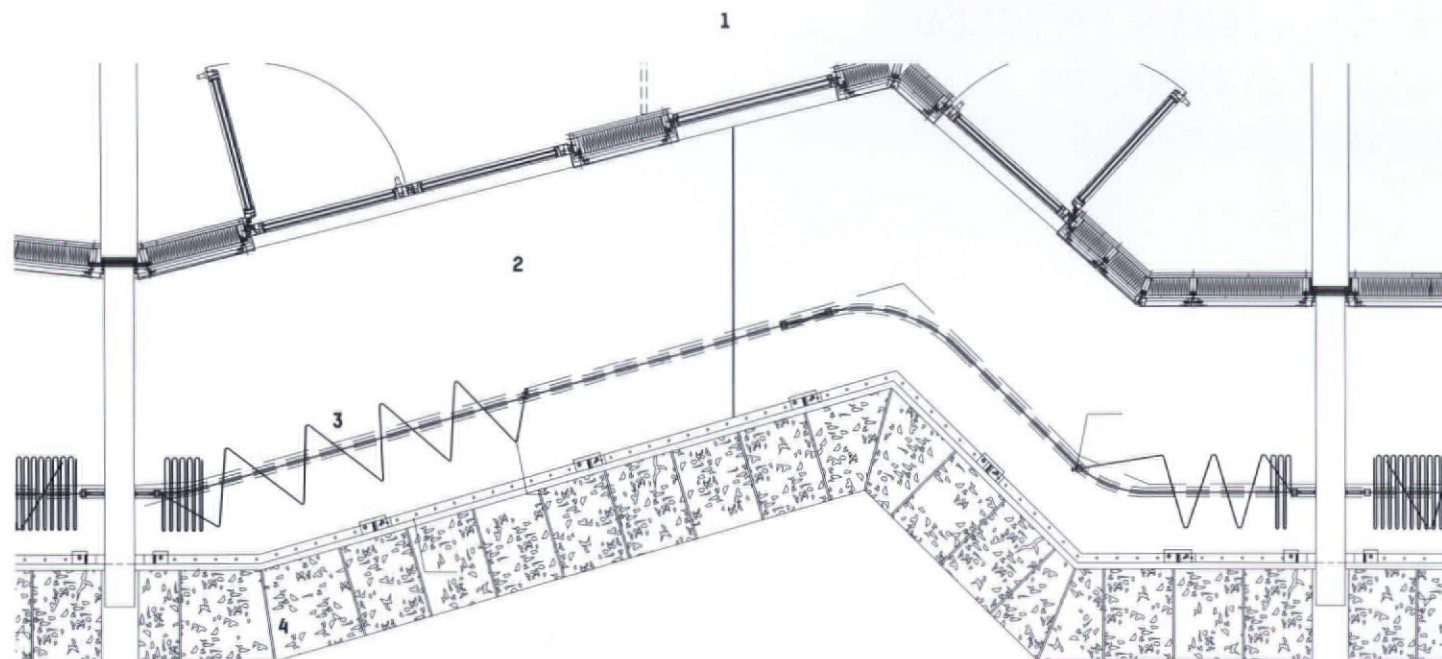


NICOLAS BOREL





- 1 living room
- 2 balcony/winter garden zone
- 3 curtain track
- 4 planted edge



detailed plan of typical balcony

The site drops two storeys to the road, and is partially excavated to conceal three subterranean levels of parking. Rubble from the excavations forms a huge rusticated wall that reinforces and defines the curved boundary of the street. The three apartment blocks sit on a datum above the rampart wall with geometries that respond very particularly to fixed conditions, such as the need to preserve a group of ancient trees, site views and Haussmann's historic rules governing building setbacks.


MacFarlane conceives the design process as a carving of an imaginary three-dimensional urban matrix, with the resulting forms smoothed and eroded, like the geological residue of a glacier. Each block has a different footprint and because the floors bulge and shrink, each of the apartments is unique. Flats are clustered around a central core of lift and spiral staircase, and private balconies extend all the way round each floor, expanding into larger communal terraces next to the circulation core.

MacFarlane envisages these terraces being used as informal sitting-out or play areas, all part of encouraging that elusive 'sense of generosity' by which unscripted spaces offer the potential to be used as the fancy takes.

Individual flats range from one to three bedrooms, with the ground floor set aside for disabled residents. Reflecting a similar spirit, there are no cramped, stingy corridors; instead, rooms flow fluidly into one another, separated by sliding doors. All flats enjoy double orientation, and all living rooms and bedrooms have access to balconies through full-height French windows. As they cantilever outwards, the floor slabs reduce in thickness and are edged with porous stone tiles, automatically irrigated to encourage moss and plant growth. The concrete is a warm and very un-concrete honey colour, achieved by the addition of mineral pigment.

The balconies can be sealed off by ETFE curtains, which were developed by a Dutch firm specialising in inflatable structures. The curtains

are anchored to the balcony slabs by a system of hooks to create a translucent membrane through which some air can penetrate. The effect is a bit like being in a biohazard tent but the slightly laborious system of anchoring does have a practical payback in that it extends the internal spaces, creating a habitable interstitial zone. As the blocks are still awaiting full occupation it will be fascinating to see how enthusiastically the system is taken up.

What matters, however, is that the potential is there and, despite being an untested system, MacFarlane found his developer client surprisingly receptive to the winter gardens and other ideas. 'Usually the aim is to minimise options,' he says dryly, 'as clients tend to be very risk averse.' Yet good architecture usually follows from imaginative patronage and, while public housing is rarely favoured with Guggenheim-style largesse, it's clear that a willingness to engage and experiment can reap tangible dividends. 

#### ARCHITECT

Jakob + MacFarlane  
Architects, Paris

#### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Batiserf Structures

#### SERVICES ENGINEER

Choulet

#### LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT

Cap Paysage



# 036

## ELEANOR AND WILSON GREATBATCH PAVILION

LOCATION

**BUFFALO, NEW YORK, USA**

ARCHITECT

**TOSHIKO MORI**

WRITER

**MICHAEL KUBO**

PHOTOGRAPHY

**PAUL WARCHOL**

It's fitting that Darwin D. Martin House should be symbolic of the renewal of modern architecture in Buffalo and in particular, the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright in the city. Martin, secretary for the Larkin Soap Company, was one of Wright's great patrons. The demolition of Larkin's headquarters, which Wright designed in 1904, stands as a notorious example of a US city's indifference to its architectural heritage and the same fate nearly befell the Martin House. After Martin's death, it suffered neglect and portions were destroyed and replaced by unsightly 1960s condominium blocks.

The University at Buffalo acquired the building in 1967 and the Martin House Restoration Corporation (MHRC) was set up in 1992. After renovation, in 2002 the MHRC invited five emerging firms to compete for the design of a pavilion that would open up Wright's complex to the public and provide a much-





needed centre to reintroduce visitors to the city's modern architecture. The winner was Toshiko Mori, a Japanese-American architect and former chair of architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, known for her concern with material innovation and conceptual clarity.

As private house became public institution, Mori based her design on inversion. Wright's overhanging roofs became an upturned canopy, signalling openness, while overlapping enclosures in plan became a visually extensive yet firmly defined rectangle of space. 'It's like a chess game,' says Mori. 'If Wright moves in brick, I use transparent glass; if he makes a hipped roof, I use an inverted roof.'


The result seems simple: four central piers, a roof and glass walls. Simplicity, however, requires technical innovation. What appears to be a cantilevered roof is in fact supported by a ring of solid, CNC-milled steel columns at the building's

perimeter, whose slender dimensions (only 70mm square) merge visually with the glass curtain wall to frame a panoramic view of the Martin House.

The pavilion minimises its visual presence and strengthens the experience of the house. 'It's an idea of anti-building,' says Mori, 'as opposed to the very powerful building of Wright.' This minimal design achieves a surprising degree of spatial complexity. The asymmetrical position of central piers creates a subtle weighting of distinct zones within the plan and a natural sequence between them. A compact entry space with ticket counter connects to a long, narrow area framed by a glass wall, which looks onto the Martin House. This in turn leads into a broader space containing display cases and interactive screens, both designed by the New York graphic design firm 2x4.

The role of information design in the experience of the pavilion

is significant. Mori's competition entry had a lower level containing auditorium and display areas underneath the lawn between the pavilion and house. The central pier was to house a staircase down to this level, framed by a double-height glass wall and a skylight above. As built, the pavilion is a single floor only. The central glass wall is used to project a film on to the Martin House, into the same space from which visitors look out over the complex.

This double-functioning allowed the square footage of the pavilion to be cut in half. It also strengthens its relationship to Martin House. Rather than simply containing information spaces, the pavilion frames a view enriched by information. The experience marks the culmination of a process more than 40 years in the making that gives new meaning to Wright's masterwork and extends Buffalo's tradition of architectural innovation into the present. 

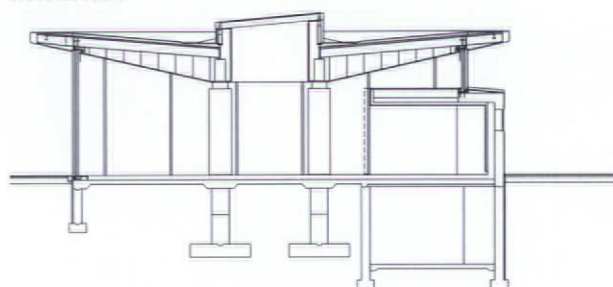




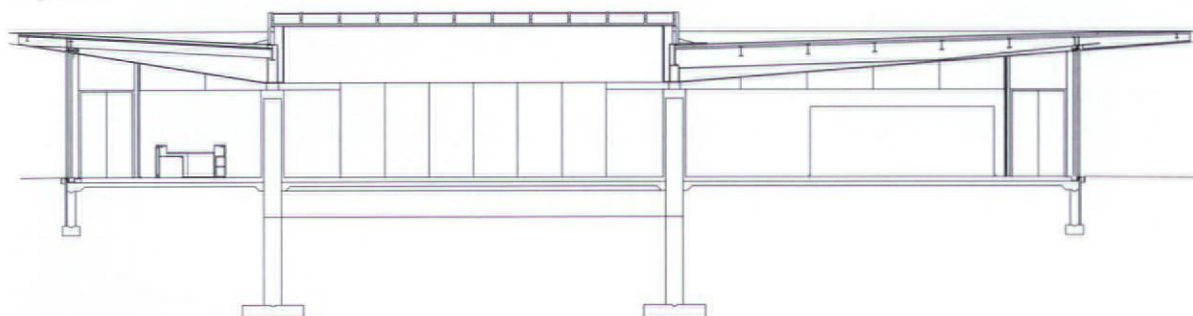
IT'S LIKE A CHESS GAME.  
IF WRIGHT MOVES IN BRICK,  
I USE TRANSPARENT GLASS;  
IF HE MAKES A HIPPED ROOF,  
I USE AN INVERTED ROOF

TOSHIKO MORI

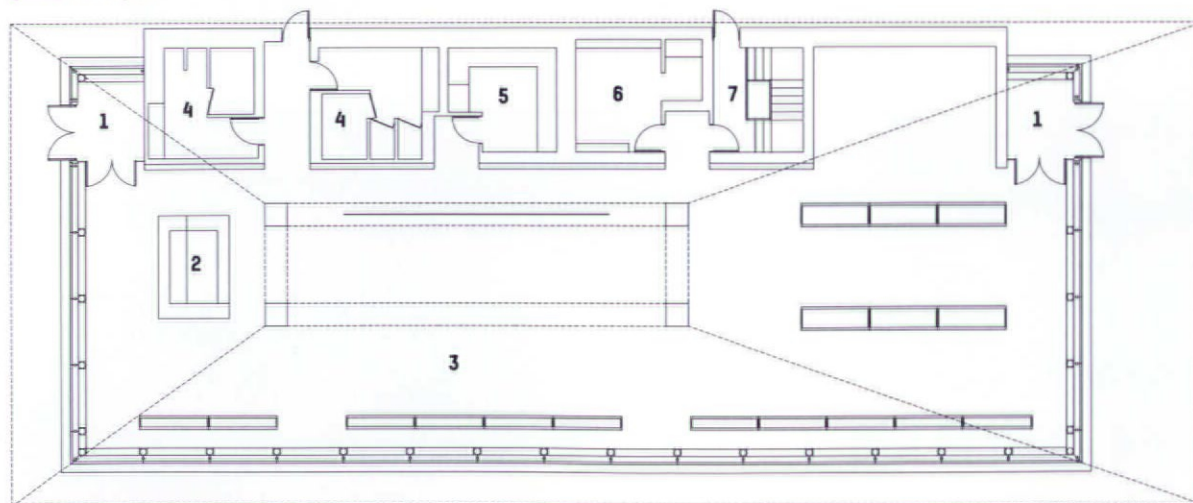
cross section



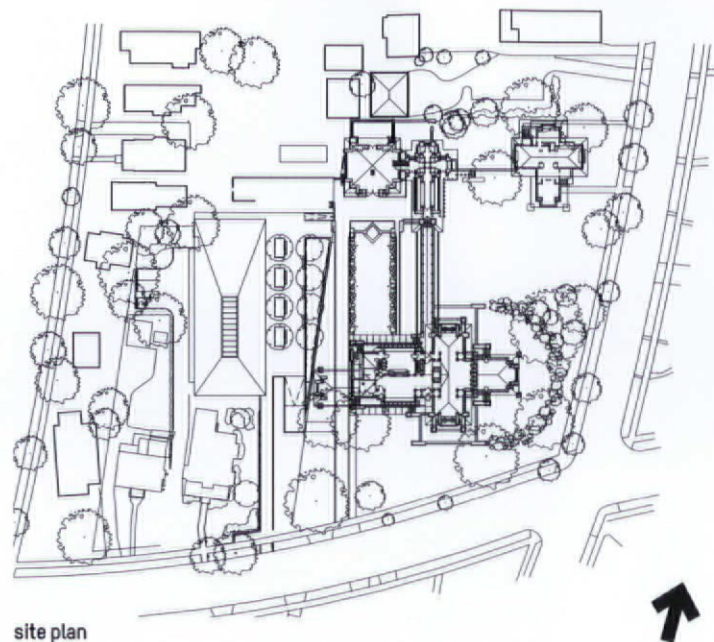
long section



ground-floor plan



- 1 entrance hall
- 2 ticketing
- 3 exhibition space
- 4 WC
- 5 kitchen
- 6 cloakroom
- 7 staircase

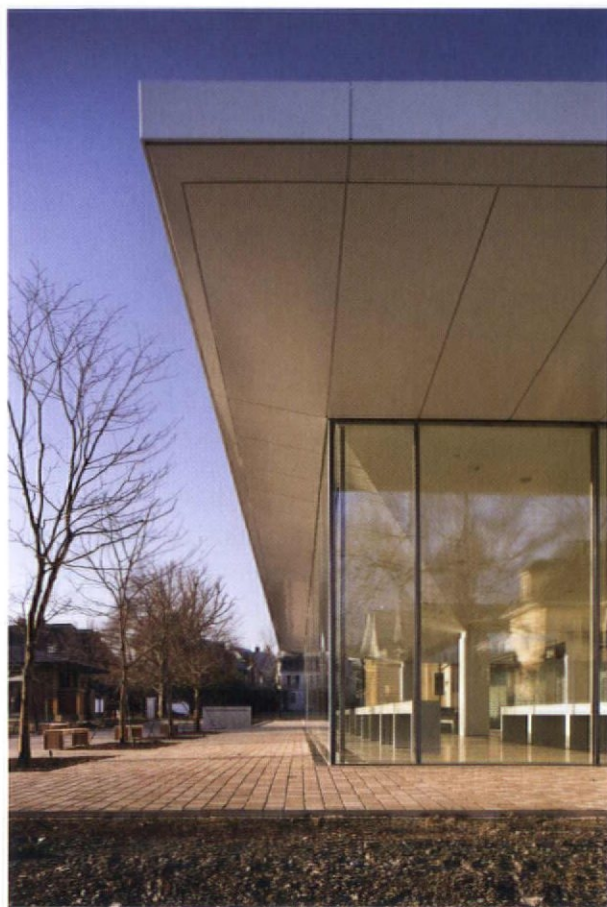
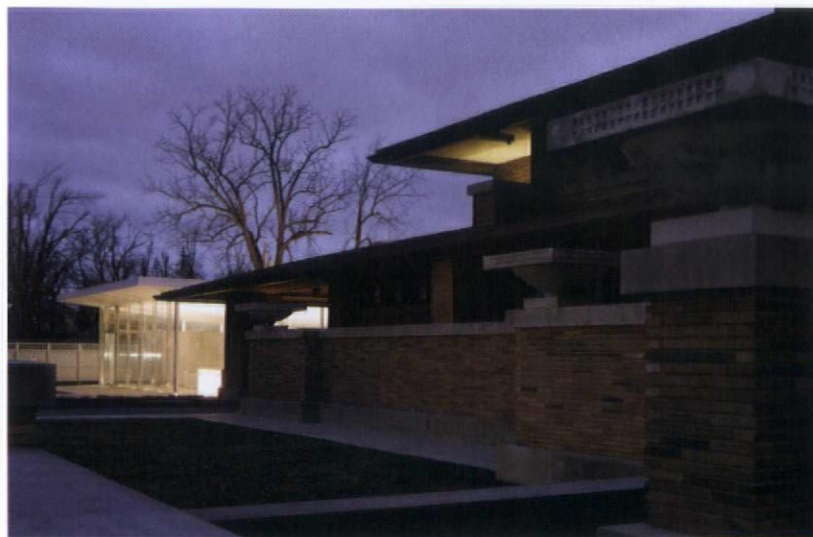


**ARCHITECT**  
Toshiko Mori, New York  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**  
Skidmore, Owings  
and Merrill, Chicago,  
Illinois  
**MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL  
ENGINEER**  
Landmark Facilities Group



Previous page\_ With an inverted roof supported on slim steel columns and glazed walls, the new pavilion is an elegantly minimal presence  
Above right\_ Mori's language of steel and glass is a consciously

lightweight foil to Wright's more rooted architecture of brick walls and hipped roofs  
Right\_ The Martin House framed by the pavilion  
Below\_ The inverted roof oversails the delicate walls of full-height glazing





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# 037

## SEAN O'CASEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

LOCATION

DUBLIN, IRELAND

ARCHITECT

O'DONNELL + TUOMEY

WRITER

KESTER RATTENBURY

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL MORAN

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O'Donnell + Tuomey's Sean O'Casey Community Centre building in Dublin is both simple and elusive, direct and subtle. Its unexpected tower sits up above the little coloured houses of the old docking community of East Wall with animal alertness – a gopher, perhaps, with its own holes to vanish down. Those consummate 'Irish rationalists' at O'Donnell + Tuomey often produce buildings with a powerful, elusive character of their own, but this one seems unusually cheeky. You might think this building is about self-expression. But in many ways, it's entirely the opposite.

East Wall is three-quarters cut off by railway lines, with one big church and a school. Now, of course, it's neighbour is the business district of the Docklands Development Authority, which has funded the replacement for the school which once occupied the site. As numbers of children dwindled, the previous building was gradually converted to community use, and regularly staged

performances of the tragic-comic plays of Sean O'Casey, East Wall's most famous son. The residents wanted a very high building, explains John Tuomey. 'They said: "Everyone else has got one."'

That was, maybe, the first of the paradoxes which make this consummate building what it is. The residents wanted that tower (how right they were), but all the uses called for a ground floor: crèche, day care, sports and theatre. So the architects made the building a single-storey square, but with its fourth edge flipped up to make the tower. The bits that are usually the duller – offices, meeting rooms – get to go in it.

But there's a more fundamental paradox. The brief had the ingredients of a wonderful, open, social community building: a mix of uses; old people and young, day and night. But in the reigning sensibility, those uses have to remain strictly separate. Old people are not, in the present culture, allowed to mix with pre-school children, or even watch them

being cared for. People going to the theatre and people playing sports are thought of as different. The whole substance of O'Donnell + Tuomey's building, while admitting those constraints as a working necessity, utterly overturns them both in how the building feels now, and in how it might come to work in the future.

So while obeying all the current rules, the building promotes, and in some visual ways works, as though it was already in a more cooperative, less paranoid world. 'It's all about plan,' says Tuomey. It is further designed so that with the slightest of changes – the odd wall to come down or be glazed – that ideal might come fully into being, perhaps even by accident.

It's a brilliant, disingenuous architectural idealism, whose guerrilla tactics can only really be spotted in that beautiful plan. It is square, but only if you include the pavement as part of the building. It is divided into four, but those divisions – transparent, casual and arbitrary – are far less important than the geometry that hooks them together, opening spaces across them. The square shapes are dented, slanted and cut by desire lines, gardens, openings, views – the things you actually look for – making visual and spatial groupings between uses supposed to be segregated. Meanwhile the building elements that express divisions or structure (the places architecture expects to be most polemical) do all they can to utterly disappear.

But as someone using it, the building is just dead simple. The old people happen to be sitting by the entrance, rather than tucked away out of sight. Although the building is very deep, you are always looking through gardens and out the other side. You might be old (and so banned from getting near young children), but you can still see kids playing in their garden, or coming in and out. Or youngsters come to play five-a-side football. Or people rehearsing a play. There's no problem with this; it's clear, simple, very human – and (almost) all in the —

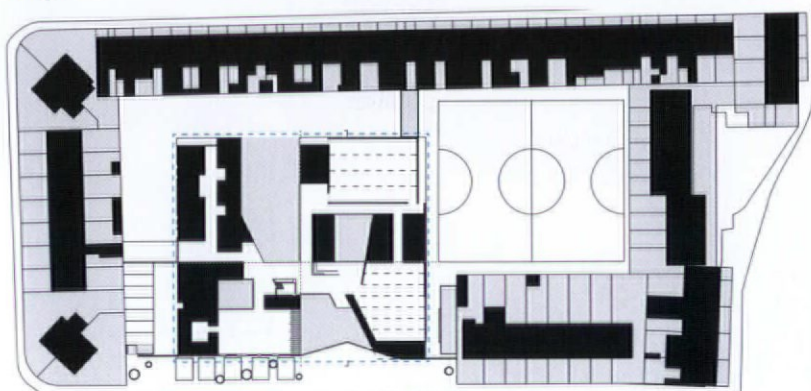




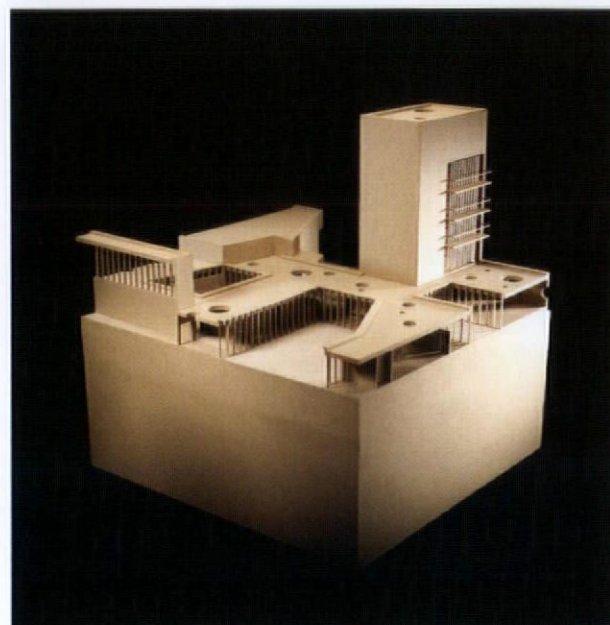


**THE BUILDING PROMOTES, AND  
IN SOME VISUAL WAYS WORKS,  
AS THOUGH IT WAS ALREADY  
IN A MORE COOPERATIVE,  
LESS PARANOID WORLD**

site plan



Previous page\_  
The new building's  
randomly perforated  
tower pops up above  
the rooftops like an  
architectural gopher  
Below\_ Model  
showing courtyard  
arrangement



plan. A very good place to foment a little invisible social revolution.

The tower (which formally opens the front up like a drawbridge) is in some ways distinct from the rest of the building: a plan cul-de-sac lifted into conversation with the wider city. It acts as a kind of ambiguous billboard or monument: a strange new friend for its terraced neighbours; a sign for the city beyond the tracks. In one light, it's poetic and partly sad, an echo of the concrete silos in the dock where many of the people who live here used to work. In another, it's as pert as a five-year-old street kid. It's made of beautiful, corrugate-shuttered concrete, the provisional language of the community building made permanent with (enormous) care. And it's punched with holes, which Tuomey refuses to call windows ('It's a tower without windows,' he insists).

It looks incredibly simple, but it's really hard to do. The holes come in 300mm (head-sized), 600mm and 1,800 mm (person-sized) modules.

It's surprisingly hard, says Tuomey, to stop them forming lines: that bubble freedom is carefully achieved. That's combined with corrugated shuttering, giving a strong sense of sadness (like the work of Turner Prize-winning sculptor Rachel Whiteread) and that wonderful, frilly window edge. The contractor, naturally, wanted to use moulds, but the architects refused – they wanted formwork lapping. Real corrugated shuttering (daywork joints at corrugated sheet-lengths) it was.

Some of the holes were harder than others; threading the concrete vibrator through the reinforcement in areas near an edge was a nightmare, and an attempt to get round the problem via hole relocation disrupted the casual pattern and had to be taken down and re-done. Then, the pressure-washer used to achieve a velvety finish on the concrete would have ruined the corrugated profile, so the contractor obligingly hand-sanded it. Elsewhere in the building, there's a pigeon loft, whose requirement for



non-tank water caused almost as many problems. This is clearly a wonderful building for obsessive hobbies: pigeons or concrete.

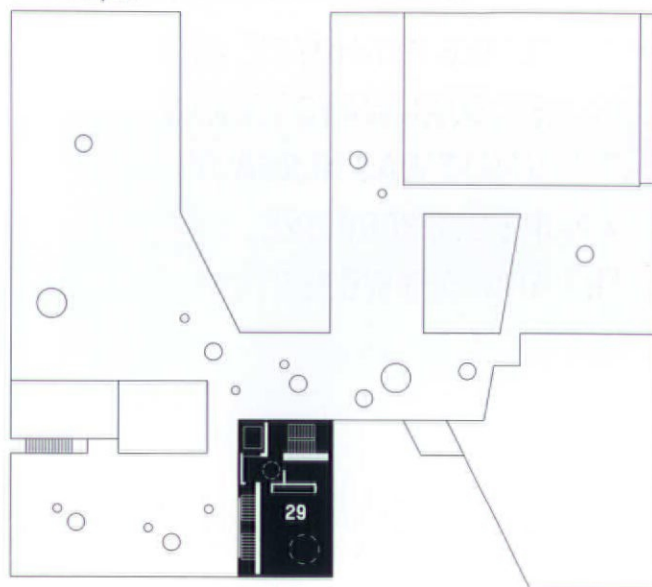
There's a lot more architectural pigeon fancying in how the building manages to feel so casual. You use that dented entrance like it's a door standing ajar, without thinking about the geometry. You wouldn't know the garden you're crossing belongs to the theatre, but presumably, drinks on summer evenings will be technically off-street. The old people across the garden can see what's happening in the street. And the gate screening the perimeter can open it all to the pavement. This last isn't happening yet, but the building, generous now, is also lying in wait for a more open-minded future.

The security desk, as you come in, is just *not* on axis of the four squares. Your view has already slipped beyond it, off-grid (there is no grid) through the children's garden and out the other side. The security boundaries are there, but you're looking straight through them, turning casually past; instead noticing things belonging to better cultures. That central axis is glass joining glass, the most evaporated of all architectural divisions. And there's a café waiting casually, at the side of the foyer between the old and young, for those paranoid boundaries to come down.

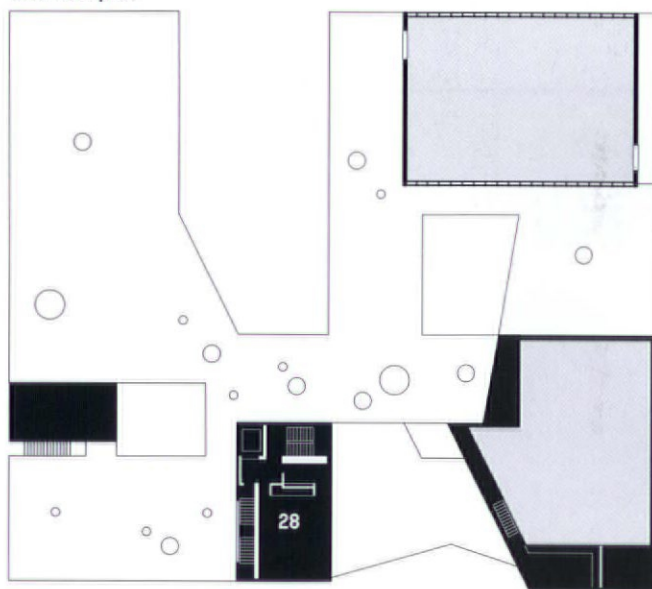
Yet each quadrant has its own character. The volumes, geometry, materials, orientation, aspect, prospect, are all varied. The theatre, lined in plywood, opens out towards the foyer, with a deep wall housing technical and usher amenities, and big south-east windows. The sports hall, lined in flakeboard, runs across the building, with a clerestory (windows to north-east, vents to south-west). The day care is grouped in squares varying from the secret (bathroom, hairdressing) to the outward-looking (day room). The crèche, hidden behind it, is a miniature school corridor: neatly ordered, playful rooms with low-level windows from which kids can —

- 1 crèche quadrant
- 2 sports quadrant
- 3 drama quadrant
- 4 daycare quadrant
- 5 main entrance
- 6 reception
- 7 theatre
- 8 stage
- 9 plant
- 10 sports hall
- 11 gym
- 12 showers
- 13 office
- 14 store
- 15 buggy store
- 16 pre-school
- 17 babies
- 18 wobblers
- 19 sleeping area
- 20 toddlers
- 21 age care
- 22 kitchen
- 23 nurse
- 24 haircare
- 25 servery
- 26 coffee
- 27 courtyard
- 28 education room
- 29 committee room

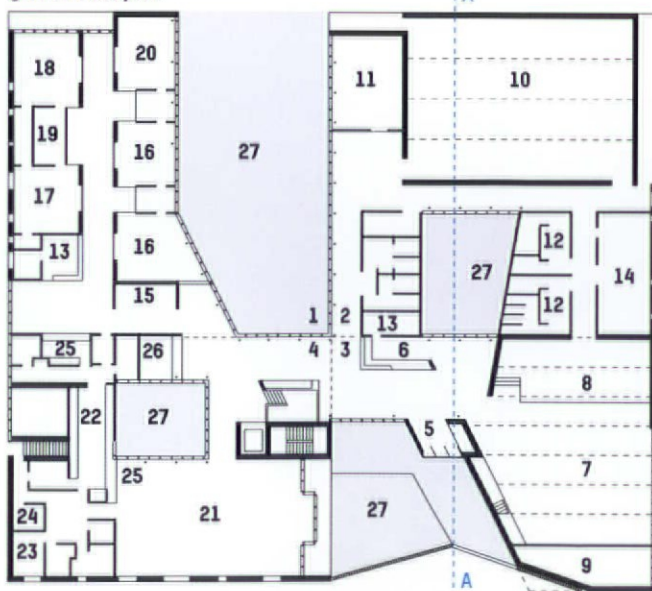
fifth-floor plan



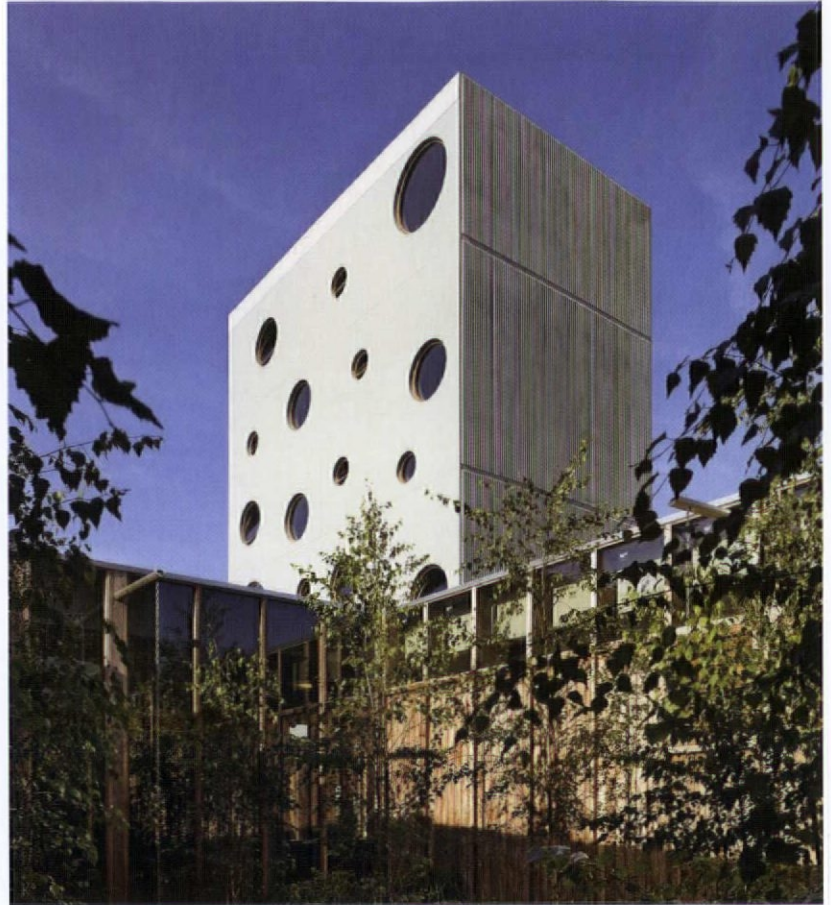
first-floor plan



ground-floor plan

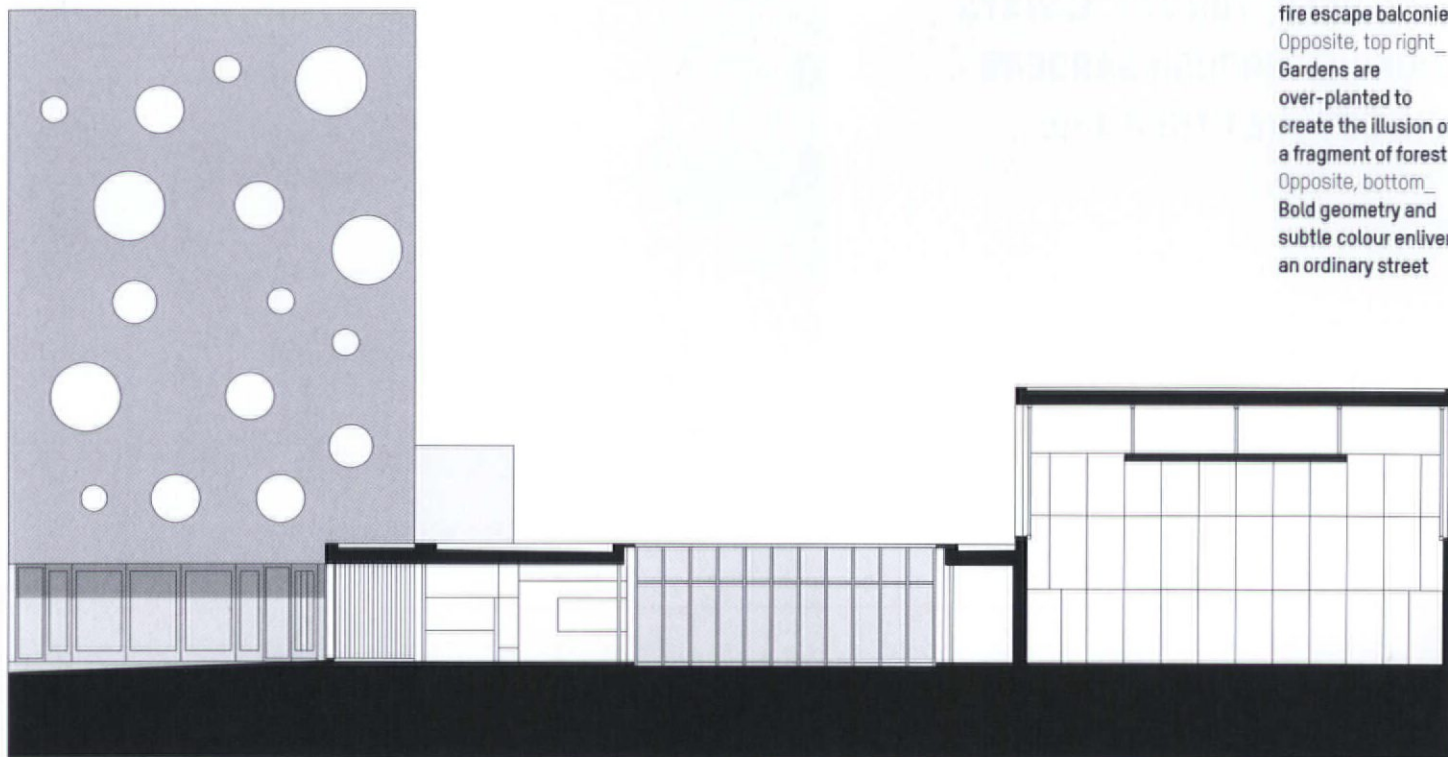








cross section A A



Opposite, top left\_ The tower's character changes on the north-west side with stacks of fire escape balconies  
Opposite, top right\_ Gardens are over-planted to create the illusion of a fragment of forest  
Opposite, bottom\_ Bold geometry and subtle colour enliven an ordinary street

peek out, but adults scarcely see in. The gardens, over-planted to suggest fragments of native forest, are different too. The kids' one wrinkles up to form a play hill. Theatregoers look through the sports garden to art on the (sports) wall beyond – another bit of covert cross-programming.

Though the tower is essentially a stack of rooms, it too loosens up and eludes you. Facing the street (and the city), the south-west wall is concrete and punctured. So is the south-east wall, the one notionally lifting off plan. But this is also painted a pale blue to join its next-door-neighbours. The north-west is blank, but for fire-escape stairs which act as a huge stack of balconies (smoking lobby, perhaps?). The north-east is completely blank, and the top room – designated for the committee – will now be used for things like yoga: a little crumbling of separatism, maybe. Perhaps it's just fluke that that single room, in the grey-floored tower, has the yellow sports floor.

And where did the structure go?

There are heavy, exquisite concrete ceilings; there's a tower above you somewhere, but only a couple of columns. Much work has gone into creating this structure-free feeling, but so underplayed is it, that the architects insisted (poor structural engineer!) on putting lighting columns beside the two elegant columns. So it's not just that there's scarcely any structure – any chance to shout 'Look, no hands!' is firmly quashed. Lightweight trusses appear when needed; secondary structure/glass slips down the sides of the courtyards like waterfalls. Those glazed corners just disappear. Rainwater pours into the courtyards on drainage chains. It's particularly nice, says Tuomey, when it's raining; a good thing in Dublin.

Those circles, too, do something far from obvious. We're all programmed to see things through square frames. From this building, you see circles everywhere. The planters on that pavement out front, like planometric stoppers for the

windows, are of course deliberate. But the five-a-side football pitch (the best in the city) also looks fabulous. Best of all is the view from the top, across to the dock and the big silo.

If this building is saying anything, it's that architecture is not the main event. It's pronouncing it, paradoxically, in the most architecturally refined, sophisticated, witty way, one that will keep architectural pigeon-fanciers absolutely enthralled. It uses extraordinary skills to set up possibilities, in a clampdown culture, for activities and interaction – and then it steps out of the way to let those activities happen. It's a fantastic place from which to see the world. To look at the city; get your bearings; remember. To obsess over concrete, birds or Sean O'Casey plays. To play chase, or five-a-side, to have a bath, a cup of tea, get your hair done. To go to when you don't know what else to do. Tuomey says it's simple: 'There is such a thing as place.' This must be it. 



ALTHOUGH THE BUILDING IS  
VERY DEEP, YOU ARE ALWAYS  
LOOKING THROUGH GARDENS  
AND OUT THE OTHER SIDE



Left\_ Courtyards engender a sense of permeability and openness, despite the proscriptions on mixing uses  
Above\_ Entrance hall and reception illuminated by playful (shades of Stirling?) circular rooflights  
Right\_ A superscale porthole addresses the street  
Far right\_ The building is an intelligently considered dialogue between strong horizontal and vertical elements







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# 038

## KÖPENICK LIBRARY

LOCATION

BERLIN-KÖPENICK, GERMANY

ARCHITECT

BRUNO FIORETTI MARQUEZ  
ARCHITEKTEN

WRITER

ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY

ALESSANDRA CHEMOLLO



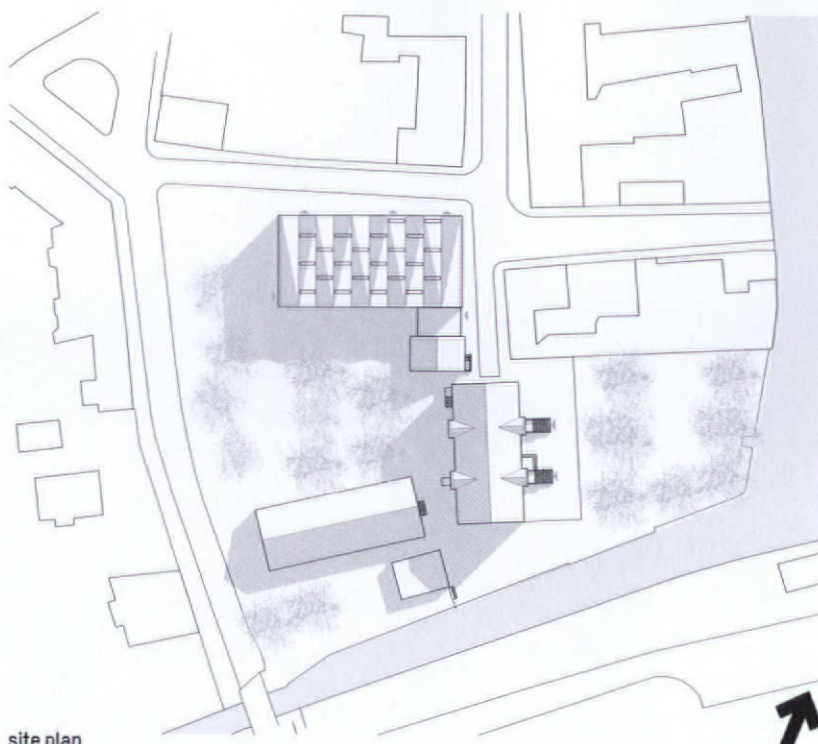






**THE WINDOWS ARE NOT  
CONSTRAINED BY THE  
LEVELS BECAUSE THE LEVELS  
THEMSELVES ARE DISLOCATED.  
WINDOWS ARE FREE TO WANDER**

JOSÉ GUTIERREZ MARQUEZ



site plan

The new central library in the Köpenick district of Berlin, Germany, is the realisation of a rule-breaking competition victory. Centralising three satellite libraries, the brief stipulated the client's preference for a two-storey building that would take up more of the historic site adjacent to the River Dahme. Competition-winning practice Bruno Fioretti Marquez Architekten proposed a three-storey building with a smaller footprint (35 x 18m), which enabled it to restore the grain of an historic market square that stood on the site. Concern over staffing levels resulted in what the architects call a 'one-room library' using single, double and triple-height space to assist the staffing regime.


Key to the project's success was its architects' reading and understanding of context. The Berlin-based firm's three partners – two Italians and an Argentinian – met while studying for their diplomas in Venice in 1990. As partner Donatella Fioretti recalls: 'It was an important place for us. Because of Aldo Rossi we gained a real understanding of the importance of the morphology of city.' This sensitivity is evident in the respect for historic grain shown

in this project, but also in how understanding the local vernacular contributed to the library's distinctive tectonic; Köpenick's robust brick-built industrial buildings are common, and even the town hall and church are in brick. The library's saw-tooth roof is also a response to built context, amplified here with playful interlocking arrangements of high and low gables that produce hyperbolic paraboloid sections.

On entering the library, visitors immediately see the underside of the roof. This orientates the uninitiated and eases surveillance. Interiors are as spare as the exterior, dominated by white-washed brick walls and the roof's underside, also white-washed but this time in timber. Both surfaces reveal structure. Walls are solid brickwork (640mm thick, with no insulation cavity or expansion joints necessary) and the soffit reveals the regular grid of primary and secondary timber sections, articulated with an apparently random arrangement of rooflights.

Windows are also arranged in an apparently haphazard way, reminiscent of Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa's fine (but regularly imitated) Zollverein School, also

in Germany. Here, 'the windows are not constrained by the levels,' explains partner José Gutierrez Marquez, 'because the levels themselves are dislocated. Windows are free to wander, creating an interference pattern that works with interlocking interiors.' Glazing is set almost flush with the internal wall surface and framed in white-washed timber frames. From the outside this exaggerates the wall's mass, while internally, the arrangement was inspired in part by the articulated window frames of Adalberto Libera's Casa Malaparte in Capri, and in part by the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, where paintings hang in dense, irregular configurations.

Köpenick Library creates a powerful civic presence and redefines the town's lost market square. The heavy and imposing walls provide a thermally stable environment for books, and also cultivate the tranquil atmosphere of a college cloister. For users who break from their books, the interiors also generate delight and intrigue, leading the eye in a dance from level to level, window to window, and from roof plane to roof plane, before returning to rest on the page once more. 





CHRISTIAN GAHL

Previous page...  
Linked to the school building with a low-lying staff entrance block, the new library redefines Köpenick's historic market square  
Left... Built in local brick, the 640mm-thick walls are expressed by a random arrangement of deepset window reveals. These also hint at the complexity of the internal volumes

south elevation



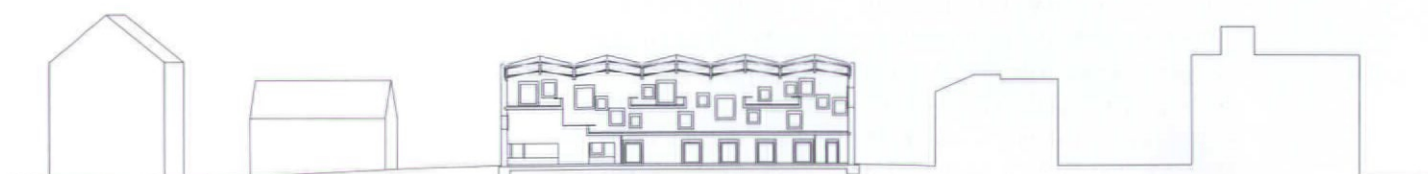
west elevation



section looking east



section looking south



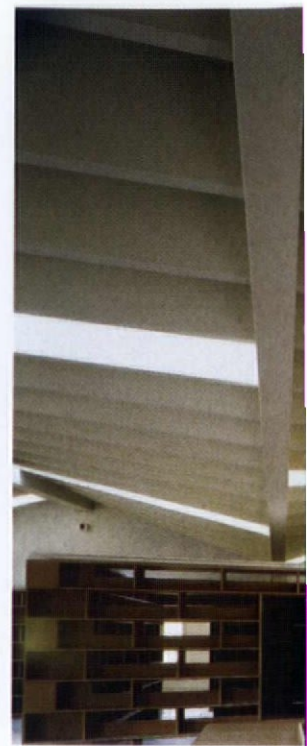












Previous page\_  
The interiors are dominated by white-washed walls and soffits. Interlocking spaces aid surveillance and 'dancing' windows recall the hanging of art at the famous St Petersburg Hermitage Museum  
Left\_ The principal reading room has sufficient enclosure to encourage concentration, while providing an internal landscape to allow tired eyes to rest  
Above\_ A dynamic relationship exists between the solidity of the walls and furniture and the more lyrical roof and window arrangements  
Right\_ From the ground-floor entrance, all three levels are visible, with views to the timber roof soffit





#### ARCHITECT

Bruno Fioretti Marquez  
Architekten with Nele  
Dechmann, Berlin

#### ENGINEER

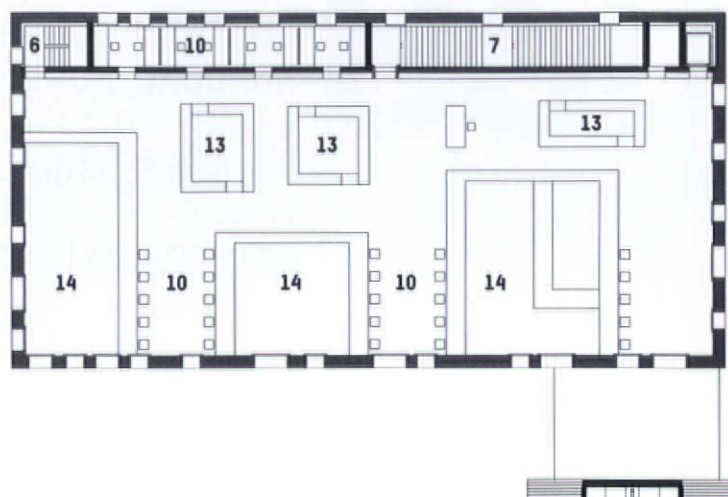
Studio C

#### BUILDING SERVICES

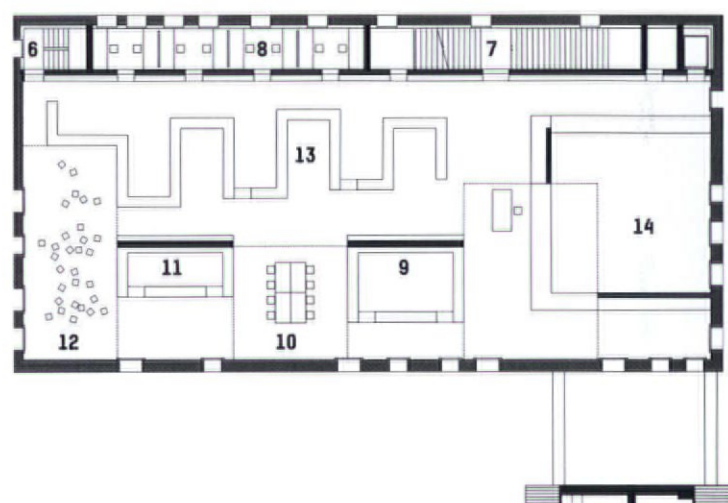
Winter Ingenieure

- 1 Entrance lobby
- 2 Foyer
- 3 Reception
- 4 Audiovisual media
- 5 Classroom
- 6 Escape stair
- 7 Principal stairs
- 8 Staff link to existing building
- 9 Youth library
- 10 Study area
- 11 Children's library
- 12 Children's area
- 13 Bookshelves
- 14 Void

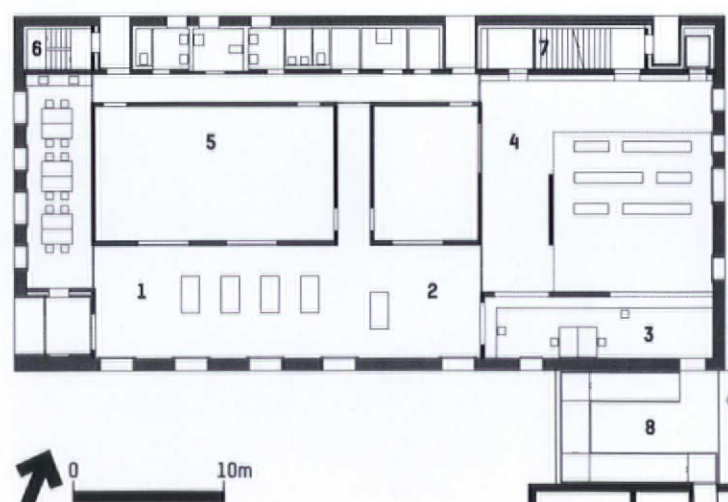
second-floor plan



first-floor plan



ground-floor plan





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# 039

## JUVET LANDSCAPE HOTEL

LOCATION

GUDBRANDSJUVET,  
NORDDAL, NORWAY

ARCHITECT

JENSEN & SKODVIN

WRITER

CATHERINE SLESSOR







■ If you really want to get away from it all, try the Juvet Landscape Hotel near Alsted in west Norway. Tourists are drawn to this remote spot by the Reinheimen National Park, a sublime tableau of mountains and forests, with a famous waterfall set in a deep ravine.


Knut Slinning established a hotel here by renovating old farm buildings near the ravine. He also commissioned the Oslo-based partnership of Jensen & Skodvin to provide new accommodation on the site. Now in their late forties, Jan Olav Jensen and Børre Skodvin were highly commended in the AR Awards for Emerging Architecture for a church at Mortensrud (AR December 2002). Connecting with nature but still unsentimentally of its time, their work draws deeply on the Norwegian modernist tradition of Sverre Fehn (see page 24). More recently, a convent on the Norwegian island of Tautra astutely explores the interaction between the man-made, spiritual and natural worlds.

In terms of form and programme,

the hotel is a much simpler proposition, but with a thoughtful twist. Rather than construct a large, intrusive single building, the architects hive off the individual rooms into seven self-contained cabins dispersed around the thickly wooded site. Careful orientation and space planning ensures that none of the cabins directly overlook each other. Each has its own view of the landscape so, to some extent, guests can pretend that it's just them and the great outdoors.

Despite the bucolic setting, Jensen & Skodvin forsakes folksy rusticity in favour of a more minimal, Miesian aesthetic. Each cabin is an exquisitely simple single-storey box clad in strips of Norwegian larch. As they are intended only for use during the summer, walls are uninsulated. Floor-to-ceiling glazing is set against slim frames of standard steel profiles and stepped edges extend the external layer of glass to the corners. Cabins accommodate two people and, though similar in size, each has a slightly varied living room and

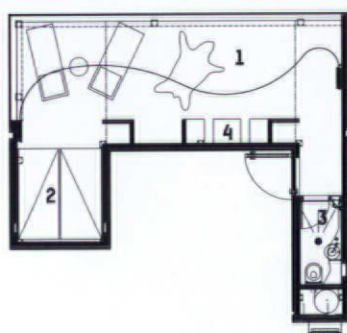
sleeping area, with a bathroom contained in a narrow leg plugged in to the main volume. The crisply detailed larch and glass containers form a taut counterpoint to the dreamy luxuriance of the landscape.

To impact lightly on the site, cabins sit on platforms supported by 40mm diameter steel foundation rods drilled into the rock. This causes minimal disruption to the existing topography and vegetation, a fact that the architects are keen to emphasise, both as a practical response to the site and as a contribution to wider notions of sustainable building. 'Conservation of topography is an aspect of sustainability that deserves attention,' explains Jensen, dismayed at how most construction usually involves the obliteration or modification of the existing terrain. 'Conserving the site is a way to respect the fact that nature precedes and succeeds man,' says Skodvin. 'Observation of the topography also highlights the irregularities of the natural site, explaining both itself and its context with more power.' 

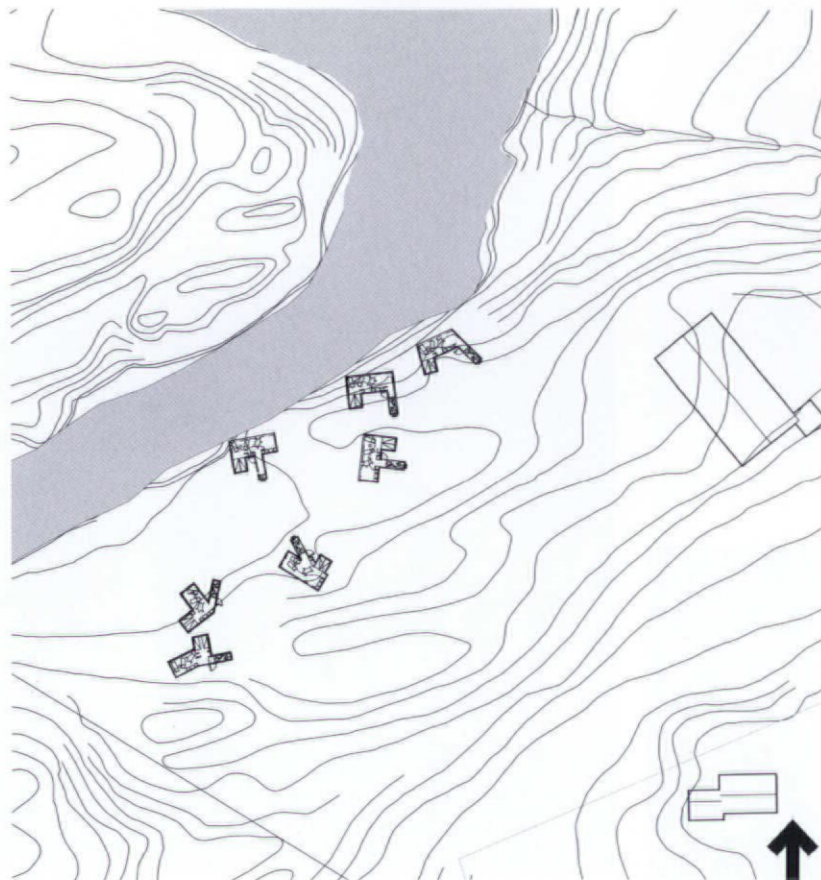


# LARCH AND GLASS CONTAINERS FORM A TAUT COUNTERPOINT TO THE DREAMY LUXURIANCE OF THE LANDSCAPE

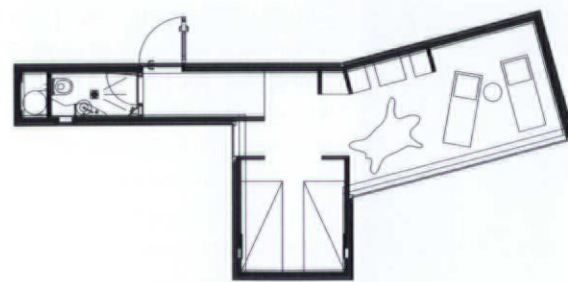
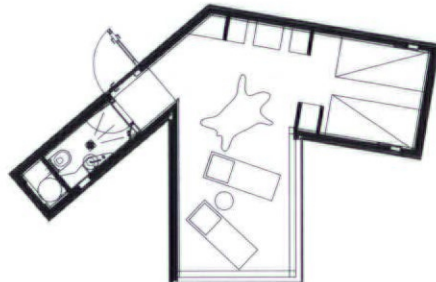
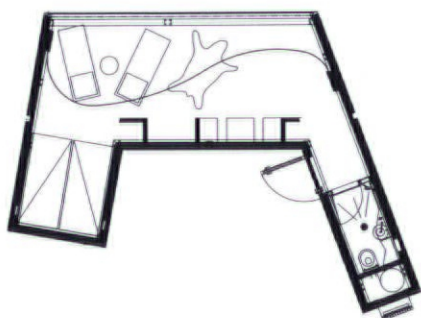
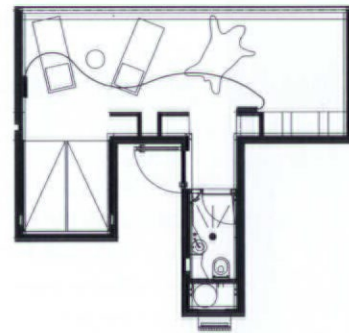
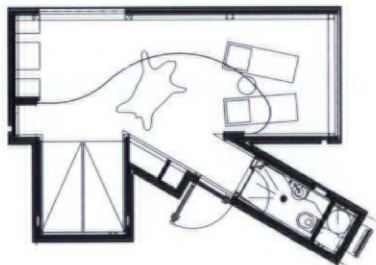
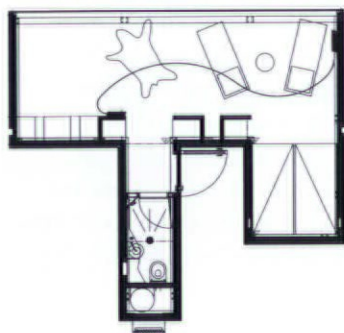
ground-floor plan of typical cabin



- 1 living area
- 2 bedroom
- 3 bathroom
- 4 storage



variations on basic cabin type

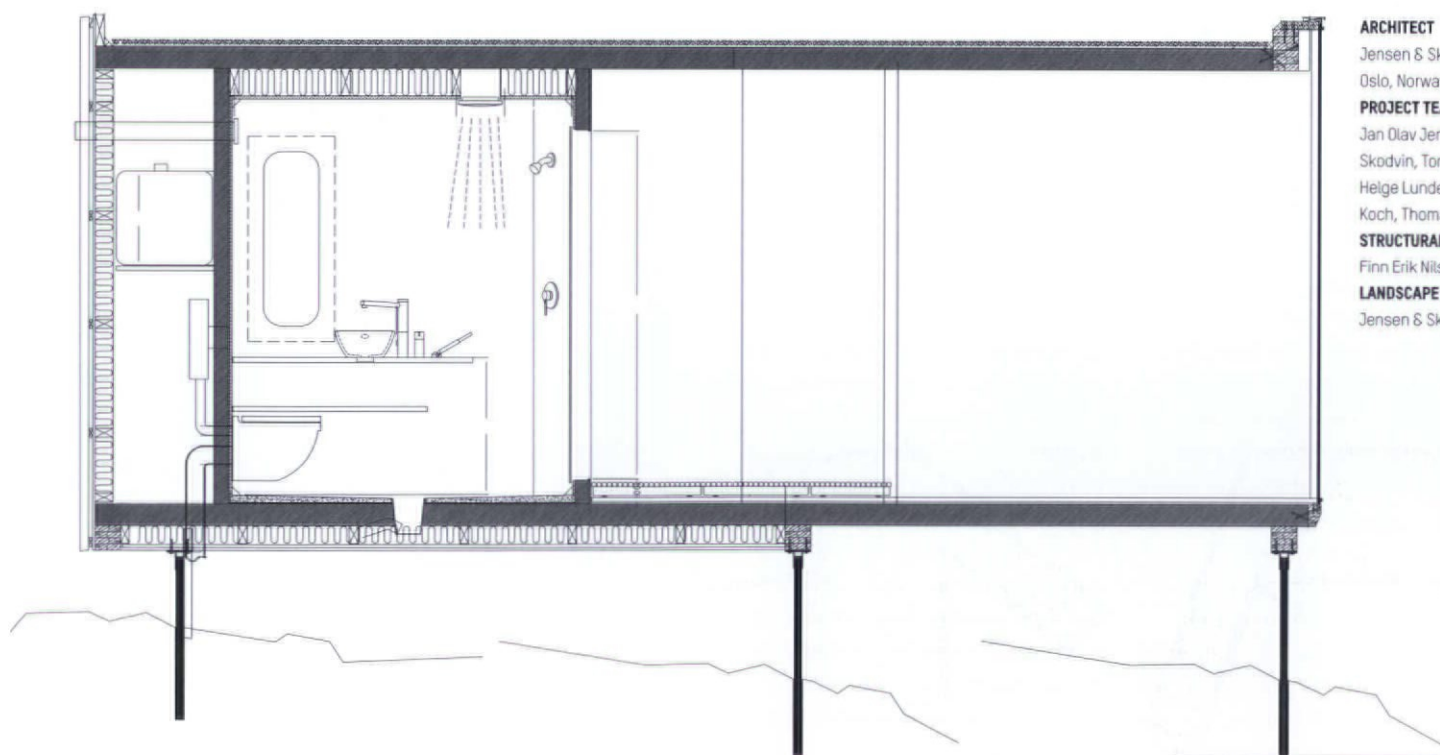






Previous page, left  
Supported on  
slim columns and  
dodging existing  
vegetation, cabins  
touch the ground  
lightly and defer  
to the landscape  
Previous page, right  
Cabins are clad in  
thin strips of larch  
This image  
Floor-to-ceiling  
glazing frames the  
view and brings  
nature within  
touching distance

typical cross section



#### ARCHITECT

Jensen & Skodvin,  
Oslo, Norway

#### PROJECT TEAM

Jan Olav Jensen, Børre  
Skodvin, Torunn Golberg,  
Helge Lunder, Torstein  
Koch, Thomas Knigge

#### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Finn Erik Nilsen

#### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Jensen & Skodvin



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# 040

## NEUES MUSEUM

LOCATION

**BERLIN, GERMANY**

ARCHITECT

**DAVID CHIPPERFIELD  
ARCHITECTS**

WRITER

**ROWAN MOORE**

PHOTOGRAPHY

**DENNIS GILBERT**

There's an obvious attraction to David Chipperfield's Neues Museum. At a time when we have been sated with the glittering object, the spectacular form, the rhetoric of newness and the icon, here is a work of patience, time and leaving alone. This might explain why it is already fêted by critics, politicians and the Berlin public, even though it is empty of the objects it was built to serve. Its completion feels like one of those moments when a museum building, like the Pompidou Centre or the Guggenheim Bilbao, has caught a collective mood.

The Neues Museum was completed in 1855, bombed in 1943 and 1945, and then left to rot until restoration started (and then stopped again) in 1989. Chipperfield's big idea was to retain the spirit of the ruin he found. It was a paradoxical operation,

to preserve the character of decay in the fixed environment that museums require. His aim was not 'demonstration of damage, but of the beauty that was there'.

His approach was different to that of other architects faced with adapting ruins. He did not, for example, go the way of Norman Foster at the Reichstag (AR July 1999), where pristine newness is simply juxtaposed with scumbled history. Rather, Chipperfield (working with restoration architect Julian Harrap), makes whole spaces out of a mixture of the preserved and the repaired.

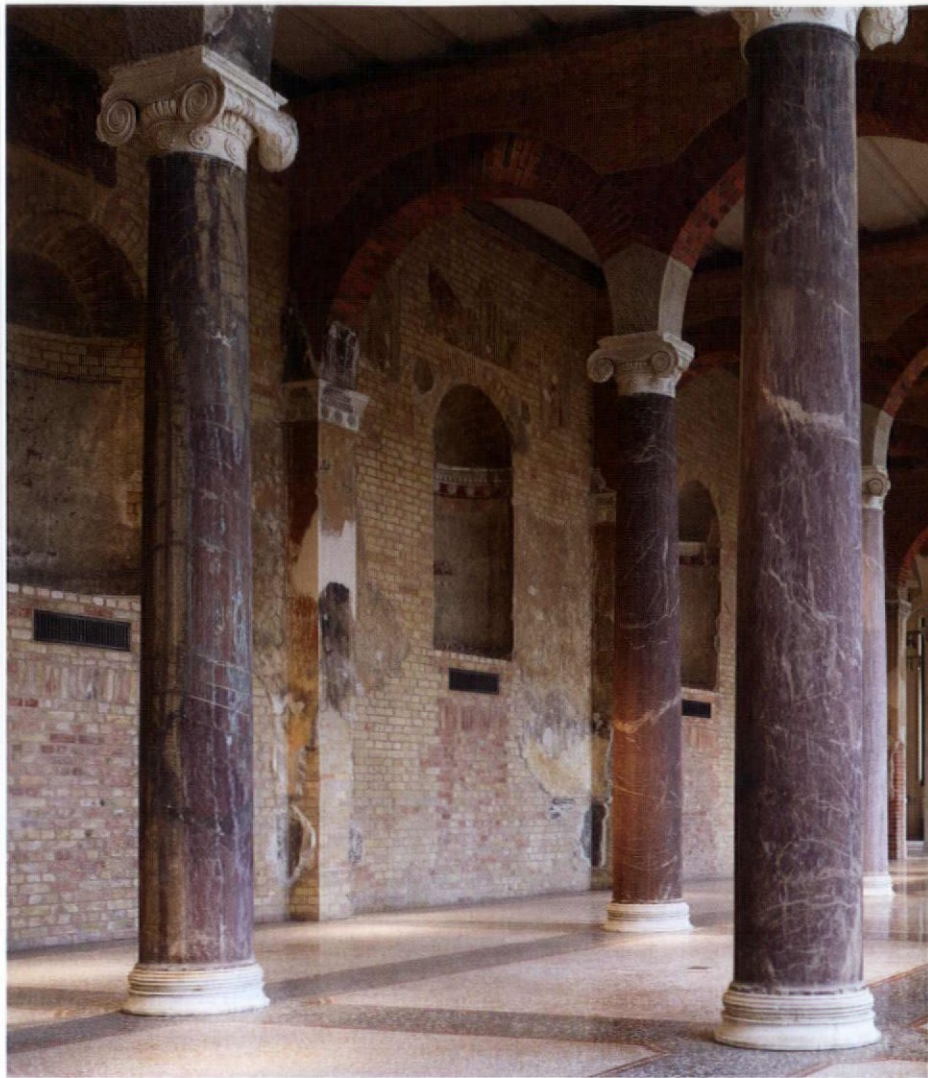
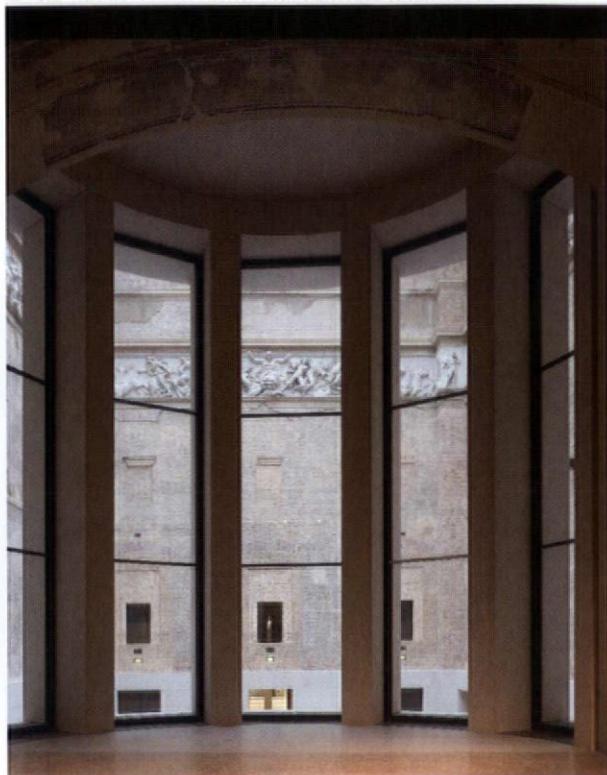
He does so room by room and surface by surface, responding to the different conditions found in each. At one end of the spectrum there's fabric found almost intact, where slightly battered decoration is stabilised; at the other are wholly new rooms. —











In between are rooms defined by fragments of plaster, distressed but recognisable classical columns and vaults of hollow clay pots whose tapioca patterns were never intended to be seen, but have a certain beauty.

In these spaces the architects had to judge when the new work should announce its newness, and when to merge with the found, as with the 30,000 clay pots that were made (by one man over three years) to go alongside the originals. Their judgment included an appreciation of the context and role of each space: thus the great staircase, which follows the form but not the detail of the stair it reinstates, is the most emphatic of the new interventions, fitting its role as the public centre of the museum. In places where the exhibits will be the centre of attention, the architecture becomes less prominent.

This approach is an impressive professional achievement. To pursue the intangible over many years, through the politics and pressures of a building project, without losing its essence, is difficult. Usually architects subjugate such pressures with the pursuit of a fixed object or a dominant style but here hundreds of people had to be brought in to an elusive concept.

Architecturally, the result is a series of halls into which critics and some of the public have been invited to roam, like people exploring a vast house inherited from an unknown uncle. Here, scorched columns, up to a century-and-a-half old, seem to acquire a greater antiquity. As we expect the classical to be ruined, they seem more authentic than they would have done when pristine.

There is an overall illusion of talc-like softness, a chalky quality —

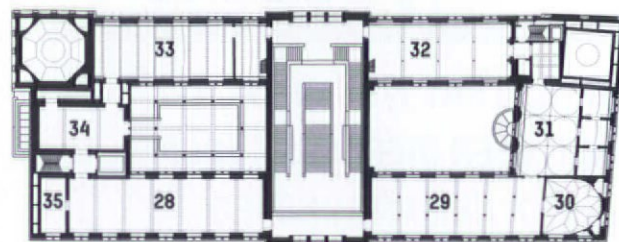
Previous page\_ The bold new stair in the restored staircase hall follows the form but not the detail of Stüler's original  
Above left\_ New window apse overlooking the Greek Courtyard  
Above\_ With its evocative tableau of distressed and new fabric, the Modern Room exemplifies the highly tactful approach to repair  
Right\_ Fragments of original wall paintings in the Egyptian Courtyard  
Far right\_ West facade viewed from the Schlossbrücke



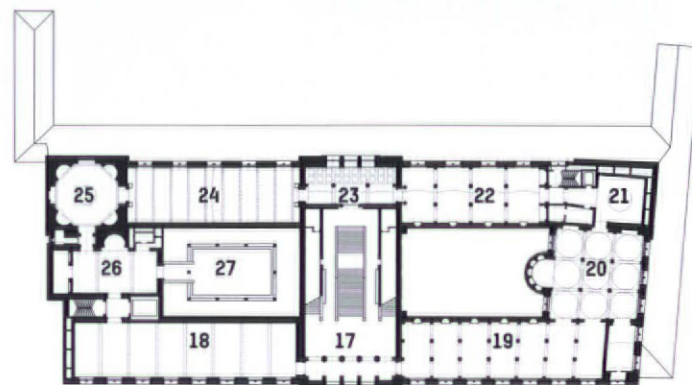




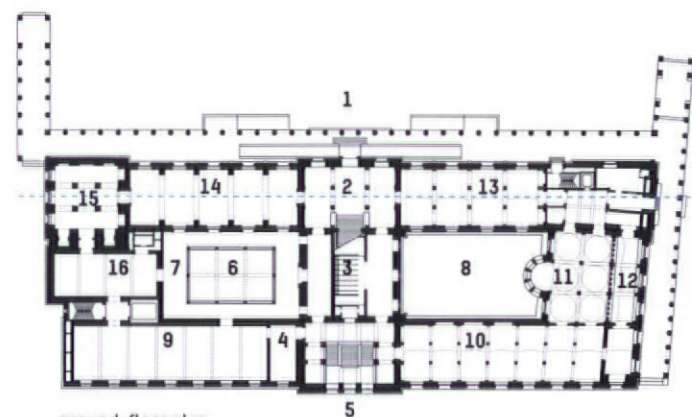
- 1 main entrance
- 2 vestibule
- 3 cloakroom
- 4 museum shop
- 5 west entrance
- 6 void above Egyptian Courtyard
- 7 new gallery
- 8 void above Greek Courtyard
- 9 Historical Room
- 10 Ethnographical Room
- 11 Flat Dome Room
- 12 café
- 13 Fatherland Room
- 14 Mythological Room
- 15 Tomb Room
- 16 Hypostyle
- 17 staircase hall
- 18 Greek Room
- 19 Modern Room
- 20 Medieval Room
- 21 South Dome Room
- 22 Roman Room
- 23 Bacchus Room
- 24 Room of the Niobids
- 25 North Dome Room
- 26 Apollo Room
- 27 platform above Egyptian Courtyard
- 28 Blue Room
- 29 Western Art Chamber
- 30 Star Room
- 31 Majolica Room
- 32 Eastern Art Chamber
- 33 Red Room
- 34 Green Room
- 35 education



second-floor plan



first-floor plan



ground-floor plan





THINGS THAT WOULD ONCE  
HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT FROM  
EACH OTHER ARE UNIFIED  
BY THE COMMON QUALITY  
OF ARRESTED DECAY



Above\_ Some of the museum's original display cabinets in the Red Room

Left\_ Long section showing Red Room staircase hall, and North Dome Room

Opposite\_ Vaults of hollow clay pots in the Medieval Room

to the illumination, and a dreaminess. Its brick construction reveals a lightness that the original architecture, wanting to look all stone, concealed. Things that would once have been different from each other – veined marble, clay pots, Nile scenes, Pompeiian decoration, mosaic – are unified by the common quality of arrested decay. The place is much more interesting than it would have been if never bombed, in which case it would, like other museums, have been another accumulation of interior design decisions.


Now the Neues Museum creates reverberations of different degrees of time. These include the time of its original construction, revealed by the partial stripping of surfaces. Also that of its subsequent use, bombing, erosion by weather and finally, its slow restoration. There is the Greco-

Roman time to which its original classical architecture refers, and there will be the time of its Egyptian and other exhibits, and the quicker time of its living visitors. The place is a composite of human and natural actions, some violent, some exquisite, some touching, some ordinary.

There are very few bum notes, although I don't get Chipperfield's faith in tall square pillars, which appear here and there. They let down the subtlety of the rest. Traps have been avoided, such as creating a theme park of destruction, or a string of anecdotes. The scraps of plaster and scoured columns are never allowed to become the main story.

What I am describing is in fact architecture. The Neues Museum might seem like a special case, and old buildings bring their privileges such as access to craftsmanship that

is taboo in new work. But the elements of Chipperfield's approach are the making of spaces, the appreciation of whatever is found, and a view of the architect's work as a series of actions that intersect with those made previously on a site, and those to be made in the future. Such attitudes are also applicable to wholly new buildings, whatever the location.

Chipperfield's Neues Museum is not, after all, about reticence or self-denial. It is a strong and distinctive idea about a place, made real. It should not then be seen as a precursor of a new modesty, or as the opposite of all the virtuoso architecture of recent years. What is special about it, and what it would be good to see more of, is the fluidity, the reciprocity to things outside the architect's own brain, that go with its strength of purpose. 

#### ARCHITECT

David Chipperfield  
Architects, London

#### RESTORATION ARCHITECT

Julian Harrap Architects

#### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Ingenieurgruppe Bauen

#### SERVICES ENGINEER

Jaeger, Mornhinweg

#### LIGHTING CONSULTANT

Kardoff

#### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Levin Monsigny

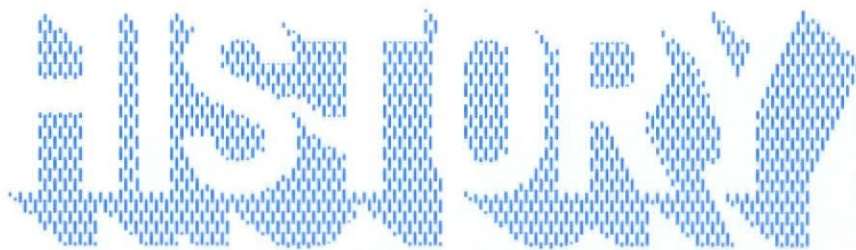
#### EXHIBITION DESIGN

Michele de Lucchi









## THE REBIRTH OF THE NEUES MUSEUM IS THE LATEST STAGE IN THE ARCHITECTURAL AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF THE SPREEINSEL, BERLIN'S HISTORIC MUSEUM ISLAND

WRITER

ALAN BALFOUR

Berlin's Neues Museum, by Prussian architect Friedrich August Stüler, opened to the public in 1855. After the Second World War, it was left in ruins and sat roofless for over 50 years. Renovation plans began with a competition in 1994, which required adding more space and diminishing the presence of the historic structure. After disagreement over the choice of architect, this was abandoned, and in a subsequent contest, David Chipperfield Architects' resubmission (a simplified version of his original entry) was successful.

The rebirth of the Neues Museum completes the restoration of the suite of museums that evolved at the northern end of the Spreeinsel (known as Museum Island) in the 19th century. The first national museum, now the Altes Museum, opened in 1830; the Old National Gallery, also by Stüler, was completed in 1876; the Bode Museum, at the tip of the island, in 1904; and the mighty Pergamon Museum was completed in 1930. Spreeinsel is a wedge of land at the heart of Berlin, divided by the Spree River. Historically, it enclosed the district of Cölln, the southern of two districts that formed Berlin. This was the nexus of the medieval city, and at its core was a royal castle, later replaced by a palace, the Stadtschloss. A key element in the formation of the

museums, the Stadtschloss was damaged during the war and then totally demolished by the East German government. It was on the land north of the palace that the rulers of Prussia began to exert a temporal order on the landscape.

In the 17th century, this became the site of the Lustgarten (literally, a garden of desire), a name that has stayed with the space, and the surprising results are displayed with some realism in a plan of 1648 by Johan Gregor Mamhard. Beyond a parterre garden and over a bridge, two island gardens are shown in the waters of the Spree: the first, a simple rectangular field (where the Neues Museum now stands); the second, an elaborate circle of segmented islands. The geometric order of the 17th-century parterre is in total contrast to the surrounding walled city: an introverted, God-centered community that constrained all medieval reality. In an aerial view of 1688 by Johan Bernhard Schulz, the Stadtschloss dominates the centre, facing the Lustgarten to the left. The island gardens are gone, replaced by an orangery behind a baroque curved facade, and there is a strengthened bastion in the enclosing city wall.

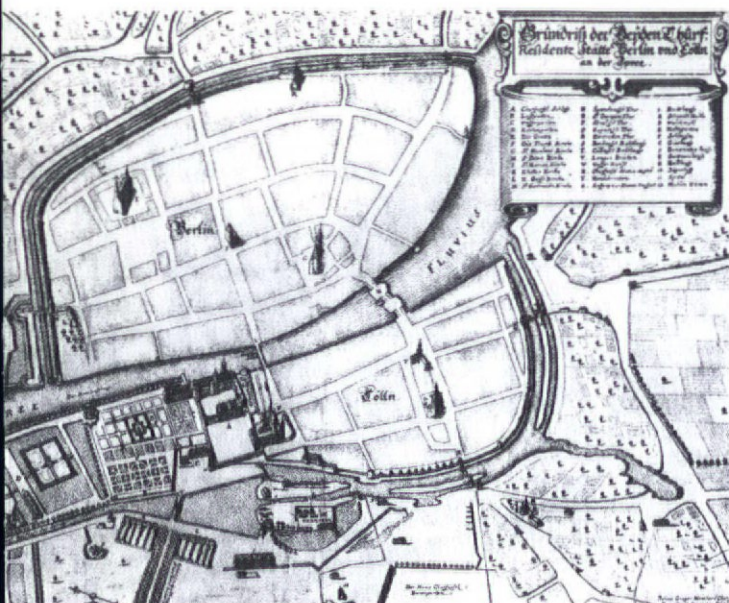
In the JF Schneider plan of 1802, the Stadtschloss is the rectangular figure enclosing two courtyards. The

Lustgarten has been cleared of all its pleasure gardens and pavilions, the great moated bastions removed and the land regained from the river, ordered and planned. This was the situation in 1798 when architect David Gilly was asked by the king, Friedrich Wilhelm III, to landscape the area immediately north of the palace. Though a gifted architect, he bowed to the modest taste of the king and simply proposed transforming the parade ground into a field of grass flanked by a double row of trees, as shown in a 1819 Schinkel drawing.

Such modesty reflects an anxiety over events playing out across France in the aftermath of the revolution, and uncertainty over Napoleon's growing ambition. This insignificant landscape is in extreme contrast to the project his son Friedrich Gilly proposed the previous year for a monument to Wilhelm's grandfather, Friedrich the Great. The young Gilly conceived of a perfectly formed Grecian temple in white marble to be placed at a critical entry into Berlin, raised up and visible to all, deifying the hero king. Whether this reflected a genuine passion for Friedrich the Great's achievements or was merely the romance of fresh imagination to the idea of the ancient gods, the competition drawings had a force that deeply impressed the person whose imagination would most shape the future of the Lustgarten: Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

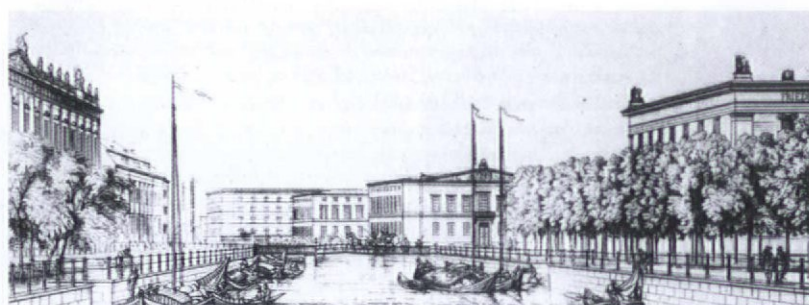
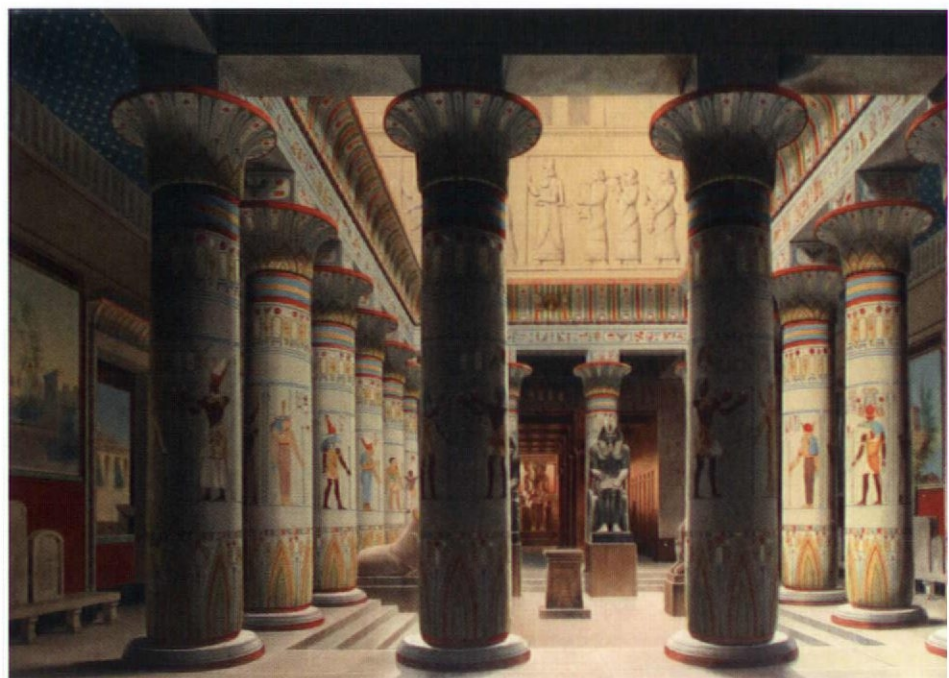
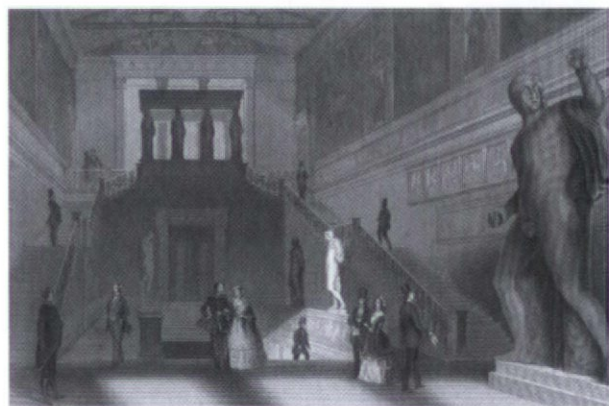
These drawings persuaded Schinkel to transform himself from a painter of grand topographic views into an architect. He became close to Gilly and his son, and eventually emerged as Prussia's formative architect. His practice and writings laid the basis for an architecture defined more by programme and technology than by historical styles, and for some, this was the precursor of the modern. The young Gilly died in 1808, but Schinkel would have experienced his prescience. He would have seen the pages of Friedrich's 'thought drawings', where he explored an architecture stripped —





Left, from top to bottom\_ Map of Berlin and Cölln by Johan Gregor Mamhard, 1648, showing the early development of the Spreeinsel; Aerial view of the Stadtschloss and Lustgarten by Johann Bernhard Schulz, 1688; The Neues Museum in the 19th century, showing Stüler's original staircase hall, replete with friezes, monumental statues and a caryatid porch;

The Neues Museum in 1855 from the river  
Below\_ The original Egyptian Courtyard in 1862, repository for the extensive spoils from German excavations in Egypt. Though largely destroyed during the War, it exemplifies Stüler's idea of evoking ancient worlds through theatrical interior design  
Bottom\_ Drawing by Schinkel from 1834 of warehouses on the site of the future Neues Museum





# CHIPPERFIELD'S RENOVATION IS SUPERB, AND ITS STRENGTH COMES IN PART FROM THE BRILLIANT IMAGINATIONS THAT PRECEDED HIM IN CONTEMPLATING THE REALITY OF BERLIN

Below left\_ The staircase hall in 1943, following Allied bombing raids on Berlin. Sadly, the museum was to remain in a damaged and overgrown state for half a century, the cost of repair too daunting for the East German authorities. Plans for repair were eventually formulated in 1993, following German reunification. Chipperfield's restoration aims to convey a sense of the building's rich yet difficult history

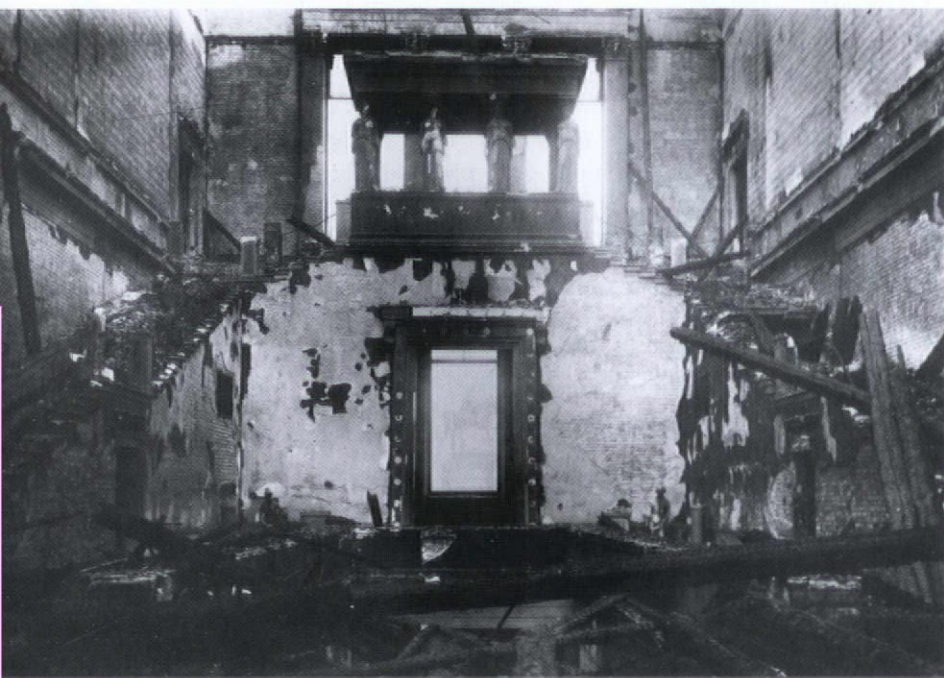
Bottom left\_ The Roman Room in 1939. Stüler's original decor boasted emerald green walls, stucco moulded ceilings and wall paintings depicting suitably uplifting scenes from ancient Rome and Pompeii

Below\_ The roofless, rotting hulk of the Neues Museum in 1985, with the Pergamon Museum (top left). By that time, the damaged section originally containing the Egyptian Courtyard had been completely destroyed

of decoration, free from the styles of history, reduced to abstract space and structure. In *Berlin: The Politics of Order* (Rizzoli, 1990), I wrote: 'Desire for fundamental change had led [Friedrich] Gilly to reject the texts of history, to detach the idea of space from that of God, and to reconnect the idea of beauty to that of ideal order. With reverberations of the French and American revolutions growing ever stronger throughout Europe and cries for freedom and equality heard on all fronts, it must have been inevitable that Gilly would see in such conceptions a direct connection between the act of freeing architecture from the bonds of history and the cause of political freedom. Liberation from the structures of the recollected histories of autocracies could mean liberation from constraining social order.' Though Friedrich Gilly had no direct influence on the plans leading to a century of museum building, there is an echo of his imagination, at its most intense, in Chipperfield's renovation of the Neues Museum.

Napoleon did invade Prussia and occupy Berlin, then left defeated. The Prussian monarchy was re-established within the uncertain structure of the German Confederation and by 1820 had regained its autocratic presence, tempered, however, by concern over the desire for democracy spreading through all levels of society. Revolutionary events in France and America could not be kept secret.

In 1819, Friedrich Wilhelm III commissioned Schinkel to construct a bridge linking Unter den Linden – the great avenue connecting the Stadtschloss with the royal hunting grounds – to the Lustgarten. In 1823, he proposed a comprehensive masterplan of the area west and north of the Stadtschloss, a plan that involved realigning the canals, demolishing old buildings and proposing a number of new structures. Foremost among them was a public museum facing the Stadtschloss that would enclose the





Lustgarten on the north side and, in Schinkel's mind, complete it. The museum was to be built over the moat that had for centuries crossed the island, and the plan also called for the construction of warehouses and upgrading of the existing wharves to continuing the support of trade in the area. This project would, Schinkel assured the king, bring eminence to the court: clearly, the court was reaching out to the people.

The design was completed in 1822 and the museum, displaying the royal art collection, opened to the public in 1830. (By this time, there were a number of public museums throughout Europe, such as the British Museum, opened to the public in 1759.) The facade is arranged in the manner of a Greek *stoa*, a vast colonnade consuming the full length of the south facade. Walls enclose the three sides and galleries run in enfilade round two courtyards, with a full hemispheric dome at the centre. In detail it emulates the Pantheon, now only partially reconstructed. This was concealed on the outside so as not to compete with the dome of the cathedral nearby. It is a work of consummate artistry, in which all its consciously theatrical elements create exactly the appropriate stage for such royal patronage.

In his last decade, Schinkel became increasingly concerned with new materials and means of construction. This is seen at its most inventive in his Bauakademie (Building Academy), built between 1832 and 1836. Sited just to the west of the Stadtschloss, it housed the Higher Council of Architecture and the Royal Technical College – an indication of the importance of architecture to his royal patron.

A rudely rational brick box, it is urbane and frankly democratic in its omnipresence. It is also the work that greatly influenced his former student, Stüler, when, at the time of Schinkel's death in 1841, he was commissioned to design the Neues Museum to adjoin the then-renamed Altes Museum (Old Museum) on its west


side. This was intended to house additions to the royal collection: ethnographic material, plaster casts and spoils from German excavations in Egypt, including the bust of Queen Nefertiti. Celebrated more for its advanced construction techniques and cast-iron frame than for its architecture, the Neues Museum was not completed until 1855. But there was still much to admire.

In 1842, Stüler became the architect to the king, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and with his help became immensely successful, designing churches, museums and palaces from Budapest to Stockholm. His last great work was the Neue Synagogue in central Berlin, completed in 1866. It is not easy to determine how much of an individual's imagination is formed from internal creativity and how much from circumstance. You sense, for instance, that Gilly had a strength of vision that could transform any age, and the strange perfection of Schinkel's drawings and the expansive theatrics of his best work allowed him to lead an anxious court into an acceptable reality. Stüler, on the other hand, seems much more the servant of the state, adapting styles and harnessing new technologies to whatever task he was given.

Externally, Stüler's museum never had the commanding presence of the Schinkel, nor was it meant to. The facade follows the form of the Altes Museum. Entrance is through a columned portico, which leads to a great hall transversing the building and containing an intensely majestic staircase. Nothing in the Altes Museum compares with this. Concerned much more with illusion and interiority than with a public face, the Neues Museum reflects the changed times. The design of its interiors evokes ancient worlds, but also creates a new kind of public stage.

Almost fifteen years ago, in *World Cities: Berlin* (John Wiley, 1995), I noted that the competition for the Neues Museum produced results free from the uneasiness that infected the

many other competitions launched to recreate the newly united city. It was won by an archly conservative project from Italian architect Giorgio Grassi, whose restoration was characterised by a carefully abstracted classical language and sparing use of decoration, emulating one of Schinkel's warehouse projects for the same site. However, I concluded that the two most engaging entries had come from David Chipperfield and Frank Gehry. Gehry was also much more concerned with finding a place for his architecture than with the renewing the presence of the Neues Museum. At the time, I wrote that he is 'at his most exuberant, fragmenting the museum into a sequence of anthropomorphic figures that... not only tease the pomposity of the 19th-century surroundings but reveal how tired they are'. On reflection, Gehry's exuberance would have been wholly misplaced and I was wrong. I also wrote: 'With an elegant and firm object containing precisely framed spaces, Chipperfield demonstrates the superiority of a critically defined modern project in an historic district, over the tendency to historicise.' In his 1994 submission, Chipperfield suggested that the project's pivotal decision would be 'the restoration at the heart of the building, the staircase'. And so it has come to pass.

It is rare to see the outcome of a project that an architect has contemplated for many years. But this delay provided Chipperfield with more time for reflection and deepened his historical understanding. It has resulted in a renovated Neues Museum redolent with complex associations and with a gravity and poignancy well beyond what was present in its original form. Chipperfield's renovation is superb, and its strength comes in part from the brilliant imaginations that preceded him in contemplating the reality of Berlin. The work is made profound by the persistence of past visions and desires, whose intent may have been long since forgotten. 



## The Egyptians used 8,362 men to erect an obelisk – not including the 900 who died

### BOOK / Obelisk: A History

**Brian Curran, Anthony Grafton, Pamela Long, Benjamin Weiss, MIT Press, 2009, £18.95**

In 1585, Pope Sixtus V decided to make an urban and architectural move that had been under consideration for over a century. He would shift the Egyptian obelisk near the Vatican in Rome 83m from the side of the Basilica of St Peter to directly in front.

It was a project of the utmost symbolic power. While taming a heathen icon and creating a centrepiece to an axially planned and richly ornamented Rome (which continued under Sixtus), it would prove Renaissance engineering skill matched that of the Romans and the Egyptians before them.

Many architects will sympathise with what happened next. Sixtus convened a 'congregazione', basically a client committee, made up of cardinals, the heads of the local government, magistrates, a treasurer-general (the 16th-century version of quantity surveyors) and a tax collector. Then they put out a call or entries to 'men of letters, mathematicians, architects, engineers and other valiant men' to enter a competition to decide who would undertake the work.

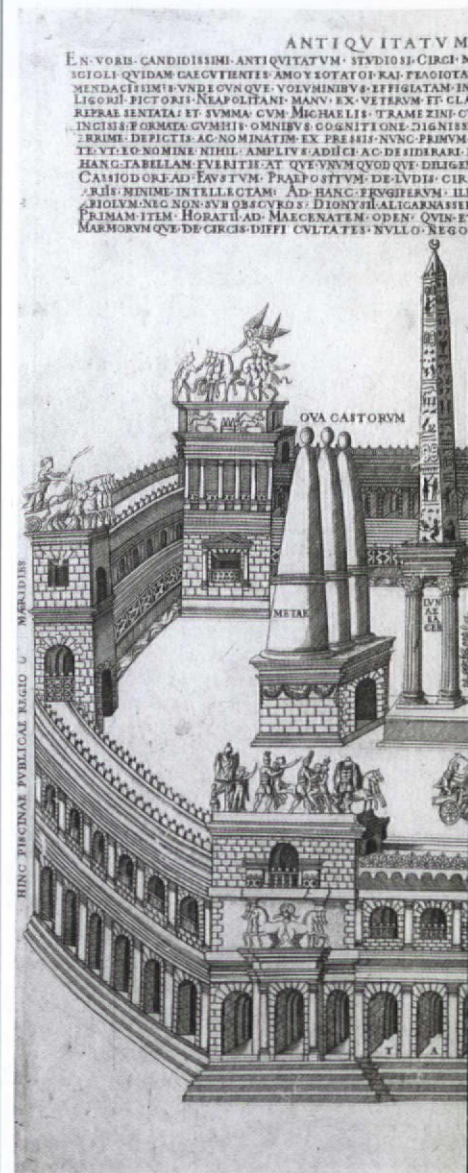
Over 500 people from all over Italy entered, flooding Rome with working models, drawings and treatises about how the task could be achieved.

Then, the pope gave the job to an old friend.

Forty-two-year-old Domenico Fontana had been responsible for building a palace for Sixtus when he was a cardinal, and seemed to be in the box seat for the job the whole time. But it was an inspired choice. Not only did he achieve the feat with the use of only 907 men and 75 horses (compared to 8,362 men used by the Egyptians to move and erect an obelisk in 1150BC, not including the 900 who died in the process), but thereafter became a kind of expert subcontractor, raising further fallen obelisks in Rome, and even installing one for the Medici family in Florence.

This book, by four historians, tells this story and many more in compelling detail from the 4,500-year history of obelisk raising. They take the narrative from Old Kingdom Egypt, to Rome, then Paris, London and New York, tracing the symbolic power of these Egyptian monuments that endured and transformed through the centuries. The book is very readable, and at its best has the effect of making the reader understand these mysterious columns as fundamental architectural objects, created often as memorials, but symbolising power and majesty through their form, inscription, and the awe-inspiring technology of their making.

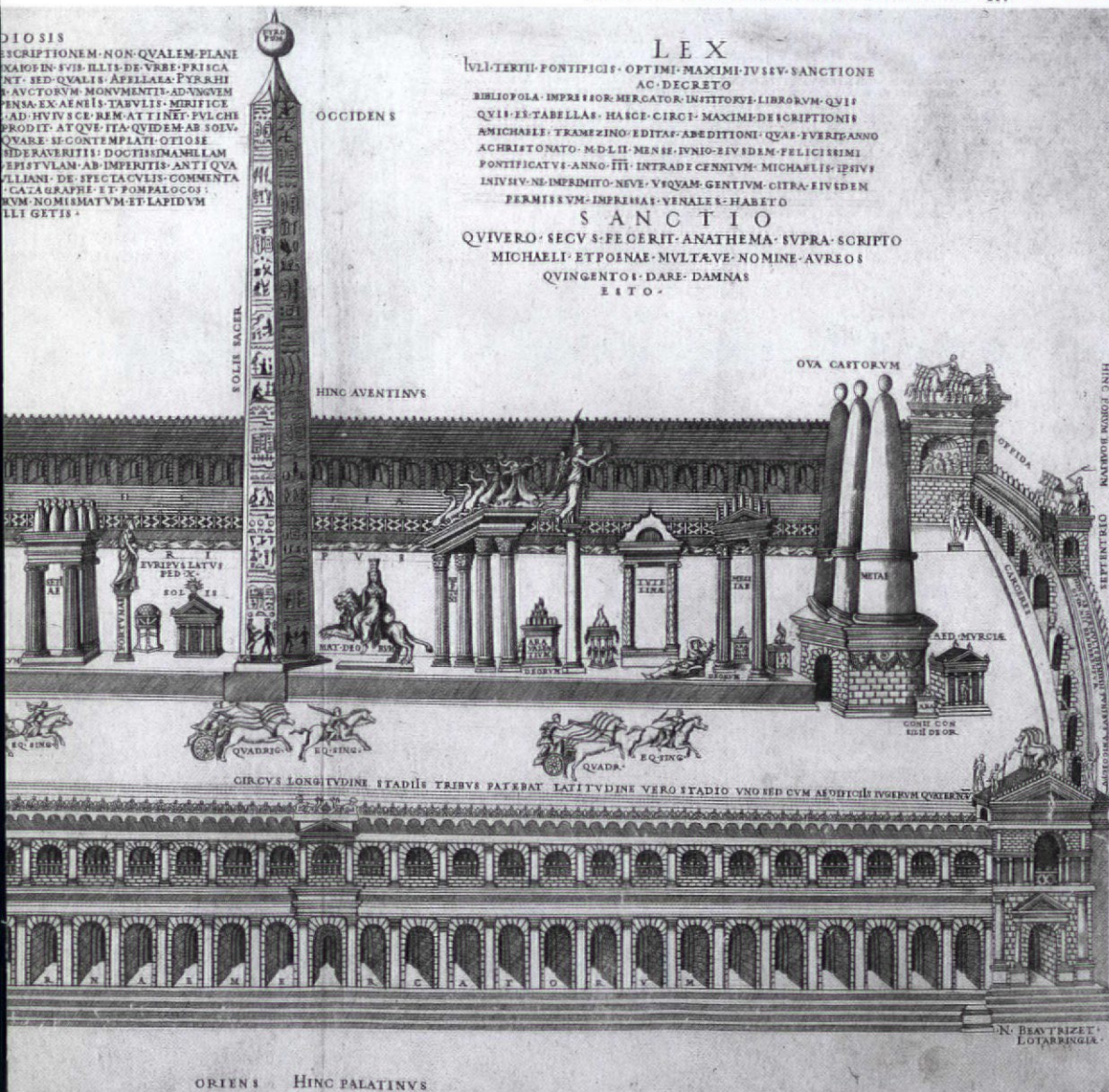
The authors begin with an account of how Egyptian



workmen would literally bash the obelisks out of the bedrock using harder, hand-held rocks, and then transport them on vast obelisk ships to their intended sites. They cover the inconclusive debate about how the Egyptians erected them, given their lack of iron pulleys and winches. Later, we travel to Augustan Rome,



Below\_ The Circus Maximus in Rome, with its two Egyptian obelisks



the decoration around its base focused on the engineering methods Lebas used to move it.

By 1878, the arrival of Cleopatra's Needle in London roused little political interest and, like its cousin in New York's Central Park, seems to have been integrated into the consumer economy through advertising and media, rather than playing a symbolic role. This was the end (for now?) of journeying obelisks, and these days arguments are more about repatriation of heritage than the symbolic power of the stones.

While this book is not at its best when trying to be analytical, its meticulous storytelling shows us the symbolic power of architecture in the starkest way possible. It is the story of moving the Vatican obelisk that feels like the centrepiece of this fascinating history – when ritual, technology, history, politics and urbanism met in one, very large piece of Aswan granite from a quarry in the south of Egypt.

**KIERAN LONG**

**+ Compelling storytelling**  
**– The cultural analysis doesn't quite take off**

where engineers had to work out how to move them across the Mediterranean. The Romans used obelisks to symbolise how a great power (Egypt) had been brought under the sway of the empire, and also incorporated their symbolic, religious meaning, integrating the gods Isis and Osiris into their pantheon. All but

the Vatican obelisk eventually fell, but many were resurrected by Sixtus and later popes, sanctified and capped with crosses.

Later, Western powers found obelisks just the things for their pretensions. The Luxor Obelisk in Place de la Concorde in Paris was erected in 1833 by engineer

Jean-Baptiste Lebas. The authors compellingly describe this as a kind of sanitising urban move, placing an ancient and politically neutral (but impressive) object in the square where Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had lost their heads. It was transformed into an object of cold scientific enquiry,



## Bigness and baroque eccentricity



### EXHIBITION / Yes is More

**Danish Architecture Centre,  
Copenhagen, Denmark,  
until 31 May  
[www.dac.dk](http://www.dac.dk)**

*Yes is More* is a dense, witty presentation of the ideas and architecture of Danish practice Bjarke Ingels Group. BIG, as it is known, has abandoned 20th-century Danish modernism to explore the more fertile world of bigness and baroque eccentricity. Judging by the practice's growing body of completed buildings, BIG's ideas sit somewhere between Rem Koolhaas and Norwegian firm Snøhetta. Like OMA, ugliness is turned into beauty by twists and folds and, like Snøhetta, BIG draws on the Nordic sense of landscape, democracy and metaphor.

The exhibition's main tools of communication are the comic strip and slogan, and the most compelling images are super-scale perspex models. BIG's world is also an optimistic

vision of the future where art, architecture, urbanism and nature magically find a new kind of balance. Yet while the rhetoric is loud, the underlying messages are serious ones about global warming, community life, post-petroleum-age architecture and the youth of the city.

In trying to reach a wide audience, BIG has consciously crossed into pop culture, which seems to have worked (the catalogue sold out in a week).

Yet there is a originality and vigour to BIG's work, best exemplified by the Copenhagen mountain residences project (AR December 2008). If this exhibition is trying to say too much, it is at least refreshing to find a body of ideas and an oeuvre of completed buildings that relate so coherently and energetically. Good architecture springs from good ideas and now, more than ever, architects need to communicate this to a wider audience.

**BRIAN EDWARDS**

**+ BIG's ideas take flight  
in this lively show**

**- Too much content for  
one exhibition**

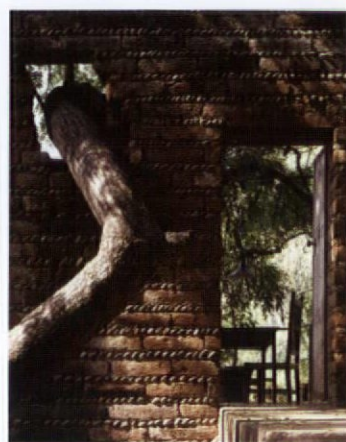
## The only place you can't do it is in the polar regions, for obvious reasons

### LECTURE / Jean Dethier, 'Building with Raw Earth: An Eco Revolution?'

**Fitzwilliam College,  
Cambridge, UK,  
17 February 2009  
[www.eartharchitecture.org](http://www.eartharchitecture.org)**

'Let's look at a piece of earth', says Jean Dethier, flashing up a cross section of sod on PowerPoint. It's nothing special but, according to Dethier, 'this was the building block of human civilisation.' A former director of the Pompidou Centre in Paris, Dethier is now an evangelist for earth architecture, the oldest means of making buildings, currently enjoying a modest revival for its simplicity, economy, versatility and impeccable environmental credentials. Though Dethier clearly owes a styling debt to the late *chanteur* George Melly (purple jacket, red trousers, pink shirt and fetching red fedora), he is *un homme sérieux* when it comes to mud. In his view, it's the only way to build, and it has contemporary applications beyond the familiar milieu of Africa.

As Dethier explains, earth architecture is everywhere – from the mud mosques of Mali to the cob cottages of Devon, from the adobe casas of the New World to the towering, painted cities of Yemen. Since humans first walked upright, successive civilisations have discovered the properties of earth architecture, putting it to all sorts of uses. Earth



structures can adapt to different scales (Yemen boasts a 65m-high minaret) and different climates, from equatorial Africa to Iceland. 'The only place you can't do it is in the polar regions, for obvious reasons,' asserts Dethier. 'No raw material.'

In the modern era, earth architecture has undergone some curious developments. During the Second World War the Nazis set up special units under Hitler's chief architect Albert Speer to investigate how to make buildings without using steel, as it was needed by the war effort. By this quirk of history, Germany is now highly advanced in the practice of building with earth. Scandinavia and Austria are not far behind and France can point to CRATerre, a Grenoble-based institute founded in 1979 which undertakes surveys of building types and trains architects in the techniques of earth architecture. These include adobe (mud bricks), pisé (rammed earth in formwork), cob (clay, sand and straw) and infill



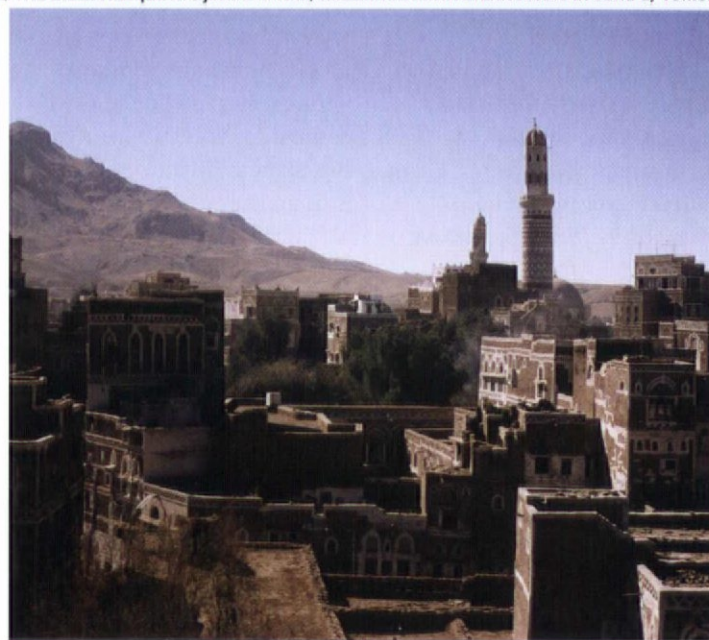
Below, from left\_ An adobe brick house in Mexico, by Sergio Puente and Ada Dewes; The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali; Decorated earth architecture in Sana'a, Yemen



(earth compacted in timber or steel frames). Thirty years on, CRAterre is still training and exporting a new generation of architects to spread the mud gospel. But the older generation were no slouches: Frank Lloyd Wright and Corb both dabbled in it and in Egypt, Hassan Fathy memorably revived the techniques of his ancestors. Today, Dethier sees wider cause for optimism as architects in environments as diverse as Arizona (Rick Joy) and Bangladesh (Anna Heringer) get

to grips with earth structures. Heringer in particular has given fresh impetus to traditional techniques, engaging with communities to build small-scale schools and houses that connect intimately with place and climate (AR December 2008).

'As the world is changing, how can earth architecture help?' asks Dethier, who is eager to extol its environmental benefits. The raw ingredients – clay, gravel, sand, silt, soil, loam – are everywhere, and compared with other materials,



a mud brick has a minute embodied energy (the energy used to manufacture and transport a unit of material). It is also thermally efficient. Scale is not necessarily a limitation; the Yemenis, among others, regularly build up to seven storeys. To underline his point, Dethier pulls out a Saudi Arabian banknote depicting the Al-Murabba'a palace in Riyadh. With its massive earth walls, it looks as if it's been there for centuries, but was actually built in the late 1930s.

'Society shapes architecture and architecture shapes society,' concludes Dethier, quoting Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus, whose microcredit loans have transformed life for the very poorest in the Asian subcontinent. Things can and do change, he asserts, and the

revival of interest in earth architecture as a response to the current environmental crisis has the potential to spark new ways of adapting old techniques. Dethier is a compelling (not to say kaleidoscopic) crusader for this most immemorial of building methods and his arguments deserve a wider audience.

**CATHERINE SLESSOR**

**+ An impeccably eco-friendly approach to building**

**— Will today's architects be keen to get their hands dirty?**



# The concept is fascinating but the shows were a bit dull

**EXHIBITION /**  
**Second Biennial of the Canary Islands**  
 Until 3 May, various locations, Tenerife and Gran Canaria, Canary Islands  
[www.bienaldecanarias.org](http://www.bienaldecanarias.org)

Canary Islanders are dead sick of tourists. Local government, the PR team, even the biennial director and curator, architect Juan Manuel Palerm Salazar, have said that the Second Biennial of the Canary Islands is about hosting a cultural event for local people. Exhibitions and events are entirely in Spanish, with mostly Spanish, Italian or Portuguese exhibitors, and this year's theme, 'Silencio' (silence), is a call to study the local landscape.

Silencio refers to the exploitation of the Canary Islands' natural landscape, first as a means of production (mainly bananas), then as a product sold to tourists. The 1970s tourism boom resulted in a raft of badly constructed and ugly hotels littering the coastline, with subsequent developments climbing cliffs and expanding the beaches.

These eyesore developments are such a hot issue that the government currently has a bill in Parliament to freeze all new tourism developments on new land. Old hotels can be refurbished or replaced, but the natural landscape must be preserved – the president of the Canary Islands has said – because the island's unique

tourist economy depends on it.

If the concept is fascinating – the biennial as a multi-disciplinary, intensive study of the islands' 30-year-old tango with tourism – most of the exhibitions were, frankly, a bit dull. The most interesting work, exhibited in Las Palmas on the island of Gran Canaria, was completed by the biennial's internal research team, which used detailed maps, documentary photographs and statistics to study the pace and spread of development.

The photography exhibition at CAAM modern art gallery in Las Palmas was another bright spot – a collection of work that documented cities in transition, including Francesco Jodice's photo series *What We Want*, which charts how changing cities reveal our desires.

The architectural projects exhibited at CAAM, however, (and this goes for several of the other venues as well) consisted of projects that were several years old, previously published and only tenuously linked to the biennial theme. Most exhibits had their plans crowded, with small type, on to large illuminated boards. Models, drawings or concept sketches were practically non-existent.

In the end, a visit to this fledgling biennial is an excuse, not a reason, to visit the Canary Islands. The 'keep it local' biennial concept has potential. If repeated, it could result in some fascinating site-specific work. But, while I did learn a lot

Below\_ Work on show in the CAAM modern art gallery in Las Palmas



about the pressing issues facing the islands – from the boat people that arrive daily from Africa, to internal tensions stemming from tourism and increased multiculturalism – much of this was gleaned from articles in the biennial programme guide. Hopefully the biennial catalogue, to be published later this year, will save punters a disappointing trip by reporting

and expanding on the best of the work on show.

**CHRISTINE MURRAY**

+ The biennial's theme of 'Silencio' has potential  
 – Work on show was sometimes old and often poorly presented

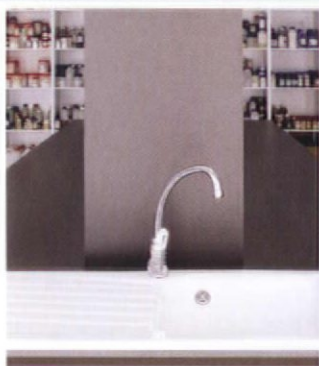


## SPECIFIER'S INFORMATION ENQUIRIES ON CARD

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### FORMICA ENQUIRY NUMBER 901

Formica is pleased to announce the introduction of its new Formica Compact Top range. Compact Top provides a high-performance, damage-resistant homogenous solid core laminate for environments where the utmost protection is required. The range offers a practical and robust design application for laboratory and industrial services and complements Formica's Chemtop2.



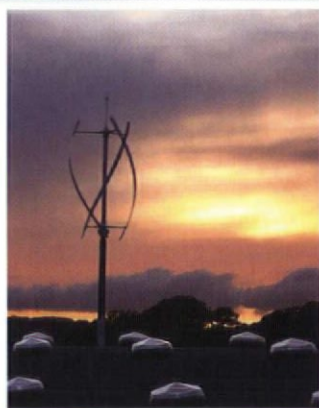
### CORUS COLORS ENQUIRY NUMBER 902

Colorcoat HPS200 was the preferred choice of material for the building envelope of the Boldon School in South Tyneside. Architect Waring and Netts specified Colorcoat HPS200 in Sergasso and white with Eurobond's Europanel composite panel, providing a striking finish with inherent fire protection, sound insulation and thermal performance for the accredited PFI secondary school.



### MONODRAUGHT ENQUIRY NUMBER 903

Food stores consume more energy than other parts of retail operations, which means improving energy efficiency is a priority. Sainsbury's flagship green store in Dartmouth, Devon, is the first UK supermarket to fit Monodraught 750mm Diamond dome SunPipes in its main shop area, which helps to slash 50 per cent of energy taken from the national grid and 40 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.



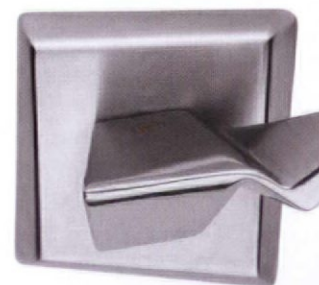
### MONODRAUGHT ENQUIRY NUMBER 904

According to Sainsbury's commercial director Neil Sachdev, 'Monodraught SunPipes provide amazing natural light' in the company's new green store in Dartmouth, Devon – the first UK supermarket to fit Monodraught 750mm Diamond dome SunPipes in its main shop floor. Producing approximately 1,000 lux at floor level, they bring natural daylight to thousands of customers every week.



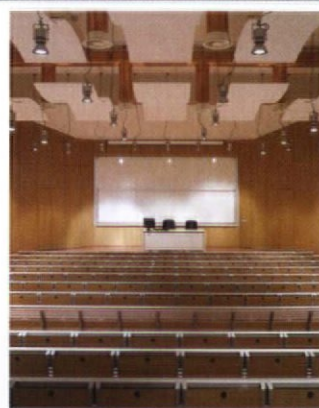
### HÄFELE ENQUIRY NUMBER 905

Häfele UK's latest training seminar for specifiers has been approved by the RIBA for inclusion in its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) core curriculum. Entitled 'Specifying Door Ironmongery – A Basic Guide', it aims to help building professionals confidently specify door hardware. The seminar examines the five basic parts of a typical door set, used to hang, close, operate, lock and protect the door.



### ARMSTRONG ENQUIRY NUMBER 906

Architect Studio Nira selected Armstrong's Ultima Canopy Panels for the hall and the 'aula magna' at Università Luiss in Roma. The light, concave and convex modules emphasise the elegant design of the amphitheatre. Yet the ceiling is not only decorative; its reflective nature optimises lighting and its acoustics improve sound quality and intelligibility.



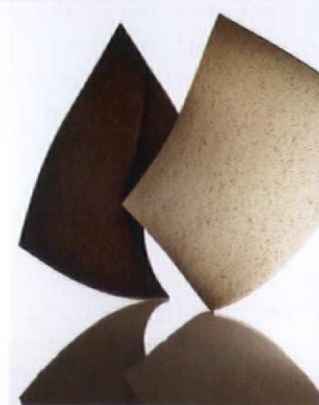
### SAS INTERNATIONAL ENQUIRY NUMBER 907

A black Trucell aluminium ceiling system by SAS International has been specified by Rafael Viñoly Architects for the Curve Theatre in Leicester. The theatre is Viñoly's first completed UK project and the design opens up views of all of the theatre's internal workings. SAS International's Trucell ceiling system is an aluminium open-cell ceiling designed to lie on a 15mm SAS Tee Grid.



### ARTIGO ENQUIRY NUMBER 908

Artigo presents its latest rubber flooring covering collections, the result of an inspired and creative collaboration with Sottsass Associati. 'Kayar' is the Tamil expression for plaited coconut fibre rope. Coconut fibre and rubber: ecological materials that convey an idea of nature and the contemporary. A primary building technique of India is here translated into a cutting-edge product.





## #2 BLANK SPACE EVA STENRAM

This photograph, by artist Eva Stenram, is part of a larger series based on pornographic pictures set in forests. The images are downloaded from the internet and the human bodies are digitally removed.

The low-resolution images bring the building block of 'the pixel' to the fore, along with the craft of constructing or reconstructing images. The omnipresent entwined naked bodies are more difficult to remove than to find. By erasing the bodies, the artist makes it possible for the viewer to inhabit the space.

The photograph evokes the erotics of public space, like the wooded areas of public parks in

mediterranean cities that can be full of lovers. One could imagine the blankets remaining as markers of public private space, a kind of temporary paradise.

As the country and western musician Billie Jo Spears sings: 'I'll get the blanket from the bedroom and we'll go walkin' once again / To that spot down by the river where our sweet love first began / Just because we are married don't mean we can't slip around / So let's walk out... and lay the blanket on the ground.' **RUT BLEES LUXEMBURG**

The photographer and artist Rut Blees Luxemburg curates a monthly series of artworks for the AR relating to questions of space and architecture

