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## BUILDINGS

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044 **041**

**Smiljan Radic**

Casa A, San Clemente,  
Maule Region, Chile

048 **042**

**Alejandro Aravena**

St Edward's University Student  
Residences, Austin, Texas, USA

054 **043**

**Pezo von Ellrichshausen**

Casa Fosc, San Pedro de la Paz,  
Concepción Province, Chile

Cover Cristobal Palma

060 **044**

**Francisco Mangado**

Álava Archaeological Museum,  
Vitoria, País Vasco, Spain

068 **045**

**Lacaton & Vassal**

Nantes School of Architecture,  
Nantes, France

074 **046**

**Toyo Ito**

Za-Koenji Theatre, Tokyo, Japan

080 **047**

**Kyu Sung Woo**

Putney House, Putney,  
Vermont, USA

## URBANISM

- 084 Florian Beigel's proposals for Saemangeum, a new metropolis in South Korea, envisage a city of islands reclaimed from a lagoon



090 Design Review

Jurgen Bey and Leo Schouten's new venture, Prooff, demonstrated some serious ambition as it debuted at this year's Milan Furniture Fair

## MARGINALIA

- 092 Nordic architects; a snazzy stair for SCI-Arc; Fritz Haeg and Paul Cardenas chat at MoMA; Roberto Burle Marx; the joy of shopfronts

097 Specifier's information

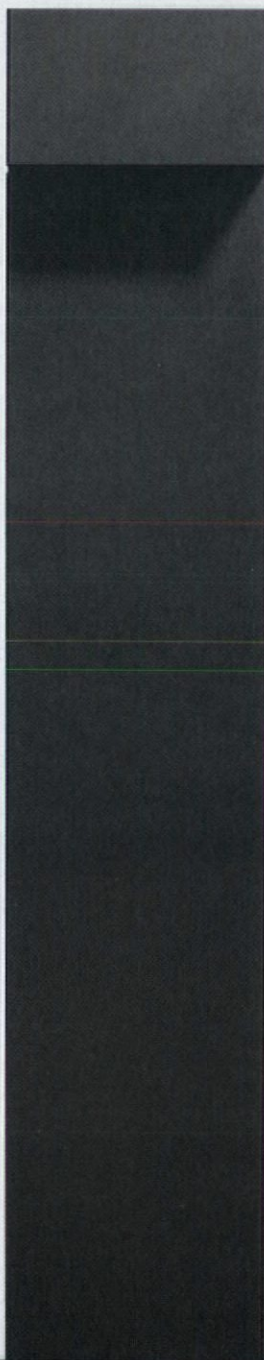
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098 Back page

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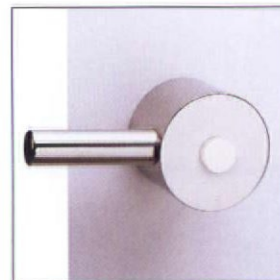
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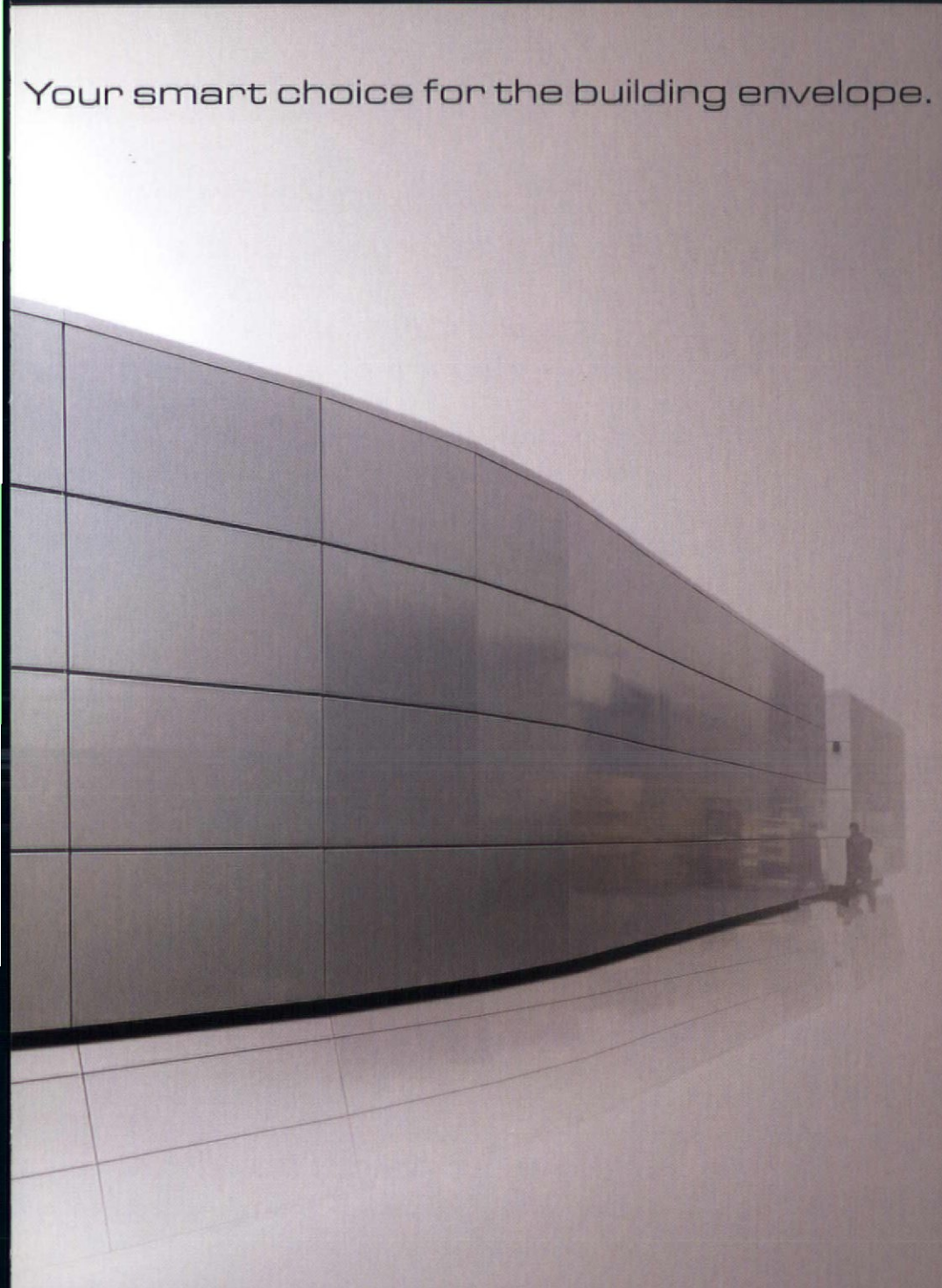


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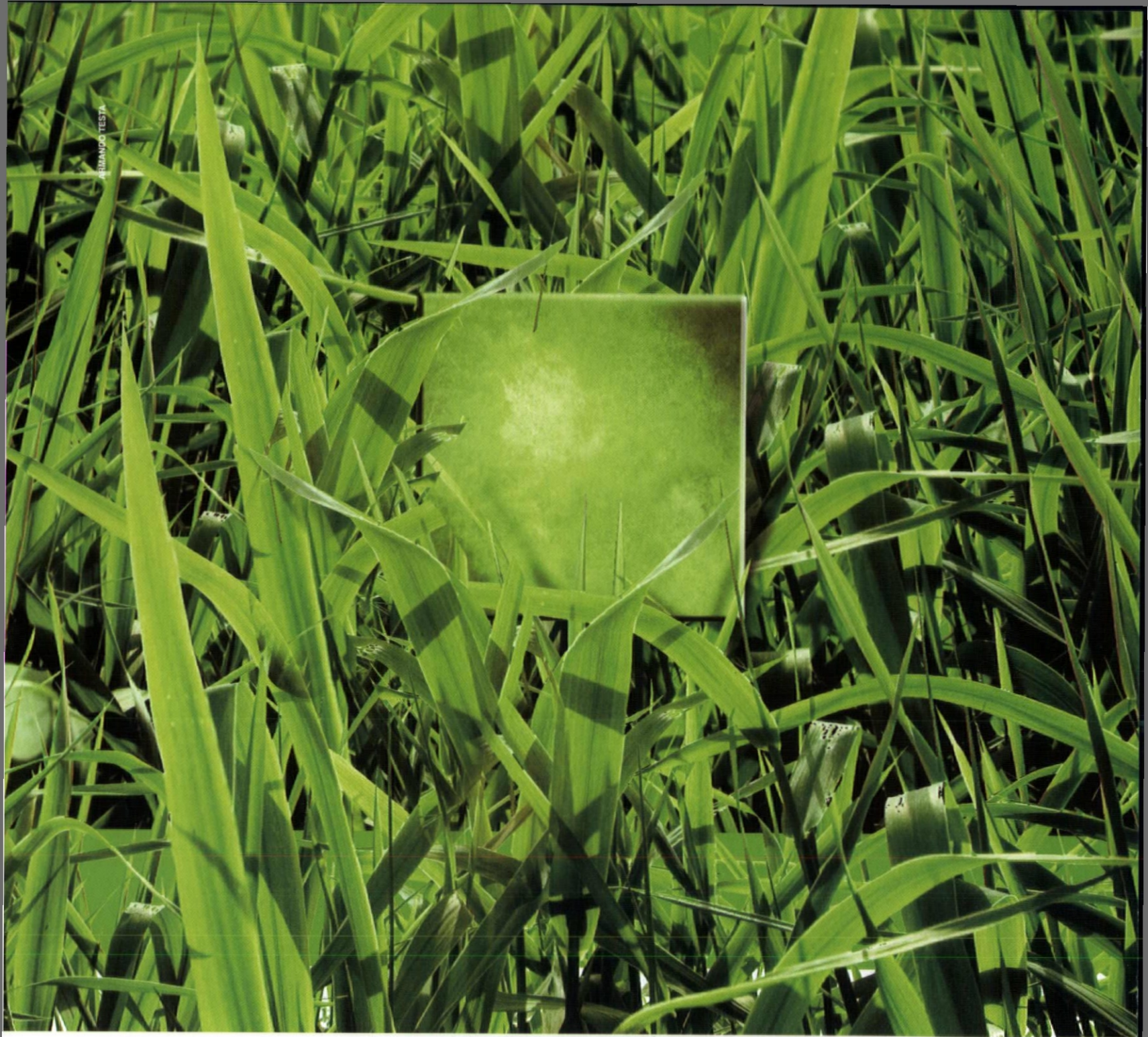
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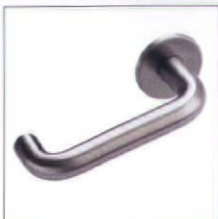
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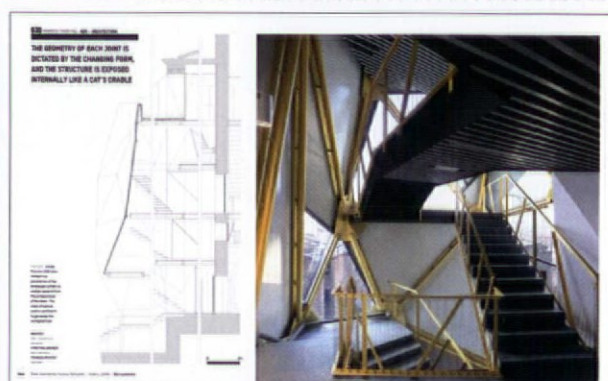
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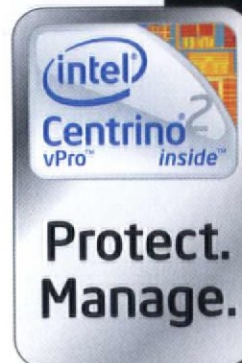
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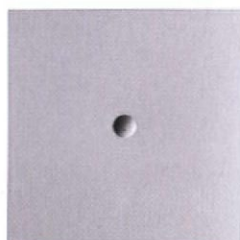
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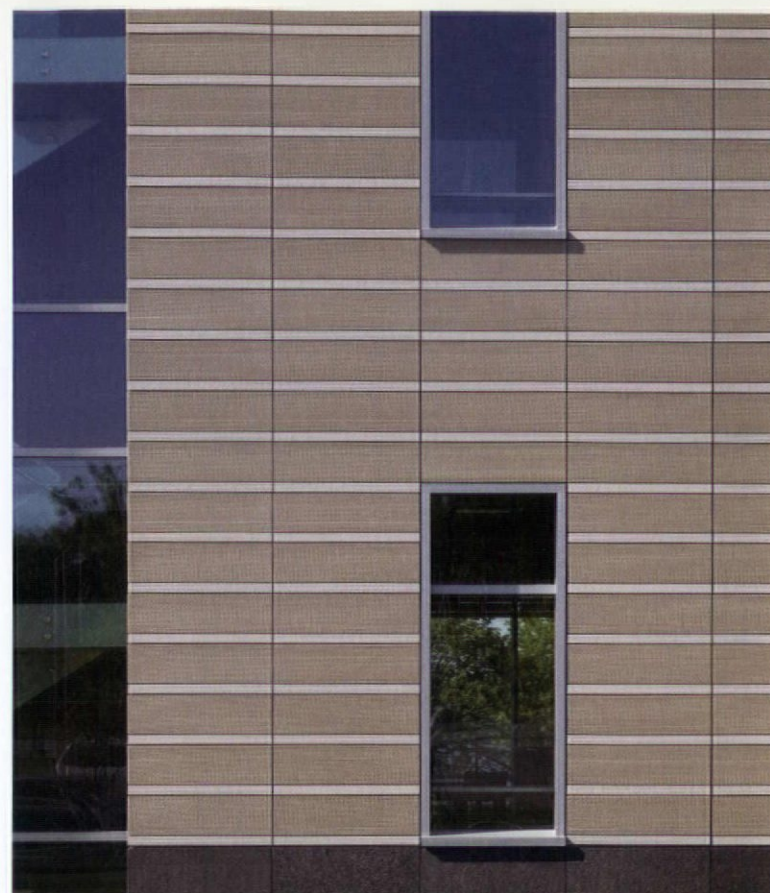
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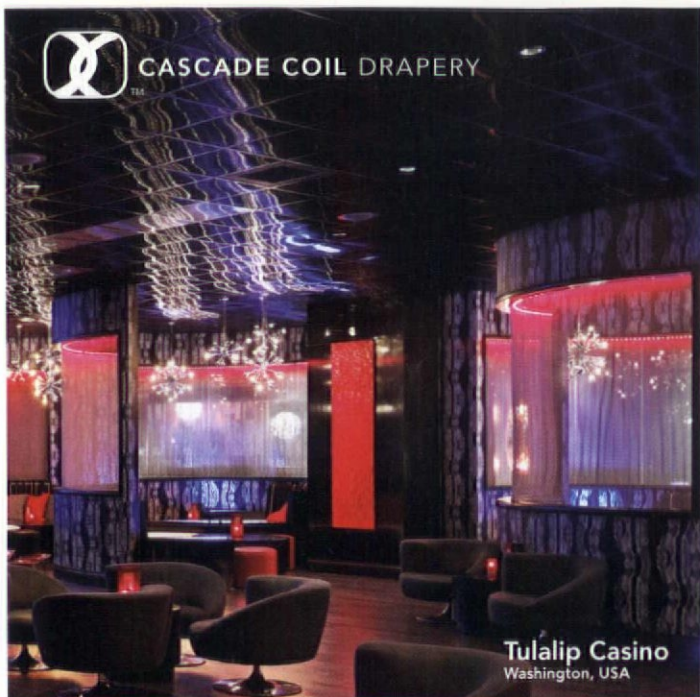


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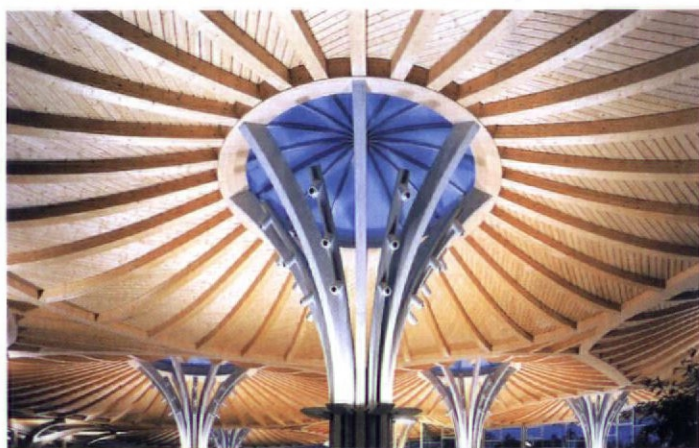
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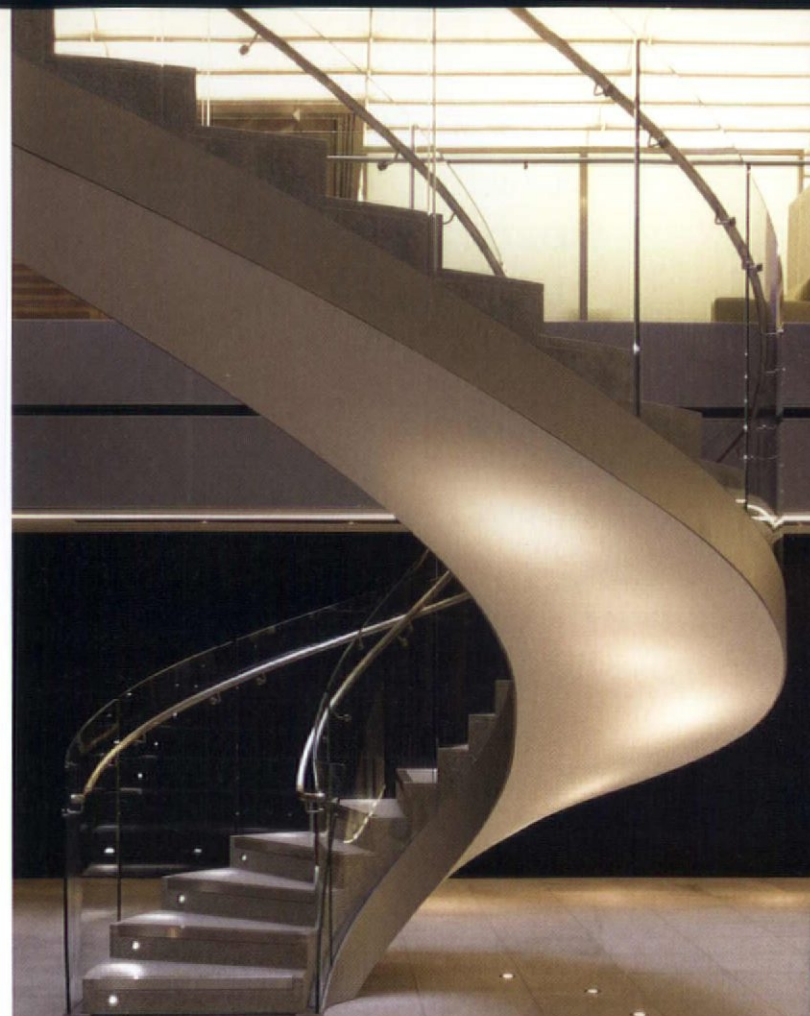
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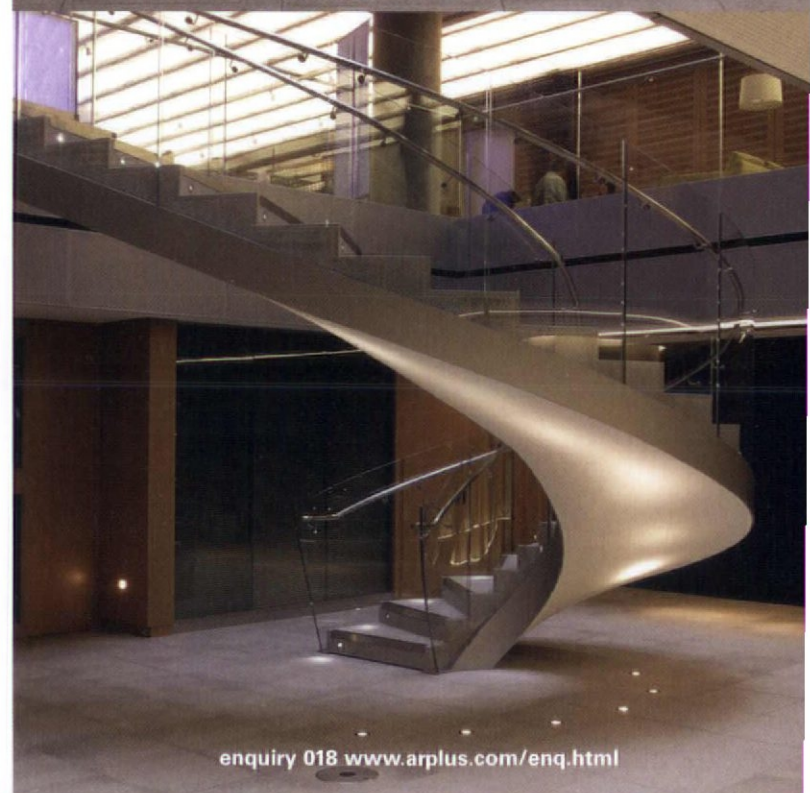


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*Cristobal Palma is a UK-born photographer who divides his time between London and Santiago in Chile. He studied at the Architectural Association, but now concentrates full-time on photography, documenting the flowering of architectural talent in Chile for a wide variety of magazines*

*Joseph Rykwert is one of the most distinguished architecture writers and academics working today. He has taught at the University of Essex, the University of Cambridge and is Paul Philippe Cret professor emeritus of architecture and professor of art history at the University of Pennsylvania. He was in Italy when the earthquake hit L'Aquila, and writes for the AR about its causes and consequences*

*Leon van Schaik is innovation professor of architecture at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, and a widely published author. His most recent book, *Spatial Intelligence*, was published by Wiley last year*

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

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WORLD WIDE WEAVE





ATHENS, GREECE

# The New Acropolis Museum: banal, sloppy, badly detailed sophistry

ALEXANDRA STARA

www.newacropolismuseum.gr

The Parthenon, the centrepiece of Athens' Acropolis temple complex, was rebuilt in the heyday of the Athenian state in the 440s BC, following its earlier destruction by the Persians. It was only decades old when Plato was writing his philosophical dialogues a couple of miles down the road. Both works went on to become influential beyond measure, underpinning the foundations of western civilization.

Architecture is one of the disciplines shaped by Platonic thought, but unfortunately one of Plato's later dialogues, *The Sophist*, does not appear to have made an impact. In this, Plato warns against sophistry as a way of reasoning. Not always meant to deceive, sophistry was often a show of intellectual and verbal skill, but in reality it served no one except the person spinning it against the common sense of the *polis*, or body of citizens. The New Acropolis Museum, opening on 20 June, is a testament to the allure of sophistry – and the failure of the *polis* to properly assign a task of such significance.

The project has had a long and troubled history spanning

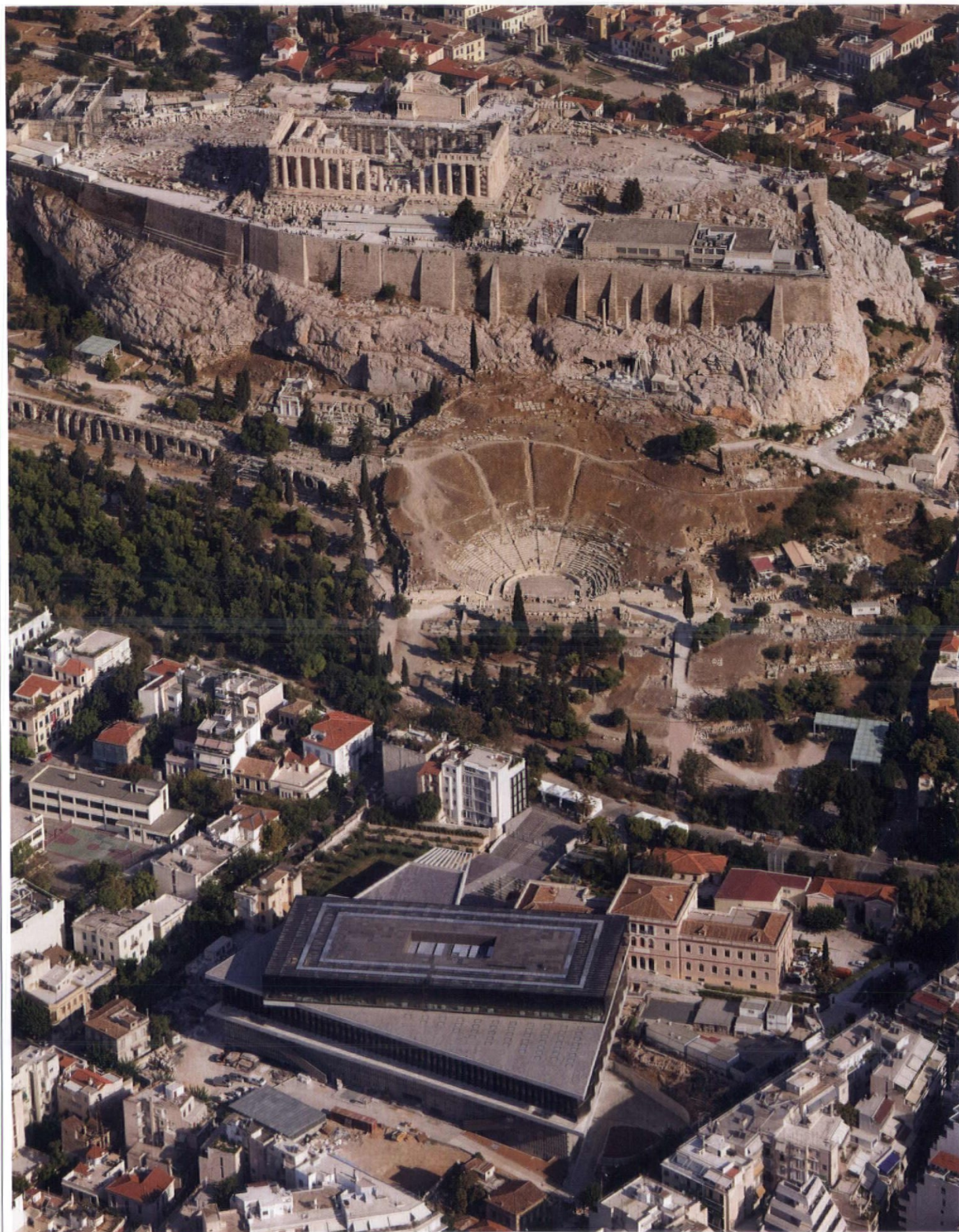
three decades. Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi finally landed the job of designing the museum in 2000, to open for the 2004 Olympics, but archaeological finds on-site delayed the deadline by another five years. The site, at the foot of the Acropolis hill on the south-east side, is further plagued by an extremely difficult shape, wedged between existing buildings of varying architectural merit. These include two conservation-grade residences, which, as a bizarre afterthought, are under threat of demolition because they block the new museum's view. As if this wasn't enough trauma for one project, the museum's programme centrepiece is absent – the Parthenon sculptures. Brought to England by Lord Elgin in 1816 and owned by the British Museum, the Greeks have been demanding their return since the 1980s.

So how do you go about designing what is effectively a surrogate Acropolis, at the foot of the original? For Bernard Tschumi the answer was simple. Armed with his favourite design strategy (as he confessed in a presentation last year) Tschumi

envisaged the building as a superimposition of three shifted geometric grids, in a similar vein to his most famous project, the Parc de la Villette in Paris (AR August 1989). The lower grid relates to the concrete columns that raise the structure off the ground to expose the archaeological site below; the top grid is a glass box, aligned with the Parthenon opposite, containing a main exhibition hall and café and offering panoramic views of the monument. In between the concrete columns and the glass box is the central volume of the building: the middle grid, with its geometry shifted from above and below. It is also largely glazed, featuring vertical fins in parts for shading. A huge concrete and steel canopy juts out above the museum's entrance, intended as a marker from the main street, from where the building is considerably recessed and partly concealed. The rhetoric accompanying this scheme is lengthy and comes as much from the architect as from his clients. Much is made of the 'conceptual clarity' of the project and how

it reflects that of the ancient monuments. But the design concept is only apparent in the architect's diagrams and his explanations. The building itself has hardly anything to do with it. As with la Villette, the abstract geometric constructs that generated the project have little effect on the actual experience. **The geometry of the Acropolis suggests a precise understanding of architecture as experienced event, as movement and measure of temporal rhythms – its drawings tell you little of its reality and meaning. With the New Acropolis Museum it is almost exactly the opposite.** The reality of the museum is the relentless banality of its spaces, consistently poor material choices and frightful detailing. The ground floor is open, accommodating entrance lobby, temporary gallery and retail/ancillary spaces, as well as the main staircase hall and landing on to the first-floor galleries. This is sufficient to show that none of the design's commendable aspirations – clarity of concept, simplicity of form and materials, relationship to Acropolis and







This image\_ Archaeological excavations beneath the ground floor of the New Acropolis Museum Below\_ Main entrance lobby



so on – have actually made it through the translation from words to building. They remain pure rhetoric.

Greeted by the crass canopy – positioned as if to ram into the adjacent residences and on to the rock of the Acropolis itself – you cross a patchwork flooring of glass and stone slabs, with the subterranean remains visible through a large hole under the canopy, to reach the building's entrance. There is nothing wrong in principle with 'subtle' and 'unimposing' as a design strategy for a museum lobby, but what happens here simply isn't it. Instead, this is a totally

underwhelming space, not small but strangely awkward and ungenerous, with clumsy layout and strikingly bad details, surfaces and fixtures. The effect, which continues throughout the ground floor, is that of an entrance to a used-car dealership. The contrast between the lobby and the staircase hall, which is concealed from the entrance and opens to the left past the ticket counter, is obviously designed to surprise. The double-height space, with a clear orthogonal plan and no columns, is a grand corridor culminating in a staircase

of the same width, which carries the visitor to the exhibition halls upstairs.

Walls are clad in prefabricated concrete slabs with large round perforations, like oversized domino pieces, and the floor is entirely glazed (remember, ruins below), with opaque glass in parts to relieve the vertigo-prone. Proportions are more Egyptian than Greek, yet with the polka-dotted walls and glazed flooring the whole thing resonates loudly with commercial references rather than anything art-related (pace Koolhaas and Hadid, who at least know how to make their shops glamorous). But this is more Lada than Prada, with a row of cheap turnstiles controlling access into this lofty hall from the lobby, reducing architecture to mere décor with no functional integrity and alas, no decorum. This holds equally on the level of detail, as the prefabricated concrete and glass

slabs composing this room are fitted with evident sloppiness and are already chipped, flaking or sagging. Unless the galleries were built by a different team altogether and such things as their office-block glazing system miraculously substituted by something more suitable, it is very hard to imagine how the remainder of the museum might offer a different picture. **The New Acropolis Museum fails its context on multiple levels, persisting with clichés such as 'visual connection' and abstract conceptions to justify architectural decisions that let everyone and everything down when actually experienced.**

This being the case, the failure of the building as a tectonic structure is even more grating. Prefabrication and the mechanical sharpness of 'minimal' modernism (from Tschumi again) are much harder to pull off than the handmade, in-situ approximations of craft; and this is nowhere more true than in Greece, where standards of building construction are not, let's say, quite what they are in Switzerland.

But Tschumi is Tschumi, with a considerable oeuvre, both written and built, that makes his position on architecture abundantly clear. The real question is what were the great and good of this glorious city hoping to achieve when they sat down with him (and long before him) to develop this project, and how can they still stand before us, before this very building, and rehash the same sophistry about light and clarity and you-name-it, as if they have never seen well-made architecture in their lives, and as if this isn't all happening in the shadow of a certain Acropolis.



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**BRANDENBURG, GERMANY**

# The rusty nail

LAYLA DAWSON

■ [www.iba-see.de](http://www.iba-see.de)

Officially called the 'Rostturm', this 30m-high, 111 tonne Cor-ten steel tower, on the border of Brandenburg and Sachsen in east Germany, has already been affectionately dubbed the 'Rusty Nail'. Hammered into a devastated moonscape, it is the landmark for Europe's biggest reclamation project, in which 60,000ha of a former open coal-mining area are being turned into a water park.

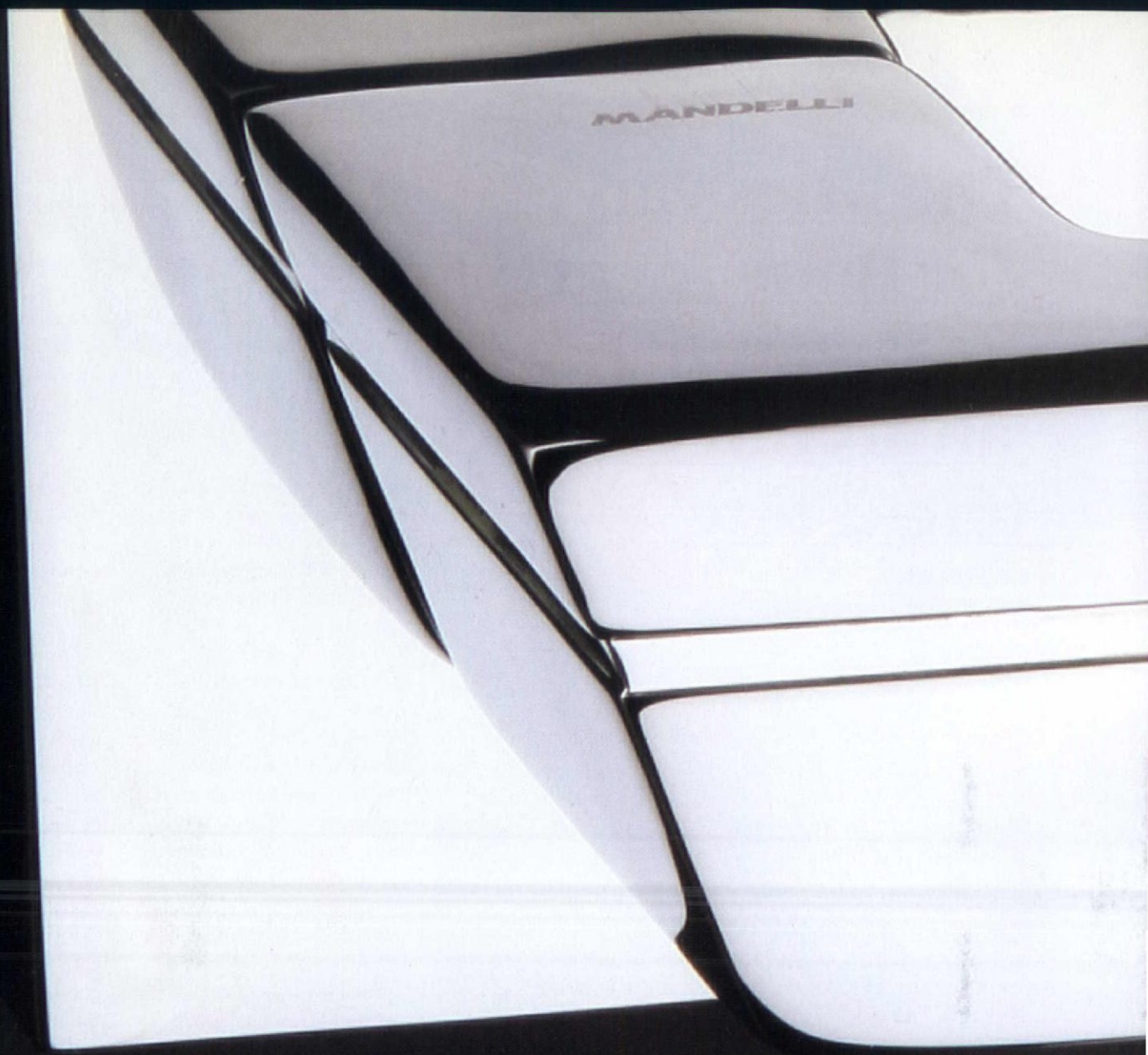
Architektur + Landschaft, a young Düsseldorf-based office, won the competition for this structure in 2005. The tower, a zig-zag open staircase with nine landings leading to a roof-top viewing platform, opened last autumn.

All is not sweetness and light, however. An association for the physically challenged has presented the Betonkopf (Concrete Head) Award to developer IBA Seeland for failing to commission a barrier-free environment. The Rusty Nail has no lift.



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BARCELONA, SPAIN

# The Mies van der Rohe Award final round: 'an architectural tête-à-tête'

ROB GREGORY

www.miesarch.com



The Mies van der Rohe Award, officially titled the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture, framed this year's shortlist as a series of architectural duels. In Antoni Gaudí's Barcelona landmark La Pedrera, the five shortlisted practices faced off in a series of lectures: Carme Pigem from RCR Arquitectes presented the practice's Library, Senior Citizens' Centre and City Block Core Zone, Barcelona; Marc Barani from Atelier Marc Barani showed his Multimodal Centre for Nice Tramway; Craig Dykers and Kjetil Trædal Thorsen from Snøhetta talked about the practice's Norwegian Opera & Ballet, Oslo (pictured); Yvonne Farrell and

Shelley McNamara from Grafton Architects the Luigi Bocconi university building, Milan; and Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas from Studio Fuksas the Zenith Music Hall in Strasbourg. Perhaps the Mies Foundation had learned from the success of the World Architecture Festival format, which debuted in Barcelona last year.

As each architect presented to the jury and a near-capacity audience, it soon became clear how significant a part of the process this would become, with stark differences between each architect being revealed. From the ad-lib charm of the Fuksases to the thoughtful prose of Farrell and McNamara, the architects vied to positively influence the jury in advance of their trip to see the buildings. The following day, with the architects' words fresh in their minds, the jury (chaired by the director of Institut Français d'Architecture, Francis Rambert and including Ole Bouman, Irena Fialová, Fulvio Irace, Carme Pinós, Vasa J Perović and 2007 prize-winner Luis Mansilla) began their three-day European tour, visiting each building before announcing, a week later, that Snøhetta was this year's victor.

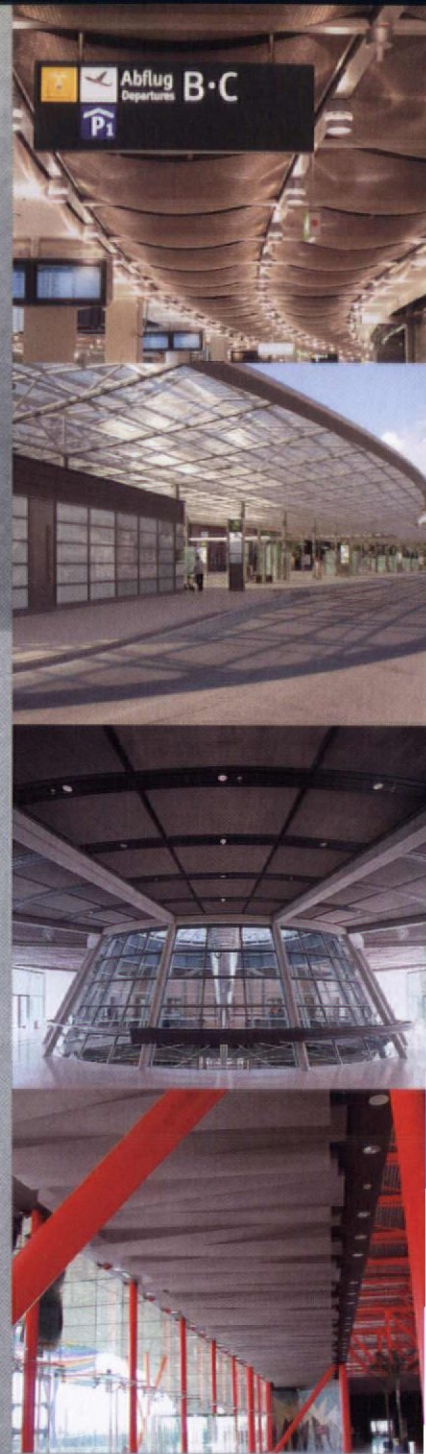
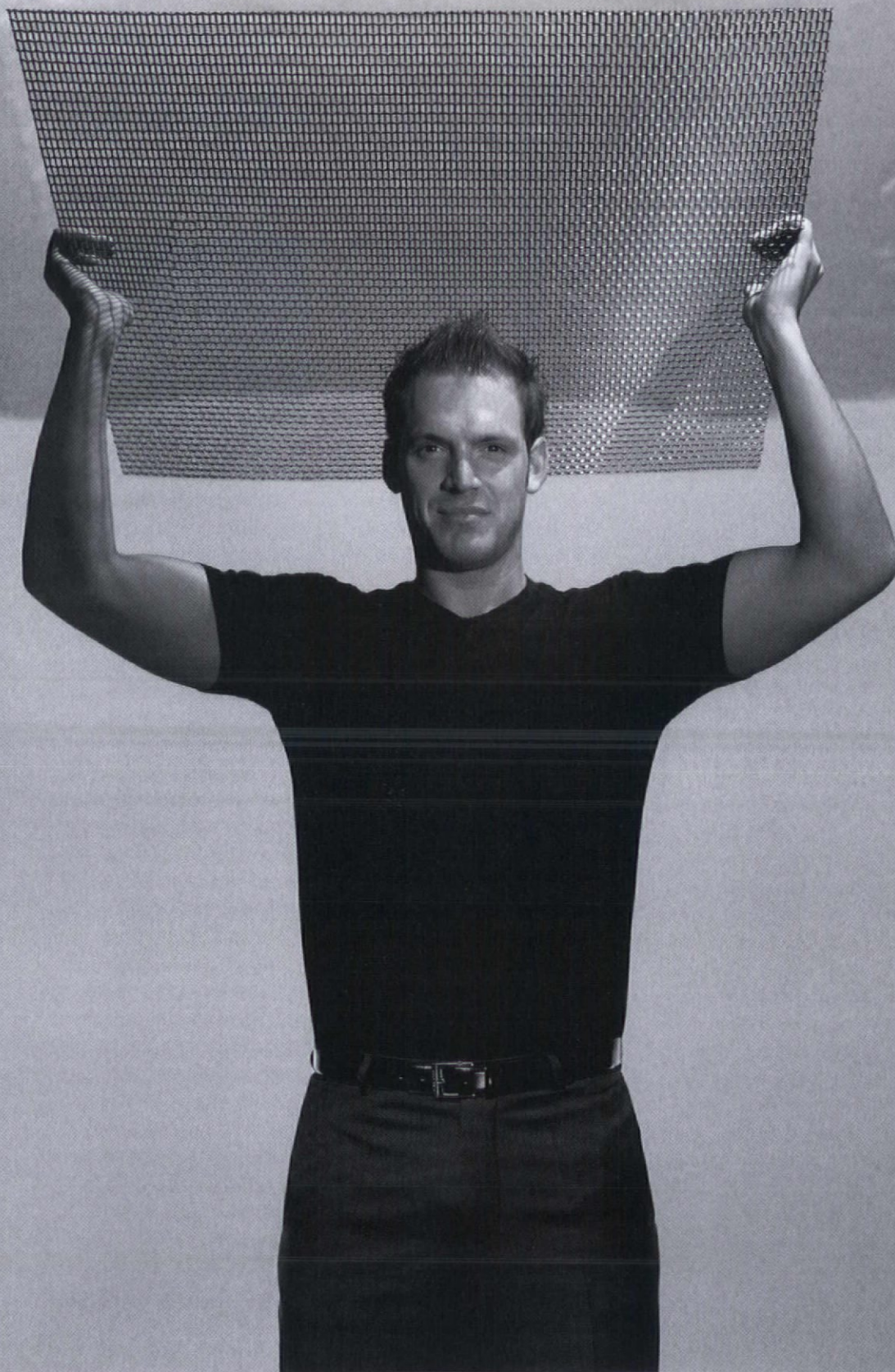
Foundation director Diane Gray was pleased with the contribution made by the lectures. 'There was a lot of engagement and it was interesting to see five very different teams in the same day. Everyone did it in a fresh way, in different styles. What unified them was the sincerity with which they presented their work.' While this was true, on the strength of the lectures themselves it would not be unreasonable to conclude that

RCR, Grafton and Snøhetta were the most convincing contenders for the prize by the end of the day. Barani and Fuksas demonstrated with profound clarity that excellent buildings are not an inevitable by-product of either rigorous problem-solving or singular moments of inspiration. Barani focused too much on complications and compromises in his building, while Fuksas failed to engage in a serious dialogue, both through his absence during the other lectures and his disappointing (albeit charming) fly-through of the Zenith.

Speaking shortly before receiving the award in Oslo, Thorsen summed up his emotions by saying: 'It was a big surprise and brought us big joy. What adds to the joy is that this award programme is unique, for three reasons: firstly, focusing on Europe (unlike other international awards) the jury can genuinely compare apples with apples. The process itself is also significant, as the jury actually visit the buildings. Too many prizes just look at pictures – and we know that some bad buildings photograph well while some great buildings do less well. Finally, the uniqueness of the Mies prize is that the jury are able to listen to the architects before they visit the buildings. This allows them to replay the words as they navigate the sites themselves, making a judgment on the coherence between the architectural intention and the final work. For us, it is important that we are walking our talk – if there is a big division between words and action then we have certainly lost our grip on architecture.'

**The presentations enlivened the judging process and revealed intriguing differences. Other awards would do well to follow suit**





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DIE DRAHTWEBER



LOS ANGELES, USA

# AR shoots the breeze with artist Dan Graham as his MOCA retrospective closes

JAFFER KOLE

www.moca.org

**The work of influential artist Dan Graham spans five decades and straddles a cross-section of media, from performance art to pavilions. As a retrospective exhibition, Dan Graham: Beyond, concludes at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (until 25 May), the AR meets him to discuss his exploration of architecture**

**AR** Why do architects respond so well to your work?

**Dan Graham** I know Atelier Bow-Wow like my work because of my early series of suburban houses photographs (*Homes for America*, 1966-67). I think Herzog and de Meuron are looking for formal solutions. Recently they told me: 'Dan, we're doing curves now' [a reference to Graham's use of curved forms]. It gives them basic ways to shift what they're doing.

**AR** Was *Homes for America* a critique of suburbia?

**DG** It was actually making fun of *Esquire* magazine sociologists, kind of a popular cliché. I take a great interest in Italian-American upper middle-classes trying to be lower middle class. So the work is a fascination with the petit bourgeois. Instead of being critical, it's a celebration of the middle classes. Also, I was very

influenced by the French novelist Michel Butor, whose work dealt with relating art to a suburban city plan, as opposed to the white cube of gallery spaces. So in a way, I'm getting away from this formalistic cliché about art of the white cube.

**AR** Do you get irritated by the typical critique of suburbia in academic and artistic study?

**DG** Critics don't like kitsch, whereas artists love it. Critics also think everything is a sociological critique and that it's reductive. I think art is about ambiguity – that's what's so good about Robert Venturi's early writing: he says it's not either/or. Venturi's very keen on the fact that suburbs are both planned and unplanned at the same time, and houses get transformed by the people who live there. Things take place in time. The main thing happening in cities is that everybody moved back into the centre, and now you have decay on the edge.

**AR** You work across so many media. How did this happen?

**DG** I always wanted to do hybrids. My early magazine work was about art, essays and writing. I did a piece for the Venice Biennale in 1976 called *Public Space/Two Audiences*, which was successful but too

easy because it was just a white cube. But if I took away a white wall and made a window, it'd be architecture – so the models came out of a critique of my own work. There were two kinds of models: one was simultaneous pavilions and sculptures, which I saw as garden situations, and the other was alterations of houses for fantasies of suburbia. **I saw a show of architectural models and I thought: 'Why can't an artist do architecture models?' I liked how that was a hybrid situation.**

**AR** What is your experience of working inside versus outside?

**DG** Very few of my pieces work inside. Video artists like Bill Viola did big vertical spectacles where you stand there watching in awe. I like the idea of watching TV lying down, and I thought of drive-in theatres where you're in your car. In my installations you could lie down. Work being quasi-functional is very important to me.

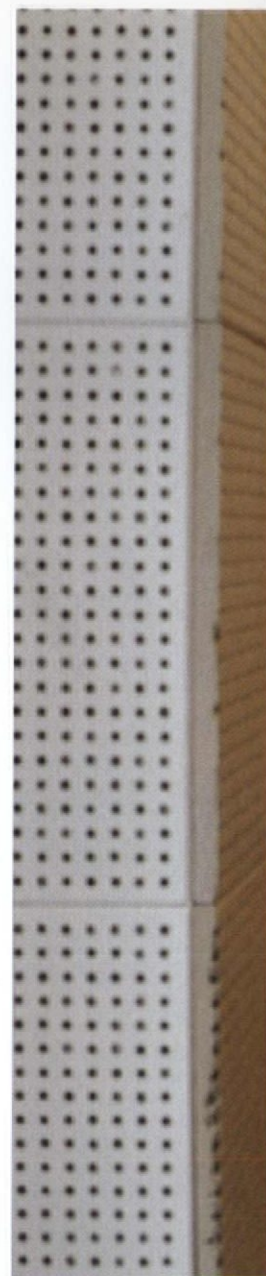
**AR** Can you elaborate on the role of art and architecture in public spaces?

**DG** In many ways, I relate to European socialism. If you look at Parc de la Villette in Paris, the socialists wanted to create a science museum on the site that's an amusement park for

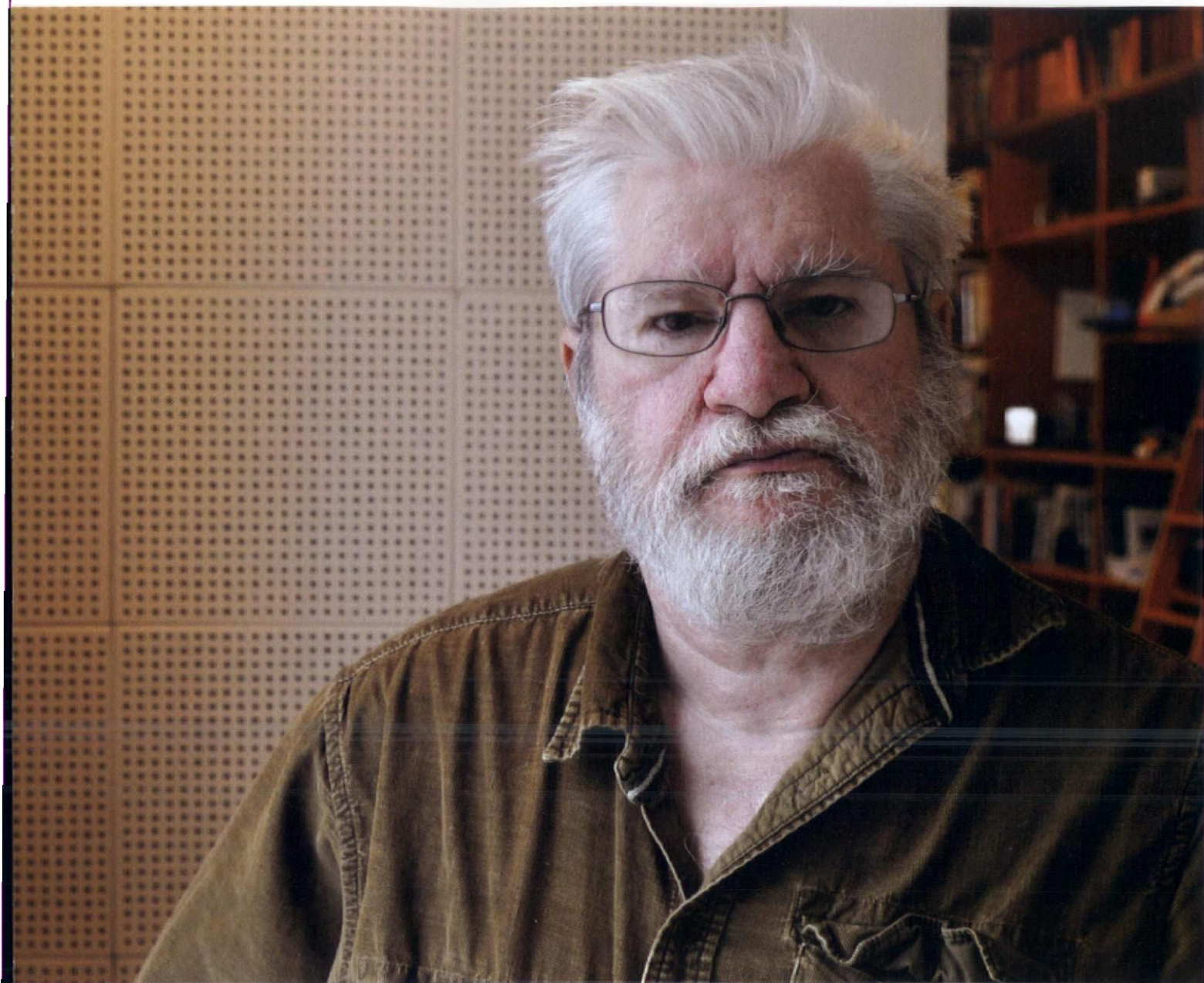
children, like an antidote to the Pompidou Centre or Disneyland Paris. Bernard Tschumi, who designed the park, created an aristocratic folly. It was a trick that worked, yet undermined the original idea.

**AR** Can you avoid that outcome?

**DG** Every situation is different. Things have to be open to the general public. Shows like Documenta, an art exhibition, and Münster, a sculpture event [both in Germany], breed entertainment and education







at the same time, so I'd create photo opportunities for parents and a funhouse for children. The idea that work has to be a sociological critique is against my own interests, which are anthropological. **I didn't like Diller + Scofidio's early work, which was against architectural tourism, because I think tourism is important.** In fact, my biggest passion is architecture tourism. However I realised that architects themselves can't look at architecture or do tourism because they are at work. I have an advantage.

**AR** How does your interest in anthropology relate to your art?

**DG** My pavilions are play stations for children. Parents like situations where they can see children having fun. I also think they should be sited so that anyone can use them to lie down, eat lunch or play. Recently I've been using parody in my work, which I picked up from Claes Oldenburg. I think a lot of Venturi's work is witty in a suburban vernacular way and Saarinen is hilariously funny, too. He did a women's dorm at

University of Pennsylvania that has a moat, and when you cross it and go inside the building, on the balcony there are French doors where the girls all appear to their boyfriends half dressed.

**AR** What materials do you use?

**DG** I used one-way mirror glass in early video pieces. The first person to use that was American sculptor Larry Bell. The leap I made was to do it in architectural forms. A big change was when I first started using curved forms.

**AR** What about the role of scale in your work?

**DG** Most of my pavilions have room for four or five people standing up, or two people lying down. Some people used them as a hotel, with sleeping bags. My work actually has a human scale. The glass comes in 2.3m panes, so the pavilions have that height. The idea of cutting things up doesn't appeal to me – I have too many divisions in my work already. I don't think of my work as architecture because it doesn't have that huge scale.

ASAD RAZA



L'AQUILA, ITALY

# L'Aquila's earthquake reveals Italy's deadly building standard

JOSEPH RYKWERT



Earthquakes are part of the way of life in some parts of Italy. A big one in the Friuli, north of Venice, killed nearly 1,000 people in May 1976; in November 1980 in Campania-Basilicata, there were nearly 3,000 dead; one centred on Nocera in Umbria made news in 1997 because it damaged the frescoes in Assisi; and in 2002 a minor one in San Giuliano, Puglia, resulted in prosecutions after a school collapsed, killing 26 children. The really big Messina earthquake in 1908 killed 150,000 people.

L'Aquila, the capital of the Abruzzo region, was hit on 6 April this year. Nearly 300 people died in 2009's relatively mild earthquake (6.3 on the Richter scale at its highest), and blame for shoddy construction methods (which allegedly multiplied the deaths) started

instantly, much of it centred on the hospital. The first stone had been laid in 1972 and it was to have 1,100 beds costing the equivalent of 5,000 euros per bed. When it opened in 2000, a parliamentary commission condemned the hospital for its 'irrational and obsolete structure' and 'poor quality of the building materials'. Meanwhile the number of beds fell to 350, now costing nearly 300,000 euros each.

A common way for contractors to swell their profits is to pinch on the cement or to use sea- instead of river-sand in aggregate. This can produce failure because of chlorine-ion attack on reinforcement or an alkaline reaction in the aggregate, which makes concrete friable. And much of the concrete supply in Abruzzo (and elsewhere) is in the hands

of the criminal organisation Camorra. After the Campania-Basilicata earthquake of 1980, 25 billion euros were budgeted for reconstruction but 30 years later, many people are still living in improvised container-homes. Since 1980 there have been 382 prosecutions of contractors, local politicians and Camorra 'activists' in relation to the event.

Italian seismic building regulations were passed in 1968 and revised in 1974; though, as a minister was quoted recently, they 'were not much applied because no one was making inspections'. All this is remote from sound practice. Any form of cross-braced timber or steel building is much better adapted to seismic conditions than masonry or concrete, as is well-known. Alberti already recommended timber for unstable regions and Leonardo da Vinci details an ingenious anti-seismic structure. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries engineers and builders suggested forms of anti-seismic reinforcement. **If contemporary builders ignore these years of experience and common sense when working in a risky zone – merely because it has not had a murderous earthquake for a century or two – the result is a harvest of deaths, as has happened now in L'Aquila.**

As the tent-town to shelter the displaced and homeless grew, the Italian prime minister allowed himself one of his mirthless jokes (known as *Berlusconate* – Italian for Bushisms), saying: 'They have all they need. Why don't they just treat it as a camping holiday?' He compounded this comment by deciding to move the forthcoming G8 meeting to L'Aquila, causing fury in Sardinia where it was originally scheduled to take place and where a reported 32 million

euros had already been spent on preparations.

A more threatening *Berlusconata* was an off-hand suggestion that the city centre be abandoned and the people resettled in a 'new town' nearby (he actually used the English words). It provoked an instant repudiation from urbanists and the local authorities who pointed out that such a plan would only benefit speculators, killing off the city centre as public institutions (schools, the university, police, fire service, post office and government offices) were relegated to the new settlement. The Aquileans would lose not only their homes but also the investment of memory which the fabric of their patrimony incarnates.

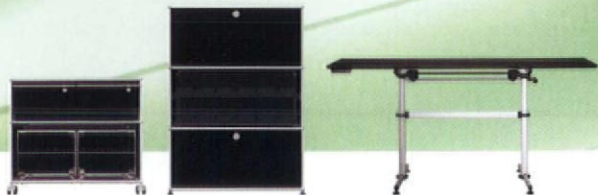
The prime minister, whose connections with the building industry are well-known, urged the press to go easy on the blame, and concentrate on the future – the G8 installations for instance. The new location, he hazarded, would avoid all those wretched demonstrations which marred the previous Italian G8 meeting in Genoa in 2001. That invited a quick riposte from the protest organisers: they were prepared for the move. Fortunately, between the state of the building industry and the stringent security requirements of some G8 participants, such installations are unlikely to be ready in time.

Earlier this year the government proposed a populist law – which has, in part, been adopted by some regions – to deregulate extensions of existing property on the pretext of boosting the faltering building trade. This new law also relaxed anti-seismic regulations, so that some people have immediately seen L'Aquila as an act of divine retribution. They may well be right.





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MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

# Slavoj Zizek encounters the best and worst sides of architects at his conference debut

LEON VAN SCHAIK

www.architecture.com.au

One of the more interesting innovations of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) is the farming out of their annual conference to the curatorship of individual practices.

The first of these was Kerstin Thompson, who turned away from the model of passive consumption of presentations by celebrity architects from abroad and introduced a network-building interaction between emerging practices from Australia and elsewhere.

This year Terroir assembled a group of young internationals around an anchor of well-known architects, critics and a popular philosopher, and arranged a series of workshops, which gave individual Australian speakers 20 minutes,

up from the 15 minutes allocated to them in Sydney in 2008. Those from overseas were allocated 40 minutes.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek, after whose book *Parallax* the conference was themed, dwelt on the relation between inside and outside, as pertaining to the individual's psychology (read from his Lacanian position) and to physical situations (with an insistence on the continuing reality of class warfare). He demonstrated through the work of his hosts that no inside exists without its outside: Terroir's Peppermint Bay Function Centre has a hall dominated by a window wall that relates the interior to an oak tree on a lawn. Here Tasmanians celebrate in a spatial duality with a 'framed-up' fragment of European landscape – a relationship that dissolves the instant you step outside. He argued that it is in the impossible-to-close gap between these 'ins' and 'outs' that the possibility for future architectural action lies.

Aaron Betsky, deploying that knowing East Coast attitude that disables any chance of seeing anything new, deflated this 'gap' into the already well-described (Vidler *et al*) and therefore easily managed

(but somehow endlessly elusive) concept of 'poche'. Zizek was visibly taken aback by this, but rallied to welcome a moment of recognition for his amateur deduction.

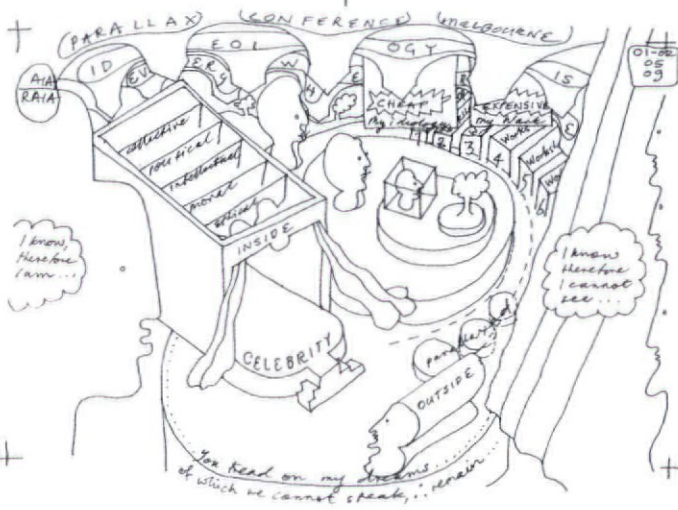
He made his most telling critique of architectural culture with the words: 'You [architects] are at your worst when you make ideological pronouncements that assert your ethical superiority and at your best when you describe your works factually.'

While this emerged in the context of presentations by Australian architects M3, Super Colossal and Elenberg Fraser, it had clear relevance to the presentation by Alejandro Zaero-Polo, who spent most of his 40 minutes delivering a discourse on the shift from 'big' ideology to 'cheap' ideology, thus leaving himself time to demonstrate his assertion that architecture must now operate in the arena of the 'cheap', chiefly by showing his firm's designs for shrouding New Street Station in Birmingham with 19,000m<sup>2</sup> of polished stainless steel.

Zizek hinted that such mega-conferences have an inside and an outside, too. In the closing forum, 20-odd speakers assembled on a stage before a thousand or so delegates to perform, rather desultorily, a closing ceremony. Zizek proclaimed, after WB Yeats, that architects should tread softly, because they tread on our dreams. He also paraphrased Wittgenstein: of what we cannot speak, we should remain silent. A conference in the medium of architecture remains to be invented.

**Parallax, the AIA's 2009 conference, was directed by Australian practice Terroir (Scott Balmforth, Richard Blythe, Gerard Reinmuth)**

Ideogram by Leon van Schaik illustrating the trials and tribulations of conference delegates






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## CHILE

From their remote outpost at the end of the world, Chilean architects are eagerly reinterpreting modernist tenets to create thrilling new architecture that responds to climate and context. Jaffer Kolb introduces the Chilean scene and looks at three recent buildings in detail

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ARCHITECT SMILJAN RADIC

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ARCHITECT TOYO ITO

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PUTNEY HOUSE

LOCATION PUTNEY,  
VERMONT, USA

ARCHITECT KYU SUNG WOO



# CHILE

## CHILE'S CURRENT ARCHITECTURAL GENERATION IS AMONG THE BEST ANYWHERE. WE TRACE ITS ROOTS – AND PREDICT INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS WILL FOLLOW

WRITERS

JAFFER KOLB, PATRICIO MARDONES

Over a collection of models, mostly cardboard and with sculpted clay furniture of various neon colors, Cecilia Puga describes the development – and woes – of Chilean architecture. 'We have never had access to the type of technology that you do in more developed countries, so we missed certain movements like deconstructivism and the more recent focus on digital technologies. Instead, we've been forced to stick with and develop modernism with more modest construction means and with local materials and labour,' she explains.

There you have it. She's pretty much summed up everything architects aspire to these days: forgetting recent movements that have left us with ugly, practically dysfunctional buildings; revisiting modernism with sustainability (social, economic and environmental) in mind; embracing regional conditions rather than importing foreign models. But Puga – one of Chile's best-known young architects and creator of the internationally published house Casa Larrain in Los Vilos, central Chile (completed in 2003) – isn't gushing about the fortunate conditions that have made Chile's architecture so relevant in the current climate worldwide. Rather, she's apologising for what she later describes as a lack of sophistication in both the tools and ultimately,

design, that mark the products of Chile's architectural culture.

In 2006, *Architecture + Urbanism* (A+U) magazine ran an enormously popular issue called Chile: Deep South. This looked at contemporary architecture, framing it through a lens of the combination of diverse geography and limited resources that has led architects to approach projects with a preemptive, problem-solving attitude. The issue included projects by Puga, Eduardo Castillo, Sebastián Irarrázaval, Germán del Sol, Alejandro Aravena, Mathias Klotz and Smiljan Radic, and focused the world's attention on a new generation of Chilean architects.

Now those architects are increasingly looking beyond Chile, taking on more work and teaching posts abroad. This spring, Mauricio Pezo and Sofia von Ellrichshausen (see page 54) are teaching at Cornell. Puga is scheduled to teach at Harvard University Graduate School of Design (GSD) in autumn. Alejandro Aravena, who was also a visiting professor at GSD for five years, has just completed a new building for St Edward's University in Texas, USA (see page 48). Nearby, the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture (UTSOA), headed by architect and theorist Wilfried Wang, has formed connections with architects in South America, inviting practitioners including Radic and Rodrigo Pérez

de Arce to teach, lecture and enter into local competitions.

All this suggests that Chilean architecture is being recognised beyond the world of magazines and coffee-table books and is increasingly looked upon as a type of architecture that complements the contemporary pedagogical model of architectural education. Despite the popular feeling among its major practitioners that they are, in some way, underdogs in the international arena, Chile is where we now look for lessons in context, form and sustainability.

And yet there are obvious disadvantages to working in Chile, many of which stem from its turbulent modern history. Political instability has had an impact on both the economy and bureaucratic structures. Yet unlike many of its neighbours, there is ample private wealth there. Most people in the middle and upper classes have second homes, which creates a booming business for architects and is one of the reasons many of the projects receiving international attention are mid-budget residences.

Public sector work, however, is scarce, leaving many stuck in the residential rut. Several of the prominent young architects I spoke to (Puga, Irarrázaval and others) all expressed frustration over this arrangement, noting that at best, Chilean architects can land a hotel commission between numerous single-family houses. But things are gradually changing. Pezo von Ellrichshausen is working on a large 15-storey housing project in downtown Concepción. Older studios like Teodoro Fernández have worked on schools and public buildings following competitions. Last March one of the most important public projects in Chile, the conversion of Valparaíso Prison complex into a cultural centre – which, until 2007, was to be designed by Brazilian star Oscar Niemeyer – became the subject of a public competition. A team of young architects (Carolina Portugueseis, Jonathan Holmes, Martín Labbé —





- 1\_ Germán del Sol's spectacular Termas Geométricas, a thermal bath complex in a deep ravine in Coñaripe
- 2\_ Rodrigo Pérez de Arce's new crypt at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Chile's capital, Santiago
- 3\_ Canopy and public space by Emilio Marín, on the road to Valparaíso
- 4\_ Casa Poli by Pezo von Ellrichshausen
- 5\_ Casa Larrain by Cecilia Puga, in Bahía Azul
- 6\_ Copper House 2 in Talca, by Smiljan Radic





## THE REGIME OF DICTATOR AUGUSTO PINOCHET VIOLENTLY INTERRUPTED THE TRAJECTORY OF MODERNISM IN CHILE

and Osvaldo Spichiger) won, and work should start next December.

Public commissions do exist however, and have resulted in some particularly interesting work. In 2006 Rodrigo Pérez de Arce completed the Metropolitan Cathedral New Crypt in Chile's capital, Santiago, in front of the Plaza de Armas, which he completed in 2000. Around the same time, young designer Emilio Marín built a series of public follies and benches along the coastal road into the city of Valparaíso, while Teodoro Fernández turned urban wasteland into Santiago's Parque Bicentenario, probably Chile's most important urban project. In 2003, del Sol completed his Termas Geométricas, a spectacular project along a deep ravine in Coñaripe, Chile's lake district. It's a private project with the goal of attracting visitors to a previously underused place of natural beauty. With a set of understated gestures, del Sol created a landscape using locally sourced wood to build a set of boardwalks and pools for the water of the hot springs to collect.

Chile's is an architecture that has arisen in response to geography and natural beauty. Many familiar Chilean houses, such as Puga's Casa Larrain and Pezo von Ellrichshausen's Casa Poli, are on rugged coasts. Smiljan Radic's Copper House 2 is in the central valley area surrounded by mountains; young architects Max

Núñez and Nicolás del Río of dRN are known for their mountain chalets and cliff houses. These projects share an adaptive modernism that maintains certain archetypal features but also enjoys formal experimentation.

Partly due to its location and history, Chile has undergone periods of isolation that have left it, paradoxically, a closed system that is also deeply affected by the outside world. Modern architecture in Chile first took root in the 1940s, experiencing a peak at the end of the 1960s, which coincided with the start of Salvador Allende's doomed socialist presidency. Architects such as Emilio Duhart, Fernando Castillo Velasco, Alberto Cruz, Sergio Larrain and Roberto Dávila were typical of this era, producing the majority of built work and teaching the next generation. Works such as the UN building in Santiago by Duhart and the Benedictine Church by Martín Correa and Gabriel Guarda are outstanding examples of the Chilean architecture of this period.

In the early 1970s, Chile's modern history was made with the coup that replaced Allende with right-wing dictator Augusto Pinochet. This change had a tremendous impact on architecture. Instead of being allowed to evolve into something new, the trajectory of modernism was violently interrupted. Many architects left Chile in the 1970s

to return in the 1980s with new perspectives, skills, ideas and influences. Among these were Fernández and Pérez de Arce, who went to Madrid and London respectively. The other effect of Pinochet's coup was to lend modern architecture a heroic character that, due to the abrupt schism, appealed to a younger generation of architects who returned to it as soon as they could. Compared to the familiar disillusionment with modernism in the US and Western Europe, this represents a marked difference.

In both education and practice, the new generation was influenced by the old guard: Fernández and Montserrat Palmer taught Radic, Puga and Klotz; Pérez de Arce instructed Irarrázaval and Pezo; Fernando Pérez worked with Alejandro Aravena.

While these are some of the most enduring and famous figures in Chilean architecture, they represent only a part of a story centred on the Universidad Católica School of Architecture. Located in the middle of Santiago, Católica is an elite private university. In a system that is seemingly exclusive, the most influential architects emerge from Católica, combining teaching and practising to create a network between generations. As well as boasting a faculty staffed by some of the country's best-known architects, Católica was also the base for the research arm of Alejandro Aravena's practice, Elemental. Housed in Aravena's building on the campus from 2004 to 2009, Elemental encompasses Aravena's practice, private developers and the university, and the result is his critically lauded research on social housing, as well as a number of built projects.

With its connection to both the private and public sectors, Aravena's practice promises a future for Chilean architecture in which its most talented practitioners can have a greater impact outside the private residential market and take a more active role in a broader context. Elemental's work with housing



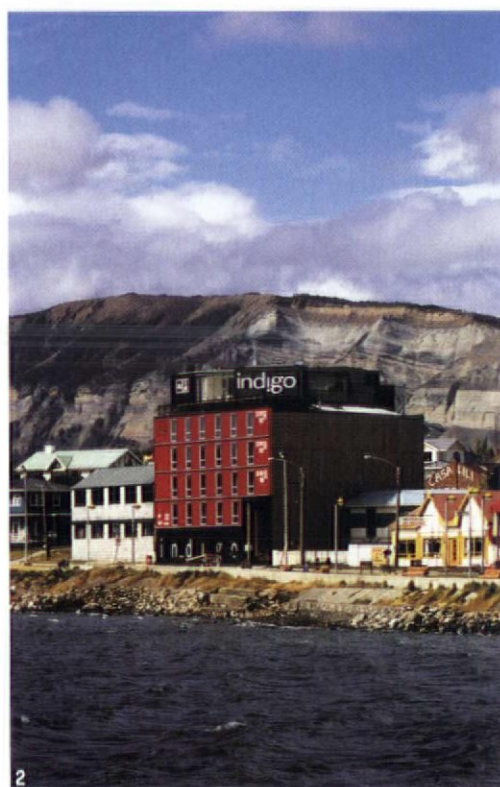
recalls the low-budget schools by Mathias Klotz: Colegio Altamira in Santiago (AR April 2001) and Liceo Alemán, in collaboration with Felipe Assadi and Francisca Pulido, outside the capital.

Collaboration between architects is a defining characteristic of Chilean architecture. Developments such as Ochoalcubo or La Reserva place peers side by side. Located in Marbella, north of Valparaíso, Ochoalcubo is a housing development with standalone houses by Irrázaval, Klotz, Puga, Fernández, Radic, José Cruz, Cristian Valdés, Christian de Groote and landscape architect Juan Grimm. It's in an upmarket community on the hills between the main highway and the Pacific Ocean. La Reserva is a different project, but equally indicative of high-end Chilean development. In a suburb an hour north of Santiago, the developers behind La Reserva chose to develop a catalogue of house plans by local architects, including Irrázaval and Klotz. Buyers purchase land, look through the catalogue, select a house, specify minor adaptations and the house is then built.

Both projects indicate the marketability of architectural celebrity in the upscale housing market. It also extends to the newest generation that includes Marin, Riesco + Rivera, Beals + Lyon and Carreño Sartori. Mindful of the older generation's frustrations, they want more meaningful work, fighting to win public projects and social housing.

This latest generation demonstrates that there is still the potential for change. They know what makes Chile unique but are also aware of its failings, caused by controversial governments and a general wariness in developing the public realm. It's been a long time coming, but the country is uniquely poised as the world watches.

**Special thanks to Patricio Mardones, deputy editor of Santiago-based publisher Ediciones ARQ, for his research and advice**



1\_ Experimental low-cost social housing, by Elemental, Alejandro Aravena's practice  
2\_ Indigo Paragonia Hotel by Sebastián Irrázaval

3\_ Colegio Altamira in Santiago by Mathias Klotz  
4\_ Irrázaval's house at the architectural zoo of Ochoalcubo, Marbella, Chile



NICK HUFTON/VIEW, CRISTOBAL PALMA



# 041

## CASA A

LOCATION  
**SAN CLEMENTE,  
MAULE REGION, CHILE**

ARCHITECT  
**SMILJAN RADIC**

WRITER  
**JAFFER KOLB**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
**GONZALO PUGA**

To anyone unfamiliar with his work, Smiljan Radic's recently completed Casa A is an encompassing example of the architect's style. With an eye for preservation, regional sensitivity and the intersection of art and architecture, 44-year-old Radic executes buildings that are both phenomenally atmospheric and surprisingly humble.

Born of Croatian descent, Radic is known for being both press-shy and for having strong art connections through his partner and collaborator Marcela Correa, a sculptor with whom he shares Casa A. Early in his career, projects in Italy and Greece as well as a tenure at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia briefly took Radic out of Chile and earned him critical success.

Located in a forest in San Clemente, a few hours south of Santiago, the house is a renovation of an A-frame that was built 35 years ago. The original structure featured a tin roof with a side entrance cut into one of the slanted walls. The house

sat on a trussed timber foundation and included a smaller pitched shed attached to one side.

Radic's renovation included stripping the roof, removing the shed, tearing out everything but the frame of the ground floor, replacing the foundation with masonry and creating a low brick platform that extends beyond the house to form terraces on either side, which angle down into ramps. The entrances were moved to the end of the A-frame and the upper-floor fenestration and cladding was overhauled.

Given the amount of work undertaken in the renovation (virtually everything but the most basic components of the frame were transformed) it is not surprising that this looks as much like a Radic project as any of his new builds. This is in part due to the exterior gestures, which include garage-style sliding doors and a new widow's walk along the spine of the roof's apex, as well as Radic's style of interior design, which is both hungrily stark and —









WITH THE STARKNESS OF  
THE PROJECT, THE WIDOW'S  
WALK AND THE BLACKNESS  
OF THE MATERIALS, THE  
QUALITY IS BOTH MEDITATIVE  
AND THEATRICAL

comfortingly rustic. As he explains: 'The only relevant formal decision I took was to "whiten" the interior: paintings from the walls, along with their nails, were all removed.'

The design of the house had to be relatively straightforward. This was partly because the contractor wasn't familiar with technical drawings and so worked from basic sketches. Also Radic – who likes to be involved with construction – could only oversee the detail work on his infrequent visits to the site. But allowing local labour to determine the outcome of a project is something Radic believes in. Projects such as his Charcoal Burner's Hut in Culiprán from 1999, in which he used traditional construction techniques for making charcoal to bake a domed clay house from the inside, reveal his fascination with craft. This, like his architecture, doesn't manifest in an obsessive fussiness but rather a more relaxed, inquisitive approach.


From the exterior, the house looks like a pavilion, or even an installation.

Correa, a sculptor whose work appears in many of Radic's projects, scattered 60 monolithic stones about the lot and on the terraces. Coupled with the absolute starkness of the project, the widow's walk projecting overhead and the blackness of the materials, the quality is both meditative and theatrical – an interactive space that is, given its simplicity, active rather than passive.

The setting of the house, reflecting Radic's reverence of nature, is key to its success. His 2006 Punta Pite house in Papudo was buried under a rocky driveway covered with Correa's sculptures. Approaching it from a hillside highway, it's easy to miss until you realise you're parking on top of it. Rather than add to the rocky landscape of the cliffs overlooking the Pacific, Radic embeds the house into it and emphasises only the rocks he's used to decorate it.

Given this attitude, it should come as no surprise that in the course of my exchanges with Radic, he emailed through a gritty image

of Joseph Beuys' 1966 artwork *Homogeneous Infiltration for Piano* with no explanation. None was needed. The piece – a piano covered in felt – represents a large body of Beuys' work in its muted palette, material cloaking and haunting symbolism. There is a lightness in its dark absurdity, a quality that's also strongly apparent in Radic's works.

Of all the Radic projects I've visited – Mestizo Restaurant in Santiago, the houses at Punta Pite and the Ochoalcubo development in Marbella (Chile) – the atmosphere verges on the melancholic, with raw materials (including Correa's work), dark colours and strong geometries. Yet perhaps given Chile's climate, or because his material sensibility is acute enough to prevent it, these aren't depressing spaces. They are organic, unfussy, and they connect gracefully with nature. These characteristics figure prominently in Casa A, a project with undertones of religion, performance and spectacle that is decidedly Radic. 



## ARCHITECT

Smiljan Radic,  
Santiago, Chile

## COLLABORATOR

Marcella Correa

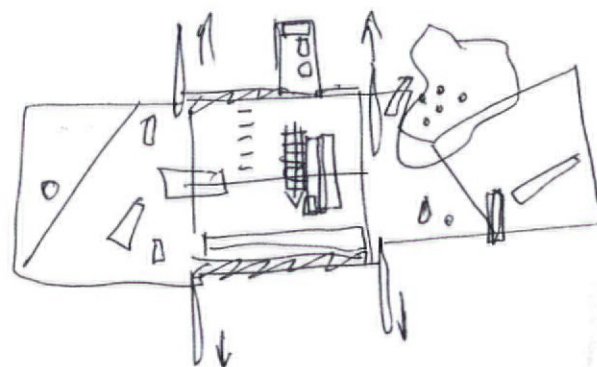
## BUILDING CONTRACTOR

Marcelino López





Previous page\_  
 With its starkly  
 simple form and  
 dark materials, the  
 renovated house has  
 a brooding presence  
 in the forest  
 Left\_ A widow's  
 walk runs along  
 the apex of the roof  
 Right\_ Radic's  
 conceptual sketches  
 Below\_ Internal  
 space is fluid and  
 informal. A ladder  
 leads up to a  
 sleeping loft above





---

# 042

## ST EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY STUDENT RESIDENCES

LOCATION

AUSTIN, TEXAS, USA

ARCHITECT

ALEJANDRO ARAVENA

WRITER

JAFFER KOLB

PHOTOGRAPHY

CRISTOBAL PALMA

Popular as it's becoming, Austin is not a beautiful city. Despite a modest, low-rise periphery, its skyline is dominated by ugly, corporate high-rises and bland plazas. The Texan city is home to St Edward's University, an oasis of a campus near South Congress, a quickly gentrifying area that was rough 15 years ago. St Edward's, which has been around since 1885, has adapted to this condition and isolated itself from its neighbours.

Alejandro Aravena's new residential complex for the college works in this inward-facing tradition. Aravena is the poster boy of the new generation of Chilean architects, with high-profile commissions abroad and a professorship at Harvard to show it. Aravena won the project for the 300-bed student dorm in 2006, and has now completed what, from afar,





looks like an aggressively stoic building, with narrow, floor-to-ceiling slit windows reminiscent of a medieval fortress.

Only by getting close and seeing the inner court formed by the two buildings does the architect's intention become clear. Aravena has balanced the faceted, brick exterior with a polished interior. According to Mike Peterson, director of Physical Plant at St Edward's, the effect is 'jewel-like', but I see it more like a crystal rock or geode. From the outside, it is harsh and roughly textured, while the inside is bright, smooth and shimmering. Aravena skillfully exploits this effect so that being inside the buildings is a much more atmospheric experience than seeing them from outside.

This interior condition isn't wholly divorced from the outside

world. In a move echoed throughout the buildings, Aravena introduces the courtyard via carefully considered apertures. From certain angles visitors can see into the narrow passageway that runs between the buildings and also see the distinctive red glazing panels that line the interior court.

Once in the courtyard, the complex is revealed. Signs and glazing communicate the ground-floor health and counselling centres, two catering facilities (a dining hall and a smaller café), offices and on the upper levels, the residence halls. This visibility is one of the project's major successes. Despite its external opacity, inside – both in the courtyard and buildings – the experience is one of views and openness. Aravena keeps the dorm rooms on the perimeter, with circulation and public spaces

on the inside, facing the courtyard, so students in common areas can see their peers from above and vice versa.

Practically, this decision was informed by a desire to establish a sense of community. It works admirably, but also achieves a certain poetry. The generous glazing transmits sparkling, colourful light, making the space much more animated than other dorms on the campus. When my tour started early in the morning, there were few students about. Later, however, when more filtered through the space, I noticed that their activities generated an interesting choreography. Since many of the windows create slit-like apertures across and down into the courtyard, you get a sense of movement: a student crossing a window here, rising from a seat there. Such actions create visible channels and flows —









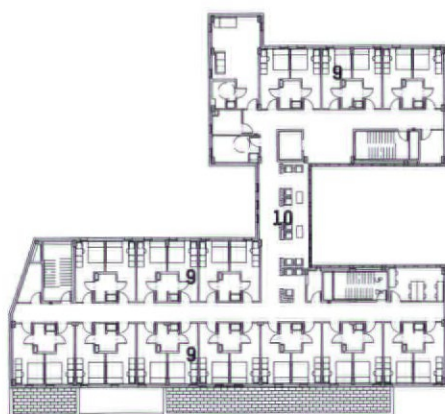
Previous page\_

The austere and minimally articulated exterior belies the visual and experiential richness of the internal realm

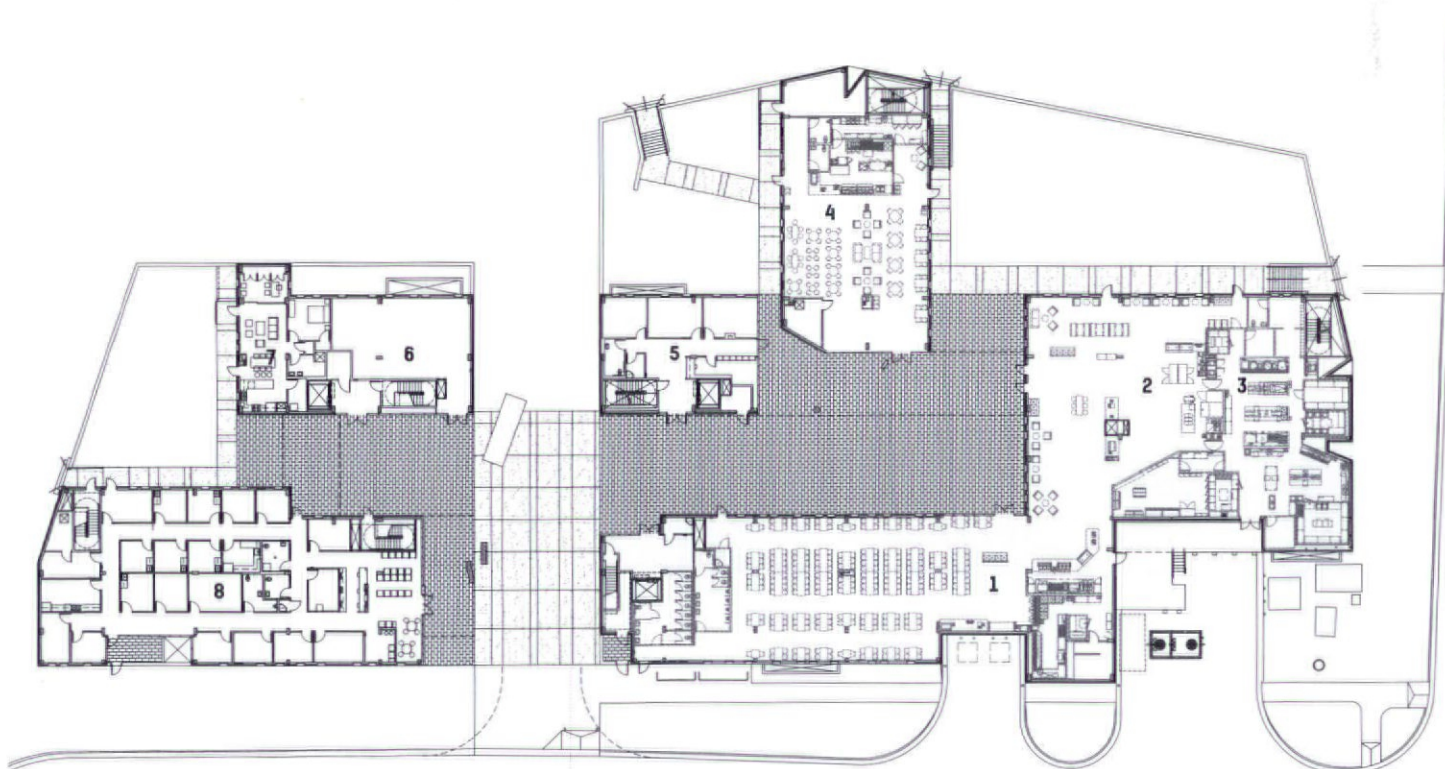
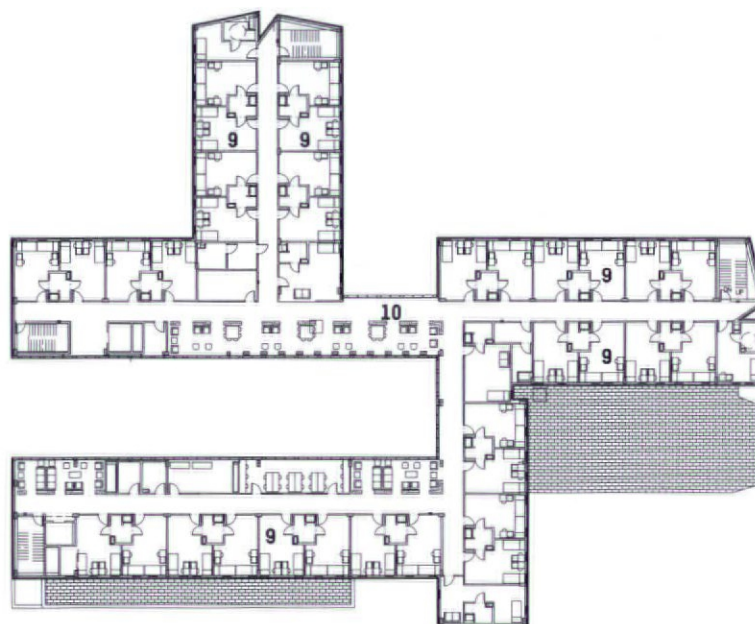
Opposite page\_

Lined with panels of coloured glazing, the courtyard resembles a geode – a surprising, sparkling core protected by layers of rock

- 1 student dining
- 2 servery
- 3 kitchen
- 4 coffee house
- 5 offices
- 6 conference hall
- 7 director's apartment
- 8 health and counselling centre
- 9 student dorms
- 10 communal space



first floor (and typical upper level)



ground-floor plan





THE 'INTERIOR' IS THE  
COMMUNITY CREATED THROUGH  
THE SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT,  
RATHER THAN SIMPLY THE  
INSIDE OF THE BUILDING

across the building, punctuating key view corridors and activating both horizontal and vertical pathways.

These grand gestures are both supported and hindered by detail and specification decisions that, surely, can be attributed to the design-build process and cost-cutting. The project cost around £18 million, most of which, Aravena notes, went towards mechanical systems, despite the building's green credentials (passive ventilation, heat-gain mitigation etc). From the outside, the use of brick works very well. With two main kinds of brickwork – smooth, seamless masonry and rough, jagged bricks – Aravena achieves a simple yet powerful effect. The result is a retort to the blockiness of comparable buildings and to the site conditions (extensive external glazing would have been a poor

**ARCHITECT**

Alejandro Aravena

**ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT**

Cotera + Reed

**PROJECT ARCHITECTS**

Ricardo Torrejón,

Adam Pyrek

**PROJECT TEAM**

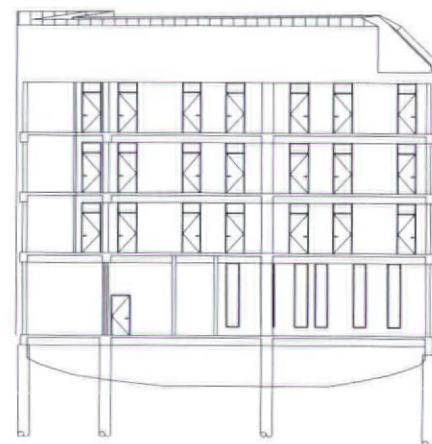
Victor Oddo, Rebecca

Emmons, Tiffani

Erdmanczyk, Travis

Hughbanks, Leyla Shams,

Joyce Chen, Deb Ebersole



long section





choice for Austin's relentless sun). Where the buildings separate to form a corridor, and where an edge is shorn off here or a corner there, the brickwork is rough, as though the walls had been torn or ripped apart. It's a simple device, but one that works effectively – particularly when the sun creates shadows over surfaces that would otherwise be oppressively planar.


The material strategy dramatises Aravena's elegant reformulation of the relationship between exterior and interior. The 'interior' of this project is created through the sheltering spatial arrangement of the blocks. The courtyard and the space between structures are as important as the rooms themselves and determine the life of the building. The composition is at its most successful in the moments when it's broken apart to

reveal this lively internal realm.

Other details are less successful. The red glazing, one of the project's more conspicuous design choices, gives the building an air of dated disco seediness. According to Aravena the choice of colour came from the client, who wanted it to match the red roofs that appear across the campus. Aravena inverts this material palette, using the yellowish brick of adjacent buildings externally and confining the red to the courtyard.

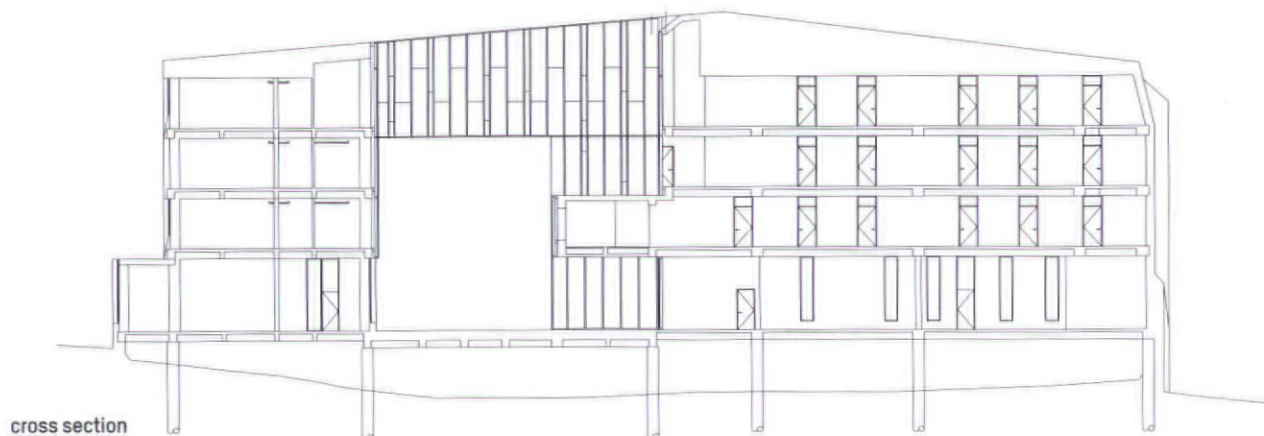
Inside, the architecture is relatively generic, though key accents elevate it. Polished concrete floors and exposed structural members (the building features a straightforward concrete frame with exposed, floor-high trusses at the cantilevered upper levels) feel more white-cube gallery than

educational institution. Communal spaces pop up in surprising places, for instance in pockets on one side of a single-loaded corridor.

This sensitivity to communal behaviour makes the project a success. By emphasising movement and constantly exposing the activity of campus life through apertures and circulation, Aravena has (without unnecessary preciousness) created a community for the students. And because the building sits on a major pedestrian thoroughfare, is relatively small (just four storeys), and because the materials reflect the character of the rest of the campus, he has done so without didactic weight or prescriptive arrogance. Dorm life can be a less than satisfactory one, but Aravena has shown that it can also be full of community, activity and beauty. 



Far left\_ Student comings and goings animate the courtyard  
Left\_ Roughly textured brick walls are also chiselled and chamfered at the corners to mitigate their bulk



cross section



# 043

## CASA FOSC

LOCATION

SAN PEDRO DE LA PAZ,  
CONCEPCIÓN PROVINCE, CHILE

ARCHITECT

PEZO VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN

WRITER

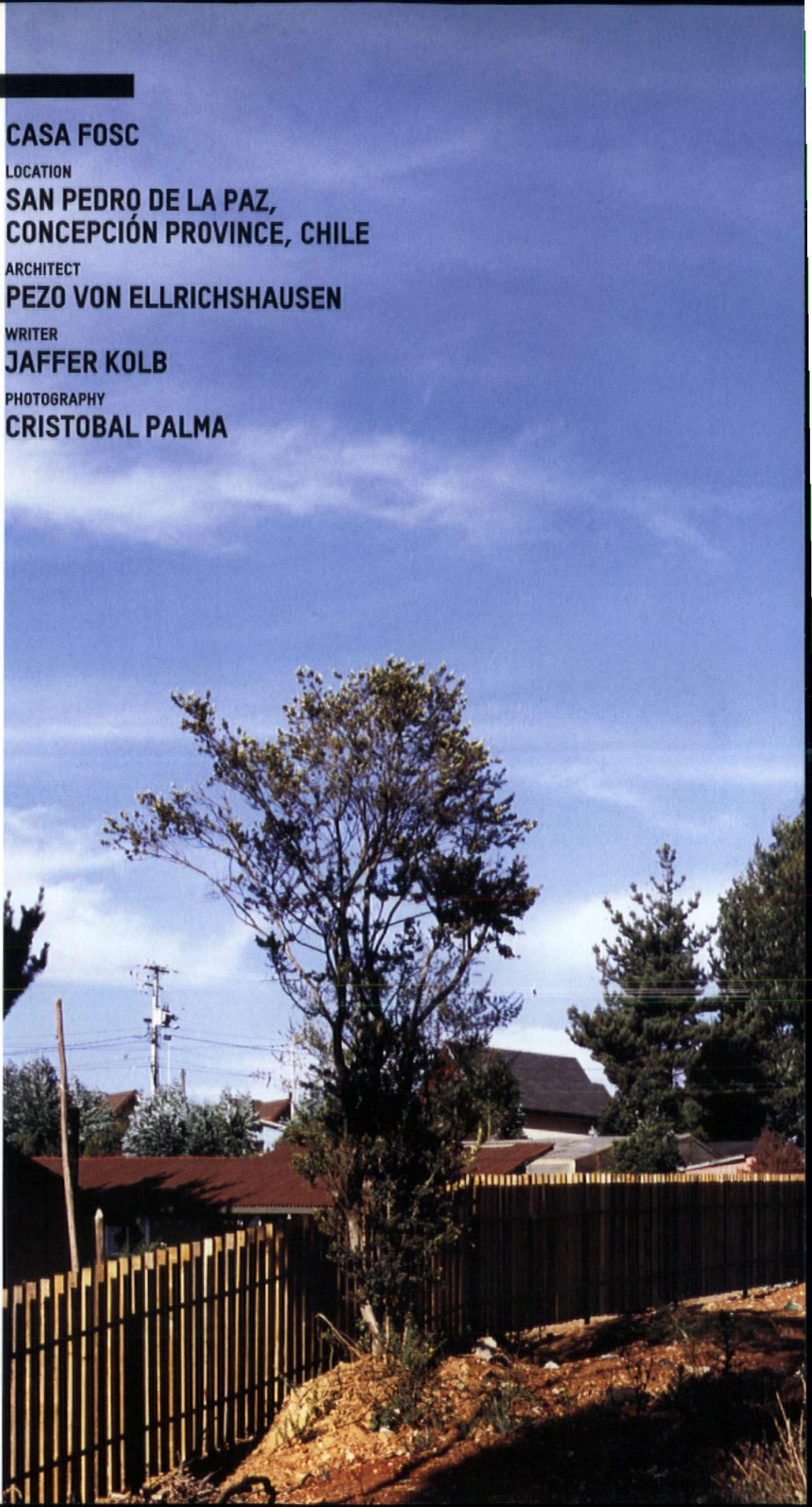
JAFFER KOLB

PHOTOGRAPHY

CRISTOBAL PALMA

There is something unmistakably playful – thrilling, even – in the residential architecture of Mauricio Pezo and Sofia von Ellrichshausen. Whether through their experimental relationship with circulation, attention to rustic detailing or the imaginative addition of hidden closets and balconies, they produce work that constantly invites exploration and curiosity – an impressive achievement given that, ultimately, their architecture is both beautiful and functional.

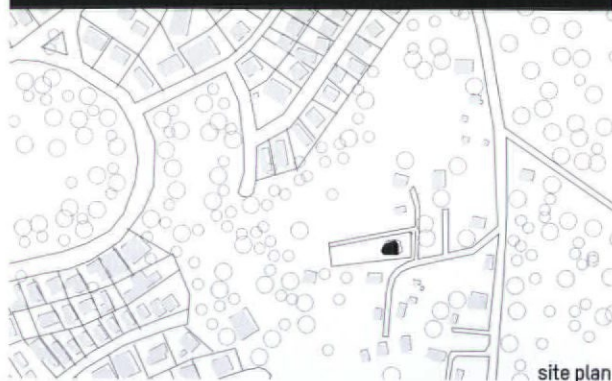
Their recently completed Casa Fosc, near the city of Concepción, Chile, continues this tradition, building on and evolving some of their formal play from earlier works. The house, an irregular hexagon in plan and punctured by the various-sized square windows that have become the practice's trademark, is situated on a gently sloping site —







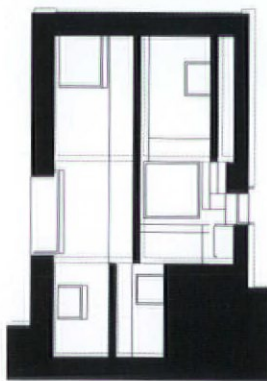
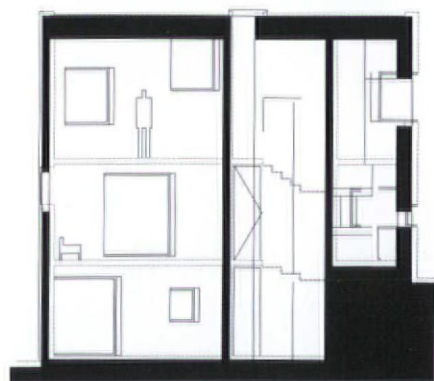
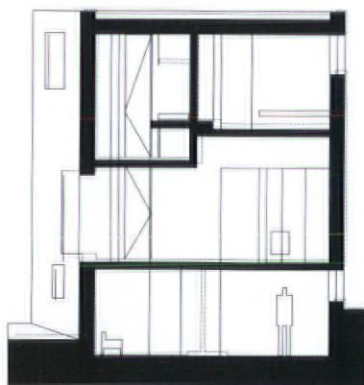
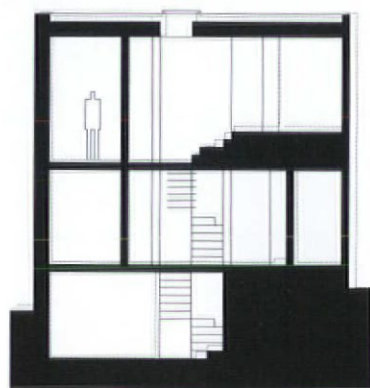




Previous page\_ With its simple geometry and uncompromising use of materials, the house is a startling interloper in the suburban landscape  
 Bottom left\_ The main entrance is at first-floor level, as the house exploits its sloping site  
 Opposite\_ Concrete walls are drenched with a waterproof coating of copper oxide, giving external surfaces a luscious green caste



cross sections



in a new expansion of San Pedro de la Paz, a small town next to Concepción, where their firm, Pezo von Ellrichshausen, is based.

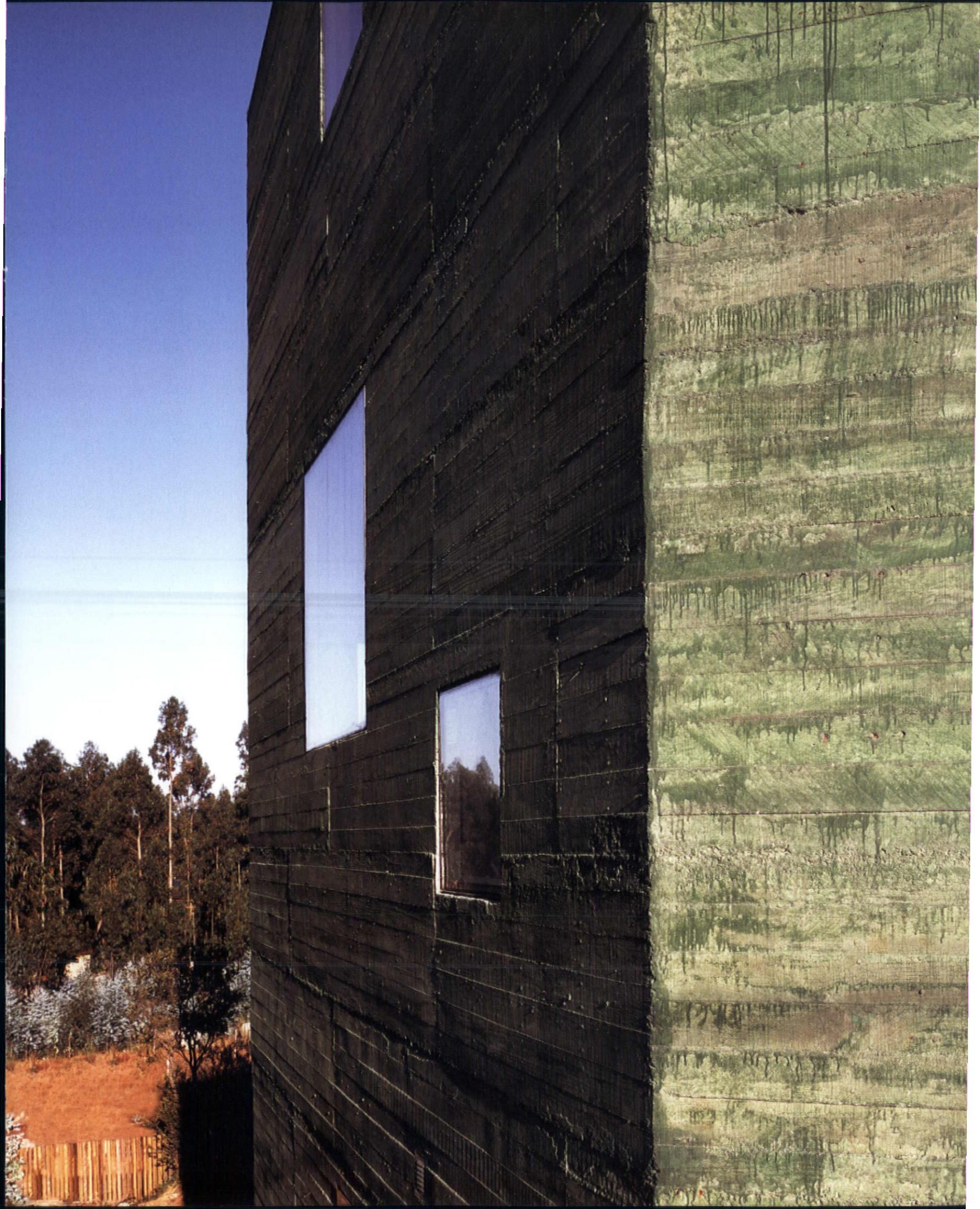
According to practice principal Pezo, the area is being converted into an 'American Beauty-style' suburb of generic detached houses with gardens and garages. Casa Fosc occupies the threshold between this development and the countryside beyond. As the 5-bedroom house was designed for a large family, the architects needed to maximise the amount of space allowed for by planning, so they began with the largest possible footprint. They then determined the shape by minimising proximity to neighbours, optimising views and accounting for sun, temperature and topography.

Visitors enter into the main living area on the first floor, which surrounds a central core of stairs leading to upper and lower levels. Because of the large number of rooms required, the architects wanted to make a house without corridors, so on each level rooms are designed around the core, expanding out to fit the polygonal and angled exterior walls.

It's a curious spatial arrangement in the context of their work. Several of their best-known projects – Casa Poli (AR December 2005), Rivo House and Wolf House – feature the opposite arrangement, with circulation contained within a double-walled perimeter. Here, with all the bedrooms facing the core (which Pezo refers to as the 'void space'), the massing appears clustered around a kind of hearth, a central object around which activity is organised – and with so many rooms, the core makes sense.

The materials work beautifully too, with black-stained pine steps surrounding a white-stained pine wall. Contrasting dark and light woods appear throughout the house. Pezo and von Ellrichshausen have impeccable taste when it comes to materials – here, the wood reminds me of Casa Poli's white painted —







**CHILDREN'S ROOMS FEATURE  
LOFTED BEDS, BEDS IN A  
CUBBYHOLE AND LADDERS  
STREWN ABOUT FOR LOOKING  
OUT OF THE HIGHER WINDOWS**



**ARCHITECT**

Pezo von Ellrichshausen,  
Concepción, Chile

**PROJECT TEAM**

Mauricio Pezo, Sofia  
von Ellrichshausen, Pia

Hoffman, Oscar Otárola

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

German Aguilera

**SERVICES ENGINEER**

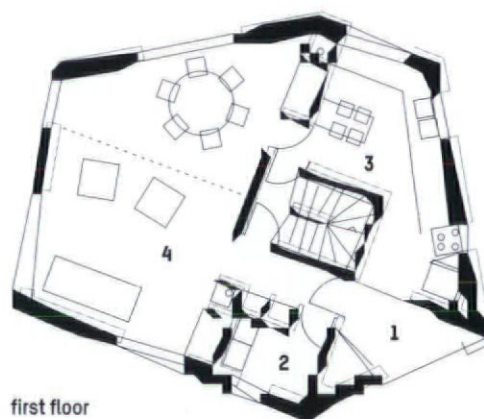
Marcelo Valenzuela

**ELECTRICAL ENGINEER**

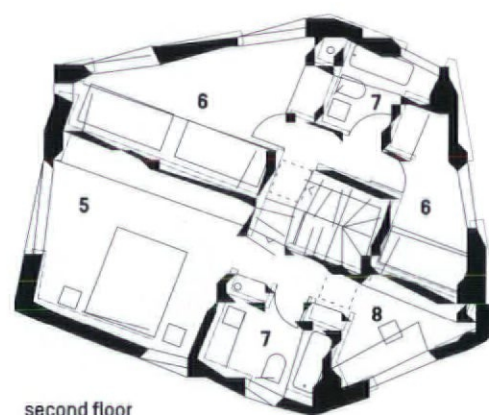
Carlos Martínez

**CONTRACTOR**

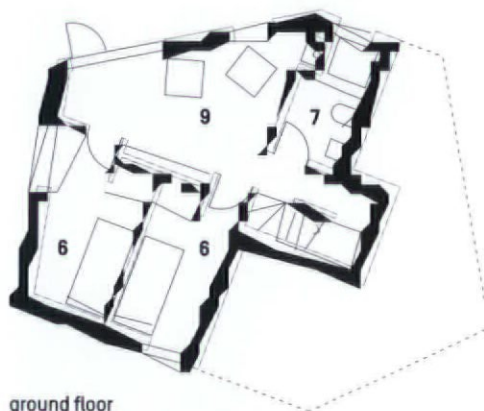
Ricardo Ballesta



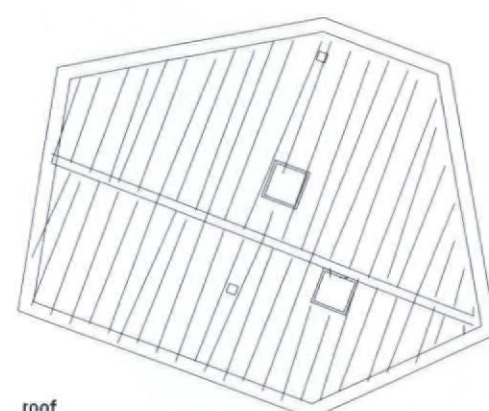
first floor



second floor



ground floor



roof

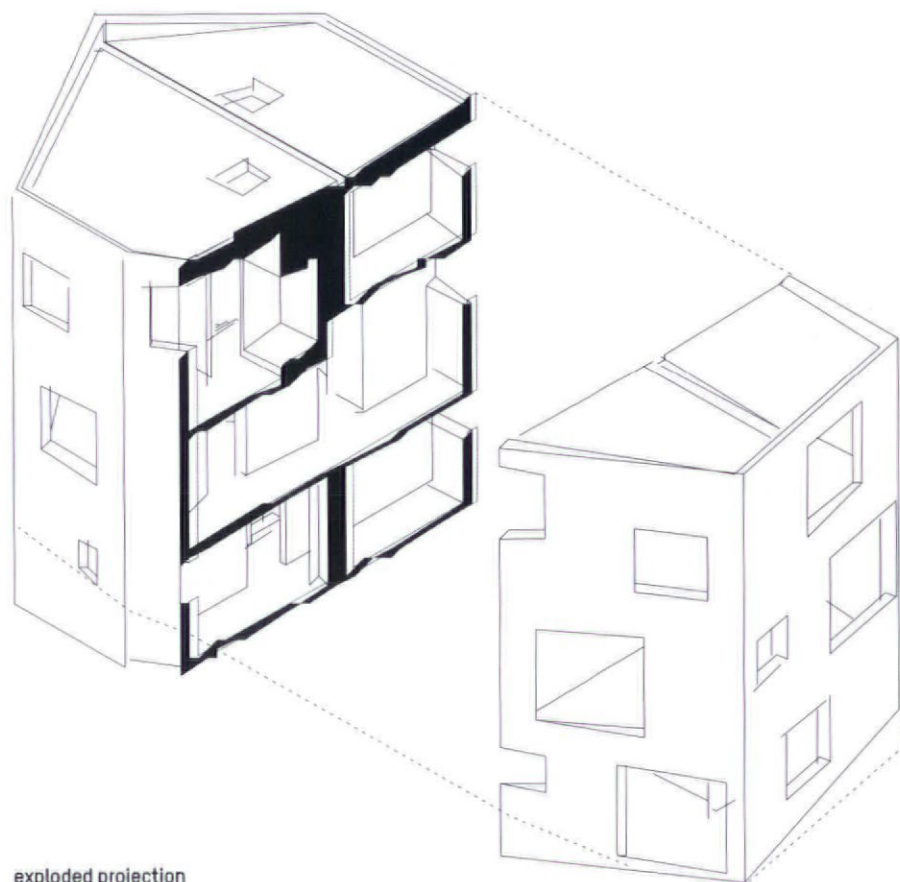
- 1 main entrance
- 2 store
- 3 kitchen
- 4 main living/dining room
- 5 master bedroom
- 6 bedroom
- 7 bathroom
- 8 study
- 9 secondary living room







Left\_ Living room.  
The apparently  
random placement  
of windows was  
dictated by the  
need to frame  
particular views  
Above\_ Children's  
bedroom, with playful  
ladder to encourage  
exploration




exploded projection

wood and cast concrete. The natural, almost messy way of treating materials ends up making them feel both timeless and aged as well as remarkably new.

One of the bolder architectural choices is the exterior treatment. The concrete walls are dyed green with a water-repellent coat of copper oxide. This quirky design arose from conversations with the clients, where they showed the architects pictures of rusted pedestals situated under monuments in local public squares. 'The oxide drippings give the surfaces a quality halfway between mineral and natural,' the architects explain.

The rooms themselves reveal more of the architects' playfulness. Children's rooms feature lofted beds, beds in a cubbyhole and plenty of ladders strewn about for climbing up and looking out of some of the higher windows. Fenestration was determined by views, and stands out starkly from the exterior as the only thing that comes close to ornamentation. The windows also reveal some of the minor changes in level – another Pezo von Ellrichshausen characteristic. As well as the mid-level entrance, the parents' bedroom is also slightly set off in section by several steps, a simple yet effective way of separating it from the rest of the house.

Here again there appears a connection to the firm's other work. Where the architects succeed best is both through their conceptual play with the forms of their spaces and the relatively simple choices they make to add depth to their architecture. By using something as simple as a few stairs to vary the section, they transform the potential monotony of a space, shifting programme and adding a new dimension that can have a surprisingly significant impact. The duo's work demonstrates, through decisions that vary in scale from building form to detailing, that there is still the opportunity for formal play and experimentation in a quotidian building type. 









044

ÁLAVA  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
MUSEUM

LOCATION  
VITORIA, PAÍS VASCO,  
SPAIN

ARCHITECT  
FRANCISCO MANGADO

WRITER  
CATHERINE SLESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY  
ROLAND HALBE



It's a box of treasure,' says Francisco Mangado of his new archaeology museum in Vitoria, 'that history has entrusted to us piece by piece.' In the cramped streets of the city's medieval core, Mangado's treasure box seems intent on making its own history. Soberly accoutred in a corrugated bronze carapace, it determinedly blanks out its surroundings. Windows set in deep reveals are like sightless eyes, reflecting peeling walls, tottering balconies and scudding skies. Aloof, impervious and very consciously of its time, its stark geometry squares up to the desiccated historic fabric. From a distance it appears as a dense, dark, almost geological presence that has erupted out of the ground to safeguard its ancient treasures.

These range from tiny Palaeolithic arrowheads to imposing Roman sculptures, fruits of archaeological excavations in the surrounding País Vasco (Basque Country). To illuminate professional and public understanding of ancient history, for some years now the Spanish government has supported archaeological research and museum building. 'I think of archaeology as history that never ends, because it lives on in each small or large finding and in the eye of the observer,' says Mangado. Vitoria's first archaeological museum was housed in a 16th-century *palacio* at the northern tip of the old town, but it eventually proved too cramped for modern needs. In 2000 a competition was launched to find a successor on a new and bigger site, and Mangado's building finally opened in March of this year.

A native of the neighbouring province of Navarre, Mangado is based in Pamplona, about an hour's drive south-west of Vitoria. Although he designed the Spanish Pavilion at last year's Expo in Zaragoza and has built all over the country, most of his work is still concentrated in the green hills of the north. The site for the new museum lies on the east side of Vitoria's medieval core, an almond-shaped warren of streets on and

around a steep hill crowned by the 14th-century Cathedral of Santa Maria. The site drops a storey across its width, which accounts for the museum's more dominating presence on the east and north facades. On the west side, on Calle Cuchillería, it is less magisterial, retreating back from the street line to create a welcoming entrance courtyard. A bridge across a moat connects this with the museum's entrance hall. The moat brings light into the lower ground level, which contains research facilities and a library. Below this is a further subterranean archive and store. The library lies underneath the courtyard and its translucent skylights register as glassy rivulets in the timber deck.

In a slightly surreal museological ménage, Mangado's building shares the site with Fournier Playing Card Museum in the neighbouring Palacio de Bendaña, founded in memory of tarot and playing-card manufacturer Heraclio Fournier, who set up shop in Vitoria in 1868. Mangado was not involved with its design (a perfectly serviceable renovation job), but the two buildings are now part of a single complex, the new bronze box forming a piquant juxtaposition with the museum's *palacio*.

Mangado chose bronze because of its 'strong archaeological resonance', being one of the first materials to be exploited by humans. Up close, the ribbed walls appear less like a carapace and more like a woven metal textile. In most places the bronze weave is impermeable, but around the courtyard it's much looser, with glazing exposed behind. The facade has an impressive sense of weight and sobriety, but there's a sleight of hand at work. As it would have been impractical to cast the larger pieces as solid elements, a wafer-thin veneer of bronze is simply wrapped around timber forms. 'You have to reconcile ideological aspirations with the practical qualities of the material,' says Mangado. 'The ancient Egyptians did the same kind of thing with stone to create an illusion of mass.

So architecture is all about fooling people, but in a wonderful way.'

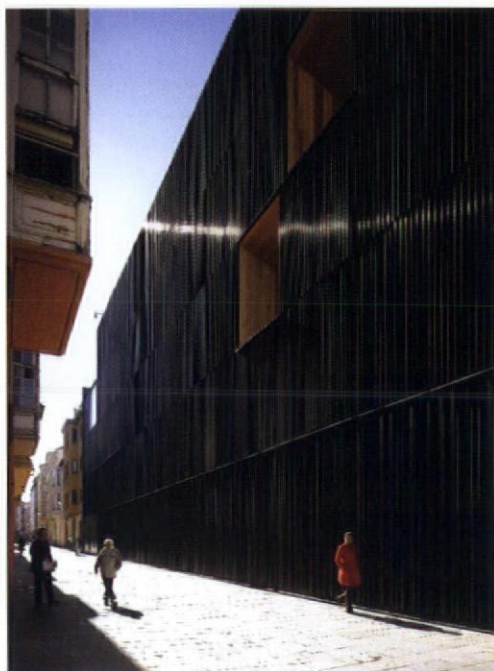
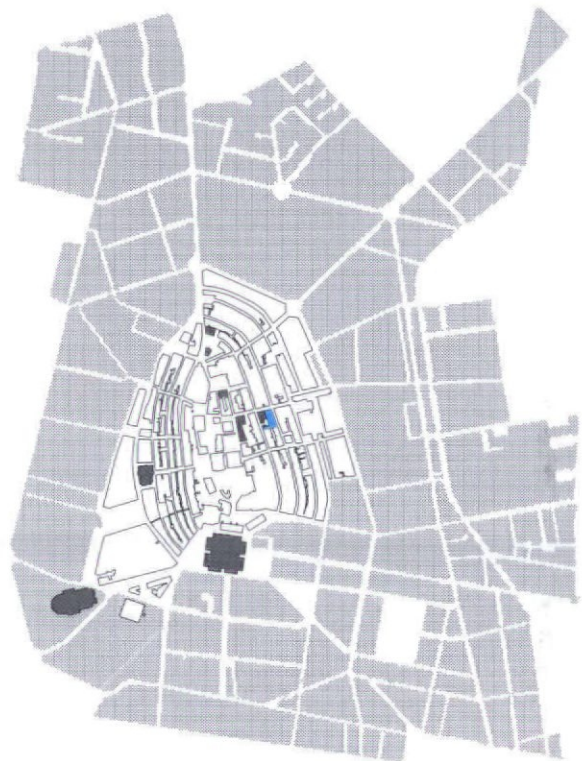
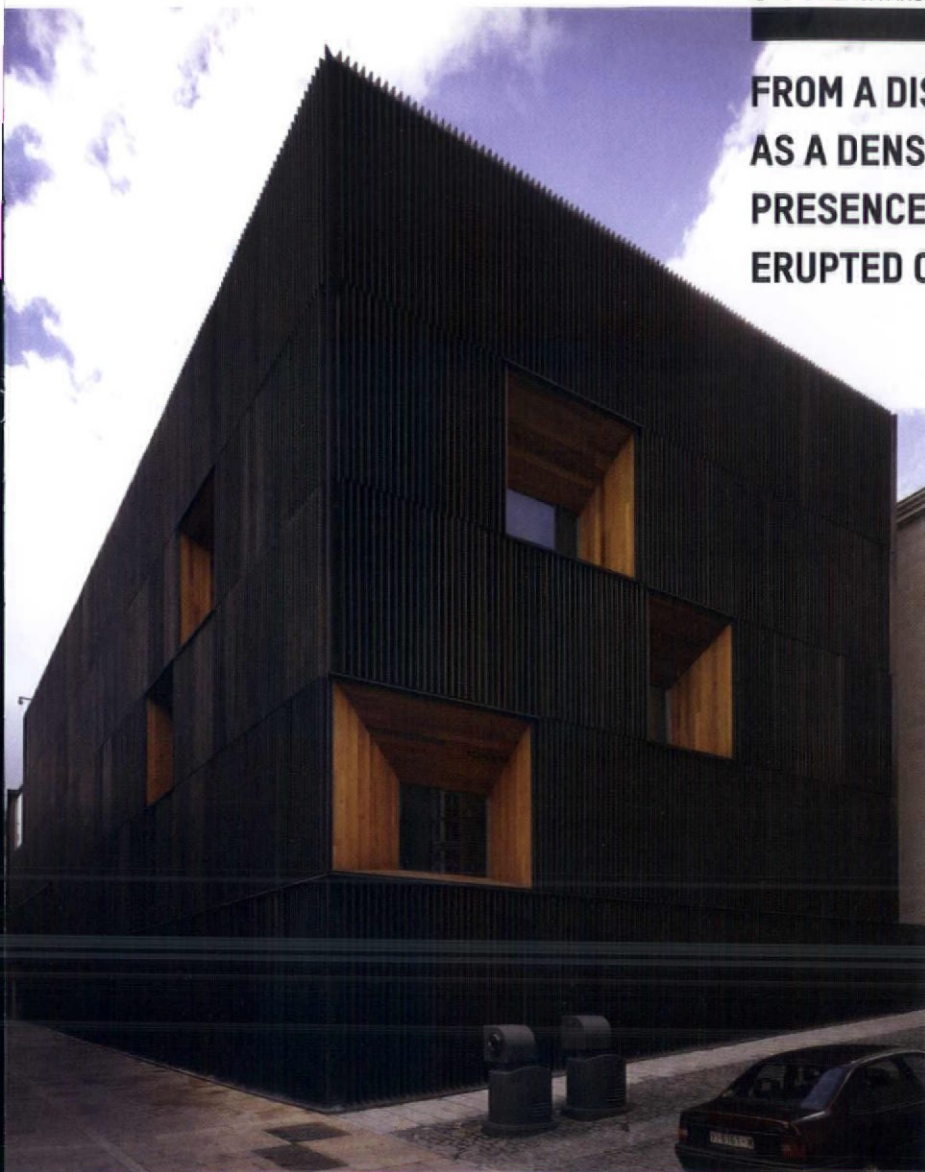
The idea of the building as an enigmatic box continues inside. Floors and walls in the entrance hall and exhibition spaces are lined with wenge, a tough, almost black tropical hardwood. A promenading staircase extends up the long, west facade, linking three floors of displays. These track an archaeological chronology from the Palaeolithic era, through Roman colonisation, to the founding of Vitoria. Each floor is essentially a long, dark room dramatically lit by a series of angular prisms lined with delicate Japanese paper that pierce the building like giant light sabres.

Mangado worked closely with the museum curators to develop a display system that would be an integral part of the architecture. Display cases are contained in narrow perimeter zones around 2m wide, and their depth creates the reveals in the external skin. These backstage areas accommodate services paraphernalia and can be accessed by museum staff through 'secret' doors. It is an apt and elegant solution. All visitors can see are the glass vitrines set seamlessly in the dark walls, like enticing cabinets of curiosities. Larger freestanding objects, such as stone sculptures or an ancient grave pit, are beautifully and theatrically spot-lit.

Archaeological relics are not only a testament to the scale of human evolution, but also a poignant reminder of the lives of our ancestors. Sometimes the simplest artefacts are the most moving – for instance, a pair of scallop shells worn by medieval travellers on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. Mangado is aware that his building, however impressive, is not the real star of the show. Of the relationship between contents and container he says: 'It can be neither a mere organising element, nor a beautiful but distant architecture,' he says. 'It must have the ability to evoke places and people from a tiny fragment of ceramic which has managed to survive and which speaks of the fragility of time.'



FROM A DISTANCE IT APPEARS  
AS A DENSE, DARK, GEOLOGICAL  
PRESENCE THAT HAS SOMEHOW  
ERUPTED OUT OF THE GROUND



Previous page\_ The new museum erupts from the compressed warren of Vitoria's medieval core

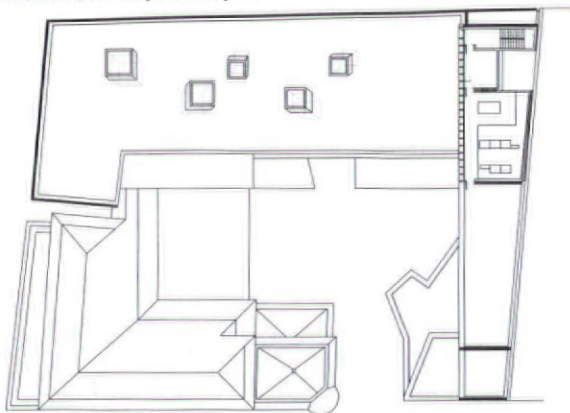
location plan

Top left\_ Corrugated bronze cladding emphasises the museum's urban persona as a hermetic box of treasure

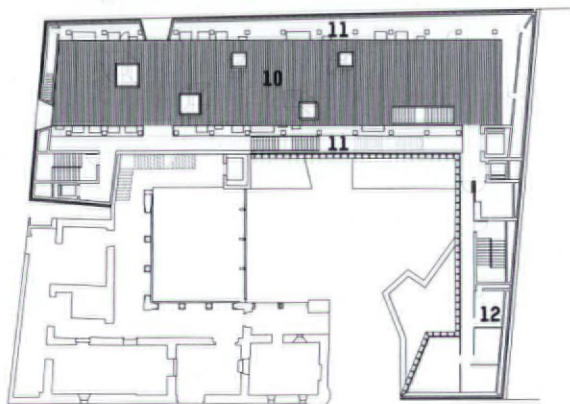
Left\_ The tight weave of the bronze cladding slackens slightly at lower level as the building touches the ground



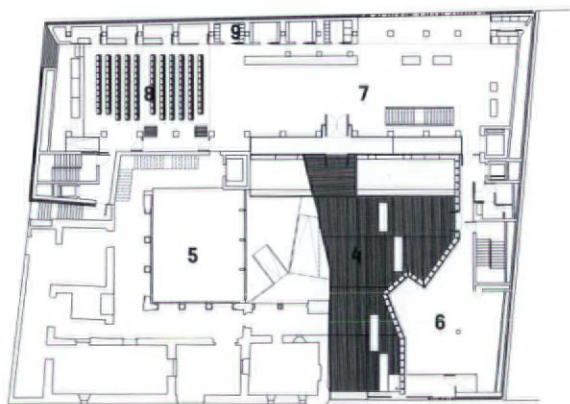
fourth-floor and part roof plan



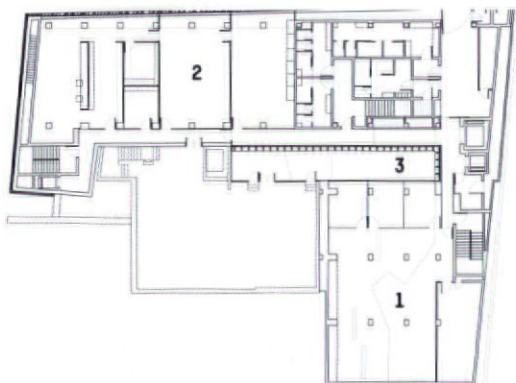
first floor (typical exhibition level)



ground-floor plan



lower ground-floor plan



- 1 library
- 2 research and conservation department
- 3 moat
- 4 courtyard
- 5 Fournier Playing Card Museum
- 6 temporary exhibitions
- 7 entrance hall
- 8 lecture space
- 9 cloakroom
- 10 exhibition hall
- 11 service zone
- 12 offices

Opposite Windows set in deep reveals lined with cedar are like sightless eyes, reflecting back the fraying urban fabric. Lines created by the panels of cladding being set slightly askew indicate storey heights

detailed section through external wall and window reveal







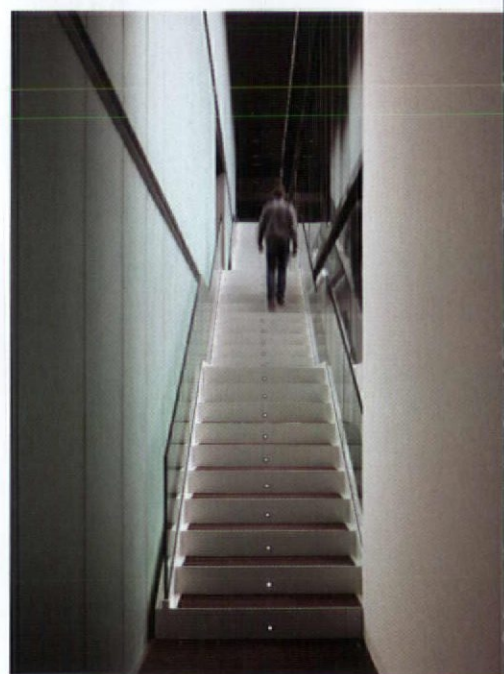


Clockwise from  
right\_ Entrance  
courtyard with the  
Playing Card  
Museum, left. The  
two buildings are  
part of the same  
museum complex;  
Typical exhibition  
space, perforated by  
glowing light prisms;  
Windows frame  
views of the city,  
hinting at another  
kind of archaeology;  
A long, narrow  
staircase links the  
three floors of  
exhibition spaces

long section



cross section





EACH FLOOR IS A LONG, DARK ROOM DRAMATICALLY LIT BY A SERIES OF ANGULAR PRISMS THAT PIERCE THE BUILDING LIKE GIANT LIGHT SABRES



**ARCHITECT**

Francisco Mangado,  
Pamplona, Spain

**PROJECT TEAM**

Francisco Mangado,  
José María Gastaldo,  
Richard Královic

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

NB35

**SERVICES ENGINEERS**

Iturralde y Sagües,  
César Martín Gómez





# 045

## NANTES SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

LOCATION  
NANTES, FRANCE

ARCHITECT  
LACATON & VASSAL

WRITER  
CATHERINE SLESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY  
PAUL RAFTERY









## HUNKERED DOWN ON A SCENIC SITE ON THE EDGE OF THE RIVER LOIRE, IT IS A HEROIC, RAW-BONED BRUISER OF A STRUCTURE

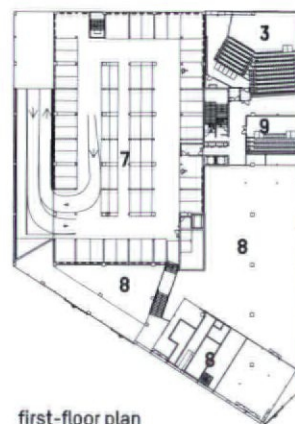
Jean-Philippe Vassal once memorably remarked that 'air and flowers' were the two most important things in Lacaton & Vassal's work. This makes the Paris-based partnership sound a bit hippy-dippy, but don't be duped. Such blissed-outness is tempered by a roll-call of tough, thrifty buildings that draw on rigorously considered ideas about materials, space, ecology, technology and an evangelical impetus to do more with less. The practice's latest project is an architecture school in Nantes, and it aims to lead by example in making its students aware of the extraordinary potential of their chosen vocation.

In partnership since 1987, Lacaton & Vassal have now emerged from the margins of colourful idiosyncrasy into an increasingly receptive mainstream. But despite being embraced by the establishment, the duo's signature grungily expressive construction is still provocatively at odds with the more 'polished' (and often more anodyne) work of their French compatriots.

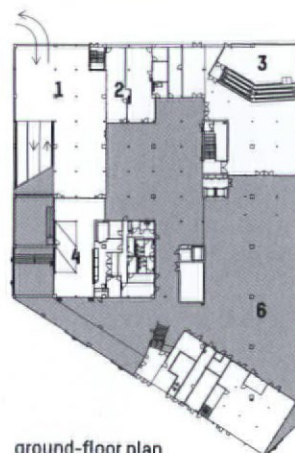
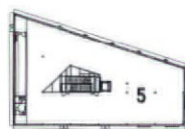
Nantes represented a testing jump in scale that could well have resulted in these qualities being

- 1 entrance hall
- 2 reception
- 3 auditorium
- 4 café
- 5 exhibition hall
- 6 fabrication hall
- 7 parking
- 8 void
- 9 lecture hall
- 10 library
- 11 classrooms
- 12 research labs
- 13 ramp
- 14 project studio
- 15 terrace

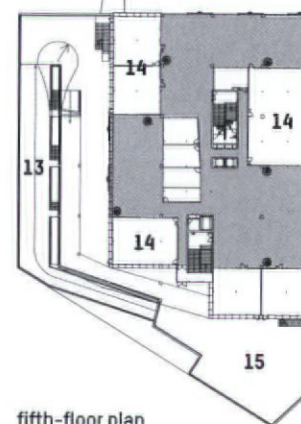
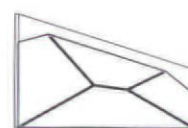
■ espace libre appropriable (free space)



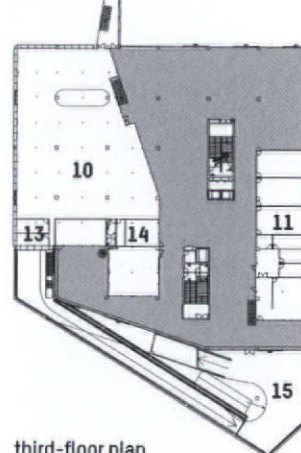
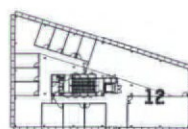
first-floor plan



ground-floor plan



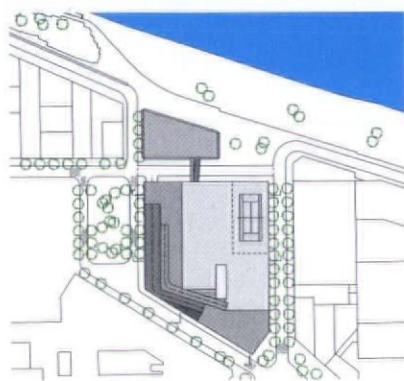
fifth-floor plan



third-floor plan

Previous page\_  
Spaces can be appropriated and colonised by students and staff as needs arise  
Right\_ A big, beefy ramp cranks around the edge of the building leading to terraces and a habitable roof  
Below right\_ The muscular 'education factory' on its riverside site





site plan





Right\_ Like a giant industrial greenhouse, the concrete and steel frame is infilled with ribbed panels of translucent polycarbonate  
Below\_ Formal enclosed studio with informal space around it and the great ramp winding up past the full-height glazed walls

**ARCHITECT**

Lacaton & Vassal, Paris

**PROJECT TEAM**

Anne Lacaton,  
Jean-Philippe Vassal,  
Florian De Pous, Julien  
Callot, Lisa Schmidt-  
Colinet, Isidora Meier,  
Frédéric Hérard

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS**

Setec Bâtiment, CESMA

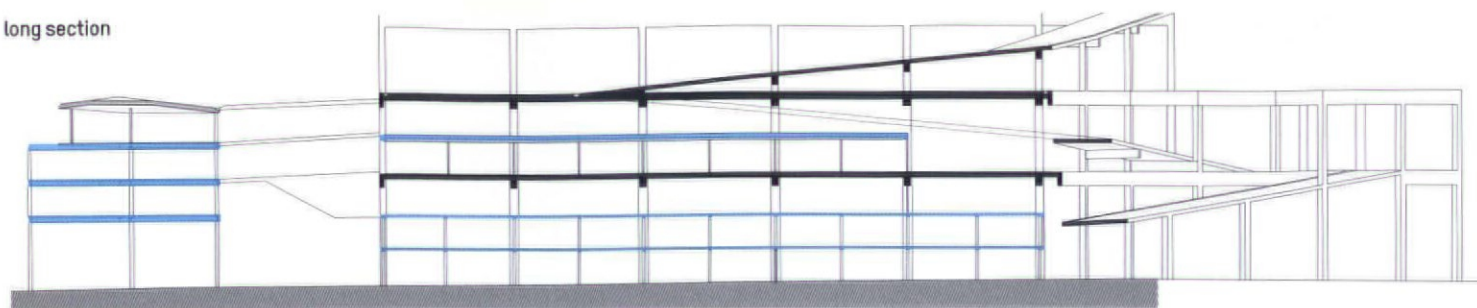
**COST CONSULTANT**

E21





long section



■ main concrete structure  
■ intermediate floor – steel structure

cross section



dumbed down or edited out. Happily, this is not the case. The architecture school is a muscular and intensely flexible armature for teaching, learning, socialising and building. Hunkered down on a scenic site on the edge of the river Loire, it is a heroic, raw-boned bruiser of a structure. The concrete and steel frame is clearly articulated, like a giant jungle gym, and infilled with an acreage of translucent polycarbonate sheeting filched from industrial greenhouses. Designed for a bit of rough and tumble, it's a veritable education factory, intended to cope with and process exploding student numbers. When the city's old architecture school was first built in the mid 1970s, it had 400 students. Now there are around 1,000.


The factory analogy is apt, but by nailing down the costs of construction and materials the architects were able to increase the size of the building and provide nearly twice the stipulated floor space. The original brief called for 15,150m<sup>2</sup>, to which Lacaton & Vassal added 4,430m<sup>2</sup> of extra internal space and 8,000m<sup>2</sup> of terraces, all on a budget of 17.75 million euros. This

offers unexpected educational, operational and social possibilities. And factories can also make for mesmerising architecture, as Nantes proves by riffing admiringly on modernist temples of industry, such as Lingotto, the former Fiat factory in Turin. Like Lingotto, Nantes has a big, butch ramp, leading up to a functional roof, though it's not a test track (as famously immortalised in *The Italian Job*); rather a potential construction site where students can build and evaluate their creations. However, Lacaton & Vassal's original presentation drawings showed a rooftop circus, so anything's possible.

Somewhat less sinuous than Lingotto, the ramp cranks around the perimeter of three double-height, concrete-framed floors. At intervals, these main floors are subdivided into mezzanine levels by the insertion of a lightweight steel structure, so generating a kind of spatial nougat. Large, double-height volumes form workshops and lecture halls; more intimate, single-storey spaces are used for seminar rooms and the library. But crucially, the aim is not to be too prescriptive. Many areas are labelled *espace libre appropriable*, to

be used as staff and students see fit, acknowledging that functions and relationships change over time. 'Like a pedagogical tool, the project questions the programme and practices of the school as much as the norms, technologies and its own process of elaboration,' says Vassal.

This notion of things being in a state of flux cultivates an engaging topsy-turviness – for instance, parking is on the first floor (an underground car park would have involved complex and costly excavation work) and the ground floor is covered with tarmac to suggest that it's a literal extension of the street. The ramp, which is also publicly accessible, 'progressively puts the ground surface of the city in touch with the sky,' says partner Anne Lacaton. On the upper levels, students can savour their city as the building becomes a giant belvedere.

For Lacaton & Vassal, Nantes is a good place from which to take stock. Ten years ago, the practice described an ideal of architecture that would be 'straightforward, useful, precise, cheap, free, jovial, poetic and cosmopolitan'. That vision has now emphatically arrived. 





# 046

## ZA-KOENJI THEATRE

LOCATION  
TOKYO, JAPAN

ARCHITECT  
TOYO ITO


WRITER  
ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY  
EDMUND SUMNER

The Za-Koenji Public Theatre is a top-heavy black iceberg of a building, set in the commercial district of Sugunami City, in the western part of Tokyo. Constrained on a tight plot and subject to strict height restrictions, the building's flamboyant black steel skin cloaks a six-storey structure, three below ground. It demonstrates architect Toyo Ito's increasingly expressive use of complex geometries, articulated by thin skins, as seen in his other recent projects, such as the crematorium in Kakamigahara (AR August 2007).

It also has an unmistakable resonance with Hans Scharoun's 1963 Berlin Philharmonie. In reality, however, it shares none of the German building's internal spatial virtuosity. Essentially square in plan, in this instance the meringue-like peaks and shallow craters are deployed to transform an otherwise static plan and black box that packs in a surprising amount of publicly accessible accommodation. The building replaces the original Koenji hall (a dull and decrepit 200-seat multi-purpose auditorium) and contains three new performance spaces. On the ground-floor entrance level is the main space, Za-Koenji 1, a highly specialised small theatre for

professionals. Two levels below sits Za-Koenji 2, a rentable stage for general public use. And on the same level, but breaking out from the boundary of the square plan, is a new space specifically designed for Awa Odori staging and rehearsals (Awa Odori is the largest dance festival in Japan). The lowest level maintains the plan's eccentricity, including three rehearsal spaces, wardrobe, workshop and even car parking.

Ito likens the building to 'a tent cabin', and has developed the steel plate, reinforced concrete construction technique employed at Ito's Tama Art University Library (AR August 2007) for both walls and roof; a technique that essentially uses steel plate as permanent shuttering/ reinforcement, with large steel templates cut to form the profile of walls, floors and roof, rather like cloth panels from a tailor's fabric pattern. Concrete is then cast against and/or around the steel plate, providing a composition of sufficient stability and sound insulation, while maintaining a relatively thin cross-sectional depth. At Tama, concrete encased steel, but here steel is exposed, with 12mm steel plate on roof and 9mm on walls, finished with a satin fluororesin coating. 





座 高円寺  
TAKUYA PUBLIC THEATRE

マッサージ薬

ラス

座 高円寺

P 空車

Park Japan 24h

電話  
TEL. 0433-XXXXXX  
平安保険  
HEIWA INSURANCE

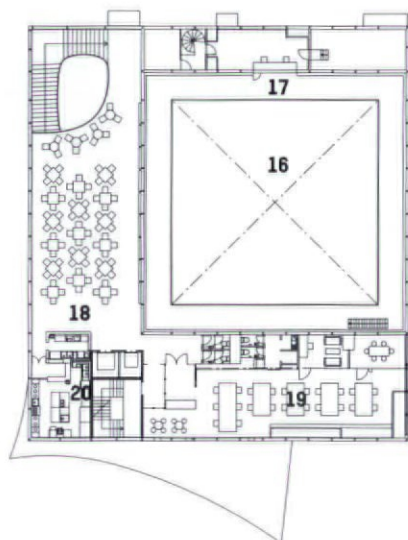
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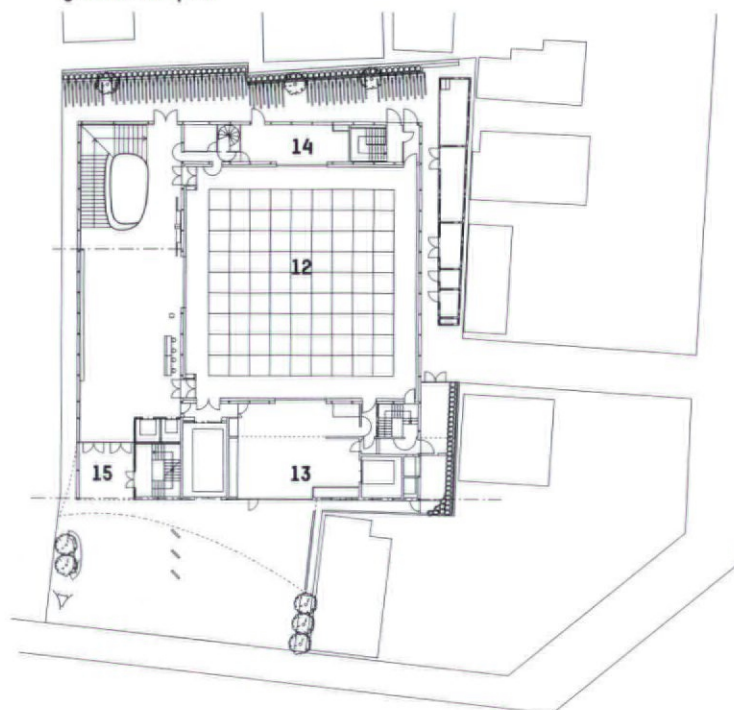
# IT DEMONSTRATES ITO'S INCREASINGLY EXPRESSIVE USE OF COMPLEX GEOMETRIES ARTICULATED BY THIN SKINS

Previous page\_  
Sinuous curves  
and peaks in Tokyo's  
fractured cityscape  
Below\_ The complex  
roof geometry is  
arrived at by carving  
five elliptical cones  
and two cylinders  
out of a cube  
Opposite, right\_  
Main public entrance  
Opposite, far right\_  
The building is a  
lively social hub

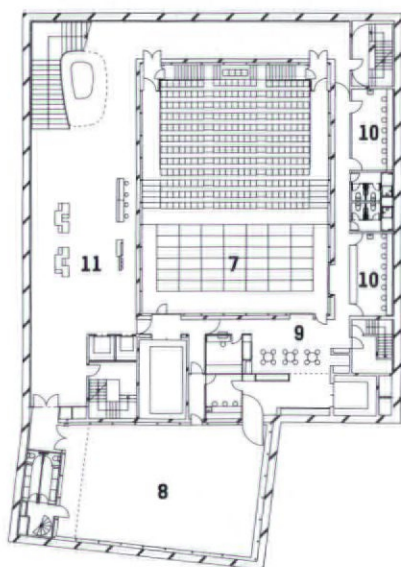
first-floor plan



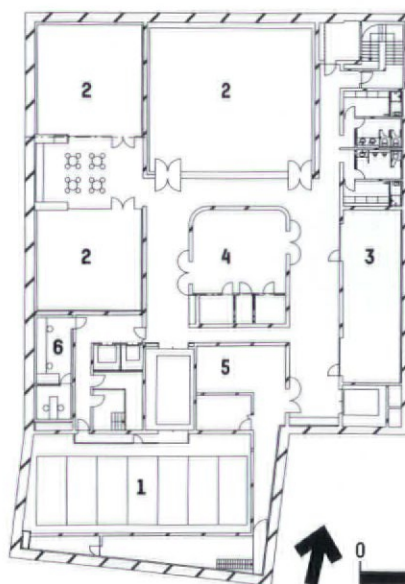
ground-floor plan



lower ground-floor plan



basement plan



- 1 parking
- 2 rehearsal room
- 3 workshop
- 4 wardrobe
- 5 technical store
- 6 AV studio
- 7 Za-Koenji 2
- 8 Awa Odori Hall
- 9 backstage lounge
- 10 dressing room
- 11 foyer
- 12 Za-Koenji 1
- 13 loading bay
- 14 store
- 15 main entrance
- 16 upper part of Za-Koenji 1
- 17 gallery
- 18 café
- 19 administration
- 20 kitchen









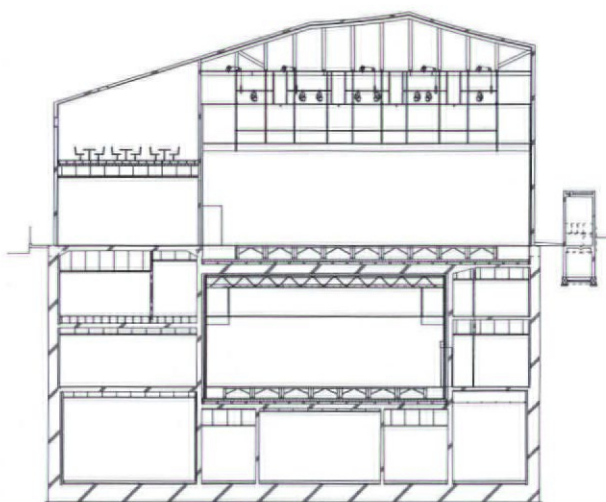
**WE ADOPTED ELLIPTICAL CONES AND CYLINDERS WITH A SINGLE CURVATURE THAT CAN BE FLATTENED INTO A PLANAR SURFACE TO EASE CONSTRUCTION**

TOYO ITO

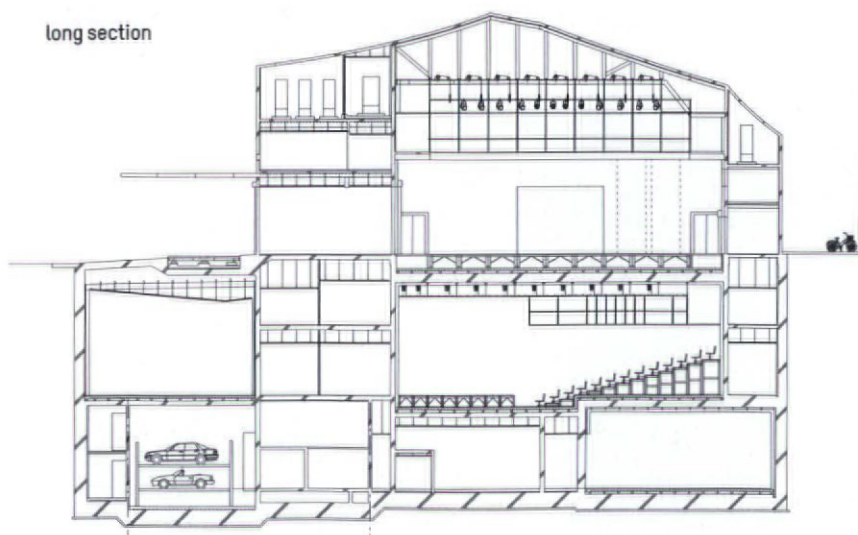
Below, top to bottom\_ The range of performance spaces; Za-Koenji 1, Za-Koenji 2 and the Awa Odori Hall  
Opposite\_ Walls and roof are thin layers of concrete cast into permanent steel plate shuttering which forms inner and outer skins

**ARCHITECT**  
Toyo Ito & Associates,  
Tokyo  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**  
Sasaki Structural  
Consultants  
**MECHANICAL ENGINEER**  
Kanko Engineering  
**ACOUSTIC DESIGN**  
Nagata Acoustics  
**LIGHTING DESIGN**  
Light Design  
**FURNITURE DESIGN**  
Fujie Kazuko Atelier

cross section



long section









# 047

## PUTNEY HOUSE

LOCATION

PUTNEY, VERMONT, USA

ARCHITECT

KYU SUNG WOO

WRITER

ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY

TIMOTHY HURSLEY







It takes Korean-born architect Kyu Sung Woo two-and-a-half hours to reach his family retreat in Vermont. Leaving his Boston office at 4pm means that by 7pm, Woo and his wife can sit down together for supper. Not simply a weekend getaway for city dwellers however, this house is the culmination of a long-standing commitment: to provide a home from home for Woo's children and their families. Having fled Korea during the war, Woo says: 'It was important to find a place where we could all meet, and the proximity to both Boston and New York was significant.' Locked in the spirit of the building, therefore, is a strong sense of family history; a sense that anchors the building's overt contemporary expression. The forms also draw on the architect's appreciation of both Korean and American domestic types (he still runs offices in both countries.)

Working initially with a landscape architect, clearings were created on the 4.5ha wooded site, set

up on the south-westerly slopes of Putney Mountain. Into the clearings Woo then placed the 300m<sup>2</sup> house, which recalls the division of agricultural functions in farmstead settlements. Limited to 4.6m depths, each shed contains a distinct use. One houses workshop, storage space and systems to power this off-grid settlement. The domesticated other two sheds are conjoined, linking a family living and sleeping space to the south and a large studio and meditation space to the north.

The building addresses views to the south and west with large windows set in flush timber cladding or deep timber reveals. To the north, avoiding differential weathering of the western red cedar in this orientation, the structures are clad in corrugated galvanised steel.

Entering a single-storey link embedded within the northernmost building, visitors view the landscape through a courtyard that diminishes in width. Exaggerating the sense of

enclosure and elaborating the ritual of arrival, this is more than mere in-between space: it is a point at which to pause. A platform creates a seating area from where you either descend to the left or rise up to the right into the flanking wings, each displaced by three steps.

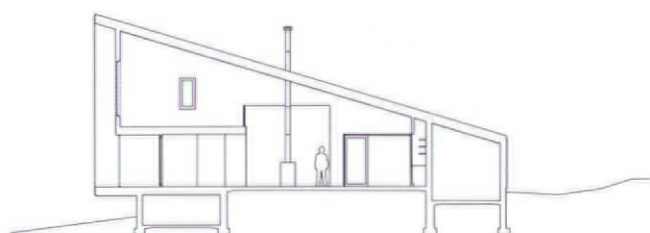
The two principal roof forms rise up in opposing orientations, with the studio along its length forming an open loft. On the ground floor of the southernmost building, the kitchen has full-width glazing to maximise south-westerly views. This gives onto an external deck, sheltering beneath a jetty of bedrooms above.

Inspired once more by the additive nature of agricultural compounds, more structures are anticipated in response to more people and changing needs. A fourth structure is already planned, providing an additional bedroom and roof terrace to the north. 'We start building this in June,' says Woo. 'It will be a very simple metal box.'

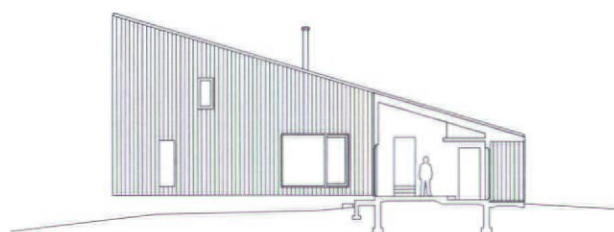


THE HOUSE RECALLS THE  
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURAL  
FUNCTIONS IN FARMSTEAD  
SETTLEMENTS – EACH SHED  
CONTAINS A DISTINCT USE

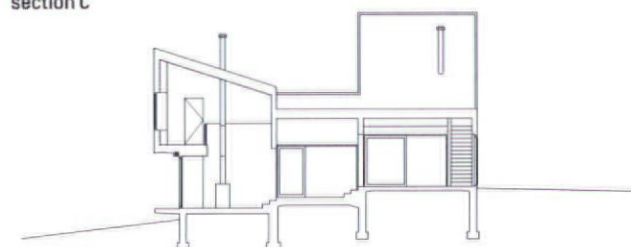
section A



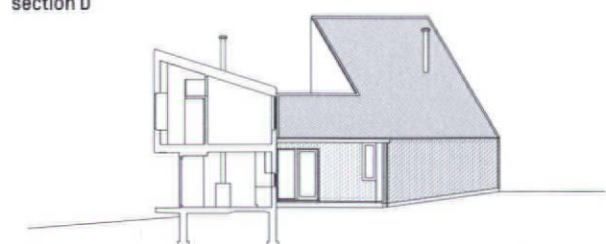
section B



section C



section D







Previous page, left\_  
Treated western red cedar is used as the cladding material to the south and west

Previous page, right\_  
To the north and east, corrugated galvanised steel cladding is used.

The shed roof is PVS

Left\_ The studio is double height, with mezzanine meditation space focused on the best westerly view

Bottom left\_ Commanding its hillside site, the house is like a modern farmstead, with the potential for future additions

Below\_ Between two 'sheds', a lobby forms a useful interstitial space. Subtle changes in level define spaces

- 1 studio
- 2 entry hall
- 3 kitchen/dining area
- 4 bedroom
- 5 bathroom
- 6 future addition
- 7 mechanical
- 8 garage
- 9 shed
- 10 loft
- 11 screened porch
- 12 children's bedroom
- 13 firewood storage
- 14 future addition roof deck
- 15 rock outcropping

ground-floor plan



#### ARCHITECT

Kyu Sung Woo

#### PROJECT ARCHITECT

Brett Bentson

#### PROJECT TEAM

Choon Choi, Katie Wirtz,  
Lan Ying Ip, Sam Choi,  
Motomu Nakasugi,

Danielle Blodgett, Min Ter  
Lim, Hyang Yi, Zeke Brown

#### LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT

Reed Hilderbrand  
Associates

#### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Richmond So Engineers



# URBANISM

## AN IDEAS COMPETITION IN SAEMANGEUM IN SOUTH KOREA HAS SEEN FLORIAN BEIGEL'S IDEAS EXPRESSED ON AN EPIC SCALE

WRITER

KIERAN LONG

The masterplanning of the Saemangeum estuary on the Yellow Sea coast of South Korea is one of the largest and most ambitious projects anywhere in the world. A 33km sea wall, completed in 2006, encloses 400km<sup>2</sup> of water that will be the site of a massive new land reclamation to accommodate industry, tourism and agriculture as well as a new airport. When complete, the result will be a new city around two-thirds the size of South Korea's capital Seoul. It is the world's largest land reclamation project.

Florian Beigel, the German-born architect and masterplanner who runs the Architecture Research Unit (ARU) at London Metropolitan University, heads one of the three teams shortlisted in a competition to find a 'comprehensive urban development concept' for the massive site. His proposal envisages a city of islands that combines a self-consciously

artificial landscape with a logic born of land reclamation and the depth of the lagoon. Beigel's work has always pursued his concept of 'landscape infrastructure', where the landscape is built first and helps to define a non-programmatic urbanism born of geography and typology. The Saemangeum proposal takes ARU's compelling ideas to an epic scale.

The redevelopment is highly controversial. The completion of the sea wall, the longest in the world, has apparently destroyed a habitat that served as a stopover for 400,000 migrating birds and environmentalists are still campaigning for the wetland to be reinstated. More significantly, the credit crunch has taken its toll and this politically important project now has an uncertain future. However, in 2006 the Jeollabuk-do province authorities injected new life into it by holding an ideas competition. Seven teams were invited and rather

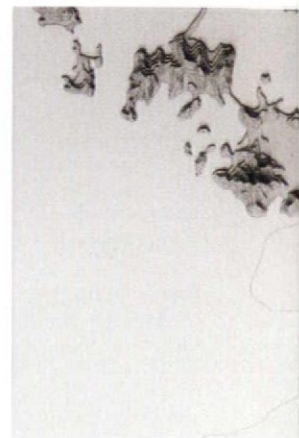
than plumping for super-famous author-architects, the coordinator of the project convinced the city to invite architects associated with research institutions. As well as ARU, teams from Tokyo Institute of Technology (with young architect Atelier Bow-Wow), Rotterdam's Berlage Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and others participated in the competition.

The Saemangeum reclamation project began in the early 1990s when Korea was concerned about food shortages and the lack of land available for cultivation in the mountainous country. Korea's high population density (higher than the Netherlands at 498 people per km<sup>2</sup>) made tackling food shortages a key promise of the first democratically elected president, Roh Tae Woo, in 1987 and it remains a priority. The Jeollabuk-do province is a 'bread basket' district of South Korea and this project was set to build on that.

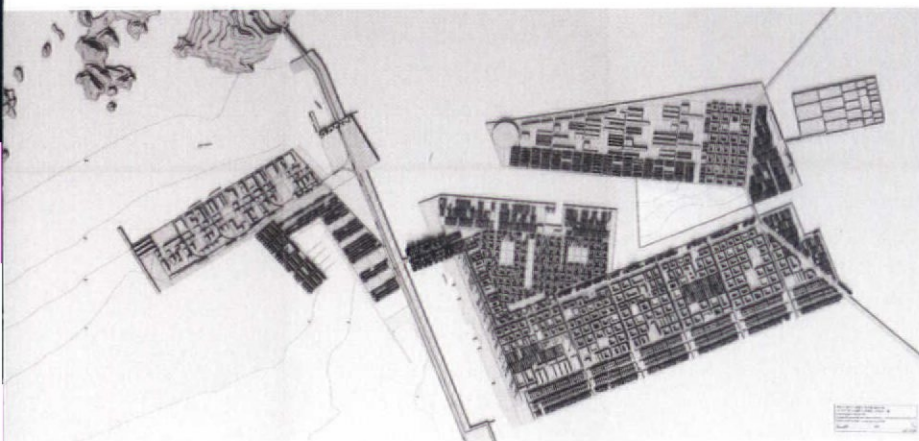
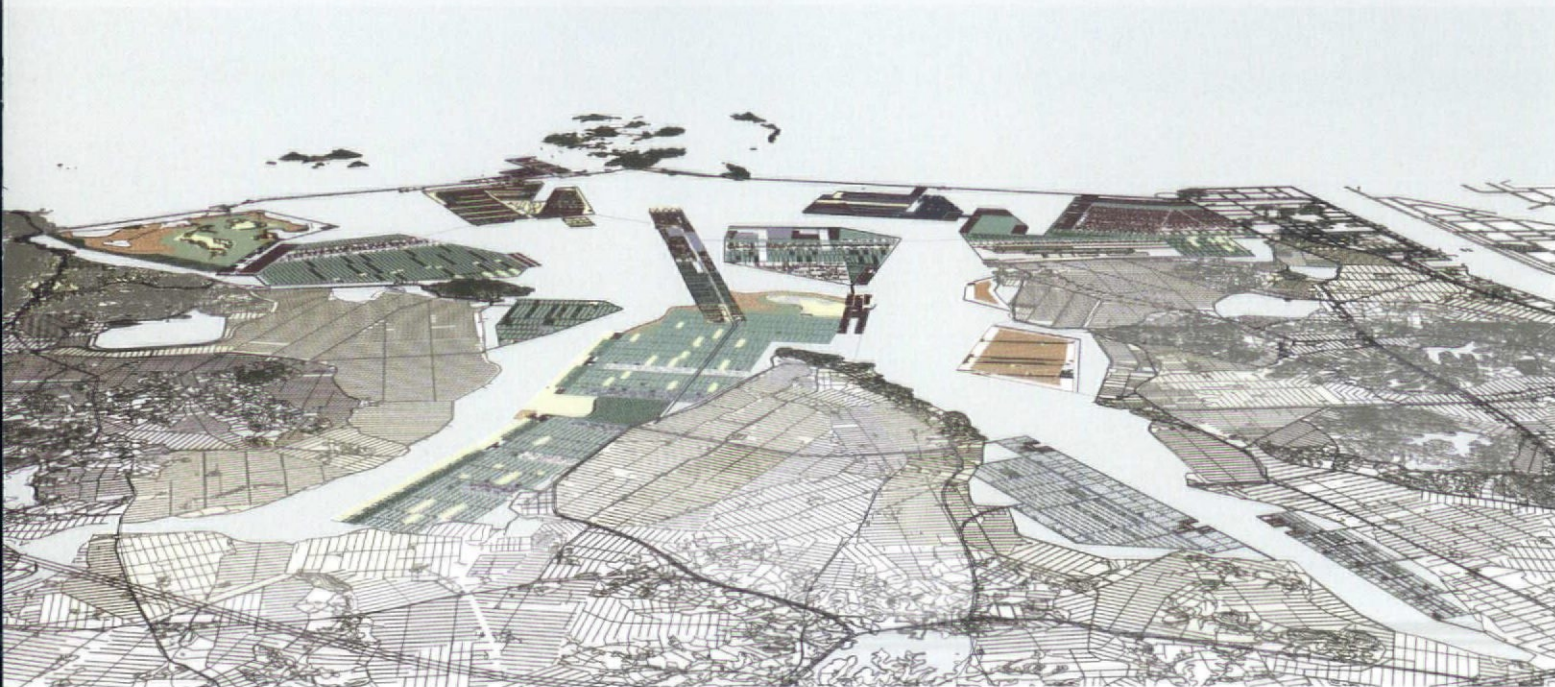
The competitors first visited the site in January last year and its enormity then became apparent. ARU partner Philip Christou says: 'The scale was a bit overwhelming for everybody. It took more than half an hour by bus to travel the length of the sea wall and when you're on it, you can't see land in either direction. You get confused about what is the sea and what is the lake.' Beigel adds: 'We told them this is very impressive, like the Great Wall of China in the sea.'

Although they say it took three months to get to grips with the —

Clockwise, from right: Perspective view of ARU's proposal, showing the planned new islands situated behind the sea wall, and a natural archipelago in the Yellow Sea beyond; A visualisation that evokes one of the programmatic mixes the project aspires to – tourism and large-scale flower production; Overhead view of the model; Another perspective, this time from the north, with the new airport shown in the foreground













REPORT CITY  
largest rice fields and  
tech industries

RIVER CONFLUENCE CITY  
near the temple

JINZBONG LAGOON CITY

BRIDGE ISLAND

FARM CITY  
at the south river shores





# THE FORM OF THE NEW CITY IS A CONVERSATION BETWEEN NATURAL WATER EDGES AND ARTIFICIAL ONES, BETWEEN ANCIENT TOPOGRAPHY AND THE MAN-MADE

ARCHITECTURE RESEARCH UNIT



site's scale, they decided early on to make a series of islands, creating maximum water frontage. The scale for the islands was defined by a 20-40 minute walking distance from coast to coast, and distances between the islands were based on precedents like the archipelago city of Stockholm and the harbour in Cádiz, Spain. The process began with sketches on A3 paper, even though scale was still tricky. Beigel says: 'The 1mm thickness of the lines we were drawing corresponded to 100m.' Eight islands emerged in the final proposal, phased over the next 20 years.

At first, the scheme presented more straight-edged islands, inspired by Álvaro Siza and Fernando Távora's 1983 scheme for the Chinese port of Macau, where self-consciously artificial, orthogonal islands were added to the medieval street plan. This atmosphere is retained by the long, central island, most of which

will be used for agriculture and a new farming university. 'We have found it helpful to make firm distinctions between the natural and the artificial. The form of the new city is a conversation between natural water edges and artificial ones, between ancient natural topography and the man-made,' write the architects.

Only one island, in the south of the lagoon, retains 'natural' edges, and these will be made by building the large embankment wall further out in the water and allowing the water level within to reveal parts of the topography of the estuary bed.

The architects were convinced that the place should not be zoned (an approach adopted by many other competitors) and, working with economist Fran Tonkiss, they divided the programmes into mixed distribution across the site. Despite this being more difficult for the developers, Beigel and Christou's

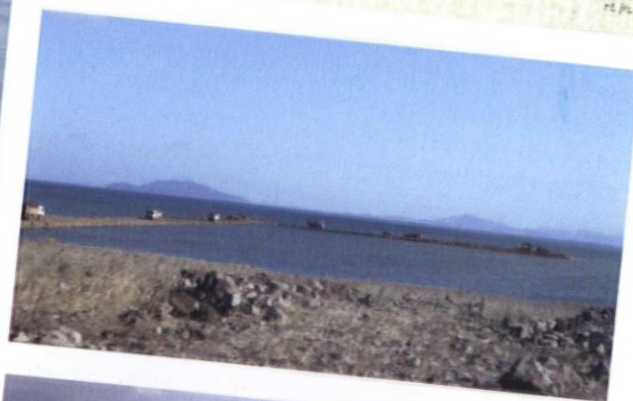
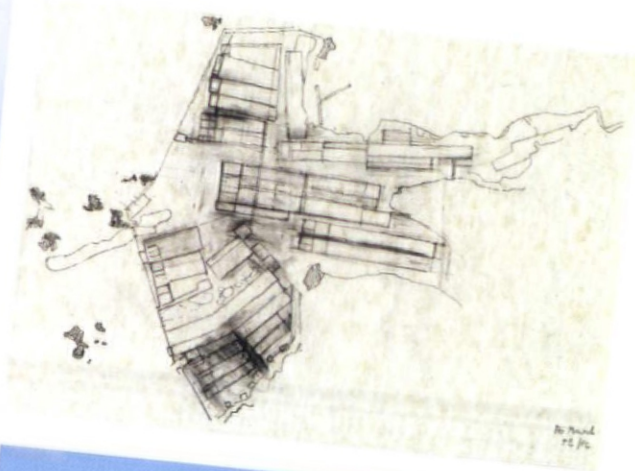
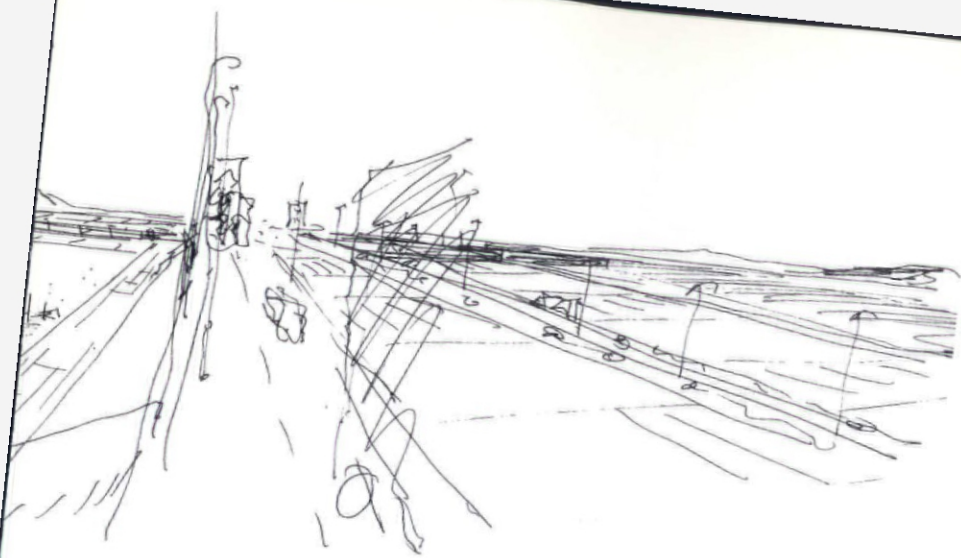
work on what they call 'city structures' aspires to building in the flexibility over time as found in the architecture of Venice, Barcelona or Georgian London. Thus the appearance of fragments of Barcelona's Cerdà grid on the harbour island and Cambridge University's quadrangles on the long, central island. This strange distribution of typologies across a landscape is called Collage City by Christou, an explicit reference (if one were needed) to the work of Colin Rowe.

Political and economic change is now affecting the future of the Saemangeum reclamation. The local government began by planning for a version of the project that would divide the uses into 70 per cent agriculture and 30 per cent industry. Now the emphasis has switched to making the project 70 per cent industry and 30 per cent agriculture, as well as bringing forward the completion date from 2030 to 2020. The project awaits federal funding.

In any case, ARU's project is a grounded yet still abundantly poetic antidote to the masterplans emerging for the coastline of Dubai or indeed, parts of China. An urbanism driven by landscape, geographical and spatial proximities and typology, Beigel's work has found an audience in Korea. Perhaps it might also inspire the urbanism of the many places in the world currently striving to create a sense of place out of nothing. 

Previous page \_  
Overview of the  
proposal  
Clockwise, from  
above \_ Jinbong  
lagoon city sketch,  
showing its  
relationship with  
existing rocks and  
the farmland on the  
banks of the river;  
Design concept  
drawing for the  
Saemangeum Island  
City proposal;  
A photo showing  
landfilling in  
progress; Aerial  
photograph of the  
sea wall; A Korean  
meal in a restaurant  
in the Jeollabuk-do  
region; View beyond  
the sea wall to the  
seaweed farms  
of the Gogunsan  
Archipelago, off  
the central west  
coast of South Korea  
- their geometric  
forms were an  
inspiration for  
ARU's masterplan









## JURGEN BEY'S PROOFF VENTURE AIMS TO TRANSFORM THE WAY ARCHITECTS AND PRODUCT DESIGNERS WORK TOGETHER

WRITER  
KIERAN LONG

**PROOFF** (which stands for Progressive Office) is a new brand based in the Netherlands aiming to change the way product designers and architects work together. Launched at the Milan Furniture Fair in March, it was one of the best-received installations and showed an ambition often lacking in the inward-looking world of product design.

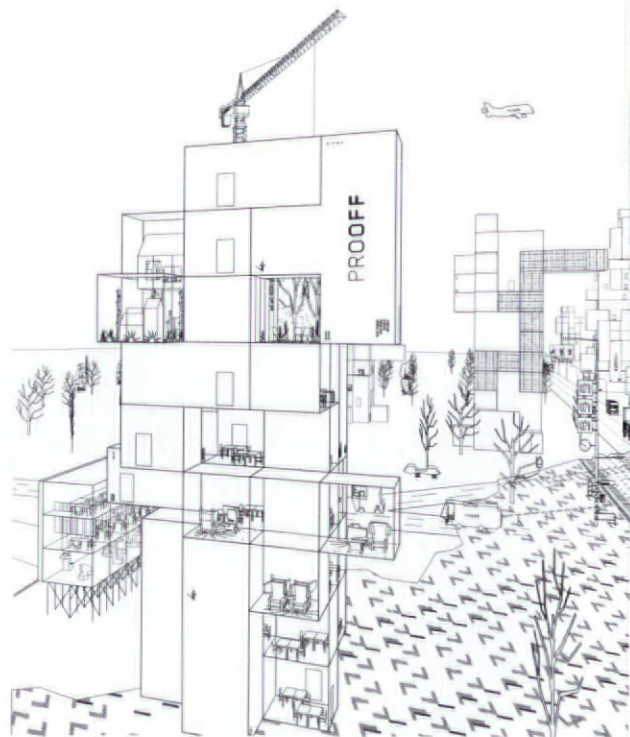
Jurgen Bey, the celebrated Dutch designer, is art director, and together with his business partner, Leo Schouten of SV Interieurgroep, they plan to involve Prooff in the earliest stages of architectural projects.

The Prooff brand brings together strands of Bey's work on how product design can transform the workplace. He says: 'I find it strange with the office that we talk about the economics and profits. Instead we should look at it more as a place where knowledge can be shared.'

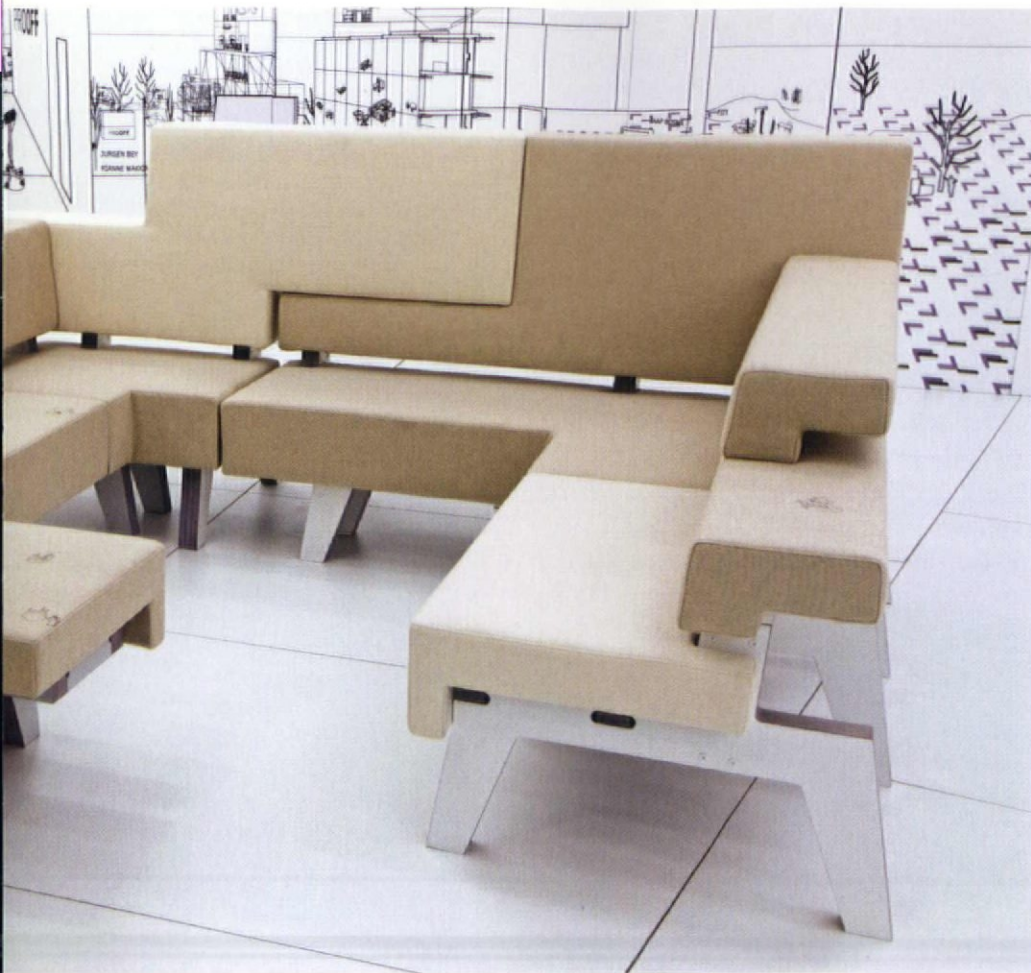
The Slow Car, conceived as a 'private space that you travel in', was originally shown at Art Basel in 2007,

and built using motorised wheelchair technology. For Bey, it exemplifies his approach to the creation of products that interrogate interior and urban environments. 'Think about when you have a whole street of slow cars, then you don't need kerbs anymore because it is safe. Then you can really think about what you use the street for,' he says, by way of example. The Slow Car was present in Milan as a reminder of Bey's ambition.

Products released in Milan were the Ear chair, which can be arranged in groups, creating private spaces for meetings and conversation, and the Work sofa, a configurable sofa that encourages informal collaboration. Bey's real ambition is to work with architects at the beginning of office projects, and he says he is close to securing roles on larger projects. This part of the vision was expressed in spectacular room-size drawings by Bruno Vermeersch of Studio Makkink & Bey, which dominated Bey's Milan installation. 





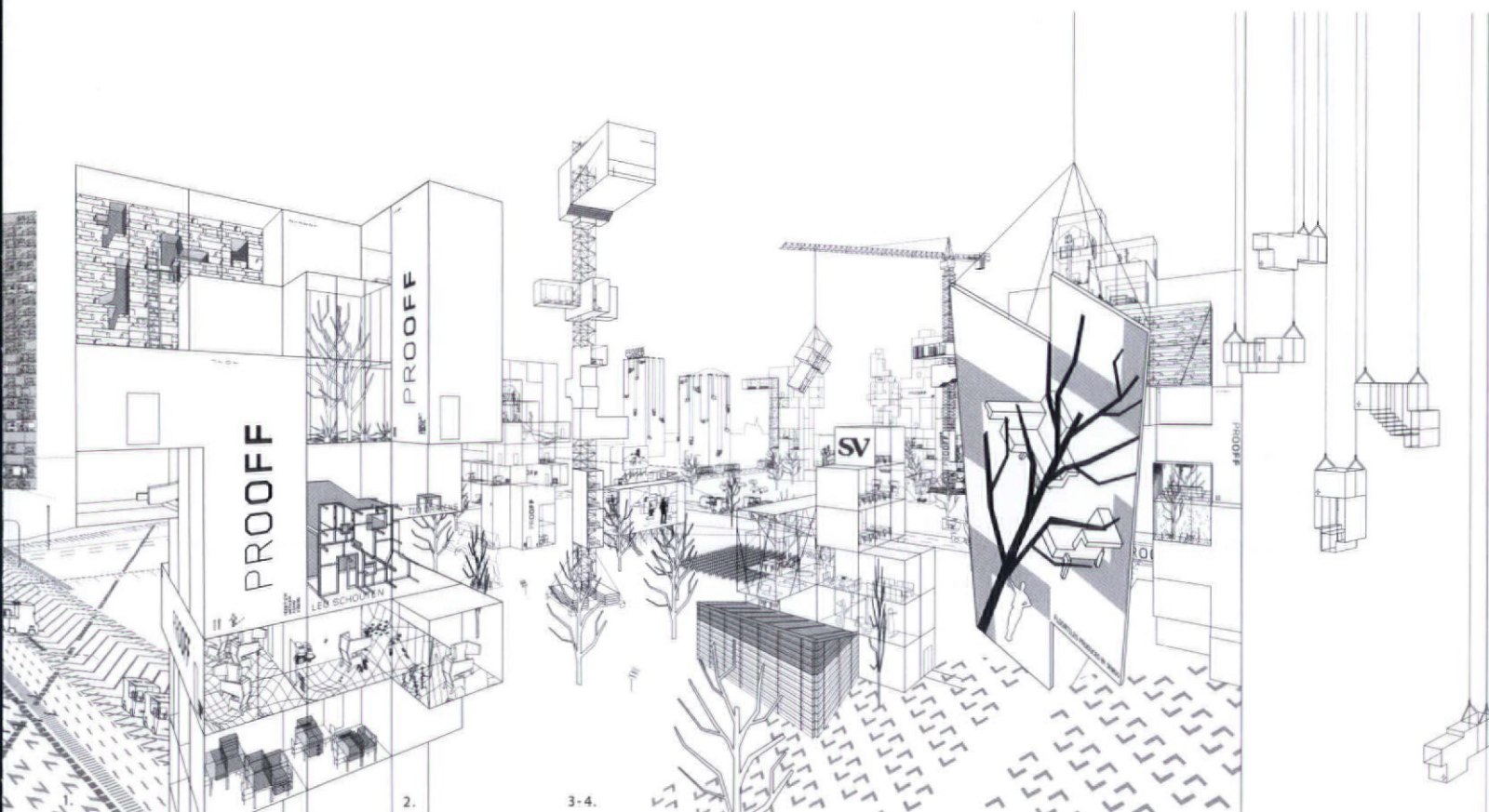


Left\_ The Work sofa can be configured in various ways to encourage informal collaboration

Below\_ The large wings on the Ear chair create private spaces for meetings

Bottom\_ Room-size drawings by Bruno

Vermeersch of Studio Makkink & Bey were on show alongside Proff's product range at this year's Milan Furniture Fair





# TRANSFORM

## We shouldn't aim for impressive when we haven't even mastered simple and obvious

### LECTURE / Sustainable Thinking: Building the Modern Community. Fritz Haeg and Raul Cardenas Osuna

6 April 2009, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA  
[www.fritzhaeg.com](http://www.fritzhaeg.com),  
[www.torolab.org](http://www.torolab.org)

Throughout the presentations by architect Fritz Haeg and artist Raul Cardenas Osuna, the word sustainability never came up. Not that I'm against that label, but it revealed the depth of belief on their parts: an investment in ideologies that transcend what could otherwise be described as a 'trendiness' in their work.

Haeg began by presenting his Edible Estates project, which introduces micro-farms to suburban and urban settings. The point is both to show residents that they can partially self-sustain and to demonstrate a new way of thinking about how we use landscape.

Haeg's gardens are located in public places where they would otherwise never be seen, as proof of our limitation in imagining what we can do with outdoor space. The project is not conceptually difficult or impressive to execute, but what he makes you realise is that we shouldn't aim for difficult and impressive when we haven't even mastered simple and obvious.

Osuna's work illustrates a similar point and, like Haeg, he does it without dictating. In 1995, Osuna founded Torolab in

his native Tijuana, Mexico. It is a 'collective workshop' exploring issues related to quality of life. The most recent work centred on making a type of bread with all the vitamins and minerals lacking in a typical Mexican diet. The other project Osuna described was an early design for a mobile botanical garden on a truck that stores all the necessary supplies to plant a small garden anywhere.

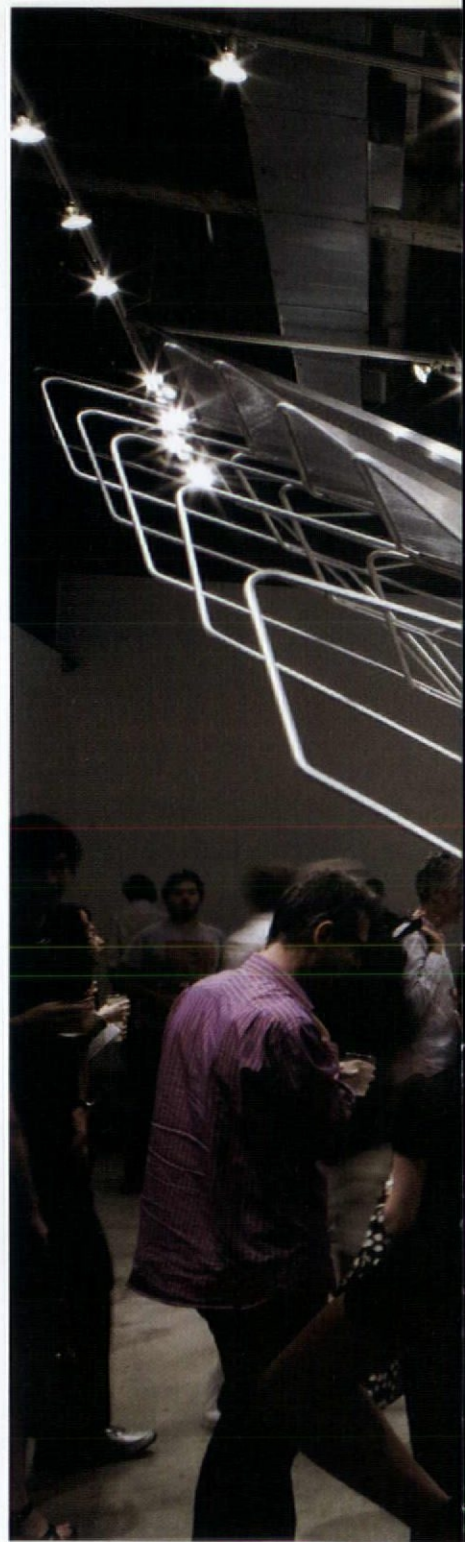
Both artists' work creates similar versions of anti-architecture: removing 'built' from 'environment' and positing ways in which better use of spaces could transform the way we live. Both work through humble, accessible methods. Haeg talked about how each arrived at a similar endpoint despite coming from vastly different backgrounds. Osuna responded that they mustn't worry about their differences, but should certainly collaborate in the future – the kind of easy-going, inclusive attitude that has led both to work that is as hopeful as it is cutting edge.

**JAFFER KOLB**

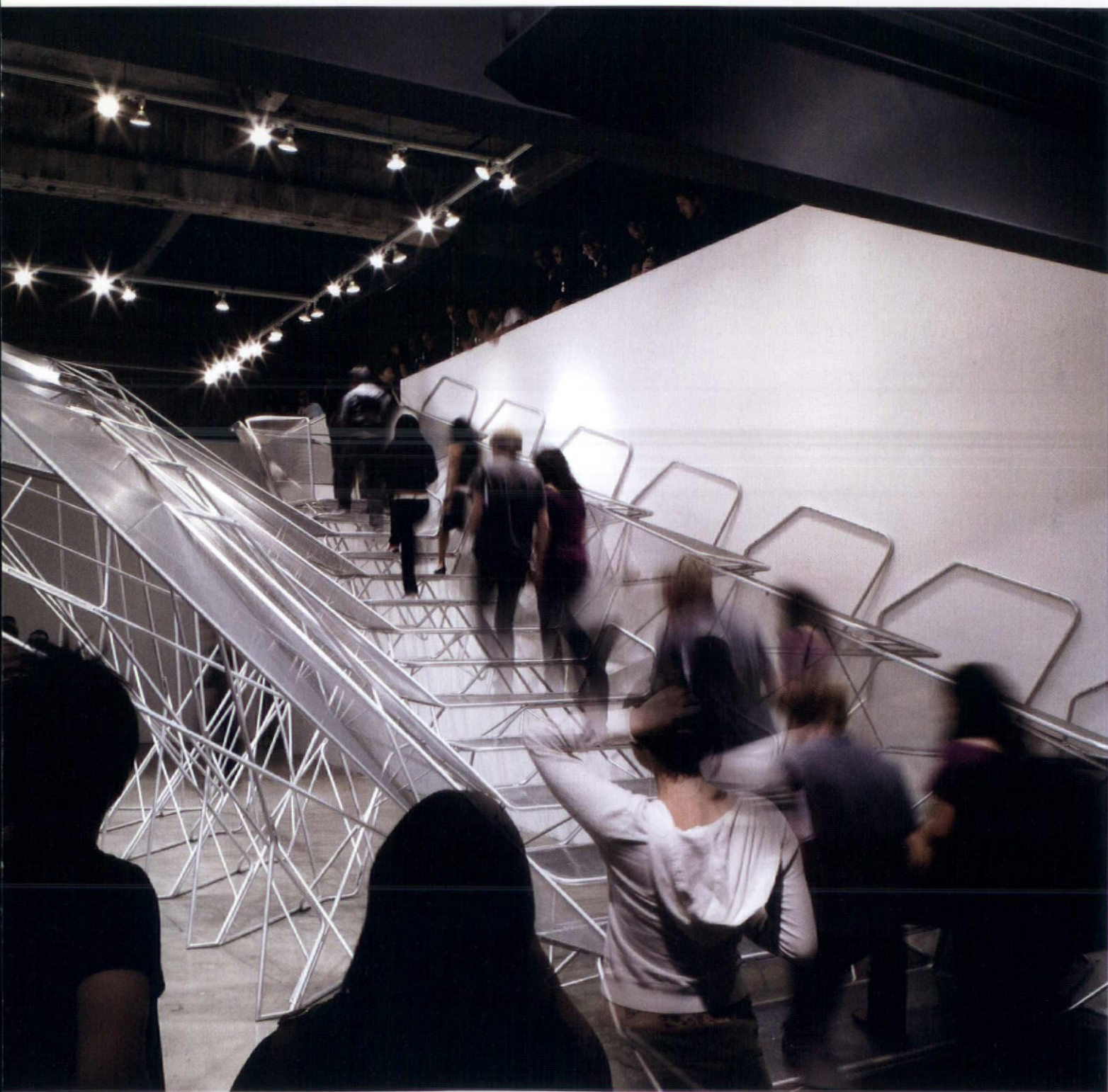
+ Sustainability without the jargon

— Making the garden lawn unfashionable

Below: Live Wire was an installation at the SCI-Arc Gallery at the Southern California Institute of Architecture by LA-based architects Dwayne Oyler and Jenny Wu. The stair used 730 linear metres of aluminium wire to link the ground floor of the gallery with a catwalk at higher level. Oyler Wu was recently commissioned to design the interior of a new space for the LA Forum for Art and Architecture in Hollywood.









## In the north, nature is a major component of thinking



### BOOK / Nordic Architects Write

Edited by Michael  
Asgaard Andersen  
Routledge, 2008, £30  
[www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)

On the whole, Nordic architects are not noted for their literary abilities. This belief partly arises from the fact that little of their writing is translated into English. For instance, until recently, Alvar Aalto was considered virtually dumb in print until Göran Schildt's books showed how prolific he was as polemicist and campaigner in Swedish and Finnish. *Nordic Architects Write* sets out to correct southern prejudices by publishing, for the first time in English, key essays by 'some of the most significant architects' to have written in the Nordic countries since 1920.

Contributors range from great names of the heroic inter-war period like Erik Gunnar Asplund and the elder Saarinen,

Eliel, to giants of our time like Christian Norberg-Schulz, Kjell Lund and Juhani Pallasmaa. Essays are arranged in four sections – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (there's not much architectural writing in Iceland) – each introduced by a local critic, with a penetrating epilogue by Wilfried Wang analysing Nordic architecture in the post-modern era.

It is a concern for humanity that unites most of the essays and much of the architecture of the north. As Nils-Ole Lund says, Nordic 'political and cultural history makes it natural to see a connection between form and content, ideology and society... Architecture is just as much about ethics as it is about aesthetics'. In the often sparsely inhabited north, nature is a major component of thinking. Norwegian Knut Knutsen believed that 'Only people who have studied nature will command machines [so] that they will serve society at large.' Perhaps northern societies can teach us as much about how to live in an ecological crisis as they did in inter-war political chaos. **PETER DAVEY**

+ *Sheds new light on Nordic ethics and aesthetics*  
- *A shame such wisdom is not more widely disseminated*

## The exhibition presents the life and work of Burle Marx as a constant, organic experiment

**EXHIBITION /**  
**Roberto Burle**  
**Marx 100 Anos:**  
**A Permanência**  
**do Instável**  
**16 July – 13 September,**  
**Museum of Modern Art,**  
**São Paulo, Brazil**  
[www.mam.org.br](http://www.mam.org.br)

Brazil is unique in having as one of its greatest visual artists a 20th-century landscape designer. The legacy of Roberto Burle Marx is alive in the dazzling streets and parks of Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and Brasília. Now, 15 years after his death, on the centenary of his birth, a celebratory retrospective is on tour. Curated by Lauro Cavalcanti, 100 Years of Roberto Burle Marx mixes documentation of the artist's most important landscape projects, for Brazil and abroad, with a vibrant selection of his paintings, tapestries, sculptural maquettes, stage sets, jewellery, and freely un-puritanical doodles.

Burle Marx is probably best known for his myriad collaborations with Rio's greatest architect, Oscar Niemeyer. At the exhibition the visitor can compare specification drawings for the public terrain flowing beneath the Ministry of Education and Health, in Rio. His plans for flower beds and paving suggest a biomorphic kinship to forms produced by Jean Arp and the early European avant-garde, yet these aesthetic objects are also working drawings. Cinephiles

may also remember the scene in *Orfeu Negro* (1959) where Pittsburgh actress Marpessa Dawn strolls across the very same organic carpet as a contemporary Eurydice exploring the wonderful metropolis, *La Cidade Maravilhosa*, Rio.

The Ministry not only heralded Brazil's espousal of modernism: this realisation of Le Corbusier's sketch design brought together an extraordinarily talented team that included Niemeyer, Lúcio Costa (subsequently planner for Brasília), modernist pioneer Affonso Reidy, painter Cândido Portinari (responsible for the blue azulejo walls), sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, and a young Burle Marx. Having returned from his studies in Europe, where he gained exposure to both innovative art and encyclopedic plant collections, Burle Marx proceeded to infiltrate Rio's public realm with the famous serpentine paving of the Copacabana beach front and, between Copacabana and central Rio, the more complex interweaving of programme for the extensive landfill site at Flamengo Park.

The exhibition formerly occupied two full floors of the former imperial palace in Rio, Paço Imperial, where suites of galleries were punctured by an open patio with vertical Burle Marx planters and a double-height hall featuring a flotilla of Burle Marx weavings. Entire galleries there were devoted to canvases that the maestro, like



Below left\_ Burle Marx's famous corniche at Copacabana beach Below\_ A typically vigorous weaving



Le Corbusier, painted in the morning before attending to his design practice. Whereas one tapestry, commissioned in 1969 for the Santo André City Hall in São Paulo State, stretched along for a breathtaking 26m, early portraits, toy-like models, and designs for a local production of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* were displayed in more intimate settings. The Burle Marx revealed in Rio was clearly a multi-faceted plastic artist.

Subtitled *A Permanência do Instável* (The Permanence of Instability), the exhibition presents the life and work of Burle Marx as a constant, organic experiment. He appears to have been full of life. We meet him here, in a film towards the end of the installation, as he demands whiskey, sings auf Deutsch, and generally regales his dinner guests (he was also, one hears, an excellent cook). His home, nevertheless, was the locus of serious enterprise.

Conserved today as the Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, this estate near Rio became the repository and incubator for the many indigenous plants Burle Marx collected on journeys deep into the Brazilian countryside. For all his exposure to international trends, the master's greatest gift was to reconsider Brazil itself. **RAYMOND RYAN**

**+** A dazzling spectrum of Burle Marx artwork to absorb  
**—** This incarnation of the exhibition is academic – the tangible legacy was back in Rio



# The original book is a snapshot of a lost England on the eve of the Second World War

**BOOK /**  
**Eric Ravilious: The Story of High Street**  
 Edited by Tim Mainstone  
 Mainstone Press, 2008, £160

*High Street* was a children's book published in 1938 by Country Life Publications. It was famed artist Eric Ravilious' creation, with accompanying text by JM Richards, editor of the AR from 1937 to 1971. The war not only killed Ravilious tragically young – an official war artist, he died during a mission in 1942 – but also destroyed the book's original lithographic plates in the Blitz, and so only 2,000 copies were ever printed. This, along with the fact that Ravilious' drawings are an extraordinary talent pushing the limits of a new printing technology, mean that the original book has become a collector's item.

The book under review, *Eric Ravilious: The Story of High Street*, is printed in an even more limited edition (750 copies) but contains a faithful reproduction of the original book, alongside essays that contextualise it in art history and trace the 24 shops it featured, documenting their current state. The family butcher, for example, 'is now Elite Hair Design [...] that still has meat hooks hidden above the ceiling.'

The original *High Street* is a unique snapshot of England on the eve of the Second World War. It documents a lost age of

Below\_ Illustration of a submarine engineer's shopfront by Eric Ravilious, 1938



the butcher, the baker and even the submarine engineer, with their respective shopfronts. Like in the 1970s cartoon Mr Benn, a shopkeeper magically appears and we are transported briefly to another life where displays are dependent on the seasons and where each outlet smells pungently different to the next. But this is also the age of Metroland and the increased

popularity of personal transport, which have ultimately led to the big four supermarket chains dominating the shopping and suburban experience in the UK.

Ultimately, *High Street* invites questions about what a street should be, as a unique place generated by people and their activities, rather than by cars and profits. In this respect, there is

something of the shock of the old about it. **STEVE PARNELL**

+ Ravilious prints for those who can't find a rare original  
 — So long to the good old days of the high street...



## SPECIFIER'S INFORMATION ENQUIRIES ON CARD

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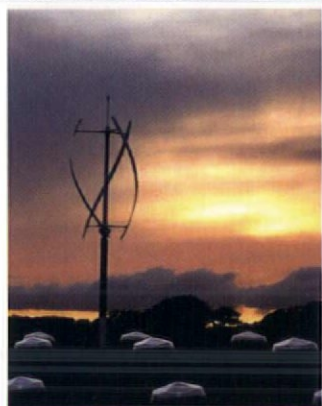
### INALCO ENQUIRY NUMBER 901

The Slimmer series of porcelain tiles by Tile of Spain member Inalco offers architects an innovative way of reacting to trends quickly and effortlessly. With a thickness of 4mm, these tiles are easy to install using a self-adhesive strip that bonds under pressure with the base material. The rectified porcelain tiles are available in a format of 45 x 90cm and can be used on a range of flat surfaces.



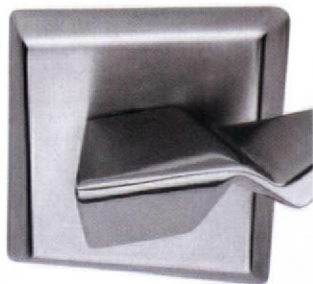
### MONODRAUGHT ENQUIRY NUMBER 903

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.



### 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.



### HÄFELE ENQUIRY NUMBER 907

Häfele UK has launched a range of high-quality fittings for frameless glass shower doors and cubicles. Designed to suit all applications, including hinged, folding and sliding screens, the range also includes suitable seals and support bars. It has been tested to the new European norm, DIN EN 14428, covering over 500 variations of glass shower cubicles, so can be confidently specified.



### CORUS ENQUIRY NUMBER 902

The £42 million Sheffield College project has been specified to a high degree in the robust and ever durable Colorcoat Prisma. Colorcoat Prisma in Zeus and Pegasus were the required specifications made on the exterior walls of the campus building facade. Colorcoat Prisma, with its striking appearance and robust colour retention performance have created a landmark building for the campus.



### DORMA ENQUIRY NUMBER 904

Dorma has supplied 40 of its elegant TS93 door closers to the futuristic dream home of one of Britain's leading industrialists. Swinhay House at Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire is a 60-acre private estate that displays an architecturally futuristic mix of angular, high-tech insulated metal roofing, curving bonded glass and lawned mounds that sweep up towards circular stone walls.



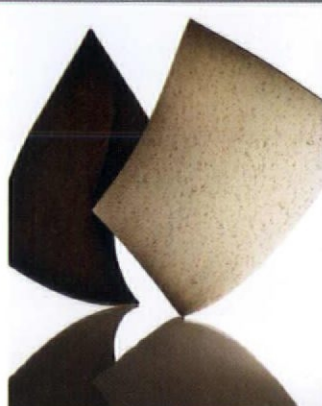
### SAS INTERNATIONAL ENQUIRY NUMBER 906

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.





### #3

## THE COURT

LYNNE COHEN

This large-format work by Canadian photographer Lynne Cohen shows a vacant indoor badminton court. The site is made into a space of expectation and possibility by the promise of nature in the far corner. It could be a temptingly placed window that draws the gaze to the wondrous forest, yet it is a mural, a photo-realistic *mis-en-abyme*.

The claustrophobia of the square chamber of the badminton court,

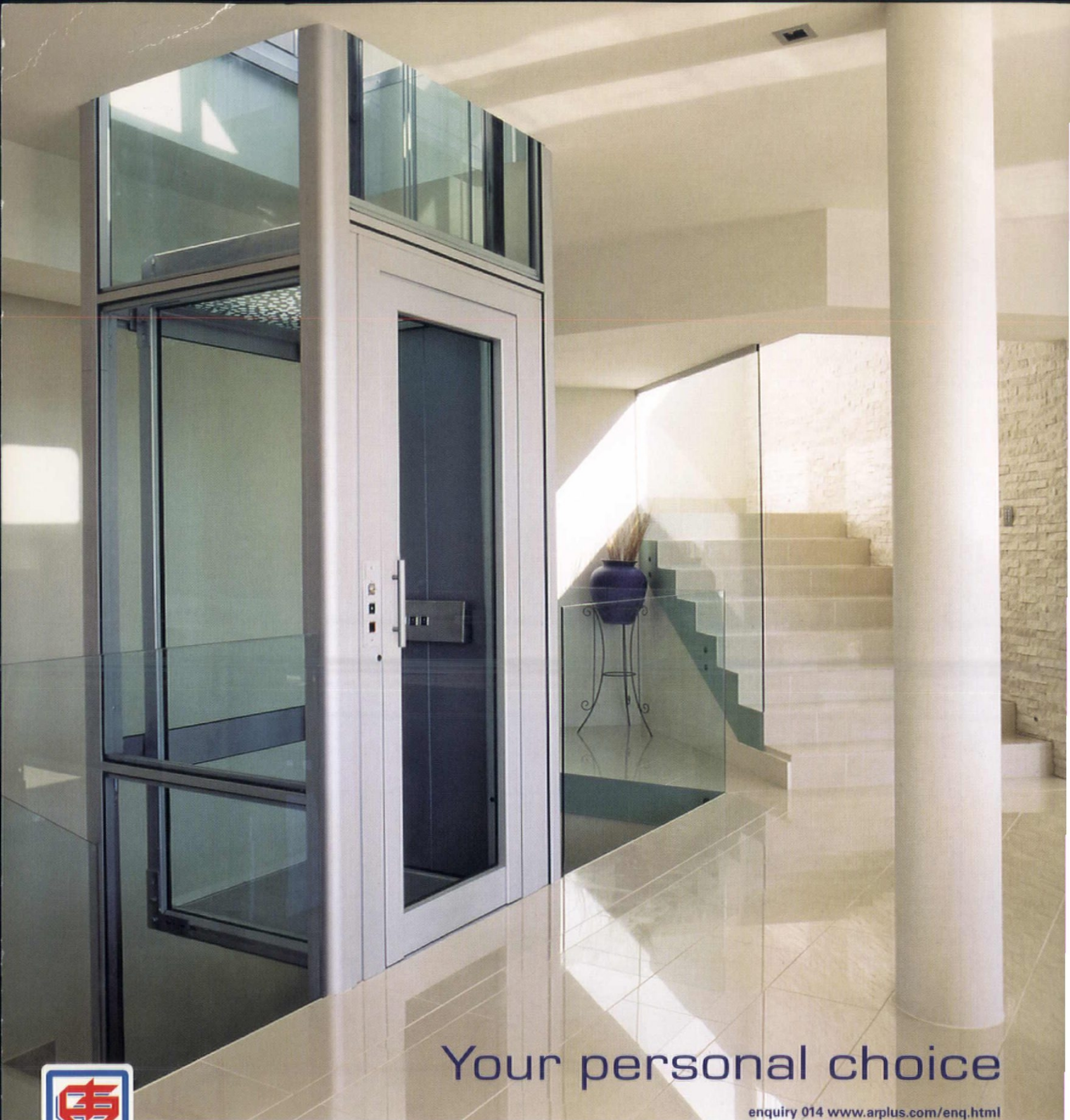
emphasised by the mono-function of the room through precise rules demarcated on the ground, vanishes when one glimpses the heterogeneous laws of ecology manifest in the image of nature, beckoning us towards the open.

**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







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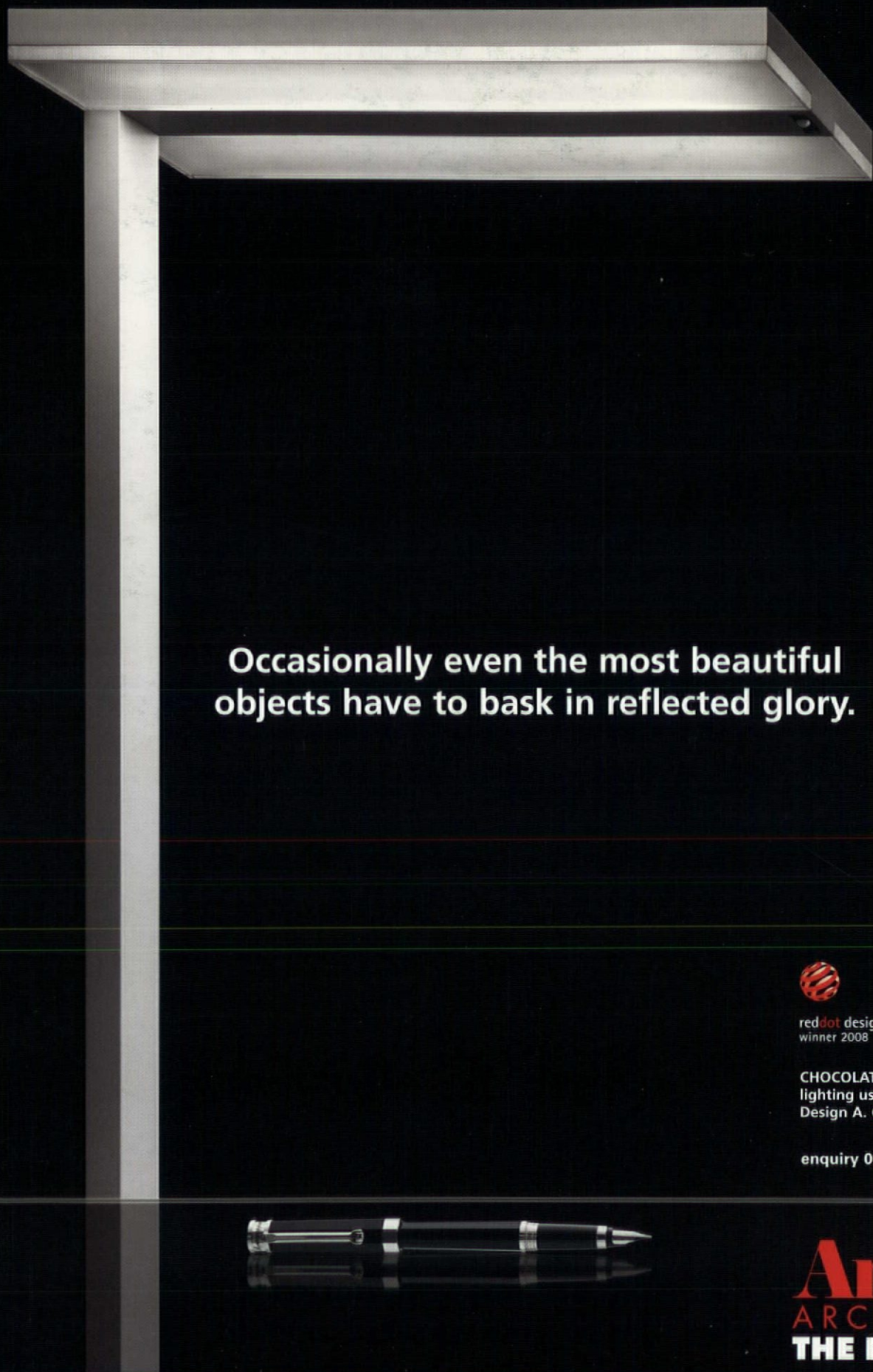
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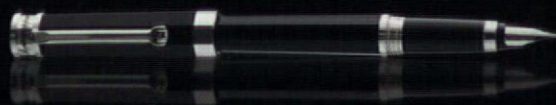
Occasionally even the most beautiful  
objects have to bask in reflected glory.



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