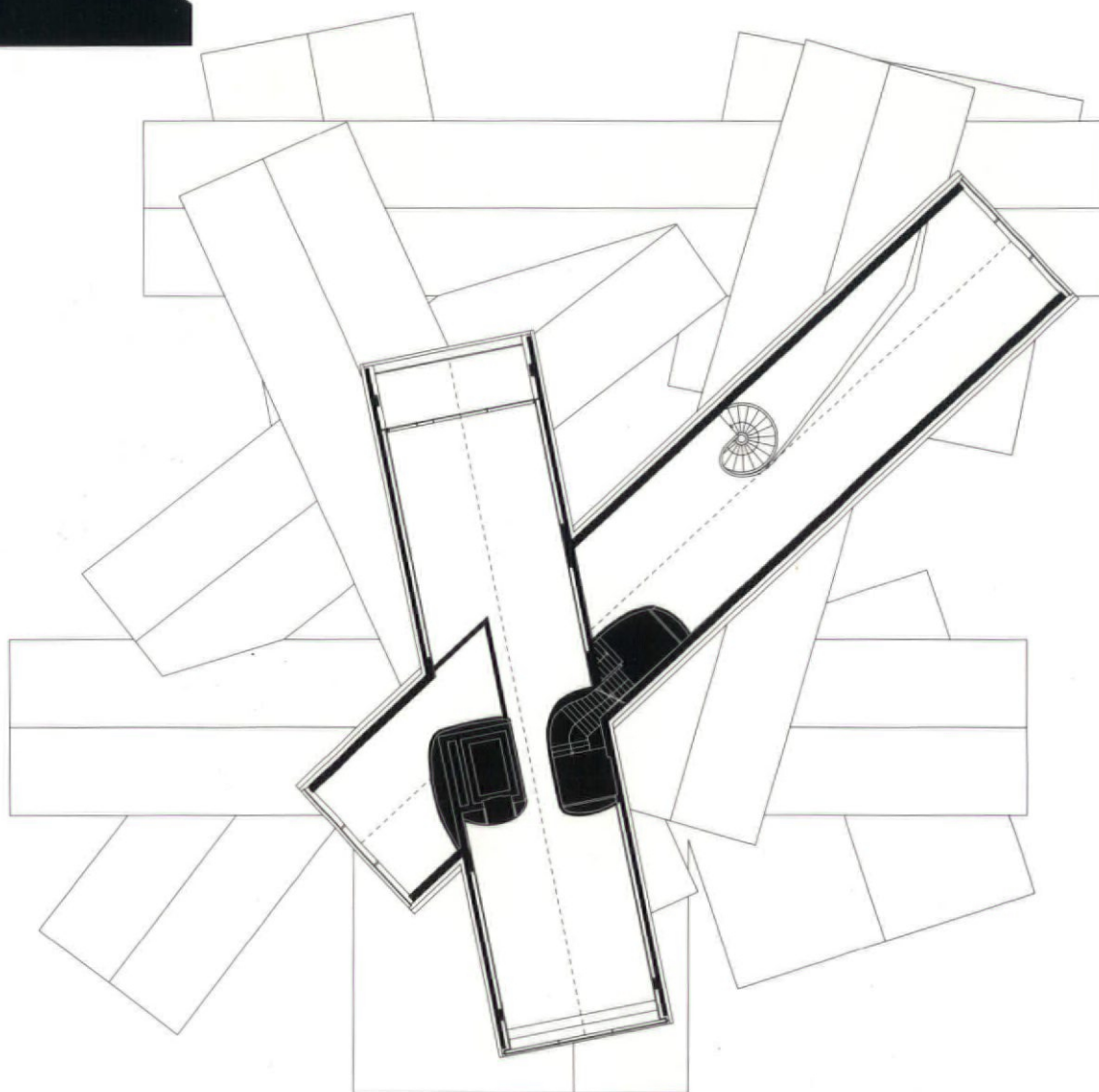


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A glorious mud library in Timbuktu by DHK

CAA Student Competition winners unveiled

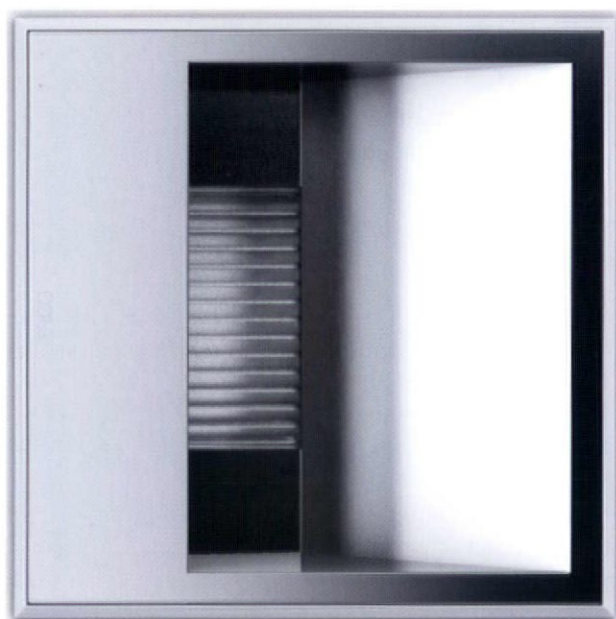
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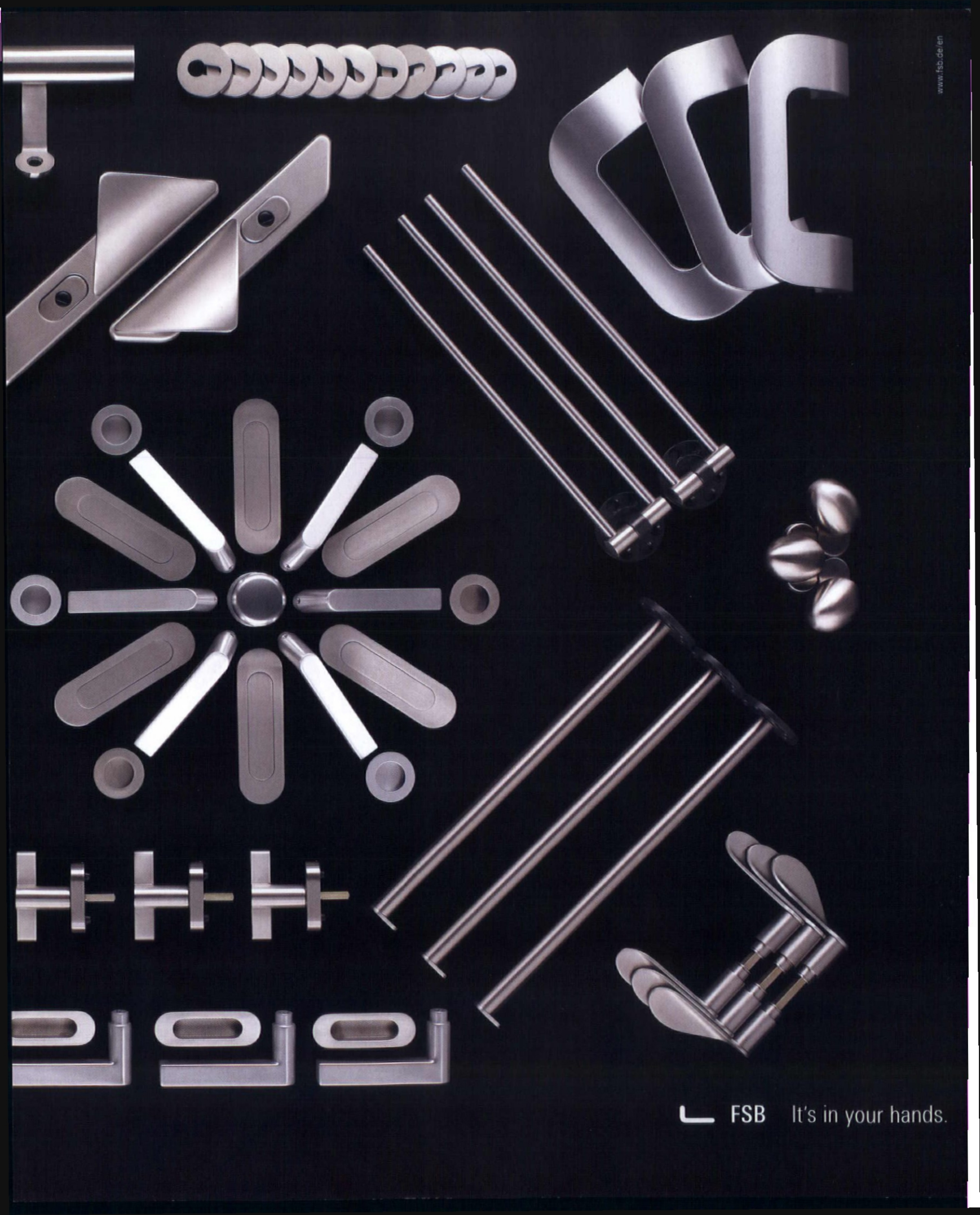
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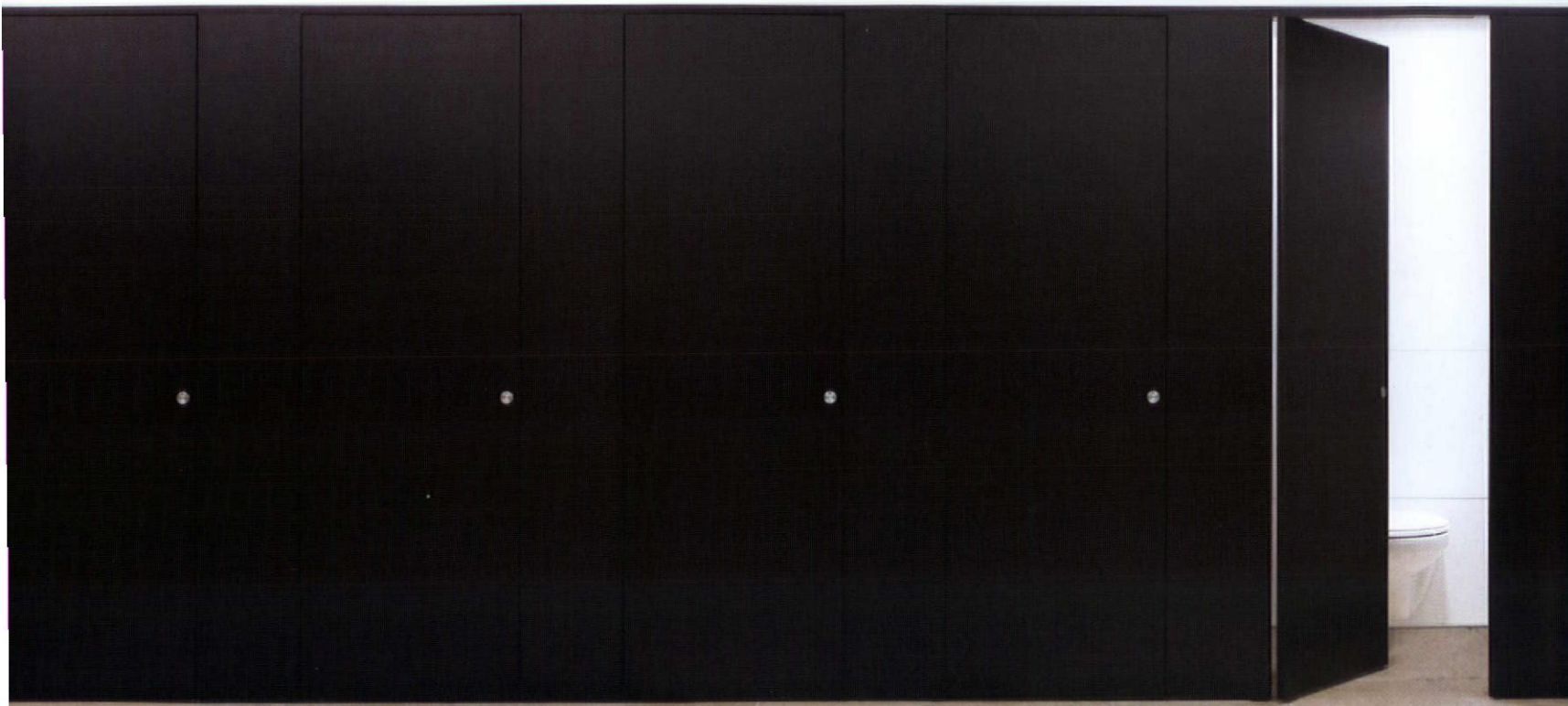


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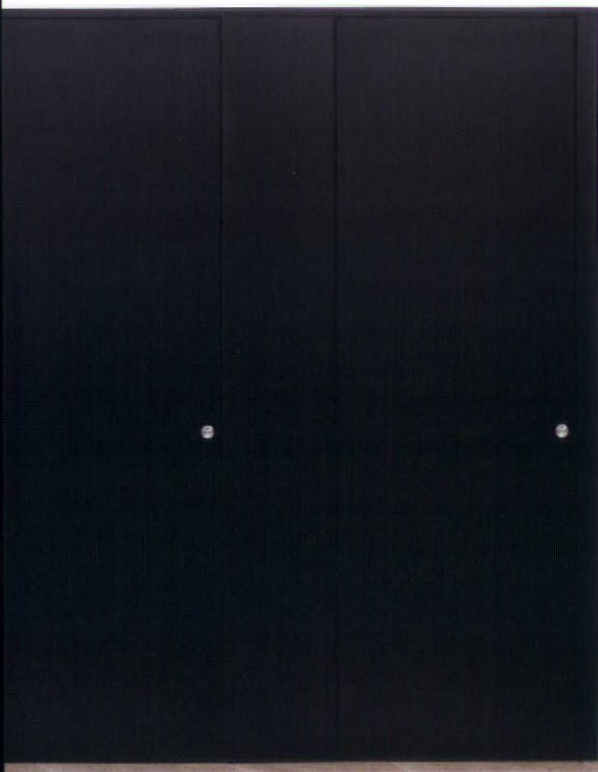
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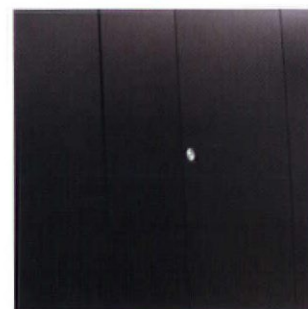
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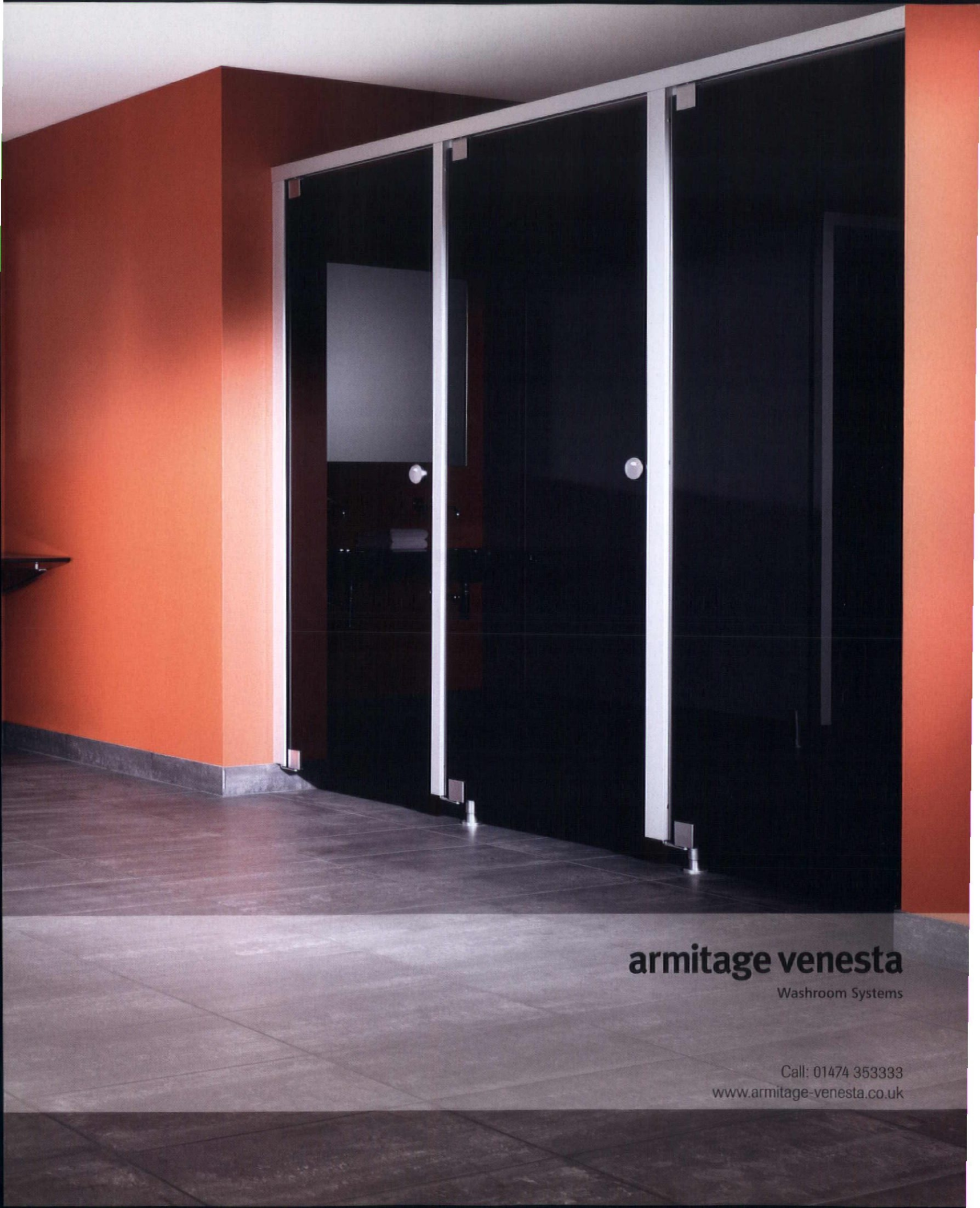
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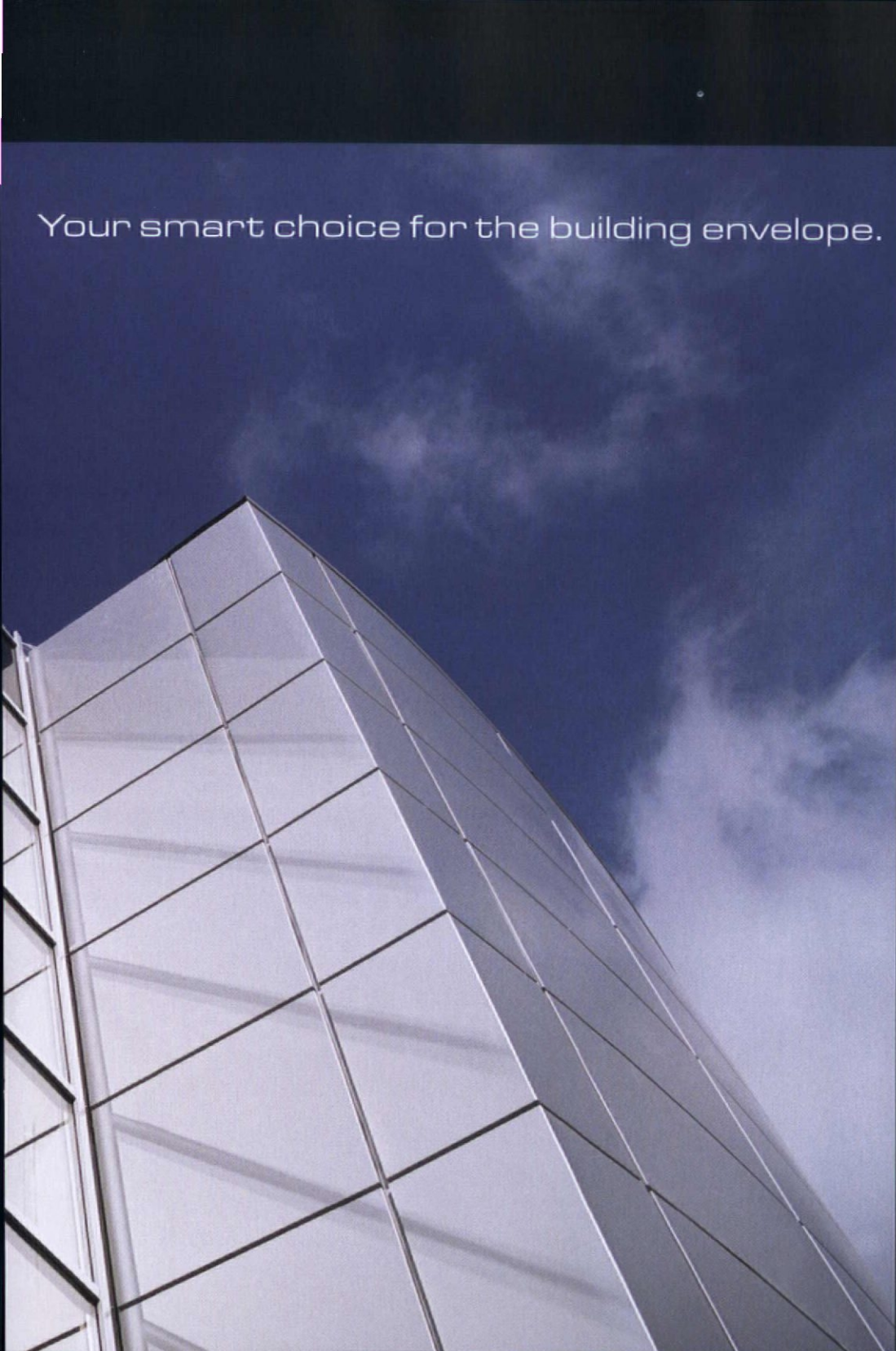




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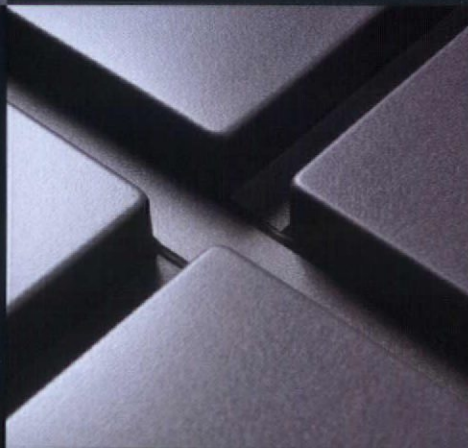
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A £10,000 prize for the design of a one-off house

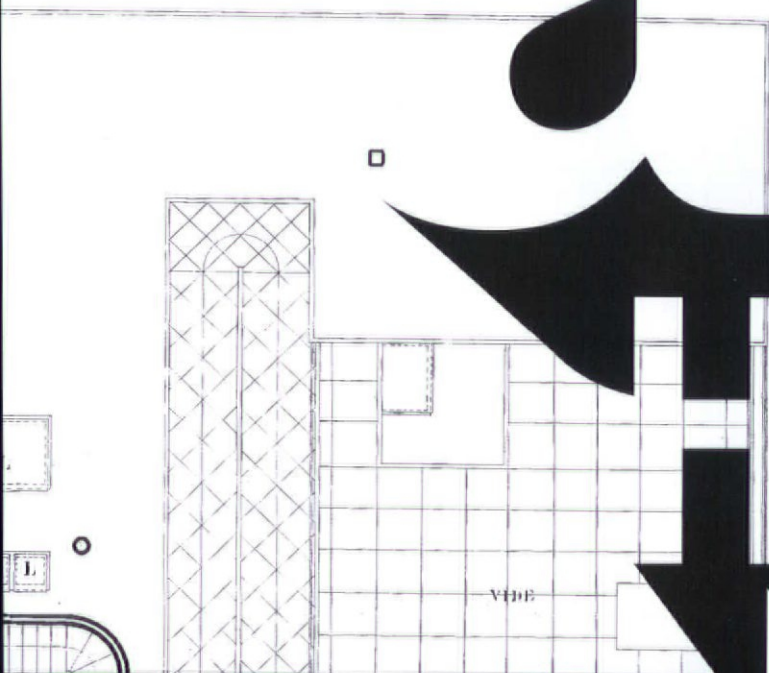
The private house occupies a unique position both in the history of architecture and human imagination. Beyond its core function of shelter, it is an object of fantasy, a source of delight, a talisman and a testing ground. From Corbusier to Koolhaas, the progress of modern architecture can be tracked through a succession of pioneering individual houses. It is the one commission that virtually all architects tackle at some stage in their careers and is still an

important rite of passage for young designers. Regardless of scale, site, programme or budget, the house offers the potential for genuine innovation and it remains critical to the ferment and crystallisation of new architectural ideas.

AR House celebrates this wellspring of creativity with a major new award of £10,000 for the design of the best one-off house. All projects must be built and there is no age limit.

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HOUSE 2010

Entries will be judged by an international jury of Sou Fujimoto (Japan), Alberto Campo Baeza (Spain) and David Chipperfield (UK), chaired by Catherine Slessor, AR editor.

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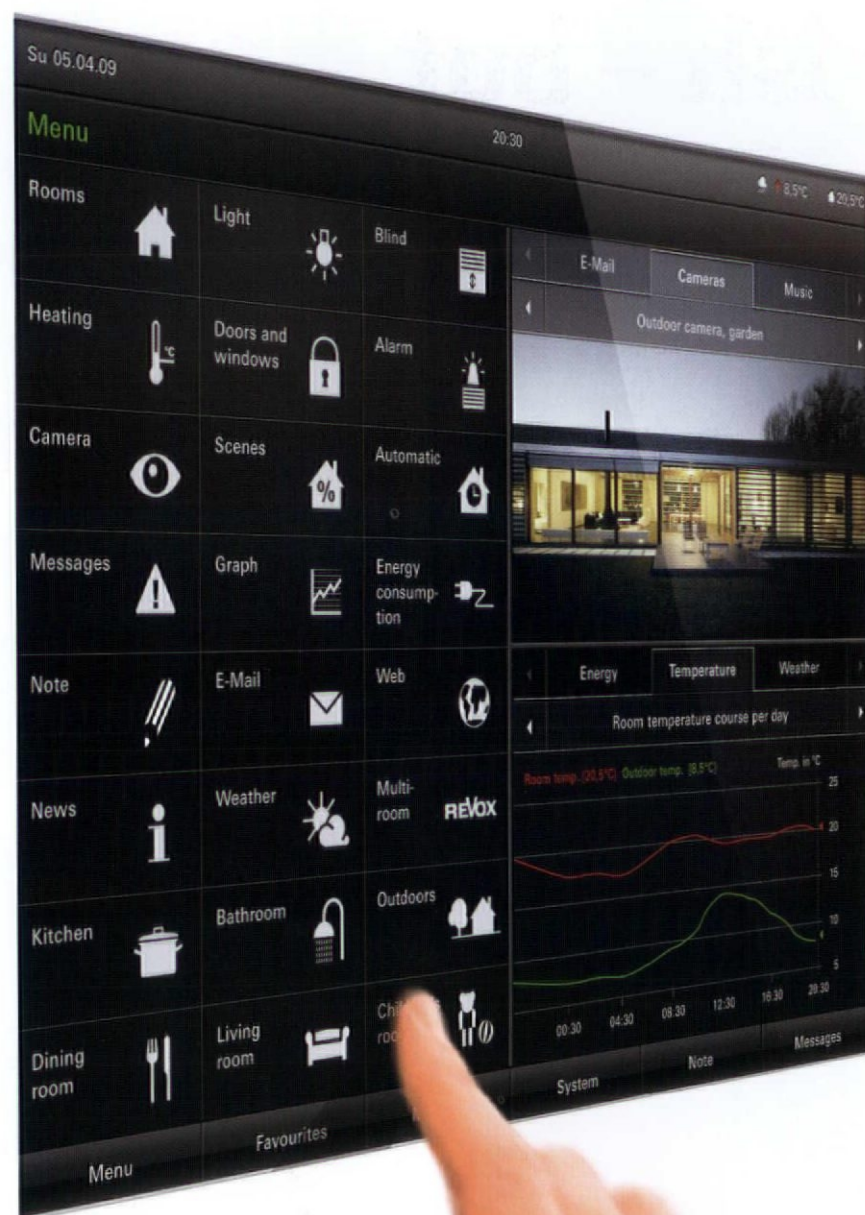
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Illustration: Gira Interface (Interface-Design: schmitz Visuelle Kommunikation)

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Let bold patronage flourish – but every building needn't be a show-stopper

Good architecture cannot flourish without enlightened patronage, which must make Rolf Fehlbaum, chairman of furniture company Vitra, some kind of patronage patron saint, the Medici of Weil am Rhein. Fehlbaum collects architects as others might collect stamps or snow domes. Since the early 1990s, he has been cultivating a posse of superstars to design new facilities on the ever expanding Vitra campus.

Vitra commissions have launched careers. Zaha Hadid's first big break was to design a fire station there (which the firemen apparently hated) and now, in a squaring of the circle, Fehlbaum's near neighbours, Herzog & de Meuron (just down the road in Basel), are the latest architects-du-jour to be added to his collection. Rowan Moore reports on the extraordinary new VitraHaus in this issue (see page 42).

While Fehlbaum's approach is in many respects deeply admirable, giving architects the longed-for chance to experiment (up next are SANAA), the ambience on what is essentially an ordinary suburban business park must rank as a tad surreal, like a band comprising entirely of egotistical and cacophonous lead vocalists. For a resonant and authentic sense of place, you need a boring rhythm section; people (or buildings) content to pump out a dignified backbeat, day in day out, so that others can shine. It's far more difficult to achieve, but enlightened patronage should extend to the ordinary as well.

CATHERINE SLESSOR, EDITOR

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Reporting from Las Vegas, Lucy Bullivant is an architecture curator, author, critic and advisor. She is a correspondent for Domus, The Plan and Volume magazines and is writing Masterplanning Futures

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A longstanding contributor to the AR, Michael Webb is an architectural writer and critic who lives in Los Angeles, in an apartment originally designed by Richard Neutra. He has never worked for Archigram

Correction The subscription card insert in this issue wrongly states that the AR redesign was solely conceived by AR's art director Cecilia Lindgren. The AR wishes to make clear that the redesign was a collaboration between Violetta Boxill of Alexander Boxill and Cecilia Lindgren

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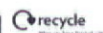
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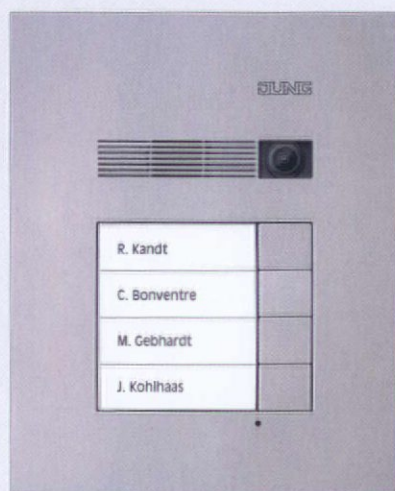
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LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND

SANAA creates a blank canvas for Swiss university learning centre

ROB GREGORY

Visiting the new SANAA-designed Rolex Learning Centre at Swiss university École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) a week before it opened was a curiously hollow experience. Almost entirely unoccupied, this vast boundless interior did have an awe-inspiring serenity. Without the hordes of students it was designed to attract, however, as an expression of its function, the space was rendered almost meaningless. The hollowness here had no echo, as the learning centre occupies a territory between undulating planes of carpet and sound-absorbing plasterboard. As such, we were guided through the white-on-white interiors wearing headsets to hear the tour's narration. Why, some of us thought, had we been invited here before the students had

taken over? Presumably we could return with headsets a week later to experience both building and narrative as part of a much larger crowd? As it was, the journalists obediently followed client and design team up hill and down valley while listening to Japanese practice SANAA's hushed tones.

Conceived as a fully integrated learning environment, providing a seamless network of services, libraries, information gathering, social spaces, places to study, restaurants, cafés and outdoor areas, as described en-route by architect Ryue Nishizawa, 'the concept of the building is to make one very big room, where people and programmes can meet together.' Unfortunately, despite its sculptural beauty (mildly disturbed by health and safety paraphernalia), none of this was



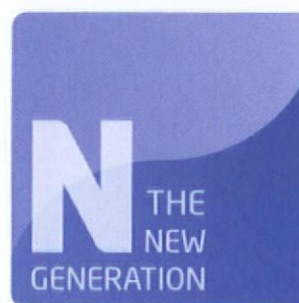
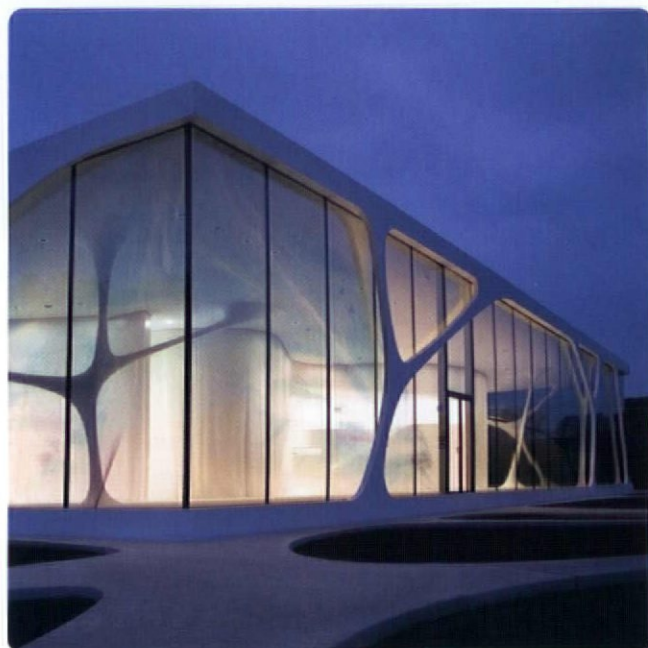
apparent in its empty state. Sensing mild bewilderment, Nishizawa's partner Kazuyo Sejima was quick to state that 'from next Monday, students will use the building and I hope that in this process students will find a good place for themselves. Maybe this will complete the building, [producing] a more final condition.'

Until now the EPFL campus had has no real heart, and as the university's president Patrick Aebischer stated, with over 10,000 students, 'we needed to create a place where they could live, and that was the original idea behind this building.' Hopefully, with the imminent return of students, the building will emphatically rise to that challenge. As seen here, however, it lay silent and stoic, awaiting the arrival of its lifeblood.



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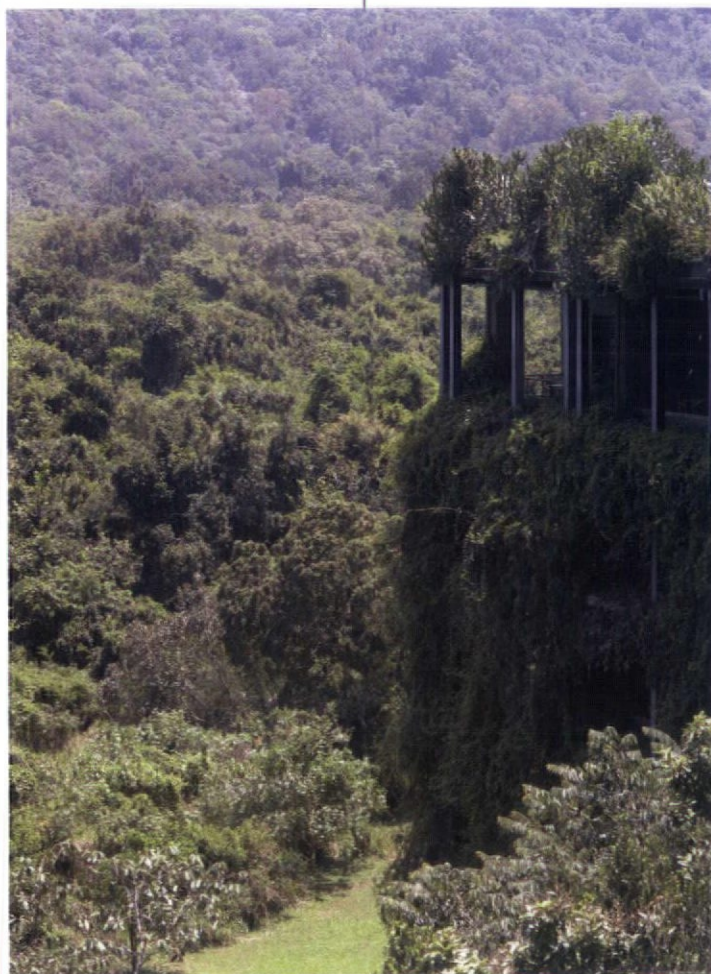
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CAA conference explores notions of sustainability that go beyond box-ticking

CATHERINE SLESSOR

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Above_
Geoffrey Bawa's
Kandalama Hotel
in Sri Lanka,
originally
completed in
the mid 90s, now
greening with age

These days, no convocation on sustainability is complete without Ken Yeang, who popped up to deliver the keynote address at the recent Commonwealth Association of Architects triennial conference in Sri Lanka. Despite having a carbon footprint the size of Kazakhstan, Ken always makes a rousing curtain raiser to such proceedings, breezing through his theories on biointegration and comparing the built environment to a prosthesis grafted on to an organic host (nature). All fascinating stuff, but he couldn't stay for lunch because he was off to Japan.

The conference theme was 'Architecture: Rethinking Sustainability' (predictable enough), but the venue, in Colombo, gave more pause for thought. In Sri Lanka and surrounding Asia, notions of sustainability are not just box-ticking exercises, but crucial to human survival.

Rafiq Azam of Dhaka-based architecture firm Shatotto (featured in the 2007 AR Emerging Architecture Awards) brought things down to earth with a thoughtful discourse on the challenges of building in Bangladesh, 'a land of six seasons' steeped in 'the poetry of the tropics'. Azam's work sensitively mines climate, culture and context, but he is also aware of architecture's responsibilities – 'the power to transform communities and society,' as he described it.

The ghost of Geoffrey Bawa still hovers benignly over the canon of Sri Lankan modernism, and it was momentarily channelled by a Milroy Perera, who used to work with the great man. His account of the building of the Kandalama Hotel (AR December 1995), on a sensitive site near the famous Dambulla cave temple, showed that

making great buildings takes immense reserves of patience and persistence. Bawa had to rebuff opposition from politicians and religious leaders ('the only man who succeeded in uniting Hindus, Buddhists and Christians,' said Perera), but his vision won out in the end. Today the Kandalama is covered in lush greenery, as its architect intended, merging to become part of the landscape.

From Australia, Kerry Clare spoke of architecture that 'locates people in a place rather than sealing them from it'. Her work showed a clear responsiveness to climate, especially the tropical zone of Queensland, through the reinterpretation of vernacular principles. 'The affirmation of local identity and character by understanding textures, rhythms and tectonics relevant to a culture is increasingly important,' she said.

South African architect Llewellyn van Wyk had a different perspective – basically we're all doomed. **Periodic mass extinctions and extreme climate events are an inevitable part of the planet's long existence and if these don't get us, the dying sun eventually will.** 'We have to recontextualise our thinking,' said van Wyk. 'We've lost the capacity to foresee and forestall.' He proposed seven 'canons of sustainability' to enable green buildings to satisfy broader concepts of sustainability, and align them 'more directly with the transformative notion underpinning sustainable development'.

Though the CAA only assembles every three years, it draws together many architects from the developing world, from Africa and Asia, whose voices are not often heard. But on the evidence of this conference, they should be.

RICHARD BRYANT/ARCAID

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Johan Celsing's 'stone in the forest' treads carefully in the Woodland Cemetery

RASMUS WÆRN

www.arkitekt.se



When the ancient habit of burning corpses instead of burying them was struggling for a renaissance a century ago, Swedish enthusiasts (yes, there were such) turned to young and progressive architects to create the buildings for this newly revived ceremony. With Torsten Stubelius, Sigurd Lewerentz devised an exemplary proposal that became the starting point for Lewerentz's and Erik Gunnar Asplund's collaboration on the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm. This masterpiece of spiritual architecture and landscape is to be augmented with a new building, for which a limited invited competition has just been settled.

The problems of dignifying

the technical processes of cremation have not diminished. In fact, they have grown.

The new building is intended to be a small but efficient plant where hundreds of thousands of Stockholmers will melt into air, with a tiny corner for mourners to follow the process. The new rite makes the entire edifice sanctified and, apart from the historically charged setting, this is what makes the task so fascinating.

The notion of what sort of building might stage and dignify these rituals was very open, as the city turned to such different minds as Bjarke Ingels, Tadao Ando, Caruso St John, White Architects and Johan Celsing for an answer. It was Celsing, in

collaboration with landscape architect Müller Illien, who won the day with a modest, almost camouflaged, brick block, described as a 'stone in the forest'. The fallout from the competition for the ill-starred extension of Asplund's City Library (AR January 2010) hung heavily over proceedings. This one must not fail.

The site is on a safe distance from Asplund's and Lewerentz's temples. And even if every other submission proposed more intricate spatial arrangements and most were more sculpturally expressive, Celsing's monolith does have the possibility of being the solid 'stone in the forest' it wants to be. It has the same simple, unaffected spirit as the brick buildings of Erwin Heerich at the Insel Hombroich art campus in Germany.

However, the jury rejected the concept of serene daylight that characterised proposals from Ando, Caruso St John and even Bjarke Ingels. Like his father Peter, Johan Celsing favours strong contrasts in light and shadow. But there are wonderful examples of simple, even brutal, Swedish crematoriums where the daylight soars in thin air. Compared to these, Celsing's proposal has still a bit to go. But if the stone gets its sacred space, the winner will also be a victor.



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LAS VEGAS, USA

The most expensive development in US history tries to redefine junkspace urbanism on the Strip

LUCY BULLIVANT

Las Vegas is universally dismissed as non-architectural or anti-urban. At night, neon signs and electronic billboards orientate the car driver and conveniently overshadow the city's junkspace context of car parks. They signal Vegas' immersive gambling enclave hugging the four-mile Strip yet, while old signs are regularly taken to the neon graveyard in the Nevada desert, little contemporary architecture has replaced them. The Strip's

relative resurgence at the hands of entrepreneur Steve Wynn reached its height with the 1998 Bellagio hotel and casino, now owned by gambling giant MGM Mirage. With its eight-acre lake and artsy dancing fountains, it was merely another thematic step from Vegas' mid-century modernism of the Rat Pack era.

Now off the Strip, and attached to Bellagio by a three-stop tramline, is CityCenter, where starchitecture is a key part of the development gamble.

Below: CityCenter, an amalgamation of hotels, casinos, residences and public spaces, opened this year

It took MGM Mirage five years to build and cost a cool \$8.5 billion. Replacing the immaterial graphic skyline with a veritable architectural zoo, this compact 'city within a city' transforms 27 hectares etched out of land adjoining the Strip on which a third-rate hotel and multi-storey car park once stood.

When Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown wrote *Learning from Las Vegas* in 1972, examining the cultural context of the city as a generator of form, they critiqued mindless Strip development and reinvented the casino as a quasi-public space that spills out and engages the street in an update of the Roman piazza.

In a city where context and use has been so out of tune with reality, and what seems to be reality is not, MGM Mirage now claims to have shifted the Vegas paradigm.

The ramped entry street indeed leads you to a piazza in front of Pelli Clarke Pelli's hefty crystalline Aria Resort. —



COURTESY OF MGM MIRAGE

At the hub of one of three blocks on the Gensler-designed masterplan, building and piazza are bonded by a huge curving waterwall. Everything radiates from here and, instead of a spilled-out casino, there is the first of many art installations on the site. The overhead monorail shuttles visitors between 'historic' Vegas (neighbours Monte Carlo and Bellagio) and new Vegas (Studio Daniel Libeskind's shopping centre, Crystals). Negotiating Aria's labyrinth of foyer casino to find the elevators to the rooms is a bore. Up front, the building lamely accommodates the fleeing space that pays its way, and Aria suffers as a result.

The pharaonic undertaking of CityCenter engaged seven architects, 60 interior designers and over 250 design consultants in total, in a project which took only five years to build from inception in 2005, picking up a LEED Gold certification for sustainability. It is too soon to know whether

CityCenter is economically sustainable, but its tactics are a unity of art and architecture, mixed programme (70 per cent non-gaming allocation, for dining, hotels, spas and so on) and the semblance of civic identity across the pedestrian-friendly district. **There may be high-end hotels – two with retail apartments – but no housing for the workers of this place of pleasure, or food shops, as occupants either eat out or order in.**

At CityCenter's gateway is KPF's Mandarin Oriental, an elegantly simple and tactile building with a facade of interlocking motifs of vertical stainless steel panels and fritted glass. It bears a standard tall atrium, but the upper-floor podium, complete with ballroom and huge window overlooking the Strip, feels genuinely fresh – for Vegas.

With a pocket park lying between Aria and Crystals, punctuated by a Henry Moore sculpture, a snatch of the

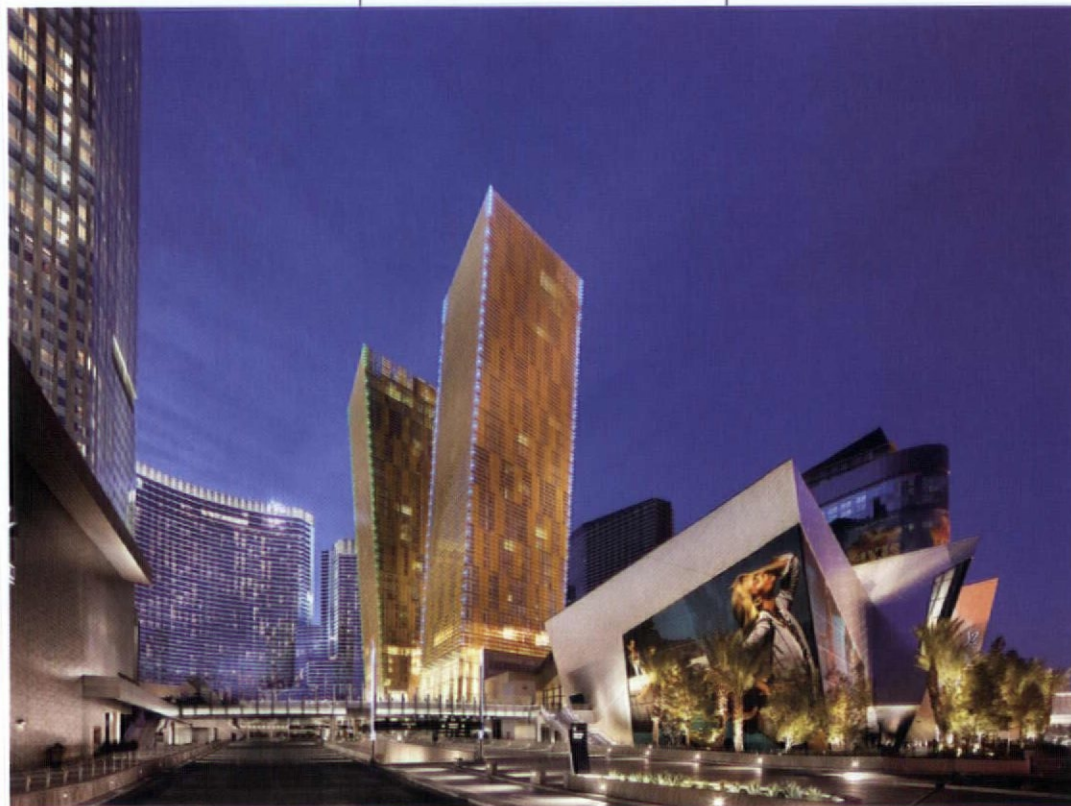
Below_ Seven architecture practices worked on the CityCenter project, including Rafael Viñoly, Foster + Partners and KPF. Shown below is Daniel Libeskind's Crystals shopping centre (right)

European post-war city and way-finding signage on the pedestrian space, the idea was that visitors could navigate buildings outdoors. Yet the quality of the seamless falls into being rather airport-like at Aria's rear conference centre, and you half expect to find an outdoor smoking room there.

Crystals, with its multi-faceted glass canopy that feels like a reworked New York Guggenheim, is punctuated by David Rockwell's three-storey tree house nudging the oculus in the roof. It forms a fraternal union on the street with Murphy/Jahn's Veer Towers, a pair of 37-storey residential blocks leaning 5° from centre and sporting yellow fritting and sun-shading fins.

Tucked away on the north-west corner, Rafael Viñoly's Vdara hotel and spa plays a symbolic card, a low-key crescent form of patterned glass amply kitted out with art (a Frank Stella painting in reception lends gravitas) and the Silk Road restaurant (a smouldering gold bazaar). Less evident at this point is Foster + Partners' Harmon boutique hotel. Opening in November, this smart blue beacon will be only half the original intended height, due to a construction error that curtailed its ambition.

Learning from Las Vegas relied too much on formal analysis. Looking at CityCenter, it would appear Vegas has had a pro-architecture shot in the arm in the form of a grown-up urban enclave replete with formal sophistication, especially of the crystalline variety. Moreover, for a growing city, the largest private development in US history has raised desires for more contestation of endless sprawl and standardised suburbia. It may be for real, but is it enough?





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LONDON, UK

The beauty of London Fashion Week lies in more than just the clothes

CRYSTAL BENNES

While the Autumn/Winter 2010 shows came to a close with the end of Paris Fashion Week on 10 March, people in the UK have not yet forgotten London Fashion Week (LFW). The clothes have yet to transit from catwalk to consumer, but fashion insiders are still talking about what they saw at LFW.

An oft-heard term this season was 'architectural'. Generally, it means a piece that is minimal, structured and geometric, like a trapezoid-shaped dress. And, though these details rarely appear in style reviews, editors and journalists are still talking about the real architectural stars of the season: the runway show venues.

Haute couture shows in Paris have a tradition of taking advantage of beautiful venues: Karl Lagerfeld is famous for unveiling Chanel collections in the spectacular art nouveau Grand Palais. But quirky, young

and hip LFW has never appeared interested in making the most of the grander side of London's built environment – or at least, not until this season.

The main venue for LFW 2010, sponsored by the British Fashion Council (BFC), has been at Somerset House – a nice change from its former home at the rather cumbersome Natural History Museum. The main BFC tent is erected in the courtyard of Somerset House and buzzes with fashionistas. William Chambers' magnificent neoclassical gem, situated just off the Strand, is a sensational venue for LFW: it is central and the snug courtyard provides a sense of enclosure, ideal for an industry that likes to feel exclusive, but also for keeping most of LFW in one place.

There are designers who opted to show outside the official venue. Early last year, Burberry moved into new headquarters at Horseferry House in Westminster, an old government office building redesigned by Gensler. The building is just around the corner from the Chelsea College of Art and Design's Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground (redesigned by landscape architect Planet Earth in 2007), where Burberry staged its last two catwalk shows.

This year also included three of London's more interesting – and often publicly off-limits – architectural landmarks. English

designer Vivienne Westwood showed in the Great Hall of the 1870s Royal Courts of Justice, which was transformed into a gothic catwalk lit with giant candelabras. I heard more people comment on the general splendour of the venue than on the design of the clothes.

The stunning art deco headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England, the Freemasons' Hall (designed by architects HV Ashley and Winton Newman and opened in 1933) was also used as the setting for a number of designers. One particularly memorable show, by Oman-born BodyAMR, was held upstairs in the banqueting hall, which is divided into two sections by an intricately carved wrought-iron three-arched gate, through which the models strutted to reach the press pack.

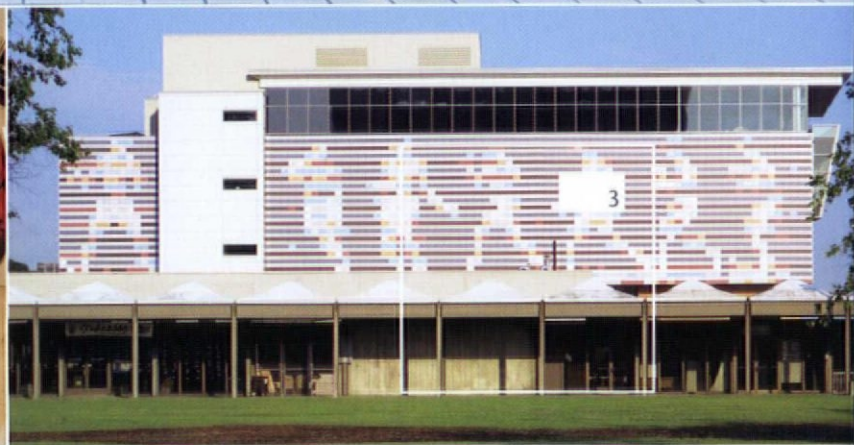
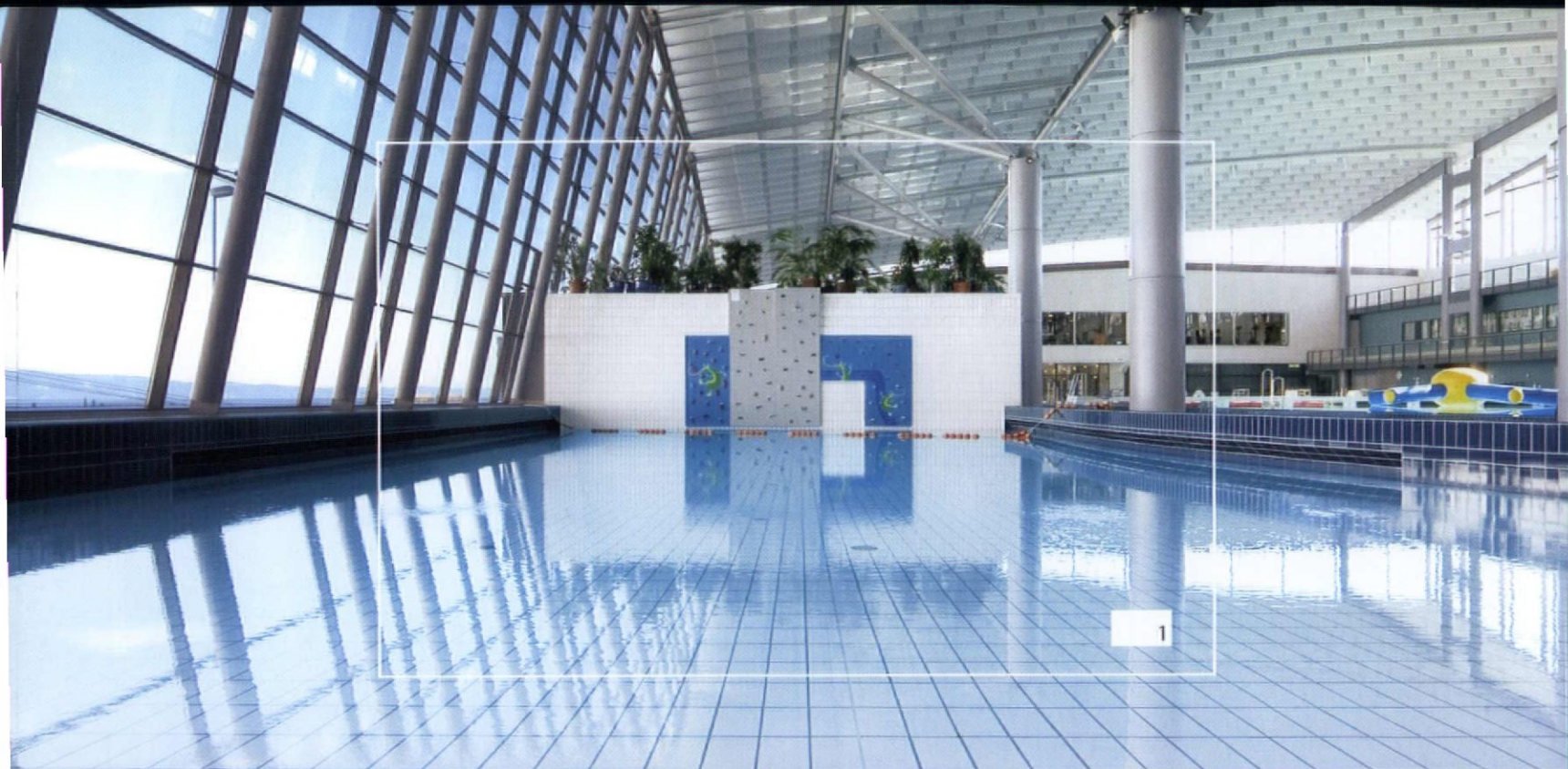
Perhaps LFW's most stunning and original venue was that which hosted Erdem Moralioglu's show. Set in Charles Holden's 1930s Senate House at the University of London, models gingerly made their way down the marble staircase in the splendid art deco Great Hall.

Why do designers seek out these venues if such details never make it into the show reports? For the same reason the general public isn't allowed to attend them: exclusivity. In fashion, it's never about the clothes alone. For those present, the venue and the clothes become impossible to dissociate. The hundred or so attendees will refine then broadcast their perception of the designer, the clothes and the show to the rest of the world. Shoppers will head out to purchase an Erdem dress because a senior fashion editor thought the whole production was one gloriously entertaining spectacle, enhanced by some of London's most notable buildings.

Below: Erdem Moralioglu's catwalk show was staged in the stunning art deco Great Hall of Senate House, Bloomsbury



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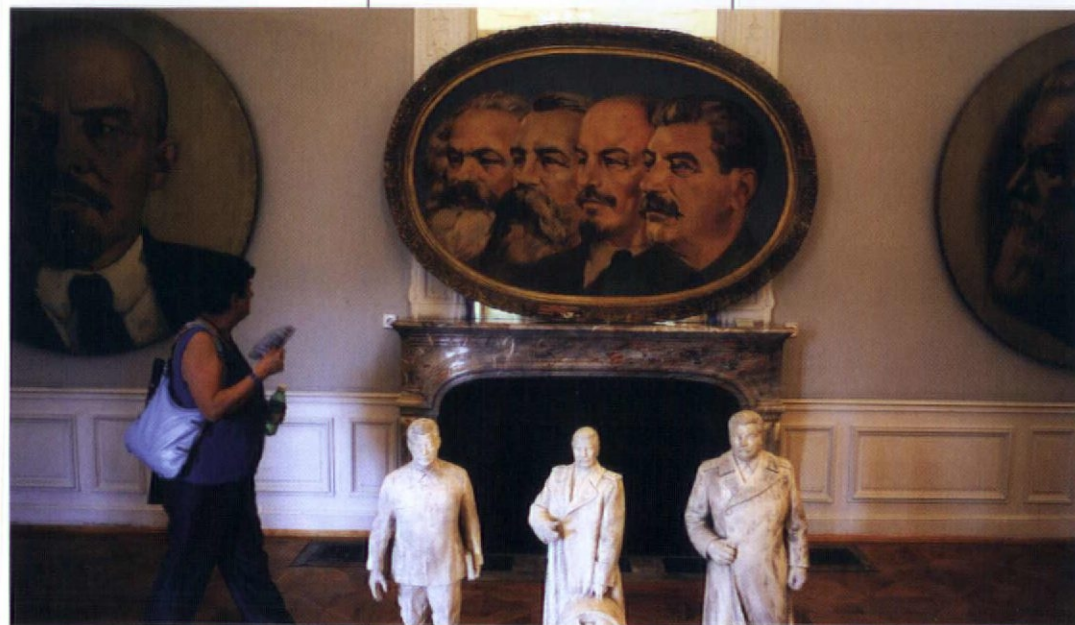


SOFIA, BULGARIA

Magazine masterminds efforts to rescue art museums from stagnation

TIMOTHY BRITTAIN-CATLIN

www.abitare.bg/en/talks



Above: A visitor to the Totalitarian Art exhibition held last year at the National Gallery of Art in Sofia

In a situation that's surely unique for a European capital city, Bulgaria's Sofia has no purpose-built art museums and no state gallery for contemporary art. Its national collections have fallen into stagnation, and corruption among directors and curators is endemic, with works sold off for personal gain. The National Art Gallery and the National Gallery for Foreign Art have between them made just two purchases in the last 15 years; the National Art Gallery is housed in a decrepit former royal residence and has nothing in the way of modern facilities, either for the display of its pictures or for its visitors. It is some tribute to the recently established Bulgarian offshoot of Milan-based design magazine *Abitare* that it has managed to

get a discussion going. And there is plenty to talk about.

The current anxiety is that the Bulgarian ministry of culture has suddenly woken up and begun to act in a high-handed manner without reasonable consultation. In January, it published a draft 'concept' for the reorganisation and rehousing of the national collections without addressing any of the central questions behind contemporary museums. What should curatorial policy be? What type of building suits a modern exhibition space? How should the museums and galleries be administered and funded? What is the role of the private collector?

One concern is that a museum of contemporary art, a relatively prestigious project, is about to be established in a

converted former arsenal in Sofia. To make use of a recent European Union grant, this will be done cheaply, at great speed, and without an architectural competition, which does not bode well for the outcome. A further eyebrow-raising proposal is the foundation of a museum for totalitarian art – including the so-called 'red collections' from the former Museum of Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship – near the offices of the national traffic police.

In February, *Abitare Bulgaria* staged a well-attended international conference called 'Do we need museums?' which invited curators and architects to suggest answers to the questions that the ministry of culture will eventually have to tackle. Speakers included architect Jean Nouvel, Wu Wenyi of Urbanus (designer of the Dafen Art Museum in Shenzhen, China) and various curators and artists. One speaker likened the ministry's high-handed approach to the attitude of Lyudmila Zhivkova, the late daughter of Bulgaria's former Communist ruler Todor Zhivkov, who apparently determined cultural policy in person in her role as president of Bulgaria's Committee for Art and Culture from 1975 to 1981. Peter Torniov, editor of *Abitare Bulgaria*, said that in his country 'it is the architects who are the radicals among the creative artists'. Let's hope they get Sofia the museums it deserves.



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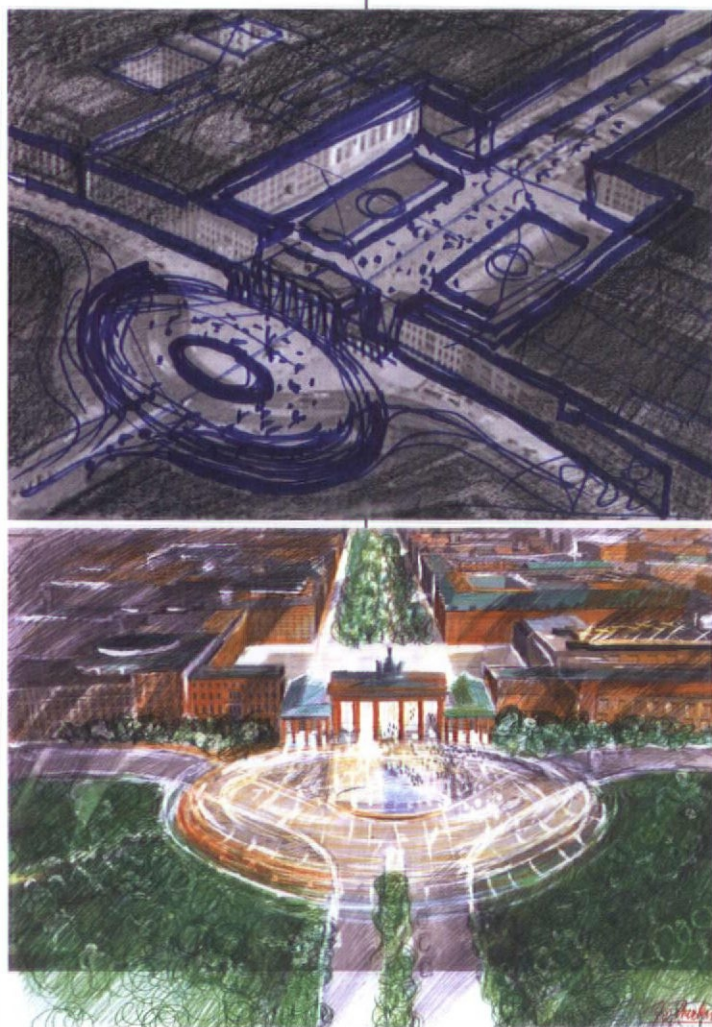


BERLIN, GERMANY

In protest at municipal apathy, Zvi Hecker plans a new public platz for Berlin

LAYLA DAWSON

www.aedes-arc.de



Above_ Architect Zvi Hecker's proposals for Reunification Platz – an open, democratic public space in Berlin

Who really builds the city? Despite being the capital of a reunified Germany, Berlin is probably the country's poorest metropolis. Reduced tax returns and increasing unemployment in a time of international financial crisis make politicians and planners easy prey for investors' demands. Big architectural projects for a Potemkin city palace or development of the former Tempelhof Airport remain airy visions of the future, while many built projects are empty. There is nothing so galling for city planners as having nothing to plan.

To fill the creative void, new public spaces appear a cheaper option, as well as a practical way of stringing together the disparate projects that have sprung up since 1989. Last year, Berlin held an open ideas competition for the area to the west of Brandenburg Gate. But, overwhelmed by 600 submissions, the city later cancelled the competition without a result.

In protest, Zvi Hecker, an Israeli architect based in Berlin and Amsterdam, has publicised his idea for an open, democratic public platz, which he presents as a critique on the current Berlin situation. 'New monuments are not needed, and this is the best place for a people's square, between east

and west, dense city structures and the Tiergarten park. Why not call it Reunification Platz?' he suggests.

To the east of Brandenburg Gate is Pariser Platz, which, despite its uninspiring architecture, is at least a reception area leading into the Unter den Linden boulevard. Tourists wandering through the gate from Pariser Platz to the west look round in bewilderment when confronted by a racetrack highway without orientation. This former militarised western zone has never been truly won back by the people. Here, in 1987, US president George Bush stood demanding that the Soviets pull down the wall. In the intervening decades the area has been patriarchally managed as a beer and circus venue. In between such events there is no protected public space in which to sit, read, talk, or walk a dachshund.

Hecker offers three options, all centred around an oval, hard-landscaped space with seating and a central water feature, in the style of early 20th-century Berlin. The first is a complete elimination of the traffic; the second an oval space around which traffic to the Reichstag, Tiergarten and Potsdamer Platz is diverted; the third a shared space for both public and traffic. The second option seems most viable, making a pedestrian connection between Pariser Platz and Hecker's Reunification Platz by way of the Brandenburg Gate.

Combining symbolism, functionality and a reasonable budget for implementation, it will be hard for the Berlin Senate's director of building, Regula Lüscher, to ignore this scheme, which is on show at the city's Aedes am Pfefferberg Gallery until 25 April.

LONDON, UK

The Architectural Review launches AR House, a major new award of £10,000 for the design of the best one-off house

CATHERINE SLESSOR

www.arhouse.co.uk



The AR is launching a new award for the best one-off house. In the history of architecture, the private house occupies a unique position. Beyond its core function of shelter, it is an object of fantasy, a source of delight, a talisman and a testing ground. Everyone dreams of having a home and the allure of the house continues to grow, fuelled by magazines and television programmes dedicated to celebrating lifestyle and location.

But there is a more serious aspect to all this. Beyond the froth of lifestyle, when an enlightened client meets the right architect the repercussions can be truly historic. Where would modern architecture be without the Villa Savoye or the Tugendhat, Schminke and Farnsworth Houses? All were calls to arms on a long, hard road of experiment and discovery that not only changed the notion of the modern house, but also had a much wider cultural resonance. From Corbusier to Koolhaas, the progress of modern architecture can be tracked through a succession of pioneering individual houses. Regardless of scale, site, programme or budget, the house offers the potential for genuine innovation.

In the 1920s and '30s, AR editors published a succession of new English houses in the now seminal Modern House issues. Examining how modernism might deliver an optimistic and healthy new way of living, these issues charted modernism's ascent in the English shires and showed how a new architectural movement was being tested and refined through the medium of the private house. Today's houses are infinitely diverse, from the ingenious

Japanese manipulations of miniscule urban spaces to the trophy houses of California and Europe, but among this ferment there are still periodic pioneers. AR House aims to seek them out.

The rationale for this new award came from our existing Emerging Architecture Awards programme. The house is by far the most common building type submitted, so that set us thinking about how to acknowledge and celebrate this wellspring of creativity.

It's the one commission that virtually all architects tackle at some stage in their careers and is still an important rite of passage for young designers, many of whom get their first break with a commission to design a house for family members or friends. It is also a chance for more established architects to cut loose and showboat.

So, AR House will have no age limit and a generous prize fund of £10,000 for the winner. The closing date for submissions is 24 May. Entries will be judged by a distinguished international jury of Sou Fujimoto from Japan, Alberto Campo Baeza from Spain and David Chipperfield from the UK. All are accomplished designers of contemporary houses. As with Emerging Architecture, only built projects will be eligible and winning and commended schemes will be published in a special issue of the AR in August. There are also plans for an exhibition of winning entries.

From this inaugural year, we hope AR House will grow to become the most exciting and prestigious global award of its kind for a single building type. And that it will write the next chapter in the history of the modern house.

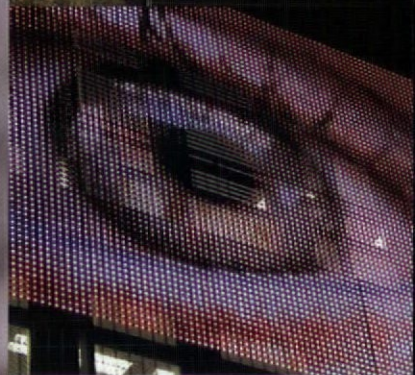


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DIE DRAHTWEBER

BUILDINGS

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JOVANOVICH HOUSE

LOCATION LOS ANGELES, USA

ARCHITECT LORCAN O'HERLIHY
ARCHITECTS

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IL FORTE DI FORTEZZA

LOCATION FORTEZZA, ITALY

ARCHITECT MARKUS SCHERER,
WALTER DIETL

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VITRAHAUS

LOCATION WEIL AM RHEIN,
GERMANY

ARCHITECT HERZOG &
DE MEURON

Herzog & de Meuron is the latest in a line of high-profile practices to have built on furniture manufacturer Vitra's campus. This instalment is a witty and whimsical take on the basic house shape.

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AZAHAR GROUP
HEADQUARTERS

LOCATION CASTELLÓN, SPAIN

ARCHITECT OFFICE OF
ARCHITECTURE IN BARCELONA

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AHMED BABA CENTRE

LOCATION TIMBUKTU, MALI

ARCHITECT DHK ARCHITECTS,
TWO THINK ARCHITECTURE

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NEZU MUSEUM

LOCATION TOKYO, JAPAN

ARCHITECT KENGO KUMA
& ASSOCIATES

In an elegant twist on vernacular building types, Japanese architect Kengo Kuma creates 'a huge roof' for this museum housing pre-modern Asian art.

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VITRAHAUS

LOCATION

WEIL AM RHEIN, GERMANY

ARCHITECT

HERZOG & DE MEURON

WRITER

ROWAN MOORE

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROLAND HALBE



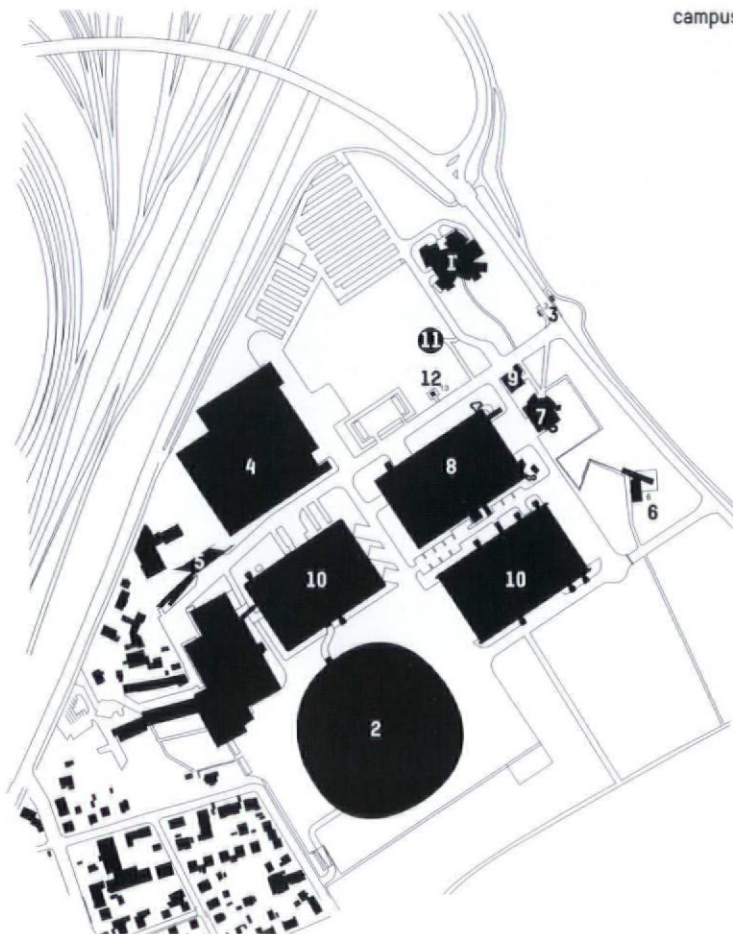


THE BARS ARE SEEMINGLY
PILED UP AT RANDOM, CUTTING
INTO EACH OTHER AND FUSING
AT THEIR JUNCTIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 VitraHaus,
Herzog & de
Meuron, 2010 | 8 factory building,
Frank Gehry, 1989 |
| 2 factory building,
SANAA, 2010 | 9 gate, Frank
Gehry, 1989 |
| 3 bus stop, Jasper
Morrison, 2006 | 10 factory building,
Nicholas
Grimshaw, 1981/1987 |
| 4 factory building,
Álvaro Siza, 1994 | 11 dome,
Buckminster
Fuller, 1978/2000 |
| 5 Fire Station,
Zaha Hadid, 1993 | 12 petrol station,
Jean Prouvé, 1953/2003 |
| 6 conference
pavilion, Tadao
Ando, 1993 | |
| 7 Vitra Design
Museum, Frank | |



campus



Previous page_ The 'enigmatic thicket' of the VitraHaus, an agglomeration of loosely and precipitously stacked bars, is the latest addition to a campus already bursting with architectural experiment

Left_ Like a pile of horizontal periscopes, the building peers inquiringly over the winter landscape
Below_ The glazed ends of the house-shaped tubes offer glimpses into the building's interior life



The great American mid-century designers – Charles and Ray Eames, especially, and George Nelson – were distinguished by two things. One was an appetite for the techniques of modern industry. The other was playfulness, a child-like delight in shapes, patterns and images. The simplest way to describe Herzog & de Meuron's VitraHaus is that it takes this playfulness and does something quite serious with it.

Vitra is a furniture company whose modern prosperity is based on its ownership of the European and Middle Eastern rights to the Eameses' designs. On the strength of this prosperity Vitra has assembled two collections, one of classic pieces of furniture, the other of buildings from the 1980s onwards, designed by Nicholas Grimshaw, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Álvaro Siza, Tadao Ando and (soon) SANAA. These have been built on Vitra's campus in Weil am Rhein, under the leadership of chief executive Rolf Fehlbaum, to serve the company's activities. There are storage, production and administration buildings, as well as a museum for design exhibitions. Fehlbaum didn't just want to sell furniture, he wanted to contribute to the culture of contemporary design.

Weil am Rhein, although technically in Germany, occupies a tri-national territory close to both the French and Swiss borders, and functions almost as a suburb of Basel. Basel is the base of Herzog & de Meuron, the kind of internationally celebrated practice that Vitra liked to attract to its site. Yet until recently, Fehlbaum looked everywhere but locally for his architects. For decades Vitra and Herzog & de Meuron, a few kilometres apart, pumped ideas and images into the world of design, side by side but separately.

VitraHaus is the long-delayed consummation of the union of these neighbours. Open to the public, it is, like the Gehry-designed Vitra Design Museum (AR December 1994), placed outside the perimeter fence of the industrial complex. Its

function is to be a showroom with an added hint of museum: it invites people to enjoy Vitra's current products alongside impressive specimens by Eames, Nelson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Isamu Noguchi and others, obtained from the collection that used to reside in the museum, which will now be dedicated to temporary exhibitions.

The role of the VitraHaus is to seduce, entice, charm and publicise more than directly sell, although a system of screens allows you to send information about objects to your personal email, together with details on how to buy them. You can also, at the end of the experience, buy smaller objects on site. At the same time the building has to attract attention for Vitra, both of passing traffic on the large roads around this slightly nondescript district, and within the global sphere of images. The Gehry museum already does a reasonable job of attracting attention, but from Vitra's point of view there was no harm in doing something new.

Herzog & de Meuron's design starts with two child-like themes, the house-shape of an oblong with a triangular top, and the precarious stacking of building bricks. These themes are then played out with an oscillation of figurative and abstract: few images could be more literal than the house shape, but the execution here is plain and reduced.

The shape is extruded into long bars or tubes, glazed at the end and treated near identically on all five other planes, in dark concrete. The bars are piled up seemingly at random, cutting into each other and fusing at their junctions. As you get nearer, the stack creates a series of intriguing, semi-enclosed spaces, with framings of the sky, of views, and of glimpses into the inner life of the building. At its heart you discover an irregular court, darkened by the proliferation of jousting beams above and around, from which you reach the VitraHaus discreet glass entrance.

There is a recommended route through the building, like a thread

through a labyrinth or a visit to a stately home. From reception you are taken to the top of the building in a lift, from where you trickle back down via a series of stairs and diversions. It's a classic shopping mall technique – rapid ascent by lift or escalator, slow descent with many distractions – but done with tact.

If the building appears on the outside as a dark, enigmatic thicket, the internal route feels natural and easy. It is bright and white. It starts, when the lift doors open on the top floor, with a startlingly lovely view of vineyards on an opposite hill. It is framed by the ubiquitous house-pentagon, which repeatedly shapes other prospects as you move through the building. A 180° turn away from the vineyard presents you with the skyline of Basel, seen through the other end of the tube. At other times, calculated glimpses are offered of the surrounding roads and landscape, and of the rest of the Vitra campus.

The determined repetition of the basic form is offset by the random placings, the occasional curve applied to vertical circulation elements, and adjustments in proportion and pitch of the pentagon-section. Surprising intersections are created – sideways, upwards, obliquely. At one point the floor steps up and then down in terraces, in order to get over the ridge of the roof below. There is some degree of accident in the creation of these intersections, but not in their detail. Each junction has been modelled at 1:5 or 1:20, with about 50 models in all, in order to avoid the three-dimensional car crashes that they could have been.

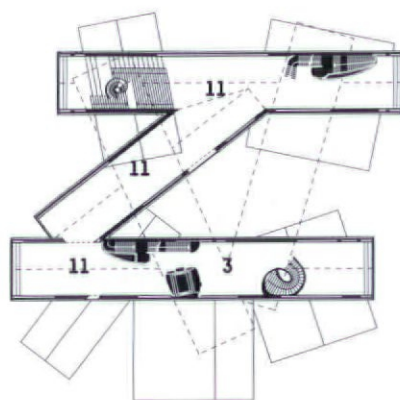
The overall feeling is of an abstracted and extraordinary house that is then tuned to create different atmospheres. The setting in the top room is like a loft apartment, with Vitra's finest domestic furniture displayed to good effect. Other spaces contain collections such as historic pieces, or a children's section, and the place is subtly modified accordingly. The means are proportion, shape and orientation, and a limited range —

THERE IS A PLAY AND REVERSAL OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL, AND ALSO OF ENCLOSURE AND EXPOSURE

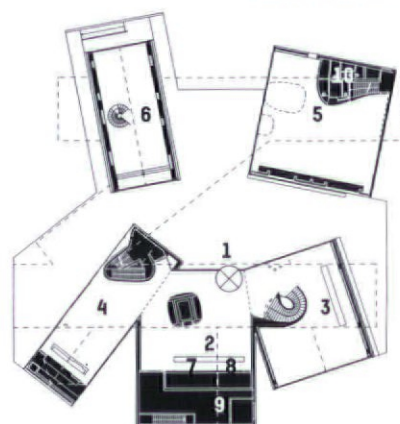
- 1 entrance
- 2 reception/foyer
- 3 shop
- 4 café
- 5 business lounge
- 6 exhibition space
- 7 cloakroom
- 8 back office
- 9 delivery
- 10 WC
- 11 showroom
- 12 loft showroom
- 13 terrace



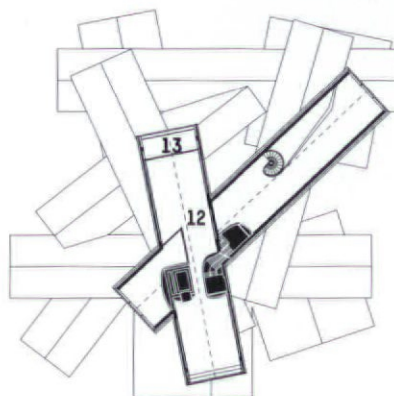
first-floor plan



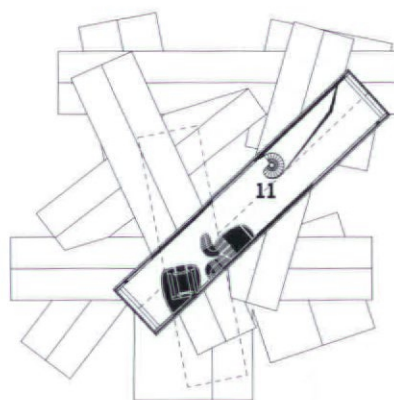
ground-floor plan



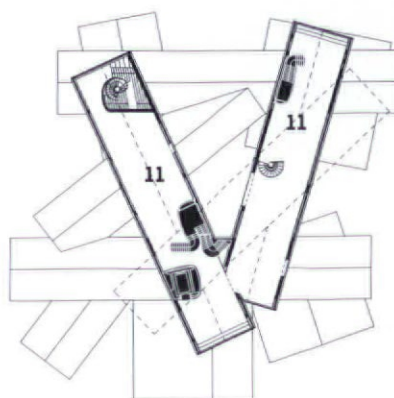
fourth-floor plan



third-floor plan



second-floor plan



of materials: white paint, untreated oak floors, and stucco lustro on the curving parts. Otherwise it is left to the objects and furnishings themselves to set the mood.

Eventually you are returned to ground, where there is a gift shop and a glass-walled café. Here the house-shaped tubes are modified with concave external walls that are wood-lined and fitted with benches, in order to make a sheltered place to sit. The external deck on which you stand is also wood. From here you can look back across a space planted with cherry trees (which originally covered the whole Vitra site) to the Gehry Museum and the rest of the campus. The VitraHaus fits within a Herzog & de Meuron masterplan, under which it was felt best to put some space between their own and Gehry's different forms of eye-catching architecture.

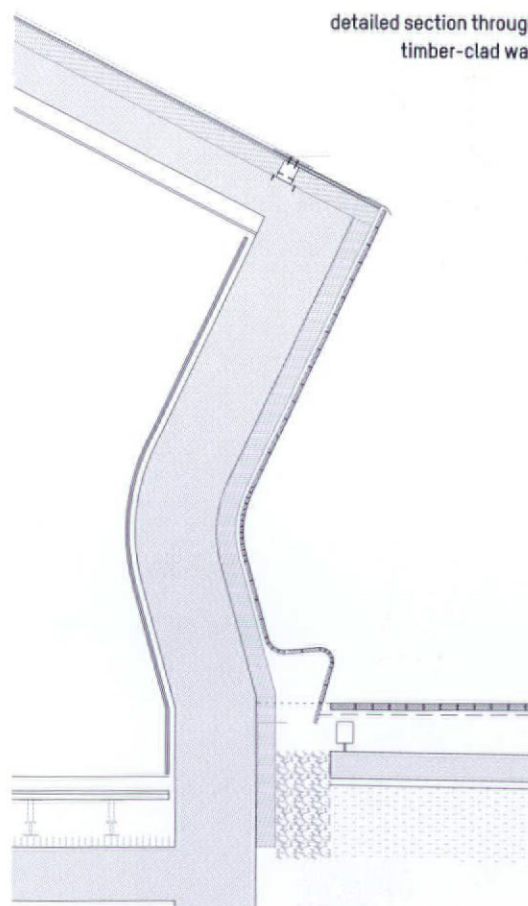
In the VitraHaus you feel yourself to be inside a charmed circle of delightful design. This is what the Vitra world has always been, but here it is distilled. There is a play and reversal of internal and external – wooden decking outside, hard floors inside – and also of enclosure and exposure. The glass ends of the tubes sharply reveal the domestic mise en scènes inside: this makes them look vulnerable and fragile, except that there is no real danger – which in the end enhances the feeling of security.

There are touches of the Germanic fairytale about this place. The delightful zone inside can only be reached through a dark tangle, something like a forest. There are moments of severity, slight menace, and withholding before rewarding. The abstract/figurative oscillation creates some disorientation and an uncertain void which requires you to trust that the unseen makers of the building know what they're doing. It also pushes you to occupy this void with your own actions and imagination. But despite the disorientation you know that, at the end of this beautiful story, everything will be all right. 

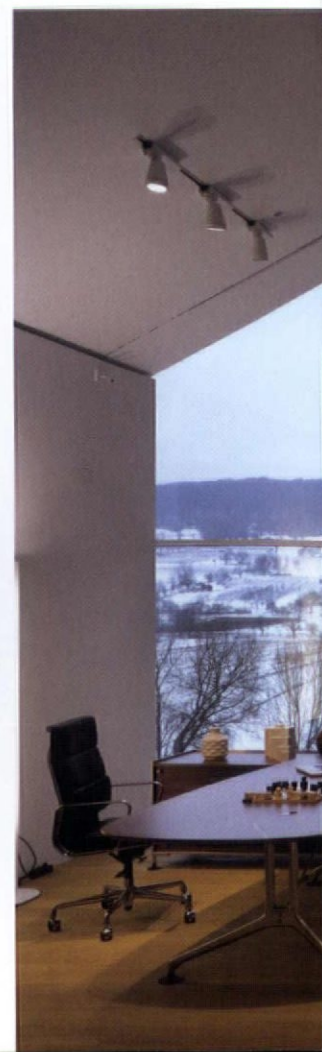
Right_ Concave
timber-clad walls
swell out to form
integral benches
Below_ At the heart
of the stack is a
courtyard darkened
by the jousting
scramble of
beams overhead



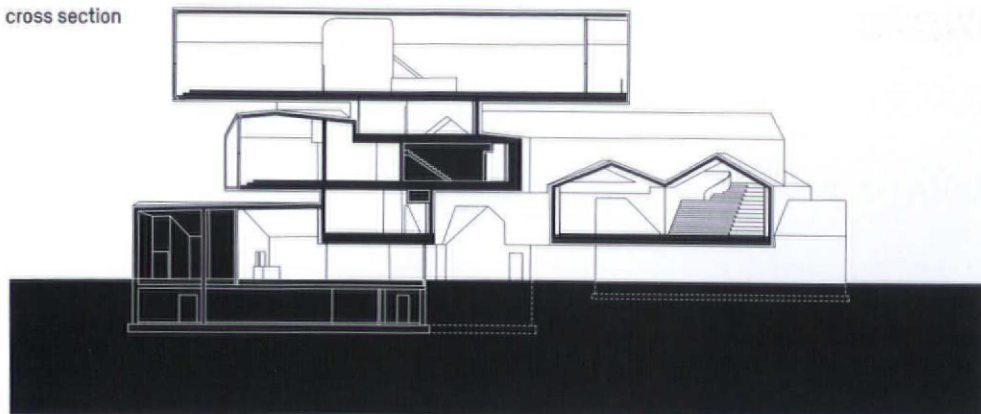
detailed section through
timber-clad wall



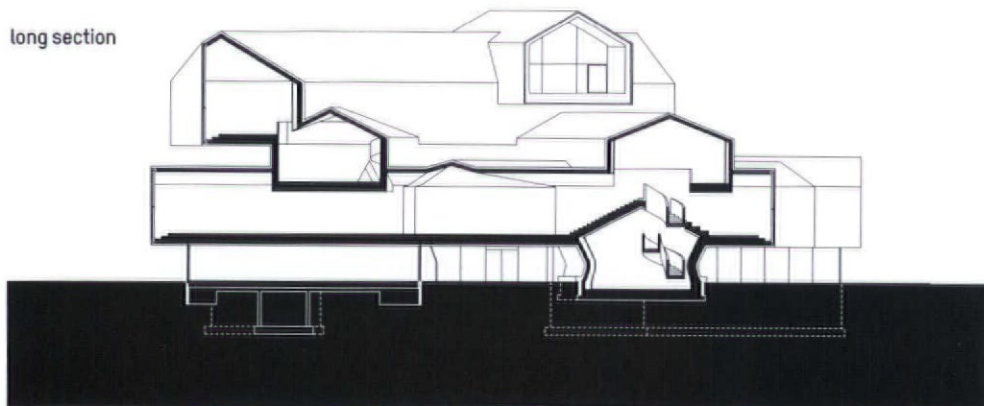
Left_ Vitra furnishings orchestrate the mood around the building. White walls and untreated oak floors form neutral backdrops to the displays
Below_ The geometry of the clashing tubes can be read from the inside
Below right_ Glazed ends frame views out over the landscape



cross section



long section



ARCHITECT

Herzog & de Meuron,
Basel, Switzerland

PROJECT TEAM

Jacques Herzog, Pierre de
Meuron, Wolfgang Hardt,
Guillaume Delemazure,
Charlotte von Moos, Sara
Secci, Harald Schmidt,
Katharina Raschofer,
Thomasine
Wolfensberger, Nicolas
Venzin, Isabel Volkmar,
Thomas Wyssen

ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT

Mayer Baehrle Freie
Architekten

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

ZPF Ingenieure

SERVICES ENGINEER

Krebsner und Freyler

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

August Künzel



124

AHMED BABA CENTRE

LOCATION

TIMBUKTU, MALI

ARCHITECT

DHK ARCHITECTS,
TWO THINK
ARCHITECTURE

WRITER

STUPAK LEE

PHOTOGRAPHY

IWAN BAAN

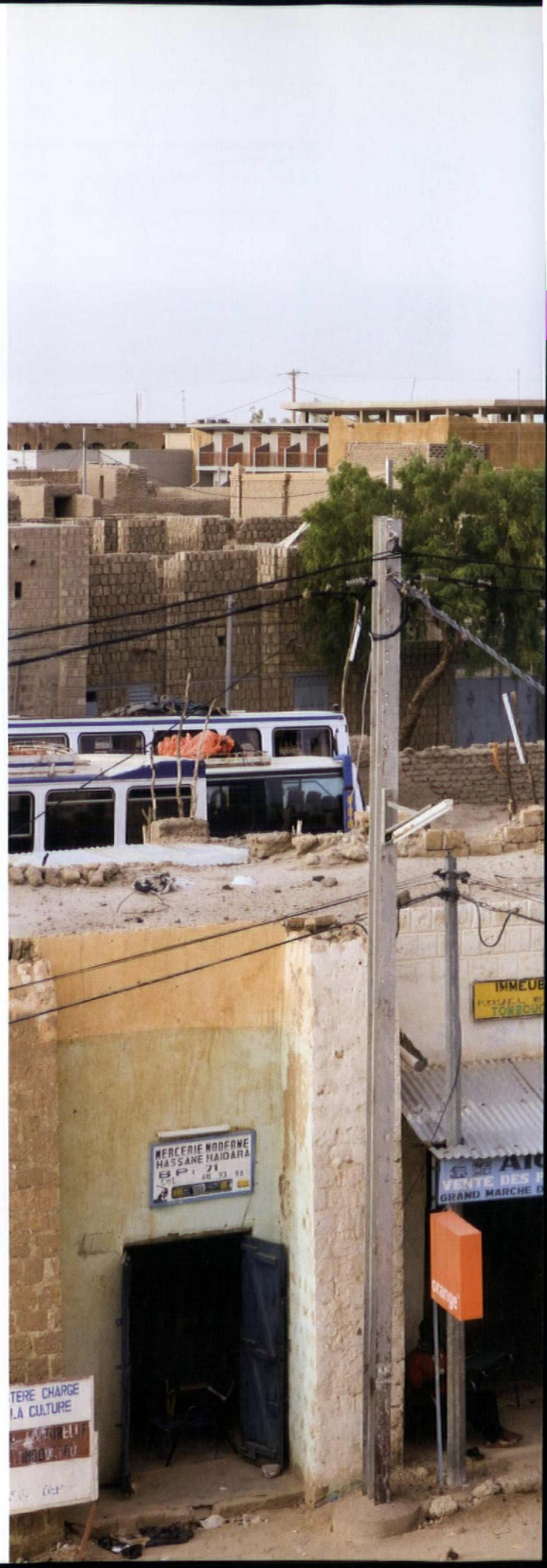
The Ahmed Baba Centre in Timbuktu has the unique mission of preserving and presenting the ancient written treasures that testify for Africa's intellectual past, challenging the common notion that the continent had only an oral tradition. The new resource centre, the result of a concerted international effort, was designed by South African DHK Architects (Phase 1) and Twothink Architecture (Phase 2), with the Malian architect Baba Cissé as a cultural consultant.

Timbuktu was founded in 1100 AD at the intersection of the main trade routes where the Niger River reaches the Sahara Desert. Between the 12th and 16th centuries it became a focal point for commerce of gold, salt, ivory and slaves, quickly developing into a multicultural city. This pluralistic society attracted thousands of scholars who studied in over 180 madrasas, turning Timbuktu into the cultural centre of Muslim Africa.

Named after one of the most important intellectual figures of

Timbuktu, the Ahmed Baba Centre facilitates the restoration and analysis of the writings inherited from those effervescent times. Manuscripts date from as early as the 12th century and are mainly written in Arabic, with a few exceptions in the local languages Fulfulde, Tamashek and Songhai (the only examples of this language written in the Arabic script so far preserved). They cover a broad range of subjects from history, theology and law, to astronomy and medicine. In addition, factual documents such as letters, journals and legal papers give an insight into Timbuktu's society and its polemics, discussing topics such as slavery, divorce or the peaceful coexistence of Christians, Jews and Muslims.

The delicate books from pre-colonial Muslim Africa are highly endangered by climate, insects and poverty. There are currently around 80 private libraries in Timbuktu, yet often the owners don't have the means or expertise to ensure their preservation. Families also —



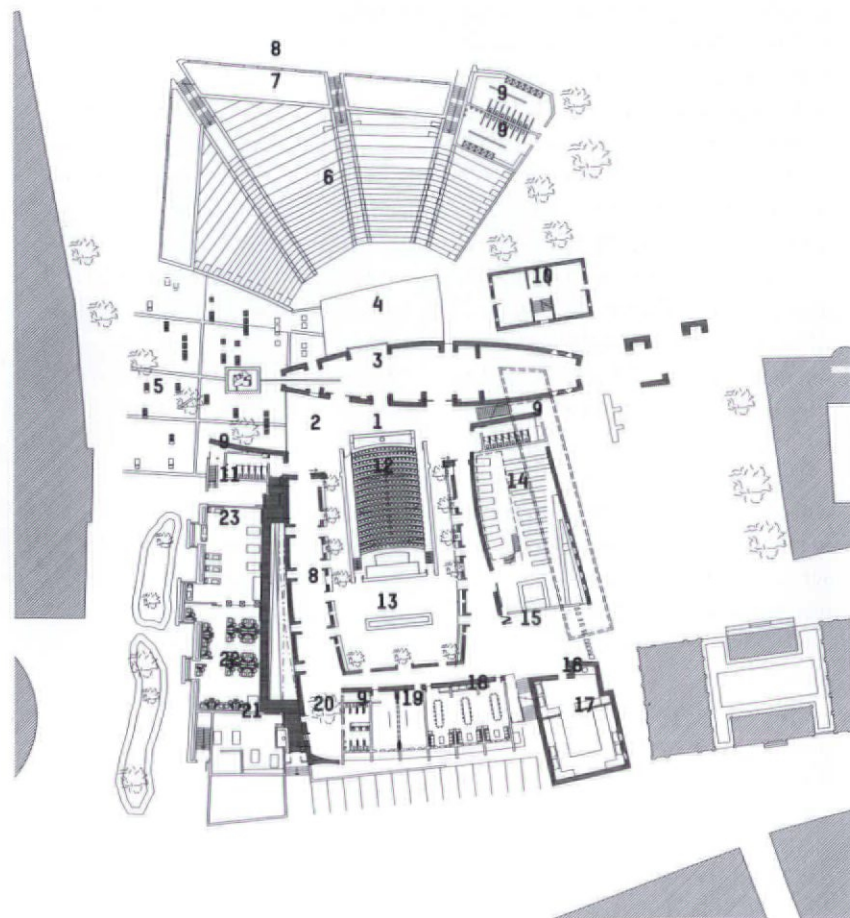


THE INTERESTING SPACES IN THE CITY BECAME THE BACKBONE OF THE CONCEPT

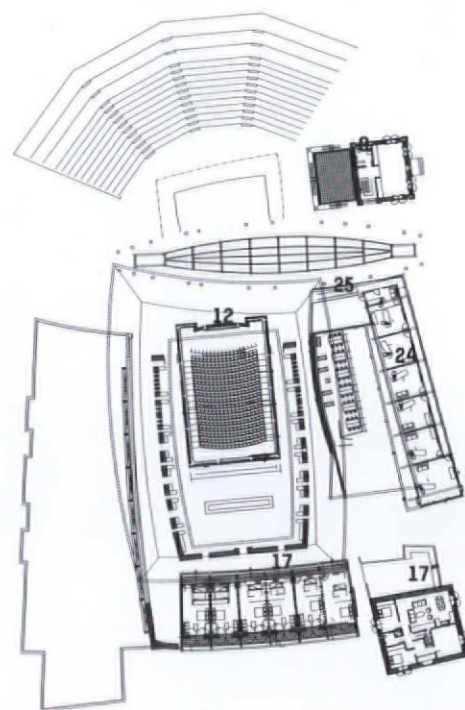
ANDRE SPIES, PROJECT ARCHITECT



ground-floor plan



first-floor plan





- 1 reception
- 2 foyer
- 3 covered galleria
- 4 stage
- 5 celebration garden
- 6 amphitheatre
- 7 kiosks
- 8 walkway
- 9 WC
- 10 Islamic classroom
- 11 storeroom
- 12 lecture theatre
- 13 courtyard
- 14 library
- 15 café
- 16 kitchen
- 17 guest rooms
- 18 reading room
- 19 boardroom
- 20 staff kitchen
- 21 photographic studio
- 22 digitisation
- 23 restoration
- 24 offices
- 25 plant

Previous page_

The new archive in Timbuktu lies near the distinctive conical structure of the historic

Sankoré Mosque

Above left_ The low-slung volume merges with the townscape

Above right_ The building made use of traditional building methods and its architecture alludes to vernacular types

repudiate deciphering the writings out of fear of compromising their ancestry through unpleasant findings. And then there are those who, unable to read Arabic, place little value on their possessions and will sell a manuscript for a few coins.

The first efforts to save the manuscripts were made in 1970 at a UNESCO initiative. Thirty years later, IHERI-AB (Institute des Hautes Etudes et de Recherche Islamique Ahmed Baba) was established as an independent establishment of higher learning, with the legal and financial frame to assure the 'restoration and conservation, scientific exploitation and dissemination of the manuscripts in possession while also offering services to private collectors and owners'. The institute is the one of the largest documentation centres in Africa, holding over 30,000 items, yet there are an estimated 700,000 manuscripts in the region. But Mali is among the poorest countries in the world and any preservation efforts are heavily dependent on foreign aid. Help came in 2002 when, after visiting Timbuktu, former South

African president Thabo Mbeki offered assistance by committing to support the construction of the IHERI-AB resource centre.

Today, Timbuktu is a slightly surreal place. To get there, it takes two days by four-wheel drive, three days by boat on the Niger River or a shorter journey on one of the rare flights from Bamako, in the southwest of Mali. The city is dominated by the monochrome, uniform tones of clay houses and tangled dirt roads. The doors are always open, bread is baked in mud ovens on the road, and kids are taught on empty street corners, occasionally disturbed by roaring cars and scooters.

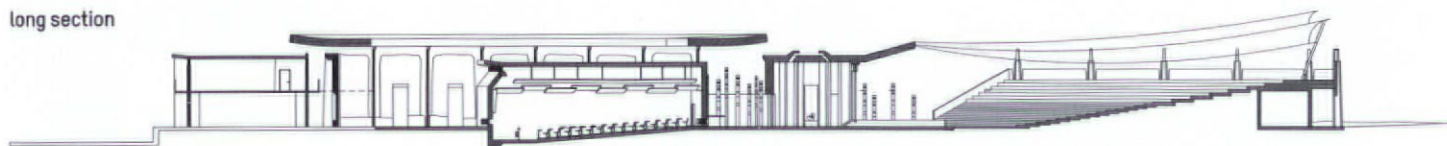
'The first take was just looking at the urban planning of Timbuktu, which had a sporadic and organic growth,' explains project architect Andre Spies. 'The interesting spaces in the city became the backbone of the concept. It's a straightforward approach: a few buildings grouped around a courtyard and walkways, and that is pretty much the way in which Timbuktu grew as well.' Four separate blocks defined —

OVER HALF THE WALL SURFACE WAS BUILT IN THE TRADITIONAL METHOD WITH CLAY, ENGAGING THE LOCALS IN CONSTRUCTION

cross section



long section



programmatically as the archives, restoration area, researchers' spaces and the auditorium are spread along a patio. An open amphitheatre makes the connection with the surrounding urban square, drawing in the public from the street. The architects were inspired by the context and built over half the wall surface in the traditional method with clay, engaging the locals in the construction process. 'It was a big local trade that we could use,' says Spies. 'Just the speed with which they built was impressive, because everyone knows how to do it.'

At the crossroad between the new and the old city, across the square from the new library and next to the 15th-century Sankoré Mosque, tourists mingle along with locals and scholars. Indigenous Tuaregs sell traditional craftsmanship in silver, leather and wood, decorated with imagery of their nomadic life, of caravans and sand dunes. In this informal and challenging context, the new Ahmed Baba Centre assumes the difficult role of a subtle mediator between different spaces, different times and different worlds. 

ARCHITECT

DHK Architects, Cape Town, South Africa (phase 1); Twotthink Architecture, Cape Town, South Africa (phase 2)

PROJECT TEAM

Andre Spies (phase 1); Andre Spies, Valerie Lambrechts (phase 2)

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Kantey and Templer

SERVICES ENGINEER

Goesain Johradien and Associates

Below_ The double-height volume of the library, which will hold 30,000 items
Bottom_ A long ramp links the two levels
Right_ Part of the internal street





125

JOVANOVICH HOUSE

LOCATION

LOS ANGELES, USA

ARCHITECT

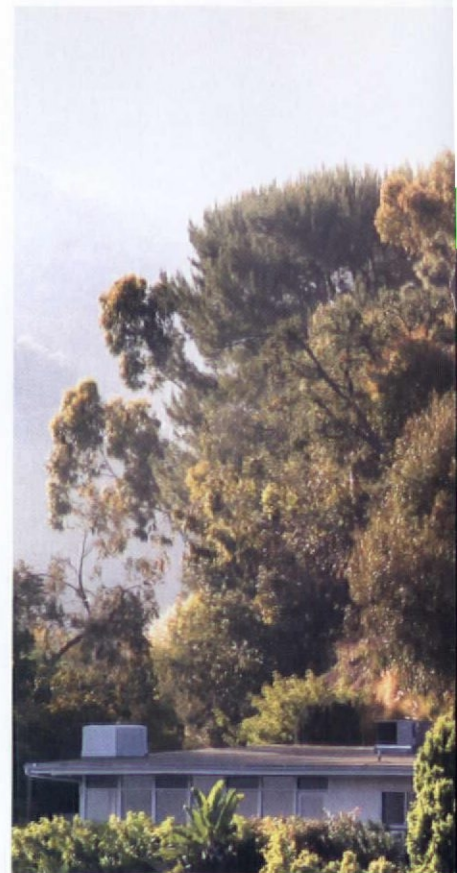
LORCAN O'HERLIHY ARCHITECTS

WRITER

MICHAEL WEBB

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL WESCHLER





opened up,' says Lorcan O'Herlihy. 'The task of infusing a banal house with energy and light was harder than starting from scratch, but the cost of building anew on such a site would have been prohibitive.'

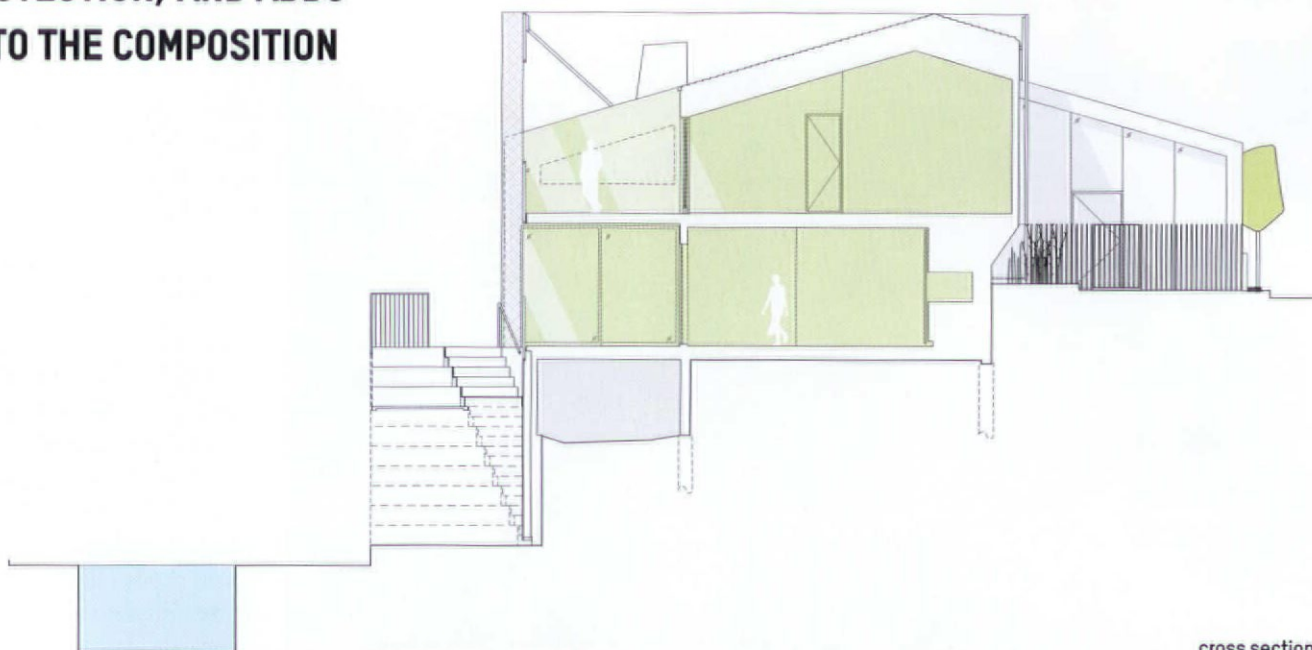
The big move was to unify old and new with PVC-coated polyester woven yarn, stretched taut on a lightweight metal frame. The mesh is cut away to frame views out and up to the sky. It conceals and reveals, provides shade and thermal protection, and adds depth to the composition. The layering and articulation of the facades echoes that of the practice's Formosa condominiums in West Hollywood, which assert their urbanity as a metallic sculpture in fire-engine red. These facades are also inspired by art works – O'Herlihy is an accomplished painter who created his own tower house in Venice as a three-dimensional version of his geometric abstracts (AR January 2004). Here, on a quiet residential street, the effect has to be subtler and softer. 'We chose the fabric, which should last five years, in preference to perforated metal, because it is light, ephemeral and tactile,' says O'Herlihy.

The house exploits the shifts of level on the site. An inclined bank leads to the entry foyer, from where a crisp steel stair descends to the living room. A long hallway along the west front links the open kitchen to the double-height living room, media room and guest room. Pocketing glass sliders open onto a broad wooden deck that runs the length of the house. Bleachers and steps descend to a pool and garden down the slope. The decks extend the house into the landscape and reveal the drama of the guest suite to the rear of the garage, which is supported on a tree-like structure of steel tubes. Within, stairs lead up to an all-white master suite, infused with natural light, that opens onto roof decks. From this lofty perch, you feel as though you are floating above the expanse of trees and the blue blur of the ocean. 

Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects has mastered the art of building on steep or confined sites and its houses respond creatively to the topography and the urban context. Most recently, the southern California firm transformed a hermetic A-frame house perched on the edge of a canyon by making modest additions, opening up the interiors to decks and sweeping views, and wrapping the hybrid form in a white scrim. The crisp cut-out carapace sits lightly on the street and from below it appears as insubstantial as a kite, floating free of the wooded slope.

To accommodate a young family and their guests and to take advantage of a 180° view, the architects gutted the existing shell, enclosed the carport to serve as a spacious foyer, and cantilevered a garage and guest suite out to the south. The new rooms add only 80m² to the existing 340m² of enclosed space, but the decks furnish another 200m². 'We took the old structure as a found object to be cut away and

THE MESH CONCEALS AND REVEALS, PROVIDES SHADE AND PROTECTION, AND ADDS DEPTH TO THE COMPOSITION

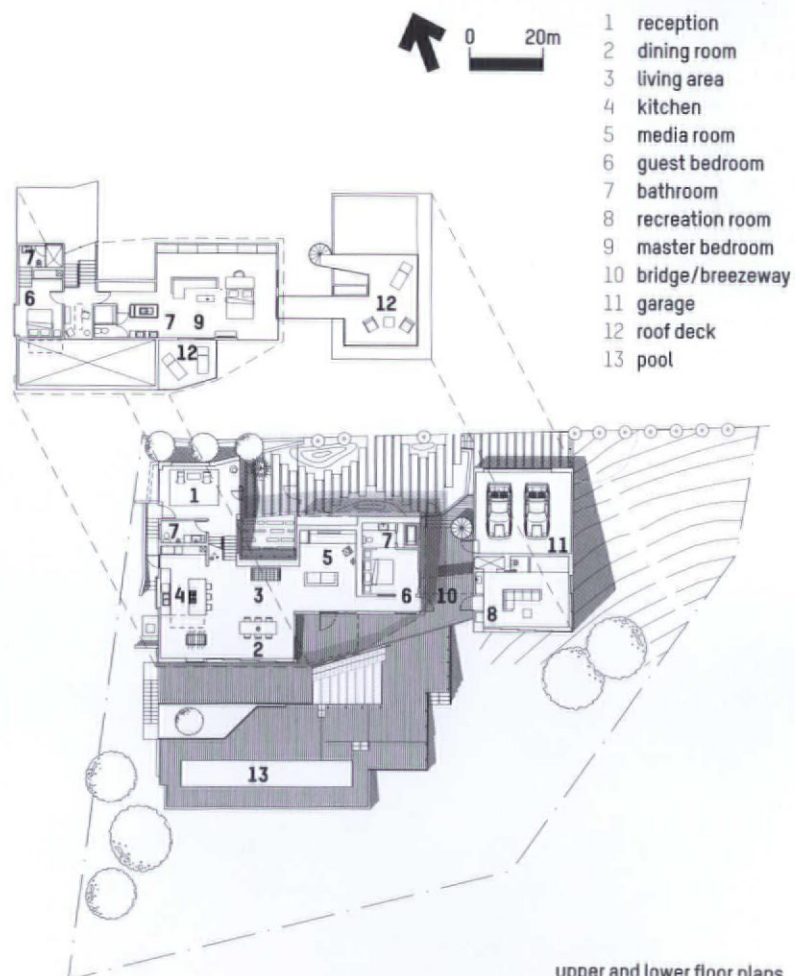


cross section

Previous page, top_ Wrapped in a gauzy fabric veil, the house clings precipitously to the hillside
 Previous page, bottom_ The remodelled house exploits light and views
 Left_ The double-height kitchen
 Centre_ The master bedroom, with LA panorama
 Top right_ The mesh is cut and shaped around the original structure



ARCHITECT
 Lorcan O'Herlihy
 Architects,
 Los Angeles, USA
PROJECT TEAM
 Lorcan O'Herlihy, Pierere
 De Angelis, Bariv Altman



126

NEZU MUSEUM

LOCATION

TOKYO, JAPAN

ARCHITECT

KENGO KUMA & ASSOCIATES

WRITER

CATHERINE SLESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY

FUJITSUKA MITSUMASA

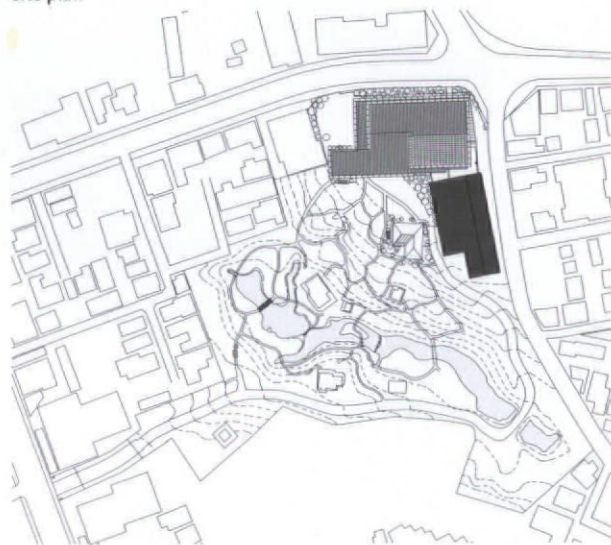




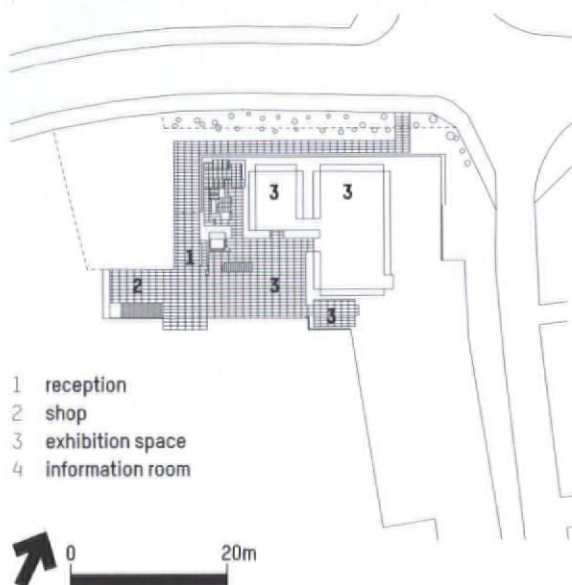
I WANTED THE NEW MUSEUM TO BE LINKED NATURALLY WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS BY THE SHADE FROM THE SLOPE OF THE ROOF

KENGO KUMA

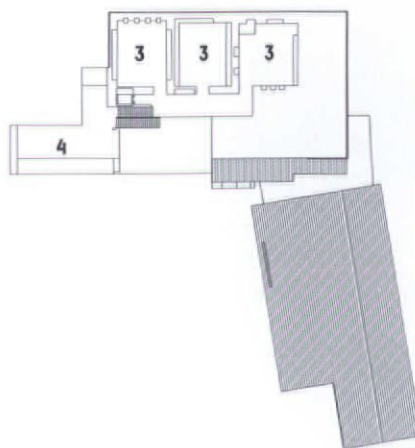
site plan



ground-floor plan



first-floor plan



Previous page_ Its eaves honed to an exquisitely fine edge, the great roof envelops the building
Right_ The new museum sits in extensive traditional gardens that block out the glare of Tokyo
Below right_ Part of the approach to the entrance, designed to allow visitors to decompress

'I wanted to create a huge roof', says Kengo Kuma of the new Nezu Museum, designed to house the collection of wealthy Japanese industrialist Kaichiro Nezu on a lusciously pastoral site in the Aoyama district of Tokyo. The big, minimally articulated roof is a Kuma signature. His Hiroshige Ando Museum (AR October 2001) was just a huge shed clad in cedar slats, but it had a powerful lyricism. Kuma's roofs are abstractions of traditional Japanese architecture, in which overhanging eaves shelter and shade, subtly blurring the boundary between inside and out. Of this latest project, Kuma says: 'I wanted the new museum to be linked naturally with its surroundings by the shade from the gentle slope of the roof. Shadows link buildings to the ground and give comfort to the architecture and warmth to the city.'

Founded in 1941 following Nezu's death, the museum boasts one of Japan's most culturally significant private collections of Asian art from the pre-modern period. Nezu was a particularly avid collector of hanging scrolls and utensils for tea ceremonies, and today the museum has over 7,000 objects, including calligraphy, paintings, sculpture, ceramics, metalwork, bamboo crafts and textiles. The collection was originally displayed in Nezu's Aoyama residence, which stood in extensive traditional gardens studded with ponds, bridges and teahouses. In 2006 his grandson Koichi Nezu commissioned Kuma to remodel and rationalise the existing facilities and design a new building on the garden site. The revitalised complex reopened in October 2009.

Intimately relating both to its site and the wider city, the new museum is conceived as a piece of urbanism rather than a single object building. It structures and defines routes from the nearby Omotesando, Tokyo's famous 'Parisian' boulevard thronged with shoppers and flâneurs. To disengage from the distractions of the street and prepare for the



contemplative serenity of the museum, visitors are steered on a trajectory around the gardens. This takes you through a thicket of bamboo (characteristic of ceremonial approaches to tea houses) and along the building's deep eaves to the main entrance. En route, the blare of the city dissolves in the verdant, calming embrace of nature. Kuma likens this decompression to a journey from town to forest, or the transition from profane to sacred space, where a traditional *torii* gate marks the entrance to a shrine.

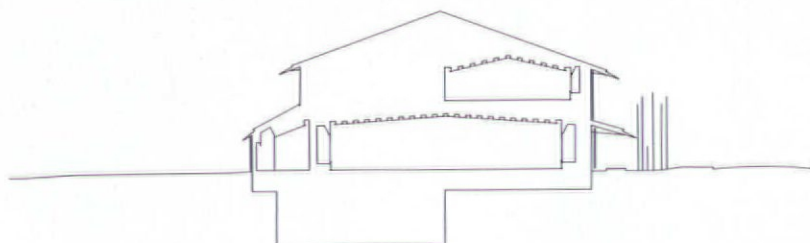
The museum is essentially an elegant two-storey pavilion capped by a voluminous, grey tiled roof. Appearing to float on walls of glass, but actually supported by a steel frame, the roof gathers visitors into the building. Scale, form and the post-and-beam structure all —



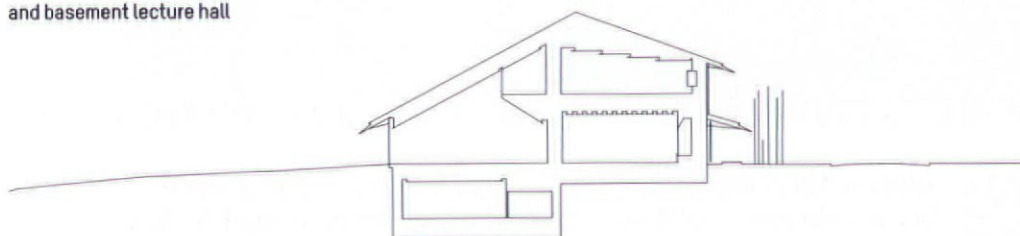
KUMA'S SOBER NEW GALLERIES PROVIDE AN ASCETICALLY NEUTRAL BACKDROP SO THE COLLECTION CAN SHINE

Right_ Kuma
abstracts and
refines the
traditional forms
of Japanese
architecture
Far right_ Galleries
are dimly lit and
neutrally appointed,
so the precious
artefacts can
take centre stage
Below_ Landscape
and light press in
through glazed walls

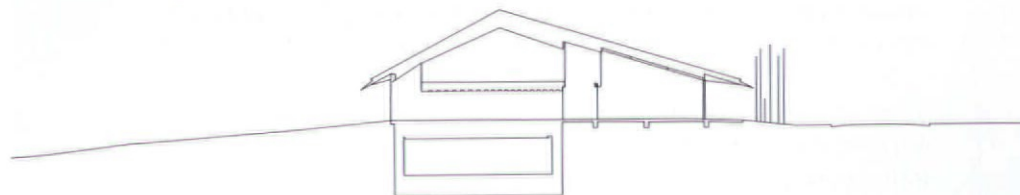
cross section through galleries



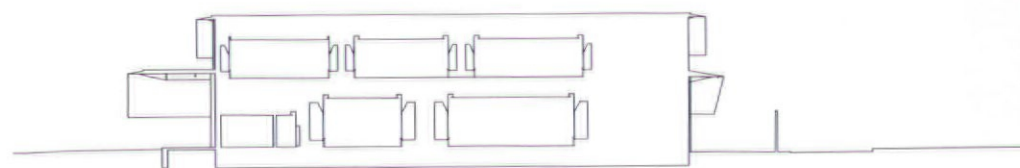
cross section through galleries
and basement lecture hall



cross section through information room



long section





ARCHITECT

Kengo Kuma &

Associates, Tokyo

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

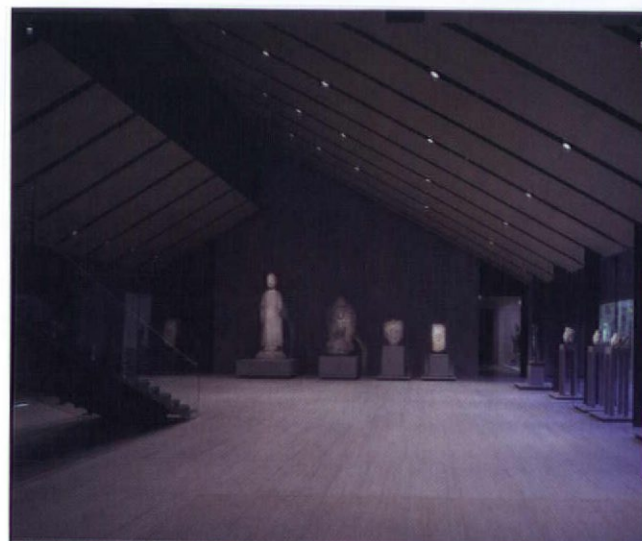
Shimizu Corporation

EXHIBITION CASES

Kokuyo Furniture

LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT

Seifuen



allude to Tokyo's lost heritage of vernacular timber buildings, but Kuma reinterprets this in an authentically contemporary way. The low edge of the roof sharpens to a blade, made from exquisitely thin planes of steel, treated with phosphoric acid for maximum slimness and refinement.

Beyond the entrance, visitors encounter a double-height space shaped by the angular pitch of the great roof, its underside clad in lightweight panels of *neritsuke* (thinly shaved bamboo on a plywood base). Around the edges are rows of theatrically illuminated Buddhist sculptures. The grey Chinese stone of the gallery floor spreads outside, softening the distinction between internal and external. In turn, the landscape almost becomes part of the exhibition as greenery presses

in through the glazed walls. Public gardens are rare in Tokyo, so this lush enclave has a special resonance.

The new museum provides six gallery spaces, four more than the previous building. Each gallery is devoted to a different artistic or craft discipline and works are displayed in simple glass cabinets. Kuma's sober new galleries provide an ascetically neutral backdrop so the collection can shine. Among the museum's holdings are seven national treasures, including Korin Ogata's *Iris*, an 18th-century depiction of flowers on a pair of gold foil screens. It's one of Kuma's favourite works. 'As an architect, I have been greatly influenced by the technique of showing depth of space with limited elements,' he told the *Tokyo Reporter*, 'and this is reflected in the construction of space at Nezu'. 

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IL FORTE DI FORTEZZA

LOCATION

FORTEZZA, ITALY

ARCHITECT

**MARKUS SCHERER
AND WALTER DIETL**

WRITER

CATHERINE SLESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY

RENÉ RILLER





‘Begun under Francis I in the year 1833; completed by Ferdinand I in the year 1838’ reads the Latin inscription over the gate of a monumental fortress that dominates the village of Fortezza (originally called Franzensfeste) in Alpine northern Italy, near the border with Austria. Strategically positioned to oversee the entrance to the Eisack Valley, this brooding redoubt was constructed by the Habsburgs to protect their empire from growing anti-imperialist fervour fomented by the French revolution.

In just five years, 6,000 workers and soldiers constructed the complex under the direction of regimental engineer Franz von Scholl. Resembling a small town, it consists of three separate fortified enclaves hugging the contours of the hillside site. Executed in a functional yet heroic stripped classical language, it was built to last, an impregnable bastion of imperial power.

Despite the Habsburgs’ impressive mobilisation of men and resources, the revolutionary threat failed to materialise. The fortress soon became redundant, ‘built for an enemy who never came,’ according to local historian Josef Rohrer. By the end of the 19th century this supreme manifestation of military and imperial hubris was serving as a humble powder depot. In 1918 Franzensfeste came under Italian rule and became Fortezza (though German is still widely spoken in the region) and the complex was used by the Italian army until 2003.

Relinquished by the military and acquired by the province of South Tyrol, it now has a new incarnation as a historic monument and place of cultural exchange. In 2008 it was one of the four venues for Manifesta 7, the European biennale of contemporary art, and in 2009 it hosted the Landesausstellung, a regional arts festival. With its massive walls and

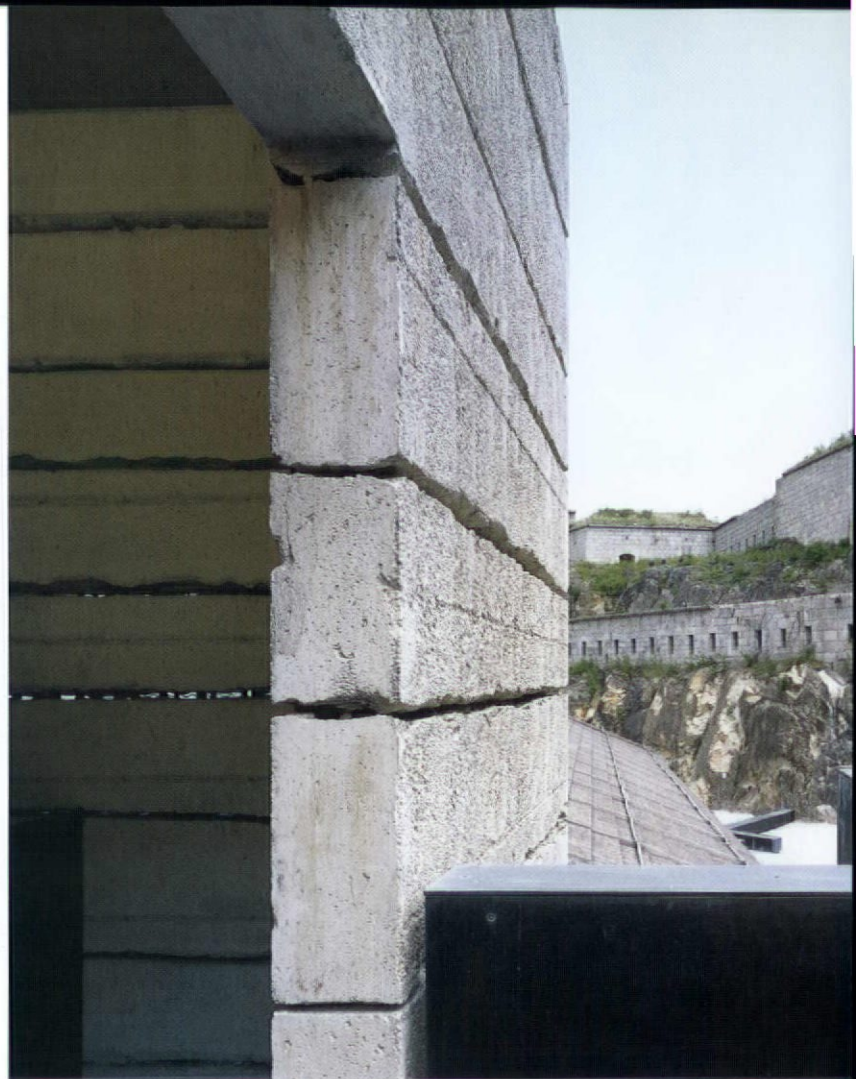
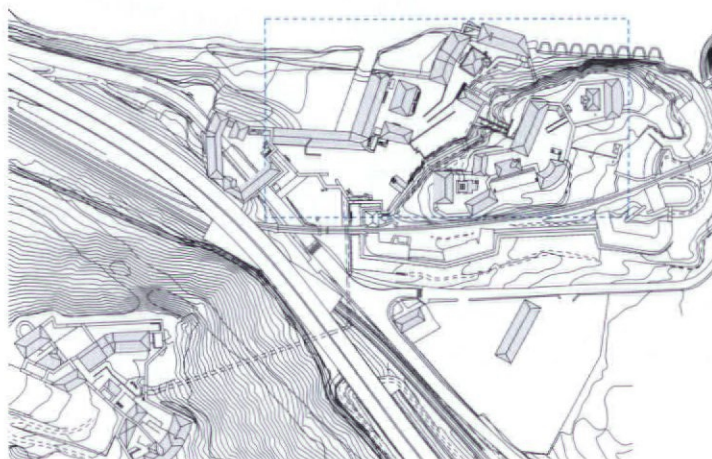
labyrinthine underground passages, the fortress provided an apt backdrop to the festival’s theme of freedom, set against the historically defensive culture of the Tyrol.

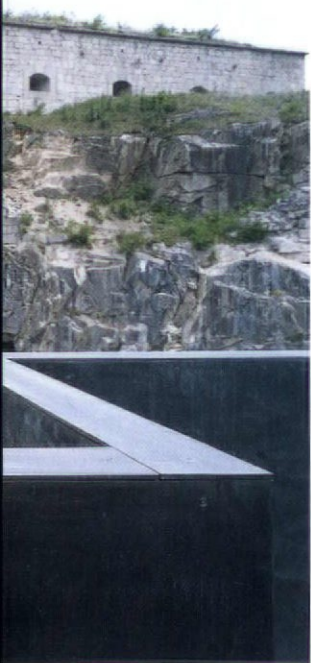
Local architects Markus Scherer and Walter Dietl were commissioned to restore the structure so it could cope with the new demands of exhibitions and tourism. Preserving the existing buildings while also emphasising the distinctive character of the architecture was key to Scherer and Dietl’s brief. The thick granite walls were restored, roofs waterproofed and windows repaired. Walled-off spaces were opened up and unsympathetic later additions removed. Throughout, the process has been a tactful cleaning up and drilling down to the raw form and structure of the fort, which itself acts as a cue for the new interventions.

From the entrance courtyard behind the main gate, the extent of the complex is not immediately —

**THE PROCESS HAS BEEN
A TACTFUL CLEANING UP
AND DRILLING DOWN TO THE
RAW FORM OF THE FORT**

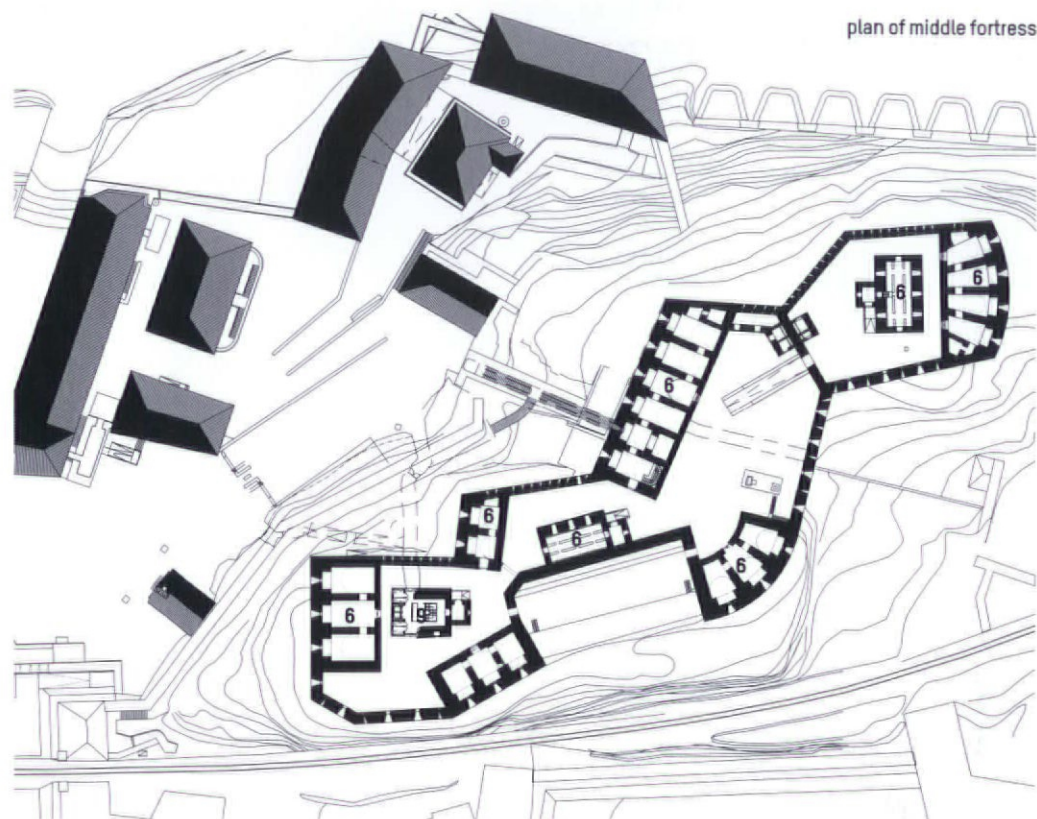
overall site plan



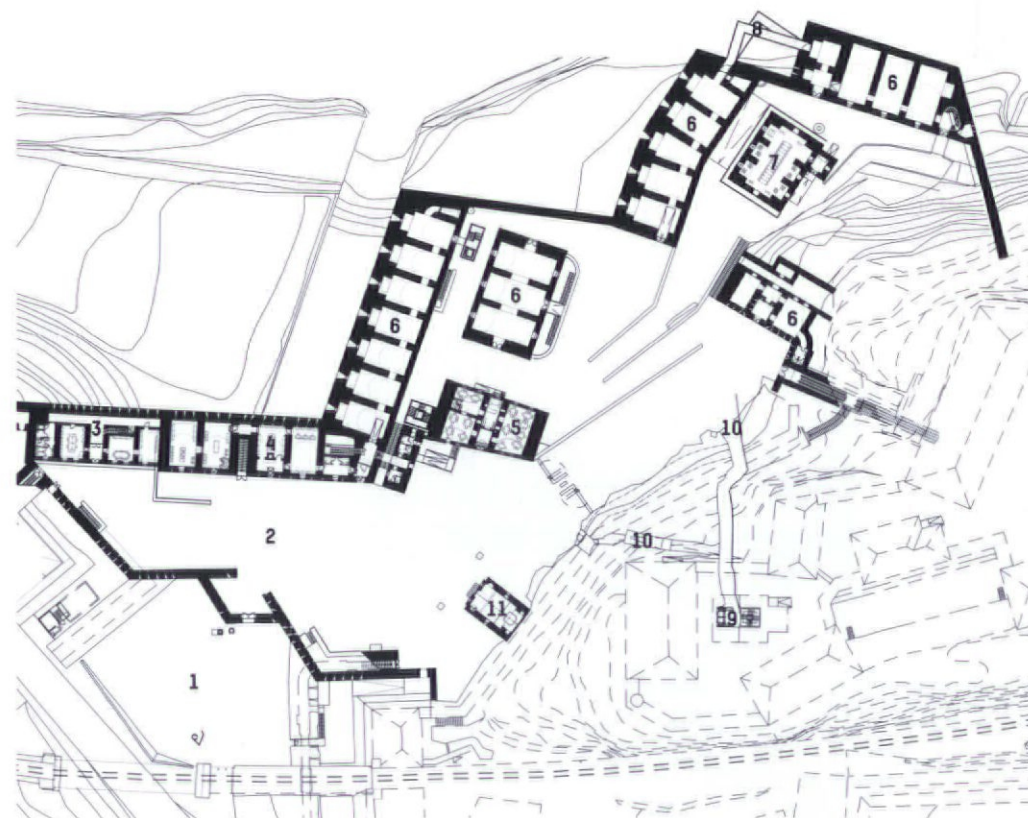


Previous page, left_ The heroic stripped classicism of the fort informs the new additions
 Previous page, right_ The fort overlooks a lake. A pair of new walkways rationalise circulation
 Far left_ Detail of steel walkways
 Left_ Dark, patinated steel forms a crisp counterpoint to the mass and weight of the original architecture
 Above_ Detail of concrete blocks, sandblasted to roughen their surfaces

- 1 forecourt
- 2 public square
- 3 administration and children's play area
- 4 ticket office, cloakroom and shop
- 5 bar/bistro
- 6 exhibition space
- 7 seminar room
- 8 suspended catwalk
- 9 staircase and lift
- 10 tunnel
- 11 church

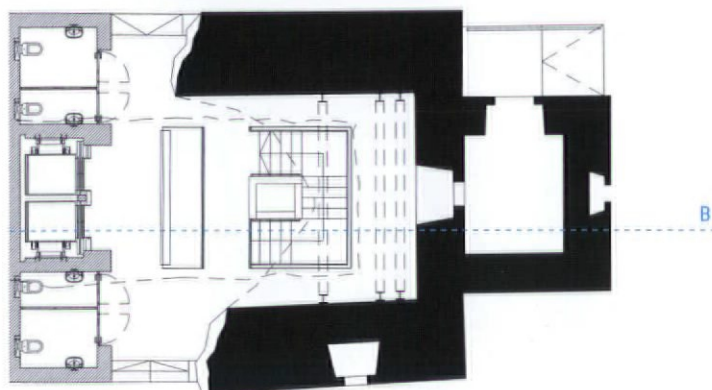


plan of lower fortress

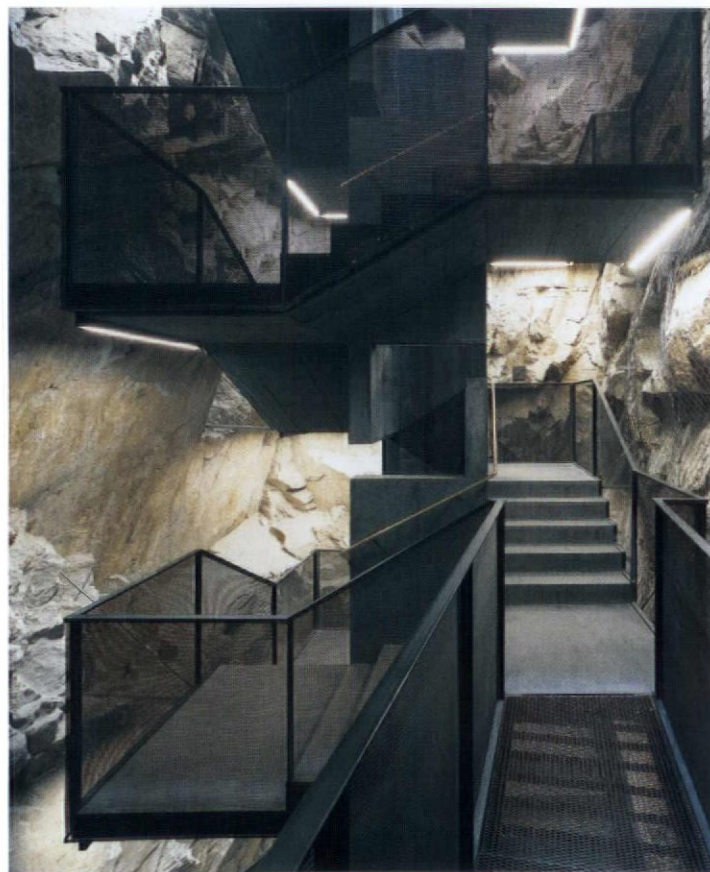
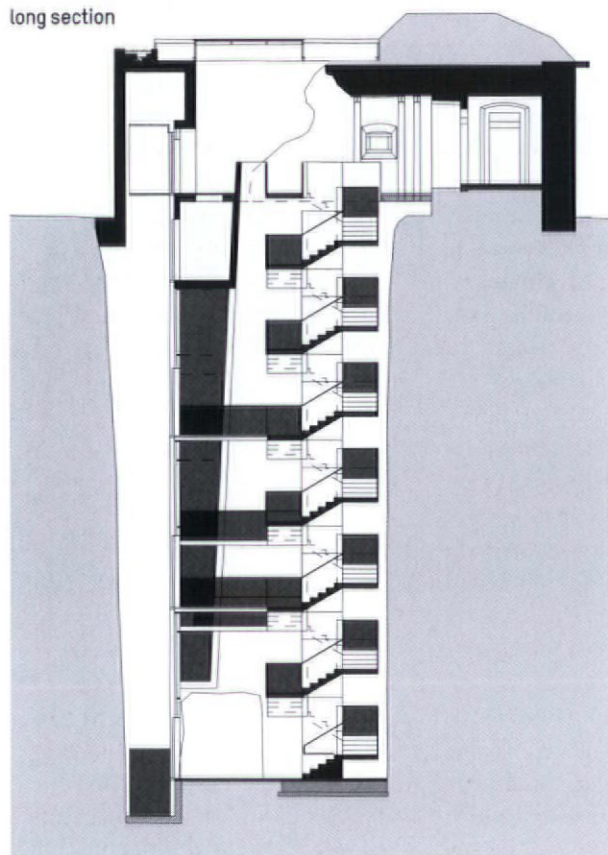


**NEW PARTS HAVE THE SAME
TOUGH, STRIPPED-DOWN SPIRIT
AS THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURE**

plan of entrance pavilion



long section





Left_ Drilled into the rock, a new shaft and staircase link the lower-level fort with subterranean caverns and tunnels below
Above_ A former powder magazine is restored to become a new pavilion above the shaft
Above right_ Detail of staircase, lifts and pavilion

ARCHITECT
Markus Scherer, Merán, Italy; Walter Dietl, Schlanders, Italy
PROJECT TEAM
Heike Kirnbauer, Elena Mezzanotte
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Baubüro-Klaus Plattner
SERVICES ENGINEER
Planconsulting



obvious. Minimally articulated stone structures that once housed barracks, stables and stores now accommodate a visitor centre, bar, restaurant, children's play area and an exhibition space spread over an enfilade of rooms. Carefully restored vaults of exposed brickwork and plastered walls, some embellished with murals, convey a powerful sense of the past. A 22m-deep vertical shaft was driven through the rock to connect the lower fortress with a subterranean cavern. A dark concrete staircase with a golden handrail spirals up through the shaft, terminating in a partially destroyed powder magazine, which was restored and reconfigured as a new circulation pavilion.

New parts have the same tough, stripped-down spirit as the original architecture. Thick concrete blocks are used to form simple buildings and enclosures. Between the blocks, layers of sand were flushed out to produce an irregular horizontal joint

pattern and the surface of the concrete was roughened by sandblasting with fine granite particles to match the colour of the existing stone. The weatherbeaten effect mimics the passage of time, so the new interventions have the feel of a modern ruin.

The most dramatic new addition is a double deck arrangement of dog-leg shaped catwalks that swing out precipitously over a lake at the lowest level to connect the exhibition spaces and complete the visitor circuit. Like the new doors, grilles and handrails, the bridges are made of galvanised steel coated with a rough black patina. Thin and sharp like a blade, the dark steel crisply counterpoints the massive stone walls. This intelligently judged reciprocity between architectures, eras and functions is emblematic of the surprising rebirth of an extraordinary piece of 19th-century military history. 

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AZAHAR GROUP HEADQUARTERS

LOCATION

CASTELLÓN, SPAIN

ARCHITECT

OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE
IN BARCELONA

WRITER

ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY

ALEJO BAGUÉ



The Office of Architecture in Barcelona (OAB) blends youth and experience. Born of the Carlos Ferrater Partnership's 40-year legacy, OAB is described by founder Carlos Ferrater as both 'a certified "laboratory of ideas" and a professional company of the highest standard'. Since its inception in 2006 the firm, co-founded with Xavier Martí, Lucía Ferrater and Borja Ferrater, has expanded with great success. Its latest building, the Azahar Group's headquarters, is designed to give identity to a group of companies committed to promoting sustainable practice in the fields of landscape design, recycling and waste treatment, environmental consultancy and construction. Situated on a 5.6ha

coastal site between Castellón de la Plana and Benicàssim in Spain, its striking white form (finished with a self-cleaning, flexible stucco) was devised to reflect the dramatic topography of its mountainous surroundings. These forms also combine to create a new topography in which the individual companies find their own unique place.

Orientated on an east-west axis, the plan is formed by two near-linear wings that buckle to create three distinct interstitial territories, which are resonant with, but purposefully isolated from, the landscape beyond. In contrast to the building's blank exterior, its inner faces are fully glazed and open to the new internalised landscape, revealing interiors that faithfully trace the

roof's cranked cross-section. Approached from the west, visitors cross a patio – a 'parade ground' that functions as an external reception area. To the east, a more enclosed, concave area provides external space with a greater sense of privacy and intimacy. In between is a large internal foyer; a central patio that unifies the two wings of cellular accommodation with a soaring toplit roof at the heart of the plan. Open to the north, this space is filled with light borrowed by adjacent rooms.

The building's form is more than a picturesque response to its setting; it serves to create a sheltered and controlled environment. Even the roof makes a contribution, collecting all run-off water in a reservoir to irrigate the adjacent landscape. 



THE STRIKING WHITE FORM WAS DEVISED TO REFLECT THE DRAMATIC TOPOGRAPHY OF ITS MOUNTAINOUS SURROUNDINGS

ARCHITECT

Office of Architecture
in Barcelona, Spain

PROJECT TEAM

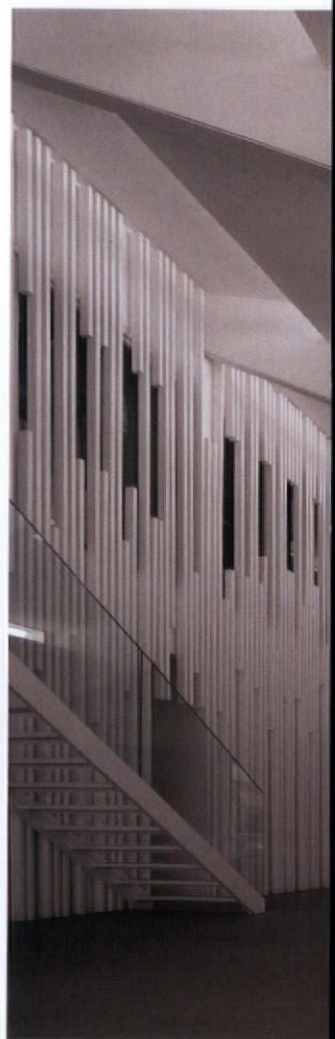
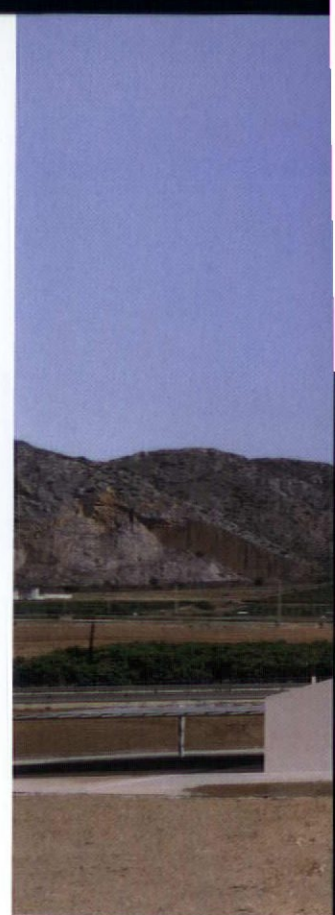
Carlos Ferrater, Núria
Ayala, Emilio Llobat,
Teresa Ribeiro

Previous page_ Looking south and east towards the coast, the Azahar Group headquarters has a striking white topography
Below_ Patios are dominated by full-height glass walls, seen here in the eastern private garden
Below right_ The internal patio forms the heart of the building, with north-facing rooflights
Right_ Unlike the patios, the building's exterior is characterised by blank white walls

cross section looking west

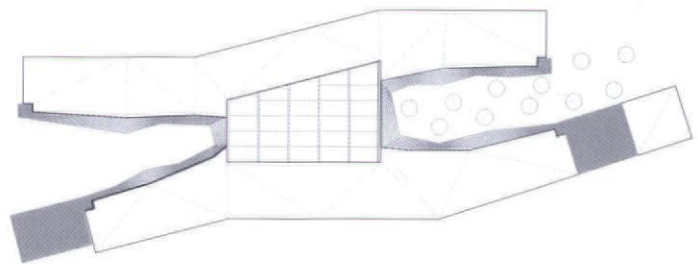


long section looking south

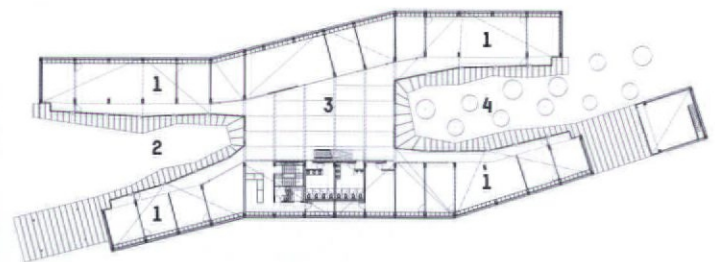




roof plan

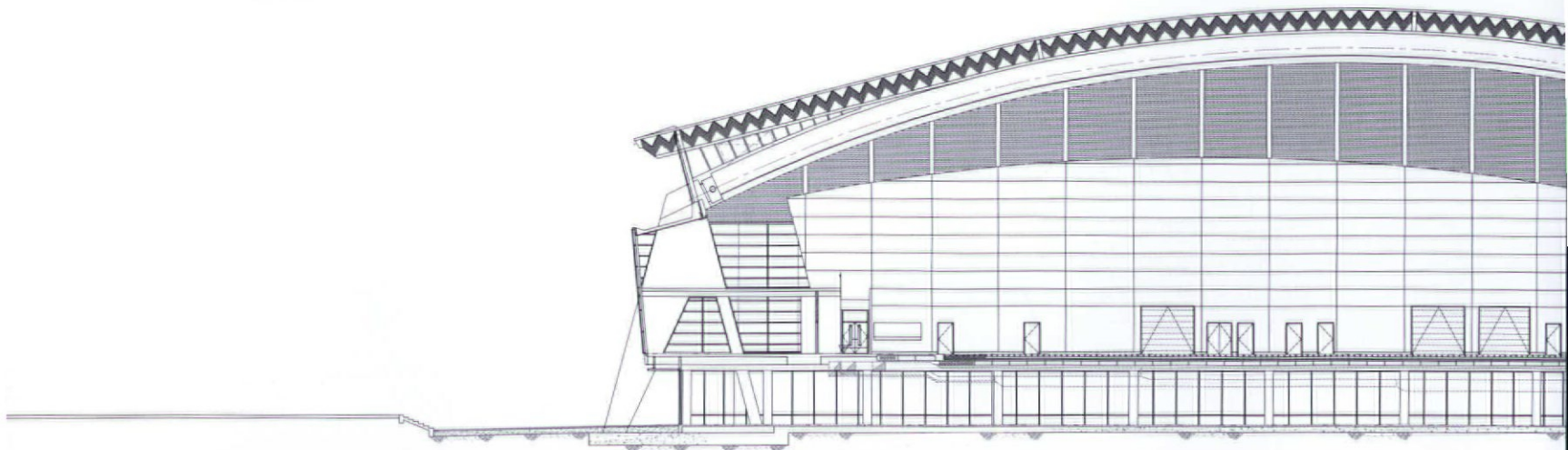


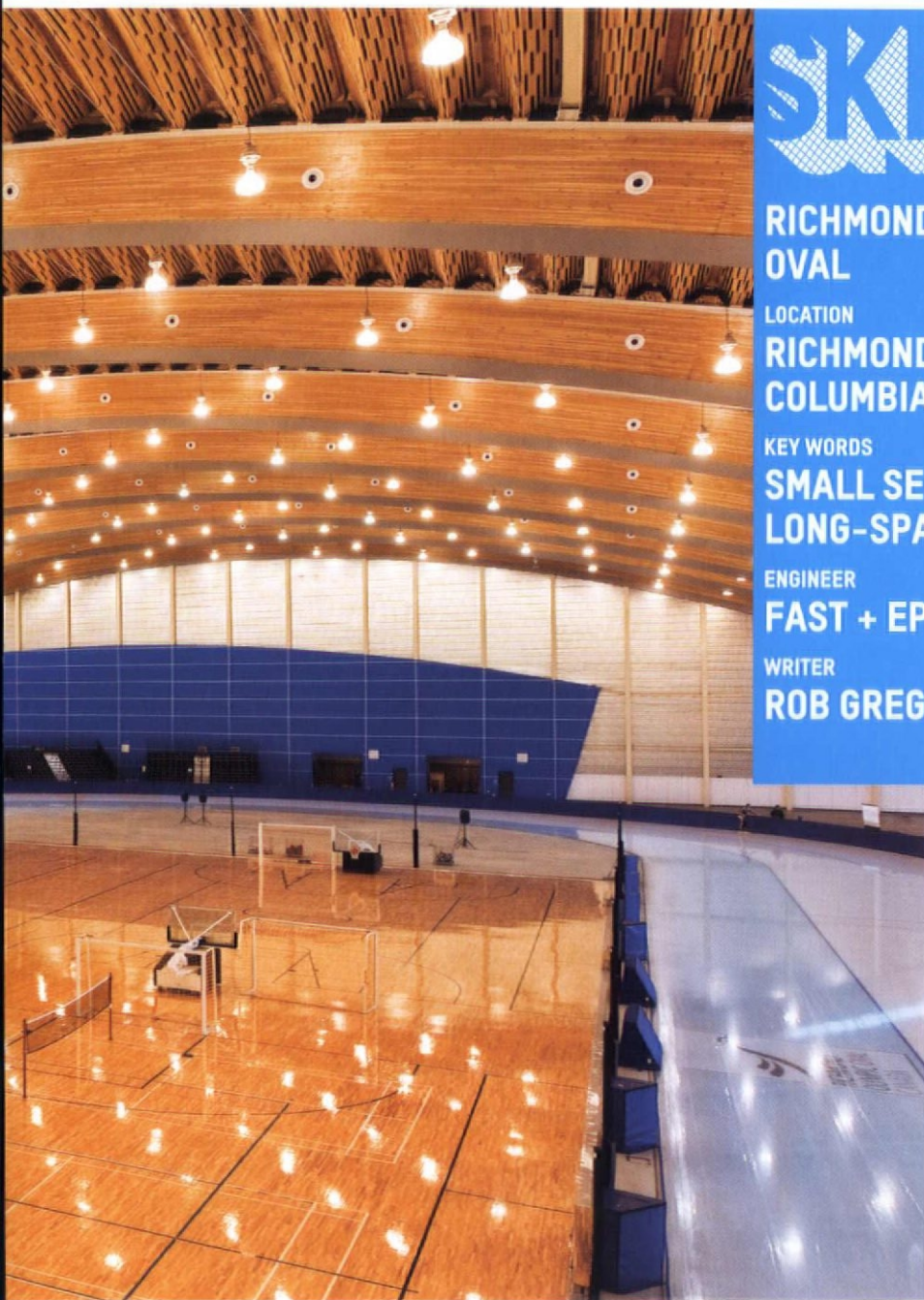
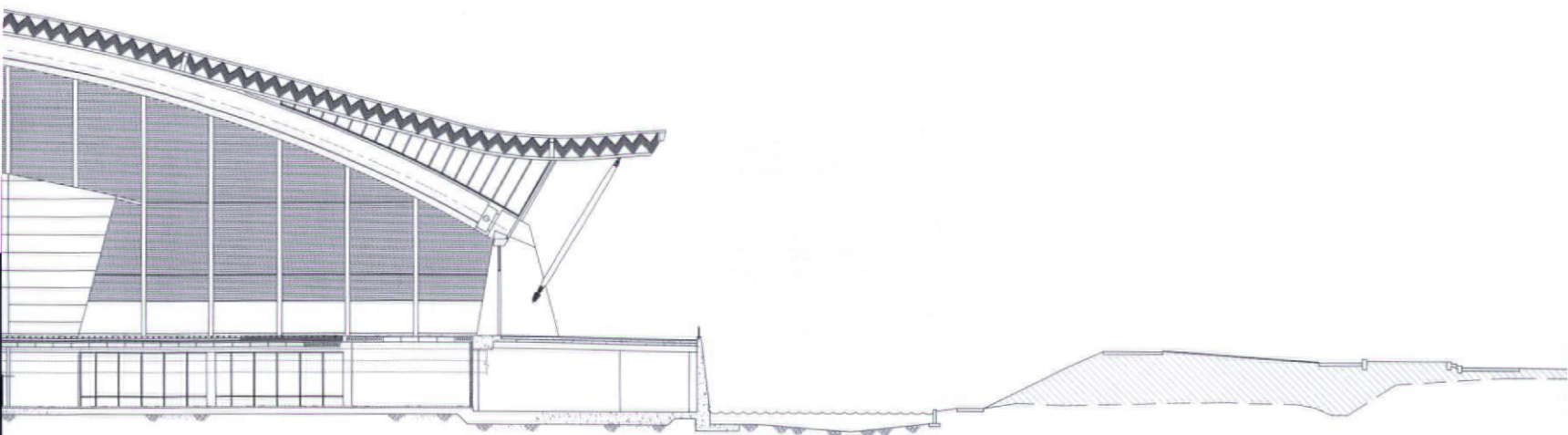
ground-floor plan



- 1 office suites
- 2 entrance patio
- 3 central patio
- 4 private patio







SKILL

RICHMOND OLYMPIC OVAL

LOCATION

RICHMOND, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

KEY WORDS

SMALL SECTION, LONG-SPAN ROOF

ENGINEER

FAST + EPP

WRITER

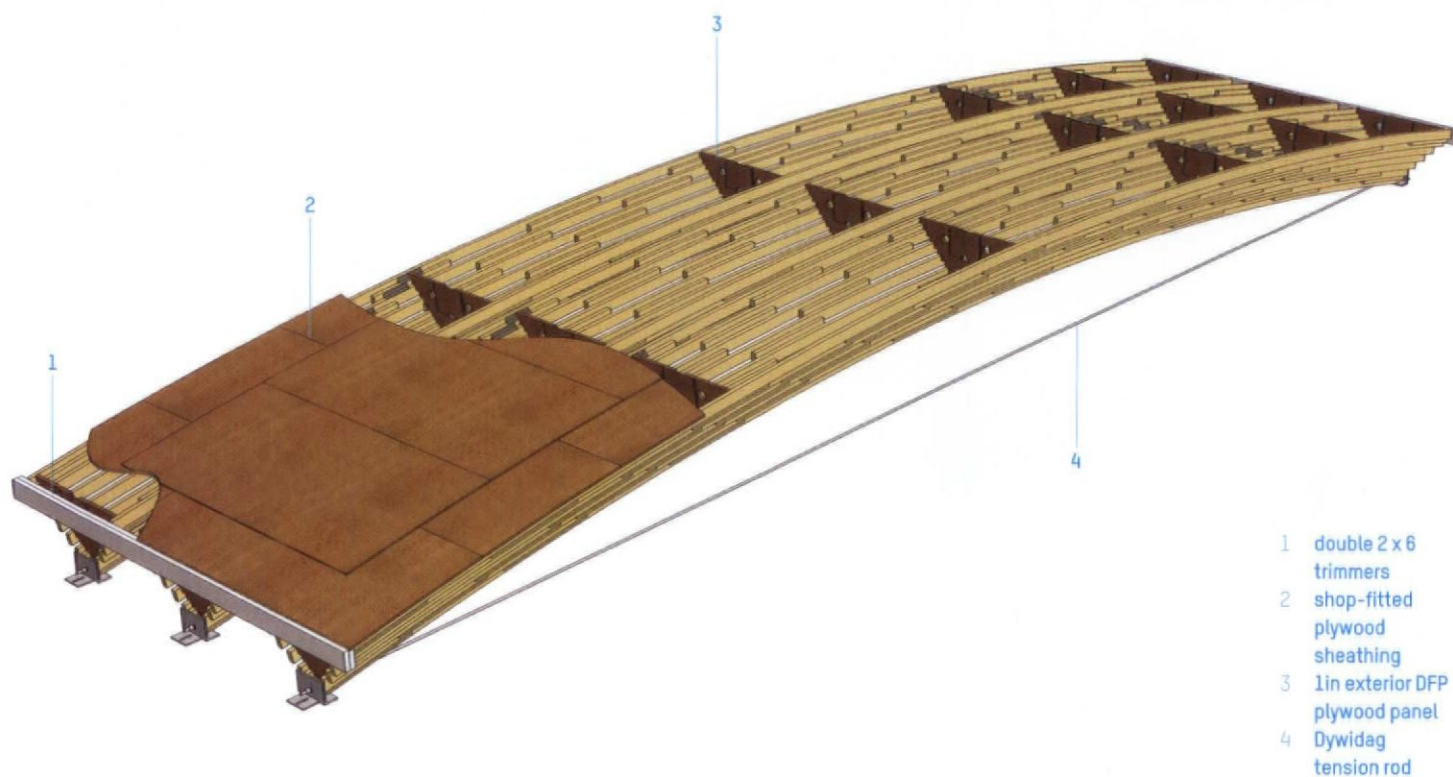
ROB GREGORY

Chris Rudge, CEO of the Canadian Olympic Committee, did not pull any punches when comparing this building with other, more celebrated Olympic landmarks. On architect Cannon Design's website, he declared: 'Every visit to the Richmond Olympic Oval is awe-inspiring,' adding that, while much has been said about the visual impact of Beijing's National Stadium (the Bird's Nest) and Aquatics Centre (the Water Cube) and their 'stunning' exteriors, interiors 'were rather pedestrian'. By contrast, 'the interior of the Oval is majestic'.

Creating a column-free space in which Olympic speed skaters chased record times, the structure itself became this site's first record holder, with the world's longest composite glulam wood/steel arches achieving a 95m span. However, what caught the attention of Trevor Boddy in his article for the AR (March 2010) was not the impressive statistics or opinions of the host city's politicians. Rather, it was the innovative use of small-section timber, salvaged from threatened British Columbia pine. With many wood producers forced to harvest timber early due to the impact of hungry pine beetles, this impressive 2.5ha roof (built for £475 per m²) found an inventive use for the unusually large stockpiles of the humble two-by-four stud.

The primary structure comprises 15 arches at 14.2m centres formed by two slabs of 175 x 1,700mm glue-laminated Douglas fir wood —

'WOOD WAVE' PANELS TIE THE ARCHES TOGETHER AND GIVE THE INTERIOR ITS DISTINCTIVE SERRATED CHARACTER



- 1 double 2 x 6 trimmers
- 2 shop-fitted plywood sheathing
- 3 1in exterior DFP plywood panel
- 4 Dywidag tension rod



Previous page, top_
Cross section
showing typical
condition with arch,
buttresses and
lift-up roof to north
Previous page,
bottom_ Richmond
Oval's 'majestic'
interior

Opposite page, top_
The world record-
beating arches have
V sections that
allow integration
of services

Opposite page,
centre left_
Southern entrance
elevation during
construction

Opposite page,
centre right_ The
last of 450 'wood
wave' panels being
lifted into place

Opposite page,
bottom_ Typical
wave panel
perspective view

Left, top_ Detail
of a 'wood wave'
V section, showing
hit and miss
two-by-four studs.

The gaps open
up to layers of
acoustic insulation

Left, bottom_ Detail
of the buttress-
arch-wall junction
on north elevation

connected at the bottom with a 10mm thick stiffened steel blade. Between these are the ingenious pre-tensioned 'wood wave' panels that tie the arches together and give the interior its distinctive serrated character. While other infill options were considered, a US \$1.5 million (£980,000) research contribution from the state government and forest industry enabled Vancouver-based engineers Fast + Epp, working with sister company StructureCraft, to offer, as managing director Paul Fast explains, 'a unique made-in-BC solution that would also meet the wood/pine-beetle use design criteria'. Typically produced in 3.6 x 13m triple V units, held in bow-shaped form by three Dywidag tension rods, the roof's prefabrication also included installation of acoustic and fire insulation and sprinkler branches.

In 2009, Fast + Epp won an Institution of Structural Engineers Award for its innovative ideas in the Oval, beating Arup's design for the Bird's Nest. Boddy says: 'If the heavy steel members and faux-sculptural mesh of the Arup/Herzog & de Meuron design represents the architecture and economies of the decade past, the elegant green efficiency of Fast + Epp surely represent a bold direction for this new decade. [Olympic medal designer Omer] Arbel's magnificent gold medals should go to engineers for leading the way for shunted-aside architects in North America's greenest city.'

EXPLORING EYE

THE CASBAH IN ALGERIA'S CAPITAL ALGIERS IS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE STEEPED IN HISTORY, BUT OVERCROWDING AND NEGLECT NOW THREATEN THIS ANCIENT NEIGHBOURHOOD

WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHY
DENNIS GILBERT

With petrol at a fraction of UK prices, generous non-interest loans from French carmakers and a complete lack of traffic lights, you would expect Algiers' traffic to be interesting. It is in fact in continual gridlock from 7am every day except Friday. The hilly city geography adds to the frustration. You might be able to see your destination just across the valley, but it needs an hour of driving to get there. Blue uniformed policemen with whistles stand at junctions of stationary traffic, blowing idiosyncratically and waving you on in a surreal display of justifying their jobs.

The Casbah, however, is a car-free labyrinth of interconnected houses, palaces, merchants' dwellings, mosques, small shops, workshops and a university. Peaceful, friendly and quiet, the Casbah rises up steeply from the harbour, so the ideal approach for a new visitor is from the upper entrance. On an assignment to record the new British embassy, I was asked by its architect

John McAslan to take some photographs there to document the historical context of the new building.

Entering through the encircling wall, you immediately come across one of the lesser palaces or townhouses, characterised by an extraordinary timber buttress structure. The entrance has a low vestibule leading off to the side (for privacy) with a riotous collection of tiles decorating the walls and integral benches, where friends and business visitors might have waited. The square atrium with its second floor loggia makes it feel perfectly Florentine. One particular house had a vast upper-floor bath area, uniformly clad with Dutch tiles in a cooling, minimal layout of hundreds of ships.

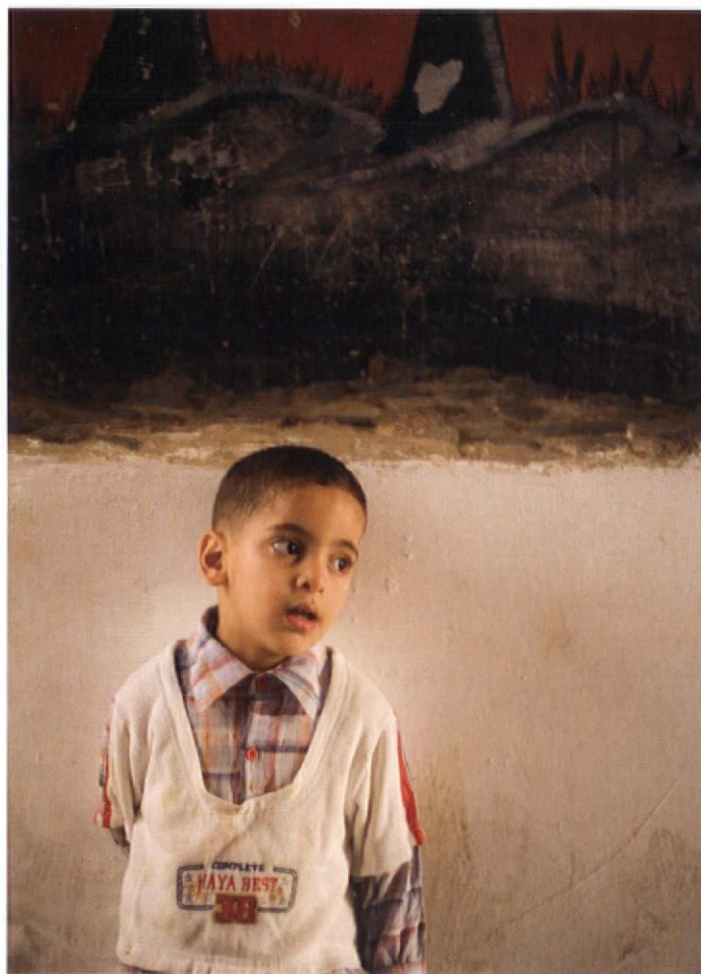
This period decoration is a result of the persistent aggression of the Ottoman corsairs, also known as the Barbary pirates, a highly disciplined and self-regulating bunch of North African privateers that preyed on non-Muslim vessels. The peak of privateering was controlled from Algiers in the 1600s, and the —

Right_ View down the Casbah to the harbour, as seen from the terrace of a merchant's house
Below_ Pirated ceramics from the Low Countries strike a slightly surreal note
Far right, top_ Characteristic timber buttresses on a typical Casbah townhouse
Far right, centre_ A riot of decorated tiles on the anteroom bench of a townhouse
Far right, bottom_ The 'Florentine' loggia in an internal atrium – the Casbah's architecture bears the imprint of a number of styles and eras









Far left_ The mosque housing the mausoleum of the city's Sufi patron saint, Sidi Abderrahmane
 Above_ Typical view of a Casbah alleyway – this historic area is free of cars, which greatly enhances its character
 Left_ A young Casbah resident. Estimates of the neighbourhood's population vary wildly, but overcrowding and squatting are rife. The area is desperately in need of investment and a development strategy

THE CASBAH IS DENSE BUT SECLUDED AND RICH IN THE CONJUNCTION OF STEEP LANES, CRANKED ALLEYS AND STEPS

corsairs ranged throughout the Mediterranean and later into the Atlantic as far as Iceland and the United States, resulting in the two Barbary Wars in the early 1800s. At least a million slaves were captured over the 300-year period of piracy, and apparently during a mere seven years from 1609 to 1616, England lost 466 merchant ships to Barbary pirates. Stretches of coastline in Italy, Spain and the Balearic Islands were abandoned for decades.

Effectively a fortified city, the Casbah was founded on the ruins of the Roman settlement of Icosium in 146BC, and developed from the base of the hill in the harbour. In the 5th century AD the Vandals conquered, and then Algiers was re-taken by the Byzantine Empire before the Arab conquest of the 7th century. In the early 1500s the Spanish occupied several Algerian coastal towns, and sought help from the corsairs who had previously supported Andalusian Muslims and Jews to escape Spanish oppression in 1492. Instead they joined the Turks and Algiers was

liberated in 1516 to become part of the Ottoman Empire until 1830, when the French colonised and established the current borders. Opinions differ as to why Spain did not return to control the country.

During the Algerian struggle for independence between 1954 and 1962, the complex layout of the Casbah was crucial to the insurgency planning of the National Liberation Front and others, providing shelter and escape routes back from terrorist attacks on French citizens and other targets. This brutal guerrilla warfare was memorably reconstructed in Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers*.

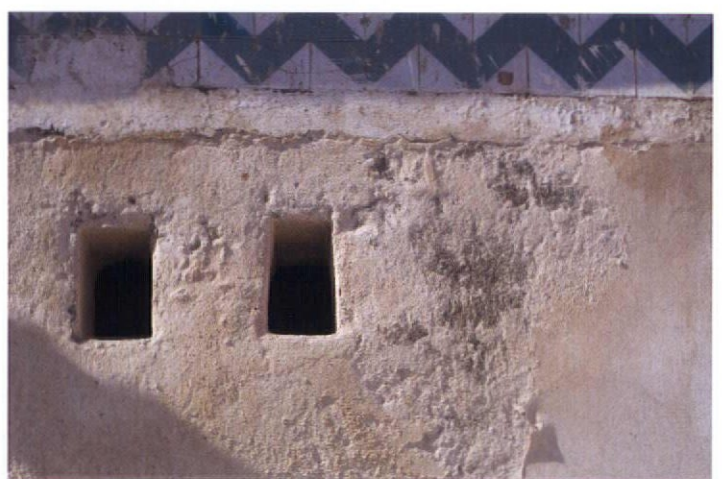
As you make your way down through the warren of streets, the Casbah appears to be an extremely attractive place to live – dense but secluded and rich in the conjunction of steep lanes, cranked alleys and steps. And also more socially open. At the mausoleum of the city's Sufi patron saint Sidi Abderrahmane (1384-1469), female pilgrims worshipped energetically, but

I was allowed to take pictures of the interior with them present. In the Casbah you sense an underlying liberal culture that is completely absent in wider Algiers.

The city, however, is struggling to maintain the integrity of the Casbah. It may be a World Heritage Site, but many of the buildings are in very poor structural condition and there are no funds to restore much of the private housing. Overpopulation exacerbates the problem, but there is no clear idea of the Casbah's exact population – estimates vary between 40,000 and 70,000 – and squatting is rife. Tighter control of planning is apparently preventing the repetition of recent brutal additions, but the area is still in need of investment and a realistic preservation strategy. At the lower end, the historic Casbah merges into the French colonial architecture and streets of the 'European' city, where you are advised to put away your camera and watch your wallet. Paradoxically, like some South African townships, the Casbah seems a safer and more civil place to be. 

Right_ French colonial additions near the harbour; paradoxically, the Casbah seems safer and more civil than the 'European' city
Below_ A jewellery workshop, one of the many small workspaces characteristic of the area
Far right, top_ View from the Casbah towards the Bay of Algiers and the city
Far right, centre_ Texture of Casbah structures, though there is much physical decay
Far right, bottom_ A street at the bottom of the Casbah





COMPETITION

THE AR REVEALS THE FIVE WINNING ENTRIES FOR THE TRIENNIAL CAA STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION, WHICH CALLED FOR A FITTING MEMORIAL TO A SIGNIFICANT PAST EVENT

WRITER

CATHERINE SLESSOR

The eighth Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) International Student Design Competition was for a memorial commemorating a significant event. Students could choose both the event and the site, but the event had to be real and worthy of remembrance – for instance, a famous battle, disaster, oration, revolution, strike, act of bravery or celebration.

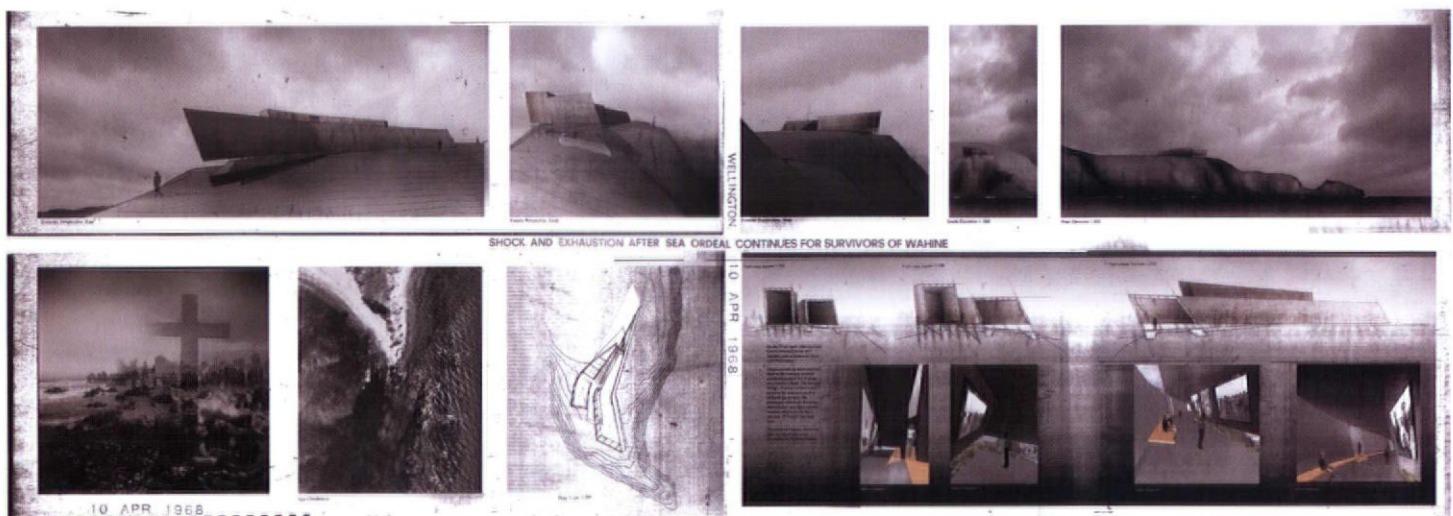
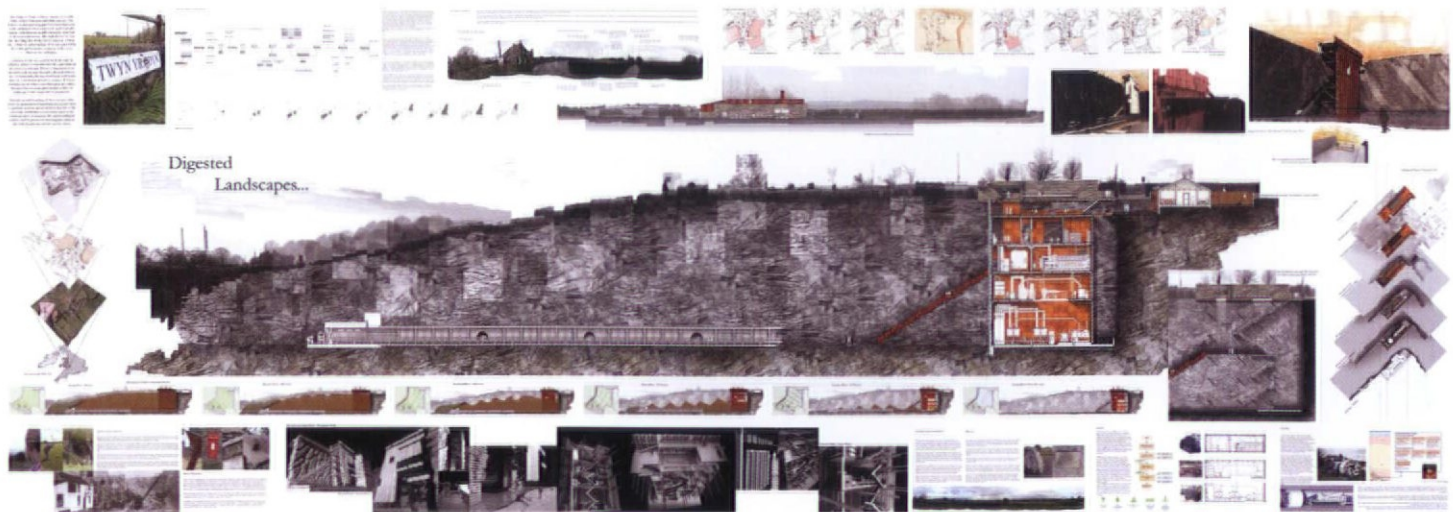
Certain historical events help to shape a society's identity and the more significant ones, such as wars and revolutions, are often marked with memorials and monuments. These can become historical and cultural points of reference for that society. But many past events go unmarked and unremembered, and lose their significance. Competitors were asked to identify such an event in their own country (for which an

appropriate memorial does not already exist) and submit proposals for a building or structure that will make manifest the memory. The competition jury was interested in ideas that explored the nature of a memorial in contemporary society and how students responded to a complex interaction of environmental, social, cultural and economic factors.

The jury met in Colombo, Sri Lanka, just before the opening of the triennial CAA Conference (*see page 25*). The jury comprised Ashley de Vos (architect and academic, Sri Lanka), DB Nawarathna (architect and convener of ARCASIA Awards, Sri Lanka), Kerry Clare (teacher and director of Architectus, Australia) and Catherine Slessor (editor of the AR, UK). Animated by a lively debate and fortified by a splendid curry lunch, the jury considered 91 entries

from 16 countries. Since the last CAA student competition (AR July 2007), entry has been open to students from all over the world, not just the Commonwealth.

Entries were astonishingly diverse, encompassing an impressive (and occasionally offbeat) range of subject matter, from political protests and natural disasters to the untimely death of Australian actor Heath Ledger. Many were extremely thoughtful submissions that showed great sensitivity in their physical and experiential approaches to commemorating often quite traumatic events. The skill with which these architectural narratives connect with society, shaping culture and collective memory, can be clearly discerned in all five prizewinning schemes, which are described in more detail here.



Top_ The winning entry, *Digested Landscapes* by Simon Crockford, is a response to the history of quarrying in a village in Wales. This entry calls for a re-excitation of the quarry over time

Above_ Thomas Ibbotson's *Memorial to the Wahine Disaster* commemorates one of New Zealand's worst maritime accidents, the sinking of the *Wahine* ferry in 1968

Left_ Joint third prize-winner Aisan Kianmehr's *Azadi Square* highlights the protests in Iran in the wake of the presidential election

MANY SUBMISSIONS SHOWED GREAT SENSITIVITY IN THEIR APPROACHES TO COMMEMORATING OFTEN QUITE TRAUMATIC EVENTS

FIRST PRIZE £2,500

SIMON CROCKFORD.
6TH YEAR, UNIVERSITY
OF NOTTINGHAM, UK.
DIGESTED LANDSCAPE

This highly sophisticated and sensitive scheme commemorates the long history of quarrying in the village of Twyn-yr-Odyn in rural Wales. The unorthodox choice of subject matter is the cauterisation of an industrial past and how this can be reclaimed and reconnected to the present through physical and experiential means. The jury admired the scheme's powerful yet poetic response to its site, an infilled former quarry that would gradually be re-excavated over time. Jurors were also impressed by the forensic level of detail, indicating the great thought that had clearly gone into the project. An especially elegant and lucid

presentation brought complex ideas vividly to life. A unanimous and outstanding overall winner.

SECOND PRIZE £1,000

THOMAS IBBOTSON.
4TH YEAR, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
OF WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.
MEMORIAL TO THE WAHINE DISASTER
A clifftop structure commemorates one of New Zealand's worst maritime disasters, the sinking of the Wahine ferry in 1968 with the loss of 53 lives. Jurors thought the relationship between a dramatic site and emotive subject matter extremely well handled. The building looks both outwards, to the site of the sinking, and inwards, to focus on the poignant historic and human impact of the disaster. A tranquil internal realm provides a fitting space for contemplation.

EQUAL THIRD PRIZE £300

HARRY CROUCHER.
2ND YEAR, UNITEC, AUCKLAND,
NEW ZEALAND.
MAUAHARANUI
A memorial to a bloody internecine Maori conflict in the late 17th century, an event which introduced muskets to tribal warfare with devastating consequences. Armed with these new weapons, one tribe virtually wiped out another. Mauaharanui means 'place of great wrongdoing' and the project tactfully steers visitors around the cliff and beach where the massacre took place. The jury was impressed by the thoughtful reciprocity between architecture and place, and the robust yet dignified quality of the individual buildings.

EQUAL THIRD PRIZE £300

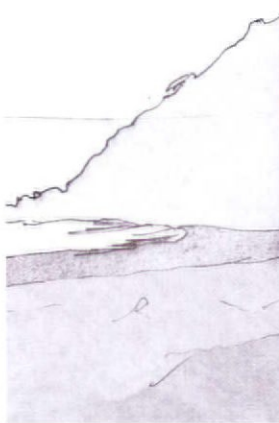
AISAN KIANMEHR.
3RD YEAR, UNIVERSITY OF PUTRA,
MALAYSIA.
AZADI SQUARE
Set in Tehran's Azadi Square, this imaginative and provocative project draws public attention to the scandal of last year's Iranian presidential election and the wave of protest and political activism that was sparked in its wake. Jurors admired the scheme's strong urban design quality and the powerful way in which the building captured, articulated and memorialised public discontent.

BEST SUBMISSION BY A FIRST OR SECOND YEAR STUDENT

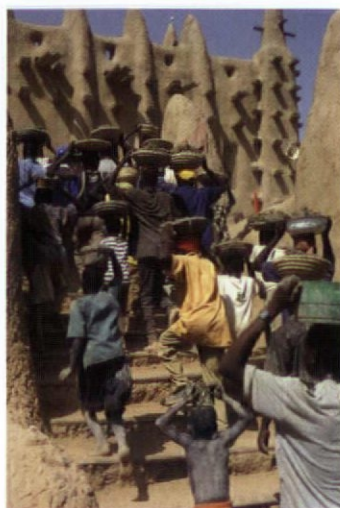
MATTHEW ROBERTS.
2ND YEAR, UNITEC, AUCKLAND,
NEW ZEALAND.
BACK TO THE FUTURE
The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi marked the founding of New Zealand. Today, only a flagpole commemorates the site where the treaty was signed. Emphasising the connection between colonialism and indigenous people, this project places a series of timber Maori stele around the site, which will weather over time. The jury thought this a simple yet effective response to the challenges and complexities of commemorating nationhood. 



Left_ Harry Croucher's entry, Mauaharanui, guides visitors across the beach and clifftops that formed the setting for a particularly bloody Maori conflict, in which muskets were newly used to devastating effect
Below_ Matthew Roberts' Back To The Future won the award for best first or second year student submission. His proposal incorporates a number of timber Maori stele at the site of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, which marked the founding of New Zealand



Drums beat as women bring buckets of water and boys trample mud and water to make plaster



EXHIBITION / Djenné:
African City of Mud
RIBA, London
Until 29 April
www.architecture.com

Since being made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988, Djenné's fame has escalated. Its historic 1907 Great Mosque has become emblematic of West Africa, and the beauty of mud buildings in particular. With this image fixed in mind, I visited the RIBA's show on the architecture of this small town in Mali and the skills of its masons.

Many of Djenné's buildings, including the Great Mosque, are made from sun-baked mud bricks, set with a mud-based mortar, which are coated with a mud plaster that provides the sculptural element. The exhibition's comprehensive photos, drawings and selection of mason's tools left me reminiscing about the numerous half-built mud structures I have seen across Western Africa.

What I have never seen is the beautifully hand-crafted Great Mosque, with massive mud walls that vary in thickness depending on height, its walls impaled with bundles of rodier palms projecting from the surface.

The real discovery of the exhibition lies not with the architecture, but in the story of the community which maintains it. The classic images of the Great Mosque usually show it devoid of humans, but here we see astonishing imagery of thousands of mud-covered bodies rebuilding the mosque in an annual festival that repairs the building after the rainy season. You cannot help feeling humbled by the scale of what is essentially a labour of love.

Drums beat as women bring buckets of water, boys trample mud and water to make plaster and children ferry the plaster to the highly regarded masons, who climb up the projecting palms to replaster. The achievement of the RIBA's show lies in its ability to convey the coordination, energy and speed of a such process, which, amazingly, is finished by mid morning. I'm going to suggest drums at my next site visit.

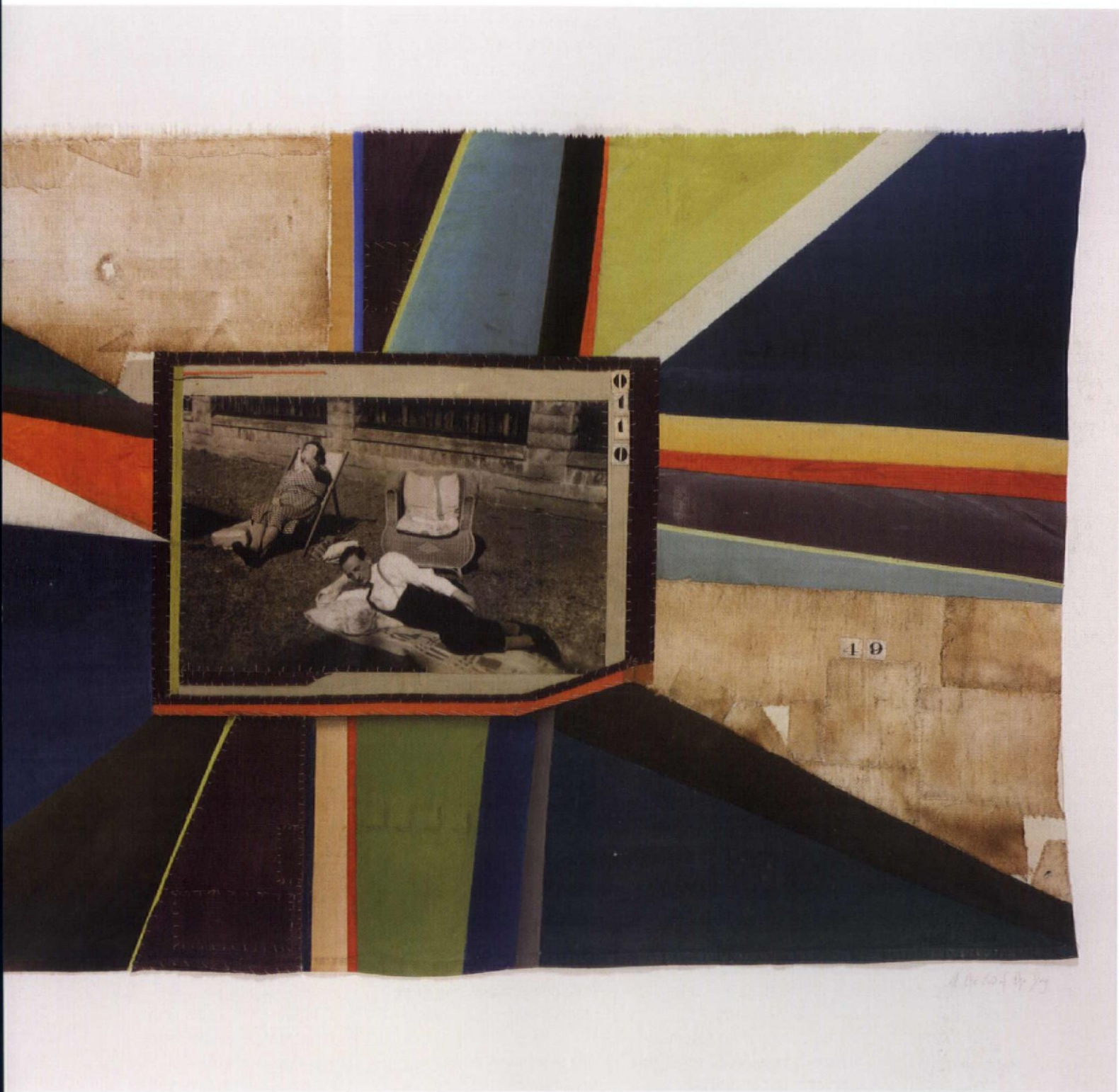
JON BESWICK

+ Goes below the surface of the historic relationship between community and building

— Leaves you wanting more – a bigger show next time?

Below_ Quilting is traditionally regarded as an innocuous feminine pastime, but as a new exhibition, *Quilts 1700-2010*, at London's V&A shows, it is rich in subversion, allusion and social commentary. Historic quilts mix with edgy contemporary works, as an age-old craft skill discovers new followers. Shown here is *At the End of the Day*, stitched by textile artist Natasha Kerr. Until 4 July.





NATASHA KERR © V&A IMAGES

Japan is now all original, producing some of the world's most creatively charged work

BOOK/ New Architecture in Japan

Yuki Sumner and
Naomi Pollock with David
Littlefield. Photography
by Edmund Sumner.
Merrell, 2010, £29.95

Flicking through the opening pages of this book, three key images present contrasting traits of Japanese architecture. There is of course much more to come, with over 600 photographs, two essays and over 100 case studies. Nevertheless, these introductory images seem particularly well chosen. Shot by photographer Edmund Sumner – with text by wife Yuki and co-authors Pollock and Littlefield – Atelier Bow-Wow's Gae House, Sou Fujimoto's Final Wooden House and Terunobu Fujimori's Takasugi-an illustrate the curious nature of contemporary Japanese architecture by setting an ingeniously planned domestic building alongside the nation's love of traditional craft and fascination with the absurd.

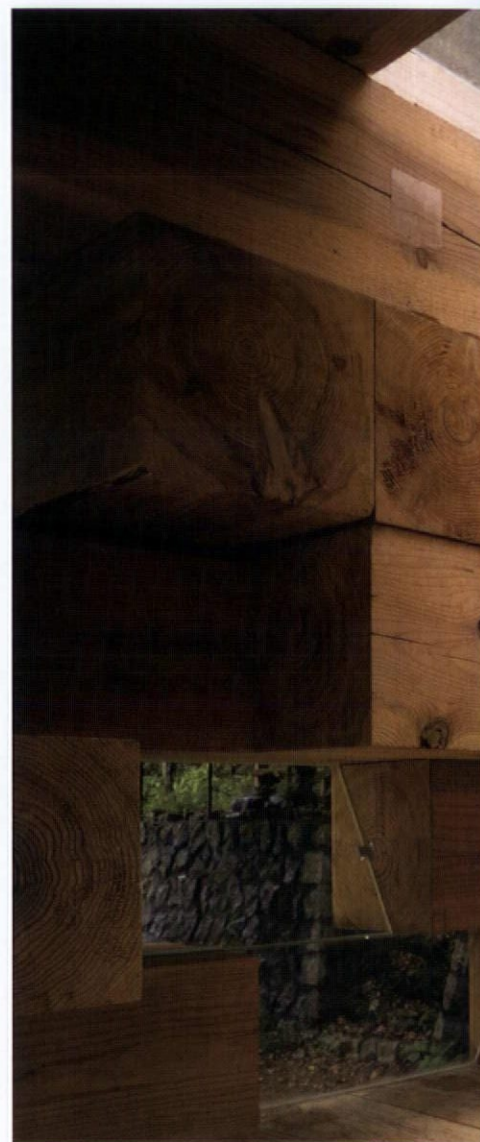
In one of the project's most celebrated images, Sumner's enthusiastic manner persuaded the client of Gae House to pose in his sunken study, where he prepares literary critiques with bikes hanging overhead and shoes neatly aligned next to the front door. With equal fluency, the photographer's interpretation of Fujimoto's rustic bunk barn shows how the interior



regularises but preserves the wilderness of the surrounding forest, while his ungrounded image of Fujimori's tree/tea house amplifies the manner in which this maverick architect takes history with a pinch of salt, as he takes tea within his own curious bird box. Whatever the context – be it city, suburb or woodland clearing – Sumner's shots surprise and delight, giving this book equal appeal to anyone with an interest in the culture or nature of this fascinating country. And, for those who want to delve deeper, essays bring first-hand accounts of the current

architectural scene.

Perhaps a victim of the tried and tested (and popular) intro-essay-case-study publishing format, there is little connection between Edmund and Yuki's observations in the book. The fact that the Sumners work so closely together, reading architecture in different media, could have produced far more critical tension had a more bespoke format been used to record their combined efforts. That said, however, the project texts are clear and concise and two essays cover the common ground of Japan's



haphazard and chaotic condition while successfully making their own mark. Yuki leads the narrative with a piece entitled *The Residue of Japan-ness*, in which she wrestles with describing the ambiguity of Japan-ness, saying that as 'a comfort zone from the nation's traumatic past ... subtle subversions of the norm

From left to right_ Atelier Bow-Wow's Gae House; Sou Fujimoto's Final Wooden House; Terunobou Fujimori's Takasugi-an, a tea house on stilts



offer temporary escape from stifling rules and regulations, rituals and protocols that plague its society', before focusing on two current dualities. First, the recent trend to embrace visual chaos, which goes against the tactic epitomised by Tadao Ando, who traditionally built solid walls to contain interiors. Second, the duality

between 'the jagged, earthy work of Fujimoto and Fujimori on one side; and the smooth, transparent, more refined output of Ito, Kengo Kuma and SANAA on the other'. Pollock also discusses variations of Japanese normality in her essay *Architecture in Japan: In Context*. Here she quotes architect Hitoshi Abe to describe



the current post-bubble condition, saying that 'until about 20 years ago, you often heard Japanese culture being dismissed as "all copies no originals" ... [but] it's now an indisputable fact that Japan has become a nation that exports culture.'

In accordance with Abe's claim, this book clearly shows that the best from Japan is now all original, producing some of the world's most creatively charged work in response to its remarkably energetic environment. With one or two

niggles, such as the omission of a contents map, this is by far the best book on Japan's recent architectural exports.

ROB GREGORY

+ Captures Japan's creative, chaotic condition

— A more bespoke format might have better suited the collaborative approach

A sequence of theatrical spaces that played with scale, atmosphere and colour

Below_ The Tribune at Strawberry Hill c. 1789, which contained Walpole's finest things



EXHIBITION / Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill

Until 4 July, V&A, London, UK, www.vam.ac.uk

'Visions... have always been my pastures... there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories, the babble of old people make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one.' So said Horace Walpole (1717-97), youngest son of Great Britain's first prime minister, Robert Walpole.

Walpole realised his dream

after acquiring a summer villa in Twickenham, south-west London, in 1747. He altered and extended it to create 'the castle... of my ancestors', and later renamed it Strawberry Hill. Strawberry Hill changed the course of architectural history. It was one of the earliest and most influential examples of Gothic Revival architecture, based on antiquarian printed design sources (the arched bookcases in the library were inspired by a choir screen seen in an engraving of London's Old St Paul's Cathedral). It was the first purpose-built, antiquarian 'museum' interior; a sequence of theatrical spaces that played

with scale, atmosphere and colour as a background to Walpole's collection of objects, all 'singular', 'unique', or 'rare'.

To coincide with Inskip + Jenkins Architects' £8 million renovation of Strawberry Hill, due to reopen later this year, a lively and colourful exhibition at the V&A brings together part of Walpole's collection of pictures, silver, ceramics, glass, miniatures, enamels and curious objects of vertu. Backgrounds of grey or faintly inscribed Gothic tracery on white paper evoke the atmosphere of 'gloomth' that Walpole created, and recall his remark that 'my castle is built of paper'.

The exhibition, designed by Block Architecture, first introduces us to the 'Strawberry Committee' of amateur designers: Walpole, John Chute, whose pivotal role was the 'oracle in taste', artist Richard Bentley and poet Thomas Gray. Walpole did not employ an architect until the later stages of development. He eventually commissioned Robert Adam for the round drawing room – even then dictating the design – and James Essex for the offices, executed by James Wyatt.

Next, we are taken through a series of dynamic, irregular spaces on a journey through the house. We encounter 'gloomth' in the hall and armoury – spaces that inspired Walpole's 1764 Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* – and in the refectory, which was part country-house dining room and part monastic

eating room. The library, designed by Chute, is Strawberry Hill's most serious essay in medieval Gothic. The Holbein chamber, focusing on the early 16th century, is followed by the state apartments, including the gallery, the round drawing room, the great north bedchamber, and finally the Tribune. Designed to contain Walpole's finest things, this room has 'the air of a Catholic chapel' and was named after the Tribuna, the room of treasures at the Uffizi in Florence, Italy.

The exhibition's display faithfully follows Walpole's picture-hanging principles, mixing portraits with landscapes and hanging canvases of different sizes side by side to give the impression of accretion over time. His 'principal curiosities' are identified with labels featuring a star. This exhibition is an unmissable opportunity to see part of Walpole's collection – one of the most unusual and interesting of the 18th-century, and surely an inspiration for that other great collector, John Soane.

MARION HARNEY

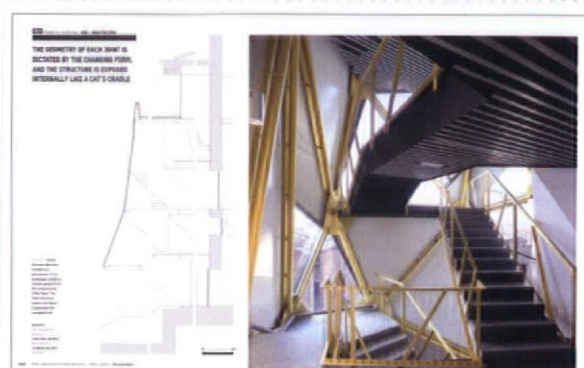
+ A chance to see Walpole's fascinating collection of 'singular' objects

– The exhibition design has too much 'gloomth' and not enough colour

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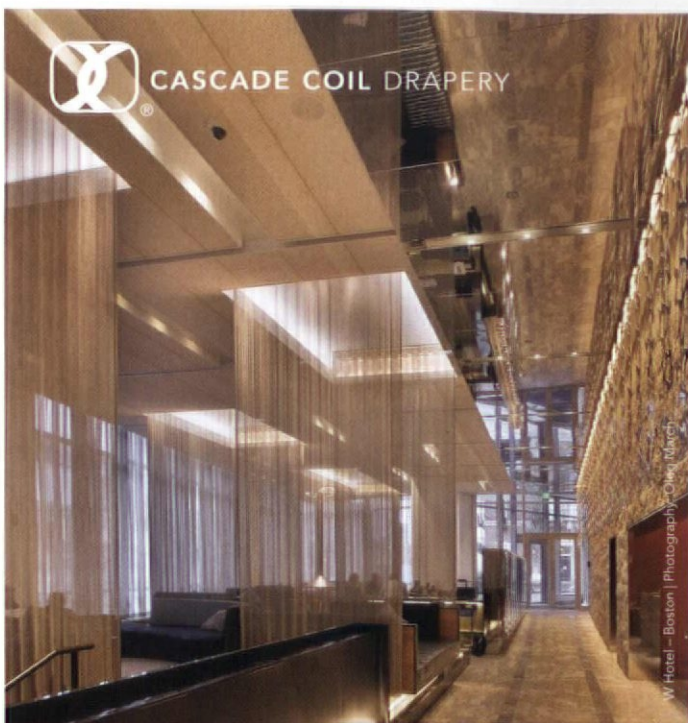
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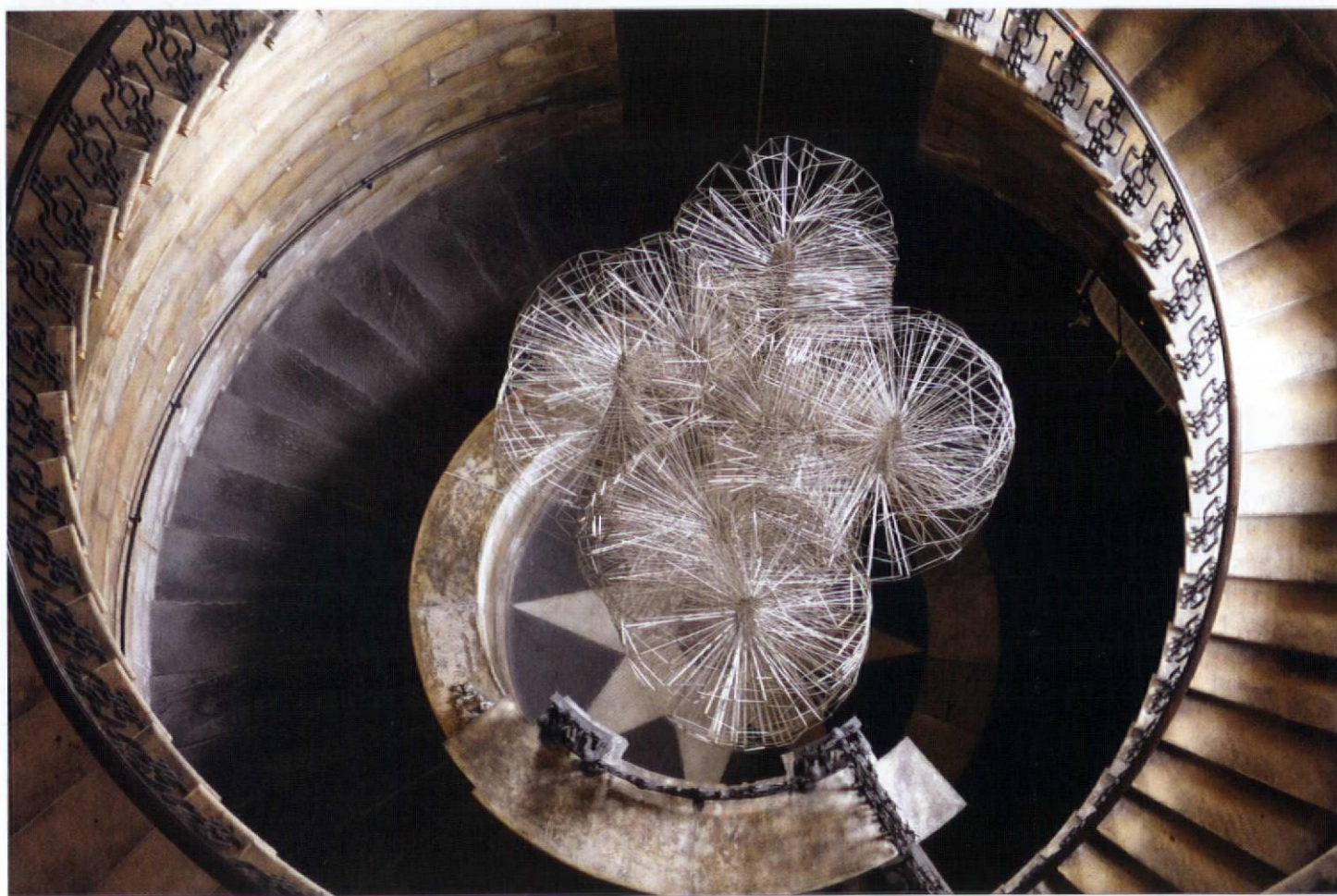
Le Petra, Ivry-sur-Seine,
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Architect:
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DELIGHT

Christopher Wren's famous Geometric Staircase at St Paul's Cathedral in London has been temporarily colonised by a site-specific installation, *Flare II*, by artist Antony Gormley. Suspended within the staircase's cylindrical void, like some anarchic, fractured Christmas bauble, Gormley's intricate wire-mesh sculpture depicts a figure

enveloped in a cloud. But are they flying or falling? Lucifer, the rebel angel, famously fell from heaven, so the temptation might be to read it as a meditation on the forces of grace and gravity. Gormley himself talks of the work as an 'attempt to use applied geometry to construct an energy field describing a human space in space'. It will be on view until the end of 2010.



GLENN COPPUS