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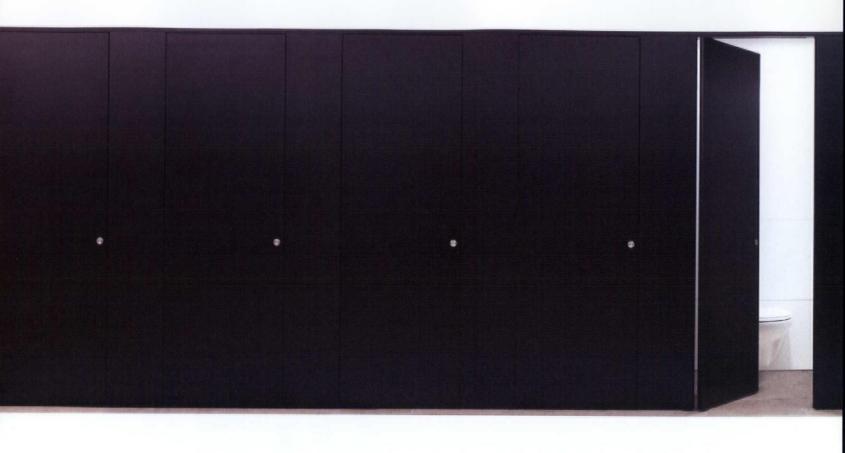
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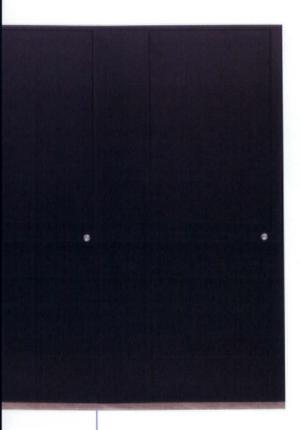
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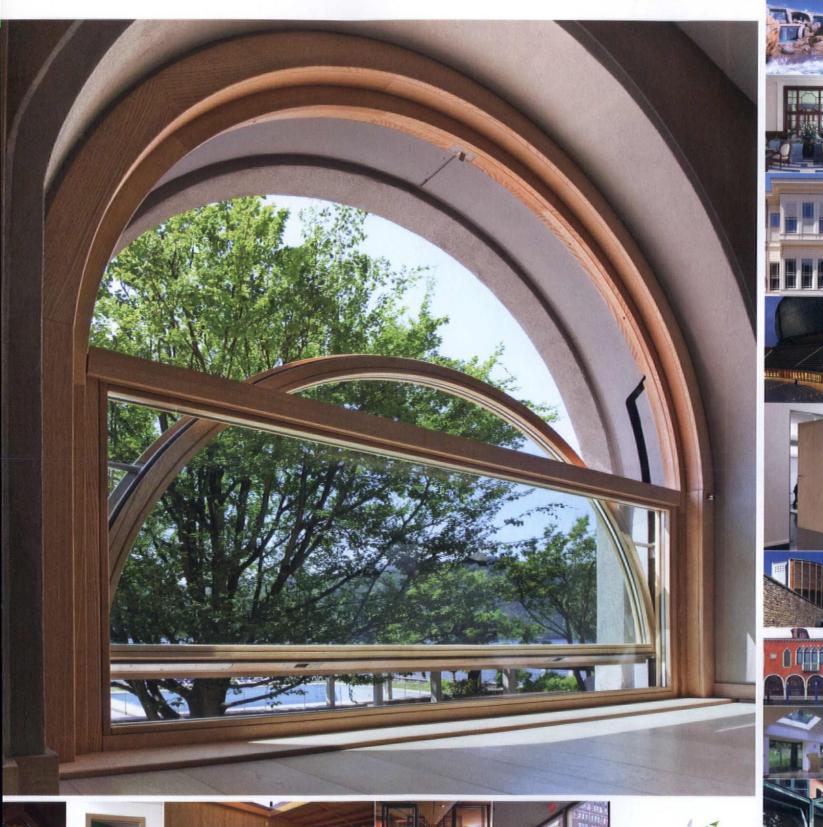
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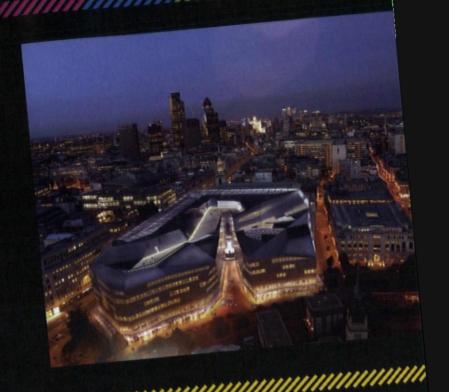






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Extolling ephemera, from the vernissage of Venice to the joy of pop-ups

Venice is like eating a box of chocolate liqueurs in one go,' Truman Capote once remarked. He meant the place, but his comment could equally apply to the 12th Architecture Biennale and the aura of unreality that temporarily descends on the city during the press vernissage. There's always far too much to absorb in far too short a time, but in this issue we distil the Biennale highlights, opening with a snatched prandial encounter with Rem Koolhaas (page 20) - who was awarded this year's Golden Lion for services to boundary pushing moving on to look at the best installations and pavilions (page 88), and concluding with a snippet from the archive of Cedric Price (page 98).

Under the directorial aegis of Kazuyo Sejima, this was one of the better Biennales: more thoughtful, less flashy and a reaffirmation of the sometimes remarkable capacity of architects from places as diverse as Rwanda and Bahrain to see the world in a new way. Activities in Venice tend to mirror the fortunes of architecture around the world, so this current zeitgeist is perhaps an inevitable consequence of wider events.

Nonetheless, it demonstrates how what is essentially a fleeting carnival of architectural ideas can still attract heavy hitters, shape critical thinking and open up new possibilities. Along with the Venice Biennale, the joy of the temporary underpins this issue, with Carmody Groarke's restaurant (page 50) and Studio Anne Holtrop's gallery (page 76), a pair of architectural mayflies that embody the ebullient spirit of summer and the increasing impermanence of our times.

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Mark Lamster, who critiques the 'Ground Zero mosque' debate in this issue, is a writer on arts and culture. He is the author of Master of Shadows (Nan A Talese, 2009), a political biography of painter Peter Paul Rubens, and is working on a biography of architect Philip Johnson. Find him at www.marklamster.com

Reviewing plans for Rhino City in Sudan, Lesley Lokko is an architect who has taught at various schools of architecture in the UK, US and South Africa. She now writes blockbusters instead, and has just released her fifth novel, One Secret Summer (Orion, 2010). She divides her time between London, Johannesburg and Accra

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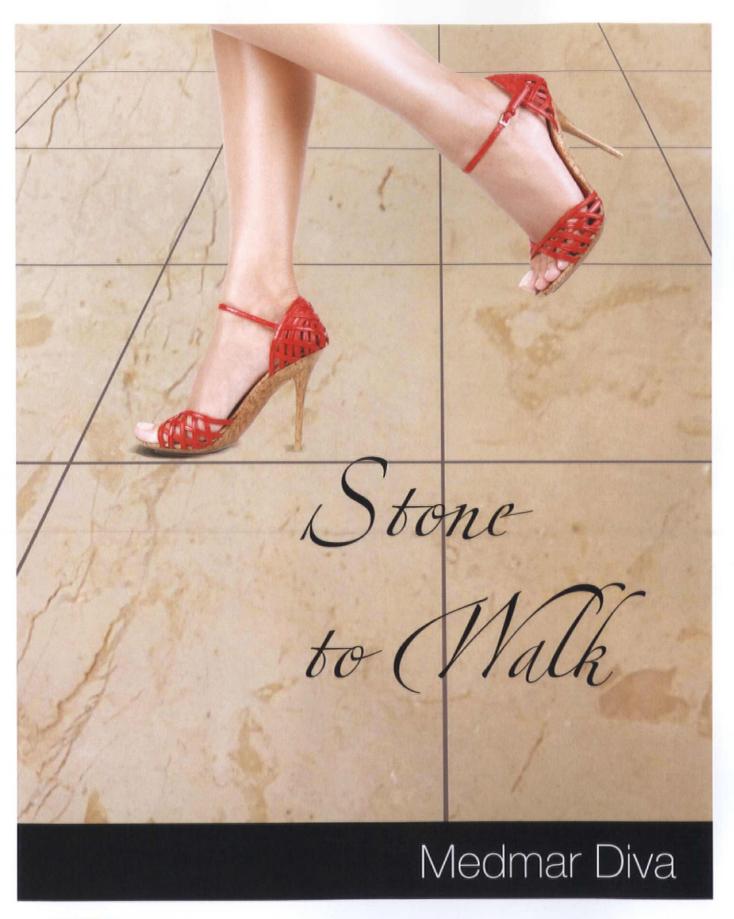


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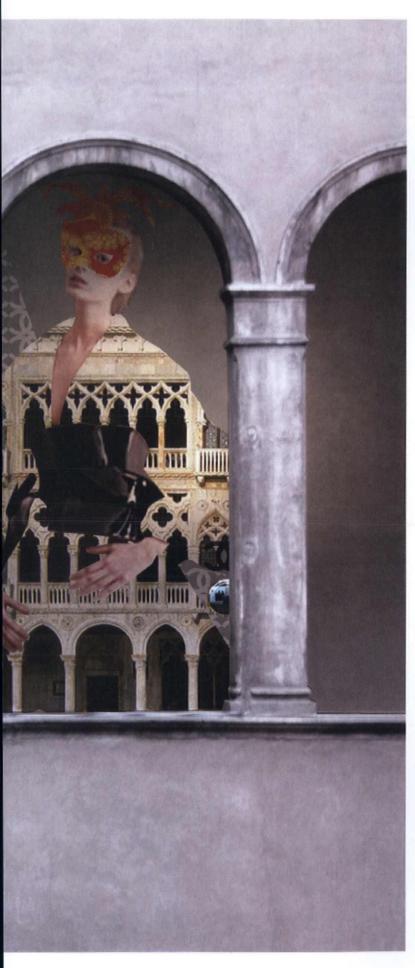






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VENICE, ITALY

A pizza with Rem Koolhaas, the Lion of Venice

PAUL FINCH

We are sitting outside Ristorante Giorgione on Via Garibaldi, on the second day of the Venice Biennale. Rem Koolhaas is the man of the moment, chosen by Kazuyo Sejima, this year's Biennale director, as winner of the Golden Lion award. Rem is talking nineteen to the dozen between mouthfuls of pizza (I am making do with spaghetti with clams) and sips of mineral water. The architecture correspondent of the Financial Times is taking copious notes.

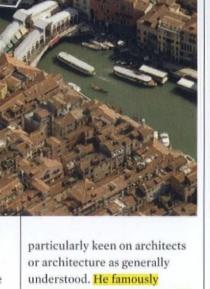
The Leone d'Oro award is more or less for lifetime achievement, but Mr K is emphatically not thinking about slowing down. As he says at the acceptance ceremony, 'It is a really wonderful moment to get a lifetime achievement award in the middle of my career. I will certainly treat it as an encouragement for further action.' Given that he is now 65, this looks like a Niemeyeresque aspiration, but the architecture practice he co-founded in 1975, OMA, seems to be firing on all cylinders

currently, with significant projects across the world.

In Venice itself, the Biennale is the occasion for the announcement that OMA is to transform the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, a 13th-century palazzo near the Rialto Bridge, for Benetton, creating what is described as a 'culturally programmed department store'. The project neatly combines three of Rem's interests: preservation (the subject of an OMA installation at the Biennale), shopping, and immensely wealthy families (think Prada). OMA is also exhibiting in the Hong Kong pavilion, showing masterplan proposals for a huge cultural district in West Kowloon, the subject of a year-long competition. This prompts a public discussion with the other competitors, Rocco Yim and Norman Foster.

The presentations are stimulating. Rem reminds us that he doesn't like competitions and doesn't normally do them, but having a year gave time ____





for thought - and to open an office to get under the skin of the Hong Kong situation - 'the Chinafication of OMA'. Their proposals are based on three villages, with a big park which is 'quasi-industrial rather than over-controlled leisure space'; Hong Kong is 'relentlessly programmatic' and 'inspiration, technicality and pragmatism' will be required.

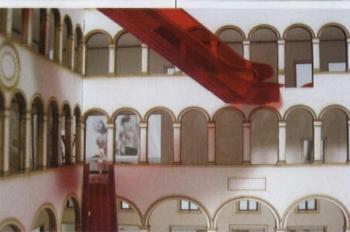
The Koolhaas aphorism is in evidence: 'This moment is the definitive death of the masterplan', to which Norman Foster ripostes: 'Long live the masterplan!' Rem thinks a big issue is how you create an 'artistic masterplan designed for artistic purposes'; he thinks in 10 years there will be a biennale based on graphic design 'to clear the messes we leave behind'. He wants to know why no architect has appeared on the cover of Time magazine since 1979 (Philip Johnson), and seems to think this was 'when we started using the word icon'.

Rem never gives the impression that he is

remarked that the profession is hopelessly suspended between 'megalomania and impotence'. choosing global workload. endless travel and unexpected initiatives as a route between. Needless to say, when OMA decided to run (through its research arm AMO) an architectural education programme, it picked Russia as the location. Together with his fellow director Reinier de Graaf. Rem presented the programme of the Moscow-based Strelka Institute in Venice.

Of course, Koolhaas has produced one iconic building after another because he and the practice are truly talented designers - but that is not what makes them so very distinctive. OMA's unique place in the world of architecture derives from an absolute determination to think more laterally about the world, engage with ideas that have little do with architecture as a technical discipline, and to





Previous page The proposed frescoed wall of 13th-century palazzo Fondaco dei Tedeschi, for Benetton Above left Location plan of the Benetton site Above, top left OMA's exhibition at the Giardini allowed visitors to tear off a souvenir

Above, top right_ Rem accepting the Golden Lion award at the Venice Biennale Above Interior of the Benetton proposal, with strident insertion of escalators

relish with deliberate cynicism the realpolitik of working with the wealthiest clients, the least democratic governments, the most extreme structural ideas. It wouldn't be enough to talk about conservation - it has to be preservation. As the consequences of the consumer society became increasingly suspect, Rem naturally chose shopping as the appropriate area for investigation with his Harvard students.

Rem's understanding of the world and its scripts, languages and navigation methods was all evident in his first groundbreaking production: Delirious New York, still an extraordinary read after more than 30 years. A decade after 9/11 and the architectural and political battles over what would replace the Twin Towers, would it be fanciful to imagine that Rem might embark on a third edition of his psychoarchitectural-historical city exploration? Only he could do it - a prince of the city that, unlike Venice, never sleeps.

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Proposed Muslim centre near Ground Zero stirs up an offensive

MARK LAMSTER

www.cordobainitiaive.org

Below_The site
of the proposed
cultural centre,
with messages
of support
chalked on to
the payement

Last November, when a Swiss ballot measure banned the construction of minarets, the New York Times responded with a prescient editorial calling it 'disgraceful' and a warning sign 'for all Western nations'. Less than a year later, that same brand of xenophobia has reared up just a few miles south of the paper's midtown headquarters, cloaked once more in an argument over architectural symbolism. The subject, in this

case, is the fate of a proposed Muslim cultural centre, originally known as Cordoba House and subsequently the more anodyne Park51, two blocks from the boundary of the former World Trade Center site.

The would-be building, a 13-storey, mixed-use structure with prayer facilities on just one floor, had been on the books for months, and only became a matter of contention in late summer when a series of right-wing commentators latched onto it in the midst of a bitter election season. And so the cultural centre, never mind its avowed mission to forge 'personal bonds across religious traditions', became to its enemies simply the Ground Zero Mosque, an outpost of 'Islamofascism' adjacent (sort of) to hallowed ground. Sarah Palin, writing on Twitter, claimed it 'stabs hearts'. Adopting the language of reason, opponents suggested moving it just a bit

further away from Ground Zero, so as not to offend the families of the victims.

Just what might constitute an acceptable distance (Chelsea? The Bronx? Rivadh?) remains an open question among the project's opponents. Neither the fact that Minoru Yamasaki's original World Trade Center towers were inspired by Moorish architecture, nor the fact that they housed a mosque before they were destroyed. nor that many innocent Muslims were killed in the attacks, seems to carry much weight with them. For that matter, as critic Karrie Jacobs recently asked, what will happen when a business that might be construed as Arab - Emirates airline was her example decides to open an office in the so-called Freedom Tower?

To anyone even remotely familiar with Lower Manhattan, the idea that Ground Zero is ringed by some kind of zone of propriety is patently ridiculous. Any number of discount retailers, gin joints, and fast-food outlets - not to mention a church and a synagogue are within close proximity to the former World Trade site. 'I don't know what the big deal is,' a stripper from a nude bar three blocks away told the Wall Street Journal. If there's anything truly offensive at Ground Zero, it's the endless parade of vendors hawking tawdry 9/11 ephemera to tourists.

More to the point, and as New York's independent-minded mayor, Mike Bloomberg, has argued valiantly, whether or not one finds the project offensive is irrelevant. 'We may not always agree with every one of our neighbours,' said the mayor. 'That's life. And it's part of living in such a diverse and dense city.' Just how dense it will be is to be determined.



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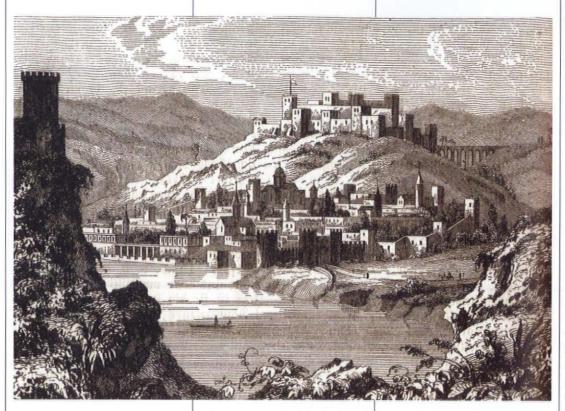
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An exemplary scheme to breathe new life into a crumbling city

NICK SHAVISHVILI



A uniquely historic city, the Georgian capital Tbilisi epitomises the quandary for so many governments in the developing world. Like others in these financially straitened times – Old Cairo, Riga, Odessa, Lima, Mexico City, the magnificent ancient Yemeni cities and others – lack of funds precludes Tbilisi from seizing an architectural solution to the urgent need for economic regeneration.

Old Tbilisi is on the tentative list of UNESCO's World Heritage sites of significant architectural and urban value, and is a candidate for inclusion on the 100 most endangered urban historic sites. The ambition, according to the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), is its continuation 'as a homogeneous urban organism (which) is still alive and preserved not in scattered individual buildings, but in its whole entity'.

Georgia must find the money to rescue its banks and supply badly-needed city jobs by reviving its highly labourintensive construction industry. The dilemma is how to do this at the same time as preserving the Old Town, one of the world's oldest Christian cities.
Successful restoration of Old Tbilisi – described by ICOMOS as a 'city chronicler' whose buildings 'offer a fascinating narrative of its historic life from the 5th century AD to the present' – should, on the precedent of other historic sites, generate plentiful tourist revenues and jobs.

Old Tbilisi and its inhabitants have an indomitable spirit (it has survived 29 invasions) that has kept it alive. This is reflected in the vitality and charm contained in its vernacular architecture built over 1,500 years, an eclectic mix of Middle Eastern and European influences. It is a jumble of ancient potholed crooked streets, crumbling walled courtyards, wonky overhanging balconies, amazing wrought-iron gates and doors, higgledy-piggledy spiral stairs and fine (if peeling and battered) examples of art nouveau and neo-classicism.

The architecture tells
the story of Old Tbilisi's long
cosmopolitan tradition –
from Arabs in medieval times,
Persians, Turks, Greeks,
Armenians, Azeris, Jews, and
later Russians have all settled
here alongside indigenous
Georgians. The town was first
built in 500AD, with Dachi, the
heir of one of Georgia's greatest
kings, constructing the capital
according to his father's plans
and incorporating churches
that remain standing to this day.

And despite significant intervention over the centuries, the original connection between the ancient Silk Road trading city and its environs is still preserved. The Old City is sited along the River Mtkvari, with its ancient narrow streets winding up a picturesque mountain ridge to a 4th century fortress.

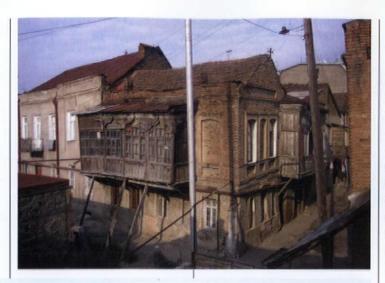
But charming as Old Tbilisi may look, the fact remains that it is in a terrible state.

After decades of neglect and an earthquake or two, some historic churches and houses have already collapsed and been lost. Residents are leaving, adding to the sense of abandonment. Houses leak and lack proper water, gas or electricity supplies.

Part of Old Tbilisi's challenge is its scale. The entire size of the region is 18.7km², of which 4.3km² comprises the oldest buildings and 9.1km² the whole area where —

A MANIA; SERGEY PROKUDIN-GORSKY

Previous page Early 19th century engraving of Old Tbilisi showing the main residential district of Kala and the ancient Narikala Fortress Right_A 19th century house in the Old Tbilisi district of Isani Below View of Tbilisi in the early 20th century





construction is regulated on account of the buildings' age. The total number of properties protected by the state within the above two territories is 1,768. The law says they cannot be destroyed, even if damaged, but have to be replicated precisely.

The Georgian government has made significant progress, despite the complexity of the issues faced. However, progress has been stymied by world events. The global economic crisis exerted more pressure to the difficulties of Russia's 2008 invasion and 2006 economic blockade, with an

attendant fall in GDP and rise in unemployment. (Georgia's chaos after the latter did not help inspire confidence in its 2007 application for World Heritage status for Old Tbilisi).

International investment has been frozen after the world crisis and Russio-Georgian war. The 158 private residential property developers, some of whom had been carrying out reconstruction work in the Old Town, are immobilised by the Georgian banks' inability to lend. The Tbilisi building industry, once worth £640 million and employing around

38,000 – more when small service companies are added in – has nearly collapsed.

Against this background, 50,000-plus inhabitants of Old Tbilisi voiced their discontent at slum dwelling. In response, in 2009 the government introduced a scheme, New Life of Old Tbilisi. Much of the financial jigsaw has been put in place with a first-step scheme that is regarded as a role model by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and leading academics. On the recommendation of World

Bank officials, a conference to discuss the Tbilisi model is being planned for 2011.

The measures aim to satisfy key groups in urban regeneration. Banks are to issue new loans guaranteed by state purchase and incorporate old debts and interest into the land price, re-starting profitable financing of a sector that is no longer toxic for them. Developers will complete unfinished constructions, meet old and new commitments. clear all debts, and move on to new jobs. Tbilisi will revive a free housing programme for the slum-dwellers and take over property in Old Tbilisi now available for restoration.

The Georgian government would generate activity through construction work and services that could add as much as £390 million to the economy. Its risk is limited by the increase in tax revenues and the sale value of Old Tbilisi land. The scheme is for developers, or other bidders, to buy it and restore the old buildings. So far the Georgian government has put in two tranches of money to what is envisaged to be a three-to-fouryear £137 million plan. Here good progress is being made.

The next step will be another application for World Heritage status and some badly needed international funding from reconstruction and restoration programmes such as the World Bank, EBRD or Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

But key to the successful continuation of the scheme, in Western eyes certainly, is the development of a plan of what should actually happen to Old Tbilisi to help retain its vibrancy and bring economic activity while restoring it as a magnet for tourists. This, potentially a huge economic generator, has yet to be added to the jigsaw.

"We wanted to directly benefit the site."



John M. Gunn, Biologist at Laurentian University, winner of the Holcim Awards Bronze 2008 North America: Center for freshwater restoration and research, Sudbury, Canada.

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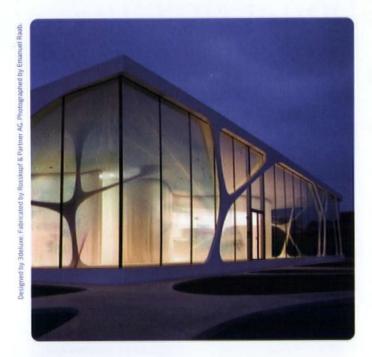
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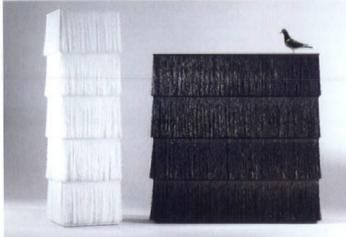


The design symposium that declared the majority of product design redundant

JACK SELF

www.alvaraalto.fi/designseminar/2010





Top Subplant 5 artwork by Icelandic graphic artist Katrin Olina Above_Ideas exchanged between Parisian Inga Sempé and paintbrush manufacturers led to Brosse, cupboards sheathed in bristles for Italian furniture designer Edra

For a gathering of international product designers, the 2010 Alvar Aalto Design Seminar reached an unexpected consensus. Entitled 'Invisible: the Origin of Product Identity', the sixth annual event aimed to question the underlying values that inform contemporary design, but ultimately concluded that the majority of product design is unnecessary.

'Ninety-five per cent of designers are working for just six to eight per cent of all consumers,' claimed Hans
Maier-Aichen, founder of the
Authentics consumer products
brand and professor of product
design at Karlsruhe University of
Arts and Design. 'The majority
of these designers live off novelty,
plagiarism and serialisation.'

Maier-Aichen went on to attack the basic morality of contemporary design, asking: are the objects we design really serving useful purposes? Rather than producing another iteration of a faceless and exchangeable product, how might designers employ altruism in their work? He gave developing world examples of the One Laptop Per Child technology programme and LifeStraw, a simple water purification device.

What the speakers rejected was design that, while perhaps materially durable, was susceptible to psychological redundancy – passing fashion and fads – and almost inevitably this guided the conversation towards notions of sustainability. Maier-Aichen's biodegradable bin, or Swedish designer Monica Förster's collapsible cloud room – an inflatable nylon meeting space – exemplified objects that are designed to have short, useful lives.

As graphic artist Katrin Olina pointed out, the obverse of thinking about sustainability in terms of short lifespan and recyclable materials is to pursue the durable, the eternal, or the absolute. Through her artwork, the Icelander presented snapshots of imaginary ecosystems in states of flux or equilibrium. Her fantastic worlds pivot on the positive and negative consequences of hyper-globalisation, exploring the complex relationship between humanity and nature.

The highlight of the seminar was undoubtedly the final speaker, Naoto Fukasawa, perhaps best known for his role at Muji. His basic philosophy is that designers should avoid creating unnecessary objects.

His work appeals to the Jungian archetype – a basic form of images that catalyses communal subconscious. 'People are aware of what they want, but they are not conscious about it,' he says. 'If you ask them they will have no clue, but present them with the archetypal object and they will say: "I have been looking for something like this."

This means that for the designer, product design becomes less about creating something new and more about finding forms already within us. It is more important to re-circulate and reinforce common images of, say, the perfect chair than it is to create something meaningless and new.

GALICIA, SPAIN

The 'illusion of plans': Eisenman's landmark vision is a conjuring trick

WILLIAM JR CURTIS

www.cidadedacultura.org

Santiago de Compostela is one of those cities that feels as if it has all been carved out of a single material, in this case granite. The streets and squares, the monasteries and churches, whatever their historical period, contribute to an ensemble that is embedded in an ancient landscape. The terraces and stone walls of the countryside invade the town, while the plazas offer framed views over the surrounding hills. Santiago is of course the final destination on the pilgrimage route across France and northern Spain, and the cathedral marks the spot where the apostle Saint James is supposed to be buried. Over the centuries it has imported architectural models from elsewhere and blended them with its own distinctive vernacular and topography. The underlying geology seems to transcend time.

In the 1980s and 1990s
Santiago de Compostela
underwent a rapid but
intelligently planned
modernisation under the
leadership of the Socialist mayor
of the time, Xerardo Estévez.
Inspired by his former
architectural mentor Oriol
Bohigas, who transformed
Barcelona in the pre-Olympic
Games period, Estévez sought
a balance between the

preservation of historic buildings and spaces, and the creation of a new cultural infrastructure. Several architectural competitions were organised to plan institutional buildings. The high point of this period was the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea (1989-94) by Álvaro Siza, which managed to stitch back the broken urban fabric to one side of the city. This immensely subtle work abstracted the historical context and the tilting terrain in its overall form, threading an architectural promenade through a floating superstructure of top-lit gallery spaces. The fractured convent garden to the rear was transformed into a public park of platforms and ramps providing views over the city.

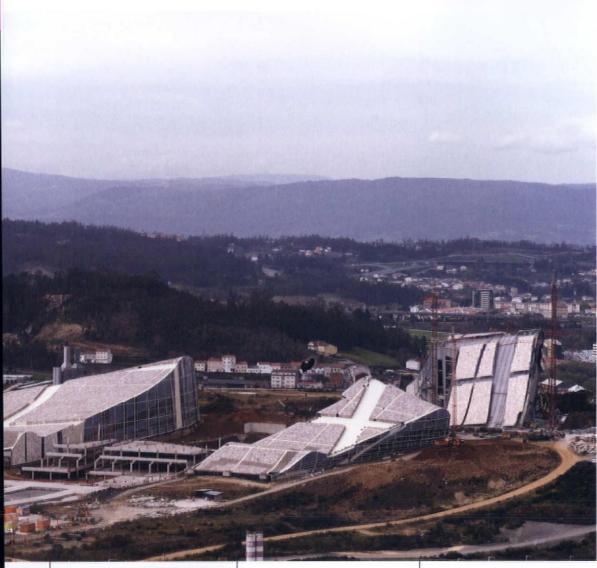
At the end of the 1990s it was the conservatives of the local government under the presidency of Manuel Fraga (a remnant of Franco's regime) who projected their vision of the future for Santiago in the form of a loosely defined City of Culture to stand on the top of Monte Gaias, roughly 3km from the hill crowned by the old city and its cathedral. This vast programme originally included a museum, a library, a centre of new technologies and (among other things) a concert hall. The reserved parcel of land extended

over 700,000m2. Clearly under the influence of the so-called Bilbao Effect, the supporters of this megalomaniac project organised an international competition and invited several members of the 'star system' to participate, including Rem Koolhaas, Jean Nouvel and Peter Eisenman. In addition there were local architects of outstanding quality such as Manuel Gallego Jorreto, whose solution was in fact the best adapted to the site, the use, the symbolic function and the need to construct in several stages.

But the client and some members of the jury felt that an 'iconic' building by an international star was what was needed, so they insisted on the sensationalist project by Peter Eisenman which, it was claimed by some, responded to the topography of the place. The competition project is preserved in a small cardboard model set into a cardboard landscape with a cardboard version of the old city to one side, and it is true that at this scale and in a unified material, the image of a folded artificial landscape sliced by crossing streets is fairly seductive. Eisenman's presentation was accompanied by computer drawings which gave the impression that the project had been 'generated' by scanning the structure of









Left Like its cardboard counterpart, the presentation model in timber has a more sympathetic subtlety, unifying context and proposal in a single material Above The City of Culture during construction reveals the fabric-folding of the model to be more ski-slope in real life

the old city then distorting it in a fractured geometry. The plan shape of the vast new 'city' was also traced to the shape of a shell, the emblem of Saint James and of the pilgrimage route. There was in turn an overlaid grid (a customary Eisenman device). The complex thus combined several geometrical systems and emerged as a sort of palimpsest, supposedly filtering the natural surroundings into the artificial world of the architecture.

Eisenman's project for Galicia summed up several years of research into fragmentation, striation, and interstitial space. Folds, of course, were very much in fashion at the time and Eisenman was forever sexing up his dossiers with a little French theory, for example quotations from Deleuze on Le Pli (The Fold). Some of his followers in turn introduced a pseudoscientific badinage concerning strings and algorithmic transformations. Behind the smokescreen of pretentious theorising, Eisenman is in fact a formalist who raids sources and manipulates forms for their own sake, leaving aside the problem of content. For all the promotional chatter, the City of Culture in Galicia seems to have been inspired fairly directly by an example in the realm of land art: Grande Cretto in Gibellina, Sicily (1985-9) designed by Alberto Burri as a memorial to the earthquake of 1968. This takes the form of a solidified 'map' of the destroyed city made from concrete and rubble, with folding shapes, incised streets, and the striations of a distorted grid laid out across the landscape.

Eleven years later Eisenman's project for the City of Culture is less than half constructed and the original budget of a little over 100 million euros has more than quadrupled; the programme has also continued to change, with talk now of a major centre of contemporary art. There is enough already built to get some idea of how things may look, and one section is even open to the public. The project promoted for its topographical sensitivity in fact required the complete decapitation of Monte Gaias and the removal of millions of cubic metres of soil. The 'delicate folds' of the competition model have translated into vast looping curves and surging roof surfaces that suggest the vulgarity of a railway in a funfair rather than abstractions of landscape. They are encrusted with a thin veneer of granite panels (imported from Brazil) of varying colour ____

and are cut by huge grooves that erode their shape. Eisenman is no sculptor and has apparently failed to translate his own intentions into cogent threedimensional spaces and forms.

There is nothing new in this: even Eisenman's supporters have had to admit his difficulties in constructing and materialising concepts. The glass curtain walls are a case in point: some of these are over 40 metres high and require a structure of their own which muddles the composition. The surfaces are sliced this way and that, with decorative mullions that correspond to some Eisenmanian geometry but fail to cohere as a pattern and give the impression of a skin-deep commercial architecture. The few completed interiors reveal a palette of plasterboard panels painted white, departing at angles and tracing serpentine curves. The effects of light are quite appealing and Eisenman has followed his research into transparency but all of this complexity ends up being monotonous and leads to an impression of sameness. There is too much architectural self consciousness and insufficient attention to human occupation and use. Here and there you stumble across a reddish diagonal line, then gradually figure out that this is supposed to register the presence of a skewed grid. Some of the geometries turn out to be merely cosmetic. It is a case of what Le Corbusier called 'the illusion of plans'. Then there are those two unfortunate towers designed by John Heiduk, which Eisenman included as a favour to a friend; like giant bottles they take on the character of a folly and contribute further to the erosion of the seriousness of the scheme.

In the lobby of the archive building, with its contorted









and empty shelves, there is a curious video that presents Eisenman as a sort of magus or showman, repeating the same spells and incantations time and time again in an uninterrupted loop, with a translation text running underneath as in a news announcement. The City of Culture will help the people of Galicia understand their place in the world; it will be an 'icon' for Compostela (as if it needed another); it will recall the routes of the pilgrims and the shell of Saint James; it will be an obligatory visit for architourists; it will distil the granite of the landscape and the glass facades of traditional architecture... You look for

the evidence of all this in these vast, twisting halls of skin-deep materials and colliding details which, for one recent North American visitor, conjured up the milieu and tackiness of a shopping mall.

Did Fraga really entertain pharaohic dreams of a monument and a public memorial? With this gigantic project the taxpayers of Galicia may be getting a shipwreck of the star system summing up its empty gestures and peddled political delusions. The City of Culture is still years away from completion and will eventually cost a fortune to run and maintain. It is just possible that the magical Bilbao Effect may not work on this occasion.

Istanbul Collection By Ross Lovegrove 1-175 reddot design award winner 2006 VitrA-sponsors of WAF World **Architecture Festival** VitrA

JUBA, SUDAN

The pursuit of political independence... and a city shaped like a rhinoceros

LESLEY LOKKO

Rhino City. The new capital of the work-in-progress that is Southern Sudan. A city in the shape of a rhinoceros. An otherworldly, fantastical piece of town planning in one of the world's newest states, although it's hard to determine (zoology aside) to whom the scheme properly 'belongs'. Rumours abound.

Plans for the expansion of what is currently the city of Juba are said to have been drawn up by a Sudanese contracting outfit and a Canadian firm, UAS.

A quick internet search reveals UAS 'has been providing innovative solutions to clients in the Aquaculture, Animal Feed, Forestry, Fertilizer, Food and Grain industries since 1974.' Well, I suppose Rhino City is innovative. Up to a point. It's the

sort of scheme that produces a knowing, humorous sigh. Here we go again.

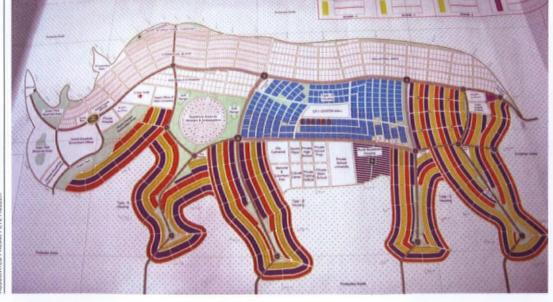
In the scramble for Africa, town planning is only the latest tool in a 1,000-year tragic history of skills-for-resources transfer. Southern Sudan, the would-be breakaway state, has yet to gain full independence and here come the experts, ready to put into motion what they would never dare do at home – three cities in the shape of a rhino, a giraffe and a pineapple. All native, of course, to the state-in-waiting.

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, has a complex history of colonisation and domination, not only by the usual European suspects, but also by Egypt. British rule, lasting just under a century, exacerbated the tensions between the Muslim, Arabic-influenced north and the largely Christian, black African south. Southern Sudan's attempts to break free are, as ever, linked inextricably to the divide-and-rule policies of both.

In January, a referendum will determine whether the 8 million Southern Sudanese will, in fact, go it alone. Rich in natural resources, with impressive annual economic growth figures (roughly 10 per cent, in stark contrast to Europe's 2-3 per cent current figures), Sudan is an investor's dream, pesky politics and local idiosyncrasies aside. No wonder everyone's pouring in. The conditions that make it possible to even contemplate building a city in the shape of

a pineapple owe as much to the half-crazed search for another El Dorado as they do to the hopeless naivety of the government officials who either commissioned the plans, or worse, sanctioned them.

But the tale of these three cities is part of a wider discussion, that of contemporary African urbanism, both academic and 'real', that has somehow lost its way. Mercer's Quality of Living Survey ranks cities according to a range of criteria, which multi-national companies draw upon when determining pay-scales and remuneration. For countries in the developing world, whose economies rely rather more heavily on the goodwill of foreign 'experts' and investors, Mercer's findings actually carry some weight. Of the 221 cities that were ranked in 2010, the only African city not occupying the bottom slots was Cape Town. This isn't to say that life in Lagos or Lusaka is intolerable - far from it. Rather, the attempts to draw out a credible set of alternatives (to pineapples and rhinos) that the town planners of what could arguably be the most interesting, challenging and, yes, exciting urban project in recent times might look to - the new capital city of a soon-to-be-established independent state - have failed. The raw material is fascinating, the solid, awe-inspiring stuff of history. Freedom, independence, equality, the future . . . not a million miles away from the thinking that gave rise to the modern movement. There's been an explosion in interest in African cities recently, with high-profile architects and thinkers devoting time, energy and resources into discovering what makes them tick. The city planners of Southern Sudan should take note. We all should.



OCIATED DRESS/DETE MILL ES

Steven Holl's exhibition shows he's a man on a mission

ROB GREGORY

www.stevenholl.com

Trying to arrange a meeting with Steven Holl is tricky business. Twice when the AR was in New York, the 62-yearold American-born architect was engaged with clients in his scruffy yet productive Midtown Manhattan studio. Chance encounters have been the only opportunity to spend time with him; once sharing a tour of Ginzburg's Narkomfin apartment block in Moscow in spring 2004 and again later that year when stranded in China at the ill-fated inaugural Beijing Architecture Biennale. On this occasion, while most overseas architects steered clear of the event. Holl stuck to the programme, showed willing, maintained momentum and most crucially took the opportunity to bolster important client relationships with Chinese developers. We met when Linked Hybrid was a seed of an idea, six years before that celebrated Beijing building became a reality.

Holl is clearly no slouch. The sort of architect who sees genuine opportunity in on-the-ground engagement, this show demonstrates the fruit of his outbound missions. Su Pietra is an exhibition of recent projects in Europe and China, on display at the Castle of Acaya in Lecce,

Italy, until January 15, 2011. It illustrates Holl's design method, from conception to form, documenting the collaborative process of model making, drawing and animation.

Projecting videos on to the castle's 16th-century walls, the exhibition draws out distinct qualities from Holl's response to each region's context.

'While the Chinese projects

- the Horizontal Skyscraper
(AR June 2010), Linked Hybrid
and Nanjing Museum of Art
and Architecture – explore the
macro scale of cities through
the lens of architecture,' he says,
'the European projects show
a vision of the preservation
of natural landscape.' These
include the Herning Museum
of Contemporary Art in
Denmark (AR October 2009)
and Knut Hamsun Center in
Norway (AR September 2009).

Not wanting to miss the opportunity to initiate an Italian collaboration on site, Holl also created a series of sculptures to complement the exhibit's projections, with sculptures manufactured from stone by local craftsmen, rendered from digital files sent from New York.

The Lecce exhibition neatly coincides with the announcement that Holl has won the 2010 Jencks Award:





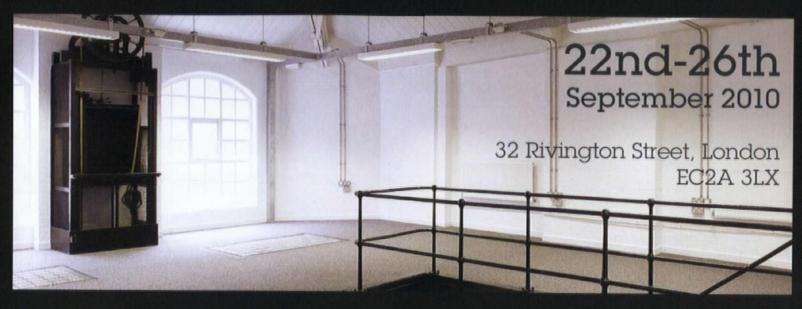
Top_Holl made this sketch tracing out the exclusion zone created by Iceland's volcanic ash cloud Above_The ash cloud sketch was one of a number of Holl's drawings that inspired a series of sculptures made specifically for this exhibition

Visions Built by the RIBA, which is bestowed in recognition of an individual's contribution to both the theory and practice of architecture internationally. Announcing the prize, Jencks made specific mention of Holl's methodology, describing how 'colour, light and phenomenology also inform his city buildings and, together with his domestic architecture, writings and watercolours, form a consistent body of work that is as rare as it is impressive.' The prize will be presented at the RIBA in London on 30 November, followed by a public lecture by Holl, with Charles Jencks as chairman. Perhaps we'll meet again?

STEVEN HOL

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4pm - 6pm Press Preview Thursday 23rd

11am - 8pm

Friday 24th

11am - 6pm

Saturday 25th

11am - 6pm

Sunday 26th

BOLON







BARCELONA, SPAIN

World Architecture Festival: an unmissable goldmine of exhibits

ROB GREGORY

www.worldarchitecturefestival.com

In its third successive year, the 2010 World Architecture Festival (WAF) continues to expand, despite the current challenging economic climate. Attracting entries from more practices than ever before, the three-day event returns to Barcelona's CCIB on 3 November. Conceived as a 'must-see' categorised exhibition for architects, developers, clients and other members of the building industry, WAF attracts hundreds of entries from around the world, all of which will be on show in the festival gallery. Category finalists will also present their work in a series of critiques that form the backbone of the event's prestigious awards programme.

The critique format gives the jury an opportunity to question the architects on the subtle nuances that may have influenced each specific outcome. While WAF is a global event, it is not only interested in identifying international trends, but also in presenting diversity and ingenuity in relation to specific contexts. As a result, 239 shortlisted schemes deliberately cover a wide range of scales and programmes, including those illustrated here. Once a winner from each category is selected, the architects are then required to pre-present to WAF's World Building of the Year super-jury,

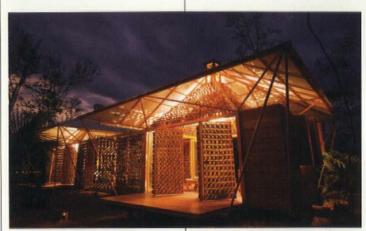
chaired this year by Japanese architect Arata Isozaki.

WAF also offers a series of seminars and events under the theme of 'Transformations: Architecture as Alchemy'. It will present major new material from South Africa and Singapore, and includes seminars such as 'Transforming Land and Site: Gardens by the Bay, Singapore'; 'Transforming Space and Form', demonstrating how digital technologies can push the boundaries of shape and space in architecture; and 'Transforming Image and Meaning', in which Sean Griffiths of FAT Architecture offers his perspective on how semantic codes can be manipulated to create original and meaningful architecture. A series of lectures continue this theme, including 'Transforming **Buildings: Transforming** Culture' by David Chipperfield Architects and Julian Harrap Architects, and a case study for rethinking the possibilities for urban expansion, Red Location cultural precinct in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, by architect Jo Noero.

International schools
of architecture are also
represented as part of the
Aecom Student Competition,
Urban SOS, with this year's
finalists including students from
Columbia University and
University College London.

Clockwise, from
top_Four of the
239 shortlisted
schemes for
WAF's World
Building of the
Year award,
which covers
a diverse range
of categories:
A Forest for a
Moon Dazzler
house in Costa
Rica, by Benjamin
Garcia Saxe;

Cultúrlann Uí
Chanáin arts
and cultural
centre in
Northern Ireland
by O'Donnell +
Tuomey; La Llotja
Theatre and
Conference
Centre in Spain,
by Mecanoo
Architecten; and
Yamaha Ginza
office in Japan,
by Nikken Sekkei

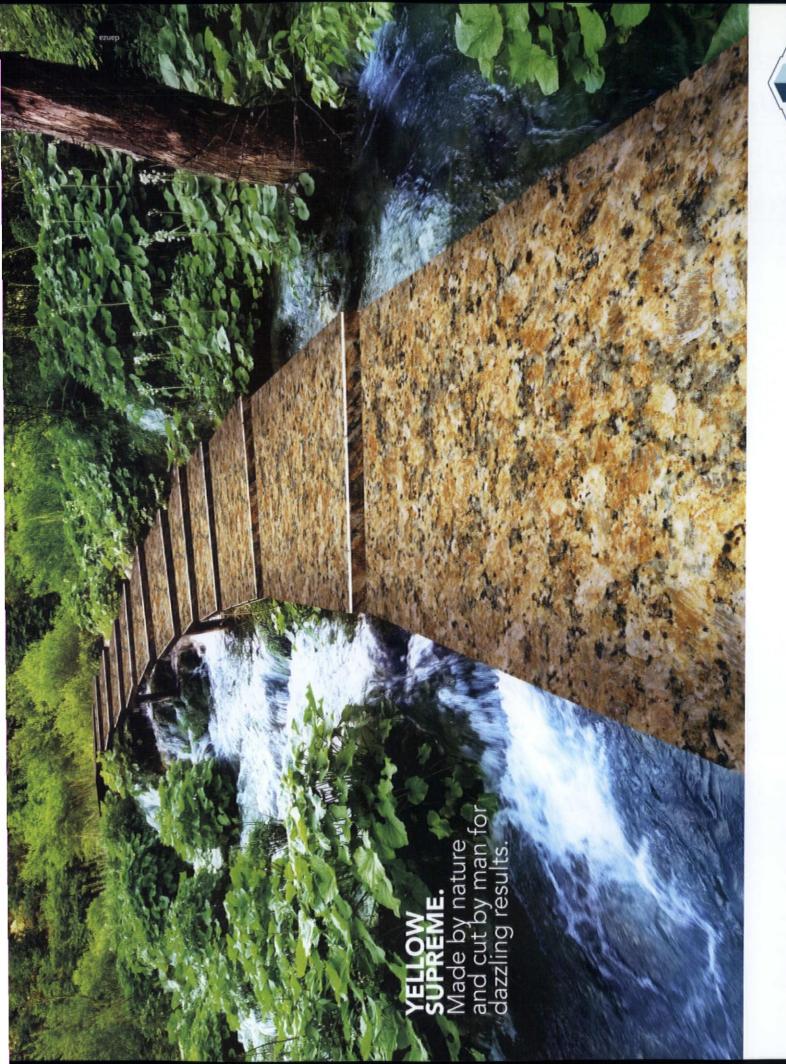








ANDRES GARCIA L'ACHNER; DENNIS GILBERT, CHRISTIAN RICHTERS; KEN'ICHI



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HOSPEDERÍA DEL MONASTERIO DE POBLET

LOCATION POBLET, CATALONIA, SPAIN

ARCHITECT BAYÓN ARQUITECTOS

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PAGE 068

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

LOCATION GRENOBLE, FRANCE

ARCHITECT ÉDOUARD FRANÇOIS

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PAGE 050

STUDIO EAST DINING

LOCATION STRATFORD, LONDON, UK

ARCHITECT CARMODY GROARKE

Popping up at Europe's largest shopping centre, this temporary rooftop restaurant wryly surveys the emerging Olympic Park 170

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TEMPORARY MUSEUM (LAKE)

LOCATION HEEMSKERK, THE NETHERLANDS

ARCHITECT STUDIO ANNE HOLTROP

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HUNSETT MILL

LOCATION STALHAM, NORFOLK, UK

ARCHITECT ACME

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PAGE 042

MUSASHINO ART UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

LOCATION TOKYO, JAPAN

ARCHITECT SOU FUJIMOTO

ARCHITECTS

This new university building library has been generated using an angular spiral diagram to create walls made of bookshelves





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MUSASHINO ART UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

LOCATION

TOKYO, JAPAN

ARCHITECT

SOU FUJIMOTO ARCHITECTS

WRITER

ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY

EDMUND SUMNER

At 6,500m², this is
Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto's
largest building to date. Ever since
his Children's Treatment Centre
in Hokkaido shared first prize in
the 2006 AR Awards for Emerging
Architecture, Fujimoto has become
more widely known for an acclaimed
range of smaller domestic projects.
With six of his Japanese houses
featured in these pages, the
architect's inventive use of space
is familiar to many AR readers.

Until this point, however,
Fujimoto's ability to produce a
large-scale institutional building
has remained untested, so anyone
interested in the scalability of his
talents will be particularly keen
to scrutinise the plans for the
recently completed Musashino
Art University Library in Tokyo.

As with all of Fujimoto's projects the plan is the key generator. With T House (AR December 2005) he challenged conventional living arrangements with a series of radial walls that created alcoves for specific use. In his House at Tateyama (AR August 2007), he laid out spidery limbs to pinpoint specific views on a panoramic site. And in House N (AR April 2009), he used three nested boxes to create permeable layers of privacy for his client.

Here too, at the university library, it is the plan that brings distinction, as Fujimoto combines conceptual clarity with functional rigour to generate a new form of library planning.

Fujimoto won the project in 2007, beating a cohort of young architects consciously chosen by the client to design a building that would give the university a distinctive and marketable identity in order to attract students. Discussing the project with the AR at this year's Venice Biennale, Fujimoto compares the purpose of his building with one by Toyo Ito, competed in 2007 for rival Tokyo institution Tama Art University (AR August 2007).

As the number of students in Japan continues to fall due to the demographics of an ageing nation and the high tuition fees that ____

THE CLIENT WANTED A BUILDING THAT WOULD GIVE THE **UNIVERSITY A DISTINCTIVE** AND MARKETABLE IDENTITY







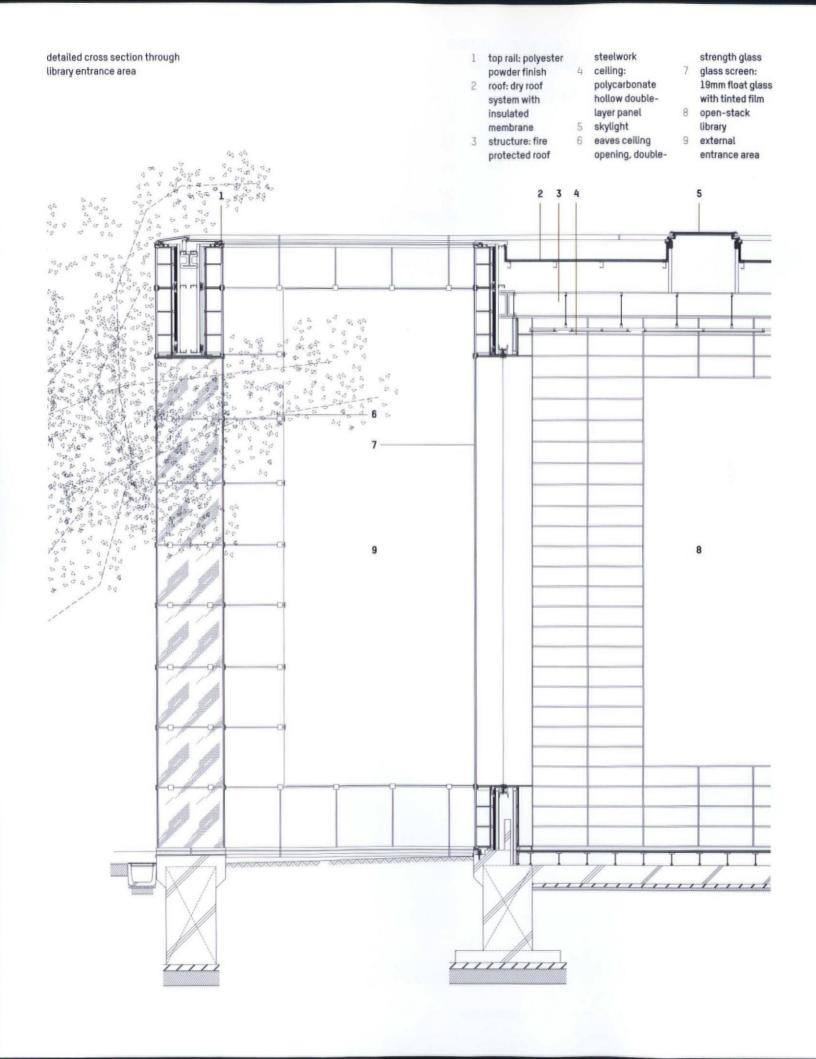
As previewed in the Japan: Back to Basics' issue (AR August 2007), the competition-winning concept was quite different to what was finally built. It was based on a series of independent rectilinear book stacks, dispersed to create a field - or forest - of monolithic blocks. Varying in size, with some large enough to contain essential services and ancillary spaces, the blocks promoted what the architect described as 'an instinct to wander', recalling how in his experience libraries are places where readers are encouraged to 'get lost'.

an impact on the jury.

Unfortunately, however, Fujimoto's first design came under immediate concept-breaking scrutiny when user-group involvement began. While the institution wanted a landmark building for its campus, those who would ultimately run the library needed a functional building that would be an improvement on the existing library, which is soon to re-open as a gallery, also to Fujimoto's design.

But in typical jovial manner, Fujimoto describes the redesign as a positive process, as he willingly took on criticisms about ease of navigation. The first design broke up the established numeric system of classification to produce a layout that would, it was claimed, have been impossible to manage, causing confusion and leading to too many scholars becoming 'lost'.

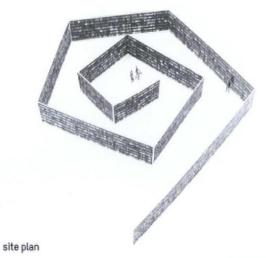
He was asked to reconsider options that would offer linear as well as meandering routes between categories, 'so we came up with the spiral plan'. This enabled him to provide ease of navigation along the length of the spiralling book stacks, while also giving ____

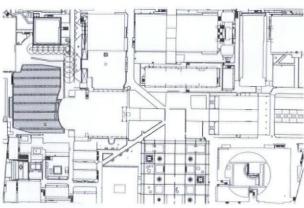


IT IS THE PLAN THAT BRINGS DISTINCTION, COMBINING **CONCEPTUAL CLARITY** WITH FUNCTIONAL RIGOUR

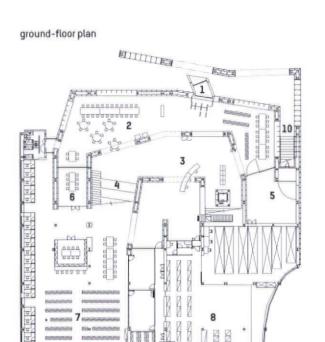


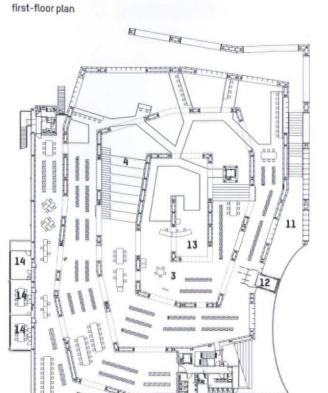
conceptual sketch of spiral book wall











- entrance
- magazine/foyer
- 2 open-stack library
- grand stair
- exhibition room
- 6 book gallery
- catalogue gallery
- valuable stacks
- 9 office
- 10 external stair to secondary entrance
- 11 external terrace

10m

- 12 secondary entrance
- 13 control point
- 14 study room



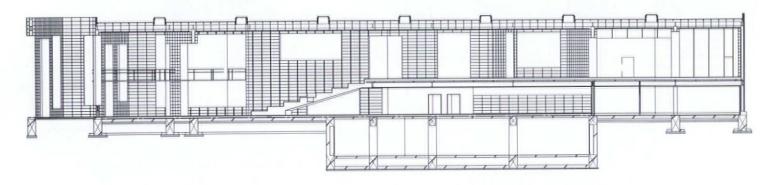


Opposite, top_ Situated around the library, large-scale numeric installations created by graphic designer Taku Satoh signal each subject category and aid orientation

Left_Axial views through the book stacks improve orientation and allow readers to take meandering routes Above_The entrance foyer/magazine area leads directly to the grand stair

FUJIMOTO WAS ASKED TO RECONSIDER OPTIONS THAT **WOULD OFFER LINEAR AS WELL AS MEANDERING ROUTES**

long section through grand stair and basement/book store



Opposite_

Suspended bridges hang above the entrance space, leading to additional study bays

ARCHITECT

Sou Fujimoto Architects, Tokyo, Japan

PROJECT TEAM

Sou Fujimoto, Koji Aoki, Naganobu Matsumura. Shintaro Homma, Tomoko Kosami, Takahiro Hata, Yoshihiro Nakazono, Masaki Iwata

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

Jun Sato Structural Engineers, Kankyo Engineering

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Taku Satoh Design Office

opportunity for more accidental forms of wandering via a series of radial axes that fan out from the central control point on the first floor.

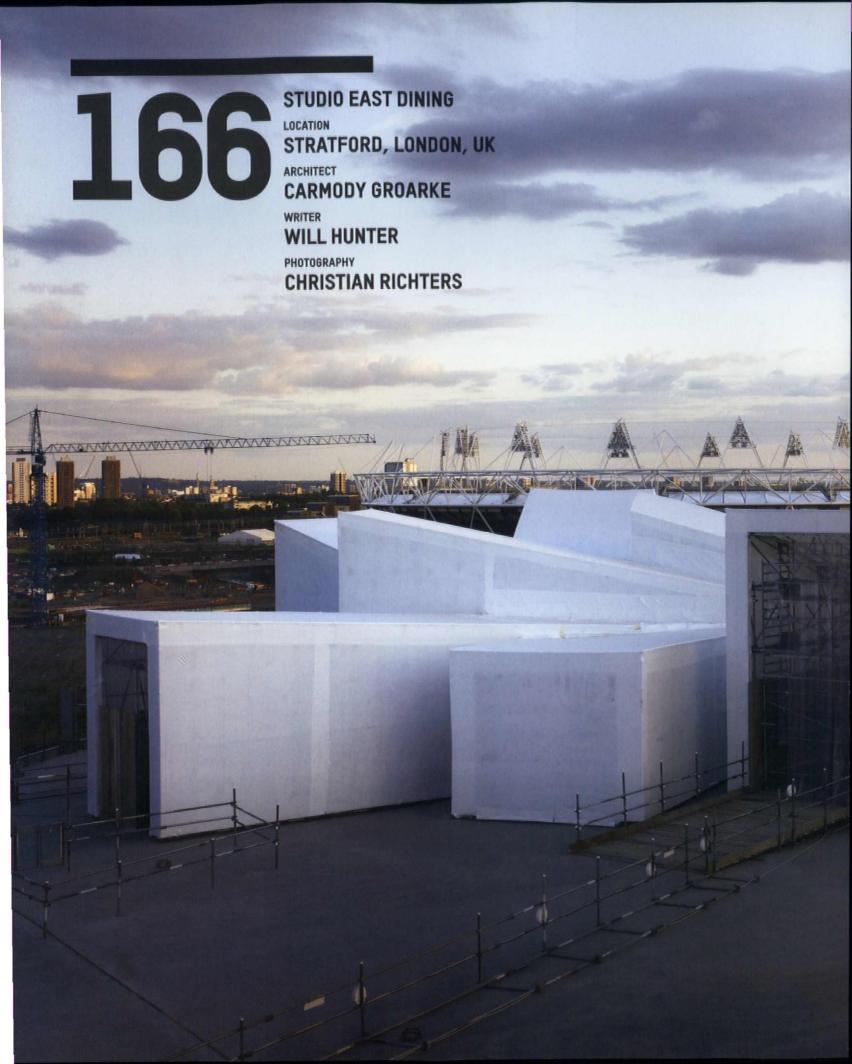
With large axial apertures, the opportunity then arose for Fujimoto to collaborate with renowned graphic designer Taku Satoh on the creation of a series of large-scale installations that bring clear orientation. The spiral plan also helped Fujimoto resolve the entrance sequence, as it uncoils at the north-east corner, where a freestanding punctured wall (recalling N House) creates a series of interstitial spaces that welcome visitors approaching along the campus' cherry-tree-lined avenues.

A subsidiary entrance will also be provided when the adjoining gallery fit-out is complete, linking across the crescent-shaped void that embeds itself somewhat uncomfortably into the library's south-east corner. Despite this, the principal entrance remains the focus of the new building, providing a route to Fujimoto's grand stair. Connected to the outside world by a large axial

window, this stair-cum-auditorium leads visitors up and into Fujimoto's impressively re-imagined forest of books.

Within this 'forest', timber predominates, with the building's steel frame cloaked in full-height wooden walls that give the impression they will eventually become full of books. It is unlikely that this will ever happen, however, not only for practical considerations of accessibility, but because not all the shelves have a load-bearing capacity. Regardless of this conceit, however, clarity of concept was maintained and the final configuration brings coherence and continuity to the interiors. Using plywood with an ash veneer, the blond timber works well with the diffuse light from the polycarbonate ceiling to provide a series of evenly lit, airy reading rooms. Externally, a darker timber is used, a result of the need to fire protect the envelope, with red cedar set in the same 900 x 300mm grid, cloaked in a sealed skin of 19mm float glass.



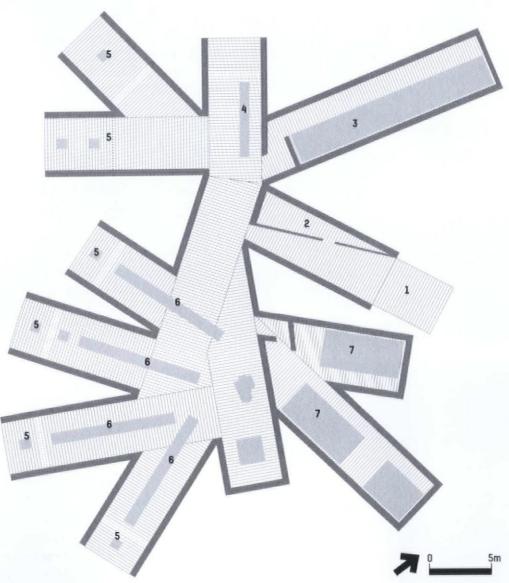




THE DINING ROOM PRESENTS FANTASTIC ELEVATED VIEWS, THE OLYMPIC SITE SEGUEING SEAMLESSLY INTO THE CITY

- 1 entrance
- 2 cloakroom
- 3 WC
- 4 bar
- 5 outdoor seating
- 6 dining table
- 7 kitchen





Previous page and right_Carmody Groarke's temporary dining room sits on top of Westfield Stratford City's soon-to-becompleted shopping centre. The overall disposition has both unity and dynamism; while the short section of the white blocks has a datum width, they are rotated in plan and inclined in longsection to frame panoramas of the emerging Olympic Park, where Zaha Hadid's Aquatic Centre is now materialising in the muddy foreground



If Britain's venerable parliament has been eroded by the emulation of the American presidential model, the late arrival of US-style live debates has certainly proved welcome compensation. Indeed, one of the first televised combats struck a decisive knell: in the 2008 London mayoral campaign, the incumbent Ken Livingstone provoked pantomime boos as he likened his method of winning the 2012 Olympic Games to a card trick. With the initial nominal budget already quadrupling to £9 billion, Londoners unamused by this whopping sleight went on to crown his rival Boris Johnson with 53 per cent of the vote. Magicians, it seems, reveal their methods at their peril.

And yet Livingstone's remaining 47 per cent suggested a marked citywide ambivalence towards the issue. Almost as many as were angered actually admired the deviousness in generating the funding for the renewal of a huge neglected area around east London. Instead of focusing on the ephemera of the Games, politicians emphasised the rhetoric of regeneration; of amenity and infrastructure; of long-term legacies. Only as people dissented from this narrative did the underlying

tensions between connection and isolation become exposed.

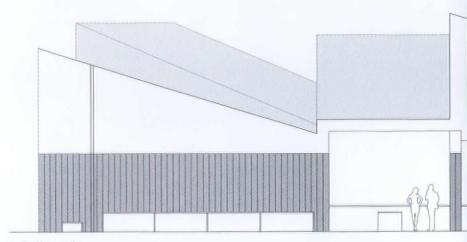
Communities voiced their displacement, a sentiment that found its tangible emblem in the monochromatic fence that rose to secure the colossal site's perimeter. 'A viscous slither of blue,' as the London chronicler Iain Sinclair described it, 'like disinfectant running down the slopes of a silver urinal trough'. As the transition got under way he noted the disjunction between imagery and actuality, the barricade unvisualised in computer-generated versions. 'The current experience, in reality, is all fence,' he complained in 2008.

Now with this infamous barrier largely dismantled or replaced with sunnier decorative hoardings, the time has come to attract attention to Stratford's work in progress. Hailed as the 'largest building site in Europe', the interim landscape presents a special state of flux. The high-speed rail link from central London (taking only six minutes) has recently opened, yet many of the sporting venues remain silhouetted structures, mere suggestive shapely shells.

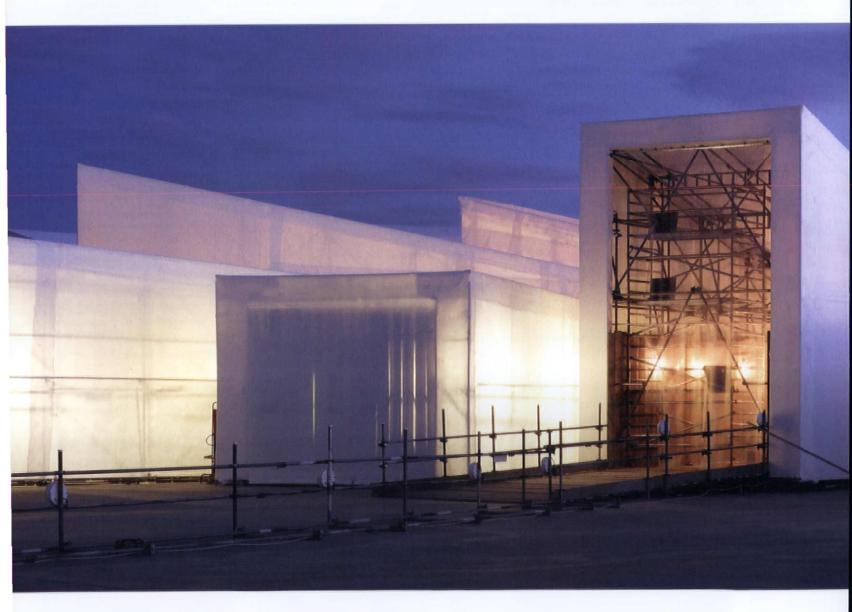
Earlier this summer – roughly midway between Sinclair's musings and the 2012 opening ceremony – a beautiful pop-up restaurant, Studio East Dining, celebrated the spectacle of this pivotal moment. Designed by young London-based practice Carmody Groarke, the project derived its particular poignancy as a pin-pricking counterpoint to the scale of the Olympic operation; and in its positioning within the polarised opinions surrounding the iteration of this ancient competition and the expansive urban transformation it will entrench.

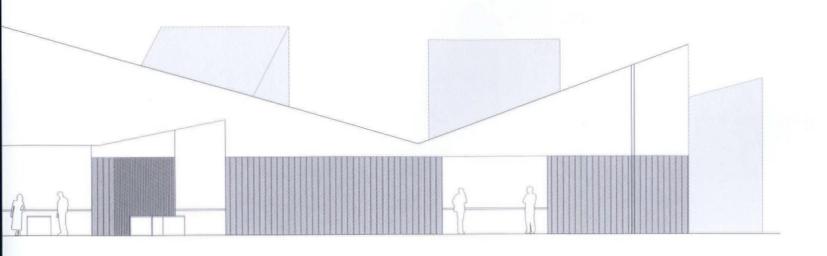
While the justification for the London Games is a settlement projected decades into the future, the duration of Studio East Dining was three weeks; the gap between the first briefing and the restaurant's opening night was (what must have been for the architects) a terrifying 10 weeks. Where the budget for the larger region is suffixed with an unfathomable amount of zeroes, this pop-up diner was delivered for the price of a modest London backextension. The pavilion's cleverness is in the line it takes between permanence and transience, and its exploration of what constitutes value.

The 800m² dining room is placed on a 35m-high flat roof which presents fantastic elevated views, the Olympic site in the foreground segueing seamlessly into the ____ EXTERNALLY, THE PAVILION ENSHRINES ITSELF AS A GLOWING ANGULAR FORM IN THE CREPUSCULAR LIGHT



indicative section







established city beyond. The object is sitting on top of a multi-storey car park that belongs to Westfield Stratford City, a mammoth 1.9 million square metre shopping centre that when completed will be the continent's largest. To generate interest in its forthcoming opening, the retail developer commissioned the project, produced in collaboration with bespoke east London restaurateurs Bistrotheque.

If these two clients were a married couple you'd think Cupid had a lamentably rotten aim or a very wry sense of humour. Launching some years back in a whitewashed warehouse in an abandoned part of Hackney, the original restaurant made itself a destination most notably for its esoteric evening entertainments - I especially admired the Bear Beauty Contest (for hairier, heavier gay men; not a woodland version of Crufts). You might not immediately think the pairing likely to work out, but the resulting creative success proves that opposites can and do attract.

Carmody Groarke's design was informed by the project's specific constraints. One of the earliest decisions was to borrow materials already on the site, using workmen seconded from the shopping centre's construction. The structure was made entirely from scaffolding poles; the wooden floor, panelling, even the tables, from planks. The translucent polyethylene roof membrane was bought especially, but is, the architects are pleased to say, 100 per cent recyclable.

As a live building site, people have to be ferried safely to and from the restaurant, which influenced the idea of a single sitting for 140 people. Instead of making one large marquee-like space, the conversation distance across a dining table has created the scale of the cross-section to series of extruded forms. These volumes intersect at the plan's centre to provide a cocktail-supping place of the arrival; guests then move to one of the long, linear tables to dine.

With the pavilion fortuitously coinciding with the summer solstice, when you arrive the space is naturally lit, articulating the almost Gothic decorative quality of the structure. As you progress through the courses (and drinks) the lighting provided by standard site lamps offers an increasingly intimate atmosphere. The denouement is a post-prandial stroll to the balconies, to the panoramic views that, glimpsed

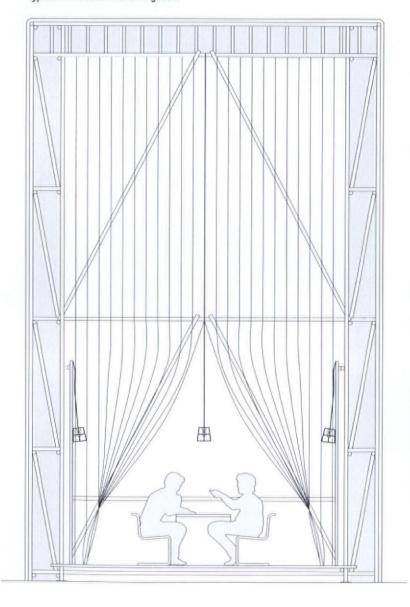
throughout the evening, can be fully appreciated as the sun descends. Externally, as you leave, the pavilion enshrines itself as a glowing angular form in the crepuscular light.

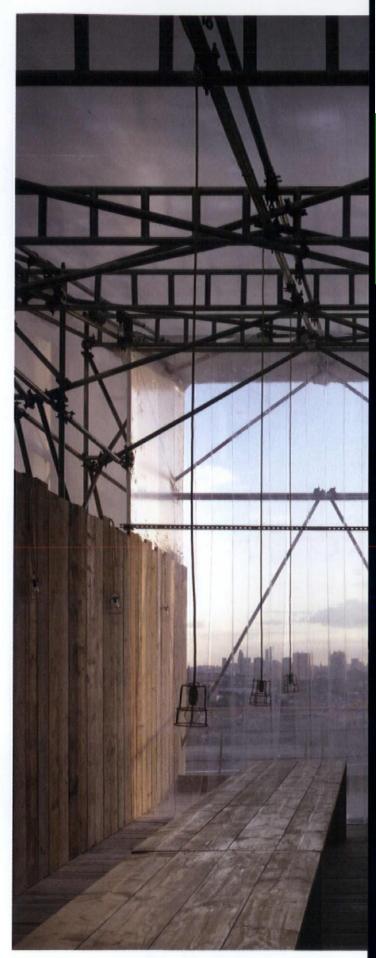
Across the globe, the oncechasmic distance between the centre and periphery of culture is now quickly traversed, a change certainly catalysed by the speed and abundance of communication. Particularly in London, the distinction between commerce and creativity, money and art, has become muddied over recent years, and yet the blurry threshold is still perceptible and significant. The same comparison is becoming true for the city map itself. It seems incredible that the once-remote Stratford is now reachable from the metropolitan King's Cross within minutes.

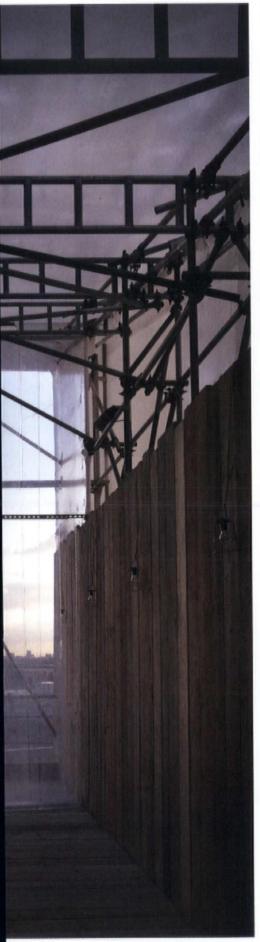
Carmody Groarke's canniness has been to create a pavilion that accentuates the inherent contradictions in the project's complexion, while appearing to straddle wider divisions, embracing its status and rejecting it at the same time. It is the Wildean epigram of 21st century temporary architecture, a light little expression that somehow conveys some deeper, more meaningful truth about the city.

CONVERSATION DISTANCE ACROSS A TABLE HAS CREATED THE SCALE OF THE CROSSSECTION TO EXTRUDED FORMS

typical short section of dining room











Previous page_
Despite the
expression of
its utilitarian
fabrication, the
entrance presents
a welcoming
upward embrasure
Left_Industrial
PVC strip curtains
half-veil the
spectacular views
in the daylight of
arrival, while
shimmeringly

reflecting diners
back to themselves
as the exterior grows
dark towards the
end of the meal
Top and above_
As the sun goes
down, the emphasis
of the space
descends from
the back-lit
overarching
structure to the
dappled timber
lining within it

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HUNSETT MILL

LOCATION

STALHAM, NORFOLK, UK

ARCHITECT

ACME

WRITER

CLAIRE BARRETT

PHOTOGRAPHY

RACHAEL SMITH





On the Norfolk
Broads' River Ant, the Grade II-listed
Hunsett Mill is a local landmark.
Until recently, though, the 19thcentury cottage to its side, once the
mill operator's home, has literally
been in its shadow. However, a daring
extension by emerging architectural
practice Acme has changed all that.

The holiday home is co-owned by Jon Emery, former UK head of development at property firm Hammerson. Before the cottage was renovated, says Emery, 'the rooms were completely isolated, there was no communication between them.' It also had little connection to its incredible setting, with no views of the mill, and few of the river.

At the time, Emery was working with Acme founder Friedrich
Ludewig, who was at Foreign Office
Architects. In a chance discussion,
Ludewig suggested a radical
approach to reworking the house.
To counter the effect of piecemeal

extensions, Acme chose to strip the cottage back to its historic tiny form and start again. 'We wanted to return the original view as you approach from the river,' says Ludewig. The extension is cleverly conceived as a 'shadow' of the original cottage, replicating its volume in three pitched pavilions behind, folded like origami to create a sharp, abstract outline.

The startling black, charred cedar exterior was chosen to distinguish it from the brick cottage. Traditionally wood was used locally for humbler, agricultural buildings. In Norfolk charring was once a method (now lost) of preserving the wood by removing its oils. Acme, however, had to turn to Japan, where a similar tradition of yakisugi is still vibrant.

The external vernacular expression belies its sophisticated construction technology. Crosslaminated timber panels were CNC-milled off-site, pre-fitted with services, and finally slotted together

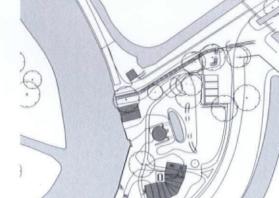
in just two weeks. Planning restrictions limited the height to match the existing cottage so this light and slim self-supporting envelope was specified in order to maximise internal living space.

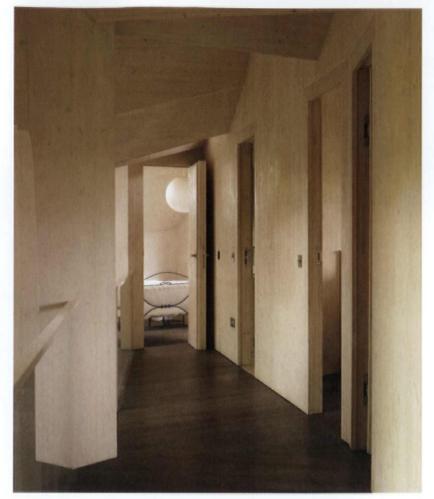
Inside, the first floor is hung from the structure, allowing Acme to cleverly use the vaulted roof space to create bedrooms. Three double-height voids with vast windows pierce the first-floor slab and help create a feeling of space in what is a surprisingly modest-sized house.

There has been much talk recently of a revival of a 'modern vernacular', drawing heavily on the heritage of Colin St John Wilson, Peter Aldington et al. The computergenerated formal language of architects such as FOA or, now, Acme is somehow often set in opposition to this. Yet here in one building the two approaches are fused in a remarkably mature and promising calling card for such a young practice.

site plan

INSIDE, THE FIRST FLOOR IS HUNG FROM THE STRUCTURE, TO USE THE VAULTED ROOF **SPACE TO CREATE BEDROOMS**

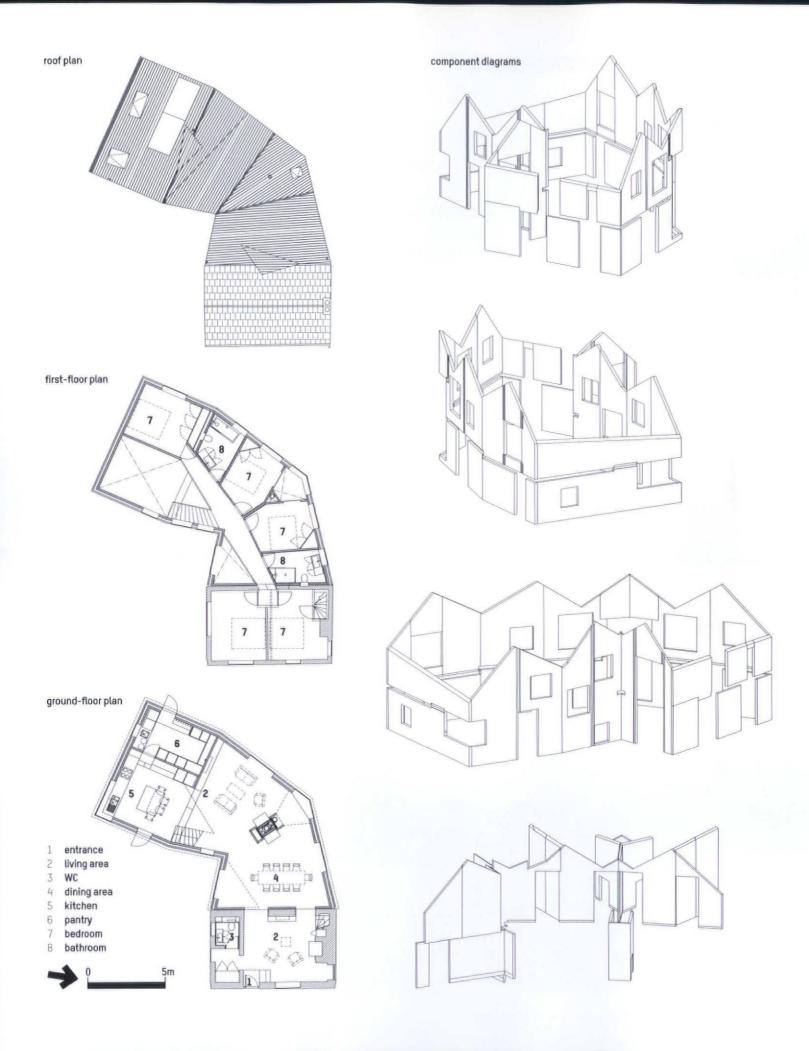




Previous page, left_ A replica volume of the existing cottage has been multiplied to create the timberclad extension Previous page, right_ The extension reveals views of the mill Above_The external timber expression is continued to the interior material palette

ARCHITECT Acme, London, UK PROJECT TEAM Friedrich Ludewig, Stefano Dal Piva, Karoline Markus, Nerea Calvillo, Chris Yoo STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Adams Kara Taylor SERVICES ENGINEER Hoare Lea LANDSCAPE Acme





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HOSPEDERÍA DE MONASTARIO DE POBLET

LOCATION

POBLET, CATALONIA, SPAIN

ARCHITECT

BAYÓN ARQUITECTOS

WRITER

CATHERINE SLESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROLAND HALBE

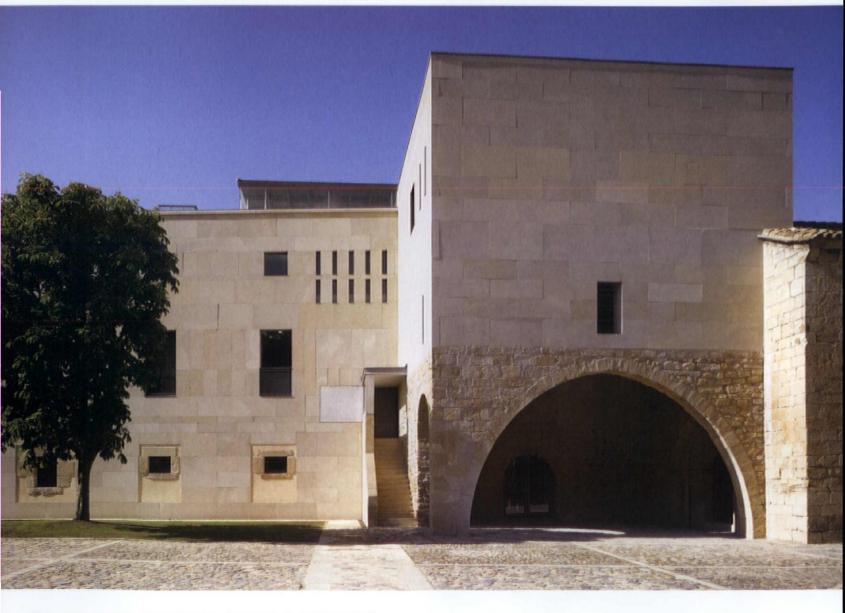




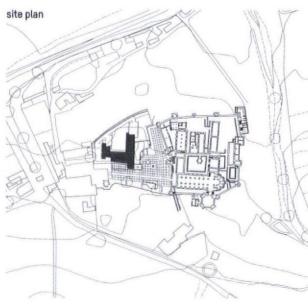
LIKE ITS HISTORIC ANCESTOR, THE NEW BUILDING HAS A POWERFUL SENSE OF WEIGHT, GRAVITAS AND TIMELESSNESS











Previous page_ Sensitively of its time, the new building adds to the historic continuum of the monastery complex Left Main entrance adjoining the existing chapel of Santa Catalina Top left Detail showing different textures of the local stone used in the facades Above_Dialogue between old and new is tactfully handled

In an ironic role reversal, it's often the dubious fate of former monasteries or convents to be repurposed as luxury hotels. The Four Seasons in Milan, for instance, was originally a convent dating from the 15th century, complete with historic frescoes. And in one of the more memorable additions to the genre, Eduardo Souto de Moura transformed the ruins of a former monastery just north of Braga in Portugal into a luxury resort (AR July 1998). The building now forms part of Portugal's network of posadas (converted historic monuments), with architectural tourists accounting for a large proportion of the building's new devotees.

So at first sight this building by Mariano Bayón might seem a predictable segue from the sacred to the secular, as another ancient centre of piety and contemplation succumbs to accommodate the quite different demands of high-end tourism. But though Bayón's new addition to the monastery of Poblet in Catalonia bears all the hallmarks of an elegant modern hotel, with its fashionably stripped geometry and honey coloured stone, this is no upscale resort. Rather it's a hostel in a still functioning monastery for visitors of a different kind, those who want to study or temporarily join the monastic community for meditation and prayer. Restating and reconnecting with the site's original purpose, it's a place to salve the soul rather than the body.

Originally founded in 1151
by French Cistercian monks, the
Monastery of Poblet was the first
of three monasteries known as the
Cistercian triangle that combined
to consolidate the order's power in
Catalonia during the 12th century.
It was closed down in 1835, but
refounded again in 1940 by a group
of Italian Cistercians. Today Poblet's
monastic community numbers just
over 30 and even has its own website.
Known as the 'white monks' for their
undyed wool habits, Cistercians

pursue an especially austere regime of prayer, manual labour and self sufficiency. At the order's heart is a literal observance to the Rule of Saint Benedict (480-547AD), which attempts to reproduce conditions as they were in the saint's time.

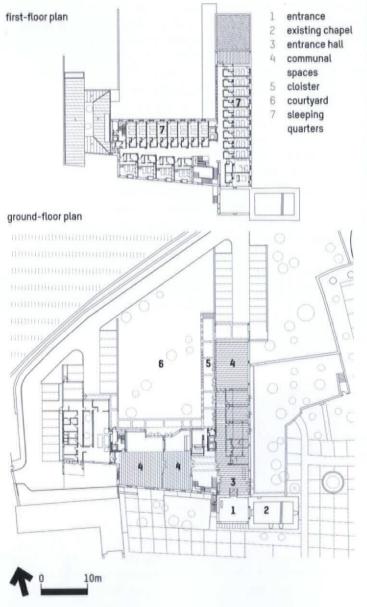
Bayón won the commission as the result of a competition held in 1998 and the project was finally completed in July of this year. Though this might sound a suspiciously long time frame for a contemporary building, in the context of the centuries-old history of the monastery, it's a mere blip. 'It has been a strengthening process,' says Bayón, 'which allowed us to focus very intensely on the relationship between old and new, as well as the precise nature of details and materials. We wanted to absorb the physical and spiritual qualities of the site and the harmonies of silence accumulated there.'

Set at the western edge of the monastery grounds, the new building adopts a simple L-shaped plan that docks on to the small existing chapel of Santa Catalina. A tall cloister runs around its longer edge, overlooking a courtyard planted with olive trees. The ground floor contains the communal areas for dining and socialising, with two storeys of monastic cells above.

Like its historic ancestor, the new building has a powerful sense of weight, gravitas and timelessness. Stone from La Floresta, a nearby quarry that supplied the stone to the original monastery, was used for its construction, and in places, the smooth jointed facades are interspersed with sections of random rubble. Internally, white-walled Cistercian austerity prevails, but is tempered by being brought into a dialogue with new materials such as concrete and dark, polished wood. It is a highly compelling and sensitive piece of architecture, yet perhaps just as importantly, in adding to Poblet's historic continuum, Bayón shows that ancient places of spiritual energy and contemplation can have a future beyond the world of Hip Hotels.

WE WANTED TO ABSORB THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL QUALITIES OF THE SITE AND THE HARMONIES OF SILENCE

MARIANO BAYÓN







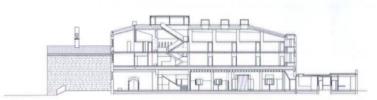




Left_ A cloister addresses a central courtyard Above_Atop-lit timber staircase links the three floors Above right_ Typical visitor's sleeping quarters



cross section looking south



long section looking south





cross section looking east





FRANÇOIS SEES A CONTRADICTION IN BUILDINGS CONTAINING 'SOFT' **INSULATION CONCEALED BY** A HARD OUTER CARAPACE

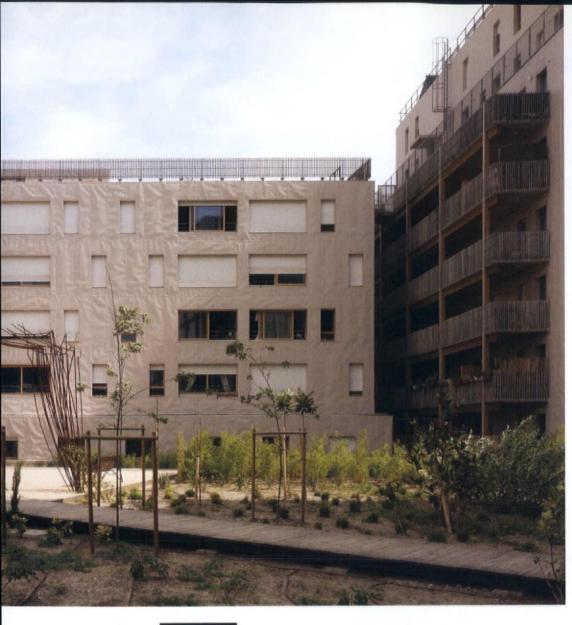
Previous page_ Facade detail of the private housing block which, over time, will become animated by flourishing greenery Right_Courtyard at the heart of the development overlooked by the private housing block (left) and

two social housing blocks that are wrapped in the specially devised soft cream skin Below_Grenoble context, with mountains at the end of every street Below right_ Main facade on Rue André Maginot









'This is my first soft building,' announces Édouard François of his latest housing scheme in Grenoble, as we pore over images and maquettes at his surprisingly low-key atelier in the 15th arrondissement of Paris. The ambience is more workshop than office, with drawings, models and material samples jamming every available surface; evidence of countless architectural eureka moments that are tested, refined and finally brought into being.

The latest eureka moment is softness. François whips out an initial image of Grenoble showing three interlocking blocks clad in a black rubberised skin, like some kind of fetish accessory. 'This is how I originally envisaged it,' he explains, 'but the client was a bit...

ambivalent.' Quelle surprise. But for some time, François had been toying with the concept of energy efficient 'soft architecture', seeing a contradiction in buildings containing increasingly thick layers of 'soft' insulation concealed by a hard outer carapace of brick or concrete. 'Why not express this softness more literally?' he suggests.

This led to the notion of wrapping the building in a soft outer skin, which would have the effect of reducing both the thickness of insulation and the number of fixing points where cold bridging could occur. François initially devised a prototypical installation sheathed in a cladding system resembling rubberised upholstery, and this led to the development of the thinner, cream coloured skin used on the Grenoble

facades. In collaboration with roofing membrane manufacturer Sika Sarnafil, the new product took a year to develop and certify. Made from polyolefin, a polymer more commonly used for shrinkwrap or moulded flexible foam, it is soft, waterproof and recyclable. However as the skin was judged too potentially vulnerable to risk prolonged encounters with the public and sharp objects, each housing block sits on a rusticated base of concrete at street level, cast in swirling pastel-hued layers, with large pebbles embedded in their geological strata.

On the south-facing street facade, a giant Jenga-style timber pergola implanted with saplings provides deck access, shade and generous terraces for individual flats, so the general effect is as much rustic as erotic. Blocks are animated by signature details, such as chestnut paling balustrades (typical of François' penchant for cheap or disregarded materials) and living screens of greenery that beautifully and efficiently temper the summer heat. However the Grenoble scheme is not as luxuriantly extreme as the famous Flower Tower (AR September 2004), in which pots of mature bamboo formed a shaggy green corona around a Paris apartment block.

Known for its high-tech industries and as a base for winter sports (it hosted the 1968 Winter Olympics), Grenoble lies at the foot of the French Alps. You can't escape the mountains; they cluster around the city like topographic bouncers and loom up at the end of every street, abruptly terminating vistas. The Grenoble housing development forms part of a wider zone d'aménagement concerté (ZAC), a now familiar urban development vehicle involving various architects working together within an overall planning framework. With the ZAC model there's always a sense of many hands at work, and Grenoble's ZAC de Bonne is no exception. Billed as France's first 'eco quarter', it involves an ambitious parcelling up of ____

THIS NEW BUILDING IS ONE OF THE MORE LIVELY EXTEMPORISATIONS ON THE GENERIC PLANNING MODEL



former military land to the south-east of the city centre for new low-energy housing blocks, infrastructure and local amenities. Plots are still being developed, so the area has a provisional, work-in-progress feel, but the southern sector along the Rue André Maginot is now complete and evolving into a more rooted and inhabited neighbourhood.

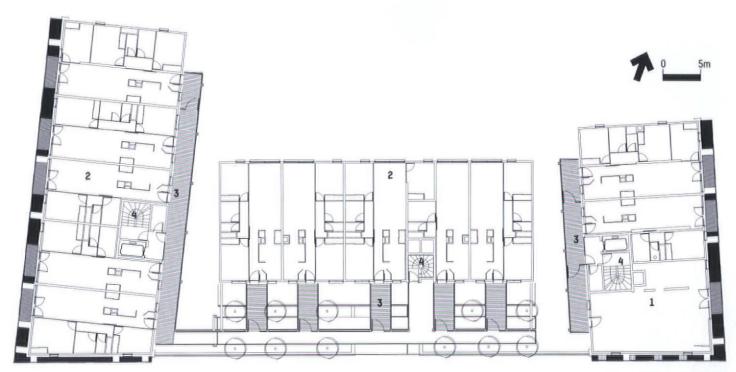
Lying at the eastern end of this street, François' new building is one of the more lively extemporisations on the generic planning model of a mid-rise apartment block with a set-back upper storey. Blocks are arranged around central landscaped courtyards that define the scale of the new neighbourhood grid. François' scheme is split between two blocks of social housing and one with apartments for sale. Curiously, the private sector block is not clad in the unifying cream epidermis and makes do with plain grey render instead. 'The client thought it might frighten off prospective buyers,' says François, which seems a slightly dispiriting failure of nerve, though the grey facades do provide a hard masculine yang to the soft, creamy feminine vin.

Inside, however, there are no such distinctions. Both apartment types have the same long thin plans, with dual orientation for views, light and natural ventilation. Compact planning keeps things tight and economical, but materials and detailing are handled with panache, turning a straightforward programme into something altogether richer and stranger. The decks, terraces and facades are now also animated by the occupants and will evolve over time as the greenery grows and the materials weather and change. 'I make living buildings,' says François. 'A building can lose everything over time. Time messes them up, as does the weather. We are in a world where people don't maintain things. You have to accept that the building will have several faces.'

As the Grenoble ZAC attracted special financial backing from the

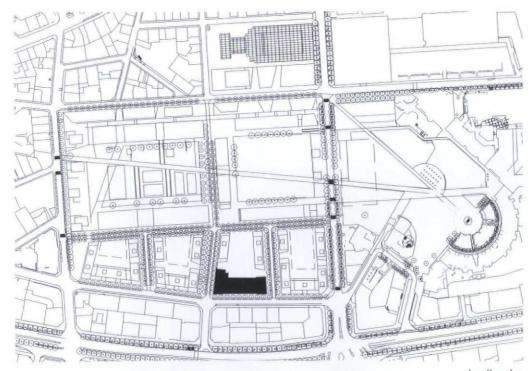
Opposite_A timber pergola provides access to the flats and a series of shaded terraces and balconies

- private housing block
- 2 social housing block
- 3 pergola
- 4 access core



typical upper-floor plan

EU, there was a remit to ensure that the development was also a test bed for new forms of energy conscious architecture, hence its designation as an 'eco quarter'. 'But most people took the money and did nothing,' says François. 'We thought we had a duty to be experimental.' However François has little time for the earnest box-ticking of the ecological lobby, preferring a more cavalier approach that sifts and tests unorthodox ideas about form, materials, greenery and urbanism. 'I have my own ecology, but it's different from the political idea of what we would usually call ecology,' he says. 'Ecology for me is an artistic tendency. It's a world, an obsession that has nothing to do with the proper way to empty your dustbin.



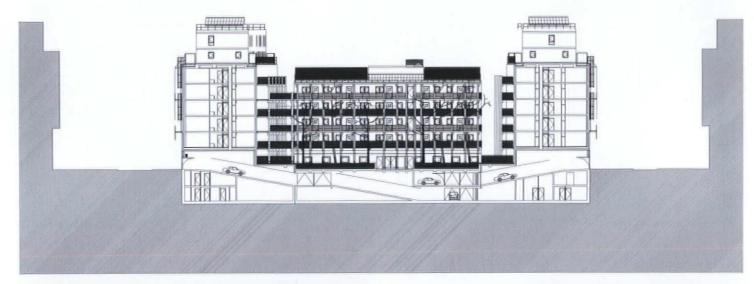
location plan

THE DECKS, TERRACES AND FACADES WILL EVOLVE OVER TIME AS THE GREENERY GROWS AND THE MATERIALS WEATHER

Bottom left_
Chestnut paling
encloses the
access decks
Bottom right_
Trees are implanted
within the timber
structure
Right_Detail
of the pergola

ARCHITECT
Édouard François
PROJECT TEAM
Édouard François,
Julien Odile
ZAC ARCHITECT
Devillers Associés
ZAC ARCHITECTURAL
COORDINATION
Aktis, Loïzos Savva
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Bétrec IG

cross section









170

TEMPORARY MUSEUM (LAKE)

LOCATION

HEEMSKERK, THE NETHERLANDS

ARCHITECT

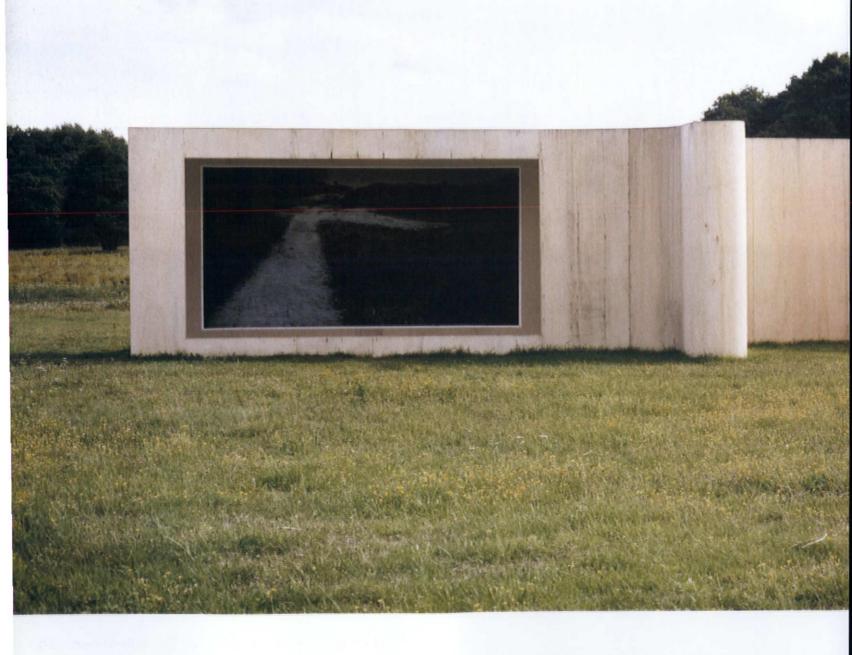
STUDIO ANNE HOLTROP

WRITER

GEORGINA WARD

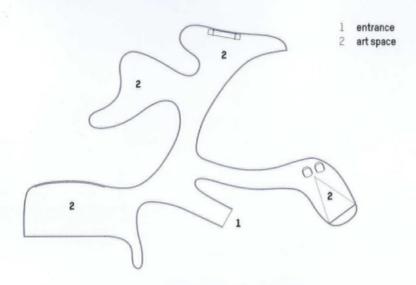
PHOTOGRAPHY

BAS PRINCEN





INSPIRED BY ARTIST JEAN ARP, HOLTROP BEGAN WITH SPATIAL SKETCHES THROUGH WHICH HE INTENDED TO 'DISCOVER FORM'



Temporary Museum (Lake) is a curvaceous form set at the end of a meandering path in a nature reserve north-west of Amsterdam. Like the ephemeral transitions of the autumnal season it inhabits, the gallery, which opened on 15 August, has a lifespan of only six weeks.

Having admired Dutch architect Anne Holtrop's first completed project, Trail House (another temporary space), the exhibition's curator Jaap Velserboer gave the architect creative freedom for his second built work. Inspired by the automatic drawings of Dada artist Jean Arp - in which the hand is allowed to move instinctively across the paper - Holtrop began the design process with spatial sketches through which he intended to 'discover form'.

This led to a fluid organic outline that 'hints at the idea of a landscape element - the lake - but is not taken literally'. The resulting shape generated a plan form, which was extruded upwards to create a single-storey enclosure, open to the elements in parts. With a budget of

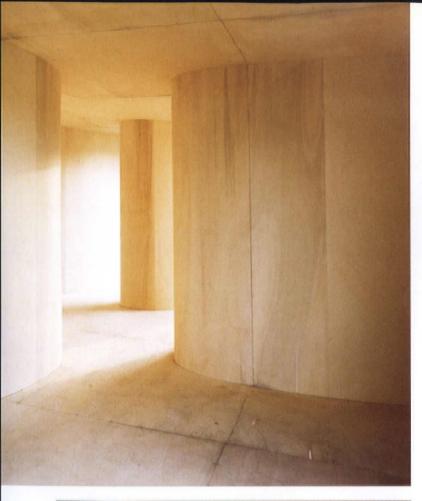
only 25,000 euros (£21,000), the structure uses a simple construction sheathed in laminated poplar.

The temporary museum houses single works from four artists - Renie Spoelstra, Eva-Fiore Kovacovsky, Driessens & Verstappen and Sjoerd Buisman - who variously interpreted the landscape theme. The charcoal drawing by Spoelstra, for example, is specifically connected to the structure and surroundings; the artwork's size mirrors the opening opposite it, while its content is an image of the scene viewed through that aperture.

Three further openings establish a relationship between inside and outside, framing the artificial fabric-like folds of timber or the gentler rendering of nature itself. Described by Holtrop as an 'abstract architecture', the design is halfway between building and model. 'There is never a point in which you can consider the form in its entirety, either inside or out,' says Holtrop, 'so the experience of the building is always relational, and not the experience of an absolute whole."



right The temporary pavilion is clad with laminated poplar Above_One artwork is based on the view through the opening opposite Above right_ Holtrop's exploratory sketch Right and far right_ Diptych describing interior space



ARCHITECT

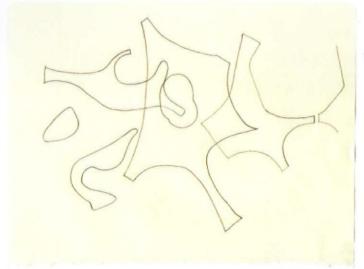
Studio Anne Holtrop, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

PROJECT TEAM

Anne Holtrop, Akira Negishi

CONTRACTOR

Art Assistance Amsterdam











A JOURNEY INTO THE DENSE RAINFOREST OF MALAYSIA REVEALS THE NOMADIC BATEK TRIBE AND THEIR TRADITIONAL STYLE OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHY

JON BESWICK

I am back in primary rainforest in peninsular Malaysia looking for an indigenous group called the Batek (or Bateg). The Batek are one of Malaysia's 133,000 Orang Asli, which simply means 'original people' in Malay. Of the Orang Asli there are three groups, further divided into 18 ethnic sub-groups, representing 0.5 per cent of the national population. Interestingly, despite their small number, the Orang Asli are not homogenous. Each group has its own language, culture, traditions and, to a certain extent, architecture. Yet as urbanisation intensifies, it pits traditional and modern lifestyles against each other. Many Orang Asli have now left their ancient tribal heartlands to live and work in urban areas.

However, the Batek still follow a nomadic lifestyle. As with other tribal groups, urbanisation, development and the logging of their traditional habitats has resulted in their numbers falling and has pushed them deep into the protected national park of Taman Negara. There are

an estimated 750 remaining Batek living in this dense rainforest in an area over twice the size of London. The best way to access the remote region is by water, down the Sungai Tembeling river on a traditional wooden long boat. The journey is lengthy, but it offers the chance to contemplate the density and vastness of the rainforest.

The two main tribes in the area have built around 20 villages between them. I am with a local Malaysian man called Musa who spent three months living with one family group in a village near the river's edge. This group is the object of my visit. Musa tells me he had planned to live there for six months, but found the lifestyle too hard and left. Not much is happening in the village when we arrive. It is hot and the men and boys are resting on bamboo benches. The women and girls are all inside; only curious heads poking out indicate their presence.

The village comprises about a dozen huts, all of which are rectangular in plan and raised on stilts. The settlement is oriented

parallel to the river in a sandy, man-made clearing. The raising of the huts is nothing to do with the proximity of the river but rather to encourage air movement beneath the building. Humidity here ranges from 30 to 90 per cent and to counter this, the men wear little clothing. The shape and size of the huts are determined by the limited roof-span and by palm widths. The structure is made from assorted hardwood branches lashed together, while the walls are bamboo, which is hammered flat and held in place by two sticks on either side. Roofs are pitched and overhang the bamboo walls.

It is heartening to see that, despite interaction with people from the nearby Malaysian village, corrugated metal sheeting hasn't yet reached the Batek. Instead all the roofs are constructed in atap, traditional leaf thatching. Leaves are removed from the plant's spine and re-sewn into a tile. Batek women, who are taught to weave from an early age, make all the roofs. The men make the huts and have been trained to do so since being given machetes when still young. I ask why the men can't make the roofs and am told they are too hasty in the sewing and leave holes. I am also told that it takes one day to build a hut. I reply that I've been working on a house that has been on site two years.

One end of the village acts as its communal heart. Here there is an open-sided hut for shelter from the sun and rain along with an impressive bamboo table for communal dining. Virtually everything in the village is shared, including the food, whether it has been hunted or gathered. Food is divided for the entire village with immediate family receiving portions first, then the extended family, then other families. When game is caught (such as monkey), members of the hunting party eat the offal and tail first, because these parts are the fastest to cook. Then the meat is divided so that each family in the camp gets some, with portions adjusted according to the size ____



Left_The Batek village on the edge of primary jungle. The Batek are a peaceful tribe who live a nomadic existence, changing location every five months or so in order to allow the land to replenish Bottom left_A traditional hut is repaired using man-made materials. Typically men build the bamboo structures and women weave the atap roofs Below_The easiest way to access the Taman Negara national park is by traditional long boat down the Sungai Tembeling Bottom right_The author tries his hand at pipe blowing... and misses wildly







THE BATEK HAVE NO CONCEPT OF LAND OWNERSHIP, SO THEY HAVE NO DIFFICULTY IN MOVING EVERY FIVE MONTHS

of the family. As with most tribes, the sharing of resources is not an act of kindness, but born of necessity. The Batek also believe that all food belongs to the forest, so a person in possession of food has a moral duty to share. In addition, upsetting someone in the village may not only cause anger among the community but also to the spirits. The fear of supernatural reprisal is enough to ensure the Batek are a peaceful society. This also explains the social importance of communal meals and the grand bamboo dining table, complete with bamboo benches large enough to cater for the entire village. Bamboo is tied together using bark lashing to form benches, while the table top is constructed from flattened bamboo similar to the walls of the huts.

Although there is little activity in the village, soon there will be a mass exodus as the village relocates to another site. Though this may seem strange to us, the Batek have no concept of land ownership. Rather, they are just stewards, looking after

the land. So they have no difficulty in moving every five months to allow the forest to replenish. All Batek are animists, without organised or codified religious beliefs. Instead they see the world, especially the river and jungle, as being animated by spirits. It is the respect for the spirits that command the entire village to move if someone dies. The departed are very important and are considered to act as intermediaries between this world and the next. Uprooting the village is just the start of a hugely elaborate burial ritual, in which the body is brought by procession to a hut, similar to the ones in the village, but constructed in a tree some 50 metres high. The body is covered and left with its possessions alongside it, together with food for the spirits. It is then left undisturbed for two to three years, upon which time the village returns to procure a bone from the skeletal remains. This is then buried, so returning the family member to the forest.

Although sharing is at the heart of village life, some items are

considered personal property, such as a blowpipe for men, or a hair comb for women. The blowpipe is a work of art, hollowed from two trunks of young palm using monkey bone tied to rattan. Once hollowed, a piece of cane is used to make the smooth barrel bore. Resin seals the mouthpiece. The darts are made from pine leaf, which is thin and flexible. The dart's plug creates an airtight seal. The tips are then dipped in a natural poison that can paralyse and kill a man. With monkeys watching from the trees, a villager demonstrates how it's used. Amazingly he's accurate to the millimetre from a distance of over 30 metres.

The duties of the men here are simple: make huts (without roofs), make blowpipes, go hunting and mate. Mating is done solely from within the village and the family units are large. When the family expands, the huts aren't extended as in the longhouses of other parts of the Malaysia. Instead the village just makes a new hut, as it only takes a day. Apparently having eight children or less is to be seen as a lazy man. I'm asked how many children I have — I have none. I'm made to feel very lazy.

Other personal items are acquired through interaction with the local Malaysian village. One boy, dressed in more westernised clothing, shows me where the food is cooked and how the fire is started. He uses two carved sticks and when one breaks, pulls out a classic red Victorinox Swiss Army knife and carves another. After some considerable effort the tinder is glowing and he tries igniting dried palms. When this fails he pulls out an old lighter and sets the lot on fire. Inevitably, the Batek way of life is changing, but not as hugely as it might be. Except for a few pieces of man-made tarpaulin, Batek architecture remains as it has been for thousands of years. There is no design here, so development is slow. Changes only occur when present solutions fail. Then the problem is tackled on a one-to-one scale using whatever is at hand.













A PREVIEW OF LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL REVEALS A NOD TO TRADITIONAL CRAFT AND UNEXPECTED USE OF MATERIALS

EDITED BY

WILL HUNTER, GEORGINA WARD

183_Glass lamp for Decode; www. decodelondon.com 2_Table light in acrylic by José Marton for allê; www. alledesign.com.br 4 Flower Cup wood chair by Leif.designpark; www.leifdesignpark.com 5 Moving Mondrian Library by Amosdesign, www.amosdesign.eu 6 Together table and Seating for Eating settle and stool in chestnut, by Ilse Crawford; www.studioilse.com 7 M Bench in concrete by Grupo Bondi; www. grupobondi.com.ar 486 will be at The Tramshed, an exhibition in east London for which the AR is media sponsor. www.thetramshed event.co.uk



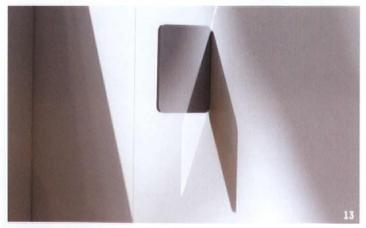


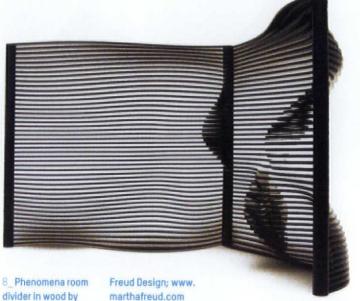


The Architectural Review / October 2010 / Design Review



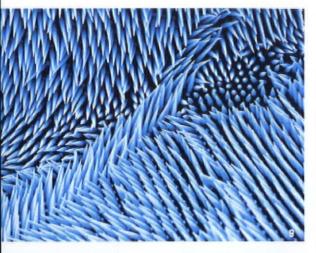




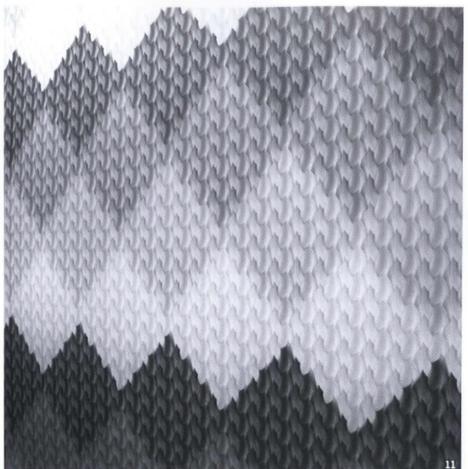


8_Phenomena room divider in wood by Sang Hoon Kim for Keame; www. keamestudio.com 9_Miranda wall tiles in silicone by Giles Miller; www. gilesmiller.com 10_Nest table in solid oak by Martha Freud Design; www. marthafreud.com 11_ Knitted Room wallpaper in pattern #2 by Chae Young Kim; www.chae youngkim.com 12_ Sculptural seat by Ora-ito for HI-MACS; www.himacs.eu













The largest rooms contain the most sensuously arrresting exhibits

Below Cloudscapes by Tetsuo Kondo Architects and Transsolar



EXHIBITION / The Venice Biennale, 12th International Architecture Exhibition

Until 21 November, various venues, Venice, Italy www.labiennale.org

John Milton is most lauded for the publication of Paradise Lost in 1667, and yet the English poet deserves not a little credit for coining the word 'sensuous'. As a derivation of the sexually suggestive 'sensual', his creation describes being alive to sensations (especially in an aesthetic wayl but cleansed of any carnal connotations. Several centuries later, the 2010 architecture biennale in Venice justifies and renews its invention. For although vitally stimulating almost all the senses, after a comprehensive perambulation the only body parts possibly heading towards tumescence are your feet.

Curated by Kazuyo Sejima, one half of SANAA, the Japanese

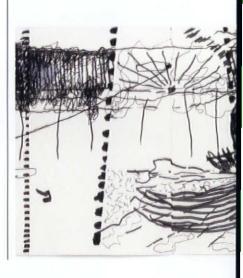
winner of the Pritzker Prize earlier in the year, this is the only time after a dozen iterations that the Biennale has had a female director; after a string of critics and theorists, she is the first architect to lead the exhibition for a decade. Reflecting an astute architectural judgement, Sejima selected 46 diverse participants for the exhibition, which takes place across two sites: in the Arsenale for the principal part, and in the Giardini, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, alongside the more established national pavilions (see page 92).

The Arsenale's exhibition is housed in the city's old rope-works, where the linear arrangement of spaces creates a 300m-long enfilade, grand in scale yet industrial in texture. It is surely no accident that the four largest rooms contain the most sensuously arresting exhibits. The first among these, Transsolar and Tetsuo Kondo Architects, have engineered

Below_Architect Christophe Egret challenged 30 participants to capture a pavilion at Venice's Giardini, armed only with a concertina sketchbook and a pen. The AR collaborated with Nigel Coates on Romania (which modesty prevents us showing); but here are (from top) Robert Sakula's Holland, Alex Mowat's Venice, and a mystery hand's rendering included for its dynamic flair.







THIS BUILDING BHEN VACANT FOR MARE THAN 39 YEARS

This is architecture that is about the perception of spatial conditions

Below_Balancing Act by Antón García-Abril & Ensamble Studio



an atmospheric cloud to hover above your head; a soaring, looping bridge guides you into – and then above – this hot, humid interlayer before returning you, sweating, to the ground. Held in place with improbable-looking rings around existing brick columns, this metallic structure wobbles you in mid-air and is clangingly percussive under the pacing of many feet.

Two works use light and sound to stunningly dramatic effect. The artist Olafur Eliasson has simply combined suspended hoses and strobe lamps to beautifully alter everyday perceptions of the essential elements of water and light. At its most dynamic, the hoses flail about, throwing off jets of liquid, hyper-articulated by dazzling split-second flashes. However, when the hoses hang limp, your hands can childishly interfere with the vertical flow, sending out precious diamond-like arcs that disappear before they hit the ground - a bouncy, black, saturated surface that gives off a wet, rubbery smell.

In a later room, Janet Cardiff has placed 40 inward-facing speakers in an elongated halo, one for each voice in an emotive rendition of Renaissance choral piece Spem in alium by Thomas Tallis. Some visitors wove in and out of the arrangement to interact with the music, but most sat on the benches or even lay on the floor. Many closed their eyes to isolate themselves and feel less self-conscious in response to the composition as it swelled and pulsed around them. Experiencing how the



near-physical presence of this wall of sound can create an architectural space was one of the show's most moving moments.

The fourth of the larger exhibits, Balancing Act by Antón García-Abril & Ensamble Studio, is an intersection of two giant I-section concrete beams, the upper pivoting on the base, supported by a quivering spring at one end and counterpoised at the other by a large rock. The composition is beguiling however, as knocking on the lower element's not-coldenough surface revealed it to be a hollow simulacrum, a stagey installation where the impression of sheer scale supersedes material truth. Placed on the diagonal axis as an interruption to the natural route, the pair of massive props

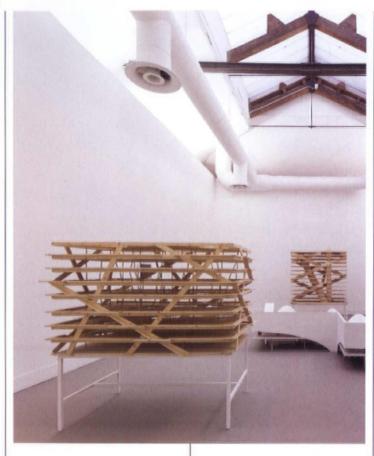


engages with the building as a found-space – like a number of the other smaller exhibits, such as Amateur Architecture Studio's timber-and-hook dome, which rises like a soufflé around the cramped terminal room's compressed columns.

There were two major screen-based exhibits. Wim Wenders' 3D video If Buildings Could Talk celebrated SANAA's Rolex Learning Centre. Though hard to take entirely seriously [with its slightly sententious voiceovers and catchy little score), it seductively sold the architectural project with cinematic sweeps of the sloping interior landscape, wonderful variations in light and shade, and the building's uncompromising, unbelievable whiteness.

Elsewhere Hans Ulrich Obrist's individual interviews with this year's Biennale participants are relayed on little televisions. On one wall are printed 850 names of the luminaries he's interviewed over the past two decades but, like a war memorial of those lost, the extensive listing leaves a daunting impression: would it have been too journalistic to pick out some quotes from the current interviews, for those without the time or inclination to sit through them all?

Over at the Giardini, the Palazzo's gallery space is more traditional though labyrinthine in layout. At the back of the building, OMA's exhibition on preservation drew visitors through the maze of curiosities. Though this venue's work was mostly smaller, it was no less communicative. Alongside an impressive array of conventional

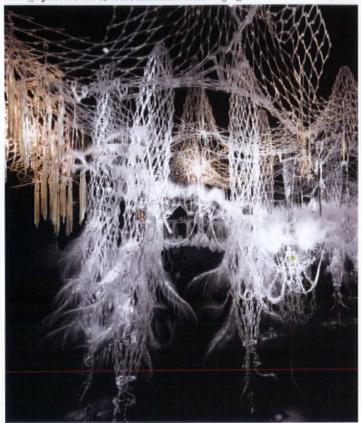


models, architecture was represented in numerous inventive ways. Among other examples, the colour, intensity and depth of Andrés Jaque's Fray Foam Home was delightful to behold (though how it represents a house escapes me still); and Do ho Suh + Suh Architects' suspended replica of a New York domestic facade stitched together from diaphanous blue fabric is exquisite. There is much to inspire here.

The 'people' aspect of Sejima's theme of 'people meet in architecture' is fairly difficult to discern in the resulting exhibition, but the 'architecture' is certainly more pronounced than her predecessor's efforts – though in a subtle, almost elusive way. It is an architecture that isn't necessarily about building, but about the perception of spatial conditions. An exciting, energetic show, serious yet fun, it speaks to all the senses. Milton, I think, would be impressed. WILL HUNTER

The poignant dignity of the rough hewn structures had nothing to do with architects

Below_Hylozoic Ground, in the Canadian Pavilion Right_The Bahrain Pavilion, winner of the Golden Lion award



NATIONAL PAVILIONS / The Venice Biennale

Whether an involuntary consequence of squeezed cultural-relations budgets, or a more tactical response to the aura of Sejima as director, this year many countries appeared to be keeping their contributions low key. Even so, in the Giardini and Arsenale, visitors were confronted with the usual daunting spectrum of curatorial propositions and possibilities.

For Chile, Mathias Klotz's photographs calmly recorded the devastation of the 2010 Chilean earthquake. Though

'only' 500 people died,
the quake was one of the
strongest in recorded world
history, with many coastal
towns and historic districts
wiped out by the ensuing
tsunami. In the festive biennale
milieu dedicated to reaffirming
architectural omnipotence, it
was a reminder of the fragility
of built form and human life.

Switzerland presented a sober survey of the work of engineer Jürg Conzett, rendered in moody panoramas of Swiss landscapes heroically traversed by his structures. Brazil also opted for a monographic homage to the apparently immortal Niemeyer. Belgium investigated the





Below_Tokyo's metabolising city fabric in the Japanese Pavilion



physical effects of use and wear through a beautifully laconic array of ordinary objects and fittings, such as carpets and handrails. Neighbouring Netherlands (Giardini geography occasionally apes the real thing) focused on the reuse of vacant buildings expressed through a huge, celestial blue polystyrene model of a 'city' of empty buildings suspended in mid-air like a temporary sky.

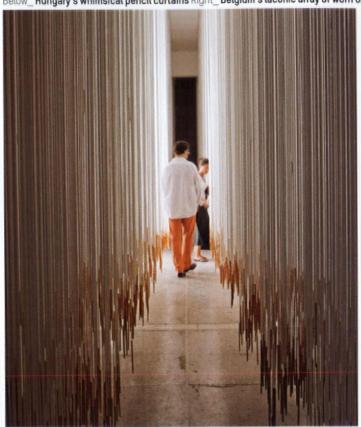
For Japan, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto of Atelier Bow-Wow and SANAA's Ryue Nishizawa showed a series of delightful house proposals in the context of Tokyo's 'metabolising' city fabric. Unlike Europe, with its historic city cores and grand plans, Tokyo consists of a fluid aggregation of independent buildings or 'grains'. France under Dominique Perrault also homed in on the city, this time as a wider urban terrain, with an installation of films and texts, though the vigorously flickering walls (doubtless unintentionally) | the curatorial spectrum, ____

induced minor queasiness in visitors. Russia's contribution was a survey of redundant Soviet-era factories in the former textile town of Vyshny Volochyok, investigating how derelict land might be brought back into use. A familiar topic of post-industrial regeneration, perhaps, but it's estimated that there are 300 Vyshny Volochyoks across Russia, housing 10-15 million people.

At the less careworn end of

This dialogue across history was an elegiac paean to memory and place

Below_Hungary's whimsical pencil curtains Right_Belgium's laconic array of worn objects

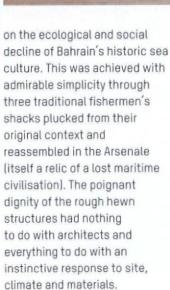


Hungary delivered a cheerful homage to the art of hand drawing, adorned with rippling pencil curtains. In a riposte to the proscriptions of health and safety, Poland encouraged visitors (at their own risk) to leap off a gabion tower on to an inflatable landing shrouded in dry ice. Canada went all weirdly sci-fi with Hylozoic Ground, an interactive forest made of thousands of lightweight, digitally fabricated components fitted with microprocessors and sensors to mimic organic life.

There were some misfires, notably the Scandinavians, who played it rather too Nordically straight (more Finnish schools?),

and the USA, whose pavilion inexplicably gave house room to architect John Portman. Spain was an inelegant articulation of some vaguely right-on, green credentials, with its section of the Biennale catalogue left enigmatically blank. For hardcore nihilism, however, one couldn't touch the Venezuelans, who didn't turn up at all.

The virtues of austerity and authenticity were underlined by Bahrain's award of Golden Lion for best pavilion. Making its debut in Venice, the tiny oil-rich kingdom confounded the stereotype of the Gulf as a latter day architectural Gomorrah, instead choosing to reflect



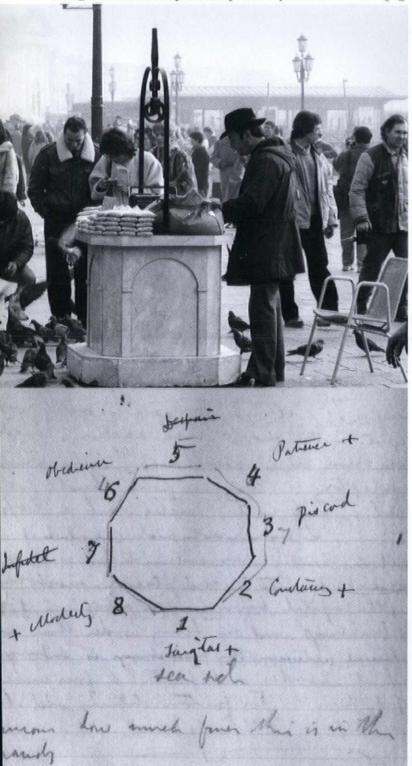
Several biennales ago in 1996, the British Pavilion was colonised by a huge scale model of Richard MacCormac's Ruskin Library for the University of Lancaster. Ruskin and Venice are grimly locked together in art-historical perpetuity, but it's well known that he came to deplore the consequences of his Venetian investigations and their careless rehashing in a tide of crass pseudo-Gothic imitations — 'accursed Frankenstein monsters of,

indirectly, my own making', as he put it. However, he was also deeply concerned with memory and especially the part buildings play as both text and repository of cumulative history. 'We cannot remember without architecture,' he admonished in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

For this biennale, the shade of Ruskin rose again, with the British Pavilion ironically rechristened Villa Frankenstein by curator Liza Fior of Muf Architecture. Ruskin's meticulous and obsessive recording is at the heart of what Fior describes as 'close looking', a strategy and spirit that underpinned the British contribution.

On duck egg blue walls,
Ruskin's Venetian jottings
and sketches were paired
with images from a remarkable
unseen archive by local
photographers Alvio and
Gabriella Gavagrin. The
Gavagrins live in Castello,
Venice's easternmost sestiere.







Here during the press vernissage, Castello's streets and gardens are transformed into a supercharged summer fete. Yet through the Gavagrins' prism of black and white camera vérité, the same locale is depicted as a place of decay and abandonment, a mouldering banquet served up for tourists.

Augmenting this subtle urban examination devised by Venice-based artist and philosopher Wolfgang Scheppe was an inhabitable scale model of part of the 2012 Olympic Stadium. Built by local carpenters and wedged into its space like a modern Teatro Olimpico, this will be used for drawing workshops during the Biennale (see page 88). There was also a suite devoted to the lagoon and its ecology, replete with aquaria and stuffed

birds. Both these sections were freighted with earnest notions of pedagogy, outreach and legacy, which though estimable in their own right, seemed slightly at odds with the more dreamlike atmosphere of the Ruskin/Gavagrin rooms. Bridging generations, methods of recording (hand drawing and the cameral and ways of seeing, this dialogue across history was an elegiac paean to memory and place; specifically, how buildings are embedded with layers of memory and meaning, and how a sense of place is physically and experientially transmuted over time.

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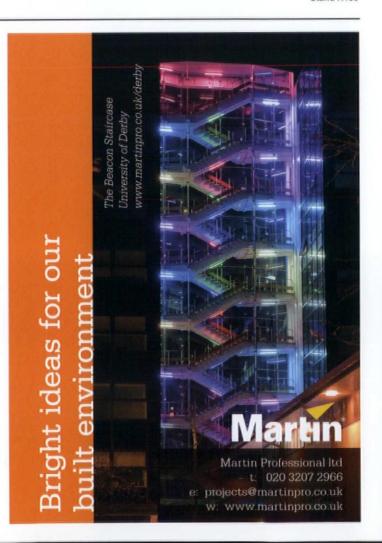
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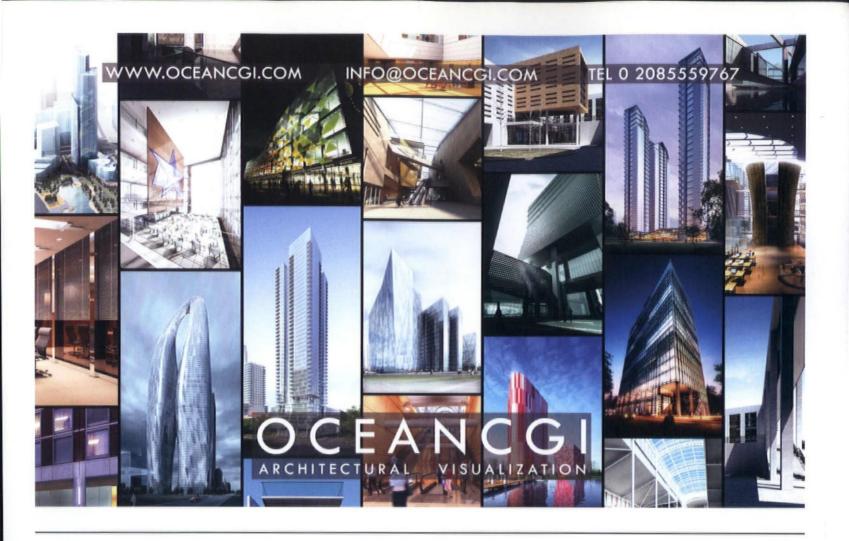
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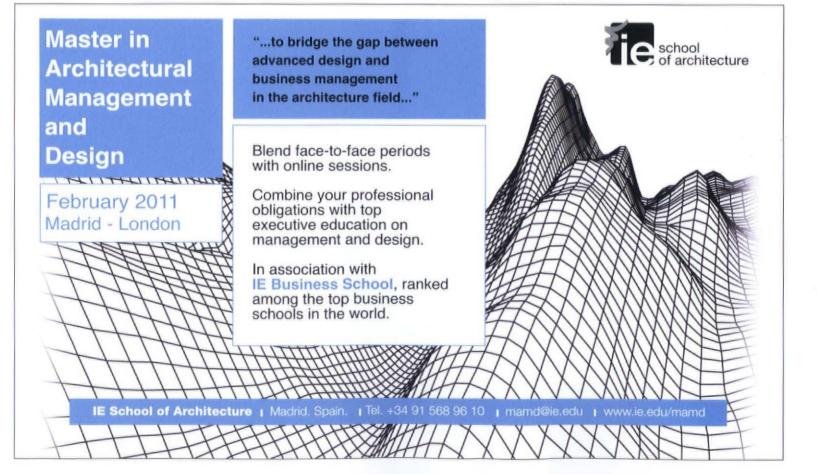
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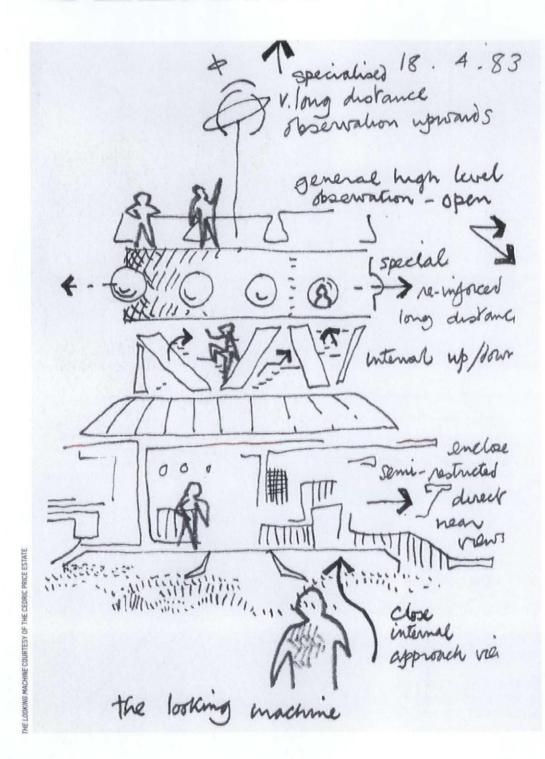
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A tiny but replete room in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni at the Venice Biennale pays homage to one of the giants of 20th century British architecture: Cedric Price (1934-2003). The exhibition attempts to celebrate Price the communicator, the philosopher, the thinker, the observer of human nature.

Venic Venic, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Samantha Hardingham, grew from a series of recorded conversations between Obrist and Price between 1998 and 2003. Among the encyclopedic array of subject matter covered, a specific reference to sketchbooks led Obrist to invite Hardingham to make a selection of previously unseen drawings from Price's personal notebooks, and to present earlier screen footage dating back to 1975. For Price, the notebook sketches 'serve as a personal reminder'; some are like the finest and funniest cartoons capturing an idea in a few lines, others show the working-out of issues of scale, logistics or composition.

The room also features an online project conceived at the department for exhibition design and curatorial practice at Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. The website comprises hundreds of individually edited video clips taken from Obrist's recorded conversations and tagged according to keywords, which can be used to generate a live – albeit fictional – conversation between Price and the user.

http://huoarchive.hfg-karlsruhe.de





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