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**Jürgen Mayer's urban parasols invade Seville**

**WOHA's mega eco-structure for Singapore**

**O'Donnell + Tuomey's Lyric Theatre unveiled**

**VIEW / Bin Laden's Abbottabad lair / Bhutan /**

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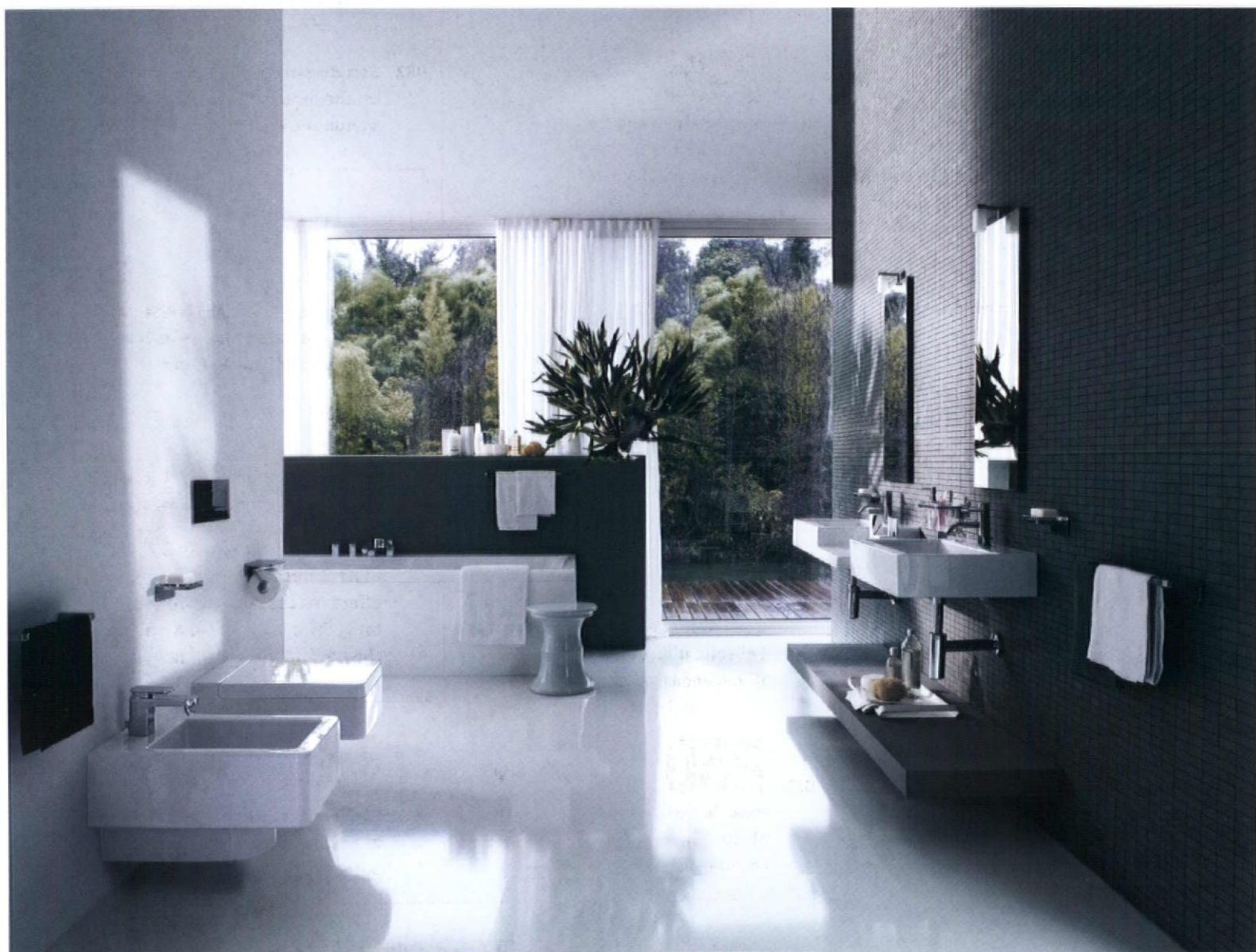
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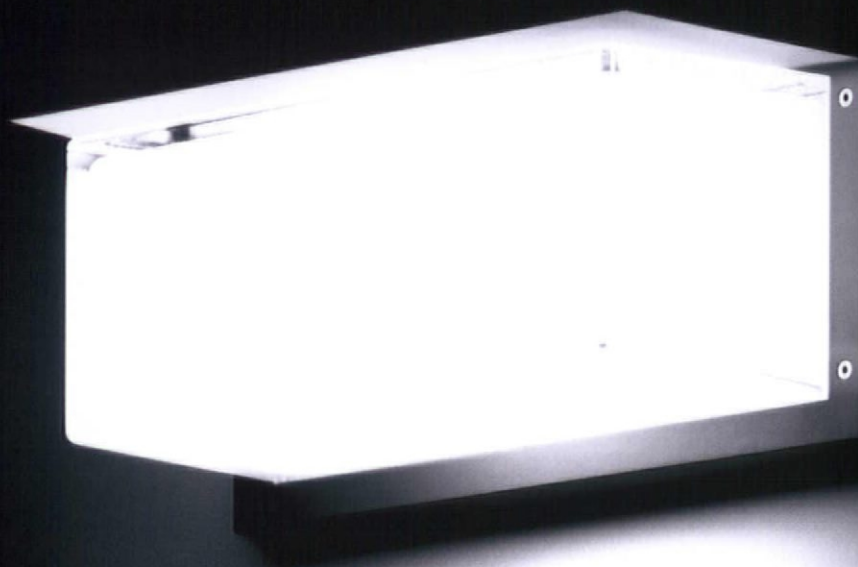
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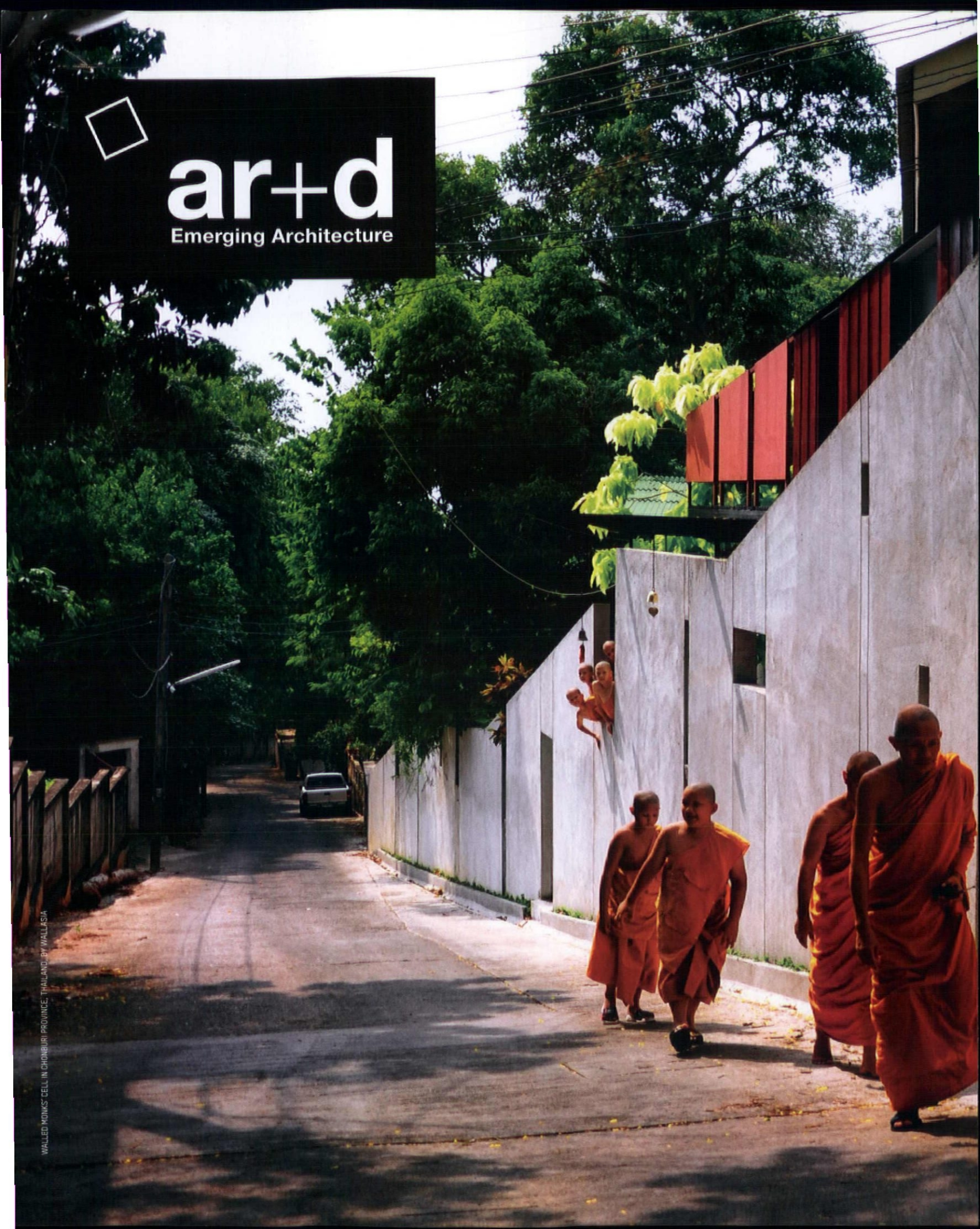




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## AR PRODUCTS CHASSIS CHAIR

Wilkhahn

Launched at the Milan Furniture Fair earlier this year, Wilkhahn's new Chassis chair is the typically innovative outcome of a collaborative and cross-disciplinary design process. Working in partnership with Munich-based furniture maker and industrial designer Stefan Diez, Wilkhahn has created a tautly honed multi-purpose chair that not only embodies the enviable sleekness of contemporary sports cars, but also exploits the precise and progressive technologies that are used in their manufacture. The fluid form of Chassis is an exercise in lean functionality, beautifully pared down in order to optimise material use and manufacturing processes and also to minimise waste. The chair's steel frame and polypropylene shell fuse to become an almost seamless, organic entity that combines strength, comfort and durability.

Developed following exhaustive research and testing, Chassis was initially conceived as a lightweight, contoured 'frame and membrane' seat. The concept behind the design is rather like a bicycle saddle: a stylish load-bearing structure made of steel and covered in a thin, elastic shell. However, this enduring and appealing archetype has been redefined by the modern technologies and processes of the automotive industry. The first prototypes were fabricated from 11 hand-crafted pieces and the chair's form was gradually refined by Diez over the course of two years. Following extensive consultation with automotive suppliers in Germany and the Netherlands, a method was found

to utilise the space-frame technology of vehicle-body manufacture to fabricate the Chassis chair frame, the first time that a piece of furniture has been produced in this way.

The design process involves using deep-drawing steel sheet to form the complex, three-dimensional shapes of the backrest frame and legs. The press applies 300 tonnes of pressure to distort and configure the steel sheet into the slim, lightweight skeleton of the backrest frame. Leftover pieces are used to form the four legs and connecting elements, so the process is economical, with practically no wastage and materials that can be recycled. A robotic welder joins together the 'chassis' of steel frame, legs and connecting pieces, and then the detachable shell of unitary seat and backrest is fixed into place. Ergonomically designed, the fine-grained polypropylene shell is a mere 4mm-thick, and acts like a membrane when stretched across the steel frame.

Weighing only 5.4kg, Chassis is extremely lightweight and stackable, making for ease and convenience of handling. Suitable for work and home use, applications for this versatile, multi-purpose chair include meeting rooms, canteens, dining tables and studios. Chassis is also available in a range of textile seat shells, developed in collaboration with fashion designer Farah Ebrahimi. Combined with different coloured frames, this choice of options expands the Chassis repertoire, so designers can use it like a tool box, combining seat and frame to fit in with any interior or setting.







1\_ Chassis chair frame components in flat steel sheet form (left), which are pressed into three-dimensional shapes (right). The elements of the frame are then fused together by robotic

welding machines. The design exploits the technology of car manufacturing to striking and inventive effect  
2\_ Detail of textile seat and contrasting frame, which offers designers the

possibility of combining different colours and textures  
3\_ Adaptable and elegant, Chassis is an exercise in streamlining form, materials and manufacturing processes





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# Amid conflict and change, architecture can live on in collective memory

*This month, the military industrial complex is on our minds, prompted by the activities of US Navy Seals in Abbottabad (page 24) and an exhibition on the relationship between architecture and the Second World War at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal (page 90). As our Abbottabad correspondent notes, there is a perennial fascination with the lairs of evil masterminds, but Osama Bin Laden's turns out to be disappointingly banal, the only really shocking thing about it being its cosy proximity to an elite Pakistani military academy. Now, however, an unremarkable piece of architecture may acquire the charged status of a holy relic.*

*It's curious to think how sites and buildings can be so strangely and profoundly transmuted. Trace the trail of Bin Laden and his operatives from Abbottabad and you end up in New York on a September day nearly ten years ago. The destruction of the World Trade Center is seared into collective consciousness because Bin Laden chose his targets well. A pair of soaring towers on the edge of Manhattan were the perfect architectural embodiment of Western capitalism. The ravaged downtown site is now infused with a terrible poignancy that has all but paralysed reconstruction efforts.*

*The Pentagon, which was also targeted that day and rebuilt exactly as it was, is one of four mega-projects featured at the CCA show. While the Pentagon is still operational, Auschwitz, one of the other projects under scrutiny, is mercifully not. But it still endures, a place where what remains of architecture is loaded with meaning that is almost too much to bear.*

**CATHERINE SLESSOR, EDITOR**



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*Rob Bevan is the author of The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War (Reaktion, 2006). In this month's View section he reflects upon the recent unearthing of Osama Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan*

*Peter Carl, who in this issue reviews Serie Architects' monograph, runs the PhD programme at London Metropolitan University Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design. Trained at Princeton and Prix de Rome, Carl previously taught design and the graduate programme in the History and Philosophy of Architecture at the University of Cambridge, UK*

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*Kester Rattenbury is an architectural writer and critic from the University of Westminster, London. Among her numerous books is Architecture of the Air: O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects (Trieste: Navado Press, 2004) and in this issue she reviews the practice's latest project in Belfast*

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ABBOTTABAD, PAKISTAN

# The presence of Bin Laden's hideout creates a dilemma for Pakistan

ROB BEVAN

Who lives in a house like this? The media has had conniptions speculating about the late Osama Bin Laden's digs. The presence of the house has had to suffice to represent the man in the absence of a corporeal Bin Laden – alive or dead. Nothing has been too trivial. Taiwanese TV focused on the house's unfortunate feng shui; the *Guardian's* Alexander Chancellor mused on a possible smoking ban indoors.

Discussion of the house has also had its more serious propaganda purposes. Although newspapers have repeatedly described the house as a lair, without a shadowy cave or an underground bunker complete with leather chair and white cat to stroke, the emphasis has rested on how evil Bin Laden has been living in a 'mansion'. He has resided in palatial, hypocritical luxury, whereas the reality for his Islamist minions has more often been a hovel.

An Obama administrative official described the building as an 'extraordinarily unique compound in an affluent suburb'. US government speculation put the compound's value at \$1 million (£600,000),

whereas local estate agents reckoned that it would fetch around \$250,000 (£150,000).

Every newspaper displayed the same graphic – issued by the US government – a bird's-eye axonometric view showing not a lot but walls. The spot where the 'paranoid' household burnt its refuse was duly marked and appeared to fascinate readers. Paranoid? Any international criminal mastermind worth their salt would do the same – they are out to get you.

It seems strange to stress the Abbottabad house's atypicality, its monstrous size and fortress form, because, if that were true, why wasn't it noticed by Osama's hunters earlier on? The implicit question is how could the unreliable Pakistani military not have observed the existence of such an outsized palace in such close proximity to one of their own elite academies.

In actual fact, the roughly finished concrete multi-family compound house, with its scabbed walls, is a typical middle-class model across secure and insecure terrains in Asia and the Middle East. The building's walls may have been on the high side but it wasn't

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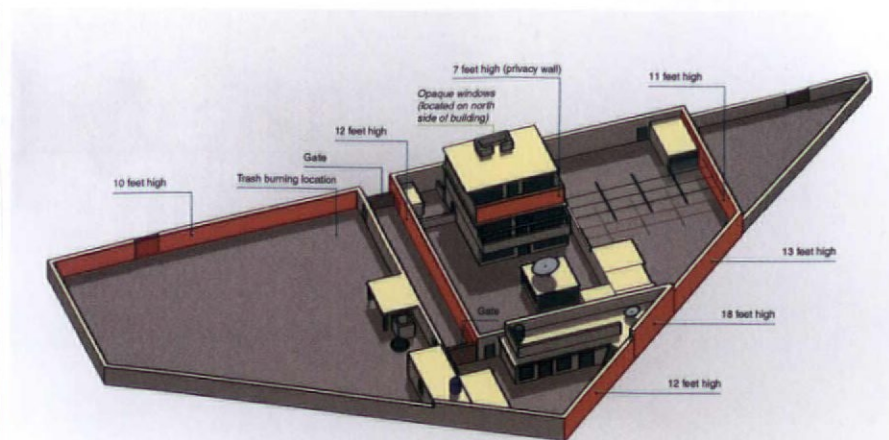
windowless, as any cursory look at a photograph shows.

It remains to be seen as this story shifts whether, after initially demonising the building by guilty association, it becomes more useful to stress its cunning anonymity. The *Daily Mail* has already used the (as we are told) torture-derived information trail leading to its door as justification for water-boarding. Propagandists want to read the story both ways.

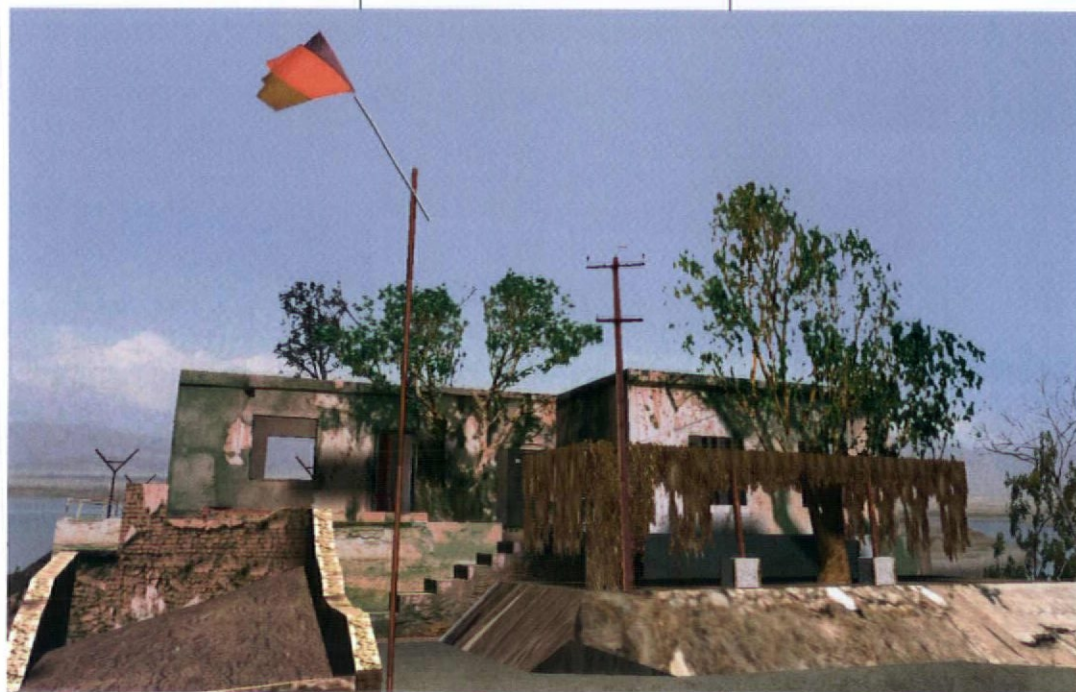
However, there is also a perennial fascination with the homes of tyrants, criminals and despots. Peter York's funny, snobbish 2005 book, *Dictators' Homes*, was an examination of tyrant kitsch – what he called an 'aesthetic schadenfreude' at the interior design hubris of the powerful but deranged. Saddam Hussein's billion-dollar palaces with gold taps and soft porn murals of buxom lovelies being ravished were perfect in this respect. Especially since conquering GIs lolled in its marble halls while the mightily fallen Saddam cowered in his dusty spider hole.

British artists Langlands and Bell were among those intrigued by the hideout of Bin Laden. The pair's 2003 work *House of Osama Bin Laden* abandoned their trademark cool white architectural models for what has been described as a 'CNN Newscape' CAD rendering of what his lair might have been like. Accurately mundane, as it turns out, down to the sub-continental wooden *charpoy* (daybed). (Which will probably disappoint York.)

Langlands and Bell told the AR: 'In the end the blurred photographs of the bloodstained double bed, the charpoy and the wardrobe reveal a world devoid of creativity, a world of emotional poverty and haunting banality.' They liken the hiding



Left\_ The axonometric issued by the US government of Osama Bin Laden's compound  
Below\_ British artists Langlands and Bell's 2003 visualisation of what Osama's domicile might look like



place to a student hostel and note the overplaying of its grandeur by the media.

What next for the compound? Will it, like other 'evil' locations such as serial killer Fred West's Gloucester house in the UK, or Hitler's Berlin bunker, be purged and destroyed? Certainly, such destruction would satisfy the crowds celebrating at Ground Zero in New York. In the so-called 'war on terror', tactics such as the assassination or the demolition of the suicide bomber's family home, have become commonplace, despite the illegality of both actions

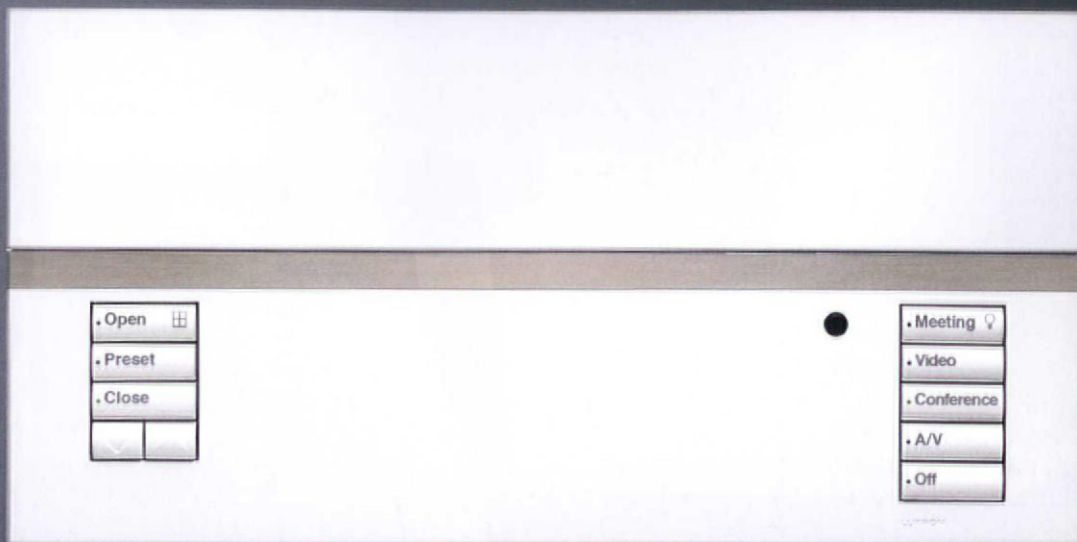
under international laws governing the conduct of war.

Already Bin Laden's compound is becoming an attraction, in the same way in which Khmer Rouge 'butcher' Ta Mok's dreary compound with its naïve Angkor Wat memorials has an uncomfortable ambivalence. Situated in the remote Cambodian village of Anlong Veng, it feels more like a shrine, tended to by loyal locals, than a genocide museum. (Pol Pot's grave up the road is used to divine lottery numbers by his followers.) Bin Laden's unremarkable hideout could equally become a place of

pilgrimage rather than just a dark tourist curiosity. In the absence of a body, the building could still become a shrine, a touchstone.

If the compound were to be destroyed, like Hitler's bunkers were, it would not reduce acts of terror or make Bin Laden any less of a hero to his supporters. The man will remain mythical, house or no house. Rather than erase the architectural endpoint of his murderous career, it is better to tolerate uncomfortable ambivalences. To demolish such a structure, whether a house or Bamiyan Buddhas, is the fundamentalist's choice.





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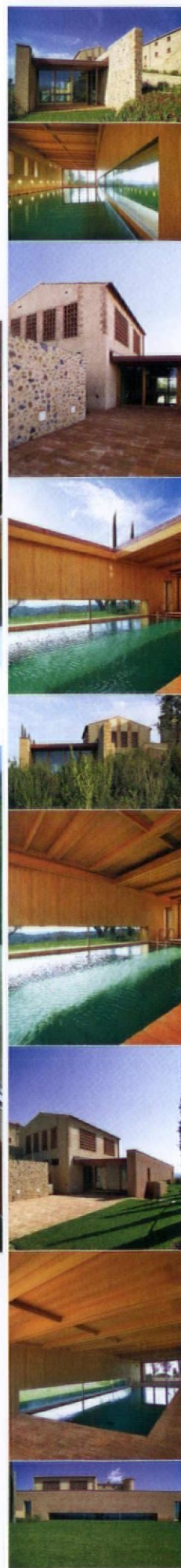
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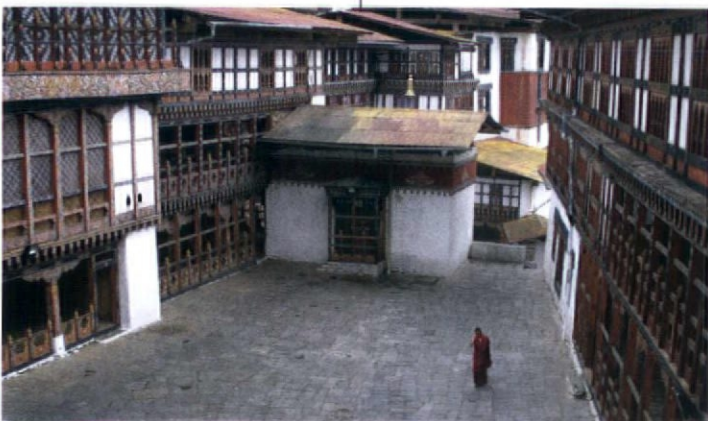
  
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# Boutique hotel ruffles feathers in the Himalayas

JOHANNA HOFFMAN



Top\_ The new Amankora Hotel in Bumthang has ruffled traditionalist feathers

Above\_ An example of ancient architecture, Trongsa Dzong is a fortress now used as a monastery and seat of regional government

In the pocket-sized nation of Bhutan – a country so steeped in historical custom that a visit there is akin to travelling back in time – cultural preservation is a serious issue. Pressed between Asian powerhouses India and China, the Himalayan nation operates under the reality that it could be annexed at any time.

For the Bhutanese, maintaining a distinctive identity is a matter of national security. Which is why a new

hotel in the valley of Bumthang is a cause of controversy. Amid the calm buckwheat fields and golden-roofed Buddhist temples, its presence is as alien as a spaceship; for the Amankora Hotel is from a future the country has yet to embrace. Owned by the Singapore-based Aman chain and designed by Australian architect Kerry Hill, it is one of five such resorts in Bhutan that trade the ornate carvings and vivid palette of traditional structures for quiet lines and muted colours.

Although Bhutanese politeness makes few willing to admit it, there is concern that the influence of Amankora's modern design could instigate a degradation of Bhutanese culture and, by extension, its viability as an independent nation. 'Without the daily influence of its architecture, Bhutan's sovereignty would be at grave risk,' says Samten Wangchuk, editor of national newspaper *Kuensel*. 'We would be just another little Indian state up north, or a tiny Chinese province down south.'

The threat of cultural invasion has deep roots. Prior to the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1951, Bhutan followed a practice of voluntary isolation, relying on its mountains for protection. By the 1960s, fearful of replicating Tibet's fate, Bhutan introduced an open foreign policy. Now, half a century later, Bhutanese identity blends traditional and westernised influences. With a population of less than 700,000, natural resources are almost as intact as a century ago, and citizens are required to wear 17th century-style dress. Yet in the capital city of Thimpu, children grow up as comfortable with video games as with ancient Buddhist dances.

To ensure that the country maintains its identity, the

government relies on a variety of regulatory measures. According to national building codes, architectural features and outer facades of all proposed developments are required to incorporate aspects of traditional Bhutanese style, characterised by rammed earth, heavy timber and stone materials, stacked lintel construction and intricate paintings of mythical creatures.

However, conflating ornamentation with architectural tradition poses a real risk to cultural preservation, in Bhutan and elsewhere. According to Richard Wolkowitz, an American architect who has worked in the Himalayan nation: 'Just putting traditional details on facades of buildings isn't necessarily keeping the country's culture alive.' Part of a culture is the people who perpetuate skills such as carpentry and craftsmanship. Yet many large projects such as hospitals depend on cheap labour from India and Nepal, removing most Bhutanese citizens from the building process.

How the depth of Bhutanese architecture should be joined up with the realities of development in the 21st century is a complex question. Although this is not a new quandary, pressures imposed by geopolitical realities of the eastern Himalayas have raised the stakes for Bhutan. While the effect that projects such as the Amankora Hotel will have on the country remains unclear, modernity's place in Bhutanese design calls for attention. As Bhutan's Ministry of Health Secretary Gado Tshering declares, doing so 'is key to our survival'.

**Additional images to accompany this article can be found online at [www.architectural-review/bhutan](http://www.architectural-review/bhutan)**



NEW ORLEANS, USA

# The Mississippi floods give new urgency to the AIA's housing debate

CATHERINE SLESSOR



Ironically, despite this year's upbeat theme of 'Regional Design Revolution/Ecology Matters', the American Institute of Architects' convention seems stalked by ecological disaster. At last year's gathering in Miami, oil spewing from a damaged BP rig in the Gulf of Mexico menaced Florida's pristine beaches. This year in New Orleans, the worst rainfall for 70 years engorged the mighty Mississippi, initiating the tactical inundation of large swathes of eastern Louisiana to divert catastrophic water levels away from the major cities.

Some 25,000 people in rural lowland areas will be affected, but the French Quarter should stay dry. 'There's never been a flood of this magnitude on the Mississippi,' said a spokesman for the US Army Corps of Engineers. 'All the water in the

United States seems to be coming our way'.

For New Orleans, the threat of flooding brings back dire memories of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when over 1800 people died and the city was consumed by water on an almost biblical scale. The impact of Katrina is still painfully visible, especially in the Lower Ninth Ward (pictured), where 4,000 homes were destroyed. Despite efforts to rebuild and resettle, a post apocalyptic landscape of overgrown and abandoned houses now prevails, as nature slowly reclaims the terrain. 'Katrina damaged the national psyche,' said James Timberlake of Kieran Timberlake, 'and it raised difficult questions about how you rebuild a community.'

Kieran Timberlake is one of the 21 practices involved in Make it Right, the initiative

founded by actor Brad Pitt to develop and build low-cost houses for the Lower Ninth. At the AIA convention, Timberlake shared a platform with fellow Make It Righters, local architect Jonathan Tait and the Japanese Hitoshi Abe, to compare experiences of post disaster design. Abe has an office in Sendai, so the trauma of the recent Japanese earthquake and tsunami is still acutely felt. Abe's Lower Ninth prototype is a variation on the local long 'shotgun' house, a 'triple shotgun', providing 65 plan variations for an expanding, multi-generational family.

The idea is that residents can choose their house from the Make It Right pattern book of prototypes and customise it according to individual taste. Budgets work out at around \$150 per square foot. But for all

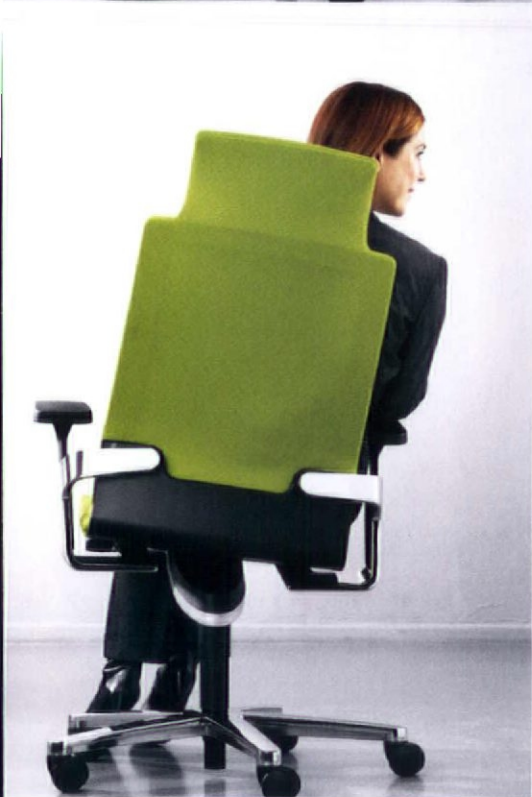
its admirable intentions, Make it Right has had its critics. One local architect described it as a 'petting zoo', and the prospect of superstars fiddling with the nuances of house design while a displaced population languish in Texan trailer parks has prompted debate about how effective architects can be in alleviating human misery. So far, with only 50 completed houses resettling 200 people, Make it Right seems like a well-meant but inadequate dent in a complex humanitarian crisis. But it only ever promised to deliver 150 houses.

Reconstruction will be a long-term slog and a sense of human connection to place takes time to develop. 'We need to come back in 25 years time and see how the architectural and community framework has fared,' said Timberlake.

JULIE DERMAN/KY/CORBIS



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BARCELONA, SPAIN

# New life post *corrida* for Barcelona's historic Las Arenas bullring

MICHAEL WEBB

Las Arenas, Barcelona's second bullring, has been reborn as a vibrant mixed-use centre, a year after the Catalan Parliament banned bullfighting in the province. That decision, acclaimed by humanitarians and deplored by conservatives, who still believe that Spain is different, was largely symbolic – a reminder that many in this region long for independence.

The sport had already lost the appeal that it still enjoys in Andalusia and Madrid, and Barcelona's one active bullring was down to 15 *corridas* (bullfights) per year. Las Arenas, which hosted circuses, rock concerts and operas, as well as bloody spectacle in its heyday,

had been abandoned in the late 1970s and was nearing collapse.

In 2000, after 15 years of debate, the city decided to preserve the facade of Las Arenas as it tottered towards its centenary. The bullring's site at the foot of Montjuïc and the convergence of two major axes makes it a familiar monument, with Neo-Mudéjar brickwork complementing the eclectic architecture on the hill.

Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners was commissioned to transform the rotunda into a shopping-entertainment complex, with a reception hall for 2,500 people and a public promenade at rooftop level. A decade of engineering

calculations, financial juggling and a last-minute rush to reach completion has given the city a brilliant fusion of old and new, with echoes of the Pompidou Centre and Royal Albert Hall.

Nineteenth-century ornament, with roots in the long history of Moorish Spain, is wrapped around modern technology, and the joints are exposed. The old building is raised a storey above ground and entered via ramps and steps. To open up four street-level entrances and stabilise a wall tilting in all directions, the architects clamped an arched beam to its base, underpinned it with branching steel props and cut away the ground beneath.

Vertical steel bars connect this reinforced base to a precast concrete beam atop the wall.

The interior was then gutted and excavated, to house 1,250 cars on four levels and a level of shops. Four concrete quadrants rise from foundations to support two more levels of shops, and a double-stack of 12 small cinemas. Four tapered steel pylons hold up a 100m-diameter dish and a shallow-domed roof. A rock museum, gym and running track occupy the fourth level. Above is the reception hall opening on to a broad terrace that encircles the building.

Most malls are labyrinthine, to disorient shoppers and empty their pockets; here the Constructivist atrium draws attention to a terrace that will soon be lined with outdoor tables and open until 2am. The domed hall has a lamella wood vault with openings that infuse the column-free space with natural light. Detached escape stairs and glass lifts are linked to a slender telecommunications tower on one side and a sleek office building on the other side.

What makes this complex so exhilarating is the clarity of the atrium, the 360° views over the city from the terrace and the bold expression of the elements. The result is a colour-coded showcase of engineering and social activity. The ground-level props and boomerang joints linking the roof to the dish are bright red, the tree-like pylons inside yellow, the ducts purple, the escape route pink and the lavatories orange. These evoke the pageantry of the *corrida*.

Now the challenge is to give new life to Barcelona's other bullring. Gladiatorial combat with disgraced bankers should prove a popular option.

**See a full set of project visuals at [www.architectural-review.com/barcelona-bullring](http://www.architectural-review.com/barcelona-bullring)**





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### Space Requirement

The project will comprise of Taiwan Tower and the Museum of Taichung City Development.

### Height

Though not aiming to compete in height with other towers of the world, in principle the observatory of Taiwan Tower should provide visitors with a view of the Taiwan Strait. The height is planned to be at least 300 meters.

### Design Principles

1. The site context and local architectural character should be integrated with 21st-Century building technology to symbolize the new Taiwan spirit.
2. Taiwan Tower should also answer its call for environment responsibility and adopt the use of alternative energy. In implementing the energy conservation and carbon reduction, Taiwan Tower will act as a model of green building for the 21st century.

### Timetable

Stage One Material Submission Deadline	2011/08/29
Stage One Jury Session	2011/09/01 ~ 2011/09/02
Announcement of Shortlist Tenderers	2011/09/02
Stage Two Material Submission Deadline	2011/11/09
Stage Two Jury Session	2011/11/10 ~ 2011/11/11
Announcement of Winning Tenderers	2011/11/11

For more information, please visit

**[www.TwTower.com.tw](http://www.TwTower.com.tw)**

(official launch on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

### Coordinator

Barry Cheng Architects  
TEL: 886-4-2326-1799 FAX: 886-4-2326-5212  
Email: barry-cheng@umail.hinet.net

### Total Construction Budget

About NT\$ 6,588,000,000.  
(About US\$ 220,000,000)  
Subject to the approved budget by city council.

### Service Fees

The service fee for this project is a fixed fee in the total amount of NT\$ 842,000,000.  
(About US\$ 28,000,000)  
Subject to the approved budget by city council.

### Qualifications for Participation (for Stage One)

1. Any licensed architect of Taiwan (R.O.C.), alone or in joint tender.
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3. Joint tender of licensed architects of Taiwan (R.O.C.) and licensed architects (or Firms / Corporations) of foreign countries.

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### Host Organization



Taichung City Government,  
Taiwan (R.O.C.)



LONDON, UK

## The UK's new Localism Bill is a betrayal that will centralise power and undermine local communities

PETER BUCHANAN

This year's James Stirling Memorial Lecture on the City at the London School of Economics was delivered as the Localism Bill was being discussed in the UK Parliament. The event provided an alarming analysis of the bill, which will profoundly impact on the running and funding of cities, by someone uniquely qualified to dissect it. The speaker, Harvard Law School Professor Gerald Frug, was introduced by Richard Sennett as having virtually invented many aspects of current urban law. Entitled *The Architecture of Governance*, the talk recognised that all forms of governance are designed; that of urban governance influencing not only how cities develop, but also the everyday lives of all of us. Crucial to such design is the division of power between different levels of government.

Purporting to empower local government, the Localism Bill will undermine it, falsely assuming that decentralisation requires no change to central government or its powers to overrule local decision-making. Indeed the bill invests the Secretary of State with astounding powers, to be exercised without any statutory

criteria, over all aspects of local governance, whose 'general power of competence' comes without financing, or the power to raise revenue. Moreover the bill's abolition of regional planning bodies fails to recognise that issues that concern cities are not only local to a city but might arise from conflict between cities, and also extend upward, even to the global level.

However, besides local government being constrained from above, the bill will also constrain it from below. The bill proposes extensive use of referenda, about anything that five per cent of the citizens petition for. Typically, as California confirms, this is for more services and lower taxes, a recipe for fiscal disaster. Indeed, Frug described the bill as the 'Californization' of the UK. Referenda are typically badly drafted by special interest groups and difficult to implement. And the process allows for no debate, negotiation and refinement of proposals.

Another major constraint from below is 'the community right to challenge', whereby groups can take over the provision of services from the

local authority. The Localism Bill wrests decisions about such privatisation from the local authority and places them with a process initiated by petition and controlled by the Secretary of State. Although Frug did not discuss this, the consequence will surely be that services from which easy profits can be made will be privatised, leaving the cash-strapped local authority to provide the rest. These are likely to be gobbled up by big corporations, as opposed to the local community groups of prime minister David Cameron's 'Big Society' myth. This is not entrepreneurship, which generates new forms of wealth, but the plundering of established forms of wealth.

Unimpressed by the Localism Bill and its division of powers between levels of government, Frug contrasted these with the vision enshrined in the South African Constitution with different 'spheres', not levels, of government, each of which is 'distinctive, interdependent and interrelated'. This important part of the talk can not be summarised easily and readers are encouraged to study the full text, which is available at

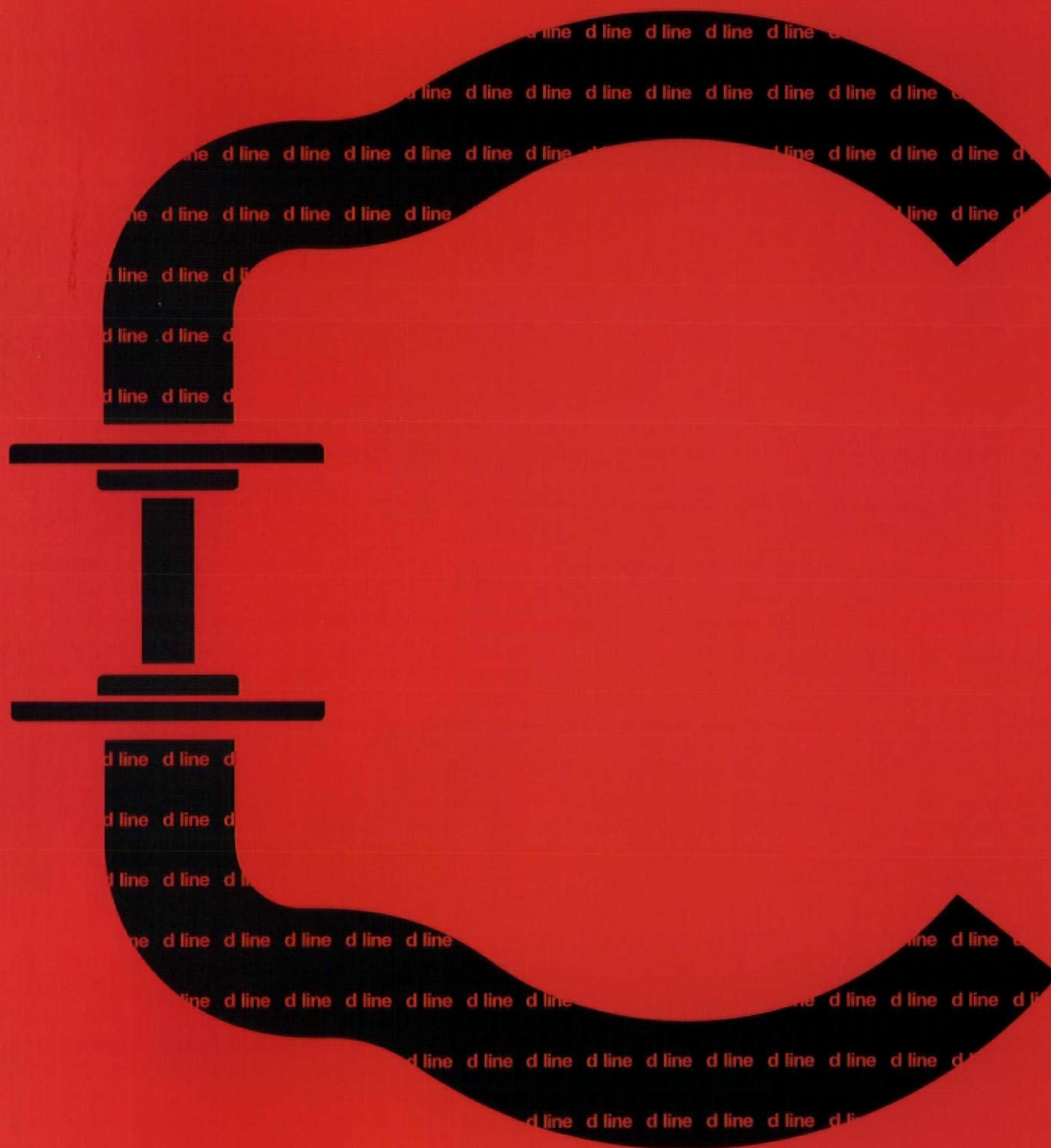
[www.architectural-review.com/frug-lse-lecture](http://www.architectural-review.com/frug-lse-lecture).

Although Frug highlighted many of the bill's shortcomings, he did not speculate on its underlying intentions. The claim to empower local governance appears to be mere camouflage for devolving downward the blame for the Coalition's cuts and responsibility for not financing local services. The immediate impetus might be the cuts, but the longer term one is unproved dogma. And the bill extends yet further the Thatcherite neoliberal project. If that, as Harold Macmillan protested, initially sold off the family silver (what were public utilities), the Localism Bill disposes of the last of the doorknobs and plumbing, leaving the state as an eviscerated shell – the carcass left by the corporate vultures. This is the climax of a process of transferring the wealth of the nation and its citizens to a limited number of individuals, the private sector and its disengaged shareholders – the antithesis of localism.

**The James Stirling Memorial Lecture on the City is co-organised by the Canadian Centre for Architecture**

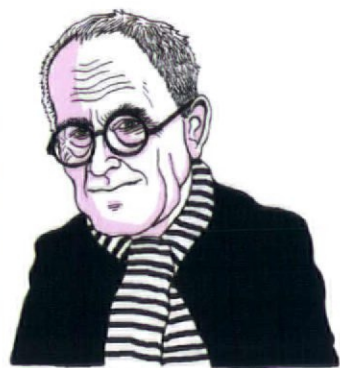


d line is in the detail...





# OPINION



## Message and medium: the architectural rhetoric of a transatlantic contretemps

PETER COOK

The age of the personality architect is far from lost: even though in the 1990s there were frequent cries that 'at last the age of the heroes is gone', we can note the degree to which Rem, Zaha, Jacques and Norman (we hardly need to use their surnames) have been identified and aspired to in the same way as the old Corb, Mies and FLW.

I was reminded of this in the wake of the recent 'spat' between the French digital experimentalist François Roche and the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc). A trivial piece of housekeeping erupted into something else when SCI-Arc, having invited him to make an exhibit, preferred not to take in a previously shown piece and Roche, instead of quietly negotiating, exploded with an attack on the institution.

'The interest of the school in scripting, computation and tooling is purely for the purpose of one end goal: cool-looking shit,' he said.

Seen objectively, Roche's own work has been among the most brilliant and exploratory in this field for some time, as any visitor to recent Venice Biennales must acknowledge. But the personality behind it appears to delight in a typically French attack on SCI-Arc's 'lack of interest for politics and attitudes'. Now where do I remember hearing such phrases? Surely around 1968, when the young sparks of French architecture would march and shout plenty of politics and attitude, and insist on 'reform'. But what followed was 20 years in which those same revolutionaries bedded themselves surprisingly

comfortably with Paris's fat-cat developers, and many of them became the most narrow-minded generation of inept professors that Europe has ever known. Ho-hum!

Perhaps the real background to all this lies in an inevitable phase in which the digital stars have broken ranks – no longer heroic or even special – being chased by thousands of kids up to the newest tricks, as well as many commercial offices who can access graduates with fast fingers and mobile mice. Some key figures – Greg Lynn, Lars Spuybroek, Markus Novak or Ali Rahim, are honing away in laboratories or universities, happy (maybe) to let the hot pursuit of digital motivation run out into the freefall of mainstream architecture.

The rhetoric against SCI-Arc is also reminiscent of attacks

that have always been made on creative schools at their peak. Large bodies of work from the Moscow Institute in the 1930s, the Cooper Union in the 1980s, the Bartlett in the 2000s or the Architectural Association for half a century have drawn accusations of creating the 'cool-looking shit' of the period (expressed in whatever grudging terms might appeal to the architectural public of the time).

Accusations of indulgence or self-referencing are often the province of the frustrated and even when it is proved, self-referencing does create a certain dynamic. For such is the nature of architecture that a 'hothouse' is more than the sum of its parts. Of course, an angry polemicist can easily feel uncomfortable in an atmosphere of nudging, or friendly internal rivalry that buzzes between individual high points, or is the cumulative effect of several people pulling and pushing the variants in a general direction.

Roche has frequently had bust-ups with institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, but will probably continue to find plenty more that are (rightly) attracted by his talent and charisma. The trouble is that the polemic, and this curious Gallic insistence on politics, gets to be a bore. Meanwhile the gang at SCI-Arc continue pretty impressively without him, with Tom Wiscombe, Andrew Zago, Peter Zellner, Rob Ley, Patrick Tighe, Ilaria Mazzoleni, Florencia Pitta, Peter Testa – and most flamboyant of all – Hernan Diaz Alonso, being chased by the latest hot ticket: Steven Ma. All of them, of course, are egged on by their puckish director Eric Owen Moss, who doesn't have to do that kind of stuff anyway. Maybe it's low on rhetoric, but – hey – it's certainly high on 'stuff'.

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# The AR reunites with d-Line for its flagship awards programme

ROB GREGORY

www.architecturalreviewawards.com

**To mark this month's launch of the ar+d Awards for Emerging Architecture 2011, the AR catches up with our awards partner d-Line, and talks to Knud Holscher, the Danish firm's senior designer**

Knud Holscher operates at both ends of the architectural scale, from buildings right down to the smallest details. As senior designer for d-Line, Holscher is perhaps best known as the creator of the Danish manufacturer's famous range of stainless-steel ironmongery.

This year, as the company celebrates its 40th anniversary, it returns as the principal sponsor for the annual Awards for Emerging Architecture, which are now in their 13th year. As the AR Awards are intended to promote young talent, we began by discussing what Holscher was doing when in his thirties (he is now 81), while working on one of the UK's most accomplished modern buildings.

'I was an associate partner with Arne Jacobsen, working on St Catherine's College in Oxford,' says Holscher, 'a place that I returned to a few months ago, after 42 years.' Invited back for a reunion, he was asked by one member of the estate team

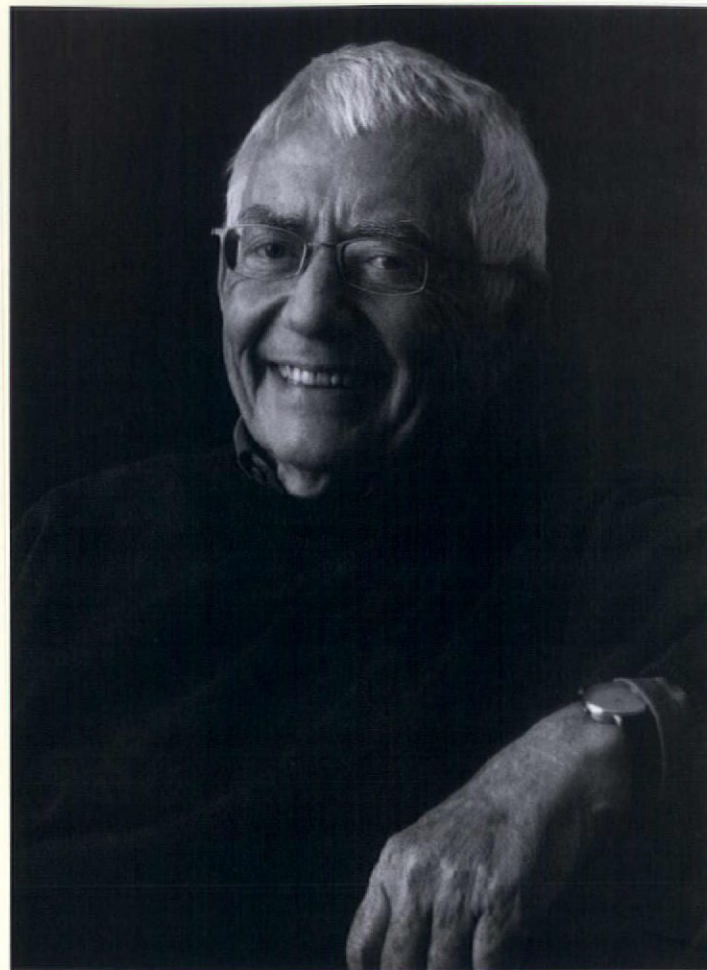
about how he thought that the buildings were faring, to which he playfully replied, 'perhaps some of the ivy needs trimming back'. But he is impressed by the college's stewardship of Jacobsen's original architecture.

After St Catherine's, he describes his breakthrough as his competition victory for Odense University, a 750,000m<sup>2</sup> campus masterplan, but he also had success with his ironmongery designs.

Holscher first worked with Alan Tye on Modric, a modular product range in aluminium, which led to his collaboration with d-Line founder Rolf Petersen, who asked whether he wanted to try something new in stainless steel. The d-Line range is the answer to a problem Holscher identified while working on St Catherine's, when faced with a huge pile of ironmongery catalogues.

'I sat there and got annoyed, trawling through brochures, trying to find one nice thing in one book, and a complementary thing in another one, only to discover the finish was different. I thought we needed to design a whole range of products, and this started the conversation. Little did I know 40 years later, I would still be involved.'

Above: Knud Holscher, architect and senior designer for d-Line, who worked with Arne Jacobsen on St Catherine's College, Oxford



Holscher describes the ability to work at different scales as part of a Danish tradition exemplified by Jacobsen; one day he designs a chair, the next day a large hotel. He seems to thrive on this diversity, which he sees as one of the core values of the Emerging Architecture programme. Initiated by the AR and d-Line in 1999 as one of the first dedicated awards programmes for younger architects, Holscher is proud of the legacy it has created. 'I feel very strongly that it has helped change the culture of architecture,' he says. 'The awards are a marvellous way to promote modest projects.'

**For details on how to enter the ar+d Awards for Emerging Architecture or to read more of this interview with Knud Holscher, visit [www.architectural-review.com](http://www.architectural-review.com)**

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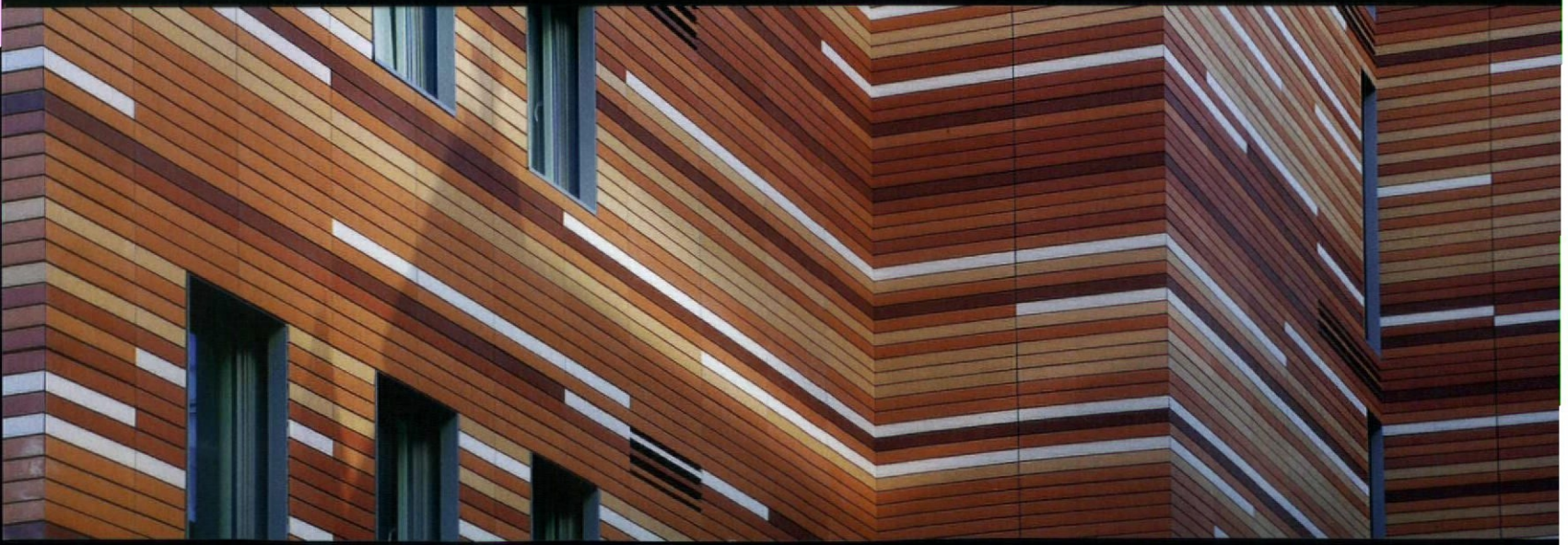
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## LYRIC THEATRE

LOCATION

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ARCHITECT

**O'DONNELL + TUOMEY**

WRITER

**KESTER RATTENBURY**

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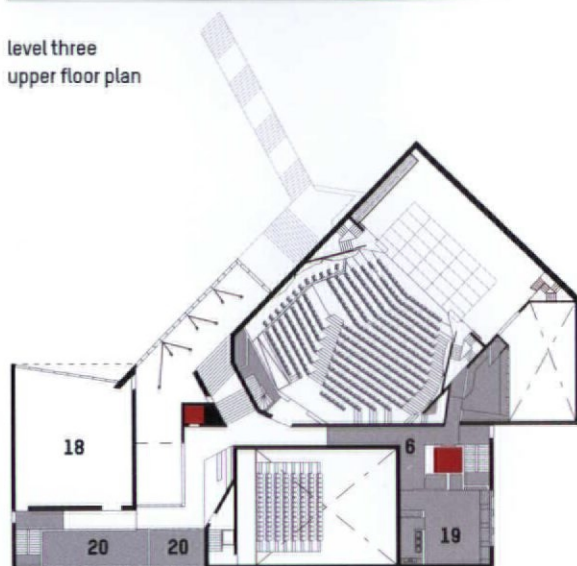
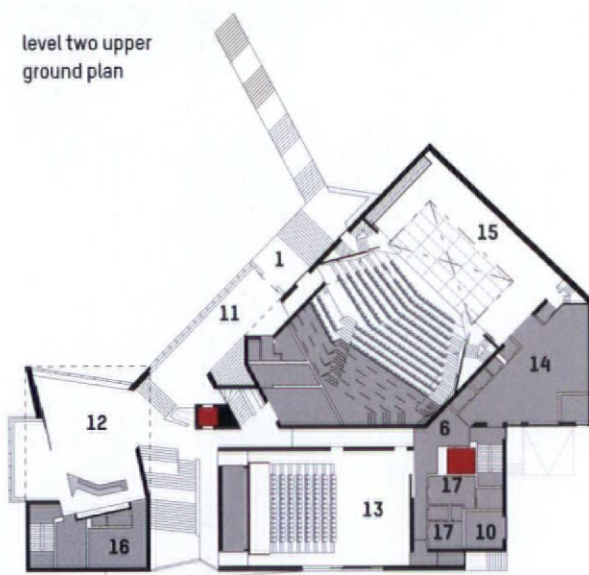
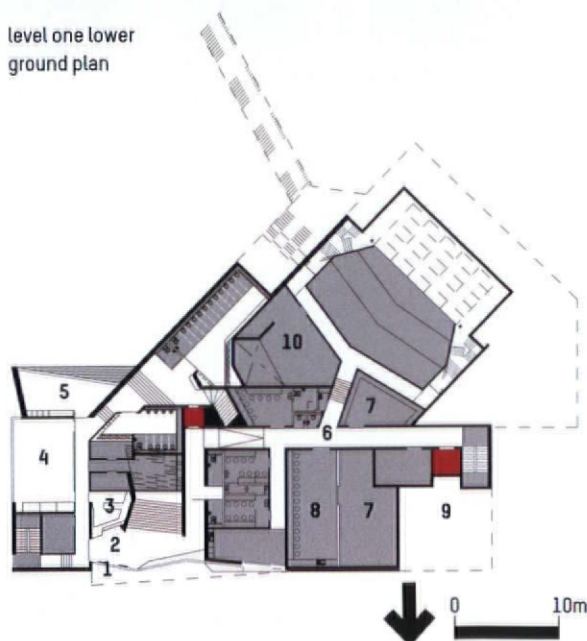
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upper floor planlevel two upper  
ground planlevel one lower  
ground plan

It's strange that something so coherently physical as Belfast's Lyric Theatre should be so fluid, so variable. From across the river, it's all graphics and landscape: a plain winged profile underlines the skyline hills; its Lyric sign appears just above the trees, drawing you to the finer parts of an unpromising site. From the busy river road, the facade seems to be a finely varied Scandinavian form in the sloping woodland. From the steep brick terraces running up the hill, it's an open, contemporary neighbour. And when you step inside, it's a plain, old-fashioned 'wow'.

Designed by O'Donnell + Tuomey (ODT), the Lyric is a grounded building, in the context of its site and in light of the last century's great auditoria (consider Alvar Aalto and Hans Scharoun for a moment). The theatre intensifies the possibilities of a site once thought compromised by an arterial road, its proximity to the edge of town and an undistinguished park. The structure transforms it into an exhilarating balcony, rising over the bend of the River Lagan, at the tip of what now feels like a proper forest.

Its distinctive subtle shape is, as Sheila O'Donnell explains, simply the site perimeter. Even so, it has won extra plots of land around the site – a sloped garden, a timber children's auditorium and a fragment of

perfectly Norse woods. But then, it's cheekily attenuated; chamfered out (for air draw-in, say), but also providing subtle steps into the river views. The Lyric is a 'models' building, where the simplicity of the three interlocking volumes on the sloping site suddenly becomes clear, but really you have to see it in person.

The river facade is fine indeed, with lovely fenestration, elegant massing and an intelligently integrated landscape. However, the handsome brickwork is plainly a match (although the brick must be sourced elsewhere) for the steep, raw Belfast terraces running up the hill behind. This side has a more casual, domestic/industrial aspect, with big windows and shutters looking toward the street. Actors like to rehearse in private, so the competition 'glassy' design was ruled out, but some windows crept back. The street frontages incorporate the animation of backstage life: the open 'get-in' yard for trucks, overlooked by the wardrobe room, is much used for smoking, as is the seat dented into the main entrance.

The architects refused to divide the front from the back of house. The old Lyric started in a domestic bay window and retained an intimacy which the new building aimed to preserve. ODT called the project the Lyric's 'house'. Backstage activities, naturally, tend to occur in lofts or basements, so while you may be inclined to stay central, you will always be passed by the life of the theatre. Three brick-lined auditoria are fitted into the sloping site, complete with public areas flowing around them like a river 'so you don't mind you have to go up and then down', says Tuomey.

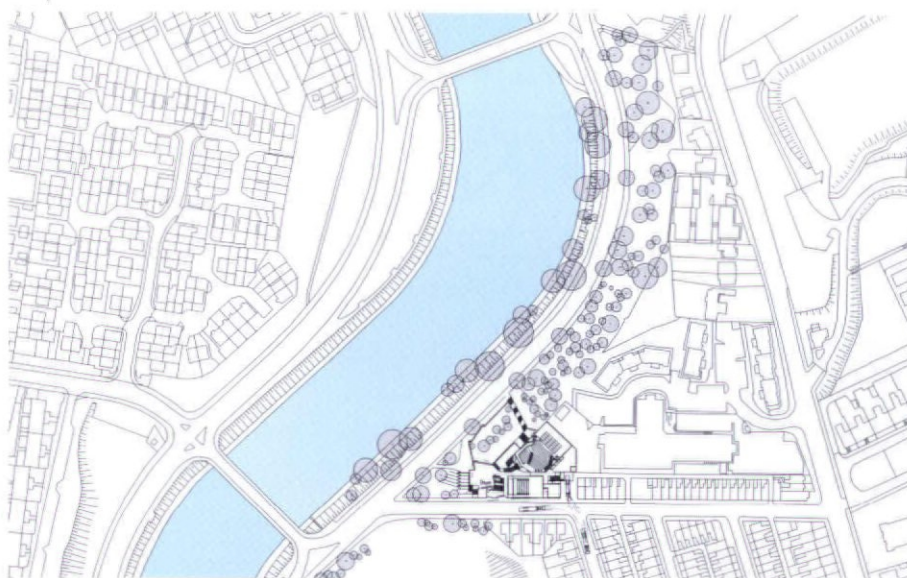
All this fabulous circulation starts in that exhilarating foyer, with its soaring spaces, where the stairs – a river of concrete – draw you up to the glazed areas overhanging the wooded riversides in a gentle ricochet from booking office up to programme seller and through to the bar and the auditorium. —



- 1 entrance
- 2 lower foyer
- 3 box office
- 4 education room
- 5 boardroom
- 6 backstage
- 7 store
- 8 classroom
- 9 loading bay
- 10 plant
- 11 upper foyer
- 12 café
- 13 studio
- 14 scenery dock
- 15 stage
- 16 kitchen
- 17 dressing
- 18 rehearsal
- 19 wardrobe
- 20 office

Previous page\_  
 Situated on a bend  
 in the River Lagan,  
 the Lyric Theatre  
 rises from behind  
 the wooded  
 embankments  
 Below\_ The upper  
 level riverside  
 entrance leads  
 visitors onto a brick  
 plinth and into a  
 glazed upper foyer

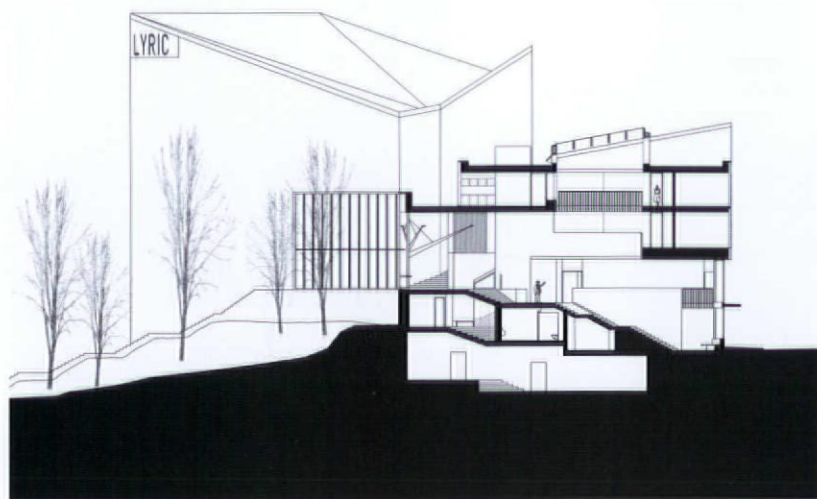
site plan





**THE OLD LYRIC STARTED IN A BAY WINDOW AND RETAINED AN INTIMACY WHICH THE NEW BUILDING AIMED TO PRESERVE**

cross section through grand stair

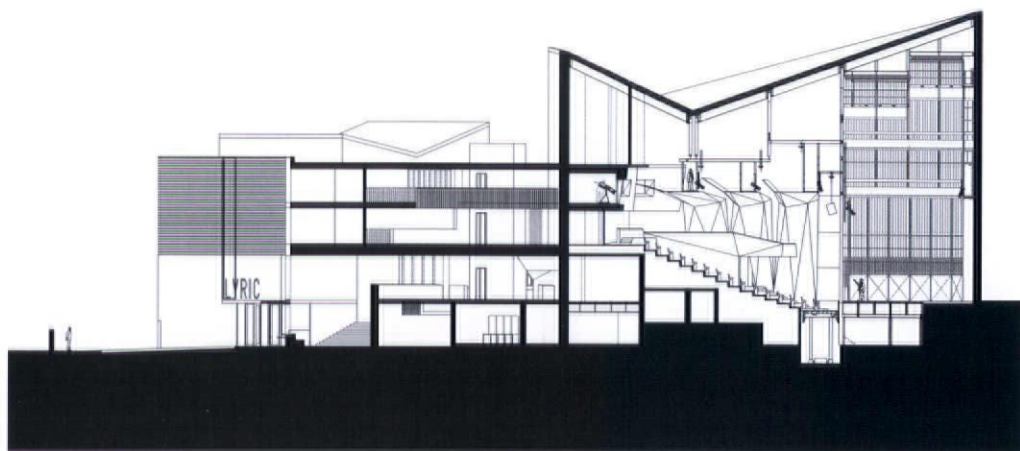


Above\_ Seen from the neighbouring terraces, the Lyric extends the use of brick and employs its multi-sided form to mediate between the scale of the street and the main auditorium roof  
 Right\_ The lower foyer addresses the street and leads directly up to the central foyer with a grand concrete stair






long section through main auditorium



so that the actors, mid-stage, are not addressing a gangway. Two runs of small balconies heighten that sense of intimacy in the building. It's very like a Scharoun auditorium, yet also somehow ancient. Astonishing. You don't want to leave.

There's also an austere, adaptable brick box studio theatre lightened by a shutterable window over the street. The top floor rehearsal/performance room is different again: an archetypal garret, with one vast loft window projecting toward the woods, and another looking down into the ever-changing foyer. These auditoria are accessed via winding routes – faintly Shakespearean and balconied above; concrete, cave-like lower down. They house enviable offices overlooking the park; education spaces, facing the river; and a boardroom with a beautiful, two-part aeroplane-wing (or bow-tie) table.

Amazingly, this exquisite building comes in at £13.8 million. Everywhere there are extras: generous places to sit or to perform, as the Lyric is realising. On my visit, the VIP area of the bar – another projecting bay that can be semi-screened – was being used as a performance space by local school choirs. It's accumulating art. It's a place people love to use. As they kept stopping me to say so.

The theatre was built for the Lyric to 'raise its game', as Tuomey explains, and it seems to be working. It has had rave reviews for its architecture and a very good one for its first performance, *The Crucible* – Arthur Miller's brilliant tense historical drama about the Salem witch trials. A shrewd choice, but it's interesting to note the production was a little overcooked, heavy on the hysterics throughout. Used to performing in a worse building, the actors were almost shouting. Designed to a whisper, this building could have taken a production more finely exploring the play's terrifying slide from domesticity to hysteria. However, the thrilled Lyric will surely learn to play its wonderful new house for all its worth. 

Or you could simply enjoy hanging around the theatre.

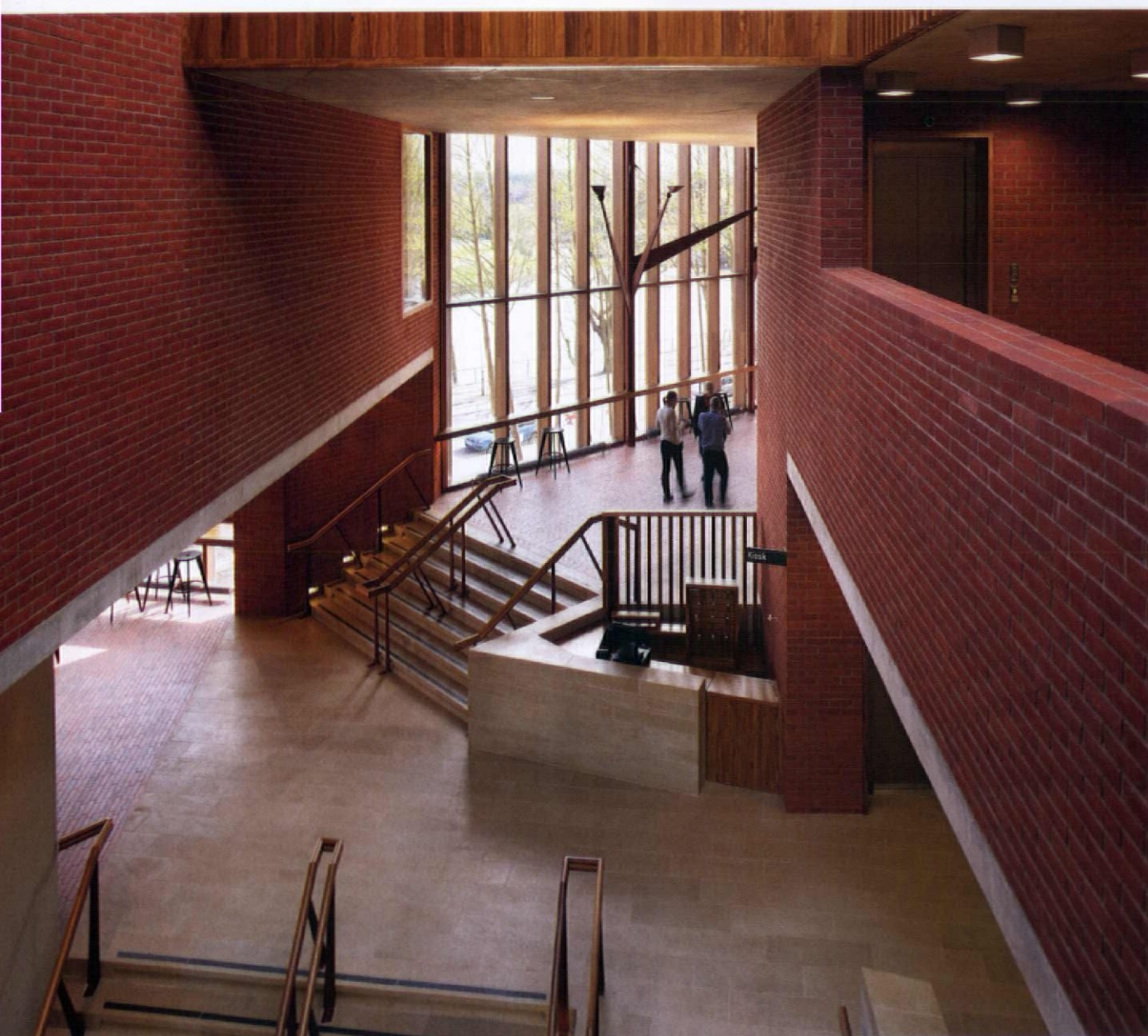
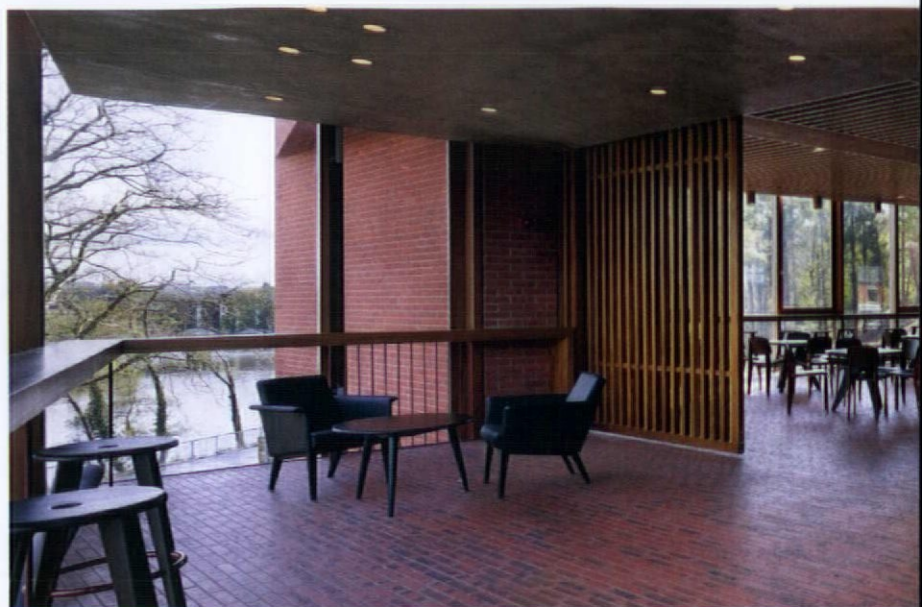
It's also here that the sheer quality of the building hits you: the immaculate brick, stone and concrete; the slightly comic handrails with their 'walking' balusters flowing in cartoon increments down the elegant stairs; the perfectly chosen furniture. Astonishingly, this was a design-and-build contract, but somehow ODT performed its usual Franciscan miracles. The firm told the contractors that it 'just wanted them to make the best building they could'. At the same time, it overwhelmed them with highly resolved design solutions that they had years to prepare between competition and fundraising.

For instance, ODT noticed the concrete formwork was being deftly executed, and asked whether the workers could also panel a complex space. Using all the DIY iroko that it could get its hands on, the team lined the main auditorium in a sort of dark, luscious 'marquetry', a cheap yet brilliant coup. With that odd sense of being complex but entirely naturally formed (which, in a way, it is), the panelled auditorium is absolutely stunning. Its modelled, attenuated, faceted design took a year to develop in response to acoustics, sightlines and lighting. Its seating mass is split irregularly, 'like the palm of a hand',





**A RIVER OF CONCRETE, THE STAIRS DRAW YOU UP TO THE GLAZED AREAS OVERHANGING THE WOODED RIVERSIDE**



Left\_ On the uppermost public balcony, views look back into the central foyer, featuring walking balustrades and branching light fittings  
Above\_ A VIP pop-out area can be screened off from the café on the central foyer level  
Right\_ Above the grand stair, upper-level timber galleries are almost Shakespearean in character  
Far right\_ The main auditorium recalls the auditoria of Hans Scharoun in miniature and features a complex iroko lining

**ARCHITECT**

O'Donnell + Tuomey,  
Dublin

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

Horgan Lynch

**SERVICES ENGINEER**

IN2 Engineering

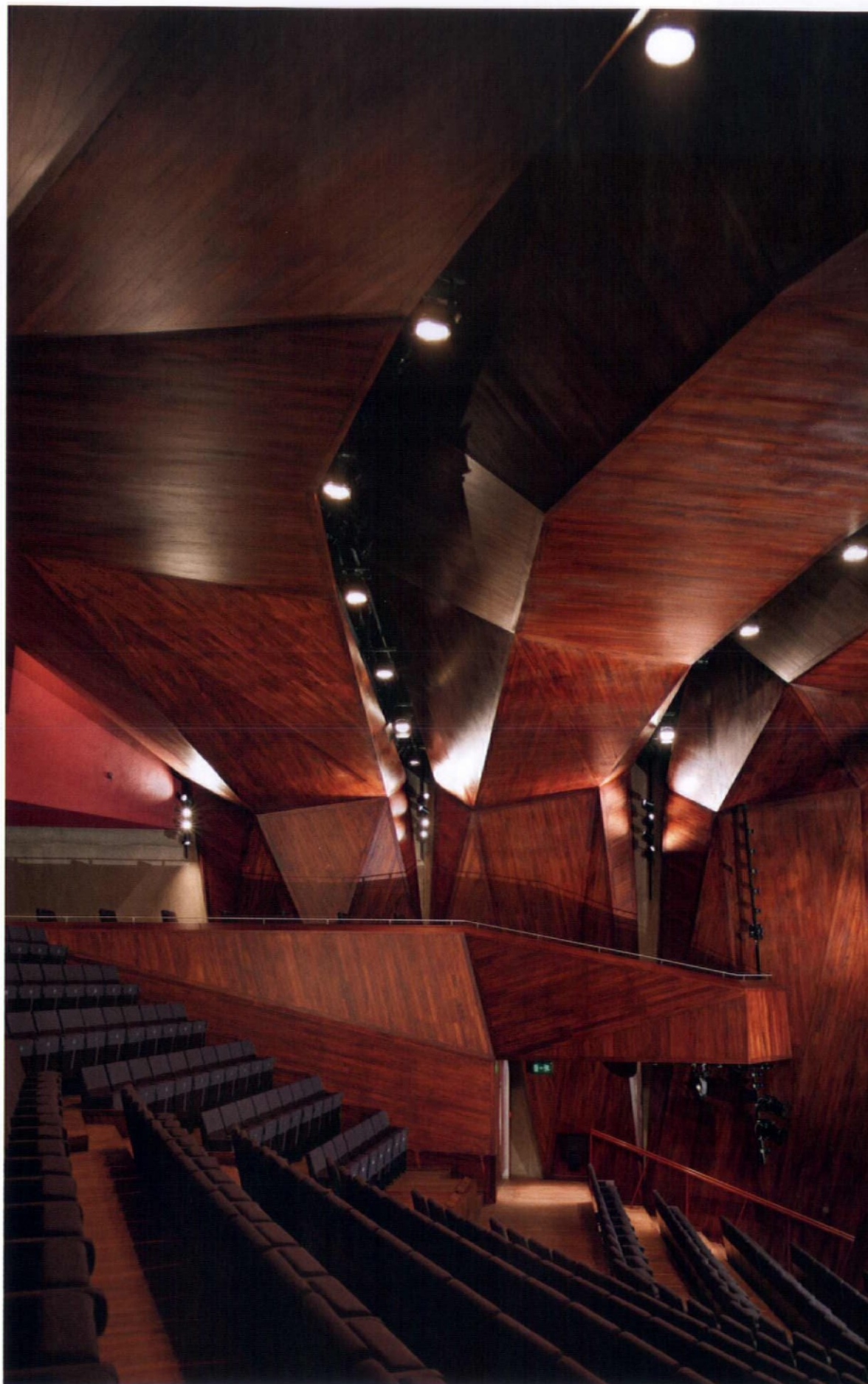
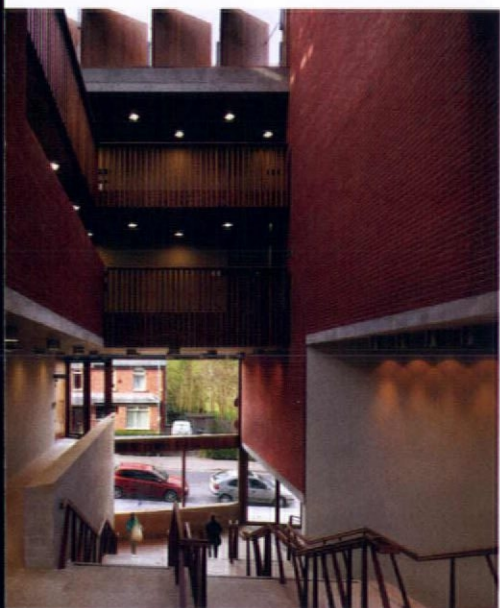
**ACOUSTICS**

Sound Space Design

**THEATRE CONSULTANTS**

Theatreplan







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# 227

**SCHOOL OF THE ARTS**

LOCATION  
**SINGAPORE**

ARCHITECT  
**WOHA**

WRITER  
**ROB BEVAN**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
**PATRICK BINGHAM HALL**







Hotel and resort design is generally looked down upon by an architectural fraternity that regards its tropes as superficial and its purpose as frivolous. But Singapore-based practice WOHA pursues an honourable tradition of climatically appropriate, tropical resort architecture. And in part, its approach amplifies the low-rise, low-density work of architects such as Sri Lankan Geoffrey Bawa or Australian Peter Muller in the 1970s.

The co-founding directors of WOHA, Richard Hassell (himself Australian) and Wong Mun Summ met while working on hotels in Kerry Hill's Singapore office. Their skill has been to successfully adapt these antecedents into high-density urban projects. In their most recently completed work, a \$100 million (£60 million) School of the Arts (SOTA), the practice explores such themes in a public building for the visual and performing arts in the heart of Singapore.

The idea of Singaporean parents pushing their children to be hoofers and singers instead of doctors and businessmen would have been unthinkable until recently, but the aggressively capitalist city state has been reinventing itself in a bid to generate an indigenous creative class. Among the fruits of this changing attitude are Michael Wilford's durian-shaped Esplanade arts centre and Moshe Safdie's Marina Bay Sands casino-hotel complex.

Now the government has introduced its very own Fame Academy as part of its national arts strategy. SOTA lies in a gateway location between Orchard Road and the city's arts and entertainment precinct. The building stands almost like a tripod, with the school itself hovering high in the air above ground-level theatres, and rises from a podium of stratified steps that act as an amphitheatre and a shaded meeting place beneath retained trees.

The lower, public elements concern communication and porosity, and are conceptualised

as the 'Backdrop'. The podium houses a concert hall, drama theatre, studio theatre and a number of small informal performance spaces. The secure, controlled environment of the classroom floors forms the 'Blank Canvas'. Together, these elements cover a gross floor area of 53,000m<sup>2</sup> on a 10,600m<sup>2</sup> plot of land.

'SOTA is not a conventional building with a solid mass, a curtain wall and an insipid entrance,' says Wong. 'It is an articulated mass full of voids and texture. It draws the urban environment and landscape into the building and is an exploration into creating a naturally ventilated building in a dense, tropical urban environment.'

The drama theatre auditorium is nested like a white egg within the school's structural supports. Students travel up escalators to a six-storey void in order to reach their classrooms and the rooftop playground, with its 400m running track. Sculptural spiral staircases made of steel blades by local shipbuilders give the impression of tap dancing between floors. At one point, the school cantilevers out, 15m into the tree canopy.

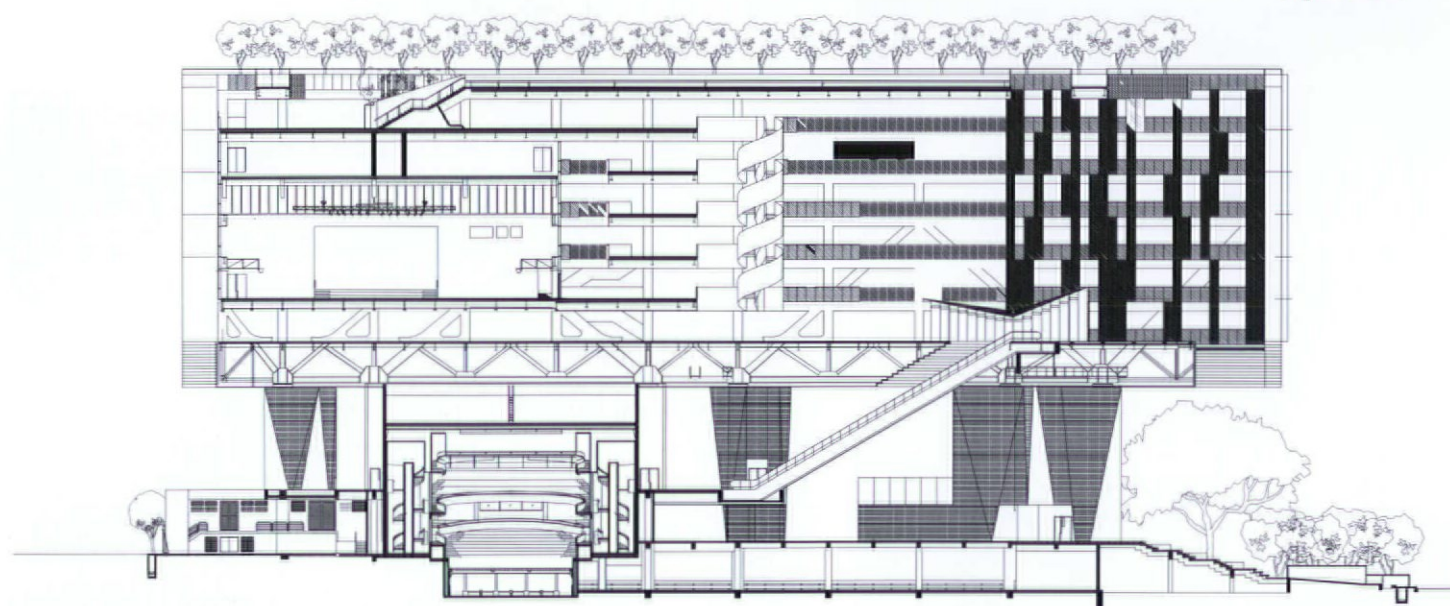
WOHA describes the 'Backdrop' as 'a faceted sculptural space', which frames the surrounding city views in fresh ways, as a metaphor for the school cultivating a creative way of looking at the world. Internal spaces are dramatic angled volumes, recalling the expressionist interiors of the 1920 silent film *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. They are treated in rough coloured concrete cast from recycled formwork for angled surfaces, contrasted against smooth-painted, vertical surfaces. Designed for purposes of display, the smooth surfaces play off more chiselled finishes, which are inspired by Michelangelo's famously rough-hewn *Captives* sculptures.

These public areas, which double as external pre-performance foyers, are designed around an urban short-cut, maintaining a busy informal pedestrian route that —

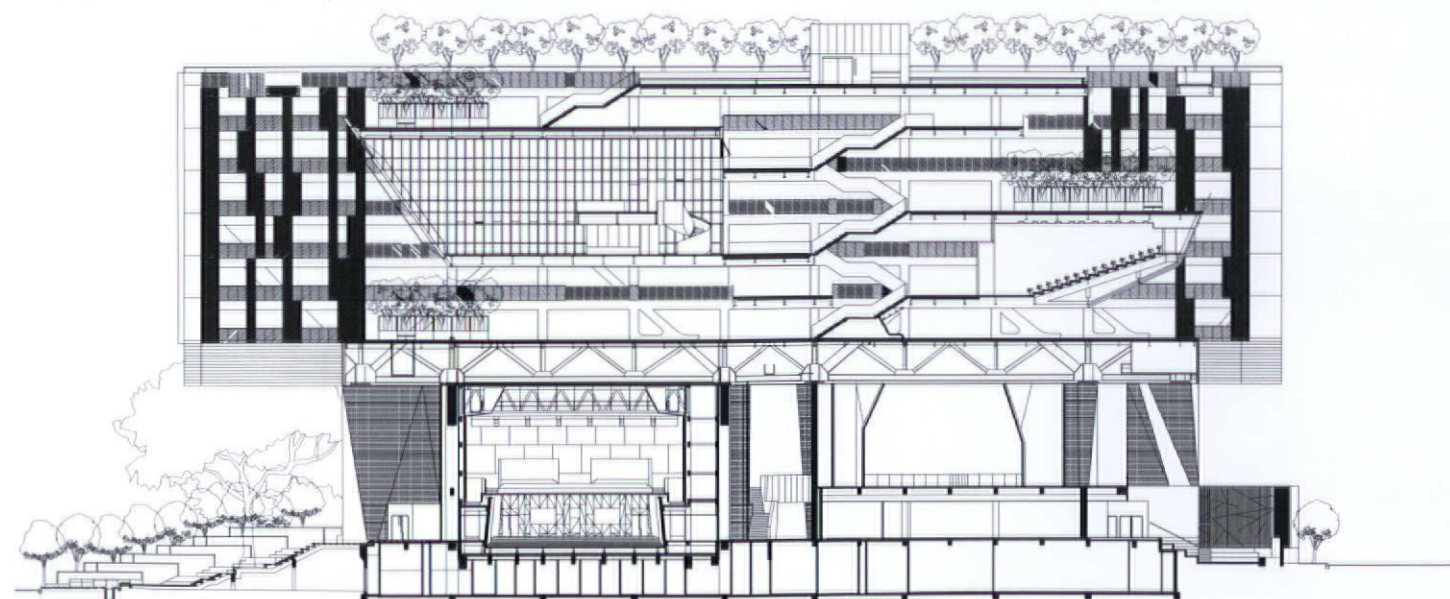


**THE BLANK CANVAS IS  
A METAPHOR TO FOCUS ON  
THE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT  
RATHER THAN THE FRAME**

section AA



section BB



Previous page\_  
Generous vertical  
circulation animates  
the large volumes  
among buildings  
Top\_ Three elevated  
teaching blocks give  
identity within the  
Singapore skyline  
Centre\_ Steps create  
a sheltered meeting  
place among trees  
Below\_ The school  
is raised high  
above the theatres  
at ground level



used to cut across an empty site leading from the underground railway station at Dhoby Ghaut.

Now along this route sit display areas and informal performance and gallery spaces, allowing the public to learn about the activities and productions of the school.

In a grittier city, this kind of open building, with its Neo-Brutalist concrete canyons, would be ripe for an instant graffiti-fest and ideal for lurking muggers, but in orderly Singapore it is a legitimate strategy.

SOTA has three main performance venues: the black-box studio theatre with 200 retractable seats has a box-in-box construction to minimise vibration and airborne noise. Interiors are matt black off-form concrete walls with blackened steel balustrades.

The drama theatre, with a capacity for 423 people, fronts a traditional proscenium stage. A pair of spiral staircases connect the stage with the fly tower, lighting bridges and all levels of seating. Layered curved walls in Venetian red and steel mesh panels are further animated by the randomly pixelated shades of the fabric seats.

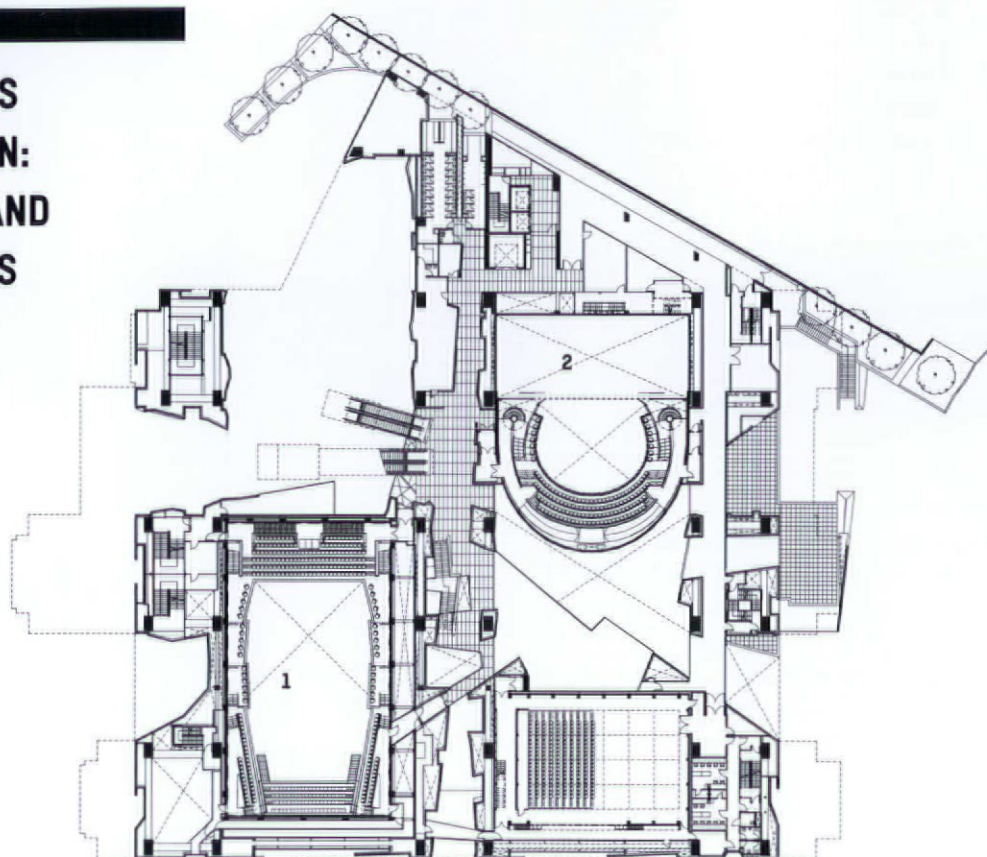
Seating 560 people, the music auditorium is similarly a box-in-box construction. Upper walls are formed out of rows of mustard-coloured precast concrete pillows, with solid white oak on the splayed inner lower walls. A motorised choir stall moves up and down stage, and provides an additional 148 audience seats for concerts-in-the-round.

The 'Blank Canvas' is, says WOHA, a metaphor to suggest 'the open possibilities and focus on the educational content rather than the architectural frame'. These school levels are controlled through a single point of access (lift core and escalator), yet visually connected from all the circulation spaces, to the public areas below. Classrooms and studios are naturally ventilated and each space has openings to the external wall and to the voids, which splits the main building. —



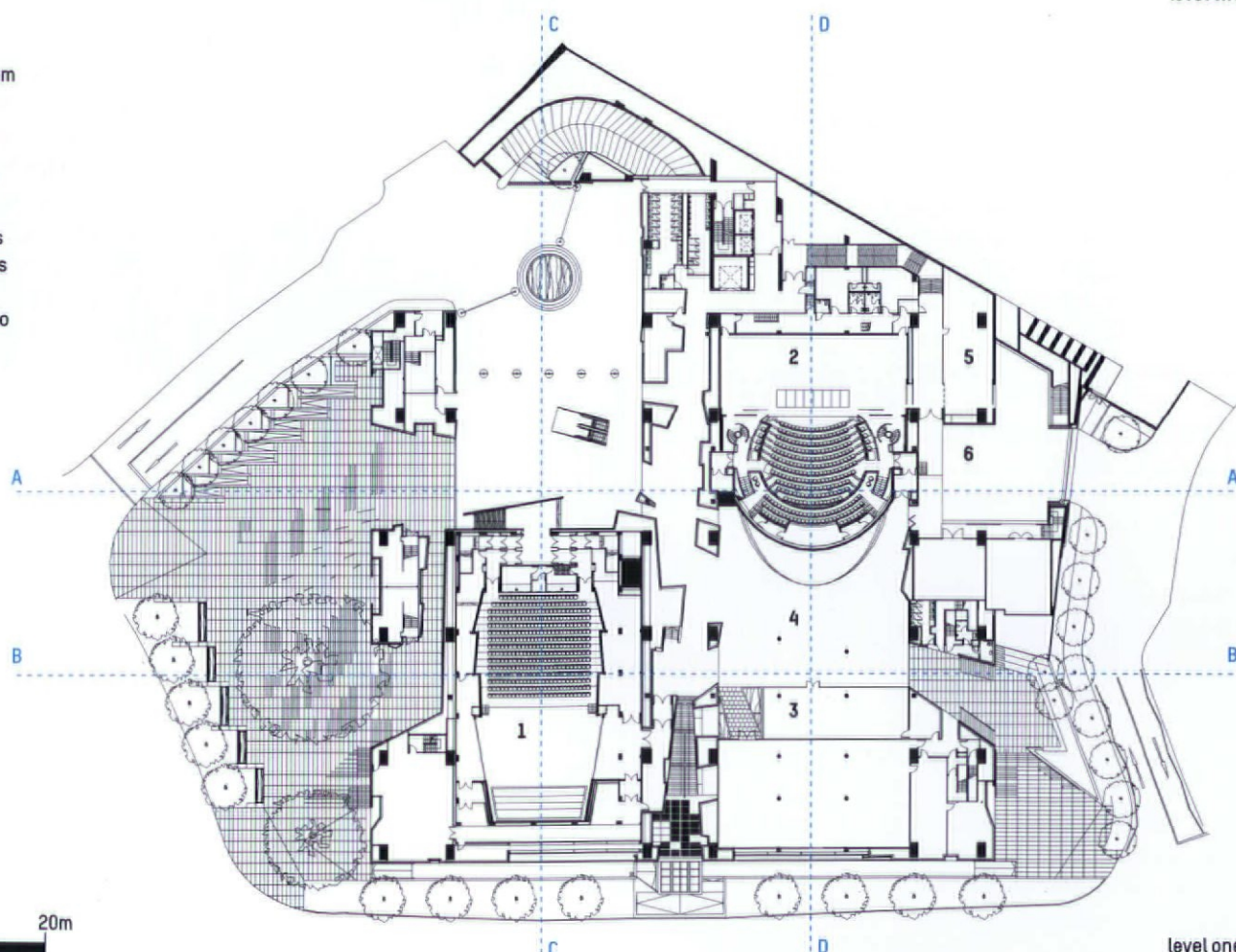


**THE TEXTILE TRADITION IS  
A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION:  
GEOMETRIC, ABSTRACT AND  
CONSTRUCTED OF LAYERS**



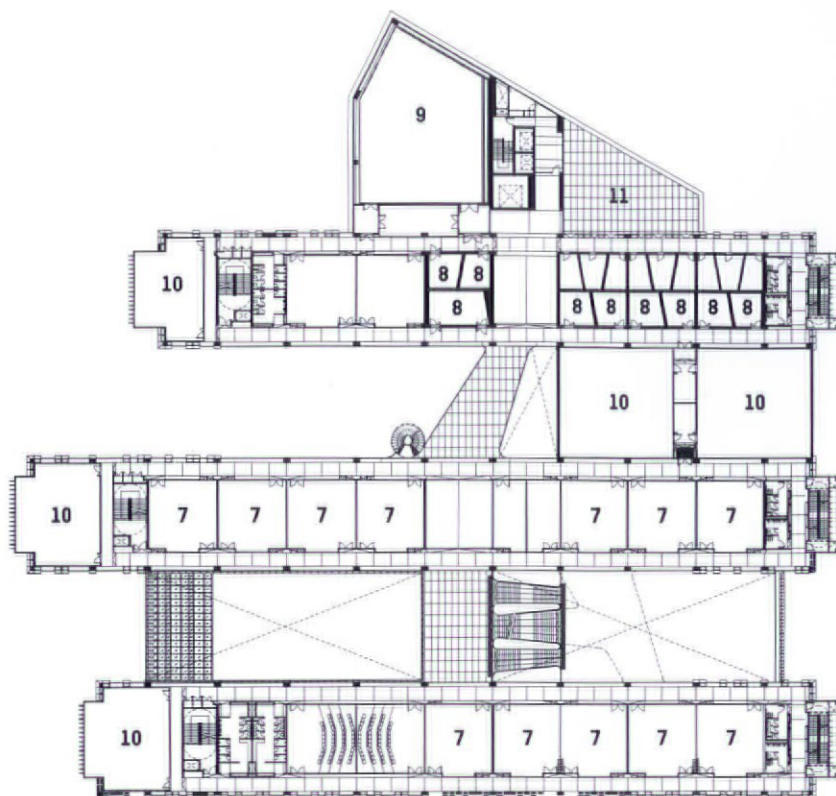
level two

- 1 music auditorium
- 2 drama theatre
- 3 theatre café
- 4 concourse
- 5 dressing room
- 6 workshop
- 7 teaching rooms
- 8 changing rooms
- 9 practice room
- 10 rehearsal studio
- 11 terrace

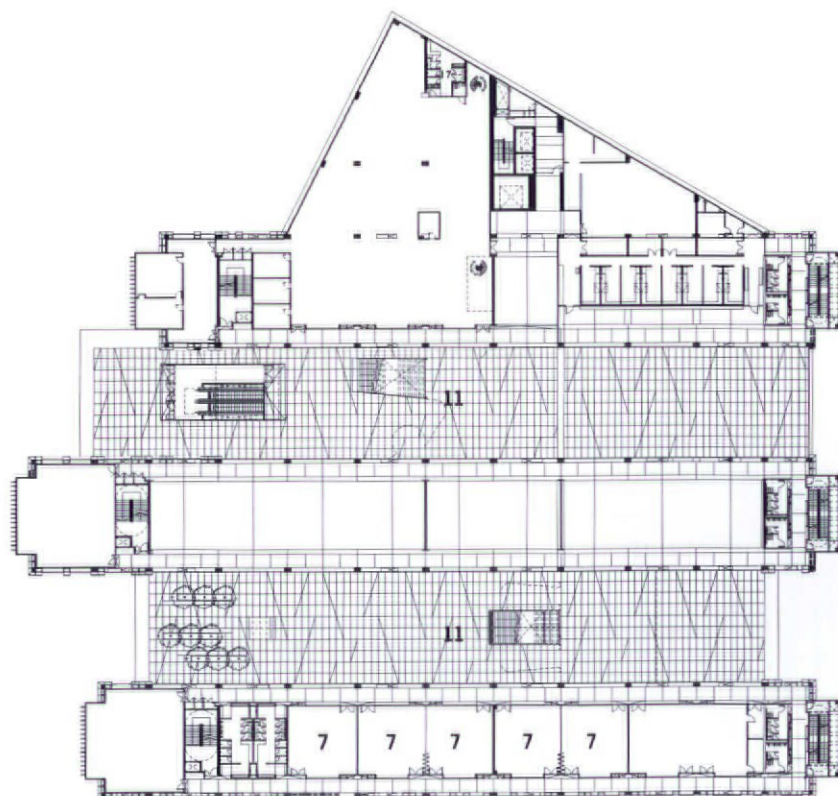


level one





level eight




level four

The planted facades, situated on a grid inspired by a musical score, provide environmental filters, cut out glare and dust, keep the rooms cool and, along with the acoustic ceilings, absorb traffic noise.

WOHA spends a lot of time ensuring that its buildings catch breezes and offer shelter from the sometimes merciless heat. The practice's dictums eschew high-tech environmental solutions. 'The most elegant solution is the simplest and what can go wrong will go wrong,' says Hassell. 'People are interested in their own comfort and would rather pull a blind down in their own house than have little motors whirring away.'

WOHA's recurring motifs, such as the layered meshes, screens and multi-storey slots scooped out of their buildings, are less of an aesthetic signature than finding forms that prove their environmental value. 'We are happy to re-use an idea if it works, but if you have a house style your innovation is over and you are trapped,' says Hassell.

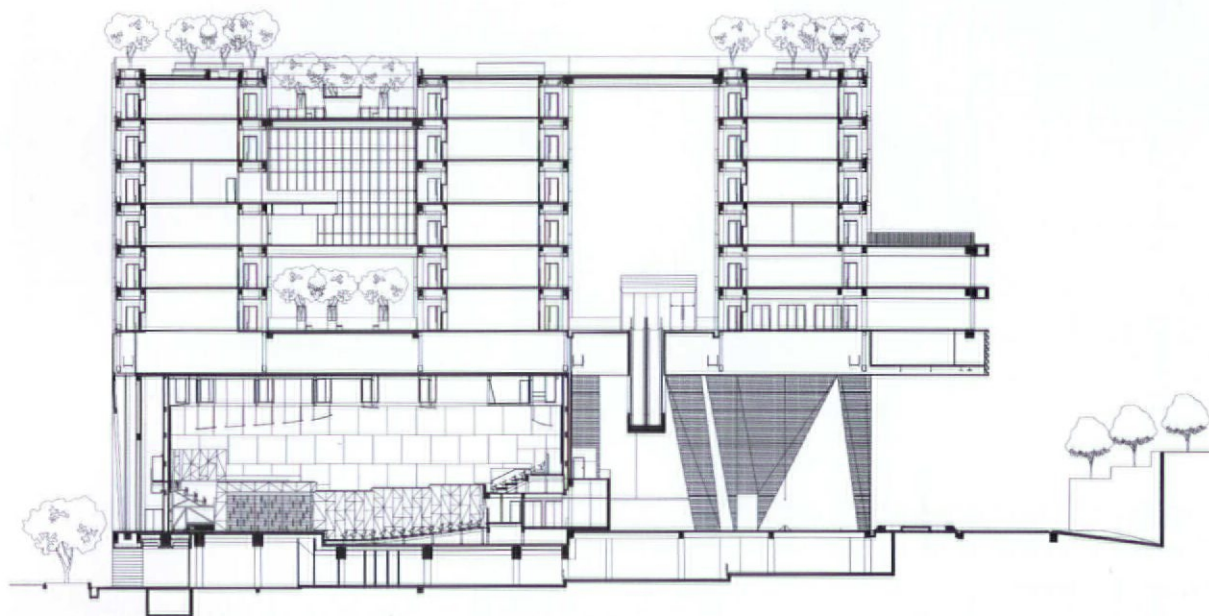
Influences that extend beyond the tropical zone are as wide as Paul Rudolph, who also built towers in South East Asia; and Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto, whose ecclesiastical architecture hovered in the wings of WOHA's almost Nordic Church of St Mary of the Angels at a Singaporean monastery. The textile tradition of the region is an additional source of inspiration: geometric, abstract and, like WOHA's architecture, constructed of layers.

The current fad for biomimetic architecture is, believes Hassell, just the latest version of a long-proven approach, exemplified by the vernacular architecture of the tropical zones and adopted by a critical regionalist mode of modernism that soon followed. 'Every architect in history has said they are influenced by nature. My worry is over-complication; our buildings are essentially dumb,' concludes Hassell. Dumb maybe, but SOTA still sings. 

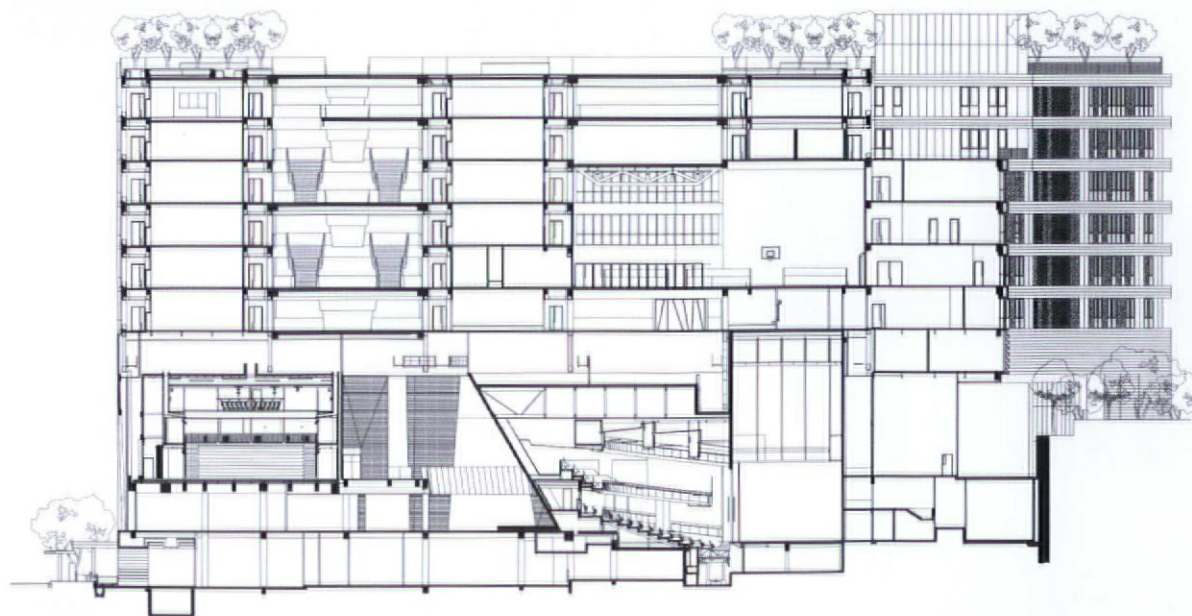


**THE PLANTED FACADES,  
SITUATED ON A GRID INSPIRED  
BY A MUSICAL SCORE, PROVIDE  
ENVIRONMENTAL FILTERS**

section CC

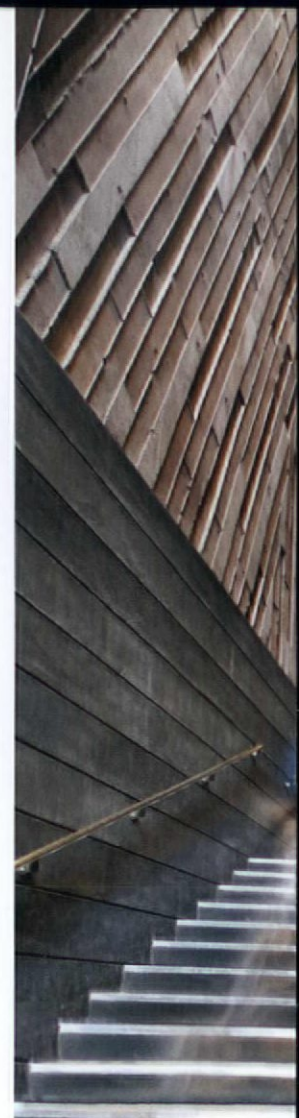


section DD

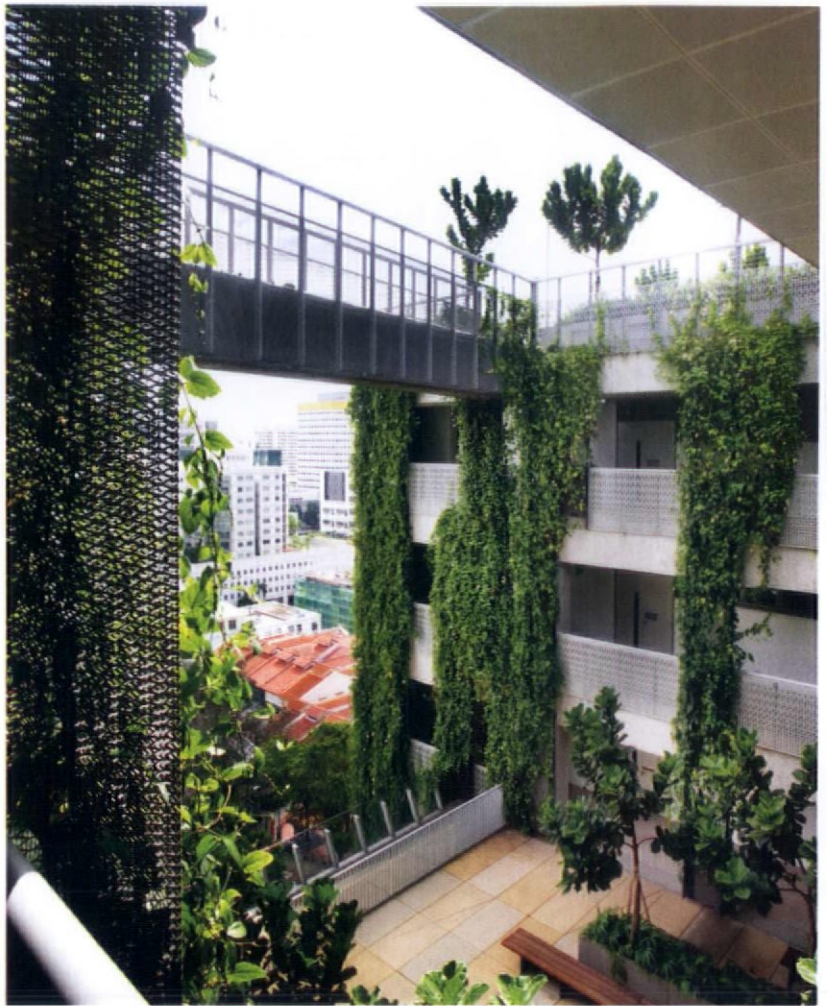


Above\_ Coloured concrete cast from recycled formwork provides relief  
 Above right\_ Planted facades enhance the environment  
 Right\_ Screens link classrooms with external voids  
 Below right\_ The black-box studio minimises vibration  
 Far right\_ A steel spiral staircase links levels

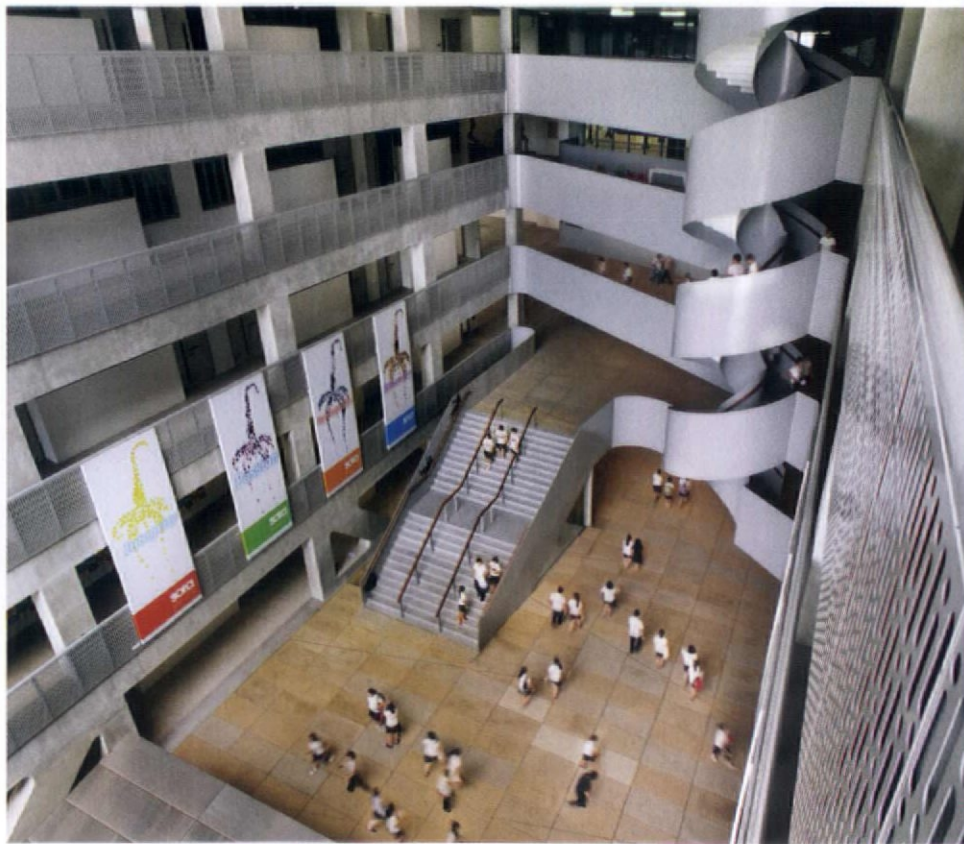
**ARCHITECT**  
 Woha, Singapore  
**STRUCTURAL AND CIVIL ENGINEER**  
 WorleyParsons  
**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT**  
 Cicada Private  
**MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEER**  
 Lincoln Scott  
**MAIN CONTRACTOR**  
 Tiong Aik Construction







TIM GRIFFITH





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# 228

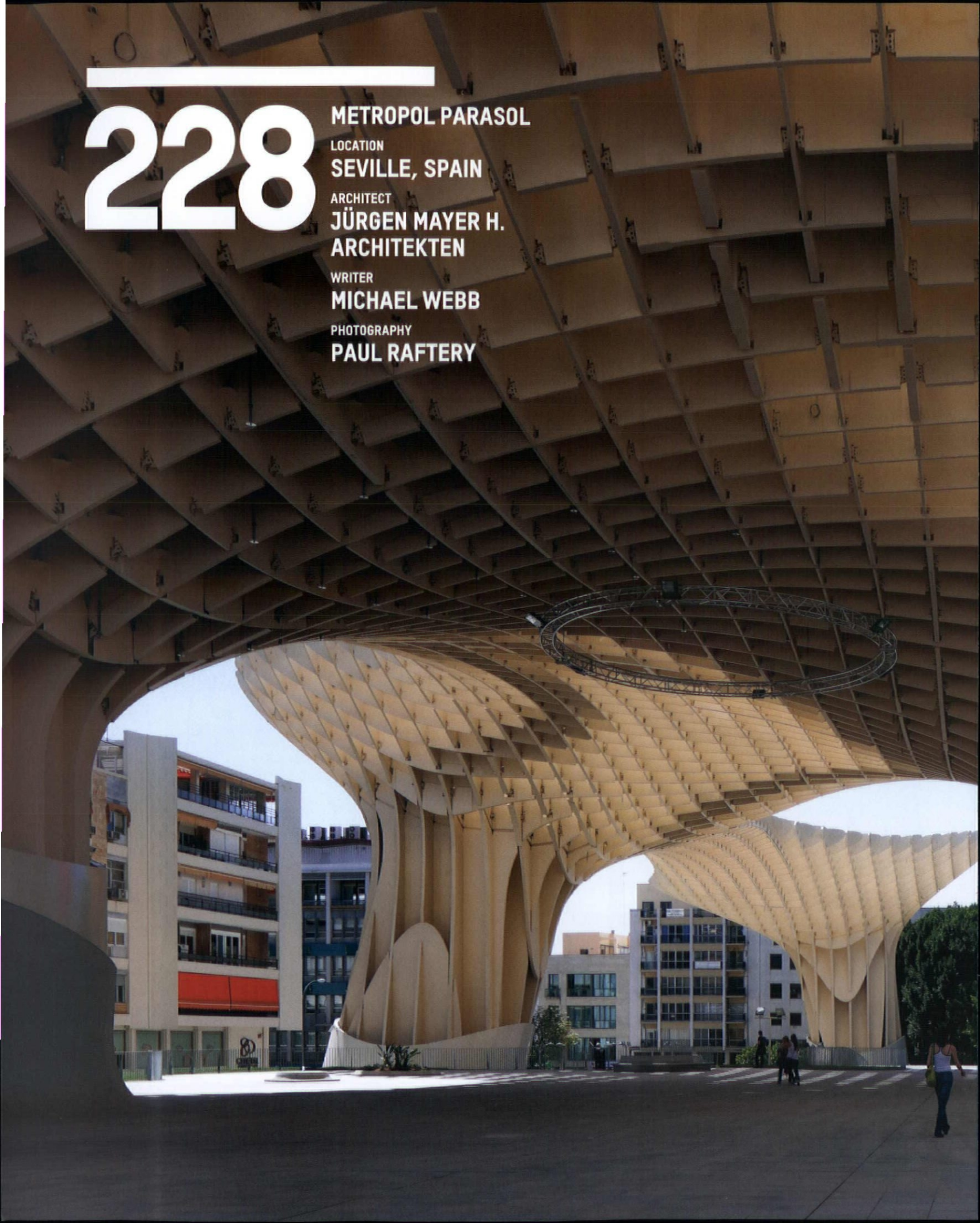
## METROPOL PARASOL

LOCATION  
**SEVILLE, SPAIN**

ARCHITECT  
**JÜRGEN MAYER H.  
ARCHITEKTEN**

WRITER  
**MICHAEL WEBB**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
**PAUL RAFTERY**



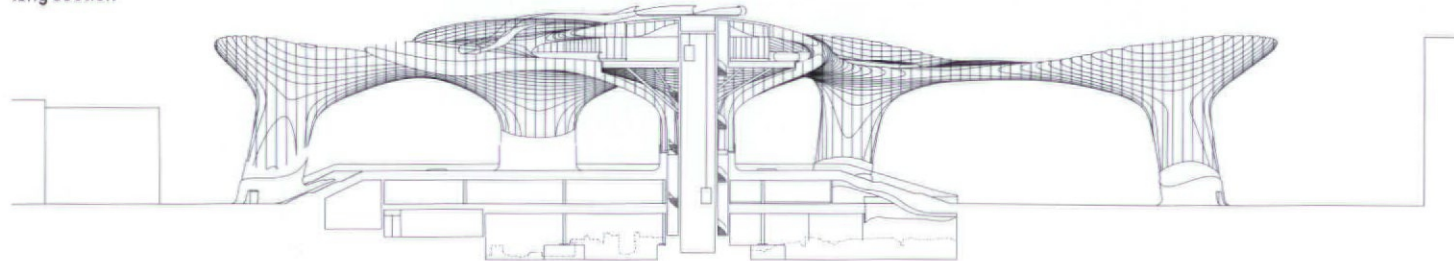






## FROM THE DAY THE METROPOL PARASOL OPENED, THE PLAZA DREW LOCALS TO STROLL, SKETCH AND SKATE

long section



Previous page\_ The rippling timber grid creates a shaded, arboreal grove in the heart of Seville  
 Right\_ Rising from thick trunks of steel and concrete, the towering yet graceful structures transform the city skyline

Civic icon, shady plaza, farmer's market, archaeological museum and belvedere: Seville's newest landmark is versatile and site-specific. The Metropol Parasol by Jürgen Mayer resembles a grove of prefabricated wooden trees soaring over the shabby Plaza de la Encarnación, excavated for an underground parking garage. Digging was halted when mosaic floors and other remains of Roman villas were discovered at a depth of six metres. Three competitions were held to redevelop the site, and Mayer won the third with an organic structure that is radically different from the sharp-edged geometry of his previous work.

His design was presented for public comment in early 2004 and the response was surprisingly favourable. Most innovative urban interventions, from the Eiffel Tower to IM Pei's Pyramid, have taken a year or more to win popular acceptance. To their credit, the Sevillanas saw that Mayer had been inspired by the shade trees in a neighbouring park and the undulating stone roof of the city's Gothic cathedral and expressed their approval. They may also have spotted

allusions to the fretted screens and patterned bricks of Moorish and Mudéjar buildings, and the barred shadows of the awnings covering the Calle Sierpes in the summer.

Seville can be wet (this year's Semana Santa was as soggy as an typical English April) or fiercely hot, as you would expect of a city that lies on the latitude of Tunis. Even a sun-loving Berliner understands the need for protection, and Mayer also realised that his work would have to be supported at a few, carefully positioned points to preserve the integrity of the ruins. The solution was to create a layered structure that turns the excavation into a subterranean museum, maintains the existing street level for the market and creates a fresh plaza on its roof beneath a canopy that rises from six trunks.

Steps, escalators and lifts in concrete shafts link these levels to an 800m<sup>2</sup> rooftop restaurant and a 250m walkway that snakes over the undulating grid of laminated wood panels. From the day it opened, the plaza drew locals to stroll, sketch and skate, lacking only the benches and café tables to be added as the spaces are fleshed out. The market

is fully occupied, but the restaurant and storefronts still await their tenants. Concerts are promised, and the multi-level complex looks as though it will prove to be a popular gathering place late into the night.

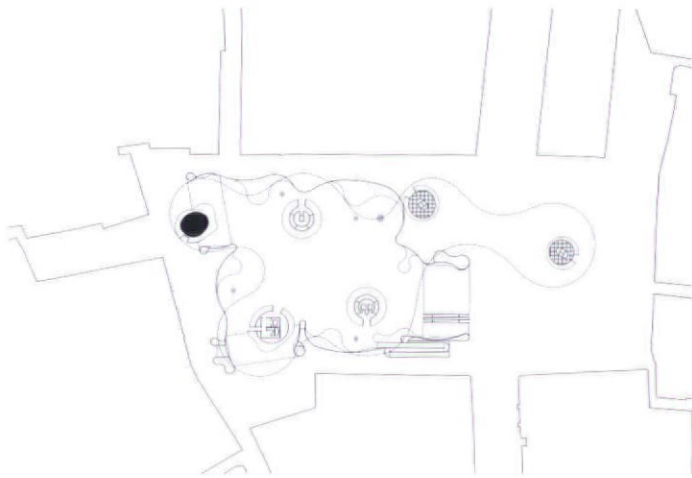
Mayer developed the structural system for his Mensa Karlsruhe, and it proved the best solution to issues of cost, durability, maintenance, thermal expansion and seismic resistance. Materials and glues were tested for temperatures of up to 80°C. Regrettably, the polyurethane coating required to protect the wood is in a dull cream tone, unevenly applied, and masks the texture of the panels, which could easily be cement board. The panels, of varying thickness and size, are bolted and braced together to create a resilient superstructure rising from a steel and concrete base. Fire regulations required the restaurant to have a steel deck.

Spanish architects have mastered the art of renewing their historic legacy, juxtaposing old and new with a grace and boldness lacking in other countries. Mayer appears to have captured that spirit in his latest and largest work. Until now, he was best known for creating isolated sculptural objects, such as the —

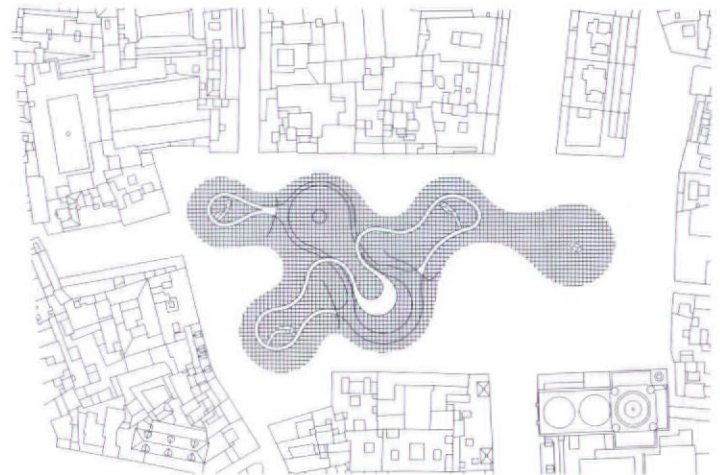




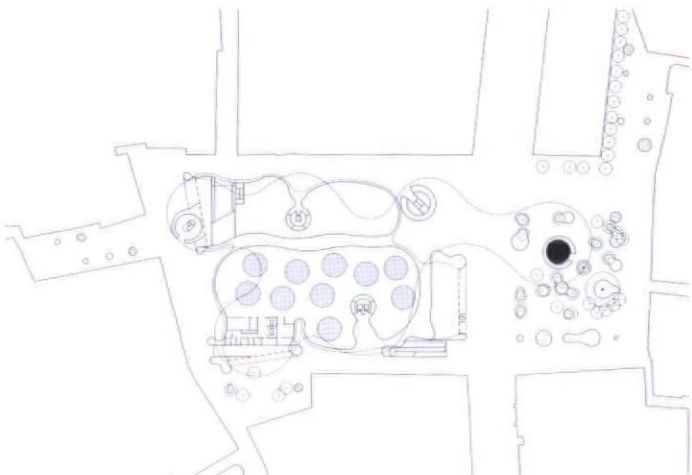
HUFTON + CROW



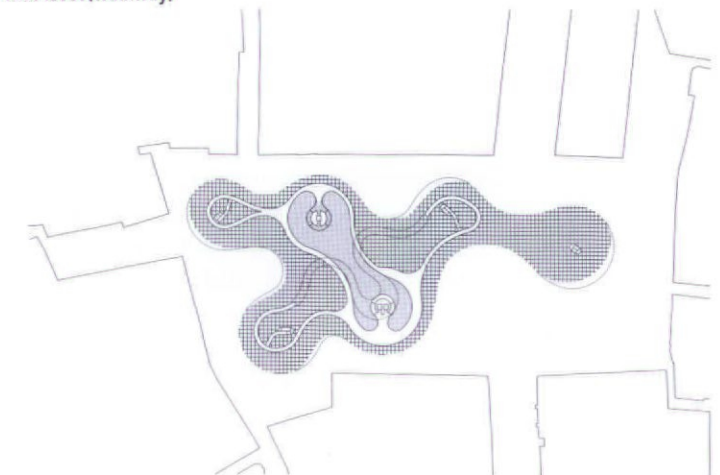
plaza level (public space)



roof level (walkway)



ground level (shops and cafés)




upper level (restaurant and walkway)





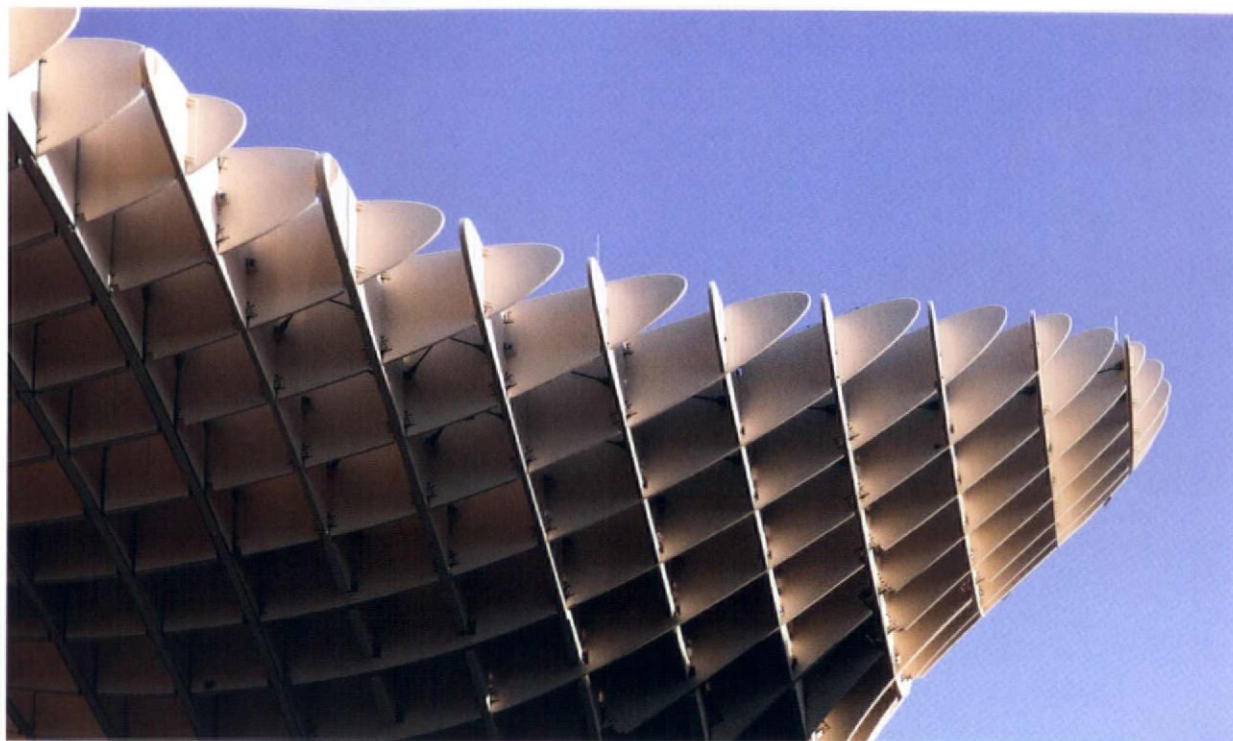
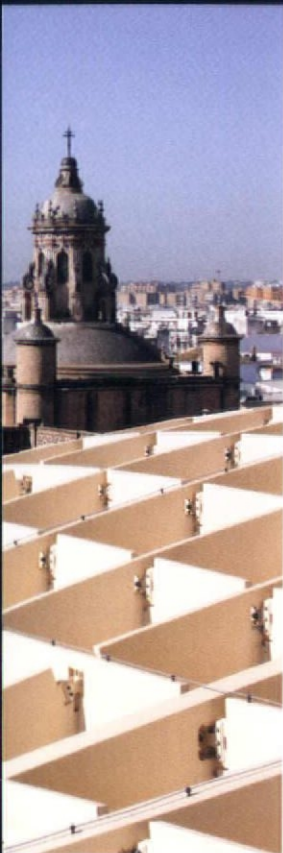
**THE METROPOL PARASOL  
COULD BE LIKENED TO A  
HONEYCOMB OR A CORAL REEF  
AS MUCH AS A CLUMP OF TREES**

Mensa Karlsruhe, Danfoss Universe and Villa Ludwigsburg, with its cantilevered wings. Inspiration came from his collection of payment envelopes, with their repetitive patterns designed to camouflage the contents. He would find a point of departure in what he called 'this primordial soup' of tiny shapes, and a simple diagram morphed into a complex structure.

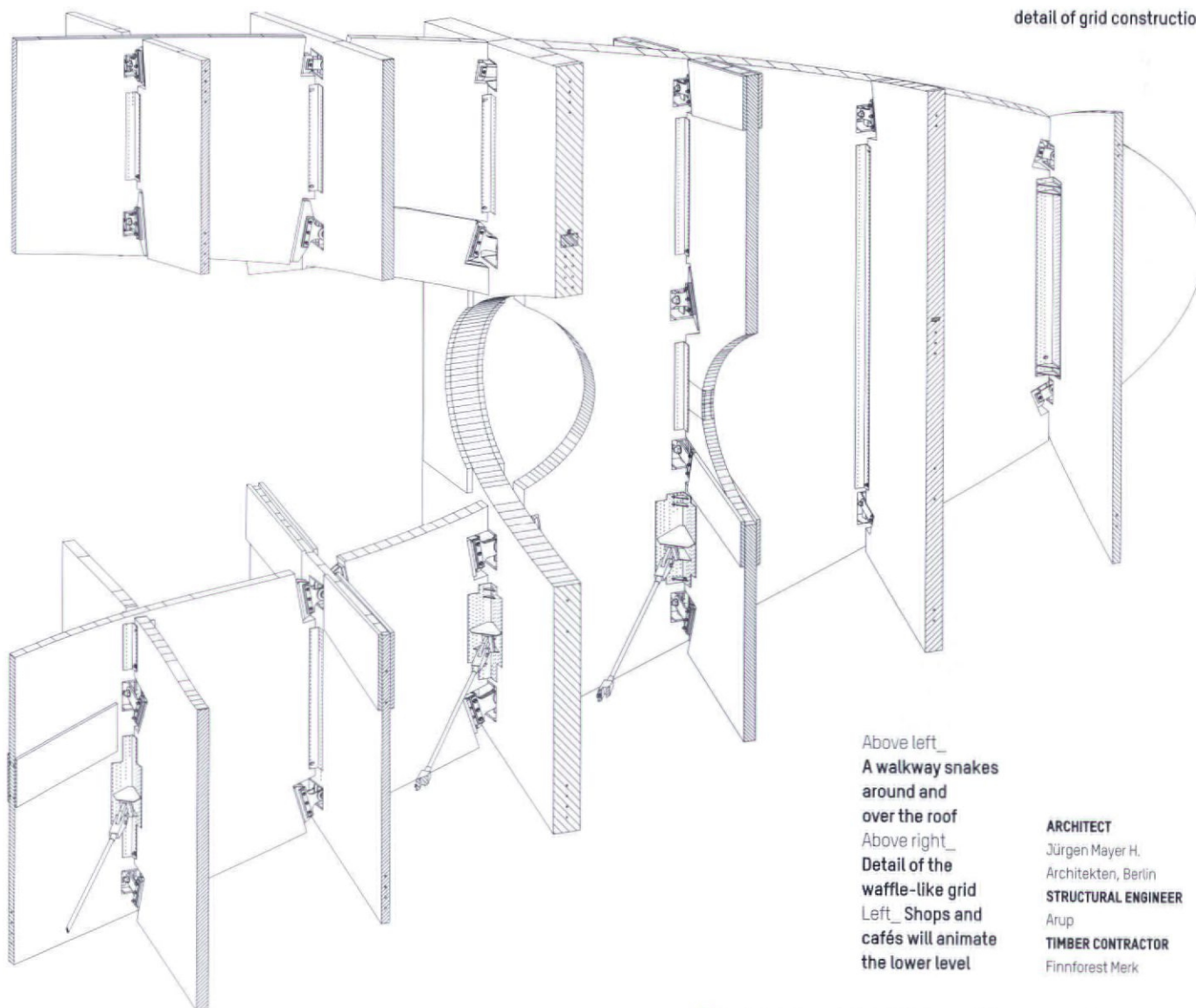
Inventive as the earlier buildings were, they can appear a little too schematic, like enlarged models. In contrast, the Metropol Parasol could be likened to a honeycomb or a coral reef as much as a clump of trees, and these natural associations give it a humanity that is lacking in the mechanistic, puffed-up structures of Santiago Calatrava. The sensuous forms that swell from each trunk and extend overhead are imbued with an inner energy that expresses the vitality of the city and plays off the drab facades. From every vantage point, the shapes and perspectives shift, drawing you up and inside the structure, as though this were a living presence. A soloist has produced a symphony, transcending the limitations of simple modules to create an urban landscape. 







detail of grid construction



Above left\_  
A walkway snakes  
around and  
over the roof  
Above right\_  
Detail of the  
waffle-like grid  
Left\_ Shops and  
cafés will animate  
the lower level

**ARCHITECT**  
Jürgen Mayer H.  
Architekten, Berlin  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**  
Arup  
**TIMBER CONTRACTOR**  
Finnforest Merk



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# 229

## REHABILITATION CENTRE GROOT KLIMMENDAAL

LOCATION

ARNHEM, THE  
NETHERLANDS

ARCHITECT

ARCHITECTENBUREAU  
KOEN VAN VELSEN

WRITER

ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY

RENÉ DE WIT

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The Dutch architect Koen van Velsen prefers to focus on one building at a time, rather than a catalogue of projects, according to his colleague Steven van der Heijden. Working at a steady pace, van Velsen scrutinises, tests and stretches his client's ambitions in order to make the most of potentially overlooked opportunities. As a result, his practice of about 20 people has spent the last 35 years producing a steady stream of sophisticated buildings across a range of uses, collectively described by Dutch critic Hans Ibelings, as buildings based on ideas.

Reworking Louis Sullivan's 1896 statement that 'form follows function', van Velsen prefers the axiom 'form follows intention'. He refers to projects as assignments in which architecture can express a key idea or a series of ideas at all levels, ranging from a 1:1000 masterplan right through to a 1:5 detail. —

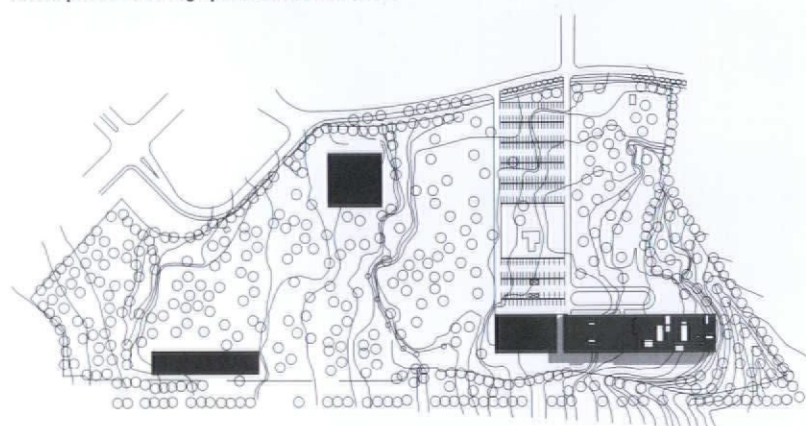




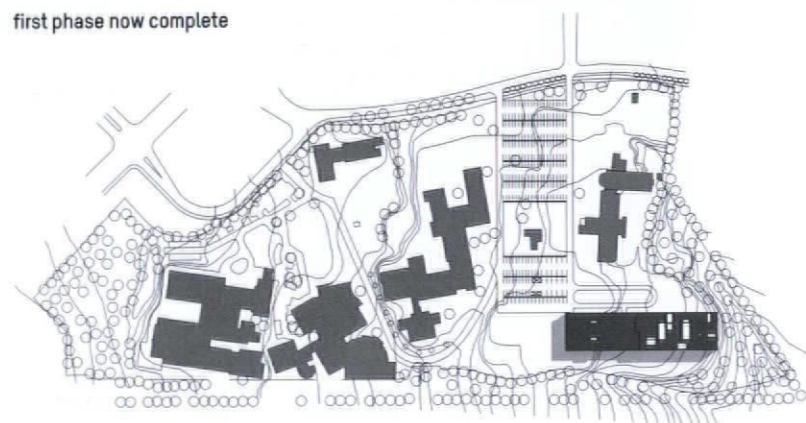




future phase showing apartments and school



first phase now complete



This building extends this lineage and represents the culmination of more than 12 years' work (nine years in development and three on site). The structure is the first phase of a three-stage plan to consolidate and rejuvenate the Rehabilitation Centre Groot Klimmendaal (providing care for children, adolescents and adults who have had an illness or accident), its neighbouring community and 9.4ha forest site to the north-west of Arnhem in the Netherlands.

Covered by beech trees, the site had been extensively developed as a sprawling campus of one- and two-storey buildings, which despite the dominance of the trees, had suffocated the landscape. To remedy this condition, van Velsen proposed a masterplan of three large densely planned standalone buildings, including this one and two future phases, a school and apartment building, all set within a restored

and publically accessible landscape. And while his strategy is based on a proclaimed respect for the landscape, it might appear counterintuitive to produce a building so big and so bold, with its three-storey portico of civic proportions at one end and its conspicuous toothy grin at the other. However, beyond the well-reasoned purposes of these key spaces, at a strategic level and with its final execution, the architect has done well to give form to almost 14,000m<sup>2</sup> of accommodation while controlling its impact on the wooded setting.

Reminiscent of Norman Wilkinson's Dazzle Camouflage, the interplay between solid and void, geometries of structure and skin, and the forest's constantly shifting light levels, lessens the visual impact of what is a large-scale intervention. Clever planning also limits the impact, with the tightly arranged composition of stacked terraces,

cantilevered from a smaller ground bearing plinth, that displays van Velsen's typical optimisation of net to gross relationships. As Ibelings observes, of van Velsen's buildings, 'there is always a difference between net and gross, between the scope of the programme itself and the scope needed to accommodate that programme. It is within this difference that architecture for him, occurs, where architecture speaks and where the building acquires a use and a right to exist with more meaning than the strictly functional.'

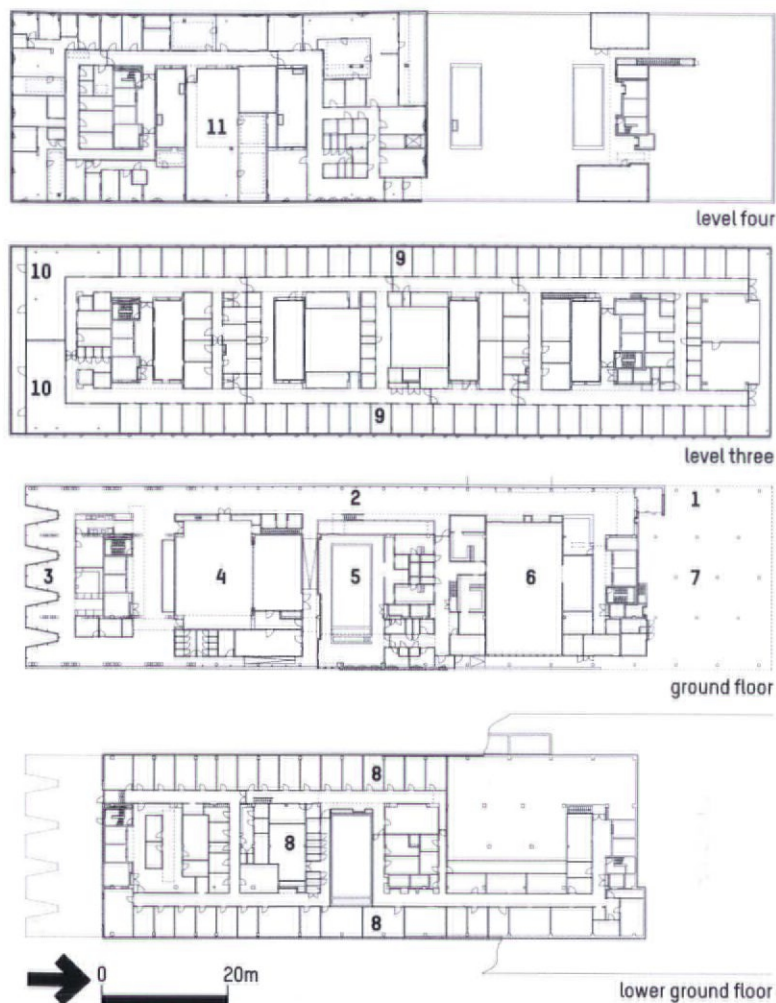
In this building, this difference is expressed in how the architect refused to adopt the conventional mode of navigation for a healthcare building – a long corridor with suspended grid ceilings and bump rails – putting in its place a series of more humane circulation spaces with no dead ends, which offer slow and fast routes across the plan. —

Previous page\_ Cantilevered above the forest floor, the broad toothy smile of the rehabilitation centre's principal communal space provides a strong connection with the landscape  
Left\_ Diagrams showing phases one and three  
Above\_ The strong horizontal emphasis of the building sits in harmonious opposition to the verticality of the surrounding trees  
Right\_ At the other end of the building, the main entrance sits beneath the generous portico, supported on slender concrete columns that provide future flexibility for additional floor slabs



ROB T HART



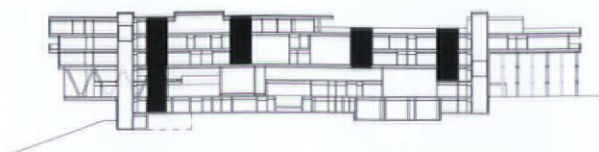


- 1 entrance
- 2 main foyer
- 3 seating area/lounge
- 4 theatre
- 5 swimming pool
- 6 gymnasium
- 7 Ronald McDonald House entrance
- 8 staff area/offices
- 9 patient rooms
- 10 living rooms
- 11 Ronald McDonald House



**A STAIR LINKS ALL LEVELS ON  
ONE AXIS, LEADING TO ROAMING  
ROUTES THAT ENCOURAGE  
PHYSICAL EXERCISE**

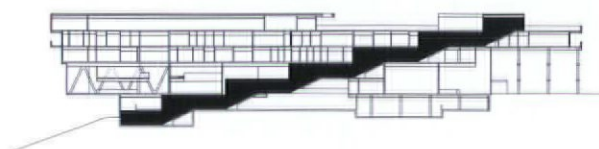
lightwells



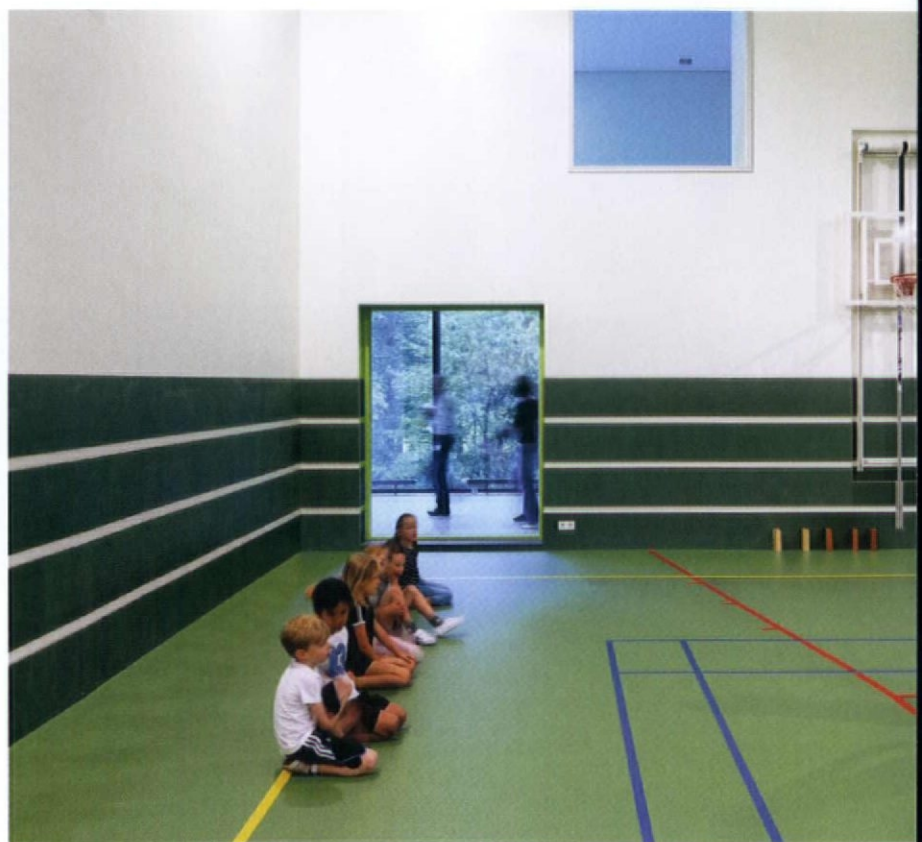
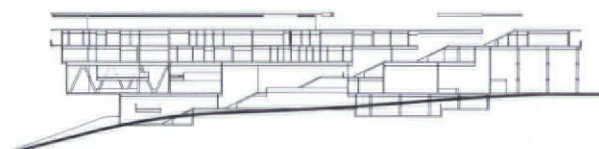
external patios



continuous stair



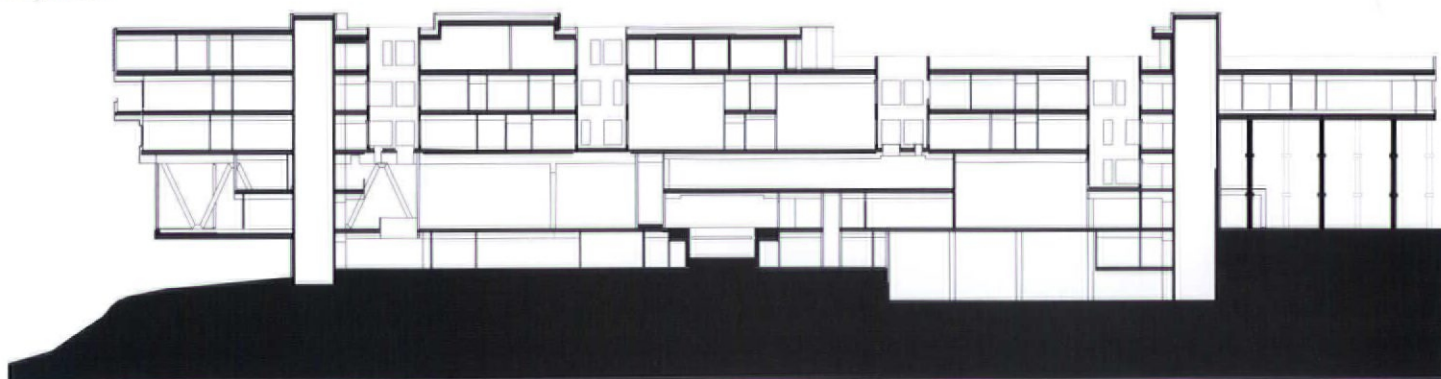
natural terrain maintained







long section

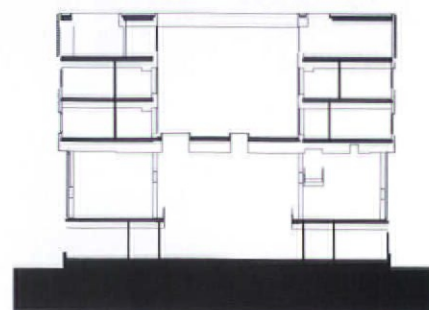
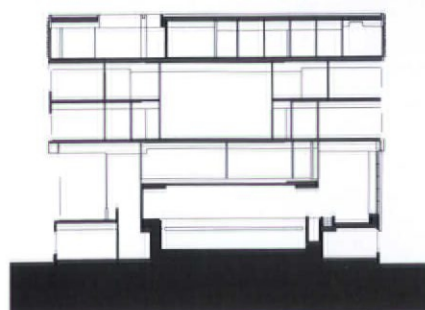


Far left\_ Inside human-scale spaces are designed for both group and individual use

Left\_ On the ground floor, this sports hall is for patient and community use

Above\_ A six-flight stair connects spaces on the lower and upper levels

cross sections





## THIS BUILDING HAS RADICALLY CHANGED THE WAY THE CLIENT PROVIDES ITS CARE THROUGH A PROGRAMME OF INTEGRATION

*Above\_ Manipulation of the cross section improves legibility between multiple levels of the building*  
*Right\_ Twelve accent colours are used throughout the building, seen here in a lightwell that sits beneath one of four patios*

### ARCHITECT

Architectenbureau  
Koen van Velsen

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Brinkgroep

### STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

DHV Building and  
Industry BV

First, linking portico to toothy grin, a generous double-height foyer runs the full length of the building. Parallel to this, a six-flight stair links all levels from plinth to roof on one axis, providing a direct route between all departments and leading to other roaming routes that encourage physical exercise. Finally, deep in the plan, four plunging patios connect different levels and bring daylight to the heart of the 30m-wide building, articulated by vibrant colours.


These elements all help users find their way between staff and service spaces on the lower-ground floor, communal and social spaces on the double-height ground floor, clinical treatment spaces on the first floor and accommodation for 60 patients on the second floor. On the top floor is a self-contained and separately accessed Ronald McDonald House, where the founding charity – which was formed by an unlikely alliance

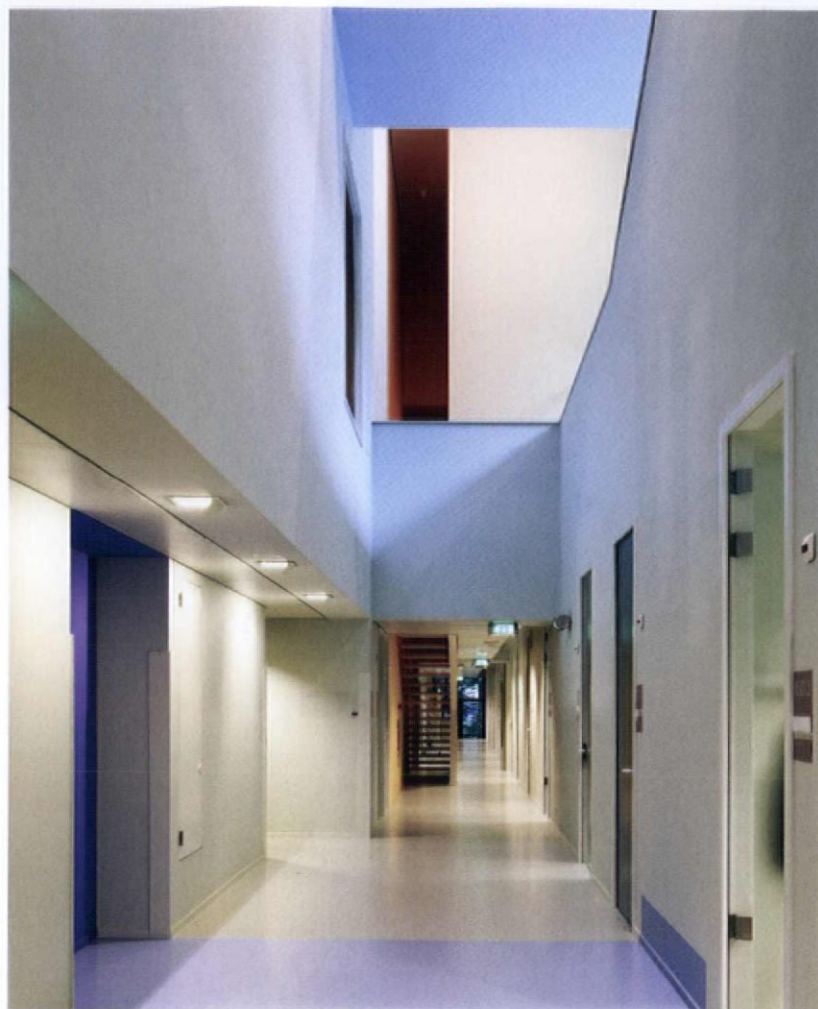
in the US between the Philadelphia Eagles football team, the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania and a McDonald's Franchisee – provides home from home accommodation where the friends and family of resident children can stay.

This component, together with the incorporation of public functions, such as a theatre, sports facilities and a restaurant, is seen as being central to a rehabilitation process that encourages the reintegration of the patient into the local community. With the ground floor functioning as a market or a plaza, where the patient can work with the community, this building has radically changed the way in which the client provides its care through a programme of integration that focuses on what the patient can achieve.

In contrast to the efficiency of the plan and the sophistication of the circulation, at first glance the portico

might not appear as integrated as other parts, seemingly over-scaled in this setting. What emerges through conversation with van der Heijden, however, is that this space is set to play a key role in phase two, when it will form a grand entrance and link to an expanded rehabilitation centre. This will provide the possibility to add new floor plates between pre-formed column heads, which currently protrude from the columns.

For now, the curious blocks contain phase-one lighting and the columns and canopy provide shelter for two of the building's three entrances, using their scale and generosity to allude to the broader ambitions of the project. The elements stand as a metaphor of the landscape that will continue to be revived as future phases go on to transform this cluttered and poorly planned campus, into a delightful life-promoting public park. 









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# 230

## MÉDIATHÈQUE

LOCATION

**OLORON-SAINTE-MARIE,  
FRANCE**

ARCHITECT

**PASCALE GUÉDOT**

WRITER

**CATHERINE SLESSOR**

PHOTOGRAPHY

**GASTON F BERGERET**

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Poised at the confluence of the Rivers Aspe and Ossau, Pascale Guédot's Médiathèque re-animates a former industrial site in Oloron-Sainte-Marie, a town at the edge of the Pyrénées in south-west France. Originally the location for textile factories in the 19th century (attracted by an abundant source of hydroelectric power), the area embodies a familiar urban narrative of buoyancy and later decline, as once thriving factories decayed into a grungy, post-industrial wasteland sundered from the rest of the town.

Colonising the site of a former beret factory which was abandoned in the 1980s (suggesting that even traditional millinery can be a fickle business), Guédot's Médiathèque heralds a radical shift in fortunes. The building forms part of a wider regenerative ambition to reconnect the prow-like outcrop with its wider surroundings. Two new walkways, designed by RFR Ingénieurs, link the Médiathèque to the opposing

riverbanks, creating a pedestrian promenade that threads across the site and through the town.

Although she is now based in Paris, Pascale Guédot is a native of the Pyrénées, and was educated in Toulouse before completing her architectural studies in Paris under the great French Peruvian Modernist Henri Ciriani. Her work has an impressive rigour, but also a delicacy and lyricism in the way it experiments with layering, veiling, light and materials.


The new building adopts the wedge-shaped footprint of the old factory, but instead of the brute functionalism of industry, expressed by a hermetic enclosure pressed hard against the site perimeter, a glazed volume wrapped in a slatted timber skin now hovers lightly and diaphanously over an anchoring stone base (the archaeological remnants of the beret factory).

At ground level, the glazing is pulled back from the stone edge

to create a pleasant riverside walkway, and at the north end, where the wedge tapers to a squared-off prow, a double-height vitrine frames views over the river junction. This device is reprised in a plain but imposing entrance portico that civically signposts the new building and overlooks a new public square.

Even though the formal language has an innate starkness and simplicity, with the timber-clad volume hanging above the river like a stranded ship's hull, the project also intelligently explores the dualities of solid and void, opacity and transparency. The vertical lattice of Douglas fir is opaque by day, but after dark dematerialises into a shimmering surface, revealing the interior and activities within, calling to mind the famous Alfred Hitchcock film *Rear Window*.

The interior is a fluid succession of large, open-plan spaces, animated by natural light and views filtered and channelled by the timber screen and large serrated rooflights – an allusion, perhaps, to the original factory. From the entrance portico you drift through a lobby and exhibition area to the main adult reading room, or go down one level to the children's section. This lower floor is more compartmentalised, with rooms designed for storytelling and facilities for book conservation. Chairs and bean bags dotted around the edge of the book stacks create informal enclaves for reading and browsing. Warm timber walls, together with a slatted wooden ceiling, contrive to evoke a softly rustic and welcoming ambience. An upper mezzanine level slung underneath the roof contains offices, storage and meeting rooms.

It's all deftly and decisively done, from the big moves, such as exploiting the urban drama of the site, right down to the smallest details and finishes. The Médiathèque also gives civic impetus and presence to a formerly rotting local backwater, and successfully reconnects it with people and place. 



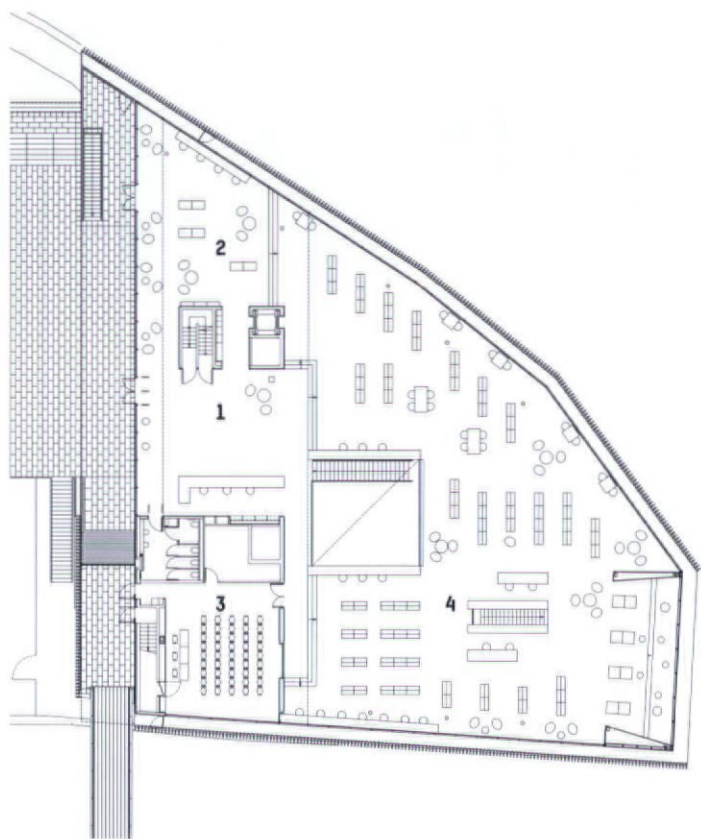




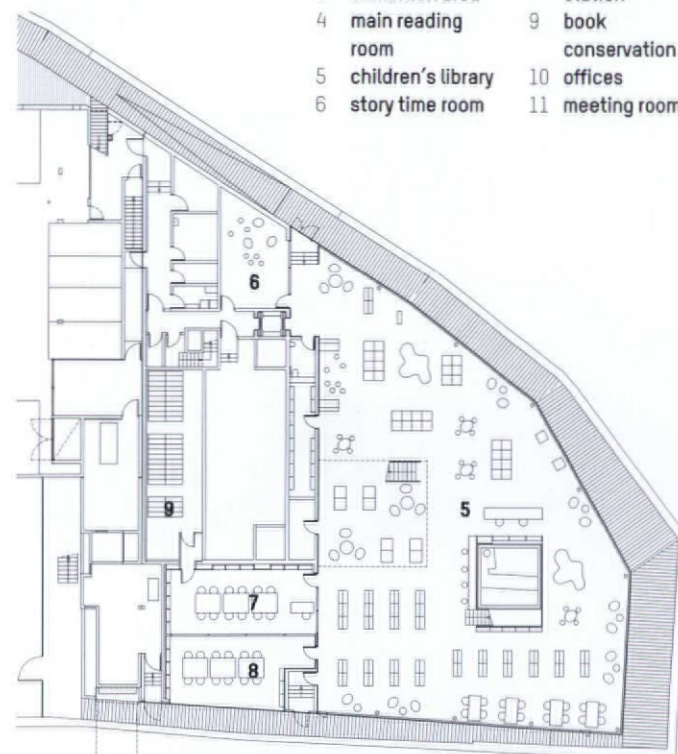
mezzanine level plan



ground floor plan



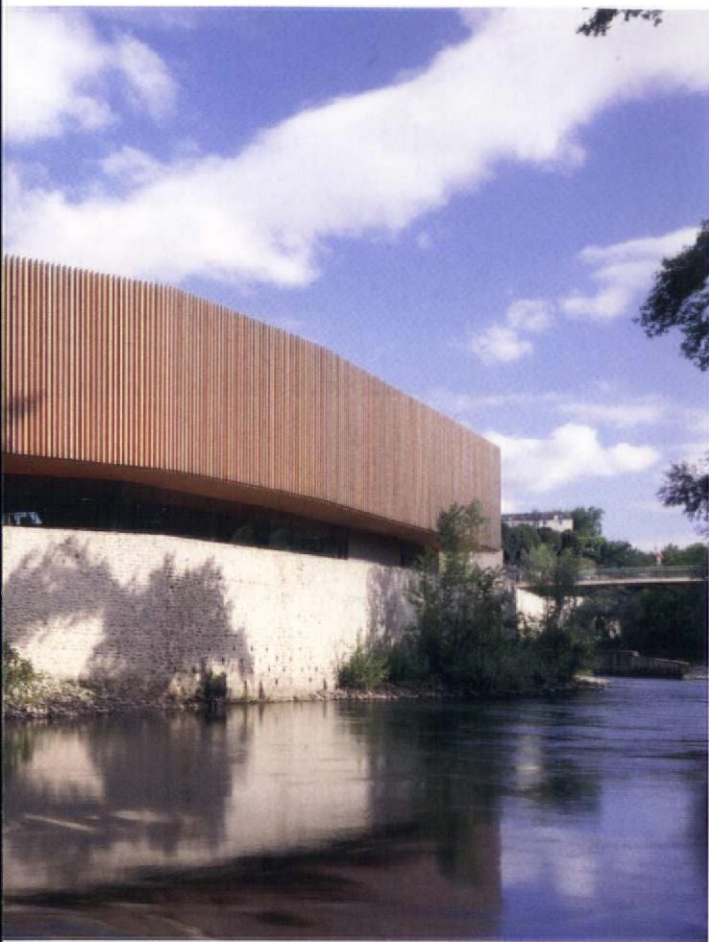
lower ground floor plan



- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 entrance           | 7 reading room       |
| 2 magazines          | 8 multimedia station |
| 3 exhibition area    | 9 book conservation  |
| 4 main reading room  | 10 offices           |
| 5 children's library | 11 meeting room      |
| 6 story time room    |                      |







Previous page\_  
New bridges link the  
formerly derelict site  
with the wider town  
Left\_ A glazed  
wedge wrapped  
in slats of Douglas  
fir hovers over the  
stone base of the  
former factory

Below\_ The site lies  
at the confluence  
of two rivers. Site  
and building are  
now reconnected  
with the town  
Bottom\_ A new  
walkway runs  
around the edge  
of the building



site plan

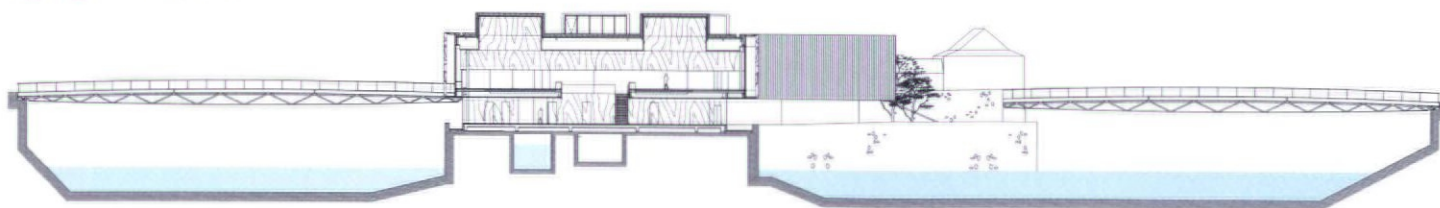


**A GLAZED VOLUME WRAPPED  
IN A SLATTED TIMBER SKIN  
HOVERS DIAPHANOUSLY  
OVER A STONE BASE**

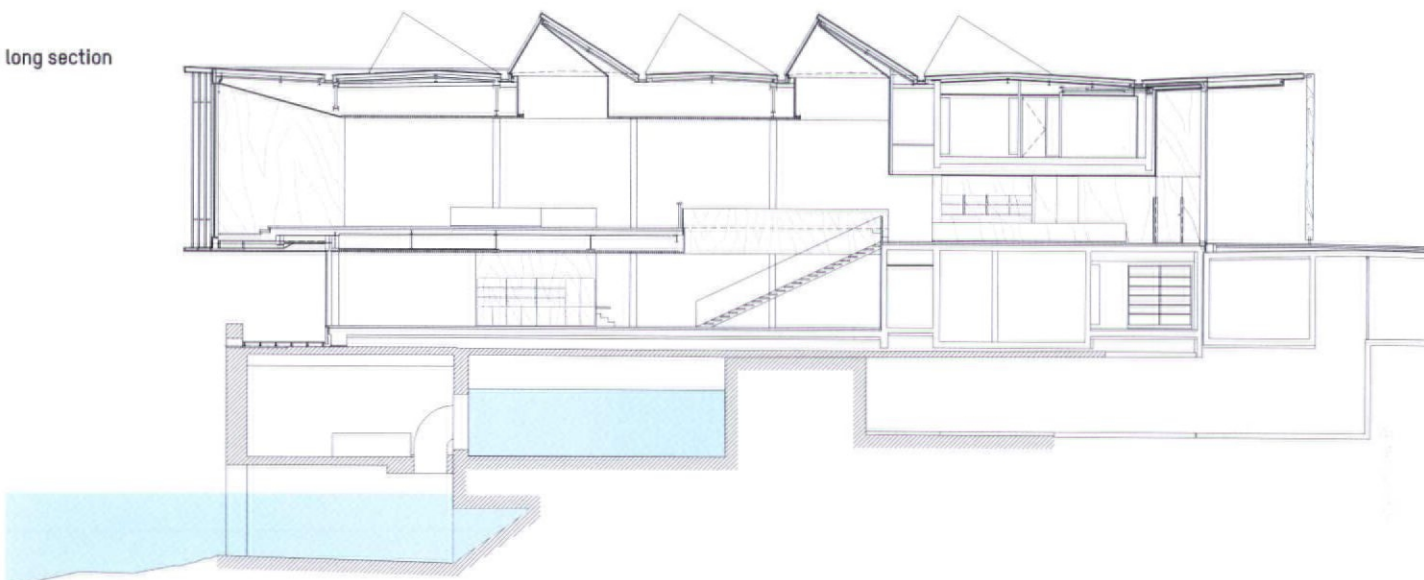




cross section through site



long section



Left\_ Part of the children's library at lower level  
Above\_ Main reading room with views out over the river  
Right\_ The fluid, open-plan interior encourages exploration

**ARCHITECT**

Pascale Guédot, Paris

**PROJECT TEAM**

Pascale Guédot, Virginie

Gloria, Cédric Dartois,

Valérie Astrie

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

GEC Ingénierie







## SPANISH COLONISATION OF NORTH AFRICA TURNED THE CITY OF MELILLA INTO A MARVEL OF MODERNISME AND ART NOUVEAU, WITH A WEALTH OF BUILDINGS NOW BEING RESTORED

WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
**CHRIS HELLIER**

Along Melilla's spruced-up Avenue Juan Carlos I, the stylised, Art Nouveau faces of young maidens gaze down on a mixed throng of Iberian and North African shoppers and flâneurs. Golden garlands and floral motifs are draped over curvaceous balconies, while bright red corner turrets tower above small squares and streets named after doughty Spanish heroes. Architecturally, little along the avenue has changed in this surprising city for more than 60 years.

Set on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, the small Spanish city of Melilla is something of an architectural enigma. This tiny enclave, an early Modernist marvel, has more in common, architecturally, with Barcelona than with North Africa. As an Art Nouveau city in Africa, Melilla appears to be lost in a time warp and a strange kind of cultural, almost continental, drift.

Indeed, Melilla has the greatest concentration of Modernisme (sometimes known as Modernismo) architecture, characterised by its eclectic mix of Art Nouveau influences popularised by Antoni Gaudí and others in Barcelona, and in Spain outside the Catalan capital. It was thanks to a student of Gaudí,

Enrique Nieto, that Melilla adopted Catalan-inspired design as its defining style. An area of the city, often called 'the golden triangle', contains some of the best-preserved clusters of Art Nouveau buildings to be found anywhere in the world.

Although little-known in mainland Spain, Enrique Nieto is a lauded local figure. A statue of him carrying plans stands at the eastern end of Avenue Juan Carlos I, opposite the Melul Building, one of his most successful early works. A Catalan native, Nieto studied at Barcelona's Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura between 1897 and 1900, and worked with Gaudí on the Casa Milà Apartment before moving to Melilla in 1909.

In Melilla, Nieto's first major project was to design offices for the newspaper *El Telegrama del Rif*. The project became a transitional building, combining Art Nouveau elements with historical references. At the time, Melilla was undergoing a period of rapid social and economic change. Although the enclave had been Spanish since the 15th century, the city had only recently expanded beyond the narrow headland and its medieval fortress. Military engineers had laid out the plans for a new city based on a single triangular branch of

a Maltese cross, heading west from the circular Plaza de España, designed in 1913.

Following the establishment of the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco, decreed by the 1912 Treaty of Fez, much of northern Morocco had come under colonial Spanish rule. With Spain's increased presence in North Africa, Melilla was feeling confident. The formerly forgotten enclave now became a vital port supplying goods to Spanish Morocco. Business boomed and the city embarked on a major building programme. There were new contracts to be had by young architects from the mainland. Nieto took his chance, moved to Melilla permanently, and was finally, toward the end of his career, appointed city architect in 1939.

Among Nieto's more successful early buildings was the provocatively named La Reconquista department store building, which dominates the Plaza Menéndez y Pelayo on Melilla's main thoroughfare. (La Reconquista refers to the period of 700 years when Christian kingdoms pushed the Moors out of the Iberian Peninsula.) With its corner turrets resembling red-tiled pinecones and elaborate floral decoration, the building, constructed in 1915, looks like a Belle Époque villa, which could have been plucked straight from the French Riviera.

At the eastern end of Avenue Juan Carlos I, another key Nieto work, the elaborately decorated Melul Building overlooks the Plaza de España. Its architecture probably owes more to the influence of Lluís Domènech i Montaner, another leading member of Catalan Modernisme, whose tenure as director of Barcelona's Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, overlapped with Nieto's studies there in the late 19th century. Completed in 1917, the Melul Building is among the most ornate of any in Melilla's historical milieu, with heavily charged windows decorated by stylised leaves, tridents and circular motifs.

Although Catalan Modernisme, the source for Melilla's adopted style, had petered out in Barcelona by —





Left\_ Art Nouveau shop front by Enrique Nieto, a Catalan architect who worked with Gaudí in Barcelona and came to Melilla in 1909. For nearly 40 years, Nieto's eclectic synthesis of Art Nouveau and Art Deco motifs made a distinctive mark on the Spanish colony. In 1939, he was appointed city architect. Now, many of these historic buildings are being restored, with funding drawn from both the Spanish government and the European Community

Middle\_ Detail of Nieto's El Telegrama del Rif offices, a transitional building mixing different historic influences

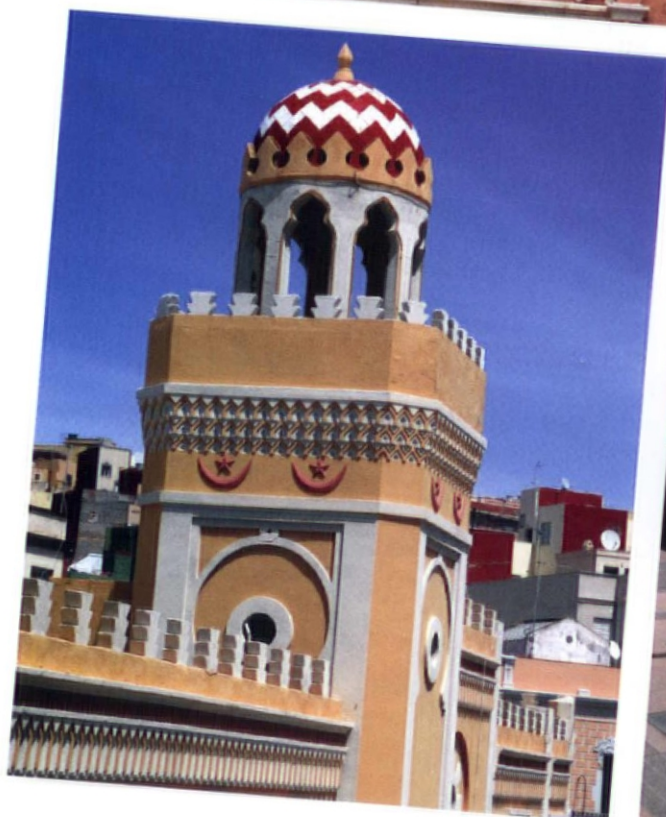
Below left\_ Detail of the Melul Building, dating from 1915

Bottom left\_ Melilla's Andalusian-style mosque, designed by Nieto in 1945

Below\_ The Melul Building is among the most floridly ornate in Melilla

Bottom centre\_ A statue of Nieto carrying plans stands opposite the Melul Building

Bottom right\_ Casa de los Cristales, the Glass House





## AN AREA OF THE CITY, CALLED 'THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE', CONTAINS SOME OF THE BEST-PRESERVED CLUSTERS OF ART NOUVEAU

the beginning of the First World War, it reached its peak in Melilla during the War. Buildings inspired by Modernisme continued to be designed and constructed until well into the 1920s, giving way to Art Deco, including the very deco City Hall (1933–48), Nieto's last major work.


The choice of Modernisme and Art Deco was a clear effort by the local authorities to stamp a Spanish and European aesthetic on this North African city. In the city's museum, framed plans reveal how Melilla might have developed had other choices been made. An alternative proposal for the City Hall is a Moorish-inspired design based on Islamic geometry, perhaps more appropriate to Melilla's geographical context, but not considered a desirable expression of its civic and political identity.

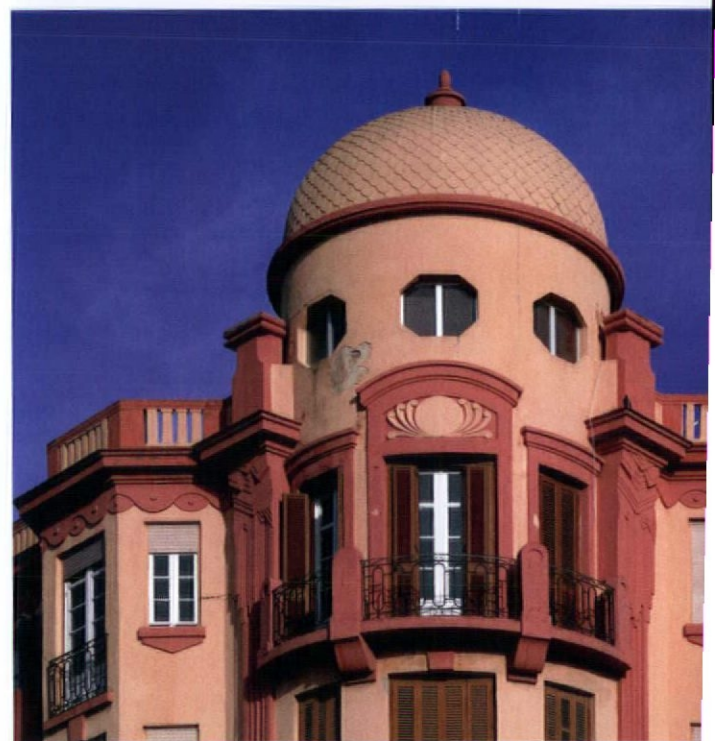
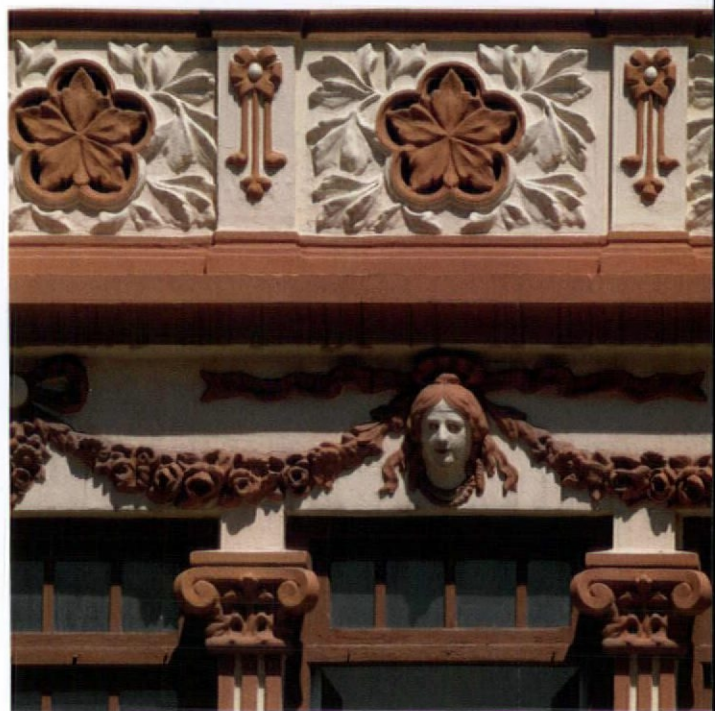
Other unrealised projects include a 1920s-style beach resort, with a Modernist pool and a promenade. Indeed many older Melilla inhabitants, at least those of Iberian descent, regard the 1920s and 30s as the city's Golden Age. But the political situation that had briefly raised its profile, and enabled the building of the Modernist city centre, quickly came to an end.

When northern Morocco gained its independence from Spain in 1956,

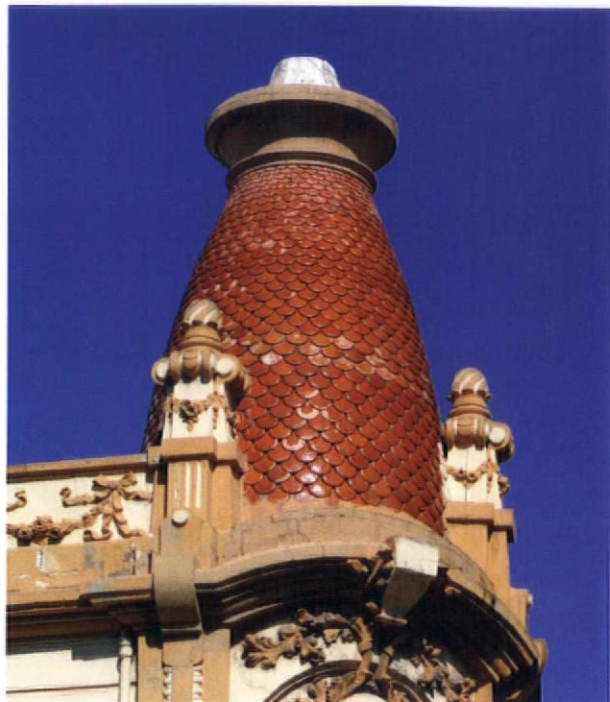
the Spanish held on to their old enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta. But as their interest in North Africa receded to these two cities, an era of decline set in. Melilla's centre soon became shabby. For decades, commercial properties were neglected as Melilla's regional importance as a strategic North African port dwindled.

It wasn't until 1995, when Melilla was granted Autonomous City status that its fortunes began to improve. Decades of stagnation meant that the golden triangle of Art Nouveau buildings, although run-down, had hardly changed since the 1930s. But, impelled by a sense of civic pride, and boosted by funding from Madrid and the European Community (EC), a major renovation programme began.

Today, work continues on some of the city's key buildings. The Teatro Kursaal-Nacional, designed by Nieto in 1929, is currently undergoing a major €6 million (£5.3 million) refurbishment. Hernandez Park, which forms the southern boundary of the 'golden triangle', is being remodelled under a €3.5 million (£3 million) scheme, 70 per cent of which is financed by the EC. The latter project is due for completion in 2013. Melilla's Modernisme star is slowly rising again. 







Far left\_ Detail of Art Nouveau facade at Calle López Moreno. Melilla's enthusiasm for Art Nouveau and Modernisme was a clear attempt to stamp a sense of European identity on a North African city  
Far left, below\_ Decorative turret on a typical Art Nouveau apartment building  
Left\_ 'Pinecone' turret detail from La Reconquista department store  
Left, middle\_ Completed in 1948, Melilla's imposing Art Deco City Hall was Enrique Nieto's last major work

Centre left\_ Detail of the Chamber of Commerce, completed in 1913  
Centre right\_ Detail of an enclosed window balcony  
Bottom\_ With its blowsy overtones of a Belle Époque villa transplanted from the French Riviera, the splendid La Reconquista department store, completed in 1915, was one of Nieto's most successful early works  
Below right\_ A lusciously ornamental Art Nouveau facade at Calle López Moreno





# EXPLORING EYE

## ON THE VOLCANIC ISLAND OF AMBRYN IN THE PACIFIC ARCHIPELAGO OF VANUATU, LOCAL BUILDING TRADITIONS AND A FASCINATING, PRIMITIVE WAY OF LIFE CONTINUE TO ENDURE

WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
**JON BESWICK**

Eight hundred kilometres west of Fiji, and only a stone's throw away from Renzo Piano's famous Tjibaou Cultural Centre on New Caledonia, lies the Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu. These paradisaical islands are home to an eclectic mix of ancient ruins, spirit caves, sunken wartime ships, missionary settlements, volcanoes, crater lakes, jungles, dugongs (a rare species similar to the manatee), and until recently cannibalism.

Some islands have been developed into expensive honeymoon destinations, whereas others are playgrounds for adventurous Antipodeans. But many remain undeveloped, untouched by outsiders except for 19th-century Anglo-French missionaries and the occasional anthropologist who visits today. Ambryn is one such island. Known

as the 'Black Island', partly for its volcanic soil and partly for its historic association with black magic, the island of Ambryn is fascinating socially, architecturally and anthropologically. There appears to be a direct correlation between the island's development, its architecture, its two active volcanoes (Mount Marum and Mount Benbow) and its connection with *man blong majik* or black magic.

A huge eruption in 1996 created the present caldera in the centre of the island and subsequent lava flows destroyed many villages in the south. Most settlements are now found to the north of the island, protected by a small mountain that is known as 'Mount Tuyu' to the indigenous people. According to NASA, Mount Marum is one of the most active volcanoes in the region, but the local

population has learnt to live under the smoke and red glow that dominates the night sky. Access to Ambryn is only possible via a landing strip cleared out of the jungle to the west of the island, but it is set at some remove from the villages in the north. This is due to a fear of black magic, coupled with the inaccessibility of the dense rainforest and the volcanic desert at the island's core. For the same reasons, no roads link the north to the runway or anywhere else on the island. Villages in the north are thus cut off from the south, from the rest of Vanuatu and from the wider world.

This isolation has a profoundly detrimental effect on residents. The only access is by a long boat trip around the west coast of Ambryn, since the east is too exposed to the Pacific Ocean for light ocean craft. Even though the journey is picturesque, it means that everything has to be imported by boat, so prices of fuel and goods are high. Consequently, large numbers of northern inhabitants have never visited the south of the island and have no access to basic medicine.

My outboard-powered boat arrived in the small village of Fonah, home to only five families, and my first experience of village life pointed up the fragility of existence here and the often-lethal lack of basic necessities. A young man from the neighbouring village of Fangjiwiri had just died, aged only 21. The cause was simple septicemia after a cut became infected, but the family could not afford the arduous boat ride, let alone the flight to Port Vila, capital of Vanuatu, to seek treatment. The sad irony is that I was carrying the basic antibiotics that would have saved him, as was the anthropologist accompanying me. Partly due to lack of medicines and partly because the young are attracted to earn money in Port Vila, half the population here is under 15 years old.

So my first night in Fonah was one of mixed emotions. I was Chief Johnson's guest of honour, along —





Above\_ The elevated house belonging to the chief's son utilises modern stilt construction

Right\_ The rusted corrugated iron roof of the village church. The local population are staunchly Christian, mixed with traditional animist beliefs, though cannibalism was practised on Ambryn as recently as the 1950s

Far right\_ A boldly decorated mask used in the traditional *rom* dance. Women are not allowed to enter the dance with the men. Once the dance is over, the masks are burnt





## ROOFS MADE OF PALM FRONDS LASHED TO BAMBOO RAFTERS CAN SURVIVE FOR 10 YEARS THROUGH THE CYCLONE SEASON

Top\_ A patchwork mixture of old and new materials – woven walls and rusting corrugated metal – are typical of vernacular building traditions  
Right\_ Boys carving up slaughtered pigs for the funeral feast. Pig ownership is intimately bound up with the status of local chiefs

Far right\_ Husks of drying coconut flesh being baked in the copra oven  
Below left\_ The village bread oven in a raked clearing in the jungle  
Below right\_ The palm frond roof of the *nakamal*. Though the parched fronds might seem fragile, palm roofs can last for up to a decade





with the anthropologist who had returned to check up on the village. We ate yam and wild cabbage before retiring to the chief's hut, which is the focal point of the community, its significance marked by a brightly painted facade. The white paint is made in the village using volcanic stone, which is ground, heated and mixed with water. The vibrant red has been shipped in from Port Vila. Chief Johnson is not just hereditary chief of the village; he is Yam Master of all the villages in the area. Nobody is allowed to plant yams until Chief Johnson plants the first yam of the season.

The layout and position of the village is determined by the significance of the two main food sources, yam and fish. Neatly positioned between the sea and the fenced, cultivated yam gardens, the site allows the visitor to penetrate deep into the jungle. I mistake the vertical timber stakes on the beach for territorial markings, but they indicate that the fishing season here is over. Villagers only fish for six months of the year to allow stocks to replenish. Fleets of Japanese fishing vessels off the coast, however, are not so respectful. They fish illegally all year round and there is nothing that Chief Johnson can do.

The next day we trek to the dead boy's village, situated about two hours away. All able-bodied residents of Fonah make the journey. We cross over a timber gate that marks the edge of the immaculate village (the ground is raked every morning) and pass numerous yam gardens that appear and disappear out of the jungle. The gardens are cleared by slash-and-burn methods, and fenced off using branches hammered into the ground. Other cordoned-off areas house pigs, which play a special role in the workings of Ambryn's male hierarchical society. The animals belong to the various chiefs of the village and the boars have their upper teeth removed so their tusks grow in a circle. One completed circle gives the boar a certain value, two circles

mean that it is worth even more and three circles cost another pig just to look at the growth.

We hear Fangjiwiri before we actually see it, through the keening sound of women in mourning. There are 21 villages in the area and their inhabitants are paying their respects, since most are related. Men, women and boys congregate separately, the women in an open-walled hut called the *nasara* and the older men around the most important building in the village, the *nakamal*. The *nasara* is used for ceremonies and meetings, with its palm roof offering protection and open sides encouraging ventilation. The *nakamal* is the men's clubhouse and *tabu* (taboo) to women. Traditionally this is a long building of two rooms, one where men meet and drink *kava*, the other containing ancestral skulls.


The boys of the village are busy working; a small group slaughter and skin the cow to be used in the funeral feast. The cooking has started in the village's open kitchen, where large pots are heated over a fire, balanced on a heat-resistant bamboo frame. The remaining boys dig a deep grave near to the dead boy's house. Unlike most village accommodation, it is raised on stilts, and the simple stepladder up to the entrance is finished with a beautifully crafted double-curved handrail made from bent branches and discreet nails.

On the edge of the village is the church, which will hold a Christian funeral later. It is surreal to think that cannibalism was practised here as late as the 1950s, and as late as the 1970s on the neighbouring island. The missionaries who first came here were eaten along with inhabitants of neighbouring islands. Today, more than 90 per cent of the population of Vanuatu is Christian (mixed with traditional animist beliefs) and every village has a church of the mission responsible for its foundation. Other key buildings common to all local villages include a large oven and a copra oven. Large flat loaves of bread are baked in the first and *copra*

(dried coconut kernels) in the latter. The *copra* oven is one of the few ways for villagers to earn a small livelihood through drying coconut flesh, which is then collected by boat.

The archetypal huts in the village are built by men and women using similar construction techniques and materials. Roofs are made of palm fronds lashed to lightweight bamboo rafters, which can survive for 10 years through the cyclone season. The lashing is made from lengths of vine. Walls are built from vertical coconut trunks and hardwood columns. Wall panels are made of sections of flattened bamboo, thatched into mats and battened down with thinner branches. These structures are light and encourage cross ventilation through the perforations in the panels. Ventilation is enhanced by raising the huts on stilts. Interestingly, the stilted huts are a recent phenomenon in these villages, an idea brought back by the younger generation, educated off the island.

In the village community, a strong relationship between the chief's hut, the *nakamal* and the church exists. All three are considered sacred, although architecturally there may be little to distinguish them. The church may display a timber cross and the occasional hand-painted sign, the *nakamal* takes an elongated shape and usually no one can go near the chief's hut. Chiefs tend to live alone to avoid being poisoned by enemies.

Today, cannibalism, animism and Christianity continue their strange intermingling in Ambryn. Amazingly, Chief Johnson's father, Wilfred Koran, is still alive. He is, however, dying and bedridden, and his constant body tremors and bursts of laughter make me wonder whether he is suffering from kuru, the neurological disorder known to affect cannibals in Papua New Guinea. Without access to medicine, the villagers can only pray for him at church each Sunday, while the men continue to drink *kava* in the *nakamal*, where they conclude that there can only be one explanation for his illness – *man blong majik*. 





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WILL HUNTER



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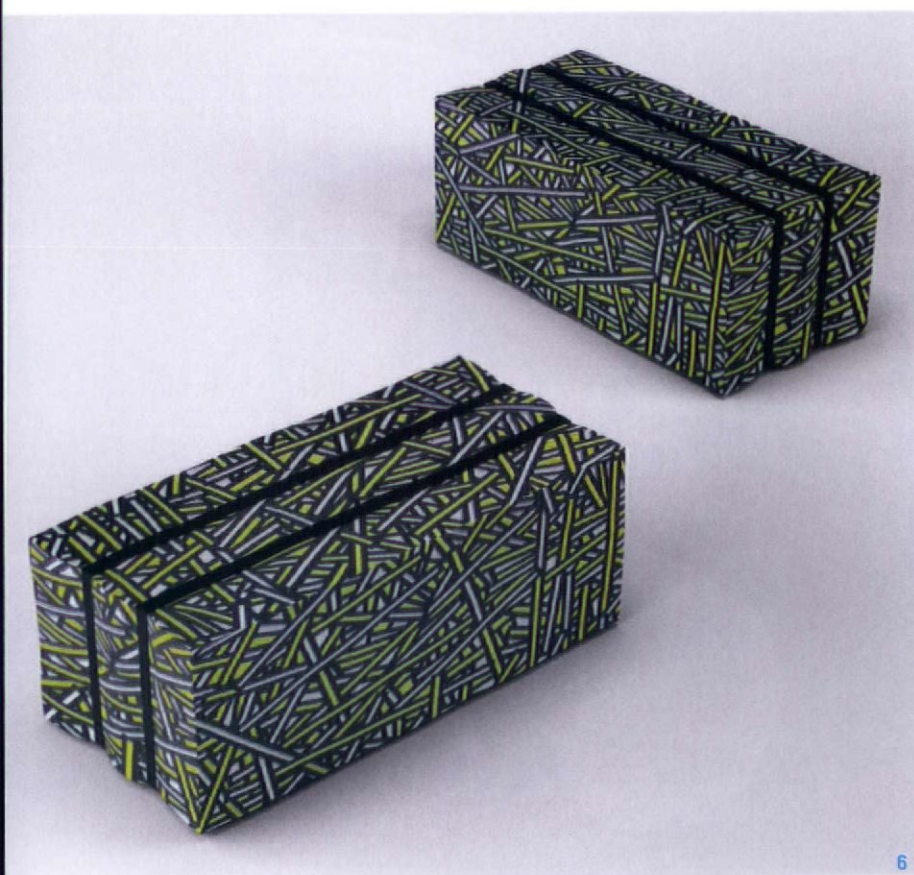
1\_Kir Royal sofa by  
Christophe de la  
Fontaine for Boffi  
2\_Café Chair in  
green by Jonathan  
Prestwich for Arco  
3\_Jill chair by Alfredo  
Häberli for Vitra

4\_Tip Ton chairs by  
Edward Barber and  
Jay Osgerby for Vitra  
5\_Piana Chair by  
David Chipperfield  
for Alessi  
6\_Hay Bale by  
Richard Woods and

Sebastian Wrong for  
Established & Sons  
7\_Kir Royal pouf  
by Christophe de la  
Fontaine for Boffi  
8\_Cape armchair by  
Konstantin Grcic for  
Established & Sons



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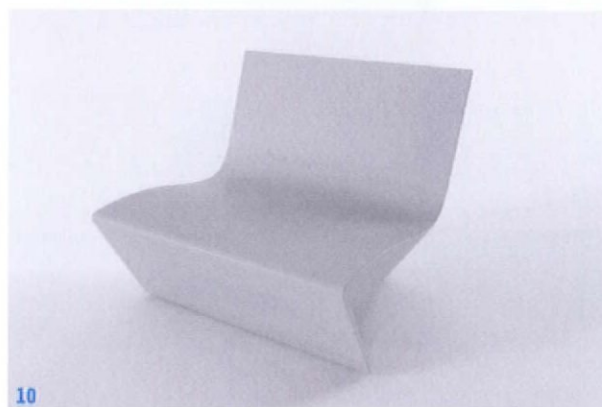
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9\_ Osso chair  
by Ronan and  
Erwan Bouroullec  
for Mattiazzi  
10\_ KAMI Ichi  
chair by Marc  
Sadler for SLIDE  
11\_ Rive Droite sofa

made in American  
walnut with fabric  
cushion cover by  
Christophe Pillet for  
Ceccotti Collezione  
12\_ Origami chair  
by Henzel and  
Matteo Casalegno



10



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12



13



14



15



13\_ Acoustic  
privacy chair in  
pressed felt by  
Benjamin Hubert  
14\_ Gladis High Chair  
by Ayala Serfaty for  
Aqua Creations  
15\_ Oz sofa bed by

Nicola Gallizia  
for Molteni & C  
16\_ Grinza armchair  
draped softly  
in eco-fur by  
Fernando and  
Humberto Campana  
for Edra





# ALBERT KAHN

## The Second World War shaped the practice and direction of architecture

**EXHIBITION / Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War**  
**Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada, until 18 September, [www.cca.qc.ca](http://www.cca.qc.ca)**

Any number of museums tell stories of the Holocaust, and our theatres and bestseller charts are routinely occupied by works about the Second World War. If you read Primo Levi or WG Sebald, Anne Frank or Hans Fallada, you may convince yourself that no other subject is even possible, let alone necessary. But more than half a century since the conclusion of hostilities, only now do we have our first comprehensive analysis of the War's profound implications for architects and their profession.

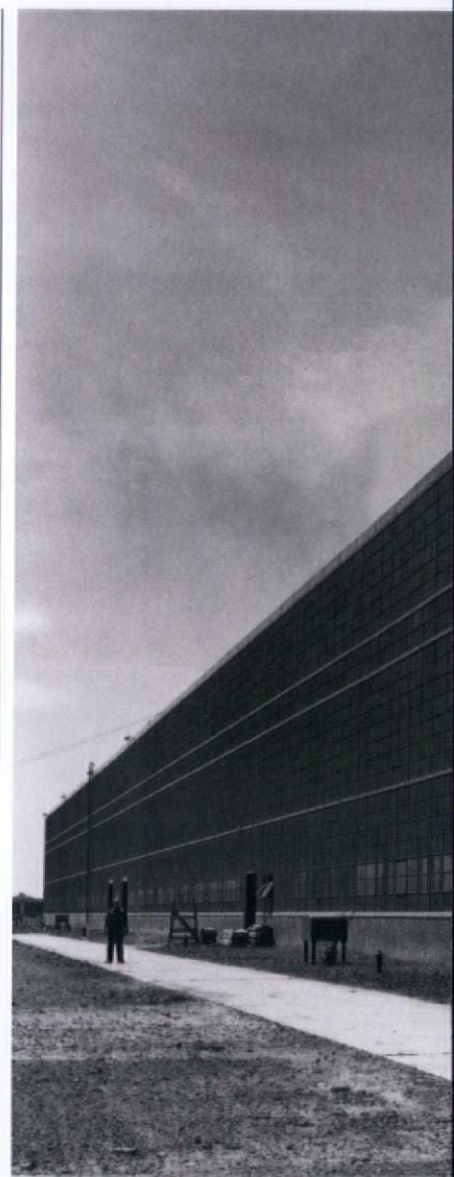
That the War shaped the practice and direction of architecture is the operative principle of *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War*, an exhibition of exceptional scope and depth on view at the Canadian Centre of Architecture (CCA) in Montreal. This may seem like a statement of the obvious, but as curator Jean-Louis Cohen notes in the show's catalogue, a landmark in its own right, the War has until recently been essentially absent from serious histories of the discipline.

Arranged in thematic rather than chronological order,

Cohen's corrective is an object lesson in the efficient organisation of resources and materials, like much of its subject matter. Gallery walls painted in shades of cool grey accentuate an almost clinical recitation of events, with Allied and Axis projects placed side by side. (A paucity of materials from Japan is a weakness.) Although the display can appear haphazard, given its reach and the limits of the museum's floor space – a flaw rectified by the encyclopedic catalogue – it is controlled throughout by Cohen's rigorous intellectual and moral authority.

The architect's role in the orchestration of overwhelming systems of rational management – whether in the service of national defence or irrational malevolence – emerges as the central theme of the show. For Cohen, the great maestro of this technocratic revolution was Albert Kahn, whose Detroit office was a model of integrated industrial production. 'Architecture is 90 per cent business and 10 per cent art,' he said. A diagram of the 'Kahn Organisation' – a tiered chart of administrators, designers, engineers and functionaries – commands a full wall.

Kahn's principles were applied worldwide – his office designed a tractor factory for Soviet Chelyabinsk – but it was in the US that they achieved almost transcendental realisation. Some 25,000 tanks were assembled at the office's



Chrysler Tank Arsenal, a massive bar with glazed windows. No detail was left to chance in the Kahn system. For the Ford Willow Run bomber factory, a vast facility that produced the B-24 Liberator, Kahn's standard linear plan was given a dogleg shift to avoid it crossing into union territory.



Below\_ Chrysler Tank Arsenal, Warren Township, Michigan, by Albert Kahn Associates, 1941



Hitler's grim campaign of aggression, enslavement and extermination demanded its own feats of infrastructural organisation. The architect Albert Speer was among the Führer's most notoriously efficient administrators. Kahn's dark mirror, however, was the largely forgotten

Herbert Rimpl, who ran an immense firm building for the Reich, with outposts throughout the occupied territories. Like so many others who compromised themselves during the War years – among them, Auguste Perret and his pupil Le Corbusier – Rimpl emerged virtually unscathed during the aftermath.

In this exhibition, special attention is given to four megaprojects that would shape the War and the technocratic future of the architectural profession: Auschwitz (presented, chillingly, as an urban design problem with no sign of its victims); the Pentagon; the American atomic

bomb factory at Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and the Nazi rocket-production facility at Peenemünde. Cohen demonstrates that it was the architects who controlled the complex bureaucracies required for such projects who would rise to dominance in the post-war years, along with the form of corporate modern design that they practised.

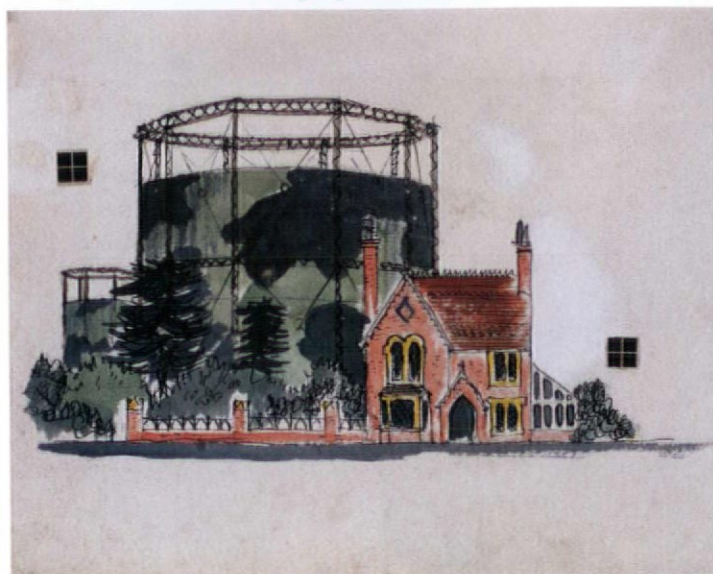
For the most part, however, architects found their position diminished in the mobilisation for War, and were faced with the daunting task of proving their relevance in a world dominated by the engineer. Camouflage, which drew on the architect's combined artistic and technical competencies, became a significant if somewhat reduced outlet for professional energies (the AR dedicated an issue to the subject in September 1944).

Cohen devotes considerable wall space to camouflage design, and in particular to the British architect Hugh Casson, a brilliant practitioner and theorist of the form. His charming watercolours were quite literally disarming, with factories, gas tanks and airfields disguised by patterned landscapes and overlapping foliage. Casson noted the conflict in the design of camouflage for a modern architect, who was inclined to bold, unadorned forms. Now, however, he was charged with creating 'ornament of the most boisterous and sensational kind' and this was 'not to emphasise structure, but to destroy it'.



## Architects faced the task of proving their relevance

Below\_ Watercolour of a camouflaged gasometer, by Hugh Casson, 1944



Destruction of the literal variety was the object of another programme that was dependent on architectural falsity. At a secret American installation in the Utah Desert, Erich Mendelsohn, Antonin Raymond and Konrad Wachsmann and designed reproduction German and Japanese buildings and villages to test American munitions. Conversely, Cohen provides a succinct political and architectural history of the design of the safety shelter.

Of the architectural fascinations fuelled by the War, none has been so tenacious in its longevity as the interest in demountable, modular and prefabricated building systems. Cohen grants the Quonset hut and the Bailey bridge their due attention, but his admiration extends to the geometries of the Mero node system – created by German heating professional Max Menringhausen – and the

panel systems developed by Wachsmann before and after his emigration to the US. The show all but concludes with a model of Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Dwelling Machine, a metal mushroom that was to be fabricated at a converted aircraft factory. As Cohen acknowledges, it would 'ultimately lead nowhere'.

Such was the War, which for all its rationality was also unpredictable, random and ungovernable – this was the conflict that gave us the acronyms SNAFU and FUBAR. Architecture emerged from it both augmented and reduced, but above all transformed.

**MARK LAMSTER**

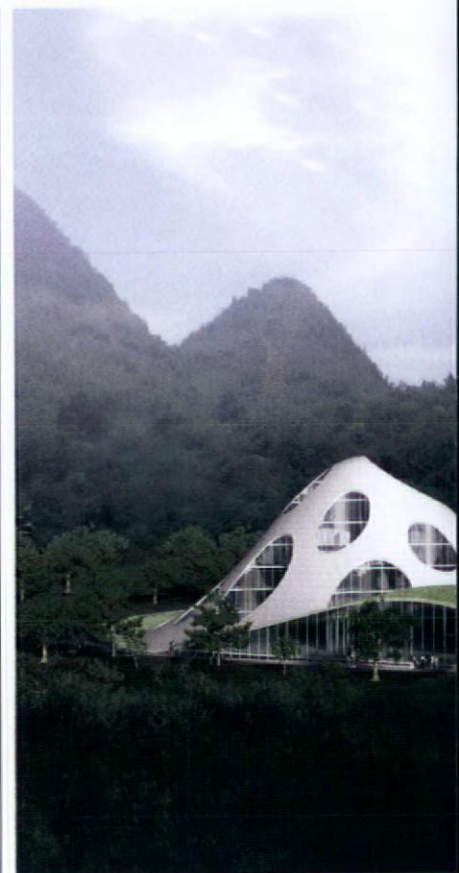
## The works themselves display an inventiveness and a wit, outside the domain of theory

**BOOK/**  
**Working in Series**  
**Serie Architects**  
 Christopher CM Lee and  
 Kapil Gupta with essays  
 from Brett Steele, Pier  
 Vittorio Aureli, Sam Jacoby,  
 Christopher CM Lee  
 and Laurence Liauw,  
 AA Publications, 2010, £20

*Working in Series* is another book from the prolific Chris Lee, whose *Typological Urbanism* (a special issue of *Architectural Design* guest-edited with Sam Jacoby), appeared only in January. *Working in Series* precedes *Urbanism*, and is built around nine recent projects by Serie Architects, of whom Lee and Gupta are the principals. The book has been lavishly produced by AA Publications, in support of an exhibition of these works held at the Architectural Association last year.

Common to both volumes is a theory that purports to draw types from the city and subject them to serial transformations to arrive at architectural and urban configurations. However, it requires having both volumes to hand to appreciate a debt to 'the city', because the emphasis in *Working in Series* is on the design of individual buildings; and the typological themes (or 'ideas' in Lee's terminology) that serve as a way to group the projects seem fairly abstract, not suggestive of a vision of civic life or an urban typography.

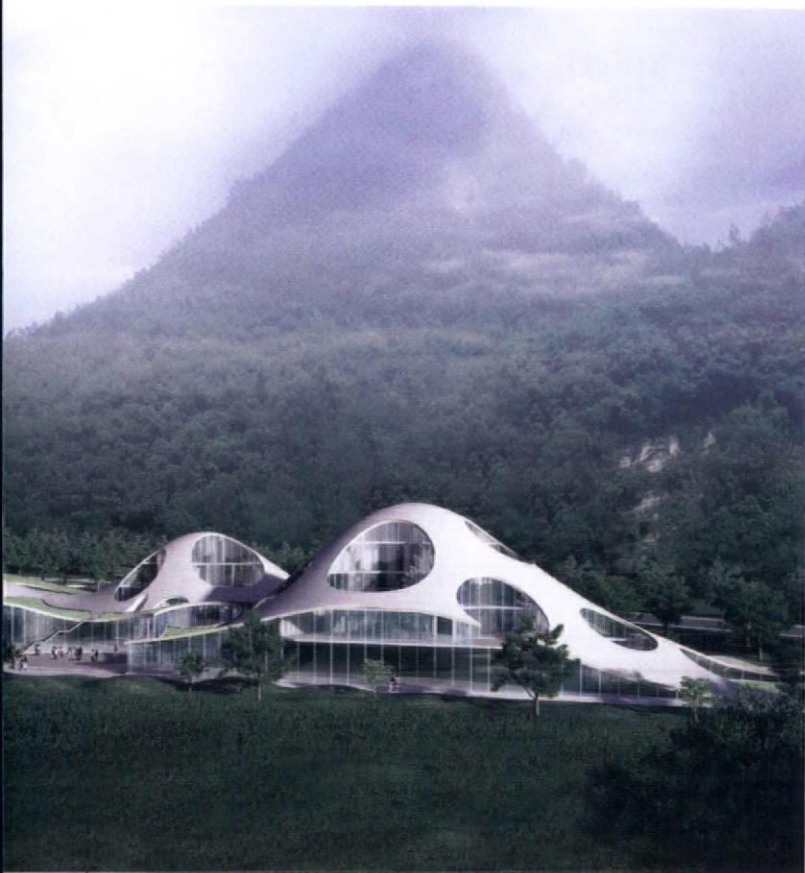
The works themselves display an inventiveness and



a wit, whose resources appear to lie outside the explicit domain of the theory. For example, the tree branch and canopy structure of The Tote in Mumbai (AR January 2010), seems at first glance to indulge a literal interpretation of the trees among which the pavilion sits. But closer inspection reveals a quasi-parametric order to these branches, a construction in welded I-sections, a delicate negotiation with a glass plane and the whole painted white to find a species of abstraction that could be considered a re-interpretation of the tree and vine iconography familiar



Below left\_ Parcel 9, HX Urban Centre Housing, Guizhou, China Below right\_ Blue Frog Acoustic Lounge, Mumbai

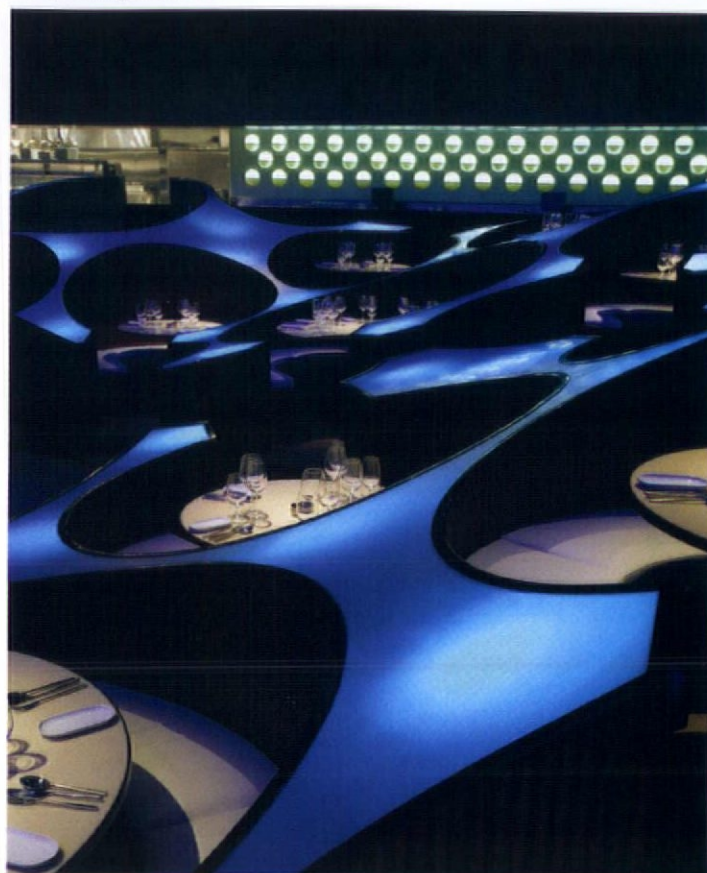


from the ornament of Islamic palaces and pavilions.

This 'reference' is not mentioned in the text, although it is difficult to avoid simply because of the cultural context in which it is situated, suggesting clubs favoured by colonial Englishmen. The emphasis in the text suggests that the work occupies an autonomous domain of form governed by the theory – even the two pages of construction photographs pass without comment, as if the equivalent of a digital printer. The ambivalent beauty of the resulting work is remarkable, especially from the

inside, where it appears to be at once invisible, a pure form, and urgently referential, perhaps combining a grove with the festival tent of a Shah or Maharajah.

The factory conversion Xintiandi Factory H in Hangzhou, China, 2010, is more evidently an essay in typological composition. A disused factory building is to be transformed into offices, restaurants and bars for creative industries, to become the heart of a new settlement. Instead of erasing the traditional masonry factory by packing it with a programme, Serie made it into



the celebratory centre of a new plinth of offices profiled to appear as a two-storey landscape wrapping around the base of the original building. The dialogue between the old and new orders is negotiated by means of cylindrical forms which are either bamboo 'courtyards' (voids) or offices that project into the factory-hall (solids).

These cylindrical interventions into a landscape surface made an appearance in the seating for the Blue Frog Acoustic Lounge in Mumbai, (2007), as well as in Parcel 9, HX Urban Centre Housing in Guizhou, China, the next year.

All three projects are classified typologically as 'plan, circles'. The three examples of landscape surface perforated with circular voids differ in scale and character, but the voids appear to consistently attract 'intimacy' in Serie's thinking, whether for dining/drinking (Blue Frog), a relief from deep-plan offices (Xintiandi Factory), or a memory of the circular courtyards of Hakka houses (Parcel 9). The communal character of the traditional example – a house implying a city – will necessarily be an aspiration for the inhabitants purchasing or renting units in



# Essays seek to understand Serie's use of typology as a species of method for design

Below left\_ The Tote, Mumbai Below right and far right\_ Aerial views of entry for Xi'an 2011 International Horticultural Expo Masterplan Competition



the configuration; but even this aspiration is an improvement upon the industrial distribution of housing so familiar in recent Chinese urban development.

The hilly profile of Parcel 9's surface also invites comparison with the surrounding hills as they appear in Song Dynasty landscape painting. Despite the formal similarity, it is unlikely that Song Dynasty landscape painting or Hakka were intended at the Blue Frog, but it is possible to see a generic 'Chinese landscape' reference at the factory. That is, the type 'plan, circles' exhibits three levels of similarity or 'typical' behaviour: a) a formal similarity and scope for variation, to which b) iconographic references can be attached or not, and whose

circles carry c) a generic reading of 'intimacy'. If this seems to exhibit opportunism in the typological rigour, it is possible to compare these circular voids to the windows of a facade.

Reading this perforated surface as a facade to the ground is encouraged by the vertical development of these circular interventions, whose mullions follow the lines of extrusion. From the exterior, the windows of a facade too exhibit a reference to 'intimacy' by suggesting the inhabitants within. Moreover, the three-dimensional character of these intersections in the profiled surface develops opportunities for reference to the primary ground by doubling as 'courtyards' and 'apses' for

entry (even if these appear to be purchased at some cost to convenience in the planning of the live-work units). It is the manner in which the circular openings are repeated and operate within the surface that suggests such a reading. Indeed, on reflection, it is not obvious that the circles are necessary to what is evidently a new type; and although Serie may balk at 'ground facade', it is a terminology which, to me at least, suggests the scope of its content more than does 'plan, circles'.

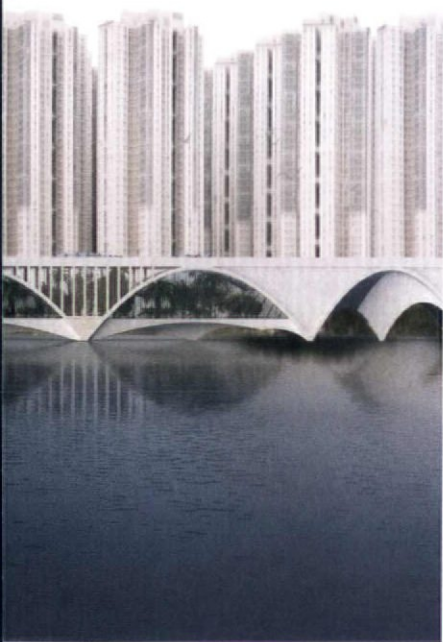
Serie approached the Xi'an 2011 International Horticultural Expo Masterplan Competition, for which it won second prize, by declaring its intention to overcome the cliché of a



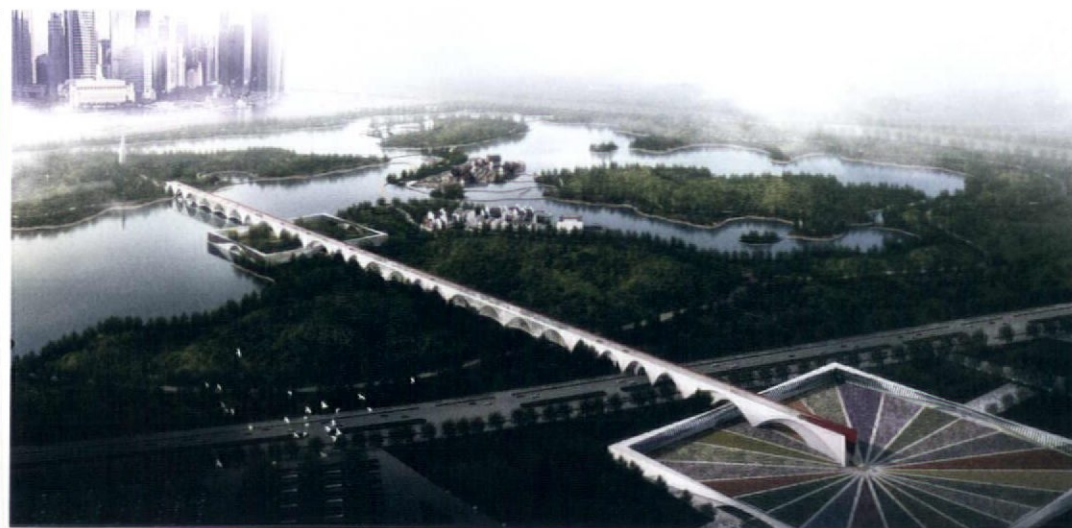
supposed conflict between city and nature by adducing the urban history of Xi'an, as well as its most prominent urban figure – its city wall, once the boundary between civic and natural orders. Like so many Chinese cities, Xi'an is in the process of high-speed mass expansion, and the creation of a horticultural park is never going to make up for previous ills, which are as much an offence to civic as to natural ideals.

In this context, Serie's kilometre-long bridge-wall providing continuity to five climate zones exceeds the





didactic intent to 're-validate' the role of architecture in city-making, and attains to a radical manifestation of the reciprocity of architecture and nature. The irregular rhythms of parabolic vaults host greenhouses when necessary and traverse a highway, a river and two immense walled squares (for flowers: one with hills, one flat) to arrive at a tall pagoda on an island. It is possible to see this as a Chinese garden turned inside out, where the wall does not enclose but provides a measure for living urban and natural incident.



Accordingly, when the text for the project speaks of 'idea' (city wall) and 'model' (a set of structural and formal principles) – a terminology adapted from Quatremère de Quincy – I again detect an ambivalence regarding the theory itself. For example, should not 'nature' (which is in some form more precise than its full scope between particle physics and body-culture) be part of the 'idea'?

The essays, of which that of Sam Jacoby is the most mature historically, seek to understand Serie's use of type and typology as a species of method for design whereby invention is constrained by rigour. This is largely the result of Lee's advocacy, not only of Quatremère de Quincy but also of JNL Durand's combinatorics (Durand's term). What preceded Quatremère de Quincy was the Mannerist and Baroque *concetto*, which sought to reconcile particular situations with their more universal

aspects (thus what was typical was universal). Therefore, one would expect to see depth in whatever passed for 'idea', after the fashion of the *concetto*, where profundity accrues to universality. But Lee finds depth in the model – nominally a particular interpretation of the more universal idea – in respect of the model's formal variation and material embodiment. Already in Mannerism one can see that the emphasis on concrete circumstances is also speculating about conceptual possibilities oriented about geometry and logic.

By the time we get to Durand, this latter possibility has taken over, and the results are only a few steps short of space-and-form, the concept that governed 20th-century architectural production. Laurence Liauw is right to observe Serie's procedures in the light of the revival of the diagram, and of its chief limitation – which, like all

theories that depend upon form/content, is the defect of silencing the creativity of particular situations of design for the sake of a re-assuring set of rules that can never be sufficiently rich or exhaustive.

Extreme (or relentless) typological redundancy is the hallmark of urban design according to space-and-form, whereas information – and, it might be assumed, urban quality – increases with randomness and complexity. We may be discussing the difference between invention and creation here, but I can't help but feel the affection for a theory governed by formal consistency places an unnecessary constraint upon Serie's genuine concerns about the relation of architecture to the city and upon its evident imagination and talent.

**PETER CARL**



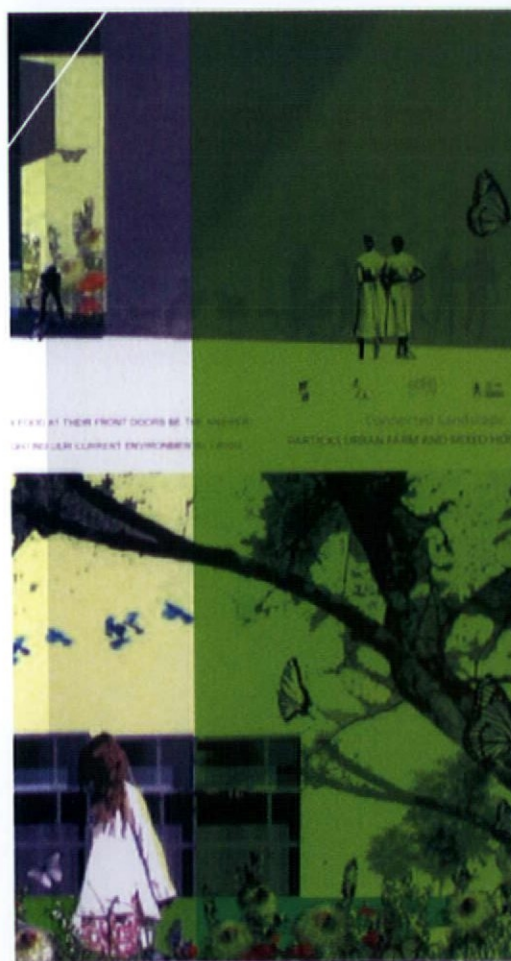
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# DELIGHT

In 1994, the renowned Chinese artist Ai Weiwei decorated a Han Dynasty urn with the red Coca-Cola logo; the following year he had himself photographed dropping and smashing another. *Colored Vases* (2009–10), which feature in the show on the artist at the Lisson Gallery in London (until 16 July), continue in the same spirit of protestation. Despite their seemingly innocent

pigmentation, the rainbow defacement with industrial paint of these precious Han Dynasty pots form part of the artist's larger critique of the Chinese state's cultural and historical vandalism.

On 2 April, the State Councillor of Culture of the People's Republic of China opened the first international exhibition at the newly refurbished National Museum of China called

The Art of Enlightenment. The very next day, in a jarring synchronicity, Ai was arrested by Chinese police in Beijing as he was about to board a flight to Hong Kong.

No official notifications have been given about his whereabouts or the reason for his detainment, and at the time of going to press he has been imprisoned for 47 days without charge. **WILL HUNTER**



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