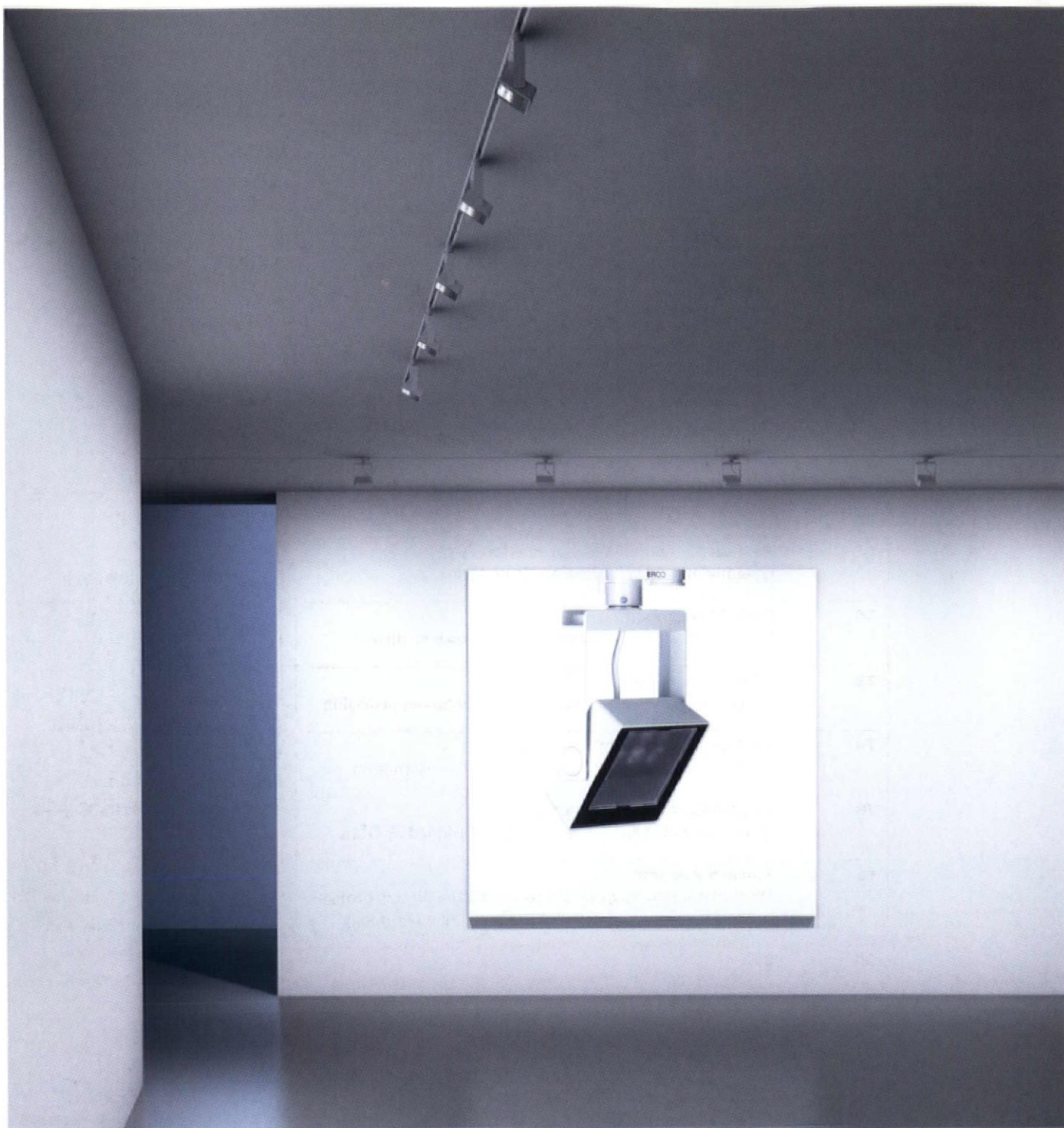


PPA - CURRENT ISSUE  
PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE



# tune the light



## Wallwashing with Logotec LED

Efficient light is light that is orientated around human perception and is produced with as little energy as possible. We perceive architectural spaces primarily by their vertical surfaces, which is why wallwashing – as uniform vertical illuminance – is a central factor for efficient visual comfort. The

ability to build wallwashers, which use an asymmetric light distribution to illuminate walls uniformly from the ceiling to the floor, requires considerable experience and expertise. In the ERCO Program, lighting designers will find what is probably the widest selection of wallwashers available, incorporating models

for indoor and outdoor areas, for recessed installation in floors or ceilings or for track-mounting, and is compatible with light sources ranging from fluorescent lamps to LEDs – everything for creative and efficient lighting concepts.

[www.erco.com](http://www.erco.com)

# ERCO





**The Architectural Review**  
**Issue number 1377**  
**November 2011**  
**Volume CCXXX**  
**Founded 1896**  
**Sero sed serio**

Cover: Madelon  
Vriesendorp's *The Birthday  
Party AKA 10 Ans Apres  
l'Amour* (1984). The  
watercolour was originally  
made for the cover of  
now defunct US journal  
*Design Quarterly*, and  
graces the AR's as we  
reconsider Postmodernism

29	<b>Editorial view</b> Not dead yet – Postmodernism's surprising urban potential
30	<b>Overview</b> The Bilbao effect has its day; Audi and how the city will drive car design; Charles Jencks and radical PoMo
34	<b>Broader view</b> Stephen Fuller on the next phase for the human race
37	<b>View from</b> Tbilisi: construction threatens its heritage and economy
39	<b>Viewpoints</b> Peter Cook on the benefits of living in 'interesting times'
41	<b>Your views</b> Letters from Ivor Smith; Patrik Schumacher; Bill Caplan
44	<b>Red Location Cultural Precinct, Port Elizabeth</b> Opening up minds in the Detroit of Africa
54	<b>Social housing, Paris</b> French public-sector housing takes a verdant turn
62	<b>Kindergartens, Medellín</b> An inventive modular system for kindergarten provision
70	<b>Builders' training workshop, Gordola</b> A simple, sober building for students of construction
76	<b>Maggie's Centre Glasgow Gartnavel</b> A new sanctuary for cancer sufferers designed by OMA
83	<b>Typology Quarterly</b> Oriel Prizeman examines six recent public library projects in the first of a major new quarterly series on typology
96	<b>Skill</b> An overarching challenge: reciprocal-framed structures
102	<b>Copper in Architecture Awards</b> Results of the 15th European Copper in Design Awards
112	<b>Theory</b> Is Postmodernism's revival just Modernism mutating?
118	<b>Reviews</b> Postmodernism at the V&A; Venturi/Friedberg overlap in Washington; OMA at the Barbican; Rem Koolhaas on <i>Project Japan</i> ; Elegy for Metabolism; California dreaming
126	<b>Pedagogy</b> ETH Zurich rejoices in creative Swiss rigour
128	<b>Reputations</b> Why Neo-Cons loved communitarian urbanist Jane Jacobs
130	<b>Folio</b> Postmodernism lives on in Stuart Franks's drawing

'A good client makes for good architecture and Spain's public authorities were, and largely remain, woefully inadequate'  
**David Cohn, p30**

'A kick up the bum could really be equal to the software revolution or the invention of plate-glass'  
**Peter Cook, p39**

'What matters more than individual lapses and failures is the general innovative thrust and historical pertinence of a global movement and style like Parametricism'  
**Patrik Schumacher, p42**

'Paradoxically, from the architect who brought us *S,M,L,XL*, there appears to be a scale problem'  
**Richard Murphy, p76**

'Shooting Post-modernism, as Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley explicitly set out to do, was a tragic and premature end'  
**Sam Jacob, p118**

'Jane Jacobs attacked planners, a powerless group compared to developers who build'  
**Sharon Zukin, p128**



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Andrew Ayers** is the author of *The Architecture of Paris* (Axel Menges) and in this issue he critiques new housing in the city by Hamonic + Masson

**Roberto Bottazzi**, who reviews the OMA show at the Barbican Art Gallery, runs the postgraduate research programme and teaches an MA unit in the school of architecture at the Royal College of Art

**Peter Buchanan**, who writes this month on Audi's plans for the future of the city, has worked as an architect and urban designer in various parts of Africa, Europe and the Middle East

**David Cohn** despatches a report from his adopted homeland of Spain on the death of the 'Bilbao effect'. His blog is at [viewfrommadrid.blogspot.com](http://viewfrommadrid.blogspot.com)

**Peter Cook** devotes his column to a formative experience when Archigram's client sacked the group and his later progress through academe

**Colin Fournier**, who writes the *Theory* piece on Postmodernism, is MARCH urban design course director and professor of architecture and urbanism at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London

**Steve Fuller**, our *Broader view* essayist, is professor of sociology at University of Warwick and author of *Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human, Past, Present and Future* (Palgrave Macmillan)

**Sam Jacob** is a founding director of FAT, which recently guest-edited the *Architectural Design* special issue on 'Radical Post-Modernism'. Here he reviews the V&A's Postmodernism exhibition

**Will McLean** co-ordinates technical studies for the architecture school at the University of Westminster with Pete Silver, with whom he has written two books, *Introduction to Architectural Technology* and the forthcoming *Structures in Action* (both Laurence King). He writes this month on reciprocal structures

**Miguel Mesa** is a teacher and architecture critic who directs a small publishing company, Mesa Editores. His twin Felipe Mesa runs architectural practice Plan B with their other brother Federico; all three share an office in Medellín, Colombia. Plan B jointly designed the kindergartens that Miguel writes about with Ctrl G, another local practice

**Richard Murphy** is the ideal reviewer for OMA's recently opened Maggie's Centre in Glasgow as his Edinburgh-based practice completed the first Maggie's Centre in 1996

**Peter Nasmyth**, who contributes this month's *View from Tbilisi*, is a founding member of the new London-based Tbilisi Heritage Group, an independent interface between the interests of conservation and development, which is contactable at [tbilisiheritagegroup@hotmail.com](mailto:tbilisiheritagegroup@hotmail.com)

**Nicholas Olsberg** is the former director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. He reveals the hidden meaning in a Robert Venturi drawing in the *Reviews* section

**Steve Parnell** has recently completed his PhD at the University of Sheffield on the magazine *Architectural Design* (looking at the years 1954-72). He grapples this issue with AD's special edition on 'Radical Post-Modernism'

**Oriel Prizeman**, who writes our first *Typology Quarterly* on libraries, has a PhD on library design. Her forthcoming book *Philanthropy and Light: Carnegie Libraries and the Advent of Transatlantic Standards for Public Space* will be published next April

**Jack Self** is the editor/founder of *Fulcrum*, the Architectural Association's weekly magazine, which manages – in the long history of AA student publications – to be both pro-establishment and seditious at the same time. Here he reviews *Project Japan* (Taschen), Rem Koolhaas's and Hans Ulrich Obrist's oral history of Metabolism

**Steven Spier** is professor and head of the school of architecture and design at the University of Belfast. The author of *Swiss Made: New Architecture from Switzerland* (Thames & Hudson), he writes in this issue on a new technical college in the Swiss Alps

**Madelon Vriesendorp** is an artist who is most famous in architectural circles for the extremely evocative images that she produced for *Delirious New York*, published by Rem Koolhaas (her husband) in 1978. The book's cover showed two NYC towers in bed together; on the AR's cover this month we see that they have continued their love affair, framing the tableau of a birthday party for Postmodernism

**Evelyn Waugh** is the author of several of the most significant British novels of the last century, including *Brideshead Revisited*, *Vile Bodies* and *A Handful of Dust* (all of three of which have been adapted for the screen). The noted American commentator William F Buckley Jr thought him 'the greatest English novelist of the century', while George Bernard Shaw's double-edged verdict was that he was 'about as good a novelist as one can be while holding untenable opinions'. Waugh was also a noted travel writer, and four years after Gaudí's death he visited Barcelona for the AR. Published in June 1930, his travelogue is reprinted in the supplementary guide to the city (produced in association with Roca) that accompanies this issue

**Michael Webb** is the AR's US Contributing Editor (West Coast); he writes in the *Reviews* section on the golden period of Modernism in Los Angeles

**Joe Wilson** is a UK-based illustrator who made the drawing for this issue's *Broader view*. More of his delightful work can be found at [joe-wilson.com](http://joe-wilson.com)

**Sharon Zukin** is professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and Graduate Center, City University of New York, and author of *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford University Press). Here she assesses Jane Jacobs's legacy

## THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

### EDITORIAL

**Editor**  
Catherine Slessor  
+44 (0)20 7728 4592  
[catherine.slessor@emap.com](mailto:catherine.slessor@emap.com)  
**Deputy Editor**  
Will Hunter  
+44 (0)20 7728 4587  
[will.hunter@emap.com](mailto:will.hunter@emap.com)  
**Art Editor**  
Jon Morgan  
**Designer**  
Tom Carpenter  
**Design Consultant**  
Simon Esterson  
**Production Editor**  
Nicola Homer  
**Sub Editor**  
Francis Pearce  
**Associate Editor**  
Rob Gregory  
**Digital Editor**  
Simon Hogg  
**US Contributing Editors**  
Michael Webb  
Mark Lamster  
**Editorial Administrator**  
Rakesh Ramchurn  
+44 (0)20 7728 4574  
**Editorial Assistants**  
Silvana Taher  
Georgina Ward  
Jack Wates  
**Editorial Director**  
Paul Finch

### ADVERTISING

**International Account Manager**  
Bharat Joshi  
+44 (0)20 7728 5261  
[bharat.joshi@emap.com](mailto:bharat.joshi@emap.com)  
**UK Account Manager**  
Alan Carter  
+44 (0)20 7728 4560  
[alan.carter@emap.com](mailto:alan.carter@emap.com)  
**Business Development Manager**  
Nick Roberts  
+44 (0)20 7728 4608  
[nick.roberts@emap.com](mailto:nick.roberts@emap.com)  
**Business Development Manager**  
Ceri Evans  
+44 (0)20 7728 3595  
[ceri.evans@emap.com](mailto:ceri.evans@emap.com)  
**Commercial Manager**  
James MacLeod  
+44 (0)20 7728 4582  
[james.macleod@emap.com](mailto:james.macleod@emap.com)  
**Italian Advertising Sales Milan**  
Carlo Fiorucci  
+39 0362 23 22 10  
[carlo@fiorucci-international.com](mailto:carlo@fiorucci-international.com)  
**US Advertising Sales New York**  
Kate Buckley  
+1 845 266 4980  
[buckley@buckleypell.com](mailto:buckley@buckleypell.com)  
**List Rental**  
Jonathan Burston  
+44 (0)20 8995 1919  
[jburston@uni-marketing.com](mailto:jburston@uni-marketing.com)  
**Director of Architecture and Media**  
Conor Dignam  
+44 (0)20 7728 5545  
**Group Managing Director**  
Natasha Christie-Miller

### SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

Please visit [subscription.co.uk/ar/](http://subscription.co.uk/ar/) or call 0844 848 8858 (overseas +44(0)1858 438 847) and quote priority code asem  
UK direct debit £99  
UK credit card £110  
UK student £76  
Europe €169  
Americas \$160  
Japan £136  
Rest of world £136  
American copies are air speeded to New York

Back issues  
£10 in UK  
0844 848 8858  
£16 overseas  
+44 (0)1858 438 847  
[are@subscription.co.uk](mailto:are@subscription.co.uk)

**Non-delivery of issues and changes of address**  
AR Subscriptions  
Tower Publishing  
Tower House  
Sovereign Park  
Market Harborough  
LE16 9EP, UK  
+44 (0)1858 438 847  
[are@subscription.co.uk](mailto:are@subscription.co.uk)

US subscribers contact:  
The Architectural Review  
c/o PSMJ Resources  
PO Box 95120, Newton  
MA 02495, USA  
+1 617 965 0055

The Architectural Review (ISSN 0003-861x) is published monthly for \$199 per year by Emap, Royal Mail International c/o Smartmail, 140 58th Street, Suite 2b, Brooklyn NY 11220-2521 USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn NY and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Architectural Review c/o PSMJ Resources PO Box 95120, Newton MA 02495 USA.

ABC average circulation for July 2010–June 2011 12,078  
© Emap Inform 2011

**The Architectural Review**  
Greater London House  
Hampstead Road  
London NW1 7EJ, UK  
[architectural-review.com](http://architectural-review.com)





THE **MARKET LEADER** IN **ARCHITECTURAL TERRACOTTA**

**NBK** | Ceramic  
ARCHITECTURAL TERRACOTTA

NBK Keramik GmbH  
Reeser Strasse 235  
D - 46446 Emmerich / Germany  
Tel: +49 (0) 28 22 / 81 11 - 0  
Fax: +49 (0) 28 22 / 81 11 - 20  
email: [info@nbk.de](mailto:info@nbk.de)

[www.nbk.de](http://www.nbk.de)

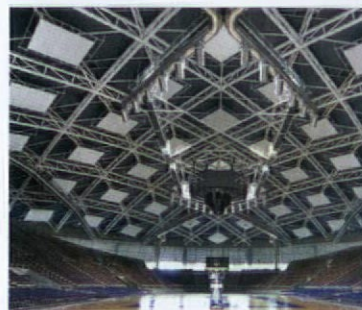
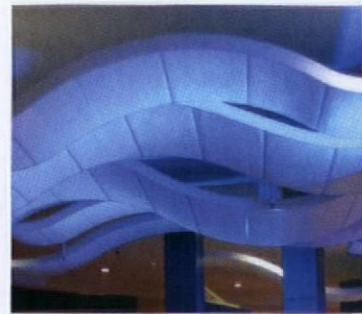
Member of  
**HunterDouglas** Group



del Business Centre, Luxembourg  
hitect: Tetra Architecture, Luxembourg



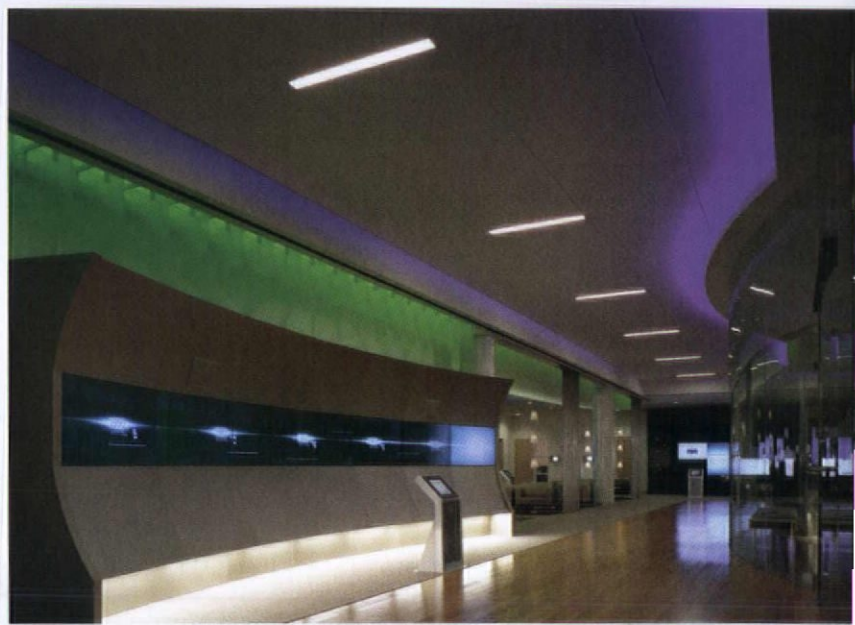
**Techstyle®**  
ACOUSTICAL CEILINGS



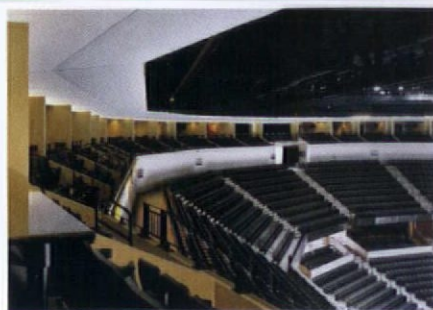
**Let performance do the talking.**

The large format of Hunter Douglas Techstyle ceiling panels bring together unprecedented acoustic performance and attractive looks, creating one perfect ceiling. Together we innovate for the future.





INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS MAKE INNOVATIVE PROJECTS



Request a sample of quiet beauty at  
[HunterDouglasContract.com/future](http://HunterDouglasContract.com/future)

# HunterDouglas

CEILING

© are trade marks of Hunter Douglas Europe B.V.





Premium new range of innovative and inspiring products.

Exceptional materials and finishes.

Bespoke washroom solutions to fit your environment.

Contact us to order our new brochure. Call 01474 353333. [www.venesta.co.uk](http://www.venesta.co.uk)





We know washrooms.

**Venesta**



d line is in the detail...

**d line**  
KNUD HOLSØER DESIGN

A19

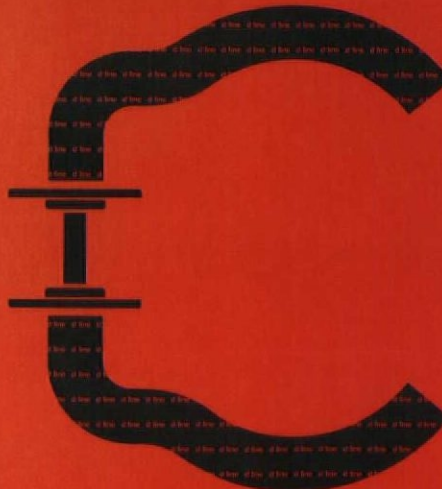


A20



PROUD SPONSOR OF

**ar+d**  
Emerging Architecture



Architect  
Richard Rogers

Project  
London Heathrow Terminal 5

d line – main sponsor for ar+d Emerging Architecture

[www.dline.com](http://www.dline.com)



**SUBSCRIBE  
TO THE AR  
BY 15TH  
NOVEMBER  
AND SAVE  
25%**

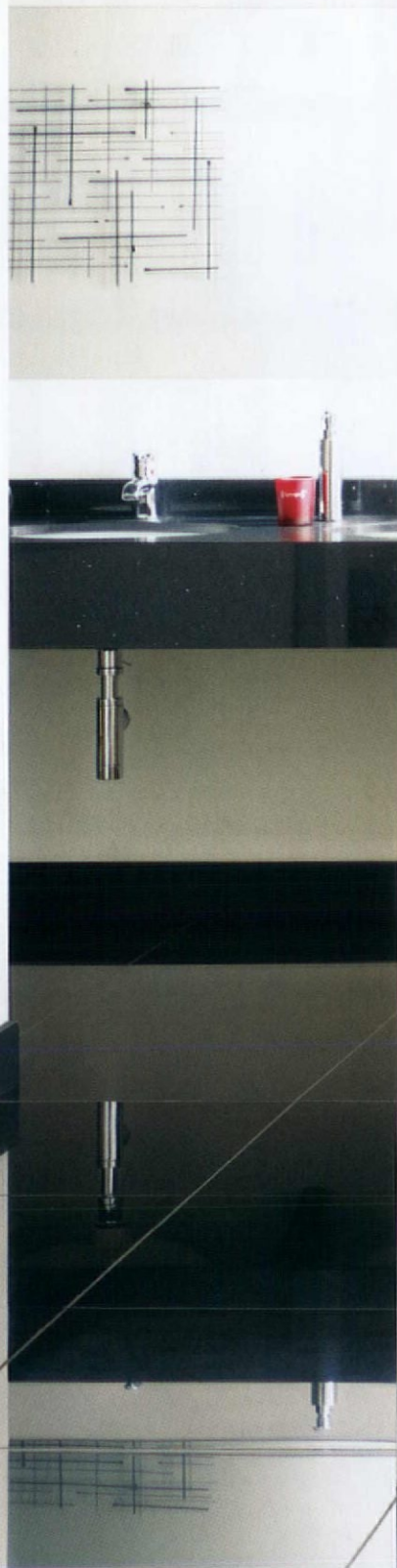
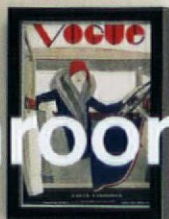
£75 UK £75 USA £102 ROW



**CRITICAL THINKING  
FOR CRITICAL TIMES**  
[subscription.co.uk/ar/rel2](http://subscription.co.uk/ar/rel2)



We know washrooms.



Available in 4 material options, Oxygen is suitable for even the most prestigious environments allowing you to specify with confidence. Contact us to order our new brochure. Call 01474 353333. [www.venesta.co.uk](http://www.venesta.co.uk)  
**10-year** guarantee.





## Oxygen

Effortlessly stylish, Oxygen breathes life into contemporary washrooms. This innovative cubicle offers maximum privacy. Its features include a clever pivoting hinge system, seamless pilasters and a choice of real wood veneer, glass, HPL or MFC finish.

We know washrooms.

# Venesta





À la Mode  
by Maxwood

# Infuse with inspired design touches.

Walk through self-supporting changing cubicles to accommodate wet and dry aisles for users; ingenious locking mechanism, with simple fold down bench inside the cubicle holds the door shut whilst in use but prevents doors being left locked. **Another unique À la Mode washroom.**

Throw a new idea at us and we'll try it; ask for something specific and we'll do it. Our collection of washroom systems is a base point – a slab on which you can build. Explore beyond with Maxwood.

perfecting the washroom environment  
call 024 7662 1122 [www.maxwoodwashrooms.com](http://www.maxwoodwashrooms.com)

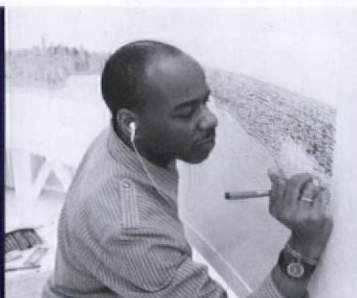






Limited Edition

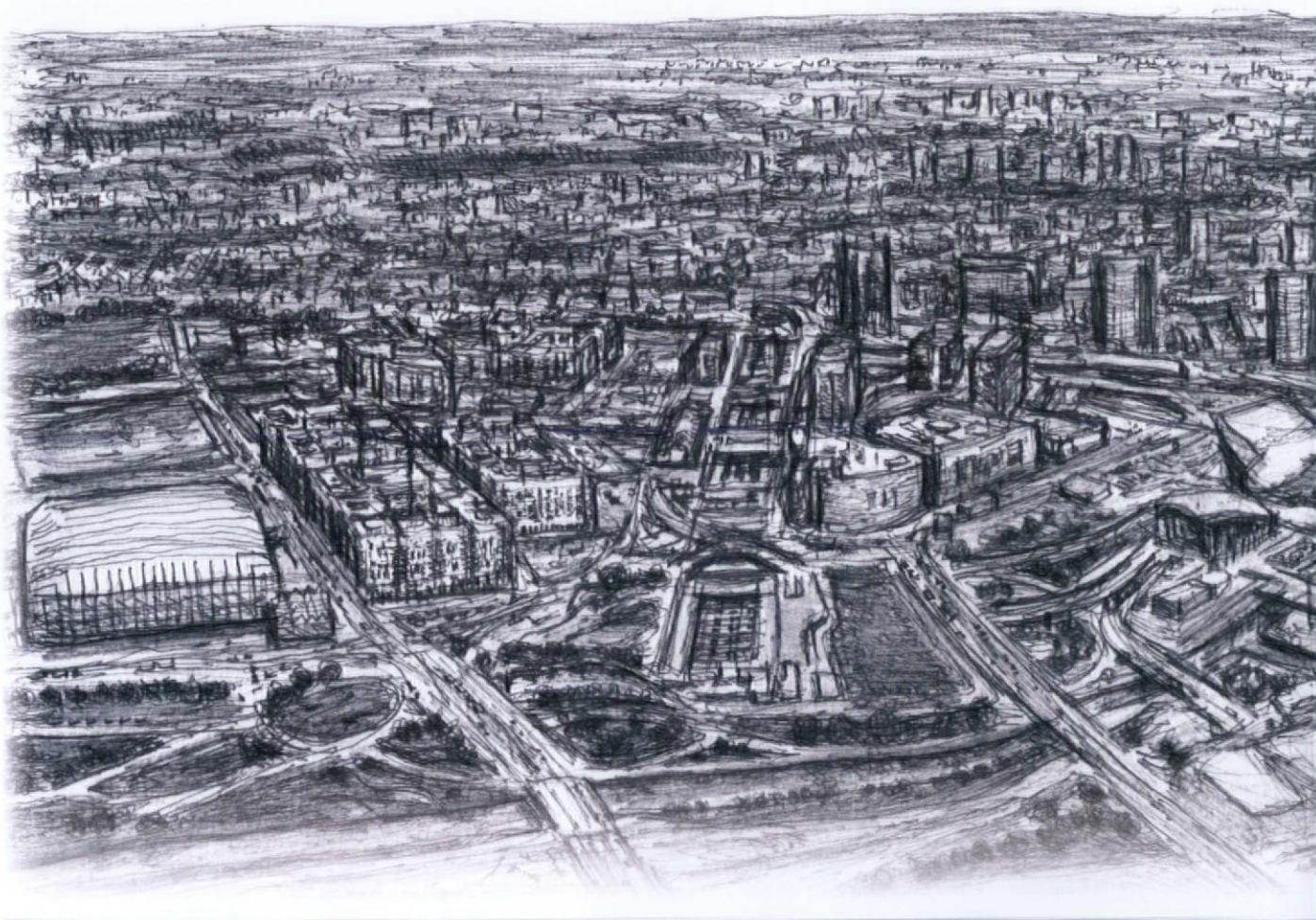
*Stephen  
Willshire*



Email now: **[contractuk@gerflor.com](mailto:contractuk@gerflor.com)**

Register on-line at: **[www.gerflorrewards.co.uk](http://www.gerflorrewards.co.uk)**

or **[www.architectural-review.com/calendar](http://www.architectural-review.com/calendar)**



The Architects' Journal  
the home of British architecture





# REGISTER NOW FOR A FREE STEPHEN WILTSHIRE 2012 CALENDAR!

EMAP in partnership with Gerflor are offering readers a chance to register for a dramatic limited edition calendar depicting Stephen Wiltshire's New London - A view of the Capital in 2012. To receive your free calendar simply contact us by email or register online and provide us with your name and address details.



Gerflor, through IHF and FIVB agreements, will supply courts for Handball and Volleyball tournaments in London in 2012. Gerflor is a world leader in the manufacture of innovative design-led eco-friendly flooring and interior finishing solutions.

**Gerflor**  
theflooringgroup



MIPIM ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

# FUTURE PROJECT AWARDS 2012



## IT'S BACK: THE AWARDS FOR YOUR FUTURE PROJECTS

REALISE YOUR VISION FOR THE ARCHITECTURE OF TOMORROW



ENTRY DEADLINE 23 NOVEMBER 2011



# GAIN INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION & REALISE YOUR UNBUILT PROJECTS

[www.mipimarfutureprojects.com](http://www.mipimarfutureprojects.com)

**'THE AR FUTURE PROJECT AWARD FOR THE PROJECT 'TOWN OFFICE TOWER' HELPED US A LOT TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP TOWARDS REALISING THIS PROJECT. WITHOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION WHICH THE AWARD GENERATED, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO CONVINCE THE CLIENT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ENERGY PRODUCING FACADE.'**

WOLF D. PRIX  
DESIGN PRINCIPAL AND CEO OF COOP HIMMELB(L)AU

## ENTER ONLINE NOW

- See your work exhibited at MIPIM 2012
- All projects are featured in the Awards catalogue made available to all MIPIM delegates & published online for our international subscriptions network
- Gain international recognition
- Increase the viability of your concept

Unbuilt projects and concepts still on the drawing board are eligible.

**Entry deadline 23 November 2011**  
[www.mipimarfutureprojects.com](http://www.mipimarfutureprojects.com)

For entry enquiries contact  
[Melissa.mcchesney@emap.com](mailto:Melissa.mcchesney@emap.com)  
or 020 7728 5511

For sponsorship opportunities contact  
[James.macleod@emap.com](mailto:James.macleod@emap.com) or 020 7728 4582





**CreativeWEAVE**  
form function solution



Mesh: **Mediamesh**® Photography: © David Joseph Photography

PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL, NEW YORK / USA

## *Media façade of tomorrow*

552 m<sup>2</sup> of **Mediamesh**® give the most famous and most frequented bus terminal in the world an unmistakable profile: on the inside an unobstructed view and naturally vented, on the outside attractive and attention-receiving. More than 1.3 million LEDs display ads and videos around the clock. The transparent media façade made of stainless steel mesh opens up new perspectives for investors, commuters and passers-by.

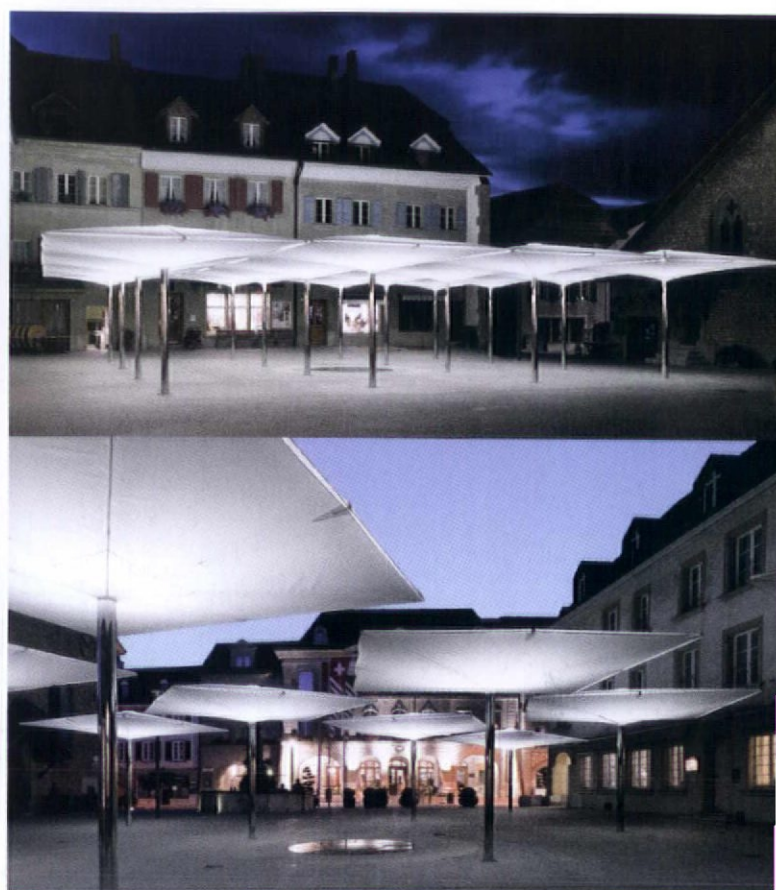
GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG  
Metallweberstraße 46  
52353 Düren Germany  
fon: +49 (0) 2421-803-0  
fax: +49 (0) 2421-803-227  
e-mail: [creativeweave@gkd.de](mailto:creativeweave@gkd.de)  
[www.creativeweave.com](http://www.creativeweave.com)



WORLD WIDE WEAVE



# WE ADD PERSPECTIVES TO PRIME LOCATIONS.



## EMBRACE THE OUTDOORS THE ARCHITECTURE OF SUN PROTECTION SYSTEMS

MDT develops, designs, manufactures and supplies innovative, highquality sun protection systems, membrane constructions and custommade products for textile outdoor architecture to customers all over the world.

**MDT-tex<sup>®</sup>**  
Membranes & Structures

MDT Sonnenschutzsysteme GmbH | Industriestraße 4 | D - 74736 Hardheim | +49 - 6283 - 22170 | [info.de@mdt-tex.com](mailto:info.de@mdt-tex.com)  
MDT Sonnenschutzsysteme AG | Rheinblickstrasse 6 | CH - 8274 Tägerwilten | +41-71 - 666 82 82 | [info.ch@mdt-tex.com](mailto:info.ch@mdt-tex.com)  
[www.mdt-tex.com](http://www.mdt-tex.com)




$$E = mc^2$$



## Boost your international scientific career in Delft.

### Unique fellowship for top female scientists

The Delft Technology Fellowship offers high-profile, tenure-track positions to top female scientists in research fields in which Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) is active. As a fellow you will be offered the unique chance to establish your own research programme of international repute, including generous start-up funding. The five-year fellowships are awarded at the assistant, associate and full professor level.

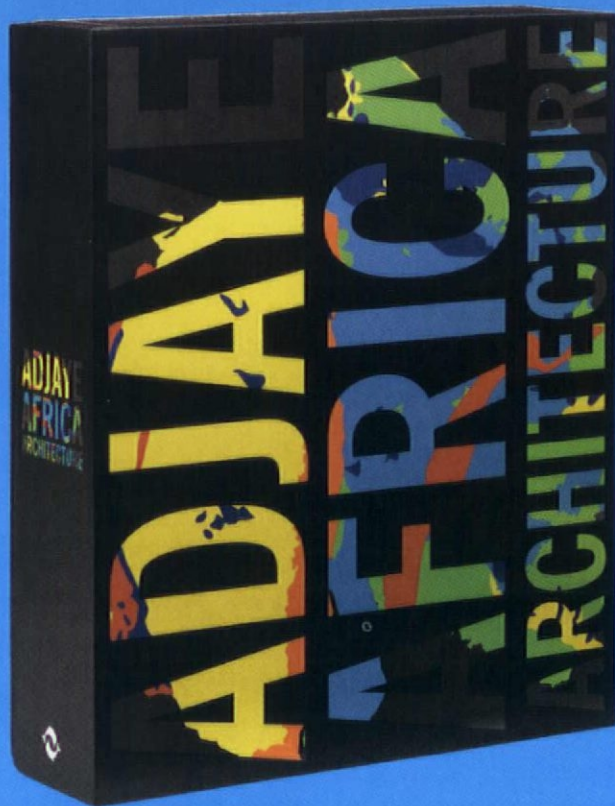
You are a highly talented and motivated pioneer with a proven drive for scientific excellence and a few years of post-doctoral working experience in various research groups in industry or academia.

For further information on this fellowship opportunity, please refer to [www.jobsindelft.com/fellowship](http://www.jobsindelft.com/fellowship)

The deadline for applications is the 15th of January 2012.

**Fellowship**





## Adjaye • Africa • Architecture

David Adjaye Edited by Peter Allison

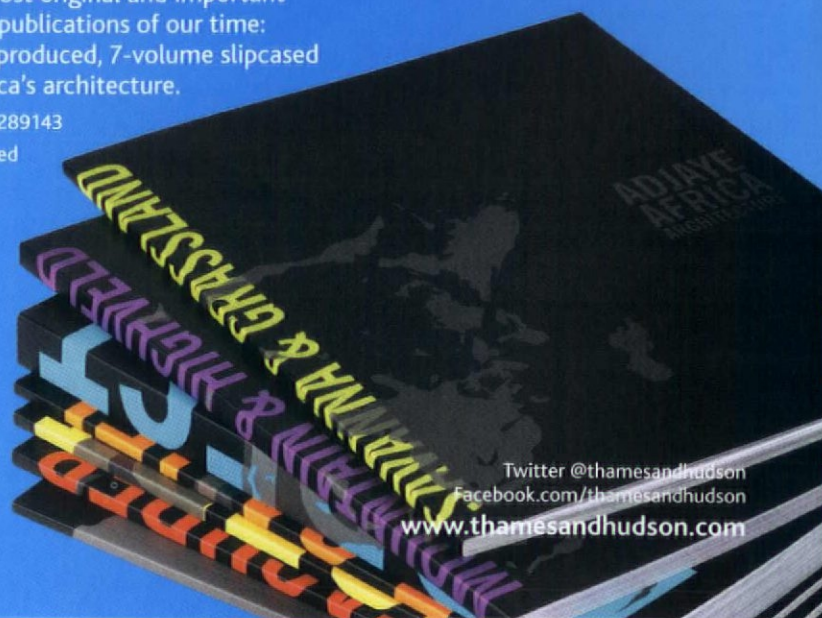
*'David Adjaye is committed to showing the world the contribution, historical importance, and influence of architecture from the African continent to contemporary discourse. This book captures the magic, relevance and significance of that contribution'*

Baroness Amos, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

One of the most original and important architectural publications of our time: a beautifully produced, 7-volume slipcased survey of Africa's architecture.

ISBN 978 0 500 289143

£65.00 slipcased



Twitter @thamesandhudson  
Facebook.com/thamesandhudson  
www.thamesandhudson.com



Thames & Hudson

**bullhorn**  
CEMBRIT DESIGN COMPETITION  
HELSINKI 2012



## Call for entries

### Urban Transit

The trend: People in cities spend more and more time in transit areas, which are becoming important identity building elements in urban environments. Often, however, these nondescript and standardised areas are inhospitable and suffer from a lack of vitality.

The objective: Develop concept designs with innovative use of fibre-cement and use them to transform one of Helsinki's biggest suburban transit areas, Malmi Station, into an outstanding and vibrant landmark that will increase the quality of life for its many daily users.

### Deadlines

Questions: November 1, 2011  
Entries: January 15, 2012

### Prizes and publicity

> 1<sup>st</sup> 10,000€  
> 2<sup>nd</sup> 7,500€  
> 3<sup>rd</sup> 5,000€

The awarded entries will be exhibited during World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 and subsequently as part of a European traveling exhibition. Awardees will also receive international recognition through Cembrit and partner networks.

### The Bullhorn

"The Bullhorn – Cembrit Design Competition" is an international competition for architects and designers. Concept designs that reinvent the use of fibre cement to create outstanding life settings and enable creative architecture are rewarded. The awarded entries will be developed into prototypes in close co-operation with Cembrit.

> For competition details visit  
[cembrit.com/bullhorn](http://cembrit.com/bullhorn)

WORLD DESIGN  
CAPITAL  
HELSINKI 2012

SAFA pentagon design\*  
ornamo100 City Planning Department

Cembrit

barbican

Every architect carries  
the utopian gene  
– Rem Koolhaas

6 Oct/11–  
19 Feb/12

OMA/  
progress  
curated by  
Rotor

barbican  
artgallery

The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre

Media partner  
ICON  
ICONEYE.COM

Sponsored by the European Council of the Netherlands, The Netherlands Architecture Fund and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Additional support provided by The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture. Photo: Philippe Fourni



1500+  
architects

700  
projects displayed  
in the festival  
gallery including  
projects from:

Foster + Partners  
Nikken Sekkei  
Woods Bagot  
EAA-Emre Arolat Architects  
Aedas  
Sanjay Puri Architects  
Zaha Hadid Architects  
Turenscape  
Perkins+Wil  
Populous  
Isay Weinfeld  
Miralles Tagliabue EMBT  
WOHA

250+  
live crit  
presentations

70  
countries

69  
international jurors  
including:

Sir Peter Cook  
Kim Herforth Nielsen  
James Grose  
Bjarne Hammer  
Akihiko Hamada  
Carne Pigem  
Sofia von Ellrichshausen

69  
media partners  
including:

The Architectural Review  
Architecture Australia  
World Architects  
The Architects Newspaper  
Arquine  
Nikken JP

35  
inspirational  
seminar speakers

30  
live awards  
presented

20+  
projects featured  
in the thematic  
exhibition

World  
Architecture  
Festival  
CCIB, Barcelona  
2-4 November  
2011

14  
hours of live  
seminar content

8  
different shortlist  
presentation crit  
rooms running live  
at any time

5  
super jury members:

Michael Sorkin  
Ben van Berkel  
Odile Decq  
Professor Kongjian Yu  
Jo Noero

4  
nights of fringe  
events and parties

3  
overall festival  
winners

2  
global keynotes  
from **David Mackay**  
of MBM Arquitectes  
and **David van der  
Leer** from the BMW  
Guggenheim Lab


1  
brand new sister  
festival Inside:  
World Festival  
of Interiors


BOOK YOUR PLACE TODAY

To register quote your VIP code ARUK

Call: +44 (0)20 7554 5800 / 0845 056 8339

E: [info@worldarchitecturefestival.com](mailto:info@worldarchitecturefestival.com)

 Follow us at @worldarchfest

 Like our Facebook group

World Architecture Festival

[www.worldarchitecturefestival.com](http://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com)

Sponsors:



SWISSPEARL

RLB Rider Levett Bucknall



OpenBuildings.com



PERKINS  
+ WILL

Exhibitors:



.hess

LAMBERTS

Mosa. Tiles.



LAUFEN



WORLD  
FESTIVAL  
OF INTERIORS

BARCELONA  
2-4 NOVEMBER 2011  
INSIDEFESTIVAL.COM

Visit Inside World Festival of Interiors  
in Barcelona to hear from some of the  
best names in design. Judges and  
speakers include:



**ANDRE FU,**  
**AFSO DESIGNS**



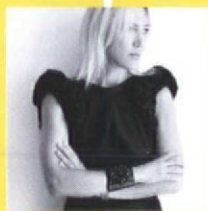
**ILSE CRAWFORD,**  
**STUDIOILSE**



**FRANK DUFFY,**  
**DEGW**



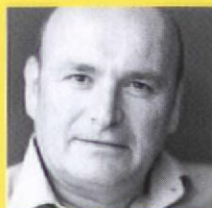
**LYNDON NERI,**  
**NERI&HU DESIGN**



**SEYHAN OZDEMIR,**  
**AUTOBAN**



**ROBERT BACKHOUSE,**  
**HASSELL**



**PAUL PRIESTMAN,**  
**PRIESTMANGOODE**



**JAIME HAYON,**  
**HAYON STUDIO**



**KIM HESFORTH**  
**NIELSEN, 3XN**

Receive 25% discount by  
quoting VIP code ARUK

For full details visit [insidefestival.com](http://insidefestival.com)  
call + 44 (0)20 7554 5800  
or email [info@insidefestival.com](mailto:info@insidefestival.com)

VitroA de zeen

[www.e-interiors.net](http://www.e-interiors.net)

on

CONCEPT

ARTICHOKE

ARCHI  
TONIC

AZURE

OpenBuildings.com  
Democratizing the Built Environment

THE  
ARCHITECTURAL  
REVIEW

AJ

SBID  
THE SOCIETY  
OF BUILDING  
INTERIOR DESIGNERS

IIDA  
INTERNATIONAL  
INTERIOR DESIGN ASSOCIATION

Design  
Institute of Australia

DECOR

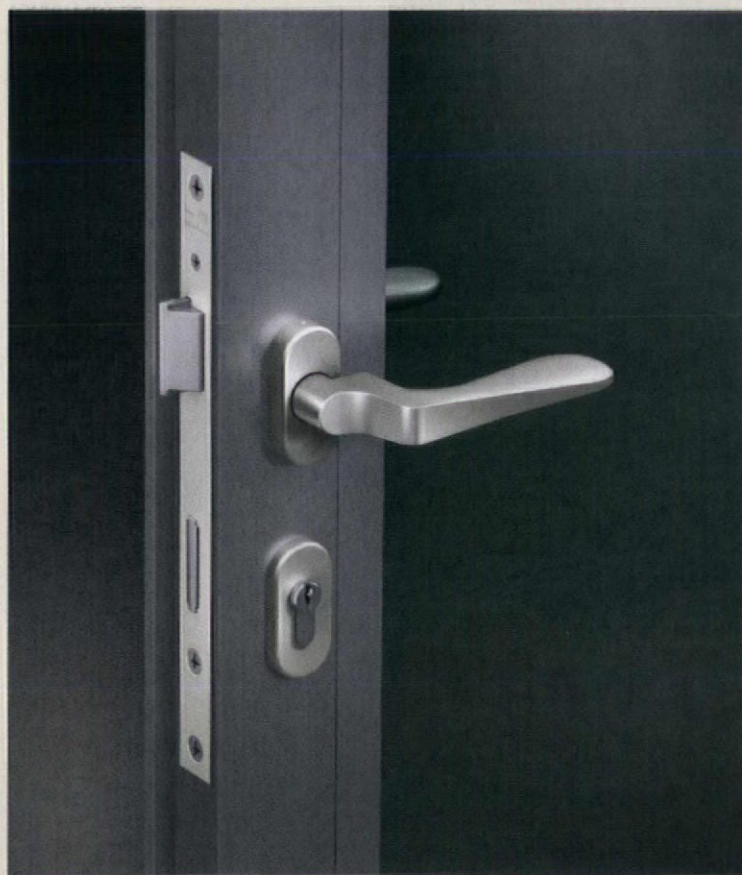
WORLD  
BUILDING  
EXHIBITION  
2011



# AR Products

Truly memorable architecture is informed by innovative thinking that permeates all aspects of design, from the initial concept down to the smallest detail. And details can be crucial. For instance, the shape, colour, proportions and material chosen for door and window hardware can impact profoundly on a building's overall appearance.

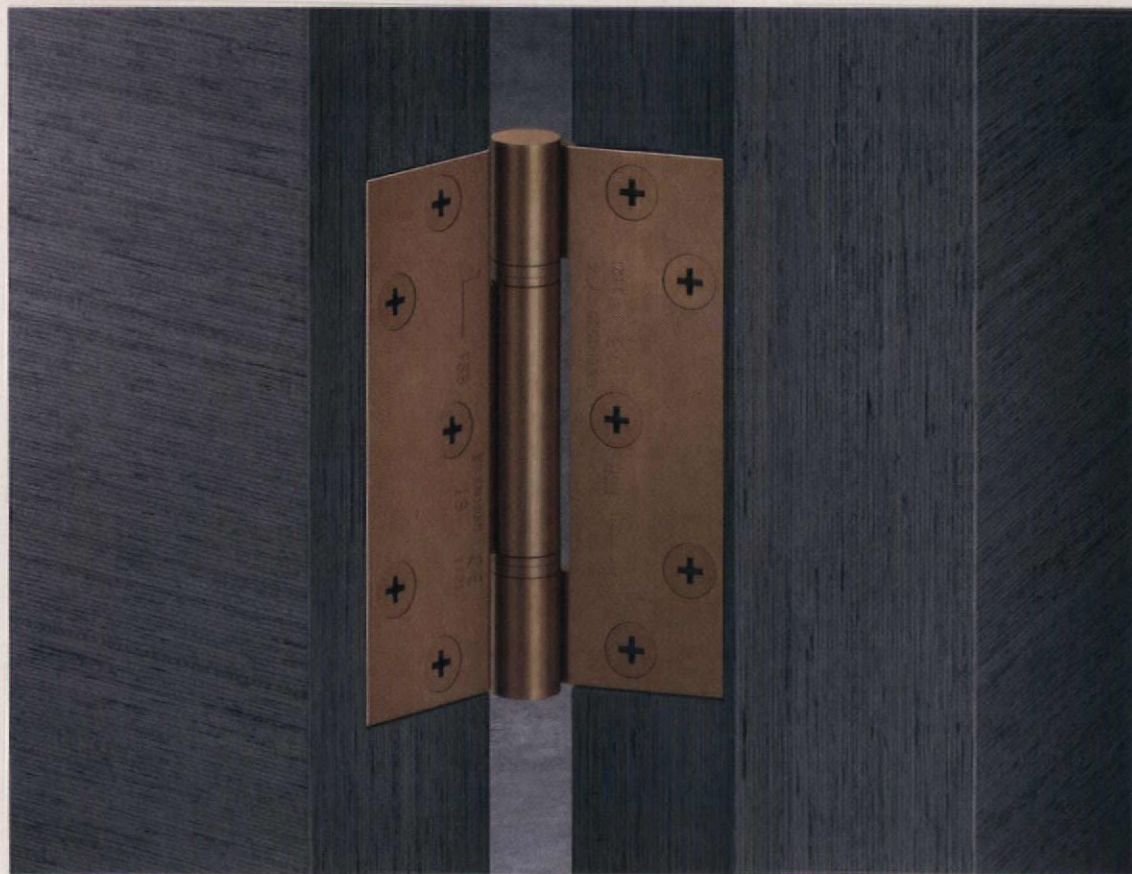
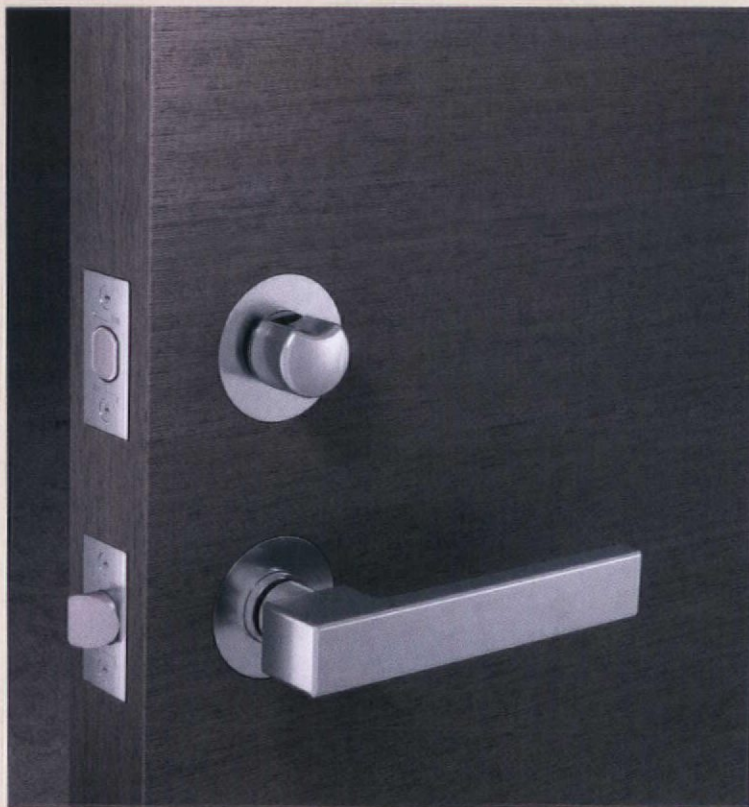
FSB are specialists in providing hardware for architectural projects at all scales and in all locales. They know exactly what is required: components that precisely reflect and embody a particular design ethos. A new FSB hardware range is based on this principle. It embraces all aspects of door and window design, and ensures that fittings are always in keeping with the overall architectural concept. FSB can supply a range of components – door lever handles, hinges, door closers, locks and cylinders, window handles – as well as accessories.



## Finishes to suit all requirements

Finishes include Aluminium Silver Anodised, Stainless Steel Satin Matt and Bronze Bright Patinated. A two-stage staining process provides a high degree of surface compaction on Aluminium Silver Anodised products, so this finish is resistant to effects of corrosion, light and the elements. Hardware with a Stainless Steel Satin Matt finish is ideal for heavily used door and window fittings. The proportions of chrome and nickel in the stainless steel make it easy to maintain and corrosion resistant. Made from a copper-tin alloy that is 92 per cent copper, bronze furniture by FSB boasts an unbeatable resistance to corrosion, a high degree of tensile strength and immense hardness. The high proportion of copper in the alloy also has antiseptic properties, so Bronze Bright Patinated finishes are ideal for use in hospitals and care units.





## A meticulous, holistic approach

Based in Eastern Westphalia, FSB has immense expertise on all hardware-related issues. This is demonstrated in its globally interactive ITT specification service, in which FSB specialists coordinate the proportions, finishes and functions of hardware ensembles with the utmost precision.

During the early stages of the design process, FSB's public project consultants can take account of bespoke fitment requirements, as well as budgetary specifications, local building regulations and technical and functional parameters, relieving architects and builders of time-consuming minutiae. They can also provide customised specimen panels that enable architects and clients to directly appraise the products involved and literally take hold of them, bringing design concepts vividly to life.



# Controlling the Gira KNX/EIB installation

## Gira push button sensor 3

[www.gira.com/pushbuttonsensor3](http://www.gira.com/pushbuttonsensor3)

# GIRA



### Gira push button sensor 3

With the Gira push button sensor 3, a wide variety of functions which are linked via the KNX/EIB Standard can be controlled, e.g. light, blinds or heating. Three models are available in various colours and materials suitable for the Gira switch ranges: Basic, Comfort and Plus. The inscription of the rockers can be created individually in just a few steps online. For additional information, see [www.marking.gira.com](http://www.marking.gira.com)

III.: Gira push button sensor 3 Plus, 5-gang,  
Gira E22 Stainless Steel



### Basic

The Gira push button sensor 3 Basic is ideally suited for controlling the basic functions of the KNX/EIB installation, e.g. storing and calling up light scenes, switching and dimming lights or raising and lowering blinds. Each button has two red LEDs which display the status of the assigned function.

III.: Gira push button sensor 3 Basic, 1-gang,  
Gira E22 Stainless Steel



### Comfort

The Gira push button sensor 3 Comfort has three-colour LEDs for status display which can be flexibly programmed for more complex applications. Furthermore, a temperature sensor is integrated which can be linked to the other components of the KNX/EIB system.

III.: Gira push button sensor 3 Comfort, 3-gang,  
Gira E22 Stainless Steel



### Plus

In addition, the Gira push button sensor 3 Plus has an integrated room temperature controller and a high-contrast, white-backlit display for controller status, temperature and various messages which can be received via the KNX/EIB system.

III.: Gira push button sensor 3 Plus, 5-gang,  
Gira E22 Stainless Steel



# Editorial view

**Postmodernism never quite died, but does it still have the stamina to re-engage with new ways of thinking about buildings and cities?**

Postmodernism, architecture's favourite painted corpse, rises again, with a tactical cultural assault on those who would dare to declare it extinct. A major new retrospective at London's V&A presents a familiar art-historical canter through the 1970s and '80s, the two critical decades in which PoMo finally shook off the dull, discredited shackles of Modernism and took root as a 'distanced, ironic, amoral handmaiden of the market', as Sam Jacob notes in his review (p118).

It all started so well. The best Postmodern buildings articulated a new kind of architectural compact through their witty and sophisticated engagement with ornament, historical allusion and context; so refreshing after the aridity of Modernism. James Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart is one obvious triumph, its calculated artfulness crowning Stirling's career and propelling an unremarkable provincial art gallery to the top of the most popular German museums league. Ironically, like many PoMo converts, Big Jim began life as the original tough-minded Modernist.

Yet for every Staatsgalerie, there were dismaying acres of mannerist, saccharine pastiche, characterised by generic floorplates and mechanistic tracts of space wrapped in skin-deep PoMo motifs as an appeasing sop to planners and the public. As time wore on, the populism proved deceptive, the buildings turned out to be vacuous, and in August 1986, the AR declared Postmodernism well and truly dead. 'It was clear that Postmodernism was not an independent freedom force at all,'

wrote EM Farrelly at the time, 'but a sort of mutant isotope of elemental Modernism; initially radiant, but highly derivative, insidious, and programmed to decay.'

But did it? Has it? Charles Jencks, Postmodernism's midwife, physician and official biographer, has just published a definitive 50-year history of the movement and claims that it never really went away. Pressing his metaphorical stethoscope up against the coffin lid, he detects signs of life, especially as the iconic and the ironic have been some of the most energetically mined architectural tropes of the last 10 years. More pertinently, however, Jencks also envisages the new possibility of Postmodernist urbanism – for instance in the proposed re-modelling of Doha (AR May 2011) – as dense, complex and low-rise, rooted in tradition and ecologically driven, forming a riposte to the dislocation of modern cities.

As Colin Fournier points out in his analysis of Jencks's arguments (p112), this also raises questions about how, as the city becomes increasingly dematerialised, through the plurality of cyberspace and digital networking, it can still 'remain the primary manifestation of contemporary civilisation'. Yet for serious students of Postmodernism, this is a far more fascinating and critically relevant speculation than whether or not ornament is back. Can the better aspects of Postmodernism contrive to shape and humanise cities in the 21st century? Maybe there's life in the old painted corpse yet.

**Catherine Slessor, Editor**



# Overview

## SPAIN

### The Death of the Icon

With Oscar Niemeyer's cultural centre in Avilés closing after only six months, the mother country of the 'Bilbao effect' might ultimately be its resting ground, writes *David Cohn*

Has the continuing economic crisis brought Spain's architectural renaissance to an end? A growing outcry over the excesses committed in public building over the past decade, together with the near-bankruptcy of local and regional governments sponsoring the binge, have been joined by sessions of serious soul-searching within the profession itself.

During the past 30 years of democratic rule, Spain invested heavily in infrastructures and public facilities, aided by massive injections of European Union cash. Major works of public architecture first took centre stage with the Seville Expo and Barcelona Olympics in 1992, heroic, visionary ventures already marred by hasty decision-making and mismanagement. In the following decade, the mania for

building conspicuous public monuments only increased, spreading to other regions – notably to Bilbao – and the central government.

The generally high quality of Spain's public architecture can be attributed to the competition system, juried by respected members of local professional associations. But it takes a good client to make good architecture, as the old adage goes. And in this regard Spain's public authorities were, and largely remain, woefully inadequate – naïve opportunists with only the vaguest ideas about programming, cost control, project management or long-term needs and means.

Alarming stories abound. One has Richard Meier being driven around Barcelona by the mayor to pick a site for a building in the late 1980s. Their conversation

supposedly went something like this: 'And what would you like to build, Mr Meier?' 'Well, a museum would be nice.'

In recent years, such abuses have only multiplied, as seen (to cite only the most flagrant examples) in the runaway costs and doubtful utility of Peter Eisenman's City of Culture in Santiago de Compostela (AR October 2010), or Santiago Calatrava's City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, as compellingly documented in Llätzer Moix's recent book, *Arquitectura Milagrosa* (Miraculous Architecture).

The most arresting image of the year found Santiago Calatrava before a judge, answering for the €1.2 million (£1.04 million) in fees he collected for an opera hall in Palma de Mallorca, a project that was allegedly nothing more than



The closure of Oscar Niemeyer's International Cultural Centre after six months could signal the end of 'icon'-focused regeneration



a model. Prosecutors charge that the scheme was a costly publicity stunt for the re-election campaign of the regional president, who was under indictment.

Another political controversy has hit the Oscar Niemeyer International Cultural Centre designed by the 103-year old Brazilian as a gift to the northern city of Avilés. A nasty fight for the centre's control has broken out between its administrators and the newly elected regional government, with the upshot that the popular centre has, after only six months in operation, closed for at least two months and may well never reopen.

A citizen backlash against the mania for architectural icons had already begun before the crisis. In 2006, neighbourhood residents of Seville sued to halt the construction of a university library designed by Zaha Hadid, charging that it illegally occupied a public park. Spain's highest court recently ruled that the half-completed building be demolished. Also in Seville, the construction of a 178m-high tower near the historic centre, designed by Cesar Pelli for Cajasol, a local savings bank, has caused UNESCO to reconsider the city's World Heritage Site status amid widespread public protest.

Other signs of reaction are coming from within the profession. Most notable among these was the congress organised last year in Pamplona by architect Francisco Mangado's Fundación Arquitectura y Sociedad (Architecture and Society Foundation) on the theme 'More for Less'. One debate, led by Mark Wigley, Mohsen Mostafavi and the philosopher Slavoj Žižek, was called 'Architecture and Pleasure: From the Aesthetic of the Icon to Common Beauty'.

Many of Spain's younger architects are rejecting the carefree formal experimentation of recent years to reaffirm a vital continuity with the modern tradition, returning to the 'disciplinary practice' that has

been a hallmark of Spanish architecture over the decades – a case in point is José María Sánchez García, featured in the AR's October 2011 issue.

In this sense, the profession is clearly preparing itself for a period of contained, functionalist remorse, although it remains to be seen if politicians and voters will be capable of capturing the change in sensibility. The media has always been quick to blame architects for the errors of public clients (many have been their accomplices, after all), and you fear that the whole enterprise of quality architecture in the public service will become another casualty of the crisis mentality.

## FRANKFURT, GERMANY

### In the fast lane to the future city

*Peter Buchanan*

The 20th-century city was shaped by the demands of the car, which fragmented and dispersed the city to ease and exploit its mobility. But in this century it will likely be the city that shapes the car, taming and civilising it, literally. This is an assumption that the German car manufacturer Audi entertains, recognising that it is precisely its current strengths and success – as market leader in China, for instance – that will make it vulnerable in an inevitably very different future. To better prepare for this future, the car manufacturer has established the Audi Urban Future Insight Team, with members drawn from across the company to regularly meet and brainstorm ideas about the city of tomorrow and



Audi's 2011 concept car for the future city



Los Angeles exemplifies the outdated 20th-century idea of designing cities around cars

to commission speculative studies by outsiders. To report on the emerging ideas, and to seek others from invited speakers and as feedback from attendees, Audi hosted its Urban Future Summit on the day prior to the opening of September's Frankfurt Motor Show.

With more than half the world's population now living in cities, the concern is with speculating on the nature of the city of the future, its citizens and their aspirations, its technologies and modes of transportation so as to best serve all of these. Not only might the car of the future be very different (perhaps smaller, certainly less fuel-consuming), so too might be the way in which they are used. Most private cars now stand idle most of the day.

In the future, perhaps we will only use rather than own cars, which will be in perpetual circulation, and Audi will be in the mobility business rather than selling cars. Perhaps too cars will largely drive themselves, using distance sensors not only to park but also to form close-spaced but uncoupled chains on main roads. With their on-board computers, these cars will be mobile IT platforms, communicating with passing buildings, kerbs and cars, and keeping passengers in touch globally. On the other hand, social media is displacing some of the desire for cars: in the

US, young people are obtaining licences later in life as the car becomes less of a necessity for keeping in touch.

A theme common to some speakers was the urge to restore the social dimension of the city that was largely sacrificed to the car. Richard Sennett discussed how the modern auto city pursued efficiency at the expense of conviviality, speed rather than sociability, and presented measures that might restore the latter. Charles Leadbeater plotted cities against the cross axes of systems and empathy, showing that modern cities, ranging from Le Corbusier's Radiant City to Dubai, optimise their systems at the expense of empathic relationships, or are low in both, such as Lagos and São Paulo. Our new design ideal should be to combine efficient systems with conditions conducive to empathy, as Curitiba, Barcelona and Melbourne do, while slums and favelas might be examples of inefficient systems with high levels of empathic relationships.

As a poll at one of the break-out sessions confirmed, the major appeal of the car is still its promise of freedom. This is not only of movement but also from the social encounters and constraints that might compromise the individualism of modern man



that is super-charged by the hubris that comes from being a master of a high-powered machine. Will we ever become rational and mature enough to treat cars as other forms of transportation, just another shared service, even if rewarded with more convivial cities?

What irony if the shift in this direction is in part initiated by a car company that makes such boys' toys as the Audi TT and R8, no matter how forward-looking that manufacturer.

## LONDON

### Radicalising Postmodernism

Steve Parnell

Those who live outside of the London architectural scene may find themselves bewildered by the Postmodern renaissance commanding the attention of its inner circle. Alongside the V&A's exhibition *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970-1990* (see *Reviews* section) and the *Architectural Design (AD)* issue on 'Radical Post-Modernism' come a number of discussions and lectures on this most

unfashionable of architectural trends. One such talk, *Radical Post-Modernism Today*, held at the Royal Academy of Arts, had a full house of slightly disbelieving guests, each secretly wondering whether their attendance was an ironic statement.

Guest editors of the 'Radical Post-Modernism' issue of *AD* (Charles Jencks and FAT's Sean Griffiths and Charles Holland) shared the stage with allegedly Postmodern architects Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Edouard François. Jencks set the scene by revisiting the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe – known as Modernism's death – which left a pile of dust in a verdant wilderness, and Philip Johnson's 1984 AT&T tower, which Jencks considers to signify Postmodernism's demise. He reiterated the three points of the 'radical' nature of the revived movement: the return to ornament, return of contextual counterpoint and the iconic building. Sadly these are all concerned with style rather than its social engagement.

Griffiths started with the Postmodern Catch-22 statement: 'I am not now and nor have I ever been a Postmodernist.'

And in doing so, he consciously echoed Robert Venturi. He claimed 'commodification, ephemerality, taste and fashion' for Postmodernism, and extolled the virtues of the superficiality of facadism due to its ability to engage with the public. Griffiths's later comments on the two-dimensional mediation of architecture were curtailed but potentially offered the most opportunity for progressing the discussion of PoMo architecture. Holland followed up with a polemic on taste, citing Pierre Bourdieu's adage 'taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier' and using Le Corbusier's famous Pessac as the definitive example. Taste, claimed Holland, identifies class and has the ability to introduce the user, opening up architecture beyond an architectural audience.

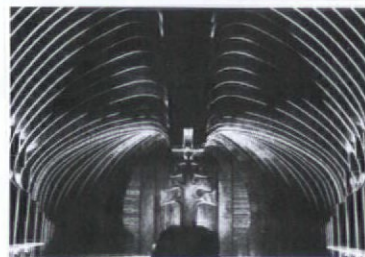
Zaera-Polo seemed unsure as to why he was there, neither claiming nor disclaiming allegiance with the movement. But he moved the discussion on to postmodern techno-socio-econo-politics by attempting to link the style to the state of the world today and the admission that we are unable either to change it or to believe in utopia. Whether intentional or not, this highlighted the tenuous link that exists between a PoMo style and 21st-century Postmodern thinking. Finally, François just did the architect-like thing of showing slides of his work, denying any relationship with Postmodernism whatsoever.

The evening proved, if anything, only one thing: there is not now and nor has there ever been a conclusive definition of Postmodernism, or even agreement as to whether it is a new movement or a continuation of Modernism. But as it appears over the horizon of historical respectability, its discourse shows a willingness to tackle questions that more dogmatic discourses shy away from. With Bourdieu, however, Holland introduces a whole theoretical framework concerning class and

power that is particularly pertinent to Postmodernism. Its overarching narrative is less concerned with style or even self-reflection, and more with classification, something that the self-confessed 'architectural botanist' Jencks is particularly keen on.

Who is and is not a Postmodernist is less important than who gets to say who is and is not. Venturi's assertion and Griffiths's echo of it are therefore more potent than Zaera-Polo's and François's ambivalence. By double-coding themselves as both architects and critics, FAT's directors are moving in a different orbit, closer to the centre of power. Their work as architects may be two-dimensional, but as critics, it most certainly is not.

## ONLINE THIS MONTH



👉 Hungarian architect Imre Makovecz died on 27 September, aged 75. In 1981 the AR's first article on him (pictured above) noted how the designer's work was 'as much inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, and Bruce Goff' as by the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner and by the sensual philosophy of the young Karl Marx.' The full article is at [architectural-review/Makovecz](#)

👉 Junya Ishigami is this month's exclusive Innovators Interview. The Japanese architect was in London to judge the ar+d Awards for Emerging Architecture, the results of which will be featured in next month's issue. All the Innovators Interviews, which are produced in partnership with Hunter Douglas, can be found at [architectural-review/innovators](#)



FAT's proposal for Community in a Cube in *AD*'s issue on 'Radical Post-Modernism'





*Feel Free  
to Compose*



Feel Free to Compose. Axor Bouroullec gives us the opportunity like never before to tailor the bathroom to our needs. More on the innovative bathroom collection and the designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec: [pro.hansgrohe-int.com/axor-bouroullec](http://pro.hansgrohe-int.com/axor-bouroullec)

**AXOR**<sup>®</sup>  
hansgrohe



# Broader view

## Designs for life in Humanity 2.0

As the technological revolution creates growing interactivity between our lives and the things around us, philosopher-turned-sociology professor *Steve Fuller* considers the social and spatial implications of a world in the near future where everyone and everything is seamlessly interconnected

**Editor's note: Predating Humanity 2.0, the term Web 2.0 refers to the evolution of the world wide web to facilitate greater interactivity and inter-operability, which over the last decade has spawned a tidal wave of blogs, 'wikis' and social networking technologies**

A good way to think about Humanity 2.0 is as questioning the negotiated settlement between form and function that has left an indelible stamp on the planet, originally to mark the progress of our species but increasingly to threaten its survival. I deliberately refer to 'form' and 'function' when describing the human condition, since the binary is invoked just as easily when speaking about the makeup of the artificial and the natural world. Humanity 2.0 is all about the convergence of these two senses of 'form' and 'function'. But first we need to see how 'Humanity 1.0' kept them apart.

'Humanity 1.0' consists of those free-standing members of *Homo sapiens* that our laws are normally designed to protect (often against each other) and empower (typically over nature). Humanity 1.0 regimes may operate democratically or not, but they all license the massive re-engineering of the physical environment to enable beings of that sort to flourish. The results have been, in equal measure, impressive and precarious. For 50 years now, one or another ecological crisis has been declared, most recently in the name of global warming. In each case, the indefinite extension of Humanity 1.0 has had to shoulder the blame.

What distinguishes the current wave of ecological crises is neither their severity nor their urgency – nor even the certainty that they will come to pass. Rather, it is the breadth of options available to deal with them. To be sure, many of the options are more conceptual than material, but all involve re-negotiating the role of 'form' and 'function' in the human condition. In particular, the hard ontological boundaries between 'human', 'animal' and 'machine' are dissolving. This is not necessarily because all these entities are being treated as equals; rather, they are being treated as overlapping in form and perhaps even interchangeable

in function. In short, we need to envisage a world where humans, animals and machines inhabit a common social ecology, learning from each other as they forge a mutually sustaining existence.

Humanity 1.0 puts peoples in houses, machines in factories and animals almost everywhere else, although they are increasingly constrained and organised by the imperatives of house- and factory-building. Here Marx divined the logic of capitalism: after all, what is not dedicated to the production (factory) or reproduction (house) of human labour is nominally left to the animals – that is, until they turn into pets or food. The three sorts of entity are presumed to be mutually exclusive, existing at best in complementary – and often competitive – relations with each other: one provides what the other cannot, but they are not the same and one cannot turn into the other.

But Humanity 2.0 is changing all this. Consider what we now know that Marx did not. We can think about the matter as posing in a new key the question asked by Modernist movements in 20th century art: *Does function follow form or form follow function?* In short, an important consequence of the increasing interaction among humans, animals and machines is that their identities have been blurred. More specifically, as humans have come to identify with animals, function has followed form, while as they have identified with machines, form has followed function. Let us take each proposition in turn.

*Function follows form:* There is around a 95 per cent genetic overlap between humans and other animals. Evolutionary precedents have been found for many cognitive and emotional traits that were previously considered uniquely 'human'. These facts have emboldened 'animal rights' activists to declare the prospect of animals as either pets or food equally horrific. Moreover, the same facts are causing humans to recalibrate

their sphere of care and concern in 'posthumanist' ways. Perhaps health insurance should be extended to animals that live in our midst? Taking seriously this newly found dignity to animals would involve re-designing spaces – not only homes but also clinics and courts – to respect the physical differences between humans and animals that would remain, but would now no longer make a normative difference. One obvious change would be an increased tolerance for mess and waste, which anthropologists have long pointed to as an important means by which humans keep their distance from animals – not least other humans who 'behave like animals'.

*Form follows function:* From their inception, machines have inspired a love-hate relationship in humans. In cultures touched by the Abrahamic religious tradition, where this feeling has probably been strongest, it is traceable to the reminder that humans themselves are created 'in the image and likeness of God'. After all, machines are typically designed to excel at activities that humans value, or at least find relevant to the maintenance of their existence. In principle, of course, these artificial creatures should free up our lives to do other things. But in practice, as Marx emphasised, the machines might overtake and replace humans – if not exterminate them altogether, as in so many science fiction dystopias. But Marx did not anticipate that some machines – computers – might be created that closely capture and amplify many, even if not all, of our mental powers, which then serve as platforms for launching an alternative 'virtual' mode of beings, with which users over time come to identify more strongly than with their own bodies. A sign that we have already taken significant steps in this direction is the increasing compatibility between sustained and sophisticated interactions with digital media and their users' disregard for the state of





their own bodies and the immediate environment.

These two vectors of Humanity 2.0 are clearly countervailing, yet both are on the rise, ever more pronounced among younger members of the population. Thus, spaces need to be designed that accommodate both projected futures: one that enables us to reconnect to our animal nature, and the other where that biological baseline is treated as merely a vehicle to journey into a more fulfilling cyber-existence. Once these parameters are in place, we can easily imagine intermediate positions: for example, prosthetically enhanced humans, chimeras and hybrids that combine human and non-human materials, and even molecular and digital information that is copied and preserved for purposes of future uploading in new 'media', in a sense that will be increasingly indifferent to whether one is talking about an organism or a machine.

An example related to the last, perhaps most outlandish possibility is already being developed by Rachel Armstrong and her colleagues at the University of Greenwich as 'metabolic materials'. These are based on 'protocells', chemical substances that can be programmed to respond sympathetically to buildings, offering them support in the face of changes in the physical environment. Armstrong, whose own hybrid existence combines medicine, science fiction and architecture, argues that this re-engineering of nature gives, say, Venice its best chance of not sinking into the sea. Tellingly, at the moment, her work is just as likely to be exhibited as an instance of synthetic biology, a piece of innovative technology and an art installation. In the world of Humanity 2.0, the glass separating those display cases will be broken as well.

**Steve Fuller's latest book is *Humanity 2.0: What It Means to Be Human Past, Present and Future*, published by Palgrave Macmillan**



HEAD ROTATES

## MULTUS

Terence Woodgate

Multus is a 45°, ellipsoidal bollard designed by the international award-winning product designer, Terence Woodgate. Manufactured from extruded aluminium, the lamp head seamlessly rotates on an axis of 45° to the body and can be rotated in increments of 10° and locked in place up to the vertical. This versatility allows the specifier to light a pathway or tilt on to steps, illuminate landscape areas or softly light facades. Multus is finished using Akzo Nobel powder coat for superior durability. Lamp options include LED, CFL or HID.

[www.paviom.com](http://www.paviom.com)

Paviom UK Ltd, The Beehive, City Place  
Gatwick, RH6 0PA, United Kingdom  
T +44 (0)1293 804 688 E [info@paviom.com](mailto:info@paviom.com)

A PHILOSOPHY IN LIGHT

**paviom**



# View from...



The recently renovated section of Tbilisi's Old Town, set between the 4th-century Narikala Fortress above and the recently constructed 2009 Bridge of Peace in the foreground

## Tbilisi, Georgia

Investment has poured into Tbilisi since the AR first highlighted the city's perilous architectural state a year ago. But now the thirst for progress risks destroying the city's historic character, reports *Peter Nasmyth*

Over the last year, Georgia and its ancient capital, Tbilisi, have been undergoing a reconstruction unparalleled since the height of the Soviet era. Under the guidance of city hall planners, a project called New Life for Old Tbilisi is readying for its second phase. Set under the stone ramparts of the 4th-century Narikala fortress, the Old Town's winding 'Asian' streets, sagging wooden balconies, pepper pot-roofed churches and Art Nouveau facades are at one with fleets of mini-bulldozers, miles of scaffolding, lifted road surfaces and shopkeepers doing business amid construction teams.

Recently, one of Britain's leading conservationists remarked that the Davit Aghmashenebeli Avenue rebuild alone (almost a kilometre in length) was the largest single renovation project she had ever witnessed. Every building is being repainted or re-fronted, right down to – and including – the pavements and road surface.

But this is only a part of what is planned for Georgia. The broad brush of reconstruction extends across the nation from the port of Batumi on the Black Sea coast – witness to a new growth of glass and steel towers – up into remote regions such as Mestia, a mountain community of about 2,500 in Svaneti surrounded by

glaciers and 5,000m peaks. There, the decrepit Soviet-era facades are being boldly upholstered in local stone or wood, with wooden balconies against a backdrop of 12th-century stone towers redolent of San Gimignano in Italy or Greece's Mani region.

The developments are part of a large, government-sponsored reconstruction drive overseen by the country's president, Mikheil Saakashvili. The aim is to propel the country into the 21st century, offer work for a large population of unemployed and revitalise the districts, particularly for tourism (Georgia's hope for the future).

While the majority of the Georgian population looks on with a kind of shrugging approval – save for some vociferous members of the intelligentsia – the speed and methodology of the reconstruction has alarmed a number of international observers, who feel that the nation's towns and cities are losing their historic character.

For instance, in Tbilisi's Kala district, the usual technique is to knock down the original building then to reconstruct it around a reinforced concrete shell re-faced by old bricks, in a rough approximation of its former self. The structures usually carry an extra floor, often topped mansard-style by uniform roofs made from cheap Turkish tiles.

In contrast, nearby church reconstructions initiated by the Georgian Patriarch's office re-use traditional stone and roof tiles wherever possible. This creates cheek-by-jowl examples of 'how to' and 'how not to' restoration.

The eradication of historic material in Georgia is happening so rapidly that UNESCO demoted Bagrati and Mtskheta Cathedrals, two of Georgia's three World Heritage Sites, to its endangered list. At the same time, local architects and art historians are trying to educate citizens to favour refurbishment, rather than reconstruction of homes.

Last year, the British Council, Goethe Institute and local EU office sponsored a conference to tackle this problem and in September 2011, the Georgian office of the International Council on Monuments and Sites hosted a three-day event on Community and the Historic Environment.

The gathering attracted eminent international specialists on conservation but only one representative from Tbilisi City Hall, inundated with questions from concerned locals. As calls for inward investment continue, it is to be hoped the second phase of 'new life' for Tbilisi's Old Town will be more effective in allowing its historic quality to live on.

**📖 The October 2010 article is at [architecturalreview.com/Tbilisi](http://architecturalreview.com/Tbilisi)**



## Emirates Glass NOW in the UK

Full advice on ESTIDAMA and LEED



[www.emiratesglass.com](http://www.emiratesglass.com)

Tel: +971 4 7094700



# Viewpoints



PETER COOK

## Economic pressures could radically reshape the profession – and for the better

There can be few people who are not waking up these days wondering if their luck will last, and mostly just trying to hang on. Yet one might see the economic crisis as some kind of universal kick that throws every one of us out of our comfort zone.

One day, early in my career, the construction company that had unwittingly carried a crazy group of architects (already being referred to as 'Archigram') gave us the sack. For me, the panic was short, for the *very same day* the Architectural Association invited me into that enduring and tantalising comfort zone called academe. Some 42 years later, the great British ageist machine deemed that I must be 'retired'.

Very disquieted at first, I started to enjoy being a real architect and using time differently. In a school of architecture, the phrase 'can I just have five minutes?' has its own dreaded significance: it means 35 minutes *minimum*. Even in Germany, a 10 o'clock start means a 10.30 lurch into action. Yet when money has to be made time means *time*. Of course, the loveable aspects of academe remain: the range of speculations, intriguing red herrings or the collective paranoia (but also pent-up power) of a lot of over-bright people: arguing over who should occupy a seminar room.

The corporate office has strangely parallel comforts: of course 10 o'clock meetings really do start at 10, yet if there is little time to speculate (considered superfluous), there is enormous

time found to discuss the obvious via systems of procedure, such as who can be referred to as 'director'? (The cynical answer is to make everyone a 'director' of something, a ploy that has even been borrowed by some dull academics).

In former times, architecture could survive through cosy regionalism: the local bigwig architect could become the local professor; the local folklore handed on, reduced but identifiable. Some good things came out of it: Barcelona's take on Art Nouveau, Berlin's take on Modernism, Tokyo's take on expressionist mechanism, Mexico City's take on colour. (Pick your own favourite.) Yet the brandishments of 'Internationalism', 'systems', 'Parametricism' or even (my pet hate) 'biscuit modesty' are all on offer as a cover for a survival strategy: give me something identifiable that I can carry in my pocket as a currency that I can exchange for survival – *now – tomorrow – here – anywhere*.

So, as a serious lover of architecture and a believer in the history of ideas and a believer in passion and integrity, I am aware of an uncomfortable challenge to my own value system. In the same way as the £/\$/€ value system is slithering around under me.

The dreaded Margaret Thatcher may have had just one good idea – which was to 'get on your bike'. All students should not only leave home but switch schools: preferably in another country and for at least two years. It was Kenneth Frampton who

surprised everybody by using his Columbia sabbatical, not to research another book or take a visiting professorship, but to (presumably digging out the odd white shirt) go and work in Richard Meier's office, reminding everyone that back in London he had successfully built social housing.

There is a chronic and stupid insistence of good offices that dissuades staff from teaching; holds the brightest of them in endless procedural meetings and invented deadlines when they want to exercise their critical talents and refresh themselves among bright kids. There is the chronic and stupid insistence of academies that dictates teachers come in on a Tuesday but not a Wednesday, or be full-time and effectively leave operational architecture. For in the UK there is a creepy suspicion of builder-architects.

There is much lingering suspicion in many countries of 'foreign' architects and their ways, nearly always referred to as 'difficult'. What is the real fear? Is it the charming of our girlfriends/boyfriends/contractors/coffee-sellers? Having a rather different take on the delineation of an electrical circuit or the jib of a window-sill? Or perhaps having a clearer intellectual position expressed in new terminology? It's all the same really.

So a kick up the bum could really be equal to the software revolution or the invention of plate-glass – and even be quite interesting – in an uncomfortable sort of a way.

## LAST WORDS

'Erring on the folkloric and looking like trees in children's stories, sprouting arms and sporting faces, they really did feel alive.'

Jonathan Glancey in the *Guardian's* obituary of Imre Makovecz, describing his 'building beings'

'Some of the best Postmodernists are Modernists on a holiday.'

Charles Jencks, in conversation with Rem Koolhaas, at the V&A on 30 September

'Wall Street has not invested in a nuclear power plant in 30 years. Architects have their hand on the global thermometer.'

Jeffrey Inaba, discussing architecture and sustainability at the UIA in Tokyo on 27 September



james burleigh



bosa

designed and manufactured by  
james burleigh using solid timber  
and compact grade laminate  
produced by the Formica Group

[www.formica.com](http://www.formica.com) - new collection

[www.jamesburleigh.co.uk](http://www.jamesburleigh.co.uk) [info@jamesburleigh.co.uk](mailto:info@jamesburleigh.co.uk) t +44[0]20 7328 2824

Formica and the Formica anvil device are registered trademarks of The Diller Corporation



# Your views

REPORT



**REFRAMING PARK HILL**

Inspired by Corbus's Unité, Park Hill is Sheffield's Brutalist icon. Designed in the 1950s by two pioneering architects, it changed with international vision for the next decade. Yet as Modernist high rises and equality fell out of fashion, the socialist ideal turned into a ghetto. Today, designer Urban Splash is reimagining its streets again, with a bold programme.

PETER BLUNDELL JONES

In his perceptive assessment of Park Hill (*Revisit*, AR October 2011) Peter Blundell Jones points to the dilemma of reconciling authenticity and change, a recurring and sensitive issue in relation to listed buildings. As Blundell Jones has described, for the first decade or so, Park Hill was regarded as paradise for those who lived there in contrast to what they had before. But over the years things began to go wrong. The three industries that had made Sheffield great ceased to exist; the management of Park Hill changed; the building fabric was allowed to deteriorate and it was used as a place to dump difficult tenants. Society was also developing a drug culture and violence increased.

The task facing Urban Splash and its architects was new, different and difficult. It went far beyond the repair of the structure, though that in itself is impressive. After years with a bad reputation it needed to demonstrate a fresh start, to attract new residents, two-thirds of whom would buy or rent from the open market.

In the 21st century, living is considered to be more spacious, and the dwellings now have more open plans with views right through and light from both sides. Double glazing allows larger windows, and the brickwork has been replaced by brightly coloured aluminium panels. This controversial proposal required approval from English Heritage, who applied the 'squint test' – if you half shut your eyes, does it still look like Park Hill? – an intriguing way of assessing authenticity! At first the colours may seem a bit bright but they demonstrate a pristine new beginning, and they continue to indicate the different deck levels – the 'streets in the air' which are part of Park Hill's essence. The change to the elevations when the panels are open is a witty device.

A new entrance now invites you into Park Hill; it is a splendid monumental space four storeys high. Shops will add life and the

glazed, two-storey offices and studios give an effective base to the building. The journey up the glass lifts is a delight with views over the city to the moors beyond; at night this will be very special, and the shiny steel stair spiralling up the building adds sparkle.

The way that the entrance, the lifts and stairs are set within the structural frame shows masterly respect for what existed before. The arrival at each level is similarly spacious, and the access still has the qualities of the deck even though the dwellings encroach on it a little. This is very clever: it not only gives useful space inside but provides a significant threshold, a public/private space, to each group of four dwellings.

The choice of materials, the detailing and the workmanship show great care; this is apparent in the entrance doors, the stairs, the windows, and the design of the kitchens and bathrooms, which benefit from more resources than were originally available. It is refreshing, at this time, that the whole design is free from gimmicks and there is a consistency and inevitability to each part.

Urban Splash and designers Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West have got the balance right between respect for authenticity and the embrace of change. What they have done gives real meaning to the word 'regeneration'; it represents a new beginning, a new vitality. I sense, in those who have been involved, the same enthusiasm and excitement that Jack Lynn and I enjoyed half a century ago.

It will be a great place to live!  
**Ivor Smith, designer with Jack Lynn of Park Hill, completed in 1960**

I visited Park Hill when it was in perfect shape in 1968. I went to Sheffield exclusively to see it and was favourably impressed to find public housing that was good and seemed to work. Of course, I had not anticipated Mrs Thatcher. Contrastingly, I found the second part, Hyde Park, much less

satisfactory. So you can imagine how pleased I was with your story. The renovation is somewhat drastic but, from the photos, it looks very good.

**Tom Killian, Françoise Bollack Architects, New York**

## To P or lower case p? That's the question

Thank you Farshid Moussavi for the elaboration of the universality of parametric thinking and its promise for 'intelligent designs that embrace the full complexity of our environment' (*Viewpoint*, AR October 2011). Given the difficulty in bridging the gap between form-finding and material architecture, perhaps this should be an educators' call to arms. Although engineers have successfully applied parametric software for several decades, architectural designers have been slow to employ the true capability for anything more than pure form generation, as you aptly indicate.

Much of this has to do with the inability of architecture schools to provide a schema that focuses parametricism on form created from 'parametric thinking as a way to integrate formal experimentation with performative concerns'. In lower case, parametricism is both a technique and a mode of thinking that employs the empowerment provided by software for performative design, as applied by the designer's creativity. It is time to dispense with the capital 'P'. As a style or classification it will not survive the decade.

Bridging this educational gap will be fraught with obstacles. Although the world is certainly different from what you describe in the 1990s, the problems of creating a relevant studio experience in an industry unaccustomed to change remain. The overwhelming majority of studio instructors insufficiently understand how one might progress from the assignment of external parameters, whether they be environmental, physical,

Letters to the Editor should be sent to:  
**The Architectural Review**  
Greater London House,  
Hampstead Road,  
London NW1 7EJ  
Or by email to:  
areditorial@emap.com  
Letters may be edited



social or cultural, to engage in a feedback loop with form.

This presents a major stumbling block. If we do not grasp this moment, the opportunity for designers to employ parametricism to inspire performative design might be lost: left to the engineers. It will be displaced by the next plaything to shape form, as well as the progressive dumbing of existing software. Each year, in the name of the 'user-friendly', the handful of companies that control AEC software tend to reduce itemised control. It will not be long before the parametric programmes geared for architectural designers will severely restrict parametric thinking in favour of push button design solutions.

This is the crucial time to realise parametric thinking for architects. Its future lies in the hands of our educators. We must not let this empowering opportunity slip away.

**Bill Caplan,**  
**ShortList\_0 Design Group, New York**

First of all, I would like to congratulate AR on its editorial make-over, with its new focus on debate and theory. My letter concerns Farshid Moussavi's article on parametric thinking versus Parametricism. I have a few points to drive home. The most important is 'mere' semantics. Words matter. If I could, I would like to prevent the term 'Parametricism' degenerating to become a punch bag and trash-can that collects all that is disagreeable within contemporary parametric architecture. The term was proposed to do serious work as a positive reference and rallying term for the convergent efforts of a new global generation of architects. If this term is trashed, a new term needs to be proposed to take on its mantle. In my dictionary Farshid is a proponent of Parametricism, indeed one of its earliest protagonists and I count her Yokohama project among its first, most compelling

built manifestations. I disagree with Farshid's distinction between Parametricism and parametric thinking. I do agree that the current proliferation of parametric software and scripting techniques – which deserves to be wholeheartedly supported – also encompasses a lot of immature, unresolved efforts. Equally, there was bad and good Modernism. What matters more than individual lapses and failures is the general innovative thrust and historical pertinence of a global movement and style like Parametricism. The style is in its avant-garde phase. It still needs a certain licence to experiment while gearing up to take on more and more real world challenges. Let's remain generous for now. The 'formal extravagance' of Parametricism Farshid bemoans should rather be interpreted as the search for rich, complex spatial organisations that might be able to articulate the increased density and complexity of contemporary life processes.

Farshid seems to imply that a style is necessarily superficial and dogmatic. In contrast I am trying to revitalise the concept of style as a tool of collective architectural self-determination and as a concept that allows architecture to project its contemporary innovations into society at large. For me styles are initially design research programmes that later aim to establish canonic principles that allow for the rapid, coherent dissemination of a new global best practice. (Historically pertinent styles in this sense deserve to become the discipline's 'dogma'. Today 'smooth and differentiated' is indeed a more pertinent default condition than Modernism's 'hard-edged and dissociated'.) Styles – according to the concept I propose – comprise a certain formal repertoire as well as a certain way of interpreting briefs. They should not be (mis)understood as a mere superficiality. A viable style must indeed integrate

formal experimentation with performative concerns. (It seems as if my resurrection of a profound concept of style was appreciated by Peter Buchanan in his thorough review of my book, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture*, AR March 2011). However, I also insist that the appearance of buildings and spaces matters. It matters precisely for the sake of their social functionality. Designed territories function as much via their legibility and appeal, that is via their capacity to orient agents, as they function via the sorting and channelling of bodies. That is why Farshid's 1990s opposition of performance versus representation must be replaced by the formula performance via representation. It's time for the refoundation of an architectural phenomenology and semiology: Parametric phenomenology/semiology. (See the forthcoming second volume of my book.) Here lies architecture's true core competency. Everything else is mere engineering.

**Patrik Schumacher,**  
**Zaha Hadid Architects, London**

## A message of hope from Afghanistan

The Maria Grazia Cutuli School is truly inspirational, magical and beautiful (*Buildings*, AR October 2011). Also a very brave bunch of creative people... I am an Afghan and an aspiring architecture student. This has given me a first real step towards achieving my goal of creating and making people's lives better. I hope one day I can act with others to achieve a similar feat.

**Comment on AR website by Saladoger**

## And some thoughts on the relaunch

I was glad to witness that the new AR avoided the sirens of trendy covers and coffee table contents. It was brave enough to insist on demanding and rewarding

content. Sadly, today, all but a handful of periodicals covering architectural projects are presented as illustrated brand names of star architects.

I enjoyed the critical presentation of architectural projects and also the theoretical articles of Edward Glaeser (*Broader View*) and Anthony Vidler (*Theory*) as indicative of a much-needed interaction between theory and praxis. Actually, I would welcome more of this kind of design-oriented theory, of which practitioners and students of architecture today are much in need. I'm sure this initiative will succeed and that it will instigate important debates in classrooms and amphitheatres. History, theory and criticism are urgently needed, but again as a unified issue centred on architectural design. Architecture cannot change the world, but perhaps it can make the world better.

**Vassilis Ganiatsas, National Technical University of Athens, Greece**

I have to admit that I was on the point of cancelling my subscription to AR. I hated the graphics, I hated the silly number codes and I was rarely engaged by the content. So the new AR, which is really the old AR brought back to life, has brought great sighs of relief. I think the *Overview* essays are interesting. Glancey's piece is good, as is the Park Hill piece. Curtis on Libeskind is brilliant – a marvellous demolition job. Only waffly Glaeser lets the side down.

**David Robson (by email)**

At last. After just plain monthly editions of pretty illustrations, yellow highlighters and lack of substance, a proper going over. Buildings photographed with people, theoretical considerations, post-occupancy evaluation, economic analysis, pedagogical teaching methods, sustainability, something to read and critiques at last. Architecture in its proper human and geographical context.

**Nigel C Lewis (by email)**



# The Upside of Tension



C A M B R I D G E  
A R C H I T E C T U R A L

Cambridge mesh  
installs under tension  
with elegant attachments  
pre-engineered to minimize  
structural connections  
and maximize coverage.

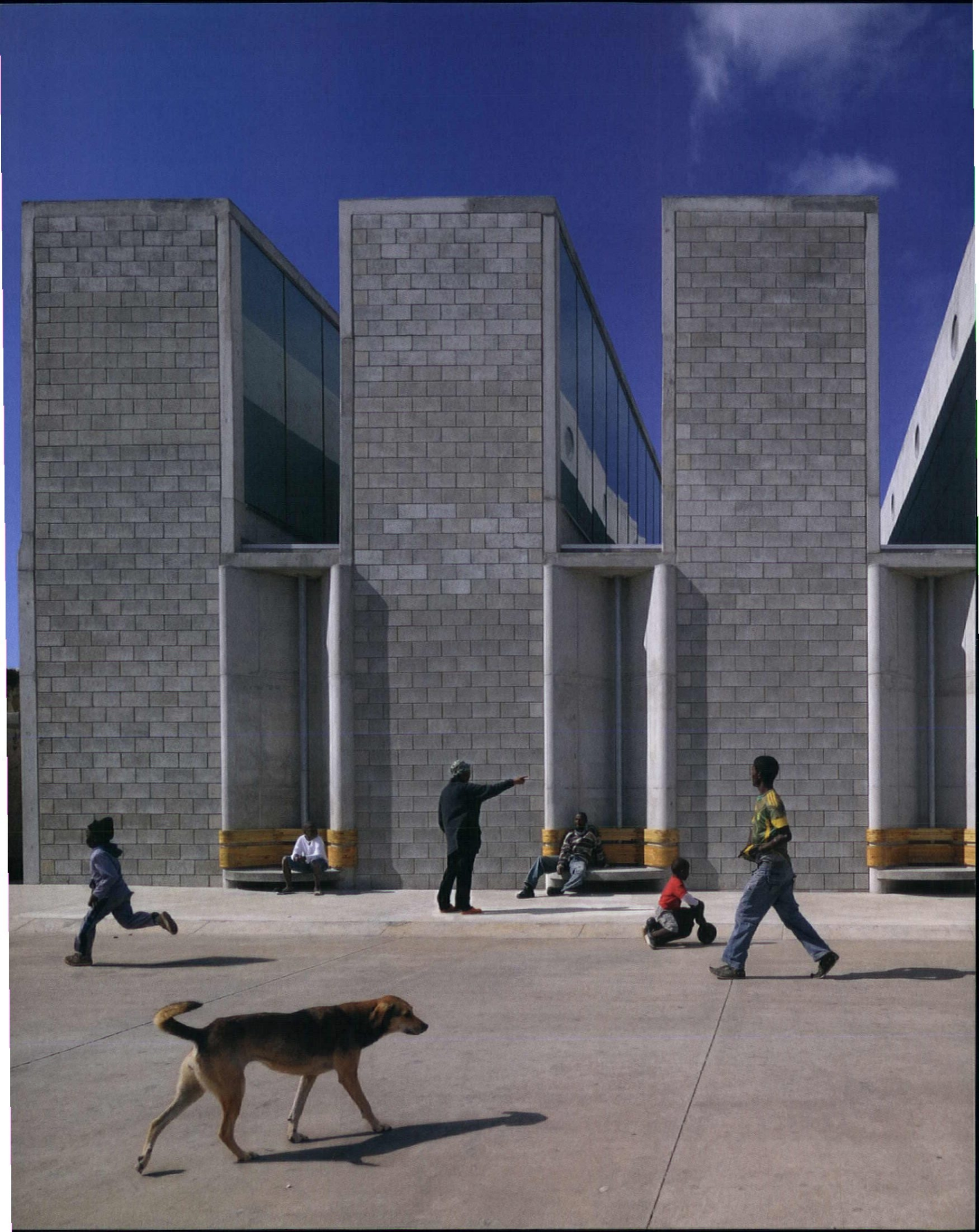


C A M B R I D G E  
A R C H I T E C T U R A L

CAMBRIDGEARCHITECTURAL.COM  
866-806-2385

Eclipse™ Tensioned  
Attachment Hardware









**Red Location  
Cultural Precinct,  
Port Elizabeth,  
South Africa  
Noero Wolff  
Architects**

# LIVING SPACE

Red Location's evolving cultural precinct explores ideas about placemaking and the African urban realm



**Red Location  
Cultural Precinct,  
Port Elizabeth,  
South Africa  
Noero Wolff  
Architects**

2



**CRITICISM**

**JEREMY MELVIN**

Culture, memory, history and public space are contested concepts at the best of times, but in post-apartheid South Africa these contests have become visceral parts of everyday life. The cultural precinct at Red Location, a township outside South Africa's fifth largest city and the Detroit of Africa, Port Elizabeth, unpacks those concepts, reflecting its architect Jo Noero's belief that 'architecture should be a way of opening up minds'. Presenting opportunities to engage with culture, memory, history and public space in different ways, these buildings suggest how contest might move towards fulfilment.

Earlier this year, Noero Wolff Architects finished three new buildings – an archive, a digital library and an art gallery – to join the Museum of the People's Struggle that opened in 2005 (AR May 2006) and won the Lubetkin Prize the following year. With the linked library and archive, gallery and museum occupying three of its four corners, and the train station a short walk away, the intersection of the evocatively named Olof Palme and Singaphi Streets is taking on the attributes of a city centre cultural precinct. Later phases include a school of arts and crafts, a cinema and performance spaces, and 210 new houses, making an urban combination of culture and community that would surely turn

Richard Rogers, Lewis Mumford and Ebenezer Howard green with envy.

However, all around in this modern settlement of 400,000 people are unmetalled roads, Lilliputian parodies of suburban villas, shacks, run-down schools, empty churches and the particularly unlovely hostels and beer halls that the apartheid state felt suitable for the majority of its population. Against this background, the evident architectural quality of powerful forms and strong colours of the gallery, library and archive is very unexpected. 'Many people find it a shock,' says Noero, but with some satisfaction as 'that opens up minds to the fact that people live here'. The apartheid deliberately and cynically attempted to make the majority population

3



4



1. (Previous page) the new gallery with its Kahnian light scoops defines an edge of a cultural precinct
2. Shack housing, with the new buildings beyond
3. Aerial view of the Red Location complex. The new art gallery and library/archive adjoin the original Museum of the People's Struggle (pictured left)
4. Some of the locals

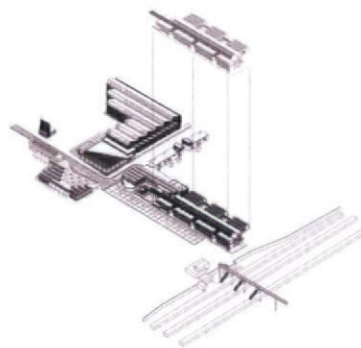




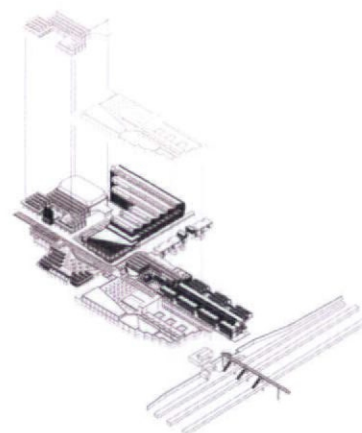
**stage 1: museum and housing 1999-2005**



**stage 2: art gallery and library 2005-2011**

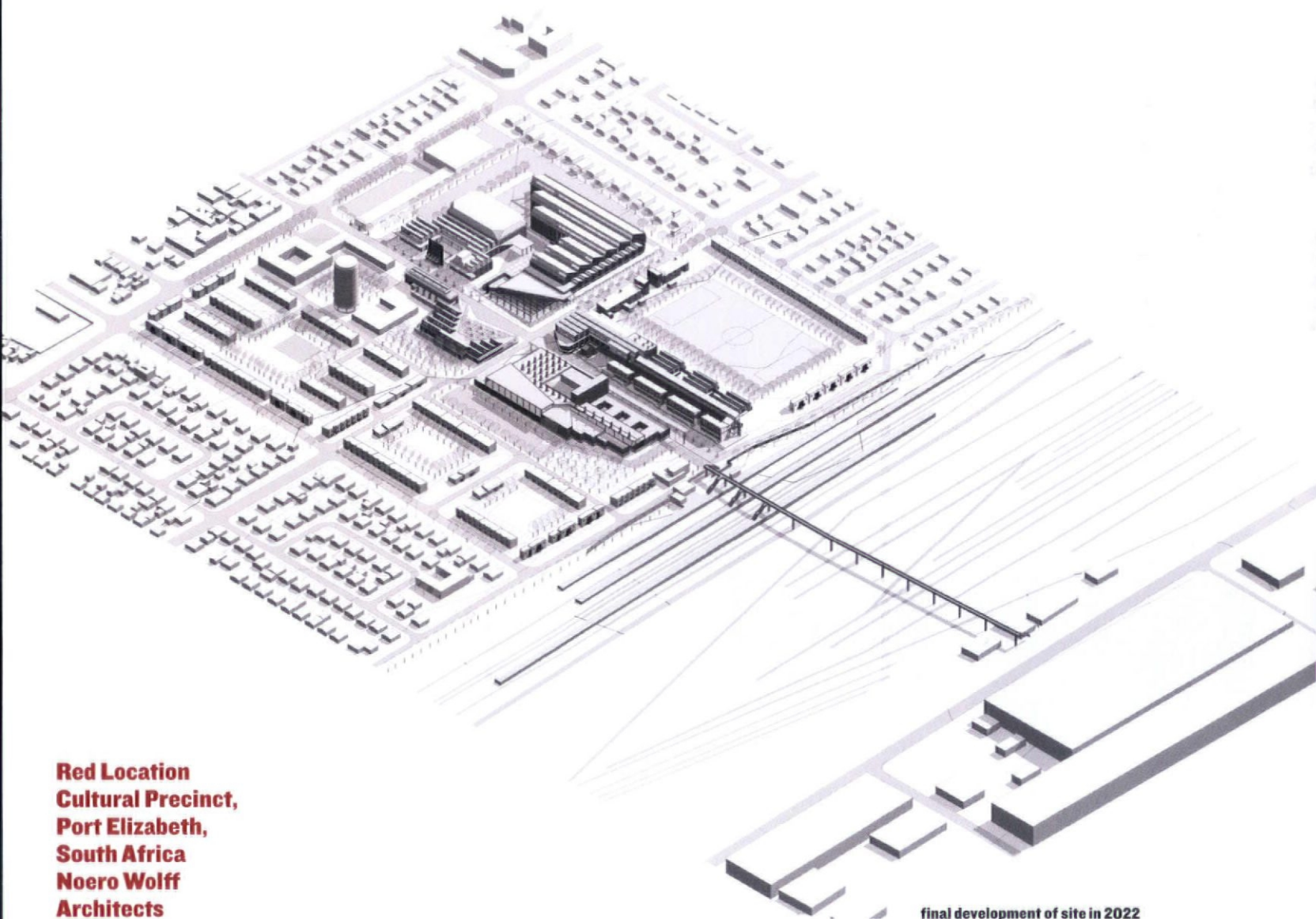


**stage 3: art and craft school 2012-2015**



**stage 4: performance space and theatre 2015-2022**

**chronological sequence of site development**



**final development of site in 2022**

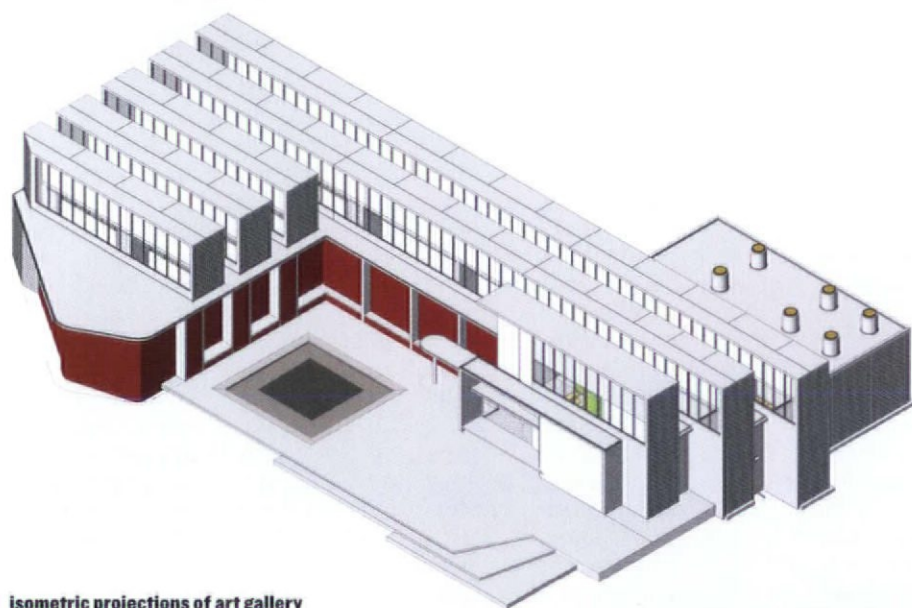
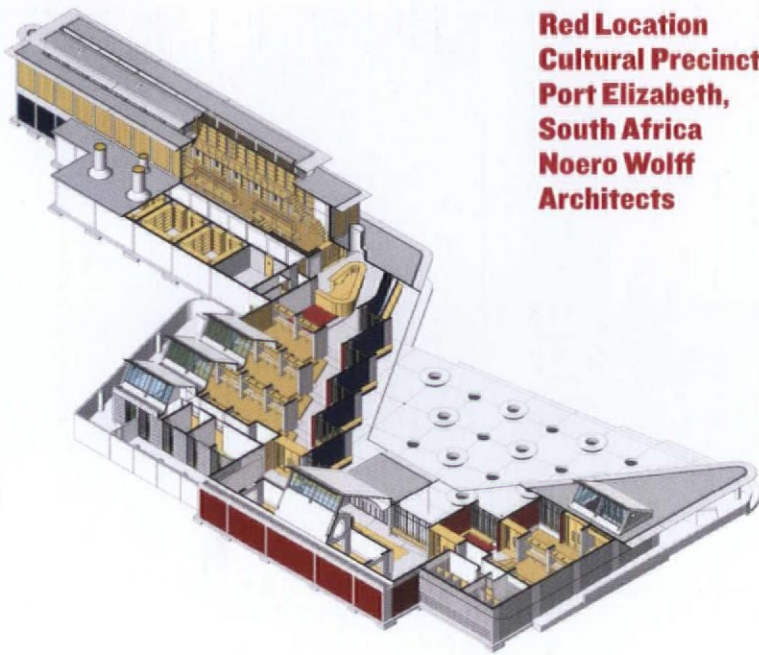
**Red Location  
Cultural Precinct,  
Port Elizabeth,  
South Africa  
Noero Wolff  
Architects**



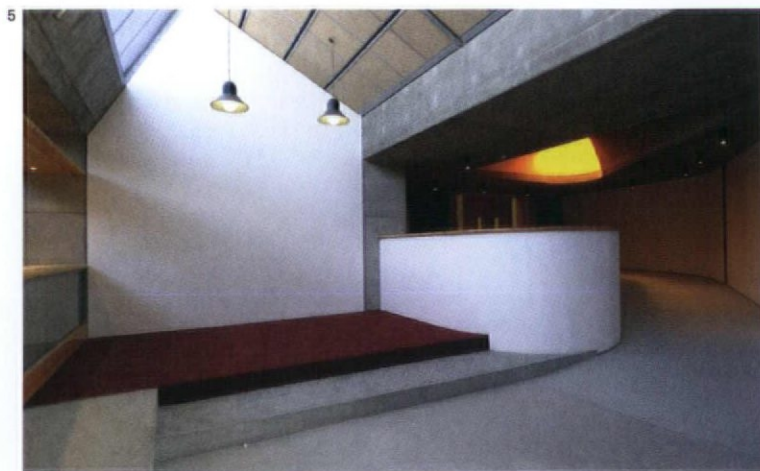
**Red Location  
Cultural Precinct,  
Port Elizabeth,  
South Africa  
Noero Wolff  
Architects**



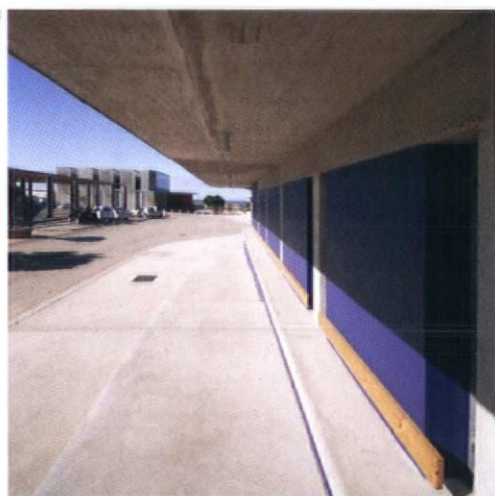
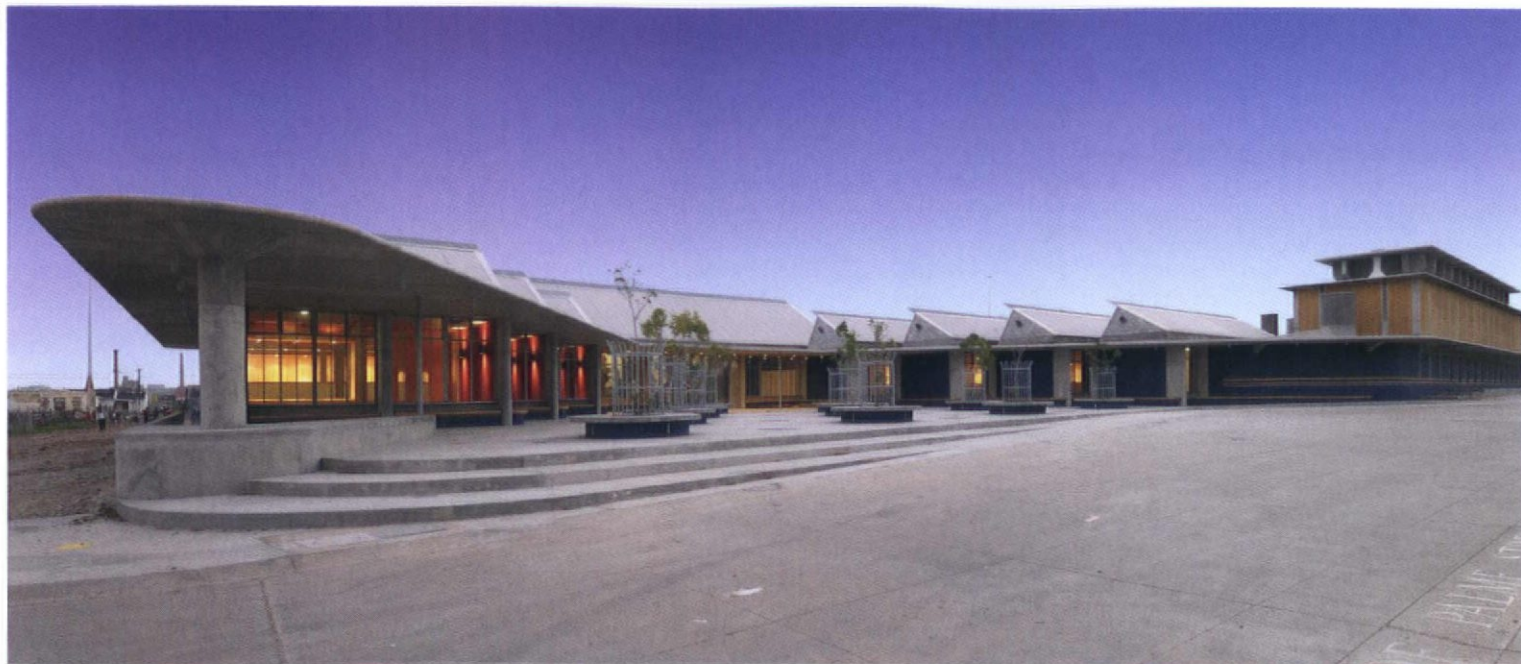
isometric projections of library and archive



isometric projections of art gallery







**5 & 6. Inside the library, with its quasi-industrial sawtooth roof**

**7. The wings of the combined library and archive embrace a public square with trees and seating, but notions of how such urban spaces are used are very different from the European ideal of the public realm enjoyed for its own sake**

**8. Detail of the overhanging canopy with the art gallery beyond**

invisible to the white community, but exhibitions and the quality of the archive – including Nelson Mandela's prison journals – are beginning to break down these barriers. Noero looks forward to 'university professors in the archive' working in adjacent spaces to 'young barely literate kids in the library'. If architecture can open up minds, it can find new ways of bringing them together.

The very existence of the precinct is all the more remarkable given the history of Red Location. The township is probably the oldest permanent urban settlement for people of Black African descent in South Africa, founded in 1902 as a dormitory for Port Elizabeth's growing industrial base, which eventually turned it into the Detroit of Africa. In a piquant touch, the materials for its first buildings were recycled from a concentration camp into which the British herded thousands of Boer women and children, and where many died from neglect and poor sanitation. Some of these huts were still used as homes until a couple of years ago: one has been preserved in the gallery's forecourt. Memory, refashioned and reconstituted, continues to persist.

By the end of the 1980s, Red Location was under almost permanent siege from the security forces, reflecting its importance as a centre of resistance to apartheid. Decades earlier, the activist Raymond Mhlaba initiated direct opposition when he led a group of comrades through the door to the railway station marked 'whites only', and after a few twists and turns ended up on Robben Island. Govan Mbeki, Thabo's father and a veteran leader of the anti-apartheid struggle, came from the area, and together with Ernest Malgas, was responsible for insisting that part of the post-apartheid settlement would be a centre which celebrated this resistance and the culture which sprang from the struggle.

**'Noero had to fashion an architecture that was relevant and legible to its community'**

Two people picked up that challenge: local councillor Jimmy Tutu, who has struck a clever balance between political machinations and the ambitions of his electorate; and Rory Riordan, an economist and former director of the Human Rights Trust, who chaired the ANC council's finance committee after the 1994 elections, and has since left politics and acted as project manager for the precinct. They were largely responsible for developing the concept of a cultural precinct – in contrast to the default option chosen for most town centre developments in South Africa, of a shopping mall, a product, says Noero of Reaganomics and Milton Friedman. Winning the initial competition for the precinct in 2000 was an opportunity to 'treat people with dignity, as something other than units of production and consumption'.

Red Location and the surrounding township of New Brighton were fertile if challenging ground for this ambition. Many locals had made their mark in cultural activity. John Kani and Winston Ntshona, actors and writers who worked with Athol Fugard, grew up nearby. The painter George Pemba lived in Red Location and drew heavily on its experiences in his art. There was no lack of culture but almost no way of recognising and celebrating it. Even now many local people make art, but few go to galleries. Without architectural precedents for public buildings, let alone cultural institutions, Noero had to fashion an architecture that was relevant and legible to its community.



That is a consistent thread in his architecture, going back to a series of inventive projects from his time as architect to the Anglican Church in Johannesburg where he worked with Bishop Desmond Tutu. Tutu, Noero recalls, looked to buildings by Hawksmoor, Butterfield and Street in poor urban areas of Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries as precedents for high-quality architecture for the disadvantaged urban communities of apartheid South Africa. The starting point, Noero and his colleagues found, was in the informal settlements, which were the only places where black people could organise for themselves, even though their means were limited. They found inventive ways of using cheap and waste materials. Noero's goal became 'to show how to elevate [this architectural language] even further'.

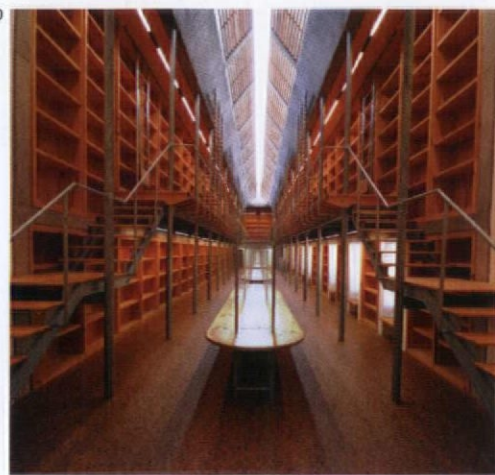
One example is the use of local pine. Noero spotted that it was used as fencing for shacks 'to keep the goats in or the dogs out'. It's cheap and robust, and an ideal cladding material. He used it around the archive, and where scholars will go to consult original and printed material on the history of apartheid. Yet if all there was to this architecture were a deft assembly of detritus it wouldn't be very interesting or functional and it would probably not fulfil the symbolic potential of the precinct either. But Noero shows a shrewd and imaginative spatial intelligence as well, and it is the mix of sophisticated types with his understanding of local sensibilities that elevates the overall architectural language.

**'The buildings have a nobility but feel remarkably embedded in their context and community'**

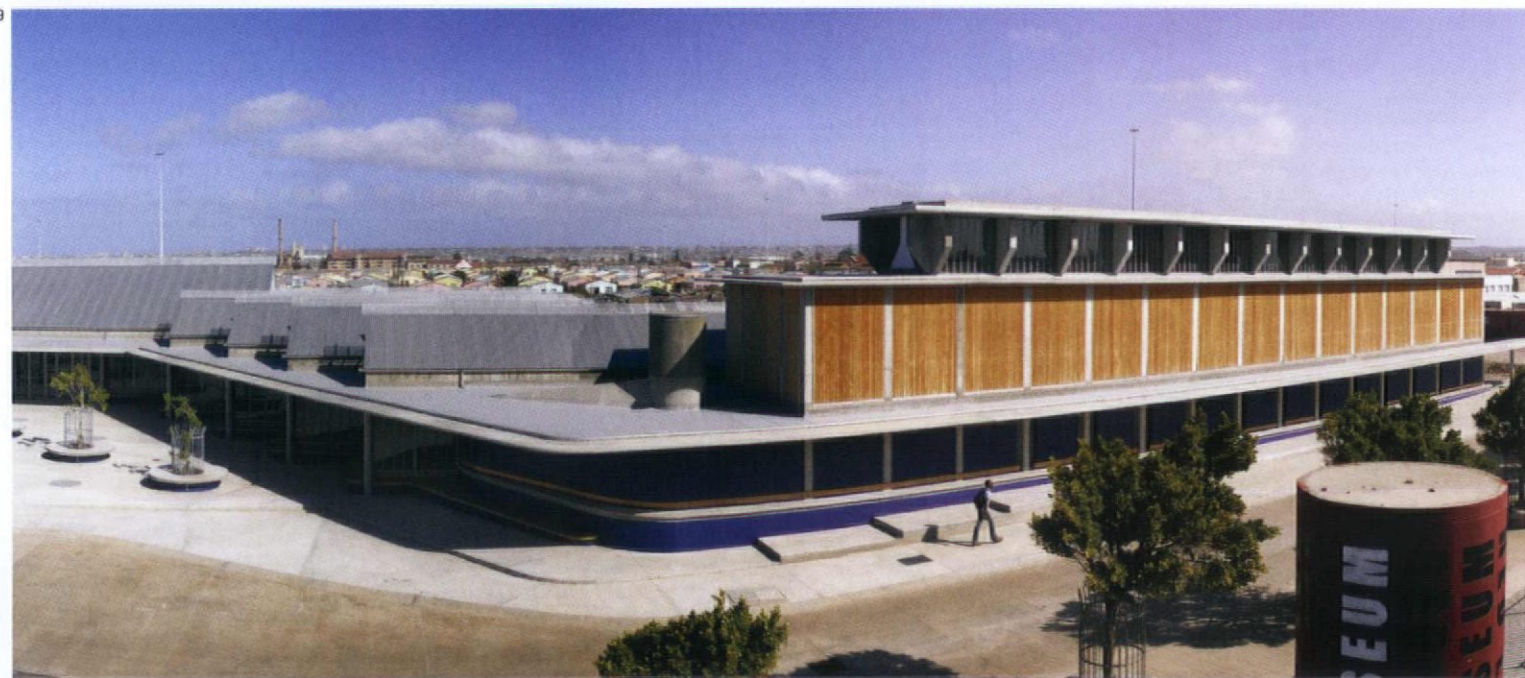
The archive, for example, may be clad with what local people use for fences, but it is the highest building in the precinct. Its long, thin interior, illuminated by a strip skylight, would not be out of place as an Oxbridge college library. University professors should certainly feel at home in this hushed, book-lined space. They will be able to reach the printed material for themselves, either from the ground floor or the elegant but simple steel galleries. Rare works will be stored in spaces with all the protection a major archive should have.

To reach the archive you go through the digital library. Its entrance is a generous forecourt which opens between two converging canopies. The canopy roofline becomes a datum that joins the different volumes of the library and archive. A sawtooth roof brings light into the pine-clad working spaces – a teaching room on one side, and several computer banks on the others. The route to the archive passes a series of faceted bays with window benches before going up a slightly rising but steeply curving ramp around the archivist's desk, clearly signalling a different space but not making it inaccessible.

The gallery shows a similar sensibility. Though small it has all the security and art handling facilities needed for international exhibitions. South-facing (away from the sun) light scoops bring modulated daylight into the main exhibition area and a system of panels allows for many different divisions and lengths of walls, so it can take primarily hung exhibits or floor-mounted installations. The effect is almost Kahnian, but the presence of the preserved shack and a single picture window looking across the neighbourhood ensure that no-one forgets where they are. The combination of architectural quality and clear reminders of location make the



**9. Clad in thin strips of local pine, the archive resembles a timber casket. It will contain extensive original material on the history of apartheid – including Nelson Mandela's prison journals – forming a valuable cultural resource**  
**10. With its pine bookshelves, steel galleries and long thin interior lit by a strip of sky, the archive would not be out of place in an Oxbridge college**  
**11. (Opposite) detail of archive exterior, its external wall doubling as a place to sit**















**Red Location  
Cultural Precinct,  
Port Elizabeth,  
South Africa  
Noero Wolff  
Architects**

case for art and society being entwined more eloquently than reams of Marxist art history. It will have a permanent display of local art and introduce work from further afield.

These are very skilful buildings, built on very low budgets and by a procurement method where local people – mostly unskilled – had to make up a proportion of the labour force. Noero knows the limitations of this situation and turns them to his advantage, using simple materials but coaxing unusual forms and even more unexpected effects. They have a nobility but feel remarkably embedded within their context and community. The crossroads is already an important meeting point, giving each building a forecourt which leads onto the streets and

infuses a sense of generosity, even of public realm, into the urban context.

Noero has thought long and hard about how to develop an African urbanism. Cities, he points out, are a new phenomenon in South Africa, and their designs largely imported from Europe. The idea of public space, used for its own sake as opposed to, say, a political meeting, has little traction. What are used in South African cities, though, are streets. They take you from point to point, and are lined with formal and informal retail activity. So they are the starting point for developing public space, and that is why each institution has its own forecourt, as a kind of intermediate zone between the public street and the building, and these

are beginning to be used, initially as short cuts but increasingly as points of social contact. Benches around the trees in front of the library add to these opportunities.

Noero sees the evolution of an urban culture as a long process. But starting at Red Location, it suggests how public space at least might become less of a scene of contest and more a place of pleasure. Given that the buildings of the cultural precinct infuse local with international culture, and make space for memories to be recorded and presented, culture, memory and history might follow too.

**Jo Noero talks about this project at the Royal Academy of Arts on 9 November.**

**See more of Noero Wolff's buildings at [architectural-review.com/archive](http://architectural-review.com/archive)**



**12. (Opposite) a system of light scoops modulates daylight in the art gallery  
13. A preserved shack in the art gallery forecourt is a reminder of the surrounding locale. Here, art and society are inextricably entwined  
14. Gallery entrance hall  
15. Typical gallery space**





Social housing  
Paris, France  
Hamonic + Masson

This Parisian public sector housing is an attempt to green the city – both with colour and a facade of stacked terrace ‘gardens’

# EXTRA VERT







# REPORT

## ANDREW AYERS

Thanks to Lionel Jospin's Socialist Party government (1997–2002), the provision of social housing in France is enshrined in law. Since 2000, local authorities in populous areas must aim to ensure that at least 20 per cent of their housing stock is social, or face an annual fine. Some municipalities – most notoriously Neuilly-sur-Seine, one of France's five richest *communes*, whose mayor for 19 years was Nicolas Sarkozy – actively resist, preferring to pay to keep the rabble away.

But across the municipal boundary in Paris the situation is very different, for the city has a long tradition of social housing provision and a growing supply, currently totalling some 185,000 dwellings. The principal provider is Paris Habitat-OPH, a public-sector institution founded in 1912 which is now the city's most active builder and largest landlord. With holdings dating back to the 1920s, the upgrading of ageing stock is a major preoccupation, and proved to be the spur for this new-build scheme recently completed by Hamonic + Masson, winner of the 2007 design competition.

Bounded by the Quai de la Rapée and the Rue Villiot in the 12th arrondissement, this prime riverside site was first developed

by Paris Habitat in the 1950s, with a collection of five- and 11-storey bars laid out in chevron patterns parallel to the Seine. By the 1990s, the estate was showing its age and, rather than refurbish, Paris Habitat decided to demolish entirely and rebuild, thereby permitting a 9.5 per cent increase in the number of dwellings. In 2000, architect and urbanist Jean-Pierre Buffi was called in to draw up a masterplan, which threw out the Ville Radieuse in favour of Baron Haussmann: orthogonal, street line-respecting apartment buildings around the perimeter, sheltering a 'hidden' centre where more diverse forms could flourish.

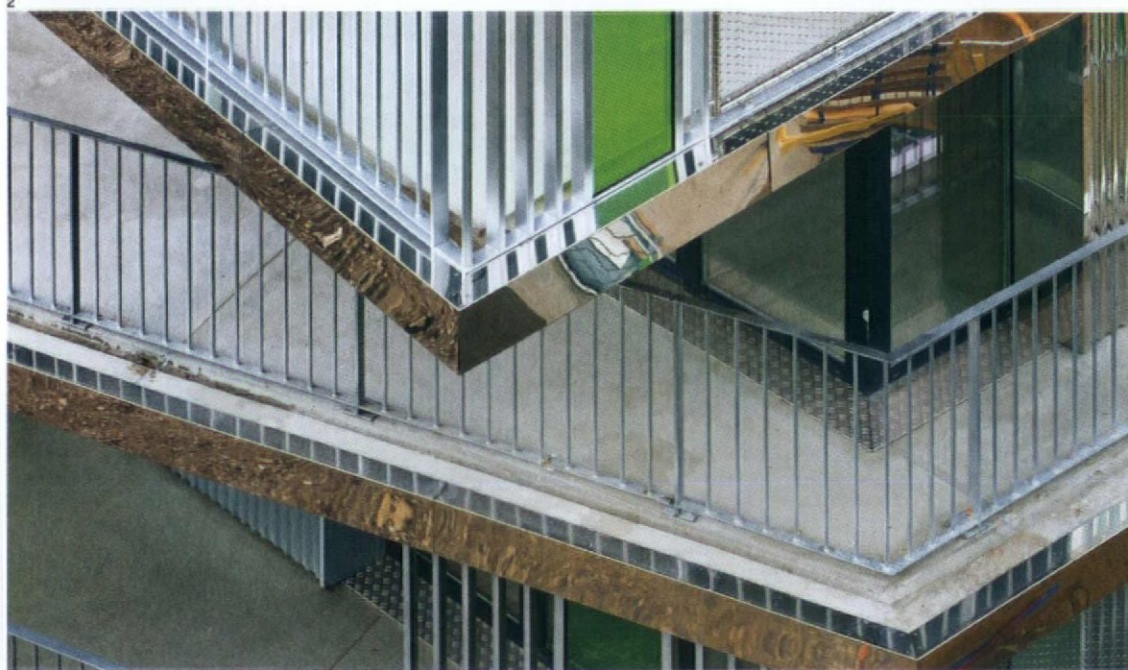
In Buffi's plan, the latter consisted of two squat towers and a low-rise terrace. To ensure they hold their own against the forbidding office blocks that have flanked the site since the 1970s, the Seine-side buildings rise to 37m (approximately 13 storeys), the maximum allowed in this sector of the city. In addition, the redevelopment was divided up into lots, in order to artificially recreate the variety found in piecemeal-developed streets. Hamonic + Masson's portion – which comprises the two towers – constitutes the penultimate realisation, Frank Salama's terraces being due for completion at the end of this year.

Hamonic + Masson was not tender in its appraisal of the

redeveloped site. It had reached, the architects declared, 'a critical mass of ugliness', and they felt that their project should be the catalyst that would transform the whole. Hence their buildings' startling visual impact: over the general cacophony of their surroundings they shout louder than anyone – 'Look at me!' – and in doing so divert all attention from the ambient mediocrity. The vocabulary here, deployed with jazzy angularity, is a jolly blast of hard-nosed urban fireworks: shiny stainless steel, both smooth and corrugated, transparent green acrylic, chunky railings, lacquered aluminium, chain-link stainless steel fencing, and massive concrete balconies varnished in a vivid green that Parisians will immediately recognise as the colour of the city's wheelie bins.

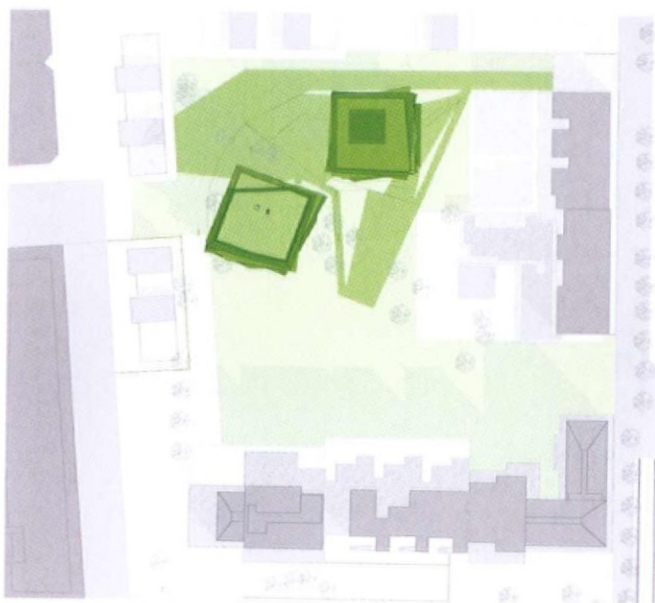
Moreover, the corrugated steel cladding on the taller tower, painted with vertical green bands, deliberately evokes the roadwork barriers seen all over the French capital, which, as municipal regulations stipulate, must be striped in grey and RAL 6018. Such a choice will clearly not be to everyone's taste, and raises the perennial question of whether one has the right to impose non-consensual aesthetics on social housing tenants who do not get to choose where they live.

With their Villiot-Rapée buildings, Hamonic + Masson is



**Social housing  
Paris, France  
Hamonic + Masson**





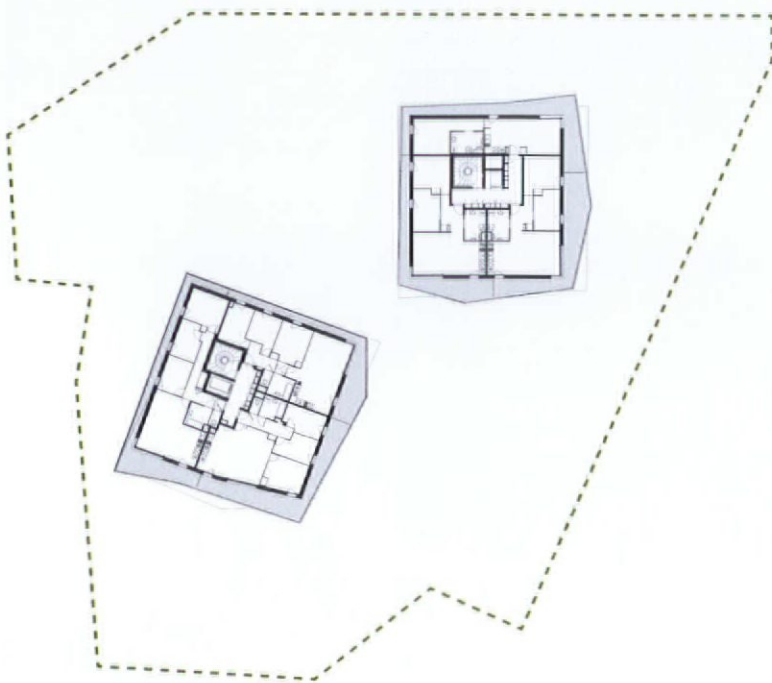
site plan



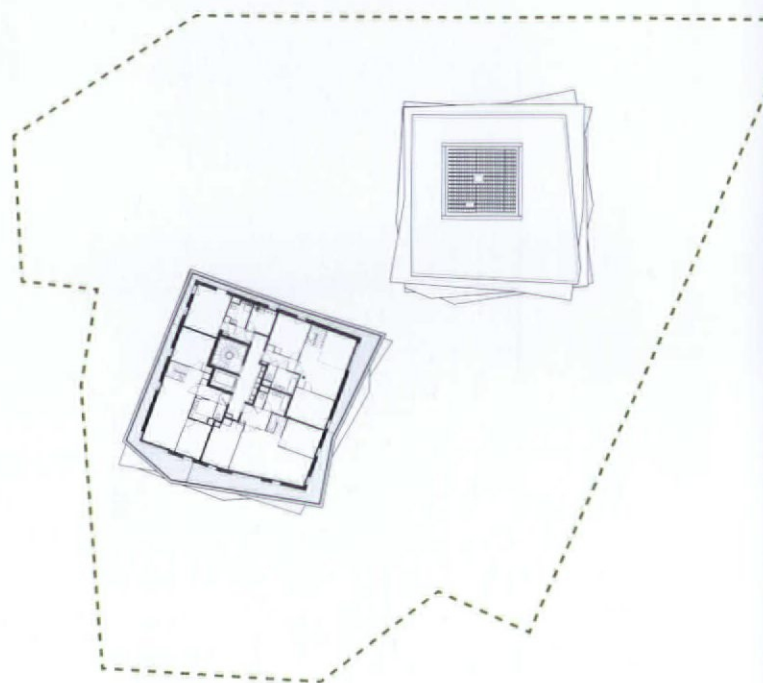
1. (Previous page), detail of balcony geometry  
2. Angular terraces add precious external space to each flat  
3. Detail of facade, a zinging assemblage of concrete, stainless steel and green acrylic panels

4. The visual and formal boldness of the two new blocks diverts attention from the surrounding ambient mediocrity  
5. Irregularly cantilevered floors control sightlines and break up the building mass

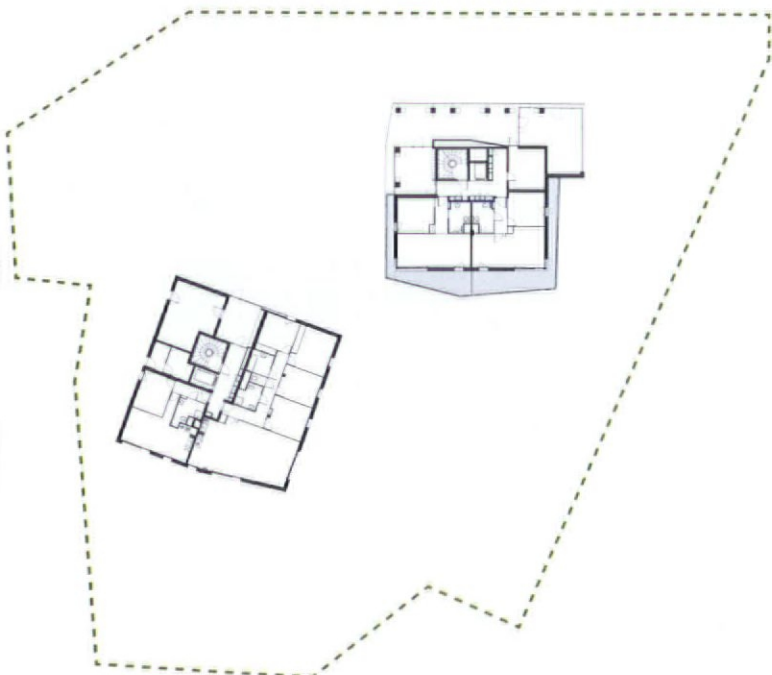




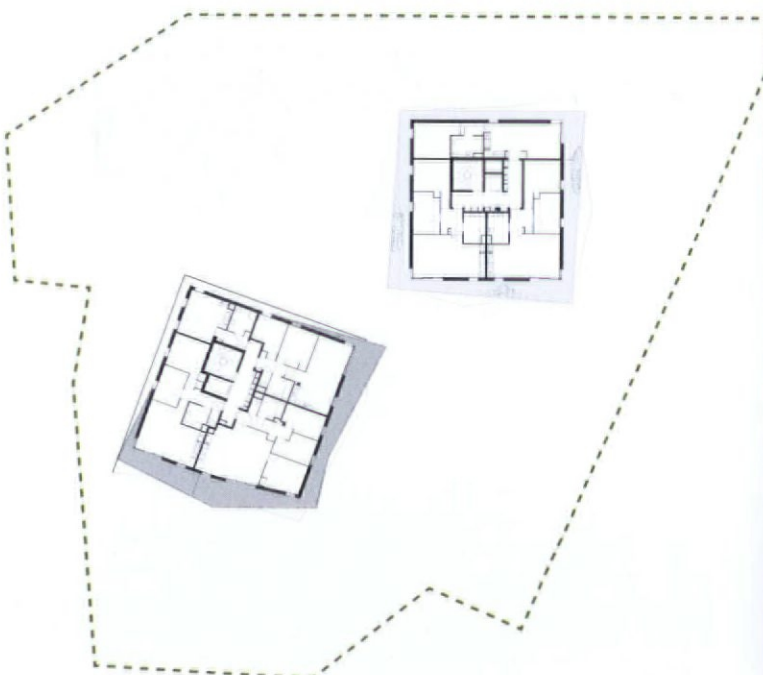
plan levels 1-4



plan level II



ground floor plan



plan levels 5-9







**Social housing  
Paris, France  
Hamonc + Masson**



playing a very similar game – however different the aesthetic and typology – to FAT at its Islington Square development in Manchester (2006). There, future residents got to vote for the scheme they liked best; here they did not. On the other hand, French architects feel that it is only in the public sector that risks can be taken and experiments tried out – it is not builders such as Bouygues or Lafarge who will naturally choose to march in the vanguard; private sector speculative housing being innately conservative.

But Hamonc + Masson's project is more than mere window dressing. Behind the visual pyrotechnics are intelligent ideas. The varied floor slab contours, for example, which twist and turn in relation to each

**'French architects feel it is only in the public sector that risks can be taken and experiments tried out'**

other in what, at first glance, might seem an entirely gratuitous fashion, are in fact the product of the architect's principal design premise. Recent opinion polls have shown that a majority of the French population dreams of owning a house with a garden but, as the architects point out, this is something that has long been impossible in Paris.

So why not give them the next best thing in the form of truly generous terrace space?

With cantilevers of up to 3m beyond the load-bearing facades, the terraces offer between 25m<sup>2</sup> and 35m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor space per flat, and provide a supplementary circulation path – since all the principal rooms run along the perimeter, you can, if you so desire, step out of your bedroom and walk to your living room without passing through the apartment's interior. The terraces' generous overhangs provide protection from rain and sun, while their irregular contours are intended both to control sightlines with respect to the neighbours, and avoid a vertiginous sheer drop when looking down.

They are also intended to express visually (and this is highlighted more strongly on the shorter tower) the idea of houses

**6. On the taller of the two towers, corrugated steel cladding painted with vertical green bands recalls French roadwork barriers. This spirit of robust functionalism enhances a dreary urban realm, but clearly the aesthetics might not be to everyone's taste and raises the issue of imposing such things on social housing tenants, who have little choice about where they live**  
**7. Facade detail with putative occupants**





**8 & 9.** Plans are varied and each flat has its own outside space that can be used as an external corridor. It remains to be seen how these terraces will be colonised by tenants, but the aim is to impart a humanising sense of individuality

with their gardens having been piled up on top of each other. It remains to be seen whether the architect's hunch that its generosity will spare these outdoor spaces their usual fate – unsightly dumps for bicycles, old fridges, unwanted furniture and washing – will be vindicated. The fact that they afford some rather surprising views over the cityscape should militate in their favour.

Inside, the apartments vary from studio flats to four-bedroom duplexes, and are treated with a bland sobriety that should allow tenants to make themselves immediately at home whatever furnishings they bring with them. Not only are the plans very varied, but each apartment has its own unique 'outside', thereby countering one of the criticisms that was often levelled at Modernist *grands ensembles* in France, namely that tenants had difficulty appropriating their home as their own because they felt like battery hens lodged in relentlessly identical barracks.

Since it is the facades and the lift/staircase core that are load-bearing, all internal walls can be removed, meaning that one day the flats could be entirely reconfigured or, as the architect indicates, the towers could be converted to a completely different use. These are, of course, freestanding buildings, so Hamonic + Masson could

orient them as they chose, with bedrooms (with reduced-size fenestration) that are mostly north-east facing, while the majority of the living rooms (with more generous glazing) look south-west and enjoy corner sites. Where energy conservation is concerned, the towers meet the specifications set by the city of Paris in its climate plan.

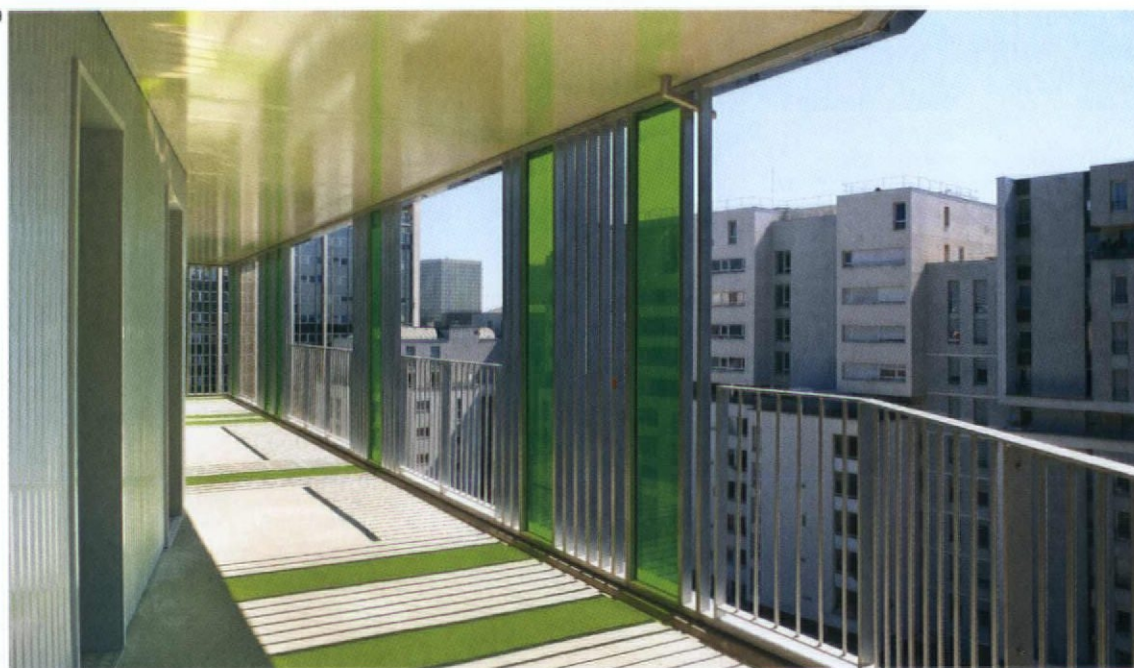
Hamonic + Masson's towers stand close together in what will soon be a communal garden for the entire Villiot-Rapée city block (designed by the landscape architect Péna & Peña). The two buildings are similar but by no means identical. The architect chose to vary their height, with one rising 12 storeys (37m, the maximum allowed), while the other counts nine. Furthermore, the ground levels are different for each, meaning their floors are not aligned, thereby avoiding direct sightlines between the two. The lower tower stands on pilotis; the garden running under it in the form of a spongy green-asphalt play area (bike sheds and underground car-park access nestle beneath it). The taller tower is planted directly in the ground, and will soon give on to a terraced sun patio – for security reasons, the roof spaces are out of bounds.

French architects frequently complain about the ever-more stringent building regulations, which they say impede innovation

and creativity, but, as with the Hays Code, they can sometimes be got round or turned to advantage. Thus, the jaunty cut-off angle on the final floor of the taller tower was imposed by the sight-line rules, and the building has but one lift where the code specifies two for edifices over 11 storeys: Hamonic + Masson placed the duplex apartments at the top, so the two final floors count as one.

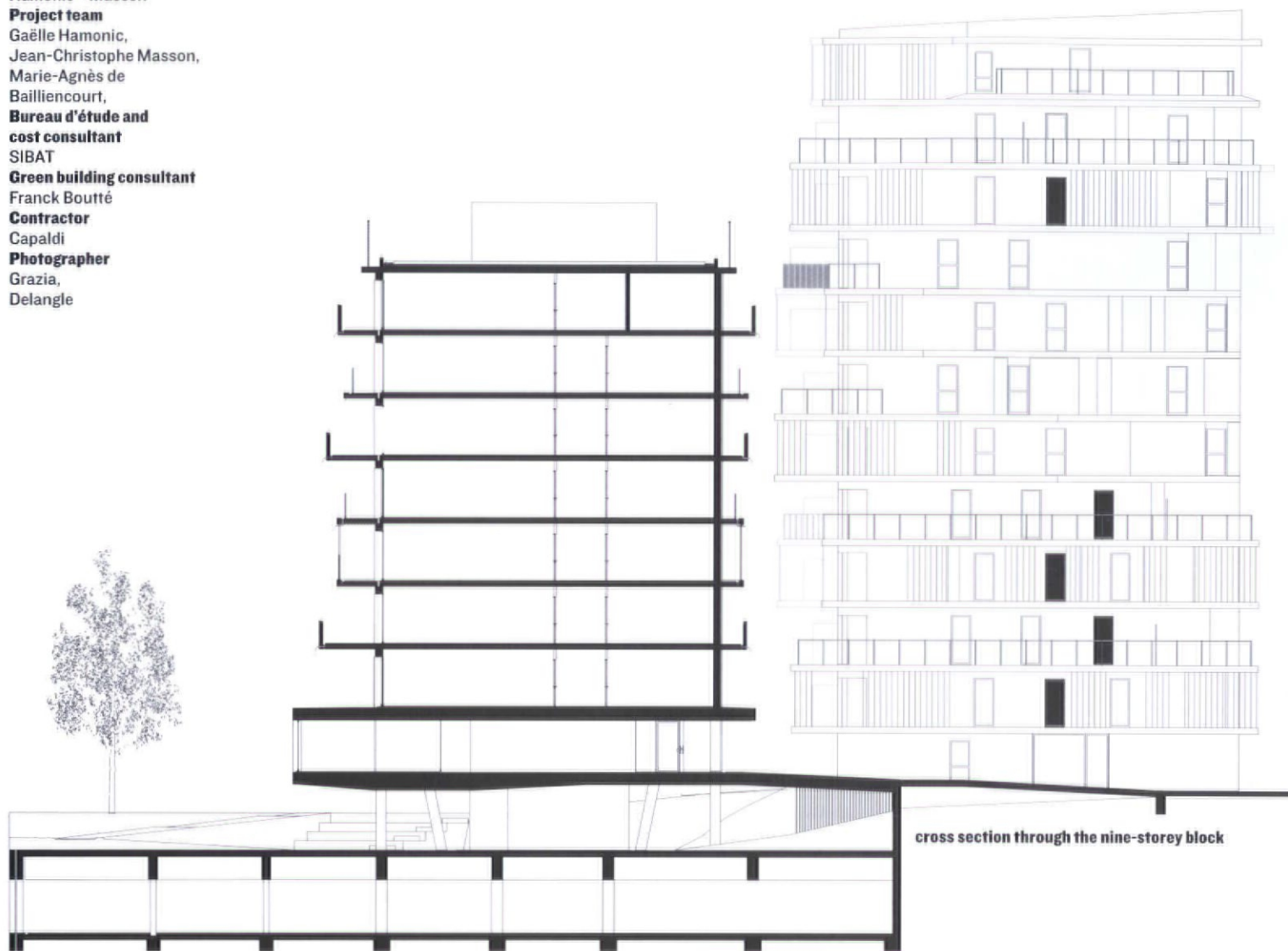
The architects also fought for details they believed in. For example: the metal stair railings in the duplexes, which were much more expensive than the clunky wooden ones that would have been standard, so costs had to be cut elsewhere to get them accepted; or the metal floor plaques that mask the transition between inside and out on to the terraces – a more elegant solution than the standard way of doing things, but, because untried, subject to persuading the *bureau de contrôle* it would pass muster. It is this generosity of spirit, the will to fight for the best on available resources, that raises this project several cuts above run-of-the-mill social housing.

The lessons learned will not be wasted, for Hamonic + Masson is currently building a 17-storey tower (50m high) on the same principles – although, context oblige, in rather more sober dress – at a site across the river in the 13th arrondissement.





**Architect**  
 Hamonic + Masson  
**Project team**  
 Gaëlle Hamonic,  
 Jean-Christophe Masson,  
 Marie-Agnès de  
 Baillencourt,  
**Bureau d'étude and  
 cost consultant**  
 SIBAT  
**Green building consultant**  
 Franck Boutté  
**Contractor**  
 Capaldi  
**Photographer**  
 Grazia,  
 Delangle



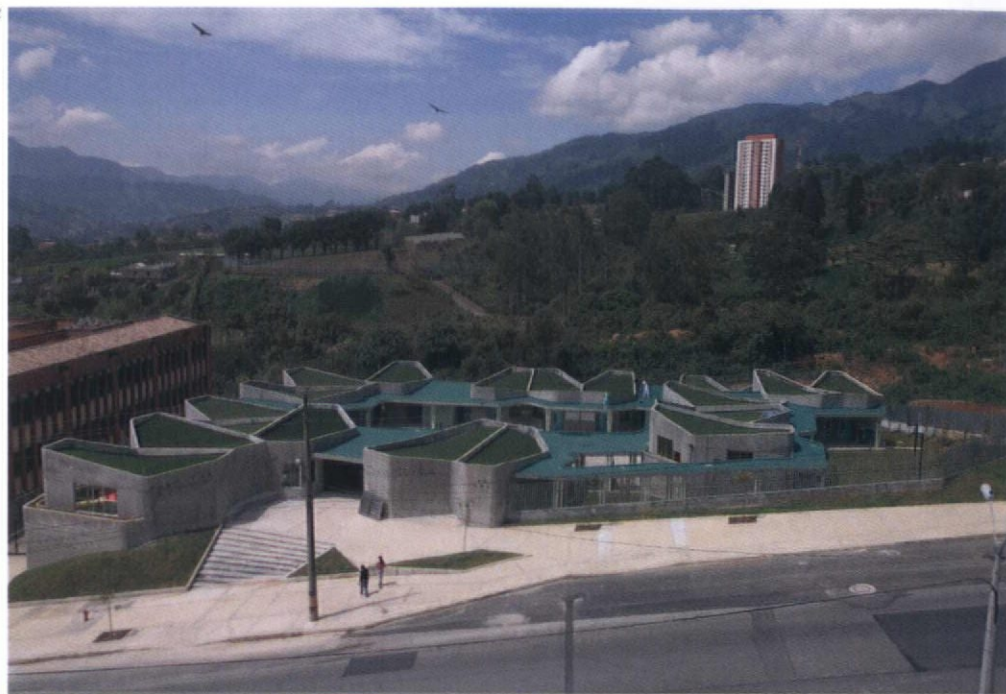
**10.** Play area at the foot of the nine-storey tower 11 & 12. Apartment types range from studios to four bedroom duplexes. Interiors are bland, neutral canvases to be personalised by occupants

**Social housing  
 Paris, France  
 Hamonic + Masson**









1: (Opposite) aerial view of the Pajarito La Aurora kindergarten. The roofscape becomes like another facade because of the views afforded from the surrounding mountainsides  
 2: The other kindergarten, San Antonio de Prado, uses the same modular system, but grouped in different aggregations and varied for the topography

# MODULAR GENETICS

A team of two architects has created a classroom module to deliver Medellín's new kindergartens. The first completed pair show the system's potential for variety and sensitivity to context

**Kindergartens,  
 San Antonio  
 de Prado  
 and Pajarito  
 La Aurora,  
 Medellín,  
 Colombia,  
 Ctrl G and Plan B**



## REPORT

### MIGUEL MESA

Medellín in Colombia is crossed by most of the great planetary issues: inequity, misery, war, drugs, arms trafficking, forced displacement, ecological instability and life in the favelas. It is a city with plenty of green, but physically and socially segregated, and arranged to favour vehicular traffic rather than pedestrians. This is why it is the perfect place to practise social initiatives of all types.

Historically, in Medellín it has been easy to take advantage of crises: it has often been difficult to discriminate between real attempts to relieve problems, simple broken promises and unconsidered exploitation. Nevertheless, and thanks to the previous two mayors (Sergio Fajardo, 2004-2007, and Alonso Salazar, 2008-2011) it is true to say today's city is not only a complex social laboratory, but a territory for architectural and urban experimentation too.

Under Fajardo's and Salazar's leadership, Medellín invested most of its budget in programmes and projects in the poor, informal and peripheral neighbourhoods of the city's mountains. Systematic physical interventions (library parks, schools, sports grounds, urban walkways and so on) have eased poverty, inequity and lack of opportunities for decent housing, public space and educational environments.

Medellín has designed and built this collection of public architecture through a double strategy: strengthening the Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (EDU), the office of urban development; and with a policy of public calls for projects. The first is disposed to manage, improve and reform the existing city and to agree on new projects with communities; the second is

to guarantee quality architecture within new infrastructures. This dual strategy has been so successful that it has set a benchmark nationally and for other developing countries accustomed to underestimating architecture's potential to effect social change.

Over the past eight years, Medellín has carried out experiments, with good and bad results, but above all it has accomplished trials. These efforts have gained the support of sister cities that suffer similar problems, and the successes have been replicated. And while programmes such as the library park are now repeated in Brazil, the city continues to try out new ideas. Such an initiative – and the subject of this article – is one of Salazar's principal projects: A Good Start.

This involves building high-quality kindergartens that – instead of weakening informal neighbourhoods; instead of creating a *tabula rasa* and enforcing social and urban cleansing; and instead of forcing people to move continuously to find basic services – actually strengthen public structures and the presence of the municipality. Integrating pre-school education at a fundamental and familial level, they employ and train local mothers and turn them into qualified teachers. The kindergartens provide buildings and community services that solve problems for local people.

The kindergartens serve children from birth to the age of five. They are built in the mountains around the valley, where the mothers – most of whom are single parents, heads of families, or young widows – go to work in the daytime. Before the kindergartens were built, the children would have been left with their grandmothers or neighbours. Designed for some of the most vulnerable children in the city, the Good Start initiative not only coordinates institutions as educational centres but also as places where good nutrition and health are guaranteed.

The kindergarten system of the municipality is co-authored by two practices Ctrl G (led by Catalina Patiño, Viviana Peña and Eliana Beltran) and Plan B



3 & 4. The exterior and courtyard aspects of Pajarito La Aurora kindergarten, where the concrete canopy provides a shaded route around the exterior spaces  
5, 6 & 7. At San Antonio de Prado the relationship between the kindergarten and the hard and soft landscaping is different to its counterpart, but still a familial likeness in the essence of the scheme is discernable

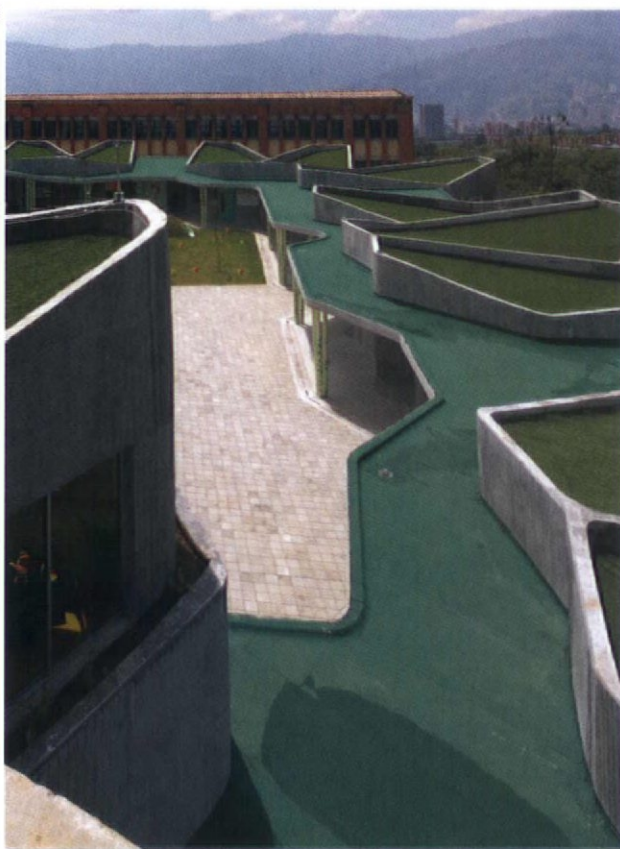
'The kindergartens share a modular classroom, yet they adapt to their topographies. They are systematic yet singular'



5



6



7



**Kindergartens,  
San Antonio  
de Prado  
and Pajarito  
La Aurora,  
Medellín,  
Colombia,  
Ctrl G and Plan B**



**Pajarito  
La Aurora  
Kindergarten,  
Medellín,  
Colombia,  
Ctrl G and Plan B**



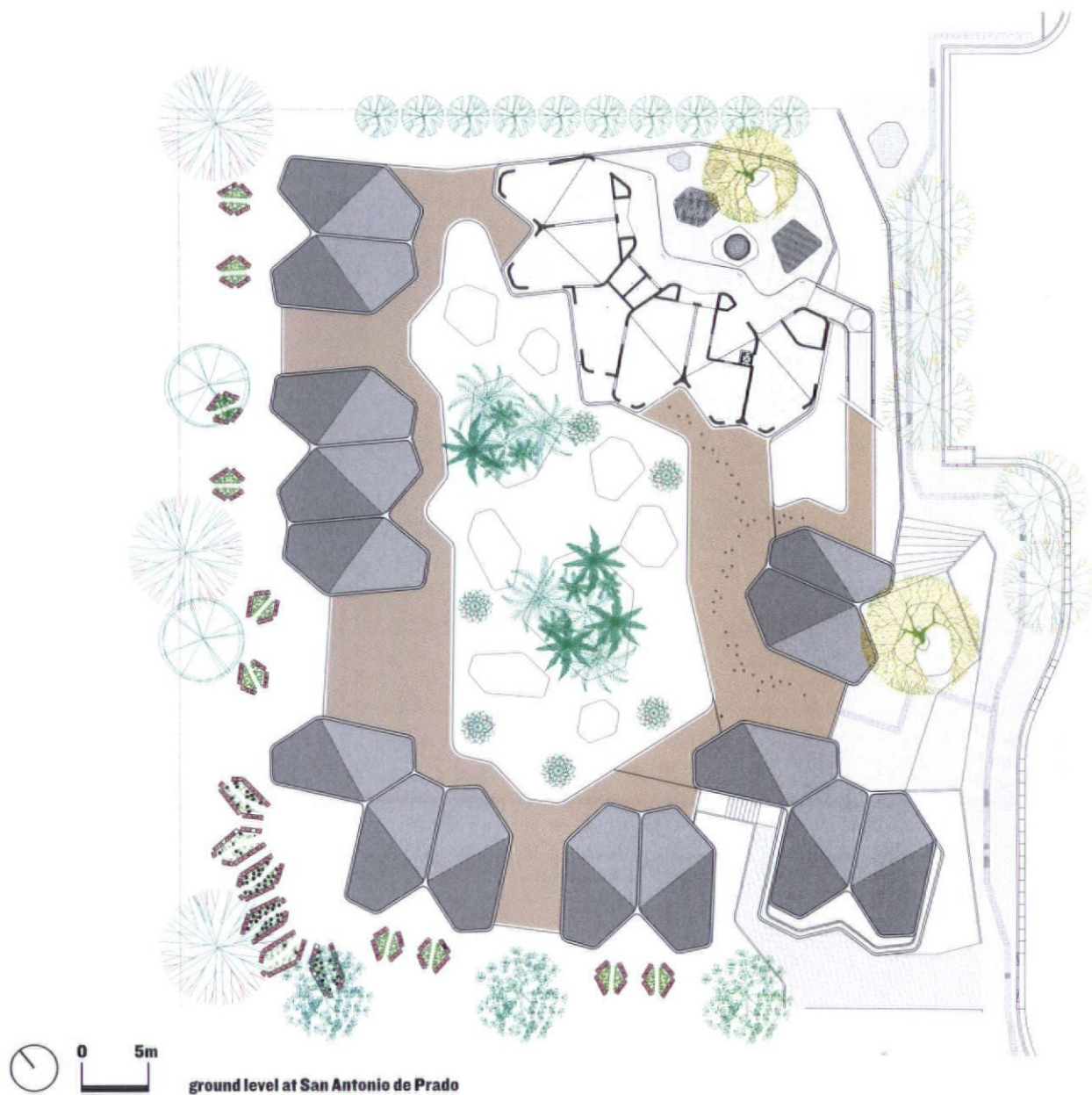
ground level at Pajarito La Aurora



long section at Pajarito La Aurora



**San Antonio  
de Prado  
Kindergarten,  
Medellin,  
Colombia,  
Ctrl G and Plan B**

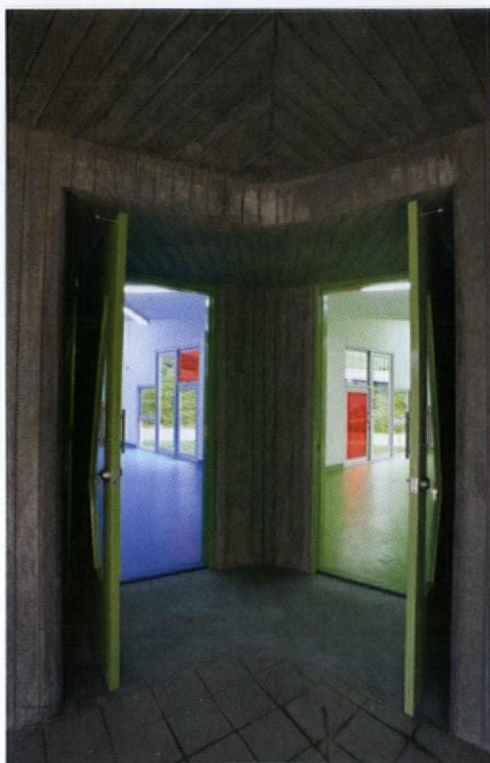


ground level at San Antonio de Prado



cross section at San Antonio de Prado





**8. The twinning of the entrances to classrooms at Pajarito La Aurora kindergarten**

**9. (Opposite) a classroom at San Antonio de Prado. The concrete soffit is left exposed and the walls painted up to a datum line. The playing children seem unperturbed by the robustness of the finishes**

## Kindergartens, San Antonio de Prado and Pajarito La Aurora, Medellín, Colombia, Ctrl G and Plan B

Arquitectos (led by Federico Mesa, who happens to be my brother). They originally won the bids for two kindergartens, in San Antonio de Prado and Pajarito La Aurora, which are shown here. Completed this summer, the EDU liked the proposals so much that it is using the same scheme to design and build 10 more. Of those 10, the Ctrl G and Plan B are designing two more, Carpinelo and Santo Domingo Savio, to be completed next year.

Working with the EDU, the projects mix classic architectural design with activities that are sometimes less visible but which have a high impact in the less-favoured neighbourhoods: agreements with the community and social pacts. These buildings are not loose pieces disconnected from the urban and social weave; but rather form part of so-called Integral Urban Plans (IUPs), which take whole neighbourhoods and activate social interventions on various scales: linking them to the integrated transport system, carrying out reforms in schools, improving housing, constructing library parks, enhancing public spaces, cleaning up the rivers and streams, building police and security centres and inaugurating business development centres.

The two kindergartens in San Antonio de Prado and Pajarito La Aurora are organic buildings which share a common floor plan and the repetition of a modular classroom in the form of a petal, yet they adapt in different ways to their respective topography. In so doing, they are simultaneously systematic and singular. The geographical placement of the buildings is interesting, too, because of various spatial turns involved, the combination of different inclinations of classroom roofs and the vibrant undulations of the terrain on which they stand. The roofs constitute the most interesting images of these small educational groups, becoming in a way another facade due to their position on the steep mountainsides.

The principal element of these architectural groups is the concrete canopy. This strip follows the circulation routes, hiding differences in floor levels and linking groups of classrooms. The canopy gathers together

the turns and inclinations of the classrooms and their roofs; it adds unity to the volumes and gives them scale; it keeps them low to suit their function.

These canopies seem to control everything: they open up space for the classrooms, giving them height; they open up to the landscape, with numerous windows featuring coloured and different-sized glazing; they allow the body of the building to traverse the gardens and they include the services and eateries. When necessary, they separate from the classroom volume and turn into fluid walkways framed by gardens. Though the classroom modules adapt to different platforms, the canopies both horizontally stitch them together and separate them. This is why the section of the classrooms is a surprise, especially when two or more classrooms are joined. The reduced scale of these kindergartens created by the canopies is reinforced by the doors, columns, toilets and sinks, and by the soft concrete spaces that constitute the architectural groupings to generate a childlike and fun atmosphere.

These kindergartens are rich places in small spaces. Turns and connections open up the possibilities for play and allow for multiple experiences. The extensive openings in the facades are intended to bring the children closer to the gardens and tropical vegetation. The designers used the slogan 'the kindergarten of gardens' and, in their terms, the exterior space is thought out in the same way as the interior. A net of polygons drawn in floor plan delineates both the classrooms and the gardens, with each polygon being seen as equivalent. The roofs, which are covered with synthetic grass, could have been planted but were not, partly for bureaucratic reasons, partly for maintenance.

The idea of planting a real garden while the kindergarten was under construction belies an underlying principle, as if the order established by architecture should also promote a natural order. The effect is to create real civic centres, giving them a wider range of uses and greater utility and recognition than ever was planned.

### Architect

Ctrl G

### Project team

Catalina Patiño, Viviana Peña, Eliana Beltrán

### Architect

Plan B Arquitectos

### Project team

Federico Mesa

### Collaborators

Luisa Amaya, Juan Pablo Giraldo, Carolina Vélez, Clara Restrepo, Juliana Montoya, Diana Rodríguez, Felipe Vanegas, Jorge Gómez, Juan José Ochoa

### Photographs

Sergio Gomez







# PLAIN SPEAKING

Set on an Alpine floodplain, this new teaching workshop for Swiss construction students embodies an exemplary rigour and sobriety





**Building Trades  
Training Centre,  
Gordola,  
Switzerland  
Durisch + Nolli  
Architetti**







## REPORT

### STEVEN SPIER

Lapped by the waters of Lake Maggiore and surrounded by vineyards and the foothills of the Alps, Gordola is a picturesque medieval town in the Ticino, Switzerland's Italian-speaking canton. Behind the idyll, however, lies a postwar, car-centric sprawl of single-family houses and shopping centres. And like all towns, Gordola's messy periphery is an architecture-free zone, with flimsy plastic tunnels for hothouse farming and functional buildings accommodating a modest level of industry. It is also where the Ticino branch of the Società Svizzera Impresari Costruttori (Swiss Society of Building Trades) has its training centre, a set of uninspiring 1970s buildings that needed new workshops.

There are a number of challenges in designing for such a place. There are issues of an appropriate architectural expression for the periphery, but also the practical problems of building in an alluvial flood plain that has spongy soil and a high water table. Some of the competition entries from 2004 relied on berms or on the building itself acting as a

dam. However, the winning scheme by Massagno-based Durisch + Nolli Architetti had the idea of raising the building to let the flood waters (as well as the prevailing winds) pass underneath it. This was the first of what became characteristically straightforward (though not always obvious) choices that engender a subtle play between object and building and make poetry out of the rigour of keeping it simple.

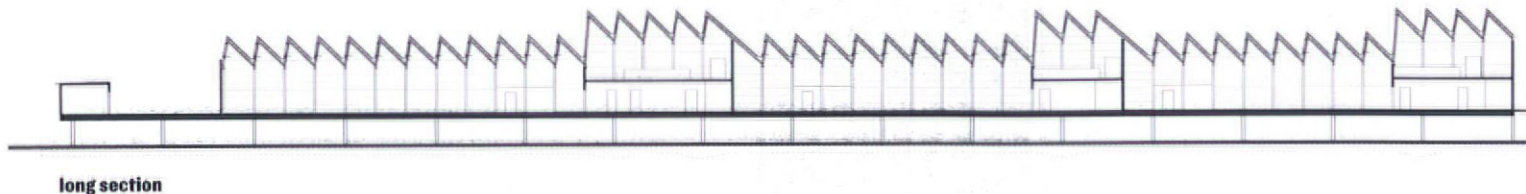
The building defines one edge of the site to create a campus with a large central space used for training on heavy machinery. A 400mm-thick concrete slab is supported by 68 slender columns, each on its own foundation. The 6m-high undercroft is used for parking and storage. On this 140m-long plinth sits what is, essentially, a machine for learning in, its design driven by strict programmatic and ergonomic constraints.

Everything is stripped down and optimised for clarity and purpose. Three staircases lead directly to a door and then a corridor. Exactly in the middle of the corridor you either turn left to enter the changing rooms and through to the workshops, or go upstairs to the classrooms. Spaces in the circulation

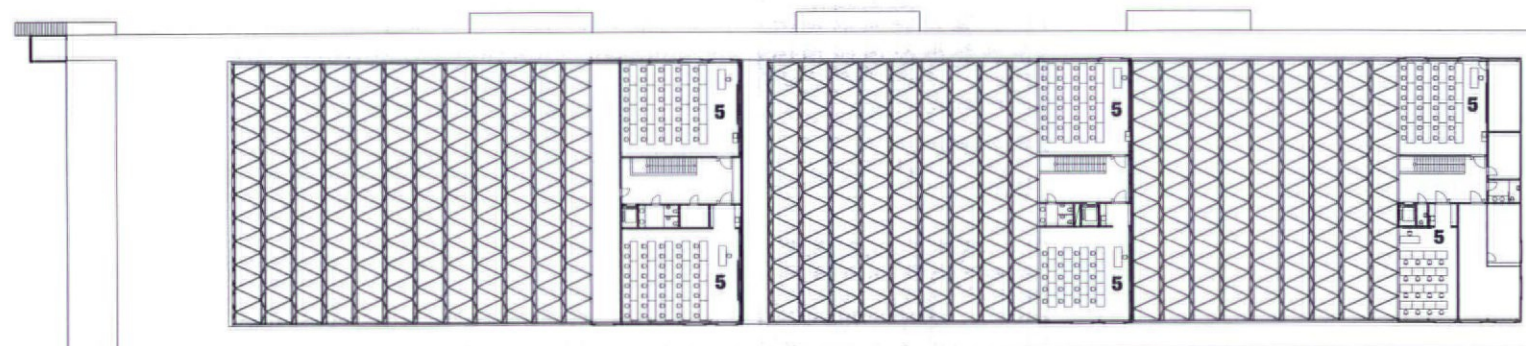
block are single-storey, while those of the workshops, for woodworking, metalwork and the sanitary trades, are double-height, with large sliding doors for the delivery of materials. Workshops are arranged on a 3m module and are either 27m or 33m long.

Construction is similarly rational. The three two-storey blocks are concrete framed and slotted in to the long bar take up the shear from the lightweight steel structure of the sheds. They have glass walls to partition the space, acoustic insulation attached to the ceiling, where necessary, and saw-tooth skylights facing north, which give the building its jagged, factory-like profile. Exposed services and a polished concrete floor screed turn the spaces into a teaching resource by showing how they are made. Likewise, the building form appears to do only what it needs to; for example, the unadorned profile of the roof pops up to accommodate the upper-level classrooms. The entire long, thin volume is wrapped in and unified by a homogenous metal skin. Minimising materials helped to reduce cost and construction time, and at CHF18 million (£12.75 million) for a 9,328m<sup>2</sup> building,





long section

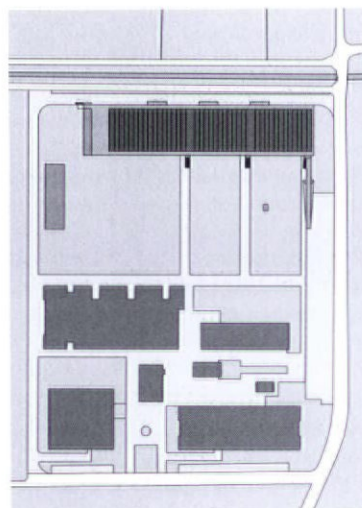


upper level plan



plinth level plan

1. (Previous page)  
elevated on a plinth above  
a flood plain, the training  
workshops have the  
familiar serrated profile  
of a factory building  
2. A homogenous  
metal skin envelops  
the long thin volume



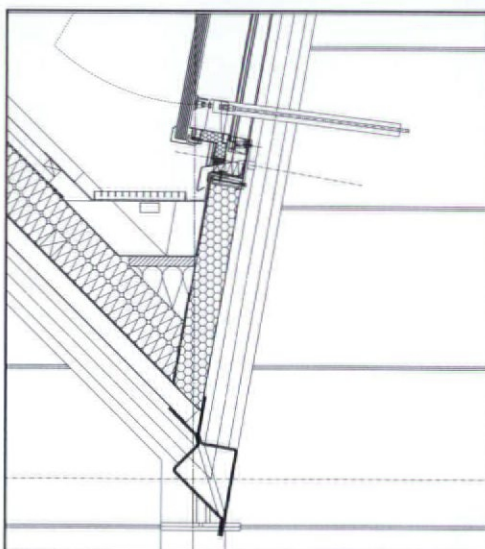
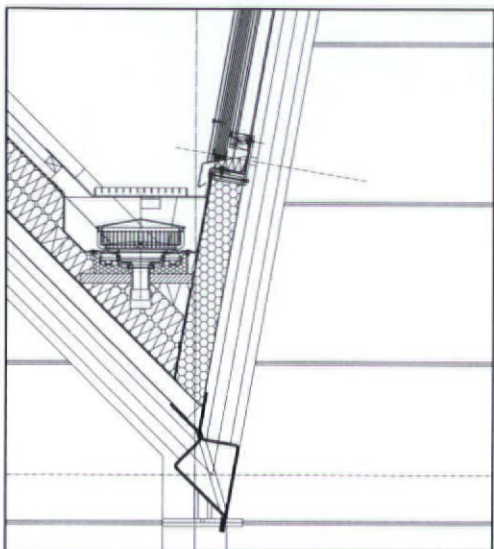
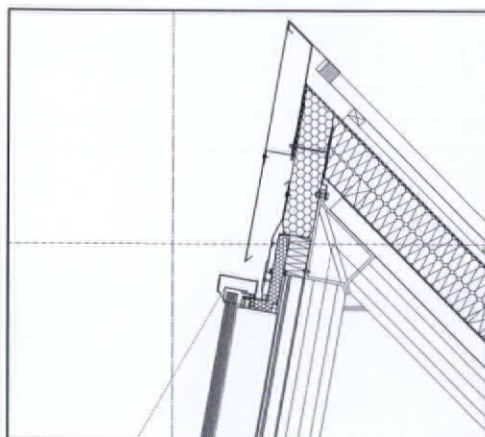
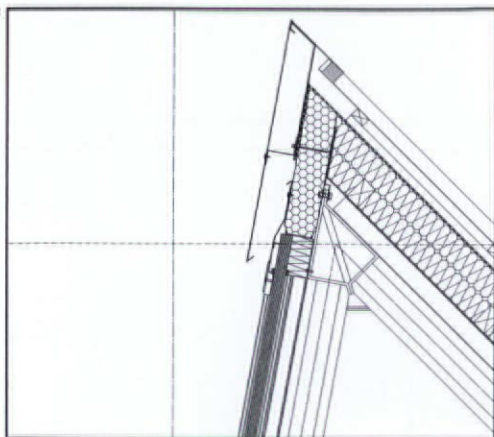
site plan

**Building Trades  
Training Centre,  
Gordola,  
Switzerland  
Durisch + Nolli  
Architetti**



- 1 entrance
- 2 plinth
- 3 changing
- 4 workshop
- 5 classroom





costs were lower than average, even for such a modest structure.

There is a subtle poetry, however, that arises from such prosaic concerns and functional solutions. For instance, the large number of columns enables both columns and slab to be reduced in size. The column line is also set back from the edge so that the slab appears to float. The stairs that lead directly to the door also lead to a corridor that slices through the building with a glass door at the end, drawing your gaze towards the lake. A handful of square windows frame views of the outside without creating a distraction, while the building is circumscribed by a deck, from which students and staff can enjoy unmediated views of the lake, foothills and mountains.

The building form is also handled with an eye for rigour. The single volume, serrated roof and metal skin obviously refer to the existing industrial buildings of Gordola's periphery, but also to the factories in which some of the students will eventually work. The architects play it totally straight; not for them the distortions of form and skin in the similarly shed-like and saw-toothed Liner Museum in Appenzell by Gigon/Guyer Architekten (AR August 2000). But that does not mean the Gordola building is without

sophistication. The apparently seamless skin suggests serious intent. With its lack of visible gutters, drainpipes and accoutrements of the services engineer (the building is naturally ventilated), the structure loses its scale. While it at first seems monumental (recalling Hans Hollein's 'aircraft carrier city' in the Alps of 1964), on second glance it looks like an industrial object: like something sitting on a workbench. It is no small feat to make such straightforward architecture or to maintain a sense of precision throughout an entire building.

The great wave of Swiss architecture over the last 15 years has almost exclusively been from German-speaking Switzerland, but though this bears all the hallmarks of Swiss German sobriety and refinement, it is a project from the Italian south. Pia Durisch and Aldo Nalli both worked in Calatrava's office in the early 1980s, and Durisch also worked for Peter Zumthor. They both seem to have absorbed Zumthor's sensitivity for materials and construction, rather than Calatrava's bombast, but as an investigation of reductivism and typological rigour, their building also alludes to the famous era of Ticinese Neorationalism, which was such an important regional force in the 1970s and is perhaps due for a quiet revival.

**Building Trades  
Training Centre,  
Gordola,  
Switzerland  
Durisch + Nalli  
Architetti**



**3. Detailed sections through saw-tooth roof showing the roof lights and drainage system**

**4. An example of the upper-level classrooms**  
**5. (Opposite) one of the workshops, an airy but tough and functional space illuminated by the serrated roof**

**Architects**  
Durisch + Nalli  
**Project team**  
Pia Durisch,  
Aldo Nalli,  
Dario Locher,  
Thomas Schlichting,  
Birgit Schwarz  
**Structural engineer**  
Jürg Buchli  
**Photographs**  
Tonatiuh Ambrosetti  
Walter Mair

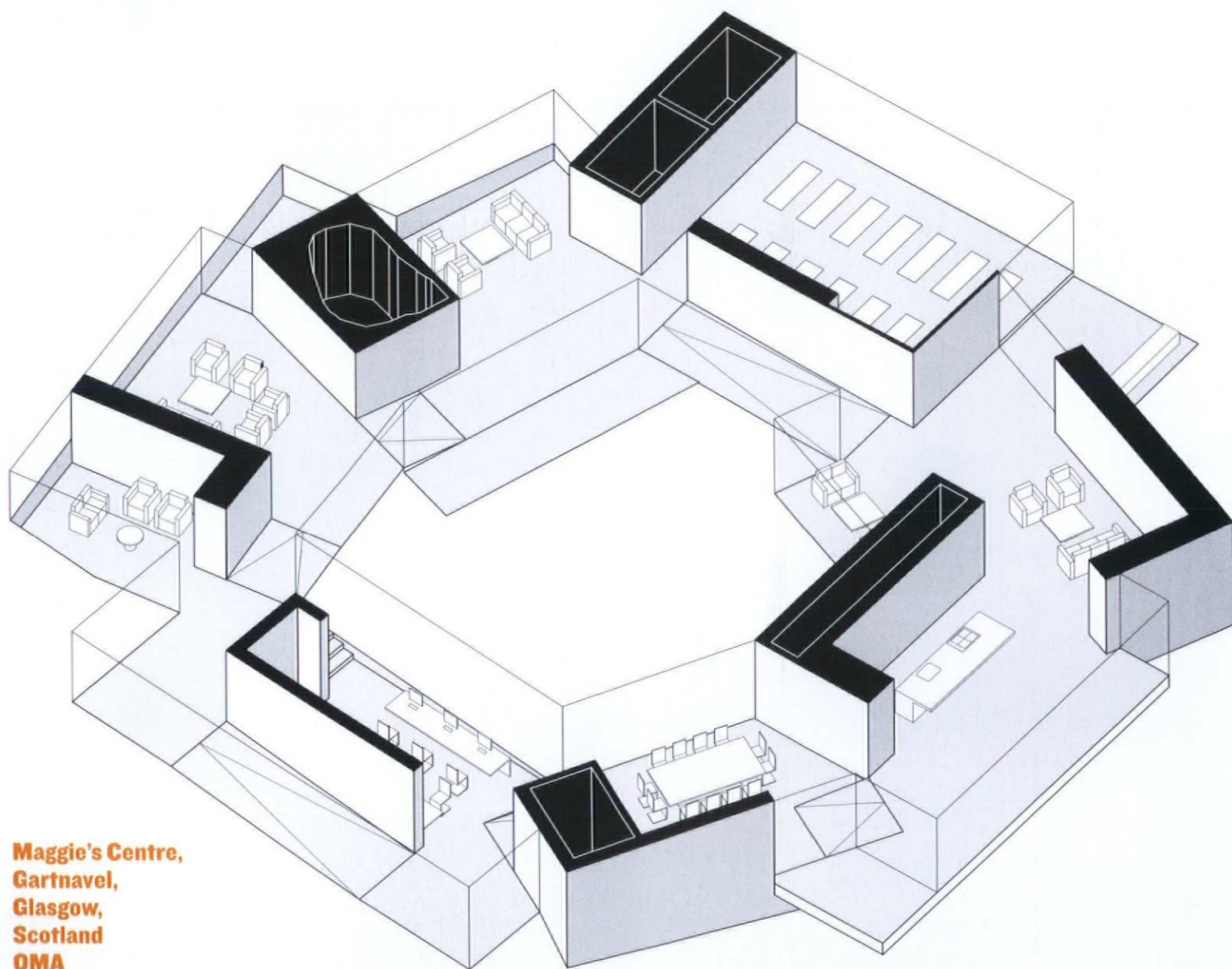






# HEALTHY CIRCULATION

The fluid spaces of the new Maggie's Centre are a reaction to the institutional nature of hospitals, yet still lack a sense of human scale



**Maggie's Centre,  
Gartnavel,  
Glasgow,  
Scotland  
OMA**







## CRITICISM

### RICHARD MURPHY

As a building type, it's difficult to categorise what a Maggie's Centre actually *is*. Maggie Keswick Jencks started the respite centres for cancer sufferers, but she never lived to see the completion of the first one in Edinburgh in 1996 (which my practice designed), and the initiative has since been continued by her husband, Charles Jencks. All Maggie's Centres are privately funded. Under his stewardship and led by the remarkable Laura Lee, formerly an oncology nurse and now head of a multimillion-pound charity, Maggie's Glasgow Gartnavel opened this October, to become the eighth completed centre in 15 years. More centres are on site and in design, two of them outside the UK. Even Maggie, with her immense optimism and ambition, would have been amazed to see what has been achieved in such a short time.

Jencks, who is in perhaps the unique position of critic-turned-client, has pursued a policy of high-profile international architectural commissions. OMA follows Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid and Kisho Kurokawa. To his credit, he has been catholic with his commissions, and the architectural disparity between the different centres is worth an article in itself. OMA was an obvious choice, given that Rem Koolhaas is a former student of Charles's from his time when he was a teacher at the Architectural Association and a personal friend of Maggie.

Jencks has described the centres using terms such as house, gallery, spiritual retreat and refuge. Non-clinical in their function, at one level they aim to provide spaces for one-to-one counselling, group activities and information for those recently diagnosed with cancer. But at another level they provide intangible support, a sense of being in a welcoming place surrounded by people with whom you could share your experiences, or who are expert listeners. It's a kind of home-from-home and a world away from the more clinical atmosphere of a hospital.

Almost universally, each of these little buildings (although they do seem to be getting progressively bigger) sits alongside a sprawling, major hospital complex. Koolhaas has observed that you need only to look at a hospital such as Gartnavel to see how the concept of civic pride and care has declined through the generations. His new centre sits on the edge of a small wood which itself is completely surrounded by the rest of the hospital campus. To one side is the original 19th-century hospital building, a wonderful castellated stone celebration of Victorian confidence, now listed as a historic structure but partially derelict; to another, is a typical 1960s Modernist slab block.

Surrounding it all is the incoherent junk of the most recent building programme, a product of the widely discredited PFI procurement process, which puts building contractors in charge of design. Looming large among these latest additions is the

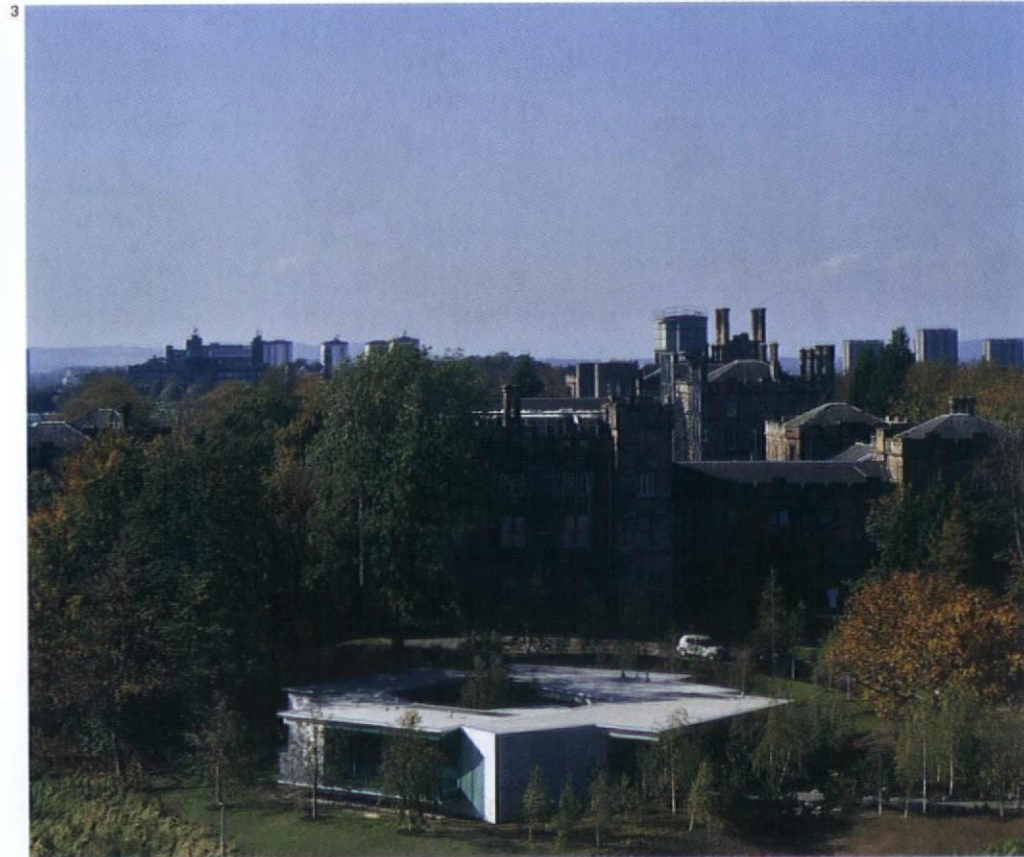
Beatson Oncology Centre, the largest cancer centre in Scotland and the second largest in the UK. Some might say if hospitals were designed along humane principles there would be no need for Maggie's Centres; others accept that factory-style healthcare is inevitable and concede that Maggie's Centres fill a gap in the patient's experience.

Koolhaas teases and stretches the accommodation into a continuous sequence around a small courtyard. The plan is conceived as a series of orthogonal spaces which collide into each other and are generally relieved by large areas of glazing looking both inward and out. Small ramps occur everywhere between spaces, presumably as a way of marking thresholds, but these are intensely irritating and wholly unnecessary as the whole building could so easily have been on a single level. Where walls do occur these are fashioned into L-shapes which define alcoves of activity: library, kitchen, dining space, office, meeting room and a large multipurpose space that can be separated off using giant sliding screens.

Healthcare institutions tend to be characterised by oppressive corridors, so minimising dedicated circulation space might be seen as a priority in such a project. Yet here it is celebrated, rather like being in an art museum. Indeed, the building has the feel of a beautiful sculpture gallery still waiting for its exhibits to arrive, reinforced by the real thing outside, set in the landscape designed by Charles and Maggie's daughter Lily.

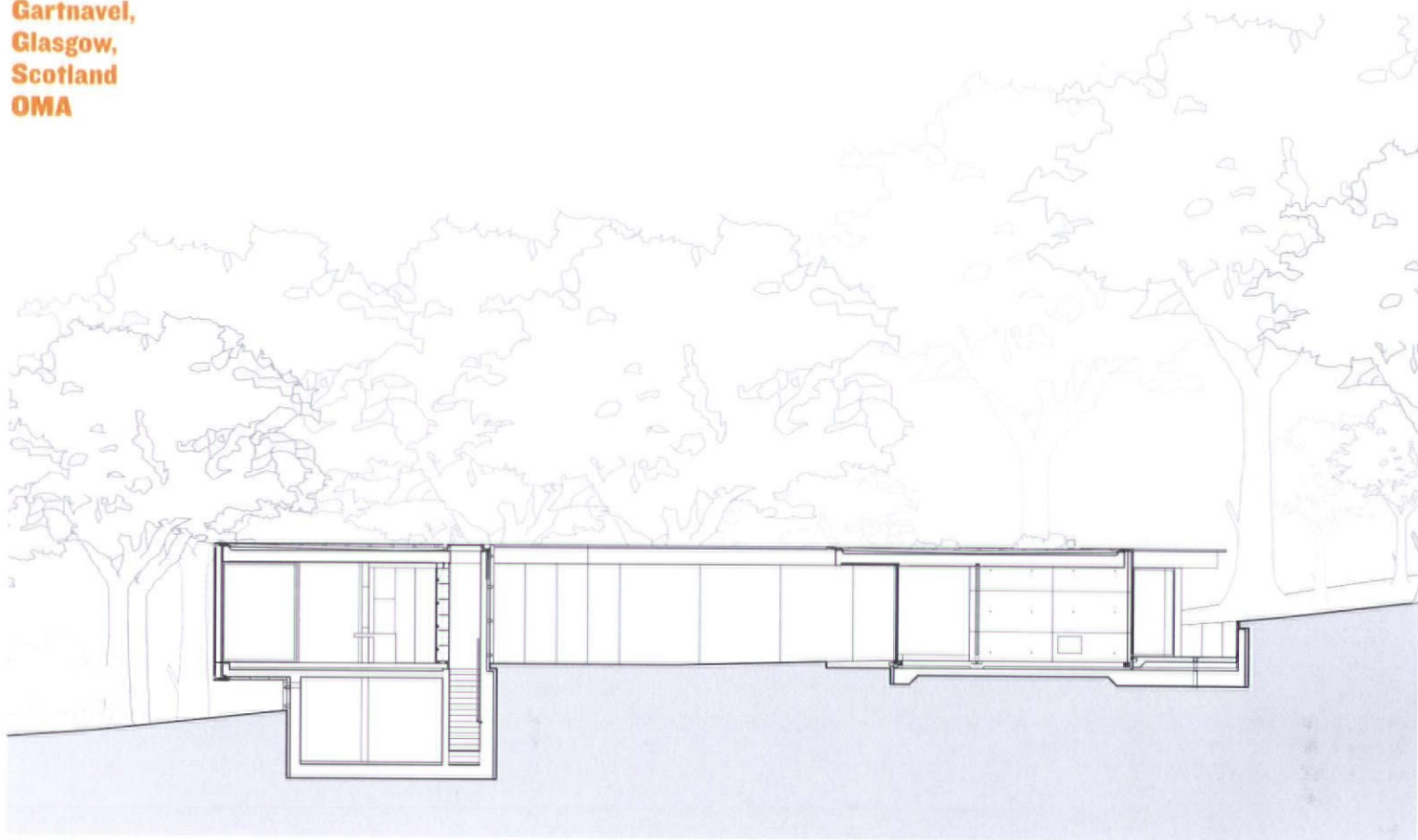


1. (Previous page) a continuous circuit of different spaces – kitchen meeting, counselling, library, offices – enclose a central courtyard  
2. Embedded in the trees, the building appears as a glazed pavilion in a sylvan setting. Lily Jencks, Maggie's daughter, created the landscaping  
3. The reality of the Gartnavel hospital campus





**Maggie's Centre,  
Gartnavel,  
Glasgow,  
Scotland  
OMA**



**section AA**



**section BB**



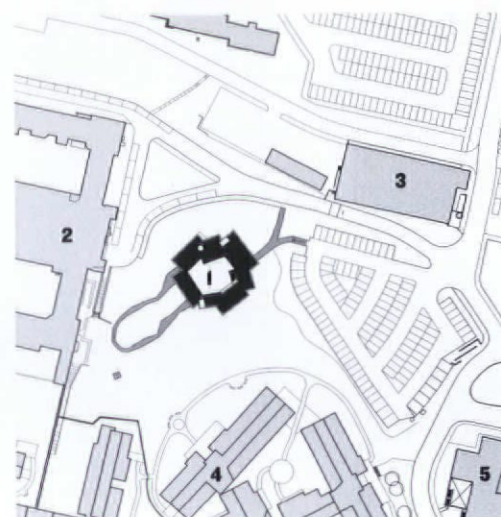
The interior aesthetic is minimalist, with exposed concrete walls, large panes of glass and immense glazed sliding doors topped off by a floating flat roof with a timber soffit, perhaps the only element that provides a sense of warmth. Counterpointing the cool, open spaces, a small top-lit room lined in curving laminated timber forms an intimate enclave for confidential conversations. Curiously, as so much of the building is deliberately indeterminate, this space consists of two fixed seats projecting from the laminated wall but set just far apart from each other to make conversation stilted. The asceticism no doubt appeals to a certain set; let's hope it doesn't alienate others. Cancer is not just a middle-class disease.

Before seeing the centre, I had assumed that the courtyard form was a means of turning it in on itself, away from the detritus outside. Yet views out are as expansive as those in to the courtyard. This is clearly beneficial when focusing on the remaining fragment of woodland, but counter-productive elsewhere. Inexplicably, a huge bay window in the most popular space, the kitchen, faces the Beatson Oncology Centre, the place from which patients have come, and presumably, would like to forget about. Is this carelessness or is an unfathomable agenda at work?

At five times the size of the first centre in Edinburgh, OMA's Maggie's Centre is generously proportioned, but perhaps too generous to cultivate a sense of inhabitation. Not only are there large areas of space where

nothing particularly happens, there is also confusion as to which bits are for the public. It would be a fantastic venue for a party; how people find their way around seems less clear. The entrance has already been found to be confusing, and visitors have a habit of heading off in the wrong direction, always a potential problem with a race-track plan. Paradoxically, from the architect who brought us the classic analysis of scale with *S,M,L,XL*, there appears to be a scale problem. We are used to the accusation that the 'human scale' is absent from so much contemporary architecture. Here, starting with the front door, there are few familiar, humanly scaled elements.

As it develops, the Maggie's programme of centres is starting to resemble a fascinating dispersed Wiessenhof of small health buildings. And, like Stuttgart, most designs are by international architects more familiar with the large scale. They also go to the heart of what architecture can do. Some time ago, I discussed with Charles Jencks what was the most significant book on architectural theory of the last 50 years. Unsurprisingly, he cited Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* as the first serious critique of what Modernism had become, in particular, its lack of signs, symbols or rhetoric. My suggestion was Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*, a wonderful reassertion of what makes rooms, housing, spaces and cities either humane or inhumane. With OMA's Maggie's Centre, you sense that neither agenda is at work.



site plan

- 1 Maggie's Centre
- 2 East House
- 3 Renal unit
- 4 Gartnavel Royal
- 5 Beatson Oncology Unit

#### Architect

OMA

#### Executive architect

Keppie

#### Structural engineer

Sinclair Knight Merz

#### Services engineer

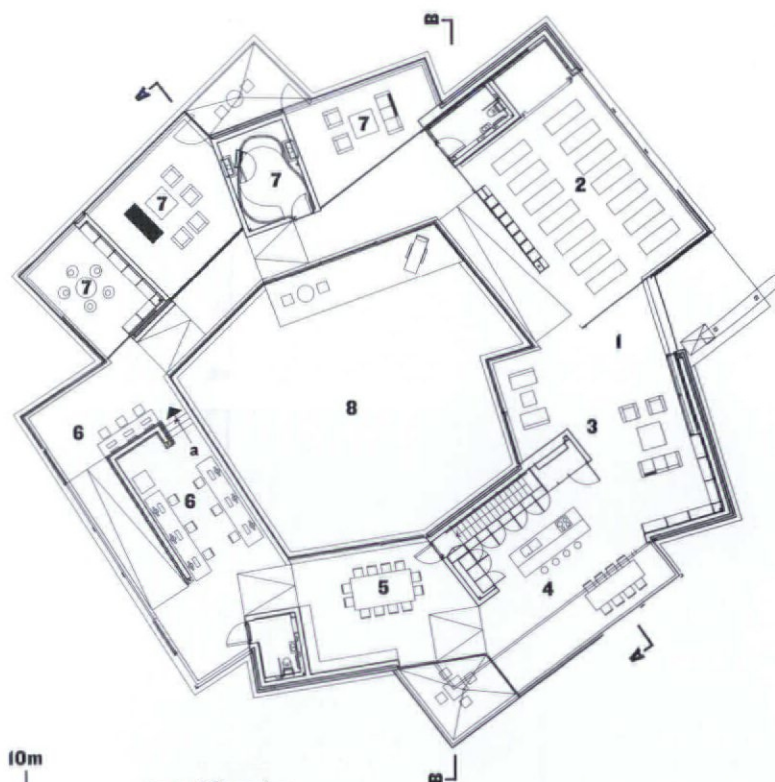
KJ Tait Engineers

#### Landscape consultant

Lily Jencks

#### Photographs

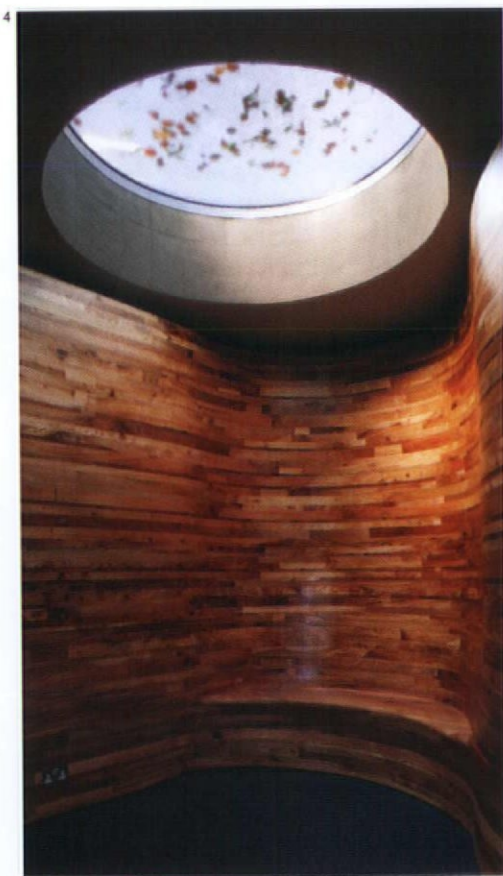
Keith Hunter,  
Philippe Ruault



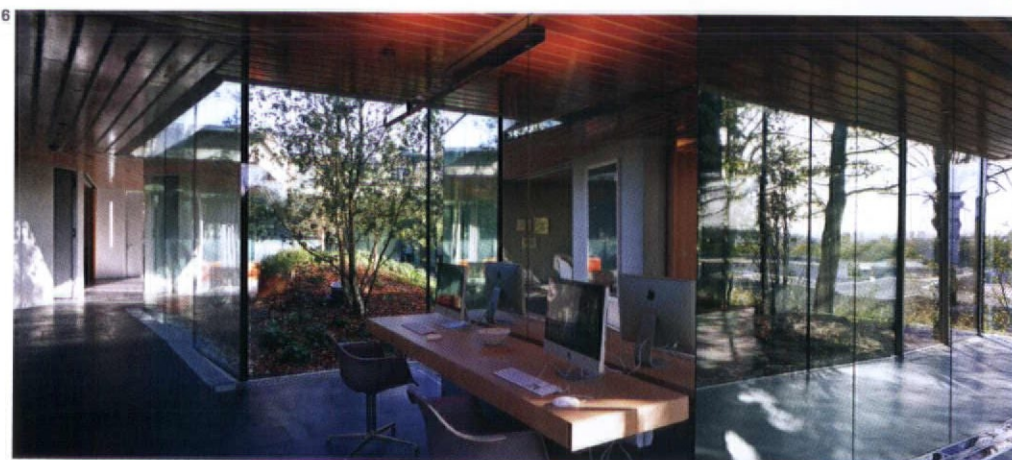
- 1 entrance
- 2 multipurpose room
- 3 library
- 4 kitchen
- 5 dining room
- 6 office
- 7 counselling room
- 8 courtyard



ground floor plan







4. The smallest counselling room is a curved, womb-like space lined with timber

5. The courtyard form might seem like a device to screen out the world, but views out are just as expansive as views in.

The cool interiors have more of an affinity with a museum and could end up deterring visitors

6. In the centre's offices, mirror-clad partition walls reflect the landscape of the surroundings

7. Light and reflections animate the interior, and a timber soffit adds a sense of warmth to the ascetic palette

8. View of one of the counselling spaces



**Maggie's Centre,  
Gartnavel,  
Glasgow,  
Scotland  
OMA**



# PREMIUM SWISS QUALITY FAÇADE SYSTEMS AND INTERIOR APPLICATIONS FOR HIGH-END ARCHITECTURE

PHOTO ROLAND HALBE



Swisspearl is specified by some of the world's leading architects, such as by Morphosis at the Giant Campus (above) in Shanghai, which featured in AR May 2011

- Environment friendly material with low grey energy
- High long term quality
- Wide colour range
- Great creative freedom
- Many custom solutions
- Reduces energy costs/CO2 emissions

For more information, visit

[www.swisspearl-architecture.com](http://www.swisspearl-architecture.com)

Or visit us at the **World Architecture Festival**

Next to the Speakers' Lounge

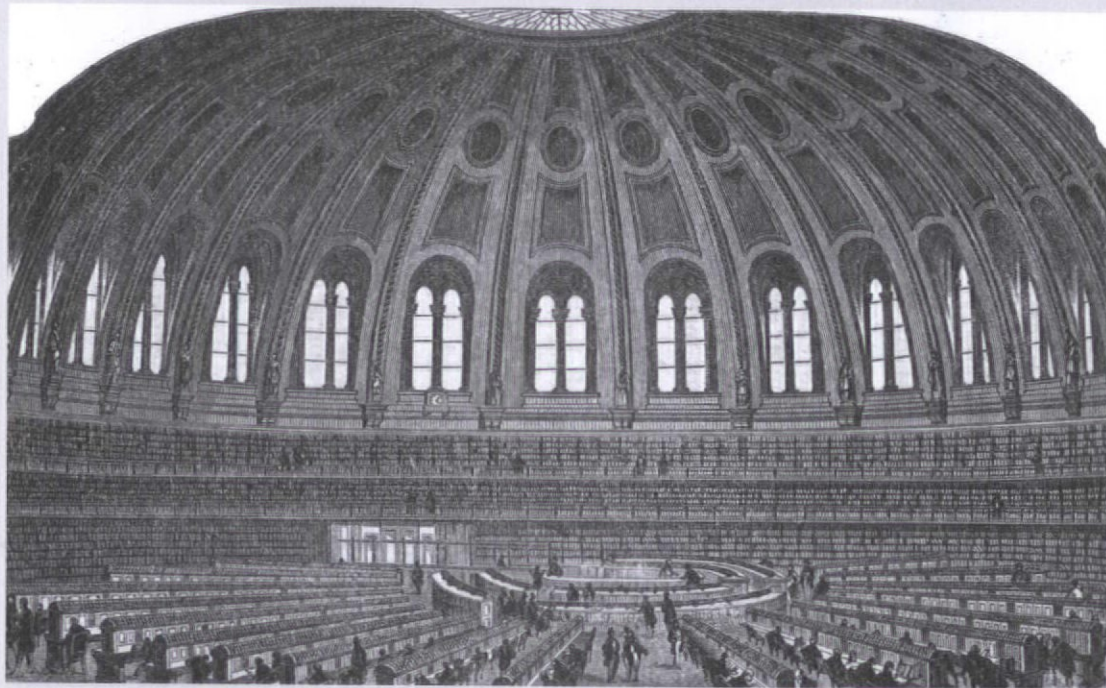


PHOTO ZIMMERMANN FOTOGRAFIE

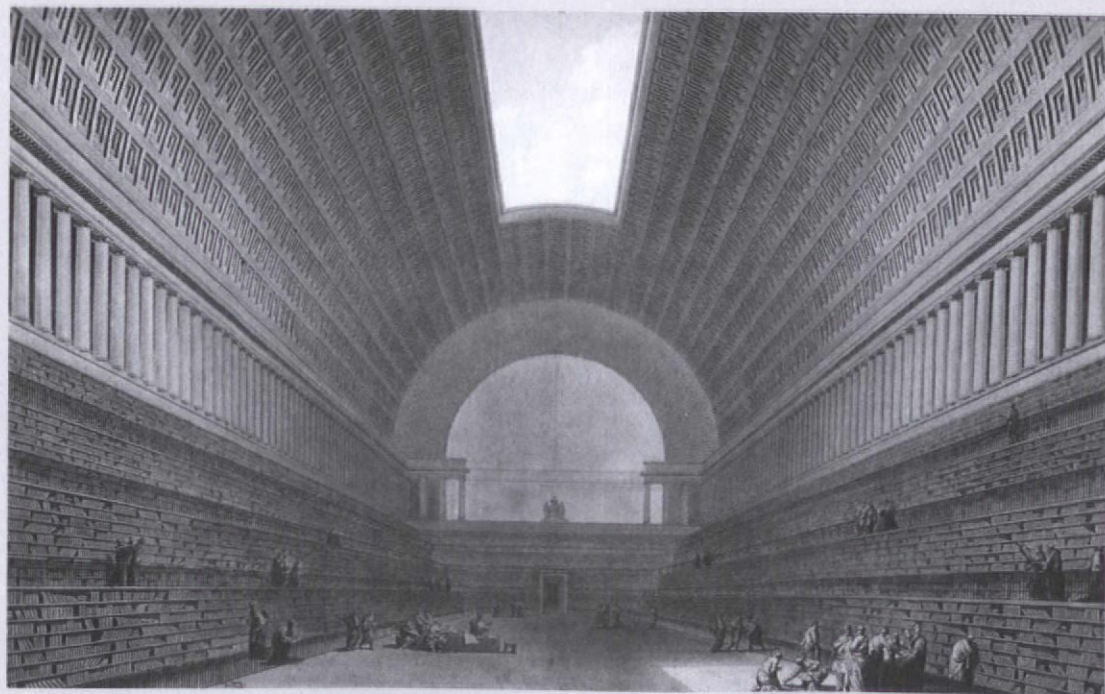
## SWISSPEARL®



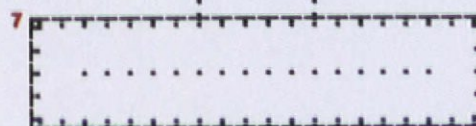
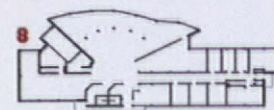
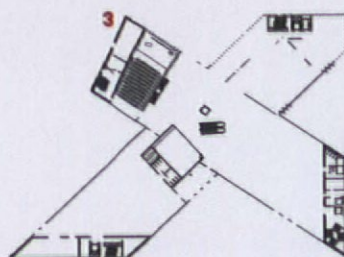
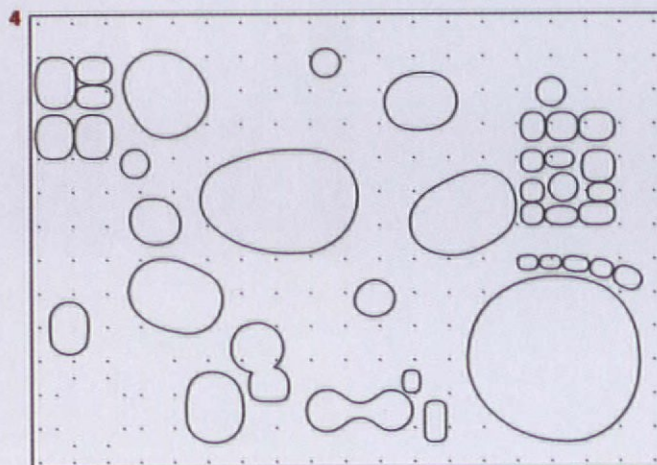
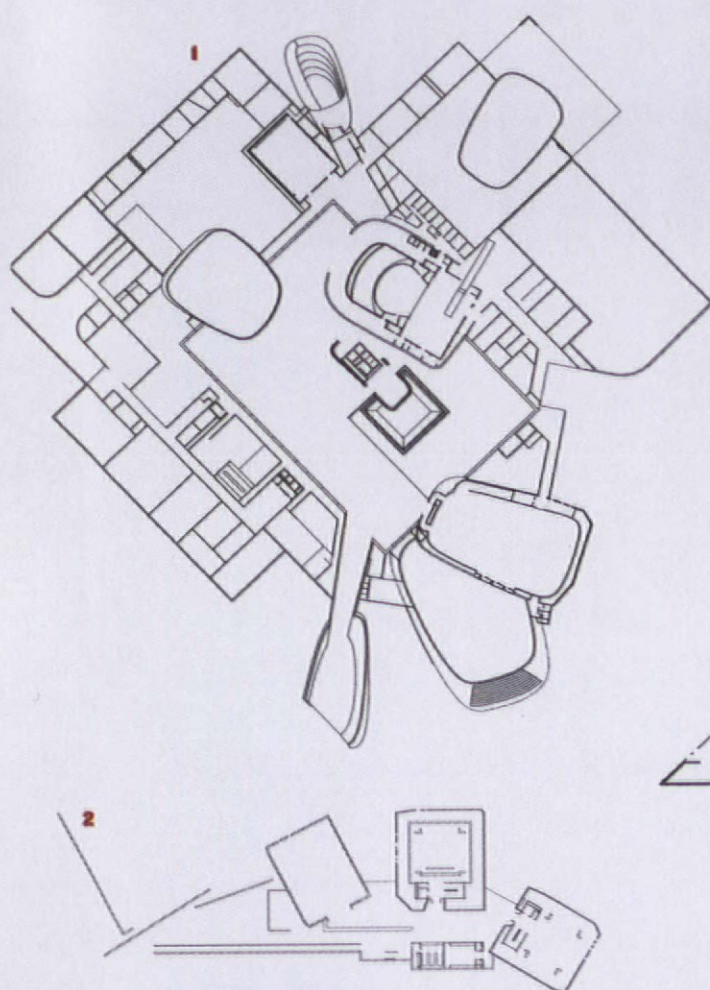
# TYPOLGY QUARTERLY LIBRARIES



Top: Robert Smirke's much loved 1857 British Library is one of the most famous examples of the radial plan, which was introduced into library design to enable the efficient monitoring of readers by librarians. Right: Étienne-Louis Boullée's 1785 vision for the Bibliothèque Nationale de France was never built but has been widely reproduced as an enduring image of the type.







Public library design is rooted in the era of Victorian philanthropists, who strove to maintain collective order while facilitating individual exploration. But today's advances in technology and civil unrest have put this dual requirement to the test. This review charts how six recent libraries are tackling the challenge as they attempt to bridge the past and the present

**ORIEL PRIZEMAN**

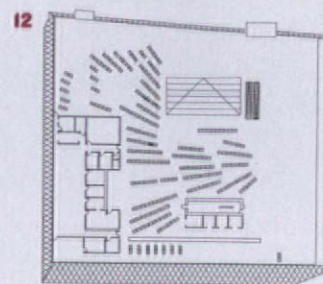
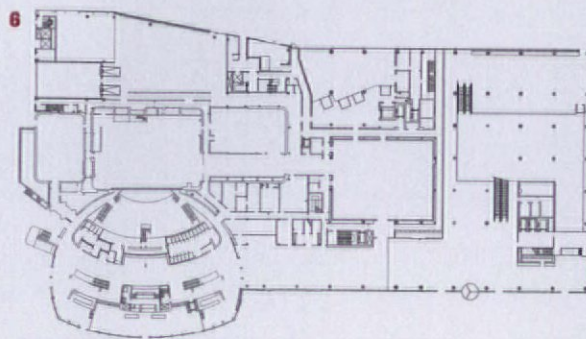
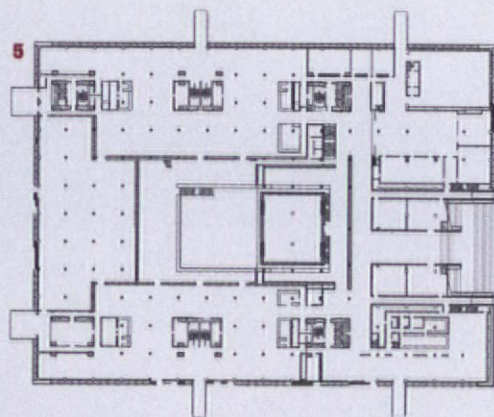
The American writer John Steinbeck suggested books be printed on rye bread, having noted a request from a librarian in England's second city, Birmingham, for customers to stop using rashers of bacon and kippers as bookmarks.<sup>1</sup> His pithy observation, rather than the spatial conundrum of Jorge Luis Borges' infinite library,<sup>2</sup> is perhaps most relevant to the idea of library design today. In the wake of the August riots across the UK, the issue of how social control and the free navigation of public space may co-exist topped the political agenda.

The history of public library design is entirely related to this challenging dual requirement: to maintain collective order while

ostensibly encouraging individual exploration. The Victorian roots of the public library movement devised various means by which access to precious books might be safely shared among an increasingly large and diverse group of people.

With few exceptions, the history of the public library is relatively short – 160 years or so – and is closely related to the progress of political enfranchisement. While all buildings designed to contain books are potentially engaging, it is those which negotiate the direct interface between a body of knowledge and an open urban realm that face the most complex challenges, so this review is limited to a number of public rather than academic or private libraries.



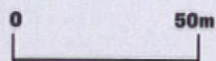
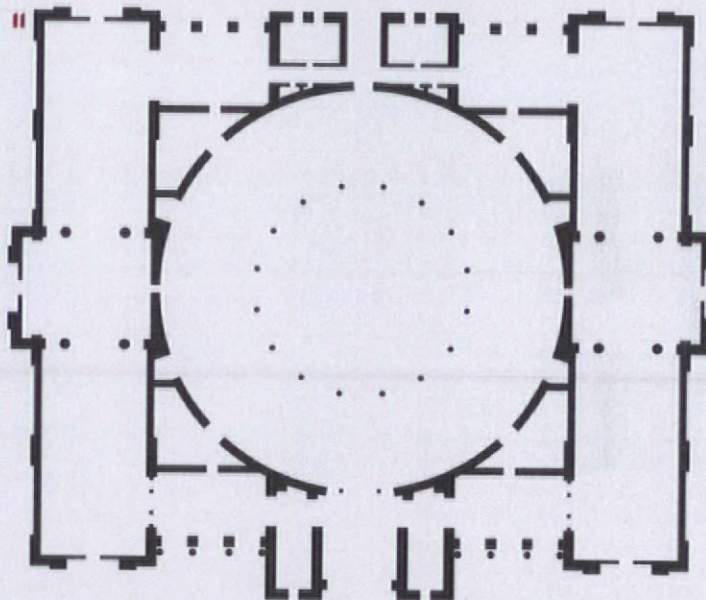
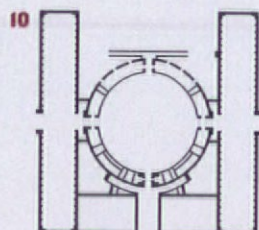
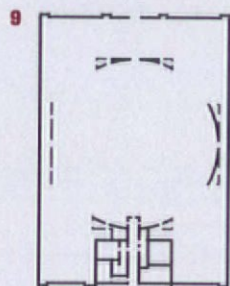


## CASE STUDIES

- 1 King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, 2012
- 2 Biblioteca España, 2008
- 3 Bibliothèque Multimédia à Vocation Régionale, 2015
- 4 Rolex Learning Center, 2010
- 5 National Library of China, 2008
- 6 Library of Birmingham, 2013

## PRECEDENTS

- 7 Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, 1850, Henri Labrouste
- 8 Seinäjoki Library, 1965, Alvar Aalto
- 9 British Museum, 1857, Robert Smirke
- 10 Stockholm Public Library, 1928, Gunnar Asplund
- 11 Library of Congress, 1897, J.L. Smithmeyer & Paul J. Pelz
- 12 Seattle Central Library, 2004, OMA



In the past 20 years, two key pragmatic aspects that had dominated the theory of library design have been radically transformed by technological change: the physical scales of containment and the ability to maintain environmental control. Before the digitisation of books became a possibility, the question of infinite physical expansion was the key issue for copyright libraries and national collections. While for early public libraries funded by scant means and maintained by limited funds, the cost of operation was the key feature of their design.

Architects submitted running costs with their competition bids. But as the price of electricity

diminished, libraries came to depend more on its steady, controllable state than on leaky, draughty rooflights. Now, however, in the context of an energy conservation agenda, architects again win competitions on the basis of their proposed energy use. Meanwhile, during the short era of public libraries, the parameters of perceived comfort have been radically altered by our familiarisation with artificially controlled environments.

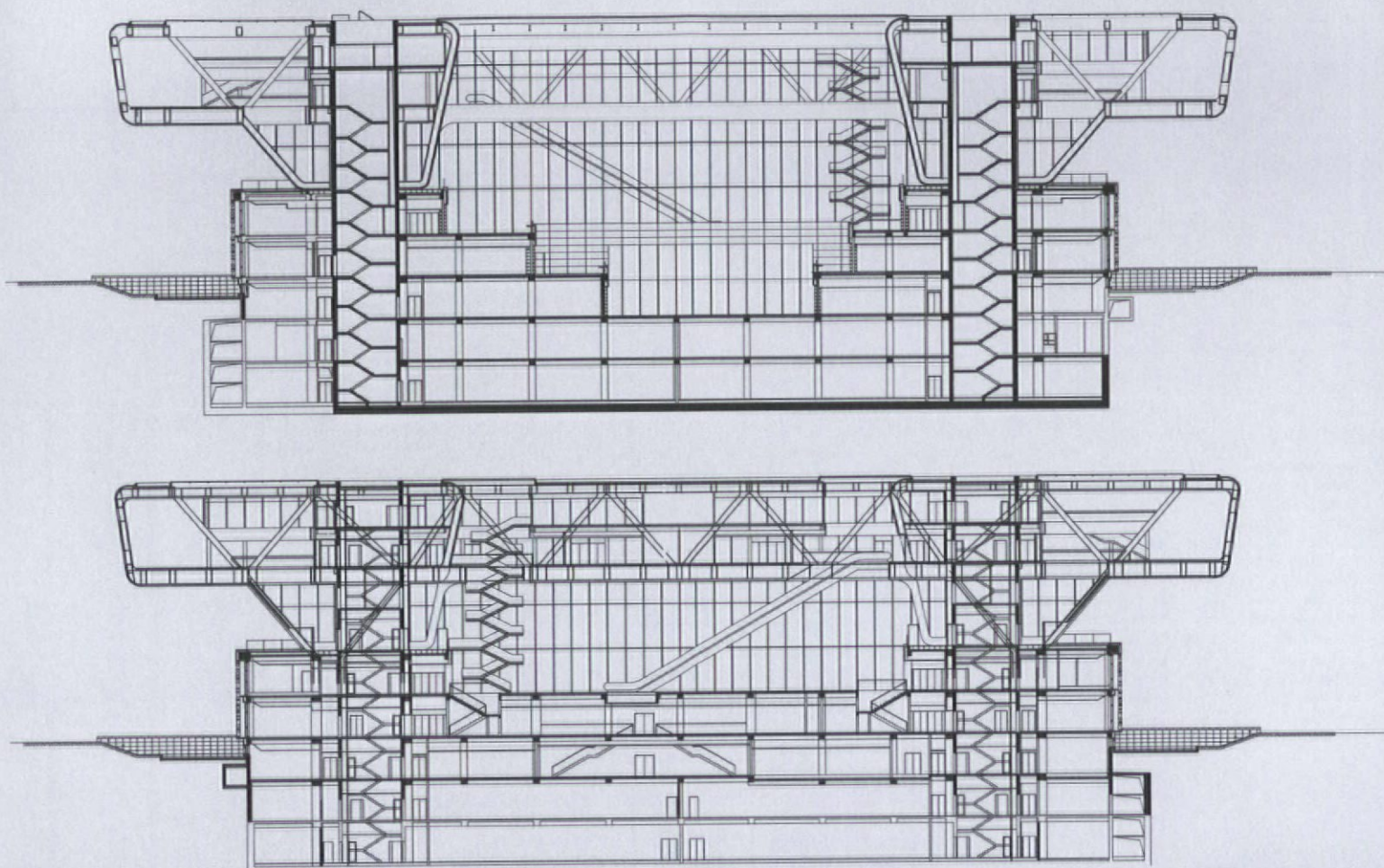
The requirement to enable visual surveillance of such spaces in the past was the driving force behind their physical arrangement. Thousands of libraries, from Robert Smirke's 1857 British Library to Alvar Aalto's 1965 Seinäjoki Library,



Above: The infinity of Jorge Luis Borges's *The Library of Babel*, as etched by French artist Erik Desmazières

had a radial plan enabling librarians to monitor readers with optimum efficiency. The French botanist and conchologist Jules Paul Benjamin Delessert had first proposed the application of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design for libraries in 1835: 'We can not doubt the immense advantage for surveillance, to be placed in the centre of the building'.<sup>3</sup> Today, for librarians, as for the police, although CCTV has enabled them to review events after they have happened, the need to see across the space may remain a key feature of library design. Here six recent international examples, ranging in scale from national to local, are reviewed to help recognise enduring themes.





## National Library of China

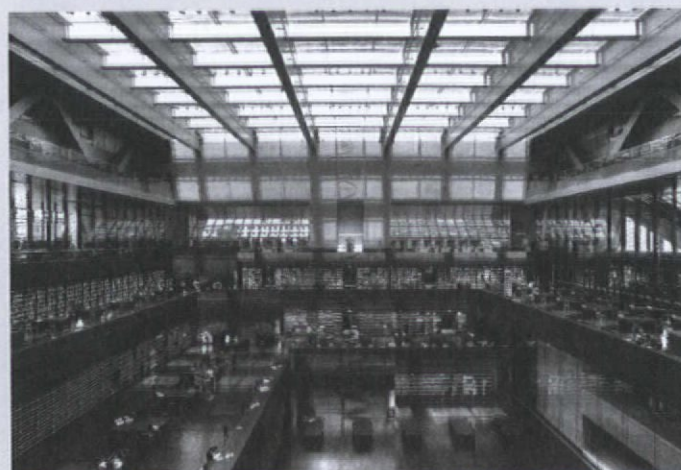
**KSP JURGEN ENGEL  
ARCHITEKTEN**

*Beijing, China. 2008: 80,000m<sup>2</sup> /  
1.235 billion RMB yuan  
(£122.4 million)*

Containing 12 million volumes, this is third largest library in the world. Though surrounded by a moat, it fits the vast motorised urban grid of Beijing. Its adjacency on the west to the picturesque Zizhuyuan Black Bamboo Park is punctuated by tower blocks. A visual separation between horizontal elements refers to traditional Chinese precedents of deep overhanging eaves. The building has three distinct constructional and functional layers: earthbound historic base; publically navigable

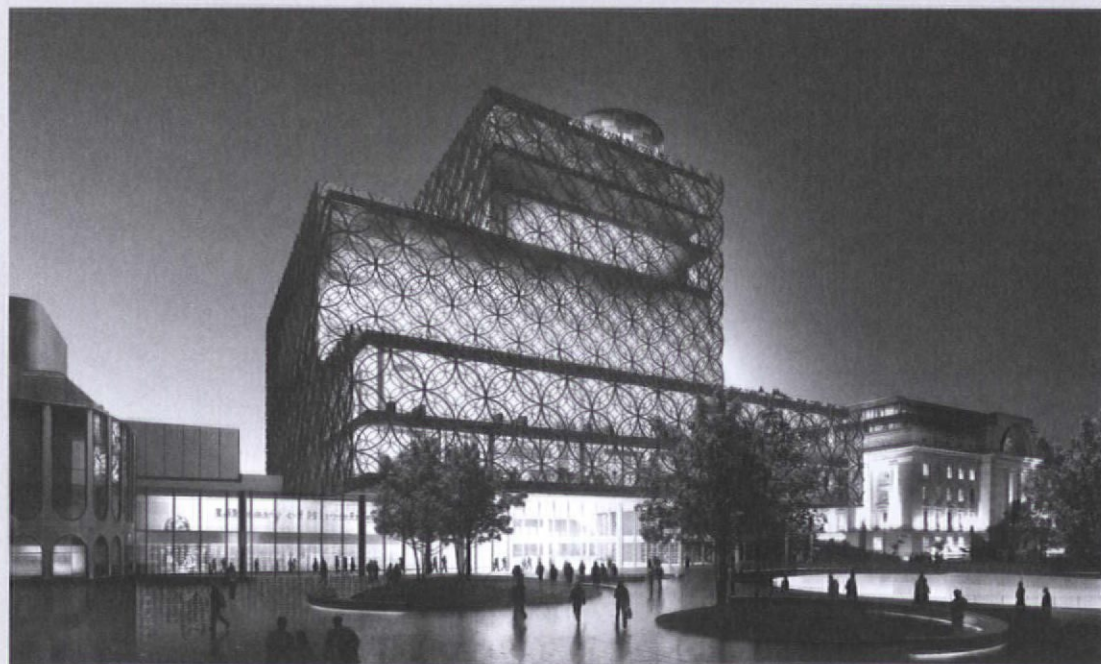
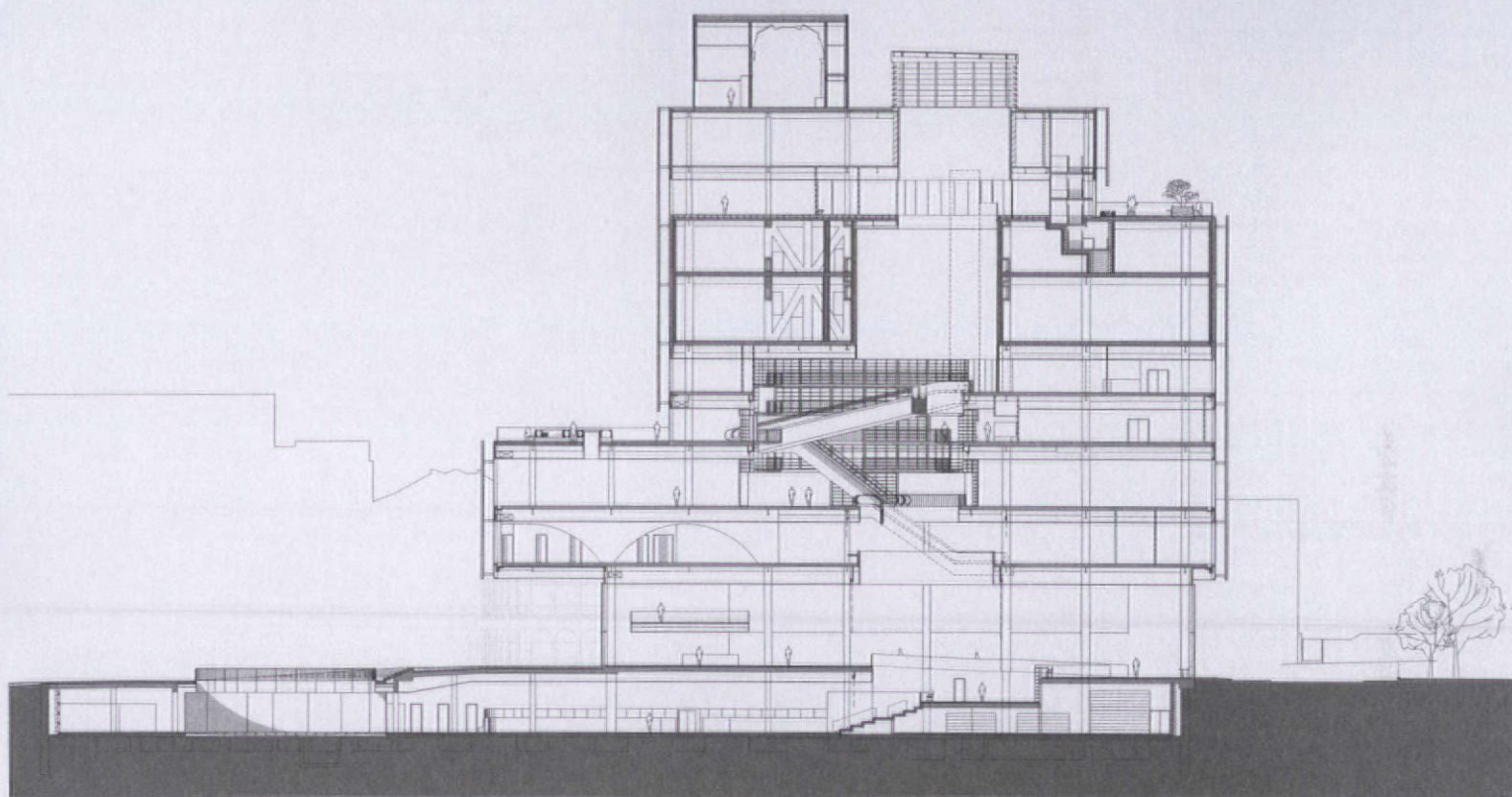
and translucent central portion; and a digital roof layer.

Extraordinary efforts were made to lift its earthquake-proof steel canopy into place. It enables a 60m span across a naturally lit reading room with 2,000 seats extending vertically from the basement to the third floor, entirely free of columns. The room would neatly house the entire footprint of Birmingham's new library. This man-made cultural cavern is designed to sandwich past and future and its three-dimensional void promises a concept of freedom. Although the quality of its design is clearly in contrast to unremarkable neighbouring blocks, its glowing, floating form in the humid air of Beijing might have been more impressive had it been allowed to refer further to the setting of its ancient precedents and were it not bordered by an eight-lane highway.



**Above: The National Library of China is the third largest in the world. It is divided into three layers: an earthbound historic base, translucent central portion and digital roof layer**





## Library of Birmingham

**MECANOO**

*Birmingham, UK. 2013:  
35,000m<sup>2</sup> / £193 million*

Birmingham, most Victorian of British cities, is also most experienced in Library re-invention and awaits completion of its fourth central library in less than 150 years. Each incarnation has swung the pendulum of the subsequent brief. The first burnt down, Chamberlain's replacement was deemed too small by 1938. Its post-war incarnation by John Madin opened in 1974 was designed to be clad in marble and surrounded by a water garden; the finish was dropped for economic reasons yet its dismal Midlands concrete patina most inspired its



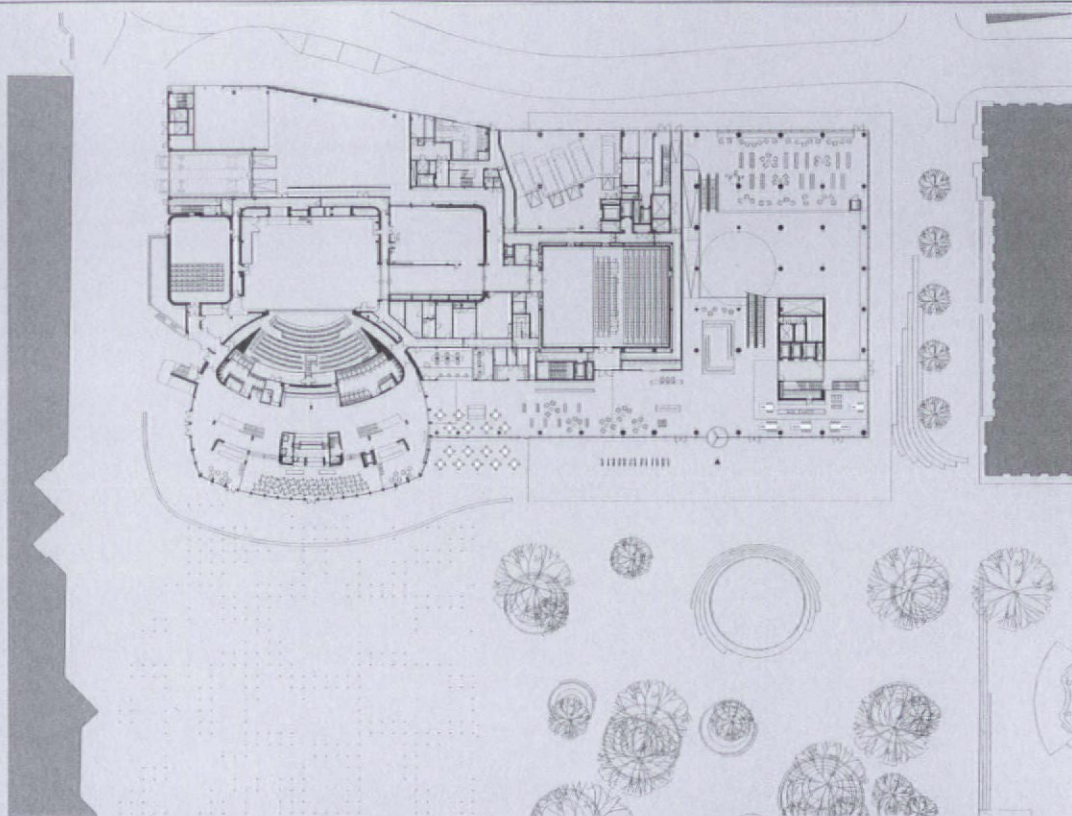
demise. Today Mecanoo's BREEAM 'excellent'-rated scheme promises a more animated vision for the city clad in aluminium petals and glass.

Mecanoo's Francine Houben sees the breadth of the brief as unique in Europe. The building is clearly conceived in navigational, as opposed to iconic, terms and is thoughtfully adapted to its neighbours. On entering, direct views in all directions give clear lines of sight. A third-floor terrace offers access to survey the city: what Houben calls its 'soft hills'. Chamberlain's Shakespeare Memorial Room was dismantled and re-assembled in Madin's library and crowns the ninth floor of the new library. The core of the building is excavated by a spiralling series of offset cylindrical courts providing natural ventilation. In the middle of the building, the rotunda is surrounded by browsable books with reading rooms located at the periphery, close to the light.

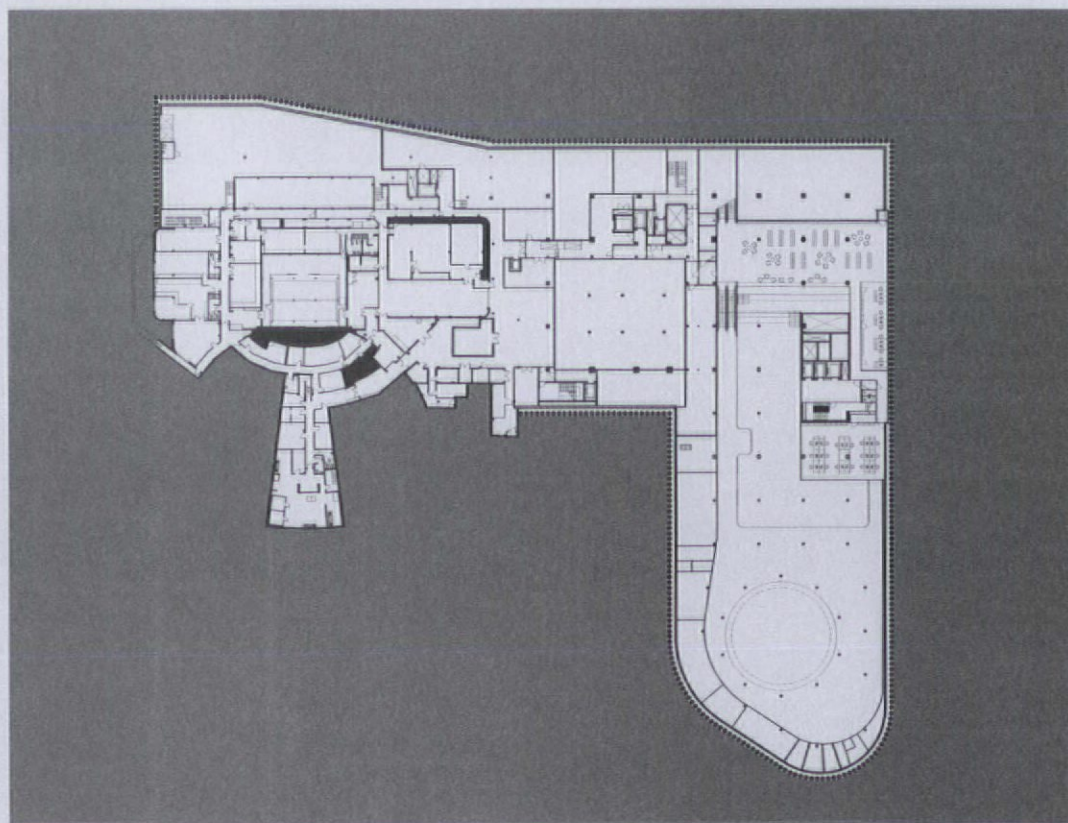
This will not be a quiet library: an anticipated 10,000 visitors a day will be allowed to chat on escalators as they traverse the interconnected activities, including a subterranean, outside performance area overlooked by a circular balustrade at ground level. This hole in Centenary Square is pictured with a grand piano to arrest the attention of the passer-by. Asked whether Birmingham's native Heavy Metal repertoire might also be revived in the space, Houben says simply: 'Of course, why not?'

**Previous page:**

**John Madin's Library of 1974** was seen by many as an impenetrable concrete edifice. Mecanoo's replacement takes the opposite approach with a filigree facade  
**Opposite, top:** The building stands in the civic heart of Birmingham, re-animating a major public square  
**Centre:** The core of the building is excavated by a spiralling series of offset cylindrical courts  
**Below:** The unifying pattern of the facade is revealed on the inside as a more complex layering of metal rings, which echo the repetition of circles throughout the plan

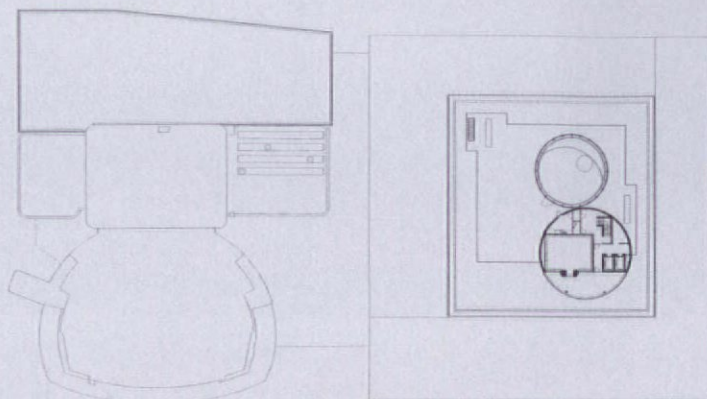


ground floor plan

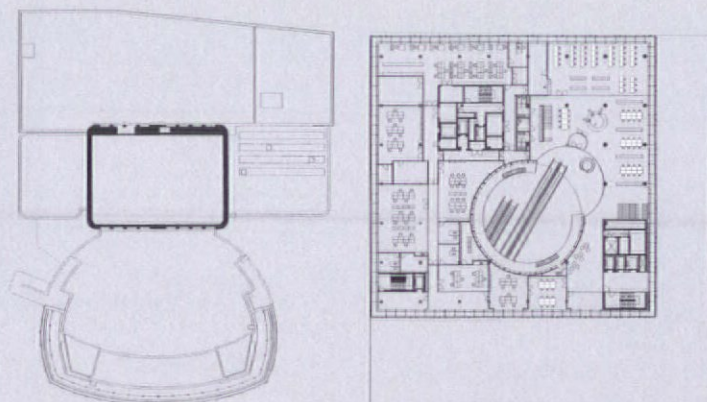


mid-lower ground floor plan

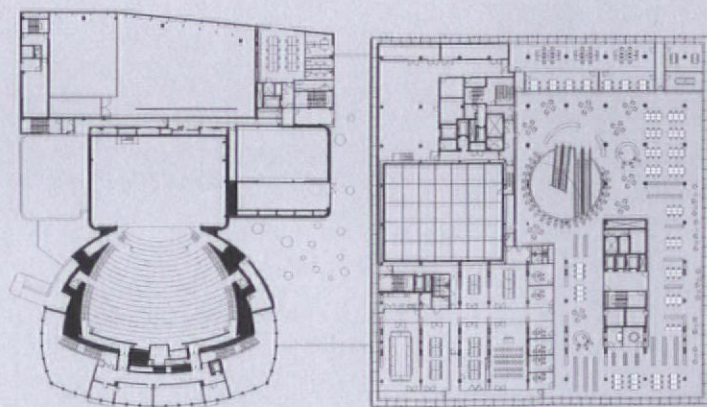




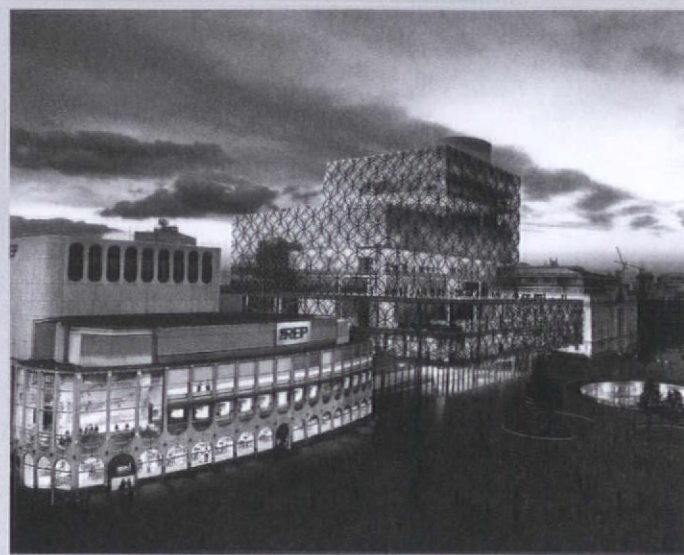
ninth floor plan



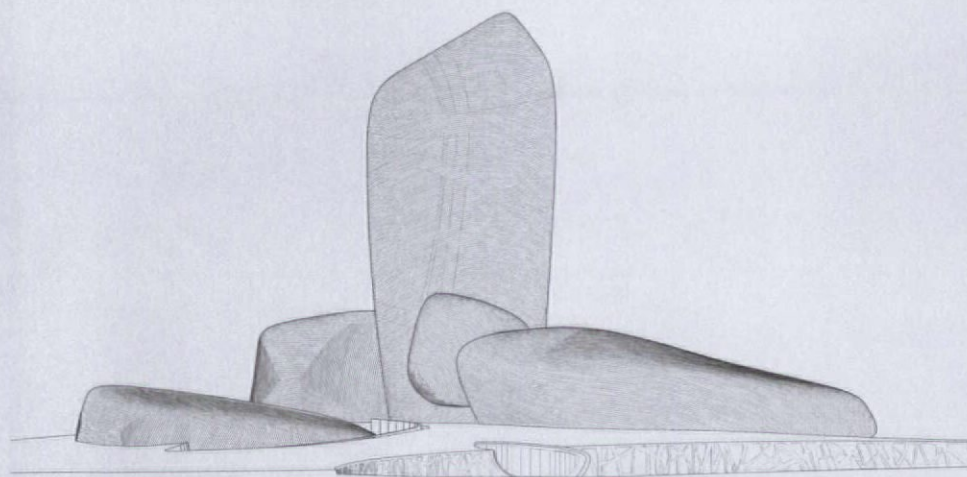
fourth floor plan



first floor plan







## King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture

**SNØHETTA**

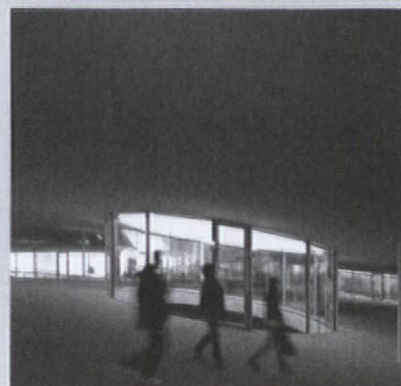
*Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia.  
2012: 45,000m<sup>2</sup> / US\$300 million  
(£190 million)*

Like the National Library of China, Snøhetta's enormous scheme also uses separate elements to represent links between past, present and future. A cluster, inspired by striped pebbles, houses an auditorium, cinema, museum, children's 'discovery zone', multifunction hall and lifelong learning space. The combination of programmes is not new; what is innovative, beyond the beguiling forms themselves, will be their life in such a social and environmental context.

The glistening knot is a trophy in a desert whose subterranean fruits have literally fuelled the global economy of the 20th century. The shiny detail of an eternal pipeline covers its surface, revealed on approach and animated by the movement of the sun, to inspire awe. The building deflects rather than cherishes light. How the interstices of the skin will weather, just as how free navigation of such interior spaces may happen, has yet to be understood. The scheme's technical ambition together with a programme that seeks to make connections should be worthy of marvel.



**Above: The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture designed by Snøhetta takes the form of a knot in the desert that holds resources which have fuelled the global economy. A cluster inspired by striped pebbles contains a children's 'discovery zone' and a lifelong learning space**



C RICHTERS / VIEW

## Rolex Learning Center

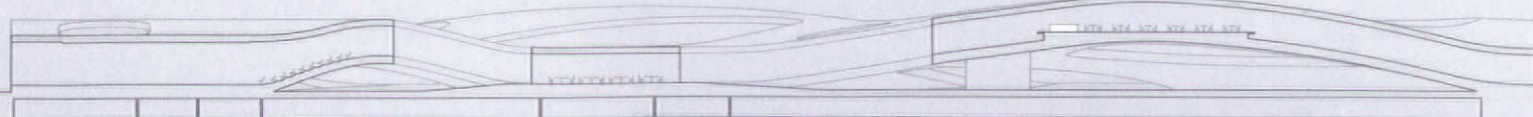
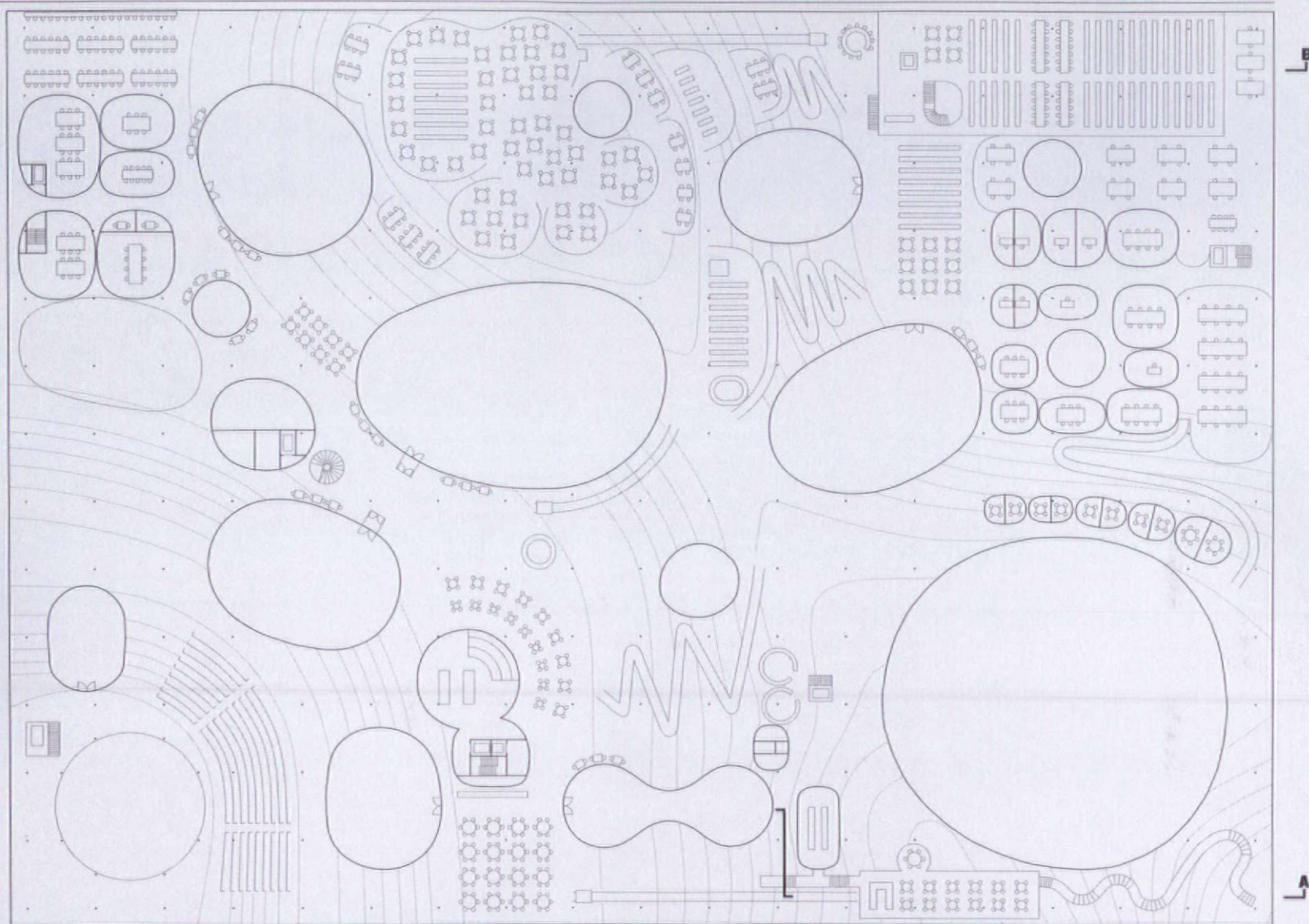
**SANAA**

*École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland.  
2010: 22,000m<sup>2</sup> / CHF110 million  
(£77.5 million)*

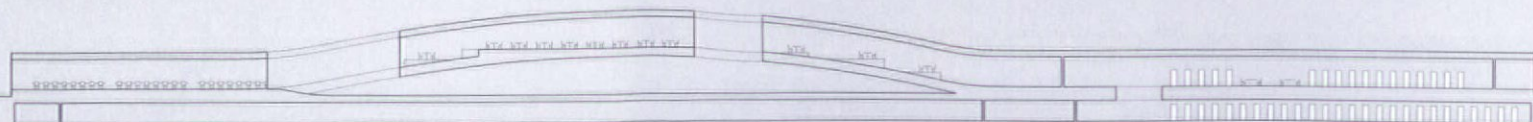
Again, the Rolex Center uses open-plan space to encourage interaction but in this instance, it is between teaching and learning, the programme being open to the public and students. It houses a specialist scientific collection and it is the only scheme here to mention silent zones in its description. SANAA's Kazuyo Sejima described it as an 'intimate public space'. Punctuated by holes, the hilly building admits light from above but also gardens from below. Floor and ceiling follow undulations in parallel. The continuous open space seeks to respond to a global trend in academia to encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas and interdisciplinary research.

As with many apparently simple strategies, its gently undulating roofscape is the result of significant technical creativity and it is openly described as 'experimental'. Formwork was positioned on site by GPS and the roof was poured in one go, over two days, to achieve a continuous surface. The challenging prospect of assessing the environmental performance of the single open volume was simulated to meet Swiss *Minergie* energy targets. As with Snøhetta's scheme, it is a highly crafted building using meticulous methods of construction to produce novel architectural form, emphasising both the new and established values of its programme.





section AA



section BB



## Bibliothèque Multimédia à Vocation Régionale

OMA: REM KOOLHAAS, CLEMENT BLANCHET

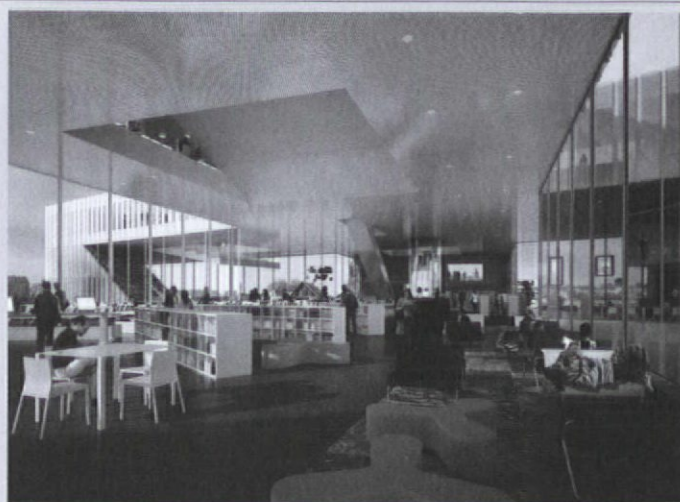
Caen, France, 2015: 12,700m<sup>2</sup> / €51 million (£45 million)

This is OMA's first library building in France. An exhibition in Paris in Summer 2011 showed its designs for the *Très Grand Bibliothèque* in Paris (1989) and Jussieu (1992). Noting that of 45 schemes in France only four were built, it emphasised the importance of theoretical development in OMA's work.

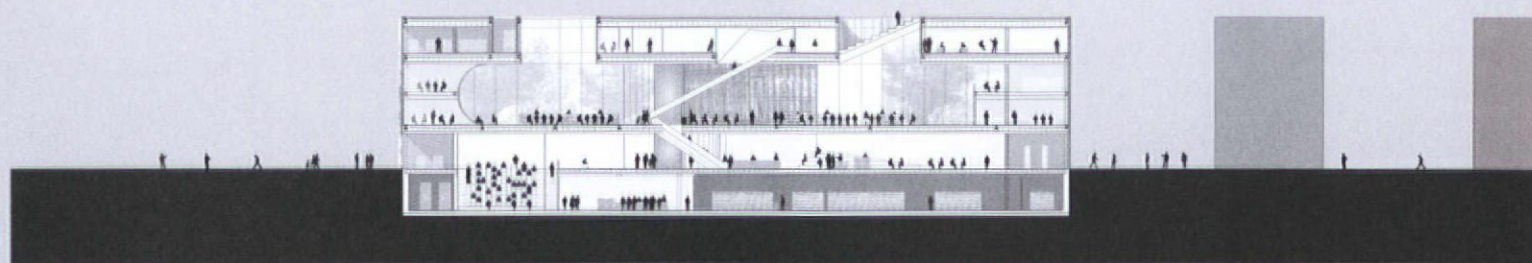
Adopting a brownfield site, an X-shaped plan intersects reading rooms for science and arts at the heart of Caen Library. Perceived as a 'flagship for its region' the cross points to four landmarks in the bomb-damaged city of William the Conqueror. Like the Birmingham library, despite being highly glazed, the building is also required to be an environmental exemplar of the

French *Haute Qualité Environnementale* standard. Using shallow (23m) floor plates to maximise daylight, it will function without air conditioning and use passive ventilation and areas of printed and screened glazing located according to orientation.

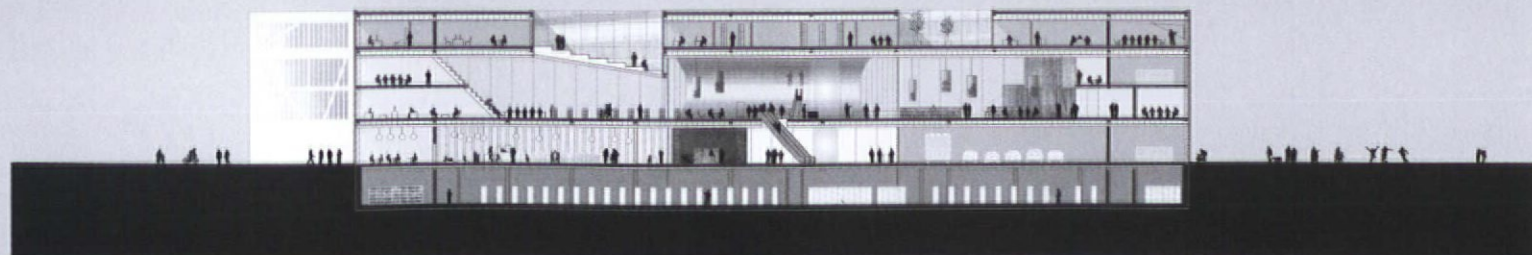
The relatively simple and presumably economic orthogonal structure of the building contains its main reading and browsing area within a double-height *piano nobile* space conceived as an 'observatory of knowledge'. Unusually for a library, it encourages an elevated ship-like perspective over the neighbouring park, waterfront and city. Blanchet describes the building as a 'social actor'. Naturally illuminated by day and glittering by night, this transparency at the intersection is used as a visual beacon. A central desk on the main floor overlooks low-level shelves and allows visual surveillance of the whole. An interior collage with a snoozing customer in the foreground recognises and anticipates the life of the library set against its more symbolic objectives.



Above: OMA has included a snoozing reader in the foreground of this interior, anticipating the probable life of the library  
Opposite: The X-shaped plan points to four landmarks in the bomb-damaged city of William the Conqueror

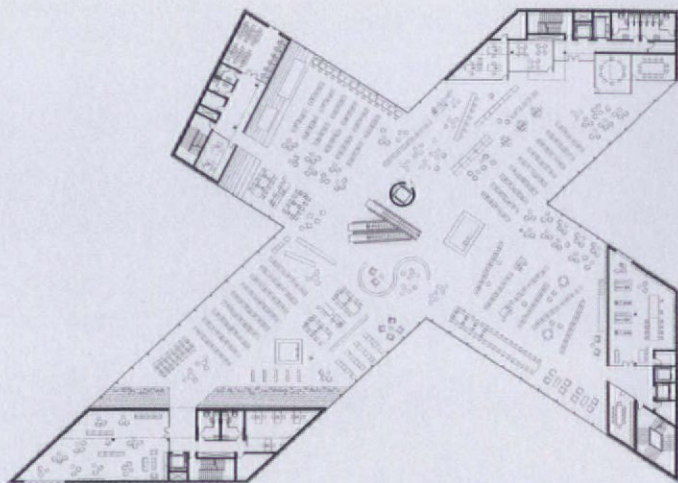


section through short block

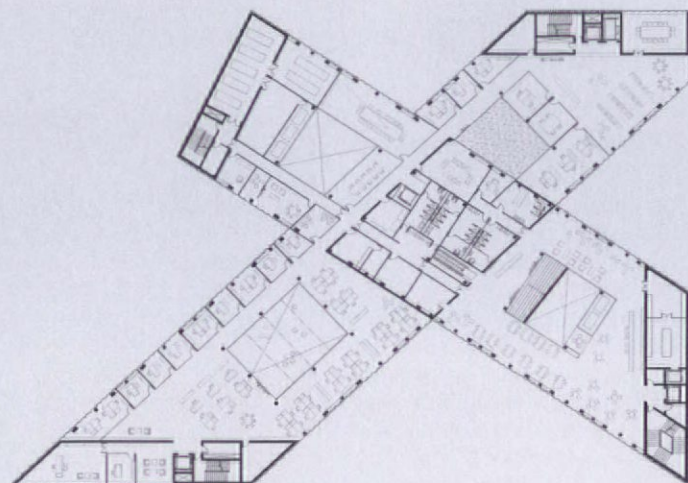


section through long block

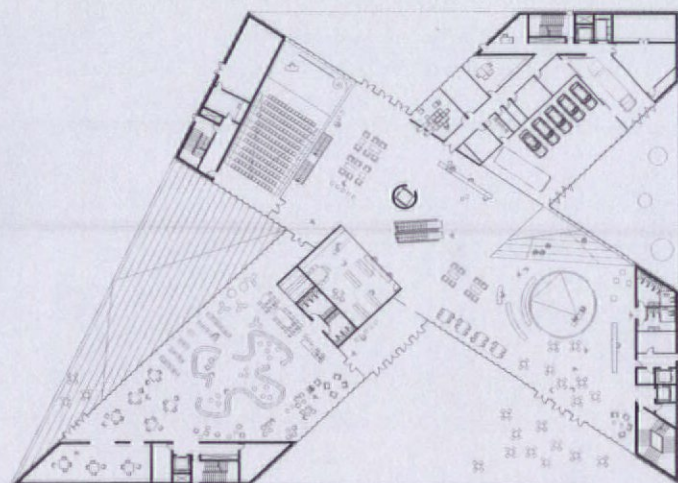




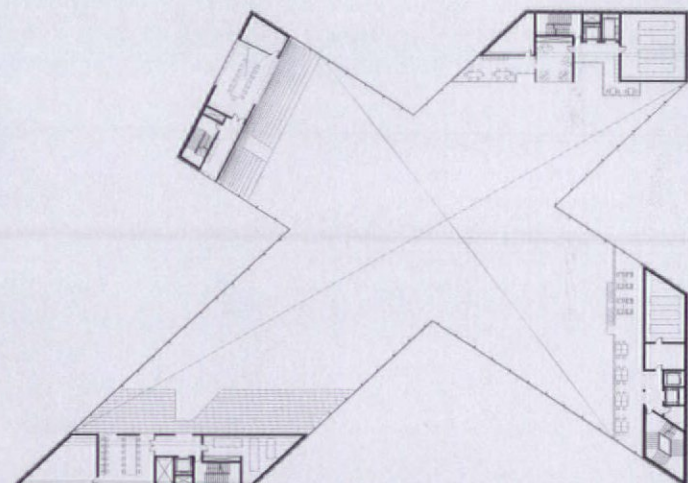
first floor plan



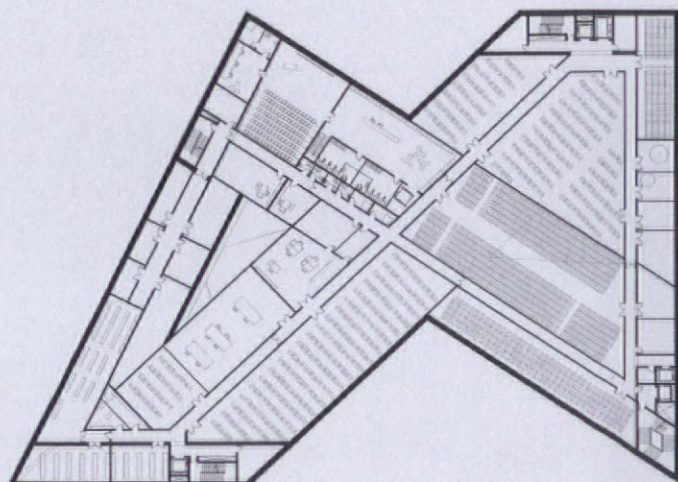
third floor plan



ground floor plan



second floor plan



basement plan





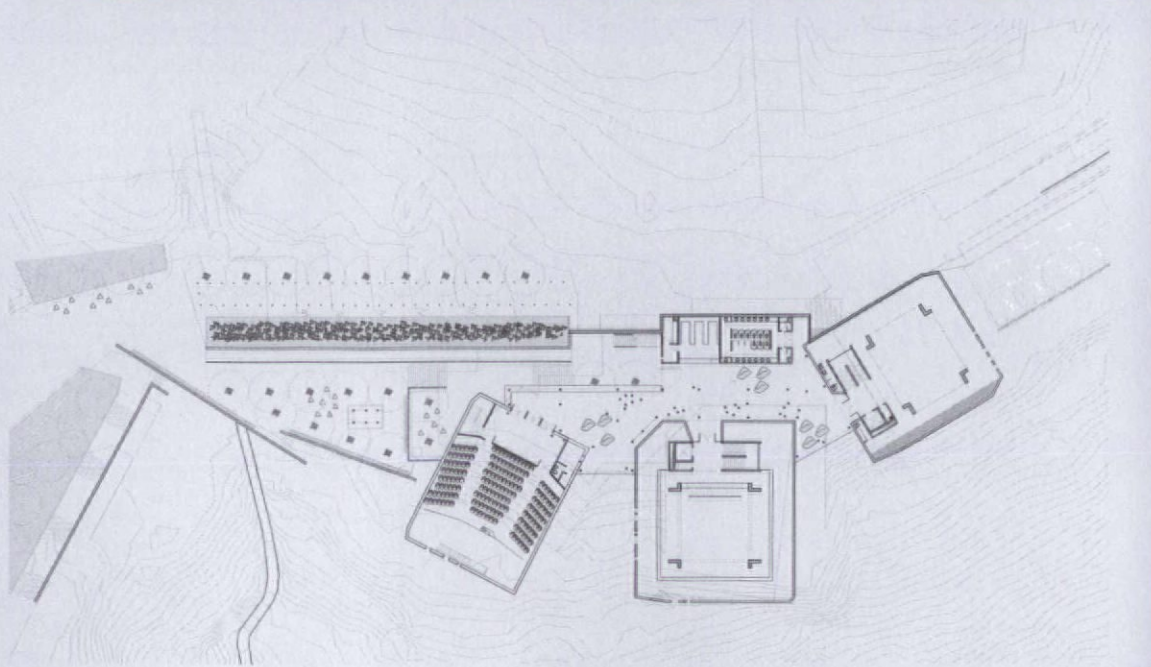
## Biblioteca España

**GIANCARLO MAZZANTI  
& ARQUITECTOS**

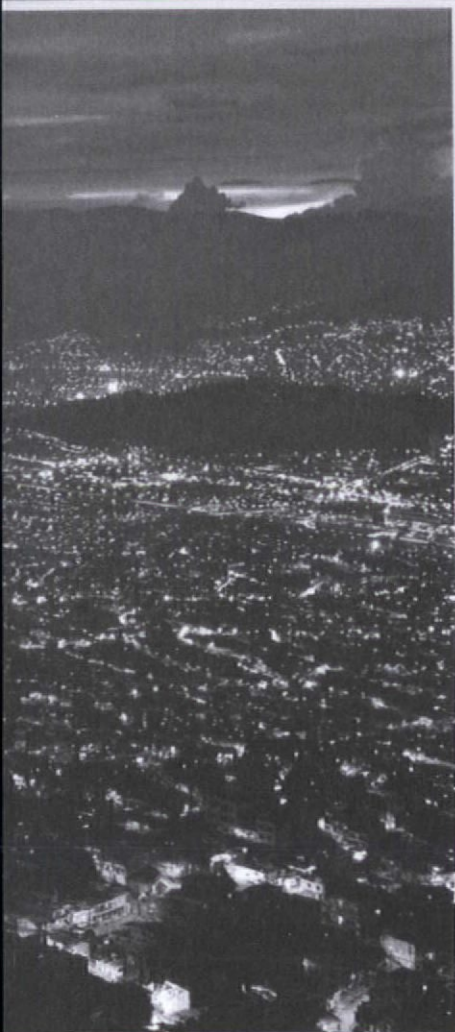
*Medellín, Colombia 2008: 1068m²  
US\$4 million (£2.5 million)*

Hamlet was perhaps not imagining his native Denmark but rather a public library in Medellín, Colombia, built in 2009, when he muttered: 'I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space'. Giancarlo Mazzanti has made a deliberate attempt visually to transport the library users away from their impoverished surroundings. Poised like giant boulders above the basin of Medellín, the library has the iconic presence of a religious statue, giving visual order over a jumbled townscape beneath it. Unlike the other more formally inventive buildings here, however, it does not serve nor is it funded by a wealthy context.

Its dark, chiselled, brown stone-clad capes punctuated with clusters of small windows shroud simply stacked floorplates internally. The space between the two provides the volume for heat and light to circulate. While the construction of building has been criticised for its leaking roof, it has also been widely praised for its intelligent provision of learning space and of an outdoor balcony over the city. With significant pressures on resources it seems unfair to condemn the building for its workmanship when, by contrast, its positive message is so overwhelming. The high quality of the design proposal is not extravagant in technical terms compared with other buildings here and it is grim to conclude that only the wealthiest societies can support ambitious design.







Above: Poised like giant boulders above the basin of Medellín, Columbia, the Biblioteca España conjures up the appearance of a religious statue as it lends visual order to the jumbled city townscape below

## Conclusion

It is evident that in all the schemes illustrated here, today's public library brief is more than simply functional. At all scales, varying in scope from nation to town, the public library is being framed globally as an emblem of hope and a symbol of cultural establishment. Recurring references demonstrate a shift from the pragmatic concerns of capacity that dominated the design agenda of the 1960s and economic preoccupations of the early public library movement. It is clearly the symbolic value of enabling the physical browsing of books that is celebrated today.

The existence of the Kindle, it seems, does not dent this ambition but rather bolsters a recognition of the importance of offering places for physical access to information or, at least, of being seen to do make such provision. Browsing the internet delivers a self-fulfilling prophecy – unless you like pop-up adverts. As Patrick Arends at Mecanoo emphasises, the accidental encounter of alphabetical order and social interaction is the promise of the new public library. Since the infinite space of the internet may be accessed from the private realm of the home computer, the library provides containment, and the

characterisation of its identity through scale and form has become critical.

Today's ethical panacea of sustainability is readily married with such positive and extrovert programmes. While often led by target-driven mechanisms, it is to be hoped that buildings with such lofty moral status may start to deliver enviable environmental innovation, albeit from a crumpling public purse. It is clear that despite much environmental advice to the contrary, cold and dull northern European skies still inspire the specification of expansive glazed facades. Increasingly sophisticated techniques to keep using the marvellous qualities of glass are still being pursued vigorously.

Victorian preoccupations with the sanitary aspects of light and air in public buildings are perhaps eclipsed by televisual aims of glamorising the perception of everyday life. It is certainly true that in offering an invitation to enter spaces resembling the shiny corporate world, some sense of social equity is delivered. In this respect, library designers on BREEAM and equivalent leases are responsible for delivering new environmental paradigms that may, in turn, influence the design of shopping centres, offices and hotels.

## Further Reading

Black, A. 2005. 'The Library as Clinic: A Foucauldian Interpretation of British Public Library Attitudes to Social and Physical Disease, Ca. 1850-1950'. *Libraries & Culture*. Vol. 40, no. 3, 2005: 416-34.  
Black, A, Pepper, S, Bagshaw, K. 2009. *Books, Buildings and Social Engineering*. London: Ashgate.  
Brawne, M. 1970. *Libraries: Architecture and Equipment*. London: Pall Mall Press  
Champneys, B. January 1902. 'The Design of Libraries'. *The Architectural Review*. Vol. XI.  
Cotgreave, A. 1901. *Views & Memoranda of Public Libraries*. London: Library aids co.  
Edwards, E. 1859. *Memoirs of Libraries: including a Handbook of Library Economy*. London: Trubner & Co.  
Levine, N. 1982. *The Book and the Building: Hugo's Theory of Architecture and Labrousse's Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève in The Beaux-Arts and nineteenth-century French architecture*, edited by R Middleton. London: Thames & Hudson

Papworth, JW. 1853. *Museums, Libraries, and Picture Galleries, Public and Private; Their Establishment, Formation, Arrangement, and Architectural Construction. / to Which Is Appended the Public Libraries Act, 1850, and Remarks on Its Adoption by Mechanics and Other Scientific Institutions; with Illustrations*. London: Chapman and Hall.  
Pepper, S. 1986. 'A Department Store of Learning'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 May 1986, 1.  
Pepper, S. 2006. 'Storehouses of Knowledge: the free library movement and the birth of modern library architecture', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*. Vol. 3 1850-2000, edited by A Black and P Hoare. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Roth, M. 2011. *Library Architecture and Design*. Salenstein: Braun Publishing.  
Snape, R. 2006. 'Libraries for Leisure Time', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*. Vol. 3 1850-2000, edited by A Black and P Hoare.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Thompson, A. 1963. *Library Buildings of Britain and Europe: An International Study, with Examples Mainly from Britain and Some from Europe and Overseas*. London: Butterworths.

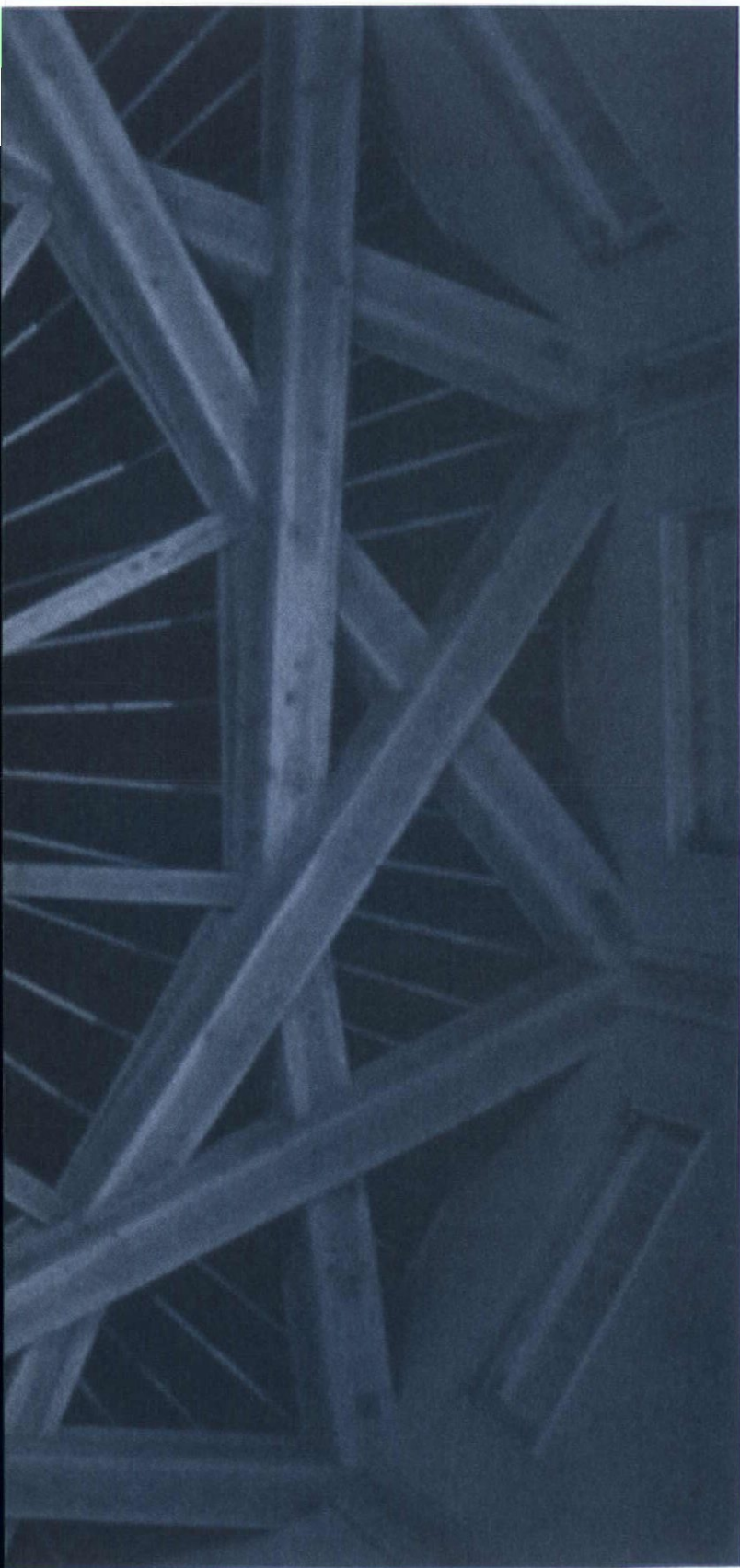
## Footnotes

1. See Steinbeck, John et al, 'Some Random and Randy Thoughts on Books', originally published in *The Author Looks at Format*, edited by Ray Freiman. American Institute of Arts. 1951.
2. See Borges, Jorge Luis. 2000. *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*. Allen Lane, The Penguin Press: 214-216. The Argentine author and librarian wrote the 1939 essay on which he based 'La biblioteca de Babel', in Borges, Jorge Luis. 1941. *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*. Buenos Aires: Sur. 3 Delessert, BJP. 1835. *Mémoire sur la Bibliothèque royale, où l'on indique les mesures à prendre pour la transférer dans un bâtiment circulaire*. Paris: Imprimerie de H Dupuy.









1. (Left) the reciprocal frame structure of the exhibition hall roof in Kazuhiro Ishii's Bunraku Theatre complex, Seiwa, Japan (1992)

2. An 'amiable vicious circle' from *Vicious Circles and Infinity: An Anthology of Paradoxes* by P Hughes and G Brecht, Penguin (1978). The closing of the circle creates a reciprocating structure with everyone supported in a sitting position without any furniture

2



## IN THE FRAME

The design of reciprocal frames rests on the structural relationships of neighbouring elements. Over hundreds of years, it has spanned across cultures, from the English Gothic spire to the North American Indian tepee and Japanese theatre. With the arrival of tensile cables, reciprocal frames hold the potential to maximise the efficiency of even the most high-tech of buildings

**WILL MCLEAN**



As the name suggests, the structural integrity of reciprocal frames or reciprocal-framed structures depends on the structural relationships of neighbouring elements. While this is true of all successful structural assemblies, the reciprocity of shared and contiguous structural forces is implicit in this most intriguing of structural type.

The history of reciprocal frames can be traced back hundreds of years, however their more formal structural designation is more recently described. In *Reciprocal Frame Architecture*, Olga Popovic Larsen's excellent survey on the subject, the history of these interdependent and structurally elliptic (or closed) forms are mathematically and physically analysed, as is the intrinsically hermetic nature of this structural typology.

Popovic Larsen defines reciprocal frames as 'grillage structures consisting of mutually supporting beams'. These grillage structures can be constructed as either flat planar surfaces or fully three-dimensional assemblages. In a three-dimensional formation the reciprocal arrangement extends to individual overlapping members forming reciprocating joints with the inner end of one beam supported by its neighbour and so on, until the structural circuit is closed with the assembly locked by self-weight and gravity.

Reciprocal frames can be configured in a number of patterns: radially, regular orthogonal or triangulated grids and irregular arrays of differently sized members; two or more of which are required to overlap at each connection thus forming the reciprocal relationship.

In Kazuhiro Ishii's Bunraku Theatre complex, Seiwa, Japan (1994), we see very clear illustrations of three-dimensional reciprocal frames both orthogonally and

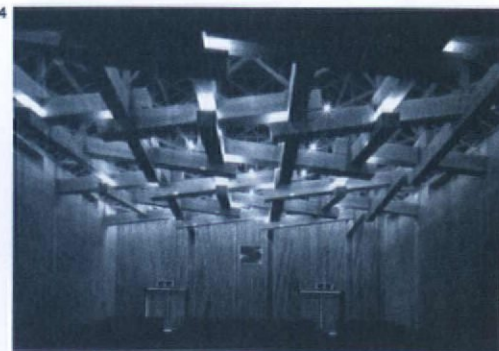
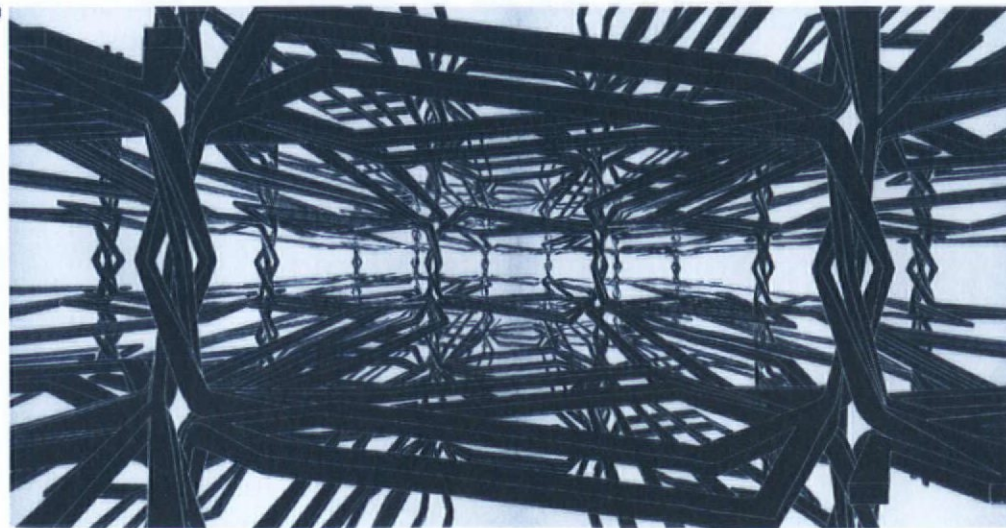
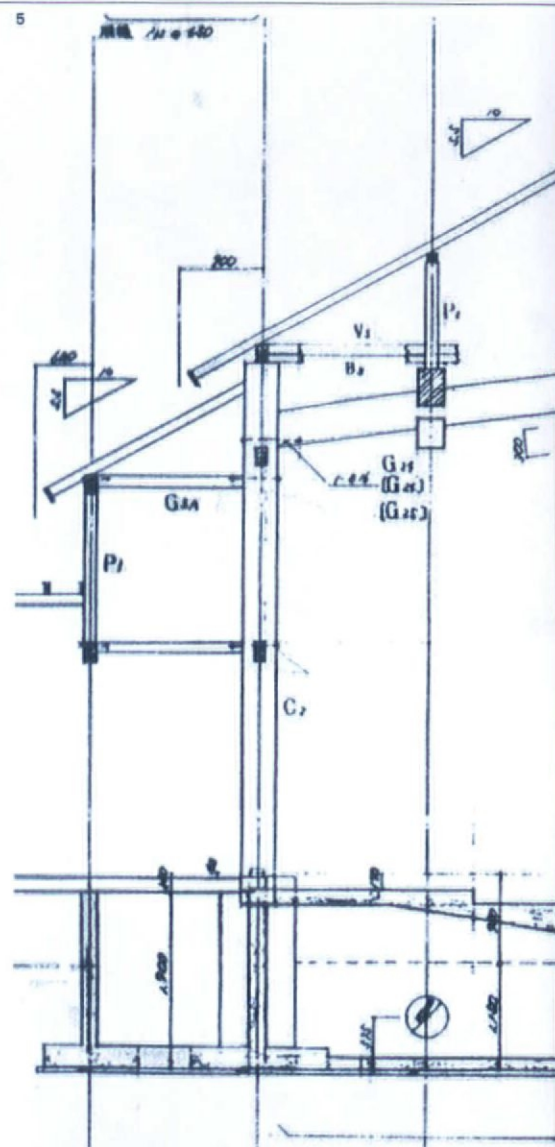
radially arranged. In the exhibition hall roof, 12 timber beams crown a double-height drum with a spiralling reciprocal frame; the drum, supporting timber columns and roof are additionally supported by two horizontal reciprocal-framed ring beams.

In Bunraku's theatre auditorium a reciprocating 90° grid is formed in massive timbers that appear to hover over the auditorium both supporting the roof structure and forming an allegorical component of the ancient Japanese art of puppet theatre. The large square section timber modules are pulled up and down in the X-plane to form an outsized woven lattice.

The historical background to reciprocal frames is various and cross-cultural and as a non-engineer I would extend the general definition to variously include the North American Indian tepee (think about the connection at the apex), medieval timber floor structures and the temporary bridges and reciprocal frame arrangements drawn and published by Leonardo da Vinci.

When you are next enjoying a bit of English Gothic in the Chapter House at Lincoln Cathedral, be aware that above the intricacies of the stone 'forceline' tracery of the ceiling sits the equally complex 18th-century reciprocating timber scaffold of the decagonal spire. The structure of the spire, built by James Essex, shares a familial likeness with Essex's Mathematical Bridge, Queens College Cambridge (1749, subsequently rebuilt), where a series of tangential (or radial) beams form both the balustrade and spanning arch.

Konrad Wachsmann, was also inspired by the Gothic style as a visible manifestation of technology, construction and architecture. A further examination of Wachsmann's



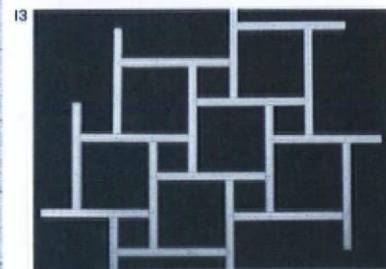
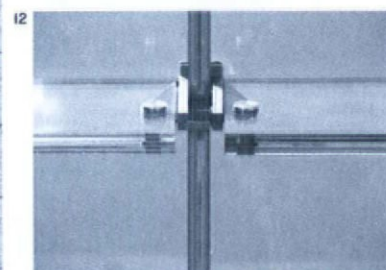
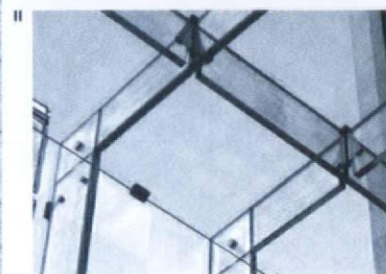
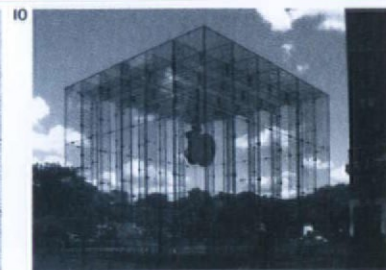
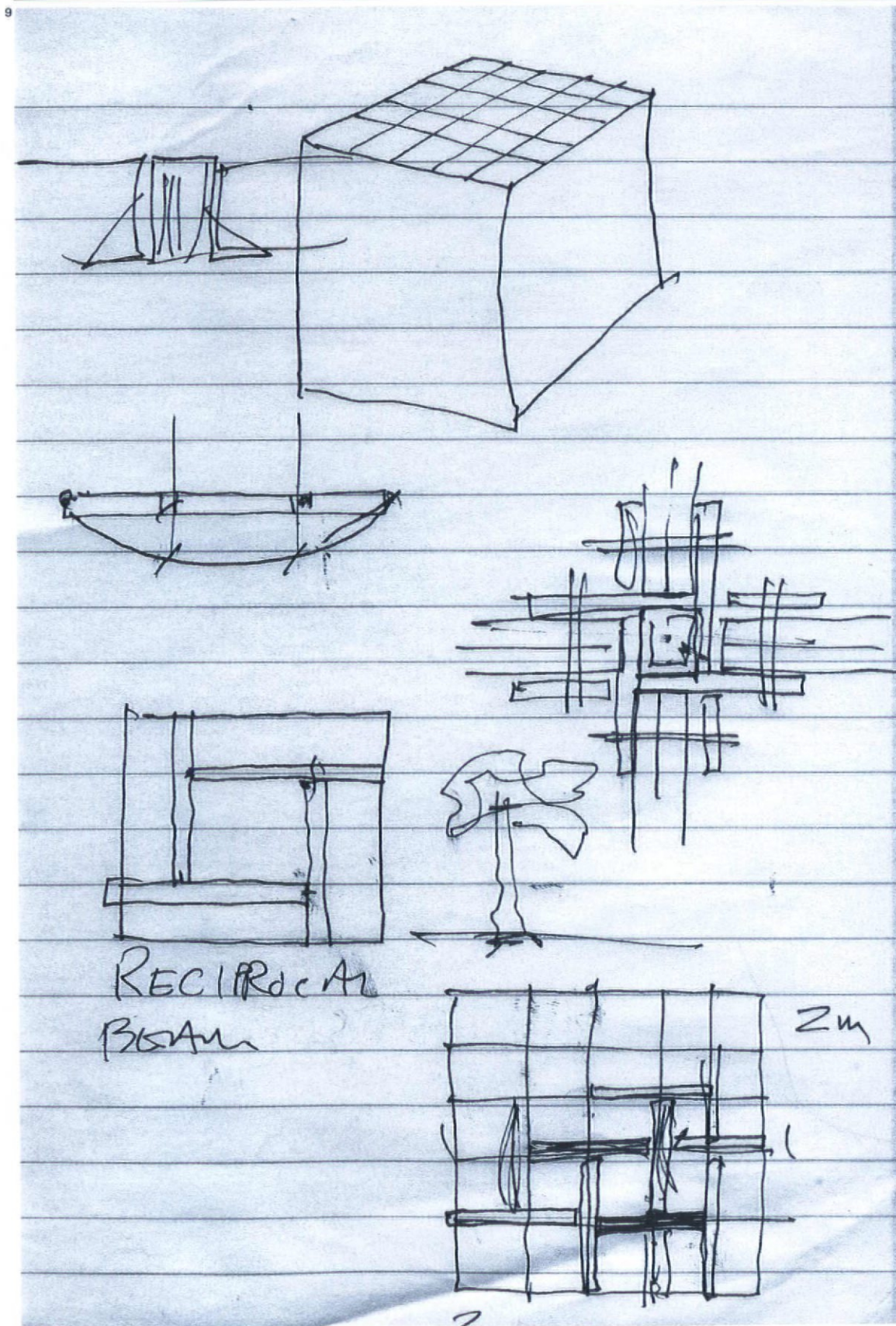
3. Wachsmann, Konrad 'Study of a Dynamic Structure', *The Turning Point of Building*, Rheinhold (1961)  
4. The reciprocal frame of the auditorium ceiling

within the Bunraku Theatre complex  
5. This long section of the theatre auditorium by engineer Tadashi Hamuzo shows how the ceiling supports the pitched roof







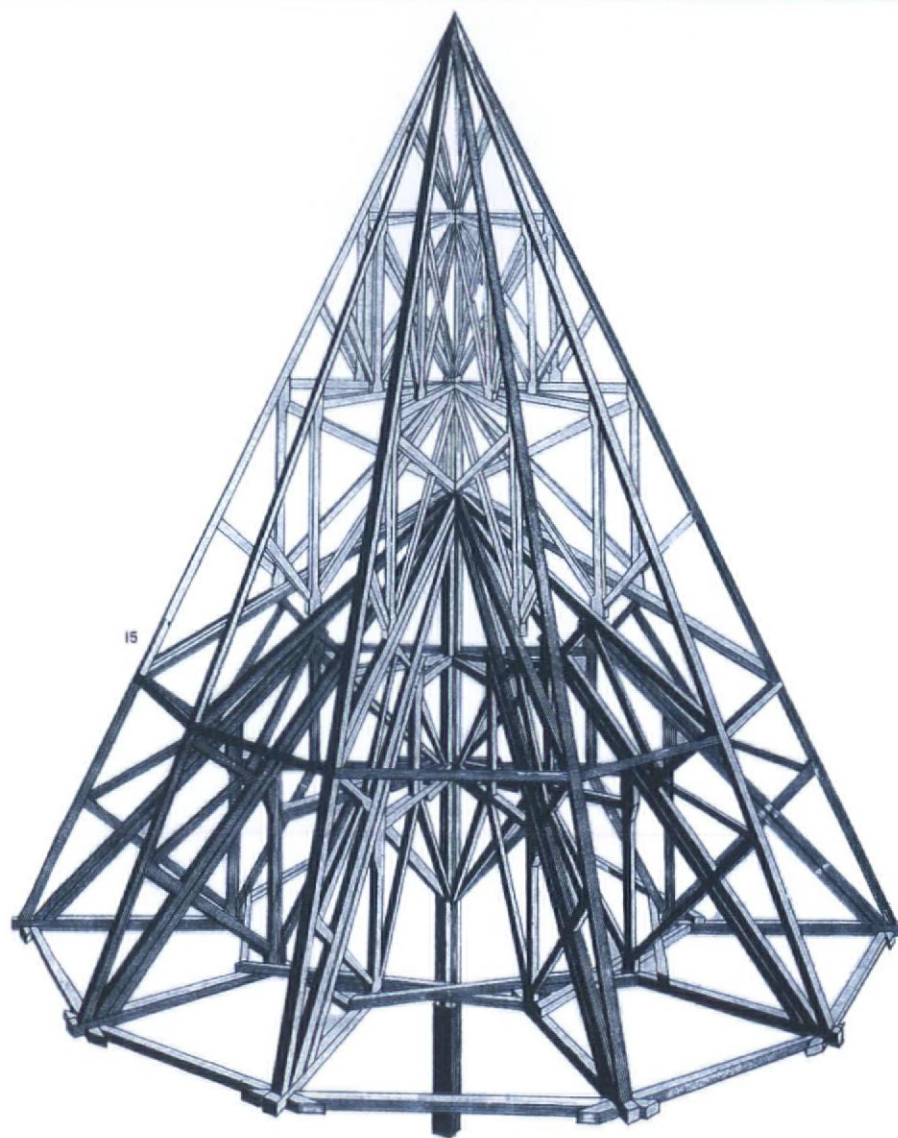
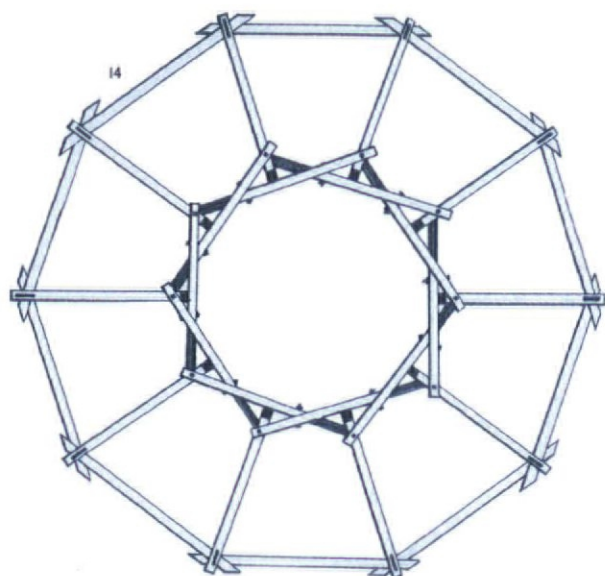


9. Sketch by structural engineer and glass specialist Tim Macfarlane of Dewhurst Macfarlane, explaining the principles of a reciprocating frame and its application to the glass cube of the New York Apple Store 10. The glass cube at the New York Apple Store 11 & 12. Detail showing the reciprocating stainless steel connections 13. A model of a planar reciprocal framework built from identically sized elements, geometrically sub-divided into three sections and thus offsetting parallel members for simple T-junction connections



14. Plan drawing of the reciprocal timber arrangement of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter House spire from *English Historic Carpentry* by CA Hewett, Phillimore (1980, p.258)

15. Drawing of the reciprocal timber framework of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter House spire from *English Historic Carpentry* by CA Hewett, Phillimore (1980, p.257)



own *Study of a Dynamic Structure* (1953) reveals single components, repositioned and repeated in a three-dimensional reciprocal arrangement. In a direct juxtaposition of Gothic stone spiral stairs and a detail of one of his 'structural concepts' in *The Turning Point of Building*, he illustrates how structural forces are bifurcated, redirected and redeployed in a three-dimensional reciprocal (space) frame.

In Morris Mitchell's book *The Lemonade Stand*, the reciprocal-framed construction technique and its self-build imperative is described as building big spans with short lengths. This method of making short lengths go a long way (or span further than their length) may also have been the expedient construction solution arrived at by medieval

builders who had bigger spans to bridge than lengths of timber, or perhaps that the smaller and less weighty elements were considerably easier to handle.

The ease of construction, or certainly the omission of complex four-way connections, was a factor in structural engineer Tim Macfarlane's use of a reciprocal beam arrangement for the New York Apple Store glass cube. A reciprocal arrangement of laminated glass beams in the 9.8 x 9.8m roof uses stainless steel joist hangers at the mid-point of cross beams creating a planar reciprocal arrangement, which is both structurally and constructionally efficient.

The structural efficiency of reciprocal frames may be further explored by extending the definition and establishing them as a

compressed proto-subset of tensegrity (a phrase coined by Buckminster Fuller to mean tensile integrity). There are certainly familial likenesses to Buckminster Fuller and Kenneth Snelson's most efficient of structural forms, albeit without the necessary introduction of tensile cables.

In fact, looking at the disaggregated triangulated arrangement of a tensegrity tower, the introduction of cable (which separates the compressive and tensile components) is an evolved model of a reciprocal disposition. And while the ends of the compressive elements in a tensegrity structure do not touch, the linking tensile cables do the job of reciprocating structural interdependencies' and relational forces to maximal efficiencies.



# EUROPEAN COPPER IN ARCHITECTURE AWARDS 15

Recognising the inventive use of copper and its alloys in buildings, the biennial European Copper in Architecture Awards express the potential of an environmentally sustainable material and celebrate the best in European architecture

**CATHERINE SLESSOR**

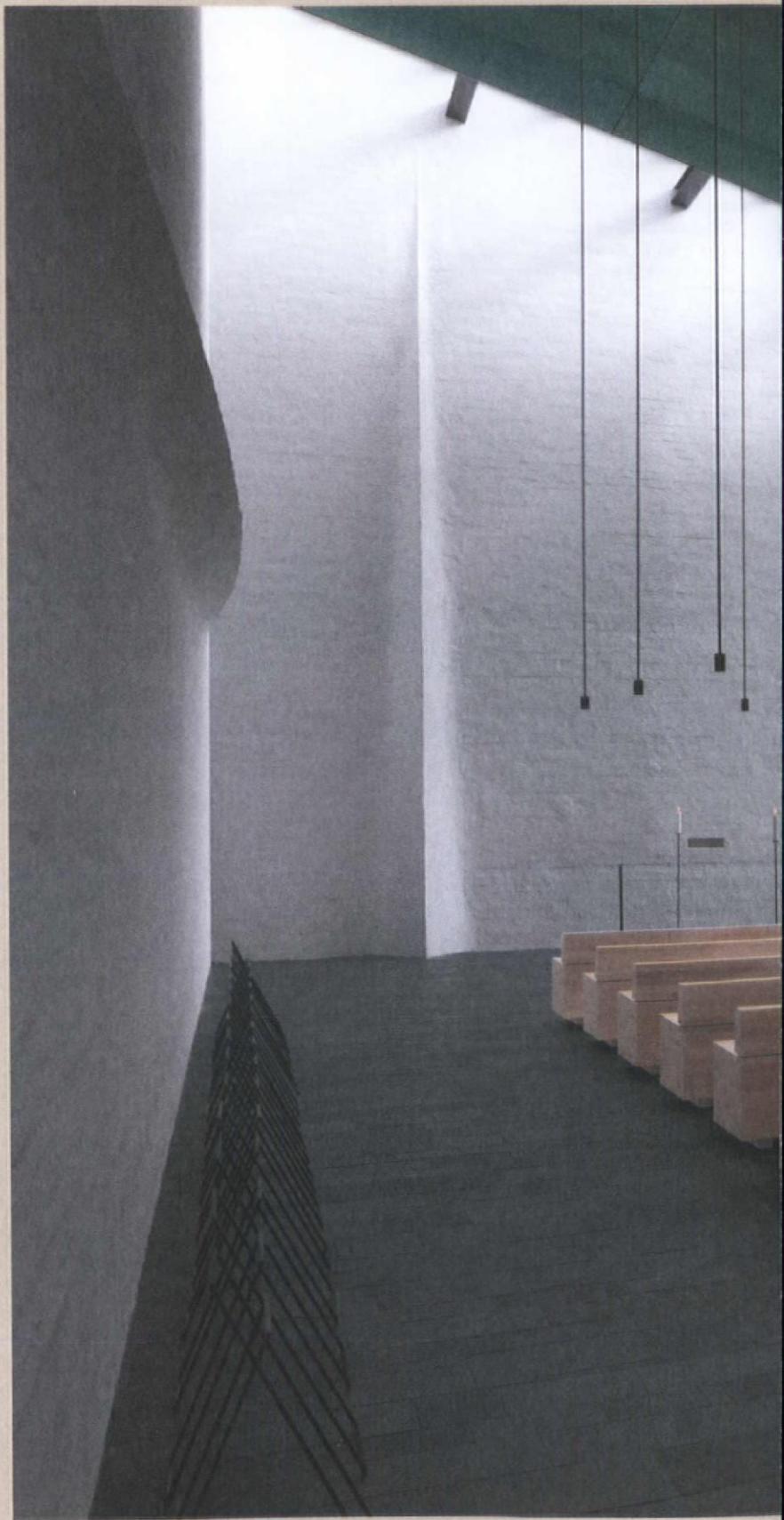
Now in their 15th cycle, the Copper in Architecture Awards are an impressive manifestation of the contemporary potential of an ancient material. Awards are given for the skilful use and application of copper and its various alloys, such as brass and bronze. With an increase in entries from 47 in 2009 to 66 this year, drawn from all around Europe, the biennial Awards clearly demonstrate copper's enduring appeal and celebrate the best in current European architecture.

This year's judging panel included a quartet of architects, all recipients of previous Copper in Architecture Awards: Einar Jarmund, partner in Oslo-based Jarmund/Vignæs; Patrick Genard, who runs his own practice in Barcelona; Pia Salin of Basel-based Zwimpfer Partner Architekten and Keith Williams, principal of Keith Williams Architects. AR Editor Catherine Slessor chaired the panel and summarises the jury's comments on each of the winning and shortlisted projects.

Entries were assessed from photographs, drawings and descriptions submitted by their architects. Initially, the judges independently considered each entry before discussing specific projects that could move forwards to the next stage. Selected schemes were then openly debated and seven were finally shortlisted, from which the following awards were made after considerable deliberation.

Set in disparate locales, ranging from central London to the South Tyrol, the seven shortlisted projects explore the role of copper as an architecturally versatile, as well as an environmentally sustainable material.

**🔗 To find out more, visit [copperconcept.org/awards](http://copperconcept.org/awards)**







## WINNER

### Chapel of St Lawrence Vantaa, Finland Avanto Arkkitehdit

This dedicated cemetery chapel aims to reconcile the emotional needs of mourners with the pragmatic demands of funerals. The deceased are brought into the building along a separate route to the cooled, lower-level preparation areas. Above, the ground-floor plan defines a symbolic route through a series of areas punctuated by intermediate rooms preparing mourners for the next stage, guided by a continuous skylight. This realises the central concept of a *polku* or a 'path' – man's journey from mortality to eternity.

Separate entrances, each with its own quiet garden, serve two chapels that can be used concurrently. Low, dimly-lit reception areas allow reflection while separate groups of mourners wait for chapels to become available. Stairs lead down to an intimate area where close family can view the open coffin. The chapels terminate the straight routes from the entrances with a symbolic 'final turning point' where mourners bid farewell and leave the deceased behind them. The path turns toward the unknown, but goes on.

The new building is close to a 15th-century church in an area classed as a nationally significant, culturally historic environment. The volume links disparate elements in the surroundings without appearing as a singular building mass, allowing the medieval stone church and bell tower to dominate the village. It also connects with the graveyard, leaving the complex of old buildings with their own boundaries and territories untouched.

The building uses similar materials as the old structures in the area. The mass of the load-bearing solid masonry walls balances changes in temperature and moisture. Lightly plastered and whitewashed walls form a tranquil background for events in the chapel. The partition walls are in-situ cast white concrete and the roof is patinated copper, like that of the old church. Many ceilings are finished with removable, perforated copper trays. The glazed walls toward the graveyard are covered with a patinated copper mesh, which functions as a screen between the outside and the internal spaces of the chapel. The mesh tempers thermal gain from the sun.

TUOMAS UUSHEIMO



## COPPER AWARDS



TUOMAS UUSHEIMO

### JURY COMMENTS

The jury found this project for a funeral chapel a highly compelling and atmospheric study in the handling of space, light and materials. White walls are counterpointed by roofs and ceilings made of patinated copper. Each panel was patinated by hand, so the copper has exquisitely sensuous colour and texture. Patinated copper mesh panels also screen the glazed walls overlooking an adjoining churchyard. The jury was very impressed by the high level of craft and technical skills involved, and how the material was used to evoke a wonderfully tranquil sense of the numinous, creating an appropriately solemn yet nonetheless uplifting setting for the immemorial rituals of death and parting.



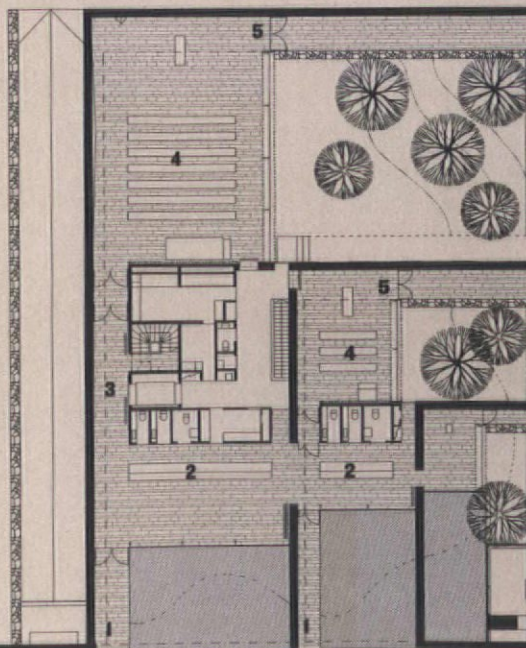
KUMC.COM





- 1 entrance
- 2 reception
- 3 stairs
- 4 chapel
- 5 final turning point

ground floor plan



**CHRIS HODSON INTERVIEWED AVANTO ARKKITEHDIT PARTNER ANU PUUSTINEN AT THE PRACTICE'S OFFICES IN HELSINKI.**

**CHRIS HODSON:** How did Avanto come into being and how is it developing now?

**ANU PUUSTINEN:** Ville Hara and I set up the partnership in 2004 after winning the cemetery chapel competition the year before. Over the seven years that we have worked together we have been involved with projects of varying scale for public communities, private companies and private customers. We have also been successful in several national and international architectural competitions and have both taught at the Helsinki University of Technology.

**CH:** What is at the heart of your approach to architecture?

**AP:** Avanto means 'a hole in the ice for bathing in winter' – a popular hobby in Finland – which symbolises our design philosophy. We want to 'open up' the environment to people with architecture that evokes emotions. For this we need to understand and empathise with those using the space; to make people feel and experience.

**CH:** How was this approach applied to the St Lawrence Chapel project?

**AP:** We set out to fully understand both the grieving process of mourners and the practical issues by attending funerals of complete strangers. The resulting design aims to help the mourner, offering space for grief. Giving peace and dignity to the funeral ceremony was of primary importance in the planning of the building, and movement from one room to another is highlighted with a change of lighting and spatial characteristics.

**CH:** What role does sustainability play in this particular design and your work in general?

**AP:** We want to create a better environment using architecture as a tool. The starting point for any project is the proviso that a building fits its environment and suits the needs of the occupants on a long-term basis. However, we also aim to create architecture that is long-lasting, durable and environmentally friendly. Of course, climate change is taken into consideration and our buildings are well-insulated and use recyclable materials. Certainly, the chapel is built to last, with a limited palette of extremely durable materials, including copper used extensively both internally and externally. We set a goal of a 200-year lifetime and a life cycle simulator was used during the design to check this.



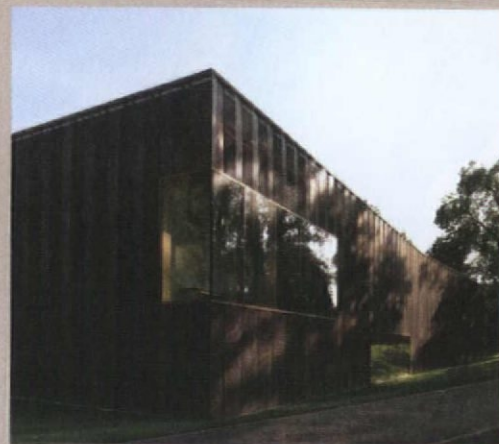
### HIGHLY COMMENDED

#### **Villa Vauban, Luxembourg** **Philippe Schmit** **Architects**

The historic Villa Vauban is located in Luxembourg's green belt and has hosted the municipal art gallery since 1959. In 2002, Philippe Schmit was commissioned to develop plans for a comprehensive renovation and extension project. This increases exhibition space from 350m<sup>2</sup> to 1200m<sup>2</sup> while respecting the site's historic elements: a fortress wall, built by Vauban in 1739, and the villa dating from 1871–73, with its garden and public park from the same period. Essentially, the design aims to create a balance between buildings and landscape. Integration is

achieved by burying half of the volume underground and giving it a dynamic facade of translucent, large sheets of perforated brass, which reflects rather than dominates the park. The new architectural ensemble is clearly identifiable as a public building in its municipal park setting.

The new building provides two levels of exhibition spaces behind the villa, rising up from the foundation of the fortress wall below park level. Openings in the frontage create viewing points to help visitors' spatial orientation and to reveal activities inside the museum to passers-by. The folds of the metal facade and roof surfaces covering the new building give a strong haptic quality and an impression of lightness while integrating it into the landscape. Internally, exhibition spaces are characterised by hammered concrete surfaces, etched translucent glass



facades and oak wooden floors. The bare walls reveal small quartz crystals in the concrete, making them both tactile and light.

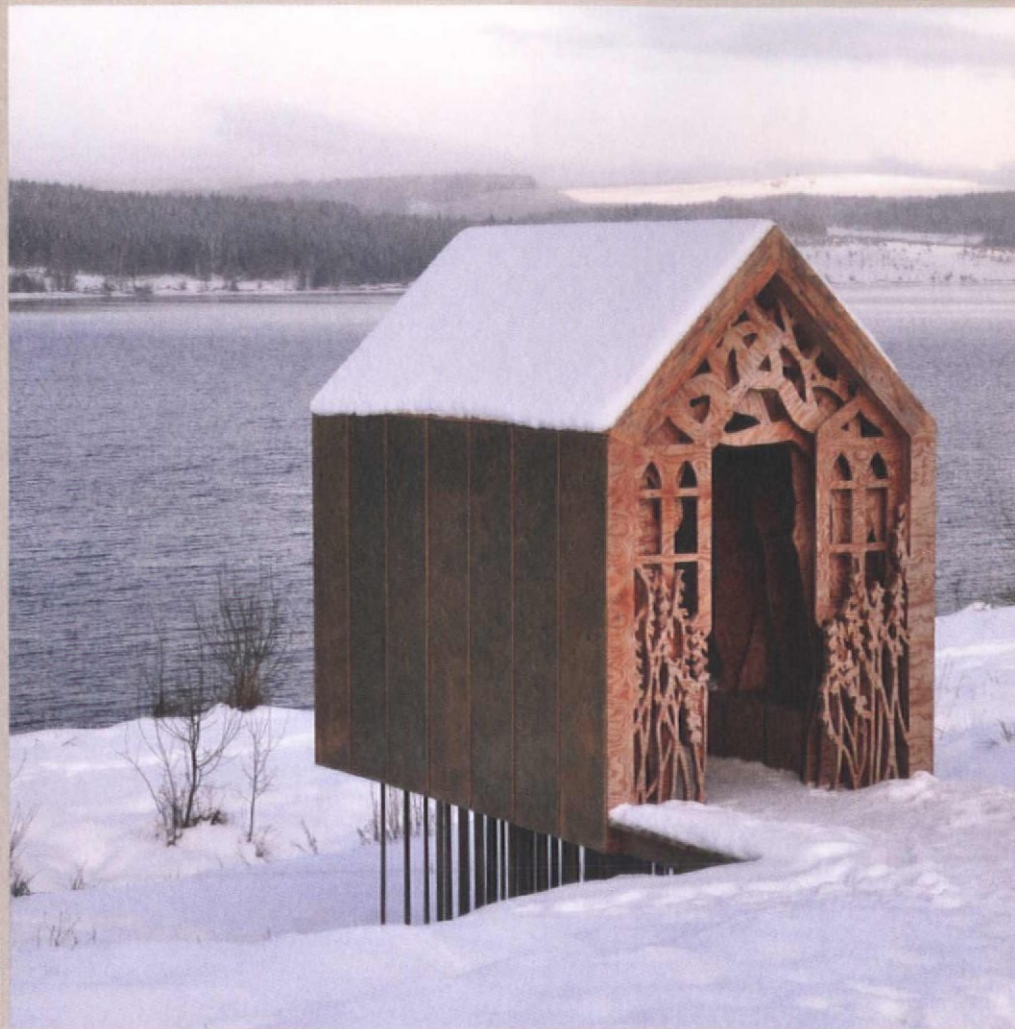
Old and new exhibition rooms have been integrated into flexible continuous spaces, with a linking entrance hall forming a transition between the two buildings. Galleries in the new extension have been articulated as superimposed flights of rooms. They are slightly offset along their longitudinal axis, creating setbacks and recesses for various uses, such as a sculpture gallery, a children's workshop, a loggia with a view on to the park and a generous staircase leading to the lower exhibition level. These elements define the choreography of the museum circulation – slowing the pace and allowing visitors to savour the disappearing park landscape and appreciate details of textures and space within the building.

### JURY COMMENTS

The jury was extremely impressed by this new addition to an existing art museum. Though the new parts are conspicuously of their time, they form a sensitively judged counterpoint to the original historic building and the surrounding parkland landscape. The new extension is wrapped in delicately perforated panels of brass, and the jury especially admired how this metal skin appeared to dissolve at night, changing from an opaque surface to a sensuously glowing, translucent veil. The combination of aesthetic refinement and technical skill made this a stand-out project.







## JUDGES' SPECIAL PRIZE

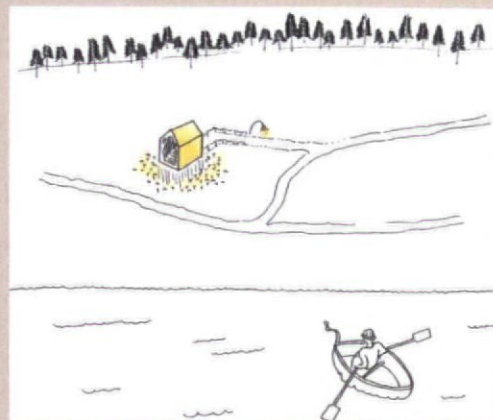
### Freya's Cabin, Kielder Water, Northumberland Studio Weave

Freya's Cabin is part of 'Freya and Robin', a project to build two structures on the banks of Kielder Water in Northumberland. The structures provide stopping points for visitors walking or cycling along the lakeside path. The architects considered the dramatic site as a stage set or a backdrop against which they could tell a story.

They invented two characters by personifying two sites facing each other across the water and wrote a love story about a flower-loving goddess, Freya, who builds a cabin to entice the object of her affections, Robin, to row across the lake to her. Freya

modelled the cabin on her flower press, taking tree branches and pressing them tight together to create an enchanted forest ceiling, then balancing it up high on the tallest, straightest stems that she could find. When she saw Robin rowing away, Freya cried tears of gold and wrapped the cabin in them.

The fantasy of the design story is echoed in the cabin's construction. The structure is made from CNC-cut plywood layers held together with glue and tension rods. The plywood is interspersed with clear acrylic sheets which admit light and form the balustrade. The building is supported on a series of brass-clad 'stems' planted into concrete foundations. Preformed trays of a copper and aluminium alloy are used to clad the cabin. The sheets represent Freya's golden tears and the copper alloy was chosen for its rich, golden colour and durable finish. The sheets are perforated in a tear-like pattern and are fixed to allow movement as the structure breathes with the weather.



## JURY COMMENTS

This was one of the more unusual submissions – more an artistic intervention or sculpture, as opposed to a building – but the jury enjoyed the folk tale narrative and decided to award the project a Special Prize. The architects have created a modern folly that chimes beautifully with landscape. The attention to detail in the choice and use of materials was especially lyrical and imaginative. The richness of the metal exterior forms an evocative contrast with the rustic simplicity of the plywood interior.



CKRANENBURG



## COMMENDED

### Family House Seeheim, Germany Fritsch und Schlüter Architekten

Located in a lush green residential area developed around 1900, the site's hillside position commands impressive, distant views of the Rhine Valley. The archetypal form of the gabled house, defined by the development plan, was taken up thematically as a monolithic form that advances beyond the edge of the slope, yet remains in equilibrium.

Contrasting views to the outside have been concentrated and staged with just four large openings across the corners, biting into the monolithic form. Vertical 'cut-out' spaces, with full roof glazing over the dining area and stairs, connect the lower and upper

floors. Panoramic openings were made as large as possible in order to capture the magnificent views – a key aspect of the site.

A central aim of the design was to create a homogenous appearance for both the roof and external wall planes. Cladding all these surfaces in copper made it possible to realise this monolithic character in the form of an abstract, sharp-edged geometric volume, while also providing a robust, weather-proof skin. The roof and outer wall surfaces are clad with large, pre-oxidised copper panels, contrasting with the white internal surfaces.

Detailing is handled with care to ensure that junctions and transitions are absolutely flush, while maintaining ventilation across the back surface area. The sharply defined white 'cuts' into the copper-clad mass form a fluid transition from outside to inside. Long-term performance was an important driver of material choice and copper was selected as a durable natural material that would enhance the sustainability of the house.

## JURY COMMENTS

The jury responded to the bold geometry of this house, which abstracts the traditional archetype of the gabled, suburban villa. They admired the way the house connected its inhabitants to its surroundings, through a series of glazed cuts in the wall and roof planes. There was evident skill in the way that pre-oxidised panels of copper were used to clad the exterior, creating an elegantly smooth carapace which enhanced the project's inherent sense of formal and material refinement.





## COMMENDED

### Weymouth Street, London Make Architects

This project transforms a relatively undistinguished, six-storey 1960s block in the heart of a conservation area in London into a highly distinctive refurbishment scheme. It increases the residential accommodation and gives the building a striking new identity defined by extensive use of brass.

Respecting its historic context, the original Weymouth Street facade has been retained and refurbished so that it blends virtually seamlessly with the surrounding vernacular. However, brass cladding dramatically caps the building, containing two new levels of penthouses. This cladding then fully envelops the rear elevation, where the building has been extended horizontally and vertically to provide 12 new luxury apartments, exploding

with punched balconies that cantilever out from internal living spaces.

Brass was chosen for its qualities of sustainability and complete recyclability, as well as its distinctive architectural appeal. A key aspect of this is natural oxidation that will cause the brass to weather over time and add depth and character to the building. Each panel will patinate slightly differently but this process has been enhanced by varying components in the copper alloy to achieve colours ranging from a soft, golden yellow at the rear of the building to a russet brown on the new upper levels facing Weymouth Street. The colours will gradually tone down to echo the shades of the neighbouring buildings. The new enclosed balconies are a play on the verticality of the surrounding blocks and the pattern of this facade has been repeated within the balcony frames, which are transformed into perforated screens. The crisply gridded Mondrian-like geometry of the balconies animates the facades,



## JURY COMMENTS

Wrapped in a skin of brass cladding, this project for a residential development in the heart of London attracted the jury's attention with its imaginative approach to materials, especially how they age and weather. Differences in the proportions of copper and zinc used in the alloy mixtures create a range of different hues, from brown to gold, so the panels will patinate at different rates over time. The jury was also seduced by the perforated balcony frames which filter light and cast a pattern of rippling and flickering shadows around the interiors of the flats.





## SHORTLIST

### **Civic and Cultural Centre Berriozar, Spain Garcia Rodriguez Alcoba**

This project aims to unite a range of cultural, civic and municipal facilities around the edge of a future square that will shape and define an important new meeting place in Berriozar, a small town in Navarre, in northern Spain. As a major new urban element, the building effectively anchors and configures the public square, but it is also prominent in its own right, as an architecturally distinctive addition to the existing townscape.

It is conceived as a single, forthright volume that folds back on to itself, thereby defining a set of voids and volumes, both inside and outside. This creates a powerful, abstract, sculptural form which is clad in horizontal strips of pre-oxidised copper.

The strips vary in width, adding interest and texture to the facade. Though the copper has a glossy, metallic sheen, it also bestows a gravitas appropriate to the building's prominent civic role. As well as a cultural centre, the building houses both the town hall and local police headquarters.

Inside, white walls and floors capture the light, emphasising the abstract nature of the architecture. The formal structure consists of a continuous vertical and horizontal prism that configures different areas. The vertical fold, formalised by the tower and the horizontal fold, where the town hall services and the cultural centre are located, are articulated by voids that connect the different areas. This encourages their use as exhibition areas, waiting rooms and halls for public meetings. The voids are completed by a set of courtyards on the first floor, which capture and funnel light and ventilation into the interior, while also serving as tranquil enclaves for rest and relaxation.

## JURY COMMENTS

**This large civic complex, which combines a range of different functions, from town hall to police headquarters, caught the jury's eye as a dignified addition to its townscape. Jury members were particularly impressed by how it articulates a sense of civic life, through a skilful interplay of solid and void, and how it meshes with the wider urban realm, defining and enclosing new public spaces. In this, copper cladding plays a key part. Copper is used in horizontal strips of varying widths to animate and articulate facades with great finesse.**





## SHORTLIST

### Alpine Recovery Centre South Tyrol, Italy AllesWirdGut Architektur

With this infrastructure building, its architects have developed a copper-clad aesthetic that reflects a mountainous context, without overpowering its village location. The new building forms a major landmark but maintains a low-key presence at the same time. The volume appears firmly rooted to the ground and surrounding landscape but still retains an air of lightness. Responding to its position at the entrance to the village tight up against the

main road, the building also acknowledges the smaller scale buildings in the nearby area by effectively representing a multiple of them.

The reduction in mass is achieved by exploiting the topography and cutting into the sloping site. Daylighting the building's lower levels might seem a challenge in these circumstances but the design turns it into an opportunity with roof-lighting to the main circulation spine and spectacularly high ceilings. Lightwells are also used for below ground rooms cut into the slope, introducing intimate external spaces. Apart from the glazing, the entire volume is clad in copper, giving a natural, earthy hue and lively surface that harmonises with the surrounding old farmhouses and pine forests. The building becomes a timeless, organic, integral part of its environment.

## JURY COMMENTS

Set in an alpine town in Italy's South Tyrol, this project for a civic resource centre impressed the jury with its powerful topographic quality.

Long and low slung, it almost becomes part of the landscape, a reassuringly rugged presence in the town. The building's copper cladding emphasises this connection with its environment. The hue and the texture of the dark copper panels evoke the surrounding farmhouses and forests. The jury admired how an essentially functional building was transformed into a new local landmark through the careful sculpting of form and adept use of materials.



The European Copper in Architecture Awards programme is part of the European Copper in Architecture Campaign, promoted by the Copper Development Association and participating copper fabricators. All the 2011 entries can be viewed on the Copper in Architecture Awards website [copperconcept.org/awards](http://copperconcept.org/awards).

The Campaign also publishes Copper Architecture Forum magazine, with extra coverage of the shortlisted and winning projects.

Copper in Architecture  
5 Grovelands Business Centre  
Boundary Way  
Hemel Hempstead  
HP2 7TE  
United Kingdom  
Email: [helpline@copperdev.co.uk](mailto:helpline@copperdev.co.uk)  
[copperinfo.co.uk/arch](http://copperinfo.co.uk/arch)  
[copperconcept.org](http://copperconcept.org)



# REASSESSING POSTMODERNISM IS THE MOVEMENT STILL RELEVANT 50 YEARS ON?

As a major exhibition opens at the V&A on the same subject, Charles Jencks has published an account of Postmodernism's historic and unfolding story. While the author includes many recent architectural projects, these later examples emerge as antithetical to the movement's original intent. But if the current crop of architecture is devoid of meaning, could Postmodernism find a future in the complexity of the city and a world of rapid scientific and technological transition?

**COLIN FOURNIER**



Five decades after the birth of Postmodernism, this comprehensive biography of its life – the latest instalment in Charles Jencks' long series of critical writings on the subject – leaves the reader in some uncertainty as to whether the fatally wounded central character is finally dead. While the current (but unrelated) exhibition at the V&A, *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990* (see Reviews section), is intended, somewhat prematurely, as a posthumous celebration, Jencks's book, *The Story of Post-Modernism* (Wiley), although conceding that the movement may indeed have experienced some near-death moments, asserts that it is nevertheless still alive. However, its offspring, coerced into an arranged marriage with late Modernism, appears, like Molière's Lucinde in *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, to have turned mute.

Jencks makes a critical survey of what he considers to be contemporary manifestations of Postmodernism in architecture and seeks to ascertain whether its fundamental principles, its units of cultural information or 'memes', as Richard Dawkins would say, are still discernable. While highly convincing when evoking the life of Postmodernism in its infancy and adolescence – including some pioneering antenatal episodes in the days of Le Corbusier's Ronchamp – Dr Jencks's diagnosis is ambivalent when it comes to examining more recent evidence. The buildings he has chosen to present in the book – and these include most of the 'starchitecture' of the last decade – appear to have little to do with Postmodernism, except in the broadest sense that they were built in the period after Modernism.

In every other respect, the design characteristics that the author correctly identifies as their major traits, such as the repetitive 'seamless continuity' of homogeneous surfaces, the curse of 'delete button detailing' and the posturing platitudes of iconic monuments, are antithetical to the principles of Postmodernism. However, this is not because they differ in terms of style – the styles associated with Postmodernism were ephemeral and are not the issue – but because they do not follow the same design philosophy: they lead, on the whole, to simplistic, autonomous, diagrammatic one-liners that have been almost completely stripped of any trace of complexity, multiple coding, symbolic meaning, contradiction, radical juxtaposition, contextual counterpoint, irony and pluralism. In their place, the all too familiar traits of Modernism have been re-injected, in a form that is even more extreme than in the original specimens, and are now being cloned on a global scale.

This apparent morphing of Postmodernism into the tropes of Modernism raises a few uncomfortable questions: could it be that the spectre of Modernism is coming back to haunt us? That Steven Holl's residential towers in Beijing, *Linked Hybrid*, might unwittingly become the Pruitt-Igoe of the 21st century in China, even if their playful 'skywalks' and irregular bracing diagonals introduce a modicum of light relief into the complex's potentially disastrous monotony? Is Toyo Ito's proposed opera house in Taiwan, despite its curvatures, not an excessively rigid spatial typology imposed, as in the old days, on to a complex and highly



I. Artist Madelon Vriesendorp's cover design for Charles Jencks's *The Story of Post-Modernism* depicts some of the author's contemporary (and perhaps unwitting) examples of the movement. Vriesendorp also produced this month's cover of the AR (opposite), which was initially made for an American journal. It shows a birthday party for PoMo, with Philip Johnson blowing out the candles. In attendance are the two towers who were glimpsed postcoitally on the cover of (her husband) Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*. The towers are now watching on in parental mode; the love affair has clearly continued...





2

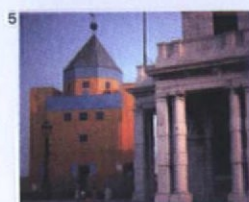


‘This apparent morphing of Postmodernism into the tropes of Modernism raises a few uncomfortable questions: is the spectre of Modernism coming back to haunt us?’

3







**2. Pruitt-Igoe, the race-segregated project designed by Minoru Yamasaki and built in St Louis in 1956, was demolished in 1972, supposedly marking the 'death of Modernism'**  
**3. Steven Holl's Linked Hybrid in Beijing: will this, as Colin Fournier speculates, be the Pruitt-Igoe of our times?**  
**4 & 5. James Stirling and Michael Wilford's Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, 1984 (above) and Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo for the Venice Biennale, 1980 (below) epitomise the wit and sophistication of the best PoMo projects**  
**6. The CCTV headquarters in Beijing by OMA could almost be seen as the two towers of Madelon Vriesendorp's imagination (evoked on the covers of *Delirious New York* and this month's AR) coming together in a stooped (and heavily braced) embrace. But does the intensity of this relationship make it oblivious to its surroundings?**

differentiated programme? Is OMA's CCTV Headquarters in Beijing, clever tour de force as it is, not an over-inflated diagram, impervious to urban considerations? Is Herzog & de Meuron's university library in Cottbus, wrapped in a cryptic wall of incomprehensible words, anything more than a silent amoeba – which has prompted Jencks to ask: 'With all these letters and words, could not a sentence or two be attempted?'

More generally, are the innumerable 'iconic' projects for museums, libraries, art centres and luxury car showrooms, the 'cathedrals' of post-industrial society and late capitalism, as Jencks puts it, anything but irrelevant monuments to anachronistic forms of communication, now superseded by digital media and new types of information transfer, inevitably on the road to extinction and therefore void of any meaning other than an ironic or effete celebration of their emptiness?

Jencks observes that three promising factors – scientific, methodological and technical – have recently emerged, that could enrich the language of architecture. Unfortunately, all appear to have been partially aborted.

The scientific factor is that a greater awareness of research, related to complexity theory, non-linear programming, self-organisation, chaos theory, emergent systems, fractals and the like, has developed over the years and has eventually become part of architectural culture. From the Santa Fe Institute, the theoretical biologist Stuart Kauffman's often quoted statement that complex systems (of which the built environment is one) must, in order to survive, maintain themselves 'on the edge of chaos' – neither so organised that they cannot evolve nor so disorganised that they cannot sustain themselves – has been hijacked by architects as a seductive metaphor, without deterring them from designing objects that have nothing to do with complexity.

The methodological factor is that computer algorithms have now penetrated architectural theory and practice, but they have been emasculated of their radical potential: far from allowing software programmes to tap into their artificial intelligence to generate unpredictable and surprising outcomes, they have predominantly been used, deliberately or unconsciously, in the service of deterministic design. The typological diversity resulting from the use of 'parametric' design methods is still limited and explores a tiny portion of the universe of possibilities. No truly emergent design methods have been used yet, no self-organising systems allowed to fully unfold. The power of the computer has been misused to replicate ad infinitum, with minor superficial variations, what we already know. Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Brian Eno and other artists have, many years ago, explored the implications of such 'autopoietic' processes much more creatively than contemporary architects have.

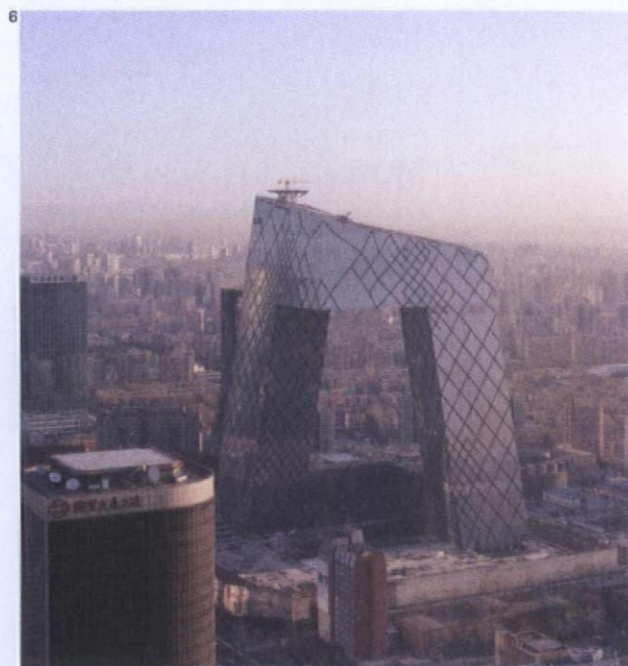
The third factor lies in the revolutionary potential of post-Fordist industrial fabrication, using programmable, computer-driven robotic manufacturing tools, but this has hardly affected architectural production, except in isolated cases such as Frank Gehry's practice. Ironically, this radical change in fabrication methods has been misdirected: rather than leading to more heterogeneity in architectural components as well as more discontinuity

and flexibility in production runs, it appears to have led, paradoxically, to further standardisation and uniformity, in keeping with the reductive ideology of globalisation. That a CAD/CAM machine can produce a bespoke double-curved panel or a standard one for the same price is not a guarantee that the resultant architecture will be any more sophisticated in terms of its 'degree of variety', as defined by information theory. So far, such variety has mostly been restricted to the outer envelope of buildings, to the skin-deep complexity of decorative effects.

The result of these shortcomings, which affect not just the continuing story of Postmodernism, but all contemporary design and construction, is that, regrettably, few of the more recent projects illustrated in the book match the sophistication and sheer wit of James Stirling's Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, or the pluralism and urban relevance of the collectively authored Strada Nuovissima installation at the 1980 Venice Biennale exhibition *The Presence of the Past*, which are both given in the book as archetypal examples of Postmodernism. They are not in the same league and don't even share the same ambitions.

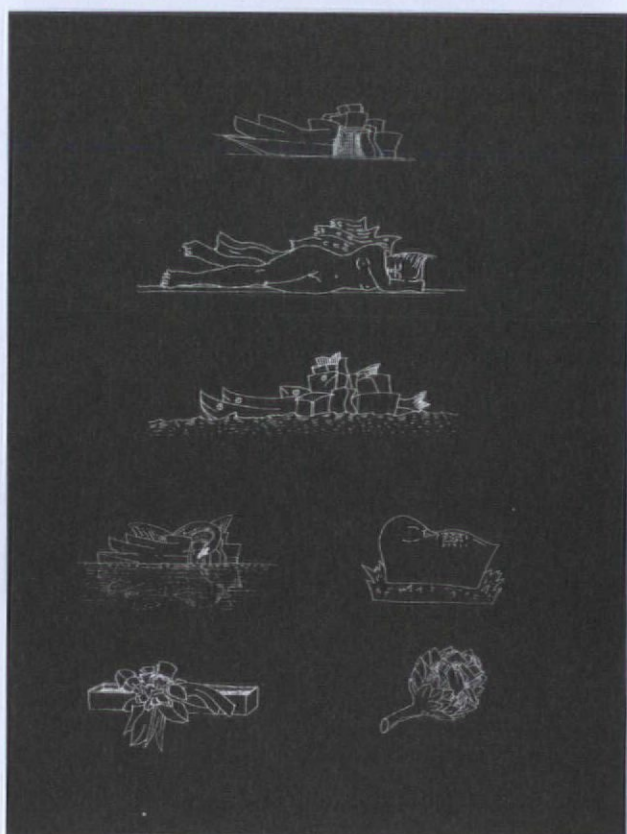
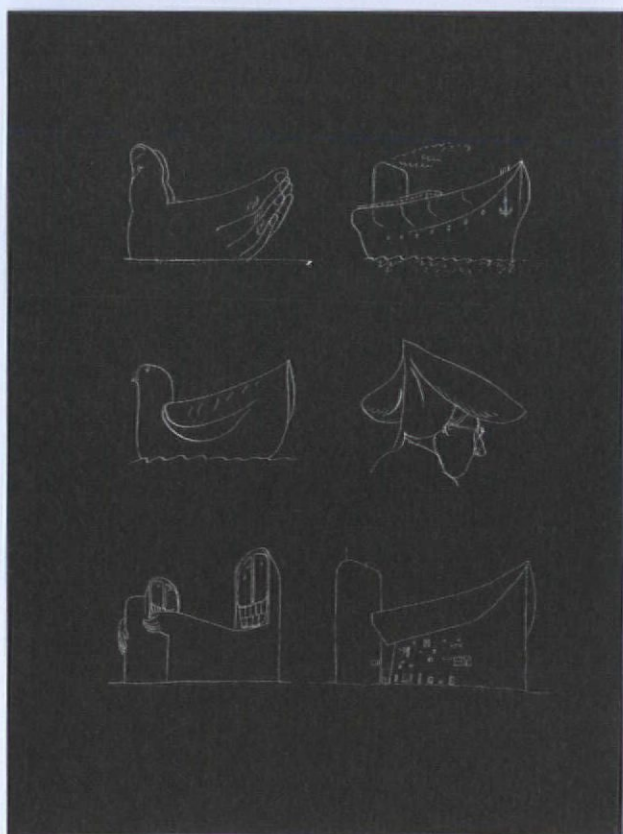
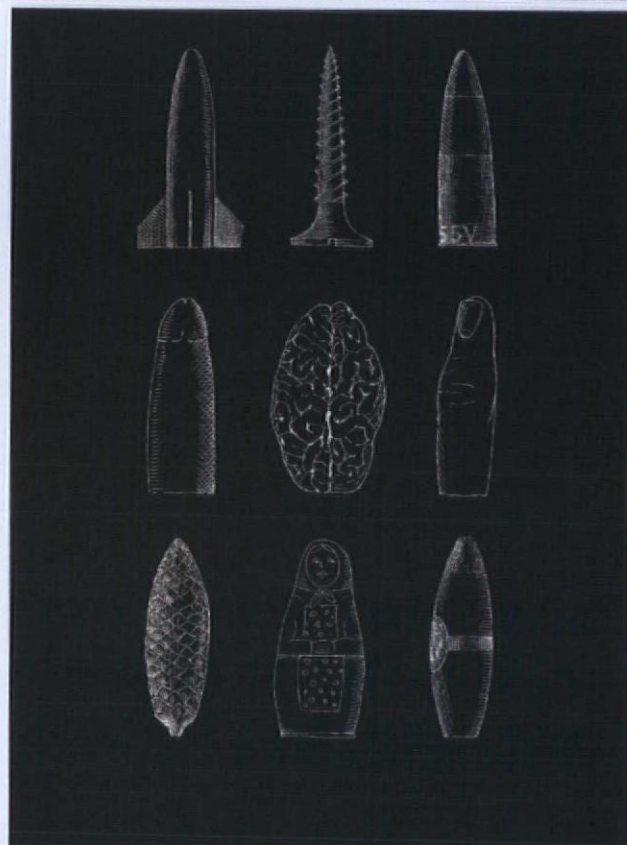
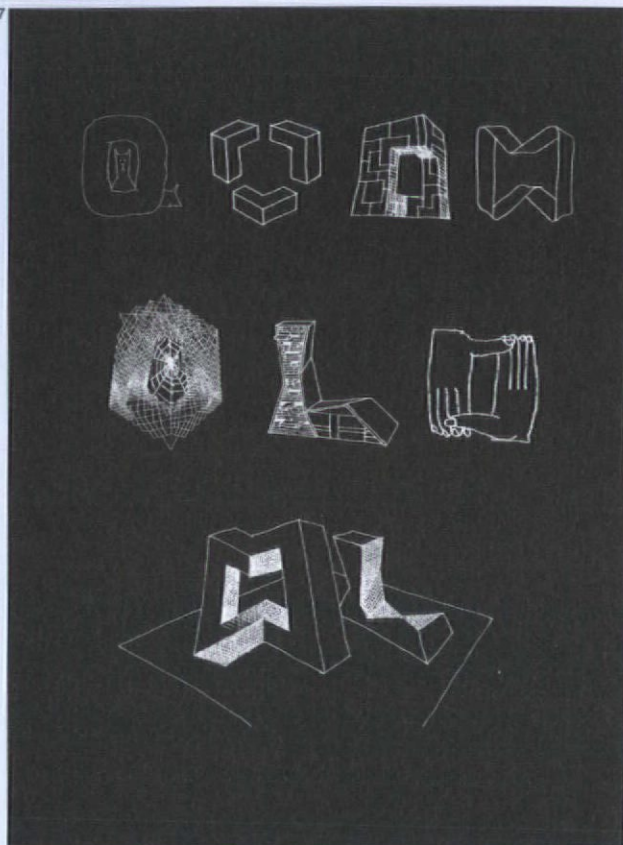
No one knows the weaknesses of contemporary architectural practice better than Jencks himself, although one has to read between the lines to realise the full extent of his discontent and to feel the full impact of his criticism. If I have any quarrel with this book, it is that Jencks has partially held back his wonderfully irreverent sense of polemic and provocation. In reviewing these projects, he is so keen to stand as a 'loyal adversary' of Modernism that he loses, at times, his proverbial bite and becomes disloyal to himself: parts of the text read as apologies of Modernism.

The power of this book lies not so much in the sharpness of the author's criticism of the present as in the generosity and perceptiveness of his anticipation of



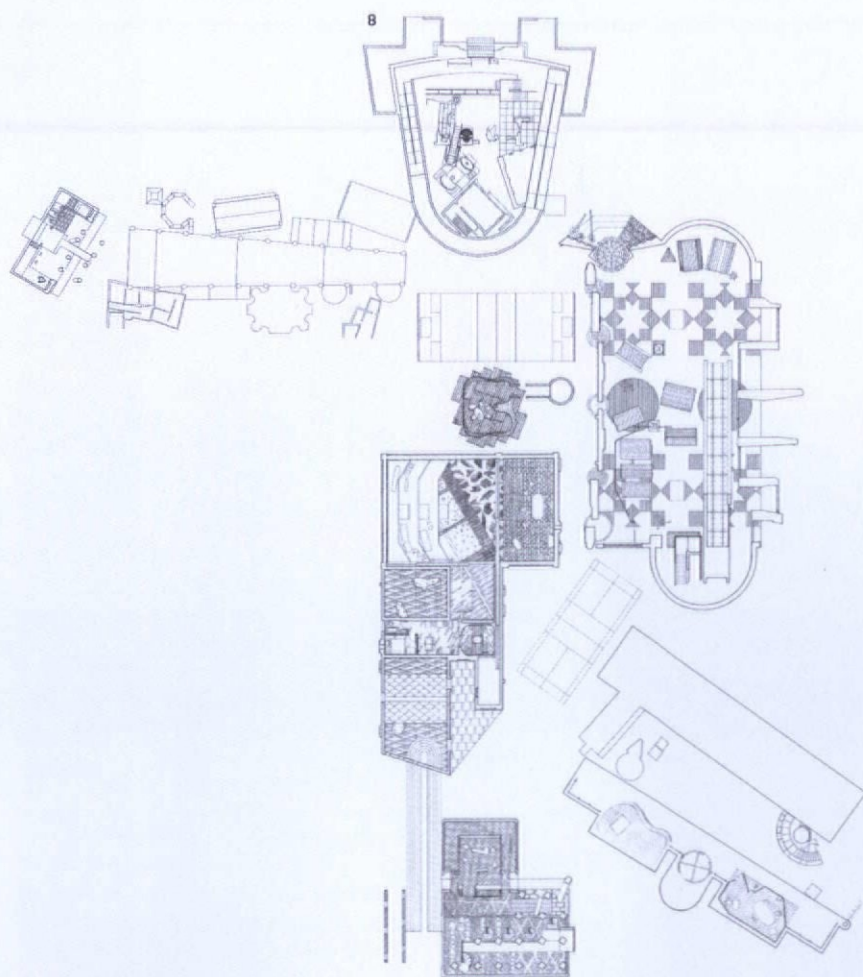


**7. Charles Jencks explores iconographic metaphors in buildings ranging from Renchamp and CCTV to Norman Foster's 'Gherkin' in London to Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim**  
**8. In 1978, Collage City by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, proposed a type of urban design that would accommodate multiple 'utopias' in miniature**





‘Jorge Luis Borges suggested that points might exist, called alephs, that contain all other points. The conceit of Postmodernism was to design even small buildings as alephs and to load them with an excess of things to say’



the future; Jencks identifies two positive phenomena that give him grounds for optimism. On the one hand, he diagnoses the growing significance of ‘cosmic’ references and although such symbolism may come across as one of the transcendent ‘meta-narratives’ that Jean-François Lyotard was so critical of in *The Postmodern Condition*, a holistic view of nature may indeed be, in the 21st century, the only realm that can offer alternative metaphors as powerful as the enduring machine metaphors of Modernism.

On the other hand, he identifies the renewed emphasis on the city, more than on individual pieces of architecture, thereby returning to some of the early principles established by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter in *Collage City*, their brilliant attack on Modernist urbanism, recently extended by David Grahame Shane’s *Recombinant Urbanism* and his fascination for heterotopias. The last image in the book is a proposal for a city, and this is highly significant, because the inherent weakness of Postmodernism – perhaps even the Achilles heel that made it trip – was that it tried to squeeze too much meaning into too little stuff.

The movement attempted to inject excessive levels of simulated complexity into the design of single buildings, while it should have been obvious from the start that the degree of variety that Postmodernism aspired to could only be achieved within the much wider realm of the city as a whole. Jorge Luis Borges suggested that the world contains certain points, ‘alephs’, that contain all other points: the conceit of Postmodernism was to design even small buildings as microcosmic alephs and to load them with an excess of things to say, until they were smothered and reduced to silence by the overwhelming momentum of late Modernism.

One is left with the question as to whether the material city will be able to nurture its diversity and complexity and thus remain the primary manifestation of contemporary civilisation, at a time when the social activities and building blocks that have made it up for thousands of years are dematerialising and switching over to cyberspace. The new cathedrals, if one persists in using such an anachronistic metaphor, are not even the gigantic server farms that anonymously house, on remote desert sites, the hardware of Google’s search engines, but the ever-changing software packages and ethereal data banks that they create. Perhaps that is where the architecture of the future city really lies, as William J Mitchell has implied in *City of Bits*, rather than in the more or less sophisticated piles of concrete and steel featured in this book.

What is being said in the world today is not laboriously carved in stone nor delicately etched on sensual glass facades, but generated digitally through collective networks and transferred swiftly, effortlessly and succinctly, on Twitter and other social media. The communication systems of late capitalism have embraced the pluralistic principles of Postmodernism much more effectively than its architecture has, and the question – for Jencks’s next book? – will be how, under these hybrid conditions, part material, part immaterial, the Postmodernist city will evolve and reinvent itself.



# REVIEWS

## Playing with Postmodernism

SAM JACOB

*Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, until 15 January 2012

To write the art historical narrative of Postmodernism is an impossible task. As a subject, it squirms and struggles as it falls under the curatorial cosh. As a body of work, its organs and limbs detach and crawl off in other directions as you attempt to pin it down. Yet equally, it was a thing of such self-awareness that it had already written its own history. The movement produced its own record through books and exhibitions, including *Learning From Las Vegas*, *Delirious New York*, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, *The Presence of the Past* and so on. This self-documenting, self-historicising tendency means that much of Postmodernism is not only a proposal but also something that has its own built-in critique.

By its very nature, much Postmodern work is already aware of its own reception, its own position and its own relationship to the world. The effect of this self-conscious approach is the generation of ambiguity, doubt and resistance to the frameworks within which it exists – of design, of objects, of commodification and of museums. Yet here we are, inevitably, at the V&A, where Postmodernism itself is now subject to the very forces that it sought to resist.

Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990 opens with endings. An enormous billboard featuring the St Louis housing project Pruitt-Igoe being blown up in 1972 is emblazoned with Charles Jencks's gambit from the *Language of Post-Modern Architecture*: 'Death of Modernism'. Next to this is more destruction:



**Above:** Concept drawing by Nigel Coates in his NATO period imagining a dream house for filmmaker and artist Derek Jarman, who wanted to live in an old quarry above the Dorset coast. The drawing was made for the Star Choice exhibition at the RIBA in 1984

photographs of Andrea Branzi's self-immolating chair. These two images of destruction mark on one side the death of Modernism's idea of progress and belief in shaping a better world; and on the other, the designer-as-radical-artist using design as a site to stage resistance. In these public and private deaths, we see the Postmodern condition: the inability of design to shape the world and the impossibility of being a designer in a world where design is simply a commodity. It's the struggle against these truths that we see echoed through the show.

The exhibition then shifts to art-historical mode. We feel the curatorial hand sequencing and arranging projects into a cohesive narrative. Starting with an alcove dedicated to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's exploration of the Las Vegas strip, the exhibition moves on to consider their projects where high and low, historical and contemporary culture intersect. From here, a sequence of framed drawings by Aldo Rossi, James Stirling and Ricardo Bofill Levi, and a model of Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia show variations of historical architectural languages deployed in, on and around forms of modernity. Seen together, the dissonance and juxtaposition of these apparent opposites is held together within the traditional architectural techniques of elevational composition. That is to say, their curation suggests a mode of Postmodernism where disparate references are resolved into a totality. Having set this sequence up, we are then confronted by Giulio Paolini's *L'altra Figura*, deployed to express the problem of history. Identical classical busts stare at a third one shattered on the floor. We see history mourning the loss of history.

We then cut back on a diagonal, quoted here in the exhibition design as a Postmodern spatial motif and used here as a curatorial device where going backwards is a means

of going forwards. This zagging alley returns us to the exhibition's opening motif of ruination, where history and reference are deployed as a Surrealist tactic. *Rome Interrupted* is on one wall; *Delirious New York* is on the other. Madelon Vriesendorp's paintings are accompanied by her animation *Flagrant Délit*, where the Statue of Liberty sets fire to herself before giving birth to the Hindenburg and segues from cartoon to documentary footage of progressive technology in flames. These surreal or metaphorical ruins continue with Arata Isozaki's drawing of the Tsukuba Center Building in a state of atrophy.

We see this too in the life-size replicas of Hans Hollein's columns from the Presence of the Past exhibition at the 1980 Venice Biennale, although they frame a vista of post-industrial dilapidation. Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* plays at cinema-scale over furniture made from industrial detritus: Tom Dixon's welded mutants, Danny Lane's fractured glass, Ron Arad's wasteland-concrete record player. Here, and with Hiroshima Chic, bag lady Vivienne Westwood, SITE's ruined Big Box retail, NATO's wobbly collapse of even the architectural drawing itself and Derek Jarman's post-punk Jubilee, the historical ruin has given way to the ruins of the contemporary. Everything seems broken, smashed up and collapsed into piles of post-cultural stuff. Not only is history now impossible, but so too is the present. Here, Postmodernism, it seems, finds utopia not only inconceivable, but also that its only mode of proposition is through dystopia.

At this point, the curatorial narrative itself begins to break apart. A room dedicated to Italian New Wave Design acts as an exhibition within an exhibition. Then we find ourselves in a populist showpiece where scaffold, chain-link and Plexiglass scenographically re-stage





**Above: This photograph of the museum and memorial to Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia, USA, features in the exhibition. Designed by Venturi Scott Brown and Associates, it places the museum underground in order to give over the exterior to a public space, which contains a steel 'ghost' structure representing the site's original house**

something like the *Top of the Pops* studio. The academic rigour of the previous sections slips into the populism of Boy George, Grace Jones, *Blade Runner* costumes, multiscreen videos of Devo and slow-motion Talking Heads. Looking at Las Vegas through the Nolli Plan of Rome feels like a distant memory.

Yet still a sense of melancholia pervades. Despite the decadence and posturing, something here appears to suggest that the only thing to do when everything is lost is to exaggerate oneself to an extreme, as though your sense of self could only be derived from external images, as though even being human might be impossible.

Sadder still is a large projection of Laurie Anderson's *O Superman*, where her voice is vocoded into a robotic wail. We have come a long

way from the exhibition's big bang opening, where the joy of destruction and collapse appeared to offer delirious and joyful freedom. Increasingly, too, we are a long way from canonical, architectural Postmodernism. We are now in a swirl where music, video, choreography, clothes and things are interchangeable.

As a sequence of spaces, the show has a kind of terrible claustrophobia. It sets its exhibits within a blackness only punctured by sharp neons and streaks of fluorescent live-edge acrylic. If this sombre background intends to recede from objects of extreme presence, it also swamps them, and us, with an overbearing melancholy. Perhaps this mood is a means of understanding whatever phenomenon Postmodernism might actually be.

Its reputation as a distanced, ironic and amoral handmaiden of the market is somewhat undone. Instead, we see these multiple strands of Postmodern design as the dying breath of a design history stretching back through the last century, through Modernism all the way to the Arts and Crafts movement, the struggle of design to shape, contribute to, comment on and resist the world it finds itself in. Against what Jameson calls 'the logic of late capitalism', designers set their morality and their desire for truth. We see here how design was deployed by capital but also how it resisted and critiqued capital. The work it produced was perverse, sometimes ugly, occasionally beautiful, precisely because of the perverse, ugly occasionally beautiful nature of the societies that it was produced within. It wanted to tell us this, or even to warn us. Postmodernism is the last thrash of a design tradition that wanted the world to change, whose ideas were social and political as much as material or formal, the last gasp before design became subsumed by the service economy.

Shooting Postmodernism, as Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley explicitly set out to do through the Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), for being the messenger as though it were the cause of neo-liberalism and global capital was, of course, a tragic and premature end. Postmodernism's ambiguous nature allowed it to be cast as a collaborator rather than a double agent. But yet killing it, and promoting other design approaches in its place, only served to hasten the victory of the market.

Approaching the end of the show, we can feel the gears of the giant art historical machine jam, its cogs spinning wildly as its subject splinters a thousand ways. In a strange angular white room with a fake suspended ceiling like a





fragment of generic office space, objects of our own era form the contemporary ghost of Postmodernism. Here is Mendeni again with a logo-splattered suit, a Ghanaian artefact and Ai Weiwei's primitive ceramic Coca-Cola vessel. 'We are all Postmodern', these objects tell us, echoing Terry Farrell's aphorism.

At last, the exhibition feels like it wants to step down from its academic perch and whisper its fears into our ear. 'Why can't we be ourselves like we were yesterday,' sings New Order's Bernard Sumner in the closing room where a video of *Bizarre Love Triangle* plays on a loop. And with this, the whole history – not only of architecture and design, but of the V&A itself – is brought to a close. The show ends this museum's cycle of exhibitions documenting the rise of modernity from the Arts and Crafts Movement, through to Modernism, Surrealism and Cold War Modern, all the way to



this point where the mechanisms of the art historical – the very foundation of the museum – disappear into itself. *Bizarre Love Triangle* provides the tragic epitaph to this century of belief in design's potential to change the world. As we are ushered into the gift shop to buy Jencks wrapping paper, we hear Sumner's words echoing 'I get down on my knees and pray' as its final lament.

## Two ideas of America collide in Washington

NICHOLAS OLSBERG

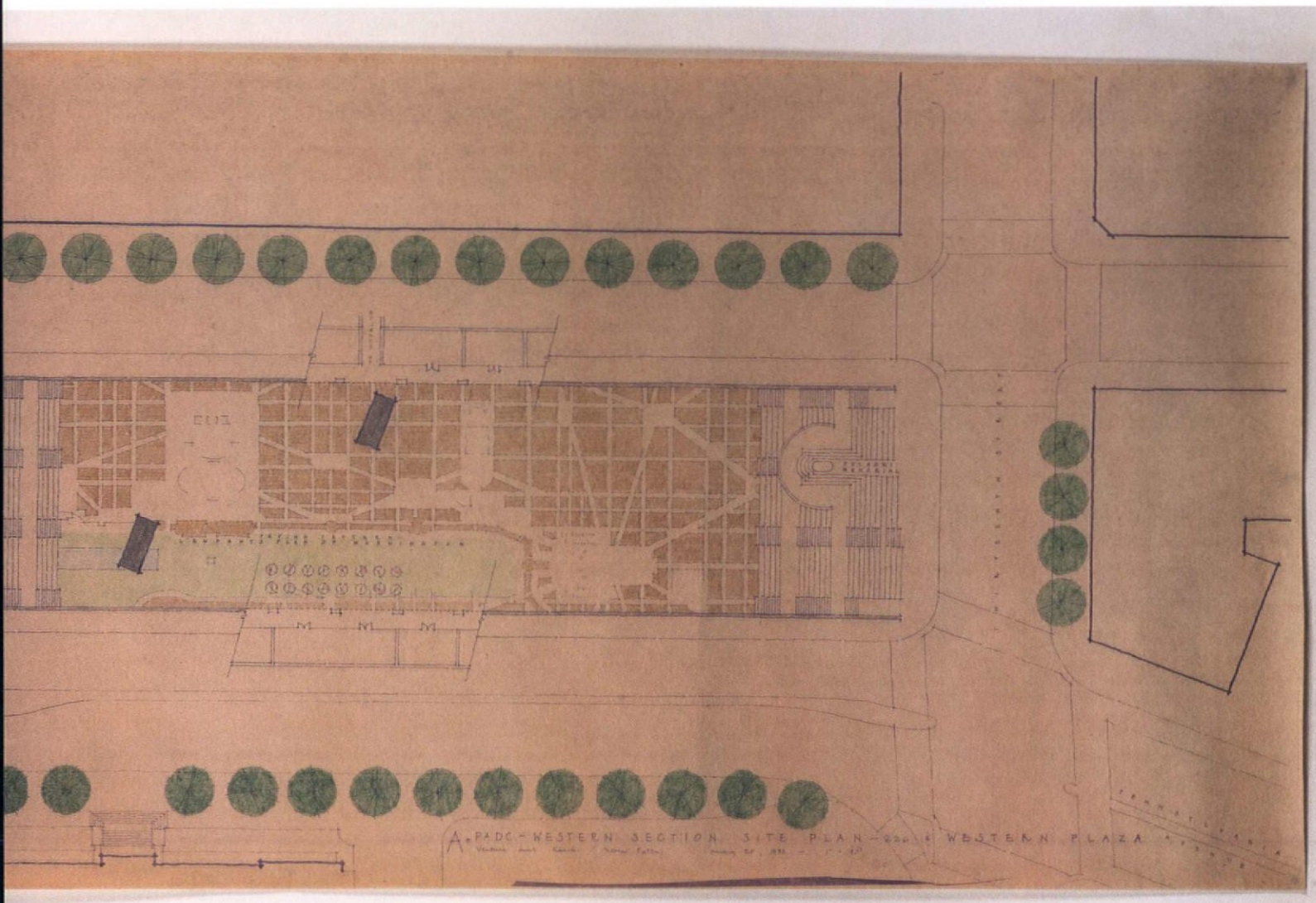
*A composite plan (above) by Robert Venturi and Paul Friedberg marks a transitional time for Postmodernism*

We all know one great idea of America. It is grounded in confidence in the individual, in self-invention, and the possibility of transcendence – in Whitman and Thoreau, Sullivan,

Wright and the pursuit of originality. Yet the governing constitution and civic life of the country, and the whole pattern by which its lands and passages are laid out, come from something very different – the Enlightenment passion for balance, discourse, and order between people and between man and nature.

Right at the heart of Washington is an uncomfortable moment where the commercial hub to the north of Pennsylvania Avenue collides with the start of the bureaucratic strip to its south. At that point, on an awkward bend in the road, Pierre L'Enfant's mile-long vista to the Capitol first appears. On this spot, the 1964 plan for rehabilitating an already decaying sector of a by then notoriously dangerous city (and one that had never been quite finished to begin with) called for a pocket park and a small plaza. The design of the park was awarded to Paul Friedberg and the plaza to a team led by Robert Venturi.





Early in 1978, the two architects matched their early schemes together in this composite overdrawn print. Friedberg's plan talks to that first great notion of America by capturing it in the simple Romantic ideal of a wandering terrain. Venturi, patterning the pavement of his plaza on L'Enfant's 1791 plan of Washington, talks to the second conception of the country: a sensibility of layered precedent, regulation and order. His approach used many of the elements that marked the first critical approach to the Postmodern, ranging from superposition and disjunction to what this document signals, the dramatic juxtaposition of contradictory aspects, in which reason and accident, history and contemporaneity, the sublime and the satirical, could be happily exist in combination.

L'Enfant's plan weaves together radial and gridded geometries, and a respect for existing topography with

a determination to superimpose new lines and vistas upon it. It was a scheme that delighted Venturi. He saw in its pattern of intersecting diagonals and rectangles shifts between the 'major and minor scales' of the same key, and the occasional skewed angle as the discordant accidental that anchored the whole. Grass swards among the paving, inserted to represent the great lawn of the White House and the wide meadow that is the National Mall, capture the idea of a civil conversation between wilderness and order. Further layers of 'complexity and contradiction' are added by inscribing playful literary reflections on the city on the pavement alongside such solemnities as a time capsule honouring Martin Luther King and a representation of the Great Seal.

The early scheme shown here included replicas of the White House and Capitol, steel sculptures by Richard Serra and a frame of giant

**Above: A composite drawing made by Robert Venturi and Paul Friedberg in 1971, which combines their two adjacent proposals for Washington Below, left: Alessandro Mendini's destruction of the Lassú chair from the V&A**

masts laid out as a parallelogram that would reconcile the colliding orientations of the streets converging around it and perhaps direct the eye toward those wider horizons within which the monuments of man are dwarfed.

Brought closer to the ground and stripped of its three-dimensional features by a timid review board, the finished plaza works neither as an urban promenade nor as a landmark. Few are tempted to mount a shallow podium on what is essentially a large traffic island simply to read the pattern beneath their feet. Yet – re-christened 'Freedom Plaza' – the site has become hugely successful in two quite disparate ways: as the primary site for demonstrations and as the subject of much fanciful speculation about its supposedly dark Masonic undertones. One can imagine a second burst of delight as Venturi contemplates this totally unexpected result.



## Casting a critical eye over OMA's oeuvre

ROBERTO BOTTAZZI

OMA/Progress, Barbican Art Gallery, London, until 19 February 2012

'Dislodge the present positions'. Written in bold white letters against a contrasting black background, this was the statement that introduced Office for Metropolitan Architecture's (OMA's) 1997 competition entry for the extension of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), in New York. What followed was a series of collages, sketches and models that went well beyond proposing a simple cosmetic extension for the museum and, ultimately, radically questioned what a contemporary art space was and could become (and allegedly, for that reason, resulted in OMA losing the competition).

Though 14 years have gone by, this statement still echoes throughout the OMA/Progress exhibition, which recently opened at the Barbican Art Gallery in London. When he was invited to organise a retrospective on the practice that he co-founded in 1975, Rem Koolhaas – the sole surviving member of the original four who formed OMA – thought the time for such a definitive event had not yet come and opted instead for a dynamic and forward-looking concept for the exhibition. Rotor, the young Belgian collective formed in 2005 which gained international renown

for its national pavilion exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2010, was invited to take over the commission and – according to the Barbican – given 'unprecedented' access to both OMA's office and archive.

What results is a rather dense and heterogeneous collection (450 objects) that well portrays the relentlessness with which OMA has been operating: there is virtually no scale, medium, building type, geographical region, contemporary architectural movement or material that the office has not worked with at some point. One large screen plays on a video on a 48-hour loop which Rotor made by collecting every single image from OMA's server. It features about 3.5 million images. Rotor has calculated that OMA churns out about 1,500 images every day.

Confronted with the sheer scale and variety of production and the desire to avoid the typical retrospective, Rotor opted for a more earnest portrait of OMA: a firm that operates globally and whose range of interests well exceeds just buildings. Traditional hierarchies and the concerns of most architects are abandoned: polished models coexist freely with rough prototypes; finished commissions and conceptual studies are given equal importance; one space – dubbed the 'secret room' – even displays working documents such as correspondence with clients and acquisition lists, the kind of material other architects carefully hide from the public eye.

Rotor tried, however, to establish some order by renouncing the idea of a traditional linear narrative in favour of a more open approach and dividing the upper level galleries into separate rooms, each dedicated to specific themes such as moveable building parts, materials and urban studies.

The idea of conceptualising Rem Koolhaas's work retroactively is not entirely new to the architect, who first launched this strategy through his seminal *Delirious New York*, a rear-view manifesto for Manhattan, and subsequently for OMA's two monographs, *S,M,L,XL* and *Content*. This time, however, the curatorial strategy does not have the same robustness. For instance, *Content* organised the work geographically from West to East, implying a shift in the political and economic landscape that demanded a re-alignment of the office's agenda. Here, the choice of themes varies



Above: The west entrance of the art gallery has been opened for the first time for this show, as the original architects of the Barbican complex had always intended. Below, left: a 1:1 footprint of OMA's recently completed Maggie's Centre in Glasgow is marked on to the Barbican Sculpture Court. (Both photos by Lyndon Douglas)

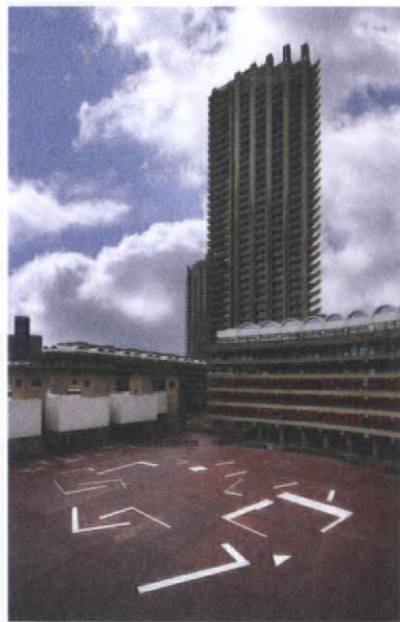
without an underlying question emerging. We go from the brilliant space in which OMA's agility in managing the design process is explored, through looking at how projects transform, to a perplexingly anaemic room where only white objects are displayed.

What remains invariably consistent throughout the show is the level of questioning that any preconceived architectural or cultural element undergoes in the hands of OMA. (In a recent interview with the *Guardian*, Koolhaas defines himself as a 'criticism machine'). At its best, this strategy produces energising moments of liveliness that challenge the intellectual inertia the profession regularly drifts towards. At a time when architectural debate is largely concentrated on urban issues, OMA uses the show to launch a new research project on 'those who are left behind' once urbanisation strikes, that is, the countryside and agriculture.

Part of the intellectual provocation also relies on the title of the show: Progress. Though Koolhaas and Rotor explicitly suggest the notion of the 'work in progress' – of the unfinished and forward-looking – the word also insinuates other connotations. It represents what modernity and positivism stood for and evokes an idea of time as a linear trajectory toward an inevitably better, improved society. The show, on the other hand, communicates a more complex and postmodern notion of time: the eruption of ideas explored through the designs recur, evolve or are simply dismissed; sometimes sustained by extreme rigour, sometimes relishing the unpredictability of intuitive thinking.

Such complex engagement with time is demonstrated, for instance, by the office's recent preoccupation with architectural preservation. OMA had the opportunity to test some of its ideas and strategies on the Barbican, an austere complex, the planning for which began soon after the Second World War. This is one of the show's most enticing sections: the integration of contemporary shapes and materials with the Modernist building is both contextual and dynamic.

Rotor designed a series of curved walls of corrugated plastic that create fluid lines, reacting to the severe spaces of the exhibition





gallery on the third floor. The curators also negotiated to open the west entrance for the first time since the Barbican's completion, thus allowing the public to occupy spaces as intended by the original architects. Outside, in what was always meant to be a sculpture garden, a 1:1 footprint of the recently built Maggie's Centre in Glasgow is displayed (see *Buildings* section).

The interior areas – labelled as the 'public zone' as no ticket is required to visit them – are not only boldly shaped by the curved walls but also constructed around the OMA shop that acts as centrepiece. The complex relation between culture and commerce is played out with wit and precision. Once again, OMA has pulled the rug from under our feet to remind us that instability is the only stable condition we can rely on.

## Talking Metabolism with Rem Koolhaas

### JACK SELF

*Project Japan, Metabolism Talks...*  
Rem Koolhaas and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Taschen, £34.99

'Once you're interested in how things evolve,' Rem Koolhaas once tweeted, 'you have a kind of never-ending perspective, because it means you're interested in articulating the evolution.' This statement essentially summarises his new tome *Project Japan*, co-authored with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, and published by Taschen.

The format of the book is straightforward: a well-articulated genealogy of an avant-garde movement itself concerned with iterative evolution. Half the chapters are contemporary interviews with surviving Metabolists; the other half comprise historical briefings on key economic, political and cultural events from 1933 to the present.

The origins of Metabolism, as Arata Isozaki explains in the book's first interview, were inseparable from Japan's particular post-war situation. Cities had been heavily firebombed by the Americans or, in the case of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, razed by atomic blasts. Japanese architects were thus faced with an unprecedented scale of urban redevelopment (the only comparable challenge being masterplans prepared in the mid-1930s for conquered Chinese states).



Above: Rem Koolhaas in conversation with Arata Isozaki. In the caption from the book it reveals that 'Isozaki the insider agrees to meet in a neutral location (his favourite gourmet restaurant) to disclose information on Tange and the Metabolists...'

As a term, *Project Japan* charts the ambition of a whole generation to transform and modernise while simultaneously re-building Japan's tarnished international reputation. The Metabolists were those who sought to achieve this transformation through architectural means, demonstrating an idealism that bestowed upon them the status of 'avant-garde', but also the criticism of being naïve and optimistic.

The historical chapters are presented lineally, while the order of the interviews is neither historical nor chronological. It is here that the true agenda of the book is to be found. Koolhaas is determined to politicise Metabolism – even when the Metabolists themselves remain reluctant or ambivalent. Far from being a coherent and ruthlessly premeditated attempt to achieve a collective utopian vision, Metabolism is slowly revealed as being only weakly unified by its members' 'loose philosophy of impermanence'.

This impermanence manifests itself in a myriad of abstract concepts and formal proposals ranging from atomised capsule towers to floating cities, from concrete megaforests to cell-like masterplans. Indeed, by articulating the evolution of 'the last avant-garde movement' the book makes the diversity of the group apparent.

Ostensibly oral history committed to paper, in reality the book might be subtitled *How Neoliberalism Killed the Last Utopian Dream*, as more than half of its 750 pages are dedicated to just that. As much as it is the story of a generation of architects and their attempt to radically alter Japan's physical and political landscape, it is also the tale of how many of those same architects sold out to free-market capitalism.

After describing the movement's apotheosis at Expo '70 there comes a long explanation of Metabolism's decline starting with the 1973 oil crisis, which renders megastructures domestically unrealisable. The book then follows architects such as Kenzo Tange and Kiyonori Kikutake sometimes into emerging, often tyrannical, states. The list of projects through the 1970s and '80s witnesses a disintegration of the group's idealism, and its obsession with form over social context: Saudi floating casinos to be moored in international waters; deployable desert cities for Gaddafi's unstable borders; the Damascus palace of Syrian president Bashar Assad (photographed by Rem before the Arab Spring). By the 1990s, as the group moves into South-East Asia, Tange (once the lynchpin of the movement) is designing nothing more than 'generic corporate postmodernism'.



*Project Japan* is at times nostalgic, but in a way this is deployed as a smokescreen for a broader agenda. Koolhaas drives the interviews, probing details of the Metabolists' cultural context, their political engagement, the role and power of the government and media in their success. The 'trialogue' interview method is unnecessary; Obrist's endless repetition of 'Do you have any regrets?' renders him, at times, superfluous.

The book comes to a conclusion with a wheel-hath-come-full-circle moment: an image of Toyo Ito contemplatively surveying the *tabula rasa* of post-tsunami Tohoku. The scale of redevelopment, he tells us, is unprecedented in recent history. We are left wondering if he will draw on Metabolist masterplans.

## The unrealised vision for Japan's future

CATHERINE SLESSOR

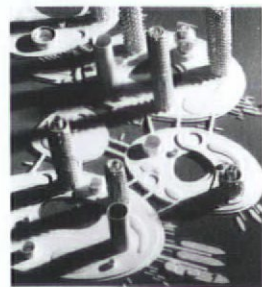
*Metabolism - The City of the Future*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, until 15 January 2012

The UIA Congress in Tokyo at the end of September saw the launch of *Project Japan*, an exhaustive oral history of Metabolism (see previous review) and the opening of a major retrospective on the movement at the Mori Art Museum in the city's Roppongi Hills. As the core cast of original Metabolists are either dead (Tange, Kurokawa) or well advanced in years (Isozaki, Maki, Kikutake), this current focus on their work has the elegaic sense of a final gathering and reckoning. Yet for much of the postwar era, Metabolism defined a new and distinct vision of Japanese modernity. With its origins in the physical and psychological rebuilding of Japan following Hiroshima, Metabolism embraced impermanence and the need for flux and change (also key tenets of Buddhism), acknowledging the fragility of human existence in the Japanese archipelago.

The *Project Japan* book is a gossipy trove of interviews, intrigue and insights, while the Mori show is a more conventional chronological survey, beginning with Japanese city planning during the Second World War and ending with a survey of Metabolist influence around the world. Its main focus, however, is on Metabolism's golden decade between



**Above:** A poster for Kisho Kurokawa's 'Capsule Metabolism' by Japanese graphic designer Awazu Kiyoshi, who was associated with the movement. The poster depicts a number of Kurokawa's Metabolist projects, including the Toshiba Pavilion for the 1970 Osaka Expo, which marked Metabolism's carnival apotheosis. **Below:** the unrealised project Marine City 1963 by Kikutake Kiyonori



1960 and 1970, from its arrival on the national stage at the World Design Conference in Tokyo, to its carnival apotheosis at Osaka Expo.

As growth took off and nation building assumed a new fervour, Metabolism was its chosen means of expression, decisively locked into Japan's political and economic DNA. National ambitions were overseen by the charismatic architect-turned-bureaucrat, Atushi Shimokobe, who graduated from Tange's office to preside over an unprecedented boom in large scale planning, aimed at decentralising Japan and relieving the pressures of space and resources on Tokyo. The dissemination of Metabolist ideas was given further impetus by the Marxist architectural critic and publisher Noburo Kawazoe, who edited the Metabolist manifesto for the 1960 World Design Conference and worked on Expo '70.

Shimokobe's charmed circle proposed a succession of city plans populated by adaptable urban megastructures that could grow and change as needs demanded. Clusters of plug-in pods and capsules were aggregated into colossal spirals, pyramids and helixes, all straining

skywards to articulate a vision of Japan's new tomorrow. Implanted within this futuristic tissue were parks, lakes, transport infrastructure, even farms. No re-envisioning of the urban realm was too preposterous or extreme. Kurowawa's Helix City and Kikutake's Marine City (its cylindrical towers resembling a set of Carmen rollers) are among the more familiar proposals, but given new life here with specially constructed models and computer animations. City quarters instantly morph into being, like oriental Alphavilles. (Or rather, they didn't.)

Yet though the Metabolists' urban speculations remained unrealised, there's still much to savour in the buildings, presented in admirably forensic detail, many featuring filmed interviews with their architects. A young Kiyonori Kikutake describes his Sky House of 1958 (perhaps the first Metabolist dwelling) in which he distils his family's domestic life into a single, multivalent space with washing and cooking enclaves plugged into its perimeter. His administration building for the historic Izumo Shrine is a subtle and quintessentially Metabolist abstraction of traditional Japanese forms, such as timber houses and temples, a synthesis explored on a much larger scale by Kenzo Tange in his famous sports halls for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

By Expo '70 in Osaka, Japanese prosperity and Metabolist confidence were at their freewheeling zenith. Masterplanned by Tange, Expo consolidated the idea of a utopian, temporary city, with an array of modular, quasi-industrial, plug-in structures, grouped together under a monumental space frame roof that clearly presaged High Tech. But the exogenous shock of oil price hikes in the mid 1970s effectively curtailed Japanese growth plans, killing off the Metabolist project, and while it took fitful root in more accommodating locales such as Singapore and the Middle East, the export version rarely embodied the same vitality.

With architectural activity in Japan currently fragmented and polarised by deregulation and *laissez faire* planning, the idea of an architectural movement so intimately in consort with national economic and social ambitions now seems almost unimaginable. Yet as Japan confronts post earthquake



reconstruction, scarcity of resources and economic stagnation, it's clear that new ways of thinking about cities, as well as the evolving relationship between man and nature, are desperately required. Cometh the hour, cometh the Metabolists? Maybe this show could be a primer for the future as well as being an elegy for the past.

## Modern life in the Golden State

**MICHAEL WEBB**

*California Design 1930-1965: Living in a Modern Way*  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, until 25 March 2012

The population of California has grown from seven million in 1940 to 38 million today, making it the most populous of the United States. Boosters have extolled its benign climate, natural beauty and economic opportunities, but the vision has soured. A major exhibition, *California Design 1930-1965: Living in a Modern Way* restores your confidence in the potential of the Golden State. The exhibition is a fusion of high and low culture, celebrating the optimism and belief

in progress that carried people through the Great Depression, the Second World War and its troubled aftermath. The show demonstrates how – in contrast to Philip Johnson's appropriation of the International Style – California design grew organically out of a 'preference for living in a modern way'.

The quote is from Greta Magnusson Grossman, a Swedish designer who joined a stream of creative European talent migrating to LA on the eve of war. Some found employment in Hollywood, others like Thomas Mann and Arnold Schoenberg retreated into a private world, but there was no language barrier for architects and designers and they seized their chances. Rudolph Schindler, Richard Neutra and Kem Weber (who later designed the Walt Disney Studios and the Airline Chair) came early and laid a solid foundation. The Hungarian Paul László reputedly acquired a car, an apartment and a membership to the Beverly Hills Tennis Club on his first day in LA, before establishing himself as an architect to the stars and designing Atomville, an underground city of 1950 where a lucky few might enjoy a carefree existence even as nuclear bombs burst overhead.

**Below: Recreation pavilion, Mirman House, Arcadia, Straub & Hensman Buff, photographed by Julius Shulman (1959), who created many of the defining images of this era's LA architecture**

The stand-out exhibit was created by Ray Eames, a California native. The Eames House that Charles built in 1949 is being restored, and Ray's artfully composed collection of furniture, rugs and potted plants (plus a tumbleweed acquired on a trip to the desert and a hundred other objects) has been re-assembled at the museum, framed by a skeleton of the Eames House. The result of the American equivalent of Sir John Soane Museum's in London: a cluttered portrait of eclectic tastes and skills. Eames furniture and other familiar works are scattered throughout, but curators Wendy Kaplan and Bobby Tigerman have presented all 350 of the exhibits in a novel way, juxtaposing album covers and Barbie's dream house, an Airstream trailer and Raymond Loewy's Studebaker Avanti, ceramics and textiles, graphics and jewellery.

Even the swimsuits that resemble abbreviated suits of armour have something to contribute to this holistic portrait of an era. Sketches and classic Julius Shulman images reveal the architecture that framed these objects and the hedonistic lifestyle that they embodied. As Kaplan observes, 'Fluidity, openness, experimentation, the abolition of boundaries: the same qualities that characterised the modern California home equally applied to the modern California designer.'

A brilliant installation by Hodgetts + Fung, a firm greatly inspired by the Eameses, enhances the impact of the exhibition. They have exploited the soaring sky-lit volume of Renzo Piano's Resnick Gallery to great effect, framing exhibits with curvilinear aluminum frames that evoke aeroplane construction and have been digitally fabricated. Biomorphous islands of white gravel set off the larger exhibits. All that is missing is the music; cool jazz would have added another dimension. The exhibition was sponsored in part by the Getty Foundation as an element of Pacific Standard Time, their ambitious initiative of funding mid-20th-century exhibitions in 60 southern Californian cultural institutions. Reason enough to fly to LA, but if you cannot get there before the end of March, there is a handsome illustrated catalogue for the exhibition, which you could pre-order on Amazon for a fraction of the cost of an air ticket.





# PEDAGOGY

## ETH Zurich, Switzerland

MATTHEW BARAC

What will life in a compact city look like? Creating images haunted by nostalgic echoes of a 30-year-old tradition at ETH Zurich, this studio, led by the young architects Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein, uses model-making to visualise an alternative, high-density urban future for Zurich.

Large white and grey boxes fill the room. On closer inspection they are models of buildings. Each block, formed in laser-cut detail, is enormous. The space feels like an empty city – a film set mock-up about to be torched for the next disaster movie. But in fact we are in a photographic studio and these painstakingly produced cardboard monoliths, together testifying to

weeks of student labour, are being professionally shot by photographer Roman Keller.

‘Although the materials are abstracted, the model pictures clearly represent architecture as “the learned game, correct and magnificent, of forms assembled in the light.”’ Gantenbein cites Le Corbusier’s 1923 dictum by way of laying down the law that governs the studio in which he teaches with Christ, who goes on to explain: ‘This approach relates to the need to engage with the physicality of architecture.’

Such physicality is impossible to deny; these miniature superblocks loom. Yet the photographs, despite looking so real, capture all that is ambiguous and problematic about the play between the make-believe scale of the model and that of an actual urban edifice.

This problematic ambiguity is at the heart of the atelier’s intellectual

**1, 2 & 3. The work of students Sebastian Ernst and Martin Tessarz shows their proposed ‘long block’ for Manhattan. It is a prime example of the ETH studio run by Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein, which follows a simple rule: ‘Renderings are not allowed’. Students therefore turn to laser-cut models and precision photography in order to visualise concepts**

programme, an agenda that draws on both the typology debate, rooted in Aldo Rossi’s teachings, and also on Hans Kollhoff’s interest in the metropolitan implications of the *Großstadt* (major city).

Christ and Gantenbein are assistant professors at ETH Zurich, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology which has, since it was founded in 1855, effectively headquartered the influential if elusive idiom of Swiss architecture. Scholar Irina Davidovici, whose volume on the subject is due out next year, places the pair within a tradition that can be traced back to Rossi’s ETH assistant Fabio Reinhardt, who was pivotal to the 1980s ‘analogue architecture’ tendency, a discourse that celebrated context through typological studies that gave rise to a design approach known as *altneu* (old-new).

Altneu buildings were discreet and emphatically ordinary,





acknowledging the scale of the neighbours rather than trying to dress up in the same clothes. The idiom of the stripped-down but intriguing box, characterised by what British architect and ETH professor Adam Caruso has called 'the melancholy of a sparsely inhabited city', began to emerge.

Reinhart's colleague Miroslav Šik, a central figure in the *altneu* debate, was important in the promulgation of the 'analogue' ethos through studio exercises. Davidovici explains: 'Šik's students would produce vast chalky perspective drawings, like CAD renderings but almost the opposite... it was all very slow, the process was a medium for evoking a kind of atmosphere. Atmosphere was everything.'

In Christ and Gantenbein's atelier, the production of images is also arduous, the end result eerily similar. But by building a perspective view in three dimensions rather than

drawing it in two, students are forced to grapple with the interdependency of floor plan and facade.

Influenced by Kollhoff's emphasis on urbanity, the flip side of the studio's fascination with image-making is a commitment to developing high-density typologies. 'We consider architecture as a scientific tool, which we want to encounter by studying exemplary dense cities. We don't reduce buildings to urban patterns but profoundly believe that their architecture makes the city,' reflect the architects.

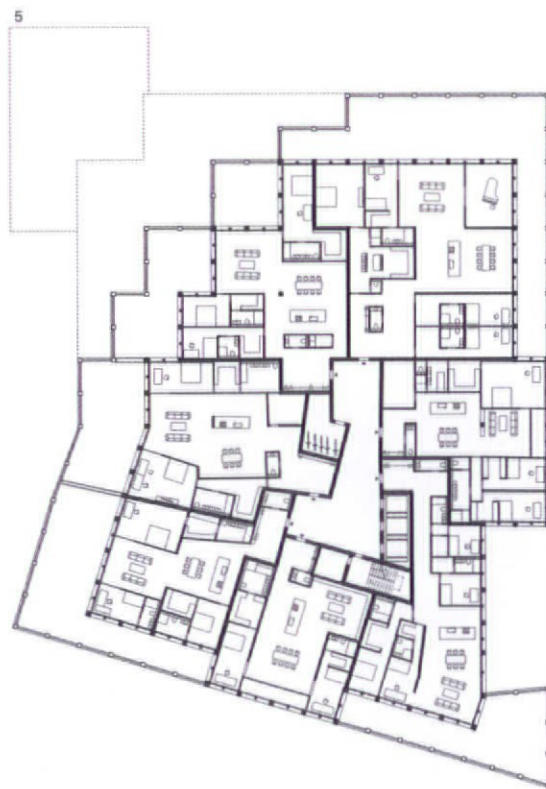
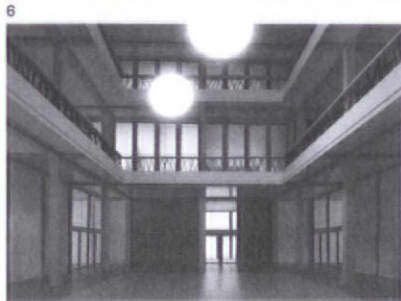
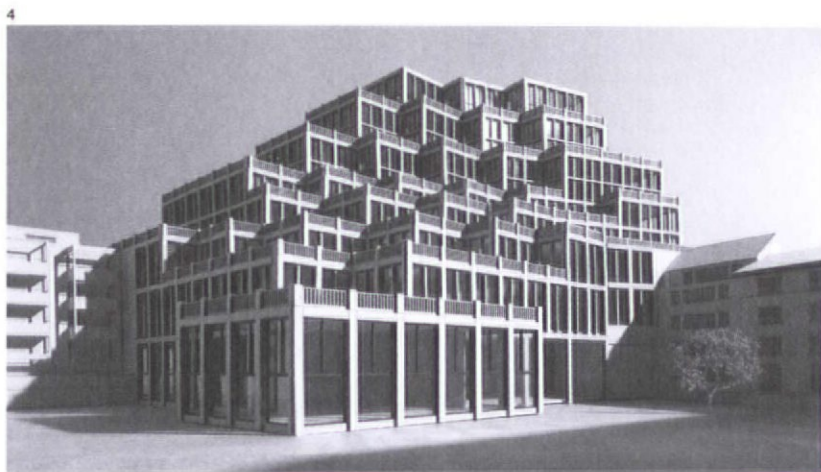
One student project tests the capacity for increased density in a Zurich quarter with a masterplan that looks to 1950s Kowloon for inspiration. Precedent studies are at the heart of a studio methodology which has been called 'typological transfer' by Christ and Gantenbein. 'The building types are transformed as they are moulded into a new

**4, 5, 6 & 7. Another project, designed by students Marcus Wunderlich and Tim Hoffman, translates the New Yorker 'skyscraper set back' rule into a scale suited to the streets of Zurich. On the street side, the building is set back only once. By comparison, on the courtyard side, there are a series of steps, creating a cascade of terraces. The resulting housing block achieves a seamless integration to both the streetscape and the courtyard, as it also provides each apartment with its own outdoor space**

context.' Introducing an apparently alien architecture creates, Gantenbein claims, an opportunity to radicalise the urban challenge: 'The project alludes to a far and exotic image while proposing surprising density scenarios. It never loses the trace of Zurich's real life need to face its high growth future.'

Another project borrows from a mixed-use block from Rome: Mario de Renzi's 1937 Casa Convenzionata. Consequences of this 'transfer' include the design challenge of a deep plan, and the need to deal with overlooking aspects when space and privacy are at a premium. Such an approach may suggest a taste for a dystopian future, but in fact it offers a timely critique of the wastefulness of sprawl and a laboratory for exploring the prospect of more compact, more sustainable cities.

**More student portfolios from this studio are at architectural-review/ETH**





# REPUTATIONS

## Jane Jacobs

SHARON ZUKIN

In the half century following the publication of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs has become the most revered, or at least the most widely referenced urban writer in the world. Prizes and medals are awarded in Jacobs's name and her ideas shape historic preservation laws as well as new mixed-use designs. She is taken as the patron saint of grassroots movements against bureaucratic fiat that result in residential displacement, building demolition and the boring inanity or the 'great blight of dullness', as she wrote, of big, ugly new construction.

Jacobs's plainspoken critique of the architectural conformity that dogged post-war Modernism challenged the prevailing wisdom about rebuilding cities for the executive class. Her advocacy of the need to maintain the patterns of the antebellum city, with its often chaotic rhythms and finely tuned local scale, contradicted the grand strategies of rationalising do-gooders who wanted to save the city by destroying it.

Appearing in 1961, Jacobs's book mobilised socially conscious intellectuals who had been skewered by McCarthyism and threatened by the Cold War. Together with the works of the environmentalist writer Rachel Carson and the feminist author Betty Friedan, *The Death and Life* laid the groundwork for a new kind of protest politics based on where you live, what you eat and who you are. It is not insignificant that all three authors were women.

Tributes rained down when Jacobs died in 2006. In her first adoptive city, New York, where the Pennsylvania-born author and activist worked as a secretary and then as a journalist, the block of Hudson Street where she wrote

*The Death and Life* towards the end of the 1950s was renamed in her honour as Jane Jacobs Way. Toronto, where Jacobs and her family moved in the 1970s (so her sons could avoid being called into military service in the Vietnam War), started a free annual walking tour of the city, Jane's Walk, on the first weekend of May. As part of the street-level celebration, volunteers now lead over 500 tours in more than 75 cities around the world.

Offering equally weighty symbolic kudos, the highest appointed official in charge of land-use decisions, New York City Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden, has declared herself to be an ardent champion of Jacobs's ideas.

But in concrete terms, Jacobs's legacy is less clear. Her preference for low-rise buildings at a variety of rents is honoured more in the pages of urban planning journals than in city council chambers where zoning laws are decided. Her praise for the social vitality of districts with attractions has morphed into the universally recognised economic value of Destination Culture and the McGuggenisation of many cities. As for the self-guiding communities that she espoused, well, they have been submerged by elected officials who pay more attention to real estate developers than to community planners and torpedoed by economic recession on the one hand and citizens' tax revolts on the other.

This is not entirely Jacobs's fault. She wrote during an age of worldwide economic expansion when governments invested heavily in building new roads, subsidising suburban development and rationalising city centres as locations for corporate headquarters – an age, in short, that was typical of the United States and Europe after the Second World War and appears a lot like China now. Some of the evils that she attacked, including the arrogance of state planners who push people out of their homes,

**'Jacobs won the admiration of Neo-Cons who could hardly have shared most of her other political opinions'**

the monolithic architectural projects that swallow old districts whole and the stunning rate of highway construction that moulds cities around space for trucks and cars, embody so much self-interest that not even a Marxist revolution could thwart their forward flow.

And Jacobs was no Marx. Though she opposed the edicts of long-time New York public-sector building czar Robert Moses, and together with her neighbours won significant victories over his plans to tear down parks and buildings and run highways through Lower Manhattan, she did not attack the nexus of economic and state power that supported Moses's vision. Instead, she attacked 'planners', a relatively powerless group compared to developers who build, and banks and insurance companies who finance the building that rips out a city's heart.

Neither did Jacobs, a communitarian, believe that state action could right the wrongs she deplored. Jacobs did not call for stronger zoning laws to encourage a mix of housing, factories, stores and schools. She did not support more permanent rent controls to ensure a mix of poorer and richer tenants, of successful businesses and start-ups. Jacobs neglected the economic priorities that favoured a shift of investments to suburbs over cities and left the public housing projects architecturally barren and perennially short of funds.

Worse, Jacobs wrote that if financially solid families remain, troubled communities will 'unslum' themselves. This seems unusually naïve for such an astute activist. The idea fails to come to grips with entrenched racial bias or the systemic disinvestment that both foreshadows and deepens the ecological misery of unemployment. For these views and her distaste for state intervention, Jacobs won the admiration of Neo-Conservatives who could hardly have shared most of her other political opinions.

### Jane Jacobs 1916–2006

#### Education

School of Graduate Studies,  
Columbia University

#### First break

Joining the magazine  
*Architectural Forum* (1952)

#### Key Publications

*The Death and Life of Great  
American Cities* (1961)

*The Economy of  
Cities* (1969)

*Cities and the Wealth  
of Nations* (1984)

*Dark Age Ahead* (2004)

#### Garlands

American Sociological  
Association Outstanding  
Lifetime Contribution  
Award (2002)

Rockefeller Foundation  
creation of Jane Jacobs  
Medal (2007)

#### Quote

'Cities have the capability  
of providing something for  
everybody, only because,  
and only when, they are  
created by everybody'





Where Jacobs's ideas work well, they focus on the social web that undergirds microcosmic urban life. Her description of the 'sidewalk ballet', the set-piece of the second chapter in *The Death and Life*, weaves a rhythmic narrative of the butcher, the baker, the bartender and other stalwarts of High Street shops who keep an eye on the street and subtly, without direction from external authorities, exert social control over the unpredictable flow of strangers and friends. Jacobs's remarkable idea is that the street is pre-eminently a social space. If we ignore the routine interdependencies and everyday diversity a city street enfolds, we lose the qualities that give it life and guarantee its safety.

There is a wonderful photograph of Jacobs in her prime, sitting at the bar of the White Horse Tavern, just down the block from where she lived in Greenwich Village. Wearing big, dark-rimmed eyeglasses and a shapeless raincoat, smiling and holding a cigarette in her right hand, Jacobs would not be mistaken for any of the legions of gentrifiers who followed her call to find the endless fascinations of the city's historic centre. But she underestimated the strength of middle class tastes for social homogeneity and aesthetic coherence that drive gentrification. What Jacobs valued – small blocks, cobblestone streets, mixed-uses, local character – have become the gentrifiers' ideal. This is not the struggling city of working class and ethnic groups, but an idealised image that plays to middle-class tastes.

Jacobs's challenge to maintain the authenticity of urban life still confronts the fear of difference and the hubris of modernising ambition. At a time in which local shopping streets are the target of attacks against a broader alienation, we urgently need to connect her concern with economic development and urban design to our unsettled social condition.



This hand-drawn section was made by student Stuart Franks to complete the first year of his MA at the Royal College of Art. A proposal for a stacked city above London's King's Cross station, it anticipates rapid population growth in the capital. The scheme draws on a number of strands of thought found elsewhere in the issue. Most directly, it has been influenced by the narrative approach developed at the Royal College by Professor Nigel Coates, who stepped down this summer after leading the architecture department for 16 years (Coates's drawing from the V&A's Postmodernism show is featured in the *Reviews* section). Yet it also combines Rem Koolhaas's ideas of cross-programming and a liberal attitude to borrowing historic and contemporary references. In its mix of structural and whimsical suggestions, its complexity and contradictions, this drawing appears, in fact, to pick up on many of the tenets of Postmodernism, making it a fitting coda to this issue's themes.

