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The Architectural Review
Issue number 1379
January 2012
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'It is the slow death of the architect that truly threatens academia and practice'
Marissa Looby, p16

'In China you cannot now go to public talks on architecture without the dreaded prefix 'sustainable' rearing its ugly head'
Austin Williams, p21

'The Triangle flies in the face of the drab reductive meanness that is characteristic of most volume housebuilding'
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'The quest for sustainability must bring an end to modernity as well as to Postmodernity'
Peter Buchanan, p67

'Without at least several metaphorical mistresses, most architects' marriage to their profession would end in a calamitous divorce'
Jack Self, p90

'He sketched for us in a cloud of cigarette smoke: asymmetric plans, Celtic motifs, tree, spires and angels'
Jonathan Glancey, p94

Cover: Ioana Marinescu

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Andrew Ayers is author of *The Architecture of Paris* and in this issue critiques the highly inventive remodelling of the Tour Bois-le-Prêtre in Paris

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Christopher Christophi was highly commended in the RIBA President's Medals Awards. His project for the Venice Arsenale adorns Folio this month

David Cohn responds to AR's Emerging Architecture awards with a perspective from Spain. His blog can be found at *viewfrommadrid.blogspot.com*

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Andrew Wilson is a principal architect and lecturer at the University of Queensland Architecture School. He looks at two houses by Go Hasegawa in contrasting suburban and forest settings

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

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Gira Esprit
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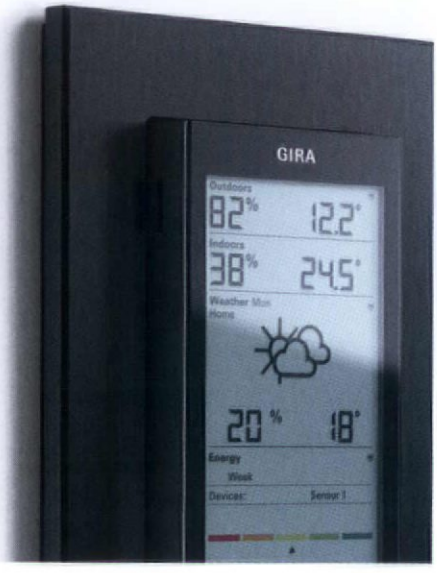

Gira Esprit
Gira is expanding the material and colour diversity of the Esprit switch range. With the new aluminium black, aluminium brown and walnut-aluminium frame variants, the successful design concept is being pursued consistently: clear forms, carefully selected materials and perfect surfaces. More than 280 functions are available for Gira Esprit.
Fig. from left to right: aluminium black/anthracite, aluminium brown/cream white glossy, walnut-aluminium/colour aluminium

Aluminium black
The natural ground structure of the material remains visible in the frames made of anodised aluminium. Thus, the feel of the surface does justice to its high-quality appearance. The new design variant in matt black is particularly suitable for modern interior design concepts.
Fig.: Gira Esprit, aluminium black with radio energy and weather display

Aluminium brown
Various brown tones are a trend and part of modern colour concepts for sophisticated interior design. Gira adopts this trend in the Gira Esprit switch range with cover frames of anodised aluminium in matt brown.
Fig.: Gira Esprit, aluminium brown/cream white glossy with surface-mounted home station video

Walnut-aluminium
Walnut is one of the most popular woods for manufacturing furniture. The combination with a cover frame made of anodised aluminium gives the new walnut-aluminium design variant an organic and modern appearance.
Fig.: Gira Esprit, walnut-aluminium with Gira push button sensor 3 Plus, 2-gang and Gira push button sensor 3 Comfort, 3-gang

Design awards:
red dot award 2011 [Gira Esprit Aluminium black, Aluminium brown und walnut-aluminium]
interior innovation award 2011 [Gira Esprit walnut-aluminium]

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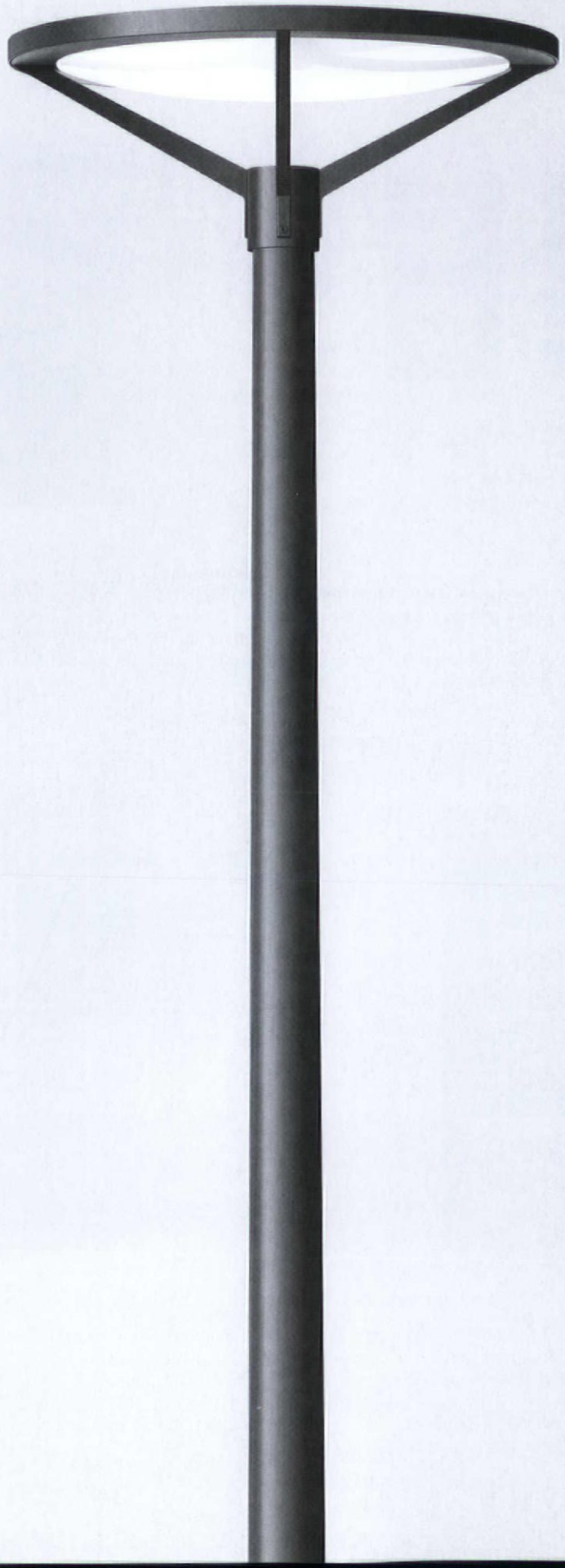


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STORYTELLING
BOONSERM PREMTHADA AND MOLO DESIGN

Tuesday 7 February 18.30

Bangkok based, Boonserm Premthada's design approach is one of adventurousness and artistic daring- particularly in the application of materials. The Kantana Film and Animation Institute's bold use of brick creates spaces that are at once dynamic, yet monastic. Boonserm talks about the inspirations behind the project and the challenges of creating this distinctive new learning environment in the tropics.

Enclosed by ribbons of twisted steel, Molo Design's Nebuta House draws on Japanese building principles to create a new home for a national tradition. Nebuta Matsuri is a form of storytelling in Japan during which heroes and creatures from myths come to life as colourful, large-scale, illuminated paper lanterns (*nebuta*). Canadian practice Molo dicusses this unique cultural project and the challenges of how to balance the milieu of the city and the sheltered, comtemplative interior.

WATERSIDE
CREUSE CARRASCO ARQUITECTOS AND JOSE MARIA SANCHEZ GARCIA

Tuesday 14 February 18.30

Creuse Carrasco Arquitectos are a practice whose work is concerned with creating social space and intervention. Their remodelling of the harbour at Malpica, a remote fishing village on Galicia's 'Coast of Death' in north-eastern Spain, is inspired by place and landscape. Creuse Carrasco discusses the Malpica project, which provides facilities for the fishing fleet, while creating a dynamic new set of public spaces aimed at reversing the fortunes of the village and creating new visitor appeal.

Madrid based Estudio de Arquitectura José María Sánchez's new centre for rowing located on the Alange Reservoir in south-west Spain is a striking new building addressing nature yet barely intruding into it. It provides elite training and competition facilities and brings together nearby facilities in a straightforward way. Jose Maria Sanchez presents this and other projects demonstrating the practices approach to lightness and material refinement.

HABITATS
ZIGZAG ARQUITECTURA AND CHINTHAKA WICKRAMAGE

Tuesday 28 February 18.30

Established in 2005, Zigzag Arquitectura have worked extensively in design and research. Recipients of several awards, they discuss their new social housing scheme in Mieres, northern Spain, which inventively reworks an urban archetype. A generic courtyard block has been reassembled to create new and varied compositions distinguished by bold geometries, while managing to remain humane in its scale.

Chinthaka Wickramage draws on the rich vernacular tradition of Sri Lanka while working to respond to modern day requirements. A new community centre in Thalalla built to a budget of £34,000 restores essential services to a community devastated by the 2004 tsunami. Wickramage discusses the project and an approach to building which adopts the ancient Buddhist tradition of *tam pita viharas* (construction supported on pillars), so that it can withstand the effects of flooding.

Editorial view

In response to the current global crises, the AR launches an ambitious new campaign to rethink architecture

New Year, new resolutions. But the AR has a New Year's resolution that we trust won't wear off by the end of January, like a failed detox regime. Sustaining the impetus of last year's relaunch and expanding the new editorial agenda of critical thinking for critical times, this month the AR launches The Big Rethink: Towards a Complete Architecture. In response to the current global ecological and economic crises, this seems a timely moment to reconsider all aspects of architecture and catalyse new cultural and intellectual approaches to issues of sustainability, urbanism and education.

Over the next 12 months, the AR will publish essays on various topics of critical concern with the aim of stimulating new thinking and combative debate. No other architectural publication is attempting anything similar. To open the pages of our competitors is to get no sense that this is a pivotal moment for architecture and architects.

The AR has a distinguished history of campaigning. Though largely confined to the UK, the Townscape, Outrage and Manplan campaigns of the 1950s and '60s radically changed how people viewed their surroundings and environment. The challenges of the current era require a more globally focused approach, but this should not lose sight of the fundamental relationship between humankind and nature, a precarious symbiosis that is slowly being degraded and debased by insistent pressures. As another year begins, there is a clear and renewed sense of urgency. At the end of last year, global climate change talks petered out in yet another inclusive procrastination, moving the world that bit closer to the incremental tipping point of climate catastrophe. Buildings account for nearly half the greenhouse gas emissions so architects, as makers of buildings, have an obvious practical and political role to play in shaping responses to global environmental concerns. At their best, they have the potential to be 'agents of change', driving agendas, educating clients, badgering manufacturers and generally doing good. Yet perhaps understandably, given the present economic circumstances coupled with an unsettling marginalisation of status, the instinct of many is to retreat into a narrow professional cocoon.

Paradoxically, emissions quotas, targets and the general mechanics of quantifying performance have served to narrow the frame of reference for sustainability, so that this is now seen as a tiresome box to be ticked, rather than an ecompassing and responsive philosophy that can touch every aspect of human existence. Beyond the design of high-performance building envelopes, architects also shape place and space, connecting with deeper cultural and historic resonances. In these oppressive times, we need to rediscover and renew that essential spirit and the Big Rethink is the first step on that path. On the way, we hope that you will make your voices heard and join what promises to be an enthralling and world-changing conversation.

Catherine Slessor, Editor

Overview

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Deal or no deal in Durban

In the anticlimactic aftermath of the COP17 Climate Change Conference, how can architects respond in the face of overwhelming political apathy, asks *Harald N Røstvik*

The world's largest travelling club, the one trying to curb air miles, rides again. Fourteen years on from Kyoto, the world gathered in Durban, under the auspices of COP17, the United Nationals Framework Convention, to confront the threat of climate change. But yet again, the Kyoto Protocol was traded in for nothing, a fiasco wrapped in victory rhetoric. In its wake lies bruised illusions. The only issue agreed on each year is: 'We'll meet again'.

The Kyoto Protocol was established in 1997. It stated that some countries could increase CO_2 emissions and some reduce them during 1990–2012. China and the US, representing 40 per cent of emissions, have not signed up to Kyoto. And Canada has just withdrawn from the accord, claiming that it would cost its taxpayers CAN$14 billion (£8.5 billion) in sanctions for not sticking to targets. Meanwhile Norway, one of the richest oil exporting nations in the world and a champion of environmental double standards, signed to raise emissions by only 1 per cent in 1990–2012. That is now 10 per cent and heading towards 20 per cent, ridiculing its commitment.

Most of the discussions in Durban were along two lines: the Kyoto agreement expiring in 2012 and trying to keep the global warming trajectory under 2°C by 2020 through CO_2 emission reductions. Both failed. Agreed targets have not been respected. Instead, it was decided that Kyoto would be prolonged until 2015, when a new agreement could be negotiated, replacing Kyoto and valid from 2020. Both China and the US have signalled participation in such negotiations. Though this can be seen as a willingness to talk, it simply stalls things for the foreseeable future. The same applies to the agreement in Durban to establish a green global fund. Nobody committed to invest any resources into it – yet. Another opportunity lost.

The EU has not been the worst behaved actor in Kyoto; on the contrary. Yet it only represents 14 per cent of global CO_2 emissions. The EU commitment to reduce its emissions by 20 per cent by 2020 agreed under European law, will more than cover its Kyoto reduction quotient. This demonstrates that national and regional initiatives appear to be more realistic than Kyoto. It is a path of hope to be pursued.

Yet instead of closing the Kyoto process, the big 'bazaar of burden sharing' continues its world tour. Astonishingly, creating a smarter, cleaner, more energy-efficient, renewables-based, greener, more silent world is still seen as a burden. If architects, planners and urbanists are looking for guiding lights, they should ignore Kyoto. Any consensus among over 190 nations will be a least common denominator so small that it matters nothing. And in any case, agreements are not respected. If one country cuts more, another can waste more. Hence Kyoto is a waste of time, regulating only 30 per cent of global CO_2 emissions. All the focus on CO_2 has also drawn the attention away from particle emissions (nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide) caused by log fires and combustion engine-based transportation. These are very harmful to human health.

In order to limit global warming to 2°C, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommended CO_2 emission reductions of between 60 and 80 per cent.

Despite pressure from NGOs and activists Durban has failed to nail down any concrete proposals to confront the climate crisis

The Kyoto negotiations were all about tiny percentages. It is too little, too late. The process has stolen too much attention and offered false promises. It is still derailed. In a recent International Energy Agency report analysing the world energy situation until 2035, it was confirmed that the global temperature has already risen 0.8 °C. Today's policies will result in a temperature rise of between 2°C and 3°C by 2035 and 3°C and 6°C by 2100. Imagine 6°C higher temperatures and the impact on buildings. It means that warmer, wetter and wilder weather, fires and drought, an increased need for cooling to reduce death tolls and systems to deal with heavy rain.

What can be done? Paradoxically, the global recession could be good for the planet. During the financial crisis in 2009, CO_2 emissions in Norway alone dropped by 11 per cent. Other nations saw larger drops. We know that by working systematically, adhering to but going beyond national and regional targets, knowledge and technology will be developed. The foggy veil could be lifted. A wonderful greener world might appear. Almost half the global CO_2 emissions come from buildings, if production and refinement of building materials are included. Two-thirds of buildings standing in 2050 are already built. We can half their energy needs. New buildings can achieve zero energy. Integrating workplaces and housing reduces the need for transport. Architects can be the 'change agents', reminding clients that reduced running costs are feasible. This 'pro-hope' philosophy can combat the 'no-hope' mentality now endemic because of lack of action.

Instead of reprising exhausted icons and the popular songs of yesterday, architects need to actively develop a new aesthetic of sustainable architecture and planning. Our potential as generalists rather than specialists encompasses many disciplines and could be a powerful force for change. It's time to apply this potential with a sense of responsibility, boldness and playfulness.

NEW YORK, USA

Chill winds in the groves of academe

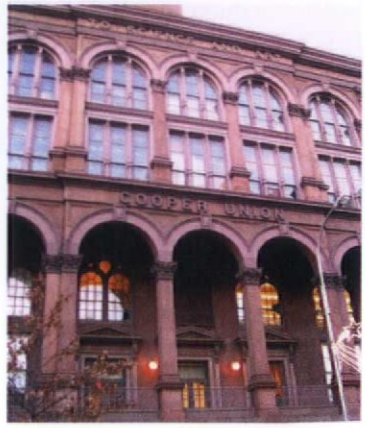
Michael Holt & Marissa Looby

As a consequence of European austerity measures and reduced US spending on education, the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York currently finds itself in the eye of an ideological storm. As an all-scholarship institution, it prides itself on its unique approach to education provision. The school generates funding from private investment and its ownership of the famous Chrysler Building in Manhattan. Yet even with these sources of revenue and endowments, the Cooper Union's financial situation has become precarious. In November 2011, Mark Epstein, Chair of the Board of Trustees, announced an annual deficit of $16 million (£10.3 million). The only possible solution would be to transform the school into a fee-based institution. Students, alumni, faculty members and the wider academic community were left staggered at the proposal, which runs contrary to the philosophy of free education inculcated by the school's founder Peter Cooper in 1902. Presently, the Cooper Union offers one of the most sought-after architecture programmes both globally and within the United States. Its rigorously selective admissions procedure encourages high achievers and has nurtured notable figures such as Elizabeth Diller, John Hejduk, Shigeru Ban and Daniel Libeskind. Yet in both the US and the UK, academia is becoming more commercialised, devolving into a product to be marketed and sold in response to corporate pressures.

In the UK, Universities Minister David Willetts has decreed that from the start of the 2012 academic year, the 'basic threshold' for tuition fees would rise to £6,000 per year. In 'exceptional circumstances', a university could charge up to £9,000 per year. With the onset of these fee increases, a two-tier system is now evolving in which only the privileged few can afford to attend the 'better' universities. The tuition fee cap is only applicable to publicly funded institutions, which means that universities can charge any fee they wish if they attract private funding. One such institution is the New College of the Humanities in London's Bloomsbury, a well-trodden haunt of academic and student life. Launched by a group of high-level academics, including scientist Richard Dawkins and philosopher AC Grayling, it intends to charge tuition fees of £18,000 per year. This creation of an elitist system reconceptualises the British university framework, bringing it more into line with the American Ivy League.

The standard architecture course is currently a five-year degree (and even then does not fully qualify the student as an architect) and would cost an average of £40,355 to complete. Anticipating an average salary on graduating from the Part I course of £16,692 per annum, realistically, how many students will be able to become practising architects? It seems extremely unlikely that the average architect's wage will be able to offset the extortionate cost of a university education.

But there are wider concerns about the status of architects. As the profession becomes more marginalised and segmented into specialised subsets, its socio-cultural value is diminished. With an increasing emphasis on project budgets and performance, the role of the architect is shifting to that of 'building coordinator', a trend now reflected in the educational system. A new degree at Instituto de Empresa School of Architecture in Madrid is described as a Master's in 'Architectural Management and Design'. This combines entrepreneurial expertise with a design approach that encourages students to become 'vocational designers' via on-site practice and web-based tuition. If the role of the architect diminishes and if student debt continues to rise, the consequence will be students deserting a profession now relentlessly focused on achieving the cheapest option.



Cooper Union's lurch towards tuition fees takes it away from its founding principles

Cooper Union may be a crumbling bastion of scholarship-based education, but the broader problem is the profession's inability to maintain its own ideology and identity. Clearly, the historic role of architectural scholar and practitioner in contemporary society needs to be evolved and strengthened. Fee-based initiatives and ascetic devaluation may be one thing, but it is the slow death of the architect – in its identifying professional form – that truly threatens academia and practice.

LONDON, UK

Going for gold at the RIBA and AIA

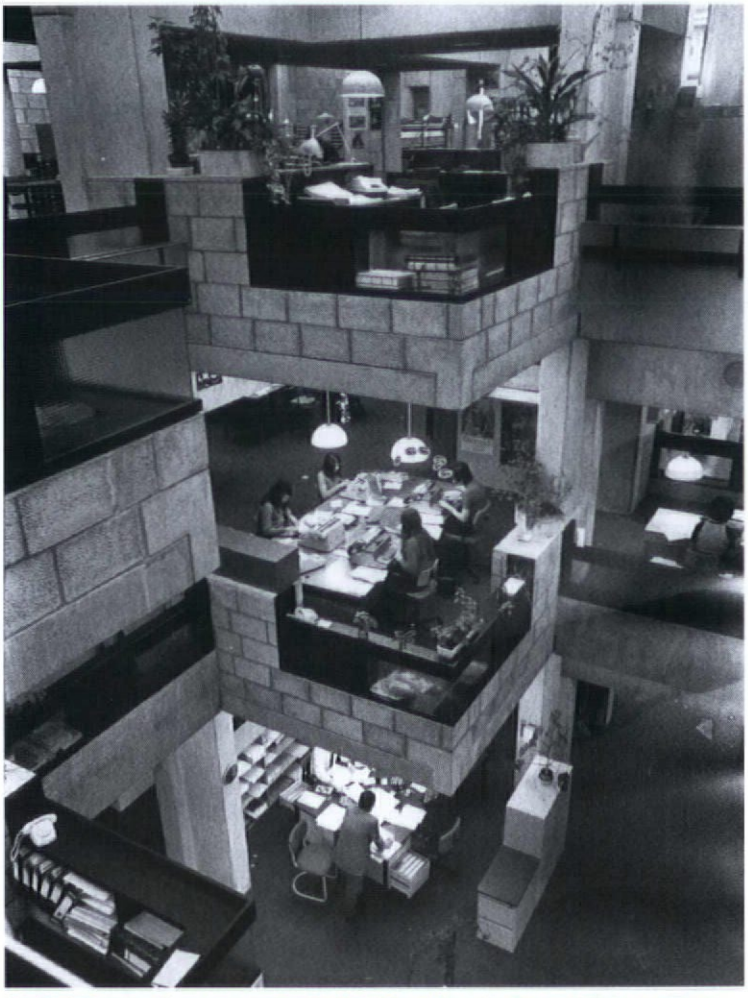
William JR Curtis

Whenever I wander into the RIBA headquarters on Portland Place, I cast an eye to the left in the lobby where the names of the previous winners of the

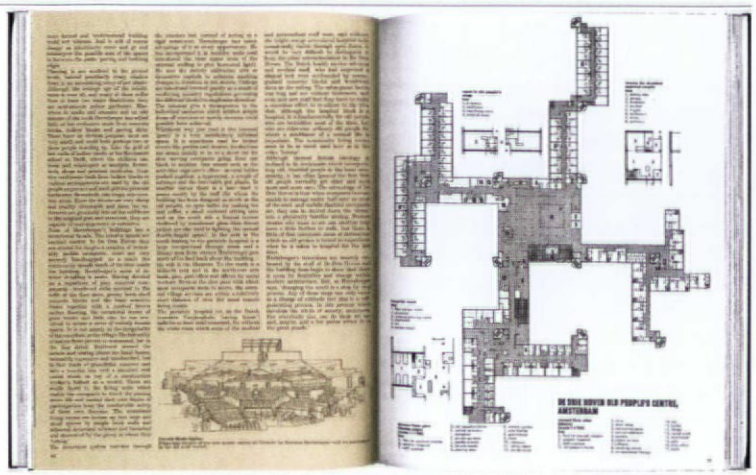
institute's Royal Gold Medal winners are inscribed in stone. Along with the grand international names that one would expect – Aalto, Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies, Utzon, Niemeyer – there are the national names that one would also expect, such as Lasdun, Stirling and Foster – but there are also puzzling ommissions such as the Mexican architect Luis Barragán or, in our own time, another Mexican: Teodoro González de León, one of the few people to have mastered the problem of modern monumentality.

Anyone who has ever been on the jury for a major prize (and I have been on several), knows that things are not as simple as they seem and that the last minute debates can take strange turns. And in any case, awards need to be taken with a grain of salt. Whenever I hear the same old thing about the Pritzker Prize being the 'Nobel Prize for Architecture' I have the same reaction. First of all, every Pritzker has produced at least some mediocre work. Secondly, the Nobel itself is not infallible, as anyone who follows the ins and outs of scientific and literary politics can tell you. As for the 'Nobel Prize for Peace', apparently that is sometimes awarded to people who make war.

It was an interesting idea to award the Royal Gold Medal to Herman Hertzberger this time around, not only for the work itself (uneven in quality but guided by social conviction) but also for the values that it represents. The citation makes much of the life enhancing qualities of his buildings, the attention to scale, the interlocking of spaces for multiple use, the search for variety within standardisation and, in the end, the democratic attitude. The Centraal Beheer office complex in Apeldoorn (1967–72) surely illustrates the strengths and weaknesses: on the inside a convivial warren of interconnected levels adapted to growth and change, materially modest but spatially rich. On the outside an abstraction of a hilltown or kasbah, yet curiously disconnected from its actual urban situation.



Small platform work spaces surround open light wells at the Centraal Beheer offices



Plans for Hertzberger's Old People's Centre in Amsterdam (AR February 1976)

Hertzberger's debts to Aldo van Eyck's Orphanage 10 years earlier and to his notion of 'labyrinthine clarity' are obvious, but he also inherited a Dutch tradition of quiet modern architecture running back to JJP Oud and beyond. You can still sense this continuity in the elegant anonymity of the Paswerk Housing in Haarlem (2000-2007). Maybe the jury wished to signal a reaction against the bling bling narcissism and excessive gestures of recent years? Here a little caution is necessary since at a larger scale Hertzberger seems to have picked up some of the viruses and formalist tricks of the time including ones from his noisier colleague Rem Koolhaas.

The American Institute of Architects' selection of Steven Holl for its Gold Medal was probably more predictable. To his credit he has the spatial explorations of works like the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki (AR August 1998) which, however, also has problems dealing with its urban context – or the Herning Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark, HEART (AR October 2009), which sits more comfortably on an open, grassy site and which owes more than a little to Le Corbusier's Ronchamp. The AIA citation goes on about Holl's 'rigorously exploratory theoretical approach' and his 'humanist approach to formal experimentation' but here some reality checks are necessary. Holl is notorious for his pretentious mumblings derived from 'phenomenology' and his 'humanism' may be less apparent to the poor suffering inmates of that scaleless hulk the Simmons Hall Dormitory at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. And what about respect for the dead and for the work which lives on after them? I am referring, of course, to Holl's project for the Glasgow School of Art, which is so horrendously out of scale with Mackintosh's masterpiece: a spiritless diagram of a building wrapped in Holl's usual clichés of iceberg glass. Last word from Mark Twain: 'Everything has its limits – iron cannot be educated into gold'.

Study AR's archive of Herman Hertzberger buildings at architectural-review.com/archive

When old meets new, design expertise provides the answer

When Cottrell & Vermeulen Architecture was commissioned to design a new sixth-form centre and assembly hall at Brentwood School, the challenge was to achieve a cohesive design on a site dominated by substantial brick buildings dating back to the 16th and 19th centuries.

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Broader view

Ancestor worship

The discovery of the oldest known wooden stairway in Europe, preserved in an Alpine saltmine, revealed astonishing levels of design sophistication among some of our distant ancestors. *Timothy Taylor* muses on Bronze Age construction and placemaking and the effects that prehistoric architecture may have had on social control

In 1343 BC, two years before the birth of Tutankhamun, a pine tree in the Austrian Alps was felled and hewn into a wooden stairway. We know the exact date because the wood, like the boy king's body, was preserved by salt – though by accident rather than design – and its annual growth rings can be matched to a section of the long, bar code-like European dendrochronological sequence. Abandoned by Bronze Age salt miners, the stairway was rediscovered at the World Heritage site of Hallstatt in 2003 and excavated in situ within a collapsed prehistoric shaft that remains too dangerous for public access. The stairway was movable and modular: the 5m section that was revealed features split-trunk side runners with terminal ends shaped to allow further sections to be attached with pegs. Each step, wide enough for three adults, has a variable tread angle that can be locked level to match any descent gradient.

Had the stairway not survived, we could not have imagined its sophistication. It is an object lesson in ancient skill and modern ignorance. When we try to grasp the scale and scope of the built environment in the distant past we have to accept that the great majority of what was carpentered, glued, woven, plastered and thatched has since been lost. What was once three dimensional becomes a vague 2D discolouration of the soil, and then only if things burned or were left to rot. Most of what was erected was later dismantled, perhaps reassembled, adapted, and eventually recycled and cannibalised. This seems true of the wooden temples known as Kreisgrabenanlagen built around 4700 BC all across central Europe: their concentric ditches, entranceways and palisades, though large-scale, were decommissioned shortly after the completion of the time-factored rituals they hosted. The fugal variance of these sites, and their alignment on a variety of passing celestial conjunctions, implies a high degree of planning and oversight by inspired, competitive and highly knowledgeable people.

The grand cultural evolution of built space was the subject of a *locus classicus* of archaeology, V Gordon Childe's 1950 essay in *Town Planning Review* entitled 'The Urban Revolution'. In it, the Australian prehistorian argued that there had been three major socio-economic and structural revolutions in the evolution of our species. The last, the Industrial, had been prefigured by the Urban. That, in turn, had depended on the appearance of settled village life in the Neolithic (or Agricultural) Revolution, which Childe had examined through his excavation of Skara Brae on Orkney. Agglomeration into larger and more permanent settlement began to accelerate 10,000 years ago in China and the Fertile Crescent as economies intensified in a period of post-glacial warming. Childe was right to argue that the city, emerging in various forms in the past 5,000 years, facilitated the emergence of social classes by allowing craftspeople and administrators to be 'bought out' of subsistence production to support rulers who identified themselves as gods.

Reconstructing the past on the basis of what partial and skewed evidence usually survives – the Hallstatt staircase is a magnificent exception – we risk misrepresenting our ancestors' intelligence, even as we rightly deny them the fantastic powers envisioned by fringe literature. The latter suffers from failure of imagination, being obsessed by the apparently mystical presence of stone-built pyramids in widely separated locations worldwide, as if the form were not such a basic, stable, even easy way of gaining height that it must have been invented many times over. Social and ritual purposes varied but a quotidian urge to impress and intimidate remains discernable, even from the ruins.

The Hallstatt stairway prompts the far more interesting reflection that what actually dominated the skylines of prehistory were perishable, organic (and probably mainly non-pyramidical) structures, of sorts whose existence must be inferred. If Bronze Age people descended in such style hundreds of feet below the earth, using a modular and site-adaptable technology, then they certainly had the capacity to ascend, architecturally speaking, well above it, but only sometimes in stone. Vitruvius long since noted that the triglyphs and metopes of Greek temple masonry were echoes of the projecting ends of timber beams and rafters and the gaps between them, and it has often been mooted that the morticed trilithons at Stonehenge emulate a carpentry technique. This conjecture has been given added plausibility by the recent excavation on Salisbury Plain of Neolithic houses whose ground plans include rooms with what must surely be side dressers of exactly the same size as the iconic stone-shelved ones at Skara Brae, facing on to identically located central box hearths. Rather than a one-off, the Orcadian site was simply the standard module, expressed skeuomorphically in stone on a timber-poor island.

A similar inference can be drawn from the far earlier yurt-like dwellings of the Upper Palaeolithic steppe hunters. These, constructed on a mammoth-tusk frame, surely echo wood-framed prototypes developed in more temperate zones to the south. Pavlovian Culture houses from this Ice Age period, some 25,000 years ago, discovered in the Czech Republic, had coal-fired hearths and formed settlements where hundreds of people may have coexisted; this tends to give the lie to Childe's contention that only the much later invention of agriculture allowed systematic village life. It also challenges the attractive idea that before the invention of the city, however defined, life was somehow healthier and more in balance with nature. Although we cannot now examine the lungs

COLIN MAYHEW

of the Pavlovians, those of the mummified Inuit inhabitants of Qilakitsoq, who lived under similar conditions in Greenland around AD1460, were horribly clogged with soot. Going without fire was not an option; a well-designed chimney could have helped but such a thing is a real architectural flourish. Many seasonally occupied, and even some permanently occupied, dwellings do not have them even today, and their occupants wake and sleep in carcinogenic smoke.

Although the planet now seems overburdened with cities, their enduring attraction may be easier to understand if we consider the possible original function of permanent villages as they differentiated themselves from earlier, more mobile settlements. Neither Skara Brae in Orkney, nor the earlier, much larger, farming village of Çatalhöyük, on the Konya Plain in central Anatolia, facilitated privacy. Rooms are small, with communal sleeping areas and single entrances – in the case of Çatalhöyük, in full public view, via the roof. These environments were ideal for closely monitoring behaviour and association. The selective breeding of new-fangled flocks and herds indubitably led to close attention to patterns of human breeding. The house was sensed as the extension of the body, and both were regulated. No longer was there the freedom of an extensive zone of wilderness as a setting for the varied sexual behaviours we now understand to be part of our primate legacy.

Oversight extended well beyond reproductive behaviour. The reason that the Hallstatt stairway was so wide, despite the challenge of construction underground, may well be that it could allow an overseer to stand centrally, regulating miners who ascended with salt-laden rucksacks on one side and descended unladen on the other. The built past was not just more technically accomplished than we have imagined; it was refined also in terms of social control.

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View from...

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Antique embroidered panel showing life in old Suzhou, long swept away in China's dash for growth. The country's next challenge is to forge coherent practical and political responses to notions of sustainable development

Suzhou, China

As the COP17 talks emphasise the need for action on climate change, China is using sustainable development as a political tool, argues *Austin Williams*

There has been much talk of China's unsustainable property bubble recently, with Western commentators taking unseemly delight in the prediction that China's mighty economy is teetering on the brink. But reports of such economic decline appear to be exaggerated. After all, with current GDP growth slowing to a healthy six per cent, Chinese wealth creation (as compared to the recession-hit West) gives a new meaning to the word 'sluggish'. Indeed, business analyst Bill Dodson, author of *China Inside Out*, wrote recently: 'It seems a near-impossibility to escape the din of construction machines punching the ground or stamping steel or crunching concrete.' China is still building at a frenetic pace.

Mind you, the concept of an 'overheated' property market is more appropriate when you consider that China places scant regard on the installation of insulation. Unlike the UK, China has several climate zones – and it is getting parky in Suzhou at the moment. Living, as I do, on the top floor of a 16-storey apartment block, I am well aware that the insulation levels in residential roofs are a quarter those of UK building regulations, and a tenth those of PassivHaus standards. A recent report indicated, on paper, 70 per cent of buildings complied with energy design standards for residential buildings, but only 30 per cent were shown to comply on inspection. This level of insulation is where the UK was 25 years ago. In terms of development, China is catching up, though it is often depicted as a sustainable energy pariah.

The West's ability to retain a semblance of moral authority by preaching about Chinese environmental failings has seldom reflected a desire to help China improve its insulation standards. Rather, it implied that China was not actively 'saving the planet'. Instead of offering people a warmer and more comfortable existence, Western sustainability consultants tended to focus on reducing energy production and lowering consumption, the very things that truly developing nations are fighting to improve.

But the COP17 UN climate change conference in Durban exposed the fact that the West is losing credibility on this issue. The surprising thing about China is the pervasive language of environmentalism. Just as in the UK, you cannot go to a public talk on architecture without the dreaded prefix 'sustainable' rearing its ugly head. Regularly, these events are presented by Western sustainability consultants touting their wares in an emerging market.

There is one difference. Unlike the West, 'sustainability' reflects a growing confidence of China's ability to play on the world stage. A recent Communist Party congress mandated that it would 'aggressively participate' in global climate change debates, showing a desire to dictate terms. Yet such confidence also betrays a political weakness. In the *China Daily* one party official wrote: 'That China is and will remain a developing country for quite some time is a solid fact... We should continue to adopt a low-key style and work doggedly for our sustainable development.' Sustainable development is mainly a political mechanism to excuse the unequal pace of 'real' development.

Just five years ago, the US-based Worldwatch Institute tried to stymie China's ambitions by saying: 'The Western model of growth that India and China wish to emulate is toxic.' Mercifully, this self-loathing is absent here. As Yang Fuqiang, a senior adviser on climate and energy policy at the Natural Resources Defense Council, puts it: 'Industrialised countries have consumed a large amount of resources from developing countries since the Industrial Revolution. They built economic power and left developing countries in poverty.' Maybe it's the turn of developing countries to have their century.

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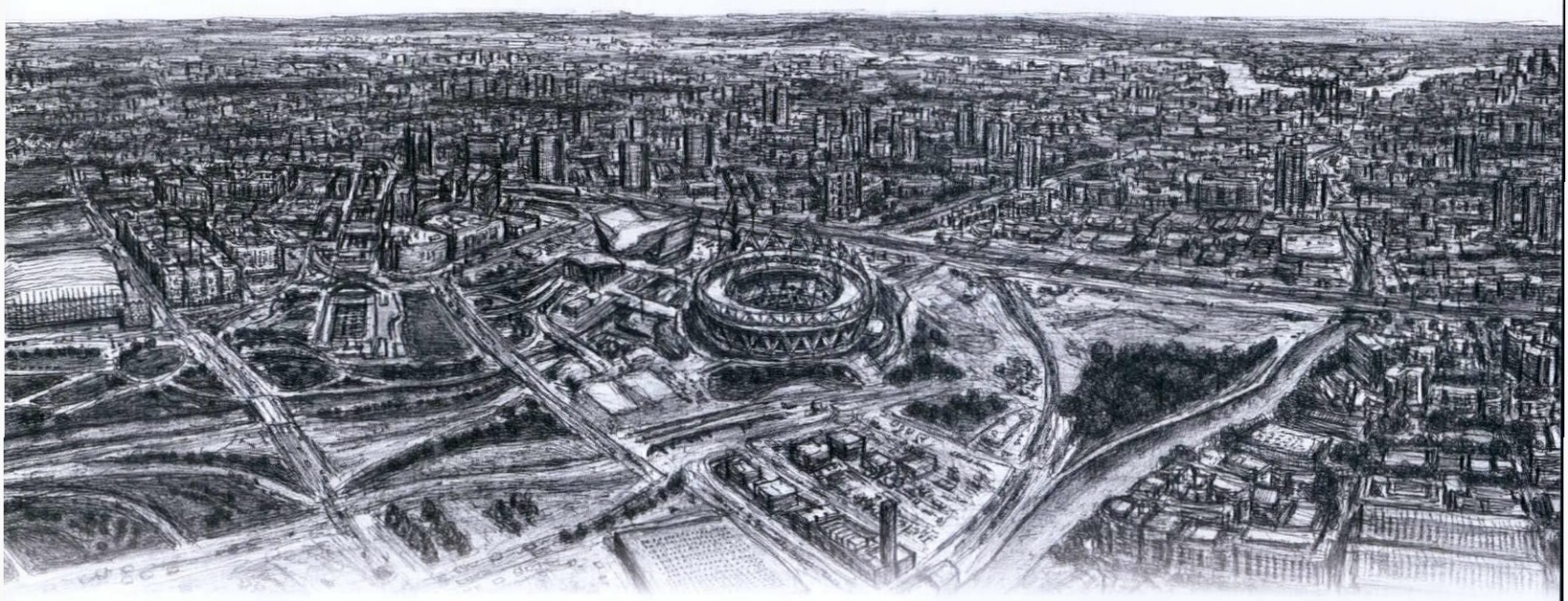

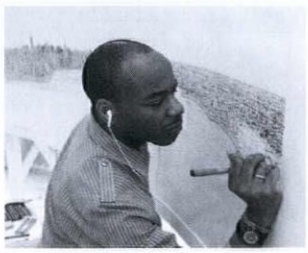

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Viewpoints

FARSHID MOUSSAVI

Architecture and activism should be as closely linked as the problems we need to solve

Architects must pursue different kinds of profession-specific activism. The world has urgent concerns from urban sprawl to the energy crisis and terrorism but no matter where these originate, they are intricately interrelated. To address the crises of our era, the traditional systems of understanding the world through the binary division 'developed world' versus 'underdeveloped world' has to be exchanged for a single world, within which environmental, mental or social spheres are intertwined. It is important for architects to volunteer expertise where they are unaffordable, but it is also essential that they dedicate their skills to inventing new practices to meet these other challenges. This may imply devising policies, working in multidisciplinary teams, or engaging with processes that may take a long time to realise.

Architects can use policies to tackle not only environmental concerns but also social ones. In the UK, Section 106 (S106) agreements under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) enshrine an ingenious planning policy, transforming the 20th-century model of the city composed of ghettos into a city composed of socially integrated neighbourhoods. Since 2006, local planning authorities have used S106 agreements to require all developments beyond a certain size to provide 30 per cent of their residential component as affordable housing. This ensures that affordable housing is provided alongside housing for higher-income groups, thereby eliminating social segregation. Housing is also introduced in areas that would otherwise be filled with commercial spaces. Without intervention, a purely commercial development would create desolate areas susceptible to crime at night. Architects can enhance this policy through design. Affordable housing can be designed similarly to its market-based counterparts to diminish perceptions of income differences, creating a community with greater social cohesion.

Patronage of architecture is another profession-specific type of activism. For example, architectural awards can be effective in setting new standards by recognising exemplary projects and inspiring similar efforts. A primary school built in Burkina Faso through the initiative of local architect, Diébédo Francis Kéré and his community, received an Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Following this, other schools were commissioned. The award rewards not only the final building but also the process leading to it and its impact on its community and the environment.

Another example of activism through patronage is the founding of the Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres by architects Maggie Keswick Jencks and Charles Jencks, based on their belief that architecture can activate change in people's mental states. Each Maggie's Centre is housed within a building designed individually to act as a home away from home for those affected by cancer. Two years ago I visited Zaha Hadid's Maggie's Centre in Fife. I found myself in front of a closed, black building with small windows. I asked one of the people using the centre what she liked best about the building. She told me that she liked the small triangular windows as they helped her focus her mind. I looked out one opening and saw the wheel of a car, another framed a branch with leaves and another framed a cloud. I began to see the design of the windows in a different way. Their random arrangement inspired visitors to look through them and focus on intimately framed details, allaying feelings of confusion induced by cancer and therefore helping them live with it. Each Maggie's Centre is designed to create this sense of focus. Hadid's Maggie's Centre uses its windows, OMA's uses a central garden and Richard Rogers's uses an arrangement of patios. In this way, the Maggie's Centres are an example of how design can be an important agent of activism.

The world faces many different problems, all of which are interconnected. It is critical that different architects pursue different practices of activism at the same time, recognising that each is not a finite or comprehensive solution, but is interrelated with others. Architecture needs to embrace problems in this multiple, overlapping way, drawing strength from its diverging areas of specialisation. Only then can architecture approach the world ecosophically, encompassing simultaneously environmental, social and mental ecologies.

LAST WORDS

'Despite COP17 being touted as a success by the architects of its demise, global 'leaders' in Durban did little more than lay a roadmap to devastation'

Cameron Fenton writing in *The Huffington Post*, 11 December

'If RIBA student medal winners are harbingers of the future, the only role left for architects is to draw spectacular images of dystopia'

Jeremy Till's reaction on Twitter to the RIBA President's Medals, 8 December

'After the riots all over the country it is evident, despite the amazing architecture, technology and expertise that something is missing'

Tia Kansara giving a TED talk in Bristol on designing sustainable communities, 13 December

AR Products

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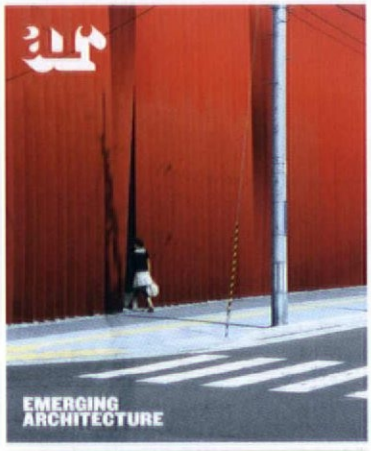

Following last month's issue on Emerging Architecture, AR readers react to the crisis facing young practices

I'd like to congratulate the AR for its Emerging Architecture Awards edition (AR December 2011). These awards are vital in recognising young talent and the quality of architecture produced this year was exceptionally high. The projects are a vibrant, joyful and enriching cross-section of architectural expression.

I was struck by the strong selection of young Japanese and Spanish architects set against the notable lack of British architects. Of course, the awards are international and the standard is very high, but I could not help wondering whether there is a correlation between the degree of strong patronage required and the absence of young British architects.

To an extent, the downturn has limited opportunities for young practices yet there are still plenty of new buildings being built in the UK. These projects, however, demonstrate an increasing tendency to resort to the usual tried and trusted names. Consider, for example, the Olympic Games construction programme. Perhaps quite rightly the big venues are being designed by the big names. However, opportunities should have been identified within the programme for younger talent to shine. Surely a missed opportunity to promote our own best young talent, instead of well-established global starchitects who already have glittering careers.

Design competitions, traditionally fertile territory for talented young architects to procure work, have all but dried up in the UK. Increasingly, competitions are being run on the basis of expressions of interest or pre-qualification questionnaires which inherently favour more established firms. This shift results in a tendency towards bland, risk-free design.

When design competitions do take place, there is an unhappy trend of projects not coming to fruition. In 2010, our office was shortlisted for an architectural competition to design a temporary building for the 2012 Olympic Games alongside a strong shortlist of young British architects. Last week, it was announced that the £220,000 building was being scrapped and replaced instead with some 'bollards' while the budget for the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies was being doubled from £40 million to £80 million.

As the Emerging Archi tecture Awards demonstrate, innovation and creativity require a degree of risk, which is increasingly absent from the British construction industry. At a time when smaller practices need good patronage more than ever, the UK seems to lack the conviction required to support its young designers. Until clients start taking responsibility and putting their faith in our best emerging architects, we will continue to look with envy on the work carried out overseas.

Hari Phillips, Director, Bell Phillips

In 'Survival Tactics' (AR December 2011), Luis Fernández-Galiano offered a first-hand view of the daunting problems facing Spain's youngest architects. Over the past decades, the country has been a remarkable incubator for young talent thanks to an abundance of work which has now been cut off by the crisis.

Open competitions for modest local public service facilities have been particularly effective in giving newcomers opportunities to break out on their own, but other factors contributing to the nurturing of young talent should be able to survive the current crisis, allowing at least a hard-core few to carry on. Teaching offers an economic cushion, however modest, for young architects between commissions. In recent decades, this system has taken on an international dimension, with talented Spanish graduates serving a stint in Rotterdam, London or Basel, while their contemporaries flock to Spain.

Many are looking to foreign commissions, but Spanish studios lack the size and financial clout of big American and English firms that routinely work abroad. Some Spaniards are finding work in Europe and to a lesser extent in the Middle East. But other markets are proving more complex. A big effort to move into China, backed by Spain's international commerce agency, has had disappointing results.

The head of the COAM, Madrid's professional association, also hopes to increase public support for renovation work as a steady source of income, a field that has produced innovative designs in the past. But with half the profession out of work, according to the president of the Higher Council of Spanish Architecture Associations, the situation is critical for everyone.

David Cohn, Madrid

Quit now and enjoy what little time you have left – our solemn advice, having just seen the winners of the RIBA President's Medals. Once a year, the student candidates present their best attempts at human salvation, set against the increasingly conventional backdrop of some post-industrial wasteland. Is there still any relevance to this exercise, or have we lost the plot somewhere?

The student architecture project has always been a platform for dissecting today's logistical and societal challenges. But be it an acute environmental phenomena or morally contentious issue being examined, these projects have become more about the power of their narrative than the actual architectural proposal.

It's just a pity that awards such as the President's Medals become distracted by the sheer block-buster expanse of these students' visions. Their melodramatic scale often bypasses conventional architectural criticism, meaning these pieces are instead judged by their evocative renders and who's put the latest tweak on the age-old story of apocalypse.

Oliver Green and Nate Humphries, Berlin

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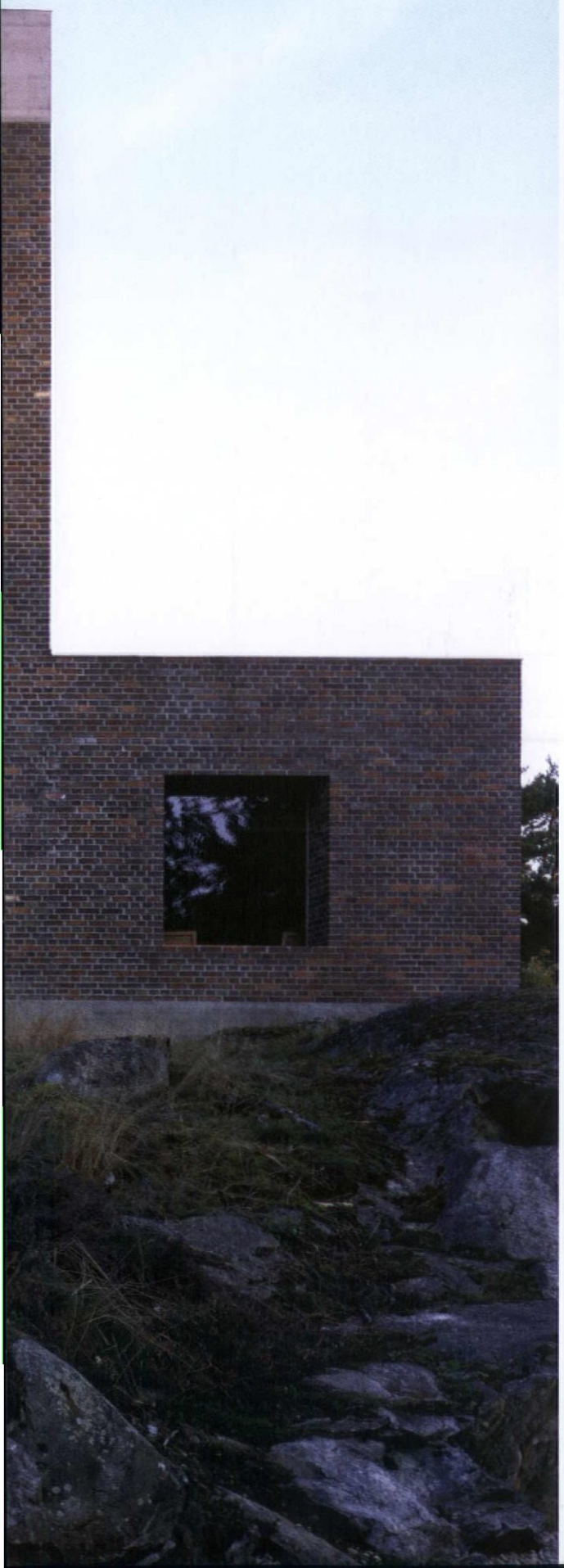

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NORDIC LIGHT

A dark brick box perforated by cool, pale light forms an austere yet serenely numinous setting for Lutheran worship in a suburb of Stockholm

Årsta Church,
Stockholm,
Sweden
Johan Celsing

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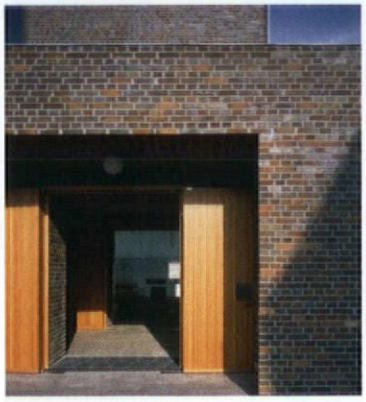

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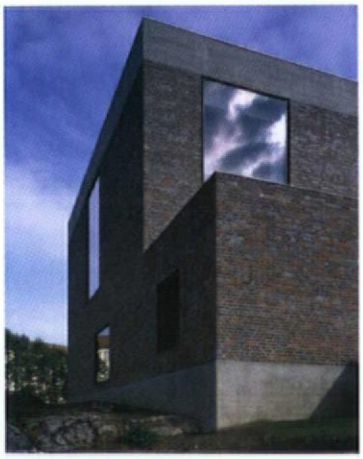

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1. (Previous page) rooted in its rocky site in a Stockholm suburb, the new church embodies an evident Lutheran austerity infused with a raw elementality
2. (Previous page) the church adjoins an existing community centre dating from the late 1960s and explores a similar architectural language
3. The imposing massing and tall windows have a strong civic presence in the suburban milieu
4. An architecture of brick and sky. Large glazed openings are incised into dark planes of brick
5. Entrance porch
6. A part of the new volume connecting the church with the community centre

location plan

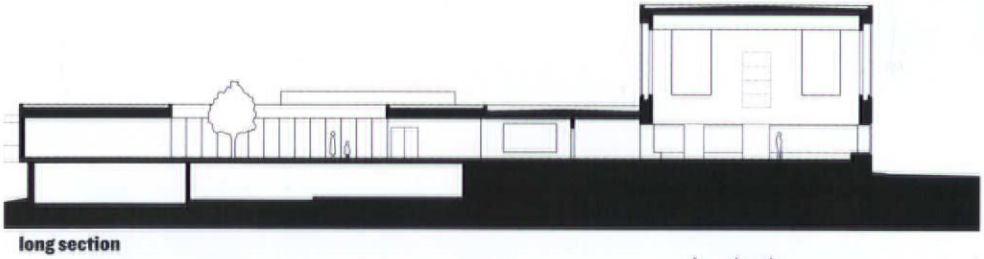
CRITICISM

EDWIN HEATHCOTE

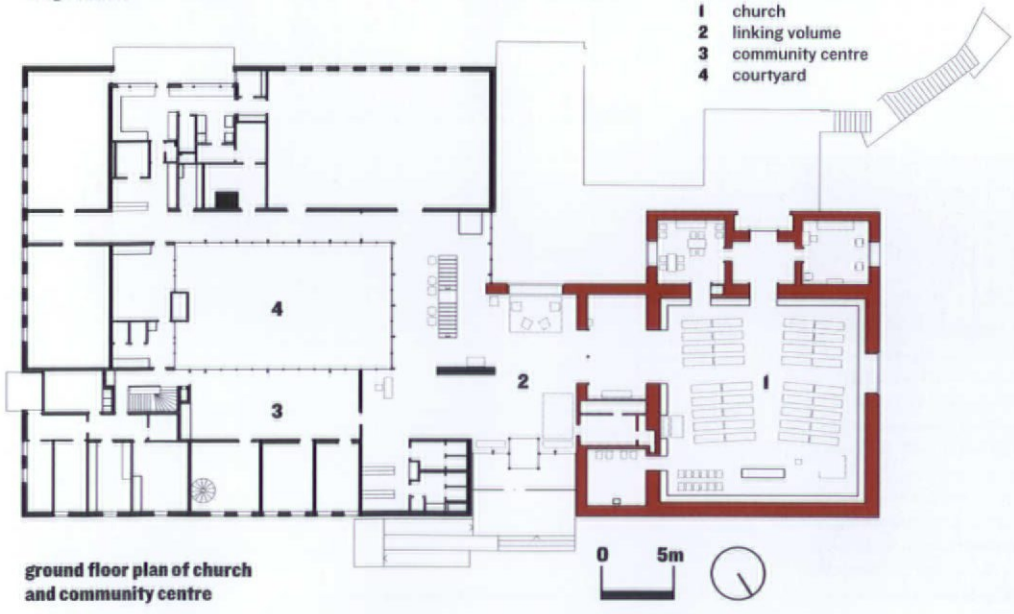
There was a particular type of soft Scandinavian Modernism that greatly appealed to British architects. It was a humanised, bricky style with gently pitched roofs and Protestant self-effacement. The Stockholm suburb of Årsta dates precisely from this era. Designed in the years following the Second World War by architect brothers Erik and Tore Ahlsén, Årsta is a gentle, socially cohesive suburb on a rocky site built around a core of community structures. Johan Celsing's new church abuts one of these community buildings at the rocky edge of the settlement. The existing buildings on the site exist from the suburb's later era of 1968 and a slender campanile already stands in a kind of profane space, setting up a civic realm that has been patiently waiting for a church for decades. The new building is, in its way, every bit as Scandinavian as its neighbours yet also radically different from the gentle suburbanity of Swedish modernity. Instead, it is rooted in an offshoot of that style, something closer to the raw, elemental experience of the churches of Lewerentz or of Celsing's father, one of the great and relatively unsung 20th-century church architects, Peter Celsing.

The massing is blocky and severe, the volume clad in stark brown brick and capped in a layer of concrete, which also forms the head of the huge windows, suggesting there must be something dramatic going on inside. The church may be entered either from the existing community centre or from its own western door – a tight lobby squeezed by a children's chapel to the right and a sacristy to the left. The space for worship is a generous more-or-less cube, 13m square by 10m high; a powerful, impressive volume. Celsing explained to me that he had initially spent much effort attempting to create unseen light sources – to bring a spirit of numinosity through cleverly concealed illumination, but that he ultimately felt he was trying too hard and that this was, after all, a church and not an art gallery. Instead, the walls are given a classical tripartite sub-division with a 2.3m datum of glazed brick acting as a base and a 5m plane of limewashed render, which also accommodates the enormous windows capped by that in-situ cast concrete crown.

The base is characterised by a built-in glazed brick bench, which envelops the whole interior, creating a kind of skirting and a surface for candles. The glazed brick above this is perforated, producing an almost woven effect, a Semperian idea of wall as fabric and an evocation of the oldest notion of the church as a mobile tabernacle. That same idea is made deliberately visible elsewhere, in gestures that knit the liturgical furniture into the fabric of the architecture. The limestone baptismal font is placed on the central axis and its round basin is pulled towards the western entrance (like a slipped fried egg) in a gesture of arrival emphasising the principal direction of the church.



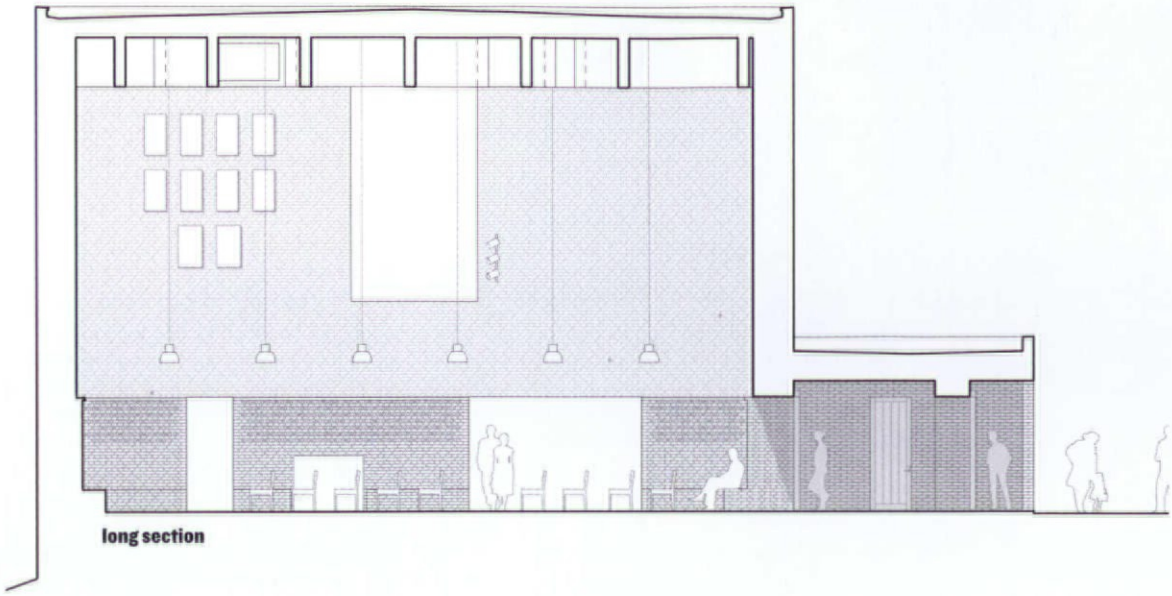
long section



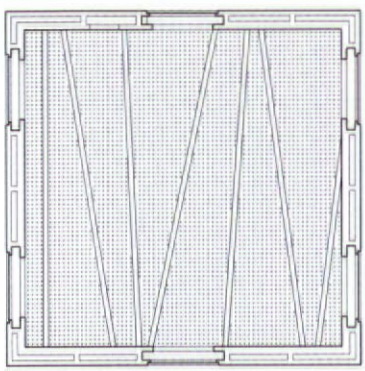
ground floor plan of church and community centre

Årsta Church, Stockholm, Sweden
Johan Celsing

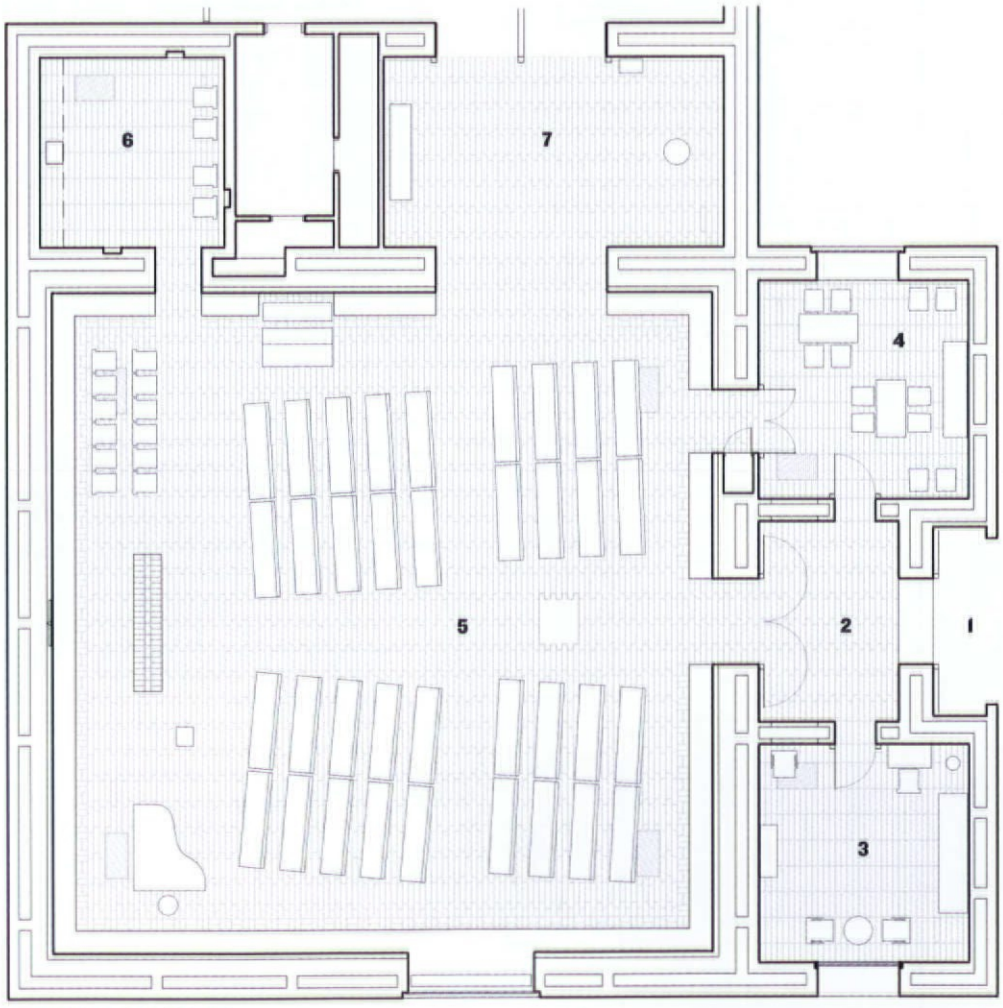
Årsta Church, Stockholm, Sweden
Johan Celsing



long section



reflected ceiling plan



ground floor plan of church

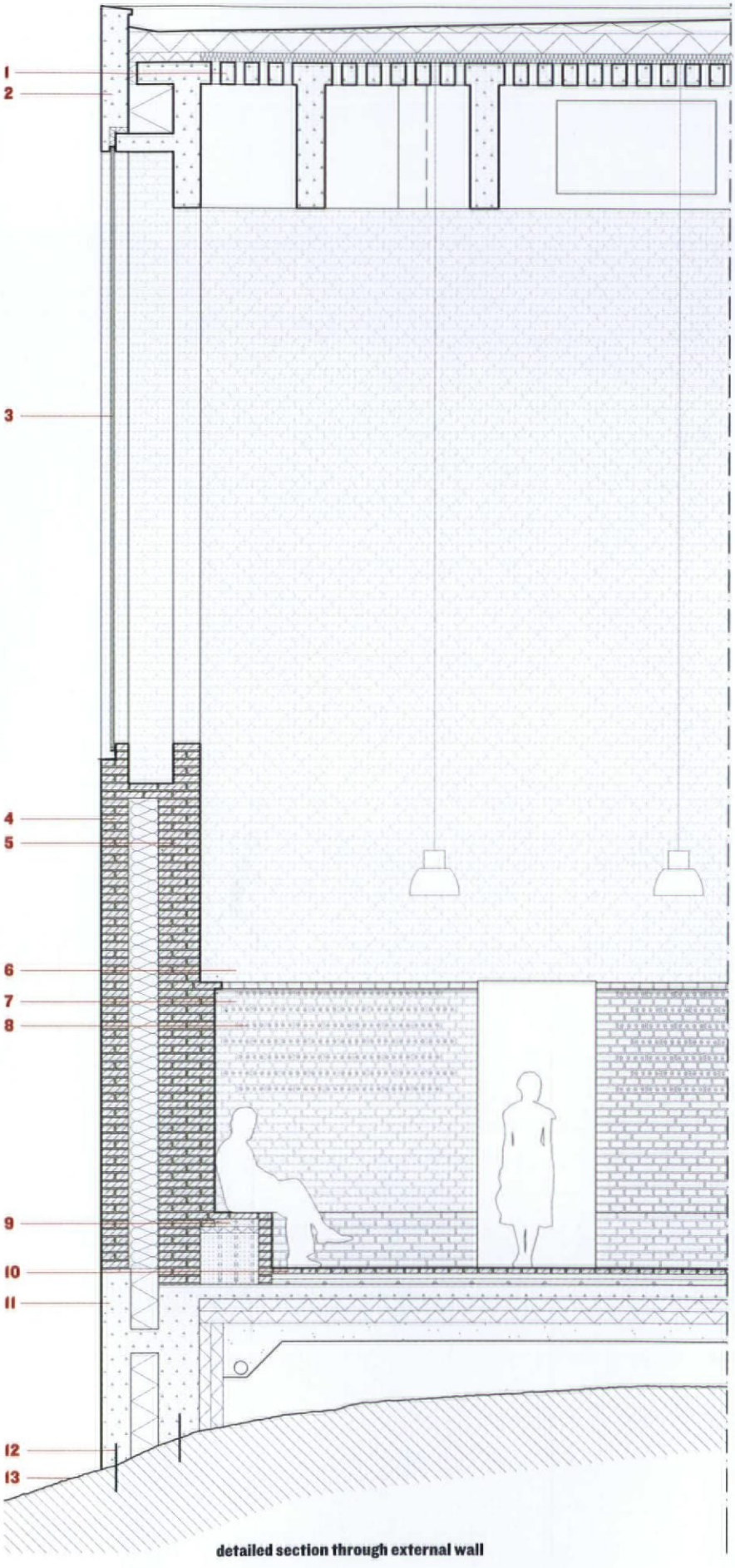
1 entrance
2 west hall
3 sacristy
4 children's chapel
5 main church
6 Chapel of Stillness
7 south hall
8 technical room

7. (Opposite) the calm luminous volume is anchored by a brick floor and capped by a roof of splayed concrete beams. The lower part of the wall is clad in glazed brick, giving the enclosure a woven quality, evoking Semper's notion of walls as fabric and the church as a mobile tabernacle

8

8. Light pours in from the high windows. Blond wood pews and pendulous light fittings (scavenged from the community centre) add quintessentially Scandinavian touches
9. The initial compression of the entrance porch gives way to the soaring volume beyond
10. Adjoining the main church is a small side chapel, the Chapel of Stillness, its raw brick walls washed with light

1 concrete slab with cylindrical perforations and acoustic absorption
2 concrete cast against horizontal timber boards
3 glazing
4 outer load-bearing brick wall 228mm
5 inner load-bearing brick wall 348mm
6 lime-washed brick surface
7 white glazed brick
8 perforated white glazed brick
9 bench of white glazed brick with heating
10 brick floor
11 concrete foundations
12 metal rod
13 bedrock



detailed section through external wall

Årsta Church, Stockholm, Sweden
Johan Celsing

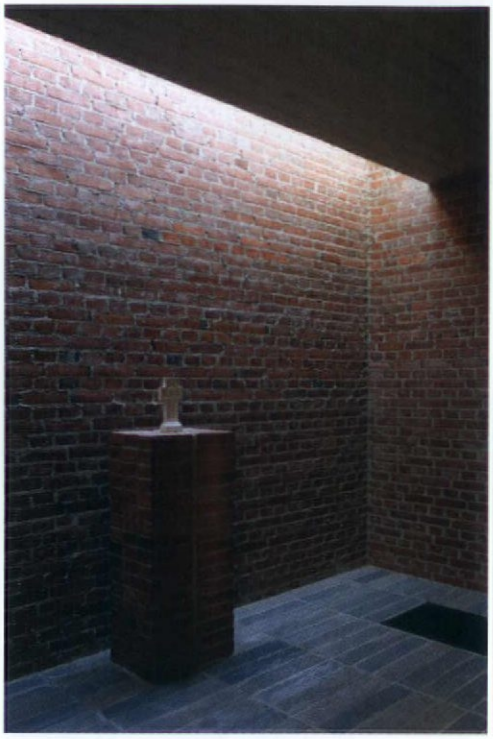
However, the stone font is also embedded into the floor, its base intricately woven into the brick in a complex tessellation. The starkly simple, almost clinical glazed brick altar is similarly bonded into the brick at its base. This means that when the church is being used for other activities than worship, the principal liturgical elements stay rooted in its physical fabric as reminders of the purpose of the building. Conversely, the seating is loose and almost ephemeral. Celsing says he conceived the space in the spirit of a standing Orthodox congregation and consequently the building's sheer verticality, and the almost anthropomorphic scale of the tall windows and the attenuated font, appear to lend themselves to a standing rather than a sitting position, as if sitting might be centrifugally pushed to the glazed brick benches.

After the rigorous cubic nature of the interior and a geometry defined by the critical humanising unit of the brick, the ceiling is a surprise. Deep cast concrete beams do not run orthogonally but are irregularly splayed. This introduces a discordant note, a hint that not everything may be as regular or as easy as the geometry below suggests. The depth of the beams also casts dark shadows on the perforated ceiling plane, creating a complex, mysterious crown from which hang delightfully simple white glazed light fittings, which the architect salvaged from the neighbouring community centre.

Celsing has clearly and deliberately eschewed making a big issue out of the junction between the existing and the new buildings. Both are enveloped in brick and there is a marginally more handmade quality to the construction of the new church. In making the church part of a larger community facility, the architect has been able to create a richer and more complex structure, which melds an existing and established pattern of use and familiarity with this more symbolic building. In this way, both the old and the new structures add meaning and depth to each other. That this is a building for a Lutheran congregation is never in doubt. Sparse, elegant and pared-down (without being reductive), it is nevertheless clearly a building for a specific place and a specific community. The church both enriches and is enriched by a Swedish tradition of an austere, ineffably elegant architecture of contemplation and a blending of the humane and the existentially harsh. It comes as no surprise to learn that Celsing is currently working on the Woodland Cemetery, where Asplund and Lewerentz created the tradition in which he is so eloquently operating.

'The church is enriched by a Swedish tradition of an austere architecture of contemplation and a blending of the humane and the existentially harsh'

10

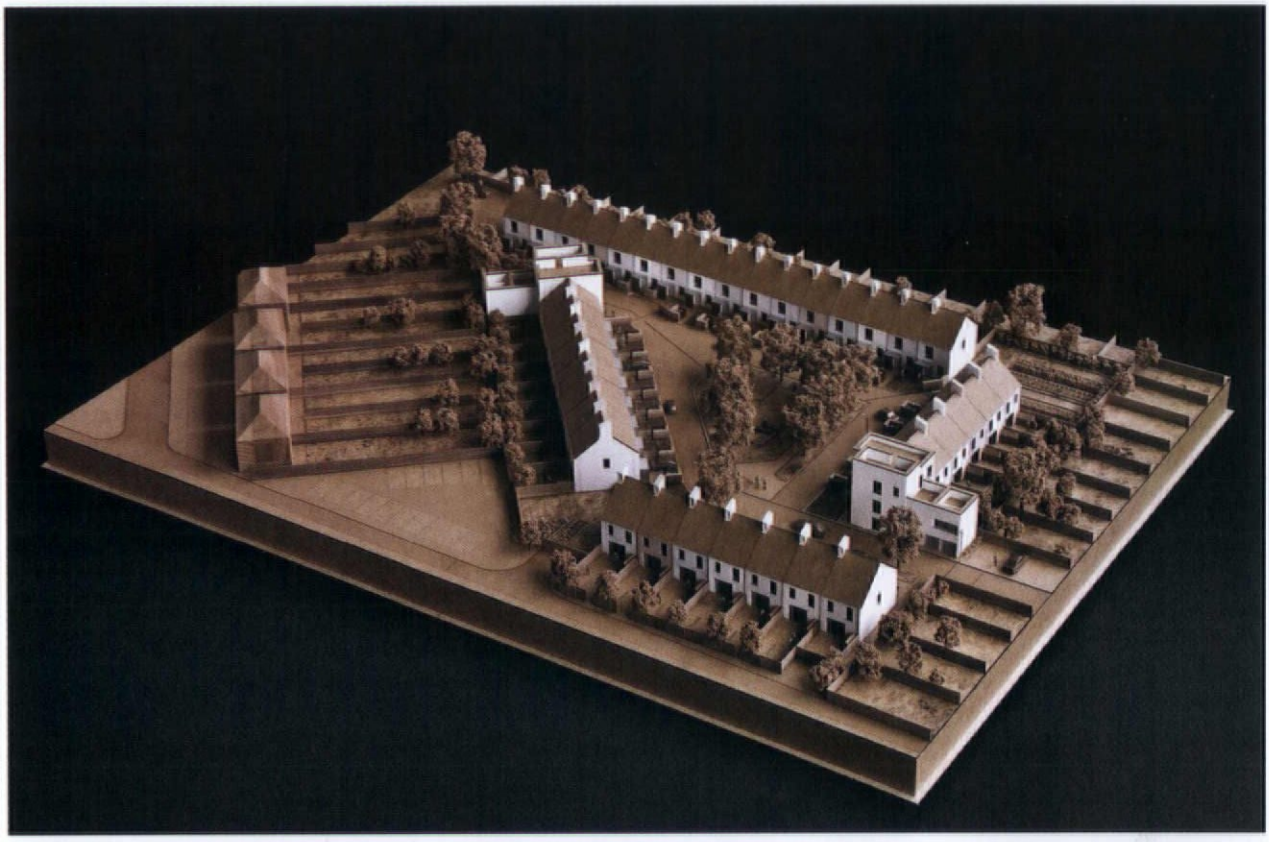


9

Architect
Johan Celsing
Structural engineer
Tyréns
Lighting
Bega
Photographs
Ioana Marinescu


29
30
W562 GFC

1. (Opposite) intended to challenge the meanness and mediocrity of volume housebuilding, the scheme is a subtle meditation on notions of what constitute the 'ordinary'. Low-rise terraced housing, an established and reassuring English residential type, encloses a central communal green
2. Model of the development. Long rear gardens, typical of the surroundings, were eschewed in favour of the triangular green, with its potential to create and sustain communal interaction



PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Conceived as an exemplary riposte to the dreariness and mediocrity of most volume housebuilding, this new residential scheme in Swindon actively engages with ideas about community, sustainability and place

The Triangle, Swindon, UK
Glenn Howells Architects

CRISPIN KELLY

The Triangle, Swindon, UK
Glenn Howells Architects

Here are some early reactions from tenants living at the Triangle in Swindon. Kevin McCloud is a 'top man; genuine,' says one resident. 'My toddler hated vegetables. But with the shared veg patch just round the back of the house, she has been eating fresh stuff all day long,' enthuses another. 'When the bullies followed [my child] here back from school, the neighbours rallied round; they knew what was going on, and chased them off the estate.' So the 36 new houses and six flats developed by the *Grand Designs* TV celebrity are producing these rather unusual stories. What has been going on in north Swindon?

The project is the result of a joint venture between McCloud's residential development company Hab and Westlea Housing Association, and is his first attempt to show what volume housebuilders could be supplying the average punter: Happiness, Architecture and Beauty. More mundanely, once the scheme was completed, the sales market proved moribund due to the recession, so all the units are now rented to housing list applicants, though the hope is some will buy in due course. For now, however, the Triangle is that peculiar misnomer: affordable housing.

Glenn Howells was the architect, with active editing from Hab's design director, Isabel Allen. The first strategic moves were to increase the density of an already consented scheme, to use terraces and to forego the long gardens common locally, and instead to create a central triangular green to be shared by all. At the points where the lines of the triangle meet are further shared areas: a vegetable patch, some poly tunnels and the possibility of a playground. Crucially, cars would not be allowed to overwhelm the place; occupiers are limited to one car parking space per household and cars parked in the spaces in front of homes are masked by gabion walls tall enough to screen them.

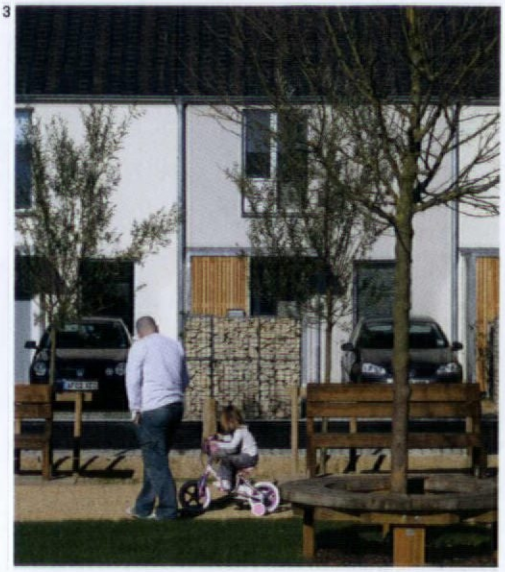
With sustainability a key focus, hempcrete has been used throughout the housing scheme. Externally, it looks like a rendered finish and gives a robust sense of enclosure and soundproofing to the internal spaces. It also chimes with the local rendered vernacular and enables a range of simple pastel tones to mark out different houses in the terrace, which would have been difficult with brick. Apparently, it has negative embodied carbon, since it continues to absorb carbon for a few years after construction. Each house is topped by a thermal chimney, part of a simple, passive ventilation system. When the houses get hot in the summer, a secure hatch at the back on the ground floor can be opened, encouraging a stack effect, with rising warm air expelled through a roof cowl. On the ground floor there is underfloor heating, with radiators upstairs. The system is powered by an air-source heat pump outside on the back wall. Green credentials are further enhanced by an estate intranet: a wall-mounted screen on the ground floor keeps residents informed about energy and water use, and lets them know when the next bus to Swindon is due.

'Hab and Westlea are engaging with the question: how do we provide decent homes that offer privacy, but also create a community?'

Walking around a house, there is a quiet feeling of generosity, which is a tremendous achievement in the face of the drab, reductive meanness characteristic of most volume housebuilding solutions: ceilings are generally 2.6m-high, and windows are wide and tall. Ground-floor plans feel spacious, with a through lounge. These are fundamental permanent benefits for which the team must have struggled, yet have delivered with success. The Triangle sits in a tradition of new affordable housing, which tries to do more. If the Georgians were concerned with buildings not collapsing and streets not disappearing into flames, and the Victorians were committed to reducing overcrowding and introducing basic hygiene, the architects of the last century started to attend to the space people needed for a decent life.

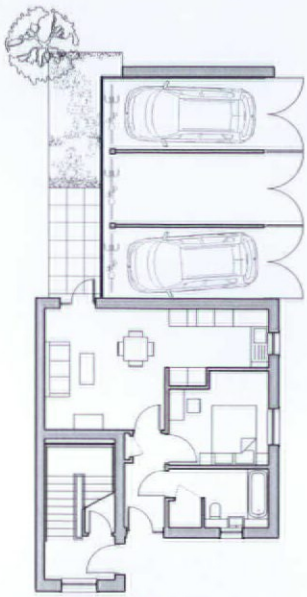
Hab and Westlea are furthering the debate in their engagement with the question: how do we provide decent homes that offer privacy, but also create a community? It has become a given that communities are best developed by offering neighbours something to share, usually a green space, and putting in place a way to manage it firmly. As its name suggests, the Triangle aims to do this. On talking to residents, I felt there was a general delight in the availability of the shared spaces. Perhaps it is inevitable that there was also a feeling that only a minority were going to participate in meetings between the residents

3



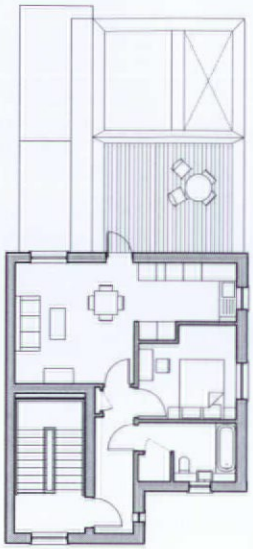
4

3. To keep the area around the communal green free, cars are limited to one per household, a proscription that may or may not be effective over time
4. Entrance porches double as cycle stores, while sturdy gabion walls define street edges and enclose bin stores
5. (Opposite) walls are made of hempcrete, mulched hemp which can be cast like concrete. Variations in the pastel tones of the lime render add visual nuance, picking up on the local vernacular



flats: ground floor plan

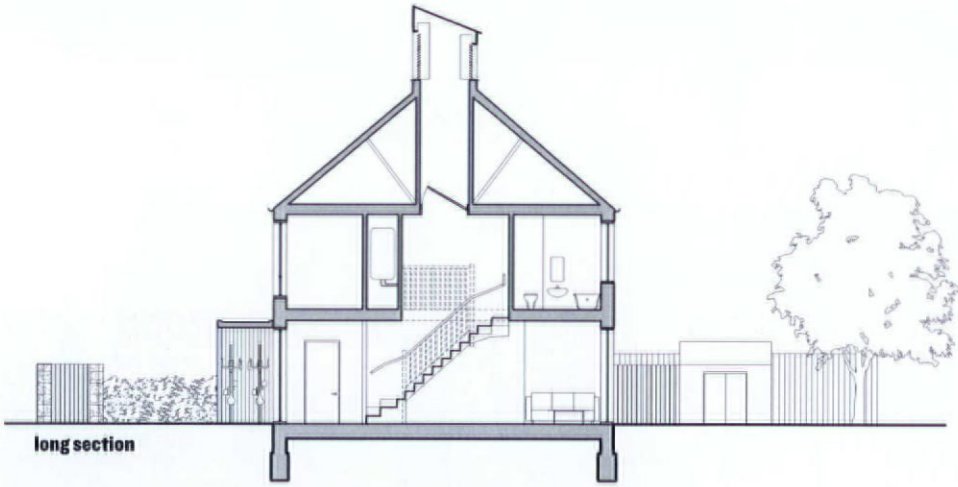
first floor plan



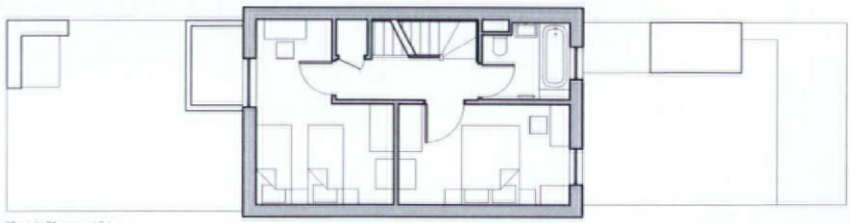
second floor plan

site plan

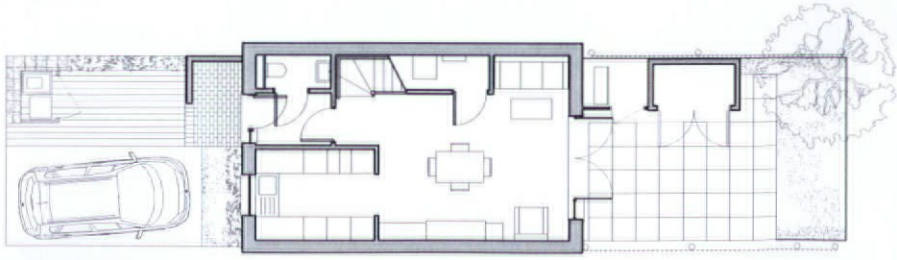
- One and two bed flats
- Two bed houses
- Three bed houses
- Four bed houses



long section



first floor plan



two bed house: ground floor plan

0 5m

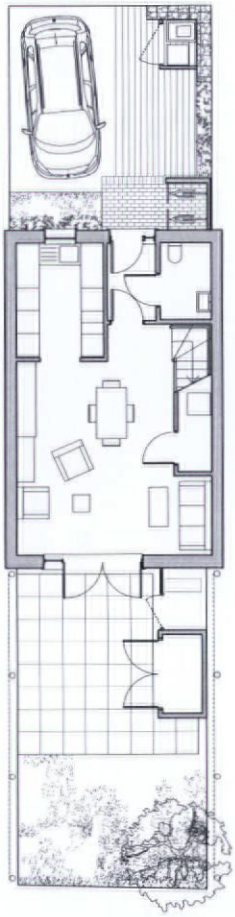
The Triangle, Swindon, UK
Glenn Howells Architects

6. Communal green at the heart of the development, with play areas and landscaping. Human-scaled terraced houses and a sense of enclosure emphasise the scheme's village-like ambience. Two blocks of flats gently interrupt the rhythm of the terraces

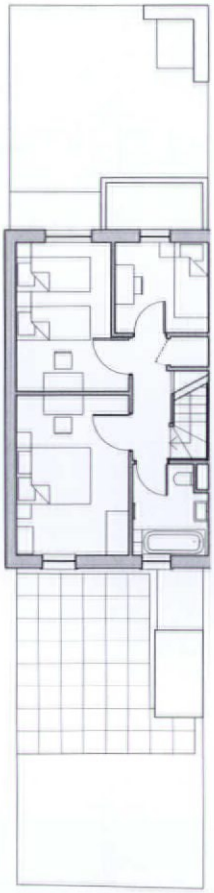
four bed house: ground floor plan

first floor plan

attic floor plan



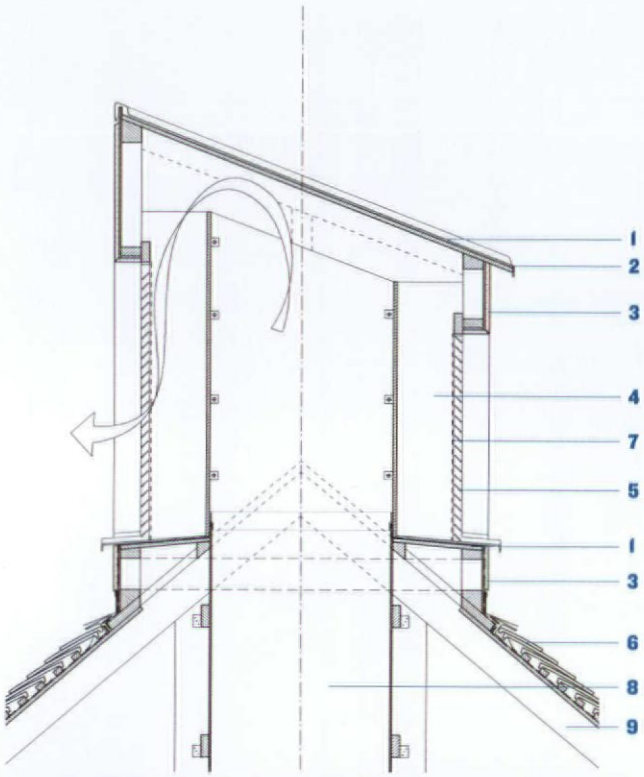
three bed house: ground floor plan

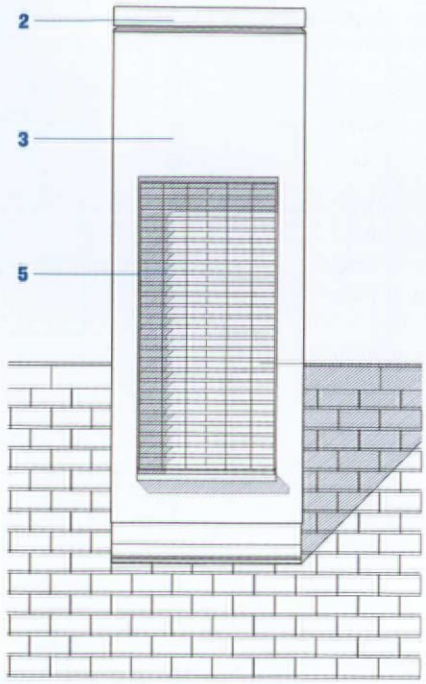


first floor plan

6

The Triangle, Swindon, UK
Glenn Howells Architects





detailed elevation and section through ventilation cowl

1 marine plywood on timber frame
2 lead roof dressing over breather membrane
3 lime render finish
4 marine plywood to form waterproof compartment
5 44 x 95mm aluminium profile grill
6 plain clay cambered tiles
7 insect mesh
8 ventilation shaft
9 timber roof structure

7

and gardening committees, and actually put in the time needed to do work for the benefit of all. Yet there is no doubt that a volume housebuilder solution would have made a poorer place, even if not everyone at the Triangle is going to be a community builder.

With developments such as Accordia and Poundbury, there are clear precedents for carefully crafted affordable housing (particularly houses rather than flats). These reflect concerted efforts to build decent ordinary houses and do their best to integrate them into a place which offers something more than a key to a door. Yet for Hab, the issue of community building is not enough. The website reveals an ambition for: 'beautiful homes that keep people cool in summer and warm in winter and generally happy and smiling all year round. Places with beautiful outdoor spaces with communal gardens and edible landscapes and butterflies and badgers and birds.' You are also guided towards a weblink for the 'Movement for Happiness', which aims to replace individualism and consumerism with community spirit and contentment.

For the Triangle, landscape architect Luke Engleback has produced *Grow 2 Eat*, a guide and cookbook for residents. You can eat the rhubarb planted near the guest parking, munch your way through the crops from the fruit trees, graze on nuts and berries, and improve your intake of greens with salad leaves. McCloud enthusiastically describes the 'intensely edible' environment with its fundamental biodiversity. Connecting housing development with food production, a general appreciation of healthy eating and an enjoyment of the daily ritual of eating is an appealing notion, although residents will need to wait until next spring and summer before the landscape is properly edible.

There are some minor caveats. On talking with residents, it is clear that some find it hard to operate the green systems effectively. And the intranet is not really up and running yet. The one car per household regime is also still a work in progress; only time will tell whether the community can keep the area around the triangle free from fly parking. And the gabions are rather strident as car concealers; the black top appears about to strangle the precious green.

But overall, this is a fine and carefully considered scheme: lots of people have thought deeply about doing housing better, and succeeded, even if there are little flickers of eccentricity, which may wither in due course. Especially admirable is the apparent confidence to do something which does not look too extraordinary, to provide a framework for people to get on with their lives without bossing them about, and to make it that bit easier for them to say 'hello' to their neighbours. Surely it is right, as Architecture Research Unit director Florian Beigel has suggested, for architects and developers to provide the rug on which the picnic is to be enjoyed.

This development has been enriched by Westlea's expertise in looking after their tenants, offering the possibility of nurturing a community, so distant from the ambitions of volume housebuilders. Hab's next schemes, in Stroud and Oxford, should build on the achievements here. The notion that beautiful places can make people happy (a sentiment shared by Alain de Botton with his Living Architecture scheme) will continue to provoke debate. My personal taste is for something more modest: it should be our responsibility to show what good architecture can offer ordinary housebuyers. Enhancing the housebuyer's sensitivity will be as much about education (about food as well as places) as supplying a better product.

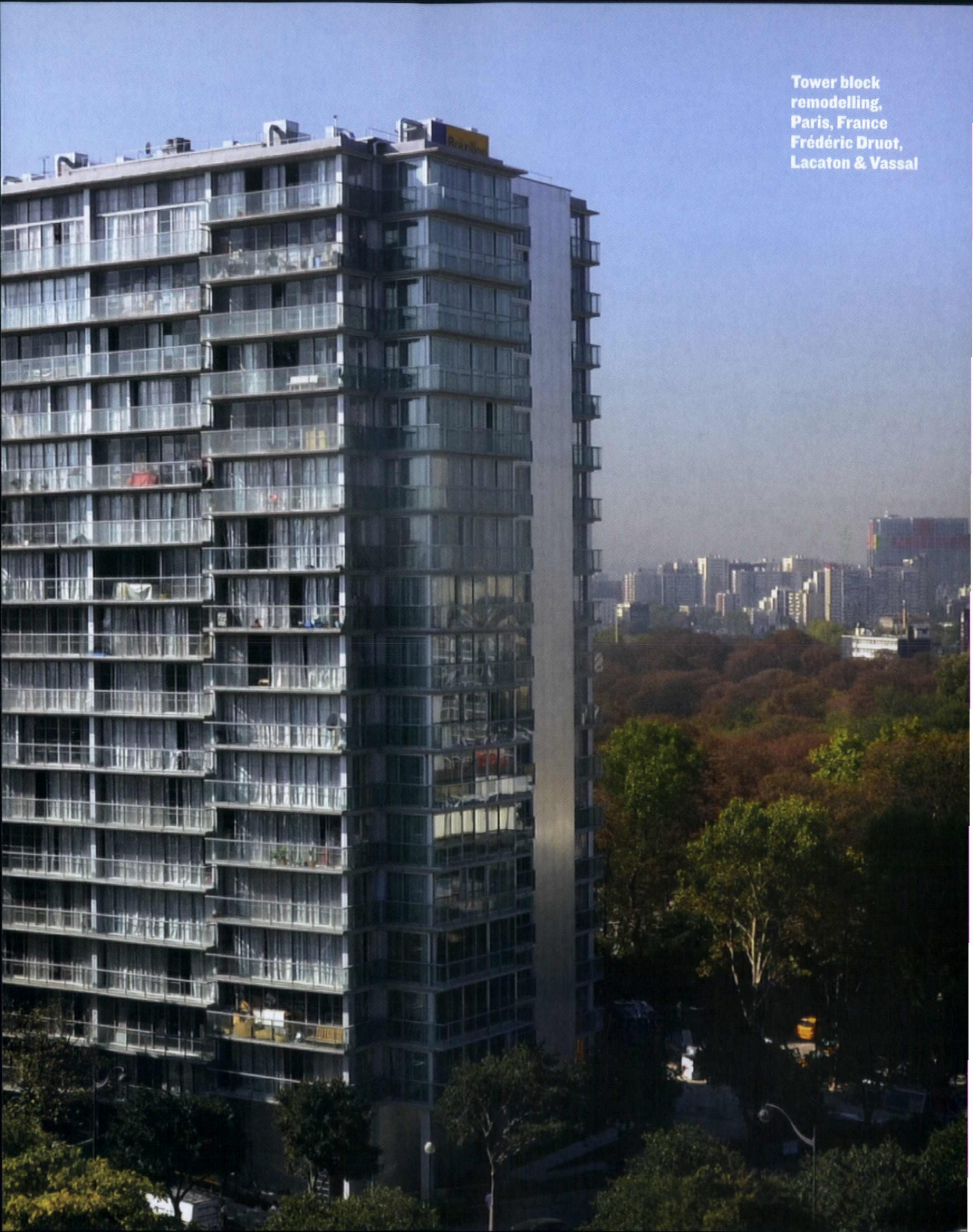
The Triangle represents a challenge to the volume housebuilder: house, community and environment. Like Jamie Oliver, McCloud and Allen are offering healthier ingredients, and their brand should flourish, as brand-building can focus on doing a good job rather than attracting our attention (which McCloud's celebrity status ensures). A test which has not yet been met is the crucible of the market. Berkeley Homes and the Candy Brothers have successfully negotiated the vicissitudes of making money and building brands, and Hab still has to do that before the housebuilders will get too worried. The next goal, after the success of the Triangle, is to show that ambitions including anti-consumerism can be squared with the realities of landbuying, building contracts and the sales office. And to check out whether that landscape is edible.

7. Part of the play area on the green, framed by the terraces
8. Typical dining and kitchen space with beaming occupants. At present, all units are rented to local housing list applicants, but the hope is that some may eventually buy their own homes. With 2.6m-high ceilings, room proportions are more generous than the norm
9. Children frolicking enthusiastically in the communal growing areas, where fruit and vegetables can be cultivated

Architect
Glen Howells Architects
Structural engineer
Curtins Consulting
Services engineer
Max Fordham
Landscape consultant
Studio Engleback
Photographs
Paul Raftery except 9. by Paul Miller

RISING HIGHER

The striking transformation of a run-down tower block in northern Paris suggests an alternative approach to the physical and social revitalisation of decaying post-war housing



Tower block remodelling, Paris, France
Frédéric Druot, Lacaton & Vassal

CRITICISM

ANDREW AYERS

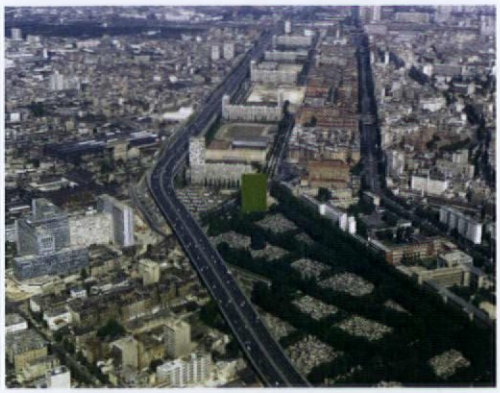
While the fall of Pruitt-Igoe in 1972 may not, with hindsight, have heralded the death of Modernism, it certainly marked a turning point in the fortunes of technocratic, high-density, high-rise social-housing schemes. In the wake of Pruitt-Igoe's destruction, many countries began to look for alternatives, and the destiny of numerous Modernist estates would follow the Pruitt-Igoe pattern. Lately, however, the appositeness of such seemingly wanton destruction has been called into question in light of the environmental impact and implicit waste of resources that demolition/reconstruction represents. In this context, refurbishment is increasingly being proposed as potentially the better option when the original structures are sound. A much-publicised British example was the recent revamp of the Park Hill estate in Sheffield (AR October 2011).

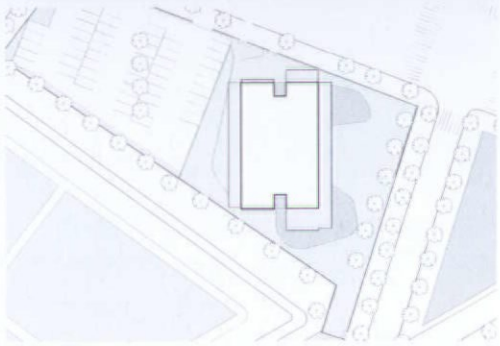
In France, a country that built a huge quantity of Modernist *grands ensembles* during the 30 years after the Second World War, the question of what to do with ageing slabs and towers is a growing preoccupation. Over the past two decades, demolition has often been the preferred option, on ideological and economic grounds. On the one hand, the image of high-rise estates was held to be irredeemably tarnished, whereas on the other it was thought that demolition/reconstruction was the cheaper and easier option, given that 1960s norms of energy consumption and thermal performance were so far behind today's standards.

In recent years, rehabilitation has generally been considered only where gentrification or the legal obligation to preserve the historic fabric were concerned. With the refurbishment of this Parisian tower block, architects Frédéric Druot and Lacaton & Vassal set out to prove that not only could the building's image and accommodation be successfully upgraded, but that renovation could largely satisfy all current requirements – including energy performance – for considerably less investment than demolition/reconstruction.

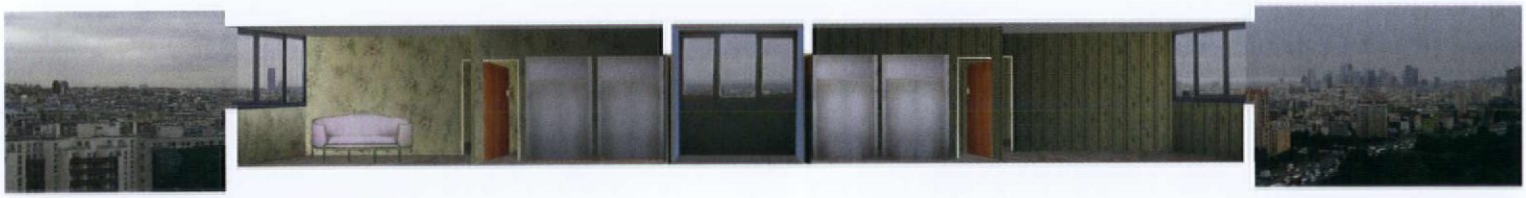
Built during 1959–61 as part of the Porte Pouchet estate in the 17th arrondissement, the 17-storey Tour Bois-le-Prêtre stands on the city boundary, next to the eight-lane motorway that is the Boulevard Périphérique (a ring road post-dating the tower). Its initial architect was Raymond Lopez, who, with Eugène Beaudouin, had erected an almost identical tower in Berlin's Hansaviertel (constructed as part of the 1957 Interbau and still in its original state). System-built, the Tour Bois-le-Prêtre provided 96 apartments of three types: 32 six-room flats, 28 three-room flats and 36 two-room flats. In the early 1990s, the original chequerboard facade was replaced to improve insulation and to restyle the tower along more modern lines. With hindsight, the 1950s facade appears the more elegant, and the revamp did nothing to improve the tower's reputation: residents called it Alcatraz, and many chose to leave.

2

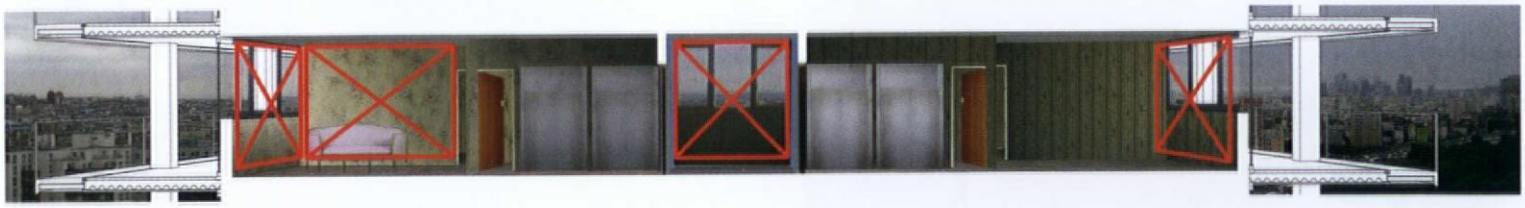




site plan



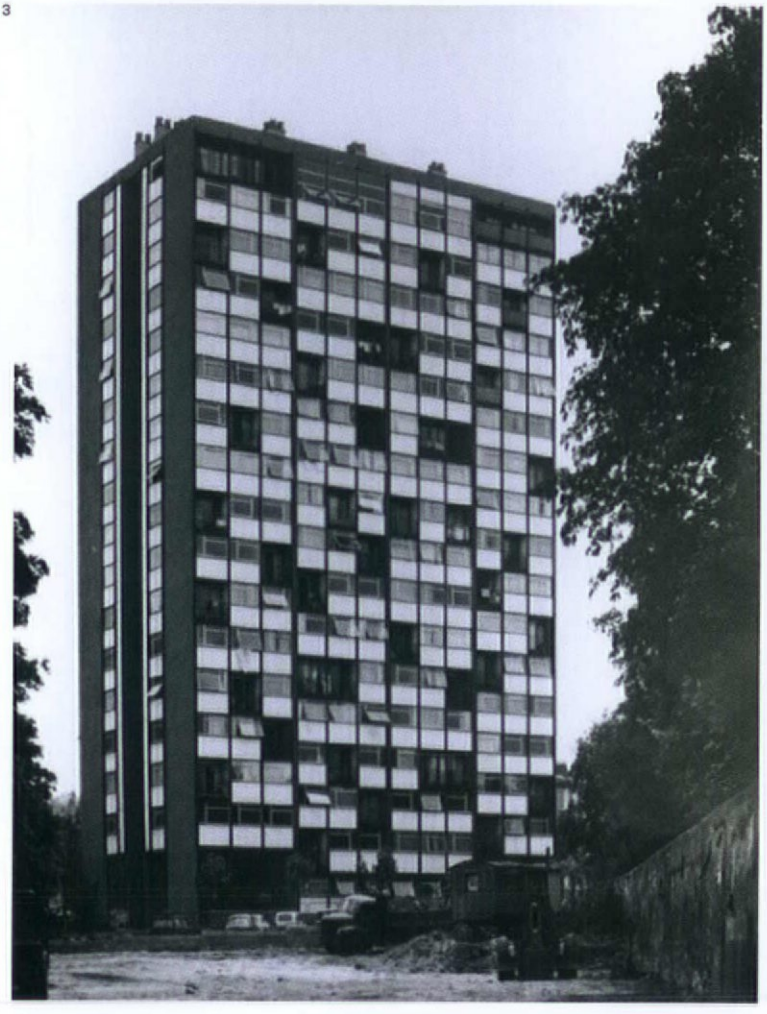
schematic section illustrating original condition



addition of new elements and demolition of partition walls

schematic section illustrating remodelled condition

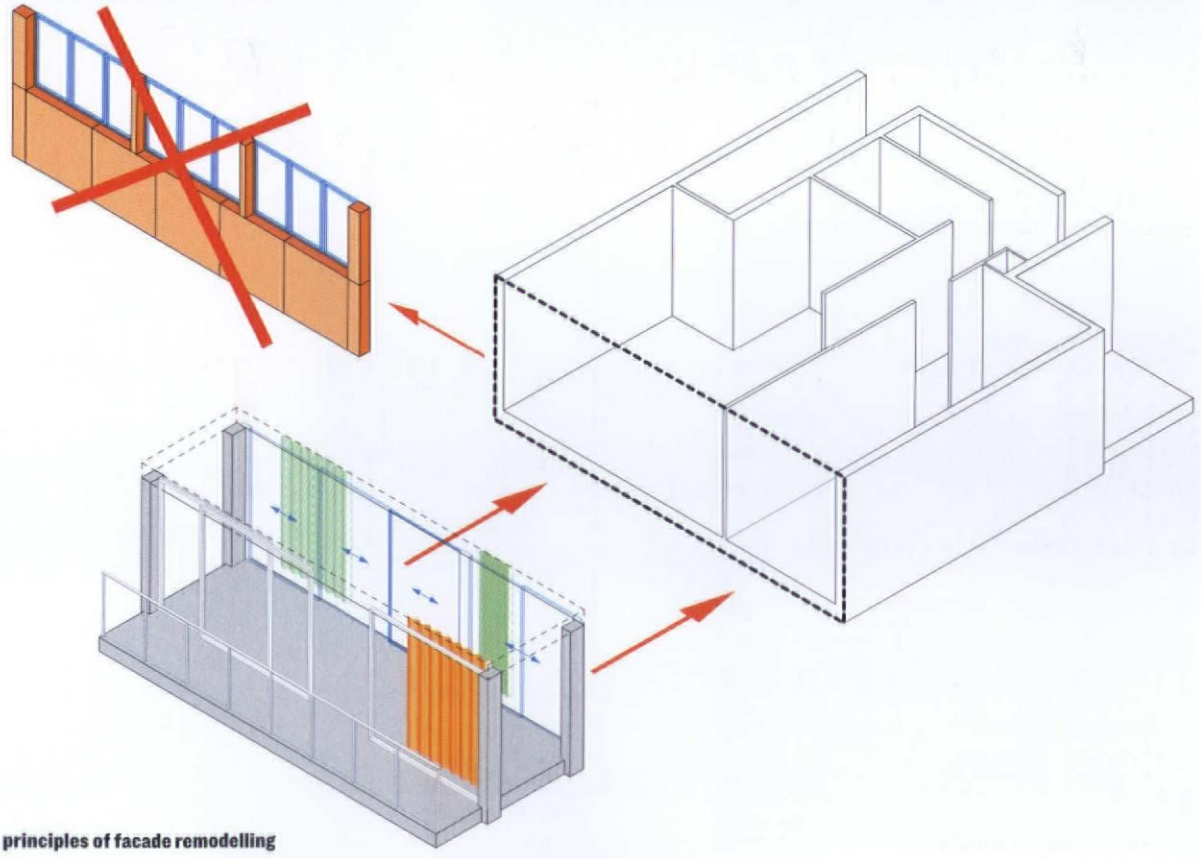
3



1. (Previous page) the remodelled tower now embodies a sleekness associated with upmarket Modernist blocks in the wealthier parts of Paris
2. Aerial view of the Tour Bois-le-Prêtre and its surroundings on the north-west edge of central Paris, next to the Boulevard Périphérique
3. The system-built Tour Bois-le-Prêtre dates from 1961. Designed by Raymond Lopez and Eugène Beaudouin, the tower was constructed as part of the Porte Pouchet estate in the 17th arrondissement
4. The block was reclad and restyled in the early 1990s, with its original chequerboard facade replaced by coloured panels to improve thermal performance. However, this plastic PoMo treatment did little to improve the building's declining reputation

4

Tower block remodelling, Paris, France
Frédéric Druot, Lacaton & Vassal



principles of facade remodelling

5

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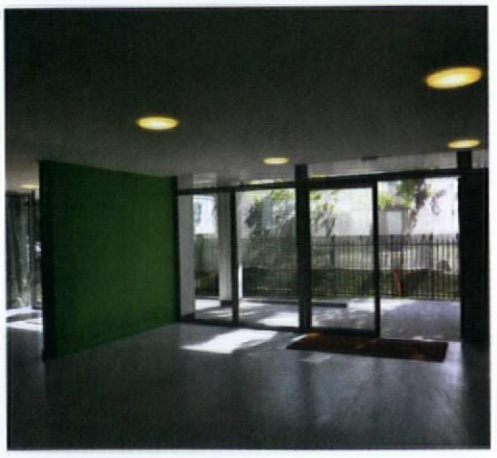
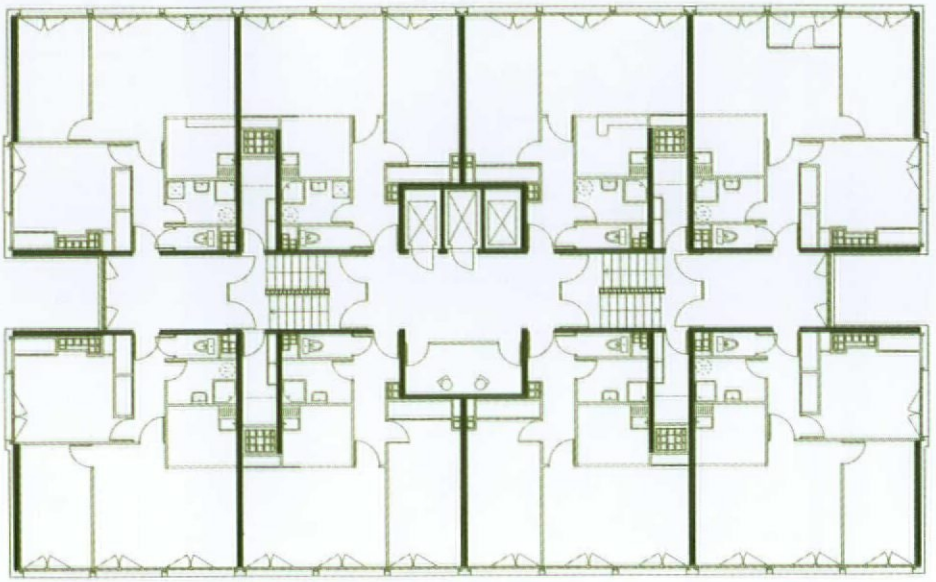
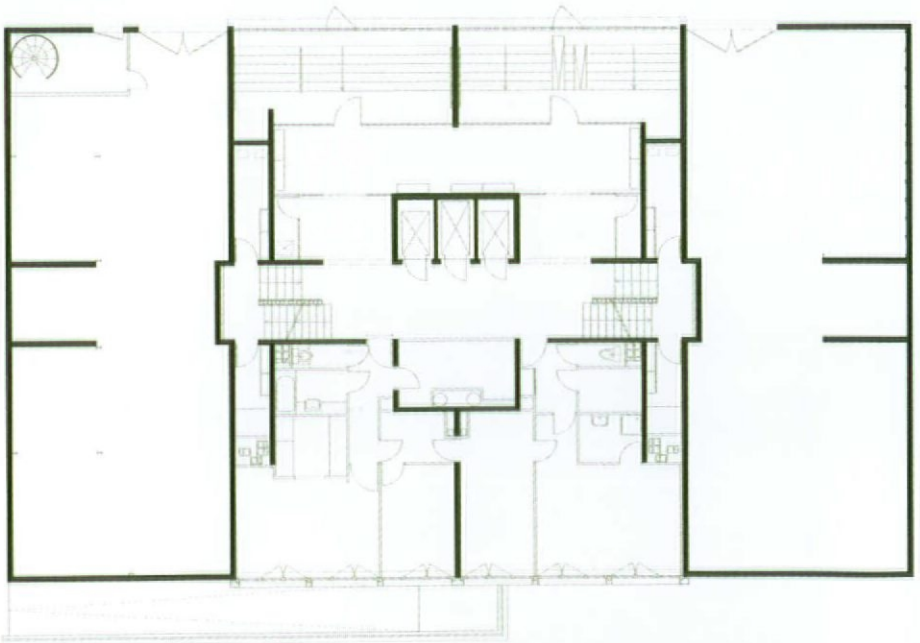




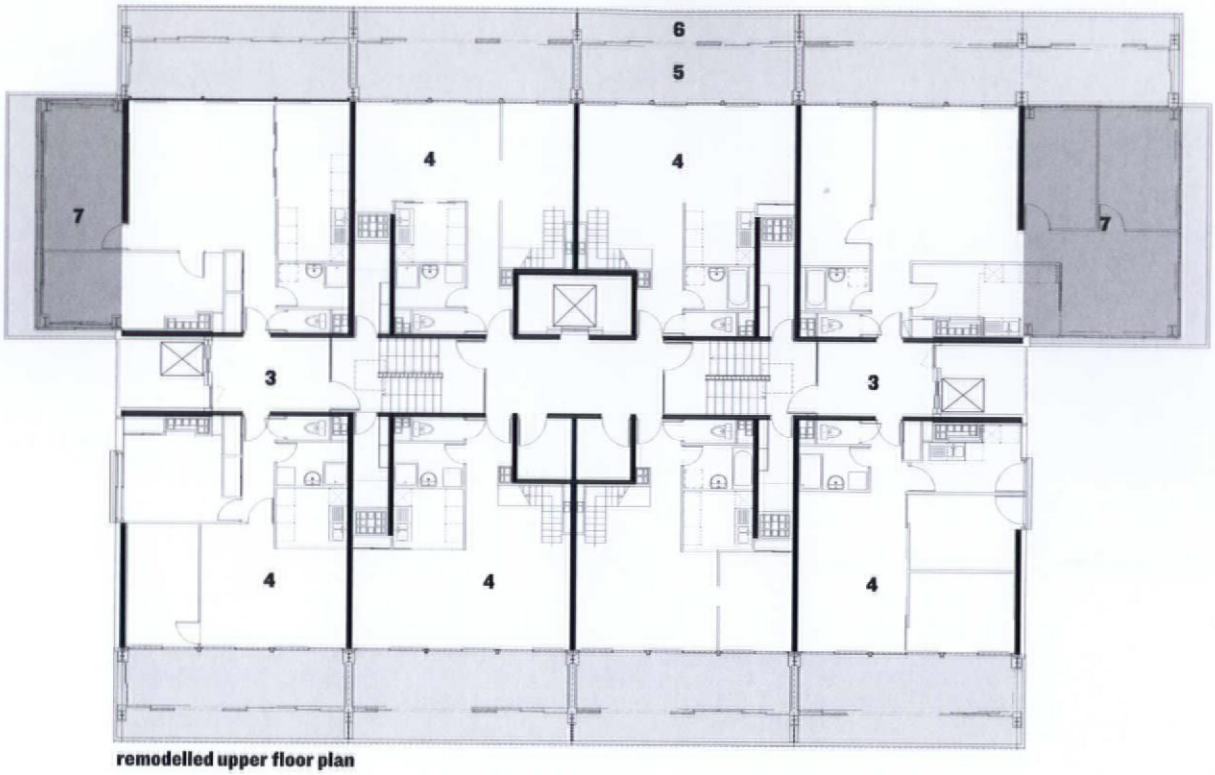
original upper floor plan

5. The original entrance, glum and fortified, despite the 'upbeat' colour scheme
6. The new entrance provides a more inviting approach to the block
7. Awkward steps at the original entrance lobby
8. The new lobby is now more easily accessible on a single level that meets the street

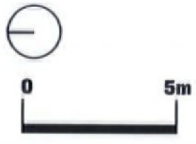


original ground floor plan

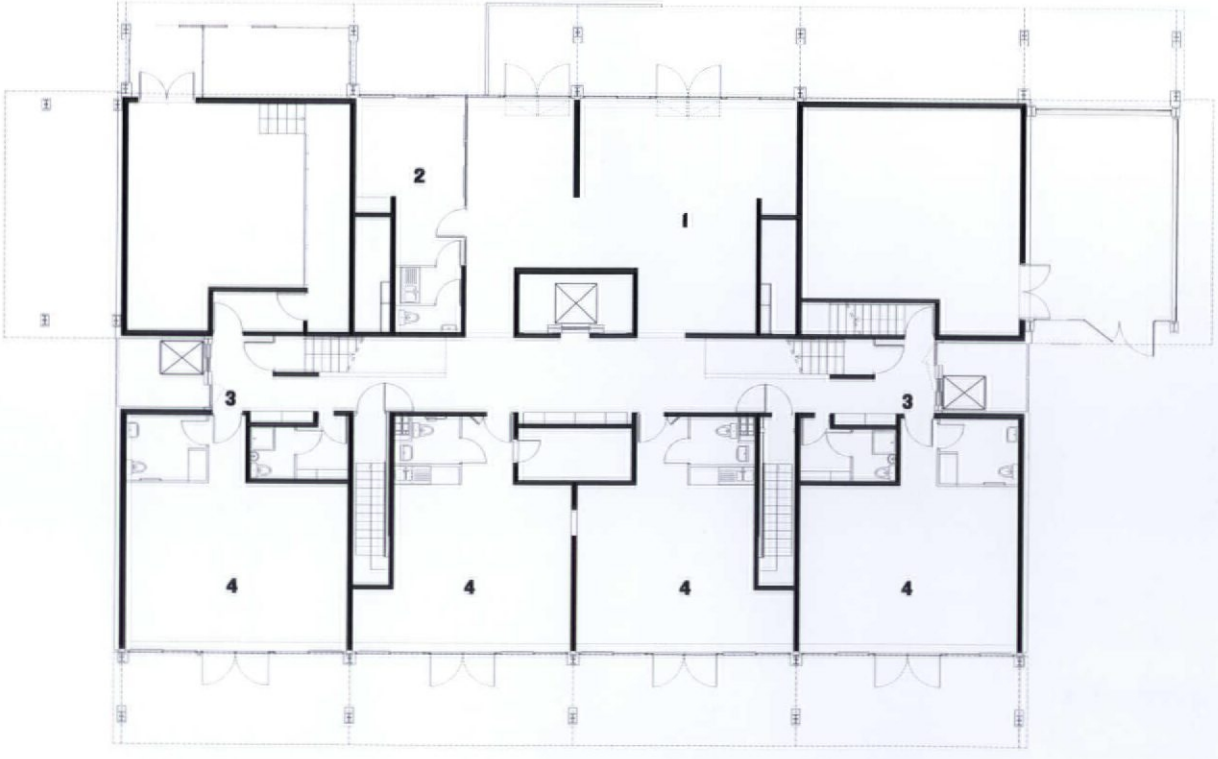
Tower block remodelling, Paris, France
Frédéric Druot, Lacaton & Vassal



remodelled upper floor plan

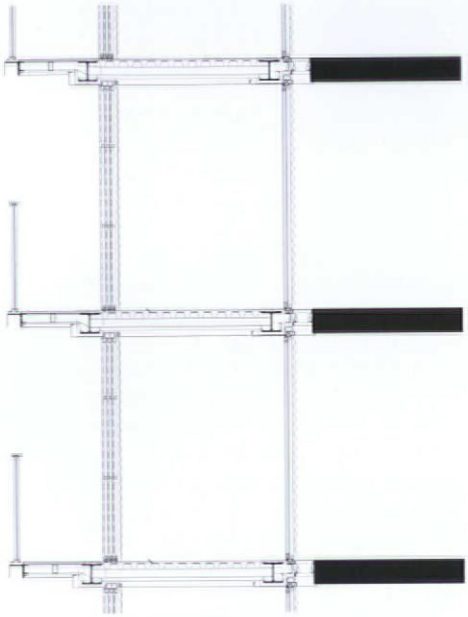


1 entrance lobby
2 concierge
3 new lift lobby
4 apartment
5 new winter garden zone
6 new balcony zone
7 extended apartments

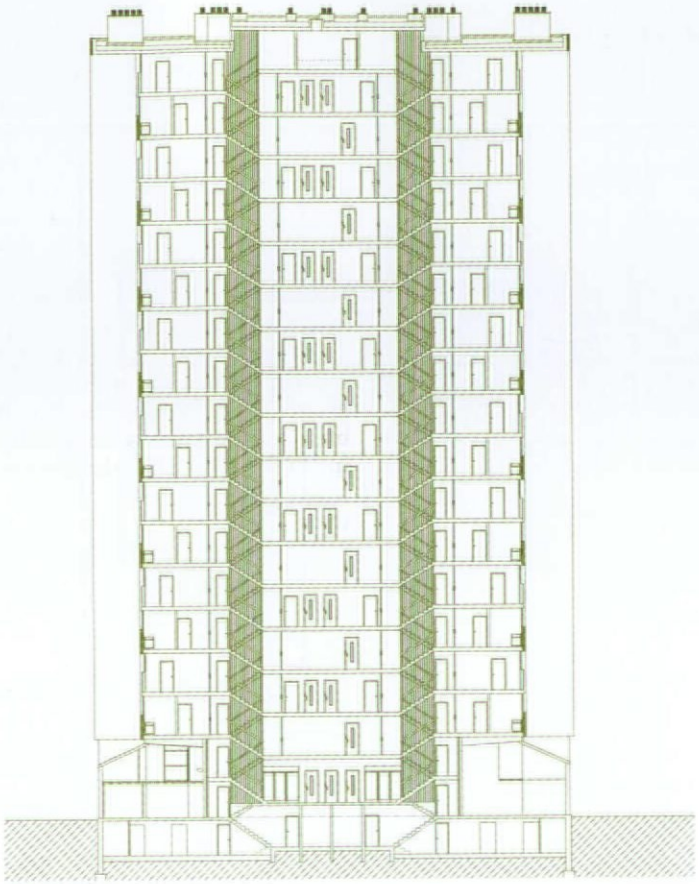


remodelled ground floor plan

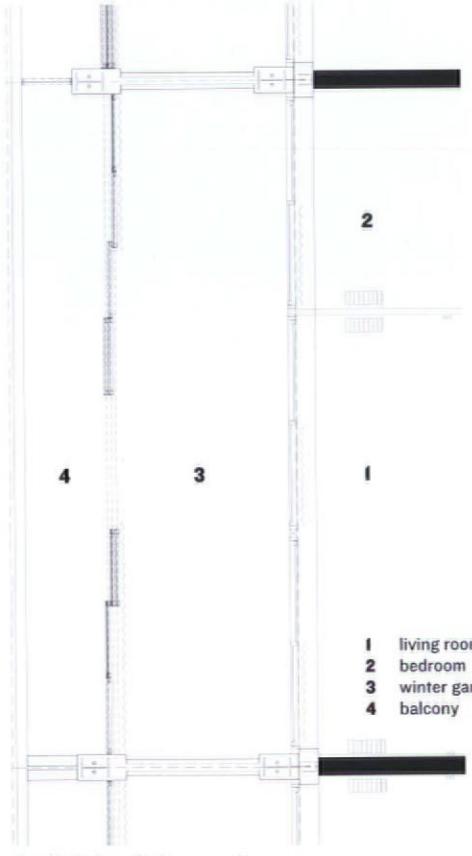
Tower block remodelling, Paris, France
Frédéric Druot, Lacaton & Vassal



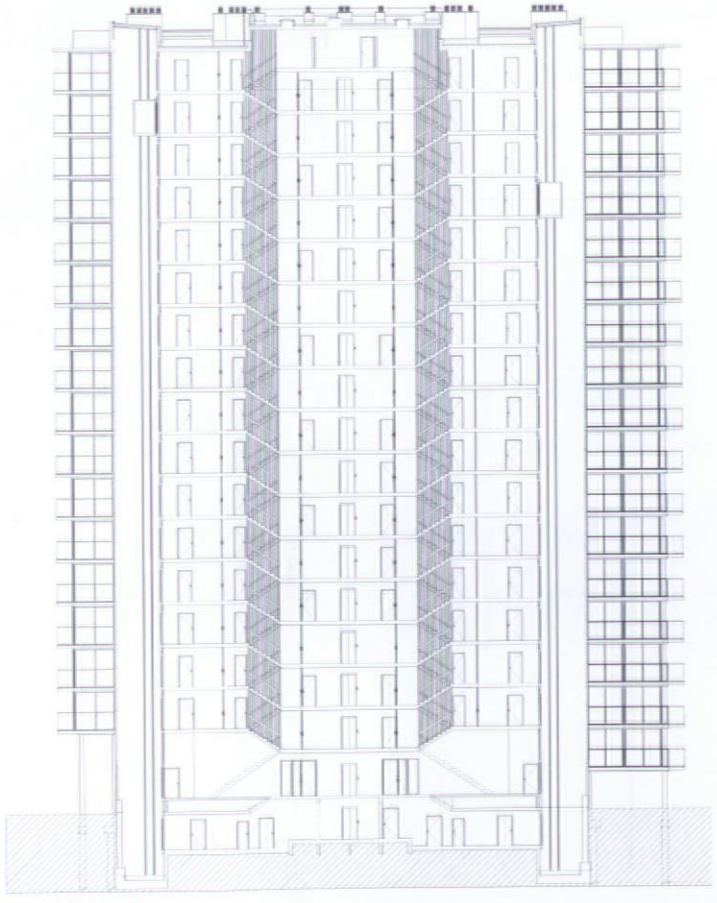
detailed section through winter garden



original section



detailed plan of winter garden



remodelled section

9

A little over a decade later, the tower's owner, Paris Habitat-OPH (a public-sector social-housing institution), was seriously considering demolition, but eventually opted to try out full refurbishment on an experimental basis. For one thing, most residents said they did not want to see the tower destroyed: its dwellings more or less met their needs and they appreciated the sweeping views, light, air and surrounding greenery it provided. Moreover, the structure was sound. In 2005, five architects (including Dominique Perrault) were invited to submit proposals. For the winning team, this was a chance to put into practice ideas they had been developing for several years, codified in a 2004 report to the Ministry of Culture.

Where the original fabric was concerned, the architects' intervention was relatively minimal. As well as upgrading all the kitchens, bathrooms and wiring, they tinkered with apartment configurations to provide more diverse layouts. One of the principal tenets in their report was that, to be viable, the concept of sustainable development must include a certain generosity, that pleasure and spiritual wellbeing should be part of the equation. Increasing space within categories of apartments was one proposal in this direction, and was partly motivated by the fact that recent French social-sector dwellings are considerably smaller than those built in the past.

The architects proposed ways of providing more space for the same construction cost, with the proviso that rents no longer be indexed to square footage but instead to construction cost per dwelling. At the Tour Bois-le-Prêtre, extra space was partly achieved through the reclassification of some apartments: for example, a number of small two-bedroom flats were 'downgraded' to large one-room studios through the demolition of internal partitions. Others were enlarged through the appropriation of corridor space. In the revamped tower there are now seven different apartment types, ranging from one to seven rooms, and the total number of dwellings has risen to 100 flats.

This increase was made possible by the architects' major intervention, extending the tower on all four sides through the addition of self-supporting steel structures. On the short sides of the tower, these include extra rooms (two per floor) and new glass lifts that, as well as offering panoramic views, allowed for the removal of one of the old internal elevators to add space to the apartments. On all the other facades, the 3m-wide extensions consist of closed, but unheated winter gardens (2m) with external balconies (1m). There is no loss of daylight inside the apartments because the original exterior walls, with their mean fenestration, have been entirely replaced by glass, in the form of floor-to-ceiling sliding doors. If anything, much more daylight filters inside than before.

The winter gardens serve several purposes. In cold weather, they provide highly effective insulation, so much so that the architects expect heating bills to be cut by 50 per cent (noise from the Périphérique is also reduced).

10

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9. A typical dingy apartment interior before the refurbishment
10. New winter gardens and balconies open up the flats to light and views
11. The original poky fenestration is replaced by floor-to-ceiling glazing. Winter gardens can be colonised as tenants choose and the 2m wide space also forms an environmental and acoustic buffer zone

12

In the summer, in tandem with their balconies, they provide shade from the sun, thereby keeping the apartments cooler than before (all the flats have been provided with sun drapes in the winter gardens, coupled with reflective silver linings on the curtains).

But perhaps, most importantly, the winter gardens enhance the pleasure of living in these apartments, offering an unprogrammed space that, temperature-permitting, can be used for all sorts of activities, as well as diversifying circulation routes through the flats. Residents who could only dream of having a garden now enjoy an 'outside' space of between 15m² and 60m² (depending on apartment size), while the new, all-glass facades allow for a full appreciation of the spectacular views across Paris. Former tenants are now begging to come back, and the project recently won the 2011 Équerre d'Argent, France's most prestigious architecture prize for an individual building.

Moreover, it is not just the Tour Bois-le-Prêtre's inhabitants who gain, but the city as a whole. A tower of this size has an enormous visual impact. Rendered distinctly unprepossessing by the 1990 refit, it is now completely transfigured, the plastic PoMo blush transformed into silver-sleek urbanity. The new palette echoes the slate and zinc of Parisian rooftops, which merge with the sky on overcast days. But while from afar the tower may now resemble the upmarket Modernist apartments that dominate Paris's wealthy western districts, a closer look belies this similarity. Lacaton & Vassal is known for its *arte povera* aesthetic, and it is deployed to full effect here: raw-concrete floor finishes, galvanised steel railings, lacquered aluminium panels, corrugated polycarbonate glazing, space-age sun-filter stripes, silver foil curtain linings – hard-nosed, pared-down, streetwise.

'Lacaton & Vassal is known for its *arte povera* aesthetic, and it is deployed to full effect here – hard-nosed, pared-down, streetwise'

So what was the cost of this magical metamorphosis? The overall budget, net of tax, came in at €11.2 million (£9.5 million), or €112,000 (£95,000) per dwelling. Paris Habitat estimates demolition/reconstruction would have cost at least €20 million (£17 million). And there are many other savings besides this €8.8 million (£7.5 million) difference. Demolition would have meant rehousing everyone while reconstruction was undertaken, at enormous expense; as it was, residents remained in situ while the work was carried out, apart from brief stays in temporary accommodation. A community was saved – some residents had lived in the tower since the 1960s – and if anything was strengthened by the renovation. Demolition is sometimes a way for landlords to get rid of tenants, since new accommodation is often more expensive, so Paris Habitat's decision to avoid this route is all the more commendable. That said, rents at the Tour Bois-le-Prêtre are programmed to rise over the next few years to reflect the improved nature of the apartments, but the increase should be offset by the drop in energy bills, if the building performs as it should.

Then, of course, there is the economy of resources, not only in the context of sustainable development and the carbon footprint, but also in terms of the current social-housing shortage in France. As Anne Lacaton points out, the reality of the situation is that demolition/reconstruction usually means more is destroyed than built, while new build is too expensive to allow for adequate development: 'Transforming an existing property... represents the only opportunity to go much further in the design of new ways of living.' Hence the architects' dictum: 'It's a question of never demolishing, never removing or replacing, but always adding, transforming and using.'

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Tower block remodelling, Paris, France Frédéric Druot, Lacaton & Vassal

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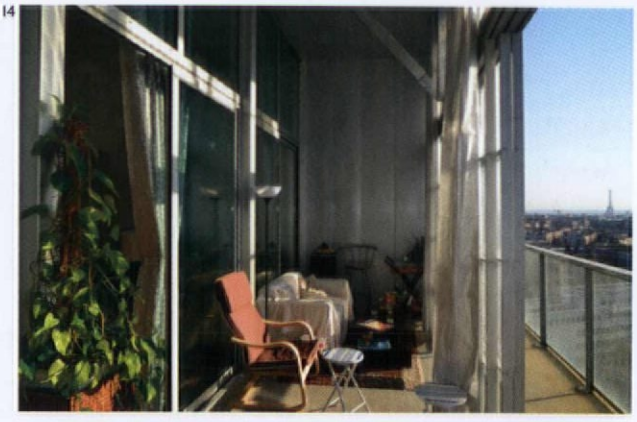

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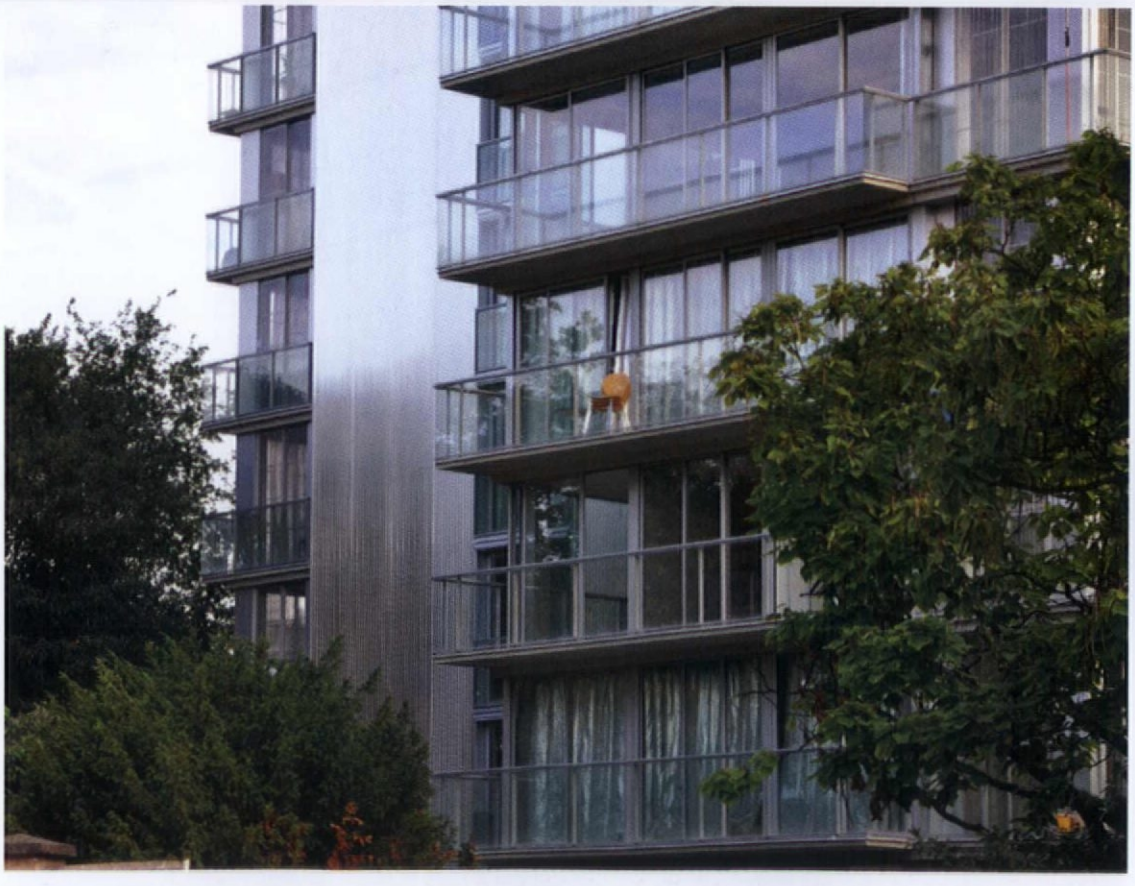


12. The 17-storey tower now enhances the city skyline
13. Balconies offer vertiginous vistas over Paris with the towers of La Défense in the distance
14. One of the new winter gardens. Sliding doors open up to extend the apartments
15. The building's quasi-industrial palette of metal, glass and ribbed polycarbonate echoes the muted slate and zinc of Parisian rooftops

Architects
Frédéric Druot Architecture
Associate architect
Lacaton & Vassal
Structural engineer
VP Green
Services engineer
INEX
Photographs
Frédéric Druot Architecture


LANNY AND SHARON MARTIN GALLERIES

1. (Opposite) the sober, elemental materiality of the museum exterior is continued into the internal spaces. Perforated ceilings diffuse Denver's clear mountain light into the galleries
2. The rough texture of the concrete walls evokes Clyfford Still's energetic, impassioned brushstrokes

2

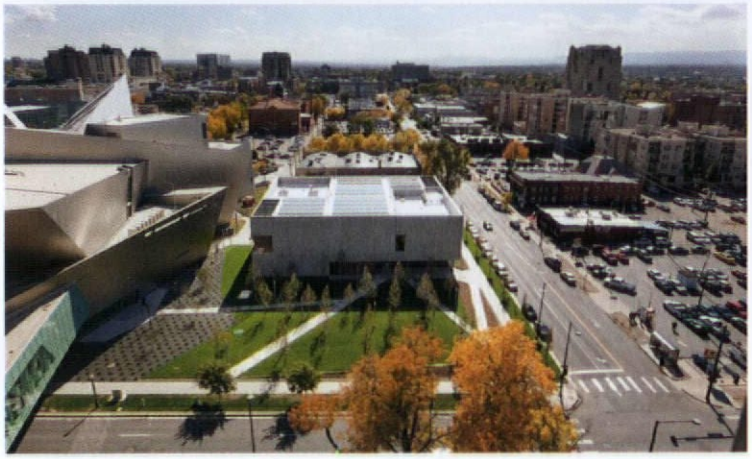
A major new art museum dedicated to the life and work of Clyfford Still draws on the expressive energy and elementality of the painter's oeuvre

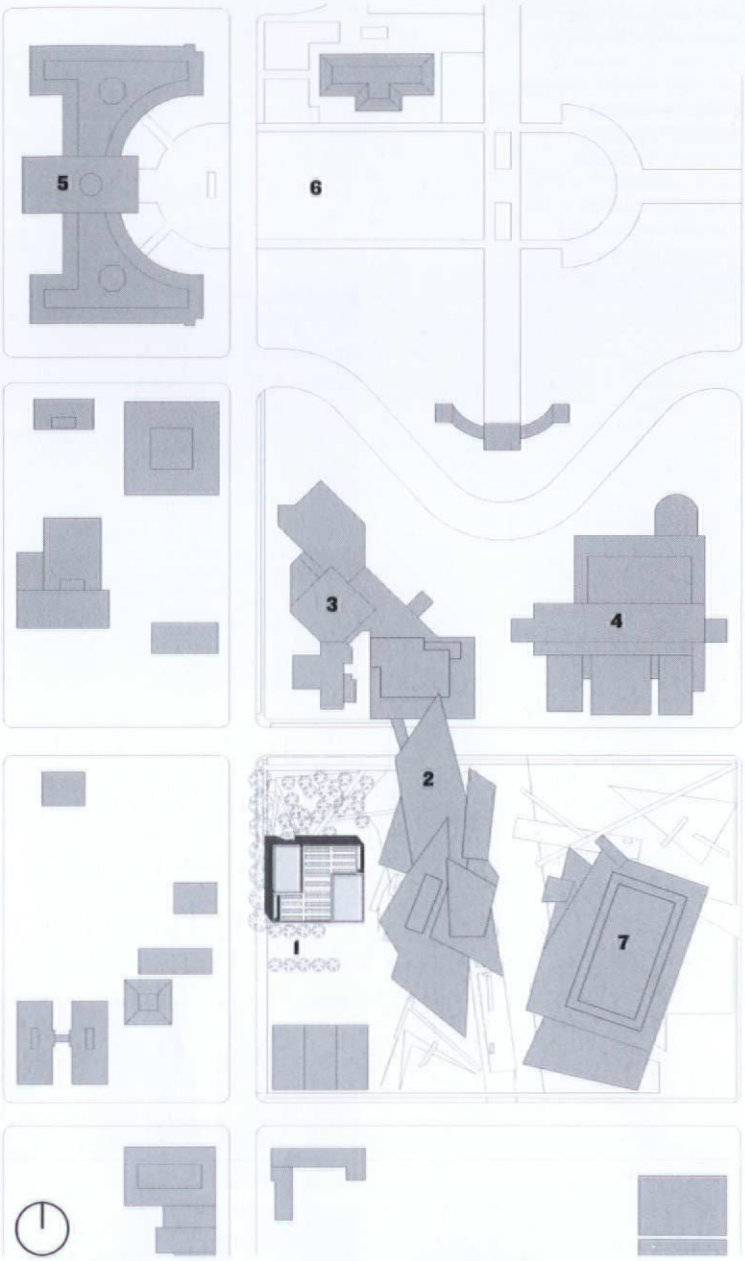
NATURAL FORCES

Clyfford Still Museum, Denver, USA
Allied Works

Clyfford Still Museum, Denver, USA
Allied Works

1 Clyfford Still Museum
2 Denver Art Museum, Hamilton Building (Daniel Libeskind)
3 Denver Art Museum, North Building (Gio Ponti)
4 City Library (Michael Graves)
5 City and County Building
6 Civic Centre Park
7 Parking Structure





REPORT

MICHAEL WEBB

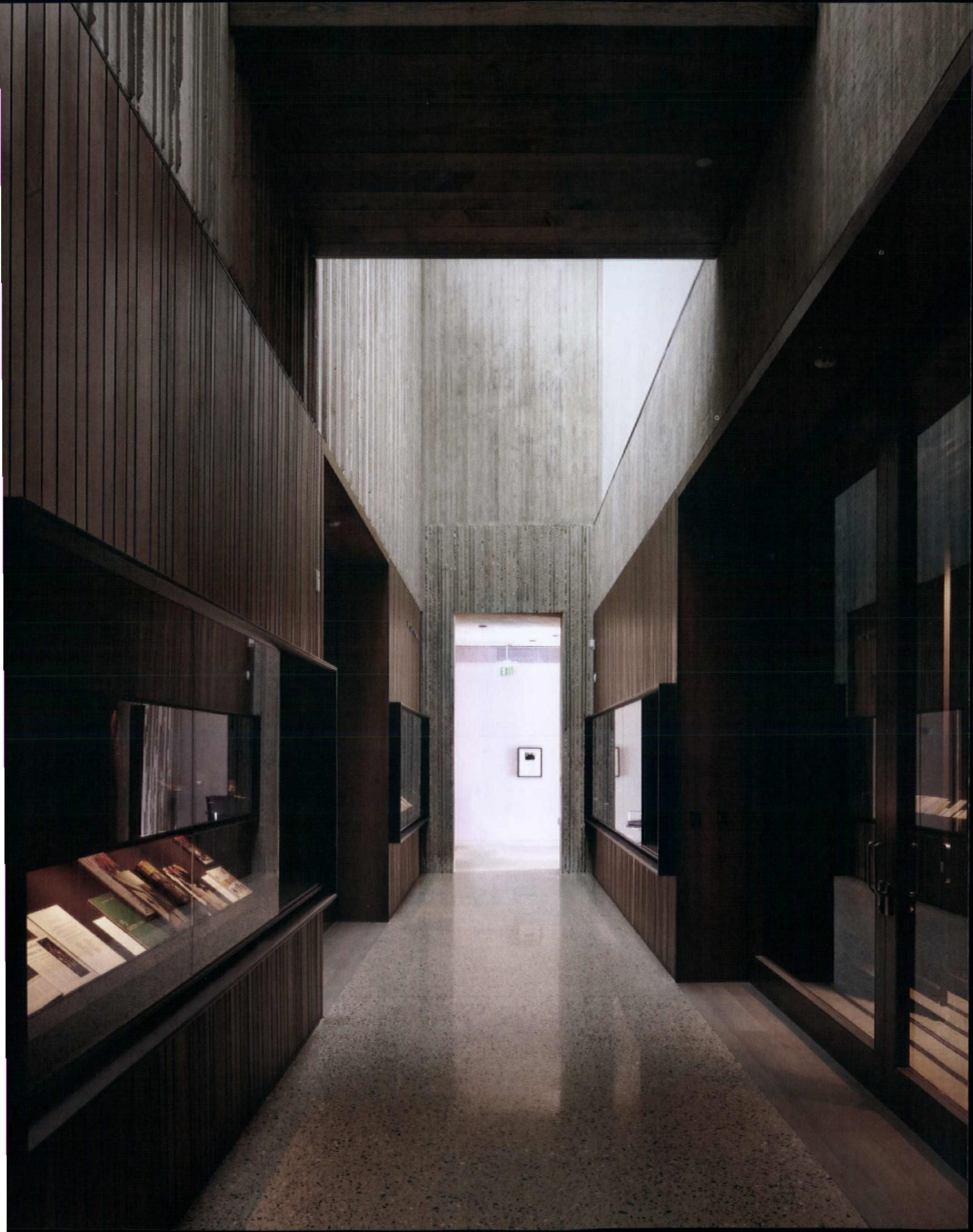
Clyfford Still belonged to that heroic generation of American artists who made Abstract Expressionism the dominant movement of the 1950s. But he was also a loner, who withheld his work from galleries, moved from New York to a rural retreat, and retained most of the paintings he created over six decades. In his will, he stipulated that his estate be given to an American city willing to establish a permanent home for the study and exhibition of his art. Some 31 years after his death, that wish has been fulfilled in Denver. The Clyfford Still Museum is a tough fusion of art and architecture, rooted in the earth and open to the sky. Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture worked closely with director Dean Sobel to create an ideal viewing environment for huge canvases that explode with energy, and smaller early works.

The austere concrete block, holding storage, conservation and service areas on the ground floor and galleries above, is a quiet riposte to the irrational exuberance of Denver's cultural district. The structure backs up to Daniel Libeskind's homage to *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* with jagged metal shards on the outside, tilted walls and acute angles inside – an ostentatious and dysfunctional extension to the Denver Art Museum, which already has to cope with Gio Ponti's eccentric castle. Beyond is Michael Graves's colourful confection for the Denver Public Library, a PoMo assemblage of Platonic forms. Cloepfil wisely ignores these distractions, drawing his inspiration from landscape and light, as Still did, to serve the art.

Although the artist spent most of his working life in San Francisco and on the eastern seaboard, he grew up on the Prairie and that experience shaped his vision. Denver is set on a mile-high plateau surrounded by the snow-capped Rocky Mountains, a spectacular setting that is mimicked in the white Teflon peaks of the Stapleton Airport terminal. Cloepfil preferred the elemental to the picturesque, starting with a concept model of rammed earth, and planning to clad the building with obsidian slabs. That proved infeasible, since the glassy fragments would not bond with concrete, and budgetary cutbacks narrowed the range of possibilities. Allied Works was determined to achieve a rough texture that would have a random, undesigned quality, and the practice went through myriad tests and mock-ups with the contractor. The solution proved simple: bevel the boards in the formwork to allow the concrete to leak out and break off. The deep fins capture the light, and enliven the windowless facades, as do the iridescent tiles that clad the Museum of Arts and Design in New York (AR February 2009). A grove of plane trees will partially conceal the museum from the street, casting shadow patterns over the walls.

Galleries are cantilevered over a recessed corner entrance, and a staircase draws visitors up from the long, low-ceilinged foyer,

3. The new building takes its place in Denver's central cultural district, in the ostentatious shadow of Daniel Libeskind's extension to the Denver Art Museum
4. (Opposite) galleries cantilever out over the recessed corner entrance. Light catches the fin-like texture of the concrete, animating the building's impervious facades



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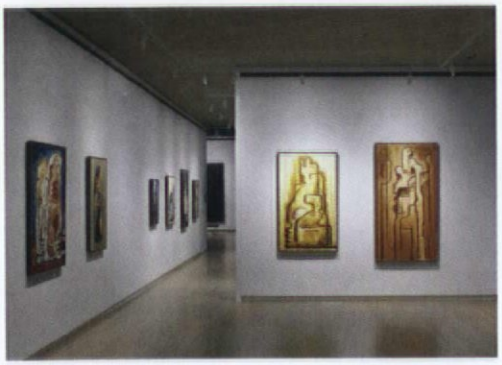
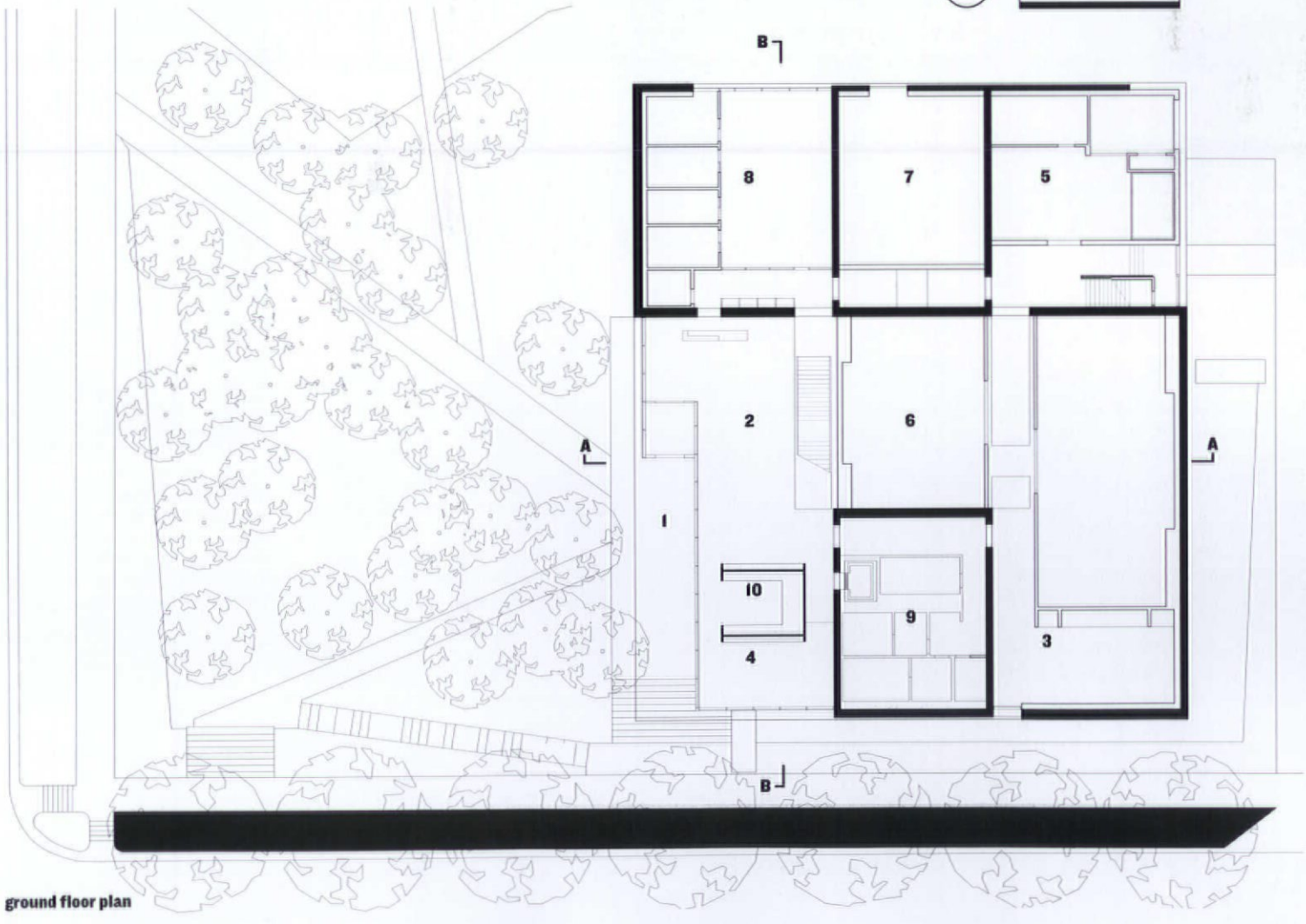


5. (Opposite) inside the museum, a double-height corridor orientates visitors with displays of archive material, and biographical and contextual timelines
6. One of the more intimate galleries for the display of smaller works. Galleries respond to the evolving nature of Still's art, changing scale and proportion, while varying the intensity of light

Clyfford Still Museum, Denver, USA
Allied Works

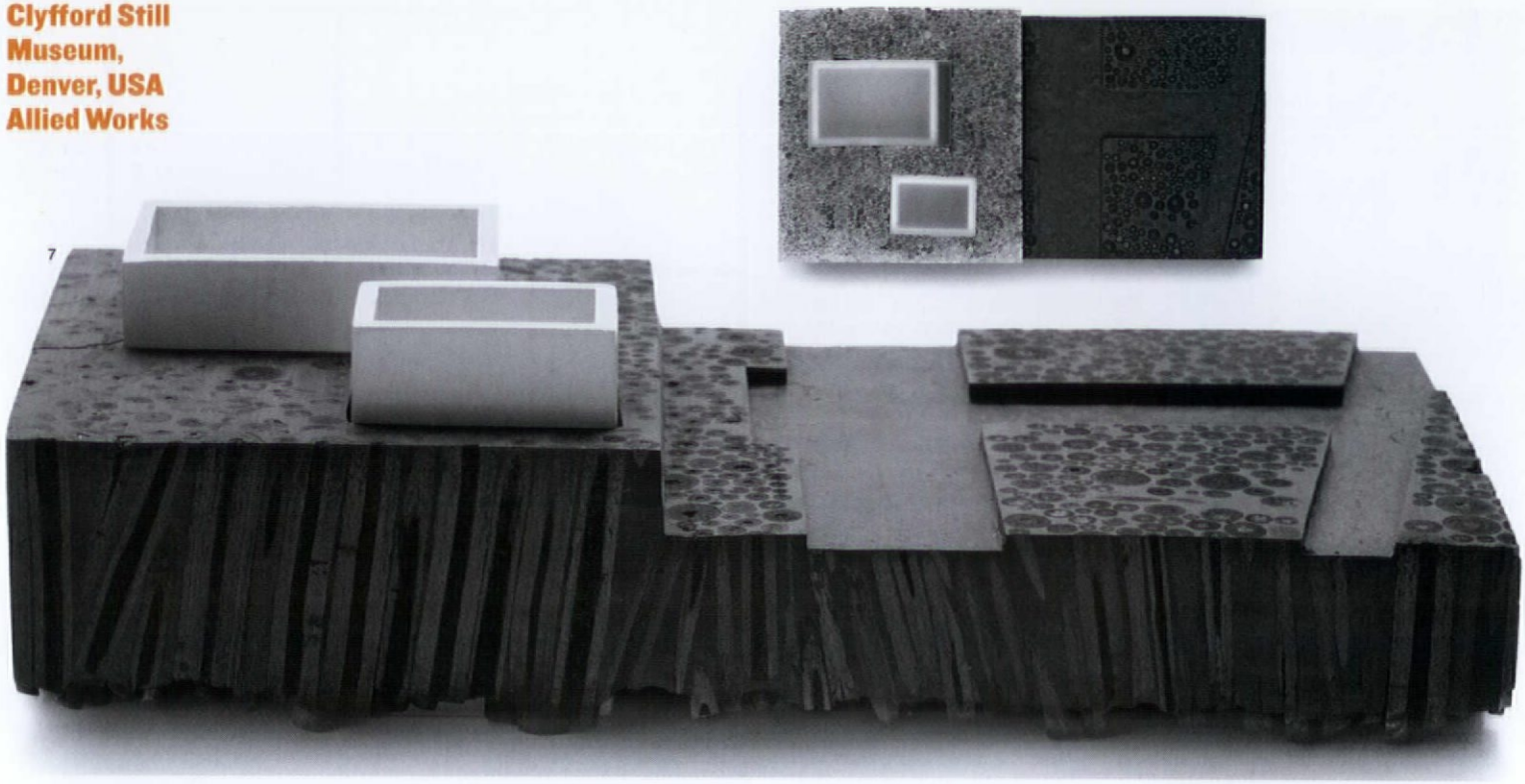
1 entrance terrace
2 reception
3 conservation lab
4 research lab
5 service
6 painting storage
7 mechanical
8 administration
9 visitor services
10 library
11 orientation
12 gallery
13 terrace
14 education gallery
15 conference

first floor plan



ground floor plan

Clyfford Still Museum, Denver, USA
Allied Works



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ascending into the light. There they move through a grid of nine rooms – defined by poured concrete slabs and drywall – which open into each other and offer oblique views across the floor. A central well and the main staircase provide visual links to the ground level. The feeling is intimate and fluid, and there are two outdoor terraces screened with wooden battens.

Wall openings frame canvases, allowing you to approach them from afar and then to immerse yourself in the explosive colours and forms. Two galleries have 3.8m diagonally boarded ceilings for smaller works, while the others rise 5.5m to a perforated concrete ceiling. The concrete fins are carried inside, but walls supporting the art have a rough-textured surface, offering a tactility complementing the impassioned brushstrokes. The perforated ceiling is set 1.3m above the walls holding the art, and the same distance below the filtered skylights, diffusing the clear mountain light through oval openings. The perforations are set at the same angle to the walls as the boarded ceilings, playing off the vertically marked walls and white oak floorboards.

'It was very important that the museum be monolithic,' says Cloepfil. 'In the US, buildings are assembled from parts. It took a while for the contractor to realise we wanted him to make things.' There were repeated tests and one wall was torn down, but the effort paid off, for the 12m pours are as impeccable as the detailing. In mass and natural lighting, the building is a worthy heir to Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum – Cloepfil's model of what an art museum should be. Cutbacks were turned to advantage. As an economy, the block was set back from the street and a third floor was eliminated, but the display area was only slightly reduced. The resulting delay gave everyone time to perfect the execution. About 70 paintings and sketches, hung chronologically with brief text panels, comprise the inaugural exhibition. Still's art is so powerful and little-seen that even a small sampling of the 2,400 works in the collection is an unforgettable experience, and this is enhanced by the architectural frame. Cloepfil drew on his long experience of designing museums and his familiarity with the key works, to calibrate the proportions of each room. As he observes, 'elemental language can create spaces that are resonant and feel infinite.'

> 'The Museum is a tough fusion of art and architecture, rooted in the earth and open to the sky'

It is rewarding to compare the rigour and subtlety of this building with David Adjaye's Denver Museum of Contemporary Art to the north (AR April 2008). Both architects have an innate respect for artists, and an intuitive understanding of how to enhance the experience of viewing their works. Adjaye provides a multi-layered complex of versatile display spaces for temporary exhibitions within a translucent envelope; a cabinet of curiosities that feels airborne. In contrast, Cloepfil has created a massive, impermeable block that appears to hide in plain view and will soon be embowered by mature trees. The archives and storage areas beyond the foyer are equally shadowy. Above, the art is washed with natural light and appears to float free of the walls that act as frames. There is an alternation of rough and refined, radiant and crepuscular, contained and free-flowing; above all, a pervasive serenity.

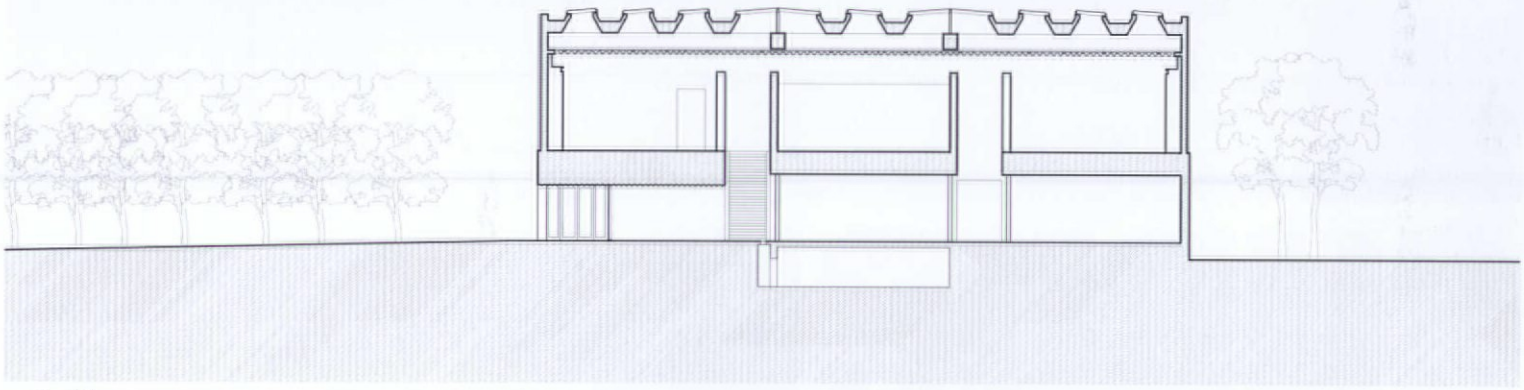
8

7. Early massing model showing the building's relationship to site, as well as a sense of the ribbed and riven external walls
8. Detail of facade. Concrete was allowed to leach out of the formwork to create the roughly bevelled texture

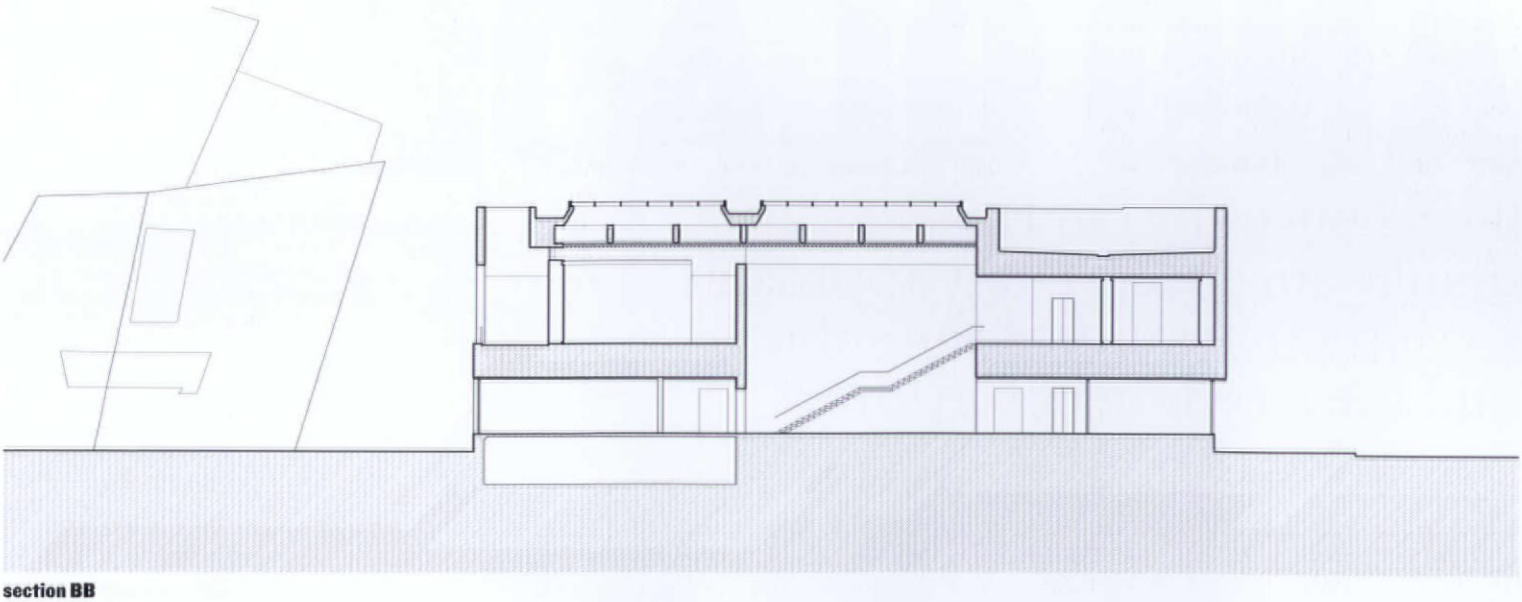
9

9. Concrete walls and white oak floors form a neutral backdrop to the display of Still's vibrant paintings. A leading exponent of Abstract Expressionism, Still was among the first to embrace the movement. The new museum re-acquaints the public with his impressive body of work

Architects
Allied Works Architecture
Structural engineer
KPFF Consulting Engineers
Services engineer
Arup
Landscape consultant
Reed Hilderbrand Associates
Photographs
Jeremy Bittermann



section AA



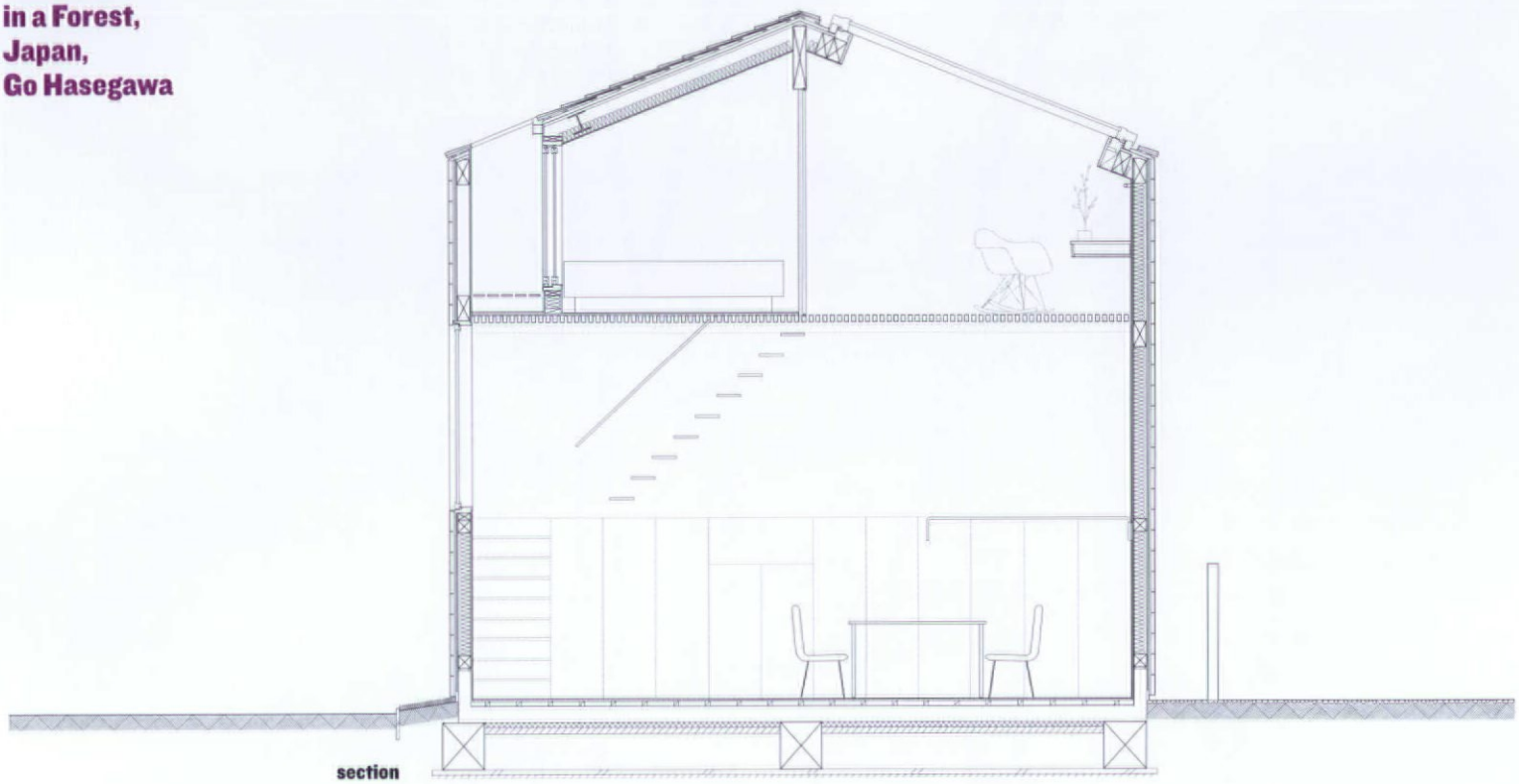
section BB

SUBURB AND GLADE

Two houses by Go Hasegawa display an equally deft approach to the constraints of the suburb and the freedom of the forest

House in Komazawa and Pilotis in a Forest, Japan, Go Hasegawa

House in Komazawa and Pilotis in a Forest, Japan, Go Hasegawa



section

REPORT

ANDREW WILSON

If tendencies in contemporary Japanese architecture exhibit a problematic disengagement with the city, the work of Go Hasegawa does not. Two recent projects, House in Komazawa and Pilotis in a Forest, reveal a consistent exploration of themes across two distinct contexts and types; in this instance a house in suburban Tokyo and a holiday retreat in an idyllic pine forest near the town of Tsumagoi in Gunma Prefecture.

From the street, the House in Komazawa appears as a gently gabled extruded form, which is uniformly clad in eucalyptus planks topped with a thin red cedar tiled roof. Unlike its neighbours, it is politely set back from the road to define a strip of lawn with a tree as its front yard. In a neighbourhood characterised by a motley collection of detached, medium-density and high-rise housing, the new dwelling sits between a low block wall along the road edge on one side and a commercial car park on the other.

Strategically, the house is pushed hard against the northern car park boundary in order to create a parking slot and side entrance on the southern edge of the site. The elevation confronting the car park is left blank and there are only three openings (an entrance and a couple of windows) in the two other visible elevations. During the day, the interior as seen from the outside appears dark and impenetrable, which enhances a general sense of imperviousness. Simplicity of form gives the house an understated presence, forming a counterpoint to its experiential and spatial complexity. When the high window in the front elevation is left open, you can look up diagonally through the dark interior and observe striated light streaming across the ceiling. From the inside, this window frames a section of the sky above the housing on the other side of the narrow street.

In conceptual terms, Go Hasegawa describes this compact (65m²), two-storey house as composed of a patio and an attic, as though the main living floor had been edited out. Paved with small granite stones, like an external patio, the tall ground-floor space forms an open-plan living zone with a kitchen storage unit along one side. Another built-in cabinet acts as a privacy screen around the entrance. Two potted trees take advantage of the light streaming in through the windows.

Tucked into the roof space are two small bedrooms, a bathroom and a laundry cupboard. There is also a long study with a linear work-bench notable for its thin blond timber floor, laid with 20mm spaced gaps to allow for the penetration of light and air. The slatted floor also gives a measure of visual and aural connection with the living space below. A thin concealed veranda slotted into the roof along the house's northern edge emanates diffuse light and provides cross ventilation for the bedrooms and bathroom. Under a retractable

3

4

1. (Previous page) wrapped in a skin of eucalyptus planks, the House in Komazawa eases into its tight site, pulling back from the street line. Such small gestures assume greater resonance in the constrained suburban context
2. (Previous page) hoisted aloft on spindly pilotis, the weekend house in the forest has no such contextual inhibitions
3. The main living space of the House in Komazawa is a fluid, open-plan zone paved with granite setts, like a patio. The slatted ceiling is actually the floor of the study area above
4. An exquisitely minimal staircase winds up towards the study and sleeping quarters
5. Study and bedroom. Light filters down through the slats into the living room below
6. A concealed veranda is slotted into the roof

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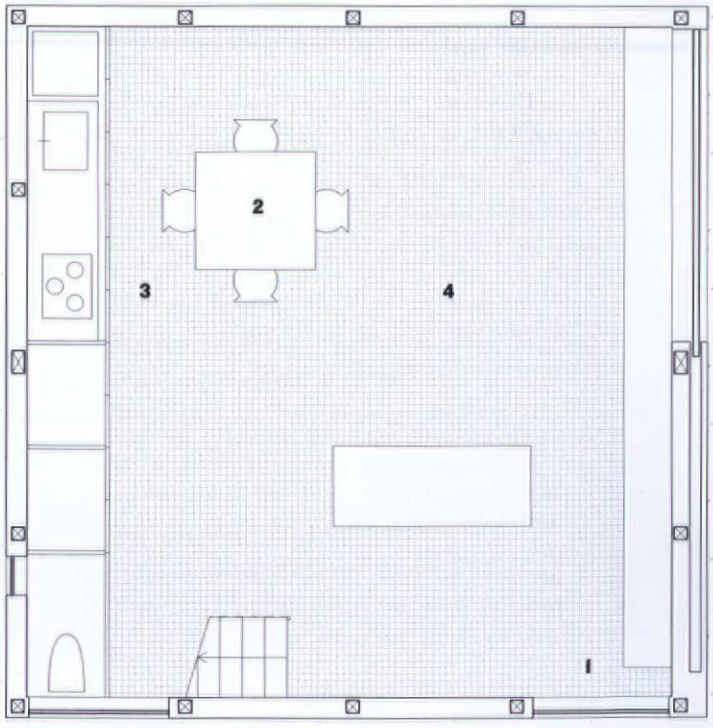
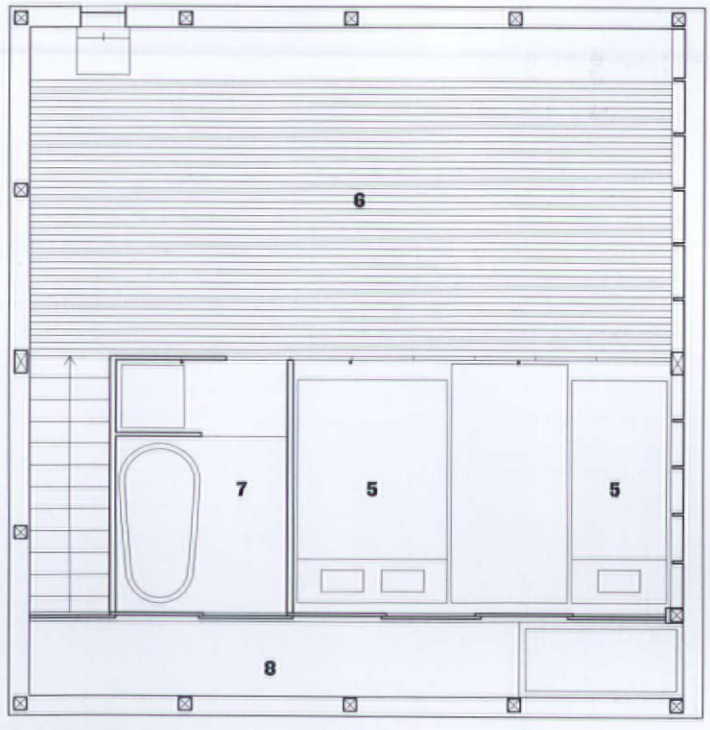


ground floor plan



first floor plan

1	entrance	5	bedroom
2	dining	6	study
3	kitchen	7	bathroom
4	living space	8	veranda

skylight in the roof, a washbasin is located at one end of the long study adjacent to the bathroom. The skylight is the source of the mysterious illumination visible when seen from outside. At the other end of the study is a wall of bookshelves. The window in the south elevation is aligned with the circulation slot overlapping the storage unit on the ground floor. Stairs deftly cantilever out of the wall and use the storage unit as a landing before pivoting into this slot. On both levels, a rich dark veneer of lauan plywood is applied as a lining for walls and furniture, giving the interior a homogenous visual and textural consistency.

Three hours north of Tokyo by car, Pilotis in a Forest is an expansive counterpoint to the suburban context and programme of Komawaza. At 90m², it also creates a larger space. Clad in corrugated, galvanised sheeting, the house forms a platform in the forest canopy at a height designed to provide views of distant mountains when the surrounding deciduous trees shed their leaves. Themes of attic and patio again play out in this project. Within a building envelope 9m high, a 6.5m undercroft forms a monumental covered patio with a concrete slab floor delimited by the supporting thin piloti and enclosed by the trees. Echoing Metabolist Kiyonori Kikutake's famous Sky House of 1958, long elegant stairs broken by a 90° landing choreograph an ascent to the gently raking skillion platform above.

> 'The house forms a platform in the forest canopy at a height designed to give views of distant mountains when the deciduous trees shed their leaves'

The stairs arrive at a terrace deck made from thin slats of red cedar spaced 20mm apart, similar to the floor of the study in the House in Komazawa. Here, however, the deck is external and calibrated to accentuate a sensation of bleeding and spatial dissolution into the surrounding forest. This feeling is restated by the framing of the distant mountain and forest across the terrace from the dining room, and a glass panel set in the floor under the dining table. The interior lining is also executed in plywood with lauan as a hardwood veneer.

These two projects reveal the extent to which Go Hasegawa is able to find and exploit productive tensions at the intersection of client briefs, the limitations of a given context and the sharp material differences between inside and outside. These tensions are explored through rigorous testing, employing model-making and spatial imagination, which in combination are aimed at revealing innovation at the limits of architectural possibility. Moments of collapse into striated light and shadow, or spatial dissolution into the unbounded forest are the fruitful and compelling end results of this process.

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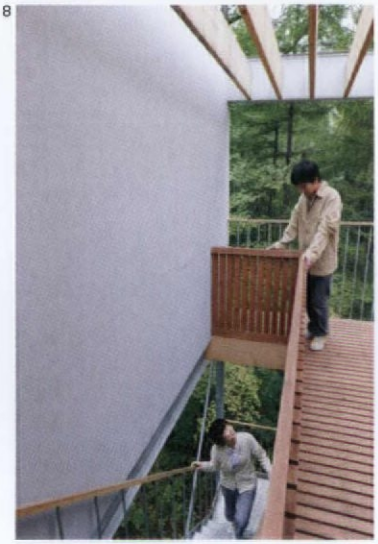
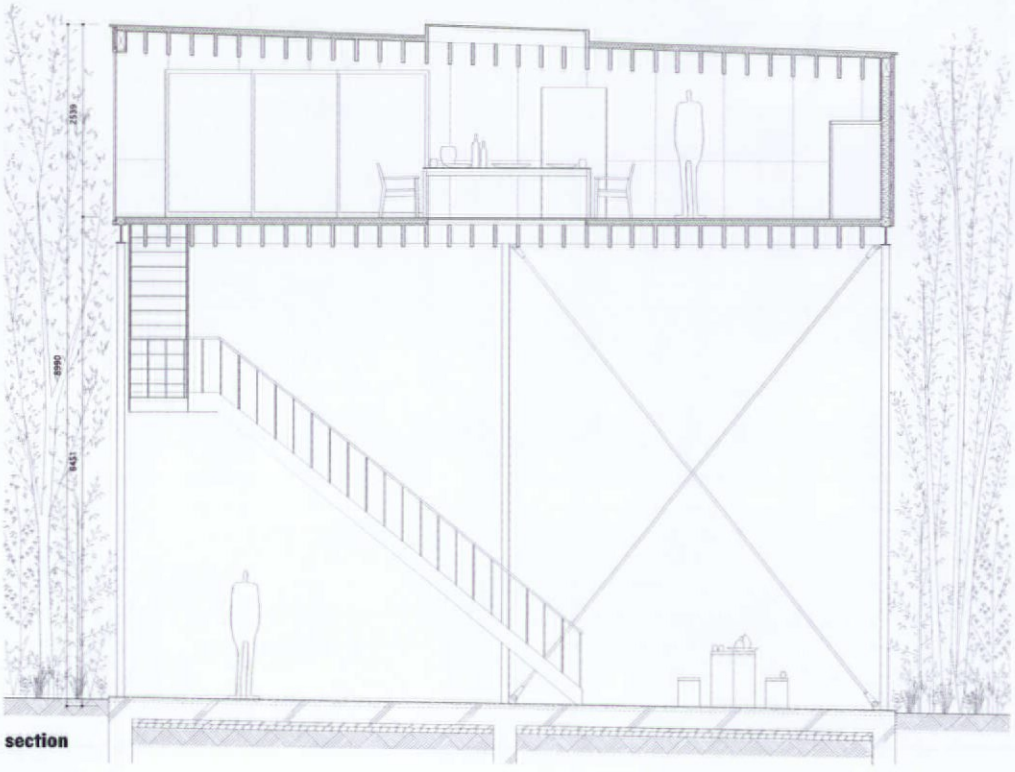


7

Architect
Go Hasegawa
Photographs
Iwan Baan

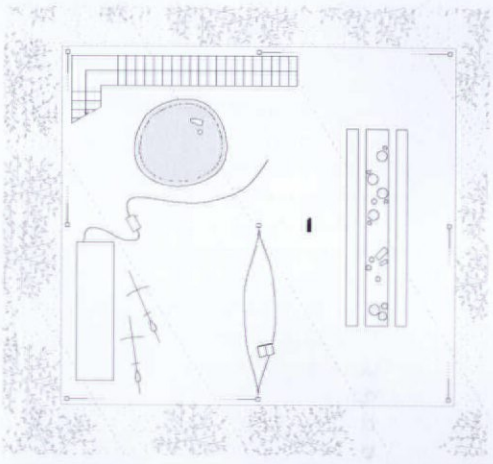
7. The elevated box of the house in the forest forms a monumental undercroft, which becomes a paved and sheltered external space
8. The staircase meets the upper deck
9. The kitchen zone, with glass table and glass floor, enhancing the connection with site and surroundings
10. Large windows open up expansive views and bring the forest into the house

House in Komazawa and Pilotis in a Forest, Japan, Go Hasegawa



section

1 undercroft
2 deck
3 entrance
4 bedroom
5 bathroom
6 dining
7 guest room



ground floor plan

first floor plan

9

10

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THE BIG RETHINK

TOWARDS A COMPLETE ARCHITECTURE

These are critical times. Throughout history, change has been the background to our lives. But now the nature of change has changed. We are in the grip of widespread and systemic ecological and economic meltdown. This necessitates that we rethink everything, including architecture and the design of the larger environment. For architects the most immediately challenging issue has been the environmental crisis to which buildings and our dispersed cities are the major contributors.

But global warming, no matter how threatening, is also the symptomatic fever heralding this larger breakdown. Some architects are now designing brilliantly sophisticated and effective 'green' buildings. But these are still not sufficiently broadly conceived to deliver sustainability. They will merely reduce the degree of unsustainability, but are not conceived of in terms of the profound cultural changes necessary to inspire the urgent and radical transformations we must undertake to reach true sustainability. A thorough rethink is required to arrive at more imaginatively exciting yet pragmatically achievable approaches.

The AR sees this is as a timely moment to reconsider all aspects of architecture, because it is so obviously required and architects now have the time and motivation to engage in such an exercise. The Big Rethink will be a year-long campaign. Each issue will feature an essay on the topic. We begin with a major overview of the state of current architecture. Further contributions will elaborate on issues from a theoretical perspective. From these foundations, wide-ranging essays illuminating various topics of critical concern will follow. Over the year, this will give coherence to the campaign, broaden the scope of debate and build up into a body of reference, inspiration and provocation. Critical thinking for critical times.

1. Designed by Renzo Piano, London Bridge Tower, nicknamed the Shard, was part of a mayoral drive to give London a 'world-class' city skyline. But though it extols its mixed-use credentials and will improve the public realm, it is an incontrovertibly overbearing presence in the London streetscape

THE BIG RETHINK: TAKING STOCK

The world is entering times of major transition. The inherent ecological and economic impacts are re-shaping the larger environment of which architecture and design forms a vital constituent. This calls for substantive reflection from the architectural profession. Setting the scene for the AR's Big Rethink and paving the way for future contributions, this first essay examines the current state of the global architectural scene

PETER BUCHANAN

Constant change has been the backdrop to our lives. But now the nature of change has changed. Instead of, or besides, being subject to the forward propulsion of 'progress', we are in the throes of comprehensive systemic collapse. Along with other potent forces for change, this suggests these are times of major transition – times in which to rethink almost everything, including architecture and the design of the larger environment it is part of.

The initial unambiguous signs of this systemic collapse were, and continue to be, the many dimensions of the environmental crisis afflicting the seriously overstretched systems of our earth. These include the many forms of pollution (of air, water and soil), the degradation and loss of topsoil, and the diminishment of biodiversity to the point where the sixth great mass extinction of species appears unavoidable. And, most urgently challenging of all, particularly for architects whose designs contribute so much to it, is global warming with all its many consequences in changed weather patterns, more extreme weather, climate-induced migration of humans, as well as other species and so on. But, no matter how direly threatening are the consequences of global warming, no real progress is being made in effective global agreements to curb it. Yet it is also now apparent that global warming could be seen as the symptomatic fever, the raised temperature of an ailing patient, heralding an even more widespread breakdown that requires even broader and more difficult-to-achieve measures and transformation.

Now a more immediate challenge to architects, to their individual professional survival at least rather than that of mankind, is the economic downturn. So far, as those economists who predicted it also forecast, it has not been resolved (nor will it be) by politicians' attempts to save banks and vested interests rather than undertake radical restructuring, particularly of the financial sector. So we are sliding into what promises to be the prolonged second phase of a double-dip recession, if not outright and lengthy depression. In the US, political process is now so gridlocked as to seem impotent in the face of the urgent action required to fix the world's largest individual economy; and the problems of the Eurozone, collectively an even larger economy, appear similarly intractable. Already, with the knock-on effects of this impasse only in their early stages, Britain has seen social stability rocked by rioting of the economically and educationally disadvantaged.

These are just some of the interlinked forms of systemic breakdown, of which many of the causal links are not yet widely acknowledged. For instance, the role our dependency on fossil fuels plays not only in the environmental crisis but also the economic meltdown is insufficiently acknowledged – despite the original crash of 2008 starting within 60 days of oil reaching an unprecedented US$147 (£95) per barrel. Without a radical restructuring of our energy and distribution systems, our having passed global Peak Oil (after which supplies decline as demand continues to rise) will inevitably wreak havoc with any economic recovery. To assert that in the present economic circumstances we cannot afford to invest in green measures is to seriously misread our predicament and to delay the transition to what has been called the Third Industrial Revolution, the most promising road to economic recovery. But as well as these immediate 'sticks' that should be provoking a radical rethink and restructuring, only a few of which have been mentioned here, there are more positive 'carrots' (such as the advent of the Third Industrial Revolution) that should also be drawing us forward. These will be elaborated in a future essay.

In the past, major downturns in architects' workload, and the free time and incentives to reassess things that this afforded, resulted in major rethinking and reorientation in architecture. Hence abstractly Functionalist Modern architecture emerged after what was seen, in part, as the purging effects of the First World War. But the abstract forms were not universally popular and weathered badly; so after the Second World War the palette of materials and forms used by architects became considerably enriched to enhance the appeal of Functionalist buildings. Now again, architecture will be compelled for many reasons to undergo major changes in the near future.

Reconceptualising architecture in uncertain times

The Architectural Review does not subscribe to the apocalyptic predictions for 2012 that are currently so prevalent – the end of the Mayan calendar and so on. But this widespread discussion about the meaning of 2012 reinforces the notion that this is a timely moment to rethink architecture, both to better meet the challenges ahead and to progress beyond current confusions, and also because so many now have the time and incentive to engage in such an exercise. The AR will thus commit a part of each of this year's issues to a cumulative and comprehensive rethinking of many aspects of architecture and urbanism, an exercise we encourage readers and others to participate in and that, where possible, will be connected with other features in each issue. Among other things, this rethink will draw on emerging areas of thought and theory that, although powerfully appropriate to architecture, have barely been applied to it. This will also set the discussion of sustainability, a defining concern of our times, in a larger context than heretofore.

But first it is useful to briefly take stock of the current architectural scene, which in many ways is lively, diverse and exciting. Yet, whereas until less than a century ago we seemed to have no problem in creating buildings people liked and that aggregated into satisfactory urban fabric, any candid assessment must accept that much, if not most, of what is being built today is pretty dismal and does little to heal the fragmentation of our cities wrought over the last century. Architects repeat the same excuses for these failings: it is what the client insisted upon; it is all that the budget permitted; and in any case the horrors constitute that majority of buildings not by architects. None of this will wash: many of the worst buildings are by architects and good buildings have been delivered on tiny budgets to difficult clients. Besides, most of what we now see as exceptionally stupid design concepts – such as the ubiquitous, a-contextual, energy guzzling, air-conditioned glass box – were initiated by architects and once hailed as exemplifying Modernist ideals.

Generally, architects seem to have become incapable of producing the cheap, plain buildings with a quiet, unobtrusive dignity that were once commonplace, in part perhaps because we no longer build with local materials and local craftsmen. Instead – partly because of the materials used and the extruded nature of modern construction and facade treatments – no amount of the desperate fad for jazzing up facades in syncopated 'barcode' patterns and other jittery rhythms, and jollying up with strong colours can conceal the tawdry, mean-spiritedness of the design and the flimsy thinness of much construction. (Even inoffensive seems beyond us.) These faults are largely the inevitable consequence of the rhetoric of cheap and 'efficient' utilitarianism promised by modern architecture.

Nevertheless, some fine architecture is also being built, respectful of history, decorum and context, functioning well and socially vibrant, and designed and built with extraordinary technical expertise so as to last. These buildings have been made possible by a whole range of technical advances that include computer-assisted modes of analysis and calculation, component manufacture and the coordination of construction. But also architects have taken seriously the legitimate comments of conservation groups and Postmodern critics. With these buildings, modern architecture could be said to have at last reached full maturity. Yet it must also be acknowledged that, for all their technical expertise and formal finesse, even the best of these buildings lack the compelling depths of the technically cruder works of those of a few masters of early modern architecture, for reasons that will become apparent in a later essay.

An perambulation around London

For examples of these mature works, let us limit ourselves, from what would otherwise be an overwhelmingly large field to draw on, to London-based architects. Some of those whose work represents this complex maturity are Hopkins Architects, Edward Cullinan Architects and MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard. Their buildings display an admirable breadth of design

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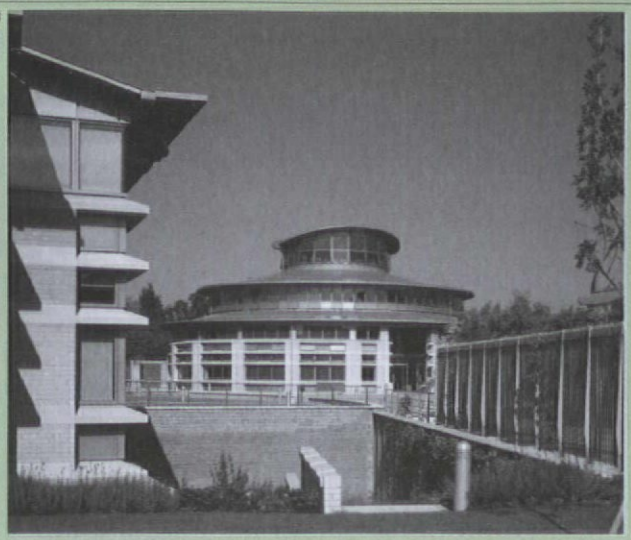

2. The west elevation of MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard's New Court extension to Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, using the same dark grey brick as the original college buildings
3. The Betty and Gordon Moor Library at the Centre for Mathematical Sciences, Cambridge. Edward Cullinan Architects were ahead of their time in designing in a centrally controlled natural ventilation and cooling system, which regulates the internal environment for 24-hour use

concerns, responding to history and context, and are aptly inventive (without being contrived) formally and technically, as well as in social organisation and environmental strategies. (Hopkins and Cullinan are among the world leaders in green design.) Their buildings are also well-detailed and constructed in a broad palette of materials, many 'natural', that help the buildings blend into their settings and weather gracefully. Importantly too, they are generally popular with users and public.

Many of today's most accomplished buildings are designed by highly professional mainstream practices, perhaps partly because of the resources that they can command, such as collaborating with the best consultants. These architects, not the avant-garde, constitute the leading edge of practice that other architects study and emulate. Yet, in academe and the media, they tend not to get the recognition that they deserve – or at least, not all of their works do. Four buildings by Foster + Partners, very different from each other, illustrate the range of what mature modern architecture can deliver. The first two are well-known and, though they perform brilliantly, their exteriors do not relate particularly well to their contexts, nor can people relate to them – the usual problems with 'blobs' of which these are two of the few convincing examples. But they are the products of great technical expertise and have fine interiors, the potential of one of which is not properly realised, while the other is used with an intensity and flair that far surpasses expectations. The other two, both of which merge with and enhance their contexts, are very little known and hardly published, perhaps in part because they are more restrained and recessive. Indeed, only an alert architect might notice them when passing by, and then only on studying them become aware of just how successful they are.

In London, 50 St Mary Axe is a widely recognised icon that – as an a-contextual, standalone, glacially inscrutable building – still displays typical faults of modern architecture. Nor is it used as intended, as a naturally ventilated building with the air-conditioning off, as would be indicated by triangular glass panels projecting open from the spiralling bands of dark glass. But that potential

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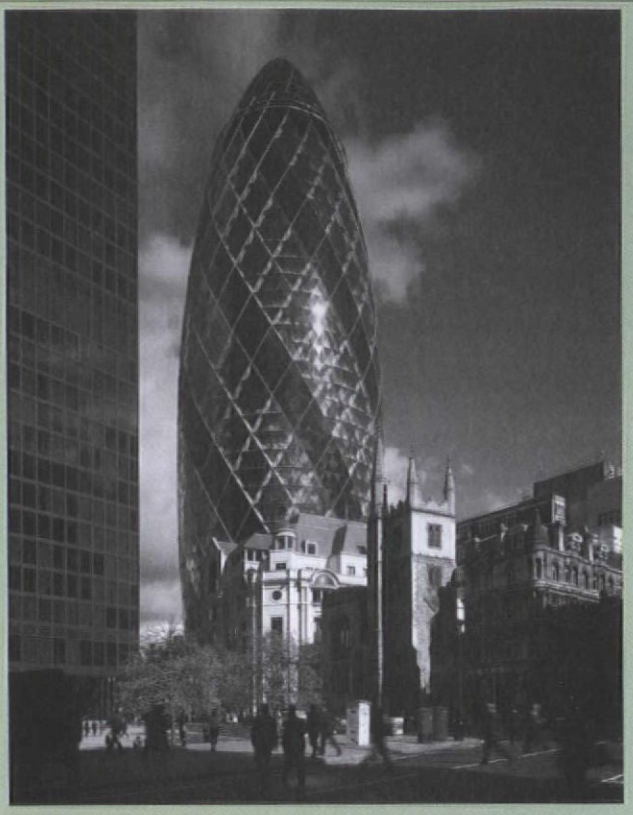

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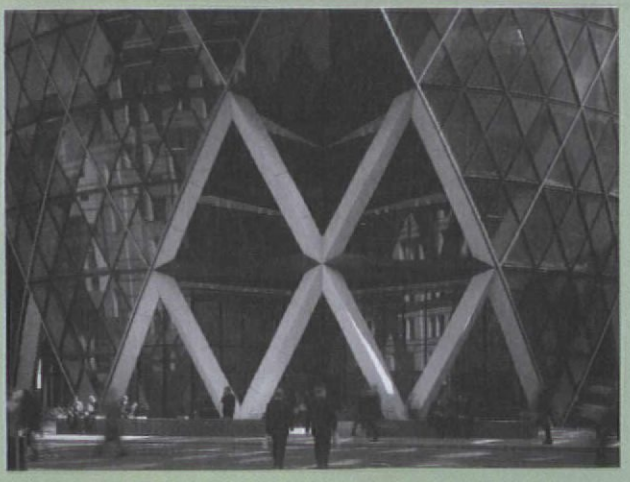

4. Although it is a masterpiece of computer modelling and highly specialised environmental design, Foster + Partner's 50 St Mary Axe does little to engage with its surrounding context
5. The innovative diagrid efficiently uses 20 per cent less steel than a conventional rectilinear block

is there in a building that is in many ways a highly synthesised technical *tour de force*, an efficient machine that realises also that other modern dream of resembling an organism in its form and metabolism. The diagrid structure is both very rigid and uses 20 per cent less steel than a conventional structure while the slippery, double-curved form of the external envelope avoids turbulence and downdrafts. It also encloses maximum internal volume for a set area of curtain wall; and it avoids the extremes of differential air pressure found at the corners of rectangular towers so this curtain wall can be more lightly engineered. Yet it is the variations in air pressure around the building that drives the movement of air up or down the spiralling 'atria', so sucking air in through the floors of the petal-like, roughly rectangular areas of office space.

None of this could be achieved without the computer, used for structural calculation and modelling the various aspects of internal and external environmental conditions, as well as the parametric modelling to resolve the many complexities of the external envelope, including the twisting geometry of the planar sleeves cladding the sloping circular columns. Updating drawings and coordinating those prepared by all the different disciplines involved – architects, engineers of various sorts, contractors and sub-contractor/manufacturers – could easily have introduced errors that would have undone such precision construction; so the same electronic models were shared and passed continuously between all these parties. The computer also coordinated all aspects of construction and now constantly monitors and adjusts the building's various systems for energy efficiency, security and so on. The result is a building of a technical sophistication that was inconceivable only a couple of decades ago.

Although the curving carapace of The Sage Gateshead, a concert hall and a music education complex, sets up fortuitous formal echoes with the curves of the bridges across the Tyne, the building sits somewhat uncomfortably in context when seen from directly across the river. This is partly because the original concept of the concourse-foyer being part of a forcefully expressed route extending through the building and sloping down to meet the riverside by the Baltic Exchange got lost during all the complexities of design development. But once inside, the building is a triumph, both because of its clever organisation and the brilliant way in which its managers and users make the most of all its designed-in potential. It is another technically sophisticated building, particularly in its adjustable acoustic arrangements. But more remarkable here is the vibrancy of the life within the building, which changes in mood and in the range of ongoing activities, and the interactions between these, throughout the day from early morning to late at night.

Right from the start, the building was conceived of as bringing together a range of differing kinds of music, their performers and audiences, together with serious music students who use the rehearsal rooms and recording studios on the lower ground level, and amateur performers and enthusiasts of all ages who make use of all parts of the buildings, in a way that provokes lively intermingling and

mutual appreciation between all of them. Much of this happens in the concourse-foyer, a sort of indoor street that extends across the riverside front of the building between the entrances on the two side ends and swells into a piazza-like café at its midpoint. This concourse is overlooked by galleries and bars serving the various levels of the halls whose stalls are a level up above its floor, the audience-spectators on the galleries thus on show to further animate the space. The educational facilities below the concourse connect to it aurally via a gap along to riverside glazing, so at times the singing of choir rehearsals fills the volume above.

The concourse is an example of a recurrent theme in some of Foster's work, the 'urban room'. This encapsulates the identity and spirit of the institution the building houses, and is where the public meet as participating equals with the specialist users of the building, so taking possession of it as their own. Here this is all played out against the backdrop of the Tyne below and Newcastle rising on its other bank. Any architect suffering doubts about architecture's capacity to enhance life and create the most flexibly functional yet intensely convivial of settings should spend a day in the building. Watching and experiencing both the great diversity of activities that happen during the day and the interplay between them can only inspire a renewed faith. Yet the Sage was built to a tight budget; to achieve the highest standards possible in the halls, money was not scrimped there; but elsewhere detailing is minimal and surfaces cheap while the whole is enveloped in a shrink-wrapped steel roof – the most frugal of solutions.

Synthesising technology and society

The Gerling Ring in Cologne is a large speculative, mixed-use development, understatedly designed for long-term flexibility in a future of unpredictable demand. The same structural section is deployed throughout the complex for both offices and housing, so allowing for future switches of use. Yet the complex fits surprisingly unobtrusively into its setting while also intensifying urban life around it. This being Germany, it is also a naturally ventilated, low-energy building with thermal inertia provided by the exposed pre-cast concrete structure, particularly the wavy ceiling soffit. The standard section is extruded as a pair of mid-rise slabs along the long sides of the site, between which are three towers in which hidden parts of the structural section are modified slightly to permit clear spans across the central court. Using a standard kit of parts, each facade is then glazed and fitted with sun-control louvres according to function, solar orientation and external noise levels.

The elevations facing a busy street to the west and an existing small square that was enlarged to the south, with outdoor tables for a new café below one of the towers, have an extra layer of glass outside the conventional windows. Fresh air is admitted into the cavity between the layers of glazing, and exhausted from it, via a band of louvres and noise-attenuating devices at each floor slab level. In the west-facing cavity are vertical pivoting louvres while those in the south-facing cavity pivot horizontally. Black on one side and white on the other, all louvres can be set not only to block direct sun but also to reflect or absorb heat. Adjusted and readjusted by those working behind them, louvres set at differing angles and with contrasting tones facing outwards impart to the elevations a liveliness missing in most fully glazed facades. Elevations shaded by overlooking the quiet central courts have conventional opening windows with Venetian blinds. The housing along the quiet street to the east has a more complex elevational treatment that includes inward opening French windows, sliding shade screens of wood louvres and fixed grilles of steel tubes in front of windows that can be safely left open for night-time ventilation and heat purging. A few glazed bays project forward to mark the entrances to the housing and mirror very similar bays across the street.

Similarly well-handled is the street level where the glazing to shops and entrances to offices and housing is set back to expose the precast columns that rhythmically punctuate the pavement. Projecting from the columns – and together with them providing sheltering, pedestrian-friendly scale – is a canopy that steps up to mark the office entrances. For a big building, it is exceptionally hospitable to the passer-by while the

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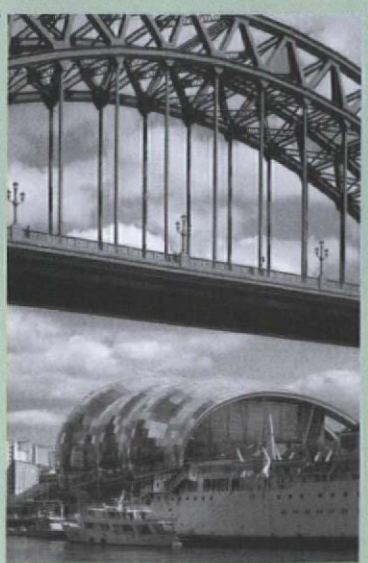

6, The semi-public indoor street of the much-admired Sage Gateshead is overlooked by balconies, bars and cafés from above. Foster + Partners have successfully created a flexible and vibrant building that confidently looks over the Tyne River to Newcastle's city centre 7. The undulating shell of the Sage Gateshead pays suitable homage to the historic Tyne bridges' covered iron trusses

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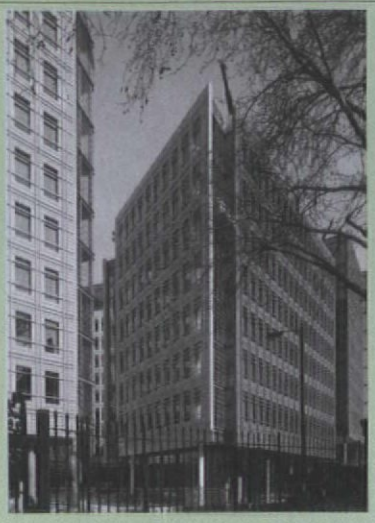

8. The gaudy glazed ceramic facades of Renzo Piano's Central St Giles mixed-use complex have created a clumsy conflict between new and old in London

shops and cafés at this level – together with the increased density of workers and residents, and the people on the generous balconies at the ends of the mid-rise slabs – all enliven the neighbourhood.

Of course, not all Foster buildings achieve these standards. But other big name architects are inconsistent too, as evidenced by a clutch of awful buildings recently inflicted on London by 'starchitects', so offering further immediate concrete evidence of the need to rethink architecture. For instance, Renzo Piano is a fine architect whose buildings in America are mostly very good. But the same cannot be said for the trio under construction or recently completed in London; these are contextually insensitive, not least in being vastly over-scaled and conceptually lazy. Whatever the real reasons for the contrasts in quality between the buildings in the US and London, it is difficult not to get the impression that American clients had approached a good architect in the expectation of 'doing the right thing'. And, by contrast, cynical British developers had said: 'You are a star: prove it by getting away with something outrageous.' The result is buildings that speak of greed more than civic values, although two of them make significant contributions to the public realm.

The Central St Giles mixed-use complex appears too big for its setting, but conforms to the intention of planners to increase the density of the area. What offends many people are the garishly coloured facades in what looks like plastic (actually glazed ceramic) that read as a patronising gesture to jolly up the excessive bulk. But what is more dismaying to those who know Piano's work is how devices used with better-considered purpose elsewhere have here been reduced to a seemingly unthinking repertoire as he recycles and debases these devices. Here the coloured facades that extend beyond what they enclose are the pointless vestige of the independent outer glass skin that on earlier buildings extended outwards and upwards in a poetic gesture that asserted the (semi-) independence of this layer and suggested a relationship with sky and wind and other aspects of context. Similarly, other Piano schemes create a new piazza that is positively shaped to expand and convey

'Many of today's most accomplished buildings are designed by highly professional mainstream practices. These architects, not the avant-garde, constitute the leading edge of practice that other architects study and emulate'

the essential spirit of the scheme; here it is mere residual space between perimeter blocks. This sort of conceptual laziness extends through the St Giles and the other London buildings by Piano.

London Bridge Tower, commonly called the Shard (of Glass), is in part a consequence of ex-mayor Ken Livingstone's notion that London needs a 'skyline' to be a credible world city, a preposterous idea urged upon him by architects anticipating the resultant commissions. Although the scheme will result in considerable improvements to the public realm, such as an enlarged bus station at its base, and will include publically accessible facilities high up within it, it is much too tall and big for its setting – and ugly also. It and all the people who will work and reside in it threaten to overwhelm the small scale and variety of the surrounding historic areas, one of the most characterful in London. Now UNESCO threatens to repeal World Heritage status of the Tower of London because of the Shard's looming presence across the Thames. These problems will be brutally compounded by London Bridge House, another behemoth (though less tall) that will overpower Borough High Street and Southwark Cathedral, to which it shows no deference at all.

Across the street from the east end of St Paul's Cathedral, and contrasting with the curved apse and sculpted detail, all in Portland stone, is One New Change. It is a new shopping complex by Jean Nouvel, its facetted forms in brown glass detailed with an insouciance that suggests the architect could not care less about the rigours of construction. The architect aptly describes it as a 'stealth' building, its forms the mute product of the various constraints of light and viewing angles that apply to the site. Its slimy, slippery shapelessness has also led to it being called, equally aptly, the Turd, its form squeezed by the rectum of these same constraints. But the negative presence of a stealth building is utterly inappropriate to a site of such civic importance. Here the role of architecture should be not to skulk away but to stand up, assert its presence and take its place in the world and enter into dignified dialogue with its neighbours.

'The negative presence of a stealth building is inappropriate to a site of civic importance. Here the role of architecture should be not to skulk away but to stand up, assert its presence and take its place in the world and enter into dignified dialogue with its neighbours'

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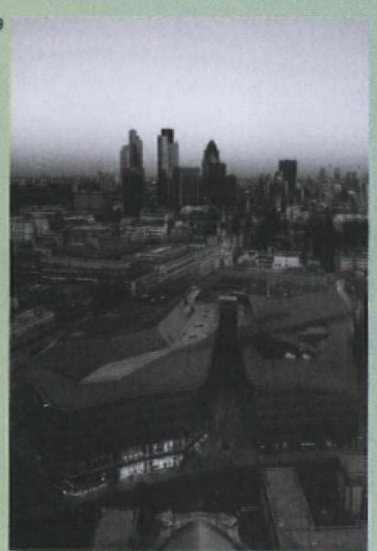


9. Jean Nouvel's 'Stealth Building' at One New Change, an unpleasant glazed brown shopping palace without coherent form or civic dignity

A similar but less extreme problem with presence is found with One Hyde Park by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners: it is simultaneously overbearing yet lacking in appropriate presence. This seems to be the most reviled new building in London, and not only because its mind-bogglingly expensive apartments, mostly owned for tax-evasion purposes by offshore trusts, symbolise the pathologies of the current world with its obscene polarisations of wealth and poverty. It is a building that only takes from its setting and gives nothing back, not forming a proper edge to the park or addressing it in a suitably civic manner, but instead sucking views of it deep into itself. It too is a negative presence, completely lacking in the architectural good manners that should be displayed on such a key site; again the lack of awareness of such niceties in even a high-profile architect accentuates the urgency of our rethink. Also swaggeringly insensitive is NEO Bankside, new housing blocks by the same practice next to Tate Modern.

Richard Rogers, as do some other architects, dismisses criticisms of his work as fuelled by nostalgia. But few architects' work is as nostalgic as his, in his case nostalgic for a future – one that fetishises an old industrial technology – that nobody else believes in anymore. Besides, modern architects missed something important in rejecting unease about their buildings as nostalgia. The word derives from the Greek, nostos (a return home), and there are ample reasons why people do not feel at home in modern architecture. These need to be addressed to achieve sustainability, which will only be possible when we cease to be alienated from the world and feel at home in it again.

In praise of critical thinking

Of the stars who have built in London recently it is, perhaps surprisingly, only Rem Koolhaas/OMA who emerges with any credit. The new headquarters for Rothschild Bank might be somewhat quirky but at least it is reticent and refined. So how did we get into this situation where even big names fail to produce decent architecture? In London, part (but only a small part) of the problem must lie with Britain's reactive rather than proactive planning system. With the exception of such things as protecting specific views, planners usually offer little or no initial guidance to the architect but instead respond to design proposals and negotiate changes to them. And even then, after weeks of this, there is no guarantee how members of the planning committee will respond. It is a stupid and wasteful system that leads to arbitrary judgements of approval or non-approval (how did some of these schemes, for instance, get approved?) and favours the legal profession and the rich who can employ it to make appeals against these judgements.

But at least in London these buildings (except the Rem Koolhaas/OMA one) are generally acknowledged by architects to be, at best, hugely problematic. Besides, these buildings have their equivalents around the globe where much other current architecture may be less nasty but more nonsensical. An obvious extreme are all those museums and galleries that seem to try and defy exhibiting in them because the walls slope

10

10 NEO Bankside apartments by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners; luxury living by the Tate Modern, but cut off from its surroundings
11. The most expensive apartments in the world at Hyde Park One. Here, Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners redefine the London mansion block for stealth wealth

11

(typical of Daniel Libeskind's museums) and/or are curved, the spaces are too big and/or wrongly proportioned, the lighting systems are overwhelmingly assertive and it is impossible to create a coherent curatorial sequence. A mistake here is that the curators and their architects want to create compelling artworks rather than mere architecture; but artworks compete with the art and cities cannot be made up of individual artworks each clamouring for attention – the core problem of the architecture of Herzog & de Meuron. Another prevalent extreme is in part art-influenced, minimalism, which comes in various sorts, ranging from that which emphasises the forceful presence of materials to that which seeks an evanescent dematerialisation. But much, if not nearly all, of it highlights a characteristic of modern and contemporary architecture that increasing numbers of writers and architects are troubled by, a creepy deadness as found in some of the works of David Chipperfield or SANAA.

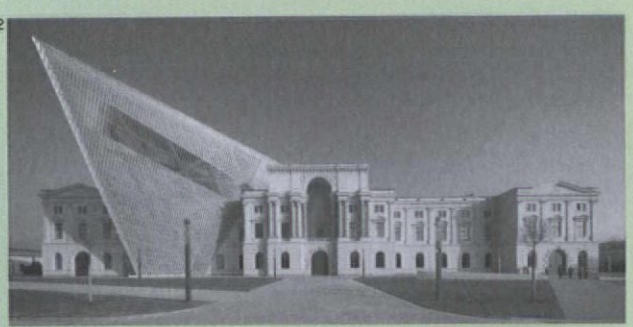
Another extreme are the 'Parametricist' blobs, once bodged together but now increasingly well made, that cannot define urban space nor relate to other buildings, and to which we cannot relate. And these are only the problems with the exteriors. There is also the ridiculous fashion for icons, again mostly blobs realised with parametric software, which are sculpturally assertive but signify nothing but the vanities of self-expression and the vacuous pursuit of novelty. And then there are the preposterously pretentious works illustrating some spurious theoretical position, most egregious and perniciously influential of all being the works of Peter Eisenman. How does he continue to get away with it? Are people really that gullible, devoid of common sense and visually undiscriminating?

Common to all these architectural approaches is that the buildings fail miserably in urban terms. Yet surely one of the most fundamental requirements of architecture is that it aggregate into satisfactory urban fabric? But these buildings relate neither to their neighbours, nor articulate public space. Nor can they create a sense of place. Conceived of as isolated object-buildings oblivious of all around them, they exacerbate one of the most pathological aspects of modern architecture – 'sunset effects', all of them, and irrelevant to the future. And yet behind most problematic current trends, of which only extremes have been mentioned, is the collapse of the simple certainties of modern architecture, with its reductive concerns and criteria, and the advent of Postmodernity, the relativist mode of thought rather than the architectural style.

Postmodernity offered a useful critique of modernity and has melted the hegemony of simplistic Modernist thinking. But it has its own serious inadequacies and particularly in academe has become a major obstacle to the embrace of useful new modes of thought, including those arising from science ('just another narrative') and the inclusive big picture visions arising from cosmology, evolution, ecology and so on – all of them Grand Narratives rejected by Postmodern thinkers. In architecture, Postmodernism's essential relativism (one person's view is as interesting and as valuable as another's), and so its aversion to discriminatory judgement, has helped spawn and legitimate the pluralism so evident in the current architectural scene.

'With the widespread lack of clarity about what is an architectural approach relevant to the future, it is little wonder that many architects decide to engage in the frivolities of form and theory and pursue momentary fame and fortune'

12



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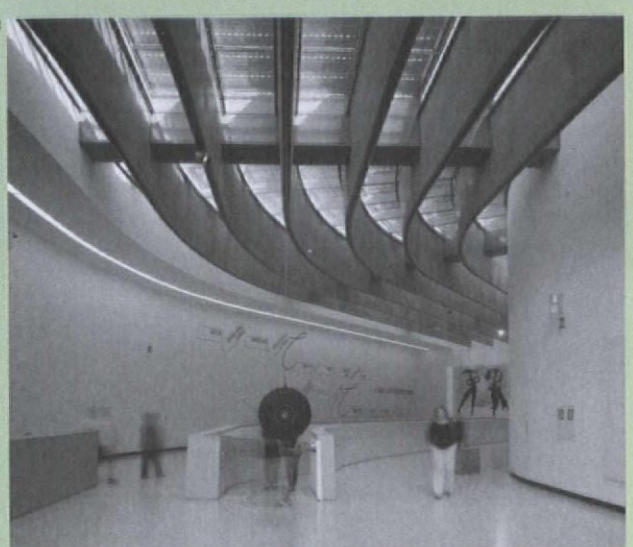
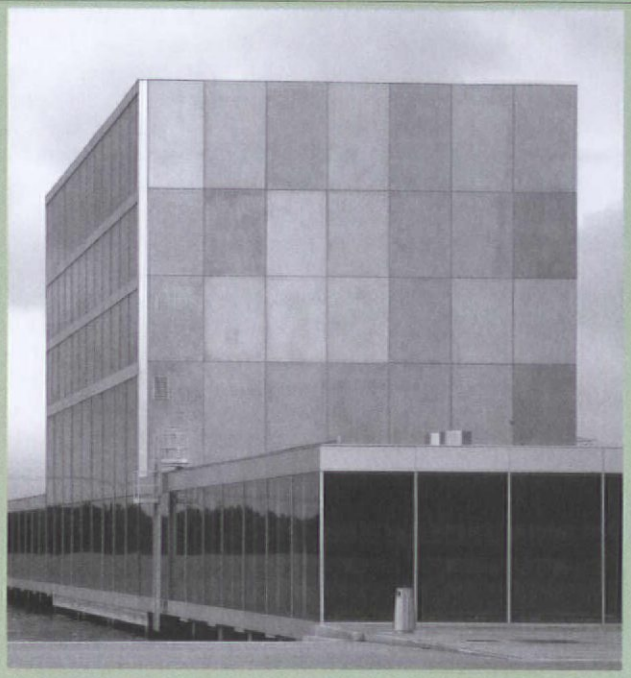


12. Daniel Libeskind's clumsy cauterisation of old and new at the Military History Museum in Dresden
13. The swooping, gestural interior of the MAXXI Museum by Zaha Hadid, a trophy museum for Rome's art scene. Its opening in 2010 symbolised the end of an era of architectural excess and largesse

14



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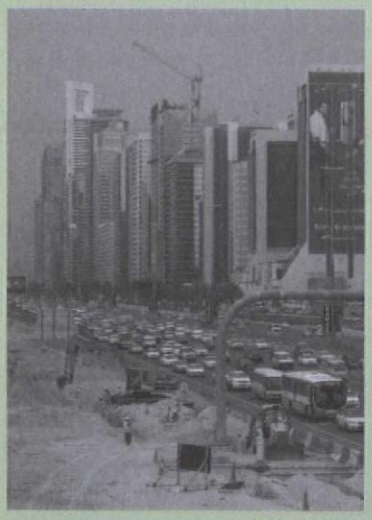
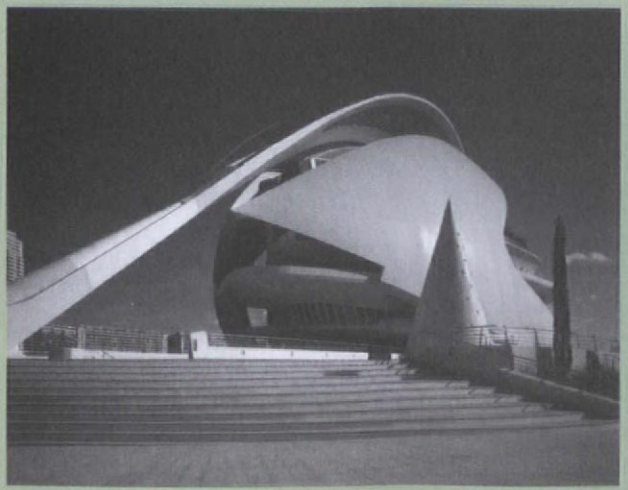


14. SANAA's arts centre in the Dutch satellite town of Almere fetishises a much imitated glacial imperviousness that has become curiously emblematic of many Japanese architects
15. The no-holds barred cityscape of Dubai transplants inappropriate and unsustainable Western models into the desert sands
16. Adventures in Brobdinagian geometry with Santiago Calatrava and the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia. A sculpture bloated into a building

16



Photographs
1 Andy Stagg
2 David Borland
3 Peter MacKinven
4-7 Foster + Partners
8 Hufton & Crow
9 Riddle Stagg
10 Edmund Sumner
11 James Winspear
12 Hufton & Crow
13 Paul Raftery
14 Edmund Sumner
15 Jochen Helle
16 Inigo Bujedo Aguirre

Modern architecture was always more pluralist than the caricature of it some Postmodernists paint and subsumed a wide variety of approaches and personal styles. Yet pluralism now is also a mask of confusion and chaos, the inability to discriminate and prioritise (which smacks of hierarchy, another Postmodern taboo), recognising one approach as more relevant than another. Compounding this is the spreading influence of academic Postmodern theory that has crippled, if not largely killed, criticism: theory tends to weave a web of obfuscatory verbiage spinning away from a subject while criticism is concerned with a penetrating engagement and discernment.

Making matters yet worse is the pursuit by academe and the media of the new and up-and-coming. This inflames the pursuit of spurious novelty, the too quick adoption of a stylistic brand and so the inability to slowly develop and mature. Combined with the widespread lack of clarity about what is an architectural approach relevant to the future, or even on the criteria of quality and lasting value, it is little wonder that many architects decide instead to engage in the frivolities of form and theory and pursue momentary fame and fortune. Yet the advent of the computer might be bringing matters to a head. Now that it is possible to conceive of and make buildings and components of any form, we are provoked to ask the question as to which forms are pertinent to architecture and the many ways people relate to it – a fundamental question the Parametricists, among others, still ignore.

In pursuit of an ecological architecture

Thoughtful architects tend to be dismayed by the confused state, pretentious posturing and irrelevance of much of the current architectural scene and education. They recognise that many of the problems seem to have started with the arrival of Postmodernism and may have something to do with it. They are also aware that we face urgent and near-overwhelming problems ranging from the environmental crisis to housing the masses flooding into the cities of the developing world – issues Postmodern thinking is unsuited to dealing with. Many of these architects have welcomed the quest for sustainability as a way of returning dignity and serious purpose to architecture – as the end of Postmodernity and a return to modernity. But the quest for sustainability must bring an end to modernity as well as to Postmodernity.

Much very good architecture is being produced in the pursuit of the green agenda. But the common flaw in this work is that it focuses on objective issues such as ecology and technology; it does not yet give due emphasis to the subjective dimensions of psychology and culture. The conceptual thinking still conforms to the paradigm of modernity. But as Einstein pointed out, a problem cannot be solved with the same level of thinking as created it. Unsustainability is utterly endemic to modernity. Today's green architecture, the accomplishments of which are immensely admirable and hugely valuable as research, is only making things less unsustainable. To approach true sustainability, the subject of the next few essays, will involve the embrace of very different modes of thought, and even of notions of reality.

TROUBLES IN THEORY PART 2: PICTURESQUE TO POSTMODERNISM

The first article in this series sketched a broad picture of the forms taken by architectural theory after the Second World War. The second part focuses on the post-war period up to the birth of Postmodernism in the mid 1970s. In particular, it examines the AR's revival of the principles of the Picturesque, and how they could be applied to the city, beginning with surveys of bomb damage and refined through the prism of Townscape. This presaged the first truly Postmodern theory of Collage City, published in 1975, marking the return of historcism and a riposte to the dehumanising tendancies of Moderism

ANTHONY VIDLER

'Let it therefore be boldly stated that the REVIEW has a "call", a call of quite a low-class evangelical kind. [...] Underneath its more obvious aims, running through them and linking them together, is another less tangible one, which may be described by the words, visual *re-education*.'
The Editors, *The Architectural Review*, January 1947.

Introducing *The Architectural Review*'s January 1947 issue, the editors – JM Richards, Nikolaus Pevsner, Osbert Lancaster and Hubert de Cronin Hastings – celebrated the start of the 'second half century' of the AR's publication with a bold policy statement. The 'Modern Movement in architecture' was accepted as 'being made of very stern stuff indeed', freeing the AR to widen its scope. Side by side with the obligation to provide a 'third programme' for architecture, the editors affirmed, was the strong mission to educate the public in the art of architecture, to act 'in the cause of visual culture'. What that meant was made clear by a reference to the 'great visual educator' Uvedale Price, a model for understanding the 'visual experience' bound to the 'pursuit of the visual life' presented in 'landscape and townscape'.

The 'First Half Century' had seen the 'drama' of the Modern Movement, summarised in two 'acts' by Pevsner in a pictorial resume of his own *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936): Act I, where Ruskin, Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement had prepared the ground had been followed by Act II, tracing 'the natural development of fresh visual symbols', and the acceptance of new building techniques. But a third act was needed to bring true visual principles to technological expression: this would bring back that most English of English traditions, the Picturesque, studied not only in landscape design but 'in relation to the new problems of urban landscape'. This act would reinstate the main plot – to recapture 'the scope and richness' discarded by the modern revolution and to work for a re-humanisation – the building up of tradition: 'new richness and differentiation of character, the pursuit of differences rather than sameness, the re-emergence of monumentality, the cultivation of idiosyncrasy, and the development of those regional dissimilarities that people have always taken a pride in.' He concluded: 'In fact architecture must find a way of humanising itself as regards expression without in any way abandoning the principles on which the Revolution was founded.'

Modern architecture is 'dominated by planning' and conceived in terms of 'one coordinated scene' – but has not yet acquired 'visual three-dimensional status, nor has the new scale that the landscape element has introduced into architecture been fully assimilated'. The visual allows for a 'continuity of tradition' and 'that historic precedent can be used constructively, not as an escape'. In this assertion of principle were bound up the complex strands that were to preoccupy the AR over the next 30 years: the dedication to visual experience, the identification of such experience with the themes buried in the English Picturesque, and the demand to make these pertinent and graphically visible to the public at large; and the seeds of what Pevsner would observe some 14 years later, and not without some dismay, as the 'return of historicism' in what he called 'Post Modern Movement' architecture.

Author's note
In essays of this series, I have adopted the position of Eric de Maré, who, in 1949, published three articles towards a new 'canon' in *The Architectural Review*, attempting to account for the range of theoretical interventions in postwar Scandinavia, Europe, Russia and the US. And, like de Maré, I will be unable to come to a definitive conclusion...

During the War, the AR ran several surveys of bomb damage to buildings 'of architectural importance'. Photographs and drawings of smoking ruins were often accompanied by surprisingly lyrical prose. Hence 'the Picturesque was allied to the terrible Sublime and pressed into the services of visual re-education'. This spread is from July 1941. The 'post-modern' principles of the AR's Picturesque and Townscape campaigns prefigured the genuinely 'Postmodern' theory of Collage City, which was published in August 1975, the year in which Charles Jencks first coined the new term

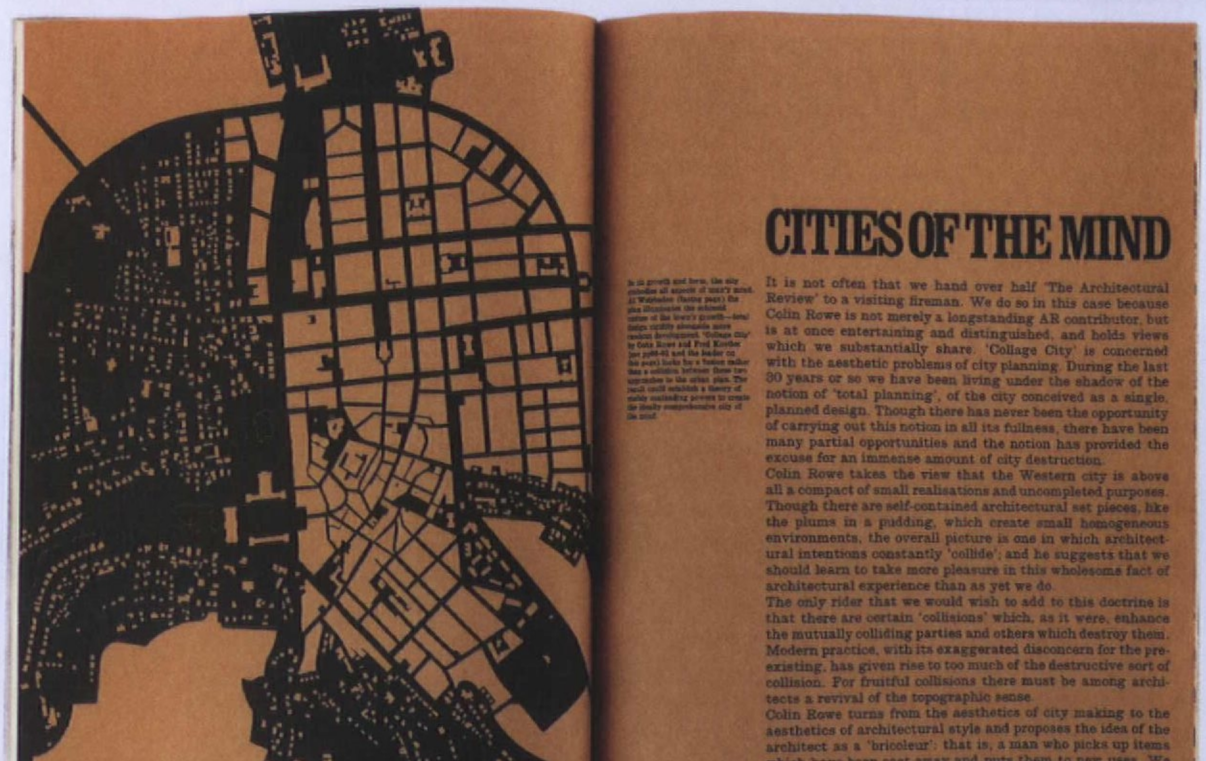

2. The End of Last Time

FIRST INSTALMENT OF A SURVEY OF BOMB DAMAGE TO BUILDINGS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

LONDON

City Companies' Halls


CITIES OF THE MIND

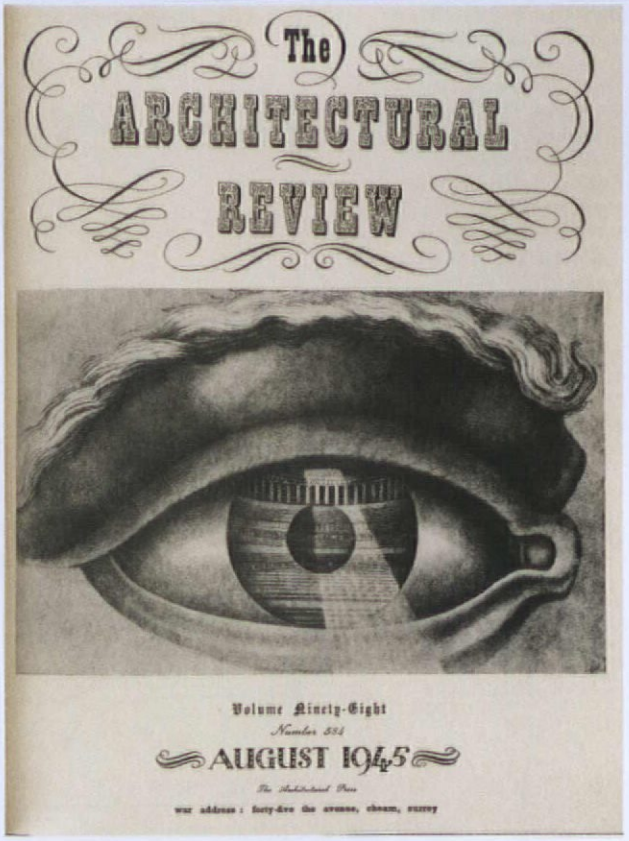
It is not often that we hand over half 'The Architectural Review' to a visiting fireman. We do so in this case because Colin Rowe is not merely a longstanding AR contributor, but is at once entertaining and distinguished, and holds views which we substantially share. 'Collage City' is concerned with the aesthetic problems of city planning. During the last 30 years or so we have been living under the shadow of the notion of 'total planning', of the city conceived as a single, planned design. Though there has never been the opportunity of carrying out this notion in all its fullness, there have been many partial opportunities and the notion has provided the excuse for an immense amount of city destruction.

Colin Rowe takes the view that the Western city is above all a compact of small realisations and uncompleted purposes. Though there are self-contained architectural set pieces, like the plums in a pudding, which create small homogeneous environments, the overall picture is one in which architectural intentions constantly 'collide'; and he suggests that we should learn to take more pleasure in this wholesome fact of architectural experience than as yet we do.

The only rider that we would wish to add to this doctrine is that there are certain 'collisions' which, as it were, enhance the mutually colliding parties and others which destroy them. Modern practice, with its exaggerated disconcern for the pre-existing, has given rise to too much of the destructive sort of collision. For fruitful collisions there must be among architects a revival of the topographic sense.

Colin Rowe turns from the aesthetics of city making to the aesthetics of architectural style and proposes the idea of the architect as a 'bricoleur': that is, a man who picks up items which have been cast away and puts them to new uses. We think this an apt metaphor for a sane architectural attitude, the more so for a generation which is seeking to recover for their art its traditional richness and particularity.

From its 'war address' in Cheam, the AR surveys a brave new post-war world in August 1945



However, the principles outlined in 'The Second Half Century', had in fact been developed by Hubert de Cronin Hastings writing as 'The Editor' in February 1944 under the title 'Exterior Furnishing or Sharawaggi: the Art of Making Urban Landscape'. Here, Hastings harked back to 'the time of Ebeneezer Howard and Raymond Unwin' and the image of the garden city, whence derived the image of the popular picture of the 'semi-Tudor', which maintained traction 50 years later.

Hastings noted that England was no longer looked to as 'head of international inspiration in architecture' as it had been at the time of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Planners had 'failed to provide an alternative picture comparable in realism, vividness or simplicity', while technological, or transportation-based, models of the culture could not sustain 'Mr Brown' who 'wants a picture of the kind of world the physical planner will make, and up to date has been given nothing between Port Sunlight and MARS'. There was, Hastings argued, a serious need for 'a picture' that would '*reconcile visually* in the mind's eye what appear to be irreconcilable elements in any town plan: quaint bits, new bits, monuments, traffic, tall buildings, short buildings, flat blocks, individual cottages.'

Thus he advanced a solution, 'Picturesque Theory', as it evolved in England during the 18th century and was internationalised in the early 19th century. 'What we really need to do now,' he suggested, is 'to resurrect the true theory of the Picturesque and apply a point of view already existing to a field in which it has not been consciously applied before: the city'. He admitted that this would demand 'a revolution in taste', and therefore supplied a photo essay as a means of developing the elements of this revived theory. Photographs illustrated the idea of the 'street-picturesque', which encapsulated 'the liveliness of the Picturesque street, whose chimneys, odd roof angles, protruding bows, trees and shrubs chiaroscuro, some distant eye-catcher closing the vista constitute a genuine piece of urban landscape'; the old and the new 'a contrast of complementarities'; the success and failure of accident as opposed to the 'visual *laissez-faire*', which produced 'a mining-camp not an urban landscape'.

Models for the Picturesque

In a masterstroke of prospective nostalgia, Hastings concluded by taking as his model for such theory, that of Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, as described in Christopher Hussey's 'The Picturesque'. The art of the Landscape Picturesque was, he claimed, identical to what the Chinese called 'Sharawaggi' or irregular gardening. Landscape should be observed with the painter's eye (he cited Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa, John Piper, John Nash, Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilious, Christopher Wood, Kenneth Rowntree – painters of 'urban scenery') against those who see 'the new Jerusalem all open space and concrete'. This series of dialectical photographs, would lead, he hoped, to a 'visual policy for urban landscape', one that was 'natural to the English temperament'. He concluded: 'Any time he so desires the modern town-planner is free to pick up Picturesque theory at the point before its corruption by the Gothic Revival; pick up the theory, rediscover its prophets, and apply the principles.'

'What we need to do now,' Hubert de Cronin Hastings suggested, is 'to resurrect the theory of the Picturesque and apply a point of view already existing to a field in which it has not been consciously applied before: the city'

Perhaps the most dramatic of these early appeals to the Picturesque, was published immediately following the London blitz and entitled 'The Architecture of Destruction'. An introduction by the artist John Piper sketched the impression of London's ruins: 'Roads blocked, warehouses still burning'. The article was illustrated by photographs of the bombed-out shells of churches and offices, taken the morning after the raid, 'a sea of smoking rubble'. These terrifying images, were, however, accompanied by a surprising commentary. The 'transparent shell' of a corner building exhibits 'drama'; Paternoster Square and Ave Maria Lane are seen as 'examples of the surprising proportions of air-raid scenery'; the north of St Paul's has been transformed into a 'grotto'; stone calcined by fire has a 'peculiar quality'; 'striking motifs' are observed in windowless arcades. The article ends by noting 'the surprising poetry of destruction: the oddity of a newly bombed interior and the almost gaiety, like a scene in a French film, of a garden in next morning's sunshine'. These were ruins looked at 'with an artist's eye', as architecture in their own right, exhibiting 'an intensive evocative atmosphere', to be admired 'frankly for their own beauty'. This was the Picturesque allied to the terrible Sublime, and pressed into the service of visual re-education with a vengeance.

These articles were to anticipate many pieces devoted, on the one hand, to the theory of the Picturesque, and on the other to Townscape. Hastings, under the pseudonym Ivor de Wolfe, wrote on Townscape, basing his theory on Uvedale Price's 'An Essay on the Picturesque' (1794), prefacing a pictorial essay by Gordon Cullen, entitled 'Townscape Casebook', the beginnings of Cullen's powerful role as popular illustrator of the principles. Pevsner wrote on the Picturesque, countering Basil Taylor's assertion that it represented 'an imperfect vision', and claiming that the Modern Movement itself had its roots in the aesthetic and demonstrating his thesis by reference to Le Corbusier's informal grouping of houses at Stuttgart. Hastings's article on Townscape, was unambiguous: 'The movement that used to be called Functionalism has developed an inner schism in which one party [figurehead Le Corbusier] has moved towards the rational or classic or crystalline solution; the other [Frank Lloyd Wright] towards the romantic or, as he would say, organic [...] There is a third movement so far not isolated by the critics [...] might be called English or Radical since it belongs to neither of the above categories [...] the war cry 'irregular' this needs a 'case-book' like the case-book of common law. An aesthetic theory had been presented with the claim that it was as English as the 'common law' of the country.

That such a theory was implicitly counter – if not Postmodern, was demonstrated by the furious response of Alan Colquhoun to Pevsner's claim that Le Corbusier himself was influenced by the Picturesque; Colquhoun retorted Pevsner's Le Corbusier was an entirely visual fabrication, and owed nothing to the internal ideational content of the architecture. But Colquhoun was himself working out of the image of Le Corbusier fashioned by Colin Rowe – that of a 'Modernist' manipulating the geometries of Palladian plans and the imbricated techniques of Mannerist facades within a vocabulary

John Piper's survey of colour in the Picturesque village, part of a regular series of colour in buildings with evocative drawings by the artist. Sharawaggi, 'the art of making urban landscape', was first expounded in January 1944, presaging the AR's Townscape campaigns of the '50s and '60s, and eventually the Collage City issue of 1975 in which Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter proposed the notion of the architect as *bricoleur*, connecting the aesthetics of making cities with the aesthetics of architectural style. This marked the beginning of the 'new' theory of Postmodernism, which was enthusiastically coded and dissected by Charles Jencks

of Purist abstraction. Rowe, as has become evident, was, like his contemporary in art history Clement Greenberg, himself making up the constituents of a 'Modernism' that was in its unifying formal characteristics, far from the heterogeneous works of the avant-gardes in the 1920s and '30s. In essence, as Fredric Jameson has noted, the 'Modernism' of the 1950s was an ideology invented to justify a concept ('flatness' for Greenberg, 'mannerism' for Rowe) by means of a reverse reading of history. This 'Post' Modern Movement ideology, in its turn was to inspire a second reverse reading: that of 'Postmodernism'.

While this characteristic of post-World War theory was not immediately evident at the time, today the apparently oppositional nature of Rowe and Koetter's Collage City to Townscape, appears less abrupt. Indeed, as John MacArthur has recently demonstrated, the similarities between a visual theory of urban composition from ground level (Cullen's Townscape) and a visual theory based on aerial photography and figure-ground plans (Rowe's Collage City) are more striking than their differences.

In this context, it is logical to find Robert Venturi's first article published under the rubric Townscape in the May 1953 issue of the AR. Entitled 'The Campidoglio: A Case Study', Venturi's thesis was entirely visual, and concerned with the way the character of Michelangelo's formalising of the Campidoglio had been 'injured' by ignorance of the principle that 'the architect has a responsibility toward the landscape, which he can subtly enhance or impair, for we see in perceptual wholes and the introduction of any new building will change the character of all the other elements in a scene'. Venturi, in a series of figure-ground plans and sections, demonstrated the point. Michelangelo had modified the piazza so the original senatorial palace was given emphasis by 'the contrasting elements of [the flanking buildings] colour and texture, and the neutral, even rhythm of their columned facades.' The intrusion of the huge, Vittorio Emanuel Monument, a 'shiny monster,' had destroyed the setting with its 'intricate, small-scale neighbourhoods,' and thus the effect of the ascent to the Campidoglio itself ending in the powerfully visually controlled piazza, as well as the view from the top, which 'formerly offered views tantalisingly interrupted with rich, unaffected architectural foregrounds'.

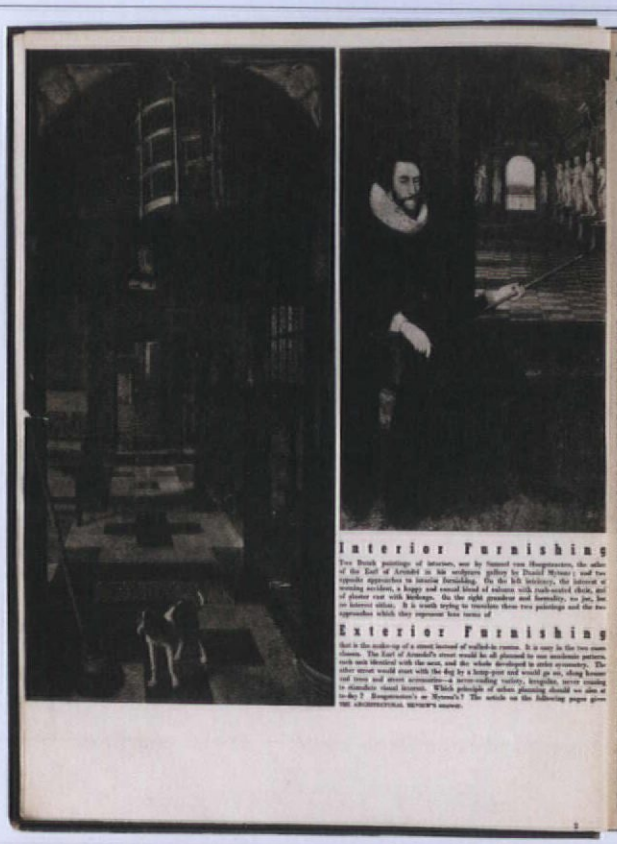
The transition from the visual theory of Townscape to that of Postmodernism was effected by this move, from urban context to the single building, aided by the sense in the early 1960s that architecture had lost itself among the different ways it had sought to justify its social and technological role. When in 1966, Venturi published the work that he had begun in 1954 in Rome, the shift was complete. Under the guise of returning to an original autonomy for architecture, he catalogued the ways the contemporary discipline might regain some of the richness lost through modernist abstraction, and all the techniques employed by Hastings, Pevsner and Cullen to revive the visual complexity and contrasts of the urban scene were used to restore visual complexity to the single building.

The first part of this trilogy was published in October 2011. The final part will appear later in the spring. Theory pieces from the archive can be found at architectural-review.com/archive

COLOUR IN THE PICTURESQUE VILLAGE

By John Piper

'Colin Rowe was, like his contemporary in art history Clement Greenberg, making up the constituents of a 'Modernism' that was in its unifying formal characteristics, far from the heterogeneous work of the avant-garde in the 1920s'



Interior Furnishing

Two Dutch paintings of interiors, one by Samuel van Hoogstraeten, the other of the East of Arundel in his sculpture gallery by Daniel Mytens; and two opposite approaches to interior furnishing. On the left luxuriancy, the interest of warming accident, a happy and casual blend of colours with rush-seated chair, and of plaster cast with birdcage. On the right grandeur and formality, we see, but we interest either. It is worth trying to translate these two paintings and the two approaches which they represent into terms of

Exterior Furnishing

that is the make-up of a street instead of walled-in rooms. It is easy in the two examples chosen. The Earl of Arundel's street would be all planned to one academic pattern, each unit identical with the next, and the whole developed to strict symmetry. The other street would start with the dog by a lamp-post and would go on, along houses and trees and street accessories—a never-ending variety, irregular, never ceasing to stimulate visual interest. Which principle of urban planning should we aim at to-day? Hoogstraeten's or Mytens's? The article on the following pages gives THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW'S answer.

EXTERIOR FURNISHING

or sharawaggi: the art of making urban landscape

By the Editor

WE are not used in these days, to thinking of this country as the fountain-head of international inspiration in architecture. Most of the under-sixties have forgotten that there was a time—a time, not at all long ago—when from Chicago to Vienna the architect, the designer, the craftsman and the "art-lover" looked upon England as the headquarters of an esthetic revolution. It was the time of Voysey's cottages, and Morris's, Crace's, Voysey's and Mackintosh's designs; of the Kelmscott and the Doves Press, of Gimson chairs, Heal beds and Ashbee and Benson metalwork. It was also the time of Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, and of William Robinson's and Gertrude Jekyll's revival of the cottage garden, or rather their raising of its social status, from a rural vernacular to a romeison—a disenunciation—style.

Though the views of these artists and architects have by now become part of the accepted stock in trade of reactionary parliamentarians and town-councillors, and of dull people all over Europe and America, their activities, seen against their Victorian background of metropolitan squalor and middle-class stuffed-shirtedness, were truly revolutionary. Much of what they did was done to help Billy Brown, the Little Man, and Bill Brown, the working man, to live a decent life in decent surroundings. And in course of time there arose as a by-product of their labours a kind of popular picture (one that considerably distorted the original vision) of the ideal old decent world the Browns. If they were adventurous, and never aware, might hope to inhabit. It was a world of dear little bird-haunted streets, cracky-quilted with semi-Tudor or semi-Vogsey or (later) semi-Georgian cottages and cottage gardens. If England were good, it was hinted, all the Browns might in the course of time and provided of course they remained rigidly respectable, expect to end up in some Garden City. Just as all good Americans when they die are supposed to go to Paris, so Englishmen if they were clean might be deemed fit for Letchworth. For town-planners of that day the garden city became a Sign and a Symbol, and it is still the dream of the Little Man, kept alight in his breast, as it was kindled and fanned, by the Garden Cities Association.

But it is no longer even the explicit objective of the Garden Cities Association which has seen fit to take unto itself a new name—the mysterious one of Town and Country Planning Association. Significant indeed is that change of name (which took place during the present war), representing as it does the admission by the most doctrinaire of planning bodies that something is wrong with the garden city ideal. Something is. It is too elementary. As a physical solution to the problems arising out of the Industrial Revolution, it is about as efficient as the pikes handed out to the Home Guard early in the war to stop Hitler's Panzers.

And yet, poor though he may, until he is in a position to put something else in its place, the modern planner will not be listened to when he exposes the falsity of the garden city idea. In its day it had the virtues of its limitations; it painted a solid picture of well-being, neither too highly coloured nor too high-falutin' for Bill Brown to hitch his waggon to. As a result it gained the national ear, or rather filled the national eye. The picture may be a faint one in that it is an over-simplification, but it is clear; clear enough to be popular. And so far the modern scientific town-planner has failed to provide an alternative picture comparable in realism, vividness or simplicity. Imagine an exhibition in which two models are on show, one of the usual modern town-plan, a machine to live in, the other of a garden city. And imagine the exhibition crowded with people. Who amongst the Browns would hesitate for a moment in their choice? A model of the transport of the future with helicopters and air-buses may look rather fascinating, but a man of commonsense does not forget all the important things he does on two legs. However alluring mechanical improvements may look, for all essential purposes the human scale of living does not really change, whatever Dr. Giedion may say. And as Bill Brown goes for the ideal he knows, because what he wants is a picture that makes sense to him. It isn't that he is a fool; he is quite capable of imagining the complications inherent in planning, even of making sacrifices for the greater good of the greater number, but he cannot, he feels, be expected to do his part without being given an idea, a pretty clear idea, of what it is all leading up to. He wants a picture of the kind of world the physical planner will make, and up to date he has been given nothing between Piet Sandgirl and MARS. It is asking too much of him to expect him to put his shirt on MARS. Hows round the Door is a picture which contrives to summon up a twinge of far cosier associations.

If this argument is right, one of the vital questions the professional planner has to ask himself to-day is: Can I find a picture that will give my non-technical fellow-countrymen a vivid impression of the good things coming to them, if they give me the chance I ask for. But before he can do that the planner himself must have a picture. And by the word picture is meant—literally—a picture; a picture of how his town will look. For this is the natural way people check up on the way they themselves will feel. The Garden City propaganda provided just this, a picture; but we do not think it is too much to say that few up-garden-city planners have any conception of the way they mean things to look. We think most town-planners are themselves puzzled and embarrassed by their lack of realistic vision, their inability to reassemble visually in the mind's eye what appear to be irreconcilable elements in any town plan: quaint bits, new bits, monuments, traffic, tall buildings, short buildings, flat blocks, individual cottages, etc., etc.

Yet—and the purpose of this article is to point it out—there is an aspect of the matter which seems to have been incredibly overlooked by town-planners. It is the fact, obvious to foreigners and historians, that a national picture-making aptitude exists among us, and has done for centuries. In *Picturesque Theory*, evolved on this island early in the eighteenth century and imitated all over Europe round about 1800, a quite unassailable national point of view asserted itself. It was expressed at first exclusively in landscaping improvements of private grounds and country estates, and though in the nineteenth century certain of its conventions were applied to the town square, the well-to-do suburb and the garden city, these were in forms so debased as to justify one in saying that true Picturesque theory has never been applied to the urban scene.

What we really need to do now, this article suggests, is to resurrect the true theory of the Picturesque and apply a point of view already existing in a field in which it has not been consciously applied before: the city. This will demand a revolution in taste. The only difficulty really is that the picturesque character of

Colin Rowe
Fred Koetter

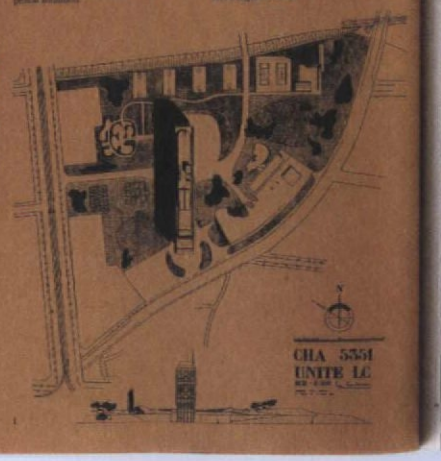
COLLAGE CITY

It was not so many years ago that the Graduate School of Design at Harvard issued a brochure entitled Cities. It was an opulent production, bloated over-size on a white ground, and its message was not at all oblique. There exists an environmental crisis but the Graduate School of Design possesses most of the know-how to arrest its progress and solution, and, therefore, in order that it may realize its mission, give, gives to the Graduate School of Design.

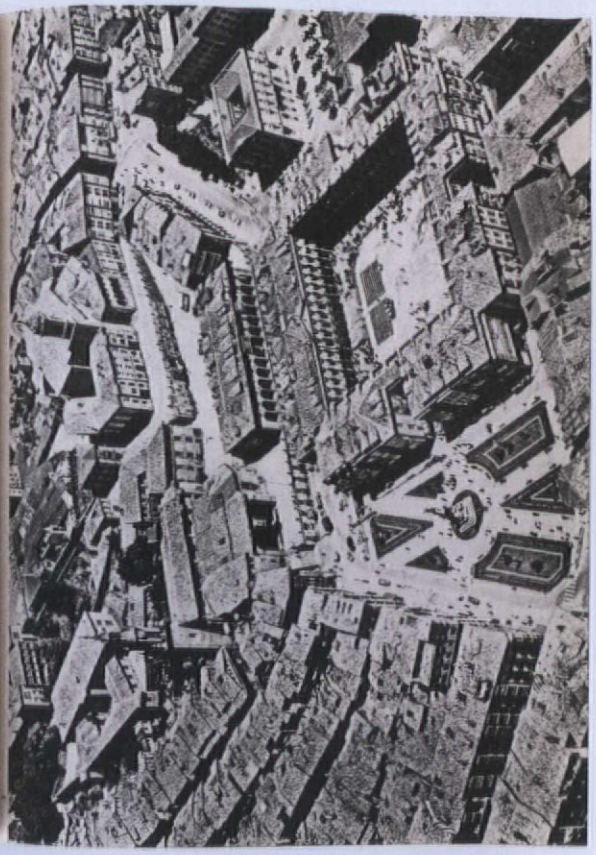
The strategy, of course, begins to be evident, but it continues apparently to be irresistible and the notion of imparting any monstrous metatypes would now seem to be regarded as the psychology of modern architecture. Apocalyptic catastrophe, instant millennium. The threat of destruction, the hope of salvation. Irresistible change which still requires human co-operation. The new architecture and urbanism as emblems of the new Jerusalem. The corruptions of high society. The bonfire of vanities. Self-enjoyment drawn towards a form of collectivized freedom. The sophisticated dressed in its sincere wardrobe and fortified by the equivalent of religious exercises, may now revert to the virtues of its primal sensibilities.

This is to caricature, though not seriously to distort, a complex of sentiments which might be designated the Bernanos-de-syndicate, sometimes often lying just beneath the threshold of consciousness, and therefore, it should be without surprise that one observes a recent *AIA Journal*—yet again Crisis (this time not letters on a black ground), and this time not as appeal for money but rather an instrument to public self-flagellation.

Now the notion of how the worshippers of decadent corruption have been so much baptized by what used to be called the Modern Movement is neither to deplore crude revivalism (necessary and the fault of the latest Appalachian convert), nor to be objective, to approach modern architecture, and, certainly, it should not be understood as condemning a movement-cum-style for maintaining that revolutions of ideas are in any way illusory. It may be granted that a crisis exists, but it must also be known that the peddling of crisis by the architectural begins to become an objectionable practice, that it is now one of those retarded gambits of criticism which any sense of obligation should feel obliged to avoid.



1, Le Corbusier's design for a Ville d'Habitation to be built in Paris (1922-27). A design for an ideal world that was seen as revolutionary. Whatever might have been its poetry has been realized as the most brutal and illiterate of plans.
2 (facing page). Utopia, whether conceived by Plato or Marx, has always been done in some kind of arch manner. But the college city view accommodates a whole range of utopias in miniature. Collage allows us to accept Utopia in fragments, as in this example of several incongruous visions of Utopia in Spain.



REVIEWS

In-house physicians

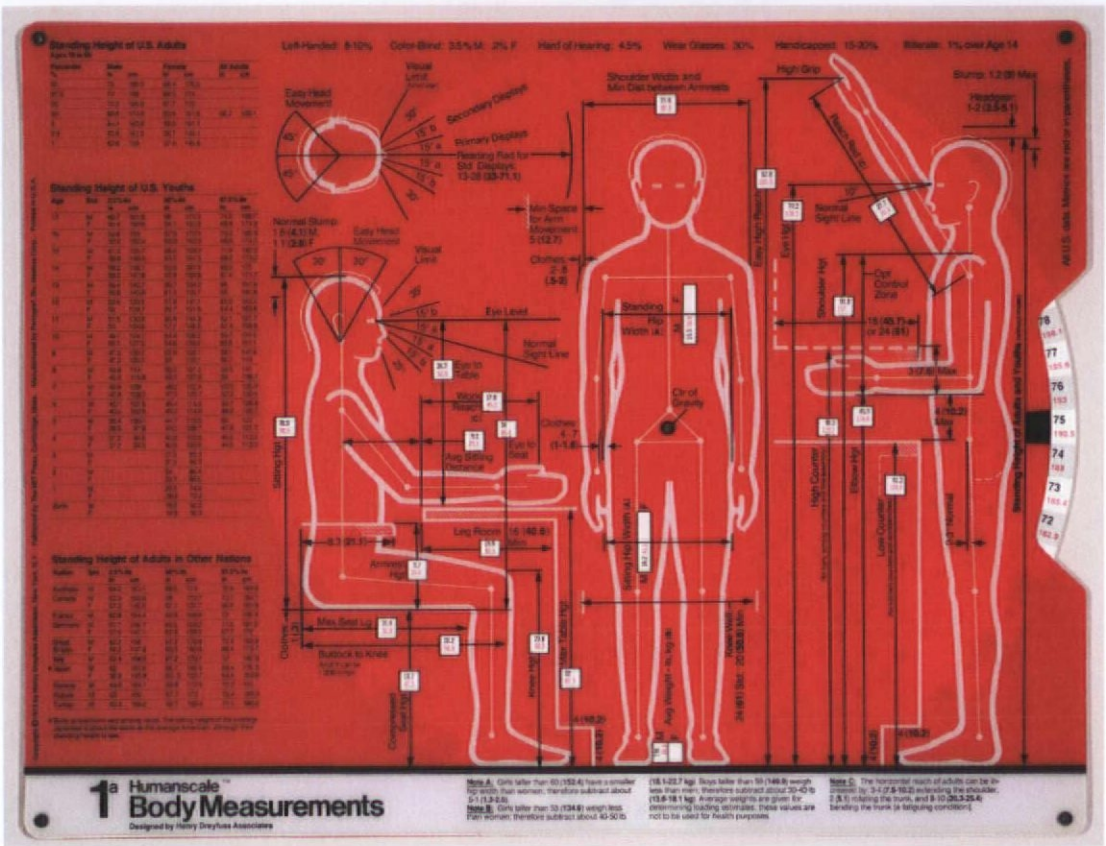
MARK LAMSTER

Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture
Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, until 15 April 2012

Earlier this year, I purchased an ultrasonic humidifier for the bedroom of my young daughter, in the hope that it might ease a persistent cough. Every day, according to its instructions, I must wash out the murky sediment it leaves in its basin and on its sensor. But of course I don't remember to perform this operation every day, and even when I do there are inevitably days when I do so with less than optimal care, allowing a sometimes invisible residue to form. And so I am left to wonder, is this machine making my daughter's environment better or worse?

The question was thrown into relief as I made my way around the exhibition Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. 'It is found in ordinary affairs that one never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another,' reads one of the maxims that curators Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini have placed throughout the show for thematic consideration. (That one comes courtesy of Machiavelli.) Among the exhibits is a survey conducted between 2007 and 2010, the results of which indicate that dust from urban residences shows higher levels of potentially dangerous metals (including lead, mercury, arsenic, cadmium, copper, zinc and antimony) compared to outdoor samples. Was that what I was circulating in my daughter's bedroom?

The exhibition opens with a provocative wall graphic that asks, among a number of other pertinent questions, 'Why are you so scared?'



Above: An exhibit from the Imperfect Health show at the CCA, this template for body measurements was designed by Henry Dreyfuss Associates. The human body and its physical potential is distilled to a manageable series of measurements and proportions

and 'Is the future of architecture medicalisation?' To the first, the curators offer many possible answers, among them: cancer, allergies, obesity, epidemics, ageing and death. On the second, they are somewhat less sure, writing that the exhibition is 'meant to highlight the uncertainties and contradictions present in the ideas of health that are emerging in Western countries today'.

Certainly, though, the show posits a necessary preoccupation with the issue of health, broadly considered, in architecture and urbanism, and at the same time a wariness of the unintended consequences inevitably set off by our interventions. This is made manifest in one of the first installations, a grid of beautifully inked tree elevations drawn by Cesare Leonardi over the course of 20 years, starting in the early 1960s. It was Leonardi's goal to create a convenient arborial graphic standard for landscape architects, and he did, but its widespread 'misuse' came with the side effect of introducing into cities a variety of species that trigger allergic and asthmatic responses.

Despite such risks, the health benefits of adding green spaces to the city are undeniable, and the exhibition offers numerous inventive alternatives, ranging from hypo-allergenic gardens to buildings cloaked in skins of vegetation to vast structures that are ecosystems unto themselves. Among the most practical of these are a series of pioneering vertical garden facades ('murs végétaux'), designed by botanist Patrick Blanc and landscape architect Michel Desvigne for buildings in Bordeaux and Paris – walls alive with plants

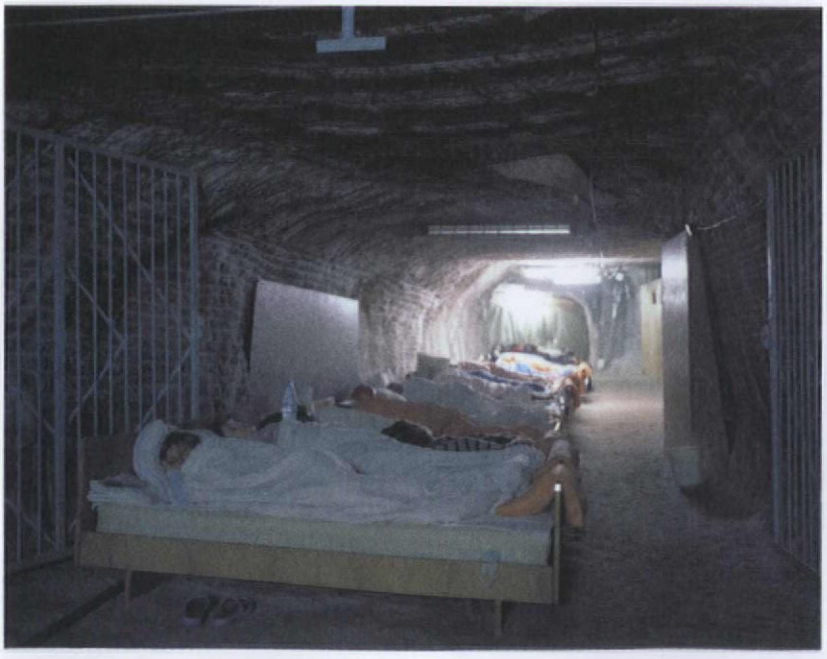
that 'introduce biodiversity, clean the air, and reduce energy consumption by influencing the building's internal temperature'.

The typological inversion of these projects, which take their form from a surface that breathes clean air into the environment, is offered by a 2002 Bangkok museum proposal by Paris-based firm R&Sie(n). Here, the surface is created not by breathing out, but by sucking particulate matter from the air by means of electrostatic attraction. 'The building would clean the air by getting itself dirty,' write the curators, forming an architecture of toxic accretion. Similar in concept, Breathing Room, a proposal by New York architect Kayt Brumder, imagines facades as 'protective filters' for the heavily polluted industrial cities of La Oroya (Peru), Linfen (China) and Norilsk (Russia).

The contaminated air of the urban environment is a problem we must confront daily, and has been for some time. In the middle of the 19th century, the Polish physician Feliks Boczkowski developed 'speleotherapy', the treatment of asthma and other respiratory illnesses in the mineral rich air of salt mines. The practice is common in Eastern Europe, as illustrated by Kirill Kuletski's photographs of Ukraine's Solotvyno Clinic, situated in tunnels and galleries some 300m below ground, which maintain a constant temperature of 22 °C.

The idea of creating hygienic space, of course, has been a fixation of the Modern Movement since its earliest days as a force for social reform. The obsession was taken to its logical extreme by Alison and Peter Smithson in their 1956 House of the Future – represented in a large sketch in the exhibition – a synthetic home of moulded-plastic surfaces with an airlock door. On entry, this domicile's 'users' (note the choice of term) were automatically showered, blow-dried and placed in nylon suits to maintain its hermetic, sterile environment. Even food was subjected to gamma rays, to kill bacteria.

That house appears a droll parody of yesterday's Futurism until you arrive in the next gallery, to be confronted by a series of projects on the subject of medical quarantine. The practice, originated in Venice during the years of the Black Death, has achieved a new and terrifying currency in this age of SARS, BSE and antibiotic resistance. Among the responses exhibited here, an inflatable Domestic Isolation Room Unit by David Garcia Studio and a plan, by Front Studio Architects, for Q-City, which divides urban infrastructure into parallel, segregated spaces – one for the healthy, one for the contaminated – a dystopia that seems to be lifted from a China Miéville novel.



Below: 'Breathing In' by Kirill Kuletski, part of a photographic series documenting asthma patients undergoing speleotherapy in a salt mine in the Ukrainian village of Solotvyno. The salt-permeated air assists breathing and kills infections

In truth, the aged and infirm already exist in their own segregated spaces, both by nature and choice. This point is made most literally by MIT AgeLab's Age Gain Now Empathy System (AGNES) prosthesis – a suit that constricts vision and movement to mimick the experience of a 70-year-old. (Alas, it does not improve conditions if worn by an 80-year-old.) The exhibition presents several projects that respond to the body's progressive decline: planned communities for the aged, elderly care centres, hospices. Among the most creative is Niall McLaughlin Architects' Orchard Respite Centre, in Dublin, a facility for Alzheimer's patients, designed to reduce anxiety and disorientation by eliminating long corridors and cul-de-sacs, and facilitating wayfinding through light, colour, material, and even smell (from kitchens and dining areas).

Though it addresses the architectural needs of the elderly and terminally ill, what is most remarkably absent from the exhibition is the hospital, the defining physical manifestation of the exhibition's title, and a type in drastic need of creative thinking. The decision to leave it out was strategic. 'A hospital is already part of the problem,' Zardini told me.

'We do not want to reduce the problem of health to the treatment of medical illness, but say that health now is a general concern.'

The exhibition concludes with Superstudio's 1971 City of Hemispheres, a collage of a rolling meadow populated by sheep and hovering domes. At its centre is a crystalline plane – an abstracted city of 10 million, each occupant 'living' in a transparent sarcophagus through which they breathe conditioned air and receive anti-ageing sustenance intravenously. From their pristine enclosures, they experience the world via the floating domes, each of which is a 'sensory apparatus' that relays information back to the immobile body.

This verdant landscape, at once beautiful and terrifying, reads as the ultimate representation of what a fully medicalised architecture might be. It is a long and impossible journey from my daughter's impure humidifier to that utopian city, but the show suggests that we have already started to proceed down the road.

Surviving on the dystopian edge

GWEN WEBBER

Design with the Other 90% : Cities
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, United Nations Visitors Centre, New York, until 9 January 2012

In countries such as Peru and South Africa, cities appear overnight. They are not precluded by a plan, a vision or a utopian ideal, and they don't involve an architect; they simply exist. These informal settlements have become hotbeds for some of the most innovative design solutions to inherent problems related to poverty: issues of sanitation, adequate space, infrastructure and comfort. How the estimated one billion people (projected to triple by 2050) living in these settlements adapt to suit their needs and improve their urban environment is the premise for the Cooper-Hewitt's latest exhibition, Design With the Other 90% : Cities.

The show's curator, Cynthia Smith, has visited 15 cities around the world including Dakar in Senegal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and São Paulo in Brazil, gathering information about local and global initiatives empowering poverty-stricken urban-dwellers. The exhibition is the second in a series that began with Design for the Other 90% in 2007, which highlighted solutions for the 90 per cent of the world's population who don't benefit from designers working on products and services to improve their standard of living (the catalogue has even been used as a textbook by various academics). In contrast to well-known approaches to humanitarian aid and construction projects that often rely on imported materials and unsustainable interventions, what Smith reveals here is the success of hybrid solutions, whereby informal settlements are working with formal settlements.

Above: Giant images of female community members cover the walls of slum houses in the Morro da Providência favela in Rio de Janeiro. Armed with a 28mm camera, French photographer JR's *Women are Heroes* project highlights the daily challenges faced by women who live in the developing world

'Different people said to me: "to build a house is easy, but it's hard to build a community",' says Smith. When the hard graft has been done already, designers and architects are weaving their work into existing currents of change. 'What is interesting with so many of these projects is that there is real application to what is currently happening around the world,' she explains.

The 60 projects in the exhibition (narrowed down from about 300) are success stories; schemes that have had a positive impact, which are scalable and transferable. The Vertical Gym by Venezuela-based Urban Think-Tank, for example, is intended to mark out a safe public space in a dense urban location. The gym has been designed as a kit of parts so that an architect can programme and adapt it to a given site, and has been proposed for areas in countries as diverse as the Netherlands and Jordan, as well as for New York City.

The urban landscape is used as a canvas in other projects. *In 28 Millimetres: Women are Heroes*, artist JR plastered large-scale images of female community members on to slum houses. This is a simple gesture, articulating the power of collective action. In the case of Dutch duo Haas & Hahn's *Favela Painting*, the action was used to draw attention to much-needed improvements to public spaces in Rio de Janeiro. Visibility was further directed at a local level in Lima, Peru. Here informal settlements can't rely on governments to map their territories, so designer Jeff Warren has assigned the task to a digital camera attached to inflated bin-liners. The resulting images, owned by residents, can

support land-title claims as well as give inhabitants an idea of their own relationship to the city.

There is a common misgiving in the West that aid is about patronage. We have grown accustomed to images of shantytowns; people living cheek-by-jowl in shacks piled on top of each other, but the role designers play in tackling this shortage of adequate housing in developing countries has been less explored. The Cooper-Hewitt exhibition includes low-tech, high-impact innovations such as interlocking sand bricks and flexible plastic formwork. These provide design solutions that are more relevant in the 21st century than ever before, as the most densely populated areas in the world have been affected by some of the worst natural disasters in living memory.

'The only way to make a big transformation is through education... so [people] can appropriate this knowledge and use it in the way they want,' says architect Arturo Ortiz of Taller Territorial, Mexico. His project, Make the House Intelligent proved to be the simplest, fastest and safest way to build shelter for the informal communities in Mexico's slums, but called for the engagement of users to understand how it could work. The effect of such simple ideas is infectious, like the many of the projects in the exhibition. Recently, Ortiz gave his plans to a builder who wanted to use the construction model in the Chicoloapan Municipality and has presented a modified system to the government in Tabasco, Mexico, where people suffer from chronic flooding.

As the exhibition's breadth makes clear, not all urban planning is design-led. For Smith, the value of collaboration and communication cannot be understated: 'The most important audience is the people working and living in these areas,' she says. 'So how do you broaden the exchange?' Grassroots movements such as Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a transnational organisation of slum-dwellers, has been working on a horizontal exchange, identifying and sharing design tools to solve global issues on a local scale. The significance of such an organisation points to a shift towards a bottom-up organisational structure, in terms of who is determining the development and integration of peri-urban settlements, when their growth is so rapid that municipalities and local governments can't keep up.

Population growth and urbanisation is not a new topic, but as rural communities continue to be less economically sustainable, questions of urbanism have resurfaced. Last year, Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York investigated the transformative potential of public art by Haas & Hahn on the complex fabric of the metropolis in Painting Urbanism – Learning from Rio, while the Massachusetts Institute of Technology explored initiatives in conflict zones in a lecture series entitled Zones of Emergency: Artistic Interventions – Creative Responses to Conflict & Crisis. And BBC Radio Four aired *Slums 101*, in which Newsnight economics editor Paul Mason raised a debate about planning one of the most populous cities at risk of natural disasters on Earth: Manila. The impact of urban planning and architecture on the social fabric of a place is implicit in most design: the colossal task for designers today is how to apply their expertise to turning impromptu cities into legitimate and vibrant settlements where urbanites might prosper in the future.

Below: an ingenious set of collapsible library steps from 1905 show Josef Hoffmann developing his signature language of squares and cubes. Together with paintings, plans, models and jewellery, it features in the Pioneers of Modernism exhibition at the Lower Belvedere in Vienna, which explores the work of Hoffmann and Gustav Klimt and their individual and collective roles as ambitious, embryonic Modernists

Viennese cross fertilisation

ANDREW MEAD

Gustav Klimt/Josef Hoffmann – Pioneers of Modernism
Lower Belvedere, Vienna, until 4 March 2012

The year 2012 marks the 150th anniversary of Gustav Klimt's birth and his home city of Vienna looks set to make the most of it, with numerous exhibitions of his paintings over the coming months. Inaugurating this jamboree is an engaging show in the palatial Lower Belvedere, which pairs Klimt with architect Josef Hoffmann on the premise that they are 'pioneers of Modernism'.

Nikolaus Pevsner included Hoffmann in his *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1960), singling out his Purkersdorf Sanatorium and the Palais Stoclet in Brussels: 'a work of exceedingly spirited composition, its exquisitely spaced openings and light walls are a joy to the eye.' Although Adolf Loos slighted Hoffmann as 'a pattern-designer, however gifted', Le Corbusier was wholehearted in his praise. 'I always experienced a true artistic pleasure when I saw here and there the architectural work of Prof Hoffmann... And in the history of contemporary architecture, on the way to a timely aesthetic, Prof Hoffmann holds one of the most brilliant places,' he wrote in *Die Wiener Werkstätte* (1929).

While Klimt has come to epitomise early 20th-century Vienna, and his works fetch astonishing prices, his position as a proto-Modernist is more contentious than that of Hoffmann. In any Klimt monograph, you find an atmospheric haze in some works but a hard-edged geometry in others, the hieratic along with the erotic, and not just sumptuousness but kitsch. It is a heady mixture that can appear more decadent than cutting-edge, and Klimt tends to be marginalised in standard histories of modern art, which highlight the progression from Manet to Cubism through Cézanne, and the subsequent abstraction of Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian.

So you wonder how the show will treat its two protagonists as 'pioneers'. Will it refine Hoffmann's position as an embryonic Modernist

or simply confirm it, and will it make Klimt appear more central than he has been up to now?

The exhibition concentrates on projects that Hoffmann and Klimt collaborated on, and opens with one of the most notable of them – the 14th exhibition of the Vienna Secession, held in 1902 in Joseph Maria Olbrich's suave Secession Building, with its gold-leaved cupola. Hoffmann designed the whole show, conceived as a tribute to Beethoven, and in the room to the left of the main hall Klimt created his Beethoven Frieze. Spanning three walls, it is an allegory of salvation through art, culminating with a chorus of angels in paradise and Klimt's favourite motif of a couple fused in a kiss. The whole thing is ludicrous but executed with such conviction that you are almost disarmed.

What we see at the Belvedere is a creditable copy of the frieze made in the 1980s, around the time at which Hans Hollein re-installed the original in the Secession Building, in a newly excavated basement. Whereas the 1902 room had openings in its right-hand wall, giving views of Max Klinger's Beethoven monument in the middle of the main hall, Hollein's basement is completely enclosed. By contrast, the current exhibition claims to 'reconstruct the original spatial effect', although that is not strictly true: the reconstructed room opens on to a rather dim corridor, not a luminous hall, but a model makes the 1902 situation clear.

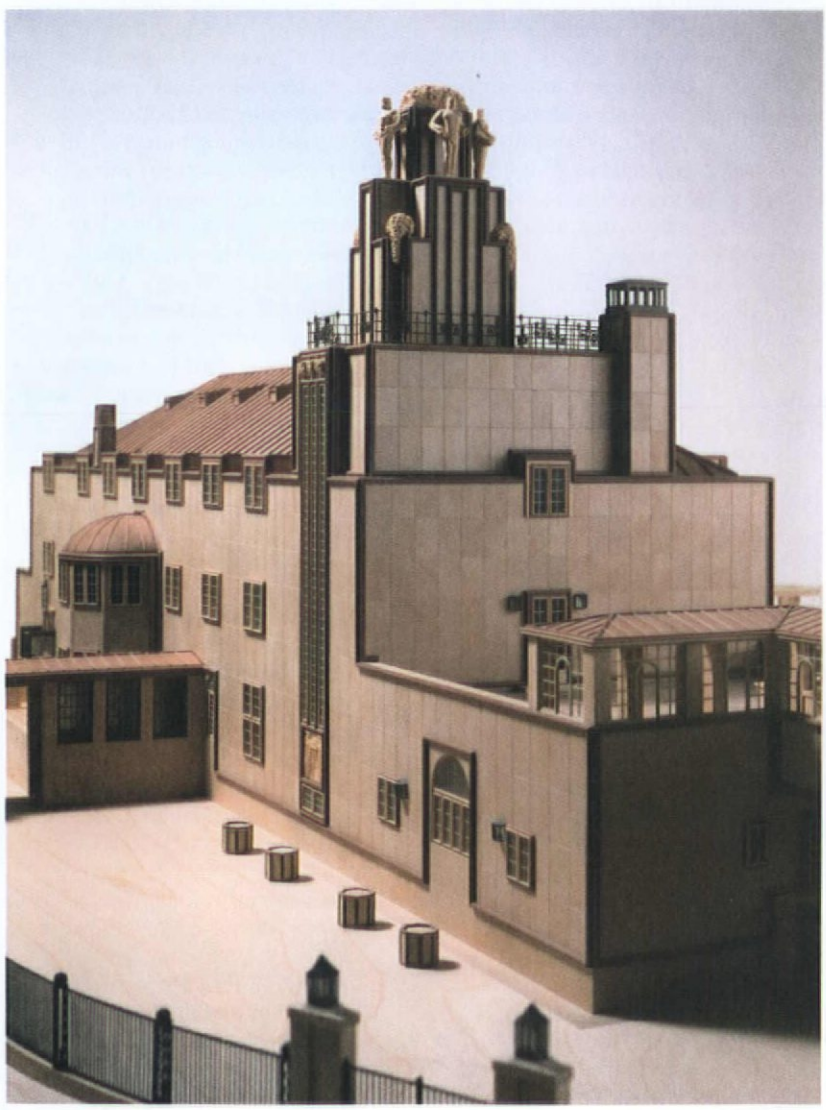
Klimt's frieze has the sinuous lines of quintessential Art Nouveau, but what the exhibition studies next is a move towards a more rectilinear style, especially by Hoffmann, as he develops his signature language of squares and cubes. That tendency is encapsulated here in a set of collapsible library steps from 1905 (like the openwork cubes that artist Sol LeWitt made 60 years later) and in some gorgeous square brooches whose jewels gleam enticingly in a room to themselves.

However, the main focus is on the integration of architecture and art that Hoffmann and Klimt pursued in the public setting of temporary exhibitions (for instance, the Internationale Kunstschau of 1909 in Vienna) and in the homes of well-heeled clients. In tableaux that replicate parts of the Villa Henneberg and the Gallia apartment, we see how deftly Klimt's paintings were accommodated into the overall scheme of furnishing and decoration, with architect and artist in unusual accord.

The undoubted highpoint of their collaboration came at the Palais Stoclet (1905–11), commissioned by banker and art collector Adolphe Stoclet – a true *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork), scrupulous and obsessive. Stoclet was stringent about quality, but relaxed about cash, and spent a fortune as the Wiener Werkstätte craftsmen laboured to realise his vision. The exhibition includes a full-scale, partial reconstruction of the staircase hall, clad in paonazzo – a restrained off-white marble from Carrara that doesn't compete with the intricate floor. Of course, living in a *Gesamtkunstwerk* demands eternal vigilance, and anxious to maintain harmony, Suzanne Stoclet ensured that her handkerchiefs matched husband Adolphe's ties.

Klimt's contribution was a mosaic frieze in marble, glass and ceramic on three walls of the dining room. Down both the long walls, the *Tree of Life* proliferates in golden spirals, while on the end wall is the highly stylised Golden Knight – the figure barely discernible amid the patterns and geometry. It is on this end wall that Klimt comes closest to a genuinely non-objective art, but the show makes surprisingly little of this aspect. Surely it is here, if anywhere, that Klimt might be a 'pioneer', but perhaps it wasn't possible to borrow his preparatory drawings, displayed elsewhere in Vienna at the Museum of Applied Arts.

If the exhibition does not clinch Klimt's right to a more central place in the history of Modernism, it reinforces the familiar view of Hoffmann. Dominated by the Palais Stoclet, and staged jointly with the Royal Museums in Brussels, the show naturally foregrounds Hoffmann's contact with such Belgian colleagues as the artist Fernand Khnopff, but in



Left: model of the Palais Stoclet in Brussels, Hoffmann and Klimt's greatest collaboration. Belgian banker and art collector Adolphe Stoclet spent a fortune on realising a ravishing *Gesamtkunstwerk*, insisting on luxurious materials and impeccable craftsmanship

doing so it underplays other influences on his work – for instance, that of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Centred on the collaborations with Klimt, it omits altogether the Purkersdorf Sanatorium, which in its stripped cubic forms is a clear precursor of the Palais Stoclet. Also absent is Hoffmann's later Neoclassicism and what that says about the architect and his times.

The contributions to the excellent catalogue (Prestel Publishing, £35) give a much fuller picture of the various projects than the show itself, but they are essays in search of a synthesis – an overview that situates Hoffmann and Klimt in an international context and really takes their measure.

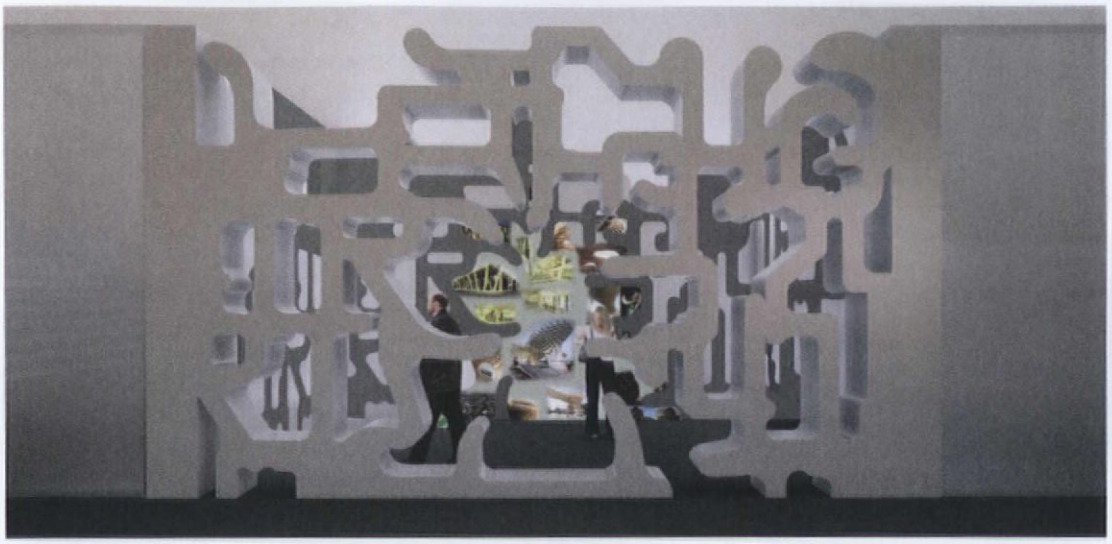
Nonetheless there is much to enjoy in the exhibition and, installed as it is in the Belvedere, it does not only orientate Hoffmann and Klimt towards the future. Halfway through, you emerge into the double-height Marble Hall that JL von Hildebrandt designed for Prince Eugene of Saxony in 1712 – a lavish Baroque showpiece. At first, this seems like an interruption but it need not be so, because the hall acquires a new resonance when flanked by the Secession. In terms of patronage and iconography, style and opulence, materiality and illusion, it brings the exhibition into sharper focus, defining not just a rupture with the past but continuity too.

Oriental phantasmagoria

RAYMUND RYAN

Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture
until 23 April 2012

Shenzhen is not Venice. It's much newer, much bigger, and, since its designation as a Special Economic Zone in 1980, expanding at a furious pace. The city is now some kind of phantasmagoria of rapid development. Like Venice, however, Shenzhen does have an architectural biennale. To be precise, the city is the primary site for the Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture. As in the case of the Venice Architecture Biennale, visitors to Shenzhen inevitably draw connections between the various exhibitions/installations and the more complex reality of the urban condition surrounding the designated biennale sites.



Above: Jürgen Mayer H.'s design for the Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture. Based on data protection patterns in print media, Facades of Countenance explores the porous boundaries between public and private realms. Berlin-based Mayer H. is among 12 contemporary practices invited to colonise a cube of Chinese space

The biennale has stretched this year by inviting, for the first time, a foreigner to serve as chief curator (previous curators were Yung Ho Chang in 2005, Qingyun Ma in 2007, and Ou Ning in 2009). This year is the turn of Terence Riley, former Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at New York's Museum of Modern Art and subsequently director of the Miami Art Museum. Riley, who is also an architect, has chosen as his theme, 'Architecture creates cities. Cities create architecture.' Almost a palindrome, this phrase sets the scene for a lively mix of urban analyses and visions, both local and international.

Most of the action is centred in the Overseas Chinese Town, where – amid Brutalist housing slabs and agreeably lush planting – several sheds have over recent years been appropriated for cultural activity. Near Starbucks, two of these sheds have been allocated to half-a-dozen foreign 'pavilions'. Austria presents public housing in the context of Viennese history. Chile investigates, post-earthquake, concepts of shelter. Seaside shacks from Bahrain, a hit at the Venice Architecture Biennale last year, have migrated here to the other side of the world. And the Netherlands Architecture Institute corrals proposals from Dutch and Chinese architects for dense, low-income youth housing.

A short stroll away is Riley's signature contribution, where a larger shed, or rather an accumulation of sheds, is organised about an invented streetscape that consciously echoes the famous Strada Novissima conjured up by Paolo Portoghesi for the Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980. That temporary 'street' is best remembered today for its stylistically knowing facades, often seen as a template for 1980s Postmodernism. Riley's idea is to ask 12 young contemporary practices to occupy and exploit a virtual cube of Chinese space in an experimental, communicative way, six to either side of an axial promenade.

On one side are Aranda\Lasch (New York), Hashim Sarkis Studios (Beirut and Harvard), Johnston Marklee (Los Angeles), SPBR (São Paulo), MAD (Beijing) and Fake Industries Architectural Agonism (New York and Barcelona). Directly opposite this sextet are Jürgen Mayer H. (Berlin), OPEN Architecture (Beijing), Mass Studies (Seoul), SO-IL (New York), Alejandro Aravena (Santiago) and Atelier Deshaus (Shanghai). An appropriately global mix, some erect porous facades whereas others open the envelope up to allow the street seep and flow. Only Johnston Marklee and Fake appear to acknowledge Venice three decades ago.

This surely reflects the growing internationalisation of architecture and marks a move away from old Eurocentric views. In Shenzhen, several participants contrive to open up and expand space. At least five of the installations utilise mirrored or highly reflective surfaces, with Johnston Marklee and MAD offering unexpected panoramas, or panopticons, and SO-IL and OPEN Architecture multiplying nature (green marble, tropical plants) ad infinitum.

Johnston Marklee, SPBR, MAD, Open Architecture and Mass Studies include mini-retrospectives, this ambition on the part of the Asian architects related perhaps to their training with Zaha Hadid, Steven Holl and OMA respectively.

To either side of these interior pavilions are informative exhibitions on major proposals for China by the likes of OMA, Holl, Field Operations and David Chipperfield; and on significant projects currently on site in Shenzhen by Coop Himmelb(l)au, Yung Ho Chang, OMA and Massimiliano Fuksas. Beyond these, in a more distant orbit, are exhibits about planning along the South China coast, favelas in Rio de Janeiro, and six cities (including, of course, Shenzhen), born in the last 60 years.

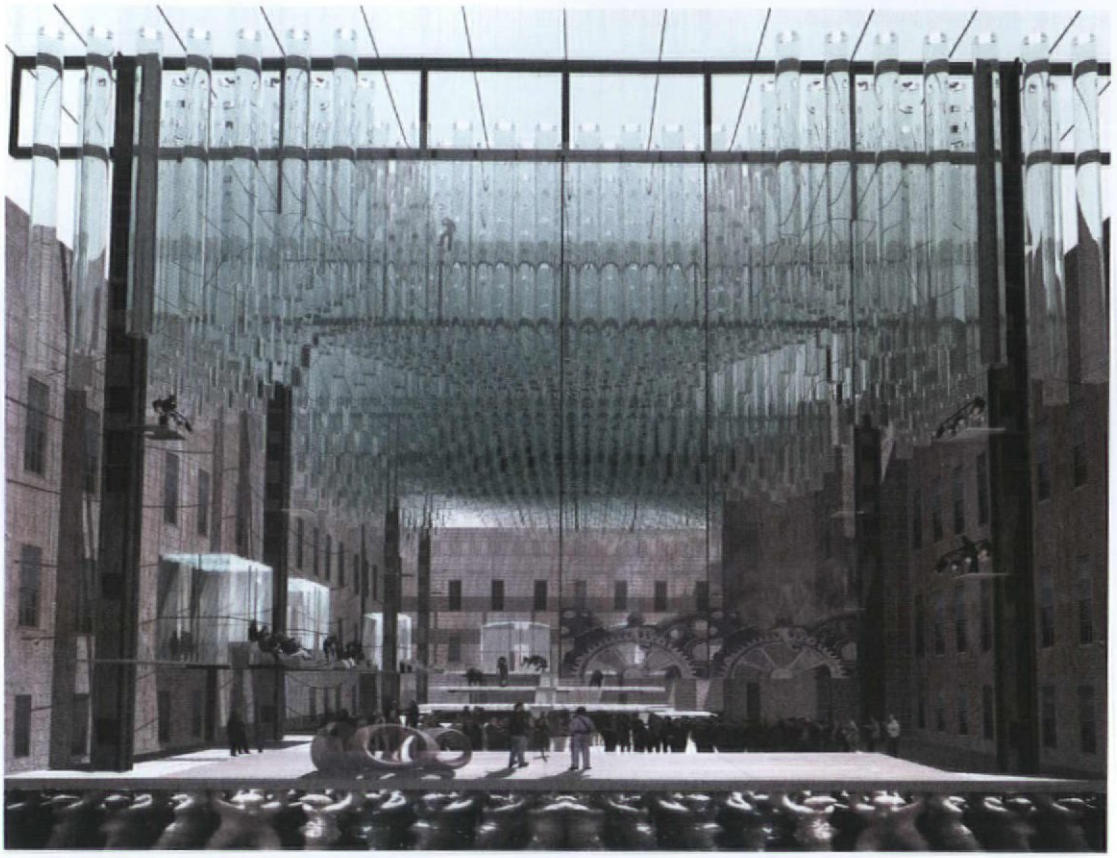
Downtown, in front of the vast Shenzhen Civic Center, six other young practices have pop-up pavilions. MOS and OBRA (both New York), Clavel Arquitectos (Murcia), Studio Up (Zagreb), Amateur Architecture Studio (Hangzhou) and Wei Chun Yu (Changsha) appear penalised due to dramatic differences in scale and resources. Nevertheless, their structures see rambunctious use being out in the public realm. Out there, too, is the siding and mechanical equipment that signal major construction projects: OMA's Stock Exchange and the site for Yung Ho Chang's media tower. Architects in the Shenzhen spotlight are already winning projects from the Venice generation.

The man from Culver City

JACK SELF

Lecture by Eric Owen Moss chaired by Charles Jencks
RIBA, London,
6 December 2011

On 6 December, the Royal Institute of British Architects hosted the ninth annual Jencks Award, which is described by its eponymous founder as 'a simultaneous prize to theory and practice, two mistresses in addition to Madame Architecture'. Not to confuse his metaphors, Charles Jencks continued his introduction by paraphrasing the words of a noted evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould: 'Greatness is an assault against Dame Nature.' This polyamorous contextualisation is hardly frivolous; Nature is not a dame easily violated, and without at least several metaphorical mistresses, most architects' marriage to their profession would end in a calamitous divorce.



Above: A remodelling of the Patent Office Building Courtyard in Washington DC for the Smithsonian Institution by the 2011 Jencks Award winner Eric Owen Moss

The award's presentation is accompanied each year by a lecture from the beneficiary. American Eric Owen Moss scooped the prize this year, a man Jencks described as 'an architect's architect'. This figure, while clearly distinct from the uncompromising individualistic architect of popular imagination (Howard Roark) is nonetheless a stoically heroic one. According to Jencks, no other architect has been responsible for such a large number of buildings in such a small area of city, over such a long period as Moss.

Since the early 1980s, Moss has worked on more than 25 projects within a quarter square mile area of Culver City, an ex-industrial urban municipality bordering Los Angeles. This 'space-time marathon' has produced such a startling diversity of forms and structures that one hardly knows how to describe them. Fortunately, Moss has shown as much imagination in their appellation as he has in their design. A flowing glass canopy and matrix of spindles adorns the Umbrella, while a squat truncated cone with crystalline interiors is named the Beehive. The Box sits close by, a tilted cube made from machine-buffed metal, as does Stealth, an office block disguised as a planar black monolith. Moss's most recent addition to Culver City is the Samitaur Tower (AR May 2011), a five-storey structure in Cor-ten steel and smooth acrylic planes designed to exhibit film and video art to passengers on passing trains.

Almost all the buildings were developed in collaboration with Frederick and Laurie Samitaur-Smith, a client-architect relationship unparalleled, Jencks argued, since that between Gaudí and Güell. Together, the Smiths and Moss have been at work on an ambitious urban redevelopment scheme since 1988, simply called the New City. This fluid and constantly evolving masterplan proposes 43 buildings in central Culver City, aiming to rejuvenate a once-thriving manufacturing district that has been in decline for many years. A little more than half of the buildings have been completed, with Moss using the time between each project to transform, adjust and rethink the governing principles of the masterplan. By remaining adaptive to the forces shaping this

pocket of city, Moss has retained the critical ability to respond to change: political and economic certainly, but also social and demographic – much of which can be seen as a consequence of Moss's own architecture.

Moss has responded to the architectural vernacular of the existing site – often employing industrial materials and forms, such as wooden trusses, blockwork and exposed steel. But he has re-appropriated these techniques in a radical way, redeploying them in unexpected manners, interspersing them with high-tech milled facades, slumped glass and pastel concrete, building up a unique architectural language particular to the place. For this reason, Jencks considers Moss a master of piecemeal progression, unequalled as an architect of contextual counterpoint and at the forefront of contemporary Critical Regionalism (though Moss himself did not deny this, he certainly seemed bemused at the categorisation).

Eric Owen Moss began his lecture by showing Dürer's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1498), which he described as being ostensibly a woodcut image. But the technical execution of the image only accounts for a very small portion of its total meaning, and its true value is easily recognised as being an illustration of the biblical story about the end of the world. It would be a mistake to confuse the format of the image with the significance of the narrative. By the same token, it is contemporary architecture's increasing concern with technical craft and exotic materials that is neutralising its ability to convey meaning. Architecture, according to Moss, should not be so obsessed with factors incapable of communication, but focus more on its capacity for narrative.

Scientific achievement does not ipso facto equal progress, and Moss argued that no matter what our technical ability in any age, this should not be the limit of our imagination. When a designer sits down at a computer and launches the Rhino toolbar, it may appear like a room service menu from a luxurious hotel, but even the most imaginative combination of functions is still constricted within the framework of the programme. The resulting project may amply fulfil the technological quotient, but it runs the risk of being vapid, of failing to contain meaning, of lacking 'the wonder quotient'.

The definition of architecture is often formed by its opposition to some other thing; as Moss puts it 'to answer the question "what is architecture?" you have to first find its enemy, you have to find its Moby Dick. But as I stood on the deck like Ahab (or maybe Ishmael, at least that way I might come back alive), I realised there is no single Moby, just endless Dicks.' To focus the efforts of an architect they must nevertheless address a problem they perceive as paramount. For Moss, it is the vanquishing of wonder from architecture that poses the greatest threat to its future, and the enemy against whom we should struggle most firmly.

Below: Stefan Kürten's *Heartbeat* shows how ornament permeates his architecture-based compositions. The 2005 oil painting abstracts the backyard vertigo of flora and collapsed Modernist housing, creating a strange domestic geography

German lessons

CATHERINE SLESSOR

Gesamtkunstwerk: New Art from Germany, Saatchi Gallery, London, until 30 April 2012

Neatly undercutting Tate Modern's current heavyweight retrospective on Gerhard Richter is a two-dozen strong posse of Germany's younger art generation, coralled in the expansive Saatchi Gallery under the banner of Gesamtkunstwerk: New Art from Germany. Architects will doubtless be familiar with the notion of a cross-disciplinary work of art (the Glasgow School of Art being a textbook example), but might not realise the term was first used by Richard Wagner in his 1849 essay 'The Artwork of the Future', as Wagner strove to define the character of a new kind of modern 'total' artwork.

Genre-wise the show is equally expansive, ranging from Max Frisinger's vitrines stuffed with found objects (imagine an edgier, less simpatico Joseph Cornell), to Thomas Zipp's sinister black balloon sculptures and Kristine Roepstorff's highly wrought junk and glitter collages. Trash, both literal and as an aesthetic, is key; scraps, junk and *objets trouvés* are energetically remodelled in blaring, post-ironic meditations on the futility of consumerism and capitalism. A predictable yet bracing parvenu insouciance runs through the work; André Butzer's fingerpaint canvases parody the intensity of Anselm Kiefer, and Gert and Uwe Tobias riff on Paul Klee and Joan Miró.

Yet among this self-conscious stridency, sometimes it's the quiet ones who attract your attention. And this is where Stefan Kürten comes in. Exhibiting technique and sensitivity, Kurten's fastidiously worked oil paintings are a riposte to the hucksterish appeal of his co-conspirators. The style may be Superrealist, but the compositions are fantastical; visions of gentle decay, as abandoned buildings are overwhelmed by time and nature. Devoid of humanity, this is how the world ends, with a soft, slow falling back into itself. Kurten describes his paintings as 'escapes from the quotidian and its purposeful rationality. Like faded images from a long expired dream, their very lack of authenticity makes them true'.

Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales

MATTHEW BARAC

'It is Day One of the course and I am up to my elbows in mud,' writes student Ben French on his blog, capturing the 'hands-on' approach to teaching building construction adopted by the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT). 'We get to know about squashing the mud to the right consistency, how to bind it with straw and push it through a recycled mesh held together with timber lathes, forming a rough plastered wall.' The wall is made of things nature gives freely, rather than of carbon-guzzling, pathogen-producing, cementitious materials that the building industry has come to rely on.

Getting stuck into ecologically sound technologies of construction by literally getting your hands dirty has been central to the ethos of CAT since it was founded in 1973 by the late Gerard Morgan-Grenville, a pioneer environmentalist and aristocrat manqué, on the site of a disused slate quarry near the Powys market town of Machynlleth, in Wales.

Morgan-Grenville, great grandson of the last Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, feared that 'ordinary passers-by' were oblivious to 'the disastrous course on which our civilisation was set'. Decades before sustainability had been absorbed by mainstream debate, he established an organisation that would not only make the environmental damage caused by conventional technologies evident to the public, but also steer a new generation of professionals towards finding solutions rather than reproducing the problem.

1. CAT's state-of-the-art conference centre and student accommodation. The cylindrical rammed earth centre embodies low-energy building techniques
2. Students participate in a straw bale building short course. Load-bearing bale walls are held together with timber pins to provide structural stability
3. A practical workshop in earth wall ramming allows students to experience first-hand the construction techniques that they are learning about

CAT today is a multi-faceted institution. Boasting the widest variety of renewable energy systems anywhere, it attracts some 65,000 visitors a year who come to see its exhibits and demonstration buildings, and to take part in volunteer projects. A range of courses – from research degrees to Community Participation and Development (CPD) modules – mobilise the centre's mission to foster a more balanced relationship with nature.

As with most of the educational programme, the professional diploma in architecture (which satisfies the terms of RIBA Part 2), is taught in residential modules. Students attend college for intensive blocks of lectures, design tutorials and practical sessions, typically for a

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week at a time. During these blocks, they are caught up in a lively but demanding cycle of activity, living, eating and learning together. According to faculty member Trish Andrews, this 'boot camp' atmosphere symbolises the school's ethos: 'Everyone plays their part, no one part more important than the other, but all significant.' Conviviality is a pedagogical principle. 'You learn more when you are having fun and sharing knowledge and experience with your peer group,' she says.

Student projects address urban challenges framed by a heightened environmental awareness, offering a more mature take on sustainability than the gestures and gadgets that populate the architectural accessories marketplace. Recent graduate Jonny Marrion designed a centre to produce and celebrate cider, strategically located upon Spike Island, Bristol. Contributing to the 600 million-litre UK annual cider market, it comprises an urban orchard, a museum, an educational facility and a cider press. The existing graving dock is recycled to provide a holding pen for aeroponically grown apples, with barges used for loading so that articulated lorries need not enter the city.

Deramore Hutchcroft hoped to build up the resilience of a crime-blighted community in Manchester through a design and construction project founded on social processes. He set up a neighbourhood group and, through public seminars, slide shows, leafleting and newspaper articles, raised support for his proposal to bring a derelict site back into use. Volunteers helped to build a straw bale meeting place and storage shed for suburban allotment gardens. Sadly, the building was razed to the ground by vandals shortly before completion, but the local solidarity inspired by the project remains intact.

By investigating everyday issues through the prism of sustainability, these and other CAT projects acknowledge that there are rarely easy solutions to the environmental and social problems created by our way of life. For Andrews, 'it is no use producing idealistic students who are then crushed by the realities of commerce'. The educational task is, rather, to prepare them for the 'hypocrisies and compromises thrown up in practice'. But at CAT we are reminded that things don't have to be this way. For architecture and its technologies – technologies of production and of interpretation – there is now an alternative.

4. Students from diverse backgrounds participate in a workshop in a sun-flooded education building
5. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer views onto the dramatic landscape of the Dulas Valley in the CAT studios
6. Post-graduates take advantage of the valley's contours to develop their height-surveying skills
7. A scale model in the end of year show has a canopy held together without adhesives
8 & 9. A secluded bird hide designed and built from Western hemlock by CAT's architecture students

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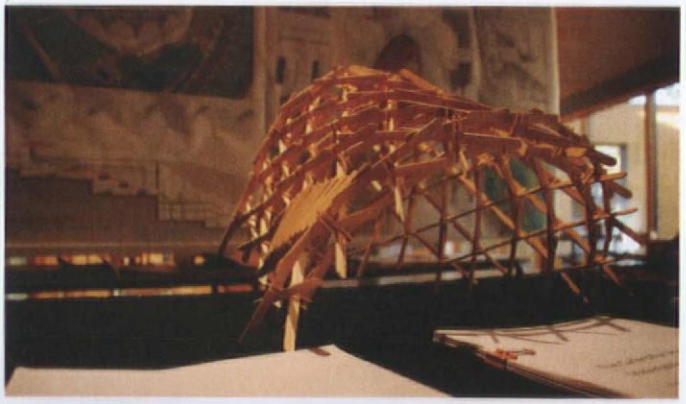

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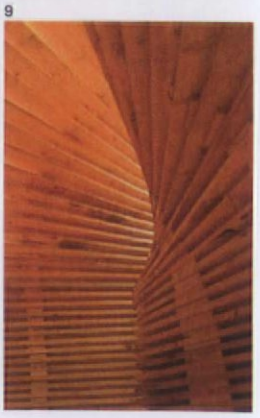


REPUTATIONS

Imre Makovecz

JONATHAN GLANCEY

Imre Makovecz was one of those few architects who have created a world recognisably their own. His, though, was a world beyond that of a readily identifiable style. Makovecz shaped highly distinctive buildings – or 'building beings' as he called them – for the world he wanted us to inhabit, one that was antithetical to the materialism, Communism, corporatism, consumerism and globalism that he saw as soul-destroying errors of our age.

A brave and unremitting individualist, Makovecz was also a devout Hungarian Catholic with a deep-rooted love of his country, folklore, craft and rural communities. He was a fierce guardian angel brought to life, and an architect who – in terms of passion, fearlessness and energy – might be equated with Pugin or Gaudí.

Born and educated in Budapest, he exhibited highly individual tendencies from the earliest days. As a student, he designed a fish restaurant with the tactile qualities of a fish. While Frank Gehry would have been applauded for designing such a thing in California 30 years later, it was not what you did in a Communist country under the Soviet yoke in the late 1950s.

From the early 1970s, while banned from working in state bureaus, Makovecz nurtured a low-cost, timber-based architecture serving local communities in and around Szentendre (St Andrew's), a pretty town on a bend of the Danube north of Budapest. At the same time, he helped plan and build cultural centres in villages downgraded by the central authorities, for which the life, folklore, myths and rituals of rural Hungary were anathema. And, in 1975, he built the extraordinary mortuary chapel in the Farkasréti (Wolf's Meadow) Cemetery on the outskirts of Budapest.

It was a small black-and-white photograph of this building printed in *Magyar Epitomuveszet*, calling to mind the belly of the whale that swallowed Jonah, that drew me to Budapest and Makovecz. Some 30 years ago, the trip required an interview at the Hungarian Embassy in London, a long wait for a visa and a ride on the Wiener Walzer express from the *gemütlichkeit* comforts of Vienna, being searched by guards toting veteran Tommy guns at the Hungarian border and passing steam trains adorned with bold red stars. I arrived at Budapest's magnificent Keleti railway station (designed by Janos Feketehazy and Gyula Rochlitz between 1881 and 1884) in a violent thunderstorm.

'The first publications about my work to appear in England were written by Jonathan Glancey in the early 1980s,' Makovecz later recalled. 'I have no idea how he came to know about me... What I am sure of is that Glancey had never before travelled in Eastern Europe. He took the train from Vienna and arrived at the Eastern station in Budapest, and was immediately stampeded by a crowd of Arab and Gypsy moneychangers. Out of desperation he finally called us and begged us to come to rescue him. My wife, Marianne, went to pick him up in her Renault 4. She brought him straight home, but even then he was obviously still in a state of shock about the condition of things.'

Language was the problem. I had travelled in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but not speaking a word of Hungarian invariably made communication difficult. Makovecz – who claimed to speak nothing but Hungarian – was convinced that I was unable to make sense of his work. Then, and in later trips across Hungary, we communicated through drawings in notebooks.

'Jonathan was convinced that I was a national hero intent on opposing the Communist system. Moreover, this hero produced his works as a kind of intuitive reaction to his surrounding social conditions... Jonathan believed he was talking to a strange, Eastern political revolutionary who dabbled in shamanism. It was a long time before I succeeded in convincing him that this was not true.'

> 'Makovecz was an architect who, in terms of passion, fearlessness and energy, might be equated with Pugin or Gaudí'

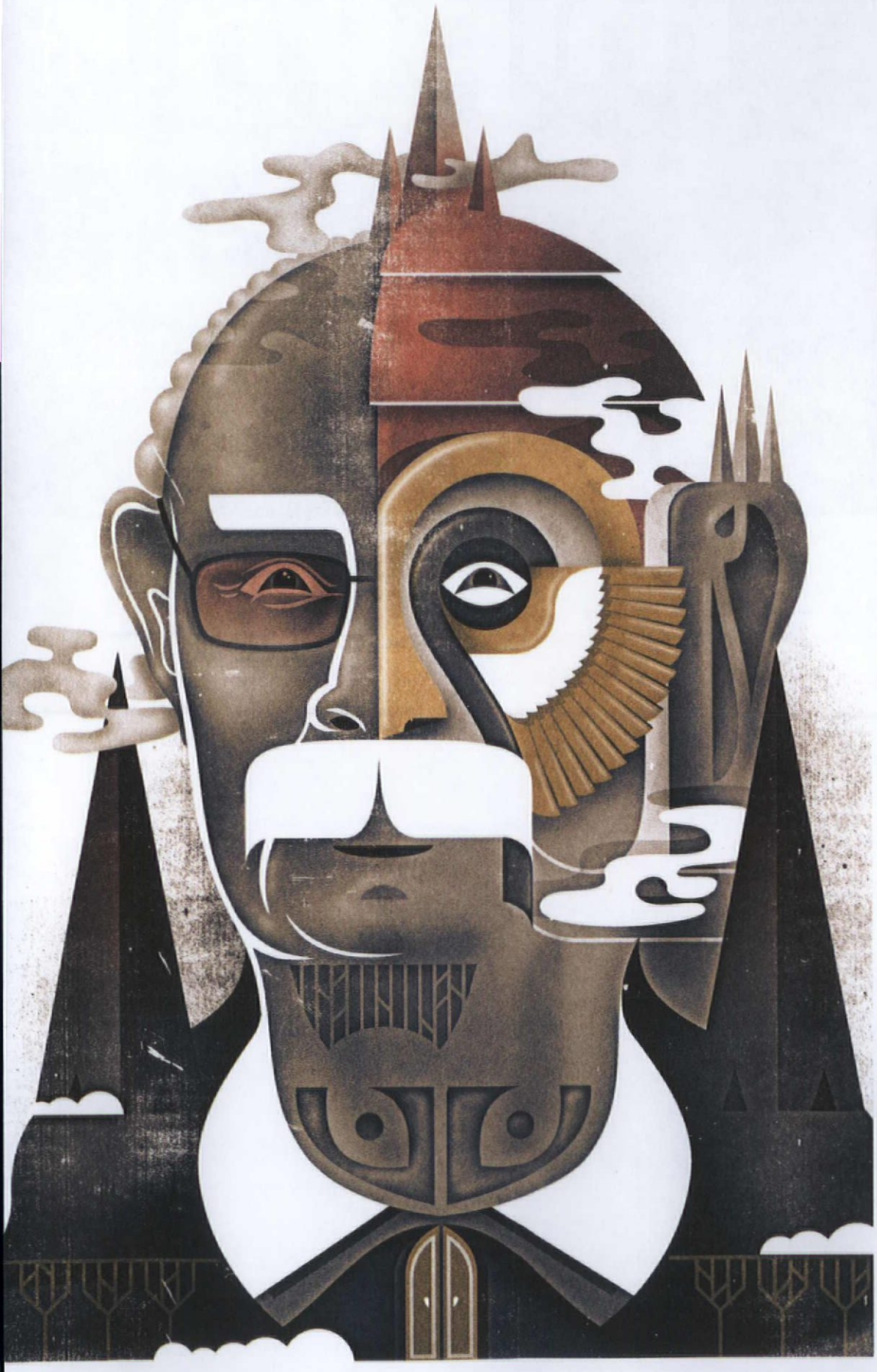
Imre Makovecz
1935–2011
Education
Technical University in Budapest
Educator
Academy of Applied Arts and Technical University in Budapest (1981)
Chairman of the Hungarian Academy of Arts (1992)
Key buildings
Mortuary chapel, Farkasréti Cemetery, Budapest (1975)
Catholic Church, Paks (1990)
Hungarian Pavilion at the Seville World Expo (1992)
St István Church, Százhalombatta (1998)
Stephenaeum, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Piliscsaba (2001)
Garlands
Hungarian Heritage Award (1996)
Gold Medal, French Academy of Architecture (1997)
Quote
'My aim is to counteract the subsensible spell of technical civilisation using supersensible imaginative power'

Makovecz's extraordinary anthropomorphic and organic buildings – a revelation to the AR – were, however, very much a spirited reaction to the soulless, system-built architecture (Bauhaus without a brain, Modernism without merit) thrown up across Hungary and the Eastern Bloc from the time at which the Iron Curtain descended on Europe. Crafted in timber, and all eyes, mouths, domes and enfolding wings, here were spirited structures imbued with a soul.

While Makovecz happily acknowledged debts to Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, Bruce Goff, Ödön Lechner and Rudolf Steiner, his work was very much his own, although a group of like-minded architects grew up around him from the early 1970s. Makovecz was surprised to be recognised, and even fêted, in the West but, as he travelled increasingly outside Hungary, he developed his own special way of addressing non-Hungarian speaking audiences. He gave memorable lectures without words, showing beautiful images of his buildings set to the haunting sacred music of his Estonian friend Arvo Pärt.

Determined to get him to explain his ideas to a wider audience, and without misunderstanding, I made a film for the *Late Show*, produced by Janice Hadlow, now Controller of BBC Two, and broadcast in 1992. Makovecz talked like no other architect before or since: 'My buildings do not come from me. They come from the landscape, from the local environment and from the ancient human spirit.' He sketched for us in a cloud of cigarette smoke: asymmetric plans, Celtic motifs, trees, spires and angels. I hope the film survives.

VESA SAMMALISTO

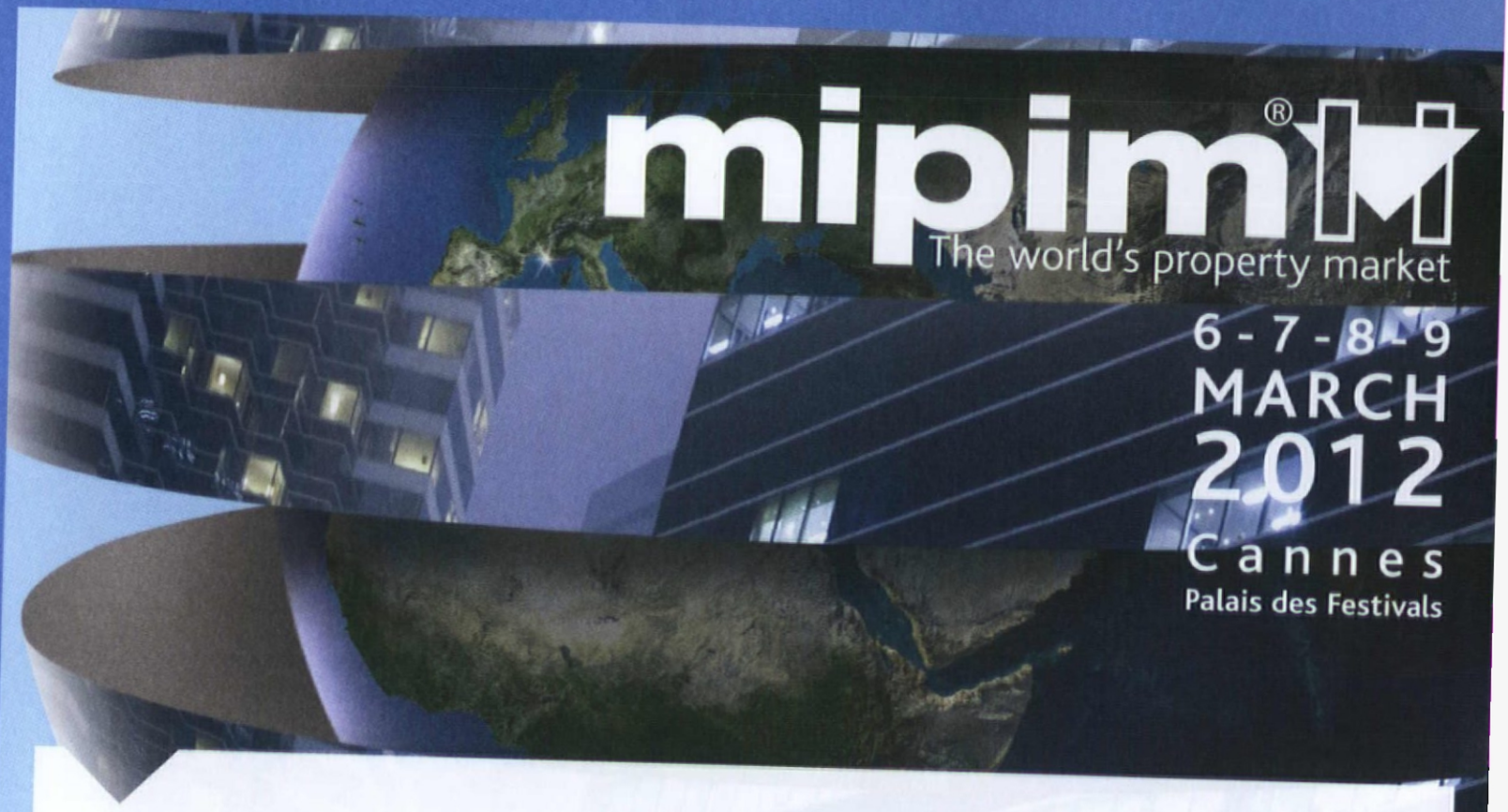


In England, his studio worked with the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture on the design of two timber pavilions while Prince Charles encouraged Makovecz to submit an entry for the competition to rebuild the rooms at Windsor Castle gutted by fire in 1992. If he had won, Makovecz would have carried out the work in partnership with Nicholas Grimshaw.

While remodelling Windsor Castle would certainly have brought him global attention, Makovecz drew a worldwide audience to the Hungarian Pavilion he designed for the Seville Expo in 1992. A glorious structure of timber and lead, towers, bells and spires and decorative crosses, suns and moons, soaring above an ark-like nave, the pavilion was unlike any other building shaped for the World Fair. Enchanting, moving and mysterious, it spoke of the Hungary and the world that Makovecz wanted us to believe in.

His most sensational building, however, was the Stephenaeum (1995–2001), an auditorium at the cultural heart of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University of the Sacred Heart's Faculty of Humanities at Piliscsaba, north of Budapest. It takes the form of two circular buildings, one adopted from the form of a traditional Magyar *jurta* (tent), the other a Renaissance *tempietto* (small temple) crashing into one another. Here are two opposite worlds, urban and rural, rational and romantic, national and international trying to match and marry.

Makovecz remains a controversial figure. Fellow Hungarians have accused him of being too right wing for comfort, though he was once the boy who helped his father to blow up Nazi tanks. And there are those around the world who find his buildings altogether too idiosyncratic. Yet when I stepped into that mortuary chapel in Budapest 30 years ago, it was the first time, this side of Surrealist tricks, I had felt a building breathe.



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This atmospheric montage is the work of Christopher Christophi, a graduate from De Montfort University School of Architecture and winner of the Serjeant Award for Excellence in Drawing at this year's RIBA President's Medals. Three laboratory towers converge with existing lecture halls, connecting to historic nodes by public walkways creating a macro algae monitoring facility and ecological research centre symbiotically existing with Venice's fragile lagoons.

The complex programme was exhaustively researched under tutors, Ben Cowd and Sara Shafiei. Christopher conceived his own strategy of defensive design that seeks to protect Venice and its lagoons from a creeping onslaught of microscopic invaders.

The project, which was also commended in the Silver Medal category for Part 2 students, combines romanticised murky drawings with a pragmatic manifesto. Elsewhere in this issue, there is much discussion of awards for architecture and the education system. This project provides a soothing coda to the debate.

More RIBA President's Medals winning projects are at architectural-review.com/folio

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