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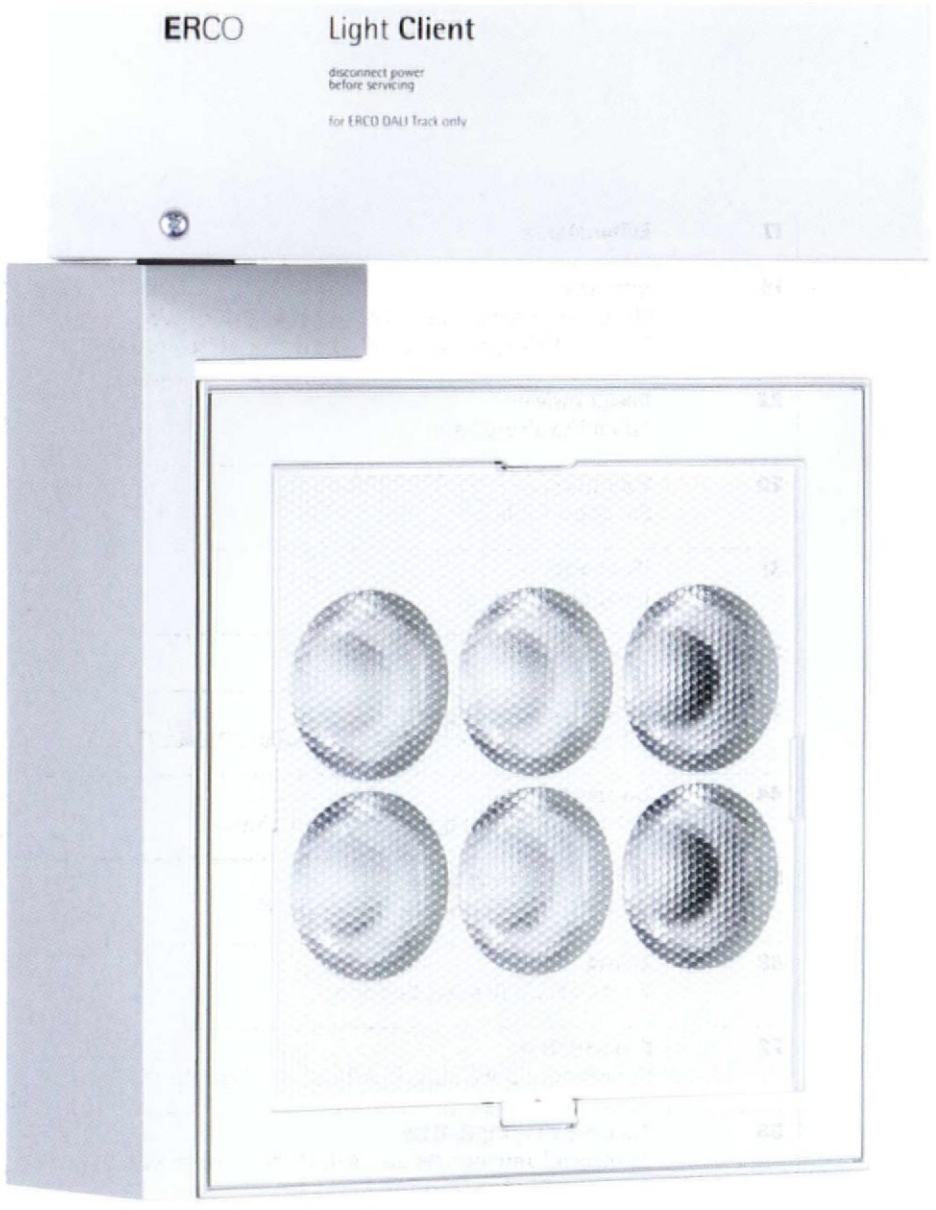

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The Architectural Review
Issue number 1384
June 2012
Volume CCXXXI
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Sero sed serio

'There should be no female role models'
Farshid Moussavi, p31

'This is a huge container for a theme park, a silo for fast food knowledge and lightweight historical entertainment'
William JR Curtis, p34

'The rebirth of Astley Castle is a strong new line of attack for future interactions with old buildings'
Niall Hobhouse, p52

'Too tight for a table and chairs, the narrow balcony between the two bedrooms can aid the nocturnal rearrangement of the guests'
Will Hunter, p62

'You can't change the modern world by making handcrafted objects too expensive to reach a mass market'
Tom Wilkinson, p102

'As you might expect from an exhibition curated by neuroscientists, it reifies the belief that 'mind' is product of the brain alone'
Joseph Deane, p104

Cover: Renovation of Astley Castle in Warwickshire by Witherford Watson Mann on page 52
Photograph: Hélène Binet

Andrew Ayers is the author of *The Architecture of Paris*; in this issue he visits the city's newly remodelled Palais de Tokyo by Lacaton & Vassal

Iwan Baan is a widely published architectural photographer. He shot a selection of the photographs of the MuséoParc Alésia by Bernard Tschumi Architects

Matthew Barac is a senior lecturer at London's South Bank University and also our *Pedagogy* correspondent. He reports on social interaction with the public to raise awareness in urban change promoted by the University of Sheffield

Hélène Binet is a leading architectural photographer. This month she has photographed Astley Castle in Warwickshire by Witherford Watson Mann

Peter Blundell Jones is a professor of architecture at the University of Sheffield and a regular contributor to the AR. This month he reports on the town hall and cinema complex in Haarlem by Bolles+Wilson

Roberto Bottazzi is a tutor at the Royal College of Art in London. He writes on the AA-AD symposium *Ecological Design Research and Computation*, recently held at the Architectural Association, London

Peter Buchanan is a London-based architecture writer and lecturer. Former AR Deputy Editor, he continues to elaborate on The Big Rethink with reference to a quartet of Modern masters, Le Corbusier, Aalto, Kahn and Lloyd Wright

Harry Charrington is an architect and lecturer at the University of Bath. He worked in the Aalto atelier, and has written extensively on Aalto's practice, most recently the book *Alvar Aalto: the Mark of the Hand* based on conversations with the atelier

William JR Curtis is a regular contributor to this journal. The author of the seminal texts *Modern Architecture Since 1900* and *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Form*, this month he reviews the MuséoParc Alésia by Bernard Tschumi Architects

Joseph Deane is a London-based designer whose research focuses on the overlap between embodiment, neuroscience and space. Here he reviews the exhibition *BETWEEN: Embodiment and Identity* at Somerset House, London

Dennis Gilbert is an eminent photographer who in 2005 was awarded an RIBA honorary fellowship for his distinguished contribution to architecture. This month he photographs ZMMA's project, Crispin Kelly's Wiltshire house

Niall Hobhouse is chair of the Cities Programme and governor of the London School of Economics. He appraises Astley Castle in Warwickshire by Witherford Watson Mann

Doris Lockhart is an art and design critic who has written for *The World of Interiors*, *Vogue*, *Tatler*, *Vanity Fair* and *Domus*. She writes in *Reviews* about a sculpture on Savile Row

Will McLean coordinates technical studies for the architecture school at the University of Westminster with Pete Silver, with whom he has written two books, *Introduction to Architectural Technology* and the forthcoming *Structures in Action* (both Laurence King). Here he writes about clay in architecture

Aram Mooradian is a director of the design firm Studio Faust. In this issue he assesses the *Young Journals Symposium* at New York's Cooper Union

Farshid Moussavi runs her new practice, Farshid Moussavi Architecture, and continues her role as professor in practice at Harvard. Following her keynote address at The AJ Women in Architecture Awards luncheon, she uses her column to explore the theory of gender politics within the profession

Robert Mull has been dean of the faculty of Architecture and Spatial Design at London Metropolitan University since 2000. He reports here on his exciting new venture in Moscow

Steve Parnell has recently completed his PhD at the University of Sheffield on the magazine *Architectural Design* (looking at the years 1954-72). In *Overview* he summarises the recent symposium *Brutalism. Architecture of Everyday Culture, Poetry and Theory* in Berlin

Jeannette Plaut is an architect who, together with Marcelo Saravic, is director of Chilean young architects' programme Constructo. They are also editors in chief of *Trace* magazine. In this issue they write *View from* Santiago in Chile

Paul Raftery is a freelance architectural photographer who for many years lived in Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles. In this issue he covered Lacaton & Vassal's recent remodelling of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris

Christian Richters is a freelance architectural photographer whose cool images are published worldwide. In this issue he photographed Bolles+Wilson's Raaksport town hall and cinema in Haarlem, the Netherlands and the MuséoParc Alésia by Bernard Tschumi Architects

Marcelo Sarovic is an architect who, together with Jeanette Plaut, is director of Chilean young architects' programme Constructo. They are also editors of *Trace* magazine in Santiago, Chile. In this issue he co-writes the *View from* Santiago

Federico Sher studied architecture at Oxford Brookes University and spent the spring with the AR. Born in Milan, he writes about fellow countryman Cherubino Gambardella in *Folio*

Tom Wilkinson is working on a PhD on German architecture at UCL, and is author of the forthcoming book on the social history of buildings *Bricks and Mortals* (Bloomsbury). He reviews *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, at the Barbican, London

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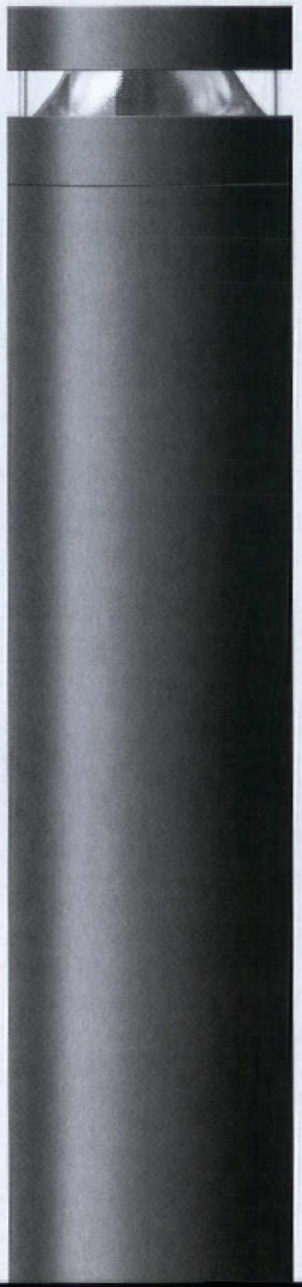

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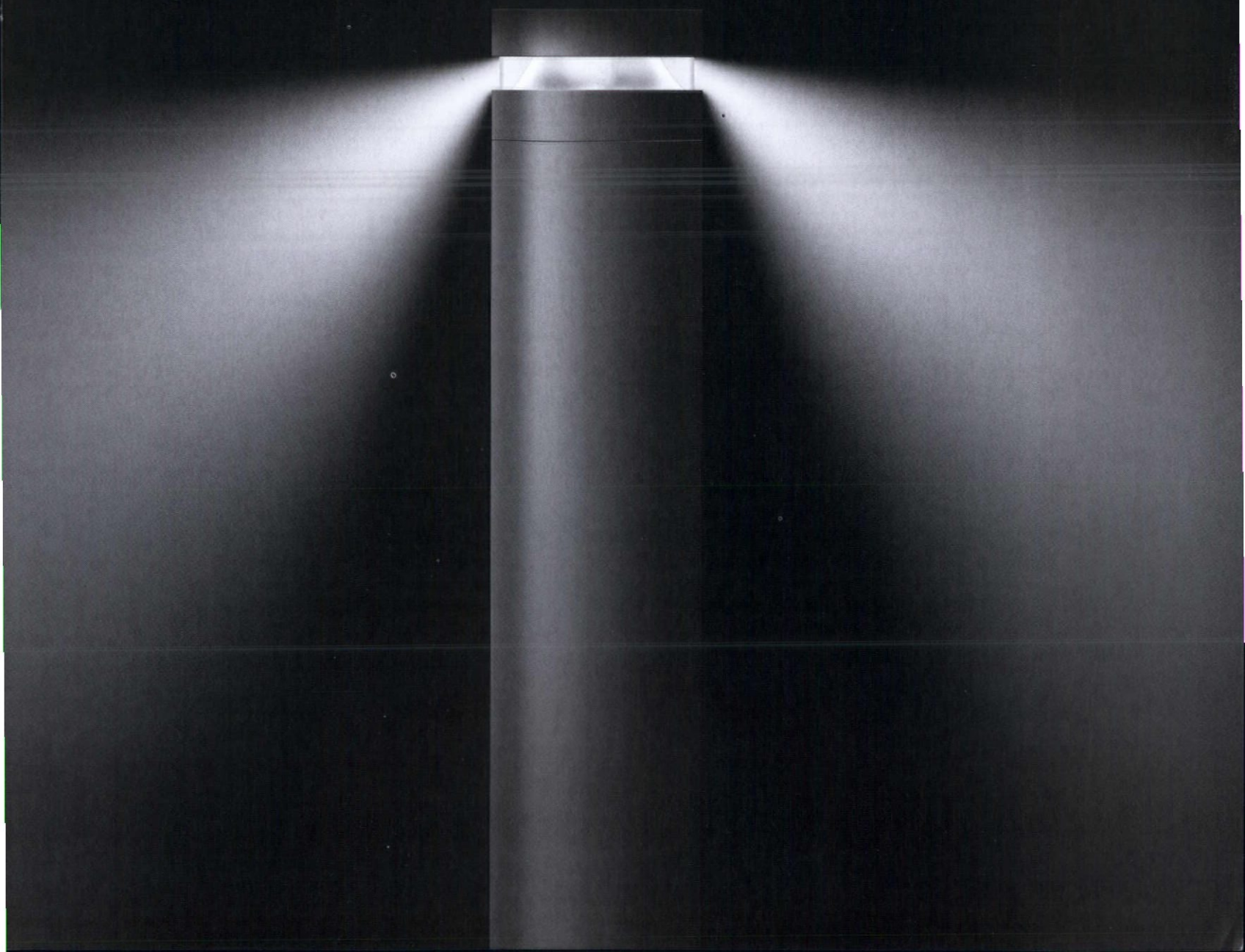

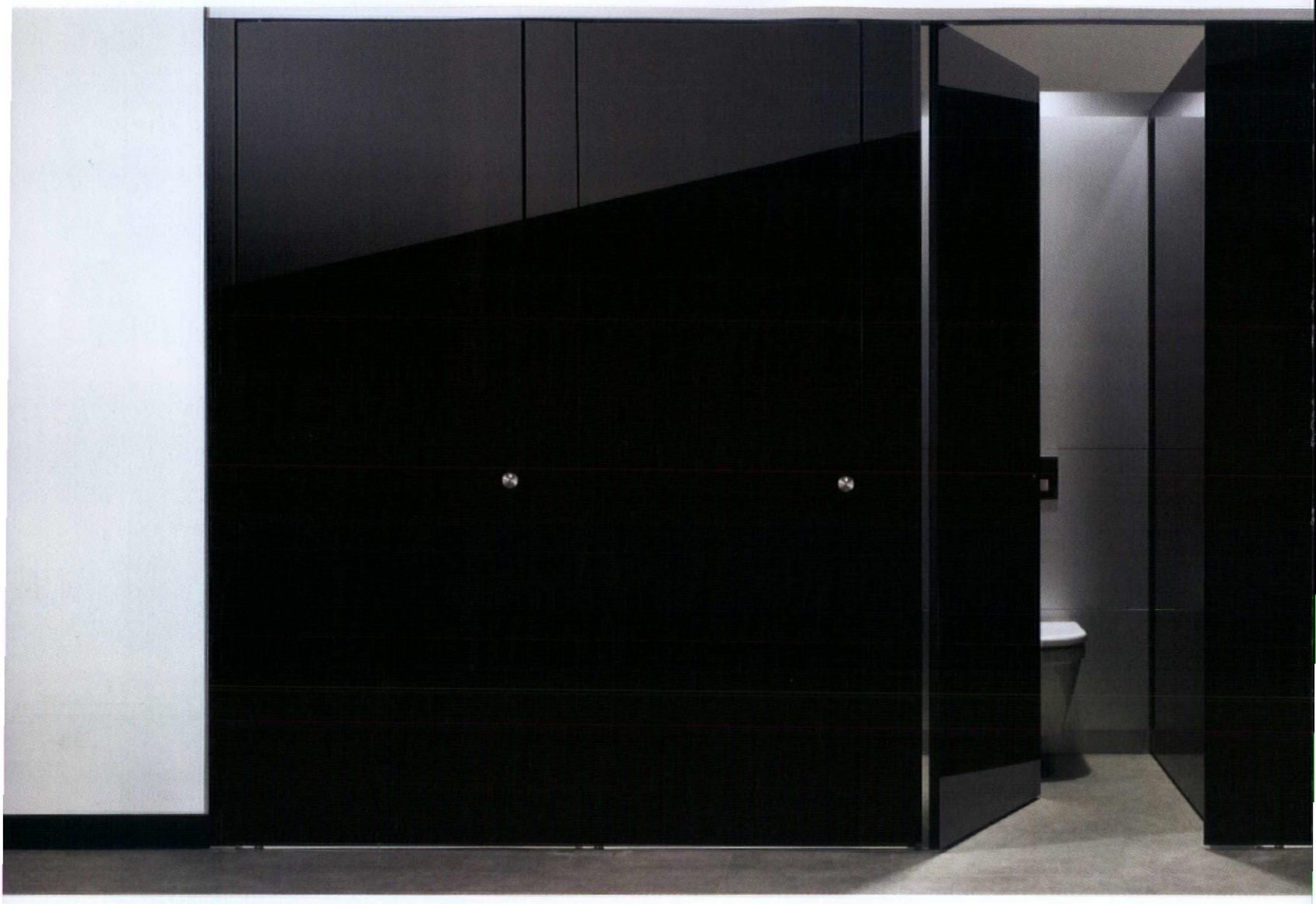

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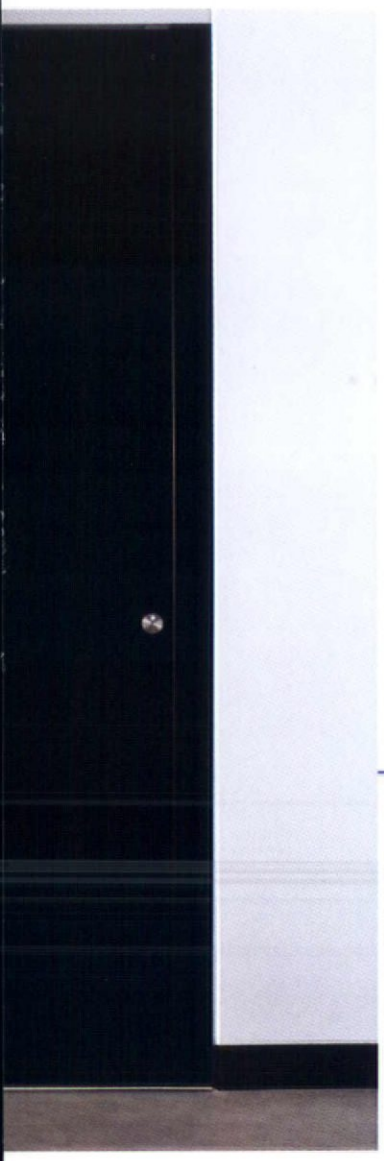

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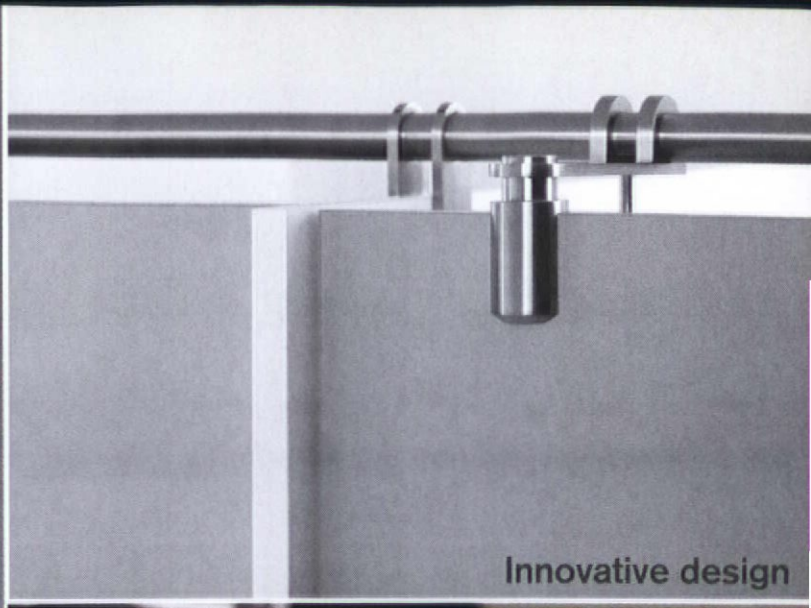

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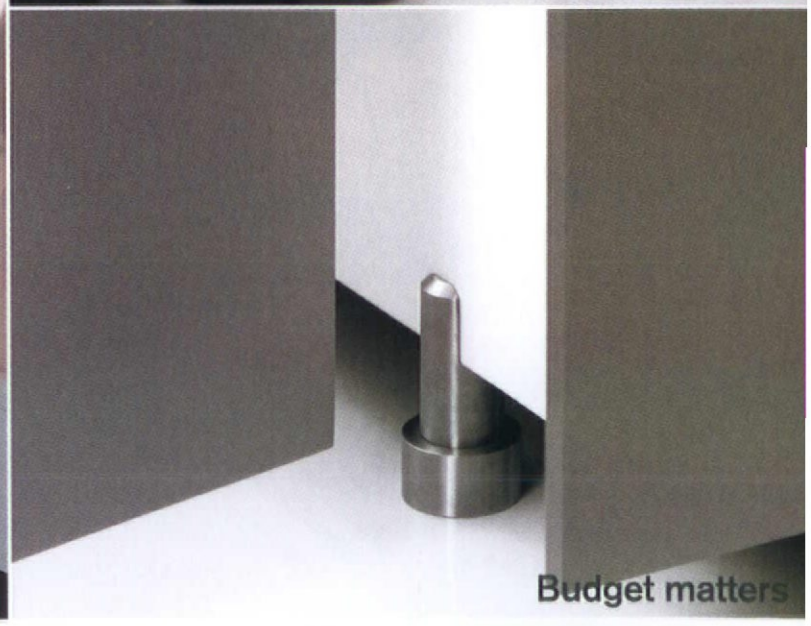

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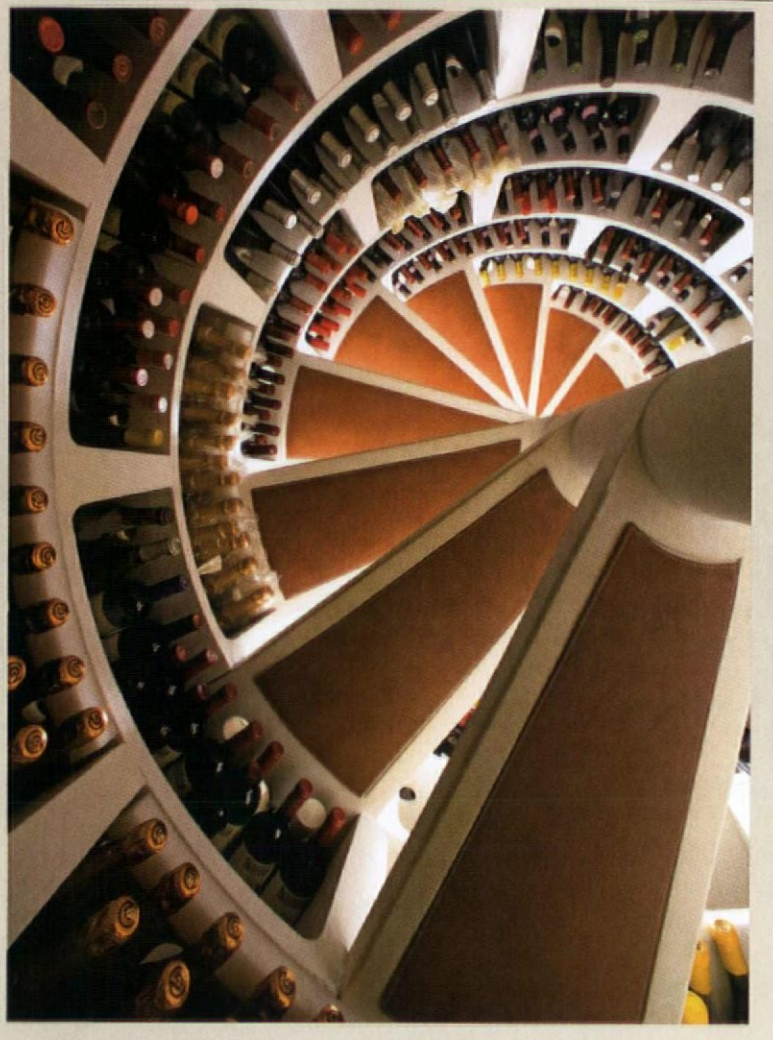

All over the UK, a growing number of people are enjoying and collecting wine and prefer to store it close to home, rather than off site. But they also find that wine cabinets just don't offer enough space – a capacity of 150 bottles is not a lot for someone who really enjoys wine. Yet for many aspiring oenophiles a conventional basement wine cellar is not a feasible option.

Spiral Cellars offers an elegant and economic solution, with wine bottles stored in a compact cellar arranged around a concrete spiral staircase.

Owners of premium homes are increasingly looking for an enhanced wow factor. A wine cellar adds to this cachet, as demonstrated by the growing popularity of Spiral Cellars, which sells around 200 cellars annually in the UK and has increased the number of its installation teams to keep pace with demand.

With 30 years of experience, Spiral Cellars is the UK industry leader in the supply and installation of concrete wine cellars. Spiral Cellars can be installed in houses, garages, outbuildings and even gardens. Commercial premises, such as hotels, restaurants and bars can also take advantage of this inventive cellar technology.

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Full project-specific structural calculations are provided by Spiral Cellars' experienced engineers and the company works closely with architects and designers to achieve optimum results. Spiral Cellars can meet architects at their offices to discuss live projects and offers architects and designers a 5% referral fee, which can be passed on to the client as an exclusive discount. Why don't you add a Spiral Cellar to the designs you present to your clients?

For further information go to: www.spiralcellars.com

1. Spiral Cellars are an elegant and economical solution to wine storage. Bottles are arranged in a honeycomb-like structure around a central spiral staircase. A range of five different depths are available, from 2 to 3m, depending on the required capacity. A 2m deep White Spiral Cellar can store up to 1,190 wine bottles, while 3m offers a capacity of 1,870 bottles, all stored in the correct climate conditions
2. With a maximum excavation diameter of 2.5m, the cellar takes up very little space and a glass trapdoor makes a dramatic focal point in any room. Cellars can be easily installed in both domestic and a wide range of commercial premises

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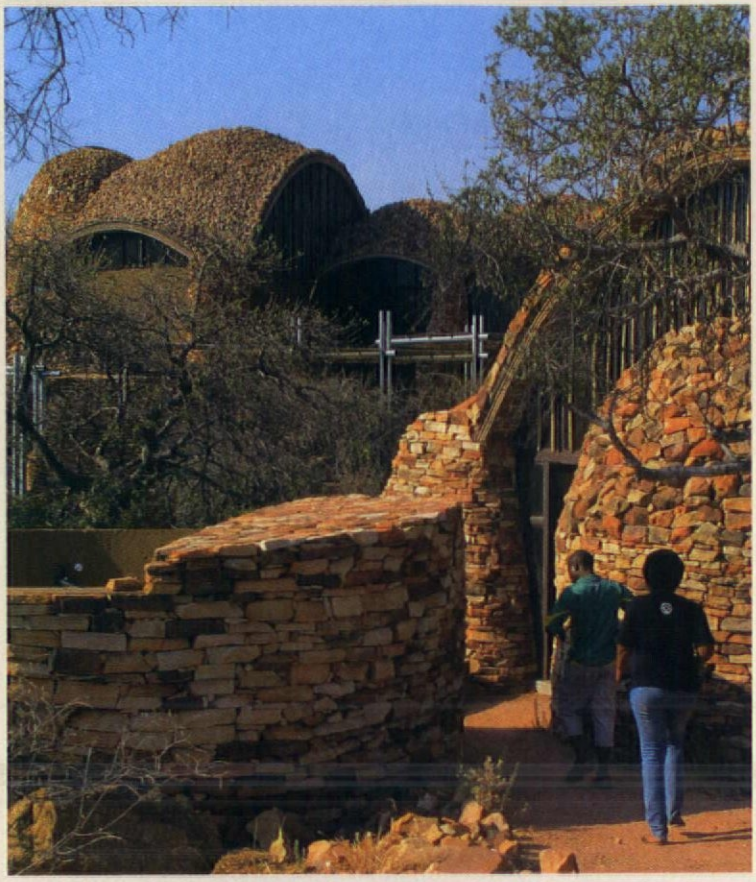

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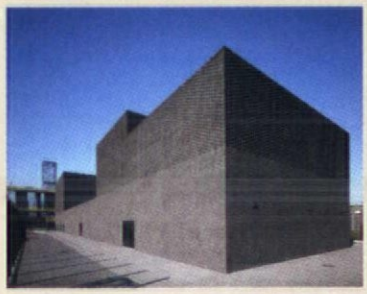

4

The winners of the Wienerberger Brick Award 2012 have been announced. Overall winner is the Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre at the Mapungubwe National Park in South Africa. A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003, Mapungubwe is one of the most distinctive and culturally resonant landscapes in southern Africa. Architect Peter Rich, an authority on the local culture and tradition, together with Michael Ramage and John Ochsendorf, designed the new visitors' centre to be 'at one with nature' by finding a low-tech/high-tech balance. Informed by vernacular precedents and his knowledge of remote areas, Rich has created a building in which the exhibits, local archaeological finds and museum combine to bear powerful witness to the area's ancient history.

In the Single Family House category, architect Bart Lens impressed the jury with his project entitled 'The Rabbit Hole', in the Belgian town of Gaasbeek. Breathing new life into an existing half-collapsed brick farmhouse, he tactfully realised a scheme which encompasses both a residence and veterinary practice, while creating a light-filled intermediate space between the two buildings.

The work of architects Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus exhibits an exceptional sensibility, earning it this year's award in the Residential category. The sheltered housing block for elderly people in Alcácer do Sal shows that functionality and a social use do not have to compromise architectural quality.

For the upcoming 2012 Olympics in London, Scottish architectural firm NORD designed an electrical substation made of coal-black bricks. The monolithic structure won the Non-Residential category and impressed the jury with its crisply articulated contrasts and abstract sculptural quality.

Winner of the Conversion category is a weekend home and studio in Čachtice by Bratislava-based architect Pavol Paňák, which transforms an old ruin into a luminous, contemporary building. Over a period of 10 years, undertaking most of the renovations himself, the architect remodelled a former brick kiln into his own personal retreat.

'Once again, we are impressed by the tremendous creativity of these architects in using brick products as an integral part of their projects,' says Heimo Scheuch, CEO of Wienerberger. 'Through their skill and ingenuity, brick is given the forum it deserves.'

The Wienerberger Brick Award has been awarded every two years since its inception in 2004. With some 230 plants in 30 countries, Wienerberger is the world's largest brick producer.

For more information visit wienerberger.com and brick10.com

1. The Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre by Peter Rich, overall winner of the Wienerberger Brick Award 2012. The project draws on vernacular precedents of vaulted brick construction to produce a unique and regionally specific architecture. Photograph: Peter Rich
2. Winner of the Residential category is a sheltered housing block for the elderly in Alcácer do Sal by Lisbon-based Aires Mateus. Photograph: Fernando & Sérgio Guerra
3. NORD's distinctive black brick monolith housing an electricity substation for London's Olympic Park won the Non Residential category. Photograph: Andrew Lee
4. Pavol Paňák's imaginatively remodelled former brick kiln, now a house and studio, won the Conversion category. Photograph: Tomas Manina

Controlling the Gira KNX/EIB installation
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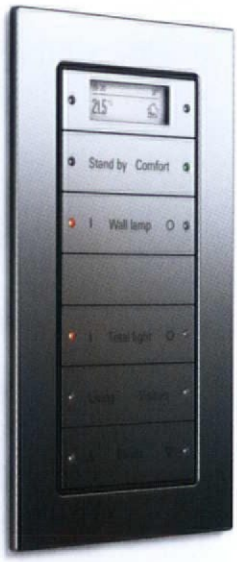

Gira push button sensor 3
With the Gira push button sensor 3, a wide variety of functions which are linked via the KNX/EIB Standard can be controlled, e.g. light, blinds or heating. Three models are available in various colours and materials suitable for the Gira switch ranges: Basic, Comfort and Plus. The inscription of the rockers can be created individually in just a few steps online. For additional information, see www.marking.gira.com
Ill.: Gira push button sensor 3 Plus, 5-gang, Gira E22 Stainless Steel

Basic
The Gira push button sensor 3 Basic is ideally suited for controlling the basic functions of the KNX/EIB installation, e.g. storing and calling up light scenes, switching and dimming lights or raising and lowering blinds. Each button has two red LEDS which display the status of the assigned function.
Ill.: Gira push button sensor 3 Basic, 1-gang, Gira E22 Stainless Steel

Comfort
The Gira push button sensor 3 Comfort has three-colour LEDs for status display which can be flexibly programmed for more complex applications. Furthermore, a temperature sensor is integrated which can be linked to the other components of the KNX/EIB system.
Ill.: Gira push button sensor 3 Comfort, 3-gang, Gira E22 Stainless Steel

Plus
In addition, the Gira push button sensor 3 Plus has an integrated room temperature controller and a high-contrast, white-backlit display for controller status, temperature and various messages which can be received via the KNX/EIB system.
Ill.: Gira push button sensor 3 Plus, 5-gang, Gira E22 Stainless Steel

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Editorial view

Putting gender on the agenda: how the disequilibrium between the sexes could impel innovation

When Charlotte Perriand turned up at Le Corbusier's atelier in the Rue de Sèvres in 1927 she was told that 'we don't embroider cushions here'. Perriand, however, persisted and eventually joined Corb's team of unpaid assistants (*plus ça change*), wrapping newspaper around her legs to ward off the bitter cold in winter. She went on to design furniture, interiors and buildings in an extraordinarily productive career that spanned over 70 years. Immortalised reclining languidly on a prototype for the classic chaise longue she designed with Corbusier, Perriand suggested a new role model for the modern, intelligent, *sportif* female designer.

Given the tenor of the times, Perriand's trajectory is all the more remarkable, and though much has changed, many obstacles still confront talented, determined women who choose to make a career in architecture and design. This perpetually challenging issue has recently had a renewed airing, notably through our sister magazine, *The Architects' Journal*. Following a survey of attitudes to women in British architectural practice, the AJ launched its Women in Architecture Awards, which took place earlier this year.

Yet though such initiatives are fundamentally to be welcomed, as Farshid Moussavi pointed out in her perceptive address at the Women in Architecture Awards lunch, and goes on to discuss further in this issue (p31), architects, whether female or male, need new and more creative ways of negotiating the minefield of gender politics.

Role models are all very well, but can be just as corseting in their unattainable representations of how women should be (for instance, the powerful and multi-garlanded Zaha Hadid certainly takes some emulating). 'There should be no female role models,' asserts Moussavi. 'Where male architects have role models to emulate, the absence of any idealised female style, career trajectory or behaviour conventions give women architects the freedom to become and produce something as yet unheard of.' Essentially, she says 'the presence of women in architecture has to be liberated from the dialectic of women architects versus men architects and women need to be considered as different'.

Citing the gender theories of Deleuze and Guattari, Moussavi posits the notion of 'becoming-woman', rather than 'being a woman', as a gender-neutral means of disengaging from the straitjacket of existing conventions and opening out to the process of becoming something completely different. 'Becoming-woman' is an especially agile and exploratory process, exploiting the multivalent forces that pervade environments external to a particular discipline, rather than simply accepting the formal conventions already internalised and turned into rules. 'In this way', says Moussavi, 'becoming-woman discovers potentials for and generates new systems and built forms.' Instead of that familiar feminist rallying call 'the future is female', the future could now be said to be 'becoming female' – for men as well as women.

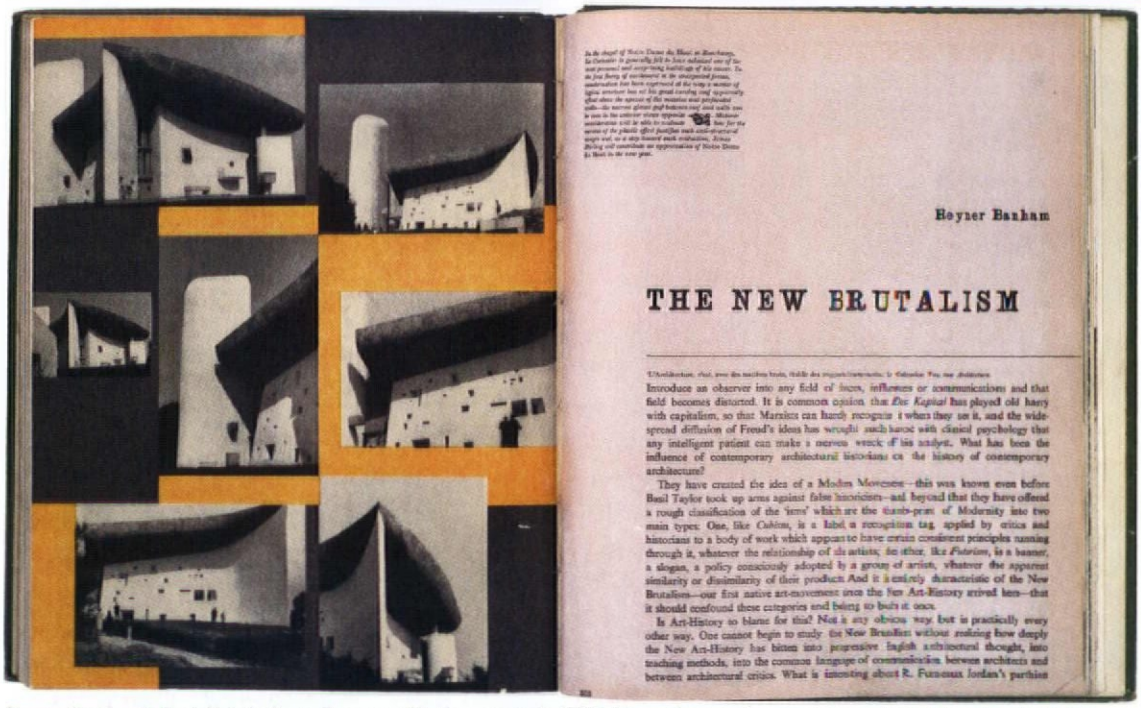
Catherine Slessor, Editor

Overview

BERLIN

Brute forces

A two-day conference in Berlin explored the international incarnations of Brutalism but didn't quite manage a definition, writes *Steve Parnell*



Reyner Banham

THE NEW BRUTALISM

Introduce an observer into any field of taste, influence or communication and that field becomes distorted. It is common opinion that *Das Kapital* has played old harry with capitalism, so that Marxists can hardly recognize it when they see it, and the widespread diffusion of Freud's ideas has wrought such havoc with clinical psychology that any intelligent patient can make a nervous wreck of his analyst. What has been the influence of contemporary architectural historians on the history of contemporary architecture?

They have created the idea of a Modern Movement—this was known even before Basil Taylor took up arms against false historicism—and beyond that they have offered a rough classification of the 'isms' which are the stock-in-trade of Modernity into two main types: One, like *Cubism*, is a label, a recognition tag, applied by critics and historians to a body of work which appears to have certain consistent principles running through it, whatever the relationship of the artists; the other, like *Futurism*, is a banner, a slogan, a policy consciously adopted by a group of artists, whatever the apparent similarity or dissimilarity of their products. And it is entirely characteristic of the New Brutalism—our first native art-movement since the Art-History arrived here—that it should confound these categories and belong to both at once.

Is Art-History to blame for this? Not in any obvious way, but in practically every other way. One cannot begin to study the New Brutalism without realizing how deeply the New Art-History has bitten into progressive English architectural thought, into teaching methods, into the common language of communication between architects and between architectural critics. What is interesting about R. Furneaux Jordan's partisan

Reyner Banham's Brutalist clarion call appeared in these pages in 1955: the conference, however, passed over Brutalism's birthplace

The Wüstenrot Foundation is trying to decide criteria by which it can discern not only what Brutalist architecture is worth preserving in Germany, but what Brutalist architecture is. The aim of its *Brutalismus* conference, held at the appropriately Brutalist Akademie der Künste in Berlin, was 'to establish substantial criteria and benchmarks, and thus promote the consistent and considered evaluation of the Brutalist legacy'. Even two long days of varied presentations and intense discussion could never achieve such lofty ambitions, but did nevertheless deliver a wide range of viewpoints on this most fashionably unfashionable architectural movement.

The Britishness of Brutalism underwrote the proceedings, so given the constellation of American and continental star speakers, it was a glaring omission to include no British-based architectural historian or critic to advocate what Brutalism meant in its place of birth at its time of birth, what it means here now, and how it is being treated. Ken Frampton, who has spent almost the last half century in the US, started his talk by warning that he had nothing new to add to the debate and to this end, he did not disappoint. So the pre-ordained myths of British Brutalism remained preserved.

The New Brutalism was born of the early fifties' Independent Group discussions. Its parents were Alison and Peter Smithson, and one of its midwives, Reyner Banham, wrote the first Brutalist exposition in the December 1955 AR. The other midwife, just as important but in danger of being wallpapered over, was Theo Crosby, technical editor of *AD* and close personal friend of the Smithsons. In the first *AD* for which he was responsible (December 1953), Crosby published their Soho house containing the first mention of the phrase 'The New Brutalism' in the press. He was also responsible for giving the Smithsons the January 1955 editorial in his magazine in which to write a New Brutalism manifesto, and subsequent unfettered access to the pages of the up-and-coming *AD*. The importance of the transformation of Brutalism through its export to other countries via publications should not be underestimated. Luca Molinari discussed this emerging theme of the Brutalist diaspora in the Italian context, focusing explicitly on the debates in Italian magazines, such as using Brutalist imagery to counter Banham's 1959 accusation of a regressive neo-liberty tendency. On migration, the Brutalist ethic is always separated from the aesthetic through mediation of the image, a substantial aspect of Brutalism as Banham rightly identified in his definitive 1966 history of the movement, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* As Stanislaus von Moos explained, 'Brutalism is charged with art', but an equally significant part, at least in Britain, was the making.

Much of the first day of *Brutalismus* focused on trying to define Brutalism by either what Banham wrote or what the Smithsons wrote, under the illusion that this would lead to an authoritative definition. Only Dirk van den Heuvel acknowledged that both parties had a different vision of what Brutalism meant, each wanting

to own it in a different way. As might be expected from a magazine man, Banham's Brutalism concentrates on the aesthetic, converging on the chiaroscuro of board-marked *béton brut*. In contrast, the Smithsons themselves didn't do an in-situ concrete building until the 1980s. Of course, Brutalist discourse constantly shifted from the very early years throughout its maturation and up to the present day – movements are invented, not discovered. Van den Heuvel's coup de grâce was to point out that as Britain's second original native architectural movement, Brutalism was in fact a continuation of the first, the Arts & Crafts Movement, courtesy of the fact that Alison Smithson's father was trained by William Lethaby at the RCA. This links the all-important making and doing aspect of both movements to a way of life, suggesting that, according to van den Heuvel, the peculiarly British 'Brutalist ethic holds a latent political project'.

The conference's other recurring theme was war. The New Brutalism was born of British post-war austerity and welfare state reconstruction, which is where the Smithsons' 'make do and mend', 'as found' ethic originates. But it is not the only movement to have been created by the war, as implied by Beatriz Colomina, who repeated her interesting talk on the Independent Group war biographies given at the ICA two weeks earlier. The AR's Townscape campaign was also a product of war, for example, and a direct counterpoint to the New Brutalism in British architectural discourse. In fact, as von Moos pointed out, Banham associated Townscape's New Empiricism with the USSR's Socialist Realism, which Khrushchev outlawed in his secret speech of 1954 to the construction industry unions, due to its expense. By constructing a microcosm of East-West politics, the New Brutalism became a 'fiercely Cold War project'. The war also explains other nations' misinterpretation of Brutalism: Philip Ursprung explained how Switzerland had no Brutalism because it had no war and therefore no reconstruction. The Swiss also have no large-scale projects, no central administration and a mentality of not suppressing affluence, he claimed, implying these as tenets of a 'classic Brutalism'. Nevertheless, Atelier 5's Siedlung Halen housing near Bern must surely qualify for anyone's Brutalist canon. Jörg Gleiter discussed the polar opposite of 'Brutalist practice' in Japan, a country whose 'as found' situation after its wartime annihilation was effectively a tabula rasa. Again, the aesthetic of exposed in-situ concrete dominated, even to the extent of it simulating traditional timber construction as in Sachio Otani's Congress Centre in Kyoto, 1963-66. Perhaps they were searching for something permanent after the shock of the war, or perhaps, as Gleiter explained, concrete was simply cheaper than steel at that time.

If the conference showed anything, it was that the nature of Brutalism is not a universal entity, but actually quite a regionalist concept. Leaving the last word to Joan Ockman, who in turn pointed out that American Brutalism lacks the moroseness of Europe's, developing a theory of preservation based on the 'as found' could be the most promising avenue to pursue.

GLOBAL

Guerrilla knitwear

Phineas Harper

For many architects the fear that their building may one day be defiled by vandals wielding spray paint is a palpable one. Meanwhile the line in the sand that defines what is a legitimate alteration in the urban realm is increasingly blurred. When New York street artists repainted a bike lane that had been removed from Brooklyn's Bedford Avenue in 2009, they argued that the lane had been erased against the interests of the public by a local authority anxious to pander to corporate lobbyists. In his essay, 'Bombing Modernism', the writer Amos Klausner argues that the rise of street art was an understandable show of machismo from a generation of working-class teenagers left alienated by the Modernist tower blocks they were crowded into. But despite occasional moral quandaries, for most local authorities street art has always been simple to legislate against because somewhere along the line it must involve the physical defacement of property. The resources spent on the removal of such urban art proved effective justification for criminal convictions and the precious architect could sleep easy.

However, in the last few years a new group of street artists have been changing the rules: a grassroots movement of vigilante urbanists who with stealth and aplomb alter their urban environment with knitted interventions. Armed with wool, crochet hooks and knitting needles, anonymous groups have brought a tactile softness to the hard edge of urban environments the world over. Working in teams they target public objects, cladding bike racks, door handles, trees, bollards and telephone booth handsets in brightly coloured coverings. The result is a multi-sensory form of graffiti that, unlike tags and stencils, is easy to remove. Routinely dismissed by newspapers as a passing craze, Guerrilla Knitting has proved itself enduring and surprisingly international. Pieces now appear across Europe, North America, Australia, Scandinavia, Japan and even India.

As megastar street artists such as Shepard Fairey or Banksy have gradually become absorbed in celebrity and eye-watering price tags, their school of work has lost relevance and credibility for the communities it came from. Into the void, a new wave of artists has emerged bringing the thrifty craft of knitting to the city in an attempt to inject moments of delight while gently claiming back some control of an increasingly corporatised public realm.

Just as traditional graffiti artists used bare walls as canvas for social commentary, so too knitters have been quick to use woollen installations as a political platform. October 2010 saw Magda Sayeg wrap the giant handgun and holster of a war statue in Bali: any heroic propaganda power of unnamed young soldier immediately undermined by the friendly

The urban fabric: trees in Austin, Texas are given snug sleeves by guerrilla knitters

Happiness is a warm gun: a war memorial in Bali decorated by knitter Magda Sayeg

colours of the Sayeg's knitting. In May 2011 the *New York Times* reported the yarn bombing of the Wall Street Bull by Polish artist Agata Oleksiak. Working overnight Oleksiak had covered the entire statue in a patchwork skin of wool. Combining knitting with the statue was an overt political stunt aimed at an irresponsible financial district and was quickly cut down by police, but elsewhere local authorities normally charged with the removal of graffiti have been confused as to how to respond to woollen art. Officially considered vandalism, the knitting is so innocently deposited and so easily removed, that councils find themselves unsure how to proceed.

Last year a group of students boarded a U-Bahn train on the outskirts of Berlin at dawn. By the time it reached the city centre every grab handle had been wrapped in brightly coloured woollen patches. Eventually the U-Bahn authorities removed the uninvited additions but left them in place for the full day allowing commuters to encounter the cheerful surprise. The tactile appeal of such pieces is popular and led online retailer Etsy to hire a knitting team to wrap every inch of their Brooklyn office's exposed ductwork in multi-coloured blankets. That shift from urban pest to environmental asset hints at the possibility for knitting to be a legitimate architectural device. It is not hard to envisage a future where the architects of tomorrow's Maggie's Centres could specify knitted details and crocheted cladding, but for now Guerrilla Knitters remain comfortably on the fringes of urbanism, acting as playful provocateurs without giving the architect cause to fear their intrusions.

LONDON & MOSCOW

A new school for Moscow

Robert Mull

'Moscow remains a city which is hard to live with,' I wrote in *Architecture Today* in 2000. 'Brutal and unforgiving, it is raw and at times scary. But its extremes shed light on other cities where brutality is less explicit. The social, economic, and political tissue that holds Moscow together has been stretched to breaking point, making it clear to see.'

A dozen years on a lot has changed in the city, but the reasons why I like it have not. It remains agitated, energetic and invigorating. And as an educator, I am delighted to now have the opportunity to become directly involved in the future of Moscow. On 10 April I was returned to the city in my role as dean of architecture at London Metropolitan University, to help launch a new architecture school in Moscow (MARCH).

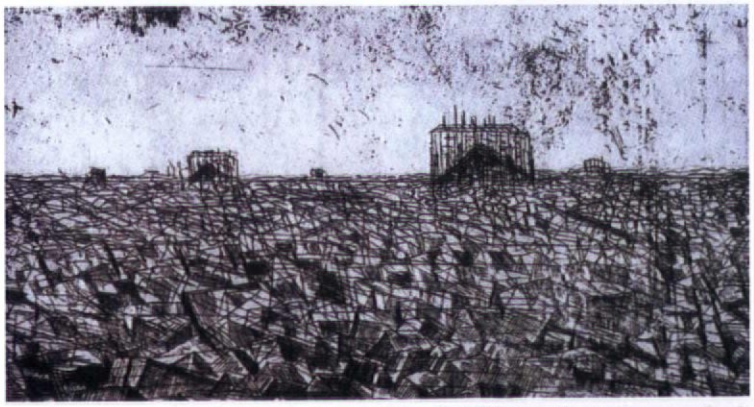
MARCH is the result of collaboration with leading Russian practitioners who have identified the need for a new voice in architectural education that complements the extremes currently represented by the Moscow Institute of Architecture and the STRELKA institute (*Pedagogy*, AR May 2012).

MARCH will be validated by London Metropolitan University and will deliver a postgraduate course in Moscow in Russian based on our Professional Diploma. Like its London counterpart the Moscow School will place an emphasis on the involvement of practitioners in delivering architectural education. The new school will be directed by Eugene Asse and will have studios by other leading Russian practitioners including Alexander Brodsky, Sergei Skuratov and Vladimir Plotkin.

The focus will be on contemporary Moscow and the development of young practitioners capable of shaping this rapidly changing city. The school will be active in the city and will take part in live projects in partnership with the individuals and institutions leading the development of Moscow and there will be live projects, research and consultancy that span between and compare Moscow and London. Students at London Met will have the opportunity to spend time studying and practising in Moscow as part of their professional diploma and Moscow students will be able to spend time in London.

MARCH will be part of the British Higher School of Art and Design, which is based in The Artplay complex in the east of Moscow. Work has started on its new studios, which have been designed by Nikita Tokarev. Over the summer the school will occupy a temporary pavilion in the grounds of the Tretyakov Gallery of Modern Art. The pavilion will host a series of lectures and events exploring the agenda of the school before its first students start in the autumn.

This alliance gives our students in London new routes to employment while providing us with the critical distance to engage more effectively with pressing social and spatial issues closer to home. We hope this is the first of many such initiatives.



***Vanishing Points 3* (1999) by Alexander Brodsky, who will be teaching at the new school**

AR COMPETITION

Call for Emerging Architecture entries

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For full details see architectural-review.com/emerging

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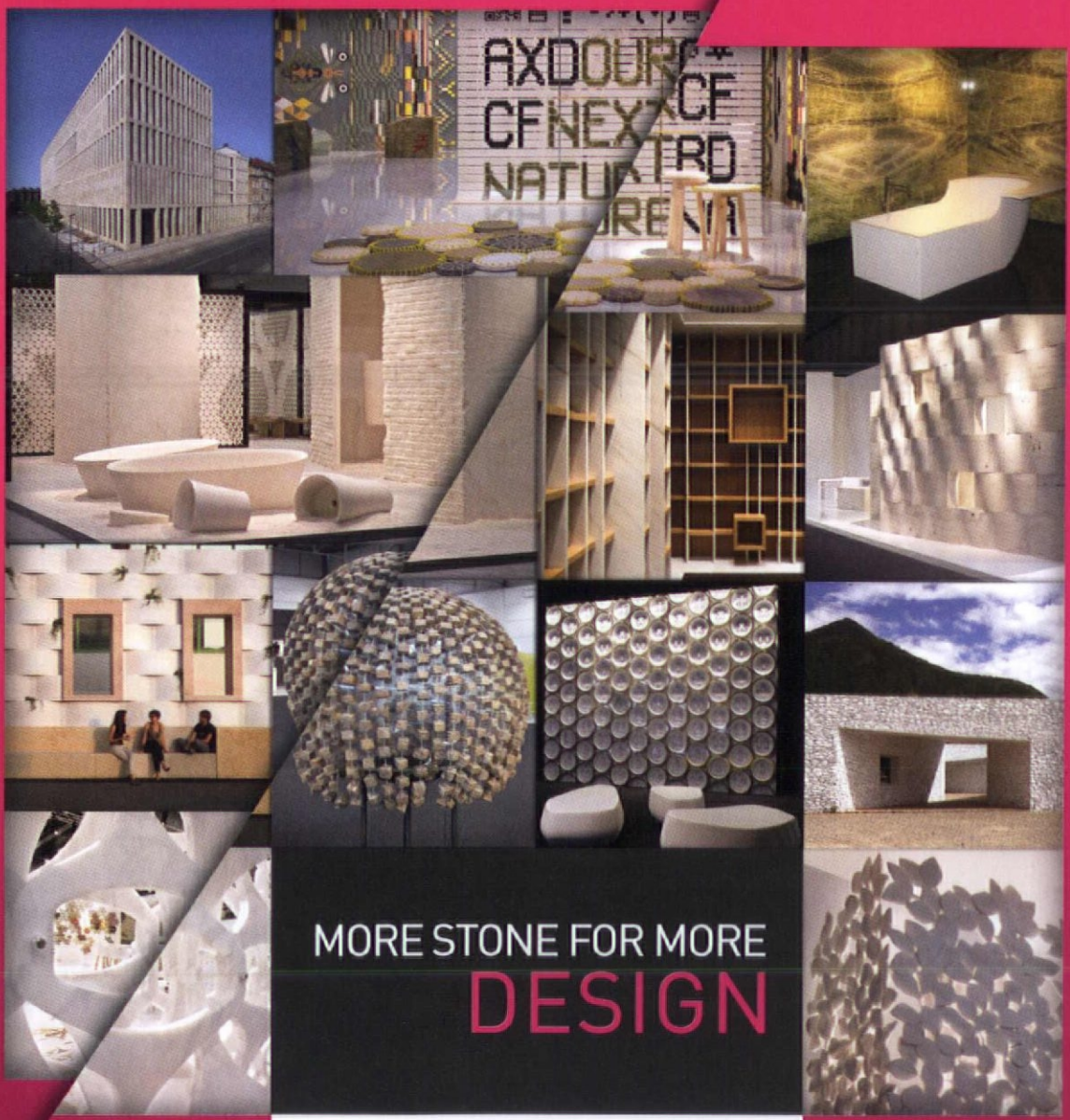

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Design review

Milan 2012

Edited highlights of the most exciting new designs and concepts from that hardy perennial of invention and sensation, the Milan Furniture Fair

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1. DALA, a range of garden furniture made from woven recycled food packaging by Stephen Burks for DEDON
2. Paper Planes sofa by Nipa Doshi and Jonathan Levien for Moroso
3. Swingrest by Daniel Pouzet for DEDON
4. Rimini sofa by Fredrikson Stallard for Driade
5. Stripes armchair by Piero Lissoni for Pierantonio Bonacina
6. Gan by Charlotte Lancelot for Gandia Blasco
7. Aria chair featuring laser cut steel strips wrapped in leather by Antonio Rodriguez for La Cividina

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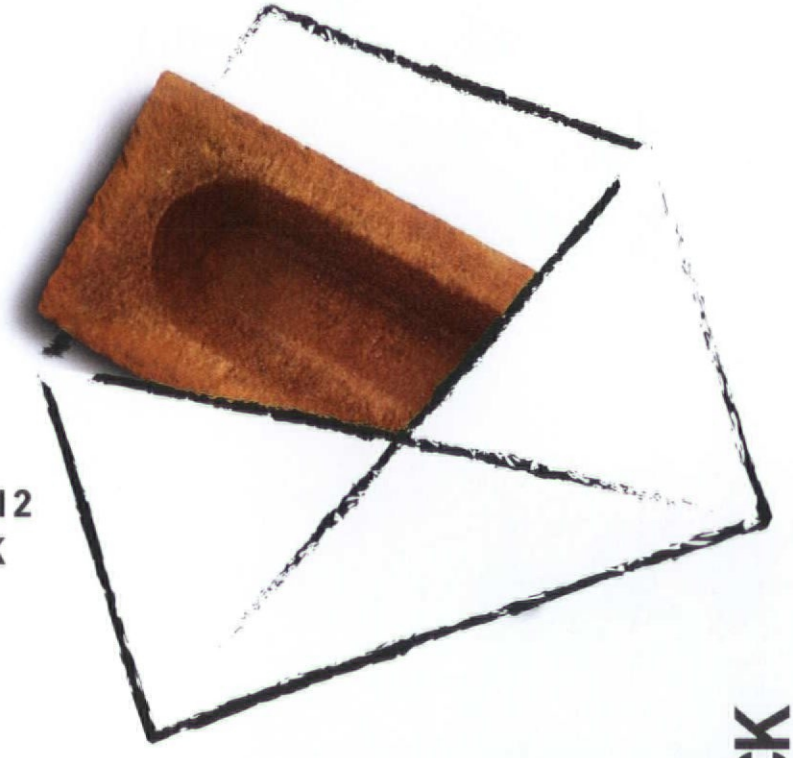

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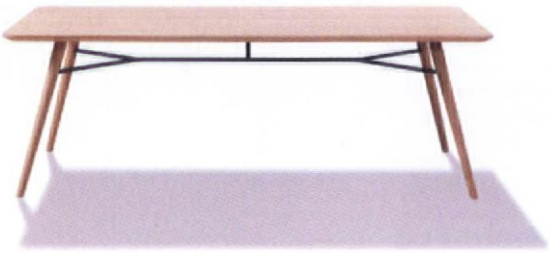

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8. M.a.s.s.a.s. by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso
9. Fauteuil de Salon 1939, originally by Jean Prouvé, revived for Vitra
10. Spine dining table by SPACE for Frederici
11. Comback chair by Patricia Urquiola for Kartell reinvents the classic Windsor chair
12. Tawaya carved wooden table by Ferruccio Laviani for Emmemobili

12

13. Bell Table by Sebastian Herkner for ClassiCon
14. Antero & Cinto urinal by Toan Nguyen from Laufen
15. S-Cube sideboard unit by Ferruccio Laviani for Emmemobili
16. Triangulation chair and table in faceted stainless steel or titanium by Zhang Zhoujie
17. Transience Mirror by Lex Pott and David Derksen

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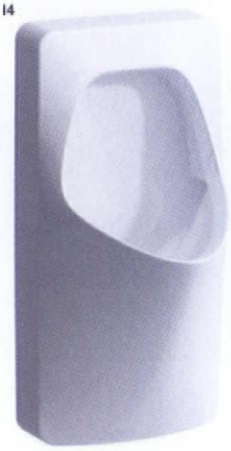

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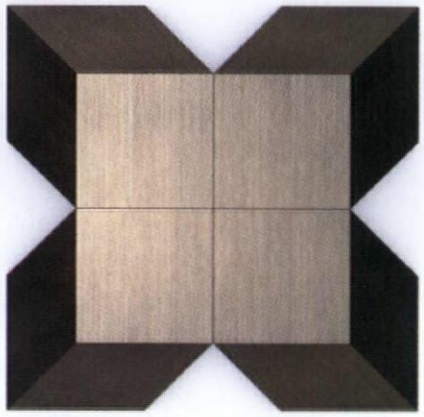

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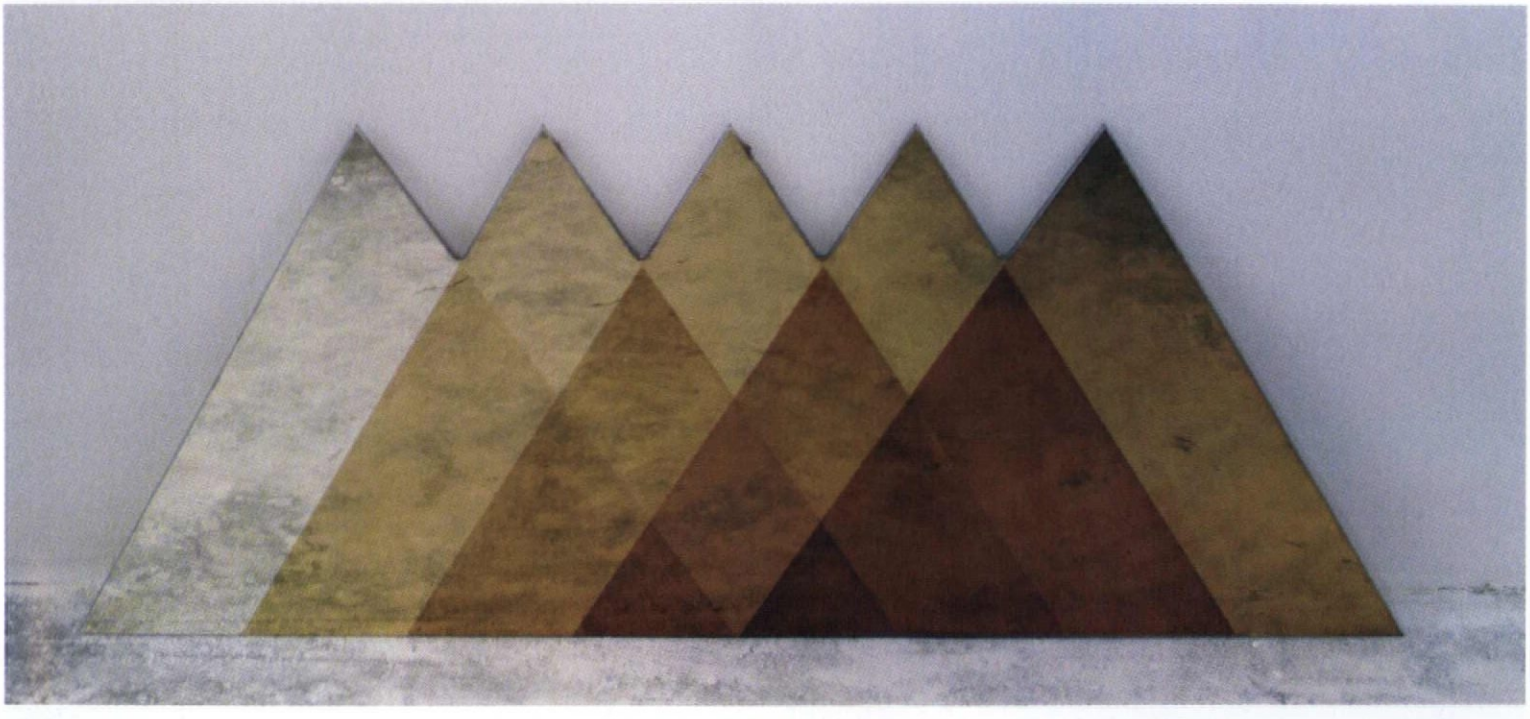

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Stage Two：about US$ 53,000／each

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View from...

PETER LANGER / CORBIS

A memorial to Pinochet's victims in Santiago's Museo de la Memória by Brazilian architects Estudio America. The museum forms part of the redeveloped Barrio Yungay. Peter Langer / CORBIS

Santiago, Chile

The redevelopment of the Chilean capital's *barrios* suggests how architecture might reinvigorate civic life and culture, report *Jeannette Plaut* and *Marcelo Sarovic*

Despite Santiago's internationally renowned legacy of 1960s Modernism, the same period saw the city failing to articulate its urban history. In many cases large tracts of Santiago were erased – for instance the remodelling of San Borja directed by CORMU for the government. This eliminated the morphology of urban blocks and replaced it with an uncompromising model recalling Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin. It also destroyed important buildings that could have been reused, such as the Hospital San Borja. Beginning in the 1970s, proliferating malls systematically displaced areas of architectural value that had sustained neighbourhood life.

Over the past few years, the people of Santiago have arrived at a new understanding of neighbourhoods (defined as micro-urban centres composed of dwellings, services and infrastructure) as offering the potential for improved quality of life. After a period of deterioration and population decline, processes of neighbourhood revalorisation and reorganisation have evolved over the past decade. Some of them came about as a result of the shared interest of a certain group, or the development of cultural and commercial infrastructure that created catalysing hotspots. Today, Santiago is home to three neighbourhoods, or *barrios*, that deserve special attention.

In Barrio Italia, once a rural area, a mixture of antique, design, furniture, clothing and jewellery shops coexist with architecture and design studios, artists' workshops, galleries, a museum and a university. A process of renovation and transformation of the existing buildings has turned it into a centre for design, dining, shopping and culture. The process has been so successful that the area now hosts annual design and arts festivals.

Barrio Yungay, which is still being developed, has become a cultural hotspot in the city's downtown. Founded in 1839, it is Santiago's first planned neighbourhood and home to an important array of the city's architectural heritage from the 19th and 20th centuries. In the mid-19th century the area was characterised by single-storey rural houses constructed from adobe which was dried in Plaza Yungay. The area has since been transformed, with a group of 19th-century warehouses converted into a cultural centre (Matucana 100), as well as the recently remodelled Quinta Normal Park, the metro extension, the Museo de la Memória designed by Brazilian architects Estudio America and new private projects, such as the Yungay Centre for the Performing Arts by Smiljan Radic.

Barrio Lastarria is another neighbourhood that has been developing this incremental strategy of urban renewal. After years of deterioration, its repopulation began around Parque Forestal. The process was led by designers and artists, together with independent clothing shops, restaurants, cafés and bars. The area also recently witnessed the reconstruction of the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Centre. The building was originally designed to host the third United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1972, after which it was to be turned into a cultural centre. However, it was taken over by the military during the Pinochet regime and years later, when being used to host private events, it was destroyed by a large fire. Reconstructed by Fernández + Lateral, it is now a performing arts venue.

These urban renewal strategies are examples of what the Catalan architect Manuel de Solà-Morales has called 'urban acupuncture' because of the impact of specific projects on traditional neighbourhoods combined with a civic interest in rescuing deteriorating areas. The term refers to the possibility of intervening in and impacting on the city from specific points that are measured and real. The experience of Santiago's *barrios* demonstrates that architecture has much to contribute to this process of improving the experiential qualities of the city by intensifying its various strata.

AR HOUSE AWARDS RECEPTION

Laufen would like to thank all the entrants to the AR House Awards 2012

Winners will be published in the July issue

To promote and celebrate this year's winning entries, the AR will be holding a drinks reception on Tuesday 26 June 2012 at the Grange St Paul's Hotel, 10 Godliman Street, London EC4V 5AJ from 6.30pm to 9.00pm

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Viewpoints

FARSHID MOUSSAVI

Agenda bender: the case for the abolition of female role models

Becoming an architect requires a leap into the unknown. You must navigate through unfamiliar territories – culture, politics, economy, the construction industry, clients, statutory bodies, user groups, emerging technologies, consultants, decision-makers, communities; the list is endless ... And for a woman there is an extra unfamiliar territory because she is working within systems which are mostly not of her own making.

Whether revolving around the need for more women architects or how the female body can be used to embed sensuality in architectural forms, discussions about women in architecture tend to be trapped in the representation of some idealised 'woman'. This idea is fundamentally conservative. To innovate, architects need to move beyond such approaches (which are limited to *a priori* assumptions) and embrace the unknown. If female gender is to become fuel for innovation, the presence of women in architecture has to be liberated from the dialectic of women architects versus men architects, and women need to be considered as different.

In gender theory, Deleuze and Guattari have dismantled biological gender definitions and reconceptualised the sexes as 'being man' versus 'becoming-woman': where 'being man' is the status quo and 'becoming-woman' is a process of becoming something beyond this. The significance of 'becoming-woman' is that it is a creative and sexually-neutral process which can be undertaken by men and women alike. Whereas the idea of 'being a woman' implies rebellion against 'being a man', 'becoming-woman' is productive – a process of disengaging from conventions and opening out to processes of becoming completely different.

In architectural terms, the status quo (or 'being man') could refer to the use of prefigured design systems, which can broadly be described as top-down or bottom-up. The common denominator of both systems is that the design process proceeds through the application of prefigured formal rules, either at the scale of the whole or part. 'Being man' therefore seeks to manage or predetermine the built environment through these *a priori* and autonomous systems. However, given that our contemporary environment is characterised by dynamic forces, these systems risk producing architecture which, being detached from processes of change, finds itself obsolete.

An innovative approach (or 'becoming-woman') exploits the multivalent forces that exist within environments external to the discipline rather than those purely formal conventions already internalised and turned into rules for the discipline. 'Becoming-woman' in this way discovers potentials for and generates new systems and built forms.

The number of women practising varies around the world, as does the perception of professional women and the professional scene: how meetings are run, when and how colleagues socialise, the way men and women interact. The need to navigate local or national gender issues is an exclusively female concern.

But this can be fuel for innovation. When I practised in Japan, my own extreme difference with the local culture enabled me to ask 'obvious' questions and challenge the status quo. And in the UK and elsewhere, I have found that clients and academic institutions interested in innovation value precisely this kind of difference and consider it essential in taking the degree of risk necessary in any creative work.

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn argues that scientific knowledge grows through two stages: periods of 'normal' (status quo) science in which scientists consolidate research around common puzzles, and 'intellectually violent revolutions' which occur when these same puzzles are suddenly seen differently. 'Becoming-woman' too makes use of the status quo, rather than rejecting or replacing it. The status quo becomes a foundation for processes of change, distortion, adjustment, subversion, decentring, dissolving, and so on. Rather than arguing for female architects to be the same as male ones, women should differentiate themselves; not only from men, but from other women too.

There should be no female role models. Where male architects have role models to emulate, the absence of any idealised female style, career trajectory or behavioural conventions gives women architects the freedom to become, and produce, something as yet unheard of.

LAST WORDS

'On Anish Kapoor's utopian yet comic tower you become aware of what the body of an athlete shares with that of a corpulent farting giant: the pulse of life throbbing and roaring.'

Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*, 11 May

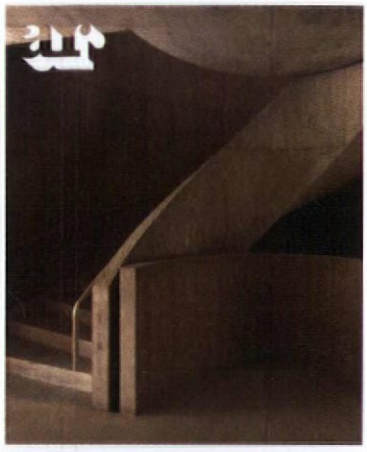
'Far too often the experience of reading architectural writing feels about as pleasurable as tooth extraction ... '

Allison Arieff, *New York Times* blog, 2 March 2012

'The annual Serpentine architecture pavilion is a mirror of the worst of architecture today. Like iconic buildings, the pavilions are not expected to do anything but be famous.'

Robert Adam, *BD*, 18 May

Your views



Time for a rethink of hospitals, or less thinking altogether?

That hundreds of thousands of square feet of clinical space are still being thrown up around the world in countries as economically and geographically diverse as Spain, Switzerland and Guadeloupe (*Typology Quarterly*, May) comes as something of a revelation in double-dip Britain. No doubt many of these enormous projects were conceived in the good times, but such sensitive buildings make the results of our own PFI hospital boom look cheap and thoughtless in comparison. Particularly interesting are the examples that recreate the urban block typology of the past: in contrast, our out-of-town Blairite sheds are, as Owen Hatherley puts it, quarantined away in the 'no there, there' places of our exurban hinterlands. At a time when the operating budgets of our older hospitals are being vampirised by mis-sold PFI contracts, and while Lansley chisels away at the foundations of the NHS, such examples of inventive and humane design show that there is another way to provide for that fundamental human need: health.

TW Quiggin, East Tilbury, UK

Call to arms in Georgia

Following the AR's recent coverage of the architectural crisis in Tbilisi (November 2011 and October 2010) your readers may be interested to know of the latest shocking news. In May, the city saw the destruction of the balconied facade of the 19th-century Lermontov House in Gudiashvili Square, Tbilisi. This does not bode well for the future survival of the architecture of a city in the grip of feverish development. The fragile physical state of the delicate building, with its characteristic perforated timber balustrade on the corner of the square has become an emblem of the fragility of the unique historic fabric in the Georgian capital. Following the first moves to demolish it, local protesters have momentarily prevented further loss.
The London-based Tbilisi Heritage Group seeks support from AR readers worldwide to prevent further loss of this nature. The architectural legacy of such Silk Road cities provides unique insights into the trade between vernacular building languages of East and West and must be protected and conserved with sensitivity. To join us please email: tbilisiheritagegroup@hotmail.com

Oriel Prizeman, Cardiff University

Primary shapes

While it is interesting to see the Swiss heritage of structure derived from efficiently directing forces re-emerge (Swiss School in Grono, Buildings, May), I have some reservations about the fitting out and future viability of the result. Why make a large clear span only to compromise it? How do you build the next phase? The formal proposition appears not to consider the possibility of an incremental programme.

Larry H, comment on AR website

I love this building. But does it actually have more to do with old style Expressionism (ie, Erich Mendelsohn) than Tendenza or Neo-Rationalism?

Michael Badu, comment on AR website

Drawn into the debate

I grow increasingly perplexed by The Big Rethink campaign and its attempt 'to introduce a new theoretical framework for architects' (*Campaign*, May). This is not to say that I do not find myself agreeing with almost everything that Peter Buchanan writes about architecture, but I cannot agree that such observations can be, or need to be, unified theoretically. Such philosophising is quite harmless in its way but one should not for

Hand-drawing by David A Valinsky

a minute be beguiled into thinking that this is architecture or even a starting point for its creation. Might I suggest closing the laptop for an hour, picking up a pencil and some scraps of paper and heading out into the city? Here you will find architecture. Most of it won't be very good, some will be execrable, a little might just be excellent. Search out those few good moments and start drawing. You will hopefully come to realise that the delight that accompanies a beautiful architectural moment is regardless of any theoretical or philosophical expression.

Various writers ponder the future relevance of the architect. We must assert that relevance not by becoming embarrassingly amateur politicians or sociologists, an approach too common in our architectural schools as Patrik Schumacher admirably highlighted in these pages (*Overview*, February), but by demonstrating a true understanding of, and a delight in, architecture and the city. It is not the creation of new specialisms chipping away at the professional role of the architect that should concern us, it is the architect's clumsy attempts to ape the expertise of others while neglecting their own that is the true problem. Creating buildings that are beautiful and work well is challenge enough; let us become a little more humble and properly engage with this creative task.

For this is the be all and end all, everything else is simply a means to this end.

David A Valinsky, Cambridge

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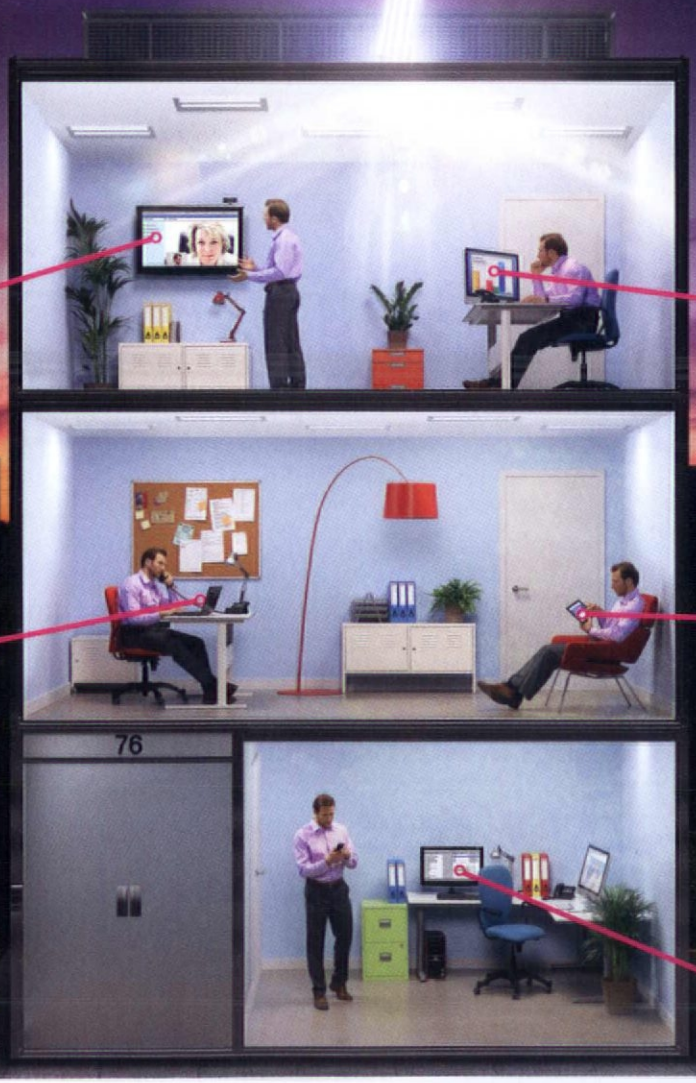

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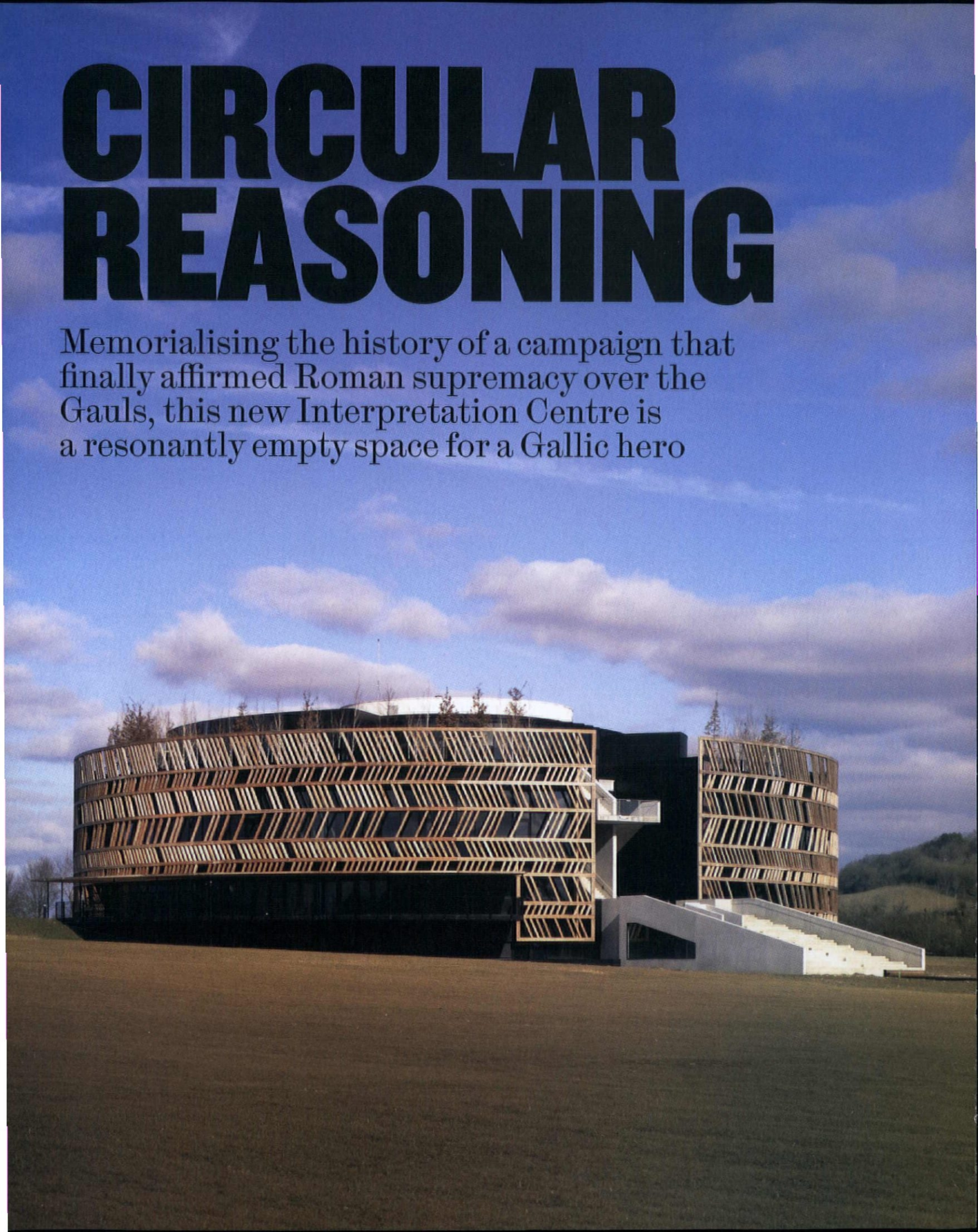
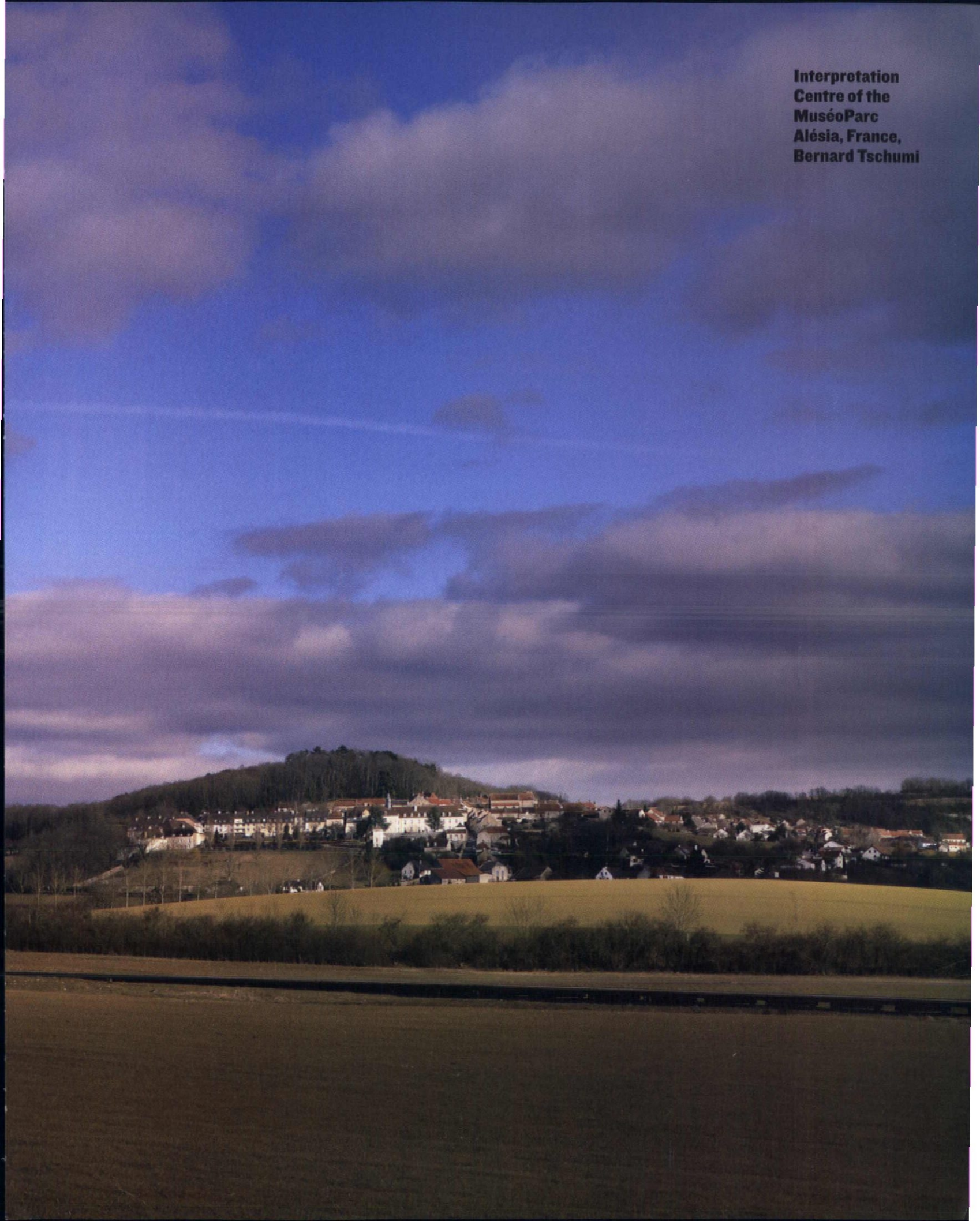
Bringing it all together

CIRCULAR REASONING

Memorialising the history of a campaign that finally affirmed Roman supremacy over the Gauls, this new Interpretation Centre is a resonantly empty space for a Gallic hero





Interpretation Centre of the MuséoParc Alésia, France, Bernard Tschumi

Interpretation Centre of the MuséoParc Alésia, France, Bernard Tschumi

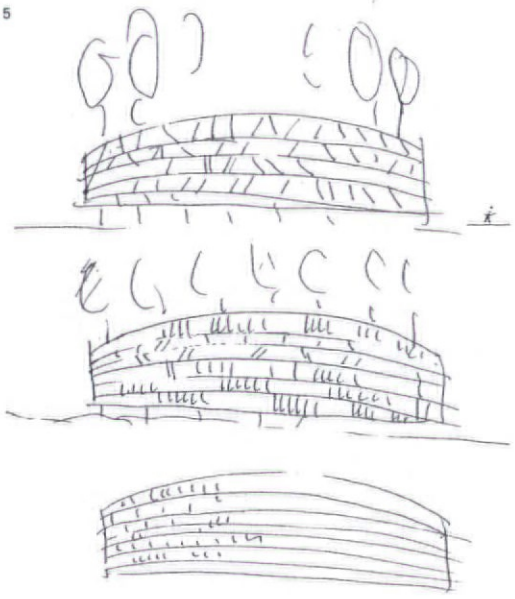
2

3

4

1. (Previous page) the circular form of Tschumi's Interpretation Centre, perhaps intended to recall Caesar's double-ringed fortifications, does not take any prisoners in its approach to the landscape
2. Sketch of Roman fortifications on the hill-top of Alésia. Concentric palisades were used to entrap the Gallic hero Vercingétorix and repel reinforcements
3. Tschumi's choice of model seems somewhat perverse, since this was the means by which the Romans eventually forced Vercingétorix to surrendor and incorporated Gaul into their empire
4. Aerial view of the Centre and its setting
5. Tschumi's sketches show the silhouette of the Centre softened by rooftop trees, like an ancient Roman mausoleum
6. Further sketches of the as yet unbuilt Archaeological Museum (left), and the new Interpretation Centre (right), with arrows marking circulation

5



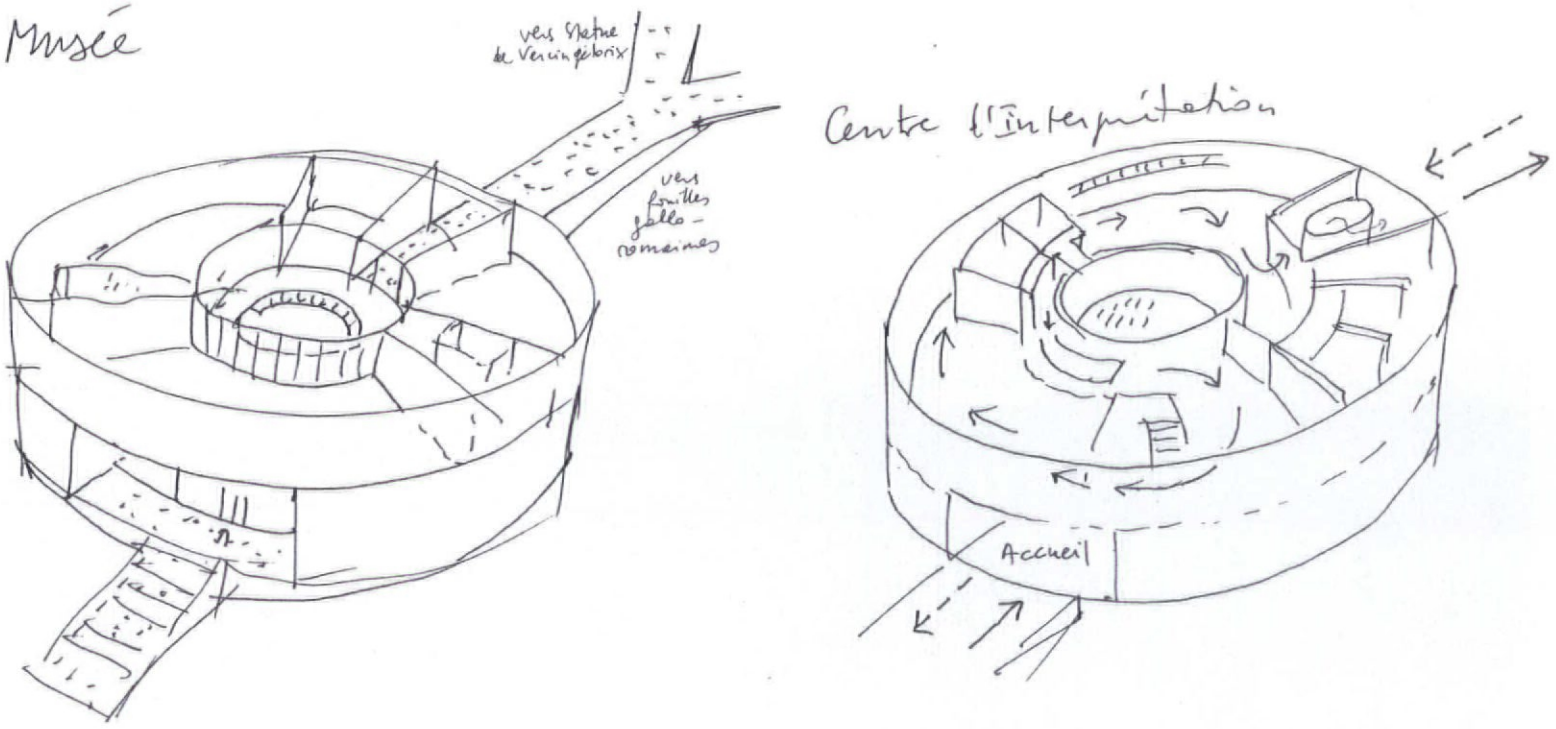
CRITICISM

WILLIAM JR CURTIS

In his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, Julius Caesar describes in great detail the siege and battle of Alésia which took place in September 52 BC. It was here that he finally defeated the confederacy of Gallic tribes under the leadership of Vercingétorix, chief of the Averni, so guaranteeing Roman dominance in Gaul for the succeeding centuries. Vercingétorix had already dealt Caesar a major blow at the earlier battle of Gergovie (not far from the present-day Clermont Ferrand) and had withdrawn to the hill-top 'oppidum' of Alésia to consolidate his revolt and guarantee protection from all sides. Caesar describes how he constructed two rings of fortifications including ditches, ramparts and timber towers, one ring facing inwards towards the besieged enemy, the other facing outwards to repel relief forces who eventually arrived in vast numbers. In the final battle Caesar had to face enemies from within and without but his legions held the day and Vercingétorix finally surrendered. However he was recuperated in Gallic nationalist mythology as a hero of the French people and in the 1860s a huge statue was erected near Alise-Sainte-Reine (north of Dijon) portraying the defeated warrior as a muscular but somehow benign giant with long hair and a flowing moustache. The base of the statue, incidentally, was designed by Viollet-le-Duc.

The only problem with all this is that it is still not 100 per cent certain that the site of Alésia was Alise-Sainte-Reine. From the physical remains it is clear that a battle took place there, and from the archaeological dig on the hillside it is evident that a Gallo-Roman town eventually flourished on the site. But a case can also be made for placing Alésia near the village of Chaux-des-Crotenay in the Jura where the landscape fits the descriptions just as well. It was during the Second Empire in France that Alise-Sainte-Reine was decreed as being the authentic site. Thus the whole question of 'memorialising' and reconstituting the site of Alésia enters the difficult territory which separates memory and myth from history and fact. Rather like Joan of Arc (the sacred heroine of the French infantry in the trenches of the First World War), Vercingétorix gradually took on the dimensions of a mythical figure who emerged somehow glorious even in defeat. He even came in handy as a Gallic and vaguely

'The whole question of 'memorialising' the site of Alésia enters the difficult territory which separates memory and myth from history and fact'



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Interpretation Centre of the MuséoParc Alésia, France, Bernard Tschumi

Republican counterweight to the Royalist and Catholic insistence on a lineage running back through the Capetian Kings to Clovis, the first 'French' king to be baptised (probably in AD 497). Then of course there are the comic book versions of Gallo-Roman history which every French school child picks up through the rumbunctious figure of Astérix with his Gallic helmet and his exaggerated golden moustache. It is only one step further to a sort of Disneyisation of national history for the entertainment of tourists and school groups.

The programme for the MuséoParc Alésia had to cater to both education and mass tourism. It included both the Interpretation Centre in the valley (just completed) and an Archaeological Museum on the hillside, still to be constructed. Bernard Tschumi's overall project envisaged both buildings as cylindrical structures, the one in the valley constructed of concrete with wooden trellises protecting glass facades, the one on the hillside buried more in the ground and clad in stone. These two markers were thought of as stopping points in a sort of strolling landscape in which the history and geography of the site would gradually be revealed. Included in the sequence was a reconstruction of the stockade and ditches of the siege fortifications. The Interpretation Centre emerges from the soft and rolling landscape as a cylinder wrapped in a rustic screen of heavy timber pieces laid out in diagonal patterns which bring the facades alive. Windows and walls are black and recede into shadows on a secondary plane. Landscaping is an essential part of the project. The vast area of parking for cars and buses is separated from the Centre by means of groves of birch trees, a subtle landscape design by Michel Desvigne. But trees are also planted on top of the cylinder and these give the structure the air of an ancient Roman mausoleum. Analogies have clearly played a role in the genesis of the project. Tschumi's circular geometry is perhaps intended to recall the rings of Caesar's fortifications, while the wooden trellises suggest timber stockades.

> 'Analogies have clearly played a role in the genesis of the project. Tschumi's circular geometry is perhaps intended to recall the rings of Caesar's fortifications'

The cylindrical form also grew from the intention of supplying an all-around panorama of the site from the interior exhibition spaces on the upper level and of course from the roof. The architectural promenade is guided from the parking by means of a meandering path to an eccentric position in the open landscape. It then turns to face the entrance on a line which cuts

7

7. Intelligent landscaping by Michel Desvigne screens the extensive car parks from the Centre
8. Visualisation showing the ramp leading to the entrance of the unbuilt Museum and the stone patterning of its facade
9. From above, the green roof of the Museum will merge with the landscape

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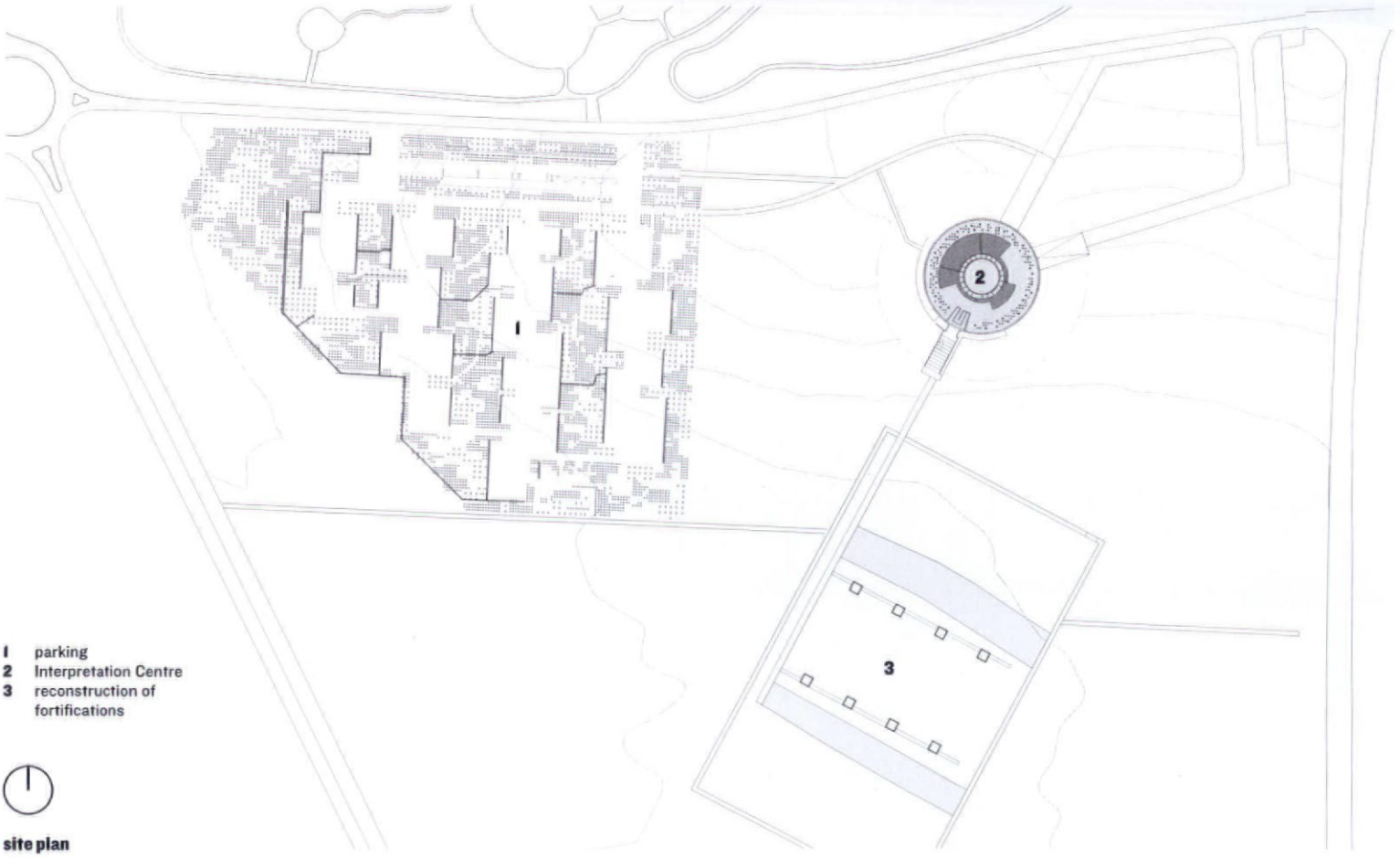
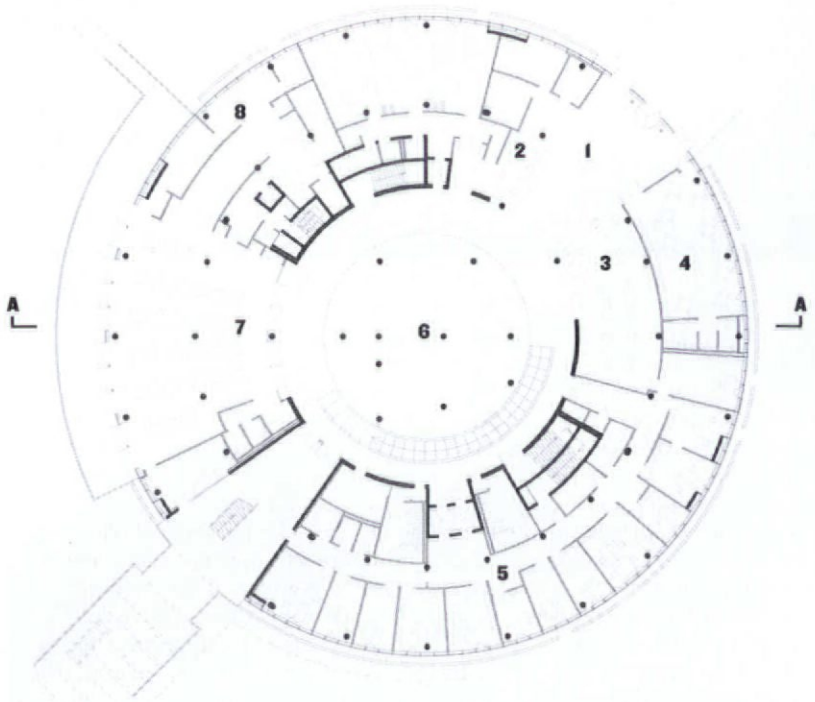


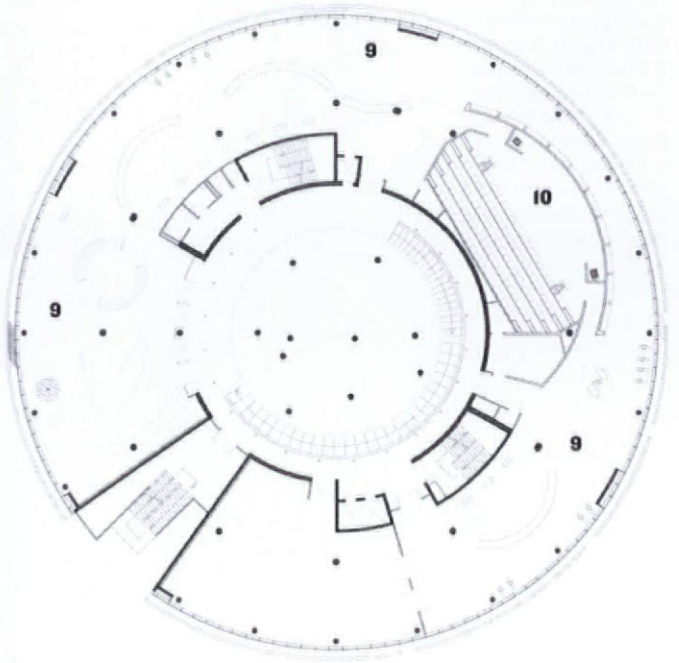
1 parking
2 Interpretation Centre
3 reconstruction of fortifications

site plan

entrance level

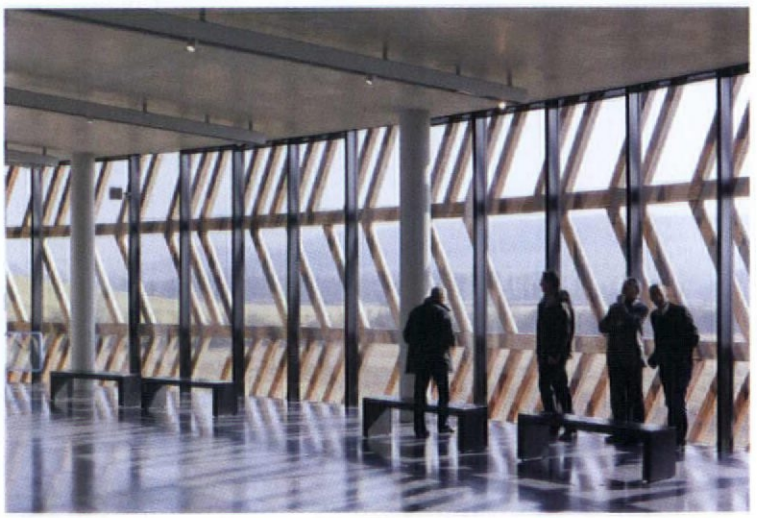


exhibition level



1 entrance
2 ticket office
3 shop
4 cafe
5 offices
6 central atrium
7 restaurant
8 servery
9 exhibition spaces
10 theatre

10



11

10. Views are distractingly filtered by the complex herringbone geometry of the timber lattice
11. Cutaway section through the external wall. The timber slats veil an inner layer of glazing, but the brise-soleil effect is only partially successful
12. The landing on an external stair doubles as a viewing platform

Interpretation Centre of the MuséoParc Alésia, France, Bernard Tschumi

through the cylinder and continues on the other side through a vertical cleft in the structure to a wooden path which goes directly to the reconstituted fortifications beyond. Unfortunately this intention and this axis are scarcely perceived: the main entrance is curiously underplayed and when you penetrate the cylinder you enter a large central volume filled with concrete columns which lean this way and that (a period cliché descending from Koolhaas) obscuring the axial route. A spiralling ramp takes the visitor to the first level where most of the exhibits are distributed in a ring of spaces with views to the exterior. The ramp inevitably recalls the interior of Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York. Not much happens in the main central space (which is toplit through skylights). School groups mill around bumping into each other and making a terrific din. The problem of reflected sound does not seem to have been on the agenda. The spaces around the edges of the entrance level provide segments like slices of cake with their narrow ends pointing inwards and their broader ends extending outwards. The restaurant, for example, expands towards the exterior perimeter and has ample terraces (and an oversized bathroom) but it is tightly squeezed where it meets the central volume on the interior and where people file in. The circular geometry and the needs of mass tourism may be on a collision course in this sector.

The Interpretation Centre is roughly 50 metres across and 15 metres high. There are five levels in all and the lowest one is half buried in the ground. But the building still seems too high for its site and you wonder if a moat could not have been dug deeper into the ground. The entrance path might then have been emphasised by a species of bridge leading into the fortified volume. A vast amount of space is taken up by the void at the centre and some of the exhibits are squeezed in at the first level. There are some conflicts between the exhibits which require artificial lighting and the intention of supplying daylight and views to the outside. The exhibits themselves are sometimes tacky. These are not the direct responsibility of Tschumi but were designed by a firm known as Scène. In effect you are guided from one scenario to the next as in a fairground: Caesar's literary descriptions; a corridor of giant warriors who appear to be made of papier mâché; a diorama of the ancient landscape of the site of Alésia; a frieze explaining the Roman background; a series of maps explaining Caesar's campaigns; even a representation of Vercingétorix but without a face because, we are told, we do not know what he really looked like. Of course attempts are also made to reconstruct the siege and battle including '*Le rêve d'un roi nu*' ('The Dream of a Naked King', a B movie directed by Christian and Gilles Boustani) which

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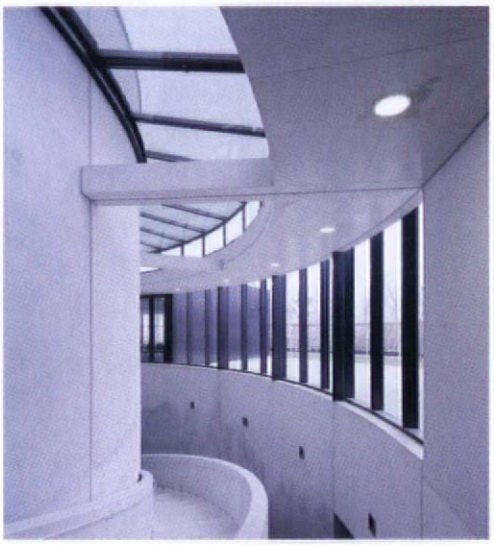
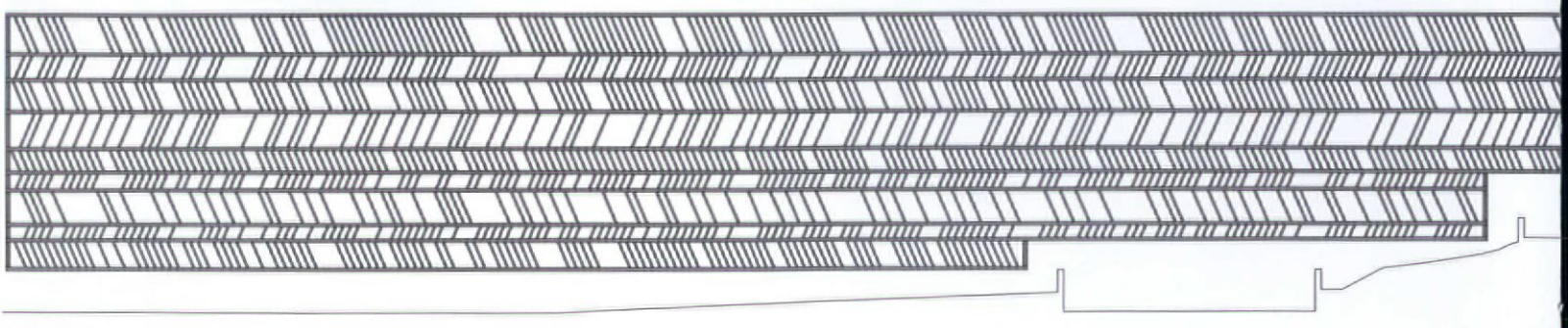


15

13. The angular columns (offspring of Koolhaas) inside the central void are by now a somewhat familiar trope
14. Extensive fenestration transforms the potentially gloomy ramp between the outer and inner walls into a bright and airy space
15. Double doors open onto the terrace beyond



'unwrapped' facade

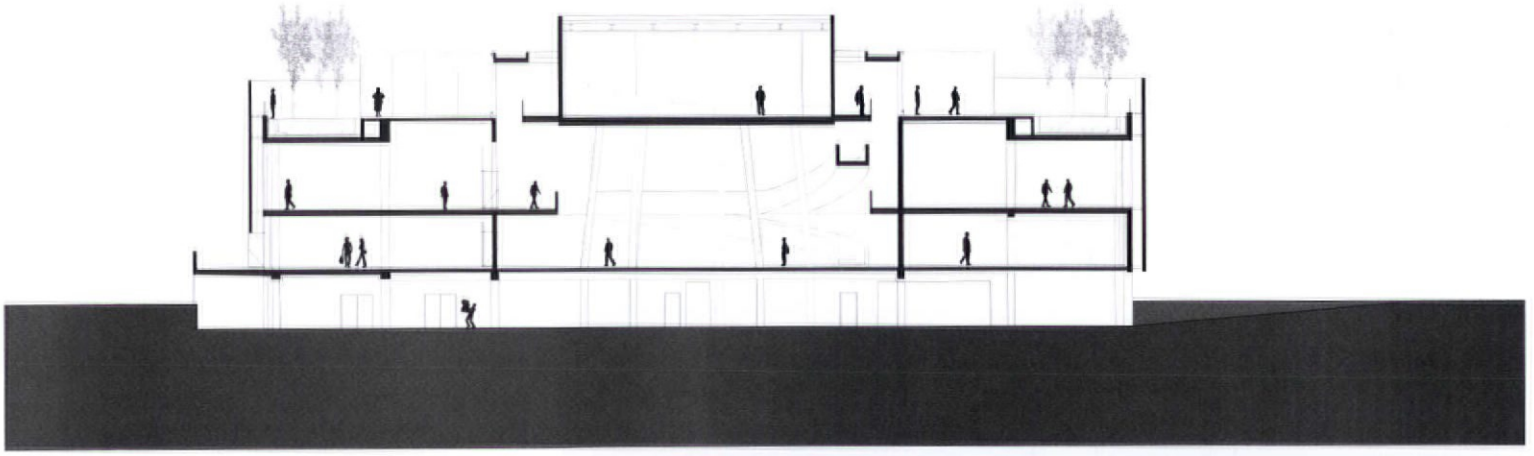
makes Hollywood blockbusters look highbrow by comparison. Many of these installations require subdued lighting so the visitor weaves in and out of partitions while along the edges some attempt is made to link the interiors to the views of the landscape in the distance. In effect this is a huge container for a theme park, a silo for fast food knowledge and lightweight historical (or mythical?) entertainment.

So how well does Tschumi manage to translate his intentions into architectural terms? Despite the declared aims, the building does not succeed in interacting with its surrounding landscape. When you are wandering around on the terrace of the Centre it takes some time to understand that your attention is supposed to be directed towards key points and landmarks in the historical setting. The diagonal wooden beams which work well enough seen from the outside do not aid a focused perception and framing of the surroundings when seen from the inside; they are even quite distracting. The detailing of the building is sometimes crude and standardised as if there had not been time to find an appropriate expression for this particular work. Over the years, Tschumi's architecture has been distinguished by sophisticated conceptual explorations but these have not always been satisfactorily transformed into the spaces and materials of his buildings. He has made abundant use of precedents, sometimes in witty ways, as with the red cubes of the 'Follies' in the Parc de la Villette (AR August 1989) which were mannerist interpretations of Soviet Constructivist prototypes of the 1920s. His reading of sites has included analogical relationships with existing features, as with the Acropolis Museum in Athens (AR June 2009), which succeeds better inside than outside, the exterior being out of scale with its urban setting. The Interpretation Centre reflects similar strengths and weaknesses. The project relies upon intelligent moves and pertinent metaphors (although some of these contradict each other), but these are not adequately supported by architectural experience. The guiding ideas of the project remain schematic and intellectualised. They do not always come alive in the realm of architecture that encompasses space, light, materials, the orchestration of movement and control of views.

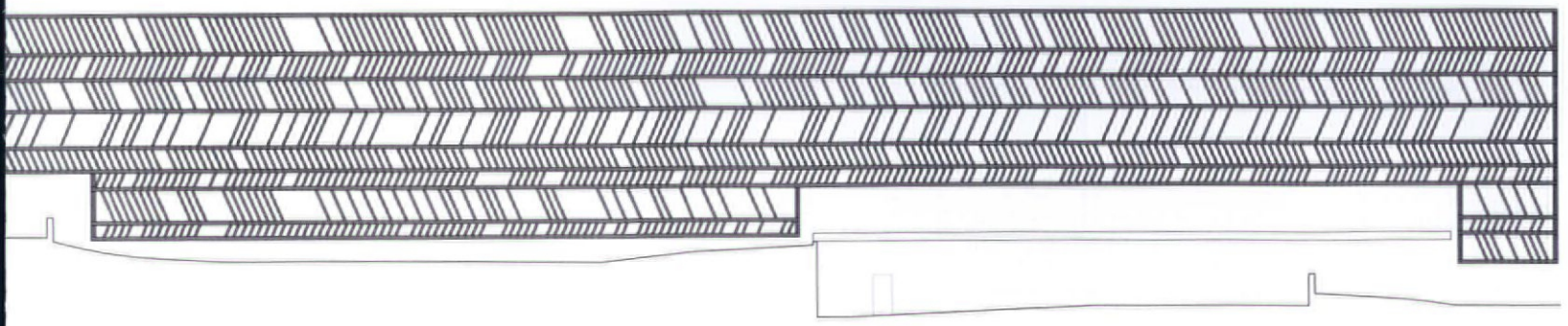
'In effect this is a huge container for a theme park, a silo for fast food knowledge and lightweight historical (or mythical?) entertainment'

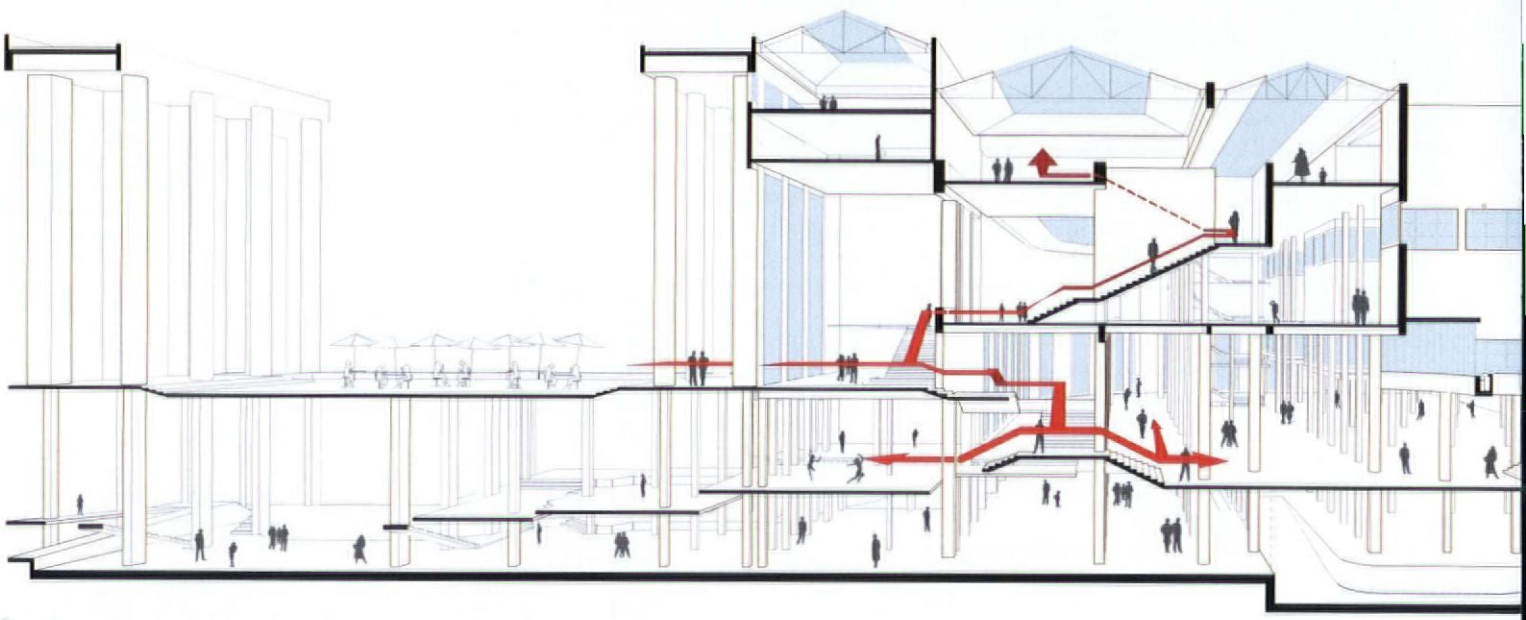
Interpretation Centre, of the MuséoParc Alésia, France, Bernard Tschumi

Architect
Bernard Tschumi Architects
Landscape architect
Michel Desvigne
Wood facade
Ochs
Glazing
Saint Gobain
Recessed lighting
Regent
Facade lighting
Philips
Interior partitions
Placoplatre
Acoustic ceiling
Oberflex
Auditorium seats
Quinette
Tiles
Casalgrande
Photographs
Iwan Baan
Christian Richters

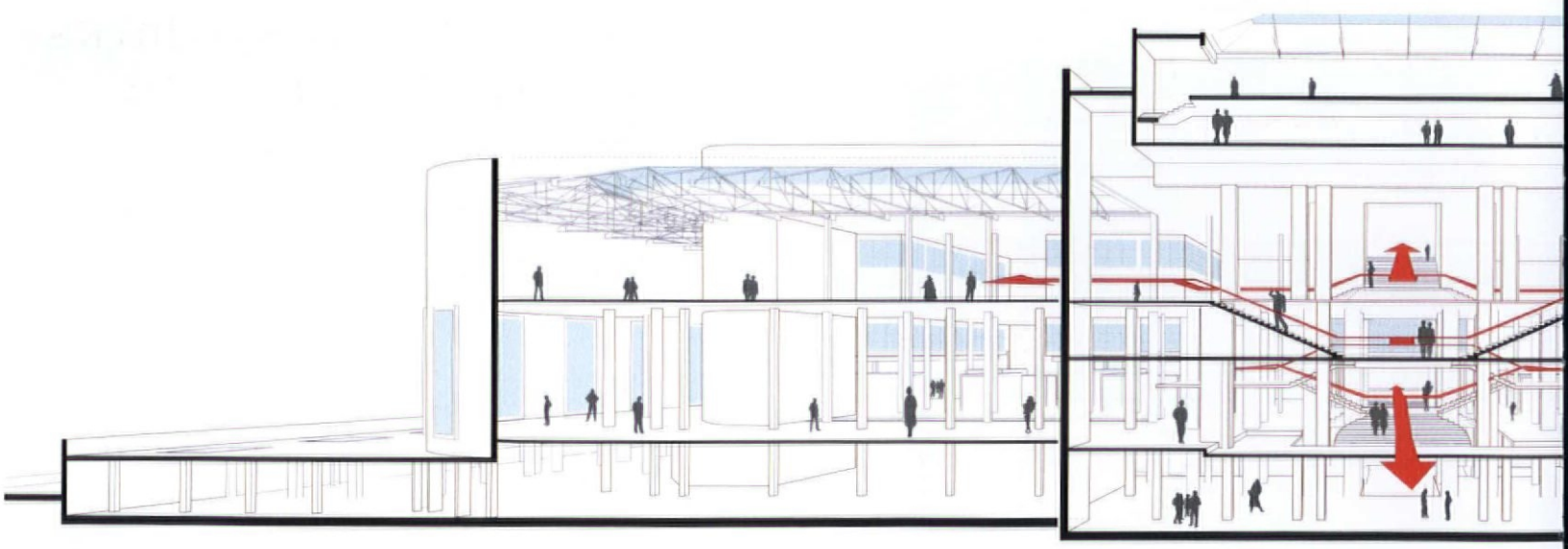


section AA



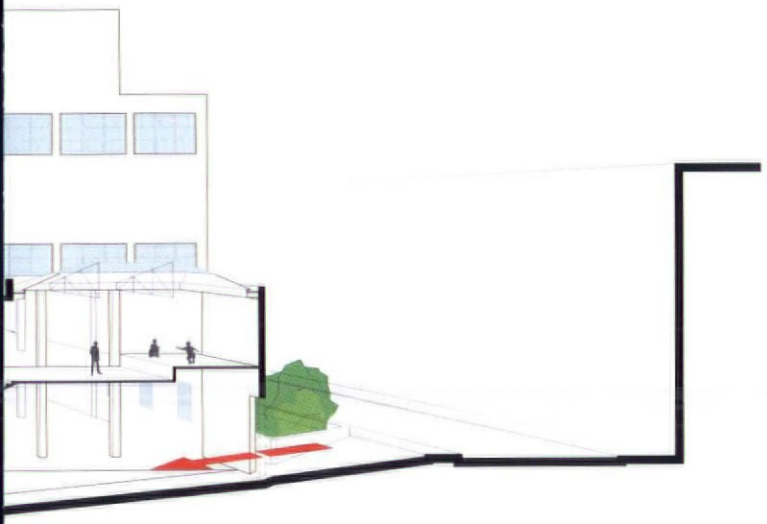


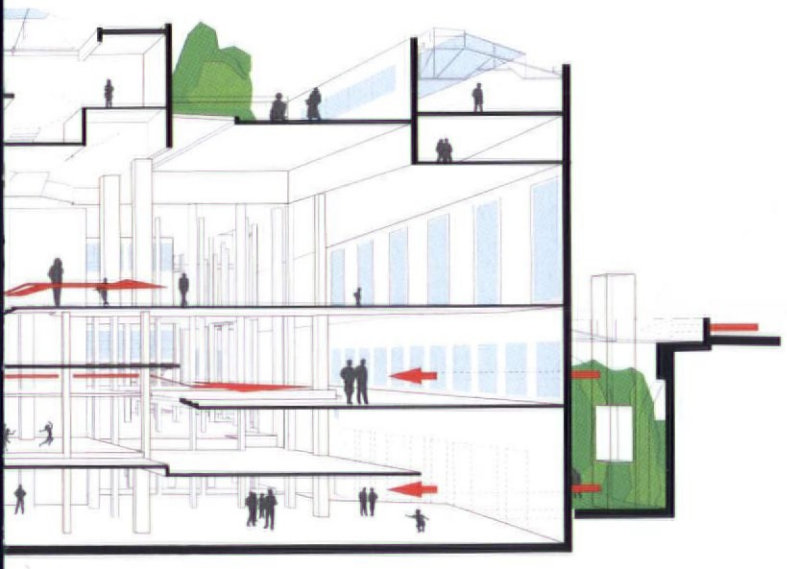
section AA



section BB

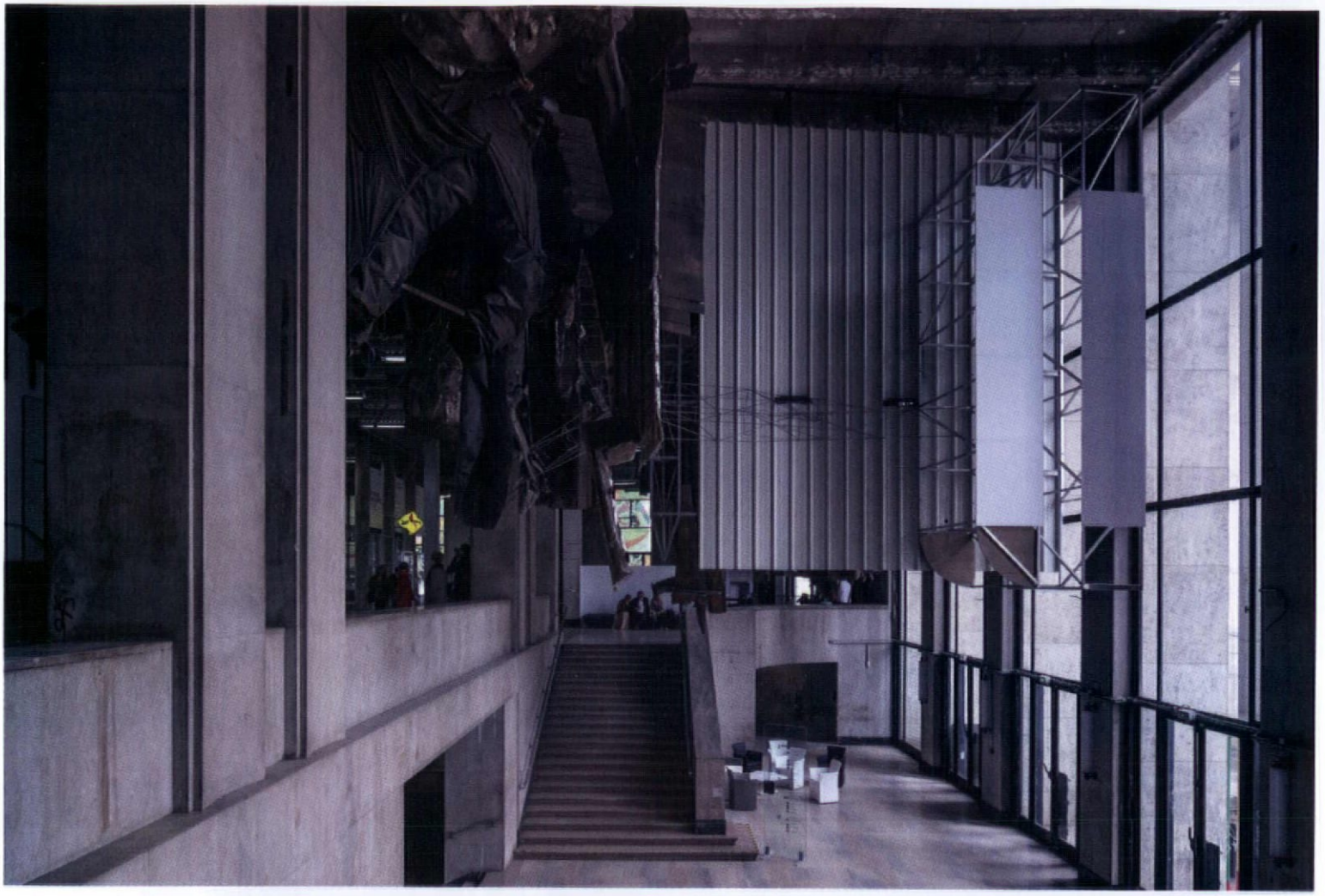
Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France, Lacaton & Vassal





FUN PALAIS

Beneath the monumental streamlined grandeur of the Palais de Tokyo lurks an evocatively rough and raw building carcass now recolonised as a museum for contemporary creation



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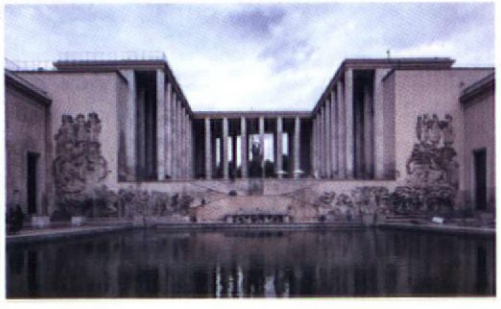
Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France, Lacaton & Vassal

site plan

4



1. (Previous page) perspective sections show the monumental scale of the Palais de Tokyo, its west wing recast as a 'centre for contemporary creation'
2. The towering entrance foyer still evokes the original sense of Neo-Classical grandeur
3. Underneath the streamlined Classicism is a concrete frame, now exposed in all its grungy, *béton brut* glory
4. Originally designed for the 1937 Expo, east and west wings of the Palais de Tokyo are linked by a colonnade and enclose a public square

CRITICISM

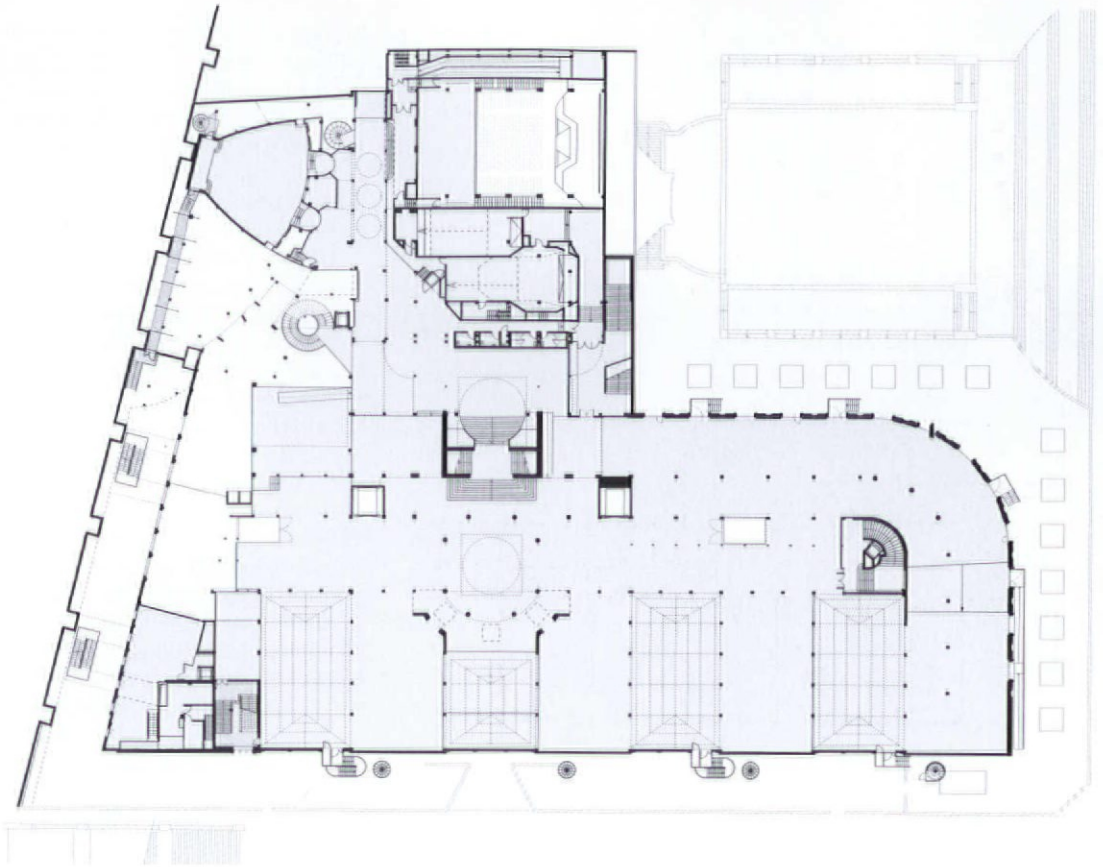
ANDREW AYERS

It was the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques – famed for the riverside face-off between the Nazi and Soviet pavilions – that endowed Paris with the elegantly monumental Palais de Tokyo. Occupying a two-hectare riverside site on the then Avenue de Tokyo (renamed Avenue de New York in 1945), it was conceived as a gallery for the modern-art collections of both the French state and the city of Paris, a never-the-twain parentage that led its Beaux-Arts-trained architects – Dondel, Aubert, Viard and Dastugue – to design a twin building. Disposed either side of a public piazza cascading down to the quayside, two discrete wings are linked on their entrance facades by a colonnade, and sport a stripped, streamlined, stone-clad Classicism that entirely hides the *brut* reality of their concrete-frame construction. While the Palais's eastern half is still home to the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the western, state-owned wing has had more chequered fortunes. Superseded in its original purpose by the Centre Pompidou in 1976, it fulfilled a number of roles until, in the early 1990s, the culture ministry decided to install a cinema museum under its roof. Some €12.2 million were spent gutting the interior only for the project to be dropped following a change of government in 1997. The structurally weakened carcase stood abandoned until in 1999 the ministry announced it would become home – provisionally – to a 'centre for contemporary creation'.

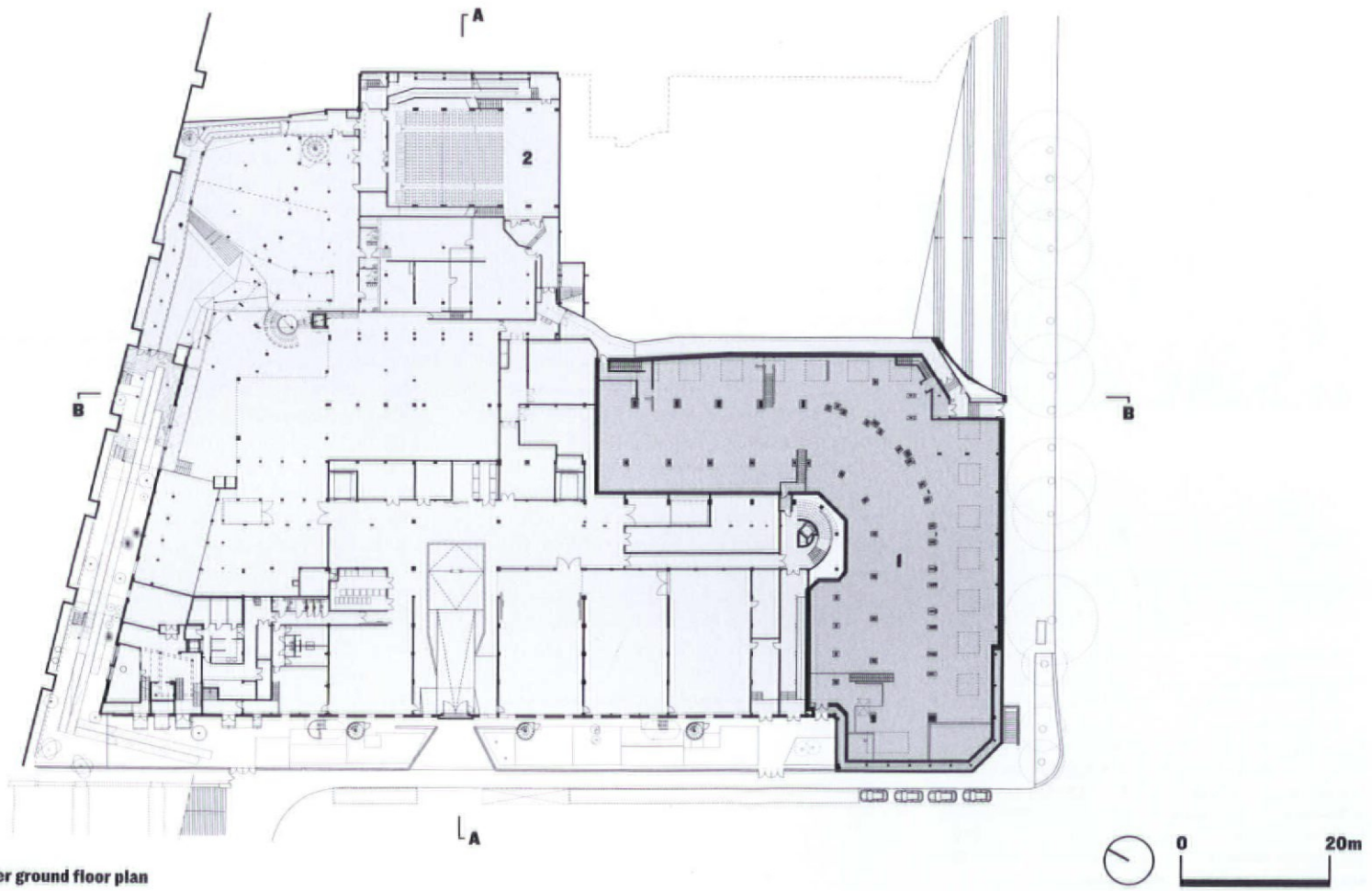
Baptised simply 'Palais de Tokyo', this new institution was the brainchild of international contemporary-art curators Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans. New York had PS1, Berlin had KW, but where, they asked, was their Parisian equivalent? The Centre Pompidou had originally been billed as a forum for exciting spontaneous stuff, but the overweight bureaucracy and classic museum mission of the Musée National d'Art Moderne had killed off all that. The Palais de Tokyo was therefore to be simply a venue, with no permanent collection, occupying 7,800sqm of the 24,300 available in the west wing. A miserly €3 million (£2.4 million) was made available for conversion work, and three architectural firms (out of 130 candidates) charged with drawing up developed proposals. Of these, the culture ministry chose Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal's because it maximised return – in terms of space and flexibility – on the money available. Since opening in January 2002, the new venue (AR February 2003) has made its mark in the Parisian art scene with over 200,000 visitors annually, and become a permanent institution. This success has now been consecrated by its physical extension: for the Palais de Tokyo's 10th anniversary, Lacaton & Vassal have just annexed the entire west wing to create one of the biggest contemporary-art spaces in Europe, for a very modest €13 million (£10.5 million).

The architects' approach has not changed, and their latest interventions continue the project begun 13 years ago. On first visiting the west wing's carcass in 1999, Lacaton & Vassal's conviction was that 'The architecture was already there.' As they explained, the building was 'striking because of the rightness of its architecture, its dimensioning, its balance of relationships ... The museum had been conceived around two axes, horizontal and vertical, ... and we wanted to regain that freedom of use.' Not only this, but in its gutted state the interior had been stripped down to the essential, revealing its 'hidden structure, the modernity of the place. It was magnificent'. This was just as well, since money was so short (both then and now) that they could do little more than carry out essential repairs, what one might term a minimalist intervention. But any kind of minimalism is much more difficult to achieve than first appears, and the Palais de Tokyo was no exception.

Take the building's splendidly slender concrete frame, exposed when the interior was gutted, which the architects wanted to leave untouched. But since it had been weakened, parts of it had to be reinforced as



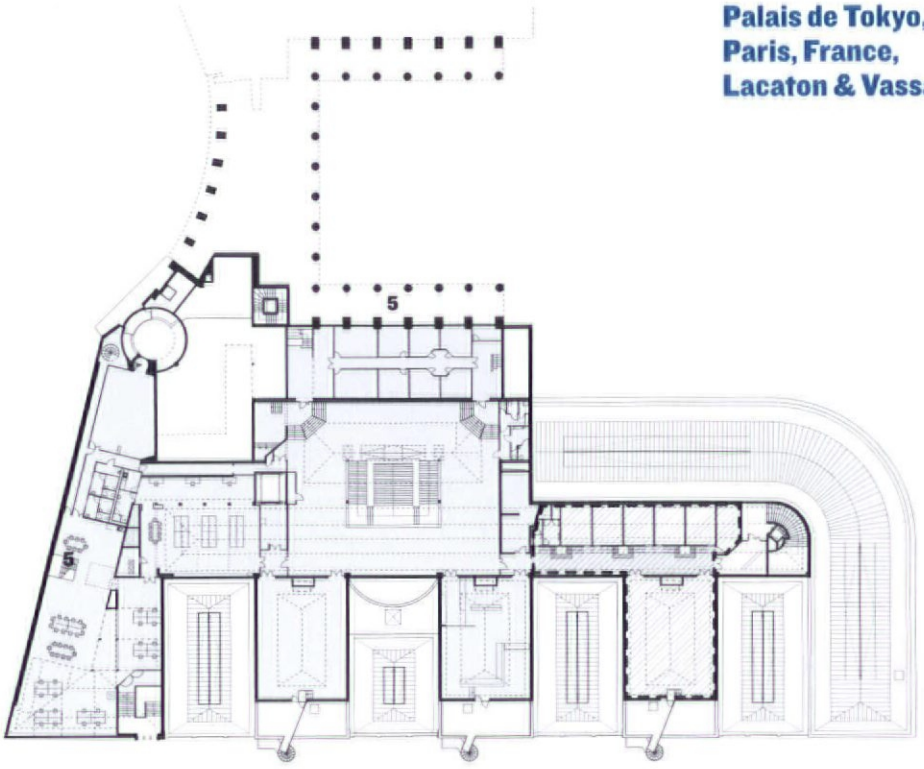
ground floor plan



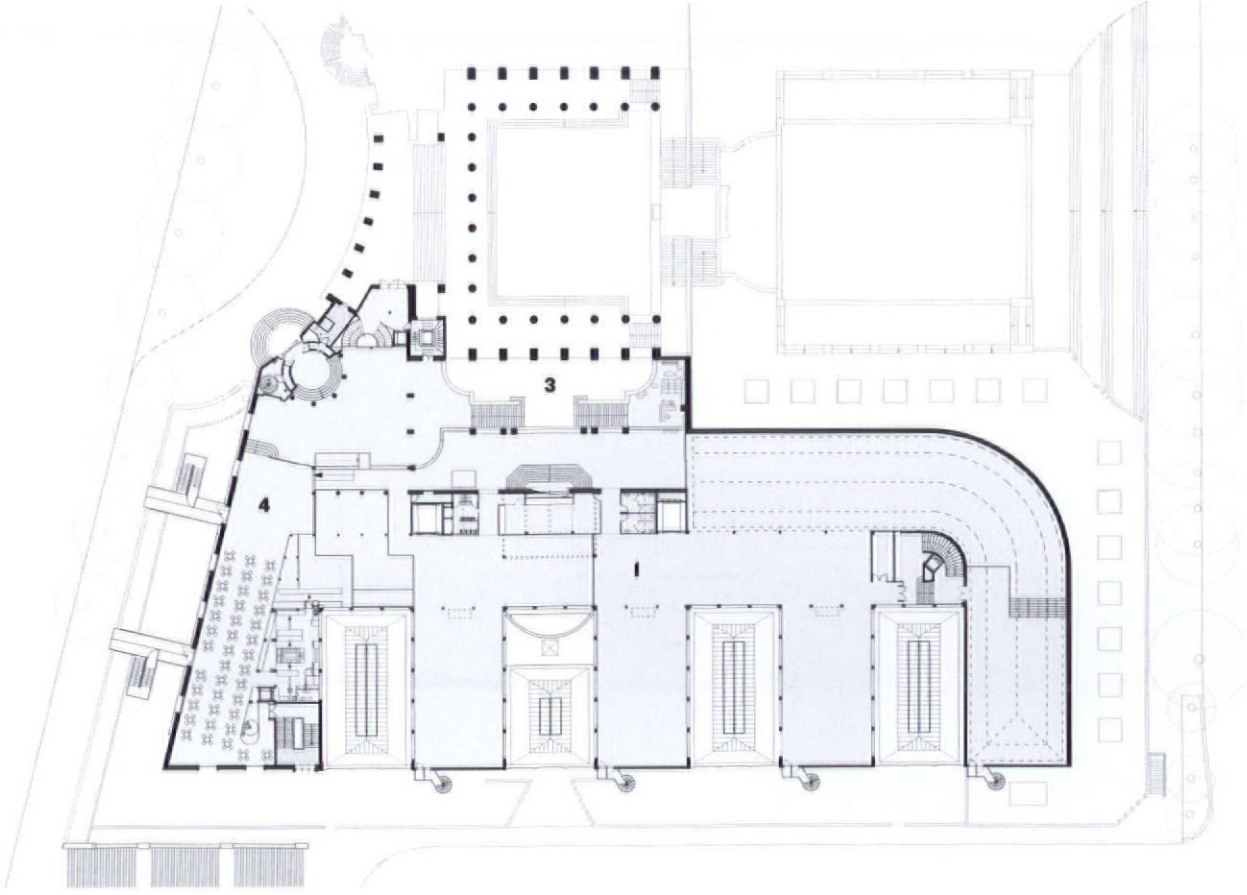
lower ground floor plan

Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France, Lacaton & Vassal

1 exhibition space
2 auditorium
3 entrance foyer
4 restaurant
5 offices



third floor plan



second floor plan (entrance level)

Palais de Tokyo,
Paris, France,
Lacaton & Vassal

unobtrusively as possible, either with steel or new concrete sheathing. And then there were the firemen, who wanted the whole thing covered in spray-on fireproofing, since without the original cladding the rebars were, in their view, insufficiently protected. Preventing this would prove a major battle for Lacaton & Vassal, one that went as far as simulating fires for five pieces of contemporary art picked out of *Beaux Arts* magazine. Another feature the architects admired in this giant found object was its luminosity and openness. When designing the west wing, Dondel and Aubert had followed the prescriptions of Louis Hautecœur, director of the national collections, who wanted minimal artificial lighting, lateral daylight for sculptures and overhead daylight for paintings. This explains the enormous windows on the north, south and east facades, and the glass roofs in all the other galleries. After the art collections' departure, subsequent users had entirely blocked out the light, but gutting the building had let it flood back in again, even more so now the frosted-glass ceilings under the skylights were gone. Lacaton & Vassal were determined that this brightness and visual connection with the outside world should remain, and a lot of their budget went into achieving this: reparation and waterproofing of the skylights and the almost unnoticeable introduction of new exits into the metal-framed sculpture-gallery windows, which meant eschewing the cheaper but visually obstructive solution of off-the-peg doors. Where overhead daylight becomes too intense, white shower-curtain-type fabric efficiently, and inexpensively, veils it.

5. Now an armature for contemporary art, the exquisitely raw interiors show traces of use and occupation over time
6. The heroic scale of the building encourages grand artistic gestures, such as Ulla von Brandenburg's coloured installation 'Death of a King'
7. Visitors become immersed within a dramatic labyrinth of soaring volumes
8. In the sculpture galleries lit by large lateral windows, the sense of connection to the exterior is scrupulously preserved
9. Repaired skylights admit copious natural light

Architect
Lacaton & Vassal
Engineers
Ingérop, CSTB
Photographer
Paul Raftery

'The gutted Palais is astonishing, a visually sublime experience ... a Romantic ruin reminiscent of Detroit or Chernobyl'

But such details are not what strikes the first-time visitor. A labyrinth of soaring, grandiose volumes, the gutted Palais is astonishing, a visually sublime experience in the Burkean, Piranesian sense. Stripped to the bone, its interior resembles the industrial hulks so prized by loft dwellers and artists alike, while remnants of its former incarnation – polished-stone cladding in the *escalier d'honneur*, the ghostly oval conference hall (abandoned in 1937 and untouched since), peeling paint, period handrails – make of it a Romantic ruin reminiscent of Detroit, Kadykchan or Chernobyl. Those disappointed by the clinical sterility of Tate Modern will appreciate the lived-in rawness here. Surprisingly, the architects claim there was 'never any question' of taking 'an aesthetic position with respect to the unfinished, to the ruin'. But how then do you explain their decision to leave undisturbed all sorts of evocative *détails trouvés* – flaking paint that could easily have been refreshed, twisted rebars that could have been sawn off in an instant, protruding nails, superannuated signage, and multiple other traces of previous occupants and activities – or their regret that the walls of the principal mid-level gallery, which they had left dirty, fractured and scarred, were repaired and whitewashed at Wolfgang Tillmans' insistence for his 2002 exhibition *Vue d'en haut*?

Which brings us to the disparity between what architects prescribe and what users actually want. Back in 1999, Lacaton & Vassal proposed an entirely open-plan project inspired by their memories of Marrakech's Djemaa el-Fna square and Berlin's Alexanderplatz: loose spaces that were constantly in flux, redefined by their users with temporary, often virtual boundaries. But, around the time of the Tillmans exhibition, whitewashed partitions went up at the Palais de Tokyo that are still standing 10 years later; mural art needs walls, and remaking them afresh for every exhibition is clearly not something a cash-strapped venue can envisage. For this latest campaign of work, the architects invoked Cedric Price's Fun Palace, quoting Joan Littlewood's promotional brochure in their explanatory text: 'No need to look for an entrance – just walk in anywhere. No doors, foyers, queues or commissionaires: it's up to you how you use it.' But despite the plethora of new entrances they introduced in the west wing, security checks and paid-admission areas mean these dreams of total freedom of access remain just as impractically utopian as they were in the 1960s.

These are merely quibbles, however. Lacaton & Vassal took a bold and intelligent position which they defended with vigour and logic; the building will evolve according to its users' wishes, just as it should, and artists will be challenged by these splendid spaces to their mutual benefit.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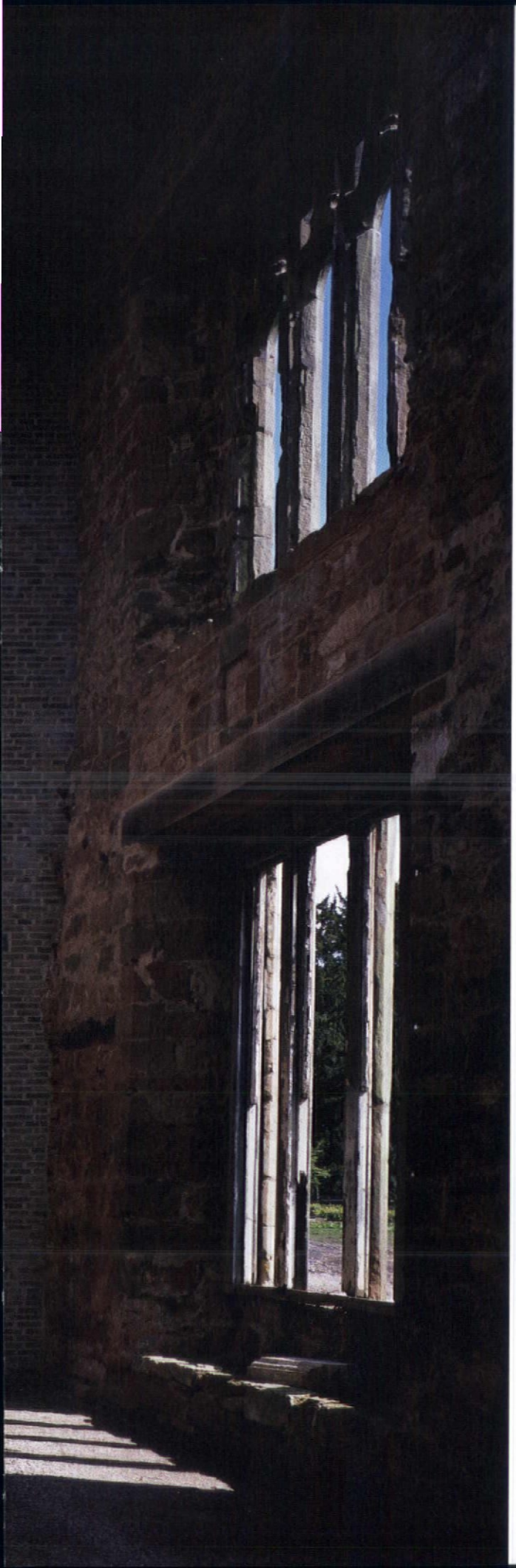


Astley Castle, Warwickshire, England, Witherford Watson Mann

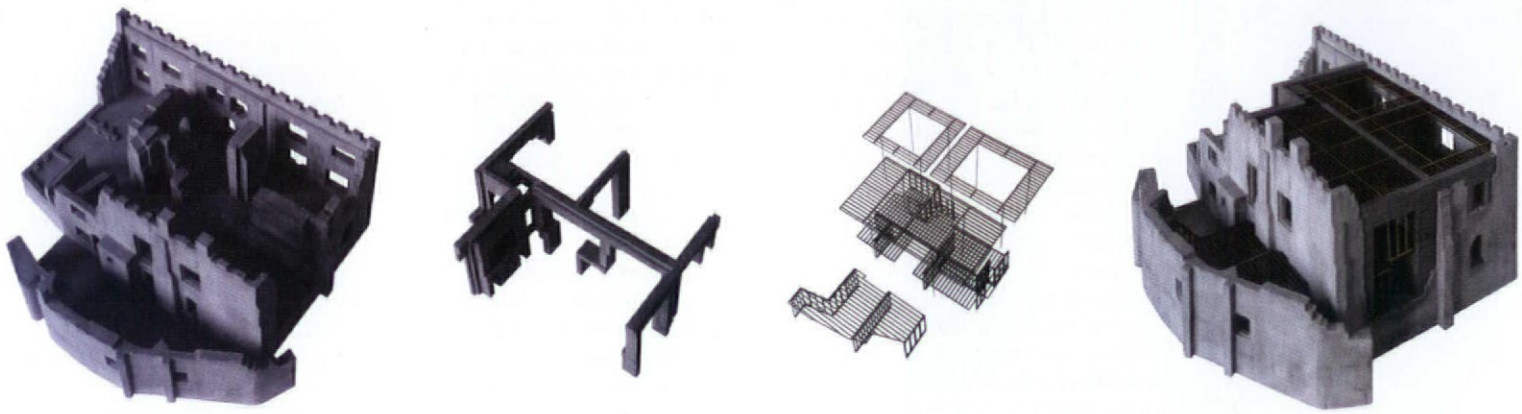
BRICK LAYERS

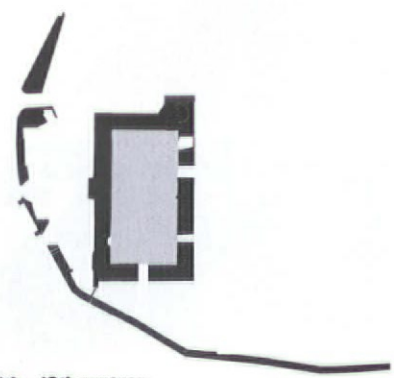
In the sensitive renewal of this dilapidated castle in rural Warwickshire, the ancient shell forms a container for a dynamic series of contemporary spaces

Astley Castle, Warwickshire, England, Witherford Watson Mann

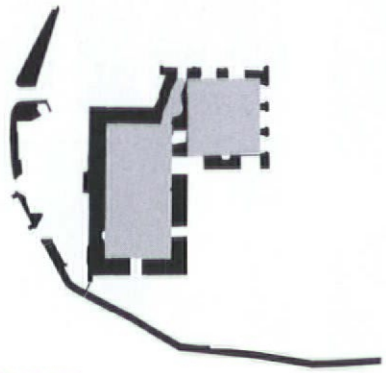
1. (Previous page) Old living alongside new: the ancient chimney stack and original walls, now open to the elements, are overlooked by the new entrance and the main living space above it, left
2. The stages of renovation, from left to right: the building before renovation, concrete stabilisation, timber lining and framing, and after completion
3. The original crumbling structure of Astley Castle
4. The moated castle in its flat rural setting. The modern insertion stabilises and protects the dilapidated ancient fortification without overwhelming it

2

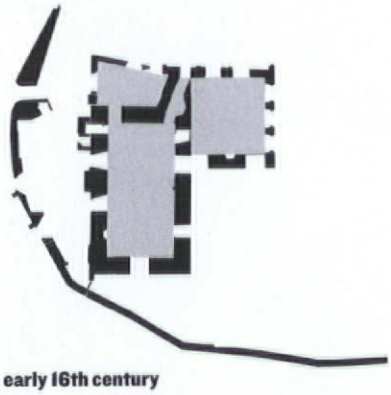




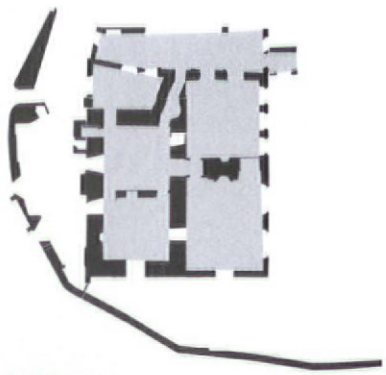
11th – 13th century



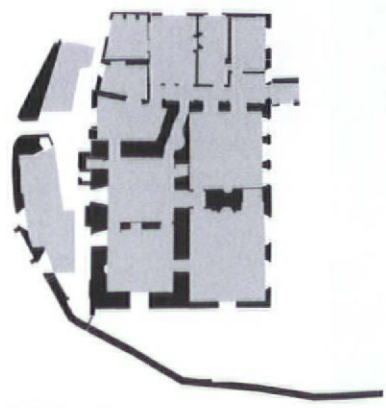
15th century



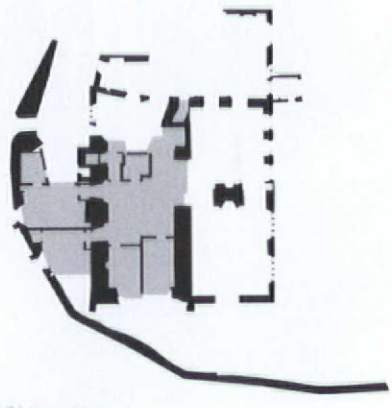
early 16th century



early 17th century

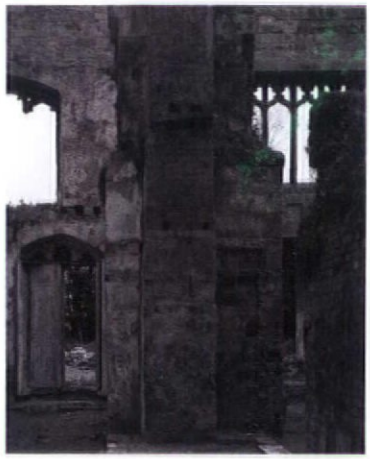


early 19th century



21st century

3



CRITICISM

NIALL HOBHOUSE

Seven years ago, the future of Astley seemed very bleak indeed. The castle was not so much the ruin of a small medieval fortification, but more the ravaged and derelict survivor of centuries of changing use and abuse. The cycle of partial demolition and rebuilding finally appeared to have run the course in 1978 with a suspicious fire, on the eve of its surrender by the then hotelier occupants to the Warwickshire estate of Arbury on which the castle sits. There followed long and uneasy discussions between English Heritage and Lord Daventry, the Estate's owner. In the search for a viable restoration project it was no help that, at least as a weekend destination for bankers, Arbury is an island of unspoilt (if unspectacular) rural landscape, barely afloat in a sea of second-string Midlands industrial towns. Nuneaton, Coventry and Sutton Coldfield all lurk just beyond the view from the battlements.

The involvement of the Landmark Trust, as a charity

'The new masonry clings to the original stonework, adapting itself to the irregularities'

dedicated to saving important orphaned buildings, by making them habitable for holiday lettings, made them an obvious saviour. The Trust's cautious and well-proven model of project-by-project capital raising came hard up against the economics of any conventional restoration; a campaign for a complete rehabilitation was beyond reach, or sense. There were real questions, too, about whether enough of the original internal fabric (by then, entirely fenced off less for its own good than for the danger it posed to the curious) survived to justify a project on those terms. And besides, Astley as it then (only just) stood, was less remarkable for what had survived of its early construction than for having survived at all. Its special plangence as a building was the result of the centuries of determined re-use; however inappropriate and inconvenient many of these uses had proved, each had added a new layer to the crumpled palimpsest.

Against this unpromising background, in the autumn of 2006 the Trust launched an invited competition for living accommodation on the site. This was a dogged and very imaginative initiative, born a little out of collective desperation. Astley Castle will open to the first 'Landmarker' family in early July; the project, as it has slowly emerged, represents a real career milestone both for the Landmark Trust itself and for Witherford Watson Mann, the winning architectural practice. It marks also something of a change of front for English Heritage, and even perhaps in our collective understanding of the duty contemporary architecture might owe to the past. The rebirth of Astley in this elegantly assured, thoughtful, project presents a strong new line of attack for future interactions with old buildings, and one that may yet prove as useful within the fabric of the city as it does here in Warwickshire. This is quite a

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large claim for our understated architectural discourse to digest easily; its defence requires both the assertion of the startling quality of the new Astley as a work of architecture, but it is important also to try to convey some understanding of the intimate process by which client and architect learned over time to integrate their very different sensibilities, to the great benefit of the completed project.

WWM were selected at interview stage, from a long list of practices that included Caruso St John, Jamie Fobert and Stanton Williams. The very loose brief had hinted that the Trust were now ready to consider any new and considered approach to the stabilisation and re-inhabitation of the castle. At its simplest, the problem that all the competing architects had faced was of how to stabilise and convert a ruin without ruining it further. Inevitably perhaps, in several of the competition entries the ruins themselves were rather uncomfortably aestheticised;

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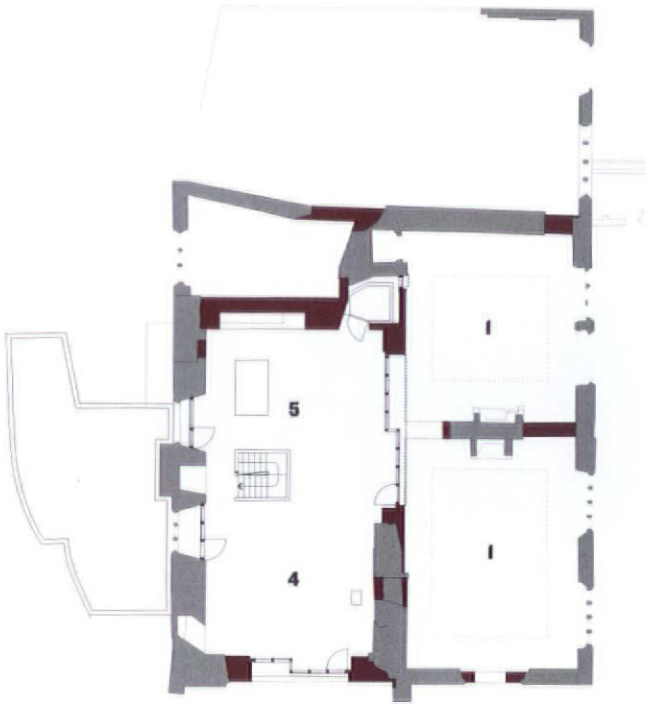
one competitor even suggesting a new house to stand beside the existing castle on its moated site. Instead, WWM proposed threading an armature of new masonry work throughout the main sections of the ruin, with the double job of both stabilising and protecting the early stonework and of providing a rigid frame to which the new living accommodation, of timber, could attach itself. This is an idea strong and simple enough to win any competition, and always thereafter to be so central to the project in hand that it survives in the detailed development of the design. As it is actually built-out at Astley, in flat Danish bricks with concrete lintels to the openings, this spine is a strong presence throughout the new house and as it extends itself over vulnerable parts of the ruins outside. Everywhere, the new masonry clings to the lines of the original stonework, thoughtfully adapting itself as it goes to the irregularities and weaknesses of the earlier structure. Half a metre away, the same brick then butts crisply to the joinery of the new construction.

Fifteen years ago, Bath Spa (AR September 2003) had made a fetish of the minimal expression of such junctions of new and old, and then seized this slightly bare pretext for a display of a technological baroque in the new structure. This approach – the already faded orthodoxy of its day – quite literally allowed the architects and the officers of English Heritage to go their separate ways on the same site. In stark contrast, WWM produced more than 100 working drawings which addressed only the meetings between the new brickwork and the broken edges of the old building. Indeed, this approach generated its own powerful aesthetic rhetoric, but in the process it freed up much of the thinking (and, indeed, some of the conventional expense) on the other aspects of the scheme. Thus delicately reframed, the many layers of the surviving original structure can be examined for

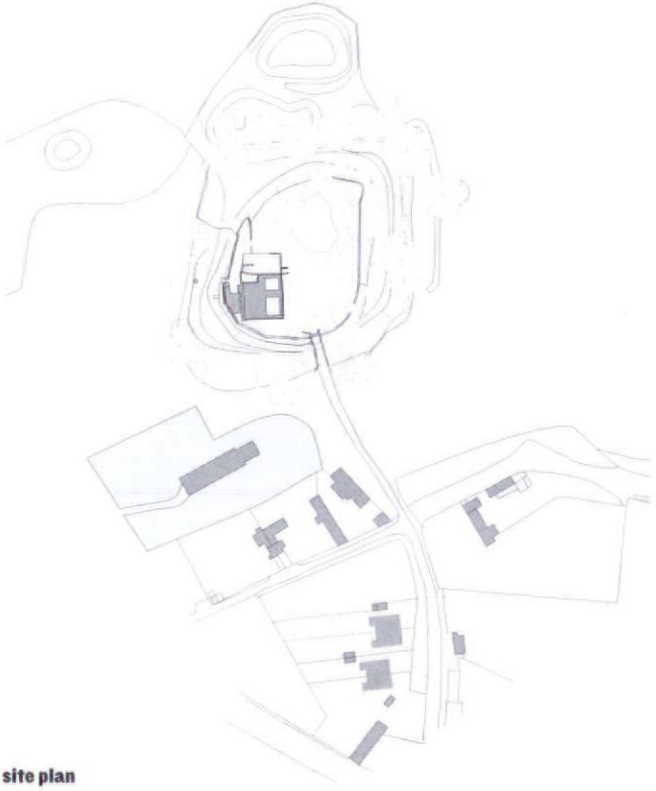
Astley Castle, Warwickshire, England, Witherford Watson Mann

5. The timber-lined bedrooms are on the ground floor, with a new wooden staircase leading to the first-floor living space
6. Cuts and openings create a dramatic play of light and dark. All of the new elements are designed to complement the original architecture



first floor plan

1 courtyard
2 hall
3 bedroom
4 open-plan sitting room
5 kitchen



site plan

ground floor plan (new parts shown coloured)

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Astley Castle, Warwickshire, England, Witherford Watson Mann

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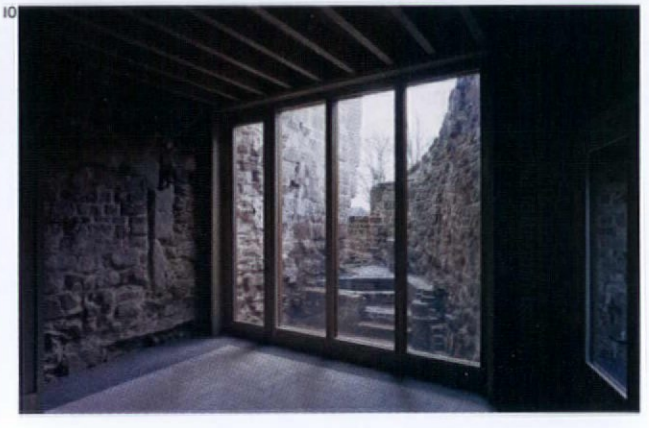


7. The first-floor living space has full-height glazing affording it views of the original deteriorated exterior walls
8. Seamless intervention: the architects have inserted a window in the upper level living space, surrounded by centuries-old brick and stone walls bearing witness to earlier attempts at renovation
9. A new timber ceiling complements the staircase
10. Bedrooms are on the ground floor and have a more direct relationship with the landscape

section AA

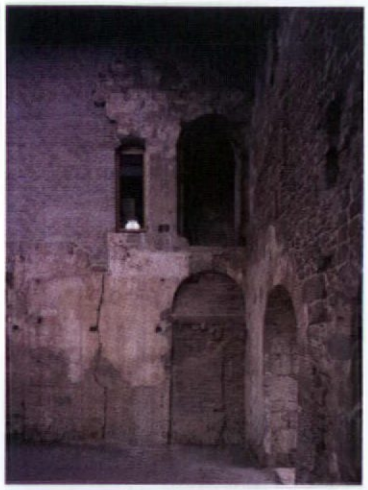
what they are, and in a comfortable intimacy; everywhere the team was careful to keep the surface record of Astley's long history, moving the project away from the antiquarian concept of a sanitised ruin. At the same time, the simple wooden frame that forms the new house presents itself as a benign colonisation of the older building; its peculiar bagginess is very much in the spirit of the castle's previous occupations.

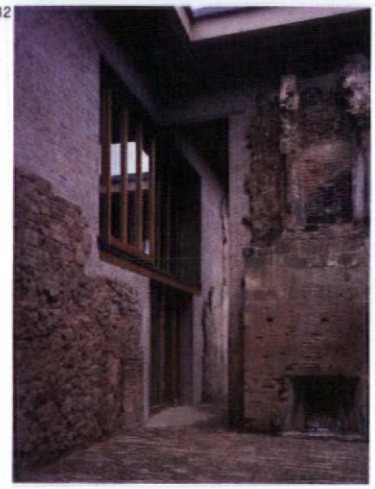
The hall and bedrooms which form the ground floor seep opportunistically into surprising courtyard spaces, and up against the battlement walls. A platform lift, that makes a slow ascent between distressed wall surfaces, has been slipped into the vestiges of the medieval vice tower. The very large combined living space in which it arrives exploits the wider gaps in the medieval structure with a series of four bold windows. Two of these give views over the fine surviving landscape of the park and towards the collegiate church of St Mary, a hundred metres to the south. The third huge opening, in fact the single most forceful architectonic statement in the project, looks into two courtyards formed from the shell of the castle; the first of these provides thoughtful access to the house through the ruins, the second forms an outside dining and sitting room for which the original great chimney has been put back into use. Over both, the architects have extended their stabilising spine, as a half-roof along the top of the walls.

'The hall and bedrooms which form the ground floor seep opportunistically into surprising courtyard spaces'

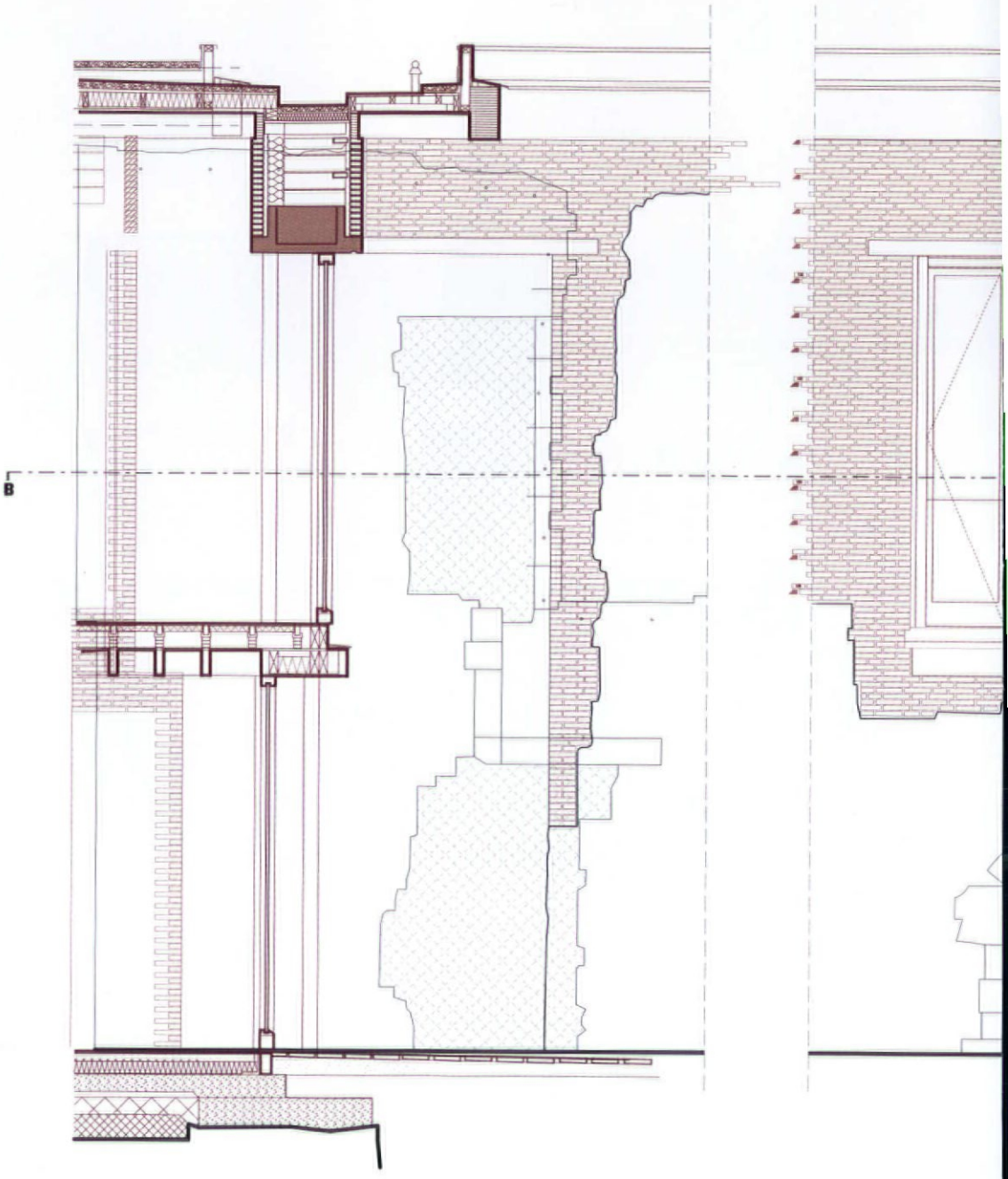
At these moments in the building there is a playfulness that sits very easily with the loose-fit approach to the massing and detailing of the new accommodation; together they play to the eccentric habitability that characterises all of the Trust's projects. In this respect the Trust must be the most exigent of developers, and it says much for the collaboration between the two teams that the client has got just the building it needed, however roundabout the process. The rigour of WWM's initial approach to the project must have seemed at times a rod for their own backs, but it did provide a necessary mediation between offering Astley the chance of another life, and of what was worth preserving from its old – frankly, rather cursed – self. The elegance of this strategy meant that in the end very little has really been lost – perhaps just the passing glimpse of a picturesque skyline, inaccessible at close quarters and unlikely to have been there at all in a very few years. What has been gained is of course a standing invitation to the customers of the Landmark Trust to view the best of the ruin in sensual close-up; but, equally important, there is a sense of the project as an extended meditation on what contemporary architecture might be able to achieve in a direct, generous, confrontation with any existing built fabric.

Astley Castle, Warwickshire, England, Witherford Watson Mann

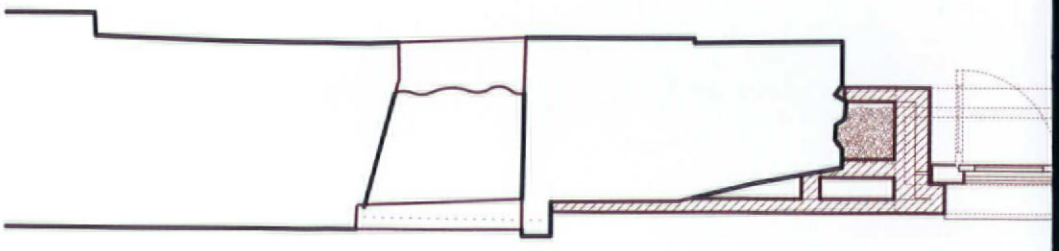




11&12. New brickwork is married to old in a sensitive reconstruction of the castle fabric that has left much of the original building carcase untouched

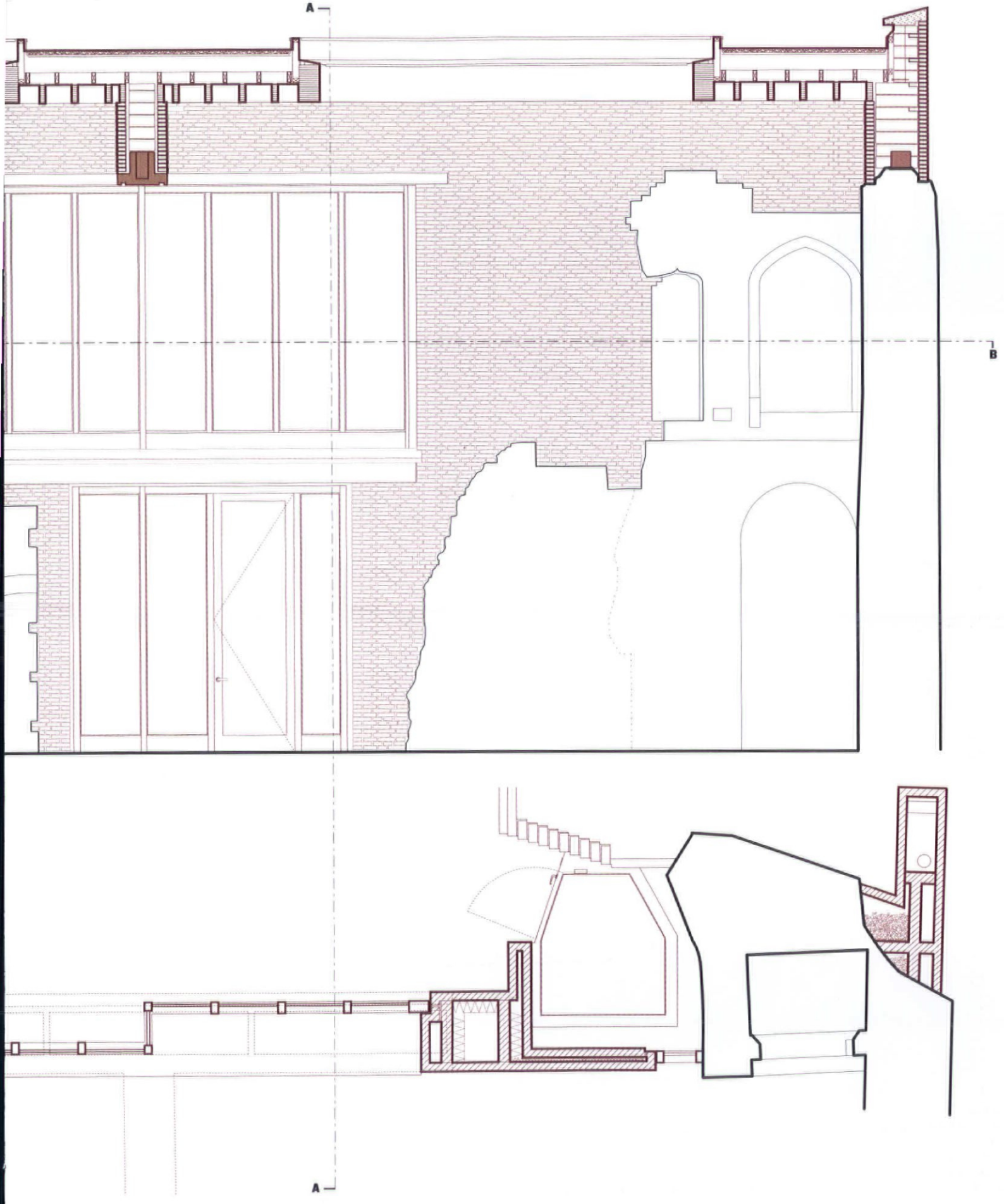


detailed section through central T section



detail plan BB through central wall

Architect
Witherford Watson Mann
Bricks
Petersen Tegl
Photographs
Hélène Binet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KINKY TWIST

In the tradition of English eccentricity, this Wiltshire country house fuses an architectural interest in the 'ordinary' with ambiguous and esoteric moments

Four Oaks, Wiltshire, England, ZMMA

2

3

1. (Previous page) glimpsed between the trees from the lane, the house has a more normative appearance than when seen closer to 2. The garden elevation has a more relaxed approach to the number of openings which enhance the interior's relationship with the countryside 3. The front door is set into a deep embrasure – one of several recesses that enliven the brick facade

CRITICISM

WILL HUNTER

Crispin Kelly is almost certainly the housing developer with the best architectural taste in Britain. And even though, admittedly, the field is hardly hotly contested, this isn't meant as faint praise. Enrolling at London's Architectural Association in 1989, Kelly spent a formative period with the legendary teacher Peter Salter. Since then his company Baylight has risen to prominence with a series of crafted commercial and residential schemes designed by thoughtful London practices from Pierre d'Avoine, Stephen Taylor and Tony Fretton to Sergison Bates, Stanton Williams and 6a.

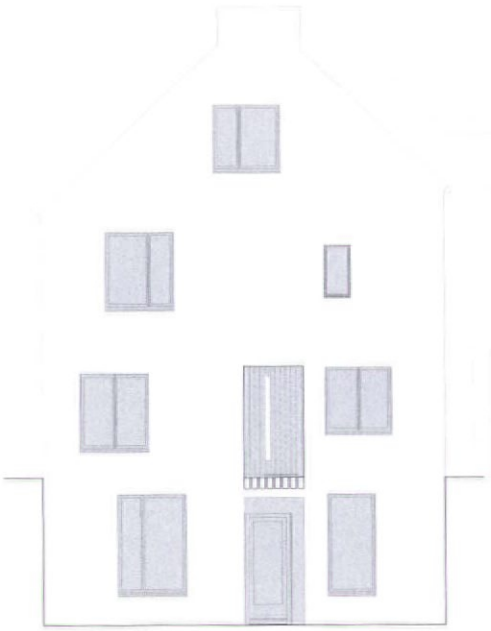
Having built his reputation by commissioning such high-calibre architects to design housing for other people, there has been not-a-little interest in the home he has commissioned for himself – an interest that has been piqued, no doubt, by the length of its development and its remoteness in rural Wiltshire. It was in 2006 that Stephen Taylor Architects made the initial proposal drawings, and these were later taken on, interrogated, and substantially evolved by practice ZMMA, who saw the project through three years on site to completion last autumn.

So now that Four Oaks is finally finished, what is it actually like?

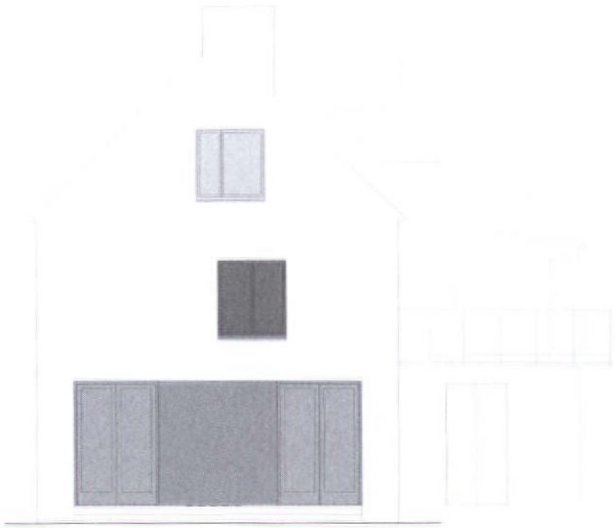
Like many simple questions this doesn't have a simple answer, and the building exploits this categorical ambiguity as one of the central tenets of its charm. In prosaic terms, it is a 600sqm house arranged over four floors, with five principal bedrooms. Glimpsed through the trees from the country lane, it gives the glancing appearance of conventional loadbearing brick topped by a traditionally-tiled pitched roof.

The silhouette and composition of the opposing gable ends is entirely within the bounds of ordinary English domestic architecture; and yet even seen straight on they hint at the house's most extraordinary gesture: the big kink in the plan, as if two misaligned teams of builders started at the tips and had to reach an oblique understanding (or is the overall form a witty sculptural abstraction of family life, with the grown-up

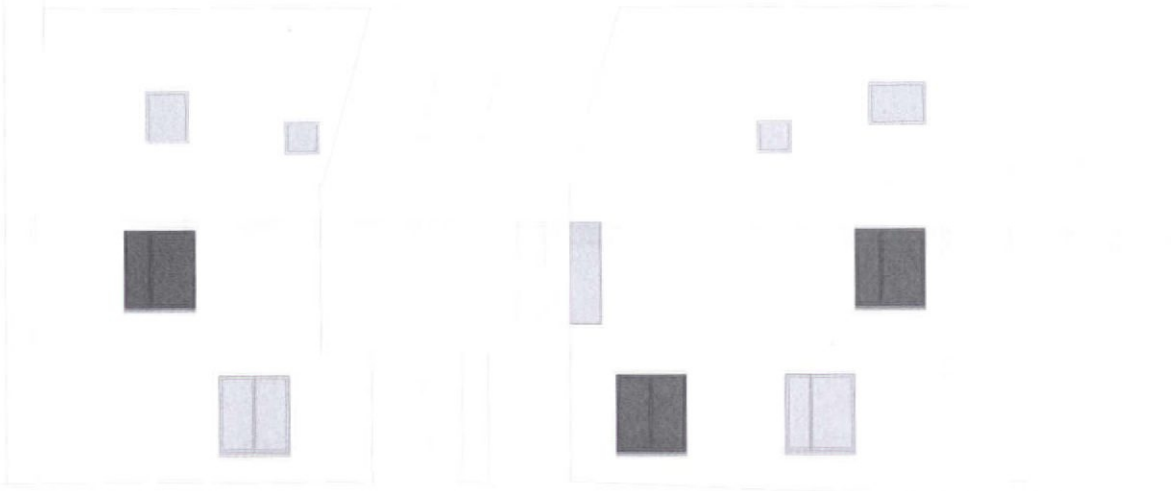
Four Oaks, Wiltshire, England, ZMMA



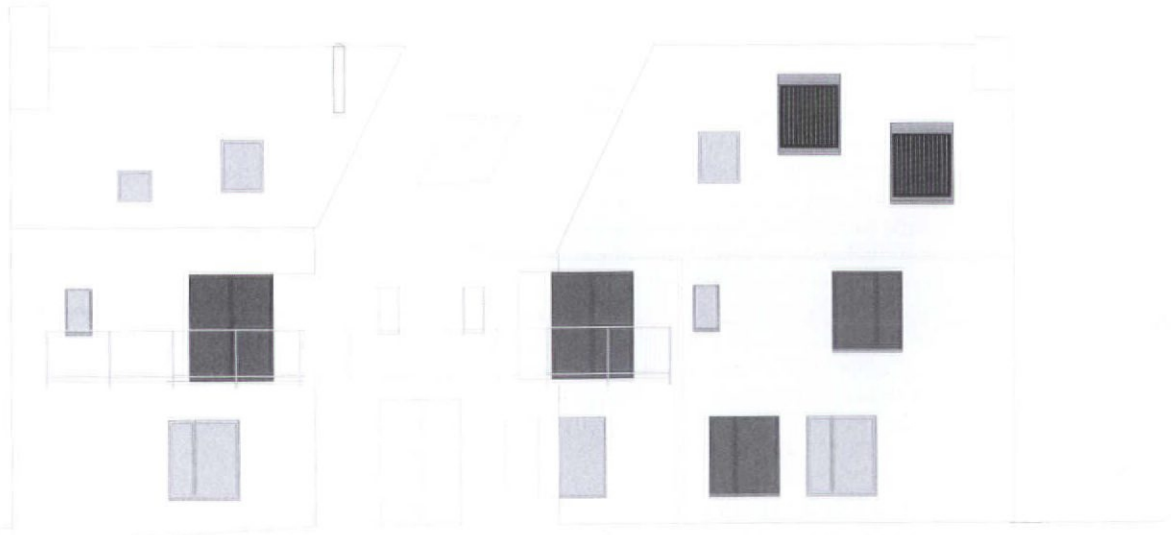
north-east elevation



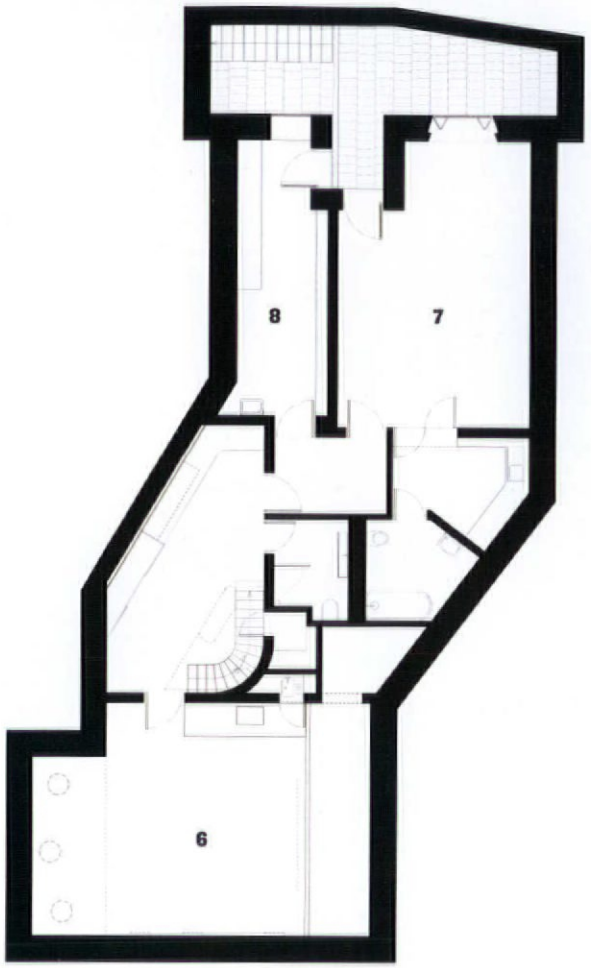
south-west elevation



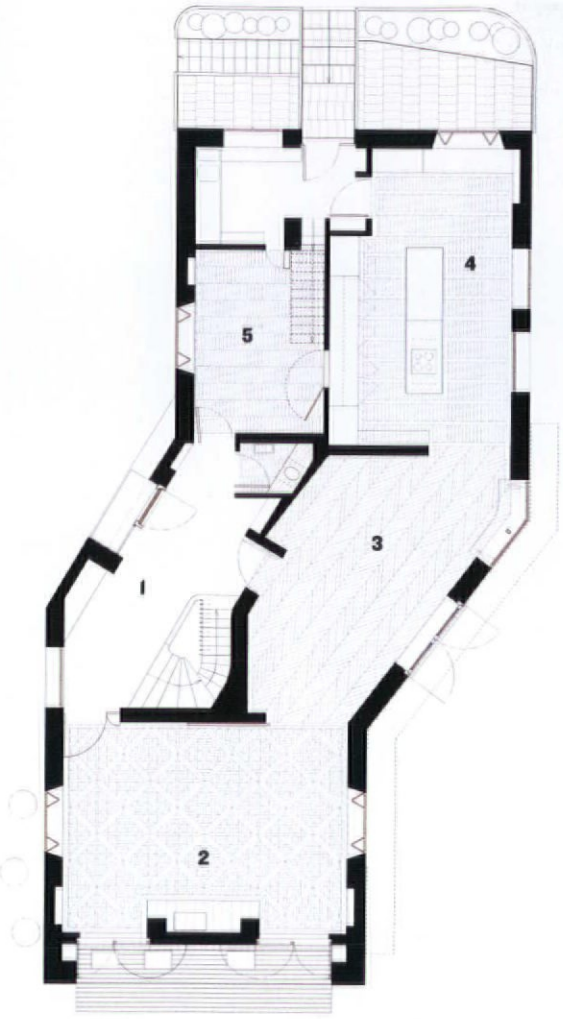
front elevation



back elevation



basement plan



ground floor plan

1 entrance hall
2 sitting room
3 dining room
4 kitchen
5 'snug'
6 cinema room
7 staff flat
8 workshop
9 bedroom
10 box room
11 attic landing

seriousness of the parents bookending the children and brokered compromise in the middle?).

The long, kinky elevations have been treated in slightly different ways. The lane-facing facade is more formal, with its mid-section angled toward the driveway to enhance the welcoming embrasure of the front door. The garden side is friendlier and, as more openings have been inserted (some as the building was going up), quite a bit busier. The balance the architect and client tried to strike between the needs of the inside and the outside can be read in the final elevational composition, and the subtle difference between the two expresses

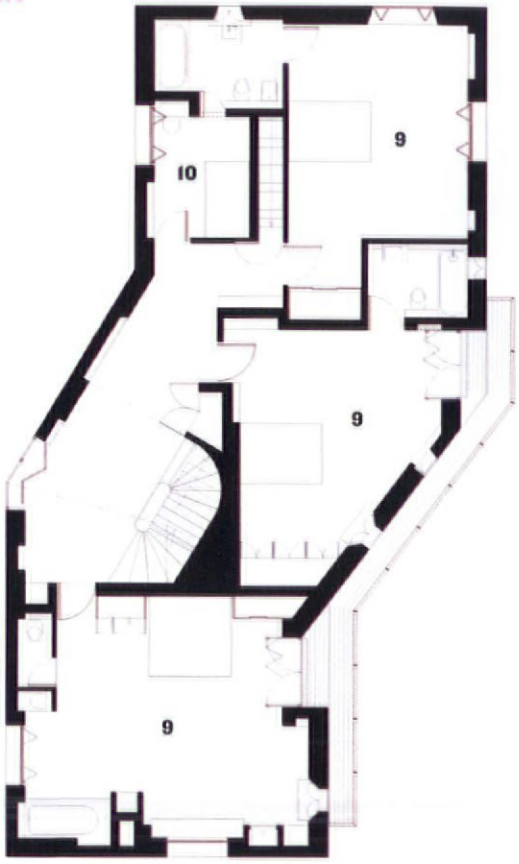
'Is the overall form a witty sculptural abstraction of family life, with the grown-up seriousness of the parents bookending the children and brokered compromise in the middle?'

different priorities. Where the front is about how people relate to the house from the outside, the back is about how the inside relates to nature beyond.

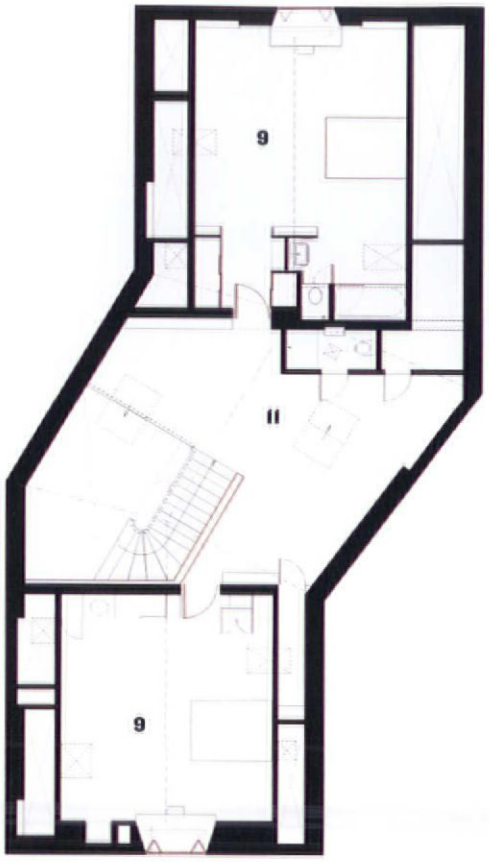
While this distinction clearly plays on the tradition of 'front' and 'back' denoting different conditions of public and private, in this instance there is not much public to talk of, and the occasional passing car or hiker is just as likely to catch sight of the house from the rear, and see it more lingeringly, because of the lane's nape and the open fields. However, despite this, it still feels an important distinction to convey, especially on a house where the simple massing is deliberately vague about its orientation.

Internally, again, there is a dance between registering the familiar and subverting it, a pleasurable parlour game that disrupts the homely with the *unheimlich*. The three main spaces enjoy an ambiguous status and interrelationship. All on the same level, the different functions of the rooms are demarcated by the oak parquet floor, from the kitchen's simple stack-bond, to herringbone in the dining room, and climaxing with the most

Four Oaks, Wiltshire, England, ZMMA



first floor plan



attic floor plan

site plan

'Internally, there is a dance between registering the familiar and subverting it, a pleasurable parlour game that disrupts the homely with the *unheimlich*'

elaborate tessellation in the sitting room. These three spaces can operate as contemporary open plan, with the activities of dining and sitting (and chatting and everything else) free to roam across them and, in the warmer weather, out through the numerous doors on to the patio and the garden. However, this isn't open plan in the unmediated sense of open views, and the more dynamic perception of foreground, mid-ground and background is heightened by the fact that the two gable-ends of the building are hidden internally from each other by the diagonal in the plan (it is the interior's relationship with the longer perspective of the garden that holds the three together).

On the ground floor there are no terminal rooms, so even though the entrance hall opens directly into the sitting and dining rooms, you can also walk round the perimeter in a continuous enfilade through spaces of quite dramatic variations of scale and character. Pulling the interior walls back from the exterior has two noticeable effects, most obviously throwing attention onto the mass of the building envelope, where the architects have emphasised the thickness of the brick wall with various carved-out indentations and apertures.

More unexpectedly, it islands the central diagonal axis as a hybrid connecting piece that must resolve the transition between the differing underlying geometries. This reveals itself with a certain spikiness in the plan, but – like the artful merging of pinstripe fabric where a suit's arms meet its body – the effect is one not of overwrought effort, but of inevitable solidity. The spine wall becomes inhabitable: the kitchen pushed against it (and through it, even, with a serving-hatch door); the poché of the downstairs loo; numerous shelves; and

4

5

6

Four Oaks, Wiltshire, England, ZMMA

– most dramatically – the sinuous Soanian swoop of the pirouetting staircase.

Between the front hall and the back door is a small cosy room that is loosely defined in purpose, seeming to fully belong neither to the served nor servant spaces. It can be used as a snug, or as a kind of look-out post over the front door, and it's difficult to tell whether it will be the central focus of, or an escape from, the internal life of the house. This is your first encounter – though it is used effectively in the upper and lower reaches of the house too – where the programme is deliberately indeterminate.

In the basement, for example, the architects told of how they were building a large space but had no idea how it would be used, and it was only quite late on that it became a cinema room. With its exposed ducting and brickwork, the sense of squatting in a found space creates Four Oak's most transgressive-feeling room; and, with its proportions so similar to a double garage, recalls (to me at least) childhood memories of provisional suburban games rooms, of ping-pong, and later teenage rebellions.

Moving up through the building also has its surprises, with the lateral generosity of the suite of main rooms unexpectedly trumped by the epiphany of the first-floor landing, often the most rotten space (as any developer would know), but here starring as the building's largest volume. Opened up to the sloping roof soffits, the spatial effect is like finding the ground floor of a barn-conversion shifted upwards in the house's vertical hierarchy. From here, the staircase leads on to the attic's mezzanine landing, bigger than some of the other rooms, yet also welcomely lacking in programmatic description.

'Belonging neither to the served nor servant spaces, it's difficult to tell whether the room will be the central focus of, or an escape from, the internal life of the house'

The house wilfully counterpoints these moments of generosity with much tighter spatial experiences. The narrow little stair, which runs from the back door up to the first landing, has a scale that suggests servants or children or secret passages. And a tiny adjunct to a larger first-floor bedroom has connotations of a dressing room – of the earlier world of valets and maids – but today is ideal for the children of visiting parents. A bathroom between the two bedrooms could deliver this easy family use, or thrust you together into a more intimate negotiation with some other hardly-known guest; you can imagine a cupid-like chatelaine deploying it tactically in the bedroom allocations.

Other principal bedrooms have a more singular ensuite arrangement, which has enabled the walls between the washing elements to be unusually dissolved in places, most theatrically in the master bedroom with the ceremony of an open bath in one corner. Both the master bedroom and the adjacent one share a narrow balcony, too tight for a table and chairs, which could allow for sleepy, morning chats with conversant offspring; but also, in some Jeeves and Wooster way, the covert nocturnal rearrangement of the guests.

At times it feels like the firmest decision Crispin made was not to make too many firm

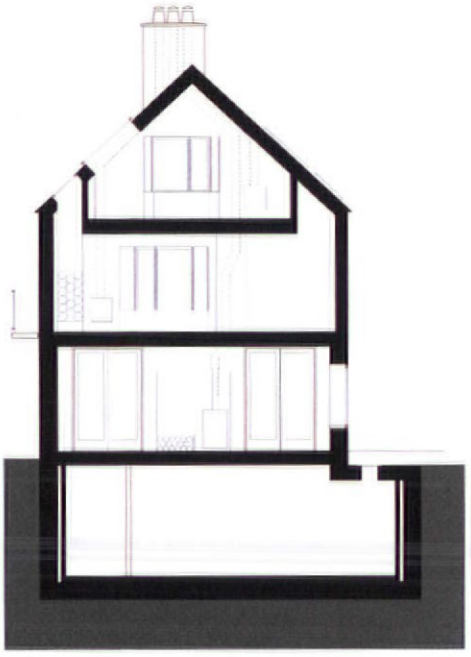
7

4, 5 & 6. On the ground floor, the suite of three main rooms (sitting room, dining room and kitchen) is an enjoyable mixture of formal space and open-plan living. The internal walls have been pulled back from the garden-side exterior wall, which creates an open route between the three – but not an open view, as as you can never internally see the full length of the house because of the kink in the plan
7. The hatch between the kitchen and the 'cosy'. Note the 'back' stair cutting across the space

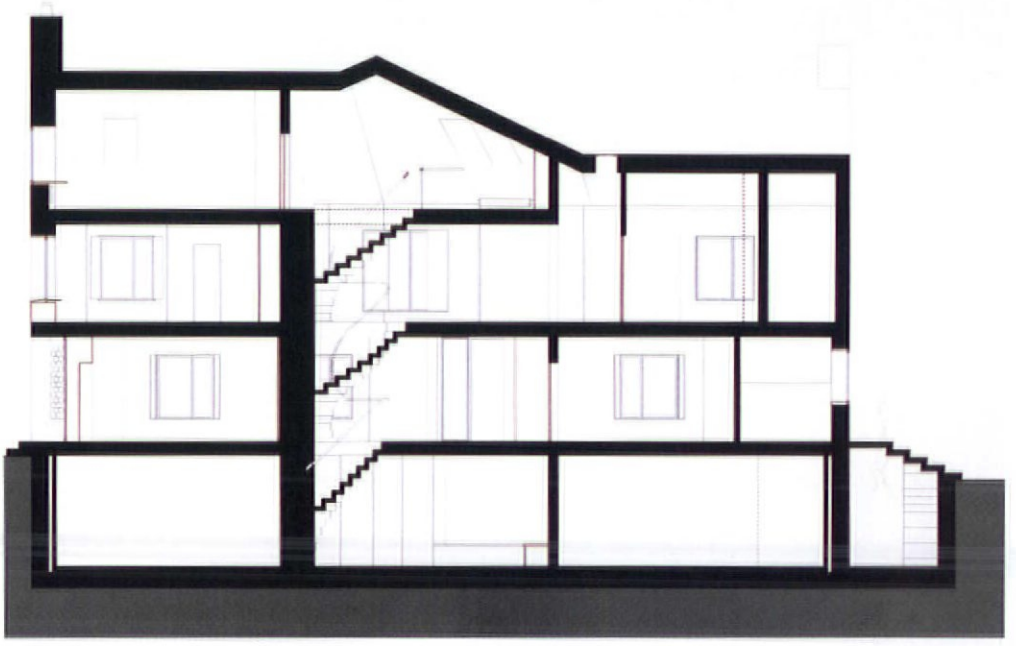
Four Oaks, Wiltshire, England, ZMMA

8. Under the eaves, a top-storey bedroom makes full use of all available space
9. The generous volume of the first floor landing stretches up to the pitched roof and encompasses the gentle sweep of the stair

Architects
ZMMA; Stephen Taylor Architects
Client
Crispin Kelly
Photography
Dennis Gilbert



cross section



long section

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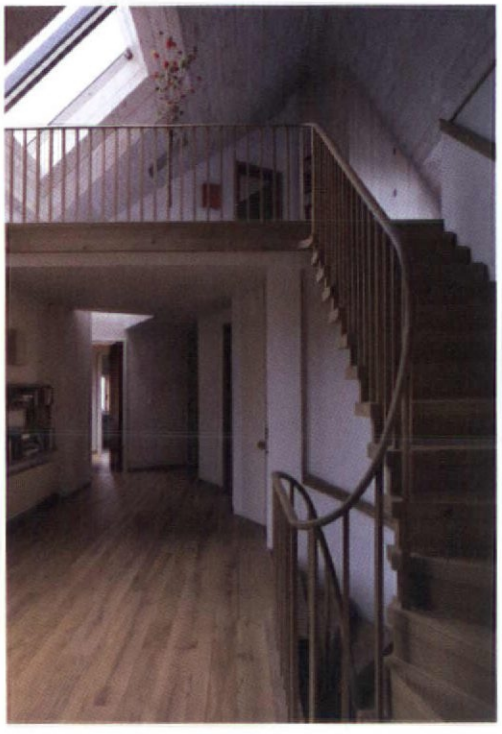


decisions: of being strategically ad hoc. 'I love compromise,' wrote Kelly in a 2009 issue of *Building Design*, revisiting the 1960s Grade II-Listed Ryde housing outside London, 'could we not do something in-between and make suburbanism acceptable to the metropolitans?'

This line of thinking can be clearly seen to manifest in the house, but not as a 'compromise' in the pejorative sense, more like the in-between state where meanings are enhanced rather than diluted. So is this a large suburban house deracinated from its suburban neighbours? Or does it draw its references more from the agricultural buildings of Wiltshire? Or the architectural culture of London? Is it luxuriously modest, or modestly luxurious?

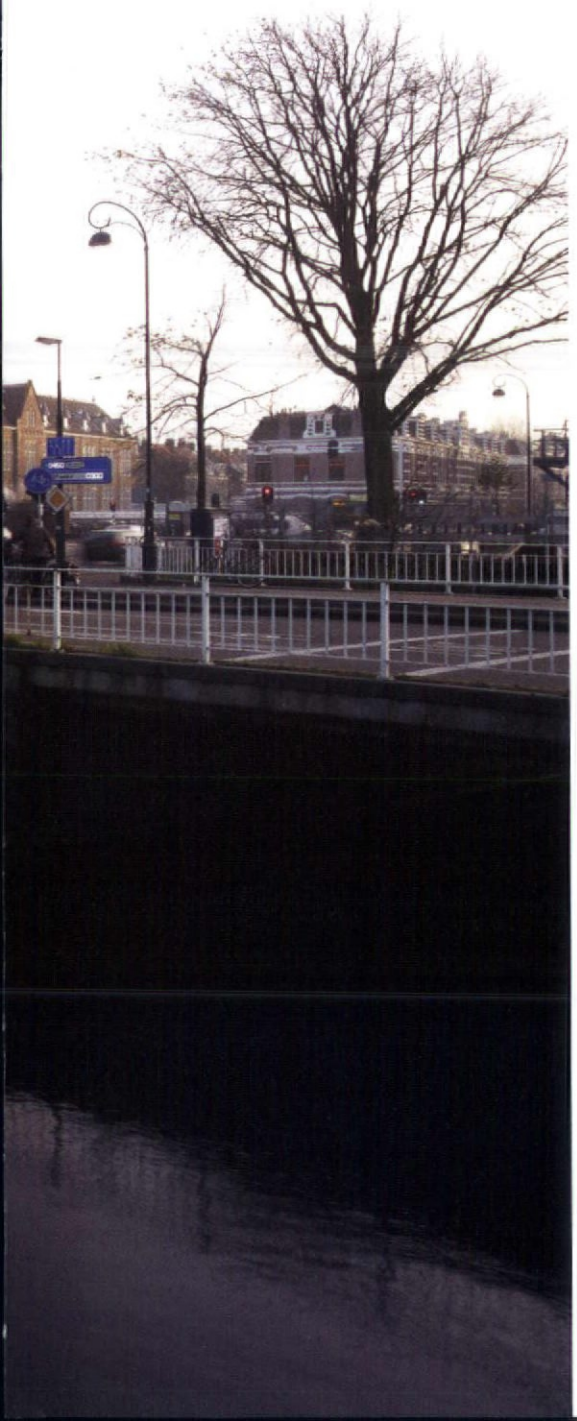
The family of architects used on the client's speculative projects feels more identifiably in a camp that traces its roots to the Smithsons and their interest in the ordinary. But this house seems to go further back to a fruitier past. Like Lutyens at Castle Drogo – where the architect had fun choreographing architectural periods, from Romanesque to Georgian, to imply centuries-long evolution –

'Four Oaks has evolved a quirkiness and idiosyncrasies that typically in British domestic architecture take generations to emerge'

Four Oaks also creates instant mythology for itself. The house is not a lamentable one-liner, but a script of references that bears re-reading.

With ZMMA working with an inherited form from Stephen Taylor, and the leisurely procurement method allowing numerous adjustments to be made on site, and with both being guided by Kelly's nuanced architectural sensibility, Four Oaks has evolved a quirkiness that few newly-built houses can match. The relatively generous gestation period for the house has compressed into its make-up idiosyncrasies that typically in British domestic architecture tend to take generations to emerge. In this rich and enchanting salvo, future generations will no doubt find much to delight in, respond to, and play with.


HOTEL



2

CINEMA SCOPE

Implanted within Haarlem's city centre, this town hall and cinema complex reconstitutes the urban grain and adds a contemporary layer to a historic palimpsest

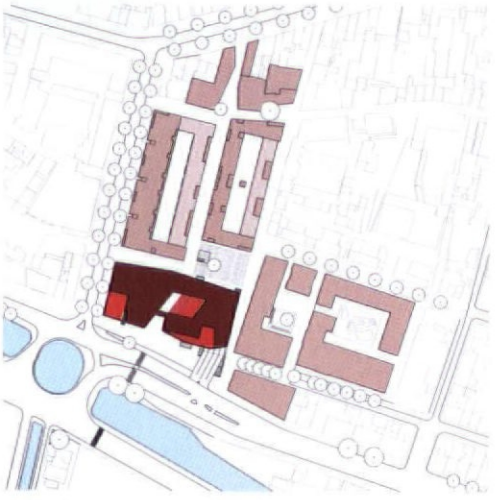
1. Anchored by a clock tower, the main public face of the new town hall and cinema complex exudes an appropriately modern civic propriety and monumentality
2. A map of Haarlem from 1822 shows the evolving town defined by the river, canals and projecting fortifications

Raakspoort Town Hall and Cinema, Haarlem, The Netherlands, Bolles+Wilson

3

Raakspoort Town Hall and Cinema, Haarlem, The Netherlands, Bolles+Wilson

3. Watercolour sketch of the eastern side building where it meets and defines a new public square
4. A pedestrian passage skews through the block, neatly dividing the civic territory of the town hall from the more nocturnal operations of the subterranean cinemas



location plan

CRITICISM

PETER BLUNDELL JONES

Just as New York overshadows York, so the name Haarlem brings to mind its US namesake rather than the original Dutch town close to Amsterdam. But in Holland's golden age the original Haarlem was a beacon of prosperity and Protestantism and the home of leading 17th-century portraitist Frans Hals. Later overtaken in commerce by Amsterdam, it is now a convenient dormitory satellite to that city, but the lack of redevelopment has left it especially well-preserved, with the original centre largely intact, canals still in use, tiny pedestrian streets and an intimate scale often at a mere two or three storeys. The narrow brick houses have generous windows and boast an infinite variety of the decorated gables so typical of Dutch towns, and it seems that every square foot was valued and given use.

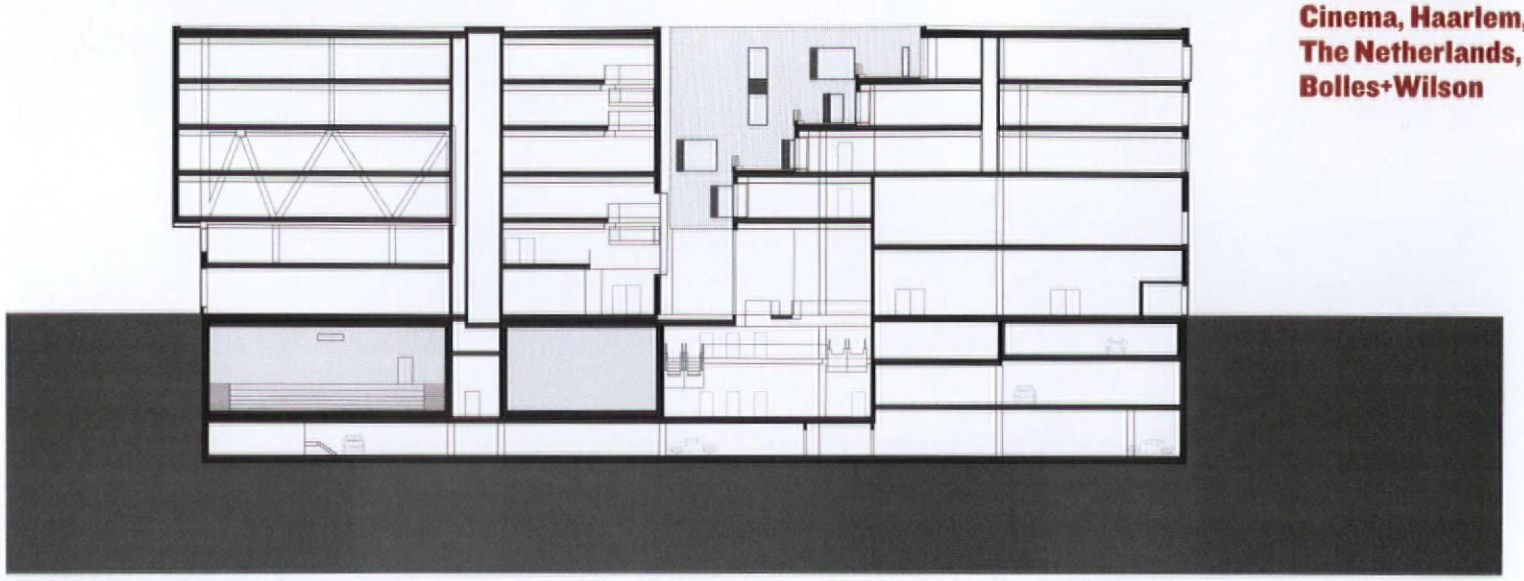
On the west side of the main marketplace Haarlem built a noble town hall, which is still in use for political and ceremonial functions, but as local services proliferated in the 20th century, satellite offices for local authority departments grew up around the town. The new building at Raakspoort was devised to bring them all together, but it has only been achieved after a decade of discussion and development involving several players. It started with an urban masterplan including the drastic addition of a three-storey car park beneath the whole block, and Bolles+Wilson became involved when they won the architect-cum-developer competition for the front end, initially envisaged as a casino and cinema. Meanwhile Döll Architects won a separate competition for a new town hall, but placed well away from the old centre in the southern suburbs where it could take plenty of space and allow easy approach by car. Then the municipality changed its mind: the casino was cancelled and the building at Raakspoort was redesigned half as town hall, half as cinema, with Bolles+Wilson as primary architects and Döll Architects responsible for the town hall interiors. All this followed and completed the earlier masterplan, with the huge car park beneath and respectable if dull blocks of five- to six-storey brick housing lining the restored streets. The new town hall's job was to provide the culmination and figurehead needed to raise the cultural level and to repossess a delicate historic site.

Until the end of the 19th century, wars in continental Europe often took the form of sieges, and towns were fortified, often with extensive moat systems. The first cadastral survey of Haarlem from 1822 shows how the town had grown at a bend of the river Spaarne in two layers defined by rings of canal, then in the 16th century a grid-planned suburb was added to the north with projecting triangular fortifications. The new town hall's site lies to the west of the centre and marketplace, at the point where the westerly canal branch Raak meets the main western moat Stadsbuiten. This was the watergate at the west edge of town, connecting across to another canal which arrived from the south-west. The Raak lost its water along with the Oude Gracht – inner canal circuit – during the 19th century, both turned into broad main streets to serve the inner town, but the outer moat Stadsbuiten remains, and you can still take a boat around the whole thing. As often happened with abandoned fortifications, the leftover space has become the inner ring road. In modern life this is therefore the place where you leave the highway to enter the restricted, dense and largely pedestrianised town centre.

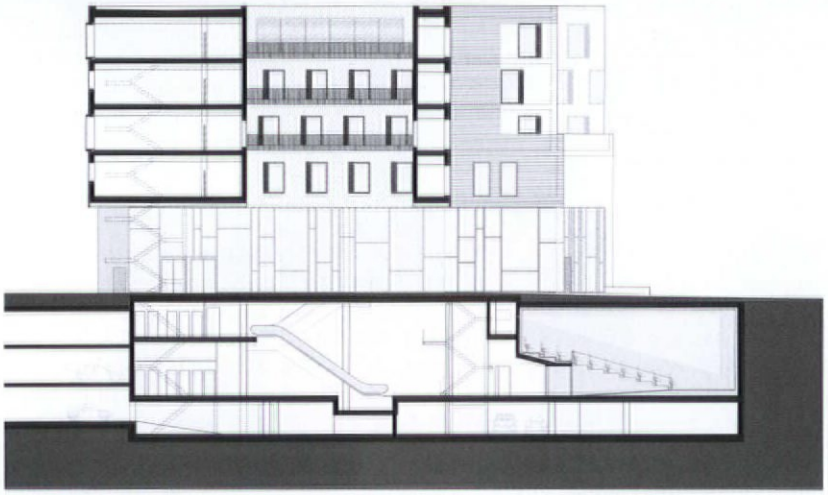
The building of the new town hall manages this transition in three ways: presenting itself


INGANG
PARKEERGARAGE
RAAKS

Raakspoort Town Hall and Cinema, Haarlem, The Netherlands, Bolles+Wilson



section AA



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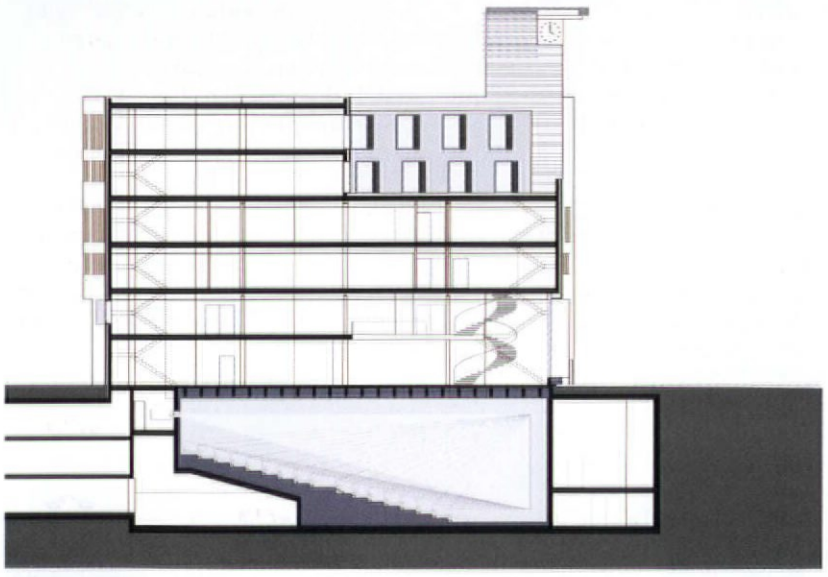
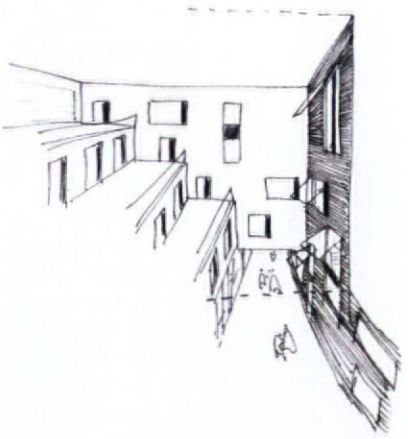
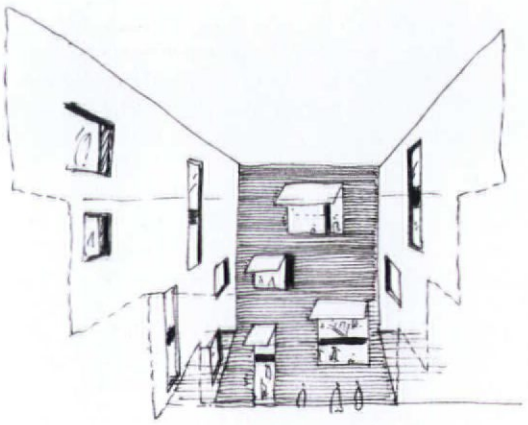


section CC

5. Sketches showing how the office floors step down to create terraces which admit light and views
6. Fragments of earlier buildings on the site are integrated into the facade, enriching the new and engendering a sense of Scarpa-esque contrast
7. The new square is a genuine urban room, with restaurants at street level and a glass cube that disgorges people from the parking levels below

5





6

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to the west as a large, monumental landmark as seen from the passing car, from the east as the milder protective edge of the pedestrian precinct completing the network of streets and squares, and at the same time acting as the gateway to the parking garage beneath, swallowing cars to disgorge passengers as pedestrians in the square behind. This is surely a better arrangement than obtained a decade ago, when large parts of the block were used for surface parking, leaving ugly gaps like missing teeth.

Instead, as shown by Bolles+Wilson's coloured site plan (p74), the urban carpet is now complete. The existing city fabric is shown in outline, blue is water, pink is new blocks of housing with attendant commercial uses. Dark red is the town hall building with bright red for terraces where the upper fabric is cut back. A generous area of pavement to the west provides space for gathering and renders the car park entry more visible. From the pedestrian crossing at the main road, a pedestrian passage runs through the new building to the street network and a new paved square behind. This square, surrounded by three restaurants and a brewery, is a real urban room, and is where people emerge from the car park, rising in a glass cube between square and street. The wide street to the north, site of the original Raak canal, has been demoted from traffic artery to service access and cycle parking.

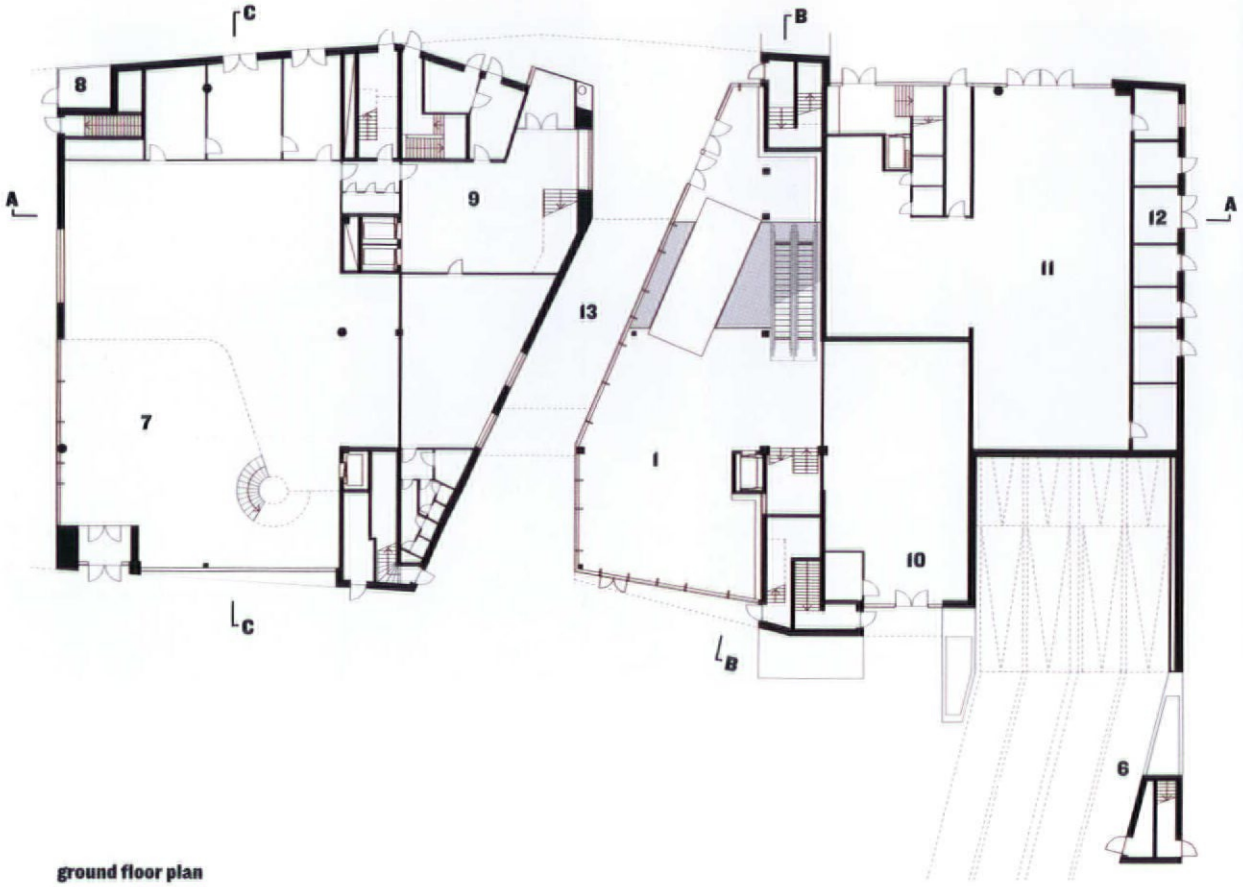
Whatever you might feel about casinos after the crash of 2008, the type had proved a problem for Bolles+Wilson. Casino owners want a dark building with no distraction from the gaming, therefore no life to express on the outside, and their suggestion of a projected city map on the facade was not popular. Cinemas fall into the same trap, and it made more sense in the end to bury Pathé's stack of them underground. Bringing the town hall functions together on top made a large office complex, which could have been dangerously repetitive. The third floor plan shows its rational system at its clearest, with a rectangular circuit of open corridor, four sets of fire stairs, two groups of core rooms, and a perimeter of offices with windows. But even at a glance you notice that the perimeter band changes constantly in width due to the irregularities that Bolles+Wilson introduced into the building's outline.

'From the east the building presents itself as a milder protective edge of the pedestrian precinct, completing the network of streets and squares'

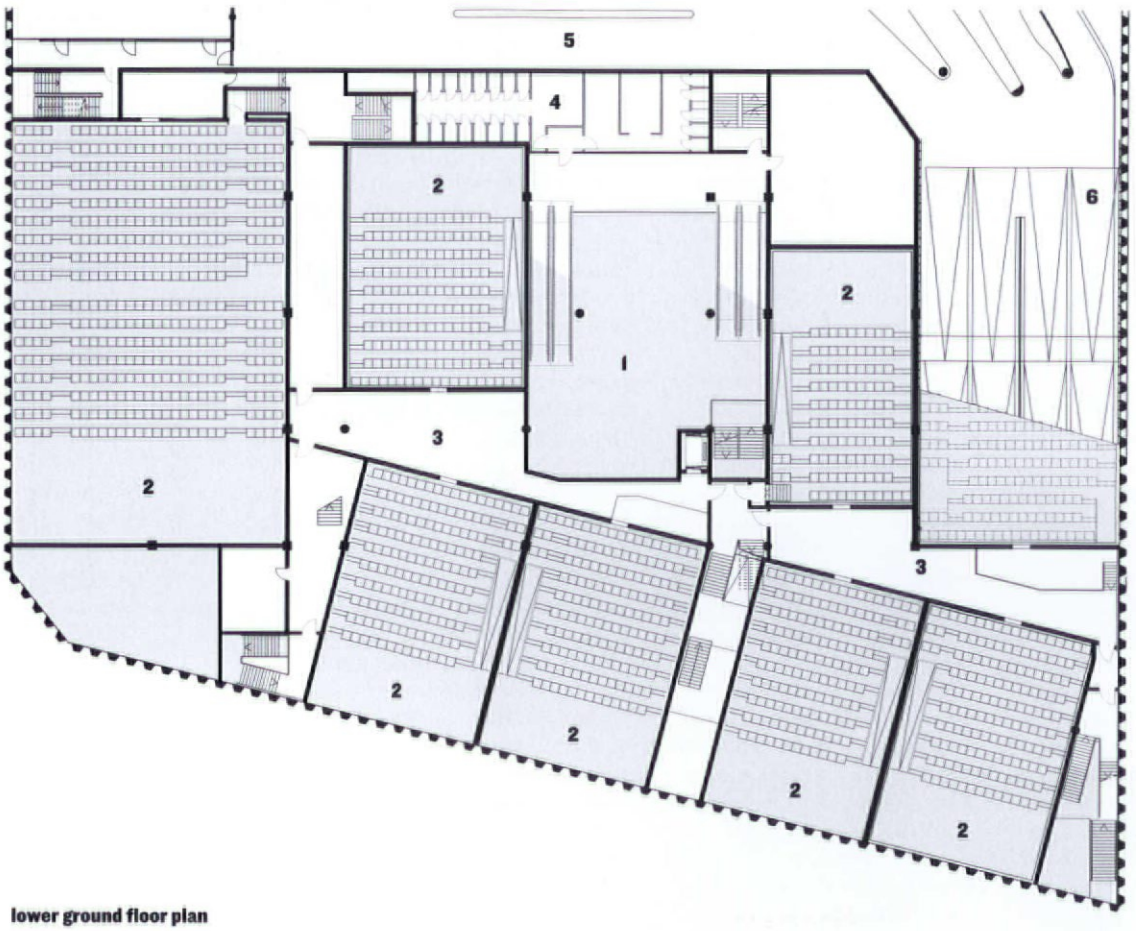
Their key intervention is a pedestrian passage skewed through the building at 24 degrees, which on the west side answers the pedestrian crossing, while to the east cutting off the view and noise of the main road from the pedestrian street. It also conveniently divides the civic territory of town hall, entered frontally at the north-west corner, from that of cinema which opens more nocturnally to the passage. The skew in plan became a leitmotif throughout the building, setting the all-important main stair on the diagonal to arrive in generous and fluid triangular foyers on each floor, and recurring as diagonal lines in carpets and ceiling lights throughout. Bolles+Wilson also adjusted the plan's perimeter, for where the masterplan envisaged a simply orthogonal east side, they introduced two slight skews of 4 degrees to render the building convex, a significant change as seen from the public square.

Another way a big office can become oppressive is in the stratification of identically repeated floor plans, but Bolles+Wilson and their partners Döll have rung the changes in section too, taking advantage of the varying perimeter conditions and changing requirements. Major moves were creating a glazed hall on three levels for the town hall's public interface which is accessed by spiral stair, and countering this with a downward hall and escalators for the cinema. The through passage's impact is increased by a series of internal balconies which step back at upper levels to increase light and allow diagonal views. Upper levels are further relieved by two high-level terraces excised in the west front, not only to differentiate between floors, but to produce a complex articulated profile culminating in the clock tower that was requested by the municipality.

Not only the clock tower but reference to Dudok was apparently suggested, and the Raakspoort building is perhaps appropriately dominated by brickwork, mostly projecting at every fourth course to give strong horizontal lines. There are no true lintels or arches, windows are not vertically aligned, and while some are flush, others project, and yet others turn corners. Patches of stretcher bond in lighter mortar appear without tectonic rationale. Clearly, it is not loadbearing, and the floor plans reveal the heavy engineering in concrete that has to be there to support it all – accommodating cinemas, parking grid and all the shifting liberties of plan libre. The structural acrobatics appear slightly on upper floors where exposed diagonal bracing follows the largest span, and five giant columns lurk behind the glazed north facade, but mostly the effort and complexity of the structure are concealed, and better so.



ground floor plan



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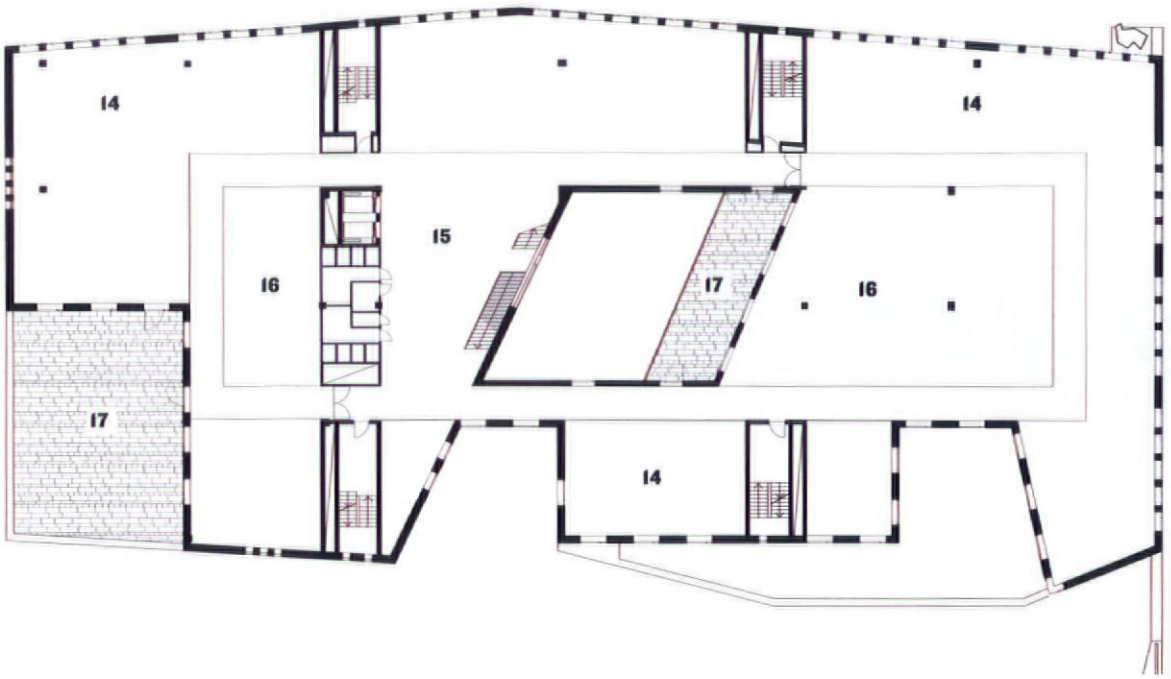
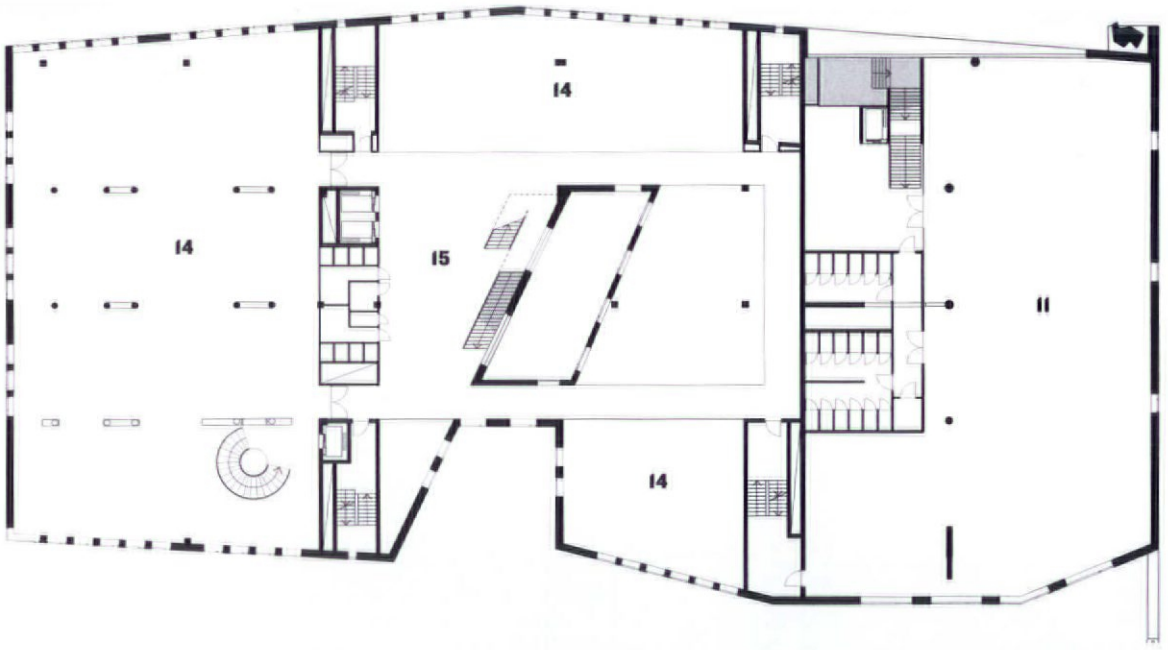
lower ground floor plan

Raakspoort Town Hall and Cinema, Haarlem, The Netherlands, Bolles+Wilson



fourth floor plan



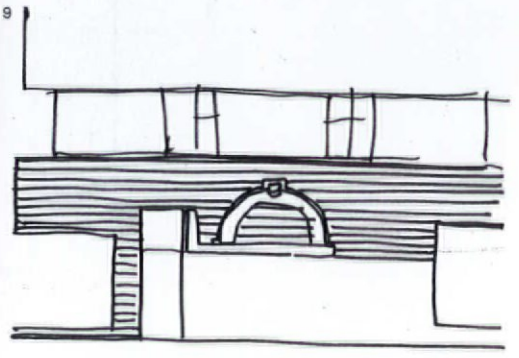
second floor plan

1	cinema foyer	10	cinema delivery
2	cinema	11	restaurant
3	projection room	12	technical spaces
4	wcs	13	pedestrian passage
5	parking	14	city hall offices
6	parking entrance	15	lounge
7	public foyer	16	meeting room
8	showcase	17	terraces
9	staff entrance		

8

Raakspoort Town Hall and Cinema, Haarlem, The Netherlands, Bolles+Wilson

9



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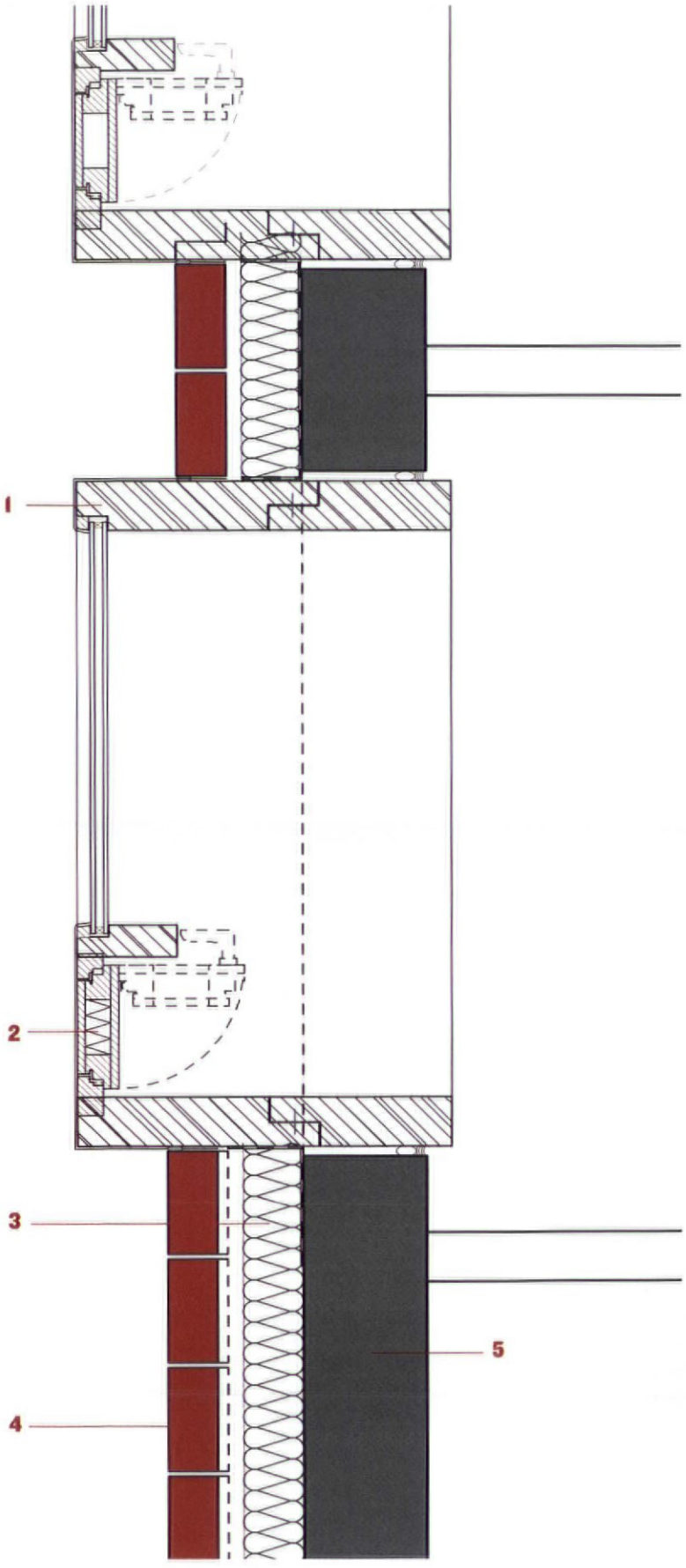
The brick still gives an impression of solidity and permanence, but accepting that it is merely a skin, Bolles+Wilson have exploited it in a collage-like manner, allowing variations of scale and treatment which have to do sometimes with neighbourliness, sometimes with internal functions, and even with the demands of balancing the three-dimensional composition. Their skill at these games has been evident through a long series of buildings, and has certainly not failed them in this case. A new variation, however, is the accommodation within the composition of architectural fragments from earlier buildings on the site. Two statues, a couple of stone arches, some sculpted reliefs, and other items have been integrated in significant corners in a manner that recalls Carlo Scarpa and his Castelvecchio Museum, setting up a stark contrast between new and old. With some the homage to Scarpa is perhaps too close, but the preservation of memories from former occupation of the site is important for those who knew it earlier, while for others it adds a historical enrichment that can only be welcomed.

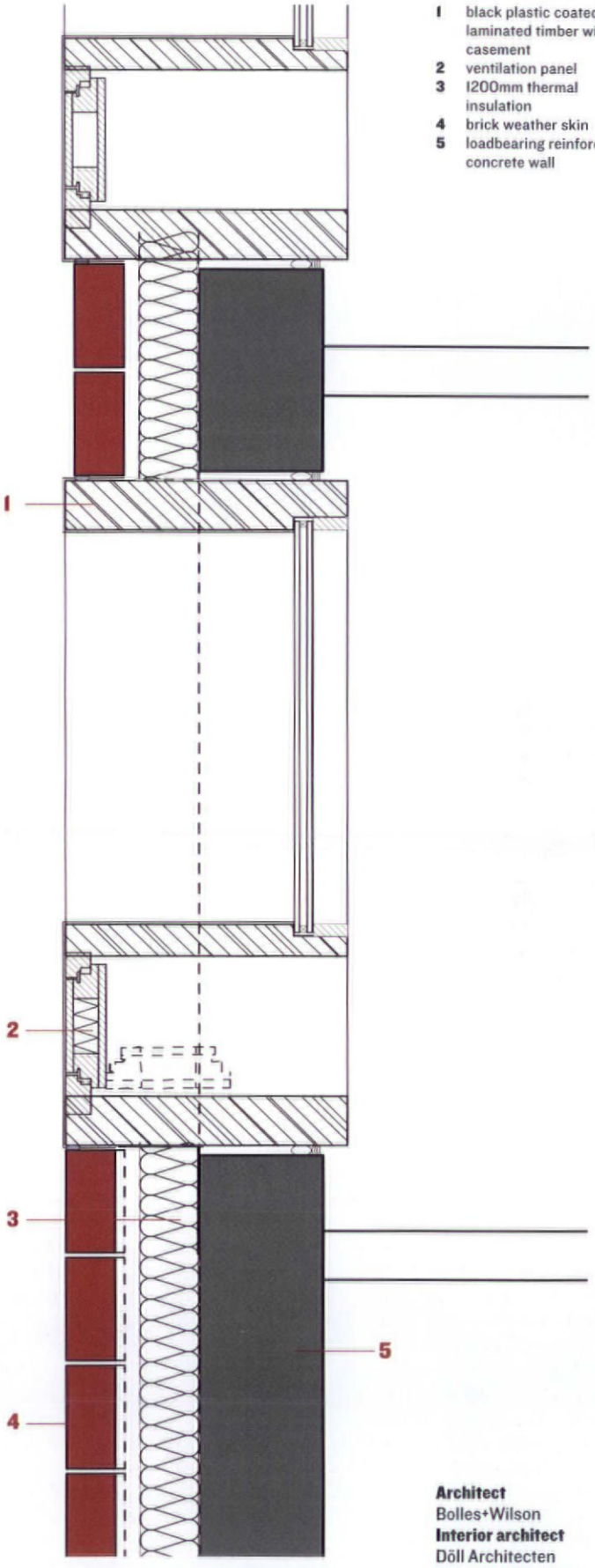
Ever since their first masterpiece the Münster Library (AR February 1994), Bolles+Wilson have set a high value on context, always seeking to integrate their buildings in the place. They were a lucky choice of architects for this sensitive site, and have dealt magnificently with its transitional role and contrasting faces. There has been harmonious cooperation both with the masterplanners and with Döll Architects on the interiors, whose choices in colours and furnishings are sympathetic, and whose place-making values have joined seamlessly with those of the principal architects. The larger significance of the project lies perhaps in its borderline position between highway and pedestrian zone, or between the no-man's land of the modern motorway system and the homeliness of the town. Until late in the 19th century most European towns were recognisable as entities, approached by the age-old donkey path and remains of walls and gates, so it was clear that you had arrived, and within town everyone walked. In the car-bound modern world, the rules of traffic engineering have been allowed to dominate, motorways being routed to avoid towns rather than to link them, and screened for noise and pollution which also prevents view. Arriving in town, we are diverted from the original streets that once led to the centre, and instead plumbed into the circulatory system. Losing all natural sense of direction, we are presented with a wasteland of backs, car parks and vacant sites.

But as pedestrians we have rediscovered town centres, limiting parking and banning cars in favour of people: Venice is now so special less for its canals than for its absence of cars. There has also been an increasing reaction, both in the Netherlands and the UK, against the proliferation of signs, signals and barriers which some brave authorities have entirely removed, repaving their streets for the pedestrian while permitting cars on sufferance. Disaster was predicted, but the accident rate fell, and traffic flow even increased. So in dense urban settings some ideas of safety were evidently misguided and the rule of the car can be broken, but on the motorway the engineers must surely continue their hegemony, for any sensible pedestrian flees. The question is how to switch between the two, and Raakspoort surely provides a fruitful example, with the violence of the huge car park well disguised and the start of the pedestrian zone clearly marked. It is all the more exemplary for lying precisely at the historic town boundary, remembering and reinforcing the integrity of the original urban pattern.

8. The brick skin is exploited as a collage, animated by texture, colour, historic fragments and sculpted reliefs
9. Sketch of part of the north facade, showing an existing stone arch set into the new brickwork
10. The arch in situ. Flush, recessed and projecting glazed openings add to the repertoire of devices



detailed section through projecting window



detailed section through recessed window

1 black plastic coated laminated timber window casement
2 ventilation panel
3 1200mm thermal insulation
4 brick weather skin
5 loadbearing reinforced concrete wall

Architect
Bolles+Wilson
Interior architect
Döll Architecten
Structural engineer
Corsmit Raadgevend
Photographs
Christian Richters

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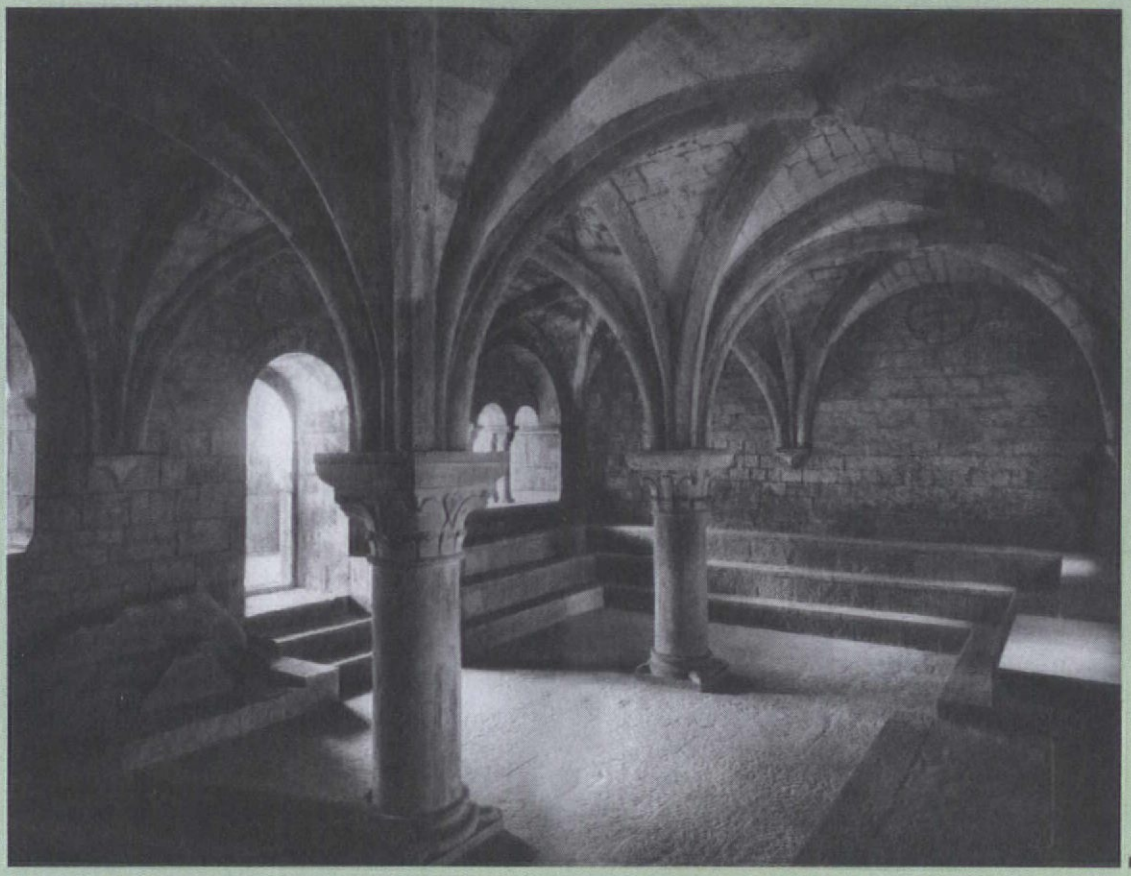


1. The semi-subterranean Chapter House of the Abbey of Le Thoronet. Like other masters of Modernism, Le Corbusier drew on and transformed historic precedent. As a monastery, the monks sat as equals looking towards the central column. But La Tourette was a seminary, the pair of columns are towards one end, denoting the difference in status between the teacher monks who sat at this end and the novices in the larger portion of the room

THE BIG RETHINK
LEARNING FROM FOUR MODERN MASTERS

The architecture of the past and other cultures represents a vast resource to study and learn from, now made widely available by modern scholarship, publications and audio-visual media – a great legacy of modernity. To conceive an architecture adequate and relevant to our changing times, a useful initial step is to investigate and integrate lessons from past architectures, including those of very different times and places, and of the 20th century with its constant experiment and innovation.

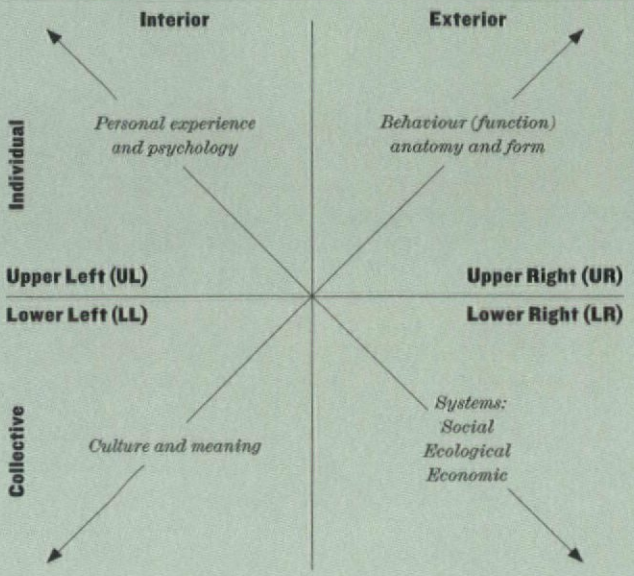
PETER BUCHANAN

Last month's essay initiated this exercise by looking briefly at some aspects of vernacular, historic architecture and modern architecture. This month's Campaign looks at a select few masters of Modernist architecture whose work still compels because both modern and yet also in antithesis to the reductive modern paradigm. A future essay will examine a few major contemporary architects.

Last month's essay suggested that modern architecture might prove not the fresh start it was assumed to be but more of a discarding of the outworn, a purifying purge and explosion of experiment, after which a much more broadly founded regeneration would be possible. The narrow reductionism of modern architecture might have proved disastrously destructive of communities, cities and ecosystems. But its innovations and explorations have left a rich legacy, much of it too soon forgotten, to be reappraised and integrated into a more complete architecture. And some of its core features, such as the development of the free plan that is sensitively attentive to the activities it hosts, are breakthroughs of lasting value to be carried forward into any future architecture.

Besides, as April's essay argued, a handful of great masters of Modernist architecture transcended the reductionist modern paradigm to do work of real substance, complexity and depth. Their concerns were not limited primarily to the right quadrants of Integral theory's All Quadrant All Level (AQAL) diagram, to such objective matters as function and construction. They were equally interested in the left quadrants, with subjective experience and psychological impact (Upper Left concerns) and meaning (Lower Left) – and many of them with some form of the spiritual (higher levels of the Upper Left). But reflecting roots in Romanticism, they tended to conflate spirit with nature. Integral theory sees even this as a form of modern reductionism, collapsing the many levels of the left quadrants into lower levels of the right. But for us today it also means most of these architects could be seen as proto-green, even though this is largely in terms of sensibility rather than actual performance, as is stressed today and largely made possible with the computer, both in predictive modelling and the monitoring of performance.

Despite reservations at conflating spirit and nature, and in contrast to most modern architects, these masters are instructive for attempting to recover a Four Quadrant approach to architecture and so were as much anti-modern as modern. They belong to that third wave of anti-modernity, between Romanticism and Idealism, the first two such waves, and the fourth and current wave known as Postmodernism. Limited space permits the selection of only four modern masters for brief discussion, and even then the focus is primarily on a very small aspect of their work. The architects are chosen for the intrinsic quality of their work and because that of each is so different. This, together with the contrasting aspects focused on, proves the breadth of their concerns and approaches, thus making them so fruitful to study. None were narrow functionalists and though their characteristic formal vocabularies might seem abstract, they are instead often richly allusive, their abstraction facilitating a denser layering of references than if these were explicit. Hence,



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in contrast to typical modern buildings, the work of these architects is richly communicative at many levels: they convey meaning, yet do so without recourse to traditional rhetorical motifs and iconography. This may yet prove a valuable precedent to any attempt to recover the cultural dimension of architecture.

The four architects are: Frank Lloyd Wright, and mainly on the spatial strategies of his domestic work; Le Corbusier, looking mainly at how he drew on and transformed lessons from history; Alvar Aalto and how his work draws us on and enhances the sense of occasion; and Louis Kahn who drew on history in a manner very different to Le Corbusier. To learn from and deeply admire an architect does not imply being oblivious to his or her flaws – far from it; a critical attitude best unearths what is valuable as well as what is problematic. With some of the selected architects, or some of their works, the flaws (or limits to their relevance) are considerable, particularly with their urban ideas and inability to make satisfactory urban fabric. But although Le Corbusier's urban ideas, in particular, were as pernicious as they were influential – including his proposals for La Ville Contemporaine and La Ville Radieuse, and the widely adopted edicts of the Athens Charter – the urban shortcomings of the others are mostly merely typical of their time and its dominant modes of thought. So the approach to examining the work of these architects is not that of a historian or critic but rather of a designer looking for positive lessons to deepen understanding and enrich his or her repertoire. (If only this dimension were added to the way history and theory are taught in most architectural schools.)

The promenade architecturale is a theme mainly discussed in relation to Le Corbusier's architecture. But all the selected architects exploit it masterfully, Wright in the sometimes convoluted approach to his buildings (particularly some of the Prairie Houses), Aalto in the way his buildings draw you through them, and Kahn in buildings such as the Kimbell Museum of Art. What all

2. All Quadrant All Level (AQAL) diagram by philosopher and psychologist Ken Wilber, a key to Integral theory

these architects understood is that architecture is an art of manipulating not only space but also time. The choreographed promenade separates and structures the sequence in which spaces and their activities are encountered in time too, so building anticipation, the sense of the sacred or whatever. Le Corbusier, in particular, manipulated time in many more ways than there is space to discuss, particularly in devices to slow our perception of it and so intensify our experiences.

Yet with these architects much more than their approach to design is instructive. So too is the scale of their ambitions – Wright and Le Corbusier sought to shape whole new ways of living – and how they created the conditions for their success. Particularly with Wright and Le Corbusier, these included shaping the persona they presented to the world and the personal myths they had to live up to, so intensifying the impetus to excel. The most successful architects recognise that skills in design and construction are insufficient to ensure success and that they must also design and shape their careers. Such things are not taught at architectural school, not least because the reason some are professors not successful architects lies in not realising or lacking the faith to design and follow their dream.

The quest for sustainability now makes it urgent that architectural education be designed to also develop the student psychologically and culturally. Architecture might then lift itself out of the egocentric shaping of icons, the competitive elaboration of obfuscatory theory and all other such trivia. Instead it can focus on the larger and now urgent concerns that are best understood and solved by designers who have evolved both psychologically and intellectually to reach a world- or biosphere-centric level of cultural and personal development. This crucial issue will be discussed in future essays that will in part draw upon so far unmentioned areas of Integral theory. For now it is worth remembering that even such grand egotists as Wright and Le Corbusier were concerned with far larger and more important issues than simply becoming famous, their ambitions driven by the intention to serve the larger world along with their clients. This was true too of Buckminster Fuller, a widely-influential thinker and designer who explored many topical themes, such as resource depletion and creating a world that worked for all. But his approach now also seems too narrow in its lack of interest in culture and misunderstanding of aspects of efficiency (such as the consequences of total life-cycle costing), some of the reasons he is excluded here.

Frank Lloyd Wright

Despite his obvious greatness as an architect and extraordinarily prolific fecundity, Frank Lloyd Wright is still sometimes dismissed with jibes like 'the greatest architect of the 19th century' or as 'a Romantic', implying irrelevance to our times. Certainly he was an architect associated mainly with suburban and rural buildings. But he still has much to teach us. Novice architects, for instance, struggling with small domestic extensions, can bring to them a sense of spaciousness and fluid ease by plundering his spatial ideas, especially as exemplified by the Usonian houses. Even when only partially and crudely executed, these spatial devices can work wonders.

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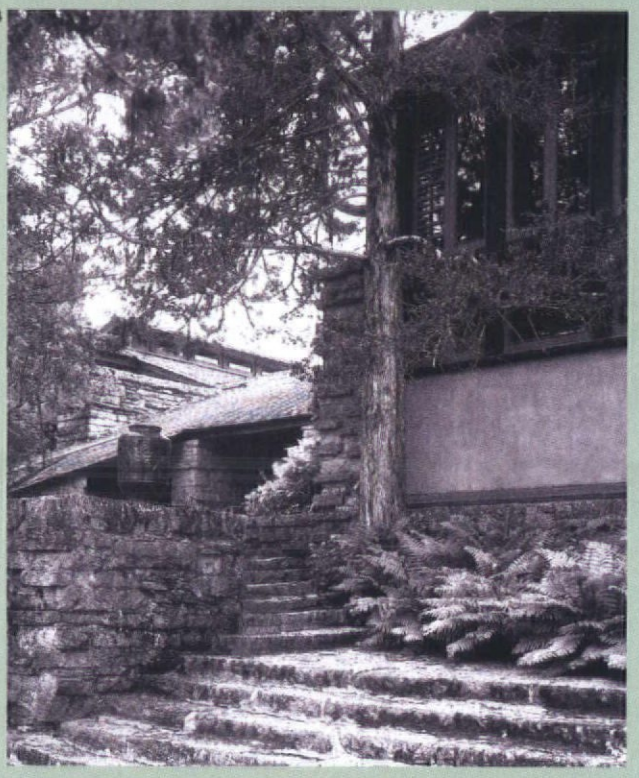

3 & 4. Distant and close views of Taliesin East by Frank Lloyd Wright, which is 'not on the hill but of the hill'

In most buildings, rooms are box-like spaces that open into each other and to the outside through openings in the middle of their walls, so leaving the corners intact and asserting a certain stasis by constraining the flow between spaces. By contrast, Wright knocked out the corner, often with the middle of the wall left for support, so that spaces slid fluidly into each other on the diagonal. Besides imparting an easy dynamism, the elongated diagonal views between rooms, and even onwards to the outdoors, dramatically increase the apparent size of the spaces, which is why so many modern architects adopted this device.

Of course, there was much more to Wright's domestic planning than this. The fluid flow of these diagonally connected spaces would be anchored by being centred on a solidly substantial masonry core containing the hearth, symbolic heart of the home. And here and there, blocking the spatial flow outwards from the hearth would be masonry corners adding more moments of rooted stasis. In a great Usonian plan, what is striking is the tension and

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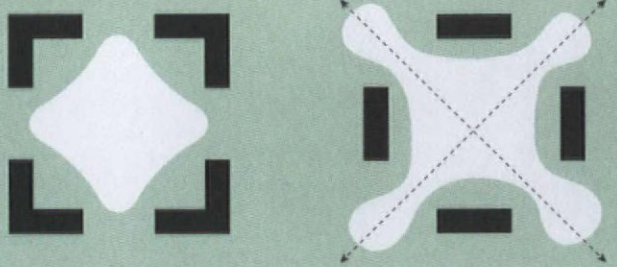

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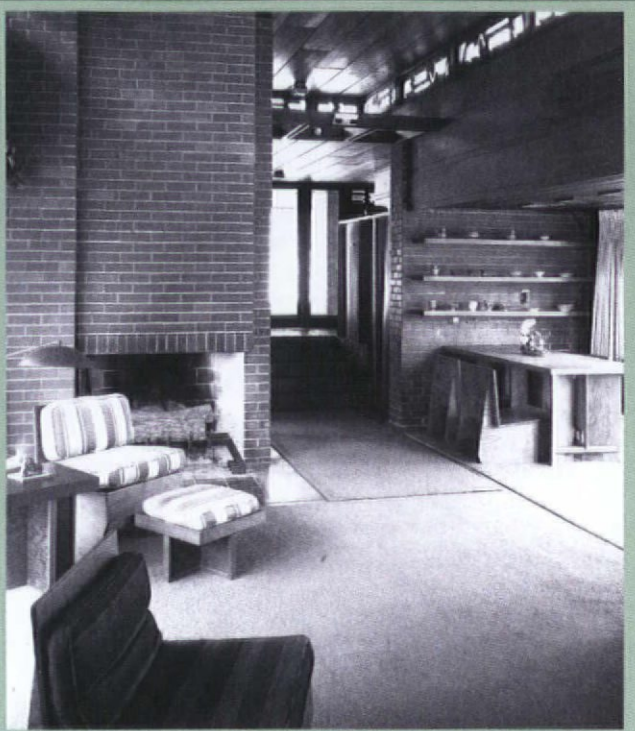

balance between contrasts: between the explosive dispersal of elements, such as the masonry loadbearing walls and the disciplining grid that holds them in place; and between the centrifugal outward flow of space and views and the contrasting centripetal inward focus, so the spaces are both dynamically extrovert and serenely introverted. Aided by devices such as broad overhanging eaves and an outward extension of the floor slab, space also flows outside and is tied back to the house, so interlocking the interior with the garden or landscape.

Moreover, the spaces are precisely judged also in functional aptness and domestic character: the dimensions, degree of enclosure and views between and out from spaces are all exactly right for the activities they house and these are brought into equally, exactly-judged relationship with each other. Natural lighting too, brought into the centre of the house by clerestories, matches the activities accommodated and there is a careful balance of fixed built-in and moveable furniture. These are rooms that are comfortable to sit alone in, quietly reading a book, yet which can equally easily host large gatherings. Yet no matter how crowded the rooms may temporarily be, there is always a strong sense of domesticity, the house centred on the visually dominant hearth, with the dining table for family meals nearby, so sacralising the home and nuclear family.

Wright was creating a new architecture for an expansive new land and a new way of living on it, in due reverence to nature. Unlike most modern architecture, his buildings nestled into and interlocked with their natural settings and intensified the sense of place. As he said of his home, Taliesin East: 'it is not on the hill but of the hill'. The fluid and extroverted spaces might match the endless prairies, but the centripetal focus on the hearth provided a stable and comforting refuge within the vastness of the American continent.

Despite his fecundity, Wright knew better than to always start each design as if from scratch. Instead he was a composer-architect, playing variations on well devised themes. Yet the results were never formulaic but well matched to client, site and budget, Wright excelling at low-budget houses as well as extravagant ones. To judge his success, it is instructive to compare the richly nuanced, emotionally succouring, warm liveability of a Usonian house, which celebrates setting and family, with the life-denying frigidity of so many minimalist-inspired houses now illustrated in architectural publications. These have been designed to be looked at, for the

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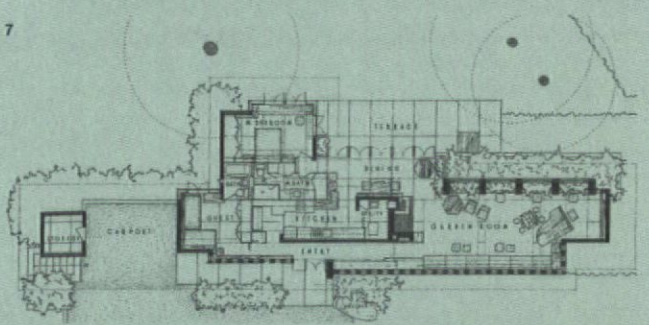

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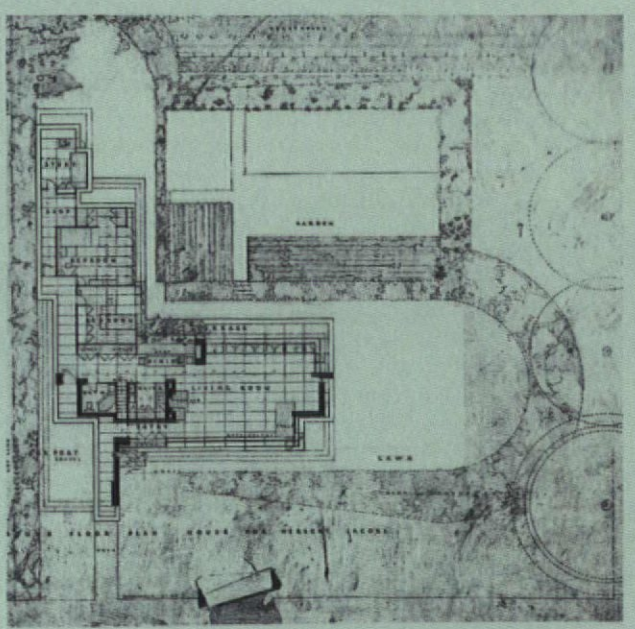

5. Diagrams showing how solid corners of traditional rooms restrict the flow of space, contrasted with Wright's opening of the corners so space flowed freely along diagonals that introduced elongated views and a sense of spaciousness
6. Living and dining room of the Pope-Leighey House, a Usonian dwelling. Space flows on the diagonal past the hearth with clerestory bringing light into the middle of the house
7 & 8. Plans of two Usonian houses: the Zimmerman House (7), and the first Jacobs House (8). Both show the interplay between the diagonal flow of space and the stabilising masonry hearth, piers and corners

immediate impression given, rather than to be lived in. Wright reworked the same approach over and again, and his works are mostly instantly recognisable as by him. Yet it is also instructive to ponder how much more convincing his designs are than those of today's starchitects who adopt a brand-style to secure their position in the global marketplace.

Le Corbusier

Although it is irrelevant to their respective greatness as architects, Wright's designs are arguably easier to get to grips with than some of Le Corbusier's. How Wright's designs were generated and disciplined is relatively easy to detect and there are several excellent studies that illuminate this.[1] There are many equally excellent studies on Le Corbusier too. But although these illuminate his life, ideas and theories, and many aspects of his work, few do real justice to his extraordinary powers of synthesis as a designer, to his attention to the nuances of function (despite lapses too) and how his buildings suggest these, and to the multiple layers of allusion to be found in seemingly abstract works. In part this lack of understanding – and controversies about, say, how much his architecture was shaped by his interest in astrology, alchemy and religious heresies – is because, although he was a prolific author, there was much he chose not write about. These matters he felt should remain esoteric, intended only to be noticed and understood by initiates – and the deserving, those who had cultivated their perceptions. But even to the majority unaware of such matters, the compelling qualities of his work that so many respond to arise from the many levels at which he engaged architecture and from how much of himself he invested in his explorations (much of it in the privacy of his painting studio) and equally important patient distillation and synthesis.

The name Le Corbusier was self-created, and even this has multiple esoteric allusions, such as to Corbeau, the crow or raven, alchemy's *avis hermetis* that transforms matter into spirit, and Corvus, the celestial constellation closest to his own sun sign of Libra, as well as featuring in numerology. Created initially as a *nom de plume* for articles he had written whose ideals he had not yet lived up to, it was a fictitious persona into which he grew as an architect as well as a constant incitement to excel. Tellingly, it was only some years after he had adopted the name as an architect that he felt his paintings were worthy of the same signature. This is just one example, an extreme one, of the many ways great architects have designed aspects of themselves, their careers, work methods and conditions, to contribute to their success. Wright too, as have been and are many architects, was something of a self-mythologist; as Carl Jung once said,

'The name Le Corbusier was self-created, and even this has multiple esoteric allusions, such as to Corbeau, the crow or raven, alchemy's *avis hermetis*'

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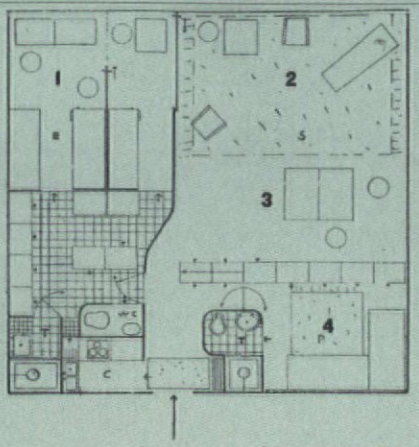

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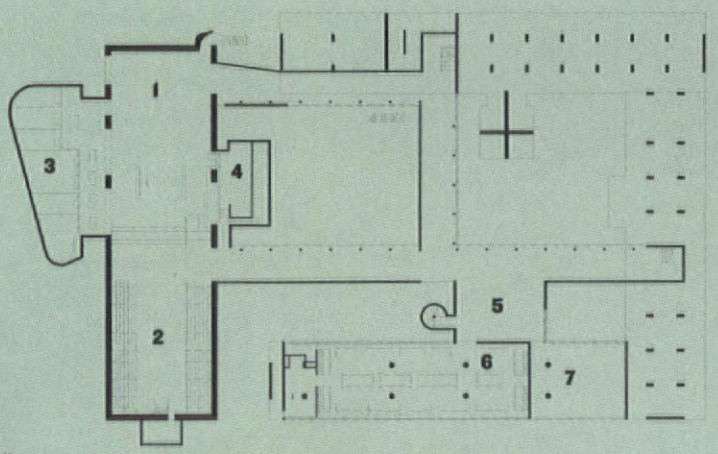
Le Corbusier
9. Plan of five-person apartment from La Ville Radieuse
10. La Tourette stands aloof from the slope

in retrospect real life for Jung had started only when he asked himself what myth he was living.

Although we admired and learnt from many other architects, for my generation Le Corbusier was the touchstone. The volumes of the *Oeuvre Complète* were the bible, the drawings and photographs rather than the text, although often you would only fully grasp a key lesson once you had made a similar breakthrough in your own work. It would take a thick book to elucidate everything that might be learned from him, or even to provide a detailed exegesis of a single major building. But Le Corbusier's own writings were often simplistic propagandising and usually help little in fully understanding the buildings. Nevertheless, many of his devices are still regularly exploited, such as the introduction of the double volume to engender some sense of spatial release, such as Wright provided with his diagonal flows between rooms.

One of the ways Le Corbusier achieved flexibility and a sense of spaciousness in even tightly planned residential units remains instructive: those elements that are unmovable (those with plumbing and large bits of furniture) are fixed in place and the rest of the space is left as fluid as possible to be subdivided as required. The series of apartments of differing sizes illustrated in La Ville Radieuse, each of 13 square metres in area per inhabitant, are inspiringly instructive, although acoustics would have been a problem. The approach has similarities to Wright's deployment of built-in and mobile furniture in his living areas. But in his houses the furniture was too



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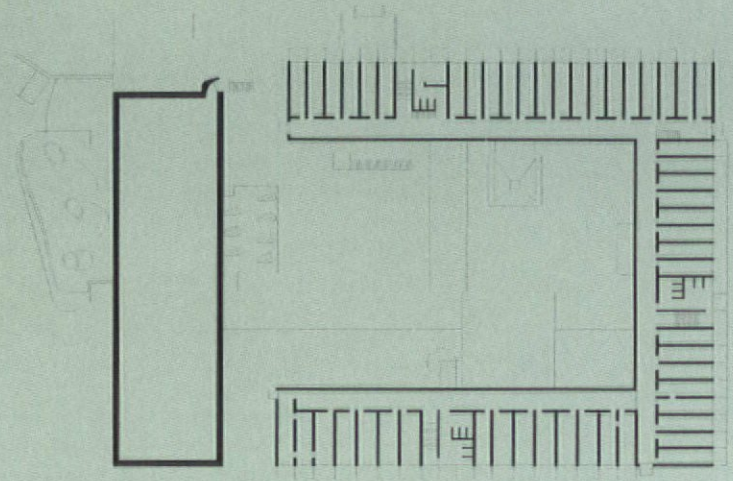

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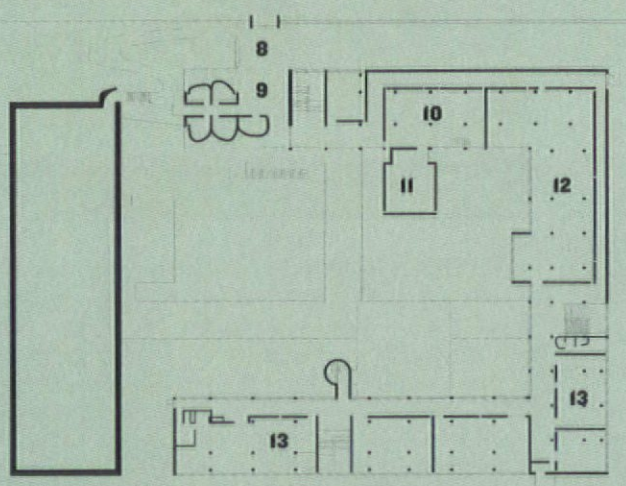

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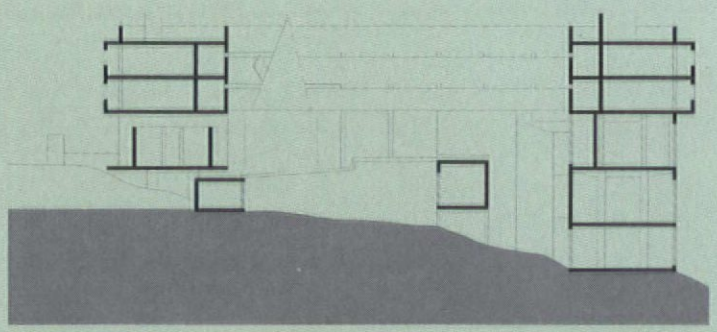

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La Tourette by Le Corbusier
11. Plan of refectory and church level
12. Plan of cell levels
13. Plan of entrance and study level
14. Section
15. Refectory with columns subdividing into nave and aisles
16. Crypt chapel feels semi-subterranean like Le Thoronet's Chapter House
17. Monk's cell, like the church, is a megaron in form

1 lay brothers' church
2 monks' church
3 void over crypt chapel
4 sacristy
5 atrium
6 refectory
7 chapter house
8 entry
9 parloirs
10 lay brothers' common room
11 oratory
12 library
13 lecture rooms

'La Tourette is a good example of how Le Corbusier drew on the past, not copying historic precedent, but radically adapting its forms and organising principles to suit very different programmes, times, materials and methods'

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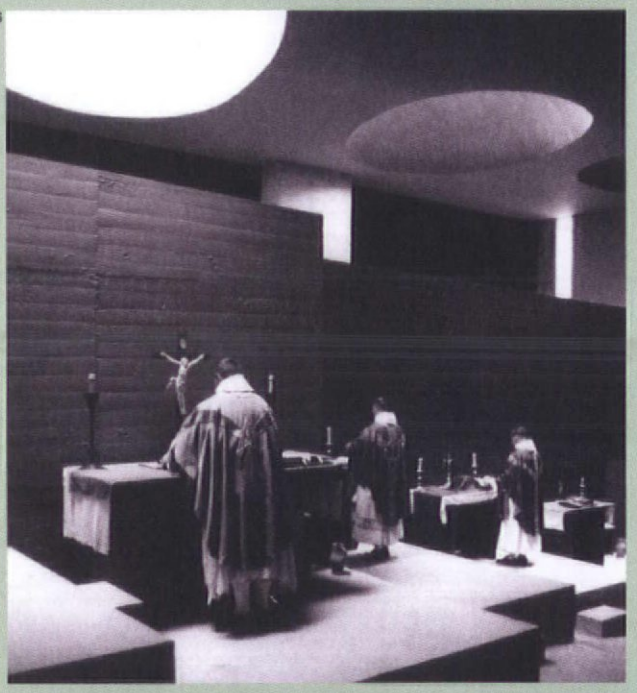

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'La Tourette was a commission particularly suited to his monastic temperament. Along with the Ronchamp chapel, it is also his most densely allusive work'

heavy to be easily moved while Le Corbusier used light furniture that could be readily rearranged. But in contrast to Wright's concerns with cosy domesticity for the nuclear family, Le Corbusier Purist *machines à habiter* were ideally for rational technocrats and avant-garde art lovers for whom cosiness would be cloying. Yet from Le Corbusier's example came an ideal for some mid-20th century architects of combining built-in and easily movable elements to design homes that could quickly change in function and mood through the day and seasons: a sunny children's playroom during the day; a restful refuge for the parents in the evenings; a party space for large gatherings; and a winter garden when plants are brought in during cold weather. This is a dimension to residential design now sadly lost, but worth recovering.

Among Le Corbusier's greatest works is La Tourette,[2] a commission particularly suited to his monastic temperament. Along with the Ronchamp chapel, it is also his most densely allusive work, so much so that to unpack the many rich narratives encoded in the building, particularly the more esoteric ones, is far beyond the scope of any brief essay. But La Tourette is also a good example of how Le Corbusier drew on the past, not copying historic precedent but radically adapting its forms or organising principles to suit very different programmes, times, materials and construction methods. Space here allows only a tiny insight into a few instances of this process.

When commissioned to build La Tourette, Le Thoronet was suggested as embodying the spirit sought. But Le Thoronet is a Cistercian monastery, where monks slept in a single dormitory, tucked in remote seclusion in the countryside. La Tourette was built as a seminary, an educational centre, for the Dominicans,[3] an urban order with monks in individual cells. And although built out of town, it is readily approached by car and set in what is now a benign countryside very different to what would have been the wilds around the medieval monastery. This difference explains something that baffles many about La Tourette: are the enclosed covered ways across the central court a dud substitute for a cloister ambulatory? No, there is no cloister, as today a contemplative stroll in the countryside is more apt than circumnavigating a cloister ambulatory within the defensive enclosure of a monastery.

Built on a steeper slope than Le Thoronet – and floating above it rather than partially sunk into it, as is the older building – La Tourette follows the traditional monastery parti of being wrapped around a central court with the church taking up one side. But the ease of approach to the seminary and the secular nature of the teaching rooms on the entrance (middle) level presented a major problem: how to achieve an appropriate sense of

sacred contemplation within the cells and church? At Le Thoronet, once reached only by protracted arduous travel, the whole monastery is sacred. But to invest some sense of the sacred in the church and cells, Le Corbusier had to build into the compactness at La Tourette some such sense of distance, in physical and temporal terms, from the secular level sandwiched into its middle. With the cells, this is achieved by ranging them on long corridors deliberately designed, with rough plaster walls and no outlook, to discourage lingering and socialising. With the church this is achieved by gathering the novices under the sloping roof of the so-called atrium adjacent to the refectory, to then process together into the church.

Yet, and this illustrates how Le Corbusier learned from and adapted the lessons of history, there is something equivalent at Le Thoronet, not found in other Cistercian monasteries. There the ambulatory outside the church is raised several steps above its other arms and lined with a stone bench where monks would gather before entering the church. Le Corbusier has taken this distancing device and intensified it, but all in a stark Corbusian vocabulary. The church is just a long and tall concrete box lit by horizontal slots that throw light on the Bibles and hymn books of the monks aligned along its sides. Derived from the megaron, the early Greek sacred building form that when surrounded by columns would become the cella of the Classical temple, it is startlingly stark and direct in its simplicity yet powerfully sacred in ambience. But the monks' cells are also each mini megarons, the visual and semantic pun between cella and cell making clear the sacred nature and interdependence of these spaces set so far apart, one for communal worship and the other for individual contemplation and prayer.

But the most distant and sacred space is the crypt, with its individual altars for solitary worship, reached by descending beside the nave to pass under it, so that the crypt seems semi-subterranean and very distant. As at Le Thoronet, the floor steps down with the slope of the hill, and to focus attention on the altars, each is individually lit by the large coloured, truncated cone of a rooflight, while the outer wall leans in as if further pressing attention on them. Here the formal and associative interplay is with an element even more distant than the cells, the little group of *parloirs* for meeting with visitors outside the entrance.

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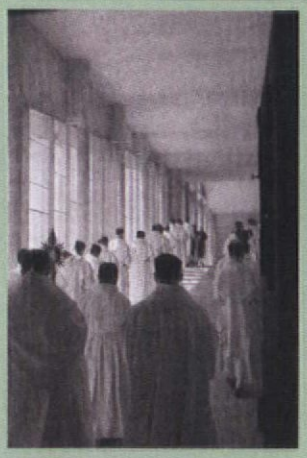

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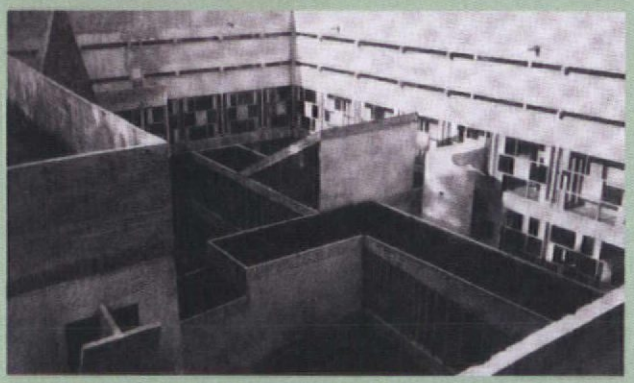

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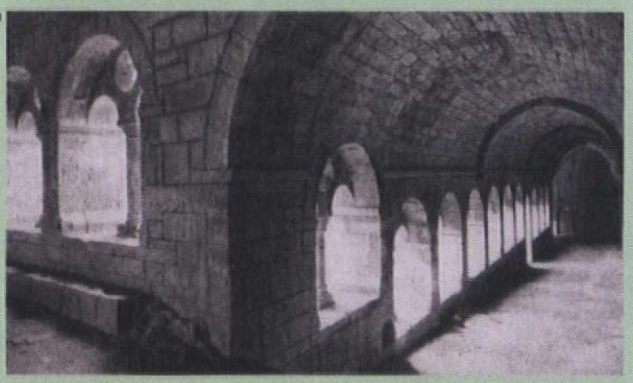

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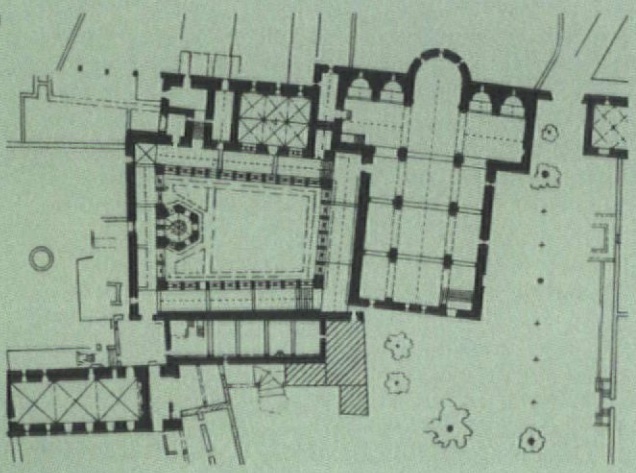

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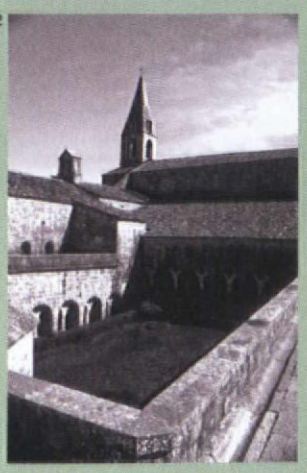

La Tourette
18. Monks processing to church from atrium
19. Atrium – under sloping roof in central court

Le Thoronet
20. Cloister ambulatory of this major Cistercian abbey built in the late 12th/early 13th century in Provence
21. Plan of Le Thoronet
22. Cloister with ambulatory floor set below garden

Essen Opera House by Alvar Aalto
23. Section
24. First floor plan
25. Ground floor plan
26. Exterior viewed on approaching entrance

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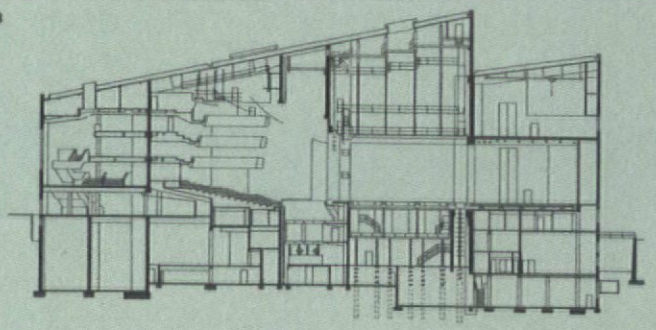

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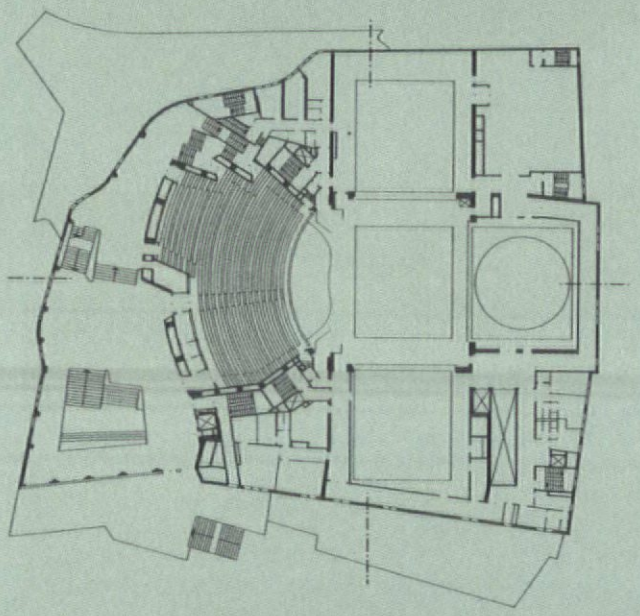

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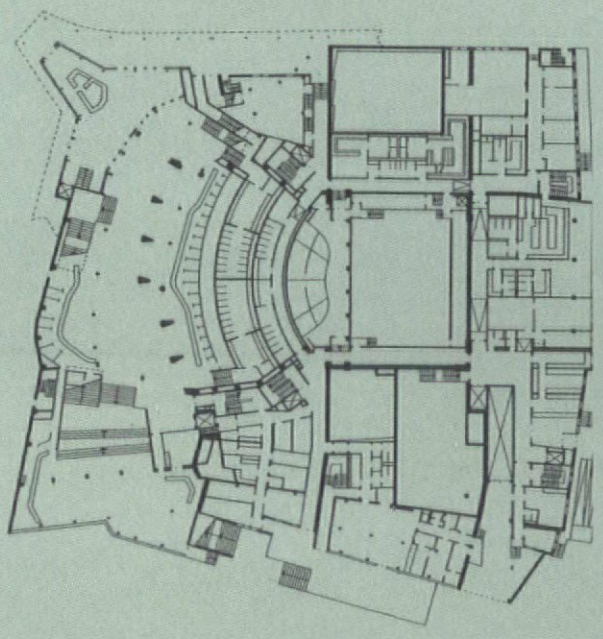

'Aalto revered and sought lessons from nature, while his roots in Romanticism were inflected through the example of National Romanticism'

These take the form of a Neolithic burial chamber shaped like the Great Earth Mother – an archetype from which Mary Magdalene, to whom the church is dedicated, is perhaps a more recent incarnation – but now unearthed, exposed and minus the head, which is replaced by a viewing balcony: another complex dig at the Dominicans who massacred Le Corbusier's forebears.

Alvar Aalto

If Le Corbusier was the greater architect of the two, more prodigiously inventive and producing deeper and more thematically complex works, then Aalto was the better one. For a client, Aalto was a considerably safer bet, his buildings much more likely to be functionally unproblematic, to weather well and last without undue maintenance. For lesser architects, Aalto was also the safer to emulate: bad Corbusian-type buildings can be disastrous while even a poor Aalto copy is relatively benign. And unlike so many modern architects, whose buildings are at their best when just completed and pristine for photography, Aalto built for the long term, claiming his buildings would be best judged after some decades (see *Reputations*, p110).

Like Wright and Le Corbusier, Aalto revered and sought lessons from nature, while his roots in Romanticism were inflected through the example of the National Romanticism of the generation ahead of him, represented in architecture by figures like Eliel Saarinen. If Wright declared himself an Organic architect, Aalto was seen by some as one too, but of a very different type. For Wright, Organic implied wholeness, an interwoven integrity in which all parts came together without compromise to their individual identity or the resulting, geometrically disciplined whole. Aalto was considered Organic, in part because his flowing interiors were like an inward extension of the natural landscape. But there tends to be less obvious geometric rigour, the presence of structure is often suppressed and sometimes sections show much poché. All of this was anathema to Wright and

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many other modern architects. Like Wright, he was profoundly influenced by Japan, one source of Wright's gridded geometric discipline, ceiling treatment, eaves extending to interlock inside and out, and so on. But while Aalto borrowed details from Japanese architecture, it was his fascination with ikebana, Japanese flower arranging, that influenced his formal sensibility, reflected in the interplay of straight and wriggly lines, of balanced asymmetry and so on.

For many, the resulting architecture is enigmatically quirky, arbitrary and irrational, no matter how much they also admire and enjoy it. Yet if designing a building of similar size and programme to one by Aalto, you often discover his precedent to be surprisingly pragmatic, compact and efficient, the distorted spaces tailored to function as well as fluidly flowing into each other, either minimising or making the most of major circulation routes, with long diagonals increasing the apparent size of spaces, and the whole enveloped in a compact exterior volume. Such a building is the posthumous Opera House in Essen, Germany. Here a prolonged and virtuovso processional entrance sequence up to and through the tall foyer, the auditorium and full fly tower, and extensive backstage and ancillary facilities, are all simply enclosed under two interlocking, sloping roofs and wrapped around with a rippling stone cladding.

Like the Rovaniemi library described last month, it is a building that seems to unfold almost inevitably before you as it entices you forward, almost as a participant in its design, with tactile detail (door handles, ceramic tile column facings, leather-wound handrails) falling to hand as if exactly anticipating your touch. Entering a low-ceilinged ground floor, you pass wavy cloakroom counters that seem to propel you forward, as if by peristaltic action, towards an inviting broad stair that cascades towards you as it entices you forward to climb up into the light. The stair then doubles back on itself to lead you into a lofty foyer, off which is entered the auditorium stalls, the tapering plan form of the space reflecting the diminishing number of people passing through it. Above are balconies, which give access to the upper tiers of auditorium seating, shaped to recall crags lining a steep-sided valley as they close towards a distant stair that tumbles, almost waterfall-like, down to the foyer floor from these balconies.

Opposite these balconies, tall windows form a jittery rhythm as they look west over the park outside. For much of the year the low evening sun enters through these to animate the foyer floor and balcony fronts with patterns of light and shade and recall the evening Nordic sun shining through pine forests. Then entering the auditorium, the natural metaphors become more explicit as you pass into night, some of the wooden slats lining the walls curving to evoke forest trees bending in the wind and all painted a dark, almost midnight, blue. Above, the white painted fronts of the upper tiers resemble clouds in the night sky while the bright-lit stage is like a forest glade in which magic of the performance is enacted. So, in this seemingly abstract building, a night at the opera is enhanced by subtly evoked resonances with ancient rituals in primeval settings.

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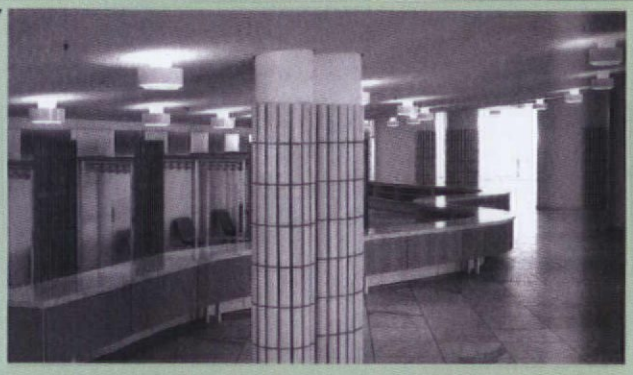

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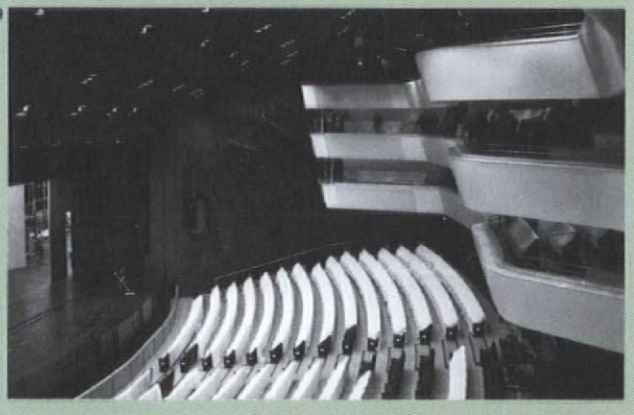

Essen Opera House by Alvar Aalto
27. Ground floor with wavy cloaks counters
28. The foyer with stair leading up from below, jittery windows overlooking the park and crag-like balconies to the right
29. The auditorium with midnight blue walls and seats and slat motif of wind-bent trees

'So, in this seemingly abstract building, a night at the opera is enhanced by subtly evoked resonances with ancient rituals in primeval settings'

National Assembly Building, Dhaka by Louis Kahn
30 & 31. Interior and plan of Assembly Building

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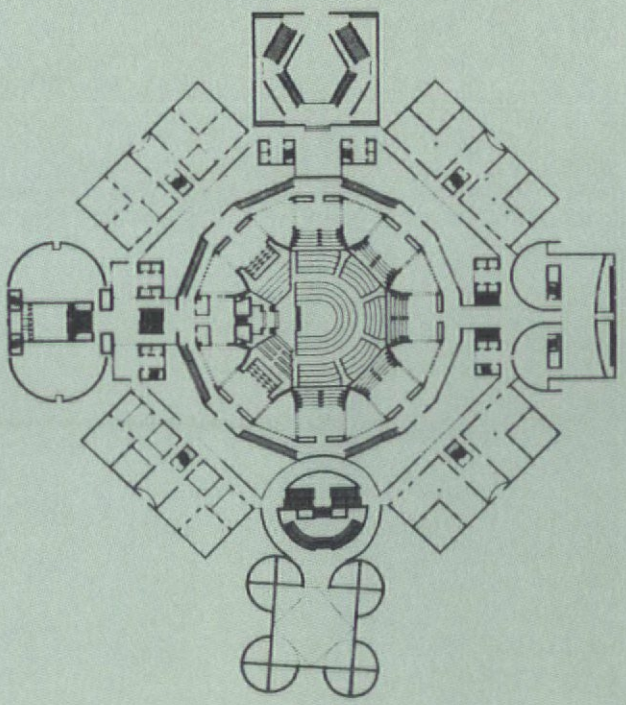

Louis Kahn

If Aalto built to last, Louis Kahn (some of whose buildings should prove equally robust) was interested in a very different form of timelessness. And if Aalto was critical of a too arid and utilitarian modern architecture, and so humanised and naturalised it, Kahn's designs more obviously react against such buildings. Although doing better than decent work, mainly housing, for some time before, Kahn only emerges as a major architect relatively late in life when various forms of backlash against conventional modern architecture were already under way. These ranged from the Scandinavian softening of it with warm, 'natural' materials, to Festival of Britain-type prettification with patterning, to creating something more forceful in form and presence – rough, tough and muscular – in aggressively raw concrete and rough brick.

Kahn too sought a potent presence in his architecture, but a still and ennobling one. By evoking rather than copying the forms of ancient architectures he achieved what seems an abstracted condensation of them, thus giving his work the archaic spirit so many refer to. He sought to return dignity to what had become the merely functional, using architecture to re-elevate important facilities into civic institutions. He was also keen to regain the germinal origins of architecture. He talked about school starting with a teacher under a tree and the need to recapture and preserve that spirit. He pursued the ordering, dignifying spirit of rigorous geometric configuration. He sought to use materials in a way that was true to their nature and the most natural way of agglomerating components or conjoining materials. He explored ways of manipulating light, making it yet more magical as it revealed itself and the building it illuminated. Always he asked, what does this building want to be, in terms of its animating spirit, structural logic, the handling of materials? This was not empty rhetoric but a way of sidestepping the ego, to more deeply engage with and bring out the spirit of the building, to achieve a timeless grandeur that both transcended and yet seemed rooted in history.

Kahn's influence was various and can be detected in very different architectures, including what became known as the Philadelphia School, from which the influence rippled out further. His example also certainly helped to precipitate Postmodernism in architecture – if only any of it was of remotely comparable quality. His idea of differentiating served and servant spaces (the latter housing vertical circulation, lavatories and ducts) has become standard practice and his sensitive use of materials is widely emulated. He was, for instance, a master of both precast and in-situ concrete, even designing in detail the shuttering for the concrete at the Salk Institute to achieve effects that are still copied by many.

In his greatest works Kahn achieved a timeless and monumental quality unmatched by any contemporary. This is seen even in a building like the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, which from most sides seems to be only single storeyed – as well as blank walled and somewhat inscrutable. Yet the museum beautifully exemplifies Kahn's notion of institution, not as unduly

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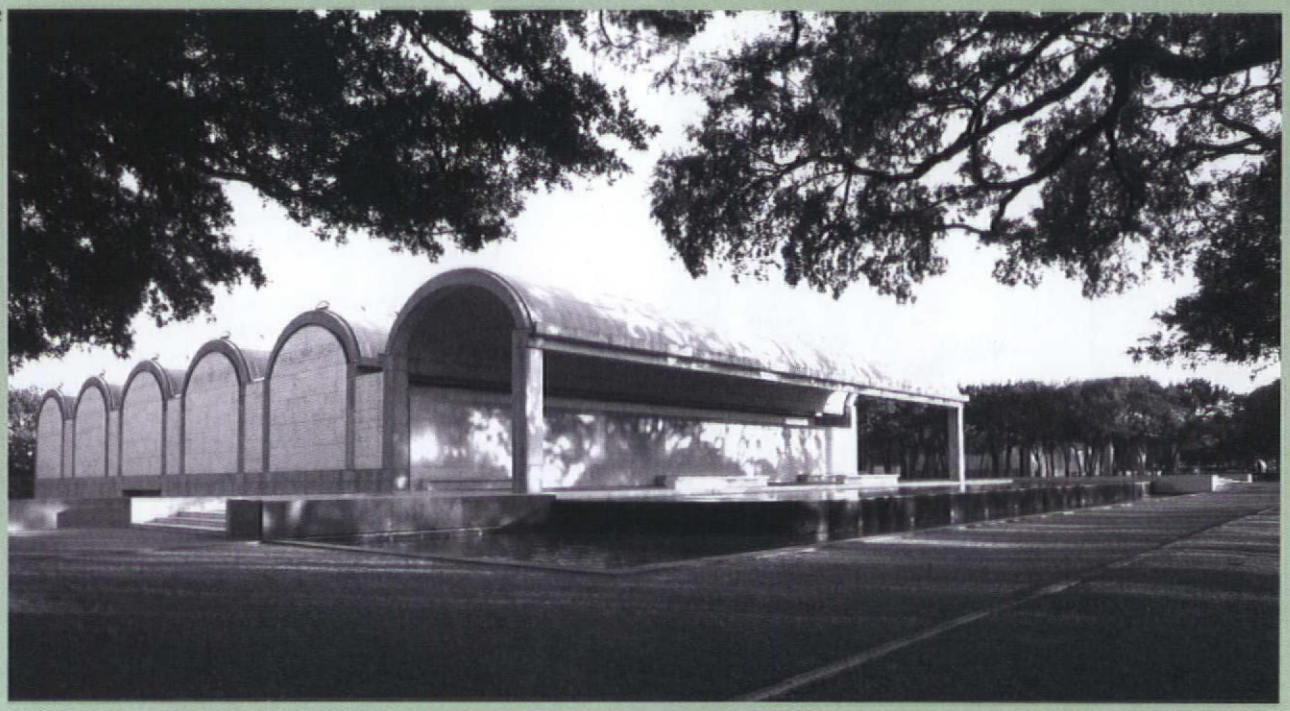

Kimbell Art Museum by Louis Kahn
32. View from park with vaulted porch leading to entrance court and grove
33. Entrance lobby
34. Typical view of gallery
35. Plan
36. Section

imposing or exclusionary, but as conferring common meaning and values by dignifying our deepest impulses to share what is most important to us. It also achieves another of Kahn's ideals whereby structure and light work together to shape space and bestow upon it its essential character and identity, the structure 'making' (admitting and modulating) the light that in turn shows off the structure. The long repetitive concrete vaults, and the silvery light bounced onto them from the metal reflectors below the glazed slits along their tops, and the rhythmic modulation of the space by the vaults and flat ceilings in slight shadow between them are, along with the seeming simplicity of the cunning plan, what give the museum its mysterious spatial magic.

Although presently mostly entered from behind and through what is a basement, the museum was intended to be approached from either side and along the front that faces a small park – or did until Renzo Piano started building an extension. From whichever side you approach, steps first slow you before entering the lofty embrace of a vaulted porch, where benches, park view and the sound of water cascading into a pool below all slow time and elicit an appropriately contemplative mood. Between the porches is the central entrance court, its diminutive, close-spaced trees suggesting a sacred grove, so signalling the reverential attitude in which to enter art's sanctum. Then more steps up under another vaulted porch that sweeps attention to either side to further slow your approach. Finally, passing through the entrance doors, you inevitably pause while time stands momentarily still as the building at last reveals some sense of its entirety and what it has to offer. Ahead, the entrance hall opens into the museum shop under the next vault, while the vault overhead again draws the eye to each side, to the galleries visible to the

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34

Photographs
2, 3 Judith Bromley
9 Fondation Le Corbusier
11-14 Richard Weston
16 Lucien Hervé
17 René Burri
26-28 Marliese Darsow
29 Ole H Krokstrand
30 Naquib Hossain
32, 34 Robert LaPrelle
35, 36 Richard Weston

'Kahn's notion of institution, not as unduly imposing or exclusionary, but as conferring common meaning and values by dignifying our deepest impulses to share what is most important to us'

right below their alternating vaulted and flat ceilings, and to bright-lit courtyard to the left with the café visible to one side and the entrance to more galleries on the other. This moment of arrival, the gesture of welcome and invitation to explore as the building gives itself to you, is one of the great architectural experiences offered by 20th-century American architecture, conferring a generosity of spirit and connection to the long march of history in which the museum's contents were created.

Conclusion

Briefly touched upon above are only a few examples of the many lessons that can be learnt from just four of the great Modernist architects, emphasising in particular the left quadrants of experience, meaning and the multiple forms of relationship the buildings establish with their users – all areas in which much modern architecture is weak. The intention is merely to suggest that this is a topical exercise worth pursuing in more depth and detail. With these architects, this is easily done as each has spawned a mini industry of scholarship. And the specific buildings discussed were chosen because I have written elsewhere about them in more depth, should anyone want to explore them further.[4]

1 vaulted porch
2 pool
3 court and grove
4 entrance lobby
5 shop
6 galleries
7 café

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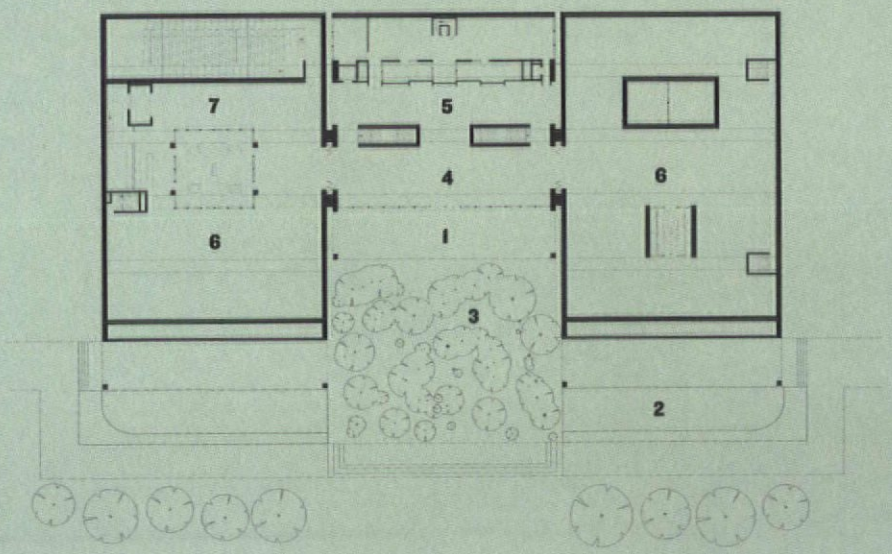

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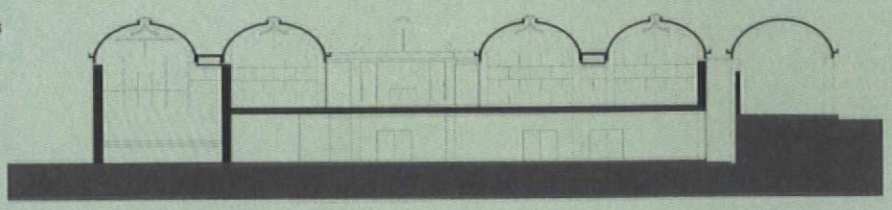
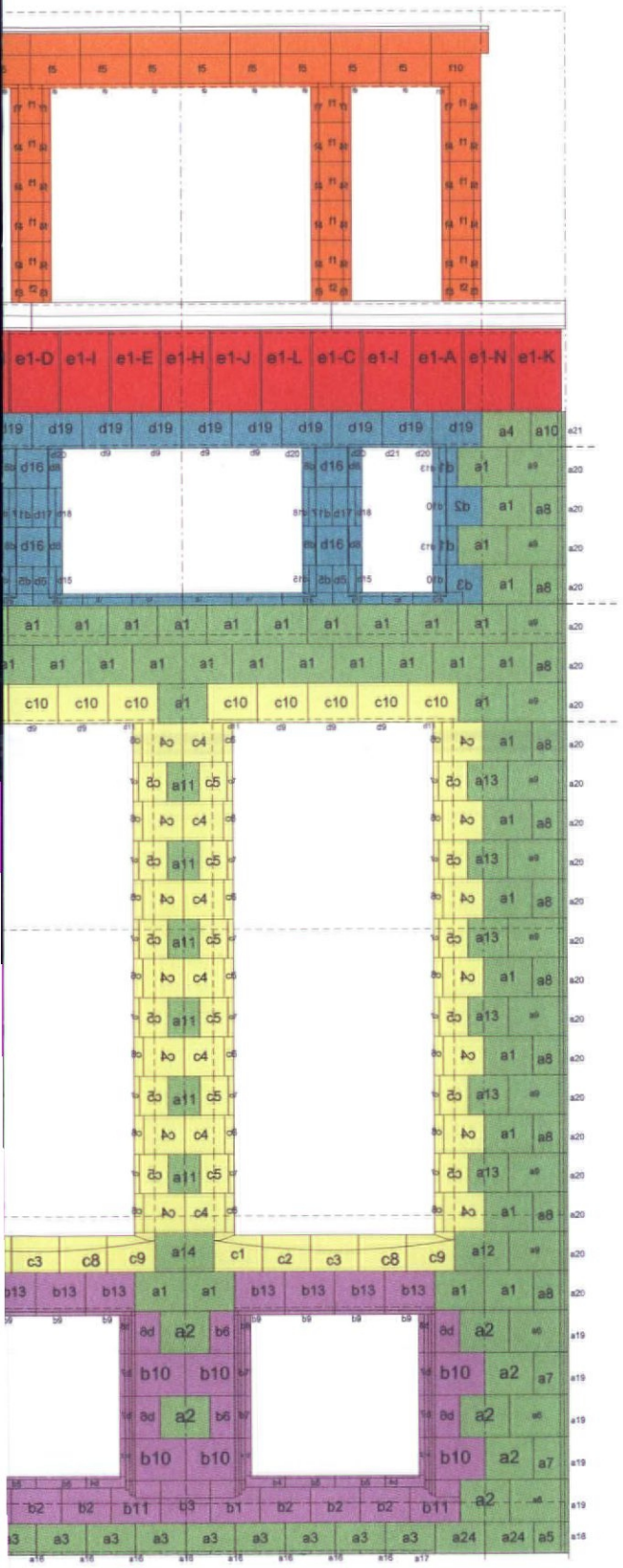


1. In particular see the excellent essays Robert McCarter (ed), *On and By Frank Lloyd Wright*, Phaidon, 2005.
2. Somehow the preposterous notion has gained credence that Iannis Xenakis was a co-designer of La Tourette, Le Corbusier's most autobiographical work. In part this arose from a BBC programme that credited Xenakis as a co-designer, although it also made it obvious he had no understanding of the building. This was confirmed in a discussion I had with Xenakis who could not explain even the simplest and most obvious design moves and who dismissed as coincidence the long sequence of paintings by Le Corbusier, originating in the 1930s, in which he developed formal themes found in La Tourette. I later spoke to architects who had worked in Le Corbusier's atelier at the time, particularly with Georges Candilis, and they all refuted Xenakis's claims. He made some early sketches in the Le Corbusier archive, with themes not in the final building, he helped with the engineering and making a model, and undertook site supervision. He later designed some villas in Greece that are awful.
3. The Dominicans were formed expressly to counter the Cathar heresy and led the crusade that massacred the Cathars, from whom Le Corbusier claimed to be descended. This accounts for many of the esoteric allusions, particularly in the church, most explicitly in what looks like a red cascade of blood.
4. Peter Buchanan, 'La Tourette and Le Thoronet', AR Jan 1987. This was intended as the first of several articles gradually probing deeper into La Tourette, but although delivered as lectures they were never published. Buchanan, Peter, 'Aalto Opera House, Essen', AR June 1989. Further description of the Kimbell can be found in Peter Buchanan, 'On Respect and Inevitability', in *Renzo Piano Building Workshop, Complete Works*, Volume Five, Phaidon.

Map of faience facade elements for St James's Gateway, Piccadilly

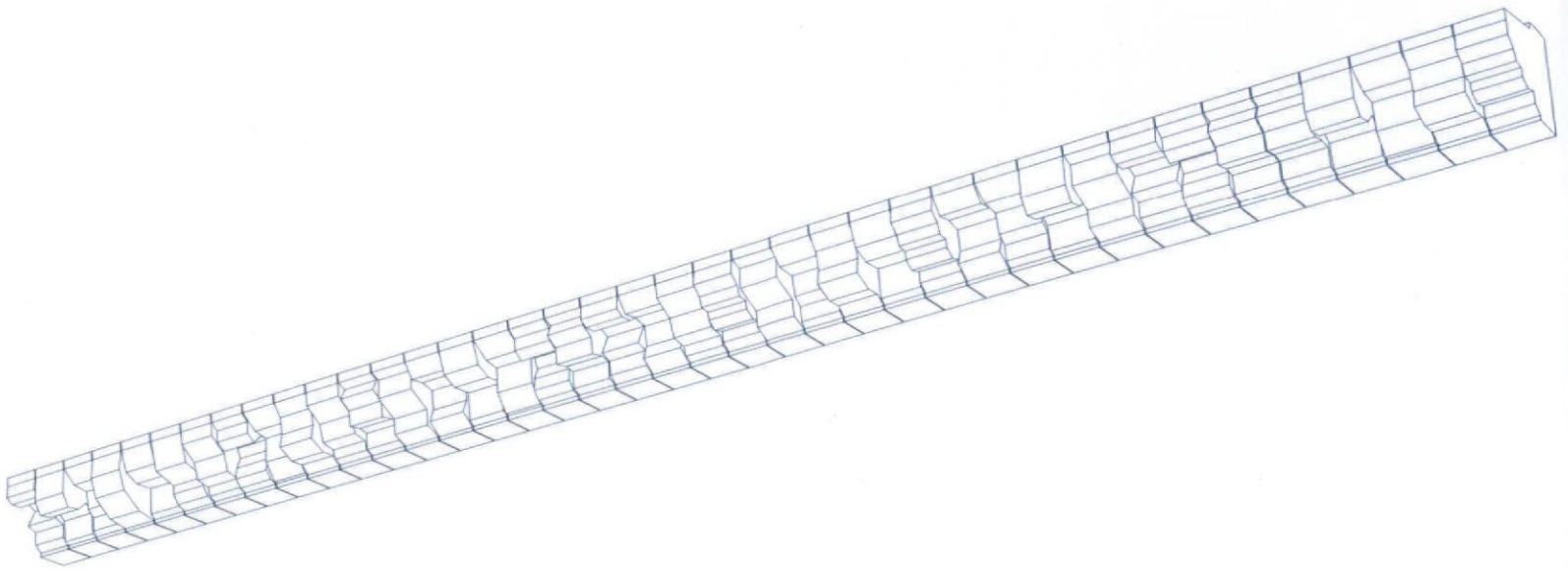


RECASTING TERRACOTTA

From the humble Mesopotamian brick to the exuberant faience tiles of Victorian facades, the crystalline sludge we call clay has played a long and distinguished role in architectural history. Cast, glazed and fired, it is the original mass-produced building material. Today, innovative production technologies are opening a new chapter in the biography of this versatile substance

WILL MCLEAN

Richard Deacon's 39-piece cornice sculpture, each made from a single, hollow glazed clay form



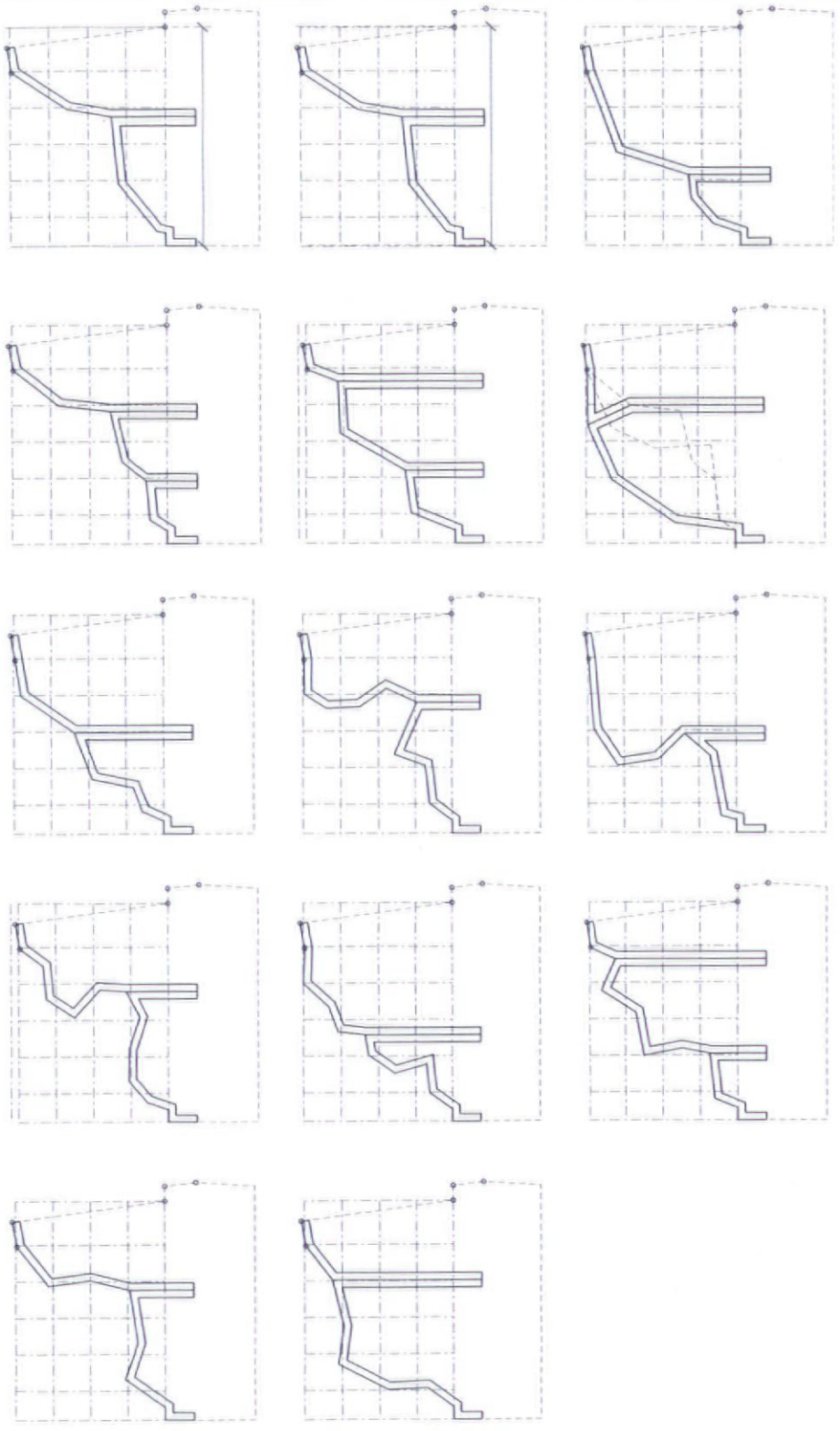
'It is proposed that life on Earth evolved through natural selection from inorganic crystals.'
Alexander Graham Cairns-Smith

Described as 'The Clay Hypothesis', this theory relates to a general notion that 'life arose from clay', which Cairns-Smith elaborates in *Clay Minerals and the Origin of Life*. Cairns-Smith suggests that the aperiodic crystalline structures of clay may encode information by difference and dislocation and are analogous to DNA in that the structure of clay could similarly encode information, replicable through crystal growth under the right conditions.

There is a question as to whether as architects and designers we should be responsible for the ways and means by which a design is made materially manifest. A contemporary tendency in architecture is to turn construction methods and materials into products and legitimise these products through marketing and the conceit of professionalism. The problem with this specialisation is that the imaginative potential of the designer is, de facto, limited by the range of marketed 'products' available, and/or known, to the designer. Clay-based building products are a useful case in point where the repertoire of architect-specified derivatives may extend to tiles: of roofing, flooring, kitchens, bathrooms; or bricks: stock, glazed, engineering etc. In some cases the application of fired clay products may even extend to the extruded rainscreen panels recently seen in various exuberant hues at Renzo Piano's Central Saint Giles building in London. However, these clay 'products' are merely the marketable result of an efficiency chain that issues standard sized or finished products based on imperatives that may not match those of the designer.

While I would not question the usefulness and tactile utility of the metric brick (215mm x 102.5mm x 65mm), the substance of clay is such an extraordinarily plastic material (in its undried and unfired state) that it would be timely to be reminded of the versatility of this hydrated silicate. Faience describes a facade made from glazed ceramic in a centuries-old process imported from Italy that was extremely popular in the UK from the 1860s up until the middle of the last century. The designer was no longer limited to the small clay units of brickwork or the heavyweight craft of the stonemason, but employing the skills of both sculptor and ceramicist and the emergence of the steel frame, a new construction method was formulated. Of the great faience and terracotta buildings, Alfred Waterhouse's Natural History Museum (1881) is an extraordinary model, in both detail, finish and perhaps surprisingly in mass production. While our eyes may be drawn to the idiosyncratic modelled animal detail of this Victorian masterpiece, we are also looking at repeated cast clay elements replacing the logic of individually hewn stones. As a consequence of this proto mass-customisation process, faience became popular as a hardwearing pollution-repellent cladding material for literally hundreds of London Underground stations and as the decorative detail facing of Oscar Deutsch's Odeon cinema chain, designed by Harry Weedon and constructed during the 1920s and '30s.

Architect Eric Parry has produced a number of contemporary buildings employing faience as external cladding material, including the articulated box of the Holburne Museum extension in Bath and the zigzagging couture facade of London's 50 New Bond Street. His most recent project to employ these fired clay building blocks is the St James's Gateway scheme for Piccadilly (scheduled for completion in 2013). Parry, working with sculptor Richard Deacon, has positioned the cornice at the same height as Regency near-neighbours in a measured deferential 'nod'. As a sculptor acquainted with the deft manipulation of matter, Deacon studied and has remade the cornice as a 'chopped-up' performance of 14 variable prismatic forms, each mutated from a single genotypic cross-section, but confined in height, or what Parry described as 'the field of play' to a not inconsiderable 1200mm. In addition, each of these 39 sculptures, extending over 25m, is highly coloured with facsimiles of Deacon's painting, using screen-printed waterslide transfers (decals) in a



Drawing showing all 14 cross-sectional variants of the faience cornice

Artwork is mapped onto each face of the cornice sections

process originally invented for the pottery industry; each facet of the cornice blocks is differently coloured, further emphasising the geometric transformations.

Shaws of Darwen, established in 1897, has produced all of Parry's faience work. Based in the Lancashire countryside, Shaws split their manufacturing between fireclay Belfast sinks and architectural terracotta or faience. Both parts of their business use the clay slip casting process. On a tour of the factory, operations director Andy Hampson explained that clay pellets are mixed with water to form a liquid clay (or slip), which is then poured into plaster moulds. The thixotropy or relative viscosity of the slip in relation to movement is important as the clay slip is piped around the factory to the various manufacturing halls. The mould making and modelling process is vital to both the sink and architectural faience work with all moulds made from plaster. Some of the most skilled work is in the modelling and mould-making studio where 'positives' are handmade or hand-finished before being set in plaster to create the moulds, reusable several times over before some definition is lost. Digital fabrication is also now used in the more speedy production of polystyrene 'positives', a process that can also be used for restoration work, where replacement components are measured, three-dimensionally modelled and quickly milled from foam. Once the two-piece plaster moulds have been produced they are filled with liquid clay slip. In the case of complex architectural forms, plaster columns are used on top of the pour holes to build up a head of pressure ensuring all the internal detail is picked up on the final piece. Typically the clay is left to dry in the mould for approximately two days before being removed from the plaster form where further natural and mechanical drying takes place before the application of glaze (faience) and firing.

The glaze process is a science in itself, with technical manager Anthony Cristoforo explaining how colours, finishes and technical performance are achieved with 'recipes' typically containing metal oxides for various colours and textures. Initially the clay components are sprayed with a first layer of engobe, which acts as an undercoat to improve colour saturation, and then a specific colour glaze. Cristoforo is currently in the process of compiling a new database of glazes, which because of evolving health and safety guidance would not now contain dangerous heavy metals (even including the less than benign uranium), to achieve certain hues and visual effects. The process of application of the glaze is also important for the final finish.

1. Clay slip being poured into a plaster mould, the plaster column helps to build a head of pressure
2. The Belfast sink casting hall, where heavy plaster moulds are held and mechanically manipulated

For the Bond Street project, copper, manganese and iron oxides were hand applied and over-dripped thus the hand of the artist (craftsperson) needs to be the same. This is less of an issue with smooth monotone finishes, although even then a consistent glaze 'recipe' and application procedure has to be maintained to ensure an even colour match. The process of fabrication at Shaws ends in a 'dry lay' where whole sections or in some cases the whole facade of a building is laid out on the ground to check for colour and dimensional consistency. At this stage you can clearly see how geometric complexity, detail and finish are manifest in a family of relatively lightweight, hardwearing and non-standard pieces.

The facade elements to Parry's St James's Gateway project are hollow 30mm thick forms hung off a steel frame, an aesthetic decision as this type of ceramic component has excellent compressive strength and could be used as part of a loadbearing facade. Both the white-glazed, gum-coloured edifice of the Wrigley building and the terracotta mullions of the Monadnock Building in Chicago use faience and terracotta and both were recently restored in part by Shaws. In this instance, the Clay Hypothesis and evolutionary design information (DNA code) is not contained in the molecular crystalline structure of the clay per se, but is revealed in a typology of forms, finishes and surface treatments found in old and new building fragments in a factory yard in the Lancashire hills.

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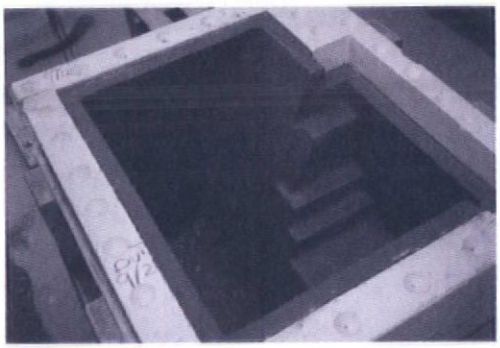

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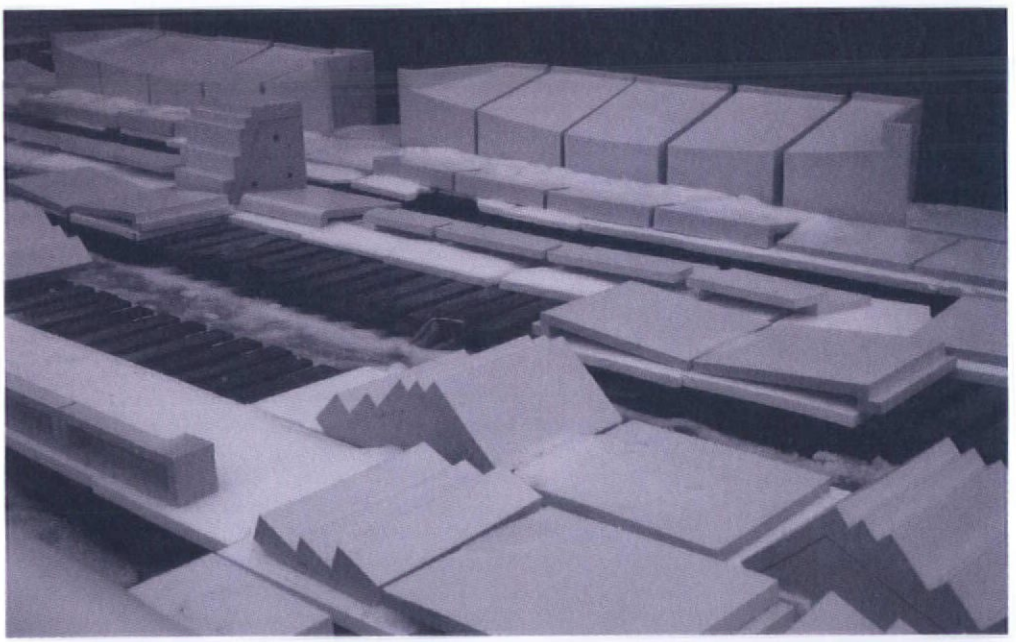

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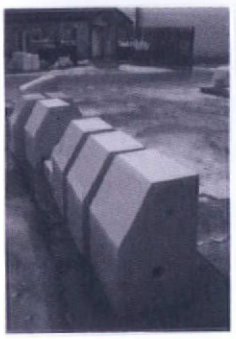

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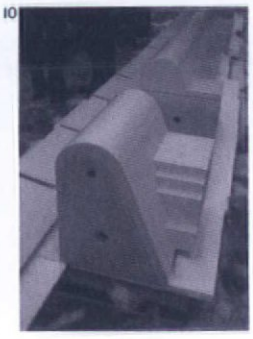

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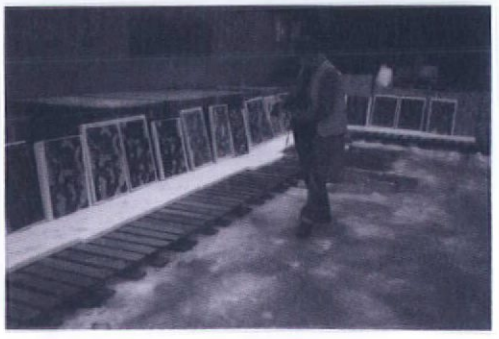


3. Once the clay slip starts to set it shrinks, so the moulds are hand pressed with additional clay
4. Architect Eric Parry tries his hand on the production line
5. A sink being sprayed with engobe
6. Sink variants awaiting the firing process
7. A piece of the St James's Gateway facade ready to extract from the mould
8. Parts of the St James's Gateway facade are dry laid outside to check for colour consistency
9. Pieces of Richard Deacon's cornice sculpture
10. These single complex components are hollow clay castings
11. The artist checks the colour of waterslide transfers that have been fired onto clay panels

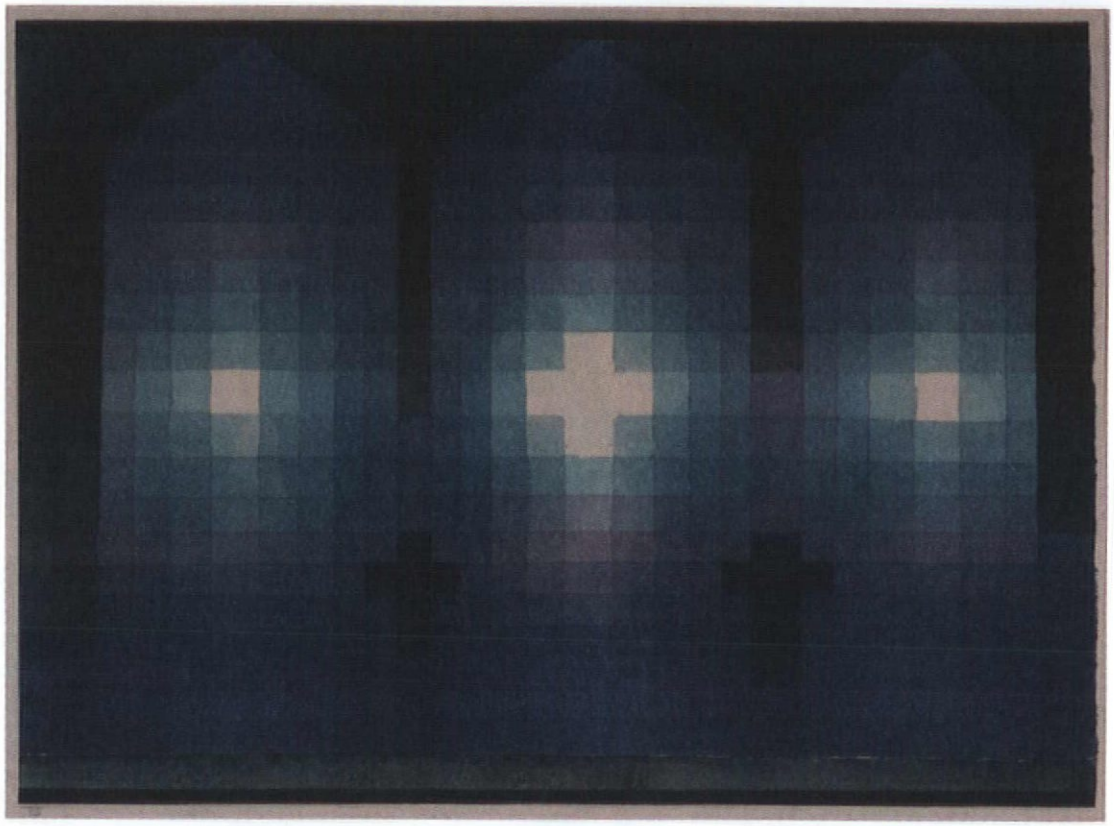
Bauhaus proud

TOM WILKINSON

Bauhaus: Art as Life,
The Barbican, London,
until 12 August

The Bauhaus is everywhere these days. I don't mean that we all live in white voids surrounded (as the familiar truism has it) by the late fruits of Modernism: we haven't gone from the torture chairs of Teutonic socialists to IKEA's kookily-named trinkets without losing much along the way. Rather, it seems we are increasingly obsessed with the Bauhaus as a historical object. There was a prodigious show on the school in Berlin in 2009, which travelled to MoMA the following year, and now the Barbican has got in on the act. As ever, when it comes to the Bauhaus, London is comparatively slow on the uptake. Convincing though the revisionist account of Alan Powers might be in its details, the wider picture remains the same: the Brits didn't really twig Modernism until quite late (our first exhibition dedicated to the Bauhaus was staged at London's Royal Academy in 1968). The ideas of the Bauhaus's leading figures had begun to percolate sometime before the war, not least through the advocacy of the AR's own P Morton Shand, but they met with limited interest at best. This exhibition provides a welcome opportunity to catch up.

So what were the ideas of the Bauhaus? Where did they come from, and why have they come to stand for Modernism en bloc? The Barbican show leaves us to make our own conclusions. Without an explicit curatorial argument, the kaleidoscopic diversity of the artefacts might defy comprehension. Nevertheless, some themes do emerge: textiles, for example, form an intriguing subplot – it is telling that the earlier examples are handwoven and crafty, whereas a later swatch is patterned with typewritten text. The dark subconscious of the school's ludic pedagogy is well represented with puppets by Paul Klee, among others: a revelatory discovery, their creepiness perfectly counterbalances Klee's annoying whimsicality. The social life of the Bauhaus is another persistent theme, but although the boho parties and zany happenings are certainly engaging, they are given too much space. Perhaps the curators thought they illustrated the slightly undercooked thesis of the show's title: 'art as life'. But is this all the idealism of the Bauhauslern amounted to: the opportunity to dress up in tin foil and silly hats? Conversely, the architecture of the Bauhaus tends to disappear. There is only one architectural model on display, of the Dessau building, with other projects represented by photos and contemporary plans.



Above: *Tomb in Three Parts* (1923) by Paul Klee seems at first glance a typical Bauhaus exercise in colour and form. In fact it looks back, through the pixellating lens of geometrical abstraction, to brooding Germanic Romanticism, and owes more to the spirituality of the Suprematists than the machine aesthetic of Lázsló Moholy-Nagy

How to deal with the ruptures and discontinuities of the Bauhaus's history is another big curatorial challenge. The school's major physical transition is marked by a change in level: from the Weimar Bauhaus upstairs to its Dessau reincarnation below. A more significant change is announced by a simple postcard. In 1921, Theo van Doesburg – who had set up a kind of pirate academy on the Bauhaus's doorstep – sent a picture of the school building to a friend, the words 'De Stijl' scrawled across its facade, curiously presaging the building at Dessau where the word emblazoned on the facade would instead be 'Bauhaus'. Doesburg's proximity coincided with a rejection of Expressionism in favour of Constructivist ideas, a rethink marked by the replacement of master Johannes Itten – with his shaved

head, robes and vegetarianism – with Lázsló Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian ex-revolutionary who affected workers' overalls (no less theatrical, in their way, than Itten's get-up). Moholy-Nagy's arrival is announced here by one of his famous 'telephone paintings', abstract compositions owing much to El Lissitzky. Moholy-Nagy, so the story goes, directed a sign painter to create these works by telephone, transforming the role of the artist from creative genius to detached administrator: a Constructivist gambit refreshed by the interposition of communication technology. But the truth is that Moholy-Nagy lied: these paintings were not produced by distant technicians but in his own studio, the myth of telephony concocted to give them a new spin. No matter, the story is a good one and doesn't lose much from being untrue. What is more significant is that these supposedly dehumanised paintings with their numerical titles were created by hand, like everything else in the Bauhaus. For all the technophilic rhetoric ('art and technology: a new unity', as Gropius put it), at this stage the Bauhaus was still struggling with the same problems that had beset its English predecessor, Morris & Co. You can't change the modern world by making handcrafted objects too expensive to reach a mass market, and consequently the Modernists were in this period – just like Morris before them – ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich, even if by now swinish luxury looked more like the home of a vegetarian bacteriologist than some vegetal nightmare of medievalist psychedelia.

Indeed, it was not until Gropius left that the school first turned a profit. Cowed by accusations of 'cultural bolshevism', he departed in 1928 to pursue his own architectural practice. He was replaced by vocal Marxist Hannes Meyer, and ironically it was under Meyer that Bauhaus wallpaper (the catalogue for which is included in the show), fully mass-produced, finally began to rake in the cash. Perhaps it isn't so surprising that a Marxist should have a firmer grasp of economic realities than his romantic anti-capitalist predecessor. But Meyer's stewardship – which also produced the most interesting Bauhaus building, the trade union school in Bernau – is underplayed here. Yes, it was brief (he was thrown out for political reasons and replaced by the opportunistic Mies), but Meyer came up with the school's most successful answer to the question posed by this show's title: art can only merge with life when it's available to everyone. Tragically, his tenure also coincided with the crisis of the Bauhaus – the real reason we are still talking about the school today. For it was the political assault on the school in those last terrible years of the Weimar Republic that led to the dispersal of its members, and with them, its ideas.

Above: Student Iwao Yamawaki's photo of the Dessau Bauhaus reveals the influence of the 'New Vision' pioneered by Rodchenko and filtered to the school through Moholy-Nagy

Ecological logic

ROBERTO BOTTAZZI

AA-AD Symposium: Ecological Design Research and Computation, Architectural Association, London, 30 April

These are challenging times for architecture. As existing paradigms are being eroded by external factors – be it the economic crisis or the impressive rise of mobile media – the profession seems wandering in search of a solid ground from which to rethink itself and its production. Emerging countries are studied as potential sources of new ideas, while current theories quickly mutate as their shortcomings become apparent.

A good example of this is the current pejorative use of the word sustainability in architecture which, until not long ago, was instead confidently waved by engineers and architects alike as a fundamental paradigm for design. Today we feel more comfortable with broader notions such as ecology; that is, we prefer more expanded concepts that allow us to think of these issues in more cultural or even metaphorical terms, beyond the more immediate technical challenges they may pose. The idea of expanding previously enclosed fields to make them more permeable to each other's discourses is perhaps a symptom of the profession's quest for a new form of synthesis which may inspire both theory and practice.

It is along these lines that the *AA-AD Symposium: Ecological Design Research and Computation* took place at the end of April at the Architectural Association in London. The day-long event, supported by the AA School's Masters Programme in Sustainable Environmental Design, was intended as an expansion of the ideas and projects featured in the November/December issue of *Architectural Design* themed: *'Experimental Green Strategies: Redefining Ecological Design Research'*.

Green strategies are an intensely debated topic that has quickly attracted many researchers giving rise to a variegated landscape of positions. For instance, Rachel Armstrong and Neri Oxman suggest that a truly ecological architecture should be based on living materials that will literally change their behaviour according to external stimuli. The like-minded people gathered for the AA symposium, however, devised more immediate and broader solutions the profession can implement without taking extreme measures: these are the practical and conceptual tools we have to analyse and design our built environment.

All interventions from both academics and practitioners were unified by a common – but not always achieved – goal to widen the debate on environmental design so

as to move it beyond mere efficiency criteria and to enrich it with more cultural and humanistic connotations which may impact design in many and possibly unpredictable ways. At the core of this challenge lies the notion of representation: what are we talking about when we talk about environments? How can we map and encode them to turn them into productive tools for design?

The opening paper by Simos Yannas clearly set the tone for the challenges ahead. His idea to decouple design from purely mechanical preoccupations freed up space for more user-centred design (not a new field of research per se, but green design often overlooks users' cultural practices to concentrate on the efficiency of mechanical systems). Digital tools as well also hinder this endeavour as they are still not conceived to compute both quantitative (metrics) and qualitative (people) parameters; as a result generative and simulation tools have only a poor correspondence and thus limit the effectiveness of designers' decisions.

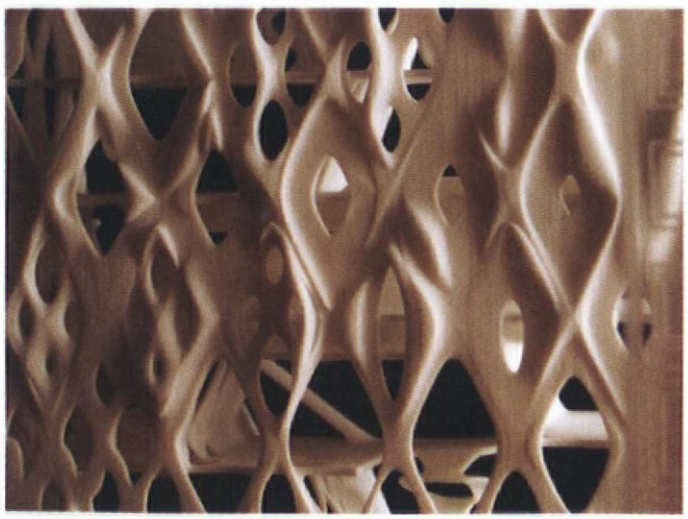
Moreover, buildings conceived this way would also have to perform differently; they should be more dynamic and flexible, allowing people effectively to alter internal and external environments.

Robert Aish – the renowned Autodesk software engineer, creator of important early parametric digital packages such as Generative Components – continued this line of investigation by analysing the relation between computer scripting languages and innovation. In a concise and enthusiastic presentation, Aish explored the relation between constraints and freedom in the design process by tracking the steps through which languages develop. He was quick to dismiss any description of design processes that did not account for intuition and playfulness to then urge architects to move the discussion on green strategies beyond both superficial decoration and pure functionality.

Aish explained how languages are cultural constructs based on executable abstractions. They must be intuitive and abstract so as to reward unpredictable applications which are at the core of their survival. As the presentation unfolded you could not help but think of the dogmatic formulas of Parametricism or the extreme user-friendliness of Apple products as the objects of Aish's critique. He concluded his presentation by quoting pioneering American computer scientist Alan Perlis who said that 'if a language is not changing the way we think it is not worth learning it'. Again, behind the issues of Green strategies a broader agenda was unfolding.

What the symposium as a whole suggested very clearly is that the future of architecture will be more and more about processes and procedures. However, this will not be a technical issue. Technology, more precisely the exponential growth of computing power able to sense and compute ever-larger data sets, is only part of a larger cultural transformation which strives towards a holistic, or ecological, account of reality. This is no small transformation: if the first part of the symposium concentrated on the conceptual challenge this presents, in the afternoon session large offices such as Aedas, Atelier 10 and Foster + Partners showed what kind of buildings will emerge out of this transformation. The second part of the symposim was not always as convincing as the first, perhaps unwittingly highlighting the profound and potentially fertile conundrum architecture is facing.

On the one hand, architecture as a stable, permanent shelter fulfils a primary need which will only grow in the future; on the other, the tenets of design are progressively being eroded by an equally growing demand for dynamic, interactive structures at odds with any traditional definition of architecture. If computers can easily deal with complexity, time and transformation, buildings cannot. It is perhaps for this reason that ecological design has embraced process-based designs rather than stylistic approaches. However, no conceptual revolution can be claimed without a parallel stylistic innovation. Without a subtle mediation between processes and forms, between green technologies and cultural values, the agenda of green design may lose its radical impact on architecture and be relegated to a technical requirement to simply satisfy. That would be tremendous missed opportunity.



Below: Structural efficiency is transformed into pure decoration by Julcsi Futo's conceptual project *Ornament* (2009). Based on the design of the Wellington Bomber, this melted form illustrates software engineer Robert Aish's argument that formal languages must be malleable if they are to be fecund

Body of evidence

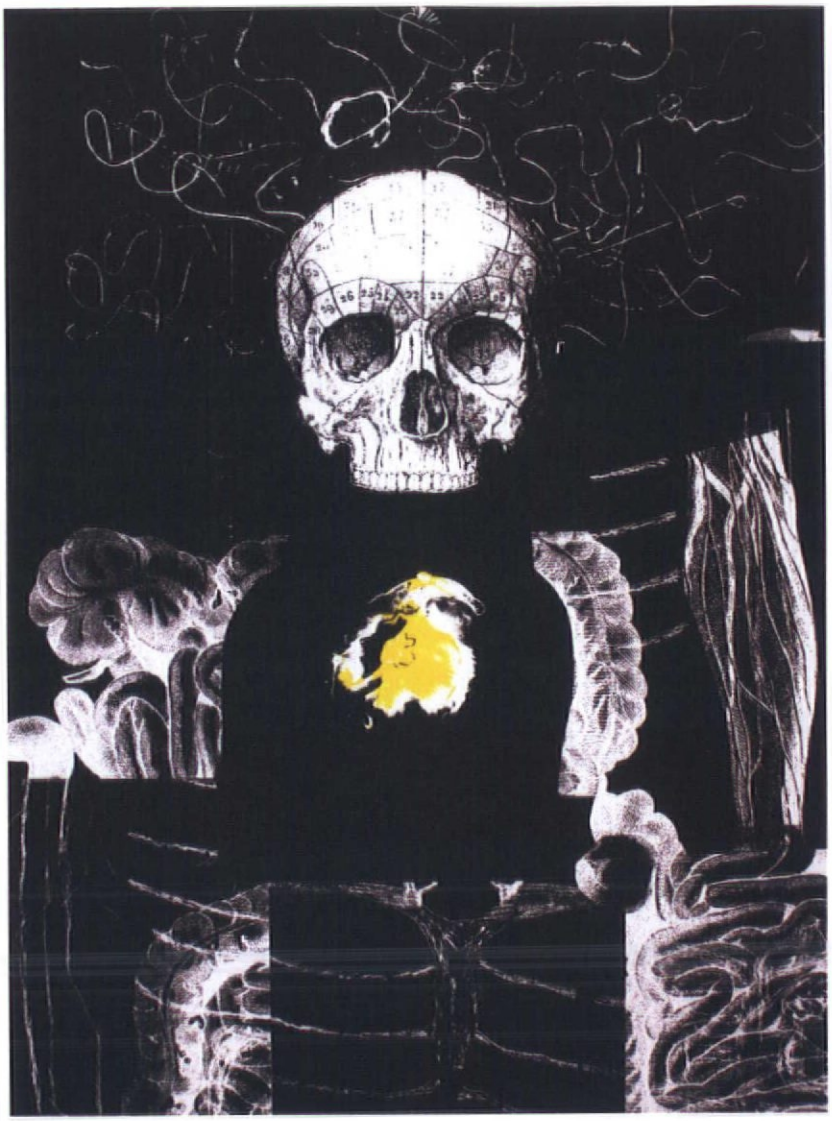
JOSEPH DEANE

BETWEEN: Embodiment and Identity, Inigo Rooms, Somerset House East Wing, London, until 30 June

Jean-Paul Sartre once stated that Marx's originality lay in the fact that he demonstrated that 'being' is irreducible to knowledge – an assertion that, once properly understood, perfectly describes the divide between the sciences (which seek to pursue knowledge and render truths in quantifiable terms) and the humanities (which might be more inclined to argue for the persistence of vagaries). *BETWEEN: Embodiment and Identity* takes as its subject such infinite – and perhaps ultimately unanswerable – disputes.

Deep in the East Wing of Somerset House, the curators from King's College London have gathered a series of contemporary works exploring how subjective identity has become embodied in a powerful landscape of cutting edge anatomical imagery. Working in collaboration with neuroscientist Richard Wingate of the college's Medical Research Council Centre for Developmental Neurobiology, the exhibition 'celebrates the richness of scientific research and presents works which collectively challenge technology's entitlement to mediate form.'

The sophistication of medical imagery has led to prolific advances in the diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders over the past decade, but how such imagery has affected our understanding of the 'self' is something that has been largely omitted from philosophical discourse. Does such technology have the capacity to formalise 'being', for instance, with all the subjective



Left: Susan Aldworth, lithograph from the series *Reassembling the Self*. Her works based on scans of brain lesions attempt to translate the specialised visual language of neurology into a more universal tongue
Below: Andrew Carnie's installation *Seized: Out of this World* portrays the liminal space of temporal lobe epilepsy

nuances that such a term implies? With each artist presenting their own critique on the proliferation of medical imagery into the ontological debate, the exhibition forces us to address these very questions.

Packed neatly into the Inigo Rooms, the work covers an impressive array of subject matter within such a modest space; with artists Andrew Carnie, Karen Ingham and Susan Aldworth collectively examining diverse phenomena – apoptosis (a 'cell suicide mechanism'); brain lesions; out-of-body experiences; the pluripotency of stem cells; Geschwind syndrome – through the media of print, animation, film, lithography, photography and painting. Having gained experience with both patients and doctors at hospitals and medical institutions across the country, each artist attempts to address both the clinical and emotive aspects of such conditions.

In some cases this is achieved quite simply. In *Variance*, Karen Ingham overlays ethereal brain scans onto photographic portraits. As we study the images we begin to ask how the scans (which show the specific brain activity that indicates a 'thought') give us either a better insight into the subject and their personality or, perhaps more intriguingly, enlighten us further as to what that thought might be?

Other works convey similar tensions. Made up entirely of cerebral angiograms, the Rorschach-esque collages of Susan Aldworth are at first glance strikingly beautiful, but we soon learn that they in fact depict brain lesions that have resulted in irrevocable changes in a patient's personality. Herein lies the power of the exhibition: regardless of the accuracy of contemporary technology, much of the medical imagery remains illegible to the layperson, and so such images remain formal abstractions. It thus becomes the role of the artist to communicate their subjective significance through the more accessible (though far less specific) techniques of metaphor and emotive suggestion.

As one might expect from an exhibit curated by a department of neuroscience, the works tend to reify the persistent Cartesian belief that 'mind' is the product of the brain alone. While many progressive neurologists such as Antonio Damasio and Lambros Malafouris are questioning the integral relationship between mind, body, and even external artefacts, it would have been germane to see more works that attest to such alternative lines of enquiry.

That being said, there are a few pieces within the exhibition that allude to such interests. Ingham's short film, *Narrative Remains*, takes autopsy transcripts from the records of London's Hunterian Museum and presents them alongside semi-fictional narratives told from the perspective of the preserved organs. Such curious accounts not only serve to exemplify the ways in which our environment forms assemblages with specific parts of the body, but perhaps more intriguingly how these, in turn, have lives of their own that contribute explicitly to the subjective personality.

Having worked with neuropsychologist Paul Broks in his study of temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE), Andrew Carnie similarly extends the idea of identity to include the somatic realm. His installation, *Seized: Out of this World*, is an immersive piece that subtly portrays the shifting sense of body and space experienced by patients during their fits. The possessive use of 'their' is critical here, because Carnie wishes to examine the deeply individual nature of such occurrences. For while the fits are disruptive and often highly distressing, some people with TLE have been known to refuse methods of available treatment because they have become such an inherent part of their identity. The fits themselves apparently create a liminal space in which another, sometimes highly creative subject, emerges.

Set alongside fascinating medical imagery, such emotive insights and metaphors make for an engrossing exhibition. While it is neither as overtly informative as the Wellcome Collection's current *Brains*

exhibition, nor as wry in its delivery as David Shrigley's work at the Hayward Gallery, *BETWEEN: Embodiment and Identity* instead chooses to direct its attention keenly towards us: the subject. In doing so it demands an acute level of introspection that is found in exhibitions perhaps less frequently than it should be, and as such should be welcomed all the more.

☛ A cross-disciplinary workshop in June aims to open up discourse between the artists, scientists and the general public. www.kcl.ac.uk/newsevents

Kept in suspense

DORIS LOCKHART

Untitled sculpture by Joel Shapiro, 23 Savile Row, London, permanent addition to a building by Eric Parry

With stolen bronze art works being rendered into liquid metal at an alarming rate in the current economic meltdown, town councils, private patrons and collectors, architects and landscape designers may think twice about installing such works of art out in the open where they are unprotected and vulnerable. When, 10 years ago, Eric Parry won the competition to design a new office building on the site of the 55-year-old former English Heritage headquarters, he wanted an important work of sculpture to be an integral part of the design, and his brief provided a solution to the problem of protecting against the current spate of thefts before they had even begun.

His choice of artist for the building's Savile Row facade was American Joel Shapiro who created an anthropomorphic abstract form that is sited above ground level in a recess, a contemporary move reminiscent of the positioning of figures of saints and worthies on the exterior walls of Renaissance churches.

Parry started his architectural studies in Newcastle, where the neighbouring art school that had nurtured the groundbreaking work of, among others, Richard Hamilton and Paula Rego, exerted a strong influence on all the university students. He then spent two years at the Royal College of Art and, after a foundation course at Hornsey, got his Part 2 at the AA where he encountered a rich mix of ideas from architects such as Koolhaas, Cook and, especially, Dalibor Vesely. While studying architecture, Parry worked for five years as a night guard at the Serpentine Gallery, enjoying in the small hours a profound acquaintance with the works he was protecting – works, for example, by Henry Moore and Giacometti. He remembers one precious moment when there was a knock on one of the Serpentine's windows at 10pm and he looked up to see the pale face of curator David Sylvester who asked to come in so he could move one of the Moore sculptures he'd installed earlier in the day, 'just a bit'.

Given such familiarity with a different form of art from his own, Parry has never felt the distrust that can exist between the architect briefed to include a painting or sculpture in a building's design and the artist chosen to provide the work. His ease with the visual arts also meant that, having seen a show of Shapiro's work at Tim Taylor's London gallery, Parry knew instantly that he wanted to work with him, that he was, as he puts it, 'a guy who really understands anthropomorphic, rectilinear forms in architectural space'.

Parry's architectural space is a six-storey building designed as a steel frame and self-supporting Portland stone structure that does away with independent columns and provides 15m spans internally. The 51m-wide Savile Row facade comprises two 18m wings flanking a 15m recess backed by a glazed wall that rises from a metal and glass canopy signalling the main entrance to the building. What appear from the outside to be conventional punched window openings establish a play of solid and transparent surfaces, different planes and travelling shadows that frame the central recess and create a 'stage' for the figure suspended there. Cast in bronze, Shapiro's *Untitled* artwork is held by steel cables normally used as boat hawsers, manufactured and supplied by British Ocean Racing, and positioned precisely by engineers so that its more than two tons of weight are evenly distributed. The figure appears to be made up of attenuated railroad ties bearing the marks of rough-grained, timber casting forms, but assembled to create an impression of elegantly extended human limbs.

It is the artist's first and, to date, only suspended figure and joins a worldwide group of commissions, including installations for Freed's Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, and the yet to be built US Consulate in Guangzhou. Initially, Parry's D2 clients worried that the sculpture marking their building in such a dramatic way might be seen as an Icarus figure falling from a great height. Having negotiated what he describes as the 'straitjacket' of restrictions and entrenched notions in such a sensitive and traditional area, Parry convinced his concerned clients that Shapiro's figure is more likely to be

Below: Not falling but flying – Joel Shapiro's bronze sculpture occupies a space both architectural and public, like a medieval saint in its niche on a church facade

seen as floating, even ascending.

Certainly it appears to this onlooker to be leaping exuberantly both up and out over the roadway and is very much 'there', but, so perfect is the dynamic between the building's structure and the sculpted form, it doesn't disturb the tranquil fabric of the street. Shapiro describes Parry's tight brief as particularly interesting because it forced him to create a work that, as he puts it, is 'on the boundary between public and private space', a position it could never have occupied had it been on the ground.

So next time you visit your tailor for a new suit, wander down to 23 Savile Row to see another example of a good fit. You'll spot it easily because it's right across from the West End Central Police Station.

Un-clogging architecture

ARAM MOORADIAN

Young Journals Symposium, Cooper Union School of Architecture, New York, 19 April 2012

Magazines, zines, pamphlets, journals, free-sheets, papers, posters and flyers – just some of the formats for the dissemination of architectural conversation that seem to be exploding. With the *Archizines* exhibition at the AA last autumn (now showing at the Storefront in New York) and not to mention the recent publication of *Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196X – 197X*, pamphlet architecture is back.

The *Young Journals Symposium* at the Cooper Union this April brought together three of the up and coming zines in and around New York City – *Clog*, *Another Pamphlet* and *Pidgin*. Chaired by Cynthia Davidson, editor of *Log* and the founder of Any Corporation, the symposium covered a number of pertinent questions: why here? Why now? And to what end?

The three magazines have very different approaches and each answered these questions in a series of short presentations. The first up was *Another Pamphlet*, a small and 'deliberately anachronistic' publication with a radical approach to format. With a minuscule circulation of only a few hundred – photocopied and posted in a manila envelope to a loyal readership

– *Another Pamphlet* was the underdog of the trio. With contributions limited to 300 words and one image (a strikingly similar format to blog posts), the magazine 'holds attention because it is physical,' its editors proclaimed.

All three of the magazines appeared to be reactions to digital media. *Clog* opened up their presentation by quantifying the overwhelming number of daily posts on architectural blogs and websites. '*Clog* formed in order to slow things down,' said Kyle May, its editor-in-chief. Unlike *Another Pamphlet*, with its small and insular following, *Clog*'s editors described a stance that was deliberately approachable. 'We wanted a holistic and accessible dialogue with a focus on content.' Grabbing the attention of those outside architecture appears to have paid off. Only three issues in, *Clog* has already expanded to a circulation in the thousands. '*Clog* was a reaction to the idea that architects are always talking to other architects – forgetting clients, contractors, users, graphic designers – when we say holistic, we're trying to bring some of those other people into the discussion.' But covering topics like Apple isn't the only way that the magazine does this. To expand on the conversations in the text, *Clog* hosts events to open up the discussions, bringing new life to the topics.

Pidgin, the oldest of the young trio, rather than being a 'gateway drug' to architecture, has the luxury of being born out of Princeton's heavy academic environment. 'The urgency for us was to get a slice through the content inside and outside of Princeton,' its editor stated. 'We felt claustrophobic.' Indeed what all of the magazines had in common was a frustration with

Above: Architectural zine *Clog* has been resoundingly successful in its search for a mass audience, and has a circulation in the thousands
Below: *Another Pamphlet*, on the other hand, is mailed to a select readership of hundreds in anonymous manila envelopes

more established journals and magazines. *Pidgin* described themselves as a constantly evolving 'messy thing', which allowed readers to enjoy the physical object of the magazine, something mainstream publications have lost with unpleasant paper and too many advertisements. The 'zine argument appears to be that if the object is great, then maybe the web won't be so seductive after all.

The questions of authorship, accountability and the role of the editor are brought to light in these young journals in a way that the internet has yet to capture. *Another Pamphlet*'s system of listing authors apart from the contributions, allowing readers to guess who has produced what, is an ideological, if not confusing, stance on these issues. Indeed *Clog*'s deliberate attempt to reduce the number of images and to expand the margins of the text is an attempt to focus on the content – a trend seen with other magazines such as *AA Files*, which under the recent editorship of Tom Weaver has removed images from its cover.

The advantage of printed material is that it forces editors to cut down and select. While most of the magazines are open to submissions, their content is very much curated. This allows editors to place younger contributors next to more established ones – an ambition supported by *Log*, which has open submissions; *Another Pamphlet*, which obscures the authors of its content; and the AA's *Fulcrum*, which with its two column format poses young authors next to established ones.

It is no surprise that a great number of pamphlets have emerged in the past few years. With the evolution of the internet the generation responsible for these papers has grown up with an acute awareness of how too much information isn't always better information. The *Young Journals Symposium* provided a glimpse into how editors are dealing with this problem. The challenge for these journals will be to defend printed matter in the digital age and to decide whether there are solutions that work with the internet rather than relying on anachronistic or potentially gimmicky ones. But without a doubt, they are proving to be an exciting and relevant contribution to architectural discourse.

PEDAGOGY

Sheffield School of Architecture, England

MATTHEW BARAC

Huddled over a laptop on the sofa, Kathy announces: 'The leisure centre emailed a five-day pass! If we go down after lunch they'll donate a football too!' AJ, who is behind the counter ostentatiously making an iced coffee for a customer, is too absorbed in his task to listen. Evidently life as a barista is what he has been missing all these years. But Shanks and Rebecca look up from their work; bits of cardboard, a scalpel, masking tape and shiny fragments of coloured foil litter the table. 'Yeahhh!', grins Shanks, 'that's our raffle prize for tonight.' The students, who have occupied the LoveEaston café as their base for a month of local consultation, are planning a 'food fuddle': part Somali cookery class, part 'pot-luck' dinner, and part neighbourhood fête.

This combination of anthropology and activism – of students immersed in a community to learn about processes of urban development – is typical of Sheffield's 'Live Projects', a programme of public-facing activities in which all Master of Architecture (RIBA Part II) fifth- and sixth-year students take part. Since 1999 the programme has run over 100 real-life projects, some of which have led to design strategies and others on to built works. All emphasise practical involvement in making architecture – whether that architecture is a building, a development process, or a social formation designed to engage in urban change.

Placing practice at the heart of teaching and research is, according to practitioner-academic Sarah Wigglesworth – a professor at Sheffield for 14 years – 'a central plank of what the school is about'. More than just a case of connecting learning to the world of work, this stems from an impulse to take academia out of its ivory tower and into the street. 'Outreach' has long been a key concern for Prue Chiles, founder of Live Projects, and it informed her decision to establish the school's Bureau of Design Research which created, through its practice-focused initiatives, a productive channel of communication between the university and its host city.

This innovation led, says Wigglesworth, to the growth of a core debate between practice and research at the school, one that operates primarily as a critique of architecture: of its thinking, its language, and of the inherited image, exemplified by Howard Roark,

1. A detail of Rebecca Hinkley's 'manifesto' model of her school for NEETs, describing how the project encourages relationships to form between diverse user groups through their active engagement in performance
2. Hinkley's sixth-year project developed out of a series of performative group surveys in the derelict streets of Liverpool, including playing parachute games with passers-by
3. A Live Projects group working with the public to create an integrated vision for the Park-Ride sites circling the city of York

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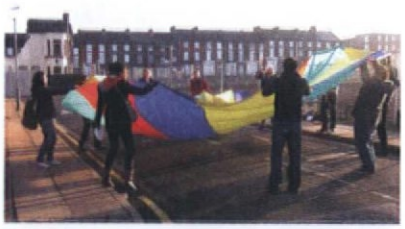

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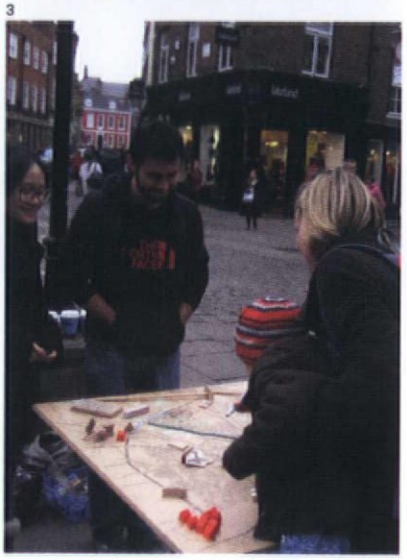

of the architect as lone creator. In *The Fountainhead*, Roark fights against, rather than participating with, the philistine public in order to protect his architectural ideals. This critique now informs every aspect of the school, not least Live Projects. According to Carolyn Butterworth, Live Projects coordinator, the programme offers students a tangible way to engage with the ordinary world of human problems that is so often edited out of paper architecture. Students learn, she says, 'how to work in a group, negotiate with clients and stakeholders, stage participatory events, think strategically, manage resources, and communicate verbally and visually'.

For her final year project, student Rebecca Hinkley designed a school in a deprived Liverpool neighbourhood for NEETs, an acronym for young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training. Connecting with this group, variously described as 'disaffected' and a 'lost generation', demanded creative strategies, so Rebecca invented a parachute game – a 'performative method of engagement'. She and a group of participants played with a parachute to make balloon shapes and shadows on a derelict street, creating a street-theatre atmosphere. 'Passers-by were intrigued by this unexpected sight and stood watching; some even joined in with us.'

Another student, Phil Etchells, developed a centre in Wakefield for the repair and resale of broken household items. His project reimagined the notion of 'new town' as a community built on bottom-up decisions rather than top-down planning. He drew the idea of recycling into a narrative about a better kind of economy, one in which our habit of spending on things we throw away is moderated by awareness of the costs, environmental and otherwise, of landfill. Both projects are steered by a concern for architecture's social implications.

4. Phil Etchells' sixth-year project design for a facility in which broken and obsolete items are turned from a waste product into a resource through the acts of repair and resale. Here Etchells' pencil rendering illustrates the entrance to the building
5. An exploded programmatic axonometric from the project which aims to propose new and relevant building types that build on an existing landfill site near Wakefield

Such conviction is certainly motivated by a desire to 'give something back', but the projects do more than that. By bringing diverse groups and stakeholders into dialogue with architectural processes, they raise awareness. They provide opportunities to not only learn about popular interpretations of urban change but also to show the public out there something of how good design can change their lives – of design's capacity, as Wigglesworth puts it, to add value by 'bringing the world together in a way that puts people at the centre of it'.

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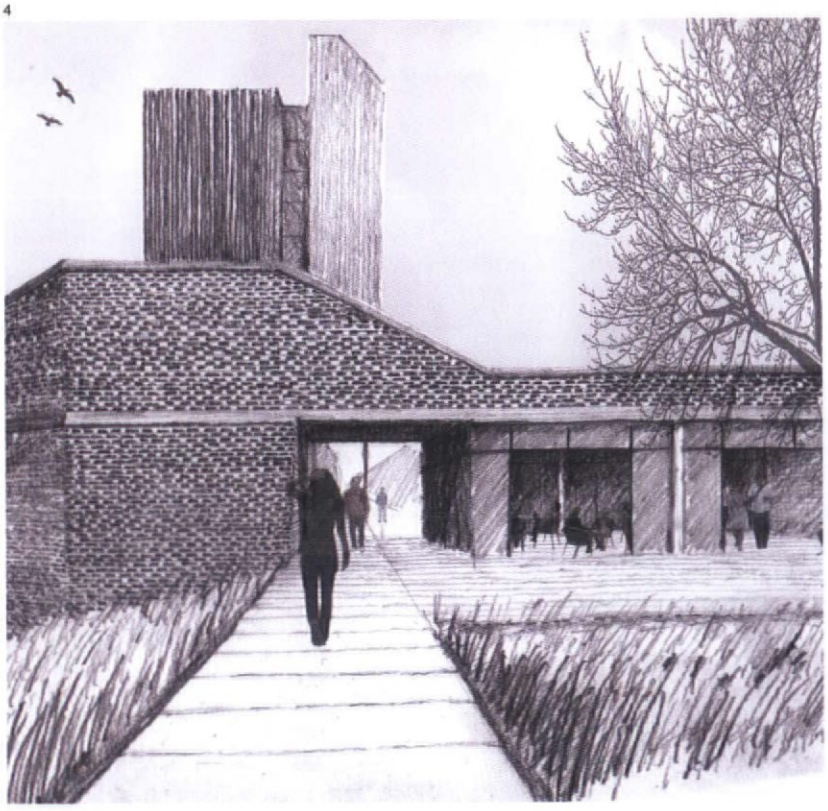

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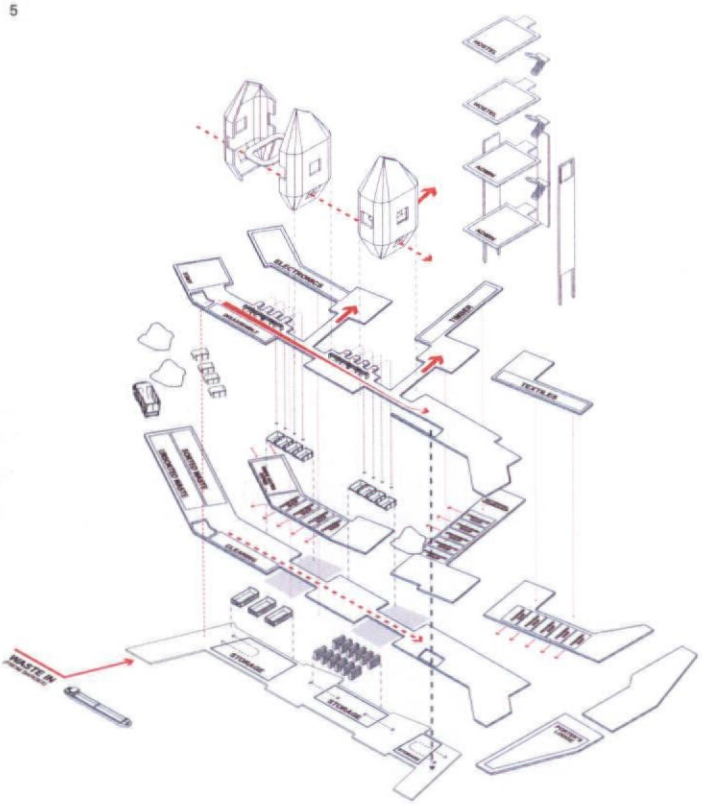


REPUTATIONS

Alvar Aalto

HARRY CHARRINGTON

Alvar Aalto was pretty sanguine about his reputation, citing the sentimentality of foreign critics evaluating his work as part of some 'wholesome Nordic sanity', as well as the gullibility of his countrymen in believing and repeating such assessments. Aalto was well aware of the paradox that while his work was venerated for its sense of place, that place was based on what Roger Connah has neatly phrased an 'expediency of inexactitude' that willed his buildings apart from the commonplace of his actual practice. Yet if the character of his achievements is separated from his reputation, Aalto represents an important link between architectural excellence and the everyday.

Firstly, Aalto's environments have endured as thriving, inhabited places that welcome the processes of ageing and weathering. Buildings such as the Baker House Dormitory at MIT (1946–49) are still beautifully fit for purpose, while projects such as the Rautatalo Office Building (1951–55) in central Helsinki, and suburban environments such as the Jyväskylä University Campus (1951–60) are typical of an architecture that reflects on art as a second nature, in opposition to the Modernist idea that a building can be conceived or experienced in isolation.

Secondly, unlike almost all his international peers, Aalto was able to work at home, building out of the nuances of what was there. Spread over six decades, Aalto's buildings address an extraordinary range of situations, from the brittle and divided First Republic that existed in Finland after Independence and the bloody Civil War of 1918, to the united but vulnerable post-war Second Republic, along with its emerging consumer culture.

Thirdly, Aalto and his atelier developed a form of artistic practice with a genius for contingency that allowed the particularities of social and physical ecology, brief, budget and materials to inform each other and the project. This approach enabled Aalto to build well, and at the same time prolifically, in response to the complexities of modernity. Aalto's atelier completed over four hundred projects in response to myriad briefs, and for every Villa Mairea there were copious others in housing, healthcare and education, plus warehouses, factories, lending libraries, etc.

Aalto insisted his work was functional, but by this he did not mean reductively mechanistic (*Sachlich*), but a purposive intention (*Zweckmässigkeit*) that forms a setting for, and frames, human activity. A staircase can be just functional, or – as so many of Aalto's projects display – a structure that binds buildings and topography, conditions experience, and acts as a place for social encounters.

As early as 1935, Aalto spoke of an 'extended rationalism' that included the uncertainties of the human condition, and in his writings he espoused a consistent theme of reconciliation. Social spaces that might encourage socially beneficial forms of behaviour are placed at the heart of his projects, whether they are asked for or not, potentially reconciling them with the life of the city, town or commune. These include the piazza at the centre of the otherwise banal offices and shops of the Rautatalo, and the integrating of the National Pensions Institute into the urban tissue of Helsinki.

Aalto understood our experience of the environment to be primarily empathetic, not visual, and he designed to sway, not direct. In his most famous essay, 'Architettura e arte concreta', Aalto reaffirmed the writer Yrjö Hirn's conception of how art is not solely cognitive, but an experience that engages our entire body. It is this understanding that makes the ambience of Aalto's works so imperceptibly engaging. While photographs may pick out individual architectural gestures or particular details, the buildings themselves are low-key; just enough.

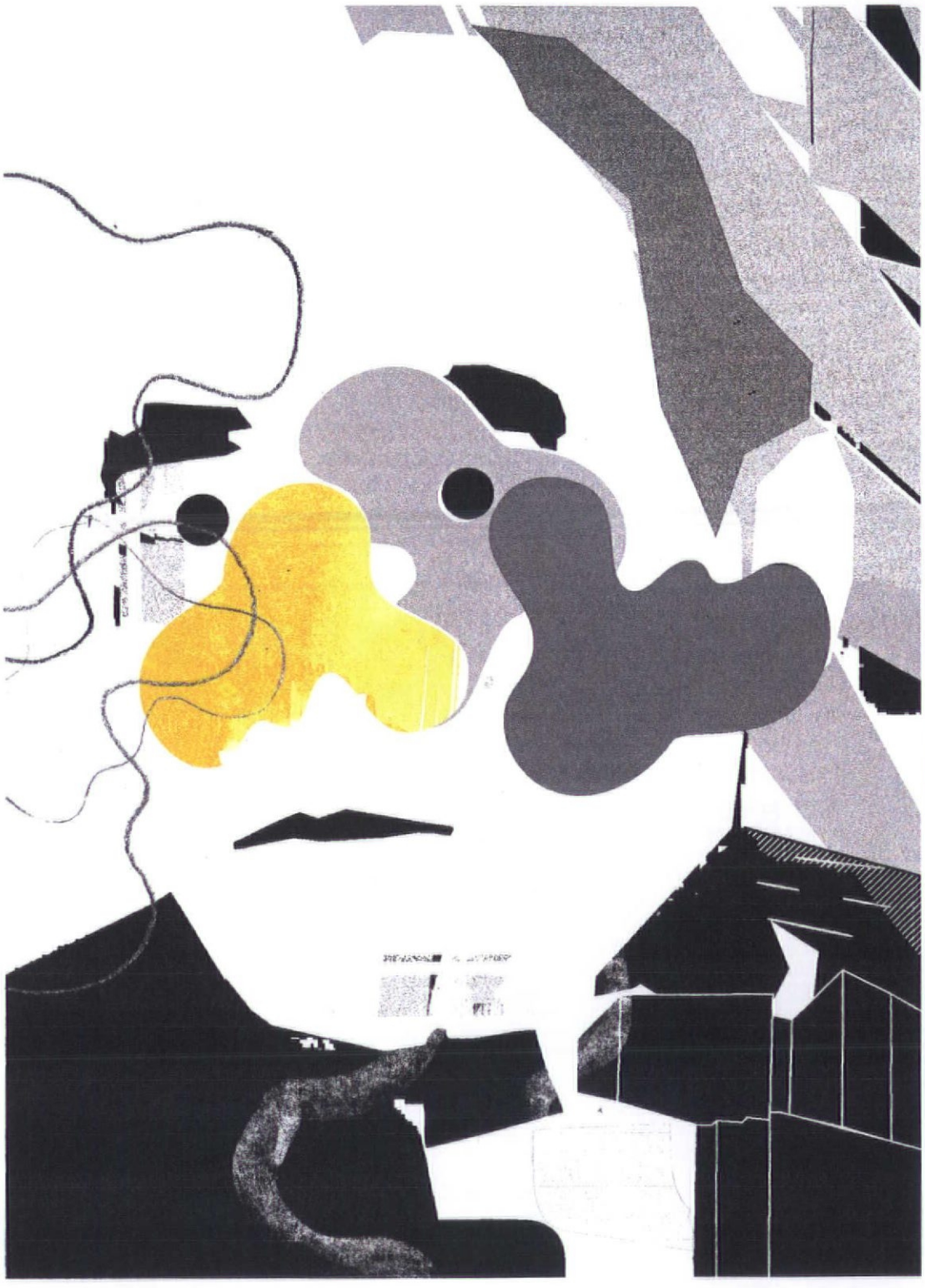
> 'While photographs may pick out particular details, the buildings themselves are low key; just enough'

The essay also describes a process Aalto calls 'child-like' in which he was free to play without preconceptions, and could assemble 'a maze of possibilities' into a cohesive design. Like a child playing in an unfamiliar room, an idea is not thwarted by the lack of any one thing, but is brought into being through whatever is at hand. This approach to design permits contingencies and fortuities to participate in 'the slow construction of the narrative'. Equally, free play leads to a synthesis in which design becomes an informed instinct; to use Hirn's terms, Aalto's designing was as intuitive as a trapeze artist performing, where rationalising the act would be fatal. It is this performance that fires his work way beyond any empirical dullness.

Playfulness also formed the basis of Aalto's representation, where from his first sketch he determined to keep the ambiguity of his ideas alive. Aalto made a series of impasto paintings from the 1940s onwards, and while the paintings are not especially good, they explore what he called 'the mental image and [its] material implementation'. His overlaying lines in soft 6B pencil elucidate a suggestion of form and a continuous contour of building and landscape. Orthogonal drawings and large-scale models check and refine ideas, but Aalto happily called the building site the largest model of all, and would change things even as they emerged from the ground.

Despite hubristic denials, Aalto also readily collaborated with others, and his career is full of concepts engendered through the visceral spark and nuance of conversation. Aalto sought out progressive practices from friends abroad, including Frederick Kiesler, Fernand Léger, and László Moholy-Nagy.

Alvar Aalto
1898-1976
Education
Helsinki University of Technology
Key buildings
Villa Mairea, Finland (1939)
Finnish Pavilion, New York (1939)
Baker House Student Accommodation, Cambridge, MA (1948)
Säynätsalo Town Hall, Finland (1951)
Rovaniemi Library, Finland (1968)
Essen Opera House, Germany (1959-88)
Garlands
RIBA Royal Gold Medal (1957)
AIA Gold Medal (1963)
Quote
'Human life is a combination of tragedy and comedy. The shapes and designs that surround us are the music accompanying this tragedy and this comedy.'



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It was Aalto's capacity to bind the clarity of their self-consciously radicalised techniques to his own context that led to some of his greatest inventions. Moholy-Nagy's modulation of artificial light with grilles was recast as the rooflights of the Viipuri Library, while his 'objective' experimental reliefs for testing materials were extended through Aino and Alvar Aalto's collaboration with the Turku furniture maker Otto Korhonen to become their bentwood furniture.

However, the most important collaborators were his atelier and partners. Most importantly, from 1924 Aalto worked in partnership with Aino Marsio-Aalto until her death in 1949, and then from 1958, until his death, in partnership with Elissa Aalto who continued to run the atelier until her death in 1994. As he said 'only when we're together can an unexaggerated attitude be found'. Typically, but no less reprehensibly, these female figures have been overlooked, as has the contribution of his wider atelier whose shared trust enabled Aalto to undertake a remarkable array of projects.

Aalto's achievement, if not his reputation, was to build well within the everyday conditions of modernity, rather than standing aside from them, or attempting to replace them with a single dogmatic artistry. Working with his atelier, Aalto exhibited a care for the uncertainties of the 20th-century human condition, and ensured he had the resourcefulness to match. Form was important, but as a means not an end. As Veli Paatela, the job architect of the Baker House Dormitory recalls in *Alvar Aalto: the Mark of the Hand*:

'Once when we were on a beach on Cape Cod, by the Atlantic, Alvar and I and were going to go for a swim, Alvar suddenly stopped. The waves had washed a few corals onto the sand and Alvar stood there and said: [...] 'I'm filming it into my head. I might need this shape one day."'

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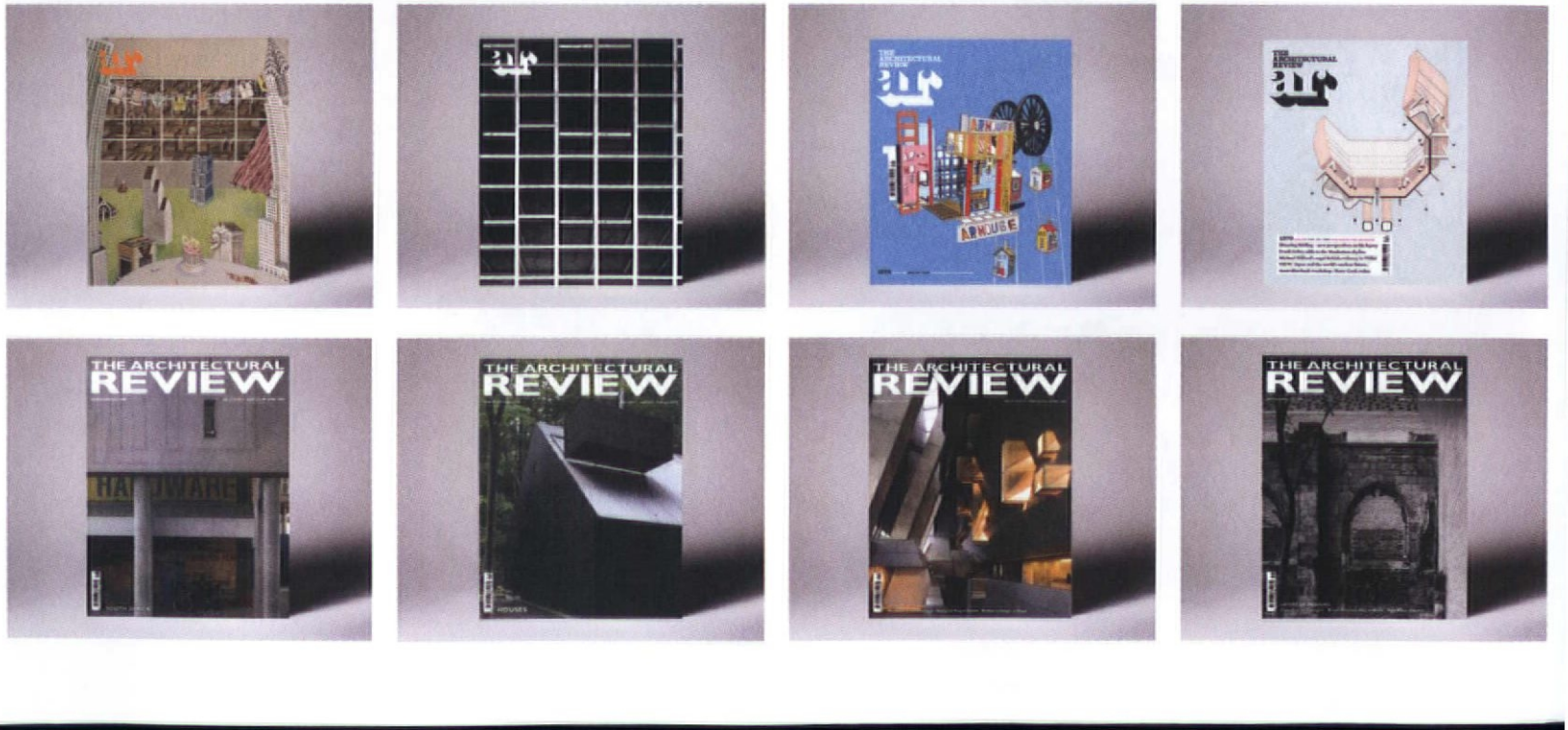

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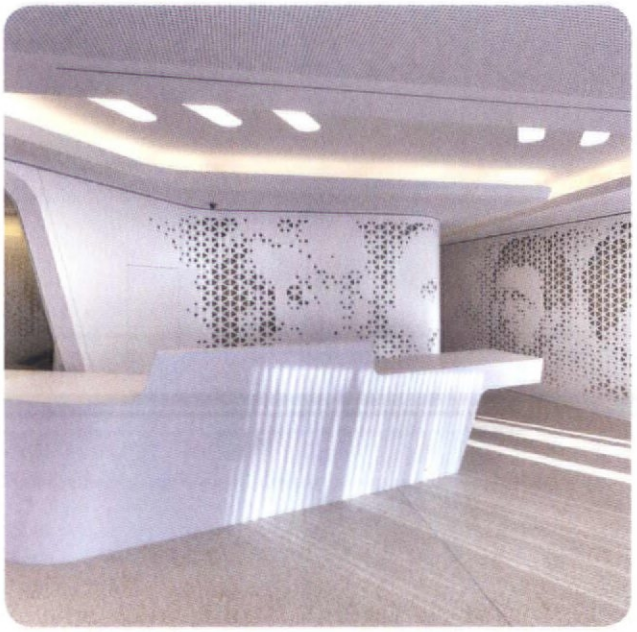

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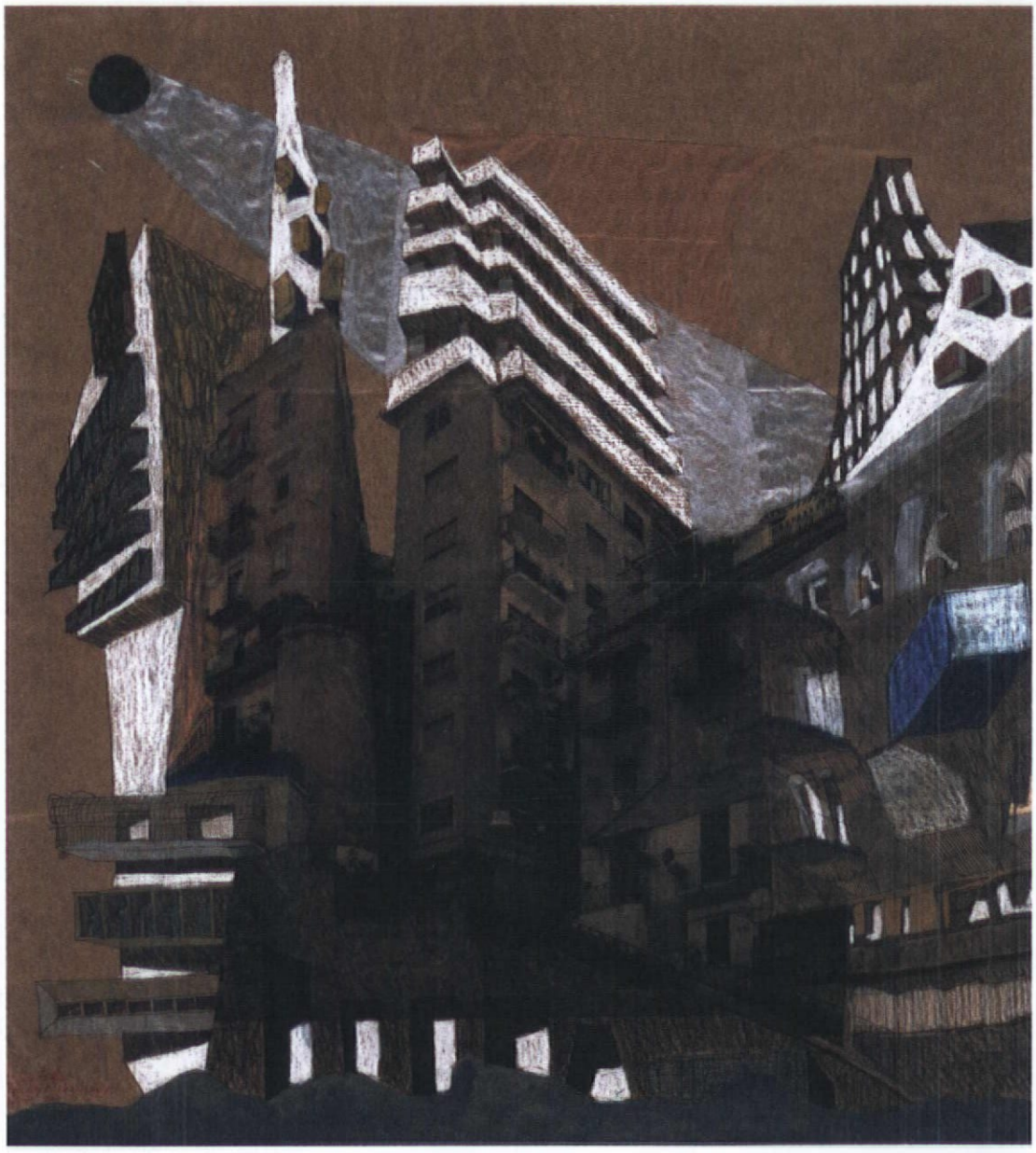

Both dizzyingly vibrant and wonderfully dark, Naples has a classical beauty tempered by decaying grandeur and crime-ridden streets. As the architect Luca Molinari once said: 'In the bowels of Naples you can find anything.' And while some may find this half-sinister ambiguity alarming, Neopolitan architect Cherubino Gambardella has found the urban scene to be an endless source of inspiration and a recurring site of speculation.

Asking us to indulge in a 'dose of unreality', this Futurist-Surrealist lovechild *Life with Objects: the Manifesto* is taken from Gambardella's latest book (*La vita con gli oggetti / Life with Objects*). With an intuitive creativity scarcely glimpsed in his more pragmatic built work, this collection of drawings offers a vision to purge the city of its pathologies and endless tedium, describing new architectures sprouting out of the old.

From the rushed yet purposeful qualities of the differing media used, to the recurring sun motif (as exemplified in the popular Neapolitan folksong *O Sole Mio*), and the collaged photographic references of ad-hoc construction, the city has clearly shaped the architect's imaginings. Or, as Gambardella would have it, 'by observing the ordinary city, the space for a new beauty will be born'.

Federico Sher

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