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The Architectural Review
Issue number 1396
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Sapere aude

'We are counting on Diller Scofidio + Renfrew to demolish MoMA's pathetic excuses for behaving crassly'
Michael Webb, p15

'People cannot insist that petrol stations have thatched roofs'
Paul Finch, p20

'Is Poundbury a concentration of Middle Englishness that Agatha Christie would tell us conceals a darkness of the soul?'
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'With arc lights and Burger Kings aglitter the romance of Los Angeles' vistas can be enjoyed'
Nicholas Olsberg, p94

'We talked over drinks in the 1935 Rolls-Royce that Hubert de Cronin Hastings had converted into a caravan lined with grand French wallpaper'
Jonathan Glancey, p102

'I used to say that the only interesting men were homosexuals or Jews and my tragedy was that I was neither'
Ulrik Plesner, p110

'Really, New Urbanism is Anti Urbanism'
Joseph Rykwert, p118

Cover: the artist Nina Katchadourian's *Austria* (2006) transforms the country's road network into something resembling a heart: a paradoxical image combining ideas of infrastructure and human intimacy that illustrates a tension running through this special issue themed on neighbourhood. Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco

CONTRIBUTORS

Isabel Allen is a former Editor of *The Architects' Journal* and is now Design Director of Hab Housing, which is currently running projects by DSDHA, AHMM, David Mikhail and Sarah Wigglesworth. She is our Guest Editor for this special issue on neighbourhoods, to which she contributes an essay on how neighbourhoods can be created from scratch, and reviews an example of a new neighbourhood in Essex

Matthew Barac is a senior lecturer at London's South Bank University and also our regular *Pedagogy* correspondent. This month he discusses the work of Architecture Sans Frontières

Timothy Brittain-Catlin teaches at the Kent School of Architecture and is an expert on British 19th-century architecture, especially the work of Pugin. He reviews the memoirs of Sri Lanka-based playboy architect Ulrik Plesner

Peter Buchanan is a London-based architecture writer and lecturer. This month *The Big Rethink* series culminates with a proposal for a 21st-century neighbourhood

Joseph Davis is a diploma student at London Metropolitan, where he wrote his advocacy essay on *The Big Rethink*. This month he drew images for its concluding chapter

Edward Denison is an architectural, urban and cultural specialist teaching at the Bartlett, whose current research concerns the multiple modernities of China. This month he reviews and photographs Wang Shu's guesthouse and village in *Buildings*. More of his photography can be seen at www.denisonren.com.

Paul Finch is Chair and Director of the Design Council Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. He is currently Programme Director of the World Architecture Festival. He writes on planning in *Broader View*

Marc Frohn is co-founder of architectural practice FAR. For *Reviews*, he visited an exhibition of photographs by Julia Schulz-Dornburg in Berlin entitled *Modern Ruins – A Topography of Profit*

Jonathan Glancey began his illustrious career as Assistant Editor of this magazine. He is a critic and writer who was the Architecture and Design Editor at the *Guardian*, a position he held from 1997 to 2012. He previously held the same post at *The Independent*. This month he reassesses Hubert de Cronin Hastings' campaigns

Andrew Mead is a London-based critic who writes on landscape, architecture and photography. This month he reviews *Building Image*, a book of photographs of modern Swiss architecture

Guang Yu Ren is an architect and consultant who has worked with international agencies in Africa and the UK to conserve and promote architectural heritage. She co-wrote the review of Wang Shu's guesthouse and village in *Buildings*

Lucy Musgrave is a former Director of the Architecture Foundation who runs the urbanism consultancy Publica. She was recently appointed to the British government's review panel for Architecture and the Built Environment. This month she contributes an essay on analytical techniques for understanding neighbourhoods

Nicholas Olsberg was Chief Curator of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. He has written an appreciation of the futuristic postwar architecture of LA, which is currently being exhibited in several venues in that city

Alan Powers is an author of several books, including the definitive account of Modernism in Britain, and is former Chair of the Twentieth Century Society. Powers was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the RIBA in 2008. He contributes a *View From* Prince Charles and Léon Krier's feudal village, Poundbury

David Rosenberg directs architectural practice Velorose. He reports back from a conference on architectural awards and prizes hosted by the Architecture Foundation in *Overview*

Joseph Rykwert is a distinguished architectural historian, Professor Emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *The Seduction of Place*, among many other books. This month he writes on elegant draughtsman, 'New Urbanist' and Speer-fancier Léon Krier in *Reputations*

Charlotte Skene Catling is a director of Skene Catling de la Peña. She and Marc Frohn of FAR frohn&rojas write a blog at www.architectural-digester.blogspot.co.uk. This month she reviews *Light Show* at the Hayward Gallery

Michael Sorkin is a practising architect and professor at the State University of New York. A distinguished critic himself, he remembers the inimitable criticism of late colleague Ada Louise Huxtable in *Viewpoints*

Julia van den Hout is Founding Editor of small architectural magazine *CLOG* and communications manager for Steven Holl Architects. She attended a conference on Social Justice & the City for *Overview*

Michael Webb is an architectural writer and critic based in Los Angeles. This month he laments the proposed demolition of the American Folk Art Museum by MoMA in *Overview*

Austin Williams teaches Urban Studies at XJTLU university in Suzhou, China. He is the author of *The Lure of the City: From Slums to Suburbs*. In this month's *Reviews*, he celebrates the achievements of John Randel Jr

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

EDITORIAL

Editor
Catherine Slessor
catherine.slessor@emap.com
Deputy Editor
Will Hunter
will.hunter@emap.com
Guest Editor
Isabel Allen
Creative Director
Simon Esterson
Art Editor
Alexander Ecob
Editorial Co-ordinator
Phineas Harper
phineas.harper@emap.com
+44 (0)20 3033 2740
Production Editors
Julia Dawson
Tom Wilkinson
Editorial Interns
Emma Galvin, Melissa Haniff
Akua Danso, Nick Pocock
US Contributing Editors
Michael Webb
Mark Lamster
Associate Editor
Rob Gregory
Editorial Director
Paul Finch

PUBLISHING

International Account Manager
Thomas Rashid
+44 (0)20 3033 2942
thomas.rashid@emap.com
UK Account Manager
Keshena Grieve
+44 (0)203 033 2947
keshena.grieve@emap.com
Group Advertising Manager
Amanda Pryde
+44 (0)20 3033 2945
amanda.pryde@emap.com
Business Development Manager
Nick Roberts
+44 (0)20 3033 2940
nick.roberts@emap.com
Business Development Manager
Ceri Evans
+44 (0)20 3033 2943
ceri.evans@emap.com
Commercial Director
James MacLeod
+44 (0)20 3033 2939
james.macleod@emap.com
Group Head of Marketing
James Merrington
Senior Marketing Executive
Anthea Antoniou
+44 (0)20 3033 2865
anthea.antoniou@emap.com
Marketing Executive
Alex Themistos
+44 (0)20 3033 4327
alex.themistos@emap.com
Italian Advertising Sales Milan
Carlo Fiorucci
+39 0362 23 22 10
carlo@fiorucci-international.com
US Advertising Sales New York
Kate Buckley
+1 845 266 4980
buckley@buckleypell.com
List Rental
Jonathan Burston
+44 (0)20 8995 1919
jburston@uni-marketing.com
Managing Director
Robert Brighouse
Emap Chief Executive
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US subscribers contact:
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The Architectural Review
69-77 Paul Street
London EC2A 4NW, UK
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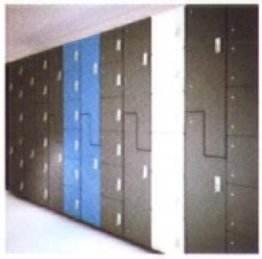

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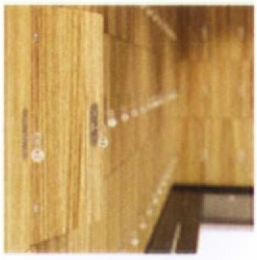

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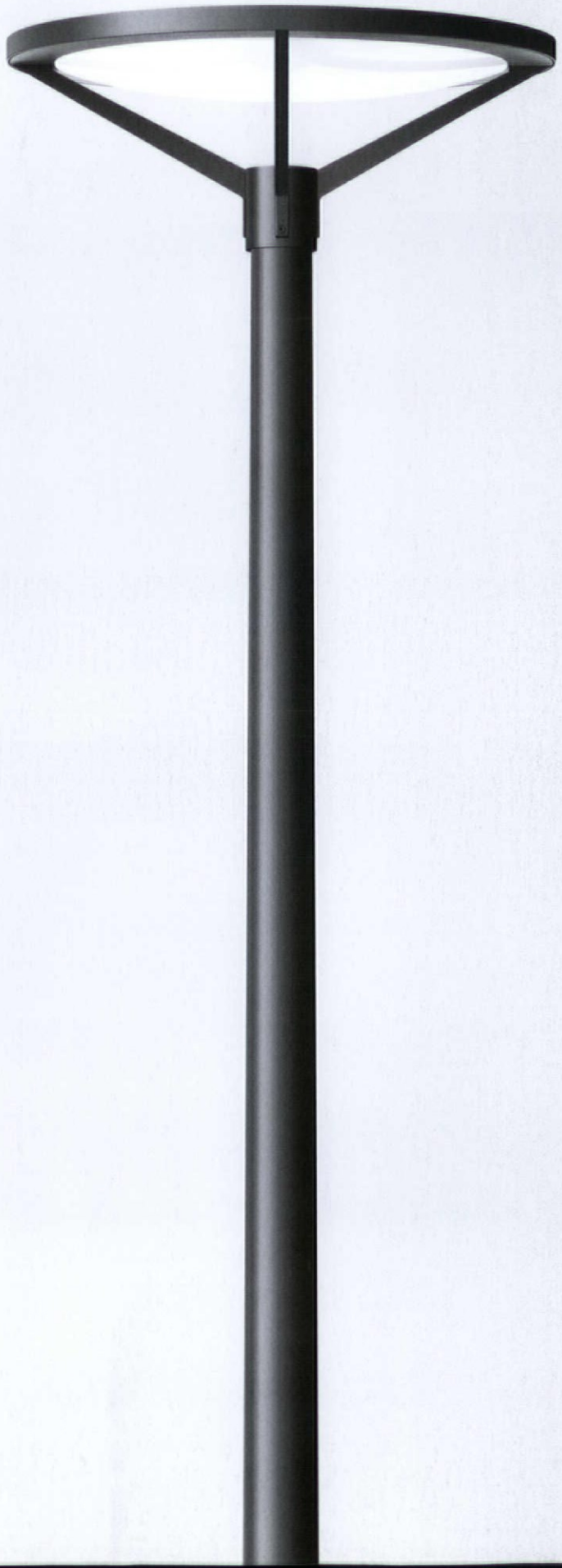

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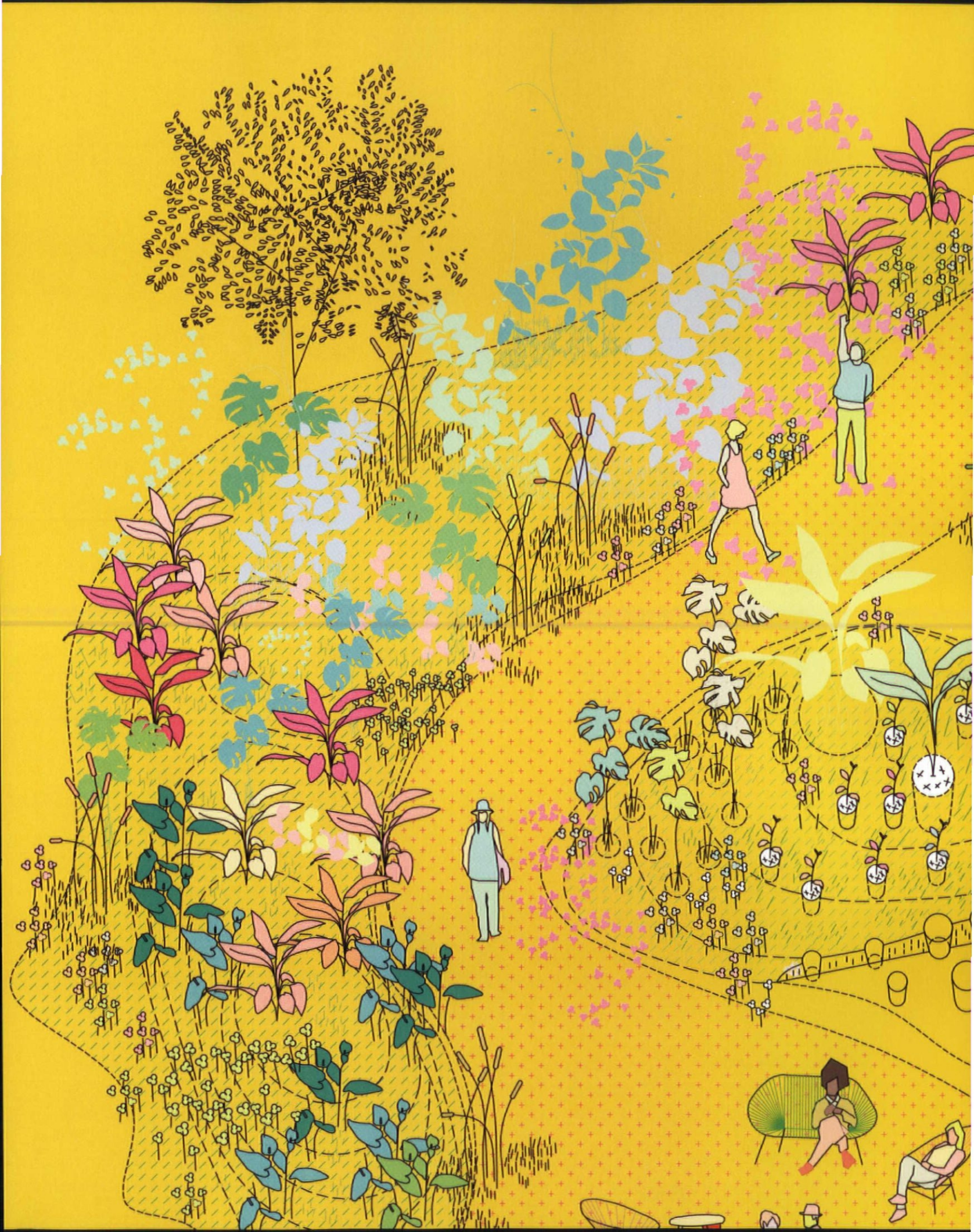
Langarita Navarro's Red Bull Music Academy in Madrid was joint winner of the 2012 ar+d Awards for Emerging Architecture



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Editorial view

How the good neighbourhood can reconnect us with our common humanity

This issue sees the conclusion of The Big Rethink, the AR's campaign to articulate a new vision of the potential of architecture and how it can re-engage more resonantly with wider social and human concerns. Underscoring the series has been the question 'How do we want to live?', and in this final chapter Peter Buchanan addresses this more explicitly in his proposal for a prototypical neighbourhood that encompasses and elaborates on many of the ideas discussed in the series. 'Because', as he writes, 'progress towards a true sustainability and its concomitant way of life cannot be delivered only by buildings'.

The concept of the neighbourhood also forms the broader theme of this issue, with guest editor Isabel Allen eloquently arguing that neighbourhoods should be socially as well as physically constructed. In the silo-isation of the different but complementary disciplines of architecture and planning, the neighbourhood can easily get lost; yet as a schema for individual and communal life it is crucial to how we connect with and make sense of our surroundings. Londoners, for instance, tend to envisage the metropolis as an organic patchwork of diverse and distinct neighbourhoods, each with their own character, history and cachet.

Within the more extreme manifestations of urban and suburban life, the pervading anomie, homogeneity and commodification can easily inculcate a sense of social and psychological dislocation. The neighbourhood, by contrast, implies manageable scale, familiarity, different sorts of activities, nuance, connectivity and communality; what Lucy Musgrave calls 'the lived experience of urban life'.

So why is it so hard to design 'good' neighbourhoods that chime with wider human experience? Why do the more memorable ones always feel more serendipitously evolved than formally planned, the outcome of informal, bottom-up regeneration, usually involving the re-use of existing structures and people willing to take chances?

'Neighbourhoods have a complex identity', writes Musgrave 'that is the embodiment of layered meanings and varied perspectives – the social within the built characteristics that define physical form, and the multiple uses that inform activity. Understanding this combination, a layered and complex picture of urban life is crucial to their success, to their ability to thrive, adapt and sustain change in the long term.'

There are clear lessons here for 'how we want to live', but as The Big Rethink has shown, we must have the courage, both as professionals and individuals, to challenge preconceptions. Only then can we achieve a truly good life, at ease with ourselves and our neighbours. And only then can we 'return to the centre of architectural concern, the celebration of our humanity', as Buchanan concludes.

Yet this is not quite the end. Now that the series is finished, we plan to canvass other voices and views, so that we can sustain and extend this crucial conversation.

Catherine Slessor, Editor

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Overview

For Folk's sake!

Michael Webb on the uncertain fate of the American Folk Art Museum, which is threatened with demolition by its new owner MoMA

If Donald Trump threatened to demolish an architectural jewel of New York and replace it with one of his tinsel towers, people would be angry but not surprised. Developers answer to profit-driven investors. Cultural institutions are supposed to have different values. The Museum of Modern Art was founded to advance the cause of Modernism in all the visual arts, including architecture, and it has fulfilled its promise for the past 84 years. That accentuated the shock of its recent announcement that it planned to destroy its neighbour, the widely acclaimed American Folk Art Museum (AR February 2002), to make room for more generic galleries. Architects and critics excoriated MoMA for betraying its principles and are urging it to reconsider a wasteful and destructive act of vandalism.

This is the 50th anniversary of AFAM, a nomadic institution that was born in a townhouse on West 53rd Street and presented exhibitions in several locations, before commissioning Tod Williams and Billie Tsien to tailor a museum to its needs. The architects shoehorned four storeys of galleries, plus offices and subterranean archive, auditorium and classrooms onto a 12 by 30 metre site. They turned the narrow footprint to advantage, cladding the facade in a shallow wedge of lustrous white bronze panels to signify craft, and opening galleries off a skylit slot of space and a cantilevered concrete stair. 'It was conceived as a house for art, that was partly inspired by Sir John Soane's Museum in London,' says project architect Matthew Baird, who now heads his own New York firm. 'We created long views through the vertical section and the curators exploited the multi-level spaces to create a succession of wonderful exhibitions.'

The building won many awards but it was fated from the day it opened, soon after 9/11, when the city was traumatised and museum attendance plummeted. A few months before construction was due to begin, Glenn Lowry, the aggressive director of MoMA, made AFAM an offer that, in retrospect, sounds more like an ultimatum. He proposed a swap of sites: MoMA would keep the one next door, and offer another it owned further west. AFAM declined: the two townhouses they had been using were donated by Blanchette Rockefeller and they felt it would be ungracious to give them up. They would incur added costs and delays in redesigning the building and forfeit proximity to a pocket park across the street. Having raised over $20 million for the new building, they borrowed an additional $30 million for an endowment. Attendance and fundraising fell short, investments slumped during the financial crisis, and they were unable to make payments on the loan. In 2011, they sold the building to MoMA and moved to modest quarters near Lincoln Center. This April, Lowry announced that it would be demolished on the flimsy pretext that the floors didn't line up with MoMA's, and the opaque facade didn't conform to the transparent aesthetic he favours.

The Folk Art Museum's intimate galleries don't appeal to MoMA's corporate aesthetic

MoMA is fond of glass, but transparency has never been the hallmark of its operations. A trio of rich ladies established it in rented quarters in 1929, and Rockefeller money ensured its growth. In 1939 it moved to the Deco-ish confection of Philip Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone, and in succeeding decades extended westwards into unremarkable blocks by Philip Johnson and Cesar Pelli. More real estate was acquired and Yoshio Taniguchi doubled the size of the institution. The architect has created several exquisite museums in his native Japan, and expectations ran high, but he may have been defeated by the sheer size of the project. The six-storey atrium overwhelms art and visitors alike, and it can seem as soulless and congested as an airline terminal. In her 2006 review, the late Ada Louise Huxtable deplored the monolithic uniformity of the new galleries: 'What is missing is the quiet place where one can communicate directly and deeply with a single work or artist,' she wrote. 'At the new MoMA there is no repose.'

That is where the AFAM building excels. The spaces are intimate and varied, and circulation doubles as exhibition space. MoMA has architectural archives that are rarely on view, and are often lost in the generic white cubes. The current exhibition of drawings by Henri Labrouste feels awkwardly housed. MoMA's unique collection of modern design can often seem like a showroom display or an extension of the museum's shop in these impersonal rooms. AFAM represents the craft tradition from which Modernism evolved; MoMA stands for the ideological rejection of that alternate path. Modernist orthodoxy went out of fashion 50 years ago and MoMA would be smart to embrace AFAM, using its spaces to complement and contrast with the sleek white galleries that will surround it on three sides.

The museum should realise that it has become too large to be seen as a whole. Many of the 2.5 million annual visitors are tourists, who come to glimpse a Picasso and a Van Gogh over the heads of the crowd, eat, shop and head on to the next must-see attraction. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is even more intimidatingly huge, but it is enriched by unexpected delights: the Byzantine galleries tucked under the grand staircase, the Suzhou courtyard house recreated by Chinese artisans, and a tiny Renaissance studiolo. These are as important to the art-going experience as the popular masterpieces and blockbuster exhibitions, and they provide a rare opportunity for quiet contemplation. The newly-restored Yale Art Gallery links three disparate buildings, and the eccentric plan and shifts of level reward patient exploration.

Developer Jerry Speyer who chairs the MoMA board commissioned his Manhattan house from Williams and Tsien, so he should understand their exceptional gifts. Needlessly to destroy one of their finest works would be a crime, tarnishing MoMA's reputation as a custodian and advocate of Modernism. There is hope for a favourable outcome. In response to an outpouring of protest from leading critics, MoMA have commissioned Diller Scofidio + Renfrew to design the extension and present alternatives for the site. Having successfully remodelled Lincoln Center, this respected firm can surely find a way to incorporate AFAM in the new structure. Everyone is counting on them to do the right thing and demolish MoMA's pathetic excuses for behaving so crassly.

There goes the neighbourhood

Julia van den Hout

'The city is manifestly a complicated thing,' wrote David Harvey in the opening pages of *Social Justice and the City* in 1973. 'Clearly the city cannot be conceptualized in terms of our present disciplinary structures. Yet there is very little sign of an emerging interdisciplinary framework for thinking, let alone theorizing, about the city.' On 4 May, Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* was celebrated in a 40th anniversary symposium organised by the Graduate Program in Design and Urban Ecologies at Parsons The New School for Design, a programme that strives to engage students in such interdisciplinary discussions as Harvey has worked towards throughout his career.

When celebrating the 40th anniversary of a text, especially one that transcended traditional approaches to space in favour of a radical new examination of social processes, capitalism and geography (heavily peppered with Marxist theory, of course), we might ask: What have we learned? Have the themes in David Harvey's book been influential in changing our urban policy, and have the questions he raised and the methods he proposed affected the way in which we treat the city and social justice today? Or have they merely sparked discussion within the classrooms of specialised graduate programmes?

Kevin Bauman has been documenting the abandonment of Detroit since the 1990s

An auditorium full of furiously tweeting spectators on a Saturday morning signals that – within the fields of geography and urbanism, at least – Harvey's book still generates active conversation. The event was moderated by Miguel Robles-Durán, Director of the Design and Urban Ecologies programme. He stressed the desired informality of the one-day symposium, insisting that the event was not a series of panel discussions but 'clusters' of speakers – many of whom recounted very personal stories of their first time reading *Social Justice and the City*, and in some cases their first meeting with Harvey. But there were also many more urgent items to discuss. The book is still exceedingly relevant to urbanism today, or, as some speakers rightly argued, perhaps even more so to our current urban development than when it was when first published.

Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk presented the story of Anfield, a residential district of Liverpool targeted for major regeneration in the late 1990s. Hundreds of homes were cleared for demolition, but only a few new houses built, and the residents have been left waiting. In the last four years, Van Heeswijk's re-energising efforts have included a community-run bakery and café, and working with residents to shape social spaces in vacant lots around the neighbourhood. Initiatives such as Van Heeswijk's are not unique to Liverpool. They mirror the many community-led social engagement projects across the world. Over a hundred examples of such American community efforts filled the rooms of the US Pavilion during the Venice Biennale last summer.

We know all too well the tragic stories of American cities such as Detroit and Cleveland, where industry has moved away and the economic gap between the inner city and the suburbs has widened to catastrophic levels. But even booming urban centres such as New York, where 21 per cent of the population lives below the

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poverty line, face issues of social injustice. Andrew Ross, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, brought Harvey's call for attention to income distribution close to home, recounting the destruction of Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. The rising value of the city's waterfront property contradicts its propensity to flooding, but 'climate change affects everyone – rich and poor. In the end we all have interest in environmental progress.' We have become focused on bracing our cities for natural disasters, rather than continuing efforts to reduce their carbon footprint.

Ultimately, expecting *Social Justice and the City* to change the urban environment in concrete terms would have been to misunderstand the nature of the text. Harvey brought the book's original manuscript ('a disaster') and a galley proof ('an appalling mess'): typed documents amended with small handwritten notes and pieces of paper pasted along the edges ('Clearly I was rewriting the book in the middle of production'). As the frantic scribbles illustrate, the book may have been published 40 years ago, but the thoughts and theories embedded in its pages continued – and continue – to evolve. It was a groundbreaking text, but one that even at the time of its publication was in the midst of transformation. Continuing his work on space and social theory today, Harvey's worst fear may be that we reach a moment of complacency, when we think we have solved issues of urban and social injustice. Cities are complicated things, and we can only continue to challenge our perceptions and preconceptions, and continue to evolve with them.

And the runner-up is ...

David Rosenberg

It is little wonder that the Pritzker family revels in their award's reputation as the Nobel Prize of architecture. This

Nader Khalili's sandbag shelters for displaced people won an Aga Khan Award in 2004

$1m-prize promotes architect over architecture at a ritzy dinner, and with as much glamour rubbing off from recipient to donor, a better comparison might be the Oscars. But are other awards any better?

Like most architectural prizes, the Global Holcim Awards are also announced at a big dinner, and their so-called ambassador admits that the $2m prize is intended to exceed that of the already-generous Pritzker. Dig deeper, however, and Holcim displays a rare openness to unglamorous unbuilt ideas. Furthermore, with a jury composed of architects and – unusually – non-architects alike, the dinner becomes less significant.

The Architecture Foundation's second debate in its three-part series on the meta-industry of which it admits to being a part, focused on this contradictory nature of awards. As we learned in the first debate, they have two sides: their stated aim, to celebrate and reward excellence, and the 'underlying motivations and benefits ... (the) ulterior motives'. Neither Paul Finch nor Simon Allford held back in that regard: they both described a bloated, greedy, and self congratulating world, 'more catering than cultural production'.

Sarah Ichioka's most impassioned hope was stated upfront: to engage the public. But the debate barely touched on this issue, nor could it that evening; one senses that the usual suspects filled the cosy venue. Although it may have failed in public participation, the Architecture Foundation is to be applauded for the spectrum of speakers that it amassed. If they help to take the discussion to a wider audience then it will have been a worthwhile evening.

Where the national awards came across as insular, the international awards were mostly revealed by their representatives to be impressively expansive. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Global Holcim Awards are notable examples. Both run on a different three-year cycle to all the others, and arguably touch a wider demographic, especially that elusive 'public'.

Each is rare in understanding 'sustainability' in a sense that transcends the fashion for all things green. Both publish works that exceed the life of the glossy brochures of most prize-giving events, and insist on transparency. Both disseminate knowledge to 'common' people.

Nothing is quite that simple, of course. Gift-giving is reciprocal, not altruistic, and like almost all awards, these bear their names with pride, and take pleasure in the association with the excellence they reward. Both the Aga Khan and Holcim throw a lot of money at their awards, and not just at the winners. Allford's note that 'judging is an award in itself' highlighted the potential worst excesses of insularity. This was also the greatest problem with an event that could have been about how to widen the debate: there was a packed audience, but not much participation – and where was the public in all this?

AR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Extra date added at V&A

Due to the sell-out success of the 'Architecture&' lecture series, we have added an extra date, hosting two of the world's hottest young designers: Ole Scheeren, who directed the CCTV building while at OMA and who now has his own practice in China; and Ab Rogers, the Head of Interiors at the Royal College of Art. The event will take place on 28 May at the V&A, London. See more at: architectural-review.com/home/public-events

Emerging Architecture

The ar+d Awards are the world's most prestigious awards for young architects, recognising excellence across a broad spectrum of design. Buildings, landscape, urbanism, products and furniture are all eligible. Entries will be assessed by an international jury. This year's prize fund is £10,000. Entry deadline is 13 September. architectural-review.com/emerging

GAGA

The Global Architecture Graduate Awards 2013 is now open for entries. A prize fund of £5000 rewards the world's best student work. Closing date for entries is Friday 5 July. architectural-review.com/gaga

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Broader view

Action plan

Groups of residents in the UK can now formally register as a 'neighbourhood' – but will this be a catalyst for positive change, or is nimbyism forever to be the stumbling block? asks *Paul Finch*

Recent local elections in England (excluding London) gave the coalition government a nasty shock: the biggest electoral winner was the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), with losses for the Conservatives and even bigger losses for the Liberal Democrats. Their respective leaders, Prime Minister David Cameron and Deputy PM Nick Clegg, must be baffled as to why significant proportions of the electorate have turned against them – when they won a general election partly on a promise to give ordinary people and local communities more of a say over decisions affecting their everyday lives. That policy seems to have backfired.

The idea of 'localism' promoted by both coalition parties was strongly related to giving planning powers back to the people, rather than leaving them in the hands of town hall bureaucrats and anonymous Whitehall civil servants. As an aspiration this sounded impeccably democratic, but has proved predictably difficult to put into any sort of coherent practice.

One reason for this is the government growth agenda, in the wake of the financial shambles left after years of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown pretending they were prudently managing the UK economy. Virtually all coalition planning policies have had to be geared to growth even though the words 'growth' and 'planning' do not automatically chime. Indeed many communities imagined that they would be able to use their new planning responsibilities to prevent development on their patch.

This attitude is commonly described as 'nimbyism' (Not In My Back Yard), and seems to be a universal condition. It is as likely to affect government ministers who lobby to prevent unpopular development in their local constituencies as village communities worried about being overrun by huge new housing estates. Both urban and rural communities are concerned about the impact of huge infrastructure proposals, such as the High Speed 2 super-fast rail route between London and Birmingham, currently the subject of great controversy. It appears that 'the man in Whitehall knows best' is a maxim that can still annoy. Fear of the political consequences of these huge projects has led to the postponement (by the Prime Minister) of any speedy decision before the next general election in 2015 on what to do about increasing airport capacity in and around London.

So is it impossible to combine localism with policies for economic growth? Or simply difficult? The latter is a more convincing proposition, partly because there are plenty of people who are happy to see more housing, more offices, revived retail high streets and new business parks. They may not make as much noise as protesters, but it doesn't mean they do not exist. Moreover, growth can be directed even if it cannot be stopped, and where precisely it takes place can be a matter where significant local influence can be brought to bear.

It can happen like this: a group of local people register as a 'neighbourhood', and they draw up proposals for policies in respect of future development which are subject to a local referendum. This can be binding on the local planning authority, and incorporated into the 'Local Plan' which is supposed to provide the legal context for all development in a given municipal area.

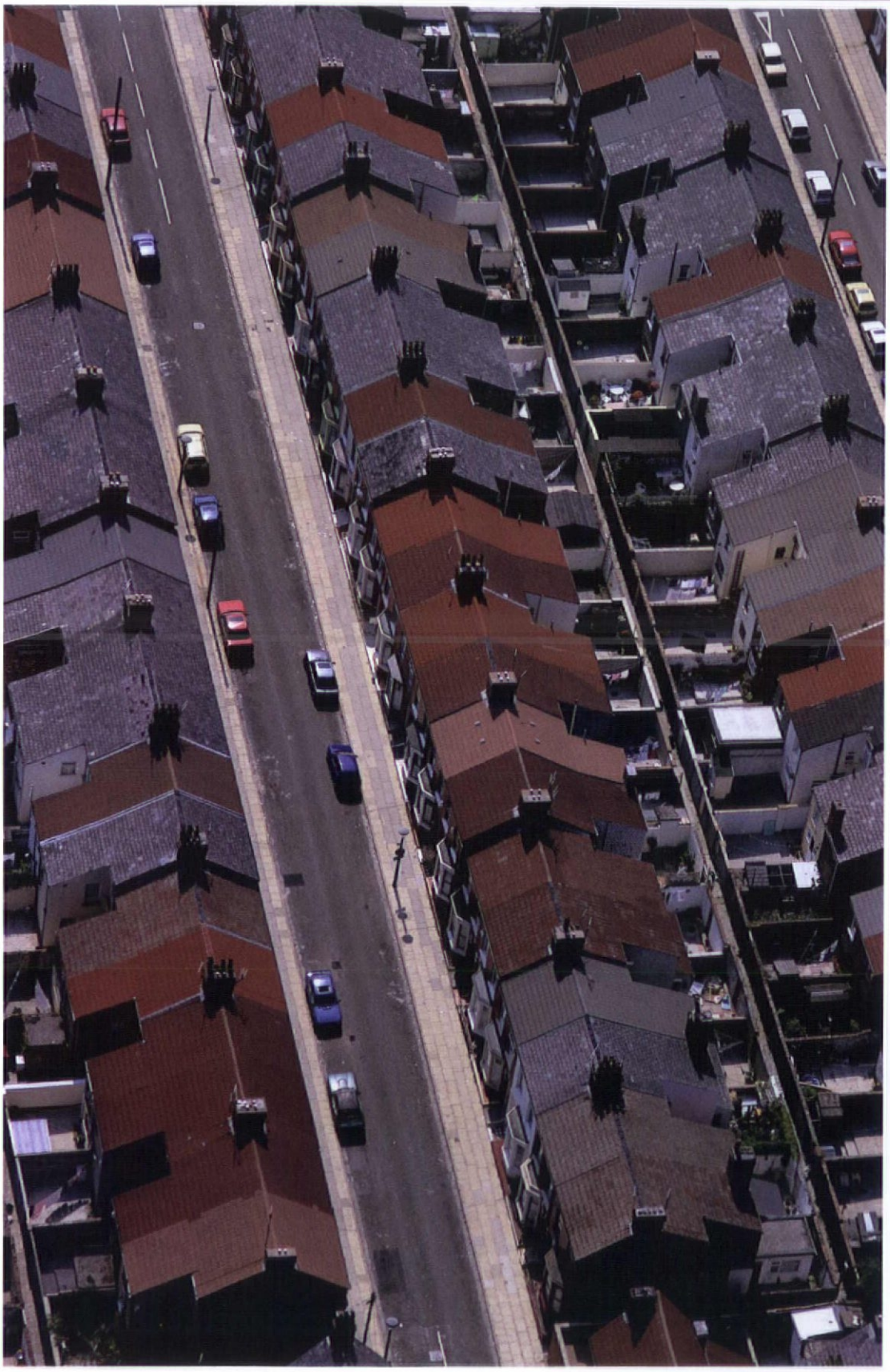
So in theory thousands of little planning soviets can determine the future of neighbourhoods where enough interested citizens can be bothered to organise themselves. There are, however, two powerful reasons why we are not going to observe planning anarchy in the UK. First, any neighbourhood plan *must* be in conformity with the existing Local Plan where there is one, though many are in the process of being drawn up or revised. More significantly, it must *also* conform to the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), introduced last year and gradually coming into effect.

The NPPF, which replaced 1,200 pages of planning rules and guidance with a succinct 56 pages, also governs what can and cannot be included in the Local Plan, and so what can be adopted in a neighbourhood plan. The man in Whitehall does therefore still know best, and that is of some comfort to architects worried that localism would lead to vast areas of the country demanding designs that would appeal to Prince Charles, banning anything without pediments, as it were.

In fact the NPPF is remarkably supportive of architectural innovation and variety, and specifically rules out the imposition or exclusion of architecture based on mere stylistic considerations. A neighbourhood could not, for example, insist that petrol stations have thatched roofs. But nor would it be possible to ban pitched roofs on ideological grounds. It is legislation underpinned by a pluralist attitude to aesthetics; it also tells planning authorities to give innovative design the benefit of the doubt.

Needless to say, what legislation decrees and what actually happens are two different things, but there is no doubt that the responsibilities envisaged for neighbourhoods in respect of 'what they want' has been balanced by the rights of clients and architects to pursue their own visions of the future. This looks like an attempt to rebalance the planning system, trying to give more certainty to what can be built where, without the imposition of rigid design rules as a proxy for complex development control procedures.

Is any of this working? As with any new planning regime it will take several years to take root, with vast numbers of planning permissions given under the old regime still to be built. There are also still significant factors which



JASON HAWKES/CORBIS

make planning permission difficult to obtain in the UK. One is the way that environmental impact assessments (EIAs) are used by local objectors as a way of fighting development, not least through legal challenges to planning permissions on the grounds that some obscure aspect of the EIA has not been properly tested. These cut-and-paste documents, which benefit environmental consultants and almost nobody else, have become a real problem.

Another major hurdle to peaceful and speedy achievement of permissions is the obsession with heritage, and the deep-seated feeling that anything new will be worse than anything old. Combine this with greater powers for 'neighbourhoods', which generally start with self-appointed if not self-interested people with an axe to grind about development, and you have a formula for potential stasis.

And even a government committed to growth still sees developments as providing golden eggs to be taxed before, during and after laying, which can inhibit house-building; when it comes to big infrastructure, however, political considerations are all-important, which inevitably means near-endless consultation. More consultation and greater speed are the two great irreconcilables in UK planning policy.

President Mitterrand, famously, was once asked why Paris had built an entire new airport in the time it took London to decide whether Heathrow should have a new terminal. 'Because in France,' he replied, 'we do not consult the frogs.'

Such dirigiste instincts are not popular in the UK, even when they are clearly required; we cling to a notion that we all live in villages, hence the localist agenda of the current government. But we are realistic enough to realise that our urban futures need a wider perspective. The latest planning regime is an attempt at necessary compromise.

View from...

TIM GRAHAM

HRH The Prince of Wales and masterplanner Léon Krier (left) surveying the streets of Poundbury in Dorset in 1999. The planned neighbourhood is designed to mimic quintessential English architecture including fake window-tax windows, false chimney stacks and reduced road markings

Poundbury, UK

Twenty years on, Prince Charles' town is liked by its residents, but suffers – not from its faux styling – but from its impulse for instant placemaking, says *Alan Powers*

What is it that makes yesterday's homes so different, so appealing? This reversal of the title of Richard Hamilton's collage could define the inquiry on which the Prince of Wales' model urban project of Poundbury was based. Planning permission was given in May 1993, and it is still growing and causing satisfaction for its residents and aggravation to architects in roughly equal measure. If the mission was to find the essence of the good past and use it to grow something new, it fell into a recognisable sequence of retro-utopias. Its closest precursor was Noak Bridge, 1975, by Maurice Naunton and George Garrard of Basildon Development Corporation who were tired of the monotonous suburbia they had worked on. Streets were narrowed and curved, houses conjoined to save ground and create a more urban quality, landscape conserved and cars parked out of sight. With less architectural and media fuss than Poundbury, it did an excellent job.

To be polemical, was, however, integral to the Poundbury mission. It divided the world into two groups, those who get the creeps from it and those who can't see the problem, and no amount of argument is likely to shift people from one group to the other. Every quantifiable characteristic of the place tells in its favour: the planning innovations, in the form of higher densities than standard suburbia; a mix of housing tenures; less traffic-friendly roads; the aspiration to integrate employment in walking distance of houses. This is supposed to add up to community, a more elusive goal, but people say they feel safe there, and the houses sell at a premium for the area. The look has been widely imitated, but there is more to the project than just appearances.

What makes Poundbury creepy, then? Is it like an over-attentive puppy that is just too cute? Is it the attempt to be old when it isn't, or just the wrong retro references, given that Modernism has now been a retro style for three generations? Is it a concentration of Middle Englishness that, as WH Auden or Agatha Christie would surely tell us, conceals a deeper deceit or darkness of the soul? But don't all planned settlements have something creepy about them? Is there a single garden suburb or Siedlung that doesn't convey a slightly zombie-ish feeling of unreality? I love to visit Milton Keynes, Hampstead Garden Suburb or Frankfurt Römerstadt and admire the beauty of the landscapes and the clarity of the architectural concept, but I am heartily glad to return to the messy reality of places that have not been hatched in a single moment. Neither Poundbury nor any Modernist *Truman Show* can ever inspire our affection as do the ecosystems of piecemeal growth. Rather than imagining a face off between, say, Poundbury and Accordia, should we place them in the same category of well-intentioned but over-determined efforts to achieve the impossible feat of instant placemaking?

If turning the dial a few notches towards Modernism reduces the creep factor, it will be interesting to see whether, beyond the control of the Duchy of Cornwall and its improving landlord-prince, the strengths of the Poundbury model can grow without their Classical trappings. At Roussillon Park in Chichester, Ben Pentreath, a major young contributor to recent Poundbury phases, has worked with William Smalley to design terraces whose stripped classicism in grey brick is a whispering bone-structure rather than a jaunty hat and necktie.

Is Accordia, with its Modernist clarity, any more than a mere arm's reach from this sort of stripped Georgian, or is Modernism, by cosying up to classicism, denying its birthright to innovate technically, spatially and artistically? Is the discussion really about the predilections of house buyers and mortgage lenders falling into a narrow band of acceptable choices, rather than anything more fundamental about the vital question of town building in the 21st century?

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Viewpoints

MICHAEL SORKIN

On the legendary doyenne of American architectural criticism

Ada Louise Huxtable died early this year aged 91. She was the first full-time architectural critic at an American daily paper, *The New York Times*, setting the pattern and tone for a small legion of successors, and was central to establishing the relevance of architecture in the American mass media. Her writing was succinct and elegant, well-attuned to the journalistic short form, and it truly embodied the style of the times, not to mention *The Times*.

In a fine piece of genre-bending media inter-textuality, Huxtable is a key period reference in *Mad Men*, the popular TV show about Madison Avenue in the '60s. This was the era in which Huxtable's sensibility found shape and the acuity of the look and affect of the show cannily embodies the core context, if not the values, of her taste and purpose. The sight of those advertising executives working to encompass their corrupt creativity along with the lifestyle and political changes of the era – feminism, civil rights, Vietnam, sex, drugs, rock and roll – as it devolves on the waxing and waning of lapels, the downward progress of sideburns, reefer in the office, and the whole mid-century look put me in mind of Ada Louise, for her having been the antithesis of such faddishness.

While Huxtable's work cannot be described as counter-cultural and she had little to write about the implications for architecture of the planetary events that roiled the times, she did have a strong moral centre and her eye was good, if narrowly focused. She was conscious that society was moving around her and found her vocation in trying to supply an anchor in the consensus of a great tradition, the stability of quality. Her prose was economical, cadenced and laced with apt zingers and she set a high standard of commitment in the tenacity of her affection for High Modernist architecture (her tooth tended to crispy clean IM Pei, the better Bunshaft, the Modernist Philip), in her powerful sense of the importance of the historic layering of the city, and her contempt for the vapidities of mass consumption. She did not suffer fools and she understood much about the position of architecture at the nexus of money and an often malfeasant governance. She was less concerned with popular forms of participation and betrayed little interest in the indecorous visual extravagances and experiments of a planet in rebellion and youth culture pretty much passed her by. Nor was she particularly engaged with environmental issues.

Huxtable's last collection, of 2008, is prefaced with an anecdote about a 'distinguished French journalist' who asks, 'Just what polemical position do you write from, Madame?' Treating this as a daft question reveals both Huxtable's viewpoint and her limitations. Her own formation as an art historian in the last days of old-time Kunstwissenshaft left her inclined to see the critic's role as an assessor of the *seriousness* – the correctness – of form. That she did not see this as a 'polemical position' speaks both to rapid shifts in theory and criticism (much of it part of a great French emanation) which did not attract Huxtable and to a conservatism in her understanding of the function of criticism at that present time.

Huxtable's outlook – its purview descending through her successors at *The Times* until a turning to greater social engagement by the most recent – involved an over-identification of architecture with architects. Looking back at her oeuvre, I was struck by its lack of real dialogue with that other great urban critic of the day: Jane Jacobs. In a sense, they'd complicitly divvied up the territory of critique, with Huxtable the guardian and connoisseur of form and Jacobs its effects. To be sure, Huxtable staunchly promoted a certain kind of community value, especially the dignity of the public realm and the visual character of the street: her special bane was bad institutional buildings, government pomposity, disorderly impositions on the spaces of collective memory.

It was as voice for what is now inadequately called 'preservation' that she was at her strongest. She loved Beaux-Arts architecture and was clarion for the protection of New York's monuments, from Penn Station to Grand Central to the Customs House. Just a month before she died, she published an incisive critique on behalf of New York's great public library, a masterpiece by Carrère and Hastings about to be trashed by its nominal custodians to install a limp Norman Foster design for a circulating library in the space now occupied by its remarkable, structural, cage of stacks. The critic at her best: impassioned, learned, acute, rising powerfully in defence of an architecture of real value and real values.

LAST WORDS

'Wang Shu is welcome proof that China's architectural future doesn't have to discard its past'

Citation from *Time Magazine*'s 2013 annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world

'There are no good writers in Los Angeles'

Thom Mayne responds to the *LA Times* critic Christopher Hawthorne's characterisation of his Perot Museum in Dallas as 'one of the pricey, preening old breed'. *Architect's Newspaper* blog, 29 April

'Le Corbusier was the Eddie Izzard of the architecture world'

Charles Knevitt in his one-man show at the Chelsea Arts Club, *Le Corbusier's Women*, 21 April

Your views

A riff on the music of architecture

I was intrigued by Charles Jencks' 'Architecture Becomes Music' (AR May 2013), especially since I have found that the only aesthetic tools (or 'tuning forks') you have in the everyday architectural toolbox that can lift an otherwise humdrum design are proportion and colour. I was therefore disappointed to find in his visionary article no explicit reference to the Fibonacci series/golden section, nor to experimental psychologist Jean Dauven's research into the correspondence between musical sounds and colours.

As regards the proportion tuning-fork, the Fibonacci series/golden section is interwoven into the very fabric of our existence: nature, the human body, works of art and many everyday items express the golden section through the Fibonacci sequence (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 21, 34 ...), the golden ratio (1:1.618 ...) becoming more accurate as the numbers increase. Known to the ancient Egyptians and their Greek students, this enigmatic sequence/section (how the one becomes many) is a theme common to Harmonics (number in time). Also, the most pleasing musical intervals, the octave (2:1), the fifth (3:2), and the major and minor sixths (5:3 and 8:5) are the first Fibonacci series approximations to the golden ratio. Furthermore, the golden section has been used by composers from Dufay, to Bach, Bartók and Sibelius, as a way of structuring a work of music; in the same way, Le Corbusier used the Modulor, his particular interpretation of the Fibonacci series, golden section and Leonardo's Vitruvian Man, to structure his architectural works.

As regards the colour tuning-fork, Jean Dauven in his *Sur la correspondance entre les sons musicaux et les couleurs* (1970) proved that colour and sound share the same vibration rates, confirming the experience of harmonious rhythms shared by the eye and the ear. His work reveals the seven rainbow colour bands corresponding to the seven notes of the rising musical scale, viz: G (violet), A (indigo), B (blue), C (green), D (yellow), E (orange), and F (red). Furthermore, within this seven-colour wheel, there are seven tonic chords corresponding to seven colour harmony triads, eg, A minor (A-C-E), corresponds to the indigo-green-orange triad – reminiscent of the sight of an orange tree in fruit, its leaves casting dark blue shadows.

Trevor Jones, Cheveley

I enjoyed Charles Jencks' musings on music and architecture, but I thought his selection of the facade of the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies as an exemplar of harmonic form was somewhat ironic: the building might look good but it has some of the worst acoustics I have ever experienced. Since it's a library, this isn't really on – unfortunate readers can hear a pin dropped on the other side of the building amplified to a sonic boom.

Matt White, London

Loos paper

One hundred years ago, Adolf Loos complained that 'the architect has reduced the noble art of building to a graphic art. The one who receives the most commissions is not the one who can build best but the one whose work looks best on paper. There is a world of difference between the two.' I wonder then what he would have made of last month's AR, devoted as it was to 'representation'? Would he have enjoyed trawling through the pages of imaginary architecture, produced by the pencil or worse, the machine – this digital froth floating on a sea of bullshit theory, these virtual and virtually pointless late capitalist simulations, utterly detached from real places and real people? What would he think of the shows at architecture schools, where every year you can see the future of architecture disappear ever further up its own fundament, the excess smeared off onto presentation sheets? And what, finally, would he have thought of the built results of our SketchUp dependency? 'What is really terrible ... is to see an architectural drawing ... carried out in stone, iron and glass. The sign that a building arises from a genuine feel for architecture is that it makes no impression as a two-dimensional representation.'

Candy Spender, New York

William the grate?

I'm a big fan of William JR Curtis's criticism: I thought his puncturing of the pretensions of Louvre Lens, for example, was spectacularly apt. So it pains me to say it, but you *can* have too much of a good thing. His *Viewpoints* in last month's AR was exceptionally self regarding – I know it's meant to be a personal view, but this author's field of vision seems to be filled by his own navel.

I was also at the lecture he gave at the V&A in the AR's Architecture& series. His presentation of his own holiday snaps, his own drawings, and his constant self-citations combined to leave a wry smile on the lips. What this all had to do with 'Architecture & Meaning' was beyond me, unless the meaning of architecture is narcissism – and perhaps in our era of Starchitects that is the case, after all.

Mr Curtis seems to have joined that select cohort of academic *éminences grises* who become so specialised that in the end they are left talking to themselves. Jean-Louis Cohen's insufferably self-adulatory talk at the Richard Pare show at the RA was another recent example, so at least he is in good company. But perhaps we could have more focus on external rather than internal events: as a lone voice of real criticism, that is where Curtis can't be beaten.

Anne Farmer, Haywards Heath

Letters to the Editor should be sent to:
The Architectural Review
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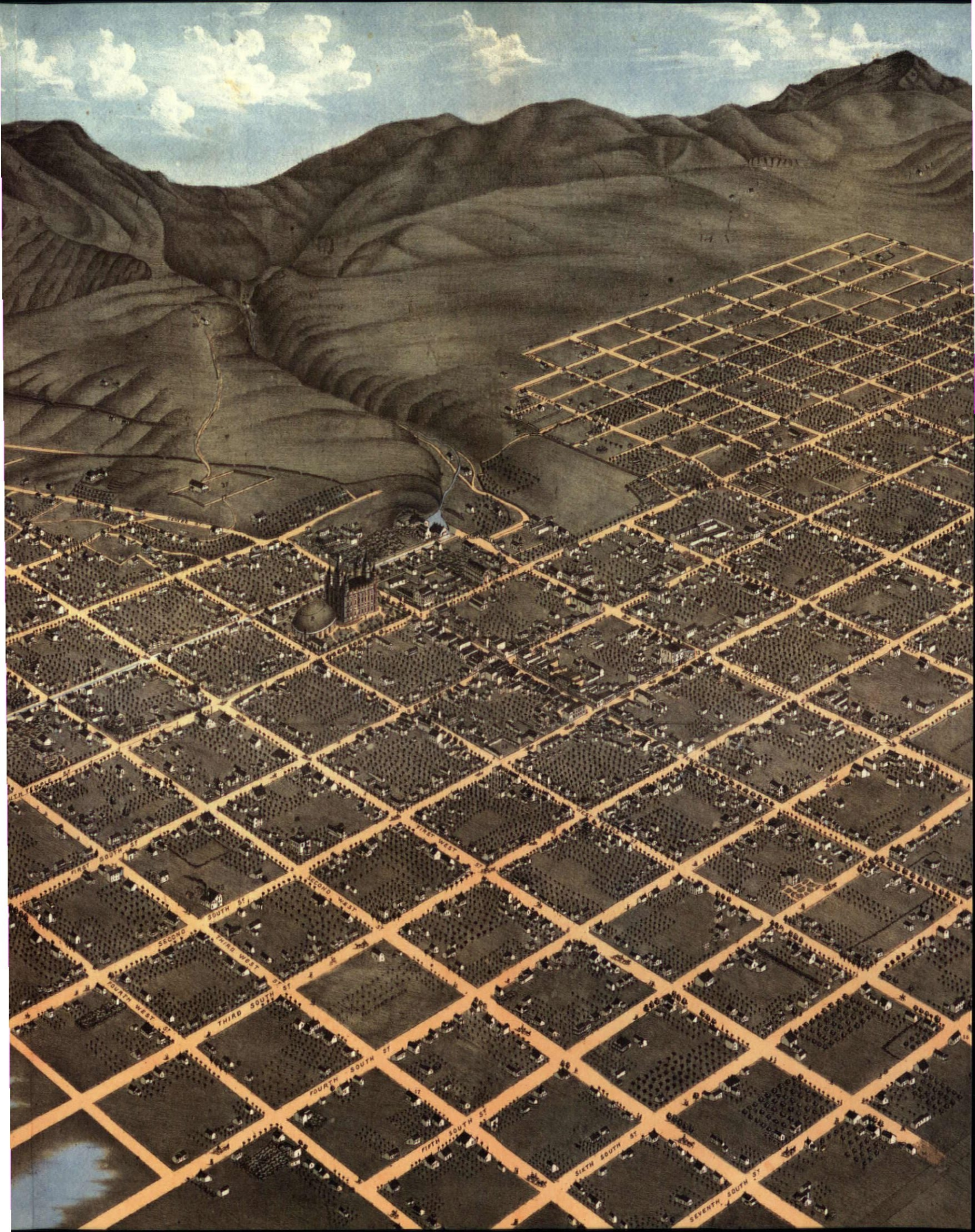
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FIRST WEST ST.
SECOND WEST ST.
THIRD WEST ST.
FOURTH WEST ST.

Governments, developers, architects, universities – not to mention sociologists and anthropologists – are increasingly aware that the possibilities for digital exchange are no substitute for our fundamental need for face-to-face social interaction. This issue constitutes a conscious attempt to reassert the importance of the physical neighbourhood: the realm of chance encounters and enforced coexistence, as opposed to the online 'community' which is an abstract, transient, highly-edited world based on a single point of interest and exited at will. It celebrates the work of those who are seeking to create environments that satisfy the human desire for company, but also for friction, conflict and debate; environments that offer opportunities to share resources and information, but also to battle out differences. Perhaps most importantly, it acknowledges the fact that the built form and spatial organisation of a neighbourhood – or university campus – is an important expression of collective values and shared rituals; an outward projection of a sense of self that transcends the sum of its individual parts. **Isabel Allen and Will Hunter**

This view of Salt Lake City was drawn in 1870, less than 25 years after the foundation of its grid. Throughout the issue we celebrate the pivotal role of pioneers, but we also explore the relationship between singular visionaries and collective action; between the provision of infrastructure and the framing of intimacy; and between the individual neighbour and the neighbourhood

RAISE THE ROOF

Drawing on traditions of scholarliness and non-conformity, Wang Shu's new guesthouse for the China Academy of Art adds to the remote campus neighbourhood that he has been building for over a decade

1. (Previous page) the complex wood and steel structure supporting the roof of the Wa Shan Guesthouse designed by Wang Shu, 2013
2. Greenery is gradually taking hold of the School of Architecture, which is set amid lakes and open courtyards in phase two of the Xiangshan Campus. The AR first published the campus in July 2008

2

REPORT

EDWARD DENISON AND GUANG YU REN

Last year the architectural world was given a jolt when for the first time in its 34-year history the distinguished Pritzker Prize was awarded to somebody from mainland China. Wang Shu was a relative unknown in architectural circles, let alone beyond its narrow orbit. The intervening 12 months have been an expedited education not only for those who knew little or nothing about this elusive professional, but also for Wang who is unaccustomed to the limelight and uncomfortable in its glare. After a year of almost constant travelling and official obligations, Wang has returned to the east coast city of Hangzhou, home to the China Academy of Art where he is Dean of the School of Architecture, to oversee the final stages in the construction of the new guesthouse and reception centre at the Academy's Xiangshan Campus, his first building to be completed since the Pritzker award.

Nestled in the mountains south-west of Hangzhou, the campus is not only where Wang works: it is his work. He designed all 22 buildings constructed in two phases over nine years. The Wa Shan (Tile Mountain) guesthouse is the start of the third phase, which will soon incorporate works by other architects: Alvaro Siza and Kengo Kuma. The opportunity for one architect to have designed an entire campus on this scale is perhaps unprecedented and it has coincided with Wang's ascent from reluctant local architect to global icon, or at the very least a champion of the non-conformist. The three phases reflect the evolution in Wang's architectural language over the last decade, while creating a tranquil academic neighbourhood fostering a community of more than 6,000 students and staff from four university departments: Architecture, Design, Public Art, and Media and Animation.

Wang joined the China Academy of Art in 2000, teaching in the Department of Environmental Design, before becoming Dean of the newly established School of Architecture in 2007. Architecture's incorporation into this esteemed institution has been an important development for China, and indeed the world, as the most populous country (and soon to be largest economy) seeks to surpass the West, while Western organisations desperate not to forgo the fruits of China's unparalleled growth wrestle to forge links with local partners. Despite being China's premier institution for art education, the China Academy of Art, like Wang, has prospered from relative anonymity compared with big universities in the country's major cities. The Academy prides itself on its progressive origins in 1928, when it was founded by China's first Minister of Education, Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), and the pioneering artist and promoter of a synthesis of Eastern (*guohua*) and Western (*xihua*) techniques, Lin Fengmian (1900-91).

The traditions of both the China Academy of Art and Hangzhou, an ancient city renowned for its natural and cultural heritage, are crucial factors in Wang's scheme for the Xiangshan Campus and especially the Wa Shan guesthouse. The impact of these factors on the appearance, form and meaning of these designs are perhaps, as is often the case when it comes to matters concerning China, obscure to Western eyes. In conversation with Wang, he goes to considerable lengths to explain. Far from being a justification of his work, his account reveals an idealistic zeal and profound passion for art and scholarship, and their role in professional practice, understanding history and improving society. He is fascinated, possessed even, by the literati – the scholarly mandarins that, by exerting influence throughout the kingdom and across all social strata, were the unofficial rulers of China for over two millennia. The literati class was born not out of wealth but out of intellect. Morality and virtuosity governed their realm and art was their means of expression conveyed through the three pre-eminent art forms: poetry, painting

Wa Shan Guesthouse, Xiangshan Campus, The China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, Wang Shu

3

4

3. One of the many different configurations of courtyard at the Xiangshan Campus, here in the School of Architecture. Timber screens are used to enclose the ground floor and upper floor corridors
4. Reclaimed building materials used to create a *wa pian qiang* (clay-tile wall), a vernacular building technique peculiar to this region of China that has become a feature of Wang's work

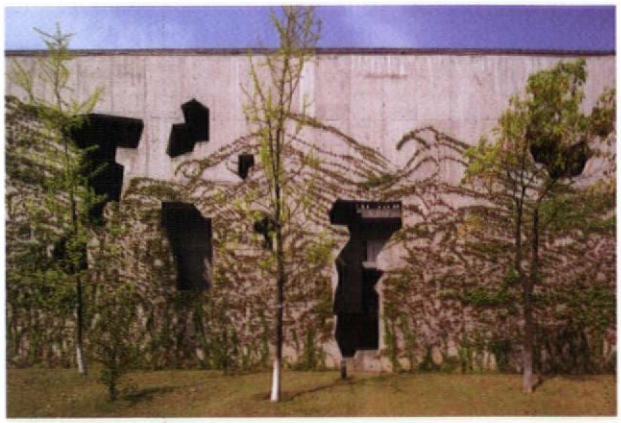
and calligraphy. In 1911, the literati were among the many casualties that followed China's turbulent transition from Imperialism to Republicanism.

Over a century later, during which Republicanism was replaced by Communism, many Chinese question the present convulsions reshaping the country, threatening its venerable culture and straining its communities. Wang is mindful that the moral and virtuous basis of the bygone literati system has an alluring appeal to critics of China's recent development and the associated economic inequality. A strong moral code, pure artistic expression and scholarly detachment were essential facets of the literati class – a far cry from the acquisitive ruling classes that are increasingly seen as the cause of China's present ills. But although the literati system may have died a century ago, its significance has not. Its roots, which have always run deep in Hangzhou, continue to be cultivated at the China Academy of Art, and in Wang's latest work are beginning to bud and blossom.

Uncomfortable with the role and label of architect, Wang sees his position more akin to the literati tradition, using art to influence and improve things. Architecture was not considered an art form in China until the early 20th century when the first Chinese graduates started returning from an overseas education. For Wang though, it is not the method of artistic expression that is important but its purpose. The liberated artist, whether an architect, poet, painter or calligrapher, has, in his view, two choices: to become a recluse or an activist. For him, the latter honours the literati tradition and it is the path he has chosen to take. For him it is the only means by which to effect change while evading the endless cycle of revolution and counter-revolution that consumes the masses. Being autonomous, the literati could be both subversive and politically active, and herein lies Wang's determination to remain outside the mainstream while pursuing his art. Nonconformity defines not only his unique approach to building, but his entire outlook on life, from the title of the practice that he shares with his wife, Lu Wenyu, 'Amateur Architecture Studio', to his role at the China Academy of Art.

Xiangshan Campus offered him and Lu Wenyu the opportunity to engage in architectural practice on their terms. He admits, perhaps too modestly, that what they have created here is not the real world. The project was commissioned by their employer with a sizeable budget in an ample and picturesque setting. Unlike most commercial jobs, Xiangshan Campus granted them an extended licence to experiment and that is one of its chief appeals; it is clearly a seedbed and a work in progress, not a haughty attempt at perfection. The site of the campus surrounds a small mountain ridge that is a fragment of the mountainous terrain that blankets much of southern China and peters out as it meets the vast plains of the Yangtze delta. The rugged landscape not only provides the backdrop to Wang's overall scheme, it is the inspiration behind it.

The first phase, 2004-07, is to the north of the mountain. Forming a ribbon of independent concrete structures that extend from the campus's main entrance at the east of the site to a recreation ground in the north-west corner, the nine buildings are laid out on a relatively conventional plan and linked by pedestrian walkways. At the centre of the group, four large buildings are arranged around courtyards, one of Wang's trademark features that he uses both literally and in abstraction. Here he has used them both in the conventional enclosed manner and adapted by opening them up on one side to give framed panoramas of the scenery. The long horizontal bands of timber screens that function as shutters to upper floor corridors and doorways to ground floor spaces in these courtyards soften the building's concrete skeleton and break up the facade with



'The liberated artist, whether an architect, poet, painter or calligrapher, has two choices: to become a recluse or an activist'

5. Jagged openings break up the monotony of a concrete wall, framing views of the building within and the landscape outside in the manner of the patterned windows commonly used in traditional Chinese garden design
6. (Opposite) detail of one of the dormitory blocks. The walls of irregular fenestration are partially concealed behind narrow concrete struts appearing like a blanched bamboo forest

irregular openings that create another feature of his work – an intermediary space, neither interior nor exterior.

Wang famously spent eight years (1990-98) away from architecture getting his hands dirty on construction sites rather than controlling a mouse on a screen (which he still refuses to do), to hone his skills in the craft of building. The experience is evident in the characteristic tactility of his work and his skill in using different materials. The campus's first phase draws from a palette of concrete, steel, wood, bamboo, brick, glass and clay tiles, which would be augmented by other materials in later phases. Inevitably, experiments have not always been successful. The 13-storey glass and concrete tower is the least inspiring of the nine structures. It is a rare example of high-rise structures in Wang's portfolio, which he has entertained more successfully in the Vertical Courtyard in Hangzhou.

The second phase, 2007-11, comprising 13 buildings arranged around the southern side of the mountain, displays a marked development in Wang's approach. Unlike the previous phase, the plan is irregular and obscure, creating complex and unexpected relationships between the buildings and the landscape. Exposed corners jar with formal elevations and informal vistas are framed by semi-enclosed courtyards or jagged openings in concrete walls that recall the patterned windows of the traditional Chinese garden. The entire scheme is crisscrossed by elevated walkways that wind their diagonal course around and through the buildings breaking down the horizontality of the facades and binding the whole scheme physically and functionally. The twin dormitory blocks, with their walls of irregular fenestration behind narrow concrete struts appearing like a blanched bamboo forest, are connected to the spacious refectory arranged around an inner courtyard, which in turn looks into the café that operates from the hulking body of converted steam engine overlooking a large stream: an unconventional scene where an unconventional neighbourhood unwinds. Everywhere the often forced and wearisome intensity of standard academic environments has been broken down, softened by the profusion of lakes, streams, trees, pathways, bamboo groves, benches, courtyards and open grassland. Here is an academic neighbourhood where established boundaries separating work and leisure are thoroughly blurred; whose creator once responded to comments that classrooms could be too dark: 'Who said teaching had to be conducted inside?'

Wang admits he is a nonconformist and he appears to thrive on challenging architectural convention, which has attracted disapproval from some peers and commentators. There are those who claim the excessive creative freedom in the Xiangshan Campus project has compromised the functionality and performance of the architecture.

Wang is aware of this criticism and sensitive to it, but whether a supporter or detractor, the academic neighbourhood at Xiangshan has an enviable status and the innovations that this project has cultivated have been instrumental in other successes that have helped gain him international recognition. The *wa pian qiang* (clay-tile wall), for example, is one of the key elements of the Ningbo History Museum (2008) (AR March 2010), reconstituting the ruins of the villages that once occupied the site. The innovation of bamboo formwork that makes its mark in the campus's concrete walls can also be found, albeit slightly adapted, at Ningbo. And the graceful arc of the majestic Chinese roof that has been abstracted in concrete to cover the School of Architecture buildings remerges in Hangzhou's Zhongshan Road redevelopment (2011).

The distillation of ideas, refinement of old techniques and exploration of new ones are developed in the third phase, but what separates this latest addition from the previous two phases is Wang's motivation. His maverick approach and respect for the literati tradition have always informed his work, but at Wa Shan they become physically manifest. The site occupies a slither of land on the banks of a river at the foot of the mountain. As with the previous two phases, the environment shaped the design, but the proximity of the mountain and water were crucial for Wang and nourished his sensitivity for tradition and a sense of place.

The project was first proposed in 2006 when six obsolete houses from the '90s occupied the site. Wang's original plan was to replace these with six new structures totalling 5,000sqm, but the project stalled and by the time it finally resumed in 2011 he had decided on a significant modification: the use of rammed earth. The incorporation of this material, which (like the *wa pian qiang*, bamboo and stone) is found in local vernacular structures, demanded a fundamental redesign and the conception of its most conspicuous feature – the 100m long roof – which protects the earthen walls from the heavy rains that make this one of the most fertile regions in the world.

The roof is the design's central element, physically and conceptually. Wherever you are in relation to the building, the roof is omnipresent with its mass of wooden struts on its underside concealing its steel structure. Beyond framing the landscape and providing shelter, the roof stages views, accommodates the assorted buildings beneath its rising and falling canopy, and on occasions opens up to flood courtyards with natural light. It is a versatile landscape too. The vast blanket of grey tiles covering the roof becomes a landscape in a literal sense, with gardens, courtyards and a pathway snaking over its peaks and disappearing into the valleys like the famous Great Wall.

Wa Shan Guesthouse, Xiangshan Campus, The China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, Wang Shu

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'The roof is used as a unifying medium in the same way that literati painters used the mountainscape in traditional landscape painting'

7. One of the residential units in the Wa Shan Guesthouse showing the complex roof structure and walls of rammed earth
8. Site plan of the Xiangshan Campus showing the mountain in the centre of the site with the buildings of phase one (2004-07) to the north and phase two (2007-11) to the south, with Wa Shan Guesthouse (2013) on the banks of a stream at the foot of the mountain. Drawing by Guang Yu Ren
9. (Opposite, above) an early sketch by Wang Shu for the design of Wa Shan Guesthouse
10. (Opposite, below) section and plan of Wa Shan Guesthouse drawn by Wang Shu

However, to associate the roof with a mountainscape only in a physical sense belies a more thoughtful intention. Wang uses the roof as a unifying medium in the same way that literati painters used the mountainscape in traditional landscape painting. Their aim was to create a scene that encapsulated the experiences of someone in this natural setting. They were not attempting to convey reality in a single image, but rather a series of experiences or feelings. The literati called these landscape paintings Shan Shui Hua (Mountain Water Painting). Mountains and water are the two essential elements of this form of Chinese art.

The same two elements are integral to the rural vernacular of Zhejiang Province, from which Wang draws so much inspiration. It is mountains and water that bring together the components for the architectural design of Wa Shan: the literati tradition, Hangzhou's heritage, the campus plan, and the site itself – facing a river with its back to a mountain. Wa Shan is his attempt to translate the two-dimensional form and meaning of traditional Chinese landscape painting into a three-dimensional spatial experience – to convert an ancient art form into modern architecture. In describing architecture's role in this process of translation he draws on another of the literati's art forms: poetry, which he sees as the ultimate art form. Feelings and experiences, he explains, do not make a poem

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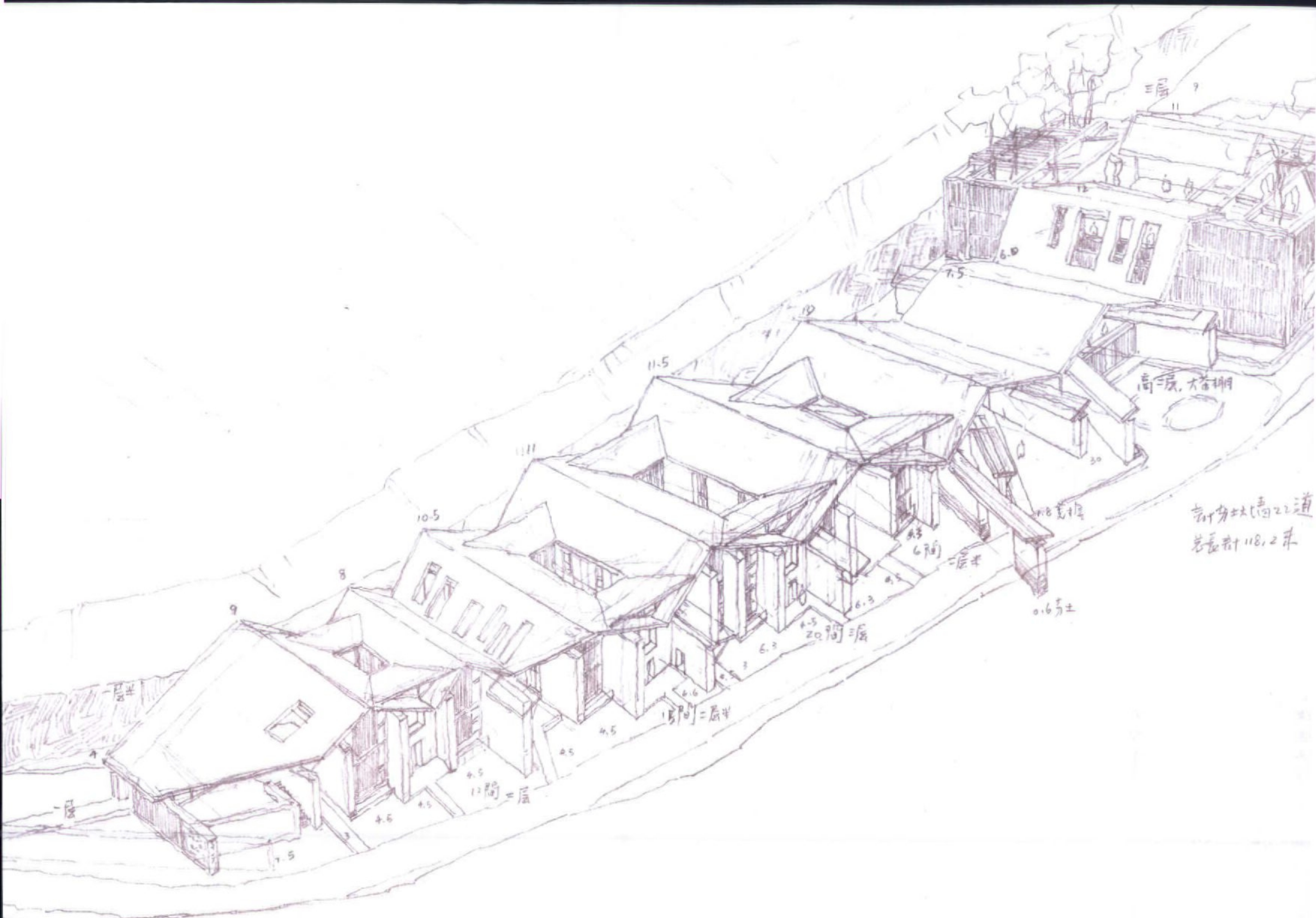
until they have been placed in some kind of structure. The process of translating profound thoughts and feelings into something that can be experienced by others (and in the case of architecture physically engaged with) is the aim of the artist and that is what Wang wants with Wa Shan.

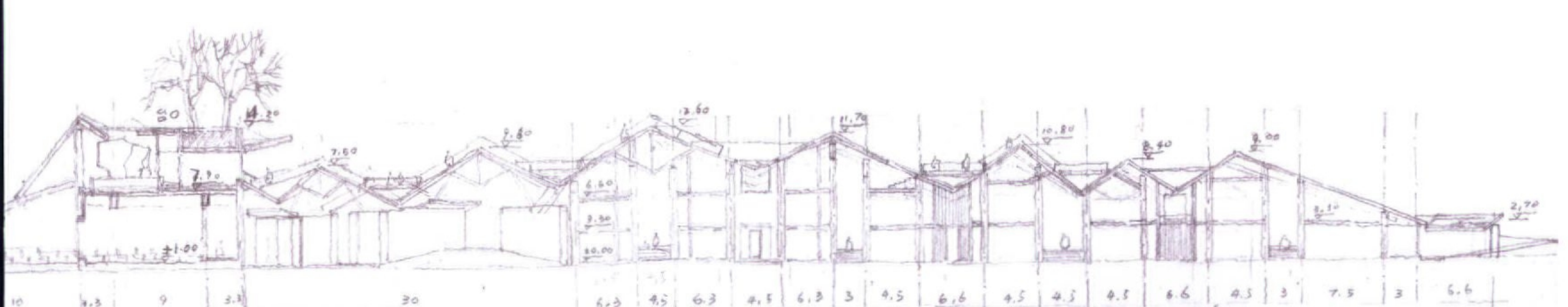
As he intended, the protracted building reads as separate experiences in a unified landscape. As you cross the building from one section to the next, from the dining area to the teahouse or one of the 30 private rooms to the conference hall, there is a sense of being in an artificial landscape – a film set or theatre stage – as the scenes dramatically change from one space to another: from a slender bridge hovering over water one moment to an open courtyard peering down on the river the next. The rhythm, explains Wang, derives from the Chinese classical landscape poetry from the Wei and Jin Periods (220-420AD), which had a short, relatively free structure. Like the space within Wa Shan, the poem moves swiftly from one setting to the next.

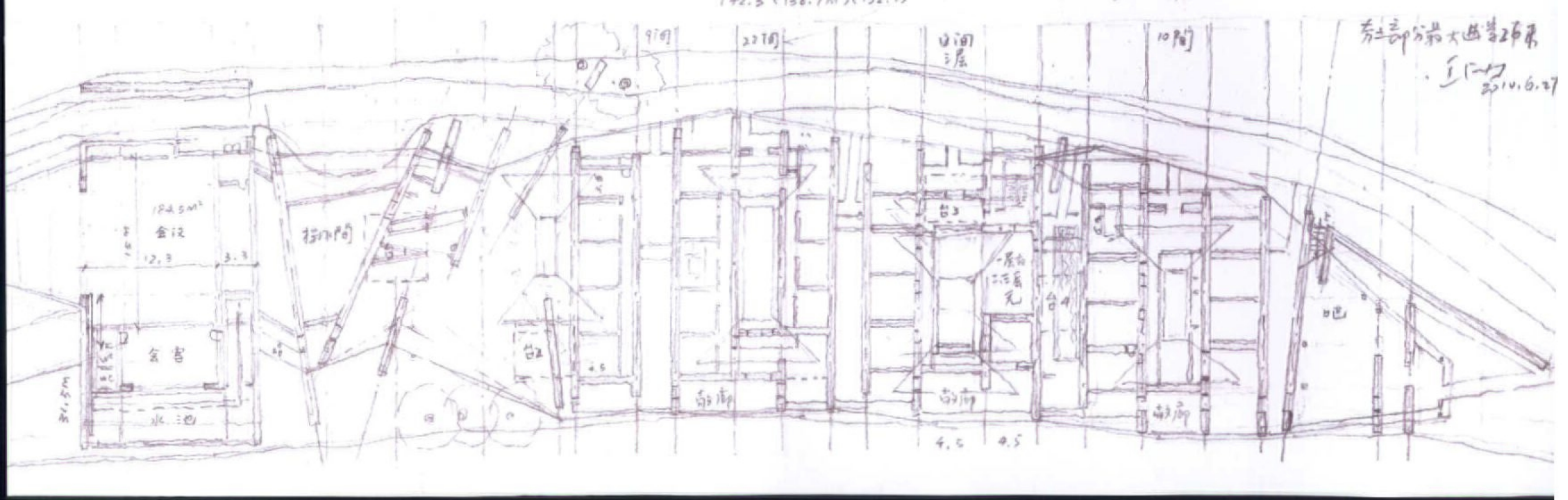
Wa Shan is both a progression and a distillation of the different phases that have fashioned this academic neighbourhood. Materially, the ochre tones of the rammed earth form buttresses and internal walls that complement the myriad surface textures within and outside the building: stone, brick, concrete, steel, tile, timber and bamboo. Permeable walls and screens, abstracted courtyards, tactile surfaces, framed views, blended materials, and unexpected routes and pathways around, through and uniting the various scenes are all established devices, but their amalgamation in a single building elevates it to an almost fantastical construction accommodating multiple journeys and explorations. The aim, explains Wang, is to give visitors a rounded experience of a mountain. Three different pathways lead from the main reception through the building on three different levels – ground floor, first floor and the rooftop – allowing visitors to navigate their way around this landscape in the knowledge that at the end of the journey they can find rest in their room, the primordial cave.

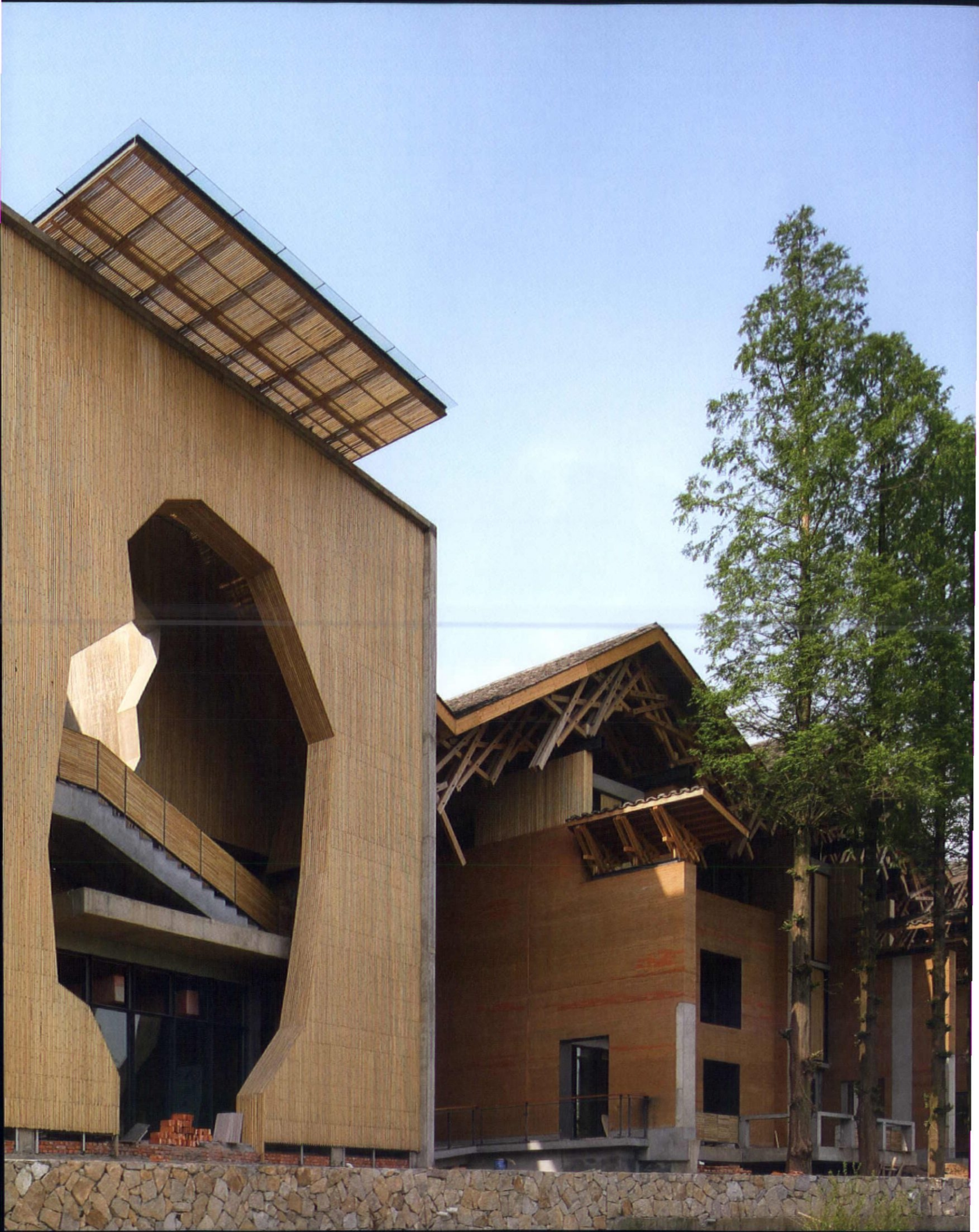
Critics might claim Wa Shan is a Modernist structure in elaborate clothing, but although Wang's work owes a debt to Modernism, his innovative approach and assimilation of traditions transcends this unwieldy label, producing an architectural language of sophistication and originality. As China concentrates on its own version of modernity, Wang's surprise entry onto the world's architectural stage is timely enough, but he would be the first to acknowledge that it is the young men and women being educated on the campus he designed that will face the biggest challenges in their lifetime. At least at Xiangshan Campus they have been given the best possible start in life.

Wa Shan Guesthouse, Xiangshan Campus, The China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, Wang Shu









Wa Shan Guesthouse, Xiangshan Campus, The China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, Wang Shu

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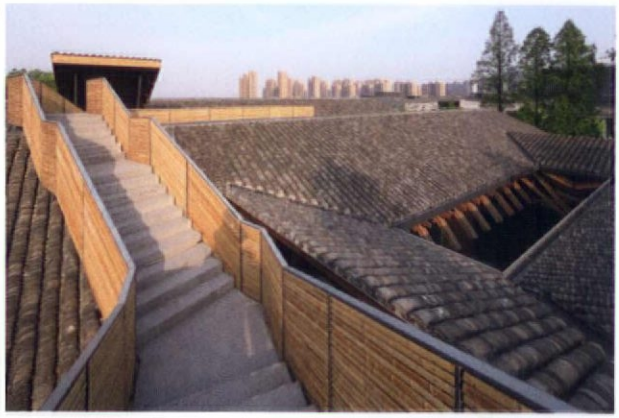

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11. (Previous page) south elevation of the Wa Shan Guesthouse showing the wide variety of different materials used, including concrete, steel, timber, bamboo and tile, stone and brick in the *wa pian qiang* (clay-tile wall)
12. (Left) north elevation of the Wa Shan Guesthouse showing the complex roof structure, walls of rammed earth and footbridges linking it to the mountain
13. A section of the vast 100m-long roof of grey tiles which forms a landscape with gardens, courtyards and a pathway snaking up and over its peaks and disappearing into the valleys
14. One of the pathways that lead through the different scenes within the building, here ascending to the roof

Wa Shan Guesthouse, Xiangshan Campus, The China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, Wang Shu

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15. (Previous page) south elevation of the Wa Shan Guesthouse, showing some of the different scenes that Wang has created under one roof
16. Detail showing the concrete structure lined with bamboo strips on one side and supporting *wa pian qiang* (clay-tile wall) on another

17. (Right) west elevation of the Wa Shan Guesthouse lined with bamboo strips and recycled materials to form Wang's characteristic *wa pian qiang* (clay-tile wall). The wooden rafters conceal a steel structure that supports a canopy over a semi-open space

Architect
Wang Shu
Photographs
Edward Denison

PIONEER SPIRIT

New neighbourhoods should be socially, as well as physically, constructed. *Isabel Allen* argues that the eccentricity and evangelism of determined visionaries trumps public sector policy every time

'If you build it, they will come.' President Roosevelt's prediction for the Panama Canal has become the mantra for all manner of *grands projets* and crackpot schemes, from Kevin Costner's baseball diamond in the 1989 film *Field of Dreams* to former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's plans – unveiled in 2007 – to build a string of eco-towns across the UK.

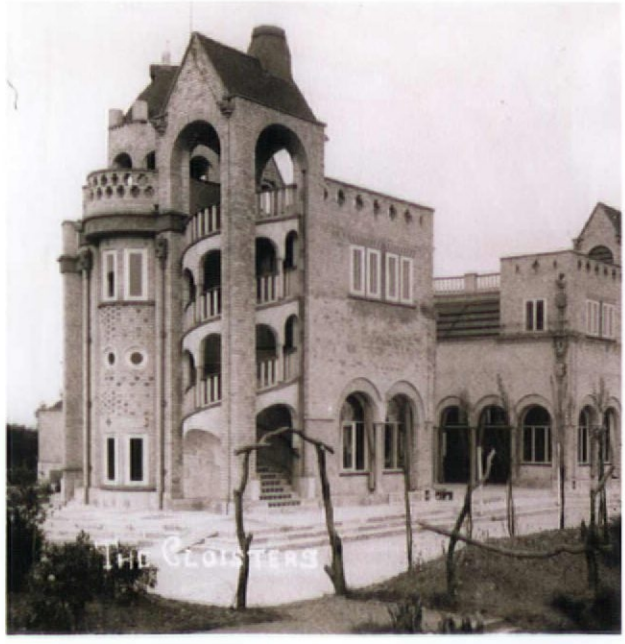
But canals and baseball fields are one thing; new neighbourhoods quite another. While it has distanced itself from the term 'eco-town', the British coalition government has pledged to speed up large-scale residential developments. But who are they actually for? The stock answer is a democratically inclusive 'anyone'. How do we know they'll come? We'll ask them what they want. Consultation is king.

But consulting 'anyone' is pretty much the same as consulting no one. In the absence of a clearly defined constituency, 'visioning' is left to hastily-assembled task forces and think tanks. Energy is channelled into courting those who might be able to access the obscene amounts of money required to launch such projects. And so begins a process which is the polar opposite of thinking, dreaming, exploring possibilities, of conjuring up a blueprint for a Brave New World. The frenzied hunt for project finance implies an inevitable slide towards conservatism. Investment decisions are based on 'official' and 'objective' predictions as to the value of the finished product. This magic number decreed by estate agents and marketeers.

But agents are programmed to sell – and so to value – properties as opposed to neighbourhoods. They trade in one-off transactions with individual clients. Property particulars present the house as a self-contained fiefdom: the Englishman's pint-sized castle. The neighbourhood is reduced to a footnote: Ofsted's assessment of the local school, the proximity of the local railway station and the standard insistence that leisure, retail and open space are reassuringly close at hand. They are not equipped – or inclined – to ascribe a value to that which they cannot sell. To communal facilities or public space, let alone to collective aspirations or societal change.

Big – shared – ideas take root in people, and conversation, in common purpose and shared dreams. As Lucy Musgrave points out in her article (page 54), the most

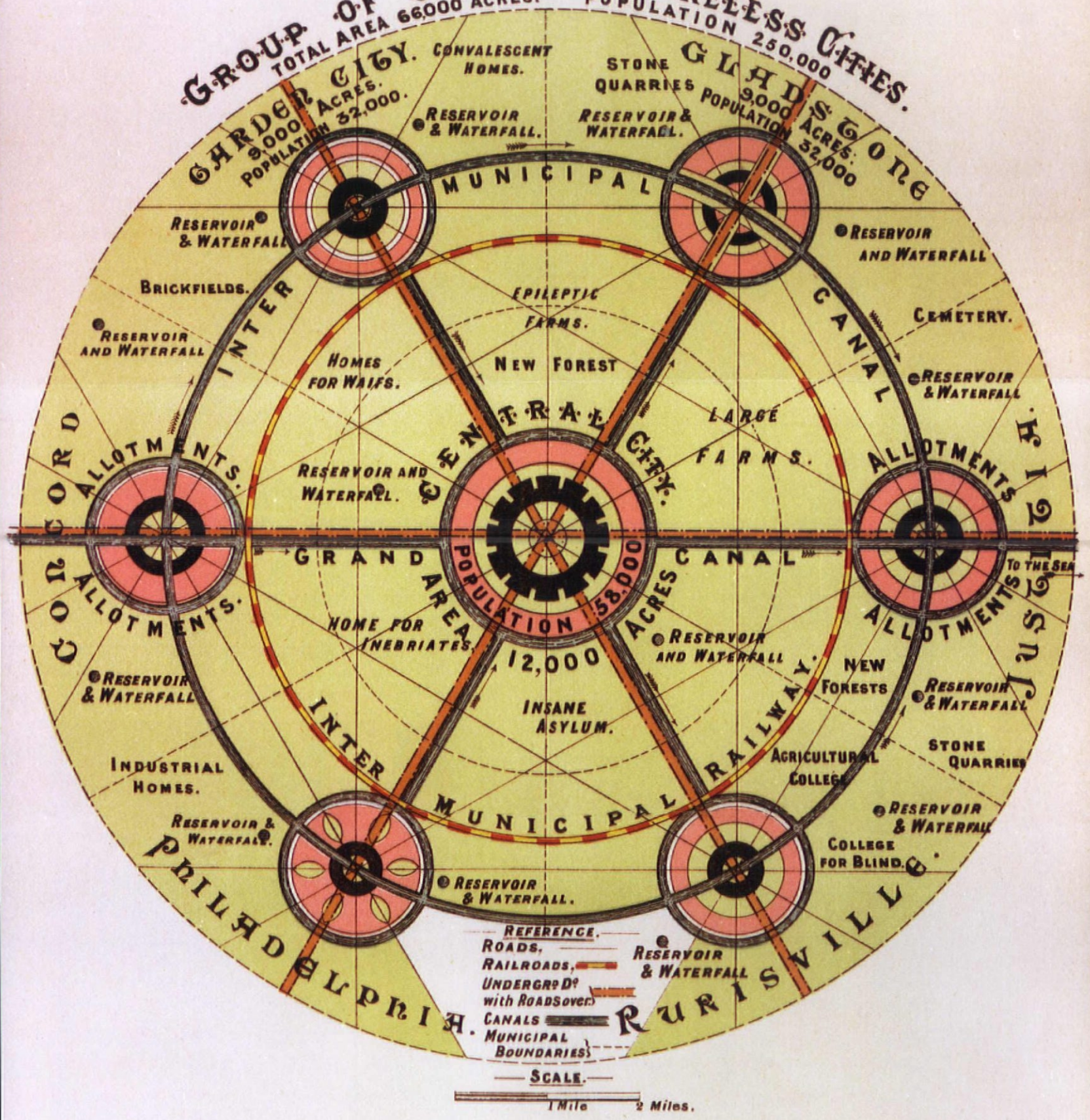
1. The Cloisters, an open-air school by the architect William Harrison Cowlishaw completed in 1907, is one of Letchworth Garden City's more eccentric anomalies
2. (Opposite) Ebenezer Howard's original Garden City concept produced in 1902



— Nº 7 —

GROUP OF SLUMLESS SMOKELESS CITIES.

TOTAL AREA 66000 ACRES. POPULATION 250,000



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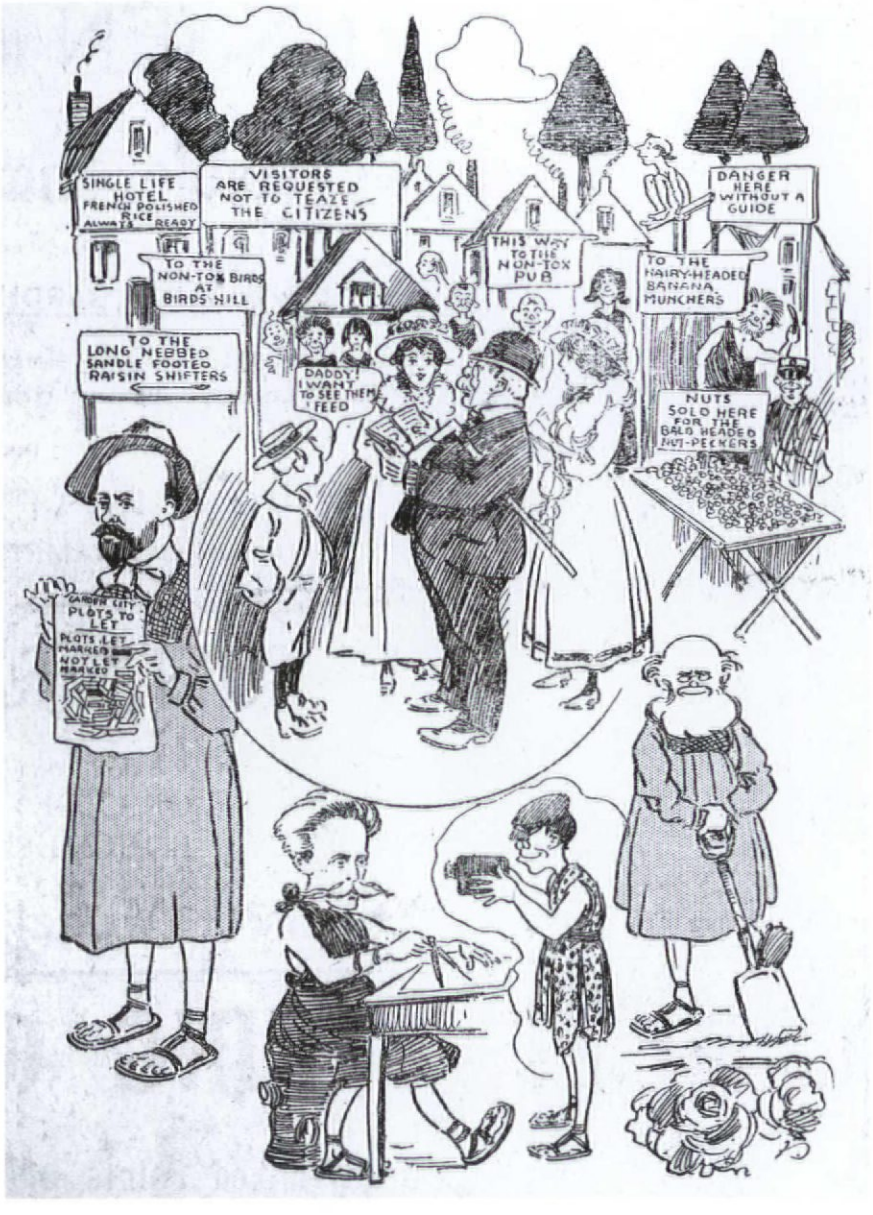

successful contemporary large-scale regeneration projects are shaped by consensus and community engagement. Post-earthquake Christchurch, while devastated, was also driven by a united populace armed with a shared repository of memories, cultural references, values and, perhaps most important of all, the 'war-time spirit' that thrives in the face of shared adversity. But what if the community has yet to be defined? How do you establish a collective consciousness where none of these bonds exists?

History suggests that you need a vision – an idea – that is strong enough to take root in the public imagination. That is sufficiently idiosyncratic to be anathema to some people, yet rich with promise to others. In his book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (originally published in 1898 as *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*), Ebenezer Howard communicated a vision that was so compelling and clear that it spawned Letchworth Garden City and a host of subsequent urban experiments from Hampstead Garden Suburb to Canberra, Australia's capital city.

Tribal instincts and caricatures

Now a byword for respectable suburbia, Letchworth attracted a very particular population – pithily characterised by George Orwell as 'every fruit juice drinker, nudist, sandal wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, nature cure quack, pacifist and feminist in England'. Orwell was not alone in voicing derision: its detractors included John Betjeman who devoted two poems – *Group Life: Letchworth* and *Huxley Hall* – to poking fun at the community's earnest utopianism.

Democratically elected governments cannot risk derision and scorn. Unlike, say, the Prince of Wales, who unapologetically threw his weight behind Poundbury's stylistic nostalgia (page p23), or Bill Dunster, who bullishly champions ZEDsquared (his design for a zero-carbon city block that can be replicated ad infinitum to produce a self-sufficient neighbourhood of any size required), our elected leaders sidestep issues of lifestyle or style. They paint a picture so nebulous and indistinct that nobody is offended – but nobody really cares.

They define their 'vision' in terms of quantifiable ambitions – carbon emissions, waste targets and so on. When pressed, they speak of families with children, the

'Letchworth attracted a very particular population – pithily characterised by George Orwell as: every fruit juice drinker, nudist, sandal wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, nature cure quack, pacifist and feminist in England'

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3. Cartoon by Louis Weirter published in Letchworth's local paper *The Citizen* in 1909. Residents were keenly aware of their reputation as mavericks and cranks
4. Students at the Cloisters slept on hammocks and studied theosophical meditation
5&6. An unapologetic exercise in stylistic nostalgia, Poundbury has proved to be a powerful magnet to those in search of the familiar language of a bygone age

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'Agents are programmed to sell – and so to value – properties as opposed to neighbourhoods. Property particulars present the house as a self-contained fiefdom: the Englishman's pint-sized castle. The neighbourhood is reduced to a footnote'

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7. Rieselfeld, one of two highly successful eco-suburbs in Freiburg, Germany
8. Freiburg's status as an eco-town pioneer may be a reflection of the fact that postwar planners reinstated the city centre's medieval, walkable street pattern, demonstrating that neighbourhoods work best when cars are relegated to a supporting role
9&10. Hab's early proposals for Pickard's Small Field in Swindon by Glenn Howells Architects. Parking is relegated to a wide perimeter road and a central square. Narrow side streets are the sole preserve of cyclists and pedestrians

essential building block of respectable Middle England. But respectability doesn't lend itself to radical urban change. Orwell's motley assortment of misfits finds its modern-day equivalent in the 'pioneer' demographic that has transformed Totnes from a sleepy backwater into an exemplar Transition Town.[1] Or indeed the writers, designers, film-makers, squatters and students that occupied the London slumlands of Camden, Clerkenwell and Shoreditch, turning them not into lawless urban jungles, but rather hotbeds of creativity, functioning neighbourhoods – and highly desirable real estate.

These newly-invented neighbourhoods have been shaped and honed by a populace that has the restless energy, the maverick spirit, to inhabit, invigorate and eventually reinvent places that have fallen on hard times; that works flexibly and lives sociably, bringing life to bars, cafés and streets; that deals in ideas and stories; that is driven to make sense of their surroundings, to tell stories, to communicate. Or to put it in the stultifying parlance of urban design, that creates the narrative of the neighbourhood and establishes a sense of place.

New neighbourhoods are viewed primarily as a means of supplementing the UK's housing stock – understandable given that we need to build an estimated 230,000 houses a year to keep pace with demand. This focus on the residential quarter – the suburb – views home-ownership as an end in itself. But our 'pioneers' want more than a ring-fenced place to live. They want a quality of life and a livelihood. They gravitate towards cheap, flexible working space; towards spaces that offer potential for a fluid relationship between work and play, and freedom from the shackles of nine-to-five employment and the daily commute.

Upside down and inside out

Every enlightened approach to development – from Smart Growth[2] to One Planet Living[3] – embraces the notion that residents should ideally be able to walk to work. At Hab,[4] we are looking at models that go further still; that offer the potential for work to be interwoven with leisure time and family life. We are familiar with the notion of progressive employers providing crèche facilities for employees. But what if we turn this model on its head? What if you build a school that offers flexible workspace too? Parents – even primary carers – could put in the same working days as their children. The school run and the work commute would be one and the same.

Perhaps, too, it's time to revisit, or reverse, conventions about working from home. Technology has liberated us from the workplace but, in so doing, condemned droves of workers to spend their days deprived of company and hidden from view. Could we build a neighbourhood that reasserts the social dimension of professional life?

What if we stop designing buildings that are either houses, or shops or commercial space, and start designing buildings that are either or both? What if we stop relegating the home-office to a space where filing cabinet and desk jockey for position with the sofa bed and celebrate it as the interface between the private dwelling and the public realm? Alison Brooks' housing at Newhall in Essex (page 62) starts to explore the potential for housing with a more active, open and dynamic ground floor establishing a more fluid relationship with the street. At Hab, we are exploring models that incorporate a 'shop window' at ground floor level – a move that offers the potential for home-working to have a public face, and that might just act as a prompt to would-be entrepreneurs. How many of us would open a shop, a restaurant, a bar, if the premises were immediately to hand?

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A neighbourhood of shopkeepers

There is, of course, a long-established precedent: the flat above the shop – a building type that is currently regarded as the *bête noire* of urban life. Images of battered high-streets with boarded-up ground floors have become the leitmotif of Broken Britain. Prime Minister David Cameron has famously drafted in Mary Portas, television's 'Queen of Shops', to help reverse the trend. Despite Portas's best efforts, somewhere between 20 and 30 British shops are closing down every day.

In fairness, the underlying causes are somewhat beyond her remit. Some – global recession, the rise of internet shopping – are beyond the place-makers' remit too. But others are intrinsic to the way existing neighbourhoods work: high parking fees that discourage shoppers; supermarkets offering cut-price competition; the tendency of boarded-up shops to trigger a downward spiral of abandonment and despair.

If we design our neighbourhoods in accordance with the 'five minute model' whereby residents can shop, work, learn and play without getting into a car, parking fees cease to act as a deterrent. If we design for small enterprise but expressly preclude the super-scale, the supermarket threat disappears. If the resident of the living space owns the commercial space too they have a vested interest in keeping the entire premises respectable. There is no reason for boarded-up shop space: if it isn't needed for commercial activity it is simply reclaimed as part of the house.

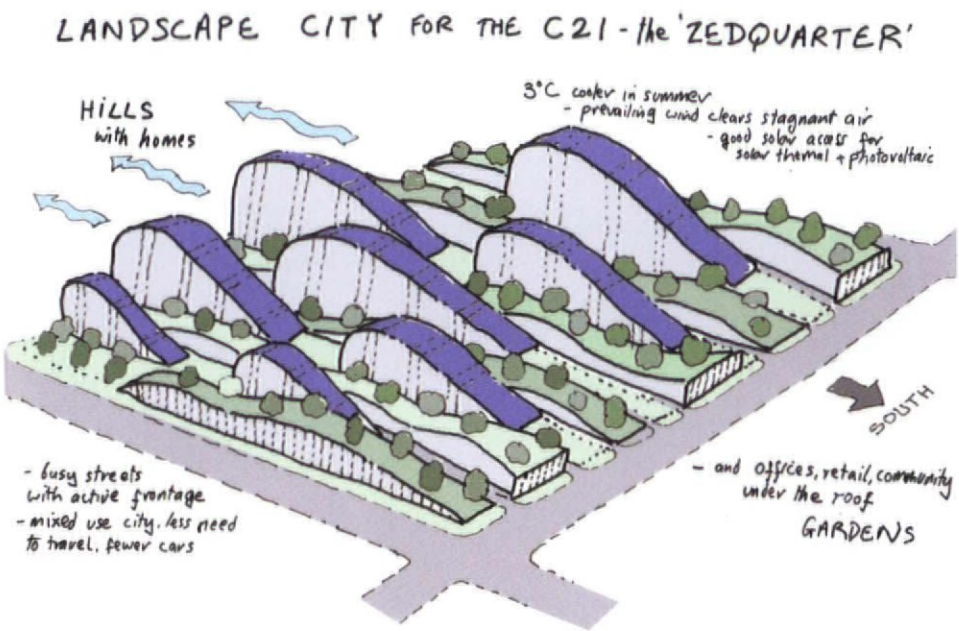
For this to work – for the ground floor of residential streets to have the capacity to become part of the public realm – we need to revisit assumptions about parking. The perceived wisdom that every self-respecting householder needs to be able to watch over the car – or cars – poses a natural barrier of vehicles between dwellings and the street. Our early proposals for Pickard's Small Field in Swindon, were for a car-free residential zone with narrow pedestrian streets surrounded by much wider boulevards with ample parking either side. 'Official' advice, from agents and funders, argued that individual households need demarcated parking space outside their front door.

But is this really so? The success – and appeal – of Freiburg in south-west Germany (winner of the Academy of Urbanism's European City of the Year award in 2010) is widely attributed to the foresight of the postwar planning director Joseph Schlippe who resisted pressure to rebuild his war-ravaged city centre as a 'progressive' car-friendly grid and instead reinstated its medieval, walkable, street pattern. While Schlippe was derided, and ultimately ousted, for his conservatism, his legacy is an effective eco-city where trams serve a dense network of people-friendly spaces and streets. That modern-day Freiburg boasts two of the world's most successful eco-suburbs and a Green Party mayor may reflect the fact that its population understands that neighbourhoods work best when cars are relegated to a supporting role.

A framework for fertile ground

Perhaps we need to approach these new developments less as an exercise in volume house-building and more as an opportunity to cultivate fertile ground for neighbourhoods to flourish. We need to focus on the big moves – green infrastructure, public transport, the provision (or otherwise) for private cars – and establish a physical and policy framework that supports small-scale grass roots enterprise and disregards conventional distinctions between domestic and commercial space. Perhaps we need to stop worrying about design codes and accept that a strong framework based on green infrastructure and strong masterplanning should be able to accommodate a degree of architectural anarchy. (Even Letchworth has its architectural anomalies, including The Cloisters, an eccentric open-air school where students slept on hammocks and studied theosophical meditation. As if to demonstrate just how far the town has travelled from its Bohemian roots, the building is now a masonic lodge.)

We need to focus less on individual house sales and more on attracting those with an interest in building a community: self-builders, co-housing groups, Community Land Trusts. This is a different kind of offer. The opportunity to buy a pre-packaged chunk of a ready-made milieu is replaced with an invitation to invest in a community, to fashion a different way of life; not just to invest in a house but to shape a place. It's an approach that turns Roosevelt's mantra on its head: if you persuade people to come, the neighbourhood might just build itself.



11. Bill Dunster champions a zero-carbon city block that can be replicated ad infinitum to produce a self-sufficient neighbourhood of any size required
12. Terry Farrell & Partners' proposal for the High Street at north-west Bicester eco-town in Oxfordshire
13. Housing at north-west Bicester: one of a new generation of eco-towns that are less focused on eco-bling and more explicitly rooted in the familiar Garden City model

Image credits
First Garden City Heritage Museum, I, 4
Dennis Gilbert, 5-6
Alberto Bernasconi, 7

Footnotes

1. Transition Towns is an umbrella brand for communities that are explicitly reinventing themselves in response to the challenges of climate change. The principles are set out in David Holmgren's 2003 book *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways beyond Sustainability*. The UK-based charity Transition Network supports communities in adopting the transition model.
2. Smart Growth is an urban planning theory that advocates compact, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods and favours high-density mixed-use development over urban sprawl.
3. One Planet Living is a model based on 10 principles that provide a framework to make sustainable living easy and affordable. Its name reflects an overarching ambition for developed countries to use a fair share of the earth's resources. If everybody in the world consumed as much as the average UK resident we'd need three planets to support us. If everybody lived the average American lifestyle we'd need five.
4. Isabel Allen is Design Director of Hab.

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CAPITAL ASSETS

Rather than aspiring to abstract and unrealistic visions, plans for urban change should seek to protect and enrich existing neighbourhood qualities. *Lucy Musgrave* makes the case for a methodology based on observation, discussion and analysis – as valid for renewing London or New York as for rebuilding Christchurch or Tokyo

Cities are inherently messy places. However much we order and systemise, rebuild, plan and rebuild again, all is contested. Our cities are places full of conflict. This is both the human and the urban condition. It is productive, unruly, beautiful and needs to be celebrated.

Understanding the social and cultural within urban planning is the richest and most complex subject in the panoply of thinking and practice around sustainability. So far it has been massively overlooked. The maximisation of resources is the challenge of the 21st century – these resources are social and cultural as well as material, so we urgently need to address this imbalance.

This fundamental and necessary shift in outlook will require us to step back from the Modernist ideal – that every day will be a brighter future, if only we could clean and rationalise – to create order in our cities. It is more realistic, and more interesting, to become better acquainted with the intimate complexities: to begin to decipher how we actually live and behave, how the city is used and navigated, and how the delicate and interdependent social, cultural and spatial networks, overlap and enrich.

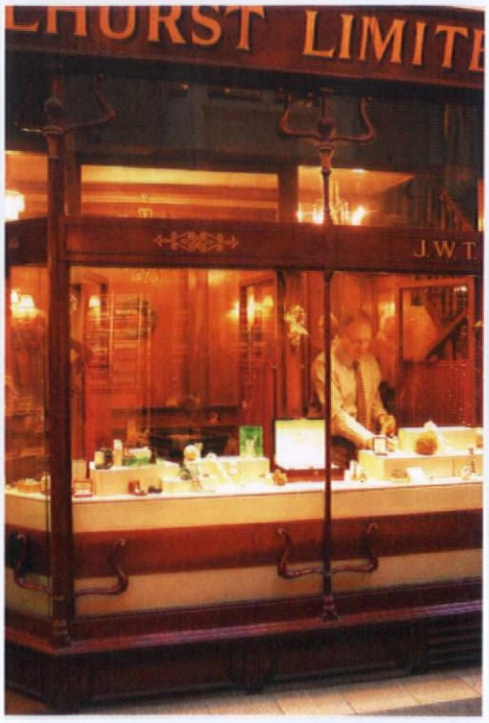
A great city is a place of constant renewal, fluctuation, adaptability and change. It is able to learn. In London, as in the cities of many other post-industrial nations, we are rebuilding and expanding development on previously used land. In an unprecedented moment of rapid global urbanisation, many are building cities anew or with a tabula rasa; in the desert, on the plain, on former agricultural land. We must all adapt to learn more of what is useful, as we build and rebuild. Our starting point should be the value of distinct places of integrity and the notion of *civic* identity. Jane Jacobs wrote in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*: 'In cities, liveliness and variety attract more liveliness; deadness and monotony repel life. And this is a principle vital not only to the ways cities behave socially, but also to the ways they behave economically.'

Civic identity requires diversity, human interaction and discourse, and a recognisable human scale. In short, civic identity is drawn from our public realm. The public realm is the stage of our lives – it is symbolic as well as functional. It is the common reservoir of a society's values as well as the physical spaces and infrastructure in-between buildings that organise our towns and cities. Whether formal or informal, the public realm of any urban settlement is not purely spatial, it is also social and cultural.

The public realm provides us with variety, opportunities to embrace our inherent sociability, a place where we meet strangers, interact with others, experience surprise and joy, where conflict and differences are played out – the lived experience of urban life. Crucially, it is found in the small, intimate spaces of our cities as well as the formal and grand public places; inside buildings as well as outside. You cannot manufacture these aspects of the urban condition or plan where they take place. This fine balance of human activity is fragile, precious and of immeasurable value. It is extremely difficult to replicate and very easy to destroy. We must begin to measure and to value the distinctiveness that makes places unique and build this analysis into our designs and plans.

The city of neighbourhoods

Our cities, however large, are urban settlements, made up of distinct neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods, understood by those that use them (whether as places that represent home, work, business or amenity) all have a complex identity that is the embodiment of layered meanings and varied perspectives – the *social* within the built

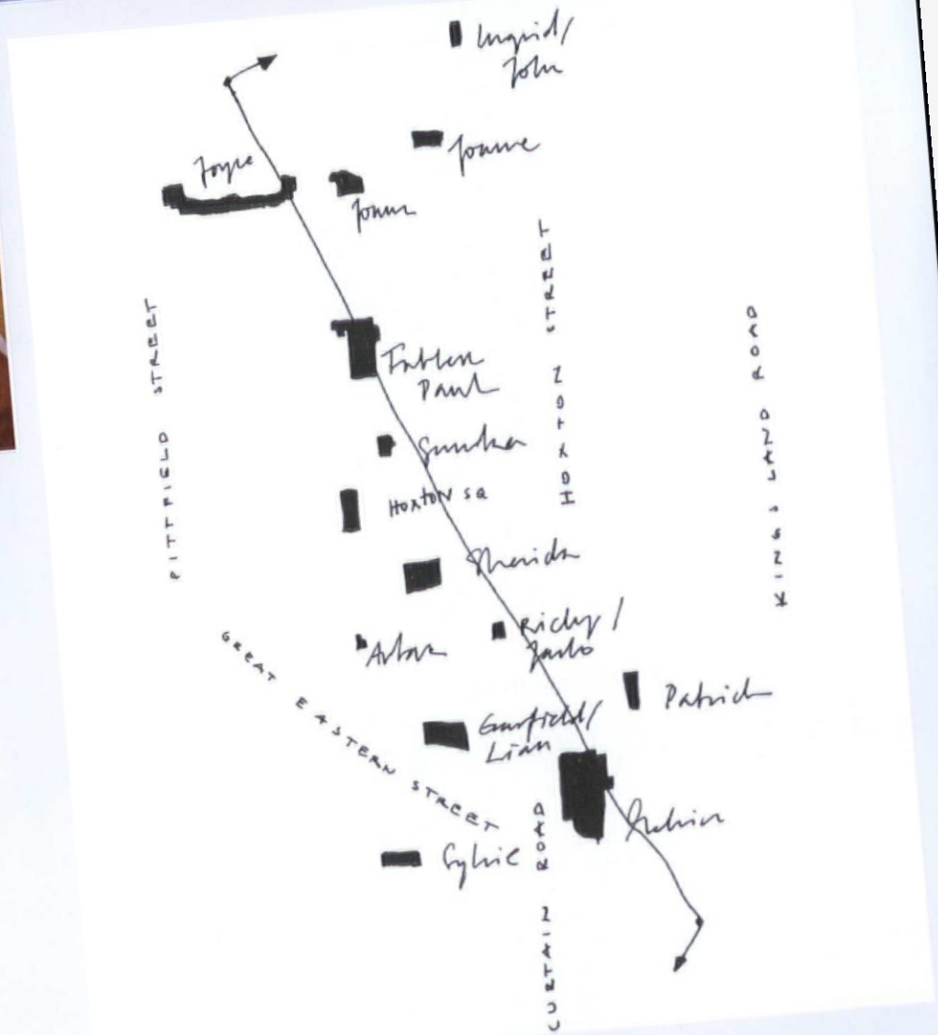


UNRULY URBAN

Currently, the process of urban change relies on an abstract 'hope value' instead of a reality-check of existing assets. Observation reveals a rich tapestry of public spaces where we can embrace our inherent sociability, meet strangers, experience surprise and joy, play out differences and conflict. Crucially, such opportunities are found in the small, intimate spaces of our cities as well as the formal and grand public places

PARTICIPATIVE MAPPING

Mapping is a process of showing what exists but also deciding what is of value. Too often we look at an urban district for potential in its buildings, while neglecting the value of its social infrastructure. Organised walks, conversation and participative mapping offer a means of recording and visualising information that can too easily be discounted or missed



characteristics that define physical form, and the multiple *uses* that inform activity. Understanding this combination, a layered and complex picture of urban life, is crucial to their success, to their ability to thrive, adapt and sustain change in the long term.

It must also be emphasised that making places civic requires the existence of consistent and stable communities, to build social capital and social networks. Development that forces communities to scatter or fragment leads to unsustainable and wasteful cities. Without security of tenure and employment for its citizens, no investment in an area will be well spent.

At Publica, our work focuses on understanding, demystifying and sharing the complexities of urban neighbourhoods. At the heart of our daily practice is the significance of the public realm within urban planning. By conducting detailed surveys we attempt to understand the landscape of places, often where change is anticipated or planned. We believe that the character and contested nature of an urban neighbourhood arises from the multiple perspectives of that place. Consequently, our method involves seeking out these different perspectives through surveying and mapping. From these investigations we create visually accessible area portraits, which provide base-line intelligence about an area's assets, social networks and character. This becomes the starting point for masterplanning and decision-making about urban change and renewal.

These profiles are used by landowners, public planning authorities, city government, private sector developers and local community organisations, as a means of understanding specific opportunities for integrating existing neighbourhoods with new development. Most of our clients take an enlightened view of long-term investment in the city, and there is an implicit regard for its custodianship. In both method and presentation the findings provide a clearly communicable tool, that considers patterns of use, fine grain land-use and infrastructure, collective memories and histories, how local people organise themselves, governance and decision-making, and how the area might compare with other places locally or internationally. In summary, they show that identity comes from use and people, as well as physical constraints and attributes. They reveal that there is an inherent value and an attraction to the diversity and the mix found in urban neighbourhoods. The very act of investigating and documenting what is valued means we consider our cities in a different way – at a different scale and with different expectations about the objectives of urban change. This approach, and this practice, is in clear contrast to mainstream architecture, planning and construction in the 21st century.

Abstraction and reality

The metabolism of our cities is quickening at a spectacular pace. This generation is witnessing and assessing the impact of rapid global urbanisation and its attendant repercussions. Land and property are so heavily commodified that an investment made in one continent can radically change the urban configuration of a district in another. Processes of building, although becoming ever more efficient, will by their very nature always remain behind technological advancement in communications. We are creating large areas of urban fabric that have been outpaced and outdated before practical completion, and that, more often than not, do not deliver the culture of urban life necessary for the human condition to flourish.

'The qualities of individual cities are distinct and vital – this is not about building types, materials or style, but the lived culture of a city'

So we have cities full of new but inflexible and bland spaces that do not meet our needs, and others, hundreds of years old, that resonate in our imagination and culture. Why is this? This global abstraction of the process of city building and the measure of value in short-term successes (financial or political) presents the most serious threat to our cities and their future.

The qualities of individual cities are distinct and vital – this is not about building types, materials or style, but the lived culture of a city. Currently, the process of urban change relies on an abstract 'hope value' instead of a reality check of what assets are already present, how they can be amplified, reused or simply better utilised. The only way one can begin to unpick and understand this is by observing very closely, and by standing still. At Publica, we spend our time on site, watching, looking, learning, drawing, talking and listening, visiting at different times of day or late at night. We make films and record through sketching and street photography. We ask others (children, often) to make films about a local condition for us, from their perspective. We always try to find individuals who have been born locally as well as newcomers, often assembling our teams with local people to help bring further insights to the investigation. And we analyse. We try to capture lived experience. Our work finds practical application in the development briefs for masterplans and new developments, and is important to our clients when investing in design, planning and building as it provides strategies for long-term thinking.

When we are asked to work on a new masterplan we always start with a wider area survey and are always uncovering surprising insights to the functioning of neighbourhoods – we start on the outside, as we believe that the clues to meaningful integration and sensitised urban planning need to recognise the assets, real desire lines and connections, patterns of use and social infrastructure in the adjacent communities. From this, the gaps and deficiencies as well as the strong local assets can be mapped and inform the development of the client's brief and therefore land use. Our contribution to the process is to provide the evidence base of the local assets and identify opportunities for integration – socially, culturally and spatially. This work helps to inform the narrative for the scheme and therefore its identity.

Participative mapping

Mapping is a process of showing what exists but also deciding what is of value. Too often we look at an urban district for potential in its buildings, while neglecting the value of its social infrastructure. What is required is a process of understanding, charting and developing tools to record and visualise information that can too easily be discounted or not recognised. The development process often brushes aside the ordinary or the 'unimportant', but the opportunity to involve a wide range of users means that the notion of value can be reassessed.

Shaping practice through participative mapping is radical and it is happening around the world. Open source technology is informing decision-making and allowing for the participation of ordinary citizens within the globalised information economy. From the mapping of areas of

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informal housing with local communities in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil as a tool for leveraging access to various urban services; to the use of GIS data as civic tool for citizens (OASIS: Open Accessible Space Information System) in New York to understand neighbourbood amenity and infrastructure; to the sensitised approach of planners in the Bester's Camp township in South Africa or in East Wahdat in Jordan, where participation in mapping is used to secure our ability to map; sharing information to utilise local knowledge is a radical departure from previous generations' professional, and therefore more remote approach to decision making.

An example of the efficacy of the participative model is a project called *Mapping Kibera,* a Wiki-2map project in Nairobi, Kenya, aimed to tackle the problem of misinformation: 'In the absence of actual data (such as an official census), NGO staff make a back-of-envelope estimate in order to plan their projects; a postgraduate visiting the NGO staff tweaks that estimate for his thesis research; a journalist interviews the researcher and includes the estimate in a newspaper article; a UN officer reads the article and copies the estimate into her report; a television station picks up the report and the estimate becomes the headline; NGO staff see the television report and update their original estimate accordingly.' (Paul Currion, 'Lies, damned lies and you know the rest', 2010)

In November 2009, young Kiberans created the first free and open digital map of their own community, documenting topography, structures and services, as well as population distribution and density. Map Kibera has now grown into a complete interactive community information project.

Trespassing to reveal value

The increased professionalisation and fragmentation of the different consultant roles within the construction and planning industries has widened the gap between city-makers and citizens. A language of architecture and planning has evolved which has become harder to reconcile with lived experience. This is not new, it is the same condition that Jane Jacobs described in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the difference between seeing the world from above, or from the street. Glossy visualisations of an imagined future are used for the purposes of gaining a planning consent and marketing the scheme. In reality, they prevent meaningful conversations about urban change, thereby diminishing their value and in the process public trust in development.

The notion of participative planning through the cultural act of placing information about urban development in the public domain – and allowing the users of our cities to act as the agents of change – has led to a generation of practitioners working in a cross-disciplinary function, rooting their work in accessible methods of communication. This is a more both commonsense and nuanced approach that considers the impact of policy and architecture on lived culture. At Publica, we are often asked what our 'discipline' is, and though the answer is many, the reality is that there is a new field of practice, evident across the globe, characterised by the notion of trespass. Practitioners are straying outside and beyond the historical confines of a single discipline to work in a broader, more strategic and critical role that considers long-term resource management and the macro and micro effects of development.

This practice is both new and rooted in the philosophical and practical debates of preceding decades. We are particularly interested in revisiting how practitioners from earlier generations undertook the type of research-led investigations into planning and neighbourhoods that we ourselves practise.

The special condition of the historic neighbourhood

Much of our recent work has been in central London, a series of historic neighbourhoods with an extraordinarily complex mixture of infrastructure and inhabitants. A typical block in the West End in central London houses a combination of shops, pubs, contemporary office space, small creative industries, highly desirable flats, flats for social rent, ancient churches, fashionable restaurants, perhaps even a historic theatre. Many of these typologies work in a continuous street frontage, creating a clear public threshold and a bold street presence at ground level. Residential and commercial uses create subtly complex thresholds to maintain an essential degree of privacy in an area of such vitality. Certain uses may be placed at higher levels or have more solid frontages. This mix and 24-hour life is unimaginable in a shopping centre or business district centred on a single purpose. Occupation is ensured at different times of day and night, helping to avoid the 'on/off 'condition of areas with a single predominant land use. Elsewhere it may be necessary to traverse an entire city to find so much interest and excitement. It is this mixture and complexity that is the West End's strength, with opposing uses feeding off one another, adding to the diversity and drawing people in. This richness of uses is sadly increasingly rare as the market for rapid urbanisation has rubbed out such complexity and such conflict.

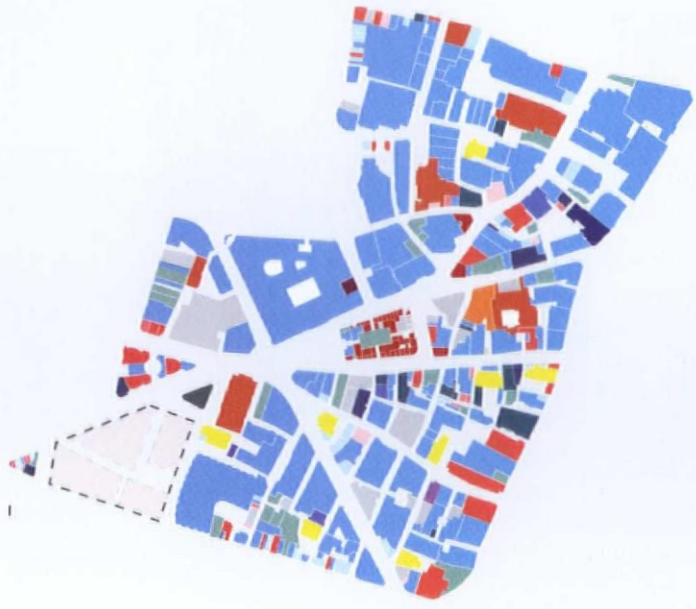
In London we now benefit from a wide consensus in national and local planning of 'mixed-use' development policy, where the city is no longer zoned into distinct land uses. However laudable the policy, the commercial reality is that policy accommodates the amplification of scale, so new investment is in mixed-use buildings rather than mixed-use neighbourhoods. This means that only commercial activities, for example a business model based around spaces only for consumption, sit within one large-scale building. This does not provide the fine grain flexibility to accommodate different types of users as well as non-commercial uses. This condition of an often unrecognisable scale, with prescriptive and highly controlled use, is stultifying civic identity.

Flexibility

Successful urban landscapes have always been made up of enormous diversity of building stock and have aged and been rebuilt in a continuous pattern of renewal and the balance and fluctuations in land values and shifts in societal patterns of behaviour. For 21st-century urban communities to thrive, they need flexibility, affordability, cheap informal spaces (what Jane Jacobs called old buildings for new ideas), alongside more formal ones, spaces for

ABSTRACTION AND REALITY

Mapping study analysing the way that Bank, the area around the Bank of England in the City of London, assumes different characters at different times of the day or week. A breakdown of building uses (1) is supplemented by diagrammatic maps highlighting areas of intensive use at night-time (2), at weekends (3), during business hours (4) and in the evening during the week (5)



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THE HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

London's most successful historic neighbourhoods contain a wide range of uses, often occupying the same street. Residential and commercial uses create subtly complex thresholds to maintain an essential degree of privacy in areas of such vitality. Rapid urbanisation has resulted in areas that lack this fine grain flexibility and tend towards a single predominant land use. This uniformity stultifies civic identity and denies us opportunities for conflict, excitement and 24-hour life.

appropriation as well as the formal provision of social and physical infrastructure. As Michael Theis points out: 'The main characteristic of the area is its mixture ... Its component parts are scattered widely, yet the area is compact. When looked at closely it is like a newspaper photograph, all random dots and seemingly without reason ... Land tenure is mixed with freehold, long and short leasehold and tenancies all jumbled together. There are no single areas of consolidated land ownership. Much investment has taken place in new building in the past twenty years and this too has been piecemeal, cheek-by-jowl with older worn out property.'

Governance – who does what to whom?

Communication, transparency and accountability in disseminating information in the public domain as a 'conversation in public' is the vital link in the meeting of professional skills and local knowledge. The findings about neighbourhood character, assets and values, need to be communicated to diverse public and professional audiences, and the most effective way of doing this is visually and publically. Additionally, strong local or city-wide leadership and clear, visible principles built from research, need a participative public debate, where conflict and opposing views can be aired. This is an essential component of leadership in urban planning.

The commitment to communicating a principle-led approach to urban change is something that Amanda Burden, Chair of the New York City Planning Commission, is promoting actively, having re-established an urban design team at City Hall and set out a zoning handbook in 2012 – *Revitalising London's Spaces: What Can We Learn from New York* – to demystify the process of planning and decision-making for users and residents 'so people and communities can advocate for their neighbourhoods'.

Burden describes New York as a 'city of opportunity *and* a city of neighbourhoods', setting out to understand the 200 different neighbourhoods and radically change the public realm, assessing projects by 'how they feel from the street. We want to diagnose the DNA of each neighbourhood and build on those strengths. Our aim is to grow but not change'. In practical terms, this means satellite offices of the NYC Department of City Planning in all five boroughs and 59 community districts, each represented by a community board with the power to propose plans, policy and zoning. Tools and support are available including the illustrated zoning handbooks used to communicate regulations – previously the reserve of 'professionals' – through use of simple descriptions and 3-D illustrations. Burden and her officers walk the neighbourhood and hold regular forums to hear evidence in public from different local voices and perspectives.

Reducing the distance between the amateur and the professional requires not only making information accessible, but generating a framework that allows for policy to be guided by communities. Since the Netherlands developed the first comprehensive cross-departmental government architecture and urban policy in 1991, several cultural institutions have been established which help to bridge the gap between government and citizen, acting as links between national policies and local practice and experience. These institutions work closely with 50 local 'architecture centres' across the country at a micro local level. The Architectuur Lokaal connects the centres and helps to not only implement current policies, but also influence future policies. Their aim is to strengthen

'Without an understanding of the constraints of the social and cultural specificity as well as the physical and spatial constraints, we are missing a trick in our thinking about sustainability in urban development and architecture'

'building culture', as 'not a matter for professionals alone. Rather, it is the responsibility of society as a whole'.

After the devastation of a natural disaster, city leaders face the desperate need to make decisions about reconstruction. New Zealand and Japan are two examples where local and national government, planners, architects and engineers, community leaders and residents have used this urgent need for restoration as the point to reset their approach and objectives to urban planning. In post-earthquake Christchurch, New Zealand, the city authority was faced with the challenge of rebuilding the badly-damaged city centre. It embarked on a survey of local residents, gathering over 100,000 impassioned 'ideas for the city'. The resulting plan is for a predominantly five- to six-storey, high-density, walkable and cycle-friendly city centre with small, concentrated retail. This recovery plan has been supported by a robust evidence base and an unprecedented level of public engagement.

The inverse of 'leveraging regional skills and metabolism' is optimising global systems and markets – our current global and unsustainable situation. It is inefficient and unstable. As architects, as planners, as developers, as citizens, and as custodians of our urban futures – we need to consider how to meet the challenges of urban development and the long-term sustainability of our cities. As K Worpole warned: 'The alternative is increasing formlessness, attenuation, exhaustion of variety and in Italo Calvino's words, the end of cities.'

The real meaning of place

If some of the most advanced economies in the world are choosing to rethink their cities as cities of opportunities and of neighbourhoods, the implications for sharing this practice internationally are profound. The call for shared, participatory frameworks in places like New York and Christchurch have shown us a new way of working that emphasises a user perspective, a human scale and a communitarian ethos. Without an understanding of the constraints of the social and cultural specificity as well as the physical and spatial constraints, we are missing a big trick in our thinking about sustainability in urban development, architecture and construction. The answers are in the way we organise ourselves, how we adapt policies and laws, how we achieve a transparent and accountable system of governance to manage our finite and delicate resources, social and environmental. But it also is evident in the informal and small action, the mix and the diversity, the conflict and multiple perspectives. We need to consider these issues at an informal level too as they will unlock the key to the symbolic value, the understanding of the significance of meaning within place, and through this will provide us with the answers for long term civic identity, maximisation of resources – material, human or economic – and a strategic approach towards achieving maximum effect with minimal means.

This paper was first presented at the 4th International Holcim Forum for Sustainable Construction held in Mumbai, India, 11-13 April 2013. All images are courtesy of Publica.

**Housing,
Newhall,
Essex, UK,
Alison Brooks
Architects**

The public sector points to Newhall as an exemplar for future developments, yet really its success has been dependent on the long-term planning allowed by private patronage. Having completed its latest phase, architect Alison Brooks is on a mission to champion the importance of design innovation in adding value to housing

HOUSING BENEFITS

1. Alison Brooks responded to the challenge of building at high density by reformatting the typical long narrow building plot with courtyard houses that sit 'cheek by jowl' on squareish plots
2. The conventional back garden has been replaced by balconies, patios and roof decks which serve as extensions to the living space and capture sunlight at different times of day

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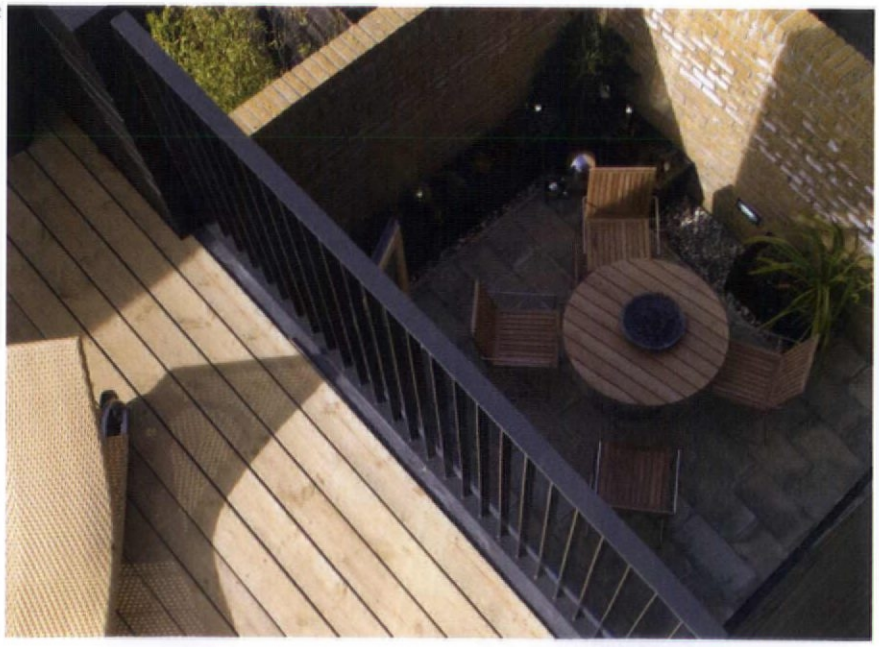

CRITICISM

ISABEL ALLEN

Harlow, in Essex, has long been a touchstone for politicians touting new solutions for volume housing. The brainchild of the postwar Minister of Town and Country Planning, Lewis Silkin, modern-day Harlow was the first of a spate of New Towns built to ease the chronic overcrowding in London's East End.

It fell to the distinguished architect/planner Frederick Gibberd to masterplan this utopia. Inspired by the contemporaneous Copenhagen Plan, he produced a 'finger diagram' with long thin neighbourhoods splaying out from a dense urban 'palm'. Each finger provided housing for 5,000-8,000 people along with shops, churches, community centres and pubs. Wedges of woodland and green space between each of the fingers offered scope for both agricultural and recreational use.

Gibberd's Scandinavian simplicity has been somewhat swamped by suburban sprawl which kicked off in the 1970s and continues apace. But, thanks to Newhall, located on the eastern outskirts of the city, Harlow's innovative urban planning continues to enjoy the dubious honour of the politicians' pet project *du jour*.

Not that the public sector can claim credit: Newhall is testament to the power of good old-fashioned private sector patronage. It owes its existence to fourth-generation farmers, Jon and William Moen, who inherited 280 acres of prime Essex farmland in the early 1980s.

The Moen brothers' first foray into development – part of the Church Langley development adjacent to Newhall – was something of a disappointment. Having sold an option agreement to a developer consortium, they looked on helplessly as farmland gave way to housing that could, at best, be described as adequate. Appalled by the dearth of developer ambition and the extent to which architects were disregarded and disempowered, the Moens resolved to take a more hands-on role in future building projects and to devise a modus operandi that would give high-quality place-making and architecture a central role.

They recruited master masterplanner Roger Evans to develop a blueprint for a 6,000-strong neighbourhood – a scale in keeping with Gibberd's original plans – to accommodate 2,800 homes within walking distance of community facilities, shops and schools, and would be denser, more urban and infinitely better designed than the average urban sprawl.

Street life

Determined to build 'the kind of place we'd like to visit', Evans kicked off by overlaying street plans of historic cities that have flourished and endured – Venice, Oxford and Bath – over a plan of the Newhall site in a bid to inform decisions about the location of green space and appropriate densities for different parts of the site. The resultant scheme has a legible hierarchy of mews, lanes, avenues and high street, leavened by a lattice of meandering streets, small squares and oblique views, a density which, at 18 houses per acre, is well in excess of the 10-12 houses that has been the norm for greenfield development in recent years – and an awful lot of parking spaces.

The hallowed streetscapes of Venice, Oxford and Bath were not determined by the dictats of the car. The designers of Newhall have had to use an ingenuity to house contemporary parking requirements in such a high-density scheme. Cars are contained in small courtyards or kept tidily out of sight – most successfully at Richard Murphy Architects' mews flats that sit atop a triple garage. The meandering streets – and the fact that building lines and pavements are not parallel – allow for wider patches of road where clusters of on-street parking spaces can be absorbed.

But the sheer quantum of parking is surprisingly conservative or reassuringly realistic depending on your point of view. The party line is that it is more important to combat car use than to limit car ownership; the challenge is to make walking and cycling – or catching the bus – so attractive that people are inclined to leave their cars at home. In other words, you design in a hefty 2.5 parking spaces per dwelling while kidding yourself that sustainable transport is a key concern.

In fairness, the public realm *is* conducive to walking or cycling thanks, in part, to the liberal peppering of balconies, bay windows, external staircases and ground-floor studies that reflect a concerted effort to challenge the 'net curtain' mentality and inject the public realm with signs of movement and life, and, in part, to a 20mph speed limit, plentiful street trees and pleasant views of the greenery that surrounds the development on every side. The decision to build at high density, and so reduce available garden space, makes it particularly important to deliver a high-quality public realm but has also made it viable to designate a whopping 40 per cent of potential building land to established vegetation including woodland, hedgerows, streams, and to new parkland, reed beds and balancing ponds.

It's wonderfully indulgent, though one wonders whether the scheme could have been improved by a less polarised approach to urban fabric and open space. The public realm is at its best when there is a sense that vegetation has invaded the project: Proctor and Matthews' Abode Housing, an early phase of the scheme, is getting better and better as greenery colonises its gabion walls.

Pick and mix

The Moens conceived Newhall as an antidote to the uniformity of Gibberd's Harlow and expressly set out to deliver the architectural

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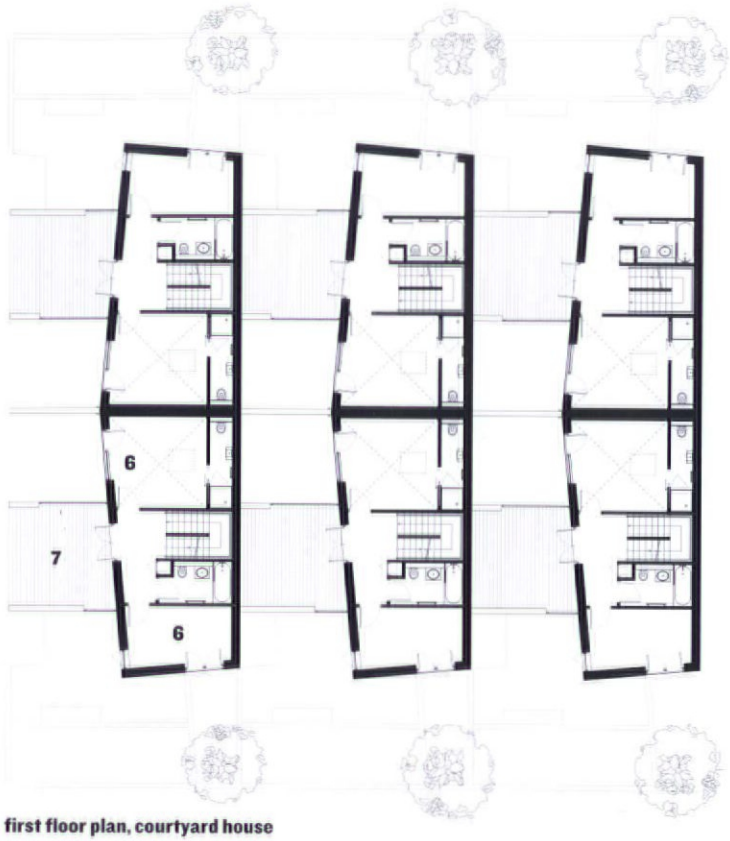
3. Roger Evans' masterplan has a legible hierarchy of mews, lanes, avenues and high street, leavened by a lattice of meandering streets, small squares and oblique views. Black tint: Alison Brooks Grey tint: built White: unbuilt

4. (Opposite) Brooks' housing celebrates the aesthetic and practical potential of the roof. Its strong silhouette and stark materiality are both inspired by traditional black-weatherboarded Essex barns

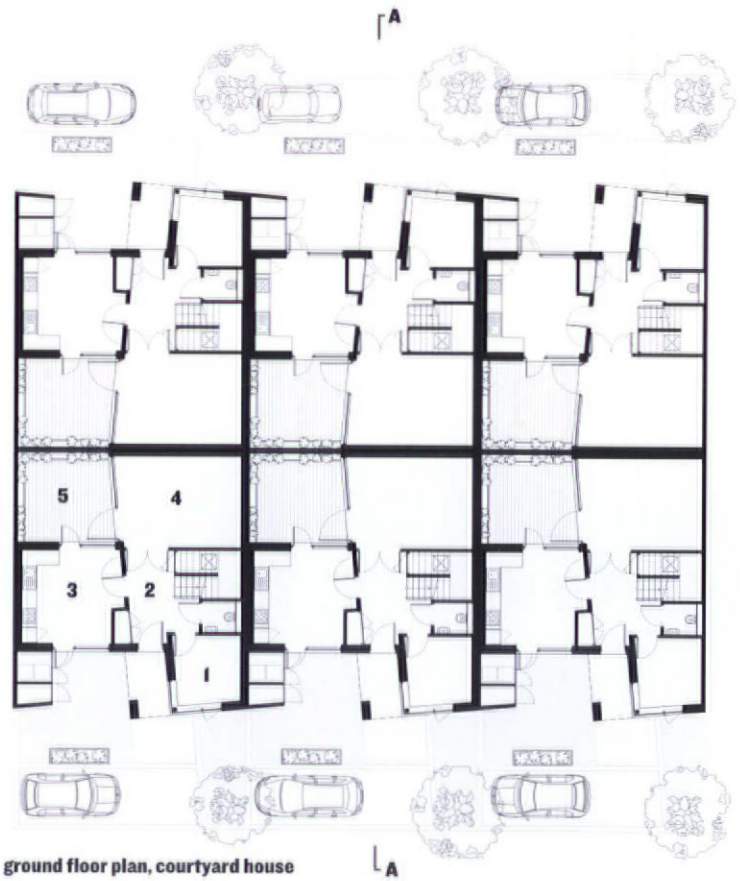
Housing, Newhall, Essex, UK, Alison Brooks Architects

5. The overall composition is both sculptural and still. First-floor balconies and generous ground-floor windows represent a determined effort to animate the street



first floor plan, courtyard house

1 study
2 hall
3 kitchen
4 living room
5 courtyard
6 bedroom
7 roof terrace



ground floor plan, courtyard house

Housing, Newhall, Essex, UK, Alison Brooks Architects

'Planning minister Nick Boles cites Newhall as living proof that modern architecture can be 'beautiful' and that the housing shortage will sort itself out just as soon as we shake the silly habit of building houses nobody likes'

variety and the cheek-by-jowl social mix that characterises settlements that have evolved over time. They wanted a showcase for the best of British architecture, but they didn't want an architectural zoo. They wanted to encourage variety, but they also wanted a neighbourhood with a degree of coherence, and a clear identity that was bigger than the sum of its architectural parts.

Their strategy was to supplement Evans' masterplan with a design code, loosely based on the Essex Design Guide of 1973, and a palette of colours and materials developed by Evans and the artist Tom Porter by applying the sampling techniques of the colour theorist Jean-Philippe Lenclos to the study of local landscape, geology and vernacular architecture.

Having established an overarching – albeit somewhat loose – architectural language, they divided the site into distinct development plots; they then dictated a mix of accommodation ranging from apartments, affordable terraced housing and detached family homes to put each one out to a designer/developer competition.

The result has been an eclectic cast of architects and – as hoped – a catholic interpretation of the design code. Proctor and Matthews, who have delivered two phases of housing on the scheme, employed a wonderfully exuberant assembly of brickwork, stucco, stained shiplap and thatch for the first project, and a rather more subdued abstraction of clay roof tiles and white render for their second. PCKO and ECD both teamed brick and render with copper cladding and turquoise powder-coloured aluminium panels. Richard Murphy used yellow stock brick in a deliberate bid to produce 'decent background' housing. ORMS clad its 'Zig Zag' – the landmark 'town centre' building housing shops and restaurant on the ground floor – in timber shuttering. Most recently, Alison Brooks has used black timber and yellow brick.

There is the odd awkward moment. Junctions between different housing parcels don't always work. The side windows of one of Brooks' houses – designed to offer light and views – has ended up looking straight onto one of Proctor and Matthews' blind end walls. The occasional bog standard Noddy House has slipped through the net, a reminder of what so easily could have been. But the overall impression is of energy, creativity and an unmistakable *joie de vivre*. So much so that former Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, in an uncharacteristic show of ebullience, was quoted in the 13 July issue of the *Mail on Sunday* as saying: 'This is the future, a model of communities we have to build. I looked at Britain and wondered where is the "WOW factor" in our architecture, where are the buildings I can get excited about? Now I can say "it's here at Newhall".'

Ten years on, the current planning minister Nick Boles cites Newhall as living proof that modern architecture *can* be 'beautiful' and that the housing shortage will sort itself out just as soon as we shake the silly habit of building houses that nobody likes.

The project's populist appeal lies, in part, in its roofscape, a happy hotchpotch of pitches and curves that suggests a friendly domesticity. Writing about suburban architecture in the October 1936 issue of *Country Life*, Christopher Hussey noted: 'the remembered impression made on the eye is ... the warm sweep of an enveloping, well designed roof ... at once so practical and so full of artistic possibilities'. This potential was explored in full-on projects such as Hampstead Garden Suburb, which boasts a full roster of granny bonnets, swept valleys, dormer windows and sprocketed eaves. But such fanciful language – and the attendant preoccupation with the picturesque – fell foul of Modernism's dogmatic flat-roof fetish. Viewed as fanciful, fusty and fey, the profiled roof was widely dismissed as historical pastiche.

All about eaves

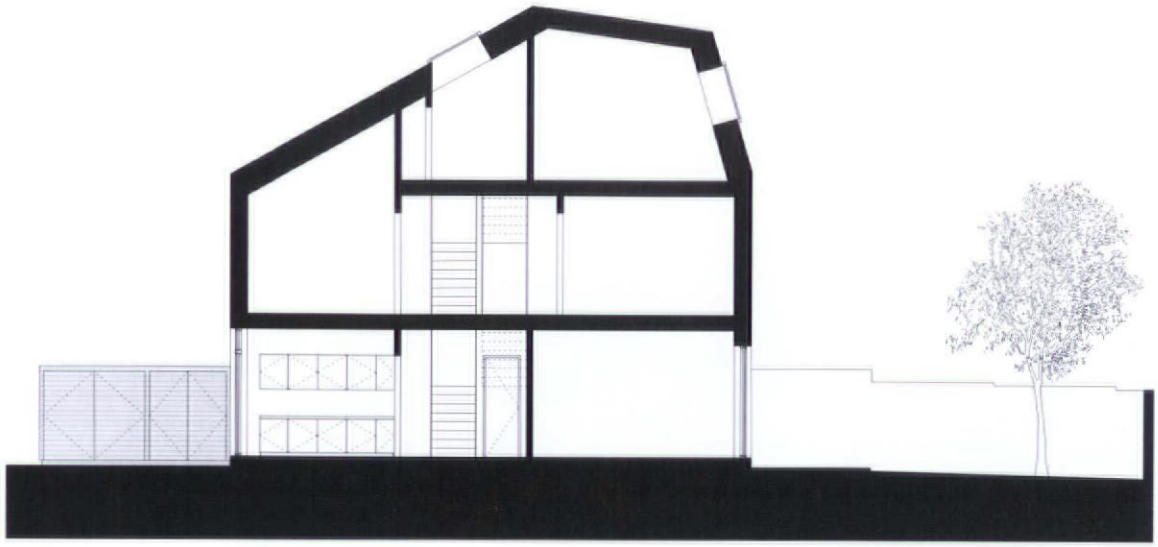
Alison Brooks views the Newhall development as part of a determined move to restore the roof to its rightful place in the lexicon of contemporary residential architecture and to explore the aesthetic, practical, social and financial benefits that the roof space has to offer. By using prefabricated timber cassettes that avoid the need for roof trusses, she has created roof space that offers either a cathedral ceiling or additional living space. Their external expression – inspired by traditional black-weatherboarded Essex barns – is both sculptural and still, giving what she describes as 'a presence you just don't get with ticky-tacky boxes plonked down in a row'.

At this sort of density, the classic combination of back-to-back garden and side-by-side box simply doesn't deliver the goods. Richard Murphy took inspiration from the way Peter Aldington's courtyard home at Haddenham, Buckinghamshire, and Jørn Utzon's take on the same concept at Fredensborg in Denmark, provide privacy and outdoor space within a relatively constrained building plot. Brooks' study of Mies van der

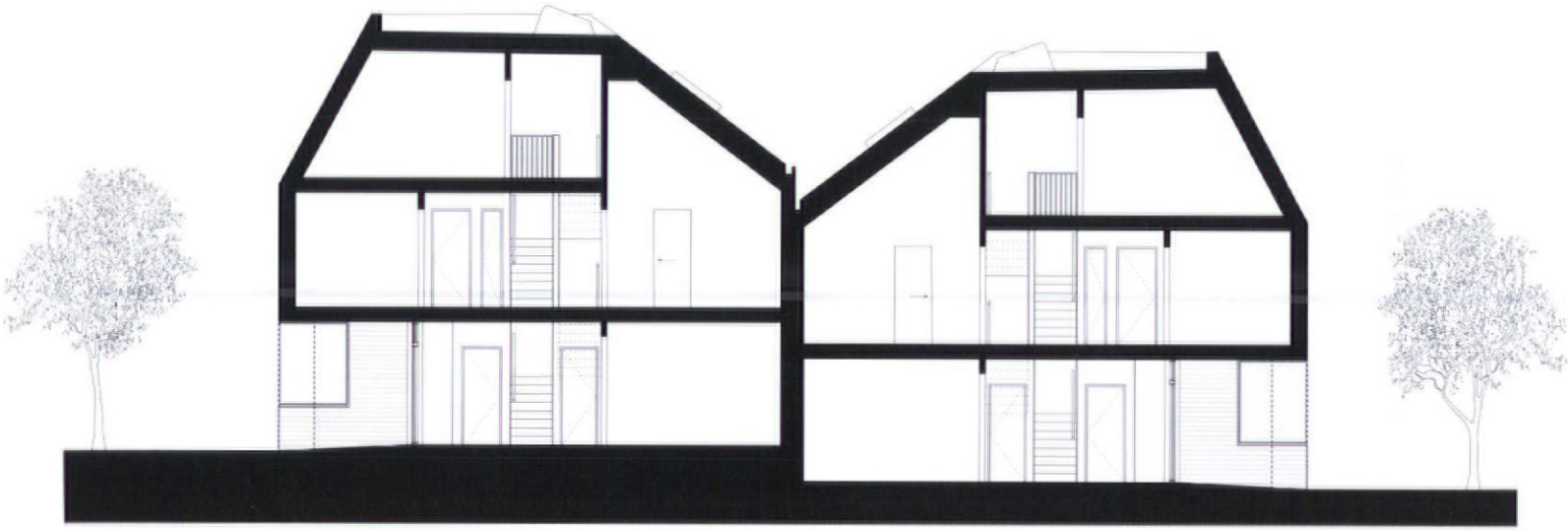
6

6. Junctions between different parcels of housing don't always work. Brooks' edge unit faces the blank flank wall of Proctor and Matthews' second phase

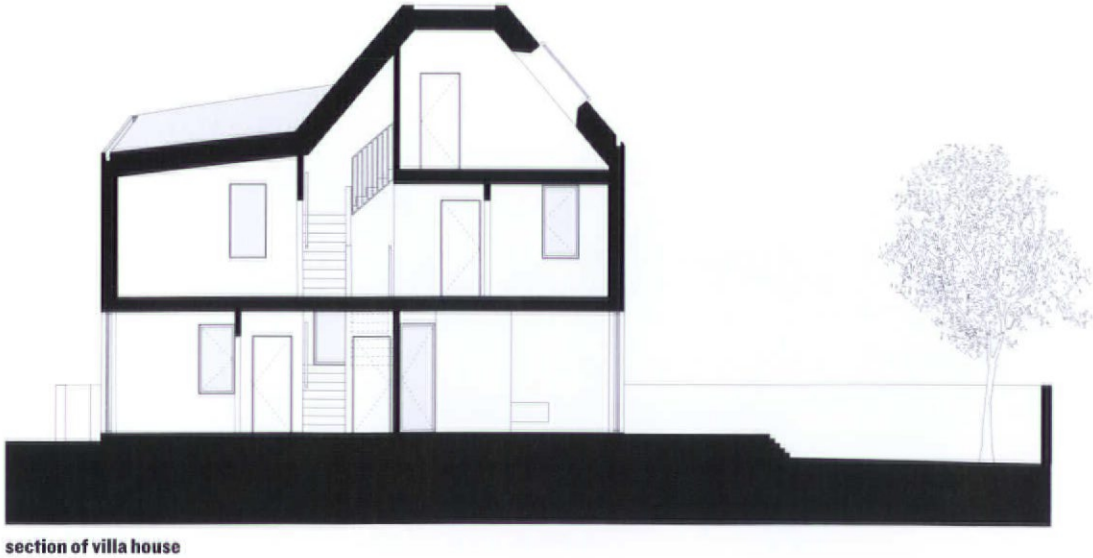
**Housing,
Newhall,
Essex, UK,
Alison Brooks
Architects**



section of terrace house



section AA through courtyard house



section of villa house

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7. Proctor and Matthews' first phase of housing is an exuberant assembly of brickwork, stucco, stained shiplap, gabions and thatch
8. An early phase of housing by PCKO combines glazed balconies, coloured render and brick. Streets are designed as attractive public realm but still very much dominated by the car
9. The occasional bog standard Noddy House has slipped through the net
10. The project's populist appeal lies, in part, in its roofscape, a happy hotchpotch of pitches and curves that suggests a friendly domesticity

Housing, Newhall, Essex, UK, Alison Brooks Architects

Rohe's unbuilt design for a house with three patios informed a radical reformatting of the typical 20m x 5m building plot into squareish (9m x 10m) plots occupied by 'courtyard houses' spiralling around a central hall. The conventional long, thin back garden has been replaced by balconies, patios and roof decks which serve as extensions to the living space and capture sunlight at different times of day.

Counting the cost

Spatial complexity combined with a high-class public realm makes for a compelling proposition – but it doesn't come cheap. The Moens are bullish about the fact that build costs at Newhall are some 10-15 per cent higher than the 'ordinary' housing at neighbouring Church Langley, but argue that the quality of the environment – and the desirability of the real estate – means that buyers are prepared to pay 15-20 per cent above local values. Brooks' housing is a case in point, with speedy sales and higher-than-average prices (£164,995 for a one-bedroom apartment rising to £399,995 for a four-bedroom detached house).

It's a formula that works at Newhall, where proximity to the station (10 minutes by car) and to London (30 miles down the road or just half an hour by train) ensures a ready supply of middle-class professionals who are both willing and able to indulge a taste for modern architecture by paying a little above the odds.

The Moen brothers could afford to gamble that their investment would be rewarded by enhanced returns. But its not an option for projects that are dependent on borrowed cash. Houses, however imaginative or beautiful, are presumed to be worth the same as neighbouring properties of comparable age and size, rendering it pretty much impossible

'Brooks has embarked on a mission to make housing valuations adhere to a list of quality criteria as opposed to a lazy dependence on precedent'

to persuade investors that more money at the front end will yield improved profits in the longer term.

Recognising that lack of finance is the single biggest blockage to innovation in housing design, Brooks has embarked on a mission to make valuations adhere to a list of quality criteria as opposed to a lazy dependence on precedent. She might just have the platform to make herself heard. Aside from enjoying a professional moment in the sun – she currently boasts the triple whammy of being Architect of the Year, Housing Architect of the Year and Woman Architect of the Year – she is a member of a small group of experts charged with shaping the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's strategy for promoting high-quality design.

Harlow has gone full circle. It grew out of a political belief that the public sector could solve social problems through planning and design. But it has proved a rather different point: that great places are made not simply by policy but by people. Not just politicians but an enlightened private sector; pioneering investors, visionary developers, impassioned architects prepared to make a fuss – and, of course, the community they serve. Gibberd moved to Harlow in 1947 and remained until his death in 1984. The Moen family has lived locally for generations. This is not a blueprint for political policy but rather testament to the transformative power of long-term custodianship and determined residents.

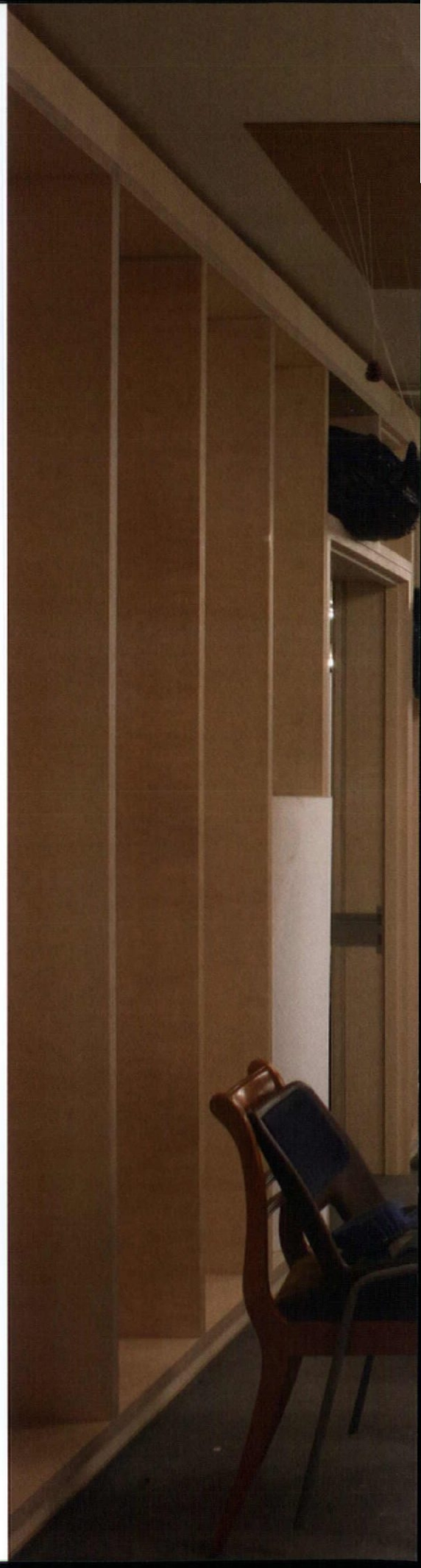
Images
Dennis Gilbert/VIEW, 6-10
Paul Riddle, 1, 2, 4,5

10

LONDON SCHOOLS PART THREE
LONDON METROPOLITAN

This final article in the series focuses on London Metropolitan's new art and architecture building, where each floor has been conceived as a mini-city in which neighbourly contact between the different disciplines is gently fostered

1. Sitting opposite the Whitechapel Gallery, Central House (marked in yellow) will make a reciprocal exhibition space at ground level, to show off the new faculty, and also open up a rooftop viewing platform to frame the Rachel Whiteread sculpture across the road 2. Mirroring the bustling high street that Central House is on, the main route of the architecture floor is conceived as a 'boulevard'



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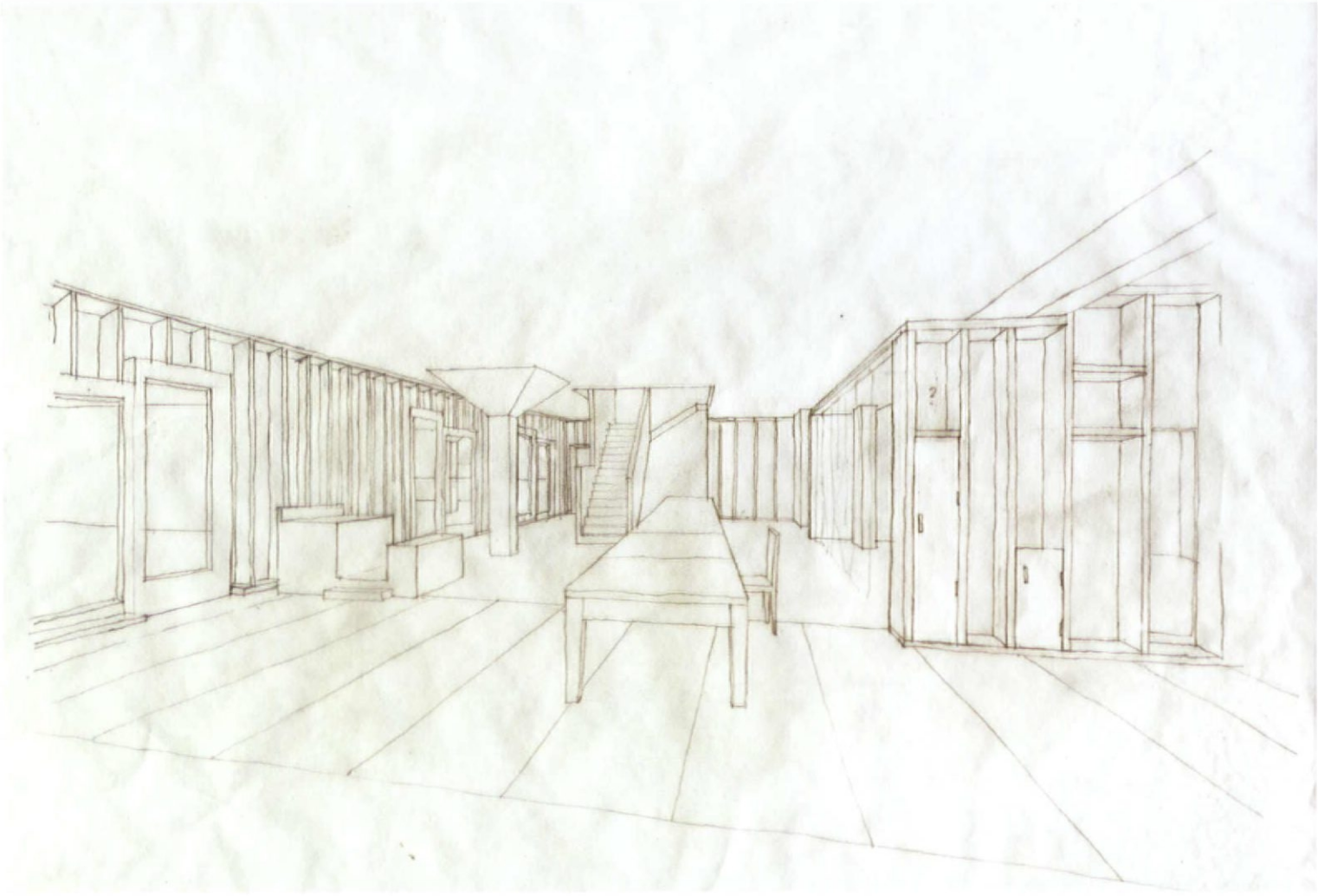

REPORT

WILL HUNTER

Unlike the previous two London schools discussed – the Royal College of Art (AR March 2013) and Central St Martins (AR April 2013) – London Metropolitan is not an internationally famous art and design college. Instead, it is a substantial university of some 23,000 students, an amalgamation of two former 19th-century polytechnics, within which the creative disciplines are but a cog in the larger educational machinery.

For many years refusing to take part in newspaper league tables (apparently on a point of principle), the university recently relented and debuted pretty much at the bottom, ranked this year by the *Guardian* as 118th in a list of 120 competitors. Yet more disturbingly, last August, the UK Border Agency noisily revoked London Met's visa licence after what was described as a 'serious systemic failure', rendering the university unable to enrol foreign students.

Despite securing a reprieve, it has been a disastrous period for the London Met's reputation. And yet in sharp contrast to the university's blundering and chaotic public image, its architecture courses are increasingly highly regarded and attract – particularly at postgraduate level – very strong students. It has become the school of choice for many of the brightest design graduates from Cambridge (which no longer has a diploma) and other top British schools.

What attracts them? Largely it is the quality of the studio faculty. Operating under the unit system (popularised by Alvin Boyarsky's AA in the 1970s-80s, of which the Dean of London Met is himself a product), here the units are much more identified with a 'practice' than an 'individual' – reflecting perhaps a larger shift over that time from the architect as avant-garde genius to pragmatic collaborator (an essay in itself).

Units are led by the principals of many of London's most interesting small-to-mid-size practices: the AOC, Caruso St John, David Kohn, DSDHA, East, Lynch Architects, Pierre d'Avoine, Stephen Taylor, and so on. Where last month's interview with Smout Allen (AR May 2013) described the Bartlett as a 'pocket' with its own definable culture, London Met is a 'pocket' of a similar status, but almost completely oppositional in culture: here the obsession is with architecture as a practice that *must* be socially-engaged and constructed.

Under the leadership of Robert Mull, the school's repute has been shaped over the last decade and has of late hit a number of high notes. Last year Met students picked up two important prizes, winning the RIBA Silver Medal for a group project that developed a prototypical house, and coming runner-up in the AR's Global Architecture Graduate Awards, for the Redundant Architects Recreation Association (AR October 2012).

Uniting architecture and art

While enjoying greater recognition, the architecture school is unlikely to become complacent as it is currently relocating properties while simultaneously merging with other disciplines in the process. Already the Dean of Architecture, in 2011 Mull also took over art, media and design, and in August last year he conjoined the faculties to create the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design – known simply as the Cass.

'Over the last 18 months there has been the move to bring everyone together,' says Mull. 'Architecture was on the Holloway Road in north London, and this will join the other subjects who were already in Aldgate, which is further east. It's a journey that is going to take at least two years, and a crucial part

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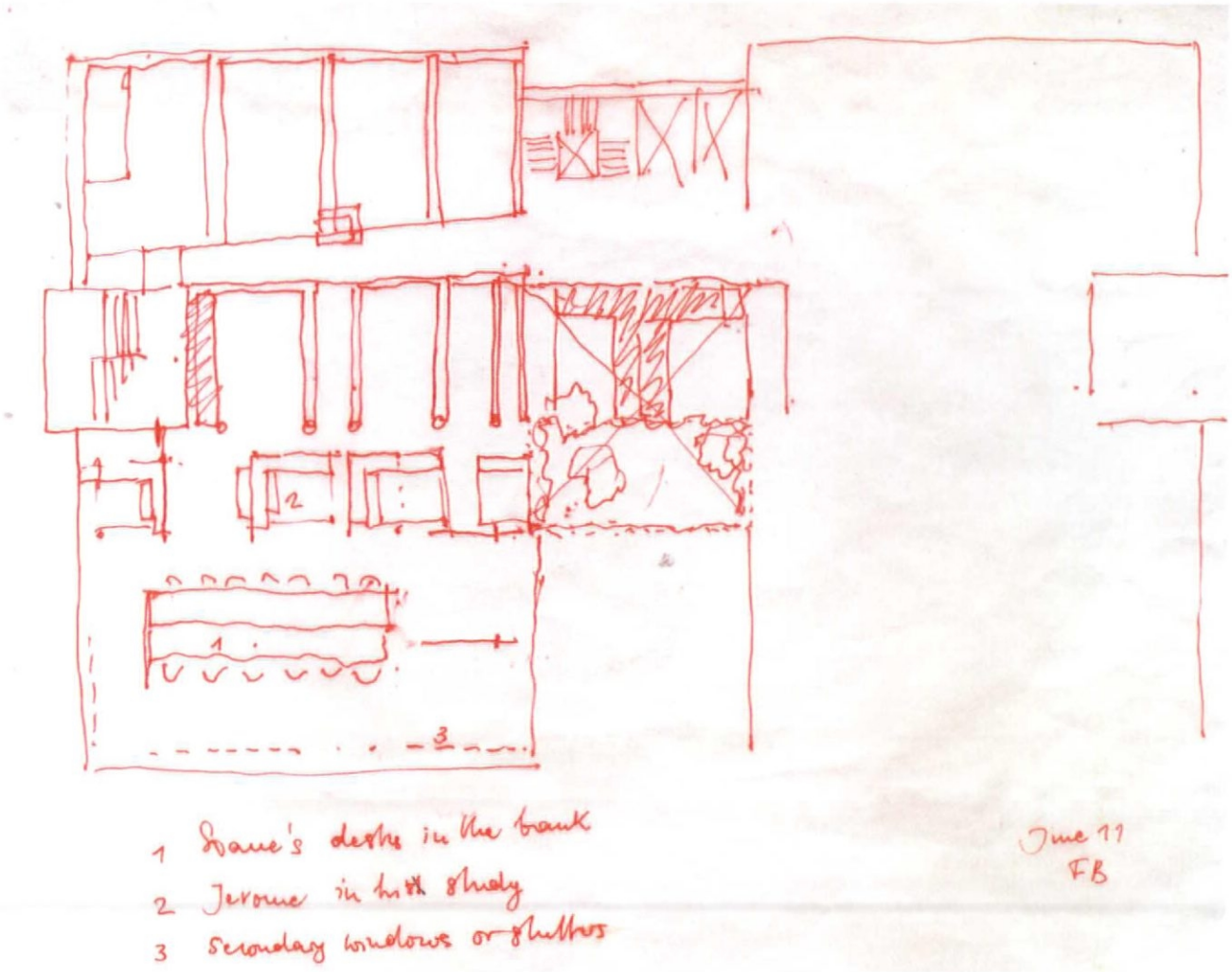
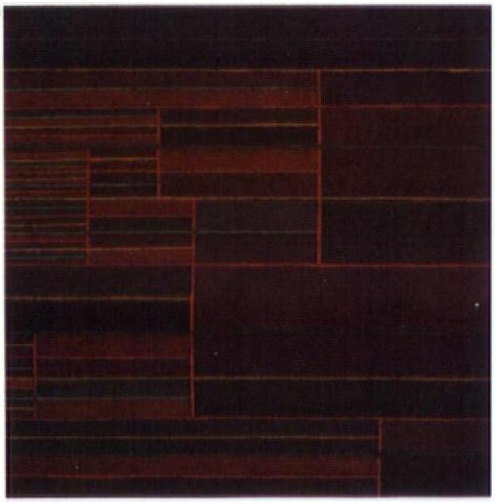


London Metropolitan, London, UK, Architectural Research Unit

3. An early sketch of the 'boulevard' 4 & 5. The plan organisation sketched by Florian Beigel was inspired by this painting by Paul Klee

5



of reinventing a new faculty is the spatial armature in which that operates.'

The new faculty will occupy two nearby buildings in Whitechapel. The crucible will be Central House, an early-1960s fabric warehouse and factory happily positioned opposite the Whitechapel Art Gallery, which was itself beautifully expanded by Robbrecht en Daem in 2009. Central House will contain the studio spaces for all the subjects: fine art, photography, printmaking, sculpture and performance, alongside product design, jewellery, architecture, urban design and planning. Further east on Commercial Road, the other building houses the workshops.

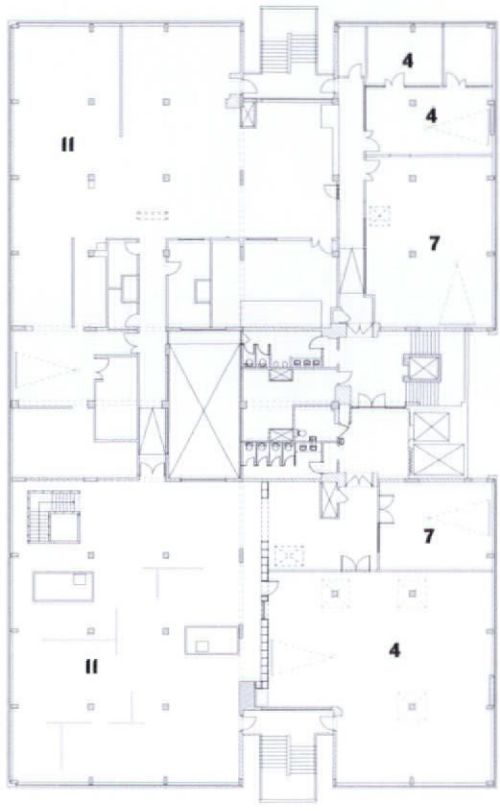
The remodelling of Central House is being designed by the ultimate London Met insiders, ARU (the Architectural Research Unit), which Florian Beigel and Philip Christou have been running there since the mid-1980s, with ArchitecturePLB acting as the delivery architects. What has been completed so far is a degree of stripping out and vertical connection between floorplates, and the creation of a single 'landscape floor', which is now occupied by 230 postgraduate architecture diploma students decanted from the Holloway Road buildings, on which the lease will soon be up.

'We want to try to broker the ideal, subtle relationship between connectivity – the ability for individuals and disciplines to contact each other and bump into each other, to collaborate – and the sense that disciplines have their own prejudices and identity'

The 'landscape floor' doesn't describe AstroTurf and potted plants, but the architectural conception of how the building will organise social relationships in space. 'ARU is very interested in the rug not the picnic,' explains Mull. 'They set up a very gentle, quite complex landscape infrastructure, which to one extent is entirely figured and tightly controlled, but at another level is entirely liberating, without being bland.'

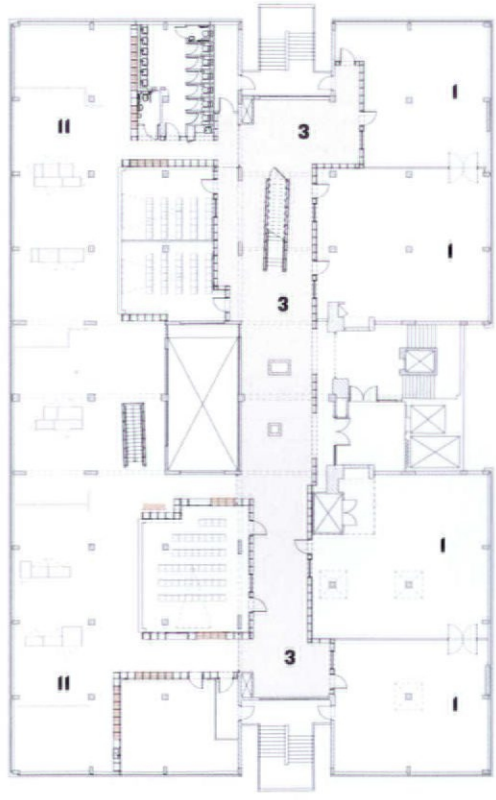
The interest of the project is how an architecture of tightness and looseness – almost conflicting in ambition itself, or at least paradoxical – can be accommodated in an existing industrial building laid out on entirely different principles. For Central

indicative first floor plan



indicative fifth floor plan

indicative ground floor plan



indicative third floor plan

1 studio
2 entrance foyer
3 boulevard
4 studio
5 gallery
6 café/bar
7 seminar/teaching
8 lecture theatre
9 open plan office
10 private office
11 open hall studio
12 computer lab
13 meeting room

London Metropolitan, London, UK, Architectural Research Unit

fourth floor plan for the architecture course

6

House is essentially logical and pragmatic: a six-storey edifice, rectangular in plan, with the entrance in the middle of the south-west long elevation, the lift and core in the middle of the north-east side, a central light well, and a pretty regular column structure.

'We quite like the building, it has a robustness, honesty and simplicity,' says Christou. 'Inevitably when reusing a building, there's a limit to how much you should do. We're taking a pleasure in our insertions and the existing fabric having an equal, respectful dialogue between the old and the new.'

The fourth floor for the architecture diploma students was the first to be completed and reveals the architectural strategy. From the initial sketches, ARU wanted the plan to have a grain to it, creating a mixture of various scaled spaces, which could be programmed in different ways. The key to achieving this was Beigel's idea to move the WCs away from the central light-well and this freed up the floor plan to enable the creation of something more urban in character.

The main stair core gives onto the primary long-axial route, which the practice calls the 'boulevard' – a term given credence by the generous width (more than just a corridor); the expression of the boundary walls (with articulated timber structure, windows and doors inset into them, so they read as 'buildings'); the smaller 'alleyways' than feed into the boulevard; and the way that nothing quite lines up, like a city that has evolved over centuries rather than a plan that has been produced for efficiency.

Each architectural unit has its own space, those on the north-east side are enclosed rooms, which have windows and glazed doors, so that they have a 'public' interface; and those on the south-west side are open to the circulation. In the middle of the floor, away from the windows, are enclosed spaces that can be used for seminars, interviews, or whatever. Though the floor is designed to offer defined and ownable space for the units, it creates an interaction-rich environment with multiple pathways between spaces – much like the urban setting that becomes the neighbourhood for families (or, in architectural parlance, 'units') and individuals.

The creation of a new culture

The art and architecture faculties were both large and successful enterprises in their own right, but they had previously never had any relationship with each other,

London Metropolitan, London, UK, Architectural Research Unit

6 & 7. The 'boulevard' space on the architecture floor performs a larger social function than a corridor, hence its extra width. The 'domestic' staircase connects up disciplines more informally than the cores. The enclosed studio rooms have doors and windows, like buildings on a high street, that give a two-way relationship between the unit and the faculty

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being on different campuses, and, historically, in two different institutions. In bringing them together into the Cass, Mull felt it was important to establish common pedagogical structures. 'The biggest one is something we're familiar with in architecture, the unit system, and – through negotiation and discourse – we've introduced to all of the fine art and design subjects a sense of the practitioner-driven atelier,' he says.

He has also encouraged the faculty to use London as a resource and location for work to be constructed. 'The academic structures, the live project structures, the external reach, plus the building, taken together, are one. It would have been impossible to do it if we'd left disciplines entirely isolated or fragmented from each other.' And the strategy seems to be effecting a culture change: 'We started off with everybody saying, "Where's my floor?". And now it's "Is there any reason why we can't be there next to this person?"'

But the Cass isn't extreme in its intent, or blind to differences; the building doesn't seek to erase boundaries altogether, merely to create fertile creative and social borders. 'We want to try to broker the ideal, subtle relationship between connectivity – the ability for individuals and disciplines to contact each other and bump into each other, to collaborate – and the sense that disciplines have their own prejudices and identity,' says Mull. 'The spatial arrangement is quite familiar in that it starts to treat floorplates as mini-cities in their own right, with a series of objects set into it, with connecting staircases.'

Mull is referring to the additional 'domestic' staircases that, cut as incisions in the existing fabric, connect two floors in unexpected places to supplement or circumvent the full vertical extension of the stair core. As Mull hopes: 'When we curate the full use of the building, we will begin to inhabit it, not as courses separated on floors, but as clusters around staircases, around projects and around themes, rather than historic disciplinary alliances – and the building will allow that to happen.'

The second phase of the work is planned to take place over this summer and to be completed for the start of the next academic year this October. The first, second, third and fifth floors will be reworked into studio landscapes. The prototypical fourth floor is being used to test the significant variations other subjects might want. 'Fine Art is having an open conversation about how far they want to be in a singular open space with some individual provisions, or how far they want to be in a series of studio rooms,' he says. 'What they're really talking about is not what space they're going to occupy, but what is the organisational, academic and emotional structure of an art school of the future.'

> 'The new building should work like a good dinner party. We're not forcing people to talk to their neighbour, but we're putting them next to each other and seeing what happens'

Central House is on one side of the busy roundabout where Spitalfields segues into Whitechapel, and while little will change the external appearance, there are plans to define the external identity. At ground level on the corner, there will be a café and restaurant, open to the public; and a large gallery space, which will act as faculty 'shopfront', and could also be used as a lecture hall. There will be a 200-seat lecture hall on the first floor, but a new one on the roof in a two-floor addition has been mooted, which would be ideal.

There is the intention to create public spine through the building culminating in

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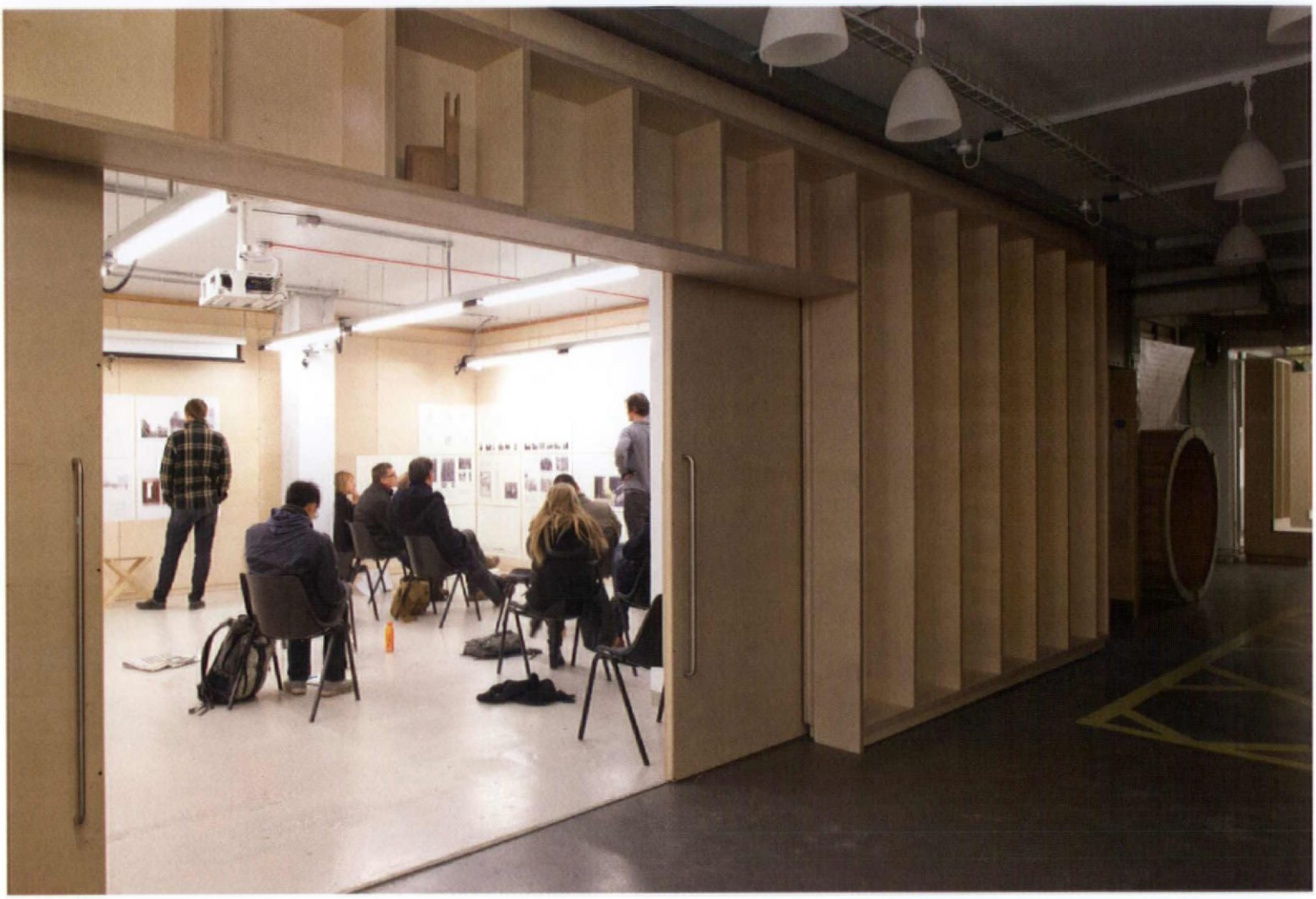

'ARU is very interested in the rug not the picnic. They set up a very gentle, quite complex landscape infrastructure, which to one extent is entirely figured and tightly controlled, but at another level is entirely liberating, without being bland'

a 'pocket park' on the roof (one of Met's 'live projects'), which will be a productive environment serving the restaurant, and a place where visitors can view the Rachel Whiteread sculpture on the front of the Whitechapel Gallery.

Team spirit

Unlike the other two schools, the Royal College of Art and Central St Martins, effectively on this project the client and the architect have been pretty much one and the same thing; where there has been friction, one imagines it (rightly or wrongly) more as a good-natured, almost teasing discussion between long-standing and trusting colleagues. And it is perhaps this closeness of the working team that has produced an identity for the building which is so unmistakably 'London Met'.

'There is an intimacy and authenticity about it, which might mean some of it is slightly troubled, but it's a proper representation of who we are and where we are. It's negotiated, and it's partial, and it has a cultivated awkwardness to it, provisional and challenging and urban – and that's good,' says Mull, expressing just as much about the teaching methodology as its physical formation. In all three schools featured in these articles, there has been a drive to break down disciplinary boundaries, almost forming a consensus – a dangerous thing surely? – between the art and design schools of London. It brings to mind the phrase 'what makes good neighbours is often good fences', prompting the speculation of if and when disciplines will start pushing back, or find new ways of defending their territories.

But Mull sees it in a much less combative light. 'It's like a good dinner party,' he says. 'We're not forcing people to talk to their neighbour, but we're putting them next to each other and seeing what happens.'

London Metropolitan, London, UK, Architectural Research Unit

One of the internalised enclosures that can be used for a range of functions. Though there is no natural light, a large sliding door allows crits to become public events should the tutors so wish

Architect
Architectural Research Unit
Photographs
Ioana Marinescu 2, 6, 7, 8

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THE BIG RETHINK CONCLUDES NEIGHBOURHOOD AS THE EXPANSION OF THE HOME

Drawing on the lessons of the series, the final part of the Big Rethink proposes a new kind of prototypical neighbourhood that expresses a more resonant connection with all aspects of the human condition and suggests a genuinely enriching approach to indivual and communal life

PETER BUCHANAN

After a hiatus, this essay returns to and concludes the Big Rethink campaign.[1] It extends and adds detail to the discussion of urban design, the subject of the penultimate essay, to bring the whole series down to earth by elaborating a more concrete, if still somewhat abstracted, vision of some design implications of the ideas discussed in the series. The focus is on the neighbourhood, in part because progress towards a true sustainability, and its concomitant way of life, cannot be delivered only by buildings, let alone individual ones. Besides, a theme of this series is that sustainability cannot be achieved by attending only to such objective issues as technology and ecology, critically important though these are. Equally necessary is attention to the subjective, psycho-cultural factors in devising a vision of a sustainable way of life sufficiently enticing to inspire impetus towards its realisation. Such a vision of a deeply satisfying way of life in an environment offering an extraordinarily rich choice of non-commercial activities and experiences – in which its residents grow up, mature and age in the embrace of community and nature – cannot be realised at a scale smaller than the neighbourhood. Progress to genuine sustainability thus requires replacing the alienating environment bequeathed by modernity, to which we could not relate and that impeded our relationships with others and ourselves, with one (here, the neighbourhood) in which we once again feel at home in the world.

Another key assumption underlying this series is that we are in the throes of epochal transition. And it is vitally necessary for environmental design practitioners to understand and participate in this transition, by furthering and helping to shape it, if we are adequately to address the near overwhelming challenges of our time. The confusions characterising much of the current architectural scene, and the inadequacy of our attempts to progress to sustainability, stem from not fully grasping the nature of the changes that are afoot. These essays have mostly focused on the implications of the waning of the modern era, which started with the Renaissance and was consolidated by the Enlightenment, and of Postmodernism, modernity's repressed flip side that emerged to further its terminal meltdown. The implications of just this transition, and the increasingly obvious inadequacies of the sort of thinking bequeathed to us by both modernity and postmodernity, are vast enough to have preoccupied us. But in fact, as already discussed in the second essay (AR February 2012) several epochs of much longer and differing duration are closing, extending right up to the ending of the current, Cenozoic geological era that started 66 million years ago. This is giving way to what some have termed the Anthropocene age, recognising the huge impact humans are having on the planet, and others the Ecozoic era,[2] in optimistic anticipation that we might yet learn to live in harmony with the planet – our only chance of long-term survival.

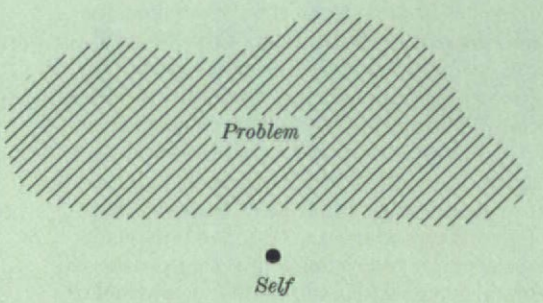
This vastly expanded perspective is also germane to any discussion of sustainability because, as we shall see, the challenging questions provoked are not only about what must we do to, say, bring about the Ecozoic era. Equally, we have to raise the question (to many the much more daunting, if also exciting one) of who must we become, or be, to realise and live in this new manner. Again, the apt scale to evoke an implementable vision of what this might imply, along with some of the complexities involved, is that of the neighbourhood. Several thinkers have posited that the transition necessary to achieving true sustainability must be of similar order to that between hunter-gatherer nomadism and agricultural (and eventually urban) settlement. These thinkers have also noted how for 150,000 years of tribal nomadism we lived in relative harmony with the planet which we treated with reverence as our home; moreover, the 10,000 years since have been, in evolutionary terms, a very short period. Thus the modern era, with its extractive and destructive ways supercharged by industrial technology and colonialism (which continue in updated forms in the quest for food and scarce resources by major manufacturing nations), has been a mere blink of the eye. And yet, our contemporary mode of living on the planet seems to most to be normal, simply and inevitably the way things are. The argument here is not to revert to tribalism; such bands were as homogeneous in make-up as our societies are heterogeneous. But instead of merely dismissing them as primitive, we might yet learn much from this long and successful phase of our historical evolution – not least about the importance of inclusive communities and an intimate relationship with nature – that might help us to shape a more sane and deeply satisfying new way of life.

A thinker I've only just discovered, and whose ideas resonate with much of what has been discussed in these essays, is Tony Fry. In *Becoming Human by Design*[3] he mentions how during 150,000 years of nomadism we dwelt in the world, treating the whole world as our home. But when climate change led us to settle the Fertile Crescent, initiating 10,000 years of settlement, this mode of 'being-in-the-world' ended, giving way to 'making a world within the world', home now restricted to only those parts we settled. As Fry says, this 'instigated those processes that were eventually to lead to contemporary ... unsustainability, with the emergent prospect of mass homelessness'. The Enlightenment then intensified the process of what Fry calls Unsettlement that climaxes in the current crisis. This pungent characterisation resonates strongly with the equally evocative diagrams by Richard Tarnas shown in the second of these essays.[4]

Thus to move forward to sustainability requires much more than knowing what to do, our current limited approach that draws on only the objective Left-Hand Quadrants of the AQAL diagram. This merely makes things – buildings, products, energy generation and so on – less unsustainable. Instead, true sustainability entails nothing less than transforming ourselves into who we must become, by attending to the Right-Hand Quadrants also, to achieve the next stage of our evolution. For Fry, the way to achieve this transformation is what he calls 'ontological design', the third driver of human evolution along with biology and social history. Fry argues convincingly that ontological design is intrinsic to the process by which we became human: we make things with purposive intent (designed artefacts) that help us act on or in the world, and which then persist to change us. Although not quite the same idea as presented in earlier essays in this series, it tallies with

I-3. Conceptual model of how to provoke change successfully
I. Concentration only on the problems to be confronted, leading to overwhelm and stuckness
2. Formulating an enticing desired outcome makes that a focus of attention so that the problem seems to shrink. But this is not yet enough to guarantee change
3. To generate momentum, elaborate the back story showing how you have already been moving to the desired outcome, and then ask: what small step will move me further towards that goal?

1



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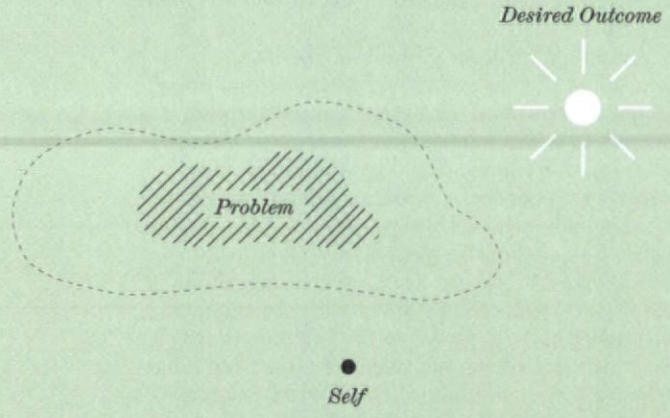

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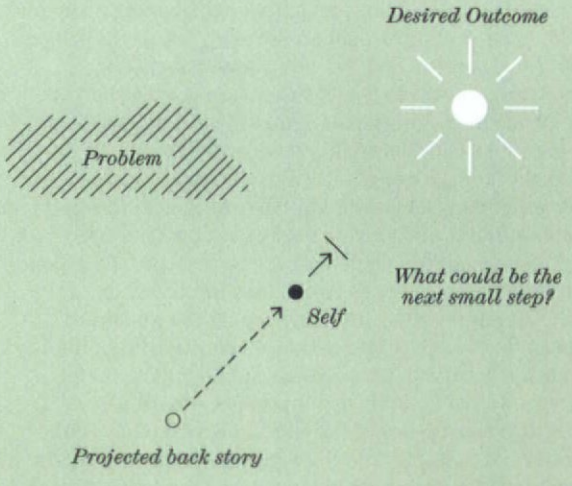

two key ideas found there. First, that it was through the spatial deployment of activities and the choreography of their relationships – through architecture and ritual, the ways in which we project our psyches into space to better explore and elaborate them, as well as intensify the experience and meaning of activities – that we created ourselves as complex cultured beings. Second, that design should now be understood as mankind's mode of purposively participating in evolution, both mankind's and that of the planet.

Such elevated views of the essential purposes of architecture and design have yet to be widely acknowledged – understandably, perhaps, after Modernism's disastrously reductionist and determinist attempts at social engineering. Yet they encapsulate precisely architecture's most essential and ennobling purpose. Recognition of this leads to adopting the evolutionary/developmental perspective that characterises so much leading-edge 21st-century thought. It also entails embracing the Left-Hand Quadrants of the AQAL diagram, as well as the Right-Hand Quadrants to furnish an inspiring vision of an environment and lifestyle that encourages us to unfold into full humanity, according to current understandings as to what that might mean.

Initiating change

Creating such an inspiring vision is part of a potently effective model for initiating change that is widely used in psychotherapy and business management. This recognises that what keeps us stuck and unable to act effectively is an overly exclusive concentration on the challenges and problems we face – the almost exclusive subject of environmentalist rhetoric – which can then become depressingly and disempoweringly overwhelming. So we should also formulate an enticing vision of where we might get to, and of what life would become like, in the process of resolving these problems. This not only provides a powerful positive motive and forward momentum but also the problems' looming presence would seem to shrink and move aside in our mind so that we could see and concentrate also on the desired outcome. Yet this envisaged outcome may not appeal to all, particularly if it includes a level of community engagement that runs counter to the aloof hyper-individualism of our times. Yet such psychological 'resistance' can also be seen as positive, as proof that the proposed changes do not fall short of what is required to bring about real transformation and, moreover, what we actually want, even long for.

To overcome such resistance and impel action it is necessary to call attention to, or just imagine, a 'back story' that indicates how we are already progressing towards the envisioned outcome. (Part of our back story is elaborated in the next section of this essay.) The key question then becomes: what is the next small step that will advance us to the desired goal? Because they are more obviously feasible, small steps are much more likely to inspire action than a dauntingly large step that might provoke the inertia of resistance. More than that, small steps are also likely to set in motion positive feedback effects that continue and amplify the forward momentum. By contrast, large, initially destabilising and possibly

difficult-to-implement interventions tend to unleash dampening negative feedback effects of various sorts. So massive change can be initiated in a piecemeal fashion by, say, building part of a neighbourhood, a perfectly feasible proposition with the potential to inspire widespread emulation.

Before focusing on the neighbourhood and its residential buildings, it is useful to note how discussion of them would differ from that about either urban design (although a successful neighbourhood probably exemplifies sound urban design principles) or such contemporary manifestations as the housing estate or residential development. These distinctions also clarify the aptness of the neighbourhood as a closing topic for this series. An urban design masterplan may be completed by buildings, but it primarily shapes the open spaces of the public realm and is future-oriented, providing a framework within which buildings will come and go. Considered in any meaningful sense, the neighbourhood must include the buildings as utterly intrinsic to it, as well as the past of those buildings and of the spaces between them, both of which would be pregnant with the memories and meanings that have attached to them over time. The housing estate or residential development is generally considered without such dimensions: it is merely where the home is located, and, in the apt terminology of writer and activist Lieven de Cauter, this home is a secure 'capsule' for the cocooned nuclear family whose members come and go enclosed in vehicular 'capsules', thus remote and protected from neighbourhood and neighbours.[5]

By contrast, any real neighbourhood is an extension of, even an intrinsic part of, the home; it is not somewhere you merely pass through going to and from home but is the environment and community within which adults meet and slowly bond and where children play, grow up and are socialised. Hence the neighbourhood is a place where we not only reside but also to which we belong: it is part of our identity and intrinsic to who we are, so providing essential psychological and existential grounding. Such Left-Hand Quadrant concerns are extraneous to the way a housing estate is usually conceived. The real neighbourhood is thus an essential aspect of what the previous essay called the City of Being, and is near-impossible to recreate with the modern, reductively functionalist thinking and design approach that produced the modern City of Doing, of destinations dispersed in a relative void.

Regeneration of the neighbourhood

Significantly, some of the same forces undermining the City of Doing are provoking the regeneration of neighbourhoods. Many complain that the computer is increasing the atomisation of society and the erosion of immediate community, with adults and children spending more time online and even preferring to meet others only in cyberspace. But although there is truth in this, it is also a one-sided view. Such online communities are certainly not real communities in which a diverse range of people are brought into prolonged and unavoidable contact so that each has a largely unedited view of the other. Instead, special interest groups are where you meet only the like-minded in circumstances of your choice – including anonymity or as a fictitious persona. Yet there is also evidence that online communities increase the desire for face-to-face contact and even for real community, beyond such phenomena as flash mobs. Certainly a longing for community seems part of the contemporary zeitgeist.

Besides, the computer and the Internet have led to ever more people working from home, at least part of the time. So it is not only children and house parents who are home during the day, but also those who once enjoyed the social life associated with work. So besides local shops reopening to serve these people, so too are coffee shops and other places to meet and hang out – the so-called 'Starbucks effect'. A complementary development is that people are realising how unsustainable is suburban life, particularly with time and energy wasted in long commutes and the house parent wasting yet more time and fuel chauffeuring children to distant schools, shopping malls and sports facilities. They are also missing the vitality, choice and community of the old neighbourhoods. So, in the USA especially, people are now moving back into city centres and reviving old mixed-use neighbourhoods. Both working from home and the return to old neighbourhoods are resulting in what some Americans refer to as 'The Return of Main Street'.

This revitalisation of the vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood, and the creation of their contemporary equivalents, marries well with other topical agendas. Such neighbourhoods, particularly those dense enough for efficient public transport and with pleasant and lively streets that encourage walking, are intrinsic to the mixed-use neighbourhoods of the Compact City advocated for being less unsustainable than dispersed cities of monofunctional urban areas. They are also consistent with the Slow City movement, which seeks to enhance the conviviality of cities as well as of the Transition Town movement, which extends such concerns to a wide range of strategies to increase the resilience of towns and urban areas to better face forthcoming challenges.

The modern City of Doing, with its fragmented fabric and dispersed destinations, promised convenience at the expense of such things as community, sense of place and belonging – all things the modern mindset tended to see as constraining freedom, which it valued above all. Despite the freedoms and unprecedented wealth enjoyed by many within the City of Doing, surveys suggest its lifestyle has not brought the happiness that comes with the deep satisfactions of a meaningful life with connections to community and place. This is because it prioritises standard of living over quality of life. Life encapsulated and cocooned in the isolated home (whether in tower block or suburb) and private car is not now seen by sociologists or psychologists as the best setting for raising children, nor for adults to flower into full maturity. Besides, it has a brittle fragility, dependent on supply chains and services that are easily disrupted, and offers neither the comforts nor resiliency of neighbourhood networks. It is a lifestyle unsupportive of both physical and mental health, nor of the self-knowledge that leads to emotional maturity and deep happiness. As argued in an earlier essay, self-knowledge depends on being fully

known in all one's roles by others, something the fragmented City of Doing expressly inhibits.

Sedentary work and dependency on time-wasting commuting, whether by private or public transport, has led to an epidemic of obesity and such associated health problems as diabetes, hypertension and heart trouble. It is now also recognised that a common causal factor in many of today's chronic diseases – such as hypertension and heart disease, cancer and others – is inflammation. And several studies suggest that, among other factors, a major cause of inflammation is living alone (or without other adults), and especially with the stresses that go with having no one to divulge problems to and share worries with. But the fragmented way of life and atomised society that have led to solitude and a sense of exclusion are almost intrinsic to the design of modern buildings and cities. These bring other social problems too, in that some of the lonely and those who feel themselves to be not included, and who have not developed the emotional intelligence and conversational skills that aid social inclusion, develop various forms of predatory behaviour. These justify further capsularisation – such as gated communities, driving children to school and so on – fuelling further atomisation and erosion of the neighbourhood values and virtues that we now realise are vital to physical, mental and social health. The resulting problems are particularly acute for children who cannot indulge the spirit of adventure (associated with the Red Meme phase of Spiral Dynamics,[6] so manifesting later in such pathological forms as gang culture) by freely roaming the city[7] or immersing themselves in nature, especially meadows, wild woods, streams and so on, resulting in what is now referred to as 'nature deficit disorder'.[8]

Everything discussed so far reinforces the premise that the design of the neighbourhood, whether a new one or the regeneration of an old one, is an obviously apt place to initiate the broad range of changes necessary to progress to sustainability. The manageable scale and phased implementation permits experiment, with the later stages refined or revised according to feedback in response to the earlier stages. Much of human life takes place here, and the scale is sufficient to shape an environment in which people may enjoy richly varied lives. The challenge is to ensure these do not overly tax the planet's resources and regenerative capacities, while also being deeply satisfying because enmeshed in multiple webs of meaningful, life enhancing connection – a fundamental key to sustainability.

Preliminaries to design

However, as argued earlier in this series, envisioning and realising a sustainable civilisation is not only the great collective enterprise of our times, but one to which all creative and responsible people should contribute, not just architects. It involves far more than shaping a new environment: also new economics and politics, lifestyles and social rituals, culture and underpinning collective myths. To describe a prototypical neighbourhood of the near future somewhat contradicts this argument for the importance of collective initiative. What follows is intended to prompt such discussion. Besides, as an abstract prototype, it ignores such specifics as local context, culture and climate, which would all be major determinants of any implemented design. Moreover, as argued in an earlier essay, the future will probably see a wide range of types of settlement, perhaps as some return to the land pursuing a small-scale mixed and labour-intensive – rather than energy-intensive – farming. The model described here is only one possibility, a dense urban settlement chosen to prove that richness of experience, community interaction and pervasive contact with nature is possible even at such an extreme. Furthermore, the focus is only on the psycho-social dimensions (the Left-Hand Quadrants) of neighbourhood and residential design. Ignored are most of the objective, technical issues (the Right-Hand Quadrants) such as energy-efficient heating and ventilation, handling of sewage and waste and so on. Although obviously vitally important, these are increasingly well understood and publicised, and subject to much promising innovation. What is intended here is to counterbalance a too-exclusive focus on such concerns, both for completeness and to elaborate a more enticing vision such as might inspire at least partial emulation in real schemes.

Clearly then, the design of the first few of such neighbourhoods would not be entrusted immediately to architects. Instead design would be preceded by extensive research by experts – including depth and evolution psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists – as well as laypeople. The quest would be for the insights necessary to elaborate a sustainable lifestyle and culture and its concomitant environment – sustainable because people would be so deeply satisfied psychically from living in harmony with the planet and its people, nature and human nature, that they spurn pointless consumption. The research would draw on both the best of our human sciences and yet also dredge our sweetest and deepest of dreams that promise enchantment and fulfilment. Some of the questions pursued would be: What do we really want? What would make us truly fulfilled and happy? Who would we have to become to live such a life? And is that what the planet and evolution would want for us too? These are not such easy questions to answer. Our expectations have been warped by materialist modern values and, most especially, by today's advertising that uses the best of psychology's insights to undermine our sense of adequacy so as to sell us products that promise to alleviate this. In the face of this, among the best tests as to what will bring fulfilment and meaning is to imagine reassessing life from your deathbed. What would matter now? What truly brought happiness? Almost certainly it would not be consumerism, but instead connection, with people and places, and making a lasting contribution to them. Ask people when they were happiest, say on holiday, and they are unlikely to talk about some expensive five-star vacation but rather remember camping on a beach. The point is that deep happiness and satisfaction need not cost the earth, financially or literally in terms of the eco-damage wrought.

From this research, questioning and discussion, would be distilled the briefs for urban designers and architects. But before design starts a set of goals would have to be formulated to guide and test design, only a few of the more all-embracing ones likely to be proposed being mentioned

here. This too would be a collective participatory exercise, with agreement on the goals reached before design proceeds, and then continuing refinement of the goals from feedback in response to completion of early phases. As a major aspect of creating a setting for a sustainable lifestyle, the environment and the social dynamics this shapes will be designed to encourage residents to discover, explore and grow into their full potential, as that is currently understood but has as yet to become possible for much of society to achieve. This requires an environment offering a great richness of opportunity for, and choices of, experience and social encounter such as will stimulate and stretch the person and bring self-knowledge. Both the neighbourhood masterplan and the residential blocks would contribute to this.

As such the neighbourhood and its housing would be designed to support all ages and stages of human development. This would extend from dependent infant and exploring child playing in safety, to the teenager roaming further afield but still in safety, to the varied lives of working adults and parents, and on up to the retired and elderly, and even the dying. Although there would be no compulsion to stay within the neighbourhood, it would also be possible to live your whole life within the same community by moving between its various dwelling types, even within a single block. Despite that option, many would probably move for work or when marrying, although some expect a sustainable society to involve less mobility than today's.

Reconnecting with nature

As important as accommodating all ages and stages, the design would seek to connect, or reconnect, our fragmented society in which children are unaware of much of the adult world, such as what their parents really do at work, and the aged are largely excluded and banished to care homes. It would also reconnect people with nature and heighten their awareness of its cycles, moods and forces. Abundant vegetation would not only provide shade, freshen the air, temper micro-climates and provide food but also contribute to biodiversity, both in the range of plant species and also in supporting insects and wildlife, as well as in creating continuous corridors for their movements. Design would foster an intimate relationship with plants and also with pond and perhaps stream life. And the reverence for nature would be reflected in the total lack of residual space, as is characteristically found around so many modern buildings, where pathetically disguised by cosmetic landscaping and potently indicative of modernity's disregard for our earth. Such a concern will extend to designing to minimise undue disruption of slowly established plant life and the wasteful destruction of resources invested in construction. So despite being designed to shape maximum variety of every sort, the masterplan and buildings will also be designed for longevity and flexibility. The housing blocks, for instance, will be built to generous space standards so that, while the street facades and structural frames will last many generations, the interiors can be rearranged as required.

Part of what gives a neighbourhood its identity is a sense of boundary, which may be indistinctly defined, and a core focus of commercial and communal uses. But here discussion is limited to only a portion of the neighbourhood and a particular aspect of it. As discussed in the penultimate essay about urban design, a key skill is to tease out into as diverse a hierarchy as possible the movement and open space systems and then interweave these to achieve the maximum richness of kinds and intensities of activity, and sorts of location and experience. Among the greatest blunders in modern planning and urban design was the Corbusian tower in a park serviced by a vehicle-only road, or Hilberseimer-type slab blocks aligned only for optimal orientation. Both approaches are dismally impoverished, with what is qualitatively only one kind of open space. Contrast these with parts of historic London such as Georgian Bloomsbury or, even better, the late-Victorian stucco terraces around Ladbroke Grove. Here the streets are social spaces framed by the flanking buildings and animated by elements (entrances, railings, windows) suggesting human scale and habitation, and the pavements are paved with handsome flagstones. In some places there are small front gardens, and always larger rear ones, which in the Ladbroke Grove area surround a shared communal garden. There are also squares with grass and trees, some still fenced for resident-only use, and nearby are the large parks. There is thus a range of kinds of outdoor space for residents to use, a minimum of three kinds in Bloomsbury and in Ladbroke Grove five or six.

A characteristic of our times is the enormous range of choice we are offered in almost everything but public urban space within new developments. But good urban design can shape a considerable range of open spaces, hard and soft, and interweave them to elaborate a rich range of experiences and potential encounters between the people using them. Our hypothetical masterplan demonstrates this. A major element in this is a broad boulevard flanked by shops, restaurants, banks and so on, which is also a public transit route for buses or trams. This boulevard passes under a limited access highway and rapid transit system with a station at their crossing. Here there is also a major square flanked by large commercial and civic buildings. Branching off the boulevard are quiet residential streets, alternatively vehicular with pedestrian pavements and a pedestrian- and bicycle-only greenway. Where the latter meet the boulevard they widen to create a small square onto which corner cafés extend, and here and there along their length they widen into smaller squares furnished to suit the aged and toddlers. Crossing these and parallel to the boulevard is a broader greenway that connects a series of larger shaded squares onto which open various communal facilities. And further away from the boulevard is a broad linear park in which such facilities as primary schools and swimming pools are sited. These lead to a large metropolitan park that extends at right angles to the boulevard and contains secondary schools, major cultural facilities such as museums and a variety of landscaping treatments including forests and meadows. Within the variegated grid these define are courtyard housing blocks, updated versions of a familiar

4. Archetypal modern layout of blocks in unframed amorphous landscaping, with only one kind of outdoor space
5. Typical historic London layout of streets formed by terraced housing with private back gardens and shared squares, so the result is three qualitatively different forms of open space. In some parts of London there are also small front gardens and communal gardens beyond the back garden, giving five kinds of outdoor spaces
6. Abstract masterplan of proposed prototypical neighbourhood showing how movement and open space systems are each elaborated into as rich a hierarchy as possible and then interwoven to create maximum diversity of places, locations and opportunities for encounter. Here are a dozen qualitatively different kinds of open space. Masterplan by Phineas Harper from rough sketches by Peter Buchanan

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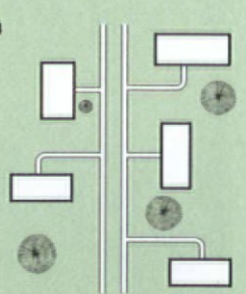

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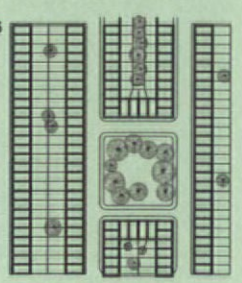
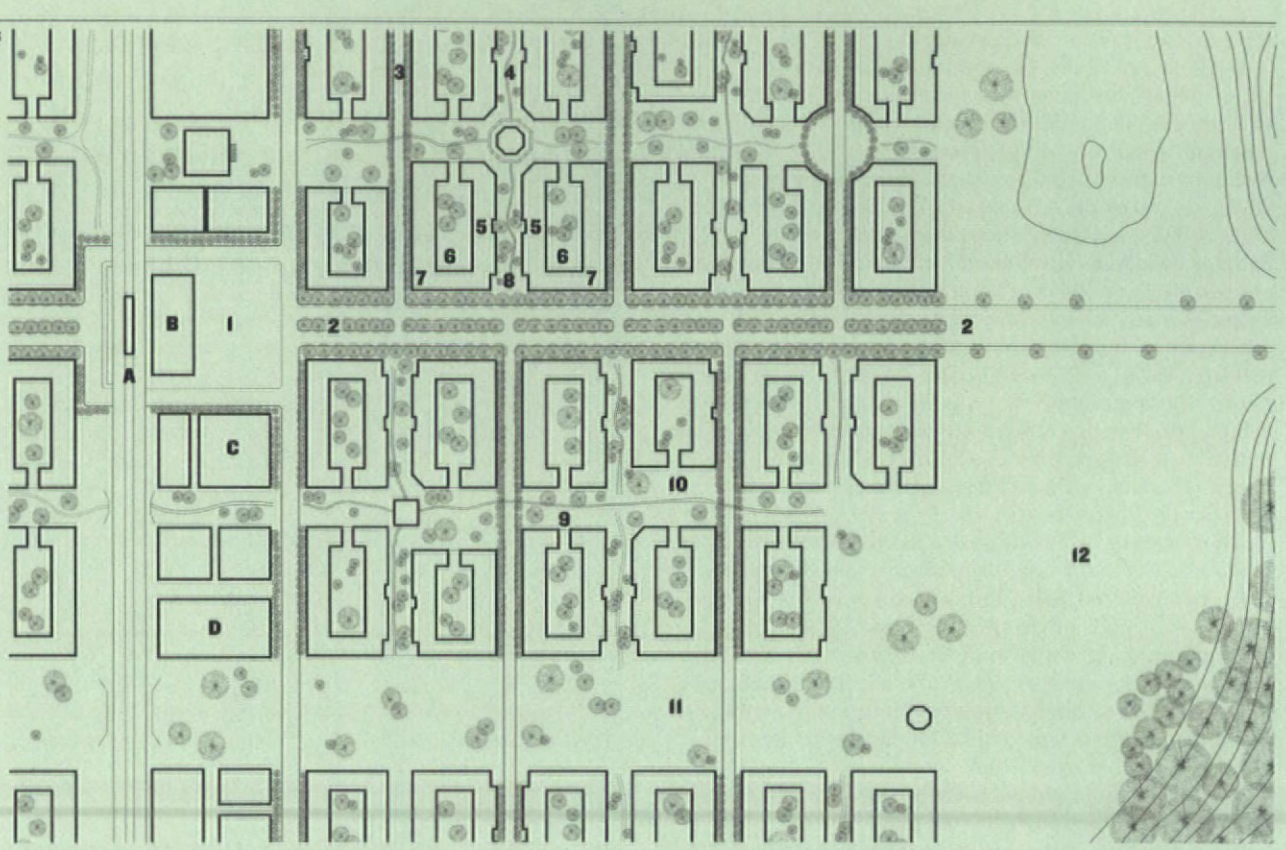


OPEN SPACES

- 1 civic square
- 2 boulevard
- 3 vehicular street
- 4 pedestrian greenway
- 5 old people and toddler area
- 6 central court
- 7 roof
- 8 outdoor extension of cafes
- 9 broader greenway
- 10 extensions to communal dining, creches etc
- 11 linear park
- 12 metropolitan park

INFRASTRUCTURE

- A station on rapid transit
- B civic building
- C cinemas, supermarkets etc
- D light industry, warehousing and other large buildings such as hospitals, schools etc



European type. As well as the landscaped central court, the roofs of these are used for a wide range of functions. All in all there are at least 12 kinds of qualitatively different open space, all suited to different activities, so shaping a richly diverse urban environment.

Residential block

The typical residential block in this hypothetical layout is an elongated rectangle with a central courtyard. The one described stretches between the boulevard along one narrow end and a park or broad greenway along its other narrow end. The long sides are flanked by a vehicular street and a pedestrian and bicycle greenway respectively. On the bottom two levels facing the boulevard and long sides, between the entrances to the housing above, is commercial and work space, for shops and restaurants along the broad boulevard pavement, and for office and professional suites, art and craft studios and workshops on the long sides. These could also be used as live-work units, and behind them are parking, storage and service spaces. On these lower levels the corners of the boulevard front are indented to create shady outdoor areas as extensions to corner cafés and bistros. Above these lower floors, the housing has sheer masonry facades facing outwards, capped by a cornice and articulated by both punched and projecting bay windows. These latter, like exposed columns, cornice and projecting canopies on the lower levels, are designed to interlock inside and outside spaces and are composed to form physiognomic patterns that together animate the public realm they face and help to invest these outdoor spaces with the sense of place so missing in the modern city. The inner face of the housing is very different, a lively composition of conservatories and balconies that extend each dwelling unit out to overlook and be seen from the court. These elements, all delicately spindly and festooned in vegetation that invades the conservatories to forge intimate daily contact between residents and plants, some of them fruit bearing, cascade downwards and outwards to the floor of the court raised half a level above the street.

The bottom four floors of housing are two layers of duplex maisonettes for families. The lower of these are deeper in plan and larger, with their own private gardens set a few steps down from their living areas and ringing the central communal garden that is set another few steps lower. The maisonettes above these have broad balconies. Jutting forward from each maisonette, the conservatories extend the kitchen and dining areas to command views of the central garden as well as internally of the living areas and up to the bedroom floors. So children, whether in home, private garden or balcony, or communal garden are under constant casual surveillance by parents and other adults. They can also safely make their way independently to their parents' place of business, whether this is in the home or oriented to the street, where it can be accessed from the entrance hall to the housing – and also to the crèche and communal facilities under the housing on the narrow side away from the balcony, as well as up to the roof. Access from these areas to the outside is electronically controlled by video-answerphone and swipe card to prevent egress by small children and unauthorised entry by strangers – a safeguard still required following

the exclusions of the modern city.

Besides the crèche, the communal facilities on the courtyard level may include a well-equipped DIY workshop, gym, launderette and certainly a kitchen and a community hall cum dining room where, when so inclined, residents can cook and eat together, have parties and meetings and so on. Also on this level along the middle of the side facing the pedestrian greenway would be small flats for the aged with a shared common room. This both opens onto a central court and has a balcony overlooking a small square between the old people's portion of two adjacent housing blocks, where aged neighbours may meet. The aged are thus not banished but a highly visible part of the community who can be regularly visited by their adult offspring and grandchildren, even when dying in the hospice portion of their unit. Children are thus aware of all the cycles and passages of life, as they always were until recently.

The central garden on the floor of the courtyard is landscaped both for visual appeal and to host a wide variety of uses, particularly aimed at younger children and the elderly. There is a playground with sand pit and splash pool and a meandering paved path. Although this path twists and turns and ramps through changes in level to pass various elements of interest, it forms a complete loop to be enjoyed by toddlers on trikes and the less mobile or wheelchair-bound disabled and elderly. Along this route would be shady bowers – with benches and tables for quiet pursuits like picnics, chess and reading – and a sundial, less for telling time than to mark the sun's ever-changing cycles.

On the levels above the two layers of maisonettes are smaller dwelling units, mainly for singles and couples without or no longer living with children. On the level directly below the roof are small flats, some perhaps for short-term lets such as for students, that are accessed from a broad gallery that overlooks the central garden and connects the heads of all the stair halls to those few that extend up to the roof. The roof is the block's other main outdoor space, more varied and intense in use than the central garden below in the court. Here there would be mini-allotments in raised beds as well as greenhouses for vegetables, fruit and cut flowers and a tank for farmed fresh-water fish and water chestnuts, as well as perhaps hutches for pets. There would also be barbecue facilities and courts for volleyball, badminton and similar sports. And there would be a large and some small pavilions, their forms a contemporary equivalent of the *chhatris* that grace the roofs of Mughal architecture, with roofs shaped with an extrovert perimeter projecting beyond the columns, between which the roof defines a more inwardly-focused centre. The large pavilion would be for parties and such things as communal yoga and tai chi – perhaps at sunrise and sunset – and the smaller ones for more intimate pursuits such as quiet conversation, reading or working on your laptop. Also up here might be a small observatory with telescope as well as recliners for sunbathing and sleeping under the stars – still a common rooftop activity in many parts of the world.

Everybody in such a block thus has many opportunities for casual encounters and other forms of meetings with

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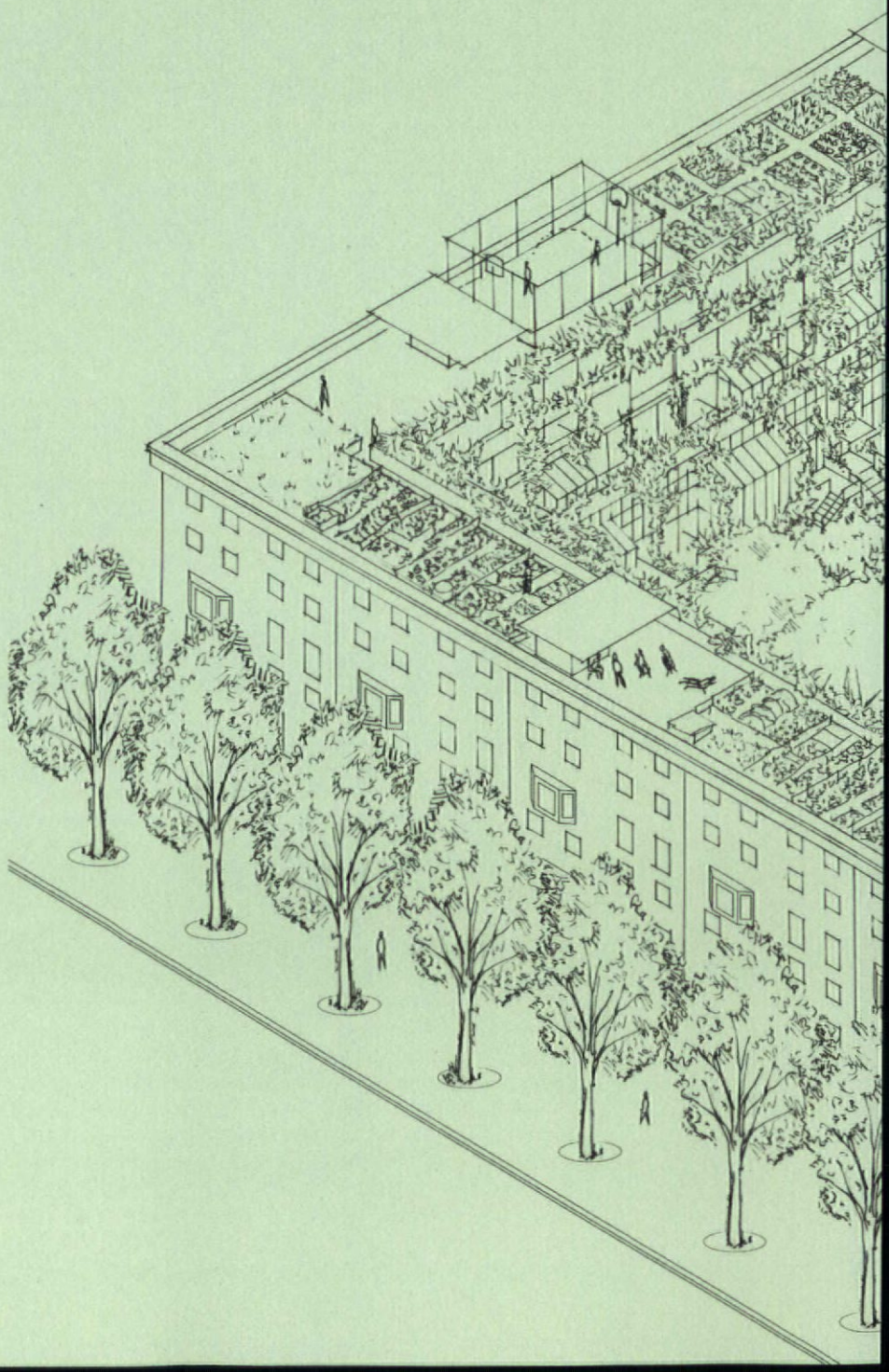


7. Axonometric of residential block showing the contrast between shear masonry, urban facades and cascading greenery, balconies and conservatories around central landscaped courtyard. On roof are a range of functions from communal pavilions to pitches for various sports and games and allotments. Drawing by Joseph Davis with assistance from Emma Galvin from rough sketch by Peter Buchanan

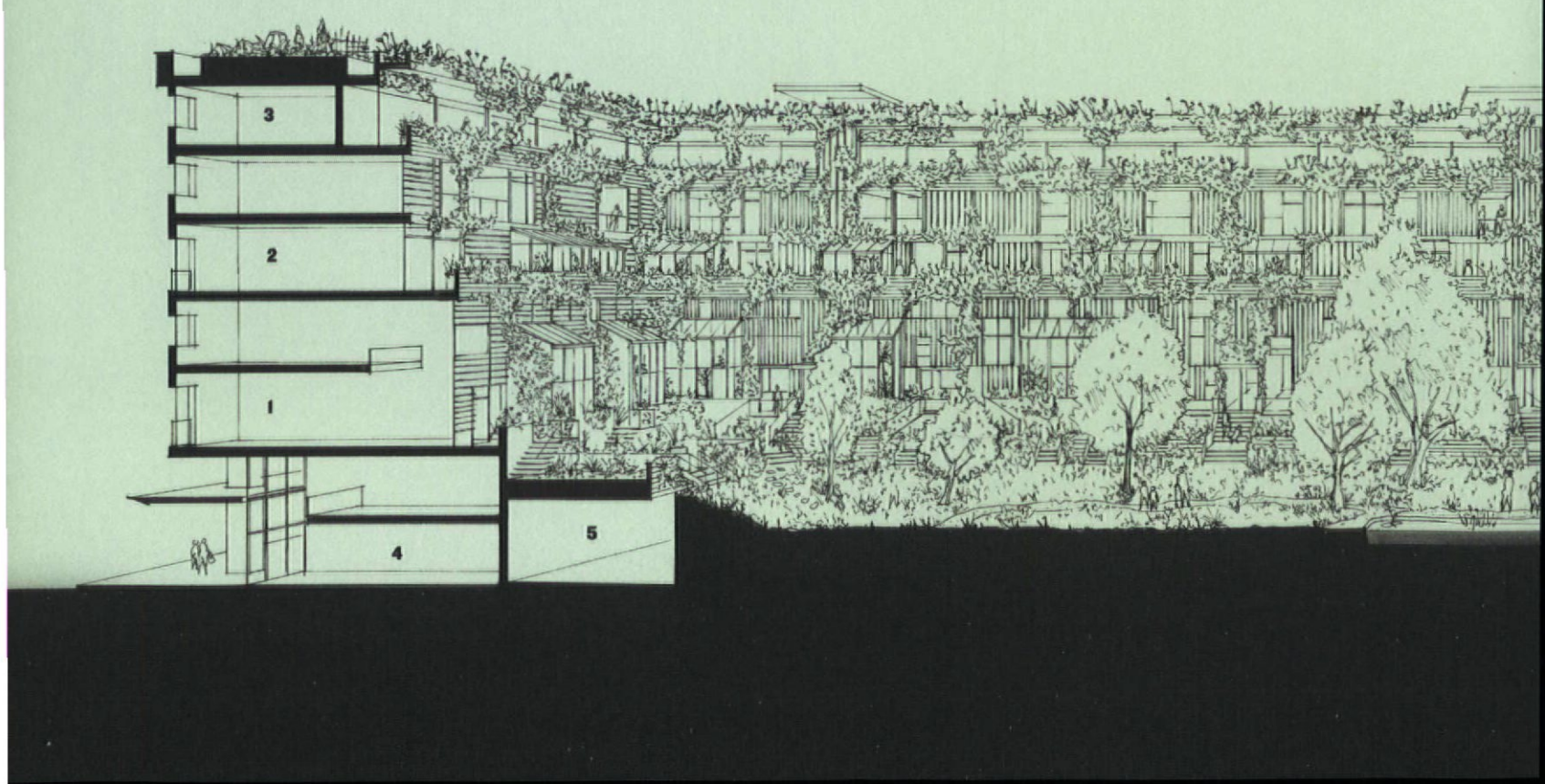
their neighbours as well as to participate in community-forming activities like shared meals and rituals – like sunrise yoga sessions. Such encounters are the glue of true community, in which everybody is seen and known in several differing roles and activities. And it is only by being constantly exposed to and properly known by others that people cannot live out some fantasy identity and so get properly to know themselves. There are also encouragements to be alert to the cycles of nature and the cosmos and engage intimately with plant life and nature's creatures. In short, residents are offered many ways to connect with each other and the larger world around, including the neighbourhood and all that it too has to offer.

Each dwelling, for instance, has an urban face overlooking a street or greenway that is part of, and leads to the rest of, the neighbourhood and city beyond, with all their facilities. Yet these dwellings open out to and engage with an abundant nature as mediated through the hierarchy of planted balcony and conservatory, private garden, semi-private communal courtyard and rooftop gardens as well as greenways leading to linear and then metropolitan parks. These last forms of green space are in turn part of a continuous network of such spaces that provide another means for people (and wildlife) to move through the city as an alternative to the paved streets and spaces. And wherever these systems cross are further opportunities for casual encounter. Within this richly articulated realm, everybody – man and woman, young and old, adult and child – has a great choice of things to do and explore, potential lifestyles to shape and people to meet, all of which must contribute to discovering and stretching the self. Compared with what is possible in most urban areas today, children can lead especially adventurous lives, playing and exploring freely yet in safety. Old people are not banished but can drop in on or be visited by younger friends and relatives whenever both parties have time to spare. And once dead, they need not be forgotten either: a low wall in the central garden might have a low wall with niches in which their ashes may be placed, if they wish to add visibly to the accumulated memories that are part of a neighbourhood's identity.

Conclusion

Such a scheme, both the neighbourhood masterplan and the residential block, is to be judged less for its form and visual appeal, which could nevertheless be considerable, but for the lifestyles made possible and the rich variety and satisfactions of the experiences offered. To best understand what is proposed, imagine living there, or even for just parts of what might be a typical day. Consistent with the themes of reconnecting with nature, you might rise early and greet the rising sun with yoga in your conservatory or as part of a group in a rooftop pavilion. Breakfast might be at least partially harvested from plants in the rooftop allotments or conservatory, before children drop down into the central court and meet friends with whom they walk to school along one of the vehicle-free greenways. You might later jog along the same route and exercise on the equipment placed sporadically along the route. Later in the day you might be working in your ground level studio or home office when the children pop in to exchange tales about how the day has gone, before they go up to attend the allotment on

1. This was always planned as a 12-essay series, spread across 2012. But unavoidable factors have disrupted the sequence. Also, some of the 12 originally planned themes expanded into two essays, so other themes have been omitted. Future essays may return to these, particularly as some coincide with requests from readers to address that subject. For instance, there have been numerous requests to write something about how to design, or how to teach design, a theme I will happily address.
2. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era, A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos*, Harper, San Francisco, 1992.
3. Tony Fry, *Becoming Human by Design*, Berg, London, 2012.
4. *Farewell to Modernism – and Modernity Too*, AR February 2012.



'The neighbourhood is a place where we not only reside but also to which we belong: it is part of our identity and intrinsic to who we are, so providing essential psychological and existential grounding'

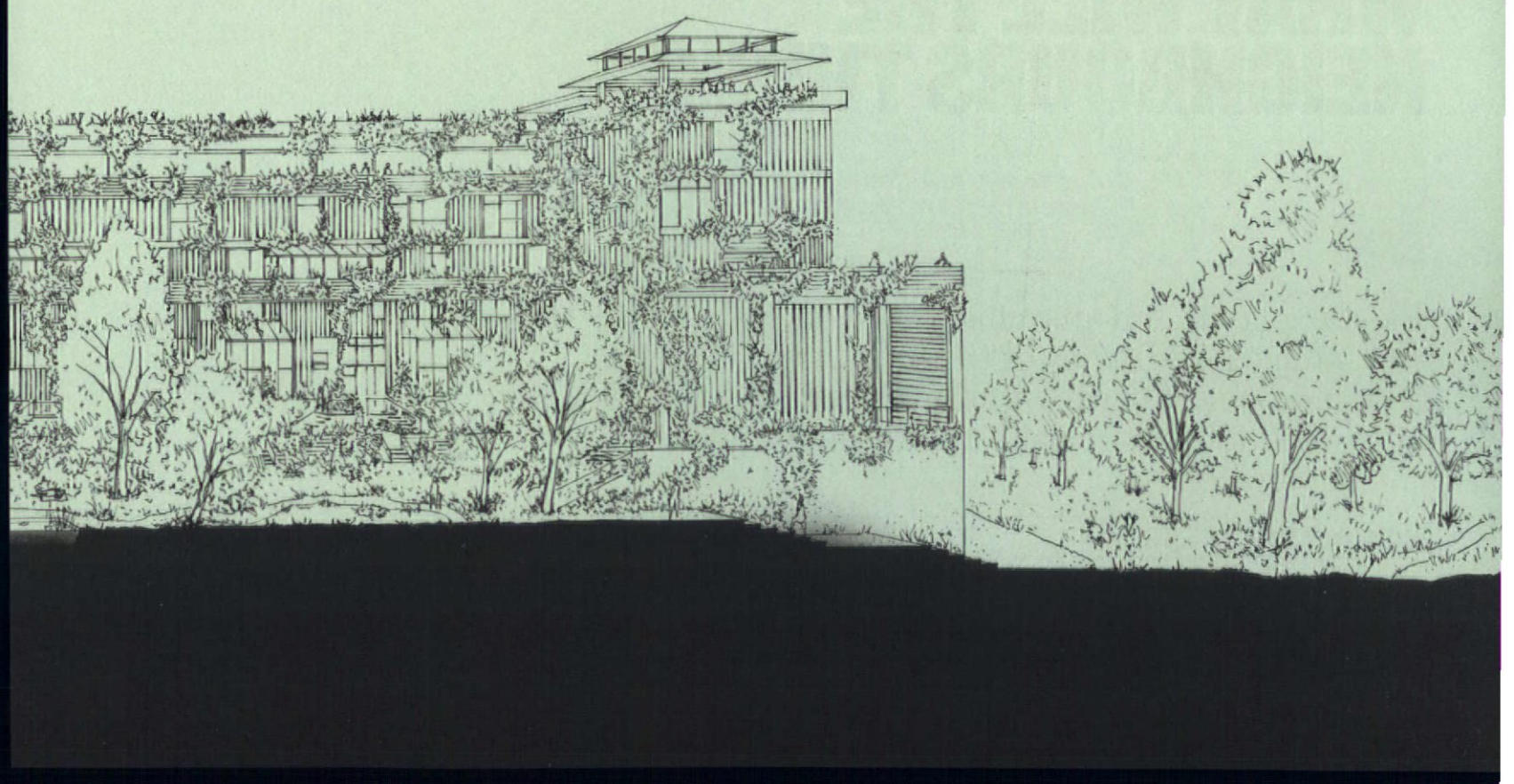
the roof. Otherwise they might drop in to see their elderly grandmother and her friends in the old-age suite of rooms or make something in the communal workshop. And in the evening, if you don't feel like cooking you can join others sharing a meal in the communal kitchen or have a barbecue on the roof, enjoying and benefiting from the interactions of a larger group such as were once provided by the extended family and tight traditional communities. This might then be followed by examining the constellations through the rooftop telescope or enjoying the communal hot tub up there before bedding down for the night under the stars.

Is this a sufficiently seductive yet sane vision to entice change, or is it one that provokes horror because of the constant interaction with others? Both the former reaction and, for reasons already argued, the latter one of defensive resistance could be seen as endorsing the effectiveness of such a scheme as a stepping stone towards sustainability, a crucible from which a new sustaining and sustainable culture might emerge. Whether or not this is true, the point is that it illustrates an alternative to the current fashions for theory and sculptural shape making – and the confusions, obfuscations and evasions of responsibility that go with them. Instead we can return to the centre of architectural concern the celebration of our humanity so that we can once again relate to and feel at home, expanding into our full potential by thoroughly engaging with a diverse community of others the many forms of nurture, including of the imagination, offered by nature.

5. Lieven De Cauter, *The Capsular Civilisation: On the City in the Age of Fear*, NAi Publishers, Rotterdam, 2004.
6. See the 10th essay in this series: *Spiral Dynamics and Culture*, AR December 2012.
7. Studies in the 1990s by Mayer Hillman (Senior Fellow Emeritus at the Institute of Policy Studies, University of Westminster) suggest that within a generation the range over which children freely roamed dropped to a ninth of what it had been.
8. Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods; Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Algonquin Books, New York, 2005.

8. Sectional perspective of residential courtyard block with its verdant interior Drawing by Joseph Davis from rough sketch by Peter Buchanan

1 duplex maisonette with private garden
2 maisonettes or flats with balconies
3 small flats and broad access gallery
4 work and retail units
5 storage and parking
6 communal facilities
7 rooftop pavilions



WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBOURS THINK? LOS ANGELES LOOKS BACK TO THE FUTURE

Elastic, plastic and anarchic, Los Angeles is a city seduced by dreams of the future that feed its hunger for experimentation. A major series of new exhibitions revisits and reframes its colourful recent past

NICHOLAS OLSBERG

In October 2011, the Getty Trust launched *Pacific Standard Time*, a generously funded programme that invited museums throughout southern California to uncover and celebrate the art of the region in the postwar generation. It was, in the words of a *New York Times* review, 'a cacophonous, synergistic, sometimes bizarre colossus of exhibitions'. Domestic architecture and design were the most successful element of this programme, with the county museum's celebration of California's revolutionary impact on the design of modern life drawing much the largest single audience to such icons of design as the Eames home and studio, Raymond Loewy's Avanti and Richard Neutra's experimental schools and housing. The startling originality and impact of the ideas was perfectly captured by *Time* magazine, which placed Neutra on its cover in 1949, and asked: 'What will the neighbors think?'

Earlier this spring, the Getty began to run a sequel, *Pacific Standard Time Presents*, in which 11 venues are tracing some less trodden paths of architecture. As a model of intelligent funding the programme is a triumph: shows complement each other, but the idiosyncrasies and strengths of each museum are apparent; and for many the Getty grants have allowed research, installation and production at a wholly new level, giving a visibility and credibility to exhibition and archival programmes that had long been under the radar.

The first shows focus on architecture and its culture in metropolitan Los Angeles from 1940 to 1990, as it grew from a lightly scattered city of under three million to a dense conurbation, over 80 miles across, of almost 15. The Getty itself anchors the programme in *Overdrive*, a wonderfully well-packed and well-paced presentation on the forward-looking thrust of the city's changing architectural landscape in those 50 years. *Overdrive* starts with roadways and roadside buildings, with power, water and the economic engines of a growing city, and then moves through a variety of expressions of public life and labour, carefully mingling design documents and models with historic film footage, printed matter, photos and sound. Nothing is made to look sacred, and the effect, as if one were driving through the city and noticing its landmarks, is both animated and incredibly legible. Visitors flash on moments of recognition, start talking and reminiscing, and leave seeing this amorphous city – perhaps for the first time – as if they owned it.

Much of what we see speaks of a city, emerging early in the 1960s, whose approach to growth and the future has been to shift scale, mostly with more fanfare than the architecture warrants. It is immensely instructive, but we begin to tire of the boosterism, cultural pieties, greed and pomp that placed these overbearing punctuations in the landscape, arriving with relief at the models of Deborah Sussman's brilliant-coloured Olympic columns of 1984, reminding us that this was still the city of Googies, Watts Towers, and the Tail o' the Pup – a playground in which structures can happily have no purpose but delight. A large quiet gallery, almost exclusively devoted to models and drawings, closes the show with a 50-year feast of bold, brilliant and sometimes still-startling innovations in the character of the residential fabric and of the small scale, neighbourly public services that support it.

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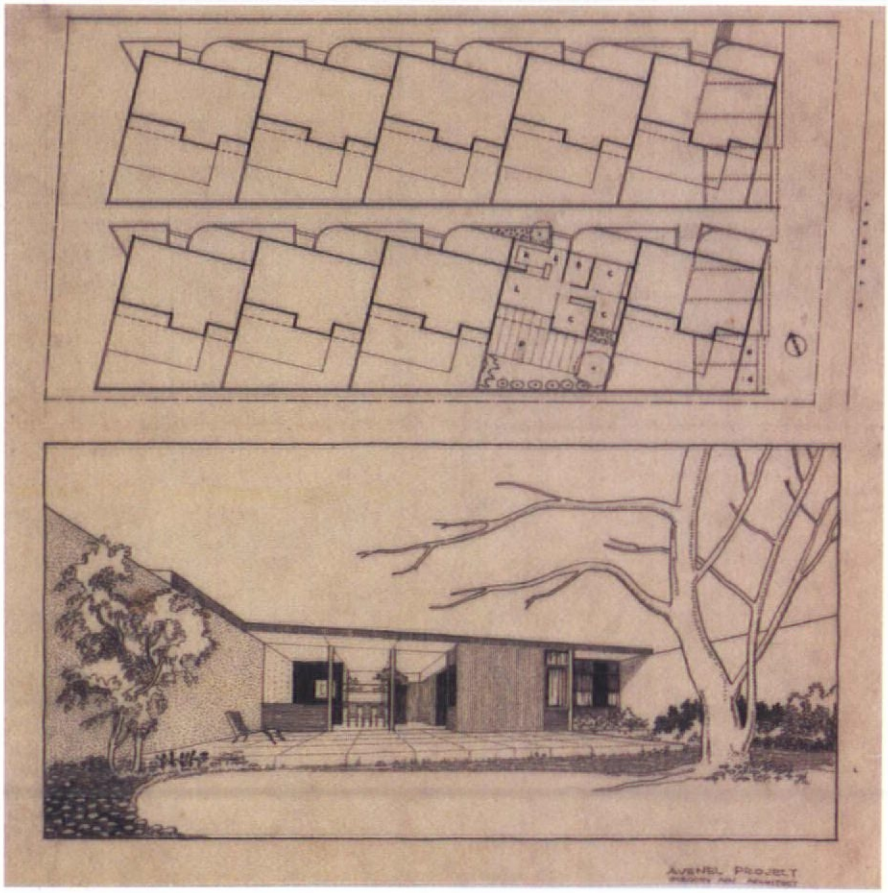

Three pictures of LA thus emerge: a city anarchic, accepting with bravado the loose, impermanent rhythms of a horizontal life and finding patterns and shapes to work with in the resulting accidents and collisions; a city plastic, periodically reappearing in an effort to match growth by re-scaling the very geography of a mobile urban life along normative, fixed and monumental lines; and a city elastic, a constant field for the reinvention of living, whether clustered or free, working with light and landscape, and stretching plans and forms to shift, with changing tastes and needs, from one function to the next.

1. The car is the star in Smith and Williams' 1961 George House
2. Gregory Ain's Avenel Homes, built in 1947, are based on LA's instantly recognisable bungalow-court type

The city elastic

Elasticity and small scale are what the city's architects – from Schindler to Kappe, Neutra to Lautner, Gehry to Israel – have always done best, and it is what the world has learned most from them: how to reshape the space of neighbourhood life to fit new and particular ways of living, to balance comfort with economy, to find private space and vistas without losing visible links to community, and to reconcile what is already on the ground with what might suit it next. As Gregory Ain's Avenel Homes show, in a city founded on the unique typologies of the bungalow court and the low-rise garden apartment complex this has never simply been a matter of the single dwelling in the landscape, but a test of how to cluster and orchestrate adjacencies, views and contiguities, whether in a single row or court of homes or in a colony of independent

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houses. One only has to linger on the terrace of the Getty for a moment to see – in the densely stacked postwar co-operative suburb of Crestwood Hills across the canyon – these ideas at work on the ground. The two monographic exhibitions in the programme are the first fully-fledged examinations of the leading figures in designing and planning that ideal neighbourhood, A Quincy Jones (at the Hammer Museum) and Whitney R Smith (at University of California Santa Barbara). Both went on to develop a number of pioneering suburban models, Jones working with Eichler Homes on middle-class, system-built housing and both Smith and Jones on a series of small-scale, small-lot, single-family developments, of which Smith's Blue Ribbon tract orienting minimal homes for working families into a common landscape is a signal example. Both were also adept at translating domestic spatial scale – its low-rise, broken volumes and horizontal line; the play of movement and vista between indoor and out; a domestic vocabulary of casual colours and material – to local services of all types: the medical clinic, the recreation centre, the nursery school, the branch library, and the office court. Their own courtyard studios were fascinating examples. Smith, working with Garrett Eckbo, placed around a central garden court the offices of an engineer, an architect, a landscape designer, an interior studio and a planning group. This was a veritable design neighbourhood, and one that inevitably

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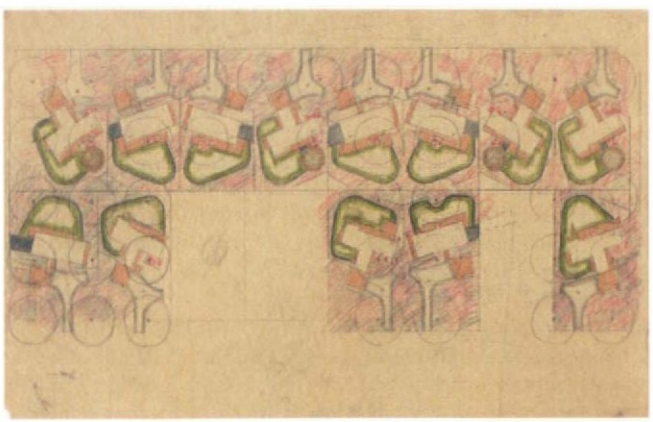

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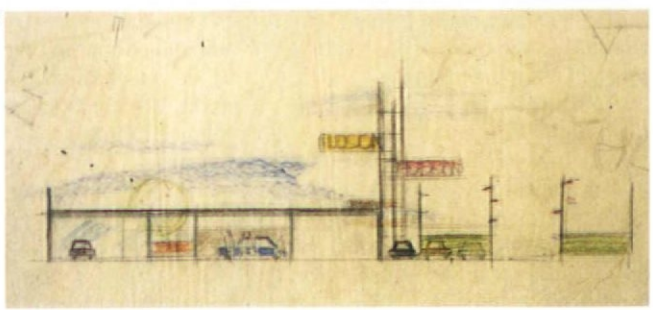

3. Japanese influences come to the fore in the Shoreline House by Smith and Williams
4. Scattered in a casual landscape: Blue Ribbon Tract plan for homes for working families by Smith and Williams
5. The practice also designed commercial projects such as Hudson Motors, which beckons motorists off the freeway with the subtlest of gestures

6. Raphael Soriano's Schrage House is defined as much by its planting as by its almost intangible steel frame

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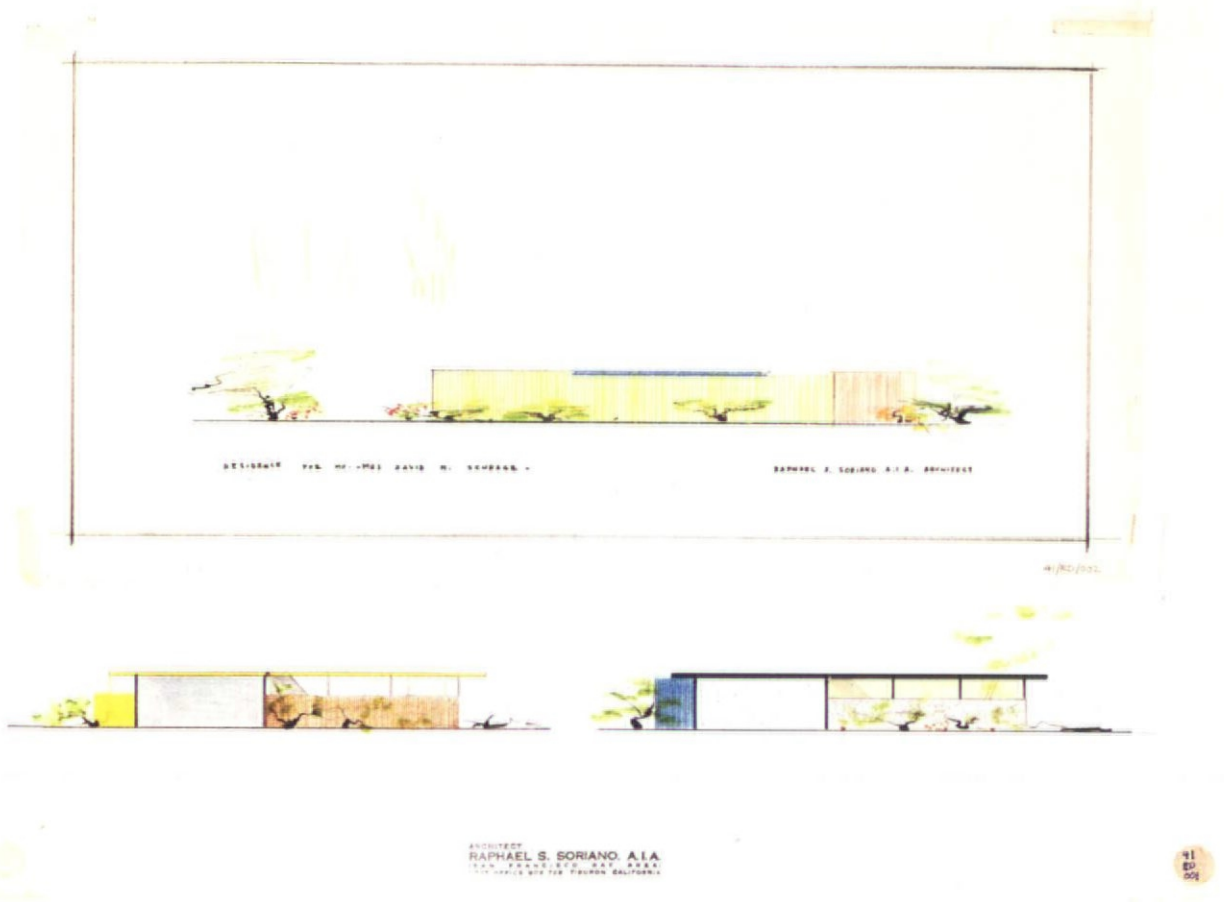

produced shared ideas and real world collaborations. The Jones office, revived and restored by Fred Fisher as his own headquarters, borrows all its scales and movement from the domestic.

Smith – in his car washes, fast food shacks, and auto showrooms, as well as many houses – also borrowed, as Schindler had before him, the structural language of the garden trellis, the post and pergola, to assemble structures that could be cut and built as fast as a new suburb blossoming out of nowhere needed them, drawing knowledgeably on those Japanese traditional examples to which California had turned since the start of the century. His most brilliant work consists of almost nothing, like a car showroom in which a single pylon, a coloured sign, and a rudimentary frame flag the driver off a fast-moving highway, and that is that. It is that California tradition of rough and ready assemblage and informal adjacencies that can be seen returning in radical work of the 1970s and '80s, whether as a kindly provocation, as in Gehry's own house, at his Edgemar shopping centre, and in his 'temporary' Contemporary; as triggers for new form in the early work of Eric Owen Moss and Fred Fisher; and as a consoling force in such work as Koning Eizenberg's experiments in social and supportive housing.

The Santa Barbara exhibition, neatly titled *Outside In* and brilliantly using those post and panel systems as the vocabulary of installation, dwells not only on Smith's dissolution of the boundaries between unmanaged landscape garden and structure, but on how other designers invented new approaches to that relationship: Maynard Lyndon with his approach to outside space and sunlight in schools, dating from 1946, that surely informed the Smithsons at Hunstanton; Gregory Ain and Garrett Eckbo beginning to zone and compose gardens at their first park-planned communities into what became Eckbo's *Landscapes for Living*, a book that took the California patio and the abstract sculpted garden to the four corners of the globe. *Technology and Environment* – at California Polytechnic Pomona – looks in depth at a small group of markedly different houses and places them in a similar light. Large-scale models analyse their plan and construction; their environmental performance is measured; and the relationship to vegetation and landscape around them is photographically recorded. The show's in-depth approach makes the varied strategies of interaction with landscape clearer than ever before. We see Smith at Santa Barbara using overhangs, openings and projections to make his houses talk to the landscape, and Raphael Soriano at Pomona reducing his steel-frame house to the barest elements and simplest geometries, depending entirely on vegetation and changing light to animate space and vistas, specifying with meticulous attention the placement, texture, colour and growth pattern of every plant within view of the window walls.

'Hollywoodland says everything LA ever wanted to say about its aspirations: looking out from the commonplace retreat of a little hillside neighbourhood and imagining the possible urban sleekness and glamour that might lie below'

At the same time the Pomona models make readily comprehensible complex structural and planning systems, like the casually intricate assembly and eccentric disposition of space at Schindler's Kallis House.

The city plastic

The rendering of the LAX Theme Building of 1961, which the Getty chooses as the signature image for its show, captures it all. There is the patent absurdity of the object itself, which served no real purpose except as a landmark, which uses an optical illusion to fake a bravado of suspension that isn't really there, and was quite consciously intended to evoke a science fiction filmmaker's view of a spaceship landing. There is the forlorn reason for its very existence, marking the spot on which, in an original plan rejected for cost, a single gigantic domed terminal would have serviced all passengers. There is what the romance of the rendering never captures – the fact that it stood for years like a distant island, dwarfed and lonely amid the sea of the world's largest parking lot. And there is the electric nightfall, which in the sunlit haze of the horizontal city, made even lonely or tiny landmarks visible from far, and in which with arc lights beaming and Burger Kings aglitter the real romance of the city's vistas can be enjoyed, since night allows so much of its wayward architecture to be forgiven.

I have no quarrel with *Overdrive*'s claim that Los Angeles' versions of corporate grandeur were in their scale and aspect – as *Time* magazine said in its cover feature on William Pereira in 1963 – peculiarly powerful as 'vistas of the future'. Unlike corporate towers and cultural centres scaled to the smaller sites and more crowded streetscape of other cities, they dressed in a lighter California palette, shone in the sunlight, often twinned around an open piazza to heighten their independence, and either stood clear of their neighbours or – as at Century City – were part of a symphony of size and newness. They were also – like Century City and the city of Irvine, planned for 50,000 and now near a quarter of a million – conceived at a unique scale. And that scale, as at Irvine and Newport Harbor, where a pattern of self-sufficient communities and neighbourhoods was developed, might stimulate some model planning ideas. But as a whole they are as stiff and plastic as Pereira's County Museum pavilions – whose history will appear in a show to open there soon, alongside Peter Zumthor's promise to tear them down. LA ends up as a result being littered with objects that smack of power but in the colours of a ghostly neutral nowhere.

Four massive firms essentially governed the landscape of LA development in the late Cold War era. One, Welton Becket's, actually described itself as the largest architectural firm in the world. They were regularly hired to do the development feasibility studies of a new venture and then co-opted masterplan and design. As a result it was almost impossible for a small office to compete for the major developments. There were also decisive shifts in the mid 1950s, when Schindler died, and two of his most fertile and imaginative heirs – Harwell Harris and Soriano – moved away, and again in the early '60s, with the departure of Ain, Eckbo and the editor John Entenza; as Richard Neutra's signal career began to close; and as those who could transitioned from studios into sometimes shortlived commercial and planning practice, turning – like Edward Killingsworth, Maynard Lyndon, A Quincy Jones, and Whitney Smith – to resorts, colleges, civic facilities and luxury homes and developments, with sometimes unseemly results. As Smith himself recalled, John Lautner was almost alone in finding enough private clients to sustain a studio practice through the '60s and '70s; others like Ray Kappe and Rex Lotery turned to teaching or masterplanning to keep small-scale inventive work alive. One exception was Craig Ellwood, whose practice had always worked as a small design and engineering collective, with highly successful and influential large-scale public buildings late in his career – the two brilliant lightweight campuses for Scientific Data Systems and the magnificent inhabited bridge in the foothills of Pasadena that houses Art Center College of Design.

Like Lautner's earlier Chemosphere and Ray Kappe's house of 1968, Ellwood's Art Center enhances the experience of the world it sits in by returning to LA's long experiment in shaping for the slope. Lautner's Chemosphere may have been mocked worldwide as a spaceship that has landed – and it actually carries its roof on the same truss forms that pretend to support the Theme Building. But it is a perfectly sensible solution to placing a simple one-storey house on a precipitous site by releasing its ties to the land and it is very much more about vistas from within than the view towards it. Lautner imagined an entire neighbourhood of such miraculously independent dwellings ranged over the hills above the San Fernando Valley, repetition being ameliorated by shifts in placement. Both Kappe, who stacked the zones of his dwelling on floating trays rising into and above the trees, and Ellwood who stretched over it in a single line, were returning to the ideal of allowing one topography – built geometries – to turn another – the very terrain – into its own landmark. Equally successful is the Music

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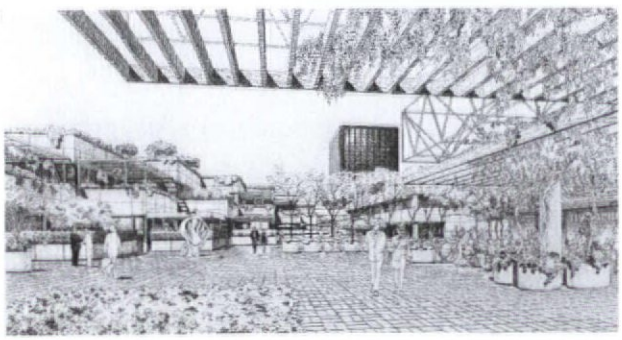

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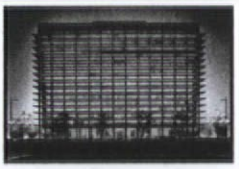

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7. SOM's MCA courtyard pergolas overflow with greenery, in a vision of the head office as suburbia
8. LA also has its fair share of failed civic and corporate monoliths, but AC Martin's Water and Power Building (1965) succeeds by virtue of its lighting and fountains
9. The Shopping Bag Market also made great use of illumination, with a glance back to Mendelsohn's cinemas
10. Craig Ellwood and Carlos Diniz's Art Center College rests on the undulating terrain like a habitable bridge
11. John Lautner's Malin House, or 'Chemosphere' (1960), escapes an extreme gradient while affording incredible views

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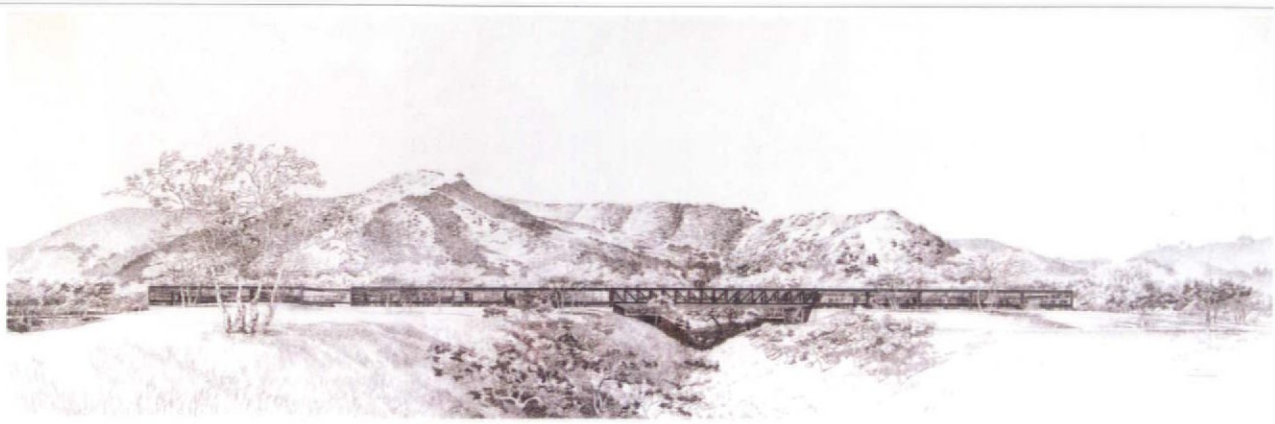

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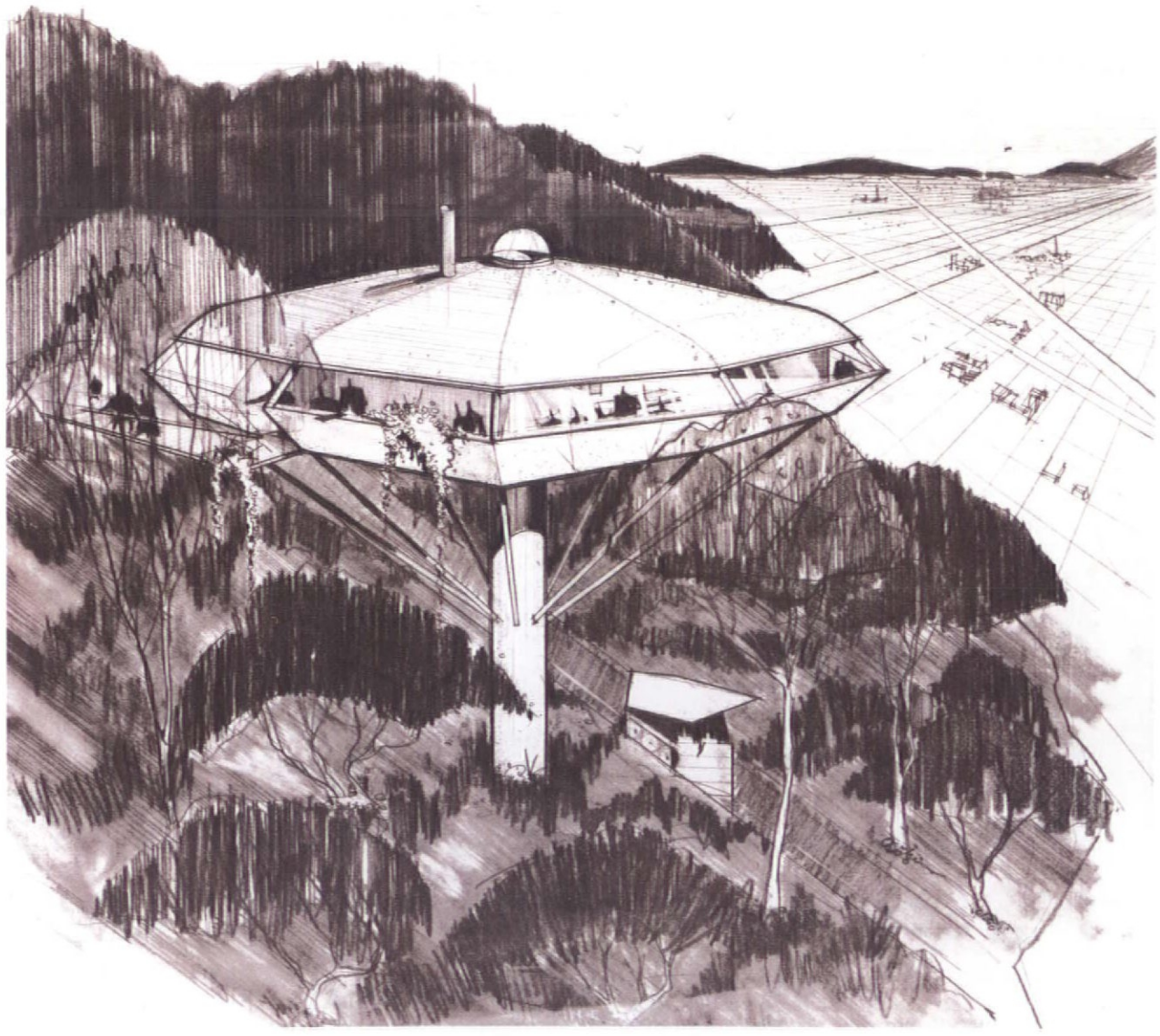

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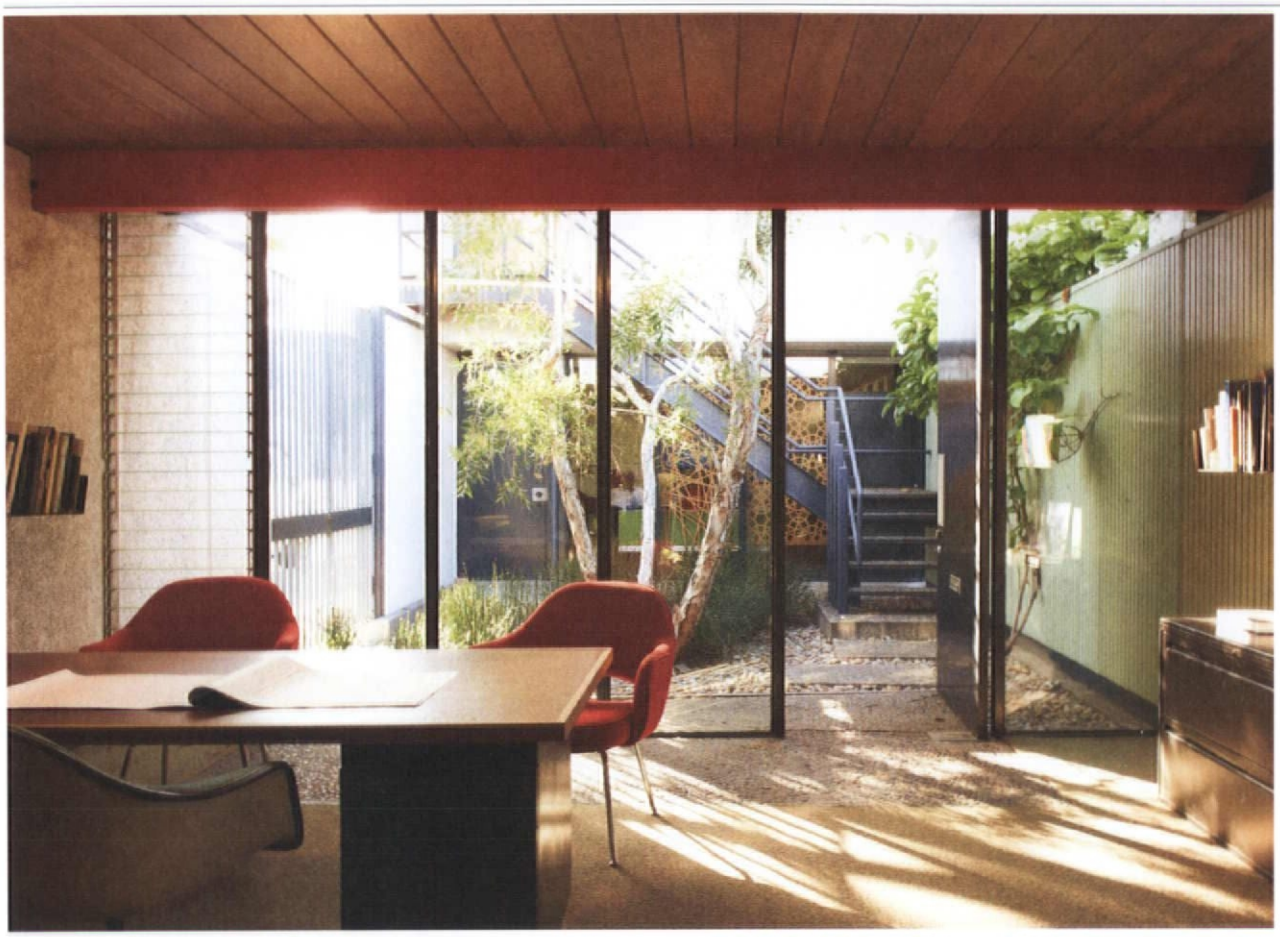

Corporation of America offices by Skidmore Owings and Merrill, built at the same time as Art Center and sadly omitted from *Overdrive*. Here SOM drew on the unique local tradition of domesticating workspace and spilling it out of doors, so that what results is a working neighbourhood, marked only with a modest orienting tower block, in which a creative community with a need to collaborate can move in and out of private space.

As anyone looking out from the Getty on its hillside site can note, all of LA's difficulties with constructing, adopting and preserving monuments might be resolved at a blow by recognising that in a city this wide and vast, very few Angelenos pass by the same point very often, and a landmark must be in the common field of vision to exist at all. And any landmark will invariably be swallowed up by the great line of hills that orients the city and controls its vistas, unless by chance it sits upon them. So it is in fact no accident that the accidental survival of an abandoned 1920s suburban real-estate sign, perfectly inaccessible in a great wave of scrub and saying simply 'HOLLYWOOD', has remained the only lovable sign for the city. These chance monuments are funny things – the Eiffel Tower says nothing about Paris. But 'Hollywoodland' says everything LA ever wanted to say about its aspirations: looking out from the commonplace retreat of a little hillside neighbourhood and imagining the possible urban sleekness and glamour that might lie below.

The city anarchic

Which brings us back to the playful landscape of the postwar roadside, and forward to the last decade in this half-century of expansion. SCI-Arc's *Confederacy of Heretics* revisits Thom Mayne's 'Architecture Gallery' – a room in his house that for 10 weeks late in 1979 showcased the work of emerging architects, most of whom would soon and wrongly be cast as the 'LA School'. They were not a school at all, but a cluster of independent minds, some working together, playing not only with architectural ideas but with the endless possibilities of how to present and visualise them. *Heretics* shows these figures and studios at a critical moment both in their evolution, and in the life of Los Angeles, questioning both the compulsion to over-plan and over-build and the solemnity that went behind it. It was the start of an exuberant decade, in which LA was reinventing itself in a number of new small-scale typologies. This is the spirit captured by Sylvia Lavin in her reflection on the oddities of improvised and creative space at the MAK's *Everything Loose Will Land*. It also appeared in the commonplaces of the first new live-work 'lofts', clustered town houses, infill beach houses, hard-edge restaurants, and 3,000 mini-malls that appeared in the 10 years since gas stations began closing in the wake of the oil crisis. Along with it went new spaces squatting inside old ones, mismatched materials, the specific language of one typology quirkily imposed on

12. A Quincy Jones' studio spills into the sunlit outdoors; it was restored by Frederick Fisher 13-15. Rudolph Schindler's Kallis House (1948) seems a precursor of the exploded forms of Frank Gehry's home (1978), an incongruous corrugated iron shell built around a colonial house. The Petal House by Eric Owen Moss (1982) follows in this LA tradition of remaking the vernacular single family house as something strange and new

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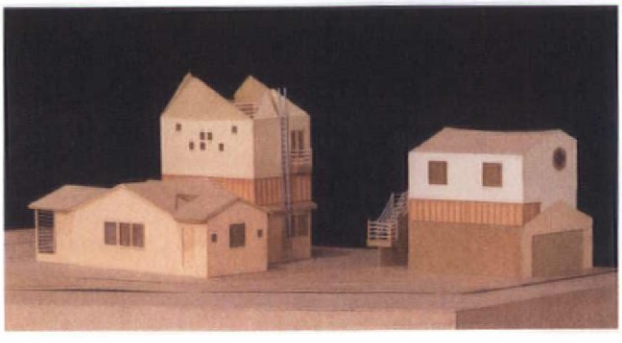

another, often borrowing from apparently inappropriate vernaculars in which surfboards served as doorways, or a lifeguard station as a den. Thus LA recaptured the improvisational intelligence of a studio culture that had been all but swallowed up in the corporate monumentalism of the plastic city. The most established of the heretics was Frank Gehry, and his work, especially at his own house, was the inevitable and liberating point of reference around which so much of that new culture spun.

In this atmosphere the heretics seem to bring the experimental traditions of the postwar studios back to life, while adopting next to none of their languages. Here – as at the Getty – we see early essays by Morphosis and Studio Works in recalibrating possible city works and forms, but with a new and livelier sense of the monumental, and expressed in a cheeky mix of rigorous line drawings and pop collage, a made-up geography, or a set of fake postage stamps; and such figures as Fred Fisher and Eric Owen Moss at their beginnings, Moss modelling his work wittily on local vernaculars of all types and eras, and Fisher on universal archetypes. Perhaps the one heresy on which they agreed was the primacy of representation and of reconceiving it. The result is a glimpse into some critically important mental worlds as they begin to formulate the landscape that might have made up the next 'vistas of the future'.

Images
Getty Research Institute, 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14
UCSB, 2-5
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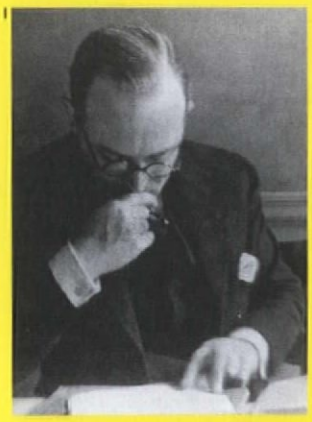
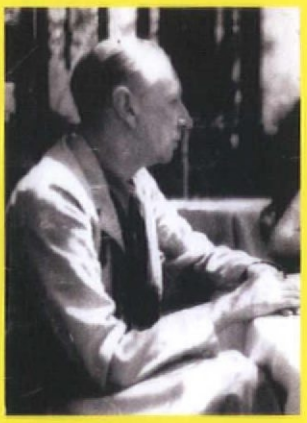
Edward Cella Art & Architecture, 9
Jason Schmidt/ Hammer Museum, 12
SCI-Arc, 15

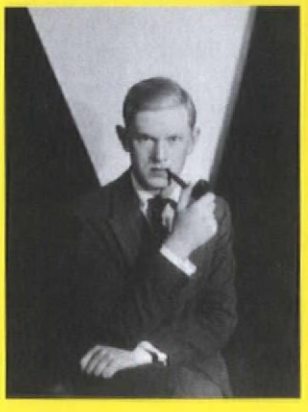
THE BATTLES OF HASTINGS

As pioneering proprietor and sometimes editor of *The Architectural Review*, Hubert de Cronin Hastings campaigned tirelessly for a more humane approach to building, planning and townscape; his ideas are more relevant today than ever

JONATHAN GLANCEY







1. (Top left) private to the point of invisibility, Hubert de Cronin Hastings preferred to pull the strings from behind the scenes. Among his eclectic roster of staff were (clockwise from top right) P Morton Shand, John Betjeman and Evelyn Waugh 2. A Soanian nook in H de C's library, with Chelsea pottery and bound AR volumes

Hubert de Cronin Hastings, proprietor and sometimes editor of *The Architectural Review* for almost half a century, joined CIAM in 1928. Encouraged by Philip Morton Shand, a well-connected, keen-eyed and exceptionally well-travelled architecture critic, then in his mid-thirties, 'H de C' steered the magazine into what were for its readers the largely uncharted waters of European Modernism. After Cambridge, Shand had studied at the Sorbonne and Heidelberg; a fluent French and German speaker, he was well acquainted with Le Corbusier at the time of the publication of *Vers une architecture*, and Gropius during the fledgling years of the Bauhaus.

A charming ex-Etonian, Shand was also a passionate pomologist and acerbic writer on food and wine. His *A Book of Food* – published the same year Hastings joined CIAM and a year after Frederick Etchells had translated Corbusier's polemic into English – tells us that cod 'was one of the things which ... it must be supposed that the Supreme Marine Zoologist created when, towards the end of the sixth day, he had already begun to nod'; while as for malt vinegar, 'The administering of this corrosive poison in any form whatever to an unsuspecting husband should be made a ground of divorce (without alimony)'. Shand had wide tastes, but he could abide neither the bland nor the banal. Nor could Hastings, who, soon afterwards, took on the young John Betjeman as assistant editor of the AR.

Within months, Betjeman – the future Poet Laureate and arch-conservationist – had published an essay entitled 'The Death of Modernism', even though he became an early member of MARS, the Modern Architecture Research Group. Meanwhile, his friend, the savagely funny Evelyn Waugh, had just written *Decline and Fall* (1928), a novel that made a mockery of the very Modern architecture Shand was writing up for Hastings. In it we meet Professor Otto Silenus, a humourless young German architect from a very rich family in Hamburg, who has been commissioned to build a new country house by the intensely fashionable Margot Beste-Chetwynde. He had first attracted her attention, Waugh tells us, 'with the rejected design for a chewing gum factory in a progressive Hungarian quarterly'. He decides on 'something clean and square' for his indulgent English client. 'The problem of architecture as I see it', he told a journalist who had come to report on the progress of his surprising creation of ferro concrete and aluminium, 'is the problem of all art – the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form. The only perfect building must be the factory, because that is built to house machines, not men.'

I hope you can begin to see that the AR's response to Modernism, and its promotion of the new 'clean and square' architecture, was never going to have been a simple affair. Hastings, who acted as the editor-in-chief, or impresario, of the AR, was a complex fellow, at once intellectually curious, witty, civilised and shyly humanistic. He appreciated Shand on Walter Gropius, Waugh on Otto Silenus and Betjeman for his slyly ambivalent take on Modernism. From the late 1920s onwards, the AR was an eclectic and questioning publication. Hasting's special genius was, as he knew himself, in employing others to do the work for him,

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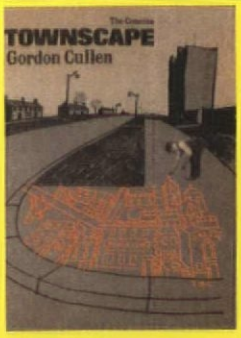

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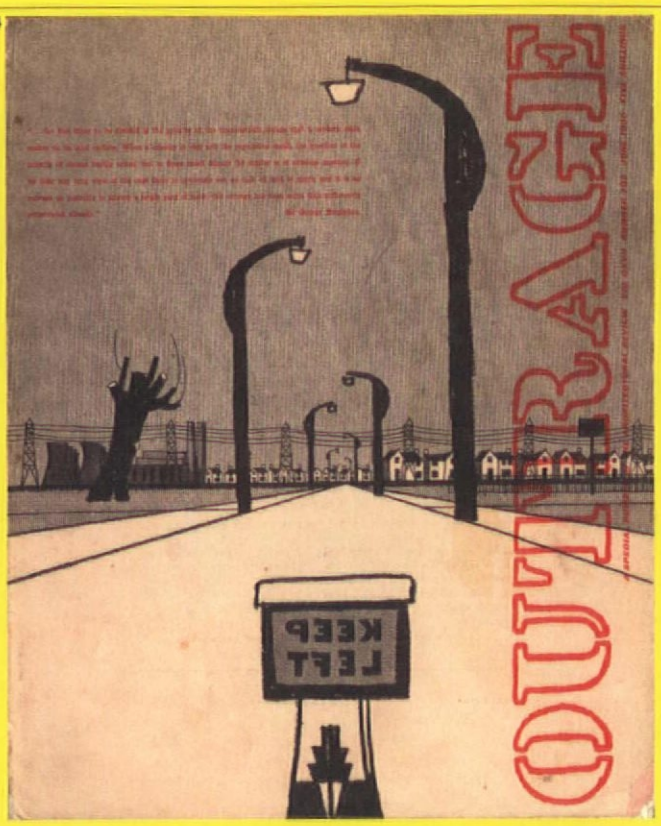

3&4. Two of H de C's assistant editors, Gordon Cullen and Ian Nairn, led strident campaigns, respectively titled Townscape and Outrage, against the idiocies of postwar planning
5&6. His own book *The Italian Townscape* (1963) offered alternative visions of a more successful urbanism

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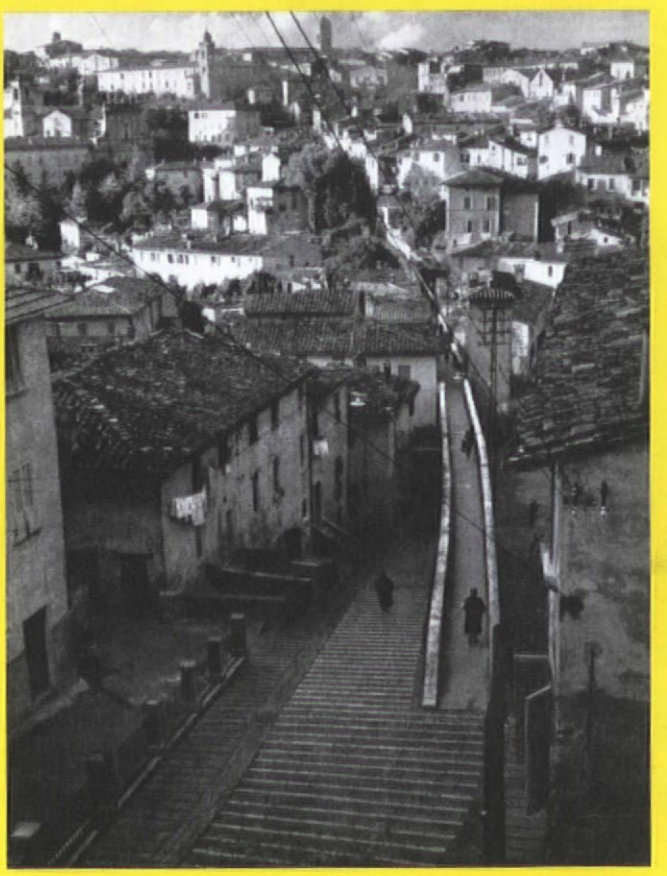

that is the bulk of the writing, editing and printing of the AR. So, while Hastings began, with the help – initially – of Betjeman to look further and deeper into matters of history, landscape and the picturesque, from 1935 JM Richards – 'Grim' as Betjeman knew him – filled half the pages of 'Archie', a frivolous nickname this serious man found annoying, with the Modern Movement architecture parodied by Waugh.

Eventually, Hastings was to employ an extraordinary cast of characters, including Nikolaus Pevsner, Hugh Casson, Reyner Banham, Gordon Cullen and Ian Nairn among others, who imbued the AR with a richness of content almost wholly absent in any other contemporary architectural publication. These rich architectural complexities and contradictions are only reinforced today by the fact that Philip Morton Shand's granddaughter is Camilla Parker-Bowles, Duchess of Cornwall and wife of the Prince of Wales, a scourge of Modernism, while Mary, his second daughter from his fourth marriage was married to James Stirling, a radical Modern architect of unexpected currents and complex depths.

It was out of this seemingly improbable and very English culture, this journalistic maelstrom and critical *zuppa inglese* that some of the AR's most original, provocative and enduring campaigns were to emerge shortly after the Second World War. And, the core of these ideas are, I feel, as relevant to this particular month's issue of the AR as they are to concerns about architecture and urbanism in general as we clod-hop through the second decade of the 21st century like a tribe of witless savages, littering the world with globalised junkitecture, anodyne city centres and relentless suburban, subtopian sprawl while weighed down with a plethora of winking, beeping technology that we have little idea how to use for anything like the common good.

Hastings promoted issues and ideas, concocted and realised through the pages of the AR and books from the Architectural Press, that have become familiar in the story of postwar architecture. There was Townscape, 'the art', he said, 'of humanising high densities after the engineers have made them hygienically possible', published in book form, by Gordon Cullen, in 1961. There was 'Outrage' (1955), an attack – written and spurred on by Ian Nairn, another of 'H de C's' young assistant editors, on the kind of lackadaisical design that meant that 'the end of Southampton looks like the beginning of Carlisle', a dismal phenomenon recorded in words and photographs as Nairn drove from one end of England to another to make the case for 'place', or genius loci.

And then there was *The Italian Townscape* (1963), a truly eye-opening and beautifully designed book written by one Ivor de Wolfe with lyrical chiaroscuro photography by Ivy de Wolfe and drawings by Kenneth Browne. Ivor de Wolfe was Hastings, Ivy de Wolfe was partly Hastings, but also his wife Hazel (H de C makes Hitchcock-like cameo appearances in some of the shots), and Kenneth Browne, the AR's long-suffering assistant Townscape editor.

Hastings toured Italy visiting, as far as I can make out 57 towns and cities, a variety that gave him considerable visual ammunition in his assault on the near abject poverty of contemporary English urban design. One town, Sforzinda, he says, 'even native Italians, and specialists at that, may find hard to place'. Even without reaching for your bookshelf, a mere few seconds with Google tells today's reader that this is the ideal, and unbuilt, 15th-century town for Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, by Antonio di Pietro Averlino.

Characteristically, Hastings opens *The Italian Townscape* with scenes of 'beautiful gleaming human washing' hanging out to dry in Capodimonte, 'a reminder that townscape is not town planning, is not architecture, is the urban scene stock-piled with all its impedimenta, toys, trinkets, tools, services, conveniences, shelters, play-pens, people. Its topic, the public life of private lives ...' He goes on to detail the physical and visual planning, the play and details of Italian cities that once upon a time made them not just intensely, viscerally and sensually appealing, but also models of what could be achieved elsewhere in the world, and, in particular, in England at the very time bypass surgery was ripping the hearts from old towns and cities and new architecture was being plonked down inside them as if airfreighted by giant helicopters from a global warehouse that had once been labelled Bauhaus.

Hastings looked long and hard at traditional Italian cities with their 'foils, focal points, fluctuations, vistas closed and vistas open, truncations, changes of level, perspective, silhouette, intricacy, anticipation, continuity, space, enclosure, exposure, precinct, profile' and back to streets within eyeshot of the AR's 18th-century offices on top of St James's Park. What he hoped to see was 'harmony within diversity', a quality that was being destroyed in London as he toured Rome.

> 'Hubert de Cronin Hastings' campaigns are more relevant than ever as we clod-hop through the second decade of the 21st century like a tribe of witless savages, littering the world with globalised junkitecture, anodyne city centres and relentless suburban, subtopian sprawl'

This quality was something Hastings had evoked in the December 1958 issue of the AR through an essay by HB Creswell, author of *The Honeywood File: An Adventure in Building* (1929), a cautionary and funny tale of a young and Candide-like architect designing an ambitious house for a demanding client. In the AR, Creswell conjured the 'Townscape' qualities of an architectural stroll down the Strand in the 1890s: a London thoroughfare hedged by a maze of continuous alleys and courts and 'fronted by numbers of little restaurants whose windows vaunted exquisite feeding; taverns, dives, oyster and wine bars, ham and beef shops; and small shops marketing a lively variety of curious or workaday things all standing in rank, shoulder to shoulder, to fill the spaces between its many theatres. As shop squeezes shop and shoulder squeezes shoulder, one watches the gaps between the buildings inexorably filling up until the latest oyster bar making its dive between the small shop and the large theatre.'

Sadly, little of this lesson, this way of seeing and of expressing a city street, has been learned over the past 50 years; or, at least, not in London where ever bigger, air-conditioned buildings barge their banal way into what was once such a vivid 'townscape', leading to prairie-style streets that, hostile to pedestrians, increasingly comprise just a few monstrous 'iconic' blocks designed to maximise lettable floor-space and financial gain. Take a walk down Cheapside in the City of London, a street linking Wren's St Paul's with the Bank of England. Its west end begins with a horrible brown shopping mall designed by Jean Nouvel that might be acceptable in an outer-suburb of Paris, yet here is as welcome as a recreation of Pruitt-Igoe would be. The rhythm of this old city street has been lost as has that of all too many others as the City of London – hardly the only villain – has done its best to lose much of its special character, one that could have been nurtured even with the latest architecture as Rem Koolhaas has attempted to do with New Court, a sleekly discreet City headquarters for Rothschild Bank corseted into St Swithin's Lane, yet sprouting coolly above the medieval streetscape and its ragbag of historic domes, pediments, cornices and shadows.

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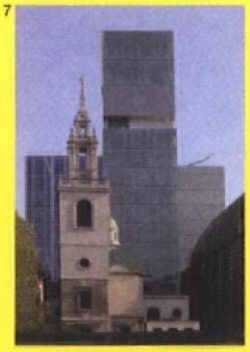

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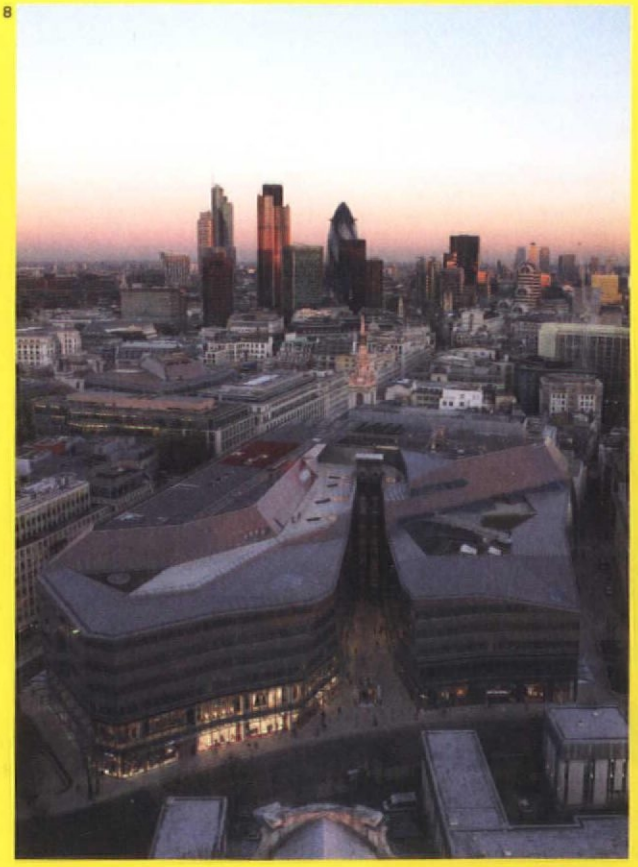

7&8. Despite Hastings' campaigning, the City of London continues to be blighted by monstrosities like Jean Nouvel's inner-city out-of-town mall. The supposedly self-effacing brown smoked glass is redolent of a '70s shag-pad (8); Rem Koolhaas' HQ for Rothschild Bank (7) is rather more successful, receding behind Wren's spire for St Stephen Walbrook rather than crowding it out

TOWNSCAPE

9. Instead of the prosaic grid of Manhattan, H de C advocated a more baroque city plan; he married this with the Anglo-Chinese concept of sharawaggi, exemplified by the exquisite gardens of Suzhou (10), which cram a huge amount of variety into tiny plots (11), and are crossed by zigzagging paths that afford sudden surprising vistas

Hastings wanted our towns and cities to have something of the theatrical qualities of the Baroque, too, along with something of traditional Chinese garden design. This apparently exotic marriage is not as odd as it might first appear. Baroque, long thought of as superficial and showy – costume design, architecture in fancy dress – does indeed make magnificent 'townscape', as cities themselves are, of course, urban stages for all of us to play on. The style itself has a power beyond its gloriously superficial drama, a quality or force, tautly evoked and beautifully expressed in *Baroque*, a poem dedicated to Borromini by James Lasdun, whose father, Denys Lasdun, was a distinguished Modern architect who greatly valued this expressive and compelling style, and way of seeing and feeling:

Spirit and form; to every form its shell;
Sounds their instruments – flute, double bass,
Trumpet, each instrument its plush-lined case,
The flesh its cribs, Death its Heaven and Hell.
Bernini, your lightest-fingered rival,
Built only on the human scale, filled Rome
With wooing, delicious airs; your dome,
Dizzying, serial-spiralled, was a skull
Sucked to the coffered contours of a mind
Breached by infinity …

To achieve such significance, and magnificence, in designs for everyday urban life was never going to be easy for those who neither truly felt for buildings, nor really looked, eyes wide open, at the city streets they rose from and should have adorned however humble or aloof. And, even if, like Hastings, you could see the city through the eyes of a skilled Chinese gardener, it would be just as hard. Even before 'Outrage' and 'Townscape', Hastings had toyed with the idea of 'sharawaggi', an Anglicised term for the traditional Chinese sense of the beauty of studied irregularity. It was a concept first drawn to English attention in the 17th century by Sir William Temple whose *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* (1685) was published while Christopher Wren was building his great English Baroque cathedral in the City of London.

Wisely, Temple warned against the practice of sharawaggi by those who might find it a little too difficult, as if the intricate landscapes it encouraged were, in more up-to-date terms, rather like solving a quadratic equation or identifying the Higgs boson particle. 'They are the adventures of too hard achievement for any common hands; and, though there may be more honour if they succeed well, yet there is more dishonour if they fail, and it is twenty to one they will; whereas in regular figures [or designs], it is hard to make any great and remarkable faults.'

So, better for architects without inspiration and town planners without feeling to lay out straight grids of regular buildings than to play to the rules of sharawaggi, and Hastings' Townscape. 'Among us', continued Temple, 'the beauty of building and planting is placed chiefly in some certain proportions,

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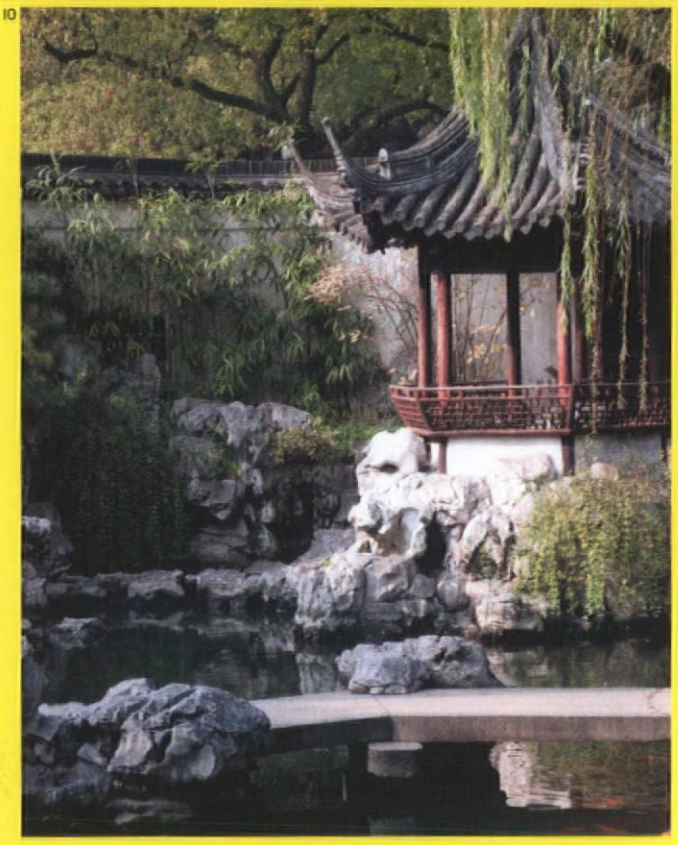

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In contrast to autopias like Milton Keynes (12), H de C proposed Civilia: a Modernist Italianate hill town combining elements of Moshe Safdie's Habitat '67 with Venetian canals, improbably situated in Nuneaton (13&14)

symmetries or uniformities; our walks and our trees ranged so as to answer one another, and at exact distances. The Chinese scorn this way of planting, and say a boy that can tell an hundred [count to a hundred] may plant walls of trees in straight lines ...'

Much has changed in China since Temple wrote his book on gardens (and, by implication, the city and its buildings): sharawaggi ought to be exported back to Shanghai and the Chinese hinterland before gurning global design – digital, so only able to count up to one – undermines what remains of intelligent Sino city design.

Before retiring to his Sussex farmhouse in 1973, two years after he was awarded the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture, Hastings synthesised his ideas on architecture, urbanism, sharawaggi and humanity in one last blast. This was *Civilia* or 'The End of Sub Urban Man' (1971), edited by Ivor de Wofle (sic). It was a thrilling riposte to the soggy Garden City movement and to inherently suburban New Towns – Milton Keynes was under construction at the time – as well as subtopian sprawl. In the pages of this jack-in-a-box book, a modern English version of an Italian hill town designed to rise from disused quarries near Nuneaton emerged, its architecture resolutely new, formed by collages of the latest buildings cut and pasted – with scissors and glue – by Hasting's daughter, Priscilla, and the ever-patient Kenneth Browne. Here was a new city of a million people, free from cars – they were parked or driven in the undercrofts of Civilia – and with work, school, shops, entertainment and long views out to unspoiled countryside never more than 200 yards from any home.

Architects and planners looked down sniffily on 'Civilia' as if holding a small Seville orange under their collective nose. It was too romantic, and perhaps too 'Fleet Street' (a common accusation by architects then for criticism or public discussions they felt uncomfortable with) for the world of unfeeling, professional modernisation, of motorways, passionless system building and smug 'comprehensive development'. Nor have the lessons of *The Italian Townscape* or 'Outrage' been even half-digested since Hastings willed them into dazzling sunlight. This month, though, *The Italian Townscape* is re-published with an intelligent introduction by Alan Powers (Artifice Books, £24.95). Perhaps, but only perhaps, the inspired behind-the-scenes editor, publisher and visionary known by

'To achieve the kind of significance and magnificence that Baroque geniuses like Borromini had in designs for everyday urban life was never going to be easy for those who neither truly felt for buildings, nor really looked, eyes wide open, at the city streets they rose from and which they should have adorned, however humble or aloof'

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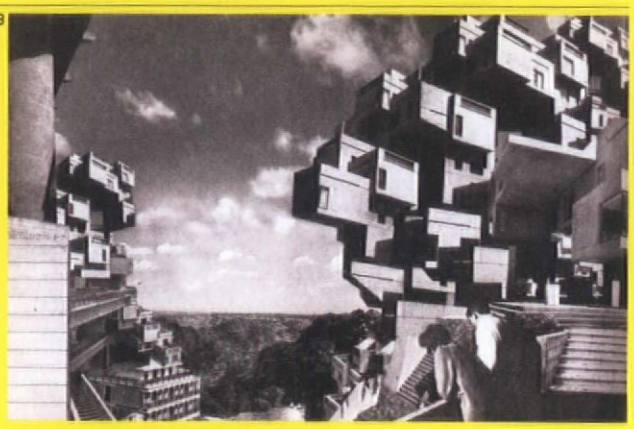

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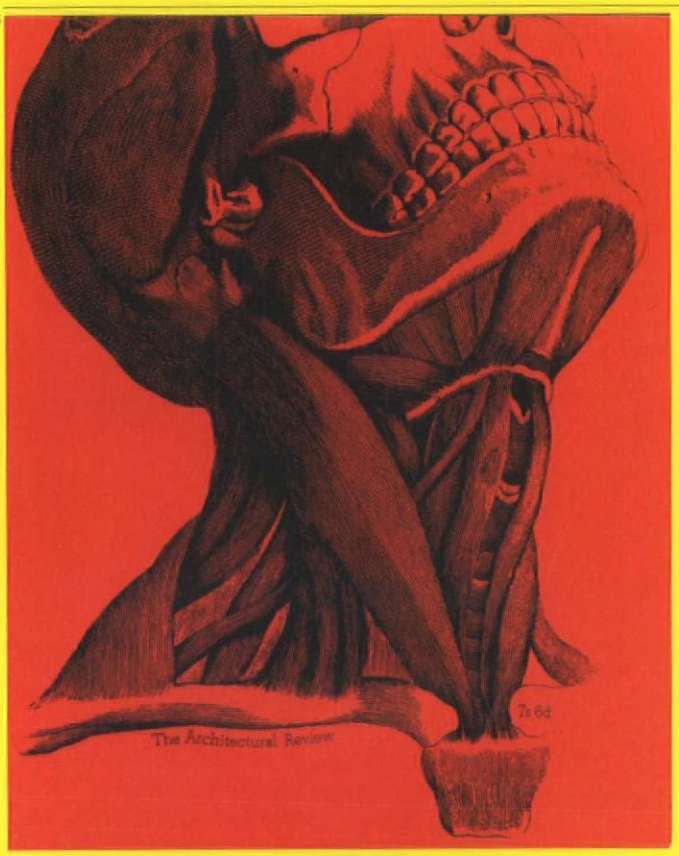

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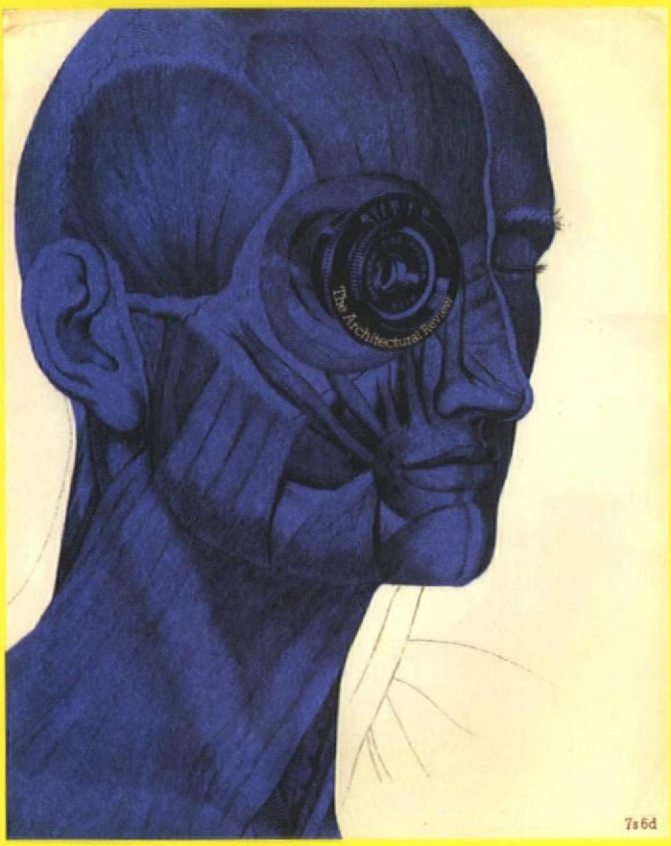


'Hubert de Cronin Hastings would not have wanted you to know him personally, but you can, and really should try to get to know him anew, eyes open, through his fecund ideas and haunting publications, and certainly before every city from San Francisco to Shanghai is beaten into submission'

John Betjeman as 'Obscurity' Hastings will yet re-emerge from the deep shadows of architectural and city paths not taken by the wider architectural profession.

I met Hastings just the once, in 1983 at the end of his life, when I was assistant editor of the AR. He agreed to see me at his romantic, sharawaggi home with its glorious first-floor enfilade of rooms modelled on the Galleria delle Antechita at Sabbioneta and mix of antique and modern furniture. We sat and talked over drinks in the extraordinary 1935 Rolls-Royce Phantom II he had toured Italy with in the early 1960s; at some point he had converted it into a caravan lined with grand French wallpaper. He had recently written a final book, *The Alternative Society: Software for the Nineteen-Eighties* (1980) that I failed to understand 30 years ago and cannot make head or tail of today.

What *The Alternative Society* showed, though, was that like great architectural critics, urbanophiles and polemicists before him, beginning in England with John Ruskin and *Unto This Last* (1859), Hastings' focus shifted to sociology of a sort and then to matters of technology and political economy with the realisation that architects and planners are largely servants of political economies and the fight to make our cities more humane and interesting places is with politicians, corporations, high finance and other ways of thinking, and bullying, that stifle beauty and creativity while paying lip service to them.

From September 1969, and for eight months, Hastings tried turning the AR into a photojournalist-led magazine concerned with such issues. This was 'Manplan', edited by Tim Rock and a showcase for brilliant young photographers making memorable use of newly fashionable grainy black-and-white 35mm photography, among them Peter Baistow, Patrick Ward, Tony Ray-Jones and Tim Street-Porter.

Imaginatively designed, 'Manplan' was a circulation disaster: architects preferred flattering images and ingratiating write-ups of new buildings, as did advertisers. Hastings knew this: he had been with the AR one way or another since he was 16 years old, minus spells at the Slade and Bartlett schools of art and architecture. He had, though, perpetual curiosity and panache; a sense of devilment, too. Hubert de Cronin Hastings would not have wanted you to know him personally, but you can, and really should try to get to know him anew, eyes open, through his fecund ideas and haunting publications and certainly before every city from San Francisco to Shanghai – despite what decent and talented architects can do – is beaten into a final and gormless global submission.

15-18. In 1969 H de C embarked on a thrilling kamikaze mission, subverting the conventions of architectural publishing with his 'Manplan' campaign. It was beautifully designed and photographed but a total flop, since the industry could not, then as now, stomach real criticism and unflattering photography

17

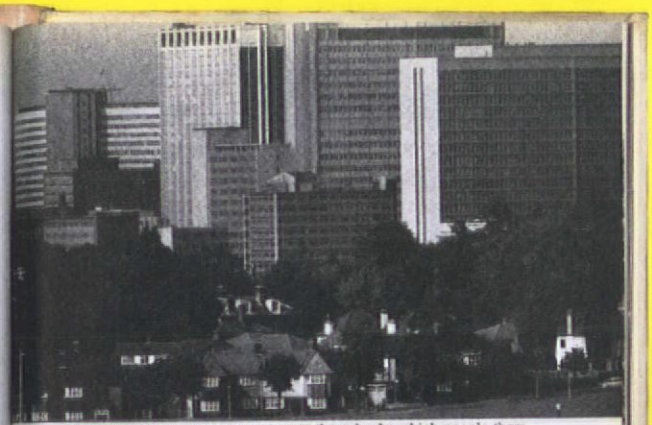
Why bother when we are told continually we've never had it so good? Because, though modern man is in some ways wealthy beyond dreams, in others he's never had it so bad. The reader is invited to leaf through the pages that follow and ask himself whether the consumer society is not paying too high a price for affluence in the pressures and frustrations which seem to dog the footsteps of every technological advance. The question is are they the inevitable fringe benefits? Or is there a gap in our thinking? Is technology for us or against us? MANPLAN proposes in the next few months to consider these matters in depth in the hope of coming up with some answers, but here forget technology and turn to the subject of this issue, the built-in spirit of defeatism which makes all our frustrations possible, since, like built-in obsolescence, it predetermines the end. We only skim the surface, but the picture that emerges covers the whole spectrum of despair from inconvenience through exasperation to tragedy and, of course, farce.

Patrick Ward, the guest photographer for this issue, has recorded one month of British frustration

Each journey, however fast, however comfortable begins and ends . . . in waiting, interminable waiting and queueing . . .

18

The office blocks stand empty, while the homeless roam the streets and protest



Monuments to commerce overpower the suburbs which people them

The gardens of houses fill with sheds and shacks, little industries and garages

Images
Derry Moore, 1 (H de C), 2
Lady Mary Stirling, 1
(P Morton Shand)
Corbis, 1 (John Betjeman and Evelyn Waugh)
Ivy de Wolfe, 5, 6
OMA, 7
Riddle Stagg, 8
Charles Jencks, 10
Ron Henderson, 11
Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, 12

REVIEWS

The man who made Manhattan

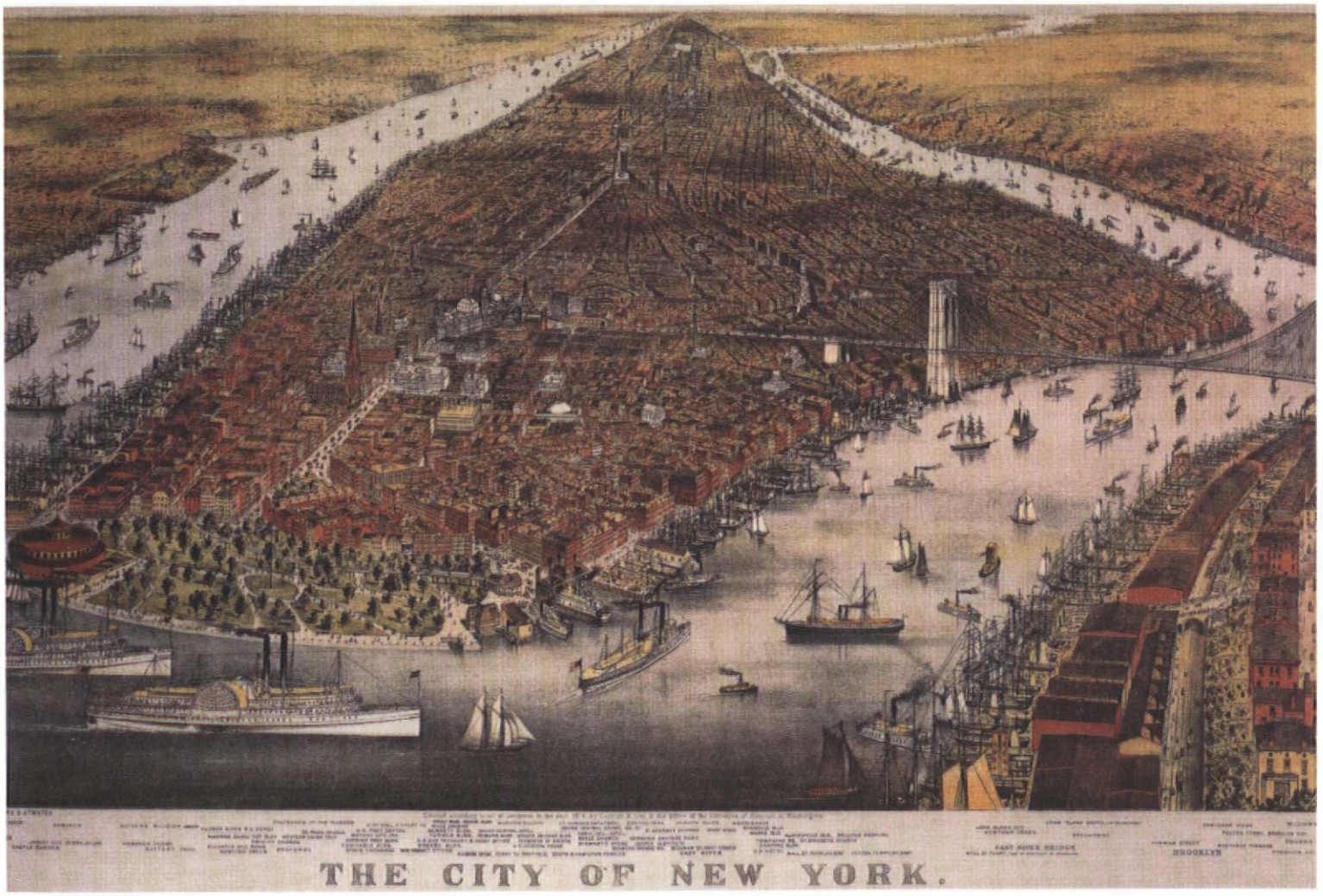
AUSTIN WILLIAMS

The Measure of Manhattan: The Tumultuous Career and Surprising Legacy of John Randel Jr, Cartographer, Surveyor, Inventor, Marguerite Holloway, WW Norton & Co, $26.95

This is the story of a forgotten man. A story of professional heroism, personal tragedy and the creation of the greatest city in the world. It is a story that could undoubtedly be told of many unknown servants of American advancement, of 19th-century engineering, of early technological experimentation; but this particular tale is suitably emblematic of that period of perfectibility, order and the emergent power of reason.

John Randel Jr was born in Albany in 1787; the year that saw the birth of the French Revolution and the US Constitution. As a young adult, he regularly walked past the Herring Street home of Thomas Paine and saw him sitting in the window, reading, a bottle of brandy by his side. (He subsequently witnessed the moment of his death.) These were turbulent times in America, as de Tocqueville described years later, wherein the prevailing frame of mind was 'ardent and relaxed, violent and enervated'.

As a child, Randel's Presbyterian minister sermonised about making 'men wiser and better', where new knowledge 'was not opposed to revelation but deepened one's knowledge of it', and in Randel, these social and personal influences seemed to have created a man 'of the Enlightenment, born into a culture and period in which reason and measured action were prized and



Below: a bird's-eye view of lower Manhattan from 1876, showing the grids laid out by John Randel Jr, and the Brooklyn Bridge, which was then still under construction

dominion over the natural world – through exploration, experiment, science, cartography, and infrastructure – was celebrated'.

The book is notionally about one expression of that rational age, the imposition of an urban grid in New York. In 1808, the city fathers employed Randel to measure much of the city and to implement the grid from 1810. His doggedness, organisation and personal sacrifice are documented in full due to his copious notes and pocketbooks, and in the many hugely detailed maps that he created.

He seems to have been a cantankerous and litigious individual, but his job required an emotional distance from quotidian concerns in favour of the bigger picture. At the time of his surveys, many farmers and businesses had settled in arbitrary plots across the city and Randel's rationalising grid sometimes ran roads through their homes. The grid – an 'a priori blueprint' – meant that the real lives and livelihoods of those affected were of secondary importance to the promised 'egalitarianism through uniform geometry'.

His strenuous personal efforts seem to have been met by feuds, professional jealousies and non-payment of fees that all combined to his downfall. Holloway documents his tribulations in vivid detail, from the repeated theft of his horse to the shameful conduct of Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Company during the construction of the Erie Canal (which generated a defence counsel document entitled 'The Shocking Oppression and Injustice Suffered for Sixteen Months by John Randel Jun Esq').

Randel was more than the man who created New York's grid. He was a surveyor, engineer and cartographer of note, who worked on hugely significant projects in the development of America's early infrastructure. As an inventor, for example, he proposed a brilliant non-stopping elevated railway for New York: one that was overlooked for a lesser version.

Above: visionary engineer John Randel Jr spent months up to his neck in mosquito-infested waters in order to create a new city

There is so much more to John Randel Jr, but in some ways this could have been a much shorter book. With the story of the grid covering a quarter of the pages, far too much is taken up with the contemporary reflections by the author. This is its weakness.

Holloway documents the search, in 2004, for a particular surveying bolt; one that would prove the accuracy and legacy of Randel's maps. It would show that *Randel woz 'ere*. Eventually they find one, hammered into a rock in Central Park. Much whooping. This relic from the past confirms the location of a street intersection that had been buried under the weight of Frederick Law Olmsted's Central Park for almost 150 years.

Unfortunately, this historical tension between Randel's Enlightenment rationality and Olmsted's later Romanticism is touched on but never fully explored. However, what *is* revealed is the tension between Enlightenment rationalism and modern relativism. The author's narrative style, flipping between now and then, juxtaposes the grand ambitions of the early explorers and the petty concerns of the modern-day archaeologists. It draws moral equivalence between historical fact and contemporary relevance, so much so that you would be forgiven for thinking that the heroic pioneer in question was the one who simply found the bolt.

As a result, the author spends far too long trying to convince us of the congruence between some PhD geek with a metal detector and an engineering pioneer who spent 20 hours a day up to his neck in mosquito-infested swamps with a surveying pole in order to create a new city. Admittedly, they both 'discovered' things, but one was a visionary cartographer, the other, a mapping technician.

The real distinction is that Randel fought obsessively for accuracy, while the latter revels in depressing relativism. As a result, an autobiography of one of the world's cartographic masters concludes that mapping is futile: 'You will never know exactly where you are'. What a tragic misdirection.

Spanish castle magic

MARC FROHN

Modern Ruins, a Topography of Profit, Architecture Forum Aedes, Berlin, ended 9 May

Modern Ruins, a Topography of Profit, was an exhibition by Julia Schulz-Dornburg that looked at the built remains of the recent episode of Spanish real-estate speculation gone wrong. Schulz-Dornburg, a German architect based in Barcelona, presents her visual documentation of these instant ruins as part of an ongoing research project she began in 2010.

It is an incredibly fascinating and timely concern, and having researched the topic myself over the last few years, I have been surprised by how little presence and attention the architectural community has given to the aftermath of this bubble – almost as if the collapse of the real-estate market had left no material traces. But Schulz-Dornburg's photographs allow us to experience this eerie architectural return on investment. Through her images we enter a dystopian landscape that seems to emerge straight from one of JG Ballard's books.

A series of 60 x 80cm photos were hung along two out of the three walls in the exhibition space. Each of the ruins portrayed entered into dialogue with the corresponding real-estate slogan that accompanied its photo. In this way, the fictional utopias of the promotional brochures and the unsettling landscapes of

investment ruins confronted one another – strengthening their morbid beauty.

Imagine, for example, the view of a whole mountaintop being shaved off into a series of stacked monumental volumes covered in spray-on concrete and pierced by metal anchors. Overlooking the sea, they strongly resembled the Second World War bunkers of the so-called 'Atlantic Wall' along the French coast portrayed by Paul Virilio in his *Bunker Archaeology*. Seeing large parts of the mountain vanished, one couldn't help but wonder what geologic time scale the real-estate developers might have been thinking about as they promoted their resorts-to-be as 'back to the origins'.

One photograph showed a large man-made mountain, or tower of sorts. What was once envisioned to become the Golden Sun Beach & Golf resort had now become a real-world incarnation of the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. The visual similarity to Bruegel's depiction of this Old Testament episode was striking; starting with a wide base, it narrowed level by level as it rose. Each floor featured arched openings. Like in Bruegel's painting, the top appeared to be unfinished and lost its geometric clarity. Beyond the visual resemblance of this one particular project, the Tower of Babel narrative called into question the human ambition competing with God by building and transforming an urban landscape on a previously unknown scale.

Though the centrepiece, these photographs only constituted one part of the exhibition. Upon entry you were confronted with an investigation by Schulz-Dornburg into one single, massive resort conglomerate: the 'Golf Circuit'. As opposed to the photographs focused on the urban and architectural debris resulting from the collapse of a massive development fantasy, this 'introductory' section sought to analyse the urban and architectural DNA these developments were based on in the first place – a promise of 'quality of life', entire settlements landing like 'flying carpets' on the ground, and the literal construction of real-estate iconography as a 'real fiction'. A sequence of screens showed us promotional real estate videos and a large-scale Google-Earth map, as well as a line-drawing of the conglomerate, attempting to depict the multiple facets of desire, design and construction.

Each of Schulz-Dornburg's photographs by itself as a powerful evocation of the brute force of tabula rasa, the omnipresence of an infrastructural landscape, the monotony of copy-paste agglomeration, the hostility of the unoccupied, and the ephemerality of built fictions. Unfortunately, the sequence they were hung in prevented them from unfolding their full narrative potential as a series. Neither temporal nor spatial causalities became apparent.

Schulz-Dornburg's use of the first wall to display an analysis of the 'development DNA' seemed like a parallel endeavour and felt strangely detached from the powerful photographs. This might explain why it almost disappeared in the catalogue of the exhibition. A singular focus on the photographs, I feel, would have strengthened the exhibition, since the depth of her inquiry did not stand up to the potency of her images, nor did it sustain itself as a parallel line of inquiry. Rather, the research stood more as a static 'survey' that would be better served by perhaps introducing vectors of change; the transformations, the speed and the halting abandonment that created the current situation.

Above: half-completed villas litter the Spanish landscape, frozen Pompeiian relics of our economic disaster
Below: a development occupying an artificial mound recalls the spiral form of Bruegel's similarly incomplete Tower of Babel – both are symbols of hubris

Yet at the same time I understand and share her interest in analysing the underlying structures of what I would call 'landscapes of risk'. These monuments of risk, these architectural and urban ruins, will be with us for a very long time. Therefore, next to the photographic portrayal of the as-is condition of this man-made dystopia, a deeper understanding of the underlying infrastructural, material and economic undercurrents was needed to intervene. To me the abrupt abandonment of such development at all stages – on the scale of a whole country – offered us the possibility to look at this freeze as part of a stop-motion production: each frame or stage of development was frozen and therefore offers itself up to be analysed, dissected and ultimately manipulated.

What is needed now is a new round of speculation. And this time it should be an architectural one. It needs to appropriate the remains of the urban, infrastructural and architectural landscapes and imagine alternative futures for a landscape that was reduced to blank slate for (un)buildable investment fantasies by the 1997/98 revision of the Spanish land act.

Playboy of the Eastern world

TIMOTHY BRITTAIN-CATLIN

In Situ: an architectural memoir from Sri Lanka, Ulrik Plesner, Aristo, Copenhagen, 300 DKK

Memoirs by architects in which they describe what happened to them in their professional lives, as opposed to how they see themselves in terms of contemporary architectural criticism, are surprisingly rare. If there were more, an entire alternative architectural history could be written. For nearly 200 years a sort of dictatorship of opinions has prevailed in which a small number of people, using what is really little more than the terminology invented by the early Gothic Revival (buildings are 'good',

Above: fast cars and loose trousers (actually a sarong; and he was rather fond of women too), were trademarks of playboy architect Ulrik Plesner, who spent his formative years in Sri Lanka

'bad', 'immoral', 'progressive', 'reactionary', and so on) decide which of a large number of buildings are worth talking about. And with few exceptions – most famously Brian Appleyard's *Richard Rogers* of 1986 – biographies and autobiographies of architects have become simply adjuncts to the tendentious promotion machinery of the critics.

The AR may have been part of the dictatorship but nevertheless the fact that its editors and contributors generally were or had been architects has meant that they were able to appreciate the work of creative people who designed outside definable categories. Thus they saw in the Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa a remarkable fusion of East and West, beginning with a lengthy article on his work in 1966 and continuing beyond his death in 2003 with news reports and exhibition reviews. Stories about Bawa recall a party-loving individual who paid another student to complete his final-year project at the AA while he swanned about Rome in his Rolls-Royce. How then did he manage to pull off a large number of buildings – 50 projects on the go at any one time, according to this book – some of which were not only complex, but were also somewhere considerably in the vanguard of sustainable, climatically sensitive architecture?

The answer was Ulrik Plesner – the Danish architect who worked so closely with Bawa for nine years from 1958 that many assumed he was his boyfriend (he was not: Plesner, working his way through the most attractive ladies of Sri Lanka, observes here that 'as a student in Copenhagen, I used to say that the only interesting men were either homosexuals or Jews and that my tragedy was that I was neither'). The nephew of a major Danish National-Romantic architect with the same name, Plesner was born in Florence in 1930. Before the war he holidayed at his mother's early 19th-century family estate in Stirlingshire; he then lived in Copenhagen under occupation, in the same street as Hitler's commandant for Denmark. He developed a passion – completely unexplained in this unselfconscious book – for the Far East and in 1956, after graduating from the Royal Danish Academy, won third prize in a competition to design a memorial for the Buddha, with a scheme that bore a remarkable resemblance to what John McAslan has done at King's Cross Station.

As in some improbable dream of an ambitious young architect, the beautiful pioneer Sri Lankan Modernist Minnette de Silva then not only sends for handsome young Ulrik but also makes love to him in his first night at her house, simultaneously saving him from being swept away in a landslide. But she is chaotic, charmless and broke. Before long Plesner met Bawa ('One immediately sensed that his life was a splendid theatre with him at the centre of a beautiful stage, where it was everyone else who came and went') who invited him to a party. There it started. Bawa claimed to have learned nothing at the AA – hardly surprisingly, if he was in Rome most of the time – and Plesner's job was to explain to him how to make real buildings from his ideas. So what this book is about is the intense practical experience of working in a small country, with its tiny social circles, and the relatively speedy process by which new concepts could be realised, or abandoned following some political cataclysm. Fine old cars, parties, artists, drinks, lovers. Real problems with planning and building. Which is sexier?

There are many gorgeous monochrome photographs, drawings and plans in this book, mostly of Plesner and Bawa's houses of colonnades, courtyards and vistas; especially impressive is the ambitious and innovative Polontolawa House of 1964 where huge rocks burst from the living room floor. Plesner left Bawa three years later after they fell out over professional attribution; his subsequent career saw him as a major architect in Israel and, now, the patriarch of an architectural practice run by his daughters which continues the Plesnerian, Bawan tradition. Not many books provide good holiday reading for architects. This is one of them.

Snapshots of Switzerland

ANDREW MEAD

Building Images: Photography Focusing on Swiss Architecture, with texts by Hubertus Adam and Elena Kossovskaja, Christoph Merian Verlag, £24

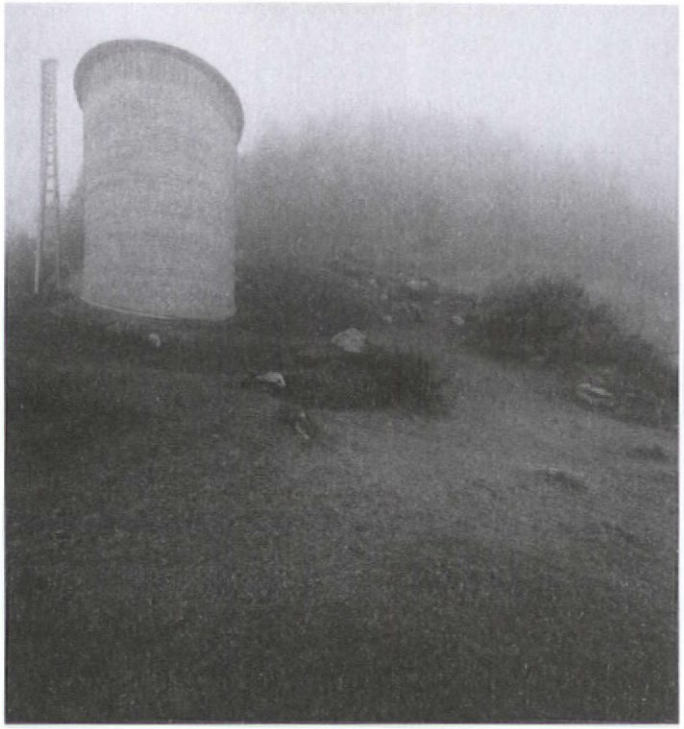
For an exhibition of his work at the Lucerne Architecture Gallery in the late 1980s, Peter Zumthor thought hard about who should photograph his buildings and opted for Hans Danuser, whose photographs up until then had only dealt incidentally with architecture. Danuser was given not a brief but carte blanche, and his resulting images were muted, atmospheric and oblique: the Sogn Benedetg Chapel, for instance, appears not in strong sunlight but emerging from fog. 'He develops a distinct visual language but nevertheless remains with the building and doesn't defamiliarise it,' says Zumthor approvingly.

Some of Danuser's Sogn Benedetg photos feature in *Building Images*, which accompanied an exhibition this spring at Basel's Swiss Architecture Museum surveying 40 Swiss buildings from the last 25 years. Its emphasis is not just on the buildings but the way they are depicted, investigating the role of photography in shaping the perception of architecture – especially how the architect wants it to be perceived.

Although it's now over 30 years old, a two-part series in *The Architects' Journal* called 'The Craven Image' (AJ 25.07.79 and 01.08.79) is still a touchstone in considering this question. But of course there has been an enormous change in the intervening years, with the explosion of material on the internet – by no means always sanctioned by the architect – and *Building Images* comes to terms with this. The meat of the book is in a dozen interviews with architects (including Zumthor, Jacques Herzog and Annette Gigon) and photographers (including Danuser, Hélène Binet and Thomas Ruff), and they are fascinating to read.

Like Zumthor, Herzog & de Meuron looked outside the usual stable of architectural photographers to present their early buildings. 'Back then, we were concerned with a critical examination of the representation of architecture because the images that we knew were worn out,' says Herzog. This quest for an alternative led to Thomas Ruff's emphatically flat and horizontal portrayal of the Ricola warehouse (1992), reminiscent of Bernd and Hilla Becher (Ruff's teachers) and of Donald Judd. In fact it's not one photo but two, neither of which was taken by Ruff, who issued instructions and then stitched them together: 'I preferred not having to drive 500km and then possibly being confronted with the wrong weather as well. It was better for someone nearby to do, who only had to drive for five minutes.'

Such involvement of 'art' photographers is a pervasive theme of this book, but architect-turned-photographer Georg Aerni confesses his scepticism about 'artistic' photographs of buildings. It would be presumptuous, he implies, to think that you could somehow treat artistically a space so well-conceived and realised as, say, an interior of Zumthor's Kunsthaus Bregenz.



Above: in a more Pictorialist approach to architectural photography than is usual, Zumthor's Sogn Benedetg chapel recedes into the mist – trademark obliqueness from photographer Hans Danuser

While Danuser and Ruff brought a fresh approach in their photographs, they still adhered to the convention that buildings were shown without people. Perhaps it's an acceptance of the inevitable as internet images proliferate, but today there seems to be more tolerance of human occupation and signs of use. 'From a certain point of time onwards, all we wanted was photographers who are able to take photos with people. The functioning of spaces for people is what really interests us today,' says Herzog, and Annette Gigon echoes these sentiments: 'For us, it's about describing everyday life, not just representing the architecture as an elevated iconic object.'

With so many postings on the web, buildings are now bound to appear in ways that their architects don't anticipate or desire. Gigon recounts the story of a Spanish magazine in the 1990s that photographed her practice's Kirchner Museum as if it were a Koolhaas project, skewing the perspectives and generally subverting the calm orthogonality. This mismatch clearly irritated her but today it's a fact of life.

Gigon reappears in the hefty but elegant 440-page catalogue to another Swiss exhibition on this subject – *Concrete: Photography and Architecture* (Scheidegger & Spiess, £53) which was at the Winterthur Photo Museum earlier this year. That's 'concrete' as opposed to abstract (not the material) – and its curators have ranged widely in time and space to find unfamiliar images that illustrate 'the intimate relationship between photography and architecture'. There is plenty to enjoy and ponder in it, but apart from the discussion in which Gigon participates, the texts are rather meagre compared with those in *Building Images* and don't pursue the implications of the material as far as they might.

The complaint in 'The Craven Image' was that architects over-controlled the way their works were presented after they were built. Ironically, *Building Images* reveals a new kind of tyranny – the power of the image before even the foundations are dug. Digital design produces so convincing an illusion of the finished building that architects risk being hostage to it in reality.

Otherwise, as far as the future is concerned, 'there are many question marks at the moment', as one interviewee rather lamely but accurately puts it. Except for one thing: no architects can ever hope again to determine the perception of their buildings in the way they once did. Whether they commission an architectural photographer or an artist to convey their preferred version of a project, alternative views will germinate, whether in the form of naff snapshots or sophisticated sequences shot during an architectural promenade. Wise architects will embrace these diverse views and maybe learn from them.

Light entertainment

CHARLOTTE SKENE CATLING

Light Show, Hayward Gallery, London, ended 6 May

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, and it was good.

That, of course, was before electricity. Le Corbusier, that other God, made the observation that 'architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light'. Light was necessary to bring form to the void, but in Le Corbusier's version, it plays something of a supporting role. At *Light Show* this was reversed. Curated by Cliff Lauson, it focused

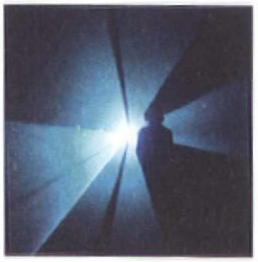
on artificial, electric light, for which the fortified and introspective Hayward Gallery was well suited, like a brutalist Plato's cave. The architecture becomes a mere backdrop, but a necessary medium to make the show's subject visible.

Light uniquely occupies the territories of art, science and religion simultaneously, and very directly. Photoreceptors convert visible electromagnetic radiation – light – into signals that stimulate biological processes. The visible becomes physiological.

It must be this sensorial experience that made the show so popular, and led to the almost hysterical, physical ecstasy of visiting children who writhed on the floors of *Chromosaturation* (2010) in the pure pleasure of the hyperactivity of their neural firing. Carlos Cruz-Diez, an innovator of Kinetic- and Op-Art in Venezuela in the 1950s, saturated three adjoining rooms with pure colour, red, blue and green. As the human retina is unaccustomed to experiencing pure monochrome, the effect is disorientation, which is heightened when moving from one intense space to another.

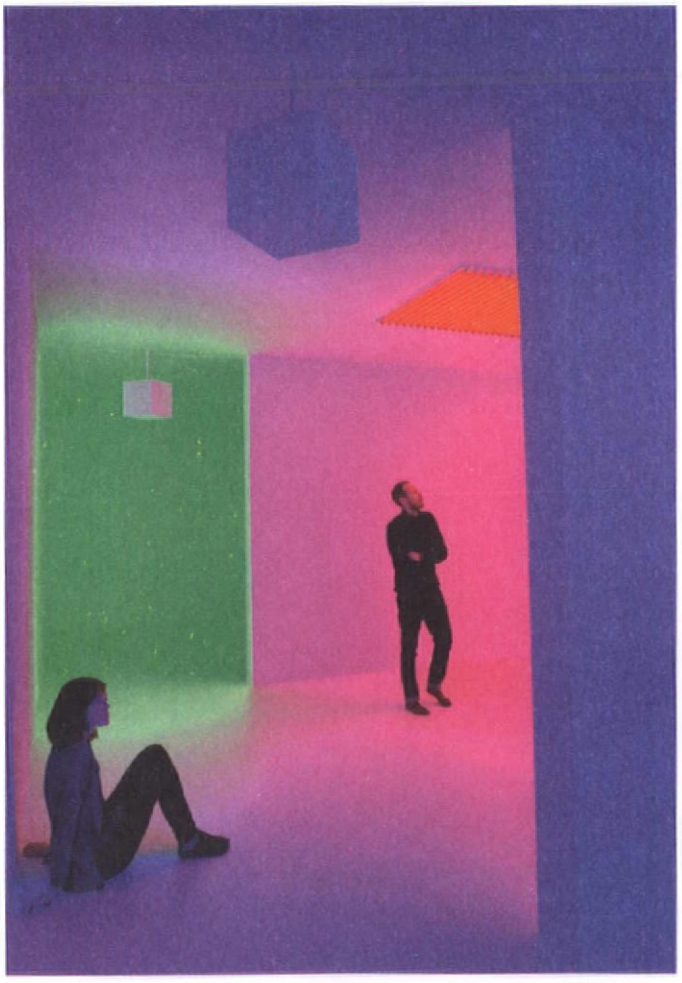
Anthony McCall's 'solid light' piece, *You and I, Horizontal* (2005), has an equally spectacular effect. Here, geometry is made solid in a space filled with mist. In it, a simple, projected ray slowly unfurls to become a hollow cone. Any obstacle to the single-point light source creates gigantic shadows on the heroic scale of a major science-fiction film. If light is the first thing perceived at birth, and apparently the last thing experienced at death, this is what it might look like.

Katie Paterson is intrigued by the astronomical sources of light: the stars, the sun and the moon. She makes poignant pieces that reflect on time, scale and the unfathomable darkness of deep space. Her piece in this show was the melancholy *Light Bulb to Simulate Moonlight* (2008). A single bulb, whose cool light was precisely designed to match the spectral range of moonlight, hung near the floor in an otherwise empty space. One yearned for the silly but uplifting artificiality of *It's Only a Paper Moon* as an antidote to so much poignancy. Outside the space, a perfunctory rack contained the correct number of these special, chilly blue light bulbs to simulate enough moonlight to last the average lifetime of 66 years. There weren't very many.



Above: viewers interrupting Anthony McCall's cone of light, part of the Hayward Gallery's *Light Show*, casts gigantic shadows in a riff on the Platonic cave
Below: Carlos Cruz-Diez's supersaturated monochrome environments were a big hit with visitors

Those queuing to see James Turrell's piece could contemplate Bill Culbert's *Bulb Box Reflection II* (1975), an elegant visual conundrum where an apparently unlit bulb is reflected alight through the use of two-way mirror, or Jim Campbell's *Exploded View (Commuters)* (2011), a 3D matrix of LED 'pixels' that created a flickering sense of movement through the simple binary switch between light being on or off. Depending on the viewing angle, images are either clear and discernible, or they completely dissolve. A perfect curatorial strategy for visitors shuffling slowly towards James Turrell's *Wedgework V* (1974). Feeling one's way through the black tunnel into the art space allowed a little time for the eyes to adjust, and for the ethereal coloured light to materialise out of the gloom into an apparently solid and tangible form. Turrell articulates what several of the artists in this show achieve, whether intentionally or not: 'I want you to sense yourself sensing'.



Turrell's undergraduate work with experimental psychologist Ed Wortz on the problems of perception for astronauts on the moon led them to produce 'ganzfelds': 360-degree, uninterrupted monochromatic visual fields, with no graspable perspectives. The effect of this sensory deprivation is that of a James Turrell sculpture; a space of apparently infinite light that develops a foggy, corporeal presence.

Jenny Holzer uses LEDs to broadcast language in order to 'have people watch what they otherwise might not'. The technique was powerfully effective in *Monument* (2008) where stacked, multi-layered texts of declassified US documents from the 'war on terror' circle swiftly from right to left, disappearing as if behind a massive column, like thoughts crossing the mind. The content is disturbing, and the speed makes it impossibe to take everything in, which itself causes a restless and relentless anxiety.

The health and safety warning that Olafur Eliasson's piece could cause epileptic fits demonstrates one real potential effect of light on the body. In an otherwise dark room, a row of simple, almost comical, water fountains are momentarily frozen by strobe light to form his *Model for a Timeless Garden* (2011); the water is 'de-animated' into snapshots by the staccato light source.

Cerith Wyn Evan's *S=U=P=E=R =S=T=R=U=C=T=U=R=E (Trace me Back to Some Loud, Shallow, Chill, Underlying Motive's Overspill)* (2010), is a series of columns of halogen tubes that pulse in a rhythm almost like breathing. They radiate heat while illuminated, and become fragile, cool and transparent when dimmed. This ghostly piece is based on a James Merrill poem of messages dictated during an Ouija séance.

Light Show was a dazzling survey of artificial light works since the 1960s, delicately balanced between the highly conceptual and the sensory or 'perceptual'. The catalogue contains very thoughtful essays about the work, and light in general, by curator Cliff Lauson, art historian Anne Wagner and science writer Philip Ball. Slits in its thick, cardboard cover allow light through, recalling Nancy Holt's *Holes of Light* (1973). They turn the book, like the show itself, into a projector or optical toy.

In other words, I saw the light. It was good. *Fiat lux.*

Architecture Sans Frontières-UK

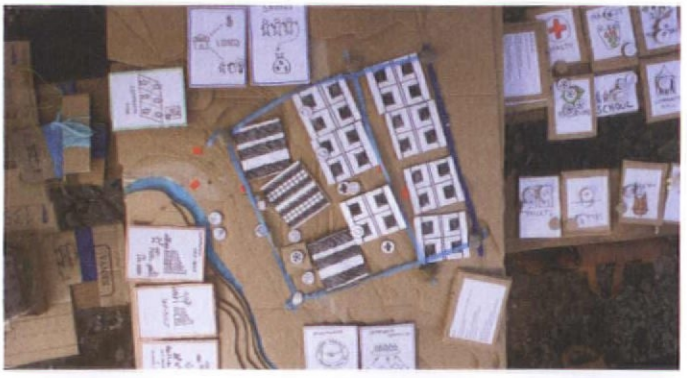
MATTHEW BARAC

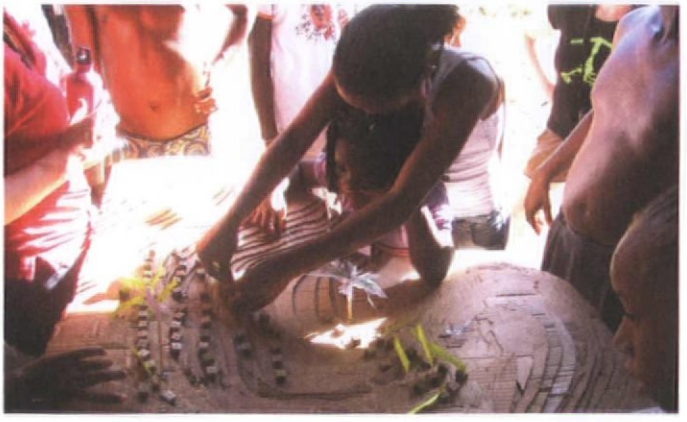
Two chunky timber tables have been pushed together at a trendy east-of-central London café and we're all jammed together to listen, above the convivial din, to Isis Nuñez – one of a stable of volunteers who together keep the ambitious Architecture Sans Frontières-UK (ASF-UK) programme going. She is describing the concept of *minga*: a Latin American principle of community housekeeping that ensures cities like Quito in Ecuador, the site for ASF-UK's forthcoming Change by Design workshop, keep functioning. In the indigenous language of Quechua, *minga* means the coming together of a neighbourhood for mutual benefit, and it is seen – particularly in poor communities – as a collective obligation. If help is needed, to fill potholes in a street or to help with the harvest, a local leader will 'call a *minga*'. Each household dutifully sends someone along to work alongside neighbours on whatever it is that needs to be fixed, moved, or built.

Nuñez tells us about the development opportunities that the community in Quito has already identified: 'they have many ideas for public spaces for their very dense neighbourhood, but don't know how to articulate them in spatial terms'. She and her colleagues, who have organised several Change by Design workshops over the last three years, see their roles, and those of the 15-20 participating architects, engineers and students – drawn from Europe as well as the workshop's geographical region – as comprising a task force mobilised to address the challenge of making such community aspirations a reality. Along the way, workshop participants learn invaluable lessons about how to deliver professional services in contexts often overlooked by architects.

But the philosophy of ASF-UK, a charity registered in 2007 and linked to an international network of similar groups, is based on the principle of doing the exact opposite of rushing in to help far-flung communities in need. Melissa Kinnear, who runs the organisation with a volunteer team, explains: 'although we have professional skills and plenty of enthusiasm, we know little about life on the ground. The real experts are the people who live there, so we're not coming in to save the day, we're coming in to learn, from them, about what the solutions might be. We want to be a catalyst for

1. An interactive presentation wall in Kenya helps local residents to contribute their ideas for Mashimoni slum, Nairobi
2. A variety of mapping tools such as negotiation cards and diagrams help ASF-UK to analyse each site and its particular social, physical and economic issues. Here a model has been used as a base to manually overlay those issues relative to their location on the site
3. A topographical model being used by a resident of Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, becomes a focal point for community discussions





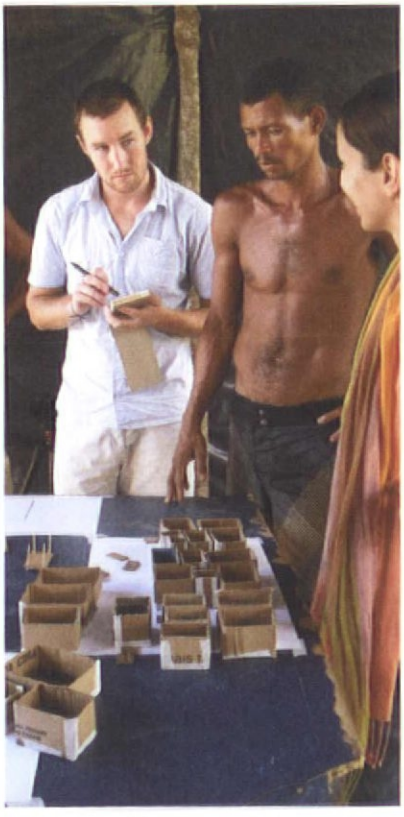
development, not a bunch of foreigners saying how it's done.'

This approach has been fine-tuned to form the backbone of ASF-UK's portfolio of workshops, summer schools, publications and – perhaps most impressively – an extended family of experts and alumni who, unlike most Western architects, are equipped to add value to vulnerable communities: groups who have human resources but don't have professional know-how, access to funding, or the confidence to bring their ideas to life. For ASF-UK, architectural practice therefore has to be strategic. This principle is at the heart of a Europe-wide initiative to develop an educational curriculum attuned to humanitarian and development needs. Entitled 'Challenging Practice' and supported by a Leonardo Da Vinci programme grant, the course builds 'on the skills and experience gained at university and in practice, but challenges professionals to broaden their field of concern', ASF-UK communications manager Sarah Ernst relates.

4. Listening intently to the views of local residents and responding sensitively to their needs forms the backbone of the ASF-UK approach to humanitarian architecture. Absorbing the wisdom of the area is crucial to address the issues that are important to the community
5. Alex Frediani and a group of students participate in an open meeting allowing the architects and residents to exchange concerns and opinions, using their cardboard models to develop solutions collaboratively

This broader, more challenging context for practice is evident in the 'tool kit manual' produced at the end of the Change by Design workshop that took place in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. Working with the 'roofless movement', which supports grassroots claims to housing in the community of Paraíso, Nuñez and her ASF-UK colleagues encouraged workshop participants to develop visual and methodological tools: concepts, props and social processes that can be used to focus discussions and collectively make decisions. 'We diagnosed and analysed the spatial situation of Paraíso to identify needs related to the slow process of consolidating homes, and produced a set of design guidelines.'

Diagnosis and analysis were pivotal to the pedagogy adopted in the 2011 workshop in Mashimoni, a slum settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. Participants faced the challenge of making sense of the informal housing proliferating everywhere – a task that naturally entails trying to understand the fit (or lack of it) between social needs and spatial fabric. Alex Frediani, who joins Nuñez on the ASF-UK team for the forthcoming Ecuador workshop, highlights the value of not only diagnosing and analysing existing problems and assets, but also visualising how life could be better for the local community: 'groups of students, architects, and residents worked together to produce posters showing a portfolio of options'. That there should be a choice – that a better urban future might be available – is in itself a reminder of design's potential to foster change.



Léon Krier

JOSEPH RYKWERT

Like the proverbial curate's egg, Léon Krier is really excellent in parts. His early defence of the street and the square as the inalienable seed-forms of the city were an essential, timely reminder. That defence was conducted in combative and carefully reasoned texts as well as clear, fluent – and often brilliant and witty – drawings which have entered the treasury of 20th-century architecture. Some of the drawings and many of the ideas Léon shares with his elder brother Rob, a much more prolific (if a less chaste) draughtsman and builder – and sculptor. Both of them were involved in the movement which called for the revaluation and recall of the concept of type in building against the wearisome (and by then exhausted) effort to make everything new – or at least worked out from first principles – as if invoking precedent in building were something rather shameful.

Léon's attacks on the functionally-zoned city of CIAM were well-aimed and timely, though the more insidious and constricting zoning imposed on world-cities by land-and-building speculation over the last two decades seems to have escaped his attention. Perhaps his wholesale rejection of industry – among whose products he inevitably lives, and whose by-products (such as having his own web-site) he unquestioningly uses – has not struck him as involving any painful and insoluble paradox. At any rate in his early career his loyalties were crossed; he entered James Stirling's office as a young architect (Rob chose to work for Oswald Mathias Ungers in Cologne) and the figure of his corpulent master, seated in a favourite Thomas Hope chair, has appeared in some drawings. But, of course, Léon was not a passive assistant and their dialogue is an interesting byway of late 20th-century architecture.

Has he mellowed over the intervening years? I doubt it. In his recent publications he seems merely to have restated the position he took 20 or more years ago. Some of the intransigent attitudes he has taken up seem rather to illustrate one of the problems which I, at any rate, have with some of the polemics in which he has been involved, in which his position is characterised by a political innocence verging on insensibility, almost flippancy. His enthusiasm for the architecture of the late unlamented Albert Speer may be a case in point.

Speer had escaped the Nuremberg gallows by claiming to be a neutral executor and administrator of others' policies and ideas. Yet his buildings (the Berlin Chancellery most notably), which I consider ham-fisted exercises in academic planning (they would certainly have been deprecated by any competent teacher trained in the Beaux-Arts method), were made of the bricks and of the granite produced and quarried by inmates of those very concentration camps that Speer had been instrumental in building and planning. I wonder if it is at all significant that Léon has no analogous words of praise for the marginally less blowsy, though equally historicist-academic Ivan Zholtovsky.

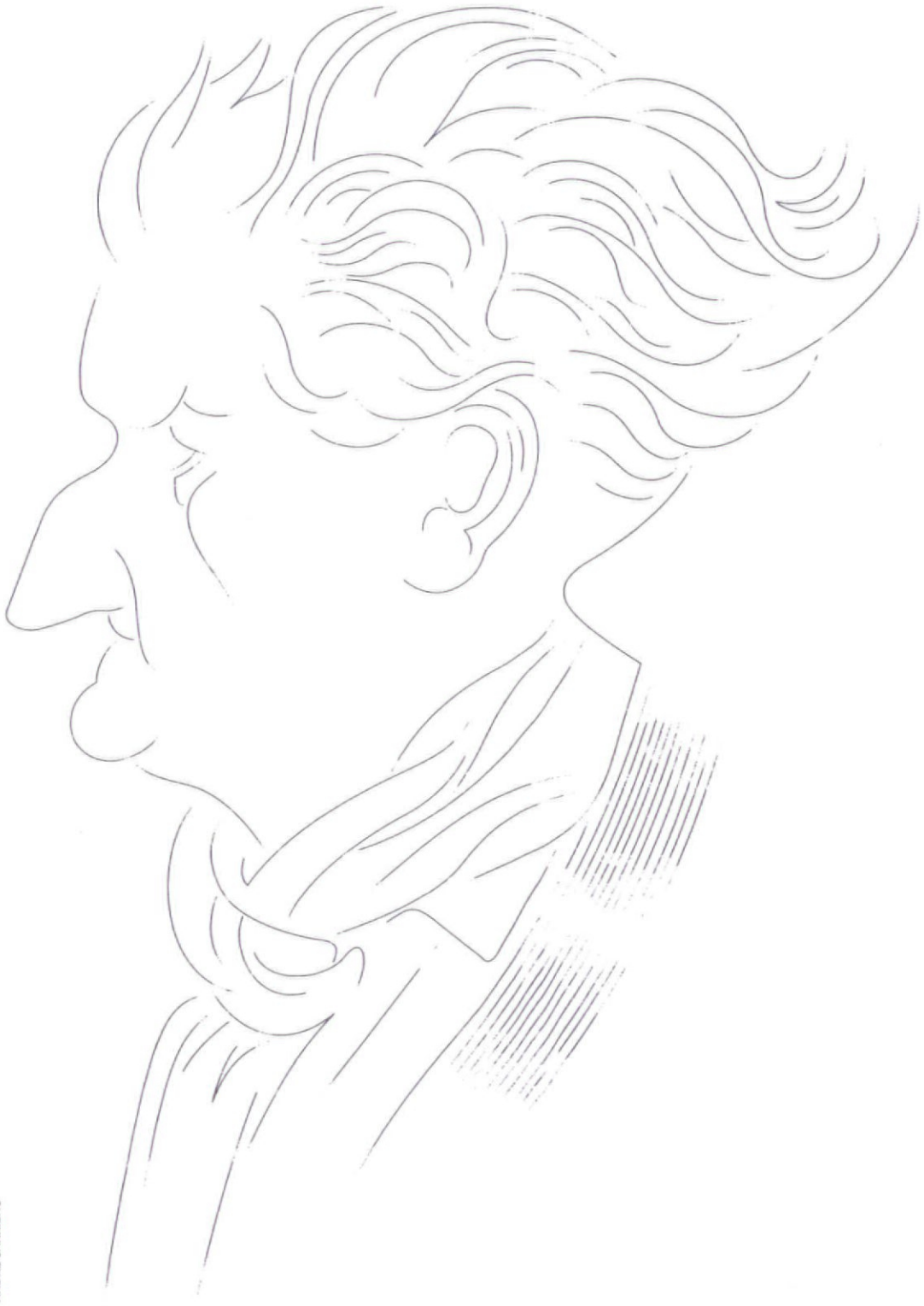
But then Zholtovsky was involved in the 'traditionalist' re-planning and the 'greening' of Moscow, a city too big by Krier's standards, though of course the Hitler-Speer 'World-capital Germania' (their transformed Berlin) was to be vastly bigger than any contemporary Soviet project. On the other hand, Krier has invoked, even deliberately emulated, Heinrich Tessenow, Albert Speer's consistently anti-Nazi teacher (whose opinion of his ex-assistant's architectural achievement was no better than mine) on the need to limit city size and city growth; yet he does not seem to have heeded the lesson which Tessenow, like Ebenezer Howard (his contemporary), insistently repeated: that for any human settlement – village, town or city – to have any vitality, it must be productive. The fallow city is a contradiction in terms.

> 'It has become difficult to disengage Krier's gold from the New Urbanist dross since he has entangled himself too stickily in its webs'

Léon Krier
Born 1946
Education
Studied at the University of Stuttgart for one year but left for London in 1968 to work with James Stirling
Key moment
Turning away from Modernism and consumerism, taking up neo-traditionalist ideas and becoming the 'godfather of New Urbanism'
Key development
Poundbury, Dorset (1988)
Quote
'Viewed from a certain distance and under good light, even an ugly city can look like the promised land'

Krier's lack of interest in such matters is illustrated by his involvement in the self-labelled 'New Urbanism', a tendency which has flourished in the United States and in Latin America, and he has recently planned a gated suburb, Cayala – outside Guatemala City – that advertises itself as the place 'where the rich can escape crime'. Indeed, we have our own royally-promoted precedent for it in the village of Poundbury, now 20 years old, which seems to prosper since expansion is planned. The village is in effect a suburb of Dorchester of which Krier is the planner, and where he has designed several buildings. There is even talk of a parallel project in India. He has of course designed his own house in the New Urbanist settlement of Seaside, in Florida. The style he has adopted is perhaps best described as William-and-Adelaide (somewhere between Regency and early Victorian). Why some of its practitioners claim the label 'Classical' or 'traditional' for the manner I fail to understand.

'New Urbanism', too, is something of a misnomer, since the nature of these settlements, allegedly communitarian and pro-pedestrian, in fact discourages public transport and relies on the private automobile. That, and the limiting of the population to owner-inhabitants, imposes a middle-income limit on those who choose to live there, while their policy excludes both industry and agriculture. It is arguable that really makes them not New but Anti-urban. However, the Krier brothers have recalibrated their collaboration over the years, and Rob's thickly-textured metropolitan spaces seem to



ANDRÉ CARRILHO

speak of a rather different urban ideal from Léon's.

The life of such gated settlements was famously satirised 20 years ago in *The Truman Show* – a film which should be shown in schools of architecture along with the Tacoma Narrows bridge disaster as well as the dynamiting of Pruitt Igoe; and in fact the realities of the New Urbanism have reduced most, if not all, of the settlements based on their ideology to the status of gated suburbs, served by unruly and often squalid outskirts where the supermarket attendants, cleaners and scavengers who depend on them eke out their living. Celebration could not subsist without its adjoining messy suburb, Kissimmee.

Still, much like some of the other New Urbanism advocates, Léon is a fluent and persuasive speaker. He also has the advantage over some of them of being a person of unaffected charm. Always trim in a suit (a just reproach to my scruffy corduroy bags and sports jacket), he is also an enthusiastic and accomplished musician. The last time we spent an evening together was in a tango bar in Buenos Aires (on the occasion of the local architectural biennale) with the Peruvian-Parisian master Henri Ciriani, whose architecture is certainly more to my taste than to his: but though some of us were brave enough to dance to the preliminary music, we were soon put to shame by the lean, pencil-mustachioed and beshawled tangoists who demonstrated what none of us – not even the Latin American Ciriani – could even remotely emulate.

By now it has become rather difficult to disengage Krier's own gold from all that New Urbanist dross since he has entangled himself too stickily in its webs. For all that, those early, unaffected drawings remain a sterling achievement and much of his polemic retains its force: they invite respect and even a grudging admiration.

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The Department of Architecture (www.arch.ethz.ch) at ETH Zurich invites applications for the above-mentioned professorship.

The professorship conveys theoretical fundamentals as well as methodological and discipline-specific knowledge in the field of constructive design. Research shall advance the entire subject area. The professorship is geared towards the architect's scope of responsibilities, and towards building practice and the current state of development of building technology.

The new professor will supervise design courses in the second year of the bachelor programme. Taking into consideration the coinciding factors of production techniques, material properties, economics, and ecology, the tasks of constructive design will be addressed in lectures and seminars. A comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and sustainable understanding of architecture as part of the design process is to be taught. Like the teaching, the field of research encompasses issues of constructional practice as well as the development of architectural strategies that take into consideration the increasingly complex requirements placed upon the construction industry as well as the social demands for sustainable and energy-efficient construction. Transdisciplinary cooperative alliances shall be promoted in the process. Research experience is an advantage. The new professor will be expected to teach undergraduate level courses (German or English) and graduate level courses (English).

Candidates must be able to demonstrate a substantial architectural oeuvre. Further qualifications typically include a university degree, teaching experience, and expertise in construction technology as well as in designing and constructing buildings of high quality. Ideal candidates have a strong interest in participating in defining the course work and in further developing educational teaching models. They have leadership skills and, in a commitment to the Department's development, engage in their activities beyond the limits of their field.

Please apply online at www.facultyaffairs.ethz.ch

Applications should include a curriculum vitae, a list of publications, and a table of completed projects. The letter of application should be addressed **to the President of ETH Zurich, Prof. Dr. Ralph Eichler. The closing date for applications is 31 August 2013.** ETH Zurich is an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. In order to increase the number of women in leading academic positions, we specifically encourage women to apply.

ETH

Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

Professor or Assistant Professor (Tenure Track) of Building Systems

The Department of Architecture (www.arch.ethz.ch) at ETH Zurich invites applications for the above-mentioned professorship.

Within the Bachelor programme, the professorship conveys the basics of building systems in a manner geared to meet the needs of architects. Knowledge of efficient and sustainable building systems is taught by introducing various concepts and their architectural implementation. In the Master programme, the acquired knowledge is applied and certain aspects of building systems are explored in greater depth by dealing with specific issues. Along with motivation and proficiency in teaching, the candidate is expected to show commitment to linking design and specialised studies and also to contribute to the doctoral studies programme. The new professor will be expected to teach undergraduate level courses (German or English) and graduate level courses (English).

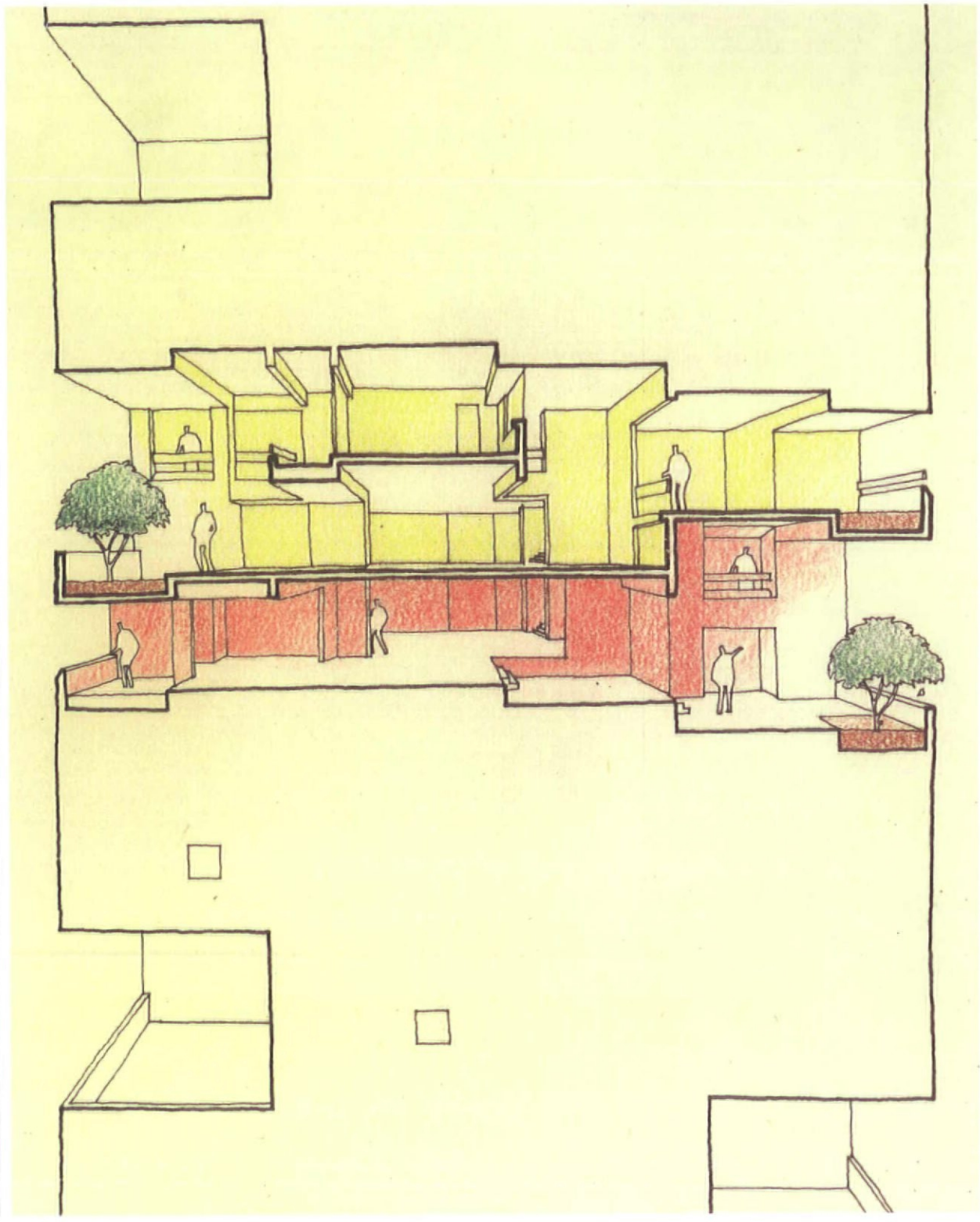
Research shall further develop the entire subject area. The professorship is geared towards the architectural profession's scope of responsibility, building practice, and the state of development of building technology. Alongside current research focused on Zero Emission Architecture and Building Services Information Modeling, the application of theories to decentralized LowEx systems, constructional practice, and optimizing the operation of technical facilities through innovative systems are also priorities. Taking into consideration the increasingly complex requirements of the construction industry, new architectural strategies are developed and transdisciplinary cooperative alliances are promoted.

Candidates must have completed a university degree, usually possess a doctorate, and have experience in designing and constructing buildings of high quality. Further prerequisites are expertise in the integral planning of diverse projects, knowledge of the building systems trades of significant relevance to architecture (heating, ventilation, plumbing, and energy systems), and the ability to direct interdisciplinary research projects. Research experience is an advantage. The ideal candidate is curious and keenly interested in experimentation, and is engaged in this activity in a commitment towards the development of the discipline.

An assistant professorship has been established to promote the careers of younger scientists. The initial appointment is for four years with the possibility of renewal for an additional two-year period and promotion to a permanent position.

Please apply online at www.facultyaffairs.ethz.ch

Applications should include a curriculum vitae, a list of publications, and a table of completed projects. The letter of application should be addressed **to the President of ETH Zurich, Prof. Dr. Ralph Eichler. The closing date for applications is 31 August 2013.** ETH Zurich is an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. In order to increase the number of women in leading academic positions, we specifically encourage women to apply.



Charles Correa, one of the most prominent Indian Modernists, currently has an exhibition dedicated to his work at the RIBA in London (until 4 September). He pioneered sustainable design integrating traditional environmental controls, such as his Kanchanjunga Apartments in Mumbai (1970-83), with balcony 'courtyards' permitting the circulation of cooling breezes. Correa said: 'to cross a desert and enter a house around a courtyard is a pleasure beyond mere photogenic image-making; it is the quality of light, and the ambience of moving air, that forms the essence of our experience'

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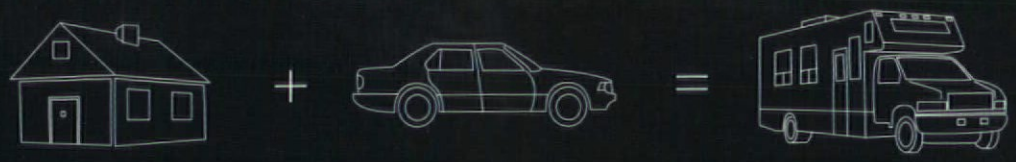

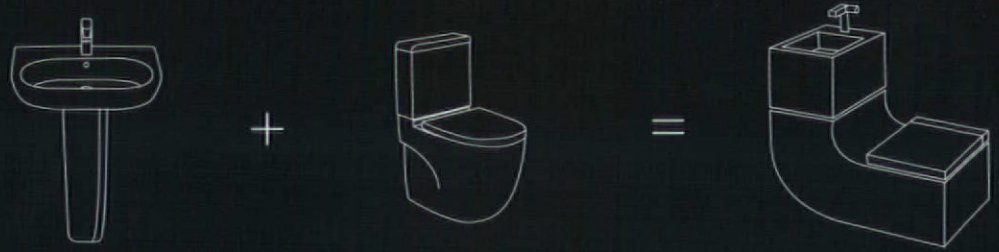

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