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The Architectural Review
Issue number 1397
July 2013
Volume CCXXXIV
Founded 1896
Ad augusta per angusta

'Jürgen Mayer showed himself determined to produce the same building with the same ornamental wave forms whatever its function, site or context'
Nicholas Olsberg, p21

'The adoption of technology was often eccentric: one woman worked in a house where the employer refused to have vacuum cleaners but where the maids sped round the rooms on motorised coal-scuttles'
Lucy Lethbridge, p24

'Nature's frugal virtues such as 'efficient interconnectedness' are brought to our attention (explain that to a fox in a henhouse, or a mouse in your sock drawer)'
Rachel Armstrong, p102

'Robert Adam citing *Playboy* interviews and explaining Bhangra music is as uncomfortable as watching a vicar dance at a wedding'
Austin Williams, p103

'Lautner hated LA. It made him physically sick, but it also worked for him, because his clients were sick of it too. His houses represent escape'
Paul Davies, p110

Cover: the sober concrete gable of Bolle Tham and Martin Videgård's summer house in Lagnö was highly commended by the jury for this year's AR House Awards (p84)

CONTRIBUTORS

Rachel Armstrong is a TED Fellow, co-director of AVATAR (Advanced Virtual and Technological Architectural Research) at the University of Greenwich and a sustainability innovator who creates new materials that possess some of the properties of living systems. Not surprisingly, she reviews *Architecture follows Nature*

Selçuk Avcı is an architect and co-founder of Avcı Architects. The practice has studios in London, Llubjana and Istanbul and has been directly affected by the civil unrest in the Turkish city, the unsettling subject of his article in *Overview*

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 Graz University of Technology in Austria

David Cohn is an architecture critic and writer based in Madrid, and a frequent contributor to these pages. This month he visited the Casa Lude in Murcia, by Grupo Aranea, which was joint winner of this year's AR House

Paul Davies is an architect who teaches History and Theory at London's South Bank University. This month he gives an insight into the life and work of John Lautner in *Reputations*

Lucy Lethbridge is author of *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth Century Britain*. In these pages she charts the decline of servants in the first half of the 20th century and the rapid progress of labour-saving devices in the household

Léon Krier is an architect, architectural theorist and urban planner. From the late 1970s onwards he has been an influential neo-traditional architect and planner and is no stranger to controversy. In *Overview* he defends himself against Joseph Rykwert's assessment in last month's *Reputations*, and this month's *Folio* shows his collaboration with Massimo Scolari: *Le désespoir de Janus*

Andrew Mead is a London-based writer interested in landscape, architecture and photography. This month he reviews *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History*

Nicholas Olsberg was chief curator of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. He has reviewed the *Everything Loose will Land* exhibition at the MAK Center, LA, which explores the cross-pollination that took place between architects and artists in Los Angeles from the late 1960s to 1980; and he also attended a day-long symposium at the Getty Conservation Institute on the insertion of new work in the historic fabric

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Massimo Scolari is an Italian architect, painter and designer, and author of *The Representation of Architecture, 1967-2012*, among many other publications. He contributes a drawing executed in collaboration with Léon Krier to *Folio*

Jef Smith is a founding member of London-based practice meld architecture. In this issue he focuses on the architecture of Shigeru Ban, subject of an exhibition at the Art Tower Mito in Ibaraki

Edmund and Yuki Sumner are, respectively, a UK-based architectural photographer and a leading commentator on trends in contemporary Japanese architecture. Their collaboration culminated in *New Architecture in Japan*, published in 2010. They report on efforts to rebuild following the earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in 2011

Tom Teatum, is a steering group member of RIBA Building Futures Think Tank and co-director of architects Teatum+Teatum. He reviews Slip House: Carl Turner Architects, a monograph designed specially for the iPad, one of the highly commended entries for AR House (see p50)

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 *Reviews*, he tackles Robert Adam's take on the globalisation of architecture

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

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

ABC average circulation for July 2011–June 2012 11,089

The Architectural Review
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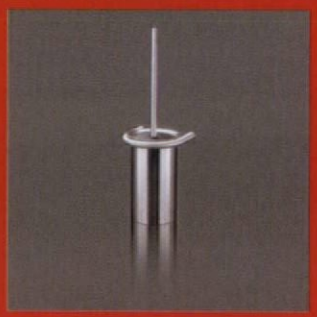

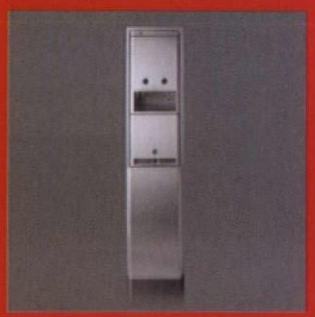

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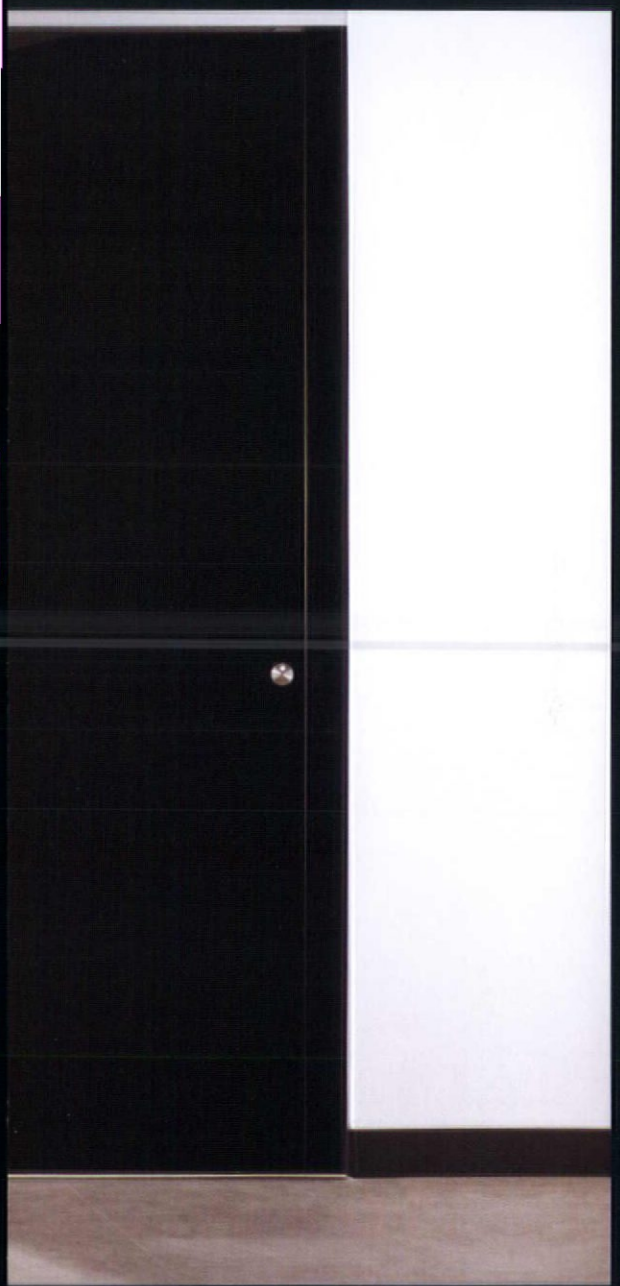

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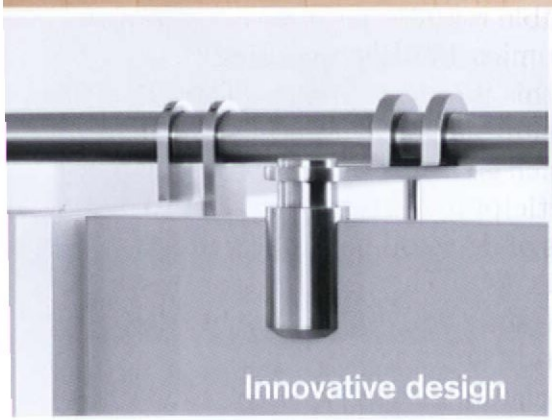

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Editorial view

Civil unrest in Istanbul and Brasília points up the historically contested nature of public space

Earlier this month, Brasília was the setting for public protests against transport fare hikes and the state squandering of resources on the 2014 World Cup. The familiar image of Niemeyer's capital as a pristine and heroic tableau of Modernist masterpieces was memorably subverted as protesters invaded the epicentre of Brazilian government and swarmed in droves over the National Congress. The unrest has since spread to other centres around the country, with reports of over a million people taking to the streets.

Something is definitely in the air. The Brazilian protests came hard on the heels of prolonged civil disturbances in the Taksim area of Istanbul, from which architect Selçuk Avcı presents a compelling eyewitness account (p12). The unrest that swept through the city in recent weeks was sparked by an unpopular plan to sweep away Gezi Park, a historic and much-loved space, in favour of rebuilding an old military barracks, with no clear idea about its role, other than 'restoring' Taksim's urban order to how it once was.

Ironically, as Avcı reports, the barracks was originally torn down to create Gezi Park, so this dismaying reversal of functions and loss of a public amenity has, unsurprisingly, generated intense disquiet. As public unease has escalated into wider resentment about aspects of Turkish government policy, it has been quelled with increasing physical ruthlessness by the authorities.

Though political regimes might wish otherwise, the contesting of the public realm, along with buildings and structures of symbolic significance, is an inescapable and essential part of human history. The apparently transgressive acts of occupation, assembly, protest and even destruction often catalyse wider social and political change. From the fall of the Berlin Wall to the more recent colonisation of Cairo's Tahrir Square, history is made in public view and in public spaces. Sometimes the impact of people taking to the streets, squares and parks can accomplish great things, but sometimes it has terrible human consequences, as with the 1989 massacre in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Over time, places and buildings resonate with the deeds and memories of previous generations, forming palimpsests that illuminate the relationship between past and present. Tiananmen Square is unusual in that events there have been scrupulously excised from China's national consciousness, but at Berlin's remodelled Reichstag you can still see bullet holes and the graffiti of occupying Russian troops.

Until the recent disturbances, both Brazil and Turkey were viewed as stable regimes with enviably robust economies, but it's becoming clear that this is at the expense of social cohesion. Despite its successes, the Turkish government needs to 'create a participatory process at all local levels of decision-making', writes Selçuk Avcı. The Gezi Park protesters now want a new contract between the state and its people. This 'negotiated revolution' envisages the establishment of a new social and political order without the coercion of tear gas and water cannon.

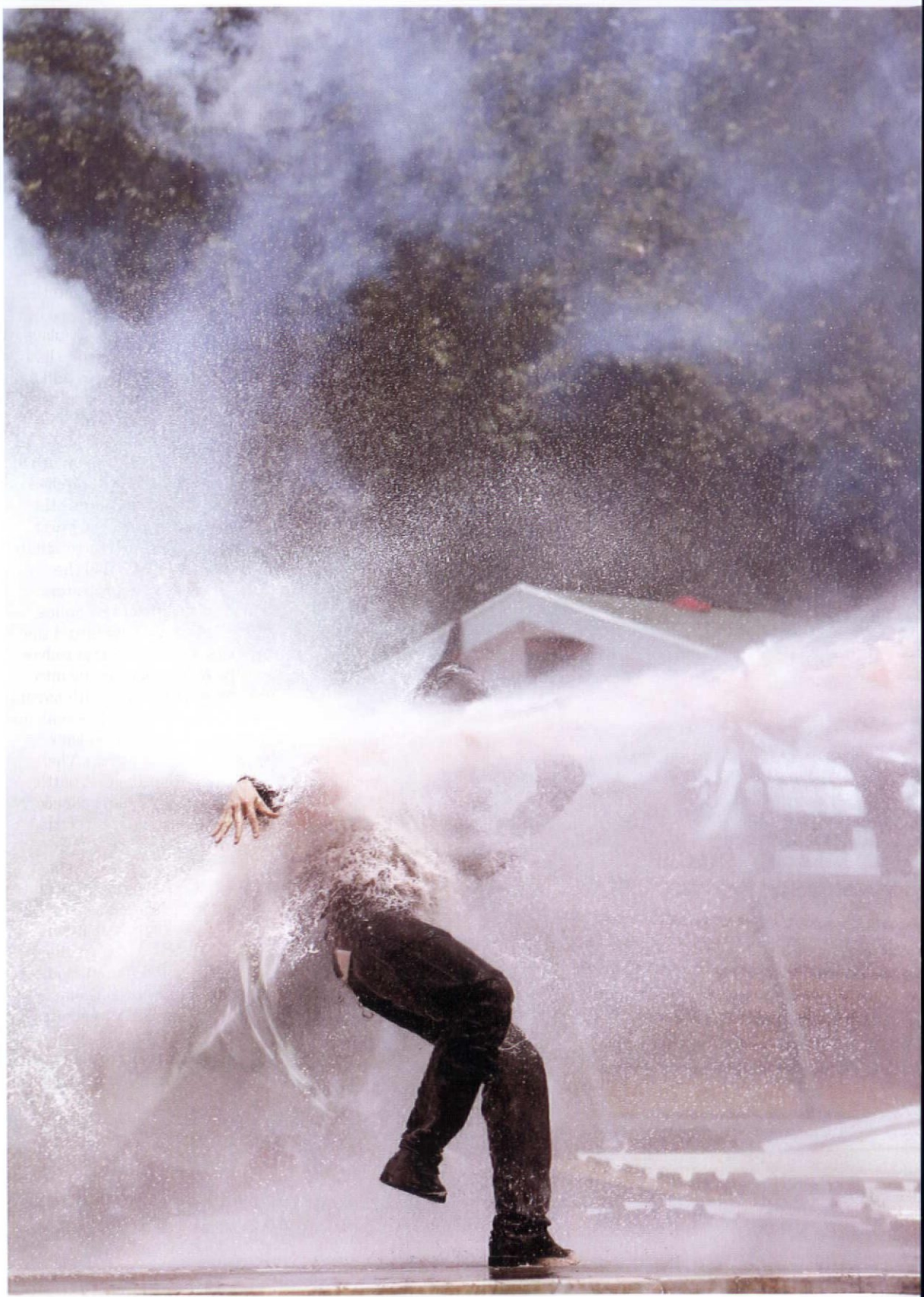
Catherine Slessor, Editor

Overview

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Running riot

Plans to redevelop a park in the heart of Istanbul have ignited nationwide protests against the Turkish government, writes *Selçuk Avcı*



Turkish riot police fire water cannon and tear gas to drive protesters out of Gezi Park in Istanbul. What started as a protest against the razing of a public park has escalated into a wider revolt against government policies

KONSTANTINOS TSAKALIDIS/DEMOTIX/CORBIS

Being in the heart of the recent Gezi Park and Taksim protests, our office had no choice but to be involved in the mayhem that ensued. Many office members had already been 'tree-sitting', keeping an eye on the contractors when they first moved in, but it soon became clear that it would be impossible to focus on work while such important events unfolded on our doorstep. No one, however, anticipated the extreme levels of violence that would characterise subsequent events.

The opening salvo took place on Friday 31 May. Someone had clearly given the order to pull out all stops on the demonstrators and the whole square was instantly filled with tear gas. The area quickly turned into an urban war-zone, as the world watched in horror and disbelief over the weekend. After an initial burst of activity, the police surprisingly withdrew, and conceded the Taksim area to the protesters. Suddenly there were no police, no gas, no water cannon and the protesters organised themselves swiftly. All streets coming into Taksim were blocked with paving stones, abandoned police vehicles and buses and whatever they could get their hands on. There was a sense that the first battle had been won. An eerie silence and odd sense of elation settled over the square.

As we walked into Taksim on the following Monday evening, what confronted us was an overwhelming crowd, banners, posters, street vendors selling gas masks, and donated food, blankets and tents. It seemed that all of Istanbul was suddenly joined in solidarity, not just watching, but there to show support. Dominating the square, the shell of the previously gutted (for renovation) Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM) was occupied and covered with flags and banners, its roof precariously filled to the brim with cheering protesters. During the peak of the weekend's events, the roof began to shake, but possible disaster was averted as a tweet went out warning everyone to evacuate immediately.

The park was already occupied with encampments of well-organised tents and shelters. Even a Gezi Library, and Museum of the Resistance, had been set up. Our sense of wonder and elation was, however, short-lived. As we moved towards the AKM, I found my eyes burning, and the skin on my face began to itch. There was an initial panic, and the crowd began to disperse. No one could tell where the gas was coming from. We speculated that the police had pumped gas into the metro ventilation shafts, which exit on the square, but this seemed too far-fetched.

Nonetheless, having witnessed the ruthlessness of the authorities, no one would have been surprised. We even began to suspect that the helicopters hovering overhead were spraying the whole city. With disbelief, anger and amazement, we moved away and found ourselves having to jump over the barricades to get out of Taksim. Clearly, although the police had withdrawn, they were making sure that we knew they were not far away.

Although the events officially started at the end of May, when the Istanbul municipality started to remove six trees for road widening in front of the Divan Hotel, this story really began over a century ago. The municipality of the time decided that the already damaged military barracks should be removed and replaced with a park. Now the exact opposite was happening: the government was executing long-standing plans to reinstate the military barracks in the heart of Gezi Park without a clear core function attached to it. The plan seemed to be to build it and then see what it could be used for.

Taksim always had an important role in the life of Istanbul, as a public square, a place for political demonstrations and key transport hub. Gezi Park, Taksim Square and Istiklal Street are the equivalent of London's Hyde Park, Trafalgar Square,

King's Cross and Oxford Street. At its peak, Istiklal carries up to two million people from Taksim Square to Tünel Square. Taksim, which takes its name from the ancient water cisterns, in fact means 'to share' out the water that is collected at this high point in the city.

Appropriately, 'sharing' is the central issue underscoring the events of the last three weeks. Turkey is a democracy where in the last elections over 50 per cent are known to have voted for the party in power, the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi: the Justice and Development Party). Until recently, however, the AKP considered that its overwhelming majority in both central and local governments justified its actions. A nationwide construction boom has been boosted by the ability of the government to take unilateral actions on urban policy, clearing the way for mega-scale developments with little or no public debate.

In the case of Gezi Park, the local government has in fact carried out a consultation within the existing formal legal boundaries, but allegedly stretching the rules along the way to achieve a cross party consensus. It therefore 'justifiably' considers that the decision to rebuild the barracks was passed through the local political system with the support of the opposition parties. The evidence as well as the silence of the opposition suggests that this is the case. However, it is clear that urban design experts, academics and many people in Istanbul and elsewhere, who have been protesting over the action of the government, feel otherwise. Indeed, ever since the plans emerged over two years ago to 'pedestrianise' the square and rebuild the barracks, NGOs such as the Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity Group have been actively questioning the decision, through dialogue and legal process, with little success.

Genuine public engagement requires a complex and well-conceived action plan that brings together as many issues as possible in a transparent and visible way. The Istanbul municipality, whose authority appears to have been outranked by the government in this matter, should define what it sees as the issues, select consultants in a publicly accountable manner and engage them to establish a consultative process of investigation and discovery, to which the public is invited and with which it is visibly involved. The ultimate aim would be to devise a brief for an international competition for a redevelopment project that responds to the importance of Taksim Square, Gezi Park and Istiklal Street.

This collaborative process could become the model for the continuing evolution of a rapidly-developing power in one of world's most sensitive regions. Istanbul needs to enact its growing role as an international city, satisfiying the demands of both local and foreign visitors. Instead, the local authority and central government have chosen to implement stealthy, partisan solutions that lead to wider issues of social division and unrest. The Gezi protests have since evolved into an all-encompassing outcry against the government's anti-libertarian policies.

ALI KABAS / CORBIS

Atatürk Cultural Centre, Taksim Square: protesters use flags and graffiti as another way to express their discontent

After the police had pulled out, many people gathered in Gezi Park and Taksim Square. Families poured in from all around Istanbul simply to observe the incredible energy that had built up in a very short space of time. At the forefront were architects, urban planners, lawyers, doctors, academics, students, housewives and office workers; in other words ordinary people. The atmosphere was often reminiscent of a music festival, as people mingled peacefully and enjoyed a moment of satisfied elation at the sense of common purpose. Yet the feeling that this may not last was always present.

Many people are conflicted by the government's approach, questioning why it is involved in affairs that should really be dealt with by the local municipality (interestingly, the mayor of Istanbul has been very quiet about these events, even though he is clearly a key protagonist in the process). The government's previous successes, which brought Turkey to a position that it could only dream of when it came into power 10 years ago, are unquestionable. Under its stewardship, it has succeeded in making Turkey a hub in the region and a respected player on the world stage. But it needs to rule with a genuinely egalitarian approach that encompasses all the population rather than just the 50 per cent that voted for it.

This means creating a participatory process at local levels of decision-making and then withdrawing into the background to allow it to happen. My personal hope is that the energy released from these protests continues to grow and evolve towards a Turkish society that is open and inclusive, becoming a model for other countries in the region.

However, for now, all this appears to be wishful thinking. On the weekend of 8 June protesters were told that the police would not enter the square until the following Monday. Tensions rose again, as barricades

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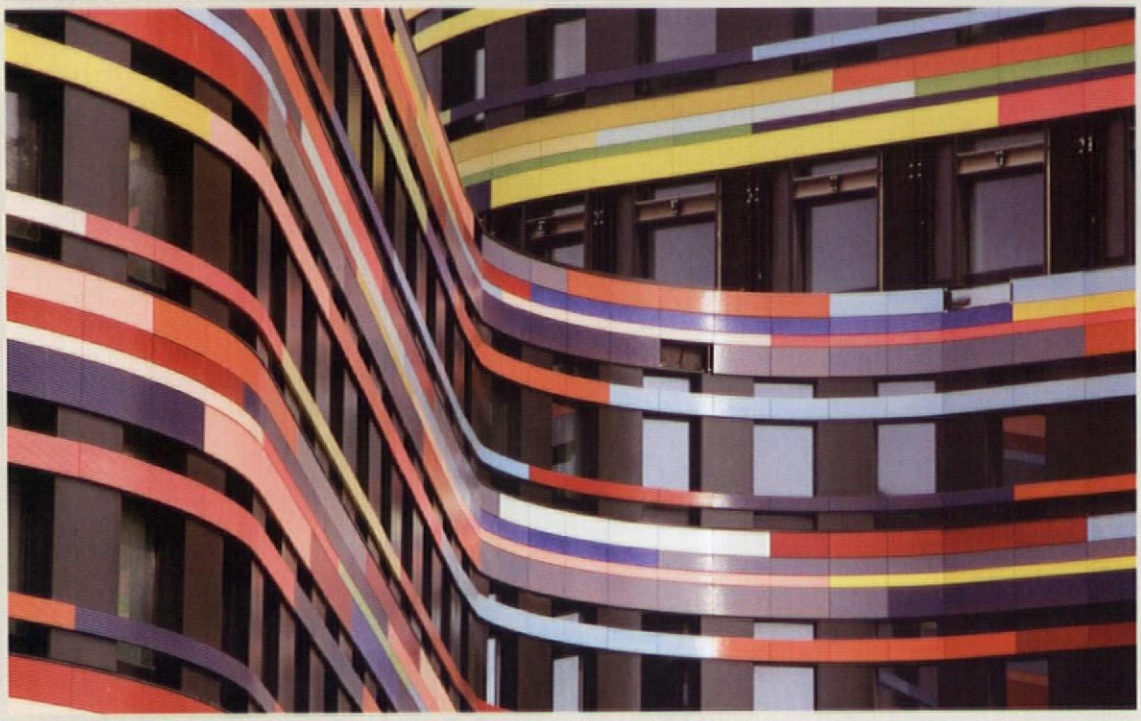

DENNIS GILBERT / VIEW

2

1. Sauerbruch Hutton's BSU Office for Urban Development and the Environment in Hamburg displays a bold use of colour
2. DSDHA's 28 South Molton Street, London store for Bosideng is a striking bespoke terracotta building

Sauerbruch Hutton's new BSU offices can be decribed as colourful, bold and optimistic. The ensemble is enveloped in a distinctive polychromatic facade supplied by NBK.

On each floor, continuous aprons with a total length of around 900 metres, made from ceramic cladding glazed in bright colours, encircle the building, giving it an uplifting character. With five different shades of blue, red, yellow and green, the cladding features a total of 20 different hues. The facade is uniform, easy-to-understand, and breaks down into a myriad of colourful elements representing the diversity of nationalities, languages, personalities and religions that come together here.

Colour distribution is based on a carefully planned conceptual proposition devised by Sauerbruch Hutton and reinforces the architectural impact: 'peaks' of colour, each in one of the primary colours of red, blue and yellow, accentuate the ends of the low-rise building (blues) as well as the front (reds) and rear (yellows) of the high-rise building.

Between these strong colour accents, gradual colour gradients blend varying degrees of different, individual colour shades.

Along the wavy south-facing facade, the colours revert to blue in the hollow (concave) sections, while the intensity of the red in the cusped (convex) sections increases the closer you get to the high-rise. This pattern is followed on the west facade, which blends blues and yellows. Greens are also added to the colour mix.

Along the northern facade where the wave-like form is less pronounced, the colour gradient is linear – from blues to greens to yellows. Likewise, along the eastern facade, the colour gradient moves from blues to reds.

Colour is an important aspect of these spectacular new buildings and plays a key role in many of NBK's innovative projects.

For example, the design of the Civic Centre in Doncaster is deliberately based on strong contrasts – not only in terms of the surfaces, but also the accompanying colours. The metallic appearance of the sinter-fired exterior of the main building is already unusual in itself, but set against the brightly coloured glazing of the 'baguette' facade in the entrance area, it blends into the background.

By contrast, the designers of Student Castle in Manchester opted to clad the exterior with engobed terracotta in different shades of blue and grey, redolent of the skies above Manchester.

A new office and retail building at 28 South Molton Street in London by DSDHA also features dark-red glazing specially developed for the project. Here, however, the unique appearance of the facade is achieved largely through the use of very different, specially-shaped vertical elements that lend the building its distinctive character and ensure that it is successfully integrated into the existing London townscape.

Ultimately, though, it is the architects' bold use of colour that lends these buildings their spectacular character and ensures that the architecture and visual appeal of the facades synergise and complement each other. The materials used – glazed or engobed terracotta – are the perfect choice to enhance such cutting-edge designs.

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were strengthened and more gas masks, blankets, food and tents were brought in. As events unfolded over the following week, and CNN broadcast live the re-taking of Taksim, a sense of hopelessness and disbelief settled over the country. The escalating political rhetoric and increasingly confident actions of the police escalated the protests. Many protesters and police were hurt, some killed, much of the gas released affected innocent bystanders and water cannons were seemingly infused with some form of chemical, which burned skins, as we watched in desperation. On Sunday my apartment building on Istiklal was cordoned off behind police barricades. Fortunately my wife and I had decided to stay away for the weekend but told staff not to come to the office until the dust had settled.

That week in the *Daily News*, journalist and political commentator Verda Özer wrote: 'The Gezi (Park) protests revealed that the citizens want a new contract to be drafted between the state and themselves. They want to shift from a state-centric state to a human-centric one ... The AKP government has to realize the fact that the citizens want to become active participants in the decision-making processes. It has to develop a healthy dialogue and a cooperative relationship with the citizens that reminds us of the concept of "negotiated revolution" coined by George Lawson. Lawson describes this type of revolution as a dynamic process that seeks to build a new order without resorting to violence and coercive control.'

'Negotiated revolution' has a good ring to it. But today, Gezi Park has been 'sanitised' of all protesters, tents dumped in bins, the library dismantled, and all signs of the occupation erased. All that remains as a reminder are the saplings planted by Gezi activists, which mercifully the city has decided to keep as a memory of the event.

RIPOSTE

Points of order

Léon Krier

In June's AR, Joseph Rykwert wrote a profile of Léon Krier for Reputations. *Léon Krier replies to him with this open letter*

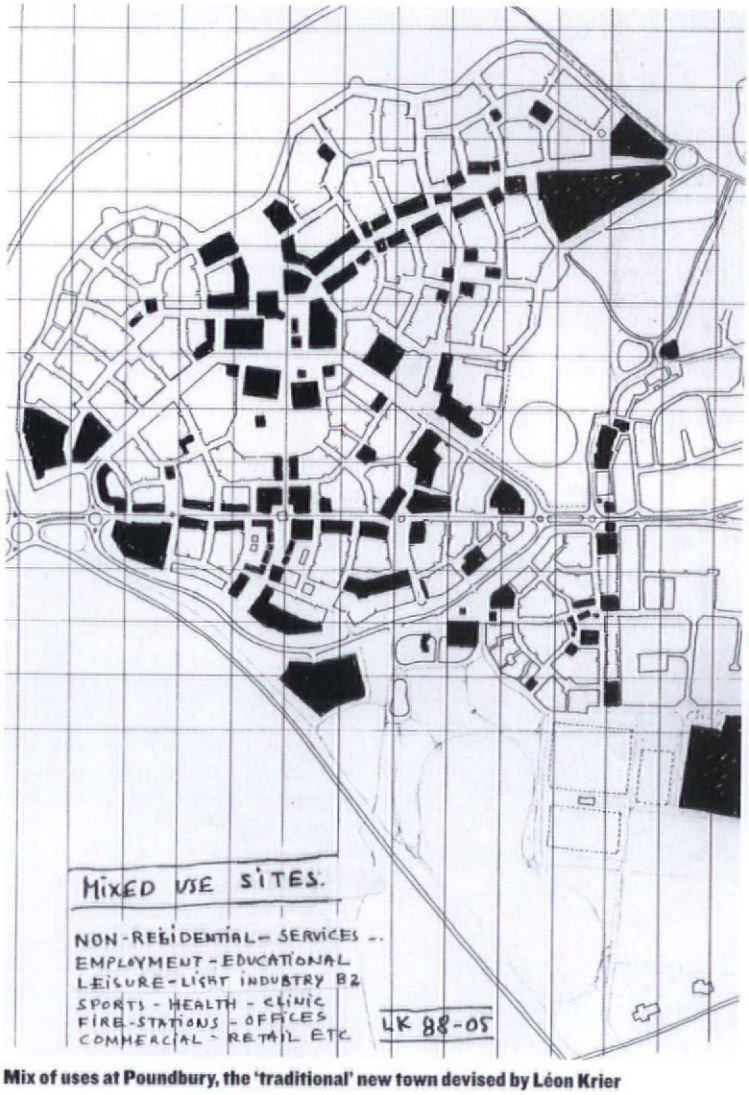
On Speer and Nazi architecture

The reprint of my Speer book is causing a lot of criticism, much of it wilfully distorting my words and intentions. Your confessed grudging admiration for some of my work is naturally more to my taste than the delinquent accusations of Owen Hatherley: 'Leon Krier is a former modernist who had a road-to-Damascus conversion in the '70s, when he suddenly began to write advocacy in the architectural press for Albert Speer, both architectural and, gradually, political.' Countering such fraudulent amalgamations was the foremost reason to originally publish and now reprint the Speer book. I never believed Speer to be innocent, and anyone pretending that I did is accusing me out of: 1. Ignorance, 2. Stupidity, and 3. Spite, generally motivated by opposition to modern traditional urbanism and architecture and to those who advocate it, namely the Prince of Wales or me.

I occupied myself with the unsavoury subject because, when I started designing in the mid 1960s, any reference to traditional architecture, be it vernacular or Classical, would be scolded by family, friends, teachers, critics, juries as 'Speeresque, Nazi, reactionary, fascist'. Those persistent and perverse reproaches led me to research a subject on which bountiful prejudice is supported by little intelligence and even less argument.

The disgusting slander which began in London in 1985 when the publication of my book was announced, led to a debilitating personal depression of such proportions that I became unable to continue my first building commission, namely the design of the National Gallery extension, to which I had been appointed eight months before by Jacob Rothschild and the trustees design committee. The competition, won by Robert Venturi, was organised only after my complete collapse and resignation from the job in August 1985.

At the time, the arguments I advanced in the book were at best ridiculed, at worst rumoured to be motivated by philo-Nazism. The German magazine *Bauwelt* dedicated a special number called 'Leon Krier's great Speer Festival, from Classicism to Genocide'. This resulted in me being professionally banned from that country ever since. You, Joseph, were among the critics who internationally ridiculed my undertaking. Against your parti pris, which by the way is still common doxa, I advance the question, 'Can a genocidal criminal be a great artist?'. I demonstrate that the negation of such a possibility is an unreflected and unfounded a priori. Curiously, that prejudice, however widespread in common parlance, has to my knowledge never been sustained in print. It is not only intellectually untenable, but more deviously, it serves as a vademecum to avoid argument by means of condemnation. You tell me that no amount of argument can change your conviction that Speer was a mediocre architect



Mix of uses at Poundbury, the 'traditional' new town devised by Léon Krier

and that Hitler had no artistic talent or judgement, full stop. Against that opinion I propose the following hypothesis: 'what if Speer and Hitler had been great artists?' What then? None of my critics seems to be able to conceive such a possibility. It is so much more comfortable to keep psalleining: 'Our arch-enemy can't possibly have serious artistic worth'; 'Our arch-enemy cannot possibly be in tune with the Zeitgeist'; 'Our arch-enemy must be inferior to us' ... what does that remind you of? Speaking of naivety? What if Hitler had appointed Corb or Mies or Hilberseimer? For you that is an utter impossibility negating the political ambiguity of many Modernist master architects and more importantly the eye-catching futurist-high-tech side of Nazi politics, economy and culture. Nazi hubris was in competition with that of other contemporary empires, using the same modern social and technical means of domination.

Nazi classicism was intended to legitimise a criminal regime, as were Nazi engineering, technology, language and industries. My question is 'why were classical architecture and art delegitimised by their abuse and not engineering, industrial technology, industrialism, language?'

It is the parallels, not the differences with our systems of producing, planning, managing, educating, circulating, which should interest critical inquiry and so shed light on the ominous aspects of our own body politic.

Poundbury

Poundbury, like most modern developments, depends heavily on local politics, planning law and market forces. It is not a philanthropic project nor can the client or the masterplanner dictate what happens there. Every non-standard design solution is endlessly debated, contested, modified before it is finally permitted and built. The West Dorset District Council are ever watchful that Poundbury is not becoming the future urban centre of Dorchester. Such a possibility is actively countered by the authorities. That is why we have been refused the public buildings and funds which we were initially promised, the District Court, the Leisure and Sports Centre etc. And yet, contrary to your statement Joseph, Poundbury is not a suburb. It mixes systematically houses, schools, shops, services and industries. In fact my objective of equating the number of workplaces and residential units within each of the four quarters has been more than fulfilled. The Non-Residential Uses diagram is closely adhered to. Mixed use is what deploys naturally in human settlements unless it is expressly forbidden by planning law and policy.

Congress for the New Urbanism

You suggest that my reputation has been tarnished by being mixed up with my New Urbanist followers. You seem to ignore that the CNU Charter is still the only coherent modern urban planning document to replace the outdated but universally reigning Charter of Athens principles. It has been formulated by a phalanx of great professionals, now backed up by a formidable scientific and technical literature.

The validity of New Urbanist theory should be assessed separately from its practical applications. The latter are largely dependent on commissions from the private sector. Locations, briefs, densities, construction methods and style are mostly predetermined by clients' business plans and existing zoning ordinances. They are often compromised by unprepared and hostile professional, legislative and bureaucratic environments. The debased realisation of my Florence-Novoli Masterplan by subsequent administrations and Fiat Immobiliari Spa is a case in point. The core value of the New Urbanism movement lies, then, not in its many fragmentary realisations, but in its broad environmental vision.

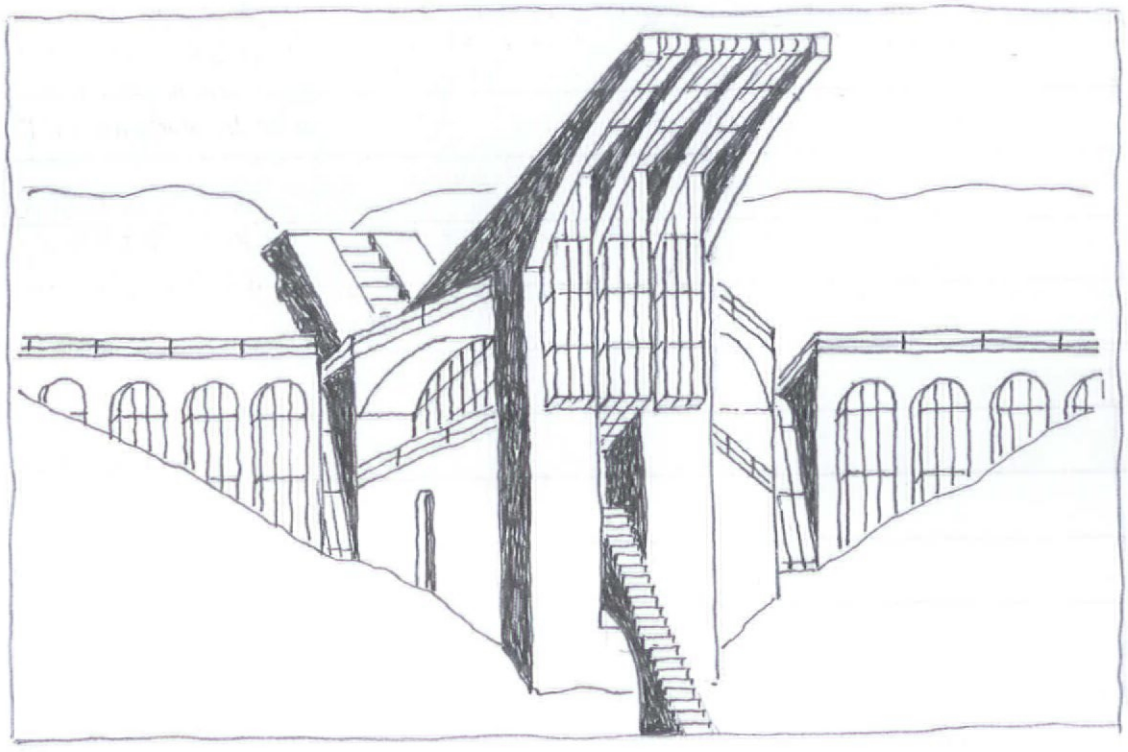
New Urbanism is not a set and sealed doctrine. Like scientific theory, it evolves through trial and error. New Urbanism's body of knowledge is definitely not a theology nor a transcendental theory, but the technology for settling the planet in ecological, aesthetic and ethical ways.

To equate the *Truman Show* scenario with the actual life of Seaside or Celebration is simply ignorant of reality. It condemns without appeal what has become the only viable alternative to sprawling gated and cul de sac-ed suburbia. It is best to visit those places yourself rather than repeat their opponents.

Cayalá, Guatemala

Contrary to what you write, Cayalá is neither a suburb nor a gated community. The 'gated community' lie was jump-started by *Huffington Post*. It took 10 years to get the 'no gates' idea accepted by the client because our Israeli security advisor had nearly convinced the client to wall the entire project.

So far only a tenth of Paseo Cayalá is built. The principle of mixed use and programmatically-tuned architectural variety has



A sketch from Léon Krier's earlier Futurist days, before his 'road-to-Damascus conversion'

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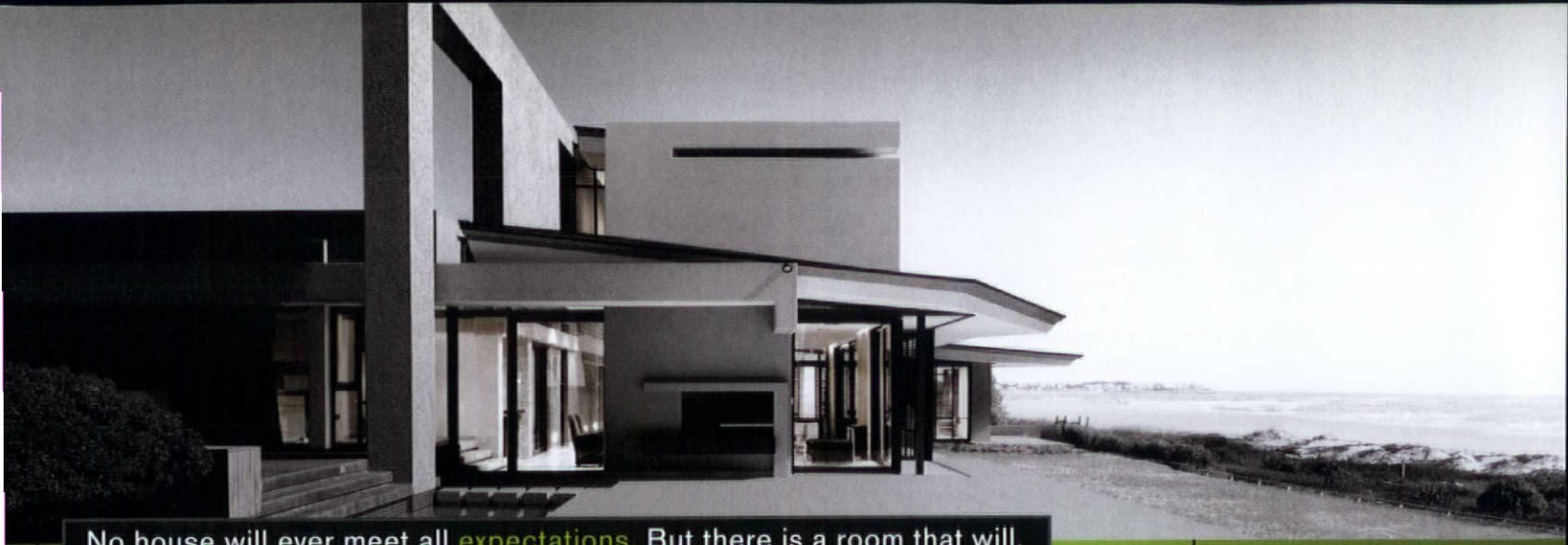

No house will ever meet all expectations. But there is a room that will.

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GAGGENAU

laid the foundation for a powerful public realm. The growth of a true urban community takes, however, more time than the two years it took to build the first streets, squares, parks and a miraculous sense of place. Cayalá is not gated nor will it be a town for the rich. It represents a first step in reconstructing a public realm for the Guatemalan urban middle-classes, bedrock of a democracy, mediator between the extremes of a society reconstructing itself after a murderous civil war. An important residential population is to elect here home shortly. The construction of their houses, apartments and penthouses has only just started. This new urban community is a rare and precious flower taking root in the tormented soil and history of modern Guatemala City. Cayalá should be judged not as a finished product but as the first step of a vision-in-the-making, the inception of a complex urban and social creation. Lies being repeated unchecked do great damage to what is an extraordinary social experiment.

Henri Ciriani et al

I enjoy Henri Ciriani's small projects, his Arles Museum and the houses in Peru particularly – I also appreciate some of Zholtovsky's work.

Miscellaneous points

- The slave-labour which was used to build the Stalinist metros, the Nazi Volkswagen factory and motorways, the foundations of Saint Petersburg, or currently the profusion of Modernist fireworks in Dubai or Beijing, doesn't seem to cause the same ethical and aesthetic revulsion with critics as does the Nazi slave labour used for building classical monuments.
- I have not worn a moustache for about 35 years.
- I use computers, planes and cars with advantage and delight and why should I not? Have you ever seen or heard me writing or saying anything against motorised vehicles as such and on principle? I criticise uncritical, unnecessary, obsessive, enforced and damaging dependence on them.
- I am not against industrialisation as such and on principle, but against the ideological, unnecessary and damaging industrialisation, against industrialisation as panacea, as political and metaphysical ideal, against industrialising subjects and activities defying reason, eroding the immense font of artisan technology and creating instead a mass society of ill-educated unemployed dependents, incapable of autonomy.

LOS ANGELES, USA

Context and continuity

Nicholas Olsberg

The Getty Conservation Institute now has a major programme to advance research and thinking about the preservation of modern architecture worldwide, both as a laboratory of the 'hows', testing model approaches to restoration (such as that now under way at the Eames House and Studio nearby) and as a think tank for enquiries about the what, when, whether and why. As part of that more philosophical enquiry, a panel of architects was recently invited for a day-long discussion of questions surrounding the insertion of new work in the historic fabric, *Minding the Gap*.

Everyone ran true to form. Rafael Moneo, in scholarly mode, allied his interventions in the historic townscape with Gardella, Ernesto Rogers and the postwar Italian movement for continuity. Denise Scott Brown provided a set of deep situational analyses for recent work whose eloquence far outstripped the increasingly shallow actual design results of the Venturi office. Richard Rogers politely dismissed the matter of history, asking us to respect instead the subjective notion of 'place' – a convenient idea which seems to grant permission to ignore context entirely, except as

RICHARD ROSS

Minding the gap: extension to Gothenburg Courthouse by Erik Gunnar Asplund, 1937

the designer intervening chooses to define it.

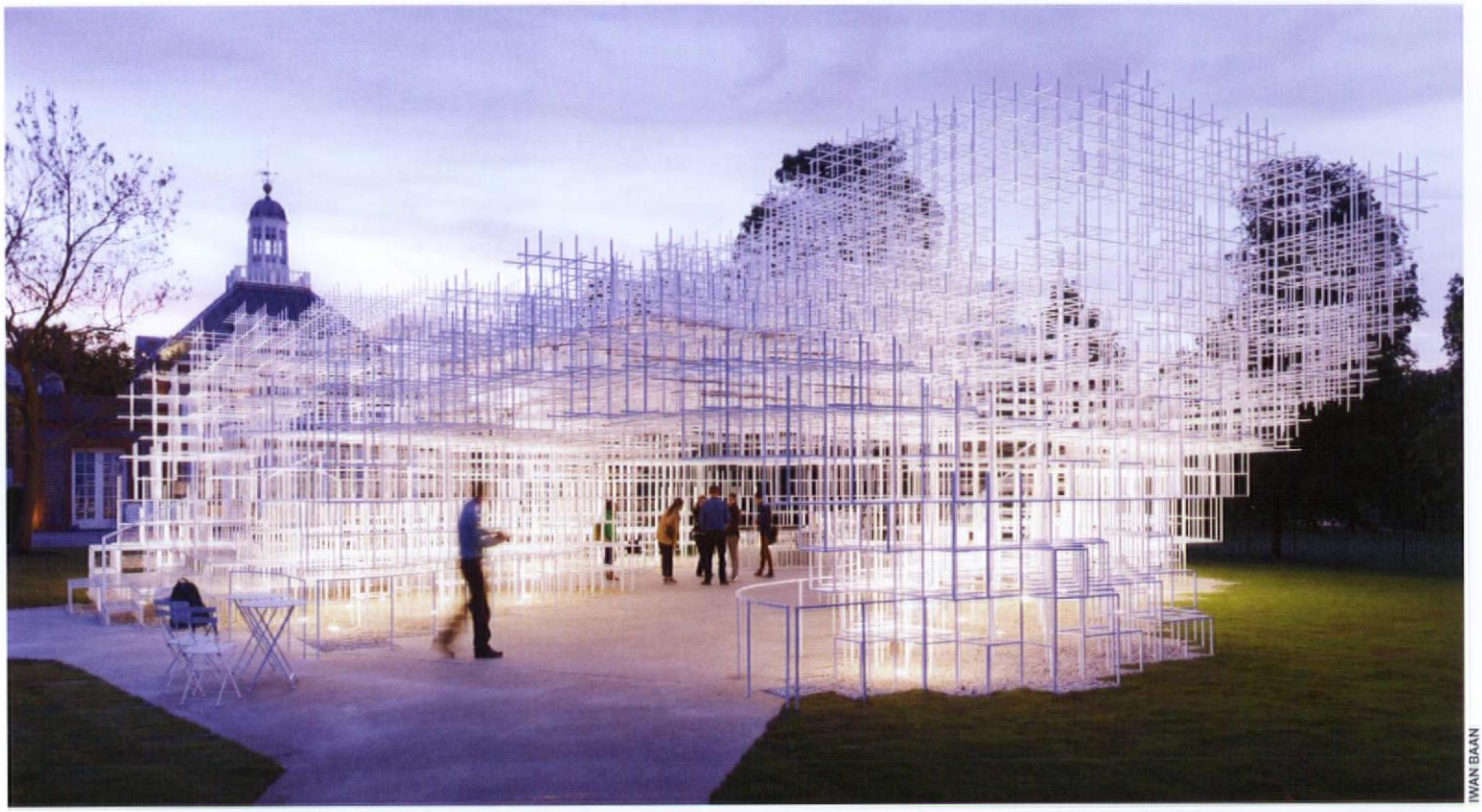
Jürgen Mayer, as spokesperson for the next generation, flipped the question off altogether, showing himself determined to produce the same building with the same ornamental wave forms whatever its function, site or context. The ubiquity of his work in the Republic of Georgia comes close to establishing a new national vernacular that will require its own conference on context in the next century.

More interesting was Thomas H Beeby's discussion of recent work – by Gehry, Piano and himself – that essentially completes Burnham's plan, a century later, for Chicago's waterfront park; an important reminder that the urban context is not a matter of mimicking facades but of respecting volumes, rhythms of movement, patterns on the ground, and the character and scale of the empty spaces between.

Two points of reference kept on returning. One was Alison and Peter Smithson's Economist complex, which manages to stay sympathetic to the pattern of street and walls around it with structures at a totally different scale and disposed on a totally different mat. The other example, even more persistent in the discussion, was Asplund's extension to the Gothenburg courthouse, dating from the late 1930s.

Scott Brown reminded us that Asplund had served at least three different polemics even in her own lifetime, being presented to students in the '50s as a model of modernity, a little later as historicist, then as a cipher of postmodernity in the '70s. That changing reception seems right. Seen across the square it remains a startlingly ambiguous work, and one, given its tortured decade-long design history, in which political compromise suddenly looks like a design virtue.

But bear in mind that the interior is decisively modern in its every aspect. Only the judges' offices are relegated to the tight



IWAN BAAN

This year's Serpentine Pavilion in Kensington Gardens is by Sou Fujimoto, a previous winner of the Emerging Architecture Awards. The pavilion is an intricate latticework of slim steel poles and glass panels. Fujimoto envisages an environment where 'the natural and man-made merge; not solely architectural nor solely natural, but a unique meeting of the two'

windowed front facing the square. The public enters to stand trial, indict their neighbours, or file papers through a courtyard that leaves the authority of the Classical behind, vaguely reflected in a great glass wall and barely visible from the three floors of open space in the new building.

The exterior may talk to reconciliation with the figure of Gustavus Adolphus – whose statue stands in front of it, and who founded this city to make an empire – as well as to the fascist members of the city council who kept on asking for changes. But the inside talks to a mannerly and respectful civil life at every turn, to the law as an instrument of social hygiene, and to democracy as something averse to judicial podiums, thrones and all design that reinforces hierarchy.

☞ On page 98, Nicholas Olsberg reviews the Sylvia Lavin exhibition *Everything Loose will Land* at the MAK Center in LA until 4 August

Shadows of the past

Leon van Schaik

Details become second nature to us, norms that seem to have been with us always. But they all have their moment of origination. Take the shadow line. Detail a skirting board and attract the derision of your peers. And yet there must have been a time when to detail a shadow line would have attracted the ire of the masters of the cover strip, ubiquitous in the 18th century.

So who first consciously detailed a shadow line? As I argued in *AA Files* 9, John Soane had a deliberate strategy of 'toy block articulation' that involved scoring deep incisions between the elements of his designs. You see this in his design of the wall around the Bank of England, in the incisions between the bays in the facade to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in his tomb in Old St Pancras Churchyard ... Was there a precedent for this conscious usage? If readers know of any earlier examples please email the AR at areditorial@emap.com

John Soane's pioneering shadow line at the Bank of England. But where did it originate?

AR COMPETITIONS

GAGA

The Global Architecture Graduate Awards 2013 are still open for entries, but not for much longer. A prize fund of £5,000 celebrates the world's most talented students with prizes for graduate and post-graduate work. Closing date for entries is Friday 5 July. architectural-review.com/gaga

Emerging Architecture

The ar+d Awards are the world's most prestigious awards for young architects with a prize fund of £10,000. Buildings, landscape, urbanism, products are all eligible. This year's international jury will include Diébédo Francis Kéré from Burkino Faso. Other jurors will be announced soon. Entry deadline is 30 August. architectural-review.com/emerging

Broader view

Served and servant spaces

The 20th century saw the sun set on the servanted opulence of the Edwardian high summer and reluctant householders faced the challenge of adaptation. The masses, however, welcomed the march of progress, explains *Lucy Lethbridge*

During the 1920s, postwar Britain saw an almost unprecedented building boom, a forest of villas, mansion blocks and service flats. London, wrote one commentator, 'witnessed the greatest amount of rebuilding all over the metropolis that has ever taken place within so short a period of time since the Great Fire of London'. It was the Second World War that finally put an end to traditional domestic service but nonetheless, the new dwellings of the 1920s were designed for a future without 'help': they had central heating, electricity, stainless-steel kitchens and eat-in kitchens. 'We are all busy now making the world anew,' wrote Randal Phillips, the author of *The Servantless House*, in 1924. It would take longer than Phillips anticipated to create a new world – economic depression forced girls back into service in the interwar years in vast numbers – but the servanted opulence of the Edwardian era was disappearing and reluctant householders faced the challenge of adaptation.

Designers, architects and writers rallied to the call: in 1920, the *Daily Mail*, which had run the Ideal Home Exhibitions since 1908, offered £300 as a first prize in a competition to design a one-servant, coal-less house, costing no more than £2,500. The winning entry was a substantial five-bedroom villa which included a maid's room but which also had electric plugs on the landing for vacuum cleaners and polishers. The house had no polished surfaces or hard angles to attract dust; there were sleek fitted radiators and smut-free electric fires. There was also a primitive dishwasher – a wooden rack in which dishes were sprayed messily with a rubber hose.

Electricity was hailed as the domestic liberator of recently enfranchised middle-class women. No longer need they suffer from recalcitrant maids who needed constant supervision: messy human relationships could be replaced by toasters, irons, egg warmers and trouser presses. Sometimes (a solution favoured by most women) you could have both a maid and an electrical gadget. In fact, most advertisements show devices operated by a pert maid. The adoption of technology was often eccentric: one woman reported working in a house where the employer refused to have vacuum cleaners but where the maids sped round the rooms on motorised coal-scuttles.

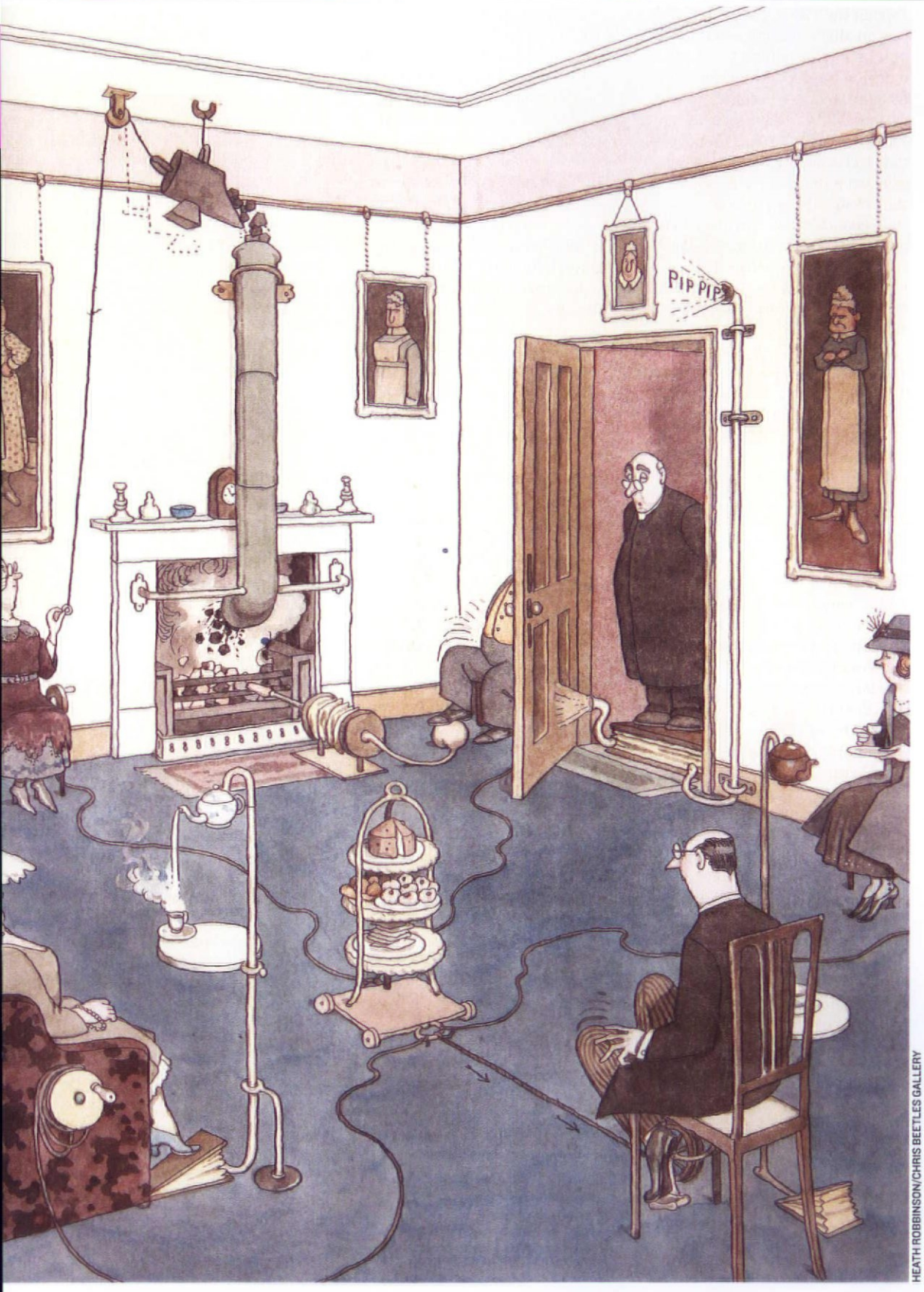
A low-maintenance aesthetic emerged. Randal Phillips recommended japanning in dull black the brass furniture of the door to obviate the need for polishing and advised 'scumbling' interior paintwork to conceal dirt. For the smaller house, suggested innovations were American-style kitchen-diners, hostess trolleys, serving hatches and hotplates, and floors of easy-wipe linoleum.

These innovations were viewed with contempt by traditionalists – surely no single object has aroused more snobbish derision than the hostess trolley. The imaginary paradise of co-dependency exemplified by the English country house had sunk deep into the national psyche. Domestic service was viewed as social order. The households of previous centuries had been flexible and sprawling, full of hangers-on, dependants and retinues. By the mid-19th century, the home had become a shrine to the nuclear family, increasingly accommodating two communities under the same roof. Houses were built with servants' entrances and basement steps; old houses were given new wings with a maze of long corridors, back stairs and cunningly designed hidden doorways. The background drudgery of the home became invisible: oiled cogs of a well-run machine. Labour was cheap – and what was the point of installing running water if you had help to lay a fire, to heat it, and bring it to you in a jug early in the morning?

It was not as if the upper classes had always disliked labour-saving technologies: in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, many were keen to install gas and other innovations. It was when these technologies percolated down to the middle classes that they became viewed as déclassé. By 1900, the comfort of the new was distinctly nouveau riche. The grandest homes boasted long cold corridors, open fires – and many used chamberpots in the 1930s when flush lavatories were widespread. Candles assumed a 'flattering glow' suitable for dinner parties, as American economist Thorstein Veblen observed in the 1890s, when gas lamps became associated with trade showrooms. The American journalist Elizabeth Banks, going undercover as a housemaid in London, spent hours scraping candle wax off parquet floors because her employer disdained gas or electricity. The idea that human domestic labour was morally superior to machines runs alongside the cult of the natural, the home-made, the artisanal: it is a perception of authenticity and therefore of virtue. Labour-saving devices carried a whiff of the clerkly suburban classes and their taste for tinned food.

So the suburban house most effectively reflects the changes of the age in the mid 20th century – although most maintained the ideal that domestic labour was outsourced: manufacturers gave vacuum cleaners names such as the 'Daisy' and the 'Mary Ann' to suggest the maid who may (but increasingly may not) have been using them. Homes gradually opened up – losing the labyrinth of small rooms that had once divided houses into 'front of house' and 'below stairs' and creating spaces with dual functions: eating in the kitchen became more common; the 'play room' moved downstairs from the nursery to the living area.

Hallways in middle- and upper-class homes had once been mediated by servants trained to spot the difference between a debt collector and a gentleman: with the decline of the rituals of afternoon calls, the narrow hallway became an awkward space, often filled with family clobber. By the 1950s, unexpected



HEATH ROBBINSON/CHRIS BEETLES GALLERY

social developments had further eroded the nature of the 'drawing room' or in smaller homes the 'parlour' or 'front room', the space previously used for entertaining callers. Across the classes, these spaces were colonised for family life – most specifically, for watching TV: 'We moved to the front', recalled a factory worker in the 1950s. In middle-class homes, family members talked more openly to one another, no longer inhibited by a servant listening at the door.

Post-Second-World-War social housing was equipped with all modern conveniences as a matter of course, a source of wonderment to its inhabitants. Former housemaid Joyce Storey was on the list for a pre-fab in Grimsby: it was: 'the desire and love of my life'. Charlady Winifred Foley wrote that her new council flat had a fridge, central heating, an electric oven: it was far better equipped than her employers' homes, most of which still had cast-iron ranges in dingy basement kitchens viewed with incomprehension by foreign visitors.

While the suburban house weathered the storm of the Second World War, the lives of the stately homes largely collapsed without the fleets of servants that had underpinned them. Mollie Panter-Downes, wartime London correspondent for *The New Yorker*, wrote a short story that captures their final gasp: Dossie, ancient retainer in a large house, mourns falling standards; her employer even offers her a trolley for dishes that would once have been carried by a fleet of footmen. To her employer's son, she is a pitiful anachronism: 'He was aware that Dossie was watching him anxiously, the old woman's eyes seemed to implore him to play their game for a little while longer, to pretend that things were just as they used to be, that their world could still be saved'.

But it was over for good. The age of convenience had arrived.

***Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain*, by Lucy Lethbridge, Bloomsbury**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Viewpoints

BARBARA PENNER

An ordinary house becomes an out of the ordinary cabinet of curiosities

At a conference at the University of Buffalo last April, I was invited to dinner at a faculty member's house, a standard (occasionally dreaded) ritual of academe. Pulling up to the venue, I caught a glimpse of a roomy old double house, a Buffalo type I knew well from a childhood spent just on the other side of the American-Canadian border. I then stepped inside this seemingly ordinary house and encountered – wonder.

My first impressions were hazy. Glimpses of hundreds of objects – mirrors, globes, dollhouses, birdcages, tools, cut-up photos – packed or stacked on top of each other or displayed in wall niches. Frames within frames; worlds within worlds. I wanted to stop and look, but I couldn't. My host was speaking to me. 'Set your coat down in the bedroom,' he said. Bedroom? That something so mundane existed here seemed scarcely credible, but there it was – a bedroom, with a bed, on which guests' coats were neatly stacked. There was a kitchen too, startling in its normality.

Later that night, under the benign gaze of a collaged Madonna and with a dinner plate teetering on my knee, I heard more about the house. Our host, architect Dennis Maher, had acquired it in 2009 when it was slated for demolition. He then began to excavate it, cutting into walls, floors and ceilings to open up the space and to provide apertures into adjacent rooms. At the same time, he collected salvaged materials, and set them in the walls, hung them from the ceilings, displayed them on stands, and constructed sculptures with them.

With its tableaux of found objects, unloved and forgotten, picturesque and grotesque, Fargo House invokes a whole category of built types: cabinets of curiosities, grottoes and dollhouses. It seems equal parts Soane Museum and Merzbau thanks to its teetering assemblages, obsessive interiority and restless air. (And dust too: Schwitters famously was happy for hair and dirt to collect in the Merzbau as one suspects Maher is too – I didn't look too closely.)

But to invoke these precedents is not to suggest that Maher is simply rehearsing a well-worn type. The house takes on its own meanings. How can it not? It is in Buffalo, which, along with Detroit, is one of America's notorious 'shrinking' cities, a Rust Belt city with a declining population. As in the better-known case of Detroit, demolition became official policy in 2007 when 5,000 vacant houses were slated for destruction.

Just as the AR is celebrating the power and fascination of new dwellings, Maher's house acts as a valuable counterpoint. It is like a ghost in the capitalist machine, an irrational spectre that reverses the typical values and expectations of metropolitan dwellers today. Indeed, for anyone living in a capital city, where space is at a premium and properties sell for vertiginous prices, it is a shock to realise that a house and its lot can have little or negative value (Maher bought his house for $10,000).

But the shock is less than it was. Thanks to the popularity of the genre of photography known as ruin porn, we have become accustomed to images of shrinking cities and deserted homes. Detroit in particular has become a factory for ruin photography, freezing the city in a kind of terrible perpetual stillness. Think of the work of Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre whose photos of vacant spaces evoke blight, flight and dreams unfulfilled.

In Buffalo, a backlash has been building against these portrayals, which fetishise decay and erase local lives and experiences. A more activist generation of preservationists are stepping up efforts to prevent demolition, often by buying and living in old houses under threat. Their messianic purpose is hinted at by the way they now speak of 'resurrecting' old houses rather than restoring them.

Maher's house anticipated and belongs to this trend. It refuses to play the nostalgia game, reanimating the dead space of ruin porn. It doesn't feel like deconstruction for deconstruction's sake. And even if a degree of fetishism slips in, it doesn't settle. Maher is an energetic custodian, changing its arrangements and displays almost daily with flea-market treasures.

Most simply, Maher's house is unmistakably *his* house. He dwells among the materials he salvages, among the peeling wallpaper and paint. Maybe this is why my favourite moments in the house are when the mundane intrudes into sight – the coffee machine, an electric socket – openly inhabiting the assemblage. They do not let us forget: someone lives here.

For images of Maher's house, visit: thefargohouse.com

LAST WORDS

'It is like the body of an Ethiopian athlete, bones and sinew, but it also has the flesh of an Ingres bather'

Rudy Ricciotti on his new Museum of the Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean in Marseille, *The Guardian*, 9 June

'Architecture – you know, this one Corbusier lamp was like, my greatest inspiration'

Kanye West on the minimalist sound of his latest album, Yeezus, *New York Times*, 11 June

'We used to say that England suffered from the shock of the new after the wars. I didn't have that – we had Picasso prints on the walls'

Richard Rogers, *Icon*, June 2013

AR HOUSE

The house still exerts a seductive grip on our cultural imagination, but increasingly, the challenge is to reconceptualise a familiar building type in response to the ecological and economic challenges of the age. Assessed by a jury of Francisco Aires Mateus, Amanda Levete, Takaharu Tezuka and AR Editor Catherine Slessor, this year's AR House Awards show what can be achieved. Two winners, from Spain and Japan, are joined by 11 highly commended schemes

L-SHAPED HOUSE, PAGE 58

CASA LUDE, PAGE 30

SPLIT HOUSE, PAGE 66

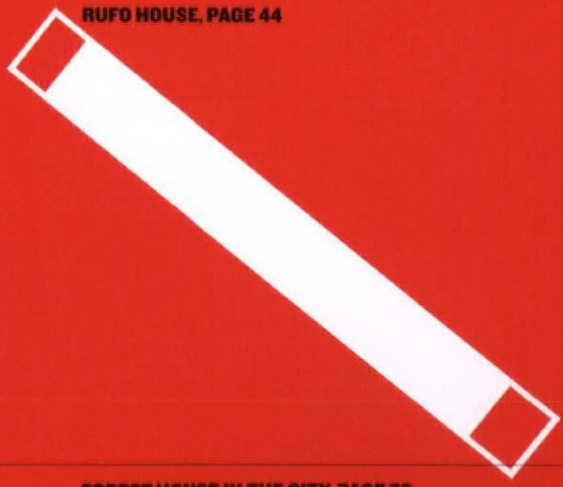
SLIP HOUSE, PAGE 50

HOUSE-T, PAGE 38

LUCKY SHOPHOUSE, PAGE 62

DIRECTOR'S HOUSE, PAGE 74

RUFO HOUSE, PAGE 44



HOUSE IN YAGI, PAGE 54

HOUSE IN LAGNÖ, PAGE 84

FOREST HOUSE IN THE CITY, PAGE 70

FLOATING HOUSE, PAGE 80

SMALL HOUSE, PAGE 78

0 10m

JOINT WINNER
GRUPO ARANEA, SPAIN

Modest ambitions do not inhibit this economical yet expressive project for a penthouse in Spain, reports *David Cohn*

CASA LUDE

Getting permission to visit the Casa Lude in Cehegín, a town of 16,000 inhabitants in the low mountains of Murcia, in southern Spain, was not entirely straightforward. The owner, a music instructor at a nearby high school, was tired of constantly opening his doors to visiting architects, students and journalists, and didn't understand what all the fuss was about. For him, it was simply a house he had asked a childhood friend to design – Martín López Robles, who works with Francisco Leiva of the Alicante-based Grupo Aranea. Echoing an oft-repeated quote from the late Spanish architect Alejandro de la Sota, López quips, 'We gave him hare for cat' – the inverse of the old Spanish saying about passing off cat meat for rabbit in a paella or a stew.

Though Spain is renowned for its adventurous public buildings, an idea about what architecture might have to offer has not penetrated deeply into Spanish society. The homes in the neighbourhood around the Casa Lude, for example, though neat and well-kept, are without the slightest aesthetic pretension. In contrast, contemporary public buildings, over-budget and under-used, seem inspired by an idea of conspicuous splendour that survives, direct and undigested, from the decadent royal courts of Imperial Spain. Of course, such extravagance has shown itself unsustainable, as seen in the skeleton of an unfinished auditorium by Martín Lejárraga in Cehegín, as well as an elaborate aquatic park in the old town centre by a young Madrid firm, almost complete

3

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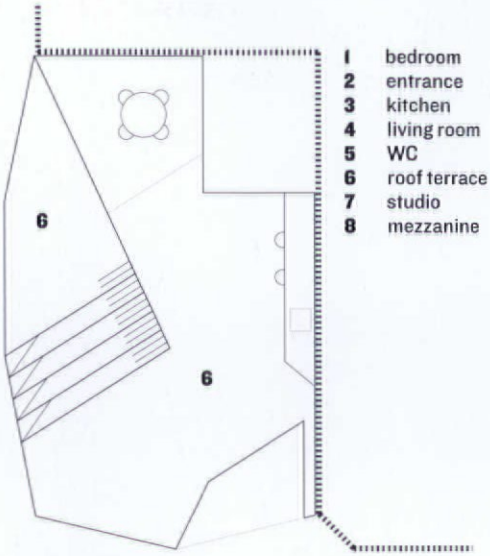
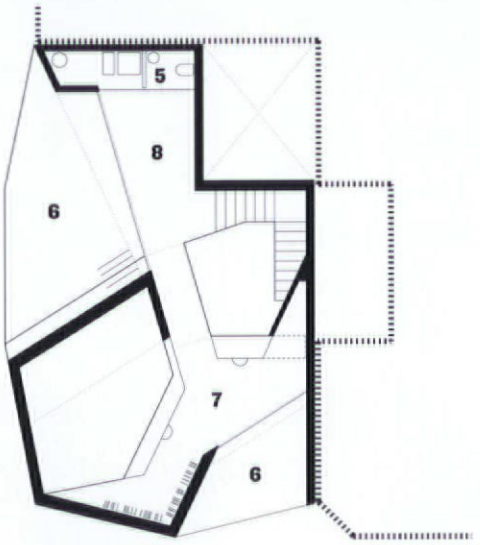


roof plan



third floor plan

second floor plan

but recently abandoned as funds dried up. But before Spain dismisses architecture as a needless frivolity, works like the Casa Lude might demonstrate what creative design can do to improve everyday life without excessive means or pretensions.

With a budget of €120,000, Lude, as the owner is known, asked the architects to add a penthouse to the modest corner building where his mother and sister live on two separate floors. The architects stretched the new volume to occupy the maximum building envelope permitted. Instead of building up straight from the existing walls, they replaced the existing roof terrace with a new slab, supported on the walls below, that cantilevers over the facades to gain space. On this new platform they erected a lightweight steel-frame structure, and fitted an upper mezzanine within the zoning height limits, expanding the habitable area from 80 to 130sqm. The roof is also habitable, a 100sqm, multi-level terrace that features a vertiginous stepped slope, both stair and sitting area, which echoes the combined stair and grandstand of the architects' prize-winning 2009 High School in Raval, in the province of Alicante. The terrace is designed with zones for sun and shade, full exposure and shelter from the wind, and with hook-ups for water and a barbeque. It is enclosed by a single, curvaceous steel tube that swoops up and around the two levels as a balustrade.

Grupo Aranea's projects are often designed around a rising spiral movement, as in their project for a seawater spa in Gijón, Spain that featured

1&2. (Previous pages) the house squats on the existing dwelling, rising above but not apart from the jagged roofscape of the town 3&4. Girdled by a delicate rail, the terrace provides a new vantage point over the surrounding hills 5. (Opposite) from certain angles, the polyhedric penthouse is almost imperceptible


STOP
1242 GLB

in the 2006 show on Spanish architecture at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Here, they fashion this three-dimensional spatial loop through the device of the stepped slope of the roof. In the open, flowing spaces of the interior, where only the bedroom and bathroom have doors, its angled plane rises to create a double-height zone in the living area that is overlooked by the mezzanine. This sloping ceiling reflects natural light from the upper level into this space, and establishes a spiral interlock between the two levels that continues on the upper terrace.

Another spatial eddy is produced by the narrow stair that rises in two runs from the entry, embracing two sides of the kitchen. Full-height windows are set obliquely in the walls, to capture views down the streets to the surrounding hills, and to shelter the interiors from direct sunlight. Additional light filters into the kitchen and the rear of the flat from a small existing patio. The result is an open, multi-level interior of inviting nooks and lively vistas.

The diagonal gesture of the slope is sharply profiled on the exterior facade, together with the planes of the walls, which alternate around the oblique window openings. All exterior surfaces are finished with a matte polyurethane in a light-grey colour that softens the impact of the southern light. These faceted planes are sensitive to different weather conditions, responding to changes in light with different shades of whites and greys, ranging even to blacks and blues. When seen at a sharply foreshortened angle in indirect light, they glitter with a reflective brilliance. As a whole, the penthouse reads as an irregular polyhedron parked on top of a modest house, not quite otherworldly, but not quite part of its surroundings either.

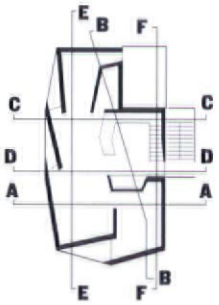
The spiral pull of the design carries visitors up to the roof, which visually connects the house to its natural setting, lifting it out of the mundane streets to find its place in the wider world, almost like a Greek temple. Up on the roof, Francisco Leiva eagerly points out the sights, from the choppy roofscape of the houses below, to the profile of the historic town centre on its hill in the near distance, and the surrounding bowl of mountains. Leiva's wife and design partner, Marta García Chico, is an agricultural engineer and landscape designer, and their firm's interest in the larger environmental issues involved in building is evident even here. The spiral movement of this little house is like that of a sprouting seed, an organic life force in vital contact with planet Earth.

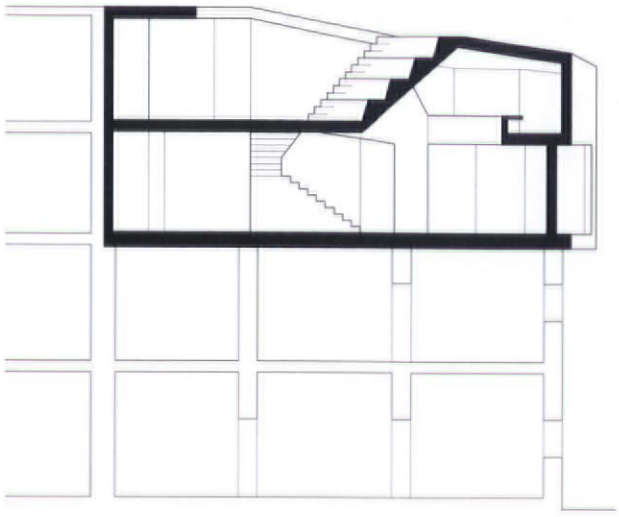
6

7

6&7. The complex spiralling volume of the interior creates a labyrinth of nooks and crannies, with angled planes reflecting the changing colour of the sky. The house's client teaches music at a local school

Architect
Grupo Aranea
Photographs
All photographs are by Jesús Granada apart from l, courtesy of the architects





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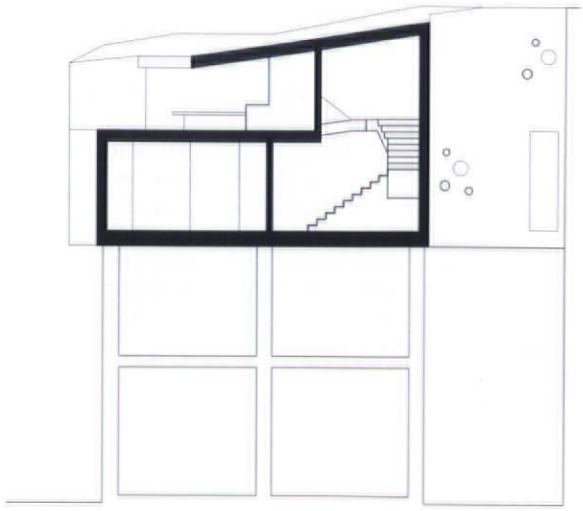

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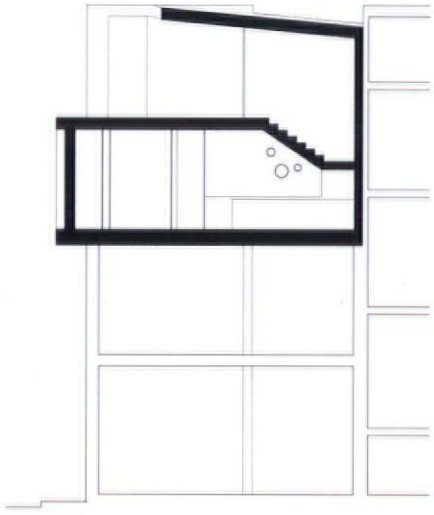

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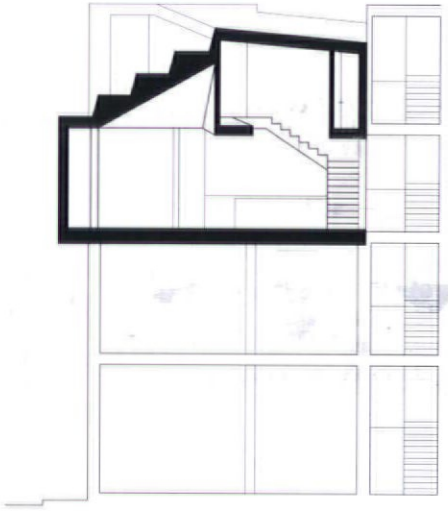

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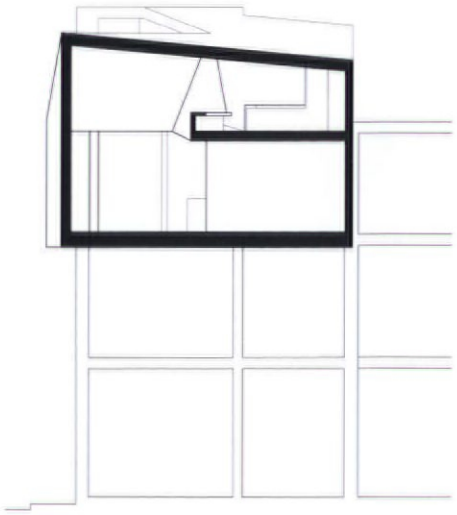

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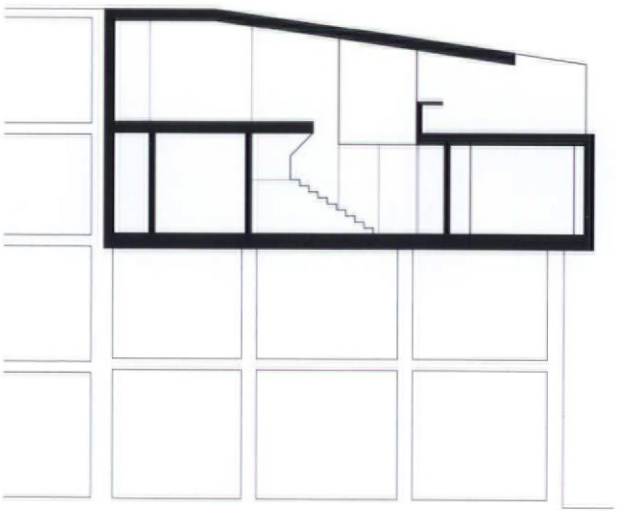


section BB

House-T, joint winner of this year's AR House Awards, is a powerfully pure statement of dwelling in the 21st century. The house's blank white walls stand as a steadfastly silent and self-contained riposte to the banality of the surrounding apartments, ordinary suburban dwellings and roar of traffic in downtown Miyazaki in southern Japan. At first glance, House-T might appear to be a paradigm of Platonic form. Yet through its abstraction it raises the question of how to empathise with such a volume. Does its Euclidean geometry imply the universality of Modernism? Or in this particular cultural context, does such whiteness and plainness conjure up images of tofu? Is such a seemingly simple form timeless, or rather incumbent upon time, through the cycles of day and night and seasons, to bring it to life?

As Michiya Tsukano's first built work, House-T has launched the architect's career into almost instant stardom as an early masterwork. Since its first appearance six months ago, the house has captured the imagination of the architectural cyber world. Its minimal form exudes both youthful energy and mature restraint – a tension similarly embodied in the landmark works of Tadao Ando's early Row House at Sumiyoshi, with its blank exposed-concrete front facade perforated by a single central door, and Toyo Ito's U-House at Nakano Honcho, with its monolithic, curved concrete wall. Each is a work by an architect in his thirties that reconsiders the fundamentals of living through the pure statement of an inward-looking, minimal dwelling, and each became signature works of their respective careers.

Like his predecessors, Tsukano's design turns its back on the chaos of the city to enclose a microcosmic world brought to life by an internal courtyard. All House-T's rooms face into the narrow courtyard on its east side, capturing morning light reflected off white gravel. Two stacked floors maintain the same basic plan configuration with living above dining, bedroom above the kitchen, and bathroom above the study. Notably, the internal ground plane lies around a metre below the courtyard, giving intensified low views of the gravel from the dining ledge and kitchen counter. Even without verdant vegetation, the courtyard animates the living spaces with the primal natural forces of light and wind, reflected and refracted within.

Such an internal world evokes multiple readings. The house's material expression is a composition of contrasting planes: at ground level, a smooth concrete floor with a timber wall and ceiling, and textured concrete core. The upper level reverses this relationship with a wooden floor and white plaster walls and ceilings. These spatial compositions appear timeless, yet can also be seen to evoke the work of Japanese Modernist pioneer Sutemi Horiguchi, especially in his Okada House (1933), or of Tsukano's translation of Le Corbusier's roof terraces into the Japanese context, a theme of his ongoing research.Moreover, the internal spaces could be seen to be a modern version of a traditional tea house, inspired by the 16th-century tea master Sen no Rikyu. Like entering a tea house, the house's entry sequence is ritualistic, through a dark corridor and down some steps to bring you below ground level, decompressing from the distracting blare of the outside world to a tranquil, internalised environment.

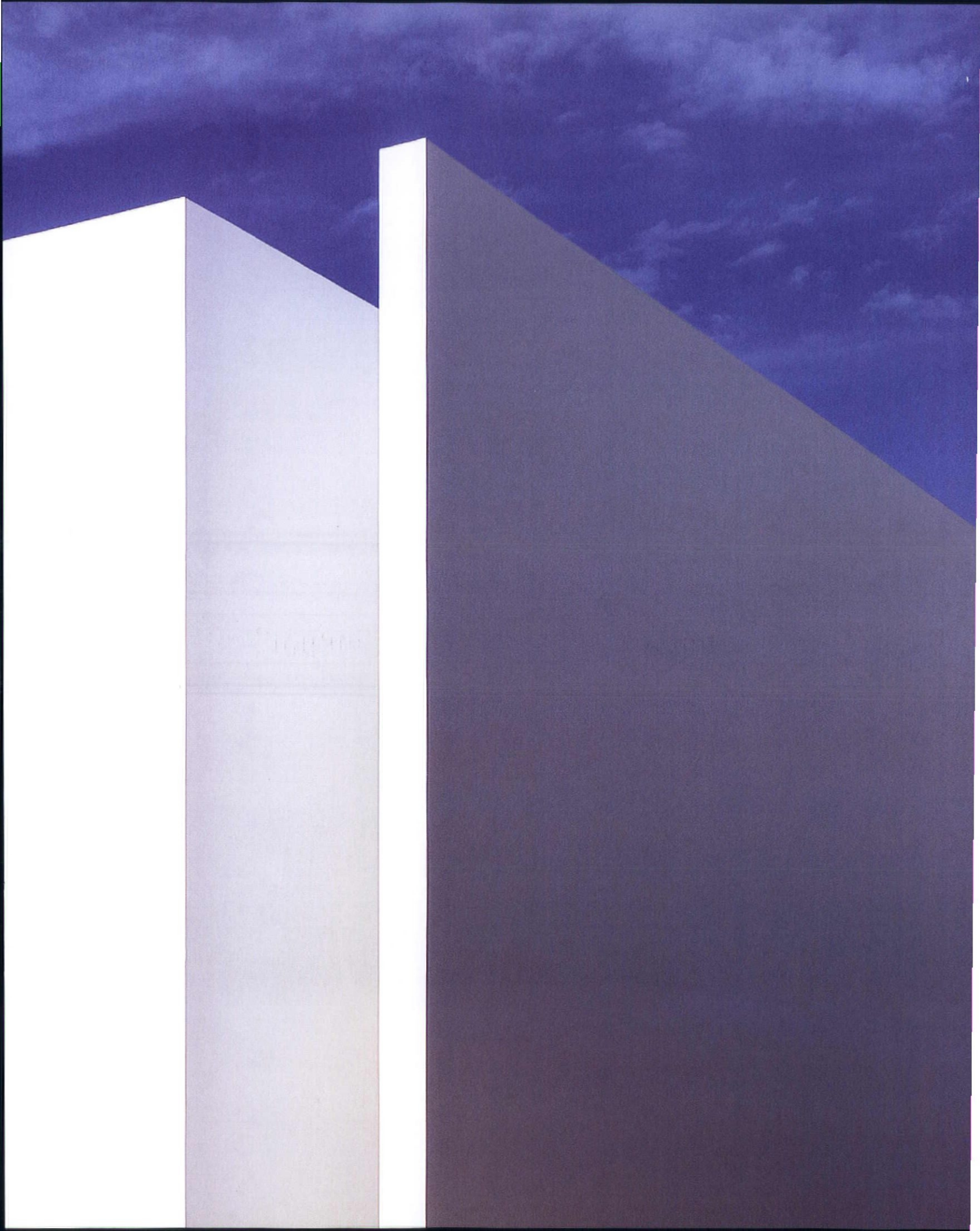
Just as the tea ceremony provides solace from chaos, so the interior maintains a sense of calm and intimacy as the basis to perfect everyday life.

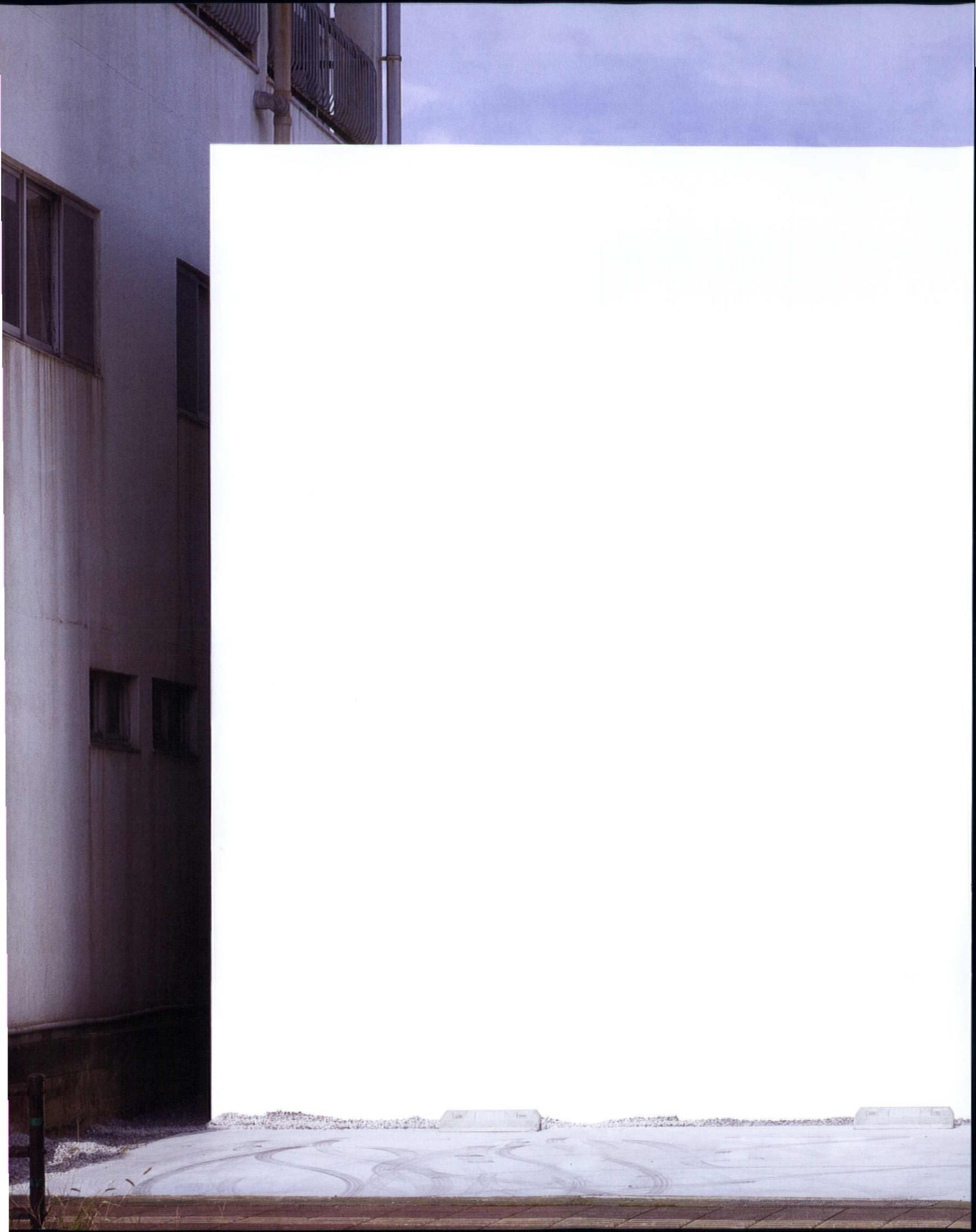
Allusions to ritual and a spirit of sensuality inform this hermetic house in Japan, reports *Ken Tadashi Oshima*

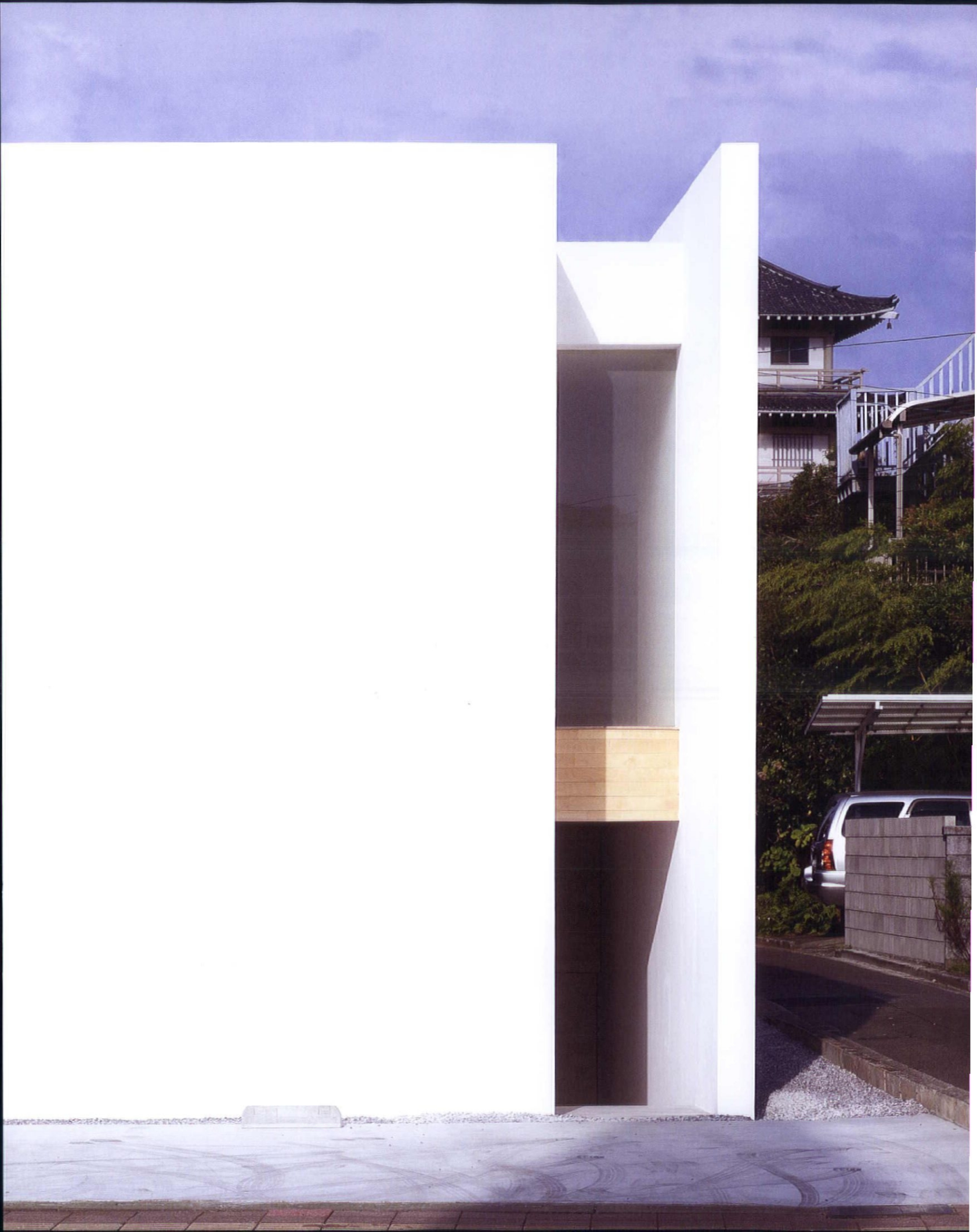
HOUSE-T

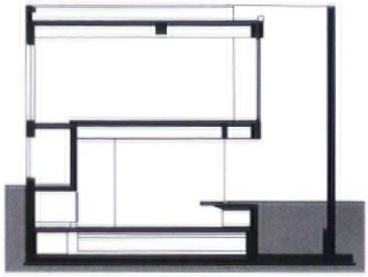
JOINT WINNER

TSUKANO ARCHITECT OFFICE, JAPAN









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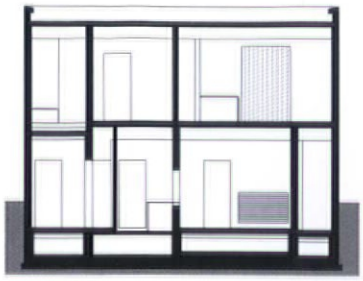
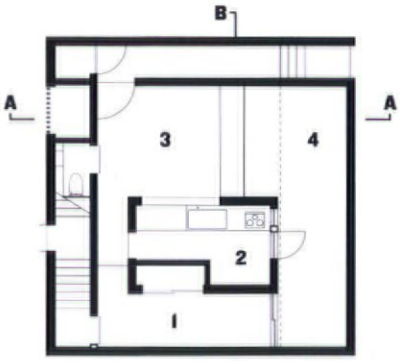
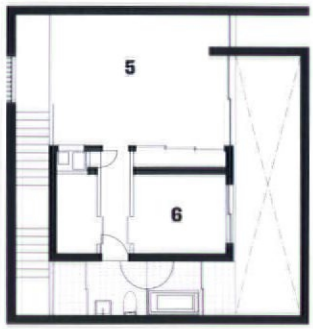


section BB

1 study
2 kitchen
3 dining
4 court
5 living room
6 bedroom



ground floor plan



first floor plan

The pristine whiteness of Tsukano's House-T also raises the question of how the dwelling will age over time. And will such radical architecture enhance or constrict the lives of its occupants? The freshness of the timber walls might be seen to resonate with the storehouses of the famous Ise Shrine that are rebuilt every 20 years. For a brief moment before being torn down, the Ise Shrine's new iteration is juxtaposed side by side with its predecessor from 20 years earlier, embodying the immemorial cycles of time, growth and decay in a tradition that has continued since the seventh century. House-T, in its current and imagined future states, can also be seen to be timeless and incumbent upon time. Situated between microcosmic and macrocosmic worlds, House-T thus connects with both the past and future through the rigour of minimal dwelling in all its experienced and imagined multiplicities.

4

1&2. (Previous pages) the pristine cube is an enigmatic presence in an ordinary milieu
3&4. The courtyard channels light into the sunken ground floor
5. Timber-clad walls recall the Ise Shrine

Architect
Tsukano Architect Office
Photographs
Kenichi Asano

5

SPAIN

RUFO HOUSE

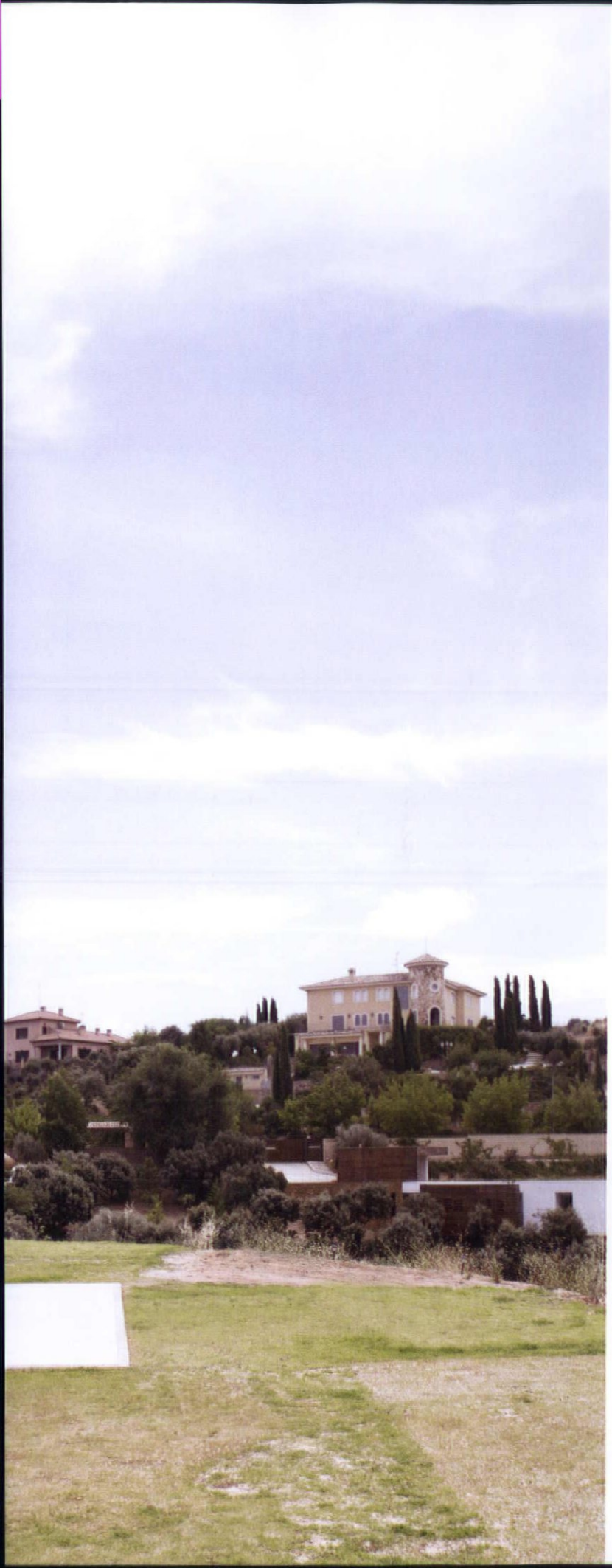
ALBERTO CAMPO BAEZA

Conceived as a weekend retreat and set on a hillside near the historic citadel of Toledo, the Rufo House is a starkly simple bar in the landscape. A long podium, 6m wide and 3m high, extends across the length of the site. All domestic functions are deployed in this elongated box made from rough concrete, giving it the muscular feel of a military or industrial structure (bunker, gun emplacement, fortress). Its architect, Alberto Campo Baeza, prefers to call it a 'cave'.

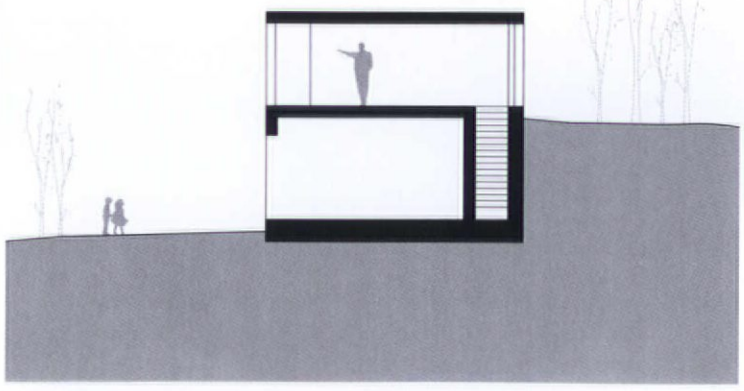
The roughness of the concrete plays off a very precise and considered architectural language. Yet though it's easy to label Baeza's approach as 'minimalist', it is shaped by a more complex and sensual attitude to space, light and materiality. After all, this is a man who lined a bank headquarters with sheets of alabaster (AR August 2002). He relishes the way light moves, the colour or sheen of a particular stone, how built form relates to landscape. His buildings are rooted in the immemorial Iberian qualities of plainness, sobriety and impermeability (hermetic walls enclosing secret inner realms), all unsentimentally reframed for the modern age.

The concrete box is perforated, creating a series of objects and voids to accommodate various domestic activities. Here, life is lived in a linear enfilade of volumes and courtyards, alternately compressed and then exposed to the wider world through large glazed openings resembling vitrines or shop windows.

From this labyrinth residents can escape to a dining and gathering space set on top of the podium. A simple concrete canopy shelters a glass box, 'the hut on top of the cave', says Baeza. Ethereal and crystalline, it surveys the landscape like the transparent bridge of a warship. The jury applauded the project's finesse and conviction, and how it cultivated a calm reciprocity with the landscape.

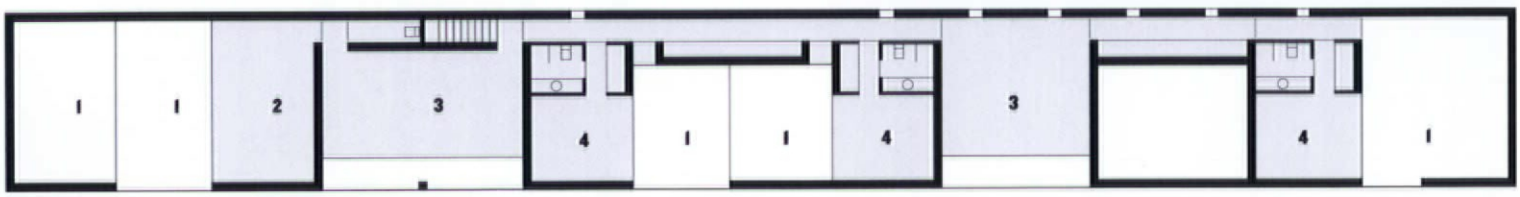


1. The rough, tactile quality of the raw concrete plays off the precise, formal language of the architecture



cross section

3



ground floor plan

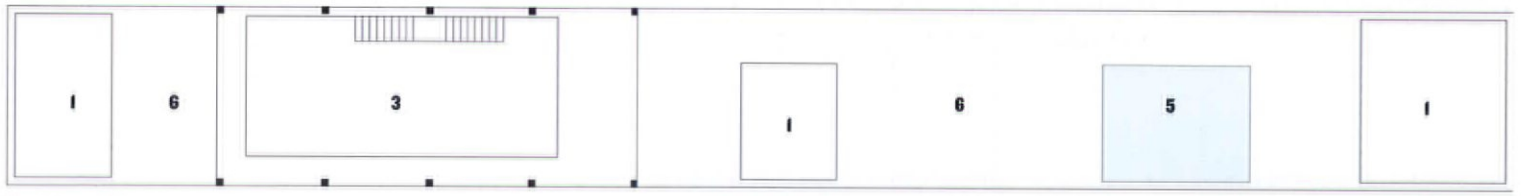
4

2. (Previous pages) the house's elongated volume is partly embedded in the hillside 3, 4. The concrete box is perforated by a series of courtyards, creating traditional patio-like spaces within the house 5. A glass pavilion sits astride the box, providing a vantage point from which to survey the surrounding landscape 6. 'The hut on top of the cave', as Alberto Campo Baeza describes it

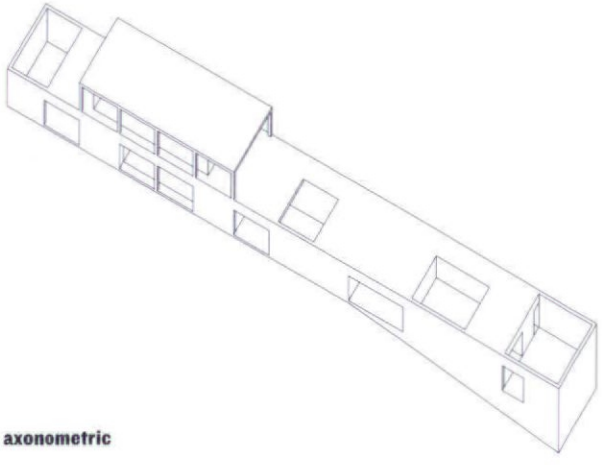
1 patio
2 kitchen
3 living room
4 bedroom
5 swimming pool
6 terrace

Architect
Alberto Campo Baeza
Photographs
Javier Callejas

5



first floor plan



axonometric

6

ENGLAND

SLIP HOUSE

CARL TURNER ARCHITECTS

Amid the back lots and terraces of London's Brixton, the Slip House is a conspicuous interloper. Based on the idea of 'slipped' boxes, its three floors are progressively slid and staggered to break up its bulk and optimise light and views. The upper floor and street frontage are wrapped in vertical planks of milkily translucent glass that veil and soften the cantilevered volumes. After dark, the translucent box glows seductively like a Chinese lantern.

But this is not simply an exercise in tasteful aesthetics. Inner London has many such unregarded gap sites, scraps of brownfield land that can often act as testbeds for new and more thoughtful kinds of development. Here, the aim is to create an ecologically conscious prototype for flexible living and working, a modern vision of living over the shop that could be adapted on a wider scale.

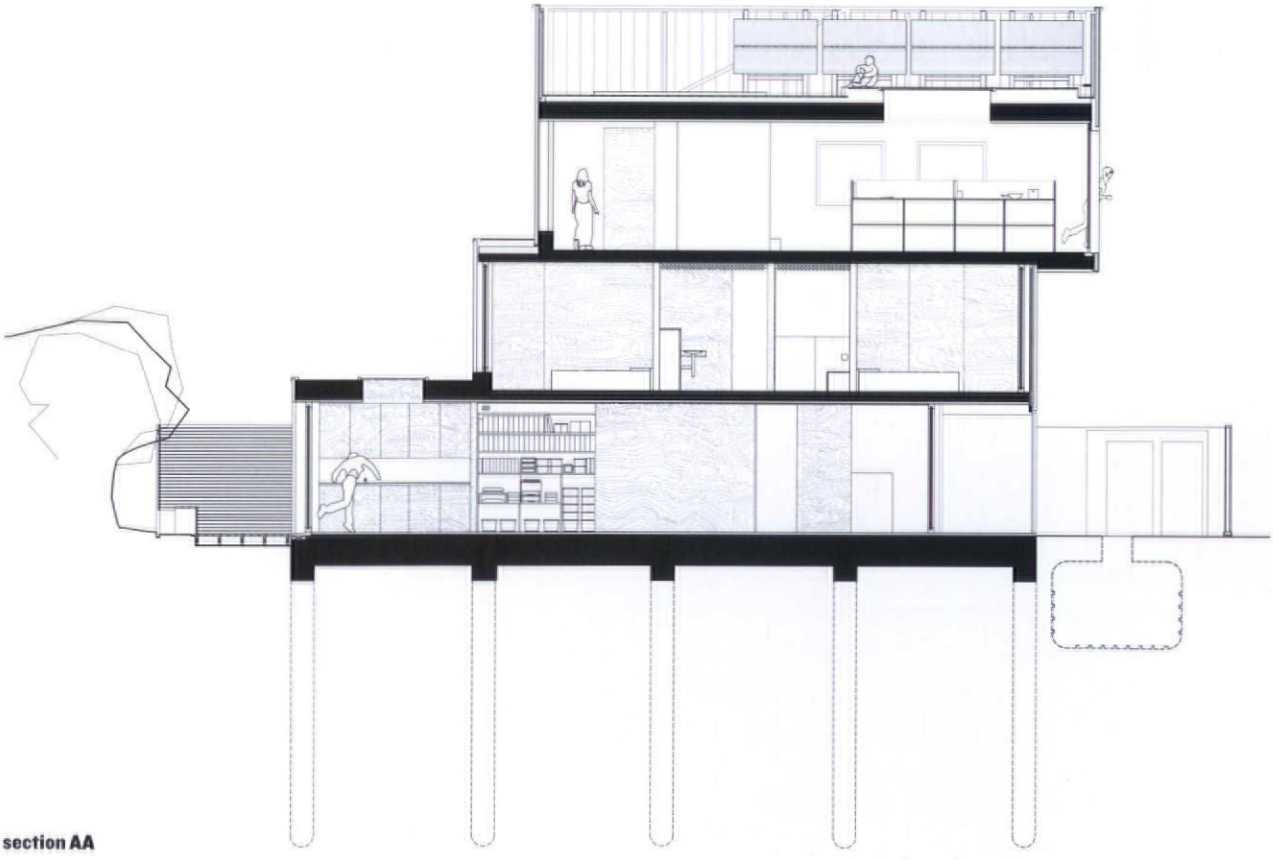
Currently being used as a design studio, the ground floor is conceived as a multi-purpose space. The upper floor is effectively the piano nobile, a single open-plan living area connected to a rooftop sky garden, with sleeping quarters on the intermediate first floor.

Architect Carl Turner sees the potential for a new kind of terraced house that allows the artisan or home worker to sublet or downsize. Such patterns of use enliven local communities and create opportunities, rather than the more usual scenario of a dwelling being seen simply as a dormitory or financial asset.

The Slip House's ecological credentials are also impeccable, integrating measures such as rooftop photovoltaic panels, a ground source heat pump, rainwater harvesting, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery and a highly-insulated building envelope. The energy performance of the house will be monitored over time and adjusted for effectiveness.

The jury was impressed by the ambition of the project to develop a house type that, while undoubtedly both formally sophisticated and environmentally responsive, also suggested a more engaged approach to dynamics of urban and domestic life.

1. (Opposite) cantilevered volumes are wrapped in a skin of translucent planks
2. The house occupies a gap site in a Brixton terrace, bringing an exotic frisson to an ordinary London locale, as well as proposing an ecologically-conscious prototype for urban living and working



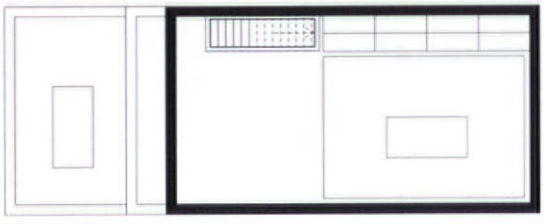
section AA

3

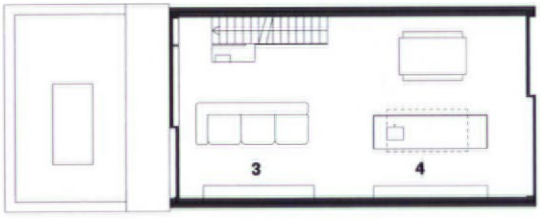
3. A design studio currently occupies the ground floor, but the space is flexible
4. Living room on the piano nobile second floor. Light diffuses through the translucent skin and is reflected off the polished concrete floor

Architect
Carl Turner Architects
U-glass panels
Glasfabrik Lamberts
Bathroom fittings
Vola
Photographs
Tim Crocker

1 studio
2 bedroom
3 living
4 kitchen/dining

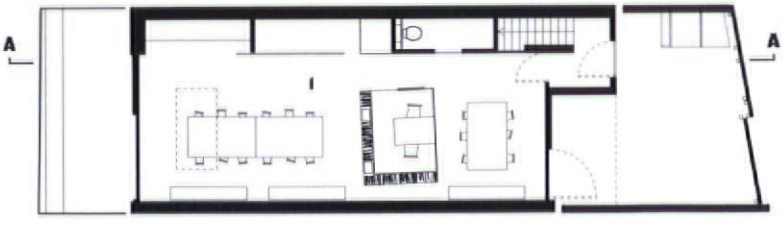


roof plan



second floor plan

first floor plan



ground floor plan

4

JAPAN

HOUSE OF YAGI

SUPPOSE DESIGN OFFICE

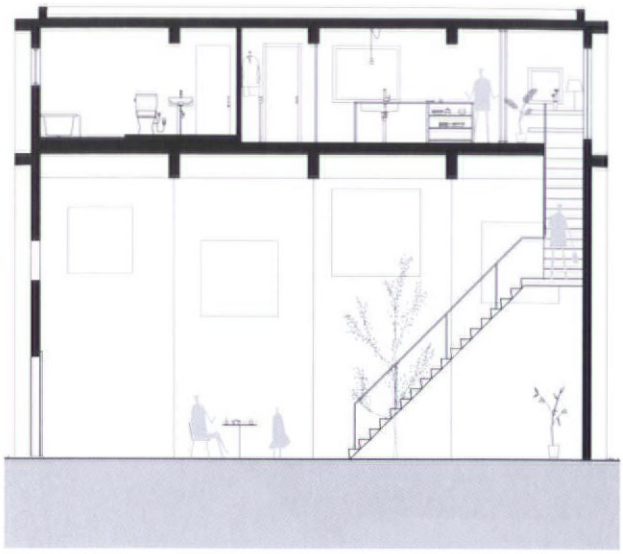
Looming over a canal, this house in Hiroshima might at first be thought to be some kind of redundant industrial structure; an old electricity substation or water tower, perhaps. Bare concrete walls, pocked by the marks of jointing and pours, are perforated by random openings. One wall flexes inwards in a faceted approximation of a curve. Stark and uncompromising, it seems almost an affront to its milieu of well-mannered suburban dwellings with their traditional tiled roofs and overhanging eaves.

However, this is ostensibly a family house for a couple with children, designed to be an adaptable armature, evolving over time to respond to patterns of use and changing demands. The ground floor is a huge double-height volume with an earth floor and lone sapling. Part garden, part courtyard, part workshop and part garage, it is partly exposed to the elements as the openings here are unglazed. The idea is that different sorts of structures can be incorporated into this space over time as needs dictate – for instance a children's room or tea house.

A narrow flight of stairs leads to the upper floor, which contains living, dining and sleeping spaces. A sliding glass screen separates the concrete stairwell from the kitchen. Within this lofty eyrie, views are framed and defined by the openings (which here are glazed), but the spirit is still essentially functional and austere – plain concrete walls, timber floor and simple pieces of furniture. A bathroom and store are enclosed by partitions made from plywood panels.

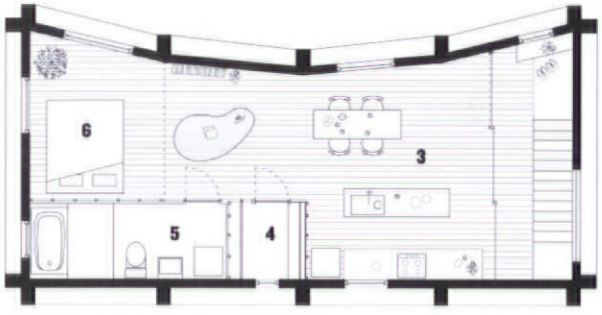
Like many similarly pioneering and propositional Japanese houses, to live here requires a certain adaptability on the part of occupants, but nonetheless the jury admired the project's experimental ambition in the way it envisaged the house as mutable physical and social entity, and how this was translated into a highly compelling piece of architecture.

1. (Opposite) overlooking a canal in a scrubby suburban setting, the house appears as some kind of industrial monolith

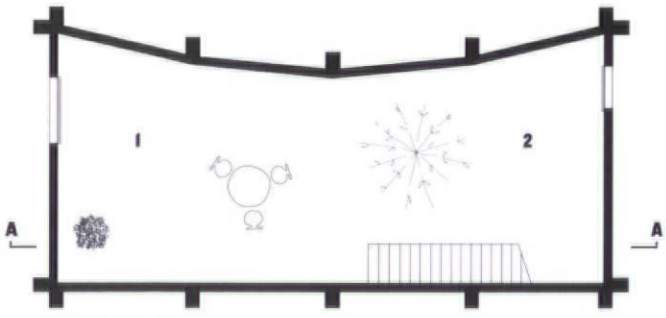


section AA

1 flexible living space
2 entrance lobby
3 kitchen/dining
4 store
5 bathroom
6 bedroom



first floor plan



ground floor plan

3

4

2. (Opposite) open to the elements, the cavernous ground floor is a flexible living space that can be adapted to the family's needs as time goes on
3. Kitchen and dining space on the upper floor
4. A sliding glass screen separates the stairwell from the kitchen

Architect
Suppose Design Office
Photographs
Toshiyuki Yano

SOUTH KOREA

L-SHAPED HOUSE

BYOUNG SOO CHO ARCHITECTS

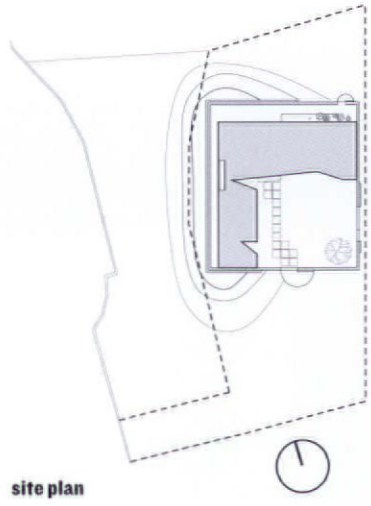
This weekend house lies in a small valley about an hour from the sprawling metropolis of Seoul. The clients are a professional couple who spend time out of the city at weekends, but at some point plan to relocate here permanently. Though rural, the setting is slightly schizophrenic, with a recently-developed industrial area to the west and a more pastoral backdrop of mountains and forests to the east. This experiential dichotomy frames the architectural approach, as the house turns its back on industry and opens up to nature.

Set in a compound enclosed by gabion walls, the long, low, single-storey house presents a hermetic face to the nearby road and industrial sheds. An L-shaped plan encloses and defines an east-facing courtyard, offering privacy and tranquillity. The courtyard is filled with gravel made from local white basalt, which reflects light into the house, bathing the interior with a soft luminance.

The bedroom wing faces east to take advantage of morning sun as the couple like to rise early. The living space is a long bar that can be subdivided into different configurations by a system of lightweight partition walls. A low terrace runs along the edge of the living area linking inside and out. The entire house is naturally cross-ventilated to combat the intense summer humidity when the house is occupied more regularly.

When the house is not in use, doors of black-stained cedar unfold like an accordion to seal it shut from intrusion. Emblematic of the project's formal finesse and material rigour, the black cedar is exquisitely counterpointed by walls of raw concrete. The jury was struck by the simplicity and sobriety of an architecture that resisted the temptation of rustic pastiche, yet the handling of light and materials also spoke of sensuous and sophisticated hidden depths.

1. Gabion walls enclose the compound containing the house and courtyard 2. (Opposite) folding doors of black-stained cedar open up to reveal a low terrace deck adjoining the main living space. When the house is not in use, the doors seal it shut



site plan

3

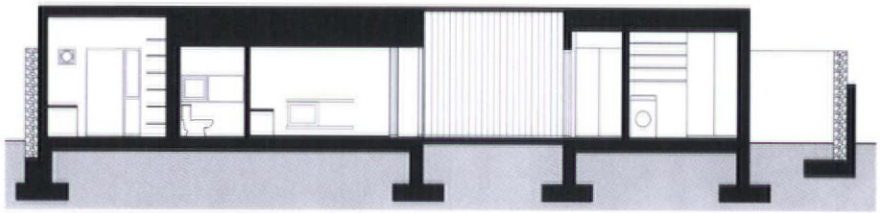
4

3. On its west side, the house turns a hermetic face to a less than bucolic landscape of industrial sheds
4. A long slot cut into the external wall channels morning light into the bedroom
5. At the heart of the house is a fluid, open-plan living space
6. The terrace deck adjoining the living room. Light reflects off the white gravel in the courtyard and washes through the interior

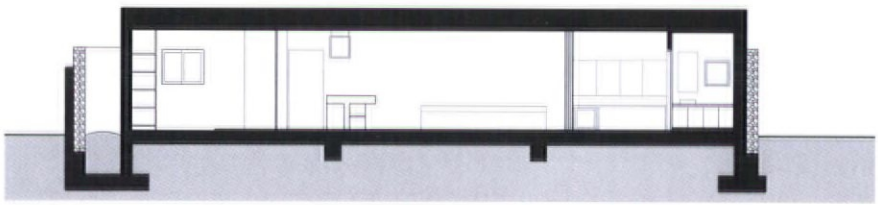
Architect
Byoung Soo Cho Architects
Photographs
Wooseop Hwang

1	store	5	support kitchen
2	bathroom	6	kitchen
3	bedroom	7	living room
4	terrace	8	courtyard

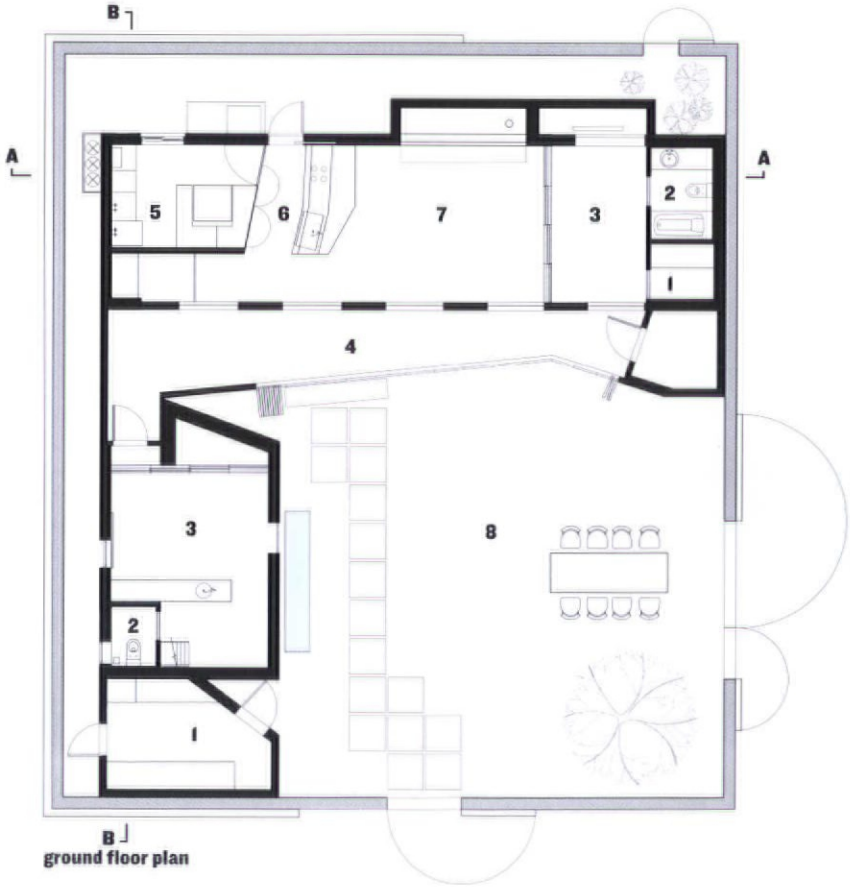
0 5m



section BB



section AA



ground floor plan

5

6

SINGAPORE

LUCKY SHOPHOUSE

CHANG ARCHITECTS

Combining living quarters above a shop, the narrow shophouse fronted by a 'five-foot way' (a narrow public arcade) is the quintessential building type of Singapore and South-East Asia. Transforming an existing structure into a modern dwelling, this project reframes and recasts the shophouse, while preserving a strong sense of its vernacular origins.

Built in the 1920s, the shophouse used to house the Lucky Book Store. The frontage has been stripped back to reveal the detail and dignity of the original architecture. Inside, non-structural elements were removed to open up the cellular plan and expose the old brick walls. Living and dining now occupy the former shop at ground level, with a bedroom and study on the upper floor.

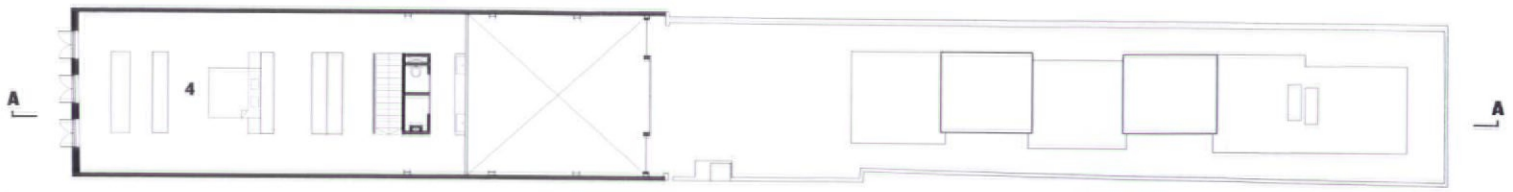
Overlooking a long garden, a double-height dining space forms the focus of the remodelled dwelling. Within the garden is a new, single-storey guest house conceived as an irregular enfilade of rooms suffused with natural light and the presence of nature. The crisp new language of concrete and glass plays off the gently weathered texture of the original structure.

The outcome recalls the best aspects of the old shophouses, and how they situated and supported domestic life within a specific commercial and urban context. It also explores the potential of a familiar vernacular building type and how it can be reused in a way that respects and responds to its origins. And though Singapore now sees its future through the prism of new forms of high-density living, the shophouse still remains an important and cherished part of its urban fabric.

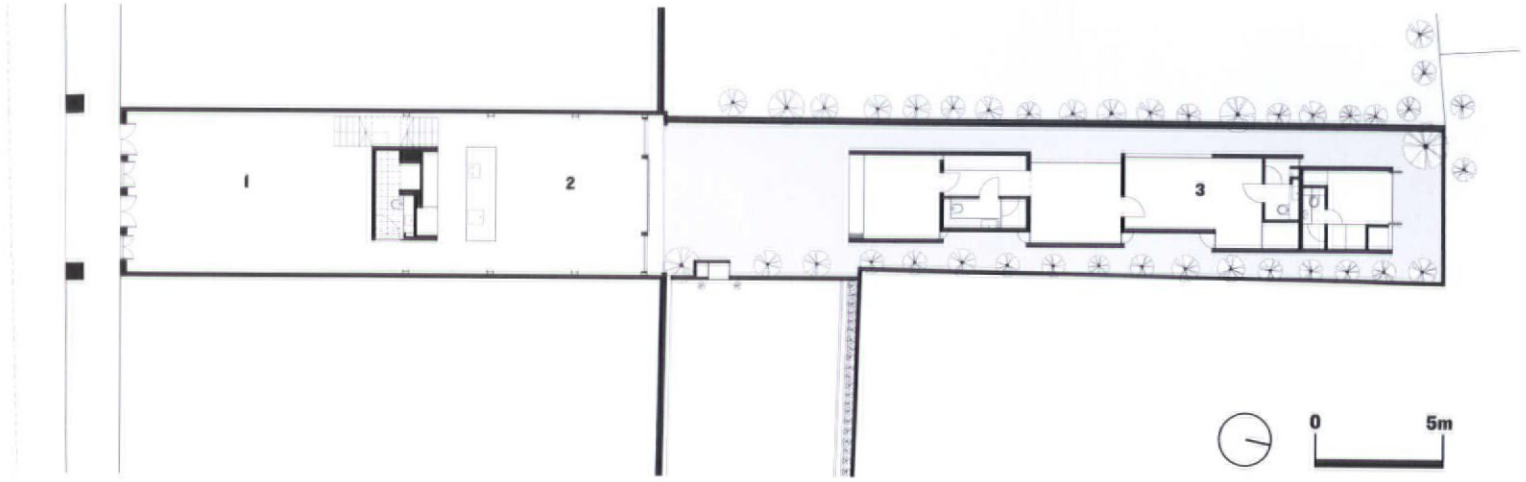
Jury members were drawn to the idea of adapting and transforming a historic building type so that it assumed a new relevance to the current era. They especially admired the project's deft and restrained handling of space and materials, and the way in which the new elements meshed with and revitalised the original structure.

1. The original shophouse is carved open to reveal the patina of age. A new guest house now occupies the long rear garden
2. The restored facade and 'five-foot way', the narrow public arcade that provides respite from the tropical climate

2



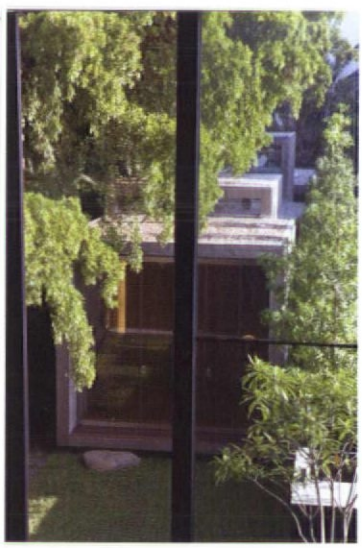
first floor plan



ground floor plan

4

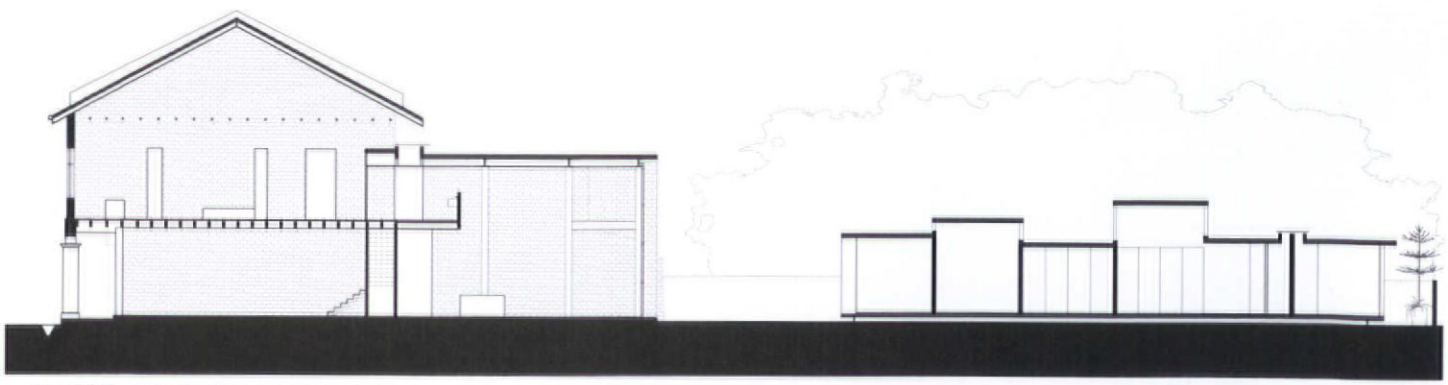
5



3. The cellular form of the old shophouse is opened up to create dramatic double-height spaces
4, 5. Extending the length of the garden, the new guest house is an enfilade of rooms illuminated by clerestory glazing

1 living
2 kitchen/dining
3 guest house
4 bedroom

Architect
Chang Architects
Photographs
Albert Lim KS, 1, 2, 5
Eric & Invy Ng, 3, 4



section AA through shophouse and guest house

CHINA

SPLIT HOUSE

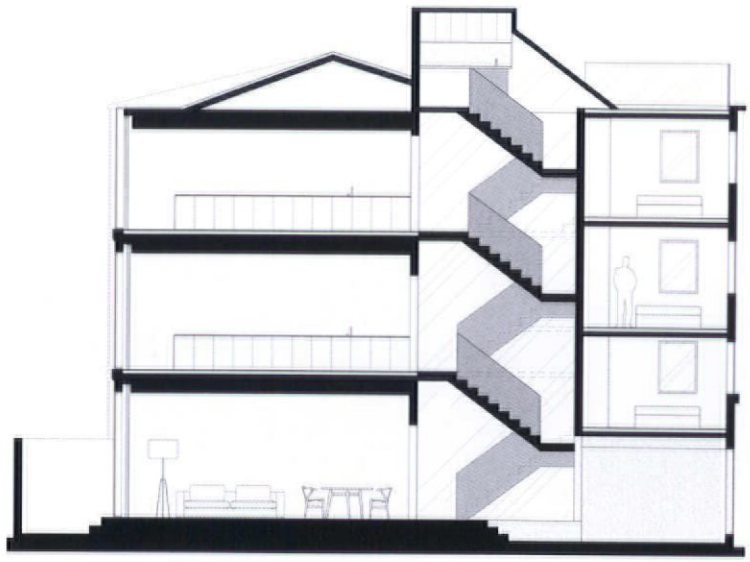
NERI & HU DESIGN AND RESEARCH OFFICE

Once commonplace in Shanghai, lane houses gave the city its distinct character in the 1930s. Now, in China's dash for growth, they are being ruthlessly demolished and replaced by featureless high-density developments. Lane houses have two distinct parts – a long rectangular space facing the street, with a smaller room to the rear half a level above the main space. This arrangement creates a split section connected by a winding staircase. Lane houses were originally occupied by a single family, but now more typically accommodate two or three families sharing the staircase and landings, rather like London's Georgian terraces.

Architects Neri & Hu were commissioned to remodel a lane house in Shanghai's historic Tianzifang district. The practice is a former winner of the AR's Emerging Architecture Award (AR December 2010) for a project that inventively transformed a mouldering industrial warehouse into a boutique hotel. A similar spirit of imaginative adaptation characterises this endeavour, but equally importantly, it emphasises the cultural, social and architectural value of an important local building type.

In this case the three-storey lane house was severely dilapidated and had been practically reduced to a shell. The original timber staircase was stripped out and replaced with a new one fabricated from black steel. This vertical spine connects the floors and locks together the front and rear volumes. A clerestory skylight channels light into the depths of the stairwell. The house is now divided into three apartments, but it could conceivably become a single dwelling again. Emblematic of its radical recasting, the decaying facade has also been replaced with a diaphanous glass skin that offers tantalising *Rear Window* style glimpses into the domestic domain.

The jury applauded the skill and confidence of the conversion and how it suggested a new way of dealing with an old building that could act as a valuable exemplar for the future.



section AA

2

1. (Opposite) the lane house's original street frontage has been carved out and replaced with a diaphanous glass skin, offering surreptitious glimpses of life within 2. The refurbished rear block, which is linked to the larger main volume by a spinal staircase

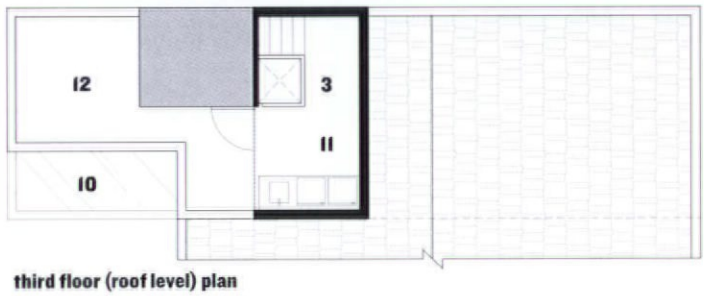
3

4

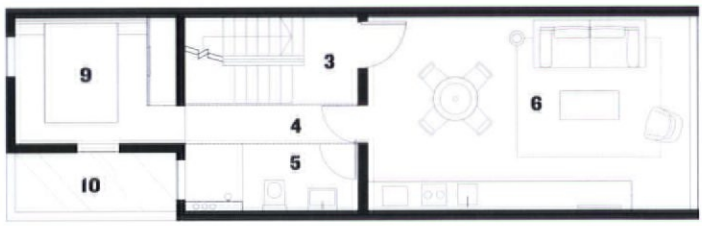
Architect
Neri & Hu Design
& Research Office
Photographs
Pedro Pegenaute

3. A new staircase fabricated from black steel winds up through the house. Light floods down the stairwell from a new skylight
4. Slightly disarmingly, bathrooms are visible from the staircase
5. New elements have an evident formal and material refinement

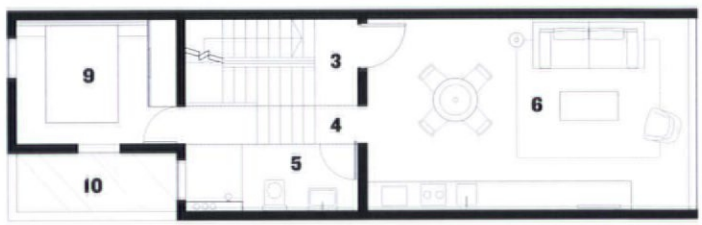
1	entrance	7	courtyard
2	lobby	8	void
3	public staircase	9	bedroom
4	private staircase	10	skylight
5	bathroom	11	laundry
6	living room	12	terrace



third floor (roof level) plan

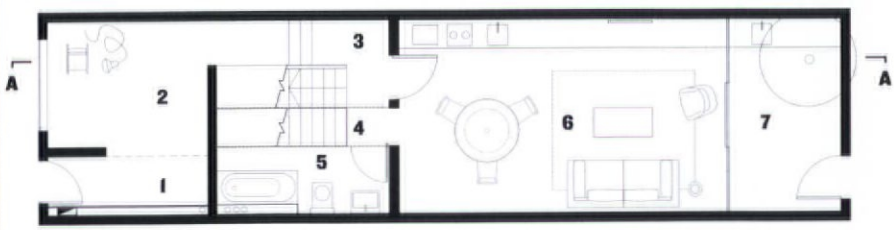


second floor plan



first floor plan

intermediate level plan



ground floor plan

JAPAN

FOREST HOUSE IN THE CITY

STUDIO VELOCITY

The template for the Japanese suburban house is imaginatively and whimsically reworked in this project by Studio Velocity in Toyokawa. The problems are familiar – a small site, hemmed in by neighbours, with little physical and architectural room to manoeuvre. The response is a glacially white house set in a lush pocket of greenery, its gently curving walls inscribing a distinctive and unorthodox rhomboid-shaped footprint.

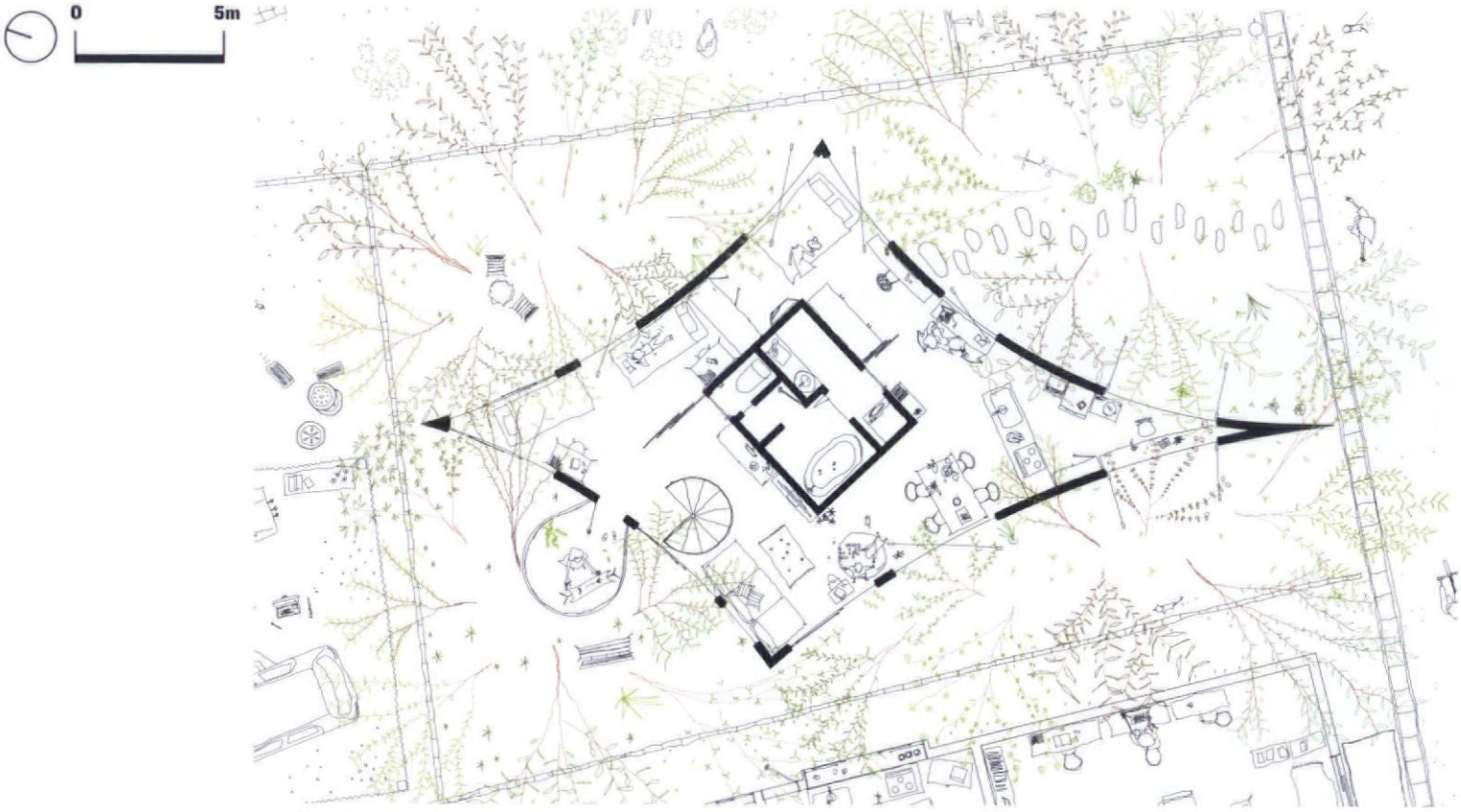
'Plants make decisions about where to unfurl their leaves and extend their branches according to the presence and position of plants and other objects in their environment', says Studio Velocity partner Miho Iwatsuki. 'We were interested in designing architecture that exhibits a similar quality'.

The architects investigated the site and its surroundings, allowing these to shape and inform their project. The site is abutted on three sides by houses that all overlook it. Various plan configurations were considered (square, rectangle, circle) but all had drawbacks. However, the curved rhombus created distance between the house and its neighbours, provided the right amount of floor area, increased the length of the perimeter wall and made efficient use of the site. Within the curved pockets of space between house and site edge are vivid bursts of greenery, so that viewed from the street and neighbouring buildings, the house and its outdoor space – both derived from their relationships with the site – resemble a forest, suggesting a new architectural ideal.

Various functions slip into the unconventional plan form with apparent ease. A small hairdressing salon occupies the ground floor, with domestic activities above. A compact spiral staircase unites the two floors. Jury members debated at length about this project – some thought it too capricious and the kind of architecture that could only be achieved in Japan – but ultimately they agreed that its propositional qualities and highly considered response to context made it worthy of commendation.

1. (Opposite) thrusting out into the street, the rhomboidal form keeps neighbours at a distance and creates pockets of greenery, so the house appears to be embedded in a lush suburban forest

site analysis



first floor plan

3

4

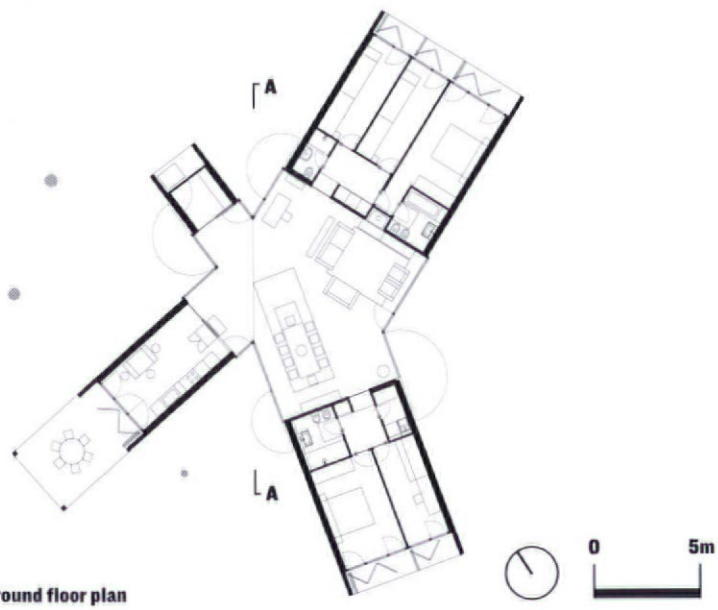
2. (Left) the ground floor contains a small hairdressing salon, with living quarters above
3. The house opens up into the surrounding garden
4. A prow-like balcony provides a vantage point

Architect
Studio Velocity
Photographs
Kentaro Kurihara

ITALY

DIRECTOR'S HOUSE

LIVERANI/ MOLTENI ARCHITETTI



ground floor plan

This house for a film director and his family in Casatenovo, near Milan, occupies a site studded with mature pine trees within a 1960s residential development. The brief was for a building that should respond to the setting and be robustly low maintenance.

The single-storey house radiates out from a central core, which forms its social and physical hub. This common space yokes together the various rooms and functions, such as the sleeping quarters clustered in separate wings, and the entrance hall and kitchen. Connecting this pivotal living space more explicitly with the exterior, tall glass doors can be opened up to encourage natural ventilation. The hub thus becomes a diffuse indoor/outdoor realm.

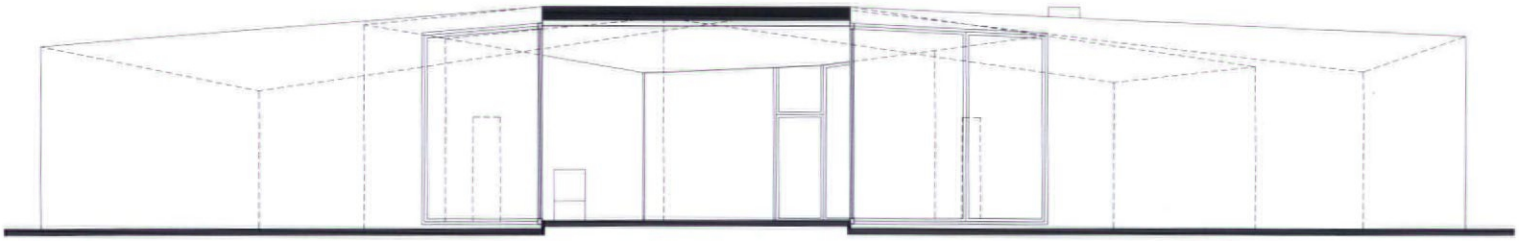
The house tactfully navigates around the mature landscape. Its irregular cruciform plan was developed in response to the position of the existing trees. Walls and roof are sheathed in a durable and waterproof white resin membrane, which visually homogenises the structure, yet an almost imperceptibly double-pitched roof simultaneously creates a series of different elevations that subtly change from every angle. The very slight inclination of the roof (7 degrees) directs rainwater flow along the walls to collect in a ground reservoir, obviating the need for unsightly gutters and downpipes.

The immaculate white resin surface will weather gently over time, with nature adding its own contribution, as leaves and pine needles accumulate on the roof. The connection with nature is enhanced by changing vistas as you perambulate around the house. Interiors are calm, luminous spaces, perpetually framed by a backdrop of greenery.

The jury was impressed by the subtlety and sophistication of the architecture. Unifying the cruciform structure, the white resin carapace combines functional rigour and aesthetic delight. The nuances of the relationship between built form and site are beautifully and cogently expressed, and the house strives to tread lightly in its bucolic setting.

1, 2. The cruciform plan navigates between trees 3, 4. (Overleaf) a nodal living space unites wings containing bedrooms. Nature forms a perpetual backdrop to domestic life

Architect
Liverani/Molteni Architetti
Photographs
Walter Mair



section AA

2

3

4

JAPAN

SMALL HOUSE

UNEMORI ARCHITECTS

Even by Japanese standards, this house for a couple and their child in a dense part of Tokyo redefines notions of compactness. With a footprint of 4m × 4m, it is a micro machine for living in. Japan's seismic regulations dictate that buildings must be physically separate from each other, giving rise to the often curious spectacle of structures in extremely close proximity, but not actually touching.

In this case, a site area of 34sqm and neighbours on three sides are relentless drivers of the architecture. Yet within this apparently uncompromising urban condition, the house manages to pack in a lower ground floor for sleeping, a double-height living area, a spare room and a terrace. Rather than occupying the whole site, the building footprint is compressed and extruded upwards, so there is enough room left over for a parking space. In fact, house and car are the same length, as if to emphasise how built form has been drilled down to the absolute functional minimum. Pulling the building away from the edge of the site also allows light and air to circulate more freely.

Floors are connected by a spiral staircase that balletically corkscrews its way through the house. The floorplates of plywood on steel joists are ultra thin – a mere 70mm thick. Everything is pared down to the bone, but there is poetry as well as rigour. A roof terrace provides a refuge from the blare and distraction of the city. And in places, the taut skin of horizontal boards enveloping the compact tower can be opened up to admit light and views.

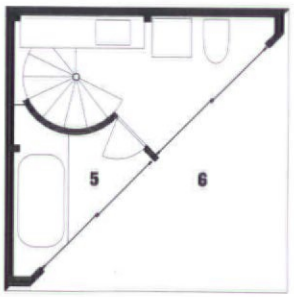
The jury was deeply impressed by the ingenuity of the scheme and how it sought to challenge and overcome such an extreme context. By showing what is possible, it suggests a paradigm for an economically and spatially frugal kind of city living that could be emulated elsewhere.

1. (Opposite) occupying the equivalent of two parking spaces, the compact house is compressed into Tokyo's dense urban milieu
2. In places the timber skin flaps open to admit light
3. A spiral staircase links the ultra thin floorplates

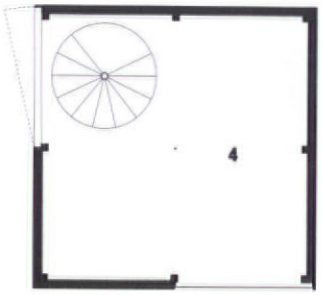
Architect
Unemori Architects
Photographs
Ken Sasajima

1 bedroom
2 closet
3 kitchen/dining
4 spare room
5 bathroom
6 terrace

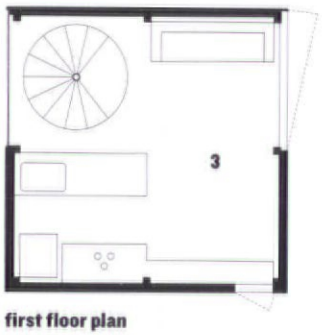
2



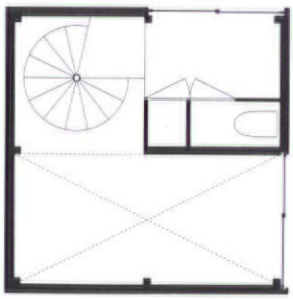
third floor plan



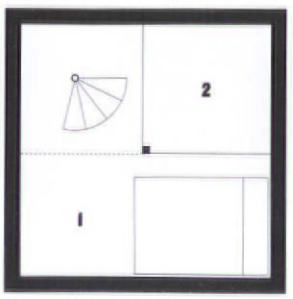
second floor plan



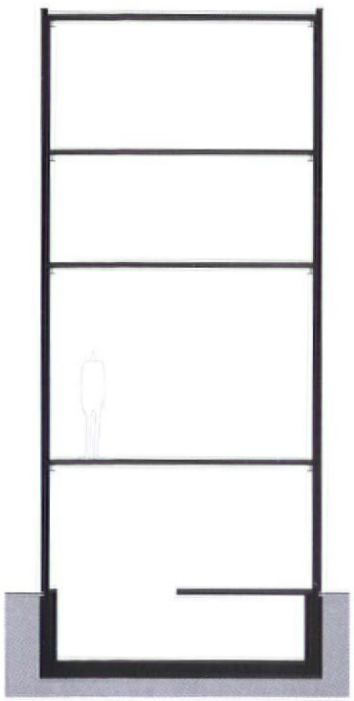
first floor plan



ground floor plan



lower ground floor plan



section AA

3

1. (Opposite) the new neighbourhood of floating houses in a suburb of Amsterdam extends the Netherlands' historic relationship with water. The basic house module can be aggregated to form larger dwellings

THE NETHERLANDS

FLOATING HOUSES

MARLIES ROHMER ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS

In most cities with rivers or canals, houseboats are a familiar sight, offering an alternative and economical form of accommodation, but they tend to be limited in size. In this scheme for a suburb of Amsterdam, the concept of a floating house is fully developed into a modular prototype that aggregates into a waterside neighbourhood.

Waterbuurt-West is part of Amsterdam's IJburg development zone that extends over a number of artificial islands which have been raised from the IJmeer lake. Residents who own a boat can head to Amsterdam's inner-city canals or open water. The neighbourhood has 158 waterside homes, 55 of which are individual floating houses moored around slender jetties.

Each house is supported by a concrete tub submerged in water to a depth of half a storey. A lightweight steel structure sits on top, infilled with cladding panels and glazing. This flexible, modular system can be adapted to accommodate individual preferences and requirements. For instance, owners can choose which side of their house would enjoy a view or have privacy.

The basic single-hull module has three storeys but modules can be aggregated to form larger dwellings. Bedrooms and the bathroom are contained in the lowest storey, which is partly submerged. The raised ground floor houses kitchen and dining spaces. Connected to an open terrace deck, the main living area occupies the cantilevered upper floor.

The houses were constructed in a shipyard, mounted on the concrete tubs and towed by tug to the site. Each house is anchored to two mooring poles in a diagonal configuration to maximise stability. A sliding connection absorbs the regular vertical movement of the modules due to changing water levels.

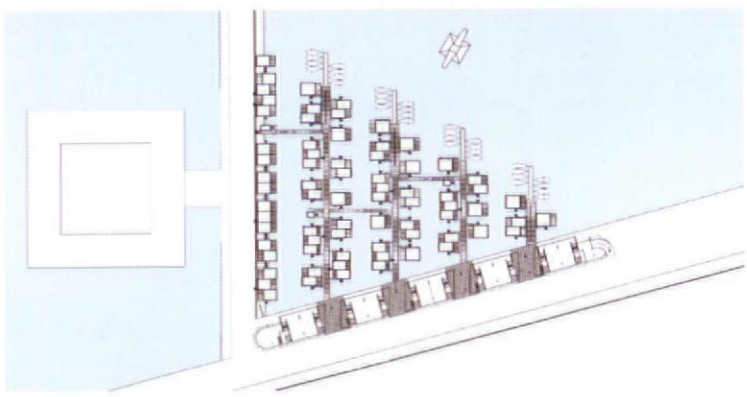
The jury thought this project was an inventive response to the Netherlands' historic relationship with water. Modest, practical and economical, the floating houses also created a genuinely urban waterside neighbourhood.

2

3

2. A house module being towed into position. The modules are constructed in a shipyard and floated to site
3. Aerial view of the waterside neighbourhood, a mixture of floating and fixed houses
4. In winter the floating houses are embedded in the frozen lake, which becomes a new terrain for recreation

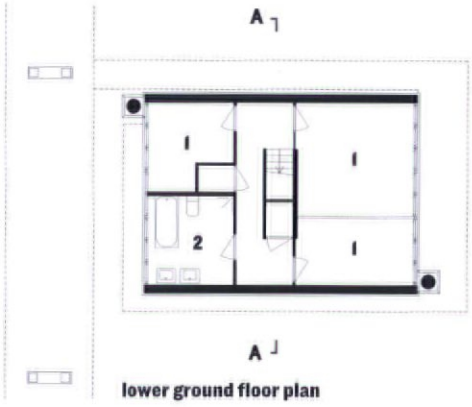
1 bedroom
2 bathroom
3 kitchen
4 office
5 living room



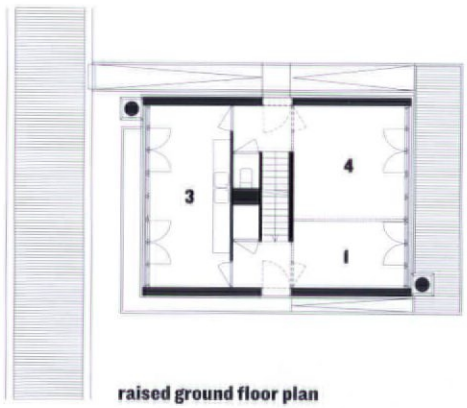
site plan

Architect
Marlies Romer
Architects and Planners
Photographs
Luuk Kramer, 1
Marcel van der Burg, 2
Marlies Rohmer, 3
Roos Aldershoff Fotografie, 4

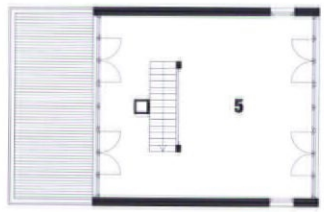
4



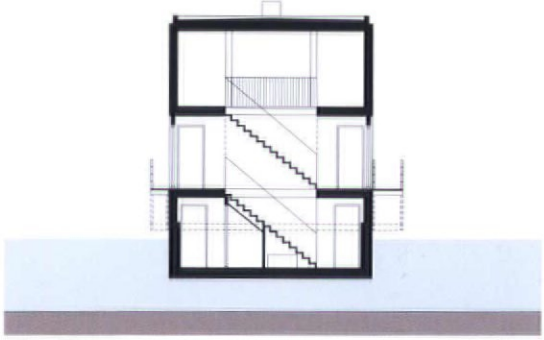
lower ground floor plan



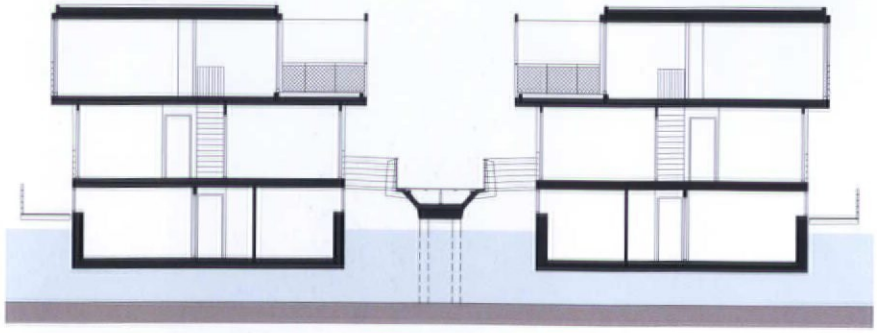
raised ground floor plan



first floor plan



section AA



long section through two modules

SWEDEN

SUMMER HOUSE

THAM & VIDEGÅRD ARKITEKTER

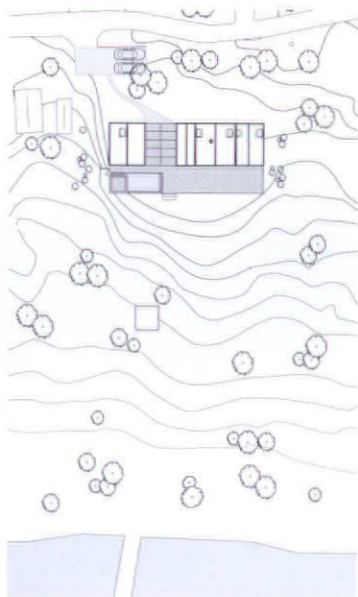
The setting for this weekend house is Lagnö in the Stockholm archipelago. Many Swedes own weekend and summerhouses, which tend to take the form of rustic timber cabins in the landscape. Here, architects Bolle Tham and Martin Videgård explore a different sensibility. 'We wanted to search for a way to design the house as an integral part of nature – rather than a light wooden cottage – where the material's weight and colour connects to the archipelago's granite bedrock', they say.

The house is divided into two volumes placed side by side to form a linear bar in the landscape where the forest opens out into a bay. Approached from the north, the entrance presents itself as opening between the volumes, prompting the visitor towards the light and water. The opening is sheltered by an angular canopy of glass.

The character of the house is derived from a series of transverse gable roofs. The gables are connected to each other and form a crisply pleated facade, like a line of boathouses. This creates a sequence of varied room heights in the otherwise open living space that extends through the entire length of the main volume. With its relatively shallow room depth and a sliding glass partition connecting to an external terrace, the space can be described as a niche in relation to the landscape of the archipelago. A sequence of smaller cellular rooms runs along the north edge, accessed through a wall of sliding doors. The rooms are lit by openable skylights and form smaller pitched ceilings within the main roof volume.

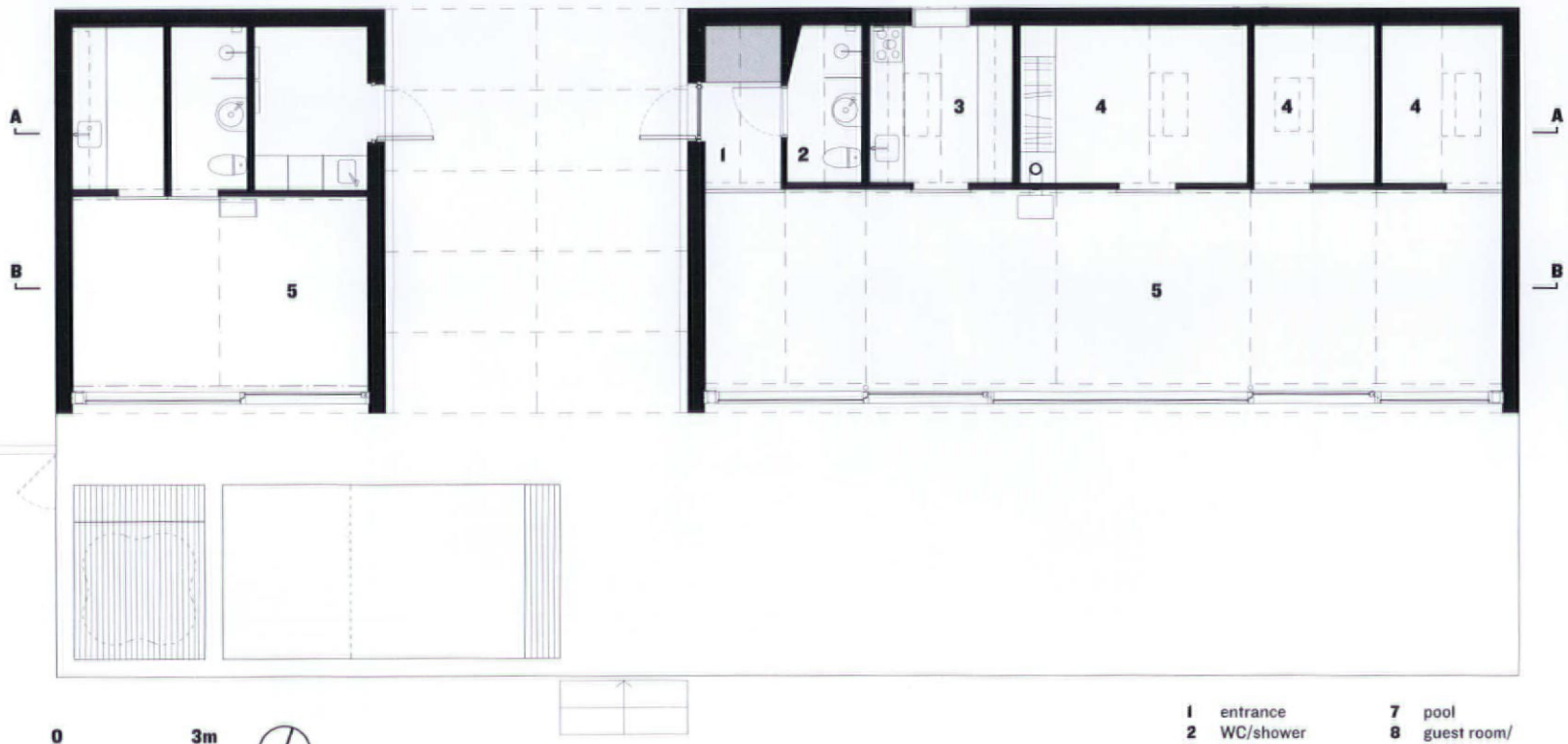
Facades, terrace and interior floors are all made of exposed concrete, counterpointed by white walls and ash fittings. The concrete has a weight and solidity, so that the house appears to grow out of its site.

The jury was impressed by the calm, sober reticence of the architecture and its thoughtful relationship with its setting.



site plan

1. (Opposite) part of the gabled facade
2. (Overleaf) the monolithic concrete structure seems to grow out of the granite bedrock



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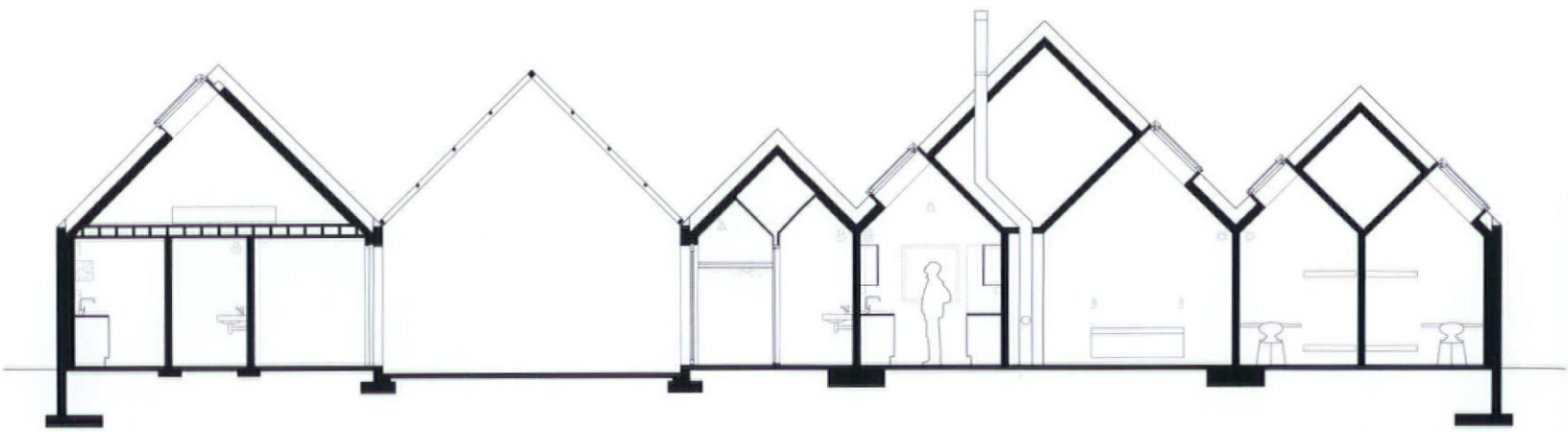
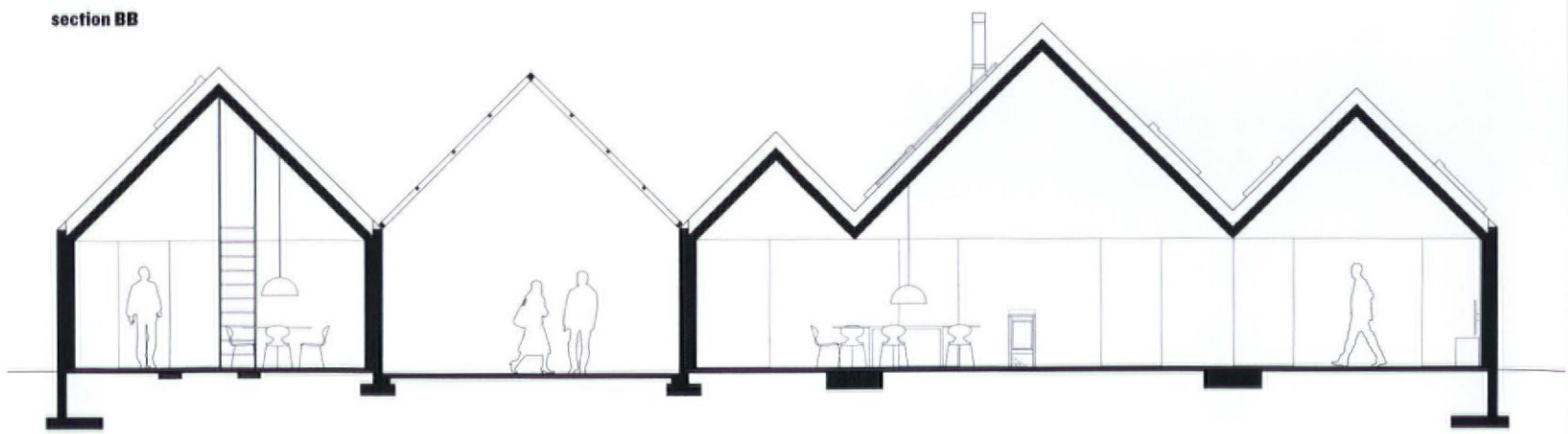
ground floor plan

1	entrance	7	pool
2	WC/shower	8	guest room/ studio
3	kitchen	9	kitchenette
4	bedroom	10	utility room
5	living/dining space	11	fireplace
6	terrace		



section BB



section AA

3. The strong linear form and angular roof geometry makes a powerful statement in the landscape. The smaller volume houses a guest room
4. The living space opens up to the archipelago beyond

3

4

Architect
Tham & Videgård Arkitekter
Photographs
Åke E:son Lindman

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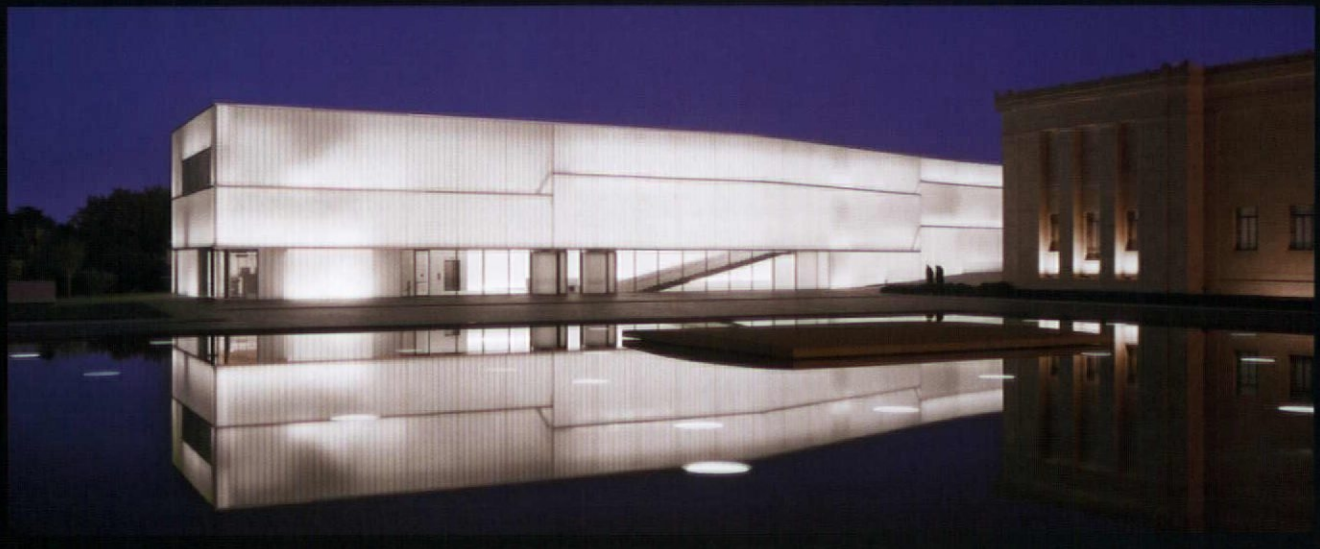

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JAPAN AFTER THE STORM

YUKI SUMNER
PHOTOGRAPHY: EDMUND SUMNER

Despite being given no formal role in the recovery programme following the 2011 tsunami, Japanese architects are engaging with communities and devising strategies that respond to the aftermath and plan for the future

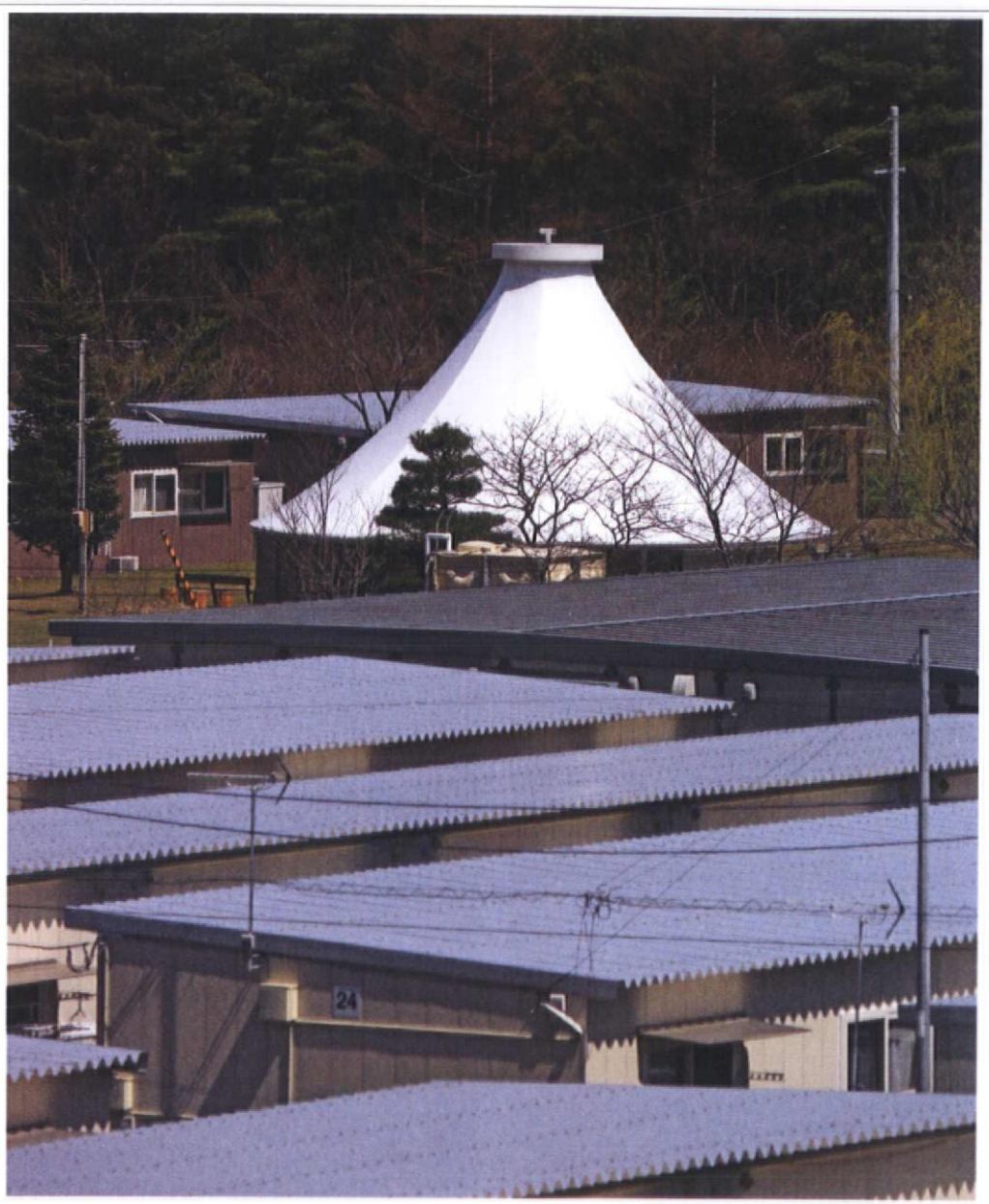
CORE HOUSE, MOMONOURA

Constructed from timber in the traditional *itakura* style, this structure by Atelier Bow-Wow can be extended as the fishermen return to the sea, eventually becoming a multi-family dwelling or even the core of a village
Previous page: the skeletal hulk of a ruined municipal building has become a temporary memorial to the victims of the 2011 tsunami

Do architects play a role in post-disaster reconstruction? 'It's marginal, at best,' wrote David Sanderson, an expert on emergency practice, in *The Guardian* in the aftermath of the Haiti Earthquake. Sadly, following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, the Japanese government appears to agree. Its official plan for recovery doesn't even mention architects. In a country that is world famous for its architectural invention, political leaders view the profession as redundant.

Instead, architects have bypassed central government and worked directly with communities. 'There has been a great surge of creativity, with lots of grassroots initiatives,' says Christian Dimmer from Tokyo University. Architects and students, he says, have been instrumental in extensive reconstruction work in the north for the past two years – conducting topographical surveys, holding talks with local people, and constructing models of destroyed villages.

The profession has also been forming collaborative networks. One leading example is ArchiAid, which is based at the University of Tohoku in Sendai City. Alongside publishing imaginative design solutions for the reconstruction and prevention of future disasters, it also held an open competition for public housing in partnership with Kamaishi City. Due to be completed next summer, the winning proposal by Hirata Akihisa



HOUSE FOR ALL, HEITA

Riken Yamamoto, working with the Kishin no Kai collective, created this community centre for a refugee camp. Though it employs modern materials, the structure refers back to traditional rural buildings with its central pillar, exposed beams and open hearth

incorporates a kindergarten and community centre alongside 40 permanent housing units.

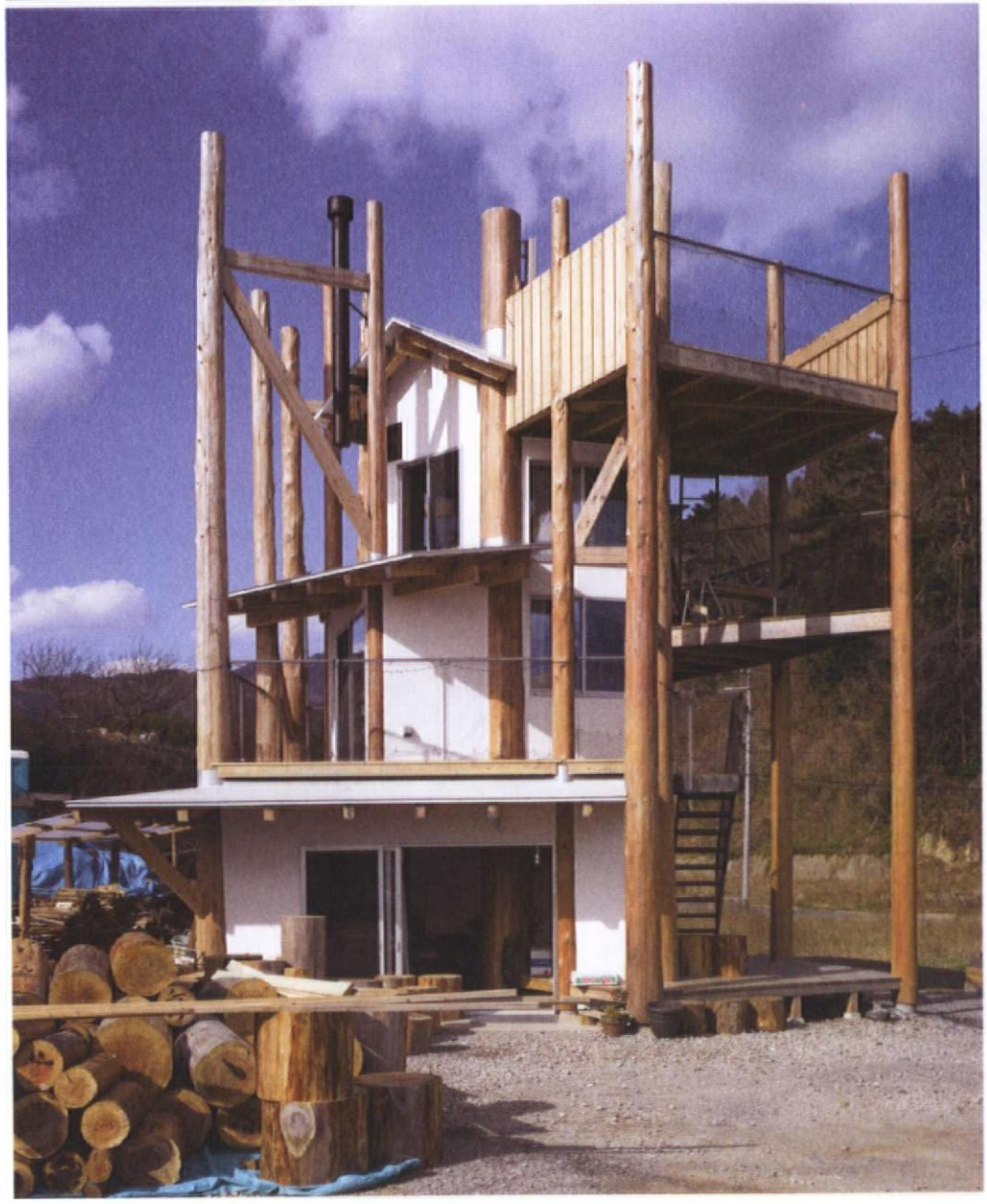
Another ArchiAid project is Atelier Bow-Wow's Itakura Core House. Aimed at residents of Momonoura who are wary of returning to live by the sea, the prototype was built at minimum cost using local resources. The idea is that the house's 'core' can be gradually built up to accommodate larger families, which, in turn, could become the basis of a small village. *Itakura* refers to a traditional timber panel construction method, often employed for the construction of *kura* or storehouses, the most famous example being the Shosoin Repository of Japan's Imperial Household.

Atelier Bow-Wow's more modest design has elements found in traditional Japanese houses, such as *doma* (tamped-earth kitchens), *engawa* (porches) and *tatami* (straw mats). The layout, which includes an outdoor changing room, is for families making a living from fishing. It is hoped that fishermen will return home before they renounce their former lives by the sea. It may be a small gesture, but it is an important emotionally-charged one. The repercussions could be felt far beyond Momonoura.

Creating the House for All

Another important collective, Kishin no Kai, has focused on providing communal facilities for people living in temporary shelters and refugee housing. Led by Toyo Ito, Riken Yamamoto, Kazuyo Sejima, Hiroshi Naito and Kengo Kuma, the House for All initiative aims to relieve cramped and isolating living conditions, creating social interaction between residents randomly billeted together.

For a temporary residential complex in Heita, Riken Yamamoto and his students have completed a new communal building. Though constructed using modern materials, the central pillar, exposed beams and open fireplace all recall elements found in Japanese rural houses. The term *daikoku bashira* refers to the central pillar of a house (also traditionally used to refer to the man of the house); *hari* signifies the exposed beams, and



HOUSE FOR ALL, RIKUZENTAKATA

Another community centre echoing the Japanese vernacular tradition created by Sou Fujimoto, Akihisa Hirata and Kuniko Inui. The view from the roof reveals a bleak tabula rasa of desolation. Rikuzentakata was virtually wiped off the map when the tsunami came

irori, the open fireplace. A raised platform in the corner can accommodate a homely *kotatsu* – or a table covered by a heavy blanket, with a heat source built into it. The rest of the space is laid out much like *doma*, except that the mud floor is concrete.

People come and go without needing to remove their shoes – a clear sign that this is an inclusive public space. Mitsu Kawabata, an 80-year-old woman who lives only a few steps away in the temporary house she now shares with her son's family, says she values her daily visits to the new communal building. The atmosphere feels welcoming, creating a refuge in circumstances most people could not even begin to envisage.

Allusions to vernacular houses are also evident at the House for All in the coastal town of Rikuzentakata, by Sou Fujimoto, Akihisa Hirata and Kuniko Inui. Salvaged cedar trees have been erected so that it feels as though you are stepping into a forest. These pillars act as multiple *daikoku-bashira*, which continue on the outside supporting a set of external stairs that spiral up to the top of the house. The rooftop platform offers a panorama of a bleak tabula rasa, a potent reminder that the tsunami virtually wiped Rikuzentakata off the map.

The house stands defiantly on the edge of the destruction. It is looked after by a charismatic local woman called

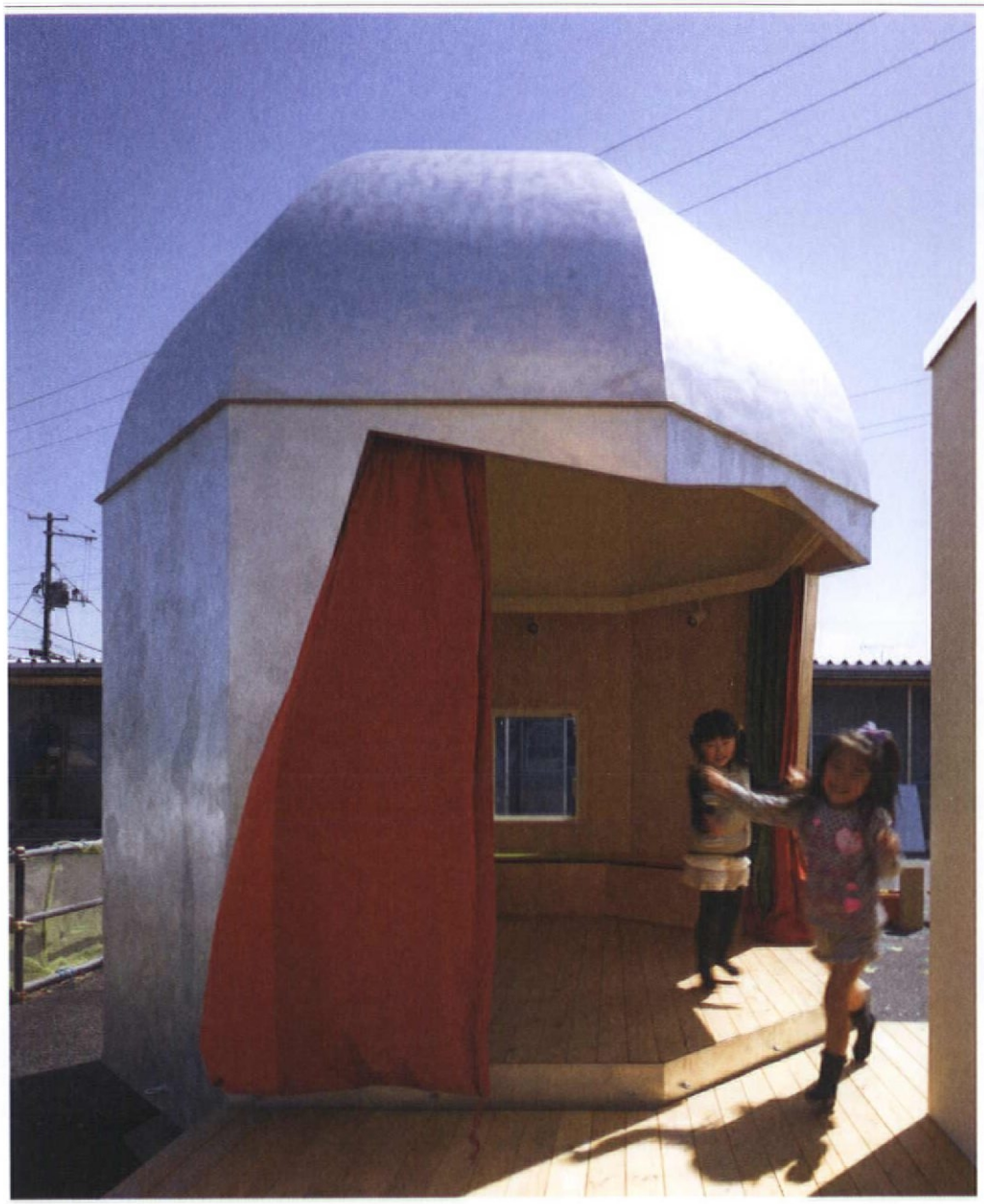
HOUSE FOR ALL, MIYATO ISLAND

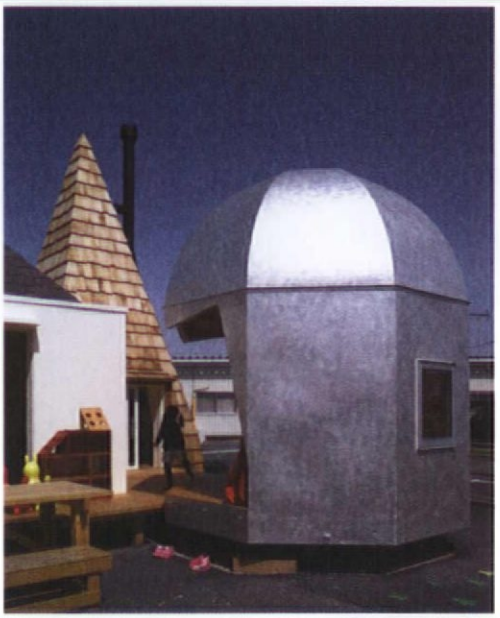
Designed to unite displaced people from three villages, this simple pavilion by SANAA has had difficulty overcoming the inherent insularity of the islanders

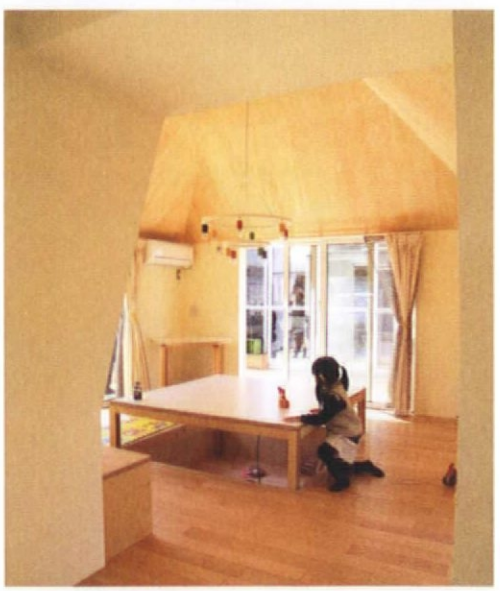
Mikiko Sugawara, who lost half of her family in this disaster but does not care to talk about her own losses, instead focusing on the volunteers who came to help build the house. She mentions the growing rift that has developed between herself and some locals because of her role in the creation of this place. Most visitors are now from outside the town; many are architectural students, drawn perhaps by the project's international reputation (it featured in the Japanese Pavilion at last year's Venice Biennale, where it won the Golden Lion).

Elsewhere, SANAA's characteristically pared-down contribution is perhaps less successful. The project aims to bring together groups of people displaced from three different villages on Miyato Island. However, even before the disaster, villagers tended to have little contact. This lack of sociability still seems to prevail; the small indoor space for them was deserted when we visited.

Not far from this project is the Children's House For All in Higashi-Matsushima City. Designed by Maki Onishi with Toyo Ito & Associates, it is next to the community centre inside a large temporary residential complex. Three semi-autonomous structures with distinctive roofs are reserved for children. Adults retreat to the neighbouring communal centre, which is connected by a raised footbridge. Functioning much like the







traditional *engawa* porch, the footbridge extends around the new building so that the children can use it to navigate freely around their exclusive new territory.

Rebuilding what was lost

All the projects described so far were designed as non-permanent structures and so have a sense of lightness. Others, however, are built more solidly for the long term. Asahi Kindergarten in Minamisanriku, by Tezuka Architects, has been relocated higher up and inland. Completed last summer, it is one of 15 new kindergartens funded by UNICEF. The architects used the 400-year-old cedar trees that lined the approach to the local Buddhist temple: 16 of these trees, irrevocably damaged by seawater, have been turned into load-bearing columns; others form beams, floorboards and handrails.

'Constructing the building was like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle', explains architect Takehiro Ota. 'We didn't use any metal fittings because they are not flexible enough for the movement of wood that still retains a lot of moisture.' There are no solid walls inside, so long beams had to be extended by interlocking multiple pieces of wood. 'We expect a lot of minor movement for years to come,' says Ota, 'so we'll come back annually to adjust the pegs and wedges that support the beams.'

CHILDREN'S HOUSE FOR ALL, HIGASHI-MATSUSHIMA

This tripartite structure composed of an aluminium cupola, shingled pyramid and tiled pitch-roofed shed, was designed by Maki Onishi and Toyo Ito for the use of children in a refugee camp

KINDERGARTEN, MINAMISANRIKU

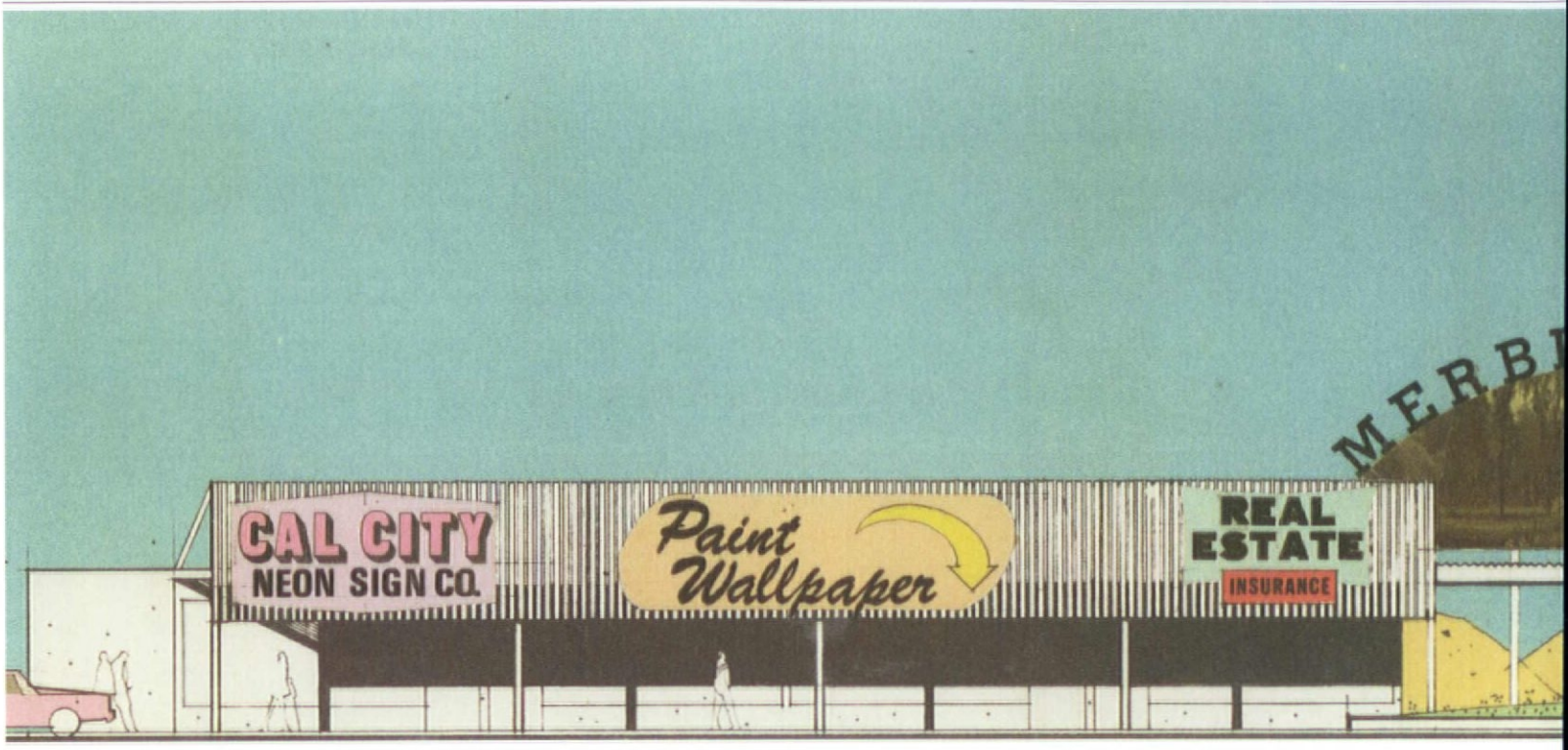
The timber for the Asahi Kindergarten, designed by Tezuka Architects, was salvaged from 400-year-old cedars that lined an avenue leading to a local temple. They had been planted in 1611 after a tsunami that year, and grew there until they were damaged by the recent inundation

Tezuka Architects' willingness to embrace and consider the effect of time in their architecture resonates with Mikiko Sugawara's endorsement for the 'necessary evolution' of House for All in Rikuzentakata. Sugawara recounted one architect who, on hearing her plan to build a protective wall around the external staircase, accused her of 'messing with the project'. She was indignant: 'He can't be a good architect if he feels that the place cannot evolve with time.'

Some architects need to loosen up. Being too controlling of their own 'products' – as the public perceives them – leaves no room for flexibility, a characteristic particularly relevant for buildings in disaster areas. Successful projects force people out of the natural shells associated with living in isolation or being affected by grief. When the aluminium pod of the Children's House for All was completed last year, it was used as a mobile Santa's grotto to the delight of local children. Pupils at Asahi Kindergarten are even allowed to explore the space under the floorboards. Such spontaneity impacts not only on the children but also on the adults who care for them.

The involvement of architects in post-disaster construction is far from a one-way process. Architects are learning from locals about the nuances of life in the north, which in turn enables them to devise solutions that are more sensitive and imaginative to specific needs, helping people rebuild their communities and even connect with the wider world. The best projects bridge the gap between experts and laypeople, urban and rural, and crucially, between different professionals. Architects can make this link.

Some of the disaster area's current problems, such as rural isolation, an ageing population, and social, cultural and economic impoverishment, did not begin only two years ago when the earthquake and tsunami struck. This remote and rural part of Japan had been largely left to fend for itself. Young people are now streaming in because of the disaster. But will they – and the country's gaze – leave this area behind once again?



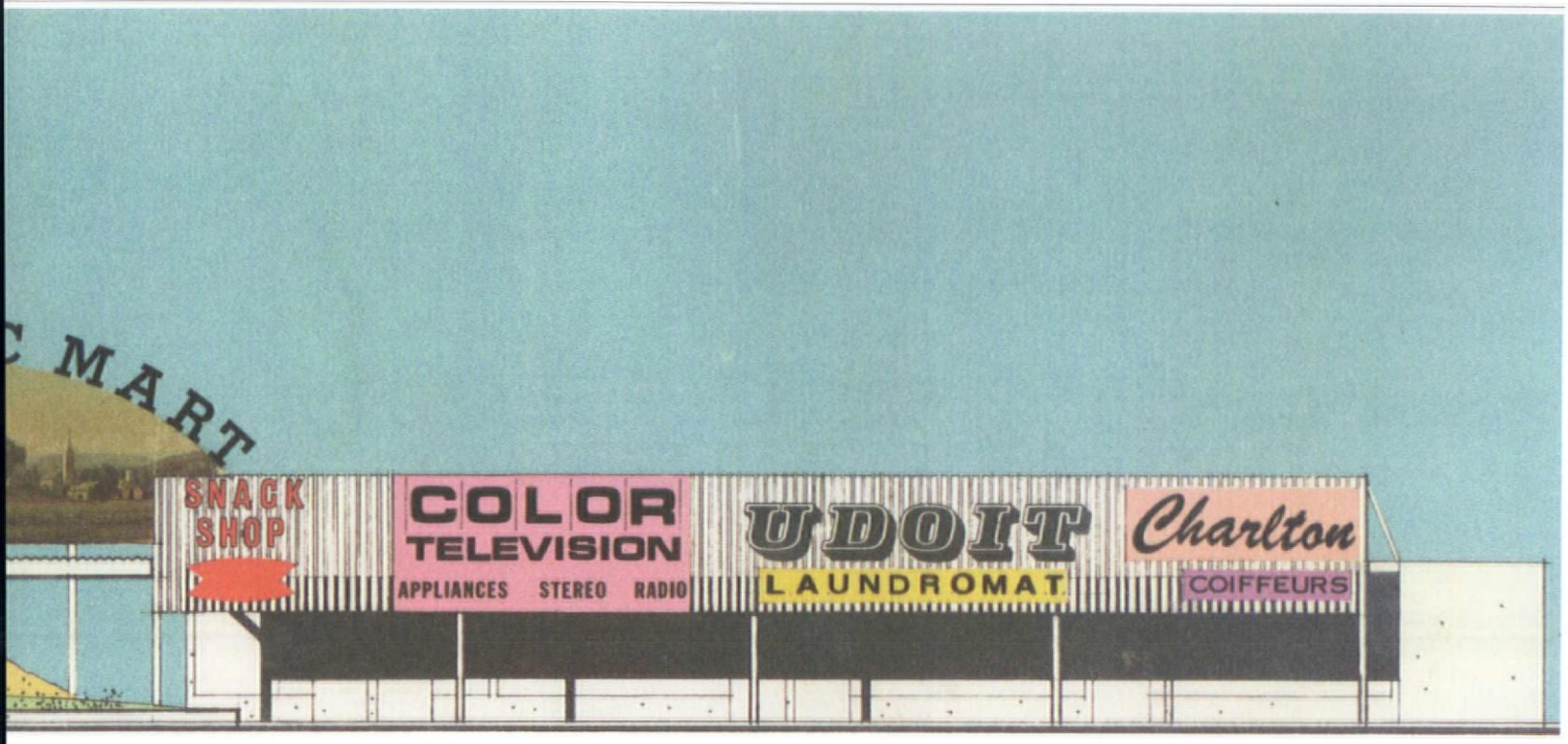
LETTING LOOSE
LOS ANGELES IN THE SEVENTIES

Fantastic mirrored pachyderms coexist with an all too real landscape of strip malls and freeways in a new exhibition on Los Angeles that examines the city's capacity to stimulate radical responses to space, structure and patterns of use

NICHOLAS OLSBERG

There is a rather terrible film by Stanley Kramer, made in 1963, called *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World*, described as a 'comedy epic', and ending with converging car chases across a Los Angeles that seems to be nothing but swathes of uncompleted freeways, concrete water channels, half-built dams and fields of dust and equipment lying in wait for the enormous buildings and plazas that were about to emerge upon them. Six years later, an unrivalled wave of civic and corporate mega-structures was in place: the completion of the Santa Monica and San Diego freeways; a vast downtown music centre; the huge three-building campus of the County Museum of Art; 176 acres of roadway, parking, plazas, tunnels and mixed-use high-rises called Century City; an entirely new town of 50,000 on the edge of the Irvine Ranch; the first megalithic skyscraper plaza on Bunker Hill; and a first very lonely downtown office tower by SOM, so lovingly portrayed as a seat of power by Antonioni in *Zabriskie Point*.

At the same time as these extravagantly sane and solid new worlds appeared, to punctuate the rather lovely mess of an antic city, local artists like Ed Ruscha, Dennis Hopper and Vija Celmins were becoming engaged by the everyday built landscapes of Los Angeles that surrounded them, looking at everything artists in other cities passed by – gas stations, signage, parking lots, dingbat apartments, commercial strips and freeways. By the early 1970s, Lewis Baltz, Joe Deal and other pioneers of the 'new topographics' were directing the same kind of anti-monumental gaze on the routine architectural incidents of a corporate metropolis struggling so desperately to look ordered and normal, finding such corners of silent disorder as the sheet metal



1. California City was a new town designed by Whitney Smith in the '50s, and abandoned when a nearby lake dried up and engulfed the settlement in toxic dust. A subsequent reclamation planned by Venturi Scott Brown (pictured here) in the 1970s also failed when the aerospace industry contracted. It now lies largely ruined in the desert
2. A detail of a recreated model of Charles Moore's BEST products showroom, occupied by a herd of mirrored elephants (original 1979)

warehouses in the spanking new city of Irvine. As with Ed Ruscha, who was picturing the little-loved County Museum of Art in flames within three years of its opening, we never quite know whether these oddly exhilarating social documents are a celebration or a cry of alarm; an elegy for what is going, an announcement of what is to be, or (what I am sure is most likely) examples of that shrug of engaged neutrality that the native vernacular of the time called 'going with the flow'. Indeed, just as the metroscape of Los Angeles had always infected the narratives of its films and literature so there arose – if a little later – a persistent conversation between the architecture of the city and the imagination of its artists, even in such romantic work as the casting of light between walls and on water in Richard Diebenkorn's *Ocean Park* series or Hockney's *A Bigger Splash*.

This crucial exchange between art and architecture is the principal starting point for Sylvia Lavin's *Everything Loose Will Land*, a brilliantly conceived exhibition on radical inquiries into space, structure and the patterns of the city as they emerged in the Los Angeles of the 1970s, and part of the slowly unfolding Getty-sponsored investigation into the city's postwar architectural culture known as *Pacific Standard Time Presents* (AR June 2013). In the many works that bring art and architecture, artist and architect into dialogue, with Frank Gehry building sculptures and Ed Moses designing studios, Lavin reminds us how fertile is the terrain which obfuscates the boundaries between the two. She also reminds us how much the 'postmodern' liberation of architecture from the rational and functional academy of Modernism owed both to a discussion with the other arts, and to the careful observation – spurred first by artists and then famously carried into the conversation on rethinking architecture by Reyner Banham and Venturi Scott Brown – of the vernacular language of the mobile city.

The exhibition takes its cue from Frank Lloyd Wright's characterisation of Los Angeles as the place where all shallow, eccentric and insubstantial ideas find a sympathetic home. Wright did not like the city, but those who do might agree with him anyway, for there is some truth to the idea that the city and its architecture cultures are rightly averse to the well-grounded, conventional and substantial, scornful of ideology and theory, and more fond of the cheerfully temporary than the solemnly lasting. In a fluid cityscape one is right to love the incident and be

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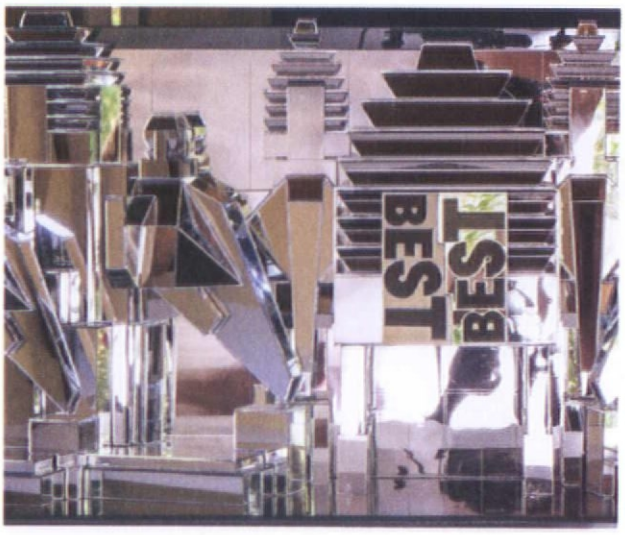

wary of the monument. Lavin locates this ideal of looseness in many things, and then places them loosely about in what is surely the perfect space to show them: the wood and concrete garden shed, its spaces carefully worked out to suggest they happened carelessly, that Rudolph Schindler built as his home and studio. At every point this modern monument to structural, material and spatial experiment, at once rough, ready and scrupulously refined, comes into conversation with the generations that followed.

Lavin organises the works around certain key ideas that she sees bringing architecture and the arts in the '70s into broad alignment: a shared concern for the environment and the catastrophic interventions of civilisation in it, which marks so many of the projects; new strategies for making work, including shared and cooperative techniques, in which we see performance, printmaking, collage, installation, happenings and events used as readily by architects as artists; a newly complicit relationship between the viewer and the work, which many of these techniques provoked; and a common fascination, peculiar to Los Angeles, with exploiting light, one example of which is gorgeously illustrated in the recreated model of Charles Moore's Urban Innovations Group for their BEST products scheme, in which a procession of mirrored pachyderms would have reflected the passing skies and scene.

Thinking of the character and pattern of the city in which these events were staged and upon which they reflected, some other, underlying ideas come across just as powerfully. Above all we begin to notice how many of the projects were essentially a critique of monumentality, assailing the idea of the city as a landscape of building block, noting its failure to recast itself in terms of new technologies of construction and communication, and calling for the looser rhythms and less substantial forms that would evade the cataclysmic environmental future of the new civic landscape and its concrete infrastructure. The most obvious examples involve dystopic commentaries like the LA Fine Arts Squad's *Isle of California*, done in the wake of the Sylmar earthquake, in which (as has now happened in the last two grave events), the freeways fall apart, or the ironic installation by Judy Chicago and the ARC group at Century City, whose monument of ice dissolved amid the nearly indestructible hardscape of this corporate 'city within a city'. Students visiting from Italy proposed on a stamped sheet what one radically different and more technologically adventurous idea of the urban monument might look like. Less overt examples, seen in the light of these, carried a similar anti-monumental message. In this context, Ron Herron's famous vision for what to do with the underbelly of the freeway system became not just a radical proposal to populate one underpass with walkable space, communication systems and bubble shelters, but a proposition to rethink the entire built world along broken linear paths, an idea which acknowledged the vast concrete skyways, just as the *Isle of California* would, as the most genuine and by far the largest monumental element in the LA landscape.

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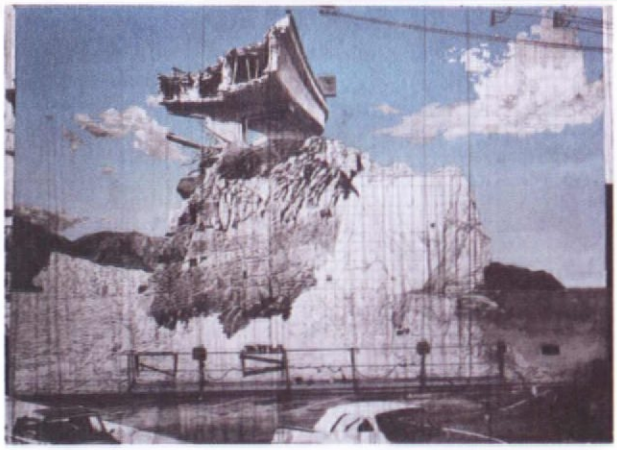

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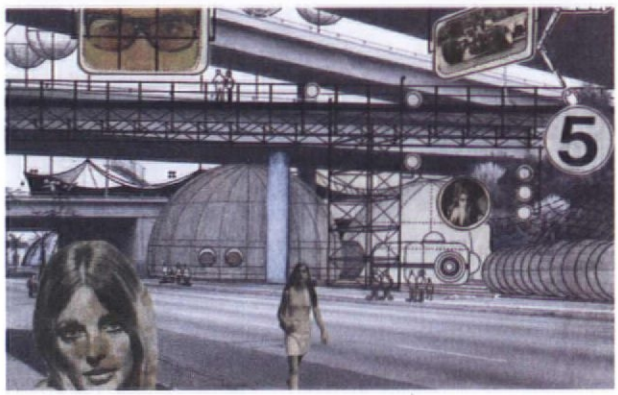

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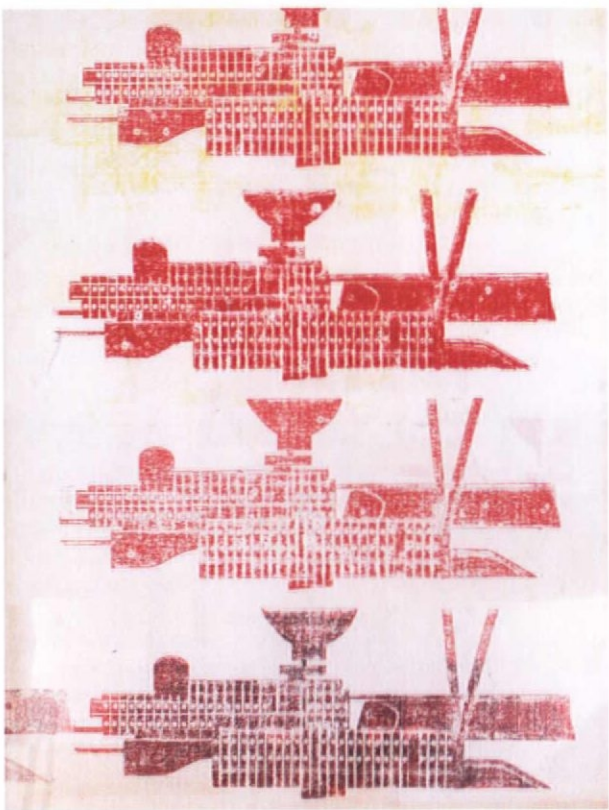

3. An image from LA Fine Arts Squad's punningly-titled *Isle of California* series shows a post-apocalyptic collapsed freeway
4. Ron Herron's more optimistic take on the freeways, *Instant City* inserts new public spaces beneath the interchanges
5. Wide-eyed Europeans arrived in droves to examine the futuristic city: here a group of students from Florence, Gruppo 9999, present a plea for an aerospace-inflected aesthetic rather than the city's attempts at urban normalisation

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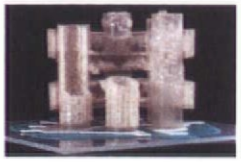

6. A model of Paolo Soleri's Arcvillage, which was intended to house thousands in mile-high tubes and eventually inspired the Bonaventure Hotel
7. Morphosis's 1978 design for a computer programmer's house used the language and packaging of toy models to focus on the system of assembly rather than traditional notions of 'construction'
8. Craig Hodgetts of the California Institute of the Arts and graphic artist Keith Godard predicted a mobile, media-based university for the 21st century, not unlike Cedric Price's earlier Potteries Thinkbelt

A similar sort of logic is followed in Venturi Scott Brown's proposed strip mall in the new desert community of California City, which realistically accepted the fact that signage was the only visible screen from roadside and the architecture behind largely irrelevant. Paolo Soleri's model for an urban village of thousands living in mile-high tubular constructions may seem fanciful and grandiose, but it was hugely influential on the ecologically minded; and one of the few successful monuments to the future in LA's chequered history of big building schemes – the Bonaventure Hotel – actually scaled down that proposal and built it. At the Bonaventure, an entire little city appears in which the patterns of freeway, habitation, vista and public space are simply upended into a vertical system, and Soleri's principal concern – to reduce the footprint to save the environment – is not entirely lost in the Oil Crisis-sealed air space of a void seen from many levels that makes up its grand concourse. In the same way one is struck by the preference for mat and pattern over structured plan, and the loose rhythm over the deterministic. This is clear from the early studies of Robert Mangurian and Studio Works of just such 'air space'; on a domestic level in the scale-shifting system of the 2468 House by Morphosis; and for an entire 'UniverCity' in a scheme developed by Craig Hodgetts.

Thus both the works themselves, many lost or half-forgotten, and the extraordinarily intelligent way the exhibition weaves the path between them, trigger unexpected ways to see the cultural topography from which a radical discourse emerged. There is no doubt of the importance of that discourse in making Los Angeles what Lavin calls the 'cipher' for a new way of thinking about the patterns and shapes of buildings and cities; in opening the door to the experimental generation of LA designers that emerged from it; and hopefully in providing keys to keeping alive such essential ideas, new to those times, as a union between need, technology and environment. At the same time, there seems equally little doubt of the extraordinary ineffectiveness of these propositions as agents of change. The battles of the 1970s were between community activists and the civic and developer initiatives they opposed. Gentrification and environmental concerns were the primary issues, and ghastly compromises – or inaction – the commonest results. What was intended to provoke reform now seems sadly only visionary.

But it is ultimately not questions about effective advocacy, about time and place, or about the nature and path of a discourse that make this feast of original, eccentric, exuberant, foolish and critical visual thinking so exciting. The real excitement of *Everything Loose* has nothing to do with where and when its subjects happened or even with what came out of them, but simply with how powerfully they remind us of the tremendous dialectical potential of architecture – from subtle polemics on the status of women to brash commentaries on the tenuous environmental hold of civilisation – and of the untamable range of the modes of representation that carry its ideas. Not incidentally, the show also makes it very plain as we look at the authorship and auspices of projects that no avant-garde comes from the head of a lonely prophet, but

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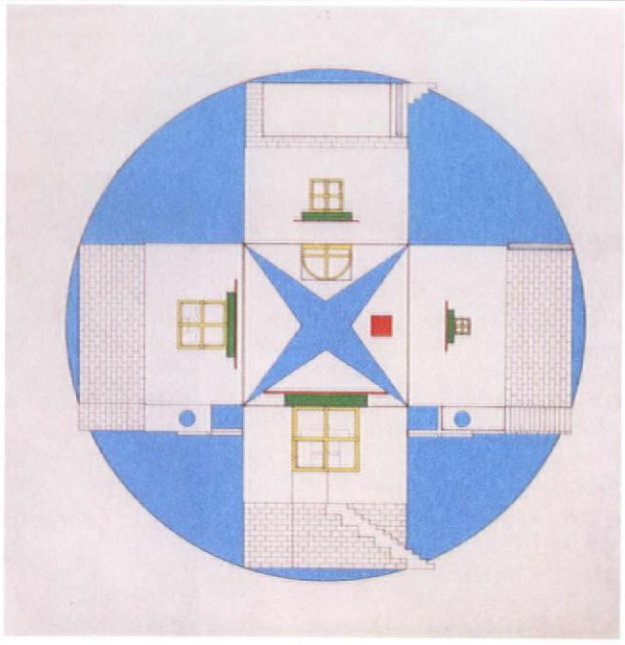

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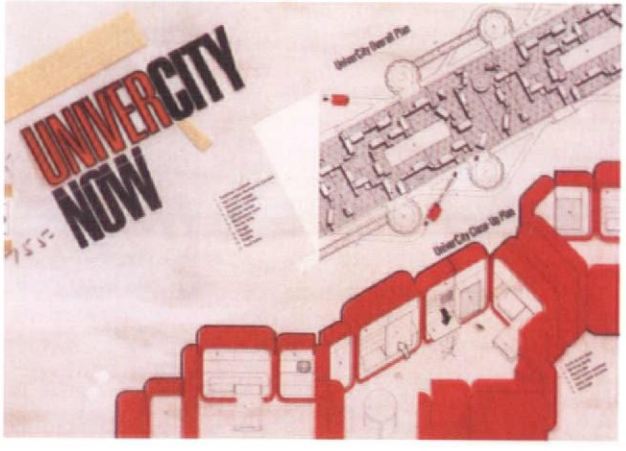


that every great shift in mentality happens because there are progressive institutions and loose associations and collaboratives to formulate and advance them and to build the platforms on which the first propositions are staged.

As we see it in the loose constructions of the '70s here, architecture is an art inextricably tied to the way we live, live together, and live with the planet. As a language ultimately grounded in the most recognisable fundament of human culture, which is the need to shape shelter, it is peculiarly well equipped to talk about these things in a ready and readily eloquent visual vocabulary of commentary, critique, conscience and consciousness: to awaken us to a social injustice or an environmental danger; to satirise, challenge or confront the dreams of the grand and mighty; or sometimes – whether in the sheer inventiveness of its ideas or the scintillation of its representations – simply as a source for the last of those great Vitruvian requirements, delight.

In this month's Overview (p21) Nicholas Olsberg reviews the Getty Conservation Institute's recent symposium in LA

Parametric snake oil

RACHEL ARMSTRONG

Architecture follows Nature: Biomimetic Principles for Innovative Design, Ilaria Mazzoleni in collaboration with Shauna Price, CRC Press, £63.99

Everyone loves biomimicry. It proposes to be beautiful, useful and sustainable. It seeks to harmonise the relationship between humans and the natural world. Indeed, if the thesis of *Architecture follows Nature* is correct, biomimicry can provide us with the solutions that will lead to a sustainable future.

The authors introduce us to their strategy in two parts. The first provides a background to biomimicry from both science and architectural design perspectives. The second applies these concepts through a series of case studies based on a variety of interpretations of 'animal skins'. These proposed architectures are enclosures, which act as filters, bounded by facades. The animal skin that has inspired the exterior design establishes the selective relationship that a particular building will have with the environment.

Architecture follows Nature shares fascinating ideas such as hummingbird feather filaments that can inspire a brightly-coloured pavilion as a mode of 'communication'; snow leopard *erector pili* (hair muscles), which can inspire the thermoregulatory system of a mobile base designed to study these elusive creatures; environmentally responsive, adaptable greenhouse cladding modelled on banana slug skins; and Namib beetles that inform water-collecting systems in temporary residences for desert researchers.

Yet although the aims – to produce more environmentally connected forms of architectural design – are noble, this book gives scant treatment to the thorny and complex political, cultural, historical and aesthetic discourses implied by the term 'Nature'.

In less than a page Mazzoleni tells us that Nature is 'interconnectedness', an idea which forms the theoretical concept for the book. Yet like Claude Shannon's theory of 'information', where the term 'information' can be read in many different ways, it's not exactly clear what 'interconnectedness' is. There is also no discussion about the qualities of experience invoked by the idea of networking artificial and biological systems, or the values or meaning that these new connections may convey.

As Donna Haraway's 'naturecultures' and Koert van Mensvoort's Next Nature remind us, our relationship with Nature is culturally and technologically determined so continually changing – which also influences the way we design. Yet, Mazzoleni presents biomimicry as a scientific fact and does not critique or compare her choice of design method with other ways of producing ecological architectures such as green architecture (increases vegetation in urban environments), progressive modernism (more efficient industrialisation), or bio-design (incorporating living materials into architecture).

It is therefore unclear what biomimicry can offer beyond an aesthetic style, which is a position that Mazzoleni is keen to dispel. Yet, without establishing exactly why solar panels inspired by a lizard are different from efficiently-packed solar arrays that are not inspired by a lizard – the functional benefits of biomimicry remain unconvincing, if not spurious.

However, these conceptual explorations are not without value. Mazzoleni poignantly observes

that biomimicry inspired proto-architecture 'defines a key moment of design, open to discourse, experimentation and environmental innovation', which compels us to seek increasingly environmentally-connected methods of building construction.

If there is one thing that biomimicry does very well indeed, it is to provide inspiration through relentlessly optimistic and seductive visions. The design projects in this book are generated from very handsome animals such as polar bears, snow leopards, vibrant slugs and side-blotched lizards, with no mention of stinking vultures, naked mole rats or abominations from the abyss. It is also noteworthy that in the world of biomimicry, animals are always useful, or efficient – not vestigial, or candidates for extinction like filarial worms, toxic algal blooms or swarms of evil midges.

This uncritical view of the natural world is contagious. It spawns the liberal use of truisms to promote the biomimicry cause ('we [...] are 'hard wired' to find nature attractive'). Indeed, biomimicry appears to induce selective attention to the natural world's activities – think of a rotting carcass (not so lovely). Alternatively, Nature's frugal virtues such as 'efficient interconnectedness' are brought to our attention (explain that to a fox in a henhouse, or a mouse in your sock drawer).

We are also moralistically cautioned – Scientology-style – that bad things that happen in the environment aren't really caused by Nature, but by humans. In fact, it posits that 'waste only truly happens when we interrupt natural cycles'. This doesn't deal with wayward animals any more than it addresses the wanton damage of natural disasters, and probably lands more power and responsibility in the lap of humans than we are probably deserving of – or capable of dealing with. Naturally, truisms can be justified when they're backed up with biology, which is what I am assuming is the point of all the science in this design book – to assert that biomimicry is fact.

Left and below: the shimmering plumage of a hummingbird inspired this iridescent pavilion, but is biomimicry nothing but a pavonine display? And isn't nature's beauty itself often only skin deep – the jewel-like tree frog secretes a deadly poison, after all, and the proud lion eats his rival's cubs?

Yet, after reading this book, and despite my personal preference for an unsanitised version of Nature – more in keeping with Timothy Morton or Slavoj Žižek – I was left with the impression that biomimicry has a very particular role to play in architectural design and our millennial relationship with the natural world.

Biomimicry is Nature for the digital world – one that has lost any real connection with materiality, context and environment – or, what it is like to be embodied. It sterilises the natural world through algorithms, edits out the bits that we can't deal with and then calls the product 'sustainable'. It is a trophy destined to be abstracted into 3D renderings, which are tenuously entangled with parametric datasets (called 'ecology') and recapitulated at a scale of 'one to whatever'. It is an abstraction of reality, compatible with the idea of biology as a form of information, which can be prototyped into existence by hitting the print button. It's a Frank Lloyd Wright view of architecture for the copy/paste generation where biomimetic geometries burst out of landscapes as recombinant real/virtual organic seeds (which as yet, have no real substance – although genomic scientist JC Venter is working on it).

Indeed, as an idealised and abstracted form of Nature, biomimicry can be whatever we choose it to be – slugs, hummingbirds, beetles, carnivores, de-extinction – even the ugly stuff. Through the transformative platform of the digital realm biomimicry can address almost any problem that we ask of it, with any value we like ascribed to it. Right now, the cultural agenda is sustainability, which is what this book is responding to. But, there are no paradigm-shifting proposals in this book – it is parametric snake oil.

Bohemian rhapsody

ANDREW MEAD

Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History, Derek Sayer, Princeton University Press, £24.95

On one of several trips to Prague in the interwar years, Le Corbusier inspected Josef Fuchs and Oldřich Tyl's new Trade Fair Palace and made a typically Olympian pronouncement: 'It is an extraordinarily significant building but it is not yet architecture.' He was less picky when he went to Wenceslas Square: 'It is splendid – its life, its tempo, its stores, its passers-by: well-heeled bourgeois as well as Average Joe types. Here there is health, strength, enthusiasm, willingness, a little brutalism, some want of classical culture, but no neurasthenia.'

Corb was wrong about the neurasthenia, while the fate of the Trade Fair Palace is one of the many ironies in this book – if irony is a dark enough word. But we might first ask why, in its title, the book claims that Prague is the 'capital of the twentieth century'. Derek Sayer, professor of cultural history at Lancaster University, suggests that – with the possible exception of Berlin – there is no other city that presents 'such a variety of ways of being modern'. Above all, he says, what makes Prague a fitting capital of the 20th century is that it's a place 'where modernist dreams have time and again unravelled'. This argument becomes increasingly persuasive as the book proceeds, though you could make as strong a case for Berlin.

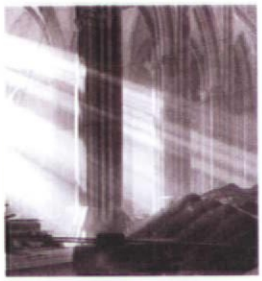
Sayer's emphasis is on the first half of the 20th century – prime years for the study of modernity and its discontents – though there are forays into the brief Prague Spring of 1968, the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the Prague of today. Instead of a strict chronological account, Sayer

criss-crosses the decades, juxtaposing various episodes like a mosaicist placing some tesserae. On the premise that there are many modernities, not one, and also many reverses, he supplies 'a multitude of petites narratives' – not the overarching grand narrative that tends to structure history books.

The architectural narratives appear primarily in the lengthy chapter 'Modernism in the Plural', with Karel Teige emerging as a key figure. An innovative graphic artist and typographer, Teige was a prominent member of Prague's avant-garde arts group Devětsil and as vocal about architecture as Le Corbusier. A hard-line purist, Teige criticised Adolf Loos for 'obsolete aestheticism' in his Villa Müller, dismissed Czech Cubist architecture as 'a cul-de-sac dominated by priests of the romantic imagination', and even rounded on Corb for 'leaving the essence of the social character of dwelling untouched'. Exploring these disparate modernities, Sayer touches on Prague's radical urban renewal at the start of the century, considers individual buildings (for example, the Bata shoe store), and surveys 'the hubbub of architectural vocabularies' on Wenceslas Square.

When the Surrealist movement's founder André Breton went to Prague in 1935, he dubbed it 'the magic capital of old Europe' and was particularly taken with the 16th-century Star Castle on its outskirts – another building whose destiny would prove ironic. Given their marginality in standard art histories, it's a surprise to discover how productive Czech Surrealists were and how engaged they were with their French confrères. Sayer immerses us in the local scene (dominated by poet Vítězslav Nezval) but gives ample space to the better-known trio of Breton, Paul Eluard and Louis Aragon, and there are detours to sites as various as Swanage and Angkor Wat – the former for Paul Nash's 'Seaside Surrealism' feature in the AR (April 1936) and the latter as the source of Max Ernst's paintings of petrified cities. With its schisms and excommunications, Surrealism was almost as turbulent as the century that spawned it. Sayer enjoys its taste for the erotic, seen as an enemy of reason, and stresses the movement's tendency to undermine 'modernity's more grandiose schemes'.

This book is as much about the atmosphere of Prague as its built



Above: Josef Sudek's photograph of St Vitus's Cathedral, completed in the 1920s, demonstrates the nonsimultaneity of the simultaneous in 20th-century Prague
Below: Karel Teige, better known for his typography and architectural criticism, also produced Surrealist photomontages such as this mutant zebra-striped nude

reality, and shadows often fall across its pages. Prague is a place where streets and squares have changed their names and then changed them again – a place where continuity is deceptive, as in the case of the delicatessen Paukert's whose founder's name is back in place after years of the store being nationalised. In the 20th century it was a place too of airbrushed photographs, show trials and executions – and the later vindication of the executed.

In the 1950s the Star Castle that Breton admired became a museum to the 19th-century historical novelist Alois Jirásek, co-opted by the governing communists because 'his work teaches us a correct view of our past and fills us with historical optimism'. Now reconstructed to exhibit modern art, the Trade Fair Palace played an infamous role in the Second World War when it was used for processing Jews en route to concentration camps. It's no wonder then that Sayer calls this 'a surrealist history', not just because it features Surrealist artists but because numerous events in 20th-century Prague have been so surreal.

No neurasthenia?

If this book's focus was exclusively architectural, you would register omissions: for instance, there's no mention of Jože Plečnik's highly singular interventions at Prague Castle or of Prague's version of Stuttgart's Weissenhofsiedlung – the now much-altered Baba Estate with its Modernist villas. But instead this is a broad cultural history in which architecture is firmly embedded, with Sayer ranging easily across the arts. So alongside pages on Prague's painters and writers we find Bohuslav Martinů's opera *Julietta*, whose hero arrives in a small seaside town where everyone has lost their memory: what's remembered or forgotten is fundamental to this book. And we see the photographer Josef Sudek recording the completion of St Vitus's Cathedral in the 1920s – its belated Gothic arches pierced by sun rays dense with dust motes.

This book is continually illuminating but also rather sobering, for just as it confounds any straightforward narrative of the past so it destabilises the future. Sayer says in his introduction that he plans to 'rummage amid the rags and refuse of yesterday's modernity in the hope of uncovering the dreamworlds that continue to haunt what we fondly believe to be today's waking state' – and by the end of the book those dreamworlds are distinctly alive.

In a city where Franz Kafka has become 'an unlikely patron saint of tourist kitsch', Sayer contemplates a now ignored statue of Alois Jirásek and with a nod to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, premiered in Prague, observes that 'statues have come to life here before'. In other words, don't count on the continuity of today's status quo. Sayer doesn't try to predict Prague's future but leaves us with a question mark. It pays to be sceptical in this haunting city.

The medium is the message

TOM TEATUM

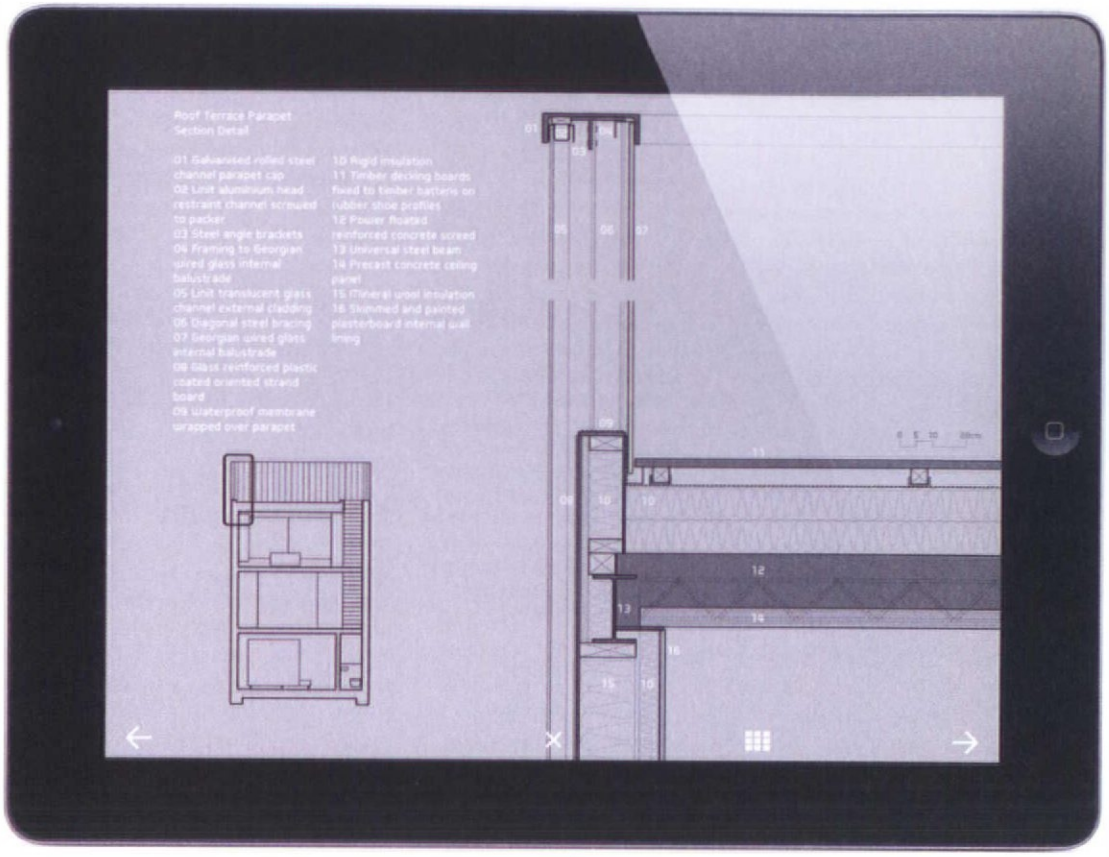
Slip House: Carl Turner Architects, Outcast Editions, £6.99

Marshall McLuhan famously said that the medium is the message – for example, in film it is the relationship between images, space and time that structures the user's experience. For McLuhan the deep structures of a medium characterise how a society can be engaged by more than content.

Today, interactive digital books collage text, photography, video, illustrations and commentary into a single experience. While drawing on established media, they differ from e-books as they facilitate a multiplicity of readings compared with the linearity of a print structure. Through interactivity, flow and depth of navigation create a different type of engagement, as our navigations over the iPad become almost an extension of our nervous system.

Established in 2010, Outcast Editions is testing this medium to publish 'Illustrated Contemporary Interactive Architecture Books' with a focus on contemporary houses. Its current six titles range from *Slip House* in the UK by Carl Turner (page 50) to an extensive New South Wales beach house by Peter Stutchbury. International in locations, designed specifically for iPad, they mix the visual immediacy of a graphic magazine with the detail of a monograph.

Digital publishing marks a significant transition in our experience of reading and consuming, a development from online shopping where the anticipation of an Amazon box ends with a tangible product. With Outcast Editions it is replaced with the instantaneous arrival of an



icon to the desktop bookstore; an icon that has multiple entry points, allowing varying journeys by each user or even every time it is 'read' by the same user.

While Amazon eroded the high-street bookstore, digital books make redundant a chain of infrastructure and production, from printing to storage and distribution, to the need for a publisher. Its replacement offers instantaneous access to a global audience through a global online shop. Outcast Editions, a digital publishing house formed by three people, bypasses the control of a traditional publisher, and directly accesses a global market through the App Store. Apple understood the medium is the message, creating a structural change that connected the producer and user directly.

One of three English houses documented by Outcast, Slip House by Carl Turner Architects is a new-build house in south London that forms a home and office for the architect. The opening interface is structured with four rows of thumbnails: a map separating contents by media – from text, video, photographs, drawings and details. Each stratum can be slid horizontally for an instant overview, allowing access directly to an individual drawing or the full selection of photos. This interface allows shallow navigation, a fast overview in a single gaze, a structure that prevents a linear experience.

Full-screen photos have a stunning quality; here the tactility of print is replaced by the luminosity of the screen. The '+' icon to the centre of the photos acts as a link that activates a plan locating the photo with a brief description. The general arrangement drawings and the details have a consistent clear quality; the details are immaculately produced and allow layers of construction to be read in a simple clean graphic. Considerable effort has been placed on developing the quality of the drawings, and they act as a tool to amplify the understanding of construction.

The '+' icon is also located on each plan; tapping it brings up section lines, elevation markers and detail locations. Tapping these brings you to the relevant section or detail. Within the details the '+' brings up a plan locating the detail, tapping the plan will return you to full plan drawing. This interactivity invites engagement that is characterised by flow and speed, aided by the clarity of the graphic organisation, allowing shallow or deep navigation.

Above: our screen dependency recalls McLuhan's misleadingly telescoped (and rather paternalistic) quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*: 'But soft, what light through yonder window breaks ... she speaks, and yet says nothing'

If linear structures create hierarchy and separation, digital space collapses distance and erodes separation, allowing a seamless transition from photo to text to video. Here there is a neat mirroring between medium and message: in Slip House, work and living are collapsed into one space. While they are separate, the house facilitates both programmes in a flexible relationship where work co-exists with living. This flexibility is a response to a desire to create an economic sustainability as much as a consciousness for reducing energy.

Carl Turner designed, produced and managed the build of this house. Setting up finance in a recession and having to sell other properties to make the project feasible shows a determination to create a modern home. Given the rise in self-employed consultancy brought on by the recession, it acts as a typology that accommodates the needs of an emerging employment structure. As a process it shows how architects may erode their dependency on clients as being the only way to build.

Turner, in a short video describing the architectural approach to the house, explains the environmental strategy with its focus on retaining energy, the formal organisation and the focus on organising space defined by daylight. The film creates an immediate engagement with the architect; with drawing and photos it adds a layer of communication that extends the opportunity to experience architecture.

With interactive books, directing a message is replaced with a structure that allows the relationship between video, image and text to resonate dependent on the method of navigation. As McLuhan noted, television cannot be judged as better or worse than radio, it just presents another form of awareness.

Battle of ideas

AUSTIN WILLIAMS

The Globalisation of Modern Architecture: The Impact of Politics, Economics and Social Change on Architecture and Urban Design since 1990, Robert Adam, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, £67.99

In *From Bauhaus to Our House,* Tom Wolfe bemoaned the fact that early European Modernism had stifled the

development of an American architectural expression, at the very time that America was emerging as a global superpower. What kind of confident economic powerhouse, he mused, would allow itself to be subjugated to an alien ideological import? Wolfe's intent was to demonise the imposition of non-indigenous belief systems and to defend the unimpeded logic of the US market. Architecture was simply the mechanism that he chose to express this point. Effectively, his was a diatribe against the aloofness of ideas, and for an architecture grounded in real social conditions (preferably those social conditions that he favoured).

In this new book, architect Robert Adam similarly offers the reader a social criticism in which he seeks to understand how changes in the 'real world' impact on architecture and urbanism. Whereas Wolfe was reacting to what he considered to be the postwar victor not getting their deserved stylistic spoils, Adam notes that even though there are equally momentous shifts in world events today, there is no equivalent power struggle among styles, theories nor movements. In fact, there is a remarkable passivity in architectural discourse, design and delivery: 'no seismic change (in architecture and urbanism) to equal the momentous economic shifts that the press reveals daily'. Like the conservative Wolfe, for Adam the Classicist, the problem is that 'High Modernism still dominates'.

Adam explains the mismatch between social turmoil and architectural stasis, in part, as a reflection of 'cultural lag'; the difference between cause and effect; the delay between real events and their representation. At its simplest level, Adam notes that architecture takes a long time to come into being, sometimes creating an anachronistic memory of the period in which it was commissioned. As artist Don Davis once noted, the Sixties actually took place between 1965 and 1975.

But maybe, the social turmoil to which Adam refers – from Cairo's Tahrir Square to China's rise – is not having an effect on architecture because it is little more than a performance; something to be observed. Contrary to popular opinion, it could be argued that the so-called Twitter revolutions of the Arab Spring were an example of *dis*engagement, not just in architecture but in politics. At a time of global financial meltdown, maybe architects aren't responding to the crisis because nobody is responding to the crisis.

Adam says that he only recently realised that architecture was shaped by forces separate to the discipline (forces reflected in the subtitle of the book) and in the incestuous world of architecture, it is good that an architect has written what amounts to a *political* book. There are enough coffee-table tomes and architectural hagiographies to go around, so it is worth applauding an explicitly intellectual intervention.

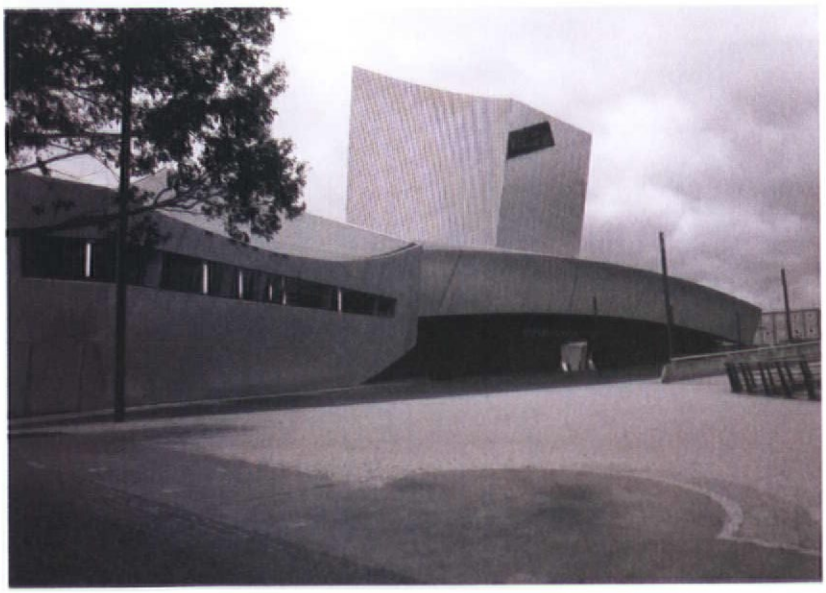
As with any challenging publishing venture, at times it is found wanting. For instance, describing 2,500 years of architectural history in just under 10 pages is not advisable, especially in a book with such scholarly pretensions. Secondly, having Robert Adam cite *Playboy* interviews, or explain the finer points of Bhangra music, is as uncomfortable as watching a vicar dance at a wedding.

Daniel Libeskind's Imperial War Museum in Manchester (below left), and SOM's China World Trade Center in Beijing (above) are used by Robert Adam to demonstrate the economic determination of culture. Such an assertion might sound peculiar coming from a traditionalist like Adam, but then Stalin liked stodgy neoclassicism, too

However, for a book on Modernism and globalisation written by a traditionalist, this is not a score-settling polemic. Admittedly, there is a certain schadenfreude in his use of examples such as Hadid's MAXXI and Eisenman's City of Culture of Galicia; both commissioned as expensive follies in a bygone age when clients had money to burn, but which have been completed in an era of austerity.

One key observation in the book is that globalisation unites as well as fragments. This is a useful and nuanced approach to the subject, which may be alien to many anti-globalisation activists. For many, it is counterintuitive to suggest that globalisation reinforces localism, but he describes quite well the particularism of market segmentation, tourist branding or simply the role of 'a nostalgia for home'. With Adam praising 'cultural diversity' and 'identity politics' like a latter-day Tom Wolfe, at times this book reads like a Big Society manifesto. We hear that traditions are good and place is important; that informal settlements are character-forming, and communities are empowering, etc. The argument is pragmatic, technical, logical ... and primarily succeeds by attrition.

Actually, there is much to commend this book but an honest defence of classicism – or traditional architecture – instead of weasly calls for Critical Regionalism, Reflexive Modernism or Contextual Urbanism would have stirred the blood a little more and prevented this book sounding like a citation-laden PhD submission. When he asserts (correctly, I think) that 'Modernism is now traditional in Europe and Americas' or that New Urbanism is 'mainstream', he is identifying a fact, but one borne out of passive acceptance rather than a victory in the architectural battle of ideas. Such is the dearth of political belief in social change, that even critical authors like Adam find it difficult to assert themselves.



Works in paper

JEF SMITH

Shigeru Ban: Architecture and Humanitarian Activities, Art Tower Mito, Ibaraki, Japan, ended 12 May

This was the largest showing of Shigeru Ban's work to date, offering a timely retrospective of his achievements and exploring the architect's role in 21st-century society across a diverse range of social issues, scales and locations.

Ban has, like many of his Japanese contemporaries, been exploring new conceptual directions in what architecture can be. But in contrast to the dreamlike, dematerialised qualities sought by others such as SANAA and Fujimoto, the tectonic ambiguities of Kengo Kuma, or the metaphorical departure points of Ito, Ban's work has a robustly pragmatic underpinning in the genuinely innovative investigation into the structural and tectonic possibilities of recycled paper and laminated timber, while still often imbued with joy and playfulness.

Very evident from this aptly-titled exhibition was his early extensive involvement with humanitarian work. Setting up in private practice in Tokyo in 1995 with the usual private house commissions by wealthy clients, Ban became a consultant of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, establishing the Voluntary Architects' Network. He has been engaged in disaster relief projects worldwide ever since. But there is no contradiction here – every project embodies an elegant economy of means integral to his design approach, regardless of setting or client.

Straightforwardly laid out in a chronological loop, the exhibition included many full-size mock-ups of whole or part buildings and structural components, well-placed moments of audio-visual and, of course, great photographs. As with all retrospectives, it was an opportunity for the viewer to reassess particular ideas within the body of work, while also becoming aware of new, or relatively less well-known, ones.

Here, the conceptual and material inventiveness in projects such as the Japan Pavilion for the Hanover EXPO 2000, Paper Church (Kobe, 1995) and Naked House (Saitama, Japan, 2000) remain hugely impressive, demonstrating a lightness of touch and avoiding bombastic excess. The full extent of the disaster relief work becomes apparent with systems such as the Paper Log House, developed in response to the 1995 Kobe earthquake and now having had several manifestations elsewhere, adapting to the particular climatic requirements and resources available.

Right: view of a retrospective of Shigeru Ban's work. His mastery of timber and card is demonstrated by recreated sections of his greatest hits

One significant quibble with an otherwise very thorough display was the lack of plans and sections. These would have been particularly useful for the less well-known (at least to the Western eye) early projects. Missing such basic information is an all too common oversight with architectural exhibitions, presumably on the grounds that they are of limited use or interest to the general viewer, but it really doesn't have to be an issue of either/or.

Ban's work itself in many ways represents a both/and mentality and it is the continuum of his refined design sensibility into the disaster relief projects which elevates them above the worthy but crude utility so often associated with this kind of work. He also demonstrates an understanding of what can engender a sense of human dignity while addressing the fundamental provision of shelter.

Perhaps this is no more poignantly represented than in the response to the 2011 tsunami, with some of the worst affected areas lying just a few miles north of Mito. Thousands of families left homeless and finding temporary shelter in community halls were rapidly provided with visual privacy and a sense of personal space by the simple modular partition system Ban devised from cardboard tubes. Supplied in three different diameters, these combined to form flexible frameworks of beams and columns over which white sheets, held together with safety pins, were hung. A series of the partitions are displayed in a room along with stackable plywood stools, which, again, have a sense of considered simplicity in their clever composition while being robust and fit for purpose. I am informed that in such desperate circumstances, sometimes it really is the little things that can mean so much.

The abundant reservoir of goodwill built up while progressing through this exhibition still cannot disguise the perceived shortcomings of the Metz Pompidou (AR June 2010), which is featured extensively in the last room, and only adds to the sense of disappointment and missed opportunity. Here the whole is very much less than the sum of the parts, so unlike the other projects shown. Perhaps this is a consequence of the relatively lavish means leading to a confused and contradictory end. Notably, the adjacently displayed one-third size model of the laminated timber column detail from the Nine Bridges Golf Clubhouse in South Korea, uses a similar language to the Metz Pompidou's. But here the column, and lattice roof structure flowing from it, is a singular generative primary idea and the project benefits from the resulting clarity.

Still, overall, after experiencing this impressively comprehensive and poignantly located exhibition, you are left with a deep respect for the meaningful enhancement brought to the lives of so many by the level of commitment, inventiveness and poetic pragmatism embodied in the work of Shigeru Ban.

Graz University of Technology, Austria

MATTHEW BARAC

Few agree on exactly what it was that brought about the 1980s flowering – or rather the explosion – of architectural innovation in Graz, Austria's second city and capital of the federal state of Styria, but none would deny the international impact of that moment. All eyes were on a city that, for most engaged in architectural debate, came to represent what Peter Blundell Jones called the 'seedbed' for a wider phenomenon. The energetic spirit of Graz, a momentum characterised by extravagant diagonals, daring cantilevers, and rebellion against both the strict lines of Modernism and the toy-town games of Postmodernism, ricocheted through the design periodicals and end-of-year exhibitions of the times. Although associated with wider dynamics of formal experimentation, the city – and its school of architecture, led by recently deceased maverick visionary Günther Domenig for some 20 years – became a laboratory for new ideas.

The role played by powerful figures such as Domenig in the narrative of what Blundell Jones called 'New Graz Architecture' should not, according Hans Gangoly, Dean of the School of Architecture at Graz University of Technology, be underestimated. 'It is the personalities and their attitudes that influence you in the course of your study ... confrontation with these personalities was vital to my own development as an architect.' Despite its heritage as a technical college and a curriculum that consciously seeks to address the 'fundamentals and givens' of architectural knowledge – historical study, understanding of technological and material basics, environmental awareness, programme and patterns of occupation – the Graz approach recognises, according to faculty member Andreas Lechner, that 'in the end, designing architecture is a highly personal thing'.

It is in our encounters, as individuals, with the challenge of design that we bring buildings to life: 'Architecture is both a craft and an intellectual endeavour, but to actually learn to design you have to do it; it is learning by doing,' explains Lechner. There is nothing new in this concept – that architectural skill, which brings together the Vitruvian triad of concerns, is an embodied form of knowledge. And yet most schools today respond to managerialist demands, for quantifiable expertise and value-for-money, by prioritising

Dean Hans Gangoly and Kersten Geers set students the challenge of remaking modern classics for new contexts, encouraging a critical engagement with architecture's holy monsters. Some of the projects recycled included OMA's City Hall in the Hague, a massive bureaucratic structure posing as a cluster of smaller buildings reworked as houses (1-4). Students Dora Jerbic and Simon Oberhofer established a relationship between block and city underlined by a row of trees dwarfed by the OMA skyline

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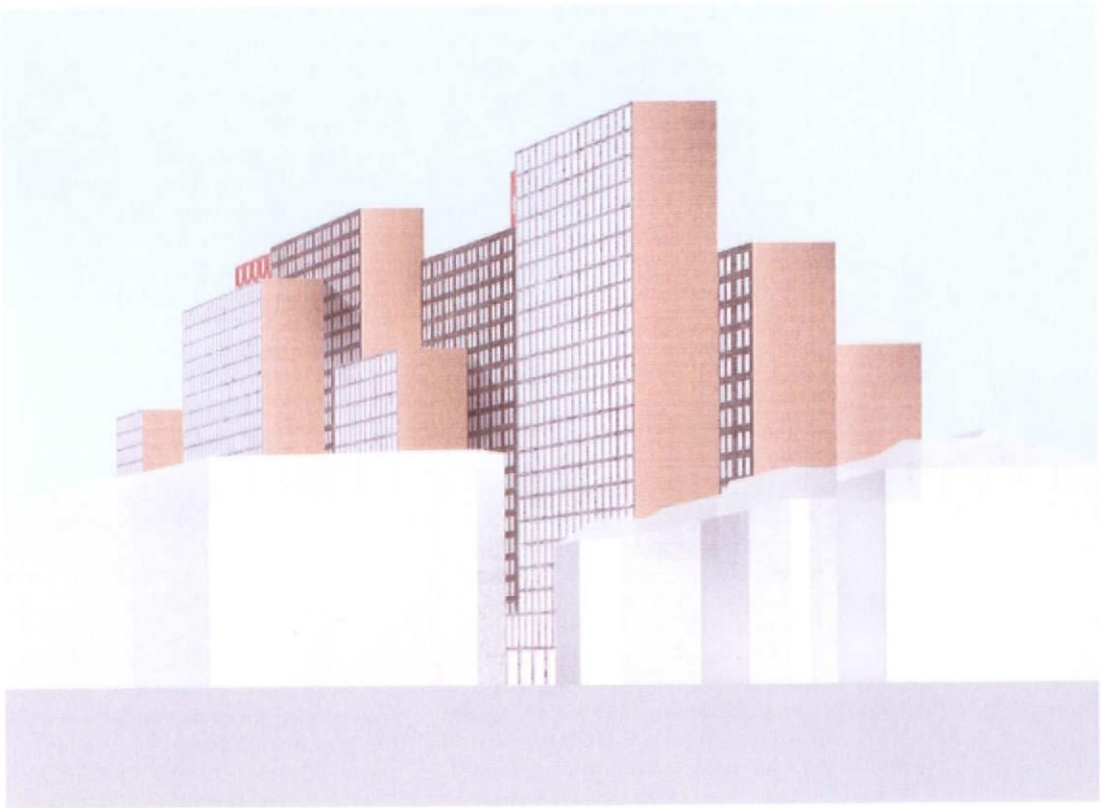

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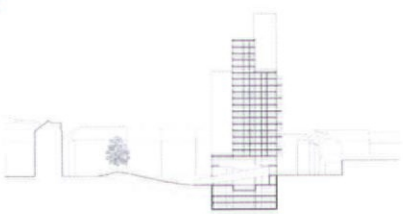

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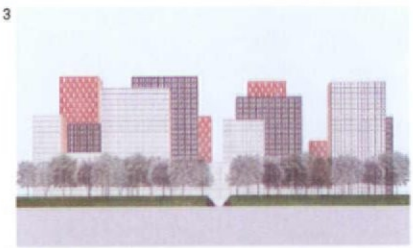

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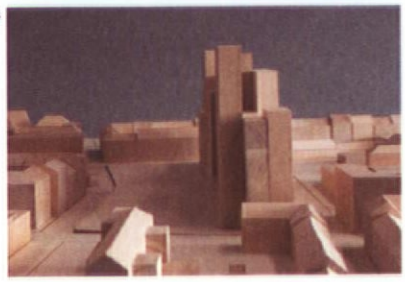

knowhow over judgement, thereby breaking the synthetic practice of design down into bits. At Graz, this would not wash: 'architectural endeavour cannot be reduced'.

Pedagogical awareness of the need to foster individual creativity does not necessarily, however, translate into design briefs that indulge the urge for self-expression. A studio project set by Gangoly and visiting professor Kersten Geers challenged students to remake and rethink modern classics in a new context. Entitled *Ziegelhaus* (brick house), the brief offered 12 key precedents – each an example of large-scale urban form, such as Poelzig's 1916 House of Friendship and Bofill's 1974 Walden 7 – for reinterpretation by transplanting and modifying the original to provide high-density housing in Graz. This manoeuvre, reminiscent of the 'typological transfer' method adopted by Christ & Gantenbein at ETH Zurich (Pedagogy, AR November 2011), invites both a critique of the role of architectural originality, and a strategic understanding of the architect's duty to context.

All students were asked to use the same set of graphic techniques to represent their schemes. Pastel-coloured parallel projections and plug-in timber models make objective comparison of the different designs easy 5&6. Henri Sauvage's ziggurat-shaped Giant Hotel was transformed into a gym by another group of students 7&8. Hilberseimer's blankly uncommunicative entry for the Chicago Herald Tribune competition was re-purposed as an urban market hall

Dora Jerbic and Simon Oberhofer took OMA's City Hall in The Hague as their precedent, a competition scheme of 1986 in which the architects broke down the gargantuan mass of the 150,000sqm institution by profiling the building to simulate a skyline. Capitalising on the gesture towards urbanity that this represents, but recognising that if housing at scale is to satisfy its inhabitants' social needs it must engage positively with the landscape, Jerbic and Oberhofer treated the architecture as an affirmative boundary between city and suburb. The wit of their proposal is summarised, in the cross section, as a stand-off between a row of trees, lined up like sentries, and the implacable superblock.

A project by three students, based on Hilberseimer's colossal 1922 entry for the Chicago Herald Tribune competition, challenged the magnitude of the scheme assigned by reprogramming a coach house as a market hall, so reviving the tradition of the Graz farmers' market. The preserved interior, with its time-worn timber structure, remains unchanged while inserted spaces for a restaurant and bakery invite dialogue between old and new. The cavernous void of Henri Sauvage's ziggurat Giant Hotel of 1927, in a proposal by another team of three, is reconfigured to offer exercise and sports facilities, responding to the culture of fitness at the heart of contemporary notions of wellbeing. Housing over a thousand residents, the flats are terraced to maximise exposure to fresh air and natural light.

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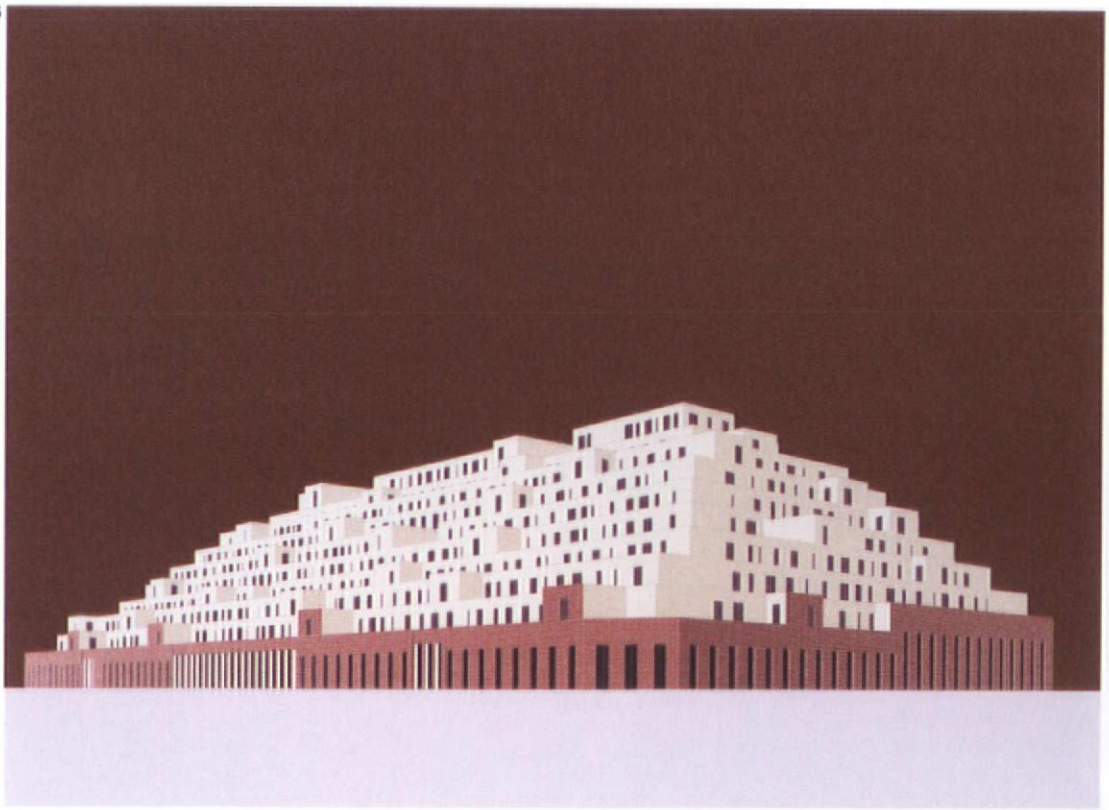

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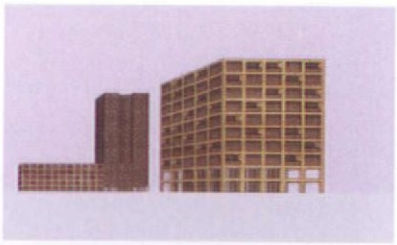

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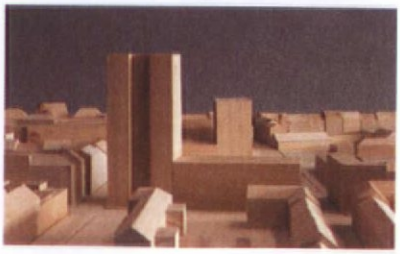

REPUTATIONS

John Lautner

PAUL DAVIES

John Lautner's reputation, by publishing weight, is largely posthumous. Andrew Holmes first proffered me a Lautner poem on a scrap of A4 one afternoon at the AA in the early 1990s. Artemis published a mammoth, sumptuous, bronze-jacketed two-kilo volume – *John Lautner, Architect* – soon after, in the year Lautner died aged 83. Rizzoli followed up with Alan Hess's well-regarded monograph in 1999. The latest deluxe addition, *Between Earth and Heaven, The Architecture of John Lautner* (Hammer Rizzoli, 2008) is academically more prickly since Lautner is now something of an industry; enjoying a Foundation at Getty, centenary celebrations, conservation conferences and so on.

'OMG' would be a reasonable exclamation on stumbling across any Lautner building, even in a book. However, the reader has to tread more carefully across the idiosyncratically populated slopes of Lautner's world; it's easy to be wrong-footed. Some (including me) have understood him as author of Googie, inspirer of *The Jetsons*, or home of Bond villains. The latter's lairs seem almost uniquely inspired by the extravagant retreats that form much of his work. It turns out this is no accident, it is even appropriate, but it is still wrong.

Today he's primarily considered a visionary, but Esther McCoy once described him as a 'lyrical technologist', while Banham just said he was 'eccentric'; I had him as 'goofy'. Lautner on Lautner (that poem) manages to come over as both sardonic and idealist simultaneously.

For certain, John Lautner is absolutely of the place: of LA, of Hollywood, Malibu, Beverley Hills and so on. He is also of mountaintops, lakeshores and shady glades at the same time. Lautner hated LA. It made him physically sick, but it also worked for him, largely because his clients were sick of it too. His houses represent literal and metaphorical escape. Clients loved a piece of bespoke Lautner: 'We have danced together throughout ... I (can now) stay on the ground and fly!' cooed Mrs Segel over her ocean-front residence (Malibu, 1979).

His cradle was the shore of Lake Superior, with a rugged upbringing amid nature, transcendentalism, mysticism; the cultivation of intuition, instinct and individualism (Bergson for breakfast) and faith in the revelation of making. He joined Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin with his first wife fearful he might be artistically contaminated, but in fact was one of the earliest and most enduring of disciples. He went west and rather bungled Wright's Sturges House (1939) but soon recovered, was briefly in partnership, but ran off with the partner's wife.

There are highs and lows, but he settled down to a career where 'two or three clients a year who wanted real architecture' would do. At 70 he was doing less, but no matter; they were masterpieces. In look, these unfortunately foreshadow today's prevalent gooey virtuosity, but overall his trajectory is toward solidity; from timber to concrete, from fast to slow, from primitive hut to cave.

He was a tall man with big hands; it looks as if he drew with his fists, and his signature is assertive, like his buildings. He didn't court publicity, especially when his buildings started to get it, so while beavering away at his unique blend of wood butcher's art and Cartier, only his clients, readers of *Playboy*, Hollywood art directors and the odd West Coast scholar seemed to get it. Now he's part of the globalised furniture and an apt aesthetic for Snoop Dogg.

The Chemosphere House (1960) – on its 30-foot concrete pole and reached by funicular off Mulholland Drive – was described by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as the most modern house in the world, but it is the word organic that hangs like a mirage. At a distance it is clear, but up close, it disappears.

> 'The living spaces can appear ungainly, and impossible to populate with furniture. However, you can fit the cameras and lights in, and Bambi and Thumper can do somersaults'

John Lautner
1911-1994
Education
English degree from Northern State Teachers College, Michigan
From 1933 to 1939 he worked under Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin and Arizona
Key buildings
The Chemosphere, LA (1960)
Garcia House, LA (1962)
Elrod House, Palm Springs (1968)
Casa Marbrisa, Acapulco (1973)
Turner House, Aspen (1982)
Quote
'Oh it was depressing: when I first drove down Santa Monica Boulevard, it was so ugly I was physically sick for the first year I was here'

If the organic is attractive (his work is very photogenic), at times Lautner reaches the sublime. The Turner House (1982) in Aspen is a vast shell featuring a whole segment of floor plate that swings out over the snow. The Marbrisa House in Acapulco doesn't seem to have walls. The Malibu Cliff House (1990) resembles a giant slug. That or it's intrusive, the living spaces ungainly, and impossible to populate effectively with furniture. However, you can fit the cameras and lights in, and Bambi and Thumper can do somersaults.

It is a paradox too that you rarely see people living in a Lautner (in pictures): wonderful, but intimidating perhaps. You see vistas, horizons, and close-ups of rocks, but the more everyday aspects of inhabitation seem elusive. So no wonder these houses appear as more stage sets with potential. Such disregard for earth and sky beyond lighting levels would have infuriated Lautner, but such is the way of the world rather than our commune with nature. Today our commercial expressions are even worse; his work is inclined to 'define the luxury spaces of our lives' and bring us 'a little piece of heaven'; it is aspirationally inspirational. It epitomises California dreamland and costs millions of dollars. That's not to say he didn't have designs and ambitions for ordinary people too, but this was his situation; he practised an inverted contextualism that was deeply contextual.

All has been brought down to earth by 'flickerland' (Lautner's term). Mel Gibson impressively pulls down the Garcia House (1962) with his pick-up in *Lethal Weapon 2*. Originally built for a jazz dude, it was charmingly employed as the home of a drug-running South African diplomat. The Elrod House (playpen of Bambi and Thumper) incarcerated Willard Whyte in *Diamonds are Forever*; Bob Hope lived in Stromberg's Atlantis; and *The Big Lebowski* gets

ADAM CRUFT

drugged in the Sheats Goldstein house. These cultural connotations no doubt irritate legions of devotees.

Lautner embodies two essential contradictions. First, that the other Modernism, the organic kind, while blind to function and habit in the broadest sense, was very attractive in others. Second, that while labelled 'timeless', it's hard to know how it adapts. In LA every owner comes predisposed to re-modelling. Lautner held particular views (such as not believing in the division of public and private) and now he's dead; hence the industry, so there is a tendency to be over reverential. Jean-Louis Cohen has attempted to extend the critical domain, but inadvertently reminds us that if we are trading superlatives, Oscar Niemeyer's Canoas house (1953) is more delicate, sensual and light of touch.

Uncomfortably it's the word fantasy that comes to mind. A man who refuted commodification, commodified. We should note that there are more spiritual retreats in California than ever before. To what extent is Lautner a cultural product when he so stubbornly insisted on his individuality? He was certainly the best part of Howard Roark; an uncompromising architect who didn't feel the need to dynamite perfectly serviceable housing complexes, but who, with considerable dexterity, whisks you to dreamland with the spectacle of the authentic.

So perhaps it is tempting to view Lautner through the lens of hyperreality; as a vivid simulation, too real to be real. Whatever his struggle, he was in the right place at the right time; architecture was somehow spiritually fecund, and we hadn't yet to register the essential truths in *Bugs Bunny*. Finally, to ground us, it is to the advantage of all publishing enterprises and galleries that their subjects are dead with a decent body of work behind them by the time they get famous. Lautner was a hoarder, so expect *The Genius of John Lautner* anytime soon.

RUSSIA REBOOTS

How do Russian architects steer a course in the fluctuating milieu of the Wild East? The work of the Moscow-based ABV Group offers a perspective on the challenges and also shows how architects can help to reboot and rebuild society

Things are tough for architecture and architects in Russia, a situation reflecting the worldwide repositioning of the way buildings are procured. This is partly a result of the complexity of modern building, which is rarely just a matter of bricks and mortar or concrete and glass any more, but incorporates such things as environmental control, sustainability, structural innovation in dealing with non-orthogonal shapes, and self-sustaining energy sourcing – all of which can make fantastic demands on the people who design them. It is also to do with the changing role of the architect, no longer the maestro of public perception, the conductor of the construction orchestra, but one of the cogs in a long train of experts who participate in the process of implementing a building.

Moscow practice ABV operates in precisely this difficult transitional environment of technological information overload, altering public perception of the architect's role and expectations of building performance. Yet, looking at the oeuvre of the ABV Group you might imagine that not a lot of this applies to this 21-year-old firm. It is widely respected in Russia, comfortable about working in collaboration with foreign practices and has an enviable portfolio of largely commercial work: offices, hotels, industrial parks, retail and residential buildings. And it has remained open to current thinking as new non-orthogonal forms have begun to be accepted into the global architectural canon.

ABV's 54 staff operate as a group of design studios whose make-up changes according to the job in hand. It is a mode of operating which, in committed hands, has been very successful. Most importantly, it engenders freshness of thinking. It also encourages staff to work on developing specialist skills and gaining experience; supports the ownership of a project and its outcomes by a discrete group within the practice which is directly responsible to the client; and means that openness is obligatory. Whatever arrangement is currently being deployed, however, there is always the overriding message from founder Nikita Biryukov, that architecture should make life easier and better for people. Here Biryukov talks frankly about some of the current challenges facing Russian architects and the prospects for his practice.

How would you describe the state of architecture in Russia?

NB Architecture is a process requiring serious investment. Today, everyone is obliged to cut costs and crisis managers have replaced more charismatic developers and clients. They neither understand nor get to the heart of the design process, and are therefore unable to generate anything new in development terms. Against such a background it is difficult to speak about any obvious architectural movements.

How has the architectural character of Moscow changed?

NB I love looking at old movies, where Moscow still has green spaces, few cars, and people calmly strolling along the pavements and through squares. Now the city has nowhere to go, except maybe for Gorky Park. Instead of green spaces we have 'time bombs' of huge shopping malls. They are like magnets drawing huge numbers of people and cars around the clock and destroying urban space. Human priorities have been lost and values displaced.

How do architects respond to this?

NB Work is becoming monopolised. I increasingly feel a sense of déjà vu, as if we are back in the 1990s. For more than 20 years architects and developers were growing up together. Clients came to architects with an understanding of potential and opportunities. Today architects have to tender for contracts with the lowest offer always winning.

Can architects still justify the importance of architecture to their clients and the state?

NB Of course they can, though it is not always easy. Architecture is not like painting, where paint, canvas and artistic genius determine the quality of the final product. Architecture is directly connected to factors such as the economy, social policy, environment and urban planning. A good architect is always aware of this.

How do you see the involvement of foreign architects in Russia?

NB There is an enormous number of foreigners in Russia today. Usually clients engage them for concept development, which then gets worked up by local architects. Though our foreign colleagues offer a very high quality product, if the same task had been entrusted to us, I am sure we would have coped with it equally well.

If Russian architects are able to perform to the same level, why do clients prefer foreign architects?

NB Clients seek out foreign professionals because they have a different mentality and a different approach to design. Russian architects have been largely discredited over the past 20 years. Many have a contemptuous attitude towards the profession. This is regrettable, because Russian architects are not being given the chance to rehabilitate themselves.

What do you think are the reasons for the unsatisfactory situation of architects and architecture in Russia?

NB Cultural continuity is important. People talk of Constructivism as an example of radical architectural thinking and wonder where it has all gone. But the Constructivists were originally nurtured and sustained by a powerful Russian culture. And then during the Second World War, the country's cultural resources were almost totally destroyed. Many people emigrated and many were simply lost in the war. Today's generation does not have that continuity upon which to build, though it is still striving to produce something worthwhile. Architects do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of society.

How are architects generally regarded in Russia?

NB Architects are not respected because of their complicity. But before the Revolution there were great architects in Russia creating landmarks, controlling budgets and construction. In Russia today there are virtually no architects; instead they have been replaced by faceless 'planners'. And when there is no respect, there is no ambition to achieve things.

What, then, is the role of the architect today?

NB There is a need to breathe life into former industrial areas and contribute to the development of modern business, trade and cultural projects. In architecture, as in any other art, there is always a place to experiment. But catastrophes can always occur, as with Moscow. Everything that comes out of our practice goes through my personal filter. So at least no one can accuse me of abusing the urban environment.

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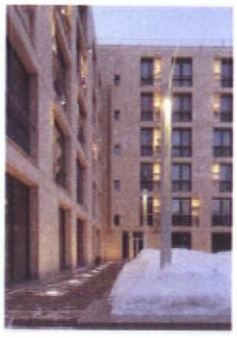

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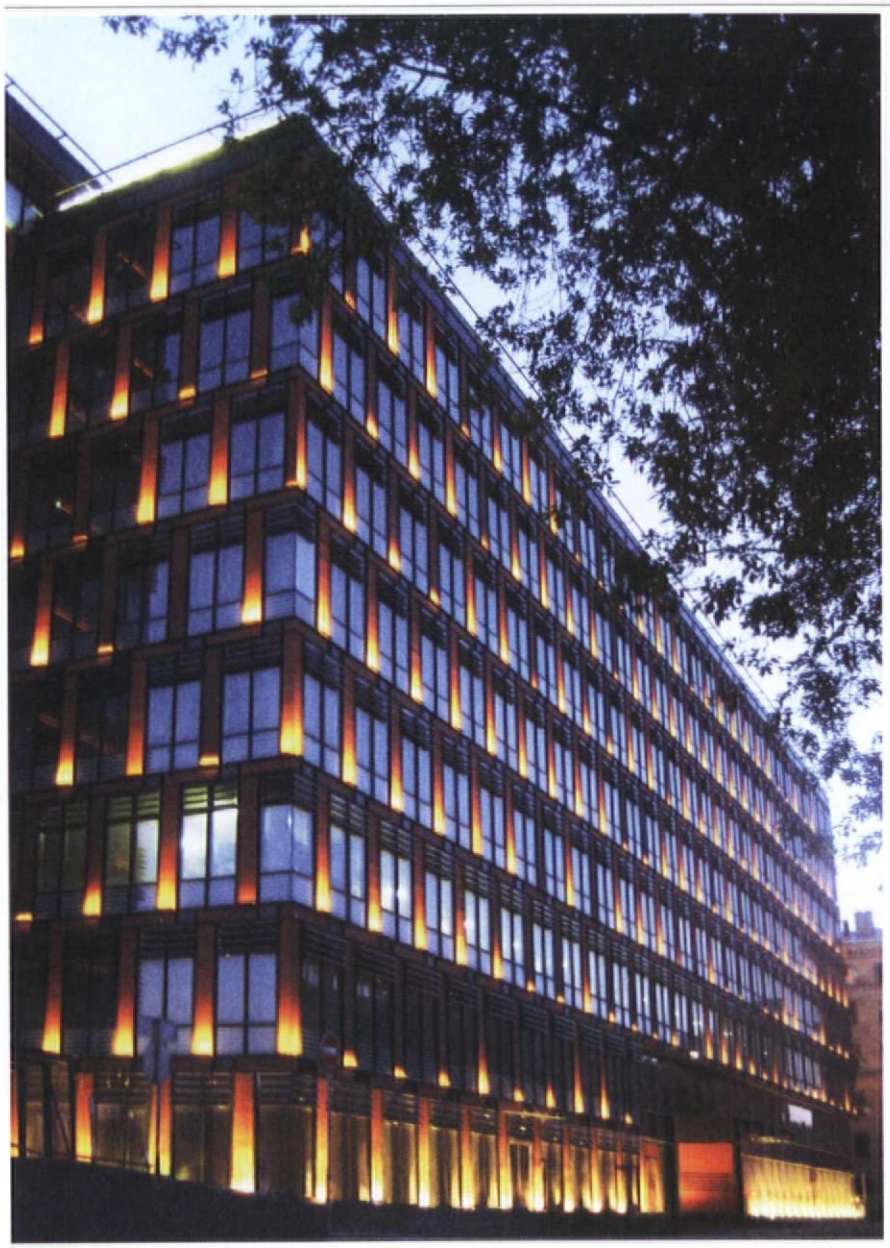
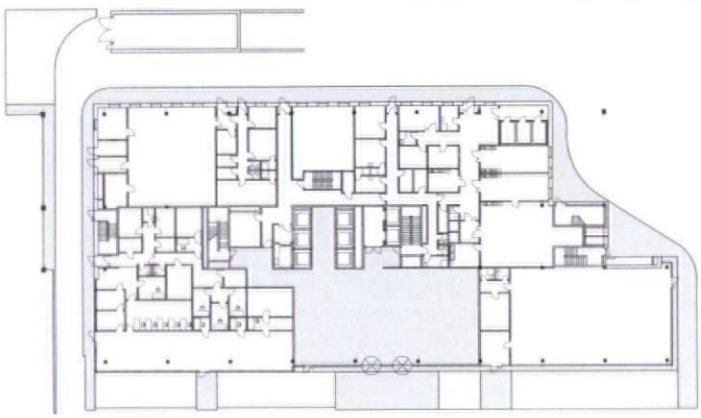
1. Wave Tower, an office development in Moscow by ABV
2, 3. Hilkov Club House, a residential project that draws on the spirit of Moscow's mansion blocks
4. Ocean Plaza Business Centre in Moscow



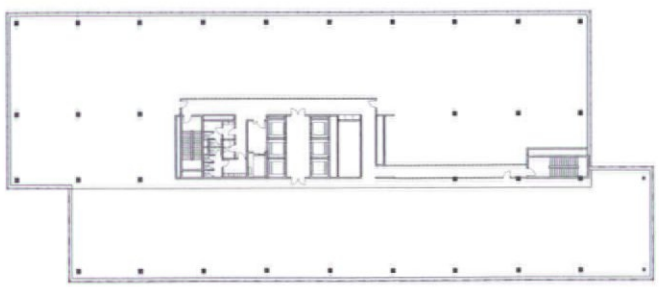
Marr Plaza, Moscow, Russia, ABV Group

Like all architects, ABV complains about the difficulties of the present time, yet over its two decades it seems to have been consistent in designing and building quite large buildings. That very satisfactory situation comes at a certain architectural price: how do you detail big buildings of the same scale as those old Soviet blocks without making facades look repetitive, and how do you avoid the comments about architectural sausage machines which a practice such as SOM had difficulty dodging in the postwar period? Marr Plaza is a new office development in a former industrial district of Moscow. The rectangular volume extends the existing streetscape of Stalin-era buildings and the terracotta employed in its distinctive chequerboard facade picks up on the historic brick.

The building is split into two volumes with a main block on Makeyev Street and a slightly taller one behind it shifting sideways in plan. This volumetric arrangement arose from the need to preserve rights of light in a neighbouring apartment building. The idea of shifting was also used to generate the pattern and rhythm of the facade. Glazed panels on each floor are shifted by half a step creating herringbone tracery of glass and terracotta. The textured surface now resembles a luxurious handmade fabric, giving the tall volumes an unexpectedly expressive quality.



ground floor plan



typical floor plan

2

1, 2. The complex, shifting chequerboard facade animates the building and its surroundings
3. The double-height volume of the entrance foyer
4. Detail of facade. Aluminium louvres provide sun protection

3

4

Looking at ABV's work as a whole, it's clear that its independent atelier mode of working does indeed produce a wide diversity of design. Yet underlying the variety of facade treatments is a clear and calm Cartesian geometry and logic and, especially in the courtyards of tall residential blocks, a sense of proportion. This is apparent in a residential project for Smolensky Street near Smolenskaya Boulevard in the heart of Moscow. Near the site is the historic Church of St Nicholas the Wonder Worker restored in the late 1990s. The city only granted permission for a new development on condition that certain restrictions were observed, relating to height and what was described as a 'modest' architectural solution. It also stipulated that any proposal include a 'house of the clergy', a three-storey volume containing an education and convention centre for the church congregation.

Designed as a wing of the residential building, the house of the clergy resembles an old Moscow mansion, while the main block explores a more contemporary language. Yet these two different structures counterpoint each other with ease and finesse. The larger block is wrapped in a deep grid of white Jurassic stone, its irregularity evocatively suggesting the passage of time, as parts erode.

Smolensky De Luxe, Moscow, Russia, ABV Group

1. The main residential block is wrapped in a white Jurassic stone grid
2. Aerial view of the development with the new mansion containing the house of the clergy, bottom right
3. The irregular form of the grid suggests erosion and decay over time
4. Site perspective showing the relationship of the new development to the historic Church of St Nicholas the Wonder Worker

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Business Centre, Grafskiy Street, Moscow, Russia, ABV Group

The Cartesian element in ABV's architecture seems almost timeless, yet modes and styles of architecture are always on the move – as is the practice's own thinking. For example, what happens when you disrupt the Cartesian grid and embrace a more fluid geometry of sliced and folding planes? And should buildings be skinned and patterned simply by the rhythm of the structure rather than by a desire to manage thermal and solar effects on the interior?

This proposal for a new business centre on Moscow's Grafskiy Street takes the form of a series of softly-profiled blocks rising and rippling from a linear podium. According to orientation, individual blocks are glazed or veiled by a gridded skin. The outcome is a break from the usual dead hand of corporate office design that gives street and neighbourhood a distinctive new landmark. And though one might suspect that the developers are predictably concerned with the relationships of gross to net, and not ncessarily with the enhancement of a locality, ABV shows what can be achieved through the exploration of non-orthogonal themes. Such imaginative architectural thinking makes it possible to combine a developer's preoccupation with lettable floor space with an intention to make a lively urban environment.

1

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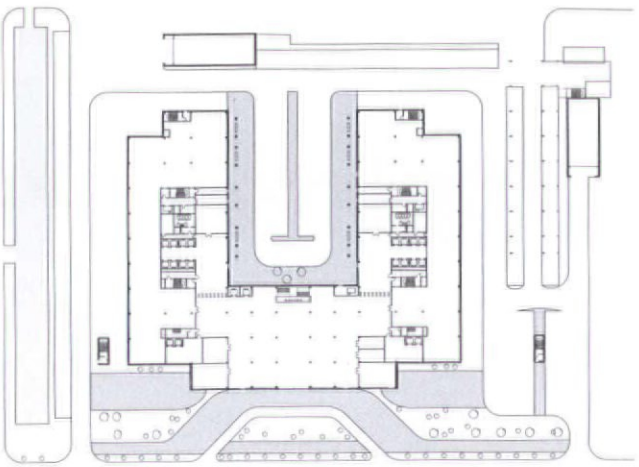
1. A series of folded forms erupt from a linear podium
2. The building is a new neighbourhood landmark
3. An alternative proposal for the same site which explores more conventional Cartesian geometries



ground floor plan

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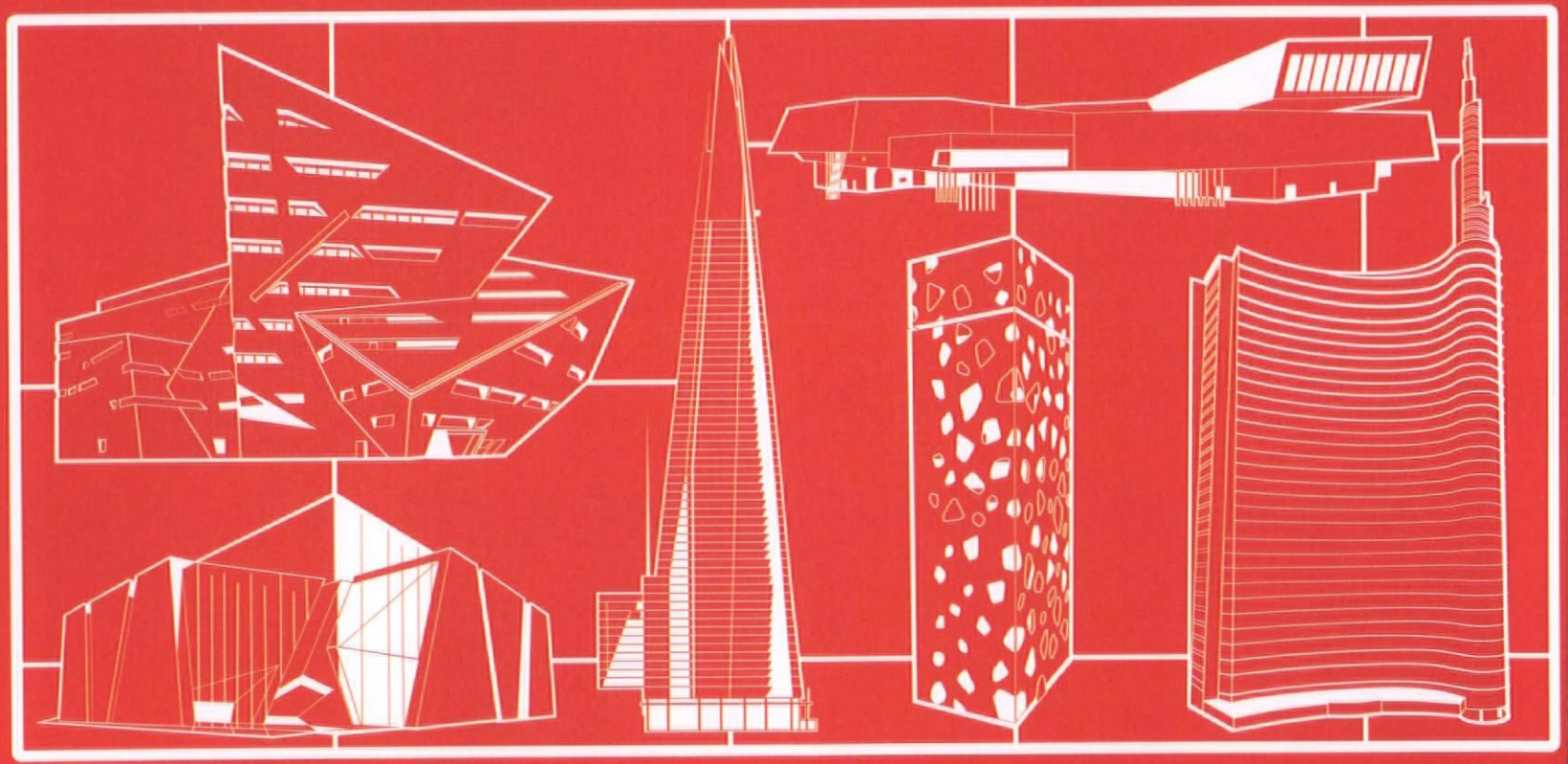

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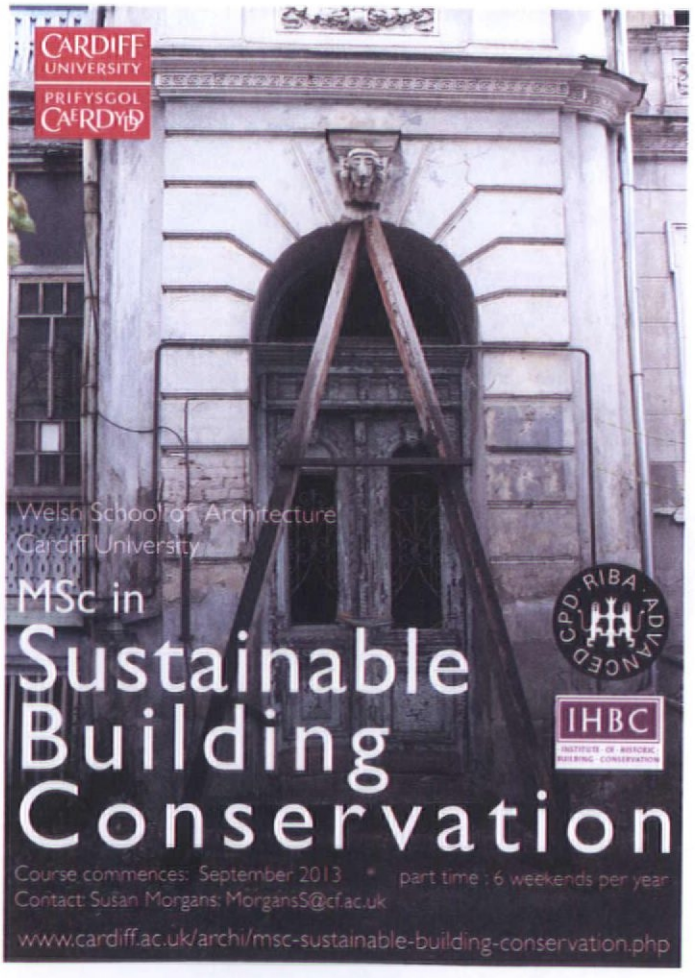

In this collaborative drawing by Léon Krier and Massimo Scolari, titled *Le désespoir de Janus* (1975), two forts face off across a strait. The structures, represented in Scolari's trademark lurid fantasy style, have more than a whiff of Sant'Elia to them, and with their cantilevered gantries, these industrial-Futurist homages are not unlike the contemporaneous works of the High-Tech architects. Facing the future and the past simultaneously, the despair of Janus is that he is trapped between the two, unable to move forwards or back. It's an apt description of the Postmodern dilemma represented here; perhaps these are not forts but the towers of some unfinished bridge, standing sentry over a gap that will never be crossed

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