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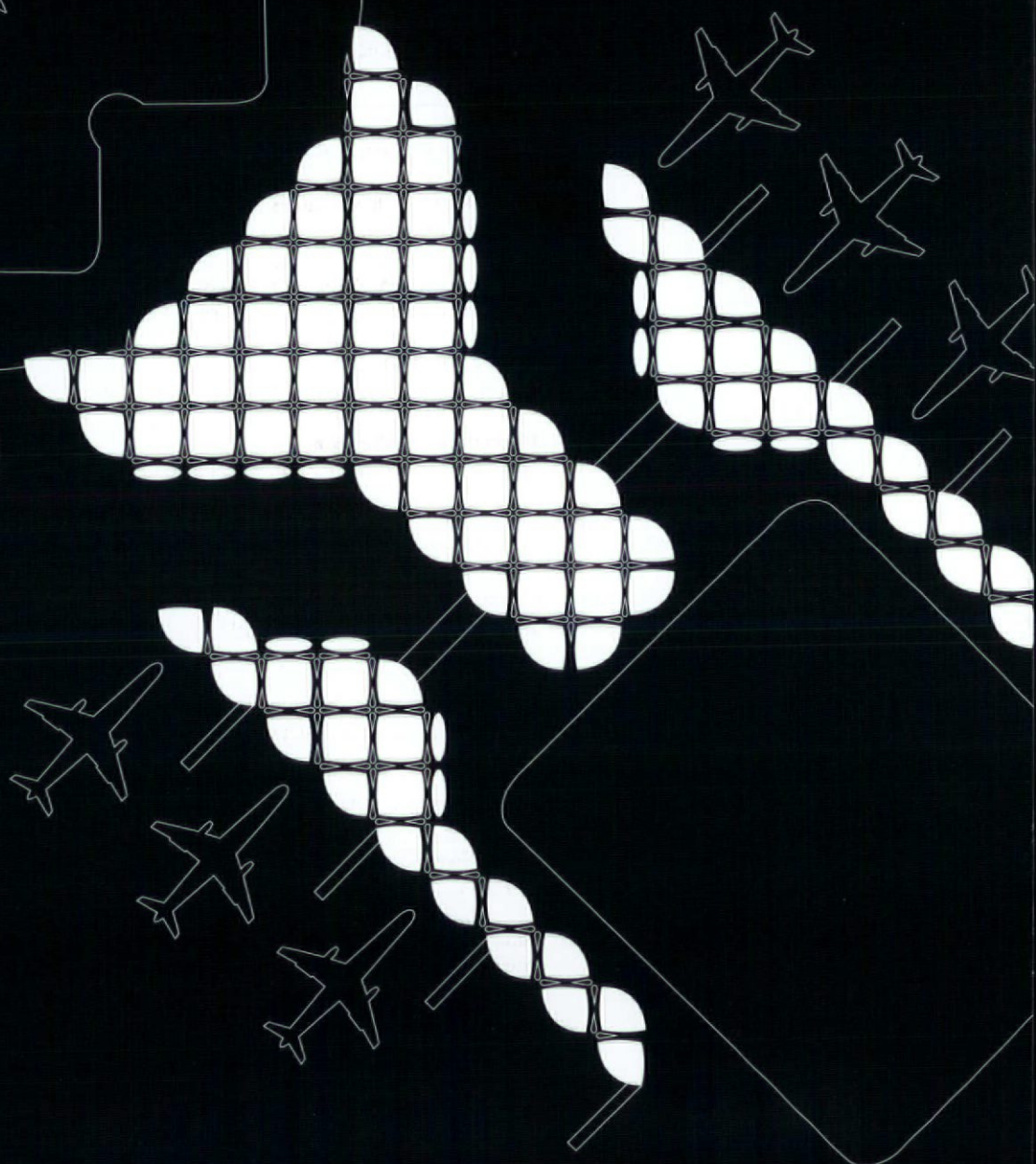
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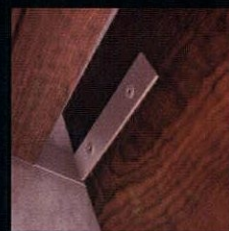
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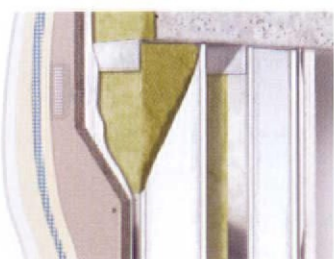
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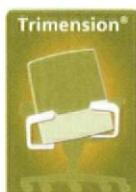
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Editorial view

Can the 'luscious particularity' of Los Angeles catalyse a more expansive vision of its future?

'Tip the world over on its side and everything loose will land in Los Angeles', Frank Lloyd Wright once said. Yet for a city with little sense of collective consciousness, LA still exerts a beguiling hold on our cultural imagination. From the Bradbury Building to the Eames House, from Hollywood to Compton, LA's scrapbook of memories thrillingly confirms its reputation as a narcissistic dystopia at the farthest end of America; 'a low-density Babylon', according to historian Mark Girouard. Beneath the ravishing scenography and lotus-eating climate beats a heart of darkness.

As a truly modern metropolis, Los Angeles should have lessons for us all, but rather than framing a 21st-century vision of the connectedness and social integration of the European urban model, it is still depressingly in thrall to the cult of the individual, insulated from the city's hostile and suppurating underbelly in a ghettoised, car-centric landscape.

In 'New Light on LA' (AR December 1987), Frances Anderton wrote that 'The fragmented nature of the city precludes a spontaneous metropolitan life'. Over 25 years on, not much has changed. Today, LA is a city of small plans. Big ambitions and contemporary *grands projects* generally succumb to collective failures of nerve, developer greed and Byzantine bureaucracy. This shying away from the public and the civic largely accounts for the insubstantial character of LA's public buildings and spaces, and its debilitating lack of transport.

'In LA almost everything is developer-driven', writes Michael Webb (p30). 'But for an occasional bond issue, the public purse is empty and profit-driven pygmies rule.'

Instead, LA cultivates what Nicholas Olsberg describes as 'a provocative tradition of luscious particularity' (p32), of brilliant individual moments, adrift in a mediocre and unloved city fabric. There may be 4,000 people subsisting on the streets of Skid Row (p42), but LA's signature typology is still the trophy house. And however compelling such boutique statements of wealth and taste may be, little of this energy and imagination feeds through into a convincing articulation of larger civic life.

Yet it was not always so. This year, Los Angeles has been deconstructing itself through the agency of Pacific Standard Time, a major series of exhibitions exploring its architectural and urban history since 1940. A key theme has been what Olsberg calls the 'bravado, grace, novelty and ingenuity' of public works programmes from the pre-war era. Now they serve to point up the paucity of current thinking.

However, there is some cause for optimism. As LA's sprawling metropolis reaches its limits of growth, Downtown areas are being creatively recolonised. Public transport is finally on the agenda with new subways and light-rail developments. Never at a loss for confidence and vibrancy, LA is rebalancing and on the wing again. Can the 'city of the eternal present' finally construct a viable future?

Catherine Slessor, Editor

Overview

INNER MONGOLIA, CHINA

The real ghost town

The Western media mock the emptiness of the vast Chinese city of Ordos, but the true failure is Ai Weiwei's disastrous attempts at development, says *Austin Williams*

Ordos in Inner Mongolia, north China is synonymous with the phrase 'Ghost Town', a term used to describe cities that are apparently built on a whim, with no one to occupy them. With China having already started to fulfil its pledge to build 400 new cities in 20 years, innumerable articles have emerged in the Western press to laugh, pity or gloat at the emergence of such tragi-comical examples of urban desolation. *Forbes* magazine is typical of many (although its tone is particularly contemptuous) when it asserts that 'Ordos is one of the most egregious examples of Chinese Late Stage Growth Obesity', while *The New York Times* says that it is a 'New City with everything but the people'. In order to get a sense of this looming urban disaster, I went to Ordos to see for myself.

What I found is hardly a definitive refutation, but it is a handy counterweight to those who rush to condemn the hubris of rapid urbanisation, in China or elsewhere. In recent years, throwaway criticisms of China's urban pretensions – a country that has grown from 20 per cent of its population living in urban areas in 1978, to over 50 per cent urbanised today – are rife. In essence, China is deemed to be a country that is developing too fast. This is a fundamental criticism given the fact that the new Premier Li Keqiang looks to increase the pace of urbanisation to reach 70 per cent by 2030. China built 4.2 million homes in the first six months of 2012 alone.

What is called New Ordos is actually the city of Kangbashi in the administrative region of Ordos. To add to the confusion, the Old City of Ordos is actually called Dongsheng. Both cities are in a desert twice the size of Switzerland. A number of myths have grown up around the Ordos phenomenon, as a cypher for other Chinese ghost towns. For example, the latest to attract attention is Tianducheng, near Hangzhou, where thousands of empty faux Haussmann-style

apartments overlook a replica Eiffel Tower. Ironically, as the houses quietly fill up, the cut and paste of these replica 'news stories' is less remarked upon.

While some commentators grow misty-eyed about Old Ordos, it is worth noting that it was built in 2000. In fact, the oldest residential areas are the slums created by the first migrant labourers who built the city. These ramshackle hutments may look ancient, but they date from 1997. Built over a watercourse that was infilled with waste material, the area is now home to a new generation of construction workers (ex-farmers) who are holding out for a higher sales price (as even this land is ripening for development). Indeed, Old Ordos shows no signs of winding down and becoming the feeder city to New Ordos. Dongsheng continues to grow. It now has over 1.5 million people and is a huge sprawling metropolis in its own right. Kangbashi is 30km away and is a new city altogether. To speak of them as the same thing – the mythical city of Ordos – simply feeds the confusion.

Kangbashi (New Ordos) is an example of the Chinese belief in 'predict and provide' – a planning concept that has been dismissed in many countries in the West in favour of 'patch and repair'. It is ironic that China is criticised for its speed of development, which is regularly equated with short-termism. Actually, any visitor to Shanghai's Planning Museum will recognise that Chinese urban-scale proposals are regularly framed out on the basis of 20+ years development models (and it has made a national brand out of its Five Year Plans – nowadays called a 'Five Year Guideline' for the touchy-feely generation). In fact, it sometimes seems that the West is the more short-termist.

Kangbashi 'seems' to be doing the same thing. Since the discovery of huge coal and oil deposits, which have turned parts of Inner Mongolia into Texas, the dynamics of city building are different from what we

experience in the recessionary, anxious Western world. Kangbashi is being built for one million people and already – according to recent figures (which may be contested) – 500,000 occupy the vast arrays of apartments and gated villas. Many more residential buildings have been bought and lie vacant, waiting for the city to develop.

The urgency of providing mass housing is, on the whole, a good thing, even if lots of it is unattractive. After all, accommodation has to be built for an unknown quantity of displaced farmers and government officials; migrant workers and business executives; family homes and luxury flats. Sometimes these experiments don't work out but at least they are prepared to take the risk. Describing a similar project called Dantu New District in central Jiangsu, one researcher notes that: 'though it took the better part of a decade, this district was making the transition from ghost city to living city.'

Aside from the supply-side residential development, which has been the focus of all criticism (as if a city is simply about houses), the civic buildings are truly impressive, although a little eerie at this early stage of development. Admittedly, your design appreciation palls somewhat when the 'concepts' behind the architecture are explained. For example, the huge National Library is shaped like a row of books; MAD's cultural museum like a desert pebble; the National Opera House like a Mongolian hat, etc, etc.

That said, it's nice to see cultural buildings taking centre stage. Indeed, the urban centre has echoes of the formal planning layout of, say, Washington DC's National Mall. Bianca Bosker, author of *Original Copies: Architectural Mimicry in Contemporary China*, says that 'China looked for imitation rather than innovation in the period of trying to quickly find a way of adapting to the market and urban



This huge trophy house by Basel-based HHF architects for Ai Weiwei's Ordos 100 project now stands forlorn in the Mongolian desert

design challenges.' One crucial difference is that Washington's centre is a designated public gathering point; whereas the huge central mall in New Ordos is planted with millions of flowers, presumably to dissuade public gathering. This is China, after all. Another difference is that instead of the Smithsonian Museum's lining the perimeter of Washington's central green; Kangbashi has two huge (quite empty) shopping malls. I leave it to the letter-writers to make barbed comment about China's worship of consumer capitalism.

One final issue remains: the much-vaunted Ordos 100 project 10km outside New Ordos. Set up by everyone's favourite wealthy dissident, Ai Weiwei, this ambitious scheme predates Kangbashi by a number of years but has never really been put under the microscope. It was/is a project to invite 100 architects to propose architectural fantasy housing for a vacant riverside site. Its launch and submissions were followed by most architectural magazines; its demise, less so. Indeed, it may

come as a surprise that this project is now dead-in-the-water.

An attractive Art Museum by DnA Architects is the only completed project sitting visitor-less in a vast, open, desert wilderness. Of the other 99 project proposals approved in 2005-6, none has been completed. A mere five building shells lie derelict in the desert sun; unfeasibly huge (and I mean 'huge!'), they have been left to fill up with wind-blown sand. Little is said of this scandalous waste of time, money and effort. It is as if being sold a pup by a company called 'Fake Design' is too embarrassing to bear. One way of coping with the shame – a strategy adopted by a number of architects and journalists – is to tour the conference and webinar circuits pretending that everything is going on as planned.

When *Color* magazine spoke of 'an absurdist example of growth for the sake of growth' it was speaking of Kangbashi, not here. But this is the real Ordos Ghost Town, even though it seems that the architectural 'community' doesn't want to acknowledge it.

LONDON, UK

Lines of inquiry

Freddie Phillipson

The status of the architectural drawing is perhaps only becoming harder to define. In the main, the makers of architectural drawings are not those who analyse their possible cultural significance, whether for reasons of insufficient critical distance or simply lack of 'reflective' time. And since the 'invention' of architectural drawing itself, in the differentiating of Architecture from the so-called Manual Arts, we have struggled to say what sets architectural thinking apart, largely relying on the perennial definition of 'artistic' ability combined with 'technical' savoir-faire.

The recent workshop *Beyond the Documentary: Defining Mastery in Architectural Drawings*, held at London's Courtauld Institute, sought to reassess prevalent assumptions about architectural drawing, asking how these works can be understood not only as serving the act of building but as having a

status of their own. In the words of Courtauld curator Stephanie Buck, the debate endeavoured to articulate how we might understand architectural drawings as 'expressions of a specific creativity', forming part of a 'history of creative thinking'.

Over the course of two days, these questions were explored by a 30-strong panel of invited participants, including historians, architects, educators and curators. This diverse group was assembled by Niall Hobhouse, who initiated this experiment in scholarship uniting the Courtauld's archive from the Renaissance to the 19th century with items in his own collection.

Arranged in thematic clusters, the drawings acted as vehicles for debates regarding architectural 'production' within broader parameters, from cultural history to connoisseurship. During these sessions, a dichotomy emerged in attitudes corresponding broadly to perceptions of the architect's role: the polarisation of 'technical' orthographic drawing and 'pictorial' renderings of a project, in turn giving rise to a perceived division between drawings made for a professional audience and those created for the 'lay public'.

Explorations of the 'pictorial' category, led by Nicholas Olsberg, made a compelling case for the long-standing interdependence of representational practices in art and architecture respectively. The grouping of virtuosic drawings by both architects and non-architects under topics such as 'Sturm und Drang' established a common ground for discussion between architects and art historians. This directed attention at the pieces themselves, as opposed to seeing architectural drawing as an index of a further reality, or simply a means to an end. However, orthographic notations placed the discussion on more uncertain ground, demonstrating the difficulty of avoiding the documentary approach which the workshop purported to broaden

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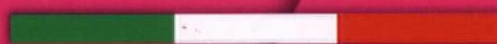
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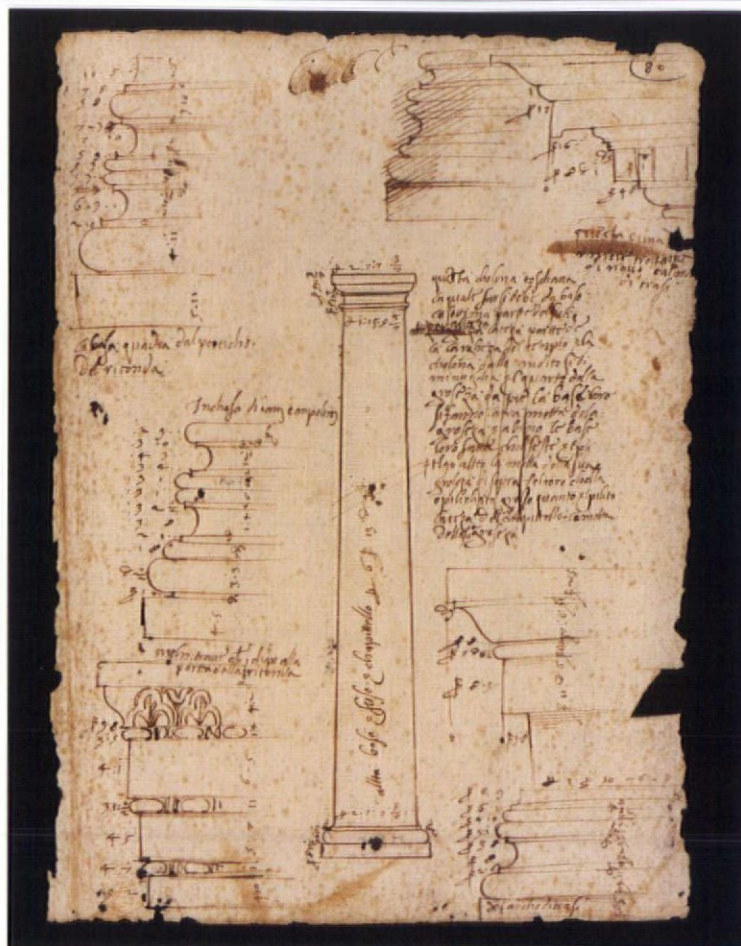


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and enrich. Gordon Higgott's rigorous research into the working drawings for St Paul's, identifying the hands of Hawksmoor, Wren and various masons (partly evidenced by divergent methods of drawing Corinthian capitals) suggested broader questions in the current context. How readily can you transfer the criteria applied to the 'pictorial tradition' in art historical analysis, to other sides of architectural production? Does this relegate 'thinking' drawings to a second tier, destined to remain 'documentary'?

The greater reticence of non-architects on the subject of orthographic or notational drawings is understandable, for their spatiality appears at first to be a 'negation' of the visible world, and only with training – most easily acquired through designing – comes to be seen as a 'translation' (to borrow Robin Evans' term). Yet as an architect, attention is drawn most often to these cryptic, impossible representations. This was demonstrated by CR Cockerell's 19th-century survey of the Parthenon. Extensive annotations accompanied a radically distilled spatial diagram, asserting the eloquent power of these abstract markings in the mind of the designer. You would refer to this as the picture's proverbial thousand words, were it not for the finer distinction (articulated by Andrew Zago) between 'drawings' and 'pictures', poles of a spectrum within which architectural production might be placed. What is at stake here is an appreciation for mastery of the potential in architectural drawing (Zago's tension between immanence – something as what it is – and projection – something which directs the mind to a reality not yet in existence).

A fruitful territory tentatively emerged between these two extremes: drawings which acted as 'invitations to an architectural experience'. Here you sensed the



Studies from the workshop of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Rome, 1545

dialogue between intuition and reflection, between concreteness and abstraction, which may be peculiar to the embodied mind of the architect. For example, a plan of Asplund's Woodland Crematorium combined the abstraction of orthographic drawing with a delicate rendering of both landscape and interior – the furniture and the paving stones acquiring similar weight – so as to give a privileged sense of walking through a topography.

An exhibition design by Sironi demonstrated another kind of drawing occupying this middle ground: a sheet made simply to see what you are getting, moving seamlessly between plan, atmospheric interior and detail. Discussion of such works could serve to explicate what it is to think like an architect, not only

to the world outside the profession but also to ourselves. Moreover, these drawings effortlessly linked aspects of cerebral and sensory experience in ways which computers are unable to replicate (at least for the time being).

The discussions culminated in a debate surrounding the possible educational purposes of these artefacts. The benefits of combining a range of approaches were evident for the deeper understanding of the drawings in their own right. It may even be said that architectural drawing, as part of a collaborative process which does not easily conform to the idea of the individual artist-author, and also as evidence of an activity spanning so many aspects of human experience, demands this kind of

collective analysis. However, as an architect you are tempted to look at this problem less in terms of exegesis and more in terms of how such material can support the continued practice of thinking through drawing. Part of this challenge is to eradicate the apparent 'distance' of history for the architecture student, so that drawings are not dead deposits or didactic instruments, but places of encounter with a colleague engaged in the 'serious play' of architectural thought (Peter Carl's phrase). In this sense, there is little substitute for physical proximity to the drawings.

Closing remarks suggested that the panel might be turning architectural drawing into 'art' at the very moment of its extinction. I would suggest that the opposite is possible: this kind of forum could help the survival of architectural drawing as the vehicle for a specific mode of inquiry into the world around us. This relies, however, on maintaining an appreciation – beyond the documentary – not only of embodied means of representation, but also of the differences between the core of architectural drawing (design) and art practice. With this approach, you may understand that architectural drawing provides the thinking designer with a means for articulating that to which – as yet – we have no other access. It is to be hoped that this event will open such avenues.

LONDON, UK

The future house is here

Tom Teatum

Two factors are changing the way we experience technology in the home: wi-fi networks that extend across space, and the streaming of content including music, video and data. Networks will become as available as oxygen; the iPad will be the interface between the



Technology was celebrated in the 1956 House of the Future; today it is made invisible

network and every IP-coded address in the home.

Smart APP-artment, at 41 Windmill Street in London, is a house as showroom as experience centre. With an investment of £1.5m, it was developed by home technology specialists Cornflake to show off the latest automated technology in an integrated living environment. Sound, television and cinema technology is connected and amplified by an interaction with the home's hard services – with lighting, cooling, window blinds, heating, security, data and cooking equipment. Spaces are traditional rooms, but capable of being altered by the entertainment systems.

Timber-panelled sliding doors reveal the living and kitchen space. The room's layout can be brought up on the iPad, and programmes selected from the range of devices integrated into the room. A television lifts out of an oak storage unit, Tiesto plays from the Las Vegas Electric Daisy Festival, blinds drop, lights alter and the music starts to take over the space. Moving on to the kitchen, the smart oven includes a screen with access to menus. A coffee maker can be pre-programmed with your favourite mix, allowing you to start breakfast before leaving the bedroom. My host is excited about the ability of the

technology, but more so in the scale of choice. Choice here offers an endless combination of events, the individual is filled with a landscape of instantaneous alternatives. Like satellite TV menus, it leads to a constant reflection on the 'what next?'

The adjoining space is a cross between a bar, games room and digital library. The screen allows computer games to be played by the family at the scale of a room. A large format touch screen is fitted flush into the work counter. Equipped with Windows 8, you can access cooking menus and weekend entertainment options, and parents can engage with online homework while preparing food. The size of the screens extends the possibility of the home as a social space, allowing parents and children to interact. It resists the insular nature of personal computers which limit use to the individual.

In Smart APP-artment, every object is assigned an IP address, connected to a network and controlled via the iPad. Given the level of environmental control, the spatial possibility is openness and fluidity. The use of the space is no longer defined by name, material or language but by the environmental variation of temperature, lighting and acoustic responsiveness. The home becomes entertainment, an

extension of the streamed film, and the space of the film is not limited to the screen, acoustically and environmentally it can be replicated in the home to super amplify the nervous system.

A 1970s view of technology focused on saving time; functional efficiency was believed to lead to freedom from work. Archigram's interest in new electronic appliances meant that we could spend more time enjoying ourselves. Images of the Monte Carlo competition focus on people sunbathing in bikinis while being served by drink-dispensing robots. In Peter and Alison Smithson's 1956 House of The Future (exhibited at the Daily Mail Ideal Home show), the space, furniture and products are all connected in a vacuum-formed world of nylon. Tables were moulded in a seamless surface with the floor and walls; clothing consisted of all-in-one jumpsuits with shoes moulded to the legs. A world that spoke of efficiency, speed and a technology that would change society. The technology felt a way off; its distance allowed the imagination to consider a near future that would bring social change for everyone. In this world there was little space for soft furnishings, for comfort, for the home as a vessel for collecting memories.

In Smart APP-artment, the environment is not designed to be a visual extension of the technology. The technology is focused on being integrated, hidden and performance driven. The interiors are a curious mix, part traditional detailing, part contemporary; references derive from yachts and expensive international hotels. These are the interiors of wealthy London homes, reflecting a collection of materials that go beyond the inherent restraint of the architect. Here technology does not speak of the future, it services the immediate. It is employed to add value beyond location and square footage to London's super prime houses. It reinforces the private-ness of the home, a world

of streamed content that removes the need to go to the cinema, to engage with the city.

The transfer of technology to the privacy of the home and the individual informs the erosion of some public buildings, including the cinema and library. Watching *Tron*, however, in the £100,000 home cinema is a visual and acoustic experience, my nervous system is blown away (especially as my seat can be linked to a motion activator that mirrors the film's action sequence). For me cinema is still an urban ritual, where the sound of an audience reacting to a filmic moment is integral to the experience. While I worry that a £100,000 home cinema is limited to a very elite group, I am reminded that the stamp duty tax receipt for a £5 million residential sale is £350,000. Soon the motion activator seat will be widely available from Amazon; its exclusiveness is temporary, technology is not exclusive for long as it needs mass markets.

While libraries may be declining, I can access iUniversity through iTunes, allowing me to connect to the world's university courses for free. Michael Sandel's Harvard course can be accessed in the home or while travelling to work. Through Cornflake's world of home automation it could even seduce teenagers into learning.

AR COMPETITION

Final call for Emerging Architecture

The deadline for entries to the ar+d Awards for Emerging Architecture, the world's most prestigious prize for young architects, has been extended to 13 September 2013. The prize fund is £10,000 and this year's jury will be Eric Owen Moss (USA), Manuelle Gautrand (France), Peter Cook (UK) and AR Editor Catherine Slessor. architectural-review.com/emerging



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Preview

World Architecture Festival

In its second year in Singapore, WAF offers the tantalising prospect of strange bedfellows and compelling cross-fertilisations, says *Paul Finch*



What do Zaha Hadid's latest parametric incursion in Azerbaijan and Robert Stern's George W Bush Presidential Library and Museum have in common? Both are shortlisted in the Culture category of this year's World Architectural Festival. If nothing else, WAF delights in its capacity to host strange architectural bedfellows.

Launched in 2008, with the active participation and support of the AR as international media partner, the intention was to create an inclusive event where architects could gather annually almost as a renewal of their interest in and love for architecture itself. Unlike international real estate events, where inevitably designers are bit-part players, WAF is a place where architects and architecture are the heart of the matter.

Architects shortlisted for the awards present their designs in quick-fire sessions in a dozen crit rooms run simultaneously for the first two days of the festival. Category winners then have to re-present to 'super-juries'

on the final day, creating a sense of drama. Crucially, all presentations are in front of delegates and international juries, providing an opportunity to see great architects from around the world (50-plus countries are usually represented) presenting high-quality design.

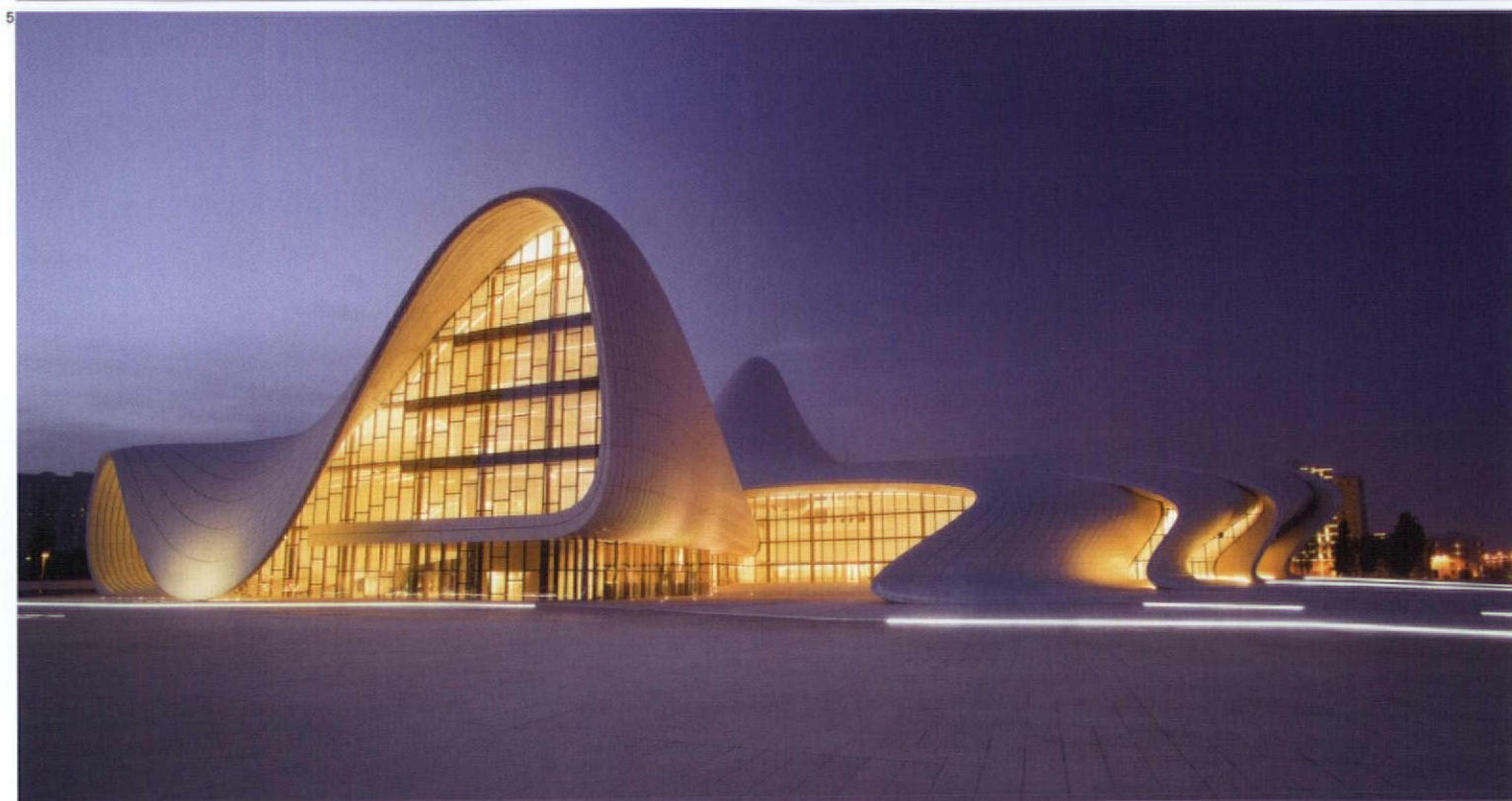
However, since the first year there has also been a more formal thematic conference programme running alongside. This year the subject is 'Value and Values', exploring how architecture manifests value in various ways, and the philosophical or political values that underlie the profession's activities and world-view. Keynote speakers are Charles Jencks, Dietmar Eberle and Sou Fujimoto, who will be accompanied by a wide variety of other pundits and panellists.

INSIDE has its own talks, including one on 'Designing for Delight' by provocateur-turned-international-treasure Nigel Coates, and its own separate interiors awards programme. All this takes place in the same venue as WAF, and delegates to either

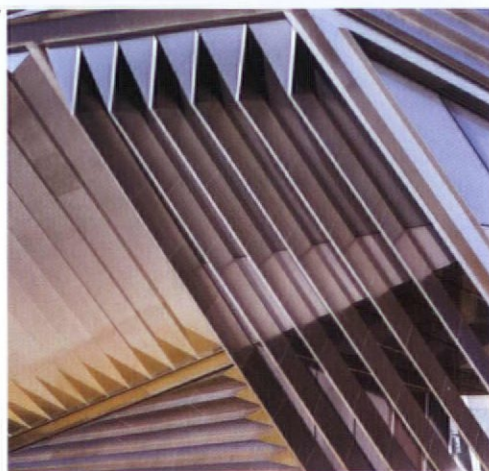
Some of the entries shortlisted for this year's World Architecture Festival

1. George W Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas, by Robert AM Stern
2. Maritime and Beachcombers' Museum, Texel, the Netherlands, by Mecanoo
3. Dailai Conference Centre, by emerging Vietnamese practice Vo Trong Nghia
4. Sir Duncan Rice Library for the University of Aberdeen, by Danish firm Schmidt Hammer Lassen





5. Heydar Aliyev Centre, Baku, Azerbaijan, by Zaha Hadid Architects
6. The sleek and sinuous Blue Planet aquarium in Copenhagen, by 3XN
7. Facade detail from the Eli & Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan, by Zaha Hadid Architects



event can attend both, marking a potent cross fertilisation of architecture and interior design.

Other aspects of the festival include a student charrette, featuring eight schools from Europe and Asia exploring the implications of increasing elderly populations, an exhibition of architectural photography accompanying an awards programme run by Arcadid, and the customary stands of exhibitors and sponsors.

Every entry is exhibited at the Festival, arranged around the perimeter of the exhibition halls. More to the point, each hall has its own bar, the result of a design competition; social and networking events include a PechaKucha organised by the ubiquitous Mark Dytham of Klein Dytham, and a final night Gala Dinner where overall awards for Future Projects, Landscape, Interiors and Completed Buildings will be presented.

Predicting the Building of the Year winner is always fascinating; last year Wilkinson Eyre's

Gardens By The Bay pavilions in Singapore were an obviously popular choice, though it was not a home town decision, with only one Singaporean on the five-person super-jury.

Previous winners include Grafton Architects, Peter Rich, Zaha Hadid and Enric Ruiz-Geli, so the spirit of the event is globally and architecturally pluralist in the best AR sense. Robert Stern's appearance to defend George W Bush renews a relationship which began in 2008 when he chaired the first super-jury. Other shortlisted firms include established Europeans, such as Behnisch Architekten, Mecanoo and 3XN, and newcomers from Asia, like Vo Trong Nghia from Vietnam who won two categories last year, and local heroes WOHA. As Singapore is characterised by its vibrant fusion of different cultures, so WAF has something delectable for every taste.

WAF takes place from 2 to 4 October at the Marina Bay Sands, Singapore
www.worldarchitecturefestival.com

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Preview

London Design Festival

Autumn ushers in the annual London Design Festival.

Lynda Relph-Knight looks forward to a cornucopia of shows and events

Why settle for a trade show when an international festival has more panache? This has long been the thinking in Milan, which buzzes with events extending way beyond furniture for the duration of the fair. For many visitors, this 'fringe' is now the main attraction, pushing creative boundaries in a way a trade show rarely can.

So, we are told, it will be in London in September when the London Design Festival celebrates its 10th year. Though established trade show 100% Design falls under the LDF umbrella, along with its grungier East London rival Tent London, there will be much more to titillate design fans.

Its continuing partnership with the LDF makes the Victoria & Albert Museum the main hub. But the Southbank Centre is also worth a look, with Designersblock introducing emerging talents there and Swedish, Mexican and Indian design on display. Meanwhile, showrooms and galleries from Aram Store to Gallery Libby Sellers will showcase design 'names' and empty properties across the capital will host pop-ups. Even mainstream retailer Heal's is taking part.

Taking its cue from the London Festival of Architecture, the LDF is again organised across districts: Chelsea Design Quarter; Clerkenwell Design Quarter; Shoreditch Design Triangle; Fitzrovia Now; and Brompton Design District.

But while we are promised more graphics and digital design this year, the LDF's focus remains mainly 3D design. It crosses design disciplines, though arguably still offers more to architects, product and interior designers.

Inevitably, there will be showstoppers. The *Endless Stair*, for example, designed by Alex de Rijke of dRMM Architects and Arup for the American Hardwood Export Council, will feature outside Tate Modern in Bankside. And Canadian manufacturer Bocci will stage a light installation designed by Omer Arbel in the V&A atrium.

Names popping up across town include industrial designer Benjamin Hubert, who looks set to be this year's man, appearing at Aram and 100% Design where he designed the auditorium. Meanwhile, architect Nigel Coates has glassware at Handblown and architectural drawings at Exploded in the White Post

Gallery at his South Kensington studio. Newer talents could be unearthed through the Conran Shop's quest with online retailer Fab to select prototypes from external designers.

There will be making, too, from handcrafting to rapid prototyping. And there will be debate. The Global Design Forum, brainchild of LDF founder John Sorrell, is scheduled for the Royal Festival Hall on 17 September with Thomas Heatherwick, Daniel Charny et al. Shows like 100% Design and Tent will meanwhile also host seminars.

But if you're pressed for time and want a full sample visit Designjunction. Based centrally, this new-style event promises some 150 top-flight brands from Allermuir to Zanotta. It is setting up a lighting section with Cameron Peters, and will stage talks and debates throughout its four-day run.

A final tip? Save the de Rijke Escher-esque stair till after the festival. It will be there until 10 October, making it one less thing to cram into an over-packed week.

The London Design Festival will encompass venues across London, 14-22 September



Alex de Rijke of dRMM Architects designed this Escher-like *Endless Stair*, which will be outside Tate Modern until 10 October

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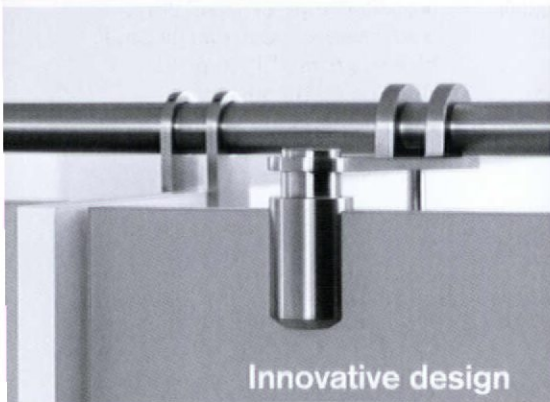
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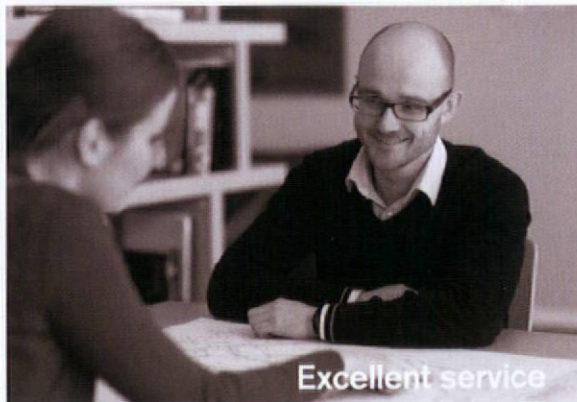
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Viewpoints



BARBARA PENNER

Building a sense of adventure

I probably will never know any space as intimately as I know the playground at the end of our street. It was the new centre of our lives for the first five years after my daughter was born. Everything was fixed, safe and vandal-proof (and everything that wasn't vandal-proof was broken). Parents monitored children's play from the sidelines, with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

When my daughter turned five, she gained access to a different space – an adventure playground. The first time we entered its brightly coloured gates, a brusque, friendly woman, a playworker, introduced us to some of the highlights: an outdoor stage, a towering wooden swing, a climbing structure with gangways and a structure with a kitchen and chill-out room. The chill-out room deeply impressed my daughter. She was struck by something else too. 'The swing's made of rope. A rope, mummy, not a chain!'

I was more conscious of the whole scene: everything looked hand-made and scrappy. Toys lay in uncut grass. Salvaged materials, including half a piano, were stacked up in one corner. The space looked at once magical and forlorn, like a movie backlot. A few kids were there painting a wall – no other parents were in sight. The playworker told me, 'You can leave your child with us if she's over eight.' 'Do you look after them?' I asked. She looked stern. 'That's not what we do.'

I didn't ask the obvious follow-up question, 'What do you do?' But I was genuinely curious. Entering the adventure playground was like entering

a parallel universe where spaces for children aren't tidy, risk-averse and controlled. Most radically, the space is parent-free and children are left largely on their own. Playworkers, I discovered later, are more like benevolent guides who assist rather than police. The entire philosophy is appealing yet subversive, Garden of Eden meets *Lord of the Flies*.

Although the adventure playground now seems less exotic to me, it is no less intriguing. And it now has the scholarly account that it deserves: architectural historian Roy Kozlovsky's very fine *The Architectures of Childhood: Children, Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Postwar England* (Ashgate, 2013). Kozlovsky's research began from a simple observation: between 1935 and 1959 in England, the architectures of childhood – playgrounds, schools and hospitals – were central to architectural discourse in a way that they haven't been before or since. He set out to find out why.

Kozlovsky notes that architects' concern for children coincided with the 'child-centredness' of the postwar welfare state, when the government was grappling with the impact of wartime measures like evacuations on traditional family structures. Kozlovsky traces how adventure playgrounds emerged from the perceived need to initiate an inadequately socialised generation of English children into a liberal model of democratic citizenship. Adventure playgrounds were nothing less than an effort to foster social and political stability in the postwar era.

In this project, aesthetics and design were not driving concerns. Adventure playgrounds were rough (the first were actually located in bomb sites) and play equipment consisted of junk rather than readymade gear. Environments were challenging precisely in order to engage children in play. By working cooperatively to improve their chaotic surroundings, so the theory went, children would learn to govern themselves, a skill they would take into adulthood.

Kozlovsky provides a sympathetic but critical account of adventure playgrounds. He particularly questions the belief that play is a human instinct that surmounts its historical context. His research suggests the opposite: that postwar play was steeped in politics and instrumentally bound up with English hopes for reconstruction. He ends by noting, however, that like so many other bits of postwar social policy, the dream was relatively short-lived – and ultimately a failure.

I hope he is wrong. Adventure playgrounds today may be less radical in that they're less risky (I can only imagine the reaction if our local playworker handed out axes as her predecessors once did). But their flexibility, emphasis on self-initiated activity, and sense of challenge remains, offering a genuine alternative to our overly regulated approach to children. And whatever adults might think, kids still get it. 'What do you think about the adventure playground?' I asked my daughter. Her answer was unequivocal. 'More fun. More special.'

LAST WORDS

'Only she and God would ever know just how many great solutions owed much more to her than was attributed'

Nathaniel Owings on the overlooked genius of Natalie de Blois of SOM, designer of Lever House, precursor of Mies's Seagram, who died in July

'The wardrobe remains defiant, but sod you architecture has put on a lounge suit'

Stephen Bayley on Richard Rogers in *The Spectator*, 27 July

'Zaha would watch *American Gigolo* all through the night, over and over again, enjoying Richard Gere hanging from a bar upside down and doing pull-ups'

Nigel Coates in BBC documentary *Zaha Hadid: Who Dares Wins*, 30 July



Los Angeles
has a long and
rich history
of architectural
experimentation,
but does the
recent period of
self-examination
reveal a city
that has lost
its nerve?



PIETRO CANALI/SOPA/CORBIS

LOS ANGELES RENEWED PROMISE FOR THE CITY

MICHAEL WEBB

No American city has provoked more impassioned debate or challenged precise definition more than Los Angeles. New York, Chicago and San Francisco bask in self-esteem, and are widely admired or envied, despite their failings. There's fierce contention on specific issues, but none on the worth of the city. Each is perceived as a whole: the tip of Manhattan (though it is only one of five boroughs), the clustered skyscrapers of the Loop viewed from Lake Shore Drive, or San Francisco's hilly peninsula sandwiched between ocean and bay are defining images. There one finds the beating heart of a centrifugal metropolis, with one or more edges sharply demarcated by water; a civic core that commands the allegiance of residents and visitors alike.

In contrast, LA is a crazy quilt of independent cities scattered over flatlands from desert to shore, climbing into the hills and leaping over mountains. Downtown is 15 miles from the ocean, and the beach communities have a small-town feel. The nearest thing to a defining image is the seemingly infinite carpet of lights as seen from the Hollywood Hills; by day it's a hazy blur. As Michael Maltzan wrote, 'From Los Angeles' inception, the city has defined itself by its ability to continuously push the outer edges farther and farther out.' Founded by Spanish settlers in 1781, it remained a dusty pueblo for its first century, but the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in 1887 sparked the first of many real-estate booms. Sixty new communities were plotted, and half survived. Scattered like landlocked islands across the basin, they struggled to remain independent of the city they encircled. Hollywood and Venice lost the battle and merged, Beverly Hills and Pasadena remained proudly independent, West Hollywood and Malibu have recently been incorporated. From the 1920s on, the empty ground between these outposts was filled in, making the horizontal sprawl surprisingly dense.

A few American cities have achieved a balance between entrepreneurial greed and civic idealism. In LA, almost everything is developer-driven. But for an occasional bond issue, the public purse is empty, and profit-driven pigmies rule. You see it in the mediocrity of most building, the lack of public transit, privatised public space and scarce parks. Masterplans are briefly discussed and filed away. Decision-making is decentralised and fragmented. Most residents and the city council representatives they elect put local interests far above those of the city as a whole. The mayor is a mere figurehead, and the city government shares its authority with 88 independent jurisdictions, county supervisors who control large tracts of unincorporated land, and powerful neighbourhood groups. A labyrinthine bureaucracy impedes prompt action. It's a recipe for urban paralysis, but somehow the metropolis retains its vibrancy, and its ability to fascinate and integrate outsiders.

Most residents are outsiders, having moved here from elsewhere in the US, Europe, Asia and especially Latin America. Crusading journalist Carey McWilliams came from Denver and, in his landmark history of southern California through the 1930s,² portrayed it as a region with natural boundaries, but no assets besides its climate; a place where everything from water to settlers had to be imported. In the prosperous postwar years, Reyner Banham celebrated its uniqueness and contradictions,³ Esther McCoy and Charles Moore chronicled its innovative architecture,^{4,5} while Mike



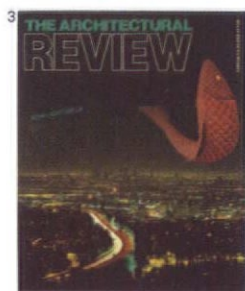


1. LA during the riots that swept the city in 1992
2. Nostalgia is emerging for the Red Cars, the electric trams supplanted by freeways in the 1960s
3. Front cover of the 1987 AR special issue on LA, edited by Frances Anderton

Davis famously judged it a dystopia with a viper under every stone.⁶ It has lured a steady stream of Brits; Banham was my Pied Piper. As an AR editor, Frances Anderton edited a special issue on Los Angeles (AR December 1987), and stayed on to become a sharp-eyed commentator on the design scene. Even Mark Girouard, the habitu  of country house libraries and an honorary Victorian, tore himself away to summarise LA as ‘... the city of Philip Marlowe and Charlie Chaplin, of Mickey Mouse and Frank Lloyd Wright, of weirdoes, professors, gangsters, gurus, millionaires, and nice ordinary people; a failed Jerusalem, a low-density Babylon’.⁷

Now, the city that grew, like a teenager, in a series of sharp spurts, may be on the threshold of another major shift. Our long love affair with the automobile is cooling, and there’s nostalgia for the Red Cars, a network of electric trams that was supplanted by freeways in the 1960s. Congestion has spurred the construction of a new skein of subways and light rail, often along the old rights of way. Bike lanes are multiplying, and Google’s research on computer-controlled electric cars holds promise of a brave new world. LA is home to the Tesla, and people are increasingly driving hybrids or relying on short-term rentals. The limits of growth have been reached and young couples are leaving far-flung suburbs to live in lofts and condos that are close to the action, especially

Downtown and in Hollywood, revitalising areas an earlier generation abandoned. There are 35 major developments awaiting approval in Santa Monica alone; residents fear it could become a mini-Manhattan. Growth can be disruptive, but it’s far preferable to stagnation. The triple blow of urban riots, recession and earthquake in the early 1990s, eroded LA’s faith in the future. Now it seems to be reviving. Maltzan takes an optimistic view: ‘As inhabitants of a city that is constantly confronting endless change, we possess an inherent creativity and ability to constantly surprise the world with our urban inventiveness.’⁸



1. *No More Play: Conversations on Urban Speculation in Los Angeles and Beyond*, Michael Maltzan, Hatje Cantz Verlag and USC, 2011.
2. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*, Carey McWilliams, Peregrine Smith Books, 1973 reprint of 1946 original.
3. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, Reyner Banham, University of California Books, 2009 reprint of the 1971 original.

4. *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader*, East of Borneo Books, 2012.
5. *The City Observed: Los Angeles*, Charles Moore, Peter Becker and Regula Campbell, Vintage Books, 1984.
6. *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis, Verso, 1990; revised edition 2006.
7. *Cities & People*, Mark Girouard, Yale University Press, 1985.
8. Michael Maltzan, *ibid*.

LOS ANGELES REFLECTING ON SIX MONTHS OF SHOWS

NICHOLAS OLSBERG

This month marks the end of a gruelling six months of events devoted to LA architecture since 1940 and sponsored or triggered by the Getty programme Pacific Standard Time. With few exceptions, the shows tended to wander along more byways than highways. Some took to their side roads brilliantly, like SCI-Arc's revisiting of a pivotal if minor event among architects emerging in the 1970s. But you had to go to Cal Poly Pomona for any deep analysis of works or for any insight into the social context in which they were made. Meanwhile, you went from show to show wondering where all the great work had gone.

We have never had a critical retrospective of Neutra, Ain, Eckbo, Ellwood, Soriano, or a recent survey of Gehry, and this programme largely passed those giants by. The long, complicated discourse on LA as a metropolitan pattern and as a recurring model for the future was ignored in favour of more pragmatic, dialectic and scientific positions. Perhaps most astonishing, the place of the movies in forming and servicing the culture of art and architecture went unacknowledged.

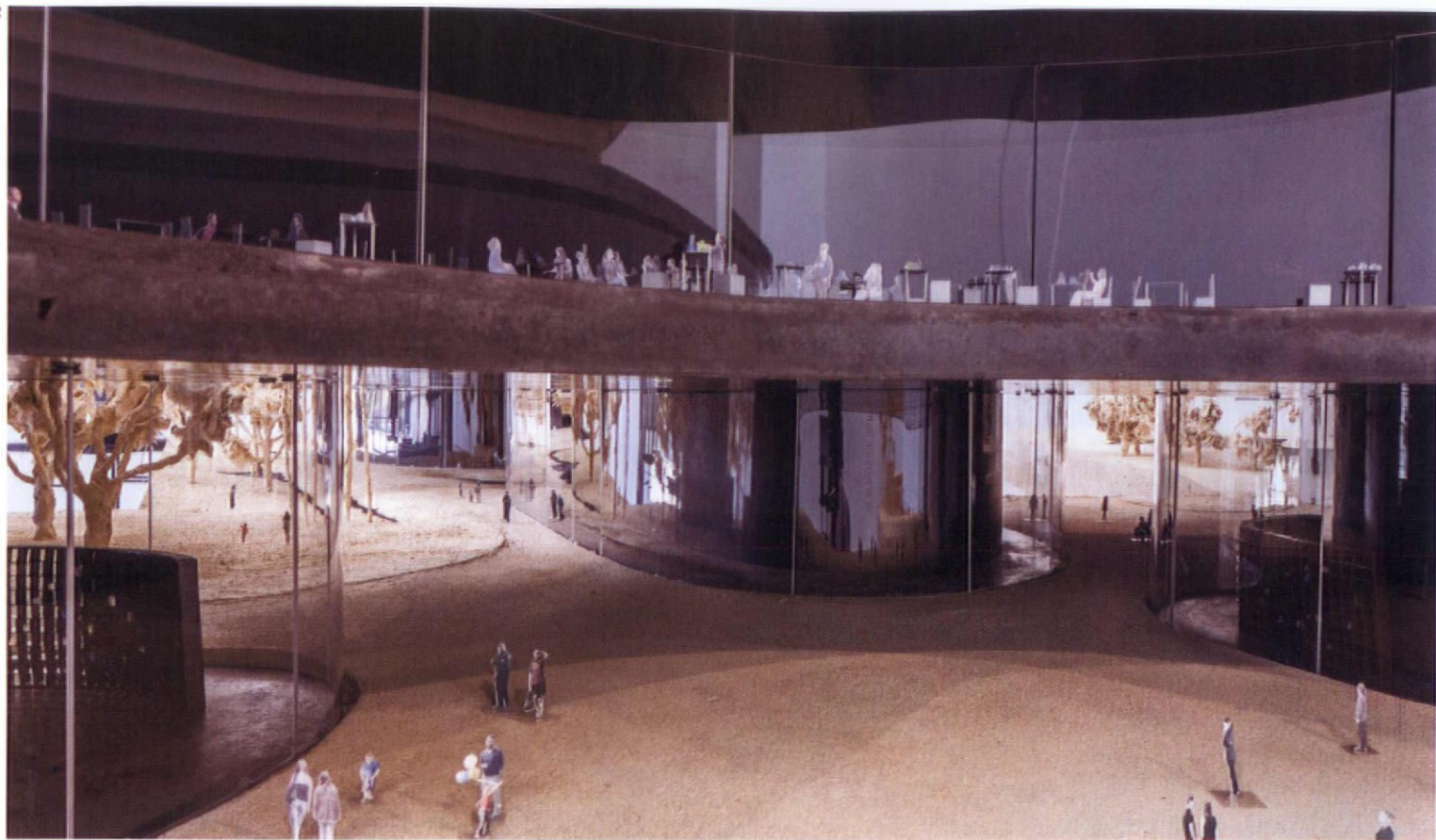
Three important lessons did come through. One was that, as all the world knows, LA has been very good at experimenting with houses. Another was that, as the world may not have noticed, the city has been very bad at making anything interesting of big civic buildings and large public spaces. The third lesson, a little harder to discern, less noted by the world at large, but perhaps most vital, was the recognition of how persistent, intelligent and creative has been the region's fondness for cluster, assemblage and collage and its architects' passion for using those strategies to reinvent small-scale commercial, service and group housing typologies that fit the changing urban landscape.

It is with their innovations in living systems and structures that LA's great lost names – Schindler, Neutra, Soriano, Ain, Eames, Lautner, Ellwood, Koenig and Frank Israel – are remembered. Early work of Ray Kappe and Frank Gehry demonstrated the astonishing subtlety and bravado with which they seemed to reinvent the dwelling; and it seemed clear from exhibitions ranging through the earliest work of Coy Howard, Fred Fisher and Eric Owen Moss in the late '70s to the emerging generation today that the persistent presence of clients ready to run aesthetic risks on a house remains a gigantic stimulus to the city's small practices. From Michael Maltzan's supportive housing for Skid Row (see page 42) to Barbara Bestor's Floating Bungalow, many younger LA studios continue to propose pragmatically inventive lessons for living with a better sense of the economies of means and space.

One of the reasons for this brilliant tradition failing to carry over to large-scale works was simply structural. All the big postwar jobs went to a handful of massive firms, and those firms had a singularly businesslike agenda. During one among a number of scandalously unsophisticated panels at the Getty, the retired partner from one of these '60s firms proudly repeated the claim that his had been for a decade the largest architectural practice on earth (though 90 per cent of its work was within 100 miles of its office), while another described his firm's philosophy as simply to design something they could deliver on budget and on time.

Disappointment about the tameness of LA's public buildings and about the failure of so many adventurous civic projects to materialise – as Michael Webb notes overleaf – becomes especially sharp when we set these failures of nerve against the triumphs of grace, novelty and ingenuity that had marked the region's large public works in the 1920s and '30s: buildings like Myron Hunt's Pasadena Library and Ambassador Hotel, Jock Peters' Bullocks





1. Richard Meier's initial plan for the Getty Center on its hilltop site shows loosely laid out pavilions within a green landscape
2. Peter Zumthor's recent proposal for the LA County Museum of Art sets plazas under and around to walk and cycle through
3. Hodgetts and Fung's Towell Library (1993) provided a temporary home for a UCLA library

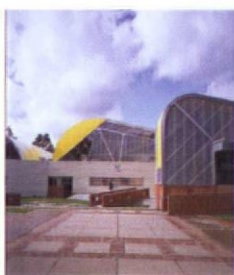
Wilshire store, Bertram Goodhue's LA Public Library and Caltech campus, and the unrivalled parade of re-inventive grandeur – from banks and office buildings to department stores and cinemas (many still standing) – with which Stiles Clements furnished miles of newly paved boulevard.

They are also in their insistence on a sort of benign monumentality horribly out of tune with the provocative tradition of luscious particularity that marks so many small-scale commercial and public works in LA. These are logical, distinctive and inventively adapted to climate and casual use. For decades new variations on the casual and the clustered seemed never to stop appearing. Though the fabric in which they sit may be dire, the city houses a feast not only of brilliantly designed dry-cleaners, drive-ins, local markets, branch libraries, restaurants and studios, or elementary schools, but also a host of mid-scale variations upon the theme of intelligent density in housing, achieved with equal intelligence and even more ingenuity.

There are clustered garden courts that allow dwellings to become at once independent and cooperative. There are small grouped studios like Whitney Smith's and Quincy Jones' from the '50s and '60s, or larger sets of offices in graduated stacks, like SOM's great Music Corporation of America campus from 1976, all working to the same effect of balancing social and private space, open and closed zones, and with the notion of creative space at their core. There are small pedestrian shopping centres, either on ramped streets, like FLW's Anderton Court from the '50s, irregularly scattered like Gehry's Edgemar of 1984-88, or tumbling along the street-front under a parking roof, like Stephen Kanner's Montana Collection from the same date. In all there is a cinematic negotiation between circulating and settling, seeing and being seen, looking at a built still life and serving as the staffage that sets it off for others.

Though the exhibitions showed much vitally important work from the '70s and '80s that moved along this line, this tradition of playing with new ideas for casual and lighter buildings, unlike experiments in the single dwelling, seems to be dying in favour of simply dressing up big or little boxes within arbitrary sculptural gestures, a pattern for which Disney Hall, whose interior spatial experience bears absolutely no relation to the shape or palette of its outward form, set the example. It is telling to recall the Getty's own timidity as Richard Meier's first plan for loosely laid out pavilions within a green landscape – an authentic LA campus – turned into a new version of the Lincoln Center, a tight and forbiddingly bright hardscape between a set of unwelcoming containers. And it is even more telling that the few recent civic buildings to capture affections have been – like Gehry's marvellously casual 'Temporary Contemporary' and Hodgetts and Fung's fluid short-term rehousing for a UCLA library – the most improvisational.

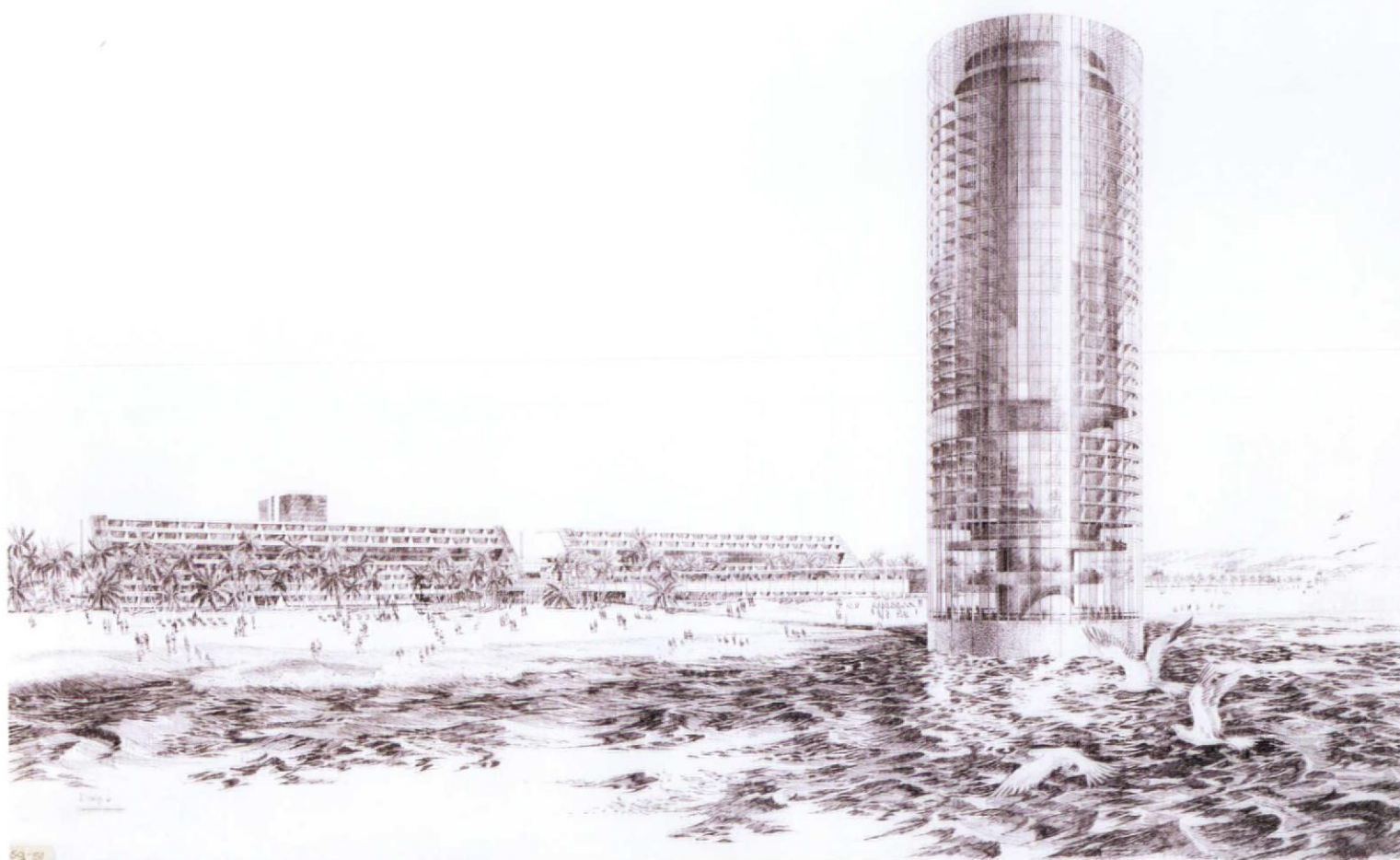
The season has ended, however, on a genuinely optimistic note, as Peter Zumthor unveiled a beautifully worded 'reconsideration' of one of the city's most pompous civic building failures – the opaque boxed enclosures of the main campus of the LA County Museum of Art. By rethinking it in completely inverted terms, as a single, transparent sheltered art park curving like a huge fallen leaf above the landscape, Zumthor has suggested the same spirit of anti-monumental invention, the type of casual California humanism that makes such poetry of the city's clustered and provisional sites. Sporting no grand entrance like the Getty, setting plazas under and around to walk and cycle through, and sitting shallow, smooth and curved against the choppy towers of its rectilinear boulevard, this model of a delicious possibility describes the outlines of the most exciting civic space the city has ever seen.



CITY OF ANGLES

Unbuilt treasures and unbuildable schemes are celebrated and mourned, conjuring the spectre of a city that might have been





The last in a six-month series of shows on LA's architecture – *Never Built: Los Angeles* at the Architecture and Design Museum – is one of the best, and because it wasn't conceived in time for a Getty grant, had to be self-financed. Even so, curators Sam Lubell and Greg Goldin's exhibition and catalogue far outshine MOCA's well-funded flop.

A hundred unrealised projects from as many years feature in the book, which provides an alternative history of a metropolis that might have been. About 40 of these are displayed at the A+D Museum, which will soon lose its mid-town storefront gallery to make room for a future metro station. It's hard to imagine a more inspiring farewell for a feisty institution that began as a nomad and will resume its peripatetic existence next year, organising pop-up shows and events in other venues.

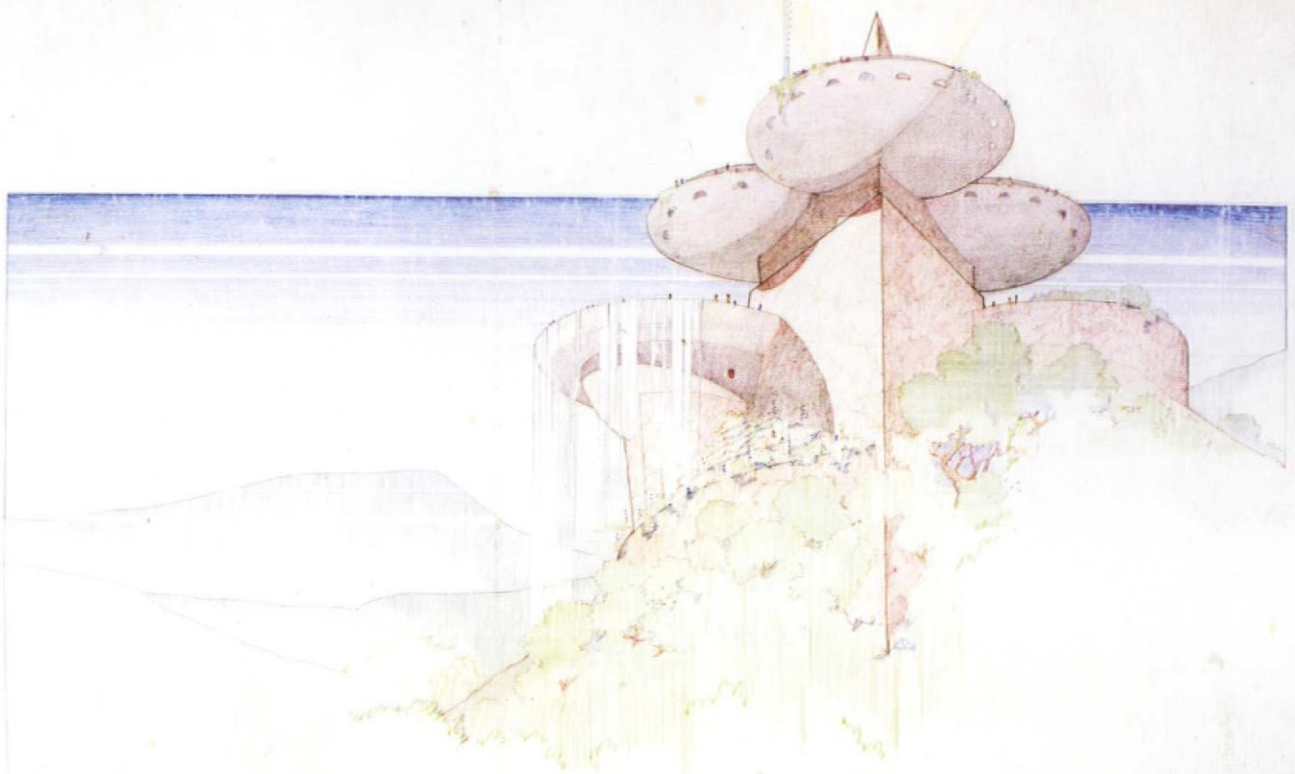
Designed by Clive Wilkinson, the installation places models on low trapezoidal plinths on a 1938 map of LA printed onto the floor. That provides a sense of context and scale, in contrast to the tabula rasa of most architectural exhibitions. Each project has its own space and there's a pleasing alternation of vintage, building type and style that corresponds well to the unplanned growth of the metropolis. Lenticular screens show what was planned for and actually built on several sites. Structural columns serve as the matrix for high-rise models, including a Lego version

of Frank Lloyd Wright's 1931 skyscraper cathedral proposal. A miniature monorail runs through the back wall, and projected images provide a virtual tour of five projects.

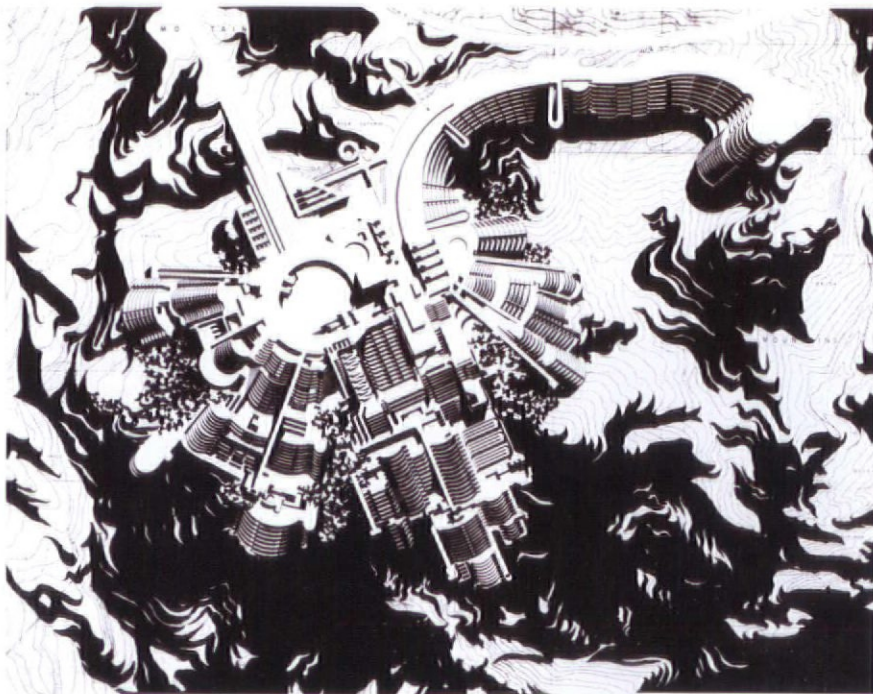
The proposals include masterplans and grandiose urban structures, an offshore freeway with a hotel rising from the surf, and a stately pleasure dome that Kubla Khan would have envied to enclose the new airport. Misty renderings of FLW's visionary 1923 scheme to develop the slopes of Beverly Hills as though a Mayan temple were emerging from the jungle are placed near the maquette of a 100-metre angel perched atop a 250-metre multipurpose tower that an Australian sculptor proposed as a symbol of the City of Angels. Seventy-five years separate these examples of the sublime and the grotesque, but the spirit of reaching for the sky is the same. The oil magnate that Wright courted settled for an Olde English mansion; the angel found no takers.

'The city's longstanding culture of timidity, political fragmentation, and subservience to developers has not only thwarted a century's worth of visionary schemes, but has engendered an ineffectual public realm,' states the introductory text. One should add to that list NIMBY neighbours, a lack of philanthropy, and an absence of leadership. It's a miracle that anything out of the ordinary gets built. Walt Disney Concert Hall was the great

1. (Previous page) Sussman Prejza's contribution to 'A Grand Avenue', the Maguire Group's 1980 plan for downtown LA
2. Looking like Mies-on-Sea, the transparent cylinder of DMJM's Pacific Ocean Park Redevelopment rises above the waves (1969)
3. Frank Lloyd Wright planned a Mayan-style scheme for Beverley Hills
4. Similarly pre-Columbian is DMJM's terraced housing for Pacific Palisades (1966)



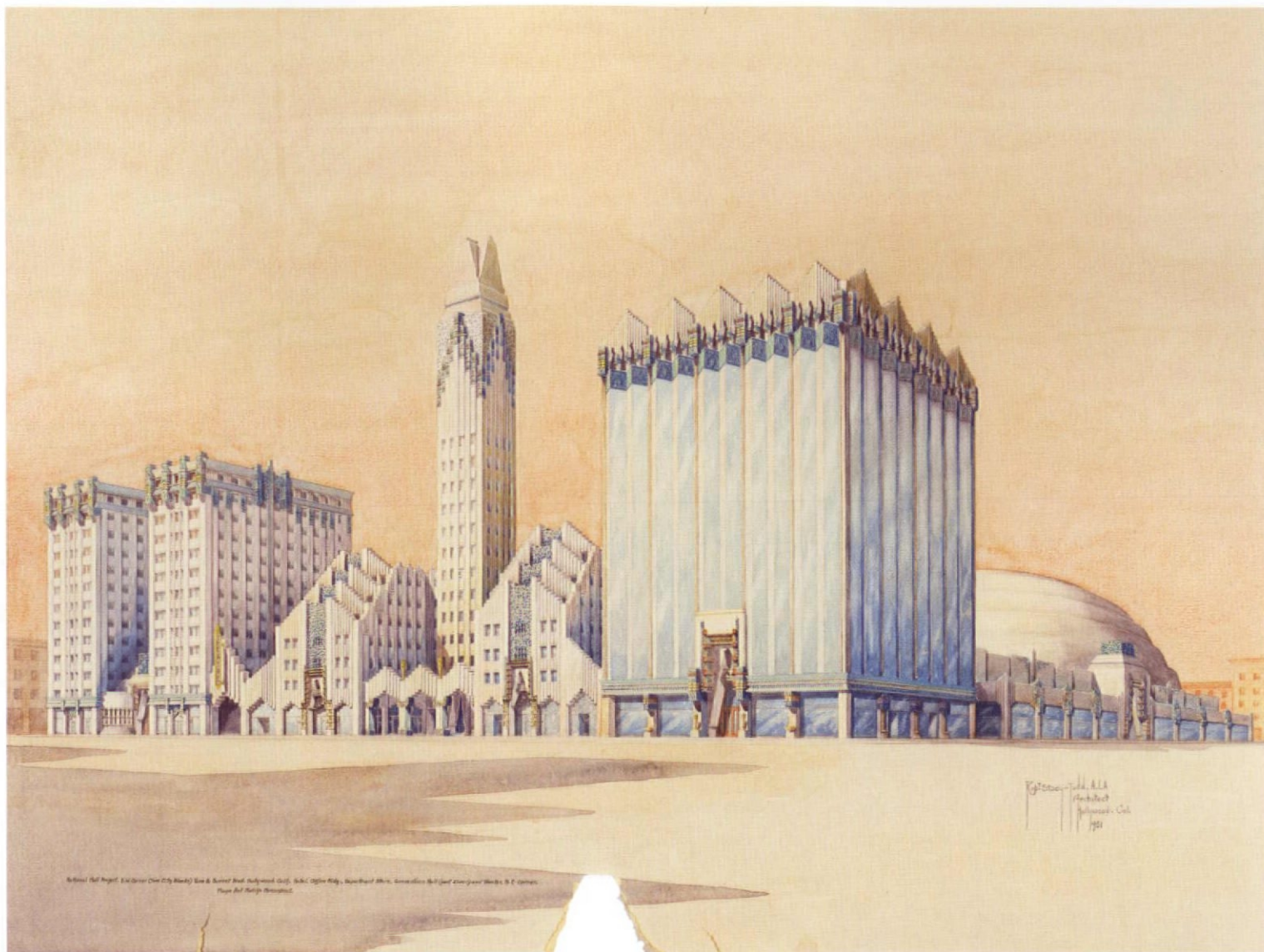
PLAY RESORT IN HOLLYWOOD HILLS FOR HUNTINGTON HARTCO
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, LLOYD WRIGHT ASSOCIATES



'NIMBY neighbours,
a lack of philanthropy,
and an absence of leadership:
it's a miracle that anything
out of the ordinary gets built'







exception, and Frank Gehry's bold design for the LA Rapid Transit Board headquarters lost out to a bland beige box by a commercial firm from Orange County. Peter Zumthor's proposal for LACMA faces an uphill fight with the philistines and bean-counters. Private wealth is lavished on single-family houses and architectural invention is often hidden by high fences.

Angelenos may mourn the failure to develop noble public buildings, mass transit and housing, but, as the curators observe, 'For every park or subway the city foolishly dismissed, it fortunately dodged an albatross.' Misguided efforts include FLW's overpowering civic centre, which would have been more at home in Speer's Berlin, and a succession of overweening towers, including a gilded 125-storey shaft for Donald Trump. Drivers on the San Diego freeway may be glad that this congested artery is not lined with Harlan Georgescu's Skylots, a mid-'60s proposal for 385 vertical villages suspended on cables. It's doubtful that the sunken section of the Hollywood freeway would have been improved by the elaborate steel gateways proposed by Morphosis and Asymptote. And it's hard to imagine Wilshire Boulevard as an unbroken ribbon of arches, monuments and fountains: a scheme promoted in 1923 in a pamphlet 'Why LA will become the World's Greatest City'. Some dreams are best left to slumber.

And then there are the projects that would have raised the architectural bar and enriched the quality of life: DMJM's terraced housing in Pacific Palisades, which appears in the 1966 renderings as a vast earthwork, and the 1950s Neutra-Alexander planned community of Elysian Park Heights, denounced as socialistic by a red-baiting consortium who preferred to replace Latino residents with Dodger Stadium and several acres of parking. The collaborative 1980 proposal for a Grand Avenue might have reanimated that Downtown street as Arthur Erickson's sterile towers never will, and it's a great loss that audacious designs by Steven Holl, Christian Portzamparc and Jean Nouvel were never realised.

Disappointment aside, this is a richly enjoyable collection, full of discoveries. Stylistically, it progresses from bombastic Beaux-Arts to the Mayan-inspired geometries of Robert Stacy-Judd and the Streamline Moderne movie houses of S Charles Lee who lived up to his motto 'the show begins on the sidewalk'. Spindly confections of the '60s morph into mirrored extrusions and a biomorphic reptile house for the city's Zoo. Aficionados of LA's diversity will relish this mix of visions and follies.

Never Built: Los Angeles, until 13 October at the Architecture and Design Museum, LA. The accompanying catalogue is published by Distributed Art Publishers, £36.16

**5. (Previous page) a gargantuan glass dome was proposed for LAX by Pereira & Luckman
6. Robert Stacy-Judd's Mayan-style National Hall
7. (Right) S Charles Lee's vast streamlined cinema**



STREET LIFE

In an area of LA infamous for its homeless population, three social housing projects by Michael Maltzan bring a sense of decency and dignity to a fractured urban realm



**Skid Row Housing,
Los Angeles,
USA,
Michael Maltzan
Architecture**



REPORT

NIALL MCLAUGHLIN

The name Skid Row has been immortalised in myth and music as both a place and a state of being. It is the address associated with the bottom rung of life's ladder, the dead-end destination for the hopeless. The original Skid Row was probably in Seattle and it got its name from the corduroy wooden tracks used to haul heavy lumber to the timber yards. The area around the yards became associated with the darker aspects of transient immigrant life; they became a haven for grease monkeys, vagrants, pimps and grifters.

The area known as Skid Row in Los Angeles is a 50-block section of Downtown. It is bounded by the Historic Core and Little Tokyo and it partly overlays the Downtown Industrial District. Its origins lie in the industrial developments that grew up to service LA's agricultural hinterland reached from the nearby rail yards. The seasonal nature of the work drew in a combination of short-term workers and rail crews on layover; small hotels suited to single male migrant workers serviced them. A scatter down of bars, brothels and religious missions vied for the attentions of this lonely constituency.

The combination of transient accommodation, available vice and the services needed to support the Fallen set the deep structure for the district and it has persisted beyond many of the original activities that generated it.

By the 1930s the place had an established character based on cheap hotels and their attendant life. The Great Depression brought in a new population of destitute farmers who had abandoned home and family. Many were alcoholics. After the Vietnam conflict, a new influx settled in the area, often traumatised and addicted to drugs other than alcohol. At regular intervals, the LA city authorities would attempt to clear the area out in highly publicised campaigns of arrest and intimidation. Although these were publicly popular, they did little to change the underlying structures and the homeless population of the area continued to grow. Now, it has one of the highest concentrations of homeless people in the US. A recent survey suggests 8,000 people in single occupancy hotel rooms, 2,000 in transitional accommodation and up to 4,000 living on the pavements. The intractable persistence of this blighted condition is astonishing. In 1947, an *Evening Independent* correspondent wrote, 'A high class criminal wouldn't be caught dead



Skid Row Housing, Los Angeles, USA, Michael Maltzan Architecture

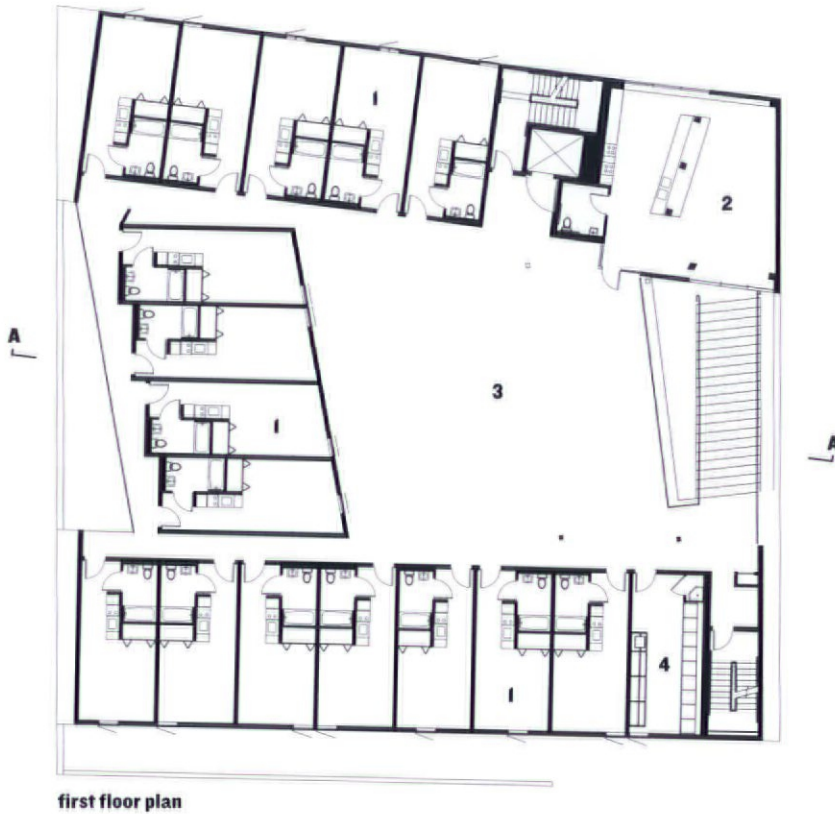
1. (Previous pages) map of the Skid Row neighbourhood showing the location of Maltzan's three housing projects
2. Up to 4,000 people live on the streets
3. Maltzan's first block for Skid Row is organised around a courtyard set at a right angle to the street



in this area. It draws cheap grifters and floaters like a magnet. It holds 9,000 transients at all times - bums, panhandlers, small time crooks looking for a quick buck.'

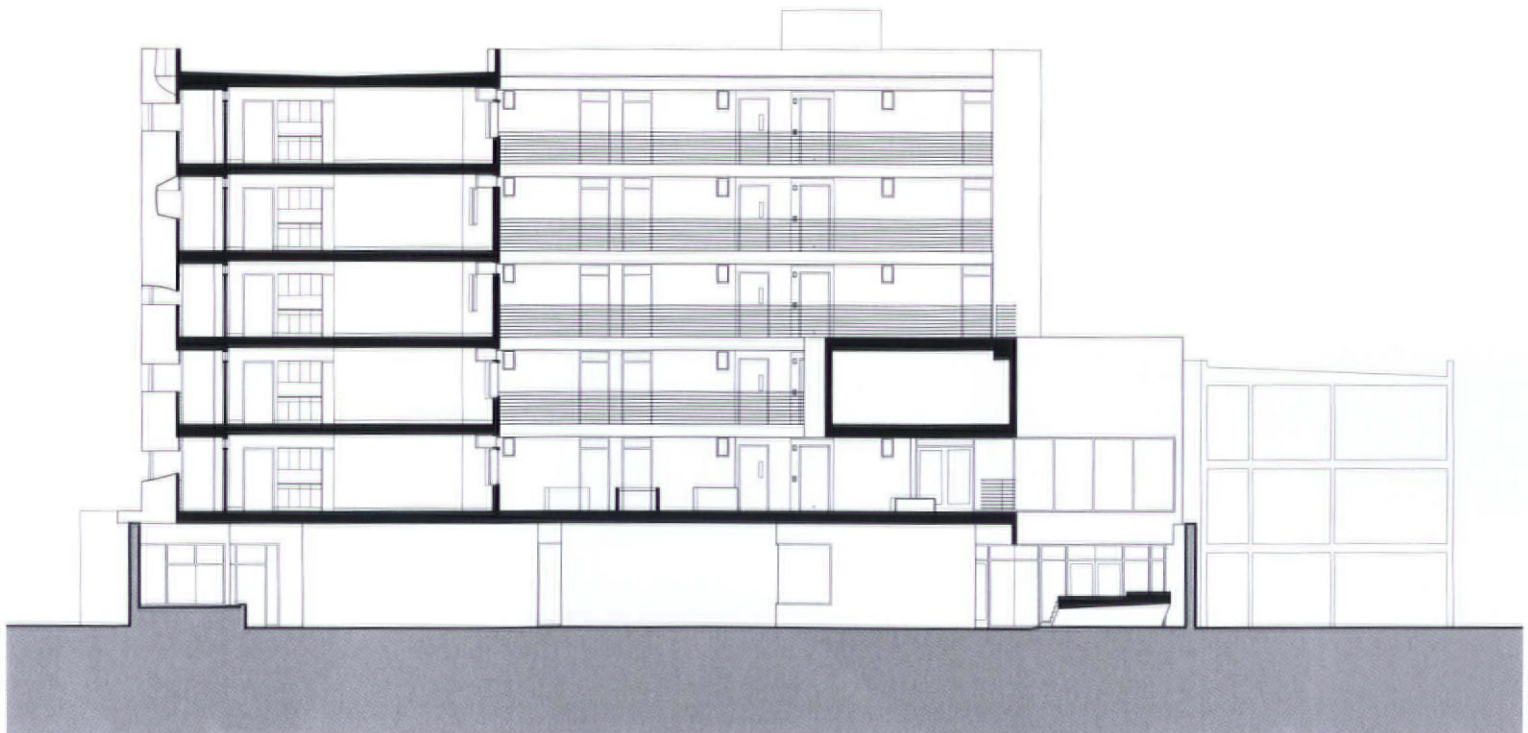
In the 1960s the authorities attempted to control the population by regulating the cheap hotels using legislation relating to fire codes. Many hotels were closed down or demolished. It constituted a 50 per cent decrease in the housing stock for the whole area. The policy was reversed in the 1970s when it was suggested that residential facilities should be preserved and enhanced with the addition of necessary services such as clinics. This enlightened policy had an unfortunate effect when other cities in LA County started dumping their unwanted citizens in Skid Row. Discharged mental health and hospital patients were unloaded into the area from considerable distances away. In 2007 a major national health provider was taken to court for dumping a patient on the pavement from a taxi wearing nothing but their hospital robes. 'Greyhound Therapy' was a phrase hospitals used for a one-way bus ticket to Skid Row.

This persistent problem situated a national malaise in a particular place. It became a battleground for civil liberties activists,

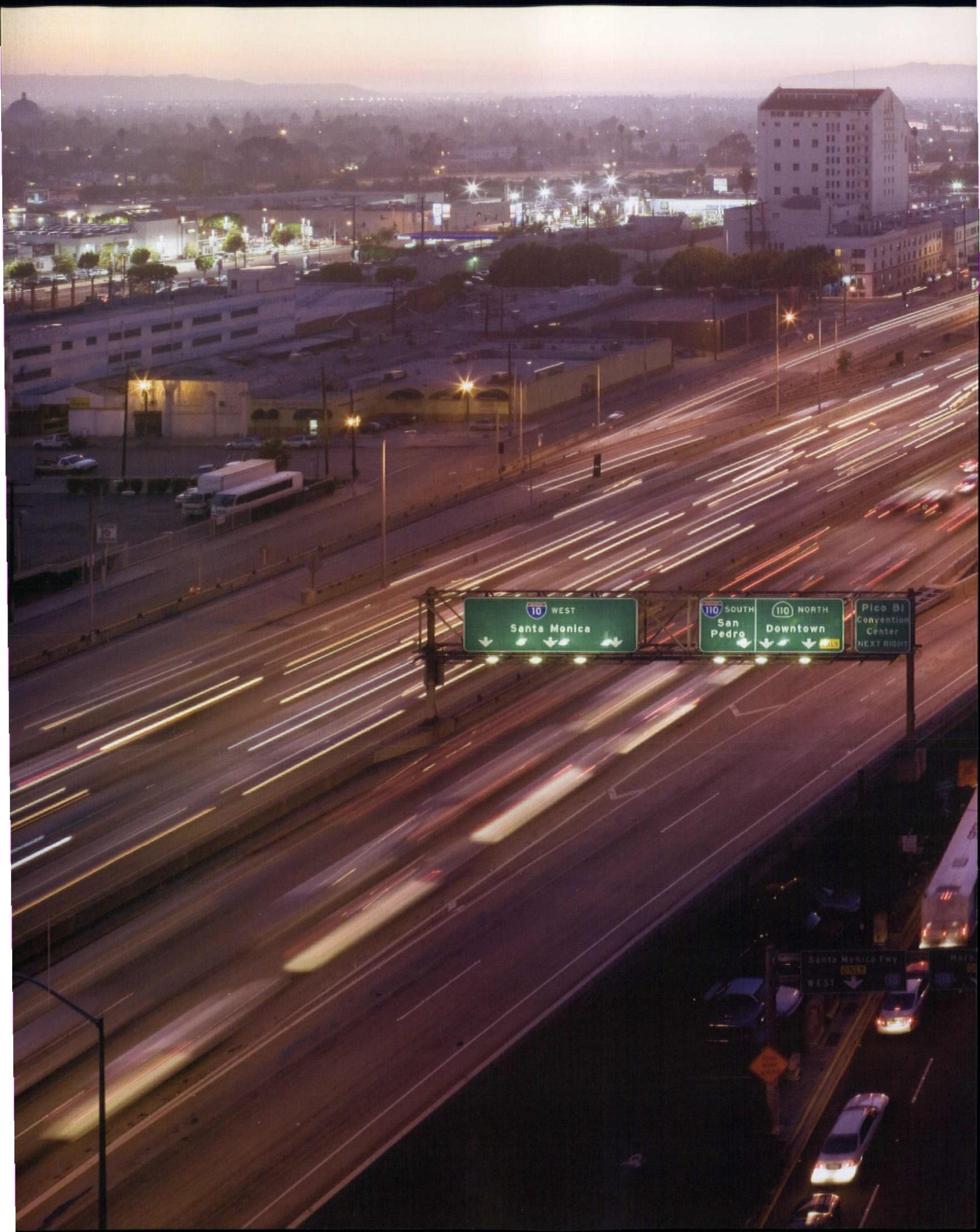


0 5m

- 1 residential units
- 2 communal dining area
- 3 courtyard
- 4 laundry facility



section AA



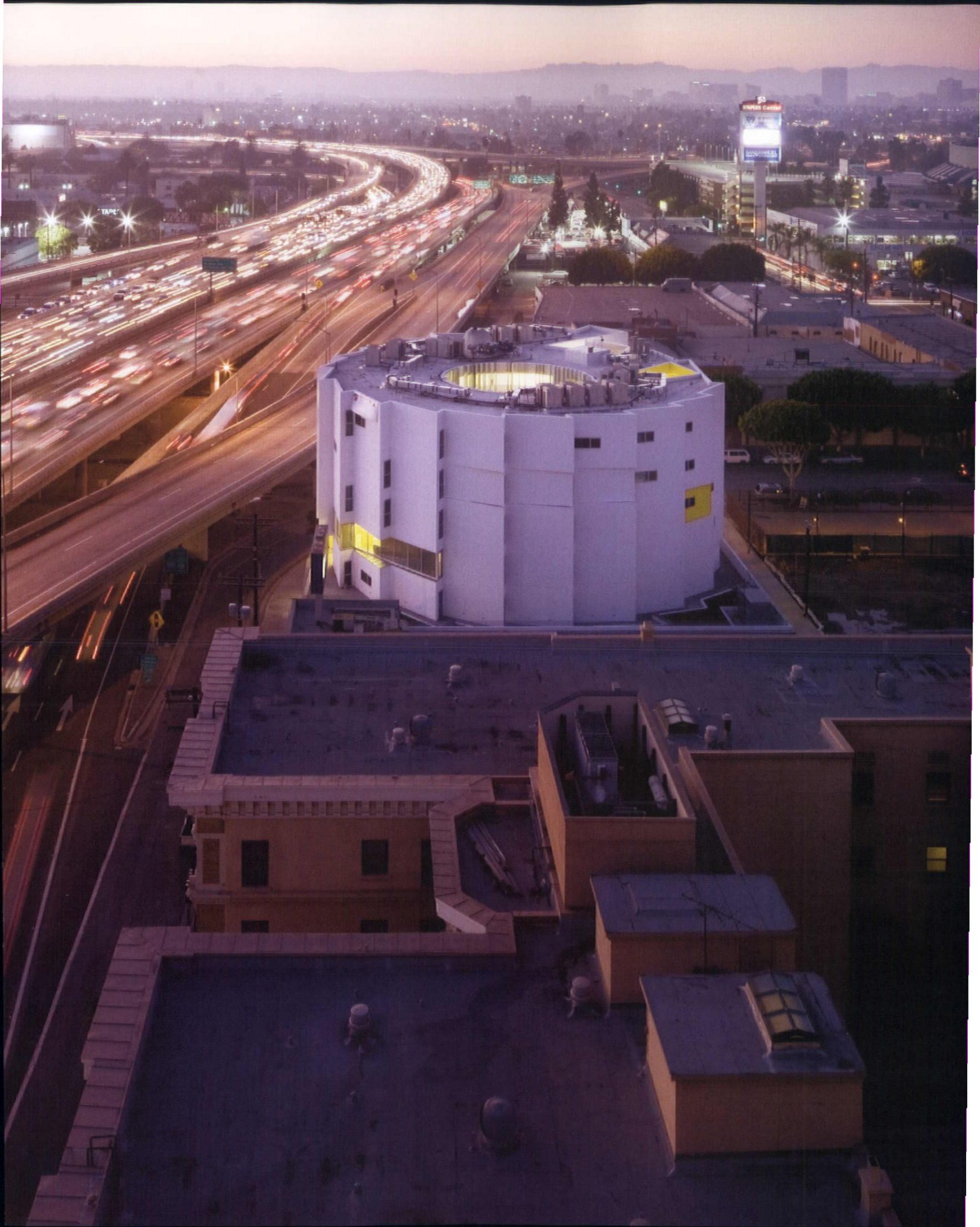
10 WEST
Santa Monica
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

110 SOUTH
San Pedro
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

110 NORTH
Downtown
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Pico Bl
Convention
Center
NEXT RIGHT

Santa Monica Fwy
WEST
↓



**Skid Row
Housing,
Los Angeles,
USA,
Michael Maltzan
Architecture**

4. (Previous pages)
New Carver Apartments
takes an entirely different
approach to the residential
block typology, shielding
its residents from the
blare of the freeway
**5. A terrace offers
Downtown views**
**6 & 7. Walkways overlook
the central atrium**



cross section



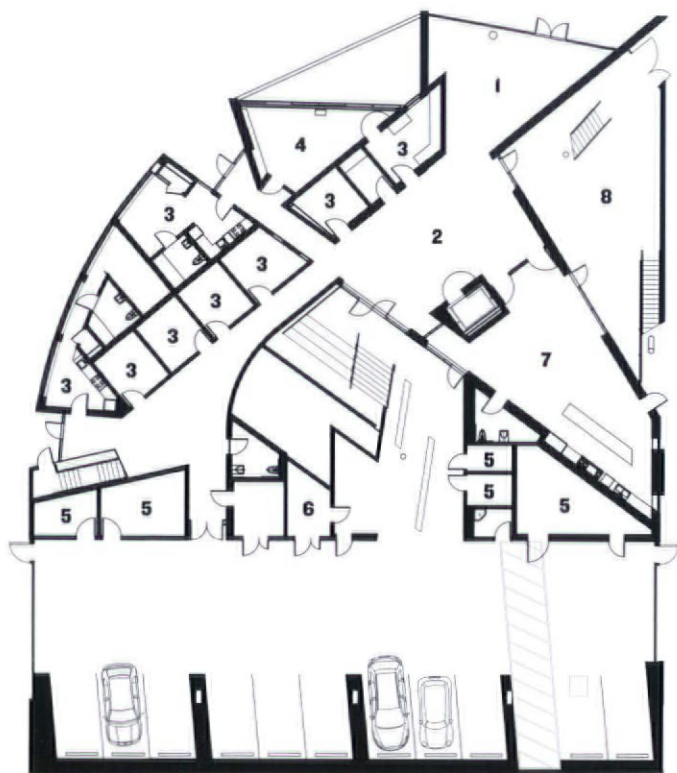
law enforcement agencies, city authorities and service providers. The potential solution came from a fairly predictable source. The overall development of Downtown was pushing property prices up in the area. Coffee bars, galleries and loft developments started to appear on the fringes of Purgatory. The police attempted another clear-out in 2006, based on the 'Broken Windows Theory', a form of intimidation and cleansing given thin academic credence. Broken windows and loitering were seen to point to disorder and therefore a threshold to serious crime. Saner voices pointed out that broken windows are merely indicative of poverty. People were cleared out of the area with no destination in mind. This simply exported the problem with the most vulnerable people separated from the services they depended upon. Since then, a new and tentative compromise has formed, with the City saying that it will not clear out homeless people without providing additional homes in the area.

The Skid Row Housing Trust (SRHT) was set up in the late 1980s to provide permanently supportive housing for formerly homeless individuals. In the 1990s they began refurbishing old dilapidated hotels using talented local architectural practices. They realised that stable accommodation only worked when combined with essential services and they developed a building model combining single person rooms, communal facilities and services such as mental health treatment, substance abuse recovery, money management and benefits advocacy. They began to target the most vulnerable people

living on the street. Their work constitutes a criticism of the whole city by attempting to reassemble the complete homeless services system in one place. From the beginning they advocated good quality architecture on the basis that it establishes the basic coordinates of a dignified settled environment for people who have lost trust in the idea of home; but it also advertises to the neighbourhood and the broader city that these people are here and that they have a viable identity in this place. This combination of inhabitation and representation is the basis for the architect's brief.

Michael Maltzan Architecture has designed three new buildings for SRHT over the last seven years. AR readers will know Michael Maltzan from his exquisite private dwellings, characterised by intricate involutions of geometry, built on the hills overlooking LA (AR June 2010). His career has followed a familiar and enviable trajectory from bespoke private dwellings to cultural institutions and major pieces of civic infrastructure. In this context, the design of low-cost housing for the previously homeless is a unique challenge. Maltzan insists that while this building type has its own architectural problems, it is designed within the practice with the same values and systems as any other commission.

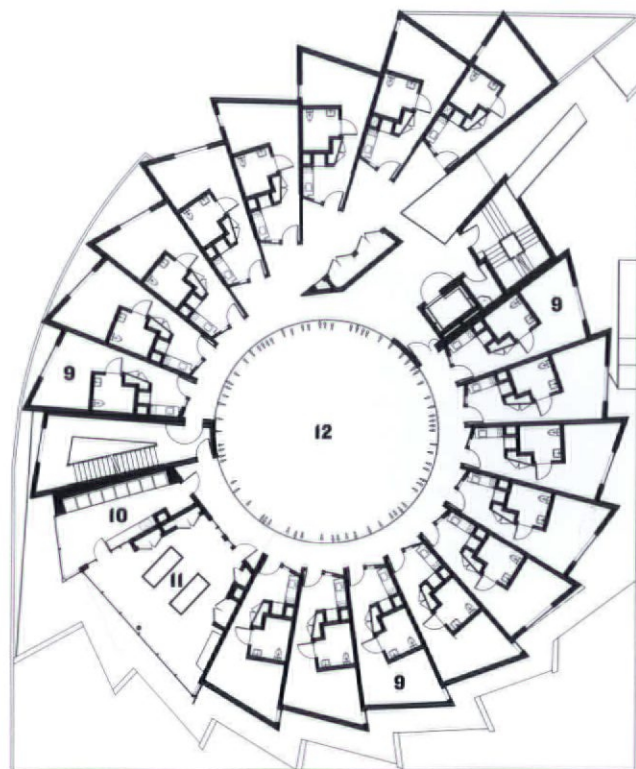
His first project is known as Rainbow and it was finished in 2006. It is built as a conventional urban block with communal services at ground level and individual rooms over five storeys above. The upper accommodation is arranged around a U-shaped courtyard set at right angles



- 1 entry
- 2 lobby
- 3 office
- 4 meeting room
- 5 plant room
- 6 recycling room
- 7 community kitchen
- 8 community garden
- 9 residential units
- 10 laundry room
- 11 community room
- 12 central courtyard



ground floor plan



third floor plan





second floor plan



first floor plan

to the street. The courtyard, established at first-floor level, is reached by a grand stair from the entrance and surrounded by deck access balconies serving individual rooms at each level. Maltzan sees the courtyard as establishing a common zone between the pleasures and perils of the street and the more isolated safety of the individual room. In the context of an individual in transition from homelessness to more permanent dwelling, this becomes the spatial crux of the architectural proposal. It is conceived in terms of views between balconies and rooms, but also framing of the sky and connection to the street. The architect then establishes a simple visual language based on plain stucco walls enlivened by coloured window reveals and openings, as though a sober suit has opened back to reveal a sumptuous lining.

The next project, New Carver Apartments, is built about a mile from the centre of Skid Row beside the 110 Freeway. It needs to deal with a more exposed and noisy location, but its position allows it to be read as a beacon on the scale of the larger city. It is highly visible to passing traffic. The architects describe the circular form of the building as being driven by environmental conditions relating to daylight and the nearby freeway. Care has been taken to baffle light and noise from cars. The section is broadly similar to the Rainbow project with ground-floor services and a grand stair rising to a central atrium flanked by open walkways. The plan, however, is based on a circular geometry,

‘The buildings announce the enduring presence of transient people in this area, giving them legitimacy’

with rooms radiating from the centre. Every room is turned slightly towards the perimeter, giving a twisting centrifugal quality to the figure of each floor plate. On the sixth floor an open-air terrace looks back across the skyline of Downtown Los Angeles.

The circular form is undoubtedly informed by environmental factors, but it changes the game architecturally from the previous project. The cylindrical beacon by the freeway draws the design into dialogue with other celebrated buildings in LA, in particular Welton Becket's Capitol Radio Tower. Instead of Becket's suggestive horizontal canopies, we have a vertical rotational unfolding, beautifully reminiscent in plan and elevation of Aalto's housing tower in Essen. The torsion is taken into the circular atrium by a screen of vertical fins that establish some distance between the individual rooms and the common atrium. This does something to offset the much higher concentration of space created by the central circular form. In all its virtuosity, this project moves in the balance from artless inhabitation towards an emphatic and singular representation. At the very limit of Skid Row, this building marks the presence of supportive housing for individual homeless with a powerful rhetorical presence.



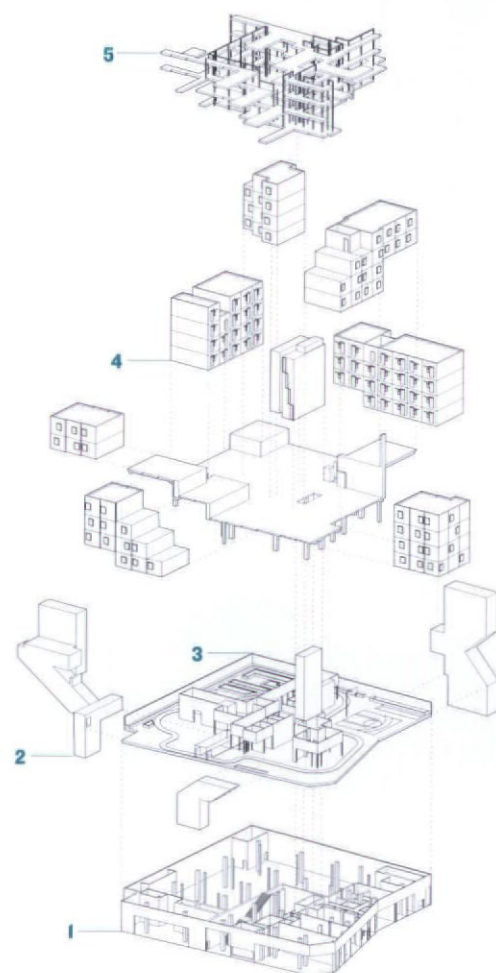
**Skid Row
Housing,
Los Angeles,
USA,
Michael Maltzan
Architecture**

8 & 9. Maltzan's latest building, Star Apartments, cantilevers its prefab rooms over the street, like a suspended kasbah

Architect
Michael Maltzan
Architecture
Photographs
Michael Maltzan
Architecture, 3
Iwan Baan, 4-7
James Ewing/OTTO, 9

Star Apartments, the final project in this suite, is due for completion later in 2013. Once again it combines essential services, communal facilities and individual rooms. Here, the common space of the atrium is turned outwards as a continuous veranda at podium level. The prefabricated rooms are elaborately held overhead like a suspended kasbah. It will be interesting to see how this variation works. The key contrast will be between the enclosed court and the outward-looking balcony. The safety, sociability and intimacy of the communal spaces seems central to the success of this transitional building type. The Broken Windows policy discouraged people from loitering in groups on the pavement; such disorganised conviviality was surely a threshold to crime. It is intended that groups will loiter here one floor above the pavement, establishing a sociable presence protected from, but participating in the life of the street.

The architect has said that he would like these projects to be read together. The formal virtuosity of each composition is Maltzan's own special skill and they suggest that high architecture can give pleasure and dignity to all of us. They also announce the enduring presence of transient and marginalised people in this area, therefore giving them legitimacy. I hope that the different spatial experiments, linking and articulating pavement, common sheltered space and private rooms, will become subjects for further reflection and analysis. It speaks of our common need to situate ourselves and participate in public life.

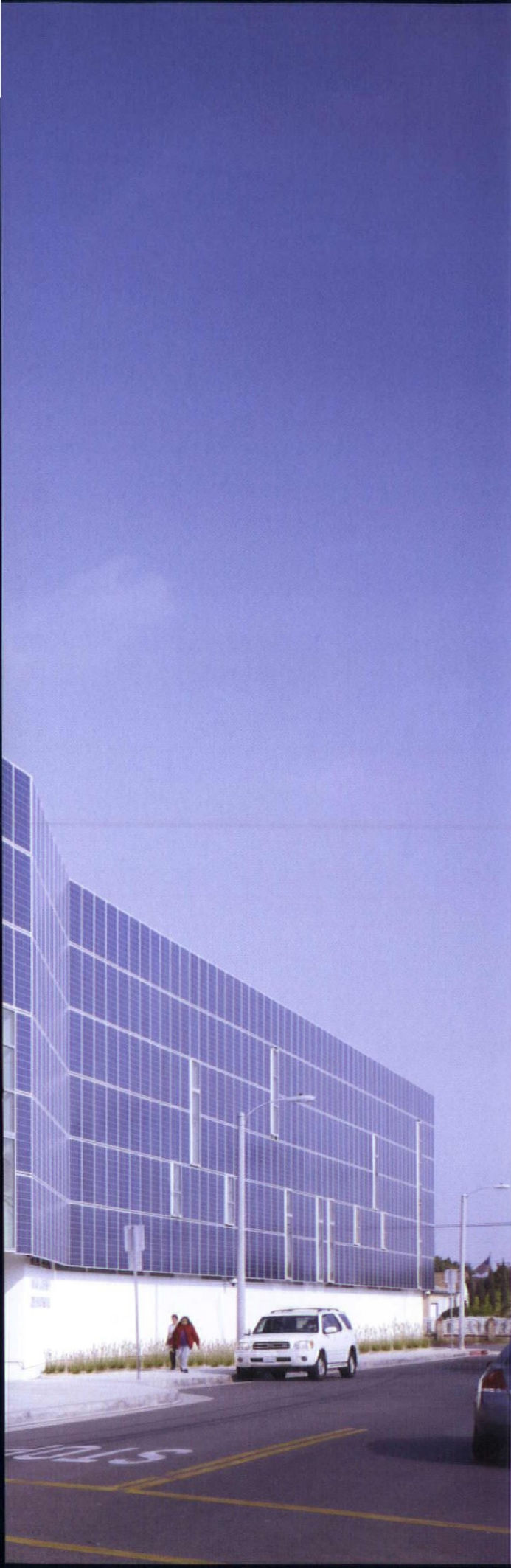


exploded projection

- 1 street level retail and entry
- 2 circulation infrastructure
- 3 community programmes
- 4 prefabricated modular units
- 5 lateral frames and floor plates



SPEED
LIMIT
25



Animo
Leadership
School, Lennox,
California, USA,
Brooks + Scarpa
Architects

TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

A pair of new schools in
Los Angeles brings fresh
architectural and pedagogical
thinking to an overloaded
educational system



REPORT

MICHAEL WEBB

Once a leader in public education, the United States is now a laggard. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is too large to manage effectively; local critics see it as a dinosaur that cannot respond to changing needs. In reaction to the poor performance of many public schools and a union that shields deficient teachers, charter schools have flourished. These are non-profit, tuition-free academies supported by public funds and private donations. Daly Genik's Camino Nuevo School (AR November 2002) is one, an exemplar of inventive low-cost architecture that responds to the needs of a multicultural community.

Green Dot, a non-profit organisation established in 1999, currently operates 22 charter academies in LA and other cities, often taking over failing public schools and dramatically improving their academic standards. Principals are encouraged to take full responsibility, reward the better teachers,

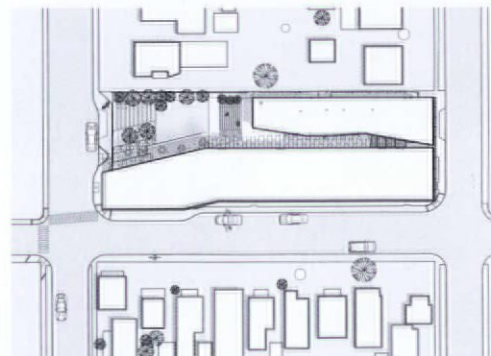
discipline students and staff who don't make the grade, and insist that parents become actively involved. It's an appealing alternative for the majority of residents who cannot afford private schools.

Animo Leadership School

The Animo Leadership School in Lennox, a tough, impoverished neighbourhood in south-central LA, is the Green Dot flagship. Brooks + Scarpa was selected on the basis of their affordable housing, and they created a model of compactness and sustainability on the skinny corner site, which was formerly occupied by a church. Most LA schools use only a fifth of their land; here the buildings cover 85 per cent of the site and a gymnasium is to be built a block to the north. Security was crucial in this densely populated high-crime area, and so was noise abatement from a nearby freeway and aircraft flying low into LAX. Working on a modest budget and tight schedule, the architects met all of these challenges and created a complex that feels more open and spacious than it really is.

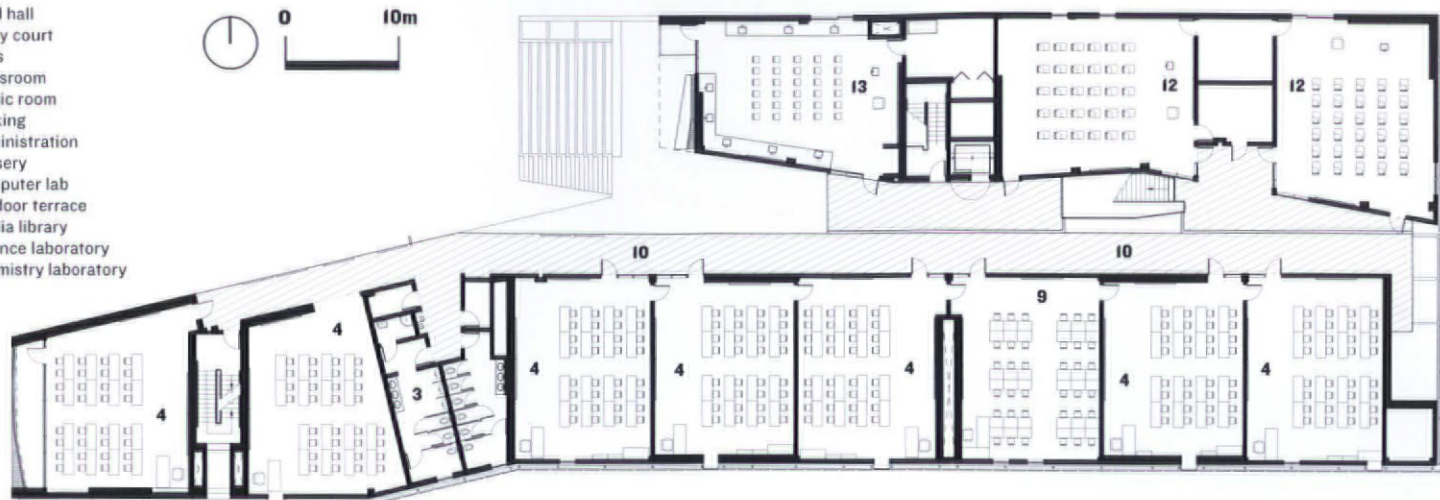
Animo Leadership School, Lennox, California, USA, Brooks + Scarpa Architects

1. (Previous page) at the Animo Leadership School an array of solar panels provide 75 per cent of the building's energy
2. An open staircase rises behind a protecting layer of white brise-soleil

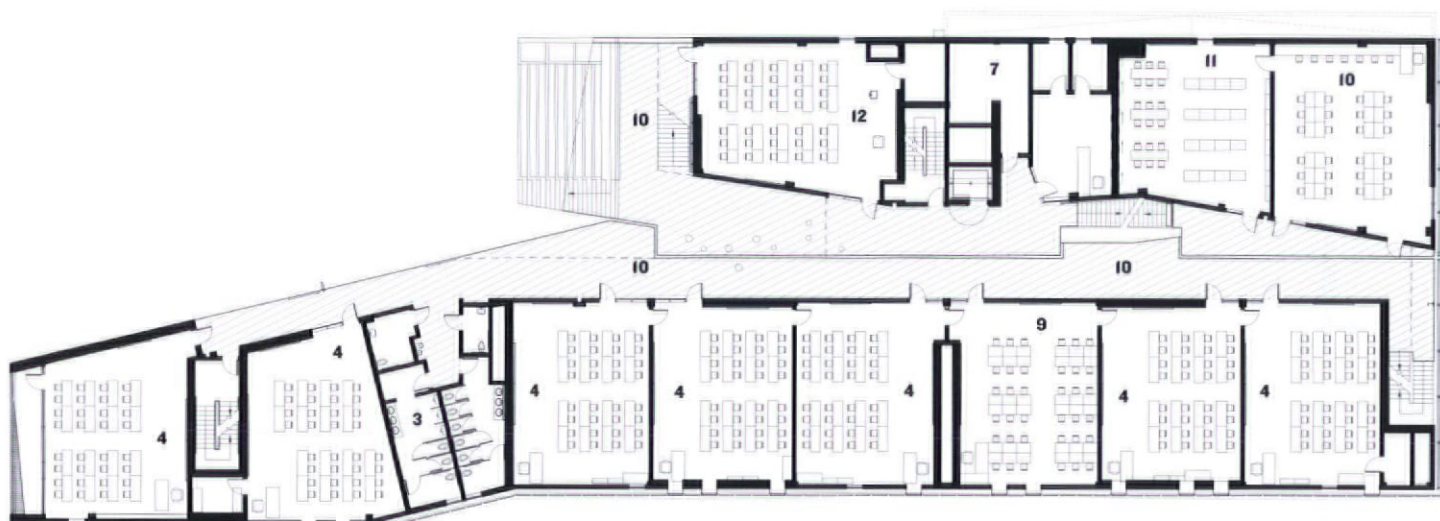


site plan

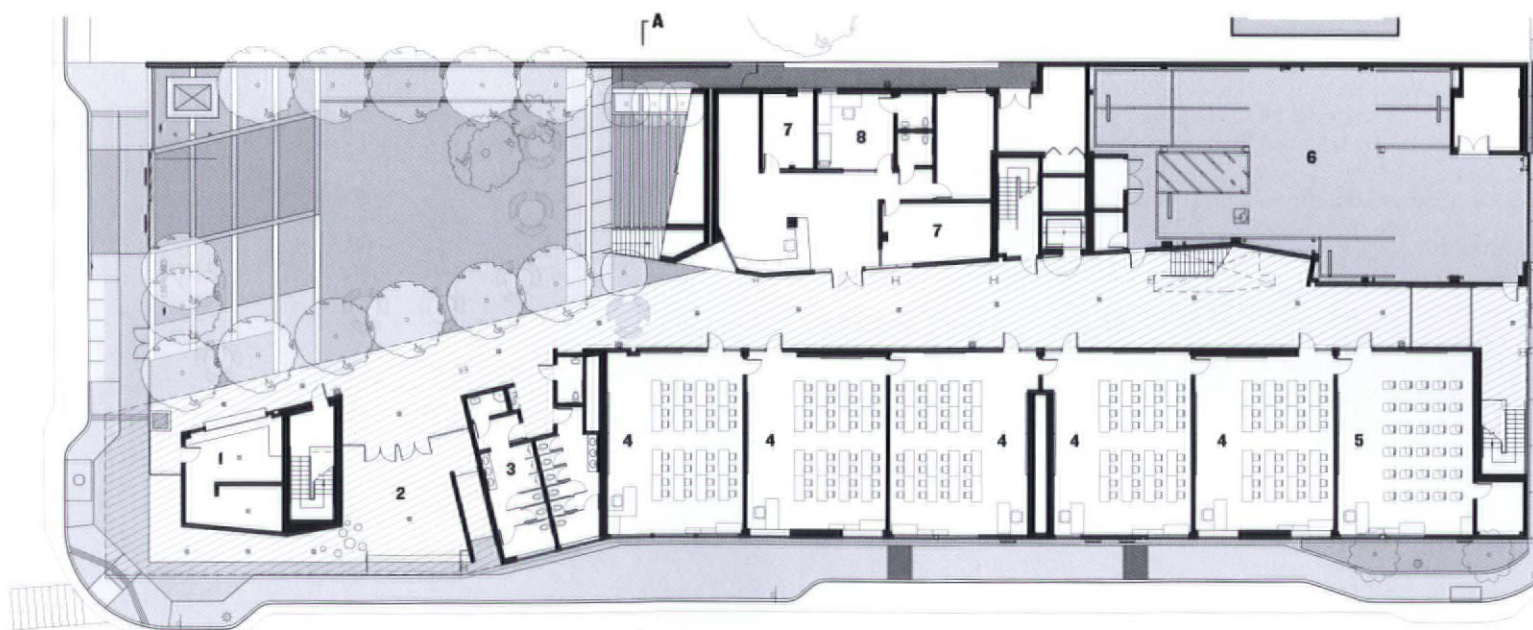
- 1 food hall
- 2 entry court
- 3 WCs
- 4 classroom
- 5 music room
- 6 parking
- 7 administration
- 8 nursery
- 9 computer lab
- 10 outdoor terrace
- 11 media library
- 12 science laboratory
- 13 chemistry laboratory



second floor plan



first floor plan



ground floor plan



3. (Opposite) students pour down the bleachers that link the various administrative and classroom blocks

Animo Leadership School, Los Angeles, California, USA, Brooks + Scarpa Architects

Brooks + Scarpa were inspired by the schools that New Orleans architects Curtis & Davis built in the early 1950s in Louisiana. There, in a poor state with a hot, humid climate, they designed narrow blocks with no corridors, allowing classrooms to be naturally lit and ventilated from both sides, and accessed by multiple staircases.

At Animo, a three-storey bar of classrooms extends to the street line on the south and west sides. The budget of £17 million (about £2,000 a square metre) mandated a simple, steel-frame structure and straightforward plan, but the architects cranked the bar to impart a sense of energy. A narrow courtyard separates the classrooms from a shorter three-storey block with administrative offices at ground level, laboratories and a library on the two upper levels. A mid-level bridge spans the divide.

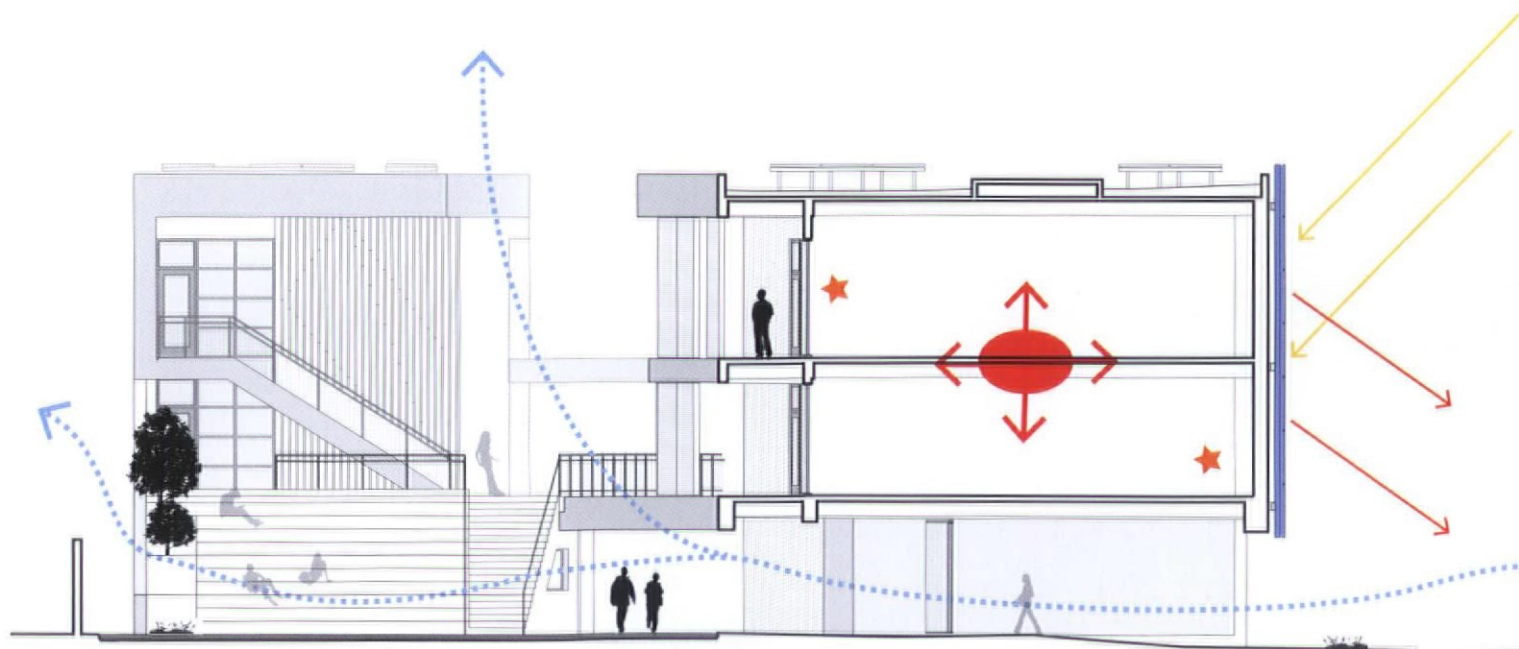
Staff and the 500 teenage students enter through an undercroft to the south, which is flanked by a brightly coloured cafeteria. Open-sided galleries along the north side provide access to the upper-level classrooms, and bleachers flank the stair leading up to the labs. The four open steel staircases double as gathering areas, and the compressed open spaces on different levels create a lively social interaction. Teachers can reconfigure their classrooms to break up the serried rows of desks and move around freely. As Lawrence Scarpa explains, 'we designed the circulation for the five minutes between classes, and envisaged the school as a social experience, not merely a machine for learning'.

Passive and active features make Animo one of the most energy-efficient schools in the country, according to a US Department of Energy survey. The buildings are oriented,

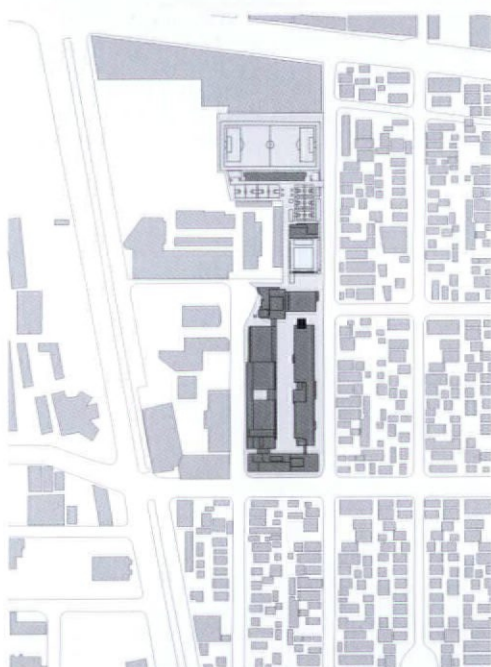
'We designed the circulation for the five minutes between classes and envisaged the school as a social experience, not merely as a machine for learning'

shaded and opened up to take best advantage of the sun and prevailing breezes. The classroom block is designed as a sun barrier, shading the courtyard and drawing in cool air at the base to be circulated through the interior. The 90-metre-long south facade and roof are clad with 650 solar panels that deflect heat and glare, furnish 75 per cent of the school's energy needs, and should reduce carbon emissions over the life of the school by about 1.4 million kg. To avert monotony on this reflective expanse, the windows are irregularly spaced; some project and others are concealed by the solar panels. The east end is screened with angled louvres of perforated metal, and the west by a lattice of blue steel rods.

Charter schools are a public-private hybrid with an uneven record thus far, but Green Dot has raised the graduation rate from about 55 to 80 per cent, bringing order to schools that were out of control. Its success has acted as a catalyst, spurring the LAUSD to make a few long-overdue reforms. In a major, bond-funded building programme, now nearing completion, the board allowed a few talented architects to propose innovative buildings. And it decided to break up the largest campuses into small learning centres (SLCs) giving each a measure of autonomy and allowing teenagers to study together for four years without being lost in a crowd.



section AA showing principles of environmental control



site plan

Linda Esperanza Marquez High School

Ehrlich Architects has previously built an LAUSD middle school in an industrial neighbourhood, and they were selected to design the Linda Esperanza Marquez High School in Huntington Park, an independent municipality in the Alameda Corridor, which runs south from LA to its port in San Pedro. Yet thanks to bureaucratic foot-dragging, it took seven years to realise. In 2005, Steven Ehrlich and his team engaged in a three-day charrette and presented three schemes, and the one that was accepted was completed in late 2012. Though the six-hectare site was much larger than the one in Lennox, it presented similar challenges. The buildings had to be set back 150 metres from a freight rail tunnel and a sawmill, while respecting the residential scale to the east and south. New schools have to do double duty as community centres, so the playing field, gym and library were made accessible to the public when not in use by teachers and students. Huntington Park's population has become overwhelmingly Latino and they would have

4. The red pitched roofs of the long, linear school complex echo the tiles of the surrounding buildings. The school is named after an activist who led a 20-year campaign to have toxic concrete debris from a collapsed freeway removed from the site

Linda Esperanza Marquez High School, Los Angeles, California, USA, Ehrlich Architects



5. Oversailing eaves and arched entrances add further vernacular touches, while the chequerboard facade animates its surrounds



section AA



ground floor plan



first floor plan



second floor plan

- 1 east entrance
- 2 administration
- 3 library
- 4 multi-purpose room/gym
- 5 classrooms and science labs
- 6 courtyard
- 7 west entrance
- 8 gym
- 9 kitchens
- 10 student dining
- 11 entrance to underground parking
- 12 pool facilities
- 13 basketball and tennis courts
- 14 grandstand
- 15 athletic field
- 16 performing arts classroom

**Linda Esperanza
Marquez
High School,
Los Angeles,
California, USA,
Ehrlich
Architects**







preferred a design in the same Mediterranean style as the 1947 City Hall. By law, all LAUSD projects have to be presented for three reviews by the community, and be approved by the City Council and the State Architect's office. That lengthy process often discourages or derails innovation, but Ehrlich was confident he could achieve something worthwhile. 'If you meet the programme, stay on budget, and pitch a good story, they are quite open,' he insists, sounding like an optimistic Hollywood director.

To break up the mass of a school for 1,620 students, Ehrlich designed a long classroom block on the east side of the site with separate floors for three SLCs, each with its own character and specialised curriculum. Shared facilities are ranged around the other sides to create a secure perimeter. Though LAUSD mandates bars on ground-level windows, 'We didn't want students to feel caged in, so we developed sheets of perforated aluminum laminated within the double glazing that admit light and allow you to look out,' says project architect Whitney Wyatt.





6. (Previous page) walkways link the school blocks at upper level
 7. These also provide much needed shade
 8. Zinging hues of lime green and orange enliven the corridors
 9. Expressive colour is also employed on the facades to soften the building's bulk

Linda Esperanza Marquez High School, Los Angeles, California, USA, Ehrlich Architects

There's a single level of underground parking and an internal pedestrian street linking the academic facilities to the athletic fields and a pool in an L-plan parcel to the north. The two gyms – one doubling as an assembly hall and performance space – are linked by a roof plane and lit from a broad band of Excelite, a double layer of ribbed polycarbonate. The roof plane is extended to the south and west to shade the expansive glazing of the library block and an outdoor dining area that extends from the cafeteria. Smaller windows in the classroom block are placed to provide abundant natural lighting while creating a lively rhythm on the facades. A massive steel staircase is embedded in the classroom block and provides a central gathering place overlooking the entire campus. A few windows can be opened, but the entire building relies on air conditioning. In part this is a response to noise, atmospheric pollution and the distance from cool ocean breezes; in part to inflexible LAUSD regulations.

The muscular steel frame of the buildings is exposed, and the facades are clad in a

red-yellow chequerboard of corrugated metal panels above an olive-green stucco base. These vibrant colours are echoed in the concrete paving, and arched entry portals to the school and the football stand provide another link to the native culture of local residents. The poured concrete arches were inspired by the work of Irving Gill, a Modernist pioneer who created a taut version of Mission-style architecture nearly a century ago. Inclined roof membranes are red to evoke expanses of tiles, and they conceal rooftop mechanical equipment. In the lively palette of colours and materials, and the clarity of layout, Ehrlich has achieved an admirable balance of urbanity and economy, though it's much less sustainable than he would have liked.

Taken together, these two schools – the first ground-up building for Green Dot, a modest experiment by LAUSD – may serve as models for future construction, and encourage a fresh approach to an education system that is failing society and the kids who need its help.

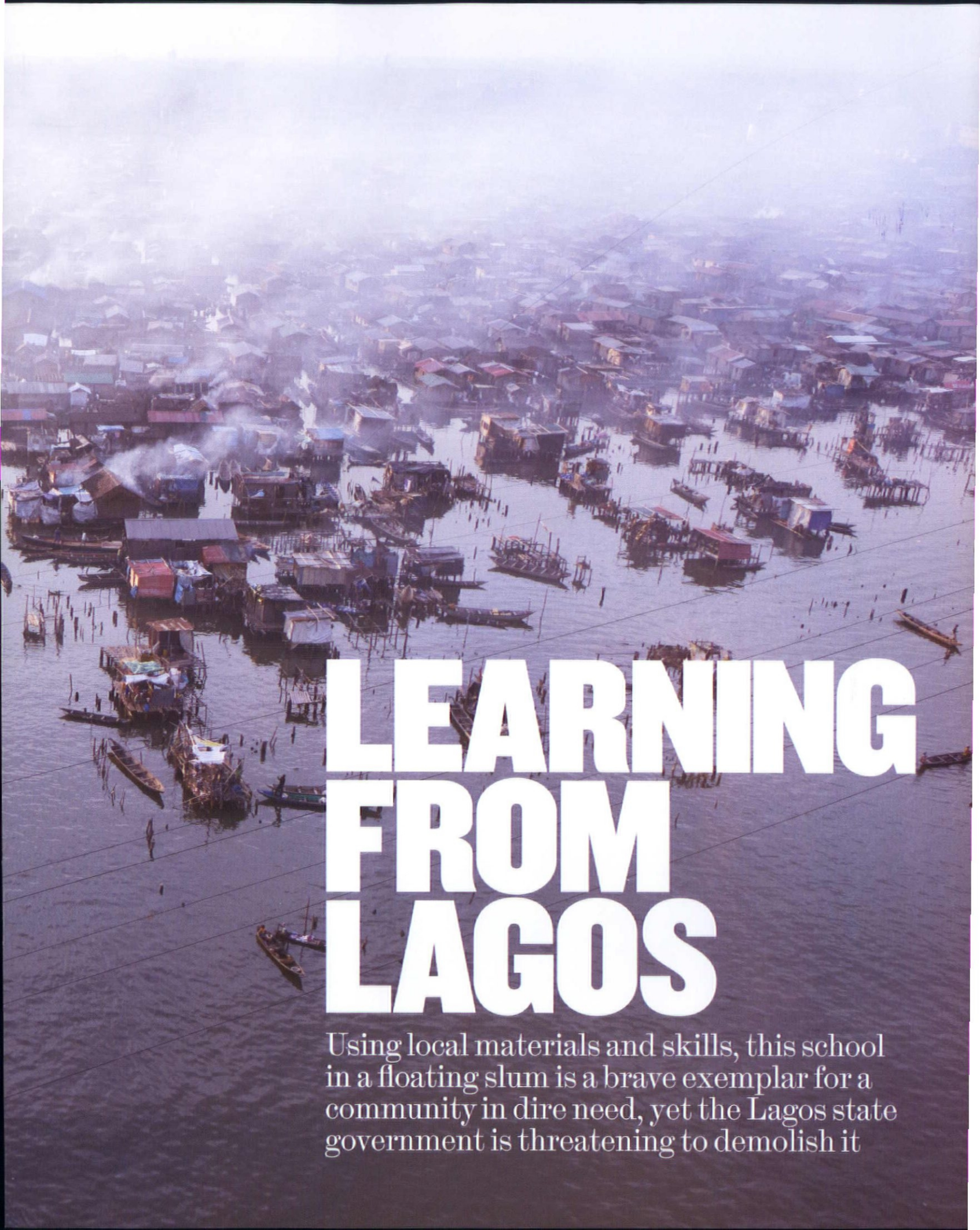
Architects

Brooks + Scarpa
 Architects,
 Ehrlich Architects

Photographs

John Edward Linden, 1-3
 Proehl Studios, 4
 Lawrence Anderson/
 ESTO, 5-9





LEARNING FROM LAGOS

Using local materials and skills, this school in a floating slum is a brave exemplar for a community in dire need, yet the Lagos state government is threatening to demolish it

REPORT

JONATHAN GLANCEY

Makoko, a Nigerian shantytown on the marshy waterfront of Lagos, is not exactly Venice, but there are marked similarities between the two. Both are built on wooden piles driven into saline mud and tidal ooze. The streets of both are famously full of water. Both were settled by fishing communities, Venice – officially – in AD 421, Makoko at some time in the 18th century. Their populations are of a similar size – 60,000 in Venice, around 80,000 in Makoko – although no one knows for certain. Both have been threatened: Venice more by floods than war, and Makoko by its status as an illegal settlement. Last year, machete-wielding men employed by the city of Lagos severed countless wooden piles, causing the collapse of hundreds of flimsy timber homes.

At this point, the difference between these two water-borne settlements becomes horribly clear. Venice – La Serenissima – was once among the world's wealthiest cities; today,

it retains its power to captivate the dullest soul, and since 1987, city and lagoon have formed a World Heritage Site. Makoko, meanwhile, has sprawled into the marshy waters fringing Lagos over the past century. Like Venice, it is almost impossibly picturesque, luring adventurous photographers from around the world who, without a ripple of a doubt, produce some of their most memorable work here: in which direction can a photographer point a camera in Makoko without winning the art director's jackpot?

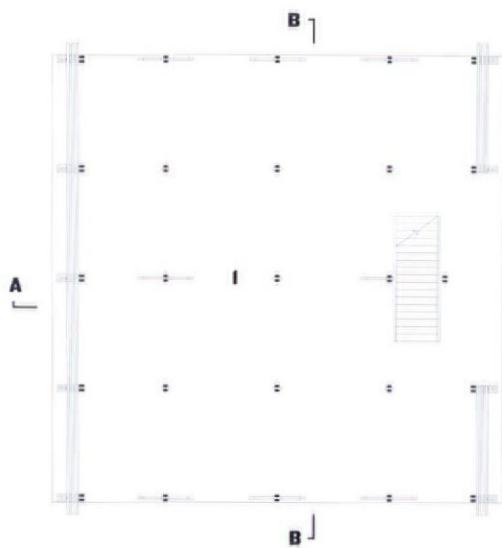
Here is the fish market with its daily catch of gleaming barracuda, red snapper, crab and prawns. Over there, young women in their Sunday best paddling their canoes to church. Morning mists and spectacular sunsets add to the superficial lustre of Makoko.

But, Makoko is very poor. Houses, sleeping several families in single rooms, share common latrines discharging raw effluence into rubbish-strewn waterways. Cholera and malaria are rife, while polio, still very much at large throughout Nigeria, strikes children

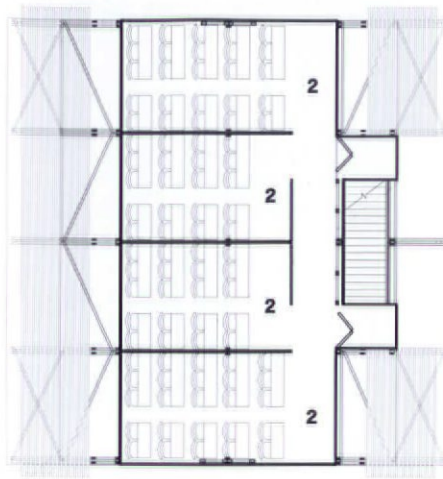
1. (Previous page) Makoko shantytown, an illegal settlement on the waterfront fringing Lagos, is the setting for an unusual floating school for local children
2. Rising from the murky waters, the A-frame timber structure floats on blue plastic barrels
3. The school accommodates up to a hundred children on two levels of the three-storey structure

Floating school, Makoko, Nigeria, Kunlé Adeyemi, NLÉ

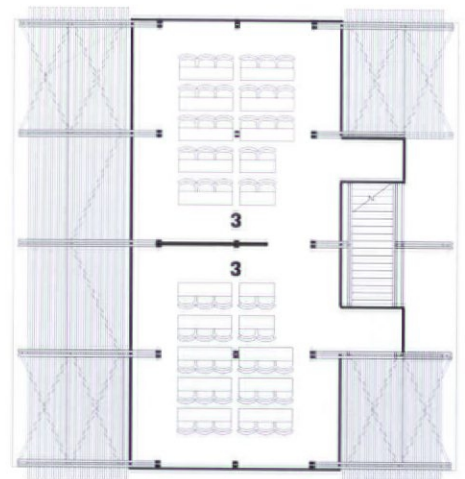




ground floor plan



first floor plan



second floor plan

- 1 play area
- 2 classroom
- 3 workshop



at random. Medicine is largely traditional. Outlaws from along the west coast hide out here. Life expectancy is under 40.

So, what should Lagos do? With plans to rebuild this west coast cosmopolis into a city for 40 million people – with skyscrapers the world can do business with – Makoko is seen as a boil on the face of Lagos in urgent need of lancing. Where will its poor go? No one knows, and few in power seem to care.

There is another way of looking at Makoko, as Kunlé Adeyemi and NLÉ, his Amsterdam-based practice, has done in recent months; Amsterdam is, of course, another water-based city. With the aid of various NGOs, including the UN, and local people, Adeyemi has designed and built, using local materials and labour, a floating school in the watery heart of Makoko. An extension, he says, to an existing school in the shantytown, it offers classrooms for up to 100 local children on two floors set in a three-floor triangular – or A-frame – timber structure floating on 256 blue plastic barrels. The school was built between last October and

February this year, designed with the help of the Dutch naval architect, Erik Wassen.

The first floor – essentially an open platform or deck – serves as a playground, of sorts, for the children as well as a communal space for fishermen to mend their nets, and for people to gather and talk, their canoes moored to its sides. The main classroom space, which can be divided by partitions as necessary, is on the second floor, and cooled and shaded by timber louvres. The top floor incorporates photovoltaic cells to generate electricity.

The Makoko floating school is, without doubt, an attractive, romantic and practical building that has won praise from, among many others, Ade Mamonyane Lekoetje, Nigeria's director of the UN Development Programme. At the school's opening in March, Ms Lekoetje said the project would serve as a model to transform other coastal communities in the West African region. Paul Okunlola, architect and Programme Officer of UN-Habitat, cited it as 'part of steps to upgrade slums around the world'.

It might sound far-fetched, and yet just as architects, planners, local authorities and local people in Brazil, Venezuela and elsewhere in South America are transforming dense slums into unexpected hill towns, so Makoko could yet be turned, if not into a simulacrum of Venice, then into a healthy, educated and very special district of Lagos. At first it might seem odd that the designers of the floating school themselves live in some of the world's most sophisticated cities working on highly advanced and expensive projects: Nigerian-born Adeyemi (the son of an architect from Kaduna, he studied in Lagos) worked for OMA in Rotterdam for nearly 10 years and was lead architect on the New Court Rothschild Bank in the London and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange; meanwhile, as construction work began on the school in Makoko, Erik Wassen, of Dykstra Naval Architects, was a guest speaker at the Superyacht Design Symposium in Miami.

And, yet, this very sophistication, married to local needs, local skills, local materials and to an acute sense of place, has the power to



site plan

4. Site plan showing the floating slum of Makoko in relation to Lagos
5. (Opposite) the triangular structure, born of local skills, needs and materials, overlooks the haphazard and growing assemblage of slum dwellings precariously constructed on stilts

Floating school, Makoko, Nigeria, Kunlé Adeyemi, NLÉ

'Makoko could yet be turned, if not into a simulacrum of Venice, then into a healthy, educated and very special district of Lagos'



shape special buildings for what should be truly special places – and not just for adventurous photographers, however good – in poor and difficult parts of the world.

As Adeyemi himself says, ‘the overarching aim of the practice [NLÉ] is to bridge critical gaps in infrastructure and urban development by creating coherent networks and global exchanges that work for people ... whether a chair for charity in South Africa, a revolutionary rotating art space for Prada in Seoul or the visionary plan [with OMA] to eliminate traffic paralysis in Lagos, in each project the essential needs of performance, value or identity – critical for success – are fundamentally the same for me. Although quantitatively different from place to place, the responsibility of achieving these needs at maximum, with minimum means, remains the same globally. I am constantly inspired by solutions we discover in everyday life in the world’s developing cities.’

Not everyone, however, shares Adeyemi’s altruistic vision. As far as Prince Adesegun

Oniru, the Lagos State Government’s Commissioner for Waterfront and Infrastructure Development, is concerned, Makoko school itself is an outlaw. ‘The floating school has been illegal since its inception’, says Adesegun, ominously. ‘It was erected without permission of the state ... it shouldn’t be there.’

Nor, then, should Venice. The fishermen who first came with their families some 2,000 years ago asked no city, no authority, no prince if they could build houses on the insalubrious, malarial marshes, yet here they laid the foundations for one of the most beautiful cities the world has yet known. It might take many generations to make Makoko as truly special as it could yet be, but with the Lagos State government threatening to demolish this floating, flag-waving school – although NLÉ, currently in negotiation with the Lagos state government, believes no immediate action will be taken – the timetable may yet have been set back again, even as global skyscrapers, apparently learning little from Africa, rise behind the Lagos shoreline.

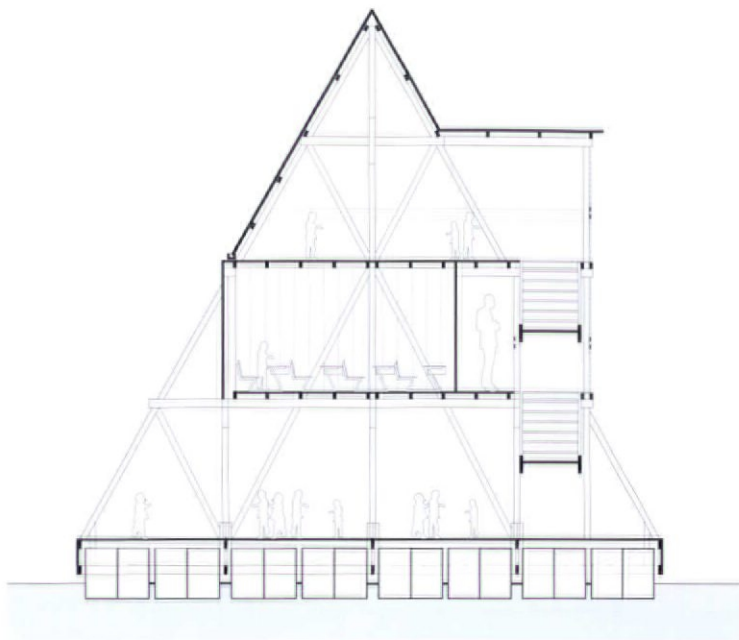
6. The first floor, an open deck, is a playground for the children, an assembly space for local fishermen mending their nets, and has become a gathering place for the community

7. The school has transformed the impoverished coastal community, yet the Lagos state government is threatening to demolish it

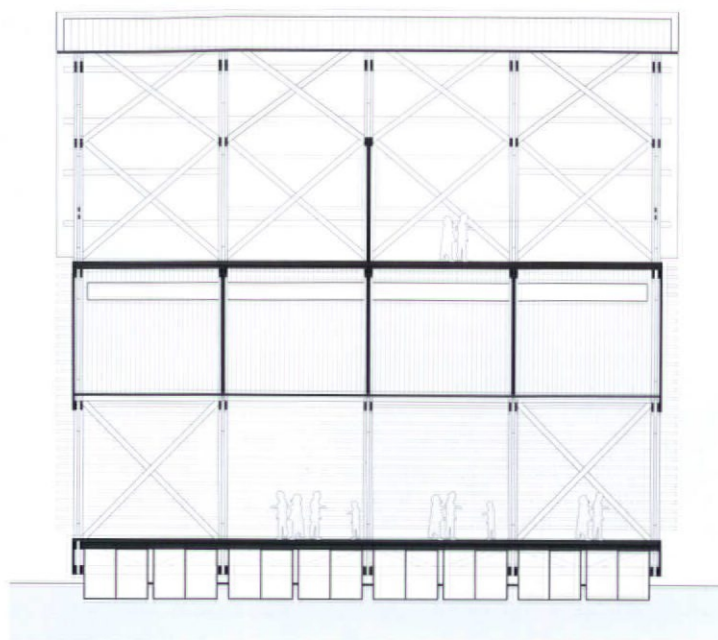
Floating school, Makoko, Nigeria, Kunlé Adeyemi, NLÉ

Architect
Kunlé Adeyemi, NLÉ
Photographs
Iwan Baan





section AA



section BB







CRAFTED FOR CARE

A centre for the treatment of disabled children in Paraguay uses reclaimed materials in an absorbing narrative of physical and social rejuvenation

**Rehabilitation
Centre, Asunción,
Paraguay,
Gabinete de
Arquitectura**

PHINEAS HARPER

Independence day celebrations were cut short in Paraguay when, in 1814, philosophy-professor-cum-supreme-leader José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia sought to strong-arm the new state into a utopian society based on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract. Introducing strict reproductive laws and a brutal secret police, he created an enduring tradition of autocratic rule that would last almost continuously until 1987. A string of dictatorial leaders, most deposed by violence, shut the country off from the rest of the world for the best part of two centuries, leaving a legacy of corruption and deprivation. Only in recent years has a new Paraguay begun to emerge, with a democratically elected leadership, the strengthening of civil liberties and one of the fastest growing South American economies.

The Teletón association is a Paraguayan charity working predominantly with spinally injured children and disabled young people. Like many of the country's institutions, it was plagued by wider national troubles and for years was blighted by corruption. The fundraising strategy – an annual televised appeal – was hijacked by embezzlement and Teletón fell into decline. However, in 2008, after a fundamental restructuring, the charity started to rejuvenate its battered reputation. And, as part of these efforts, it commissioned

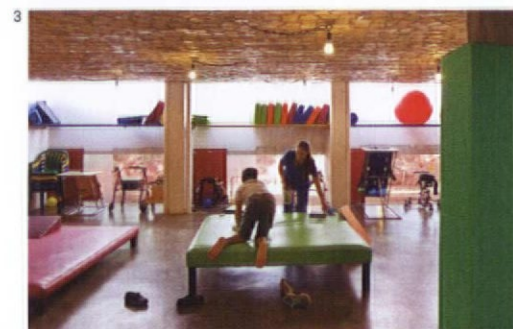
this new rehabilitation centre by local architects Gabinete de Arquitectura.

The rehabilitation centre provides a base for physiotherapy courses and a programme of educational projects aimed at improving public understanding of disability. On the border between the capital Asunción and the overlapping city Lambaré, the complex is organised as a cluster of masonry buildings set within a lush garden. Visitors turn off from a busy road into the centre's grounds along gently sloping ramps. An ascending pathway is shaded by a pair of vaulted, reclaimed brick canopies (with concealed steel skeletons), which form a perforated screen between the street and garden. The main building is arranged as two wings, separated by courtyards, containing consultation rooms, play spaces and physiotherapy facilities.

From the main building's south-east corner a path leads to a hydrotherapy pool housed in a dramatic masonry enclosure. A triple-height reclaimed brick wall hangs in the air above a storey-high ribbon of glazing. Inside, three vast inverted brick pyramids rise from freestanding columns concealing emergency water tanks (Paraguay is prone to droughts). Sitting upon an exposed concrete frame the stereotomic walls zigzag along the facade creating a triangulated texture – one of several recurring themes which tie the scheme together visually. Throughout the site, the architecture's hard edges are softened with playful child-friendly flourishes.

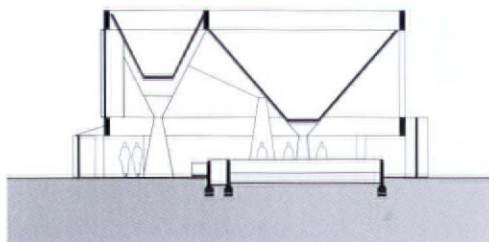
Rehabilitation Centre, Asunción, Paraguay, Gabinete de Arquitectura

1. (Previous page) a tree pokes through an arching canopy of reclaimed bricks
2. Sawn-off plastic chairs recline at angles and continue the rhetoric of rehabilitation
3. Treatment room
4. The exterior of the paraboloid corridor
5. The centre's two main blocks are arranged around a green quad
6. Inside the brick parabola

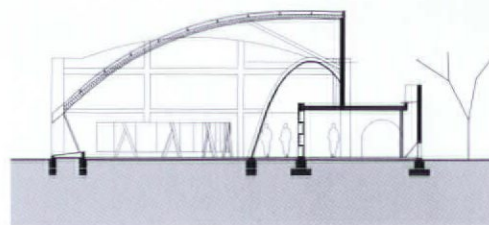




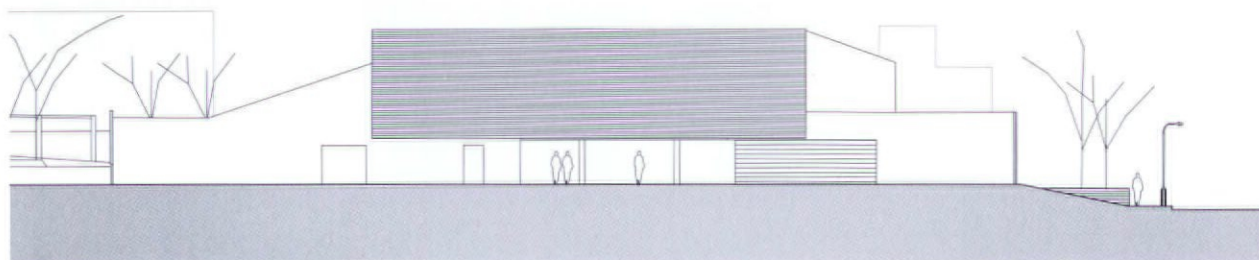
**Rehabilitation
Centre, Asunción,
Paraguay,
Gabinete de
Arquitectura**



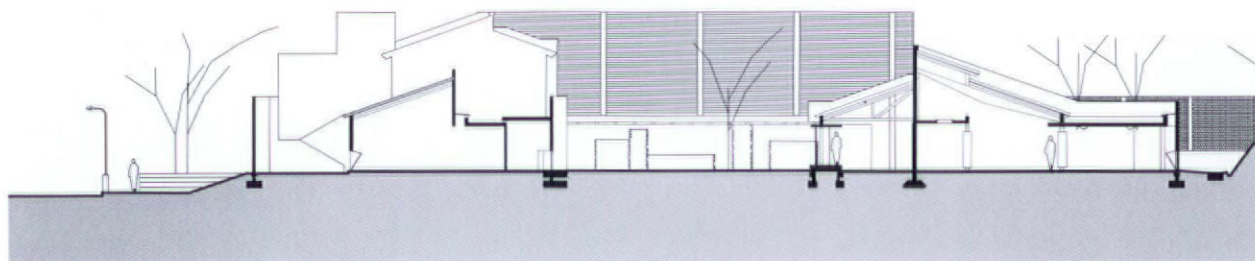
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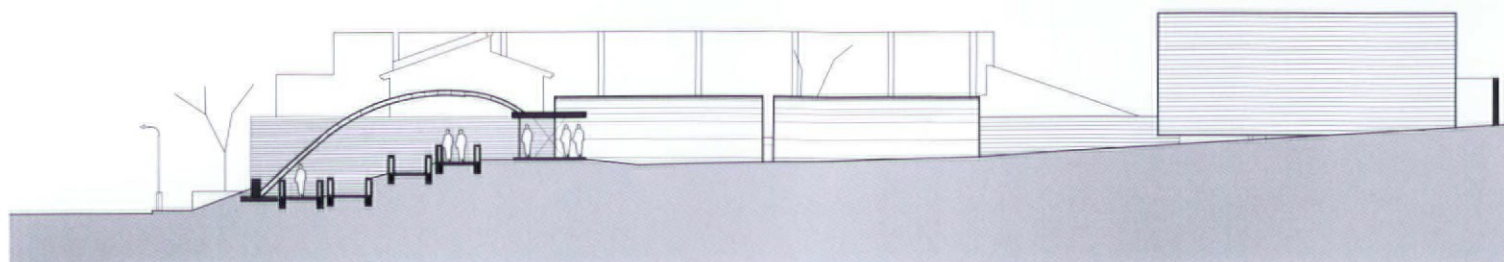
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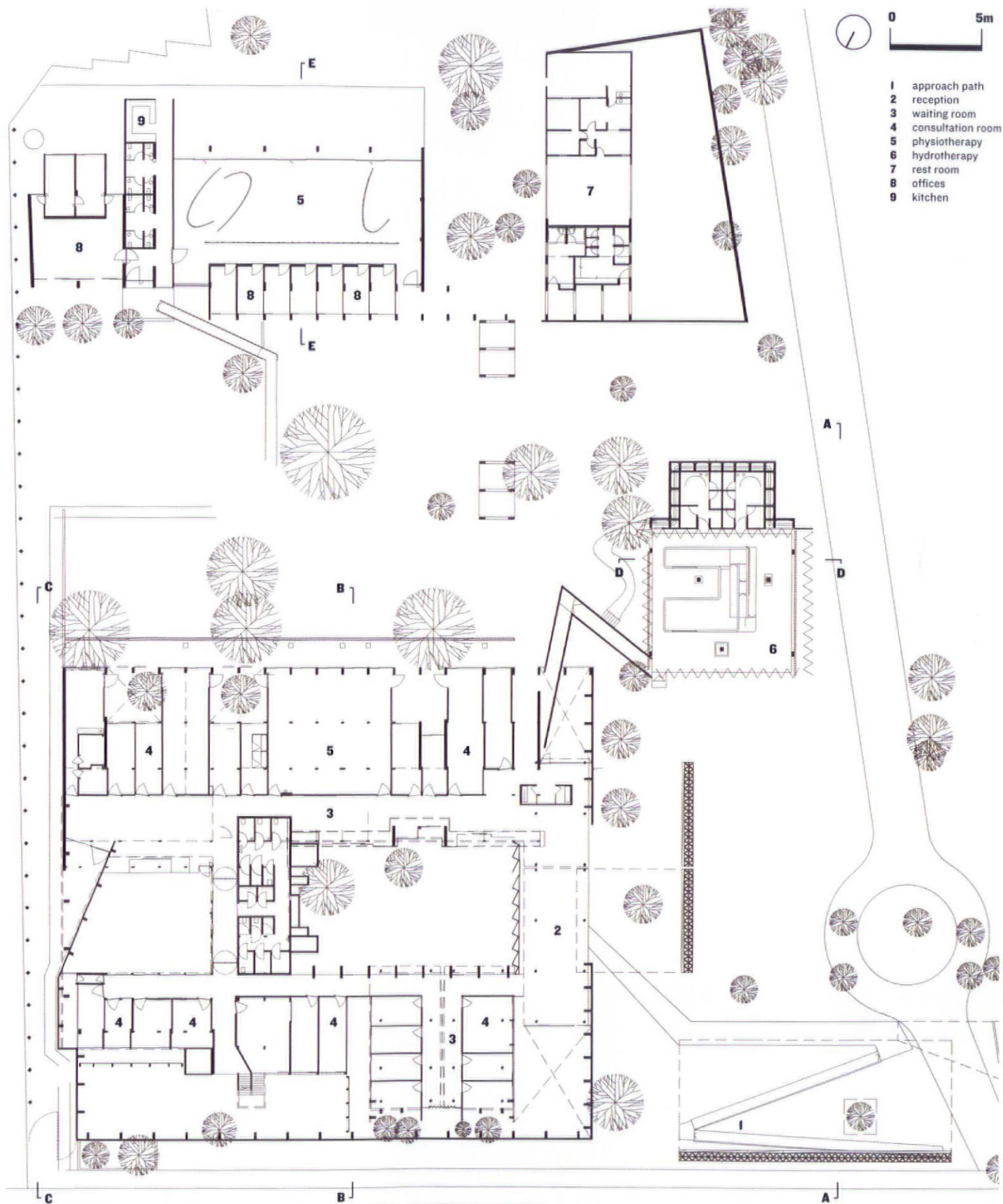
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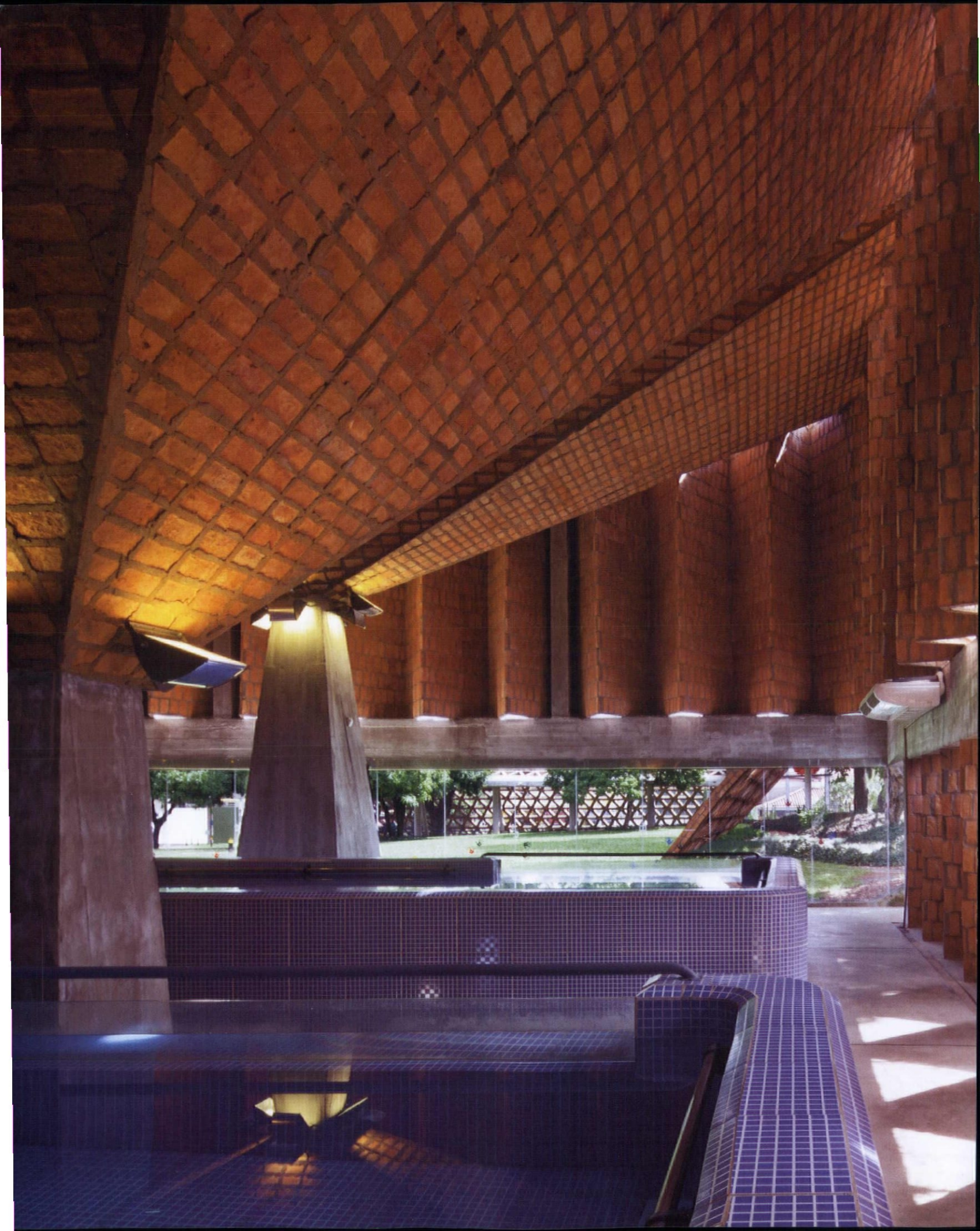


section AA



- 1 approach path
- 2 reception
- 3 waiting room
- 4 consultation room
- 5 physiotherapy
- 6 hydrotherapy
- 7 rest room
- 8 offices
- 9 kitchen

site plan



7. (Opposite) inside the pool block, huge inverted pyramids conceal water tanks
 8. A brick wall zigzags above a ribbon of glass. Rather than aping vernacular forms, the architects opted for a more nuanced synthesis of regional roots and local materials
 9. Seating behind the zigzag brick wall

Architects
 Gabinete de Arquitectura
Photographs
 Leonardo Finotti

Rehabilitation Centre, Asunción, Paraguay, Gabinete de Arquitectura

Elsewhere, a pre-existing roof structure has been reworked to contain offices and exercise equipment. The steel carapace recalls the geometry of the brick canopies, sailing over the main space to lean against a vertical masonry wall. The offices are housed in a row of units poking out beneath the wall and accessed via a parabolic arched corridor, designed to allow construction with a thin layer of reclaimed irregular bricks.

The use of brick in structurally elaborate systems became a symbolic challenge for the architects. Trade in the 16th and 17th centuries flowed across the Atlantic to Europe, taking more resources than it brought. Ships that left Paraguay's ports laden with cotton, tobacco and tannin, would arrive back practically empty. Heavy English bricks were used as ballast for the westward voyage which would be left behind and used to build walls. These bricks were fired to British standards, able to take 700 newtons per square metre of compressive force which became the benchmark for Paraguay's building regulations. Over time, to cut costs, those regulations were revised to 70 newtons per square metre but, as architect Solano Benitez explains, because regulations are poorly enforced, today a typical Paraguayan brick can take just seven newtons per square metre – meaning that even building high straight walls is an impossibility.

The strategy of deploying reclaimed materials in innovative structures is overtly

articulated throughout the scheme. Bricks, tiles, tempered glass, wooden door frames and metallic roofs have all been salvaged and re-purposed from the dilapidated facilities that previously stood on the site. The vaulted garden shaders are constructed from triangles of reclaimed brick joined together with an elastic cement; where bricks were broken they were used to build non-structural walls and paving. Reclaimed tiles are used to decorate partitions and ceilings while movable platforms on casters hold second-hand plastic chairs, their legs chopped in half and reattached so as to lower the seat into a reclining position.

Such a comprehensive use of reclaimed materials might be interpreted as simply a robust ecological approach, but here it can be read as an architectural manifesto celebrating the reformation of Teletón and the wider political sphere of Paraguay. For Benitez, a narrative of rejuvenation runs through the scheme. He argues that the act of building is metaphorically charged and can be understood as analogous to building a better society. Consciously avoiding vernacular references Gabinete de Arquitectura has introduced new forms, legibly constructed from old materials. They are telling a story, literally taking apart an old structure piece by piece and putting it back together in a new, more humane configuration – an apt metaphor to describe their ambitions for Paraguay's ongoing social development.



'The act of building is metaphorically charged and can be understood as analogous to building a better society'

Art Museum,
Ravensburg,
Germany,
LRO Architekten

ART BASTION

Set in Ravensburg's atmospheric medieval core, the salvaged brick fabric of the town's new art museum is equally antique, but its architecture has a contemporary sensitivity and sobriety



Ravensburg's new art museum has its origins in the ambition of local collector Gudrun Selinka to place her and her late-husband's collection of Expressionist works on long-term public loan. With no art museum in her home city, she was initially considering loaning it to the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. On learning this, Ravensburg's mayor was prompted to do a bit of fancy footwork, getting the support of a local contractor Reisch to buy a site, stump up the €6m to build an art museum, then lease it back to the city. Won in competition by Stuttgart-based Lederer + Ragnarsdóttir + Oei (LRO), the new museum now houses both the Selinka Collection and touring shows of international modern and contemporary art.

This conjunction of local benefactor both funding and filling a new art gallery indicates the intensity of civic pride still thriving in many German towns, as well as the level of local prosperity. Ravensburg is in core *Mittelstand* country: the small and medium-sized companies that power the German economy. It was not machine parts, however, but board games and jigsaw puzzles that made Ravensburg famous, a twee 'toytown' image symbiotically confirmed by its

'If the small, elongated bricks look old, they should: they were salvaged to order from a demolished 14th-century cloister near the Belgian border'



relatively untouched medieval *Innenstadt*.

Yet despite the character of its 500-year-old core, the visual texture of Ravensburg, like so many German towns, is suffocated in thick layers of external insulation and painted plaster, padding and blinding out the half-timbered facades, their structure indicated only by first floor overhangs. So the pragmatic *und praktisch* wins over the chocolate box. Any urban textural richness is provided by the horizontal plane, an undulating carpet of cobbles that weaves together the network of streets and *Platz*, all nestling at the base of a hill capped by a turreted *Schloss*.

On a tight turn at the top of one of these streets, a more exaggerated overhang of brickwork holds the corner, cantilevered over a large picture window, marking the strong but subtle presence of the new Kunstmuseum. Given the profusion of painted plaster elsewhere in the city, at first glance this looks strongly uncontextual. Yet though it sticks out, it feels right, the blankness of the rough brick echoing the unplastered rubble walls of churches and announcing itself as a public building that stands apart, but not in a conspicuously contemporary way. If its small, elongated bricks look old, they should: they were salvaged to order from a demolished 14th-century cloister near the Belgian border. Set in irregular courses with roughly applied grey mortar joints, these ancient, handmade bricks have a softness of contour that chimes with the surrounding structures, many made from bricks of a similar vintage, albeit buried under thick layers of plaster. This simple haptic sensibility grounds the new building firmly within the historic townscape. Arno Lederer of LRO explains the idea of familiarity, as opposed to mimicry, in slightly gnomic terms: 'The reason is you read it, you know it, it is normal.' He admits a liking for old bricks for aesthetic and environmental reasons, pointing to the embedded energy saved through reuse.

Previously occupied by an accumulation of small factory buildings, the tight site has only two street facades. The longer one facing the *Schloss* displays a rough symmetry, the cantilever at the left of the main body of the building echoed in the perceived void of the entrance strip to the right, both set back from a central element with a grid of small windows marking vertical circulation. This symmetry explores the idea of a formal 'public building' entrance but then deliberately undercuts it, as it is not experienced when entering off the street and is only apparent on climbing the small footpaths that perambulate up to the *Schloss*. Even then it is partially obscured by trees.

Added to this, the gravitas of the whole is thrown into question by the building's distinctive but rather ungainly profile at parapet level, a series of large arched forms starting and ending in mid-flight, like an



site plan

**Art Museum,
Ravensburg,
Germany,
LRO Architekten**

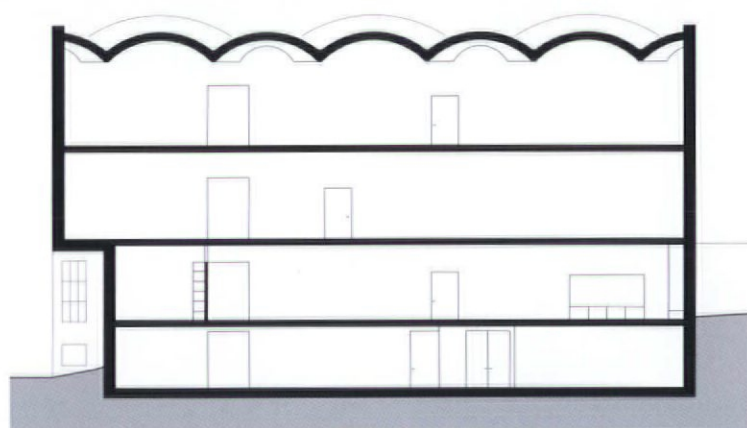
1. (Previous page) Ravensburg's new *Kunstmuseum* has the aura of a fortress, with its brick walls minimally punctuated by slot-like openings
2. The medieval core is dominated by the hill and *Schloss* with its crenellated tower
3. (Opposite) from the hill the undulating roofscape of the tapering vaults is clearly visible



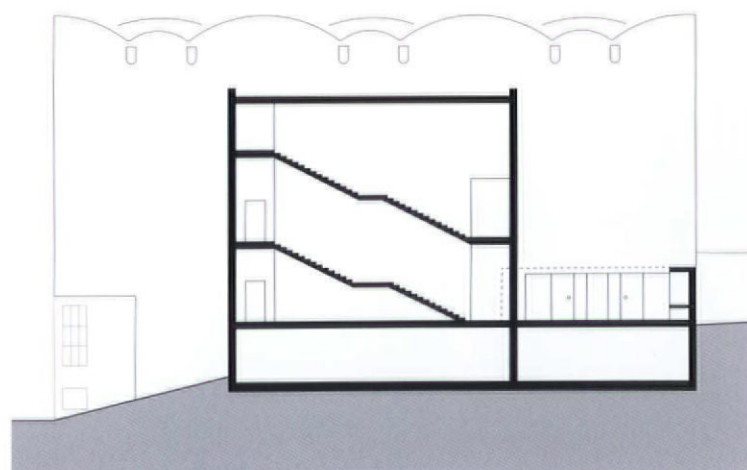
**Art Museum,
Ravensburg,
Germany,
LRO Architekten**

4. The stripped down entrance portico.
Burnished copper adds visual piquancy to the brick walls, their texture enriched by the patina of age. The bricks were salvaged from a medieval cloister and reused

4

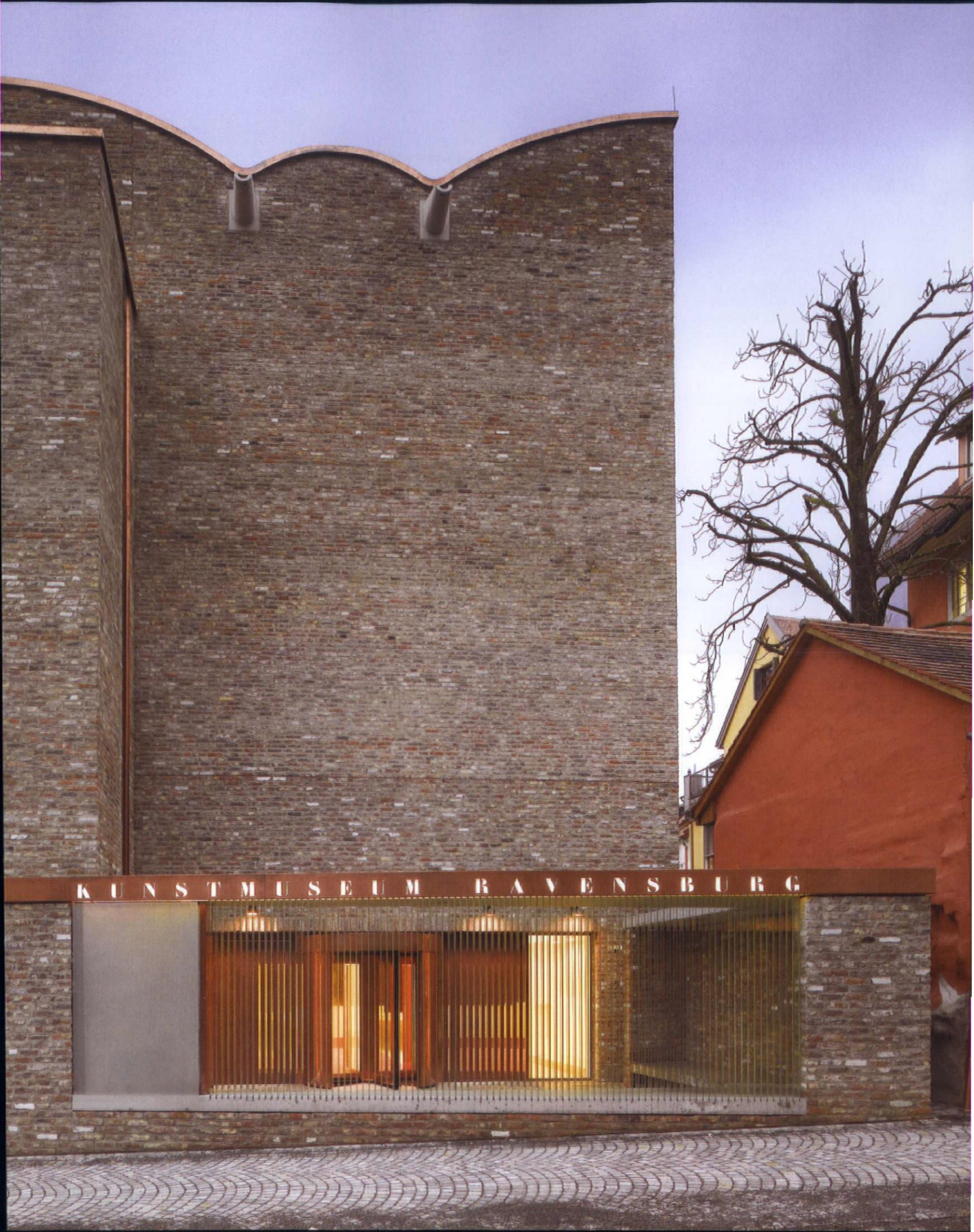


section AA



section BB





KUNSTMUSEUM RAVENSBURG

'There are three ways of closing the house to the heavens: with a flat roof, an inclined roof and the vault. We used the third as it marks this out as a public building'

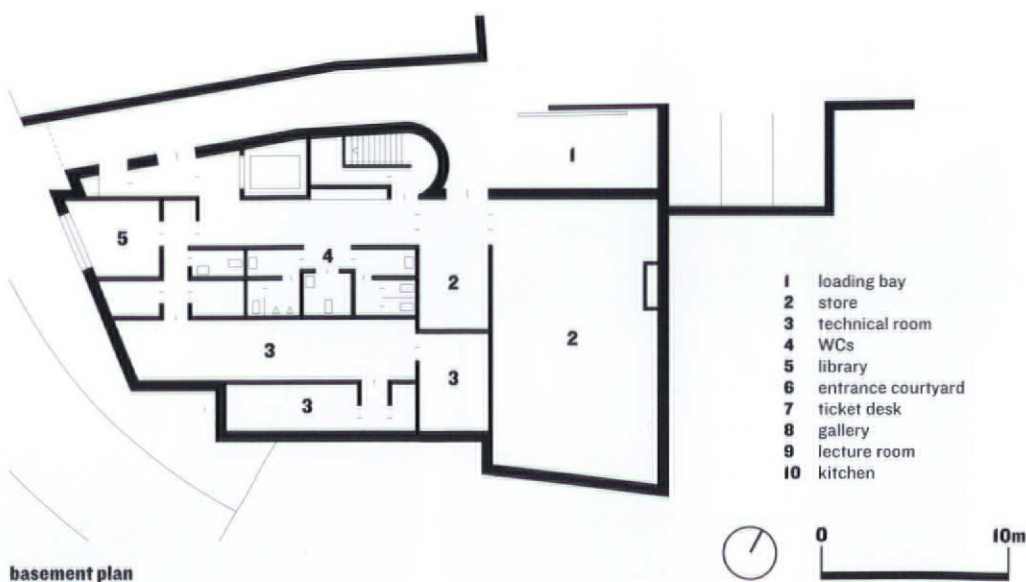
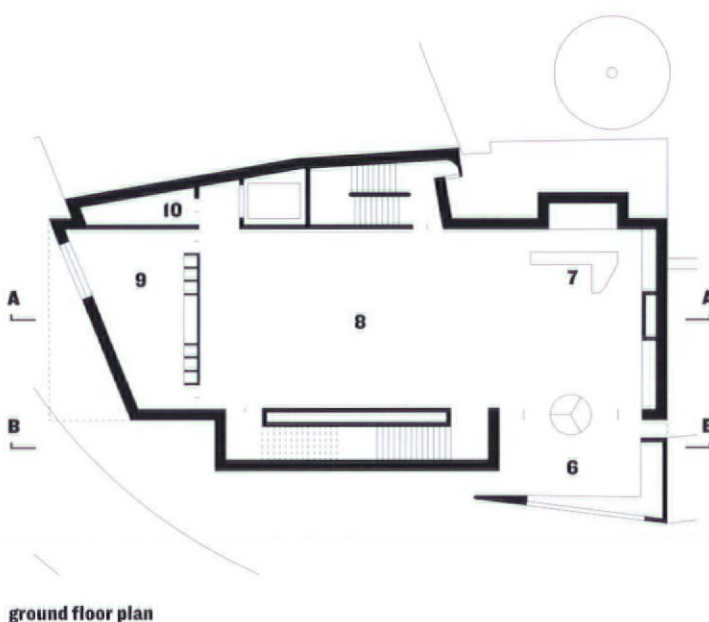
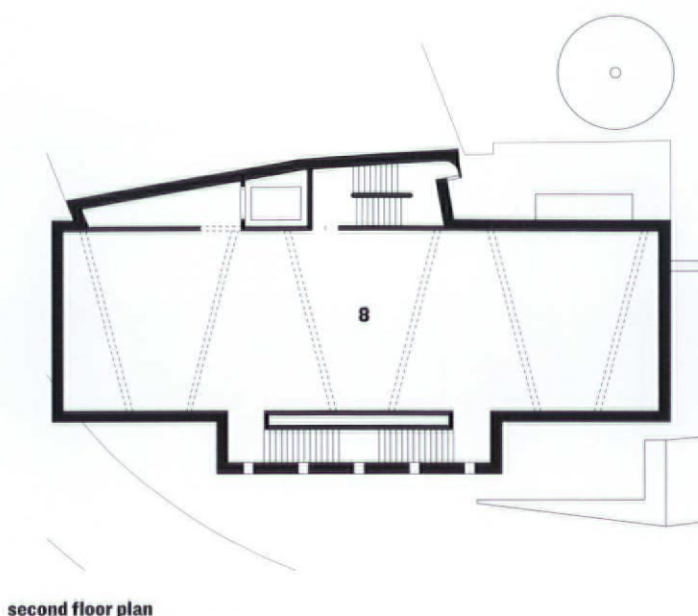
exaggerated mock-Gothic crenellation. These mark the ends of a row of cross-canted vaults that form the roof: the vault being another signifier for Lederer of a civic role: 'There are three possibilities of closing the house to the heavens: the modern way with a flat roof, an inclined roof and the vault. We used the third way as it marks this out as a public building.'

Entry is through a small courtyard peeling off the pavement, guarded by a copper gate. This is a tight threshold space shielded but not claustrophobically cut off from the street by a storey-high wall inset with thick perspex fins. Here the three key materials of the building's palette are concentrated. The brick is set off against a plinth of light grey concrete, which acts as a generous bench wrapping halfway around the space, while brightly burnished copper forms the frame and doors of the glazed entrance screen. The copper is not recycled but as Lederer points out 'lasts five or six centuries'. Commonly used in the town for drain pipes and guttering, here it is also similarly employed but as a distinctive, heavy vertical open channel cutting vertically down the building. 'We get into conversation with a building through the details,' as Lederer puts it. For him it is as much a conversation with modern architectural history as context. The rain channels riff off Carlo Scarpa, there's evidently Lewerentz in the brick detailing, and the pronounced concrete water spouts at roof level quote Le Corbusier. 'We don't believe there are any inventions in architecture, you have a palette of options to work with,' says Lederer.

Inside, a carpet of gridded copper laps up to the foot of a concrete reception desk, fronting a deep black niche behind: another Scarpa reference. These highly articulated elements contrast with the rest of the main ground floor space: a long rectangle divided simply by a screen wall into a lobby area, with two hefty planks forming a table, ringed with assorted plywood chairs for reading, resting and waiting, together with an art-space for less environmentally sensitive work, and an education room, separated by a glazed screen wall. The latter's sliced-off shape reflects the line of the street behind, and is flooded with light by the single large picture window seen in the approach up from the town. This high visibility for art education and activity underlines a key aspect of the programming devised by museum director, Nicole Fritz, making the building – as she quotes from Jeremy Rifkin – 'a play space for emotional training'.

**Art Museum,
Ravensburg,
Germany,
LRO Architekten**

**5. Entrance hall,
with its angular
concrete ticket desk**
**6. The dominant brick
vaults of the upper level
gallery draw the eye
upwards in the manner
of a Venetian Scuola**



5



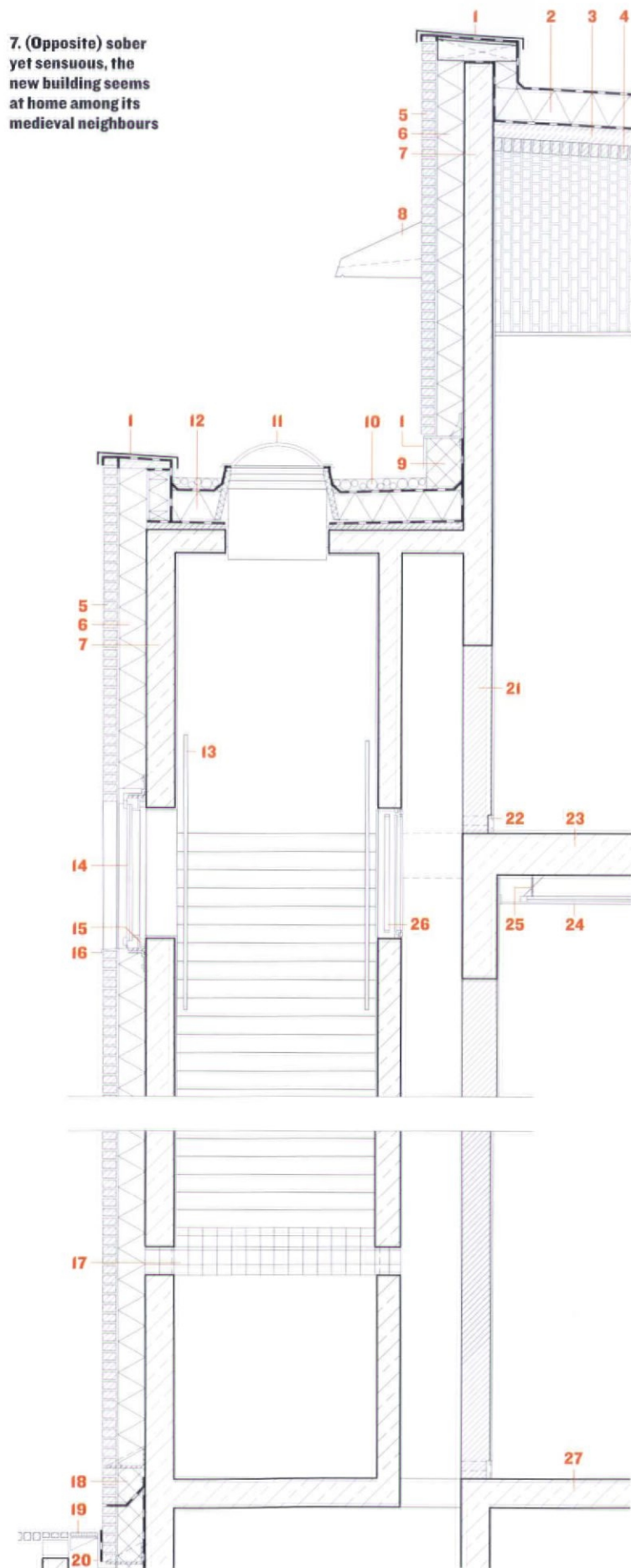
6





**7. (Opposite) sober
yet sensuous, the
new building seems
at home among its
medieval neighbours**

- 1 copper flashing
- 2 300mm thermal insulation
- 3 reinforced-concrete ballast
- 4 load-bearing brick vault shell
- 5 115mm recycled facing bricks
- 6 240mm cavity wall insulation with 10mm air gap
- 7 reinforced-concrete slab
- 8 precast-concrete roof drain
- 9 perimeter insulation
- 10 vegetation
- 11 insulated dome light
- 12 280mm thermal insulation
- 13 30mm steel rod banister
- 14 triple-glazed window
- 15 LED light strip
- 16 1.5mm copper window sill
- 17 precast-concrete stair run
- 18 240mm perimeter insulation
- 19 cast grating
- 20 drainage layer
- 21 masonry infill at shafts
- 22 skirting and air diffuser
- 23 400mm reinforced-concrete slab with thermally activated core
- 24 12.5mm gypsum board
- 25 aluminium substructure
- 26 lighting with glass cover
- 27 250mm reinforced-concrete slab with thermally activated core



detailed section through external wall

The ground floor introduces the basic footprint of the building, an elongated rectangular central body, serviced on either side by two flanking elements with vertical circulation, 'like the ears on the side of a box', as Lederer puts it. Here four concrete boxes are stacked vertically on top of each other, with basement plant and lavatories, and above, two floors of galleries. The gallery floorplates form the purest rectangles: space for art is maximised by extending into the overhang above the street.

As robust spaces with chunky service detailing in their grills and uplighters, the galleries work well as environments to show the equally robust Expressionist work of the Selinka Collection, which encompasses Gabriele Münter paintings, Erich Heckel woodcuts and the paint-fest canvases of the Cobra group. Highlights from the collection will usually be shown on the first floor, a completely internalised space, but a thoughtful accent is the glimpsed view out, afforded by the landing window placed at the head of the stairs, opposite the gallery entrance doors.

Though it has an identical floorplate, the upper gallery is a much more dramatic space, its ceiling soffit formed by the brick vaults of the roof, each funnelled and handed to either side. Here the grey mortar is even rougher in application, with gobbets looking like they might occasionally detach and splatter to the floor. Entering it is rather like entering the upper room of a Venetian Scuola, where the eye is constantly drawn upwards to the dominating heaviness of the ceiling. At times, the wave-like layering of cross-canted steel beams and hull-like funnels of brick induces a slight dizziness. And while the present graphic faux-folk-vernacular exhibition of Gert and Uwe Tobias only suffers marginally from this dominant horizon, quieter shows may have difficulty competing with the space.

Structurally, the museum's compact shape, internalised main spaces, highly insulated walls with thermal bridging reduced to a minimum – all clothed in a reused skin – are matched for thermal efficiency by the servicing strategy. Heating and cooling is supplied by a gas absorption heat pump, with a geothermal probe field serving as a heat source, maintaining the concrete slabs at a constant 22°C. This has resulted in the building receiving the first ever Passivhaus designation for a museum. All this has been achieved through a series of quiet, understated moves rather than any flashy green contortions. Over time, anticipated lower operating costs will add to the positive PR glow for the city.

Fitting with ease into Ravensburg's antique street-scape and comfortable in its own (if second-hand) skin, this is a building that is both sensible and sensuous.

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BUILDING SEAGRAM

A MEMOIR OF MIES AND MODERNISM

Phyllis Lambert's compelling and incisive account of the commissioning, design and construction of the Seagram Building is both a critical history and personal memoir of a pivotal moment in architecture

ANTHONY VIDLER

HISTORY

Arriving as a fourth-year graduate student from Cambridge at the new TWA Terminal at JFK, my first thought was to make my way to see two buildings, the most iconic in New York for European visitors: Lever House, completed for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill by Gordon Bunshaft in 1952, and the Seagram Building, finished in 1957 by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson. The former impressed me as elegant in its green glassed Modernism and refined courtyard; the latter, following a detailed study of Greek architecture with Peter Smithson, and an introduction to Schinkel from Colin Rowe, seemed to incarnate, in its bronze dignity, the principles of antiquity and modernity all at once. My intuition of neo-classic Modernism was confirmed by viewing the reflection of the triple arches of the balcony of the Racquet and Tennis Club centred in the glass entrance of the Seagram – after all McKim, Mead & White had quoted Jacques-Louis David's triple-arched scene for his painting of Brutus in their facade, and Mies must have followed the cues. But the back-story of Seagram's design and construction took a long time to emerge, and with Phyllis Lambert's extraordinary historical study – *Building Seagram* – it is now clear.

The book's frontispiece sets the scene: to the left Philip Johnson; at centre Mies van der Rohe; and to the right a young and vivacious Phyllis Lambert. Johnson is gesturing with his pencil; Mies, head on hand, holds a cigar, and listens to Johnson; Lambert, engaged and smiling is ready to draw, pencil at the ready over a roll of tracing paper. Behind is a photograph of the model of the proposed new headquarters of the Seagram Company. Taken in 1955, this image stages the fascinating story that Phyllis Lambert recounts in this unique and deeply felt narrative of the complex processes that led to the construction of Mies's New York masterpiece.

This book is unique because, as an active participant in the selection of the architect, director of planning, and, as she writes serving 'in effect, as "client" from 1954 to 1959', and consultant to the company to 2000, Phyllis Lambert has written a 'memoir', but one that is also, as researched over a decade, a critical history based on archival evidence and interrogation of sources. As such it is a testament to the successful efforts of the daughter of Samuel Bronfman to persuade her father to sponsor the best of modern architecture, but also to the daughter's evolution as an architect, historian, institutional creator and mentor to generations of researchers, scholars, preservationists and public officials, in her role as the founder-director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

The resulting book, published by Yale, in bronze covers, with a plethora of rare archival photographs, and a foreword by Barry Bergdoll, is in turn a narrative of the building of an icon, a revelation of the intricate aesthetic and political forces behind the scenes, a study in depth of New York's zoning laws at mid-century and of the social importance of the Seagram plaza, a review of the later history of the building, its art collection and patronage role, and a movie-worthy story of the interaction of the three unlikely collaborators at different stages of their careers.

As a 'memoir' the voice is authoritative, the facts established by research, and the story fascinating. A prologue describes the lead-up to the selection of Mies – the history of the Seagram Company from its beginnings as a single distillery built by Samuel Bronfman in Ville LaSalle near Montreal in 1924, to its consolidation as the Distillers Corporation-Seagrams Limited four years later. Seagram's first offices as it expanded in New York were in the Chrysler Building with interiors designed in Tudoresque and Moderne style by the young Morris

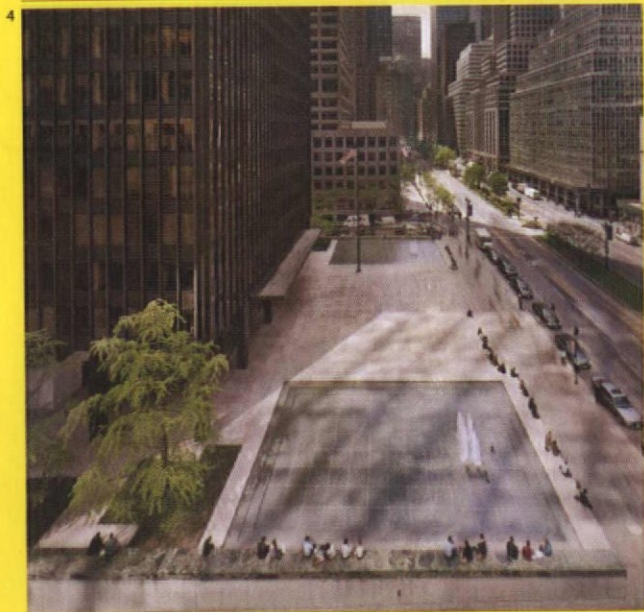
1. (Previous page) Philip Johnson, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Phyllis Lambert in front of an image of the model for the Seagram Building, New York, 1955

2. Reflection of McKim, Mead & White's Racquet and Tennis Club in the Seagram's lobby enclosure, April 2000

3. (Opposite) the Seagram Building in progress. Here the tower steel frame is 18 floors high, with concrete fireproofing extending to 10 floors. The east-wing fireproofing is completed and the ground-floor bronze mullions attached to the east wing. This view was taken at 52nd Street looking west, on 27 September 1956







Personal rivalries led at one moment to Johnson's resignation, and at another to Mies's derogatory remarks on his New Canaan Glass House (a "hot dog stand")

Lapidus in 1934, 20 years before the completion of his signature hotel, the Fontainebleau in Miami Beach.

From her account, young Phyllis Lambert was 'a self-imposed outsider', distant from her business-occupied father, who 'considered only his sons to be in the line of ... succession'. A sculptor, she became interested in modern architecture in her last year at Vassar College, preparing an exhibition on the relationship of art to architecture, following this with courses at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Living in Paris and working from her studio, her first intimation that Sam Bronfman was planning to build in New York came in a letter from her father showing her a plan for the new headquarters, drawn up by Charles Luckman, the developer architect of the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill-designed Lever House on the Park Avenue site opposite that selected for the Seagram Building, and now a partner in Pereira & Luckman. Horrified, Phyllis wrote her father a letter in return.

Dated 28 June 1954, this extraordinary missive – eight single-spaced typed pages long with penned annotations reproduced in full in her book – demonstrated a detailed knowledge of modern architecture, and in particular, of the qualities of Gordon Bunshaft's Lever House. This letter deserves to be recorded in the annals of critical moments in the literature of architecture, as it not only deployed every argument possible, practical and aesthetic, filial and emotional, but was so spectacularly successful in its effect. Following an appropriate Shakespearean opening, neatly reversing Lear's cry to his daughters, 'No, No, No, No, No', she immediately took issue with her father's characterisation of the project as 'Renaissance modernized'. Her argument still rings true after two

decades of postmodern pastiche: 'You can't modernize the Renaissance – you can only learn from it.' Presciently, and four months before her efforts had resulted in the choice of Mies van der Rohe, she advanced the idea of a noble public space of entry from the street level, anticipating her later championing of the plaza, and imagining the effect of a glass curtain wall with its 'surface due largely to changing reflections ... a mosaic out of this lovely pattern of many panels of glass and colour through the light reflecting on each section and the reflection of the sky and other buildings in the glass, and of course the basic field of colour from the glass itself'.

Her dramatic critique of the Luckman-Pereira plan in the voice of a man-in-the-street wowed by its flashy effect, her analysis of the emerging modern style as represented by the UN Building and Lever House, her call for a humanising Functionalism, and her ethical plea for a 'building which expresses the best of the society in which you live', all spoken with the authority of one committed to architecture, who was considering 'going to school or working with an architect', won over her father. 'Now I really have a job,' she wrote to a friend.

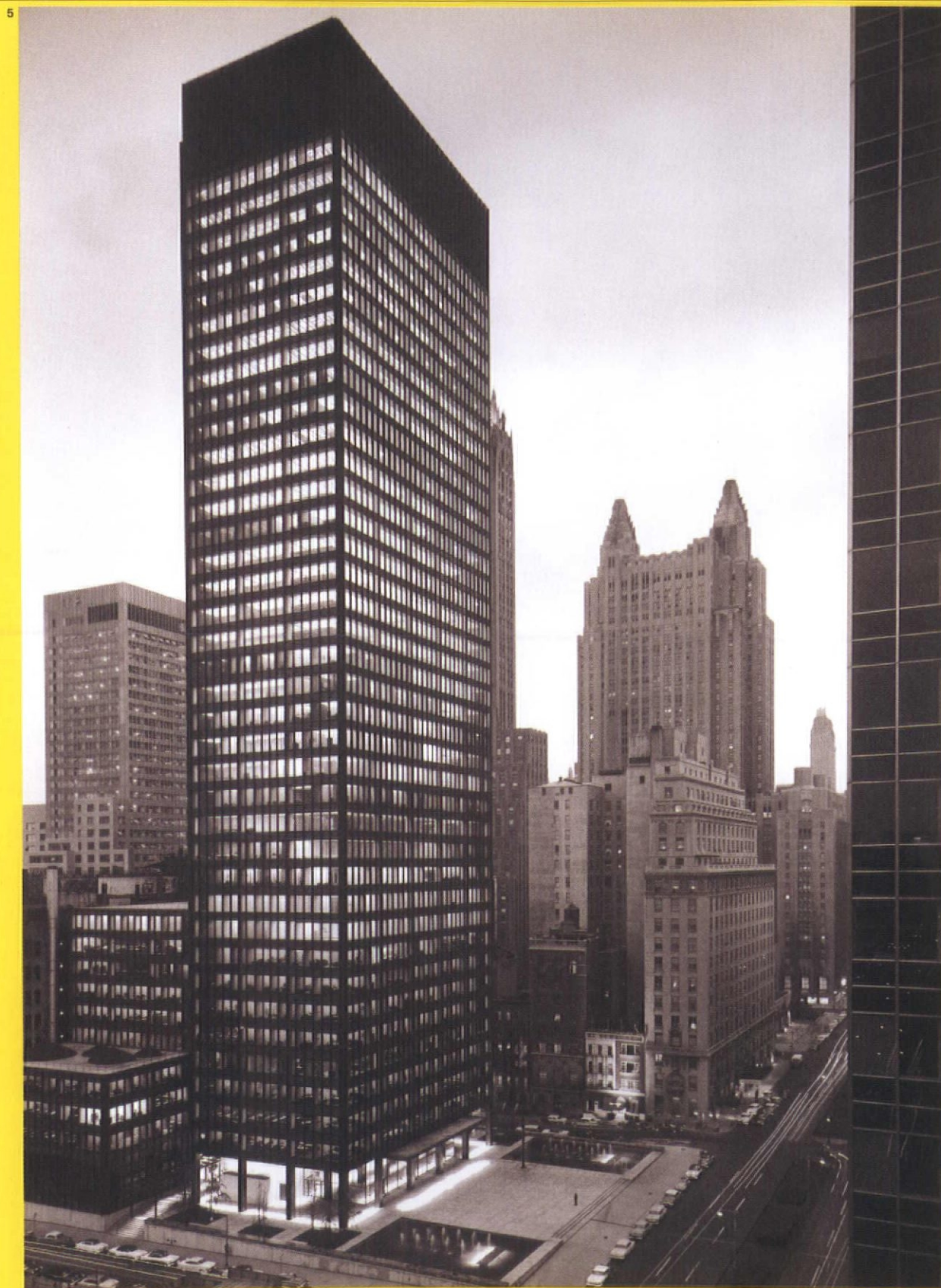
The search for a fitting architect included meetings with Lewis Mumford, Alfred Barr and Philip Johnson, himself just starting his practice after stepping down as MoMA architecture curator. Eero Saarinen was the most helpful, despite his own ambition for the commission, suggesting a list of 'those who could but shouldn't, those who should but couldn't, and those that could and should'. Which left Le Corbusier and Mies. A meeting between Mies, Johnson (who had championed him for the 1932 MoMA show) and Samuel Bronfman sealed the deal, with Mies suggesting a partnership 'Van der Rohe and Johnson'. In December 1954 Lambert was appointed director of planning, and the trio figured in the frontispiece was complete.

The ensuing story is well known in its outlines and entirely new in its details. On a personal level, we are entered into the difficult negotiations with corporate committees and city agencies, plunged into the personal rivalries that led at one moment to Johnson's resignation, and at another to Mies's derogatory remarks on his New Canaan Glass House (a 'hot dog stand' was the comment). There are accounts of Mies's dinner conversations, of his working methods, of the various members of the team and their roles, and most interesting, the arguments over specific aspects of the building and successive crises with respect to the New York City Building Code, culminating in the rejection by the local AIA of Mies's application for a New York State licence – it was suggested that he take the high school graduation exam to qualify. These, and a hundred more fascinating insights into the design and building process, are deftly welded into a deeper examination of the selection of materials, the concept of the structure and the continuous refinements and often counterintuitive changes made by Mies in order to hold to principle while satisfying technical requirements.

But the overall strength of the book lies in its wide-ranging contextual history of Mies's and Johnson's own architectural philosophies and careers, their historical sources, and intersecting if often opposing aesthetic

4. Plaza panorama, looking south from the first setback of 399 Park Avenue, 15 April 2010. The Seagram's plaza prompted New York's planners to encourage the provision of public space at ground level

5. An evocative view of the completed Seagram Building, from the north-west at dusk



6. Seagram Building study in AR December 1958.

See the complete original archive article online, with a coda by Peter Smithson who wrote at the time:

'The Seagram Tower certainly communicates a dream of a controlled, spacious, machine age environment, even at the popular level'

7. Joel Shapiro, Untitled, bronze, 1974-75, installed on the Seagram plaza, in the autumn of 1986

8. Samuel Bronfman congratulates Phyllis Lambert on the first day he occupied his office in the Seagram Building on 23 December 1957.

Also pictured are Mies van der Rohe (right) and Saidye Rosner Bronfman (right, with back to the camera)

preferences, together with Phyllis Lambert's special concentration on two major aspects of the building often ignored: the radical nature of the front plaza, and the fundamental role of lighting and especially of the partnership between Johnson and the lighting designer Richard Kelly. A whole chapter is dedicated to what Lambert calls 'the urban landscape' constructed by 'the union of building and plaza', and here she performs a close analysis of Mies's interpretation of Schinkel's perspectival relations with the external landscape. Here the crucial Modernist intervention was the use of coloured (in this case bronze) glass as an urban, public/private interface, with Mies's debt to Paul Scheerbart's utopian vision of *Glasarchitektur* (1914) seen as the crucial moment in his evolution from neo-classicism to Modernism. This study of the design of the plaza culminates in Lambert's history of its subsequent role in the staging of public sculpture – in which she herself played a major part – and the plaza's incorporation into the public life of the city as attested to by Frank O'Hara's *Lunch Poems* (1959) and the celebrated enquiry by William H Whyte's *Street Life Project* (1980), in which the Seagram's outdoor space figured prominently. It was the example of this plaza that impelled New York City to review its zoning code in 1961, introducing the concept of 'incentive zoning' and encouraging developers to provide public open space at ground level.

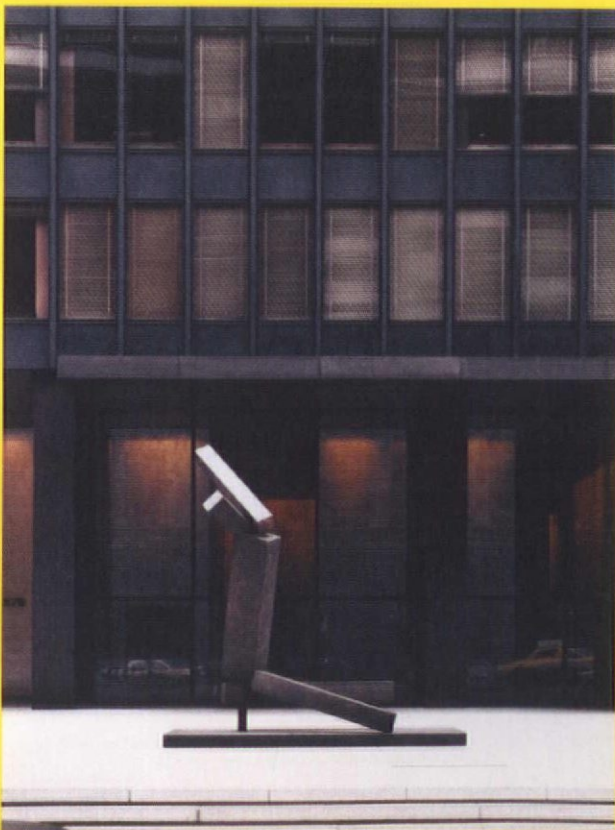
Bonding these narratives together is a consistent inquiry into the immense complexities of process and fabrication needed to bring Mies's aesthetic to realisation. To give only one example – that of the unprecedented bronze skin and

the difficulties of the mullion design – as Gene Summers, Mies's assistant wrote, 'we tried shapes that were curved, shapes that were rectangular. And we tried in the drawing, and then we tried in sketches, and then we would build it full size ... in the final analysis, the simple H-shape ... was still the better aesthetic shape'. Problems of the thickness of the extrusion, and finally the patina, applied by hand to prevent the bronze turning green, were solved through the same experimental method, until the rich brown and relief shadows of the resulting facade were achieved.

In a final chapter, not without a sense of irony, Lambert brings the story to the present, through the traumas of the successive sales of the building, of its struggle to attain landmark status, both externally, and internally in the Four Seasons Restaurant, and the final collapse of the Seagram Company with that of Vivendi Universal less than a year after the merger of the two companies. The ensuing destruction of Philip Johnson's executive offices led to a final letter from Phyllis Lambert, warning Edgar Bronfman Jr of the 'recipe for disaster' in the change in ownership. But, as she closes, 'Seagram didn't live here anymore, and very soon, neither would Vivendi Universal.'

Perhaps the most moving photograph in the book, a fitting pendant to its frontispiece, is that of Mies standing next to Samuel Bronfman on the occasion of his occupying his Seagram office; Phyllis Lambert is standing on the other side of her father, who gently takes her by the arm in congratulation.

Phyllis Lambert, *Building Seagram*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013



Images

1, United Press International

2, 4, Richard Pare

3, The House of Patria

5, Ezra Stoller/ESTO

7, James Dee, courtesy

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New York, Joel Shapiro/

SODRAC

8, Tommy Weber

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Architecture, Montreal

REVIEWS

Irritable bowelism

PETER BUCHANAN

Richard Rogers RA: Inside Out, Royal Academy of Arts, London, until 13 October 2013

Because there was a big retrospective of Rogers' architecture at the Design Museum as recently as 2010, the Royal Academy exhibition presents each scheme rather fleetingly, often frustratingly so. Instead it focuses on the ideas and ethos that inform Rogers' life and work generally. The title, *Inside Out*, refers to his predilection for exposing the structural skeleton, servicing entrails and vertical circulation outside the main body of the building.

This distinctive trait starts with the Centre Pompidou that launched Rogers and Renzo Piano to international fame. Although Piano remains proud of this architectural landmark, he refers to it as 'a young man's building, an act of loutish bravado'. Recognising the validity of Postmodernity's criticisms, though not its architecture, he then entered a highly exploratory phase in partnership with Peter Rice before evolving the more mature, contextually and culturally inflected approach first exemplified by the Menil Collection. By contrast, as this exhibition makes clear, Rogers has not moved on much.

This is emphasised in the introductory anteroom – whose shocking pink walls and large circular lounge take us back to the Pompidou era – and introduces his ethos, including the admirable constitution that has guided the firm since it became the Richard Rogers Partnership (later becoming today's Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners). Much of an accompanying video is a close-up of Rogers' own transparent-face Bulova wristwatch. But this is not, as implied, consistent with

the *Inside Out* theme: the watch's innards are merely revealed, not vulnerably exposed, which in architecture leads to extra construction and maintenance costs, and sometimes to compromised functionality, such as in extended circulation routes. Exposing these elements is not Functionalism but Formalism, a means of gaining the visual articulation and interest once provided by overtly rhetorical elements and modulating the facade.

The succeeding rooms explain and justify this approach in relation to seven themes, six of them elaborated in the rooms to either side of the anteroom. Each theme is illustrated by the partial presentation of selected buildings and projects, although some themes are contradicted by other projects, often not shown. How, for instance, can such noble nostrums as 'A Place for All People' and 'Democratising the Brief' be reconciled with that lavishly exclusive enclave for tax-exempt non-doms, One Hyde Park? Just as the work evokes a bygone era of untroubled techno-optimism, so does the interpretation of some themes, such as Bucky Fuller's 'Do More With Less'. We now recognise this should apply less to the material and energy present in a building and more to that involved in the total life cycle of sourcing and manufacturing those materials. In new understandings of efficiency, mud and thatch are near unbeatable – not a message Rogers would endorse. As well as the panels stating these themes, there are others, whose often sensible points are marred by the hectoring tone of assertion rather than reasoned argument, of flatly stated 'I believe ...' or 'We need ...' This, too, unintentionally conveys an ethos.

As an architectural exhibition, this one is unsatisfying in that no design is shown sufficiently completely for in-depth study. As well as the partial presentations exemplifying individual themes,

Below: Richard Rogers photographed at his current exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts

maybe a major building should have been comprehensively presented to demonstrate the synthesis of the themes. The choice of schemes is also puzzling. Obviously duds have been omitted, such as Berlin's Potsdamer Platz blocks, London's Tower Bridge House, Barcelona's Hesperia Hotel, and Antwerp's bizarre Law Courts as well as the two London residential buildings that have drawn so much opprobrium, One Hyde Park and NEO Bankside. But omitted too are some of Rogers' very best buildings, such as London's 88 Wood Street and Lloyd's Register, both better than the bombastically overwrought original Lloyd's and on a par with the marvellous Barajas airport terminal – which is shown here along with (very fleetingly) such fine and relatively understated works as the Fleetguard factory in Quimper and the blocks at Chiswick Park.

Instead selection seems to favour the most structurally expressive schemes illustrative of the *Inside Out* title. As such, although formally vigorous and exciting, they exemplify *in extremis* key pathologies of modern architecture: isolated object buildings autistically expressive only of anatomy and construction and unable to relate to context and culture, particularly as part of contiguous urban fabric. The building is the dominant, positive figure and external space a merely residual ground without coherent and positive form, and of limited functionality. As well as to the space around buildings, this applies also to that beneath them, as with the Zip Up House and Chateau La Coste gallery projects. This is no trivial point: we cannot approach sustainability without treasuring every part of the earth – not leaving it residual and unloved – and moving beyond treating buildings as subservient functional mechanisms to once again seeing them as cultural artefacts mediating between us and a larger temporal and spatial continuum, a subtle but crucial



notion utterly at odds with Richard Rogers' approach.

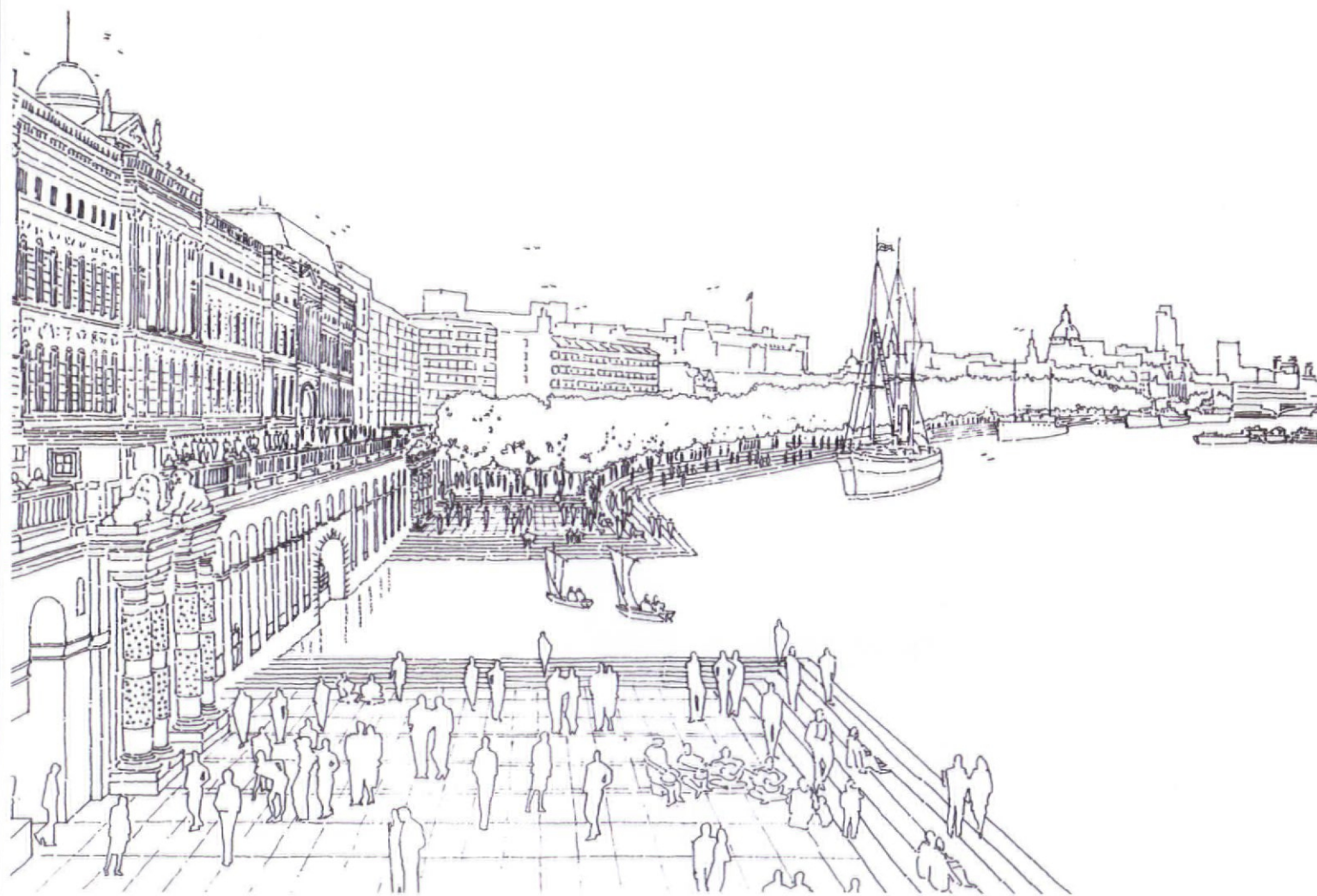
The whole of the third large room is devoted to the seventh theme, 'The Power of the City', but is decidedly underpowered, as if preparation time ran out. Yet this theme is claimed as central to Rogers' concerns. The report of a commission he chaired, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, was undoubtedly important and influential, as was the community work and writing he undertook in association with Anne Power. On the strength of these, and inspired by Oriol Bohigas's achievements in Barcelona, he became Chief Advisor

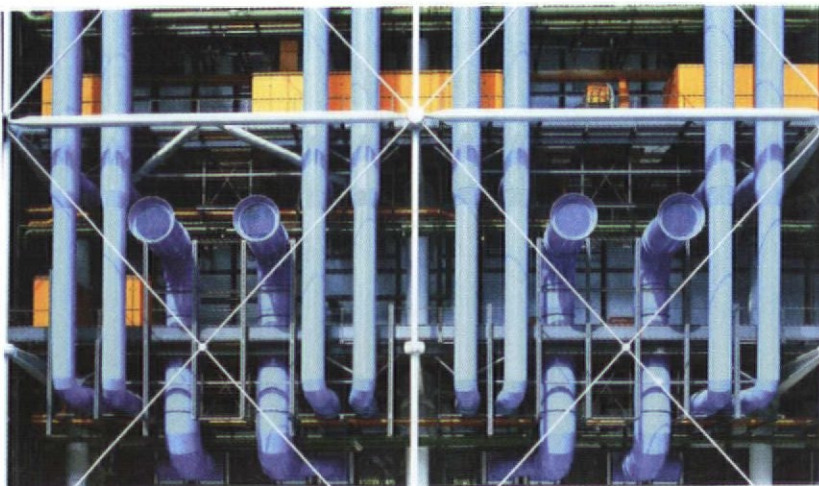
Below: as part of the World Squares for All initiative, Rogers proposed sinking the road along the Embankment beneath the river, and replacing it with a linear park. This would have enabled the restoration of Somerset House's historic river gate, as pictured here

on Architecture and Urbanism to Mayor of London Ken Livingstone. But contrary to normal practice he did not forgo building in London (Bohigas had resigned his post so that his firm, MBM, could once again build in the Barcelona) – but then 'conflict of interest' seems a non-issue in contemporary Britain. Some architects contemplated taking this up with the RIBA, but realised it was futile with Rogers' then partner Marco Goldschmied as president, an example of the formidable web of networks Rogers has cultivated. This room could usefully have explored what Rogers hoped to achieve when

in this post rather than showing a few unexplained survey plans and more panels of hectoring assertions.

A key Rogers initiative during his time as mayoral advisor, inspired by Barcelona, was that London be provided with 100 new urban spaces. But the cities are not remotely comparable and faced very different priorities. Barcelona's new spaces were a cheap way of creating international impact and initiating a snowballing momentum that would open up densely overcrowded areas and reconnect the city in novel ways. By contrast, London's new spaces were to be just dotted around its vast





Left: the prolapsed pipes of the Pompidou won Rogers' oeuvre the earthy soubriquet of 'Bowelism' – and made for a hefty maintenance bill
Right: the concentric haloes of James Turrell's *Aten Reign* installation refer to their setting, the New York Guggenheim, but mask Wright's architecture

expanse with little concern with forging connections and drawing on their hinterlands. Worse, completion of a really promising initiative from before the Livingstone era, Foster's World Squares for All, was scotched. This had proposed counterbalancing the hard classicism of Trafalgar Square, once centre of Empire, with a soft, green and leafy network of spaces – modelled on the English cathedral close – around the Gothic and Neo-Gothic of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. As part of a larger strategy, this would have better connected up central London while also intensifying its sense of history, meaning and identity – all key dimensions to intelligent urban intervention. Instead it was proposed that Parliament Square alone be refurbished, a savagely compromised proposal terminated by Mayor Boris Johnson. Although I am unsure how much Rogers contributed to this, central London's other legacy from this period are some high profile buildings by friends of Rogers – Jean Nouvel's almost sacrilegious One New Change and Piano's inappropriate and mediocre trio of works, Central St Giles, the Shard and New London Bridge House – and those by Rogers' own firm – the two housing schemes already mentioned.

But none of this, nor anything else contributed to London during this dynamic phase of the city's history, is touched upon here. Instead and easily overlooked, much the most impressive part of this room is the presentation of the work on the Grand Paris project aimed at bringing the whole city, urban core and suburbs, into a new and more vital unity. The impression here is of a sound and sequential strategy

founded in research and analysis. It would be interesting to know more and see what comes of this, which seems to mark a new maturity in Rogers' approach to the city.

Leaving the exhibition, others were overheard describing it as an 'epic orgy of naivety and nostalgia, nepotism and narcissism'. Such a response is easily understood, but also harsh. On reflection, the overriding impression left by the show is that Rogers has led a blessed life, as celebrated here. His early years in England might have been tough, but he has forged an empowering narrative out of his family and foreign backgrounds. He might have had to fight his corner, but he has created and seized extraordinary opportunities. He has, among many other things, been a professional partner to two of the greatest architects of his time, Norman Foster and Renzo Piano, worked extensively with one of the greatest engineers, Peter Rice, enjoyed a famously successful marriage and the succour of a large extended family, and reached the upper echelons of England's Establishment. This might be a slight show, but there are things to be learnt from it, positive as well as negative.

Pardon our appearance

EMMANUEL PETIT

James Turrell: *Aten Reign*, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York, until 25 September 2013

'The basic concept was not to try to destroy or be provocative to the architecture, but to melt in. As if I would kiss Taniguchi. Mmmmm.'

So claimed Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist of her MoMA installation *Pour Your Body Out* in 2008. Rist's work sought an intimate dialogue – more like a tête-à-tête – between 'feminine' art and 'male' architecture, as historian Sylvia Lavin convincingly argued in her book *Kissing Architecture*.

No such thing can be claimed of James Turrell's installation *Aten Reign*, currently on view at the Guggenheim in New York. Turrell turns his back on Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, hiding its complex geometry behind opaque cloth coverings and rendering Wright's vertiginous building one dimensional and flat.

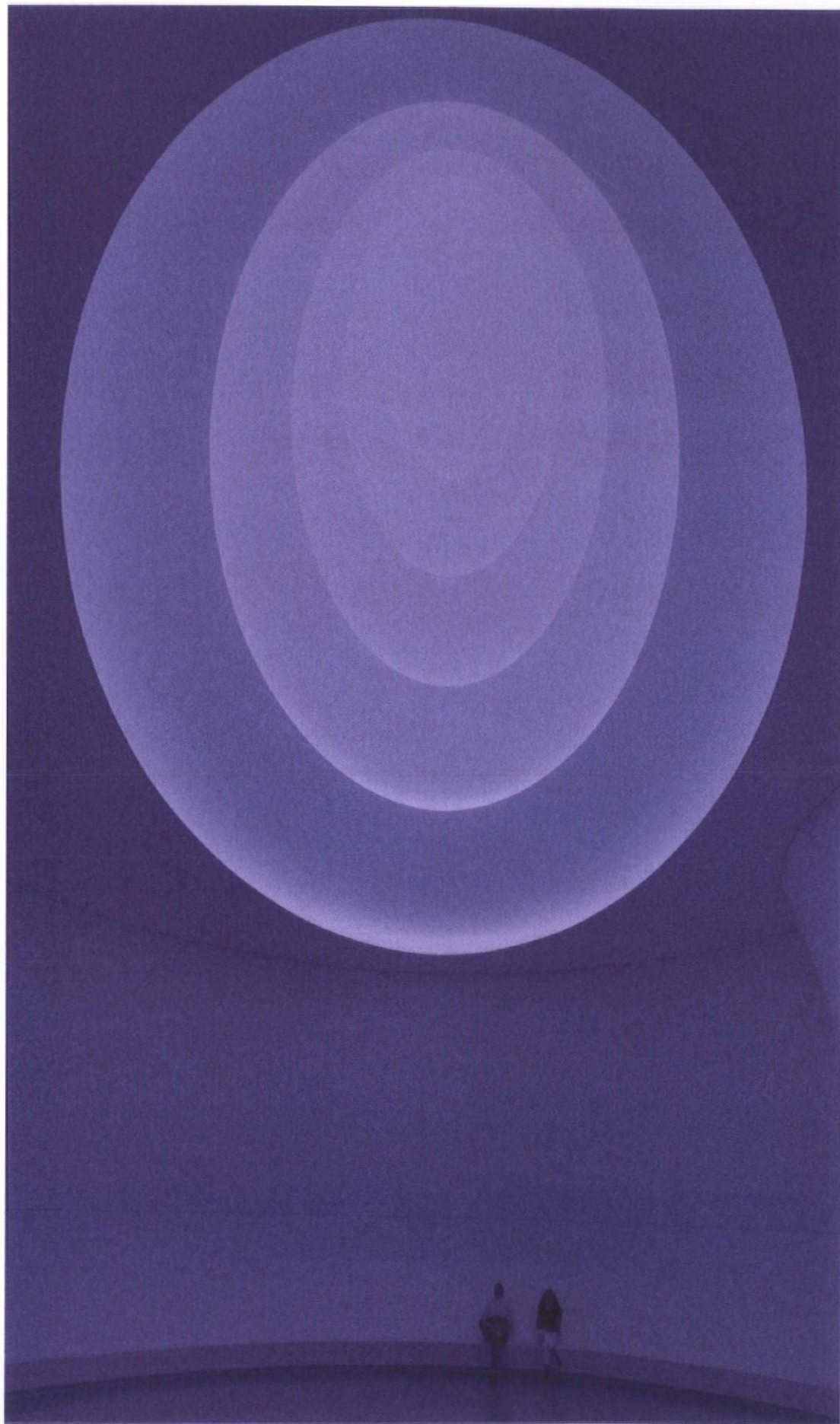
Aten Reign inserts itself in Turrell's fascinating, life-long and patient investigation of the materiality of light and the idiosyncrasies of perception. It is going to be an art historian's task to comment on the specific merits of this piece within a very accomplished chain of projects over the past five decades – among which are *Afrum I* (White) and *Prado* (White) from 1967, *Ronin* from 1968, and *Itar* from 1976, which are also on display in the Guggenheim's side galleries.

Viewed as an autonomous piece of art, *Aten Reign* proves once again Turrell's virtuosity in controlling the visual field. However, this particular work raises questions about the relationship between museum architecture and site-specific art installations.

Notwithstanding the allusion that Turrell makes to the Guggenheim's round atrium space with his six-step oval cone of light, he treats the museum building as if it were just another *Kunsthall* to be incorporated into his work, devoid of its own particular architectural qualities and history.

But the siting of Wright's edifice in New York was in fact a revolutionary act, by virtue of its defiance of the orthogonal, open and 'democratic' logic of the Manhattan street grid with its idiosyncratic, introverted and involuted geometric logic. In this sense, it is a more than intriguing premise to have Turrell offer his interpretation of an otherworldly, psychedelic atmosphere in a building that is, in itself, already *all about* interiority.

Moreover, today, the notion of atmospheric interior seems more topical than ever, with the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk recently developing his theory of globalisation



in terms of the history, ambience and morphology of human-made interiors in his book *World Interior of Capital* and the trilogy *Spheres*. In this context, Étienne-Louis Boullée – who has famously been an inspiration to Turrell over the years – has been given the role of one of the principal protagonists of such a spatial episteme.

Yet Turrell chose to obstruct the visual dialogue between the temporary installation's discrete oval rings and the soaring spiral of Wright's exhibition path.

While Wright had reinvented the notion of a central dome by making its concave space accessible to the kinetic and visual experience of the museum visitor, Turrell reverts to the conventional idea of a distant sky-bound dome 'up there', sitting on top of a centralised, architectural space. Somehow, in this specific work, the concept of visual *Ganzfeld* only applies to the framed field of the elliptic cupola, but excludes the architectural space 'down here' which the visitor inhabits.

The view to the atrium from the winding ramps of the museum is closed off by Turrell with more opaque fabric, and these surfaces do not participate in the shifting light and colour play of the main space. *Aten Reign* has no backside.

You realise that when divested of the only spatial benefit these side spaces have (which has to do with their visual and acoustic connection to the open atrium), they acquire the charm and interest of airport corridors, where certain sections are patched up while under construction; the visual attention is drawn to the air vents, the light fixtures and electric switches: 'Pardon our Appearance'.

It appears that the Turrell show at the Guggenheim is yet another chapter in the controversy about art exhibits in generic white cube galleries versus signature architecture museums.

You would assume, however, that spaces with an architectural intentionality comparable to the one of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim are scarce enough throughout the world that an artist would seize the opportunity and face the challenge to create a work which could not be reproduced anywhere else. *Aten Reign* can be mounted in any space that holds a volume of roughly 65 feet wide and 95 feet high.

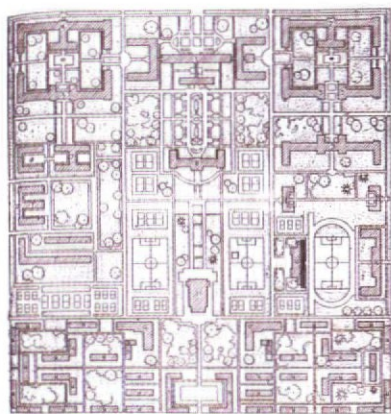
A tale of four cities

AUSTIN WILLIAMS

Factory Towns of South China: An Illustrated Guidebook, Stefan Al (ed), Hong Kong University Press, US\$25

Even before he became Premier, Li Keqiang had been banging on about his intention to accelerate urbanisation as a 'huge engine' for the country's future economic growth. China's urban population will reach one billion by 2030, representing 67 per cent of the overall population (compared to America's 82 per cent or 91 per cent in Japan). While we sometimes forget that this kind of urbanisation has happened in all developing countries, the speed at which China is growing means that it is much more significant. Over the last 30 years, much of China's historic urban form has disappeared as new developments continue to transform a huge number of cities and towns.

Whether this is a good thing or not is open to question, but urbanisation and industrialisation are certainly ripe for analysis and many social commentators and anthropologists have begun to document this society in transition. A number of books have sprung up in recent years which attempt to construct an urban tableau based on simple observation, from John Logan's *Urban China in Transition* to John Friedmann's *China's Urban Transition* and the more contemporary *Urban China* by Xuefei Ren. However, the lack of credible independent research, or simply the impenetrability – to Western readers – of existing Chinese language research, means that there is a huge amount still to be discovered.



Below: a modern masterplan for Xi'an University of Communications harks back to the geomantic grid plan of that ancient city, capital of the first emperor

The latest book, *Factory Towns of South China: An Illustrated Guidebook*, is a useful addition to the field. It seeks to document and represent the key urban agglomerations within the Pearl River Delta (PRD) of southern China, the area that borders Hong Kong. This is the 7,500km² region where modern industry and agriculture have been most rapidly developed since Deng Xiaoping established China's first special economic zone (SEZ) in Shenzhen in 1980. It encompasses four cities and accounts for around nine per cent of China's GDP.

The book comprises 13 short articles by a range of academics from around the world with special Chinese expertise. The articles have sufficient depth to be insightful but are not encumbered with academic jargon; in other words, they are nicely pitched. The second half of the book is a potpourri of photos, graphs, interviews and images that provide a basic grasp of the geographical location and a visual snapshot of conditions on the ground.

The editor suggests that this book is 'not written with tourists in mind as the readership, but from the perspective of the factory worker'. Ignoring the non sequitur, he suggests that the book 'subverts the genre ... it attempts to be a *détournement* from the typical illustrated guidebook'. A Situationist statement of intent if ever there was one. As a result, the book is liberally peppered with the spectacle of press cuttings, collages and speech bubbles, but mercifully, such is the range of contributors that elements of psychogeography are kept to a minimum.

On the negative side, the end result is a book that doesn't look or feel particularly appealing. Suffice to say, it looks like a book produced in China (where production niceties are not yet so important), but actually it's merely repeating the tired, retro, cut-and-paste graphics of the '60s. Admittedly, once you immerse yourself in it, a coherent format emerges but you still have to negotiate an unattractive jumble of snapshots, colour coding and axonometric sketches.

Essays include critiques of environmental degradation, unregulated growth and authoritarian manufacturing processes – the standard fare in any book about China – and a number

of incorrect shibboleths have crept in. First, there is the ubiquitous criticism of the suicide rate of Foxconn employees (which fails to state that this is actually, pro rata, 25 per cent of the national average); and the meaningless statement that 'smog ... [is] ranked as the number one air pollutant'. That said, there are also interesting perspectives on the *hukou* (the system of urban and non-urban residency permits); post-industrial changes as well as comparisons between the PRD and Hong Kong and Taiwan.

One article entitled 'From the Iron Rice Bowl to the Steel Cafeteria Tray' looks at how the state accounted for 99 per cent of all industrial output in 1980; while today it is 40 per cent but still subsidises many private companies by providing state-owned refectories. In a different context, another contributor focuses on the *danwei* (the all-encompassing, collective live-work unit of Mao's China) which has become something of a study fetish for urban commentators in the West. It is a romanticised form of social regimentation, but unsurprisingly, one that started to decline when Deng Xiaoping decreed that housing – much nicer housing – would be supplied by the private sector.

The final section of the book looks at six particular urban areas, their buildings, real lived lives, individual work routines, pay, conditions, eating habits and a basic indication of the architecture of the factory and dormitory blocks. This is potentially the most revealing section, but it prefers to remain inconclusive ('a collection of traces and particles'). Without doubt, this book is a good start, but it remains a guidebook that forces you to find your own path.

Made in Italy

STEVE PARNELL

Giorgio Casali Photographer, Domus 1951-1983, Architecture, Design and Art in Italy, Estorick Collection, Canonbury, London, until 8 September 2013

The Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art is located in a relatively modest Georgian house in Islington, London. This provides an appropriately domestic setting for



a small exhibition of work by Giorgio Casali (1913-1995), mined from a newly explored archive of over 200,000 photographs at Venice's IUAV. Casali is an overlooked figure in architectural photography partly because he was modest and never part of the scene, and partly because he dedicated so much of his work to a single outlet and his name became overshadowed by that of the magazine in which he published, Giò Ponti's *Domus*. His photographs are even jointly credited 'foto Casali Domus' creating a double-barrelled surname merging his own work with that of the magazine.

Casali became house photographer for many postwar

Above: Giorgio Casali's photograph of Ponti's 'Superlight' chair wittily borrows the contrapposto stance of Cellini's *Perseus* – but instead of petrifying people, consumerism equates people and commodities, making the former into things and giving the latter human qualities

Italian architects, including Angelo Mangiarotti, Franco Albini, Marco Zanuso and Gae Aulenti, among many others, but it was his work for Piero Bottoni documenting the QT8 experimental housing district in Milan that brought him to Ponti's attention. He then photographed the Superleggera chair that Ponti designed for Cassina, which was published in March 1952's *Domus*. From then on, Ponti relied heavily on Casali's photographs until his death in 1979. Two Casali photographs of the 'Superlight' chair feature as centrepieces in the exhibition, enlarged to human scale. One (above) shows a woman, back turned to the camera, weighing the chair at arm's

length hanging the spring scale from a single finger. The other is of a besuited boy holding the chair with his little finger. The message is clearly communicated through the photography: the chair is both stylish and light.

The exhibition documents Casali's photography from 1951 to 1983, corresponding to Italy's postwar economic miracle when the 'Made in Italy' brand became known for quality of design and production. *Domus* was central to the creation of this image, transporting it all over the world. Ponti fully understood the power that photography had in this creation, giving over more room to the photograph than the text not



only for the international market, but for the overall visual appeal of the magazine. His vision was to merge art, architecture and design in one beautifully mass-produced object. From editorial to advertising, *Domus* led the way in design and production quality, introducing regular colour features in the early 1950s, long before its rivals.

This was a time when Italian architecture and product design blended into one discipline. Casali's close friend Mangiarotti, for example, designed household objects such as vases, lamps and clocks, as well as houses to hold them. His 'Secticon' clock is shown as prototype and finished object, each photographed as a work of abstract art. And later, a photograph of a Mangiarotti and Morassutti house

appears, unusually showing the life inside as opposed to the house as an object. The viewer becomes a voyeur, peeking in through open curtains onto a domestic scene, the table suggesting a relaxed meal was enjoyed, the apartment furnished as elegantly as the people are dressed, all demonstrating to the growing middle classes how to consume life with modern Italian design and craftsmanship.

The exhibition boasts a clutch of the original objects, too, sitting alongside their photographed representations. Pareschi and Orsini's Libro Chair, produced by Busnelli in 1970, takes its name from the 10 cushions bound at a spine and laid open on the floor like a book, presumably to flick through to find the perfect seating arrangement.

Above: photographed by Giorgio Casali for *Domus* – the stair in Albini and Helg's Roman department store La Rinascente refers to Borromini's famous elliptical stair for Palazzo Barberini in the same city, making this a palace of consumerism

Unfortunately, flicking is forbidden. The model in the accompanying photograph sits sideways in the centrefold, looking beautiful and symmetrical, but surely missing the point of the designer's witty observation? And Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni's classic 'Arco' lamp, manufactured by Flos in 1962, and spawning numerous retro imitations, occupies a corner, its long arc framing two large Casali images of it in domestic action.

Much of Casali's photography uses strong geometry and there are often central vertical and horizontal lines cutting across the frame, structuring the image ready for the page. Buildings are usually photographed as objects in space, or sitting full frontal or at a three-quarters angle on the horizon, the camera pushed low to the ground. The resulting images turn 3D objects into 2D art merging product, architecture and art, perfect for Ponti's aesthetic approach. Although most of Casali's photographs in the exhibition are black and white, some are shown as internegative, coloured, cropped or framed. Over 30 of these made their way onto *Domus*'s covers, some of which are shown next to the original photographs.

Overall, this small exhibition throws a slice of light onto the hermetically sealed world that Giò Ponti was able to manufacture through the pages of *Domus* and that he used to sell good taste to the increasingly wealthy Italian middle classes. It is beautifully retro and tastefully mid-century modern and the catalogue is even better.

All that is solid melts into air

THOMAS JOHNSTON

Masterpiece London, Royal Hospital Chelsea Parade Grounds, London

Wealth is surface. Granted, it is depth of surface, but surface nonetheless. Concealment is only as deep as the penetrating eye can gaze, which with money can be really quite deep indeed. *Masterpiece London*, held in Chelsea in late June and early July, was an art fair par excellence. In a gargantuan space-frame structure erected on the parade grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, Picassos brushed shoulders with Peruvian antiquities, Lichtensteins met capital from

Liechtenstein, and Dali danced opposite an Etruscan head. The Unaffordable Art Fair, as it ought be named, caters to London's growing cabal of the super-rich, perusing in opulent style the opportunities to privately purchase art, antiques and design of the highest calibre. This in itself is of limited interest: art has always attracted the varied tastes of the wealthy, but what this temporary megastructure in a field illustrates is wealth's aversion to the mechanics below the surface.

The 'tent' itself – designed and installed by Neptunus – was a remarkable feat of aluminium engineering. Its lightweight, complex space frame, however, remained hidden behind countless layers of fabric, painted panels and, most beguiling of all, the full-length, two-storey high printed vinyl screen of a faux-Georgian facade. This under-scaled simulation of a structure that was never on the site – greeting visitors to the show through a three-dimensional Regency portico – gave heed to what lay beyond. The interior of this structure – the vast majority of which is built by the Dutch exhibition company Stabulo (who are founding partners of the show) – consisted of elegant, perfectly coloured fabric walls that acted as staging for the display of art and design pieces of phenomenal value. Fabric ceilings presented a neutral, soft-lit backdrop; darkened interiors displayed Old Masters; custom-built, glossy display cabinets (coming in at tens of thousands of pounds for the cabinets alone) held jewellery including an enormous pearl said to once have belonged to Mary Queen of Scots, antiques, porcelain and time-pieces. The floor was better carpeted than most prime market homes, and the lighting perfectly matched to the exhibits, throwing a general rich lustre to all and everyone.

Though truly amazing, the art was really of secondary importance – to this reviewer – to the fascination of the covering, the surface: the hidden non-depth that existed in a show that lasted for a mere eight days. From the vinyl-Georgiana to the fabric-festooned interior, via the deep-pile carpets of many a stand, what *Masterpiece* demonstrated is a marked antagonism between the 'behind the scenes' and money, and a desire to build a visage of permanence through the

Below: this £85,000 cocktail cabinet was on display at *Masterpiece London*. 'Lined with gold leaf,' its makers rhapsodise, 'the interior shimmers with an exquisite glow that seems to burst from within.' The veneered doors also hide a fridge and a cigar humidor 'which rises up as if from the centre of the molten Earth': an apt metaphor for the show as a whole, its sleek skin concealing naff extravagance

impermanent. Peeking behind the curtains, looking behind the drapes, lifting the pelmet of any exhibition stand and you found cheap ply-panelling, nails and screws, aluminium extrusions and miles upon miles of temporary cabling. All this was hidden from view, the art of making covered with vinyl and cloth that attempted to manufacture a contextual face against the backdrop of the Hospital and the foreground of the Thames, in one of London's most expensive districts. How all this came into being, or even a suggestion, a hint at the underlying efforts to construct such a palace of opulent art and dining experiences, was rigorously concealed.

This tendency towards the surface lay in the experience of the art as much as anything else. History, context, production were absent from the display of these fine works of human creativity – absent except for one striking instance where the actual *manufacture* of an object was physically admitted to. An incredible

piece of contemporary marquetry by David Linley, whose stand showed a collage of still and video images illustrating the making of the *Skyline Marquetry Panel* – a banker's delight of an object, depicting a composed London skyline of the home of international capital – its tectonic honesty striking in its uniqueness at the fair.

Contrast *Masterpiece* with the *Affordable Art Fair* (AAF) – similar in its structural set-up, just slightly less expensive in its content: the AAF, held in Hampstead two weeks prior to *Masterpiece*, acknowledged its tent structure, exposed its air conditioning and appealed to that middle-class (middle-budget) desire for honesty, home-spun making and 'craft'. Here, the depth was made surface (structure made aesthetic), while the relationship at *Masterpiece* was inverted: with wealth, it appears, comes the desire to make the surface deeper, lusher, more lustrous, while hiding, covering and draping the human effort behind the veneer.



PEDAGOGY

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago

MATTHEW BARAC

Stretching from its arid northerly border with Peru to the filigree geography of Cape Horn some 2,500 miles south, the map of Chile looks like a ribbon: a long, narrow country caught between the Pacific and the Andes mountain spine. Shaping life along its length, a variety of topographic and climatic conditions naturally offer myriad agricultural opportunities and exemplary biodiversity. But the nation's physical geography also tests the resolve of the Chilean people; the geological artefacts of the Andes and its underwater inversion – the Atacama Trench, 100 miles out to sea – bear witness to a turbulent seismic history.

There have already been 14 significant earthquakes since the advent of the millennium, one offshore, in 2010, reaching almost 9.0 on the Richter scale.

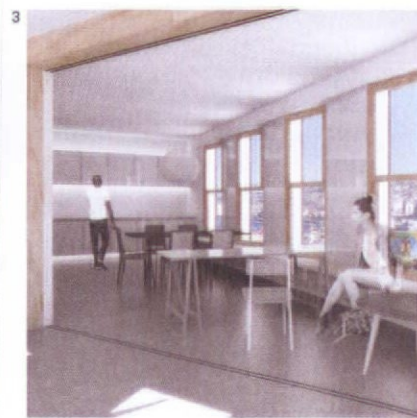
The implications of designing for this challenging environment are embedded within the architectural curriculum at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC) in Santiago. Romy Hecht, who coordinates undergraduate affairs at the school, acknowledges the relevance of sensitivity to regional issues. But at the same time she is at pains to emphasise a concern, at PUC, to train students for global practice: 'We believe that responding to such challenges gives us knowledge that is valuable worldwide, as long as we develop it in a universal language.'

A concern for architecture's universal dimension has practical as well as philosophical overtones. Being connected to wider debate

1-3. Final-year student Claudio Viñuela Schweitzer proposes rescuing the heritage of Valparaíso's urban fabric by transforming an abandoned ruin into a hybrid of residential and commercial units

is certainly a practical priority for the school's director, Juan Ignacio Baixas. Faculty members engage actively in research networks and conferences, aspiring to be 'at the forefront of international debate'. But the PUC ethos also builds on the notion of universality: Baixas elucidates the 'school spirit' in relation to two key concepts 'that we have called the "ethics of creativity" and the "will of reality".'

Even the most prosaic of design proposals will respond, at some level, to the uniqueness of its context – to 'a precise time, place and user' explains Baixas. 'As such,' he continues, 'architectural design is necessarily original and belongs to the realm of creativity.' Bound into the practice of design, creativity therefore carries a measure of duty and 'enters the ethical domain'. 'Ethics of creativity' thus serves to remind PUC students that the architect's duty



of care – a duty oriented always to the user – finds expression in the synthetic act of design. Balancing diverse needs and wants, claims and constraints, architecture entails judgement as a matter of course.

At face value the ‘will of reality’ calls us back to the practical demands of realising a building – to bricks and mortar, steel and glass. Yet as a concept it draws attention to the necessary abstraction at the heart of architectural pedagogy; teaching and research prioritise a style of speculation often missing from the world of work. Some schools see such removal from reality as positive and others negative: as critical distance and freedom to dream, or as evidence of a gap between university education and the demands of industry. Acknowledgement, at PUC, of the need for dialogue between these extremes guides the delivery of technical, social and environmental

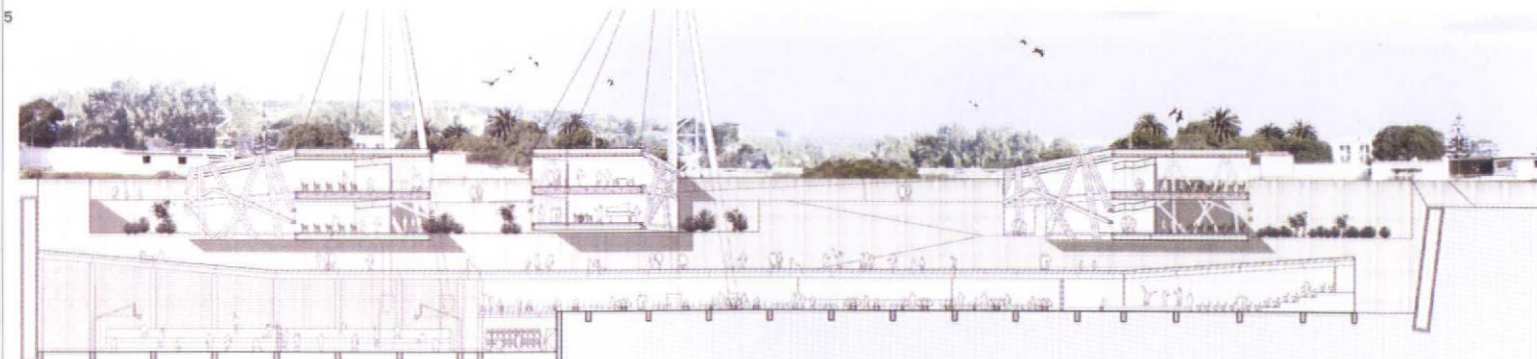
4-6. Constanza Cabezas and Juan Ignacio Hodali challenge established forms of education and engage with the local community in their proposal for a learning centre in the port of San Antonio

studies, and the ‘will of reality’ captures a play between the conditions that constitute a design proposal in relation to its possibilities – ‘an attribute that’, as Baixas puts it, ‘only the architect can perceive before inhabiting the building’. Moreover, he adds, this concept ‘means that we consider reality sufficiently rich in poetic content as not to need fiction to awaken creativity.’

A scheme for an education unit in San Antonio port, by fourth-year students Constanza Cabezas and Juan Ignacio Hodali, takes the form of a workshop megastructure. Inspired by the visual language of loading cranes and container ships, the proposal articulates an interpretation of the landscape that treats the upper entrance level as a quay. Interwoven with the cascading topography is an educational programme that seeks to question accepted learning models, highlighting intersections between

urban community dynamics and the institutional life of the building.

The challenge of balancing diverse briefing factors, and of responding to competing site conditions to optimise future possibilities, is addressed in a final-year project by Claudio Viñuela Schweitzer. The proposal, in Valparaíso, occupies an abandoned ruin that boasts unexploited heritage character as well as real-estate value. Using the design project as a vehicle for questioning the process of property development, the scheme tests ideas about how best to treat a sensitive site, asking: how can a new building rescue the existing fabric and responsibly bring it into dialogue with the development expectations today? The result is a hybrid building envisaged as a response to commercial prospects, hosting flexible residential units on the upper floors with retail accommodation at street level.



REPUTATIONS

Berthold Lubetkin

JOHN ALLAN

'A reckoning or public estimation', says the dictionary on reputation, with its distinct implication that it may differ from reality. Lubetkin is a good example. How many people still think he was a communist refugee driven to inhabit an alien culture, the doyen of English Functionalism who achieved international fame with a few dazzling icons in a brief burst of interwar creativity, only to become a pig farmer in 1950 following the rejection of his plans for an unbildable city of towers at Peterlee, on the east Durham coalfield? It is a potent legend, made no less so through being partly cultivated by Lubetkin himself. But it's not the whole truth.

The huge upheavals in ideology and politics that from the early 1930s propelled many key figures of modern architecture – Mendelsohn, Gropius, Breuer, May, Meyer, Stam, et al – across cultures and continents, did not for Lubetkin involve a reluctant migration to England. On the contrary England, which would become his domicile for the next 60 years, rather suited him. His youthful plan upon leaving Russia in 1922 had been to get the necessary technical education in Europe to equip him to return home and take his place in building the first socialist society. But by the time he was ready to return 10 years later, Stalin's USSR presented an altogether different prospect.

In England, Modernism had yet to arrive, and he was exotic, free, sought after and could make his mark on a clean canvas. Its scientific advances and progressive labour movement offered further attractions, all suggesting, in his own words, 'a country about to change its rules – open, tolerant, friendly and seemingly just waiting for advice'. It was an immigrant's wishful expectation as he would later admit – yet it underpinned the formation of his

partnership Tecton and the soaring optimism of their prime works – the Penguin Pool, Highpoint One, Finsbury Health Centre. It was indeed the reputation created by their immediate acclaim that would then impose limits on Lubetkin's architectural licence.

Notwithstanding Tecton's compelling exegeses, loyally published by the Architectural Press, it was not the functional resolution (however exemplary) but rather the humanist values and social commitment of these radical projects that constituted his core message, his insistence that modern architecture's task extended beyond merely demonstrating its own operational duties. Yet they fitted the Functionalist template so plausibly Lubetkin had only himself to blame if they were recruited to the fledgling local crusade. Little surprise then that his reputation took such a dent on the completion of Highpoint Two with its notorious caryatids and the wilfully exotic decor of his penthouse apartment. Indeed, if you can date the first major divergence of Lubetkin's reputation from his own reality to a specific moment, it is the winter of 1938 and the critique by Anthony Cox in AA magazine *Focus II*. The second Highpoint block with its 'formalist' preoccupations was castigated as a betrayal of the movement's iconoclastic mission.

Alas, Lubetkin's lesson was three decades too early. Such explicit reminders of a building designer's compositional responsibilities, of the capacity of architecture to carry metaphor and metabolise history, would have to wait another 30 years before the audience was ready. But then the attack came not from within the Modernist tradition but against it, with the shrill summons to 'complexity and contradiction' and the egregious debaucheries of Postmodernism that this would legitimise. Meanwhile Lubetkin's continuing exploration of his expressive themes in the architectural

'The doyen of English Functionalism who achieved international fame in a brief burst of interwar creativity, only to become a pig farmer in 1950'

**Berthold Lubetkin
1901-1990**

Key buildings
**Penguin Pool, London Zoo
(1934)**

Highpoint I & II (1935-38)
**Finsbury Health Centre
(1938)**

Spa Green (1950)

Key moments
**Witnessing the
Russian Revolution (1917)**
Founding Tecton (1932)
Royal Gold Medal (1982)

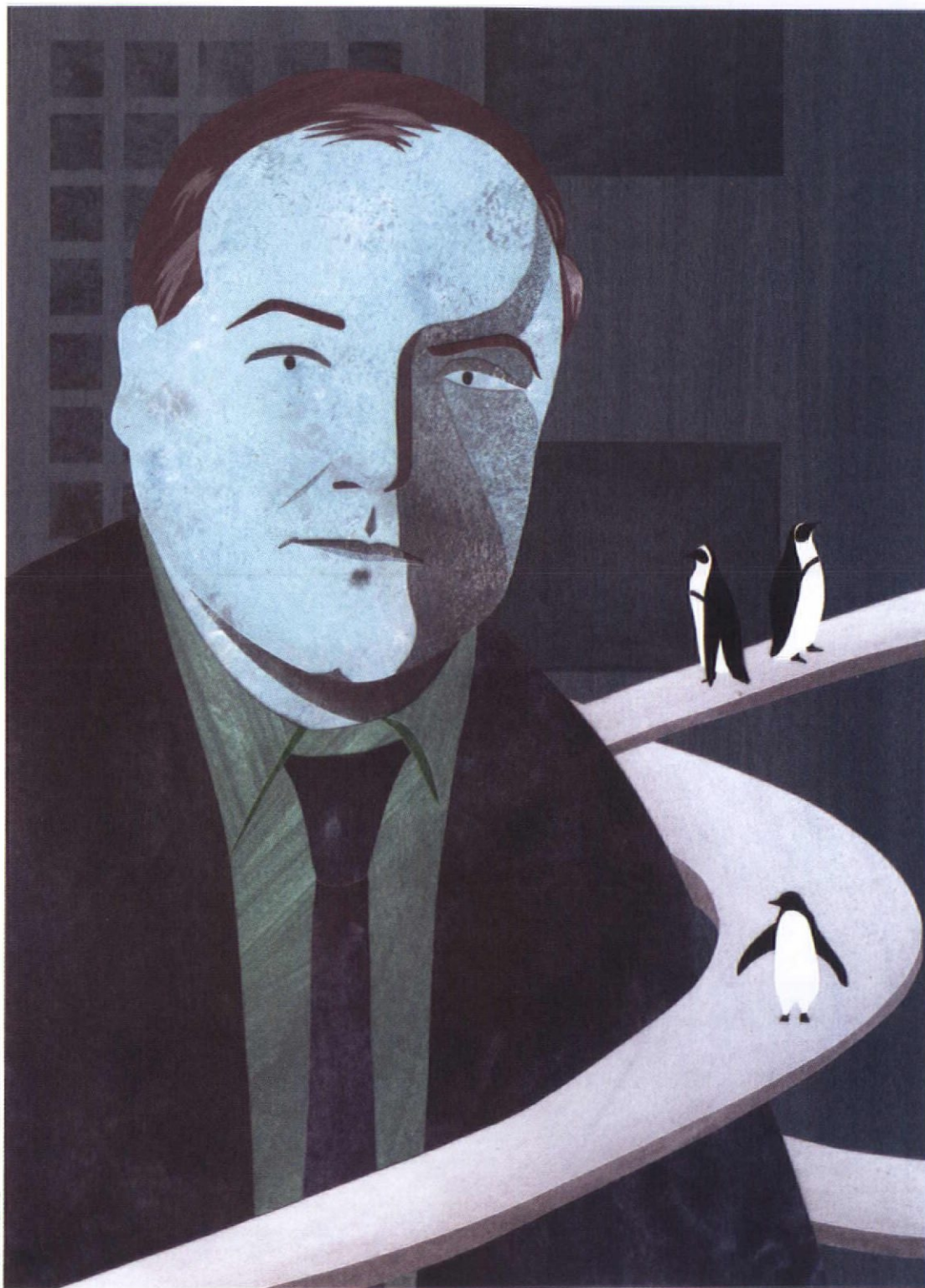
Quote
**'Architecture can be a potent
weapon, a committed driving
force on the side of
enlightenment, aiming
however indirectly at the
transformation of our
present make-believe
society, where images
outstrip reality and rewards
outpace achievement'**

treatment of the later housing projects – in Finsbury, Paddington and Bethnal Green – would only further damage his contemporary reputation, virtually redacting his contribution from the received narrative of British architecture, despite the vastly more productive output of his postwar career. Yet the evident popularity and successful rehabilitation of Lubetkin's social housing schemes, not to mention their extensive statutory designation, now provides ample vindication of his original intentions and their value.

And so to Peterlee, and the tenacious canard of Lubetkin's unrealisable fantasy of a 'city of towers', apocryphally justified in this instance by his alleged claim that 'miners were used to travelling in lifts'. Such were the technical complexities and administrative challenges of that assignment it is unsurprising that such grossly oversimplified explanations for his premature departure in 1950 (only two years after his appointment as architect-planner) became necessary. Too many official faces had to be saved. But close study of the real story reveals that Lubetkin's Peterlee was indeed feasible, that it involved only three tall buildings (and just 12 storeys at that) to define a flexible evolving town centre which itself would entail minimal loss of coal while helping to diversify the local economy and create a New Town of architectural distinction.

What it also required, however, was a degree of departmental cooperation in the coordination of over- and underground working that would allow the pattern of residential development to avoid 'suburban scatter' and achieve the compositional order that Lubetkin so ardently desired to reflect the solidarity of the mining community. But such ambitious integration the various official agencies were either too unimaginative to understand or insufficiently motivated to undertake.

The ensuing debacle aborted



STACEY KNIGHTS

what would surely have become his crowning achievement and abruptly terminated his public career. Now he would become 'Lubetkin the hermit' – despite his continuing and prolific architectural activity in the new firm Skinner, Bailey & Lubetkin. Yet so complete was his disappearance from professional reportage that the publicity surrounding the Royal Gold Medal award 30 years later in 1982 suggested the reincarnation of a missing person presumed dead. His sudden octogenarian rediscovery prompted another sort of selective amnesia. The lost decades were overlooked and a new simplified reputation was created. Lubetkin, author of those defining icons of English Modernism, was now the sole surviving socialist crusader of the Heroic Period whose defiant disappearance into rural obscurity just when things became toxic preserved the myth of a prelapsarian untainted Modernism. It made a grand story and touched the hearts of the numerous audiences that he addressed in his last hectic years of celebrity. But it wasn't true either.

There is a Gatsby dimension to Lubetkin's adventure. The youthful dream of an imminent radical future first intimated in the heroic years of 1917 had carried him through Berlin, Warsaw and Paris, to England, to Peterlee, indeed almost to China, where he contemplated migrating in the late '50s. But his dream was already behind him, in Moscow and Petersburg with their revolutionary parades and Constructivist tribunes. It was that inspirational if frustrated vision which fuelled his prodigious creativity with its enduring lessons in architecture and social practice, and its poignant commentary on Modernism's waning sense of purpose and hope. Lubetkin's 'reputation' may continue to captivate – but his real story is much more compelling.

The second edition of John Allan's *Berthold Lubetkin – Architecture and the Tradition of Progress* is available from Artifice Books on Architecture

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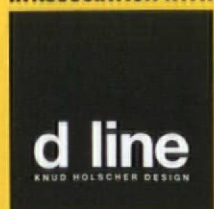
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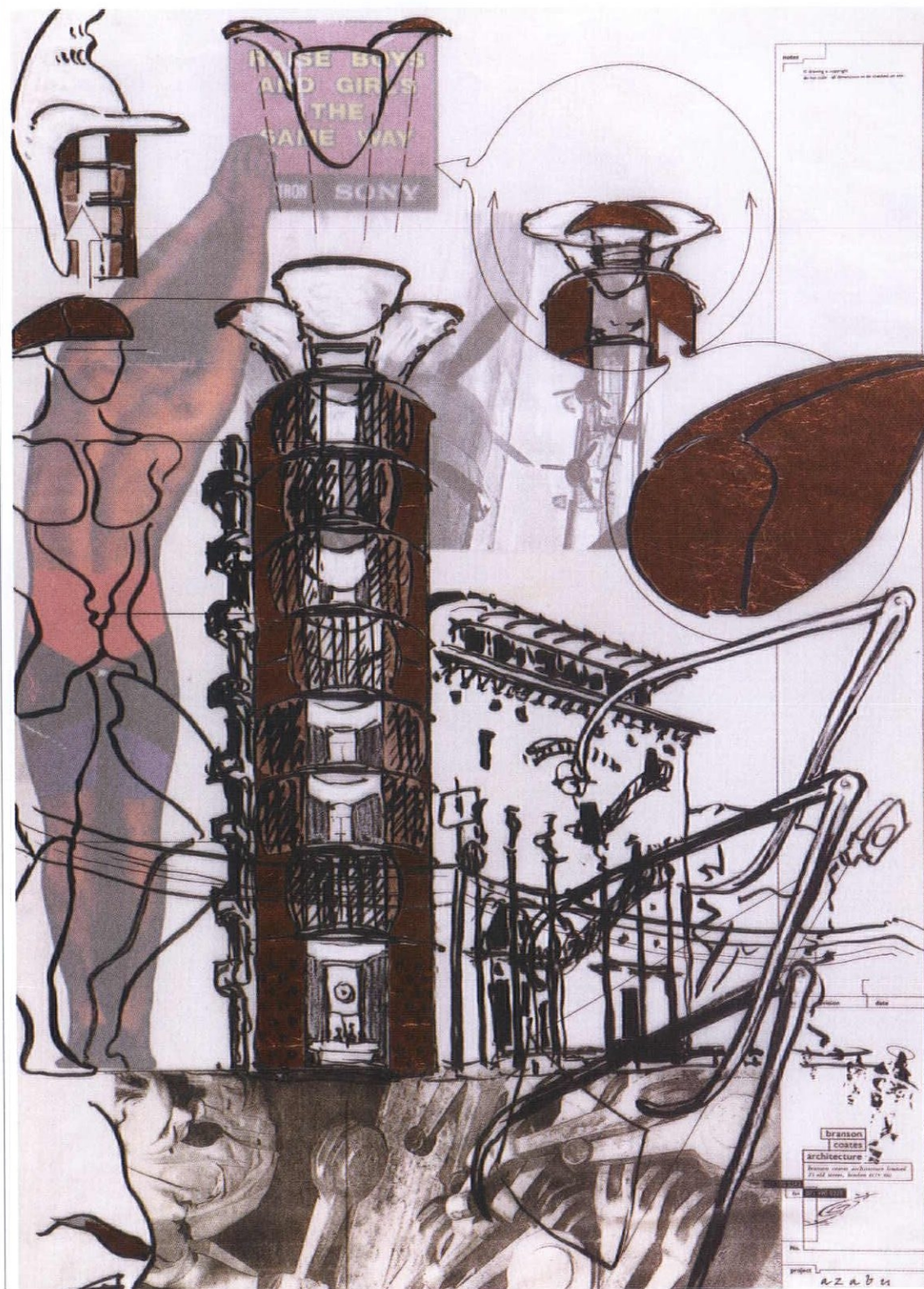
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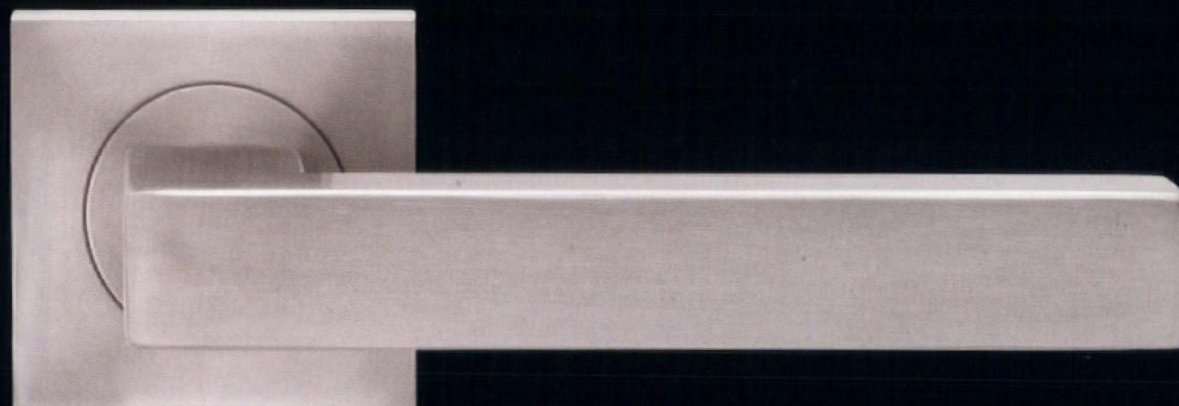
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Homoerotic classicism gets a techno twist in Nigel Coates' drawing for Caffè Bongo in Tokyo (1986). The exterior famously had a plane crashing into it, its wing supporting statues on the interior. The conjunction of aerodynamic modernity and classicism was inspired by *La Dolce Vita*, and makes explicit an equation made by many Modernists — as in Corb's comparison of the Parthenon to a sports car, or the Futurist assertion that 'a roaring motor car is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace'. This and many more of Nigel Coates' pioneering drawings are on display at his London studio 14-22 September as part of the London Design Festival

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