Full circle
Antinori Winery returns to the earth

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Helical ramp at Antorini Winery
Photo Pietro Savorelli

The RIBA Journal September 2013
Inspiring A Vision...

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Dolphins washrooms worth experiencing
There’s a sense of civic engagement about our roster of buildings this month, though not all are as clearly in the tradition of grand public commissions as Mecanoo’s Library of Birmingham. Archea’s Antinori winery in Tuscany, for instance, is to do with opening up to the public as a destination – wine tourism at the top end of the market being a lucrative, brand-reinforcing business – as much as placing its HQ closer to where the wine is actually produced. It’s all a long way from a municipal swimming pool in Worthing, but Wilkinson Eyre has taken this often banal building type and made its shoreline complex into a place almost as intriguing.

It all raises the old matter of whether some typologies are inherently superior to others. Thankfully we now seldom find the snobbish putdown phrase ‘commercial architect’, but art galleries will always get more press than shopping malls. It’s all to do with the expectations of the commissioning clients. Which, to judge by the buildings that follow, were gratifyingly high. ©

Shoreline splash: Worthing’s new public swimming pool, page 26
Languishing off the sea wall of Marseille’s mediaeval Fort St-Jean, something a little more 21st century now sits on the port’s old J4 pier. Coinciding with the city’s designation as European Capital of Culture 2013, the €191m Museum of the Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean (MuCEM) opened with a huge firework display that lit up the entire docks area. The designer of the 15,000m² facility was outspoken French architect Rudi Ricciotti, who describes his massive square structure as a ‘vertical casbah’. The building has two skins. The inner is 52m square – effectively a glazed box containing all the functions of the museum. This huge expanse of glass is then shaded by a deep grey lava-like outer lattice of fibre-reinforced ultra-high performance concrete, extending a further 10m beyond it on all sides. Between these two skins Ricciotti has placed ramps that run ‘Tower of Babel’-like down the 18m high facade to the main entrance foyer at ground level. A 115m long, high level grey concrete bridge is the only connection between Fort St-Jean and the MuCEM’s panoramic rooftop viewing terrace. We’re impressed by Ricciotti’s concrete form, but even more so by his own description of the building; ‘The sole material the colour of dust; matt, crushed by the light, distant from the brilliance and technological consumerism, commending the dense and the delicate,’ in a manner more ‘lah-di-dah’ than ‘ooh la la.’
This year’s vintage
In a radical move to the country, this ancient wine-maker returns to the grape-producing earth of the Tuscan hills

Words: Hugh Pearman Photographs: Pietro Savorelli and Leonardo Finotti

It’s a different kind of architecture, the Antinori winery at Bargino outside Florence. Different not only because it is a very large building complex sunk relatively unobtrusively into a hillside, but also because it represents the first shift out of town for the celebrated Antinori dynasty – Tuscan winemaking aristocracy – which has been based in its eponymous palazzo in central Florence for the past 500 years.

Now complete but for the necessary natural healing of the landscape over and around the building – it is planted with vines and olives, naturally, none of your manicured lawns – the building is something of a manifesto statement not only by the client, but also by the architect, Archea Associates of Florence. For the client, it is a return to the Chianti Classico countryside, its 120-strong administration being located in the same complex as a new working winery, together with restaurant, shop museum and auditorium. For the architect (Marco Casamonti of Archea leading the team) it is proof that a large mixed-use complex can be absorbed into the landscape. The concept was of a building that was no more than two uneven cuts in the landscape, like a Lucio Fontana slashed canvas. The bigger and lower of these two slashes is some 160m long.
It took eight years and some heavy engineering to achieve this building. Earth-sheltered and organised on a staggered section, it required the complete excavation of a 35ha hillside. When digging began in 2005, the ground proved unstable, so the building had to be piled and tethered with ground anchors: engineer Hydea also acted as project manager.

From the road below, you see only a retaining wall in pinkish in-situ concrete (the colour of the soil here) with the Antinori name emblazoned on it. From here the road snakes up the hill and you catch a glimpse of the curving brow of the building in Cor-Ten steel. Then the road disappears beneath the complex, bends again and deposits you at the lowest level beneath the canopy, from where a very considerable 100-tonne helicoidal staircase, more sculptural than functional, rises through the canopy to the terrace above. The canopy is a 21m cantilever at its deepest point, with the added weight of soil on top.

Museum, offices and shop are at the front, looking across the valley. Behind, dug into the temperature-stabilising hillside, are the cellars dedicated to barrels ranging in size from the smallest ‘barriques’ upwards. Perched high at the back behind them is the winery, complete with bottling plant. This level, the second slash in the landscape, is fronted by the restaurant, again enjoying the view.

Archea keeps the palette of materials incredibly simple, mostly in earth tones. There
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is poured concrete tinted with iron oxide, terracotta bricks of similar hue used in various ways, Cor-Ten steel, rough-sawn timber and curving glass. The whole building, glass excepted, has an industrial feel to it and there are wonderfully Stygian staircase atria between the front and rear halves of the complex. The three rows of cellars are dramatically treated, sinusoidal in form, and lined with terracotta bricks set on a metal armature within what would otherwise have been a single huge rectilinear space. Glass-box tasting rooms project into the cellars. The lower level, though buried beneath a new vineyard, is daylit through a succession of circular apertures of various sizes. The two largest mark courtyards at either end of the building – one for cars, one for trucks.

Antinori is a prestige wine marque – the present Marchese was one of the earliest exponents of the Bordeaux-challenging wines known as ‘Supertuscan’ – and this is plainly intended as a statement building, for all its hunkering-down. It is all about what the French would call ‘terroir’. It is conceptually of the land, as the wines are. Archea Associates, meanwhile, is going places, with studios not only in Florence but also Rome, Milan, Beijing, Dubai and São Paulo. Yet for all this expansionism, this project close to home is clearly hugely important for the company. Wine tourism is important, and growing as an activity. A big-name winery is a destination. Rather than go the flashy route, Archea and Antinori have chosen drama, mystery and power. It works.

Piranesi would be proud: simple yet monumental stairwells at the rear of the building.
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Architectural photographer Iwan Baan does like his aerial shots. He became world-famous when he braved the skies over Manhattan in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, in the only helicopter prepared to risk undertaking such a trip, in order to capture an incredible night-time image of a city half plunged into darkness by flooding. First published as the cover of New York Magazine, the photo went round the world, won multiple awards, and became a fundraising poster for hurricane relief.

So we’re delighted to show a gentler but no less intriguing aerial photo from the lens of the hovering Baan. One can only dream of this kind of house in the UK – not just because of planning restrictions in rural areas, but also, one suspects, for climatic reasons. Here is a house for a young family, nestling in a forested hillside, which is conceived as a hamlet of linked forms, a three-storey main body with a single-storey curling tail. The concrete building, by Mexican architect Tatiana Bilbao, exemplifies an enduring modernist dream.

Casa Ventura, Monterrey, Mexico
Architect Tatiana Bilbao
Photograph Iwan Baan
Words Hugh Pearman
How about this: a fully-functioning 1400-seat theatre, complete with grown-up seating, air conditioning, full lighting rig, proper acoustics and foyers, for not much more than £1m? If you stop thinking ‘building’ and start thinking ‘tent’ instead, then it makes sense. But this is no ordinary tent, though it can trace its lineage back to the tradition of the circus big top. Chichester’s Theatre in the Park, by architect, academic and temporary structures specialist Teresa Hoskyns, is the most ambitious yet in a series of travelling theatres that she and her husband, theatre producer Matthew Churchill, have produced.

It helps that there are no foundations deeper than the clusters of 1m-long steel pins that keep everything tethered, that everything from wardrobe to dressing rooms to foyer cafés can be made of shipping containers, and that a lot of the kit – from toilet cabins to air handling and generator units – can be hired. In fact the whole theatre – though designed specifically for the needs of Chichester Festival Theatre’s summer season – is designed to be repurchased, packed away, and reconfigured for other productions elsewhere.

This means that the permanent octagonal Festival Theatre, originally designed by Powell & Moya and at present being rebuilt and extended by Haworth Tompkins, will keep its very loyal audience, which would otherwise have to make do with only the small second permanent auditorium, the Minerva. The day I went to the Theatre in the Park, crowds were pouring along the boardwalk from the old theatre across the park to the magical new one. They were there for a matinee performance of – what else – Barnum, the circus musical. Hoskyns’ theatre, its external trusses allowing for column-free space in the auditorium, its part-sound-absorbent, part-reflective doubled skin giving good acoustics, was proving to be a theatrical event in itself.
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Three new college auditoriums by Berman Guedes Stretton have opened around Oxford in the last few years. But only one has projecting bands of granite and a shifted geometry that twists it into something special. The Leonard Wolfson Auditorium takes its cues from Powell and Moya-designed Wolfson College (1974) which speaks of solidity and thoughtfulness as it gathers rooms to form courtyards around its graceful landscape.

Precast concrete panels studded with granite mark the original out along with the dining hall which rises to a timber-lined apex under a hipped roof. Later additions include student residences – also by Berman Guedes Stretton – continuing the horizontal linear theme, plus rather clunky extra entrance roads. The auditorium is the first phase in a reframing of the public face of the north Oxford college, giving it visibility from the suburban road by using a natural ventilation tower as an excuse to break the domestic datum. The new building is a sign of the ambitions of the college president, Professor Dame Hermione Lee, and the college’s programme of public talks. It also adds a student gathering point, extra library space and a porters’ lodge, as they are still known even at this modern Oxford college.

The outward expression of the auditorium building, with the granite overwhelmed by render, doesn’t quite match the weight of the original college. But one foyer later and the drama of the form, twisted around the chimney to give a stepped roof, does rival and complement the main hall. Berman Guedes Stretton’s original design was orthogonal; it was only after the working drawings came in that Lee suggested the roof might do something a little more interesting – as the main hall does, which she sees from the president’s house. Concrete beams fanning out from the chimney set up the geometry of experience, the muted seats following their course with offset balconies either side. Chestnut-lined, it exudes a quiet confidence.
Dramatic concrete beams span out from the ventilation tower. There are awkward spaces between auditorium and rectangular envelope — but not too many.
IN NUMBERS

£3.35m
construction contract including phase two plant

£4,350
cost per m²

770
m² area

Architect Berman Guedes Stretton
Structural engineer Price and Myers
Services engineer Michael Popper Associates LLP
Acoustic consultant Raf Orlowski
Theatre consultant Anne Minors
Asian Games village, New Delhi, 1980-82
Architect Raj Rewal
Words Hugh Pearman
Photographs Architectural Research Cell

The Indian Summer of architecture at the RIBA, centred on the exhibition of Charles Correa’s work, is to be followed by an autumn exhibition in Paris of his great near-contemporary, Raj Rewal. The Pompidou Centre is to devote a room to Rewal for nine months from October 20, as part of the rehang of its modern collection.

Here we show one of Delhi-based Rewal’s great projects from the past, archive photos of his Asian Games village in New Delhi designed and built in 1980-82. As with London 2012’s Olympic Games, this was necessarily rapid construction using precast concrete components and sold on to owner-occupiers after the games; there, however, the resemblance ends. Rewal designed his township of 500 homes in a mix of types built up from a basic form. The blend of medium and low-rise was inspired by traditional Indian towns, particularly in their deployment of narrow streets, pedestrian priority and natural ventilation. This dense plan was pierced with a number of public squares. By this time, prefabricated housing estates in Europe and America had acquired a bad name: Rewal breathed new life into the typology.
Municipal swimming pools are rooted in our consciousness, splashes echoing, slippery tiles and hair in drains. Worthing had one of those – Aquarena – built in the late 70s. But now, funded by loans raised on Aquarena’s future sale and development and built alongside it, the seaside town has a new municipal pool. It was commissioned and designed with startling confidence, given the straightened times, and it’s finished to unexpectedly high quality given the norms of public procurement.

The ‘design’ solution was initially up against a shed extension to an out of town leisure centre, but councillors plumped for more central development along the seafront. That brought an obligation to spend money on a high quality design that would do justice to the prominent site between the pebble beach and the main Brighton Road, alongside the listed Beach House and grounds. As recession kicked in, 109 practices submitted entries to an RIBA competition, and Wilkinson Eyre took the prize.

Real estate went down and the budget followed, dropping from £22m to £17m; then a slimmed down design was accepted at £19.7m which came in at £3600/m². December 2010 was identified as a time when tenders were likely to come in extremely low (which put a stop to endless discussions about minor details such as installing pirate ships and so on). Council leader Paul Yallop decided to ride out any criticisms and just dive in.

The pools are housed in one curving volume with a timber box alongside for gym and studios. From the coast road the building appears with a VitraHaus-style outline of the form against picture windows – a drawing of its section (the curve has the elegance of a Hadid roof but with more structural sense).

As a large volume there was the danger that side-on it would appear monolithic – potentially just a replacement for Aquarena as a stolid book end to the beach. But the rhythm of the copper panels on the west elevation plays a large part in ameliorating this effect – as does the facade in the way it flicks out to pick up sun from the north in mesh-clad extrusions.

The pools opens towards the sea, sweeping...
visitors along in a curve towards the beach. The sea frontage – glazed spa, seagull-populated paddling pool onto listed Beach House colonnade, and projecting timber box – is least convincing, lacking presence and access. This is only partly a victim of a lack of funds that has delayed the addition of a beach house café facing the paddling pool to create a phase two.

The discussion of economies came at the start of the design process, with the entrance pushed into the centre of the building in a way that would minimise circulation space and staff to control it. You wouldn’t think it, but keeping volume to an airy minimum was also critical. Happily, high tech pool floors nowadays can help to reduce heating loads, by not only moving to allow different depths but also acting as pool covers. When I visited the grass outside was still recovering having been dug up for the ground source heat pumps.

There are three pools in the complex, set in a line from road to beach. But the building form, its glazed end opening up on the beach, and its structural twist, ensure all is not orthogonal. ‘It would have been deadly dull if it was all straight lines,’ says Wilkinson. ‘You don’t win a competition with ordinary,’ he adds. The main steel beams read as a sinuous ribbon structure – which perversely and beautifully runs the 50m length of two pools as far as a glazed partition. Each steel curves in two directions opening up towards the sea, braced by good looking structural timber cassettes in the 8-14m distance between the long beams. The practice describes the structure as ‘experimental’ and the engineer admits to a certain amount of ‘unusual load paths’.

Once you are in the pool swimming, the roof and eye level view are all. So the twists of the beams play a great part in the delight in the building. Deck level (not quite infinity-style) pool edges and low level glazing borrow a bit of the park for the pool. Hopefully the transparent glass will survive swimmers’ sensibilities here as it has failed to do at other pools. ‘We wanted the architecture to be as light as possible,’ says Wilkinson. ‘That is what transforms swimming from an exercise regime.’

STRUCTURE
The pool hall was an exceptional challenge. Its roof is supported by two 80m long continuous steel beams with a trapezoidal box section. They have a 50m clear span and curve both in plan and elevation generating large forces that create torsion in the box beams. These are restrained against twisting by steel frames hidden within the roof profile at the hall-ends. Minimising intermediate structural requirements, this permits an uninterrupted timber clad soffit between the main feature beams, drawing the eyes to towards the open sea. Parametric design tools were used to create the main curved beam geometries and aid with the setting out and interfaces with the glazing.

The long facade, which takes the brunt of westerly gales, has an ingenious stability system. Wind forces take a convoluted path across the complex roof profile back to the main concrete frame, leaving the feature glazed end facades free of stability bracing.

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IN NUMBERS

£19.7m project value
4700 m² gross area
3600 £/m² cost per m²
111 kg CO₂/m²/year calculation

Design Build JCT 2011 form of contract

Very Good Breeam rating

Credits

Client Worthing Borough Council
Architect Wilkinson Eyre
Project management/Cost consultant Deloitte Real Estate
Structural & services engineer AECOM
Main contractor Morgan Sindall

Suppliers and subcontractors

Timber roof structure Finn Forest Merck
Primary steelwork Watsons
Copper roof and copper and wood exterior Kingsley Roofing
Concrete JP Dunn
Joinery PJ Saines
Architectural metalwork Brass Age
Partition and ceilings Broadsworld
M&E contractor Emcor
Flat roof Kingsley Roofing
In-situ and precast concrete and external works JP Dunn
Lifts Kone
Brickwork Ibstock
Aluminium curtain walling and windows: Schüco
Glazed doors Geze
Aluminium louvres Contrasol
External paving Marshalls
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Age of Enlightenment

Birmingham’s new library is built for people, its tantalising pockets of learning and experience glimpsed like insights on the journey to knowledge

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek  Photographs: Dennis Gilbert
‘I come from the south – we’ve actually got hills there,’ Francine Houben, co-founder of Dutch firm Mecanoo promptly corrects me when I suggest her fascination with designing buildings stacked-up like mountains might be due to the fact that Holland is below sea level – and that she feels compelled to raise people’s sightlines to above the cusp of a dyke. Truth is, from her hometown of Sittard in Holland’s southern most province, she’s spitting distance from the Vaalsberg, which gives views from its 330m summit back over Limburg and even into Belgium and Germany. Admittedly, it’s no Mont Blanc; but as I have just discovered, one should expect a Dutch person to exhibit a highly sensitive appreciation of level changes.

By the time the interview’s over I have displayed my ignorance of the geography not only of Holland, but of Birmingham too, where Mecanoo’s latest design, the city’s new £189m library now forms a strangely dizzying visual spectacle on Centenary Square. The practice’s appointment in 2008 after an invited interview process, came about after a brief three-day site visit by Houben, to help her get a handle on the UK’s second biggest city. ‘The problem was not the library – I know all about them,’ recalls Houben confidently. ‘What I needed to get to know was Birmingham.’ And she’s not fibbing – the Mecanoo-designed library at TU Delft, a concrete cone piercing a huge sloping grass roof running up from grade, changed the nature of the campus and made the practice internationally famous. In summer students sunbathe on it, in winter they ski down it, and any time of day spark up at its summit. With a high-tech library below its ramped roof, the fake hill became by default the university’s real heart. You feel a similar social intent here.

Having overcome her initial disorientation, Houben realised she could only get under the skin of Birmingham through its topography. ‘The city is defined by hills, further refined by the styles of architecture on them; classical stone, red brick, industrial iron’ she says. The comment’s an interesting one – the impression I’ve always taken away of this riverless conurbation is one of unrelenting flatness, yet Houben mythologises it as more ‘Palatine’ than ‘pancake’, with Centenary Square ‘the highest hill of them all’. And it’s here, looking over a city that Houben was shocked to find took up only two pages of a UK tourist guide, that between two incongruous
palazzos – the ‘optimistic concrete’ of 1971 Rep Theatre and the 1938 neo-classical offices of Baskerville House, Mecanoo has inserted its ‘iconic’ third.

The 10-storey Library of Birmingham is a huge concrete and glass ziggurat, within which the architect has inserted a state-of-the-art facility. Its levels, you’ll discover, will be devoted to reception, to galleries, to storing its massive archive and to the reading spaces that serve them, and on the top a saved reading room from the original 1880s library; all linked by an atrium of offset circular voids. But for now all that is out of sight. Only its giant staggered form hits you, the functions unified behind a slightly deranged spiographic facade of interlocking aluminium circles hovering off its face. Neither Houben nor the late John Madin would appreciate it, but from the corner of your eye, its homogeneity and massing references the brutalist old library at the east end of the square – only here the ziggurat’s flipped back on its feet.

As at Delft, the nettle has been grasped that a library can be a social space as well as one for private research. Houben notes that ‘people like to move at ground level, so we created a lot of them’ – something skillfully done by melding the 9m high ground floor with its mezzanine and the lower ground in section so two levels fluidly become four. Visitors can wander east to enter Mecanoo’s refurbished Rep lobby or drift north down a slope into the open plan public lending library at the back of the building. Here, triple height north glazing reveals the trees of a park space beyond, while slim 12m high columns rise to a meet a black metal ceiling, creating a generous and lofty space. Turn again and escalators take you down to the children’s library where the soffit drops significantly to make the scale instantly more child-friendly.

A bright yellow painted floor draws you past the bookshelves to the brightness of the music section, which wraps around an 18m diameter curved glass amphitheatre set into Centenary Square. Its glazed walls can slide away, opening the lower ground floor to the public realm, which millions walk across in any year. Now up to 500 of them at any one time will be able to look down and listen to open-air lunchtime piano recitals or plays. ‘We wanted formal and informal spaces for interaction,’ says Houben.
IN NUMBERS

£4114
cost per m²

35,000
m² area

1m
publicly accessible books

2m
items in its photographic archive

10,000
visitors per day expected

50
% better energy efficiency than current library
'This space was not in the original brief, but creating the amphitheatre as part of the library also makes it part of the square; we want the city folk to feel they’ve visited it even if they haven’t.’ Certainly from inside the circle, while the library’s main facade looms up all the more in front of you, there remains an uncanny sense of separation.

The circular form of the amphitheatre and the golden cylinder crowning the library are the only two external clues you get of the geometry that governs the internal circulatory arrangement. Once in the foyer, the circle is immediately apparent, a pair of double height escalators disappearing into a huge hole in its ceiling. As you ascend you’ll realise the circular openings will keep continuing up; like transient phases of the moon, only partially evident as they rise, waxing and waning through the volume, while escalators criss-cross the space with, it seems, neither rhyme nor reason. You’ll glimpse stolen views of a glazed rooftop at the top of the space – part of a spatial metaphor. ‘The intellectual conceit we gave the design was that learning be an exploration, a journey; that chance and serendipity is part of the experience,’ says Brian Gambles, project director of the library. It turns out you’ll never quite see the light until you reach the top; but then again, that’s the point.

And books are where that journey begins, literally. The book wall that dominates the mid-levels of the library not only defines the atrium, but acts as a visual foil for spaces beyond. Popping through it at lower level reveals reading rooms, partially shielded from the sunlight by the filigree metal cladding. The experience of height is replaced by width, timber hardwood floors for marbled ceramic, volume for metal ceilings. The conditioned white, minimal upper archive galleries are counter pointed by low, red banquette, viewing booths for the BFI archive – a space that looks set to become the library’s go-to snogging area, and which is symptomatic of the aspects of surprise and sociability being employed here. But while juxtaposition of spaces is deliberate and its effect immediate, subtle differences in the nature of the atrium are evident as you ascend. At the upper archive levels, crossed by a travelator, the book wall seems more imposing – looking through the rooflight to the sky, its volume has a greater sense of...
Herb gardens on terraces directly accessible from the reading rooms edge the ascent to the golden cylinder of the Shakespeare Memorial Library. Houben says these perform two functions – at the level of neighbouring buildings connecting the gardens with the scale of the square; and connecting the library to distant views of the southerly Lickey hills and Black Country to the north.

So has the gain of transferring the Library of Birmingham from its old concrete sarcophagus been worth the pain? I was cynical, but I can’t help but feel genuinely excited about the new building. The more I wandered through it, the more I sensed it craving occupation. It has grandeur where necessary and smaller scale, even intimacy, where appropriate. In contrast to its exterior of brash stacked volumes, internally it exhibits functional complexity. I have gripes – I would have made more of the amphitheatre space in Centenary Square as there’s a crudity to its area and quality of finish. And that contentious spirograph facade; while it unifies the many functions of the building, it still doesn’t quite convince in either its finish or its fixing back to the main structure. I live in hope that more affluent times will see it replaced for the Scarpa-esque bronze sections it actually deserves. But this is architecture with a big ‘A’, of strong formal moves; it’s bold and optimistic, ready for use now, yet open to change and reinvention. And it is, in an increasingly rare sense of the word, a truly civic building, designed for its users and not, like the British Library, for the books.

Walking back to New St station, also being redeveloped, I cross the square and through John Madin’s library (Parting shot, p106), that with its brutalist dignity, benevolently accommodates the riot of shops clinging to its concrete piers like lichen to rock. Its form and atrium, I’m convinced, would look amazing in a new incarnation as the city’s anchor John Lewis store; when, to my mind the regeneration of Birmingham’s centre would be complete. Later, pulling out of the station, I’m aware for the first time of the rail viaducts spreading like a spider’s web out from the city – a brick datum which Birmingham’s natural levels peel away from and then rise up to meet. Like the library, Houben was also right about the hills.
How they Kept the Keep

Astley Castle’s much-praised reinvention is a technical triumph as much as an aesthetic one

Words: Pamela Buxton  Photographs: Hélène Binet

If refurbishment were a sport, the Stirling Prize-nominated reinvention of Astley Castle would be firmly in the full-contact, all-in wrestling category. Witherford Watson Mann’s (WWM) robust rehabilitation of this Warwickshire ruin has boldly transformed a 12th century wreck into a popular holiday house that’s fit for the modern visitor, yet nonetheless remains a partial ruin.

‘We never went down the “touch it delicately” route. We went into this ruin and pushed it strongly,’ says WWM director Stephen Witherford.

The architect won a Landmark Trust competition for the project in 2007 with a £1.35m scheme that, instead of holding the Grade II* listed ruin at arm’s reach from any new build, directly inhabits the oldest part of the site and uses the new work as a graft to bind the ruin together and halt its decline. ‘However romantic, a ruin is not a natural state for a building,’ says fellow director William Mann.

WWM was clear that there would be no attempt at scholarly restoration back to a particular era of ruin. For a start, the castle was no single ‘olé’, but the result of 800 years of interventions. It began as a defensive stronghold with walls nearly 2m deep, underwent significant expansion in the 15th, 17th and 19th centuries and was finally burnt out in the 1970s and left roofless. Instead, this ‘new’ is another, clearly legible episode in the building’s life that makes no attempt to cover up what Witherford calls the ‘catastrophe’ of its past. Yet it moves on positively to set up what WWM terms a ‘conversation’ between old and new.

The first step, stabilisation, was no mean feat, says David Derby, partner of structural engineer Price & Myers. At the start of the project the ruin was so far gone there were doubts that it could be saved – although most of it was in the end, except for the relatively flimsy Victorian additions. The east of the house, so atmospheric now as courtyards, was completely filled with vegetation and rubble and in danger of collapse. A new roof was urgently needed to prevent further deterioration.

Price & Myers cleared the debris and used props and resin anchors to stabilise the castle initially. The key to the permanent structural solution lay in how the architect chose to use the ruin. After grappling long and hard with the site to make sense of its past and potential future, WWM made two main moves concerning location and configuration. It opted to
A physical model of Astley Castle followed by WWM’s 3D modelling of its intervention. Used to create a subsequent physical model of both the brick and timber elements, the whole was ultimately inserted into the 1:50 model of the ruin.
ARCHITECTURE WITH RHEINZINK
Titanium Zinc Alloy for Roofing and Wall Cladding
colonise the 12th century section for residential accommodation, extending on the ground floor into a 19th century addition to the west. The scheme also adapts the immediately adjacent ruins to give two partially roofed courtyards that function as external social spaces.

Next, WWM decided to invert the accommodation with four bedrooms and two bathrooms on the ground floor and a grand living space and kitchen on the first, with views down into the courtyards. The great gashes in the ruin were used for full-height glazing on the south and east to create a surprisingly light castle interior. The lack of surviving north wall eased the task of accommodating kitchen and bathroom servicing.

This transformation was navigated with a clear material approach – brick and concrete to strengthen and infill the primary masonry structure of the ruin, and laminated timber for the relatively independent secondary interventions needed to make the residence – the roof, staircase and room partitions. The result is 60% old, 40% new.

WWM’s new brickwork (see box) plays a huge role in the project, creating massive brick piers which fill the voids in the walls and frame new windows. This buttressing and binding structure, says the architect, is like a new ruin being integrated into the old.

Nothing was easy. Installation of steel reinforced concrete lintels was particularly tricky, made harder by the presence of a moat that limited crane access. To make craning possible, larger lintels were hollowed out to reduce their weight and, once positioned, filled in-situ to give them structural strength. The largest is a 7m long, 600mm T-shaped lintel with a 200mm visible ‘boot’, positioned above the full-height windows along the middle spine wall where the eastern 15th century wing meets the core.

Windows are set deep in the masonry so that externally, you see the void in the wall rather than the glass on the surface. The large new openings take their inspiration from the rhythms of the surviving Gothic mullions and are stepped in plan with a laminated perpendicular pane to create a partial Juliette balcony, and break up the reflecting plane.

Bolstered by the pier infills, the now-stable walls had enough capacity to take a new, stained pine roof. The massive 7m spans in the living room suggested use of laminated timber; this was brought to site and installed in a grid of primary and secondary structure using traditional carpentry to hide the joints with some steel plates where necessary. Together with the timber partitions, floors and stairs, this joinery creates the warmth and intimacy necessary for its domestic use adding a softness to accommodate awkward bits that don’t align. Services and cabling are
Laminated timber structural joints are crisply detailed at their interfaces and create the upper living level.

Distinctions between the old and new structures, using timber and Danish brick, bring new materiality and language to the old ruin.

Picking the brick

For such a very English ruin, purportedly once home to Lady Jane Grey, it’s ironic that the 49,800 bricks used to bind the wreck together are Danish. Petersen Tegel’s charcoal-fired D36 were chosen for both their hue and narrow 37mm height, which allowed the architect to build finely and closer to the ruin.

The bricks form piers with the same dimensions as the walls they buttress — 600mm to 1800mm. A diaphragm pier construction of clay blocks binds the inner and outer skins, tied in by a header at every fourth course. This hollow inner structure is backfilled with aggregate so new and historic elements move similarly, avoiding the need for movement joints. Around this structure is the outer face of bricks, laid on a quarter lap rather than half, to avoid a relentlessly mechanical bond. Joints have a lime-stabilised fill with thermal and movement characteristics close to the original and are spaced at 18-20mm to match the join with the old. Where new abuts old, hidden stainless steel ties link the brick to the existing masonry.

The D36 brick has a range of tones from pink to green that together are closer to the existing sandstone than the grey/green brick WWM initially chose. The resulting, combined infill brick pier/existing masonry wall structure is built to roof level and has the strength to accommodate the new concrete lintels, and support the laminated timber roof.

easily concealed within partitions of hollow stud construction, faced with dense fibre panels for sound and fire resistance. These are finished in birch plywood with sycamore beading and skirting. Floors are oak block with terracotta borders to separate the wood from the original walls, which have yet to finish drying out.

For the two courtyards, the challenge was to protect the insides of the walls from the weather while retaining them as open spaces. The solution was a new partial pine roof in each, with Roman atrium-like central openings. This tactic enabled the architects to rebuff the Trust’s original desire to lime-wash the inside of the courtyards. Instead, the texture and character of the uneven inner walls are retained. Any rain that comes through simply drains away through the brick paving and gravel aggregate floor.

As well as retaining an overall clarity of philosophy towards the old, the architect had to respond intuitively to suit the constant challenges of the highly particular conditions. For example, how on earth, as Mann says, do you get a contemporary kitchen into a Medieval ruin without hitting a bum note? The answer was by creating a kitchen niche for the ‘hot’ functions within the rebuilt north wall using smoked oak units with Spanish terracotta tiling. ‘Wet’ functions are accommodated in a separate island unit.

The architect says with some justification that photography cannot do justice to the nuances of this reoccupation project. It might be a long shot for it to win the Stirling Prize, but when the judges visit this month to experience it for themselves perhaps they too, like many of the visitors to Astley Castle so far, will fall under its spell.
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Little Green Cells

Some clever thinking has created a building that is powered by algae and reduces CO₂ at the same time

Words: Amanda Birch

On an inner-city site in Hamburg, Germany, sits a building covered in algae. But this is no derelict structure: it is a bold experiment in harnessing one of the world’s most primitive organisms to produce energy. The green micro-algae facade on the newly completed five-storey apartment block generates biomass and heat, supplying hot water for domestic use and heating the building. It is the first building of its kind in the world.

The £3.95m BIQ (Bio Intelligent Quotient) pilot project is the realisation of a competition launched in 2009 by the International Building Exhibition (IBA Hamburg) for a Smart Material House. The IBA wanted smart materials on the facade, asking entrants to look at ‘materials, systems and products that behave dynamically, unlike conventional building materials, which are static’.

Austrian architect Splitterwerk won the competition – chosen for its track record in producing experimental architecture – with Arup in Germany. Arup and Splitterwerk formed a consortium with Colt International, a facade specialist of internal shading systems, and Strategic Science Consult, a biotechnological research company, to develop the technology and facade system.

What has emerged from this intensive period of development is highly complex. Installed on the south-west and south-east elevations (those most exposed to sunlight) of the square-shaped BIQ building, are 129 bioreactors. These are flat glass aluminium-framed panels that create an environment in which algae can flourish. The panels are like slimline vertical tanks, each filled with about 25 litres of water containing liquid nutrients. They are 2.5m tall by 0.7m wide with an 18mm cavity, and consist of two 10mm thick sheets of transparent glass – to optimise solar gain and therefore algae productivity.

Each of the Passivehaus building’s four storeys has its own individual closed loop of pipes to feed carbon dioxide to the bioreactors. The pipes run horizontally along the base of the reactors, concealed behind striking red and white powder-coated horizontal panels. As the nutrients in the bioreactors receive daylight and CO₂, they begin the bio-chemical process of photosynthesis – converting daylight and carbon dioxide into algal biomass.

‘Algae use photosynthesis quite effectively because they are unicellular and each cell divides every seven hours,’ says Jan Wurm, associate director at Arup Germany and one of the chief designers of the system. ‘This means the biomass doubles in seven hours. It is then removed and can be used as an energy source.’
Below: Intermittent injections of high pressure air redistribute the algae around the panels to optimise biomass production.

Bottom: Algae panels, whose biomass pipe runs are hidden behind striking red metal panels, create a distinct look for the BIQ building.

BIQ building, plan and section

1. Living dining room
2. Bedroom
3. Loggia
4. Office space
5. Hall
6. Common stair lobby
7. Lift shaft
These ideal conditions of light, carbon dioxide and nutrients promote the algae’s growth, which is further boosted by jets of pressurised air pumped periodically into the panels. Structurally bonded to the base of each bioreactor are three vertical metal strips which direct the air upwards. The air creates bubbles which gain speed as they rise to the top, split and create turbulence in the liquid.

‘The turbulence is needed because we want the algae to move from the lighter area to a darker zone and that’s what stimulates the metabolism to make it grow faster,’ says Wurm. ‘If it remains in the light too long, it can get stressed and may die, but too long in the dark zone means it won’t reproduce, so it needs to constantly shift from light to dark.’

The turbulence also releases about a dozen small plastic balls. This kicks off a self-cleaning process where the balls ‘scrub’ the inside of the glass by rubbing against it. The panels, which are connected to a pivot at the top and bottom, can be rotated 45° to allow additional cleaning and maintenance. There is potential to connect them to a motorised engine so they can track the sun to make the most of solar gain.

So how does the biomass produce energy? During photosynthesis, water contained in the panel is heated by the sun. The biomass and heat generated by the bioreactors are transported by the closed loops to the energy management system in the building’s ground floor plant room. Both forms of energy are exchanged by a separator and heat exchanger respectively. In summer, when demand for hot water falls, any excess heat can be stored in the geo-thermal system for future use.

The bioreactors are installed as a secondary facade as it was thought residents might feel uncomfortable looking onto algae. These fears were largely unfounded however; tenants moved into the 13 flats in April and have been very positive about the technology. BIQ employs a plaster primary facade painted green as a backdrop for the bioreactors and loggias appear at each level to break up the solidity and draw in daylight. The red and white horizontal stripes add another layer of impact.

‘When people see the algae facades they will remember the image of the red and white stripes,’ says Mark Blashitz, director of Splitterwerk. ‘This colour could mean many things. It is the colour of Hamburg’s flag and our webpage, but the colours also have associations with unfinished buildings and danger. The algae facade and stripes produce a special atmosphere, which was important to us’. A more restrained contrast to the dynamic algae facades is offered by the north-west and north-east elevations, with plain rendering enlivened by painted graphics.

The BIQ building will be monitored for two years and the technology’s energy and technical performance and user acceptance will be studied closely. It is too early to provide any concrete data, although in a product overview of the bioreactor facade, which is being promoted as ‘Solarleaf’, early predictions expect BIQ’s algae facade to produce biomass of 30kWh/m²/y and heat energy of 150 kWh/m²/y. In total, the facade is expected to reduce the building’s carbon emissions by 6 tons a year and eliminate 2.5 tons of CO₂.

Reducing CO₂ emissions and generating energy in a benign way are the more distinct benefits of the bioreactor facade, but the system also has the potential to provide summer shading. This has not been implemented in the BIQ building, but the panels could be built into a structure’s primary skin so that, on a bright summer’s day for example, the algae content could be doubled from morning to midday.

Bioreactor panels can also be used to produce electricity through a process called hydro-thermal conversion. It is possible to turn the biomass into biogas, which could power a generator or a combined heat and power plant to create electricity. It wasn’t possible to implement this on the BIQ building, but on a larger scale project which had the building units connected to the district grid, this would be worthwhile.

Other areas of the technology could be exploited. For example, grey water could be used, and bioluminescent algae cultures or other organisms such as cyanobacteria adopted. Crucial though, the technology needs to be fully integrated into the energy and building concept and it needs mass take-up if it is to become more affordable. Cost is the technology’s main limitation, but like any new product, as production increases the price will come down. If this happens, algae facades could become commonplace, especially in cities where bringing down high CO₂ levels is an imperative.

‘The algae facade could be the next most important technology in the next 20 to 30 years,’ says Blashitz. ‘I could see it being used to reduce carbon emissions in all the major cities of the world. BIQ is such an important building because it will be a starting point for a new generation of architecture’. ➤

As the nutrients in the bioreactors receive daylight and CO₂, they begin the bio-chemical process of photosynthesis – converting daylight and carbon dioxide into algal biomass.

IN THE SAME MOULD

The concept of using a common unicellular plant to generate energy might seem far-fetched, but it has been seriously considered before. Arup director Peter Head wrote about his vision for an ecological age and delivered a Brunel lecture on the subject in 2009 entitled, Entering the Ecological Age: The Engineer’s Role. He mentioned early research commissioned by Arup, which tested viability and the key role micro-algae had in generating energy.

Architects have also enthusiastically embraced the idea. In Los Angeles Emergent proposed a shop installation called The Flower Street Bioreactor where a transparent acrylic panel was filled with green algae and LED lights which maintained the conditions for growth. Make Architects has also explored the idea of wrapping buildings in algae tubes into which its gaseous waste products would be pumped. The algae would then be harvested for power. But these proposals, unlike the BIQ building, have not yet been realised.
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You've plastered art posters large and small across the country. Tell us about Art Everywhere

It was about trying to flood the streets with art. Fewer than 10% of people go into galleries so we thought we should take the art out to the people. These posters of 50 different pieces of art were on 22,000 sites, donated by the industry, from massive billboards to tiny taxi screens across the UK.

Q&A with Richard Reed

The co-founder of smoothie-maker Innocent on Art Everywhere and why beauty matters

You and your wife came up with the idea. Why?

I used to walk to work along Goldhawk Road in West London and someone had put up a beautiful piece of art. I would stop and look at it. It gave life a bit of a bounce. There’s no commercial agenda. It’s an ad campaign for the beauty of art. We never expected to be taken seriously. But once we had got £3m worth of poster sites everyone got behind it with their cash, their support in graphics or app design, and their votes.

Where is your favourite site?

I was driving into London on the A4 flyover and saw a giant Tracey Emin with a love heart on the digital screens. It was fantastic. Posters are wherever people are: there are Hockneys in Huddersfield where my parents live. Ninety per cent of the UK will see 15 of them.

Where do you look for beauty?

I take spiritual nourishment from things all around. Of those that are man-made it is architecture as much as art. In the Pantheon in Rome, looking up through the building I was transported 2000 years. Innocent’s old office was a former industrial unit, with no windows. Now we are in a new building, Fruit Towers. It’s contemporary architecture, a temple of light, space and views. And the business has completely unfolded, it’s transformational, the energy is amazing – although I haven’t got a spreadsheet to prove it you can feel it. But I connect most with things that are not man-made, like an epic sunset on a beach somewhere.

How can architects imbue the city with art?

They can plumb art into the infrastructure of buildings and spatial design. And art should start with the building itself, it is there for beauty rather than hard commerciality. Design is for humans and we do respond to warmth and touch. Things that provide joy endure the most. In our world we want to create things with innate desire, so you want it even before you know what it is. I think that is very much comparable with architecture. It has to appeal to the emotional right brain and to the logical left.
Are things looking up?

Earnings have fallen – but unemployment has fallen by more. Could we be at a turning point? The Employment & Earnings Survey 2013 sifts the winners and losers

This year’s annual RIBA / The Fees Bureau Employment & Earnings Survey reveals two changes since last year. Average earnings are down, while employment activity is up.

So we have lower rates of unemployment, and indeed lower rates of under-employment, compared to the previous three years. The downside of having more architects in work appears to be a reduction in average pay. The profession’s average earnings are lower by 3 per cent – and with inflation at 2 per cent this is effectively a pay cut of 5 per cent.

It may well be simple supply and demand; more architects are in work (mainly due to more setting up on their own) but this appears to be holding down average earnings. This is supported by the fact that the largest fall in earnings is recorded by sole principals – precisely the group which includes the majority of new self starters. These two trends mirror what we are seeing in the wider economy; the number of people in employment is rising while pay is flat.

In architecture, there has been a rise in employment across the board. Indeed, the number of architects working full-time is the highest since 2007 and this year’s is the first increase since 2005. The proportion of architects working full-time has risen from 84 to 87 per cent among male architects and from 63 to 69 per cent among females; overall, the proportion of architects in full-time employment has increased from 80 to 83 per cent since last year. The rate of reported unemployment has fallen dramatically, halving from around 4 per cent in 2009, 2010 and 2011, to less than 2 per cent now. Taken with those who are not working ‘for other reasons’, the total proportion of architects not in employment has fallen from 7 per cent two years ago to 4 per cent this.

Also lower this year is the level of under-employment, where architects believe they are working significantly below capacity. The proportion overall is 14 per cent, down from 18 per cent last year. But under-employment is more than double the overall average for sole principals. Among principals in partnership, 16 per cent believe they are under-employed, while the rate is lower among salaried staff: 6 per cent among private practice salaried,
Figures suggest there is not enough work to go round for the growing number of architects who have set up as sole principals... but those who set up new practices in partnership with others have been able to maintain their earnings.

3 per cent among central government architects and no local authority architects.

On the earnings front, it is sole principals who have fared by far the worst in 2013. Their average earnings have already been falling each year for some time (from £40,000 in 2009, to £35,000 in 2010 and 2011, and further to £32,500 last year). Their average earnings have fallen 8 per cent to a new low of £30,000, on top of last year’s fall of 7 per cent. Last year, the lowest earning quarter of sole principals earned less than £20,000. That figure has fallen this year to £18,500, which means about 1,000 sole principal architects are working full-time and earning less than £18,500 a year.

We’ve commented in previous surveys on just how low average earnings have become for this group. But we’ve also pointed out that there are a third more sole principals now than three years ago, suggesting average earnings are lower because they have been pushed down by new entrants. What we also see this year is a stubbornly high rate of under-employment among sole principals. While this has fallen for other architects, the figure...
remains at 29 per cent for this group. This suggests there is not enough work to go round for the growing number of architects who have set up as sole principals.

Something different is happening for principals in partnership. These architects, who are partners and directors in small, medium and large practices, have also seen a boost in their number. Indeed, this is the largest single employment group of architects. But unlike sole principals, rather than falling in recent years their average earnings have stayed flat. Partners and directors in practices have earned around £50,000 in each of the last four years. It appears that architects who set up new practices in partnership with others have been able to maintain their earnings at the same level as those in established practices. There has been no diminution of earnings as numbers have increased.

Principals in partnership record average earnings of £50,000 in this year’s survey. This varies by practice size, with a wide range all the way from £30,000 in a two person

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practice to £75,000 in practices with more than 50 staff. In medium sized practices, with between 10 and 30 staff, principals’ earnings average between £50,000 and £60,000.

Salaried architects (including associates) have seen a small drop (1.3 per cent) in average earnings, to £38,000. This is the same average as recorded in 2010 and 2011; like the earnings of partners and directors in the practices in which they work, salaries have been flat. But unlike their principals, salaried architects’ average earnings vary little by practice size, ranging from an average £36,000 in a three to five person practice, to £39,000 in one with more than 50 staff.

For the 1,600 public sector architects, salaries have continued to fall in 2013. Average pay for architects working in local authorities is 1.0 per cent less than last year; while for central government architects the drop has been a touch more (1.4 per cent). But over the last four years, salaries earned by architects working for local authorities have fallen by more than those for architects working for central

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£ average (median) earnings

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responded. Buy the full report from The Fees Bureau at feesbureau.co.uk or call 01243 565630. RIBA members can see summary statis-
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Aziz Mirza is lead researcher at The Fees Bureau.

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China break-in

A country the size of Europe with room for growth would tempt any practice. Hawkins\Brown got a toehold

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucherek

In the year it celebrates the silver anniversary of its founding, it’s no surprise that Hawkins\Brown has used the event to hail its expansion into China. Developing skills over the past 25 years in education, mixed-use residential and infrastructure projects (it’s involved with three Crossrail stations), partner Roger Hawkins explains they felt it was time to take their expertise to Asia – and to do it their way. This has been seen most palpably with the firm’s appointment as fit-out designer for the Handan Bank’s new 50,000m² HQ in Hebei province – bigger in size than the Gherkin.

‘Most architects seek collaborations with local practices. There’s an American model of architects handing a design to a local to deliver,’ he says. ‘We wanted more of an ‘hour glass’ shaped approach, where skills cross over and both parties are involved throughout. It’s an amazing opportunity. For instance, Crossrail is the largest construction scheme in Europe, but China has 20 such schemes that size on site now.’ To establish a toehold in the market, the firm sought out a Chinese director who could act as intermediary, appointing ex-RMJM China project leader Fang Fang as a London-based director for its Chinese arm, HB International. She gives an idea of the potential scale of work when she says that China plans to invest over RMB10bn (£1bn) to build 100 universities in south China alone in the next five years, a type the firm is well-versed in.

But getting in on the design market is the challenge. Fang Fang explains that the lion’s share of the work in China is carried out by local design institutes, state-owned offices that hold all the licences and certificates needed to carry out large-scale works, and act as a ‘one-stop shop’ for private clients. Working in JV with foreign architects they are typically responsible for construction documentation and site management (RIBA Stage E onwards), a situation Roger Hawkins, pushing for greater practice involvement, seems to want to change.

Bucking the trend to set up in the practice-heavy and competitive Shanghai or Beijing, the firm opted for Chengdu in Sichuan, partly because the city’s at the centre of the state’s ‘Go West’ policy. Having spent six months setting up its WFOE (wholly foreign owned enterprises), it is about to start employing local staff. The firm’s first project, the design of the 1.2million m² Nordic City in the city’s Xindu district, involves seven mixed-use residential towers – ‘each one’, Hawkins notes, ‘bigger than any project we’ve done in the UK.’

The project is already pushing the practice to be propositional. Chinese building codes demand that every room gets a window, resulting in gnarled plan forms and pre-determined and inefficient use of space. ‘We want to convince the authorities to adopt a more flexible approach to layouts that use common cores but allow them to be open plan.’ Its ‘SoHo’ proposal (Small Office/ Home Office) would allow firms and families to buy one or multiples of the 40m² base units that they can lay out themselves. Hawkins is also pushing off-site manufacture, saying, ‘We were initially shocked at the low level of build quality, and saw MMC as the perfect way to rectify it.’

These efforts caught the eye of local auth-
China plans to invest over £1bn to build 100 universities in south China alone in the next five years

orities who, having seen their efforts at Nordic City, commissioned the firm to analyse the Development Control Plan for Xindu’s Sanhe Metro masterplan, a 100ha derelict industrial site intended to house over 20,000 people in the next three years. ‘They asked us and Buro Happold to review the plan and put forward proposals, aspects which are now being implemented as policy. It was all about place making, economics and getting the right mix of uses,’ says Fang Fang. She describes design review here as an open process – all submitting firms can watch each others’ presentations to the authorities, unlike the UK. Hawkins claims the firm is trying to steer away from US clients’ urban typologies for a more European approach. ‘We are challenging the idea of the megastructure: underground car parks and big decks with towers above. Some of our language about urban hierarchy is new to them,’ he says. ‘Local government is selling plots with the new guidance in mind, which is about lower densities and more green space,’ he says. ‘We’re thinking more about place making. Some places have too many shopping malls which are also far out of town; the oversupply is becoming problematic.’

In all they do, there’s a realisation that as the Chinese get more affluent they are becoming more selective, having seen their cultural heritage disappearing in the unrelenting march of development.’ Fang Fang thinks companies need to respond to this with more nuanced approaches when reintroducing social concepts to this socialist state: ‘It will be a hybrid solution of the indigenous and foreign to accommodate the needs of an emerging and burgeoning middle class,’ she concludes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current and projected area demands in office, retail and logistics space, 2012/2020</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 1 cities (BJ, SH, SZ, SZ)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>China 50 (non-Tier 1 cities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade A office (highest quality)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.9 million m²</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL: 97.1 million m²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail (department stores/shopping malls)</td>
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<tr>
<td>57.1 million m²</td>
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<td>TOTAL: 174 million m²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logistics (warehousing/distribution)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.5 million m²</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL: 31.9 million m²</td>
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Source: JLL, Shanghai

**SPECULATIVE INVESTMENT IN A COMMAND ECONOMY**

As central government guards its own research, so there is no transparency in the private market – we have 40 analysts in China dedicated to researching property trends in office, retail and high end residential. The country is shifting from investment to consumer-led, with developer interest accelerating and the retail sector particularly hot. With a burgeoning middle class, there’s a lot of interest in capturing demand from this new consumer market. Last year 80 malls opened in the top 20 city markets – this year, it’s projected to be 150.

Because the government wants to control price inflation in the sector, it has put restrictions on residential development to control investor speculation, and China is not experienced in the overuse of leverage. In contrast with the West where you could once borrow up to 110%, that figure in China is 70%. Housing is a hot topic, and although the market is geared to the top 20 income earners, the government is aware of the need to maintain social stability and ensure property prices don’t rise unchecked. As a result, the sector still needs to be fully built out, and won’t slow down for 10 years.

For offices we expect annual completions to peak around 2017. We track the top 20 markets, which includes both Tier 1 (Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou) and Tier 2 cities. Grade A office annual completions is about 3.5million m², with lower spec Grade B at 6.8million m². While demand in Tier 1 cities remains healthy, in Tier 2 cities like Chengdu, Chongqing and Wuhan there are concerns that office build-out rates are outstripping demand.

Despite a crackdown on extravagant architectural projects, due to public perceptions that they were a misuse of public resources and even corrupt, work potential for architects remains strong in Tier 1, 1.5 and 2 cities.

Steven McCord is local director at Jones Lang LaSalle, Shanghai
Strength in Numbers
Several smaller offices embedded in the regions can sometimes add up to more than a sum of the parts

Eleanor Young

‘We’re on the verge of being a national practice,’ says David Hunter, Stride Treglown’s chairman ‘But we are not in the east side of the country – the North East and Midlands.’

The phenomenon of multi-headed countrywide practices has been largely ignored in the excitement of overseas expansion in recent years. Even the idea of bases across the UK might seem alien to many signature practices. But a whole generation of firms have built up their presence in the regions and become part of the local scene in the process.

Regional offices seemed to make sense in the context of city regeneration, when the development agencies established by the Labour government brought a range of initiatives, investment and sense of direction to both city and regional strategy. Then came the downturn and many firms, such as BDP, turned their efforts to the Middle East, India and beyond.

We have seen the demise of projects like Building Schools for the Future and a return to smaller scale contracts that favour practices embedded in their local area. Now, getting close to the ground to develop opportunities and resource projects locally is increasingly important. Stride Treglown recently opened a new office in Southampton and Purcell has established bases in Cardiff and Nottingham.

A spread of offices might be seen as the perfect antidote to over-corporatisation in a large firm. Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios is just one that decided to split itself into studios across Bath, Belfast and London. Having offices dotted around inevitably breaks up the team, of course. But while 15 to 30 is often seen as an ideal, there doesn’t seem to be consensus about the critical mass of architects an office needs. BDP tends to have around 30-35 but Purcell seems happier with far smaller teams with typically eight or nine architects.

Anecdotally, staff satisfaction and geographical desires seem to play a larger part in the concerns of leaders of these practices than those of other practices. The chance to lead an office or studio within the protection of a larger entity, the opportunity to be a player in your area and the possibilities of developing as a sector leader all play their part in holding onto the architects these practices value.

With green shoots on the horizon BDP’s chief executive Peter Drummond can even foresee a time when the practice’s regional bases will be again be critical for recruiting away from the London hot house.

From its historic Bristol base Stride Treglown is facing the questions of practice management that dog many of these national firms: how to communicate effectively, how to leverage sector expertise and how to ensure the whole company is pulling in one direction. Over the next pages three heads of such practices give their views on these issues.
‘We were founded in Preston in 1961 and have been heading south ever since,’ says BDP’s chief executive Peter Drummond. ‘Regionalisation was ad hoc but inevitable.’ In the 1980s the practice focussed on the UK, ensuring ‘critical mass’ in key markets. ‘The regional offices have been a strong part of BDP, giving it connections in places it works, the culture, knowledge and ability in busy times to recruit talented people,’ says Drummond.

And in some locations a local base is critical for a steady stream of work. Drummond identifies Scotland and Manchester in particular. ‘There is a business, design and governance community in Manchester that it is very important to be part of,’ he says. And in any location an understanding of community, local authorities and issues is important.

BDP eschews a head office. But inevitably the largest offices have the most support functions. Human resources – and chairman David Cash – are based in Manchester, for example. Peter Drummond started his career in BDP’s original office in Preston but is now firmly settled in London.

‘Not all studios can be all things,’ says Drummond. So some offices have specialties – as with Sheffield’s experience in hospital design and education. Only Manchester and London operate across all sectors. Each studio is its own profit centre – responsible for winning its own work and finance – though north and south also each operate as a group. Individual ‘marketeers’ direct work in major sectors like retail, focussing on marketing and knowledge management. They can team up with a local office: BDP buildings at Liverpool One were designed by the local office and a specialist team. On Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool the practice is taking advantage of ‘very, very’ specialist knowledge in Manchester, London and Sheffield offices.

‘Design is a lot about resource management. If one aspect hinders it, say geography, that introduces a complication. I am sure at Fosters [one big London office] it’s simpler.’

Maintaining standards across the offices are profession heads who deal with people and quality. ‘With that in place all the other things should work,’ says Drummond. But to ensure it does, the BDP design process also includes gateways of design and technical reviews which involve those outside the team – and often outside the office.

Video conferencing, WebEx and Skype are de rigueur given the practice’s international reach. ‘But we still like to sit around a table and get paper out,’ insists Drummond.

Reading has closed and Southampton’s on the brink of opening. Stride Treglown’s re-think of the geography of the practice is part of new chairman David Hunter’s look at the shape of the organisation. Stride Treglown started in Bristol 60 years ago and started branching out in the 1970s with a mixture of acquisition and organic growth. And Hunter is happy to encourage offices with different characters.

In Manchester, for example, Stride bought Chapman Robinson and, with the directors looking to retire, recruited Gordon Tero from BDP. ‘Our Manchester office has a high profile with high end design work. It has turned heads in the Manchester market and surprised people who know Stride Treglown,’ says Hunter.

In Bath the connections of Philip Fawkner-Corbett who is, among other things, head of the local Chamber of Commerce, defines the practice in a very different sort of market. Fawkner-Corbett came back to Stride Treglown after setting up his own practice.

The east of England is where the practice is hoping to make the next steps to growth, perhaps on a similar model.

Resources are not ringfenced by office. Hunter is proud of the fact that the practice takes expertise to where it is required and offices can build workload on that. So when...
a series of university technical colleges came up in the South West, a specialist team with education experience supported the Plymouth team heavily on the first. Now onto its third, it is working far more independently.

Getting board directors together every month from across the country to discuss the detail of business issues has proved a strain so management has now been split with a smaller number – again from around the offices – examining the minutiae.

A larger group meets once a quarter to grapple with strategic issues. Improving reporting across offices so that directors don’t feel left out of the loop has been essential to this culture change. Next on Hunter’s list is working towards having two directors in each office, for robustness. And alongside that is the widening ownership of the practice with a gentle move towards an employee owned company. ‘It’s about the fulfilment of those working in business. When I was young ownership seemed an impossible thing, but I wanted a sense of influencing the business where I spent most of my waking hours.’

Purcell
Plus Hong Kong

‘Architects are quite difficult to control,’ says Mark Goldspink, chief executive officer at Purcell. ‘I know, I am one. It’s easy not to be a team and work in an individual way.’ That is especially hard between 15 UK offices. After a review of the practice Goldspink is proud that a leadership programme has now been set up to bring the senior team and partners together, face to face. In parallel, potential future leaders are sharing a monthly coaching session – for which they set the agenda.

‘If we don’t work at it I could see it could dissolve in a decade’s time,’ says Goldspink. In the meantime he is upbeat about the ‘talented’ young architects spearheading the two new offices in Cardiff and Nottingham. In Cardiff, one family’s need to move to Wales suddenly made a new base there possible, although the practice had been considering it for three years. This is the office which will run the St Fagans project, which won HLF funding last year. And there’s another. ‘In Newcastle they are putting in the phones as I speak,’ says Goldspink. The one thousand student rooms in Newcastle, Durham Cathedral and other city projects just added up and staff living nearby have been co-opted to the office.

‘I represent three offices on the board,’ says Goldspink, ‘Bristol, Cardiff and Hong Kong. And I visit each every month. I love seeing young architects flourish and develop.’

The character of the offices is defined less by place than individuals, who run the office and secure and deliver work as they see fit. ‘They’re autonomous in that sense,’ says Goldspink. ‘We don’t run them from London.’

Anationalpractice: Staffnumbers in Stride Treglown’s offices

129

16

20

26

8

4

Bristol
London
Manchester
Bath
Plymouth
Cardiff
Twente
Abu Dhabi

Below A Welsh enterprise: Purcell’s newly opened Cardiff office will allow its development of the St Fagans 1875 main museum building to be resourced locally — although it did not have a presence in South Wales when it won the job.
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Heritage & heresy

Originality at all costs or fearful pastiche? Bath debates the architectural crossroads

Lucy Inder

‘The dream of a uniform society is dead,’ claimed Christophe Egret of Studio Egret West as he opened Rethinking Architecture, at Bath’s Love Architecture Festival event. The debate considered whether the city should look to the future or the past.

Modernity vs traditionalism is an old debate. Development in the Unesco World Heritage city always courts controversy, whether neoclassical or contemporary. But recent developments including Grimshaw’s Millennium Spa, Eric Parry’s Holburne extension and Chapman Taylor’s Southgate scheme, have put this question up for open debate.

Hosted by conservation architect Donald Insall Associates (DIA) in association with the RIBA, Rethinking Architecture brought together six speakers: Christophe Egret, Paul Simons, former director of development and tourism in Bath, and Rob Dunton of DIA representing the ‘modernists’; and speaking for the ‘traditionalists’ Quinlan Terry of Quinlan and Francis Terry, Ted Nash of Nash Partnership, and Peter Carey, also from DIA.

Preservation in aspic
Egret opened with a claim that the city is in danger of becoming a museum, arguing that in our multicultural society architecture should celebrate individualism and diversity. He said contemporary design offers freedom beyond style, and argued that creating harmony within the public realm is more important than creating individual buildings. Public spaces, a fresh injection of ideas and respect for inevitable change will allow contemporary buildings to succeed whatever the context.

This was backed by Paul Simons, Bath’s project leader on the Millennium Spa, who underlined that cities are workshops of social and economic activity, and have a dynamic which cannot be controlled. If we insist on preserving a Georgian city ‘in aspic’ commercialism will eventually overtake us to the detriment of all.

Both Quinlan Terry and Ted Nash put up strong arguments for learning from the past, with Terry warning that if we are ‘rethinking architecture’ then we must not dismiss the past so easily. He cited John Wood and his successor, Brydon, as two of Bath’s great architects who picked up on universal aspects of the city with great care, and created buildings which work within this particular landscape.

One of Terry’s most convincing arguments addressed sustainable design. While new buildings continue to use energy in their construction and use, they survive on average 25 years before demolition. So how can Bath’s stone buildings, which continue to survive if cared for, be out of place in our modern society?

‘Egotistical idiots’ was one of the most memorable phrases of Ted Nash’s presentation. Why should the individual be more important than the city? Why not learn from the past – when we don’t know what the future holds but do know what worked for people and places for centuries? He questioned strongly whether it was an architect’s place to impose his creativity above all other concerns.

Lack of confidence
A telling contest developed between Peter Carey and Rob Dunton, both of DIA. While Carey argued that contemporary architecture can sometimes be defined as originality at all costs, Dunton reasoned that the British obsession with the past shows a true lack of confidence in the future. Contemporary architecture can show respect without descending to pastiche, and new buildings should show their clarity in being of their time.

At the end of the debate, Caroline Kay of the Bath Preservation Trust, who chaired the evening with great authority, presented the second count of votes, and although the classicists gained, the real winners were those who believed that there was a place for both schools of thought. As one audience member said succinctly: ‘If both sides work together, surely we can create something quite wonderful.’

Lucy Inder is an architect at DIA

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Good work in the ’hood

Only design can excite locals and get them involved in improving their areas

John Herbert

Neighbourhood planning is the ‘poster-child’ of the new planning system. It puts the local community in the driving seat and enables it to influence the scale, location, form and supporting services for local development.

If plans have the buy-in of the community at large (via a referendum), and conform to general planning objectives, they will be brought into force by the local authority and become part of the development plan for that area. But so far, only three neighbourhood plans have cleared the referendum process.

A report for Defra into front runners in rural neighbourhood planning, by engineering and design firm Parsons Brinckerhoff, includes case studies and ‘top tips’ that communities considering neighbourhood planning can consult.

Having led the research, I am heartened that so many communities are interested in planning and the wider place-making agenda. I originally feared it would be no more than a charter for nimbyism and a barrier to new homes. Certainly, that wasn’t the intention of the government, which believes involvement will make a local community more likely to welcome growth and new development.

In some places, this is exactly what is happening. In Thame, South Oxfordshire, the spatial distribution of housing growth in the local plan has been reconsidered in the neighbourhood plan. In Upper Eden, Cumbria, the plan permits small scale housing development in villages, recognising that without it, a lack of homes for future generations will be detrimental to village life.

A key question remains: can neighbourhood planning help deliver the scale of growth required to meet housing need and demographic change? The rationale behind neighbourhood planning, and changes to the planning system as a whole, is a push for growth. Our work shows that while some communities are planning for new development, much is small scale and goes little beyond that already established in local plans. So it seems unlikely neighbourhood planning will seriously address the national housing shortage.

A change in mindset is needed. If we moved to a wider debate about the quality of place and the potential to effect positive change through appropriate new development, the proposition could become far more attractive. This is a challenge, but also an area where help and assistance can be provided to the community.

Issues such as density, grain, scale and adaptability, for example, are not always easily understood. A design-led approach can help communicate issues and opportunities and, more fundamentally, excite and engage. Demonstrating the art of the possible can help overcome fears about new homes, showing how well-designed development responds to local character, while supporting and sustaining a better public realm.

Some professionals might be lucky enough to be employed to help do this. More likely, in my view, is the potential to contribute through community-led planning initiatives within our own neighbourhoods. Where resources are shared and the council acts in an enabling role, the result could be far greater than the sum of the parts.

Jon Herbert is the spatial planning lead within the Place team at Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Demonstrating the art of the possible can help overcome fears about new homes.
Not too much, not too little

When and what you bill needs a rethink: use the new Plan of Work as a catalyst

Adrian Dobson

It’s rare that two or more architects gather at a professional event without the conversation turning to the subject of fees. Just what is the secret recipe to calculate the right fee to win the job while ensuring it will allow the project to be properly resourced, deliver quality and value to the client, and at the same time provide a fair profit for the architect?

With the launch of the RIBA Plan of Work 2013, many practices will be reviewing the way in which they approach fee setting and presentation, since schedules of service are normally mapped and derived from Plan of Work Stages. So how do the standard fee formats work with the new Plan?

Traditional way

The traditional approach is to base fees on a percentage of the construction cost. The downsides to this are that clients perceive it as failing to provide an acceptable degree of certainty and offering little incentive for the architect to control construction costs; the percentages used are based on historical models, and do not take account of the greater variation in services which are now commonplace; the only fee negotiating position is to offer a percentage discount. Despite its mythical status, shrouded in the mists of a halcyon past, the percentage fee remains more alchemy than scientific method.

Resource-based fixed fees can be matched more closely to the services to be delivered and the value explained with greater clarity. Clearly clients prefer the cost certainty, but the architect takes the risk that its estimate of time/resources is accurate. Successful resource-based fees rely on accurate time recording of project work to build up a realistic picture of how long it takes to deliver service elements on different types of projects.

Hourly rates can be readily benchmarked in the marketplace and can be a useful option for more specialist services and for brief preparation and feasibility work (high value activities which architects often give away too easily), but they remain a very difficult sell for the main delivery stages.

The new Stage 0 (Strategic definition) and Stage 7 (In use) offer good opportunities to develop innovative pre and post project service which might readily suit an hourly fee structure. Stage 1 (Preparation and brief) is also an area where an hourly fee structure would be appropriate. Too often as a profession we give away this crucial early work too cheaply, yet work for the recently published Client Conversations report by the RIBA (see RIBAJ July 2013, p72) has shown that clients recognise just how important these early stages are to successful project outcomes.

Client perceptions

The new Stage 3 (Developed design) requires a fully co-ordinated design as an output (particularly important as we move rapidly into a BIM enabled era), going a little further than the old Stage D, and we would anticipate that the proportion of fee chargeable at Stage 3 will be higher than those applied to Stage D.

If a greater portion of resources and of the total fee is chargeable at an earlier stage under services derived from the structure of the new Plan of Work, then this will certainly map much more closely to clients’ perceptions of where architects add maximum value, which in research has consistently been shown to be in the earlier project stages.

In the old kingdom of mandatory fee scales, billing was traditionally structured around the end of stages, but this carries significant risks for the architect, not least because it means extending a lot of credit to the client, which affects cash flow and puts a lot of money at risk in the event of non-payment; so a monthly fee invoicing regime is far more preferable. While it is anticipated that fees will continue to be profiled against services in stages, a schedule of monthly fee payments across the project programme is an essential approach in effective fee management.

While as architects we may sometimes feel like Cinderella in comparison with colleagues in other senior professions, it is worth noting that in the EU context UK architects remain among the best remunerated, and despite economic challenges we are responsible for the leverage of a significant contribution to UK GDP and export income. Although the RIBA Plan of Work 2013 waves no magic wand, it offers an opportunity for practices to re-visit fee structures and ensure that Cinderella can continue going to the ball.

Adrian Dobson is RIBA director of practice
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Each purchaser of the flats received a certificate from S&P confirming that the building had been built to a satisfactory standard and in general compliance with the drawings approved under the Building Regs. As a result, when the residents made claims for these defects, not only was Optima sued, but so was S&P as certifying architect.

A long line of case law makes clear that a professional providing advice to another party with whom it has a special relationship can be liable for so-called ‘negligent misstatement’. The special relationship between S&P and the residents was certainly sufficient to allow claims to be made against S&P.

However, the more surprising aspect of the case (even though technically not new law) is that the judge decided the certificates provided by S&P were individual contracts in their own right. This gave the residents the contractual ability to recover damages, which affects the amount of damages recoverable as opposed to damages simply in tort.

The judge’s logic is that the certificates were essentially warranties. However, for the certificates to amount to contractual warranties, some ‘consideration’ (see panel) was needed. Clearly, residents made no payments directly to S&P, but S&P was engaged by Optima, and the residents had all paid the purchase price for the flats to Optima.

The judge held that the purchase price was in part given by residents on the understanding that they would receive a certificate from S&P. This amounted to consideration, and meant there could be a contractual basis for a claim between the residents and S&P.

What does this mean for architects issuing such certificates? Any certificate issued directly from an architect to a buyer of a residential unit is now potentially enforceable directly. For this reason, architects should think of such certificates not simply as a ‘tick box’ exercise, with little ramification if incorrect, but as independently creating a right for the resident to bring a claim against it for defective works.

It goes without saying that if an architect is not sure that the works have been carried out correctly, it should be wary about certifying that they have. If as an architect you agree to provide such certificates, you will need to make allowance in your fee for a higher degree of inspection to ensure you are happy with the quality of the works.

Alistair McGrigor is a partner at Nabarro

The judge decided the certificates provided by S&P were individual contracts in their own right. This gave the residents the contractual ability to recover damages.

Coniseration

Generally in English law there is a principle that a promise is not enforceable as a contract unless it is either formalised as a deed, or supported by consideration. Consideration itself is usually deemed to be monetary value, but can equally be an agreement to do, or refrain from, a particular act. The act might benefit the person making it or be of detriment to the person to whom it is made.

In a typical consultant appointment, the architect will promise to perform its services, with consideration being the payment of its fee by the developer. It is for reasons of consideration that many legal documents contain a line stating that one party agrees to pay the other £1, so that something of value (however small) has been paid by the party receiving the benefit of a warranty.

Collateral warranties are often entered into as deeds, which has the added benefit of including a 12 year limitation period.
About face

Facebook’s a great way to self-publicise isn’t it? But what persona will work best?

More of our clients are now asking us to create project Facebook pages. This seems to work well in terms of communicating with peers, populating events and getting people involved in the transformation of their local area. That’s all rosy and good, but the professional Facebook identity brings with it some dodgy dilemmas.

Facebook can be difficult to navigate at the best of times, but how does it work when those friending and unfriending you, liking your status and poking you, are not your closest chums from nursery school, but consultants, clients, or even community representatives? In the course of the social mediarisation of several of our projects, I have seen, been, and/or been subject to the following characters.

The pre-emptive stand-off-er: Perhaps the most cautious professional Facebooker, the pre-emptive stand-off-er creates a shiny, squeaky clean Facebook profile with a professional looking profile picture (preferably with a building in the background) and a friend list comprising only professional acquaintances. This semi-persona is free to roam about the Facebook world creating project pages, commenting on consultation events, and administering community groups without the fear that a client might see pictures of them and their mates from uni dressed up as zombie nuns and throwing up in a graveyard.

The leave-no-record-er: A comfortable compromise, the leave-no-record-er is over-familiar with colleagues in person, cheeky on the telephone, and as raucous as the best of them over the post-meeting beers, but this sort takes great pains to prevent the creation of any documentation of friendliness. I once mistakenly tried to friend a leave-no-record-er and in return received a very awkward phonecall explaining why we couldn’t be Facebook buddies, at least not until after the project was over at which point he may yet reconsider.

The bragger: The most irritating of Facebookers might be the bragger, whose life is so consumed with self-promotion that Facebook is a non-stop personal marketing campaign. The bragger has no need for the pre-emptive stand-off as they are able to seamlessly move from status updater to project page poster without so much as a change in timbre.

The fact-controller: This is a breed that has the technical ability and desire to control who sees what through multi-terraced levels of friends. The fact-controller is uniquely powerful and annoying in their ability to edit their various facades and therefore easily divides their personal life from their professional with an ease either of the first two types might envy.

The manipulator: A dark and deadly professional Facebook user is the manipulator. This is a dodgy sort who lures you in with seeming openness and warmth only to later implicate you in a world of conflicts of interest and petitions against you. Do not friend. Feign ignorance, feign the leave-no-record-er, feign that your account was hacked, but do not friend.

The all-in-er: This is a rare bird indeed. Most often a young creature, the all-in-er embraces the blurry line between personal and professional, embraces the discomfort a client may feel when seeing that picture of zombie nuns, embraces the journey downward in the estimations of many and the triumphant rise in the few who share their philosophies. The all-in-er is probably actually best placed to reach the holy grail; to actually get work through Facebook.

Maria Smith is a director at Studio Weave

Risk and reward

Embrace the knocks – they’ll make you stronger. It’s a compelling theory

Eleanor Young

Too many organisations practise risk avoidance, without taking advantage of the way that dealing with small risks strengthens an organism. Risk is planned for. But you can’t plan contingencies for all the crazy things – banking crisis, global warming, international epidemics, volcanic ash cloud, molasses, flood – that could happen to your business or your project, however robust your risk register might appear. There are things that ‘gain from disorder’ – ‘antifragile’ in the thinking of risk philosopher and author of Antifragile, Nassim Nicholas Taleb.

Analysis

So why are modest-sized shocks a good thing? Shocks, knocks or stressors are all information; reacting to them means you are learning. So a practice used to stress might be one doing a school project here and an office refurb there, used to switching and getting to know sectors and clients. The opposite is a firm subsumed by designing large hospitals which, when a government programme is suddenly shut down, struggles to turn staff into entrepreneurs to find work elsewhere.
Jane Jacobs’ ideas of neighbourhood gain from disorder. Robert Moses’ urban renewal one-liners are contrastingly fragile.

So the popular refrain of problems being ‘character building’ could hold more than a grain of truth. In urbanism the thinking that gains from disorder is that of Jane Jacobs on the importance of neighbourhood, set against the fragile one-liners of New York’s Robert Moses on urban renewal and Le Corbusier’s tabula rasa. There might be lessons for government too. Taleb gives the example of Switzerland, which by encouraging arguments and occasional bloodletting at local Canton level stops these issues being contested at state level. Try applying the same thought process to neighbourhood planning where, in theory, many local debates might defuse the national hot potato of planning mass housebuilding.

Options
To make the best of disorder, maybe even to become one of the antifragile, the prescription is ‘Less is more and usually more effective’, writes Taleb paraphrasing Mies. It’s a personal philosophy that is relaxed about how to live in a world we don’t understand – in which we are not afraid to work with things that we patently don’t comprehend.

MORE RISKY READING

Managing Project Risk: Best Practices for Architects and Related Professionals
James B Atkins and Grant A Simpson, Wiley, £50

Read the original: AntiFragile by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Penguin, £8.99

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Cultural revolution

New section, new magazine – a better RIBA Journal

In case you missed it as you tore open the packaging for this reconfigured RIBA Journal, there’s a welcoming letter from me in the bag. But if you’ve got this far in the magazine, you’ll know well enough that there have been big changes round here, in content, design and physical feel. The RIBA Journal is, like Dr Who, in regeneration mode. A year ago you had one magazine, issued 10 times a year. Now you have two: the redesigned Journal, proudly back to 12 issues a year; and PIP, our very well-received Products in Practice supplement, refreshed and up to six issues a year.

That’s just what you receive on paper (better paper). We also operate live – we are half way through our Gerflor 120 series of debates on the state of the profession, highlights of which are on page 89. We reached out to the profession again with last month’s highly successful Eye Line drawings competition, which we shall certainly run again. These things concern the fundamentals of what it means to be an architect. Our regeneration continues: next is the overhaul and expansion of our digital presence, the fruits of which you will see in due course. Incidentally, none of this is paid for from your membership subscription: the Journal operates from RIBA Enterprises on a commercial basis, and is self-financing.

So what’s the idea with our new Culture section? This is the more discursive end of the magazine. Anchoring it is our profile, which appropriately enough this month is new RIBA president Stephen Hodder. Stephen is an example of an architect with a high profile as a practitioner who also dedicates a lot of his time behind the scenes to the workings of the RIBA. He wants the institute to serve both its members and their clients better.

Here you will find our opinion columns including – following Maria Smith of Studio Weave’s practice reflections at the end of the previous section – two new ones. In Round Here a changing roster of architects will celebrate their particular UK locale, kicking off with Ian McKnight of acclaimed practice Hall McKnight in Belfast. This is counter-balanced by our regular Out There column from architects working overseas. This month our correspondent is none other than Charles Jencks, recounting his work in Korea. Another new column, The Flâneur, is contributed by architectural and cultural commentator – and indefatigable traveller – Herbert Wright.

In this section are also reviews, our obituary and letters pages (called Exchange as social media increasingly usurps more traditional communications, and incorporating a slice of history) and finally, a treasure as familiar as it is valuable: Parting Shot, our monthly gem from the RIBA’s remarkable Robert Elwall Photographs Collection.

I’m very aware that, while we have been living with and developing this new design over several months, for you it is a sudden change. I’m also aware that editors and designers throw everything at their relaunch issue, and that the real test comes over time. We shall of course continue to refine it. In the meantime, well, of course I hope you like it, and tell us what you think. Letters@ribajournal.com is the place to talk to us.

‘I’m out there, I’m just a regular member, is how he puts it. Well, up to a point’
— Stephen Hodder p82

When ornamental affect reigns supreme, architecture may risk losing its capacity to be on the verge of speaking
— Antoine Picon p89
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Checking out the Check-in

Herbert Wright on what hotels tell us about locality, branding, technology and ourselves

A cockroach and I once shared a 3m² room in Chungking Mansions. It was at one of two Hong Kong hotels I’ve tried. The other was a Marriott, with sumptuously plush rooms, views of Victoria Harbour, shimmering lobbies and 24/7 service. By contrast, Chungking Mansions is a gritty Kowloon edifice in which many thousands live, work, trade and sleep above a warren of bazaars and eateries. Life there is colourful, multicultural and never sleeps. The Marriott floated above the city; Chungking Mansions was the city.

This raises two issues, non-locality and travellers’ budget. Marc Augé’s 1995 book, Non-Places: an Anthology of Supermodernity, identified hotels, along with supermarkets and airports, as offering a bland location-oblivious experience. Actually, non-locality has a long history, spread by transport. The railways spawned grand Victorian terminus hotels offering a similar First Class experience everywhere, and cars dispersed the motel typology. When Hilton opened in Park Lane in 1963, the Jet Set had landed in the UK, and so had the international chain. These chains gradually spread downhill until they reached the bottom of the star-rating system, and have jumped into star-free ‘boutique’ hotels. Chains are now brands with boutique sub-brands, along the lines of My Trendy Hotel by You Know Us.

At least chains are now reversing the drift to anywhere-and-nowhere. Buildings with history are being rehabilitated, and in old and new, design is increasingly theming in local character – stuffing überhip art into a Shoreditch hotel, say, or rock’n’roll iconography into Camden. That could go further – how about barred windows in Pentonville, or big kennels for Battersea? The danger is the Disneyification of what’s just outside.

In the UK, this and other trends – such as rooftop restaurants or apart-hotels – apply mainly to London. The Olympics have gone but hotel construction continues, and London will need even more beds if the Home Office ever makes visas easy for the Chinese. London’s average room generates over double that of UK rooms elsewhere, despite over half of them being classified as ‘budget’. Sadly this word no longer implies ‘cheap’ – that’s something only the chance whims of the Internet-based booking market might deliver. No wonder that couch-surfing, an ultimate local experience, is so popular.

The most extreme non-places must be pod hotels. Fitting everything into a small area (much bigger than in Chungking Mansions, by the way) was not their big design leap; that was dispensing with the window. Who needs a window when a big screen shows everything, perhaps even a televised view? Like dives for discrete liaisons, pod hotels are flexible with time, but not with space. Here’s a design challenge that might keep prices down; make room size flexible, with moveable walls or partitions. When demand is high, pack more rooms in, and when it’s low, cut their number and inflate them for more appeal. With silent mechanics driven by sufficiently quick market response, a client might check into a rabbit-warren and wake in a suite.

For most, comfort and convenience win over local authenticity. But personally, if I get back to Hong Kong, I’ll shack up with the cockroach for the latter.

Herbert Wright trained as a physicist, is an architectural writer and historian, contributing editor on Blueprint, art critic and author of London High and other titles.

SAVE OUR TOWERS
The demolition of Richard Seifert’s International Press Centre is under way and his King’s Reach Tower is being recycled to be taller and residential. Both these 1970s London towers were distinctive – the former with a matrix of rounded windows on facades mounted above Seifert’s characteristic ‘dinosaur leg’ pilotes, the latter for its full-height concrete fins and staggered roofline. Height and Heritage, the conference theme of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat this year, addressed skyscrapers in historic cities, but the heritage of great London high-rise itself is getting swept away for more Big Glass. Hm, time for reflection.
Blight relief

Though fading, scars of the Troubles still mark Belfast

Ian McKnight

Each morning at the ex-flax mill that now houses our office, people arrive for their business meetings in suits, negotiating their way into the building alongside fork-lifts loaded with pallets of pet food and post for the sorting office. Art and photography studios, internet retailers, printers and welders, pet food wholesalers, ‘International Lasers’, gyms, music practice rooms, a social enterprise that employs adults with learning difficulties, engineers, graphic designers, film makers and dance classes are all easily accommodated within the 4.5m high, brick-vaulted spaces of the old mill. Tracks set into the quarry tiles speak of their previous use. The building was not made by design, but in response to the functional requirements of an efficiently run flax mill: clear spaces with tall windows for good light. Although barely changed since the 1870’s, the spaces retain a robust adaptability that make them useful for almost anything.

However, in the context of Belfast the survival of this building is a result not of its inherent value, but under-development and lack of investment. The mill remains because the property is of comparatively little financial value. These neighbourhoods exist all around the city, disconnected from the centre by major roads. Even worse, at this eastern edge, commercial development of the main route into the city has been blighted for 30 years by road protection lines retained for a soon-to-be-abandoned extension of the inner ring road.

Now, more than ever, Belfast is a city of contrasts. Down the street from our building, tourists come to photograph political murals adjacent to the bronze statue of the Harland and Wolff ‘Yardmen’ and a road which a night ago was the scene of a riot. Sadly riots still occur in waves, but in the new Belfast apparent order is restored for the tourists the next day; broken glass and rubble cleared in time for the city-sightseeing tour bus. Attempts have been made to change the murals; alongside men in black with guns, we now have paintings of the Titanic, Aslan from Narnia and its author CS Lewis, who spent his childhood nearby. In front of the local library, a bronze wardrobe, door ajar, stands as a strangely literal reminder of the same writer.

Through challenging decades, Belfast city centre existed as a destination for the accomplishment of essential retail tasks – a phenomenon reinforced by a no-man’s land of roads ‘protecting’ the city from being connected too easily to the communities of north, east and west Belfast. Is it a coincidence that no such barrier exists for the affluent southern suburbs? Until the relative peace the city now enjoys, people would visit, complete their tasks and leave: Belfast has had to re-learn how to use public space. Festivals, street theatre and concerts, which have always had a marginal presence, now occupy a growing number of interior and exterior public spaces.

However despite this burgeoning public life and the welcome relatively recent phenomenon of Belfast as a mass tourist destination, increasing density of development focuses on the ‘safe’ areas that don’t stray too close to the edge of the city centre; there is an invisible line that, especially now the boom is over, few developers want to cross. Between city centre and suburb is the space traversed by tour-buses that no-one wants. Development of it will signify a further stage of the transformation of the city. Ten years ago it would have been impossible to anticipate; now it seems a distinct possibility.

Ian McKnight is co-founder of Hall McKnight Architects, Belfast

DIVIDING LINES

Territory is also marked out by a turn in the road, a local landmark, a shop like the new Dunnes Stores, low level yellow barriers to close roads, new road layouts or developments, flags, murals, election posters and street names, protective grilles and bars on domestic properties, and redevelopment which distances residential areas by the construction of industrial or commercial zones – such as along the Tiger’s Bay length of Duncarl Gardens. In the last 30 years, north Belfast has experienced the highest levels of Troubles-related deaths and injuries in Northern Ireland.

Source: Community Relations Council
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Inside out Clarity
How a Korean morality play became a vehicle for a green message

Charles Jencks

South Korea has a natural form of paradise. It is a country where despite rampant urbanisation, 70% of the landscape is still forested. Low mountain ranges are touched just by hikers (millions of them) and a few pavilions. Peaks, cliffs and waterfalls rise above plains and shallow valleys still dominated by rice fields.

Koreans might work longer hours than the Japanese or Chinese, but they have taken steps to preserve the wilderness of their plains and valleys. There are national parks and hiking trails and, since President Lee announced a ‘low carbon, green growth strategy’ in 2008, the eco movement has gathered strength.

In 2006 Suncheon Bay, a beautiful river delta in the South Sea, was officially recognised for its mixture of habitats, scenery, and reed-beds uncannily designed by nature into a circular shape. It is the first Korean estuary to enter the Ramsar list of protected wetlands, and thus gain international recognition. More than two and a half million eco-tourists visit every year, along with migrating birds like the black-hooded crane, a symbol of the bay. Imagine an area rebranding itself like the latest Olympic city, with flapping wings that protect nature and revive fortunes, and you can guess its emergent narrative.

Suncheon, a few miles north, is a city of 300,000 people threading through and around undulating mountains, above all, the big one at its centre, Mount Bong-Hwa. Tree-covered summits provide a strong juxtaposition with human artefacts – concrete highrise and highways. So Suncheon City is a microcosm of the country, with three major rivers and a swathe of pine trees and rock outcrops above it. Perhaps such vistas inspired the mayor and his team to set up the garden festival International Garden Expo of 2013, the self-styled Eco Geo Festival, as an incipient park.

The Korean paradox is that its omnipresent mountains make the inhabitants value flatlands, which most countries find boring. Designing our public park for the festival, this led us to a thought experiment. Could we miniaturise the extraordinary, non-visible 100-mile linear ecology as a whole, and bring it to consciousness? We set about crystallising a miniature landscape of the three protagonists – mountain/city/wetlands. Our scheme’s layout mirrors the area as a compound reality. We turned the system inside out: the flat lake becomes the sprawling city of the plain; the bridge becomes the Dong-Chon river bearing nutrients to the wetlands; and the seven mounds reflect the bowl of mountains all around. In places these metaphors are made explicit by signs and words set in the ground.

The festival’s opening ceremony was a loosely framed morality play pitting ecology against economy, hooded cranes against pollution. Over 2000 performers took part. Halfway through, the mixture of local mythology and global pop culminated in a feverish dance. Music, smoke, explosions – ecologically-dead, killed in a Disney-Wagnerian romp, orchestrated to leave one suspended between tears of laughter and suspicious angst. Then the melodrama reversed as the crane was revived by the youth of Suncheon bearing white lanterns.

Most people, especially architects and those who live in cities, think of landscape as passive. But the landscape can be a protagonist marking the major transitions of life. Miniaturising nature as a morality play brought back this agency. Maybe Suncheon’s gamble – to convert people to an ecological view through gardening and drama – will work.

We set about crystallising a miniature landscape of the three protagonists – mountain/city/wetlands. We turned the system inside out.

The park landscape of Suncheon Eco Geo Festival 2013 was designed by Jencks Squared
New RIBA president Stephen Hodder prides himself on being a realist and a practitioner above all else. But his resilience might be the most important quality he brings to the job

Words: Hugh Pearman Portrait: Carol Sachs

Staying Power

‘Welcome!’ says Stephen Hodder, flinging open the door of the President’s office at 66 Portland Place. He’s hot-desking there the day we meet, this being at the time still Angela Brady’s domain. Hodder has sized up the office, knows what furniture (genuine modern classics including an Eames table) and art (some of the best from the Photographs Collection of post-war university buildings) he’ll be installing. Being Manchester-based, he needs a London pied-à-terre to be president. He’s found a flat in a Make-designed block hard by. His children (Ollie, 9 and Matthew, 6) are campaigning to visit. Previously an RIBA vice-president who has been much involved in the restructuring of the Institute in recent years, he’s got one key attribute he wants to get across: ‘I am,’ he remarks, ‘a realist.’

What this means, he explains, is that he knows that a president with a two-year term can only achieve so much: no point promising the moon, so to speak, if you can’t deliver it. So he has set himself achievable targets for his term and got one of them under way well in advance: the wide-ranging membership review which started early this year is his baby, and the results will be known by the end of this year. ‘Empowerment of members’ is his aim. Better communication – with actual and potential clients in one direction, and the grassroots membership in the other – is another. Getting to grips with the education system is a third – in particular, encouraging the bringing-together of theory and practice in a world where demonstrable professional skills are needed more than ever. And finally, cultural outreach, drawing on the invaluable resource of the institute’s collections. ‘There’s a strong message about the benefits of architecture, why architecture is so important.’

The fact that his presidential bid was uncontested, back in 2012, suggests that the members see Hodder, with his record of award-winning buildings, north-west regional base and reputation as a tough-minded
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Institute insider, as a trustworthy figure. He felt a bit short-changed however, having anticipated hustings, so went on his own tour of the country to explain his position to the membership - appropriately enough, given that he was vice-president for ‘Nations and Regions’.

He’s had his ups and downs, of course. The ups include winning the first Stirling Prize in 1996 for his Centenary Building at the University of Salford. The downs include a much-publicised, protracted and nightmarish legal case, alongside other consultants, over problems with his Clissold Leisure Centre in London. Happily that’s long since resolved, though Hodder did not continue his London office. Another leisure building, the RIBA award-winning Berners Pool at Grange-over-Sands, has stood empty since the trust running it went bust in 2006 and is finally likely to be demolished. A cruel fate for such a handsome building. So Hodder has hit heights and plumbed depths, and emerged in good shape overall. As in Kipling’s ‘If’, he has met with Triumph and Disaster and treated those two imposters just the same.

Architects, who know the risks they habitually run, can relate to all that. ‘I’m out there, I’m just a regular member,’ is how he puts it. Well, up to a point. Yes, he’s a practitioner with a small-to-medium size office of 16 people who has managed to ride the economic switchback of the past 30 years with no more or less difficulty than any other firm of that size. On the other hand, there are few architects who, for 20 of those 30 years, have had one very loyal repeat client in the form of St Catherine’s College, Oxford. This project elevated him from regional rising star to national prominence, and it was all because of another swimming pool.

That was one of his first completed buildings after leaving BDP, the pool building in

As in Kipling’s ‘If’, he has met with Triumph and Disaster and treated those two imposters just the same.

Taking a line for a walk.

Phase 2 of student residences at St Catherine’s College, Oxford, 2005.
Colne, Lancashire, a low-budget but audacious structure of overlapping, angled roof plates engineered by Tony Hunt. Well received, it jointly won the 1992 Building of the Year award run by the Royal Fine Art Commission – jointly with Norman Foster’s Sackler Galleries at London’s Royal Academy. The architect who saw great promise in Hodder (I know, because I was there at the time) was the sagacious Sir Philip Powell. The building was duly published nationally. What happened next was that the bursar of St Catherine’s, running a competition to add new student residences to Jacobsen’s masterpiece, saw it in the paper one Sunday. Intrigued, he added Hodder to the shortlist of practices he was inviting. And so occurred one of the great competition upsets of the time: a clutch of well-regarded London-based practices found themselves beaten by the lad from Lancashire. Two major phases of new residences, plus a sequence of careful refurbishments to Jacobsen’s buildings, followed. There have been stand-offs along the way, but Hodder is retained by the college to this day, backed by the confidence of the Arne Jacobsen Foundation. He has other Oxford projects in hand, including new student residences behind James Stirling’s Florey building at Queen’s – framed in brick, but wisely not Stirling red brick.

It’s all very different to his most recently-completed student residences, the 37 storey Student Castle in Manchester. Essentially a cluster of four slender towers of varying height above a podium, it makes a notable addition to the city’s skyline and is unusual for Hodder – not previously known for towers. The project director there, however, was not this Hodder but the other one – his wife Claire, experienced architect, managing director of the practice and the person who helped turn his life round when he hit bad times. Once famed for trying to run everything himself, Stephen Hodder has, it seems, learned the arts of delegation and collaboration. He speaks highly, too, of his associate directors Tom Goldthorpe and Kevin Fraser.

This gives him space for the institute, and more. He’s also taking on a visiting professorship at Belfast University. But he’s clear about one thing: being an architect who builds. The predecessors he admires for their multi-tasking are Sir Richard MacCormac and Sunand Prasad, he says – who fruitfully combined practice, presidency and cultural awareness.

‘At the end of two years I want to have delivered a few things well,’ he says, ever the realist. ‘And I’m determined to remain a practitioner. I’m known for my work. The people in my office still look to me for design leadership.’

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Hodder goes high-rise: Manchester’s ‘Student Castle’ addresses the skyline, 2012.

The first Stirling Prize winner in 1996: Centenary Building at the University of Salford.
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Reinventing the Meaning of Ornament

Ornament is everywhere... yet it signifies nothing. The time is ripe to dump boundless variety and return it to legibility

Words: Antoine Picon

Ornament has returned as digital culture has developed. Projects as different as UN Studio’s Galleria Department Store facade in Seoul (2004) and Manuelle Gautrand’s extension of the Lille Museum of Modern, Contemporary and Outsider Art (2009) present a strong manifestation of this phenomenon.

Today’s ornament is indebted to an inquiry into materiality and the senses. Our understanding of materiality is evolving rapidly with the spectacular development of material sciences and the rise of the computer – with the possibilities it offers to visualise and operate at various levels. Its appeal owes something to the desire to experiment at this new frontier for design and manufacture.

The notion of materiality implies an encounter between a subject and the material world. First, it appeals strongly to the senses, to a mix of sight and touch in particular. It gives the impression of engaging the whole sensorium, inviting the viewer to stroke facades (think of Herzog & de Meuron’s tactile De Young Museum, its dots evoking a Braille text or Snøhetta’s Wild Reindeer Centre Pavilion that demands to be handled).

**Touch but not in touch**
This haptic character often goes with visual complexity. The swirls and tendrils of Foreign Office Architects’ John Lewis department store have such a hypnotic quality. This sort of design addresses perception as a whole, rather than through isolated channels. It is as if the viewer and architectural work were part of a single continuum (just as we are becoming with our digital selves). It abolishes the notion of a privileged point of view from which the building should be contemplated. Distance is no longer relevant if seeing becomes akin to touching. It’s all about Deleuzian ‘affect’ (intensity both superficial and immersive).

However, does the role of architectural ornament extend beyond an expressive function? A link with social distinction seems almost completely absent. Architectural ornaments do not have clear addressees. When the budget allows, an architect will use the same type of texturing and patterning for social housing as for a museum. The emerging neutrality of decoration to social hierarchy, which used to be a fundamental role of ornamentation, is troubling. One may interpret this as social generosity, but it is more likely dictated by helplessness in the face of having to differentiate in an increasingly egalitarian society.

When ornamental affect reigns supreme, architecture may risk losing its capacity to be on the verge of speaking. And though buildings may never actually speak, part of their appeal lies in the impression that they could if only the proper conditions were met.

Modernist architecture complemented its use of affect by a discourse on function and by ideals of technological and social progress, combined with concern for the natural dimen-

Smooth and soothing: the timber surfaces at Snøhetta’s Wild Reindeer Centre Pavilion allow visitors to be ‘in touch’ with nature even as they shelter from it.
sion of life. This attitude of so many contemporary digital designers has not yet reached that degree of maturity. But it is not enough to see architecture in terms of how buildings behave and what they produce.

How can architecture trigger meaning? There have been multiple answers to this question. Digital architecture, in particular, rejected meaning as leading to unnecessary additions, which confused the train of affects that architecture was supposed to convey. Without reinventing post modernism, it may now be useful to rediscover some of the issues that it raised, beginning with the quest for a renewed legibility of architecture.

Naive symbolism
If clear architectural meaning is still officially taboo, but what must we make of so many iconic projects that seem to indulge in an almost naïve form of symbolism? Consider Jean Nouvel’s Institut du Monde Arabe (1987), which opened a new era of symbolic manipulation, with sunscreens on its main facade playing on a mix of references including traditional Arabic mashrabiyas. Irresistible as it may appear, the return of the symbolic repressed remains largely unacknowledged and untheorised.

Or look further back in history. Useful precedents are not provided by 19th century allegories (it is hard to imagine that architecture will again be adorned with symbolic figures like Carpeaux’s Imperial France Bringing Light to the World and Protecting Agriculture and Science). Robert Venturi’s billboards or today’s giant digital screens may offer a better type of solution, but they come generally after the architectural form, and have little connection to it.

It may be profitable to revisit the five orders of the Vitruvian tradition which show that architectural symbolism may also lie in the emergence of a possible resemblance, at the articulation of perception and culture, rather than in a static set of imitative features. The most powerful symbols are perhaps those that represent something. They truly embody a movement towards representation, a dynamic captured in the material of the building.

Another stimulating aspect of the five orders is how they related to a set of highly formalised mathematical operations. What we need today are rules, not styles; rules that may help us to attribute meaning to our actions. Once, the architect was also able to express himself through the modulation of rules or codes. Today, pure and boundless variability has replaced modulation. The only alternative to repetition seems to lie in a quest for original solutions, the status of which, work of art or architecture, remains difficult to assess.

Symbolic load
How can we transpose the lesson of the orders to contemporary digital architecture? A difficulty immediately arises: the crisis of the tectonic makes us uncertain about what will eventually replace the conventional elements of architecture if parametric design continues to spread. Parametric relationships have no parts or limbs. Urgent reflection is needed on what may replace parts in a computer-driven design world. Elementary operations such as twisting, bending or folding should probably be envisaged from this perspective, just like fundamental types of textures, patterns and topologies. The next stage could be to recognize that these operations – textures, patterns and topologies – can carry a symbolic load.

At a more fundamental level than cultural and regional connotations, the new regime of relations between the subject and his/her environment could constitute a major source of symbolic inspiration. After all, ornament already conveys essential aspects of this new condition through properties such as tactility.

In the future, another possible role of architectural ornament could lie in helping us to cope with our double existence – physical and digital – without falling into irredeemable schizophrenia. More generally, one of the functions of architecture is to help us live multiple lives on various levels, in reality but also in our dreams, as physical beings made of flesh and technology and as fictions fed on desire.

Ornament presents us with a kind of mirror. In this mirror, we see ourselves as we believe we are and as we would like to be. The political relevance of ornament lies in its mediating role between the masses and individuals. To play this role, ornament must convey lessons. It must reconnect with reflection and knowledge once we overcome the limitations of an approach that is almost exclusively based on effect. The time has come for architecture to regain its full momentum by throwing some light on what it means to live together in this strange ornamental world.


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Time to reflect

Questions of value and conscience met with lively debate at RIBAJ120 events

Eleanor Young

It is not often that the profession has a chance to reflect. Questions such as ‘When does conscience kick in?’ and ‘How do you make architecture count?’ might sound like just a dinner table conversation but thinkers, doers, clients and architects at the first two of the RIBAJ120 Series with Gerflor showed how critical they are to everyday practice – and, as Deborah Saunt said, at the heart of being an architect.

Values, including money, were considered in the first thought-provoking discussion ‘Counting the Difference’. Indy Johar of 00:/ argued for an understanding of the performance value of architecture – what it adds to an organisation, its people, services and its perception. Stirling Prize winner Alison Brooks, now Stirling shortlisted for her New Hall housing, railed against over simplistic surveyor measures of value and the values they exclude – quality of space and of life. For architect-turned-client Roger Zogolovitch it is the lack of commercial engagement that lets architects – and their fees – down. ‘Why are they not taught how to do a development appraisal?’ he asked. From the audience Paul Hinkin of Black Architecture suggested post occupancy evaluations might capture some of a design’s human value. But architects must engage intelligently with value, whatever it is.

Grappling with Collective Conscience was the theme of the stimulating second debate. There was no consensus on whether conscience should be personal (Ted Cullinan, architect and Royal Gold Medallist) or pan-professional (architect and educator Sarah Wigglesworth). Tension between the ever disputatious Maxwell Hutchinson, who has acted contrary at least since being RIBA President in the 1980s, and the sharp thinking Royal Society of Arts’ Matthew Taylor, one time political advisor to Tony Blair, led to pointed interchanges. The audience’s varied contributions showed what a live issue this is, whether sustainability (Justin Bere), fee setting or public service guides your actions.

The debate continues on Twitter (#RIBA120). The series will look at working internationally in Home & Away on 30 September with Aecom’s Jason Prior and Francine Houben of Mecanoo Architects. Blurring the Boundaries on 9 October brings together Clive Dutton, London School of Economics’ expert in cities and government, Tony Travers and RIBA president Stephen Hodder to discuss housing, cities, continuity and change.

For full details see www.ribajournal.com
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Adam Wardle
1971–2013
Associated Architects director whose energy and enthusiasm for life made him a popular mentor

On hearing of the sudden death of Adam Wardle aged just 42, his final year tutor at Birmingham School of Architecture, Allan Haines, said: ‘Adam was always an enthusiastic designer, not in a hugely demonstrative fashion but rather through a persistent enquiry, striving for greater knowledge. He sought to make his projects soundly based and his thirst for knowledge and personal improvement made it a joy to work with him.’

After graduating, Adam joined Associated Architects in 1996 rising rapidly through the ranks to reach associate in 2000 and director in 2003, leading the practice’s dedicated school design team. He worked passionately to develop a succession of schools in both the public and independent sectors, including Stoke and Birmingham Building Schools for the Future contracts and culminating in an RIBA Award this year for the inspiring Yarm School at Stockton-on-Tees. His work at Associated brought numerous design, civic and construction awards but his legacy lies more in his influence on clients and colleagues than these formal achievements.

Adam was ostensibly a private person who was very much his own man, but this persona belied the generosity of time and support he gave to those around him, whether formally mentoring younger members of staff or offering advice to friends and colleagues about design and construction. ‘Ask Adam’ was a commonly used phrase as his depth of knowledge allowed him to make informed decisions, inspiring utmost confidence in his leadership.

Adam took great pride in the development of others, and his team at Associated speak of how he empowered people by trusting their ability and throwing them in at the deep end. But he was always close enough to throw a lifeline if need be. His energy and positive outlook inspired those around him, and his sound character, temperament, wise counsel, and mentoring skills led us to ask him to be a professional examiner on our Part 3 course in 2010.

I always considered him to be a ‘proper architect’, one who could genuinely work across the spectrum of our profession, from conceptual thinker and designer to shrewd businessman, while his teenage years working for a local builder served him well in dealing with contractors in a no-nonsense yet empathetic way.

Adam’s life was about balance and while he loved working at Associated Architects and the opportunities a thriving practice brought, he wasn’t drawn to the bright lights of the city. As a devoted family man he chose instead to make the daily 100-mile M6 commute to stay close to his roots, returning each night to the stunning contemporary cottage that he of course designed and built himself. It is this life outside architecture that he also had an immense appetite for, a real joie de vivre in all that he did. He loved the outdoors and its physical challenges and his relentless energy led him to be a keen mountain biker and hiker, culminating in a meticulously prepared trip to Mount Everest base camp to celebrate his 40th birthday.

Adam is survived by his wife Julia and daughters Grace and Alice.

Kevin W Singh, head of Birmingham School of Architecture
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Monk’s treat
I was amused to see in your ‘50 years ago’ section (May 2013) that you reproduced my personal drawing (not Corb’s!) and my description of the only building Le Corbusier ever built in America – the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard, with Louis Sert.

This was one of two articles I produced for RIBAJ about that time. Although you generously call me ‘critic A J Monk’, I was then only an inexperienced architectural student on the Yale University Masters programme along with Foster, Rogers, (Eldred) Evans and others under the tutelage of Paul Rudolph, Serge Chaermayef and Robert Venturi.

However, by December 1963, I and my two future partners, had returned to the UK and won the late-modernist Paisley Civic Centre, from 147 entries. That was the foundation of Hutchison Locke and Monk (now HLM Architects). So we have a more significant ‘50 years ago’ to celebrate. During this time HLM has endeavoured to make an effective contribution to our welfare state in healthcare, civic, housing, defence and education.

This is in fact an accolade for the RIBA competitions system, which enabled three young, unknown, inexperienced architects to create a significant practice and to make a sustained contribution to our profession.

Tony Monk, Berkshire

Exchange

I feel like Andy Dufresne in The Shawshank Redemption — Doug Fowler

Rome truths
Thank you for your lovely piece on Bishop Edward King Chapel (RIBAJ July 2013). Scheming Satanists apart, I was taken by the observation about arriving into the ellipse on the angle so as to deny comprehensive knowledge of the order of the building. Theologically perfect!

Of course Oxford has a persistent connection to the Roman Baroque. Gibbs, who designed the Radcliffe Camera, was trained in Rome – unheard of in the 18th century. I put it down to Oxford’s long loyalty to Charles I and pro-Tory anti-Whig sentiment. Tyack points out how little Palladian architecture the city has.

Niall McLaughlin

Without redemption
Last year one of the local authorities I work with set up an ‘accredited agents’ scheme. I decided to join and, as one of the few architects who are now approved, feel that our profession has again lost out to the ever growing group offering ‘architectural services’ to the public.

I have written to Arb and the RIBA several times about the need to protect an architect’s function but been advised that only the word architect is protected. Meanwhile, the number of companies calling themselves names including the words ‘architectural’ or ‘architecture’ continues to rise. One only has to visit a ‘Grand Designs Live’ show to see the number of firms offering such services: the public can no longer distinguish between them and architects.

I feel like Andy Dufresne in The Shawshank Redemption (who wrote to the state each week for 10 years before receiving a response). Unless we stop this problem, our domestic work will disappear from under our noses.

Doug Fowler, Hampshire

Tweetback
John Eynon @56JONTS ‘Darwinian moment’ by Richard Saxon in @RIBAJ – BIM, change and the industry – capex and opex on the same page… Good stuff!!

Brendan Redmond @brendanredmond
Some amazing drawings in the @RIBAJ Eye Line drawing competition.

Matthew Taylor @mat8lou
Has anyone kept a total of how many arch firms have gone under, been bought out etc since 2009 – it’s hard to keep track.

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AS THINGS STOOD: DECEMBER 1962
Sheffield’s Park Hill Estate, as part-transformed by Hawkins/Brown and Studio Egret West for Urban Splash, has made it to the Stirling Prize shortlist. When it was originally built, from 1957-61, it was an object of fascination for architects, and the RIBAJ devoted many pages to it. Here, from December 1962, one of its project architects, Jack Lynn, reveals forgotten truths about the project.

The elevations were not ‘composed’ in the usual sense and indeed were never drawn; 1/500 scale floor plans indicated the distributions of the various house types within the structure and the quarter-inch house plans laid down where windows were to go. The irregular window and wall disposition which resulted on the facade, particularly on the deck side, was considered to be an advantage in presenting an ever-changing rhythm running counter to the regular beat of the structural grid, the combination expressing the main social theme.

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**Altro walks the walk of champions**

St John’s Primary School in Kent has a bold and colourful new entrance area and corridor created using Altro XpressLayTM safety flooring, originally laid at Olympic venues for London 2012. As the supplier of flooring to the London 2012 Games, Altro was the only PVC manufacturer of safety floor approved for use at the Games and supplied flooring for 33 Olympic venues, not just in London. London 2012 was the most sustainable Olympic Games in history and Altro supplied a total of 50,000m2 of safety flooring to the Games – enough to completely wrap the Olympic Stadium.

Re-use of the flooring has been possible as Altro XpressLay is the world’s first adhesive-free safety floor that can be taken up easily post-installation for re-use or recycling, making it ideal for temporary installations and the Olympics was the first time it had been reused on a large scale.

The entrance to St John’s Primary now features coloured circles that replicate the famous Olympic rings with the words ‘Corridor of Champions’ in the centre.

w: www.altro.com

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**Mapel’s protective waterproofing system provides water-tight solution**

A system of Mapel’s cementitious waterproofing products has been installed by specialist contractors Preservation Treatments as part of the refurbishment of Raynes Park Station’s old ticket office in Greater London. The original concrete framed structure has been converted into a new retail unit as part of the station’s refurbishment works.

w: www.mapel.co.uk
T: 0121 508 6970

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**Light Bell by Piero Lissoni**

Suspended general lighting luminaire for indoor mounting. It has a high efficiency latest generation LED light source and a low-loss technical thermoplastic diffuser. The luminaire housing is made of spun aluminium, available in external matt white finish with silver anodised interior, external matt black with gold interior, and external polished aluminium with silver anodised interior.

w: www.atrium.it/uk

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**Saint-Gobain Weber**

A Green Guide rated monouche render by Saint-Gobain Weber has been specified for the new colourful Greenvale Leisure Centre, Magherafelt, Northern Ireland. Weber.prL D render provides an attractive, low maintenance coat which offers excellent weather resistance and durability whilst allowing the structure to breathe. Weber.prL D is just one of Saint-Gobain Weber’s products that incorporates One-Coat Technology.

w: www.netweber.co.uk

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**Design with storage in mind**

Architects looking to improve their understanding about designing storage and maximising space can now undertake a core curriculum RIBA-approved CPD course led by Link 51, the UK’s largest manufacturer and supplier of workplace storage solutions. Design with Storage in Mind – a Specifier’s Guide is a one-hour seminar that provides best practice guidance on the specification of storage schemes.

w: www.link51.com
**Timber Expo**

Where do you find some of the biggest names in the timber industry discussing some of its hottest topics? At the Timber Talks Seminar Programme – organised by TRADA and taking place at Timber Expo 2013. Timber Talks will deliver an unrivalled collection of high calibre speakers from all four corners of the built environment. From niche areas to leading trends, the Timber Talks will be characterised by key industry topics, major names, super projects and big issues – and they are all FREE!

Take the opportunity to draw on the expertise, knowledge and experience of a leading panel of speakers and meet like-minded business professionals.

Pre-register FREE at: w: www.timber-expo.co.uk/book

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**Maple release new brochure**

Maple has published ‘Green from the Roots’, a new brochure detailing how Maple take their environmental commitment very seriously. The brochure highlights Maple’s strategy, integrated management systems, testing methods and certification in producing environmental friendly products across the building sector within their manufacturing facility located in Halesowen, West Midlands. w: www.maple.co.uk  t: 0121 508 6970

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**METRONOME**

The Metronome hanging lamp by fashion designer Tim Van Steenbergen is an essential accessory in a city like Milan. And not just because there’s the link with the world of fashion. Its decorative nature will also appeal to visitors. With its aluminium strips, the Metronome brings a play of light and shadow into the space. Divine to look at, both in retail or residential applications, the Metronome is in (59 cm) (55 cm) and (210 cm). w: www.detalight.co.uk

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**Derby council house achieves ‘excellent’ BREEAM rating**

A £35 million renovation and redevelopment of The Council House, Derby in the centre of the city, saw the transformation of the 50 year old building into an impressive, modern and energy-efficient headquarters. Utilising Reynaers aluminium systems throughout for the windows and curtain walling the development, designed by architects Corstorphine and Wright, also incorporates a hydro electric scheme linked to the adjacent River Derwent.

To further enhance the insulation levels Reynaers CS 24-SL windows are used throughout. A three-chamber, thermally insulated system ideal for new build and renovation alike, they offer slim exterior contours and glazing beads making them a popular choice for renovation projects.

Assisting the modern appearance of the building and the impressive entrance to the public facilities Reynaers CW 50 curtain wall delivers.

w: www.reynaers.co.uk  t: 01332 401199  e: reynaersltd@reynaers.com

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**Equitone adds ‘sense of innovation’ to design centre**

QUITONE [natural] has created a striking and visionary aesthetic on the new £9.9m Northern Design Centre at Gateshead Quayside. EQUITONE is the new international brand for Marley Eternit’s architectural facade materials and brings together the ranges [natural], [textural], [pictural] and [textural].

w: www.marleyeternit.co.uk/equitone  t: 01283 722988

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**Levolux keeps the peace in Cardiff**

Cardiff University's award winning Hadyn Ellis Building creates the ideal environment for world leading scientific research, thanks to the inclusion of a multi-purpose Solar Shading solution, courtesy of Levolux. A range of Louvres perform different functions, including Acoustic Pans applied around the building’s entrance, in addition to Aerofoil Pans and Ventilation Louvres.

w: www.levolux.com  t: 020 8863 9111  e: info@levolux.com

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**Junckers Floors used in the UK’s first Passivhaus School**

One of the first Passivhaus certified non-domestic projects to complete in the UK features Junckers prestigious sports flooring in the school’s main hall. The architectural practice, Architype, who uses the German Passivhaus Standard for the majority of its projects, designed Bushbury Hill Primary School in Wolverhampton. The building conforms to the rigorous Passivhaus principles, achieving approximately an 80% reduction in energy usage as opposed to standard building regulations. For the main hall, Junckers 22mm SylvaSport Premium was specified, installed by Capital Floors, providing a complete solution to the multi-use facility and conforming to all required standards. Junckers FSC and PEFC certified sports flooring systems simplify specifier choices by combining safety with cost-effectiveness and ease of installation.

w: www.junckers.co.uk  t: 01576 554 700
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Contact: Donald Angir.
w: www.dztesting.com  t: 01484 478 685 m: 07427 455 061 e: Donald@dztesting.com

Equitone helps create facade Inspired by War of the Worlds
Pagoda and staff have moved into the Marley Eternit fibre cement EQUITONE clad £32m BREEAM Very Good Shoreham Academy in West Sussex. Architecture PLB specified a combination of Marley Eternit’s EQUITONE architectural fibre cement facade materials including natural, pictorial and textured to provide the building with a striking aesthetic inspired by H.G. Wells’ ‘War of the Worlds’.
w: www.marleyeternit.co.uk/equitone

Bracknell roofing heritage specialists complete luxury development
Four luxury residential properties at Several Parks in Wallingford, Oxfordshire have been completed to stringent heritage and Listed building requirements by national roofing and cladding company Bracknell Roofing. Having a specialist team for heritage work enabled them to cope with all the demands on this large, historically significant development of existing buildings.
w: www.bracknellroofing.com

Steelights/Copperlight Glazing
A design adaptable, Stainless Steel/Copper and Glass, 50 minute fire rated glazing system, updated in material from a 19th Century glazing principle. Extremely strong, engineered and with a hidden jointing method, to offer a 21st Century ‘retro’ decorative potential. Also with size variations within a single unit extra design potential is possible together with different glass types and textures.
w: www.steelights.co.uk

Even lords of the castle value their comfort
The Ottenheim Castle in South Tyrol could only be reached up to a few years ago after a 45 minute walk. This has now changed; Schwarzer from Gais designed and built an iron staircase. The railings are made from MEVACO untreated steel crimped mesh with a wire thickness of 5 mm. Profiles made from steel WF 40x40, with a 9.6 mm slot width, profile edge the crimped mesh.
w: www.mevaco.co.uk

A Bona Finish for A Fir Floor
The John Hope Gateway is Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh’s biodiversity and information centre. It’s a shining example of green construction and sustainability, and the restaurant features a Douglas Fir floor which has just been finished with Bona Traffic HD.

The 900m² floor was sanded and finished over just five days by Fife based Cleaning Systems UK. The team treated the floor in four sections, which allowed the restaurant to remain open while the floor was renovated. The whole area was initially sanded back to bare wood using Bona’s DCS ‘dust free’ sanding system which meant there was no need to ‘tent’ the adjacent mezzanine area. The sanding dust was recycled by being bagged up for use by local riding stables.

Each section was then primed and given one coat of lacquer at night, ready for two further coats of lacquer the next day. Bona Traffic HD was specified for the final two coats to provide the required level of durability in such a busy space with inevitable food and drink spills. Bona Mega Gloss was used for the initial lacquer coat with its glossy finish acting as a wear indicator; to ensure the surface will always be refinished before it is worn down to bare wood in the future.

Bona Traffic HD is a very low VOC, non-yellowing formulation designed for protecting wood floors in highly trafficked areas. Its fast development time means that busy commercial areas can be put back into full use just 24 hours after application.

Bona is a RIBA approved CPD provider and offers seminars on how to specify finishes for wood floors and how to install wood floors using adhesives. Bona also delivers certified training courses to wood floor installers and can provide names of suitable contractors for your project.

t: 01908 593 150
e: info.uk@bona.com
w: www.bona.com
Top Restaurants select Nobel’s Kitchen System

Famed for their style and elegance, restaurants within Caprice Holdings include Le Caprice, The Ivy, S. Shrewsbury, and S. The Grosvenor. No surprise then that when it comes to kitchen design, only one fire suppression system is able to satisfy the incredibly demanding specification made by these internationally renowned establishments.

The ability to meet the most stringent fire protection requirements while also providing kitchens with a ‘no show’ minimalistic system that satisfies the aesthetic qualities seen throughout the décor of each individual restaurant within Caprice Holdings was a winning combination for Nobel Fire Systems. Its ‘R-Series’ fire protection systems are engineered to meet the specific individual requirements of the kitchen being protected. Systems are electronically controlled with no mechanical moving parts and are installed in stainless steel to enhance the working life and endurance of the product.

w: www.nobel-fire-systems.com
m: Ben.Burley@nobel-fire-systems.com

Timoleon

Why bother installing a chipboard floor deck and radiator heating separately when you can instead install chipboard panels which have been machined to take 12mm underfloor heating pipe? Now, you can install a chipboard floor and UFH, at the same time. Torus panels can be glued directly across battens or joists to create a squeak-free floor plus the fastest-selling form of unobtrusive, more comfortable, timber-floor UFH.

w: www.timoleon.co.uk

Bagno Design

Inspired by late night Jazz parties, cocktails and the social rascals of London town, Bagno Design introduces the Bloomsbury Collection. Bringing luxury and opulence to the modern day, yet classically styled bathroom, Bloomsbury features standard washbasins which can be combined with a variety of different washstand options. The range also includes furniture, a freestanding bath, brassware and accessories.

w: www.bagnodesign.co.uk

New energy initiatives put sustainability first at Brett Landscaping

Brett Landscaping has reinforced its commitment to sustainability with a range of initiatives that emphasise renewable energy, reduced emissions and reduced-carbon operations. Since April, the electricity supplied across all of the Brett business units and manufacturing sites has been generated solely from renewable sources. The commitment to 100% renewable energy is the result of detailed negotiations between Brett and its energy suppliers. “We have agreed a robust deal to ensure that Brett uses only green and clean energy sources, without the usual cost penalty that is associated with renewable power,” confirms Andrew Gill, Marketing Manager at Brett Landscaping. “The sources for our power are fully tracked, and we are proudly displaying the certification across all of our sites.” The company has also taken advantage of the latest innovations in low-emission delivery vehicles with four new additions joining the Brett Landscaping fleet to ensure that customer orders are despatched promptly and arrive safely.

w: www.brett paving.co.uk
m: 0845 60 80 570

Cedral Weatherboard helps create luxury holiday home

The aesthetics and low maintenance benefits of Marley Eternit’s Cedral Weatherboard made it the perfect choice for prestige leisure home manufacturer Lissett Homes at The Warren in Gwynedd. And, with the exclusive holiday home on sale for £500,000, it’s hardly surprising that only the best materials were specified throughout the contemporary design.

www.marleyeternit.co.uk/facades

Rundum

A solid oak Rundum Original concave garage door was specified on Downley House - a beautiful innovative home located in rural South Downs National Park and designed by RIBA competition winners Birds Portchmouth Russom. The use of oak and the concave design complements the natural flowing form of the landscape and the rest of the building. The door slides back along the side at an angle into the garage and is operated by remote control.

w: www.rundum.co.uk

Dolphin Dispensers

Dolphin Dispensers launched the Dolphin Modular System this month as a new concept in washroom design. Their designers have spent over a year working with architects to get the product to the standard that the market was looking for – a washroom with the latest technology, including sensor taps, foam soap and energy efficient dryers, whilst at the same time being stylish with the products hidden behind mirrors for space saving. Their technical department said that too often when going to sites there are Health and Safety issues, including heavy mirrors being lifted off walls and below standard electricians and plumbing. The new system eliminates all this and makes servicing easy. They included LED lighting and the products used will help build towards BREEAM excellence. Cost saving in design and on site trades is astounding!

w: www.dolphindispensers.co.uk
Central Library
Birmingham, 1974

The impending demolition of John Madin’s Birmingham Central Library, and the World Monument Fund’s seemingly doomed campaign to save it, has shone a spotlight on the architect’s previously undervalued contribution to the city’s metamorphosis between 1950 and 1975. It was the library, described by Pevsner as the ‘finest example of the post-war public buildings in Birmingham’ and by city planners as a ‘concrete monstrosity’, that brought Madin’s work to national attention but his panoply of innovative buildings throughout the city can be substantially credited with its recovery from the bombs of World War II.

Madin dedicated much of his career to Birmingham, with projects including the sensitive development of the Caithorpe Estate (1958), Warwickshire Masonic Temple (1964-71) and the NatWest Bank offices (1964-75).

His work consistently divided opinion however, and as Brutalism fell from public favour so proposals for redevelopment began to surface. His 17-storey glazed Post and Mail Building and the BBC’s Pebble Mill studio were both demolished in 2005, along with the West Bromwich Police HQ in 2012. Now the Chamber of Commerce, declared ‘tired’ and ‘outdated’ is also under threat.

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