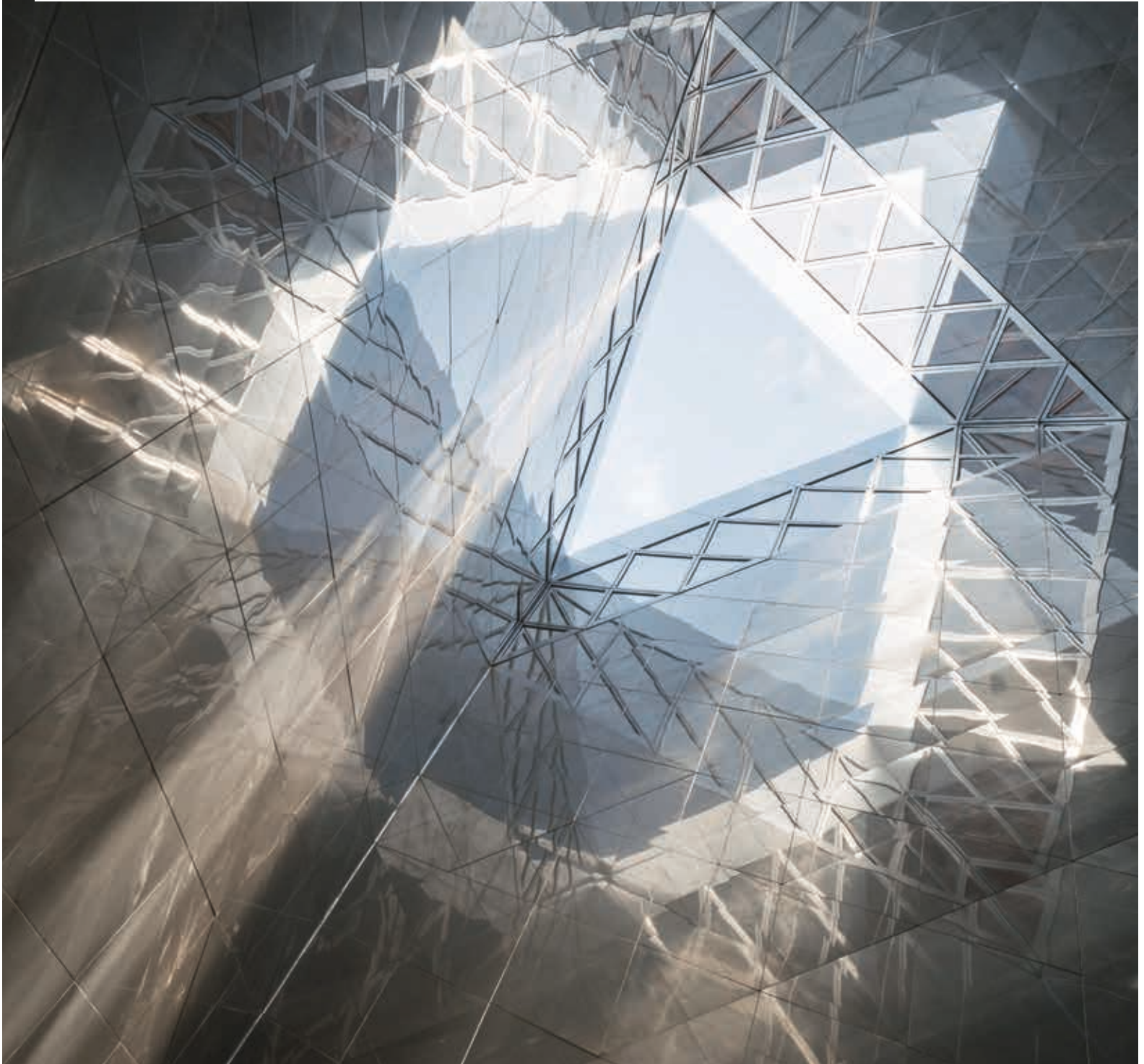


JUNE | JULY 2013

Products in Practice



FLOORING : **ME HOTEL LONDON**

KITCHENS : **HAMILTON TERRACE/THE ARAB STUDIO/KLEIN HOUSE/WALBER HOUSE**

FACTORY VISIT : **RUBBER FLOORING**

HOUSING : **HOW TO BOOST NEWBUILDS**

EXTREME SPEC : **RIJKSMUSEUM'S UNDERWATER CONCRETE**

BIM : **CONFERENCES CONUNDRUM**

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When

... the UK's first female prime minister Margaret Thatcher checked out of the London Ritz for the last time in April, this fundamentalist believer in the power of the free market to decide might actually have been glad she had. American Forbes Travel guides last month downgraded her convalescent home from five stars to four, leaving competitors like the Dorchester and Claridges out in front. What this highlights is that in a competitive market for our custom, hotels have to up their game and can't rest on the laurels; even if, as with the Ritz, they've been happily sitting on them for 107 years.

And the competition's just hotting up. Thatcher would have known that as well as anyone, as she passed right in front of an example of it on the Strand

just before being transferred to a gun carriage on the way to her funeral at St Paul's. Places like Foster+Partners' ME Hotel, whose pyramidal marble atrium graces our cover, is one of a new range of luxury hotels like St Martins and The Sanderson – pretenders to the old hospitality hierarchy that are vying for the custom of a younger, hipper, but no less loaded clientele.

So I imagine Thatcher wouldn't have left a tip; or if she did she might have appropriated the last words of Oscar Wilde this time rather than St Francis: 'Either this wallpaper goes, or I do'.

Jan-Carlos Kucharek, Editor

Cover image by Nigel Young



> 10 EXTREME SPEC



> 30 KITCHENS



> 42 SIGN UP...SIGN OFF

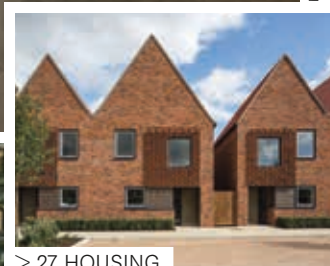


NIGEL YOUNG

> 14 FLOORING



> 12 FACTORY VISIT



> 27 HOUSING

> 4 COMPENDIUM > 8 TECH IT/BOOKS > 20 SPECIFIED: FLOORING > 22 COSTED: FLOORING > 36 SPECIFIED: KITCHENS > 38 SHOWCASE

Compendium



POHL POSITION

Lording it over sheet metal fabricator Christian Pohl's generous stand at BAU this year was a working sample of its 'Skylabs' integrated facade and sunblind, installed at the 'Bahnstadt' business park in Heidelberg. Looking initially like a solid white facade of perforated aluminium, actuators can fold up this outer cladding to reveal the clear glass behind. Even when closed, the 2mm thick facade admits adequate internal light while preventing solar gain. When open, the folded geometry completely alters the look of the building, mediates direct sunlight inlet and gives striking shadows and contours.



FOSTER + PARTNERS

POOR LITTLE RICH THING

Being far from dainty, this might not be something for the fainthearted, but Italian sanitary ware firm cea lab has produced a striking range of taps and mixers with a masculine, functional feel. The Neutra range has simple pipe faucets with flat, pivoting solid steel pull levers that adjust flow rates and temperature. With the whole range in brushed stainless steel, the

sharp industrial feel is unmistakable – and there's something quite compelling about their sheer mass. Cea lab's Bold 100mm showerhead meanwhile is so pared down, it verges on the elemental, suggesting the mains pipe has just been smashed into the bathroom. Specified in some very flash Italian boutique hotels, the arte povera allusions merged with the obvious luxury of the stainless finish makes it one of my current faucet faves.

TILES OF THE UNEXPECTED

The capabilities of porcelain tiles are being investigated this summer in London's trendy Primrose Hill, with Capitol Design Studio's pop-up installation Pulsate. High-end tile firm Capitol Designer Studio commissioned artist Lily Jencks, daughter of architectural historian Charles, and Nathanael Dorent to reformulate its retail space, with the unbridled use of Marazzi SistemN tiles. Jencks and Dorent created a zany herringbone pattern from the 10cm by 60cm tiles, which play strange perspectival games with the space. They're hoping it means the space is appropriated in new ways. 'The floors are sloped, benches are built into the structure, so you're never sure what you're looking at. You can sit and talk, lie on the slope or view the product.' Hopefully there'll be more – a programme of events has been planned for the six months that the installation will remain in place.

HUFTON + CROW



TOP BRASS

French Ambassador Bernard Emié, no less, turned out to open St Gobain's new London innovation centre at 95 Great Portland St, showcasing the global construction firm's huge range of products, including glass, British Gypsum, Ecophon and Isover among others. There's also a library and meeting rooms which are available free to architects for private meetings, seminars or events. For more details on forthcoming events or to enquire about booking rooms, call Shalini Patel on 020 7323 6576.

CAD DOMES AND ENGLISHMEN

Foster+Partners' recently-opened 103,000m² Queen Alia International Airport looked to nomadic Bedouin architecture for design inspiration – when approaching by air, the roof apparently resembles the flowing fabric of a tent, the form of its shallow domes generated by the firm's advanced geometry team. However, the only time the fabric of this airport was really flowing was when they were casting it in place. Its elegant domes and supporting structure are concrete, its high thermal mass

enabling passive environmental control in the searingly hot clime. Where these shallow shells meet, light filters in softly. To help the thermal mass do its job an unobtrusive ceiling system was needed. SAS International designed and supplied 12,000m² of its curved linear metal ceiling system Tubeline and 4,000m² of bespoke triangular ceiling panels. The result is a ceiling that's a thin, translucent gauze for the solid structure beyond. Very dance of the seven veils.



GKD/HOLTKÖTTER

DAS TOUCH

The 18th century 'König von England' in Stuttgart's Schillerplatz was first home to one of Germany's earliest coffee houses, opening in 1712. Converted in 1798 to an inn, and renamed the 'King of England', the building was ironically destroyed by Allied troops near the end of WWII. It was the only building in Schillerplatz not to be reconstructed after the war, instead replaced by an administration block for the Baden-Württemberg state ministry – listed in 1984. Recently refurbished, the architect optimised acoustics in its meeting areas with GKD's funky anodised CMP aluminium mesh acoustic ceiling. The stiff honeycomb mesh covers an area of almost 100m² in gold, and is accentuated by strange hovering LED luminaires. Both give a right royal feeling to the new 'King of England's' ceiling.



KALZIP

GRIMSHAW UP NORTH

With its distinctive huge, curved sweeping roof, Stoke-on-Trent bus station recently opened – a significant step in the city's redevelopment plan. Architect Grimshaw's wave-like roof curves both in plan and elevation and required complex double-curved Kalzip XT aluminium standing seam sheets. The firm also supplied flashings, bonded panels, fascia soffits and rainscreen panels. While the roof rises and falls in response to the entrances and passenger facilities, it's lined with a warm and welcoming timber soffit. There's also extensive use of local Staffordshire blue brick and Carlow limestone flooring – a metaphor, apparently, for the underlying coal seams and clay that drove the area's growth.

KEEPING YOUR LIGHT UNDER A BUSTLE

Commercial lighting firm Deltalight teamed up with Low Countries haute couturier, Belgian fashion designer Tim Van Steenberghe, commissioning him to create a new light. The result is very 'A' line – a series of aluminium plates with alternating angles, creating the effect of a skirt of many petticoats. Van Steenberghe says the form 'conducts the light into a varying effect of shadows' – an effect one might consider to be quite subtle until you realise the scale of the thing. At 2.1m tall, and available in white, black or red, the Metronome XXL is in fact a huge eyecatcher that can enhance any large space and dwarf a small one. In a size 0 world, it's good to know that at least one designer's happily gone plus size.



BENCHMARK HUNG, DRAWN AND QUARTERMEILED

Benchmark has been busy up in Edinburgh's Quartermile district, a new mixed-use residential project masterplanned by Foster+Partners. Its Konnect engineered facade system was specified on a seven storey block in the development in an effort to cut the installation schedule by three weeks. The factory-made, unitised system comprises highly insulated, multi-spanning modules that are the engineered for the firm's range of external facades. They're also supplied as fit-out ready for internal plasterboard, eliminating the need for internal framing. Over 1000m² of the system was installed using a 'sucker' plant by five operatives in only 10 days. The Konnect system modules can be fabricated up to 7m high and can incorporate a cavity for ventilation and services.

CLUB CLASS CLUBHOUSE

Like a Centerparcs for the upwardly mobile, niche developer yoo commissioned architect De Matos Ryan to design the social hub of its 260ha holiday home development on the edge of the Cotswolds, with its Orchard Spa. The building has a 20m pool, play pool, gym, sauna, steam and treatment rooms, and clubrooms for holidaying residents

– yoo was keen that they be able to treat it as their own. Using the footprint from an old portal frame shed that used to sit on the site, the firm souped up the industrial typology. The portal frame form remains, but its' ground level is now fully glazed and its upper level clad in rich Siberian larch. One corner of the glazing retracts

fully to the landscape, and basalt tiles run through from inside to the pool's edge to ground the building in the landscape. Flamed basalt continues in the wet areas, with walls clad in Douglas fir. Above the pool, a stretched fabric ceiling cleanly hides all services, ensuring, as the architect says, 'the building gets out of the way of the users'.



HUTTON + CROW



TEMPERED STEEL

If you've ever secretly desired a heated towel rail in your bathroom that looked like a fetishised version of the last steel frame you designed, your time has come. Designers Matteo Thun and Antonio Rodriguez have designed their SerieT range for The Radiator Company and it looks just like an 'I' beam. Mounted horizontally, it'll keep the bath sheets for the whole family warm as toast, and vertically, in its 'Mies' position, it even comes with a hook for hanging your terry towelling bathrobe on.

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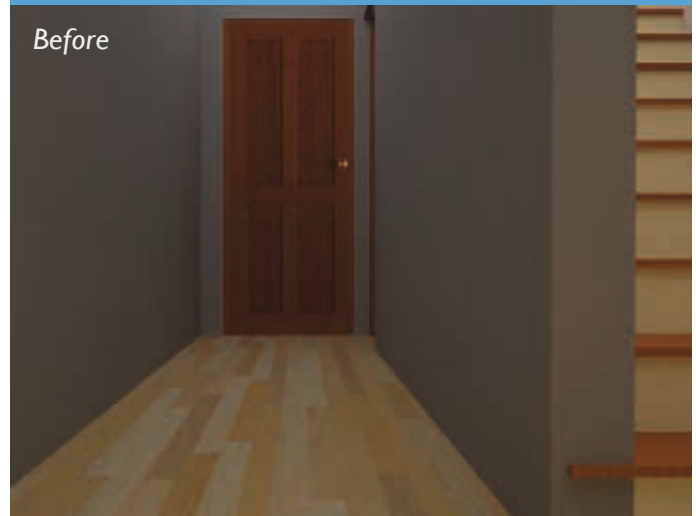
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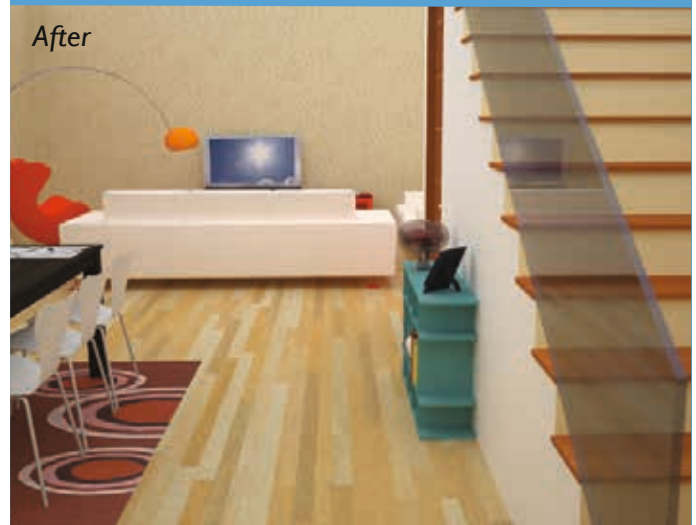
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Conference fix

Daniel Heselwood
is associate
director at BIM
consultancy Evolve



Conferences: whether you consider them educational resources, insightful days out the office or jollies, they appear to be BIM's fastest growing add-on. I've considered attending, just this year, Autodesk University, BIM Show Live, Bentley Learn, Revit Technology Conference, Revit User Group, thinkBIM, ecobuild BIM, Tweetups, BIM in Practice and RICS BIM National Conference, without even mentioning the plethora of webinars every other lunchtime... all with their very own acronym.

The acronym 'BIM' was followed by a landslide of others: EIR (employer's information requirements), BEP (BIM execution plan), MIDP (master information delivery plan), IFC (industry foundation classes), IPD (integrated project delivery) etc. The problem is that unless you are heavily involved you probably have no idea what these stand for. The mobile phone and 'txt tlk' seem to have made acronyms so cool that they've infiltrated the professional world as well. I'm considering referring to myself as DH to see if that improves my life successes.

Conferences can give meaning to the acronyms and are an important part of what I do. They help

me understand the direction of the industry – and they're frankly the best place for networking. The difficulty lies in choosing which to attend. Although there is a great buffet at each, the content is high on the same – the same speakers, the same presentations and quite often, the same terrible approach to filling 100 PowerPoint slides with some of the best cures for insomnia. I sometimes wonder whether some of the 'addicts', who seem to attend every conference, get withdrawal symptoms if they miss one.

No need to panic though. I have, of course, considered the onslaught of conference season and come up with a structured approach to ensure

I sometimes wonder whether some of the 'addicts', who seem to attend every conference, get withdrawal symptoms if they miss one

that you don't spend as long choosing which to go to as actually attending them.

A lot of the information that is presented can be found through a very simple internet search. What you should be looking for from these events are presenters from the same field as you, facing the same challenges. Software vendors will be highly knowledgeable on upcoming releases and the intricacies of working with the available tools, but if you want to know about that, invite them into your office for a demo. They can often be very separate from the industry and the challenges facing project delivery. If in doubt, refer back to your search engine of choice and check out their credentials. If they've been working as a pig farmer for the past 20 years and only spent the last six months building, they probably don't understand the industry just yet.

The cost of conferences can quickly mount up while remaining a total waste of time and money – or they can be an invaluable learning and networking experience. Be selective and choose the right presenters, talking on the subjects that matter to you. ●

Tech books



PLANTING: A NEW PERSPECTIVE
Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury
Timber Press £30

It's strange to think that there's any kind of science involved in the gardens that plantsman Piet Oudolf creates. Surely it is about structure and beauty, creating landscapes up there with the likes of Jekyll and Jellicoe. The distinction is that while theirs was a mystical art, he seems to be able, in a truly modern sense, to quantify and categorise his output. And so we have his book on the science behind his art. Oudolf uses his own garden in Hummelo, the Netherlands, as a laboratory in which to experiment on cross-fertilising his beloved perennials, and there's an empirical approach employed here too. Lavish photographs of his work are counterpointed by graphic representations for planting layouts, individual descriptions and characteristics of species, and best combinations of plants according to season, soil type and orientation. At the back is a directory, which in its cold categorisation of planting types as a mere list, belies all the potential myriad joys. Lovely.



INSIDE SMARTGEOMETRY – EXPANDING THE ARCHITECTURAL POSSIBILITIES OF COMPUTATIONAL DESIGN
Brady Peters and Terri Peters eds
Wiley £29.99

Smartgeometry was founded in 2001 by Hugh Whiteread, Lars Hesselgren and J Parrish, who have become synonymous with the development of advanced computational thinking in architectural form generation – although they would say they're more about the creation and application of digital tools and cross-disciplinary fertilisation of ideas, rather than a sole association with architecture. I find most AD publications tend to suffer from being fluff-filled (aka Schumacher Syndrome) but this one is different. If the various authors are not talking about real architectural projects that they have been directly involved with and whose challenges were interrogated and resolved, they are discussing how factors from other disciplines can impinge, influence and modify computational design. As a result, over 22 copiously illustrated essays by renowned practitioners and academics, the book has the cumulative sense of being firmly grounded – more coal-face than cutting edge. It's an aspect that works in its favour.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY REFURBISHMENTS - PRINCIPLES, DETAILS, EXAMPLES
Clemens Richarz and Christina Schulz
Edition Detail Green Books £46

Publisher Detail is committing to helping architects through the maze of sustainable refurbishment, and while its intention is stated at the outset, how well it does this is debatable. This could partly be due to how the information is presented – the book comes over as extremely dense – pages are packed with information, text and images and can seem impenetrable. Greater editing of the text to convey ideas more directly would have helped, as would larger graphs and tables, and there's a bias to German DIN standards and directives which may baffle UK readers. The book's refurbishment theme made me think there would be more photographs of projects before and after upgrading but there aren't; images are used sparingly. Illustrated projects with supporting case studies might have helped contextualise refurbishment and allow architects, and perhaps their clients, to see the benefits of the works. Undoubtedly a detailed and technical approach to the subject, I've seen other books convey its principles more effectively.

Room for expression.

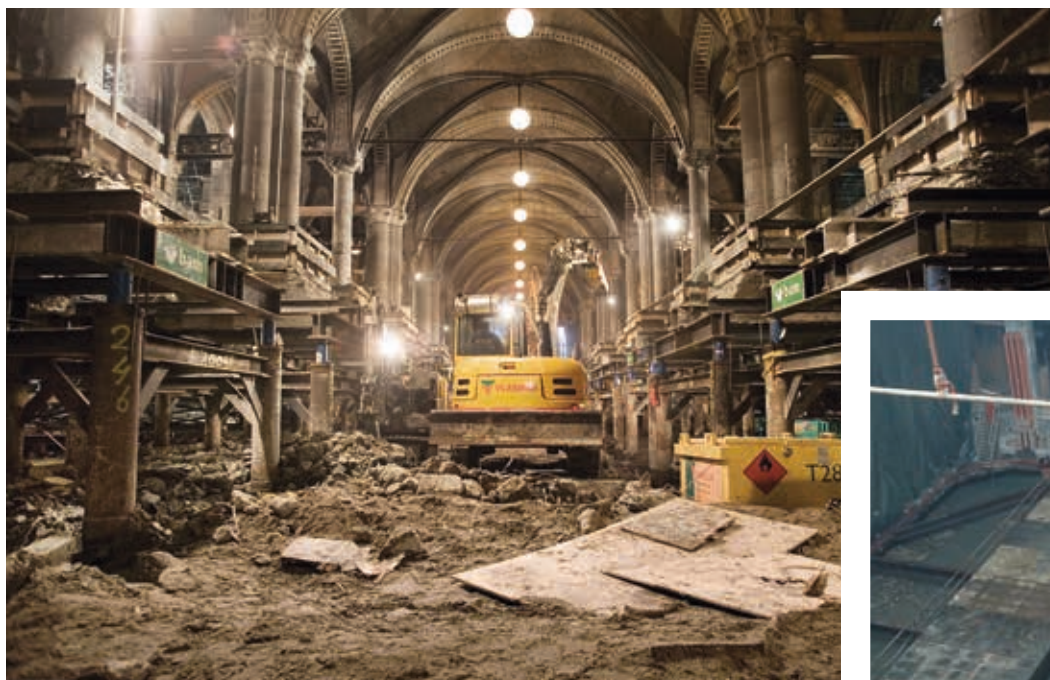


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Underwater

Below left: The Rijksmuseum's public passageway was the final stage, dramatically excavated to its foundations to link the new courtyard basements.

Below right: One of the new internal courtyards. Bottom right: All the soil excavation was done below Amsterdam's shallow water table. Once dug, the underwater concrete was pumped in to create the floor of the new basements.



HUGH PERMAN



WHAT: UNDERWATER CONCRETE WHERE: RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

Forget the finger in a dyke story. When, in its 2002 competition-winning proposal to refurbish Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, Spanish architect Cruz and Ortiz proposed digging basements into the world-famous museum's interior courtyards, even the Dutch engineer Arcadis balked at the idea. But it had to concede the spatial clarity the idea offered. And the only way to do it was by using waterproof concrete.

'But we drew the line at linking the two courtyards' basements beneath the museum's central passageway [a heavily used public right of way]. It was far too risky, even for us,' recalls Arcadis director of structural engineering André de Roo. As it is, the 1895 brick-built museum sits on 8,000 wooden piles, 500 of which would have to be removed to excavate. De Roo explains that these are typically 12-14m long, as the first load bearing sand layer does not start until 11m down. And the ground is soaked. 'Water appears at 80cm below the surface,' says De Roo, 'so anything you do below ground is really below the water table.'

De Roo explains that because the clay's ability to form a seal could not be guaranteed, running sheet piles into it was not an option. Instead, tension piles were driven to the level of the new basements

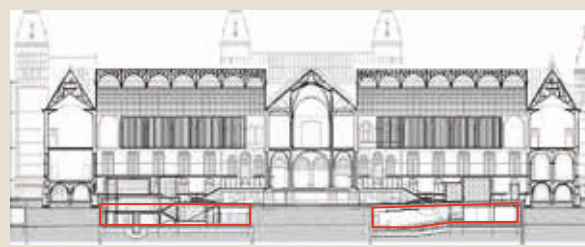
across the courtyard areas, and steel sheet piles sunk along their edges. Once the steel box walls had been constructed above the clay layer, the soil was partially excavated, allowing struts to prop the sheet walls, holding them in place.

Underwater digging continued down to the tension pile caps, when the waterproof concrete was pumped in to start the new basement floor. The concrete, with good flow characteristics, sank to the bottom of the pit floor and self-compacted. Cast to 800mm thick, it hardened to full capacity in two weeks, with the advantage of behaving as a form of horizontal diaphragm holding the steel sheet walls in place. Integrity ensured, new concrete floors and walls were cast, creating two basement boxes either side of the central passageway.

Connecting the two basements involved excavating the cellars below this central wing and narrowing the huge concrete support columns that were built in the 1960s to support the neo-gothic structure above. Propping up the lot on temporary steel jacks, the whole passage was floated, original concrete columns removed, and new, slimmer ones inserted beneath.

'We're used to working with underwater concrete,' says De Roo, 'But it was great to see its use here, just so cyclists could bike back to the suburbs, as they always have, through our national art gallery.' ●

Plasticisers and fly ash and colloidal admixtures improve the flow characteristics of waterproof underwater concrete, although most of the remaining constituents are the same as the standard material. Concrete is laid using 'hopdobbers' – a hopper on a gantry that runs across the casting zone, pumping the concrete in at intervals along its run at about 100m³/hr. While concrete cube tests are carried out on the mixture in the factory, the only way it can be checked on site is through test-cubes underwater. Trained divers do this and check the structural quality before the water is pumped out. At the Rijksmuseum, specialist firm DCN performed this work. The cold water actually helps the concrete to set, arresting the exothermic process and reducing the likelihood of thermal cracking occurring as it cures. The superplasticity means the concrete self-levels to some extent, but it is usual to have fluctuations of +/- 50mm on the top surface. Cement content is usually 350-400kg/m³ with aggregate size of around 16mm. This yields a typical compressive strength of 35MPa. The underwater concrete floor was 800mm thick and not reinforced. Being strongly water repellent, there is negligible risk of washout and sludge formation during casting. It's very cohesive, with little risk of separation, and needs no vibration.



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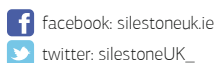
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Right: Nora production manager Carsten Klever with PR manager Doris Lierz.

WHAT: RUBBER FLOORING
WHERE: NORA FLOORING,
WEINHEIM, GERMANY

Floor manufacturer nora has taken great strides since its humble beginnings as a maker of rubber soles for shoes

Technology transfer has many quirky manifestations. Take nora – it's one of the world's largest rubber floor manufacturers, yet started out making shoe soles, pulling itself out of the ashes of a bombed-out post-war industrial base.

'The cost of leather after the war was prohibitive, so in 1949 the firm started looking at the production of rubber to use as a substitute,' says Carsten Klever, production manager at nora. He explains that while developing its synthetic rubber recipe, the small town of Weinheim in Germany, where the firm's still based, was partly populated by 20 'testers', whose job it was to wear and wear out the shoes, to ascertain the most resilient compounds. In a stroke of genius, some bright spark at the time caused the step-change (so to speak) in the firm's fortunes, by suggesting that the rubber move off the sole of the shoe and onto the floor – and nora the rubber flooring company was born. Since then, the firm's workforce of 1,100 has created an annual flooring turnover of over €200m – although 10% of the firm's output is still rubber soles.

It was a very different world then. Without

a global transportation network to access Far East markets for the real thing, nora created its rubber synthetically. Dictated more by utility than fashion, the dyes, explains Klever, were produced from coal by-products, so it was dirty work creating the brown and grey flooring that nora first sold in bulk to American occupying forces in the nearby city of Heidelberg. How times have changed – all its 'norament' tiles and 'noraplan' rolls now have 'Blue Angel' accreditation both for the low emissivity of the product and the low volatile organic compounds (VOC) used to bond it to the floor. And when its lurid green 'Pastille' design was specified by Norman Foster on his Willis Faber & Dumas building in 1975, (even now it's called 'Ipswich Green' in its honour) nora's rubber floor moved beyond the realm of mere fashion to design classic.

And nora's still selling well to the Americans – PR manager Doris Lierz explains that this is now the firm's biggest market, with a strong showing in the healthcare, education and transport sectors. This could be due to the product's homogenous nature, which gives it a

Above: Norman Foster's 1975 Willis Faber & Dumas HQ in used nora's lurid green 'Pastille' tile. Inset: Artificial (left) and natural rubber.

particular durability. Lierz points to one of the 80,000m² of black Pastille tiles fitted at Frankfurt airport in 1969. Cleaned and installed like a museum piece in the firm's factory showroom, over 40 years later there's little sign of wear to its heavily trafficked surface.

Now the firm is exporting globally, you'd think that there would be advantages in localised production, but Klever says not. 'Holding the whole world's production in this one factory does have its advantages', he explains. 'Here, we can exercise high levels of quality control, and perform R&D on our product lines using the associated Freudenberg Laboratories, which have state of the art materials research facilities almost on site – these are effectively our USP in a very competitive market,' he adds. That said, the firm has distribution facilities in the USA, Shanghai and the UAE, and has just opened another in Chile, cementing its intention to reduce lead-in times across the world.

You can see that nora is not sitting on the laurels of its Pastille range – the showroom is choc-a-bloc with its new ranges – unita,





PRODUCING NORAMENTILES

Norament rubber floor coverings are produced as 1m² tiles and include a high percentage of synthetic rubber. Synthesised from oil, Klever explains that this component is important to ensure that the product can meet the technical specifications demanded of flooring materials, including abrasion resistance, slip resistance, fire performance and electrical conductance.



crossline and sentica mimic the look and feel of natural materials but their bright, clashing colours could almost have come straight out of Ettore Sottsass' Memphis atelier in the 80s. The unita, which has a carborundum-like sparkle created by the addition of tiny flakes of granite, recently won a Red Dot design award. The firm hopes that the breadth of the ranges will strike a chord with its global clientele – nora is not only monitoring how ranges are specified to help it pick up on specification trends, it's also attempting to set them by employing colour consultants to advise on future spectral possibilities.

'Colour trends are constantly changing – last year yellow was really on trend in Europe,' says Klever. 'And Germany generally likes green.'

It sounds trite, but colour selection is another important specification choice along with the obvious slip resistance and durability. But unlike these decisions, colour choice can seem counter-intuitive, says Klever, adding, 'For a communist country, it's strange that China really likes blue'. Counter-intuitive? Perhaps prophetic... ●

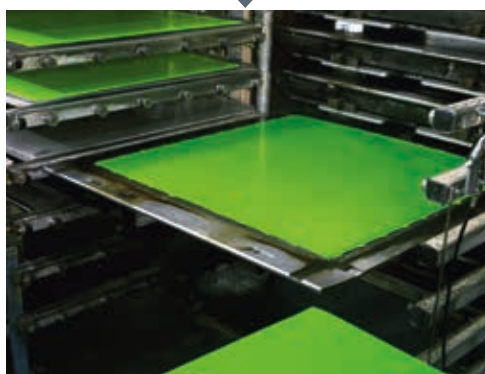


> QUALITY CONTROL OF THE MIX

Synthetic rubber, chalk and pigments from storage silos are mixed and then dispensed in 300kg batches to the Calender line on the factory floor. Two of these huge machines heat and mix batches to reach the required homogeneity. While the technology looks quite complex, the idea is simple, says Klever: 'It's like blending cake ingredients – the better you mix it, the better it tastes.' Large steel rollers heated to around 140°C compress the mix into sheets, before running it through another set to remove air bubbles. Even at initial stages, samples are analysed to check batches meet consistency criteria. If not, the mix is corrected and the process repeated.

> POURING, VULCANISING AND CUTTING

Each 300kg batch produces about 70m² of norament tiles. Once the correct consistency is achieved, the hot mixture is run to the 1970s-built tile presses, each able to press only six tiles at a time. All six drawers are fitted with an identical tool of extremely hard and durable steel costing €15-70,000. A heated pressure of 170bar is applied to the 1m² rubber surface for 5-7 minutes to produce a single vulcanised tile. Klever says the firm looked to optimise this part of the process, but has not yet found a better method of achieving tile quality. Once pressed, panels are trimmed. Attention must now be paid to the underside of the tile.



> REVEALING THE GRANULE AND FINISHING

To make the granule design visible, the interior of the sheets is opened up by splitting the blanks across the plane. The appearance of exposed granulates in the blank is fixed during vulcanisation in the press. The splitting process brings the tiles to their required 3.5mm thickness. They are then sanded on the underside to give them the correct grip for bonding to the subfloor. Norament tiles are abraded in the abrasion line, which consists of five subsequent machines. During abrasion, the vulcanisation skin on the back and the mould separating agent are removed and the tiles are abraded to the pre-defined thickness. Tiles are transported through a 40m cooling plant and remain in the rest zone for at least 24 hours before being punched.

> FINAL CHECKS AND PALLETISATION

Tile thickness is measured at exactly defined distances on an automatic measuring table and documented. After abrasion of the underside, tiles are stored, tempered evenly, and punched. Sheets are photographically centered across the four corner pastilles in the semi-automatic punching machine. Tiles are stored on pallets and electronically tabbed for unique identification by the factory's in-house product control software. Large runs of ordered stock are despatched directly, although nora does hold massive stores of its standard range on site to reduce lead-in times when ordered. Bespoke colour orders can take around six weeks.





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interfaceflor.com

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ecora.co.uk

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uk.harlequinfloors.com

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kahrs.co.uk

ME Hotel London

A strong black and white colour palette used in sumptuous materials gives this London hotel its strong identity

WORDS: AMANDA BIRCH

IMAGES: FRANCISCO GUERRERO

Of all the times to visit Foster & Partners' newly completed ME Hotel I had to choose the day of Margaret Thatcher's funeral. This was a problem because the hotel's location, on a prominent corner where London's Strand meets the Aldwych, happens to be along the planned funeral route. When I arrive in the early morning, the cordoned off streets and heavy police presence around the site contribute to an unsettling blanket of silence. To add to the drama, just as Giles Robinson, partner in charge of the project, explains the intricacies of the building's curved geometry, the highly polished hearse carrying Thatcher's body drives slowly past.

It is an historic yet bizarre moment, but one that Robinson takes good-humouredly in his stride. He has needed a sense of humour on this long-running project. Fosters was appointed in 2004 and the practice's involvement only ended on 1 March this year, when the hotel officially opened. During this time the client changed and it had to accommodate different design requirements for Melia Hotels International. The project and its team have also had to work through one of the worst recessions in history. Then in June 2011, Robinson saw the nearly complete new double mansard to the adjoining Marconi House burn down in a serious fire believed to have been triggered by welding work. He must feel immensely relieved that this protracted project is finally finished.

The five-star ME Hotel, the first for which Fosters has designed both the interior and exterior, has 157 bedrooms, a bar, two public restaurants and a rooftop terrace all over 10 floors. Three new basement levels have also been created, providing two floors of car parking and a conference facility and small gym. Triangular in plan – a geometric shape repeated throughout the building including in some of the stone flooring – the steel structure restrains a self-supporting

Portland stone facade which curves on the Aldwych elevation. The building terminates at the corner with an elliptical tower topped by a glass cupola – a contemporary reinterpretation of the Edwardian-style domed roof on the building opposite.

Striking triangular Oriel windows project from the facade. They are full-height on the first floor and reduce to a standard rhythm at the upper levels. The hotel's elevation blends seamlessly into the facade of the adjoining grade II listed Marconi House. This Portland stone building, named after Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company, had previously shared office space with a fairly utilitarian 1960s building that was demolished to make way for the ME Hotel. Marconi House has been separated from the hotel as part of the ambitious £92m Fosters-led development and converted into 87 exclusive private apartments.

As Robinson and I make our way to the ME Hotel's main entrance, he points out the York stone slabs underfoot, laid as part of a Section 106 agreement with Westminster City Council to reinstate the material on the surrounding footpaths. The stone leads us into the hotel's vestibule which is reached via the tower. An elliptical light hovers overhead, an elegant design by Fosters that appears again inside.

Pass through the glass sliding doors into the lobby and the interior looks very much like the set of a seventies James Bond film. Angled screens of shiny chrome tubes conceal and separate the Marconi Bar from the other activities in the space. Within the bar, taupe-coloured circular chairs and white leather divans surround low marble tables fixed on tan-coloured hand-tufted inset wool rugs. Suspended from above are lights of intersecting elliptical rings.

Unlike conventional hotels, which usually have a check-in desk for visitors in the main lobby, the ME Hotel directs guests to a concierge desk located to one side. They



Main image: The pyramidal reception area in black and white is a vignette of the triangle/monochromatic themes that appear everywhere.

Inset: West elevation of the ME Hotel in London's Aldwych.



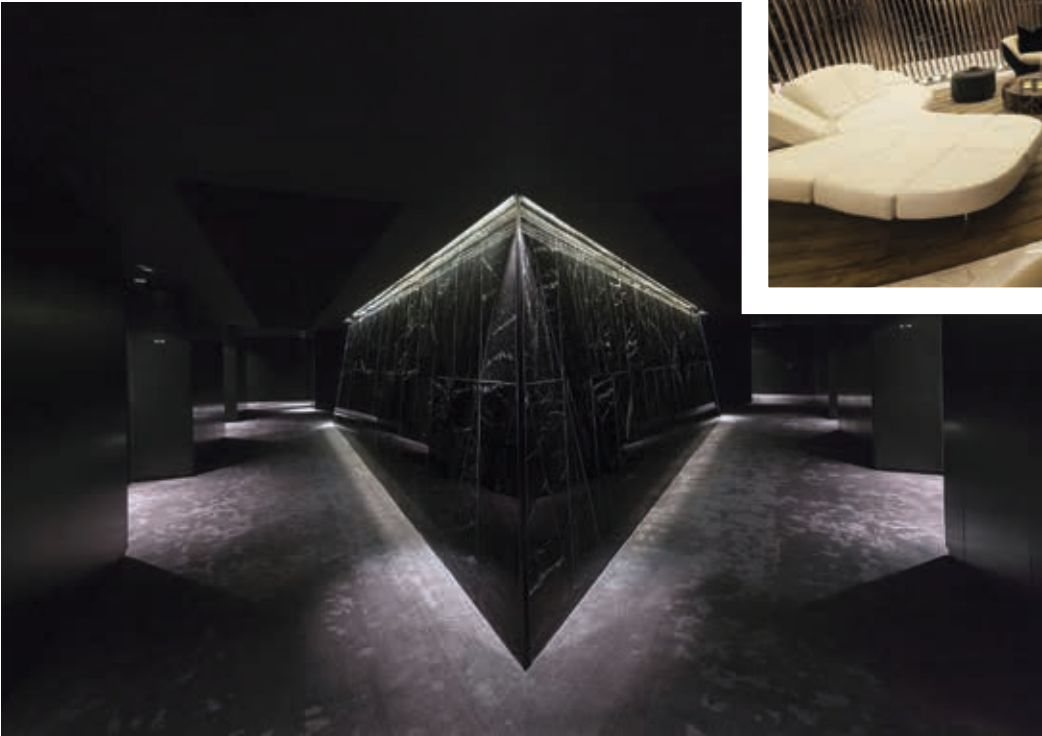


> FACT FILE

> White, 20mm thick Carrara marble was used for the ground floor lobby and 10th floor Radio Rooftop Bar, and also on the stair treads leading to the basement and lobby area. The floor to the conference/banqueting facility is covered in a dark charcoal-coloured carpet and the small gym features a sprung timber floor. Employed in the bathrooms to the hotel bedrooms is Spanish Nero Marquina marble – 20mm thick and both polished and honed.

> The public washrooms feature a predominantly dark interior with black walls and black floors of Indian black granite – polished and cut in 500mm by 500mm by 20mm thick shapes. White Corian counters and wash-basins offer relief from the all-encompassing black.

> The public restaurants also use stone for the flooring where appropriate. The floor to the STK restaurant is clad in Welsh slate – honed in sizes cut to 850mm by 850 by 20mm thick – while in the Cucina Asellina restaurant German Jura marble was specified – honed and cut to 1200mm by 600mm by 20mm thick.



Architect: Foster & Partners
 Client: Melia Hotels Int, Galliard Homes
 Structural engineer: Buro Happold
 M&E and lighting engineer: BDSP
 Fire engineer: FEDRA
 Traffic engineer: Atkins
 Acoustic engineer: Sandy Brown Associates
 Cost consultant: Davis Langdon
 Historic buildings advisor: Feilden & Mawson
 Contractor: Adprotel (Sol Melia subsidiary)
 Interior: B&B Italia (rooms), Mivan (public areas)

then walk along the polished white Italian Carrara marble flooring laid in 800mm by 400mm rectangular slabs, past angled walls of Spanish Nero Marquina marble in 1.55m tall triangles, to the rear of the space where lifts rise to the first floor reception. This was one of the key alterations that Fosters had to accommodate when the client changed, and involved inserting an extra floor to create an exclusive reception space for hotel guests. The client also wanted to maximise the food and beverage area on the ground floor. So on the left side of the lobby is STK, an American steak house, with a more family-friendly restaurant, Cucina Asellina, in Marconi House.

Exclusivity to the hotel continues on the first floor, where guests emerge from a lift to a corridor with low level lighting, black carpet and black marble angled walls. All the corridors to the hotel bedroom floors employ this dark palette and materials, but instead of hard flooring, Axminster fitted carpet absorbs sound and help with acoustics. It's slightly disorientating, but a glimpse of light ahead draws one into the next space, like a moth to a flame.

The architects have saved all the theatrics for the hotel reception in the centre of the

Above: A black granite pyramid rises through the lobbies to the suites – the effect is strengthened with the specification of black carpet.

Top: The black theme stops at the door to suites, where a relieving white suddenly predominates.

building. The drama of the black and white contrast is at its boldest in this atrium, where the triangular theme – or more accurately, the truncated tetrahedron – is at its greatest. Highly polished Zimbabwean black granite clads the floor, canting upwards at the edges to conceal lighting beneath. Angled white marble walls extend nine floors up, culminating in a glazed lantern at the top where thin shafts of daylight stream in. It is unexpected and amazing, and for one brief moment the windowless interior feels a little like the inside an Egyptian pyramid. However, the impression is fleeting, given the plush furniture and fittings and highly conditioned atmosphere.

'We introduced this bold black and white interior palette, which is a recurring theme throughout the hotel, because it establishes a strong identity,' says Robinson. 'We then defined the individual character of each space through variations in tone, texture and scale, justifying the approach.'

A similar, although less dramatic, contrast in colours is experienced when moving from the dark corridors to the guest bedrooms. Predominantly crisp white with stylish white faux leather walls, the floor however is dark. A robust charcoal-coloured fitted wool carpet is used in the bedroom

area, but in the bathrooms 800mm by 800mm slabs of polished Nero Marquina clad the floor. The same marble is used in the showers, although it is honed to create a non-slip finish.

Up on the 10th floor at the Radio Rooftop Bar, the glazed pavilions' interior is also predominantly white. However the space depends less on visual impact – the spectacular views of London provide this. White polished Carrara marble flooring cut in 800mm by 400mm tiles is employed in the interior, while outside the terrace is clad in similar-sized slabs of bush hammered Blanco Estrella Diamante granite which line the sides of planter boxes spaced along the edge of the terrace.

The stone finished flooring, whether marble or granite, which has been used throughout the hotel interiors, is well suited to this black and white theme and was specified in highly trafficked areas because of its durability and long lasting quality.

When given the opportunity to design both the exterior and interior of a project an architect wants to create an impact and leave a mark. Fosters has achieved this in its execution of a thoughtful and complex design that provides the right balance of drama and delight. ●

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AND WE WERE RIGHT.

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Right: Laying out the floors in lobby areas. Setting out lines are drawn from the tip of the atrium triangle through the centre of the vestibule ellipse.

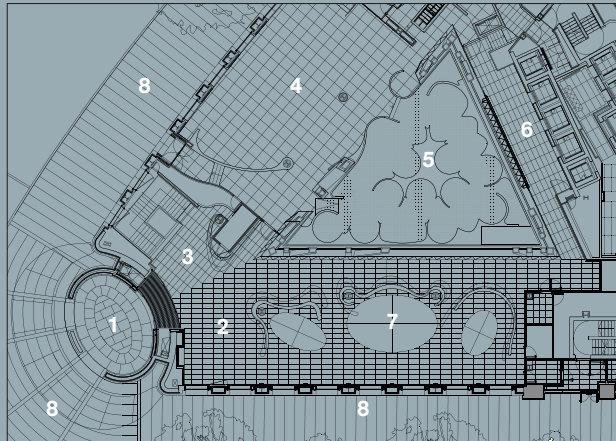


STONE FLOORING SETTING OUT IN PUBLIC AREAS

The triangular site of the ME Hotel informs the shape of the building and the pyramidal atrium at its core. However, this geometry led to some technical challenges for the design and installation of the internal stone floor finishes. Regular tiling grids along the Strand and Aldwych had to be resolved where they met the corner of the building. The marble slabs were sized and set out so their corners intersected perfectly, and related to the column and window spacing throughout. The resulting kite-shaped infills (see photo) were then measured on site and cut to size. This achieved a continuous corner at the entrance, rather than an undesirable movement joint on axis. It also avoided cutting acute angles to the slabs, which would be vulnerable to breakage.

At the centre of the building where all the geometries meet, particular care was taken in creating the dramatic pyramidal atrium. Triangular tiling grids were developed that met the corners without any cut tiles on either walls or floor, and with just three sizes of triangles. To achieve such precision, the space had to be surveyed to determine the exact lengths and angles that would work. Consideration was also given from the outset to minimising the visual effect of movement joints.

An extremely stiff primary steel frame was designed so that building movements could be minimised and large joints avoided. The resulting movements were then taken up within the joints using flexible silicone – unusually silicone was also used on the floor joints. Much like the walls, the size of the construction joints could be reduced as each stone slab is allowed to move in relation to its neighbour. Silicone also had the added benefit of creating a much blacker joint than could be achieved with grout, and it produces a joint which maintains its colour over time. In order for this to be effective, great care had to be taken to control the dust from the site during installation. The overall effect is one of a continuous black reflective surface.



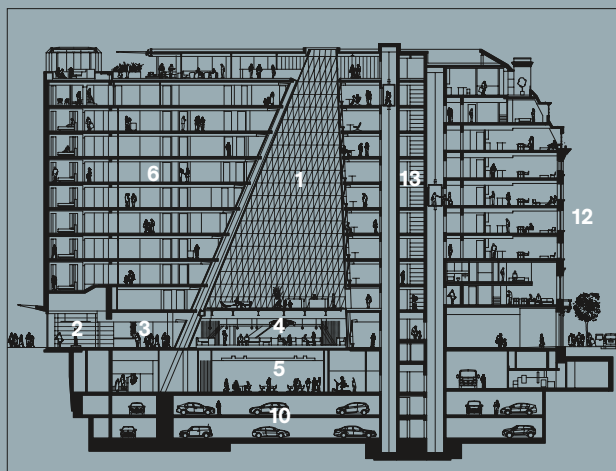
SETTING OUT DRAWING (GROUND)

- 1 Vestibule: York stone
- 2 Reception: White Carrara marble
- 3 Entrance area: York stone
- 4 Restaurant: Welsh slate
- 5 Atrium: Wool carpet
- 6 Lift lobby: White Carrara marble
- 7 Lounge area: Wool carpet
- 8 Exterior flag stones: York stone



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 1 Vestibule
- 2 Hotel lobby lounge
- 3 Marconi Bar
- 4 STK restaurant
- 5 Finishing kitchen
- 6 Lift lobby
- 7 Cucina Asellina restaurant
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Ramp
- 10 Apartment reception



SECTION

- 1 Hotel check-in
- 2 External vestibule
- 3 Hotel lobby
- 4 Restaurants
- 5 Banqueting rooms
- 6 Suites
- 7 Duplex suites
- 8 Radio Bar
- 9 Roof terrace
- 10 Car parking
- 11 Loading bay
- 12 Apartments
- 13 Lift lobbies

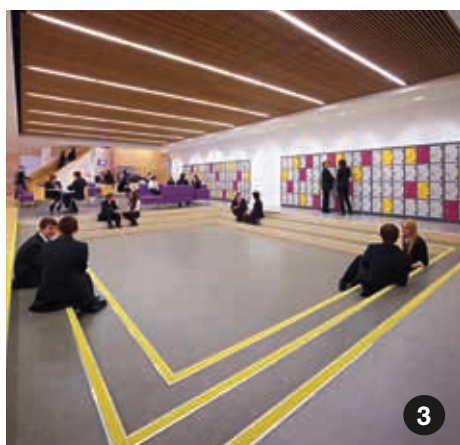
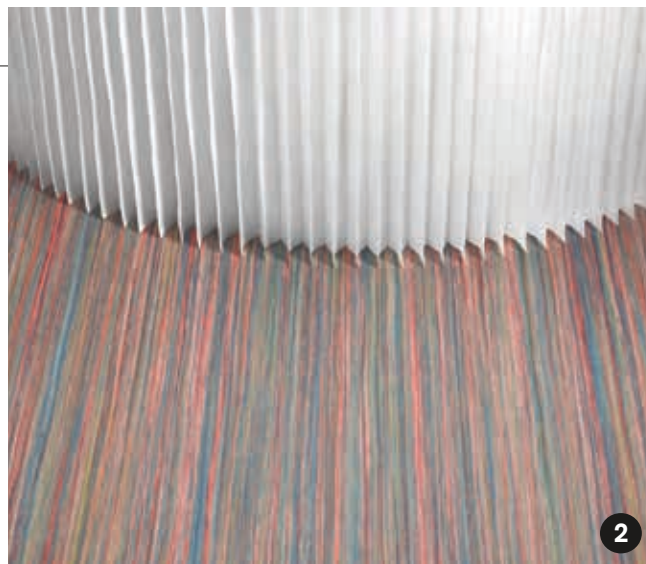


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Specified



STEVE TOWNSEND

1 WALNUT VENEER AMERICAN HARDWOOD COUNCIL

Dubai might be the last word in new thrusting modernity but when it comes to a seat of learning, a classic look is the order of the day. The new Campus Library at Zayed University in Khalifa City has been kitted out in American hardwood to give the institution a gravitas that sits comfortably alongside its more venerable counterparts. Designed to resemble an amphitheatre, the library's walnut flooring continues on the bookshelves and walls, showcasing a jointless veneer appearance that highlights the continuous flow of the grain while providing a modern, classic and comfortable atmosphere.
americanhardwood.org

2 NEXT GENERATION MARMOLEUM FORBO

The new green is a whole lot of colours in Forbo's Next Generation Marmoleum range. Four new collections from the company concentrate on setting the interior tone through colour statements – whether bright and bold or subtle and understated, and with random patterns that never repeat. With strong sustainability credentials and a 30 year life expectancy, the designs demonstrate that whatever else you do to a space, it all grows from the floor.

forbo-flooring.co.uk/marmoleum

3 DLW LINOLEUM GERFLOR

Durability, hygiene and low maintenance requirements were top of the agenda when Park Mains High School in Renfrewshire was looking for floor coverings. Composed of renewable material and totally recyclable, Marmorette PUR from the DLW Linoleum range is being used for the school's public spaces, technical classrooms and kitchens. Available in a range of colours and finishes, the flooring can be as bold or muted as required, and scrubs up well after a day at the feet of students either hurrying to lessons or turning steps into seating as they relax.

gerflor.co.uk

4 VISUAL CERAMICHE REFIN

Two things a council wants to avoid are mishaps on its doorstep and accusations of extravagance. So when Wiltshire Council refurbished its civic offices in Trowbridge, the architect plumped for porcelain tiles to floor the busy atrium. Ceramiche Refin's Visual range of bush hammered tiles – hard-wearing and durable with a safe non-slip finish – were chosen to cater for the high number of visitors to the area, which gives access to the library, registry offices and a café. Whether the public servants beaver away in open plan offices above the newly enclosed space will appreciate the noise of the throng below is unclear.

refin-ceramic-tiles.com



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interfaceflor.com

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kahrs.co.uk

Costed

David Holmes, associate at Davis Langdon, gives an overview of floor finishes and costs.

The primary function of a floor finish is to provide a durable, safe, clean, acoustically compatible, attractive and affordable surface. The flooring selection depends on the function of the space. The choice of floor types, quality and colour is enormous and requires careful consideration. Costs – both of the floor itself and any substrate – vary greatly. Each choice will have some effect on the price of the material, as will the area and shape of the space to be covered. Generic key performance requirements for flooring include:

- > Acoustics: the floor of any room represents a significant proportion of the overall surface area and its acoustic qualities can play an important role in the room environment
- > Durability: floor finishes have to be able to

withstand foot traffic as well as support furniture and equipment without undue deformation

> Sustainability: BREEAM is the standard tool for assessing the environmental impact and flooring can have a significant effect over its lifespan. Floors can have the highest and lowest ecopoints per square metre of almost any material.

> Hygiene: all floors need cleaning but some areas are particularly important so specify where higher standards are needed.

> Static electricity: where electronic equipment is present consider anti-static properties to avoid build up of static charge

> Heat resistance: kitchen and some processes need heat resistant floor finishes

> Safety: under CDM regulations the designer must

carry out potential hazard assessments including unloading and handling, safe storage, installation, cleaning and maintenance.

Flooring finishes can account for 2% to 5% of the total construction cost and involve a significant investment in the overall project; they are also heavily used, so whole-life costs are as important to consider as capital costs. Rather than focusing on capital costs alone, a holistic approach will deliver maximum benefits. The following guide rates are for the supply and installation of a range of floor types. They are neither minimum or maximum values, but reflect rates typically seen in tenders received. No allowance has been made for any sundry costs associated with protection and storage on site or power provision for installation. ●

FLOORING TYPE

In situ screed and floor finishes; laid level

Self levelling latex screed; 3mm thick on existing sub-base prior to receiving floor finishes	£6-7.5/m ²
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Cement and sand (1:3) screeds; steel trowelled; 100mm thick	£19.5-24.5/m ²
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Granolithic; laid on green concrete; 38mm thick	£27.5-35/m ²
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Epoxy floor finish; 1.50mm-2.00mm thick	£27-36/m ²
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Epoxy floor finish; 5.00mm-6.00mm thick	£46-62/m ²
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Resin; 2 coat application nominally 350-500 micron thick	£7.5-9.5/m ²
----------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------

Resin; 3 part solvent-system; up to 3mm thick	£26-32.5/m ²
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Resin; slip-resistant; 3 part solvent-free system; 5mm-6mm thick	£59-75/m ²
------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------

Sheet/board flooring

Chipboard; 18mm-22mm thick chipboard flooring; T&G joints	£13.5-17/m ²
-----------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------

Wrought softwood T&G strip flooring; polished; including fillets	£21-27/m ²
------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------

Softwood skirting, gloss paint finish	£11-15/m
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MDF skirting, gloss paint finish	£11-14.5/m
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Wrought hardwood T&G strip flooring; polished; including fillets	£76-100/m ²
------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------

Hardwood skirting, stained finish	£13.5-18/m
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Sports quality; T&G plywood 22mm thick on softwood battens and crumb rubber cradles	£120-165/m ²
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------

Sprung composition block flooring (sports), court markings, sanding and sealing	£81-110/m ²
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------

Rigid tile/slab finishes

Quarry tile flooring	£44-55/m ²
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Glazed ceramic tiled flooring; standard plain tiles	£33.5-45.5/m ²
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Glazed ceramic tiled flooring; anti slip tiles	£36.5-49.5/m ²
------------------------------------------------	---------------------------

Glazed ceramic tiled flooring; designer tiles	£76-100/m ²
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Terrazzo tile flooring 28mm thick white Sicilian marble aggregate tiling	£39.5-54/m ²
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York stone 50mm thick paving	£125-170/m ²
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Slate tiles, smooth; straight cut	£49-66/m ²
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Portland stone paving	£205-280/m ²
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Roman travertine marble paving; polished	£190-260/m ²
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Granite paving 20mm thick	£290-390/m ²
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Parquet/wood block finishes; wrought hardwood block floorings; 25mm thick; polished; T&G joints	£100-140
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------

Flexible tiling; welded sheet or butt joint tiles; adhesive fixing

Vinyl floor tiling; 330mm by 333mm by 2.00mm thick	£12.5-16/m ²
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Vinyl safety flooring; 2.00-2.50mm thick	£33-42/m ²
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Vinyl safety flooring; 3.5mm thick heavy duty	£42-53/m ²
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Linoleum tile flooring; 333mm by 333mm by 3.20mm thick	£34.5-44/m ²
--------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------

Linoleum sheet flooring; 2.00mm thick	£28-36/m ²
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Rubber studded tile flooring; 500mm by 500mm by 2.50mm thick	£32-40/m ²
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Carpet; including underlay, edge grippers

Heavy domestic duty	£39.5-50/m ²
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Heavy domestic duty; treads and risers	£33-41.5/m
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Heavy contract duty	£40.5-51/m ²
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Entrance matting

Barrier matting with polished brass / stainless steel frame	£455-580/m ²
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Access floors

Raised access floors: including 600mm by 600mm steel encased particle boards on height adjustable pedestals > 300mm;

light/medium grade duty	£37-50/m ²
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Raised access floors: including 600mm by 600mm steel encased particle boards on height adjustable pedestals > 300mm;

heavy grade duty	£50-68/m ²
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Common floor coverings bonded-access floor panels

Heavy duty fully flexible vinyl	£18.30-25/m ²
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Anti static vinyl	£23-31.5/m ²
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Needle punch carpet	£14-19.5/m ²
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Under floor heating

Electric cable system woven into pre-made mats for laying under tiles

Typically used for small single rooms (bathrooms)	£350-425/room
---------------------------------------------------	---------------

LTHW system with pipework at 300mm centres for areas over 250m ²	£30-45/m ²
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------

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TILES FOR EVERY OCCASION

It's difficult to beat tiles if you're looking for a hardwearing finish with lasting beauty. Spain's expert tile makers tick all the boxes.

Non-porous and impervious to chemical agents, abrasion-resistant, weather-proof and easy to clean – the new generation of high-performance porcelain tiles from Spain answers the demands of heavy traffic flooring. Tile of Spain presents the latest advances in the field and outlines some of the major considerations when specifying tiles for high traffic and exterior flooring.

Durability: Porcelain tiles offer the kind of beauty and robust resistance that is perfectly suited to high traffic and exterior applications. Porcelain fulfils demanding specifications with compact composition, low porosity and less than 0.5% water absorption, which makes it dimensionally stable and resistant to frost.

Slip resistance: Slip resistance is an essential factor not only for outdoor and wet areas, but also for busy

retail and hospitality zones. Spanish manufacturers offer a wide range of porcelain tiles equivalent to Britain's Low Slip risk classification. This slip resistance may be achieved either by including natural abrasive materials in the body of the tiles, or by a special glaze or treatment.

Low maintenance: To minimise maintenance and increase hygiene, a growing number of Spanish manufacturers have developed flooring tiles with 'dirt-repelling' finishes. Rectified formats allow minimal grout in favour of low-maintenance and a smooth transition – especially important in places like transport hubs, which experience high footfall and heavy trolley and luggage traffic every day.

Special formats: Spanish manufacturers offer an extensive selection of large format, slim profile



OPPOSITE PAGE:

Fahrenheit by Land Porcelanico – designed for busy commercial environments

ABOVE: Mystery by Rosa Gres offers added anti-slip and low-maintenance properties for exterior and high traffic areas

TOP RIGHT: Toyo Ito's Fira 2 metro station in Barcelona features bespoke tiles by Porcelanosa

RIGHT: Ribadeo Gredos by Vives-vintage patterns over hardwearing porcelain



tiles (as large as 1m by 3m and as thin as 4mm) which can be installed over existing surfaces to save time, cost and landfill. Expertise is also available in easy- installation raised-access flooring systems to accommodate essential services below the tiles, while achieving a perfectly level floor on rough or sloping surfaces. The latest systems also incorporate special architectural elements – such as porcelain steps and drainage catchments for swimming pools.

Beauty matters: The Spanish tile industry, renowned for combining a heritage of craftsmanship and aesthetic elegance with technical innovation, has further enhanced the decorative possibilities of porcelain flooring with inspiring bespoke solutions, digital printing, new coating technologies and UV-resistant glazes for reliable and enduring beauty.

Find a Spanish manufacturer of advanced flooring tiles:

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Housing in crisis

Government efforts to halt near paralysis in the house building sector include an injection of £3.5bn to ease mortgage availability. Will it really help?

STEPHEN COUSINS

Is the UK on the brink of a housing bubble similar to the one that precipitated the 2008 credit crunch? That's the question being asked by several economists after the government announced bold plans in its March budget to pump £3.5bn of taxpayers' money into measures designed to stimulate housing demand by giving potential buyers financial help with mortgages.

Help To Buy is a two-pronged scheme. On the one hand it extends the FirstBuy scheme, which will see the government take an equity loan worth as much as 20% of the price of a new home up to £600,000, if the buyer puts in at least 5% deposit. On the other, a mortgage guarantee will be introduced in January 2014, to open up mortgages on existing and new build homes worth up to £600,000, available to buyers who can stump up 5% deposits.

House builders have broadly welcomed the measures and many have reported a rise in interest from potential buyers, but some economists have branded the scheme 'economically insane' and 'a huge gamble', questioning the sense of putting more public money into lending and claiming it could do more to inflate house prices than promote building.

The Help To Buy 'gamble' is the government's latest attempt to stimulate housing supply in the weakened economy. It comes in the wake of several apparently flawed initiatives, such as the £1.3bn New Homes Bonus, introduced in February 2011, to financially reward local authorities that approve housing developments, but which was recently slammed by the National Audit Office for having had little impact on councils' behaviour. Sweeping changes to the UK planning system have also been blamed for causing widespread uncertainty and holding back new development.

GETTING BUILDING AGAIN

The UK housing market has long been weakened by the lack of new homes being built, a situation that has forced up rent and house prices, and left millions struggling to get on the property ladder.

Housing completions in England last year



Above: Architect Make's mixed-use Greenwich Square development for client Hadley Mace, a £225m regeneration scheme on the former Greenwich District Hospital site, will provide 645 new homes, 50% of which will be affordable.

totalled just 115,620 – less than half the estimated 221,000 new households formed in the country each year and a mere 1% increase on 2011, according to figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

Chancellor George Osborne's latest package of measures for housing, which also includes the expansion of the Build To Rent fund from £200m to £1bn, have been widely backed by house builders, including Redrow, Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey, whose share prices rose by up to 5% in the days following the budget announcement.

There are high hopes for the three-year equity loan scheme, which it is estimated could create 25,000 new homes sales a year. Persimmon, the UK's biggest house builder by stock market value, expects it to generate 3,000 or more sales over the next year – roughly a third of the company's output.

The fact that the government will put up the entire 20% loan for homebuyers itself – rather than split it 50/50 with the builder, as is the case under FirstBuy – should encourage more house builders and developers to take part, says Steve Turner, head of communications at the Home Builders Federation (HBF), whose membership covers around 80% of new homes built in England each year: 'With previous schemes developers had to put more into shared equity, which tied up balance sheets that should really be invested in new land and sites. Taking away that requirement gives us the potential to do more,' he says.

In particular it could benefit smaller house builders put off by large upfront investment, but the big question remains whether Help To Buy will ramp up housing supply enough and lay the foundations for a sustainable future housing market.

'The scheme will appeal to house builders and improve access to mortgages, but it may be scratching around the edges in terms of overall impact,' says Steven Proctor, founding director at architect Proctor and Matthews, which designed the multi-award winning Horsted Park housing scheme in Chatham, Kent. 'We could end up with a situation where there are many more people with access to

Below: Proctor and Matthews' 2012 Horsted Park in Chatham, Kent.

a mortgage trying to buy the same house, which could have the effect of dramatically raising prices.'

Others have questioned whether an increase in demand can even be met by supply as house builders must still secure credit and planning permission and they may prefer to land-bank rather than expand. Despite repeated attempts to contact them, the CLG was unavailable for comment.

OTHER IMPACTS

Affordable and social housing supply has been profoundly affected by a 60% cut to the affordable house building budget announced in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Last year just 15,657 affordable homes started on site, less than a third of the number that got under way in 2011, and the future looks even more uncertain, says Adam Barnett, investment policy officer at the National Housing Federation, whose members include 1,200 housing associations: 'Most HAs receive an average of just £20,000 per home, so to make up the shortfall for construction they have to borrow more money and recoup it by

are included in schemes.

'The policy change means we can have sensible discussions with local authorities about whether the proposed levels of affordable housing are viable in today's environment,' says the HBF's Turner.

'It's about getting the balance right to ensure that developments go ahead. Push affordable numbers too high and sites become unviable – and then no homes at all get built.'

A major obstacle to development has been reluctance by councils and other statutory bodies to release land for less than the market price. The government aims to release public sector land suitable for the construction of up to 100,000 homes between 2011 and 2015, but the effects of this policy have yet to materialise.

'We have consistently pressed the government to speed up the pace of public sector land release,' says the National Housing Federation's Adam Barnett. 'One option could be to advertise the land in a single shop window, such as through the Homes and Communities Agency, which could release it much faster as a single agent. Shifting the focus from large sites that require a lot of land assembly and infrastructure preparation before they can progress, to smaller sites of up to 100 homes, could also help bring schemes to site much more quickly,' he says.

ECO UNCERTAINTY

Uncertainty also surrounds the future of sustainable housing standards after the government's October announcement of a review of the Code for Sustainable Homes, as part of its housing standards review designed to cut red tape.

Although the government has re-affirmed its commitment to the 2016 zero carbon homes target, some elements of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) may be incorporated into changes to Part L of the Building Regulations, and there have been rumours that the requirement for CSH could be reduced or even phased out completely over the coming years. Working groups are considering the options and will to report to ministers this month, with the government scheduled to publish a 'plan of action' by the end of July.

'Things are in a state of flux at the moment and we hope that doesn't mean sustainability aspirations and targets get watered down,' Joanne Wheeler, head of policy at the UK Green Building Council, told *RIBA J*. 'Housebuilders have come a long way in the last few years, putting work into R&D in an effort to meet targets, and some are already building to Code level 4 and 5 cost effectively. Those that are committed and proactive will strive to continue to meet targets regardless of economic pressures,' she concludes. ☐



PROCTOR AND MATTHEWS

It's about getting the balance right to ensure developments go ahead. Push affordable numbers too high and sites become unviable – then no homes at all get built

charging higher rents through the new affordable rent product. But there's a limit to how much lending they can secure and although our members are confident they can manage the current target of 170,000 affordable homes by 2015, there's great uncertainty over whether they will be able to do the same in the years after that,' he says.

The upheaval of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 has also hit the number of applications being approved by councils.

The reforms are designed to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. But CLG figures show a fall in the proportion of approvals for new small scale developments of fewer than 10 homes within the government target of eight weeks – from 71% in 2011 to 68% in 2012. And the proportion of larger developments approved within the targeted 13 weeks dropped from 60% in 2011 to 57% in 2012.

Meanwhile, measures intended to make it easier for developers to challenge Section 106 planning agreements with councils if they believe the terms of agreements are making schemes unviable, are likely to affect the number of affordable units that

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Hamilton Terrace

Main image: While the main space was stripped back to its original surfaces, new details also make their presence felt. Here, the soffits of the inserted steel beams are left revealed.

The kitchen winds around the central column.

Below: Pale grey tiles and pale Douglas fir counterpoint the dark blue limestone floor.

If the thought of a domestic 'knock through' doesn't usually set an architect's heart racing, it might in the salubrious West London residential street of Hamilton Terrace. Here architect Threefold was employed to take its client's 200m² lower ground floor apartment in an Edwardian villa, pull it back to its original enclosing walls and completely redesign it. 'Given that this floor would traditionally have been 'below stairs', it was different from the rooms above it in that there weren't the usual mouldings, architraves and features that characterise the upper floors,' recalls Threefold director Jack Hosea.

The relative starkness might have influenced the practice's plan to introduce the decorative element by way of a 'cabinet wall' that not only incorporates different



CHARLES HOSEA (2)

functions according to which direction it faces, but acts as the de facto domestic divide. The cabinet wall became a sort of piece of transmuting furniture – a storage wall, glass vitrines, kitchen units, a piece of dining room furniture – an 'amped up' threshold between the reconfigured public and private areas,' he explains.

The floor's new open nature was helped by the fact that, at lower ground, there was no need to provide a dedicated compartmented fire escape to the main door, meaning the cabinet wall was free to wind its way around the open spaces of the flat. Entirely timber clad, it became the defining feature of the space. Hosea says: 'We really liked the rich, red, expressive grain of Douglas Fir that emphasised the wall's horizontal nature'. It also helped to disguise what are in fact basic storage carcasses ennobled by the Douglas fir appliqué – given extra quality through the judicious use of brass and glass vitrines that 'gave the wall real depth', and bespoke

JACK HOSEA DIRECTOR, THREEFOLD

We really like using Valchromat engineered coloured wood – it has a kind of powder-coated finish and beaded edges that give it a homogenous, solid look. We used it on another of our projects, Murray Mews in Camden, where we chose a matt lacquered option. It's also nice used in bright colours to inject some life into splash backs and reveals.

While it's worth spending money on a good tap – cheap ones will soon start to drip – we've never been fans

of 'catering style' hose faucets, preferring the simplicity of, ideally, a Vola fitting. But best is to source something reclaimed that can give your kitchen a unique feel, which is something we did at Hamilton Terrace.

Floor finishes will always be project specific, but we'd avoid timber in kitchen areas every time, as it's easily damaged by moisture. Instead we'd veer more towards polished concrete or a sealed stone, preferably with riven finish to give it more grip.

brass pulls and fittings.

Given the unifying strength of the effect, Hosea thinks it was money well spent, saying that you could spend the same kind of money just on the kitchen; but for Threefold it was about directing money towards the big wins to make the sure the kitchen was just part of the bigger architectural idea. To this end, once it was in the kitchen zone, it went for unifying 11cm thick concrete worktops, which were cast-in place in sections. The kitchen top was set off with the reclaimed sink and mixer tap, which the practice had de-chromed to bring it back to its brass finish.

For the floor, the firm chose a sealed Lapidia blue limestone with riven finish to give it extra grip, which also offset the polished concrete worktop. Counterpointing the brick, but picking up on its module, Threefold went for a very pale grey brick-sized tile on the back walls. 'It was a smooth textural moment in among the rich grain of the joinery,' says Hosea.

The Arab Studio

Below: The four original rooms that made up the Arab Studio have been knocked through to create a single large family space.

Bottom: Original period features have been retained, but details like the glazing and joinery make it achingly contemporary.

It's probably no surprise that the 19th century architect responsible for such eclectic works as the Italianate Christchurch Streatham, the imposing Grimsby Dock Tower based on Siena's campanile, and the round arch rundbogenstil of the Museum of Childhood should have had a studio at his own home in a strange Moorish style. James William Wild might have been influenced by brother-in-law Owen Jones for his 'Arab studio', appended to his house in London's Maida Vale, and the result was a space with strong Spanish touches. Designer Voon Wong + Benson Saw took advantage of this when it configured the studio as a dedicated family space for its present occupant.

The listed studio is now one large space holding kitchen, family TV room, library and built-in storage seamlessly designed to accommodate all these functions without destroying the homogeneity of the single space. Project architect Francisco Serradilla says it took time to get the proposal past the planners, who were resistant to the creation of the large glass wall to the rear of the studio. They conceded to the architect's assurances that the features of the space – notably its original windows and heavy-set timber ceiling, both of English oak – would be restored, respected and integrated into the contemporary look.

'We usually specify Fineline windows, but here we opted for glazing from IQ Glass, as we were really keen to have a frame that was absolutely flush to the ground level to give a seamless flow from inside to out,' says Serradilla. There were, however, colour differences between the York stone flags outside and the interior flooring stone. 'The client wanted a limestone, but a darker one, perhaps because it was going to be used in a kitchen area, so we ended up going for a Spanish Bateig Blue,' he adds. This harder limestone brought other benefits. At around 100m² overall, the size of the space meant the firm was keen to use a larger 900mm by 900mm tile, and the softer York stone would have been a lot thicker than the 20mm Bateig Blue tiles they specified – bringing a bare foot that bit closer to the underfloor heating that's installed throughout.

Originally four rooms, the space was knocked through and steels installed to create the single open area. The kitchen units, and indeed all the bespoke joinery for



FRANCISCO SERRADILLA
PROJECT ARCHITECT, VW + BS

the flat, was in thick veneered English Oak MDF. Serradilla explains that the joinery height line corresponds to the original dado – the line is respected across all the spaces, visually unifying them. The oak ceiling and windows had originally been black painted, but the firm argued to have them stripped back to expose the oak, blending it in to the new timber joinery. Serradilla thinks the eclectic Wild would have liked the changes, saying: 'Revealing the true colour of the timber took the original heaviness of the studio away and replaced it with a lightness that has transformed the space.'

'About 50% of our workload involves interior redesigning of kitchen and bathroom areas. We really like using natural materials in our projects. We use a lot of English oak, ash and sycamore, and use natural stone in preference to things like poured resin floors. That said, we are specifying concrete screed finishes on a couple of our jobs, but generally we find that clients can think it's a bit industrial – they seem to go far more for the stone. As shown on this project, we like the beauty and utility of stainless steel for our kitchens – work surfaces will be either this or Corian – but we've yet to convince a client to go for concrete worktops. Taps are an important consideration in the design of a kitchen. Generally we like the look and quality of Franke or Blanco faucets.'



Klein House

Below: A large steel runs from the rear elevation to an interior column, opening up the internal space.
 Middle: With the pivot doors open, the island bar becomes exactly that.
 Bottom: Looking back, highly polished timber doors give a modern feel to the Edwardian main house.

Architect Paul Archer Design has, over time, worked hard on the residential extension, mainly concentrating on high end, bespoke developments. Its recent Klein House in London continues its theme of pulling the inside towards the outside – here shown by an island unit that seems to punch through a glass wall to the patio beyond.

The client wanted piecemeal changes to the whole house and a kitchen/living/dining space big enough for the children to amuse themselves independently while remaining part of a bigger 'family' space. The practice replaced the higgledy piggledy nature of the lower ground with hefty hidden steels running across the elevation and back to the main rear face of the house, interrupting the area with two internal steel columns.

'We wanted to make this large open space stretch even further to the patio, so we designed it to open as much as possible to the outside, even to the point of making internal elements external,' says project architect Elizabeth Partington. 'While the extending island bar creates the main illusion of this, it's helped by the two huge Cantifix 'Pureglaze' pivot doors that open to the garden – which also meant there were no vertical mullions'.

Partington explains that while the kitchen units are standard carcasses, this converts externally to a rendered block work structure. Between the two on the weather line, the glazing runs in an 'L' around this block work frame. 'The worktops actually butt up against a steel frame and the glass sits within that,' explains Partington. The steel then sits on the block wall, but giving the sense of passing through the glass. The base might be different, but the same Quarella stone worktop finish runs from inside to out.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Paul Archer Design was keen to ensure that its extension, which created a deeper plan at ground level, didn't create darker spaces. 'The clients were used to a 'sunny spot' at the back of the house where they used to sit and look out at the garden and they wanted us to recreate it in the new extension,' says Partington, hence the use of rooflights.





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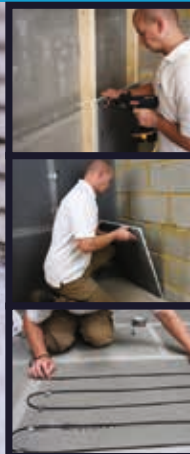
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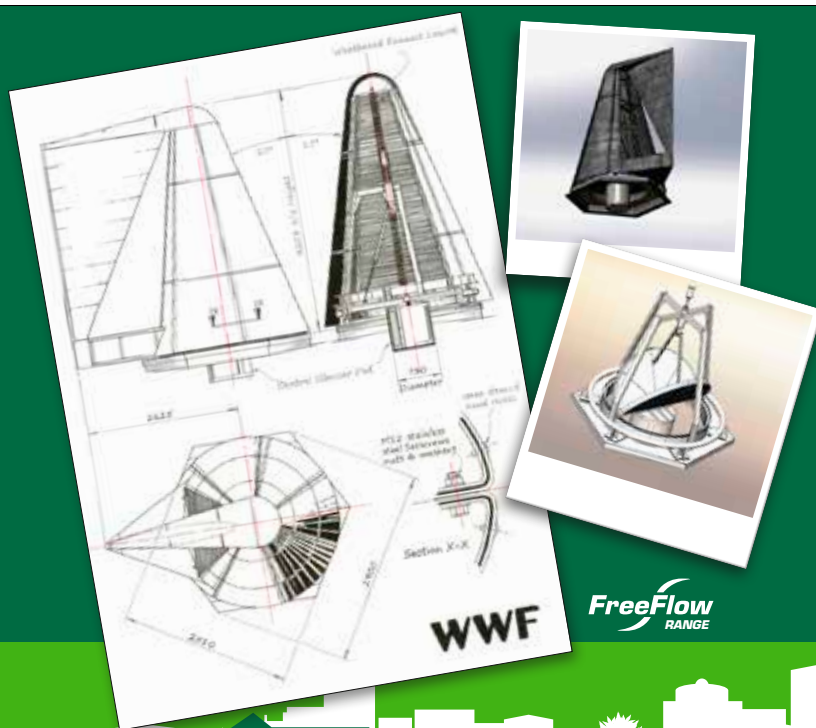
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Walber House

Below: The curated randomness of Pauline House.

Middle: Walber House kitchen – the result of vague conversations and concrete worktops.

Bottom: Seabank Cottage. Materials are almost throwaway – the thinking isn't.

'When it comes to kitchens I'd say our clients are the sort of people who love cooking, but don't see a fancy kitchen as a means to that,' says Brian Greathead, director at architect Manalo & White. They would also appear to be a bit quirky – even eccentric. At the firm's recently completed Walber House, his client, who is also a friend, asked to have a 'dog drawer' built in to the design so the dog basket could be pushed out of sight when not in use. Greathead says the client's dog-owning friends are so impressed they're thinking of doing the same when they re-do their kitchens.

The firm has done high-spec bespoke kitchens, but you get the feeling that Greathead is more excited by working with the very limited budgets available for Walber House and the two other projects shown here: Seabank Cottage, the Norfolk holiday home the Till family, of whom son Jeremy is Dean of Central St Martins; and Pauline House, Greathead's own London pied-a-terre. 'All these are part of an organic process of design – lots of conversations with the clients and working with the kind of contractor that's more open about how things come together. The kitchens were pretty much designed on-site with no drawings,' he says.

The materials might be different, but the design principles are similar. Greathead dispenses with wall units but creates a simple shelf at the back of the units that can be used to keep bottles and small appliances within reach, without cluttering up the work surface. At Walber House a rooflight follows the line of the steel polished cement worktop that was cast

in-situ. At Seabank Cottage, it was a bog-standard catering style one in stainless steel. Both are used because they're not only easy to keep clean, but they age gracefully – Greathead is intrigued by the traces of time and habitation.

There's also a filter of nostalgia. While he's specified a £1,000 Kohler Karbon tap in one kitchen (it might be anachronistic, but his own preference is for individual hot and cold taps, and for such rooms as a larder) at Seabank Cottage a beautifully made timber shed sits in the space. Greathead rues the day he decided to remove the larder in his own home to free up much-needed space for his family. In his London flat meanwhile, the larder is almost a display cabinet, its amber glass casting an almost Soane-like dull religious light into the corridor.

Greathead says that his own flat's kitchen in Pauline House is his favourite as it embodies everything that he aspires to in terms of economy and utility. The steel was a cast-off from a contractor, the timber backsplash leftovers from another job. Furniture was sourced from secondhand shops, as was the crockery. But despite all that apparent randomness there is no doubting the hand of the architect in the precise curation of the space – there's even a deliberateness to the cheeky Gingham curtain below the sink hiding the bleach and washing-up liquid. But Greathead is also very happy with his friend's kitchen at Walber House.

'I'm usually nervous about working for friends,' he confides, 'as you're expecting to turn up there one day and they'll be complaining – but it's worked for them and they really love it.' ●



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1 AQUACLEAN SELA GEBERIT

Geberit's AquaClean Sela is the company's latest WC to clean its users with water. A design influenced by Milan-based designer and architect Matteo Thun, the shower toilet cleans its user with a spray of warm water, providing, says Geberit, 'an unbeatable feeling of freshness throughout the day'. But the luxury avoids extravagance, using only 0.5 litres of water in the pre-set spray time and heating the water only as the user approaches, helping to reduce energy consumption.

geberit-aquaclean.co.uk

2 SQUARE GEOMETRY TOTO

Hoping to make the bathroom a place of relaxation as well as cleansing, Japanese manufacturer Toto has designed its new Square Geometry range to look elegant and streamlined, while incorporating technical innovations. The collection features a state-of-the-art toilet and washlet which includes a warm water spray, heated seat, dryer and odour-absorbing deodoriser. On top of this its e-water+ function sprays the bowl before use and after, so that not only the user but also the device ends the experience clean and fragrant. All part of the service.

eu.toto.com

3 INDIVIDUALDESIGN SIEMATIC

Mindful that a significant and growing part of modern life is spent in the kitchen, Siematic has cooked up IndividualDesign, a flexible system that creates kitchens tailored to personal taste. Enabling a mix and match of different elements of its kitchen programmes, the picture shows Siematic's FloatingSpaces shelving system and S2 cabinets, united by a new natural oak wood veneer with a continuous grain that will horizontally or vertically traverse a run of units.

siematic.co.uk

4 DUEMILAOTTO BOFFI

Duemilaotto kitchens go back to nature without any of the attendant discomforts. High tech meets natural materials in its designs, which use new treated woods, and new varieties of composite stone for the worktops and peninsular eating areas. And there's more: artisan floor tiles sit alongside stainless steel legs on the breakfast bar and wall-suspended or island compositions. The range is completed by lamps with LED illumination systems and the architect's favourite – new styles of handles, both externally mounted and integrated into the doors.

boffi.com



5 KARTELL LAUFEN

Kartell by Laufen is an integrated bathroom design that brings together Italian style and Swiss efficiency. The design uses the revolutionary SaphirKeramik, a material that allows a corner radius of up to 2mm, and creates washbasins that are as thin as blades and very light. SaphirKeramik weighs half that of normal ceramics but is immune to the effects of scratches, chemicals and limescale. The two companies assert that Laufen's imperishable ceramics and Kartell's indestructible plastics are key to the sustainability of the project. So is this the last bathroom furniture anyone need ever buy?

uk.laufen.com

6 FANTASIA ELICA

It might look like a giant iPad stuck on the wall but this is Fantasia, Elica's latest contribution to kitchen chic – a vertical cooker hood. The stylish design has just won this year's Red Dot Design Award, and as well as looking good it can extract air at rates of up to 610m³ per hour. Available in a black or white glass finish or silestone quartz, the hood incorporates a single panel that conceals an airflow system which extends along the entire perimeter of the unit. These cavities capture the air directed across the surface of the unit, which has both grease and charcoal filters as standard.

elica.co.uk

7 CONODUO KALDEWEI

A five star hotel must need five star bathrooms... Kaldewei Conoduo baths have been specified to furnish the bathrooms at the Waldorf Astoria's new Berlin branch. Part of the Avantgarde collection, the 180cm by 80cm baths are roomy enough to accommodate two bathers at once, with sloping backs at each end and a centrally positioned overflow. And with the special anti-slip enamelling, made from a combination of quartz and sand burnt into the steel, romantic bathers can get friendly without losing their dignity.

kaldewei.com

8 NEEDO INTELLIHEAT

With an eye on both energy efficiency and fashion, Intelliheat's Needo electric heating system obviously lets householders heat every room to its own timing and temperature, so the bathroom – via the stylish towel rail pictured – can be tropical while the bedroom is gently warmed just in time for sleep. This, and technological innovation in the core elements of each radiator, can produce a 30% cost saving while still giving users a nice warm feeling – due to appropriate temperatures, lower costs and the pleasure of looking at elegant radiators while they adjust the room controls.

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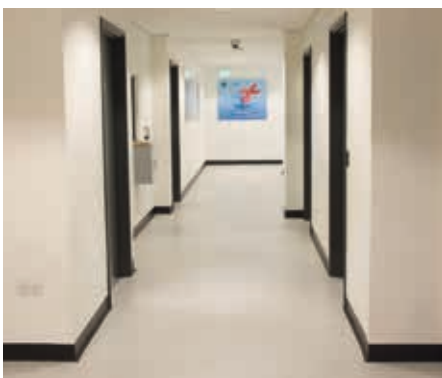
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www.nora.com/uk

KINGSPAN ACCESS FLOORS ACCESS FLOORING AT BRENT CIVIC CENTRE

Kingspan Access Floors has completed a contract to supply more than 19,000m² of access flooring at a new civic centre for Brent Council that is on course to be the greenest public building in the UK. Built opposite Wembley Stadium, the civic centre aims to gain an outstanding standard in the BREEAM environmental assessment scheme.

www.kingspanaccessfloors.co.uk

TILE OF SPAIN XTREME BY APAVISA

Porcelain tiles from innovative Spanish manufacturer Apavisa are distinguished by advanced technical characteristics such as micro-sealing, high flexing resistance (61 N/mm²), very low water absorption and resistance to frost and surface wear. The striking range shown here features 'corroded' metal aesthetics in rectified anti-slip porcelain suitable for interiors, exteriors and high-traffic applications.

www.apavisa.com

MODULEO ACCREDITED TO ISO 9001 AND 14001

Leading luxury vinyl flooring specialist Moduleo has been independently certified with ISO 9001, the global quality management standard, and ISO 14001 which specifies environmental requirements for effective management. David Bigland, MD of Moduleo for the UK and Eire says the ISO standards demonstrate the firm's ability to quickly deliver high quality, sustainable flooring solutions.

www.moduleo.co.uk

FILA MP90 SEALANT IN NEW SOLVENT-FREE FORMULATION

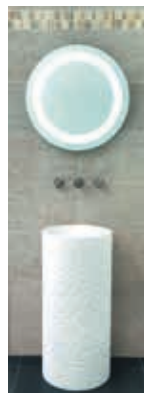
Fila is launching a solvent-free version of its best-selling sealant – MP90. Part of Fila's Green Line, FILAMP90 ECO is a penetrating stain proofer for polished porcelain, ceramics, polished natural stone, terrazzo and crackle-glaze tiles. Developed with the environment in mind, it also offers uncompromised performance and versatility. It is LEED-compliant, suitable for use on food contact surfaces and can be used internally and externally.

www.filachim.com

GEBERIT STYLISH STORAGE IS ALL PART OF THE PACKAGE

Geberit has introduced an innovative way to reduce bathroom clutter by integrating drawers in the side of its glass Monolith sanitary module. This keeps toiletries close to hand but stores them out of sight, making the module ideal for smaller bathrooms, where wall-hung sanitaryware helps to create the illusion of space. Drawers can be fitted on the left or right-hand side of the Geberit Monolith, which has space for daily essentials on its countertop.

www.geberit.co.uk

BAGNO BRINGING NATURAL MATERIALS TO THE BATHROOM

Bagno Design offers basins and bathtubs made of composite stone, to complement a neutral colour palette. BagnoTec stone's luxurious finish is extremely durable and several items are embossed. Pictured is the Pool Engraved freestanding washbasin, which comes in glacier white or charcoal black composite stone. Measuring 400mm by 850mm and featuring a beautiful pattern it will be a focal point of the room.

www.bagnodesign.co.uk

REGIONOX NEW SINK RANGE FOR COMMERCIAL APPLICATIONS

Reginox has launched the Regi-Commercial Hygienic range, a collection of stainless steel sinks, taps and worksurfaces designed specifically for commercial, public or retail areas where hygienic products are required. The range features sinks with or without overflow; stainless steel worksurfaces that can include integrated sinks or washroom vanity bowls and taps from leading supplier Pegler.

www.reginox.co.uk

KALDEWEI LISTEN WHILE YOU SOAK WITH SOUND WAVE

Sound Wave is the first audio system for Kaldewei 3.5mm steel enamel baths that plays music from Bluetooth-enabled devices such as tablets, laptops or smartphones. The bath acts as the sound box, with or without water, so simply pair up your Bluetooth device (up to eight per household) to play your favourite tunes. And, if you are already the discerning owner of a Kaldewei bath, fear not, as all models can be retro-fitted with Sound Wave.

www.kaldewei.co.uk

HANSGROHE RAINDANCE SELECT E300 3JET SHOWERPIPE

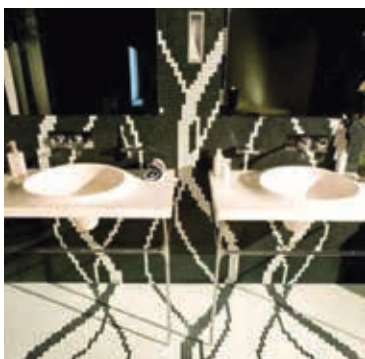
The Raindance Select collection from Hansgrohe offers a choice of spray modes with a simple push button 'select' operation. The new Raindance Select E300 3jet overhead shower (shown here on the showerpipe) features RainStream, a new third style of spray. Rows of cascading shower nozzles project the water in a uniform curtain which keeps its shape all the way to the ground. A button on the thermostat switches it on and off.

www.hansgrohe.co.uk

LANDAU PARAPAN GREY IS THE NEW NEUTRAL

Grey is a favourite for neutral schemes across the Landau Parapan ranges. High gloss acrylic Parapan® comes in five shades, from cool contemporary to traditional warmer tones. Graphite with clean white or glossy black can be particularly striking. Grey also performs well as a backdrop for Parapan's® lime green, red, orange, pink and new Zest Yellow colours. Its mirror-like reflective quality offers a contrast texture to grey woods from Landau's exotic veneers.

www.landauparapan.co.uk

TREND LUXURIOUS MONOCHROME TILES ARE IN VOGUE THIS SEASON

Black and white is this season's fashion, and Italian decorative surfaces specialist Trend expresses this design theme in a whole host of beautiful, lasting products, from tiny 1cm by 1cm micro mosaics to luxurious 3m long granite, quartz and glass composite sheets. Between them, these materials cover most interior and many exterior surfaces in supremely distinctive style and permit virtually endless permutations of creative design.

www.trend-group.com

AQATA LUXURY WALK-INS AND SHOWER SCREENS

Aqata's luxury walk-ins and contemporary shower screens with hinged panels are designed to create seamless wetroom-style showering areas. The stylish Spectra SP446 walk-in screen with hinged panel, in particular, has become a best-seller. Offering clean lines and a spacious contemporary showering space, the 1950mm high corner walk-in has a practical 350mm hinged panel to keep overspray to a minimum.

www.aqata.co.uk

MUMFORD & WOOD CONSERVATION WINDOWS EXCEED REGULATIONS



Mumford & Wood is surpassing government regulations that aim to upgrade the country's building stock. Enhanced products in the Conservation™ range, including the new triple-glazed box sash, use only certified, clear-grade engineered timber for exceptional thermal performance, strength and stability. Mumford & Wood's energy rated windows and doors are manufactured entirely in the UK.

www.mumfordwood.com

SIKA SOLUTIONS FOR WESTON-SUPER-MARE'S GRAND PIER



Sika concrete admixtures and Sika Sarnafil roofing membranes were used for Weston-Super-Mare's award winning Grand Pier. Sika Stabiliser 4 and Sikament Boost Pak were added to the concrete so it could be successfully pumped 400m from shore to the pavilion, while Sarnafil G410-15EL, a high performance single ply membrane, was used to waterproof the pier's platforms, terraces and balconies against the harsh coastal elements.

www.sikabuildingtrust.co.uk

SILL ILLUMINATING IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM NORTH



Sill Lighting UK has supplied bespoke lighting for the Imperial War Museum North at Salford Quays. The dramatic building, designed by Daniel Libeskind, is now lit at night, highlighting the striking aluminium-clad exterior. Sill's parabolic projectors use the highest quality optics and are compact and efficient; they are discreet and effective without compromising views of this spectacular architectural landmark.

www.sill-uk.com

ULTRASCAPE PAVING THE WAY



Instarmac brand Ultrascap is an urban regeneration and landscape specialist providing high performance bedding, jointing and sealing products for all paving constructions. Its mortar paving system, independently tested by a UKAS accredited laboratory, is BS 7533 compliant. Ultrascap mortar paving system consists of Pro-Bed HS bedding mortar, Pro-Prime slurry primer and Flowpoint flowable grout.

www.ultrascape.co.uk

WEBER HIGH PERFORMANCE RENDER FOR LUXURY COASTAL HOME



Saint-Gobain Weber's high performance weber.rend MT render system has been specified for a luxury home on the Hampshire coast. The multi-coat system incorporates glass-fibre meshcloth reinforcement and a resin-rich adhesive coat that carries a choice of textured finishes in a wide range of colours, and is suitable for application onto a framed panelled background or sound masonry substrate.

www.netweber.co.uk

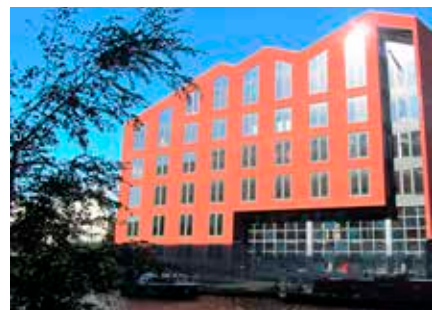
JENNIFER NEWMAN MULTI-ENVIRONMENT FURNITURE



Clerkenwell-based Jennifer Newman designs furniture that couples simplicity with durability, enabling products to be placed in a wide range of environments, inside or outside. The added benefit of colour choice enables architects to harmonise Newman's products with their design schemes. The same products can be used for outside terraces, allowing for a holistic design approach.

www.jennifernewman.com

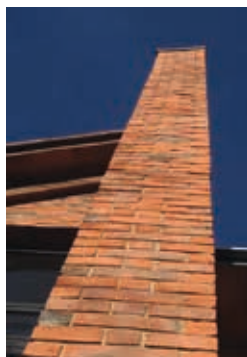
COMAR ARCHITECTURAL SYSTEMS WIN SECURED BY DESIGN LICENCE



Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems has become a Secured By Design licence holder for its Comar 5P.i, Comar 9P.i and Comar 7 windows and doors. This police initiative aims to design out crime in buildings. Its windows and doors offer features such as anti-snap and anti-bump locking systems. On points of attack stainless steel plates and protectors resist entry even under prolonged abuse/attack.

www.comar-alu.co.uk

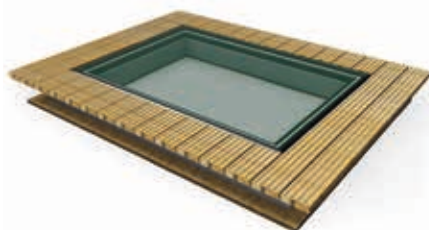
IBSTOCK EYE-CATCHING AND HIGH PERFORMING BRICK RANGE



Ibstock, the UK's largest brick maker, now offers over 50 bespoke product choices in its Linear range. These elegant, high performance, long thin bricks offer flexibility in bond pattern and joint size while helping turn an architectural vision into reality. The range has brick dimensions of 240mm (l) by 102mm (w) by 90mm (h) minimum, up to a maximum length of 490mm, and now includes two new textures – coarse and fine grained.

www.ibstock.com

XTRALITE WALK-ON ROOFLITE IS A STEP AHEAD



Xtralite Rooflights, the UK's largest rooflight manufacturer, has introduced its revolutionary 'Walk-On' rooflight. The rooflight allows foot traffic on areas such as terraces and roof gardens – or on the ground over basements – while admitting natural daylight to the rooms beneath. Decking or slabbing can be set level and aligned with the top face of the rooflight unit, creating smooth flat leisure areas. The units come in rectangular, square or round glazing and a range of colours.

www.xtralite.co.uk

KNAUF DRYWALL SYSTEMS PROTECT WASTE PLANT FROM FIRE



Two lightweight construction systems developed by Knauf Drywall are helping build the energy from waste facility at North Hykeham in Lincolnshire. Knauf Drywall's Shaftwall made installation of the liftshaft simpler while its 30m Steel Frame System provided fire- and weather-proofing far lighter than the concrete block equivalent. Knauf Shaftwall encloses service and lift shafts while working from one side – improving health and safety while reducing scaffolding.

www.knaufdrywall.co.uk

MARLEY ETERNIT RESPONSIBLE SOURCING ASSESSMENT BOOSTS RATING



Leading roofing and cladding manufacturer Marley Eternit is celebrating improved ratings on its UK manufactured clay tiles, fibre cement slates and profiled sheeting as the result of its annual third party BES 6001 certification re-assessment. These products have achieved a 'Very Good' performance rating under the BRE's BES 6001 'Framework Standard for the Responsible Sourcing of Construction Products', up from a 'Good' rating in 2012.

www.marleyeternit.co.uk

SIKA ONE STOP SHOP SEALANTS FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS



Sika has added two joint sealing solutions to its range of commercial building façade sealants. SikaHyflex joint sealants are highly durable, cost effective and will enable a 'one stop shop'. They have been developed to accommodate movement between substrates and ensure a permanent bond. SikaHyflex 250 Facade is more suited to masonry application while the SikaHyflex 260 Facade can be used where high UV resistance is paramount.

www.sikaconstruction.co.uk

KALZIP BROCHURE SHOWCASES ECONOMIC AND FLEXIBLE SYSTEM



A host of international projects depicting the Kalzip FC rainscreen system are featured in a new 20 page colour brochure which is also available to download. Ideal for new build and refurbishment projects, Kalzip's quick-fit FC rainscreen system is installed on vertically fixed modular click rails – each lightweight panel is simply hooked at the top and then 'clicked' into place at the bottom. Panels come in widths from 250mm-500mm and up to 8m lengths

www.kalzip.com

MARSHALL TUFFLEX TWIN165 FOR STUDENT UNION REFURBISHMENT



Competitive price, top quality and great looks proved to be the winning combination for Marshall-Tufflex's Twin165 double compartment cable management system, which was specified for the award-winning £8m refurbishment of Newcastle University Student Union's (NUSU) Grade II listed building. Twin165 was picked as a robust, CAT 6A compliant medium-sized PVC-U trunking, split to give power delivery 60% space and data supplies 40%.

www.marshall-tufflex.com

MARLEY ETERNIT EDGEMERE SLATE COMPLEMENTS LOG HOMES



Marley Eternit's market-leading Edgemere interlocking slate has been specified for two pioneering, pre-fabricated Canadian Log Homes at a campsite for Christian charity, Foundation Matters. After discussions with the local planning officer, the charity selected the slate as an aesthetically pleasing and practical roofing solution which would complement the natural look of the log homes and provide a seamless blend with the campsites' location.

www.marleyeternit.co.uk

GEZE UK LOVE AT FIRSTSITE FOR SLIDING DOORS



GEZE UK has created a highly unusual, all-glass dual entrance for firstsite, a visual arts organisation in Colchester. The building's 11m high front portico uses full-height glazing. GEZE UK and glazing specialist FA Firman created a set of automatic sliding doors within larger manual swing doors. Two giant pivoted glass door leaves each have a smaller door leaf within. Single Slimdrive SL operators fixed through the glass to each smaller door leaf, are interfaced to work as a pair.

www.geze.co.uk

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ALEX GORDON ASSOCIATE AT JESTICO + WHILES GIVES US THREE OF HIS SPECIFICATION FAVOURITES



VELFAC COMPOSITE WINDOWS

We often use composite windows. The natural timber finish gives an interior warmth that aluminium systems don't, while the aluminium exterior provides a durable and low maintenance finish. Although project budgets don't always stretch to the use of such window systems (which are generally much more expensive than aluminium), we find that creative use of composite windows as 'window walling', in place of more expensive curtain walling, often allows a composite system to be used throughout. We have used this strategy on education projects to give a uniform interior and exterior appearance and consistent sight lines whether windows are opening or fixed – a key benefit of systems such as Velfac's over other aluminium window systems.

Manufacturer: Velfac



IBSTOCK DORSET RED STOCK BRICK

The humble brick is one of my favourite, if not my most favoured building material. We use brickwork a lot on different building types and are always looking for new and interesting ways to use it, just as civilization has for thousands of years. Three of my last four completed buildings have used Ibstock's Dorset Red Stock brick, which we've specified on account of the natural warmth and subtle variation this brick gives. While relatively flat in tone and uniform in appearance over a large area, when light falls across the surface of the brick it really brings out the natural imperfections of its manufacturing process and helps to give the facade character. By introducing simple brick detailing such as recesses, projections and splays, depth and interest can be easily added to enliven a facade.

Manufacturer: Ibstock



NORAPLAN UNI RUBBER FLOORING

Rubber flooring is relatively cheap, wears well and comes from a sustainable source. I hate the flecks in a number of sheet flooring products as they can not only look like vomit but also have a connection with the associated smell found in institutional/hospital buildings, where they are often used on account of their ease of maintenance and ability to conceal dirt and wear. However, when specified for the right type of space the finish offered by flat tone/finish, such as Nora's Noraplan Uni, can create a brilliant effect across large areas. I installed this product in my bathroom and kitchen at home and the product gives an almost seamless finish across the floor. It comes in sheets or tiles in a bold colour range that can create a real statement. Used in large quantities, it can also be made in any colour you wish to specify.

Manufacturer: Nora

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JAN-CARLOS KUCHAREK ENJOYS THREE OF THIS ISSUE'S OUT-TAKES



ONCE MORE WITH FEELING

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WHEN ONE DOOR SHUTS ANOTHER OPENS

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Can we really tell you everything you need to know about BIM? nb-yes.

As we all know, BIM is here and although people are becoming familiar with it, there is still much to learn. NBS is here to help. Our experts have an in-depth understanding of what BIM means and the changes it has set in motion. To find out more visit www.theNBS.com/BIM.

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For more details, call us on **0845 456 9594**
or visit www.theNBS.com/BIM

Axor Starck Organic



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your
Head
and
your
Heart



► How much thought and how much heart has gone into creating Axor Starck Organic?
An extraordinary amount: resulting in a functional mixer shower jet that is unprecedented, revolutionary low water consumption of 3.5 l/min. and a totally new operating concept.
Find out more about the new bathroom collection, which will enable you to experience water in a completely new way, at head-and-heart.com
For more information visit pro.hansgrohe.co.uk

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