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Resplendent in all her finery. Who? The Queen? Well rarely a building: Farrow and Ball with stripped brass is the finest that tasteful modern architecture normally stretches to. Even the shimmering copper facade of CF Møller’s Panum Institute in Copenhagen (p33) has little of the jewelled presence that finery denotes. But behind the brick of the restraining stays on the voluptuous art deco Liverpool Philharmonic (p22), its pared down finery makes its jewels sparkle. Caruso St John’s interpretation of the decoration, originally influenced by pyramid finds, sees choice elements picked out in gold against unexpected hues. It would give the haughty Queen Nefertiti a run for her money. And it is a reminder that finery can be deployed without resulting in bling.

Indulge your senses: Liverpool Philharmonic, page 22

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The bold gestural designs that marked out Kathryn Findlay’s work are visible in the early designs with a grand ramp curving down into the gardens behind the museum, but few survived.

York’s revamped Art Gallery disappoints: ribaj.com/buildings/york-art-gallery

Natural trends that once would have remained confined to the specialty food sector are now having an immediate impact on beauty, apparel and even architecture.

How buying natural products has reached construction: ribaj.com/products/the-new-natural
A 5m tall concrete wall soars out of an idyllic sandy beach only 150m from the water’s edge. A concrete jetty perpendicular to the wall carries a dipping pool, long and thin, into a craggy landscape peppered with flamboyan trees, maguey plants and other cacti. Approaching Casa Wabi from the beach in 30°C heat, it is hard to resist the urge to dive in. A lonely crab scuttles alongside the windbreaker screen. The wall is sticky to touch: the concrete is sweating.

Casa Wabi, a multi-disciplinary arts centre with residential accommodation for six artists, is Tadao Ando’s latest export to Mexico. Feeling like one of the apes in the opening sequence of Kubrick’s film 2001: A Space Odyssey, I retract my hand and instead inquire into Ando’s enigma.

Locals here on the Oaxacan coast, an hour’s plane journey from Mexico City, prefer to use something more malleable and easy to build their houses – parota, a hardwood, for structural support, leaves from palm trees for roofs and stems to decorate walls.

Vernacular palapa construction roofs also feature alongside concrete at Casa Wabi, as well as the traditional open-sided structure. The Japanese architect has elevated the roof to create a gap between it and the concrete form so that they never touch. In Ando thinking, ‘the open space unifies the two essences’ – ie ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’.

‘I admire Ando’s use of raw material, which gets better with age,’ says the New York-based Mexican artist and founder of Casa Wabi, Bosco Sodi, explaining why he commissioned Ando.

The brutality of exposed concrete resonates with the earthiness of the thatched pitched roofs. The void between them is pleasing, its execution immaculate and sophisticated. The main concrete screen separates public areas from the private elements of the winged complex sprawled across the flatland, but the programming is not so clear cut. The wall traverses an expansive, semi-outdoors communal room where meals are taken together on a long table and Mezcal drunk until the leaves on the giant palapa roof start shivering in the midnight breeze.

Inside, two freestanding angular pods accommodate Sodi’s private living quarters. The interior is left in raw concrete enhanced by perota wood fittings and the structural undersides of the pitched roof thatching left exposed, faithful to the traditional format.

Casa Wabi had originally been envisaged as a retreat for Sodi and his artist friends, and as a host Sodi wanted to be at the centre of things, welcoming the guests. However, when Patricia Martin, a well-known art curator from Mexico City, was appointed as director of the foundation, everything changed. Martin hired two local anthropologists, Genaro Guevara Cortina and Denise Lechner, to connect the artists to the locals and vice versa. Community engagement is now a vital part of Casa Wabi’s residency programmes.

And so, with assistance from Martin, Guevara and Lechner, a synergy of the most beautiful kind is emerging at Casa Wabi between ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ forms of architecture and community. With this in mind, Ando’s enigma is dissolved.

Yuki Sumner is a writer on architecture.
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In the darkness your neural synapses start to fire, telling you it’s Christmas – or an anonymous nightclub in Berlin. Photographers André Giesemann and Daniel Schulz have been working on portraying nightclubs after the party is over and once the lights have been switched on, as a means of getting under the skin of the illusory spaces of the clubbing world. When asked to provide us with an image however, what they sent us was a ‘failed’ attempt at capturing the illusion itself. As Giesemann explains, it turns out that trying to freeze the spirit of these spaces is about as easy as photographing fairies. Perhaps its intangibility is due to the fact that the illusion is predicated on human occupation, rather than any intrinsic aspect of the place itself. Photographing them for the series was technically complex, involving long exposures for the large format images; so long in fact, that the two would go off for a drink elsewhere while they were waiting. But in discovering what failed and how far the envelope of underexposure could be pushed, they came to realise their ‘unheimlich’ images. A salutary lesson for us all; as the spectre of the playwright Samuel Beckett reminds us, ‘fail better’.

Vom Bleiben, Berlin 2013
Photograph André Giesemann and Daniel Schulz
Words Jan-Carlos Kucharek
Good design makes light work

CaSA Architects’ workshops demonstrate the social benefits of good design for Ringwood’s Lantern Community

Words: Eleanor Young  Photographs: Simon Maxwell

Quiet concentration as the shuttle is threaded through, thought before the correct foot pedal is pressed for the loom to tamp down the thread and bring another line of material into being. At the Lantern Community nearRingwood in Hampshire, soft cushion covers, simple lavender bags, smart table runners and linen dishtowels emerge from the hands and looms of the companions in the workshop.

Beyond this Steiner-influenced enclave, companions are more normally known as people with learning disabilities. If you have encountered a group on the street you may have sensed a fearful wildness and the impression that stressed carers are only a step away from being out of control. But in their workshops, designed by CaSA Architects, the atmosphere is studious, with hands engaged. Why crafts? ‘They are what your hands are for’, explains Simon Figg, lynchpin of the community. ‘There are inherent gestures built in to us, it is about what it is to be human.’

The spaces for exercising those gestures used to be a motley collection of garages and sheds. At its heart the warm wooden hub of shop, cafe and meeting space shines out from a Feilden Clegg Bradley building, giving the community its name. Since it was finished in the 1990s it has been the centre point to the grounds and the houses – which most of the companions live in – scattered around it.

Now that centre has bloomed. Two new buildings, long and low, look onto a small scale landscape spread around a large tulip tree, in yellow autumn array when I visited.

Overhanging roofs may provide shading but also offer a protective wrap and, even on a grey day, a veranda – a hunkered down stoop. Here workshops meet the garden and, edged by bench-walls, people meet people. The same communal principle operates on the plan of both new buildings, which are entered through the kitchen that links the main spaces and provide the social glue, over tea, that joins together the sessions of work.

While the two buildings share a lot, the pottery workshop and art room are dug into the earth of the hill, a small signal that this is a place of the earth. Actually, though, dust is what really had to be dealt with: extractors deal with this and also remove some of the heat of the kiln. Here the most delicate and beautiful pieces are made in fine ceramic: less thumbs into clay, more delicate filigrees. The demand from the shop for lights and cups is such that if this was a true production line the teams would be being hurried along, but
there is a balance to be struck between pro-
duction and measured, education-led work.

The second building, for weaving and
seasonal craft, uses the same highly insu-
lated envelope with natural ventilation,
using BMS for window controls, based on
Passivhaus principles. Also housing a wood
drying store and dying room, it is a little larg-
er. Its processes are signified by the woven western red cedar on one face. On the other,
slats of more western red cedar, now greying,
offers a less refined nod to the seasonal craft.

One wonders if the fitted out workshops,
each to a different brief with bright wool wall
here and sewing space there, might prove
inflexible in the future. It is hard to tell: the activities and residents, some who have lived
here most of their lives, seem very settled.
But the demands of local authority funders and the Care Quality Commission have
wrought many changes over the last decades.

Emma Borbely looks after the activi-
ties of the day for the 40 resident and 25 day
companions and has worked, and some-
times lived, at the Lantern Community for
two decades since she was eighteen. She
acknowledges that 10 years of masterplans,
designs and fundraising seems a lot for two
buildings that could have been simple tim-
ber sheds. But no, this should show the qual-
ity that the Lantern Community offers res-
idents. For CaSA, the dedication over this
time became a personal project that drew on
many of the practice’s interests in sustain-
ability and, perhaps, the personal ethos of
director Ian Walker. Walking freely around
this pleasant and reinvigorated little village,
the simple lines of the project seem perfectly
judged for the setting, reflecting the care and
purpose the community itself generates.

**Pottery plan**

1. Store
2. Kiln room
3. Pottery studio
4. Tea room
5. Flexible work space
6. Table looms
7. Sewing
8. Weaving studio
9. Dying room
10. External store
11. Seasonal craft workshop
12. Covered work area

**Weavery plan**

1. Store
2. Kiln room
3. Pottery studio
4. Tea room
5. Flexible work space
6. Table looms
7. Sewing
8. Weaving studio
9. Dying room
10. External store
11. Seasonal craft workshop
12. Covered work area

**Credits**

**Client** Lantern Community
**Architect** CaSA Architects
**Contractor** Greendale Construction
**Structural engineer** Mark Lovell Design Engineers
**Building services engineer** Greengauge Building Energy
**Quantity surveyor** Smith Thomas Consult
**Windows** V200 System
**Windows manufacturer** Velfac Direct
**Sliding doors** Katzbeck Windows and Doors
**Brick** Ibstock Brick
**Timber woven panels** Garden Trellis Company
**Flooring** Forbo
**Rooflights** Lamlux
**Flatroof** IKO Single Ply

**IN NUMBERS**

- £800,000 total contract cost
- 372m² gross internal floor area
- £2150/m² GIFA cost

**Form of contract:** JCT intermediate

Below The woven timber
fronting the weaving
workshop.
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The power of design

Grimshaw shows how a wider approach to designing Suffolk’s waste to power plant has minimised its impact on the landscape

Words: Kay Hughes Photographs: Jim Stephenson

Given that the Suez Waste to Energy Plant in Great Blakenham takes waste from the whole of Suffolk and produces enough electricity for 30,000 homes, the first distant view of its two slender stacks above the roadside hedges is both surprising and encouraging. It is also an example of how spending a small amount on the design of infrastructure (compared to the cost of the plant) pays dividends not only for building efficiency improvements but also for long term public acceptance of these necessary buildings.

The plant, which began operation in 2014, was at the outset subjected to scrutiny by the planning department – hence the appointment of Grimshaw Architects. Partner Kirsten Lees is clear, however, that the firm’s greatest contribution was the delivery of a wider strategy related to the form, function and building processes. And this is true: its comprehensive design analysis and shaping of the building form in the landscape followed by a complimentary Cabe design review meant planning was never an issue.

Architects have more to offer such logical systems infrastructure than is immediately apparent: it is not just a case of prettying up facades for planning. At the Olympic Park, where I oversaw the commissioning and delivery of designs for the infrastructure, the architects really delved into the engineering processes to define the form and inform the architecture. This not only improves public perception of the buildings but retains value in the adjacent land or landscapes.

Grimshaw’s grasp of the context of the
Understanding the Gripping Valley context was essential to planning the building.

**IN NUMBERS**

- **£180m** total contract cost
- **9,900m²** area

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Gripping Valley and the semi rural landscape pepper potted with industrial buildings led to an analytic approach to the massing. The final site layout is the result of the analysis of a significant range of plant arrangement options, where Grimshaw carefully broke down the independent functions and volumes to optimize the appearance of the plant and its functions. What remains is a pragmatic clear layout which functions efficiently for users but considerably reduces the visible bulk of the plant.

Grimshaw initially separated the large footprint of the ash and waste store, nestling it low on the site behind a band of perimeter trees, the railway and road. This in turn has freed the arrangement of the remaining site for the other volumes to be more clearly expressed and set in an east west sequence ringed by a one-way service road.

On the building approach from the local roads, tree screening mitigates the scale disconnect between the perimeter and the huge building, almost entirely disguising it so that key views are either from the middle distance or within the site.

The main site entrance is set back from Bamford Road creating a green foreground for queuing HGVs. The length of approach acts as visual mediator between the scale from outside and the parking and office space and HGV weighbridge within.

To the right a retention pond filled with water harvested from the plant building roofs forms part of the landscape setting that signals the visitor centre and staff entrance.

Suspended over the retention pond, the offices and visitor centre have dramatic views of the surrounding countryside. Elevating these staffed areas might initially seem excessive, but it allows for direct connections to the plant control areas, avoids pedestrian/vehicular crossover on the service road carrying HGV traffic around the main plant building, and solves a lot of functional problems. Furthermore the centre manager found the office space, a significant improvement on the customary black box, a welcome contrast to other facility working environments. It is hard to believe this does not help with staff morale and retention.

The inclusion of a visitor centre in the overall building composition also ensures engagement with local residents and pro-

Below: Visitors' centre and offices are elevated over a balancing pond and soft planting.

Below: Inside the boilerhouse.
vides an educational and community re-
source. The centre offers tours of the facility
and comprehensive information about waste
and recycling, and the tours are fully booked.

HGVs go to the weighbridges and then
the tipping hall, where they unload waste
into a deep bunker with cranes above. These
operate not unlike the crane machines
in amusement arcades – but at a dramatically
different scale. Then the waste is mixed to
ensure it has a regular calorific value before
being lifted into the furnace where it is burnt
at high temperature to produce heat energy.

Waste is burnt in the boiler hall/furn-
ace – the plant’s largest volume. Flue gas
is treated here and toxins extracted, and it
houses the turbines.

Finally, the waste is transferred across
to the Bottom Ash Recovery facility where
a magnet picks out metal. The remaining
ash products are then graded for re-use in
either roads or buildings. All in all this is an
efficient process producing energy and waste
that can be recycled elsewhere. Only a very
small percentage is toxic and has not found a
new use, but that is coming soon.

The team is very explicit about the artic-
ulation of the different parts to break down
the massing and express more directly the
process and functions within the plant.
Its ‘shrink wrapping’ of the internal func-
tions has reduced the size of the enclosure
volumes. The distinct expression of each
volume and different well detailed materials
with clean lines make for an economic and
smart building.

The boiler hall, which is the primary func-
tion and the biggest volume, has been picked
out for special treatment. External cladding
of translucent polycarbonate with twisting
horizontal louvres mounted externally gives
the building an ephemeral visual texture. The
louvres’ changing angles reflect the light dif-
f erently and seen from afar they create a shim-
mering unsteady movement that reduces the
volume’s visibility in the landscape. Running
the length of the roof, transparent ETFE strips
admit light behind the facades, creating a fan-
tastic top lit working environment and mak-
ing them luminescent.

Other volumes such as the tipping hall
are clad in a darker panel intended to ground
the buildings. However, because they are set
against the very successful ephemeral treat-
ment of the main boiler hall they now make the
other elements of the building more
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visible and heavy especially from a distance.

I left impressed by what the architectural team had achieved and the care and attention it had paid to the functioning of the building as well as its quality. As the car rattled off along the bumpy lane through the withering autumn landscape, towards the soulless ring road that encloses Ipswich, the slight slim stacks of the waste to energy plant spoke more elegantly. The design effort to expose those stacks and remove the standard bulky flue casing was clear.

All in all this building finds the right line: its design approach has made it economic and functional and as unobtrusive as it could be. It is also a great place to work in and steps a long way from the portal frames and haphazard structures of so many utilities buildings.

As political decision makers continue to be evaded by broader challenge of building vital infrastructure to service a growing population and to deal with climate change, schemes like these offer hope. It not only offers an alternative to landfill but it also sensitively addresses the visual impact of infrastructure buildings – which so often causes opposition.

Suffolk County Council is to be commended for its initial hard line and so is client Suez Sita, which looked beyond the process and understood how profound is the subconscious effect of these buildings on the landscape and the public whose support they need. To build more they have to take this on; it will pay back long term dividends.

Kay Hughes is director of design consultancy Khaa

Credits
Client SUEZ environment (formerly SITA UK)
Architect Grimshaw
Main contractor Lagan Construction / CNIM (joint venture)
Quantity surveyor Lagan Construction
Structural engineer and M&E consultant RPS / TATA Steel Projects
Planning consultant / supervisor RPS
Landscape architect Land Use Consultants (LUC)

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The beat goes on

Caruso St John’s vibrant colours and deferential refurbishment of Liverpool Philharmonic have given Rowse’s building a new lease of life

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Hélène Binet

Left The chandelier of the Grand Foyer shines out from between the turrets of main facade.

Right Caruso St John’s work tuning and air conditioning the concert hall and mechanising the staging is almost invisible.
The billows of Herbert Rowse’s 1939 ceiling roll over you, pulling you in towards the orchestra, the sublime crash and spray of the music filling the hall. At full strength the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and its choir take over the depth of their stage with up to 205 people playing Shostakovich or Handel for an audience that can be as many as 1600. On another night, an organ will be brought up from the depths of the Liverpool Philharmonic building, the organist playing to accompany the 7m high cinema screen rising in front of it. Or the venue will be taken over by Morrissey and his followers who flood the purples and greens of the foyers with the excitement of their younger selves.

They may not notice the £8.5m transformation of the grade II listed building by Caruso St John. The brass carpet runners are still buckled and worn in places, the seats have the same familiar squashiness. But the more observant among them may perhaps pick up that it is a rather more special experience than it used to be, that despite the throng you feel a little like royalty as you enter the main bar, that the queues for the loo are rather shorter than they were, that the hall is a less stuffy and that the sound in it is rather finer than they remember.

I may be underestimating the city’s concert goers. They have been using the wonderfully tuned spaces around the concert hall, painted in colours that grace the space with an intensity unmatched by the previous magnolia with green mouldings, for a year already. The main bar, now dubbed the Grand Foyer, has the green velvety sweep of a ball gown with gold pinned on
as if at the nape of the neck. Caruso St John suggested a simplified scheme of picking out the mouldings alongside a colour palette that subtly intensified the shortlived colours revealed in paint scrape tests.

Certainly the infirm and those who arrive in wheelchairs will feel the difference. The Philharmonic faces the street with curvaceous turrets of stair towers that once fed the cheap seats direct; there was no grand foyer en route, just a narrow bar at the top of a steep climb. One of the turrets has become an all-level lift which now whizzes up from the intense purple foyer, stopping at the voluminous green of the main bar en route to the deep circle at the top of the concert hall. It is a nicely turned morality tale of exclusivity converted to inclusivity.

But whatever anyone else misses, neither the performers nor the staff could have overlooked the transformation of their world. For a year the hall was dark, the orchestra performing elsewhere as a hugely ambitious six month programme took apart and reconstructed the hall and front of house, adding air conditioning, new acoustic surfaces and staging. It shifted the basement café to a revitalised Grand Foyer while stashing more loos in the basement (and those red, red loos are a performance in themselves, including the angular geometry of the white wiring on the underside of the ceiling slab). Then the back stage was shifted to temporary huts on the car park alongside as the season got up and running again. Only in autumn 2014 did the back of house reopen in its new home. The
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The scalloped stainless steel canopy looks bendier than a tin can.

The completed extension was deliberately lower budget. It works internally: a certain stripped back aesthetic often accompanies such venues and gives them a pleasant, less formal atmosphere. Outside, however, the envelope can’t help feeling cheap against the rolling brick of the Dudok influenced entrance and even its plainer flank walls. The brown of the thin fibre cement boards gives a sense of impermanence, though the colour matches the brick. In another reference to Rowse’s detail, the stainless steel canopy is scalloped – but it looks bendier than a tin can and more suited to a seaside cockle stall than one of Liverpool’s great civic buildings.

But as they are behind the main entrance, the extension’s elevations don’t detract from the revitalised Rowse which, with its new illuminated letters, is looking as inviting as it should. Liverpool is a city with a great collection of grand civic and commercial buildings from more prosperous times and it is a pleasure to see (and hear) this one tended and brought to life.
Left: The chandelier of the Grand Foyer shines out from between the turrets of main facade.

Credits
Client: Royal Liverpool Philharmonic
Architects: Caruso St John Architects
Consultants
Structural engineer: Price & Myers
Services Consultant: Max Fordham LLP
Cost consultant: Simon Fenton Partnership
Project manager: Deloitte LLP
Access: David Bonnett Associates
Acoustic consultant: Threshold Acoustics
CDM co-ordinator: Innov8 Safety Solutions
Approved building inspector: HCD Building Control
BREEAM consultant: Price & Myers
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Surgical gauze

CF Møller has dressed Copenhagen’s new Panum Institute for medical research in a moving copper mesh that echoes the city’s traditional roofs

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek  Photographs: Claus Norman Moeller

For a city predominantly characterised by six or seven storey buildings, Copenhagen’s 15-storey Panum Institute sticks out like a sore thumb. The result of a 2010 international design competition, the DKK1.5 billion (£142 million) Maersk building, a new medical research facility for Copenhagen University, sits on its campus in Nørrebro, a stone’s throw from the city’s Rigshospitalet teaching hospital. Here it is fully on display to the city, sat on the shores of the Søerne, the city’s 19th century man-made lakes. But the residents’ usual knee-jerk sensitivity to high-rise has been mitigated here by the designer of the 74m high project, CF Møller, whose ingenious and beautiful secondary cladding panels of copper mesh not only move across the glazed facade to prevent solar heat gain, but reflect in their materiality the traditional spires and domes crowning this low-rise city.

The plan form of the 42,700m² building was developed through detailed analysis of user needs. At lower levels this meant considering not only the building’s connection to the adjacent medical campus and hospital, but also ingrained patterns of public movement across the site, which connects the Søerne to the public housing to the north. Set out in a star plan, the lower levels endeavour to create permeability for the public while devoting the space between access routes to communal academic activities, with lecture halls clearly visible from the public lobbies. The form of the ‘science tower’ above, meanwhile, was informed by the needs of academic staff, with three teams of 25 researchers on each level, resulting in the triangular plan with a central laboratory space connected by a ‘research plaza’ – a communal space promoting interaction between scientific disciplines.

Being a research facility, the dynamic
cladding design needed not only to prevent solar gain to the building, but to do so while maintaining the highest possible daylight colour rendering index – which influenced the glass specification behind the panels. As project architect Jan Besiakov explains, 2010 saw the design development of triangular copper panel ‘Toblerones’ based on the section of a wing flap, ranging from 4.5-5.5m in height. The 1.3m set-out of the facade came from the sum of the 0.8m glass width combined with the 0.5m Toblerone.

Each triangular copper-coloured exterior aluminium mullion is paired with a movable aluminium frame coated with a 0.3mm copper mesh veneer and separated from the frame by neoprene gaskets. Initially perforated with small holes, this changed to a fine mesh to allow a more diffuse light to permeate the spaces rather than one characterised by light and shade. In the neutral position this mesh panel sits next to the mullion until heat sensors on the glass register direct sunlight for more than two consecutive minutes, at which point mechanical actuators set at low and high level within the facade deploy the mesh panels to mitigate heat gain. With a free area of 30%, sun and heat transmission are reduced proportionally.

While the central BMS system registers the sensors independently and raises the tantalising prospect of a ‘Mexican Wave’ facade, Besiakov thinks the effect will be more understated than that, given that there are 30 incremental positions the panels can move into, meaning shifts will be almost invisible. Both the actuator and its water resistant motor are housed externally within the triangular mullion for ease of access and maintenance. Moving panels underwent rigorous testing to ensure that the system was up to coping with the climatic extremes that it’s likely to endure over its design life. Continued exposure to temperatures of up to -30°C to freezing sleet or snow gathering on the cills is automatically registered by BMS sensors in the mechanism, disabling the actuators until the snow has melted enough to allow free movement. Panel positions were exposed at all possible angles to 34m/s wind loads at a specialist facility in Vienna – not only to check their structural integrity but to analyse possible reverberant impulses that might transfer through the unitised cladding elements and brackets and back into the concrete slab: the designers were aware that any vibration could affect readings in the
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sensitive lab equipment being used. Analysis put consequential vibrational load on the concrete and steel structure at 9Hz, far short of the 70Hz needed to become significant. CF Møller patented its modification of the Schueco profile, in which vertical radiators were placed in the internal mullions to counter ‘cold spots’ on the face of the glass surface.

Aware of the experiments being carried out, the firm specified the highest transparency low iron glass it could find, without resort to the prohibitively expensive iron-free versions from high temperature specialist kilns. Besiakov says CF Møller wanted to avoid performance coatings that give a green or blue ‘Moscow’ hue, aiming for a colour rendering index in excess of 95 – as good as or better than museum grade glass. Being a triple-glazed panel, any divergence from clear would effectively be trebled; the Guardian glass specified results in an overall facade U-value of 0.5.

Besiakov is unsure whether the copper facade will patinate. Other modern copper clad buildings in the city, perhaps due to reduced urban pollution, seem to have resisted accelerated oxidation and stayed brown. But the eventuality has been considered, with a large drain dug all the way around the tower’s footprint at ground level to allow possible contaminated run-off to be naturally filtered before entering the groundwater system. The additional electrical demand of the dynamic facade has also been considered, with solar PVs on the roof feeding into the grid and offsetting the building’s energy use.

Facing the city, it is only the multi-storey communal gathering areas connected by bold spiral staircases, that break the convention of the wraparound copper facade. Here a double skin ventilated facade provides the requisite external insulation levels with full height glazing, allowing daylight to enter as far back as the central concrete cores and offering amazing views over the lakes and the old city. For the 50-75 regular users of the facility on each floor such views are only bet-tered by the double height faculty club on the top floor. It’s a large building, but this social heart connecting the three working prongs of the scheme does lend an intimacy to the space – one reflected by the sizeable public lobbies and auditoria downstairs.

In a sense that intimacy comes out in the detailing of the copper cladding and moving screens that define the exterior aesthetic of this dramatic addition to the Copenhagen skyline. The seductive, curved, glinting copper form catches the redness of the evening light beautifully, its subtle moving facade both warm and sophisticated. ‘We always wanted it to be of a materiality that complemented the existing, significant civic buildings of the city but still pushed the boundaries’, says CF Møller partner Mads Hansen. ‘That said, we didn’t want it to be like Nouvel’s Arab Institute whose demands proved too much for the technology of the time; so it’s an old fashioned, analogue facade that we’ve simply given a 21st century twist.’
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Marc Mimram

Parisian engineer/architect Marc Mimram has, with UK engineer Webb Yates, won the competition for the Bath Quays bridge crossing the River Avon. But isn’t it small fry for a man more accustomed to bridging grands projets?

But you're crossing the river in a rather unloved bit of the city

That’s why bridges are so fascinating as structures – they are liminal spaces that span divides. One of my first bridges was over the Rhine in Strasbourg, connecting France with Germany; it made two nationalities aware that they were a city sharing the same space and valley. Another I built in Paris connected a cut-off community with the Stade de France. They are connecting devices, socially and politically; and hopefully here too.

And Bath’s residents have been notoriously resistant to modern interventions...

I’m viewing it as an honour that not only were we the judges’ favourite, but we got the most support in the public vote. I’d like to try and heal this urban area. I’m thrilled that they’re in favour allowing this bit of soothing modernism into their classical city.

Can you explain what inspired the design?

The Bath bridge’s steel structure has a subtle curve in both plan and elevation and the form is derived from moment resolution of forces. The two posts on the city side are instrumental in allowing the form to be so thin in the middle, where loads are least. The point is that ultimately the design is about not only loadings but the experience. Brunel understood that concept implicitly with his bridge designs. For those crossing this undulating structure I’d like the experience to feel more like a ballet than just a walk.

Do you have a view on London’s Garden Bridge?

At risk of being unpopular with its supporters, I’m not convinced that placing trees along its length is necessarily the best idea for a bridge – I’d ask myself if they’re needed. The real landscape is the river itself – and the bridge a means of viewing its theatre. I see no reason to use trees to hide it.

That’s a sensual notion for an engineer: is that why your bridges have so many curves?

Love is curves…

Congratulations on the win, but after Haussmann’s Paris, doesn’t Bath feel a little provincial?

Not at all. I see Bath as truly global, an 18th century classical city that deferred to its landscape in a unique way. In that regard it’s very unlike French classical cities. Its urbanism at the time was completely modern, in the way that Niemeyer’s Brasilia, where I lived for two years while on French national service, was utterly modern. I felt compelled to come and experience it over 20 years ago and it’s great to get the chance to build here.

Intelligence is officially approved RIBA CPD. Look out for icons throughout the section indicating core curriculum areas.
For whose benefit?

The housing bill will replace social housing priorities with relaxed planning regulations to stimulate house building. But is this really the answer to solving the crisis in the sector?

Words Jan-Carlos Kucharek  Illustration Toby Morison

The Department for Communities and Local Government’s housing and planning bill, now at committee stage in the Commons and awaiting its third reading, has been touted by the government as a means to turn ‘Generation Rent’ into ‘Generation Buy’, by building 200,000 new homes in England a year – a million by 2020. Its key tenet is for local authorities to include starter homes as part of the planning consent on larger developments. These will be offered to buyers under 40 years old at 80% of the market value and capped at £450,000 for Greater London and £250,000 outside, to promote greater levels of home ownership. The initiative marks a clear government strategy to move away from planning permission and reserved matters, to promotion of brownfield land, or development or neighbourhood plans – initially expected to be limited to smaller development sites of 10 homes or less. Kathryn Hampton, senior associate at law firm Nabarro, explains that full planning permission is only given once ‘technical details consent’ has been approved, and likens the new policy to outline planning permission and reserved matters, but with notable differences; namely that the LA cannot impose conditions on the permission in principle, as the government considers that any conditions should be reserved for the technical details consent stage itself.

What this amounts to is the adoption of a ‘zonal’ approach to planning, with design matters being addressed further down the planning line. Architect Alex Ely, author of the mayor of London’s Housing Design Guide, sees this as problematic, saying: ‘It means that planning will become more about land use and density than architecture and detail. I fear this will mean reduced design quality as it is not a priority from the outset.’

With design decisions only as good as the people making them, Ely wants to see more emphasis on design enshrined in policy, adding: ‘If design quality is robustly stipulated, there would be less scope for it to be watered down and a clear policy basis for any refusal.’ Nabarro’s Hampton also states that the LA will be bound to the terms of the planning in principle – they won’t be able to reconsider the principles of development when determining the technical details consent unless the circumstances of the in principle consent have changed considerably. Board member at the Housing Forum Andy von Bradsky isn’t concerned with a zonal approach per se but with the implications of ‘redline’ planning on community engagement. ‘Permission would be indicative and doesn’t contain detailed consent,’ he points out. ‘I’d be worried about how much local residents would be able to inform and shape the terms of the planning in principle consent.’

Planning before design

The housing bill is being received with some caution by the design profession, worried that the pro-development stance needs to be further thought through to ensure it does not result in reduced build quality or further exacerbate the economic divide between England’s rich and poor. By default, with more powers being handed to the secretary of state to determine applications in the case of local authority under-performance, it appears that the proposed bill could in some regards be considered as going against the government’s own 2011 Localism Act.

A key aspect of the bill is its ‘permission in principle’ provision, which allows consent in principle to be granted on land allocated by the local authority for development – typically land held on the LA’s required brownfield register, or development or neighbourhood plans – initially expected to be limited to smaller development sites of 10 homes or less. Kathryn Hampton, senior associate at law firm Nabarro, explains that full planning permission is only given once ‘technical details consent’ has been approved, and likens the new policy to outline planning permission and reserved matters, but with notable differences; namely that the LA cannot impose conditions on the permission in principle, as the government considers that any conditions should be reserved for the technical details consent stage itself.

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In conflict with localism

Von Bradsky picks up here on the government’s drive to expedite the planning process to such an extent that it would seem to contradict its moves to promote localism. ‘Local Plans have to be in place by 2017 and if
local authorities delay publishing them, then the secretary of state will have the option to intervene,’ he says, talking of the extended powers under the bill for developers to go straight to the secretary of state for planning permission if the local authority is deemed to be under-performing. Together with extended permitted development rights for office to residential conversion, von Bradsky thinks there’s a smack of centralisation to the decision-making process. ‘The government pushed localism so far that it seems to have become an impediment to housing delivery,’ he adds. ‘The move back to centralised decision making and permitted development is palpable and I’m wondering how it will work against local level devolution in the long run.’

Taking subsidy from the poor?
But it is the contentious starter homes policy that most worries von Bradsky, who sees it as more politically ideological – driven more by the Exchequer than DCLG – than about sorting out the housing problem. ‘The government has set its face against housing for rent and towards home ownership, but this initiative could be seen as taking a subsidy from the poor and giving it to the aspiring classes,’ he notes, concerned that the continued squeeze on homes for social rent will ‘build to a pressure pot’. Senior lecturer at Northampton University’s Institute of Urban Affairs’ Dr Bob Colenutt agrees, blaming volume housebuilders’ vested interests and calling the issue ‘an economic problem that has nothing to do with housing need; this bill seems to be about house building at any price’. He claims the bill makes no mention of the needs of the home-less, key workers or elderly, potentially leading to what he calls a ‘sub-class’ of society’s most vulnerable. This leaves local authorities following up their duty to meet housing need with only the NPPF to fall back on.

National Housing Federation policy leader Adam Morton meanwhile is generally in favour of the bill’s intention to release more affordable homes, but is clear that it shouldn’t come at the expense of the social rented sector. Morton is also highly circumspect about the stipulated possibility of selling homes at full market rate after just five years, thinking: ‘The government needs to show there
would be no selling on of homes by buyers just keen on speculating.’ He wants measures to prevent profiteering, perhaps in the form of covenants on developments with planning consent. Senior research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research Bill Davies agrees, saying ‘clauses to ensure starter homes remain starter homes in perpetuity’ should be written into the planning permission.

Preparing the ground

Davies, and even the highly circumspect Colenutt, seem generally more amenable to the bill’s proposal to maintain a register of brownfield sites and to grant suitable development consents on them to meet the need for self-build and custom build. Davies says it is ‘good, as there’s a real lack of custom build in the UK and it’s important to prioritise land for SMEs’. But he cautions that: ‘It’s got to differentiate clearly between the small custom builders and larger developers.’ The London Housing Guide’s Alex Ely sees the bill has ‘latent potential’ to kick start a custom build boom, but only arising out of resource strapped local authorities ‘taking the initiative to enable development’. For him, that also means LAs releasing more than infill plots – ‘the kinds of sites that are handed over to larger developers’. But von Bradsky thinks it’s about more than land availability. ‘We’ll need more facilitators like Igloo to create the support network for custom build to work on a wider scale,’ he thinks. But it may be about creating an economic model as well as a planning one. Getting custom build to really work ‘will take government intervention and perhaps preferential lending rates – we need a level playing field to allow smaller, less experienced custom builders to get on board,’ he adds.

Link to infrastructure

As a means of linking housing supply to infrastructure, the bill proposes to give the secretary of state new powers to grant development consent for housing linked to major infrastructure projects like HS2 or Crossrail 2. In principle this should be good news, formalising an obvious link between the two. The NHF’s Morton cautiously welcomes the policy is redolent of the ‘enterprise zones of the Thatcher years’: there would seem to be a strong link between this policy and the urban development corporations recently touted by ‘northern powerhouse’ tsar Michael Heseltine as a means of driving urban regeneration – with the planning deregulation that it’s associated with. For Nabarro’s Hampton the jury’s out: the policy sounds good but needs more detail. ‘The bill mentions guidance on the amount of housing but isn’t clear on the scale of development,’ she says. ‘Everybody wants to know what the parameters are and what type of housing they mean but as yet there’s no detail on that.’

More power to the mayor

Proposed additional powers for the mayor of London to determine applications should expedite housing delivery, especially where development sites crossing neighbouring boroughs can get stalled in bureaucracy. It could lead to the kind of resi/infrastructure thinking that has seen the Northern Line extension to Lambeth/Wandsworth’s Nine Elms development – itself desirable despite the project’s extremely high density. But given mayor Johnson’s controversial intervention at Mount Pleasant and the fact he has just called in the luxury £800m Bishopsgate Goodsyard application despite strong community objections, his exercising of powers may lead to more housing in the capital, but perhaps not the right type.

What price devolution?

In all, to drive the housing agenda forward, the bill seems to concentrate a lot of planning power back to communities secretary. The government’s demand for Right to Buy, which is being foisted on housing associations and paid for in part through the forced sale of higher value local authority properties, will only exacerbate the need for housing for social rent and precipitate a crisis in the sector unless housing associations are in a position to step into the breach. But Genesis Housing Association, which manages over 30,000 homes, stated at a recent NHBC press briefing that the proposed housing bill will force a review of its development programme and operating costs. It still intends to bid for Section 106 schemes but may well have to scale down their value and scope. What comes through from those interviewed is a disconnect between the ideological notion of home ownership and genuine housing need, be it social or affordable rent: one that the 20% discount from market value cannot address. Those looking to this bill for some kind on incentivisation of the rented sector will thus be disappointed; the needs of society’s most vulnerable are simply not addressed.

Furthermore, the relaxation of planning regulations and shift to centralised decision making seems to attribute blame to planning authorities and punitively punish them for their apparent under-performance. But the picture painted from those spoken to here is one of local planning authorities stretched to the limit and hampered from more proactive housing approaches simply through sheer lack of resources. With the bill going through its final reading early next year, it is only by addressing this resourcing shortfall that LA planning teams will be able to concentrate on ensuring that the devolved decision-making the public expects from local and neighbourhood plans remains just that – devolved.
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Borrowing from IT

The search for better procurement methods seems perennial. But there are better ways

Walter Menteth

Embedded use of inappropriate inflexible and generic procedures stops effective procurement delivering best value and quality. Evidence shows this is leading to increasing UK market aggregation, a decline in the number of public architects and the profession losing market share and access.

For example, 49% of architectural public sector opportunities are now in ‘hidden’ architecture notices which, though referencing architectural or building design outputs, do not directly call for an architectural appointment. The facilitator, developer or contractor is asked to provide design services; the architect, if there is one, is employed as a subcontractor. Between 2008 and 2015 the top 10 firms, comprising 0.24% of the market by number, captured 8.17% of awards, an average 127 each.

In the UK these embedded methodologies are evidently expensive and inefficient, with call-off procedures from frameworks attracting further economic costs. Data from across the EU also shows that UK procurement is significantly one of the most inefficient, offering poor market access.

In the five years to 2014, eight UK design contests (0.8% of the architectural market) were held, but only two were open calls (in Germany the figure was 13%, Austria 33%, France 26%). In the UK negotiated procedures, which accounted for 2% of the market (Germany 83%, Austria 34%, France 15%), are evidentially the most economical appointment procedure.

Comparative studies of UK procurement support unjustifyable skew towards the use of the two stage restricted procedure and a lack of procedural diversity for appropriately delivering efficiencies, effectiveness and better quality.

Design contests and negotiation
As well as design contests, which are separate for the appointment of architects, the EU directive provides six basic procurement procedures. Of these, four are rarely recommended for architectural appointments.

Public authorities commissioning architecture don’t often embed appropriate procurement procedures because they have little insight into the wider impacts, or how best to effect change. There has also been a dearth of knowledge and information available to support and lobby for change.

In 2013 Project Compass CIC was founded as a social enterprise to provide a sector specific procurement intelligence service for clients and architects. This free open access web portal service provides guidance for clients and all the documents are published on the directive and public contract regulations, publishes architectural OJEU notices and comprehensive real time analytics (including data about clients and their procurement histories) and offers multiple other resources. Project Compass also publishes reports on construction procurement trends and guidance for clients.

Future framework procurements?
My research and work into Project Compass shows that framework procurements also need reform as despite their benefits, many of their aspects are deeply flawed.

Lessons can be learnt from London’s Silicone Roundabout, which has become the focus of enormous growth in the UK IT sector where emergent IT SME start-ups have succeeded in breaking into new UK markets, leading to new product innovations and gaining global reach.

This has not been by chance. In 2012 the UK government changed the sector’s procurement regime to improve access and competition for public contracts by a targeted opening of the market to enable SMEs to gain greater market share of public contracts. This was done to precipitate growth - increasing SME access, reducing cost and improving transparency by using innovative digital procurement.

It’s called G Cloud, or the digital marketplace. It is widely acknowledged as a notable success of the last parliamentary session.

G Cloud is a single national digital framework for IT services to which all the public sector has access, with regular calls. It works in conjunction with the ‘digital first’ policy, by which the public sector are required in the first instance to purchase digitally, and only from those on the framework (wherever the service is provided there). Entry criteria to the G Cloud framework are set deliberately low, in order to open up the market, with easy minimal criteria and simple procedures. Reliance is placed on the information on G Cloud being digitally transparent and accessible to clients. Call-offs from the framework are directly shortlisted for negotiation; with candidates evaluated against the recorded criteria of the tender, its brief and objectives.

This renders traditional restricted framework procedures, followed by call-offs, effectively obsolete; reducing the first stage for all appointments by having a single framework appointment by a single bid with only two stages.

Replication of a construction sector specific G Cloud for the acquisition of professional services offers a huge potential opportunity that requires urgent evaluation and exploration for future framework procurement.

Walter Menteth’s Pathways to Construction Procurement Reform won the President’s Medal for Practice-oriented Research

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Strength and beauty

After six years of research, Tonkin Liu’s shell lace structure is finding practical success

Anna Liu

Shell lace structure is a tailored single-surface structural technique pioneered in 2009 by Tonkin Liu architects and developed over the last six years with Arup engineers. The technique has integrated a growing body of research, generating a variety of structural types applicable for bridges, large-span halls, and shelters, yielding a vast array of super-thin cost-effective structures.

All shell lace structures are ultra-light and deploy three formal principles: curvature, corrugation and distortion – principles demonstrated by mollusc shells. They are nature’s way of generating maximum strength from minimum resources. By learning from nature, shell lace structure reasserts the direct relationship between form and structure. Form for structure’s, not form’s, sake.

Reconnecting to hands
Architectural research is an intellectual act underpinned by intuitive and systematic physical investigations. Structural principles intuited by the hands can be lost in digitally-generated, complex models. Shell lace structure reconnects the hands to the computer. Using plasticine, hands, paper and scissors, we studied structural stiffness in local folds and varying curvatures, and invented the method of tailoring a curved structure with flat sheets. This unexpected discovery occurred when making study models for a seaside pavilion design competition in 2009. Now every shell lace structure project begins with hand-kneaded plasticine models.

Shell lace structure would not have been possible 10 years ago. Advances in digital tools have enabled us to learn more from nature’s constructional patterns and mimic their principles. Tonkin Liu’s interest in this dates back to its teaching at the AA School of Architecture in 2001-5, and has advanced in leaps and bounds, expanding the territory of biomimicry. Shell lace structure combines advanced digital tools with tailoring techniques. Patterns of flat sheets are digitally generated, cut and reassembled to form stiff 3D structures.

Shell lace structure was also born out of the flurry of design competitions we entered during the 2008 recession. We persisted with the research, vigorously testing it through 15 design competitions and advancing it in various scales: materiality, cost and technical realities. In more ways than one, shell lace structure is a product of our time.

Occupying the threshold between art, science and industry, shell lace structure has been enriched by collaborators. In the past two years we have held an MArch studio at the University of Westminster, widening the remit with fresh insights from architects, scientists, engineers and students.

Our competition-winning proposal for Rainbow Gate demonstrates its structural virtuosity with 3mm thick stainless steel plates spanning 7m, a project that won an RIBA Award and the RIBA North West Small Project of the Year Award in 2013. When the sun shines, 133 glass prism inserts in the perforations cast rainbow-coloured light. In early 2014 we won the Salford Meadows Bridge competition, which has now been completed up to the Approval In Principle stage and will shortly be submitted for planning. We have also developed other new shell lace structure hybrid types through international art competitions. The ‘Sugar Vane’ for Guadaloupe is an interlocking lattice tower of perforated surfaces, while ‘Hull Shadow Gate’ is a perforated, twin shell, stressed-skin structure internally braced. Sometimes, as the sun shines through the aligned perforations, poetry by one of Hull’s residents is projected onto the city’s pavement. Hull Shadow Gate is due to be completed for the forthcoming 2017 Hull City of Culture.

Research grant
Winning the RIBA Research Trust Grant in 2013 gave our research a new lease of life. Although financially challenging, launching the publication and exhibition at the RIBA helped establish our authorship of this invention. Furthermore, the tactile, large, lightweight models enabled visitors to understand shell lace structure’s inherent physical and structural logic. A raft of invitations followed for Tonkin Liu to lecture and exhibit both internationally and in forums in the UK. Responding to Tonkin Liu’s talk at the RIBA, a bio-medical research group invited the team to develop a respiratory stent for collapsed airways, using the same principles. We have now received a grant to fund the design for generating several 3D-printed prototypes to be tested in surgery in the lab.

In between fee-earning projects, our small practice invested in shell lace structure research, amounting to 20% of our overall output. This year, with an increase in new work, we have positioned the research in an academic sphere, with director Mike Tonkin undertaking a PhD at the University of Bath.

Research must break new ground to have integrity and be useful. We want to discover possibilities for the future. The journey requires single-minded pursuit and the ability to embrace failures to inform the process. Through this work, Tonkin Liu has become more engaged with structures, using the technological understanding and tools of our time. We hope to continue to explore and advance all shell lace structure’s environmental, structural and technical potential.

Tonkin Liu’s shell lace structure was shortlisted for the RIBA President’s Awards for Outstanding Practice-located Research.

Anna Liu is a founding partner at Tonkin Liu

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Living in the future

As society changes, so must the places where we live

Robert Adam

We build for the future but can only do so with knowledge of the present. This is a permanent handicap in architecture. And nowhere does it matter more than housing; the most numerous, intimate and quotidian of building types.

There is at least one thing we do know about the future, barring plague, disaster or nuclear war: as people born now get older they will enter different life stages. The life stage poised to be a major influence on housing demand is the 18-34 age group – generation Y or the millennials. ADAM Urbanism in partnership with Grainger, the UK’s largest listed residential property company, thought the social trends in this age group would be the most likely to reveal the needs for tomorrow’s home.

We engaged researcher Lily Bernheim, of Space Works Consulting, to look into research information, academic studies and other publications. Some key trends emerged.

Declining commuting and end of dormitory suburbs The daily commute is in decline, so the dormitory suburbs built for previous generations of commuters will soon be a thing of the past. Homeworking employees are the fastest growing workforce segment. Millennials will spend more time where they live, leading to stronger local communities grouped around local services like cafés, crèches and shared office facilities. Suburbs will be places of work and play as well as sleep.

Mega-commuting is good for the environment and the economy Millennials moving from major work centres as a result of flexible digitalized labour will live further out and make longer, less frequent commutes. This new pattern of ‘mega-commuting’ and ‘micro-commuting’ (working from home or a local work hub) has brought about a decrease in miles travelled to work. Transport network congestion is threatening future British economic development, which mega/micro-commuting will help alleviate.

Strong, vibrant and increasingly popular second and third tier cities This transition will be reinforced as both major cities and first-tier suburbs become too expensive. There will be an exodus to second and third tier cities, resulting in a further boost for regional towns. Public-transport-loving millennials will prefer cities and town centres because they are well-connected and walkable as well as affordable. This will reshape our geography with a more even spread of population and wealth across the regions.

Public transport in: cars out Millennials are giving up cars, which should prompt more investment in public transport. Transport hubs with facilities and landscaping will become places where people will be happy to spend time, and public transport itself will provide ample space for working and socialising.

The sharing economy takes socialising out of the home Homes will become places of rest and work rather than socialising. Communal facilities will play a larger role and the shared urban environment will be increasingly important. Extending the success of the ‘sharing economy’ model from the transport and workspace sectors to the residential and leisure sectors will be an innovative area of growth. We can expect to see individual dining rooms, gardens and leisure equipment replaced by shared facilities attached to residential developments, leisure centres and parks.

Solo-living stagnated; shared housing is on the rise Living alone is no longer on the rise as more millennials opt to live with friends and family. Reports that over 30% of people now live alone have been exaggerated from misunderstood data. Only 10% of 25-44 year-olds and 4% of 16-24 year-olds now live alone. Shared households of unrelated adults will grow and we will see a growing demand for housing to accommodate this sector. House builders may build in flexible units that can be up-sized into a house for an extended family or down-sized into individual apartments.

The countryside colonised by the over 50s Millennials are living and renting in cities for longer, but may move into the countryside in later life, where they will home-work and ‘mega’ commute less frequently. This ageing rural population will need transport, healthcare and other services.

Millennial generation as a proportion of population

Source: Adapted from data from the Office of National Statistics
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Nurture at work

We’ve all seen personal development suffer as working under pressure becomes a way of life. It doesn’t have to be like that.

KSR Architects is based in Camden with about 30 architects, interior designers and administration staff. Working under constant pressure, we realised that individual growth within our practice was not being nurtured and decided that a change was needed. We wanted to devise a way of encouraging people to develop existing or new skills within a supportive environment to ensure a maturing and content workforce.

KSR now operates a two-tier mentoring system; one for senior members of staff who are mentored by a partner, and one for other members of staff who are in turn mentored by the senior staff. Everyone in the office is included, professional and non-professional staff alike. For the business, the core purpose is to retain staff by providing someone to support them throughout their career.

Senior staff

Senior staff select from the partner pool a mentor to support them and provide advice on all career matters.

In conjunction with the mentor, the mentee first creates a personal professional development plan. This is developed, reviewed and reported against throughout the year, and provides a platform for structured development of professional skills. It encourages senior staff to attempt various business, design, technical and management tasks.

Everyone involved is encouraged to form awareness of, for example, fee bidding, concept design, client pitches and technical innovations, as well as contributing to the management processes of the office. This expansion of expertise can be a refreshing change to someone who may be confined to the running of a project or who principally gets involved in concept design stage, providing a framework for people to grow and demonstrate new skills to the partners.

It is intended to keep bureaucracy to a minimum and for mentees to record their attempts and triumphs on a spreadsheet which is used in discussions with their mentor. It leads to the mentor sitting alongside the mentee at their annual review to offer support and focus.

General staff

As part of their own professional development plan, each senior person has one or more junior members of staff to mentor and nurture themselves. This is a positive experience for mentor and mentee alike.

At this level the system is intended to provide a structure for people to progress their professional skills; encourage them to contribute towards the smooth running of the office, its work and its social life; and to encourage people to develop an interest or expertise in the office and to set targets. It also aims to nurture a sense of team spirit in the office and retain staff by giving them a clear path through the office hierarchy.

The mentoring structure is kept loose to enable it to work for all staff, and kept light to avoid it being an administrative burden. Relationships are kept under review by HR and partners, with both the mentors and mentees being asked to comment on progress. However, each pairing is encouraged to develop its own agenda and relationship.

Mentors and mentees meet regularly, typically every 1 to 2 months. Two formal reviews per year are conducted with a partner, one of which is the annual review where the mentor sits in on at least part of the discussion.

Mentees are encouraged to create their own development plan in discussion with their mentor. This is divided into three headings: office, project and social; each heading is addressed within the plan. Headings are open to interpretation, depending on the seniority of the person and their role within the practice. So under the heading ‘Office’, the year-out student may get involved with 3D printing, an architect may research green roofs and the receptionist take control of the office library. Furthermore, each person is encouraged to develop an area where they can become the office expert or ‘go to’ person to help them feel valued. By having general discussions at director meetings, mentors see how to encourage mentees to develop thoughts of their own to develop a skill and broaden their overall professional development towards progressing in the practice.

More to come

It is intended to keep the two mentoring systems under review and allow them to develop in response to comments. The scheme is evolving to include, for example, special support for members of staff who are ill or on extended leave, to ensure that communications are kept open and that everyone feels that there is someone who is looking after their interests. The initiative will continue to be monitored but has been generally well received and appreciated by staff.

Virginia Newman is practice director at KSR Architects and is RIBA ambassador for equality, diversity and inclusion.

Your route to mentoring

The profession is ever more involved in retaining talent for a diverse and progressive workforce. As part of its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, the RIBA is developing an online mentoring hub. This will bring together the diverse range of existing mentoring activities operating throughout the country, both through Fluid mentoring and the regional student mentoring scheme, as well as offering a package of useful resources.

The mentoring hub will include advice on setting up and running both formal and informal mentoring schemes in practices.

Guidance will include case studies with reflections from mentors and mentees to build up a valuable repository of mentoring experience and develop best practice.

Mentoring, already so popular and successful in architectural education, can benefit all architects in practice throughout their professional lives.
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“It provided the potential to display the building structure through the façade which was key to the flat-pack/tectonic aesthetic of the building. There was little budget for expensive materials or interior finishes so the tectonics and construction – its CLT frame, panels, claddings and openings - are what give the building its character. We set a template for producing a contemporary architectural aesthetic and a unique and mature learning environment with limited means.”

Matthew Jeniec, Urban Projects Bureau

Tel: 01268 531 466
To read the full case study visit www.rodeca.de/en/graveney
The recent frantic rush to put in place principal designer appointments in order to comply with the new CDM Regulations has, for many, brought into focus the issue of appointing sub-consultants. With most architects lacking the in-house experience to carry out the function, many are subletting services to former CDM co-ordinators to assist in discharging the principal designer role. What issues do practices need to consider when appointing sub-consultants?

**PI problems**

If the sub-consultant has a lower level of PI or insists on a cap on its liability you will need to ensure this does not cause issues with your insurer. A client is unlikely to agree to a lower level of PI and cap in the main appointment even if there is a gap here.

Then there are fee payment arrangements. Ideally you will want an extended payment period under the sub-consultancy agreement so that you have a few days from receipt of payment from the client in order to make payment to the sub-consultant. Except in very narrow circumstances it is not permitted under the Construction Act to make payment of the sub-consultant contingent on receipt of payment from the client (a so-called pay when paid arrangement). You also need to ensure that the sub-consultant’s right to additional payment is not broader than your rights under the main appointment, as you would have to cover the gap.

You will want to ensure that you have a right to terminate the appointment of the sub-consultant if the main appointment with the client is terminated, or you will be bound to pay the sub-consultant even though you are no longer appointed by the client.

**Co-ordinating copyright**

Care must be taken to ensure that copyright provisions comply with the requirements of the main appointment. If this contains a waiver of moral rights, it should be included in the sub-consultant appointment too. Architects are often obliged to indemnify the client if they breach a third party’s copyright. Again, this must also appear in the sub-consultant appointment.

Bribery Act and confidentiality provisions will also need to be passed down as appropriate. Often the main appointment will include express requirements for this in any sub-consultancy agreement.

Appointment of sub-consultants does not need to be difficult. Care needs to be taken however to ensure that the terms are as closely aligned as possible with the terms of the main appointment.

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Angus Dawson is partner at Macfarlanes

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Buying in consultancy skills? Make sure your contract terms are in tune

**Procurement & contracts**

Joint names insurance is cover under which the contractor and employer are each named as insured on the policy. This means that either can claim if an insured risk occurs but also that the insurer is unlikely to be able to pursue the employer or contractor if either of these causes the claim in question. If, for example, the contractor is a joint name and causes a fire on site, the insurer will have to pay out but will not be able to recover reinstatement costs from the contractor. Composite insurance operates in a similar way.

If the contractor were not a joint name, the insurer might look to exercise its rights of subrogation. Here the insurer steps into the shoes of the insured to sue the person who has caused the insured risk. If an insurer waives these rights, it loses its right to sue the person who caused the insured risk. A waiver of subrogation rights therefore provides similar protection to joint names. The key difference between the two is that someone benefiting from a waiver of subrogation rights cannot recover insurance proceeds under the policy.
Fuelling energy efficiency

Ruukki composite panels have helped create an appropriately energy-efficient building for a coal depot in Yorkshire

The UK’s largest undercover coal yard and cash and carry has been constructed by SCM Construction using Ruukki composite panels for the roof and walls. Situated near the Pennines in Halifax, West Yorkshire, the new and exciting energy distribution centre serves domestic and industrial customers with solid fuel, bottled gas and air products compressed gasses, seven days a week.

Ace Energy has been trading on the site for almost 20 years and decided to make the improvements to future proof the building and to offer a new way to store and distribute its fuel products. The owner wanted to create a legacy for his years in business that he could always be proud of and requested that the contractor SCM approached the project in the same way.

Two large warehouse facilities have been constructed giving extra capacity to store a total of 8500 tonnes of solid fuel on pallets and 1500 tonnes of loose coal in the undercover coal yard. Ruukki SP2D wall panels and SP2C roof panels were chosen by SCM because of their high quality and good looks; they are also very easy for the contractor to work with on site. SCM appreciated Ruukki’s interest in the project and efforts to ensure deliveries and requirements were met and that time schedules were adhered to. This level of detail helped deliver a superb project on time and to such a high level of execution.

SCM, which has over 20 years’ experience in the industry, was recommended to the client. It designed a bespoke colour scheme and aesthetics in order to achieve the exact look the client was trying to achieve. This project is the forth and largest SCM has constructed using Ruukki composite panels and more, similar, developments are already in the pipeline.

Overcoming insurmountable odds
All works were carried out around the day to day operations as the site remained operational throughout. However, there were access issues on this project that could have appeared insurmountable to many people. To the rear is a river and at the gable end permission to work on the neighbouring land was rejected. Handling 12m panels safely and efficiently in these areas made many back away from the project. However, the solution was to install the panels from the inside of the building. This was expertly done without causing delays on site.

‘The client on this project is absolutely delighted with the end result,’ says Nick Beresford of SCM Construction. ‘I am looking forward to duplicating projects of this nature and can only see that our company’s success in this regard will be achieved using Ruukki as a partner for materials.’

Complete energy efficiency
Not only is this building aesthetically pleasing on the eye but it is energy efficient in itself and the benefits can also be passed on to the consumers. Due to the thermally efficient and air tight construction customers can save up to 15% moisture content on solid fuel products, so effectively receive more fuel on each purchase.

The development does not stop here, as plans are in place to install power points to recharge electric vehicles. And on the industrial unit’s roof 200kW of solar panels are being installed. The warehouse will be heated with biomass renewable energy and rain water is being harvested for reuse on the site.

The coal depot has attracted much interest and already has a waiting list of tenants ready to occupy the end units.

To find out more about Ruukki Panels visit www.ruukki.co.uk or contact (0121) 704 7300.
Power games

Maria Smith shows design who’s master

I get to be an architect. You get to be the building. I get to be the architect of this. I get to look at you. I get to look at you before you exist. You don’t exist without my looking. You might not notice me at first. That is because you haven’t noticed yourself in my eyes yet and you are still worthless. I circle you from a distance for a while. I make glances at you and I make glances at those around you. I make you curious about me. I make you curious about what I can do to you and how I can make you feel. I make you feel as though I am everywhere and you cannot escape me.

I get to scrutinize you. I change you and bend you so that you are what I want. I stretch you and move you and shift your weight. You are like clay to me. I get to press my thumb onto whichever part of you I wish. I get to dig my nails in and pull. I knock you into shape. I force you into reality. You are like cardboard to me. I get to sweeten your fibres. You are like paper to me. I get to ripple your thinness. You are like data to me. I get to fiddle your numbers.

I get to see all of you. I get to know every part of you. I draw you inside out. You don’t get to hide. I make drawings of your internal elevations. I see through you to your reflected ceiling plans. I cut you in halves and force your innermosts to flinch in the air. I pretend to want your wholeness but I will cauterize any part of you if it suits me. I get to have you in the image I decree. I know what you should be and I don’t stop clawing at your insides and printing your outsides with my eagerness until you are right. I try you. I revise you. I supersede you.

I get to write your story. I tell them what to think of you. I tell them your size and your amount and your good. I don’t tell them your bad because you don’t get to have bad. You don’t get to confess and be forgiven. You don’t get to have anyone understand or listen or pretend to. I get to decide what of you is told and I get to tell it so that I get what I want from you. I keep telling them louder and louder as you squirm quieter and quieter until embarrassment and consent are confused and my fun really begins.

I get to decide what you wear. I get to make sure you appear as my ideal. You might feel too tall or too gaudy or too bristling or too incongruous but that doesn’t matter. I get to adorn you in the sheaths of my belief and you get to be grateful. You get to be grateful because you get to respect all I have gone through to make you perfect.

I get to enjoy the perfection I have made of you. I get to stare. You get to keep still and silent. You get to bear my burden and represent my interests. I get to present you to the people I want to impress. You are my trophy. You are my pretty idea of you. You make me look good. You make me feel powerful. You make me feel irresistible. You make me feel immortal.

You are the building. I am the architect. Maria Smith is an architect and teaches a course at the Cass.
Join the club
Why RIBAJ is changing the way you read it online

Hugh Pearman
As you’ll have noticed, we have made enormous strides in developing your RIBA Journal and its supplements over the past couple of years – first in print, then online. We consulted the profession widely and in both cases we started from first principles: the results have been well received. Since then, our experts have been working behind the scenes to develop our publications further. Now the time has come to move on to the next stage: refining how RIBA members and honorary fellows, other subscribers and the world at large access the material we produce.

The RIBAJ is published by RIBA Enterprises and is required to be commercially self-supporting – a contributor to, rather than a drain on, the Institute’s finances. At the same time it is justly regarded as a key member benefit. That means that full RIBA members should get access to valuable material that is not necessarily open to all online – and that others should subscribe to enjoy the same access. This will help our balance sheet which in turn will help to support other RIBAJ and RIBA activities.

We have long had paying-subscriber readers – typically commissioning clients, libraries and members of associated professions – as well as RIBA member readers. But until now, we have not had sufficiently sophisticated technology to present and process a variety of access and subscription choices to suit everyone. Consequently, everything we publish online has been available for anyone to see. We have been giving away our goods for free. Now, working with the RIBA’s membership department and our digital agency, we have reorganised to continue giving full RIBA members and subscribers access to everything – while others will be gently encouraged to subscribe after viewing a certain number of articles free.

If you visit ribaj.com and click on a link, you will see how the process now works. If you are an RIBA member who receives the Journal, an honorary fellow or existing subscriber, we ask you to register with your details to activate your full online access. You do not need to do anything to continue receiving the print RIBAJ. Others will be able to access up to seven online articles per month for free. As they approach the end of their metered allowance, they will be offered a suite of subscription options to choose from to read more. This is a tried and tested model in other specialist publications.

To ensure the magazine’s online character is maintained and the appetites of potential subscribers whetted, beyond the metered content we will also present a certain amount of unrestricted online material – including contributions from our commercial clients, our competitions and live event details, and editors’ selections of representative articles.

With any change of this kind, there are bound to be further tweaks that we shall need to make as we monitor progress and respond to your comments – please send them to us at letters@ribaj.com, or discuss them with us on Twitter @ribaj. We hope you see the sense of what we are doing, and that this represents the best way to ensure the continued and increasing vitality of your RIBAJ.

If you are a qualifying RIBA member who receives the Journal, an honorary fellow or existing subscriber, we ask you to register

Hugh Pearman

I particularly like the sound of the Architects Revolutionary Council, an activist group established by Brian Anson and students of the AA, and the Architectural Detective Agency. Architecture beyond building: http://is.gd/otherarchitect

Monsters of Sicilian baroque: http://is.gd/sicilianbaroque

Some are bespectacled or blindfolded, or have their tongues sticking out, like the masks of Greek theatre
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Clear water revival

Oliver Wainwright finds that the river runs deep in downtown LA

Images of Los Angeles’ bid for the 2024 Olympics seem eerily familiar. There are the usual sparkling stadia and luxury legacy investment opportunities you’d expect, but snaking through it all is a seductive ribbon of blue. It’s a river, just like east London’s Lea, that is to be transformed from post-industrial dumping ground to glistening new amenity by a liberal sprinkle of Olympic fairy dust.

‘People really underestimate the power of badminton,’ said Lewis MacAdams with an ironic smile when he saw the plans. The 70-year-old activist poet has spent the last 30 years trying to raise awareness of the plight of the Los Angeles River, ever since he arrived in the city in 1980. He was horrified to discover that the very water source that first drew tribes to settle here 1,000 years ago had become an abandoned 51-mile-long concrete gutter, the result of canalisation in the 1930s after severe floods had devastated the city.

‘I thought I just had to convince people the river could be better,’ he said. ‘But the problem was no one even knew there was a river.’

Star of dystopian film scenes, from Terminator motorbike chases to Transformers explosions, the river recently hit the headlines when it was announced that Frank Gehry had secretly been appointed to mastermind a new plan for its entire length. This has thrown the status of MacAdams’ carefully laid community-driven plans, developed with a local landscape practice over a decade, up in the air.

“Without either Gehry or the Olympics, LA’s long-abused concrete ditch is already enjoying a new life thanks to the grassroots work of MacAdams’ group, Friends of the LA River. You can now kayak down a stretch and go riding alongside it, while a riverside cycle lane now swarms with lycra-clad commuters. Property values along the river have rocketed. A new arts district is growing out of an area of old industrial buildings, where biscuit factories and veg wholesalers are making way for the ubiquitous regeneration cocktail of galleries, craft beer and artisan coffee shops.

It’s just one aspect of the unexpected revival of LA’s long-maligned downtown – ‘DTLA’ to the cognoscenti – which has seen an influx of young creatives, priced out of Venice and Santa Monica, and even New York lured here by the big spaces and sense of frontier possibility. Once a place of half-vacant buildings and empty streets, DTLA now bristles with bars, studios and gaggles of property developers, hot on the heels of the artists.

It’s a new lease of life that offers hope for the latest beacon on the city’s ghostly cultural acropolis of Bunker Hill, where Gehry’s Disney Concert Hall and Arata Isozaki’s Museum of Contemporary Art shout across the six lanes of Grand Avenue and its deserted sidewalks. Packed like a big concrete sponge next to Gehry’s billowing titanium sails, The Broad museum is an enigmatic addition to this parade of arts buildings. Its monolithic facade gives nothing away – which makes it more tempting to discover what’s inside.

Designed by New York architect Diller Scofidio & Renfro, it is the latest gift bestowed on LA by the city’s richest man, Eli Broad, as a repository for his private collection of contemporary art. Inside, it feels like a Bond baddy’s hideout: from a dimly-lit concrete cave you’re whisked up through a tunnel on an escalator to a top-lit acre-sized gallery, where Broad’s booty of Koons and Kusama trinkets shine even brighter than usual in the dazzling LA light. The journey back down a winding labyrinthine stair allows snatched glimpses into the ‘vault’ where the rest of his bounty is stored.

It’s a strangely fitting final act for the 82-year-old Broad, who made his billions building cheap suburban housing and then spent three decades trying to champion the revival of LA’s downtown, mostly in vain. In the end, as with most big plans, it’s kind of happened organically, without him.

Oliver Wainwright is architecture critic at the Guardian. Read him here every other month and at ribaj.com
Apply now to receive a free copy of a beautiful and exclusive print of the Barbican, part of Contour’s 2016 wall calendar.

Innovative architectural fabrications designer and manufacturer, Contour, is delighted to announce the inaugural edition of its wall calendar, and is inviting applications from architects and building sector professionals for a free copy of this limited edition print.

The beautiful, high quality, A2-portrait print features a reproduction of a detailed illustration of the Barbican and surrounding area of London in gold and black, by Will Clarke, one of the UK’s leading architectural artists.

A faithful reproduction of the original screen print, the calendar illustration uses the careful spot application of gold colour to highlight details. Only 1,500 copies of the calendar will be available.

How to apply for your calendar
To apply for a calendar, visit www.contourcasings.co.uk/the-2016-contour-wall-calendar/ and complete the online application form. Supply is limited to one calendar per applicant and subject to availability. Please see the webpage for terms and conditions.

About the Barbican
Contrary to popular belief, the Barbican was never built as social housing. In fact much of the scheme was intended to provide exclusive housing, with a number of apartments on the upper levels of the towers designed as penthouses. This area of London suffered serious bomb damage and loss of life during the Second World War and discussions on what to do with the war-ravaged site began shortly after the end of the conflict. A decision to build residential properties was reached in 1957 and the Barbican began construction in the 1960s, with the aim of providing a centre for living and socialising. It remains one of the greatest examples of brutalist architecture in Europe and is grade II listed.

Chamberlain, Powell and Bon, the architect responsible for the design of the complex, was very keen to introduce modern techniques while including references to its historical context within the city. So many aspects of the scheme, including its name, remind us of the site’s ancient history. The name ‘Barbican’ derives from the Latin word ‘Barbecana’, meaning fortified gateway or defensive structure, and refers to the main fort built in this area of Roman London (or ‘Londinium’) between 90 and 120 AD.

It is truly remarkable that such a huge complex can exist so centrally in a city where space is at a premium. Still fully occupied, it has proved to be one of the great successes of modern metropolitan architecture.

About the artist
‘I first became interested in printmaking as an art student in Bath, and have been working as an artist and printmaker in south London for six years,’ says Clarke. Having experimented with various styles, I now focus primarily on architectural imagery. Some time ago I undertook a six-month drawing of London, as seen from the dome of St Paul’s Cathedral, and have been fascinated by architecture and the urban landscape ever since. Screen printing, more than any other technique, gives me the precision and control I need to reproduce very detailed line drawings. To this detail I like to add bright blocks of colour and an element of abstraction.’

About Contour
Contour designs, manufactures and installs innovative exterior and interior building products including architectural fabrications such as copings, fascia and soffits, column casings, anti-climb protection and low surface temperature radiators and guards. Contour works in close partnership with architects and design consultants, contractors and specifying customers. From its 32,000 ft² facility in Telford, it designs and manufactures, and has capacity to tackle almost any project in the UK or overseas.

www.contourcasings.co.uk

For more information on Will Clarke’s portfolio of architectural artwork and to purchase hand pulled screen prints, visit www.willclarke.co.uk
Doing the right thing

Ethics are at the heart of the Institute’s latest work

Famous US investor Warren Buffet once suggested: ‘If your business decisions and motives were published on the front page of a (broadsheet) newspaper and you still felt comfortable, then do it.’

During our recent discussions on the development of a new strategy for the RIBA, many of you have highlighted the importance of prioritising strong ethical standards.

Ethical behaviour in our profession can be measured by the degree of trustworthiness and integrity with which practices and individuals conduct their business, and make and stick to their decisions. But as our profession changes and becomes increasingly international, so must our approach to developing and reinforcing professional ethics.

Architecture has a direct impact on societies and economies; it shapes and influences the world we live in. For this reason, as architects we have a duty to uphold the highest standards wherever we practice.

Architects face various ethical dilemmas – from which clients to work for and which projects to bid for, to how much to charge and who to consult or what priority to give to minimising the impact of climate change.

In the best procured projects, enlightened clients understand that skills and long term quality should trump base capital cost in delivering the greatest good. Unfortunately, the suicidal bids that were being made during the recession, encouraged by lowest cost procurement processes, were perhaps too often excused by practices. Similarly, tendering is a process that may be susceptible to unlawful abuse by reputational concerns, workload promises and even financial bribery.

What happens when an architect finds out about conduct in tendering that falls short of being unlawful, but can still be regarded as unconscionable – is there an ethical duty to speak out? Should ethical conduct in architecture be better defined and regulated? Should architecture have a strict code of ethics? Does architecture have a primary goal (as clear as medicine’s aim to preserve life) that could inform such a code, or should members of the profession be allowed to choose by themselves what they believe to be moral?

Peter Oborn, RIBA vice president international, and a brilliant team at the Institute deserve our support for their work to create an appropriate and ethical context for practice at home and abroad. The International Task Group proposed the role that the Institute will play in responding to the built environment needs of communities facing human rights violations, civil conflict and/or natural disasters, and a new International Ethics Standard will be ready in early 2016.

I am delighted that the RIBA has signed up to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and committed to support and promote its principles on human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption with a six point action plan. The RIBA and its members already work within robust standards and codes that promote many of the UN Global Compact’s principles, but we will now be able to provide even greater support for our members in responding to ethical and moral issues. I will also be considering what advice we need from ethics experts outside our profession and I and the RIBA will continue to support the view in Paul Morrell’s Edge Commission report that all the professional institutes should join forces on a code of ethical conduct.

Whatever spin you choose to put on it, there is never a right way to do the wrong thing. I’m so proud of our work and the role that we play in society and I want everyone to value it as we do. Embracing, using and sharing our ethical business values will benefit us as architects, our clients and wider society.

What happens when an architect finds out about conduct in tendering that falls short of being unlawful, but can still be regarded as unconscionable – is there an ethical duty to speak out?
Ma Yansong, founder and principal partner of MAD Architects in China, is convinced we are entering a new era. He believes it is the end of the Modern age – with a capital M – and, less significantly, that the time of the international style and philosophy is finished.

‘There are many critical points about modernism… Everyone has a complaint about the modern city,’ he explains.

Sitting beside him in the large meeting room at his hipster-esque office with bare brick walls, exposed ceilings and a ping pong table in a former printing factory in the Beixinqiao district of Beijing, it is easy to understand his logic. We are enjoying the last of the summer heat in September and crystal blue skies, but yesterday people were walking around with filtration masks, clogged throats and blood in their noses unable to see the next city block, never mind the mountains that contain the sprawling metropolis.

It is Beijing Design Week, and the European expat architects and new practice arrivals hoping to find the land of plenty to support struggling headquarters back home are worried. The lustre of working and swanning around in exotic climes has, like the smog, been dissolved by the rain.

Ma’s comments resonate with a feeling that there is something dangerously wrong but have a sense of being on the cusp of something truly, earth-shatteringly exciting. The state is certainly making much of the festival: 12km of Design Week banners on every other lamppost from the airport into the city. But it is matched by a surge of interest and visitor numbers Europeans can only dream of. The 200,000 in 2009 when the festival was launched grew to 6.5 million in 2015.

MAD has 55 projects on show at the China 1000 exhibition at the Art Factory in the Chaoyang area of the city, but we are here to talk about his other work – the stuff which is uprooting Westerners from previously safe jobs – such as the Absolute Towers in Toronto and the upcoming George Lucas Museum in Chicago, announced only last month. We are here to talk about what is happening to architecture in China, and discover if there is a Chinese way of doing things.

‘Before 2008 there was no such thing as modern architecture. There were two types of building; traditional Chinese or Russian – columns and big facades, a Roman style by default,’ says Ma. ‘The Beijing Olympics changed everything. They gave the city international attention and foreign architects started flooding in. The projects showed what creativity in architecture was, and helped Chinese clients to understand modern architecture and open up to it.’

Ma launched MAD Architects during this momentous shift at the age of 29, having always wanted to start a practice to ‘propose and express his ideas’. He began alone in 2004 in an apartment, joined soon after by his two business partners: Dang Qun, who he had met via the Association of Chinese Architects in New York in 2003, and Yosuke Hayano, who worked with him at Zaha Hadid Architects in London the same year. The firm’s first job was a club house outside Beijing, but
it won three projects almost simultaneously.
'The competition in Toronto was our turning point. We were surprised to get it built,' he says. 'This was 2005, when the conversation was only about foreign architects in China. Not the other way round.'

Born in Beijing and an undergraduate student of Beijing Institute of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Ma was propelled onto the global stage and the competition made him into one of the world’s youngest starchitects almost overnight. MAD became the first Chinese practice to work outside of China. A mere 10 years earlier only state architects had existed in China, and 30 years before that there was virtually no urbanisation at all. The Toronto client liked its tower so much that it commissioned another next door, which became its inverse and MAD rapidly began to gain trust with clients within China too.

The Absolute Towers (completed 2012) were followed by the Ordos Museum, a ‘giant UFO in the Gobi desert’ (2011), the upside down U-shaped Sheraton Huzhou Hot Spring Resort (2011) and this month the firm will open the Harbin Cultural Island, a 79,000m² wetland opera house/theatre and labour recreational centre on a natural landscape 25 minutes’ drive from the city centre of China’s far north-eastern regional capital. ‘I understand the situation and culture in China,’ Ma remarks.

Today MAD Architects employs around 80 people of many nationalities between its two offices in Beijing and Los Angeles. Ma says that the practice could grow larger, but there is a limit to how much work a firm can take on and retain a studio atmosphere. Project work is split into teams covering primarily cultural, residential and hotel schemes at home, but extends to an apartment block refurbishment in Rome, a kindergarten on the edge of a rice field in Japan and a dense ‘hilltop village’ in Beverley Hills. He encourages a conceptual level of architecture to remain, including recently a globe-trotting mobile Chinatown named Superstar, as well as a proposal to plant Tienanmen Square with a forest of trees ‘for everyone to enjoy’. At any one time the practice is working on 10 to 15 projects.

Asked what defines his work, Ma’s response is ‘nature’ – a thirst for it. While MAD’s portfolio clearly draws on Ma’s experience working for Zaha, there is a subtle but essential difference: it boils down to his critique of international architecture mentioned earlier, which he defines as technology driven, ruled by order and rational organisation in design and programme.

‘Human emotion has been absent in modern architecture,’ Ma explains. ‘As has the relationship between architecture and nature. The ‘green’ and ‘sustainable’ architecture we see is still based on this modern logic – they are the same buildings, with the same kind of spaces, based on technology and materials.’

Ma wants to make architecture more emotional – he cites Louis Kahn – using concrete and asymmetry. He doesn’t see this as contradictory, and his ideology does not seem to focus on the environmental/carbon neutral element of design, nor solar panels, ground source heat pumps and other green paraphernalia. Rather it is about using nature as part of the building, not just the landscape surrounding it.

‘It’s about restoring a space for nature and people to connect. Nature is part of our body.’
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This translates into green elements, and organic shapes and organisations. Designing by sketching instead of by computer is integral to his method, as is listening to his instinctive reactions to place.

‘That is the only way you can deliver a building,’ he says. ‘If you start from programming and logic or analysis, there is never one answer as nothing is perfect.’

At Beverley Hills this means an urban block with a small community feel around a public space, while at the Huangshan Mountain Village, it’s a housing development designed to form a new topographical layer in the landscape – trees and mountains at once. At Harbin it is taking a cultural centre out of the centre of the city where urban growth happens, whereas Chaoyang Park Plaza’s two towers by Nanhui Lake in Beijing are almost a return to a gothic assimilation of nature.

Behind these ideas is a reaction to the North American style of doing things, which Ma sees as wreaking havoc on daily life in modern China, and making global issues problematic there too. He blames Chinese planners, though, not foreign architects, for choosing this convenient model of icons to address its hurried urbanisation process.

Now he wants a Chinese agenda for architecture. His focus on nature is inspired by the poetry and art of ancient Beijing: the carefully constructed gardens and parks, the beauty of that traditional culture and lifestyle. He is convinced that taste is changing, that Chinese architects are learning from good and bad architecture and that they will do better. A more human style is developing around community, independent offices and architects wanting to express a human value – he cites Daipu Architects as an example. It’s a confidence being strongly felt around those foreign architects at Beijing Design Week.

Yet there are still dangers. And strangely, for Ma, its source is in the very machine that propelled his practice to instant global fame and acceptance in the first place – the media.

‘Young designers get attention because ideas can spread quickly. Good opportunities come, but also pressure, because there’s lack of time to think,’ he explains.

In contrast to architects such as Zaha and others architects who exhibited at Philip Johnson’s 1988 deconstructivist exhibition at MOMA, ‘the real world accepts them,’ he says. ‘Today’s architects do not need to push boundaries, they do not have to be aggressive and idealistic to get their ideas across. These young architects enjoy their success rather than fighting for what they believe. Consequently architects are becoming more collaborative with mainstream values. This presents architecture as a fashion problem. It will be increasingly difficult to isolate from present values to be forward-looking.’

‘It’s about restoring a space for nature and people to connect. Nature is part of our body’

Below left Rendered drawing of the ridges and valleys that define the exterior glass facade of Chaoyang Park Plaza in Beijing.

Below Ordos Museum, completed in 2011, is ‘a giant UFO in the Gobi desert’. The city is mired in controversy: the conflict between long standing traditions and dreams for the future.
This is a splendid book by Robert Harbison, author of a distinguished catalogue arising from a study of architecture through history.

Ruins and Fragments is a thoughtful, stimulating and contemplative study of the fragmentary nature of our environment. It is about the meaning of the physical ruins of the past, but much more in the way it sees literature, language and social patterns of life as layers of meaning influencing adaptation and iconoclastic destruction.

Its informed and opinionated text challenges the established dogmas of approaching a ruin and is dismissive of the sanctimonious certitude of self-righteous interferers.

In the first of seven chapters, the ‘collectors of scraps’ and the ruins, which we’ve plundered to enrich contemporary design, are dealt with. Harbison says: ‘The next chapter takes on the great early 20th century monuments, to a fragmentary view: Ulysses, Battleship Potemkin, Vertov’s enthusiasms and Benjamin’s arcades – literature, film and literature as film – in the optimistic moment when the breaking up of the old certainties and loosening of form into ceaseless movement tempt writers and filmmakers to epic scale and exuberance.’

The next chapter traces a thread linking the skeletal work of Corbusier to brutalism and its feeling for the expression of materialism, proposing that the fragment bespattered landscapes of Orford Ness and Dungeness can carry us forward to grasp war damaged ruins in Dresden, Munich and Berlin.

After a literary and intensely illuminating excursion into the justification or otherwise of restoration and reordering, and a text on reconstructing the classic ancient shattered pot, we confront the two key chapters: Destruction and Reconstruction. A passage through the deliberate creation of ruins follows with an erudite essay on Cubism, complemented by the introduction of Schwitters harnessing the debris of social disorder and disintegration.

The author awards a special position to Gordon Matta-Clark for his deconstruction of standing structures and buildings, and compares it with Soane’s explorations of spatial manipulation at Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

This final chapter on reconstructing the landscape of ruin is ambitious and thought provoking. It considers such archaeological reconstructions as Angkor and Athens, and the polluting pressures of tourism.

The text is interleaved with a series of nice observations. One particularly attractive description is the archaeologist’s presumption that ‘all sites should be studied as thoroughly as possible, even if it kills them’. Presumably for this historian author, no fragment of evidence should be destroyed or manipulated to mislead the enquiring mind.

Distance offers perspective to both architecture and history. One wonders whether part of the book’s commentary on modernism needs time for deeper evaluation. Prize winning projects may not stand the test of time.

Ruins have meaning only if they are capable of rational analysis. One has to be able to prepare a strategy of technologies with which to manage decay and come to terms with the palimpsestous sequence. Meaningful engagement with conservationists might have led to a debate about the beaux arts tradition and a closer encounter with the SPAB pioneers of the late 19th century.

This is an essential text for all those responsible for ruins and fragments. Let us hope it saves some architects from ruining a ruin.

Read a longer version of this article at ribaj.com

Julian Harrap is a conservation architect
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Hilla Becher, 1934 – 2015

One half, with husband Bernd, of a famous photographic team that preserved the memory of industrial structures and made them art.

In the digital age it is easy to look at a photograph, or even 12 or 15 similar photographs like those of Hilla Becher, who died last month aged 81, and dismiss it as no more than a snapshot in time. The photograph often doesn’t convey the effort and complexity behind it – a certain context, the ‘so what and why.

The photographic oeuvre Hilla Becher leaves behind is part of this misfortune. Now well known within photography and architecture for the images of heavy industrial structures she took with her husband Bernhard from the early 1960s, the apparent photographic simplicity and repetitiveness disguises the duo’s radicalism.

The Bechers’ genius, as their last interviewer, the academic and author Moritz Neumüller explains, was in their methodology. Trained by the Potsdam master Walter Eichgrün in the large-format 19th century tradition, Hilla Wobeser worked at an advertising agency in Düsseldorf where she met Bernhard (Bernd), an art student at the Academy. Their collaboration began in 1959.

‘She was crucial to the work,’ explains Neumüller. ‘At the time Bernd was not a photographer, but an artist with a brush and pencil. Hilla gave visual form to their ideas. She taught him photography.’ They married in 1961 and together developed a way of documenting Bernd’s interest in the industrial structures of the Ruhr region he grew up in. Their approach was distinctive for its stated ‘objectivity’ and straightforwardness.

During the Cold War nations were particularly security sensitive to industrial places. From Germany, only 15 or so years after they had been primary bombing targets in the war, the Bechers travelled Europe and the United States, and spent most of their lives exploiting the subject. They got permissions to enter nearly impossible sites. They travelled in a Volkswagen caravanne, taking photographs by day and developing them by night. When their son Max was born, the quest didn’t stop. Rather than holidays by the beach, they toured post-industrial towns and cities. Max was given the camera too.

They photographed everything from water towers and blast furnaces to gas tanks. They missed oil only because getting access to platforms and refineries was too difficult.

Their method was vertical, front-on, stripped back, structure in the centre of the image frame. Each was a solo portrait from which humans were mostly absent. A foggy autumn day, or rain and cloud, created the shadowless, expressionless images they needed to show the essence of an object. Their precision was imperative at the point of capture, images were rarely cropped or edited.

Cataloguing and categorisation into geometric grids attempted to make sense of the shapes and forms, posing the question of why there were so many possible variations of supposedly functional buildings at the centre of the work.

‘It was the only way of working which made sense to them. They didn’t want to be too talkative,’ says Neumüller. ‘What we were interested in were the visual and sculptural aspects of the structures,’ Hilla once said. ‘And because these types of purpose-built structures can’t be preserved forever, we wanted to at least hold them fast in pictures, and so we began to collect them. Photography basically means nothing more than collecting.’

Photographically, the couple’s work was influenced by Walker Evans’ churches in Alabama and the system-atic approach of August Sanders, as well as Ed Ruscha, though far less funny. But conceptually they worked in a similar way to Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt.

Essentially, there were two strands of achievements: to preserve the memory of these buildings and to transform them into art – the latter marked by their winning the 1991 Venice Biennale Leone d’Oro award for sculpture, because there was no category for photography.

By encouraging photographers to work with theory, work on a theme and not let loose until it is covered in an interesting way, they influenced many, including Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth. Their method continues to form a foundation of most first year photography courses.

From architecture’s perspective, one of their most resounding achievements must be their involvement in saving and securing the future of the Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex in Essen, Germany, in the 1980s and early 1990s by transforming it into a cultural centre with Unesco protection. This was probably due only to their fastidiously collected emotive images.


Isabelle Priest

Read an extended version of this obituary at www.ribaj.com
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Let’s shout louder
Addressing the issue of architects’ fees, Jane Duncan’s final paragraph is pertinent (November 2015). I was recently quoted solicitor’s fees for a claim I am making. The scale ranged from £100 to £130 per hour for an unqualified trainee solicitor – the solicitor himself charges more than double that.

With that in mind, I conducted a mini survey of architects from the chartered practices register. I was quoted £45.00 to £185.00 per hour; the vast majority unable to charge anything like the trainee solicitor.

While I appreciate that our president has her eye on the ball here, I hesitate to suggest that we need a radical review of our place in society if we cannot charge the fees we deserve for the value that we add.

We need our voice to be heard at a far higher level. For example, the sheer number of technicians operating under the banner of ‘architectural’ designers, is surely warning enough that we are losing the battle. I would expect our president to appear publicly, explaining the value that architects add.

We owe it to the next generation of architects to get this sorted once and for all before our position becomes redundant.

Douglas Fowler via email

Still waiting
Bob Ghosh (RIBAJ, November 2015) rightly acknowledges that New Street station is much improved by its reconstruction. On a recent visit, I too found the locals enthusiastic about the project – not surprisingly, given that the 1960s station was so depressing. But equally, Birmingham was sold short by the economies imposed by Network Rail – the detailing is poor and the materials (ETFE and PVC cladding) second-rate. Compared to, say, McAaslan’s concourse at King’s Cross, this is a cut-price job. Ghosh doesn’t even mention the platforms, which remain – better lighting and new escalators apart – cramped and claustrophobic.

The ideal solution would have been to demolish everything up to the sky and create a light-filled station recalling that which existed until the 1940s. Now Birmingham must await HS2 and the new Curzon Street, incorporating the restored 1830s terminus building, for a vision of what 21st century railway architecture can be.

Kenneth Powell

Exchange

King’s Cross Academy
As the headteachers of King’s Cross Academy and Frank Barns School for Deaf Children we wish to respond to the recent article about our school/s (RIBAJ November 2015).

Unfortunately, the author made no attempt to engage with us during or after her visit – if she had, we could have explained the considerable thought and planning that had gone into the design and build of our wonderfully innovative and inclusive school. Teachers, parents and pupils were involved at every stage of its development. They are at the centre of our school’s philosophy so it is right they were at the centre of how we designed our new facilities.

We are both incredibly proud of our new school/s and since opening we have witnessed, with our pupils and parents, how successful the design, both inside and out, has been at supporting children’s learning and promoting inclusive practices across our communities, which is to be celebrated.

The multi-level aspect of the playground, offering a multitude of extra physical opportunities in comparison to a traditional playground, is a highlight of the design. Our pupils will soon have access to a 940m² Multi Use Games Area to provide them with a multitude of sporting opportunities, complete with entrance and viewing areas, storage and changing facilities.

If you are interested in coming to see our new school/s and to learn about the planning and design process, you are welcome to take part in our Design and Build visitor programme and information can be found on our school websites.

Emyr Fairburn and Karen Simpson
Headteachers, King’s Cross Academy
Frank Barns School for Deaf Children
We are glad that the headteachers are proud of their schools and wish them every success: the article reflects the writer’s view of the architecture and her interaction with them and others when she visited – Ed

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The joy of wood

Welcome to this year’s Wood Awards publication, where you can see all the winning and shortlisted schemes. As an introduction, Hugh Pearman considers what sets wooden architecture apart.

Is there something conceptually different about architecture that is made out of wood? In furniture, this is unarguable. But does the use of the material guide the architect’s hand in such a way that the resulting building is clearly distinguishable from a sister building with the same brief, made from different materials?

I would argue that yes, it does: that in devising buildings with wood in mind – and here I mean structurally, not just the external envelope – architecture adapts accordingly, if perhaps subconsciously. It’s not just a matter of calculating what you can do with given dimensions of green oak or laminated beams or particle board or engineered slabs of CLT (cross-laminated timber, which has been described by one leading architect as ‘the new concrete’). It’s as much to do with an attitude of mind: that here is a material that is grown rather than made, that is infinitely replaceable, that treads lightly on the earth.

These are factors that count heavily with architects, especially the rising generation. In an echo of the ‘nose to tail eating’ movement where no part of the animal is wasted, here is something more herbivorous: it is possible to design and specify a building where no part of the tree is wasted. Especially if your modest energy needs are generated from green sources which will include biomass-fuelled power stations.

In this context I was intrigued to learn recently that scientists are investigating how feasible it is to make the growing of timber completely predictable at the cellular level, so that densities, and therefore strength, can be precisely predicted in the way that is more usually associated with synthetic materials. This would certainly help reduce global carbon emissions and allow more delicate structures, and so should be welcomed. But this risks missing one of the joys of timber, which is the look and feel – and sometimes the mass – of it.

It is a very forgiving material in the way that it carries a certain redundancy, which also means repairability. How many conservation projects have you seen where an ancient, perhaps derelict, timber-frame building has been brought back to life, repaired, straightened – even perhaps disassembled, moved and re-erected? Wood can do that. It lasts. It adapts. Long before the term was coined, it was your basic ‘kit of parts’. The different kits that evolved in various societies did so with the human body in mind – what people could readily handle, singly or in groups, as they assembled buildings. I contend that something of that memory remains.

And this is what makes the annual parade of fine architecture and design presented by the Wood Awards such a joy. On the one hand this year, we see a great big office multi-storey block for a media company that makes full use of the technology of timber structure. On the other hand, we find an exquisite little lakeside building that revisits the idea of the ‘noble barn’ as put forward by Britain’s first Renaissance architect, Inigo Jones. Or you can take other contrasts: an ultra-sleek conservatory roof to a Crossrail station in London’s financial district, or an uplifting sequence of spaces in an Edinburgh nursery school. And then we see furniture designs that would be at home in any of these buildings – something that makes this award unique as a fusion of architecture and design.

This range tells you everything about the capabilities of timber in the hands of the best architects, designers and makers. Take a look, and enjoy this year’s winners and commendations. Wood brings out the best not only in buildings and furniture, but also – and this is cause and effect – in people.
The Fishing Hut

Set on a man-made lake that was originally built as a fish farm, fed by a river that defines its southern boundary, the Fishing Hut has been designed for a fishing consortium. It is a place from which to take advantage of the fact that the river provides some of the best fly-fishing in the UK.

The hut provides a secure place to store boats and fishing tackle, and is also a meeting place and shelter for anglers. Boats can be moved in and out of the water under a cover.
Wood Awards 2015
Arnold Laver Gold Award and Private

The structure has been designed to be as open as possible when in use to maximise views of the rural landscape, but can be closed and secured when not in use.

Eighteen pad foundations support nine galvanized steel goalpost frames, and these in turn support the timber floor structure and glulam oak superstructure. The roof consists of softwood rafters, clad internally with oak boards and externally with profiled aluminium sheeting on larch battens. There are 10 bays of 1.8m. A pair of bays at each end form open decks, partly covered by the overhanging pitched roof.

Below the eaves, shutters and cladding of open-jointed timber planks enclose the six central bays. This enclosure comprises a weather-tight internal space of four bays and a semi-enclosed storage area. The first bay of the internal space contains an entrance lobby, WC, kitchenette and dining area. The other three bays form an open-plan space enclosed by sliding glazed screens. The storage area beyond contains a loft for boats, an external shower and a covered mooring with a removable floor and water gate.

This building is classified as agricultural for planning purposes and, when closed, its pitched roof and the handling of the cladding refer directly to the construction of modern agricultural buildings. The untreated exterior timber will weather to match the silver-grey of the roof cladding and steel supports. Shutters pivot horizontally upward from the eaves, making the enclosure disappear, leaving you on a deck beneath the pitched roof.

In contrast to the exterior, the timber of the enclosed interior will retain in its warm golden tone, revealed and reflected in the water as the perimeter shutters are opened.

Every detail of this building has been carefully thought out and carried through and the way that it opens up to the surroundings is a delight. As one of the judges said, ‘Who wouldn’t want one of these?’

Location: Hampshire
Architect: Niall McLaughlin Architects
Structural engineer: Price & Myers
Main contractor/builder: Inwood Developments
Joinery: Inwood Developments
M&E consultant: Max Fordham
Timber consultant: Wood Architecture and Building
Electrical engineer: RS Birch and Partners
Plumbing/heating contractor: Design Heat Winchester
Quantity surveyor: Ridge & Partners
Project manager: Padstone Consulting
Landscape designer: Imagination Design
Wood suppliers: EC Forest Products, East Brothers Timber
Timber: European oak from France, Douglas fir from southern England
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Andrew Laver, group managing director, said: ‘We are, and always have been, keen to promote the use of wood as the world’s only truly sustainable material. By sponsoring the Wood Awards Gold Award we hope to encourage customers and their clients not only to use more timber, but also to celebrate what is good about what they have produced using timber. The Wood Awards help showcase what is possible in design and innovation, and allows us to move the discussion on further. We are very proud to lend our name to such a high-profile and important initiative.’
Sussex House

This elegant house has an upper floor made from 143 CLT panels that form walls and an undulating roof, which both mimic the surrounding Sussex hills and allows it to be entirely self-supporting. Cladding of the upper floor is with western red cedar of the highest visual grade, tongued and grooved and fixed to battens with a 10mm gap to allow for expansion. The cedar is untreated and will weather naturally.

Location: Sussex
Architect: Wilkinson King Architects
Structural engineer: Price & Myers (CLT), Packman Lucas
Main contractor/builder: Westridge Construction
CLT manufacturer: KLH UK
Wood supplier: Vincent Timber
Timber: Spruce, western red cedar (Canada), engineered oak
Joinery: S M Carpentry (external: cladding and decking, internal: linings, timber stair)

Dundon Passivhaus

Location: Compton Dundon, Somerset
Architect: Prewett Bizley Architects
Structural engineer: Structural Solutions
Timber frame: Allwood
Staircase: Fowler & Co
Interior joinery: Heartwood Cabinet Makers
Green oak supplier: Luton Green Sawmill
Client/owner: Graham and Emily Bizley
Timber: Green oak, European oak, birch plywood, pine, softwood
How they did it: The Fishing Hut

Timber was the natural choice of material for the structure, cladding and principal elements of the Fishing Hut, its barn-like form echoing the local vernacular of timber agricultural buildings. The exposed timber structure, shutters and cladding are made of oak, chosen for its durability and characteristic colour and grain. It is untreated and will weather to match the silver-grey colour of the roof covering and the steel supports which emerge from the water.

The building rests on pad foundations which were set on the lake bed and consist of precast concrete drainage rings filled with concrete. Rising from them, nine galvanized steel goalpost frames support the timber floor structure and timber frame superstructure – a series of oak glulam columns and beams which form 10 bays at 1.8m centres. These columns support simple oak glulam trusses and the beams project at the eaves.

Both architect and structural engineer felt that the use of flitch plates and visible bolts or pellets to connect oak glulam members would be inappropriate in such a finely crafted building. Instead, the main structural connections are by direct bearing; the top of each column is notched to slot into a rebate in the beam above. Each connection is fixed diagonally by high-tensile screws and concealed by being fixed from above. Horizontal roof truss members prevent roof spread and avoid the need for a ridge beam. Insulated softwood rafters form the roof, clad internally with 15mm-thick finger-jointed oak boards and externally with profiled aluminium sheet on larch battens.

Glulam to order

External walls of sliding glazed screens and slatted oak shutters are fixed between the oak glulam columns and beams. Pivoting upwards from the eaves to lie parallel with the projecting oak beams, the shutters transform the interior to an outside space and act as large horizontal brise-soleils.

To fabricate the structure, the architect approached Inwood Developments of Lewes, one of the few UK companies to produce oak and hardwood glue-laminated components to order. Inwood developed the timber process and fabrication details with the architect and became general contractor, sub-contractor and specialist supplier, manufacturing and prefabricating most of the building elements apart from electric installation, plumbing and steelwork.

Beams and columns were glue-laminated in the Inwood factory from 22mm kilndried and graded PEFC-certified European oak from France. Glulam components in the kitchen area were of FSC certified Douglas fir sourced from southern England.

Tenoned and jointed oak is used for the glazed screens; the shutters are of vertical
Wood Awards 2015
Arnold Laver Gold Award and Private

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(left) Oak boards spaced apart on an oak frame with connections and actuators of stainless steel to avoid bi-metallic corrosion. Inwood prefabricated all the elements individually in its factory before installing them on site and sealing them with a UV-protection oil.

Minimum impact
With the site having significant ecological importance – it is an SSSI (Special Site of Scientific Interest) and SAC (Special Area of Conservation) – protection of this environment was the prime factor in design and construction. To prevent environmental damage on site, the team used prefabrication and dry construction techniques as far as possible to minimise on-site processing of materials and avoid pollution risks. It built the superstructure without draining the lake to avoid damage to flora and fauna. Materials were carefully selected to ensure that run-off and components in contact with the water would have no adverse impact on the aquatic environment. The building sits over the lake and rainwater discharges directly into it. Wastewater is treated on site and cleaned before discharge directly to the river. The building’s floor is raised above predicted flood levels.

Another important part of the design process was the impact of materials on the wider environment. The inherent durability of each specific component was chosen to maximise life expectancy, limit maintenance and minimise embodied energy. Most of the structure is built of oak, an indigenous and sustainably sourced hardwood whose natural durability allows the construction to be untreated externally. The glue-laminated structure uses small timber sections that make efficient use of the raw material. Extensive use of prefabrication minimises site waste and the transportation of bulk materials, while energy efficient LED lighting helps keep energy consumption to a minimum.

There are more than 70 case studies on the TRADA website. To read this case study in full go to trada.co.uk/casestudies
This timber canopy forms an outdoor venue occupying a disused industrial recycling yard in Liverpool’s Baltic Triangle. Brothers Hugh and Howard Miller, a furniture maker and an architect, collaborated on the design and making of this project which went from initial idea to opening in just over three months.

Inspiration for the design comes from the remaining gables of a burnt-out warehouse that form a backdrop, reflecting the pitches in the profile of the canopy. The structure is supported by a set of 10 ‘quadrapods’ – doubled A-frame supports – made from green oak. Each one incorporates a table or bench as well as supporting the load of the canopy via glulam beams, which project from the roof to form a wing-shaped rain spout.

Green oak furniture, conceived as a set of tessellating components, populates the courtyard garden, along with planted one-tonne builders’ bags which are designed to be easily movable. The judges were impressed by the boldness of the scheme, the attention to detail and the iterative model making in this imaginative project, which was a real labour of love.

Location: Liverpool
Architect: Howard Miller Design
Structural engineer: Materian
Main contractor/builder: Hugh Miller Furniture
Joinery: Hugh Miller Furniture
Wood supplier: Materian
Client/owner: Constellations
Timber: Welsh green oak, TR26 softwood roofing timber, OSB3 boards, Norwegian spruce glulam beams

OPPOSITE: Trestles that support the roof double as seating.
TOP: the bar creates a sense of enclosure.
LEFT: Roof pitches echo those of the remaining walls.
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The Grown in Britain licensing system had its first birthday in the summer of 2015 and has since broken through the one million tonnes barrier. It has over 250,000 ha of productive woods and forests feeding its sought-after supply chain.

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The Grown in Britain mark is on all kinds of products from structural spruce to softwood cladding, hardwood flooring, charcoal and woodfuel. Our licence holders are the only organisations allowed to use the trademarked Grown in Britain brand so please apply for a licence today and do not be tempted to use the mark without permission. Get a pack via enquiries@growninbritain.org

Our culture of responding to customer needs has also led us to announce several new licensing categories to embrace a fuller range of UK forest and woodland products. These are woodfuel, Christmas trees and products containing recycled material, and we are close to finalising licence categories for coppice products and nursery plants Grown in Britain.
WINNER

Arcadia Nursery, Edinburgh
Built for the University of Edinburgh, Aracdia Nursery was conceived as a floating, lightweight structure that could be built within a site that was restricted by extensive tree cover. The CLT structure creates a warm, tactile interior but also allows clear roof volumes to enable the creation of a mezzanine space, used by the children for quiet time. Timber acoustic ceilings soften the sound and aesthetic of each playroom, while timber cladding and wood fibre insulation envelope the building. Throughout the building, decks, walkways, feature fences and play features are all made of wood.

Designed to be a very low energy building, the nursery’s BREEAM assessment at design stage achieved a high score of 82.2% with the materials and pollution sections achieving a score of 100%. In particular, the design team went to great lengths to avoid using fire retardants and varnishes in order to ensure that the good air quality enabled by the construction methodology was not compromised by products emitting VOCs and other low-level toxicity.

The judges were impressed by intelligent use of space, which creates natural breaks within larger groups and also allows groups to collaborate. They admired the feeling of calm and contentment – remarkable in a building for the under fives.

**Architect:** Malcolm Fraser Architects  
**Structural engineers:** AED, Eurban  
**Main contractor/builder:** Balfour Beatty  
**Structural frame contractor:** Eurban  
**Joinery:** MK Timber  
**Wood suppliers:** Stora Enso, Lignatur, Lignotrend, Russwood, Natural Building Technologies  
**Client/owner:** University of Edinburgh  
**Timber:** Austrian spruce, Siberian larch, Scottish larch
Time for timber

David Hopkins, executive director of Wood for Good, celebrates timber’s popularity – and looks for more

Now that the Conservative majority government has settled in, it is looking for solutions to a variety of policy problems. But there are two issues that have transcended political boundaries in recent years: housing (or lack thereof) and climate change.

There’s no silver bullet. Both require a complex mix of policy and innovation to solve them. But many of the answers are already in front of us, and timber is part of the solution.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide naturally and store it in wood. If we built 200,000 houses each year in timber, it would sequester and store nearly 4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. Safely, visibly, structurally.

Wood for Good is proud to support the national Wood Awards as it encourages and rewards a greater use of timber in construction and promotes the range of advantages and benefits this brings to the economy, the environment and to society.

The timber industry is a fast-growing, naturally low-carbon supply chain valued at over £8.5 billion in the UK. It provides employment across a wide range of skills and sectors and is attracting huge levels of investment from home and abroad.

Timber is changing the face of high streets, schools and homes, inspiring innovation in design and manufacturing and fast becoming the material of choice for sustainable urban modernism. This is an exciting time for timber in the UK. The range of entries in the 2015 Wood Awards reflects this.

For more information, visit www.woodforgood.com or email David on info@woodforgood.com

Wood for Good works across the supply chain as the promotional vehicle for the timber industry
HIGHLY COMMENDED

Maggie’s Oxford

The Maggie’s Oxford Centre offers free practical, emotional and social support for people with cancer and their families and friends. The concept is a treehouse; raised above the ground the building extends into the protected woodland amid the tree canopy, to maximise views towards the nature reserve and where possible screen the dense development of Churchill Hospital, Oxford. The judges admired the ambitious design and the sense of welcome it provided.

Location: Oxford
Architect: Wilkinson Eyre Architects
Structural engineers: Alan Baxter Associates, Metsawood
Main contractor: Jackson’s Building Contractors
MEP engineers: KJ Tait Engineers
Joinery: Roger Kendrick Joinery
Consultant specialist engineer: Merk Timber
Client/owner: Maggie’s Centres
Timber: Norway spruce, white fir, Scots pine, European larch, Douglas fir, Swiss stone pine, European oak, birch plywood, Scandinavian kiln-dried softwood Thermowood

SHORTLISTED

Keynsham Civic Centre & One Stop Shop

Location: Keynsham, Bath & North East Somerset
Architect: AHR

SHORTLISTED

The Level

Location: Brighton
Architect: Knox Bhavan Architects
WINNER

The Studio
Birch plywood has been used extensively as both a finishing and a structural material on this tiny house, creating a new staircase that acts as a unifying feature while providing not only circulation but a surprising amount of storage.

At the top of the building, a timber-clad mezzanine room overlooks a double-height space. Timber contrasts with more neutral white plasterboard walls throughout.

The architect wanted the staircase volume to feel sculptural, as if it had been carved out of one piece of wood, so it was important that the surfaces felt solid and continuous. To achieve this, he used plywood plugs to conceal fixings and the cupboard doors are without handles to enhance the solid, carved-out appearance of the space.

The plywood has been treated throughout with a clear Bona extra matt water-based varnish.

The judges were impressed by the way that this imaginative approach created a family home out of what would previously have seemed an unliveable small area, and that, despite having no external space, the building never feels claustrophobic.

This is a charming and imaginative home for a small but growing family.

Location: London
Architect: Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects
Structural engineer: DMC Consulting Engineers
Main contractor/builder: Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects
Joinery: Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects
Wood supplier: Lathams
Client/owner: David and Rosanna Bradley
Timber: Siberian birch plywood, American red oak
**WINNER**

**Bryanston School: The Tom Wheare Music School**
This independent school places great emphasis on music, and its new Tom Wheare Music School has at its heart a 300-seat auditorium that plays host to public performances as well as in-house ones. Timber is used on most exposed surfaces to create a warm, inviting and acoustically appropriate environment.

American white oak flooring, wall and ceiling panels join with specially designed oak acoustic panels (backed with sound-absorptive material) that can be individually adjusted to improve acoustic performance in the space. Spruce glulam timber beams support the roof. The fixed seating is timber backed.

Elsewhere, sustainable Douglas fir has been used as framing for most windows and as part of the large integrated panels below the windows. There are other uses of timber framing and timber linings, and a corridor with glulam beams.

The judges praised the use of a single timber for most of the auditorium finishes and the care that had been taken with detailing. They were particularly impressed by the simple and effective design of the moveable acoustic panels which can be adjusted manually.
HIGHLY COMMENDED

Pod Gallery

This was an imaginative way to create a free-standing art gallery within a barn, linked to a private house.

Location: South Gloucestershire
Architect: Stonewood Design

SHORTLISTED

Hult International Business School

Location: London
Architect: Sergison Bates Architects

SHORTLISTED

Spathroom

Location: London
Architect: Paul McAneary Architects

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Wood Awards 2015
Structural/Judges’ Special Award

WINNER STRUCTURAL AWARD

Canary Wharf Crossrail

This project was singled out for the structural award from shortlisted entries across all categories because of the impressive 300m long spruce lattice roof that sits over a garden. This is the topmost layer of a development, otherwise largely retail, above the new Crossrail station. The judges admired the intelligent response to the varying levels of exposure (parts of the roof are open) as well as the way in which the structure was resolved.

Location: London
Architect: Foster + Partners
Structural engineers: Wiehag, se-austria (seele), Arup
Main contractor/builder: Canary Wharf Contractors
Timber: Spruce

WINNER JUDGES‘ SPECIAL AWARD

BSkyB Believe in Better Building

The judges chose to give this project a special award in recognition of the scale and speed that were achieved, and of the client’s determination to use timber for its environmental and aesthetic properties. The 3,000m² development consists of a four-storey linear building with a dramatic stair running the length of the main facade. It has a glulam frame with visible-grade cross-laminated timber panels providing core stability to the walls and floors – left largely exposed within the finished structure.

Location: London
Architect: Arup Associates
Structural engineers: Arup Associates, engenuiti
Main contractor/builder: Mace
Joinery: Taylor Made Joinery Interiors
Timber frame contractor: B & K Structures
Cherry means many things to many people. To the garden enthusiast it suggests the sweet-smelling wood from a fruit tree. To the Japanese it may mean Prunus serrulata, which is sometimes called ‘sakura’ – famous for cherry blossom in springtime. To the American forester it is Prunus serotina, one of the faster growing temperate hardwoods. To the furniture craftsman it is a supreme wood to work with and to finish. Cherry turns well on a lathe and is good for steam bending, while its striking colour tones darken with age to a deep, rich reddish brown.

There are many ornamental varieties of cherry tree – famous in Japan and China – and some timber-producing cherry is found in the forests and woodlands of Europe. But the most well-known and commercially available species for timber production is American black cherry, which grows extensively in America’s eastern states such as Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia and West Virginia. This is a quality forest tree that regenerates naturally and is not planted like most of the smaller ornamental cherry trees.

Cherry is managed on a sustainable basis. It is also relatively faster growing than some other temperate hardwoods, such as the oaks, so it is likely to always be available to bespoke and industrial furniture-makers. However, after being a very fashionable and heavily used timber a few decades ago, cherry is nowadays a beautiful and sustainable timber full of potential that is sadly being underutilised. So it is time to celebrate once again what it can offer and see it restored to its rightful place as a desirable, high-performance option for contemporary design.

But it’s not just about fashion trends. When it comes to wood it’s important to make the best use of what nature provides. David Venables, European director of the American Hardwood Export Council, explains: ‘The vast temperate hardwood forests of the eastern USA provide abundant and diverse timber species. Given current furniture fashion you may be forgiven for thinking our forests are all white oak and walnut. Establishing a balance between market demand and the dynamic of the forest is essential to achieve true sustainability.’

Following that thinking, the American Hardwood Export Council continually works hard to create a balanced and sustainable demand for different hardwood varieties. This year AHEC has mainly focused on promoting American cherry with two show-stopping projects, celebrating the unique characteristics of this timber.

The Invisible Store of Happiness was a fascinating experiment, crafted by furniture maker Sebastian Cox and artist Laura Ellen Bacon, using American cherry and...
American soft maple. It was premiered at Clerkenwell Design Week in London, and then again, more recently, at 100% Design during the London Design Festival.

The role of the installation was to inform the debate, and to continue to create an environment where people are choosing American hardwood because of a better understanding of the materials.

The second of the projects initiated by AHEC is Rotunda Serotina, a towering structure of American cherry plates, designed by architect Kolman Boye and made by Benchmark, as part of the Wallpaper* Handmade 2015 exhibition in Milan.

This installation also allowed AHEC to gauge public reaction to American cherry and articulated the technical and aesthetic qualities of this species while establishing a lively gathering point in and around the heart of the gallery.

To learn more about cherry and other sustainable American hardwoods visit americanhardwood.org and follow @ahec_europe
To learn more about The Invisible Store of Happiness visit theinvisiblestoreofhappiness.info
To learn more about Rotunda Serotina visit rotundaserotina.info
The Observatory: The Study and The Workshop

These two small structures, each of which can be rotated manually, were a response to a competition brief for a mobile and sculptural building to house 12 multidisciplinary artists over a two-year residency in remote landscapes and coastal locations. The prefabricated cabins, an artist’s studio (The Study) and a public shelter (The Workshop), can be transported together on an 8x2m truckbed.

Externally, both of The Observatory cabins are in charred homegrown larch and imported Siberian larch with a ‘test bed’ wall clad in a variety of charred timber including cedar, oak and chestnut. The design team is researching and monitoring the effects of time and weathering on the various species on the test wall and on the imported and home-grown larch, which has had varying treatments.

The timber was burnt using Shou Sugi Ban, a traditional Japanese method of burning and preserving wood economically and sustainably. It involves assembling a chimneystack of several braced timber planks, which burn from the bottom upwards, charring the timber within a few minutes. It is a field that is still largely unexplored in architecture, and the design team will record and monitor how the timber fares.

A durable hand-made screen, created by artist Edward Crumpton from the traditional fisherman’s tool of tarred marlin rope, connects The Observatory with its coastal locations and landscapes.

The judges were impressed by the imaginative response to the brief, by the project’s interaction with the landscape, and by the provision of much-needed research into the durability of charred timber.

Location: Various (currently Lymington Keyhaven Nature Reserve)
Architect: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
Main contractor/builder: S&S Construction
Engineer: Unitspark
Joinery: S&S Construction
Wood supplier: James Latham
Client/owner: SPUD
Timber: Siberian larch, home-grown native larch, Canadian western red cedar, home-grown native chestnut, European oak, Coillte Smartply, structural softwood Tricoya, Accoya
The Healthcare Innovation Exchange (HELIX) Centre’s new design studio sits in the grounds of St Mary’s Hospital as a hub to engage frontline NHS staff and patients as design collaborators. The Kerto structure consists of interlocking portal frames that stabilise the building in two directions while achieving the relatively large clear span roof. Inside, the timber frame is incorporated into bookcases and shelving that help to create a dynamic workspace for creative research. The judges admired the thinking that produced this appealing and unusual prefabricated building.

Location: London
Architect: Royal College of Art architecture students
Structural engineer: AKTII
Main contractor/builder: Millimetre
Joinery: Millimetre
Environmental design: Max Fordham
Cost control: Gardiner & Theobald
Wood suppliers: Sydenhams, Lathams
Client/owner: Imperial College
Timber: Kerto-S LVL from Finland, WISA-Spruce and WISA-Birch plywood from Europe, European engineered oak
A material for the 21st century

On a hot summer’s day, I and fellow judges Corinne Julius, John Makepeace, Rod Wales and Katie Walker gathered to peruse the considerable number of entries to this year’s awards. Our eyes were focused on the Furniture and Product categories, looking for an even spread across production-made and bespoke projects as well as student designers, a category we welcomed for the first time this year. Corinne was new to the judges and I joined as the new chair, having been handed the baton by Sean Sutcliffe of Benchmark. After several hours with plenty of debate and discussion, we settled on our shortlist before our second phase of scrutiny which was to come later.

And that moment came at 100% Design during the London Design Festival, when we judged our shortlisted contenders in front of physical examples of their works. A whole new level of assessment kicked in as pieces were touched, sat upon, turned upside down and even sniffed! This threw open fresh discussions with the varying expertise of the judges alerting group members to different considerations. While the bespoke contenders were strong this year, the production-made category attracted the most debate, with the general quality of submitted work failing to reach the heights that it could and should.

What is clear when judging the Wood Awards is that this age-old natural material maintains its appeal in a market awash with alternatives. Its tactility, richness, structure and warmth continue to lend it to myriad applications, and its popular uptake by industry as well as consumers is testament to its versatility and relevance in the 21st century.

Max Fraser, Spotlight Press

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Congratulations to all this year’s Wood Awards winners from James Latham
The judges were so impressed by two very different shortlisted projects in this category that they took the unusual decision of selecting joint winners.

**Endgrain**

Endgrain showcases the possibilities provided by dyeing wood instead of painting it. Staining the wood all the way through leaves it consistently saturated, so that when Endgrain gets dirty or fades in the sun, removing or sanding the top layer will make it look brand new again.

The idea was inspired by xylem, the water-conducting tissue in trees that facilitates transportation of nourishment through the roots and into the rest of the plant. As each responded differently to the chemicals in the dye, experimentation helped the designer settle on two species: jelutong and southern yellow pine. Both allowed the stain to soak all the way through, while achieving different aesthetic qualities. In jelutong the process brings out the colour and in pine it brings out the natural grain of the wood.

The constituent wood blocks in the pieces are glued together much like a butcher’s block, facing up, to expose the stronger surface of the timber. The judges were excited to see colour used in wood, which is unusual, and by the huge response provoked in people who see the pieces. They admired the studio’s initiative in conceiving and developing the process.

*Designer: Raw-Edges Design Studio*

*Wood supplier: Jennor Timber*

*Timber: Jelutong, southern yellow pine, cypress veneer*
Wood Awards 2015
Bespoke

**Ves-el**

For this project, Zaha Hadid was invited to collaborate with Gareth Neal, commissioning him to create a bespoke design for something Hadid has always wanted but had never been able to find.

The brief was simple, to create some form of tableware from wood. The water carafe idea emerged from considering the liquid nature of Hadid’s work, and juxtaposing that with a functional element. Neal extruded the form along one of its axes with a slit opening at the end that allowed the viewer to look into a cathedral-like space. He was interested in the idiosyncrasies of traditional processes such as a hand-thrown pot or a raised piece of silverware, and how these could be simulated through digital imitation. The vessels were made in two parts on a CNC machine during a week-long stay at Benchmark Furniture. Benchmark had to upgrade its software, as the designs really pushed the boundaries of the machine.

The judges felt this was a winner because of the combination of the process and the finished result which, they said, had an intensity of energy.

**Designer:** Gareth Neal in collaboration with Zaha Hadid  
**Maker/manufacturer:** Benchmark Furniture  
**Wood supplier:** Lathams  
**Client/owner:** Zaha Hadid as part of the Wish List project  
**Associated gallery:** Phos Art + Design  
**Timber:** American white oak
If you are interested in exhibiting at next year's show, please contact Scott Hartley (scott.hartley@media-ten.com)

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Bespoke

SHORTLISTED

From Greenwich To The Barrier & Perpetually Ajar

Designer: David Gates
Wood suppliers: Blumsoms, WL West, North Heigham Sawmills, Timberline Tonbridge

GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Designer: Sebastian Cox
Maker/manufacturers: Sebastian Cox and Benchmark Furniture

Production-made

SHORTLISTED

A Stool For The Kitchen

Designers: Felix de Pass and Alison Brooks
Maker/manufacturer: Benchmark Furniture

Aero Trestle Table

Designers: Catherine Aitken and David Murphy
Maker/manufacturer: Edinburgh Sculpture Workshops

The judges decided not to make an award in this category.

SHORTLISTED

Alpha Chair

Designer: Brodie Neill
Maker/manufacturer: Made in Ratio
End grain stationery

This stationery accessories collection was inspired by the wooden floor in London’s Barbican theatre. The surface pattern of the floor reflects the nature from which it was derived. The aim was to introduce this mix of nature and man-made beauty and apply it to functional, everyday products. As pine is widely used in carpentry there is often waste that cannot be used for large products. This collection uses the end grain patterns from off-cuts, which are carefully cut and glued together. The judges said this work was fresh, and that it felt like the start of a journey in designing and making.

Designer: Simin Qiu
College/university: Royal College of Art
Timber: Pine
Wood Awards 2015
Student Designer

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Slatted Chair
Designer: Emma Leslie
College/university: Building Crafts College

SHORTLISTED

Throne Stool and Pew Stool
Designer: Torsten Sherwood
College/university: London Metropolitan University

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  Sidell Gibson
- **Michael Morrison (co-chair)**  
  Purcell
- **Jim Greaves**  
  Hopkins
- **Andrew Lawrence**  
  Arup
- **David Morley**  
  David Morley Architects
- **Hugh Pearman**  
  RIBA Journal
- **Adam Richards**  
  Adam Richards Architects
- **Ruth Slavid**  
  Architectural writer
- **Nathan Wheatley**  
  engenuiti
- **John Wilkie**  
  Craft specialist

### Judges for the Furniture Awards

- **Max Fraser (chair)**  
  Spotlight Press
- **Corinne Julius**  
  Design critic
- **John Makepeace**  
  Furniture designer and maker
- **Rod Wales**  
  Wales and Wales
- **Katie Walker**  
  Katie Walker Furniture

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**Welsh Slate**

**Title:** Welsh Slate as a building material  
An overview of the benefits of natural slate for roofing, cladding, walling, flooring, paving and aggregates is contained within a new RIBA-approved CPD from Welsh Slate. The "Welsh Slate as a building material" presentation profiles the company, explains what slate is and what its advantages and applications are, and addresses problems caused by poor-quality slate. And it explains the changes to BS 5534.

**Contact:** T: 01248 600656  
E: enquiries@welshslate.com.

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**Airflow**

**Title:** Understanding Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery for Commercial Applications  
The seminar explains the need for better indoor air quality and the energy savings that can be achieved by implementing the correct ventilation strategy. By explaining the principles of operation variants in equipment design, the drivers of specification and the regulatory landscape the participant will learn and understand the features and benefits of this technology.

**Contact:** E: info@airflow.com  
W: www.airflow.com  
T: 01494 525252

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**Karndean Designflooring**

**Title:** Inclusive Flooring Design: Where Form and Function Meet Legislation  
This seminar is designed to inform and inspire specifiers designing flooring in environments where the visually impaired, patients with dementia, and the elderly will be present. The CPD will cover key topics such as reducing the risk of slipping, complying with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and importance of colour contrast and light reflectance values. It will introduce guidelines for product selection, maintaining hygienic floors and environmental benefits.

**Contact:** T: 0845 605 5330  
E: commercial@karndean.co.uk  
W: www.karndean.com

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**SCHLUTER SYSTEMS**

**Title:** Movement Joints and Uncoupling Membranes for Tile and Stone Coverings  
This CPD seminar will provide information on how to solve problems such as moisture movement in the substrate or drying shrinkage by specifying the appropriate movement joints and uncoupling membranes in specifications. Participants will come away from the seminar confident in being able to specify movement joints and uncoupling membranes to counteract stresses and prevent future problems, such as failed sealed connections, cracked tiles and joints, from occurring. Run during lunch breaks this training session is being offered free of charge with lunch included. Includes 15 minutes for questions and participants will receive a certificate upon completion. Please quote reference number Ref: R0M312 for priority bookings.

**Contact:** E: training@schluter.co.uk  
T: 01530 813396

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**RIVERMEADE SIGNS**

**Title:** Wayfinding and Best Sign Practice  
The CPD looks at what constitutes ‘Best sign practice’ and how good signing can help everyone; not just those with disabilities. Specifically:

- How signing for the disabled can be well intentioned but is often poorly thought through  
- The choice of typography and colour ways to aid legibility  
- Why the layout of information on a sign is so important  
- Helpful and misleading symbols and arrows  
- Case study Whitley Court - what do signs look like when they are specifically designed to assist a variety of visitors with different disabilities.

**Contact:** C: Marion Phelan  
T: 020 896 6906  
E: marion_phelan@rivermeade.com

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**British Gypsum**

**Title:** Ceiling Solutions for Improved Acoustic Environments  
A new RIBA-approved CPD seminar on the fundamentals of building acoustics, sound absorption and reverberation control in residential, public and commercial buildings. This one-hour seminar outlines the various factors that need to be considered when designing an interior environment.

The session also touches on the impact of aesthetics, fire safety and air quality, and the latest regulations and requirements affecting specific commercial sectors.

**Contact:** W: www.ribacpd.com/british-gypsum/01203/overview/

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**Geze**

**Title:** Rubber Floor Coverings - a product with fascinating properties  
Our iPad based, interactive seminar looks at the technical and aesthetic aspects of specifying resilient floorcoverings, the properties of rubber and the quite unique design impact that can be made to any interior.

**Contact:** T: 01543 443000  
E: cpd@geze.com  
W: www.geze.co.uk

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**Comar**

**Title:** Designing Functions & Reliability into Entrances  
The issues that influence the function of main entrance design and technology. This seminar aims to offer an understanding of how user expectation influences door design and links this with hardware selection, entrance configuration and floor finishes.

**Contact:** T: 020 685 9685  
W: www.comar-ahu.co.uk

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**KARNDIEAN DESIGNFLOORING**

**Title:** Inclusive Flooring Design: Where Form and Function Meet Legislation  
This seminar is designed to inform and inspire specifiers designing flooring in environments where the visually impaired, patients with dementia, and the elderly will be present. The CPD will cover key topics such as reducing the risk of slipping, complying with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and importance of colour contrast and light reflectance values. It will introduce guidelines for product selection, maintaining hygienic floors and environmental benefits.

**Contact:** T: 01788 513 160  
F: 01788 552 812  
E: info-uk@nora.com  
W: www.nora.com/uk
The smart Gerflor GTI range has just been stepped-up a notch with the addition of two new electro-conductive floorcovering products. Showcased at the Lab Innovations 2015 exhibition, the GTI ELS Control and GTI ELS Connect ranges were well received by key decision makers in the industry. GTI ELS is a multi-layered looselay vinyl tile, 6mm thick, reinforced with two glass fibre grids and will be available in two new additional formats, with each format available in five stunning colours.

DOYMA is a world-leading manufacturer of sealing and fire protection systems

The company’s products are used to seal penetration points through walls and floors to permanently prevent any infiltration of gases and water into the building. With over 40 years’ experience, DOYMA operates in the three core fields of expertise of civil engineering, building services and energy supply providing the market with ducting systems for pipes and cables, single and multi-service house ducts for supply lines and fire protection products for preventive structural fire protection.

Sadolin launches new online product help videos

Premium woodcare brand Sadolin is keeping specifiers in the picture with a series of videos that bring to life the attributes of its ranges. 27 videos have been created highlighting each Sadolin product range. Each video introduces the product, explains where it can be used, highlights the key features and benefits, and finally shows how wonderful wood can look after Sadolin has been applied. The videos can be accessed by the Sadolin Woodcare YouTube channel or on the Sadolin website.

Comar completes Seaford Library Complex

Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems have recently completed the new Seaford Library complex in East Sussex. The architect’s design vision was to create a continuous wall of glass to the libraries ground floor facade. With this in mind Comar 6EFT was selected as it offers architects a flexible system, providing a structurally glazed solution, with options for facads, concealed vents and an extensive range of profiles that cater for large structurally glazed panes.

Welsh Slate goes down the CAD route

Leading UK manufacturer Welsh Slate has unveiled CAD capability with the launch of a selection of standard details. Available as CAD-compatible and PDF files, the details cover eaves, vented soffits and fascias, verges, abutments, valleys, ridge and hip details, parapet gutters, mansard roofs and changes in pitch.

Cembrit provides architects with BBA certified slates

The importance of BBA certification is well-known as an independent mark of approval for suppliers to the construction industry, and Cembrit has the distinction of having its complete range of fibre cement fully accredited by the organisation. Cembrit holds five BBA Certificates for its fibre cement slate range, ensuring that whichever system is chosen, architects can be confident in the specified product.

Architects respond to the Rooflight Company survey

Our recent survey of architects in the conservation sector is an in-depth enquiry into architects’ attitudes to authenticity, considering traditional versus modern alternatives for achieving this in period buildings. From the survey 52% of architects said they believed an authentic appearance should be the priority.

New rubber flooring noraplan® valua

Warmth, comfort and naturalness are decisive criteria in interior design in all areas and beyond the private living space. The new rubber flooring noraplan® valua from noraplan® systems combines two aspects, warm colours and natural surface structure, giving rise to a cozy atmosphere in every room. Presenting 32 appealing colours and with the authenticity of the rubber material, noraplan® valua provides exceptional durability and walking comfort, and fulfils all of the requirements for a long lived and sustainable floor covering.

Sadolin has been applied. The videos can be accessed by the Sadolin Woodcare YouTube channel or on the Sadolin website.

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When photographs of Farnley Hey first appeared in the specialised press, between 1955 and 1956, they instantly revealed the originality of its design. Built at the edge of a drop into a thickly wooded valley in Yorkshire, this small house by Peter Womersley is considered one of Britain’s most outstanding mid-century modern houses.

When it was listed in 1998, English Heritage described it as one of the best demonstrations of the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright in the country. The interior revolves around a large double-height living area, with no internal partitions separating the various ‘rooms’. They are instead defined by changes of level, and elements such as columns, sideboards and music units, as well as different lighting and surface textures. The illusion of spaciousness created by the adoption of the open plan is further enhanced by the use of extensive glazing, which allows spectacular views over the Pennines, as do the outdoor porches and terraces.

This photograph successfully conveys the character of the interior space, especially in its relationship with the exterior.

Valeria Carullo
How to save a rainforest

The average Brit uses 325kg of paper per year. That's the equivalent of 6 trees worth of paper per person or a UK total of 385 million trees.

Recycling newspapers, method statements, junk mail, phone books and food packaging as well as purchasing products made from recycled material can make a big difference.

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