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Oxford Brookes' new building by Design Engine gets ambitious

28

Finishing lines

Haworth Tompkins makes sense of Chichester's theatre

12

Tanked up

Fosters makes room for the IWM's armoury

35

Back to work

Hurrah! Good news for employment and earnings

42

All for one

Assemble and the new collectivism

80

Edwin Smith

Photographer of a lost Britain

84

Wherever I lay my hat

Radical approaches to housing in Latin America

89



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1

Buildings



Comment 07

Neighbours from hell: history demands more from design

School 08

Gove's legacy: Sheppard Robson's big-shed Liverpool school

Photograph 10

Morley von Sternberg shoots IM Pei's Doha Museum of Islamic Art

Theatre 12

Haworth Tompkins finds a way to extend the listed Chichester Festival Theatre

Mixed use 20

Grace under pressure from Broadway Malyan at Liverpool's Mann Island, says Dave King

John Henry Brookes building, Oxford 28

Design Engine makes a civic hub of distinction at Oxford Brookes

Refurbishment 35

In time for the Great War anniversary, Foster + Partners' radical surgery on London's Imperial War Museum pays off

2

Intelligence



Q&A 41

Arup's Tristram Carfrae on Heatherwick's garden bridge

Employment & earnings 42

Pay's rising, but there's a lot of catching up to do. Find out the figures here

Housing 49

Experts gather at the RIBA's client round table

Regions 53

Post-industrial Sheffield retains a steely core

Profession 57

Construction professions need to rethink the way they operate

Legal 60

How hard must you search for a nasty surprise?

Diary 63

Maria Smith does some counselling

Roof Lines 65

3

Culture



Comment 71

Celebrating practices that break the mould

The flâneur 72

Herbert Wright thinks in full colour

Out there 75

Socialising stays online in Riyadh

Round here 76

There's more to Guernsey than cream

President's column 79

Hodder's half-term report

Profile 80

Piers Taylor meets Assemble, the collective that dares to be different

Preview 84

Edwin Smith's shots of the everyday enchant

Review 89

What can we learn from South America?

Obituary 91

Richard MacCormac, 'architectural lion'

Exchange 92

Sustaining Construction 95

Parting shot 106

Denys Lasdun's masterly Royal College of Physicians

On the cover

The heart of Oxford Brookes
Photograph
Nick Kane



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1: Buildings

They show you up, your court and quad. Luckily at Oxford Brookes, Design Engine didn't have to compete with that, being up the road in the less historic Oxford university (p28). And in Chichester Steve Tompkins could argue his designs were completing the 1960s Chichester Festival Theatre (p12). But building slap up against a heritage set piece it throws a different light on the design. Liverpool's Fourth Grace was condemned

to languish alongside the three much loved landmarks of the Royal Liver, Cunard and Port of Liverpool buildings. If it had been Will Alsop's Cloud, as once planned, it would have drawn criticism for the exuberant nature of the design (diamond knuckle duster anyone?). Ten years after that was officially cancelled Mann Island has opened its doors, the jet black of its blocks owing much to the most dramatic of European commercial ar-

chitecture (page 20). But the question for both the city and architectural criticism is how it sits within its great context. In this most commercial of settings, Mersey's mercantile parentage speaks more to the proud city than an ambitious piece of modern city design, founded on those same principles. Only time will tell if Mann Island becomes accepted as part of a new quartet or remains a raw admonishment to the architecture of our age. ●

Below

Looking southeast over the tiered flats of
Broadway Malyan's Mann Island, page 20



EDMUND SUMNER

Notre Dame Catholic College, Liverpool
Sheppard Robson

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Photographs: Hufton + Crow

Liverpool's £15m Notre Dame College is very much a product of its time. Two-thirds through the City Council's 'Schools Recovery Programme', funded via Labour's well-funded Building Schools for the Future, but with only a dozen schools left to do, the rug was pulled from under the city's feet. The coalition government, dealing with the deficit, foisted austerity on the UK in 2010 with cuts that spelt the end of BSF. But the bell didn't quite toll for Notre Dame and its Victorian school, as local politics were also at play. Liverpool's mayor reached office pledging to champion school investment, and secured limited city funding and cash from the government's £130m 'City Deal' to do so. But in line with its budgets and Gove's 'no frills' approach, this was to be anti-iconic, austerity architecture; cue Notre Dame redux.

When Sheppard Robson was appointed in September 2011, the procurement landscape had changed radically. Build cost for the 950-pupil school had been cut by a quarter to £1450/m² and, as well as Notre Dame's desire to maintain a sense of the quirky 19th century pile it was leaving, came a string of far less whimsical programme demands. One was future flexibility and adaptability – an education space that could be reconfigured to respond to changing needs, or turned into

another type of building altogether.

This thought drove the warehouse-like space the firm proposed – a concrete-floored, insulated steel shed. Inside, a two-storey, 8m wide doughnut of classrooms on three sides of its daylit perimeter encloses a performance space/amphitheatre and randomly placed rooms-as-objects, overlooked by a first floor access gallery. The aim was to create an internalised 'village' under the school's overarching roof, acoustically insulated against the rain. Project architect James Jones argues that these placements, including a FAT-like chapel-form, create 'nooks and crannies', allowing seclusion or encounter, the way it was in the old school.

Before it even opened, the building already met the brief. The school was designed to include community facilities and a GP practice, but when these fell away after the contract had been let, the robust form absorbed the change without major disruption. In this way, Jones says, the design proved itself responsive to programmatic shifts.

And the school seems to have experienced social changes. Deputy head Andy Rannard has seen the highest ever exam results this year, better behaviour and reduced truancy. The local community has taken it on too, lifting it from second or third choice to oversubscribed. And this low-cost warehouse pedagogy helped secure Sheppard Robson a brace of Liverpool city schools; its Archbishop Beck Catholic College opens this month and Archbishop Blanch completes next year. ●

Below The timber-clad exterior of the building announces the warehouse form.

Right Set beneath its oversailing timber glulam roof, village-like spaces are enclosed by a two-storey doughnut of classrooms.





**Doha Museum of Islamic Art
IM Pei****Photograph Morley von Sternberg**
Words Jan-Carlos Kuckarek

Morley von Sternberg can be considered one of the UK's Old Guard architectural photographers. Truth be told, he had been moonlighting as a photographer during his stint as a project architect for the likes of TP Bennett and 3-D Reid until the early 90s, before deciding to carve out a career photographing buildings rather than designing them. But his time in practice is what gives him insights into the profession that go beyond the view through the lens. And, he says, it's not just the tech-

nology that has changed, but the whole photographic approach. 'I was schooled in former AR editor Peter Davey's way of looking, where people never appeared in shot,' he says. 'It seemed like an unwritten rule that the image of the building bore no relation to real life.'


While that aspect has changed over time, how architects manifest their identities has not. Von Sternberg's shot them all, and whether it's Rogers, Hopkins, Alsop or the more commercial firms, over the years he's seen a commonality of form develop in their distinct architectural outputs.

While studying architecture, von Sternberg loved the post modernism of Charles Moore but he confesses he'd always had an

enduring fascination for Islamic architecture; which makes his choice of IM Pei's 2008 Doha Museum of Islamic Art a no-brainer. 'Pei's always been photogenic, with his obsessions with the platonic geometries of the triangle, square and hexagon; classic themes that have always run through his work,' he says. But it's hard geometry always tempered with humanity: von Sternberg is one of the few people to have been in Pei's only UK building, his private pavilion at Oare House in Wiltshire – an indulgent modern-day folly in the tradition of Versailles' Petit Trianon. It turns out it has a similar feel to it. 'It's geometrically formal, but is in fact an incredibly relaxing place to be,' he concludes. ●

Looking up into the central domed atrium
space of the museum complex.





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It's showtime

Haworth Tompkins' additions to Chichester Festival Theatre have been needed since 1959

Words: Hugh Pearman Photos: Philip Vile

Who knows whether the amazingly ambitious Chichester Festival Theatre, the brainchild of local worthy Leslie Evershed-Martin, would have survived more than a few months without Sir Laurence Olivier at the helm? Securing him as its first director in 1961 – an international celebrity relentlessly pursued by paparazzi – was an extraordinary coup for what was a purely local initiative. But Olivier was at a bit of a loose end. He had failed to raise the money for a fourth Shakespeare film and he'd had his fingers burnt running West End theatres in London. His second wife, Joan Plowright, was pregnant with their first child. He wanted to strike out in a new direction. 'This new theatre, affording new shape (for the last 400 years anyway), new ideas, new functions, new thinking just at this moment in time seemed to me just exactly what the dear, kind doctor had ordered. Apart from creating my own

films I had known no job in all my life's work equal to that of forming a new theatre group,' he wrote a decade later.

Not that he was uncritical of the 1959 design by Powell and Moya, itself heavily influenced by the 'Shakespearian' thrust-stage festival theatre of Tyrone Guthrie in Stratford, Ontario (a city of almost exactly the same size as Chichester). The design had a strange geometry that perplexed Olivier. 'I found it difficult to feel altogether comfy about the almost aggressive cleanness of the hexagonal shape of the theatre, which seemed to suggest rather a clinical attitude with its broad, arrowhead statement of a stage.' And he hated the way the architect had designed no backstage area, assuming the actors would enter and exit through the audience. How was that meant to work for Romeo and Juliet, he demanded? But he took the job anyway. Building was only just start-

ing on site, and was meant to be operational in a year. Shortly afterwards Olivier found himself signed up to direct the fledgling National Theatre too. Chichester thus became the testing ground for the National, in both architectural and theatrical terms.

It also became a testing-ground for ultra-low budget design, as it was funded by public subscription. It came in at just £110,000, which Philip Powell later remarked was 'about a 10 times lower price than is normally expected in a theatre of about 1400-1500 seats.' But that meant that a lot of stuff normally associated with theatres – flytower, backstage area, offices, all but basic dressing rooms – were just left out. The auditorium was lifted into the air on stilts to allow these rudimentary amenities to be tucked underneath. The roof was the first in Britain to be supported on tension cables, which also held the whole structure together.



Left The theatre approach returns to its original appearance, plus the low-key 'ears' of café and bar wings.

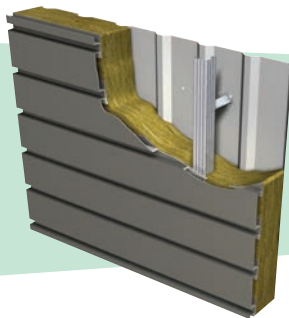
Right New back-of-house extension clad in Cor-Ten echoes Powell and Moya's vertical glazing patterns.



Always moving forward

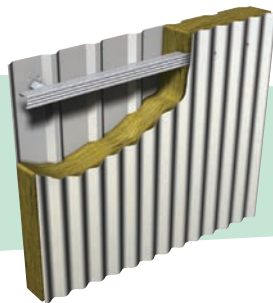


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'If the public approved of the theatre and the productions then it would be possible to add the other improvements at a later date,' wrote Evershed-Martin.

The subsequent physical history of the theatre has been all about cramming in or grafting on the missing facilities, with the usual unsatisfactory results. And so came the inevitable 'later date' when the thing had to be done properly, not least because the original exposed concrete structure was also starting to flake. Hence the total overhaul and extension just completed by Haworth Tompkins at a construction cost of £13m.

Today Powell & Moya's building is grade II*-listed, which meant proceeding carefully – not that Haworth Tompkins is in the habit of treating existing buildings disrespectfully. The architecture wouldn't have taken a fly-tower, for instance. Instead, this is a textbook exercise in de-cluttering and re-focussing. Of course, it all comes down to detail but the overall strategy – to restore the building as much as possible to its original appearance, find more foyer space, improve the rake of the auditorium, insert lifts, replace all the HVAC services and add a large back-of-house extension in as deferential a manner as possible – is as logical as could be. This contract – a

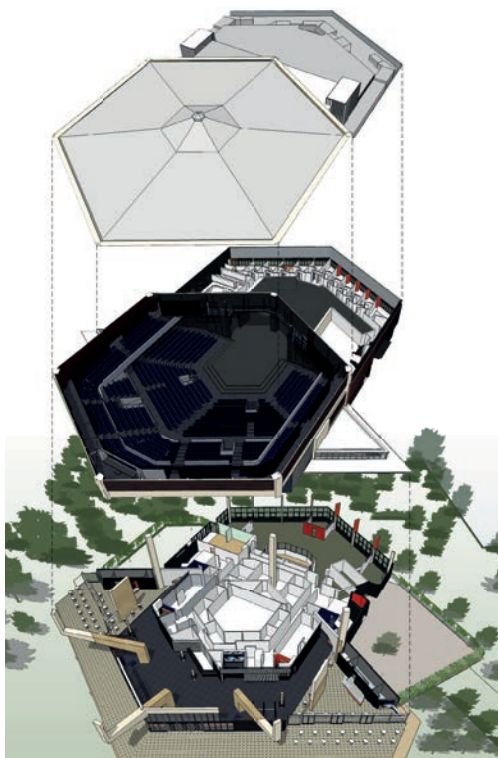
rare traditional one – consisted of 55% refurbishment and 45% newbuild.

Nobody could pretend that this was ever a pretty building externally, and its (repaired) rough concrete is more motorway service station than cultural centre. But it has verve and poise, sat there in leafy Oaklands Park on the northern edge of the town. Its original architects were steeped in the ethos of post-war austerity and had of course achieved a miracle with the Skylon at the Festival of Britain. Theirs was the making-do generation that discovered the cost-cutting benefits of large-span engineering techniques developed during and after the Second World War (consider also its contemporary, the Commonwealth Institute in London by RMJM, of similar economy and energy). Thus the structural engineering solution of Charles Weiss and Partners became an important part of the theatre's functionalist aesthetic, and this – a raised concrete hexagonal bowl, its rim held in tension by criss-crossing steel cables, visible within the auditorium – remains as vigorous as ever.

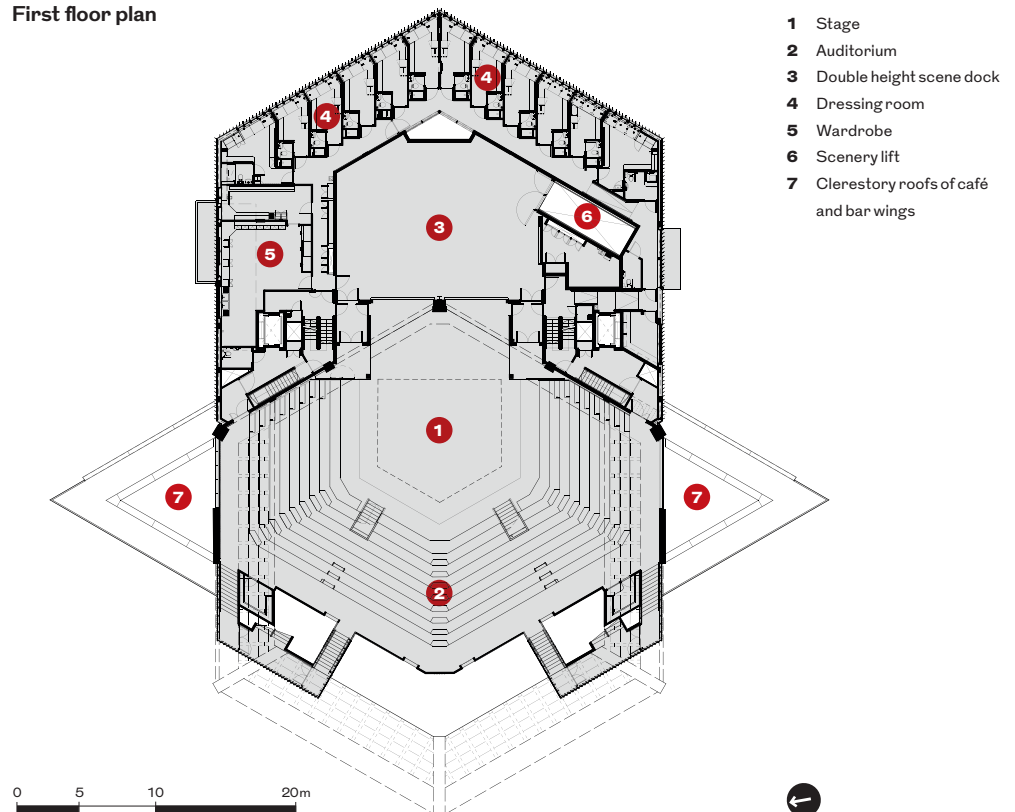
Engineering aside, you wouldn't design a theatre this way nowadays – we know more about acoustics now, and later theatres such as RHWL's Crucible in Sheffield (1971) had

'If the public approved of the theatre and the productions then it would be possible to add the other improvements at a later date,' wrote Evershed-Martin in 1971

Exploded diagram



First floor plan



a much better thrust stage auditorium. For all its deference to Guthrie, Powell and Moya was somewhat half-hearted about its audience wrap, still weighting it mostly towards the front. And Olivier was right – by designing the auditorium and stage from a point of the hexagon rather than a flat side, a geometric tension was established that did not serve theatre especially well. This also, as Steve Tompkins of Haworth Tompkins points out, led to other oddities such as a key structural column placed at the point of maximum inconvenience, directly behind the stage. And the orientation is odd – facing sideways, away from the historic centre, and separated from it by a large municipal car park.

No point trying to reinvent or reposition the hexagon. Instead, Haworth Tompkins has gone with the geometrical flow. Its new extension replicates it exactly, on plan stretching the hexagon into a lozenge. This provides a double-height scene dock (and get-in and scenery lift) plus offices (the director's is right in the prow) and some of the best dressing-rooms in the business on the first floor, overlooking the parkland.

In elevation, however, the original hexagon stands proud, with the new extension set lower and clad in Cor-Ten steel, its fenestration

matching the dimensions of the original. The Cor-Ten revival is fast becoming an architectural cliché, but here, as it darkens over time, it will visually retreat still more, especially as new screening landscape developments. As to the original building, just about the only later additions adopted are two little low 'ears' of triangular foyer extensions, one each side, which are rebuilt higher to bring in more daylight, their ceilings decorated by Haworth Tompkins' regular collaborator, artist Antoni Malinowski. These are a bar and café.

One could write at length about the myriad subtle changes the architect has made to tweak the original and bring it back to life. In essence the strategy, successfully pursued, is for the audience to feel immediately at home, as if nothing much has changed. It has, of course, in foyer and auditorium alike. This is a working theatre, not a museum of postwar theatre design. But Haworth Tompkins' approach has always been to respect and respond to the existing architecture. Just as the original Chichester Festival Theatre proved to be a curtain-raiser for the later National, so this job is completed just before Haworth Tompkins' much larger reworking of that magisterial building. We shall report on that soon. ●

Proud of its rough concrete, the foyer is decluttered.



In the auditorium, seating is rearranged with a steeper rake.



IN NUMBERS

£13m

construction cost

4,594m²

gross internal area

£2,890/m²

gross internal floor area

1,316

auditorium seats

3

bars/café

55%

refurb

45%

new build

BREEAM Very Good

Design Team

Architect Haworth Tompkins

Client Chichester Festival Theatre

Contractor Osborne

Project manager Deloitte

Theatre consultant Charcoalblue

Structural engineer and BREEAM

assessor Price & Myers

Service engineer Skelly & Couch

Acoustic engineer Gillieron Scott

Acoustic Design

Landscape architect Camlin Lonsdale

Landscape Architects

CDM co-ordinator and quantity

surveyor Gardiner & Theobald

Collaborating artist Antoni Malinowski

Transport consultant Mayer Brown

Fire consultant Trenton Fire

Access consultant Babel

Building control Approved Inspector Services

Suppliers

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Windows & curtain walling Schueco

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Douglas fir cladding & doors NHE

Roof Sika Sarnafil

Theatre technical Delstar

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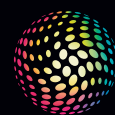
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Angular and modern, rather like its neighbouring Museum of Liverpool, the Mann Island development sits between the proud industrial and civic architecture of Liverpool's dockside.





Rock solid

What was once the site of a proposed fourth grace has been filled by Broadway Malyan by an interesting but deferential scheme. Agreed?

Words: Dave King Photographs: Edmund Sumner

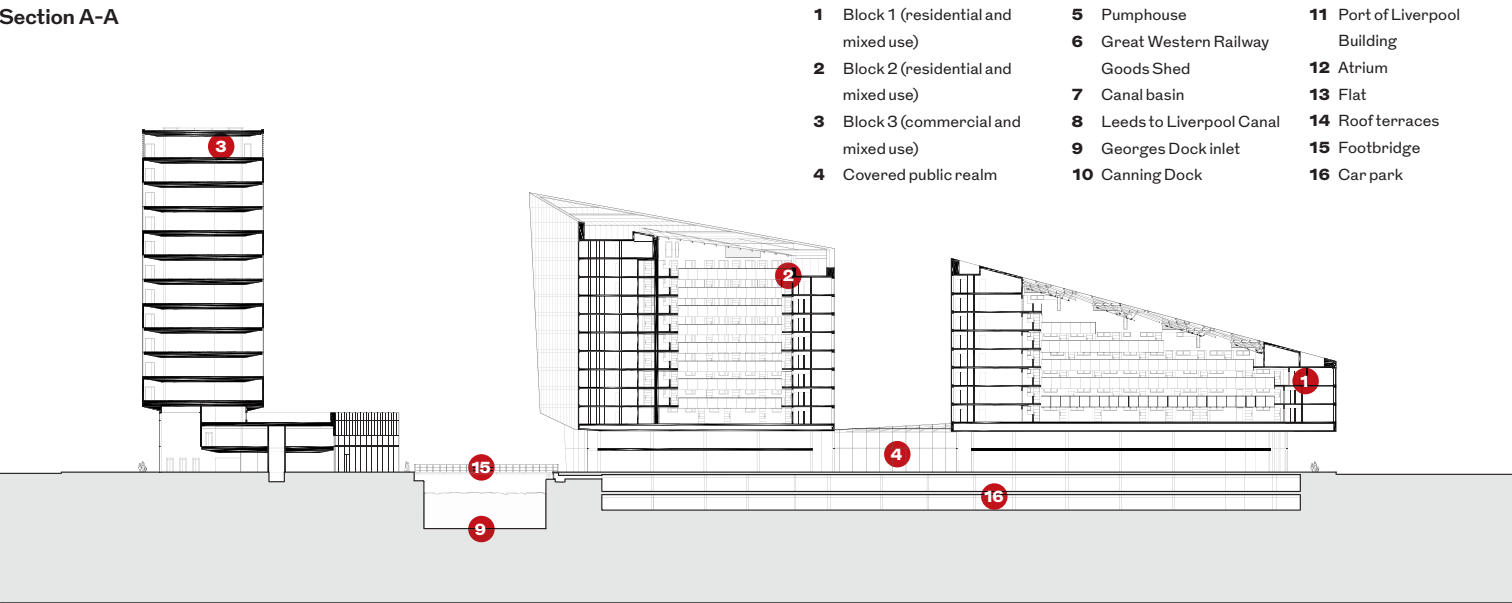
The 'Three Graces' – the Royal Liver, Cunard, and Port of Liverpool buildings – symbolise Liverpool worldwide. So when a competition was announced to design a fourth Grace to coincide with the Liverpool European Capital of Culture Year 2008, there was a good deal of anticipation in the architectural world. Quite why it failed to produce an acceptable solution is still something of a mystery, but suffice to say a great deal of money was spent on what now seems to have been something of a lost cause – some say merely a PR exercise. Lords Norman Foster and Richard Rogers plus Ted Cullinan produced heavily symbolic and dominant edifices, but it was Will Alsop who outshone them with his 'Cloud' – before the sculpted Liverpool Museum and lesser ferry terminal existed.

So when the Cloud evaporated, leaving a vacant plot on the site called 'Mann Island', it

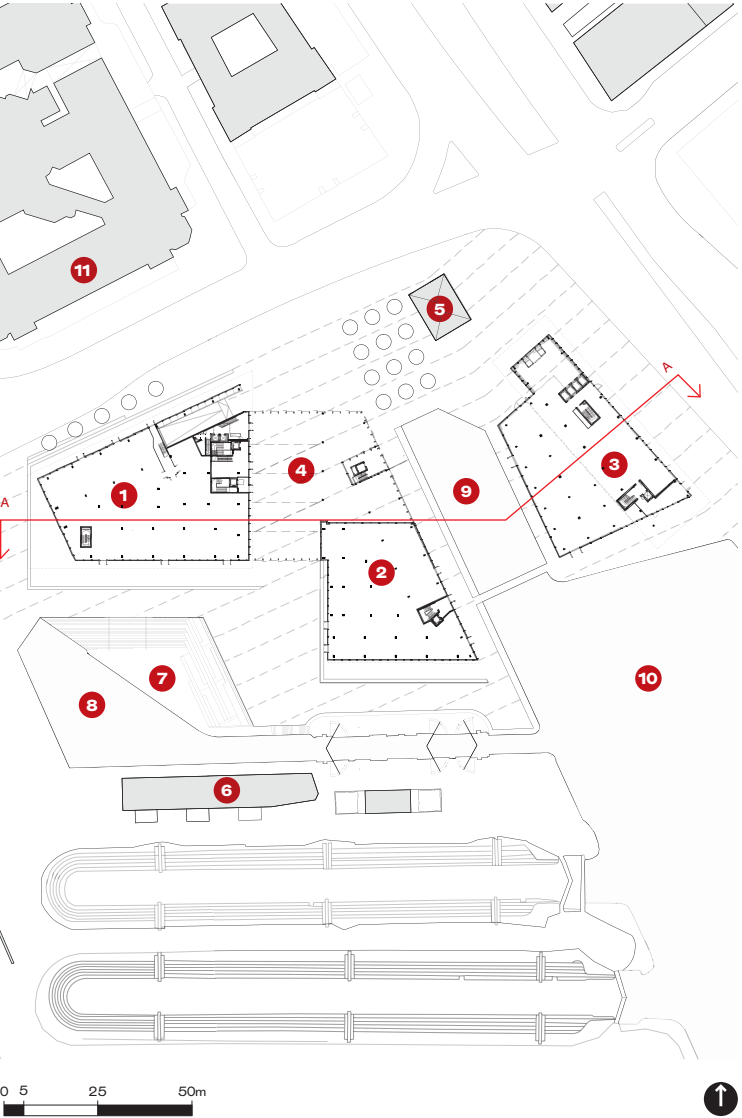
was left to Countryside Properties and Neptune Developments to make a new proposal. Broadway Malyan, led by Liverpool studio director Matt Brook, was entrusted with this difficult and controversial task. The fact that the scheme is now complete and acting as the hub for the Liverpool Festival of Business, a headquarters for Merseytravel and the proposed regional centre for the RIBA is something of a coup – not for architectural triumphalism, but for the power of abstraction. The idea that architecture can stand back and respect its neighbours while retaining quality of detail by being minimal in extremes, is hard to achieve, particularly in a design and build contract where commercial pressures rule. But the scheme has succeeded: it maintains presence without competing with the Three Graces.

How has this been achieved? The team

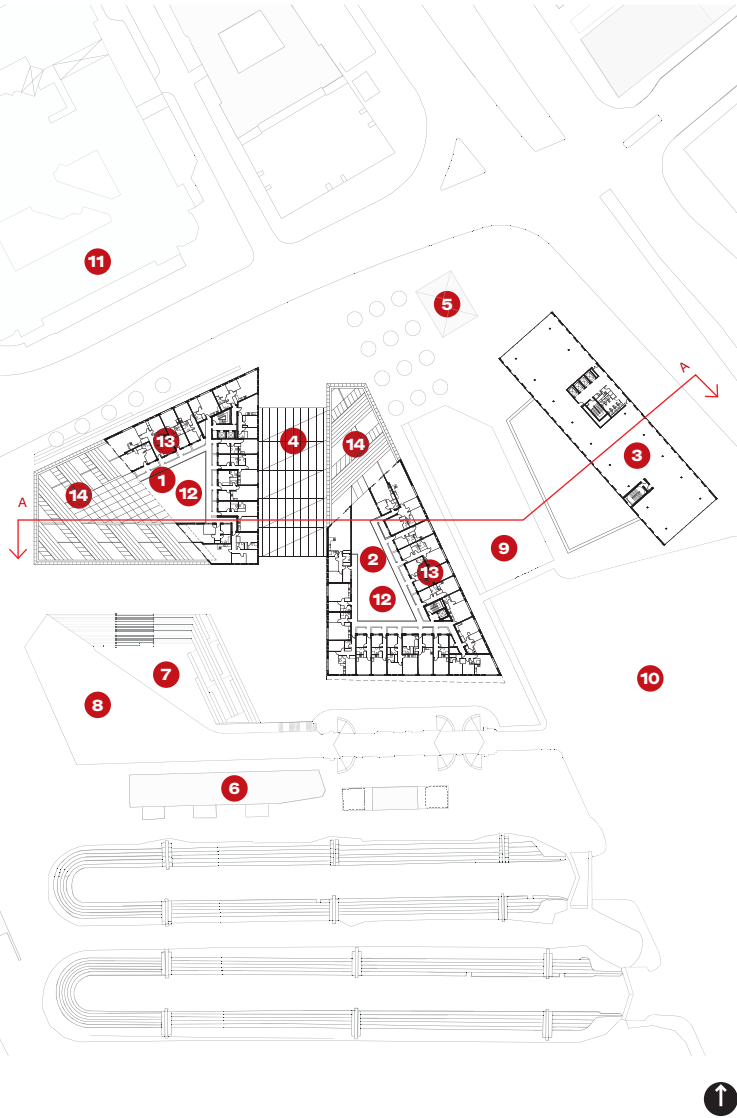
Section A-A



Ground floor plan



Mid-floor level plan



took the contextual problem seriously from the beginning. A first sketch shows three trapezoidal shapes arranged, not as a fourth entity, but a foil to the existing triumvirate. This, allied with the idea that the forms should be designed with sloping roof planes and placed at angles across the site, indicated an abstract sculptural arrangement reminiscent of the work of Philip King or Richard Serra, but using full-size buildings. The result in certain lights and from across the river suggests massive rocks may have fallen from the sky, or been placed by some legendary giant. Of course close up, the buildings are conventional with entrances, exits, windows and structure, yet the detail masks this. There is an indeterminate quality which can work more than a little magic – the buildings are black and for the most part smooth and

without shadow, except where a panel suddenly opens to suggest a darker interior. So it's a surprise to find a white courtyard/atrium space within. A black rock form with a Mediterranean holiday complex inside? The skin belies the function, which is why these buildings succeed in this context. The long view from the river allows light and weather to play the kind of tricks that the restrictions of street sites do not permit. Renzo Piano's Shard has this quality through height, as does Ian Simpson's Manchester tower. Such buildings seen from afar often become dematerialised: Mann Island achieves this both at distance and close up. The ramp to the car park, which takes the hard paving of the piazza and just bends it down one storey, repeats the impression of 'something' inside which is not quite what one would expect.

The roofscape is not just a flat surface but suggests cuts in a rock face which turn out to be terraces and patios for penthouse apartments bounded by an extremely minimal drainage slot – copings are so sharp and precise they just don't seem to exist.

So will these buildings stand up to architectural critique? As in Michael Hopkins' annexe to the House of Commons, Portcullis House, there is the problem of either competing with or respecting an icon. Hopkins' building is modern but highly detailed in an almost baroque manner, yet has a respectful and traditional profile seen from across the Thames. Mann Island presents minimal and abstract forms but respects the Three Graces of the Pierhead.

Despite those early sketches of three similar trapezoidal forms, but office plan-

Below Despite its attempts to offer views through the buildings the planning process provoked bitter criticism of the scheme.

Below Unpeeled: the black-skinned flats are entered through a white, light filled atrium.



ning functionality has meant an orthogonal rectilinear form for the building that is now mostly occupied by Merseytravel. The aesthetic argument for this is that it forms a backdrop to the two more abstract forms. This is perhaps questionable, although it is a confident building in its own right. The glazed link between the apartment blocks shows in its detail some late design and build influence, but it is still a grand entrance space which can be used for events and exhibitions. Internal fit out in the offices has not been led by the architects; ditto the apartments. Nevertheless such issues only marginally detract from the whole, which in civic design terms has brought an elegant and appropriate solution to the issue of a fourth 'Grace'. Couple this with the provision of two dramatic white internal lifestyle

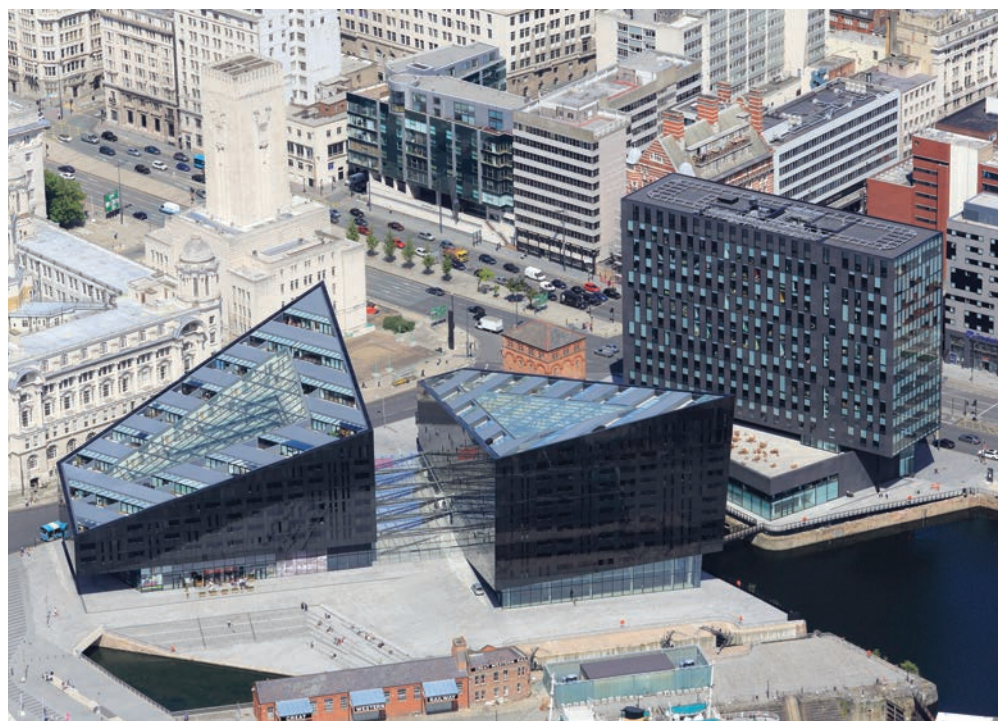
spaces – each apartment having a defensible front entrance area but with windows on the outer wall giving extensive Mersey views – and Liverpool has a worthy addition to its famous collection of fine buildings. The decision to place ground to first floor columns inside the glazed wall (as in Peter Cook's Kunsthau at Graz) may seem arbitrary, but when explained as yet another move to sublimate all references to the 'grounded' solidity that the Three Graces have, it makes sense.

Broadway Malyan, a successful practice in the commercial field, should be proud of Matt Brook's Liverpool operation, which is producing a confident and thoughtfully intellectual brand from a stylish studio set against a backdrop of one of the world's most familiar and iconic views – the Mersey at Liverpool. ●

Dave King is co-founder of shedkm

Below left Slicing the blocks allows private terraces to step down the roofs.

Below right The flush black facade of Mann Island at an indeterminate scale contrasts with Victorian polychromy. Opening windows give it a fleeting sense of inhabitation.



IN NUMBERS

£93m

total contract cost (includes public realm £2,36m)

£1,942/m²

gross internal floor area

46,666m

area in m²

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Acoustic consultant Hoare Lea Acoustics
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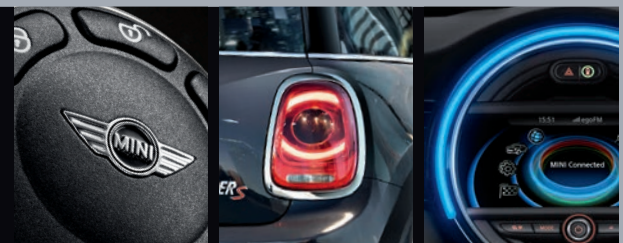


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A world of its own

Design Engine's John Henry Brookes building gives the other Oxford university a prominent expression of its proud academic achievement – in thoroughly modern civic centre form

Words: Hugh Pearman



NICK KANE (2)

Left A gateway building with a somewhat corporate air, but with steps to the entrance plaza making an informal amphitheatre.

Right The main space is intersected by the university's various functions including the concertina-like box of a lecture theatre.





London casts a long shadow over the architecture of the UK. In this year's crop of 56 national and EU RIBA Awards, for instance, few practices do not have a London base, and of those from England only one. That is Winchester-based Design Engine, and the building in question is at Oxford Brookes University. Which just happens to be on the London Road.

The £83m project, at the Headington campus of the university to the east of the city, fully deserves its national accolade and proves that the capital might call most of the shots when it comes to the big, high-profile projects – but not all of them. Indeed, it made it to the RIBA's 15-strong 'midlist' for the Stirling Prize in what is a strong year, and is therefore officially one of the top 15 projects in the UK (and by Brits in the EU). Possibly its slightly disappointing exterior halted further progress, because otherwise this is a strikingly successful building.

This is a very bold move by Brookes (as it is generally known). It gives this former polytechnic – academically one of the most successful of the early 1990s wave of

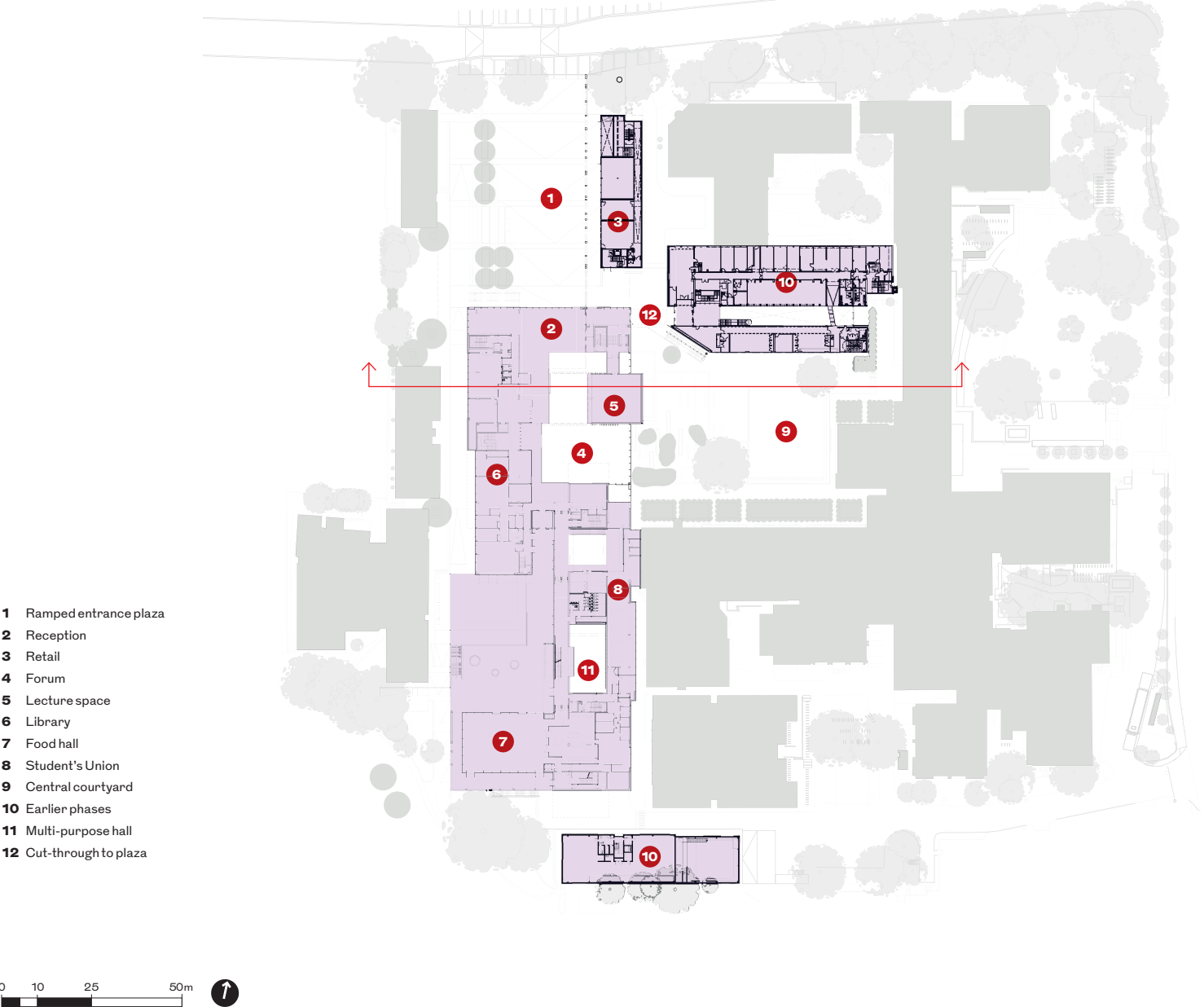
new universities – a gateway presence as well as a varied chunk of new facilities, from library through lecture rooms to student union, cafés and restaurants. That is a lot of programme and its great achievement is the way it brings it all together, playing the various elements off against each other to generate an exceptionally rich and satisfying interior. At concept stage the architect reduced all this to a simple block model: a central, glowing box interpenetrated by 'pegs' of accommodation reaching out to the wider campus. One of these 'pegs' is the earlier thorough refurbishment and extension of the 1950s Abercrombie wing of the university (RIBA, November 2012).

Although it will be filed under 'higher education', take a look at how this complex works and you realise that it qualifies as a mixed-use development that's essentially a civic centre. Consider: there is a grand entrance plaza in the form of a gently sloping ramp, taking you up from the aforesaid London Road to the entrance. A Corten-clad colonnade of shops on your left takes you there under shelter if needed – and sets up one



Left Inside the lecture theatre: visual connection is made with the rest of the complex

Level 1 plan



Cross section



of the leitmotifs of the building as this band of Corten snakes its ribbon-like way right through the complex. The feel inside – the library, cafés, the expressed wedge of the auditorium, the view down through to a green courtyard beyond, teaching and meeting rooms – is very like the current generation of civic centres with their combination of outward and inward facing elements.

The ramp has a twofold function. Its rise means that you arrive at first floor level, which shortens journey distances, makes security easier for the bustling atrium floor below, and generally energises your view of the building. That in turn makes a void beneath the ramp that is used as the labyrinthine cool-air intake for the lecture theatre that hangs so dramatically within the building. This is part of a sustainability policy that includes exposed thermal-mass structure – both precast and insitu – and careful orientation and variation to the solid/void ratio of the facades (overall 42% glazed). There are green and brown roofs, a 600 m² array of photovoltaics, a combined heating and cooling plant, rainwater harvesting and a Sustainable Urban

Drainage System (SUDS) which means that there is no increase in run-off as a result of this densification of building on the site. Specification was done with reference to the BRE Green Guide. All this adds up to a BREEAM Excellent-rated building.

Not, I would imagine, that the students or staff will necessarily notice much of this because this is not a building that wears a hair shirt. On the contrary, it seems opulent in the best sense, which is the generous organisation of space. The ‘wow’ moment is when you enter the building and look down into the lower area known as the ‘Forum’ while above you is the concertina-like form of the lecture theatre, and facing you is the end of the library. This is where all the ‘pegs’ come together and it all helps to generate a very dynamic space in which the enormous volume – 20.6m from floor to roof, a few inches higher than the nave of Wells Cathedral – is put to good use. There is, for instance, a sitting-out space on top of the lecture theatre, accessed via a bridge from the library.

Diagonal views from level to level within and

IN NUMBERS

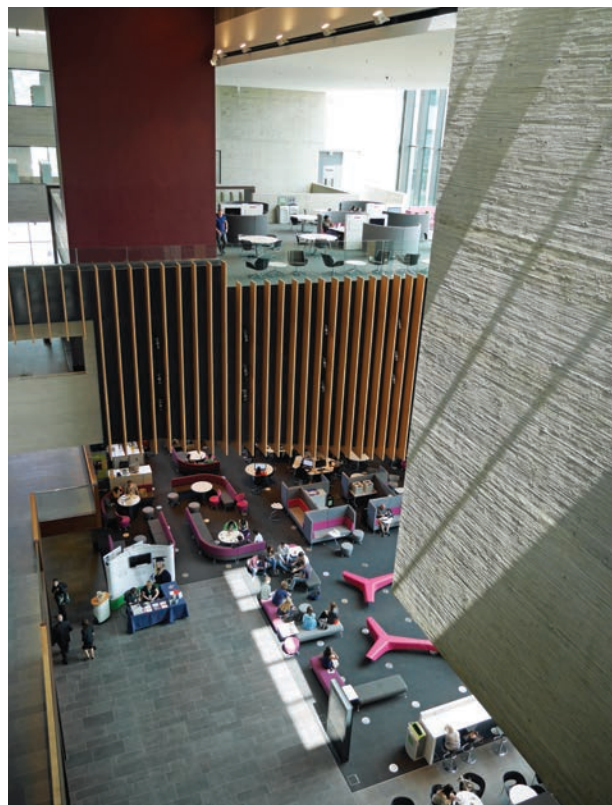
£83.02m
total contract cost

£3413
cost per m²

24,320m²
area

15.8kg
kg/CO₂/m³

BREEAM
Excellent



Far left The very high main space is made good use of – as in the library's sitting-out space on top of the lecture theatre.

Left On the residential flank, the library has a vertical sawtooth facade of glass fritted with a plant cell pattern.

Right The entrance plaza is a gently sloping ramp flanked by a Cor-Ten colonnade.

Credits

Client Oxford Brookes University
Architect Design Engine Architects

Structural and civil engineer Ramboll UK
Environmental services, fire consultant Grontmij
Landscape architect Land Use Consultants
Specialist lighting consultant Speirs & Major

Project manager and cost consultant Turner & Townsend

Main contractor Laing O'Rourke

Stone flooring contractor Vetter

Flooring Axiom
 Carpentry, internal doors SJ Eastern

Joinery MJM

Internal cladding SAS

Internal glazed partitions Planet

Dry-lining and ceilings BDL

Blockwork Laing O'Rourke

Glass bridges Littlehampton Welding

Lifts Kone

Suppliers

Acoustic metal ceilings SAS

Acoustic internal cladding panels Decoustics

Internal timber doorsets Leaderflush Shapland

Internal sliding partitions Alcowall

Stone Marshalls

Fibre-concrete cladding Rieder

Curtain walling systems Focchi

External louvres Renson

Internal blinds Levolux

Lighting DAL, Zumtobel, Enliten

Raised access flooring Kingspan

Fire curtains Cooper Fire

Firestopping Kilnbridge

through the building were paying off when I visited in graduation week – when the whole place was swarming with gowned, mortar-boarded students and their families. The forum with its café was bustling, people were spilling out into the relandscaped courtyard or the seating of the entrance ramp; a million selfies were being taken. Never underestimate the importance of space and drama to the student experience: although necessarily much more tightly planned, O'Donnell + Tuomey's Saw Swee Hock student centre at London's LSE performs the same function.

Away from this is a run of standard student teaching rooms and fairly unremarkable student union quarters (though landscaping of a courtyard in the masterplan will transform these), but there is an emphatic end-stop to the composition: the refectory in its glazed Corten pavilion, raised to give views over the playing fields. It may only be a cafeteria, but in quality of space and finish it wouldn't disgrace a college in the other Oxford.

I mentioned the facades. Of unitised construction, these tend towards the bland – although crisply

detailed, the main approach facade has something of the business park about it, for instance. Where it gets interesting is where it has been broken down, the box eroded – on the western flank where a lot of planning negotiations with demanding residential neighbours took place. A vertical sawtooth arrangement for the library allows daylight in without overlooking the locals. The fritting on the glazed fins, taking its pattern from plant-science cell structure, helps to make a busy and curiously satisfying promenade along what is pretty much the back of the building.

The John Henry Brookes building reflects well on both client and architect. It is a place of learning, administration and relaxation that works at various speeds and levels of privacy, from the ultra-public to the ultra-concentrated. It gives the institution a focus and a sense of physical stature that it previously lacked. Not quite Stirling-shortlistable, given the competition this year? Never mind: if there's any justice this should bring Design Engine to the attention of quite a few academic and civic institutions around Europe. ●



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Bring on the big guns

Reconfigured by Foster+Partners to fit its tanks and planes, the Imperial War Museum now has space to breathe – and a better light in which to see them

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Nigel Young

'Forewarned is forearmed' might have started as a truism of military strategy, but the maxim bears up well to scrutiny in any field. And it was duly heeded by Foster + Partners in its design approach for London's Imperial War Museum – part of the ongoing phased refurbishment of its 19th century home. The £40m Phase 1 opened this summer, part of a bigger masterplan to spatially reinvent the former mental hospital to cope with burgeoning visitor numbers – expected to increase by 30% this year alone – and to maintain it as a world-class museum to conflict. The firm's dramatic new atrium space has undergone a wholesale remodelling in time for the anniversary of the start of World War I.

Part of that strategy, says Foster's senior partner Michael Jones, was not just about having a long-term idea for what the museum could be, but making sure that the future curation of the gallery spaces was considered at design stage. This concept drove the design of the atrium space from the outset. 'Because the exhibits here are tanks and planes, their size, scale and weight were key considerations,' says Jones. 'Getting them in meant close collaboration between us, the client, engineers and exhibition designer Casson Mann – there was a real desire for a spatial narrative that ordered historical conflicts by floor and made sense of exhibits that previously felt randomly placed.'



Above The IWM as was: the atrium an uncurated space of exhibits with the exhibition 'black boxes' in the gallery levels.

Below left Reconfigured, the new space opens the gallery up both down and sideways to connect with itself and the park beyond.

Visitors previously entered at first floor level into a top-lit, exhibit-crammed space with dark gallery levels either side, so the result of Foster's intervention on this experience has been dramatic. The whole first floor slab was removed, exposing ground floor spaces and opening the building up to its full 22m height. All the gallery level floor plates meanwhile have been pulled out and into the 12m wide atrium, attached to concrete structural fins that widen as they go up. The overall effect is vertiginous and ravine-like. Jones explains that there was real pressure on exhibition space, so although they have lost a floor, pulling in the gallery levels has offset this, yielding a net increase of 2000m². 'The new structure is stitched into the old. Spacing of the fins is now half of the previous structural grid, going from 6.8m to 3.4m,' notes Jones, 'But their raking out to the structural line of Arup's barrel vault roof, also creates the "vitrines" for exhibits, part of the new curation strategy.' Thus, flanked by white precast concrete raking fins, exhibits now jut out into the main atrium, relating to this space and also the themes of any particular floor, increasing the intelligibility of the museum.

The choice of 'U'-shaped white RC concrete columns rather than slicker steel was part of a deliberate approach of using self-finished materials. In this way, Jones explains, the concrete and composite floors were finished in screed, and the main stair that runs up through the atrium is sheet steel with a hot zinc applied coating. It gives, says Jones, 'a robust feeling to the building using a palette in keeping with the objects on display.'

This materials strategy extends to the

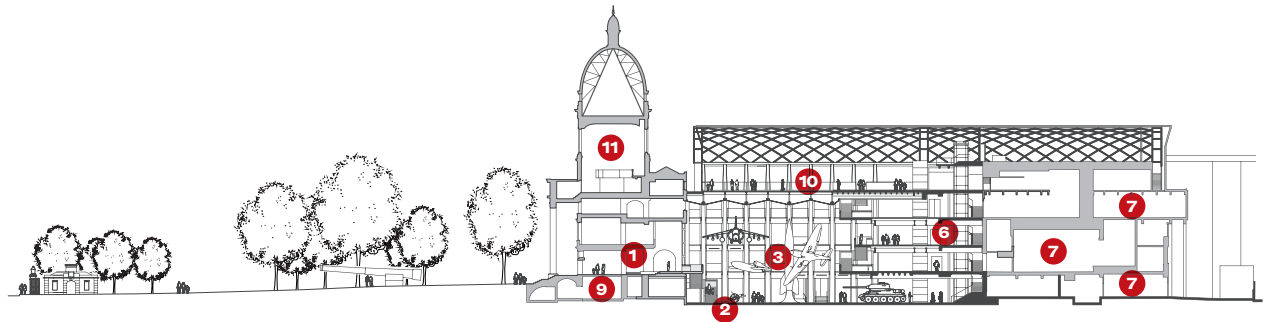
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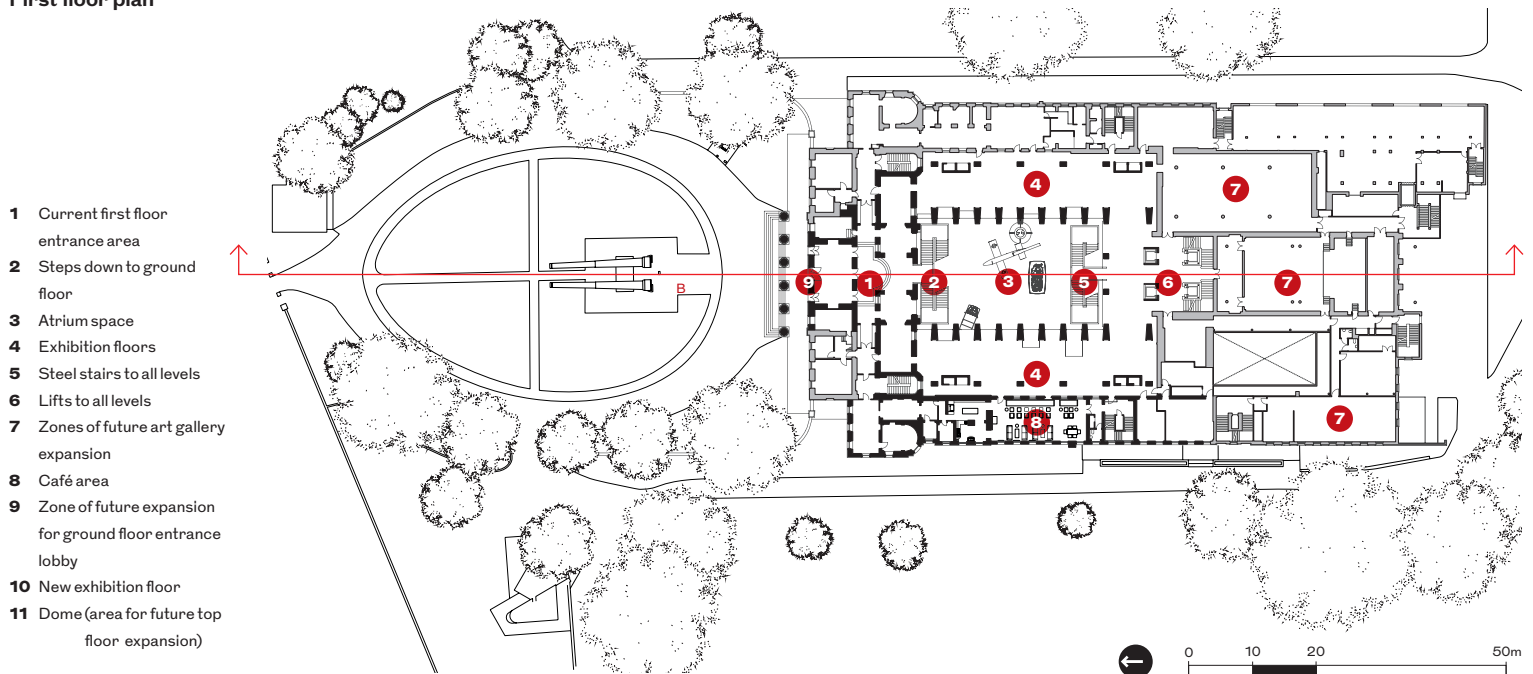
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Feix and Merlin Architects
Simon Maxwell Photography



Long section



First floor plan



new floor that has been inserted directly beneath Arup's 1980s barrel vault, sitting on raked hollow steel trusses that span the space to the fins on either side. These chunky trusses, from 400mm to 1100mm deep, are designed not only to accommodate 500 people mulling over the new 'contemporary conflicts' exhibition and events space that will occupy this upper floor, but to allow a Harrier jet from the Kosovo conflict to hang almost invisibly from the structure on steel cables.

The raked beams themselves are hidden by triangulated, polished aluminium panels that tessellate together to form a continuous, faceted soffit. Angling away from the sides at their edges, this new floor is also a key aspect

of the museum's lighting control and M&E strategy, limiting direct light into a central space that was previously flooded with it. 'The museum used to be a light-drenched atrium with "black box" galleries all around. For the first time light levels are right to display things like textiles and other delicate exhibits in the main gallery areas so that everything is visually open to everything else,' says Jones, explaining the curatorial changes that have occurred as a result.

Lower light levels have also meant a reduction in the cooling load. Buro Happold, which was in charge of the M&E as well as structural engineering, faced a difficult balancing act. The air handling strategy meant

supplying conditioned air to a larger exhibition space, but planning conditions forbade any increase in height to the roof plant zones on the building's east and west sides.

'We were working with existing constraints, which meant holistic approaches,' explains Damian Wines, M&E associate at Buro Happold, which co-ordinated with Fosters on the issue. 'We didn't want to increase air volumes as that would have a major effect on energy performance, so we had to look at everywhere we could to cut energy demand.' The reduced atrium daylight levels played a major part, but this was augmented with an LED strategy for space and exhibit lighting, significantly cutting the electrical load. Both



There was a real desire for a spatial narrative that ordered historical conflicts by floor and made sense of exhibits that previously felt randomly placed

Left Looking up the atrium, the new 'contemporary conflicts' floor increases net area as well as acting as the perfect baffle to control museum light levels.


power and data runs were designed so that they would use the spare space capacity in the 'U'-shaped concrete columns.

Most importantly however, the decision was made to allow temperature levels to fluctuate outside the narrow range usual for museum buildings, ranging here from 16-25°C and 40-60% relative humidity. 'We came to a decision with the museum that at peak demand and at times of low occupancy we would allow temperatures and humidity to swing over a greater range than would normally be considered suitable, meaning a significant cut in the building's carbon emissions,' explains Wines. 'At peak load the air handling plant is designed to work at full

capacity throughout the museum, with delicate exhibits singled out for special air handling treatment within dedicated enclosed areas.' The new floor beneath the barrel vault – which is proposed to be changed from polycarbonate to ETFE – has had underfloor cooling and heating installed within its composite floor to deal with its more demanding heating and cooling load.

Further phases of the museum masterplan have also been considered in this first phase, with a new service trench dug into the ground floor for potential services distribution. Funding permitting, future phases are to see a whole new entrance lobby and ticketing area inserted beneath the current stone

access steps on the south elevation, to allow for direct and step-free access into the newly revealed 'ground' level of the museum – obviating the need for the staircase from the old lobby and truly opening out the ground floor level to its park landscape. Future plans will also see the formal south rooms of the 19th century building incorporated into the main museum, creating grand gallery spaces to display the IWM's sizeable collection of war art, all accessible from the atrium space and exhibit floors. These additions will provide both a fitting sense of formal welcome and a reflective component to a museum whose structure, services and curation will, by then, be state of the art. ●

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2: Intelligence



Designing &
building it

Tristram Carfrae



The Arup Group deputy chairman, Arup fellow and fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering is also this year's winner of the IStructE Gold medal. How on earth does he find time for gardening?

So why is Thomas Heatherwick's Garden Bridge being proposed?

It's all part of a joined-up strategy of Heatherwick's to connect crowded Covent Garden with the similarly popular South Bank via the North Bank. At the moment that is prevented by three major roads – Embankment, Aldwych and the Strand. The bridge can help catalyze this but it will also mean stakeholder buy-in. A role for the Inns of Court, for example, is key to making the North Bank succeed.

You're landing the bridge on Temple Station – the least used stop on the Tube network?

That's actually really convenient. The Port of London Authority demands minimum clearances over the Thames and for accessibility, the slope of any bridge can't be more than 1:20. This means any bridge would end up landing 6m up the air when it hits the banks. Temple Station is great for dealing with this on the north side but we'll need an access tower on the south.

The bridge structure reminds me of Jürgen Mayer H's Metropol Parasol in Seville

Yes, it is like the Metropol Parasol in that it's balanced cantilevers. Part of the frustration of working with Heatherwick is that he's already got the structure worked out! His simple concept was for two steel plant pots to rise out of the river and meet in the middle. It's made up of three components. The main structure is mild steel trusses above which is a stainless steel 'planter', 1.8m at its deepest, which will hold over 4500 tonnes of earth over the bridge's length, and on top of all that will be the concrete deck to walk on. The steel will be coated in 2mm non-tarnishing cupri-nickel sheet, giving the bridge its gold colour.

5000 tonnes of earth? Hardly the Millennium Bridge then?

Actually, it's exceptionally light structurally, considering it's over 300m long. I knew you were going to compare it to Foster's bridge, which is light, but the trick there is that all its weight is below the water line. The Garden Bridge is 20m wide where it springs from its columns and goes down to 4m wide and just over half a metre soil depth where the cantilevers meet at the centre.

Seriously though – isn't it all a bit of a wild idea?

Not at all. It's going to be on the same principle as the High Line in New York, but vice versa – more like paths through a proper garden; some of the trees here are going to be 20m tall. A few people have said that it's going to completely block views to the City from Waterloo Bridge, but it'll only be partial. Imagine that same view set against the foreground of a garden. Now that would be just wonderful...

OLD ARUPIANS

The IStructE Gold medal is given for a body of work. Carfrae has been at Arup since he graduated from Cambridge. He spent over 20 years down under working on Asian and Australasian projects, and has seen the firm grow into a 12,000-strong worldwide operation. 'It has always had a desire to take on the biggest engineering challenges and solve them, and that's attracted a particular kind of person,' says Carfrae. 'I'm a shy, retiring creature at heart who enjoyed a quiet collegiate life, and Arup felt like that when I started there.' Heading up a Sydney branch that grew from 100 to 500 during his tenure, he still thinks small is beautiful. 'Our best work is always carried out in teams of 50-100 and that how we try to keep it,' he says.



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2: Intelligence



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Internal
management

The only way is up

Earnings are starting to recover – but are still off their pre-recession peak. Aziz Mirza discusses architects' fortunes this year

Unemployment is down, earnings are up. This year's survey confirms that the recovery is under way and reaching pretty much all sectors of the profession, although it's less even geographically. Figures published up to 1 April 2014 show architects' average earnings standing at £42,000: five per cent higher than last year's figure, and convincingly higher than the £40,000 to £41,000 averages recorded in the previous four years. The strength of the improvement in the last 12 months is confirmed when comparing with inflation data – CPI inflation rose by two per cent during the year, implying that architects enjoyed a 'real' increase of 3 per cent.

But put the earnings survey data into a longer term context and we find that there is still some way to go until the profession's earnings catch up with pre-recession levels. Average earnings were higher in 2008 (at £42,250) and 2009 (£45,000). So unlike the British economy, which earlier this year saw GDP pass its pre-recession peak, architects' earnings are still lagging – by seven per cent,

in fact. While this latest survey shows that average earnings increasing, the rise is not yet euphoric.

London in the lead

In the quest to return to 2009 earnings levels, London is leading the way. This year's average of £47,825 in the capital is very nearly as high as the 2009 peak value of £48,350. Architects in the South East and the South West & Wales are within five per cent of their 2009 peak. But average earnings for architects in the Midlands & East Anglia remain 11 per cent lower than the 2009 peak, while in the North of England they are 14 per cent lower. Data for Scotland was not available in 2009. But data for Northern Ireland, though based on a small sample size, is unique in this survey for suggesting that average earnings for architects in the region are actually higher now than they were in 2009.

Nationwide, the survey shows that architects' average earnings have increased by five per cent this year. Most employment groups

MAIN FINDINGS

£42,000
architects' average earnings on 1 April 2014

5%
rise in average earnings 2013 to 2014

2%
inflation over the same period

1%
per cent unemployed
– substantially lower than in recent years

1%
per cent not working for other reasons –
substantially lower than in recent years

WINNERS AND LOSERS

↑ 7%
largest rise is in the earnings of sole principals

↑ 3%
average earnings for salaried architects
in private practice

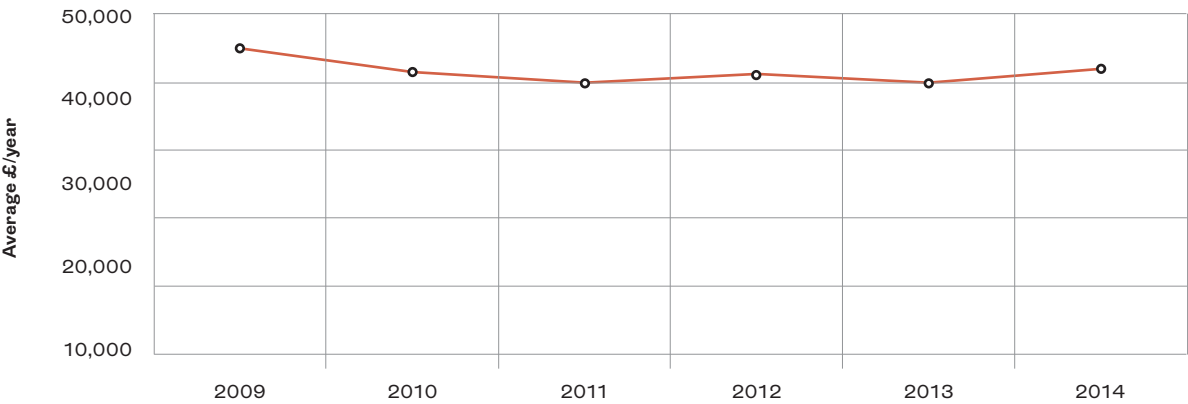
0%
change for principals in partnership

>£15,000
lower quartile earnings of sole principals

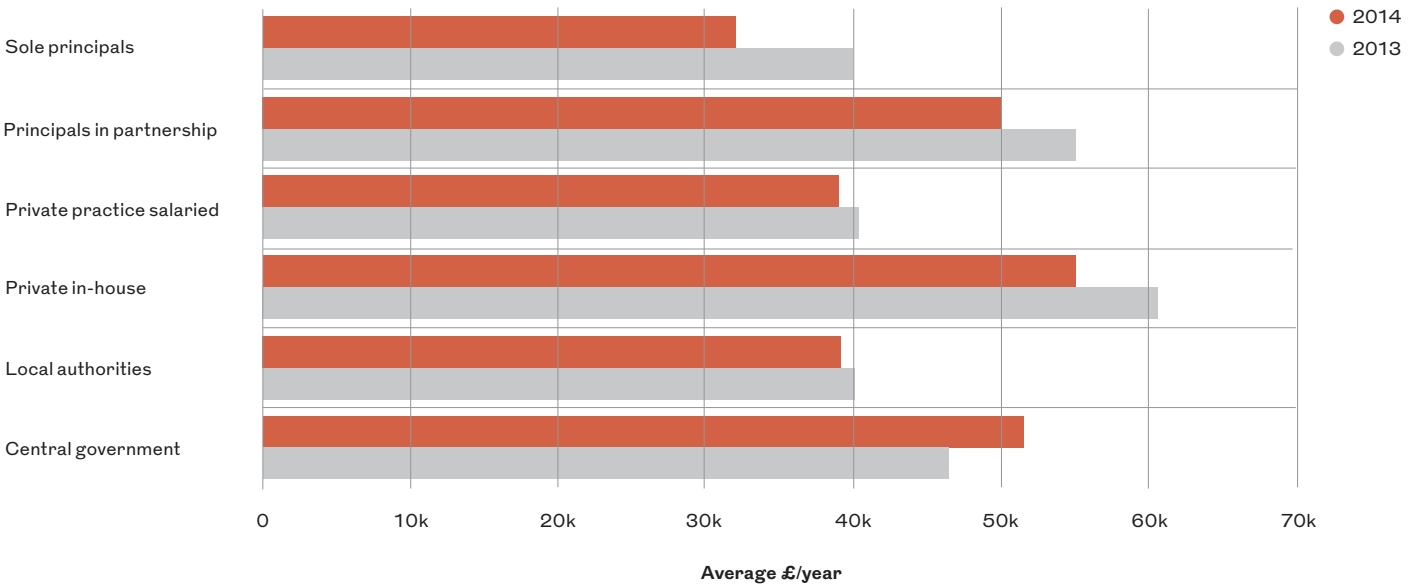
<£75,000
upper quartile earnings of principals in partnership

Architects' average earnings stand at £42,000: five per cent higher than last year

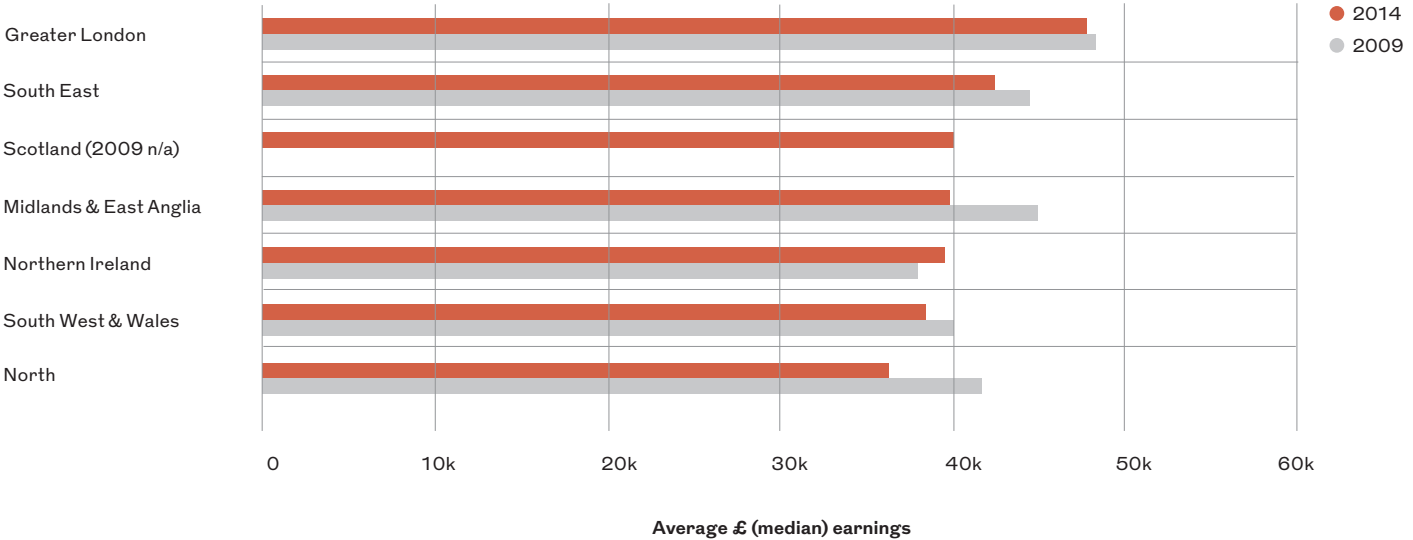
Earnings 2009 to 2014 average for all architects



Earnings 2009 and 2014 for key employment fields



Earnings 2009 and 2014 by region



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The top 25 per cent of partners and directors are now earning more than they have at any time in the last six years

Architects' earnings by field of employment, 2013 and 2014

Employment field	2013			2014			Change of median
	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile	
2013-2014							
Sole principals	18,500	30,000	50,000	15,000	32,000	45,000	6.7
Principal in partnership	33,625	50,000	72,000	36,050	50,000	75,823	0.0
ALL PRINCIPALS	27,050	44,000	65,000	29,920	45,000	70,000	2.3
Private practice salaried	31,900	38,500	45,000	34,000	39,000	45,875	2.6
Private in-house	42,250	53,500	70,000	43,875	55,000	78,200	2.8
Local authorities	35,000	38,100	43,825	35,646	39,150	42,286	2.8
Central government	36,336	49,300	60,000	45,925	51,500	63,750	4.5
ALL SALARIED	33,000	39,500	50,000	35,000	41,100	52,000	4.1
Total	30,750	40,000	55,250	34,000	42,000	60,000	5.0

record an increase over the 12 months; only the earnings of principals in partnership have not changed.

The largest percentage increase has been in the earnings of sole principals, which is seven per cent higher than it was last year. This reverses last year's fall and returns average earnings to a level similar to that seen in 2012. However, both the upper and lower quartile figures for sole principals are lower this year – the lower quartile in particular fell from £18,500 to £15,000.

For principals in partnership, the figures show no change in average earnings but here both upper and lower quartile figures have increased, each by over four per cent.

Salaried architects working in private practice recorded a three per cent rise in their average salaries over the period, with the figures also showing that both upper and lower quartile figures have increased too.

Gains in government

In the public sector, average salaries are higher by three per cent for local authority architects, and by four per cent for central

government architects. Private in-house architects also record an average increase of three per cent.

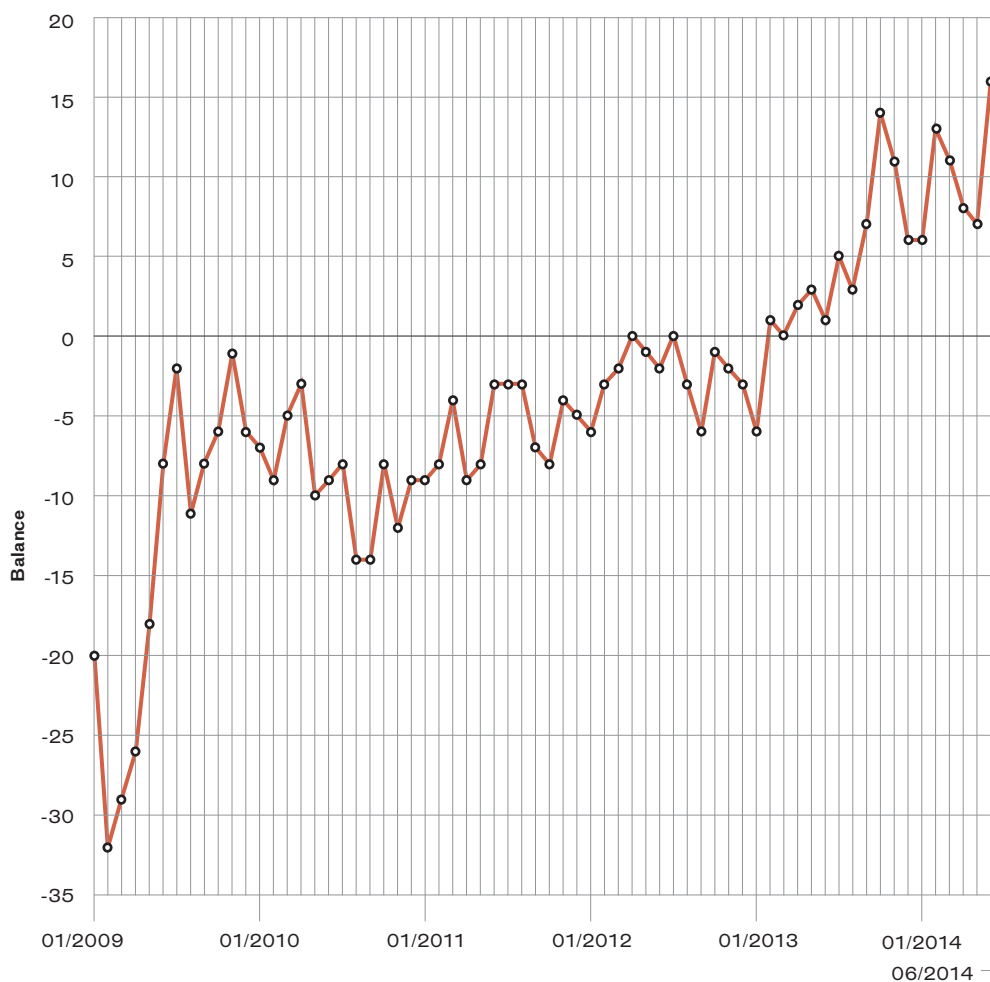
Again, if we look at where the profession is now compared with 2009 peak values, all but one staff category has yet to exceed its peak value. That one exception is architects working for central government, whose average earnings now are £51,500 – well ahead of the £46,389 recorded in 2009. Part of the reason for this rise may be, however, that there are fewer architects working for central government now than there were five years ago. Average earnings for salaried architects working in private practice are approaching 2009 levels; lagging by just three per cent. But partners' and directors' pay remains nine per cent behind 2009 rates.

There's one interesting finding for partners and directors – the upper quartile figure this year is in fact higher than the 2009 upper quartile. In fact, it's higher than any upper quartile recorded since 2008. This means that the top 25 per cent of partners and directors are now earning more than they have at any time in the last six years. →

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAIL

The annual RIBA/The Fees Bureau Architects Employment & Earnings Survey is conducted exclusively among UK-based RIBA members. A sample was invited by email to complete an online questionnaire in April and May 2014. Around 1,300 responded; we are very grateful for their willingness to provide their earnings information and for continuing to support the survey. Participants represent all areas of architecture: private and public sectors; full and part-time; men and women; and all ethnic groups. The profile of the sample by age and region is broadly consistent with previous years.

Staffing expectations: How do you think the number of permanent architectural staff employed in your organisation will change over the next three months?



Source: RIBA Future Trends Survey Staffing Index. The balance is the difference between those expecting to employ more and those expecting to employ less.

The largest pay gap between now and before the recession is experienced by sole principals. Despite enjoying the largest rise of any staffing group this year, sole principals' average pay remains 20 per cent lower than in 2009. In fact, this employment group – unlike any other – recorded peak pay in 2008 rather than 2009; so in fact sole principals' average pay is currently even lower – by 29 per cent – than their previous all-time peak. We have suggested reasons in previous surveys for the fall in sole principals' pay – partly it is due to the fact that this employment group has grown over the past five years, absorbing newly redundant or unemployed architects from larger private practices, who prefer to set up on their own as new practices

than register as unemployed.

Recorded unemployment – and we stress the word 'recorded' since architects as a profession are highly reluctant to be 'unemployed' – has fallen back sharply in the last two years, from around three to four per cent during the recession to just under one per cent now. While still higher than the negligible levels recorded between 2005 and 2008, the statistic is balanced by our estimates of the number of architects in the workforce, which has increased by 1,000 in the last year. We estimate that the workforce contains an estimated 27,700 architects, with 23,100 of them working full-time. Both estimates are higher than in 2009. ●

Aziz Mirza is a director of The Fees Bureau

ON THE JOB FRONT

This July the number of adverts for architectural staff increased by over 60% compared to the same month last year. In some sectors, like high end residential in particular, firms are finding it much harder to recruit architects with the right experience. Opportunities are therefore rising for architectural staff who have stayed with practices on lower salaries during the recession to test the water and view new options. In a number of cases salaries appear to be improving rapidly but it should be noted that although practices are far busier, they are also reporting that fees are still very tight and there is a limit to how much they are willing to increase offers by.

However, some studios are growing briskly and are willing to pay high salaries in order to fill urgent roles in a reminder of the market conditions in 2007. Ideally, these practices are seeking architects who are available at short notice and have around five years' experience on similar projects. For people with the right skills and CV it is very much an employee market and firms may have to consider other options to attract them. This can consist of flexible working, increased holiday allowance, training and payment of professional membership fees, but what we find most candidates are looking for is a clear view of future career progression.

After a number of incredibly difficult years for the architectural profession, it is fantastic that architects are finally having a larger choice of opportunities to choose from, and benefits beyond just salaries will become increasingly important.

Paul Chappell, RIBA Appointments

RIBA members can see summary survey statistics free and buy the full report, *Architects Earnings*, which includes detailed tables and charts, from The Fees Bureau: fees.bureau.co.uk; 01243 555 302

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Procurement
& contracts

Home truths from a thriving sector

With a third of last year's architectural fees coming from the housing sector, frontline research into opportunities in the housing development market make vital reading

Words: Matt Thompson



The UK housing market is a patchwork, with contrasting sectoral and regional differences fundamentally affecting the way new housing is procured and designed. Social, affordable, private, luxury, owned or rented, single, multiple or mixed-use – all require different approaches from developers. In turn, the developers expect their architects to understand the subtleties of the sector, and to challenge the brief intelligently.

One thread that holds the housing sector together is policy intervention from government. Certainly, the RIBA housing

roundtable and subsequent filmed interviews found it impossible to discuss architects' roles without reference to this context. Changes to planning, private rented sector incentives, targets for zero-carbon, standards for decency – they all affect the design. For Jane Briginshaw, head of design and sustainability at the Homes and Communities Agency, engaging with this wider policy background is critical. 'Architects need to understand why central and local government do the things they do,' she says.

This complex policy context is a balancing

act by the government, which needs to house its citizens and knows that untrammelled market forces alone will not meet this public good. The devastating wounds of the sub-prime housing crisis that triggered the 2008 world recession are still very much to the fore.

The sector is, however, recovering strongly from the recession. According to government statistics, annual housing starts to March this year were up 31% on the previous year, with completions up 4%. Nevertheless, the rise is uneven across sub-sectors. While new private dwelling starts were 15% higher than the previous quarter, housing association starts were down 22%.

In particular, the private rented sector, spurred on by the government's Build to Rent programme and debt guarantee scheme, is on the rise. Private rent is thought to be relatively safe because it does not involve personal mortgages or much public expenditure. Indeed, this sector is flourishing not just because consumers are being forced into it by increasing property values, but because they actively opt in, for any number of lifestyle reasons.

There are a growing number of private-sector clients that retain a long-term financial interest in buildings and have evolved their briefs accordingly. The value of design is no longer just about achieving quality at low cost for maximum profit. Instead, long-term value is the order of the day. This is a challenge for architects as they seek to design out maintenance inefficiencies, build in whole-life savings, and attract tenants more quickly and for longer, all with a view to increasing yields. Clients are looking for architects who can deliver on this front.

Richard Meier, a partner at Argent, explains: 'It's the net operating income that counts, driven by the gross revenue coming in – so, how attractive the product is – minus how much it costs to run.'

Gregor Mitchell, land director for be:here (a subsidiary of Willmott Dixon) agrees, adding: 'It's equally important to keep your void rates, management and life-cycle costs down. If I were an architect, I would look beyond the concept design to what will happen once the building is being operated.'

Housing developers unanimously acknowledge the indispensable economic, environmental and community value of architecture and architects. Sean Cook, formerly head of design at First Base, describes

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“Architects need to understand why central and local government do the things they do.”

Jane Briginshaw

this as a key part of the company’s DNA, from inception to construction.

Be:here’s Mitchell expands on what this means: ‘Excellent quality design – better than would otherwise happen – that maximises value and delivers the most profit for the client.’

This value is not just in drawings, but how those drawings mediate the needs of end users, community consultees and, most importantly, planning departments. Architects’ reputations and relationships with planners can make or break a development.

Argent’s Richard Meier believes that architects can add greatest value at the start of a project. The right architect with the right design reassures planners, making them ‘a bit more willing to push the envelope as far as actual massings are concerned’.

Almost as valuable, community consultation skilfully facilitated by architects is crucial. As Sean Cook puts it: ‘High quality architecture and considered design responses are critical in winning over the community. They embed their wants and needs, and de-risk the process.’

The real opportunity for architects, though, is to truly understand their clients’ aspirations. Housing developers across the sector cannot afford for architects to pursue their passion for design at the expense of viability. This is about working within a budget, proactively maximising the commercial opportunity, and problem solving – in short, minimising risk. When architects make mistakes, the consequences are severe. Talking about this risk in relation to how much architects are paid, Stephen Day, technical director for Barratt London, says: ‘Mistakes can add

tens of thousands of pounds onto the project and then it’s disproportionate to their fees.’

Good interpersonal skills lead to enduring partnerships. ‘Trust in the relationship is very important,’ says Meier. ‘As you start to get into those sorts of relationships, there’s more scope for sharing risk and reward.’ Housing developers ideally want architects who look out for their interests in what Cook describes as a ‘symbiotic relationship’ where the client’s value drivers are understood and the architect responds creatively with better solutions.

Regardless of whether architects are appointed to secure planning or deliver working drawings, housing developers are looking for them to lead the integrated consultant team, especially in a BIM environment. BIM has yet to spread to mainstream traditional house building, but many clients are beginning to recognise the benefits. Meier again: ‘How well co-ordinated the project is has a huge impact on costs, delays and issues further down the line. I’m keen to see architects who understand BIM and the co-ordinating role it plays because it de-risks projects.’

There is a perception that architects are undervalued or perhaps undervalue themselves by not being commercial enough. Developers are sceptical of architects’ ability to steward the design for financial viability when it is not always evident in how they conduct their own affairs. Mitchell argues that architects should serve their own interests more carefully – to do so shows that they understand profitability and risk. And if they do, he says, ‘you can almost dictate your own fee, and are more likely to be reappointed again and again’. ●

RIBA CLIENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The RIBA’s Client Liaison Group is a running a series of roundtable discussions to listen to and understand external perceptions of the architectural profession and the value architects bring to the project team, and ultimately to identify the tools needed to promote architectural services in these sectors successfully.

The feedback from interviews with housing clients is included here, and 60 second clips of the one-to-one interviews are available on architecture.com

TOP TIPS FROM HOUSING CLIENTS

1. **Understand** housing clients’ project drivers and make sure design proposals meet those requirements as well as the broader design metrics.
2. **Proactively** lead and co-ordinate the design team, and manage risk.
3. **Optimise** the development opportunity by understanding the underlying policy context, exploiting relationships with planners, and engaging in effective community consultation.
4. **Design** for long-term value in the rental and affordable housing sectors, with users and ease of maintenance in mind.
5. **Demonstrate** commercial and financial literacy to give clients comfort that you understand business strategy and can transfer that into the project process and the design.
6. **Balance** design and technical inputs from inception to ensure affordable, buildable and high-quality outcomes.

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It's escaped pin-striped bling
– now paradoxical Sheffield
must grab its chances

Steve Parnell

Sheffield is a much loved city. It's hard to know why, really. On the face of it, it's pretty down at heel. Achingly so, if you believe the cliché. If you have no connection with the so-called Steel City, it probably brings to mind Robert Carlyle and co dancing to Hot Chocolate in the mid 1990s. And Sheffield is often chosen by TV mockumentaries as the typical northern post-industrial hive of inequity.

These portraits aren't false. But they are one-sided – Sheffield is often also voted the happiest place to live in the UK. And Hallam is one of the richest boroughs in the country with allegedly its highest concentration of professionals.

The real paradox is how Sheffield's locals manage to maintain such pride in a city which is, on the surface, pretty crap.

HS2 will not stop at Sheffield, but at its retail hub, Meadowhall. Ah yes, the 'M' word. That shopping mecca developed by a scrap metal dealer on the site of Hadfield's massive

That rumbling
sound is Nairn
turning in his
grave as Sheffield
Council's cabinet
member for
business, skills
and development
dances on it

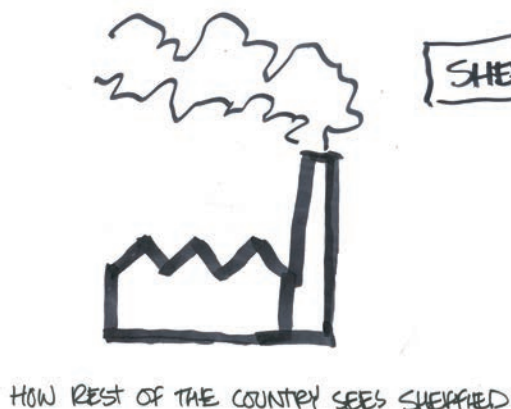
Hecla Works using one of Thatcher's Enterprise Zone non-plan deals. Nothing symbolises the shift from industrial production to post-industrial consumption more.

They say Meadowhall killed Sheffield city centre, but the councillors have done a pretty good job on their own, ever keen to raze any building of note in order to create a tabula rasa for 'regeneration'.

Last week's Sheffield Telegraph sported on its front page an 'artist's impression' of the future of the Castle Market site. The markets designed by Andrew Derbyshire in the 1950s have had heavenly praise laid upon them by that Holy Trinity of architectural criticism, Ian Nairn, Owen Hatherley and Jonathan Meades (I may have made up the last one, but I'm sure he'd love it as much as Cedric Price did). But the site looks like a bouncy castle aside a grassy knoll fit for mediaeval battle re-enactments. That rumbling sound is Nairn turning in his grave as Sheffield Council's cabinet member for business, skills and development, Leigh Brammall, dances on it.

Or maybe it's the bulldozers demolishing more of the city centre which looks something like a ghost town, most of its traders being given their compulsory purchase marching orders. Down the Moor (the central pedestrianised shopping area), shops are empty or demolished. Last July, after years of indecision, developer Hammersons finally pulled out of negotiations to develop the New Retail Quarter, a Liverpool One style state-of-the-art privatised shopping precinct enveloping the city centre. Sheffielders' response was a typical shrugged 'it's not for the like of us any road up'.

Actually, it's given Sheffield a stay of execution and what could have been a city with all the character of the pin-striped bling of Leeds, now has a chance to be half decent. So what are Sheffield architects doing about this?



SHEFFIELD'S IDENTITY ?



SHEFFIELD SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

A recent initiative of the Sheffield Society of Architects invited local practices to join a day-long charrette investigating the opportunity that the New Retail Quarter hiatus afforded. Councillors like Simon Ogden (head of city regeneration), Isobel Bowler (cabinet member for culture, sport and leisure), and Maria Duffy (interim head of planning) were invited for an end of day crit to see the proposals and comment on it. We all know that architects can get a bit heady when given some blank sheets of paper, coloured crayons, and an urban problem. But sometimes that's what's needed. The key idea that the decision makers should have taken away was based on Marcus Westbury's ideas from Newcastle, Australia. Westbury recently visited the university to talk bottom-up, independent, cultural, and creative regeneration – that you need to attract people into the centre and then they will spend money there. If Meadowhall is going to be the retail hub, then the historic centre could be a culturally charged civic centre. Without battle re-enactments.

Few cities do festivals better than Sheffield with its generous archipelago of public spaces. It hosts the DocFest (claimed as the Cannes for documentaries), Grin Up North (England's largest comedy festival), and Tramlines (an independent urban music festival). At festival time, the city feels relaxed, generous, friendly, open, creative, pregnant. Julian Dobson of Sheffield based Urban Pollinators comments that Blairite language like 'New Retail Quarter' misses the huge opportunity that presents itself to Sheffield to define the first of a new model of city centres rather than the last of the old. A centre promoting cultural and civic engagement might be such a model.

Director of RIBA Yorkshire Emma Eng-

If Meadowhall is going to be the retail hub, then the historic centre could be a culturally charged civic centre. Without battle re-enactments

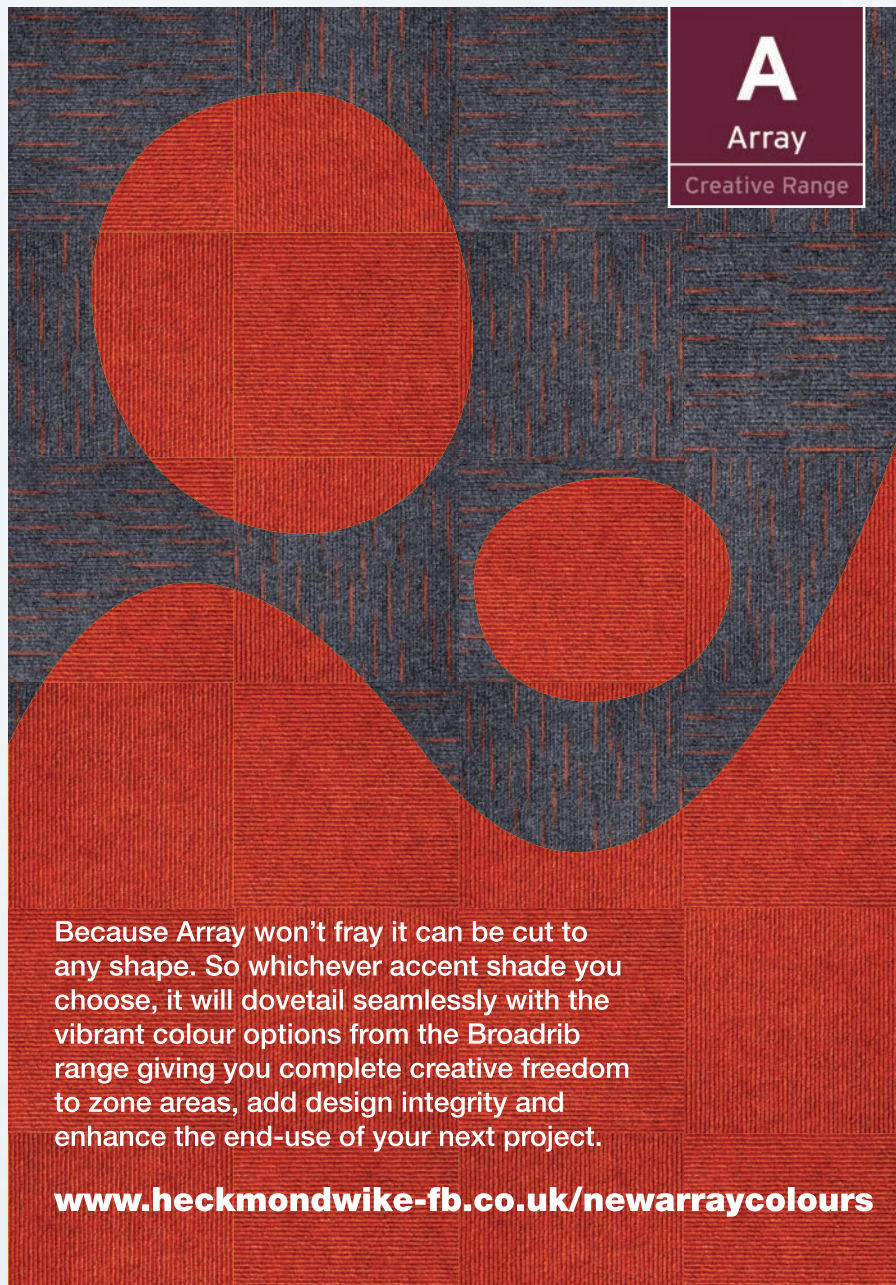
land says the Sheffield chapter is the most active in the region, due to the two universities being involved, the city being so willing to engage in its activities, and a more design conscious community. The large Sheffield practices, BDP, HLM, HCD and Bond Bryan, are also very supportive of its activities, and smaller practices such as Norton Mayfield Architects, which works mainly in London but is based in Sheffield, is also proactive in its engagement. They co-organised and hosted the Fantastical Cities workshop for children, for example, as part of Sheffield Design Week, where the road was closed in front of their studio and kids invited to design a fantastical city from cardboard, gaffer tape, bubble wrap, and various other off-cuts.

But the micro-practices really excite me. Those like Studio Polpo, set up as a social enterprise to plough its profits back into benefiting the city, working with Architype on larger projects. Director Mark Parsons proactively engages with people in the area on small initiatives that are original, work, and fun. Remember fun? A micro allotment network uses small parcels of unclaimed front gardens to grow vegetables. Its River Commons initiative encourages people to get involved in opening up the many hidden rivers under and behind Sheffield, particularly around the Upper Don valley. Polpo has also worked as part of a larger team to save Portland Works from being 'developed' – instead it's been bought by a collective to be turned into artists' workspaces. Forget guerilla tactics. This is architectural practice, Jim, but not as we know it.

In 1961, Ian Nairn wrote of Sheffield, 'it is typical of this exciting, exasperating city that it never seems to assume its true importance.' Therein lies the clue as to why it is so cherished – it just doesn't know how good it is. ●



Left Building Fantastical Cities – on the street.
Image: Tony May



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Context

A united front to tackle the future

Collaboration between the professions could be the best way to deal with the challenges of a changing world



As the industry emerges from the recession, there is a natural desire for everything to return to normal and for the good times to roll again

Simon Foxell

We all know that the world is changing at pace and with it our working lives, the technology and systems that we use and the expectations for future forms of practice. The impact on the construction industry, designers and other professionals working in it – especially those at the start of their career – will be huge.

As the industry emerges from the recession, there is a natural desire for everything to return to normal and for the good times to roll again; a temptation that we are all prone to – individuals, practices and not least the professional institutions. Yet this is really the moment to be planning ahead and changing the way we do things to prepare for whatever the future throws at us.

Multidisciplinary built environment think tank The Edge has been looking at professional issues in the industry for the last two years. In particular, it has set up a Commission of Inquiry on Future Professionalism chaired by Paul Morrell, the former government chief construction adviser. At present the commission is considering

its recommendations, which The Edge will publish this autumn. Without prejudging the panel's deliberations, the following are some of the themes that arose at the sessions.

The commission has built on support for the special issue of the journal Building Research and Information on the topic of 'new professionalism' (January 2013). This laid out several major challenges for the industry's professional institutions, including the need for far better knowledge of building performance, for a co-ordinated approach to climate change, for the provision of a shared educational foundation, and the need to take account of the changing nature of professionalism itself. To these can be added pressures from developments in research, technology and communications, and the recruitment crisis in parts of the industry.

The Edge wanted to know how the institutions were tackling these issues and, if potential actions or projects could be identified, how they could work collaboratively and collectively for the greater good of the industry. To address these questions, over the spring of 2014, presidents, past presidents and chief executives from the main professional bod-

ies gave evidence to the inquiry alongside a range of other commentators and experts.

Ethics and standards

The issue of professional ethics was hotly debated. Although there was broad agreement that professionals should be held to a higher standard of behaviour than non-professionals and certainly one that was above the legal minimum, there was difficulty in pinning down what this meant in practice.

Yet the ethical standards of UK professionals were recognised as having a high value in overseas markets, especially where there was a more flexible approach to applying regulations.

The institutions disagreed, however, on whether they should take a stand on ethical issues, for example climate change or modern day slavery. Some institutions believed it was important to get 'ahead of government and let the policy chase us', but others took the view that these were decisions for individual professionals and it was the institutions' job to help and guide them through the ethical minefield rather than to adjudicate on their behalf.

Several speakers thought the reputation of the professions had been badly tarnished by the 'rampant self-interest displayed in the past'

Ethics were agreed to be an essential element of professionalism. A shared base code of ethics and behaviour was proposed by the RICS as a way to unite UK professionals. What seemed certain was that high standards were a vital precursor of future value but that no institution was willing to collectively impose them on UK businesses.

The public interest

To justify their chartered status, professional bodies need to ensure that the public interest is put before the interests of their members or members' clients. But again there was difficulty in both defining public interest and showing that it did take precedence. Instead, several speakers were concerned that the reputation of the professions had been badly tarnished by the 'rampant self-interest displayed in the past'.

If the professions truly believed in the greater public good then the institutions needed to be seen to act accordingly and to rebuild trust with society. Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the RSA and a former chief of staff to Tony Blair, stressed the importance of the professions delivering messages that 'reinforce a core story of public value' and achieving 'alignment' by making sure that 'everything that you do lines up with what you say'.

Influence and communication

It was agreed that the institutions had a degree of soft power and influence with government but that this was severely limited by a number of factors including their reputation for self-interest, an inability to deliver promised performance and, above all, the fragmentation of the professions and their unwillingness to voice a co-ordinated and

consistent message.

To remedy this, several speakers suggested the institutions take a self-denying ordinance on a range of issues and only speak on them collectively, possibly through the CIC. It was agreed that this was a big ask but that there was 'an urgent need for the professions to work cohesively together'.

Professionalised institutions

Several of the institutional leaders commented on the complexity of the world they now have to interact with and their need for professional staff to deal with it.

They believed that institutions 'can't be run by amateurs'. Members, on the other hand, expressed concern at the resultant loss of control and engagement with 'their' institution, and instead expected them to use readily available technology to listen to their concerns and to improve consultation.

New blood

Although recruitment onto architectural courses is still strong, for the moment, other built environment professions are struggling to attract adequate numbers and it is predicted that 'in 2030 there will be more people above the age of 50 in our industry than below'. Equally the industry has a poor record of diversity in its workforce. These challenges were a matter of concern, particularly to the engineering institutions.

Young professionals ended the final session by demanding that institutions provide 'leadership, judgement and guidance' – as unfortunately they felt 'it's not there'. There is work to be done. ●

Simon Foxell is principal of The Architects Practice and is a member of The Edge

THINKING ON THE EDGE

The Edge was established in 1995 to provide a joint thinking space to fill the gaps between institutions. It is run on a voluntary basis. The start support came from the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) and the RIBA, but sponsor bodies now also include the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE). In the last year they have been joined by the Construction Industry Council (CIC), the Society for the Environment (SocEnv), the Building Centre and the UCL Energy Institute.

Full details of the sessions including speakers' notes and a report of each session are available on the Edge's website www.edgedebate.com.

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Compliance

Tales of the unexpected

Searches must be reasonable, but there is no need to keep looking on the off-chance of finding something nasty

By Alistair McGrigor

Carrying out research into a site or project often involves extensive reviews of archives and publicly available documents. But how far do you have to search before you can safely say you have looked extensively enough for possible risks surrounding a site?

Sir Robert McAlpine recently received an answer to this question from the Court of Appeal. It stems from a project it is developing in Newcastle upon Tyne. The site had been subject to numerous redevelopments, some in the 1970s, which had involved significant excavation. However, when McAlpines came to sink a large number of concrete piles in the site, a private sewer 3m below ground level, which had not shown up on any of the usual plans or searches, came into play.

When the concrete being poured for the piles came close to this unknown sewer, it leaked into it and ended up flowing into, and then blocking, Northumbrian Water's pub-

lic sewer in the adjoining road.

After the event, while looking for an entirely different sewer plan, one of McAlpines' employees found a 1908 plan showing the private sewer, in the archives of the Newcastle Discovery Museum.

Northumbrian Water brought a claim against McAlpines for the cost of removing the obstructing concrete from its public sewer in the road. Northumbrian Water claimed that McAlpines had been negligent in not looking further for the plan in the Museum.

Chance encounter

However, the Court of Appeal was clear that the original judge was right to dismiss the claim of negligence against McAlpines. Because the site had been extensively redeveloped in the 1970s, it was highly unlikely that any earlier drains would have survived, and McAlpines had carried out all the usual investigations and searches as to what sewers might be under the site – including a sewer search with Northumbrian Water which showed no sign of the private sewer. The 1908 plan was discovered only after a search of the Museum archives lasting several hours by one of McAlpines' employees, who was in fact searching for plans relating to another issue on an entirely unconnected sewer.

The Court of Appeal said it would not be reasonable to expect a contractor to search for several hours in museum archives to see if by chance there might be a sewer not shown on all the other searches, and which had been built more than 100 years earlier.

The escaping concrete was also found by the Court of Appeal not to be a 'nuisance', which it may have been if the development of the site was somehow an unreasonable use of the land, bearing in mind that city redevelopments of this nature are entirely usual. The fact that it was not expected that the private sewer existed, and therefore might result in concrete flowing into the public sewer, meant that it was not unreasonable to carry out works using concrete piles of this sort.

Architects may therefore wish to bear this case in mind if needing to investigate a particular site or location, to gain some reassurance as to just how extensive searches of the site would need to be. Searching for hours through archives, on the off chance of finding something significant, is not necessary to avoid facing a claim for negligence. ●

Alistair McGrigor is partner at Nabarro

When concrete came close to this unknown sewer, it leaked into and blocked a public sewer

EQUIVALENT RIGHTS OF DEFENCE

One of the key protections which architects should seek in any collateral warranty which they may enter into is an 'equivalent rights of defence' clause. As the name suggests, these enable the architect (when facing a claim brought under a collateral warranty) to rely on the same defences to liability in the warranty that exist in its appointment with its client. This is important because, if you have carefully negotiated, say, a cap on liability in your appointment document, the clause will automatically impose that same cap on your liability under the warranty.

Likewise, if you have a clause limiting your liability for 12 years from the date of practical completion in your appointment, but no such clause in your warranty, the equivalent rights of defence clause will impose the same protection for a claim under the warranty. This could be important where a warranty is signed many years after practical completion, and avoids a new 12 year period starting to run from the date the warranty is signed.

Frequently, such clauses also carve out the defences of counter-claim or set-off. This is because, if a client wrongfully does not pay an architect its fees, but goes on to claim losses from that architect, the architect can counterclaim for the unpaid fees. However, should a beneficiary of a warranty on that same project bring a claim against the architect, it would be considered inappropriate to allow the architect to set-off unpaid fees, as the beneficiary will have no control over whether the client has paid those fees.



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The Shard, London is nominated for the 2014 RIBA Stirling Prize.

This is Concrete is supported by The Concrete Centre.



Procurement
& contracts

Civic slide

Maria Smith takes out a contract



Maria Smith

Anywhere Borough Council (ABC) is inviting expressions of interest from architect-led teams for the regeneration of the Anywhere town centre waterfront. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform Anywhere town centre and secure its future for generations to come. We are looking for a team that shares our vision and commitment to delivering a high quality outcome that makes everything better without changing anything. This commission is to build on the civic visioning masterplan for the cultural way-finding heritage strategy that was half-heartedly prepared by Sort Of Almost Economics regeneration consultancy.

Anywhere is a totally generic place with no distinguishing features whatsoever. It has a history of agriculture and industry like everywhere else, and in recent years has suffered from a decline in industry and in domestic tourism, like everywhere else. Like most settlements, Anywhere boasts a slightly smelly and underused waterfront. This is lined with disused industrial buildings that have no merit whatsoever and that everyone from school children to elected members are keen to see the back of. However it is critical that, when this area becomes a dead dormitory scene from a horror film that is too depressing to be scary, this unloved character is retained. First and foremost, our vision is to

create a sense of place. This means nothing at all but a great deal to the entire project team.

Over the last few years, Anywhere Borough Council has awarded miserably weeny grants to local artists and community groups who have delivered excruciatingly small-scale projects. We have encouraged local people to take up market stalls at the dramatically unattractive historic 1990s market, and to create pop-up shops in the town. We gave them no support or rates relief and the project failed before anyone noticed it was happening. We have granted over £30 in shop front improvement schemes which over four shops bid for. We were heartened by the vivacity of local spirit this desperation revealed and are reinvesting the cash in a fundraising scheme to create extra parking spaces round the back of the town hall for council officers who prefer not to walk more than 10 steps. The spaces will be named for the shopkeepers and will be allotted on a first come least served basis.

Infrastructure is key as Anywhere is built entirely for the car. Buses run once a week and stop 12 miles outside the town centre in front of an abandoned swimming pool, one of the county's finest buildings in disrepair. With this project, we aim to increase the carriageway widths to assuage local politicians, increase pavement widths, add cycle lanes – all without affecting the everyday business of the failing shops. ABC previously commissioned a feasibility study, which proposed slightly narrower road markings but the council was unable to resource an officer. ABC welcome proposals that tackle these restrictions creatively, working with the council highways and maintenance teams and doing exactly what they say.

It is essential that everyone in the town, including those that will be dead by the time the project begins construction, is happy with every aspect of all the proposals. We have therefore carried out extensive community engagement over the last 50 years. This has resulted in reams of fantastically useless questionnaires that the council does not have the resources or intelligence to interpret, and consultation fatigue on a spectacular scale. Last year alone saw 3 deaths that have been linked to pointless questionnaires. ABC would like to see consultation experts with a complete disregard for privacy and ethics as part of the team, one of whose the first tasks will be to carry out a series of community events to determine the best format

ABC is keen to appoint an insipidly collaborative team that thoroughly misunderstands the term collaboration

for community engagement going forward.

ABC is keen to appoint an insipidly collaborative team that thoroughly misunderstands the term collaboration and is open to being chaotically manipulated by the project team. ABC has already appointed 12 project managers, each with specific, unnecessary roles who can create extraordinary confusion in scopes of work, contract management and cost control. They will determine procurement policies at their whim and the design team will be expected to adhere to all policies as they emerge – written or not. We would expect the design team to also include at least four design-focussed project managers with a specific remit of unpicking the complex, idiotic lines of communication.

The budget for the project is £20m for capital works only. This is to include professional fees and maintenance costs and cannot be spent on maintenance. It has been drawn down from 2067-8 budget and will be available on sign off of the concept stage, which will almost certainly never happen. We look forward to receiving proposals from teams motivated by the challenges this project brings.

Expressions of interest should be delivered by email, 75 copies printed off on obviously recycled paper and hand delivered on the back of an ox by midnight on the summer solstice. Tenders received after this deadline will be given to the witch who will use creepy witchcraft to dispose of them. Please include within your expression of interest, confirmation that you are not related either directly or by marriage to the creepy witch.

Please address any queries to: genericproject@anywherebc.gov.uk. This email is unmanned and you will receive an automatic reply within two years. ●

Maria Smith is a director at Studio Weave

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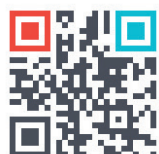
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SIG Roof Lines



Part of the scenery

The subterranean construction of a Devon home used Rhepanol hg to protect the structure from the tonnes of earth above it

When a London couple chose to make their 1970s holiday bungalow retreat in Devon a permanent home, they decided an upgrade in the quality of the accommodation was also in order. But sited as it was in the Dartmoor National Park, their initial proposal for an expanded family home was flatly turned down. Exasperated, they turned to local architect Van der Steen Hall. Fully aware of the limitations on this highly sensitive site, the practice proposed a more imaginative approach: digging down into the slope rather than building up from it. The result is a highly bespoke home appearing as part of the landscape, its Devon granite and fully glazed facade growing out of the hillside below an expansive grass roof, which sensitively hides the home in the Dartmoor scenery.

Limited access to the site, along a narrow bridle path, dictated the choice of materials and logistics: the building constructed from

what could be best moved along it: concrete blocks, thick and deep oak beams, and a simply applied SIG Rhepanol hg single-ply membrane to protect the structure from the tonnes of earth above it. 'The roof was conceived as a concrete structure,' says practice partner Peter Hall. 'But with trucks precluded, we opted for heavy oak beams with square-edged boards above them and the Rhepanol hg on top. We'd tested out the use of heavy timber roofs when restoring some of Devon's Palmerston forts. There we had to use asphalt on screed, but here the use of a Rhepanol hg membrane seemed appropriate, robust and certainly cost-effective.'

With the house procured under the Intermediate Form of Contract, and the architect specifying the 250m² of roofing with a no 'similar approved' proviso, Hall needed to ensure the specification was robust and that structural deflections were

minimised. 'Basically, he told us 'sheep, yes, but cows, no,' recalls Hall, speaking of the additional loads that might be exerted on the roof. 'Performance was paramount – at the time we had a rep come over to help us develop the design. Rhepanol hg wasn't just specified on the roof either, but on the heads and cills of all the windows.' SIG provided 15-year warranties on the material, but not on the workmanship, says Hall, so the time spent with SIG's technical team proved invaluable when it came to ensuring the roof specification was, in all senses, watertight.

With the owners now happily settled in, Hall says the house and its roof are performing well – so much so that he has since specified Rhepanol hg on two other projects. He still seems to rue the toning down of his initial concept, however. 'The design was rather more wildly troglodytic than it ended up,' he says, 'much to the client's eventual delight...'

Single-ply roofing

Seven top tips on successfully specifying a single-ply roof membrane

Get a single-ply roof membrane right and no one notices. But get it wrong, and it's another, very costly, story. Steve Cleminson, technical manager at SIG Design & Technology, gives his top tips on the art of specifying a successful single-ply roof membrane.

Take a holistic approach

Choosing the actual product is only part of the story. You can investigate the difference between the products themselves all you like, but it's the whole, holistic story that matters from the start to finish, including the availability of trained contractors and suitable support on site. That's 10 times more important than simply choosing the single-ply roof membrane system itself.

Interrogate the brief

Be clear about what you're trying to achieve with the product in terms of fire rating, u-values, warranty periods, third-party accreditations, environmental considerations and aesthetics. Ensure you address these key issues in your specification, and that the implications for not meeting any of them are understood. Investigate site conditions such as the nature of the deck and whether you can have a loose-laid, bonded or mechanically fixed installation, and produce clear and concise NBS specification for main contractors to go out to tender with.

Educate yourself on compliances

I never fail to be amazed by how some architects seem more interested in the colour

of the toilet walls than complying with best practices. The BS 6229 code of practice for flat roofs states that no part of the finished roof should have a fall of less than 1:80. Getting the falls right is a common pitfall, especially when there are third parties involved. Even if non-compliance isn't picked up by building control or third-party insurers, poor design regarding falls can lead to increased maintenance requirements, accelerated ageing of roof finishes and dangerous conditions for roof access routes.

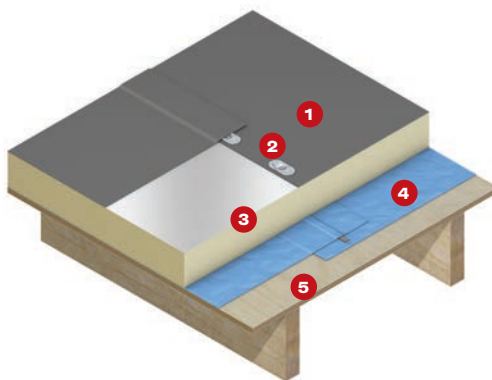
Understand the products

Single-ply roof membranes are flat, synthetic polymer-based roofing materials manufactured in a single waterproof sheet. All may look very similar but their base

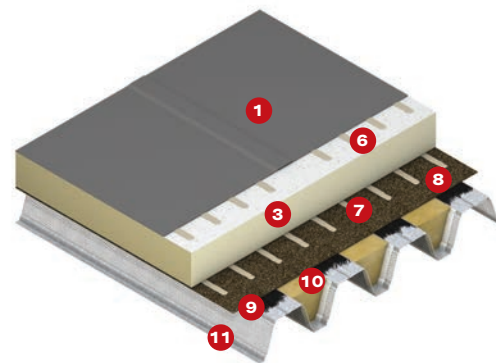
Single-ply roofing membranes

- 1 Single-ply roof covering
- 2 Mechanical fixing and washer (thermally broken)
- 3 Insulation
- 4 PE vapour control layer
- 5 Timber deck
- 6 Membrane adhesive
- 7 Insulation adhesive
- 8 Bitumen vapour control layer
- 9 Primer
- 10 Acoustic infills
- 11 Metal deck
- 12 Round washed ballast
- 13 Paving slab
- 14 Paving slab support pad
- 15 Fleece layer
- 16 PE layer
- 17 Copper paint
- 18 Standing seam
- 19 Gripfix strips
- 20 Thermally broken insulation fixing

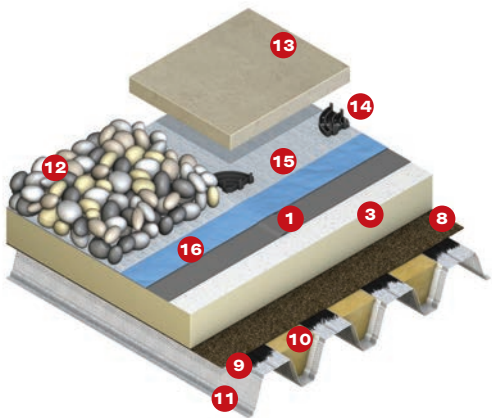
Warm roof, mechanically fixed



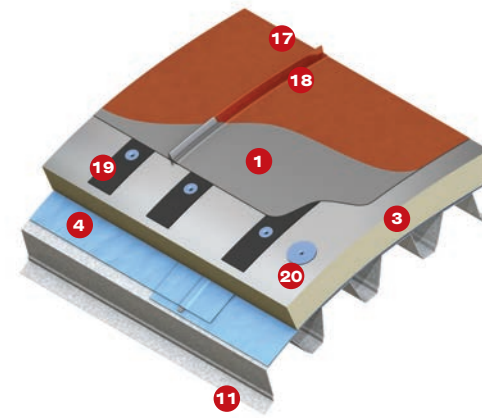
Warm roof, bonded



Warm roof, ballasted



Warm roof, decor profiles



compounds and chemistry are very different (see right). They are often wrongly considered a drab solution, rarely specified to look pretty, but favoured for their longevity, ease of installation and the peace of mind that they will stay waterproof. However, with many systems offering a range of colours, coatings and decorative profiles, quite striking results can be achieved. Make sure you understand what the warranty is covering, and what maintenance requirements are set out in the warranty documents.

Think carefully about sustainability

Identifying the greenest choice is a minefield. The more cost-effective PVC option has traditionally been seen as less green because of its chemistry. It can, however, have advantages if, say, it is manufactured locally compared to the implications of importing other products from abroad. TPO and TPE can claim some enhanced green credentials compared to PVC, but if sustainability is the top priority, specifiers often choose PIB. The product choice will depend on what the architect wants to achieve for the client. There is an element of compromise since, generally, the greener the product, the more expensive it is.

Get the sequencing right

Ensure roofing suppliers are involved early on, or expect heartache and cost later. Always ask suppliers how readily available stock is, to avoid long lead times causing delays. Sequencing and the design of interfaces is imperative – for example, early consideration of a balustrade post, which may avoid someone later on sticking a bolt through the membrane and affecting the waterproofing. Most problems are due to a lack of coordination. If you do it wrong, you have to backtrack and pay more or end up with a very weak detail, which will cause problems later on.

Choose your installer carefully

Every product is only as good as its installer. If you go for a cheaper option and end up with a contractor who isn't fully familiar with a particular system's requirements, you could end up in trouble. Instead, identify suitably trained, registered and monitored contractors who are supported by suppliers that comply with Single Ply Roofing Association (SPRA) guidelines and training regimes. Always ask your supplier how they monitor the quality of their installers, and check they have technical design support available for the installers.

FIVE MAIN SINGLE-PLY ROOF MEMBRANE TYPES

PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) Accounts for around 80% of the UK market. Available in a wide range of colours. Contains plasticisers and chlorine. Requires isolating layer for use with bitumen. Durable, partially recyclable, some UK-made.

PIB (Polyisobutylene) First developed in the 1930s, PIB is long-lasting, 100% recyclable, and the only membrane with a full life cycle assessment to ISO14040 standards. Available in grey and with a copper paint finish. A self-sealing edge makes it simple to install.

TPE (Thermoplastic Polyolefin Elastomer) 100% recyclable and simpler to weld and install than TPO. Small punctures can be resealed using heat. UK manufactured.

TPO (Thermoplastic Polyolefin) Often seen as a more environmentally friendly alternative to PVC because of its lack of plasticisers. However, it can require a solvent to clean it before heat welding. Popular for civil engineering uses. Only available in greys. Partially recyclable.

EPDM (Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer) Elastic, synthetic rubber roofing membrane, which is popular for domestic projects though it can be hard to detail. Only available in black. Not recyclable, although the membrane can sometimes be reused. Often the cheapest option.

Left Whichever single-ply roof membrane you choose, your product is only as good as the skill of the installer.



8 steps to the perfect roof

1
The Right Products

2
Design Expertise

3
Meet the Regulations

4
Confidence in Supply

5
Experienced Contractors

6
Monitored Installation

7
Full Guarantees

8
Planned Maintenance

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Copper here in spirit

Replacing stolen copper at a crematorium while respecting visitors' sensitivities led Guildford council to look for a membrane equivalent



ADAM COUP (2)

Despite a 50% fall in incidents of copper theft – a result of Operation Tornado, which demands authentic photo ID from those selling to scrap metal dealers – the crime still costs the UK economy over £1bn a year. This was made painfully aware to Guildford City Council when its crematorium facility and Chapel of Remembrance on the outskirts of the town was targeted by thieves in 2011, and completely stripped of its long strip standing seam roof.

When it came to replacing the stolen copper, the council thought long and hard about its options for a facility that was never going to have a 24-hour security presence. The problem was strangely more complex than just changing the material for a cheaper one, such as zinc. 'We were conscious of the fact that this was a place visited regularly by bereaved family and friends,' recalls Guildford City Council project manager Tommy Parkes. 'It was important to respect the fact that they might be sensitive to any radical changes. While it wasn't part of the business case, we were keen to maintain the aesthetic, but had to minimise the chance of future theft.'

To meet both demands, the council opted for Rhepanol fk roofing membrane finished with its copper roof paint, which patinated in a matter of weeks to its characteristic green oxidised form. For the council it was a no-brainer. The £400,000 allocated to the works also involved additional insulation to internal areas, removal of asbestos and replacing



The use of Rhepanol fk roofing membrane finished with copper roof paint maintains the traditional appearance while dealing effectively with the threat of theft.

RHEPANOL SHINES IN THE TYROL

It's not all about theft. For some schemes, the specification of Rhepanol fk with its copper paint finish can be for aesthetic or other reasons. In the picturesque Austrian city of Salzburg, the recent refurbishment of a local government health building involved removing 1,000m² of its zinc sheet roofing, and replacing it with something more aesthetically pleasing and suited to its historic city centre context. A traditional copper standing seam roof would have meant increasing the roof pitch height from its existing 3° – precluded by the city's urban heritage planning guidelines. But the low roof pitch was no problem for roofing contractor Johan Bruckner, which specified Rhepanol fk and its polyisobutylene copper paint finish. Laid with standing seam profiles at 600mm centres with a 50mm seam overlap, the copper particle coating acted as a perfect way to complete the project while keeping the locals – and planners – happy.



courtyard walkway soffits – in total, upgrade works to about 1,000m² of roof. Parkes says that programme was all-important here. The work had to be carried out in three main phases over 18 months and at weekends to minimise disruption to a facility that, for obvious reasons, couldn't simply be closed down for a while.

As regards sustainability, the council was satisfied with Rhepanol fk's credentials. SIG Design & Technology project manager Christa Thompson explains: 'Rhepanol is a synthetic rubber, whose core polymer is Polyisobutylene based on Opanol, which is used as a constituent of many chewing gums. Also its BBA certified service life of 40 years is one of the longest available in the market place.'

Rhepanol fk also has good natural fire protection characteristics without resort to halogens such as bromine and chlorine.

Thompson explains that the council initially applied the material to back-of-house areas on the project to ascertain its suitability and to observe its patination characteristics. 'Once they were convinced that it worked with the standing seam profile attached, it was rolled out across the rest of the job,' says Thompson.

Eighteen months later, the council remains happy with its new roof. With walk boards, the roof can be easily accessed for cleaning, and there hasn't been a recurrence of the earlier theft. I ask whether there has been positive feedback from the public. 'In the day-to-day facilities management of the council's estate, you tend to be more worried by the projects that people talk about rather than don't,' remarks Parkes. And as is fitting for a place of final rest, the crematorium's visitors continue to visit, no more unduly perturbed than before the change.

TAKE THE RISK OUT OF ROOF DESIGN

8 STEPS TO THE PERFECT ROOF

1



The Right Products

Don't rely on a single manufacturer who will recommend their product for any application. Get independent support from an experienced supplier: make an informed choice.

2



Design Expertise

Don't risk uncoordinated design input from several manufacturers. Have your roof designed, specified and co-ordinated from the deck up by a single PI insured designer.

3



Meet the Regulations

Ensure you meet all the Statutory Requirements even if they change. Use an independent, expert design service and get full, free technical support until completion.

4



Confidence in Supply

A reliable supply chain is essential for profitability and performance. Choose a proven materials supplier with local availability, shorter lead times and high stock levels.

5



Experienced Contractors

An experienced, accredited contractor knows the products and will integrate the roof system with your whole building so it performs well and looks great too.

6



Monitored Installation

In many projects, buildability issues will crop up on site. Ensure your supplier will monitor the installation and provide quality field support for your contractors.

7



Full Guarantees

Don't fall between suppliers who may dispute responsibility. Have the roof designed, installed and guaranteed from the deck up by a single entity you can rely upon.

8



Planned Maintenance

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3: Culture

Shake it all about

Why we should all applaud a different way of working



Hugh Pearman Editor

'But,' said a colleague, 'how do they manage their insurance? Do they do PQQs? There's a whole list of dull questions like that.' She was talking about Assemble, the refreshingly unincorporate and surprisingly numerous ex-Cambridge self-building collective practice profiled by Piers Taylor in this section. Taylor himself has rejected the conventional practice model with his Invisible Studio, and views Assemble as one of the most interesting new firms around – if 'firm' is the right word here.

Is it time, then, to strike a blow for freedom, and step forth unshackled by the trappings of... what? Outdated notions of professionalism? Architectural arrogance? Form-filling? Over-reliance on others? That all sounds good. But then again – given that Assemble has just won a biggish 'conventional' job for Goldsmith's College and will doubtless go on to win bigger – er, what about the insurance? Who will be the project leader?

From Tecton via the Architect's Co-Partnership and the great public sector architects' offices in the post-war years through Ted Cullinan's studio and the 1980s Communi-

How to avoid the hoops so many architects must jump, do good work, and stay in profit?

ty Architecture movement to today's bright young things, there has always been a strong collective strand in British architecture. Rogers Stirk Harbour retains some of that. Even BDP, today regarded as a large conventional practice, was a pioneering multi-discipline set up, founded by a lifelong socialist inspired by Walter Gropius' Bauhaus. The question for private practice is always: how does idealism survive commercial success, or failure?

The main bar to progress is, as all architects know, a now-stifling bureaucracy and the predations of myriad specialist consultants and project managers who cream off the lion's share of the fees for a fraction of the work. Maria Smith's hilariously accurate column 'Civic Slide' in the preceding pages is spoken from the heart. In living memory, things were much simpler. Look at the history of the Chichester Festival Theatre by Powell and Moya for example, now restored and extended by Haworth Tompkins (p 12). P&M was appointed, told to produce a design, expected to bring in appropriate engineering and acoustics expertise and to cost the job itself – and that was it. Three months later the adventurous design was ready, it was duly built by a diligent contractor, and came in on time and (tiny) budget.

Now, bureaucracy can have its advantages – building sites are no longer deathtraps, for instance, thanks to those much-maligned health and safety regulations. But the hoops so many architects must jump through before they even get a whiff of a commission, let alone after they land one – how to avoid those, do good work, and stay in profit?

Charm, enthusiasm and talent are what carry architects through and it looks as if Assemble has all three in abundance. There's a joie de vivre in the way they are shaking things up with such apparent ease, falling into practice, starting with generating their own projects. Don't be fooled: it's not easy. But showing there's a different, nimbler way to do things: everyone can learn from that. ●

Non-architects can be so much more astute and direct than the rest of us who are loaded with the language of obfuscation and meaning

Lewis Jones,
Assemble
p80

He transformed his house next door into a homage to the Soane Museum and connected the two properties via a secret pivoting fireplace

Richard MacCormac
p91

A brighter shade of pale

Herbert Wright is tickled pink with ideas for the city



Herbert Wright

September is upon us, holiday time is vanishing faster than peanuts at a beerfest, and it'll soon be time to dump bright summer clothes, coat up and traipse out under grey skies. Still, maybe there's some cheery colour in the daytime built environment (other than the ephemera of billboards and street-art).

Colour that grabs the eye has made some appearances in our architectural history, but they are usually brief, then hastily stuffed back like a jack-in-the-box and the lid closed. The Regency period favoured gorgeously colourful interiors, but outside, apart from a few splashes like the pediment friezes by JG Bubb on John Nash's Regents Park terraces (so like Wedgwood), it was all about cream or stone. Sure, the Victorians leveraged the colour possibilities of masonry to the max, and even had a weakness for glazed brick, but bright colour was in the detail, not the big surfaces. Similarly art deco with its optimistic motifs and trimmings. International-style 60s blocks sometimes sported coloured spandrels, but by the 70s it was all browns and Miesian blacks. Even crazy-fun PoMo wasn't that colour-splashy in the UK – sadly-missed FAT's most day-glo work was in a Rotterdam suburb. Incidentally, the new,

After Edi Rama became mayor of Tirana, Albania, in 2000, he had loads of drab buildings painted in bright colours. The whole city perked up

completely red Casa das Artes in Miranda do Corvo, Portugal, is not by the same Fashion Architecture Taste boys at all, but Future Architecture Thinking from Lisbon. It chose a similar tomato soup shade to Jean Nouvel's decidedly devilish 2010 Serpentine Pavilion, also sadly missed (at least by me).

Rogers and Piano brought colour with high-tech to Paris' Pompidou Centre, and Rogers has stuck with his colour-coded ventilation pipes ever since. I'm looking forward to the kinetic colour action when the 200m of north facing lifts and lights get going on RSHP's Cheesegrater. But in the Central St Giles offices (2009), Piano actually embedded warm colours into entire volumes, using glazed tiles. What's not to like about this great cubist salad in the middle of London?

We need more stuff like this – entire buildings. Colour profoundly affects our psychology, as architectural lighting and interior designers know well. Still, it also gives confusing signals – perfect for government department buildings. Red, for example, is aggressive but also represents love and says STOP: that's Defence. Green is GO, evokes nature but can be just greenwash: Environment. Yellow may be cheery, but can induce frustration and is the most demanding colour: obviously, the Revenue. That's Westminster sorted, let's order the paints.

But colours work most effectively in combination, as artists such as Edi Rama, for example, know. After he became mayor of Tirana, Albania, in 2000, he had loads of drab buildings painted and patterned in bright colours. Some were like dazzle ships, but brighter, drier and unarmed. The whole city perked up and arrived on the culture map. Well, Hans Ulbricht Obrist turned up.

Not only do we need to fruit up our cities with colour, we should also consider colours beyond the visible spectrum. Let's expand the palette. Surely either genetic engineering or an update on Google Glass will enable us to see in infra-red and ultra-violet sooner or later. But no need to bother with wavelengths shorter than UV. That's X-ray territory, and there's enough see-through stuff with the endless march of blocks of low-E glass.

And if we don't want any building colour to cheer us up on grey days, fine. We can always take Mick Jagger's advice and paint it black. ●

Trained physicist Herbert Wright is an architectural writer, historian and art critic

LAST SUPPER

With this column, the Flâneur bids adieu. He was defined by Baudelaire and Victor Fournel as a voyeur of the urban experience when Haussman's Paris was emerging. What with global money, bloating urban grain, digitalisation and now the rise of AI, DB05 and FOMO, psycho-geographical upheaval continues. Time to wander off. The Flâneur thanks his readership, including those who thought this was a cookery column. Sorry I never got round to that recipe for a tasty flan.

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RIBA J



A private public space

In a strictly regulated society, online activity lets Riyadh's population socialise

Homayoun Alemi

Two years ago, I arrived at Riyadh International Airport for the first time as a senior architect and urban designer. This was one of the richest countries in the world. The airport is domed with arabesque decorative stone and a big pool between some trees and long queues of immigrants seeking a share of the country's enormous prosperity.

On the way from the airport I saw people from all over the world, but few Saudis. The taxi driver told me they are too smart to come out in such heat. But it's more than that: they do not need to get out. They are socialising, not outside their homes but inside, on the web.

I reached my place, 35km away after an hour of driving through solid traffic; I had arrived on National Day. It was a happy festival with youngsters dancing on the jam packed road inside their four wheel drives. Little did I know this was the only day in the year that they were allowed this sort of freedom. The limits are all too real. I soon discovered that most of my colleagues sat there, as Mark Twain would say, 'like an envelope without any address on it'. I might have ended up the same had my wife not contacted a diplomat in Riyadh to look after me. So I entered the Dip-

A rare example of an urban past that's rapidly fading.



lomatic Club where films, concerts, plays, pub entertainment – all absent from Riyadh – kept me socially alive throughout the year.

The city seems more a representation of a utopia than a real place. Many buildings are empty and the only areas with any activity are the mosque during prayer, or the many shopping malls. The architecture is out of scale, aiming at an illusion of transparency with hints of de-constructivism as motorways cut through it. Huge empty plots and an abandoned airport occupy the middle of the city. However three areas are worth mentioning.

Al Moraba is a 60-acre square in the south where the old palace and new National Museum are. This is a rare green urban space where people come together and is one of the few public spaces outside the shopping malls.

The King Abdullah Financial District, or KAFD, is about 400 acres – home to 100 high-rise buildings with mixed use, high density, public transport (mono-rail), a green wadi dedicated to pedestrians and lots of entertainment and social places. I feel privileged to work on such an impeccable master plan and its various office and hotel projects – designed by some of the best architects in the world and due for completion by 2018. It sits apart from the city, a transplanted space dedicated to the future bureaucrats of international finance. A convivial urban space is the result of a lively social life; not vice versa. As a Western utopia in the east it only highlights the life missing in the rest of the city.

The original village of mud houses and palaces, Derayia, is being reconstructed and restored with Unesco guidance. These earthy ruins have touched me more deeply than the modern KAFD. Am I getting old; losing touch with the fast changing world?

The rest of the city is an urban sprawl fragmented by motorways; what this mostly reflects is a lack of real social life. In the words of one inhabitant, 'nothing is allowed; nothing is forbidden'. Everything is separated, assigned to unconnected 'sites' and 'tracts'.

Meanwhile the internet reinstates connections. One in two people have access to broadband. They meet, fall in love, have sex and exchange opinions online, where men and women can move freely. The 'online' is meeting the unmet needs of Riyadh – it removes the impetus to seek face-to-face contact. And so the urban space reflects this paucity of public life. The smart phone has replaced the centre. ●

Homayoun Alemi is director of Green Architecture

Many buildings are empty and the only areas with any activity are the mosque during prayer, or the many shopping malls

Island life diversifies

Cows, cash and now creative industries – Guernsey is nurturing its cultural side but still needs to build design ambition

Max Babbé

Most people think Guernsey is a tax haven for the super rich, a backwater tourist destination, or a windswept island covered in cows. These slightly unappealing views of the island keep a lot of people away. But with one of the lowest unemployment levels in Europe, low crime, a vigorous local economy and a warm climate, this affluent island is a very attractive place to live and work.

Shortly after establishing SOUP in Highbury, London, in 2012 with Patrick Walls and Jamie Le Gallez, we set up our Guernsey studio following a growing number of enquiries in the Channel Islands. After spending 12 years away from the place where I grew up and was educated, I was excited about the opportunities this little island had to offer.

Guernsey is a world-class financial centre, but a lively arts and cultural scene has

Guernsey's warm climate and burgeoning local economy make it a very attractive place to live and work.

helped attract some big names in the creative industries. Last year, a committee of business owners, including myself, formed a collective called Creative Industries Guernsey. We set it up to guide the local government in providing support for emerging digital industries, and to inspire young people to take up careers in applied, creative workplaces. It successfully piloted the Creative Academy, which provided teaching and studio-based work experience on the island. The group held a design conference in 2013, with speakers including postgraduate tutors Theo Lorenz and Professor Tanja Siems from the Architectural Association, who spoke about plans to bring their groundbreaking Interprofessional Studio course to the island next year.

Guernsey also nurtures entrepreneurial spirit with initiatives such as StartUp, which gives young people mentoring and advice for starting their own businesses. Plans for work hubs similar to Google Campus and for super-fast fibre connectivity are also being tabled, demonstrating that Guernsey is serious about diversifying its output.

Building types in Guernsey are quite varied. Outside of the main town, the architecture is a mixed bag of converted granite farmhouses, fisherman's cottages and chalet bungalows. The main town, St Peter Port, is a busy mix of office blocks, historic buildings and small houses, with few buildings more than six or seven storeys high. There seems to be a frustrating lack of ambition in the design of many of the buildings across the island. Dramatic 100m sheer cliffs, wide-open beaches on the west coast, and views of neighbouring islands provide obvious design cues, but sadly most new buildings are not taking advantage of their stunning settings.

When I first returned to the island, I was surprised to find the title of 'architect' was not recognised under Guernsey law, architects are still seen to have the master-craftsmen role. But we are more interested in collaborative methods of working between specialists and professionals, introducing construction methods and techniques developed in the London studio. We have also worked closely with the local building merchants to introduce new products and systems to our clients. We are thoroughly enjoying working in the Channel Islands, on a number of residential projects of various scales. ●

Max Babbé is strategic director of SOUP

IN NUMBERS

8
islands that make up the
Bailiwick of Guernsey

30 miles²
area

31
miles of coastline

65,000
population

350,000+
tourists each year

22
chartered architects

2,700
Guernsey cows on the
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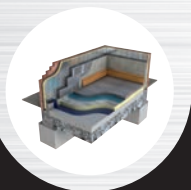
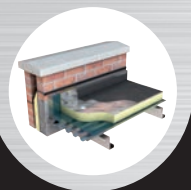
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INSULATION EXCELLENCE

Half term report

One year in, the president pauses to look at his progress



Stephen Hodder

As I conclude the first year of my presidency I wanted to report on progress with my key ambitions of creating more opportunities for our members, facilitating a closer relationship between academia and practice, and extending public outreach.

Opportunities for architects

Establishment of the RIBA for Clients initiative last year was a good start. A priority of the institute's 'Leading Architecture' strategy, it is designed to stimulate demand for architecture that delivers economic, social and environmental value. A client liaison group was set up to listen to clients' views and needs and then identify the tools required to successfully promote architectural services in these initial growth sectors: contractor-led procurement, housing, and retrofit. Early feedback is published in this and July's RIBA J, with more to follow, culminating in a comprehensive report at the end of my term.

We also established an RIBA Competitions Task Group to review competitive selection processes, evaluate European models and develop ideas to improve the design and team selection competitions in the UK. New guidance for clients and competitors will be available in the New Year.

Early in 2015, efforts to extend our public outreach will see a sister gallery opening at Mann Island in Liverpool

Our members

The Membership Review has been built on our largest ever consultation. As a result, a streamlined membership offer has been developed with the first phase, a new Fellowship category, set for launch early next year. I have endeavoured to engage with members in the regions, the Gulf, and Hong Kong, promoting the institute to Part 3 candidates in latter two. The UIA Congress and Assembly in Durban reaffirmed to me the institute's international profile.

At the government-initiated triennial review of Arb, the RIBA made a strong representation for protection of title and a minimal regulatory authority. An announcement is expected in the autumn.

The Education Review Group is looking at the structure of architectural education in the UK and will report at the end of 2014.

Outreach

This year saw the launch of the new website. With content that focusses on demonstrating the import of architecture through informative, sharable and thought provoking web articles, it demonstrates to the public the value of using a chartered architect. RIBA members will, I hope, benefit immeasurably from the soon to be re-launched 'Find an Architect'.

The new gallery at 66 Portland Place allows the RIBA's special collection to be displayed for the first time as part of wider strategy for the promotion of architecture to the public. The gallery opened in February with 'The Brits who Built the Modern World' exhibition, held in partnership with the BBC. Almost 30,000 visitors passed through the doors, and one million viewers watched each of the three part television series. The next exhibition, Ordinary Beauty: The Photography of Edwin Smith, opens in September. Early in 2015, this approach to extending our public outreach will see a sister gallery opening at Mann Island in Liverpool.

New premises were bought in 2014 in Portland Place and Newcastle to better support both the RIBA and RIBA Enterprises.

As I move towards the second year of my presidency there is still much to do but I am pleased with the steady progress the RIBA continues to make. As a practitioner I am used to delivery, and at the end of two years I want to ensure the RIBA has delivered too. ●

@HodderPRIBA

For a report of the UIA Congress see ribaj.com

COUNCIL MOVES

My congratulations to the following who have been elected to RIBA Council from September:

John Assael
Marie Braithwaite
Robert Brown
Russell Curtis
Ben Derbyshire
Robert Firth
Goh Chong Chia
Martin Hare
Daniel Leon
Julia McLoughlin
Nick Mills
Shahriar Nasser
Vinesh Pomal
Kerr Robertson
Flora Samuel
Kevin Singh
Carl Turner
Edward Williams

...and re-elected:

Nela de Zoysa
Meryl Townley
Walter Menteth
Peter Oborn
Owen O'Carroll
George Oldham
Mark Kemp

...and particularly to Jane Duncan who will succeed me as president in September 2015.

A tightly-knit creative gathering, Assemble is a practice that's definitely not put together in the conventional way

Words: Piers Taylor Portraits: Marco Micceri

Built to last

Very early in the conversation, Assemble says 'we never meant to start a practice'. In an age when many architects' currency is the rhetoric of the grandiose and self-serving big slogan, it's a relief to find a practice so loose and relaxed with itself. For an group purporting to have fallen into it, they're unusually inventive with reimagining practice.

Graphic designer Alan Fletcher of Pentagram once said that the vehicle of practice – the organization itself – was at least as important as any of his projects; this is certainly true of Assemble.

Curiously though, while in the 1960s reinventing working method was the norm, now every architect and his dog seems to want to chain themselves to a corporate office, rigid hierarchies and unthinking practice.

Things are different at Assemble's Sugarhouse Studios: they work out of a ramshackle light industrial building that is awaiting demolition just off Stratford High Street. They secured the building in the interim on a peppercorn rent; it is complete with large multi-purpose spaces, tools and site gear, a welding workshop and a pink table tennis table. It is full of discombobulated bits of previous temporary projects, a kitchen where they take it in turns to cook lunch every day and, critically, a yard used for gatherings, full-scale fabrication or just hanging out.

Assemble acknowledges the 'yard' as an important part of the cultural history of this area of London – they talk of how the shared artisan yard is the essential component, rather than buildings. They also acknowledge the import of their place of work, and its sheer

abundant space and the freedom it gives them to operate in a different way. Stonemasons, artists and carpenters also work in this building and the new adjacent Yardhouse Studios. Assemble's Lewis Jones says: 'We couldn't do this from a little office in Clerkenwell.'

The group is fascinated by the act and process of making – they have built many of their own projects including Folly for a Fly-over and the Yardhouse Studios, but not in a pious Arts and Crafts way of obsessing over technique and detail – they 'make' because it is fun. Nor do they fuss about the material control and autonomy it gives them; instead relishing the give and take of working as a team and the negotiations needed to construct a building. This is another aspect of their can-do mentality.

More important, perhaps, is their focus on people and place, and how buildings and the process of delivery can act as catalysts for change. I mention Jeremy Till's description of the consequence of buildings being more important than the buildings themselves, and Maria Lisogorskaya agrees – 'absolutely – otherwise you're limited to talking about what shape or colour a building is – and that gets pretty boring'. Unlike many of their contemporaries who grab at every opportunity of appointment, regardless of the politics behind it or wider agenda beyond formal design, Assemble have little interest in private commissions unless bigger issues can be explored.

They grew out of the recession and widespread disgruntlement when many architects were bemoaning the profession's increasing marginalisation. But while others



Assemble assembles

Back row from left:
Maria Lisogorskaya,
Lewis Jones,
Joe Halligan,
Jo Bibby,
Mathew Leung.

Front row from left:
James Binning,
Frances Edgerley,
Alice Edgerley,
Paloma Strelitz,
Amica Dall,
Anthony Meacock.

Away: Adam Willis,
Louis Schulz,
Jane Hall,
Giles Smith.



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did little to get work, Assemble generates its own – finding sites, raising funding, and, of course, building the projects itself. This is all part of opening up the dialogue of architecture, and a leap away from a culture where architects are becoming outmoded, limited to styling objects. Assemble is entrepreneurial in the best sense, in that the group started a business to create the environment in which to operate – rather than merely being available for work on other peoples' terms.

The practice is a group of friends that studied together at Cambridge; not all did architecture, which Lewis hails as a relief. He says of the non-architects: 'They can be so much more astute and direct than the rest of us who are loaded with the language of obfuscation and meaning with which architectural education indoctrinates you.'

Their first project was the 'Cineroleum' – a self-initiated scheme that transformed a derelict petrol station in Clerkenwell into a temporary cinema, demonstrating the potential to re-use the 4,000 empty petrol stations in the UK as new spaces for public use.

At the time, the Cineroleum was not even credited to Assemble – it didn't exist then. The practice now describes it as a project that grew from some casual conversations about what the friends could do during the summer of 2010. The project was conceived and constructed in an impromptu way. It captured a zeitgeist about working quickly and instinctively and making the most of what you have. Importantly, it also successfully bypassed the conventional po-faced architectural rhetoric that litters contemporary discourse.

The same is true with their next project – the Folly for a Flyover, also temporary – which appropriated a disused motorway undercroft in Hackney Wick for a new public space. Built by Assemble with 200 volunteers, for nine weeks that summer the space was a venue that attracted over 40,000 visitors. When the project was disassembled, the London Legacy Development Corporation invested in allowing the site to continue as a public space because of the Folly's success.

More recently, they built the nearby Yardhouse project for £85,000 – £285 per m² – with match funding from LLDC. Yardhouse grew out of the practice's desire to provide the cheapest possible creative workspace – which is, by and large, the most important ingredient in allowing creative industries and artists to flourish. Lewis calls the project a simple



Assemble at its self-built Yardhouse in Hackney Wick, complete with coloured concrete shingles made on site.

'decorated shed' and Assemble is delightfully unprecious about the fit-out which is left up to the tenants. Joe Halligan clearly takes pleasure in the way that the architecture has encouraged user occupation, saying gleefully: 'It's a bit shantytown now, but that's how we like it'. Music to my ears, as one who abhors the obsessive control most architects continue to have over how their buildings are occupied.

The relaxed way members talk about their work belies the fact that each project is perfectly realised, exquisitely beautiful and clever. Unlike much collaborative design, all Assemble's projects are pert, playful, singular and inventive. But they are savvy enough to realise that formal beauty is only a tiny part of the picture. Creating a building that exists only as an object would never be enough for them. And they don't moralise either – they are too busy getting on with what they do.

A big change, potentially, and a hint at a different direction is the recent win (through competition) for a new £1.8m gallery at Goldsmiths. The group seems remarkably unfazed by the leap in scale. Nor does it see the conventional procurement route as a hindrance, assuming it will still use its own yard for full-scale investigative fabrication. Even though the competition was won on the basis of a developed scheme, they talk about how Goldsmiths was hungry for a different way

of doing things, and how they support the practice's ethos. Assemble also seems excited about a move away from the pop-up, and don't want to become typecast by early projects.

The close-knit group of 12 plus part timers is pretty fixed. There are no interns or Part 1s; they can't imagine taking on anyone who wasn't one of the originals. Their ambition is not to be defined by an aspiration towards growth – a relief in a climate where architect's practices are often defined by size. They want to work in a way that is interesting and socially and culturally relevant, not world domination. I ask about the future and Joe says: 'What if we didn't grow, but stayed 12?'

Assemble has swiftly and skillfully formed a model for restating the relevance of architects. The last 20 years have been dominated by the globe-trotting starchitect as the aspirational role model for practitioners, and even those who started out as freer collectives are now rigid and corporate, often with multiple offices. The recession is usually the reason they give for having to straightjacket themselves into becoming flunkies for straight-laced clients. Assemble on the other hand is showing that recession is not a reason to abandon an idealistic modus operandi, but an opportunity to develop it. Many practices start off as principled and experimental, but few stay like it. Assemble, however, just might. ●

Lasting impression

Unsung perhaps, but Edwin Smith's photographs have spread deep enough into the national psyche to evoke unconscious familiarity

Words: Eleanor Young

Are Edwin Smith's photographs truly nostalgic or do they just look like that 40, 50, 60 years later when those captured moments are gone, asks architect Tom Emerson? Emerson, of 6A, is one of a small number giving their views on this unsung hero of post war photographer in *Ordinary Beauty*, an exhibition on Smith opening the RIBA's 66 Portland Place on 10 September.

Smith made his way into thousands of homes through the Shell Guides, English Parish Churches and English Cottage Gar-

dens. His work has a sort of familiarity. The Eugene Atget-influenced reportage of small children in streets and hatted men in markets, loading meat (or inspecting hats), looks like you must have seen it before, perhaps alongside some diary extracts gathered by Mass Observation research project – which also valued the everyday. Here are the women working in industry or at home, the wind whipping away the moisture even as the housewife hangs the washing on a bleak Scottish hillside (below).

Writer Gillian Darley recalls searching for 'Edwin Smith gardens', the very particular look of an unreconstructed vernacular cottage and a mixture of vegetables and flowers, having studied his book on the subject. These bright photos, once Brand Edwin Smith, barely appear in the exhibition. Taste changes, as Darley's personal tastes have. 'I realise I don't like Smith in colour,' she admits now.

In one of the rare shots he took of a modernist building – Connell, Ward and Lucas' 66 Frognal in north London – Darley points



EDWIN SMITH/RIBA LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION (4)

Below left A record of times past: clothes lines, Glencaple, near Dumfries (1954).

Below centre Nostalgia and record sit side by side in Smith's work, as here: the cottage looking out over its working landscape of the newly ploughed field, Holkam, Norfolk (1970).

Below right The book *English Parish Churches* took Smith's photographs into many homes. Here St Lawrence, Didmarton, Gloucestershire, is beautifully composed (1961).

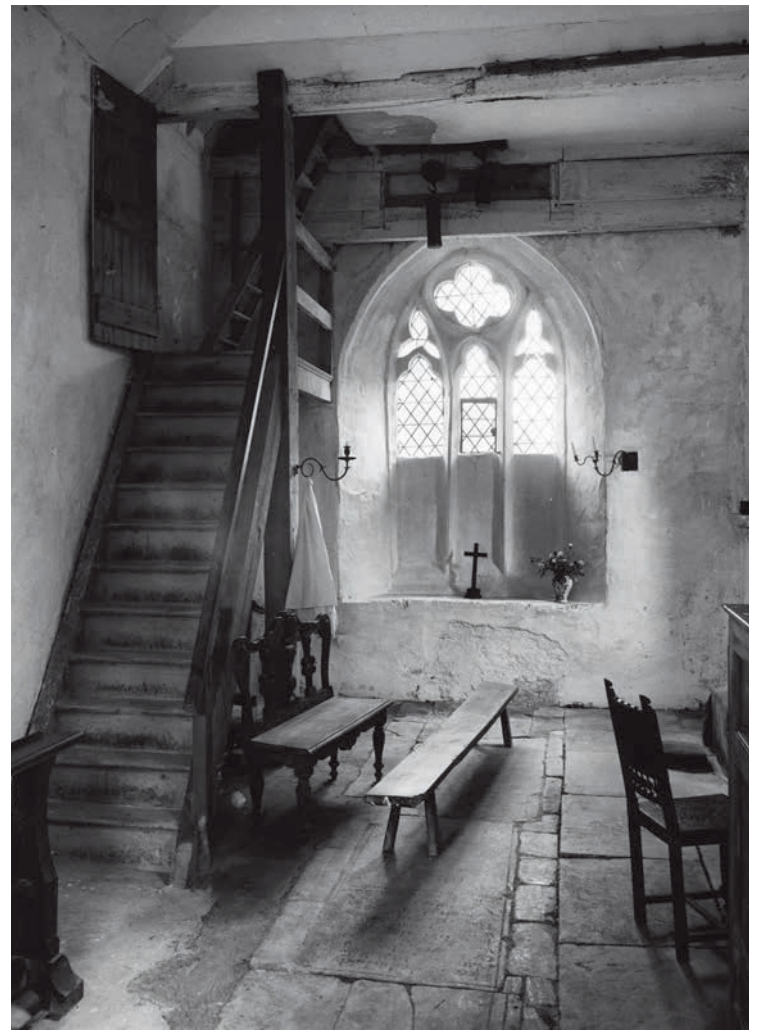
to the dilapidated picturesque framing of its flat planes, fringed with branches and an unhinged gate alongside. Is it that he puts his imprint even on modernism with its sunny photography or that he always picked up such little details? After all, he imbued wig models on the high street with the same classical dignity that he shot iconic marble statues.

Instead, it is the monochrome photographs and their perfectly pitched tones that draw viewers in with evocations of moments and places, whether from a bird's eye view of

the dock at Newcastle or the nuanced composition of a corner of a tiny parish church in Didmarton, Gloucestershire (below right). Playwright Alan Bennett discovered Smith through his pictures of churches, and is also interviewed for the show. The churches were part of a stream of interest in the British vernacular, much of which was disappearing before Smith's post war eyes. He gives tumbledown cottages a Constable prettiness, but in black and white they suggest more record than postcard (though he had a series of these

in his time) – which is essential to the way we understand them now, with a tinge of sadness for a way of life that has gone (below left).

Perhaps the purest test of nostalgia versus photographic art is proven by his masterfully composed and lit photograph of Wells Cathedral's preserved but worn steps. Darley imagines he must have waited and waited for the light to show the hundreds of years of footfall. 'He behaves as if he is a landscape photographer in buildings. It's amazing,' says Emerson. 'It becomes a hillside not a staircase.' →





Left The staircase becomes a hillside, steps leading to the chapter house, Wells Cathedral, Somerset (1968).

Ordinary Beauty:
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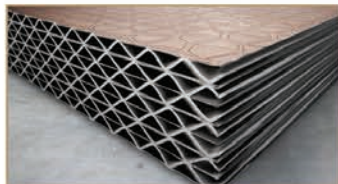


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Latin rhythms

Informal settlements have become the prevailing mode for housing the poor in much of Latin America, with minimal government input

Douglas Murphy

Towards the end of July, the government of Venezuela began to evict the residents of Torre David, an unfinished office tower in downtown Caracas, which over the last decade had been occupied by thousands of families squatting up to 28 floors in the air. The tower had become an emblem of radical, ground-up solutions to housing the poor of South America. Its self-organised community offered a tiny fragment of a better alternative to the discredited world of state-provided housing or the hyper-dense informal settlements encrusting the edges of Latin American cities.

Torre David has significance for writer Justin McGuirk, who, with photographer Iwan Baan and Swiss-Venezuelan design firm Urban Think Tank, won the Golden Lion at the 2012 Venice Biennale with an exhibition on the tower and its unlikely residents. Seen one way, the tower represented

Atrium at Torres David in Caracas, Venezuela, an unfinished 28-storey office building occupied by thousands of families.



a new form of experimental urbanism, born of desperation but signalling ways in which worldwide urban problems might begin to be solved. But the fascination of designers for the tower and its surreal spatial juxtapositions ran the risk of minimising the hardship of the people who lived there. In his new book, *Radical Cities*, McGuirk interrogates these issues further, looking at various different kinds of experimental activist practice across Latin America, and asking whether they are a model for the future of urbanism.

He sets the scene with various infamous examples of Corbusian planning from the post-war era, before the state lost control of housing. McGuirk's journey then takes him through all manner of radical approaches to urbanism. From the settlements constructed by and for the social movement Tupac Amaru in Argentina, surreal 'luxury' towns built by their occupants; to the half-built houses of Alejandro Aravena's firm Elemental in Chile, we see attempts to create new innovative housing for the poor. We encounter various kinds of 'urban acupuncture': the cable cars that have begun to stitch the informal settlements back into the fabric of cities such as Caracas, Medellin and Rio; or the squares and public buildings that attempt to formalise and render civic the barrios and favelas. We are also invited to consider radical methods of local governance, such as the performative mayoral strategies of Antanas Mockus in Bogota, or the San Diego academic Teddy Cruz leading politicians across the US-Mexico border through a sewage culvert.

A lively reportage style and a focus on human stories sets *Radical Cities* apart from much architectural polemic. Whether he is interviewing local personalities, politicians, designers or residents, McGuirk lets various voices make their own arguments.

McGuirk believes the solutions to the problems of urban inequality are only going to come from ingenuity, creativity and a disregard for institutions. *Radical Cities* ask what role the state can possibly play in the amelioration of urban crises moving into the future. Whether a system where small groups of charismatic activists exploit their skills and privilege for the common good can lead to change of the necessary scale is a debate that needs to be had. *Radical Cities* is an exciting, thought-provoking contribution. ●

Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture is published by Verso.

Fascination for the tower and its surreal spatial juxtapositions risked minimising the hardship of the people who lived there



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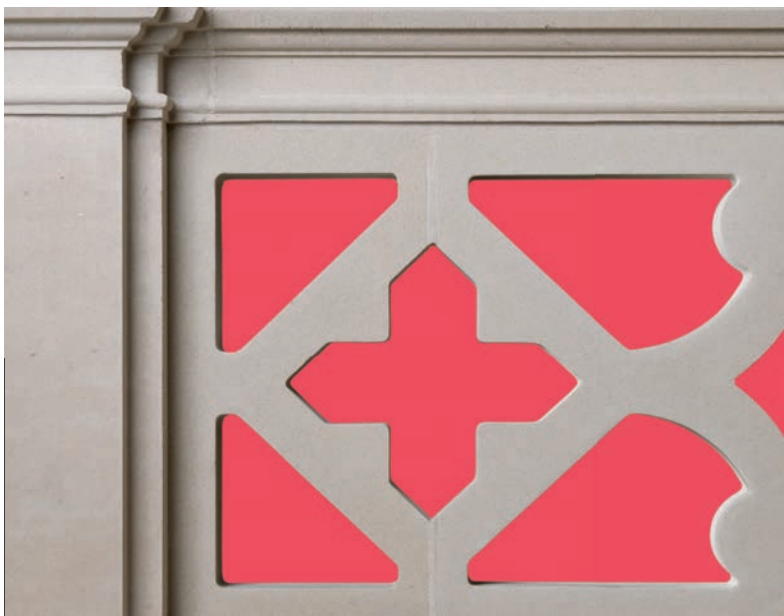
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Sir Richard MacCormac

1938 – 2014

'Architectural lion', essayist, RIBA president and raconteur whose passions for the aesthetic, Soane, and life in general informed and enlivened his work



Richard MacCormac, past president of the RIBA and founder of the London Practice of MacCormac, Jamieson & Prichard has died after a prolonged battle with throat cancer. England has lost an architectural lion.

Educated at Westminster School, Cambridge and the Bartlett, he had a hugely infectious sense of humour

and masterful skill as a raconteur. From Cambridge, he never lost a fascination for form and geometry in the generation of his buildings.

Housing was his first preoccupation and with Leslie Martin and others he challenged the orthodoxy that urban density could be achieved only by tower blocks. His extraordinary snaking housing project at Duffryn was the first of many demonstrations of his theories; a fascination with creating dense housing without losing the garden continued to the end of his life where he was developing 'an urban tool kit'.

His partnership with Peter Jamieson, later joined by David Prichard, quickly started to mine a rich seam of work in the Cambridge and Oxford colleges. His first competition win at Worcester College, the Sainsbury Building, is still perhaps his most recognisable image. Jutting into the college lake it appears to be a cascade of what he called 'roofed rooms' arranged around the then revolutionary concept of kitchens as 'social heartbeats' of groups of students, the whole being generated by his mastery of tartan grid planning. Dubbed by his friend Peter Davey, then editor of the Architectural Review, 'romantic pragmatism' Richard never felt entirely comfortable with either word. Always acknowledging the sources of his inspiration, he transformed them into his architecture. A film by the Royal Academy, of which he was a leading light, explains how the ideas of Palladio came to influence the disposition of the Cable and Wireless headquarters through the essay by Colin Rowe and Richard's love of the English country house and its relationship to landscape.

After Worcester College the office was on a roll with no fewer than a dozen competition victories in Oxbridge

quads and courts. He became the most prolific post war architect in both cities. Mostly variations on a theme, they were never formulaic, each one produced after the most intense reading of that particular site and its history. A lifelong love affair with Soane (he became a trustee of the museum) infused his work, culminating in the tour de force 'Garden Quadrangle' for St John's College, Oxford, with its dreaming towers of student rooms surmounting a glimpsed Piranesian underworld of auditorium and dining room under Soanian saucer domes. Arguably his most poetic and exquisite project was the boat-inspired Chapel at Fitzwilliam College, shortly followed by the Ruskin archive library at Lancaster University.

In the 1990s the office grew with prestigious commissions for Southwark tube station, commercial office buildings in the City and the Wellcome Wing of the Science Museum. Much has been written about the BBC, our own version of the tragedy of Sydney Opera House. Richard saw the BBC as a great national institution, with, like the Catholic Church, influence throughout the world and he wanted to build a St Peter's as its newsroom. But, unlucky with his pope, he was thrown into a pit of project managers, an irreconcilable clash of cultures with the inevitable result. A knighthood in 2001 was poor compensation.

If all Richard's buildings turn to dust he would still leave us another treasured resource – his essay writing, of which 30 are included in the summation of his work 'Building Ideas', published four years ago. His knowledge of all aspects of architecture, planning, construction, history, art, philosophy was immense; his architecture from the period when modernism was redefined is consequently some of the richest and most fascinating in the country.

Richard separated from his wife Sue Landen and later fell in love with his Spitalfields neighbour Jocasta Innes, whose kitchen played a role in his gregarious lifestyle for the next 30 years. He transformed his house next door into a homage to the Soane Museum and connected the two properties via a secret pivoting fireplace. He continued designing right to the end, sketching an extension to his own Maggie's Centre in Cheltenham from his hospice bed.

Tragically, his younger son Luke died suddenly at school aged 10. He is survived by his elder son William. ●

Richard Murphy

A longer version of this obituary can be read on ribaj.com

In Memoriam

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ALLAN IAIN MCEWAN
ELECTED 1986, GLASGOW,
LANARKSHIRE

HAMISH JAMES YOUNG SIMPSON
ELECTED 1988, DUNFERMLINE, FIFE

WILFRED GEORGE RYMILLS
ELECTED 1946, WITNEY,
OXFORDSHIRE

CLIFFORD ALWYN RUTHERFORD
ELECTED 2003, KESWICK, CUMBRIA

BERNARD JOHN TANCOCK
ELECTED 1952, LONDON

VERNON WILLIAM CROFTS
ELECTED 1957, WOLVERHAMPTON

EDWIN JOBLING
ELECTED 1960, ASHTEAD, SURREY

ROY LATHAM
ELECTED 1958, FAVERSHAM, KENT

JEAN MARY MACDONALD
ELECTED 1948, LONDON

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ELECTED 1954, LEICESTER

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ELECTED 1961, OTTERY ST MARY,
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ELECTED 1964, MAIDSTONE, KENT

DAVID JOHN BERRY
ELECTED 1964, LEDBURY,
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RICHARD MACCORMAC
ELECTED 1968, LONDON

ALEXANDER PETERS BORRIE
ELECTED 1970, INVERNESS

GEORGE EDWARD O'DELL
ELECTED 1980, BEAUMARIS,
GWYNEDD

PETER JOHN SQUIRES
ELECTED 1981, EAST MOLESEY,
SURREY

To inform the RIBA of the death of a member, please email membership.services@riba.org with details of next of kin

Exchange

Formal points

Reading the August issue of the RIBA J it is interesting to dig into ideas of collaboration in design projects, particularly with reference to two of the buildings illustrated: Hauser & Wirth gallery by Laplace & Co and benjamin + beauchamp; and Clark Art Institute by Tadao Ando, Selldorf Architects and Gensler.

The former seems more successful if one values context, scale and materiality over reductive formalism, which is always an inadequate approach when complex and subtle programmatic requirements are presented to the design team. I am not suggesting that the Ando/Selldorf/Gensler approach at Clark Art Institute is simply formalism, but the building and landscape 'connections' as evident in the site plan and photographs, are not as seamless as suggested.

Interestingly, RSHP is listed as the sole designer of the British Museum's WCEC, but it is the 'uncharacteristically conventional' approach to massing and elevations combined with 'loose fit' but dynamic interiors which show the practice's intelligent interpretation of programme and urban context. No mere formalism here either.

(Mr) Lindsey Dawe

Driven to change

When my parents married in 1932 they bought their new terrace house for £300. At that time my father was paid £3 a week – so a two-years purchase. My wife and I bought our first (a temporary) house for £400 30-odd years later. Not much of a house but I was earning about £20 a week, so no difficulty there. Ten years later I was designing and building small new detached single-storey houses for between £1800 and £2000 – we lived in one of them for 15 years.

House prices have since become quite



ridiculous, and I don't understand how the discrepancy between wages and house prices has become so huge. But if we built our cars as we do our houses (by carting raw materials into a field and starting to shape and assemble them), what sort of a car would be produced, and at what cost?

House building techniques are prehistoric. Houses were built by sticking blocks of burned clay together with slop 5000 years ago – just as we do today. How many other artefacts are still made as they were 5000 years ago? (Yes, the land value is different and should be separated from the house and held on a long lease).

It is not just a matter of moving construction from site to factory; the whole concept of what a house could or should be is hugely overdue for reconsideration. The definition of its function is a good place to start. What do you want the house to do? Should it feed, clothe, clean and protect you? Clean and renew itself? Expand or contract?

If we could carefully and imaginatively define function, we could see how that target could best be achieved. But this is hugely difficult; think of someone from the days of horse-drawn vehicles trying to imagine what a car should be like!

I largely blame my own profession which has and does shamefully neglect its responsibilities in this matter. Perhaps a well-funded competition for defining the function of a modern house might be a good start? And if that is a success then a follow-up contest to show how it could be economically produced (for less than that of what is still the more complex artefact, the car).

And remember, this product would be exportable across the world – just like cars.

This is a very real and important opportunity for someone with drive, resources and imagination to improve the lot of mankind – and make themselves enormous amounts of money in the process!

Arthur Quarmby, Holme

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@RIBAJ on Richard MacCormac's life - I drank w him in #Palestine. Shared a hotel room in Ramallah; wise, hilarious



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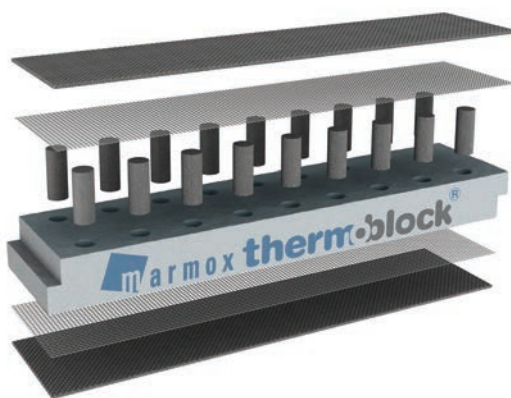
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The building is no longer the end-product

Can the construction industry embrace the concept of the circular economy, where materials are continually reused? **Pamela Buxton** joins a round table of experts to consider the issues



'A revolution in attitudes is still needed - but this can happen.'

Matthew Taylor, chief executive, RSA

Apple last year launched a recycle and reuse service for its products in the UK that guarantees responsible recycling plus money back if the item still has some value. This February, the pop star Pharrell Williams unveiled a range of jeans made out of the plastic waste clogging up our oceans.

Where are the equivalent effective and alluring solutions for the built environment? How can developers, designers and users be encouraged to engage in fundamental changes to their processes and habits to enable truly sustainable practices? And how can concepts such as the circular economy and cradle-to-cradle (C2C) be best communicated?

These were some of the issues aired in the Armstrong round table debate Sustaining Construction – Green Strategies for the Built World, chaired by RSA chief executive Matthew Taylor with an invited panel of design, sustainability and materials experts.

First, some definitions might be helpful to navigate the terminology and jargon surrounding the subject: instead of the conventional linear model of take, make, consume and dispose, the model for a circular economy is restorative, with materials designed to circulate in a continual cycle of production, recovery and remanufacture with their economic value preserved or

enhanced. Cradle-to-cradle (C2C) design can be thought of as the practical application of this concept, a method of supporting design that has a positive effect on the environment and society. In doing so, it embraces the design of products that can be recycled, uses increasing amounts of renewable energy and embraces local diversity.

These are complex issues, not helped by the profusion of green accreditation schemes and all-round greenwash that muddy the waters when it comes to thinking of what constitutes a 'good' sustainable product. There are more than 100 self-certification and labelling schemes on the market according to Jeremy Sumeray, who is leading the C2C programme at Armstrong, which has pioneered ceiling recycling. The variety of labelling schemes makes it much harder for specifiers to make informed choices. C2C has the advantage, however, of being a relatively easy and engaging concept to convey, which appeals to specifiers' and users' personal values as a pathway to good. It also, he said, 'fundamentally forces us to think about what and why we're designing'.

Clash of concepts

Sometimes circularity and some aspects of sustainability, such as adaptability, can appear to clash, according to Sophie Thomas, project leader of the RSA's recent The Great Recovery Project. This identified four different design models for the circular economy: designing for longevity; leasing; reuse in manufacture; and material recovery.

'Do you design space for adaptability and longevity, or for recycling?' she asked.

But there does appear to be a sea change in attitudes away from the linear model of production, as demonstrated by firms such as Apple, according to Duncan Baker-Brown.

'That's what we should be doing with our buildings,' he said. 'More and more people understand we're in a linear model and need to do something about it.' But he remains concerned at the high level of building demolition rather than reuse.

Baker-Brown has recently, with students from the University of Brighton, designed the Waste House, the first permanent building to be designed from waste, including discarded plastic from construction sites.

'I say there is no such thing as waste, just things that are in the wrong place,' he said. 'The clever money is on avoiding buying new stuff and avoiding throwing things away.'

The very nature of most buildings is a



'There is no such thing as waste, just things that are in the wrong place'

Duncan Baker Brown, director BBM Sustainable Design



Could technology be harnessed to make C2C concepts appealing in a non-technical way to those who occupy the buildings?

Richard Francis, director, Monomoy Company



'Will building component recycling lead to the adoption of a radically different, more magpie, aesthetic?'

Cany Ash, founder partner, Ash Sakula Architects



'We rely on government too much to lead the way.'

The answer is in our hands'

Jeremy Sumeray, senior segment manager, sustainability, Armstrong Building Products



'We need to design backwards and learn to speak the same language as those recycling building parts'

Vincent van der Meulen, partner Kraaijvanger



It is imperative to challenge the idea that sustainable buildings necessarily require more capital cost
David Cash, chairman, BDP



Buildings are very complex, with thousands of component products, and materials with different lifespans, different ownership rules, different warranties
Nitesh Magdani, sustainability director, BAM



'Do you design space for adaptability and longevity, or for recycling?'
Sophie Thomas, co-director, RSA



'A major problem is knowing what's in a building so that you can know what the material is and what grade it is'
Ian Hunter, director, Materials Council



'Industry and government don't have these conversations [about investment and innovation in sustainability]'
Neelum Mohammed, senior sustainability consultant, CBRE

challenge for C2C processes. 'Buildings are very complex, with thousands of component products, and materials with different lifespans, different ownership rules, different warranties,' said Nitesh Magdani of BAM.

Simplicity of design is to be applauded. 'There's a lot to be said for keeping things simple on all levels,' said BDP's David Cash, who like Baker-Brown also called for a greater emphasis on building reuse.

C2C will require a complete rethink in how designers and architects design, since the building or object is no longer the end product. Instead, there is no end product, rather a continual loop of use, reclaim and reuse. It's clear that far more thought needs to go into designing for disassembly, whether for a fridge or an office block. Clearly designers are going to have to engage far more with the nitty gritty and, as Cary Ash puts it, with the mundane.

The RSA's Sophie Thomas evocatively described visiting a fridge recycling plant and wishing the designers were there to witness the huge physical efforts needed to disassemble their fridges – some as little as six months old – into components and materials that could be fed back into the design process.

Vincent van der Meulen, who is at the forefront of C2C in the Netherlands, talked about the need to design 'backwards' with disassembly and reuse in mind, and for architects to learn how to speak the same language as those who end up dealing with reusing the building parts.

Problems of identification

Several participants raised the issue of identification when it comes to dealing with building materials and components after their first use is over.

'A major problem is knowing what's in a building so that you can know what the material is and what grade it is,' said materials expert Ian Hunter.

Better identification would facilitate more efficient reuse, he argued, especially if you want the material to retain its value.

Sophie Thomas raised the idea of a 'reverse BIM' with digitally coded materials so that 50 years or so later, people would be able to understand what they were dealing with. Duncan Baker-Brown agreed that this barcode approach would be particularly helpful for retrofits.

'We need to not see the building as a monolith but [instead] understand the layers behind it,' he said. He also favoured the use



PARTICIPANTS:

Matthew Taylor, chief executive, RSA (chair)
Jeremy Sumeray, senior segment manager, sustainability, Armstrong Building Products
Neelum Mohammed, senior sustainability consultant, CBRE

Cany Ash, founder partner, Ash Sakula Architects

David Cash, chairman, BDP

Vincent van der Meulen, partner Kraaijvanger

Richard Francis, director, Monomoy Company

Duncan Baker Brown, director BBM Sustainable Design

Nitesh Magdani, sustainability director, BAM

Ian Hunter, director, Materials Council

Sophie Thomas, co-director, RSA

Left The panel chew the cud of sustainable futures beside the 'green wall' at Clerkenwell's Portal restaurant.

of 'ReIY' type networks to find new homes for building materials – even more vital now timber can no longer be consigned to landfill.

Another important strategy raised for C2C was the potential of designing for leasing, where manufacturers take back their products at the end of their lifespan. These already include carpet tile manufacturers, which offer customers a leasing option and recycling the product at the end of its life.

Matthew Taylor asked what business models would encourage more sustainable practices, and wondered whether a top-down approach was the answer.

Jeremy Sumeray advocated a 'one mind at a time' step-by-step approach with leadership from within the business, though not necessarily from the very top. Though slow, this can be a really powerful way of altering practices at a time when, he said, the market is looking for things to change.

It is also imperative, said BDP's David Cash, to challenge the idea that sustainable buildings necessarily require more capital cost. To the contrary, agreed Jeremy Sumeray, low-impact materials can often be low cost. And the more we learn how to reuse, the less new raw materials we'll need to buy, said Duncan Baker-Brown.

Cany Ash commented that the design community had less power than it used

to in the procurement process. Architects certainly do have to work hard to convince clients of the merits of a more sustainable design, as Vincent van der Meulen related, describing a project where he managed to reinstate sustainability elements that had previously been cut, by making a business case of the savings these measures would bring over 40 years.

Government's role

What of the government's role in promoting more sustainable processes? Several of the participants felt there had been a backtracking and loss of momentum in the last few years in terms of investment and innovation in sustainability.

'Industry and government don't have those conversations,' said CBRE's Neelum Mohammed. 'The confidence has gone.'

BDP's David Cash felt that if the voting public wanted to see sustainability high on the political agenda, then it would happen. But Matthew Taylor felt the public didn't want too much noise about sustainability – they just wanted the government to get on with it.

Richard Francis of Monomoy Company wondered if technology could be harnessed to make C2C concepts appealing in a non-technical way to those who occupy the buildings, perhaps by using digital

technology to map internal spaces and their sustainability credentials.

Sumeray generally felt that it was up to business to take the lead and work harder to promote C2C.

'We rely on government too much to lead the way. The answer is in our hands... If we could see more leadership in the UK on developing the circular economy and circularity, it would bring some momentum,' he said.

It's clear that a revolution in attitudes is still needed. But this can happen, as proved by the recent legislation and shift in mindset towards smoking, said Matthew Taylor.

Maybe the answer, he speculated, is a combination of many approaches rather than one, in order to facilitate the massive change in thinking needed to encourage more circular practices – not only top-down regulation but innovation and creativity and a philosophical change that can win over both hearts and minds.

Perhaps the last word should go to Duncan Baker-Brown, who quoted US sustainability expert Neil Chambers: 'If people say [sustainability] will cost more, get them to try harder. And if they can't, get someone who can... There are people who know how to do it and people who don't. The ones who know will be the ones making the money.'



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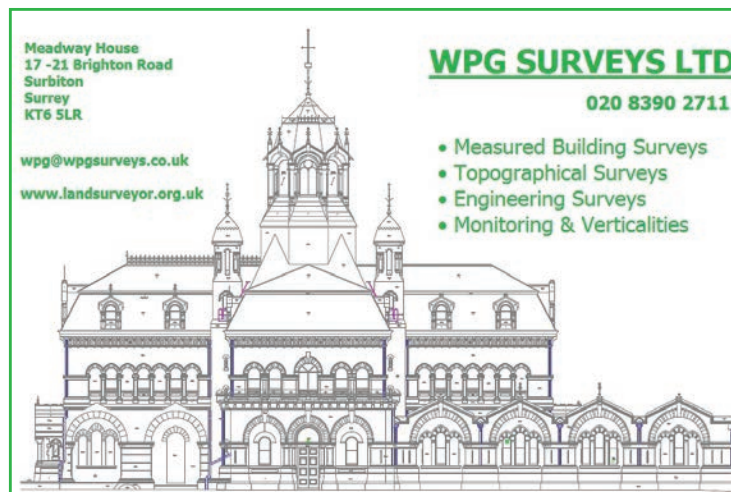
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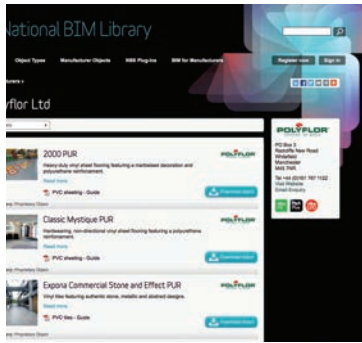
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Polyflor BIM Objects now available

Polyflor, the UK's commercial and residential vinyl flooring specialist, is pleased to announce that it is now offering Building Information Modelling (BIM) objects for a selection of its best-selling flooring ranges, available to download free of charge via the Polyflor website and www.nationalbimlibrary.com.

As part of the first phase of Polyflor's BIM Object development the objects have been developed in all leading software formats including Revit Architecture, Bentley AECOsim, Nametschek Vectorworks, Graphisoft ArchiCAD & IFC.

[w: www.polyflor.com](http://www.polyflor.com)



New website reveals benefits of concealment

A new product website has been created by Samuel Heath to provide detailed information on the company's ranges of Perko, Perkomatic and Powermatic concealed door closers.

The sleek site will be useful to anyone involved in the specification and installation of door closers.

[w: www.concealeddoorclosers.com](http://www.concealeddoorclosers.com)



GEZE UK appointment makes specifying easier for architects

Leading door and window control system manufacturer, GEZE UK, has strengthened its specification team with the appointment of Richard Richardson-Derry.

Richard, who has 20-years' experience in the construction industry, joins GEZE UK as Specification Manager for the Midlands and North region. He will be responsible for providing the company's clients with specification and technical support across its entire product range.

[t: 01543 443000](tel:01543443000) [w: www.geze.co.uk](http://www.geze.co.uk)



AluK window and door systems aid Shakespeare House's new lease of life

AluK window and door systems have been specified for the regeneration of Shakespeare House in Hackney, London, where 24 flats were converted into 18 high quality apartments. Architect bptw partnership installed additional windows on the housing block to increase natural light levels, using AluK's 58BW window system as well as its 58BD and GT55 NI door systems on all the existing and proposed new elevations from ground to fifth floor level.

[w: www.aluk.co.uk](http://www.aluk.co.uk)



Survey shows importance of safety

Supermarkets, hospitals, stations and schools have all featured on a list of places Brits would consider suing should they take a tumble while on the premises. To help prevent slips Tarkett is expanding its industry Safetred safety range with two new collections, Safetred Ion and Safetred Aqua.

The Safetred Ion collection is available in Linen and Contrast. Linen is available in 14 colours with a woven pattern effect designed to be more homely. Contrast is a decorative, three dimensional, multi flake effect safety floor suitable for entrances and corridors and available in six colours.

Tarkett's Safetred Aqua range has an improved specification that includes specially designed top embossing, as well as aluminium oxide particles. It's suitable for barefoot and shod and for use in wet and dry areas, so is ideal for the leisure, healthcare, aged-care and hospitality industry.

[t: 01622 854 040](tel:01622854040)
[e: uksales@tarkett.com](mailto:uksales@tarkett.com)



LEVOLUX BLOOMS IN EARLS COURT

Lillie Square, one of London's largest residential developments, is being showcased in an exciting new Marketing Suite, wrapped in a custom screening solution by Levolux. The solution comprises perforated aluminium panels, backed with tensioned fabric. The perforations create an image of Lily flowers that is illuminated by integral LED units at night.

[t: 020 8863 9111](tel:02088639111) [e: info@levolux.com](mailto:info@levolux.com)
[w: www.levolux.com](http://www.levolux.com)



UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ZERO CARBON HOUSE

Saint-Gobain's collaborative new-build project with The University of Nottingham could answer the demands on the UK's housing stock. The Nottingham H.O.U.S.E (Home Optimising the Use of Solar Energy) launched at the University Park Campus, with Zero Carbon Hub and Build Offsite in attendance to help mark the occasion. Saint-Gobain worked with the University of Nottingham assisting a group of Architecture and Engineering students to create the vision of a viable starter home for the UK market.

[w: www.saint-gobain.co.uk](http://www.saint-gobain.co.uk)



VERTIGO - First fibre cement slates designed for vertical application.

Marley Eternit has launched an innovative new architectural facades system, specifically developed in response to the growing trend towards using fibre cement slates across the whole building envelope.

The new Vertigo range has been specifically designed for vertical application, enabling continuity between roof and facade and helping architects to express their creativity like never before through inspirational designs.

Available in eight different colours from blue/black to terracotta, the new range of Vertigo slates offers multiple possibilities for both new build and refurbishment projects. The fibre cement slates come in three different product types, including two types of nail holed systems specifically created for use on the facade, with invisible fixings that create both a modern panel and broken bond application.

As part of Marley Eternit's fibre cement range, Vertigo boasts superb sustainability credentials, helping to achieve environmental credits with a 'very good' BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing accreditation and its own Environmental Product Declaration (EPD).

[t: 01283 722588](tel:01283722588)
[w: www.marleyeternit.co.uk/vertigo](http://www.marleyeternit.co.uk/vertigo)

Guiding you through the 'BIM wash'.

With the latest statistics showing over half of construction professionals are now using BIM and 93% expect to be using it by 2016*, Marley Eternit has launched an online tutorial showing how to find, download and use BIM objects for its range of clay roof tiles.

The short video, available at www.youtube.com/MarleyEternitLtd, gives a quick tour of the company's free online BIM Space and an overview of the Autodesk Revit files available for its range of clay plain tiles, as well as demonstrating how they can be applied to the user's own designs.

Marley Eternit's BIM Space is free and once registered, all users are given instant access to the full range of facades and fibre cement and clay roofing BIM objects. The video demonstrates how easy it is to download the Autodesk Revit files, which contain product data along with image files to create high quality 3D renderings of the roof. The tutorial then shows users how to transfer the files into the building design, so the roof structure can be built 'virtually'.

Marley Eternit's BIM objects are available for free at

w: www.marleyeternit.co.uk/BIM



New Armstrong CPD is fit for online

A RIBA-approved online CPD designed to help specifiers overcome the design challenges of fit-out projects has been launched by Armstrong Ceilings. "Fit-out solutions for Category A and B ceilings," meets RIBA's core curriculum criteria of designing and building (design, construction, technology and engineering) at general awareness level. It details how specifying the correct ceiling and wall solution can help achieve performance requirements, user comforts and sustainability.

w: www.armstrong-ceilings.co.uk



H+H LEADS THE WAY IN BIM FOR AIRCRETE

H+H is leading the way in BIM within the aircrete sector and remains the only aircrete block manufacturer in the UK to offer downloadable BIM objects. 3,500 H+H BIM objects have been downloaded since they launched on the National BIM Library in Sept 2013. Celcon Plus Blocks are the most popular, followed by Foundation Blocks, Jumbo Blocks and Super Strength Blocks. The comprehensive range is also available on the H+H website.

w: www.hhcelcon.co.uk

Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems

Comar Architectural Aluminium Systems have completed a new build for Tesco in Swaffham, Norfolk. Comar 6EFT stick build curtain walling and Comar 5Pi ECO casement windows were specified for this project. Comar 6EFT provides a capped curtain walling solution and offers architects the opportunity to maximise large glazed areas as it has the slimmest sightlines available making it the perfect choice for the glazed facade of this Tesco store.

w: www.comar-alu.co.uk



Altro Whiterock, available from IDS, is perfect for school canteen refurb.

Altro Whiterock provides a decorative, practical and hygienic solution for a wide range of catering applications, as well as education, healthcare, retail and office environments. Benefitting from a watertight, seamless surface Altro's hygienic surface is certified to all EU hygiene standards. IDS offer total flexibility on delivery quantities from one sheet upwards and products are stocked and available in 24-48 hours from twelve branches nationwide.

w: www.idsurfaces.co.uk

Twyford Bathrooms invests in Showroom.

Twyford Bathrooms has invested £150k in a brand new showroom at its Alsager plant, near Stoke on Trent. The investment is part of parent company Sanitec's strategic plans to raise the profile of the Twyford brand and coincides with the upcoming launch of major new ceramic and shower enclosure ranges. It also showcases the five design collections in the luxury brand Keramag Design, including the recently launched Xeno² collection and luxury freestanding Mattis bath.

Visits are by appointment by emailing

e: reception@twyfordbathrooms.



LATERAL PLUS LED PENDANT LUMINAIRE

Lateral Plus is an impressive lighting element, designed to effectively illuminate a space in a natural, unobtrusive way. The innovative binary lightguide system transforms transparent glass into a non-glare, radiant light surface with superior light quality. The uncompromisingly minimalist luminaire structure delivers an astonishing amount of light, distributed via an extremely wide, indirect luminous flux. The result is comfortable, yet focussed illumination.

w: www.trilux.com/lateralplus

NFRC spearheads 'torch-on' membranes safety campaign.

The NFRC has launched a 'Responsible Specification Checklist' in a bid to reduce the number of fires caused by the inappropriate use of gas torches on flat roofs.

The safety campaign has been created to alert roofing contractors, architects and specifiers to the potential dangers of torch-on membranes. Endorsed by HSE, the new checklist continues the 'Think roofs – think NFRC' campaign that was launched by NFRC last year.

w: www.nfrc.co.uk



SAINT-GOBAIN WEBER EWI FOR L&Q FLAGSHIP PROJECT.

Saint-Gobain Weber External Wall Insulation (EWI) has been specified for the refurbishment and thermal upgrade of eight 1960s blocks of flats in the London Borough of Lewisham. The Webertherm EIW system has been applied to the exterior of the properties which includes a final render coat. A range of colour schemes has been chosen for each building. The application of webertherm XM has significantly rejuvenated the appearance of the properties and dramatically improved the thermal performance of these homes.

w: www.netweber.co.uk



SIKA'S PROVEN SCREED FITS THE BILL FOR WORLD FOOD COMPANY

Sika has delivered the perfect flooring solution for a new production area at a food factory in Leeds. A hard-wearing and fast-applied flooring system was needed that would offer long term performance durability and be able to withstand constant traffic and heavy pallet loads. Following the removal of the existing latex flooring, over 600m² of the Sikafloor 20N Purcem was applied at a 6mm depth.

w: www.sikaconstruction.co.uk



nora® flooring solutions

Lady Eleanor Holles School is an independent day school for girls, first established in the early 1700's. Recently over 2500 m² of noraplan stone were installed at the school, specified by architects Walters & Cohen for its versatility. It has been installed in many different areas all over the school. noraplan stone was chosen for its durability, its excellent slip resistance properties (R10) and ease of maintenance. This project is winner of the RIBA London Award.

w: www.nora.com/uk



Kingspan Optim-R takes school to the next level

A new two storey extension has been constructed at Caldmore Community Primary School with Kingspan OPTIM-R forming a key part of the solution. Ensuring a smooth transition from the first storey classrooms to an outdoor 'play deck', Kingspan OPTIM-R and Kingspan Styrozone H 350 minimise heatloss from lower level corridors and ancillary rooms without exceeding the height threshold of the classroom floors.

w: www.optim-r.co.uk



Urban Front

Urban Front design and make hardwood contemporary front, internal feature and garage doors with steel reinforcement, high security locks and pivot or 3D hinges. Our six timbers are European Oak, American Black Walnut, Iroko, Western Red Cedar, Fumed Oak and Wenge, but doors are also available as a painted finish. We've also recently launched our E98 Passive doors certified to Passive House level. All of our doors are finished with stainless steel fittings.

t: 01494778787 e: info@urbanfront.co.uk
w: www.urbanfront.co.uk



Realonda

Spanish manufacturer Realonda is renowned for expertise in textured tiles. The striking Megane wall tile is a porcelain offering with a vigorous relief structure, manufactured using the company's innovative Realink digital ink-jet process, which enables creative ingenuity and versatility in customisation. Megane is available in various tones including wood-effect, in a 31x56cm format. Shown on the floor: Sahara Gris in a 44x66cm format.

w: www.realonda.com



Gerflor takes large leaps with Tile Giant

When Tile Giant based in Wickes, Borehamwood needed a robust vinyl flooring solution they came to International flooring specialist Gerflor. With a 2mm wear layer and 6mm thickness overall, the ultra smart GTI Max Decor can withstand constant footfall, bear the heaviest static loads and easily cope with forklift trucks. Available in 5 colours to give design flexibility, the loose lay interlocking tiles can be laid directly and quickly over problem sub-floors or existing surfaces without interrupting the business.

w: www.gerflor.co.uk



WINNING BRONZE

Visitors to the Adelaide Oval in Australia will now be greeted by a dramatic, cantilevered curved form over the main entrance, created from over 4,000 individual panels of Nordic Bronze from Aurubis. Designed by architects Cox Architecture, the redevelopment involves new south and east stands, related to the previously redeveloped western grandstand. A copper mesh veil provides shelter and solar shading to facades, and is pierced by a series of solid Nordic Bronze clad volumes, orientated to optimise specific local views.

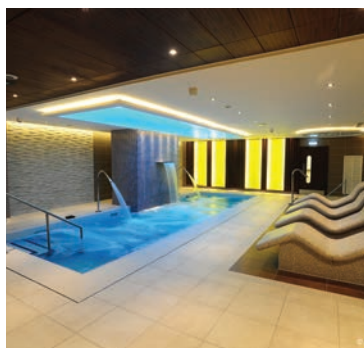
w: www.aurubis.com/finland/architectural



HERITAGE LIGHTING PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Spectral Lighting's extruded H-PROFIL system have been used in a challenging project to replace the existing GLS chandeliers at Bristol's Central Library. More decorative than functional, the inefficiency of the existing lighting was becoming hard to justify and so a low energy, low maintenance alternative was required. The unique aluminum profile of H-PROFIL can be suspended to any length using steel wires, finished in any colour and shaped to fit individual project requirements.

w: www.spectral-lighting.co.uk



Armstrong effects on metal

A snapshot guide to the effects that can be achieved on its metal ceiling tiles and planks for prestigious high-end projects has been launched by Armstrong. A four-page A4 brochure shows the standard "Effects on metal" range of bronze and chrome as well as five woods but also refers specifiers to the manufacturer for any other effects or configurable solutions they want to achieve.

w: <http://www.armstrong.co.uk/content2/commclgeu/files/83454.pdf>



ARBORCLAD LAUNCHES NEW BROCHURE

ArborClad's specialist range of quality cladding, available exclusively through Howarth Timber and Building Supplies, is now supported by a comprehensive new brochure. The brochure provides information of the range of traditional and thermally treated cladding products, alongside installation guidelines, technical details and inspirational case studies. Totalling 32 pages the document is available in hard copy and also as a downloadable PDF file from the Howarth Timber Group website.

w: www.howarth-timber.co.uk



Junkers Launches Two New Products at Design Junction, Stand F12

Inspired by the increasing demand for parquet floors, Junkers have developed two new solid hardwood floors Whalebone Staves and Industrial Parquet. Whalebone Staves is a pre-finished parquet floor using long, larger than average wide board staves for an exclusive contemporary look, available in natural or Black Oak. Industrial Parquet is made of slim Oak staves laid on edge to create a spectacular pattern of natural colour variation.

w: www.junkers.co.uk



JOHNSTONE'S UNVEILS STRIKING NEW BRANDING

Johnstone's Trade has developed exciting new branding that reflects its position as a paint manufacturer committed to progressing product performance.

Johnstone's is committed to delivering high performance products to trade decorators and specifiers who, demand high quality and the best possible results. This commitment is now backed up with striking new branding, an improved logo and a brand new strapline – 'Paint to be Proud of' – which perfectly captures the spirit of the Johnstone's Trade brand.

w: www.johnstonestrade.com



GEZE Turns Heads at the Nadler Soho Hotel

A striking façade has been created for the Nadler Hotel in Soho by positioning a bespoke piece of modern art above a stylish revolving door from GEZE UK. The three leaf automatic TSA 325 NT revolving door and two pass doors powered by EMD-F automatic swing door operators have been installed to create a sophisticated modern entrance; hanging above is Selene, a stunning 3m piece of public art by artist Hew Locke.

w: www.geze.co.uk



SENIOR OPENS GATEWAY TO MODERN STUDENT LIVING.

Fenestration systems designer and manufacturer, Senior Architectural Systems, has supplied curtain wall and window systems for The Gateway Apartments student accommodation in Edinburgh.

Assisting the architects in their mission to achieve an exceptional contemporary look both inside and outside, the systems ensure the accommodation is flooded with natural light, creating an environment which encourages productive study and enhances the wellbeing of residents, with natural ventilation throughout.

w: www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk



GOING SOLO: New product launched in anticipation of more stringent roof fixing standards.

Marley Eternit is the first UK manufacturer to launch a one piece clip and nail, which could save up to 30% on roof clipping time when planned changes to fixing standards in the UK are introduced later this summer.

SoloFix has been launched by Marley Eternit because the revised BS5534, the Code of Practice for Slating and Tiling, is expected to require a much higher number of roofs to be both clipped and nailed, in preparation for more extreme weather conditions in the UK.

Manufactured from a high grade composite called Zinc Aluminium (ZiAl), SoloFix has the strength and performance of stainless steel, making it able to withstand the harshest environmental conditions across the UK, including gale force winds and salt corrosion. This means that it provides a single clip solution, eliminating the traditional requirement for contractors to use two different types, aluminium and stainless steel clips.

w: www.marleyeternit.co.uk



SIG RoofSpace - the market leading panelised room-in-roof system

SIG UK Exteriors, a division of SIG plc, is pleased to announce the acquisition of RoofSpace Solutions Limited. RoofSpace is the market leading turnkey supplier of the award winning 'RoofSpace I-Roof', an offsite manufactured panelised room-in-roof system. The business provides a fully managed package including the design, supply and installation of the RoofSpace I-Roof to UK house builders looking to maximise floor footage by creating loft living space through a room-in-the-roof.

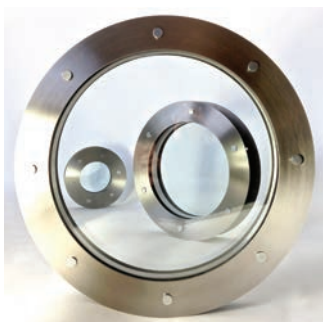
w: www.sigroofsace.co.uk



SOLAR SOLUTION IS STORMING SUCCESS ON DAMAGED ROOF

The flat roof on Linn Products' office building in Glasgow was left badly damaged by storms. The client needed immediate remedial work and wanted to optimise the roof with a high-quality solar solution. Bauder's photovoltaic system, SOLfixx, fulfilled this requirement. The PV array included 166 modules, generating at least 38.67 Megawatt Hours of solar power each year. These works have transformed the building into a benchmark for roof sustainability.

w: www.bauder.co.uk



Porthole vision panels for doors and walls.

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t: 44 (0) 115 926 9756

w: www.philipwattsdesign.com



'us' - flexible seating from Lyndon Design.

Lyndon Design has unveiled 'us' – a versatile modular seating solution that is suitable for straight and 'c'us' is ideally suited for corporate areas, from intimate reception lobbies to expansive atrium areas, where breakout spaces are increasingly popular. Its soft rounded form and high level of comfort also extends to the hospitality and leisure sectors, including shopping centres and other public areas.

t: 01242 584897

w: www.lyndon.co.uk



JOHN DONAT / RIBA LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION

Royal College of Physicians London, 1960

Since its establishment in 1518 the Royal College of Physicians has occupied five London premises. The latest is Denys Lasdun's radically modern 1960s masterpiece.

The RCP, needing larger premises, acquired Nash's Someries House in Regent's Park in 1958. The building was severely bomb damaged and its demolition was agreed provided the replacement harmonised with the adjacent stucco terraces. Lasdun, as one of five architects considered, was dubious about his chances of obtaining the commission. He assumed that the 500 year old institution wanted a traditional, classical building, unaware that the new headquarters was to express the modern-

ising spirit of the College's new President Robert Platt.

The resulting building is an unapologetically angular block of cantilevered white mosaic volumes countered with utilitarian blue engineering brick. Inside, the architect understood and was careful to retain the ceremonial spirit of the previous premises, reinstating the oak-panelled Censors' Room that had travelled with the College since the 1670s. A dramatic marble staircase sits at the building's heart, rising through the central void, up which the candidates for admission ascend in formal procession. ●

Justine Sambrook

Editor
Hugh Pearman

Executive editor
Eleanor Young

Senior editor
Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Sub-editor
Alysoun Coles

Art editor
Patrick Myles

Advertisement manager
Richard Tomlin
+44 20 7496 8329

Business development
manager
Midge Myatt
+44 1902 851 645

Advertisement executive
Clive Waite
+44 20 7496 8338

Production manager
Pete Songi

Director of media
Jonathan Stock

Telephone
+44 20 7496 8300
Fax +44 207 374 8500
firstname.surname@
ribajournal.com

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