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In 1244 a tiled floor was laid in the Main Cloister Walk within the precinct of the Greyfriars Friary just outside the West Gate in Oxford. The cloister's roof provided shelter but with open sides the floor was partially exposed to the elements, creating an environment with plenty of light and air for the monks to study and exercise.

Today there is a different precinct on the site – the Westgate shopping centre; partially open glass roofs cover impressive urban spaces, providing maximum light and airiness; a nod, perhaps, to what stood there 770 years ago and the ageless need for design in urban environments.

A partially open roof inevitably means an ingress of rain and so managing surface water has been brilliantly catered for on all levels – literally and aesthetically. ACO's stainless steel modular systems feature throughout the precinct helping define public squares and roof terraces while ACO's discrete Multi Drain slot system is used on access routes at ground level, blending perfectly with the flow of the Westgate's paved floor.

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Adapting and extending sometimes problematic buildings of the recent past, that’s one of our strands this month. Not that there is much of a comparison between the multi-storey car park-turned gallery in Wrexham by Featherstone Young (P.8), and the historically-aware makeover of London’s South Bank Centre by FCB Studios (P.42). In Southwark, the Kipling Estate was always one of the better examples of mid-1960s social housing, and now – under direct tenant management, with a new block by Bell Phillips – it is better still (P.14). Our other two buildings in this sizeable September issue are concerned with the numinous: Roz Barr’s beautiful reworking of St Augustine’s Church in Hammersmith (P.8) and Fumihiko Maki’s Aga Khan Centre in King’s Cross with its gardens in the sky (P.32). Buildings of intensity, all of them.

"We have created a form of micro-village that could become the nexus of a whole new kind of culture"

Stephen Cousins looks forward to life on Mars: ribaj.com/lifeonmars
Truth and the light

Roz Barr Architects’ award-winning refurbishment of St Augustine’s Church is an honest return to the original.

Words: Kate Jordan Photographs John MacLean

After several fallow decades, British faith architecture seems to be enjoying something of a renaissance. An increasing number of religious communities are commissioning high-profile practices to design places of worship, raising questions about the meaning of contemporary faith spaces and how they articulate new interpretations of spirituality.

A recurring trope in contemporary approaches seems to be a Ruskinian emphasis on ‘truthful practice’: a theme which is powerfully embodied in the RIBA award-winning refurbishment of St Augustine’s Roman Catholic Church in Hammersmith. The objective of this scheme, an impressive collaboration between Roz Barr Architects and parish priest Father Gianni Notarianni, was to strip away the veneers of paint, creosote and carpeting to reveal the raw materials of the church. The relationship between space and symbolism is explicit, as Roz Barr states: ‘There is an honesty to our approach that aims to celebrate this urban room and create a more optimistic and purer interior.’

The church, built between 1915-16, was founded by Augustinian priors and continues to be served by the order from the neighbouring priory. The original building is a competent but undistinguished example of early 20th century Neo-Romanesque, typical of its era. The intervening years saw the interior decorated and redecorated in a sequence of uninspiring styles; by the time the current refurbishment began, paint had been applied enthusiastically (no less than six layers) to every surface even including the stone piers; the roof timbers were stained dark brown and the internal colour scheme was dominated by the sky-blue apse and the red-carpeted chancel floor.

Father Notarianni secured initial funds from the International Order of Augustinians to begin the first phase of a major redevelopment of the site and in 2012 Roz Barr was appointed to undertake the work, beginning with a significant overhaul of the interior. The most striking elements of the refurbishment have been the introduction of light into the space.
the space by stripping the roof timbers and treating them with a white oil, and creating a unified pale colour scheme. The limestone columns and timber floors have also been stripped and sealed, allowing the church’s hidden materiality to emerge. Everywhere, the desire for honesty is present. Although, for example, the heating infrastructure is concealed in the walls using pioneering technology, this is visibly expressed by allowing copper piping to snake around the timber ribs at the clerestory level. The overall aim is to create a rationalised, readable space that generates a sense of unmediated spirituality.

Beyond symbolism, the project also revives the arts and crafts tradition of holistic design, in which the furnishing, liturgical apparel and decoration are carefully selected to create a dynamic unity. Father Notarianni, an alumnus of the Slade, is deeply invested in ‘re-establishing a connection between the Catholic church and contemporary art’ and actively promotes cultural activities and exhibitions through his outreach initiative, the Austin Forum. This enabled him to secure and continue to raise funds for a refurbishment which transcends the practical and helps to, as Notarianni suggests, ‘build bridges with the art community’. This objective couldn’t be clearer: for a modest parish church, the attention to detail and quality of craftsmanship in the fixtures and fittings at St Augustine’s is remarkable. The focal point of the church is the monolithic oxblood-coloured, Venetian plaster altar, designed by acclaimed ceramicist Julian Stair. Suspended like a great halo above the altar, is a striking cast iron ring, into which is written the Augustinian motto, ‘Veritas, Unitas, Caritas’. This, along with a large free-standing tabernacle which is still being cast, was designed by Roz Barr. Typographer John Morgan was...
commissioned to create a new font for the text which has been painted in moon gold around the walls of the apse. Everything down to the candlesticks and even candles has been painstakingly designed to create a rich and perfectly-tuned harmony.

Piecemeal funding means this is a lengthy work in progress – though the church is now operational and the altar has been officially dedicated, the baptismal font (also by Julian Stair), crucifix, vestments and kneelers (commissioned from the textile designer Pauline Caulfield) and other fittings are yet to be completed. But budgetary constraints have proven to be generative: leading to the retention, for economic reasons, of the original statutory and painted stations of the cross has allowed layers of time to be stitched into the refurbishment, making earlier phases of life in the church clearly legible. And, importantly, the slow drip of funds and lengthy time-frame provides space for the development of a thoughtful and conscientious programme of design; producing such a scheme in slow-motion allows every decision to be meticulously considered before it is implemented.

It is inspiring to see a project in which art and architecture have been brought into such meaningful dialogue. The relationship between the two is often voiceless, irrelevant and depressingly perfunctory. But perhaps it is St Augustine’s aspiration to truthfulness that distinguishes it. It seems appropriate to give the last word to Ruskin: ‘We may not be able to command good, or beautiful, or inventive, architecture; but we can command an honest architecture: the meagreness of poverty may be pardoned, the sternness of utility respected; but what is there but scorn for the meanness of deception?’

Kate Jordan teaches at the University of Westminster. She publishes and lectures on contemporary faith architecture.

Credits
Client The Order of St Augustine
Architect Roz Barr Architects
Structural engineer Smith Wallwork Engineers
Building services Ritchie H Daffin Engineers
Project manager Castle Davis
QS Stockdale
Approved building inspector MLM
Main contractor Clive Graham Associates
Specialist subcontractor Hargreaves Foundry
Specialist lettering John Morgan Studio/Abyme
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While talking in superlatives about her love of architecture and the desire to ‘capture the expression and dignity of buildings’, Maryland photographer Dee Thompson isn’t giving up the day job quite yet. Her father having worked in construction, she might have grown up surrounded by drawings of plans and elevations, but Thompson has been a lawyer for 30 years, currently an attorney to the US government, specialising in contract and environmental law. The latter, she claims, ‘drawing you into notions of space and context’, spurred her on to attend the technical courses that would help her to develop her second, photographic, skill set. ‘I’ve always appreciated legal nuance – how law is about extrapolating base arguments to align them with higher principles,’ she tells me. Perhaps that’s why she believes that no single image can capture a building. ‘In a different light they change to take on a particular look or character’: nuance indeed.

Holding that thought, Thompson fully intends to return to Frank Gehry’s 10-storey InterActiveCorp (IAC) headquarters in Manhattan’s Chelsea district, the 2007 building that preceded his impressionable 2011, stainless steel clad skyscraper, 8 Spruce St. This is altogether a more subdued creature; a sail-like, white-glazed facade billowing out over a large part of its city block, its expansive feminine horizontality counter-pointing the brusque, melted masculinity of his later tower. Thompson wants to shoot the building at night when it takes on a different guise and can be read in silver bromide negative. Asked which of them is more appropriate for the Big Apple, the jury, it seems, is out. ‘They are two very different structures telling two very different stories,’ she says – just like the best Judge Judy dilemma.
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Marklake Court, 27 homes for social rent built on the site of 12 Council-owned lock up garages, acts as a gateway building for Southwark’s 1960s Kipling Estate.

**Opposite bottom** The new residents and design team celebrate the opening of the building on its third floor communal deck.
If...

A benchmark for social housing has been set with hugely satisfied tenants on a new part of Kipling Estate in London
Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek   Photographs: Kilian O’Sullivan

Whatever you may think of the actual architecture, there’s no getting away from the genuine enthusiasm being expressed by the new residents of Marklake Court on Southwark’s Kipling Estate – the result perhaps of the lowest of expectations. ‘I thought they were just throwing up another council block but when they took us to see a lovely (Bell Phillips) block in Grays, Essex I thought “Wow, this really isn’t what I was imagining”, so I decided to sign up to it.’ says Barbara. A week into occupying her third floor two-bed flat she’s already got to know her neighbours from its big balcony. She knows Melanie across the way too, who moved with her son into a top floor flat with two of them – both with amazing views – and enormous ceiling heights. ‘My sister can’t believe I’ve got this place,’ Melanie tells me. ‘Sometimes I walk into this living room and can’t help giggling!’

Bell Phillips’ £7.8 million Marklake Court – a 27-unit block of one, two and three-bed homes for social rent – has been born in a perfect storm of agendas and organisational structures that have combined to produce what looks to be a considered, dare I say it, pioneering model for social housing that could (and should) be rolled out elsewhere. A tenants’ management organisation (TMO) with the vision to procure social housing despite no experience; facilitator Igloo, keen to test its community build offering; and Southwark Council – perhaps reflecting on its controversial sell-off of the Heygate Estate for private development with scant regard for displaced residents – releasing land and funding it to the tune of £9.7 million, and smoothing the scheme through planning.

Occupied last month, the project’s gestation is the starting point to grasp the context that brought Marklake Court about. Leathermarket Joint Management Board (LJMB),
founded via an active Neighbourhood Forum in 1996, had in 2013 become the country’s first TMO to become self-financing, meaning that the rents from 1100 of its 1500-home estate (400 were owned under ‘Right to Buy’) were under its direct control. Tenant confidence in them was high – in their 2011 continuation ballot 72% of the residents who voted gave them a 96% approval rating – but there was also an identified clear need to provide more and suitable homes, so the JMB conducted a housing needs survey. In an area with sky-rocketing rents, it revealed low level tenant anxiety.

‘Some properties were overcrowded, some had mobility needs and some were clearly under-occupied; but it was a case of the devil you know and keeping quiet about it,’ says Rachel Brain, community and communications office to Leathermarket Community Benefit Society (LCBS) – the organisation set up as a development vehicle by the LJMB in 2014 to identify potential sites on the estate and address the housing need through building. ‘With 11,000 people on the housing register you could have very legitimate reasons to be housed and never make the top of the list,’ she adds. Some people who moved into Marklake Court had been on the list for 10 years.

With no experience of housing procurement, the fledgling Benefit Society went to facilitator Igloo, appointing it as development manager for the community-led project. This was earmarked for a site that was, at the time,

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<td>27</td>
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<td>homes for social rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
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<tr>
<td>year lease on the site</td>
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<td>302</td>
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<td>units/ ha</td>
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<td>£9.7m</td>
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<td>total funding from Southwark</td>
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*Right* The new building reinforces the street line, its angle countering the orthogonality of the Kipling Estate.

*Beneath* Far from eroding the oasis-like quality of the estate, Marklake Court seems to have increased privacy and augmented the green courtyard to its west.
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12 council-owned run-down lock-up garages at the east end of the Kipling estate, just south of London Bridge station. With £70,000 seed funding from the Greater London Authority, LJMB brought Bell Phillips in to start working up a design. Aiming to use a Community Right to Build Order, Igloo also managed to secure further GLA funds to bring the figure to £323,000 while negotiating with Southwark the transfer of a 125-year lease of the site to the CBS for a pound, on the basis that this was to be a 100% social rented housing with no Right to Buy. Initial funding and land secured, it was then about engaging the local community to respond to dealing with the housing need – critically by encouraging residents of under-occupied or unsuitable properties to release them by offering what were in effect, bespoke, down-sized homes; everything rested on Marklake Court being a big enough carrot to draw them across.

After local consultation, Igloo development manager Kym Shaen-Carter said that residents weren’t against development in principle but that the new homes had to be something they could be proud of and hold in perpetuity. It also meant maximising the potential of the site – in the end the architects were to realise a density of 1050 hr/ha. In carrying out the thorough tenant engagement process through Community Right to Build, they achieved densities that couldn’t have been possible for a private developer or even Southwark itself. ‘Encouraging down-sizers to move, we could see that having 27 tenants here would affect more than 100 families,’ Shaen-Carter says of this grass
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roots social engineering. ‘It was also about demonstrating a community empowered way of generating housing.’

This they did in spades. Overlaying LJMB’s housing survey findings with the Council’s own allocations policy that prioritised local people, the design team knew six months before it even submitted for planning, exactly who it was designing for. The two blocks on a plinth design was to have four one-bed, 14 two-bed and nine three-bed units – the emphasis on two-bed units to accommodate the downsizers who would need a bed for a guest or family carer. All are dual aspect and compliant with the London Housing Design Guide and lower level duplexes have rear gardens. Three flats were built as wheelchair accessible, with one made so later due to one tenant’s ongoing health problems.

But meeting guidelines and standards is not what these flats are about. ‘We had a dozen tenant consultations before the scheme even went in for planning – unheard of for a housing project,’ recalls Bell Phillips’ Hari Phillips. ‘We workshoped the scheme asking tenants everything from what were the biggest direct issues in any flat design to more amorphous concepts such their desire for “a building with a sense of purpose”.’ Massing was developed by the architects, but only after tenants were walked around and asked their opinions on local architecture. It transpired residents were proud of their estate and eschewed more modern materials for its sober brick. They liked Victorian richness of detailing – which saw the architects adopt corbelled and saw-tooth brickwork around the base. And they wanted balconies to face away from the existing low-level courtyard housing to the west to maintain a mutual sense of privacy (hence all those east facing street-side balconies). Not just window sizes and their cleanability, but open plan or separate kitchens, bathroom fixtures, wall tiles and flooring. Shaen-Carter says ‘every comment we received from residents was registered, responded to and audited.’ This engagement was critical: ‘I would have been reluctant to even consider downsizing if it hadn’t been done this way,’ says Barbara, one of the first to sign up to the design’s community engagement process. And it was a two-way street, explains Phillips: ‘Knowing who the residents were beforehand was a critical part of the project’s success.’

The architect thinks the towers could have been taller, but the key elements are all there; the dual aspect flats with generous balconies, large communal terrace above the duplexes, and reinforcement of the curious staggered street line of Weston Street. There has been a deferring to privacy for the existing courtyard behind; in fact, far from encroaching on it, it’s as if the building has reinforced the estate’s slightly hidden, strange, oasis-like quality – a sense that had previously drained away past the lock-ups to the wider street. Phillips recalls a Twitter spat where an architect had come across the construction site and posted a picture of a sawtooth brick detail supported on a metal angle. ‘The modernists were, like, ‘how could they?’ And the post-modernists were saying ‘What’s wrong with it?’ But it’s a discussion that left him bemused. ‘I think it’s completely missing the point to get hung up on a detail in the context of what’s happened here, because for years the residents, CBS, Igloo and Southwark have been piecing this whole thing together,’ says Phillips. ‘In the end the architecture is just a small part of a much bigger story.’
Multi storied

Featherstone Young has transformed a car park and dwindling market into an art gallery and community space that is flexible enough to be many things

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: James Morris

The edges of our cities are spotted by the oily dark puddles of multi-storey car parks, shoppers gripping bulging shopping bags as they navigate petrol haze and grubby stairways to make it back to their vehicles. But Wrexham has reclaimed at least some of its parking bays for a different sort of venue, Tŷ Pawb, a gallery and community space with a market, reworked by Featherstone Young Architects.

In the 1990s Wrexham cleared the edge of town and built a new car park, the product of optimistic thinking about the city's future as a market town and shopping destination. It faced the town with projecting brick-clad bays mimicking the city's older streets and, below, the Peoples' Market, re-establishing the trio of markets that have long defined Wrexham. Its rear was more uncouth,
unmediated stacks of parking, bins cluster-
ing grubbily around the service entrance un-
der a sweeping ramp.

It is not the most obvious place to display
display art. The original gallery Oriel Wrecsam was
an annexe to the city library, alongside a park
(and, inevitably, a car park). Featherstone
Young’s scheme for this a decade earlier had
foundered due to lack of space and revenue
cuts. By the time it came back on board it had
been decided to take over the market space in
the People’s Market. Clearing the dwindling
number of market stalls that had spread their
wares there might have seemed rational but
it was at the nub of resistance to the plans. One
poster baldly suggested that art should
be left to posher Chester up the road.

Gradually a possible mixed mode of op-
eration emerged – market stalls and galler-
ies share the ground floor, with a food hall
drawing on the thriving example of Altrin-
cham market. At the same time Featherstone
Young proposed that flexible spaces might
replace two of the three highly conditioned
galleries and that the first floor parking deck,
used for maintenance and mayoral parking,
might work for some of the back of house
spaces, education rooms and offices for rent.

For precedents, Sarah Featherstone
looked to Wrexham’s covered streets
and markets, multiple routes leading to covered
squares. Similarly, Tŷ Pawb has one formal
and three smaller entrances, so it works as a
cut through from the town centre to the edge-
of-town Tesco, Mecca bingo and mega gym.
The market stalls, some in blockwork around
the perimeter, some more like pop ups in
timber, have been gathered on the city side of
the ground floor. Here too is the Sgwâr y bobl or People’s Square – an activity area where translucent industrial strips with red and gold highlights can be drawn around to make a more private space. Children worked busily on a ‘drawing disco’ on the day I was there. Sliding across this and most of the length of the plan, long tables sit alongside food outlets such as Plât Bach, borrowing the light from both windows that have replaced the loading bay to the south and from the main entrance. In one corner the box of tall gallery spaces is marked by reception desk and shop.

From the market stalls, dripping with lacy baby bonnets, you read the gallery as a ribbed ply box. The wall is imbued with depth and interest, benches cut into it and narrow windows giving glimpses onto the gallery. And two full scale billboards of art (Wal Pawb) – twist from one specially commissioned piece to the next and change each year as well. But let’s backtrack from all the busy complexity of the gallery-as-city and imagine we have parked up with the intention of visiting Tŷ Pawb’s beautiful touring summer exhibition of drawings. Drawing up to the car park from Market Street the gallery imprint is all over the four storey building in bold black angles and Tŷ Pawb spelt out in huge letters. A 9m high atrium is signalled by a glazed entrance cut into the concrete planks of the car park. Selective filleting of the concrete of the first floor slings a bridge over the atrium before the ceiling is reimposed over the reception and shop and leads on to an internal courtyard (Gallery 2), back up to full height, that asks for a gathering. Featherstone describes this as the leftover space, formed of the two serviced, insulated, conditioned spaces alongside it. They are: a
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studio and performance space with a sprung floor, bleachers and a loading bay – great for all sorts of events including film screening – and the full on Gallery 1. This 220m² of high quality gallery – conditioned and composed – comes as a surprise after the contingent spaces around it, the three lighting tracks allowing it to be split up fairly flexibly.

So the gallery is many things, with spaces that demand quite different sorts of programming, and a market and food hall to nurture. Its name translates as Everybody’s House and that is what it aims to be. Tŷ Pawb creative director Jo Marsh took over part way through the project. But with years of experience in learning and engagement at Oriel Wrecsam and a mission to be open to the people of Wrexham, she has worked with Featherstone Young to develop its idea of ‘baggy’ space. This enables “unplanned and unimagined”, impromptu activities, drawing spreading out on the floor, the parking of artists’-project ‘shepherds’ hut. In architecture terms it avoids the specific programme, favouring space over furniture, and Featherstone Young has styled much of the circulation as if part of the city – with ‘street signage’ and the matching original concrete floor.

Marsh explains the idea of the Arte Util, or Useful Museum in its UK context, as promoted by Alastair Hudson of mima in Middlesborough, who now runs the Whitworth in Manchester. So she programmes things relevant to the location and its needs and to running the gallery responsively.

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organising jazz Sundays, booking high end exhibitions (look out for Grayson Perry), answering stallholders’ queries, ending up with shoppers’ frustrations at parking meters... (the latter, at least, not the job of the Ty Pawb team). But the gallery’s own exhibition, Wrexham Is The Name, that works on many levels, is an example. Local and more widely known artists created works that relate back to the history of the town – from a colouring book to delicate asymmetric ceramics referring to city immigration. The selection had a year long run-up with the public voting to choose six from 25 designs, these specially commissioned objects are being manufactured and will be sold in the shop. The scarf with ‘Wrexham Is The Name’ could be seen on the terraces soon. The same attitude has brought to life some baggy spaces with stools and tables with timber with flashes of red that are scattered through the project courtesy artist come designer Tim Benton.

There are many many architectural ideas that have not made it through at this stage: outdoor seating in the south facing terrace next to the car park ramp, a community garden on the second storey deck, maybe even an artist’s eyrie alongside the lift gear in the car park’s tower. In the meantime the deep plan of the building means the programming will have to work very hard to attract a good number of people into the slightly gloomy flexible spaces that need the animation of activity, and to the market and food stalls to keep them vital.

The most unfortunate omission – a corollary of the limited £4.5million budget – is that all the signage firepower is concentrated on two sides of the building. Town side it is still easy to pass by without broaching the rather dingy, unreconstructed entrances. But there seems no better gallery to take on these practical challenges, drawing in artist and locals as it grows.
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Awards
Gira G1:
- iF Design Award 2015,
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- Good Design Award Chicago 2014,
- ICONIC Awards 2014,
- Plus X Award 2014,
- Design Plus 2014

Gira Interface:
- ADC Award 2015,
- Red Dot Award 2014
- Best of the Best
RIBA steals the show at UK Construction Week

NEC Birmingham 9th - 11th October 20

Building quality, digital innovations, colour combinations, energy-efficiencies, bionic buildings, wooden skyscrapers and 300,000 new homes are just some of the crunchy topics headlining this year’s UK Construction Week (UKCW).

The UK’s premier built environment event returns to Birmingham’s NEC on 9 – 11 October featuring an array of talks, discussions, expertise, workshops, exhibitors, products, innovations and networking opportunities, with RIBA taking centre stage.

Building in quality

RIBA president, Ben Derbyshire, will be joined by Nigel Ostime, project delivery director at Hawkins\Brown; Paul Nash, chair of the RIBA Client Liaison Group and past president of CIOB; Chris Langdon, development and investment director at Keepmoat Regeneration/ENGIE; and John Hughes, President of RICS, at RIBA: Building in Quality.

As part of this talk, RIBA will exclusively launch the Quality Risk Tracker, developed in partnership with the CIOB and RICS. A system for documenting and tracking risks to quality through the life of a construction project, this is a launch not to be missed and follows industry momentum in the wake of the tragic Grenfell Tower disaster.

Colourful insights into the future of building

RIBA will exclusively launch the Quality Risk Tracker, developed in partnership with the CIOB and RICS.
construction feature throughout the UKCW seminar programme, including:

Regeneration Hub, sponsored by Easy-Trim, exploring planning for growth with Victoria Hills, chief executive at the Royal Town Planning Institute, and Passivhaus at the heart of regeneration.

Digital Construction Hub delving into BIM maturity for all of the supply chain and project management in construction with Action Sustainability and BIM Direct.

Offsite Theatre, supported by MPBA, discussing hybrid concrete solutions and factory-built bathrooms.

Building Tech Live Theatre, delivered by Voltimum and ECA, bringing topics such as cybersecurity for smart buildings and market networks, from speakers including Professor Prashant Pillai and the ECA.

Timber Focus Theatre, delivered by TRADA, covering how tall we can build in wood and how specifiers research and source timber products, with speakers from Waugh Thistleton Architects and ZÜBLIN Timber.

And the Surface and Materials Hub, discussing trend and colour forecasts and bionic buildings from speakers from Formica and Envelope Architects.

**Colourful insights**
The UKCW Stage hosts high-level discussions around lessons learnt and how to move forward.

Elsie Owusu, principal of Elsie Owusu Architects, and Stephanie Akkaoui Hughes, founder of AKKA Architects, will lead panel discussions on stopping building failures and the digital future of construction.

Barbara Res, the project manager behind Trump Tower, will share her experiences as a female in construction and working with Donald Trump. Advanced booking is essential and

Lord David Blunkett will discuss how technology and diversity can turn the skills gap around.

**Building up your industry knowledge**
Following the booked-out success of last year’s CPD sessions, three hubs return with experts including the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists, the British Woodworking Federation and H&H Acoustic Technologies covering topics such as:

- Building Regulations post-Grenfell;
- High rise and high-risk buildings;
- The role of daylight and ventilation;
- An introduction to Passivhaus; and Fire doors.

**Booking is essential.**

‘Future of Construction’ theme
The Future of Construction Hub provides an immersive opportunity to discover how digital construction, 3D printing, robotics, AI and AR and modern methods of construction can deliver the new Construction Sector deal, and is a new collaboration with Birmingham City University. Alongside this will be the state of the art Construction Simulator from Coventry University used by construction firms for professionals and students.

An Innovation Trail will take visitors on a journey of the latest innovative ideas, products and systems from companies including: 3THERMO, Bruag, Canon, Ecovolt, Kore Wireless, Marsh Industries, Quinn Building Products, Rockwool, and Soudal.

The Internet of Things (IoT) Arena at Building Tech Live will be partnered this year with Gooee. The arena will showcase Gooee’s award-winning IoT ecosystem with its partnered companies, including Aurora Lighting.

**Forums for change**
Talented people will be recognised by the Role Models campaign, with seven of the 36 people shortlisted coming from architecture. The winner is announced on the UKCW Stage on 10 October.

UKCW will also hold the launch of the Passivhaus Student Competition for 2019 – a nationwide competition arming the next generation of architects and designers with the tools and design skills to deliver sustainable buildings.

**Be inspired**
With more than 650 exhibitors exhibiting their latest products and services it’s well worth taking a look at the exhibitor list before attending.

New products include Velux’s futuristic smart window system and curved glass rooflight; IDS’s quick to lay vinyl flooring collection; Crown Décor’s niche luxury laminate brand from India; and Decorative Panels Lamination’s new mirror, veneer and fabric designs.

Other exhibitors include: BLFA, Bruag, Fibo UK, Formica, Pfeiderer, Impress Surfaces, Rothoblaas, Hanson Plywood, Morland, Rockwool and Soyang Europe.

HVAC 2018, Civils Expo, Plant and Machinery Live, and Grand Designs Live.

Free visitor tickets and updates are available from www.ukconstructionweek.com and allow access to all UKCW shows: Build Show, Surface and Materials, Energy 2018, Timber Expo, Building Tech Live.
Secret garden

Islamic-inspired gardens are the delight of Maki and Associates’ new Aga Khan Centre, so it’s a pity they are barely visible on the exterior.

Words: Isabelle Priest
‘This is perhaps a strange question to leave to the end of a two-hour press tour,’ I say to one of the representatives who has accompanied the press group around the new eponymously named centre in King’s Cross, London, ‘but who exactly is the Aga Khan, where is he based, and how is he paying for this £50 million building with a “generous private donation”? ’

The Aga Khan Centre has been hyped up over the past few years as one of the cultural assets drawn to King’s Cross alongside the Francis Crick Institute, Facebook and Google. When I first heard about the project in 2015 the buzz was that the building was going to be mightily impressive. But for me – and a lot of others on the tour – it asked more questions than it answered. We’ve all heard of the Aga Khan Architecture Awards, even if we aren’t sure what precisely draws them together. It is legendary Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki’s first building in the UK – but what exactly has he built again?

Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary leader and religious Imam of the Nizari Ismaili Muslims, the second largest branch of Shia Islam. He is a prince, but doesn’t rule over a geographical area. He lives just north of Paris and from there presides over the estimated 10-15 million Nizari Ismaili Muslims worldwide, a denomination that emphasises human reasoning, pluralism and social justice. Now in his 80s, he has spent his later life expanding the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a group of 10 private international agencies, many based in Switzerland but working a lot in the Middle East and Africa, that promote these values through research, education, medicine, the built environment and cultural programmes.

Fumihiko Maki, meanwhile, is the architect most
Concealed outside.
Revealed inside.

Schueco’s FWS 60 CV aluminium façade features a concealed vent that makes it impossible to distinguish from outside which vents open and which are fixed. The result is elegant, state-of-the-art, floor-to-ceiling ribbon windows that present a sleek, unbroken external appearance. Also ideal for punched openings, the façade combines narrow face-widths with high levels of functionality and Ucw values as low as 0.85 W/m²K. For German engineering made in Britain, there’s only one name.

www.schueco.co.uk
Critique
Aga Khan Centre

It has been designed as an invitation for people to explore Islamic history and Muslim civilisation.

famous for the eclectic aluminium and glass 1985 Spiral Building in Tokyo as well as the rather delightful three-decade Daikanyama mini city project, also in Tokyo, and various big North American-looking buildings all over the world from Shenzhen Sea World Culture and Arts Center in China to Isar Büro Park in Munich and public housing in Lima, Peru.

This latest building, commissioned to unite employees formerly split across rented sites in London, is the third project that Maki and Associates has designed for the Aga Khan. The first was The Delegation of The Ismaili Imamat in Ottawa (2008), followed by the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto in 2014 (RIBAJ, October 2014), both significant schemes larger than 8,000m².

‘We are calling it the trilogy,’ says Gary Kamemoto, director at Maki and Associates, who has flown in from Japan to take us around the 10-storey, 10,175m² project. Serving a primarily educational function with a library, offices and 200-plus researchers based there, the centre brings three of AKDN’s organisations under one roof for the first time: the Aga Khan Foundation, Aga Khan University’s Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and the Institute for Ismaili Studies.

Along with nearby Victoria Hall, designed by Stanton Williams in 2016 as halls for Aga Khan students, the organisation has bought into the Argent development to be part of what has been dubbed the King’s Cross ‘knowledge quarter’ – to make, as Matt Reed, CEO of the Aga Khan Foundation UK reveals, the most of ‘opportunities in more deliberate and amplified ways’.

The building has, however, also been designed as an invitation for people to explore the history of Islam and the contemporary expression of Muslim civilisations and cultures. On the completely public ground floor, there is an exhibition space and a retail unit that will be a Turkish pizza bar, and six gardens and terraces dispersed across different levels of the block which are intended to become known as ‘the Islamic gardens of London’.

‘My expectation is that from this new home our education-oriented institutions will contribute powerfully to building new bridges of understanding across gulfs of ignorance and parentheses about the Muslim world,’ the Aga Khan explained at the
building’s official opening the preceding day.

The site is located to the rear of Central St Martins art college, sandwiched between Duggan Morris’ bubble-gum pink R7 building and the textured black stone commercial S1 Building by Mossessian Architecture awaiting completion on Handyside Street. Maki’s approach, in common with most buildings at King’s Cross, has been to flood the site with volume and then cut away areas for an entrance loggia and the terraces – some shallow and tall, some low and wide. Within this method, Maki has also taken on a modern interpretation of a tripartite composition that is classical in outlook for the exterior: a glazed two-storey base, seven-storey stone middle and an aluminium crown to top the building off – with its angular sloping roof defined by the development’s light cones guidance that allows daylight to reach the streets at ground level.

‘We started by doing an architectural survey of the area,’ says Kamemoto, explaining how the Aga Khan Centre ended up being clad primarily in stone. ‘We found that many new buildings are in brick, but if you look closely at the details of old buildings like St Pancras and around London at buildings built by the Crown, which this is too [a reference to the Aga Khan’s royal status], they are in Portland stone.’ To improve durability, though, as well as use the cladding to meld Islamic culture into the building, the final choice is a very white stone from Andalusia that is incredibly uniform and granite-like. Windows have been pulled forwards to be flush with the facade and coated with a 47 per cent dot point ceramic frit to accentuate these characteristics overall.

Inside, the whiteness continues with plasterboarded white walls across all levels, indiscriminately of function. Entering from the Central St Martins side, the view is drawn past the reception up towards the first floor where the solidity of the building’s external appearance is relieved by a 39.5m tall central void. With two lifts pushed to one side, this rises through the floors, inspired by the central patio of the madrasa where classrooms are frequently arranged in small clusters around a large courtyard. Here, the levels open onto the atrium as balconied terraces.

While the ground floor is committed to public spaces, the first floor and second floors offer collective spaces such as staff and student lounges as well as conference and seminar rooms. In this vertical campus, the library sits in the middle on levels three and four, easily accessible both from below and the offices of the

Credits
Client Aga Khan Development Network
Architect Maki and Associates led by Fumihiko Maki
Executive architect Allies and Morrison
Cost consultant Gardiner & Theobald
Main contractor BAM
Structure Expedition
MEP, BREEAM, facade, lighting Arup
Garden design Maki and Associates; Madison Cox Design Inc; Nelson Byrd Woltz
Soft landscape executive architect Untitled Practice

Above The Garden of Light at the top of the building comes off one of the executive meeting rooms and is a tribute to the Moorish gardens of southern Spain.

Below right The upper level of the two-storey library in the middle of the building stack. Bookshelves are black to make glistening spines stand out.
With its consistent rectangular formal language, the Vero Air bathroom series is synonymous with architectural and straight bathroom design. The patented c-bonded technology seamlessly combines the washbasin and vanity unit. Shown here with the Brioso vanity unit in Chestnut Dark.

**Vero Air c-bonded. Now with the new bathroom furniture series Brioso.**

With its consistent rectangular formal language, the Vero Air bathroom series is synonymous with architectural and straight bathroom design. The patented c-bonded technology seamlessly combines the washbasin and vanity unit. Shown here with the Brioso vanity unit in Chestnut Dark. **Duravit London**, open now. [www.duravit.co.uk](http://www.duravit.co.uk) and [pro.duravit.co.uk](http://pro.duravit.co.uk)
three institutions above – the university on levels 5 and 6, the Institute of Ismaili Studies on level 7 and the Aga Khan Foundation UK on level 8. The top floor is for ceremonially activities, including executive meeting rooms. Except for this floor, which has two more finely considered rooms, in general the interiors are defined more by their furniture and contents than by their architecture, appearing as white and non-specific as generic speculative accommodation. With so little to look at, though, it is impossible not to notice how beautifully detailed everything is. The only deviations from this pureness are the specially commissioned blue, red, yellow and green geometric artwork by Pakistani artist Rasheed Araeen, which saves the atrium from looking like an early 2000s hospital by throwing colour across the tallest wall; and perhaps the eight-sided pattern Maki composed for the scheme, which is used in different sizes on everything from glass frit to flooring and acoustic ceiling panels – though the motif is so mass-produced across the building that it too could be easily integrated to add interest to speculative offices in this computer generated and made age.

The terraces, however, are the delight of the new Aga Khan Centre and lift it from being just another King’s Cross commercial or resi block into something unique. Every function in the building has an associated garden inspired by a different Islamic type from around the world. There are six in total and they create a sequence across the building, starting with the Garden of Tranquillity on the first floor which is inspired by the covered loggias of Persia and Egypt, a garden overlooking another garden, in this case the upcoming Jellicoe Gardens. The sequence ends with three gardens on the rooftop. The largest, the Garden of Life designed by Madison Cox, is a Mughal Empire inspired space with a Chadar waterfall through the centre, while the Garden of Light looks to the Islamic courtyards of Andalusia with patterned screens carved with extracts from the Qur’an and Persian poetry. The third, the Terrace of Discovery, is the most arresting. A long narrow sliver of a terrace on the southern aspect of the building, it

With so little to look at, it’s impossible not to notice how beautifully detailed it is

Left The ‘central academic courtyard’ with a 39.5m artwork by Pakistani artist Rasheed Araeen.

Bottom left Terrace of Discovery on the ninth floor looks out over London.
This very plain building gets lost among its cuboid massed neighbours is inspired by the Persian talar, a throne from which to address the congregation. Looking out over central London from this height, the majesty of the platform, with its blue and white tiled floor, does indeed make you feel as though you are addressing the city.

The only problem is, despite being planted with pomegranate trees, magnolias, quince and witch-hazel, the gardens are not really visible from the street. This means the best part of the building fails to illuminate the exterior, resulting in a perfectly palatable but plain building that won’t help people understand who the Aga Khan is, let alone the centre’s activities. It ends up lost among its fellow cuboid massed neighbours, within the restrictive parameters of the King’s Cross plan. Except for those who know they could be sipping hibiscus juice on one of those terraces, the building is unlikely to remain the talking point it has been these past years.

Indeed, you don’t really appreciate the building urbanistically until you see it from afar, potholing along the raised train tracks that circle King’s Cross. From there, in the brightness of the blue-sky summer heatwave, the brilliance of Aga Khan Centre’s flat white stone facade finally bristles with a kind of eye-catching excitement. That makes it worth it.
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Spot the difference

FCB Studios has enhanced the Southbank Centre with the lightest of touches

Words: Pamela Buxton  Main image: Hufton+Crow

The Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room have undergone a thorough overhaul as part of Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios’ £35 million refurbishment of London’s Southbank Centre. The revamped foyer includes redesigned pyramid ceiling lights.
‘We treated them as if they were listed. We took care of them,’ says Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios’ Richard Battye of the practice’s £35m refurbishment of the brutalist arts venues at London’s Southbank Centre. The listing reference is particularly pertinent given the recent decision by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to turn down the complex for listing and instead issue a Certificate of Immunity, just a few years after the centre proposed, then abandoned, more extensive and controversial plans.

The recently completed refurbishment of the Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall (QEH) and Purcell Room was actually always part of that larger plan according to the architects, who say their appreciation of the 60s complex grew during the course of the project.

'We liked it but we love it more now. We became more impressed with the robustness of it,' says FCB Studios managing partner Ian Taylor of the Southbank buildings, adding that they're of a quality that merits listing.

The radical complex was developed between 1963-1968 by the London County Council’s Special Works Group of architects, which included Archigram’s Warren Chalk.

**IN NUMBERS**

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and Ron Herron. There’s no denying that after 50 years, these buildings, however much they were admired for their cultural activities and – by many – for their brutalist concrete aesthetic, were in dire need of an overhaul. Half a century of use had affected building services in particular – cooling hadn’t been operational in the QEH since the 1980s, and in the Hayward staff sometimes preferred to leave gallery scene-setting lighting on overnight rather than trusting that it would turn on again the next day. Key design features had been compromised, for example the Hayward’s pyramid rooflights, which had long been obscured internally by a suspended ceiling.

Decades of clutter and modifications needed to make the spaces suitable for a wider range of uses had also detracted from the sharpness of the original aesthetic. Some elements of the centre’s original brief were drawn up as long ago as the 1950s, and since then not only have technical requirements risen greatly but so have standards of facilities for performers, exhibitors and visitors.

‘Quite a lot had to be done to make it programmable again,’ says Taylor.

So how did FCB Studios upgrade the buildings to contemporary standards while respecting the integrity of the original architecture? Many visitors will be oblivious to much of what’s been done in the two-year, largely internal refurbishment, since most of it, and even the few externally visible changes, look like they’ve always been that way. The achievement of apparent timelessness is not to be underestimated, and can only be accomplished by channelling the original spirit of the building.

“The way we’ve treated it shows that we respect it. If you do a refurbishment really well, you can’t tell what we’ve done,” says Battye.

**QEH and Purcell Room**

That’s not to say that the changes weren’t significant. The brief was to overhaul everything, from front and back of house to performance spaces. At the QEH, the architects have ingeniously harvested former undercroft space at the rear to provide 300m² of new back-of-house including dressing rooms and an artists’ entrance, the latter with dramatic views up of the building through a lightwell.

The always striking public foyer, shared with the Purcell Room, is greatly improved by the repositioning of the café bar. This enables the corner to the left of the entrance to be opened up with the insertion of new windows to the riverside, a bold intervention which nonetheless appears seamless.
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The bar design by Archer Humphryes creates a far fresher and more sociable space with the inclusion of a new café and long bar plus new seating including plump banquets and window seats along a shiny brass counter. With its hand-made tiles and zippy colours, it’s a sharp but generally pleasing contrast with the exposed concrete interior, which is quite strong enough to take it.

FCB Studios also replaced the foyer’s 1970s metal inverted pyramid lights with sound-absorbing, insulated tulipwood versions more akin to the 1960s originals. Integral lighting provides a variety of effects to suit different uses, including club nights.

Auditoria

The practice sought to enhance the original character of both auditoria, which have been refurbished with new seat upholstery, production infrastructure, lighting rigs and services. Timber wall panelling was French polished again and the board-marked concrete restored, as it was in the Hayward. This shows off the high quality of the concrete, which was cast, FCB Studios discovered, using formwork crafted by a team of some 180 skilled site carpenters.

‘This brutalist building suddenly seems new and tactile,’ says Taylor.

One of the biggest challenges was over-
hauling the services to create comfortable auditorium conditions with minimum intervention to the building fabric.

‘The thing that made the building difficult, and interesting, was that in the existing services strategy, the distribution of air was very much integral to the fabric and form in a way you don’t get with modern buildings,’ says Peter Creaney, an engineer at building services engineers Max Fordham. ‘The challenge was to reuse existing routes to bring them up to modern standards.’

In the QEH, this meant an ingenious reversal of the airflow to introduce air through redesigned grilles beneath the seats and discharge it at high level rather than the other way round. This lower-energy displacement system provides a more comfortable and stable auditorium environment. The small amount of extra plant involved has been elegantly contained in a glass enclosure on the roof. At the Purcell Room, the engineers replaced the air-conditioning and added cooling and humidification control.

**Hayward Gallery**

At the Hayward, the design team faced several challenges: overhauling the fabric (notably the leaky rooflights); upgrading the services; and realising the gallery’s long-held desire to reintroduce top-lit lighting into its upper spaces. All this had to be achieved while providing optimum conditions for display. The design team succeeding in providing 50 percent relative humidity at a set point temperature of 20°C all year around.

The 66 single-glazed pyramid rooflights, so central to the Hayward’s visual identity, were too far gone to salvage and had to be completely replaced, although this was done so sensitively that few would now realise. But their replacements’ improved solar-shading functionality, in combination with adjustable blinds and acoustic coffers below, has enabled the galleries to be top-lit once again with controllable natural light. Post-refurb, the gallery uses 50 per cent of its pre-refurb energy. Throughout the gallery, the architects have replaced terrazzo floors and cleaned the walls.

Yet despite all these – beneficial – interventions, the architects have succeeded in their aim of retaining the essential ‘Haywardness’ of the gallery rather than producing a bland white cube. The Southbank Centre has also reorganised the Hayward’s foyer, shop, project spaces and café, the latter now relocated above the entrance.

FCB Studio’s refurbishment is now complete, but further changes to the setting of the centre are likely. While the Certificate of Immunity is disquieting for fans of the brutalist arts complex, for now it is probably looking – and working – better than it has done at any time since it first opened. With summer crowds strolling along the South Bank enjoying the centre’s cultural and hospitality offerings, and with children frolicking in the fountains in the sunshine, it looks every bit the story of success and longevity.
WICONA’s façade engineers and specification consultants assist in the development of highly engineered façade designs for aspirational projects, such as Newfoundland Tower, which features a unitised facade and bespoke window and pull/slide door systems.

For more information, please contact WICONA on 01924 232323 or wiconaprojects-uk@wicona.com
Fire protection: begin at the beginning

It needs a fundamental overhaul of the construction industry’s approach to fire safety to prevent another Grenfell

Words: Michael Willoughby

As he launched the Grenfell Inquiry in June, Richard Millett QC warned against ‘a merry-go-round of buck-passing’ about which agency was responsible for the conditions that led to the inferno.

But to pass the buck, one has to know what one’s responsibilities actually are and how they fit into an overall plan. ‘Ensuring Fire Safety Throughout Design and Construction’, a RIBAJ seminar in association with Kingspan Insulation in July, illustrated the continuing lack of clarity throughout a still reeling construction industry as to what exactly went wrong and how to fix it.

The current system was designed to be fit for purpose by professionals in government, the civil service and the industry. So how can we be sure that even a new regime adopted in full from Dame Judith Hackitt’s recommendations – including a new regulatory framework, clear allocation of responsibilities, three inspection ‘gateways’, more rigorous enforcement and all the rest of it would prevent another tragedy?

Searching for answers
Chair Paul Bussey, CDM fire access lead at AHMM, said the experts, government and authorities ‘don’t have all the answers.’ He maintained that architects need to understand fire better, and that the current guidance is ‘not designed to help people who design buildings’.

He wanted to collate feedback from the packed room and look at how to help embed a ‘golden thread of responsibility’ for fire safety through the RIBA Plan of Work – a starting point, if too brief on fire issues.

He showed pictures of incorrectly installed fire-protection elements, some with gaps, and others where flammable materials had been used to plug holes, calling for architects to work more closely with the industry to understand more clearly how these elements should work. ‘We need to get a feel for what good looks like,’ he said.

Deep down, few who have been around the industry for long could have been surprised at his images. Some, who understood the implications of the current regime of product testing, construction management and Building Control, were prepared to say ‘I told you so,’ including Niall Rowan, CEO of the Association for Specialist Fire Protection.

Southwark’s 2009 Lakanal House fire, in which six people died and 20 were injured, was ‘the wake-up call that should have stopped Grenfell.’ Back then, the coroner said the guidance on exterior cladding was inadequate and needed updating, he told us.

‘The ASFP has been calling for a review of Approved Document B (ADB) for...’

Notably, the insulation material type made very little difference, whether it was ‘combustible’ or ‘non-combustible...’
nine years and successive governments have ignored us,' he said, blaming the government's lack of motivation to review the guidance – despite repeated warnings that construction is changing – on the fact that deaths from fire have more than halved.

'A DB is designed not for designers but to show a means of escape and for authorities to prosecute you,' Bussey added, calling for a simpler DB. 'The design process through the regulations is mixed up and backwards' – B5, B4, B1, B3, B2.

**Complex issues**
Roy Weghorst, head of regulatory affairs (fire) at Kingspan, balked at the idea of over-simplification: 'Fire safety is a complex matter. You can try to have an easy, foolproof guideline especially in a holistic building design; I do not believe it is possible to make a complex matter into an easy guideline and still be sure it is safe. Look at the codes in the US, is the UK's less complex?'

He showed pictures of fires caused when aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding with a polyethylene (PE) core, such as that used at Grenfell, had erupted in flames over the past decade, including Hotel Grozny in Russia, the Address Hotel, Dubai and the Polat Tower in Istanbul.

'How could an aluminium composite panel with a polyethylene core end up on a building?' Weghorst asked. 'Because it wasn't new, and it was already clear for many years and previous high-rise fires that this product is not fit for use on high-rise.'

Kingspan had carried out tests comparing well controlled burns of a 2,4m² high facade constructed with nine 779m² by 508mm ACM panels. The test with 4, 5m² ACM PE cladding such as that used at Grenfell gave off the heat of 'two couches burning down after just four minutes – 16 times more heat than Alpolic A2 limited-combustibility cladding and Alpolic/fr-RF fire retardant cladding tested in the same way. Notably, the insulation material type made very little difference, whether it was 'combustible' or 'non-combustible'.

Weghorst said it was the behaviour of the cladding panel in the context of the whole system. 'How does the system, as it is, perform in a fire?' he queried, maintaining that this can be ascertained only through system testing, not product classifications.

His view was echoed by Russell Clinton, chartered fire safety engineer and director of Tenos, who defended test BS 8414 Fire performance of external cladding systems. ‘Polymers are combustible and cannot be treated to achieve limited combustibility,’ he said, continuing, 'Combustible external wall and cladding systems tested to BS 8414 can be safe as long as they are specified, installed and maintained correctly.'

Even a fire on highly flammable expanded polystyrene could be kept under control with the addition of mineral fibre cavity barriers to absorb the molten material and prevent fire-spread.

Clinton was surely right when he said: ‘Industry is faced with a stark choice: there will need to be complete step change in how things are done or there will be an outright ban on combustible materials, wood included, which would not be proportional.’

The question is how will we know when it’s right?

And while ‘a culture of change’ is being effected, how many potential Grenfells still stand? Andrew Mellor, partner at PRP Architects, has been involved in many cladding investigations. He thought ‘a couple of thousand’ high rise towers would fail inspection under ADB and other risky details such as ‘high-pressure laminate boards and render systems.’

That’s more than four times the government’s estimate of 470 of those clad using ACM systems.

**Complacency**
Dr Debbie Smith, director BRE Global, pointed out that there has been practically no government funding into research of new materials and methods over the past 15 years, alongside complacency over guidance. ‘Innovation needs to be underpinned by research’ she said.

Perhaps complexity itself is to blame for the confusion, suggested Smith. One way of managing the complexity of today’s buildings is through the use of BIM – as the Hackitt Report pointed out – and Smith lamented its irregular use.

Mellor agreed. ‘We recognise that the contractor is the barrier to implementation of BIM. Not many of them use it... It stops at the design stage and can’t be taken forward’.

If there was one major agreement from the many distinguished experts, it was this: that just considering the fire performance of the cladding and insulation used in a project is essentially meaningless. It is the system that must be tested or modelled, which includes elements such as vapour barriers, the amount of glue used and cavity barriers.

It is clear that there is an appetite for change, a desire to do things better. Perhaps it’s time to stop passing the buck, and to work towards making Hackitt’s model happen. As Dame Judith herself said ‘An outcomes-based framework requires people who are part of the system to be competent, to think for themselves rather than blindly following guidance, and to understand their responsibilities to deliver and maintain safety and integrity throughout the lifecycle of a building.’
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SURFACE 360
After Grenfell and the shortfalls between social landlord and tenants that it exposed, does the Social Housing Green Paper go far enough?

There are some positives to take from the fact that the government’s addressing the challenges facing tenants – especially in light of the Grenfell tragedy, which highlighted the erosion of trust between tenants and social landlords. To their credit, the consultation did involve policymakers travelling the country to speak to tenants, but consistent policy isn’t helped by the fact that housing ministers chop and change: we’ve had two since they instigated the consultation.

Does the paper help alleviate the impact of high housing costs and rents on poverty?

There’s comfort to be gained from the fact that local authorities aren’t being forced to sell high value council homes any more, but there’s still nothing that would allow them to borrow in order to build. It’s weird: there’s a lot written in the Green Paper about addressing the stigma of being a housing tenant but the carrot of ownership is still dangled by government as the better option. This symbolic hierarchy remains extremely powerful.

How can you start addressing your stated shortfall of 80,000 social rent homes a year?

If you go back 40 years, those kinds of figures were being achieved year-on-year – and even surpassed when the political will existed to build them. The touted cost to the public purse of doing this is disingenuous; our current housing benefits bill to keep people in private rented housing amounts to £27bn a year. Imagine if that sum was going towards building homes for affordable rent.

Failing a pledge to meet housing need, what single thing could the government do to progress things?

The policy of disconnecting local housing benefit allowances from market rent values has had a very detrimental effect. People losing their jobs suddenly and being unable to afford the shortfall between what they can claim and market rents is the biggest single cause of homelessness. Benefit allowance levels were supposed to make 30% of local rents affordable, but the truth is that it’s way below that. A recent report from the Borough of Brent put the upper benefit allowance as making 2% of properties in the borough affordable. Re-linking benefit levels to actual market rents would be a start!
Earnings are static, and that’s good news

Salaried architects in private practice pull off a double trick – salaries rise and the gender pay gap closes

Aziz Mirza

For the third year in a row, architects’ earnings have stood still. Overall average earnings remain £45,000. Since 2016, inflation has increased by 5% but average earnings have stood still. The profession might be losing out against inflation, but there are substantially more architects registered with ARB so despite the lack of movement in earnings, the net worth of the profession has increased. The ARB figures show that the number of architects has increased by 3,300, and we calculate the net addition to the workforce is 2,800. That’s a 12% increase in the workforce in just two years.

In the context of adding that many new architects to the workforce, most of whom are likely to be young and less experienced (and therefore paid less than the average), it becomes quite impressive that the average earnings figure has remained the same and not fallen. At the same time, reported unemployment remains below 1%.

Average earnings for private practice salaried architects – the destination of most of those new architects – have increased, by 2.5%. Unlike most other employment groups, private practice salaried architects record an inflation-beating rise (although only just). There’s been quite a shake-up of salaried architects’ pay in medium and large practices. Last year, average pay at larger practices was substantially higher than at medium ones – now the differential is insignificant. This levelling out is probably so that medium sized practices can compete with the larger ones to attract or retain talented staff; but it appears to have come at the expense of partners & directors’ remuneration, which has slipped significantly in these same medium sized practices. The fall in directors’ pay is such that now, the average pay reported by a partner & director in a 31 to 50 size practice is very similar to one with 11 to 30 staff.

Move up to the largest practices, though, and directors’ pay improves dramatically; average remuneration for directors in a firm with more than 50 staff is not only 50% higher than for those in the next size down, it is also 41% higher than it was last year.

Partners and directors in medium sized practices may well have seen a reduction in pay this year, but for those in small practices (up to five staff) remuneration is slightly higher. Their increase is easily beaten by the rise experienced by sole principals. Yet despite their 14% increase – the highest of any employment field this year – sole principals still earn less than any other employment group. And a quarter of sole principals earn no more than £24,000 a year.

In the public sector, the decline in local authority architects’ average salaries continues. Last year average earnings fell by 2% and this year by another 1%. By contrast, architects working in central government report a higher average, up by 6% this year.

In the private sector, the decline in local authority architects’ average salaries continues. Last year average earnings fell by 2% and this year by another 1%. By contrast, architects working in central government report a higher average, up by 6% this year.

Highest average

The profession’s highest average earnings continue to be reported by private in-house architects, although their average figure has remained broadly flat for the last three years. Private in-house architects are, perhaps, the least homogenous group in the survey,
**THE MAIN FINDINGS**

- **£45,000** architects’ average earnings on 1 April 2018
- 0% change in average earnings 2017 to 2018
- 2.2% inflation 2017 to 2018
- 1% unemployed
- 4% not working for other reasons
- 2% more paid to women in private practice
- 2.5% increase in earnings in private practice

Conducted by The Fees Bureau, the annual RIBA / The Fees Bureau Architects Employment & Earnings Survey is a research survey conducted exclusively among UK-based RIBA members. A sample of members was invited to complete an online questionnaire form in April to June 2018. Around 1,350 architects responded. Together they represent private and public sectors; full-time 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. RIBA members can see summary statistics or buy the full report at feesbureau.co.uk
reporting the widest range of salaries (an inter-quartile range of more than £50,000 compared with £15,000 for private practice salaried architects).

What’s really noticeable this year is the convergence in average earnings between London and the South East. London architects still earn more than anywhere else but the gap between the capital and its neighbouring region has narrowed substantially. Plus, average earnings in these two regions are pulling away from the rest of the country.

London architects record the highest or joint highest average earnings in the UK – as in previous years – for every staffing category in private practice. Overall, earnings in London average £48,000 and are 7% higher than the national average. The South East of England records the second highest average at £46,200, just 4% lower than London. In all other parts of the country, average earnings are in the range between £40,000 and £43,000.

Gender pay gap
The modest growth in earnings reported by private practice salaried architects masks something remarkable; they have closed the gender pay gap. For each of the past 10 years, there’s been a gender pay gap among private practice salaried architects of between 7% and 11%, in favour of males. This year the gap is 2% – in favour of females. As universities report the numbers starting architecture courses are split precisely equally between the genders, private practices appear to be adopting principles of gender pay equality.

There’s still a gender pay gap across the profession as a whole, 10% in favour of males. The gap is 22% among partners and directors, and 25% among sole principals. But the public sector has the largest gap – among architects working in central government, the gender pay gap in favour of males is 33% this year. These figures don’t, of course, take account of seniority or experience. Nationally across all sectors, the ONS gender pay gap figure is 18% in favour of males. Data for firms with fewer than 250 employees was extracted from the government’s gender pay gap service, and for these smaller firms (more comparable in size with architectural practices) the average pay gap is 12%, in favour of males. This year’s gender pay gap among architects is only slightly narrower than this figure.

Aziz Mirza is a director of The Fees Bureau.

Aziz Mirza is a director of The Fees Bureau.
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Sounds like a plan

Rural growth, build quality and affordable housing gain in the revised National Planning Policy Framework

Neal Morris

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) puts a new emphasis on the delivery of new homes, and for the design community to put design quality at the heart of the system.

RIBA Planning Group members have picked out the most significant changes. Stephen Gleave, director of Gleave 23, endorses the policy statements that declare high-quality buildings and places to be fundamental to planning and development. But the question remains: will they make a difference? Previous planning guidance made similar calls.

‘We have to be positive,’ says Gleave. ‘At the outset of our national policy framework, design quality is fundamental to what must be achieved from planning activity. Advisers have a duty to highlight this with all clients, public and private. This is a shared responsibility. The NPPF must be read as a whole – there are threads throughout that put expectations on design quality across the system.’

He continues, ‘Where there is disagreement in negotiation, planners will know they have support in the NPPF to hold ground and not see design quality undermined.’

HTA planning partner Riette Oosthuizen picks out changes to viability assessments, a widened definition of ‘affordable housing’, and a mixed picture with regard to targets for the delivery of housing on small sites – the revised document doubles the size of a ‘small site’ in the draft version to 1ha.

Crucially, Oosthuizen points out, the revised NPPF gives decision makers the power to decide how much weight to give to viability assessments, which should allow local authorities to resist proposals with limited affordable housing. The guidance now clearly reinforces court rulings that have established that the price paid for land cannot be used to justify a failure to meet local plan policies.

The Housing Delivery Test rulebook, published alongside the new NPPF, is a key document that shifts the emphasis from local housing targets to actual delivery, says Oosthuizen. The test compares what has been built with past forecasts, and where targets have been repeatedly missed, various sanctions can be applied against the local authority.

Several Planning Group members zeroed in on the latter half of Paragraph 130 that directly addresses build quality and has the potential to produce tangible results: ‘Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).’

Design dangers of D&B

At stake, of course, is the 50% of UK construction output delivered by design and build and the many projects where the original architect is not retained beyond the planning stage, where no-one is liable for ensuring the quality of what gets built.

This is a real issue, says Planning Group chair Philip Waddy: ‘Unlike Building Control where a Completion Certificate is issued, there is no similar certification of compliance with the planning consent. In my experience, once permission is granted and conditions discharged, the local planning authority seldom monitors what actually happens on site.’

Gleave adds that the test of what constitutes a ‘materially diminished’ change will be determined through challenge, but he sees Paragraph 130 as taking its place in a framework that now promotes best practice at all stages of construction.

‘When materials are specified and approved, builders will always chase the market for best price. Theirs is a commercial enterprise. The planning system must hold ground in maintaining the standards set in the approval. This was the developer’s commitment and risk,’ argues Gleave.

Rural planning specialists meanwhile have seized on an expanded section on ‘Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy’. New Paragraph 84 states that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to, or beyond, existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.

Richard Wooldridge, director of Lancaster-based Harrison Pitt Architects, sees this as a loosening of control over location that will be of definite use to architects who practice away from major urban centres.

Ruth Reed, RIBA past president and former chair of the Planning Group, finds other subtle changes in the new NPPF that will support additional development in the countryside, such as the call for policies that identify opportunities for villages to ‘grow and thrive’ (Paragraph 87), a more proactive statement than the ‘enhance and maintain’ found in the previous framework.

The RIBA cautiously welcomed the document. President Ben Derbyshire said: ‘Time and the fulfilment of these proposals will be the real test for the NPPF. But we are pleased to see commitments to the Climate Change Act, to Garden City principles and that our call for increased transparency in viability tests has been formally incorporated. We will now be urging the government to closely monitor confidentiality exemptions to ensure this is not abused.’

This article first appeared as a professional feature on architecture.com
Plenty of room for all sorts of views

How landscape influences architecture, and how architecture responds to and employs it, was the subject of the second RIBAJ/Knauf seminar

Words: Josephine Smit

Floor to ceiling glazing wraps around our office blocks, fronts our urban apartments and defines the domestic extensions of comfortable suburbia. It might be contributing to summer overheating in city homes, but we love it for the light and the views. Those expanses of glazing and bi-fold doors bring a sense of connection to nature in our increasingly disconnected and digital lives, or as glossy lifestyle magazines put it, ‘bring the outside in’.

Of course, we can do a lot better. Our interfaces with nature, in building and landscape, provide opportunities for expressions of culture and creativity, and to design in a way that harmonises with nature and taps into its potential to protect us and enhance our lives. You only have to delve into history and tradition to find examples, even for something as fundamental as a view, as Stephen Richards, partner with landscape architect and masterplanner Gillespies, says. Look at Japanese architecture and its tradition of the shoji, the translucent screens that adapt and frame views. ‘Views were manipulated. What you do and don’t see can be lyrical,’ he noted. ‘A lot of what you see in architecture now is simply putting in a big window. In doing that, you lose things like playfulness.’

Richards was speaking at the second in a series of debates on space in architecture, organised by the RIBAJ and Knauf at the Knauf Clerkenwell showroom in July, and

Above Right to left: Stephen Richards Tumpa Husna Yasmin Fellows, Michael Pawlyn and Holly Porter.

Views were manipulated. What you do and don’t see can be lyrical
People in remote places have learnt how to deal with climate; we learnt from them

‘The water is beneath and around the verandah where patients wait. Some patients don’t want to leave the verandah because the cooling breeze feels so pleasant and healing.’

New ways of thinking

For this community project Fellows drew on the traditional knowledge of local people and used their earth building techniques. ‘We felt people who live in remote places have learned how to deal with climate, so the best way was to learn from them. We tapped into local skills and knowledge. I had to stand back as an architect and recognise local skills.’

Now is the time for such fresh thinking, argued Michael Pawlyn, founder and creative director of Exploration Architecture. ‘We’re now entering the end of the fossil fuel era and we’re going to see a massive reawakening of ingenuity in the way humans live in the landscape.’

Pawlyn is practising what he predicts with innovations such as the Sahara Forest Project, which tests the viability of greening the desert to produce food and clean energy.

Contrast that with nations across Europe and north America, where innovation in the built environment is commonly measured by a BREEAM Outstanding or a LEED Platinum. ‘Systems like BREEAM and LEED have taken us so far, but I’d argue that we have not nearly gone far enough,’ said Pawlyn. He called for radical approaches and broader targets, taking on board such factors as the food that needs to be grown to supply a city. ‘When we’ve done that, we’ll have cities in a functional landscape,’ he said.

That still sounds some way off for the UK. •

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No I in team

Gavin Heaphy, in charge of North West Cambridge, says the way people work together is the key to success.

Matthew Thompson

With Phase One of the ambitious North West Cambridge Development virtually complete and a Stirling Prize nomination under his belt, the University of Cambridge’s contractor-turned-client Gavin Heaphy has an illuminating take on how to achieve quality.

Gavin Heaphy is construction director at the University of Cambridge, part of the executive team overseeing the £1bn North West Cambridge Development (NWCD).

First and foremost a construction manager with 20 years’ experience in and around London, he turned to the client side in 2007 to deliver a large chunk of the London 2012 Olympics Athletes’ Village. Working for Lendlease at the time, the move was a dramatic shift in perspective.

Having gained a taste for the role, he joined the Cambridge University capital development team in 2011. Now with overall responsibility for design, procurement and delivery of the largest capital project in the university’s history, he is using his experience to steer the wider project team to outstanding results.

The multi-phase NWCD is a well-tempered giant. With planning permission for 3,000 desperately needed homes, accommodation for 2,000 postgraduates, academic research and development space, a hotel, a clutch of vital community buildings, open spaces and green infrastructure, it is billed as a new district for the famous university town. They first broke ground in 2013, and are now nearing completion of Phase 1.

Already boasting a clutch of awards in various categories, one of the new buildings – the all-in-one Storey’s Field Community Centre and Eddington Nursery designed by MUMA (RIBAJ May 2018) – has been shortlisted for the 2018 Stirling Prize. With results like that, Heaphy and his team must be doing something right.

So how do they do it? To answer that, Heaphy rewinds to the start of the project when he and his team were setting the rules for achieving the right level of quality. His thinking is dominated by a few interlocking principles.

Get the right people

It’s all about the team. When you build a community from scratch on a greenfield site with no pre-existing built context, a collaborative spirit needs to dominate. ‘We don’t want designs competing with each other,’ Heaphy says. ‘To achieve that, architects need to be able to work well with their contemporaries.’

This meant that he consciously sought architects by interview rather than asking them to carry out competitive design work. It was about exploring architects’ underlying attitudes and ways of working. As Heaphy puts it, ‘We find people rather than practices.’

Define quality

Quality targets need to be properly defined and communicated unambiguously to the entire project team. Indeed, Heaphy sees this as the client’s main role.

If everyone’s singing from the same hymn sheet, you’re much more likely to get better collaboration and a higher quality outcome. Of course, hiring in professionals, especially architects, helps to optimize the process. ‘I’m under no illusion that it can take time to tease out of a client exactly what they want. A good designer will do that.’
Focus on process and detail

Given Heaphy’s background, it’s no surprise that he should peg process, buildability and detail almost as high in his list of priorities as designing for the user. Looking back up the value chain from the sharp end of delivery, these factors are the most destabilising links along a typical project’s pathway.

Insufficient, inaccurate or unbuildable drawn information can often lead to delay. Heaphy explains that it’s not just the cost of keeping workers waiting or the lost income or rent. ‘There’s the cost of carrying debt for longer. That’s the bit that architects don’t always appreciate as much as they should.’

He’s quick to point out that it’s not just architects who are guilty of not perceiving the client’s pain points. But since architects working on NWCD are all novated, they can’t relent in the later stages. Understanding how a drawing should be built is a vital piece of the puzzle and architects should not, as he puts it, ‘abdicate responsibility’ for it.

Learn from mistakes

The project culture at NWCD is to admit mistakes quickly and learn from them. All kinds of feedback are actively shaping their tactical path to completion. All are committed to carrying out post-occupancy evaluations and capturing lessons from the project teams. For example, feedback from Phase 1 might change the policy of always novating architects to the contractor.

This continuous learning environment is a double-edged sword. Stay on the right side, and it is clearly an intellectually satisfying experience. Fall foul, though, and the consequences are clinical. Early on in the project, an unnamed architect failed to play by the rules and was let go. Their mistake? Not listening. ‘My team and I are pretty experienced. When they didn’t listen, we decided to find somebody who did.’

A little respectful humility goes a long way. Even during selection interviews, Heaphy was happy to hear about how practices dealt with what are usually euphemistically called ‘challenges’. ‘You’re barking up the wrong tree if you come to an interview and don’t talk about what went wrong on previous jobs. Failure is a great teacher.’

Involve contractors early

Heaphy says contractors have a lot to give. They are often the first to know about new technologies, and the benefit of that knowledge and experience can significantly improve the way architects work. That’s why NWCD uses a two-stage design and build process, and tries to involve contractors as early as possible. But he’s not blind to the devastating consequences of poor workmanship, and uses the NEC contract, which allows for a supervisor. Akin to a clerk of works, the role is critical to his overall quality ambitions.

Tips and hints

Acknowledging that architects’ waning attention is sometimes connected to waning fees, Heaphy urges them to be more communicative about resource squeeze, especially after they’ve been novated.

‘A good relationship with your client allows you to have an open and frank discussion about spend,’ he says. ‘That is quite important when you spend more than expected early on.’

Smaller practices often don’t get a look-in on large-scale projects, but that isn’t the case at NWCD. Heaphy gives the example of Mole Architects. He was impressed with its offer and yet did not want to absorb all its resource. He recommended to Wilkinson Eyre that it collaborate on Lot 1, and Mole ended up designing 70 apartments.

The future

With Phase 1 of NWCD more or less a wrap, Heaphy has turned his attention to Phase 2, though architectural lots are at least a year off. By then he might be basking in the reflected glory of a Stirling Prize win. Even if he isn’t, you can be sure that he and his team will be quietly championing and achieving the art of built quality.

Gavin Heaphy is speaking at the RIBA’s Smart Practice conference on 4 October in Cambridge, Value-Added: Making Design Quality Count. See more at architecture.com
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History lessons

Traditional, low-tech methods can improve comfort in old buildings

Sarah Khan

Older buildings tend to be seen as a particular problem in the face of global climate mitigation targets and the drive to reduce energy use – and bills. Generally, heating and lighting have been the main consumers of energy in buildings, although with the rise in summer temperatures it is predicted that air-conditioning will soon surpass them.

This general concern took practical shape during my study of the Georgian grade I listed Architectural Association (AA) School in Bedford Square, London, which had a low SAP rating and an issue with occupant comfort. In this case summer overheating was a particular issue, and occupants often asked about installing air-conditioning. My study took an experimental approach, and showed that traditional passive methods could save energy, lowering the carbon footprint while improving occupant comfort.

The current focus is on retrofitting existing buildings to make them more energy efficient, or adding services to meet heating or cooling demands. For traditional buildings, especially listed ones, the need to preserve their character often conflicts with retrofit solutions, and the need to maintain breathability requires careful thought; meeting increased comfort demands often results in high energy use. Installing air-conditioning throws up issues that would seriously compromise building and may still not provide enough comfort; one modern air-conditioned extension at the AA achieved exactly the same level of occupant satisfaction as the traditional buildings while using a lot more energy.

Sustainable architecture is too focused on technology-driven processes. We must remember that people, not buildings, use energy, and they have historically used traditional buildings more efficiently. My research adopted a retrospective lens: old buildings, after all, may have existed for centuries and been through much extreme weather. Just as people changed clothes to adapt to changing seasons, they also used additional layers such as tapestries, external awnings and blinds to adapt their buildings to the weather, with no additional energy expenditure.

My research mainly used the experimental method to understand existing conditions and to test proposals. Based on historical evidence, various traditional controls were chosen and their efficacy for winter and summer tested in two near-identical rooms at the AA. One was designated the experiment room, which received treatments, and the other the control room, which remained unchanged. The winter experiment was carried out in March, and the summer one in July/August. Each ran for at least three weeks, with monitoring of existing conditions in week one, after intervention in week two, and post-experiment conditions in week three. After this occupants chose whether they wanted to continue with any of the installations.

Winter
The winter interventions were tapestries/wall hangings, local radiant heat sources such as foot and seat warmers and small personal radiators, task lighting coupled with natural daylight instead of ceiling lights, translucent curtains for glare control and warmer upholstery. Radiators were turned off during the experiment week.

The internal room temperature in the experiment room was only slightly below that of the control room in the experiment week, and both rooms retained an internal temperature of well above 21°C, indicating that the building’s thermal mass was effective. Experiment room occupants reported that they were comfortable although there were individual differences. Local radiant sources were used only
An occupant could not believe wall hangings had improved her comfort until presented with the experiment results for an hour or two in the day, except for one occupant who benefited from the seat warmer. The occupant who benefited from wall hangings felt comfortable throughout, and did not use her radiator at all, even though she had reported feeling the coldest before the experiment. She initially found it difficult to believe the wall hangings could be a reason for this, until presented with the experiment results.

The task lighting meant that ceiling lights stayed off until the blinds were drawn to reduce glare. The occupants initially disliked the translucent curtain blinds for aesthetic reasons, and reported them as a failure. However, time-lapse photography showed that all three blinds were drawn only on days when direct sunlight was streaming through the windows. On partly cloudy days, the middle blind with the translucent curtain was the only one that stayed up. The curtains were useful in blocking glare, but the effect was not immediately noticeable to the occupants.

The heating had stayed off for the entire week after the experiment as well.

Interest in using the treatments was initially low, but after their benefits were explained, most people were willing to try them. Even after their use participants were convinced the effects must be due to better weather rather than the interventions. As experiment results were shown to them, they quickly became enthusiastic participants.

**Summer**

Pre-experiment monitoring occurred during the hottest week of the summer, and temperatures exceeded 30°C internally. Thermal imaging showed internal blinds absorbing sunlight and giving off heat almost like radiators. The summer controls adopted were external awnings/blinds, opening up a chimney to facilitate stack effect cross ventilation within the experiment room, a ceiling fan (not strictly traditional in the UK but used in many hot countries) as well as night cooling. Task lighting and translucent curtains were tried again to check their efficacy for summer conditions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly night cooling was the most successful option: just one window left slightly open, combined with chimney ventilation, produced a reduction in air temperature of up to 1.5°C. The awnings reduced the solar radiation gain. The chimney introduced a welcome draught, and the ceiling fan was used only on some days as on occasion it made the occupants feel too cold. The translucent curtains were very popular and different occupants tried them for their windows and were happy with the results. A follow-up study a year later saw some of the tested methods in place. The black blinds have now been replaced with light reflective blinds, the chimney was open for ventilation and ceiling fans were in the process of being installed.

Many of the measures proposed can be adapted to current uses and can be used with modern services. They could be equally applicable to modern buildings. External awnings and shades, for example, have been the hallmark of many sustainable modern buildings. Passivhaus designs, for example, include strategies such as external shading, stack ventilation and night flushing.

For the past few decades we have been using our traditional buildings in a way that goes against their grain – by not understanding how they were designed to work, and slowly denuding them of their components. This research shows that our approach to sustainability of traditional buildings needs to be rethought, and a return to a seasonal way of living could be a way forward. It is, perhaps, time for the flow of beneficial inspirations to reverse. We need to learn from the past, so that we may better design the architecture of today and tomorrow.

The proposed measures are low impact solutions, which put control back in the hands of a building’s users. These solutions serve to enhance, rather than compromise, the historic character of listed buildings. They could point the way towards a more sensitive, contextually relevant zero-carbon approach for historic buildings.

Sarah Khan is a conservation architect and partner at Roger Mears Architects.
Back to school

For both students and lecturers heading for uni, there’s a new book to stow in your satchel

Alex Wright

The design process is a fiendishly complex thing. Even when limited to the relatively constrained field of architectural design, the variety of activities involved, and the plethora of objects which the process produces, makes any attempt at describing it extremely daunting. For those teaching architectural design, these difficulties are all too well understood. In his new book ‘Design Process in Architecture’, Geoffrey Makstutis addresses this challenging area of pedagogy directly and with a clear aim. The book’s ambition is not to teach a student how to design, or to evaluate design as good or bad, it rather addresses the problem of how a young designer can begin to define their own working process. It is written for those considering, or in the early years of, studying architecture.

The book is structured in a logical progression of themes, building to a final case study in which the author illustrates the breadth of the architectural design process from end to end. First, the reader is introduced to the various stages of the design process and the tools used. Makstutis prioritises the information logically using succinct, straightforward and engaging language. The book is easy to read, the author never lingering too long on any one point, and is generously illustrated with well chosen projects, sketches and examples to support each chapter’s subject matter.

The third chapter presents half a dozen models of the design process, drawn from architecture, engineering and product design. These are useful to a degree, but highlight the lack of any generally accepted, comprehensive, coherent and readily applicable model of the architectural design process. A more diverse range of models might have helped, but given the book’s limited aims, the principle components of the process are described well within the overall framework of design as a fundamentally iterative, ongoing activity.

Subsequent chapters deal with general approaches to architectural design, the importance of project definition and the design process in action. Examples of recently completed high profile buildings are used to best effect, quotes from their architects add colour and, as the book’s subtitle suggests, Makstutis covers the full range of outputs idea to finish. Relatively shallow enquiry in these sections is balanced by the final chapter – a case study of the New Adelphi Building for the University of Salford in Greater Manchester by Stride Treglown. For those studying architecture at Salford (in that very building) this chapter will doubtless have a particular interest, but for any reader it provides a satisfying culmination of the themes raised throughout.

Makstutis refers to the earliest known examples of building regulations, found in Code of Hammurabi, dating back to 1754BC (who knew!).

The book attempts to maintain balance between ways in which individuals and groups design, between the use of analogue and digital tools and between the art and science of architecture. Given the pace of change in digital design and fabrication the text covering these issues is likely to have the shortest shelf-life. Makstutis refers to various constraints on the process including the earliest known examples of building regulations, found in Code of Hammurabi, dating back to 1754BC (who knew!). The book presents a positive outlook, perhaps even bordering on the rose-tinted. However this may say more about the reviewer than the book.

This book is essential to the library of those working in architectural education and a sound addition to first year reading lists. For practising architects looking to refresh their critically self-reflective design practice, it is probably not for you. But if you need something to introduce the activity of architectural design to an aspiring or first year architecture student, I can think of no better book.

Alex Wright is head of architecture at Bath University

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Project on a shoestring

Rising Star Ben Ridley and Matt McKenna explain how to make cost effective, small scale architecture work for everyone

Ben Ridley and Matt McKenna

Clients that approach architects with small projects and constrained budgets but also with aspirations for design can provide a great opportunity to express creative flair. However, to avoid over-exerting the studio for little benefit, it is important to assess why, when and how to take on such projects.

When budgets are constrained clients often mistakenly push for fixed fees. However, as design constitutes such a large part of the work that is likely to be axed first. Clients often arrive with an appreciation of your work and strong ideas about design, which can help discussions of design, aspirations, budget and working together to be put before professional fees and services.

The degree to which a client listens to your thoughts during initial discussions and is flexible, is a great measure of how much they trust and value your input. This is imperative for successful collaboration on small schemes – as for example happened on our House for a Stationer, a 91m² refurbishment and extension in Canonbury, Islington. At £140,000, the project was delivered for half the typical construction cost, and for £13,975, less than half our typical fee, while still creating good design and a modest profit due to a carefully structured, limited service.

How you provide services and structure your fees competitively while making a profit is particularly important on domestic projects as they are less likely to yield a direct return of repeat work. Clients with fixed ideas and fixed budgets that don’t marry up are likely to run over budget and end in conflict.

Clients usually choose a practice for its design approach and completed work before their assessment of architectural services. If fees are questioned or compared early on, it is better to be flexible on the services you provide and reduce your involvement, rather than trying to do the same work for less. It is imperative that non-standard services are clear at outset. Where many unknowns exist and greater flexibility is required, it can be simplest to work on an hourly rate, and review it once the project is better understood.

Expensive ways to save costs

Clients often try to save money by avoiding professional cost estimating by a quantity surveyor early in the project, instead opting for a wait-and-see approach to tendering from contractors. But by then much of the architectural work will have been carried out, so changes will be likely to exceed the cost of a desktop report from a quantity surveyor.

There is a tendency with tight budgets to omit items and reduce specifications, but less conventional propositions are worth exploring. For instance, budgets can be heavily influenced by borrowing for younger clients. In these circumstances, making an extension larger can help increase end value, enabling a larger loan than the added cost of the additional works which can be used to fund other parts of the project. At House for a Stationer, the rear extension was extended 1m further than originally planned to make the home larger. Although costing marginally more to build, the increase in floor area was a strategic move for end value and borrowing. Traditional cost savings are, however, still useful and subtleties such as advising how best to use a budget is more positive than stipulating something can’t be done. The Victorian parts of House for a Stationer, for example – shutters, sash windows and French doors – were lightly repaired in lieu of replacement.

Before works begin on site, strategically planning the construction phase and a good handover with a trusted contractor can significantly reduce professional fees for a client, especially if a homeowner’s contract can be used to omit contract administration services. To do this effectively the handover must be thorough and include a responsibility to deliver design intent – not just pass over information packages. To get a good end result while relinquishing control requires trust that the contractor will deliver the project with the aspirations set out. It is easy for a client-contractor team to lose sight of this and attempt to deliver a project as quickly and as cheaply as possible. Inevitably things change, and judgement and trust from all parties is paramount to avoid dispute. Effective handover with clear objectives is vital.

Once the scheme is complete it’s important to debrief with the client and contractor. With reduced services and no contract administration, RIBA Stage 7 (In use) is often forgotten, but should at least be undertaken informally, to build on the knowledge gained – as suggested by the cyclical nature of the RIBA plan of work. This also helps maintain good working relationships for next time.

Ben Ridley is director of Architecture for London and a member of RIBA’s 2017 Rising Stars cohort. Matt McKenna is project architect at AFL. RIBAJ Rising Stars recognises and rewards up and coming construction professionals. It is open for entries now at ribaj.com/risingstars
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Light your world
Clarity is paramount

Reduce the risk of later trouble by ensuring contracts are clear about where responsibilities lie.

Disputes about the scope of contractual obligations have probably existed for as long as there have been contracts. No matter how clear parties may consider their contracts to be, there is always scope for disagreement.

In the recent Scottish case of Midlothian Council v Bracewell Stirling Architects and others, the courts had to consider whether the architect, Bracewell, had assumed responsibility for work by other consultants appointed to the project, even though those consultants had been directly appointed by the Council and had carried out the services in question before Bracewell’s appointment.

To cut a long story short, the courts found in favour of Bracewell and decided it had not agreed to assume responsibility for services provided by those other consultants. The contractual obligations were clear and did not extend in the way the Council argued.

Although the subject matter changes from case to case, the episode serves as a reminder of the scope for dispute about the extent of contractual responsibilities. The story is all too familiar. So how do we go about trying to avoid these costly disputes?

The obvious answer is to be as clear as possible in contracts about what the parties’ respective obligations are – though this may be easier said than done. Construction projects are complicated, usually involving multiple parties, and full of grey areas, leaving considerable scope for confusion and disagreement. Broad-brush statements about who is responsible for what may not reflect what is actually needed to deliver the project. The way responsibilities are intended to be allocated or shared may not be clear.

The parties should invest time in defining, as far as possible, the scope of a particular role in order to reduce the risk of confusion and arguments later. This could include the use of specific inclusions and exclusions from the scope and the use of responsibility matrices. Parties should also avoid statements that could be considered contradictory or open to different interpretations.

What we have learned from recent case law is that, if the requirements in the contract are clear (for good or for bad), parties cannot rely on the courts to come to their rescue if this would result in an unexpected commercial outcome. The courts apply the terms of the contract where these are clear. They will not intervene to protect a party from what turns out to be a bad bargain.

In the Midlothian case, the courts considered whether there was more than one potential interpretation of the contract. They recognised that if there were two potential meanings to a particular obligation, consideration may need to be given to which was consistent with business common sense. In this instance the terms were clear, so they did not need to consider this. The courts did, however, comment that, if it had been necessary to decide the issue, the contractual position put forward by the Council would have been unusual and carrying considerable risks and would not therefore have been consistent with commercial common sense.

Angus Dawson is a partner at Macfarlanes LLP.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH: JOINT NAMES COVER AND SUBROGATION RIGHTS

Joint Names Cover is cover under which the contractor and the employer are each named on the insurance policy. If damage to the works occurs as a result of an insured risk either party is entitled to bring a claim under the policy. More importantly, each joint name is usually protected from a claim by the insurer. If, for example, the contractor is a joint name and has damaged the building as a result of an insured risk (maybe a fire it has caused on site), it will usually be protected from a claim by the insurer to recover the reinstatement costs the insurer has paid.

Subcontractors tend to be either joint insureds or there will be a waiver of subrogation rights. Subrogation is where the insurer effectively steps into the shoes of the insured (ie the contractor) and brings a claim against the person who has caused the insured risk. If the insurer waives its rights of subrogation, it will be unable to pursue the subcontractor to recover any sums the insurer has paid out which are attributable to the acts or omissions of the subcontractor.
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Maria Smith

Are the design ethics of the 20th century holding us back from operating ethically in the 21st?

The likes of John Ruskin, Owen Jones, William Morris, Adolf Loos, Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Kenneth Frampton – to name a few – have left us with a weighty set of principles under which to create what is deemed good design. These are internalised in each of us, indoctrinated insidiously at architecture school where we are trained like naughty children under Supernanny until we feel that they are inherent truths.

We all know the kind of stuff. Good design is honest design, constructed from rationally chosen materials expressed in tactile, tectonic forms befitting those materials: truth to materials! ‘I like an arch!’ called the brick. Good design is not superficial scenography deployed for effect; it is never merely visual. Good design is stripped back, where nothing could be taken away to improve it. Degenerate ornamentation glorifying chattered labour is to be discouraged; less is more! Good design is of its time, exploiting technological progress. It is not nostalgic or pastiche. It is contextual, but intrinsically so; it is of its climate, topography and region. Good design digs deep and honours the essence of place.

It’s very hard to disagree with any of this. Even the architects who do mostly do so knowingly, with irony or poignant flamboyance. But given that these tenets were developed in a time characterised by stupendous technological and social progress, and we don’t live there any more, is it not right to question whether they might be becoming unhelpful?

According to Google Books Ngram Viewer, which charts the frequencies that words or phrases appear in published sources, ‘truth to materials’ rose sharply from the early 1950s to an initial peak in 1968. The global population in 1968 was 3.5 billion; now it is more than double that at 7.6 billion. Today architecture isn’t about honouring the essential properties of materials or pursuing the beauty of as few lines as possible. It is about enabling too many humans to live on this planet together. This is our great problem. It is social, technical and political and I ask, is it served by the aesthetic moralising of a wildly different age?

What harm could these principles be causing? Could our analysis, abstraction and reconfiguring of context in the name of good design be perpetuating outdated and now inappropriate building technologies? Is the contextual congruity of brickwork distracting us from stimulating afforestation? Could we be so afraid of superficiality and skin-deep scenography that we write off the signals of environmental design from trombe walls to straw bales as style choices to be justified and discredited according to pre-climate change design principles? Could our insistence on the distinction between the arts and sciences; our insistence that good design is not technocratic but elevated from mere engineering to an art, be preventing the scientifically rational from running the show? Is carbon sequestering being hampered by perceived creative perversity? Is our history of revered industrial progress encouraging us to explore the design opportunities offered by, say, 3D printed plastics and steels just because we can?

It’s an upsetting thought that our design inculturation could be a factor in ethical shortcomings but I suspect it’s quite likely. After all, this is a very normal source of inertia that prevents change. I’m probably not advocating that we throw all of the last century’s design discourse out with the bathwater but I do believe we ought to be much tougher on ourselves. We definitely ought to watch out for using old tenets as alibis. And we definitely should not be churning out any more graduates conversant in critical regionalism but ignorant of embodied energy, carbon sequestering, or albedo management.

To be intentionally provocative, isn’t the integrity of exposed concrete a bit like the oxymoronic righteousness of humane murder?

Maria Smith is a director at Interrobang architecture and engineering and Webb Yates Engineers, and is co-chief curator of the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019.
Marble and Ceramic City Ltd was appointed tiling contractor for a prestigious spa in the basement of a private London residence. The spa was entirely done out in Calacatta Oro bookmatched throughout to stunning effect with a main pool and three separate mini pools with jets, a steam room, shower and seating area. The stairs leading out of the basement were also tiled in Calacatta Oro.

The size of the slabs proved challenging as they measured up to 1000mm x 2500mm and some were 30mm thick. Specialised lifting equipment was needed to raise the slabs to the desired height.

Kerakoll adhesives were specified, with the project manager at MCC commenting ‘We chose Kerakoll because we are keen supporters of eco-friendly materials and we always have access to excellent technical support from Kerakoll.’

Biogel No Limits was used for the majority of the tiling with Biogel Extreme used in areas where it was necessary to fix directly on to metal. Both of these are from the revolutionary Biogel range that won the TTA award for Best Innovation 2018.

Biogel No Limits is a C2 TE S1 standard set powder form adhesive. The Shock White version was chosen for the white marble. Kerakoll’s white adhesives contain recycled Carrara marble which gives them a pure white not seen with other manufacturers’ products and this is particularly true of Shock White.

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Biogel adhesives offer simplicity of choice as the same adhesives can be used for all tiling materials and all substrates, no matter how deformable. They are perfect for use with large size tiles as they are easy to spread, hold their shape and wet the whole area, creating a structural bond between the substrate and the tile.

In addition, H40 Eco Marmorex with added latex was used in areas such as the pool surround and stairs that needed a rapid-setting adhesive so that other trades could get in quickly. Adding latex to H40 Eco Marmorex gives a pure white rapid set adhesive specially designed for use with delicate marbles and natural stone.

Kerakoll UK Ltd is more than happy to advise on products at the specification stage, as well as offering technical support both on and off site. •

The same Biogel adhesives can be used for all tiling materials and all substrates, no matter how deformable.
Belief system

Sometimes designing is so much better than thinking

Basil Spence was no great theoriser. Other architects over-think things: don’t get me started on the Smithsons.

The fraudulence of this hearth is obvious; it is after all outside. It must be outside, because that is where our peacocks strut, and far from where they roost.

George Grylls on Love Island: ribaj.com/loveisland

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It’s a cover-up
Getting plastered isn’t always as bad as it seems

Not far from where I live in east London there are a couple of blocks of council houses, designed by the London County Council’s architects’ department and built as part of the Ocean Estate at the strikingly early post-war date of 1953. They are built of slightly nicotine yellow brick with large casement windows and monopitch roofs, displaying the influence of Scandinavian modernism on the LCC at the time (or so Pevsner says). Individually they are distinctive little family homes and together comprise a surprisingly coherent and intact streetscape, arranged around a series of small greens. The residents clearly care for them, and I daresay in 20 or 30 years someone at Tower Hamlets will shake themselves from slumber and make them a conservation area.

I hope they do, anyway, because the investors are circling. An end-of-terrace in the block was recently bought by a small developer, refurbished, and resold – a sequence of events that was easy to see because they slapped creamy render all over the yellow brick, leaving it gleaming like a gold tooth.

There’s nothing inherently wrong with that, and they’re not the first – a few of the other homes in the group had been rendered. Several of these were, I expect, proud right-to-buy homeowners eager to exercise the privileges of their new status and differentiate their properties. Architects (and critics, and future historians) might flinch at the slow erosion of the group’s coherence, but that’s urban life.

What’s funny is that the group has a non-identical twin – a couple of blocks to the south, there are two more streets of post-war LCC cottages, without the Scandi influence and ensemble appeal, but solid and pleasant. These were originally rendered, and here homeowners and investors make their mark by chipping off the cement and revealing the rather undistinguished pink brick beneath.

The individual choices involved might be perfectly reasonable, but viewed collectively the fates of these two groups of homes suggest a certain indecision on the part of homeowners about the value of brick – or at least an agreement that the appearance of difference is more important than any other external treatment. Nevertheless I marvel at the mutations in the image of the workaday brick.

It was humble stuff, in the 19th century, at least compared to stone, which is why better class dwellings went in for stucco. But stucco thus had a disreputable air of artifice. ‘Even when most perfect, we know [stucco] to be a deception, and intended to hide deformity and worthlessness,’ wrote Robert Bakewell in 1834. That it was dressing a meaner material was no secret – the real concern was that builders might use such a duplicitous tool to get away with all kinds of tricks. Charles Eastlake, writing in 1868, calls it ‘specious’ and the invention of ‘an evil hour’: ‘good and bad work was reduced, in the eyes of the general public, to one common level’. (Both these quotes are drawn from Clive Aslet’s The English House, an amusing whistle-stop tour of 1000 years of domestic architecture published in 2008.)

Today, the streets in between the two clusters of LCC survivals are being filled in with giant blocks of apartments, one of which I inhabit. These are clad in brick slip panels, meaning that the brick’s transmutation is complete: now it is the surface treatment, covering the more prosaic modern concrete frames and insulation panels. And pre-2008 blocks in the neighbourhood have what only can be described as fake stucco: a concrete finish intended to resemble render over bricks, but with no brick beneath. Two different eras, the appearance of two different materials, and a bewildering variety of meaning, concealment and revelation, all on the doorstep.

Will Wiles is an author. Read him here every other month and at ribaj.com
Teamwork triumphs

Crossrail is glorious thanks to the project team’s culture of collaboration and respect

When the Elizabeth line opens in London in December, it will showcase the UK’s best architecture, engineering, design, contracting and project management, applied to the task of threading modern infrastructure through an ancient, congested city. This challenge, of course, is one that confronts all major cities of the world as global urbanisation continues. So the achievement is one of major significance as we leave the EU, hungry for new markets for our goods and services, just three months after the line opens for passengers.

I was shown around two of the stations recently, Paddington and Farringdon, which enabled me to grasp the difficulties and appreciate the sheer quality of the project team’s response. The line is no mere light railway or tube line extension. It is a full blown modern railway which will see nine-car trains travelling through the tunnels at up to 90km/h.

As a design and construction project, Crossrail, with its physical connections above, sideways and below, the sequences of trades and operations that must be accommodated and the importance of the public realm, makes any freestanding building look like a walk in the park. But the lessons we can learn from it are important and widely applicable.

First, Weston Williamson and the Crossrail team understood the value of design and the need for seamless interdisciplinary working – where information sharing and communication between professions, constructors and the supply chain is encouraged and enabled. Second, as a consequence of this, a sense of respect and selfless collaboration has emerged between the team members. All the people I met were positive about each other and the atmosphere polite and friendly. Success in these circumstances is not just about technology, data sharing or sophisticated project management, it’s more about profound knowledge and skill, mutual respect and the collaborative behaviour thus engendered.

As a result, the stations that will greet passengers in central London are stunning. They have an air of permanence and solidity, and thoroughly integrated design solutions enable large uninterrupted expanses of finish in materials that are beautifully patterned and textured in a restrained palette. The Paddington box is lined in brick and filled with light from the glazed colonnade above. The wonderful coffered tunnels of Farringdon flow with complex double curvature and house the most elegant lighting and information totems. This project is another triumph of brilliant engineering design for transportation infrastructure in a distinguished line from Isambard Kingdom Brunel through Charles Holden to Renato Benedetti in recent times. Julian Robinson, Crossrail head of architecture, should soon find himself among this pantheon.

We are seriously good at this, and we need to do more of it. Contrasting the smooth concrete and polished stone of Crossrail with the dilapidated and overcrowded trains I travelled on during a recent visit to Teesside was a jarring experience. In London and the South East we often fail to realise that the state has invested billions in our transport networks, leaving the rest of the country to make do with the tired old trains we cast aside. It’s no wonder the UK remains one of the most geographically unequal countries in the world.

My biggest regret is that the Crossrail design and procurement approach is not more commonplace. Its message is evident for all to see, especially visitors who will naturally expect infrastructure of this quality. But I hope the lessons are not lost on clients, regulators or funders in other sectors. Would that such thoroughgoing design and quality management was as prevalent in the housing industry, for example. The RIBA’s recent report, Joining the Dots, touches on many of these themes. I hope that we find a willing audience for it in Westminster and beyond.

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Crossrail makes a freestanding building look like a walk in the park, but we can learn important and widely applicable lessons from it.

Ben Derbyshire

DISCIPLINARY SUSPENSION

On 12 June 2018 the RIBA Hearings Panel found that Nicholas John of London was guilty of breaching Principles 1, 2 and 3 of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct, in that he delayed in refunding money to a client after advising her that he would repay it, made repayment of the money conditional on the removal of adverse online feedback, failed to adequately provide an effective service for the client and failed to adequately deal with a dispute and/or complaint appropriately. The Panel decided that the appropriate sanction for this was a suspension from membership for a period of 24 months, to be applied retrospectively from 19 October 2017, with the requirement that Mr John provide 10 references relating to his professional conduct during the time of his suspension.
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Culture
Profile

Hana Loftus (left) and Tom Grieve with plasterer downstairs at Trinity Works in Colchester. This is going to be the kitchen of Café Saison.
If you want to know how buildings are made, visit HAT Projects in Colchester. Hana Loftus and Tom Grieve have a habit of getting into construction on their own account – both on their largely self-built extended house in the countryside and in their own new studio. This is in what had been a 1974 Christian Science church, right in the medieval centre of town. Now it is Trinity Works, set to become a creative hub along with Colchester Makerspace which runs classes and workshops, providing the equipment for designer-makers from ceramics to textiles. There’ll also be an independent public café.

They saw the church lying empty and up for sale, round the corner from the office they were then renting. It was sound, well-designed by a good older-generation local architect, Bryan Thomas. Above all it was adaptable, with a variety of spaces and a secondary entrance. When a previous potential purchaser pulled out they took the plunge, bought the freehold, began the refurbishment. The day I visit, they’ve not long moved in. The eight-strong practice occupies the upstairs space behind the original full-height glazing to the narrow street. Down below the light-touch building work continues. The café kitchen and servery are going in. Original 1970s chandeliers have been moved to the main stairwell at the centre of the plan. As usual for these self-generated projects, the practice-turned-developer is managing all the trades itself, keeping things lean and efficient. They have built up enduring relationships such as with metalworker David Wesbroom of Wesbroom Engineering who has worked on five of their projects including the stair handrail and screen at Trinity Works.

They have a thought-through commercial strategy. The rent from the café (on a 10-year lease) and the Makerspace will help pay for it all, while the architects get themselves a reasonably high-profile shop window. And of course they have a property investment. But the thing with HAT Projects (the HAT stands for Hana and Tom) is that they are anything but small-town architects. In fact they haven’t yet had much work in Colchester (‘The challenge has been winning work locally,’ remarks
Being part of the 2017 RIBA RS cohort gave me a fascinating insight into the architectural advances my own generation is forging. Our discussions were lively and frank, I learnt so much and thoroughly enjoyed every part – Matthew Wilkinson, AL_A

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Grieve), though East Anglia has provided commissions such as the all-new High House artists’ studios in Purfleet, Essex, an exercise in bare-minimum functionalism over three levels using durable materials on an industrial estate. ‘The idea was to make it cheap, robust, affordable – not remotely romanticised,’ says Grieve. At first the planners didn’t quite get the aesthetic and started demanding balconies, says Loftus. ‘Why would you want balconies, next to the largest Carpetright in the country?’ End result: no balconies, just a Cartesian exercise in space and light on a budget of £836/m².

Galleries form an important strand of their work – see also their refurbishment of the Gasworks gallery in Vauxhall (RIBAJ October 2015). And no one can ignore the project with which they made their name: the £4 million Jerwood Gallery on the beach in Hastings, opened in 2012. This was in the family – Jerwood’s director Alan Grieve is Tom’s father – but that just increased the pressure to perform. Imagine the critical response, had it fallen flat. And at first there was strong local opposition to the project. ‘It was horrendous – I felt so exposed,’ says Grieve. But by common consent the young practice played a blinder with its characteristically simple and unaffected solution, clad in locally made glazed black tiles with a metallic sheen (RIBAJ, April 2012). This was and is one of the best and most ambitiously programmed of the regional galleries.

Loftus and Grieve set up the practice in 2007 to handle this – just the two of them at first, working from the bedroom of their recently-acquired Colchester house. They did not want to be lost in the London swirl, and Loftus was from nearby Suffolk. Besides, children were on the way – this is a family unit as well as a business partnership – and both share all the duties both work-wise and parent-wise. Colchester is a London-commuter town but is large enough, old enough (Roman) and far enough away to be itself.

They had met at Haworth Tompkins and there’s something of the pared down, celebration-of-materials, salvage chic approach of that practice in their work, they are happy to admit. But there are other influences. Grieve, who later worked for Tony Fretton, had spent his year out at Paxton Locher, where the late Richard Paxton with Heidi Locher set a high-profile – if financially bucaneering – example of the architect couple acting as developer through self-generated projects, generally their own spatially luxurious houses which they would build, inhabit for a while, then sell and move on. Grieve learned something else there, he says: Paxton was fond of technological gizmos but they didn’t always work too well.

When, later, I visit them in their own house out near Fordham, some six miles from Colchester, there’s a notable absence of gizmos. You find two new timber-framed brick-clad pavilions linked to the stripped-back 300-year-old coach house via a roofed courtyard or atrium. The layout is reminiscent of early van Heyningen and Haward: a pavilion for the parents, another for the children, another – the original house – for guests such as grandparents. All three converge on the common table in the atrium. It is a built diagram of family relationships, allowing for future change.

The planned landscaping was put on hold when Trinity Works hove into view to claim the couple’s full-time attention. Before that, Grieve in particular had been working on site at the house in the mornings, doing things such as casting his own reinforced concrete staircase – and learning fundamentals on the way, like making sure the shuttering is stout enough to contain the weight of the material, he remarks wryly, pointing out a slight bulge in the finished stair.

Loftus brings other experience, having worked also at General Public Agency and spent time at Rural Studio in Alabama in 2004-5, designing a $20,000 house as a prototype for improving the living conditions of...
those caught in poverty. The collaborative, community-led approach she took part in there has informed the approach of HAT Projects, which places great importance on the consultation side of things – to the extent that some of their commissions are purely consultative. She’s also a member of Public Practice, an initiative set up by Pooja Agrawal and Finn Williams to bring greater design expertise to planning departments; Loftus’ placement is with South Cambridgeshire District Council, working on village housing.

As a small office – Grieve reckons the ideal maximum size is 17 – they share design work though have different specialisms. Neither does practice admin – that’s the preserve of their trusted colleague and musician Robin Alderton, a stickler for detail as they both attest. So the principals are both job leaders. ‘Tom has the patience for houses – I don’t,’ says Loftus firmly, citing agonising over bathroom taps with clients in her case against. This prompts Grieve to respond: ‘I enjoy them – there’s something about working directly for the end user.’ So one imagines it’s mostly Grieve who’s building a new rural house in Shropshire for his now elderly parents – single-storey, designed for easy management, taking its form from agricultural buildings that used to stand there.

They have designed a group of four modern-vernacular houses, Hopton Yard in Suffolk, for a developer and wouldn’t mind a bit more of that. Another 37-unit housing project, as yet confidential, is in hand. Slightly surprisingly, given the visual solidity of most of their work, they have a sideline in lightweight structures, such as a tetrahedral installation at Silver End, the Crittall model village, for the recent Radical Essex weekend.

Although nearly everyone in the office lives locally the capital keeps calling with commissions. Following their makeover of the V&A’s Secretariat reception, they are in the thick of a £2.8 million job making a ‘friends’ suite, the Smith Centre, for the Science Museum, close to the main entrance. Working within former Post Office buildings to make a series of indoor and outside spaces, it’s the kind of light-touch project they are adept at – by necessity, as they reckon the budget could easily have been twice as much.

They seem unfazed by the challenge and anyway, they’ve never been ones to overdo the finishes. ‘When you’ve got materials with patina, you’ve got richness and warmth,’ says Grieve. Ask them to define what their own architecture is and it’s not about style or materials. Grieve reiterates: ‘We want to talk to the actual people who will be using the building – we’re trusted to do that communication job.’ And Loftus adds: ‘You have to have respect in the work that you put in: to be clear, not condescending.’ To work with, and with respect for, the user: it’s no bad mantra.
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Roll over Palladio

Come on classicists – venture outside your Palladian comfort zone and take a few more risks with materials and manners

Charles Holland

Classical revival is in the air; the Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) is an increasingly voluble presence in the RIBA and Hugh Pearman has called in these pages for the British Pavilion at the next Venice Architecture Biennale to be given over to them. Young practice Smith and Taylor teach an unashamedly classical design studio at Kingston School of Architecture and motifs such as colonnades and arches have become almost ubiquitous in current student work.

Nevertheless, old battles rage on. When I told an architect friend who lives in Cambridge that I was coming to visit The University Arms, the city’s recently reopened hotel designed by John Simpson Architects, she snorted with derision. If a nuclear bomb landed on Cambridge, she said, the only thing left standing would be the porte-cochère that adorns the front of the new building.

The University Arms, dating from the early 19th century, was the first hotel in Cambridge. It faced onto Regent Street, sandwiched between Park Street and Parker’s Piece, a large area of open common. It was enlarged by the architect G J Skipper, first in 1903 and again in the late 1920s. His work, distinguished by large bay windows and copper domed towers, was described, somewhat sniffily, by Pevsner as ‘more like Bournemouth than Cambridge’.

The Georgian frontage was first replaced in 1965 by respected modernist practice Feilden + Mawson and John Simpson updates this in a style that mixes neoclassical monumentality with polite neo-Georgian. The differences between the two reflect changing architectural attitudes over the intervening 50 years. If, in the early 1960s, classical architecture was a marginal activity, today it feels like the architecture of a new establishment, increasingly deployed by upmarket institutions and high-end developers.

Feilden + Mawson’s soft-brutalist contribution was an expressed concrete frame in-filled with brown brick. A saw-tooth profile allowed rooms on the Regent Street elevation a side-glance towards Parker’s Piece. The most obvious feature, though, was the ground level car park, separated from pedestrians by a raised podium entrance. The rest of the hotel frontage hovered over this space, with inevitable noise problems. It epitomised a mid-century modernist acceptance of the car as a generator of urban form and subordination of the pedestrian experience to it.

Simpson’s replacement sets out to restore the street frontage while acknowledging that most guests still arrive by car. The monumental porte-cochère provides a theatrical point for a taxi drop-off, and the hotel brochure depicts this space occupied by a Bentley Continental with uniformed staff standing by. The intersection of classical architecture with a certain kind of luxury branding is thus made explicit.

This gesture means the hotel front proper is pulled back from the building line, creating a visual connection and pedestrian route to Parker’s Piece. The slightly ambiguous result – part parking space, part colonnade – works quite well as a generous widening of the street experience though, inevitably, the hotel realm takes precedence.

Behind this triumphal entrance is a new...
hotel building that sits stylistically somewhere between Skipper’s ‘Seaside Victorian’ and the 1930s neo-Georgian of Park Street opposite. Simpson’s classically proportioned facades faced in pale brick create a reasonably polite piece of urban infill, albeit an unashamedly large one. New work includes the addition of an extra storey to parts of the hotel, increasing its bulk along the narrowest section of Park Street. Simpson’s architecture has undoubtedly been employed to smooth this process, creating a hotel with 192 rooms without scaring the conservationist horses.

The interior spaces are mostly the work of Swedish designer Martin Brudnizki, executed in a theatrical combination of neo-deco meets senior common room. Only the front reception space is Simpson’s and this is neo-classical via Soane. The entrance volume is divided in two, with reception and restaurant lobbies separated by a big, classically detailed timber screen. Large semi-circular clerestory windows with pea-green frames light the space from above. The decision to split it is questionable but the screen works well in navigating this compromise and the space as a whole has both heft and punch.

The central question posed by Simpson’s new building, though, is this: to what extent should we welcome the return of classical architecture as a mainstream style? I believe it depends on the kind of classicism on offer. Raymond Erith, one of the very few good traditional architects working in the post-war years, coined the term progressive classicism to describe the work of his hero Sir John Soane. For Erith, Soane’s inventiveness pointed the way to a form of classical architecture that could evolve to answer contemporary building needs. His own designs combined elegant simplicity with mannerist touches. They tended to be hybrid rather than pure and had a lightness of touch that kept them clear of stiffness or pomposity.

By contrast today’s classical revival buildings often feel weighed down by a desire for correctness and propriety above all else. If classicism can be seen as a form of period drama or re-enactment – and let’s be honest, much modern architecture is too – then why is it always the same period? A worthy 18th century English Palladianism dominates. Virtually no one mines the fruitier end of Victorian architecture, or the kind of baroque mannerism practised by Hawksmoor or Vanbrugh. Today’s classicism doesn’t take enough risks, with materials or manners.

Ultimately, the classicism of The University Arms is too conformist for my taste, too willing to play a game of appearing civilised while maxing out its net to gross ratio. If we are to have a classical revival, it needs to be more inventive, less respectful and more inclined to take risks. I have little time for the kind of technological determinism that would hold, say, parametricism a more appropriate style of architecture for today than classicism. Architectural development is not a straightforwardly linear process, whatever the modernists decreed, and history is as valid a source of inspiration as any other. But to move on, to generate new things rather than make replicas of old ones, classicism needs to break with its establishment values and address other programmes, other tastes and other challenges. Smith and Taylor’s studio experiments, Adam Nathaniel Furman’s delirious classical mash-ups or even the inventive but highly satirical work of artist Pablo Bronstein point the way. •
Archigram lives

Bouncy castle meets giant rubber duck in this year’s Antepavilion, an immensely appealing inflatable theatre

Hugh Pearman

It’s part Zeppelin, part boat, part marrow, part rubber duck, part bouncy castle and all Archigram. This year’s ‘Antepavilion’ by the Architecture Foundation is a floating, moving, inflatable bright yellow theatre that is immensely appealing, if not very easy to get into and out of.

Designed by Thomas Randall-Page and Benedetta Rogers, this is the second of the AF’s Antepavilions (the name is meant to give a sense of those on the threshold of their careers). It was built in east London at the Hoxton wharf owned by sponsor Russell Gray of Shiva Ltd, a highly unusual property company concerned with traditional London fabrication and craft-based industries. The pair won this year’s competition out of 132 entries, all given the same boat to work from. Last year’s winner, a silver-shingled timber-framed rooftop structure by PUP Architects masquerading as H&V plant, is still there for comparison purposes.

The foundations for this one, which is called AirDraft, consist of a proper old wide-beam motorised steel lighter. Randall-Page and Rogers, with engineer AKTII, have inserted two inflatable structures into it: one for the gently raked squishy auditorium you see here, the other for the superstructure. The bright yellow fabric structures were made by Cameron Balloons. A flap of the same material seals the entrance aperture while a clear pvc strip at gunwhale height provides all-round vision.

The lighter’s proportions are generous enough for this to be a genuinely usable space, though the stage area – a small semi-circular area of floor at the entrance end of the boat – is never going to take a big cast of performers. Backstage is a tiny room under the bows that doubles as entrance foyer. You have to climb down through a hatch to get into and out of it.

AirDraft was shuttling to and fro along the Regent’s Canal in August, hosting daily performances ranging from spoken word to comedy, theatre and music. Then it will be available for hire. Deflated, it passes easily through bridges and tunnels. Inflated, it brings bouncy pneumatic pleasure to all.

Above AirDraft has two inflatable structures: one for the gently raked squishy auditorium you see here, the other for the superstructure.

Below Ahoy there, amorphous object! AirDraft’s foundations consist of an old wide-beam motorised steel lighter.
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Composer Michael Price’s latest album uses music to bring out the spirit of seven buildings

Pamela Buxton

How do you channel the spirit of a building in music? Three times Emmy Award winning composer Michael Price set himself that challenge for Tender Symmetry, a new album inspired by seven historic locations ranging from the atmospheric ruins of Fountains Abbey to the modernist domesticity of Erno Goldfinger’s 2 Willow Road.

Price embarked on the project after working on a previous album in Berlin, where he felt influenced by the atmosphere of the city and its buildings. Keen to find suitable buildings in England that weren’t of a stereotypical chocolate-box nature, he collaborated with the National Trust to identify six locations, including the Speke Hall Tudor manor house on Merseyside and the Quarry Bank industrial heritage site in Wilmslow, Cheshire. He added a seventh, non-Trust building, All Hallows church at Gospel Oak. Each became both the inspiration for his composition and the venue for the actual recording, with musicians performing in a range of testing conditions including deep in the World War II tunnels at Fan Bay in Dover.

For each location, Price first went on a recce to explore the atmosphere of the building and identify two contrasting places within it for the recording. At Quarry Bank, for example, this took place within the Georgian mill owner’s house and also in the steam house deep down in the mill itself. After completing the composition over a period of months, he returned to the location with musicians and vocalists to make the recording, working around public opening hours.

‘The journey and the exploration built into each of the pieces is hopefully what gives them their character,’ he said.

At 2 Willow Road, Price enjoyed the contrast between the domesticity of the house and Goldfinger’s more monumental, Brutalist creations. He was also particularly taken with the extraordinary spiral staircase, and chose the top of this as the location to record soprano Grace Davidson. Listen carefully and you can hear the sound of children at a nearby playground, conveying something of what he describes as the ‘domestic modernist’ quality of the house. He recorded a string quartet in the wood-panelled back living room, which, he said, felt like you were enclosed in a musical instrument.

Price, who describes himself as an amateur lover of architecture, plans to compose in response to the built environment in future, as yet unformulated, projects.

Tender Symmetry by Michael Price is released on the Erased Tapes label on 31 August, 2018. The track Shade of Dreams – inspired by All Hallows church at Gospel Oak – is available to stream at soundcloud.com/erasedtapes/michael-price-shade-of-dreams
Christopher ‘Kit’ Evans always exuded an air of slight exasperation, languid melancholy or amused indifference. A good-looking, punctilious and well-read man, he was a member of a very particular set – the north London, AA-trained, dinner-party circle around Jim Stirling and James Gowan. After qualifying in 1955 Kit had worked for Stirling and Gowan on university and housing schemes. After they split he remained loyal to Gowan, reminding everyone that he was the creative force on the celebrated Leicester Engineering building. Michael Wilford, who arrived in the Stirling office later, recalls that his name was always mentioned there with respect.

He also worked with Paul Manousso on office designs and luxury housing, and with Chapman Taylor Partners on a plastics factory. During this period he taught architecture part time at Regent Street Polytechnic and at the Royal College of Art. He broadened his experience by spending six months teaching at the University of California, Berkeley and worked with Charles Moore.

In 1967 he was recruited by Bill Jack to join the young London office of BDP, and there he stayed until retirement. Connections mattered: Bill’s wife Janet, also AA-trained, had been one of Stirling’s many ex-girlfriends. Janet Jack became head of landscape at BDP but also ran an independent consultancy and nearly always got the landscape job on Stirling’s buildings. The families were close, taking holidays in Normandy together. Kit would come along but, as Bill Jack remembers it, was always somewhat aloof, to be found sitting cross-legged on his own in front of his tent at the far end of the beach.

On arriving at BDP he immediately took on a complex retail-cultural project in Leicester including the Haymarket Theatre. Later he became something of an authority on airport terminal design, both theoretically and in actuality. He designed the domestic departure lounge and shuttle terminal at Heathrow. A typical Kit Evans project at BDP would be a retail-led town centre development, housing or a computer centre – he was also responsible for the extensive retail area at Canary Wharf – but in contrast to these relatively conventional projects he took charge of Falklands Mount Pleasant Airport. Following the Falklands conflict, with an urgent need to strengthen the islands’ air links to the rest of the world, this was commissioned in 1983 and completed in 1986. Evans produced the development plan, carried out the environmental impact assessment and, with the BDP multi-disciplinary team, designed the buildings.

He was an awkward-squad member of BDP, believing in the primacy of architects when all disciplines were meant to be equal. ‘Judged by my peers under the heading “partnership policy and methods”, I had the lowest mark of all 33 partners in the firm,’ he revealed in the practice magazine in 1979. ‘So that tells you all you need to know about me.’ For good measure he then ran through examples of architects as hero in fiction and film and observed: ‘I cannot recall a single H&V or electrical engineer figuring in the literature of the last 150 years.’ On receiving a written document from one of the engineers, it was not unknown for him to correct the grammar and spelling in red ink and send it back with a score – 3/10, say.

He designed his own house in Chelsea and converted a barn in Wiltshire, in retirement living mostly in France. ‘Loves pizza and string quartets, hates sociologists and smoking, things are nicer than people, Wodehouse greater than Dostoevsky’ was his personal self-assessment. He was also a very good architect. He is survived by his sons Dan and Toby, his erstwhile wife, now Marsha Grimwade, and his later partner Claire Jortner.

Hugh Pearman
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‘Members might have been somewhat surprised last month when the Journal discussed the Prince’s views on access to buildings by the disabled,’ wrote editor Peter Murray in the July 1984 issue of this magazine. ‘Views which formed a major part of the speech and seemingly ignored everything else HRH had said. The reason for this is that the article in the Journal was prepared and printed before the speech was made and at the time of going to press we had no idea he was involving himself even deeper in the architectural debate.’

We know what he’s referring to, don’t we? THAT speech. The speech Prince Charles made on 30 May at the Hampton Court gala which was meant to be the highlight of the Institute’s 150th anniversary Year of Architecture. The one in which, without warning, he launched his campaign against what he saw as the evils of modernist architecture. When he dismissed ABK’s winning entry to the first competition to extend the National Gallery as ‘a monstrous carbuncle upon the face of a much loved friend’. When he contributed uninvited to the public inquiry debate on his polo-field friend Peter Palumbo’s plans for a Mies tower in the City, Mansion House Square (‘better suited to downtown Chicago than the City of London.’)

As guests stared open-mouthed and RIBA President Michael Manser’s face became a mask, the prince concluded: ‘In this 150th anniversary year, which provides an opportunity for a fresh look at the path ahead and in which by now you are probably regretting having asked me to take part, may I express the earnest hope that the next 150 years will see a new harmony between imagination and taste and in the relationship between the architects and the people of this country.’

Editors hate it when this kind of thing happens, even more so then. Murray couldn’t rush out an online newsflash or pithy tweet: the lengthy lead times of print meant his response had to wait until July. By then the Charles anti-modernism stance had gone several times round the world and the Institute was knocked into a policy tailspin from which it took years to recover.

Looking back, it is instructive how the respect for the monarchy then prevalent made people bite their tongues rather than snap back. The Sainsbury family stumped up for the National Gallery to run a second competition for a larger extension – the Sainsbury Wing by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown we see today. Palumbo’s Mansion House Square was duly rejected, whereupon the prince took a swipe at its utterly different replacement by Stirling Wilford, No 1 Poultry (‘rather like an old 1930s wireless set’). Finally Palumbo was piqued to respond: ‘I can only say God bless the Prince of Wales, and God save us from his architectural judgement.’ The old wireless set is now listed grade II*.

Back in July 1984, Murray was diplomatic. ‘On two points everyone I have spoken to are agreed: firstly, it was a good thing that the heir to the throne is so passionately interested in architecture and, secondly, that the Royal Gala at Hampton Court, organised for the presentation of the Gold Medal to Charles Correa, was the wrong place for him to voice his criticisms. Correa’s triumph was overshadowed by the debate surrounding the Prince.’

Both the Prince and Correa were much later to be hosted at the RIBA. Just not at the same time.
Six Pillars
Dulwich, 1934

In 1933 Valentine Harding, a member of Berthold Lubetkin’s Tecton practice, was commissioned to build a house on the Dulwich Estate for the headmaster of Dulwich College Preparatory School. The estate’s trustees were anxious that the house not be ‘injurious to the amenities of the neighbourhood’ and objected to his radically modernist design in the Georgian and Victorian setting. They eventually consented but insisted on a location at the very edge of the estate and only after London stock brick was incorporated into the facade.

Ironically, some of the historic housing stock was later demolished by the estate to make way for its numerous 1960s housing developments. Harding used this project to experiment with Corbusian characteristics including the pilotis on the facade and the duplex entrance hall dissected by a sculptural staircase and lit by a square lattice screen. This window was a typical Tecton device and one that had also been utilised at the earlier Highpoint I. The fluctuating patterns of light and shade created by the screen are exploited here by the Architectural Review’s staff photographers Dell and Wainwright. ●

Justine Sambrook
Dishoom gets the acoustic treatment

Set in Kensington’s beautiful Grade II listed Barkers Building, Dishoom was designed by interior architects Macaulay Sinclair’s with the aim of transporting diners back in time to Jazz Age Bombay.

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