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Houses

Made in Dundee

Ghastly modernism

Five standout homes

Kengo Kuma's V&A ship sails in

James Stevens Curl blasts everything non-Trad

47

32

111

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1

Buildings



HUFTON+CROW

Comment

07
Homes and cultural
places lead this issue

Gallery

08
Victorian firefighting
and domesticity appear
again in 6a's conversion

Photograph

15
James Brittain under
Habitat '67

Cultural centre

16
MCW Architects
brings Scandinavia to
Stapleford Granary

Gallery

24
Goldsmiths wanted a
rooftop gallery but
Assemble had bigger
ideas

V&A Dundee

32
Kengo Kuma's sharp
geometry adds up but
his gallery tries too hard

MacEwen Award

45
Socially conscious
project? Enter now

Houses

47
Five homes to coincide
with the RIBA award

48

Highland blackhouse
reinterpreted by Mary
Arnold-Forster

58

Harrison Brookes rides
to the rescue of Old
Court House

64

Texture makes inside
as compelling as out on
6a's Coastal House

72

A library to die for:
Tonkin Liu's Old Shed,
New House

78

The closer you look the
better Kenwood Lee by
Cousins & Cousins' gets

2

Intelligence



IWAN BAAH

Q&A

85
Lucy Carmichael
from the RIBA on the
consultation for the
Plan of Work for Fire
Safety

Rising Stars

86
Úna Breathnach-
Hifeárnáin's take on
Brexit and foreign
architects across
Europe

Language of design

91
A new conceptual
language underpins
design. Master it to
stay on top

Legal

95
Who pays what in
a net contribution
contract?

Diary

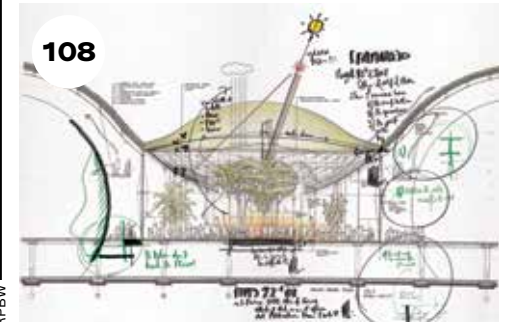
96
Maria Smith comes
over all disciplinarian

Robots are extremely flexible and efficient
– they can arrange bricks in an almost
endless number of configurations

Stephen Cousins sees the possibilities
of automation in construction: [ribaj.com/
robotslaybricks](http://ribaj.com/robotslaybricks)

3

Culture



RPBW

Leader

103
MJ Long and Sandy
Wilson showed how to
live and work together

Wiles & Wainwright

105
Oliver Wainwright on
culture in Finland

President

106
New safety tests will
boost our authority
says Ben Derbyshire

Review

108
Explorer of light,
master builder and
bridge donator – Renzo
Piano at the RA

Review

111
Making Dystopia:
an anti-modernist
diatribe with a sense of
grievance

Supplement

117
Norbord's Room
Within a Room
competition

Obit

115
Deborah Saunt
remembers MJ Long

**RIBA
J125
YEARS**

Archive

129
Welcome to the Stirling
Prize – and the strong
views its awards
provoked

Parting shot

130
Beyond the Opera
House: Jørn Utzon's
Bagsvaerd Church

On the cover

Old Court House,
Worcestershire, restored
and photographed by
Harrison Brookes Architects





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SIMPLY IMAGINE



1: Buildings

Presumably people will try to reinvent the Sydney Opera House for ever – as if it needed reinventing. The water-side cultural icon-building is still such a currency and yes, we are talking about Kengo Kuma's new V&A Dundee (P32). Is it enough to bring the tourists flocking? But most architecture, as we all know, is not like this. Much of it consists of older spaces adapted to new uses, as with MCW's Stapleford Granary on the edge of Cambridge (P16), 6a's latest addition to the South London Gallery in a former fire station (P8) or Assemble's Goldsmiths Centre of Contemporary Art (P24). Or of course the 20-year

old Dundee Contemporary Arts warehouse conversion by Richard Murphy, well worth revisiting if you're in the neighbourhood.

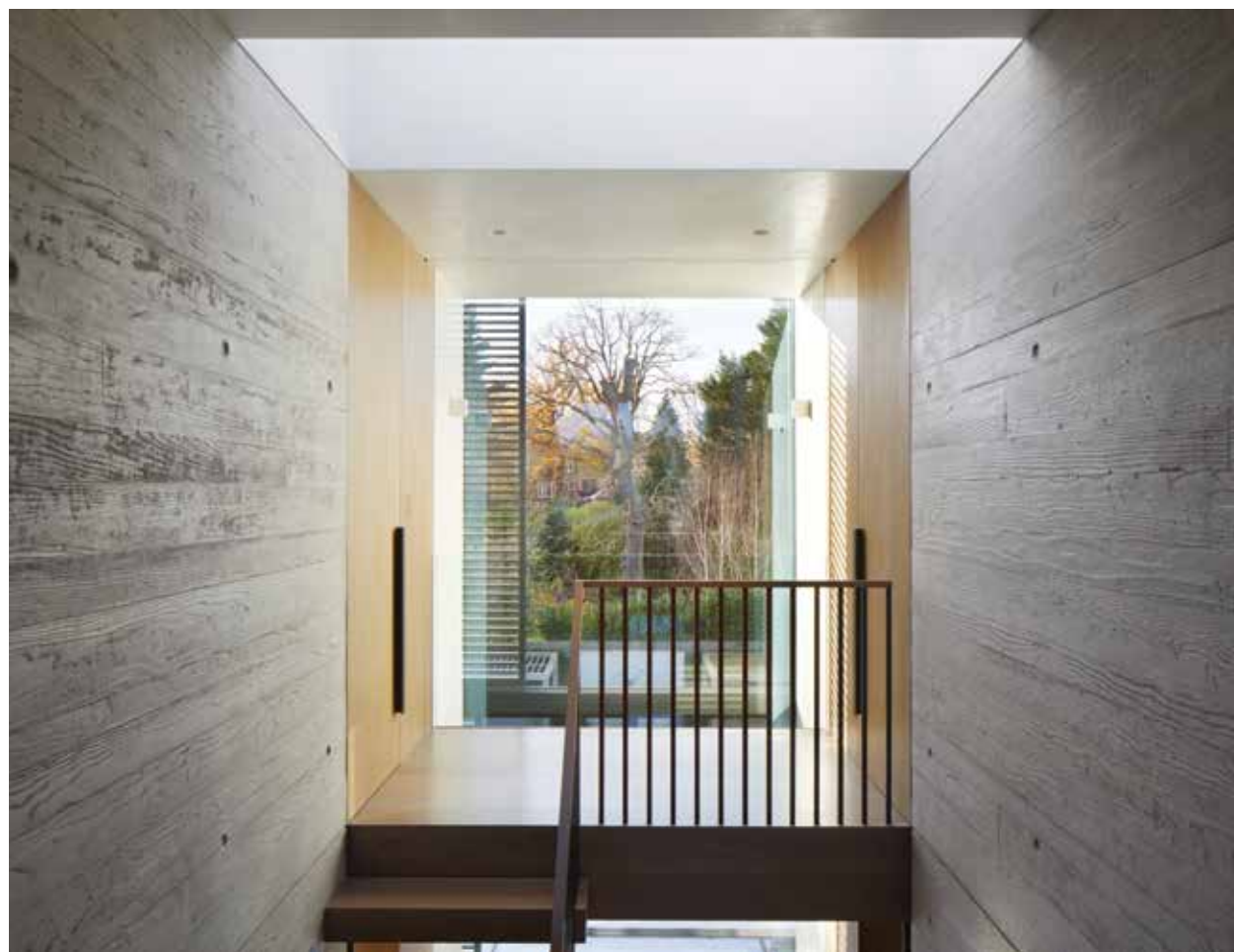
And – despite the frequent complaint that most housing in the UK is not done by architects – again we know that housing work accounts for a large part of many practices' activities. So in this bumper autumn issue from P47 we run a series of exemplary houses, all over the UK, both refurbished and newly built. And there is more online at ribaj.com. They all meet the ultimate test: would YOU want to live there? ●

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It's not necessarily density itself that people object to as much as having it foisted upon them

Alex Whitecroft sees a bright future for community housing
ribaj.com/community/housingbetterhomes

Kenwood Lee House in London by
Cousins and Cousins, page 78.



JACK HOBHOUSE

Gothic novel

6a revives the ghosts of the original Victorian firefighters and their families in its light touch gallery conversion

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Johan Dehlin



The staircase is the main formal move standing out against the general 'light touch' approach.



North elevation to Peckham Rd.

If the expression of a sense of the past runs like a seam through the work of architect 6a, nowhere might it carry greater mnemonic weight than at its South London Gallery (SLG) in Peckham. Long before the practice's 2016 collaboration with artist Gabriel Orozco to create the SLG's radially-inspired garden and its earlier Clore Gallery and education space extension, it seems that 6a was there in utero. Stephanie Macdonald recalls a visit in the late eighties, made as a young Portsmouth Fine Art student with her year group; a buzzing show at the end of a trek down a long, narrow corridor to the make-shift gallery, and a lively drinks event in the concrete yard that the Orozco Garden would eventually transplant. Whether this memory influenced the firm's later interventions Macdonald doesn't say, but she was reassured, after the 2010 extension doubled the size of the SLG, by people telling her that the nature of the place – its 'genius loci' – hadn't really changed at all.

But this should come as no surprise, since the original gallery – whose motto, 'The source of art is in the life of the people', is set into socialist artist Walter Crane's now hidden marquetry floor – has always been less about the space itself than what it facilitates.

The gallery has always been less about the space itself than what it facilitates



Left Cresy's main gothic elevation has been repaired and delicately cleaned but bears the marks of time. Gallery doors open to engage with the front court.

Below left Gallery spaces are almost domestically sized white boxes.

At any time of day locals fill the SLG's café or the back rooms are hosting community/school outreach events, and the very creation of the garden celebrates the connection of the gallery to the council estate behind it. Always sticking to its principles, its benevolence was rewarded in 2014 when an anonymous donor gave the SLG the dilapidated 19th century fire station building almost directly across the road from it. With its past record for transforming its spaces, 6a was asked to convert this surprise acquisition into SLG's newest iteration.

Designed by an un-fêted Edward Cresy Junior in 1867, the grade II building, in a vaguely glum cod gothic, is most notable for being the first example of the style employed to express the nature of the newly established London Metropolitan Board's fire service, until then the remit of private companies only. With two horse drawn fire engines stationed in the front of the structure and stable blocks at the rear, the building's municipal purpose at ground level made way for a more domestic language above, where the firemen's families would have lived. With a construction budget of £1.5 million, 6a wanted to reveal and celebrate both aspects while inserting new gallery spaces that would, in effect, double SLG's capacity all over again.

Interestingly, 6a's inspiration for the fire station's key internal move came from the external metal escape stair at the back which connected the former living areas to ground level. With multiple internal timber stairs locking the space down, the firm felt



IN NUMBERS

400m²
gross internal area

£4m
total project cost

27
firemen and families
occupying in 1911

130,000
visitors/year since 2010
up from 25,000

Below Moved walls now allow clear views along the length of the gallery. Where possible, floors are original.

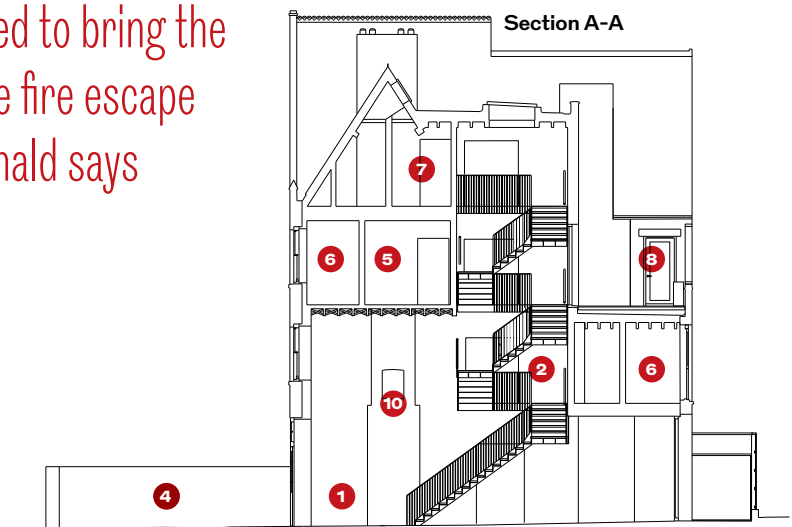
Right The steel and concrete stair creates the gallery's civic feel.

a lot was to be gained from ripping them out and positioning a single new staircase internally, springing off what would have been the brick chevron access way from the front courtyard to the stables. 'We just decided to bring the language of the fire escape inside,' Macdonald says nonchalantly of the simple but far from utilitarian white steel and concrete feature stair that winds its way assuredly up the revealed and stabilised brick and timber structure to the upper gallery floors and attic level artist studios.

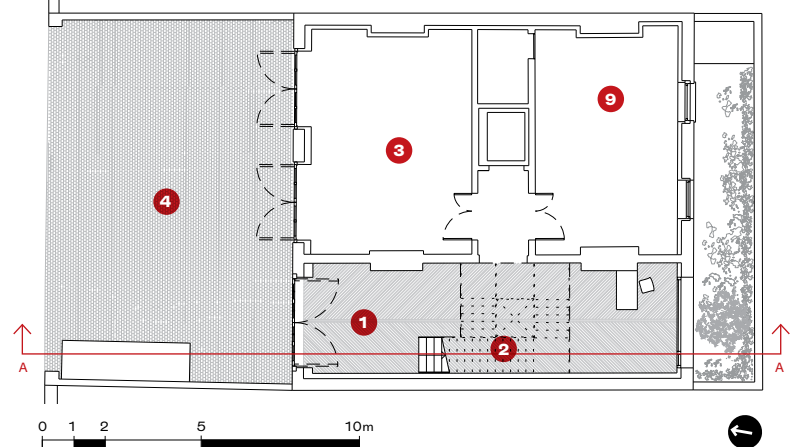
And it's a solid beast – there's no contingency here or trace of footfall transmitted along the stringer. The soffit's steel structure echoes that of the gallery floor joists; with grey-green pre-cast concrete treads nestling alternately between diamond punched metal risers. A balustrade of long, thin square metal sections subtly marks its arrival at ground with a double-sized terminating flat; and where they meet newly revealed high-level window openings they billow out into it with a bustle-like flourish. And all the way a fine, moulded handrail curls luxuriantly up at landing turns. All this is only perceived in its entirety because the firm's second move was to remove the first floor



'We just decided to bring the language of the fire escape inside,' Macdonald says nonchalantly



Ground floor plan



- 1 Entrance/ former rear stable access
- 2 New stair
- 3 Gallery
- 4 Front court
- 5 Store
- 6 WC
- 7 Artists' studio space
- 8 Patio off kitchen gallery
- 9 SLG archive exhibition space
- 10 'Hanging fireplace'

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to open out the space – a move intimidated by the fireplace now hanging at first floor level, blackened and redundant. ‘We found people are loath to go to upper levels of galleries if they can’t see what’s happening,’ observes Macdonald. And so it is here; looking up or vertiginously down, the space feels connected and undeniably civic.

By contrast, the gallery spaces themselves, walls shifted to allow clear views through from front to back, have a charming domestic scale. In counterpoint to SLG’s larger exhibition spaces, the idea here is to allow more intimate showings for major artists, or for younger, less renowned artists to exhibit comfortably in the space. That domesticity is expressed in the second-floor kitchen, a nod to past habitation, where artists can get cooking or chefs get artistic; a surrealist touch Dali, of the Cookbook, might well approve of. Timber floorboards, some reconditioned, some reclaimed, some cut with slats as air feeds, tell the same, strange, homely tale. I remark how odd it is when I observe those same timbers running into the new access lift as we walk past to the enormous picture window on the ground floor’s south side. ‘Everything’s odd in a lift,’ rejoinders Macdonald and in a surreal way,



Above left Where windows were revealed, balusters adapt to engage with them.

Top Upper level artists’ studios, ceilings removed, take advantage of the formerly hidden full height of the attic.

Above The second floor gallery kitchen is a quirky, unexpected insertion.



The gallery spaces themselves have a charming domestic scale

she’s actually right. Out back meanwhile, she points out a huge acacia pravissima, freshly planted, its golden flowers peppering the glass like a Pollock study in yellow where the stables would have been.

It’s a shocking flash of brightness that stands out against Cresy Junior’s generally dull gothic – a mood that 6a chose to work with rather than oppose. On the street elevation, the firm opted merely to delicately clean and repair the Gault brickwork, terracotta and Portland dressed stone – to the extent that you might ask if anything had been done there at all. But new guttering and a handsome replica black wrought iron fire station lantern intimate the guiding hand of the restorer.

The result is an annex to SLG that, from outside at least, looks part Addams Family art fest, part burned-out shell; while both inside and out, the message it’s now communicating is a satisfying meld of fantasy and fact. Engaging as it does with forecourt and street, the Fire Station is a version of SLG that eschews its slightly clandestine quality for a more overt, expositional feel – engaging directly with the public realm. This has all been done via a selective reformulation of its past to offer a new reading; one jewel of a move fixed into a barely changed setting. But then, sometimes artistry is best evinced in the skill of knowing when not to do something; an assertion that Junior, consigned by history to abide in the shadow of his bolder, more prolific father, might at the very least, concede for himself here. ●

Credits
Client South London Gallery
Architect 6a architects
Structural engineer Eckersley O’Callaghan
M&E engineer Serge Lai
Cost consultant Stockdale
Contractor Lengard

Left A 1905 picture of the fire station, replete with fire wagons.

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**Undercroft, Habitat '67,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

Photograph James Brittain

Words Jan-Carlos Kucharek

I realise immediately that it's a stupid question when I ask if he has a Twitter handle. For James Brittain, who is, slightly confusingly, predominantly based in Canada, has spent a good part of our call discussing the rampant hegemony of social media and the empty Instagram-ready digital imagery that it creates. Having worked in the business for over 20 years, he believes that mainstream architectural photography, driven both by the need to portray buildings as 'perfect' in the eyes of the client and click-bait oriented digital

consumers, has shied-away from engaging with the actual experience of architecture. That there is no meaningful, critical dialogue with it – that we've come to a dead-end.

Extricating himself awhile from this 'hamster wheel' of commercial pressures, Brittain instead decided to go rogue with a personal project, 'Revisited'. There are countless images out there showing Moshe Safdie's iconic Habitat '67 housing, but few, if any, that portray it like this. Here he takes us to its undercroft and the massive structure that bears its dramatic living blocks aloft, and there he invites us to ask questions about it. 'I want to focus on how the space feels rather than the formal aspects of its architecture,' he says, challenging the viewer to consider

'how it's used and inhabited, how its public and private spaces are occupied and adapted by residents'.

And so, under the massive belly of Habitat '67's much-vaunted form, we enter a sunless world of Piranesi-like monochrome. Here you'll find the building's cleaner – perhaps brushing up trash, perhaps setting his house in order before asking Charon to transfer him across the mythical Styx beside him. 'It's okay for photographs to not be perfect, for them to be faithful to a subjective experience of architecture, to express the tension between beauty and ugliness,' says Brittain. 'Is it still possible to photograph the spaces around us thoughtfully and usefully? And if so, how do we do that?' ●



Nurture in nature

Life-long learning pioneer the Association for Cultural Exchange will reach further still from its new farm premises

Words: Bobby Open Photographs: Jim Stephenson

Stapleford Granary sits at the southern tip of Cambridge, ostensibly on the edge of the village of Stapleford, but in reality at a point where the expanding city meets countryside proper. In 2009, the Association for Cultural Exchange (ACE) Foundation bought a series of derelict Victorian farm buildings from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, with a vision for a community-focused study centre for education, culture, music and the arts, and a home for the ACE Foundation itself. This has been transformed by a new development by Cambridge-based MCW Architects in a project initiated by Toni Moses Design. The granary now includes a performance space, galleries, studios and creative workshops, with offices for the ACE Foundation and sister company ACE Cultural Tours.

The ACE Foundation is a non-profit educational trust established in 1958 by Philip Barnes who, on returning from two years of service in military intelligence in the 1940s, wanted to encourage continued adult education, for both its value to the individual and its importance in fostering cultural relations and international understanding. There were pioneering early study courses on the search for identity in modern democracies and in free societies.

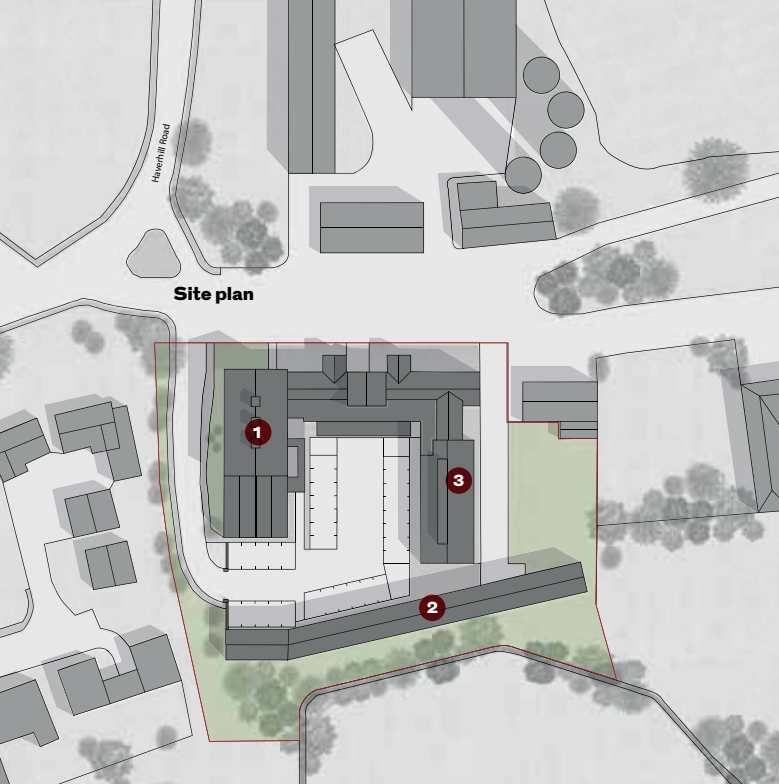
How better to encourage lifelong learning than tours? So ACE Cultural Tours was formed – working with the 20th Century Society and Fauna and Flora International. The link with architecture was critical from the Foundation's earliest days: as a focus for international tours and, especially via ACE

Below Bury Farm before work started.



The glazed 'long gallery' across the length of the building ties the three parts together,





IN NUMBERS

£1.4m
total construction cost
(second phase)

£1,733/m²
gifa (second phase)

827m²
area (second phase)

- 1** Phase one: Gallery, studios, recital hall
- 2** Phase one: Outbuilding: meeting rooms, offices, workshops
- 3** Phase two: Offices and support

Looking over countryside but in reach of the M11 and Shelford train station.



The long gallery acts as informal exhibition space and part of a flowing foyer.



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trustee David Medd, a subject of consideration in its own right.

Profits from the group tour company are reinvested in university summer schools, educational fellowships, study courses and a plethora of worldwide sustainable projects in art, architecture, design, music, theatre, archaeology, conservation and heritage methodology, development studies and the natural world.

Those profits also funded the purchase and development of the Bury Farm site in Stapleford. ACE Cultural Tours' new open-plan offices form one side of the central courtyard – an airy, passively ventilated space to strategies developed with engineers KJ Tait. Within the courtyard, MCW has designed a glazed 'long gallery' extension linking the offices and main entrance with exhibition and performance spaces. Flanked by a shaded terrace, the gallery acts as an informal exhibition space, circulation space and, for events and concerts, forms part of the flowing foyer sequence leading to the main performance space at the upper level. A further courtyard in external blackened-timber with a galvanised steel staircase has increased capacity of the performance space from 60 to 100.

The naturally ventilated performance

Credits

Client ACE Foundation
Architect MCW Architects
Designer Toni Moses Design
MEP engineer Smith & Wallwork
Civil and structural engineer KJ Tait
Quantity surveyor Bremner Partnership
Landscape The Landscape Partnership
Contractor TJ Evers

Profits from the group tour company are reinvested in

space is already gaining a reputation for acoustic quality, with a growing programme of international calibre performers. Concerts are relatively informal, the architecture supporting the shift in focus from day to evening mode, much as Leslie Martin's West Road Concert Hall in Cambridge does. In line with ACE's emphasis on continuing education, there is a programme of community events and workshops in conjunction with local arts, cultural and music groups, and lectures by prominent authors and experts.

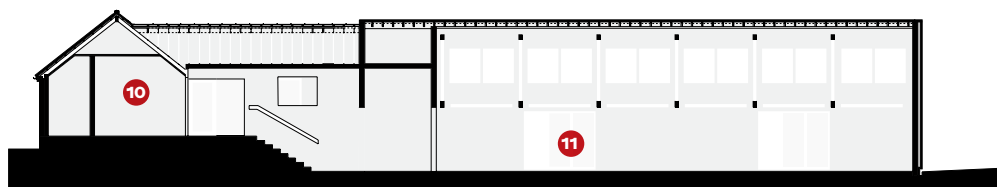
Stapleford Granary is located five miles or so south of Cambridge city centre so, aside from the local cycling tradition, transport connections are critical. Shelford train station is nearby, as is the M11 and, in keeping with the tone of the centre's concert mode, an informal arrangement with the neighbouring farm when more car parking is needed.

MCW's architectural approach reflects a familiar process of retaining and celebrating the best of the existing vernacular buildings

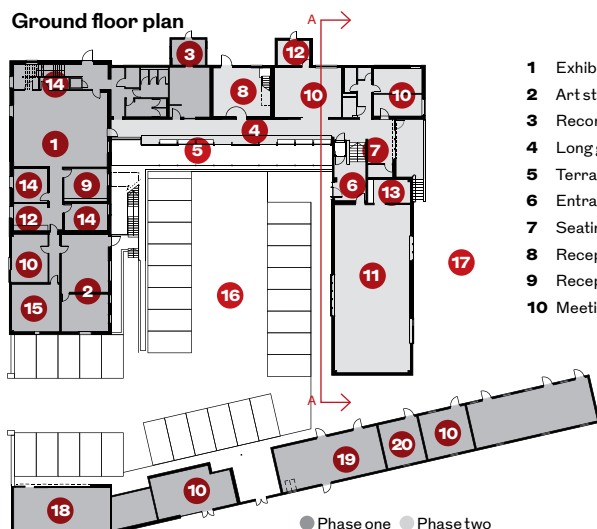
Below The first phase here, under Toni Moses Design, created the naturally ventilated recital hall.



Section A-A



Ground floor plan



- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Exhibition space | 11 Open plan office |
| 2 Art studio | 12 Kitchenette |
| 3 Recording studio | 13 Staff kitchen |
| 4 Long gallery | 14 Store |
| 5 Terrace | 15 Archive |
| 6 Entrance | 16 Car park |
| 7 Seating area/cloak room | 17 Walled garden |
| 8 Reception & office (above) | 18 Workshop/studio |
| 9 Reception library | 19 Make-space workshop |
| 10 Meeting room | 20 Office |

and contrasting this with a crisply-detailed palette of contemporary forms and materials; the finish is high quality, aided by the traditional form of contract and close liaison with a committed and enthusiastic contractor. There is a Scandinavian influence at play, which is not surprising given founder Philip Barnes' early posting as Reuters' chief correspondent in Copenhagen. Gault clay brickwork characterises the original granary buildings and forms an internal backdrop to new and refurbished elements. New laminated beech BauBuche posts, beams,

furniture and finishes reference the original timber frame structures which have been left exposed throughout. Salvaged cast iron columns reappear internally to support a new mezzanine office for general secretary Paul Barnes, son of ACE's founder. Outside, black stained timber cladding and screens update the original barn cladding. Existing roofs include triple delta and triple Roman clay pantiles, the latter particularly recognisable from agricultural buildings in nearby Stapleford and Shelford. Zinc replaces roof finishes that were unsuitable for retention and goes on to establish a language of folded metal planes for the new extensions. From a distance, the three acoustically-attenuated natural ventilation stacks of the performance space echo those at Snape Maltings near Aldeburgh, while the courtyard additions remain mostly hidden from the wider landscape.

Comparisons with Snape Maltings, and Hauser & Wirth in Somerset, are perhaps inevitable, with the countryside setting and position next to a working farm lending Stapleford Granary a rural authenticity. Just to the south is an orchard siding on to a tributary of the River Granta, with an overgrown mooring dock once used for the granary's river-based transportation. However, if you're

Gault clay brickwork forms an internal backdrop to new

looking at the plan and wondering where the café is, you will notice that, in this respect, Stapleford Granary differs from more commercial precedents. Although there is a very nice unrestored walled garden to the east – which one suspects might lend itself very well to such an addition – there is no café, bar or restaurant here. In some ways this is a surprise, but it also underlines the essential purpose of Stapleford Granary as a cultural centre rather than another destination eatery. The public events and workshops are an integral and exciting part of the centre's life, yet refreshingly the ACE Foundation's core values and identity remain paramount as it looks to the future. ●

Bobby Open is founder at Bobby Open Architects in Cambridge

Below Entrance with views into the exhibition gallery.



A Nordic influence can be seen in the gallery.

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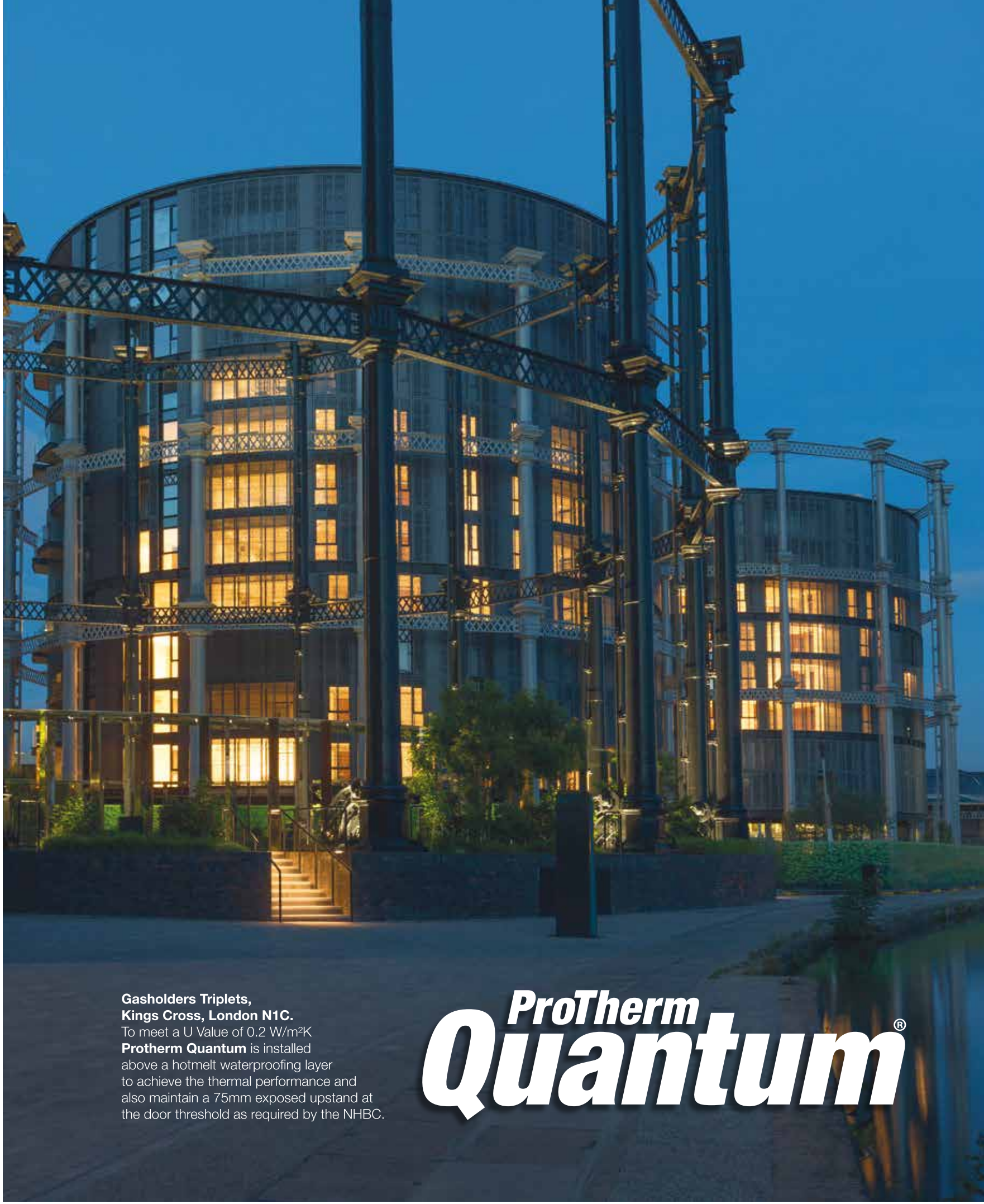
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From the top

When Assemble won a competition to convert rooftop water tanks into a gallery for Goldsmiths, it was just the beginning

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Assemble

IN NUMBERS

£4.6m
cost

1000m²
area

8
galleries



You have to start with the tanks. If you're working with the industrial back of house of a 19th century bath house, of course you have to start with the water tanks.

That's what London University's Goldsmiths did when its art department wanted a gallery space. Its head went up ladders above the art studios to peer into the industrial gubbins on the roof, the pipes, the hoists and two huge tanks. These volumes, protected from the elements by night-dark cast iron panels, encrusted in pigeon guano, were at the centre of a modest competition to create the gallery, won by fledgling practice Assemble before it was even nominated for the Turner Prize.

The gallery was intended to connect

Goldsmiths to the contemporary art world and act as a resource for students, staff and research. But architects Paloma Strelitz and Adam Willis didn't stop with the tanks; they redesigned the back of the whole building as a larger gallery than had ever been imagined. Eight exhibition spaces and £4.6 million later, the gallery has just opened.

Its name, Goldsmiths Centre of Contemporary Art, alerts you to the remarkable artistic reputation of this hodge podge of a college stuck out in New Cross, south east London. Its list of former students includes the now not-so-young Young British Artists and beyond: Damien Hirst, Sam Taylor-Johnson, Michael Craig-Martin, Bridget Riley, Gerry

Top right The texture of the tank is mediated by its shine and regularity of the panels and their new steel ribs.

Left The unconventional, and interestingly uncomfortable, dimensions of the project space. Two ruptured floor plates made this.

Right Competition model showing the section through the gallery.





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SURFACE 360

The bricks' rough surfaces are more 'strip and expose' than 'scrape and reveal'

Judah. An auction of alumni's works raised money for the initial stages of the project.

The gallery slots into a narrow plan at the back of the university's painting studios, topped by the original project – the oiled unlined tanks flanked by two white box galleries. Beneath are two storeys of bastardised brickwork, their rough surfaces more 'strip and expose' than 'scrape and reveal'. You could graze yourself on these walls. That feels raw and right when – as the press did to dodge student protests – you enter the back way through a labyrinth of passageways and fire escapes. But if you take the more conventional route, via the front entrance with its oversailing porch and on through a polished and clearly legible sequence from reception to stairway to galleries, the roughness takes on an uncomfortable sense of artifice. The duality of the more polished gallery spaces versus the raw project space, café and smaller galleries could be easily explained by perfectly rational decisions on where to spend the money – but Assemble did it to give each space its own, idiosyncratic, character.

At its most banal level this is expressed as gold paint on the ceiling. At its best, the dimensions and geometries of the site are emphasised and stretched into difference with a real sense of three dimensional un-



Above The gallery in the tank with its first, dramatic, installation by Mike Rottenberg.



Left The delicate trusses of the white gallery spaces pick up the light from the rooflight.

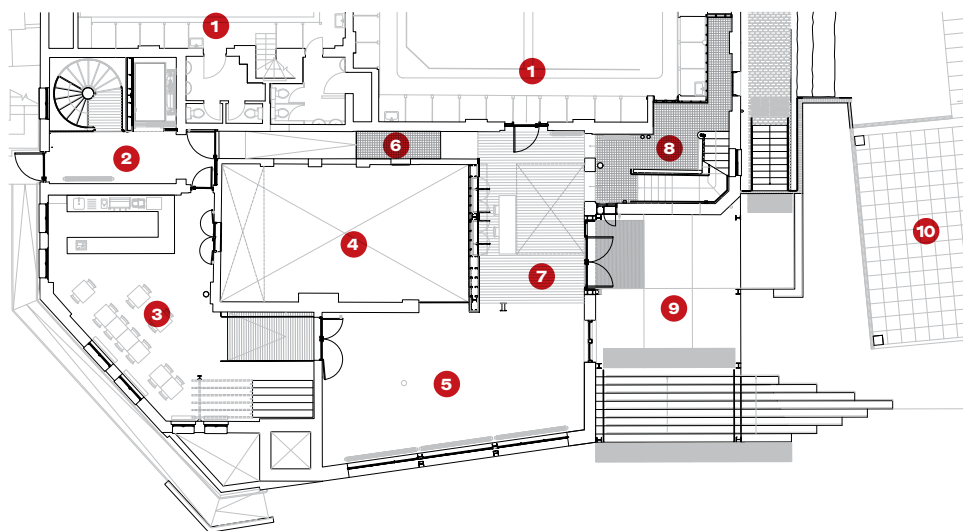
Right At ground floor old and new openings look out onto the project space, here from the café.



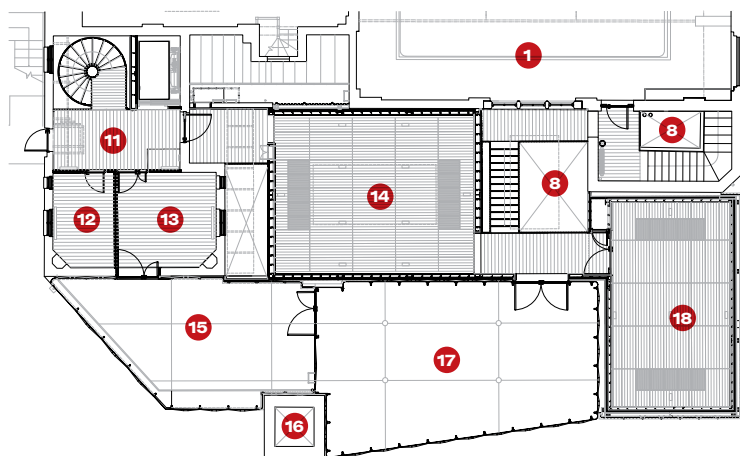
- 1 Main baths (art studios)
- 2 Lobby
- 3 Café
- 4 Project space
- 5 Vitrine gallery
- 6 Walkway
- 7 Reception
- 8 Stair tower
- 9 Entrance undercroft
- 10 Alsop-designed Ben Pimlott building entrance
- 11 Winch room
- 12 Curator's studio
- 13 Gallery
- 14 Lantern gallery
- 15 Courtyard gallery
- 16 Chimney
- 17 Tank gallery
- 18 Clerestory gallery

The floor slab has been knocked out to create a narrow double-height room for ideas to be fought over and arguments hammered out

Ground floor plan



First floor plan



Credits

Architecture Assemble
Structural engineer Alan Baxter
Mechanical and electrical engineer Max Fordham
Graphic designers Kellenberger White
Project management Goldsmiths Estates
Quantity surveyor Artelia
Contract administration Artelia
Building control MLM
Main contractor Bryen Langley
M+E contractor Elmec
Fire strategy LWF

The elevation shows what a collection of spaces this is.



derstanding which has allowed Assemble to ignore options that might look more logical on plan. This is most visible in the project space, where the floor slab has been knocked out to create a narrow double-height room for ideas to be fought over and arguments hammered out. It's what gives the gallery its edge. It is not the building's atrium, as it would be in many a diagram: you can enter and exit three ways at basement level. From above, cut-outs in the walls allow you stop and observe, but not become part of the action. Alongside, the ground floor café kinks into the perimeter of the plan almost uncomfortably while a passageway linking two staircases is a thin leftover of uninspiring corridor. It should be either underused or a pinch point, yet it seems more than that; an extra layer to explore or favourite cut through for those in the know.

The circulation of the main staircase here is entirely separate from the vertical volume of the project space. It reads as a new stair in an old space, topped by a Victorian rooflight. But if that's what it is, why does external window at the top of the old baths (now art studios) face out to the stairwell? In fact the Victorian rooflight was raised when Assemble added a storey to accommodate the new white galleries alongside the tanks. The delicate steel trusses of the two white cubes will enjoy the light from the lantern

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The café before its tables arrived, furnished with the pipes and machinery of the old bath house.

and clerestory – although for the opening exhibition they were turned to black boxes as visitors entered through a tunnel.

Sandwiched between the two white galleries is the black tank, its cast iron panels pock marked with years of degradation but oiled back to a shine. The tanks have been stripped of the struts that held in the water and their structural logic reversed to resist wind loads, with new steel ribs almost invisibly tied back on existing holes. An extra panel's depth of windows perches round the top of one. Unlined, uninsulated and unheated, this will be a gallery of extremes (we should have more of them). Mika Rottenberg's installation at the opening exhibition plays on

Bottom left The large covered 'porch' under the gallery extension was imagined as a place for display and performance.

Below In the stair, a touch of gold on the beams just visible.



Unlined, uninsulated and unheated, this will be a gallery of extremes (we should have more of them)

the dark drama of the space with cast iron frying pans throwing up hissing clouds of spot-lit steam.

The second tank is opened up to the sky as a sculpture courtyard. In the light of day the cast iron takes on a more workaday texture. From here you can also get a close up of the outside of the new galleries which are clad in a corrugated cement fibre board more often used, rather dully, in agriculture. Despite the scale of this project Assemble hasn't relinquished its making ambitions. It got closely involved in fabricating the cladding, using ridge pieces between layers, water-jet cutting and creating sills between layers and designing new fixings. The architects even put together the concrete acid wash stain and painted it on themselves. There are other such interventions, the folded steel plate café chairs (with an iridescent golden surface kind to the eye but a little sharp and uncomfortable), the marbled splash backs of the basins, the pink cast concrete of the servery and the lampshades from the group's Turner Prize winning Granby Workshop. And in the tanks, Assemble transferred their metallic elements to the new wood panels, coating them in a solution of wire wool dissolved in vinegar.

So much art, like architecture, is designed too remotely from making. Assemble's Goldsmiths CCA gives you a little poke, a reminder of the many routes to inventiveness. ●

Trying too hard

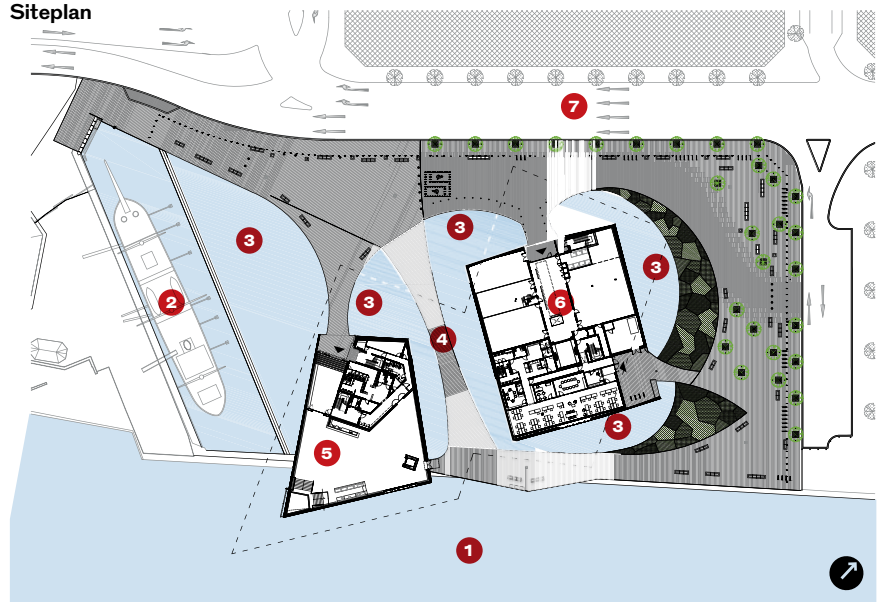
Kengo Kuma's gallery sails into Dundee with much fanfare, but why all the strenuous shapeism?

Words: Hugh Pearman Photographs: Hufton+Crow





Siteplan



- 1 River Tay
- 2 Scott's RSS Discovery
- 3 Landscaped pools
- 4 Path through arch
- 5 Arrival/atrium
- 6 Administration and workshops with galleries over
- 7 A991 dual carriageway

Left What is it trying to be, this curious building of both land and sea?

Below Compression before the release: low-ceilinged entrance lobby and information point.

Welcome to the great big mixed cultural metaphor on Tayside. Is Kengo Kuma's V&A Dundee a cliff, a ghostly pair of ships, an arch, even (given the way the facade peels away in places) a curtain? It is all of these things which might seem good: multivalent imagery, after all. But it is also curiously scale-less and from certain never-photographed angles looks like nothing so much as a cold store or titanic multi-storey car park. And while it dips its toes into the silvery Tay and sits amid landscaped pools, it is also in an expanding sea of second-and-third-rate commercial buildings sliced through by relief roads. Dundee proper is close, but does not feel nearly close enough.

That's the exterior, with its randomised aggregate-rich rough concrete slats slung from the black (or rather, dark grey) in-situ concrete carapace of the building, about which more in a moment. Inside there are lots more randomised slats, this time in timber, lining an impressive atrium with a nice floor in fossil-rich Irish limestone and a distinctly unimpressive suspended ceiling. But you don't really look at that because a



humdinger of a cantilevered staircase snakes up one side of this huge room, complete with benches to pause at on the way. And a freestanding lift tower, clad in stainless steel mesh, rises like a totem through the space, surprisingly successfully.

This interior works on the good old compression-and-release principle: you enter at a corner where the curtain of slats is pulled aside, pass through a relatively dark lobby, and then emerge into the epic space of the atrium, housing at its base the usual humdrum activities of café and shop. There's a restaurant up at gallery level where the cliff-face of the facade erodes uneasily to reveal an unremarkable glass box, the better to enjoy the view west to the Tay railway bridge and down to Captain Scott's ship *Discovery*, berthed alongside. There are a couple of cramped high-level open terraces but a rooftop viewing deck was strangely never in the plans.

The atrium is reminiscent of the equivalent space in London's similarly-sized, similarly expensive Design Museum (RIBA, December 2016) as inserted by John Pawson beneath the retained roof of the old Commonwealth Institute. Ceiling aside, it's much better than that because of the fizzing energy generated by the extreme structural geometry of Kuma's building,

Right The veil is pulled aside to make an arched entrance opening on the corner next to Scott's *Discovery*.

Below Yes, these were once working docks, hence the water and rather obvious ship-like forms. But check out the cantilever on that left-hand corner.



IN NUMBERS

£80m

construction cost

11,600 m²

approx site area

8,445 m²

total floor area

21

separate wall sections

2,500

individual precast
cladding slats

2

Right The big internal view is all about the atrium, anchored by the freestanding lift shaft and cantilevered stair. The ground floor window is angled down at the water.



The arch formed where the two buildings join gives an intriguing view of the Tay unfortunately blocked from the city side by new commercial development.

apparent in the sharply outward-sloping walls. The atrium serves much the same purpose as a big events space, with the actual galleries tucked away apparently behind the scenes. Kuma (profiled in RIBA J, December 2017) has borrowed a trick from Diller Scofidio and Renfro's 2006 Boston Institute of Contemporary Art with its large window angled downwards towards the water: here (geometry again) the downwards-angled window is triangular. Otherwise he pierces the sloping walls with little rectangular windows framing views out between the slats.

Struggling to get hip in the 1980s, the V&A ran a cringeworthy-but-effective Saatchi advertising campaign 'An ace caff with quite a nice museum attached'. Now that seems like a prophecy. Here the attached museum is on the upper floor in the second building: at this point the two built forms merge so it is all very spacious, with room for an informal gallery and library in the timber-floored circulation area. There are two floors of the museum's workshops and offices down below. These museum areas are black-box spaces, for conservation and curatorial reasons. The two galleries here – the Scottish Design Gallery by architect ZMMA and the spaces for temporary exhibitions opening with the V&A's excellent 'Ocean Liners' show – work perfectly well. Once you're in them (with the exception of an original Mackintosh Miss Cranston tea room interior, the Ingram Street 'Oak Room' which takes us to 1908 Glasgow) you could be anywhere. The galleries could be in an adapted distribution warehouse. But that, of course, would not have cost £80 million and would not have had such a spectacular café space.

The reason it cost £80 million, up from an original highly-optimistic £27 million, is down to Jørn Utzon and Frank Gehry. The shapeist cultural building, as ushered in by Utzon's Sydney Opera House and Gehry's



Scottish Design Gallery by ZMMA – nicely done but museum black box spaces could be anywhere.

The old ad campaign 'An ace caff with quite a nice museum attached' seems like a prophecy

Below A third informal gallery occupies the top floor circulation space.



Mackintosh's 'Oak Room' is a complete surviving 1908 Miss Cranston tea room interior, minus furniture.





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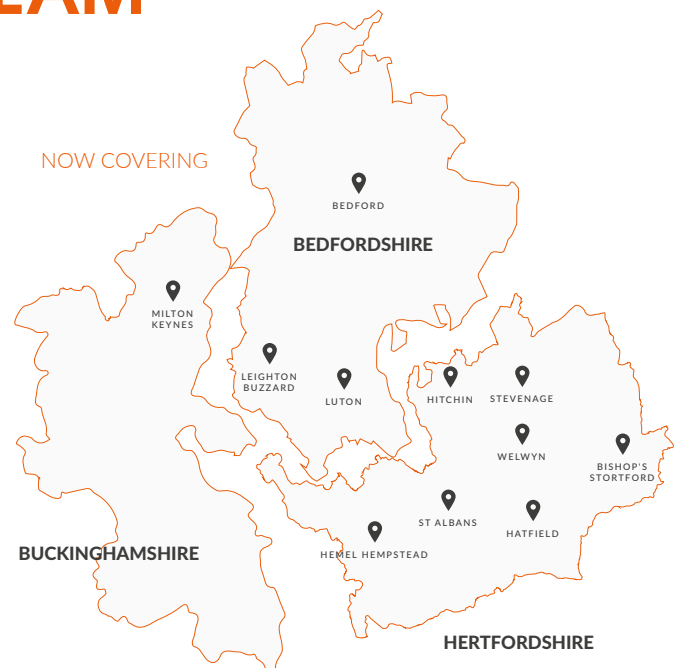
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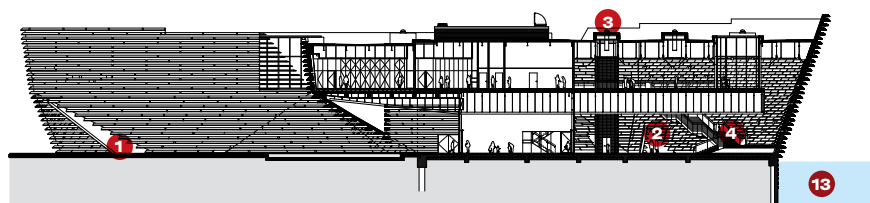
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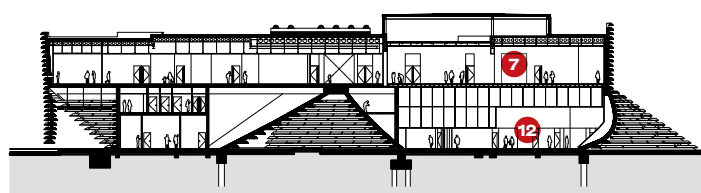
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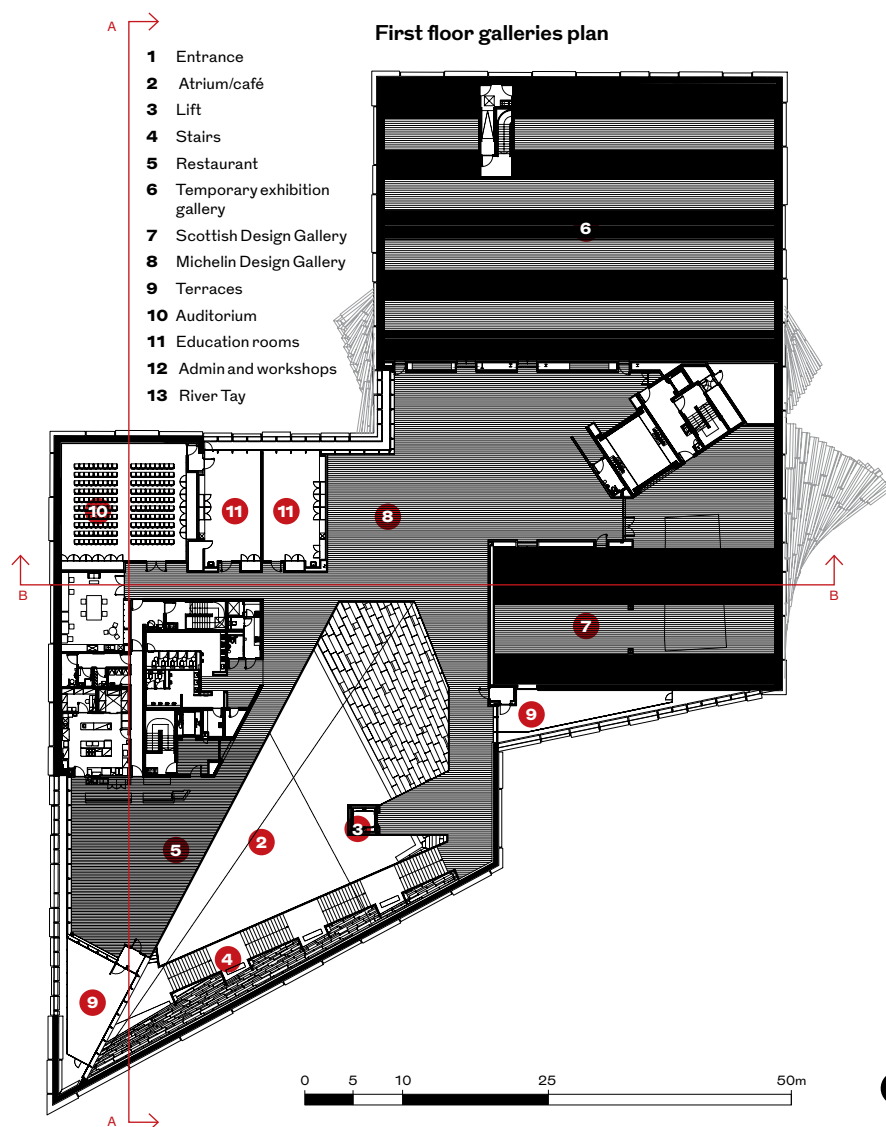
Section A-A



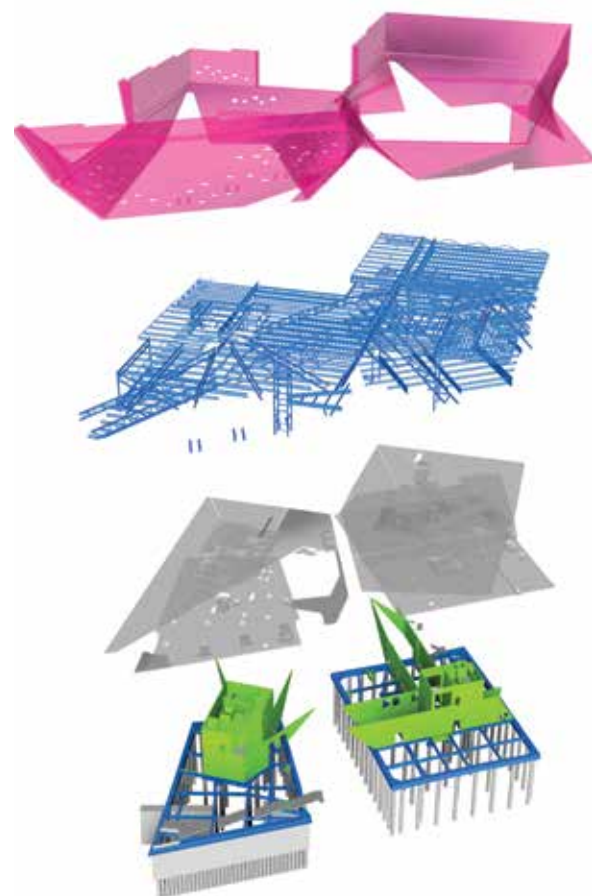
Section B-B



First floor galleries plan



Exploded axo of the structural system



later Bilbao Guggenheim, is still thought to be so much of a currency, worth so much in global visibility and tourist dollars, to be well worth the supercharged capital outlay. So although the V&A Dundee was value-engineered (originally, for instance, it was going to project much further into the Tay, splay outwards more outrageously and have a double-skin structure) it was still very challenging indeed to build. And as Utzon did in Sydney, here Kuma also depended on the talents of engineer Arup to make the whole thing work.

This is an in-situ concrete hull set on piles going down some 15m to the glacial bedrock, which required a huge cofferdam to keep the water out. The walls lean this way and that, folding in and out, and at the corners where the outward-leaning walls join, they develop into mighty cantilevers, one stretching 19.5m beyond the building's footprint. Arup found a way of making the walls much thinner than originally envisaged, with very precise steel reinforcement, tolerance of 3mm as you'd hope in a corrosive marine environment. The 300mm walls are backed with a waterproof membrane and 150mm of sprayed insulation which is then rendered and largely concealed behind the interior cladding.

It's a hybrid monocoque construction, the whole thing held together by the steel trusses of the roof and the floor slabs. The formwork for the concrete could

Nonetheless it feels uncomfortable, walking beneath those tonnes of concrete hanging above your head

not be struck until the roof structure was attached and when it was, the inevitable very slight sag had to be very carefully monitored. Without the roof all the segments would fall apart like a chocolate orange. It was all made from an integrated 3D model shared by architects, engineers and contractors. The setting-out was effectively done in space using GPS. Costly though it was to build, it should be economical on energy, using 30 geothermal 200m deep boreholes and air-source heat pumps on the roof for heating and cooling.

And then there are those exterior slats. These are beefy precast components, rough-finished with a sparkly mineral aggregate. Most hang via stout stainless-steel fixings from the slope in walls, some are arranged vertically on stanchions. The fixings are high strength Duplex stainless steel that resists stress corrosion (it's noticeable that some of the bollards around the building are already showing signs of the effects of the sea air). Nonetheless it feels uncomfortable, walking beneath those tonnes of concrete that are hanging above your head. And as you get in close, you can't help noticing the waterstreaks on the underlying concrete hull.

The arch between the two conjoined buildings leading to the waterfront is good, even noble. But if its aim was to recall the Royal Arch which until the mid 1960s stood at the entrance to the docks that used to be here, then the surrounding commercial development stifles that. There's a particularly unfortunate glass-box hotel going up directly opposite the museum, blocking any possible view through the arch from the town. Though to be fair, the city's 1920s Caird Hall did just the same for the original Royal Arch.

The intention is that the V&A Dundee will become the 'living room for the city'. Another advertising slogan. In fact for 20 years the city has had its own cultural living room at the nearby Dundee Contemporary Arts, a successful low-cost warehouse adaptation by Richard Murphy. It still feels very good today, is buzzing with people and enjoys a direct connection with the city. It's an example of how you don't have to undertake costly look-at-me structural gymnastics to make a place people might want to come to. Taken together, Dundee now has quite the cultural visitor offer. Though it will take a lot to convince me that the Dundee central waterfront development pressing in on the V&A isn't a considerable urbanistic missed opportunity. ●

The randomised horizontal cladding slats make for successful photos in some places, less so in others.



Credits

Client Dundee City Council
Lead architect Kengo Kuma & Associates (project architect Maurizio Mucciola)
Delivery architect PiM, studio Architects
Executive architect James F Stephen Architects
Structural/maritime, civil, facade, mechanical, electrical, fire, lighting and acoustic engineer Arup
Project manager Turner & Townsend
Main contractor BAM Construct UK
Landscape architect Optimised Environments (OPEN)
Quantity surveyor CBA
Wayfinding and signage Cartlidge Levene
Water feature specialist Fountains Direct



The slats recur internally in timber.



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British Standards update February 2018 – clear definition of air permeable underlays

In February, a second amendment and updated version of the British Standard for Slating and Tiling BS5534 was introduced. For the very first time BS5534:2014 + A2:2018 now includes a clear industry definition of air permeable underlays.

Previously an underlay would be defined as type HR (high water vapour resistance) – an underlay with a vapour resistance greater than 0.25MN/g and type LR (low water vapour resistance) – underlay with a vapour resistance less than 0.25MN/g. The updated standard now also defines a low water vapour resistance (type LR) and *air* permeable underlay as ‘underlay that has a water vapour resistance not more than 0.25MN/g combined with an air permeability of not less than 20m³/m² h at 50Pa which allows for the transfer of both water vapour and air’.

What this means for contractors and developers

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resistance EN12572 = 0.065MNs/g and air permeability EN12114 = $34.4\text{m}^3/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{h}\cdot 50\text{Pa}$ (Mean test results quoted).

NHBC technical guidance

In 2011 NHBC confirmed that it would be adopting guidance as outlined in BS5250 Code of practice for the control of condensation in buildings, requiring a ventilation gap to be installed at high level, equivalent to a 5mm continuous slot at or near the ridge. The basis for this was that vapour permeable roof underlays permit the movement of vapour through the membrane, but generally do not permit the passage of air. Since 2012 NHBC issued technical guidance which acknowledged that there are some vapour permeable roof underlays that permit both vapour and air to pass through them. Where an underlay can be shown to provide suitable ventilation, ie at least the equivalent of a continuous 5mm high-level slot, NHBC will accept that underlay without

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What this means for contractors and developers

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such as Bellway, Bovis Homes and Crest Nicholson, backed by the NHBC, and independent industry research, all agree that some underlays perform at an exceptional level, providing a failsafe option, without the need for additional ventilation. By specifying Roofshield developers are guaranteed the highest quality, pitched roof underlay, which is both air and vapour permeable.



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MacEwen is calling: enter now

The MacEwen Award keeps producing winners. If your project benefits the wider community it could join them



It's time to gear up for the RIBA MacEwen Award 2019. This is the award that recognises and celebrates 'architecture for the common good'. We are looking for buildings and places demonstrating a clear social purpose, which enhance the lives of people rather than (or ideally as well as) just looking good. As with all the awards we run at RIBA, it is free to enter and aims to reach previously under-represented parts of the profession. Deadline is Monday November 12, 2018.

It's now the fourth year of MacEwen. Our first three winners were, starting in 2016: a relocated and reconfigured Segal-method building – offices-turned youth centre by then architecture students Benjamin Barfield Marks and Matt Atkins, in south London. This was followed in 2017 by another youth centre, but this time all-new, at Tadley in Hampshire by fast-rising practice Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt. Then early this year we declared the 2018 winner as the Meadow View community care centre outside Matlock in Derbyshire by Glancy Nicholls Architects.

We have also commended and shortlisted



HUFTON + CROW

streetscape improvement schemes, 'meanwhile uses' on vacant land or in empty buildings, educational initiatives ranging from woodland schools to the annual 'Scale Rule' pavilion designed by school students; landscape improvements, advice centres, hostels and social housing, craft workshops, restored historic buildings and heritage centres.

Our entrants include well-known practices (we were the first to commend dRMM's Hastings Pier, for instance, which went on to win the Stirling Prize) along with a lot of emerging small practices and design collaborations between architects, engineers, landscape designers and social enterprises.

The MacEwen Award is named after Anni and Malcolm MacEwen, she an urban planner who pioneered a conservation-based approach to regeneration in both town and country, he a campaigning journalist and former editor of this magazine. This year as last we are delighted to be supported by BDP, that hugely successful multi-discipline practice that has always been guided by a strong social ethos. ●



MATT ATKINS



MARTINE HAMILTON-KNIGHT

Above 2018 winner, Meadow View community care centre, by Glancy Nicholls.

Left 2017 winner, The Point youth centre by Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt.

Below left 2016 winner, Oasis Children's Venture by Benjamin Barfield Marks and Matt Atkins.

RULES

Projects must be in the UK, Ireland and islands such as Man and the Channel Islands. Projects must have been broadly physically completed within the two years to 1 November 2018, and must not have been entered previously for the MacEwen Award. A phase of a longer-term project is eligible.

Anyone including clients may enter a project, but the design team must have included an architect or architecture student.

The number of awards and commendations given will be at the judges' discretion: shortlisted entries will be published on ribaj.com, culminating in the winners and commended entries appearing in the RIBA Journal February issue; those involved will be invited to a winners' celebration lunch.

INFORMATION REQUIRED

Entries should be submitted online only via the link below

Name, location and description of project (300-500 words) explaining the beneficial social impact of the scheme.

Credit list of consultants and clients.

Maximum of six images, to include photos and drawings.

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- Knot-free engineered timber with FSC® Chain of Custody
- Tested by BM TRADA with a certified result of Rw 40dB to meet BS EN ISO 10140-2:2010

An essential issue with regards to the Newman Street development was to ensure the peace and quiet required by the hotels guests; should they wish to retire for the evening. Too often secondary glazing is used, which is clumsy and ugly, so the architects sought out Lomax + Wood who designed traditional timber windows that meet the sound engineer's acoustic ratings. Lomax + Wood offer an acoustic upgrade to their standard products and a bespoke service for problematic locations where noise levels are unacceptably high. The company commissioned Exova BM TRADA, a leading UK-based research and test establishment, to independently test and certify these bespoke sections in accordance with UK and European standards.

VISIT: www.lomaxwood.co.uk/newmanstreet



Contemporary Project:
Oxford, Oxfordshire

Aluminium-Clad timber flush casement windows and doors from the Contemporary collection by Lomax + Wood were specified for this modern, new-build, private development just minutes from the cosmopolitan city centre of Oxford.

- Aluminium Clad made-to-order timber windows and doors
- Dual finish with Aluminium externally Ral 7035 and timber internally Ral 9010 internally.
- Knot-free engineered timber with FSC® Chain of Custody

The dwellings were designed to complement the form, style and materials of the more established surrounding suburban properties typical of this sought after area. Traditional proportions and roof pitches; use of natural materials such as timber cladding complemented with the sharp lines of crisp, clean render; timber casement windows and a number of contemporary design features contribute towards the creation of these high quality, sustainable buildings.

In addition to aluminium clad timber windows Lomax + Wood also provide a unique bonded construction system. This also provides all the style of aluminium and all the warmth of wood internally.

VISIT: www.lomaxwood.co.uk/oxford



Traditional Style Project:
Berkshire, Country Home

Lomax + Wood have supplied high performance made-to-order timber box sash windows and doors for this stunning country home in the county of Berks. Based on the classic Georgian window proportions this new build property shows a full range of Lomax + Wood products, all suited to provide elegant sightlines.

- Full CAD window schedule and sections produced.
- Timber box sash windows with slim 18mm double glazed units.
- Made-to-order entrance door, with insulated panels incorporating steel inserts for security.
- Supplied using engineered timber with under the Lomax + Wood FSC® Chain of Custody

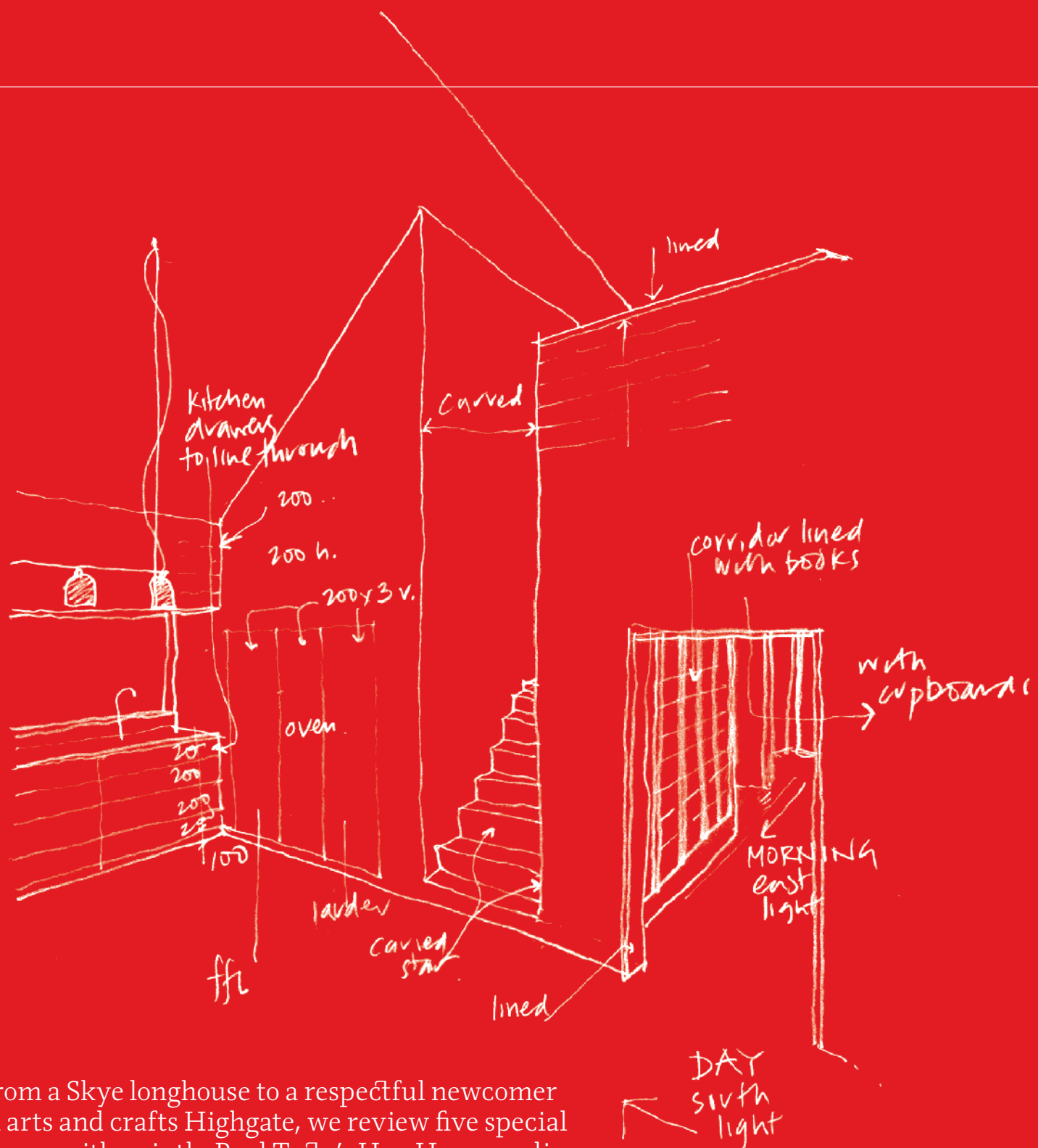
Set within a country landscape this substantial country house has incorporated a number of period features to create a traditional country style. Lomax + Wood worked closely with the architect to produce the detail required from the beginning and liaised with the builder and architect to reduce management time.

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Houses



From a Skye longhouse to a respectful newcomer in arts and crafts Highgate, we review five special homes with a sixth, Paul Testa's Hen House, online

Back to black

This unassuming home on Skye is a deeply thoughtful and spiritual interpretation of the Highland – possibly providing answers for modern families too

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: David Barbour



For a fleeting moment I'm worried. I've spent most of the previous day getting here, and as I drive over the craggy terrain on the five-mile single track road from Broadford, the pair of black sheds that begins to emerge – that can only be what I've come to see – look like they might be a disappointment. Is all I'm really looking at two quite basic constructions of black-coated corrugated aluminium sheeting just beside the road? 'This is architecture too,' I remind myself as I run through the rain and galvanised steel gate up the drive.

I hadn't thought much about the exterior when we chose it for this special issue. Now I wonder if that was a mistake. From the outside The Black Shed, as it is known to its owners, architect-turned-academic Helena Webster and liberal rabbi Judith Rosen-Berry, is just that. (Its architect Mary Arnold-Forster calls it 'Heaste' after the crofting community where it is located.)

With the smaller building, a workshop, sitting parallel to the road and the larger main

one perpendicular to it for privacy, the project doesn't look like much. It isn't supposed to – not to appear modest in its surroundings but, at the owners' request, so that it be typical of them – a single form and materiality common to the rusting tin buildings all around; the chapel over the road, village halls built elsewhere on Skye, animal shelters and barns.

At first view (the weather doesn't allow a double take) I'm not sure whether it is just, God forbid, a cheaply built house. But this is actually a heavily intellectualised, even polemical, home.

'It had got to the point where it was time for a change,' explains Webster. 'Either move institutions, job positions, or do something else. Judith too was getting dragged in the wrong direction. We haven't got children, so we decided to do something mad': find a plot, commission a house, quit their jobs and move from Oxford, where they had lived for much of their lives, to the Scottish Highlands.

About this time Webster was also writing



This image The house is reduced to three basic materials – aluminium sheeting, timber and resin.

Above left The main bedroom upstairs. The only cupboards are under the eaves, and one of them is for Dotty.



We always joked about having a one-room house with a huge table down the middle

Below Webster fought hard not to have a bathroom upstairs but Rosen-Berry has always wanted a timber tub.



This image The couple had to be selective about what they brought with them. Rosen-Berry's father's desk overlooking the void provides one of three places to work.

Below The 'all space' enhanced by the asymmetry of the first floor opening and with the kitchen set into a bay.



an essay for the Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, and becoming increasingly interested in the houses designed by Rural Design and Dualchas trying to create a modern vernacular based on traditional local blackhouses. These were single-storey longhouses with curved ends and rush or heather roofs, where animals lived at one end, people at the other, and functions were defined by elements – hearth, chairs, box beds – not rooms.

'I wanted to get away from the two-up, two-down of our Edwardian house in Oxford. I'd always felt constrained by it because it was built at a certain time for a certain family unit that we didn't conform to,' explains Webster. 'We always joked about having a one-room house with a huge table down the centre where you could sleep at one end, work in the middle and eat at the other. In lifestyle it came from a different place, but almost went back.'

Finding a site took three years, but eventually the couple went back to Mary Arnold-Forster who was working at Dualchas but now has her own practice. She gave them the keys to her house to look around and they gave her a slideshow of things they liked, including Scott's Arctic hut, Zumthor's alpine chalets and Le Corbusier's Villa La Roche.

Entering the house at the gable end from



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Find out more about BS 8612 and DryVerge at Redland.co.uk

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This is the owner's crucial 'all space'. At ground level the squat plan feels intimate, but look up and it is majestic

Top The guest box bed is inspired by traditional Highland ones that protected linen from falling soot.

Middle The two-part composition. The owners hope to create a further mezzanine in the workshop for a library.

Bottom Looking back from the corridor to the front door.

the torrent outside, in contrast to the perceived thinness of the exterior, this is the kind of building where you can shut the door and let the weather whirl silently behind you – protected by the thickness of the walls, closeness of the space, warmth and homely smell of the Douglas fir lining. The house is about being inside, physically and mentally.

Yet, as I hang my coat on one of the five pegs and see the tree trunk block to help me take off my shoes, I realise it is also incredibly practical. 'This is Dotty the dog's bathroom,' says Webster as she pulls across a pocket door on the other side of the neat cube hall and opens one to her right. 'We can come in from a walk and wash her without her dirtying everywhere.'

Ahead, the hall squeezes through to a tunnel-like corridor, lined on one side with horizontally stacked books, on the other by timber cupboards for the many coats required to live here. To the right is another pocket door to the only non-utility room in the house – a two-person study with a box bed for guests sneaked in. 'Mary kept wanting us to have more bedrooms, but we were adamant there shouldn't be any rooms that could be shut off,' recounts Webster.

At the end of the corridor, at the midpoint in the plan, with the visitor by then in full anticipation of what lies beyond, an entrance-way releases into a double-height space that



reaches to the rafters and stretches back up behind the full length of the house at first floor level. In one corner, a sofa and arm-chairs are arranged around the TV next to a wood-burning stove, in another, by the kitchen set into a bay, is a table with bench seating. A central stair leads to the mezzanine where the main bedroom and a study balcony overlook the void.

True to the longhouse, you can see from one side to the other. This is the owners' crucial 'all space' – for working, resting and eating. At ground level the squat plan feels intimate but look up and it is majestic. A few carefully punched windows mean sunlight blasts straight down the corridor from the glazed front door in the morning and tracks round during the day to create modulated light and shadows across the smooth grey resin floor.

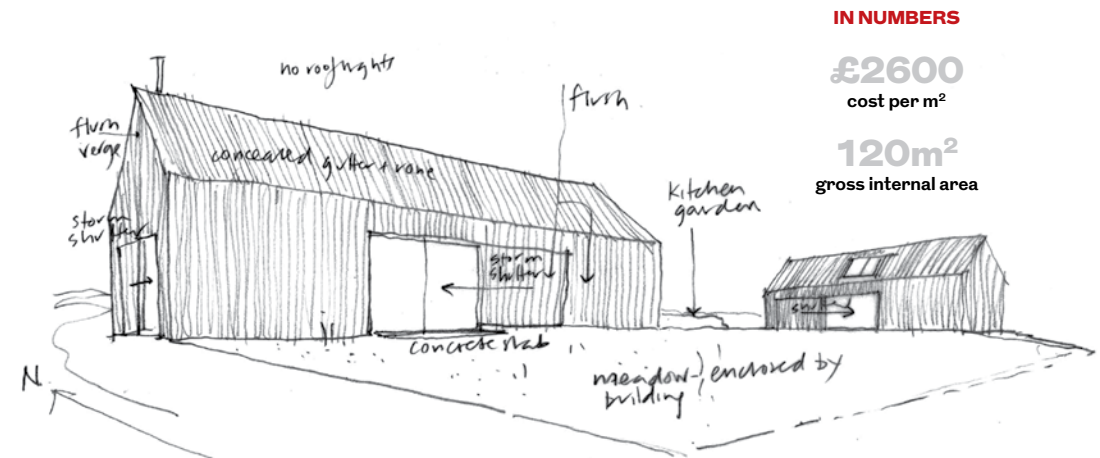
But the all-timber lining is what makes the difference to this project. The wide horizontal boards have a cosy quality. They effortlessly mould into bookshelves, cabinets and stairs, filling the spaces with a radiant pink hue – unglamorously caused by the fire retardant, but that does set the house apart from the Swiss chalets it references.

The collectedness and serenity of the spatial experience, however, disguises the polemic of its being – its intentions, what it says and means for Skye, the Highlands and

This building is part of a movement trying to assert a more authentic cultural regeneration

Scotland. This architecture is part of a movement trying to assert a more authentic cultural regeneration that supports Gaelic speaking too – for that reason planners here can't get enough of it.

The resurrection of the blackhouses is underpinned, as Webster explains in her article, by a discourse that converges to mean a better pre-English/Union identity, and provides evidence of an independent strand of architecture that finds more commonality with the longhouses of northern Europe than the Victorian 'white houses' on Skye, perceived as English – though Heaste's architect and owners are all English and I have

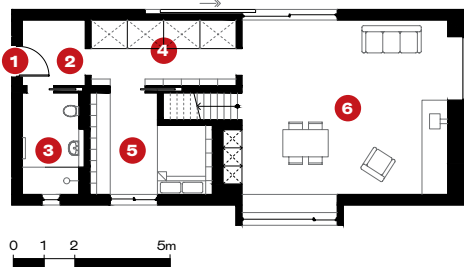


IN NUMBERS

£2600
cost per m²

120m²
gross internal area

Ground floor plan



First floor plan



spent enough time on Skye to see English influence is helping finance the island's change in direction.

I don't see this as regrettable but celebratory. The modern vernacular houses being designed on the west coast of Scotland are compelling, particularly as a group. Examined at an individual level they aren't always enough architecturally – as with my first impression here. Heaste has, however, laid various external, international, pointers on its shores – the Arctic tent, the Parisian house – that combine to add a crucial bit of wider intelligence to the design and expand the genre.

Heaste, though, is also important at a personal level that could have greater resonances as well. Webster and Rosen-Berry say it is a house that fits them, how they want to live, who they feel they are. The couple have been together for more than 20 years, but it is while living here that they have been moved to marry. As buildings in Scotland do not have to be licensed for weddings, their 'all space' will be for marrying too.

With the primariness of its apex lined in wood, surrounded by water, wilderness and wild weather, the space speaks of Heidegger's fourfold of what it means to dwell and summons ideas of the first places of devotion as clearings in the forest. What more could you want from a house than that? ●

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Hall
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Library/storage corridor
- 5 Study/guest bedroom
- 6 'All space' living, dining, working, kitchen
- 7 Main bedroom
- 8 Void

Credits

Client Helena Webster and Judith Rosen-Berry
Architect Mary Arnold-Forster Architects
Main contractor Allen Cowe Builders
Civil and structural Engineer IPM Associates
Douglas fir Dinesen
Cladding Plannja

Below Barn-like and lit up at night.



The hall has a Spartan, ascetic look.





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Residential sector demands versatility from window suppliers

Technical performance is not enough for architects, developers or future residents

A windswept cliff-top, a constricted site within a historical city, and a major multi-storey residential block – three very different performance briefs, especially for windows and doors. Which is why product versatility is so important when assessing glazing systems, says VELFAC sales director Andy Cook.

‘Residential builds place wide ranging demands on window suppliers, from proven technical performance to expertise in design, delivery and installation. Windows are also a key selling point when developments are marketed, making specification crucial to return on investment.’

While glazing must offer reliability, excellent weather resistance, and low maintenance construction, good design can also bring commercial benefits, he says. ‘Rooms flooded with natural light are instantly more attractive to potential buyers making larger windows, and slim-framed systems, a popular choice. Wooden frames can be a selling point, but can also prompt maintenance concerns,’ he adds. ‘Composite window systems, such as VELFAC, combine external aluminium with inner timber in a ‘best of both worlds’ solution, and can also deliver a different finish inside and out. We often supply units with a lacquered or white painted timber frame, to support a neutral interior palette, complemented by a distinctive external aluminium frame finish, which adds character and style to the development as a whole.’

Three recent case studies showcase VELFAC versatility when specified for residential projects, and also underline the range of performance demands placed upon the system once installed.

Case Study: Nelson's Yard, York Mesh Architects

Shortlisted for a 2018 RIBA Yorkshire Award, Nelson's Yard in York, is an innovative new-build terrace of six townhouses offering beautiful views and generous outdoor spaces despite the restricted plot. VELFAC plays an important role in the development's success, offering contemporary design, quality construction and impressive performance to help developer Northminster Ltd gain maximum return on their latest investment.

‘Having specified the VELFAC system for a previous project, we knew it was the ideal choice for this type of residential development,’ says Mesh Architects design director Ian Collins. ‘We’ve installed VELFAC windows in every house, and used fully glazed doors to provide access to the rear gardens and balconies, and to the roof terraces overlooking the nearby St Denys’ Church. The slim VELFAC frame delivered our vision of light, space and clean, uninterrupted views, with the sharp, external aluminium section supporting the contemporary aesthetic. Internally, the wood frame also provides a natural, comfortable finish which prospective buyers like.’

Below Nelson's Yard townhouses benefit from slim framed VELFAC windows to deliver the vision of light and uninterrupted views.



Case Study: Marine Place, Clevedon Acorn Property Group

Marine Place consists of nine homes overlooking the Bristol Channel. Described as ‘light-filled modern townhouses,’ each property features VELFAC composite triple-glazed windows, patio doors and bi-parting doors, with the VELFAC slim frame design used to enhance stunning seaside views. The system also delivers the exceptional levels of weather protection required by the cliff-top location, where the facade is frequently exposed to salt-laden high winds and driven rain.



Case Study: X1 The Landmark, Salford Forrest And DK-Architects

VELFAC composite glazing will be installed at X1 The Landmark, a major residential development in Salford, to be built by Forrest. Designed by DK-Architects, the building will comprise 191 luxury apartments and townhouses, together with communal facilities, in a stepped development rising from five to 14 storeys. VELFAC will supply over 3,000m² of composite aluminium / timber glazing, including windows, patio and sliding doors, and CWCT-approved spandrel panels. The specification includes SBD-accredited glazed units for ground and upper floors, and solar control glass.

VELFAC will also provide a comprehensive design service to ensure manufacture and installation is on time and on budget. The £31.2 million development is due for completion in early 2019 and, says DK-Architects, will 'signify this part of Salford as a developing area of civic and visual importance, while providing an additional focal point of urban activity.' ●

Left More than 3,000 m² of glazing complement the impressive design of The Landmark in Salford.

Below Proof of weatherability is a must on seaside locations like Marine Place in Clevedon.

Windows are a key selling point when developments are marketed, making specification crucial to return on investment

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'Quality is an important element of all our developments, and the VELFAC system is recognised as a quality product,' says Dave Gittins, head of construction for Acorn Property Group's Bristol Region. 'We had already used VELFAC products in an earlier development, so we were familiar with the system and its benefits. We also wanted a window system which had been formally tested to withstand exposure to severe weather conditions, including strong wind speeds and loads – and VELFAC could give us the test evidence we needed.'

ACORN PROPERTY GROUP



Labour of love

Harrison Brookes' commitment to this daunting restoration project extended to demonstrating ancient skills on site

Words: Bob Ghosh

Every second Sunday of the month, people converge from three counties to sell the finest provisions at the Teme Valley Farmers' Market in Knightwick, a village in the tranquil foothills of the Malverns in Worcestershire. From the market, a private track leads to the neighbouring village of Martley and the Old Court House, a grade II listed building-at-risk that has been restored and extended by Harrison Brookes Architects and is on 2018's House of the Year shortlist.

Set within a seemingly timeless landscape, the project was part of a development that has consolidated five farms into a single estate, including multiple structures in various states of disrepair. The planning consent for the site had a Section 106 obligation to bring the long-derelict Old Court House back into use first, which was a considerable challenge given its condition.

Undaunted, the owner paired with a skilful and dedicated West Country architect to create a long-term legacy for the estate. While it was always a commercial endeavour, the project is underpinned by an innate sense of tradition and an almost philosophical approach to investment, measured in generations.

The client, who resides in Georgian splendour nearby, next to his racehorse stables, is preoccupied with notions of quality and longevity, essentially giving Harrison Brookes licence to 'do whatever it takes... but it has to be done properly'. This approach is reminiscent of the artisan food on sale at Knightwick – a lesson in provenance, authenticity and technique.

The first task for the architect was to understand what was there, and what wasn't, as records were limited. The building was rumoured to be a hunting lodge of Elizabeth

It is underpinned by an innate sense of tradition and an approach to investment measured in generations

IN NUMBERS

160m²
original footprint in
1610

70m²
derelict footprint in
2010

168m²
new footprint in 2018



Left When Harrison Brookes got to the project only one wing remained. It had been derelict since the 1970s and several roof timbers were waiting to fall.

Right The wing has been restored and incorporated into a building nearly three times the size of the derelict structure.





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Above Timber beams, old and new, starting to be put back into place.

Left Window detail.

Below New floors and balustrades sit alongside the old.



I, dating from between 1441–1613. Its timber and lath frame had survived 500 harsh winters but had recently developed its own ecosystem of protected species. The year-long process of ‘deciphering the code’ revealed that the structure may have been the southern wing of a C-shaped symmetrical composition, and the project sought to reinstate this. Forensic geometrical analysis also indicated that the fenestration pattern was likely to have followed a medieval portrait-format (an earlier equivalent of the golden section).

The team had to navigate a maze of archaeological, environmental and ecological constraints, all the knowledge gained was painstakingly assessed and recorded to inform any future interventions. On top of this were the more predictable but no less complex issues of access and mains servicing: the infrastructure investment included construction of a 2km road, a 7km water pipe and new reed beds for filtration.

At the outset, the timber frame showed signs of distress. While the engineer could easily have condemned the structure, in the spirit of the project the team instead looked for ways of rescuing it without changing its simple character. This was achieved by designing first-fix joinery members to help resist racking because, except for the surviving masonry chimney, the frame was unbraced. The use of hempcrete as a infill material helped provide additional strength and thermal mass to the envelope.

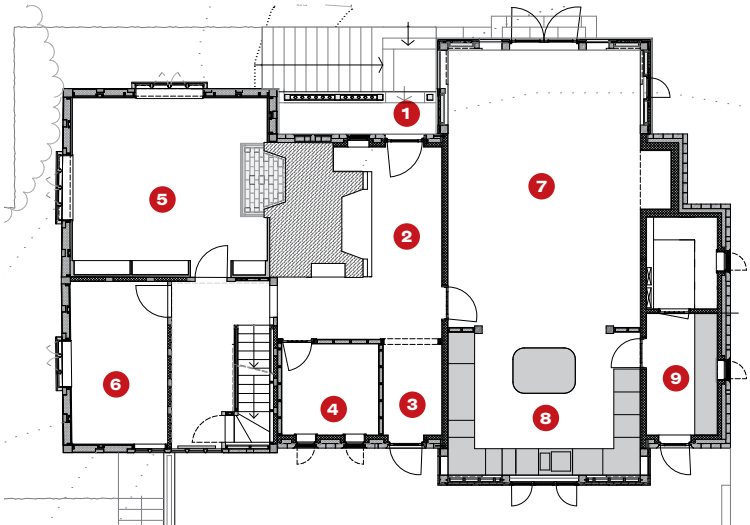
Given the undefined scope of the project, the procurement was carried out on a cost-plus basis, by a medium-sized regional contractor. The architect describes this as ‘reactive, rather than proactive’. However, it was the only way the process could have worked. At certain stages the contractor struggled to find the skills required, so the architect spent days on site encouraging staff to leave their comfort zone and learn ancient techniques. Harrison Brookes mixed the lime-casein recipe to treat the oak frame on site, and it has helped unify the old structure with the new one and provides a sublime colour to the oak. The team also demonstrated traditional oak-jointing techniques and trained operatives how to mix and apply wattle and daub to the internal walls.

Conservation was carried out with a rigour rarely seen on grade II listed buildings. High levels of craftsmanship, which respond to the unique site conditions, are evident

Rear elevation

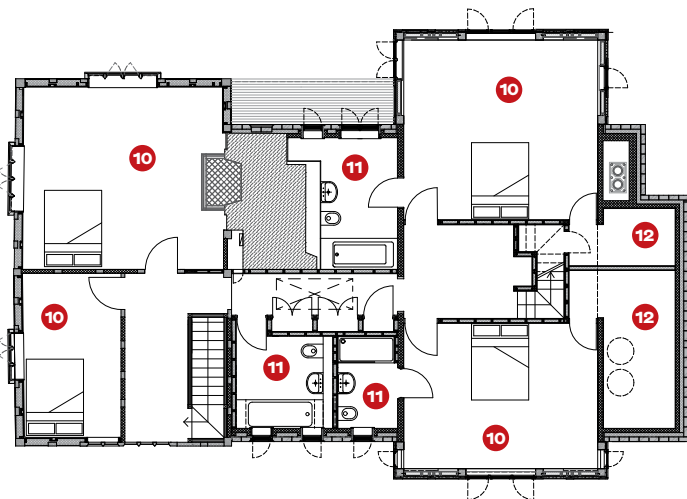
**Right** Wattle and daub being applied to new lath structure.

Ground floor plan



- 1 Entrance
- 2 Hall
- 3 Back hall
- 4 Cloakroom
- 5 Library
- 6 Study
- 7 Living room
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Utility
- 10 Bedroom
- 11 Bathroom
- 12 Store

First floor plan



Credits

Architect Harrison
Brookes Architects

Client Private

Structural engineer
Shire Consulting

Geotechnical engineer
Shires Geotechnical

**Archaeologist and
historical research**

Mike Napthan
Archaeology

Geologist Herefordshire
& Worcestershire Earth
Heritage Trust

Dendrochronology
Nottingham Tree Rind
Dating Laboratory

Ecologist Webb Clark
Ecology

Main contractor Speller
Metcalfe Gloucester

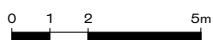
Roofing works
Merriman Roofing

Joiner Oakwrights Bath

throughout. For example, research concluded that the clay for the original bricks and tiles may have been extracted from the site itself so there was an (unfulfilled) aspiration to re-open the pit, build a kiln and fire their own. The source of the sandstone base was another mystery. The geologist traced it to a point along the river corridor, and attempts were made to obtain a mineral extraction licence. While this didn't prove possible, it indicates the near-obsessive nature of the process.

Inside, the extension, which includes a central link and a new north wing, traces the assumed historic footprint. The brick link accommodates the entrance hall, cloaks and bathrooms with storage above. The north wing mirrors the gable of the surviving wing and houses the main living and bedroom spaces. It is also constructed with a green oak frame, but this time the external wall build-up is rendered board, sheathing and dry lining, super-insulated with 150mm of PIR. This part of the building could be described as 'polite' rather than challenging or contrasting with the historic fabric, and architecturally it is understated, even underwhelming, but the old and the new sit comfortably together. This could have so easily become fake-Tudor, but it isn't. It is a disciplined piece of functional design that will simply be referred to as 'the 21st century wing' by future generations.

The cost-plus contract, where the contractor submitted monthly timesheets and purchase receipts to the architect for certification and payment, illustrates the levels of collaboration and trust that were required to deliver this challenging five-year project. The budget is undisclosed, but it's almost an irrelevance. Above all, this is a conservation project, carried out with rigour and technical competence. Harrison Brookes, a two-man practice in Somerset, with its extraordinary knowledge and hands-on approach, recalls the master builders who existed long before the profession of architecture. ●



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Of land and sea

6a produces a feast of tactile materiality growing in its own nurturing landscape with this radical retrofit

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Johan Dehlin

Before an ambrosial lunch from the garden – bright new potatoes, roast beetroot, nasturtium flowers atop salad, honey, figs – we step down onto the granite boulder towards the view and the sea. ‘Glued’ drystone walls of slate bed the grounds into the land, an oval pond rests in a bowl in the gardens and a new ha ha invisibly separates garden and grazing. Explore further and you can slip through a snicket in the wall and find a willow thicket to lose yourself in. Here is the commitment and energy for the land and place that drew practice 6a to the couple who owned the house when they were introduced by designer and plantsman Dan Pearson (RIBA July 2018). The Coastal House, now shortlisted for the RIBA’s House of the Year, was the last major piece in reworking this farm.

The fruit and vegetables, walls and willows all found their genesis more than 10 years ago on works that started with fixing the land drainage and went on to move the cows to a new, larger barn across the road. The concrete farmyard was dug up, and to Pearson’s design became a miraculously abundant and beautiful garden in the lee of the farmhouse. Stephanie Macdonald from 6a saw this in its early stages, with the family in the cold, leaky house alongside, small kitchens and multiple stairs leading to tight rooms in an uncomfortable plan disconnected from the garden by the raised plinth it had been built on. The practice wasn’t looking for work on houses, it knew it needed to work at a different scale and with more of a social programme. But this collaboration was impossible to turn down.

The practice wasn’t looking for work on houses. But this collaboration was impossible to turn down

Below You can see right through the house from the living room to kitchen. A wide fireplace uses a gatepost for lintel and the hearthstone comes from the door of the house.



Credits

Architect 6a**Structural engineer**

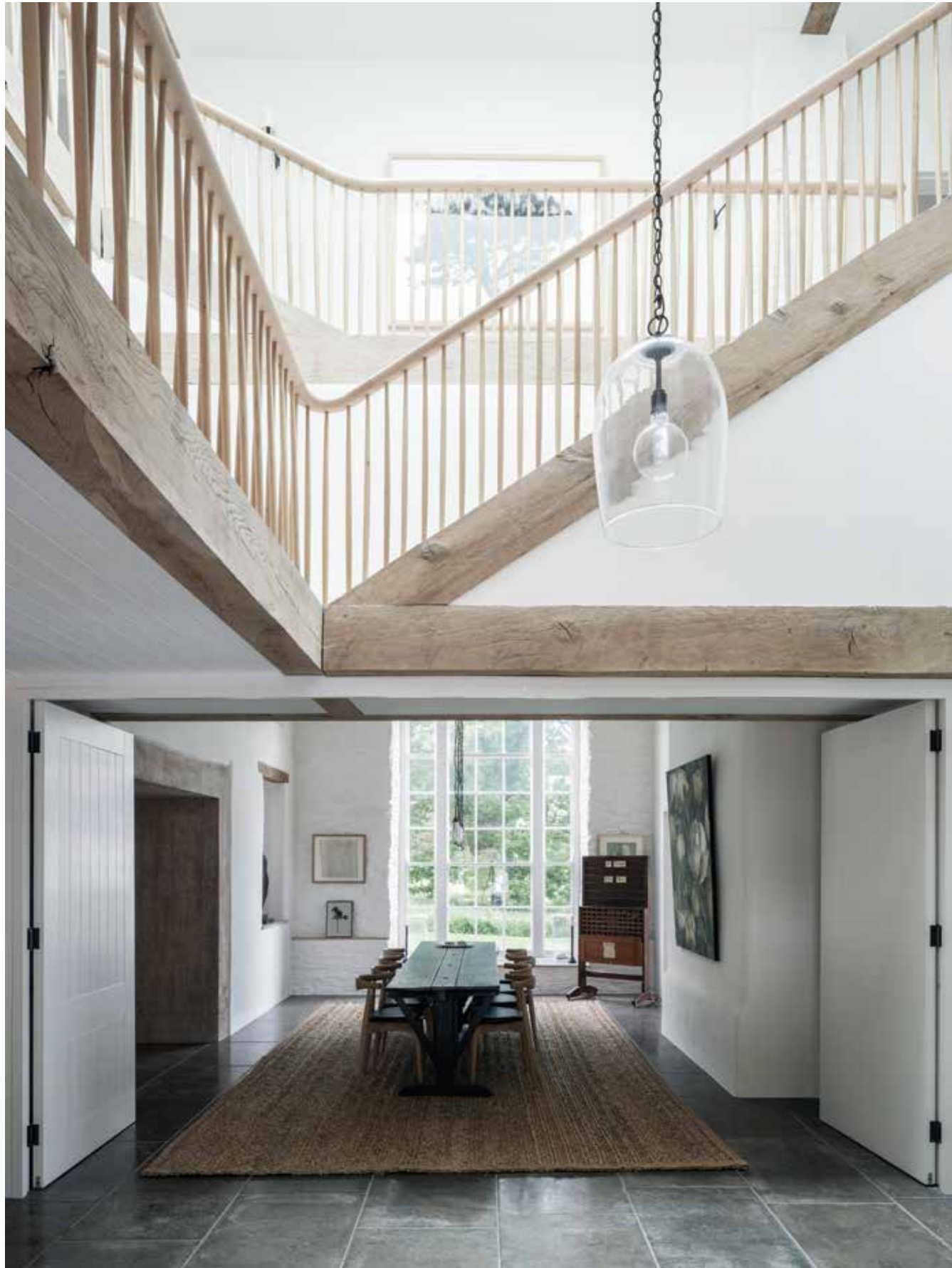
Price & Myers

M&E engineer

Ritchie + Daffin

Landscape

Dan Pearson

QS Gleeds**Contractor** JE Stacey

Right The entrance hall with its refectory table. Above the top-lit, triple height stair well, ahead a room for long family dinners. The spaces can be closed off, but rarely are.

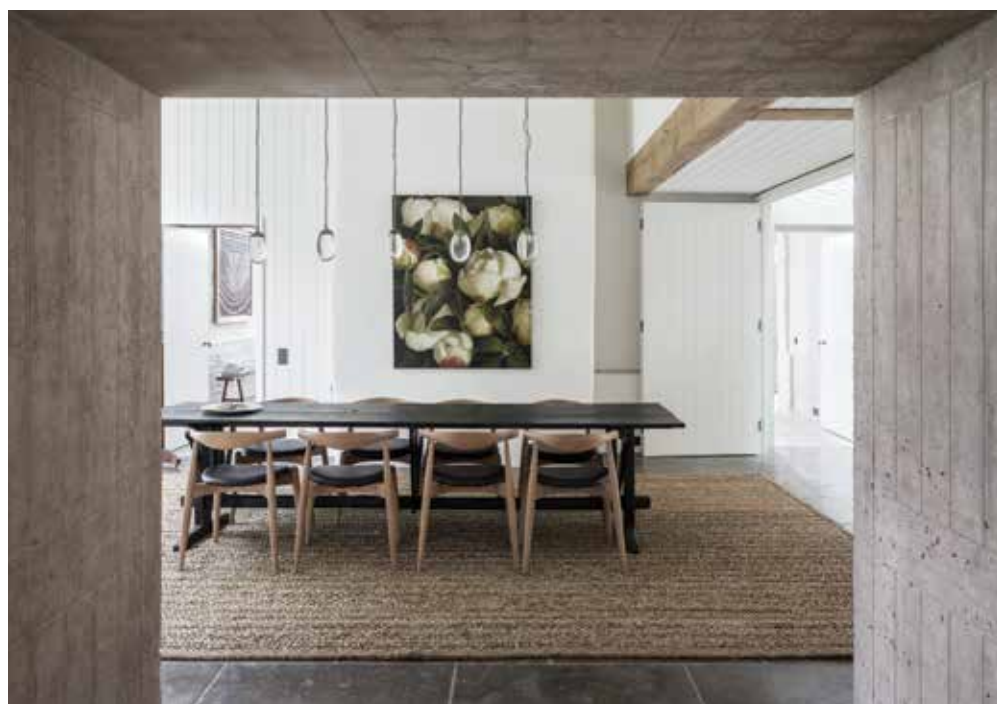
Given the state of the undistinguished turn of the early 20th century house with odd additions, and systems failing, the first thought was to knock it down and start again with a design level with the garden rather than stuck up on its plinth. This thinking took 6a as far as planning. But it didn't seem quite right and the clients' attachment to the farmhouse, and to the sense of time and continuity it represented, made them think again. It became a radical retrofit.

The house stayed. Or at least its outer walls did, warmly lined with insulation and reclad in reclaimed slate. This left the internal walls free to be stripped right back, a white slurry finish uniting the rather rubbly stone – and its interspersed horizontal timber levellers – to leave texture and topography exposed. The convoluted rooms of the extension have been made part of the house and one of the four chimney breasts

Below Around the concrete is the old wall of the house, the kitchen (behind the photographer) is in what used to be the annexe but its intimate airiness bears little relationship with that now.

Right Over the kitchen in the three storey section of the house sits a small guest suite. The upper level, is devoted to family bedrooms.

Bottom right The texture of the rubble stone walls is brought together with a white slurry finish.



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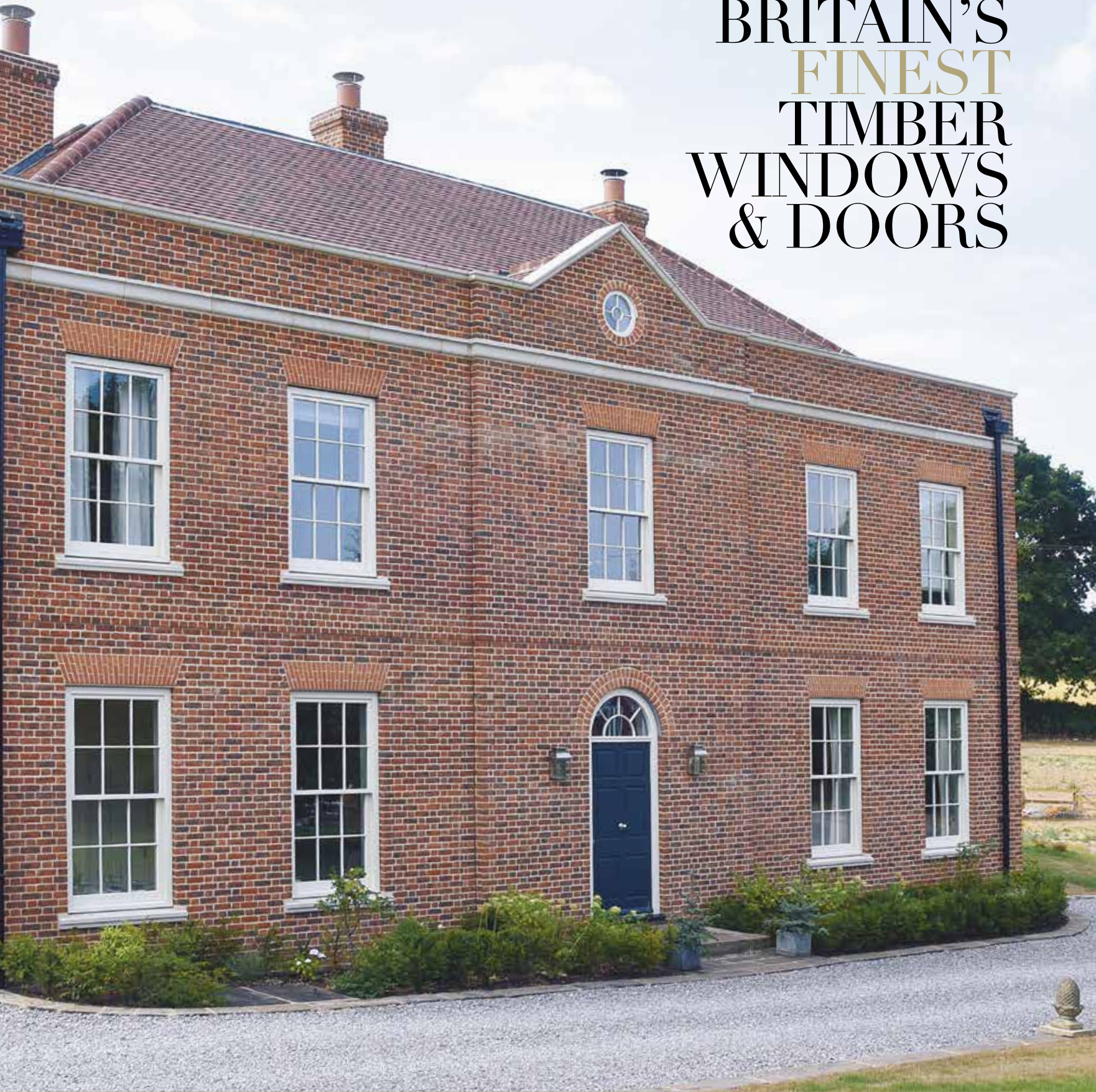


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The openness in the heart of the plan captures the landscape for the house

supplanted by a top-lit staircase that opens up the centre of the house.

What made all this possible, within the brief, was using the void under the floors. The empty plinth has donated its volume to the ground floor rooms and the house now connects with ground level on three sides, on the fourth a terrace faces out to sea. There is now a concrete slab plumbed with underfloor heating. Where the floor joists rested a slim ledge now runs around the living room. Elongated windows maintain an elegantly comfortable scale with French doors opening on all sides to the garden through the deep walls; above them clear panes of glass look to the sky. In the evening the black eyes of the darkness can be shut out with simple shutters, though you are more likely to find the inhabitants on the new verandah garlanded with blankets, catching the last light of the sun.

I would like to describe each room to you, the way the light falls and the air moves, the trees framed and moments created, the kitchen's deep external window seats and its relationship with the courtyard, how the master bedroom extends up into the roof space, just the right amount. But two spaces in particular show how the reworking has grounded and grown the house, imbuing it with a sense of history, despite the light and modern living. The first is the hall. As you enter your consciousness is nudged by church naves and Tudor manor houses (and their arts and crafts reinventions). The compression of the staircase above is just perceptible but your eyes are on the oak tree ahead while taking in the dark monastic refectory table. A step inside reveals the light from the roof three floors above and the generous oak staircase leading up to it, before peripheral vision asserts itself, unveiling spaces beyond the rooms – a sheltered courtyard to one side and, stretching the view, the sea horizon over the fields. The openness in the heart of the plan captures the landscape for the house. But looking up into the house you see that it's

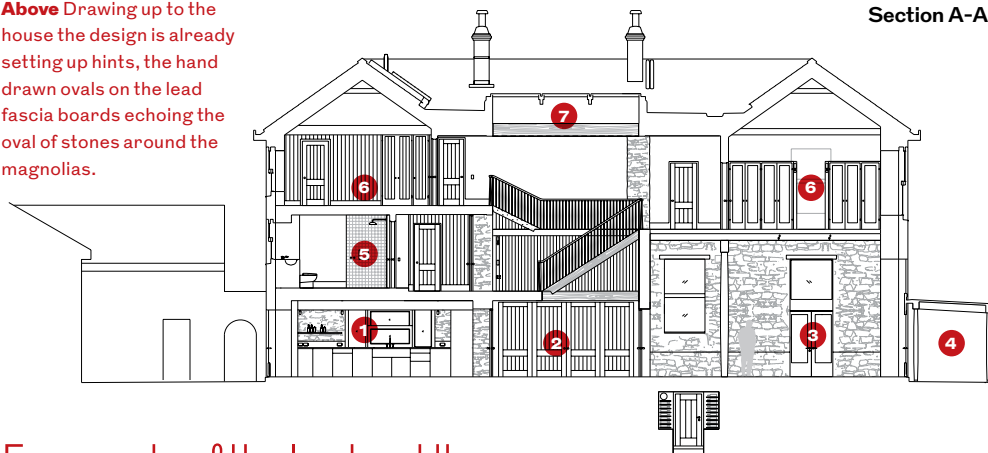


Broad beams of air-dried oak work with a board mark concrete portal to supporting new openings in the house. Lintels are left exposed.



The spindle columns and exposed beams recall those inside.

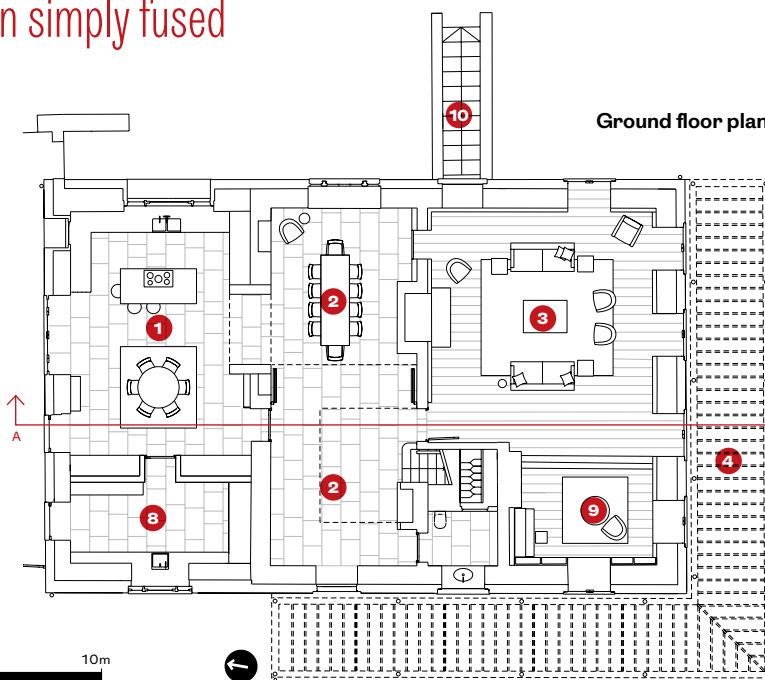
Above Drawing up to the house the design is already setting up hints, the hand drawn ovals on the lead fascia boards echoing the oval of stones around the magnolias.



Section A-A

Fragments of the land and its past have been simply fused

- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Hall/dining
- 3 Living room
- 4 Verandah
- 5 Guest suite
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Rooflight
- 8 Pantry
- 9 Snug
- 10 Stair to wine cellar in undercroft



Ground floor plan

not all about the view out; it is also precious in itself. This shows in details like the smooth handrail of curving elm and spindle-shaped oak balusters that dance up the staircase; set alternately at two degrees, the slender verticals render larger bracing unnecessary.

The living room has the sense of a mediaeval hall about it with a large hearth and minstrels' gallery. Here the textures of the whitewashed stone and juxtaposed shutters on the long windows are most pronounced. Timber downstands and herringbone strutting in the ceiling are exposed and an oak column (also shaved to a spindle) inhabits this large 78m² space with a notional divide. At the same time it has strong echoes of the original cottage Kettle's Yard gallery – ledges set with treasured found objects, naïve paintings and the time worn delicacy and slim spindles of primitive chairs. The room steps down under the mezzanine for an evening snug on the sunset side of the house. Here there is no need to talk of a 'material palette', fragments of the land and its past have been simply fused; ubiquitous veined local limestone as doorstep, an old gate post as fireplace lintel, a hearthstone below once sat at the farmhouse's front door.

This house is remarkable in many ways: for its extraordinary coastal site; the way the land informs and enriches both it and the garden as a way of life; the radical upgrading of the fabric and the way it has been used to create very different spaces; the masterly handling of the materials and details; and the artistry with which it is lived in. It is impossible to separate these from the architecture, and that is how it should be. ●

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Gruff magic

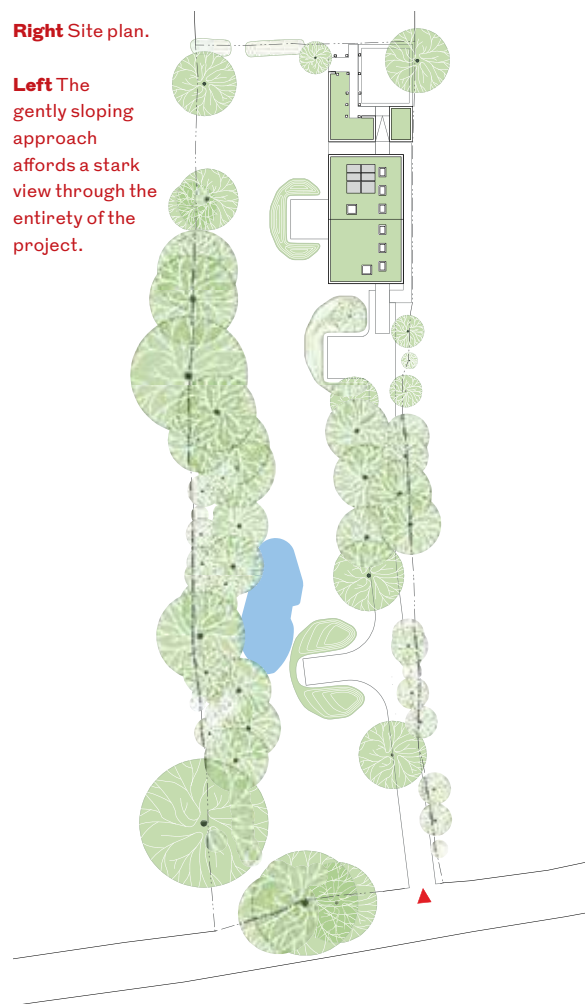
Deliberately understated from the outside, Tonkin Liu's Old Shed, New House is a masterclass in the curation of daylight

Words: George Grylls Photographs: Greg Storrar



Right Site plan.

Left The gently sloping approach affords a stark view through the entirety of the project.



There is something particularly special about Yorkshire light. It rakes colour from landscapes that seem to harbour none and uplifts in a way that David Hockney can only aspire to capture in paint.

So it was disappointing that on the day of my visit to Old Shed New House, gruff and surly, Yorkshire decided to cloud itself in a foul grey. Throughout the afternoon it grew darker and darker until the rain finally appeared in the form of an apocalyptic down-pour on the A1. All credit then to Tonkin Liu's unprepossessing three-bedroom house which, despite the weather, presented a supreme lesson in the curation of daylight, as the project's signature library positively beamed colour back into the gloom-shrouded countryside.

The brief from the clients was for an affordable and comfortable house, whose architecture would emphasise the retired couple's collection of artworks and books. Knowing the area from family holidays, they bought some land on the edge of a North Yorkshire



village with access to shops and services but sufficiently removed to allow a feeling of bucolic seclusion. The project's aesthetic was borrowed from two elements on the site: a copse of silver birches and the eponymous agricultural shed.

The form itself is deliberately unremarkable, recalling the functional vernacular of the previous structure. Exposed steel fins speak of a rugged unpretentiousness, while a black chimney pipe is allowed to impinge on the otherwise pure facade of shot-blasted larch. 'We wanted to keep it no-nonsense,' remarks Mike Tonkin, 'it's not trying anything.' Yet the subtlety throws up great serendipity. The flutterings of silver and grey that run across the wood are supposed to echo the birches, but look closely under the rolling Yorkshire skies and you will also see soft smatterings of purple and blue.

Tonkin Liu's supreme achievement here is to concentrate the limited budget on the creation of two exceptional spaces. The first, opened up at each end by two-storey

Above Subtle changes in the stacking of the larch create an understated rhythm.

Tonkin Liu's supreme achievement is to concentrate the budget on two exceptional spaces

windows, is a double-height axial corridor running from east to west, cleaving the house dramatically in two. It is as if Moses himself had sectioned the shed based on his experience designing a safe passage through the Red Sea. As you approach up a very slight slope, you feel as if you could continue walking right through the very heart of the building without deviating. Yet, contrary to expectation, you do not enter straight ahead, but through a little door nestled on its thinner side. It might have been nice to crown this corridor with a main entrance, but given that the kitchen counter at the distant western end of the perspective is nicknamed 'the altar', perhaps that whole experience would have felt a little too sacrificial.

The project's pride and joy is undoubtedly the other double-height space: a library so beautiful that it really does elicit an envious gasp. No wonder everyone gathers in this kaleidoscopic room, the changing colours conjured by the fickle hand of the Yorkshire sky. The outside comes streaming in and



INNOVATORS IN
FORMPAVE



the house comes out to meet it with a cantilevered pergola. 'You feel like the outside is always part of the house,' says the client, 'even in winter.'

Light is what makes this room so special. On the library's ceiling an interlocking grid dapples the sun down from the lightwells, recalling the clearings in the aforementioned birch copse; in keeping with the building's Passivhaus commitment, the louvres along the south-facing glass wall are variously angled to repel glare on the hottest days of the year, but streak low bands of light in the winter months; and mirrors, mirrors and mirrors cover the bookshelves, reflecting back a Soanian depth of space that belies the library's small footprint. In stacking the shelves, the idea of curating by colour of cover was rightly rejected in favour of a more practical organisation by author name, and the unintended effect is of measured polychromy. Nothing about this house is overbearingly insistent.

The bedrooms of Old Shed New House have been simply organised on the second floor to accommodate the grand gestures of the hallway and the library. Their triple-glazed windows are small so that ginormous coverings of glass can be afforded elsewhere without compromising the building's ability to insulate effectively. In a way, the simplicity of the bedrooms does not matter. To reach them you cross an 80mm thick



Above left To access the upstairs bedrooms, you cross the library's dazzling mezzanine.

Above right The bedrooms are functionally arranged to maximise storage space.

Left Door frames are painted white in an otherwise grey house as a way of harmonising with the paintings.

IN NUMBERS

210m²

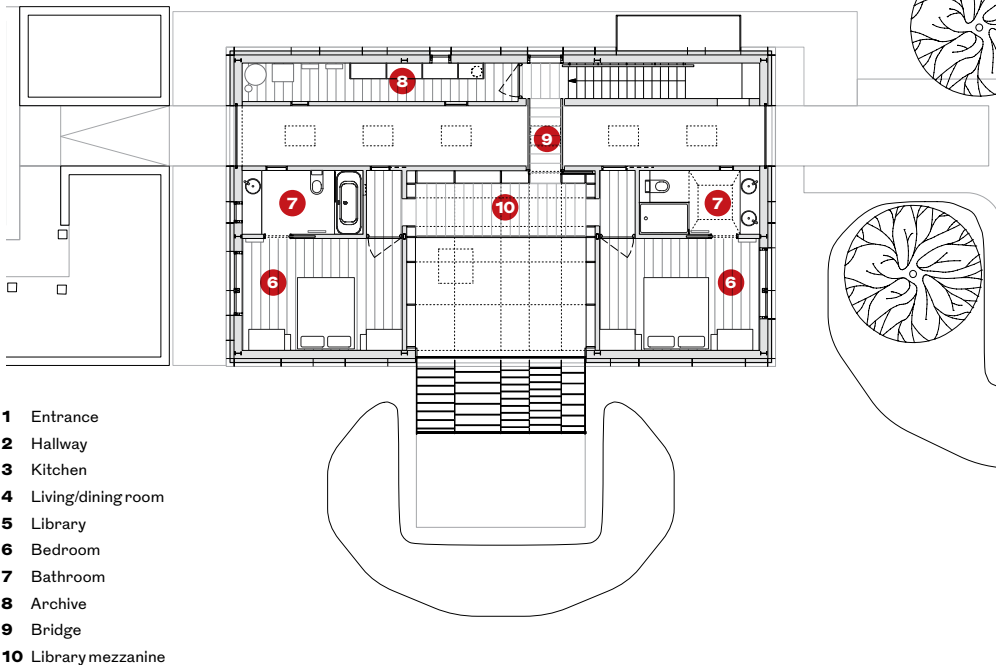
gross internal area

11.39kg/m²

Annual CO₂ emissions

The library is so beautiful that it really does elicit an envious gasp

First floor plan



- 1 Entrance
- 2 Hallway
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Living/dining room
- 5 Library
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Bathroom
- 8 Archive
- 9 Bridge
- 10 Library mezzanine

Right An open-plan dining room feeds off the central hallway and living room.



bridge across the hallway, and wander over the mezzanine level of that magnificent library. Old Shed New House never lets you forget where its priorities lie.

It also never lets you forget the scenery. Windows are deliberately placed to open up perspectives onto select patches of countryside, providing ever-changing sources of comparison with the impressive collection of paintings, which are hung with a rhythmic syncopation all the way up the double-height walls of the hallway. ‘The windows onto views become further paintings,’ explains Mike Tonkin. Lo and behold, a rabbit in the neighbouring field positions itself flirtatiously in the frame, only to be replaced by a Stubbs horse a moment later. And the trees that fringe the southern side will sway with all the picturesque gait of a Hockney painting, and presumably, on a good day, with all the colour.●

Credits
Architect Tonkin Liu
Client Private
Structural engineer Rodrigues Associates
Services Integration
Main contractor Vine House Construction

Ground floor plan



Right Windows and skylights abound in the impressive double-height hallway.





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Look closely

Cousins & Cousins' house both stands out and fits in to its street, but it's the impeccable detailing that makes it really special

Words: Pamela Buxton



As the first project that Cousins & Cousins took on, Kenwood Lee House in London's Highgate was something of a test case for Ben and Jelena Cousins' business relationship when the husband and wife set up in practice together back in 2012.

Six years later, with the 650m² project finally finished, it's fair to say the gamble has paid off. The practice is now 17-strong and the house is shortlisted for numerous awards – as well as attracting the attention of a number of passing north London footballers enquiring whether it's for sale.

Kenwood Lee House is a quietly impressive family home with a relatively restrained street elevation that belies the more radical moves within. The project stands or falls on the quality of its detailing – which has fortunately been impeccably realised by high-end residential contractor New Wave London, whose owner just happens to be the client.

Located near Hampstead Heath in a conservation area with many Arts & Crafts residences, this was a potentially challenging context for contemporary architecture. However the planning process proved straightforward, helped by both the unremarkable nature of the 1960s house being replaced and Cousins & Cousins' respectful approach to the environs. Given free creative rein, it aimed to create a contemporary version of a double-fronted suburban villa, taking care

Above Kenwood Lee House's slight street-side asymmetry fits with its Arts & Crafts neighbours.

Right ... But behind is a full-on and unashamed contemporary elevation.

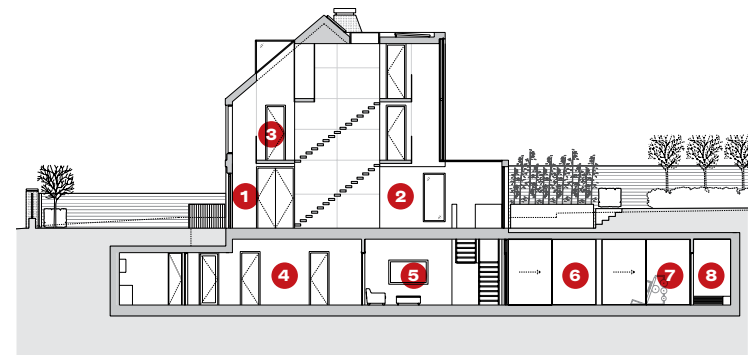
Credits

Architect Cousins & Cousins Architects
Client: Ziomek Wiertelak
Structural engineer FORM SD
M&E /sustainability Mendick Waring
Project manager/cost consultant Brendan Hennessey Associates
Planning consultant Cousins & Cousins Architects
Contractor New Wave London
Home technology consultant Andrew Lucas London
Glazing Vitrocsa





Section A-A



in the street elevation to reference the eaves line, gable and pitched roof of its neighbour.

'The front of the building responds to local vernacular as much as a modern building can,' says Ben Cousins. 'Clearly it's not an Arts & Crafts building, but there's an appreciation of those buildings in these streets.'

At first, this double fronted house with dormer windows looks fairly conventional, although closer inspection reveals a gently asymmetrical facade. Secondly, the muted greyish brick tones deliberately contrast with the area's prevalent red brick, which the architect feared might feel like pastiche, and work better with the patinated zinc roof.

Inside, the axial hallway is the central spine of a logical symmetrical layout that leads through to the kitchen/dining room at the rear, past reception rooms to either side. However the triple-storey garden elevation is entirely glazed within a rendered frame in complete contrast with the brick front, maxi-

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Dining area
- 3 Bedroom landing
- 4 Corridor
- 5 Family room
- 6 Pool hall
- 7 Gym behind
- 8 Changing room

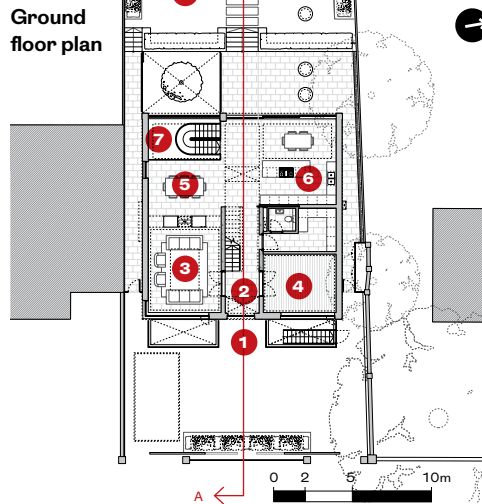


JACK HOBHOUSE

Left Mirror, outdoors, mirror, outdoors, where does the bathroom end?



JACK HOBHOUSE (2)



Left The central concrete stairwell.

Below left Stair into basement with view through to courtyard.

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Hall
- 3 Living room
- 4 Reception
- 5 Dining room
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Stair to basement
- 8 Garden

Corten but turns out to be polished plaster.

But it's the highly-textured finish of the 250mm thick concrete of the stairwell that really holds the attention – created using larch formwork arranged horizontally in bands of varying widths after extensive testing of different finishes and arrangements. In total, 25 boards were used per floor with no repeats, the carefully lined-up shuttering holes filled but still legible.

'We knew the finish of the central space was key to the success of the whole building,' says Cousins, adding that exposed concrete is rarely used in high end residential and has to be handled well.

There are five upper bedrooms including the top floor master suite, with two more at the front of the lower ground floor. Reached via a helical staircase, this lower level is an impressive 325m², with facilities including a further lounge, home cinema, gym, pool, sauna, steam room, plus rooms for utility/plant, IT and even a car lift. Despite a large amount of dark oak panelling, the architect has managed to get a reasonable feeling of light into this potentially gloomy level – helped by a niftily-opening 4.2m by 6.1m wide window with counter-balanced sliding glazing, which opens onto a light well in the garden.

Elsewhere, highlights include an elegant 3m by 2m travertine double-sided fireplace – a definite nod to the marble of the Mies van

der Rohe Barcelona Pavilion – that also neatly conceals the air-conditioning unit. The house is full of beautiful oak joinery – notably in the enviable dressing room where garments and accessories are displayed in internally lit, glass-doored cases akin to museum vitrines.

Yet this is not just a luxury design show-piece – its success is that it does feel like a real family home, helped by the relatively compact layout of the above ground levels and the warmth and tactility of the materials.

Gazing at the satisfying alignment of shadow gaps and beautiful finish of the concrete, Cousins is hugely appreciative of the client commitment and workmanship that enabled the practice to realise its first commission with such aplomb: 'It's been a special project because of the client's desire for perfection, and allowing us such creative freedom.'

Below Ground floor kitchen and dining space, with a peek past the fireplace to the living room.



ALAN WILLIAMS

At the heart of the city

Fitzroy Place, London

The complex replaces the former Middlesex Hospital, of which only Fitzrovia Chapel remains. It contains 235 apartments, including suites, maisonettes and a penthouse. The apartments, designed by renowned interior designer Johnson Naylor, combine classic English style with chic, minimalist elegance. The penthouse offers light, luxurious rooms with marble walls in the bathrooms, polished plaster and a roof terrace with bar, cooking area, outdoor TV and audio system. From here you can enjoy the spectacular view of London's West End and the 189-metre BT Tower.

The cabled Gira Smart Building system has been installed in the penthouse, giving users maximum comfort and excellent security. It also offers the opportunity to integrate audio, video and monitoring systems, as well as programme the unit based on personal preferences and needs. KNX also permits integration of devices from other manufacturers. The devices communicate in the same programming language (IP) across all aspects, and can be implemented using a single software tool (ETS).

Integrating climate control into the KNX system was a particular challenge due to its complexity. Here, individual systems had to be able to communicate with one another in order to efficiently regulate the temperature in the penthouse: underfloor heating, electric heated floor mats, various fan coil units and a gas fireplace. The



Fitzroy Place, at the heart of London, features 235 apartments, including suites, maisonettes and a penthouse.

(Fotos: Alex James)

sunlight coming in the 7-metre-high windows also had to be taken into account in the temperature control. The temperature is controlled based on a defined setpoint value. Thermostats in the rooms then ensure efficient, individual temperature regulation.

The Gira HomeServer is used to control complex tasks and scenarios. With this and the corresponding intuitive operating devices, users have complete control over their space, receiving status feedback for all functions.

The aim of the system technology was to implement this powerful KNX system through a visually appealing and intuitive user interface. The control panels on the walls had to fit in with the clean design of the penthouse. In addition, the touch sensors had to be modern and minimalist. With this in mind, the Gira E22 design line in aluminium was chosen, mounted flat on the wall. Each touch sensor is laser-labelled, providing a clear overview of the various functions. Light scenes, heating, ventilation, air conditioning technology and curtain control have all been integrated.

Because the specialists at "Sound & Vision" offer remote maintenance of their KNX systems as standard, the status of devices can be checked from outside and any errors can be diagnosed and remedied without the user having to be disturbed. The basis for this is once again the Gira HomeServer and a virtual private network.



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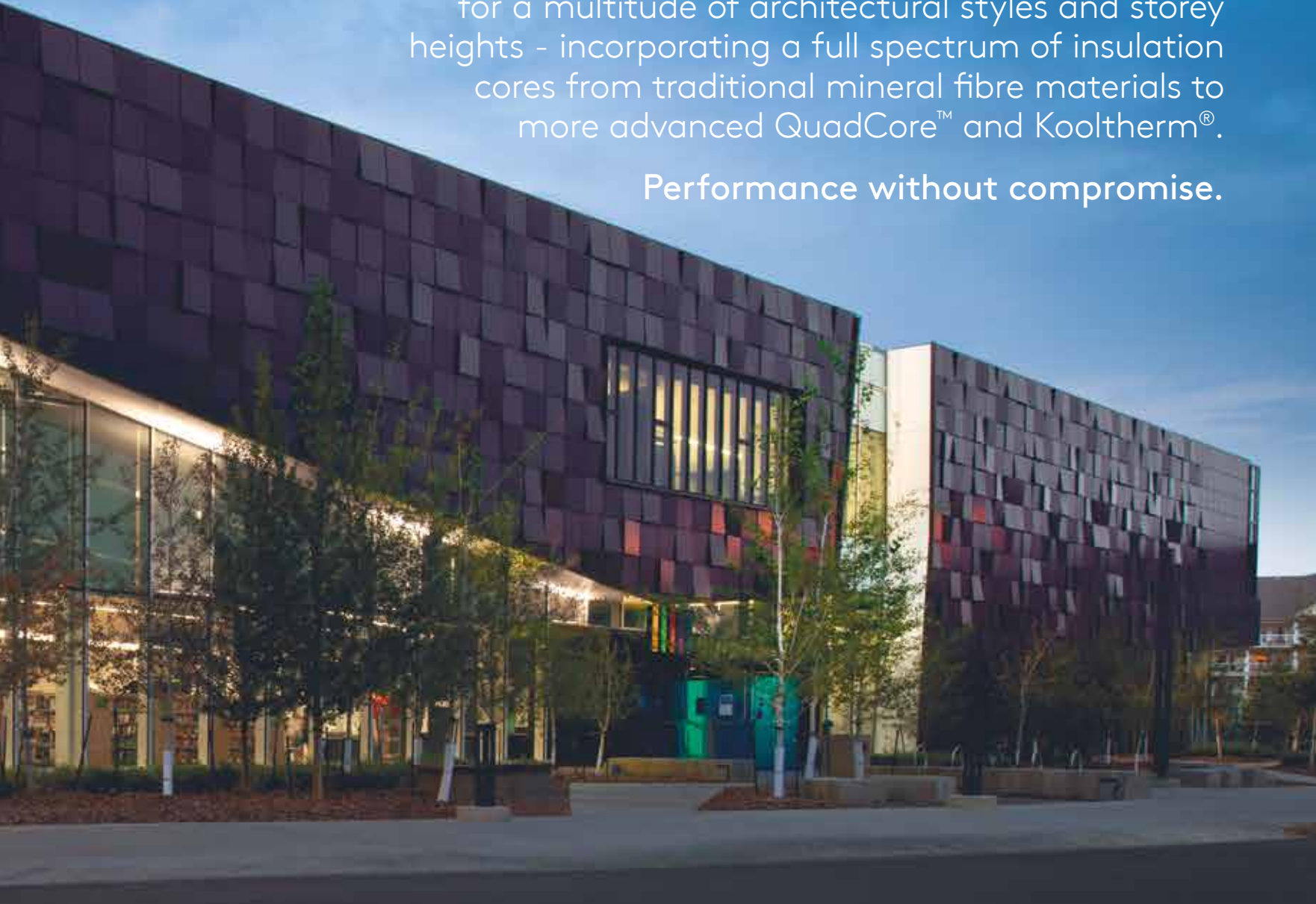
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2: Intelligence



Health, safety
& wellbeing



Legal, regulatory &
statutory compliance

Lucy Carmichael



Lucy Carmichael, RIBA director of practice discusses the launch of the consultation for the RIBA Plan of Work for Fire Safety

To view the consultation visit architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/plan-of-work-for-fire-safety-consultation

What are you hoping this consultation will achieve? How do you want members to get involved?

This initiative is RIBA driven but it's an industry-wide consultation. We've been pushing it through the likes of Building magazine and professional bodies like the Institute of Clerks of Works and even insurance companies. We want feedback on whether this process will improve fire safety – a sense check of what's happening on the ground with the profession, including any commercial pressures that might influence roles and information. Have we got the detail of the deliverables schedule right?

How does the Plan of Work for Fire Safety strengthen accountability for project teams?

It is bringing together a new statutory framework as recommended by the Hackitt review with more clarity in how projects are managed, which is the cultural shift. Most accountability will be driven through the proposed extension of CDM2015 and the principle of statutory dutyholders for construction health and safety to include building user life safety. It's important to make it clear who's responsible for what at each stage.

Will this overlay require a ground shift in the way architects approach their responsibilities within the Plan of Work?

This isn't about creating unnecessary paperwork, it's about embedding fire safety at an earlier stage, in a more formalised way. The Plan of Work systematises who's doing what at each stage. If the process for developing, co-ordinating and signing off information is followed it could generate efficiencies, and avoid abortive work due to late redesign. Some architects may resist the extended role of principal designer – but if they want to lead the design process, with power comes responsibility.

Is this actually going to be adopted?

It needs to be fine-tuned, but it will be adopted within the RIBA Plan of Work guidance as a process map for fire safety roles, responsibilities and deliverables. There will be other overlays too – for sustainability and ethics for instance. All must be embedded early in the process.

Are other changes to the building regs, such as with cladding, sprinklers and means of escape, likely to be incorporated into the guidance?

Regulation on sprinklers and cladding will be strengthened but might not go as far as the RIBA wishes. Sprinklers are mandated in Wales and Scotland in residential buildings so there's a precedent. Secondary means of escape is a bigger issue. The cost of upgrading the public estate would be enormous. Until now there's been no need to retroactively apply regs, but would existing council tenants accept lower safety standards? Regulation is also likely to be influenced by public opinion and what liabilities insurers will accept.

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We need action plans for immediate changes and strategic moves to address the disparities within the workforce of these practices

Abigail Patel investigates the gender pay gap and moves to tackle it: ribaj.com/genderpaygap



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

Health, safety
& wellbeingLegal, regulatory &
statutory compliance

Where to call home?

What will Brexit do to the UK's pool of talent? RIBA Rising Star 2017 Úna Breathnach-Hifearnáin shares an emigrant's story

I was always curious as a child growing up on the west coast of Ireland. I enjoyed stories and nature equally. I loved imagining places and drawing or making models of these spaces. I loved exploring the buildings around me – the impressive Moore Hall, Ashford Castle and The Linenhall as well as the more ordinary, like my grandfather's traditional cottage – and considering how they might have been put together. I ended up studying architecture at the University of Limerick following a first degree in interior architecture, and graduated from my part II course in 2012.

I had always assumed I would work in Ireland, but at that time it was still struggling from the 2008 financial crisis and following recession. Architecture jobs were few, poorly paid and not guaranteed long-term. I had worked and studied in Germany over the course of my architecture degrees and so considered returning there. In the meantime, I had also applied for a job in the Cotswolds at Millar + Howard Workshop, where I subsequently worked for two and half years.

My emigration was in many ways simply for economic reasons and the choice of the UK over Germany was for the ease in translation of qualifications, given that the system of part I to III is common to both Ireland and the UK. I imagined that I could come to the UK, spend a couple of years working, complete my part III and then head back 'home' for the rest of my career. Emigration is not such a straightforward path, however. At the end of two years in the UK I had completed my



part III at the University of Bath and considered returning to Ireland. But the economy there was still struggling; I had made a life here and was happy. One of the fascinating things about emigration is that the desire to settle makes your host country feel like home, although an ever-present part of you longs for your maternal one.

My experience of leaving Ireland to look for a brighter future elsewhere was quite commonplace at that time. In 2008 there were 3,500 architects on the register in Ireland, but by 2012 this had dropped to 2,500; the architectural market earned €409 million in 2008 but depreciated to €112m in 2012. In my graduating class of 25 students some interesting statistics unfold: roughly 50% emigrated to the UK, the US and elsewhere, and the remainder largely worked outside the architectural profession – a trend that applied to all those completing part II in Ireland in 2012. This picture was reflected at a macro scale too. In the general population that year,

Above and right The west coast of Ireland, Úna Breathnach-Hifearnáin's childhood home.

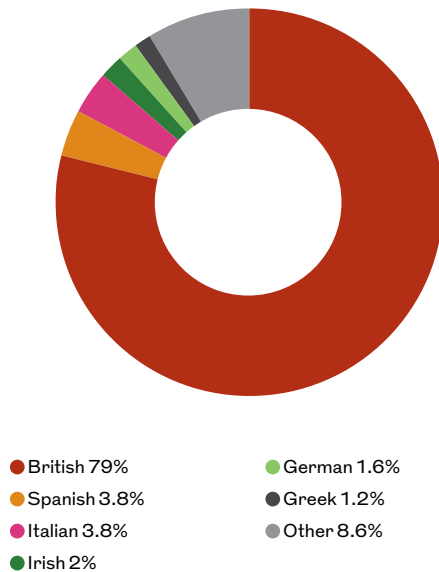
With the UK a more difficult emigration option, other countries may benefit

at total of 87,100 people left Ireland, almost 2% of the population – more people than since new records began in 1987. Ninety-two per cent of the emigrants were under 45 years old; 41% between the ages of 15 and 25. The most popular destination was Britain, with 19,000 settling there in the year to April.

In contrast, the UK, which I now call home, is a melting pot of architects from all over the world. Ideas from various cultures mix to produce fascinating manifestations. Discussion and debate are varied, and the schools are full of talent from many differing backgrounds, pointing to an inspiring future. The current proportion of registered architects from other countries in the UK is 21% of a total of 40,754 registrants. The range of nationalities is broad; the most common represented (other than British) are Spanish (3.8%), Italian (3.8%), Irish (2%), German (1.6%) and Greek (1.2%). It isn't possible to understand how this proportion has risen and fallen over time as this is not something architect registration boards have tracked until now. Like me, those who emigrate from other EU countries may come due to free movement and curiosity and, in looking for a new place to settle, find a rich architectural industry that is welcoming and will allow them to thrive. The RIBA's position on the benefits of a diverse workforce is that: 'International architects, many with highly specialised skills, help British practices fill domestic skill gaps and enrich the practices they work for.'

Roll forward to 2018, however, and 60%

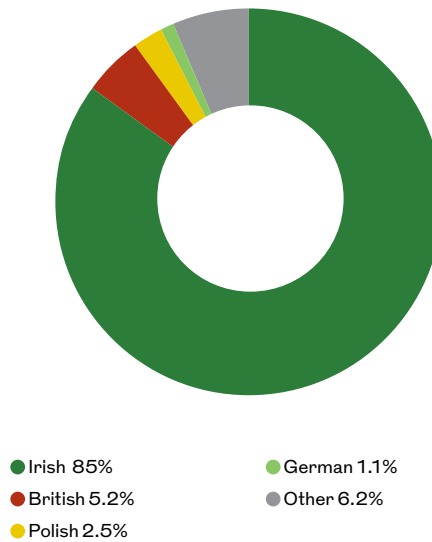
Nationalities on the ARB register



of EU architects in the UK, according to the RIBA's own Global by Design report, said they would consider leaving because of Brexit, and practices have been reporting that talented architects are now either leaving or seriously considering doing so because of the continued uncertainty over their status. Brexit means that after April 2019 no further EU nationals will be able to come to live in the UK without a visa, and those who have been here for fewer than five years will need to leave or apply to live here on a visa. This process may prove complicated and costly.

There are 600,000 architects in the EU, which translates to 1 per 1,000 inhabitants. Yet in the UK there are 0.6 architects per 1,000 inhabitants and in Ireland even fewer at 0.5 per 1,000. In Ireland, registered architects amount to 2,763 individuals of whom 15% are foreign nationals. The mix of

Nationalities on the RIAI register



Given the societal change ahead, will this be a place I will still want to call home?

nationalities represented is vast but the largest concentrations are British (5.2%), Polish (2.5%) and German (1.1%). In France, there are 30,000 registered architects of whom 4.6% are foreign nationals. The largest concentration of the latter come from Italy (1.4%). Italy has the largest number of registered architects in the EU with 157,000 individuals, representing one quarter of all Europe's architects and 2.6 architects per 1,000 inhabitants. Germany has 109,000 architects, of whom 7.1% are foreign nationals. Spain has 54,000 architects, and the Netherlands has 13,805 architects, 24% of whom are foreign nationals. At 21% Britain seems to have the second largest percentage of foreign architects on its register, and when it becomes a more difficult emigration option after Brexit, these other countries may benefit from an increased influx of architectural talent.

Nevertheless, the Common Travel Area and the rights of an Irish citizen to settle and work in the UK without restriction predates the EU and so Brexit has no effect on immigration laws for us. Naturally, we feared that

during Brexit talks this agreement could have been changed or regressed, but this anxiety was quashed in June 2017 when the UK government's policy paper on the position of EU citizens in the UK stated a desire to 'protect the Common Travel Area arrangements', saying that 'Irish citizens residing in the UK will not need to apply for "settled status" to protect their entitlements'. The Irish are in a unique position given that although we will remain EU citizens, we will not have to leave, and so Brexit will not have any direct effect on us. The indirect effects, however, will be felt by all architects: concerns have been shared over work drying up and projects being put on hold indefinitely. When I consider these things I again find myself toying with the idea of returning home to Ireland. With that consideration comes the anxiety of the unknown and of returning somewhere I haven't worked since qualification.

Brexit does mean architects will leave the UK. Some will be forced to by the complicated and costly visa process; others will choose to because they feel unwelcome after the goings on in the two years since the leave vote. And the final group of leavers will be UK citizens who feel alienated by their own country as it pushes out their friends. Brexit will undoubtedly cause employment difficulties, with foreign architecture students being unable to get visas to work here, and the debacle of visa application may mean the UK will struggle to attract talent.

More than 80% of RIBA members have identified access to skilled international talent as being vital to the profession's future. I foresee that Brexit may also require us as architects to diversify the sectors we work in, and to potentially reinvent what architects actually do. It may mean some need to retrain or move into other sectors where our skill sets may be needed. The coming years will certainly be a challenge for architects in the UK.

At the moment, it is quite difficult to imagine what the post-Brexit UK will be like and how great those challenges will be. The amount of societal change is also hard to predict and so I find it hard to judge whether it will be a place I will still want to call home. For me, this may mean exploring options elsewhere, possibly trying to move back to Ireland and facing whatever career implications that may hold. ●

Úna Breathnach-Hífeárnáin is an architect at Purcell's Bristol office





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Terms of reference

Architects are adopting the language of modelling. They must make it more than jargon to be effective

George Grylls

Whisper it quietly, but the language of architecture is changing. New words have started to appear in the mouths of professionals. New words with profound implications.

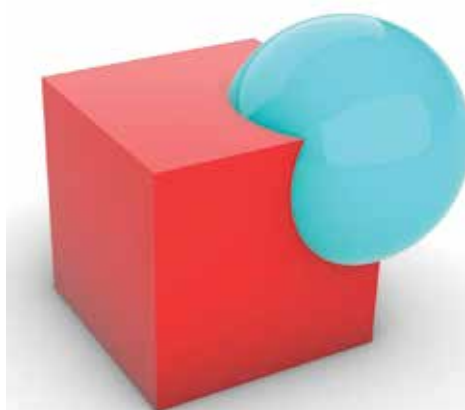
One of these words is 'Boolean'. According to one 2016 article, Steven Holl 'frequently sculpts geometric voids – known as boolean voids – into his buildings, creating unusual facades and internal spaces across more simple base structures' (Dezeen). Another word is 'extrude'. MVRDV's Tianjin library of last year apparently 'extrudes upwards from the site.' For your average 3D modeller, such terminology raises no eyebrows and if anything helps to clarify the design processes of MVRDV and Steven Holl; but for the layperson the words 'boolean' and 'extrude' are completely baffling. 'Extrude' is not a computer command that structures

The boolean void in action Stephen Holl's
Ex of In House, Rhinebeck, New York (2015).



IWAN BAAH

Below Boolean difference:
A 3D object (blue) is used to
subtract from the volume of
another 3D object.



their working day but rather a floating piece of abstruse vocabulary, one that disorients with its faintly familiar Latinate root. Didn't 'extrude' appear somewhere in Edward Lear's Scroobious Pip? Was 'boolean' perhaps in Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky?

'Boolean' is in fact an adjective used to refer to the branch of algebra pioneered not by Carroll, but by another 19th century English mathematician – the logician George Boole. Boole discovered that variables could be alternately expressed as either true or false, a sort of binary language that underscores the entirety of electronics. Computers work on the premise that the answer to each of their functions will be a one or a zero. Computers therefore speak a sort of Boolean patois.

However, in that Dezeen article on Holl's house Ex of In, unwittingly or not, the word 'boolean' has not been capitalised, implying therefore that the 'boolean void' no longer has anything to do with George Boole. What is being referenced no doubt are the 10 commands in Rhino that govern the union or subtraction of two volumes (and if one were to hazard a more specific guess, the command 'BooleanDifference' might come to the fore). In all the Rhino commands, the word 'Boolean' is capitalised, signifying therefore the mathematical language governing the modelling function. But in Dezeen's description of Holl's artistic retreat in Rhinebeck the word loses its capitalisation to specifically describe the modelling technique of using one volume to subtract from another.

The words 'extrusion' and 'boolean' are

Below The resulting
boolean void.



indicative of the way in which architects are now quite literally speaking the language of 3D modelling. Such literal use of 3D modelling language exposes the extent to which a new conceptual language underpins design. There is no doubt that the last 30 years have seen a dramatic shift in the way architects conceive building, one which has prompted reactions of both rapture and stern disapprobation within the profession. Patrik Schumacher has been at the forefront of embracing the active role of the computer in design, yet the idea of submission to the machine still has a tendency to unnerve. Does the tool control the craftsman or rather the craftsman the tool? Is it a collaboration? Does it even matter?

Active embrace

If we lend Holl the benefit of the doubt, we can say that the use of the word 'boolean' comes across as an active embrace of technology. And for those who can picture a red extrusion flickering with all the glitchy excitement of an imminent subtraction, the link between the word 'boolean' and the signified process is much clearer than the vague denomination of 'geometric void.' Holl's firm leaps headfirst into the language of 3D modelling, and thereby can be said to carve itself a niche in the new literature of computer-based design.

But there seems little clarity in terms of which commands are widely acceptable. Take for example the text released by Zaha Hadid Architects for the opening of its new

Does the tool control the craftsman or the craftsman the tool? Is it a collaboration? Does it even matter?

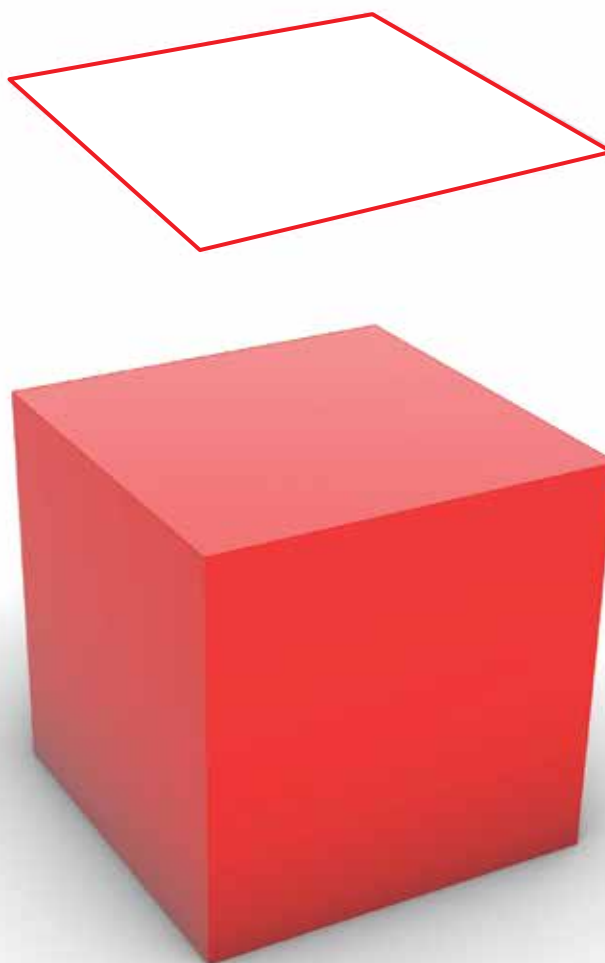
Morpheus Hotel in Macau – an enormous cobweb-covered cube warped by the omission of a few central organs. The word ‘extrusion’ is used three times to explain the initial design process of creating the solid. Yet the firm is too reticent to use further modelling terminology: ‘This block was then ‘carved’ with voids.’ All the accompanying vocabulary that Holl used to articulate the parti of the Ex of In is intact, but somehow the word ‘boolean’ itself, the very command that has enabled the whole process, has been dropped by ZHA.

While the word ‘boolean’ is still in linguistic limbo, it seems that the word ‘extrusion’ has now reached a critical point of usage whereby its etymology no longer has any bearing on what it means in the architectural profession. Originally it referred to the mechanical process of squeezing a viscous liquid through a die to create a rod with a certain profile. Now it the creation of a solid from a closed line (or ‘curve’ to use the right modelling term). But the ‘extrusion’ process of the 19th century was originally called ‘squirting’, so the word’s meaning has never been static. And when architects are faced with the image of an operation on their computer screen day in day out, and they have been provided with a word to describe that specific operation, it is little wonder that the language of 3D modelling is now translated into their depictions of the everyday world.

Who are you talking to?

Who though is the intended audience of this vocabulary? Fellow professionals, clients or the general public? If it is fellow members of the architectural profession, then undoubtedly the international language of 3D modelling is appropriate, because the insights into Holl, MVRDV and Hadid’s massing techniques are crystal clear to anyone with even a few hours of experience designing on a computer. One might argue as well that few outside the profession would be interested in

Right The 2D profile of a closed line or ‘curve’ is extruded to make a 3D object or extrusion (below).



the early stages of design that these words describe. Perhaps so. Perhaps the wider world is only concerned with architecture’s implementation and effect. But it is at least worth being conscious of the fact that the new language is so specialised as to be exclusive, and so when speaking to clients and the broader public, ‘extrusions’ and ‘boolean voids’ are just going to extract blank stares.

Every profession has a unique vocabulary that can appear baffling to the outsider. Architecture has always used words like ‘spandrel’ and ‘joist’ that are unlikely to appear in pub conversations with solicitor friends and accountant acquaintances. In the past these specialist words have tended to refer to esoteric parts of buildings, that few other than architects, builders and engineers would even know exist. The fact that the new terms describe the processes of design rather than what is actually built speaks to the conceptual hold that 3D modelling has on the profession.

In the context of greater architectural history, ours is a nascent period within the development of the conceptual language of 3D modelling. For 3D modelling programs are exactly that – languages. Each program belongs to a family, whereby fluency in one helps secure fluency in another. Italian feels simple after Spanish because they are both Romance languages; Revit follows on from Autocad because they are both Autodesk products. And like languages, these programs are quite clearly conditioning the way in which architects are expressing themselves, with both words and designs. This should not necessarily cause consternation. The natural rhythms of the English language have pushed English authors to err towards iambic pentameter, the French language settled on the alexandrine. Those who are conscious of the language they are speaking will have the ability to manipulate it into literature; those who do not will inevitably sink into platitudes. ●

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Recovery positions

Welcome clarity on net contribution clauses upholds inclusion of all obligations, even on a breached contract

Alistair McGrigor

Net contribution clauses apportion liability in the case of defects caused by the negligence of several parties. Until recently there were very few cases on their interpretation, but now we have several. The latest sheds light on how widely they can be applied.

The case involved Radius, a housing developer, and its engagement of JNP Architects to design and oversee the construction of two apartment blocks in Northern Ireland. The apartments were to be built off a concrete platform which required water proofing. The original design called for a full tanking solution using Hydroguard.

After a contractor had been appointed, a quantity surveying error was discovered meaning less than a quarter of the required Hydroguard had been allowed for. The architect devised a cheaper, partially tanked design involving the use of a 'Famguard skirt'. Famguard is more reliant on a high degree of workmanship than Hydroguard.

The water proofing failed and water ingress occurred before and after completion of the works. The main cause was found to be the failure of the Famguard skirt. This was the result of workmanship failings by the contractor but also a lack of adequate supervision by JNP. Given the vulnerability of the Famguard design to workmanship errors, JNP ought to have built in additional safeguards (such as hose-testing) to ensure the revised design was effectively implemented.

Crucially, JNP had also failed to obtain Radius' consent to the change in design, contrary to the terms of its appointment.

Although Radius representatives had attended some site meetings and received copies of site minutes, 'informed' consent could not be implied from that alone. In the court's view, 'a deliberate decision was made to keep Radius in the dark'. Had consent been properly sought, the court found that Radius would have required assurances and safeguards to ensure that the Famguard skirt would work just as well as the Hydroguard design. Without such assurances, money would have been found to keep the Hydroguard solution.

JNP was appointed under the RIBA Standard Conditions of Engagement, which included a net contribution clause, reversing the common law rule that an employer may sue either its contractor or its architect/consultant for the full amount of a loss which both can be said to have caused or contributed to. The principal effect is to transfer the risk of insolvency of one or the other responsible parties on to the employer. The contractor in this case had indeed become insolvent, so should the employer be limited to only a proportionate recovery from the architect, bearing the contractor's proportion itself?

Radius argued that the clause only applied to negligent design by JNP and not to its obligation to obtain consent to a change in design. The failure to obtain consent, Radius said, made JNP wholly responsible for the problems which occurred.

The court disagreed. The clause applied to all JNP's obligations under the appointment. It could not have been intended that some obligations would fall within the clause and others not, depending merely on whether consent to changes had been obtained. The clear intention in including the net contribution clause was not that JNP would 'be responsible for any fault on the part of the builder' but only for JNP's share of the responsibility.

This decision follows previous cases upholding the operation of net contribution clauses and emphasises the width they can have. The court was prepared to uphold the clause even though as a result the employer faces the prospect of a less than full recovery in respect of a 'high risk design' which, in breach of contract, it was not given the opportunity to consider and object to. The negotiation around the inclusion of net contribution clauses in your appointments is likely to become even more intense as a result. ●

Alistair McGrigor is a partner at CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP

The contractor had become insolvent, so should the employer be limited to only a proportionate recovery from the architect, bearing the contractor's portion itself?

IN PLAIN ENGLISH: CONSENT

One of the key questions in the case above is that Radius did not give 'informed' consent to the design changes. In the context of a professional appointment, consent given by a lay client will not absolve the architect from liability in circumstances where the client is relying on the architect to avoid defects, unless the client has given its approval with full knowledge of the defects.

The requirement of consent is therefore, in this context, a requirement for informed consent. In the absence of informed consent, an architect could potentially alter the design, without the client knowing why, and without understanding what were the advantages and disadvantages of the change, from a cost point of view and for the long term viability of the project.

By contrast, a court might not look so kindly on a client who has a team of advisers that provides input to the client on changes raised by a contractor. In those circumstances, if the client gives its consent to the contractor without the contractor having explained the ramifications, but with the client having taken the advice of its team, a client might well be deemed to have given its informed consent.



Design, construction
& technology

Team talents

Never let it be said there is too little discipline in architecture



Maria Smith and Donna Gage

Multidisciplinary: People from different disciplines working together, each drawing on their disciplinary knowledge. A multidisciplinary design team aims to have as many disciplines as possible so new disciplines are created often, a phenomenon known as disciplinative easing. In a multidisciplinary practice, the goal is to have as many services as possible in the menu on your website.

Interdisciplinary: Integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines and applying them to a common vision. An interdisciplinary design team aims to belittle the education and experience of other team members by taking an 'it can't be that hard' approach to stepping on each others' toes.

Transdisciplinary: Creating a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives. In a transdisciplinary design team, all individuals roam unimpeded across the field of endeavour. In a transdisciplinary practice, the goal is to smugly lord it over all the unevolved unidisciplinary practices.

Monodisciplinary: A group consisting entirely of individuals from one discipline. This can lead to the quicker buildup of pests and diseases where the uniform group is susceptible to pretentious aesthetics and fashion, and in more serious cases, hypocritical reverse snobbery. In a monodisciplinary practice the goal is to marry and procreate within one's

discipline, further strengthening the bid for monodisciplinary-supremacy.

Subdisciplinary: Working under the control or authority of another discipline. A subdisciplinary consultant charges a high fee to submit to the will of others, usually as a facade to veil a lack of ideas, lack of stomach for responsibility, or genuine pleasure at being put upon. Subdisciplinary are known to offer themselves up as a sacrificial lamb on a failing project in order to save the reputation of other parties meaning they are often the most sought-after design team member.

Semidisciplinary: A half hearted attempt at embodying the knowledge and methods of a discipline, often taken up by lazy proponents of the 80:20 principle and those that prefer to work only at the RIBA Stage C of yesteryear. In a semidisciplinary practice, buzzwords, bravado, and Gantt charts replace insight and integrity. In a semidisciplinary design team meeting, ping pong tables and the latest apps act as decoys for a gaping knowledge vacuum.

Microdisciplinary: Focussed on a small area within a given discipline. Microdisciplinary are so obsessed with their specific area of study that they tend to disappear into irrelevance until wheeled out by perversely curious creative types with delusions of crossdisciplinarity. Despite the microdisciplinary's irrelevance, these practitioners often go on to win multiple awards, albeit in obscure categories and most often by default.

Homodisciplinary: A clone of another discipline created to command the same fees with fewer skills and a lower limit of indemnity on their PI insurance. Many homodisciplinary have dabbled in monodisciplinary, but finding no pleasure in cutting themselves off from society, leave the group to practise the same discipline under a less onerous guise.

Misdisciplinary: Working with the knowledge and methods of another discipline but with wholehearted, often wilful, errors and so dire results. The misdisciplinary design team aims to avoid allegations of gross misconduct, usually by putting the blame on a subdisciplinary subconsultant, or taking up teaching.

Undisciplinary: Involving no subjects or areas of study.

Hypnodisciplinary: Practising while asleep, either in dreams or, more dangerously and frequently, when in a lethargic stupor. Hypnodisciplinary design teams are often made up of design students and insomniacs. Hypnodisciplinary have been known for the

In a semidisciplinary design team meeting, ping pong tables and the latest apps act as decoys for a gaping knowledge vacuum

occasional stroke of creative genius, usually during a period of blood caffeine optimisation or one hour before a looming deadline.

Amphidisciplinary: Taking on the knowledge and methods of two seemingly opposing disciplines. In an amphidisciplinary design team the goal is to please everyone all the time which is especially useful when working with conflicting stakeholders. Not surprisingly, amphidisciplinary's projects always go to Design and Build contractors and the amphidisciplinary are never novated.

Redisciplinary: Descent into a spiral of self-referential, self-reinforcing madness: 'anything you can do, I can do meta'.

Hyperdisciplinary: Taking extraordinary offence at needing to interface with other disciplines. In a design team meeting, hyperdisciplinary can be found passive-aggressively pouring tea and avoiding eye-contact.

Circumdisciplinary: Skirting around the practices of another discipline without getting one's hands dirty. The most successful circumdisciplinary have a political background, bringing a talent for evading the important questions. In a circumdisciplinary design team meeting, the aim is to engage in conversations based deliberately on whatever is most meaningless to the end goal.

Domdisciplinary: Exerting power and influence over other disciplines. Rather than have the best interests of the team at heart, domdisciplinary have been known to throw other team members under the bus and incite public humiliation. Due to this, hybrid dom/subdisciplinary design teams often make the most successful collaborations.

Pandisciplinary: Assuming god-like oversight over all other disciplines: Architect. ●

Maria Smith is a director at Interrobang architecture and engineering and Webb Yates Engineers. Donna Gage is a writer, proud hypnodisciplinary, and practice manager at Interrobang and Webb Yates Engineers

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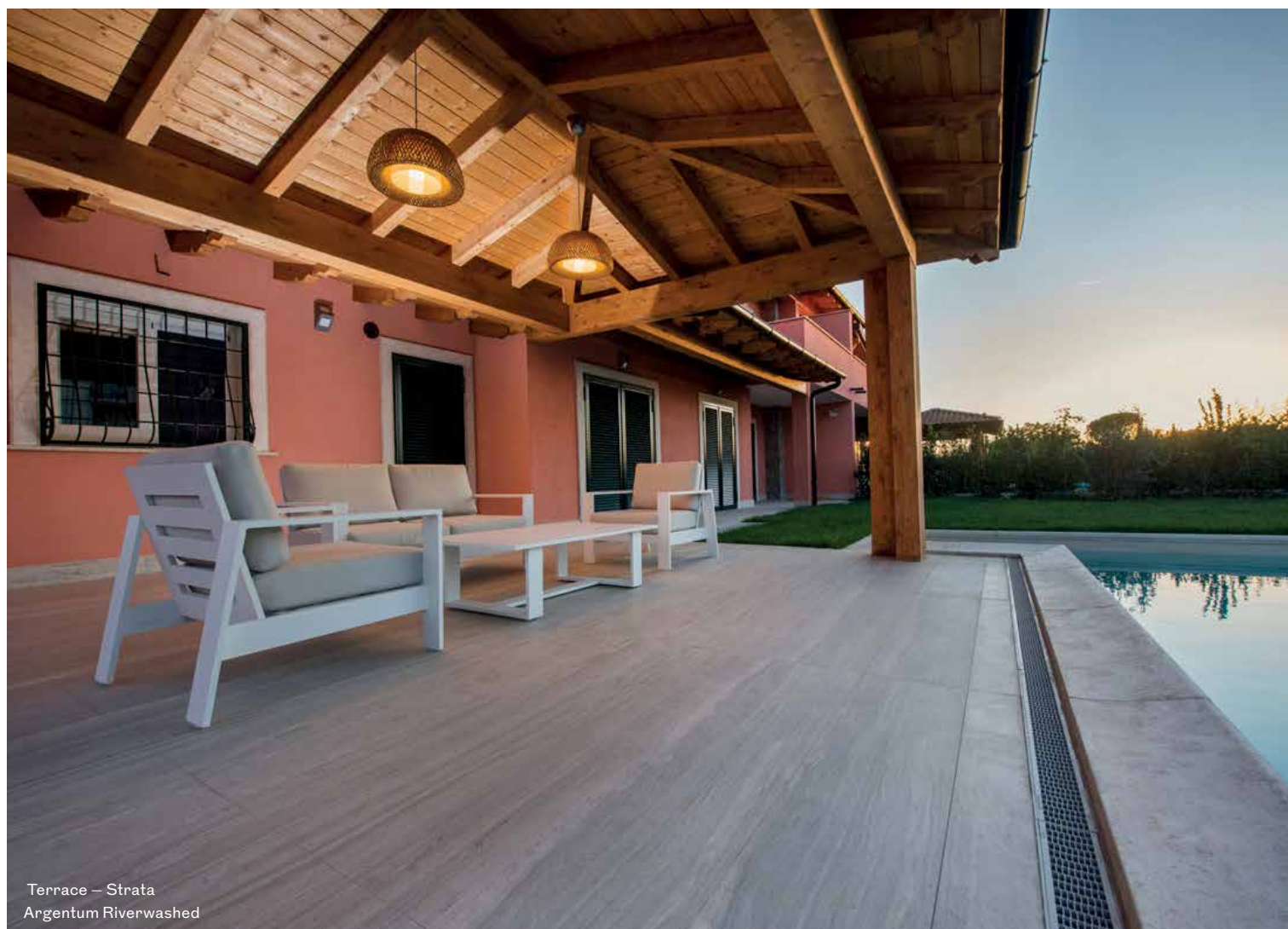


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Images: Nigel Young, Lewis Kahn, Nick Kane,
Nick Hutton, Alan Williams, Nick Kane.

Capturing continuity and contrast

Neolith[®] goes with the flow and against the grain for stylish Italian villa



Terrace – Strata
Argentum Riverwashed

'House in Roma', was borne out of a desire to bring the glamour of an Italian countryside villa into the heart of Rome.

Approaching this project, architect Pierluigi De Gasperis was fascinated with the dual principles of continuity and contrast. He wanted to include both concepts into the final designs of the structure's interiors.

Using their considerable artistic expertise, De Gasperis's team of designers mixed and matched colours and textures to achieve a contrast and enhance the overall atmosphere of the interior. But the greater challenge lay in his ambition to

capture the essence of continuity.

Initial inspiration came from the local abundance of travertine stone, which combines subtle grey-white tones and delicately undulating veining. The desire was to incorporate this style throughout the villa's flooring. However, naturally hewn stone is notoriously hard to fabricate into a continuous grain, due to its unpredictable and spontaneous patterning.

Rather than making him change tack, this encouraged De Gasperis to consider alternative materials in order to achieve the fluidity that was so central to his imaginative design.

Classical continuity

Silver travertine is a dramatic stone, full of character, and was central to the overall aesthetic of the house.

Travertine, widely found throughout both classical and modern architecture, was highly prized by the ancient Romans. Marked by its characteristic veining or strata, it is a material with deep affiliation to the Lazio region in central Italy.

The luxuriant villas nestled in the Alban Hills, which fringe Rome, have long used carved Travertine for both structural and decorative purposes. It is these corresponding attributes that influenced

Travertine's visual appeal and association with grandeur made it highly desirable

the architect when he drew up the initial concepts for 'House in Roma'.

'We wanted to ingrain this house with personality and history', says De Gasperis. 'Travertine's prolific use in architecture over the last 2,000 years and its timeless ability to evolve and adapt in-line with a specific style or movement made it an attractive choice. Its visual appeal and association with grandeur made it highly desirable.'

De Gasperis continues: 'However, the permeability of natural travertine makes it susceptible to staining, especially from acidic substances, even seemingly innocuous, everyday liquids such as orange juice. Neolith® Strata Argentum provided a welcome solution. Its faithful interpretation of travertine made it the perfect choice for this project: the robustness required to meet the wear and tear associated with the modern family house, and the beauty and authenticity of the real stone. Importantly, we were able to design around the Neolith slab to create the consistency in veining we required.'

Flawless fabrication

Rome is globally renowned for its impressive sculptures and iconic stone monuments. Paying homage to the skilled artisans of the city, the 'House in Roma' floor is a masterpiece in fabrication and the centrepiece of the project. It is a feature in its own right, a vista of travertine, stretching beyond the threshold of the house, emphasising continuity.

As a result of the clever and meticulous fitting by top fabricator Stone Arredo, the villa's flooring creates a mesmerising illusion of fluidity. Rapturously flowing from staircase to ground level, out of the threshold and onto the terrace into a panorama of Strata Argentum, it provides



Walls – Neolith
Calacatta Gold Silk,
Vanity Top – Neolith La
Boheme B02

a seamless connection between the inside and outside of the building. The surface's silvery striations pleasantly stretch out to ultimately envelop a pool that incorporates the subtle, sandy, sun-soaked shades of Neolith's Arena.

Commenting on the significance of the project, and how it relates to the brand's own activity, Neolith's Mar Esteve Cortes says, 'When our Italian distributor, Domus Marmi, came to us with this project and described the concept we were very excited. We felt the material chosen and the required precision within the design would present a tantalising challenge for the fabricators. If the ambitious plans could be realised, they would create a highly individual interior full of character. As one can see from the finished floor, the results speak for themselves; it really showcases the potential of Neolith.'

A question of balance

A key principle within the world of art is that contrast should, fundamentally, be complementary. It must serve to augment perceptions, creating harmony as opposed to discord.

When colours are contrasted effectively within an interior, they can offer either a backdrop emphasising certain features, or stand alone to become the unifying element, bringing a whole room together.

In addition to ensuring a high degree of continuity throughout the house, the designers were also keen to provide focal points within the property through an interesting and diverse use of matt earth colours and natural effects.

De Gasperis's simple but visually arresting mosaic of Neolith's Barro, Pietra di Luna and Pierta di Osso in one of the two bathrooms lends a distinctly modernist look. Its approximated symmetry offsets the space's metallic fixtures.

The second bathroom features the rustic look and feel of wood against lavish and lustrous marble. Neolith's La Boheme B01 and La Boheme B02 used in conjunction with Calacatta Gold establishes a minimalist décor, which is refinement embodied.

The clever use of material patterns and textures within these two rooms amplifies the space within, creating a captivating visual equilibrium which excites and entices. ●



Floors and Stairs
– Strata Argentum
Riverwashed

The world according to Neolith®

Neolith® delivers contemporary look to high-spec Netherlands show home

When Dutch materials experts from Stone and Skills discovered Neolith in a Netherlands-based stone shop three years ago, the brand immediately captured their attention. The wide range of different colours, patterns and finishes on display fired their collective creative imagination, encouraging them to find out more about this Spanish Sintered Stone.

Following a visit to the Neolith factory in Castellón, Spain, they learned more about the performance and aesthetic attributes of the material and were determined to work with it on future projects.

On returning to the Netherlands, the Stone and Skills team kept thinking back to the ways in which Neolith had been presented, through various applications, at the brand's Valencia-based showroom.

'It brought the product to life in a variety of ways,' said Amal Babay of Stone and Skills. 'Like any building material, it's one thing to see the standalone slabs hot off the production line, but quite another to see them in application. Experiencing a kitchen or bathroom specified in Neolith gives essential context, emphasising its visual qualities and design capabilities.'

Babay continues, 'We wanted to bring Neolith to life, giving our clients the same



Above Neolith Show Home in the Netherlands

Below A mix of material patterns are on display including wood, metal, concrete and marble

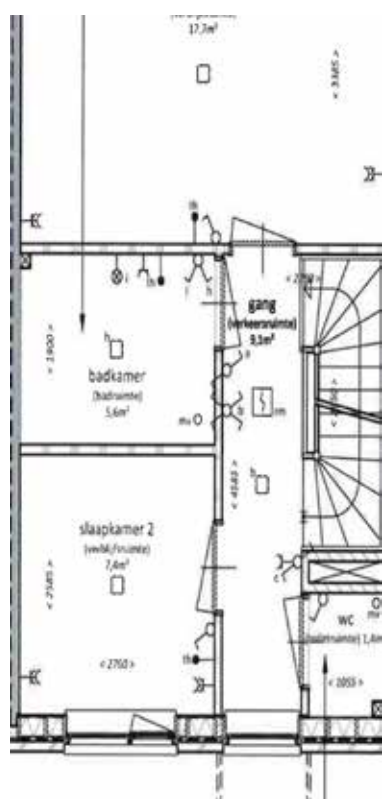


experience as we had in Valencia, by creating an immersive atmosphere which would do justice to this prestigious brand. Inspired by what we had seen, we decided to take the showroom concept a step further and create a fully functioning 'Show Home', allowing a customer to enter a real residence. Here they could truly visualise how their own project might look if they specified Neolith.'

Stone and Skill's ambition was on a grand, all-encompassing scale. It wanted to incorporate a variety of colours, patterns, finishes, thicknesses and formats to really celebrate the aesthetic breadth of Neolith's range. Applications across floors, walls, worktops, fireplaces, dining tables and even a clock demonstrated the brand's potential.

A modern house in Hoofddorp, in Haarlemmermeer, Netherlands, provided the perfect set within which to conjure up a vision in Neolith. Stone and Skills sought to create a contemporary feel with an industrial theme, spanning a total area of 120m², playfully mixing several different material patterns including wood (La Boheme), metal (Iron Grey, Iron Moss and Iron Corten), concrete (Beton and Concrete Taupe) and marble (Pulpis Silk).

With so many diverse colours and



The biggest reward is the look of wonderment in the eyes of our clients

finishes used, it was important for the designers to ensure that none of the surfaces clashed with each other.

To achieve a balance, Stone and Skills turned to Fauvism, an early 20th century artistic movement made popular by artists such as Dufy, Derain and Braque. This approach focuses on the use of complementary colours, in which seemingly opposite hues can be used in conjunction to make each other look brighter. A famous example of this technique is Matisse's *Le Bonheur de Vivre* (1905), a pastoral scene painted in a mesmerisingly vivid mix of red and green, purple and yellow.

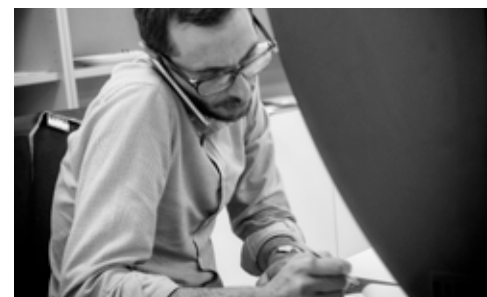
Although using earthier tones than Matisse's brighter palette, the principle was no different for Stone and Skills. For example they chose a warm, rich, rusted-iron colour, offset with a cooler, subtly grained, natural wood pattern. This combination resulted in a visual marriage of materials, emphasising each as one part of a greater whole.

Commenting on the significance of the project, Amal Babay of Stone and Skills said, 'The biggest reward for us is the look of wonderment in the eyes of our clients when they step over the threshold into a world of Neolith. One of our clients was so impressed that they chose to replicate the design of the show house, using different colours from the Neolith catalogue.'

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Q&A WITH CARLOS GARCIA, PRODUCT DESIGNER AT NEOLITH®



Design is all about problem-solving. What architectural challenges do you think Neolith® addresses within interior and exterior design?

Neolith is a polyvalent product with which you can create almost anything you want. If we're talking about interior design, for example, you can create furniture, chairs and tables and you can imitate materials like wallpapers, textiles and woods. With exterior design, you can create sculptures, among other things. I have seen creations that I never imagined you could make with our product.

What are the greatest creative challenges when developing new Neolith colours, patterns and finishes?

The challenge is always to create an original product nobody has, which is nice, natural, commercial and better than what nature can offer you. Another challenge is to always be better, making progress year after year.

Please describe Neolith Digital Design (NDD) and its potential for creating hyper-realistic colours which mimic the materials which inspire them.

NDD is a new technology that enables us to reproduce almost anything we want. It has improved our products substantially: we can print an extensive pattern on a big surface like a slab with no repetition in the pattern. We can apply new effects, which you can see in the new collections. And I think we will do more interesting things because the technology is constantly changing.

Which projects involving Neolith are you most proud of?

There are so many Neolith projects that make me proud, but I think we must talk about Enigma, a restaurant in Barcelona. We produced everything that could be covered: the floor (which was the most difficult part of the project), the walls, all the furniture, the kitchen counters and more. I really like this one because I had never experienced a project as challenging as this.

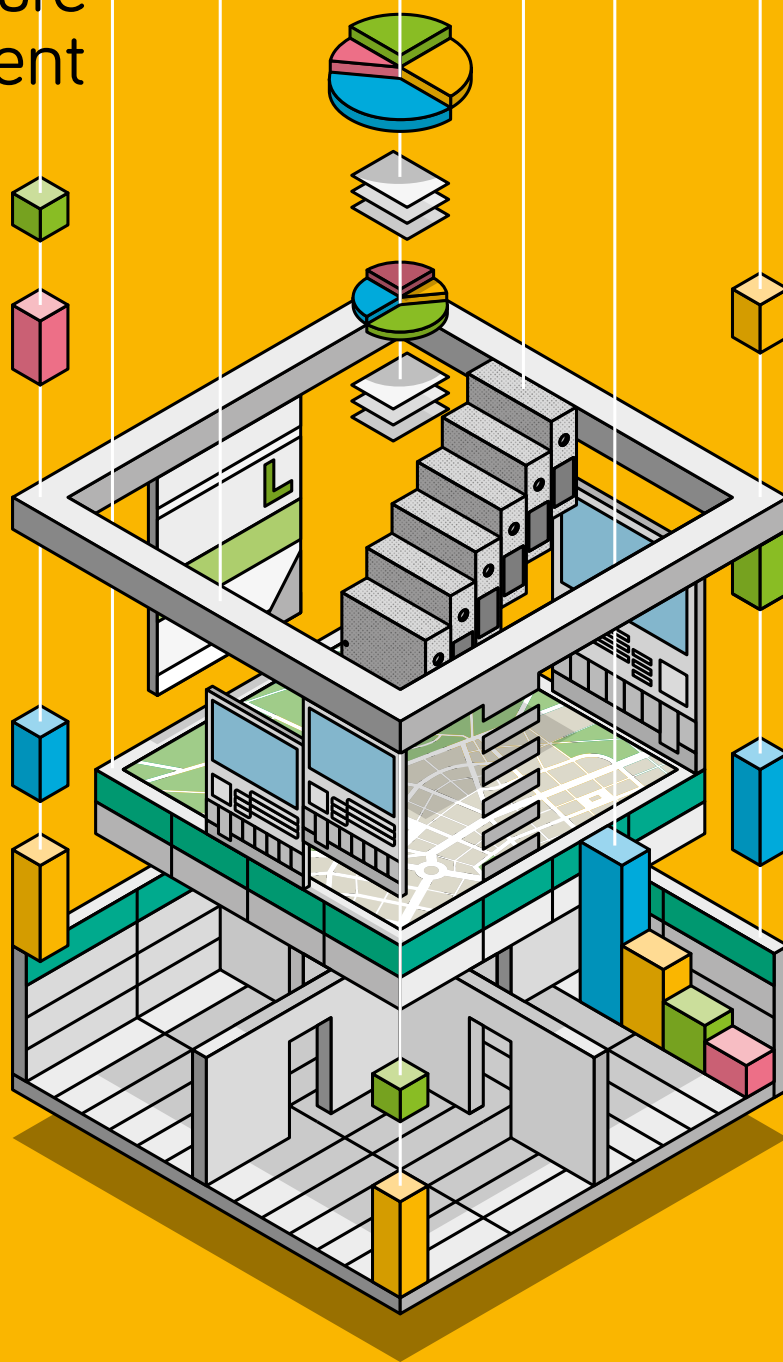
What do you believe to be Neolith's potential for modern architecture and design? How do you see the surface being applied/specified in the future?

I think we will see amazing things because people now know the material well and they are doing interesting things with it. In the future, with more advanced technology, we will create unbelievable products with Neolith. So, let Neolith open your mind and enjoy the surface of Sintered Stone!

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3: Culture

Support system

MJ Long and Sandy Wilson's intertwined lives were an example of what partnership can really mean



Hugh Pearman Editor

Architects who are partners in life as well as in work have one big advantage over their peers who 'marry out': they understand all the frustrations and joys, all the late nights and the reasons for those. They have one big disadvantage too, which is the same. There is really no escape apart from taking turn and turn about, especially when it comes to looking after children, or ailing parents. And even then, you'll be bringing your work home with you.

I don't want this column to be about the time-consuming pressures of practising architecture and how best to deal with those pressures in the interest of domestic harmony, vital though it is for every architect to manage that. Rather I want to celebrate a telling coincidence of this month's Culture section where, although we sadly publish our obituary of MJ Long, we get the chance



MJ Long and Sandy Wilson, by RB Kitaj.

As an incisive teacher and critic, MJ Long could bring Sandy's ideas into focus and contribute her own, while simultaneously running her own business

to examine her working life with and without her husband Colin 'Sandy' St John Wilson. Because Sandy Wilson also features in our RIBA archive slot on P.129 which starts off being about the launch of the Stirling Prize in 1996 but goes on to discuss the disruptive role his British Library played in the early years of the prize.

'His' British Library, did I say? Deborah Saunt, as a one-time employee of them both, puts the record straight in her obituary of MJ on P.115: she had as much to do with the British Library as Sandy, indeed, she was 'in charge of the brief' as it was put. As an incisive teacher and critic she could bring Sandy's ideas into focus and contribute her own, while simultaneously running her own business.

Then things went a stage further: such was the controversy surrounding the British Library in the usual way of our great public projects that she established the successful practice of Long and Kentish with Rolfe Kentish as a kind of distancing device as much as a legal one – and Sandy collaborated with this practice for the final part of his career, in a subsidiary role to the named partners.

The whole life/work thing for Sandy and MJ was captured perfectly by their friend the artist RB Kitaj for whom MJ designed a studio; there are the two of them at work, presumably in their self-built home in Cambridge, children and cat present. But Sandy is looking at us in that quizzical way of his over his glasses, while MJ, leaning over her drawing board in profile, is not engaging with us, is just absorbed in her work. So it was in life: while he quite enjoyed the limelight if not the controversy, neither was her choice. This didn't stop her designing excellent buildings on her own account.

And then, finally, they designed the Pallant House gallery in Chichester together, which brought their art collection – Kitaj represented there of course – together with their architecture. A remarkably apt culmination of two intertwined lives well lived. ●

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George Grylls defends tall buildings and finds the problem lies beneath: ribaj.com/belowtallbuildings

Hack the Root showcases the potential of mycelium for local, non-toxic and decentralised modes of production

Pamela Buxton on building materials grown from agro waste: ribaj.com/hacktheroot

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National pride

Museums can say a lot about a country – we're talking buildings, not contents



Oliver Wainwright

Just as a group of journalists were sitting down to a lunch of reindeer steak in the restaurant of the new Amos Rex art museum in Helsinki last month, one of the city's press officers arrived all of a flutter. On the eve of the opening of the €50 million new arts complex, the country's minister of culture and the mayor of the Finnish capital had declared their joint intention to build another one – this time dedicated to architecture and design.

It is an exciting time for cultural beacons in Helsinki. Like the proverbial bus, Finns have waited years for such things and now three come along at once. No sooner have the Amos Rex's subterranean caves of contemporary art opened, than the magical tree-dotted reading rooms of the city's gargantuan new central library completes (in December).

Designed by local firm ALA (not to be confused with Amanda Levete, although it does receive her post apparently), the €98 million Oodi Library will stand next to the central station as a great galleon of learning. Its curvaceous timber hull will rise to an ethereal white cloud at the upper levels, dubbed the 'book heaven', where bookshelves will stand in a glade of trees beneath a billowing white ceiling, beanbags scattered over its sloping floors. It is a fitting monument: the UN recently named Finland the world's most literate nation. While the UK spends just £14.40 per head on libraries, Finland spends £50.50.

The cultural building boom is all the

Bookshelves will stand in a glade of trees beneath a billowing white ceiling, beanbags scattered over its sloping floors

Below Amos Rex Art Museum Helsinki by Finnish practice ALA, the first in a number of cultural projects for the city.



more welcome following Helsinki's truculent claim to fame as the first city to turn down a new Guggenheim Museum. After five years of bitter public debate, city councillors killed the project in 2016, rejecting the €150 million outpost as a bastion of US colonialism. It was a sorry saga. Billed as the world's biggest ever architectural competition, receiving 1,715 submissions from 77 countries, the winning design was a dour cluster of dark sheds, by little-known French-Japanese firm Moreau Kusunoki. The bill for the taxpayer for the first 20 years would have been over €23m, but it was the Guggenheim's attitude that put people off, and the total lack of consultation.

I visited the city in 2014 to see the proposed waterfront site, and asked the opinion of the security guard at the earmarked plot. 'I'm not paying my taxes to be handed over to an American corporation to do with what they want,' he told me firmly. 'If we're spending that kind of money, it should be on our own national museum, not another outpost of a global company.' It was a sentiment shared by many.

Some of those funds will be devoted to a new combined home for the city's architecture and design museums instead, two worthy institutions currently housed in a couple of separate converted buildings around town. And the two possible site earmarked for its location? One is the very harbour-front car park where the Guggenheim was planned.

There are still substantial research and brief development stages to be worked through, but insiders say another international design competition is likely. 'After the Guggenheim fiasco, we are aware that we need to proceed very carefully, with maximum public input,' says a source close to the project. Their caution is prudent; its neighbour Copenhagen recently moved its excellent Danish Architecture Centre from an atmospheric brick warehouse threaded with criss-crossing oak beams to a glacial £236m ziggurat designed by OMA. It sounded like a thrilling vertical city on paper, a jumbled Jenga-block stack that even spans a road, housing a gym, apartments and workspace. But the result makes the architecture gallery itself feel like an afterthought, entombed in an atrium at the centre a corporate office complex. If Helsinki chooses mixed-use, it must ensure the institutions themselves are the stars of the show. ●

Oliver Wainwright is architecture critic at the Guardian. Read him here every other month and at ribaj.com

WIDER READING

The Finnish love of libraries might come from the fact that they offer far more than books. On my tour of the Oodi library construction site, the chief librarian proudly told me that, alongside music studios and makerspace, it will also have counters to hire out sports equipment and power tools.

Sharpening our tools

RIBA's safety test will make us stronger; add your views to help hone it



Ben Derbyshire

As many of you will be aware, the RIBA Council has voted to require all UK-based chartered members to undertake a mandatory health and life safety test. Existing members will have at least 12 months to prepare and pass the test. Like a driving licence examination, it will be competence-based and you will be allowed to re-take it. Chartered membership will be suspended for any who fail to demonstrate competence.

There is a lot of detail to think through before implementation and members' reactions so far have been helpful and informative. The response falls into two camps; those who believe the move to be bureaucratic, burdensome and ineffective, and others who see benefits in terms of greater rigour and increased confidence in our professionalism among clients and society. After more than four decades in practice, I can understand the frustration some members feel about any additional burdens on practice when margins are so tight. But there are wider implications we should consider, and I would be interested to hear views on a longer-term perspective.

The RIBA has been working with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) since the introduction of the CDM Regulations 2015 to see how best it can provide reassurance that RIBA members have the skills, knowledge and experience to undertake designer and principal designer duties. Health and life safety competence has come under even greater scrutiny since the Grenfell Tower fire

CPD requirements are not just a safety net for minimum competence, they are part of re-asserting ourselves as a distinct offering

and the subsequent recommendations of the Hackitt Review of the Building Regulations. Moreover, I believe that change is necessary to restore the influence of and respect for our profession and consequently the value we can expect for our advice and design expertise.

Surely the essence of any professional relationship is the client's trust in our ability to use knowledge and skill to manage their risk. This is certainly the case for clinicians, accountants, lawyers and engineers. Some of these professions demonstrate their side of the bargain with mandatory CPD. Are our own current CPD requirements adequately rigorous? The definitions of what constitutes CPD are very broad and compliance audits are infrequent. I have only ever been asked to satisfy the RIBA on this point twice in my career.

Meanwhile both the nature and tools of practice are undergoing rapid change. And so is the regulatory framework. Many of us have been arguing for years that the overlapping and sometimes conflicting bureaucracies of compliance are in need of radical review and the RIBA has been vocal since the Grenfell fire in proposing changes in the provisions for fire safety. Things are moving fast.

Competition for our services is fierce; from non-professionals and constructors, and from related professions, particularly architectural technicians and surveyors. It could be argued that the architecture profession has failed to position itself into a strong and identifiably unique selling proposition in our market. So CPD requirements are not just a safety net for minimum competence, they are part of re-asserting ourselves as a distinct offering.

Indeed, the introduction of this first ever requirement for mandatory testing on a specific element of the core CPD curriculum for architects could be seen as presaging a new, more flexible and effective regime for the education and training of architects based on the principle of life-long learning. There is much to be said for a shorter, more affordable education for architects in terms of the core competencies that set us apart from other professions, and then a series of formally certified modules of CPD that enhance our value, and earning power, in the market place.

It is all to play for, in my view. A much more rigorous approach to CPD might very well play a significant role in our future as a profession. Please tell me what you think. ●

@ben_derbyshire
president@riba.org

CONFERENCE SEASON SPEAKERS

The RIBA has partnered with the CIOB, RICS and RTPI for events at this year's Labour and Conservative Party Conferences focusing on diversity and skills in the built environment. Shadow housing minister Roberta Blackman-Woods MP and housing select committee member Helen Hayes MP are speakers at the Labour Party event at RIBA North, and the Conservative Party event in Birmingham sees secretary of state for education Damian Hinds MP as guest speaker.



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Still facing forward

The Royal Academy's Renzo Piano exhibition celebrates the 81-year-old's achievements – and looks to the future

Pamela Buxton

In the midst of the Royal Academy's new Renzo Piano exhibition is an imaginary island, a giant model beautifully crafted in the workshop of the architect's famous Genoa studio and populated by 102 of his past, present and future projects at 1:1000 scale. In this playful installation The Shard forms part of a promenade with many of Piano's urban landmarks while other projects are thoughtfully positioned around the coastal landscape.

Perhaps this can be thought of as Renzo Island, a gathering of the fruits of the esteemed Italian architect's 50 years-and-still-counting career. As visitors to the exhibition navigate the island's built population with the aid of a map, a film projected on two nearby walls of the room gives insights into his approach to life and architecture while 32 newly commissioned photographs contribute to this portrait of the Italian architect and his work. In Thomas Riedelsheimer's film, we learn about his love of sailing and his home town of Genoa, his thoughts on urbanity and the urbane, his fascination with light and lightness, and his consideration of architecture as a public art and as an art of telling stories. This central section on the man himself is the beating heart of Renzo Piano: The Art of Making Buildings, in the RA's newly created Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries.

Surprisingly, the show is the first major London exhibition of his work since 1989. London seems an appropriate location given Piano's connections with the city, which go back far further than The Shard and Central St Giles projects. The honorary Royal Acad-



Above Renzo Piano in his workshop in Paris, 2015.

Below Model of the Shard, London, RPBW.



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FRANÇOIS MORIA/APREX/SHUTTERSTOCK

emician lived there from 1966-71, teaching briefly at the AA and staging exhibitions of his work in 1967 and 1969 (a couple of surviving panels from the latter are included in this new show). During this period he met Richard Rogers, who became his lifelong friend and future collaborator on Centre Pompidou, and formed relationships with Ove Arup and ZS Makowski, a Polish engineer leading innovations in space-frame structures.

The roughly chronological exhibition explores 16 projects in detail that represent the huge span of building types, scales and contexts he has tackled throughout his career, from skyscrapers (The Shard, 2000-2012) to small-scale ephemeral projects (IBM Travelling Pavilion, 1983-86), and from cultural centres (Centro Botín, Santander, 2010-17) and offices (New York Times Building, 2003-07) to airports (Kansai, Osaka, 1988-94). In doing so, the show spans his collaborations with Rogers (1971-77); with engineer Peter Rice (1978-81) and the establishment of his own Renzo Piano Building Workshop in 1981. Visitors are greeted by a scenography of suspended and tabled models plus Piano's splendid large-scale drawings. A number of specially created soundscapes seek to evoke the atmosphere of the buildings, such as the sound of air travelling through the slats on the facade of the stunning Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre (1991-98).

Entering the exhibition is like 'stepping into a world of floating ideas' according to curator Kate Goodwin, head of architecture and Drue Heinz curator at the Academy. In particular, she hopes the suspended models reinforce the theme of lightness so central to

He is both a pragmatist and a dreamer, both humanist and scientist and perhaps above all, an 'architect of dignity'

Piano's work. Routinely described as elegant and poetic, it can be hard to pin down in that there is no stylistic consistency to hold on to. Instead, Goodwin points to an attitude and approach which Piano himself identifies as a 'fil rouge' that runs through his career. He is, she says, both a pragmatist and a dreamer, both humanist and scientist and perhaps above all, an 'architect of dignity'.

'There is something very considered and refined about his work, something that is never in excess. Its starting point really is the art of making a building and how it comes together – it is about its construction, never the expression first,' she says, adding that while he is very rational, this is combined with the ability to give beauty to the technical.

The son of a builder, Piano is well known for his attention to the art of building, as epitomized by his practice's name. Both exhibition and the accompanying book emphasise his deep commitment to making, in particular his refinement of design through the use of large-scale mock-ups and prototypes. This is well illustrated with the design of the Menil Collection in Houston (1982–86), the first time that he made a 1:1 prototype of a whole section of gallery. Here Piano painstakingly developed light-filtering 'leaves' that enabled the introduction of natural light into the gallery from above without damaging the exhibits. In doing so, the changing cycle of light over the day is perceptible – a common theme throughout his work. The exhibition includes white ceramic rods from a 1:1 mock up of the New York Times Building.

As well as Piano's particular focus on refining the process of making, the exhibition explores his belief in architecture's role as a 'civic gesture and social responsibility',

Right Jérôme Seydoux
Pathé Foundation, Paris,
2014, RPBW.



© MICHEL DENANCÉ. © RPBW

The starting point of his work really is the art of making a building and how it comes together

exemplified by his offer to donate a design for a new bridge for Genoa after the recent tragedy. His drawings are often characterised by areas of orange denoting shared public space both outside and inside, with concentric circles indicating particularly important gathering places. He has always, says Goodwin, had the ability to engage at a larger civic scale as well as detail. As a result, his very legible buildings – with notable exceptions such as the eternally provocative Centre Pompidou – often look as if they've always been there, especially once the building has bedded in as the context settles around the aspirations of the architect's intervention.

'He creates something that's rooted in the integrity of the place,' says Goodwin.

Unlike many retrospectives that only look back, this show also looks forward, with the 81-year old architect still firing on all cylinders. His 150-architect practice is on site with the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Los Angeles, and the Emergency Children's Surgery Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, both included in the exhibition as works in progress, a fitting reminder of Piano's fascination with the construction process.

'He has an alertness, an undying curiosity, a youthfulness... and there's an agility to how he works and thinks,' says Goodwin, who hopes the exhibition will inspire visitors through both his work and the complexity and power of architecture in general.

The Royal Academy describes his work as architecture 'that touches the human spirit'. After visiting this wholehearted celebration of his oeuvre, Renzo Island and all, visitors should be well armed to judge for themselves. ●

Below Section of the
Whitney Museum of
American Art, New York,
RPBW.



© RPBW

Renzo Piano: The Art of Making Buildings
Gabrielle Jungels-
Winkler Galleries,
Royal Academy of
Arts, Piccadilly,
London.
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Out with the new

If it's not trad, he ain't glad. James Stevens Curl has a lot of modernism to get off his chest

Hugh Pearman

All modernism is bad. It has been a disaster, a catastrophe. It's all barbaric, whether it's the late 1920s Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier with its devilish horizontal window bands and pilotis, or some shapeist bit of 21st century starchitecture by Libeskind or OMA or whoever. The fact that modernism has been on the go for a century or more, with all manner of stylistic and regional variations by all manner of architects, that it has itself become historic and worthy of preservation and listing, matters not a jot. The allegedly wholesale abandonment of traditional architecture and the seemingly baffling global adoption of modernism ushered in all manner of horrible things, possibly including the various conflicts in the Middle East. Oh, and the Nazis weren't always anti-modernist. As for the Bauhaus – nest of vipers, and did you know that some of its alumni helped design the death camps?

This is the flavour of James Stevens Curl's latest book, an (obviously) anti-modernist diatribe that has very much a goodbye-to-all-that feel to it, a signing off. Curl, now 81, is a distinguished architectural historian and we are all very much in his debt for, among much else, his editorship of the indispensable Oxford Dictionary of Architecture. Perhaps because of this his editors at Oxford, assuming there were any, appear not to have touched his text which doesn't half ramble on and repeat itself. If this book HAS been edited, goodness knows what state it was in before. It's all isn't-it-appalling outrage which he attempts to justify through exhaustive and exhausting scholarship. And yes, there is solid scholarship here, evidenced by the fact that



Above Curl's depiction of himself as author driven to death by the task of warning the world against the destructive powers of architectural barbarism. Drawing on Alfred Rethel's *Death as a Friend*.

fully a quarter of the book consists of notes, glossary, bibliography, index. For instance his account of the Bauhaus is a good concise history of that influential institution, and of its progenitor Gropius whom he naturally loathes as a prophet of modernism.

Occasionally Curl lets his guard slip a little and sounds as if he is becoming slightly drawn to some aspects of the genre. He is somewhat on the side of Erich Mendelsohn, for instance: less so for his sleek architecture with its curvilinear motifs than for the fact that he was not considered International Style enough for Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock in their 1932 exhibition of that name at the then-new Museum of Modern Art in New York. Though Curl does have an evident soft spot for Johnson, despite or because of his gadfly style-shifting diletantism, attraction to Nazism, etc. Of course attempts by some German modernist architects to find an accommodation with the Nazi regime, Mies among them, are condemned. But they can't win because when they finally escape the regime they carry the poison of modernism with them, and this modernism comes to be seen as anti-Nazi and so is widely adopted post-war. And this is naturally bad.

As for the Bauhaus – nest of vipers, and did you know that some of its alumni helped design the death camps?

He dismisses Ruskin because he disliked the Baroque on the grounds of lack of 'truthfulness'

Curl can draw a little, and likes his symbolism. So the cover of the book is a circular illustration modifying one of Pugin's in 'Contrasts'. Here the 20th/21st centuries, represented by various modernist styles, are literally weighed in the balance against the civic buildings of the 19th century, and found wanting (in Pugin's case it was the 19th century found wanting compared to the religious buildings of the 14th century). But Curl is not terribly keen on Pugin because Pugin preferred Gothic to 'pagan' Classical, and had what for Curl was a suspect ideology in that his honest-construction, truth-to-materials mantra was later justified by the hated modernists and functionalists EVEN THOUGH Pugin's architecture is ABSOLUTELY NOT any kind of modernist precursor, because modernism rejected history, religion, etc. A religious sensibility in architecture is a good thing for Curl, though it's not very clear why. Probably just because it's to do with tradition. He dismisses Ruskin too because he disliked the Baroque on the grounds of lack of 'truthfulness' and so handed ammunition to the modernists who ALSO saw their mission in moral terms. Though not religious terms, which would have been preferable. Still with me? Curl quotes Osbert Lancaster describing Ruskin's writings as 'impenetrably obscure', and reading this, one begins to sympathise.

The closing image of the book is titled 'Knell for a Past, and Vision of a Barbarous Present and Future' (see previous page). Curl depicts himself dead, again modifying a drawing by someone else, in this case Alfred Rethel's 'Death the friend' of 1851. 'The author, exhausted by his efforts to alert humanity against architectural barbarism leading to Dystopia, has expired in his chair, but Death comes as a friend to continue ringing the warning bell: outside, exemplars of the international style, deconstructivism, blobism, brutalism, and Corbusier-inspired structures



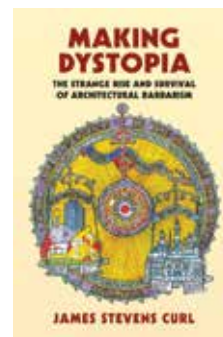
Above Utopia gone wrong – the 'Crescents' at Hulme in Manchester photographed in 1995 and long since demolished.

are seen against a sky filled with the flames of widespread destruction.' Neither drawing was made specifically for this book, and it's hard to know how tongue-in-cheek all this is meant to be.

Generally, Curl elides correlation with causation. The world may be going to hell in a handcart – hard not to agree with that at the moment – but is that, actually, the fault of the architecture that the world has chosen? This is what he seems to be saying.

He quotes approvingly from Sir Reginald Blomfield's 1934 diatribe 'Modernismus' and clearly sees this book as its spiritual successor. Of course he makes no mention of Colin St John Wilson's 1995 'The other tradition of modern architecture'. He cannot: Wilson's achievement was to trace the line of softer, more humane modernism, more in touch with history, as exemplified especially by Scandinavian architects such as Alvar Aalto but also Scharoun, Wright and Rietveld; and harking back to great Victorian masters such as Waterhouse and Butterfield. For Wilson, a clean break with tradition was not necessary in order for this strand of modernism to occur: but Curl will have no truck with that kind of softy talk. Wilson and Aalto get the barest of mentions, presumably because this other kind of modernism does not fit Curl's thesis. So a glaring sin of omission means that the book fails in its purpose, but as an example of very extensive research carefully selected to try to prove an entirely subjective point, it is both a wonder and a proper caution. ●

Making Dystopia:
the strange rise and
survival of architectural
barbarism
By James Stevens Curl,
Oxford, 592pp, HB,
£45



Project Architect J13365

Permanent, Salary: D.O.E, London (North)

This young, dynamic and innovative architecture practice is seeking a Part 3 Architect with UK job running experience, in private residential and education projects, to work in their North London office.

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M J Long

1939–2018

Critical to husband Sandy Wilson's British Library and designer of many cultural buildings, modest but fiercely committed to architecture



Mary Jane 'MJ' Long died at her home in Sussex in September, aged 79. It was while studying at Yale in the 1960s that she met Sandy Wilson, teaching as a visiting professor from Cambridge. She married him in 1972.

She began working with Sandy in 1965, when they designed a house for the painter Christopher Corn-

ford in Cambridge. This early project revealed the integrity with which MJ approached her work, responding at once to the particularities of the client's brief, a sensitive understanding of sunlight and the environment and the rigorous control of the architectural idea.

As a director of Colin St John Wilson & Partners, the focus of her work for over 15 years was the British Library, but throughout this time she pursued a significant portfolio of her own projects including a series of artists' studios for Paul and Susie Allen-Huxley, Peter Blake, Frank Auerbach, and RB Kitaj.

As work on the British Library was drawing to a conclusion (see our archive page this issue, P.129), she launched a new practice in 1994 – Long & Kentish – with Rolfe Kentish who had also worked with Colin St John Wilson & Partners. I was one of their first employees, working on the their first competition which led to their commission for a new library for Brighton University. This was followed with an impressive portfolio of cultural buildings including the Jewish Museum in Camden, the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth, the Keeper's House at the Royal Academy, and significantly Pallant House in Chichester, which was designed again in collaboration with Sandy, to help house his art collection which had been donated to the gallery.

Throughout her life, MJ Long was fiercely committed to architecture. For her, it was the work that mattered, pursued above all with the utmost sincerity and integrity.

Despite a consistent series of commission from

celebrated artists and major institutions, she never courted the limelight, nor recognition beyond her peers. She was shy of publicity, perhaps after the damaging impact of criticism levelled at The British Library, or more likely she thought it was extraneous to committed practice. She wasn't interested in fashionable architecture, the latest trend. She designed studios for artists to let their work shine, making an architecture as a background to life and art – not self-referential or pretentious.

I met MJ on my first day at Colin St John Wilson & Partners, fresh out of college. I knew nothing about her apart from her enigmatic name. I was told she was 'in charge of the brief'; as a novice I didn't realise what a pivotal role she played as a key partner in its complex design, but as her friend Anthony Vidler has written: 'Much of the quality and strength of the British Library is due to MJ Long's critical design sense and ability to bring Sandy's consistent sense of "potentialities" and shifting design ideas into order and precision.'

Invited as the keynote speaker at an Architecture Club event called 'Amazons in Architecture' in 2014, to talk about a career that cut across scales and continents, challenging expectations, MJ spoke about the travails of being a woman in architecture in the early 60s. At the end of her studies at Yale, her portfolio was put forward for a prestigious travel scholarship. When she entered the room of male judges, she was told her initials MJ had let them to expect a man, and that as a woman, she obviously could not be considered for the award. She gracefully stood her ground and was duly awarded the scholarship.

MJ stayed close to Yale where she taught annually, influencing generations of architects. In the UK, as a CABE commissioner and chair of design review, she helped promote the value of design to wide audiences – most notably in the South West where she worked on the celebrated Porthmeor Studios in St Ives and became a visiting professor at Falmouth University.

Working to the last, MJ submitted the planning application for Anchor Studio in Newlyn only three days before she died. She is survived by her children Sal and Harry Wilson, and three grandchildren. ●

Deborah Saunt

IN MEMORIAM

HUBERT RAYMOND HIPKIN
ELECTED 1952, LEICESTERSHIRE

GRAHAM RICHARDS MOFFATT
ELECTED 1953, KUALA LUMPUR

SYDNEY ERNEST BELL
ELECTED 1955, OAKHAM

DAVID LOXLEY HUGHES
ELECTED 1960, CARDIFF

ROBERT THOMSON HURLEY
ELECTED 1961, COLCHESTER

IVOR MILTON PLUMMER
ELECTED 1964, SURREY

ELENA MARIA-MONTSERRAT LLOYD
ELECTED 1981, SURREY

PETER MICHAEL CAREY
ELECTED 1978, BATH

ALBERT WALTER VOUSDON WHITE
ELECTED 1948, ESSEX

NOEL JOCELYN WURR
ELECTED 1948, LONDON

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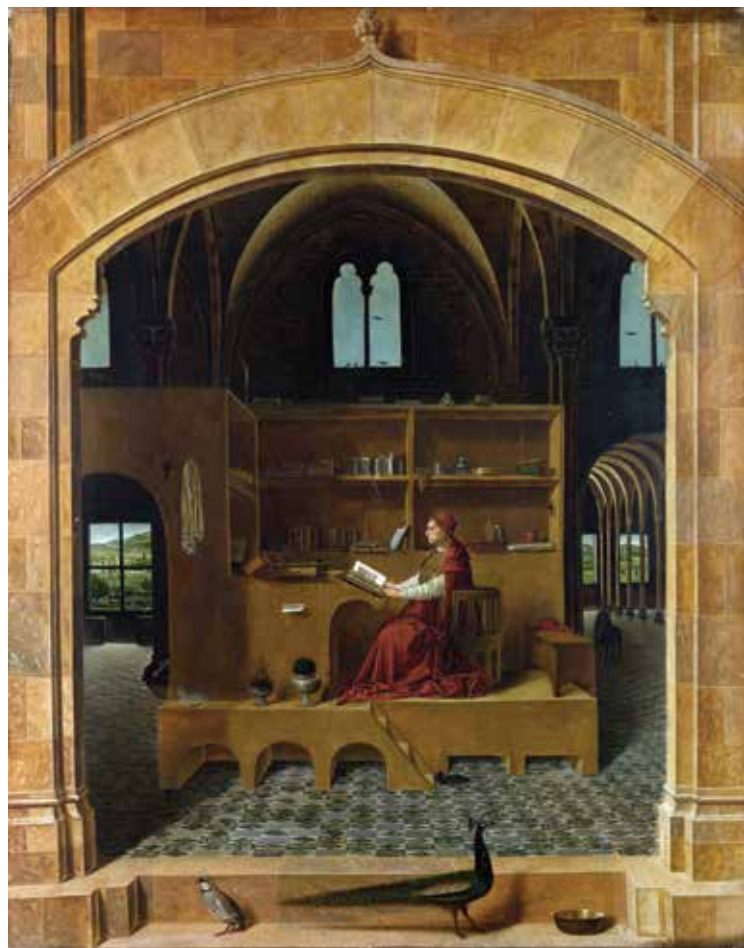
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RIBA **Room within a Room**



Saintly precedent



Above St Jerome in his Study, Antonello da Messina, c1475 – the starting point for this year's competition.

This is the fourth year that Norbord Europe Ltd has teamed up with the RIBA Journal for a competition that challenges architects to use Norbord's flagship OSB brand, SterlingOSB. With the ever increasing need to use building materials that are environmentally friendly and/or add value, architects have to deliver while ensuring the chosen products are fit for purpose and ethically sourced. This year's Room within a Room competition certainly provoked some deep thinking about the use of space; somewhere that would be a place for work and contemplation but also somewhere the occupier would enjoy spending their time. The successful entries not only made the Room within a Room a special place to retreat but understood the technical aspects of OSB as a wood panel to build with. The judging process was an enjoyable one. I hope you enjoy the supplement.

David Connacher, marketing manager
Norbord Europe



The nature of work is not a fixed thing



Jan-Carlos Kucharek
Senior editor,
RIBA Journal

If there are any corollaries to be drawn between Antonello da Messina's 1475 painting St Jerome in his Study and modern working practice, it's the fact that, long before the 21st century notion of hot desking, the artist had, in his own way, imagined the future of work. The saint, sequestered within his bespoke environment in some chapter house or library, was occupying the first consciously cellular workspace. It is only a short leap of the imagination from this to Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Building, Hertzberger's Centraal Beheer or Foster's Willis Faber building. Given such precedents, we were aware that a lot was being asked of the 90 entrants to Norbord SterlingOSB's Room within a Room competition. For the judges, it was about nothing less than selecting those who recognised that the nature of work might not be a fixed but a mutable thing.

This demand made the process of whittling down the submissions easier, as most posited standard assumptions. Jan Kattein pointed out during the judging how few proposals had questioned what form work might take. 'You have your screen and stuff around you and you imagine that everyone else does, but it's very self-referential: "This is how I work, so it must be how everyone else does";' he remarked. Running his own small practice in a competitive environment, he is aware of the pressures of the modern profession, adding: 'You need to take account of different ways that entrepreneurs might work; that performance nowadays is, in a sense, as important as what you actually do; that social media play a role; that you might want to attend that party as well as finish the job

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SterlingOSB

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Design
Richard Krzyzak
Sub editor
Gail Novelle
Cover image
The Bakerloos
Design Studio

at hand.' The winner would not only need to consider this but put forward a proposition that best expressed it in the medium of SterlingOSB.

For the majority of submissions that fell by the wayside in the initial sift, the issue was detailed consideration of the fabrication methods of SterlingOSB rather than the bigger picture. Many submissions fetishised the notion of the flat pack, of CNC cutting, of male and female interfaces slotting together; all interesting but all assuming that what was being enclosed was just a seat and a desk with a laptop on it, so it was just the formal language that changed. Judges were exposed to postmodern Tempiettos and rotundas; they went through all manner of modernist boxes that hinged open or unfolded or hung suspended from ceilings. Forms were generated through multiple lamellae or employing novel geometries, but these did not make it past the judges' scrutiny as most were ultimately conventional in nature.

What the judges were looking for was a 'pincer movement' from entrants – a thorough understanding of SterlingOSB and the manner in which it would be best employed in the submission, combined with a more abstract idea of how the material could bring form to the idea of new modes of working. By the time the entries had been decimated to a longlist of eight, discussions were far more nuanced and interrogative; not just about the notion of work but the mechanics of fabrication and interpretation of the original da Messina image.

The final eight could be broken down into three categories. Submissions by The Bakerloos Design Studio, Charles Holland Architects and Yuting Cheng were essentially postmodern, drawing influence formally or semantically from the St Jerome painting. Those by Tony Leung and Tom Gregory/Fraser Wallis could be described

Right The judging process: successful entrants had not only to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the properties of SterlingOSB, but to interrogate the nature of work.

as 'theatrical' – forms that celebrated the counterpointing of privacy with overt display.

And those submissions by Ralf Thiede/Caroline Barker, Chan Brisco Architects and ONMQ Architects were essentially functional; measured responses to the competition brief. All became the focus of targeted deliberations that tried to discuss their common territories to provide a justification for discounting schemes. As the eight were halved to the final four it became apparent that all on the shortlist were exemplary in one regard. One took the rigour of the da Messina image, reinterpreting it for the 21st century. Another seemed to be a piece of furniture so seamlessly designed that the judges wondered why it wasn't already available as a flat pack. A third rose from a plethora of unfolding boxes, a solution that became more nuanced the more you looked at it; and the fourth was a strange unfolding stage set that had the judges questioning its viability, but never to the point of rejecting it.

After a long, hot morning of stimulating debate, agreement was reached on the winner of the £2,500 prize. Yes, the competition was about SterlingOSB and what might be possible in its use, but it revolved too around musings on the nature of work. As judge Sarah Castle concluded, it was about the manner in which it was manifested: 'If this competition is not just about fabrication but higher levels of aspiration and joy, there can only be one winner.' And that you'll find on the turn of the page...



The judges were looking for entrants with not only a thorough understanding of SterlingOSB and its properties, but who used it to give form to new modes of working

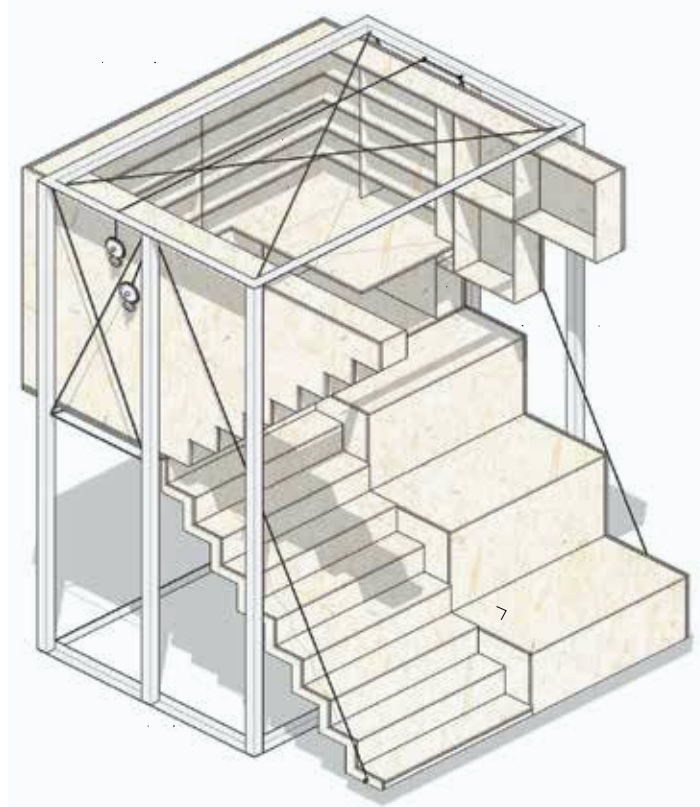
Winner The Playwright's Retreat

Tom Gregory and Fraser Wallis

'The playwright' is a creative individual who must have his or her head a little in the clouds in order to produce a masterpiece.' So begins the explanatory text of Tom Gregory and Fraser Wallis' 'Playwright's Retreat', an isolated SterlingOSB workspace eyrie set up from the ground, which unfurls back to earth to act as a performative space for the playwright's work.

The retreat caused much discussion among the judges. One thread centred around how the design may have overreached on its ambition; another was whether the SterlingOSB design, with a number of 'tag-ons', was technically viable. 'Because of that ambition we're asking the questions about its construction,' said Sarah Castle. 'Its material use, drawstrings and pulleys would take a lot of resolving.' But the judges kept coming back to the scheme, Jan Kattein observing that it was the one that 'most successfully sublimates the idea of solitary working with performative display'. Stephen Proctor noted its 'small footprint but big effect; distancing itself from the real world and then dramatically unfolding into it'. Of its complexity Ed Burgess felt that 'it was easy to pick holes in it as a design but that's because it's so much bolder a proposition than anyone else's'.

The judges noted the judicious use of SterlingOSB which played to its structural and aesthetic strengths, while other materials, such as steel, were used to create the minimalist plinth and raise it up from the ground – a bold decision, given the nature of the competition, that somehow reified both materials. Ultimately, the entry's unresolved technical nature was not an impediment. 'As a proposal, it joyfully accommodates both introverted study and conscious display,' concluded Kattein, echoing the designers' own aim 'to create an independent realm of study, providing a moment of solace and contemplation in the often-chaotic theatre of modern life'.



Above In its 'closed' iteration the retreat allows for private study, but still retains a wide opening up to the void/sky above.

Below Unfolded, the retreat allows the playwright to descend from the eyrie to the performance space at ground level.

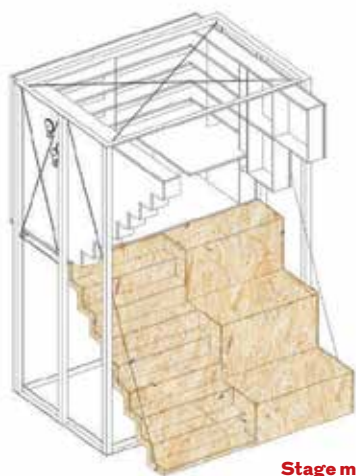
Above right Opened out, the retreat becomes an amphitheatre for its small audience.

Right The mechanics of the retreat unfold via pulleys and wires, supported by a steel frame.

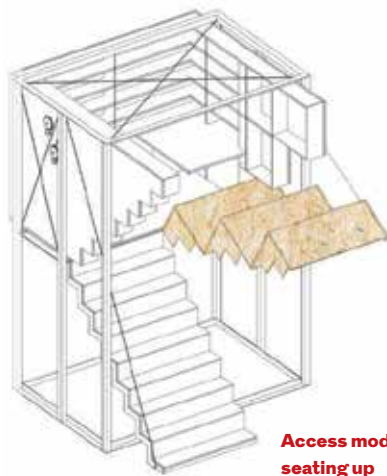


'As a proposition it joyfully accommodates both introverted study and conscious display.'

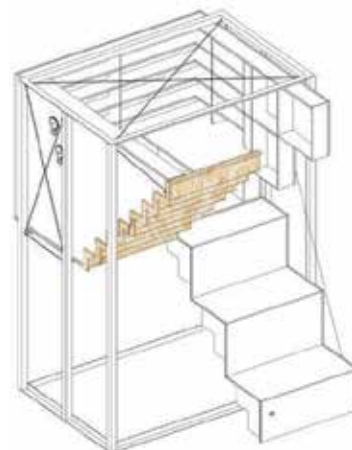
Jan Kattein



Stage mode



**Access mode/
seating up**



**Stairs up,
seating down**

Commended Jill of All Trades

Thom Brisco and Nicola Chan

‘Jill’ is a modern day Renaissance woman and the scenario painted for her was a detailed one. She’s a freelance illustrator, a would-be horticulturist and has three zero-hours jobs: as a biscuit factory worker, a waitress and a takeaway delivery rider. The resulting proposal, a tripartite, supercharged fitted SterlingOSB wardrobe of sliding doors and niches, intrigued and delighted the judges.

It was not only the narrative but the clear design influences that caught their attention. The references to the ‘Tokonoma’ alcoves in pre-war Japanese homes and Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s dark lacquered alcoves at the Glasgow School of Art, but most of all perhaps the IKEA-like potential for mass production.

Yet the clear level of technical resolution also raised questions. Would the design always require a 6m long room in which to install it? Was any consideration given to how the three SterlingOSB elements might be reconfigured for smaller spaces or placed centrally in a room? ‘Because you can easily imagine selling it as a flat pack, could the three modules interact in different ways?’ Sarah Castle asked. ‘The only shortcoming is how this system might occupy a different type of space from the one presented,’ thought Jan Kattein and Ed Burgess.

Norbord’s David Connacher was impressed by the level of resolution (as were all the judges), with the Miesian detailing of the SterlingOSB ceiling cantilever elements/bookshelves of particular note. All could imagine this unit being manufactured and installed – to the great credit of the designers – but questions over its breadth of vision kept it off the top spot. That said, this SterlingOSB designer wardrobe’s ‘generic yet highly specific nature’ earned a hearty commendation.



Above The tripartite nature of Brisco and Chan’s proposal allowed for different modes of working, study and display.

Below Judges praised the aesthetics and technical resolution of the project.



All could imagine this unit being both manufactured and installed, to the great credit of the designers

Commended Atelier Astula

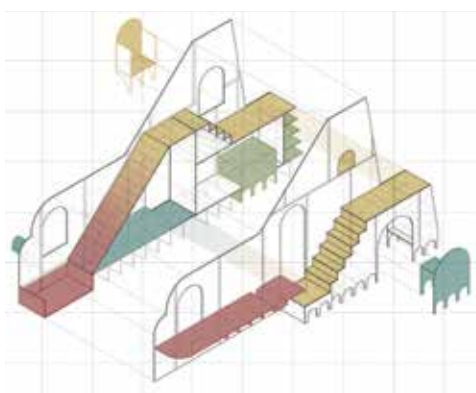
The Bakerloos Design Studio



Left Atelier Astula appearing within the reconfigured da Messina image in a curious but compelling mise-en-scène.
Below Exploded axonometric.

If you'd never heard of the 'Double Diamond Design Model', you have now. The judges were informed in Atelier Astula's entry that it is 'a method of mapping the design process, providing a spatial breakdown to give more detail on key activities in each of its four stages: discover, define, develop and deliver'. If you think that sounds too scientific, thankfully, so did the designers, whose postmodern proposal for a SterlingOSB mini-fun palace of contemplation, resolution, discard and display utterly charmed the judging panel.

The form, Stephen Proctor noted, is a 'postmodern collage – a contemporary interpretation of da Messina's St Jerome Study' and encapsulates these four forms of working, allowing for primary research,



interpretation and alignment, idea development and 'the stage' where the final proposal is displayed. Between these are joyful elements: SterlingOSB bookshelves, hidey-holes, the 'incubator slide', a paper

roll, study alcove and even 'the pit of ideas'. All seem comedic but Jan Kattein noted 'this scheme is actually questioning the notion of work and accepts that inspiration may not necessarily come from sitting in front of a computer screen'. Sarah Castle championed the project throughout, immediately appreciating its 'playful irony, lovely rendering and great use of the material'.

The clear referencing of the St Jerome image in the beguiling main render was instrumental in embedding the idea in the minds of the judges, and saw it progress from the long to the shortlist, despite reservations about its robustness. But the palpable, childlike delight in the notion of how ideas might be generated made this a worthy commendation.

Commended CReATE

Ralf Thiede and Caroline Barker

It's true to say that the majority of submissions for Norbord's competition were variations on the classic unfolding box, meaning judges became increasingly inured to the form. It took one of note, such as Thiede and Barker's here, to grab their attention. Key to this submission was that the proposal belied its apparent simplicity – the judges kept returning to it because every time they did, some other nuance or sophistication became apparent.

'Create-collate-contemplate-curate' is the proposal's mantra; and so, with only one moving element, the designers aimed to give physical form to all of them within their SterlingOSB box. Each side is devoted to expounding one of those themes; a desk and seat, shelves for storage, a day bed for thinking and the hinged display wall – closed for consideration, open for display.

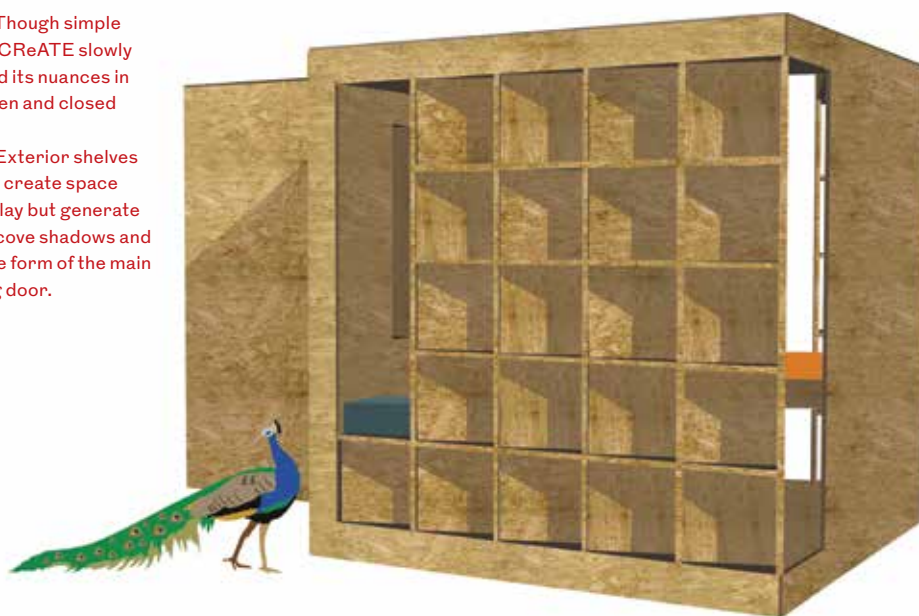
Sarah Castle found herself first drawn to it, observing 'the nice resolution of the diagonal once the door is opened', Ed Burgess noting later the 'lovely plays on scale – the outside OSB shelves are the hinged door in miniature'. Slit windows offer views while it is closed, and a James Turrell-like opening in the ceiling gives light and air. Stephen Proctor particularly enjoyed the 'spatial twist of the interior plan relative to exterior'.

All the judges appreciated the simple drawing style and clarity of intent, a strategy that allowed the designers to optimise the geometry of the SterlingOSB box form. This wasn't the most adventurous solution, but like the peacock standing alongside it referencing da Messina, once the feathers opened, this proposal had a flamboyance all its own.



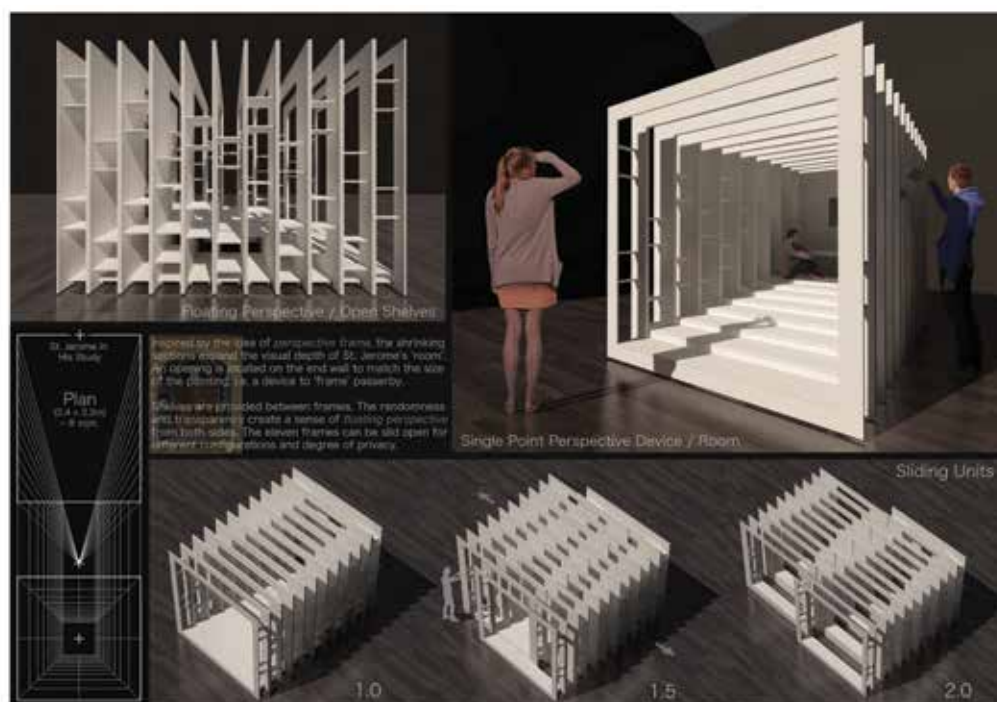
Above Though simple in form CReATE slowly revealed its nuances in both open and closed modes.

Right Exterior shelves not only create space for display but generate deep alcove shadows and echo the form of the main opening door.



Like da Messina's peacock, once the feathers opened this proposal had a flamboyance all its own

Longlisted



Tony Leung/Frames

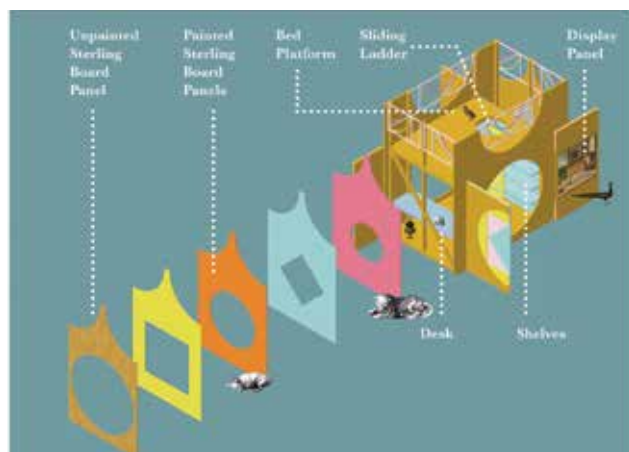
'It's novel – he's picked up on the artist's original use of perspective and made 8m² look like 80m², a bit like the Tardis.'

Stephen Proctor

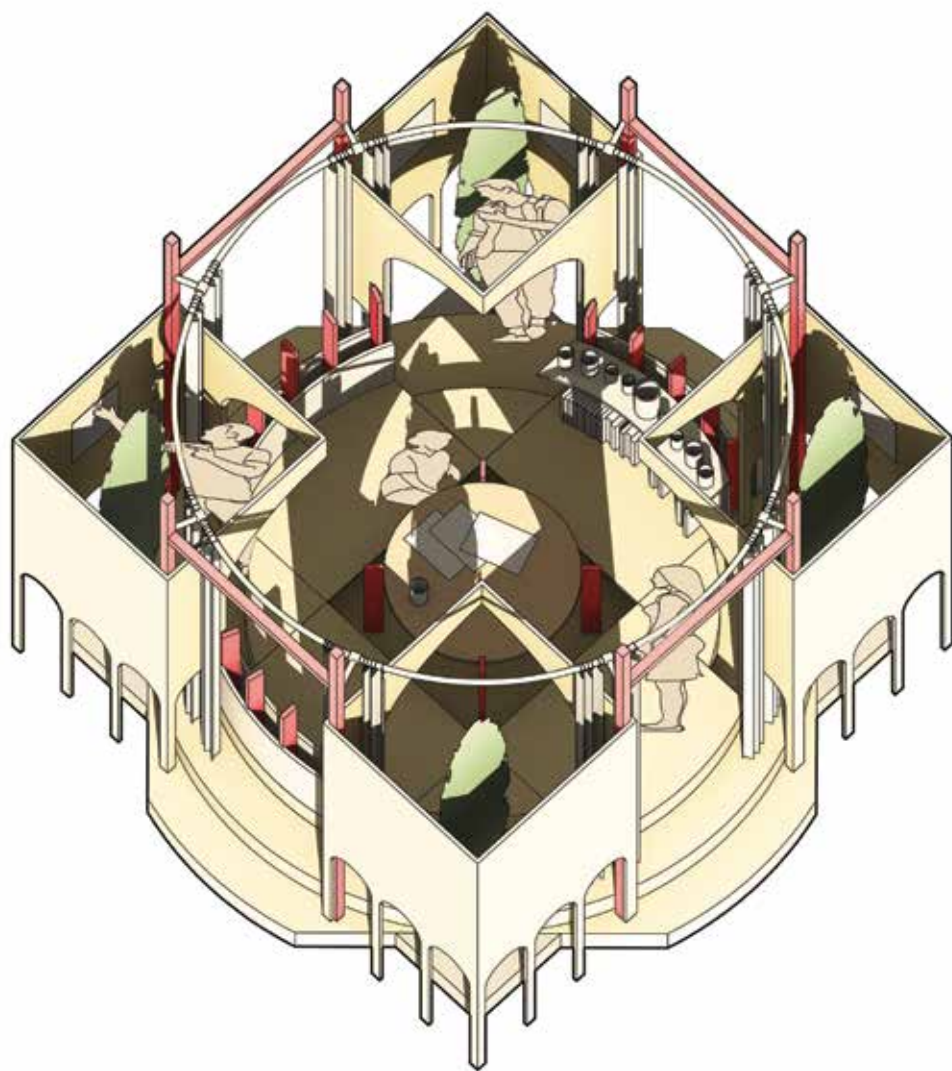
Charles Holland Architects/A Heavenly Mansion

'It's more about the mad surface than the function, which picks up on OSB's material nature – and makes it really fun!'

Sarah Castle



Longlisted



Yuting Cheng/Citadel in a Room

'Strange OSB trees in the corners hide the central workspace, helped by a circular curtain. It's odd but quite nicely so.'

Jan Kattein

James O'Neill and Ninian MacQueen/Inside-Out

'It's well considered, in the Alhambra garden tradition and with a triangulated structural rationale that makes good use of OSB.'

Ed Burgess



Judges' comments



It was interesting to see such a diverse range of approaches, from the exuberant collaged references to da Messina's St Jerome, to the more minimal, almost 'solitary confinement'

of some of the more austere retreat assemblages. The jury saw the potential and fun in both. In the end what appealed to us all was the idea that such a small 'room within a room' could have a dual personality – expressing the idea of retreat and engagement in equal measure. The Playwright's Retreat captured this idea in a simple play of 'head in the clouds' gravity-defying workspace, cleverly unfolding to present a theatre in miniature.

Stephen Proctor, founding director, Proctor and Matthews



A good number of entries explored the underlying questions in this year's brilliant brief, elevating them from an exercise in cabinetmaking to questioning the nature of work, identity and

social interaction. There was an impressive range of elegantly presented proposals with technical aspects carefully considered. We have made dramatic progress with Norbord on developing our Kit Studio winning entry from last year to a prototype stage and it is exciting that the inherent smaller scale this year, which lends itself so well to OSB, will suit fabrication of the developed design.

Ed Burgess, founder, Burgess Architects



Boffinry really is rife. We saw it all – from the neo-renaissance workspace rotunda, to the po-mo kitsch workscape, the flat-pack domestic micro work unit and the eco-warrior's

office allotment. All credit to Norbord and the RIBA Journal for unleashing such creativity around one single material. The winning design humorously captures the challenge of today's young entrepreneur. The constant juggling act between doing the work and selling the work is expressed in one elegant spatial transformation from solitary work pod to ready-made stage set.

Jan Kattein, founder, Jan Kattein Architects



The RIBA/J/SterlingOSB Room within a Room competition presented a fun challenge to the designers entering – how to accentuate the formal and material

properties of the board in a believable yet inventive way. The very best designs showcased not only highly creative spatial solutions, but also used the OSB in a way that enhanced the playful character of the material.

Sarah Castle, director, IF_DO

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RIBA J125 YEARS

The Stirling Prize arrives – and stirs up the conversation

Hugh Pearman

'Stephen Hodder's receipt of the £20,000 Stirling Prize should come as no surprise,' wrote RIBA J editor John Welsh in December 1996. 'Today's adventurous building is more likely to come from an office in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow or Edinburgh than the once comfortable salons of London.'

The launch of the Stirling Prize that year was a game-changer for the RIBA. It had watched with concern as rival architecture awards had sprung up to challenge its own system, not least the Royal Fine Art Commission's 'Building of the Year' award. As architecture critic at The Sunday Times I'd been involved in the RFAC award which we sponsored, but there was no cash prize. I persuaded the paper to switch the sponsorship to the new prize, the money to go to the winner.

Our group setting this up included Jane Priestman, then head of the RIBA awards panel, and press officers Chris Palmer and Sarah Gaventa. President Owen Luder gave it his blessing. We needed a good name – something like the Turner Prize for contemporary art, which I'd been watching on TV. Stirling? The name had a good ring to it, like sterling silver.

Jim had never stood still, was constantly reinventing his architecture. He had won all three global architecture accolades: the RIBA Royal Gold Medal, the Pritzker Prize, and the Praemium Imperiale. He had unexpectedly died in 1992, aged only 66. The new prize for the best new building would keep his name current. The Stirling family and Jim's surviving practice partner Michael Wilford kindly agreed. So the new top architecture prize was born, at journalistic rather than institutional speed.

The controversy that attends all such

Below Sandy Wilson photographed in his British Library as it neared completion.



ANNE-KATRIN PURKISS RIBACOLLECTIONS

JOHN DONAT RIBACOLLECTIONS



Left The winner that got away: the Humanities Reading room at Sandy Wilson's British Library when brand new.

awards soon appeared. The second year, the Prize was won by Stirling Wilford's Music School in Stuttgart: the smart money had been on Alsop & Lyall's 'Grand Bleu' regional government building in Marseilles. As Wilford received the prize, he brandished the trophy and declared: 'This is for Jim!'

In the early years of the Stirling Prize the judges occasionally 'called in' buildings of merit that had been overlooked in the lower tiers of the awards system. None was more egregious than in 1998, when Colin 'Sandy' St John Wilson's British Library was inexplicably excluded. So the Stirling judges – me among them, with Marco Goldschmied in the chair – summoned it onto the shortlist.

That year the winner was Foster's air museum at Duxford in Cambridge. Writing in the RIBA J, Kester Rattenbury was scathing. 'The Stirling judges...rejected the daft notion that the British Library should not be on the shortlist because some parochial gnomes considered it ineligible for a civic and community award,' she wrote. 'But they didn't reject the notion firmly enough to let the library actually win, thus fixing the prize (a la Booker) as the great vehicle for promoting everyone's second choice.' (Almost true – in fact that year it was a fine house by Rick Mather that was pipped at the post).

Kester was right when she remarked that it was its unfashionability, after 37 years in the making, that denied the British Library the Stirling, and right when she described it as 'a magnificently detailed piece of great civic architecture.' Today it is grade I listed.

Hurrah for the RIBA J, unafraid to take a hard look at the RIBA's top prize! This was architecture's crit culture working as it should. In the long run, it's always better to be right than to be expedient. ●

As Wilford received the prize, he brandished the trophy and declared: 'This is for Jim!'



RIBA COLLECTIONS

Bagsvaerd Church Copenhagen, 1976

This year marks the centenary of the birth of Jørn Utzon, the Danish architect best known – and by some almost exclusively known – for the Sydney Opera House. The church of Bagsvaerd, designed over a number of years and completed in 1976, is one of the very few projects Utzon built in his own country. Situated next to a busy highway intersection in a northern suburb of Copenhagen, the building turns its back on its surroundings, presenting a severe exterior of thick walls in concrete and ceramic with limited fenestration. No visual clues prepare the

visitor for the light-filled interior and its splendid vaulted ceiling, which Utzon claimed was inspired by rolling cloud shapes seen on a beach in Hawaii. Unusually, the curved ceiling is structural, and supports the straight aluminium roof. As well as natural forms, the design of the church is influenced by other sources such as oriental architecture and Nordic traditions, all combined to create what architect John Winter described as a memorable place, 'with a mood of calm and peace'. ●

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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.

This design incorporated stone floors, marble stairs & polished plaster walls; all finishes that on their own, would turn the space into a sonic battleground.

Macaulay Sinclair specified Oscar Acoustics' trowelled SonaSpray fcx finish onto plasterboard at 12mm thick for the ceilings; enough to take the edge off the noise & make speech clearer but not enough to kill the atmosphere.

Unlike the majority of acoustic finishes, it is possible to adjust the SonaSpray range's depth so as to fine tune the acoustics to suit every project & brief.



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