

UCL'S stairway to heaven

Milton Keynes distilled

How Liverpool students flourish

Future winners: practices to watch

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April 2019

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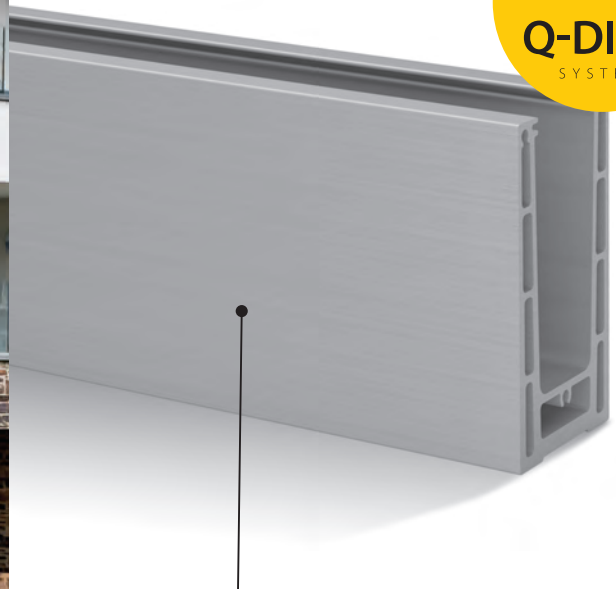




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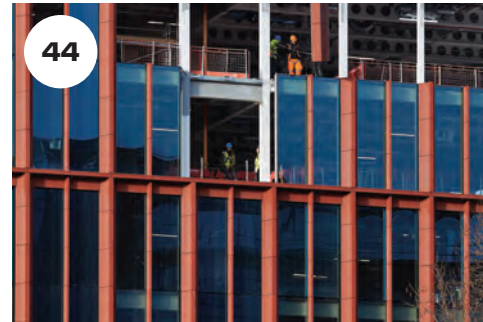
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UCL student centre by Nicholas Hare Architects, photographed by Alan Williams



Comments always welcome. Write to us: letters.ribaj@riba.org

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1: Buildings

What a pleasure it is to welcome back Sir John Soane, who has always been a lodestar for architects of all persuasions. The restoration of his country home, Pitzhanger Manor in Ealing, suggests a challenge: instigate a regular Soane aficionado's pilgrimage trail from his town house in Lincoln's Inn Fields to Pitzhanger. That was a walk he and his mate the painter Turner used to do frequently. It's around 16 km. Who's in?

There's a bit of an 18th century underpinning (really) to the original landscape design of Milton Keynes, a city that is now discovering its own recent history in its newly expanded art gallery by 6a architects. Enjoy that, along with Horden Cherry Lea's use of PV panels as architectural devices for two new homes. Then there's Nicholas Hare's new UCL Student Centre. Take a look. Is it perhaps just a bit... Soane-ian? You judge. ●

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extension by 6a, page 26.





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VISION | INNOVATION | SOLUTIONS

University of Akureyri extension, Iceland
Photograph Nanne Springer
Words Jan-Carlos Kucharek

It's only at the end of our conversation on her choice of photo that Nanne Springer speaks of the trauma that occurred on the day she shot it. How the initial clear blue clarity of that sub-zero dawn day in Iceland was supplanted with leaden clouds that came in fast off the sea, and the ensuing violent storm. 'Flying back through it we were thrown all around the cabin,' she recalls of the hair-raising prop-plane return to Reykjavík. 'It was the worst flight of my life.'

Rewind to the freezing morning twilight and architect Gláma-Kím's low-lying university building, set into the landscape so as not to disturb the view of the mountains beyond Möðruvellir. The photographer had set up quickly, but needn't have done. Dawn happened in slow-motion, over hours not minutes, giving the hoar frost that coated both path and perennials its day in the sunshine. As Springer luxuriated in the time nature had afforded her, she observed the subtle pink glow of the northern hills and the ground frost's nuanced chromatic register of the sky's blue, before the dark clouds rolled in and her Atlantic drama began. ●



Freedom to shine

Gone are the magnolia paint and clumsy additions to Pitzhanger Manor. Its restoration to 1810 leaves it gloriously engaging

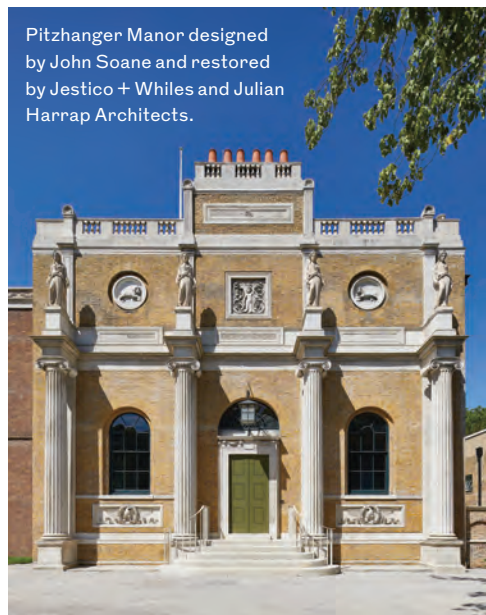
Words: Pamela Buxton

I was always rather underwhelmed when visiting Pitzhanger Manor, the country retreat of the revered John Soane. After the fantastic intensity of Soane's Aladdin's cave of a London home – now the Soane Museum – the Ealing mansion fell distinctly flat. Not only was it distinctly empty of artifacts, but after major extensions and alterations and a century in the hands of the local council, its Soanian character had been sadly eroded.

'It was very difficult to see Soane in the building,' admitted Clare Gough, director of the Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery Trust, which with Ealing Council has just overseen a £12 million restoration of the grade I listed building. Now, she adds, 'it's got its soul back.'

Visiting the splendidly rehabilitated manor, it's impossible to disagree. The difference

Pitzhanger Manor designed by John Soane and restored by Jestico + Whiles and Julian Harrap Architects.





is startling. With judicious removals and meticulously researched restoration and reinstatements, Jestico + Whiles with Julian Harrop Architects have revealed Soane's 1804 design anew. It turns out it was always there, just well concealed beneath later additions and lashings of municipal magnolia paint.

As with many mucked-about heritage buildings, the restoration was an ethical minefield, especially since Soane's own design was not a single pure vision but a partial demolition and redressing of a 1768 manor designed by George Dance (to whom the young Soane was a pupil) with new outbuildings.

In 1800 Soane bought the manor, which was then very much out in the country, and set about transforming it into a country retreat for him and his family where he could lavishly entertain visitors.

Soane created a dramatic main entrance graced with caryatids from which visitors progressed through an impressive ensemble of spaces decked out in bold colours and rich, sometimes exotic decoration. Reception rooms and bedrooms were housed in the main house with a sunken colonnade leading through to a separate new block housing kitchen facilities. Beyond this was Soane's assembly of mock 'ruins'. As well as the caryatids, the house was dressed in elegant fluted pilasters at the north facade, and topped, it is believed, with a roof lantern of coloured glass. To the rear, the house sported an impressive conservatory and looked over extensive, landscaped grounds of what is now Walpole Park. Although his design was largely complete by 1804, Soane continued to make minor alterations until he sold it in 1810.

Subsequently several major changes had a drastic impact on Soane's design. In 1844, a

Right Marbled entrance hall with reinstated original colour scheme and above, amber and primrose glazing.

Bottom Pitzhanger Manor as depicted by Joseph Gandy in 1800.



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Above The Eating Room at Pitzhanger Manor, where Soane would have entertained his guests.

Below The colonnade, reinstated in its original position following removal of the Victorian addition.

Victorian infill replaced the colonnade, obliterating both the handsome north facade and views of the park beyond. Then in 1901, a pitched roof rear extension by Charles Jones on the other side greatly enlarged the ground floor of the original Dance wing. The same year saw the conservatory demolished. In 1939, the kitchen block made way for a public library extension, latterly used as gallery.

As well as providing appropriate visitor facilities, the restoration challenge for the design team was how to steer a course through this architectural complexity. They made the bold choice to restore back to 1810 – with a few well-considered exceptions – which meant removing both the Victorian and early 20th century additions. Although the latter had its uses, Soane's design had to have precedence to allow the historic house to be restored and shine as the key heritage exhibit.

'It's not fashionable these days to demolish anything. But some layers are more significant than others,' explains Judy Allen, associate at Julian Harrap Architects.

And here Soane clearly wins.

'Soane was a visionary architect,' says Jude Harris, director of Jestico + Whiles.

Below Interior of the conservatory, recreated at the rear of Pitzhanger Manor.



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| 4 Library | 13 Manor |
| 5 Breakfast room | 14 Reinstated colonnade |
| 6 Dressing room | 15 1901 extension |
| 7 Shop | 16 1939 extension |
| 8 Entrance hall | 17 Victorian extension |
| 9 Main gallery | |

'Some of what he was doing would be innovative today. He was willing to push boundaries. His very idiosyncratic style is, I think, still relevant two centuries later.'

This 1810-focused approach was only possible if the visitor facilities could be located away from the restored Soane house. As well as retaining and refurbishing the gallery wing, which now includes retail and ticketing, the key solution was the creation of a sympathetic, flint and brick-clad new café/restaurant building by Jestico + Whiles, a respectful distance away in the manor's walled garden.

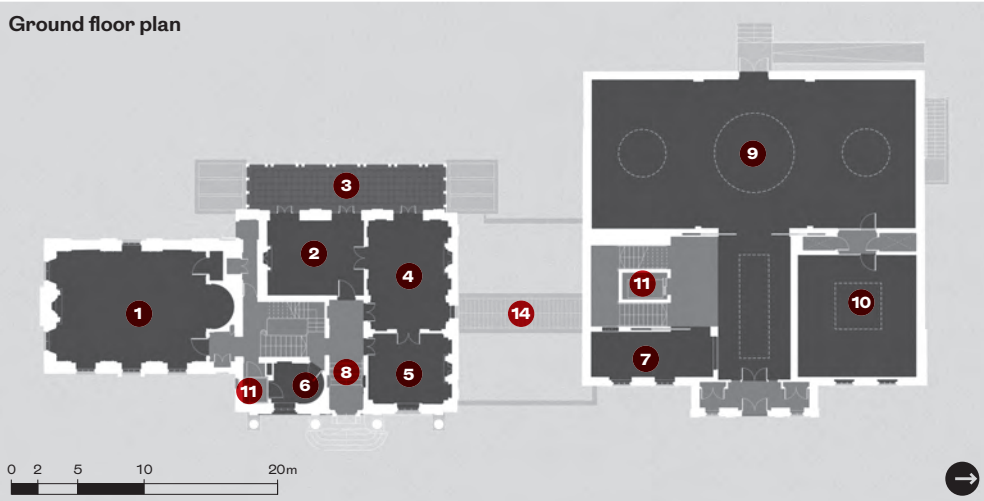
The boldness has paid off. Removal of the suffocating Victorian addition has freed up the main manor building by revealing once again its north elevation and views through to the park and in doing so, giving it space to breath. And at the rear, removal of the over-large Jones addition has restored the hierarchy between the elements. Amid myriad interventions, the other main moves were to reinstate the important colonnade, conservatory and roof lantern, each the result

Below Small drawing room.



Right Manor rear, showing the reinstated conservatory. Soane's original was demolished in 1901.

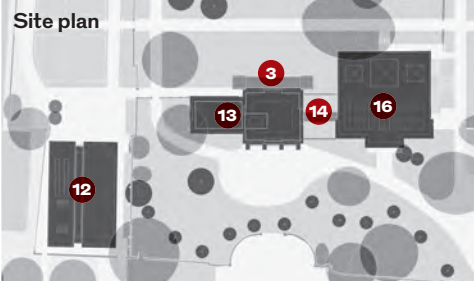
Ground floor plan



Site plan before restoration



Site plan



of exhaustive research. Rather than delivering a historic building polished to within an inch of its life, traces of past interventions are clear while still ensuring, says Allen, that it reads as an architectural whole.

'As we uncovered it so much of the soul was there. We could see how Soane had changed the design in his own time. So much was revealed,' she says.

The architects were hugely helped by the wealth of material on the house design in the Soane Museum archive, and by Harapp's specialist expertise after many years of restoring Sir John Soane's Museum. However these visual references were not without challenges, including elements that Soane either changed later or never realised in the first place. The only way the team could be sure was through a forensic investigation of the building that informed decisions on everything from paint colour to window position.

There are so many highlights – the startlingly vivid colour scheme, the Chinese-style wallpaper in the upper drawing room that took six months to hand paint, the reinstated trellis-design library ceiling, the hand-carved Portland stone Doric colonnade with its copper-topped roof. Restoration of the 'Tribune' tall entrance vestibule is particularly impressive, and reminiscent in atmosphere to that of the Soane Museum. Long gone is the magnolia, replaced by the original dark, dramatic colour scheme, while high up, the design team discovered boarded-up reveals that once housed amber and primrose

IN NUMBERS

1
conservatory

1
roof lantern

4
Coade stone urns
on the roof

4
Portland stone columns
in the colonnade

251
years since Dance's
original manor was
finished



coloured glass. This has now been reinstated.

It's a surprise to learn that Soane rarely stayed at Pitzhanger after putting so much energy into his country retreat creation. Yet despite selling up after just 10 years in 1810, it was evidently in his thoughts for much longer – in as late as 1832 he commissioned an idealised aerial perspective of what he'd wanted to achieve there.

Back to 2019, and as the revived Manor welcomes its first visitors the big decisions have clearly paid off. This restoration has liberated Soane's design by removing the shackles of the additions and allowing it to take centre stage in its new landscaped setting.

Yes, there is now an entrance fee (some times are still free for locals) but there is so much more to enjoy, assisted by the new visitor interpretation. Now I doubt anyone visiting Pitzhanger will go home disappointed. ●

Above Breakfast room,
Pitzhanger Manor.

Client Ealing Council
with Pitzhanger Manor &
Gallery Trust
**Architect/lead
consultant** Jestico +
Whiles
**Conservation architect/
heritage consultant**
Julian Harapp Architects
Landscape architect J&L
Gibbons/
Structural engineer Ellis
& Moore
Services/M&E engineer
King Shaw Associates
Interpretation designer
Ralph Appelbaum
Associates
**Historic landscape
advisor** Sarah Couch
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Left Stairway hall in the
restored Pitzhanger
Manor.



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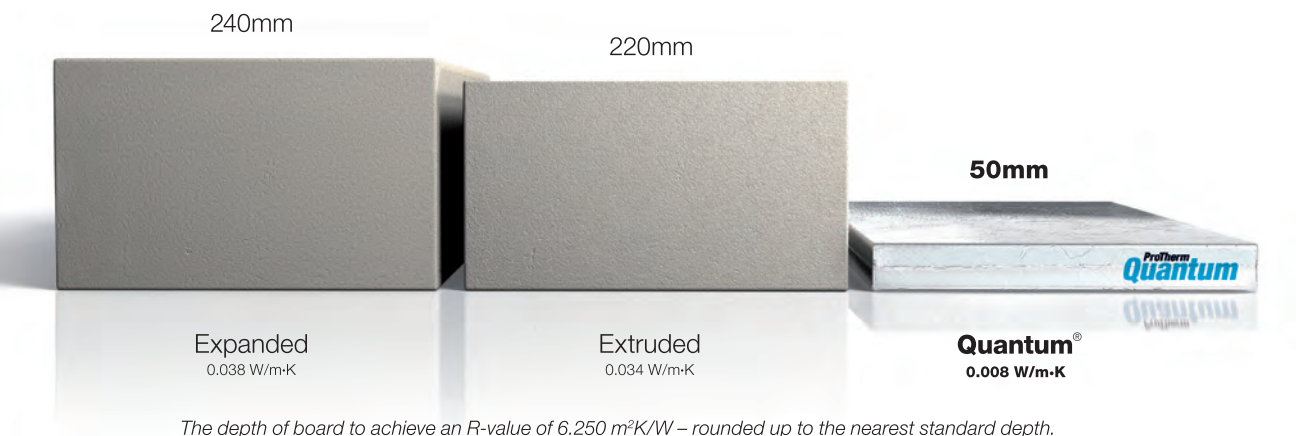
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Wild inside

UCL's new student centre from Nicholas Hare Architects buzzes with life and new ways of learning, but outside it got conservative cold feet

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: Alan Williams

You don't have to be many years past university to incorrectly assume what is meant by the term 'student centre'. For most people not involved in higher education or the construction of these buildings it simply sounds like a new name for the student union or, if you are a bit more up-to-date, one of the hubs – like Wilkinson Eyre's University of Exeter Forum – that was developed in the mid noughties as a congregating place for students where they could fulfil their every administrative need from enrolling and paying fees to finding accommodation.

In fact, the phrase refers to a completely new genre of campus building – one that was quite unimaginable only 20 years ago and is most succinctly described as a hot desking office building for students. Versions of them, including The Diamond by Twelve Architects at the University of Sheffield, are being built across Britain in response to how universities perceive learning to be evolving, particularly as a result of technology. And technology is changing the way university buildings run too.

'Students don't just learn in classrooms



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Looking down the atrium. Columns were precast while slabs were made in . The flawless connections make them look simple but in reality they were far from it.



and libraries any more,' explains David Young, senior project manager at University College London, which opened the doors of its own freshly completed student centre by Nicholas Hare Architects mid-February.

'If you go back 15 years students might have had a laptop, they might have had a phone, they certainly didn't have an iPad,' he says. 'There are different modes. Now all students have multiple electronic devices. The way they learn and connect with their faculty is different. Universities have extremely strong wifi systems that allow students to directly connect to the network drive of their department that enables much more flexible working.'

There has also been a shift in learning from solo to group work, which might come as a shock to those who still associate

IN NUMBERS

£38.5m
construction cost

5,765m²
gifa

£6,680
cost per m²

1,004
study spaces

15.3kg/m²
carbon emissions

Below The view from the main Gordon Street entrance. The building has achieved BREEAM Outstanding at design stage and is on course to achieve it at construction.

rigorous study with a semi-hermetic, ascetic existence. Whereas previously the rest of UCL's Bloomsbury campus had a lot of desks dedicated to individual study, this new student centre was commissioned to address how students study now, with 24/7, 365-day a year access and spaces for group activities as well.

It's clear on the day I visit that the current cohort of students has no trouble comprehending what and who the building is for, throwing out centuries of passed-down understanding of scholarly work as something carried out alone, in quiet and from books. The place is heaving, students are sprawled across every surface, occupying every cranny, and a productive chatter fills the atrium. The lifts are too packed, circulation space too busy, to go anywhere with speed – and the



The centre has 24/7, 365-day a year access and space for group activities

building only opened seven days ago.

Located on Gordon Street along the road that runs behind the university's iconic Wilkins Quad, the new Student Centre occupies the last significant undeveloped piece of land on UCL's original city centre campus (there is now UCL Stratford too). Squeezed between James Cubitt & Partners' 1968 brutalist Bloomsbury Theatre and a terrace of stucco and brick Georgian buildings, the site had been largely vacant since World War II when a church hall there was destroyed. Temporary functions included a fire fighting reservoir for the rest of the war then physics huts, but more recently it was used as a back and service entrance to the interior campus. The unloved gap didn't make much sense in such a prime location.

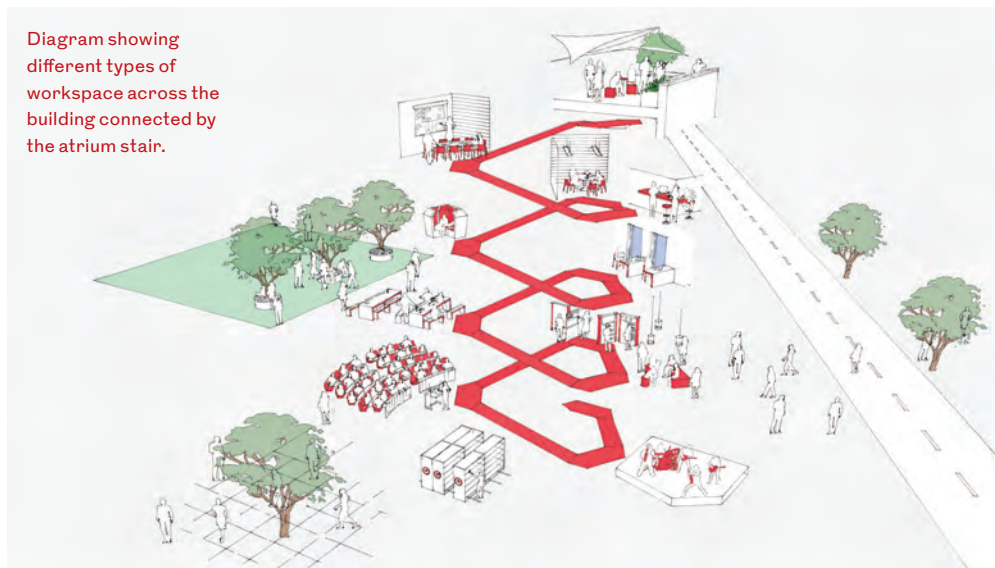
Nicholas Hare Architects came to the project five years ago via an open OJEU process. The site already had an approved scheme for a cultural heritage building called the Panopticon, an entirely black granite clad building. That fell through when the main benefactor pulled out because of the financial crisis in 2008, but by 2014 UCL's objectives had shifted.

As part of its £1.2 billion Transforming

The auditorium steps
from above with its
York stone floors and
oak timber seating.



Diagram showing
different types of
workspace across the
building connected by
the atrium stair.



UCL Programme, the site became purely for student use. Its brief was simple: fill the hole and create 1,000 learning spaces, as well as a new front door to the campus so that students and the public could walk all the way through to Gower Street on the other side of the Quad easily and unobstructed. It would have to navigate the preceding rabbit warren and three different levels across the 30x30m plot – from the street, 1.5m down to the courtyard to the back left and up 3m to the raised 1980s Japanese Garden to the back right, which was significantly underused. The building should also be designed to last 200 years.

However, it was not just UCL's priorities that had changed since 2008, but also Camden Council's. In contrast to the rather radical-sounding and potentially rousing

Credits

Architect Nicholas Hare

Architects

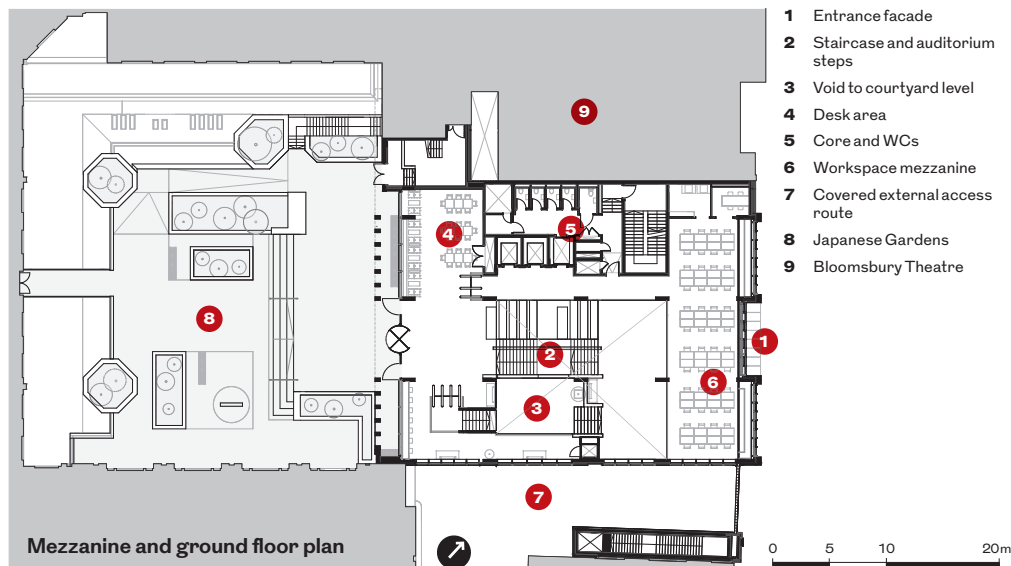
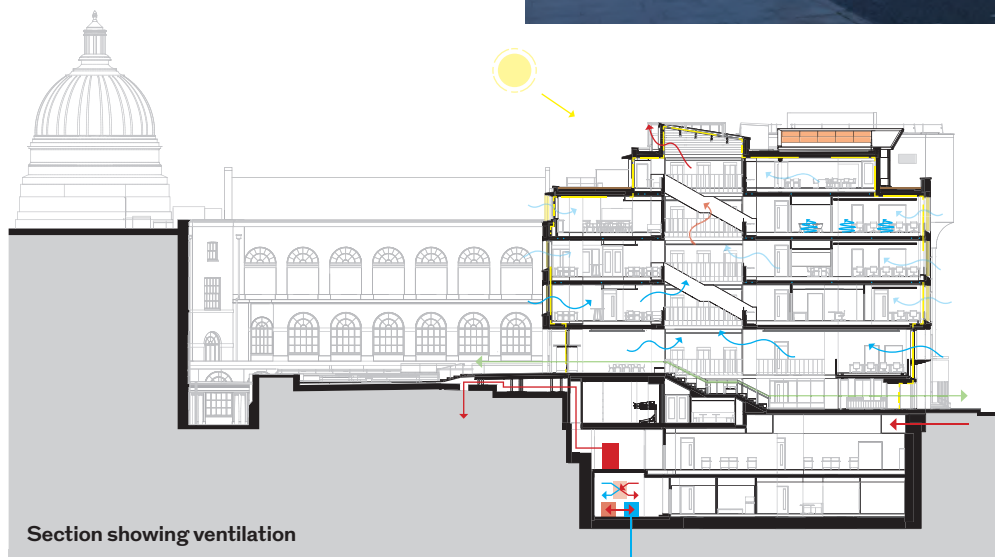
Client UCL**Form of contract** Design & build with two-stage tender**Contractor** Mace**Services, acoustics & lighting design** BDP**Structural engineer**

Curtins

Fire engineer Arup

Right The Gordon Street elevation doesn't prepare visitors for the architectural excitement within.

Externally the building feels like it had an approved approach to designing



scheme that had previously been granted permission, by 2014 conservatism had taken hold and sympathising with the surrounding heritage had become an obligatory part of the design process. Consultation and approval were required on scale, massing, verified views, materials and every detail.

Hence from the outside, although the building has evidently been carefully considered and well made, its architecture is modest and self-effacing. The three-width bays, proportions and use of brick relate to its Georgian neighbours, and the stepping of its facade, height and massing bridge the street line and scale between those and the theatre.

With the very similar redevelopment of the Bartlett up the road, as well as other schemes in the borough such as Mae and Matthew Lloyd's infill of the Regent's Park Estate on the other side of Euston, the building feels like it had an approved approach to designing that demonstrates personnel changes at the council. Added to the tick-box list of ingredients – light Petersen bricks, repetitive facades and anodised aluminium framed glazing and dressings – the method is forming a predictable type across the area, with the particular planner's buildings easy to spot. Here, the spiky battlements of the recessed top floor's sawtooth roof are the single feature that perhaps distinguishes it from others.

Likewise to the rear, the Student Centre continues the parapet level of the listed

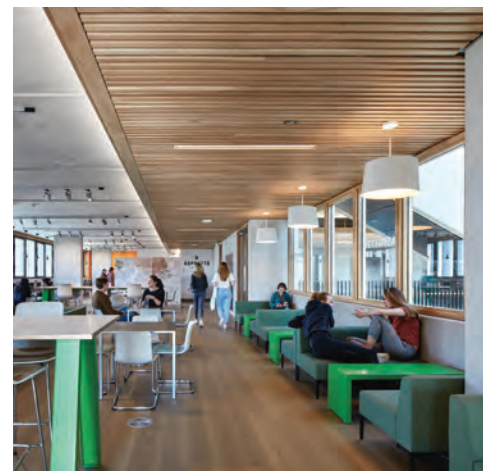
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Wilkins building and warms the colour of the bricks to yellow to better blend with its neighbours on that side.

It is only when you step inside that you truly see the hand of its architect and the Student Centre starts to scintillate with excitement. The bashful brick drops away and you are faced with a suede-like smooth chalky white concrete and oak interior. The building opens out in front of you – a south-light-filled Escheresque tower of staircases, forest of penetrating columns, flying walkways and mezzanines enveloping up, down and around.

Visitors glide past the reception desk and security barriers to the right, giving the impression of a free-flowing, accessible space. Auditorium seating climbs alongside the principal stair for students to quickly throw down their things alone or in groups. Sofas are tucked into the dog-legs of the stairs, as well as underneath. The materials are self-finished and were chosen for their longevity and robustness; solid timbers, very little plaster and paint. Seen from the base of the atrium, the fluidity of the elements and space disguise the essential plainness of the plan – two bars of accommodation either side of the floorplates with the core pushed to the blank wall of the theatre. Spaces that rupture back and forth above give an identity to each level, fitting in 5,750m² in the process, two below ground, four above and a mezzanine.

The building exceeds its study target, achieving a total of 1,004 spaces to suit any possible need. There are quiet closed off zones of long tables with or without screens, banquettes abutting the stairs, desks and group tables open to the atrium and other sources of noise as well as bookable private rooms and nooks tucked into leftover spaces,

Above left A breakout space in the quiet zone at the top of the building. The upper floor is made from CLT and set back to be less visible from the street.

Above One of the group spaces open to the atrium.

Above right The student-only café for working in.

Below To achieve the openness of study spaces coming directly off the atrium it is a fully sprinklered building.

UCL's position should make it a bolder, more ambitious patron of architecture



plus a roof terrace with power points and café seating. Furniture, also specified by NHA, and acoustics dictate the modes of study and allow for personal preference. The first basement level, for example, is completely windowless and artificially lit, which might stifle some but help the concentration of others. The only functions that interrupt the hot-desk office programme are the contemplation rooms on basement level 2 and the Student Enquiry Office which has been relocated with Wellbeing from the union.

Nicholas Hare has clearly met his brief and created a well-used building that judging by its initial popularity could be justified at twice the size. During my visit only 54 of the 647 spaces being monitored by the clever UCLGo app, which tracks desks like spots in a car park, are free. Young tells me he has logged 400 people in the building at 10pm on a Saturday as well as 150 at 5:50am. Internally, the reason is self-explanatory. Externally, however, it is deftly handled but genteel. The reason seems to lie more with the changed character of the council and university than the architect – 'What the building looks like is not a priority,' says Young when questioned, as I think back to the intrigue that full black granite would have created.

This reply is dumbfounding. The university's location, school of architecture and powerful position should make it a bolder, more ambitious patron of architecture, as it has been in the past with its School of Slavonic and East European Studies and Centre for Nanotechnology, both built in 2005. At this rate, the concrete structure and oak inside might be beautifully weathered in 200 years, but I would be surprised if its facade will still be there. ●

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Going back to plan A

6a's extension of Milton Keynes Gallery has reasserted the town's original design spirit and impact

Words: Hugh Pearman





IN NUMBERS

£7m
contract value

500 m²
gallery space

5
exhibition galleries

150
seats in Sky Room

300
Sky room standing capacity

284,400
estimated Milton Keynes population by 2021

Left The clever and colourful curtain creates blackout and divides the space in several ways.

Below The new MK Gallery extension with its all-seeing window as viewed from Campbell Park.

This is a fascinating exercise: how to capture the original spirit and subsequent history of Milton Keynes, and condense all that into one expanded art gallery?

It's a tough job that nobody had to do but one group of people firmly wanted to: especially the proprietors of 6a Architects, Tom Emerson and Stephanie Macdonald; artists Gareth Jones and Nils Norman; and MK gallery director Anthony Spira. They all love the ambition and identity of the city as it was designed in the 1960s and built in the 1970s, and they wanted to celebrate it.

The result is an art gallery, some 50% bigger than it was before, which acts as a visual condenser of Milton-Keynes-ness, in parts very obvious, in other parts very oblique. It opened last month. This is not normal territory for 6a. As Emerson puts it: 'It's great for us because everything we've done previously has been in London or Cambridge where it's like wading through heritage mud. Here, the land is hard and dry and people are interested in the future.'

They are also interested in the future as it was previously imagined and then half-forgotten – a product of Leftist thinking that was paradoxically loved by Margaret Thatcher. 'Here' is at the top end of MK's axial Midsummer Boulevard, overlooking Campbell Park with its mystic mound. There's more than a danger that the city will lose the clarity of its original landscape vision – and since 2000 a terrible anomaly has marred the journey from the railway station at the south end of the original centre to the gallery at the top. That journey is the full length of Midsummer Boulevard, and it should be achievable in a straight line. Unfortunately the axis is interrupted two-thirds of the way up by a half-arsed shopping centre expansion, plugged into the side of the

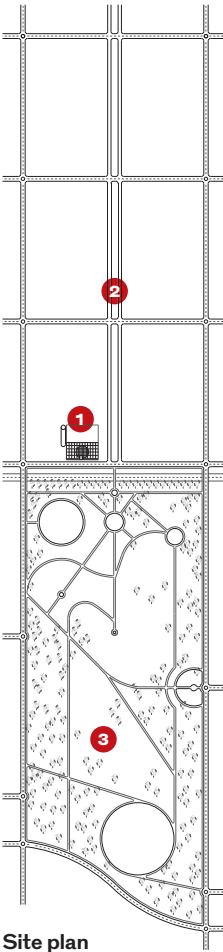


External finishes, other than the new extension's stainless steel, are in keeping with the colour schemes of the 1970s

Below The famous 1974 Helmut Jacoby aerial perspective of how Milton Keynes would turn out in 1990, and (right) as it looks today, seen from photographer Iwan Baan's drone. Theatre and gallery at top end of central boulevard on the left. 'Snozone' indoor ski slope far left. Huge new car park on the right.



- 1 MK Gallery
- 2 Midsummer boulevard
- 3 Campbell Park



Site plan

Credits

Client MK Gallery
Architect 6a Architects
Project manager
 Jackson Coles
Structural engineer
 Momentum
Environmental engineer
 Max Fordham LLP
Quantity surveyor Gleeds
Landscape architect jcla
Main contractor Bowmer
 + Kirkland
Artists Gareth Jones &
 Nils Norman

Suppliers

Curtain walling MB Glass
 (subcontractor) / Schueco
 (supplier)
Glass Guardian Glass
Steel doors and windows
 Jansen
Timber doors JW Doors
Precast concrete
 Cornish Concrete
Concrete floors Lazenby
Rubber flooring Nora
Gallery lighting ERCO
Sanitary ware Duravit,
 Ideal Standard and
 Dolphin

original very long, rigorously rectilinear (and now listed) mirror-glass mall. That was by MK architects Derek Walker, Stuart Moss crop and Christopher Woodward and was opened by new PM Thatcher in 1979. Perhaps the rapid decline of the retail sector generally will lead to the reinstatement of the axis at some point.

The MK gallery was itself an addition, though far from disruptive. It was slotted as a late extra into one side of the entrance plaza to the city's theatre, designed by Blonski Heard to occupy a complete city block and opened in 1999. Everything was properly on-grid but the gallery was little more than a couple of basic boxes and turned its back on the open park landscape behind. Wholly refurbished and extended to much better environmental conditions and security (necessary to enable it to be part of the Government Indemnity Scheme when borrowing valuable and vulnerable artworks and objects), it now has a sequence of five exhibition galleries, shop and café, education studio and outdoor playspace. For the first time you can see from front to back, an enfilade running from the entrance right through to the new window looking into the landscape beyond.

On this ground level there is not much of an outlook

owing to the existence of a raised road running across the back: the view here will terminate on a single Scots pine planted in the new close landscape behind. Upstairs, however, it's a different matter. The biggest change to the gallery comes in a rectangular two-storey extension at its north-western end, clad in corrugated stainless steel, the end elevation defined by a very large circular window spanning both storeys (bottom half mirror-glazed). Upstairs, it's the Sky Room, a 150-seat multi-purpose auditorium suitable for events from cinema (programmed by the Curzon chain) via stand-up to live music. It's relatively basic apart from its first-rate acoustic isolation but it incorporates retractable bleacher seating and is lined with a huge stripey curtain on a trainset-like arrangement of tracks for different configurations. With the parkland beyond, I can imagine the semicircular window being left uncovered at dusk for a rural version of Manhattan's Jazz at Lincoln Center. This is a revenue-earning space for the gallery but it can also be used for art installations – a sound piece was playing there the day I visited.

The external finishes, other than the stainless steel of the new extension, are in keeping with the colour schemes of the 1970s. There's a whizzy red external

Seen from the road,
 its derivation from
 the city grid becomes
 apparent.



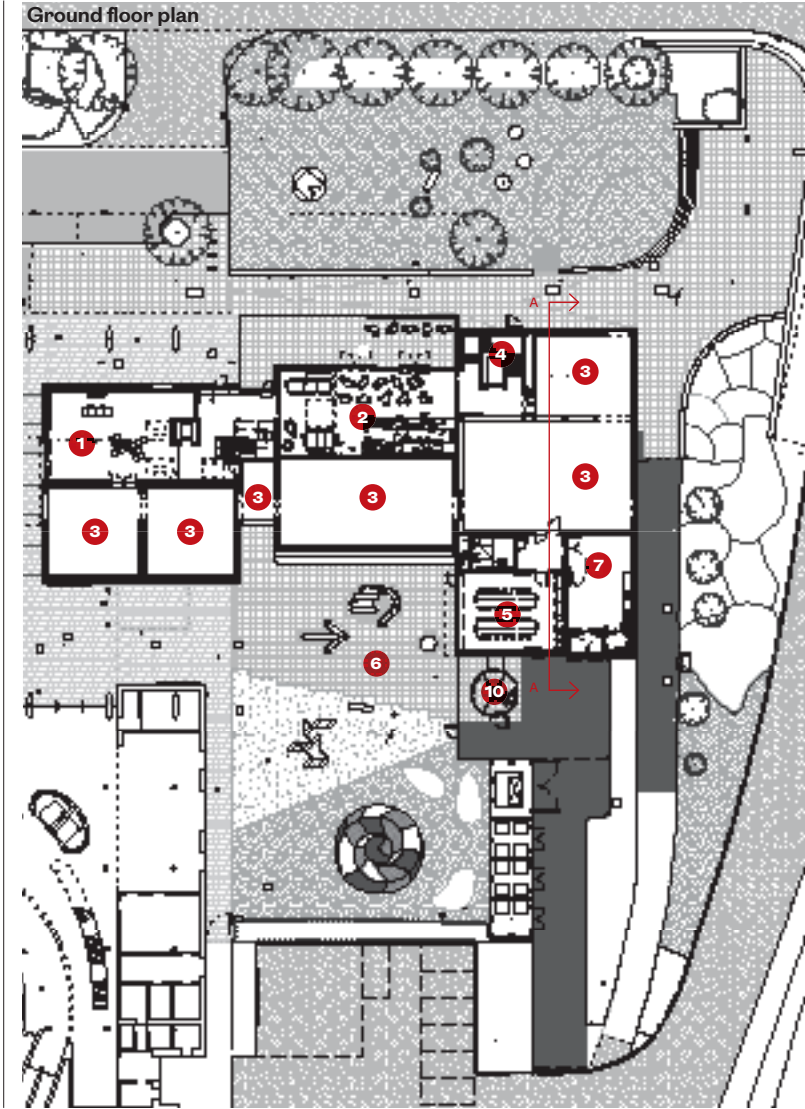


staircase, while the colour-blocked original rendered entrance block is now done in the 1970s rather than 1990s colour palette, complete with the original and present logos for Milton Keynes. The playground is in the spirit of the 1970s (and includes a mystic mound) though apparently some of the play equipment of the time is deemed too dangerous for today's kids.

The Milton Keynes-ness starts at the entrance – previously part-concealed, oddly, by a concrete fin wall. Now there is a porch taking the form of one of the familiar original MK features: the simple black steel porte-cocheres that act as markers and shelters for the pedestrian routes from boulevards to buildings. Once inside, it's a world of 70s exposed services, colours and graphics including more red and yellow surfaces and black ceiling, all seen in the MKDC architects' 'custard factory' department back in the day. The big lift between the floors is pure yellow inside. 6a's reworking of the

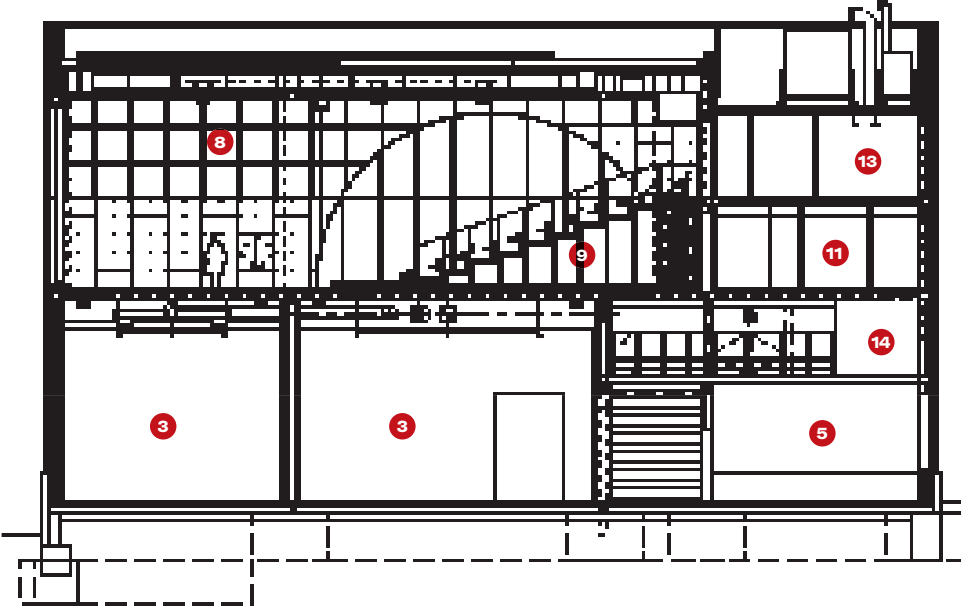


Below left The café area in the rethought original section – colours inspired by 'The Custard Factory' (top left) as the MKDC architects' department studio was known.

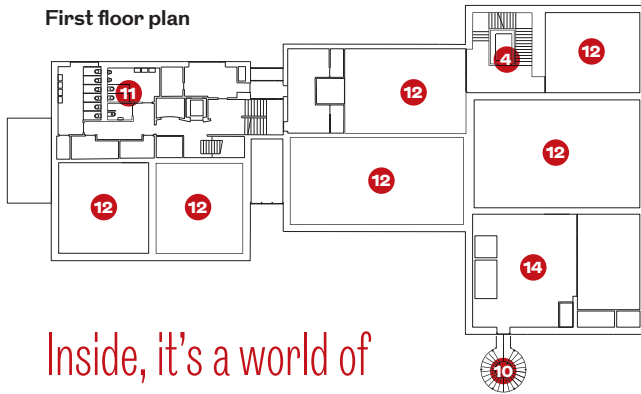


- 1 Entrance and shop
- 2 Café/bar
- 3 Galleries
- 4 Stairs and lift
- 5 Learning and community studio
- 6 External play area
- 7 Workshop
- 8 Sky Room auditorium
- 9 Retractable seating
- 10 Exterior staircase
- 11 Toilets
- 12 Double-height voids
- 13 Plant room
- 14 Storage

Section A-A

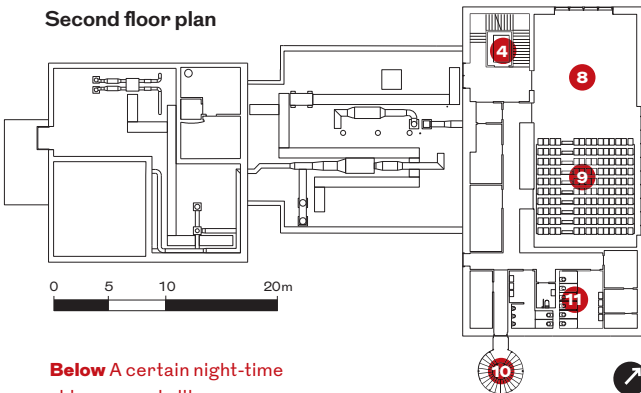


First floor plan



Inside, it's a world of 70s exposed services, colours and graphics

Second floor plan



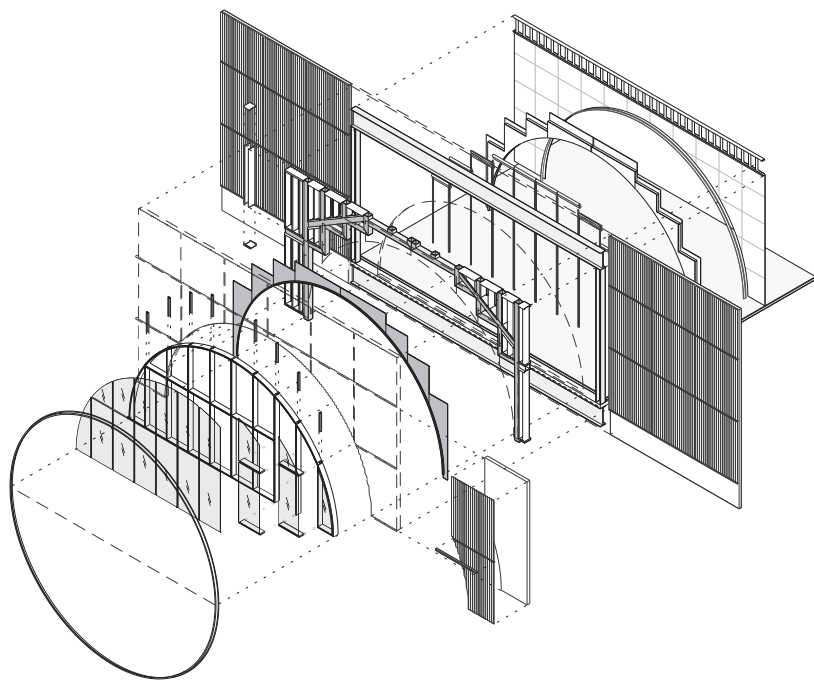
Below A certain night-time shimmer and glitz.



Left Groovy 1970s-style signage and colours.

Below These days, this is a heritage colour. 1970s-red exterior staircase.



Axometric of Sky Room acoustic wall and window build-up


spaces in the original buildings includes a mysterious high-level door to nowhere which apparently used to connect to a service stair. Left in place as a bit of recent history, it's locked, reassures Emerson.

The obliqueness and subtlety comes in the design of the new extension. Its form is based like many of the artists' interventions on 'City Club' a never-built supergroovy MKDC leisure and cultural centre much influenced by Archigram which would have occupied a complete city block. Part of this involved a rectilinear gridded steel form containing a silver sphere. The memory of that – a memory of the utopian never-built – is enshrined in the silvery extension with its huge circular window. Your average punter will no more get that illusion than they will the neon heart on the entrance facade, which is based on some cover artwork of the time from AD magazine's coverage of the new city. But they may well pick up the fact that the new gridded building is based on the gridded city it sits in.

'We've tried to avoid being over-nostalgic' says Emerson. Well, up to a point. There's bags of a very architectural kind of nostalgia here, for a different, optimistic, public sector era and the way it expressed itself. I love this aesthetic and spirit as much as anyone but there was always something paternalistic if not Big-Brotherly about the way MK communicated with its burgeoning population. The point is, all that is now historic. This building – and its opening exhibition 'The Lie of the Land' with a broad landscape theme including much about the city itself – is all to do with a new city that now has a tradition of itself. I'm glad that tradition is recognised and invoked. ●

Right One of the double-height galleries.

Below Inside the Sky Room with the bleacher seating extended.



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PV and proud

Two homes squeezed into an unobtrusive corner of Fulham flaunt their sustainable credentials, and work them hard

Words: Pamela Buxton Photographs: Dennis Gilbert



Below left The solar screens are fixed at an angle of 45 degrees to give only oblique views while enabling daylight to filter through.

Bottom right View down the front of the two mews houses in Fulham showing the row of angled solar screens in front of the elevation.

HCL Architects two new houses in Fulham, west London, wear their photovoltaic hearts not on their sleeves, but on their facade. Rather than tucking the energy generators away on the roof, the architect took an up-front approach that not only made the panels a key design feature but solved tricky overlooking constraints as well.

The practice has previous in this overt use of PVs, namely on the Kingsgate House social housing block completed in Kensington in 2014. But while the energy-generating panels in that development were attached to the facade, the solar screens at Fulham create an independent, 5.55m high structure in front of the semi-detached mews houses.

One of the last projects to be worked on by HCL's co-founder, the late Richard Horden, this is a redevelopment of disused garages tucked away down a narrow drive off Fulham Road. Passersby that glimpse the facade glittering in the sun may well stop in their tracks – these houses are quite a contrast to the local conventional Victorian properties.

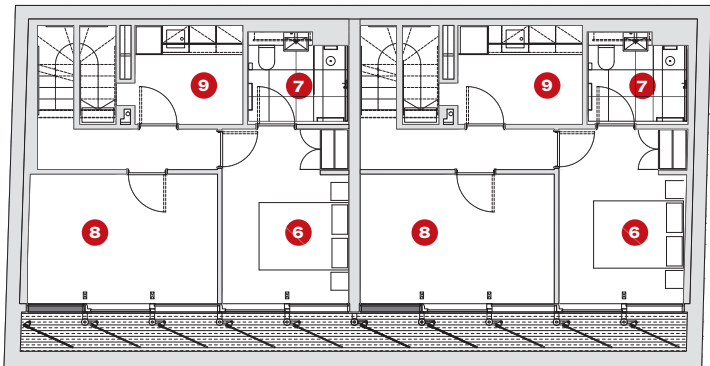
When HCL took the project on, permission already existed for a more conventional, two storey pair of semi-detached homes. The new design introduces a lower ground floor level to create two houses of 150m² each.

Overlooking issues, and vehicular access for the houses in front of the mews on Fulham Road, severely constrained the design. To make the most of the tight site, the houses

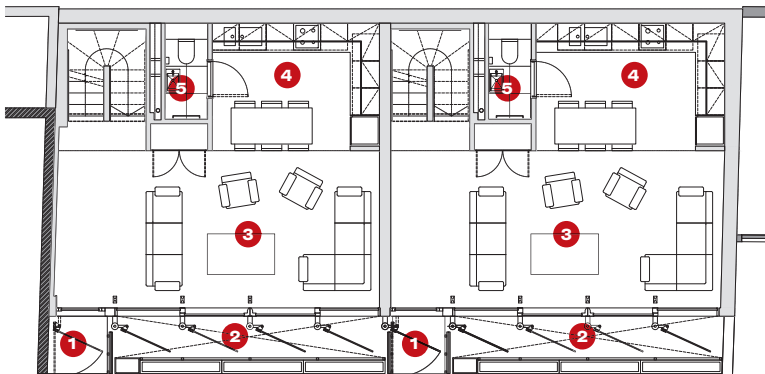


‘We are honest about the PV cells. They are visible on the outside and are doing a job’

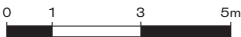
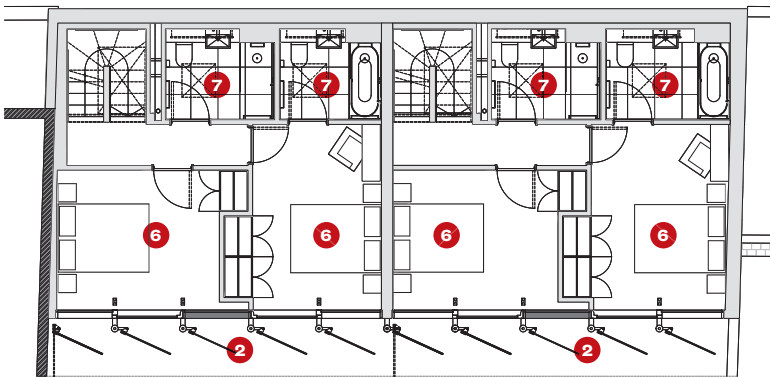
Basement floor plan



Ground floor plan



First floor plan



Credits
Client Artemis One
Main contractor FCM
Project manager Phil Little
Structural engineer BMCE
M&E consultant EDP
Quantity surveyor Bond Davidson
CDM Quoin
Acoustic consultant KP Acoustics

sit at the rear perimeter with glazing only along the south east-facing main front elevation. The development has an exposed steel-framed structure, with side and rear elevations above party walls clad in yellow London stock brick to match the surroundings.

Silver screens

It’s the south-facing solar screens that make the design. Angled at 45° in front of the fully glazed Schueco elevation, these are a pragmatic solution to the need to admit as much light as possible without overlooking the rear of the houses just 18m away. Initially, HCL looked at angling the facade itself, but this would have compromised the interior space and prohibited the 1.2m wide courtyard at the front at the boundary of the set back zone.

With screening a necessity, HCL made these elements generate energy rather than simply using a metal screen or frosted glass. As well as providing privacy, the shading also prevents sunlight overheating the interior.

‘We are honest about the PV cells. They are visible on the outside and are doing a job, they screen the views to avoid overlooking issues and maximise daylight by allowing the use of full height glass,’ says HCL associate Angel Huerga, adding that the dual function (energy-generation and screening) enables the design to incorporate a green sedum roof too, adding another layer of sustainability.

The 10 shutters are angled south in contrast to the south-east facing elevation and give the required oblique views. Each house has five screens of PVs supplied by Romag. These are supported on steel posts in line with the 1.5m modules of the structural grid. Each 400kg screen is divided into three 1.2m wide panels of PVs totalling 192 cells.

Finding a contractor to build the PV structure with the desired visual lightness was the biggest challenge of the project, according to Huerga, since most contractors

Right The shutters give oblique views out in response to the close proximity of houses on Fulham Road, while allowing through sunlight.



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It's the solar screens that are the stars, not just visually but practically

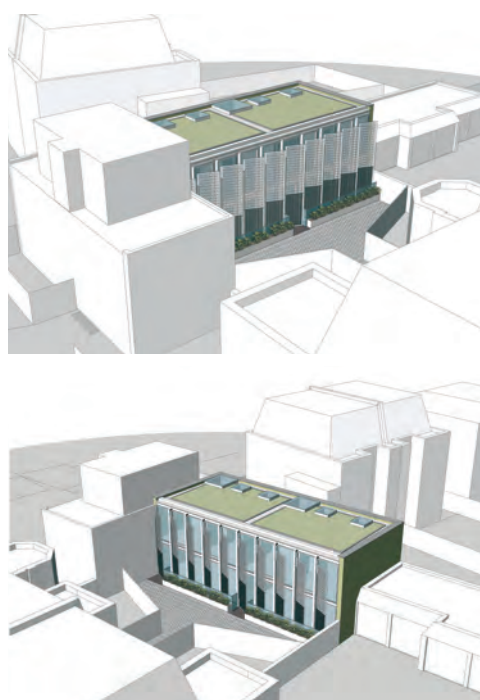
wanted to frame the entire panels rather than just the side that attaches to each post. The project was eventually realised by contractor ECP with each screen supported on one side using only two rounded brackets fixed by two bolts. The structure ties back to that of the main house at ground floor slab, first floor slab and roof level.

It is what it is

'The bracket is very carefully designed,' says Huerga. 'It had to be right. We didn't want to hide the bolts and structure. We wanted to say "it is what it is".'

Each shutter has three, 25mm thick panels of PV cells within low iron glass, totalling 192 cells per screen. HCL chose the silvery grey multi-crystalline silicon option for these, because of the depth of the design and its glittery, jewel-like quality.

'It's like a little work of art,' says Huerga, adding that it reflects the sky, making the whole building appear lighter and more per-



- 1 PV Shutter
- 2 Steel support post
- 3 Support connection to slab
- 4 Fixed glazed panel
- 5 Window frame and bracket system
- 6 Folded sheet aluminium spandrel panel
- 7 Concrete and ribbed steel deck

Above Visualisations from south west and south east.

Below The full height, double-glazed elevation can be seen behind the angled solar shutters.

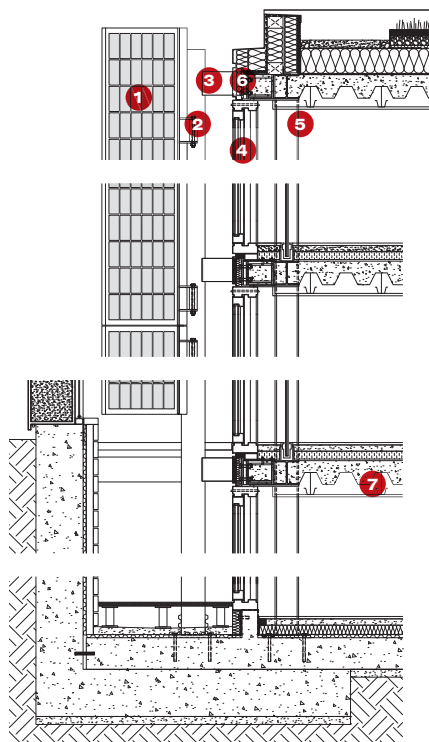
meable. On the inside of the houses, the grid of the cells creates a dappled lighting effect.

At each entrance, the lower of the three panels opens independently to give full access. The building facade has sliding doors on each level and a Juliette balcony on the first floor.

HCL certainly gets the most out of the site. The layout is compact, with kitchen/living space at ground floor and two bedrooms (one with a top-lit en-suite) and a bathroom upstairs. On the lower level is a further bedroom and a flexible use/guest room, plus a further bathroom and utility control room, which the PV cells feed into. The sliver of front courtyard allows natural light into the lower level rooms – although it's a shame the site didn't allow this to be more generous.

But it's the solar screens that are the stars, not just visually but practically. With a peak output of roughly 3kWp, they are expected to meet most of the daily electricity requirements for the houses. It remains to be seen whether the government's decision to close the Feed-in Tariff scheme to new applicants from 1 April will limit further domestic PV projects. Set up in 2010 to promote the uptake of renewable energies by enabling excess electricity to be exported back to the grid, its closure won't affect existing solar households. A replacement scheme is believed to be in development. ●

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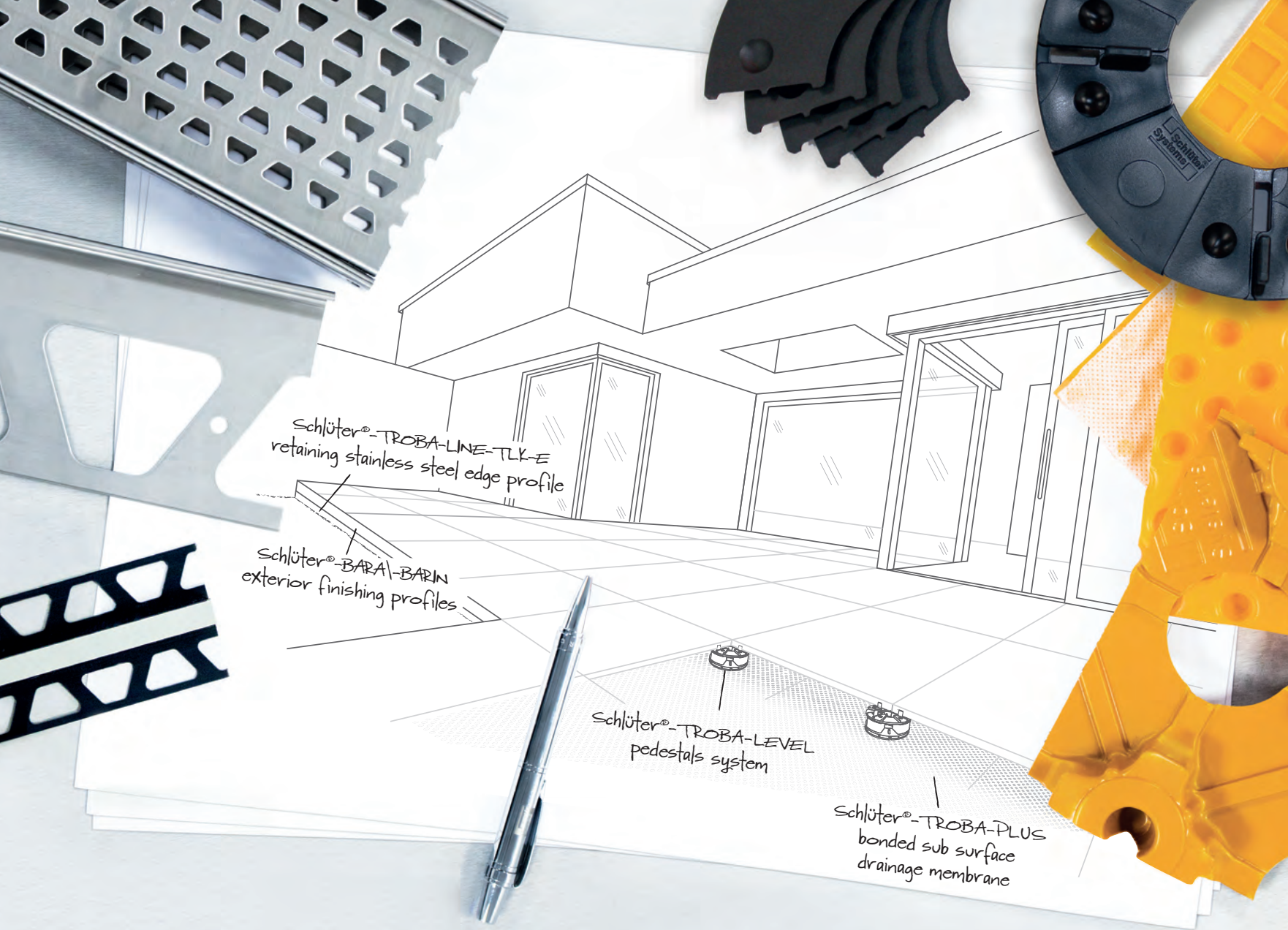


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Eye Line 2019: call for entries

We describe it as an award for architectural drawing, but how you achieve that image is up to you. And once again we have separate categories for students and practitioners

eye line

It's Eye Line time! The original annual award for architectural image-making skills – let's call it 'drawing', though we welcome all media and combinations of media – is now open for 2019 entries. As ever, it's purely the power of the image that we're interested in. How well do you communicate an idea or record an existing building or place?

This is the seventh year of Eye Line, and my, how it's grown. Once again we invite entries in two categories: practitioners and students. We will exhibit winners and commendations at the RIBA as well as publishing them in print and online. And our colleagues at the RIBA's world famous Drawings and Archives Collections (DAC), based in the Victoria & Albert Museum, will scrutinise the winners for potential inclusion in the collections.

We make no distinction between 'hand drawing' and computer rendering skills. Both are of equal value and anyway, so many architectural depictions layer several techniques to produce the final image. All are welcome.

We DO distinguish between practitioners and students however, as the conditions under which you work are very different.

Student category: images made by those in architectural education or who are submitting images made before fully qualified.

Practitioner category: images made by those fully qualified and working in practice, either for real-life projects or to explore ideas and experiences.

Last year's overall winner was Tszwai So of Spheron Architects with *An Echo in Time*, drawings for a Brussels memorial to victims of 20th century totalitarianism. His main charcoal drawing *The Messenger* will take its place in the RIBA Collections.

Other practitioner winners and commendations were Rory Chisholm of Donald Insall Associates, Jolene Liam of Studio



Above Last year's overall winner was Tszwai So of Spheron Architects for his drawings titled *An Echo in Time*.

Egret West, and Alan Power. Student laureates were Jacob Hoepfner of the University of Stuttgart, Lucinda Anis and Chris Hamill from Cambridge, Caroline Bernard of Kingston University and George Allen of the Royal College of Art.

Now it's YOUR turn. This is an international competition. Practitioners and students – get image-making, and enter! ●

Winning and commended entries will be published in the August issue of RIBAJ and exhibited at the RIBA

RULES

We seek the best 2D representations of a building design or concept through visual means. They may be hand or digitally drawn, incorporating collage or any combination or overlay of methods. Video and straight photography excluded. Enter in either the student or practitioner category. The RIBA Journal reserves the right to reallocate to a different category if deemed necessary.

Maximum of three images per entry, which can be from different projects, or all from the same project.

Joint entries on which more than one person has worked are permissible.

All entries must be uploaded via the link below. We cannot accept physical works. Images must be at 300dpi, file size maximum 25Mb.

The work must have been produced within the three years up to the deadline of 23.59 on Monday 10 June, 2019, and must not previously have been entered for Eye Line. Enter online on: ribaj.com/culture/enter-eye-line

Information required

Title of work(s) if applicable, and medium.

Name of the author(s) of the work.

Name of organisation where author works or studies.

Email, postal address and phone number.

Dimensions of the original work as presented (or as you would wish it to be presented) in mm.

Date it was completed.

Key dates

Deadline: Monday 10 June, 23:59.

Judging: end June.

Winners and commendations announced: August issue of RIBAJ and online.

Exhibition opening: August.

Correspondence: eyeline.ribaj@riba.org

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2: Intelligence



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& technology

Philippa Simpson



AOC, with base-build architect De Matos Ryan, is to reconfigure and redesign the Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green. The V&A's director of Design and FuturePlan talks about this latest part of its long-term intentions

Is the Museum of Childhood about displaying objects related to childhood or a museum for children?

That's an interesting question. It's had a number of iterations since it was founded as the Bethnal Green Museum in 1872. What it is, to whom, has been a continuing debate since the V&A's Sir Roy Strong launched it as the Museum of Childhood in 1974. It is obviously an important repository of items relating to childhood but I think we want to change its remit. We want it to be a Museum for Children – specifically 0-14 year olds. There'll be spaces for creativity, discovery and problem-solving. It will be about giving children tools and skills.

Caruso St John redesigned the Museum in 2007. What didn't work about it?

It was fine. Caruso St John was merely enhancing a building that had become a victim of its own success. This reworking addresses a completely different issue – it isn't about capacity but the experience. The base build will unlock the circulation and a lot of back-of-house spaces for group workshop use. AOC is concentrating on the galleries and the visitor experience; with the shop and café seen as another side of the cultural offering.

What won the project for AOC?

The firm was propositional and even prevocational – looking into display methodology and language. Pulling things out of cases and using props. It wants to play down the digital component and make it about the tactile, the visual and dynamic. We all agreed that digital screens shouldn't distract from the experience but enhance it.

Aren't you ever worried that bright ideas can be dulled by committee?

I know what you mean, but no. We went through a two-month process with AOC honing the brief by talking to users and the V&A's learning, conservation and project teams. Yes, we need to be aware of their needs but we are primarily a museum of design and we'd like to think we have a healthy respect for design ideas, however outlandish they might first seem. The V&A is big enough and ugly enough to accept new propositions and change.

You've announced that Sam Jacob Studio will rework the V&A's Cromwell Rd entrance. What's next for the FuturePlan?

We've got a programme of projects over the next seven years; not least the enormous O'Donnell and Tuomey V&A East development in Stratford which will open in 2023. But I think we'll also be looking at piecemeal upgrades to the museum estate in the meantime – returning to the maxim of our Victorian director Henry Cole that you should always renew your thinking.

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Stephen Cousins gets a glimpse of the future of construction: ribaj.com/robotbuilders



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Business, clients
& services

C is for crafted, L is for lean

A design-led practice without a design policy? Glenn Howells has filled the gap with his CLEAN philosophy

By Eleanor Young

A couple of years ago Glenn Howells spotted a gaping hole in the practice. Amid all the policies and procedures a modern architectural firm has to have, there was nothing about design. 'We have to write policies on everything else, like modern slavery, but the most important thing was not there,' he says.

For someone who built his practice on a belief in design, that gap had to be stopped. 'I only ever wanted to design buildings that were brilliant and take people to see them,' he says. Many of the buildings are award winning. Gloucester Services, the Stihl Walkway at Westonburt Arboretum and the Remembrance Centre at the National Memorial Arboretum all won RIBA National Awards for Glenn Howells Architects, while the Savill Building in Windsor secured it a place on the Stirling shortlist in 2007. ('Loss leaders,' Howells confirms.)

With offices in London and Birmingham, the 150 person practice has long relied on mid density urban housing and commercial schemes for most of its work, plus an increasing number of masterplans including London City Island in east London – currently being built out – and Birmingham's Eastside in preparation for HS2.

Howells had also been concerned to ensure consistency across the practice, not least

ROBERT PARRISH.



Above Howells still sees his practice as small and crafted. Here at 125 Deansgate, in central Manchester, the terracotta cladding demonstrates some of the practice thinking around lean design.



Left A masterplan, housing and the cultural centrepiece of the English National Ballet at London City Island, Newham, east London.



Left Avoiding the values of the word 'sketch', Howells like to refer to doodles, a way of trying out options while not being too precious. Royal Wharf, east London.

for its stable of repeat clients, some of whom have been with the practice for 20 years.

So he came up with CLEAN: crafted so it works at the smallest scale and the largest; lean in that each component should be working hard in a number of ways; elegant; appropriate and specific to its place; narrative with a story that drives the projects at every scale. Despite the acronym elegance comes last. Only after everything else is in place does this become the goal. 'If you start with that elegance you short circuit the rest. You are just designing Instagrammable architecture,' he says. He writes in the office manual: 'Design is not something you apply, it is revealed.'

Howells laughs that his acronym stands out like a sore thumb in the manual. But it is used throughout in formal and informal design reviews. On Tuesday it is Birmingham design review, examining cladding options for a piece of HS2 infrastructure, testing that it fits the narrative, that the components are lean and working hard at all levels dealing with safety, structure and architecture, that there is nothing superfluous. 'Our buildings are quite simple,' he says. 'It is all about how they are put together.' This internal testing uses the practice resources of five model-makers and five visualisers. Design review

includes a wide variety of senior architects. Howells is excited by the fresh ideas that younger architects bring and knows that interrogation before they get to the client helps build confidence. 'And there is nothing worse than presenting an untested option to the client because then you are out of control.'

Offices and superconnectivity don't always bring the best ideas and design to the fore, so the manual also offers some tips: be quiet; be clear; don't always use a computer, your best computer is your hand and eyes; build up your knowledge of interesting things and ideas. Howells favours the quick work of sketching and models for options. In the London office in Fitzrovia, drawings are spread over high lunch tables as one architect goes over them resolving details at scale. Howells himself builds in a quieter day on Mondays for sketching and exploring ideas and new opportunities. Over the years of shuttling between Birmingham, where he lives, and London he has found the train a refuge for concentrated work. He sketches in layers in Adobe Sketch using Apple Pencil on his Ipad. It beats his old way of laying tracing paper over a pdf, drawing then photographing it before sending it back to the office. It even syncs his layers.

There is a lot of traffic between the offices. Daily in the case of senior staff, to give consistency and ensure it feels like one team, and over careers for young architects who might move to the capital to see the action, then back to the Midlands as they start families. When the Birmingham office was first established in the nineties, it caught a moment in the city when there was interesting work. And it has carried on being a good base for northern cities too: the practice has major projects in Liverpool and Manchester as well as Selly Oak and Wolverhampton. Its reach is significant, with clear clusters of projects in these urban areas and Gloucestershire and the same client names popping up again and again. Some are more obvious, like the Westmoreland family who commissioned Gloucester Services and now a head office, while others are individuals who have moved around professionally, taking Glenn Howells Architects with them.

The other obvious value of having a Midlands office is cost. In Birmingham an architect's salary can afford you a family house in walking or cycling distance of the office; in London Howells sees an exodus to Hertfordshire. In Birmingham the 35,000ft² office is double the size of London and so is the space per person. This means the floor of visualisers, modelmakers and BIM experts makes sense. But in some respects the two offices mirror one another. They are both open, light workspaces. And both are within spitting distance of old fashioned, unpretentious pubs – another important part of building office culture. It is not an exact science. 'I am not saying we have got it nailed,' says Howells. But 30 years into the job, as friends talk of retirement, his dream is retiring to do projects, working with trusted colleagues and spotting other people's brilliant ideas. Though he wouldn't claim to be a businessman these are the dividends of creating your own practice. 'Designing a building is great, but building an organisation with shared intelligence is even better.' ●

*If you start with elegance
you short circuit the rest,
you are just designing
Instagrammable architecture*

Design, construction
& technology

The city's the lab for Liverpool students

Can Liverpool University's Chinese outpost and the process of expanding its own buildings give students the rich experience that made earlier alumni?

Hugh Pearman

Up the hill from the centre, across Hope Street with Frederick Gibberd's space-capsule Roman Catholic cathedral to your left and the brick chimneys of Haworth Tompkins' Stirling Prize-winning Everyman Theatre to your right, and you enter the heart of Liverpool's university quarter. There on Abercromby Square you find an old-fashioned front door in a row of plain late Georgian houses, as famous in its way as the AA's earlier, more elaborate version in London's Bedford Square. Just how many students and teachers have passed through that door over the years?

The numbers have increased sharply since the Russell Group university went all out to attract Chinese students, in 2006 establishing a joint Anglo-Chinese university with Xi'an Jiaotong university in Suzhou (neighbouring Shanghai), known as XJTLU. The architecture school is closely involved with this so, since 2012, numbers in the second year always mushroom with the arrival of the Chinese cohort who have opted to do the final two years of their course in Liverpool. This, along with all the other nationalities typically present in a school of architecture, gives the place a cosmopolitan feel. There's been inevitable pressure on space and facilities but that's now being put right in an ingenious way: the school is running an international competition to extend its campus and the students are directly involved in it as part of their studies. The school has always been famous for using its

host city and its buildings as its raw material – though like many of its peers it also has a small outpost in London.

Its history is important: founded in 1894 it may not be as venerable as London's Bartlett, say, but was the first university architecture school in the country to offer RIBA accredited degrees (from 1902) and since then it has gone on to count six Royal Gold Medalists among its graduates and staff, including Jim Stirling, Patrick Abercrombie, Maxwell Fry, William Holford and Colin Rowe. In the early years (1904-33) its guiding spirit was another eventual RGM, Charles Herbert Reilly, who brought the school to national and international prominence. In his final year as head he co-designed with former pupils what is still the school's main studio, the Leverhulme Building, in the 'jam-factory' industrial-modern manner, reworked and extended in 1989 by King McAllister. The school's more recent alumni include Jonathan Falkingham of Shedkm/Urban Splash and Jim Eyre of Wilkinson Eyre, twice a Stirling Prize winner and now a visiting professor along with Alan Dunlop, Nicholas Ray, Ian Ritchie and Michael Wilford. Since 2010 the school has been part of the university's School of the Arts, alongside English, music, philosophy and communication and media.

For years the school was associated with the formidably knowledgeable and well-connected David Dunster who joined as a professor in 1995, was head of school from 1996 to 2000, and continued working there until his retirement in 2010. Doing crits with David in attendance in the big green-floored studio





Left The school's late Georgian buildings (right) meet the 1933 Leverhulme Building by CH Reilly as extended in 1989 by King McAllister.

Below left Students get going for the new term.

Above From project The Museum of Digital Archaeology by Aftab Shaikh, Irshaad Basha, Sophie Budsworth and Jordan Egglestone.

Tutor: Rosa Gutierrez



– followed of course by a congenial lunch or supper – was an education in itself. Today there is a more collegiate air about the place. The head is Soumyen Bandyopadhyay (unavoidably absent when I called in); deputy head is Torsten Schmiedeknecht. The school staff includes published expert authors such as Neil Jackson and Robert Kronenbourg – mobile structures a speciality – and historian Barnabas Calder, with his current specialism in brutalism. Mark Swenarton, chronicler of the late flowering of social housing in Camden, is an emeritus professor.

Schmiedeknecht meets me and we sit and chat in his office. He has a stack of original Ladybird books on his desk, part of his two-year RIBA Research Trust Award project into postwar architecture in children's picture books. The project will culminate in an exhibition at RIBA North in Liverpool from the end of March to the end of May, and we'll review it shortly. He's previously published his studies into the postwar period through the medium of professional journals.

Research groups based in the school cover architectural and urban history, acoustics, sustainability, Arabian and Indian architecture, heritage and the intersection of architecture and contemporary visual arts.

Why would students and staff choose Liverpool University rather than any of the other schools in the UK, I ask? 'It's Liverpool – it's a very special place,' he says. 'Most of our projects are set in the city, we use it as a lab. We're culturally diverse and we've grown a lot over the past six years. And in the first year you get two full tutorial days a week, so it's quite intense hand-holding.'

Schmiedeknecht reckons that on a scale from purely vocational to mostly theoretical, his school sits bang in the middle. Students are introduced to theory and ideas – indeed it offers a separate design studies course for those who prefer that to designing for themselves, and students wanting that usually transfer after their first year. A typical first year would be 120-130 students, doubling in the second when the China cohort arrives. Each student is assigned one of the four large design studios to work in. For the MArch course, where numbers are much lower, they are also introduced to the idea of practice through group working. This was a Dunster innovation. Fourth years do half their work in groups in this way. 'That's an incredible preparation for practice – we have a very good employment record.' And in the

MArch students are introduced to practice through group working

Most of our projects are set in the city, and the first year has two tutorial days a week

fifth year the design module gets the benefit of the visiting professors.

But back to that competition, which sprang from a broader masterplan for the whole university. Driven by senior lecturer Marco Iuliano, it is to reorganise the school as well as add a new building. Head of school Soumyen Bandyopadhyay is on the competition committee along with Iuliano and visiting professor Nicholas Ray plus faculty and estates heads. From a longlist of 18 they're now at shortlist stage: those involved are top drawer (though none from Liverpool): Carmody Groarke, 6a, Grafton, Haworth Tompkins, O'Donnell & Tuomey and Eric Parry Architects. The judges are pretty top-drawer also: Kenneth Frampton as chair, Michael Wilford, Juhani Pallasmaa and Maria Balshaw, director of Tate. So what was left for the students to do?

Fifth-year student Alice Bufton says that the involvement of the students is both real and valuable. 'First a group of us were chosen to present the work of all 18 to the school,



Above Project set in Hamburg by Ian Ritchie for MArch final year – *Crafting Identity. An Expression of Identity through collective and individual craftsmanship.* By students Tringa Kelmendi, Alice Pulley-Dumonde, Rachel James.

Below Deputy head Torsten Schmiedeknecht (right) in the well-equipped workshops.



who then voted. Then a month later 18 was whittled down to nine, finally it came down to a very strong list of six. Last week all six practices came to visit the school in person, together. They invited about 20 students from all the years including PhD students. We all sat down together and had a conversation, told them about the school, answered questions. A few of them stayed behind to chat to us one on one. It was great because you don't usually get to meet these well-known architects and we could also discuss it across the years.'

It's notable that all those shortlisted have a strong craft aesthetic. Having stayed with the school since the first year, Bufton knows it better than most. 'The school is a reflection of the city,' she says. 'It's a humble place, it doesn't have an elitist attitude, more of a family feel. It's about making good honest architecture. The people who go to Liverpool have that kind of mindset.' ●

METRICS

Students Part 1 633

Students Part 2 88

Studio floor area 3,157m²

(4.37m² per student including pin-up space)

Workshop areas 618m²

Studio opening times 24hr access

Tutors per student:

Tutors per undergrad student 1:12 max

Tutors per MArch 1:12 max

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Spanning Suburbia

Who doesn't love a suburban home? Our competition invites architects to rethink the typology for the 21st century

Suburbia, that early 20th century typology, still holds a fascination for the architect, despite the rise of the larger metropolis and megalopolis. Even in our modern world, the aspirational middle-class values it embodies retain their draw. History has charted suburbia as a battleground for artistic movements – from Mod to punk and now bedroom-generated electronic music; and that's tracked by competing architectural styles: arts and crafts, neo-vernacular, modernism... even post-modernism.

Now we are asking architects to rethink suburbia with a design for a one-off house which expresses the needs and aspirations of its occupants and is highly creative with a wide range of lintel features. These styles have stood the test of time. From the first inter-war estate housing to the rise of the archetypal 1950s semi-through to the toy-town developments of the 80s that characterised the free-market expansionism of Thatcher's Britain, the utilitarian nature, flexibility and potential for expansion of suburban housing endured.

With such potential for the individual to put their stamp on their home over its long life, the suburban house reflects the lives of its occupants. Mass-produced by default, over time it embodies the potential to express its owners' taste in the most curious ways – a kind of architecture without architects.

Inspired by this our competition, Spanning Suburbia, in conjunction with the UK's largest steel lintel manufacturer, IG Lintels, invites architects to offer us their own vision with a design for a 21st century suburban family villa – whatever that might constitute; perhaps non-nuclear, online, atomised! ●



Above In Chestnut Hill suburb, Philadelphia, Robert Venturi's 1964 Vanna Venturi House.

Below One of IG Lintels' Bullseye Feature on a house at Potter's Hill near Bristol, UK.



CRITERIA The main construction material should be traditional brick or block, and the main structural support for its features should be the steel lintel. Each entry must incorporate at least three of the following features in their designs (entrants will be provided with weblinks to IG Lintels technical product information and technical telephone support will be available):

- Gothic arch
- Parabolic arch
- Bullseye window
- Apex arch
- Segmental arch
- Semi-circular arch
- Sun lounge
- Corner windows
- Square bay windows
- Splayed bay windows
- Glazed apexes
- Brick feature details

Using these lintels, our challenge to you is to create a home that meets the needs of its contemporary occupants; which can be minimalist or highly decorative; restrained or exuberant. Whatever the formal language, thermal comfort and efficiency is a key consideration. Rooms may be functional but must include an abundance of natural light and decorative features.

THE SITE Entrants are at liberty to pick their suburban site – but we will want to see evidence of it – as the building will have to respond to the context you have decided on. Why did your fictional residents choose the site?

JUDGING Judges will be looking for a winning design that is highly creative in its employment of a wide range of lintel features, and which joyfully expresses the needs or aspirations of its occupants. It should be energy efficient, it may be innovative or playful. The winner will be the design that best embodies the utility, contingency, personality and joy that the best suburban homes can manifest.

SUBMISSIONS Entries must include the following and be laid out on no more than two A3 sheets, supplied electronically as pdfs:

- Site plan and critical images of the chosen site
- Plans of the villa, including north point
- Elevations and a key section
- Axonometric or 3D visualisation showing lintel construction methodology
- Optional supplementary images you consider helpful

PRIZES There will be a cash prize of £2000 for the winner and £500 for each of the three commended entries. Winning entries will be published in the September 2019 issue of the RIBA J.

ENTER HERE ribaj.com/spanningsuburbiacompetition

Deadline for entry: 14 May 2019

Entry support: info@iglintels.com

Further information: iglintels.com/special-lintels



Design, construction
& technology

Testament of youth

Rising number of local
student enrolments bodes
well for UK profession

Below Staff and students from
architecture and the built environment
at UWE (Bristol), which now tops the
table for numbers of full time first-
degree architecture students.

Brian Green

The number of new full-time first-year students from the UK starting first-degree courses in architecture in UK institutions has risen by almost a fifth since 2012. Numbers enrolling in the academic year 2017/18 topped the levels hit in the peak years of 2008 and 2009.

There were fewer part-time starters in 2017/18, so the overall number of first-degree new starters has a smidgeon to climb before setting a new record (see overleaf). But the pattern of strong growth seems established. For now, at least.

More importantly, the number of young UK citizens embarking on architecture degrees is about double what it was in 2000. This promises a bigger injection of new blood into the profession over the next few years.

According to data from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), in the 2017/18 academic year there were almost 25,000 architecture students in the UK, of whom almost a third were from overseas. The numbers show

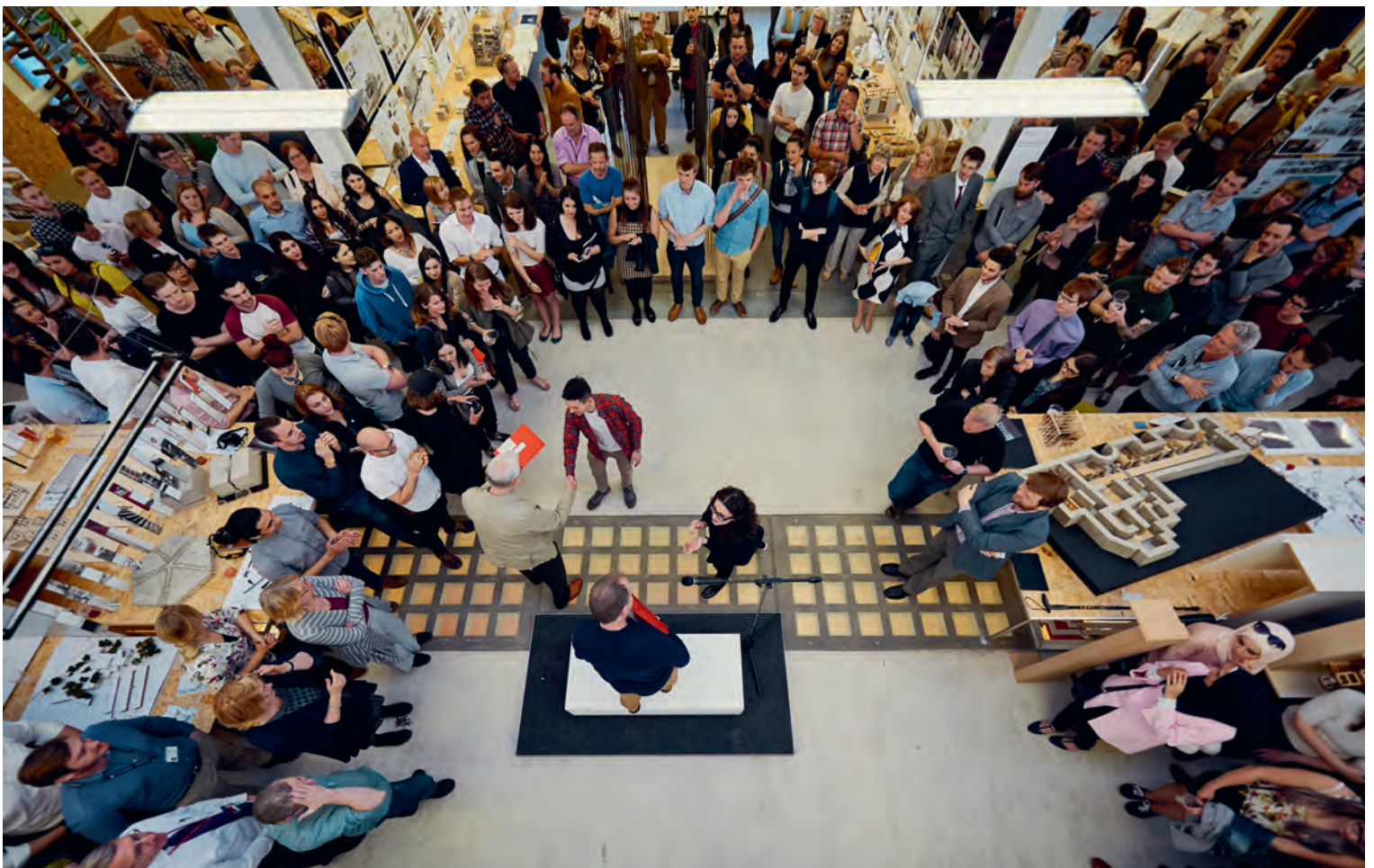
almost 16,400 first-degree students, more than 7,300 post-grads and 1,200 or so other undergraduates studying architecture.

Set that 25,000 against the 41,200 ARB-registered architects and the potential supply of new recruits into the profession looks reasonably sound, even allowing for those who drop out or who take their skills elsewhere.

The rise in number in recent years shadows rising activity in the construction industry and thus in work for architects.

Put the economic and student data together and they suggest that a fall in construction, and consequently architecture, workload isn't a great incentive for would-be students of architecture living in the UK. The second chart overleaf tracks the change in UK-domiciled student starters with changes in construction and architectural & engineering activity – which, although much wider than architecture alone, is a reasonable indicator of work in construction-related professions.

The long-term trend in architectural activity is very much upward, as its share of the



UK economy grows, and provides a strong case for increasing numbers of students. Interestingly, though, while construction's share of the UK economy is flat over the long term, its short-term volatility does seem to have a big influence on the more immediate trends in the numbers enrolling on architecture degree courses.

The great news is that the long-term need for architects, and therefore students, seems well established.

UK's academic institutions have increasingly become beacons for overseas students, receiving a huge boost more recently on the back of an expanding middle-class in China. In 2017/18 China accounted for 31% of first-year non-UK domiciled students.

The overseas proportion of full-time first-degree architecture courses is a shade under 30%, having grown steadily. However, growth is coming from outside the EU nations, which is not surprising given the influence of China. The number of overseas students from the EU has flatlined over this decade.

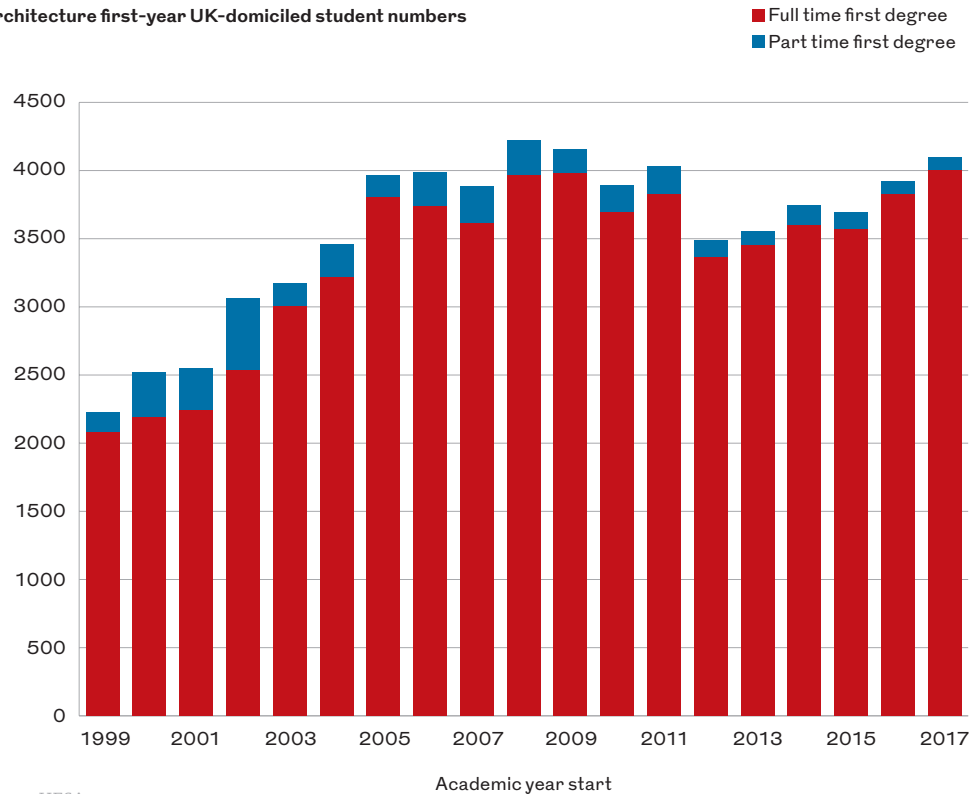
More than half of full-time post-graduate students in architecture are from overseas, though the proportion drops to 40% if part-time students, who predominantly live permanently in the UK, are added in. This undoubtedly marks the UK as a well-established and highly regarded seat of learning in the discipline.

Progress is being made towards gender balance, at least in the run-up to entering employment. Parity between male and female student numbers is within a hair's breadth. Ten years ago, women made up below 40% of full-time architecture undergraduates in UK institutions. In 2000 it was about a third.

Although it is in no way inevitable, the trend points to a period where the balance in numbers of students may well shift in favour of women. How this will impact on the workplace, however, is a very different matter. But the cultural assumptions of young architects making their way into work will be very different.

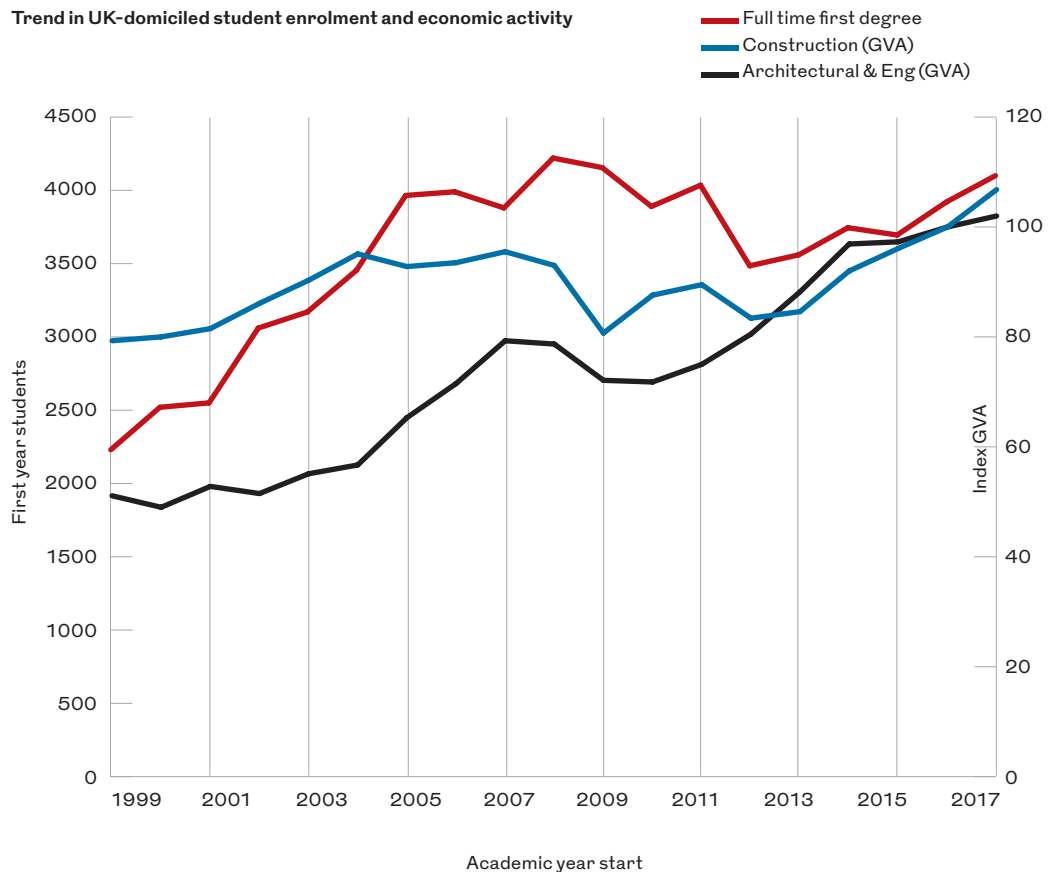
Leaving aside broader attitudinal change within society, it seems reasonable to assume

Architecture first-year UK-domiciled student numbers



Source: HESA
Note: UK domiciled.

Trend in UK-domiciled student enrolment and economic activity



Source: HESA, ONS

Male and female student
numbers are almost equal



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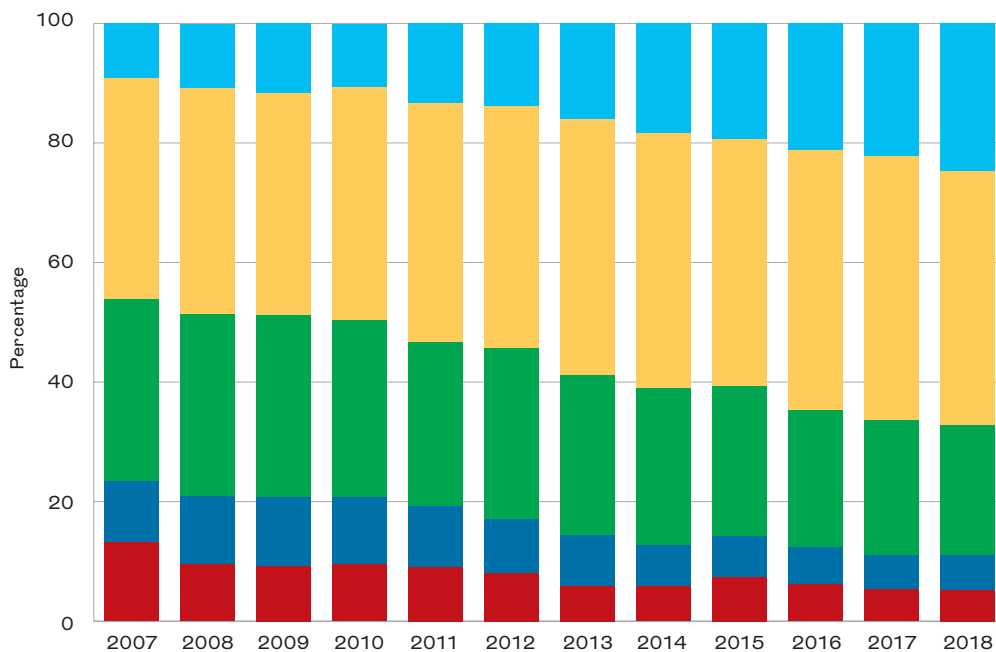
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Class of first degree awarded in architecture



Source: HESA

■ Unclassified ■ Third class ■ Lower second ■ Upper second ■ First class

that studying in an environment where genders are broadly equal in number (as opposed to two-to-one in favour of men as it was before 2000) will influence attitudes to parity in the workplace.

One issue that has caused a general level of anxiety is that of grade inflation, and it seems architecture is not unaffected. Both the number and the proportion of firsts being attained by students of architecture is rising fast. The share of first-class honours degrees awarded has more than doubled over a decade. In 2007 students were more likely to fail than get a first, in 2018 the outcome was 24.7% firsts and 5.2% unclassified.

More than two-thirds of students sitting architecture degrees in 2018 ended up with a first or upper second, compared with less than half 10 years earlier. Firsts and upper seconds now account for 70% of passes.

For those architecture students sitting finals, London remained the most likely location out of the regions and devolved nations of the UK. A shade under 18% of full-time first-degree architecture students were studying there in the academic year of 2017/18. That is pretty much the same share as five years earlier.

The average share of full-time first-degree architecture students by region is shown right. The numbers can bounce about a bit

Grade inflation is affecting architecture too – the number and proportion of firsts is rising fast

year to year, so we have taken the latest two years 2016/18 and compared those figures with the two academic years 2012/14. The region that seems to have been most expanding its base of budding architects is the South West, which accounts for about half the UK growth in architecture students.

This is largely down to a big expansion in enrolment at the University of the West of England, on the outskirts of Bristol. It now tops the table for full-time first-degree architecture students, according to the HESA data.

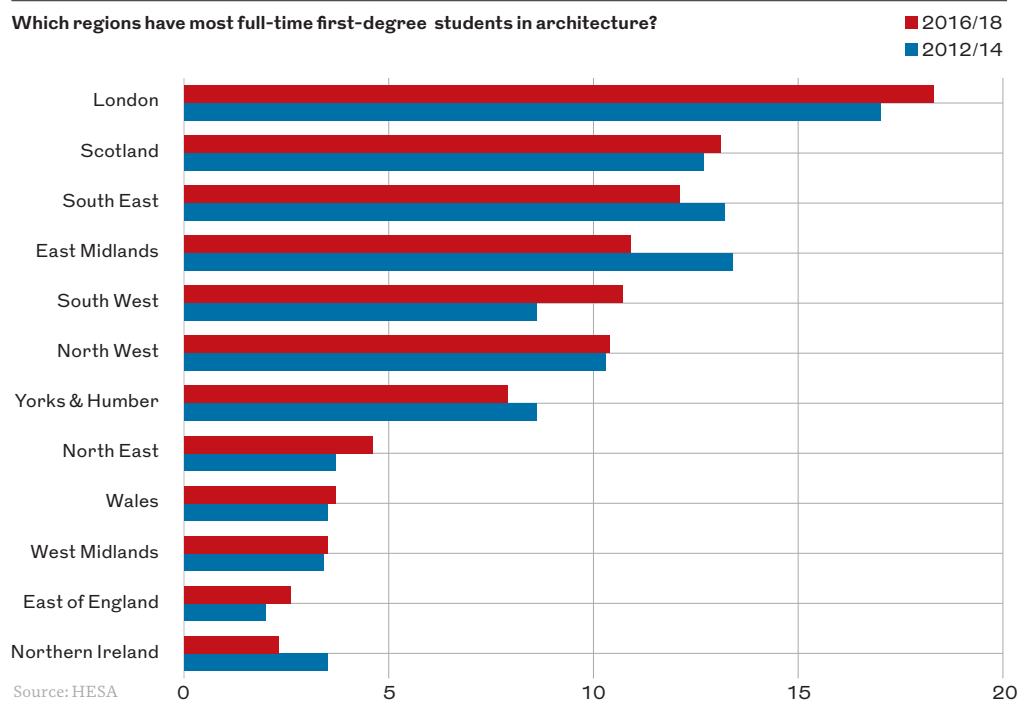
When it comes to postgraduates, however, UCL comes out head and shoulders above other institutions with around 1,200 postgrads, of whom more than 1,000 are full-time.

Naturally the boost to our academic institutions from overseas students and the internationalist perspective so common in the world of architecture appear vulnerable to both Brexit and the wider anti-globalist populism that appears to support it. This may lead many to view the current numbers with some concern. And, it is hard to judge simply from the figures what the latest higher education data really mean for the future of architecture in the UK, or globally for that matter.

Ultimately the outpourings from universities are just people, with all their fortes, foibles and fancies. But judged solely on the data, there are many reasons to be optimistic. ●

A fuller version of this article appears on ribaj.com

Which regions have most full-time first-degree students in architecture?



Source: HESA



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Robotics in architecture — the future today

Should construction change to enable automation? Expert panel at Knauf argues for change

The construction industry must modernise or die. That was the conclusion of Mark Farmer's 2016 review of the UK construction labour model. It is not difficult to understand how he reached that conclusion given the construction industry's ageing workforce, looming skills shortage and its poor levels of productivity.

Farmer said: 'The real ticking "time bomb" is that of the industry's workforce size and demographic.' In the document he warned that the age of the existing workforce and current levels of new entrants could result in 'a 20-25% decline in the available labour force within a decade'.

Construction is a big industry; it is also a very conservative one. While technological change and innovation are proceeding at a phenomenal pace in wider society, there are concerns that unless the industry starts to embrace innovative ways of working, it will miss the greatest single opportunity to improve productivity and offset the implications of its shrinking workforce.

Failing to embrace change will also further marginalise the industry by making it less attractive to a new generation of workers who will have grown up in a digital world.

Government too is keen for the industry to evolve in order to achieve better value for money and to speed the time taken to deliver its assets. Its strategy was set out in the document Construction 2025, which includes the aims for construction to deliver:

- a 33% reduction in both the initial cost of construction and the whole life cost of assets (from 2010 levels); and
- a 50% reduction in the overall time from inception to completion for new build and refurbished assets (based on 2013 standards).

Future proofing the construction industry is an essential part of business



at Knauf. Rather than simply focusing on the here and now, taking a more holistic approach to product design and manufacture could be the catalyst to unlocking technologies that might revolutionise the construction process. This also applies to architecture.

One way to transform the industry could be robotics. Robots have transformed the automotive industry, reforming both quality and productivity; could they hold the key to the transformation of construction? To find out, Knauf, the UK's leading manufacturer of lightweight building materials and systems, hosted a Robotics in Architecture panel event at its Clerkenwell showroom in London.

The event, in January, brought together leaders from the robotics and technology community with experts from architecture and construction to discuss the applications and implications of robotics in the industry. The speakers were Sebastian Andraos, co-founder and vice president of Human-Machine Interactions at HAL Robotics; Eva Magnisali, founding director of DataForm Lab; and Dale Sinclair, director of technical practice at AECOM.

Above Panellist, Eva Magnisali is a registered architect, engineer and founding director of Dataform Lab.

Above right Real-time vocal control and programming language designed for natural human-machine collaboration.

Instead of using new technologies in order to reinvent the construction processes most of the time we use them to substitute already known processes, so we don't take advantage of their full potential

Sebastian Andraos, HAL Robotics



Although there were no finite answers offered at the event a few common themes could be seen throughout. One of these was the way that robotics is currently looked at and utilised in the built environment. Sebastian Andraos argued that robotics is being used to service out of date methods when really construction should change to meet automation.

This was a belief backed up by Dale Sinclair, who stated: 'We should be reinventing the bricks and materials used in construction and architecture. That's what we should be doing. We shouldn't be using a robot to take a material designed for the human hand and expect it to work. Let's think about how to manufacture and assemble buildings and products in the future that will help to prime the way that we build going forward.'

The subject of offsite was debated and the general agreement was that this is where robotics will come to the forefront; automation can be used to do jobs and tasked deemed monotonous or dangerous for humans. Using robotics in this way is something that Knauf sees in the not so distant future to help alleviate the lack of skilled labour.

'Offsite construction is carried out in a factory environment so there is a greater element of control and the quality of product can be improved,' said Paul Tollervey, head of technical UK & Ireland, Knauf.

'Robotics can have an influence on this as the traditional construction site does

not lend itself to an autonomous or robotic way of working. However, looking at offsite there is much more scope for robots to take over monotonous or dangerous tasks that can be carried out with greater consistency, speed and with a greater element of safety.'

DataForm's Magnisali raised the point that it is not only at the build level where automation is important but also at the start of the whole construction process.

'There are several reasons construction is constrained,' she said. 'First of all there are too many people involved in one single project and it can be hard to coordinate. But most importantly it is down to the fact that data is being lost during this coordination. So even if we start with BIM in design, several sub-contractors may not support this data so we end up back at analogue and manual process.'

It was her belief that all systems have

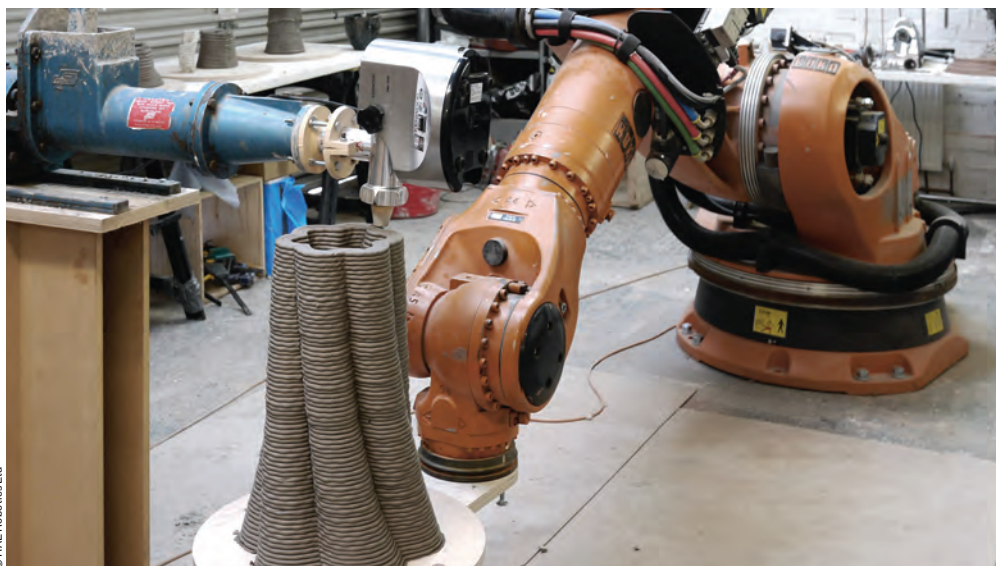
We should be reinventing the bricks and materials used in construction and architecture

Dale Sinclair, AECOM

to be automated and that the loss of data in projects is more damaging than human error on site, slowing down the process even before ground is broken.

The introduction of new robots in architecture will change the distribution of jobs in the sector, but not necessarily to the detriment of all workers: many jobs in construction are dirty and dangerous and often dull too.

Robots could free up workers to be retrained for more challenging, complex or creative jobs. The design, manufacture and commissioning and supervision and maintenance of robots will create a new industry. ●



Above Multi-robot steam bending of timber elements with 6-IR camera-based real-time trajectory compensation.
Above right : Multi-robot steam bending of timber elements with 6-IR camera-based real-time.

Knauf helps deliver innovative solution to housing shortage

Has ZedFactory's LivShare affordable housing unit cracked the search for the perfect modular build system?

With the housebuilding target of around 300,000 new homes a year, significant advances need to be made to get anywhere near achieving that. Modular construction was highlighted in the 2016 Farmer Report as a key solution to the housing crisis, with Mark Farmer insisting the construction industry must modernise or die.

There have been several attempts at crafting the perfect modular build system and the latest effort by ZedFactory may have cracked it. Not only is the system quick to build in factory conditions, it is easily transported to site and installed. The best part is that it's affordable.

Principal at ZedFactory, architect Bill Dunster, has designed its LivShare modular units to provide affordable accommodation for young people as a first home away from home option. The units are designed to be built very fast – the prototype went up within two weeks at a sixth form college in Essex.

The inspiration for LivShare came from Bill's frustration at seeing some local councils propose to address their housing shortage by using shipping containers, which are not only narrow but have poor longevity.

'We wanted to show that local people could solve their own housing problems without having to live in shipping containers or all of these short life temporary solutions which will just need replacing every 20 years,' Bill explains.

In contrast, LivShare is an affordable, permanent and high-quality housing solution which can be erected quickly. The house is also extremely sustainable and can deliver zero net annual energy bills.

'We are trying to make it easy for people to have very durable prefabricated homes and what's nice about the LivShare system is that they are not flat roof boxes,



Above Several attempts have been made at modular build systems, this is the latest effort from ZedFactory showcased at FutureBuild 2019.

they have the right angle for solar, they have got building integrated photovoltaics, very high levels of insulation, excellent air tightness, triple glazing and heat recovery ventilation,' says Bill. 'It's the best specification that you can afford if you haven't got much money.'

The prototype isn't just designed to demonstrate a cost-efficient affordable housing solution however. Before its debut at Futurebuild, the house was constructed by some sixth-formers at South Essex College in Grays, helping the younger generation learn modern skills within construction and gain valuable experience which contributed to their work experience module.

Bill chose to specify Knauf GIFAfloor FHB because of its strength, durability and A1 fire rating. 'There is no question about the quality of the products supplied. Knauf GIFAfloor provides a strong floor deck laid directly on joists and was installed by students in half a day.'

Knauf GIFAfloor FHB is a high-density dry screed panel system which is able to span between joists. Its high thermal conductivity makes it ideal for using over underfloor heating systems and raised access floor systems alike. Knauf GIFAfloor is ready for foot traffic once the adhesive has set: an ideal solution when speed of build is essential, for example in offsite construction projects.

Knauf has recently partnered with the Modular & Portable Building Association (MPBA) to help make it easier for specifiers to find the quality solutions they need for projects which employ offsite construction methods.

'We couldn't do this demonstration project without the collaboration of all the supply chain,' Bill explains. 'The Knauf flooring was important to us because we wanted its thermal mass. We wanted the floor to be a self-finished material so if someone moved in with almost no money, they could literally just sand the floor and then seal it.'

'That's exactly what has happened, some sixth form students have installed the Knauf floor, sanded it and put on a couple of coats of water-based lacquer, job done. That is a really stable, durable and fireproof solution. If you want to tile it or put other finishes on it then you can, but



Above Knauf UK's GIFAfloor has been specified for use in the LivShare modular system by ZedFactory.

Above right GIFAfloor can be finished a number of ways, including simply sanding and coating with water-based lacquer.

what is exciting is that if you're trying to deliver affordable homes and you can't afford £2,000 for another floor finish, you don't need to.'

Immensely strong and versatile, Knauf GIFAfloor system is manufactured from natural gypsum based calcium sulphate and is ideal for raised floor areas requiring continuous or hard finishes such as stone or large format porcelain. This partial access raised floor system makes it possible to run services under the floor with ease.

Knauf GIFAfloor panel systems are designed to span, be it across pedestals, joists or acoustic battens at maximum 600mm centres, creating extremely strong and dimensionally stable floors over voids up to 1,200mm high. Due to the tongue and groove design the GIFAfloor system is flat and smooth once installed, with the added advantage that the joints will not track through the applied finish.

'We had Knauf's technical people come to site to work with our onsite team and the college students. They demonstrated and then off the students went and they laid the whole floor in one day,' Bill says.

The full LivShare modular system requires the right combination of materials and building practices to enable the construction of an affordable solution. Knauf's GIFAfloor proved to be the ideal answer for the flooring. LivShare demonstrates how Knauf helps to build for the world we live in, every day. ●



We wanted the floor to be a self-finished material so if someone moved in with almost no money, they could literally just sand the floor and then seal it

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3: Culture

Awards antidote

Have a look at the selection of smaller, non-London practices we tip as future winners – and cheer up



Hugh Pearman Editor

Let's be hopeful. Let's have fun. The news is almost unrelentingly awful, ominous or infuriating, surveys of architects' future work prospects are wobbly at best, who knows which way the economy will head in the next few months and years, good buildings are being demolished and bad ones being built BUT we've been this way before. All things must pass, to quote the simultaneously gloomiest and most optimistic Beatle when just 27.

It's in this spirit that we present our 'future winners' in this section: an antidote to the usual plethora of annual awards in which with unashamed subjectivity we select a clutch of smaller practices, none of them from London, go to see them, and tell you why we rate them.

There's something
about this lot that
commends them to
us and, we hope,
to you

The set-up here is that they may or may not have already started winning awards – most have – but we reckon they are all winners already. Obviously we could have chosen any number of others and our internal debate on this was lively. But there's something about this lot, their backgrounds and the places they have chosen to locate, that commends them to us and, we hope, to you. Find out about them from page 73.

Meanwhile, if you follow my mugshot's gaze back to the preceding Intelligence section, you'll see where such beginnings can lead: we sit down with Glenn Howells, founder of what was once a small London practice moved to Birmingham and now, much-garlanded, has a studio in the capital again as well, working on a national scale. Glenn has always combined a finely-honed architectural sense with a grasp of the business essentials that any practice needs to grow and flourish, and he shares his personally written firm's manifesto along with his working tips.

It's not necessary to grow, mind, if that's not your aim. There's enormous grace and social usefulness, not to mention personal satisfaction, in being a small market-town or rural practice, say, serving the needs of a local community, doing good work and leaving it at that. Any attempt to stick at the supposedly ideal number of people for a firm of architects (two? eight? 24? 48? Increasing multiples of those? Opinions vary) is doomed to fail. As a business architecture is generally just too lumpy to allow you that planning luxury though we all know small firms that seem to come close to equilibrium.

The traditional pattern of growth will always be with us – I'm surprised by how quickly some firms scale up – but in the end it's collaboration, clusters of like-minded architects joining forces when necessary, that perhaps offers the liveliest alternative future for the profession. Agility and low overheads will be key. Oh, and damn fine architecture. ●

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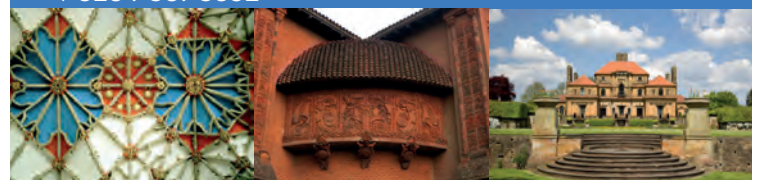
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Cuba heals its broken marvel

A happy ending looks to be in sight in the up and down saga of Havana's Art Schools



Oliver Wainwright

A contemporary dancer writhed spasmodically to and fro in a gallery of the Milan Triennale last month. Before you turn the page, this wasn't the usual architecture-meets-performance-art novelty. The dancer was Cuban, representing the country's first participation in the Triennale for 50 years, with an exhibition themed around one of its most remarkable, and remarkably abandoned, architectural works: the overgrown terracotta domed complex of the national ballet school.

It is topical because after decades of neglect and ruination, this revolutionary structure might finally be revived. The Getty Foundation has allocated funding for a conservation and management plan for the entire decaying National Art Schools site – five institutions devoted to the plastic arts, modern dance, drama, music and ballet on the outskirts of Havana.

I visited a few years ago and it felt like happening upon a lost world. After walking around the guarded perimeter fence of the 160-acre site, I finally found a gap to sneak through, and discovered an overgrown kingdom of great vaulted chambers linked by atmospheric winding passages, like the ruined palace of a forgotten civilisation. It was even stranger given that the buildings at the other side of the site were still up and running, seemingly inured to their cousin's fate.

The complex was the brainchild of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara who decided, at the end of a round of golf in 1961, to repurpose – Havana's exclusive country club as a tuition-free art school to serve a new generation of

'The aspiration was to create a project that would reflect the revolution in all in its dynamic aspects'

Below School of Ballet, Havana, progetto di Vittorio Garatti.



revolutionary artists and performers. They appointed Cuban architect Riccardo Porro, and two Italians he had worked with in Venezuela, Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti.

'The aspiration was to create a project that would reflect the revolution in all in its dynamic aspects,' said Garatti (the only surviving member of the trio, now aged 92) in a recent interview. 'No dogmas were imposed, there was a total freedom... Working in a park, we were immediately reminded of garden architecture: of love pavilions, of the 1,001 Nights, of English greenhouses, of the gardens of the Alhambra.'

The US embargo against Cuba, begun in 1960, made importing rebar and Portland cement prohibitively expensive, so the architects used locally-made brick and terracotta tiles, developing a system of Catalan vaults to create clusters of domed rooms. The bulging rooftops emerged from the undulating former golf course like great orange bosoms, crowned with pointed skylights (the allusion was no accident). It was like nothing the country had seen, an attempt to reinvent architecture as the revolution aspired to reinvent society.

But, by 1965, the project had fallen out of favour. It was decided that other buildings needed the resources more urgently, and political ideology had changed to support a more functionalist approach. The schools of ballet and music were left unfinished, engulfed by jungle over the following decades.

Over the last 20 years, awareness of the fragile marvel has been growing. The site was added to the World Monument Fund Watch List in 2000, and to the Unesco World Heritage Tentative List in 2003. More recently, Norman Foster was roped in by Cuban ballet dancer Carlos Acosta to imagine how the complex might be completed and transformed into a new centre for dance and culture. Their plans faced an immediate backlash, accused of privatising a national asset and the choice of architect jarring with the nature of the place.

Thankfully their project seems to have quietly fizzled away. Joining the Getty funding is a second grant from the Italian Agency for Development Co-operation, for the restoration, structural reinforcement and renovation of the theatre school. As the optimistic display in Milan attests, the future of this sinuous masonry marvel may finally be assured. ●

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

DRAMATIC EFFECT

The history of the Art Schools is so colourful that it could inspire a book, a movie or an opera – which it has, all three. Architect John Loomis wrote a book, *Revolution of Forms*, in 2011, which was then turned into a documentary film, *Unfinished Spaces*, in 2014, and provided the basis of an opera directed by Robert Wilson, staged in the site itself, as part of the 2015 Havana Biennial.

VITTORIO GARATTI, 1964. JOSE MOSQUERA LORENZO'S ARCHIVE



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Shadows in a Brexit mist

A few certainties hold as we feel our way through Brexit, and it's important that we hang onto them



Ben Derbyshire

The tyranny of the print deadline makes writing a piece about Brexit a month in advance a challenge. At the time of writing, we are just days away from the date we were repeatedly assured that the UK would leave the European Union, but the uncertainty continues.

This is not just damaging for business confidence. Brexit has become the densest of fogs, veiling the palpable and real concerns faced by people across the country – such as the housing crisis, crises of community, climate change and sustainability, and halting significant action from being taken by politicians and policy makers – who are by accident or design being taken away from thinking about the critical issues to play to the gallery on Brexit.

There are a few things that I do feel confident about stating, even at this uneasy juncture. First, it is important that we maintain a positive relationship with Europe. Many politicians on all sides of the debate have been keen to stress that leaving the EU does not amount to breaking off contact relationships with the Continent. If they are serious on this point, the quality of the conversation must get much, much better. We are all used

We need to ensure that our European colleagues want to stay in the UK

to having difficult conversations in our daily lives, and we mostly manage this without the sort of mud-slinging that we've seen in recent months. Neither the UK or EU will benefit from putting at risk our continued cultural and intellectual exchange, regardless of what is happening on the political stage.

Secondly, we need to ensure that our European colleagues want to stay in the UK. I have been told by European architects that they simply do not feel as welcome here as they did before the referendum. Anecdotal-ly, practices are raising the drop-off in applications from EU citizens. This is not an acceptable situation, and it is one that could be avoided if leaders stop getting so squeamish about having a sensible, evidence-led conversation about immigration.

Thirdly, politicians need to take a much more radical approach to the built environment in this country. Much of the conversation around the referendum centred on overburdened infrastructure and undervalued communities. I'm not sure how any politicians could look at you straight in the eye and tell you how this has been addressed in the subsequent years.

Architects, and the built environment sector, have a significant role to play in correcting the problems we see today – but only if the government is willing to step up. Greater public investment in housebuilding would also offset some of the uncertainty that we're likely to see entering the market in the coming months.

The RIBA is a broad church and members will have a range of opinions on the rights and wrongs of the various political actors in the Brexit debate. The RIBA will continue to lobby the government for the best outcomes for architects and provide you with the information and support you need, whatever the outcome. In a spirit of optimism, I hope that by the time this column reaches you, the fog will have cleared somewhat, and that the profession can get on with doing what it does best. ●

@ben_derbyshire president@riba.org

DISCIPLINARY SANCTION: SUSPENSION

On 29 January 2019 an RIBA Hearings Panel found Anthony Browne of London guilty of breaching Principles 1.1 and 1.2 of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct in that he used company money to pay a personal debt. The removal of this money meant that the company could not pay VAT, National Insurance, PAYE or company tax. As a result, HMRC was owed over £200,000 and Mr Browne disqualified from acting as a company director.

Mr Browne was found to have failed to act with impartiality, responsibility and/or truthfulness at all times in his professional and business activities. Further, he was found to have been influenced by his own self-interest. He was issued a suspension from RIBA membership for a period of two years. This is to run concurrently with the duration of the suspension imposed by the ARB on 12 June 2018. In addition, Mr Browne is required to complete 10 hours of supervised CPD training relating to company administration.

DISCIPLINARY SANCTION: PUBLIC REPRIMAND

Following a hearing before the Professional Conduct Committee on 13 December 2018, Derek Briscoe was deemed to have breached RIBA Byelaw 4.1 and the following provisions of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct: Principles: Principle 2.2, Principle 2.3, Principle 2.4 and Principle 2.5. He was found to have failed to adequately, if at all, make his clients aware of the likelihood of achieving their requirements and aspirations, and of failing to ensure his terms of appointment, the scope of works and essential project requirements were clear and recorded in writing. Additionally, he was found to have failed to adequately, if at all, keep his client informed of the project progress, to produce working drawings within the required time and to have been practising as an architect when he was not registered with the Architects Registration Board.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the RIBA's Disciplinary Procedures, the Committee issued Mr Briscoe with a Public Reprimand. In addition, the Hearing Panel directed him to provide a copy of his Terms of Appointment and complete targeted CPD training.

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Tomorrow is still engaging

Is This Tomorrow? at Whitechapel Gallery updates its impactful predecessor with explorations and questions

Pamela Buxton

'Strange, yes, but exciting and provocative'. That was the British Pathé news verdict for the famous 1956 exhibition *This is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Gallery, in which 12 architect-artist-designer teams created installations in response to the theme of tomorrow. Can the same be said of *Is This Tomorrow?*, the gallery's reboot of the show, in which 10 contemporary teams tackle the same theme?

It is certainly rather strange. Visitors find themselves channelled through animal control barriers, navigating a mini-maze of turnstiles, inhabiting a doll's house like museum, or simply enjoying spaces of contemplation.

At the 1956 show, there was no explanatory interpretation. Instead, visitors were 'spectators' responding to the exhibits. While this is similarly experiential, visitors at least have the assistance of the exhibition guide – which is just as well, as there is an awful lot going on that might otherwise be missed.

So why stage this exhibition now, 63 years later? Whitechapel director Iwona Blazwick felt current uncertainty about the future made it a good time to consider tomorrow again.

Unlike the original show, when the teams were readily formed thanks to pre-existing associations such as the Independent Group, teams in the 2019 version were match-made by chief curator Lydia Yee. There are far more



Above Borders
Inclusivity by Farshid Moussavi Architecture and Zineb Sedira considers the issue of free movement.

Is This Tomorrow? until 12 May 2019, Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX whitechapelgallery.org

Below Rana Begum and Marina Tabassum with their work *Phoenix Will Rise*.

'We're more likely to know animals' names than those of our own neighbours'



women and international participants.

And what do they make of the future theme? Do their responses reflect the very different times, when the sense of potential and opportunity of the 1950s has on the one hand been replaced with increased prosperity, but on the other is overshadowed by increasing concern over the environmental cost?

Although hardly optimistic, it is less apocalyptic than I expected. The exhibition gets off to a relatively playful start with the installation by architect 6a and artist Amalia Pica, drawing on ideas around global ecology and our relationship to nature and animals.

In *Enclosure*, visitors take imagined animals' perspective as they navigate a series of pens and runs that have been 'enriched' with entertainment for the animals – jumps for horses, scratching posts for cats, buoys for seals, or high-level carrot feeders for horses or giraffes. There's apparently a whole world of such products out there – even a teething toy for pigs. Pica imagines the environment as populated by a hybrid creature able to enjoy all the enrichment objects.

'We have an amazing interdependent relationship with animals,' says 6a's Stephanie Macdonald, saying we're more likely to know their names than those of our own neighbours. She hopes the installation, which uses architecture to explore relationships with animals, will be joyful yet pose critical questions.

COURTESY THE WHITECHAPEL GALLERY (2)

There are darker themes elsewhere. Spirits Roaming the Earth, by Andrés Jaque/Office for Political Innovation and Jacolby Satterwhite is an extraordinary black mound suggestive of fossil fuels and carbon. Within it, screens consider resource extraction and fracking in combination with gentrification, wealth, queerness and designer babies.

Cao Fei and Mono Office's totem-like I want to be the future looks at the relationship of people to technology. Farshid Moussavi and Zineb Sedira's cluster of security turnstiles and motion-triggered soundscape considers, says Yee, how the passage of people can be controlled but not their thoughts.

David Kohn Architects and Simon Fujiwara explore the idea of authenticity as a dwindling resource through their museum dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi painting. One person at a time may enter this intriguing installation, ducking down and popping up in a doll's-house like environment. It was inspired by a research trip to the Abu Dhabi Louvre by Kohn and Fujiwara in which the promised Salvator Mundi failed to materialise, and by the rise of immersive art experiences where the original artwork being celebrated is not itself present. Instead, it has become so branded that 'almost no humanity is left'. Is this, they ask, the pinnacle of what an artist can expect to achieve? Does it matter that the art isn't even there? Will the future be 'post-art' and 'post-architecture'?

In the Whitechapel piece, the imagined Salvator Mundi Experience includes an animation of the painting, a selfie station, auction room and a room dedicated to donations.

Apparata's Thugz Mansion collaboration with Hardeep Pandhal is a more visually striking piece – a construction site/ruin-like installation containing concrete benches where visitors can listen to Pandhal's music and contemplate societal issues. It considers what happens to architecture when political systems become outmoded. 'Can we construct a world more accepting of fluid identities?' asks Apparata's Nicholas Lobo Brennan.

There are some fascinating concepts. In Mind Garden, Heart Garden, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio and Mariana Castillo Deball uses time as a generator for architecture, more specifically a Mesoamerican ritual calendar which measures time in 20 months of 13 days. This generated the use of 2m long straps punctuated by 13 holes to suggest the walls and rooms of a house, the straps colour-coded



Above The Salvator Mundi Experience by Simon Fujiwara and David Kohn Architects presents a miniature museum for the Leonardo da Vinci painting housed in a building of sampled architecture.

Below Mind Garden, Heart Garden by Mariana Castillo Deball and Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, takes inspiration from a Mesoamerican 260 day ritual calendar.



to refer to different types of space.

These are moments of calm – Adjaye Associates and Kapwani Kiwanga have created the Sankofa pavilion from reflective dichroic glass sheets as a place for intimate conversation. The name refers to an Ashanti word for reaching into the past to guide your future.

Dhaka-based architect Marina Tabassum and London-based artist Rana Begum's contemplative space was appealing. The two found common ground in their shared Bangladeshi heritage, with Begum particularly taken by the manipulation of light in Tabassum's Bait-ur-Rouf mosque in Dhaka. 'From the ashes, hope will always arise,' says Tabassum, commenting on Bangladeshis' optimism.

Their Phoenix Will Rise installation, says Begum, is a place to bring people together in contemplation that plays with light, colour and geometry. In the centre of the room a deep circular void brings light into the space and is lined with a textural artwork by Begum. Created in aluminium foil, this appears as a three-dimensional landscape, its contours highlighted by vibrant spray painted colour.

Tabassum talks about the importance of a hopeful, rather than dark, negative view of the future: 'Tomorrow for us is hopeful'.

Is This Tomorrow? could never have the same impact as the seminal 1956 exhibition. But this collection of fruitful collaborations still gives plenty of food for thought. ●

COURTESY THE WHITECHAPEL GALLERY (2)



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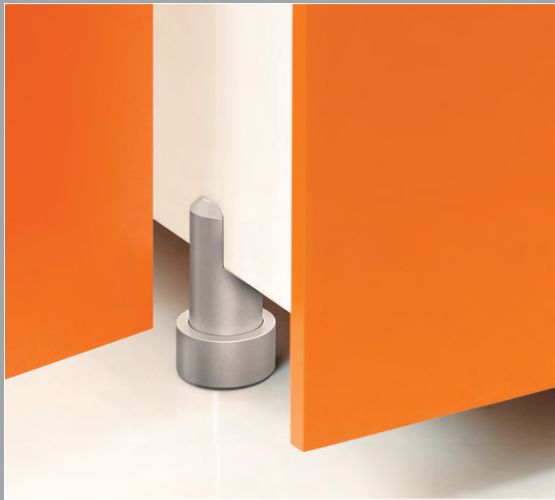
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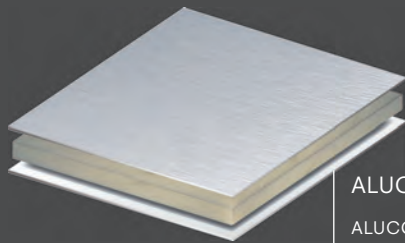
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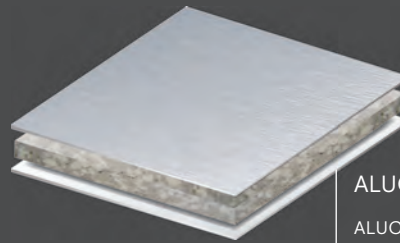
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Future winners



The practices featured here may not have won many awards yet, but they surely will. In April last year our awards aggregator issue RIBA Besties ranked architecture prize winners according to number and importance and threw up some predictable as well as more surprising names. This year, instead

of looking back we look ahead to introduce RIBA's Future Winners. In this special section, we take a spin from Edinburgh and Birmingham to Halifax, Carmarthen and Leominster, touring the regions to discover who is doing the most interesting work, sometimes in less likely locations, by unorthodox means. ●



Gagarin Studio

Thinking big is a winning approach for a Halifax practice that refuses to be constrained by being small

Words: Hugh Pearman
Portrait: Sarah Mason

Gayle Appleyard and Steve Gittner of Gagarin Studio see no reason why a small practice should think small just because it is regionally-based. A glance at the jobs recently completed or under way at the firm shows an impressive variation both in scale and type. This ranges from excellent domestic work – including a ‘Paragraph 79’ one-off moorland house – via a £4 million youth cultural centre and a complete mill conversion – to a sculptural 55m long Corten footbridge across the River Aire in Leeds, fabricated in Albania.

Everyone asks – why the name? I’m no exception, wondering what the eponymous Soviet cosmonaut, first man into space, has got to do with the mill town of Halifax where (among much else) they make Quality Street sweets. In case you think they inhabit some kind of retro-tech capsule equipped with

Above Gagarin Studio in Old Town Mills, Hebden Bridge. Left to right: Andrew Dent, Stephen Gittner, Patrick Cook, Gayle Appleyard, Chiara . And office dog Alan ‘Shep’ Shepard, also named after an astronaut.

Below Just installed, the firm’s sculptural Corten footbridge over the Aire in Leeds.



flashing push-buttons, they don’t: the studio is in a wing of a lofty stone-built listed Victorian schoolhouse-turned-workspace, Causey Hall, in the town’s central conservation area. No, the name turns out to be to do with launching yourself boldly into the unknown. ‘Gagarin has always been a hero,’ says Gittner. ‘It felt like a brave thing to do, setting up a small practice in a Northern town during a recession.’ That was six years ago, and they were pondering it around the 50th anniversary of Yuri’s first spaceflight in 1961. The world was still fighting its way out of the consequences of the financial crash. There is also a complicated bolted-on acronym in there – Gittner, Appleyard-Gittner, ARchitecture and INteriors – but let’s stick with Yuri, shall we?

Appleyard, RCA-trained and specialising in interiors, conversions and project management, cut her teeth working in London for a number of practices including Eva Jiricna, and set up her first firm, Red Apple, there. Later she turned more to teaching, and was senior lecturer at Leeds Met for a number of years. Now she’s firmly back in practice. Gittner’s London experience was with Powell Tuck Associates in London – lots of cultural,

SARAH MASON (2)

GAGARIN STUDIO

There's also a complicated acronym in there, but let's stick with Yuri, shall we?

workplace and high-end residential work there – and then as an associate with Studio-Baad in Hebden Bridge. Both of them have loads of experience in working with existing buildings which is, let's face it, the way forward at a time when we need to marshal our use of resources very carefully and make the most of existing embodied energy.

I'm looking forward to a chance to check out their Thorney Barn, completed late last autumn, overlooking the Luddenden Valley in West Yorkshire. It started out as a derelict barn and is now a muscular home designed down to every last detail. Some radical alterations and additions were required but the strength of the old building comes through. So far it has picked up a local award but I'd expect more. In contrast another house on the moors in a rural hamlet six miles from Halifax, this time all-new, is seeking planning permission under Para 79 for exceptional cases. Designed in detail, it is based on the precedent in the area of wealthy medieval 'yeoman clothier' houses 'The idea is that building a farmhouse in this setting isn't unusual – and the client is a farmer,' explains Appleyard.

Old Town Mills, on the other hand, is a classic conversion-and-newbuild job of a



Above Substantial new house made from previously derelict Thorney Lane Barn: the landscape the practice operates in.

Bottom left Latest project is this 'Para 79' house based on historic precedents of homes for yeoman clothiers.

Bottom right Gittner and Appleyard inspect Old Town Mill, residential project starting on site now.

former mid 19th century textile mill overlooking Hebden Bridge, achieved by working with a small-developer client under the eye of Historic England. The project will see 25 homes, five of them new-build, with other uses. It's an atmospherically derelict place and so – with an eye to the backdrop possibilities of their projects – the practice chose it as the location for its latest studio photoshoot in which the dog Shep takes a starring role.

The bridge over the Aire, with its concertina-like slats of faceted Corten, designed in collaboration with engineer DP2, is a very different kind of object which may well send the practice off in a new direction. Meanwhile its IOU arts venue in Halifax's Dean Clough mills complex attracted the attention of the British Construction Industry Award judges and it got to the finals of the cultural category. The Civic Trust Awards recognised its Orange Box Young People's Centre in Halifax – a very civic-minded urban move which Gittner started off as a StudioBaad project and completed as Gagarin. Summary: for a six-year old practice with five people, Gagarin Studio is already winning. ●





Konishi Gaffney



Above The timber fin structure of the firm's Bowhouse project on the Balcaskie estate in Fife's East Neuk.

Left Kieran Gaffney and Makiko Konishi.

Delicacy and restraint – of materials, design and their own image – guide this Edinburgh practice

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek

'As a firm, we want to be interesting, but not that interesting,' says Kieran Gaffney. It's a strange comment coming from one of Scotland's more notable design-led small practices, but once you have got under the skin of it, it's a theme that subtly resonates through its work. Edinburgh-based, even its office location talks of it; not ensconced in New Town's Georgian grandeur or tucked away in a medieval nook off the Royal Mile but far down Constitution Street in the port of Leith. Perhaps it's the three years he and Makiko Konishi spent in Japan bringing up a young family, but that osmotic deference permeates the pair's drawings too. As we talk they show me laptop SketchUp perspectives rendered in shades of grey, some hanging delicately in a frame of white, like a cobweb.

Konishi Gaffney set up back in Edinburgh

nine years ago. In that time it's developed a clientele skirting the polarity of aspirational domestic jobs on tight budgets and quietly affluent rural landowners wishing to make the most of their real estate. To both they bring an instinctive, analytical sense best characterised as homing in on one flourish or detail to generate simple, affecting work.

When asked about favourite projects, Gaffney talks details on cost-critical domestic work: an expanse of glazing flush to the stone face on the £23,000 Bath Street extension or a £120,000 job with thin, crisp steel eaves. Another is of steam bent timber slats that Gaffney, his brother and the project architect formed and fixed themselves. It shows they're not only prepared to get their hands dirty but they concentrate money where it yields most benefit. 'On the early small domestic stuff, we had to obsess about something,' says Gaffney. 'To focus on one thing and just run with it to a natural end – a bit like artists do.'

And in the firm's scaled-up, bigger budget commissions, this experimental blend of artistry with artisanal still comes through, along with the 'interesting' sensitivity he spoke of. At the £800,000 Lockerbie visitor centre for UK softwood supplier James Jones, the client wanted the architect to tread a fine line between flamboyance and utility for its corporate buyers. The result is a two-storey timber proposal linked by a glazed passage to the existing 'log cabin' site office. One face curves round and up, generating a complex roof form with a panoramic picture window looking out over the 14ha sawmill. With the



Top The James Jones visitor centre in Lockerbie with its quirky curved corner.

Below Edinburgh's Greyfriars Charteris Centre eschews stone for timber and Jesmonite.

Bottom left Timber model of Greyfriars Charteris' interior showing the first floor dedicated prayer space.

They bring an instinctive, analytical sense – homing in on one flourish or detail to generate simple, affecting work



'Edinburgh's a conservative city. You can't be too challenging'

Right Japanese influences on the Balcaskie estate's converted Comielaw steading. It reached the 2017 MacEwen Prize shortlist.

client providing all the spruce, larch and Douglas fir Konishi Gaffney wanted, the firm ran wild with timber. 'You'd usually run it at 400-600mm centres but we've taken it down to 175mm in places – it verges on too much' confesses Gaffney. It's all counterpointed with 0.5m thick 'T' joist walls rammed with wood pulp insulation. Indulgence blends with pared-back sustainability – and back to that client sensitivity: 'It's not just about the design but getting the restrained tone right.'

Edinburgh's Greyfriars Charteris Centre, a 1911 church turned multi-faith community hall, was an invited competition. Running against far more established Scottish practices, even Konishi Gaffney seemed surprised to have won. The £1.8 million project will see the church converted to be more accessible and function better, and a new 10m high annex will house the main reception, with a lift. Less 'annex' than lift core and narrow access corridor, the firm obsessed on this, flooding the tight, vertiginous timber structure with top light, eschewing baronial gothic red sandstone for a minimalist language of vertical structural timber fins.

'We're working with local artists on Jesmonite panels between the fins to see if we can make them ourselves,' Gaffney says nonchalantly. Neither views this as radical;

moreover, both seem baffled that the city council didn't run with them extrapolating the high-level arched window to ground to read their delicate first floor timber screen prayer space beyond it. 'Edinburgh's a conservative city,' Gaffney tells me innocently. 'You can't be too challenging.'

The couple met at Thomas Heatherwick's fledgling office in 2000, after Konishi had finished her degree in 3D design from Brighton and Gaffney his diploma at the Bartlett. They were the office's first romance – Heatherwick attended the wedding – and affection clearly endures. The designer spoke so highly of them at a 2012 Dundee V&A fundraising dinner that London and Scotland estate landowner Toby Anstruther commissioned them for the Comielaw steading, turning redundant farm buildings on his Balcaskie estate in Fife into work and leisure buildings, with added architecture.

Its most recent proposal, Balcaskie's Bowhouse project, is a structure of timber fins, is on a satisfyingly grander scale. The practice's 30m by 8m glasshouse showcases local cottage industries at work and links two old warehouses it converted to farmers' markets. It is the latest iteration of its minimalist, repeating timber fin approach.

Konishi was demurely present for most of

the interview but you can't help subliminally feeling that all this investigation into the nature of timber is driven by her Japanese roots. She recalls an affecting visit to Magome on the Nakasendo highland trail between Tokyo and Kyoto. Transposing its Edo-period timber vernacular to East Neuk in Fife, the 450mm fin module strikes a pleasing parallax effect between it and the warehouses' stone openings; the new structure by turns both revealing and hiding the original.

When asked what they took away from Heatherwick's office, Gaffney reflects a moment. He notes politically: 'I suppose it would be not to try too hard... maybe just relax a bit more.' But if Heatherwick proved frustrating at times, neither doubts his energy. 'He firmly believes in his own ideas and is charismatic enough to take everyone along with him and see them through,' adds Konishi.

They might need some of that resolve for the polo-shaped art gallery they're working on for a local philanthropist on a hillside overlooking Dunblane Cathedral. Set half in and half out of the slope, from the town-side you'll have to pop under its cantilever before you can pop into it. The client's consulting on it with the community now. Too 'interesting' for them? Only time will tell if Konishi Gaffney has finally jumped the shark. ●



SEAN DOOLEY



Left Konishi Gaffney personally fitted cladding on the steam-bent, timber-clad Pollokshaws Rd extension.

Right The office model of the Dunblane art gallery proposal.





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Intervention Architecture

Word of mouth – and social media – has proved a powerful marketing tool for this four-year-old firm

Words: Isabelle Priest
Portrait: Edward Moss

The smell of peroxide hangs in the air. We've nipped over to the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham from Anna Parker's office in grittier Digbeth by the Custard Factory. She's the founder of Intervention Architecture, which was only set up four years ago but very quickly started making a national impression. All around us women are having their hair coloured. Alan, a prim but very fashionable bulldog, is trotting around keeping clients company amid the noise of dryers blowing.

We're at Hazel + Hayden, the salon Intervention completed a year ago. The business has followed a similar trajectory to Parker's own. It started around the corner behind a tiny shopfront and now has 10 cutting chairs and eight employees. Intervention itself has, since 2015, gone from one-woman show in a co-working space to a five-strong practice

Above Intervention Architecture's director Anna Parker in the Hazel + Hayden hair salon she designed.

Below The Coach House micro formula could be repeated across Moseley.



and took the lease on the workspace next to its micro office two weeks ago. The builders will soon be knocking through – the marking tape for the joinery is already on the walls – and Parker is hoping to recruit more people as well.

In the salon there's a coffee counter, iPad browsing bench and a drinks bar. Parker was invited to take on the project, in a forgettable 1980s office, after the founder Dale found her Instagram feed. From the outside it is a bog-standard engineered red brick low block but inside the practice has stripped out the carpet tiles to reveal the concrete slab, ripped down the suspended foamboard ceilings and put in new ductwork and electrical service trays leaving them exposed to create an industrial look. The boutique pampering aspect is layered over the top with bespoke metal frame and timber top joinery, mirrors, pink paint and hanging plants. The space is bright, playful, deeply trendy and buzzing. It is also a great marketing device: hairdressers like to talk, and Parker has got a number of new clients from it – new homes and extensions.

'I didn't appreciate how important a hairdresser would be as a client,' explains Parker, who says word of mouth is one of the

Parker loves the joy of smaller projects



main ways Intervention gets its work. This isn't really a surprise as in person Parker is personable and low-key. You get the impression that she would nurture your small residential refurb's budget as much as the design. She also looks and sounds incredibly young; she is wearing a blouse with a cute cat-shaped collar showing her love of felines, and her voice is sugary and sweet, like the salon's design, but her achievements make you feel she should be older than she is.

Parker started Intervention Architecture aged 27 because she liked 'the joy of smaller projects – high quality extensions, residential projects and competitions', but saw no other means of doing them in Birmingham. 'There isn't the same small practice culture that you get in London, or Manchester and Liverpool.'

Her interest in this work had been building for some time. She is originally from near Telford in Shropshire and had worked at the Shrewsbury office of Aedas (now AHR) since the age of 18 while studying for parts 1 and 2 at the University of Manchester, but she spent her year out working at 5th Studio, then six or seven people, in King's Cross. After part 2 she returned to London to

Above Designs for the ground and first floors of Hazel + Hayden. It converts a 1980s office.

Below View across the High Contrast House extension. Its timber floorboards are pleasingly wide.



Threefold Architects, based at the time in Great Western Studios, where she enjoyed the mix of people from creative backgrounds and the sense of independent craftsmanship, which explains her interest in using and supporting local skills in Digbeth too.

For family reasons, she decided to move back to the Midlands and took a job at Glenn Howells working on a new headquarters for a glazing/cladding company in Cannock Chase called Wintech as well as a retirement home scheme for Pegasus Life in Wilmslow.

'Glenn was doing interesting things in the area and still is to some extent the strongest design voice here, but after a year I really missed that small practice type of work.' Parker decided the only way to get it was to do it herself.

'I had absolutely no money, dad's a teacher and mum's a nurse, I had no business experience, I just knew I wanted to do it and put everything into it,' she says. 'I have been quite lucky. I haven't had to look for work. There's a thread through every project. They are all linked in particular ways – it shows the importance of keeping good relations throughout a project.'

Personality counts. Intervention's first



client was the neighbour in the divided large Victorian house in Moseley where Parker was living at the time. The woman, a writer, wanted to split off the 3.8m wide piece of land which had a crumbling timber mechanic's shed on it next to her flat on the ground floor. The idea was to create a tiny live-work home with a little garden at the back for her to move into, and sell the flat. Parker got permission to rebuild the timber front and back in brick and raise the height to make a mezzanine bedroom under the roof pitch. The only condition was the project had to maintain the look of garage doors at the front.

It became known as The Coach House and for a first solo project that is relatively simple, materially and spatially, cheaply built and takes its cues largely from its context, it unexpectedly went viral online. Dezeen published it and the images made it into nearly every 'small is beautiful' type newspaper article going. It didn't win an RIBA Award (the feedback was that it is too small, as if that is not the point) but it is artfully done.

That project more or less led to everything else. Soon after another of Parker's neighbours commissioned her to design the interior of a new whisky bar that opened last year in the Jewellery Quarter, and now Intervention is doing the house next door. What is the explanation? It was the first of its kind, but looking at the red brick detached houses around the area there are opportunities for more.

Parker believes she couldn't have achieved the same amount of things in London had she stayed. The rents and overheads simply wouldn't have allowed it. Here the practice's office, which admittedly is basic, only costs £350 a month. In London a regular co-working spot would be £1,400. The other

thing is that Birmingham may be England's second city but it has a community feel. 'It's so supportive and friendly that you can get to know a network and everyone is rooting for you.' She points out that it is Europe's youngest city too, in terms of population, so many people are in the same boat starting out.

Birmingham does, however, have its drawbacks as a place for architecture. 'Sometimes,' Parker explains as we drive past the site of the former Victorian St Luke's Church which was demolished last year to make way for copy and paste developer homes, 'there's a too quick to lose approach'. That applies to modernist buildings too. The Signal Box, for example, her favourite building in the city centre, is the only remnant of that mid-century architecture left there. 'It's a shame to lose so many chunks of heritage.'

What's more, Parker believes the developer culture is not as community driven as it should be – quality and amenity lag behind. 'In the Jewellery Quarter the intention of having new housing is good but the execution is so obviously value engineered that it is impacting the details and craft of the historic nature of the area.' There is no input of affordable homes either.

Who does Parker blame? She won't really say, but thinks there has been a change of perception at the council recently that appre-

Her first solo project went viral online but didn't win an RIBA Award



Above left Whisky bar in the former café of the next-door Jewellery Quarter museum.

Above The project divided the space into three areas with the bar in the middle section.

ciates things have been missed or could have been improved. She doesn't, however, give the impression that she necessarily wants her practice to ultimately go into this kind of large-scale developer work. She would prefer to influence from the inside by providing a counter to it in design, building community engagement, continuing with teaching and lecturing (she was a tutor at Birmingham School of Architecture for four years), and by getting involved in the council's new design review panel, as she has been since September, where she is the only small practice member. She also sits on the RIBA's Small Practice group.

It's still hard work though. At the latest completed project, High Contrast House, also in Moseley, she had to have an argument with the conservation officer about pastiche.

So what next? From the whisky bar there is a wine bar. There's a rubber rendered home extension, two new houses in Tenbury Wells and countless others. The studio is so busy that it recently introduced a waiting list, which is running at three months for initial discussions and doesn't seem to be putting people off. Parker still does most of everything though – accounts, training, first meets and social media – on behalf of an even younger team still working mostly on laptops in the office. You can be sure that once the next project is complete it'll be creating a buzz on social media and along with everyone else you'll be liking it. ●

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Kate Darby Architects



Kate Darby interweaves many roles deep in Herefordshire's remote and ancient landscape

Words: Eleanor Young

Portrait: Paul Ligas

Kate Darby's career tells of a woman starting architecture late, taking time with her children, thinking deeply about her own voice and stumbling across it in a bramble-bound barn on the edge of an ancient common.

She came to prominence on the back of Croft Lodge Studio, an extreme salvage of a waterlogged outbuilding next to her home in Herefordshire. The conservation officer suggested the tumbledown building should be kept; Darby took him at his word and encased the crumbling plaster, rusty nails and all. Even the twists of the dead ivy are preserved; some perhaps holding together the lath and plaster she works alongside on her macbook.

She has been practising from this outer edge of architectural culture in Herefordshire for years. Having worked for small practice Gianni Botsford Architects she moved here from London with young children and David Connor, husband and sometime collaborator – as on Croft Lodge Studio. She kept her architecture work ticking over but now, with children having left home, she is plunging into it again. She works with Connor, whose firm designed shops for Vivienne Westwood and remains separate even while he sits each day alongside Kate Darby Architects. This consists of Darby, a part one assistant, the dog and the stove, all overlooking giant oaks and grubbing black pigs that forage on the common.

How does the small practice find and deliver work? In recent months bids have gone in with sympathetic practices cum friends at Architype or Mole Architects, though none has yet come off. Ex-boss Botsford is a good sounding board as they collaborate on their unit at the Welsh School of Architecture – each making the other just that little bit better. 'We hold one another to a vision,' she says.

Earthy concrete grows out of the land while agricultural black sheds perch on top of the flats

Architect Piers Taylor counts Darby as one of his number in Invisible Studio, a band of go-it-aloners who also like to work together.

A binding force for this disparate group is Studio in the Woods. Last year it was in Ruskin Land in the Wyre Forest, not far from Darby's studio. Each summer, over an intense weekend, groups gather to design and build their own timber structures. This year Darby commissioned a survey for the studios – of how millable the timber from once-coppiced oaks was. The resulting pavilions vary in shape and size. Three still stand six months on, alongside the muddy ruts of logging machines: a basket-style barricade of pegged branches, a structure of slats holding back saplings to allow a sunlit clearing in the shady forest and a tower of curving oak offcuts.

Ruskin Land started as a small master-planning project for Darby, looking at sites



Above New house, Herefordshire, 2019.

that house community activities and forest management. John Ruskin was given these acres in 1871 to build an ideal community. It never worked out but the land has taken on a life of its own for Darby as she steepers herself in its history and ecology. She has even brought her masters students here to build another marker for the land of its own timber, an oak grid designed around the path of the sun.

Trees, land and the sun make up Darby's context. On family land in the south of France, below a house where she has spent many sunny summers, she and Connor are designing around the landscape on a section newly zoned for development, trying to imagine double aspect flats that revel in place unlike their generic suburban neighbours. Earthy concrete grows out of the land while agricultural black sheds perch on top of the flats, a kind of rural penthouse. Darby hopes

Below Apartments, Frejus, France, 2019.



Darby is exploring how remaindered books can be stacked, stapled and coated with intumescent paint

to sell the land with designs to one of the circling developers and getting chance to design at a far larger scale en route.

There is a very practical, almost industrial edge to Darby's work. Her designs for a house for a writer, in Herefordshire, stack the modest rooms up a hill, stepping over the long track into the site. She is working through the construction, minimising concrete that would have to be driven along the track, re-using the stones from the existing ramshackle cottage, with variable widths of timber verticals above. There is one other, unusual material, requested by the client: remaindered books. Darby is exploring how they can be stacked, stapled and rendered class 0 with intumescent paint.

She is drawn to the agricultural and industrial, preferring local town Leominster's workaday industry and plastics factory to Ludlow's delis and prettiness. She toys with the idea of a studio on the industrial estate and dons boots over precisely belted trousers

Above On site with Prototype, Unit XV, MArch II students at Welsh School of Architecture, Wyre Forest, 2018, tutors Kate Darby and Gianni Botsford.

Below Quaker Meeting House, Ludlow, 2019.



to set out into the mud. The tough edge to her design is visible at Croft Lodge Studio where she and Connor specified local materials for a new vernacular, starting with steel. Here she used some of the nine steel fabricators in Leominster, where the corrugations of the cladding were pressed in and the steel welded.

At 54, Darby has a quiet assurance that now is her time to seriously make practice work. Her studio has inadvertently been a launchpad. Her concerns for the land, for making in all its forms, and piecing together likeminded individuals, seem to auger well for her. ●





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Rural Office



Niall Maxwell fights on all fronts from his office in Wales: building the practice and his home and testing all with his evolving philosophy

Words: Eleanor Young
Portrait: Gruffydd Thomas

'Then up on the mezzanine is the cwttch,' says Niall Maxwell, founder of Rural Office for Architecture, comfortably. I know cwttch from Welsh friends as a cuddle that encompasses embrace and cosiness. Now I know it is space too. Maxwell came to Carmarthen, the heart of Welsh speaking Wales, over 10 years ago. His boys speak both Welsh and English, and standing by a pool of concrete with Nigel the builder, he can pass muster in a discussion of the Six Nations. This Loughborough boy has become a cheerleader for Welsh regionalism – perhaps any regionalism – and is on the lookout for alternatives to the centrist forces of London on architecture and the economy, which are too often the same thing.

In the 10 days since his Skoda was last serviced, Maxwell has driven 1,200 miles –

Above Niall Maxwell of Rural Office for Architecture at his farm near Carmarthen, shifting a bundle of hazel sticks.

Below Inside the house at Alma Grange.



to Hereford, Aberystwyth, Aberaeron, and to speak in Chester. As he goes he studies the place. He has an instagram library of corrugated sheds, garages and outbuildings, including a real one on his own farmstead. And of pebbledash bungalows and McMansions. His own work is rooted in the vernacular of a time before builders' merchants and brickworks consolidation. Best known and hard to miss are the grand oast house volumes of Carling Wood clad in handmade clay tiles, which won the RIBA House of the Year in 2017, designed with James Macdonald Wright.

Other projects, on other budgets, are more sparing. Yes, they use different volumes to good effect and roofscapes are important – as you can see from the simple shapes used on the practice website. Lofty roof spaces enrich rooms. But ROA designs also tend towards protected and hidden outdoor spaces, though they are smaller, perhaps more liveable. The twists on materiality shine through at Galen, a new house in Aberaeron on Wales' west coast, even in its unfinished state: the rough white harling (aka pebbledash) is interspersed with arrow-beaded profiles of sweet chestnut, the reticent bead politely stopping short of the junction. A brick plinth

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Maxwell is drawn to more complex projects

grounds the building in dark herringbone.

Maxwell's last decade has been split between establishing his practice and rebuilding a farm in the hills with wife Helen, much with their own labour, around a young family. I first came across Maxwell in the early days when he was documenting this process as a blog – hefting up scattered mud stone, levelling land, building a simple volume for the family to camp out in comfort. Even now with a taped, watertight shell and builders working on the farmhouse, the pioneer spirit, and years of sacrifices made for a big idea, are etched into the family's story. Helen has limed tens of slates to hang on the house front and laid many metres of drystone walls.

At the farm the pieces of the plan have slowly come together, a grant funded office that lived out its time has become a games room, ready to be entrance hall, living and party room when the farmhouse is finally completed. A separate studio, built by the practice in a week from CNC ply, attests to one architecture experiment that won the Self Build on a Shoestring competition at Grand Designs Live before it proved a dead end, mired in warranties needed by lenders and the cut throat pricing of the garden office market.

And the fragments that make up practice appear, at last, to be coming together. From wanting simply to 'design', Maxwell has been increasingly drawn to these more complex projects, from the gathering place of oversized steps at Prince Charles Quay in

Above The living space of Galen in Aberaeron.

Below New interventions at Aeron Park, making the farm work better.

Cardigan to bright red interventions at Aeron Parc, Llangeitho, where sunny sheltered work space and a new entrance extension – all in a cheery russet – have made the whole place work far more smoothly. As a consultant to the Arts Council of Wales Maxwell has applied his way of working beyond the physical to organisational structures, as he analyses regional arts organisations around the country. Two ongoing projects are demanding that precise mix. At Aberystwyth University he is unpicking and restitching the catering and arts provision, asking



Maxwell is on the lookout for alternatives to the centrist forces of London on architecture and the economy

questions about who runs what and how, re-searching student habits. 'We are looking for fractional performance gains, like Bradley Wiggins and Team Sky, and then we apply them to building briefs,' he says. 'I now have to understand and enjoy the structure of organisations.' More locally, in Carmarthen, at he is looking at how the National Trust might make the best of the grand house of Dinefwr and its estate, with radical ideas of shifting the entrance that could make the whole proposition much clearer.

With around 25 projects ROA will expand from six to eight staff in the next few months, a big commitment when a new recruit has to uproot themselves and family and move. An office manager may be next. This is despite a difficult 2018 and the ever-present uncertainty about what is around the corner. 'We



At Aberystwyth University Maxwell is unpicking organisational as well as architectural design.

Below Prince Charles Quay, Cardigan. One of Rural Office for Architecture's early projects in Wales.



got no work from Caring Wood,' he says. 'Last year was the most challenging, and quieter after all the hubris.' Though Caring Wood's win has made it easier to recruit good people. 'Now the CVs we get are amazing,' Maxwell smiles.

Could the many little projects be converted to fewer higher value schemes? Maxwell sees this as a way to sanity but also to better projects. Here Carmarthen's S4C creative hub, for the local university and the Welsh language broadcaster, creeps in. It was won with BDP and completed last year but his thoughts are laced with regrets for the building that it almost was. He prefers to design with research and a slow build up of layers, with his subconscious working away quietly. Understand the constraints and the grid then leave them behind is a lesson he learnt from one-time Bartlett tutor Colin Fournier, and now comes as an occasional prompt from his wife. A current commission for a Japanese house in the mountains of Nagano Prefecture for a film director and family have given him the chance to do this sort of design. Underneath the everyday spreadsheets, recruiting and troubleshooting of busy practice, his thoughts of mountains, Steiner ideas and the Japanese tsubo measure as the design gestates are a murmur away. Let's hope such chances to be free with the design continue. ●

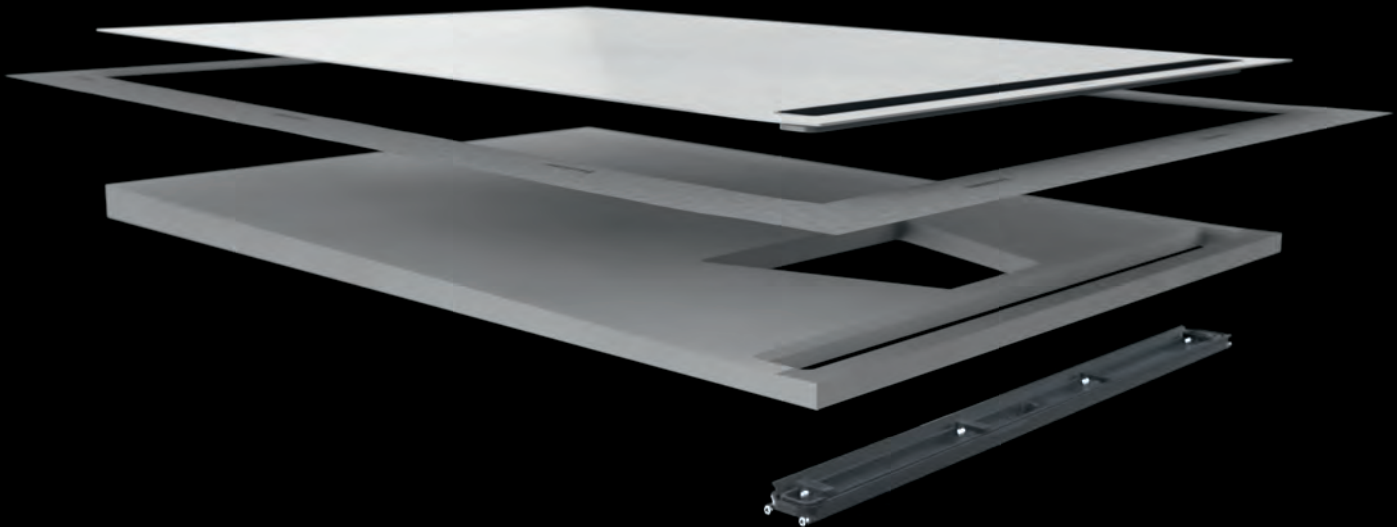
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Kevin Roche

1922 – 2019

Prolific designer and recipient of many prizes including the Pritzker, one half of Roche Dinkeloo, which developed and built on Eero Saarinen's legacy



Kevin Roche's life and career spanned an epoch of post-war American modernism in which he proved with great distinction that a celebrated personality-led firm of architects could successfully change direction following the death of its founder.

That founder was Eero Saarinen, and it was to his

small office in Detroit that the Irish-born Roche gravitated in 1950, aged 28. Saarinen himself, then 40, was still building his reputation so Roche's influence in the practice over the next decade – from 1954 as Saarinen's principal design associate – was key. Following Saarinen's unexpected death in 1961, he and the surviving partners John Dinkeloo and Joseph Lacy completed a dozen outstanding projects – among them Saarinen's great air terminals for TWA at Idlewild (later JFK) Airport and Dulles International, the astonishing St Louis Arch, the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center, Manhattan, and the Deere and Company headquarters in Moline, Illinois.

Roche Dinkeloo and Associates scored its first competition win in 1961: the Oakland Museum, remarkable for its ahead-of-its time 'green' roof. Over more than six decades thereafter, Roche's diverse body of work included eight museums, 38 institutional and corporate headquarters, seven research laboratories, performing arts centres, theatres and campus buildings for six universities. His more than 200 built projects can be found throughout the United States, Europe, India and Asia.

Eamonn Kevin Roche was born June 14, 1922 in Dublin, Ireland, and moved with his family in 1924 to Mitchelstown where his father Eamonn Roche, a noted Irish Republican organiser and political prisoner, became on his release general manager of the town's creamery. The youngest of three brothers (a sister died during child-

hood), Roche studied at the School of Architecture at University College Dublin from 1940 to 1945. While a student he designed several built projects for the Mitchelstown Creameries including the cheese warehouse and the piggeries.

After graduation, Roche worked for the pioneering modernist Michael Scott in Dublin – notably on the Busáras central bus station – and Maxwell Fry in London. He came to the United States in 1948 to continue post-graduate studies with Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology. In 1949, he worked on the United Nations Headquarters. Then came the move to Saarinen in Detroit, and later Roche Dinkeloo established itself in Hamden, Connecticut.

In New York City, his key projects include the Ford Foundation Headquarters, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, (where he developed the master plan and for nearly 50 years designed all the new wings), the Central Park Zoo, 60 Wall Street and the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Memorial to the Holocaust.

Roche brought a strongly geometric approach to his portfolio of corporate headquarters and college campuses. While many of the projects such as France's Bouygues headquarters, completed in 1988, represented some of the world's largest campuses, others were more intimate, such as the delicately realised Wesleyan University's Center for the Arts in Middletown, Connecticut.

An early Pritzker Prize winner in 1982 and an AIA Gold Medallist in 1993, Roche had seen his work exhibited in the MoMA as early as 1968. He was a member of both the RIAI and the RIBA, returning to Dublin to build the city's tilted-cylinder convention centre of 1998 – 2010, a carbon-neutral building.

Roche is survived by his wife of 55 years, Jane Clair Roche (née Tuohy), his five children Eamon, Paud, Denis, Anne and Alice, their spouses and his 15 grandchildren. In his Pritzker acceptance speech he said: 'To build well is an act of peace. Let us hope that it will not be in vain.' ●

Hugh Pearman

IN MEMORIAM

Bernard William Huggett
ELECTED 1946, SOUTH AFRICA

Edward Fielder Billson
ELECTED 1957, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Vivian Thomas Uku
ELECTED 1959, BENIN, NIGERIA

Martin John Birkett
ELECTED 1967, KENT

Timothy G Vaulkhard
ELECTED 1971, NAIROBI, KENYA

James John Hemming
ELECTED 1986, SHROPSHIRE

Natalie Emma Goulden
ELECTED 2015, MANCHESTER

Franc Dixon
ELECTED 1955, ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

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Exchange

Weighed in the balance

In reply to the editor's column 'Special delivery' on the supervision of architects' designs (March 2019), architects now practise in a very different world – business minded or artistically minded alone won't cut it. We usually have to combine both aspects to survive, but it is now a matter of balance. I exclude the established and the stars who can name their price – William Matthews' experience working with Renzo Piano (March 2019, p64) puts it well. But even the stars have bills to pay.

The key persons in the equation are the client, possibly the contractor and funder and perhaps the nature of the appointment.

If you can work with all the other members delivering the project and they want you to continue, that sounds fine – but do I want the hassle and fights that ensue? Will the project not be delivered as I would like? Is that even a reasonable aspiration? Should I walk away? Am I on a framework? Could this be a longer term relationship? Would I rather avoid the construction risks inherent in delivering the project?

Of course architects are excited by a win and have to maintain commitment to complete the project. If the prospect doesn't look appetising, then perhaps call it a day.

Simon Carne, London SW13

Broader view

So: William Matthews (Profile, March 2019) is not an architect and so not a member of the RIBA, his is not a chartered RIBA practice and the RIBA Journal is promoting him. What a great advert for the RIBA... not. Can you tell me why we should be members?

Robert Guy, Bristol, via Twitter

Editor's reply: The RIBA has never



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confined its coverage to RIBA members and practices only. The RIBA charter concerns not only the interests of its members but 'the general advancement of Civil Architecture'.

Broader mind

I am writing on International Women's Day 2019 and am working on a project to design a new cricket pavilion. Part of the brief is that it should be welcoming for everyone – specifically women (the funding is centralised and they are trying hard to support a successful women's cricket team). It was during an initial client meeting that the company director (middle aged, middle class, white) said: 'Well, we could paint it pink...' at this point I made it very clear that this is exactly the attitude which necessitates gender inclusive design, to which he retorted that his 'wife paints everything pink.'

With the RIBA attracting criticism for planning to celebrate IWD with cooking classes (reported in The Times, 6 March 2019) it is not just the institution but the whole profession that must reflect on itself.

G Charles Williams, by email

Curtain call

I was pleased to see Willis Polk's Hallidie Building in San Francisco featured as the Parting Shot in the RIBA December 2018 issue. Built in 1918 and now designated a 'historic monument', it is actually not, as is commonly thought, 'the first true example of the curtain-wall applied to a large urban structure'. This quote, which appears in Valeria Carullo's commentary, is attributed to Henry-Russell Hitchcock in *Architecture: 19th and 20th centuries*. An earlier curtain-wall building, the Boley Clothing Company Building, was built by Louis Singleton Curtiss in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1908. Did Willis Polk know this building? Possibly. His family had moved to Kansas City in 1885 and, as a young man, he had worked there briefly as an architect-builder before moving to New York and eventually California. Whether or not the Boley Building was a precedent for the Hallidie Building, Hitchcock is nevertheless incorrect in his assertion.

Neil Jackson

Liverpool University School of Architecture

The company director said: 'Well, we could paint it pink... my wife paints everything pink'

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RIBA COLLECTIONS

Kensal House London, 1937

Kensal House in London, designed in 1937 by a team of architects led by Edwin Maxwell Fry and social reformer Elizabeth Denby, was a pioneering social housing project in inter-war Britain. Among the photographs taken at its completion, one group stands out for its slightly unconventional approach – more akin to social documentary – the author was Austrian photographer Edith Tudor-Hart. Born Edith Suschitzky, she studied photography at the Bauhaus; her Jewish heritage, social activism and political leanings prompted her to leave her native Vienna for London in 1933, when she married British doctor Alex Tudor-Hart. In Britain she used the camera to document

social injustice, but also collaborated with architects such as Ernő Goldfinger and took photographs of the Isokon flats under construction. Tudor-Hart was an anti-fascist and clandestine member of the Communist party; her work was consequently blacklisted by the Ministry of Information and she was eventually forced to give up photography.

The contribution to British culture of refugees from Nazi Europe, including Edith Tudor-Hart, will be celebrated this year in the nationwide festival *Insiders/Outsiders* (see page 67). ●

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