



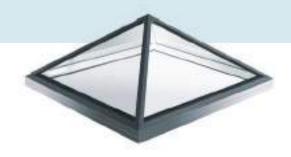
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**Buildings** 



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**Naturalis Biodiversity** Centre by Neutelings Riedijk, photographed by Scagliola Brakkee Fotografie

The methodology behind the technology is open source and available to all, unlike Vantablack, which Anish Kapoor purchased exclusive rights to in 2016

Black is blacker than ever, discovers Stephen Cousins: ribaj.com/evenblacker















Did you see your dream home in this issue? Or your dream colleague in Rising Stars? Tell us what you think: letters.ribaj@riba.org

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# as MACO

#### **Location of case study** Silver How, Llanhennock, Monmouthshire.

#### Project requirements

Redevelop the original Arts and Crafts stable building into a beautiful, welcoming family home, seamlessly blending old with new within the rural location.

#### The solution

A new glazed wall opening the house to the adjoining courtyard, ACO Brickslot gratings removing surface water along the step-free threshold.

#### Discreetly detailed

The mountains sit quietly with Grasmere village at their feet as people visit what is a former home of Wordsworth, ambling local routes as they have for hundreds of years, rewarded by expansive views across the lakes.

A modest fell in height, Silver How could be considered one of many in the Blea Rigg ridge. Were it not for Alfred Wainwrights Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fell that may have been the case. The new Silver How, like its namesake has a natural affinity to its setting. The house, demands quiet admiration, holding great confidence among its scenic Monmouthshire surrounds.



Silver How could have been just another house, but, as Wainwright afforded the mountain it's own chapter, the Arts and Crafts period stable has its own story. Simple ACO Brickslot gratings remove surface water along the discreet, level threshold which has been opened up with new glazing bringing the courtyard into a house developed with detail in mind.

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# 1: Buildings

The civic. It's about an overall sense of place as much as a municipal building, say, but in Croydon's case its fine late Victorian town hall has long been counterpointed by a postwar neighbour, the Fairfield Halls complex, opened in 1962 and still clearly very influenced by the Royal Festival Hall of more than a decade prior. It has now been comprehensively refurbished by architect MICA and will be the centrepiece of a remade town centre with a lot of new housing. Differently grand is our cover star, the

Naturalis museum in Leiden. Think we have difficulties with our public projects? You'll be amazed at the fistfight the Dutch got themselves into. But in the end, the sense of place is as much about the cumulative effect of lesser buildings. Like Peter Barber's new mansion block in Peckham where there used to be just a petrol station. Or Stuart Piercy's clever reworking of existing buildings in London's Spitalfields to make a new kind of workspace. Icons? Who needs them?

### **Below**Refurbished lighting at Fairfield Halls, Croydon, page 14.



#### **ONLY ON RIBAJ.COM**

Norwich councillor Gail Harris drew attention to the hostile environment in which councils are operating, battling with cuts and Right to Buy. Will the housing secretary, who was in the room, take heed?

Eleanor Young, at the Stirling Prize announcement, draws lessons from Goldsmith Street's win: ribaj.com/ stirling2019

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### Personal space

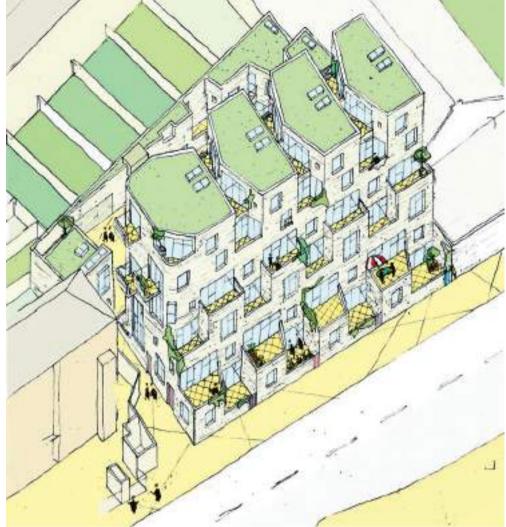
Individuality and sociability blend in designs that invite customisation in this typically imaginative project by Peter Barber Architects

Words: Hugh Pearman Photographs: Morley von Sternberg



The RIBA Journal November 2019 ribaj.com





It's remarkable how much space a petrol station takes up with its forecourt and ancillary structures. Enough space, on a busy road in Peckham, to build a block of 33 homes in an interpretation of the mansion block typology – a relatively complex mix of apartment, maisonette and house types and tenures ranging from full market price through shared ownership and affordable-rent to social rented. The moment you see it, you know it's a Peter Barber project. It's unmistakable. Few other architects have such a distinctive style.

Barber's projects, widely admired, may not be loved by everyone – they can sometimes be seen as over-complex or mannered, even whimsical. Having broken through to widespread acceptance he is starting to seem almost prolific, always a dangerous moment when people are inclined to start muttering about a repeated formula. But this is classy stuff, as anyone knows who gets to vet the often depressing standard of apartment-block design in the UK's cities today.

The steadily-evolving Barber approach has a joie-de-vivre. It embraces everyday life, delights in setting up places for people to encounter each other, values a very old-fashioned tight urban grain, and is totally relaxed about the residents modifying their homes and shared spaces to their own tastes, which

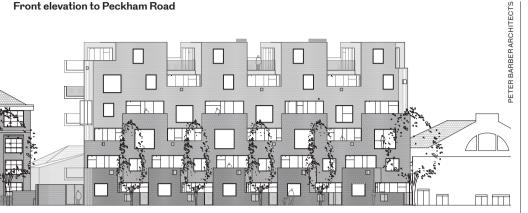
the practice sees as a form of enrichment.

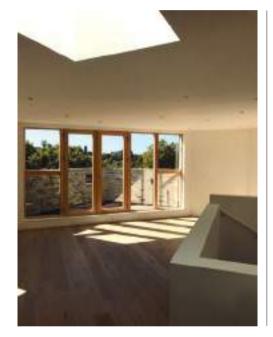
Although Barber first became known for social housing and homeless hostels – as his appearances in our MacEwen Award testify – 95 Peckham Road, also known as Peckham Mansions, comes from the private-developer side of the practice's work. They seem to strike a chord with the small developer-builders, often with awkward sites needing a higher level of design ingenuity than most, such as Moray Mews in Islington (RIBAJ, October 2017). His design approach is, therefore, market-tested.

Barber's co-director Phil Hamilton shows me round with colleagues from the studio who are meeting the developer – they have another, much bigger redbrick mews project of 97 homes, 50 per cent 'affordable', to do up in Barnet, right on the North Circular Road, part of the GLA's small sites programme. It's their third project with the firm, Kuropatwa, which acts as contractor as well as developer and sets up a design-and-build arrangement with, er, itself. It seems to work, and the skilled trades it has on its payroll bring down the overall costs to something Hamilton calls 'the low 2000s per square metre'.

Rather than turn its back on the main road, it addresses it directly with front doors to maisonettes behind little set-back front

#### Front elevation to Peckham Road





gardens: the main entrance to the other apartments is to the side. A gate guards the courtyard behind, and is overlooked especially by houses at each end, one freestanding and sunk half a floor to reduce its bulk.

The main block is a pragmatic affair of a four-floor walk-up section plus a six-floor section accessed by a lift and second stair. The various setbacks, cutouts and projecting balconies - some very deep - enliven the facades, making the intended theatrical framework for people's lives. Inside the set-up is tenure-blind: I could see very little difference between the finishes and fittings while the fact that almost every plan is different anyway, given the many non-orthogonal spaces, helps remove any them-and-us distinctions.

There are familiar Barber touches: gridded timber gates, projecting-box oriel win-



dows, flourishing sedum roofs, cream brick and brick slips, granite setts which run into the entrances. Stairways are tight and industrial-concrete in feel. There's a little look-out gazebo built into the tall existing back wall of the yard, which is secure and tough enough for children to play in.

Residents are moving in steadily. Balconies and terraces are just starting to be personalised. There will be clutter and chatter and chance meetings. Another Barber building is coming to life.



Above right Stairs are tight and industrial in feel, moulded from in situ concrete.

Above left Corner apartment living space with outdoor terrace. Left Rear courtyard with individual house to left. A thin wedge of leftover space at the rear becomes a raised gazebo and maintenance store. Sedum roofs throughout.

Credits Architect and landscape design Peter Barber Architects Developer client and contractor Kuropatwa Structural engineer Hall Davis Consulting Engineers Planning consultant DP9 M&E consultant Mendick Waring Approved inspector **Building Control Approval** Housing association Hexagon

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#### Juergen Teller Studio, London 2016

Photograph Johan Dehlin Words Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Looking like a modern-day version of Velázquez's Las Meninas crossed with a Japanese rendition of a Greek plate-smashing kefi night, there's no disputing a lot's going on here. Is the subject 6a's studio for photographer Juergen Teller, or is it four-piece Japanese psychedelic rock band Bo Ningen, extracting their weapons from builders' sacks dumped outside the just-completed building? Is it Juergen Teller, on the right in the blue T-shirt, his back to the viewer,

capturing their antics? Or, unseen, is it Johan Dehlin himself?

The Swedish-born photographer was also the building's project architect during its design stages from 2011-2013, when he returned to Stockholm to set up his own firm. His had been a good education. After a spell at OMA, where he worked under modelmaker/designer/photographer Frans Parthesius, he took a Masters at London Met with photographer David Grandorge. Dehlin was, perhaps unwittingly, all the while honing his fascination in the inextricable connection of architecture to scale, its image and the viewer.

Returning in 2016 to shoot the studio, he found it very much as he expected. Getting light in was a fundamental requirement for the 60m deep site and Teller had been open to the architect's desire for a garden courtyard separating the studio's public and private sides to help do that. He'd just leave an umbrella by the door, Dehlin recalls him saying.

It is this garden that most impressed him on his visit, turning out better than he'd imagined. The green among the concrete has 'lent an extra dimension to the design', muses Dehlin. 'It has the feeling of left-over ruins.' And the dimension? One more component to his architectural triumvirate – time itself. •



# Double bill

MICA's refurbishment of Croydon's Fairfield Halls aims to lure more casual footfall and revitalise the wider area

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Hufton+Crow







**Left top** The Phoenix concert hall is flanked by the Arnhem venue to the south (right) and the Ashcroft theatre and extension to the north.

**Left middle** The Arnhem wing to the south with its new space and terrace at the top.

**Left bottom** Section through the reworked concert hall, foyer and sun lounge to the west.

#### IN NUMBERS

£42m construction cost

21,160m<sup>2</sup> gross internal floor area

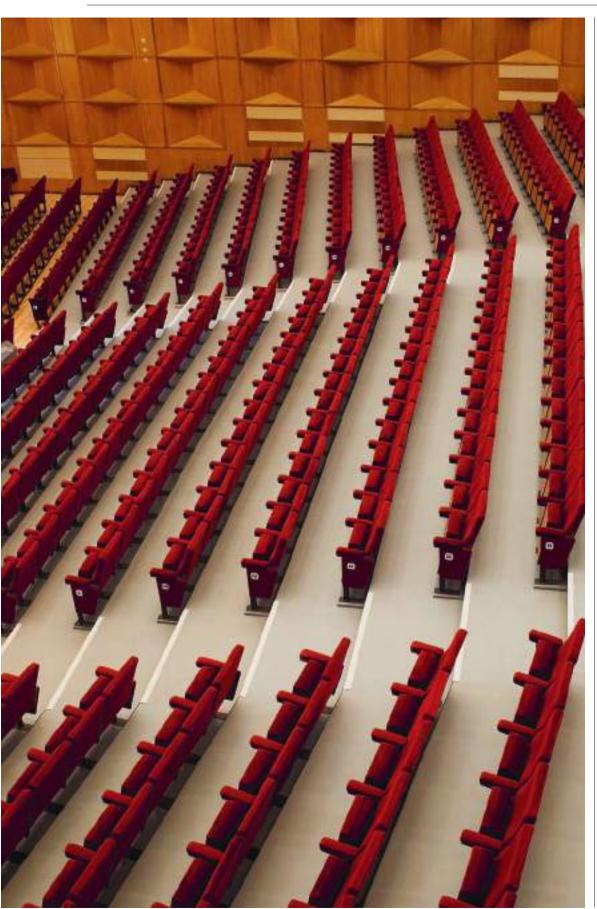
£1,985

What are the ingredients of regeneration and local growth? Croydon's version is writ large in the colourful pavement graphics and high rise apartment blocks flanking soon-to-be developed sites around Ruskin Square near East Croydon station (including two unpalatably high towers of 38 and 44 storeys by HTA). Another area to be tackled is the cacophony of sixties development divided by the canyon of the A212 which is eight lanes wide in places.

Between these two areas, in the spot where medieval fairs were held, is Croydon's civic ballast: the courts, the college and Fairfield Halls. In the hands of Croydon Council's arm's-length developer, Brick by Brick, these too have been reconceived as drivers for regeneration. In the end, the college sidestepped changes. But can Fairfield Halls' £42 million package of works help make this Croydon neighbourhood become a place worth visiting for Londoners? MICA, previously known as Rick Mather Architects, has taken on the challenge.

The raw material seems promising. Fairfield Halls is a similar vintage to the South Bank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, an early 1960s expression of optimism, of high quality culture for the people. It has a huge 1,800-seat concert hall, with the Arnhem theatre in a wing on one side and what used to be a gallery on the other, now a conference venue. These elements are linked by a cascading public foyer. There is a pleasing plainness to the very rational facade and its original architect, Robert Atkinson and Partners, imbued it with a selective richness in mosaics and window surround details.

While the Royal Festival Hall fronts on to the Thames, Fairfield Halls faces the A212, with a sweeping drop-off to allow



# Ascending to the sun lounge mezzanine, you can feel the expansive ambition of the original building

**Left** Refurbished seats and acoustic panels of Japanese oak in the concert hall. Below Fairfield Halls in 1962 with the car park deck, on which College Green sits, going up alongside.

those in cars to arrive in style, as if in a Gordon Cullen Townscape drawing. MICA's masterplan aims to reorientate Fairfield Halls by softening the approach from the town centre via College Green, opening it up to more incidental visits rather than just occasional big concert nights out.

On the building itself this was dealt with by a glazed extension along the north flank facing the green, conceived by MICA as a café and public space, though the latter has been switched to activity spaces. What might gently nudge the project back towards an urban rather than solely a venue strategy is the recently announced reworking of College Green by an exciting team joining MICA, including Charles Holland, OOZE and Adam Nathaniel Furman. For Fairfield Halls though that is the most dramatic external move. Elsewhere there was a bit of tidying up with the demolition of the 'plastic palace' of old offices at the back and a polycarbonate 'light box' extension on top of the south wing.

Ascending to the sun lounge mezzanine on the first floor you can feel the expansive ambition of the original building. Foyer spaces flow into one another and the elevated view west puts the road in its place and



ARCHIV

#### **Buildings**Fairfield Halls

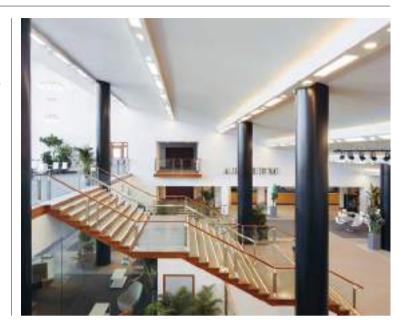
shifts the view to Queen's Gardens opposite. The cascade of stairs into the foyer and concert halls is echoed by a revived raked soffit with trough lights marking the stepping. The spare, elegant chandeliers, here and in the concert hall, have been relamped by a local firm. In the sun lounge they add grandeur and a sense of arrival. This is an important message as the chairs and carpets of the main foyer have all the pragmatic appeal of a council one stop shop; comfortable and cleanable for the free events intended to drive footfall but miserly if you have paid £35-plus for an evening of Jimmy Carr.

The Phoenix concert hall does, however, elicit a little gasp of surprise at its scale and intensity. Dug into the centre of the building it is very deep and relatively narrow for its scale. At lower levels the reworked colours

Credits
Architect MICA
Client BrickbyBrick
for London Borough of
Croydon
Structural engineer AKS
Ward
M&E, lighting and
acoustics Max Fordham

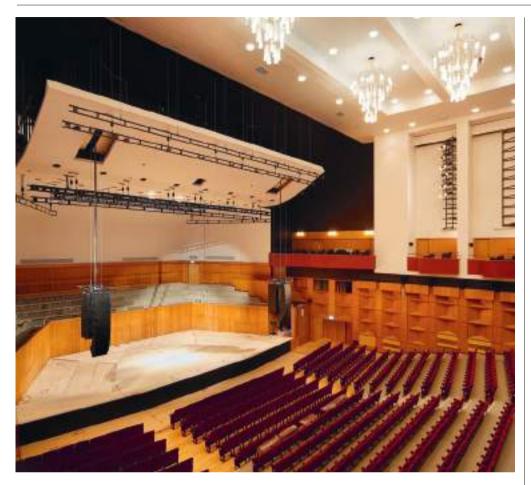
**Right** The black columns of the foyer were reinstated as part of the refurbishment.

**Below** On the sun lounge mezzanine above the foyer.





The RIBA Journal November 2019 ribaj.com





**Left** The canopy above the stage in the concert hall works hard with services and stage equipment.

give clarity and intensity to this tall white volume. Faceted timber panels of Japanese oak edge the lower walls, while sumptuous curves mark out the boxes above reconditioned oxblood red seats. MICA delved into the council archive and the memory of the ushers and their families to understand the building in more depth, from the grand opening by the Queen Mother to the colours of columns and walls. Some elements have been reintroduced, such as the original typeface, though not the pink walls that had crept in, nor the ash trays once integrated into walls and furniture.

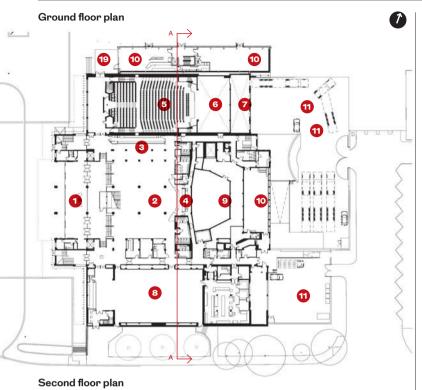
Other little details remain, like the matrix of holes on the seat bases, designed to match the acoustic absorption of a person sitting on that seat. The original acoustician was Hope Bagenal who also worked on the Royal Festival Hall, and theatre consultant for the refurbishment, Anne Minors, is adamant that this hall has the best acoustics in the country. The demands are quite high as Fairfield has a varied programme, from its own Mozart Players and orchestras to pop acts and comedy. There are now additional acoustic hangings to be unfurled when major rock bands are booked. Packing the original canopy above the stage with infrastructure also helps with quick changeovers of amplification and scenery.

The whole of this volume was internally scaffolded for the project, as the ventilation was reworked with new nozzles to bring in fresh air more quietly than had previously been possible. This all involved ductwork threaded through the double-skinned walls. Other new elements range from a fire door to an organ and bespoke house lights in the ceiling.

There were surprises, of course, though the asbestos was expected. MICA has worked with plenty of buildings of this age including the 1960s Congress Theatre in Eastbourne

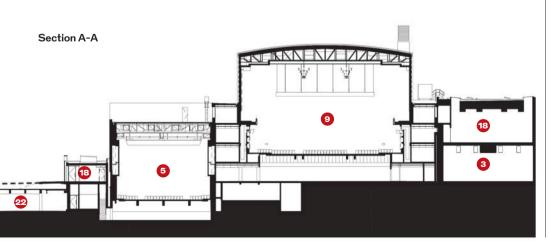
### Some elements have been reintroduced — but not the integrated ashtrays

#### **Buildings**Fairfield Halls



Right Natural light, chandeliers and trough lights each adding another character to the sun lounge.

- 1 Entrance space
- 2 Foyer
- **3** Bar
- 4 Café
- 5 Ashcroft theatre
- 6 Stage
- 7 Backstage
- 8 Arnhem conference centre
- 9 Phoenix concert hall lift machinery
- 10 Studio
- 11 Service yard
- 12 Forecourt and drop off
- 13 Phoenix concert hall
- 14 Choir seating
- 15 Dressing rooms16 Ashcroft theatre flytower
- 17 Restaurant
- 18 Multifunction room
- 19 New Ashcroft entrance
- 20 Offices
- 21 Organ fan room
- 22 Carpark
- 23 Terrace





and Seifert's Centrepoint Tower on London's Tottenham Court Road, as well as master-planning the South Bank Centre. For Croydon's BrickbyBrick this has perhaps been a bigger leap as a client, quite different in scale and uncertainty to the smaller housing projects it had been working on when it started, with all the complexity refurbishment adds.

Another strand of Fairfield Halls' complexity is that it is tied up with the Brickby-Brick housing development behind, which has a first phase of 500 homes. Cross funding of the halls with housing rather mixes up the issues of section 106, the community infrastructure levy and the level of affordable housing. BrickbyBrick and MICA are trying to balance these in a recently revised higher density masterplan, with the encouragement of Croydon Council.

Until the housing, roadside landscape and College Green are at least under way it seems as though Fairfield Halls may only a be mild stimulus to activity, an isolated island in a sea of hoardings that might only be navigated once the tickets have been bought, rather than the drop-in destination it has the potential to be. Operator BH Live seems to be taking a pragmatic attitude to this – the number of bars has been reduced from eight to five and some public space envisaged giving onto the green repurposed for other activities. While Croydon is to be commended for taking this leap into cultural investment it might take some time to pay off.



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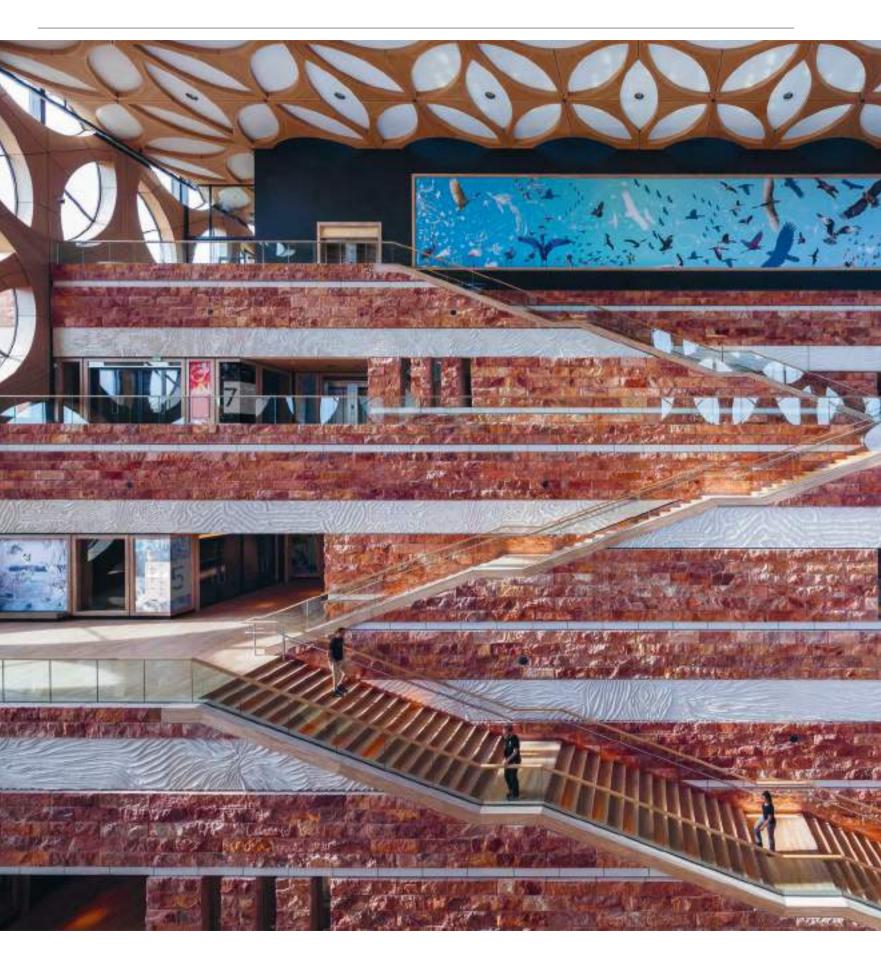
# Spoils of victory

Leiden's Naturalis has changed a great deal in the last 20 years. This remade, mismatched colossus is now large enough to hold its massive collection

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Scagliola Brakkee Fotografie









**IN NUMBERS** 

**€60m** cost of original building

cost of new and repurposed buildings

20,000m<sup>2</sup> new building area

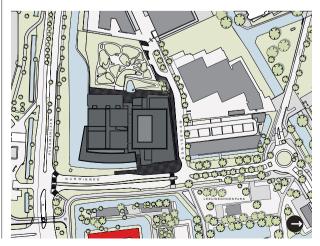
18,000m<sup>2</sup> repurposed space

### For the client, this change of architect did not fare well

Even before the collection reached this size, alarm bells should have been ringing over the spatial demands on the building in 1998. At the time, the €60 million project created a public museum, archive storage tower and research institute on a site that, even then, required Verheijen to construct a steel bridge over a wide road on Leiden University's sprawling 80s campus to harness the space of the leased Pesthuis – then acting as a reception, café and temporary exhibition. So when the archive was further enlarged, visitor numbers boomed from 150,000 to 400,000 and the City of Leiden decided to sell off the Pesthuis, Verheijen's number was up. The resulting 2013 OJEU competition to reconfigure and expand Naturalis to meet its new needs was won not by Verheijen's submission, but Neutelings Riedijk's.

For the client, this change of architect did not fare well. Neutelings Riedijk's creation of a whole new museum adjacent to Verheijen's design and the overhaul of that into administrative offices and expanded archive, was, Verheijen felt, 'mutilation' of his design, and he sued. Naturalis, facing a protracted court case and with a new museum to build, settled out of court to the tune of €1.5 million. With Verheijen now laying claim only to the untouched 60m high archive tower, the client also bizarrely promised to fund a detailed CAD model of his lost museum; a virtual Matryoshka of his idea now sat like a 3D seed in the belly of its offspring.

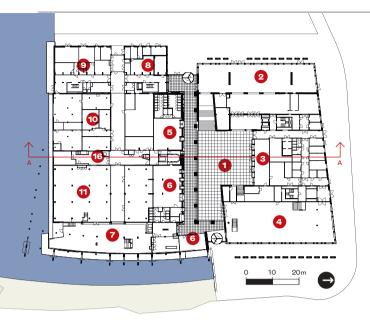
Given the history, and with over 18,000m² of the 38,000m² project involving reconfiguration of the existing, Neutelings Riedijk's €72 million melange of old, new and repurposed is, not surprisingly, a curious beast. Gone is Verheijen's link bridge and the exhibition space has become open plan offices on the atrium's east side for the research institute's 320 full time staff.



Left The new atrium's north face reveals the vertiginous 'stone' access stair to the attached exhibition halls — each with their own generous lobby.

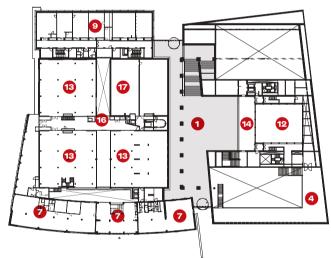
Right The site plan of the building shows the position of the Pesthuis (in red) — formerly the main entrance to the old complex.

#### **Critique** Naturalis Biodiversity Centre

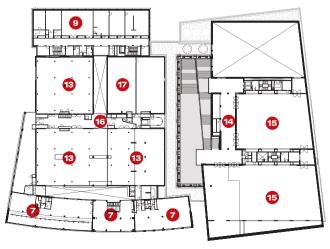


Right Red travertine, concrete art frieze, limestone floors, timber soffits and treads, Tord Boontje murals; everything is thrown at the visitor at ground floor level.

Ground floor plan



First floor plan



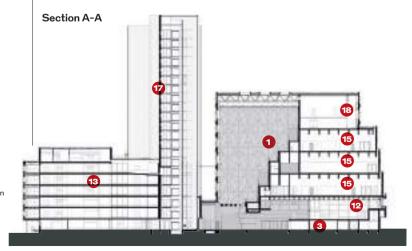
Third floor plan

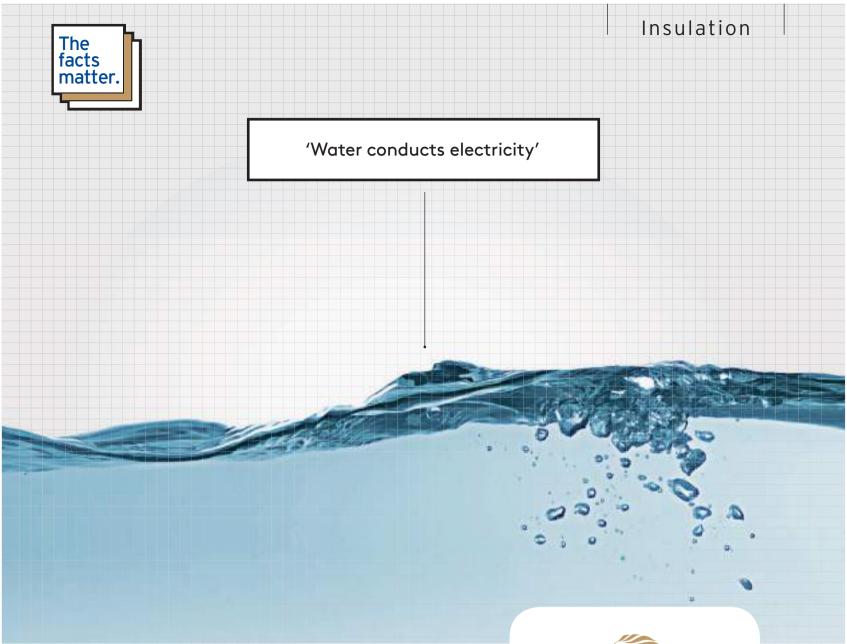
- Atrium
- Restaurant
- 3 Shop
- Free exhibition zone
- 6 Education room
- Offices
- Public lab area
- Laboratories
- 10 Workshops
- 11 Book depot
- 12 Auditorium
- 13 Collections depot 14 Lobby
- 15 Permanent exhibition 16 Ouarantine zone
- 17 Collections depot
- 18 Plant room



On the west side of the original block, new collection depot spaces for the archive are crucially isolated from the 'clean' archive tower (even the ebola virus is stored here) by a narrow quarantine zone where samples can be cryogenically sterilised before being re-admitted into the tower. A new, state of the art laboratory block to the west of the archive tower houses laboratories for the research institute, which had previously had to rent them from Leiden University.

Internally, the change has been root and branch, almost completely gutting the building and inserting a new programme into the host body - hence Verheijen's ire. But it has transformed the facility's storage and research capabilities, future-proofing it in the process. The original architect may have drawn cold comfort from the fact that the existing complex on the south of the site looks virtually unchanged from outside. Perhaps as a sop, metal cladding on Neutelings Riedijk's new lab dutifully continues the original's formal horizontality,





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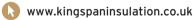
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#### **Critique**

#### Naturalis Biodiversity Centre

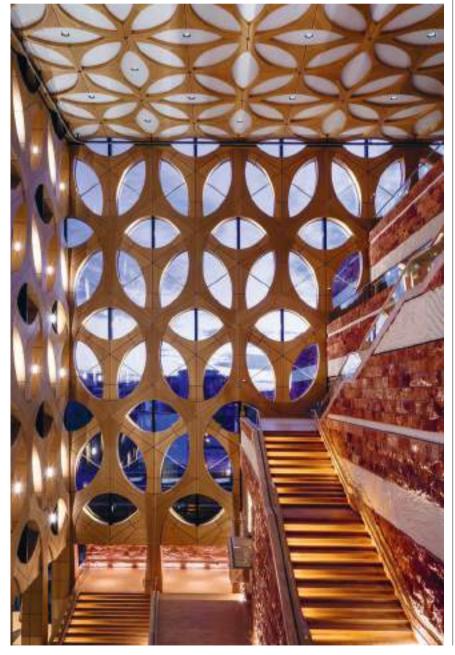
but this must have merely stuck in Verheijen's craw.

But, structural as those internal changes were, it is not for them that the new Naturalis complex is instantly memorable. It is more for the striking 40m high cuboid atrium that announces unequivocally the building's public nature, in a campus of modern but otherwise faceless university faculty buildings. The volume also aims to give equal weight to the east and west sides of the site in terms of an entrance statement, depending on whether you arrive by public transport or car. That aside, the entrance otherwise dissolves distinctions. Visitor, worker and academic researcher all pass through this central, democratising orientation point.

It is this hybrid structure of precast concrete parallelograms and steel creating the strange hexagonal/

Right Set against the metal cladding of the archive tower, the hybrid structure of the atrium is clad from top to bottom in perforated European oak.

Below The hybrid steel and concrete structure is lined in European oak. The 'solid' stone staircase is revealed as layers rather than monolithic.





elliptical box form that demarcates the existing from Neuteling Riedijk's stacked floors of public exhibition spaces, strikingly clad in Iranian red travertine and banded by a horizontal frieze of patterned cast concrete. And if it looks to the reader to formally resemble Mecanoo's 2013 Library of Birmingham (RIBAJ September 2013), that is no coincidence. Both architects were, they say, inspired by The Netherlands' only mountain, the Vaalsberg, to offer locals the tantalising prospect of popping their heads above sea level – although given the nature of this building, the location and metaphorical allusions to geomorphology and strata might seem more justified here.

Stacking was inevitable. On a tight plot, Naturalis demanded over 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of museum and ancillary spaces, forcing the architects to build up rather than out. Not only that, but the design had to take account of new exhibition practice, each floor dedicated to themed 'experiential' curating - accounting for the nine 'black box' halls ranging from 6-12m in height, with the tallest allocated to the resident 150 million-year-old Camarasaurus. For that, the client wanted the flexible, 21m clear spans between two 6m concrete service cores that the design delivers. Whether Naturalis will see curatorial need for the rooflit slits that the stacked halls' offsets reveal in section as they rise remains to be seen; currently they are blacked-out, but were retained at the architect's insistence, despite value engineering, to allow artefacts to be viewed in a new light in the future.

The user interface for all of these exhibition halls is, of course, the vertiginous staircase that connects them, running along on the atrium's north side; which, combined with the zany atrium volume, is something of a show stopper. The overwhelming gorge effect is partially mitigated at ground level by the expanded

### **Critique**Naturalis Biodiversity Centre



Credits **Client** Naturalis **Biodiversity Centre Architect** Neutelings Riediik Architecten Architectural engineer ABT BV Ingenieursbureau Structural engineer Aronsohn Raadgevende Cost consultant IGG / Bointon de Groot Installation design Huisman en van Muiien **Building physics DGMR** Raadgevende Ingenieurs Interior designer offices Hollandse Nieuwe Reliefs Iris van Herpen **Graphics** Tord Boontie **Urbanism** Studio Hartzema Landscaping H+N+S

Left Designer Iris van Herpen's frieze of fabric-like concrete intersperses the strata of cleft Iranian travertine.

shop, a large restaurant and access to the first floor auditorium, but there's no escaping the immediate sense of a cliff-face – due not least to the cleft, red, crystalline travertine that clads the in-situ cast structure.

It's set off even more by Dutch fashion designer Iris van Herpen's 263 white, cast concrete panels, 1km of them in total, which run in bands around the inside and outside of the building. But the general weightiness of stone effect is oddly exposed as a conceit; at its most obvious it's the shift to timber soffits at the entrance foyers of every exhibition hall level but it also appears on closer inspection in the shadow gaps between stone panels. The timber stair treads also push the reading of their stone walls as lamella rather than something more substantial. Crowned at the top by designer Tord Boontje's huge mural, one of a number scattered throughout the building, what one initially assumes is monolithic turns out to be an agglomoration of veneers.

This idea of veneer thus becomes a theme. The complex, 550mm thick hybrid atrium structure of precast concrete and steel is internally faced with a perforated timber lining, which does help with acoustics, but it's a move that reinforces the sense of artifice. The structure's internal concrete feet are furthermore clad in Portuguese limestone; a late change to the original specification of the red travertine after

Right The east elevation, approached from public transport, acts as the Naturalis complex's other, main facade.

the stone contractor's bank refused to lend the money to source more of it, falling victim to America's latest trade embargo against Iran. Forcing yet another material to be introduced into the mix here, it's the first time I've seen a building submitting to the 'Trump Effect'.

Neutelings Riedijk attests to the fact that material expression was not its main concern here - rather the desire to create a particular kind of atmosphere - but I feel the display of all the different materials, especially where they meet, distracts the user from the clarity of what is otherwise a highly methodical design. Here, various layers of concrete, stone, steel and timber, metal cladding, glass - even the firm's signature 'snaking' columns at ground level, mask a complex and successful programmatic reformulation of an existing building. It also fails to intimate the story of construction logistics, such as that of the slowly installed 16m deep screw piles for the new building; an operation of such delicacy that not a wing of some rare 17th century flying insect was vibrated off to facilitate it; while all the time allowing these specimens in the archive tower to be accessed for research while it was constructed. Such nuance seems lost in the bombast of the approach.

But still it lives. Beneath a taut geometric epidermis, stretched over augmented ligaments, stitched back to veneered bones, and bound forever to its original body, Naturalis, in its new guise, is a monster that has been revivified for the future in a way it never could have been in its former guise. Mary Shelley would be proud.



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#### HYGIENIC COLLECTION



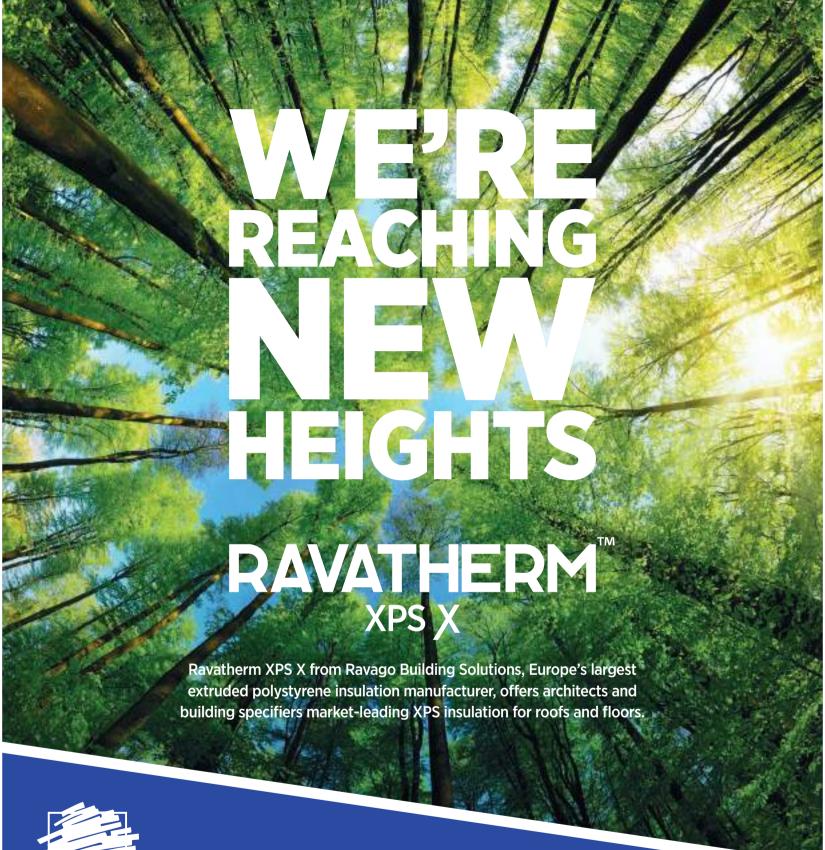






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### A ribbon runs through it

Piercy&Company's coworking space conversion is cool, calm and crafted, united by a dramatic stairway

Words: Andy Pearson Photographs: Jack Hobhouse

'One of key things Fora is keen on is that you notice the quality of hospitality through the little details and points of contact you have with the building,' says Pete Jennings, director at architect Piercy&Company. He's talking about the co-workspace provider's latest venture in Princelet Street, just off London's Brick Lane, where the practice has transformed two adjoining Victorian warehouses into 2,100m² of contemporary workspace.

In a crowded market, Fora's USP is providing a members' club feel and a business hotel vibe. Accordingly, Piercy&Company's refined design for Princelet Street eschews the brash industrial characteristics common to many co-workspaces for a calm, disciplined interior where the focus is on craftsmanship, clean lines and functionality.

When the practice first became involved with the scheme, the space had just been vacated by a tech start-up. 'The bones of the space were great but there was no connection between the floors and very little natural light,' explains Jennings.

Under a comprehensive refurbishment Piercy&Company has added a floor at the top of the building, opened up the basement, provided a new glazed entrance and exposed the structure of cast iron columns, beams and timber joists. The most striking intervention, however, is a new sculptural staircase. This

**Right** Above the red-painted steel ribbon stair is the unifying element of Piercy&Co's refurb and upgrade. **Below** Princelet St before refurbishment.



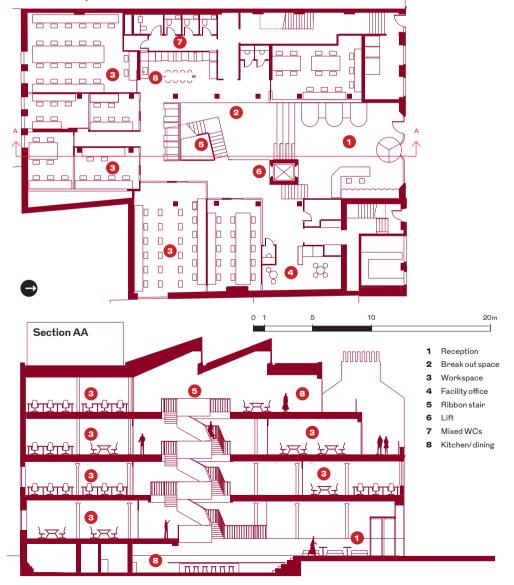




**Above** View from the reception area past the lift down to the break out space, above which the ribbon stair winds up.

### **Above right** The entrance of curved glass with the old brick painted over in grey.

#### Ground floor plan



**Buildings** Retrofit



winds up through the heart of the building like a giant twisting red ribbon, linking the ground floor reception to the new top floor, creating a focal point for the office floors while enabling daylight to penetrate deep into the core.

To accommodate the new stair a void had to be punched through the floor plates. The staircase is part cantilevered, part suspended from the existing structure; the folded steel treads cantilever out from the red ribbon-like inner structure while the outer edge of the stair is suspended on rods from the structure above.

The ribbon-like element is made of a series of steel posts and plates. This steel structure is concealed behind sheets of MDF which are encased in aluminium with a vibrant red powder-coated finish. It is an effective solution; the overall impression is one of a single twisted sash of bright red steel.

A red timber handrail mimics the twists and turns of the ribbon. 'The handrail was quite a tricky three-dimensional detail to create,' says Jennings. To ensure its precise fit, after the staircase was installed it was laser scanned and the coordinates used to guide a CNC machine in carving the wooden handrail sections. By contrast, the geometry of the handrail on the opposite side of the stair is relatively conventional. It is attached to a series of regularly spaced, vertical white metal balusters.

Arranged around the staircase are informal, communal spaces incorporating booths designed by Piercy&Company and manufactured in oak by Realm Joinery. The booth's banquette seating features fine rib detail that picks up on the rhythm of the stair balusters and the white-painted joists supporting the floors above. 'The roughness of the existing building is tempered by the refinement and elegance of the new joinery,' says Jennings.

Oak has also been used for the wooden floors of the communal spaces. The difference here is that the timber is unpolished 'so that it felt like it was at home in a warehouse environment'. Alongside the bespoke timber

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**Top** The upper level kitchen/ breakout space with characterful sawtooth rooflights

Above The workspaces' material palette is restrained and minimal rather than trendily industrial

Left The finely detailed steel plate stair is a dynamic addition to the space.

#### Buildings Retrofit

furniture, the architect has also worked with Darwin Terracotta to create a bespoke Belfast sink for the washrooms.

Three floors of workspaces are arranged around the central stair and communal spaces. These areas are designed to be used intensively with an occupation density as high as one person every 5m². Services for workspaces are also arranged in a ring around the stair void: electrics and data are distributed beneath a raised access floor, while heating and cooling pipework along with fresh air supply ductwork serve fan coil units concealed above a mesh suspended ceiling. 'The spaces are designed to be pretty densely occupied so the heating, cooling and fresh air loads are significant,' says Jennings.

The additional storey is a large, light-filled space for socialising and events. Tests showed that existing cast iron columns and foundations were capable of carrying the loads of the extra floor with minimal strengthening. Nevertheless, to keep weight down the additional structure is steel; it incorporates two lightweight, pitched Vierendeel trusses, which span the full width of the building to provide a column-free top floor. North-facing glazing has been inserted between the top and bottom cords of the truss for maximum daylight with minimal solar gain.

The roof's form ensures that the new storey cannot be seen from the street. This was important because the scheme sits within the Fournier Street Conservation Area and the planners had made clear that they already considered the building to be quite large for the area. 'The idea was to create a folded roof that reduced at the perimeter of the site but that created a really grand space that can be used either for gatherings or for office space,' Jennings says.

The roof space is one of the few additions to the scheme, and had to comply with the thermal requirements of the Building Regulations. Elsewhere Piercy&Company deliberately minimised interventions to avoid falling foul of the consequential improvements requirements of the regulations. 'It was agreed that our improvements to the building as a whole were outside the requirements for consequential improvements, so we did not have to add new insulation to the old walls, or anything like that,' he explains.

Jennings is pleased with the final result: 'It is lovely to be able to design a space on this scale – from the concrete to the cutlery.' ●

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It's that time of year again - time to enter the RIBAJ MacEwen Awards. The deadline is 18 November 2019 and entering is easy. We're  $\frac{9}{5}$ on the lookout for your projects which present an architecture for the common good. They should demonstrate a clear social purpose that enhances the lives of people and effectiveness of communities, or an ambitious environmental agenda, reuse and recycling buildings, or more.

It's the fifth year of the award. Named after Anni and Malcolm MacEwen - she an urban planner who pioneered a conservation-based approach to regeneration in both town and country, he a campaigning journalist and former editor of this magazine - the award was launched in 2015. We wanted it to counter what seemed like an unstoppable deluge of luxury projects that didn't act beyond the whims of private individuals and clients, as well as vested interests. Things like new schools that prioritise the high-end market housing on top rather than the pupils inside: buy-to-leave anti-urban apartment towers; overpriced retail malls; needless demolition of perfectly good buildings.

The competition shakes up construction awards themselves too: it is free to enter and unearths previously under-represented schemes and architectural practices - frequently younger ones - in the profession. Engineering-led and landscape-led projects, both urban and rural, are welcome so long as an architect is also involved. Projects can be huge or tiny.

We have had a fascinating array of winners and commended projects. We believe that a wider awareness and adoption of the 'common good' goal means there are now even more. Many emerging practices are choosing to focus on this type of rewarding work. But entries come in from established names too, can be from anywhere, of any type and any procurement method, so surprise us!

To give you a flavour, 2019's winner was the Star and Shadow Cinema and community hub designed by MawsonKerr from a disused carpet warehouse in Shieldfield, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Others on the roll of commended schemes included a flood alleviation and footbridge by Knight Architects with Mott MacDonald for Leeds City Council; a mission church, café and community centre by Gatti Routh Rhodes Architects on a downbeat block in Bethnal Green and a terrace of homes for downsizers by Peter Barber Architects.

In previous years we've given awards to all sorts. A reused Walter Segal building for local residents in Stockwell, youth centres, a women's centre in Birmingham, sports and leisure facilities, a village room in rural Northumberland designed and built by architecture students, a public sector specialist care home in Matlock. Now is the time to put your project forward too.





Above 2019 commended, Knostrop Weir Bridge, Knight Architects with Mott MacDonald. Left 2019 winner, Star and Shadow Cinema, by MawsonKerr Architects.

Below 2019 commended, Bethnal Green Mission Church by Gatti Routh Rhodes Architects. Bottom left 2019 commended, Burbridge Close by Peter Barber Architects.



#### **RULES**

Projects must be in the UK, Ireland and islands such as Man and the Channel Islands. Projects must have been broadly physically completed within the two years to 1 November 2019, and must not have been entered previously for the MacEwen Award. A phase of a longerterm project is eligible.

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

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

#### INFORMATION REQUIRED

#### Entries should be submitted online only via the link below

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

Credit list of consultants and clients. Maximum of six images, to include photos and drawings.

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#### Burtle village hall, Somerset

Sam White Director, Knight Architects

The village of Burtle at a glance may appear an unremarkable place. Seemingly cut adrift on the Somerset Levels where the lush tranquillity of summer gives way to a starker landscape in winter as winds accelerate over flatness. As a seven year old I probably only paid attention to it because on a pitch black winter evening coming home over the moors it was the single visible marker for knowing how close we were. At that time local villages that had once revolved around farming were generally in decline if they weren't close enough to the M5 to attract commuters. Burtle was no different and it was starting to show in places, like the village hall that looked particularly tired.

Years later one evening with my dad, the pub conversation turned to Burtle, the next village on and how they were taking things into their own hands to fundraise and build a village hall, having been turned down for Lottery funding. Behind it all was a retired local builder normally used to agricultural sheds who had the idea of cocooning the existing building to use what was already there to make it remotely feasible.

Posters started appearing combining good

humour with purpose: 'Have you ever wanted to burn the village hall? Genuine BVH Kindling Wood, 50p per bag.' 'Coming soon, straw bale and clay "plastering" picnic weekends. Come and be part of it.' 'Wanted 4000 wine bottles as insulation. Why not put a message in a bottle and be part of it?' Eventually the sign was altered to say 'no more please'.

The playful creativity wasn't limited to posters though, this was a project that showed innovation is not the preserve of professionals and universities. The building's main wall insulation would be straw bales coated with local clay; rather than buy a machine they built their own custom mixer affectionately called Betty. She would be used to find the ultimate Roald Dahl like recipe before the village joined for the weekend to do the dirty job of plastering the bales. Farmers donated sheep fleeces for roof insulation and finally wine bottles were arrayed to make a rigid thermal break at the base of the walls. As client and builders, a level of ambition was realised that you might not normally expect to find in such a remote location. Passing the hall now, which has reinvigorated the local community, there is still a little window into the wall construction, a reminder of the inspiring 'help ourselves' determination of a small village those years ago.

### Coming soon, straw bale and clay 'plastering' picnic weekends. Be part of it

**Below** Villagers doing it together build Burtle's community hall in Somerset.



.





### Byker Estate, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Dan Kerr Director, MawsonKerr

It seems like a cliché to someone that lives and works in the North East to pick out Ralph Erskine's Byker Estate in Newcastle as an example of architecture for the common good. Somehow it seems too obvious a choice. However, on further consideration, I don't think it is. The project is as relevant today as it was when being built during the 1970s and early 1980s, and there are still lessons to be learned from it as a housing project.

In 2007, English Heritage gave it a grade II listing stating: 'The Estate's ground-breaking design has been influential across Europe and has proved a pioneering model for its approach to public participation.'

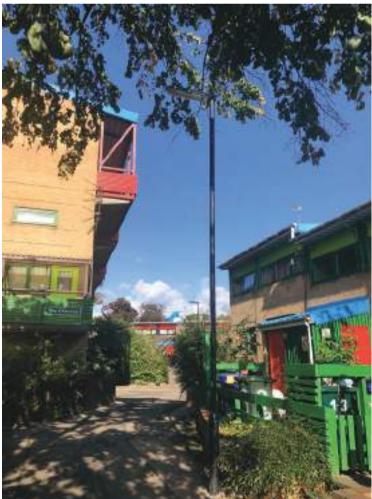
The revolutionary approach at Byker was to embed the design team into the community during the project, and this became as important to the final product as the design. The project demonstrated that deeply involving the people who will live in the homes makes for a sense of ownership and pride. It also brought a holistic agenda to the fore. Life cycle costs, energy usage and the longevity of the building became much more important to the project objectives than in a speculative build. These are all obvious things, yet this process of design and true community involvement is still seen as 'special' and not commonplace in housing schemes nearly 40 years later.

Byker is not without its critics and it certainly isn't flawless, but to embed the community in the design process can only strengthen a scheme and make it more sustainable and relevant in the future. Today there is the need for more housing, but not any housing; we need better housing that champions the 'process'. This will ultimately make a better product. 'The job of buildings is to improve human relations,' said Erskine, 'Architecture must ease them, not make them more difficult.'

The project showed that involving people who will live in the homes makes for a sense of ownership and pride



**Above** The outer face of the Byker Wall.



**Right** Pedestrian cut throughs within the estate.

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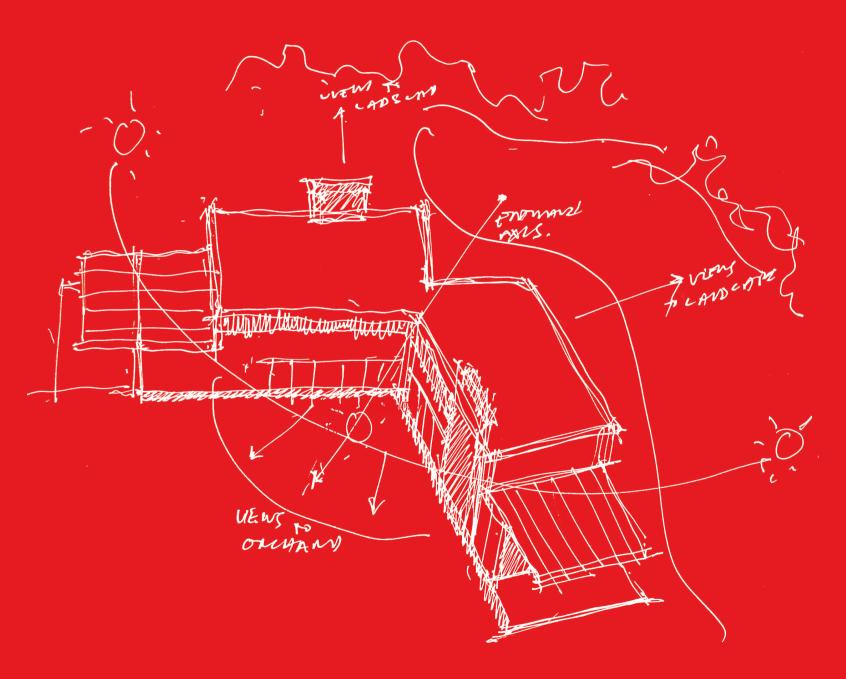
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### Houses



We put out a call for house projects and received more than 150 submissions. Here are five of the most interesting in the UK

Concept sketch of Orchard House, Kent, designed by Beasley Dickson (p66)



Everyone, I feel, should have their own secret rural valley. I know that this is not a practicable proposition, nor an especially sociable sentiment, but it's an agreeable fantasy. And if you can build your own house in your valley, pleasing nobody but yourself, then that is surely a reasonable stab at creating an earthly paradise for yourself.

Nithurst Farm in Sussex is just such an exercise: a house by and for an architect – Adam Richards – and his family. Richards, you may remember, is the architect of the Ditchling Museum, also in Sussex, which drew rave reviews in 2013 (RIBAJ, November 2013). His emerging promise was shown by another, smaller house for clients, Mission Hall – again Sussex – in 2010-11 which Richards described as 'contemporary versions of a classical temple and a gothic chapel fight it out on a brick plinth' (RIBAJ, October 2011). Allusion and historical reference is key to



his work, as you might expect from someone who – before setting up his own practice in 2002, at first specialising in commercial interiors but gradually expanding into domestic and cultural projects – had worked for Niall McLaughlin, MacCormac Jamieson Prichard and O'Donnell & Tuomey. A grounding in lyrical architecture, therefore.

Nithurst Farm is a house so packed with allusion and references that one feels slightly unworthy trying to unpick it all. In the interior there is inspiration from classic films, specifically Tarkovsky's 'Stalker' and Powell & Pressburger's 'A Matter of Life and Death'. On the exterior you can see it as a twin-funnelled steamboat, puffing due south in Fitzcarraldo fashion straight towards a hill, the slightly tumbledown farm outbuildings bobbing in its wake. The boat, however, is also a kind of baroque folly – Vanbrugh is mentioned, with internal nods to Lutyens (the

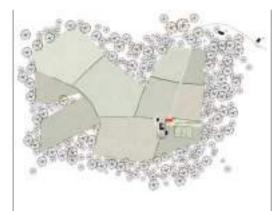
### The architect describes it as an industrial ruin wrapped in a Roman ruin

Credits
Client Adam and Jessica
Richards
Architect Adam Richards
Architects
Structural engineer
Structure Workshop
Services Engineer PR3
QS MPA
Main contractor
Garsden Pepper

visually denied access) and Palladio (his plan of the Villa Barbaro). In another reading it is a Roman villa: though more vertically than horizontally arranged and not open to the sky, it certainly has a lofty atrium at its heart. But wait – this is also a medieval great hall. Confused? Again Richards has a pithy phrase to explain it all: 'an industrial ruin wrapped in a Roman ruin'.

This is close to the truth, for it is an insitu concrete building - raw on the inside, just as it came out of the shuttering - over which first copious insulation, then the freestanding brick carapace are slid like thick garments. The square-headed window openings on the inside coincide with but do not match the arched versions on the outside flanks, so you get to see both sides of the brickwork. The tall south-facing elevation, however, eschews arches in favour of large rectangular windows with solar-control glass - which seemed to be working on the hot summer's day when I visited. The brick is relatively cheap but is treated as a precious material, laid by stonemasons rather than brickies with thick, flush lime-mortar joints. It steps in level by level. There's a subtle gofaster-stripe effect too, where the darker brick of the arches on the flanks (taking the form of Diocletian windows on the two upper storeys) streams out behind them, adding to the illusion of movement.

The setting is important. It is an underappreciated fact (I speak as someone born and raised on the Kent-Sussex border) that there is an awful lot of properly rural Eng-



Below The concrete towers rising through the main space contain lesser spaces — here there is a small study.

**Above** Site plan — new house in red.

land south of London. It's not all Range Rovers and security gates, especially when you get towards the South Downs (newest of our national parks, for which Richards serves on the design review panel). Haslemere and Guildford may not be that far to the north, Arundel and Chichester to the south, but in this fold in the hills, miles from any railway station, it is as agrarian and remote as you can imagine. You emerge from deep woodland-shaded lanes on to a farm track winding down through fields to the house with its older attendant outbuildings. Seeing it from above like this, the neatly organised dark grey shallow-pitch metal roofs come into play as an important compositional element.

The house steps up from a chamfered single storey entrance pavilion at its stern to a three-storey mini-tower at its south-facing



### **Buildings** Nithurst Farm

# Ground floor plan

Long section AA

#### First floor plan



#### Second floor plan





- Entrance hall
- Sittingroom
- 'Great Hall'
- Stair hall
- Kitchen
- Dining
- Play room
- Study
- Utility room
- 10 Boot room and WC
- 11 Bedrooms
- 12 Bathrooms
- 13 Stair to master bedroom
- 14 Store
- 15 Landing

#### IN NUMBERS

0.45ha site area

> 97m<sup>2</sup> GIFA

> > 6/7

bedrooms

2 years construction period

prow, commanded by the master bedroom. Or rather twin bedrooms, each with its dressing room, separated by the stair landing, linked by a bathroom behind it. 'I snore,' says Richards of this sleeping/bathing arrangement, adding: 'It's a potential Benny Hill sketch.' These mirror-image rooms are angled slightly towards each other, the culmination of a tapering plan, internally a gentle exercise in false perspective organised around a longitudinal cut line. The stair rising to the enormous window between these bedrooms is inspired by the staircase to heaven in 'A Matter of Life and Death' - a family reference in that Richards' own father was a pilot who died when Richards was a baby. For him the whole house represents a



**Below** South elevation is a grid composition dispensing with arches.





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journey towards a spiritual destination.

This is a big house: six bedrooms in all, seven if you count the master suite as two, plus that kitchen-dining-playing great hall and, up a half-level at the front, a large sitting room. With its multiple changes of level (it follows a rise in the land from north to south and the layout is such that there seem to be steps and stairs everywhere) this is not a house for the physically infirm.

The 'great hall', 4.5m high, is defined by six perimeter concrete forms, rising to towers as the house steps up. These contain servant spaces – utility, boot room, kitchen, study, larder, stairs, bathrooms. Richards plays the old compression-and-release game, in which you are squeezed through a small dark entrance hall before emerging into this large space, and again at its far end where you take dog-leg stairs to the light-drenched sitting room perched up at the south end.

### It is odd that it is brand new; it feels like a rescued ruin

**Above** West elevation: main entrance at the rear is deliberately downplayed.

**Below** The south and west facing sitting room — note view of inside of arch.



Above those is a mezzanine looking back down the hall, while the level above that contains most of the bedrooms and a central landing from which the grand stair to heaven commences.

If this all sounds too heavily freighted with metaphor, really nobody but the architect needs to understand why it is the way it is: the rest of us simply see a highly unusual house containing a somewhat mysterious sequence of spaces and levels. In a way it is odd that it is brand new: for all the raw-concrete interior, this feels rather more like one of those ruins rescued by the Landmark Trust, with facilities shoehorned into various spaces and levels. It is instantly old, something reinforced by an eclectic selection of antique furniture, wall hangings and contemporary art. Tangential to most architectural norms, it successfully distils centuries of domestic living.

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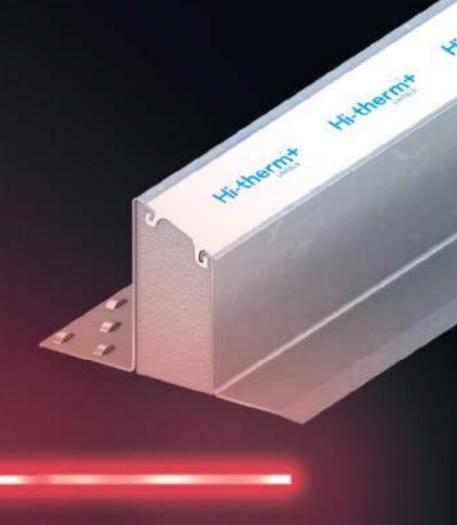
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The type of grass on the ground floor roof of this house balancing over the moors north of Bolton in Lancashire is the project's story in microcosm. Architect Mark Percival of Manchester-based practice architecture:m had planned that the initial bright green grass would evolve, mixing with seeds blown in from the surrounding landscape. It would become longer, coarser, more diverse and colourful. Its super flat terrain would become mushier and lumpier too, merging with the moors beyond. But the clients, a couple who until moving here lived in a three-bed suburban home in the town, won't let that happen. 'I'll be plucking it out myself,' one responded to Percival's suggestion that moss be allowed to slowly bed in.

The football-pitch-pristine versus moorland rooftop speaks volumes about the house in the photographs before you. Lower Giles Farm is a new Paragraph 55 home that has taken years to come to fruition. The clients had not intended to build, but while driving past scouting for a home to buy, they saw the plot for sale - a three hectare site down a rugged track. It only had a tumbledown building on it and didn't come with planning permission, but the couple had realised that neither the small rooms nor the challenge of 'getting clean' the types of properties available nearby - old stone cottages, barns and farmhouses - really suited them. They bought it, originally to rebuild the ruin.

 $Architecture: m\,came\ on\ board\ in\ 2012\ on\ the\ recommendation\ of\ the\ client's\ planning$ 

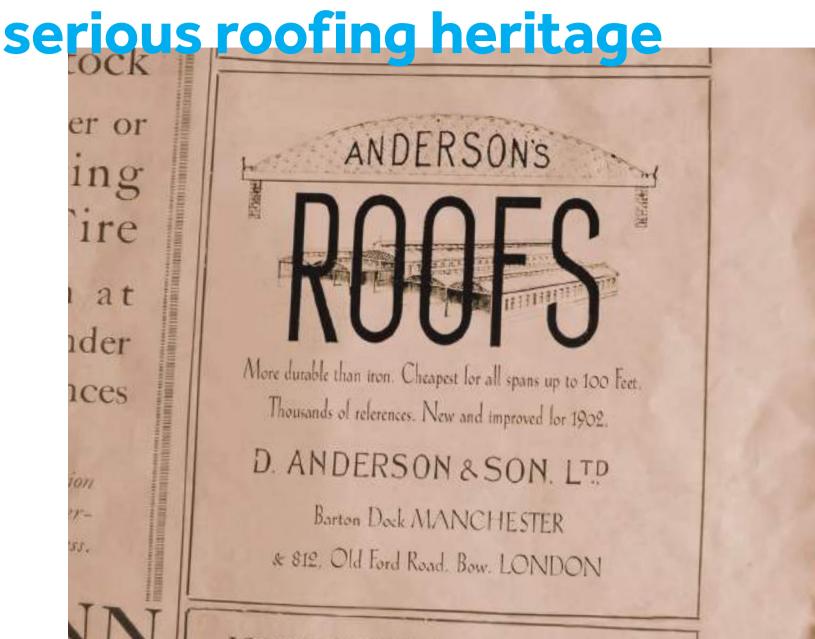
### The football-pitch-pristine vs moorland rooftop speaks volumes about the house

consultant. By that time it was clear rebuilding wasn't possible. The brief called for four bedrooms, a gym, lots of storage, views and consideration of the owners' cats. The architect's idea was to push the building to the far end of the site, to the edge of a steep ravine, so the owners could fall asleep listening to water rushing down the winding gorge. It would be upside down, light and open upstairs, heavy and semi dug into the rock downstairs; 160 piles made it possible.

Approached from the moors, the house first appears like a tiny solitary glass and steel matchbox sat weightlessly in the land-scape, delicately placed on the grass next to a naturalistic pond. Coming down the track, the ground floor reveals itself as a blank red-dish stone wall wrapping around the drive, garage on one side, the entrance set back in the corner, the pond and glass box above. Just about visible through the glazing, the stone carries up from the ground floor to become an internal wall. Move to the other side of the house and the upper floor soars over the valley, hanging precariously like a boulder pushed up from the rocky stream during the



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### **Buildings**Lower Giles Farm

last Ice Age, the stone wall below becoming part of the crag.

Inside, the view down the corridor transports your eye through a mid grey all-tiled interior to the wilderness beyond. To the left past massive dark framed sliding doors is an open-air courtyard, again completely tiled, a stainless steel kitchen tucked in behind the front wall. Three bedrooms with their own shower rooms and doors onto the clough come off the long side of the opening. The gym and another bedroom loop round overlooking a field of ponies. The study comes off to the right, the cinema and its LED star-lit ceiling and plush whisky cellar/panic room beyond (apparently all the rage in the region). This all feels like a different building, the cold wipe-clean surfaces nothing to do with the sponginess and roughness of the grass, trees and stone outside. Everything is slick - framed views, high contrast, shadow gap details, gloss surfaces - an overwhelmingly hygienic, white and grey gallery.

Between these rooms, continuing the

- 1 Drive
- 2 New pond
- 3 Parking
- 4 Garage
- 5 Entrance6 Courtyard
- 7 Study
- 8 Cinema

- 9 Cellar/panic room
- 10 Bedrooms wing
- **11** Gym
- 12 Kitchen and dining area
- 13 Sittingarea
- 14 Balcony
- 15 Grass roof over ground floor



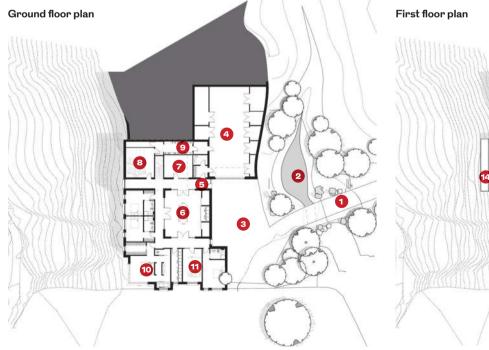
Above The balcony was a late addition to the end of glass box and caused the cantilever structure to get thicker, visible by the lighter grey cladding.

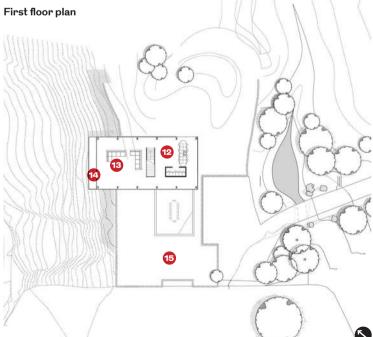
IN NUMBERS



line of the bedroom corridor, is the stained timber stair to the perched glass box. You have been teleported from the underground to a large single space that could be a rooftop city restaurant - grey tile flooring, shining white kitchen units, squishy velour sofas, yellow accent lounge chairs, cushions and dining table banquette. But you are in the landscape, the charming soakaway pond on one side and the gorge crashing past under the balcony to the other. Also you aren't. It's warm, dry and still. All the comforts of contemporary life are here. Step onto the cantilever and you'll soon be reminded it's artificial. It's exhilarating. There's no buffer between landscape and building.

Yet, there are two ways to think about this house and it comes down to the fact that it was self-built by the client and his builder friend. The first is that it does everything it wants to in this rather mad and majestic setting and is a pretty astonishing accomplishment. The macro moves are all there. The other way comes back to that grass on the roof - between what was planned and what wasn't, in the decisions made on site while the owner and builder were present and the architect wasn't. Some questions of its architectural integrity arise. You may spot some differences between the architect's and client's intentions, others you may not. The stone slip dressing, for example, should have been dry stone wall. The balco-





### Percival now plans to design in a way that leaves clients less room to change things

ny was an unforeseen addition that meant the structure had to increase from 350mm to 600mm. The rusticated reconstituted stone corners should have been slips carefully mitred. The all-grey tiled walls and floors were the clients' choice too – Percival would have preferred plaster, maybe a timber floor. In places this leaves the building a bit chunky, more urban than envisaged: Manchester on the moor. Grouting doesn't line up either.

The result is that the project reflects diverse personalities. But for the architect, the differences between what was planned and what has materialised have to be a shame. It's easy to imagine how it goes; no matter how convincing the arguments deployed by the architect, the client is steadfast. Some alterations, like the balcony, are obviously fun. Yet it makes one wonder how many clients truly understand the point of an architect beyond maximising floor area for financial advantage and getting a scheme through planning (which took four years). With its copious bedrooms, 771m2 floor area and lone glass box 'iconic' appearance, the house certainly considers monetary value at one level, so must be critiqued regarding that as well. I'd say it misses out on the added zing that comes when building with near-complete integrity from concept to detail. That approach may look like less personalisation to the financiers, but could, for example, also mean full wheelchair accessibility, which this house does not have but could.

So now Percival's plan is to work on how to design buildings that leave less room for clients to change things as they go along. He wants more control over the final aesthetic. This building is a testament to such a strong architectural concept and to Percival's straight-up character that he can tell the clients this and they all remain on good terms. It may be a client's house and a client's money, but Percival's creation, practice and livelihood come out of it too. He's going to proceed by investigating the possibilities of prefabricated timber panels.





Top The courtyard on the ground floor pleases planners because it contains domestic paraphernalia, so that it doesn't litter the landscape. Above Looking from the kitchen/dining area towards the moors in the glass box, sleekly finished, the manicured grass beyond.

Credits
Architect architecture:m
Client Private
Engineer James Crosbie
Associates
Main contractor Kevin
Whelan Construction
Planning consultant
Graeme Luxton
Consultancy
Piling Total Piling

Right From the other side of the pond, the house is so lightly placed it looks like it could be temporary.



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There's a lot going on at Stonecrop, the house designed by Featherstone Young in rural Rutland. A chunky Clipsham stone buffer wall, cedar cladding, two sweeping green roofs, cantilevered pods, tie-stone projections, unexpected splashes of colour – you name it, this substantial new build has it. In the wrong hands, it could all add up to a bit of a mishmash. Fortunately, Featherstone Young has pulled it off with aplomb. It's no wonder that the clients, retired doctors Matthew and Nicky Lyttelton, love it.

Located in the Rutland village of Wing, a conservation area, the site had its planning challenges. Part of a former garden nursery, it straddled the settlement boundary but was pretty much invisible to the rest of the village since it was tucked away down a single track off the main road. Architect and clients proceeded cautiously, submitting first an online application to establish the principle of residential use before submitting a detailed application that revealed the modern design of the house. The house and its immediate landscaped garden were within the village, positioned hard up against the boundary, while its extensive grounds beyond the boundary were given over to meadow. This strategy ensured a smooth planning process.

At 347m², the house is sizeable yet announces itself slowly to visitors, who see mainly the relatively modest guest wing



### Even though this is a house of considerable size, it doesn't present as such

on arrival. Walk round to the rear, and it is something of a surprise to see the substantial scale of this elevation, which contains three levels of accommodation and is highly glazed to maximise pleasant views over the meadow and into the countryside beyond.

The clients had some particular requirements in their brief – a separate guest wing, a courtyard, easy access to outside space, a larder and a non-orthogonal design. They got all that, and more.

The concept started off with an orthogonal arrangement around a courtyard with a 700mm thick stone buffer forming the elevation to the northwest. This was then cut through diagonally to give the two wings, which both have faceted green roofs that swoop down to the ground – pitched in opposite directions – as if the meadow has been lifted up over the house.

The stone wall gives thermal mass and acts as a buffer on the exposed site for both inclement weather and any noise from the adjacent pub car park. This wall is built in Clipsham limestone – a familiar local



**Above** View across the rear of the lounge to the buffer wall.

**Above right** Inside the 5m high lounge. The stairs lead to the eyrie.

**Below** The guest wing with the stone buffer wall to the right.





material – as part of a hybrid masonry and steel structure.

'We wanted the buffer to have a solid, more rustic feel to it – more monolithic,' says architect Sarah Featherstone.

This deliberately coarse element is carried through into the interior side of the wall and is juxtaposed with the other more refined surfaces. These include the white rendered courtyard elevations, the finely dressed ashlar stone on the guest wing and the cedar cladding over the rear, where the main bulk of the house is located behind the guest wing in order to avoid creating the impression of an imposing structure. As a result, even though this is a house of considerable size with a spectacular 5m high living space at the rear, it doesn't present as such to the outside world. As Featherstone says, 'it's not what you think it is'.

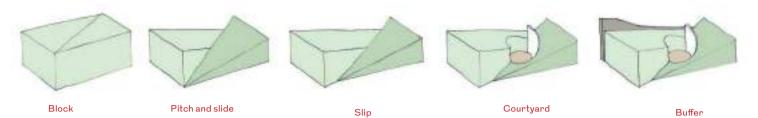
In contrast to the relative restraint of the front, rear and opposite side elevation, the buffer wall comes in for a more playful treatment. There are four projecting timber pods cantilevered off the Clipsham wall, which begins as piers at the bottom of the main house's tapering roof before coalescing into the buffer wall. These projections begin at the entrance with the dog room, followed by the utility and the larder, their positions following the rising levels of the main living space. The fourth is a steel-framed eyrie, located high up at the top western corner. The upwards trajectory of



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### **Buildings** Stonecrop

#### Concept diagram



Courtvard

Ground floor plan

Entrance porch

Kitchen/dining

TV room

Hall

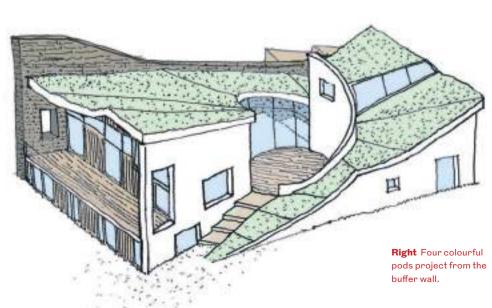
these cantilevers is accentuated by five projecting tie-stones between the eyrie and the kitchen.

There is a surprise when you view this elevation from the rear - each projecting pod, whether the underside of the eyrie or the side projection of the other three pods, is marked by a splash of colour, in different shades of green and blue Trespa cladding. There could have been a danger that this would all be too much combined with everything else that's going on here. But in reality, these little flourishes work well - and in any case, tucked away as they are, these are something of a private pleasure for those who live there.

Inside, the star of the show is the main living space, which flows up through the house to the rear, taking in two short flights of steps, and unified by the cedar-clad, faceted ceiling that gives an important visual warmth to the soaring space.

'This gave us the opportunity to dip down and dip up to suit whatever was happening underneath, and gives a more organic feel,'

Below Diagram showing how the two volumes stitch together around the courtyard.



ed into areas by partitions that deliberately Terrace don't meet the ceiling - they are conceived Dogroom Main living room 10 Utility 11 Larder 12 Eyrie above

as furniture rather than static walls. Each is finished in progressing shades of high gloss red - the architects were going for a jewel-like effect. The first burgundy screen encloses a toilet cubicle in the entrance lobby which is glass topped to give enclosure without touching the cedar. This is carried through to the outside where the splash of colour signals the main entrance to the side of the guest wing. The next screen divides the lobby from the kitchen, while a third contains a two-way wood-burning stove and divides the bespoke kitchen from the rest of the living area. The stove's flue is the only element that touches the roof.

says Featherstone. This single space is divid-

The rear is awash with natural light and opens onto a full width balcony under an overhanging roof. To the left, sliding partitions can be used to divide off a separate area originally conceived as a music room but now occupied by a loom. A small door opens



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to reveal not a cupboard but a staircase up to a mezzanine overlooking the living area. With extensive rear glazing, this makes for an enviable office space with great views and copious amounts of built-in storage.

On the other side, another staircase leads to a delightful den. This is the eyrie – fitted out in jaunty green leatherette built-in seating, it is a cosy space with its own wood burner and was conceived as a tree house because of its proximity to the trees at the edge of the site, affording plenty of bird-watching opportunities.

The lower rear accommodation is tucked under the main living space and reached down a lofty stairwell off the kitchen. After some initial misgivings, the clients have got used to going down, rather than up, to their bedroom and now love the sensation of looking out at eye-level over the meadow. This lower level includes a second bedroom, cellar and plant room to coordinate hybrid heating sources including ground source heat pumps and solar thermals.

The guest wing provides two further bedrooms on the ground floor with a third at first floor level. This can be opened up when required and otherwise remain unheated.

Between the two wings is the sheltered courtyard, a popular outdoor eating spot along with the rear balcony. A kitchen garden is located near the entrance with a more landscaped garden to the east.

With its lofty proportions and open plan

**Above** Looking out over the meadow from the mezzanine office.

**Below** View across the meadow to the rear of the house. Bedrooms are beneath the main living space with a mezzanine office above to the right.

Credits
Architect
Featherstone Young
Structural engineer
Conisbee
Quantity surveyor Burke
Hunter Adams
M&E In-gine
Landscape architect
John Dejardin
Contractor John Perkins
Projects

### It can be a party space or really quite cosy. It's been a joy to live in

arrangement, this space could have felt a bit overwhelming for two people. It's turned out to be anything but, thanks to the warmth and variety of the materials, the scope for displaying artwork and ephemera, and the interest created by the array of screens, hidden staircases and cosy nooks and crannies.

Certainly the clients are enjoying both the house and the generous garden, which is keeping them busy in retirement. They have easily adapted to the free-flowing space, which is a sharp contrast to their far more traditional former home.

'The effect of the different levels and screens means that in a lot of ways, it doesn't feel open plan,' says Matthew. Nicky adds: 'It's such a useful space. It can be a party space or really quite cosy. It's been a joy to live in.'

And for the architects, Stonecrop is part of the practice's continuing wider interest in creating new housing in villages without sprawl and by doing so helping to revitalise declining rural communities. •









### Staying power

Diligent and determined management of the difficult years of recession has paid off for the award-winning bricks of York Handmade

The York Handmade Brick Company has established a first-class reputation for manufacturing bespoke bricks for the quality self-build residential property sector. Based at Alne, near Easingwold, in the heart of the Vale of York, York Handmade has won a host of awards for prestigious home-build projects across the UK.

As one of the largest independent brickmakers in the north of England, the company fought very hard to keep momentum going during the recession. As a result it is now well-equipped to take advantage of the upturn in the construction sector, especially in the self-build market. York Handmade has invested in the future by spending £65,000 on refurbishing its two kilns, which has increased production and efficiency. As confidence returns to the property market,

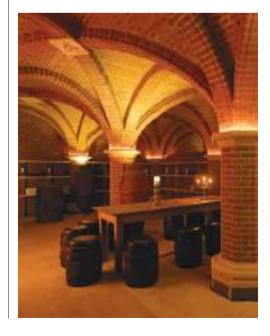
the company is reaping the benefits of this investment and of its determination to battle through the difficult times.

There is now increased demand for its award-winning bricks, which are being used across the country. For example, the company recently supplied one of its established clients, Heritage Homes, with bricks for a prestigious new housing development in Newton Abbott, Devon. This underlined York Handmade's credentials as a national supplier and the company recently provided bespoke handmade bricks for a number of outstanding new houses in Surrey, Sussex and the Home Counties.

York Handmade, which celebrates its 30th anniversary next year, has won a succession of Brick Development Association awards, the Oscars of the Brick Industry. In

**Above** Moses Dell near Radlett, a sophisticated 21st century home in woodland.

Below Tupgill Cellar, near Leyburn in North Yorkshire — 'one of the most stunning wine cellars in the north of England'.



The RIBA Journal November 2019 ribaj.com

2012, for example, the company triumphed in the Best Single House category for Four Oaks in Little Bedwyn, Wiltshire. One judge said of Four Oaks: 'This was the highlight of all my viewings this year. The design of this fantastic building is ambitious with the rhythm of the landscape setting off the brickwork.'

Other stunning houses built with York Handmade's bricks include the winner of Best Potton Home award in 2011, a magnificent self-built home at East Knoyle, near Salisbury, and Moses Dell, a luxurious and sophisticated 21st century family home in woodland near Radlett in Hertfordshire. The latter gave York Handmade the chance to showcase its increasingly popular long Maxima bricks, which are rapidly becoming its USP. Maxima bricks are much liked by architects because they lend themselves to innovative and bold designs.

Meanwhile York Handmade has helped to create 'one of the most stunning wine cellars in the north of England'. The firm supplied high-quality bricks and specials worth  $\pounds$ 70,000 for the cellar at Tupgill Park, the estate near Leyburn, which includes the Forbidden Corner visitor attraction. The



**Above** The Grange, a superb new-build house in the classic style near Sheffield.

Below Millington Hall at Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire. A 16th century heritage public house and restaurant, it was shortlisted for the Refurbishment Award at the 2005 Brick Awards.

## 'York Handmade's bricks represent around 4% of the cost of a new building, but can account for 70% of the look'

specials included rib vault bricks and vault headers, together with dog-legs, bottle-holder bricks and a unique brick door.

David Armitage, chairman of York Handmade, commented: 'In providing the bricks for the cellar at Tupgill, which is home to one of the finest and most popular tourist attractions in the county, we have consolidated our reputation as the leading supplier of bespoke and special-shaped bricks in the UK.

'This is one of the most visually stunning jobs that we have ever undertaken and we are delighted and honoured to have played our part in creating such an aesthetic feast. Apart from our traditional bricks, we also created some specials which we believe have contributed to an astonishing room.'

He added: 'It is significant to note that York Handmade's bricks represent approximately 4% of the cost of a new building, yet they can account for 70% of the look. The slight extra cost of using our bricks is marginal, yet the resulting brickwork will give a building unique character. Not only can we offer bricks in at least 10 blends, but a variation can be achieved by mixing combinations of the basic colours. We are extremely flexible in our ability to produce bricks of any size, shape or finish to customers' specifications.'

And Armitage practises what he preaches – his own home in the picturesque village of Nun Munkton, near York, was built with his own bricks.



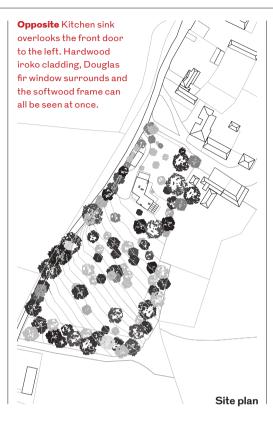
YORK HANDMADE BRICK Winchester House, Forest Lane, Alne, near Easingwold, nr York YO61 Tel: 01347 838881 darmitage@yorkhandmade.co.uk www.yorkhandmade.co.uk





As I make my way from London Charing Cross Station to the village of Benenden in the Kent countryside, Extinction Rebellion's planned two-week shutdown of central London hasn't quite got under way. It's Monday morning and the usual clash of workers and tourists is unfolding in Trafalgar Square under the autumn sun. By the time I return from my visit to Orchard House, however, the roads all around are closed off by armoured vehicles. At the top of Whitehall, eight police officers surround a hearse containing a coffin inscribed 'Our future'. People are demonstrating, shouting and singing - 135 have been arrested. As more of the erratic weather that characterised the previous week closes in, the crowd dwindles in response.

In this special issue on private homes it would have been easy to fill the pages with environmentally agnostic houses – massive weighty ones made of concrete and steel. Given the planning process, many of the projects completing now were designed years ago, and often the opportunity of building a single-family dwelling is considered as ex-



ceptional by client and architect – a one-off that excuses it from wider considerations. But with the recent belated recognition of the climate emergency that would have been wrong. Hence it was not only the timber cladding but the timber frame of this building that turned the project from a maybe on our shortlist of schemes into a definite. It shows how a large middle class detached home can have it all yet be executed in light, renewable resources. The elegant external 1960s architectural overtones added to its curiosity.

Sustainability was not, however, the primary objective of Orchard House's architect Beasley Dickson or its client. The latter was a pair of retired prominent journalists, the parents of practice director David Dickson. They had acquired a habit of living in timber houses, first on the east coast of the USA, then in an 18th century listed farmhouse in Kent, a county that abounds with timber clad and framed vernacular buildings. And they had had a lot of exposure to the contemporary timber clad architecture of North America.

'We always wanted to build our own





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### **Buildings**Orchard House

### The design had to be open plan but 'not feel baggy'

house,' says Hilary Wilce. 'Martin wanted views and it was time to do something new.' They found the site while they were living again in the US. It was everything they wanted – a former orchard, semi-self-seeded wooded 0.8ha plot on the edge of a village with views to the south of neighbours' red tiled roofs and to the north towards denser woods and the weald. Their son's practice was, of course, the only architect they considered. Yet by that time, living in a glassy condo in downtown New York, they had realised the benefit of open plan and of living with the outside coming in, and wanted that too.

The site had a small, damp 1950s house on it so the planning strategy was for a replacement dwelling. Any proposal was restricted to the height of the old roof ridge, 6.5m (though they gained a little ceiling space by moving the house further into the plot to take advantage of the slope). The new house could not be more than 1.5 times the footprint of the old. Then there was the invisible line across the rear northern half of the long site where the contours fall away – they could built up to this, but not over it. The bit beyond was con-



Above The side entrance could allow the music and boot rooms to be become an annexe.

**Below** The main front door, again sliced in, with a view of the stair through the window.

sidered more akin to agricultural land than residential.

The brief called for a house appropriate for a retired couple but generous enough to accommodate surges in guests and 'not feel baggy', explains Dickson. It had to be open plan, but not feel undefined and like living in only one room. It had to have lots of light, but not be like an aquarium. It had to feel constantly part of the outside, but not have wrap-around floor-to-ceiling glazing. Bedrooms could operate as studies, but they had to be the same size and have the same view to stop bickering over who had the best. It had to be timber clad, but not need painting or treating; Dickson senior and Wilce had had enough of that.

It also had to accommodate a possibly less mobile and able future for the clients: that they could live on one floor if they had to, and that there would be space for a lift and a potential annexe for a live-in carer. 'It was important that it should operate for the average buyer in the area too,' adds Wilce, 'a family with two children moving from Camberwell.' Dickson and Wilce also wanted a conservatory, so the design needed to incorporate one without it appearing like the usual bolt-on.

With so much at stake, it was decided that



### **Buildings**Orchard House



**Right** The recurring motif of corner post with windows either side, here in the kitchen.



- 1 Entrance patio
- 2 Hall
- 3 Music room
- 4 Sitting room
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Dining area
- 7 Conservatory
- 8 Larder
- 9 Utility
- 10 Bootroom
- 11 Annexe entrance, hall and shower room
- 12 Guest bedroom

#### IN NUMBERS

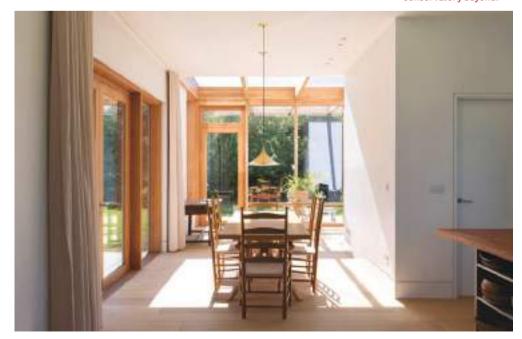
£650,000

total contract cost

260m<sup>2</sup> GIFA

£2,250 cost/m<sup>2</sup>

**Below** Looking the other way from the kitchen to the dining area and conservatory beyond.





the other director of the practice, Melissa Beasley, would act as the intermediary in the case of profound disagreements. There weren't any. Instead the design emerged out of deep family history and knowledge to fill the permitted space from the inside out. The roof became flat to accommodate the 2.9m ceilings that encourage creative thinking. The volume followed a similar elongated V-shape plan to the existing house and attached artist's studio, the angle between the two wings reminiscent of Amyas Connell's 1931 High & Over modernist house in Amersham.

Viewed from the lane, Orchard House is set back on the site with one long elevation along that invisible planning use line, parkland falling away down the slope to the north, the southern lawn set between the wings, parking on the other side. At the point of arrival, however, around a separate garage/ workshop constructed using the same timber frame and iroko wood cladding as the main building, only the end of one wing is visible, the other just pokes out around the opposite side. Together the volumes appear as a small informal cluster of pavilions, the two ends stepping down to reduce massiveness. Overhanging timber canopies stretch out to allow the landscape to slip past underneath and for plants to grow up for solar shading.

The end of the drive takes you to the precipice where the main entrance is cut away from the turn of the V, away from the arrival elevation. The opening in plan forms a sense of enclosure before you enter, enhanced by the sliced-in front door with a built-in bench to the right, and ensures visitors step into the centre of the house. Inside, the ground floor maximises views to the south and west, while on the first floor the focus is to the north and east. Views and connections all around the house pass through the double-height hall





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### **Buildings**Orchard House

that brings the components of the building together, and between the open treads of the gracious curving steel and wood stair.

Downstairs there are only three principal rooms. The music room can be shut off with the boot room and WC with shower to create an annexe for a carer or nanny. The sitting room sits at the most southerly part of the house and a kitchen-dining space leads into the glazed conservatory that was such a challenge. The larder and utility room interrupt what could have been a huge single space. Instead areas connect visually via full-height pivot doors and through the expanses of glazing out and back into the house. Door heights drop down for the music and sitting rooms to create an increased sense of intimacy and cosiness. Upstairs, the north facing wing is devoted to the master suite; the guest bedroom faces south and the study bedrooms east.

Externally, the arrangement of timber boards on the facade does a similar thing. The mix of horizontal and vertical with portrait and landscape oriented glazing keeps lines of sight satisfyingly looping around and over the building, interrupted only by the sunken back doorways to the kitchen, annexe and boot room. The method not only creates interest, but the longer and shorter board sections were an efficient use of timber. The two red brick chimneys, one for each wing, conceptually lock this lightweight building into place between them. Likewise, the softwood timber structure, Douglas fir cills, window and door backs and surrounds maintain material connections between exterior and interior. The repeated corner detail with glazed panels either side of a timber post is a motif used at large and small scales throughout the building, always giving that extra unexpected aspect in, out or through. At scale, for example by the kitchen sink, it's majestic, whereas by the entrance it's rather cute.

Internal finishes are simple – oak floors, plasterboard, tradesman kitchen units and doors, deeply fossilled light grey kitchen worktops quarried from the same source of stone Michelangelo liked to use. There's a

It's easy to see how liveable the house is for its current owners or anyone else Credits

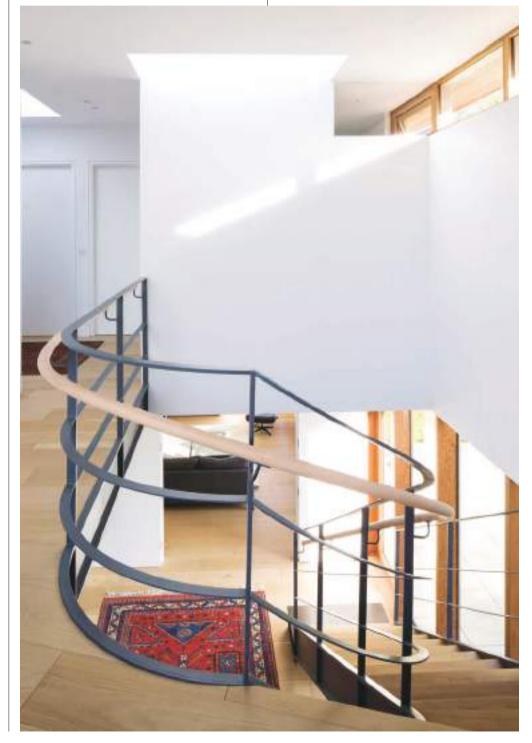
Architect Beasley
Dickson

Client Martin Dickson and
Hilary Wilce

Structural engineer
Foster Structures
Doors + fixed windows
Graham Nunn Joinery

External cladding Brooks
Bros

Below The stair is beautiful when seen from outside but is less successful in its positioning so close to the glazing on the ground floor. laundry shute, interfloor lofts snuck in above WCs and other more practical rooms to store suitcases and the paraphernalia not required every day. It's easy to see how liveable the building is for its current owners or anyone else. The house is a smart, exquisitely detailed suburban villa, but it is of the orchard and countryside too. It shows there's an architectural way in timber, which we need to attempt now more than ever, for all.



The RIBA Journal November 2019 ribaj.com

## Steel enamel is the sustainable material of choice for bathrooms

Kaldewei optimises lifecycle costs with resource-efficient manufacturing



With over 100 years' experience across four generations, Kaldewei is a pioneer of sustainable manufacturing. The company's portfolio of over 600 shower surfaces, washbasins and baths, and over 150 design awards, makes it a partner of choice for architects and designers in all aspects of sustainable bathroom design.

Kaldewei guarantees optimised lifecycle costs through resource-efficient manufacturing, superior material properties and longevity for its bathroom solutions.

Steel enamel is a highly sustainable material that contributes to conserving resources. It is ideal for sustainably designed buildings and Kaldewei has been awarded an Environmental Product Declaration that complies with ISO 14025 and EN 15804. It is also a member of the US Green Building Council LEED.

Kaldewei's superior steel enamel fuses steel and glass for exceptional toughness. Despite frequent use, the smooth surface shows no scratches and has no place for dirt or bacteria to settle. This makes the use of aggressive, ecologically harmful cleaning products unnecessary. Kaldewei underlines the quality and longevity of its material with a 30-year warranty, ensuring its bathroom solutions continue to look as beautiful as they did on installation.

Kaldewei has an ethical and ecological commitment to the environment and offers a sustainable material choice that supports the UK government's carbon neutral 2050 target. All its bathroom solutions are 100% recyclable and the company avoids the use of colour additives in production. In 2017, Kaldewei won a Green Good Design Award – one of the world's most prestigious sustainability awards.

Kaldewei also has an extensive portfolio of award-winning bathroom solutions, from over 100,000 options for designing a floor-level shower area, to washbasins for all installation types – undercounter, countertop and wall mounted – and baths including the luxury Meisterstücke

Kaldewei Conoflat shower surface, Kaldewei Silenio washbasin and Kaldewei Meisterstueck Incava Bath

freestanding collection, showering baths and compact baths perfect for small bathrooms.

Creating the 'perfect match' in a single material in the bathroom, in either one harmonious colour or as a stand-alone colour statement, has never been easier thanks to the exclusive matt shades of the Coordinated Colours Collection.

Visit Kaldewei at Stand B40 at the Sleep + Eat 2019 event at London's Olympia from 19-20 November and see its bathroom solutions on display, including a 'Material Experience' zone where visitors can put Kaldewei steel enamel to the test. •

#### KALDEWEI

For more information please visit www.kaldewei.co.uk or contact Kaldewei on 01480 498 053

#### Drawn to the lawn

The brief was for strong links to the garden; AFL delivered

Words: Tszwai So Photographs: Christopher Brailey

**Below** Exposed beams will weather differently indoors and outdoors.



A five-minute walk from Tufnell Park tube station towards Highgate, up a gentle climb, brings a large, detached, mid-Victorian villa in sight. The London setting has long since turned its buff bricks dark brown. For the last three decades of the 20th century it was a dental clinic, before being converted back into a single dwelling in recent years.

The principal elevation of the original house is three bays wide, flanked by later single storey extensions on each side, one of them a garage. The layout and the fenestration were typical Victorian speculative pattern book design; only three small French doors linked the rooms to the rear garden.

When the client bought the property in 2014, she felt strongly about opening the back of the house to better connect with the garden: 'It (the property) needed some love,' she said. Without any previous experience of commissioning an architect, she short-listed several from the internet including Architecture for London (AFL). It was a relatively new office founded by a talented and entrepreneurial young architect and RIBAJ Rising Star Ben Ridley, who had a very clear road map for his emerging practice.

Ridley understands that in the age of social media the old-school architectural business model of leveraging personal connections is out of touch. Naming the practice Architecture for London was a smart move, pushing his firm up the Google rankings. This, together with a website that genuinely communicates to the customers rather than other architects, resulted in patrons chasing after his practice, not vice versa.

Ridley was the first to be interviewed by the client and he immediately won her over; she appointed AFL straight away without meeting any of the other architects on the shortlist. His swift but effective drawing captured and expanded the client's vision for her home. It was done with a deep understanding of the rules within a conservation area, so it was no surprise that the scheme sailed through the system with no objections nor complications. The completed extension looks pretty much the same as the napkin sketch which set the tone for the project.

It was a full retrofit job, but the most drastic interventions were on the ground floor. Here a 17 metre wide rear extension, more than 4m deep, spans five bays, adding over  $60\text{m}^2$  internal floor space to the house. It is clad in Portland stone, which Ridley says is





## AFL understands that the old-school architectural business model is outdated

a nod to the Chiswick House Café by Caruso St John, with its shelly texture and natural variations.

This extension replaced a small two-storey one previously occupying the central bay. On the first floor, the vacuum left by this demolition was filled by a new volume, also clad in Portland stone. Externally the extension manifests itself as an interesting interplay between solids and voids, and seen from the rear garden it gives the impression that the white cube now in the central bay was deliberately pushed up to leave space underneath for the outdoor barbecue table.

The interior space cannot be fully appreciated without taking into account how the whole of the ground floor has been rearranged, while retaining some of the walls. The new layout essentially consists of three large 'chambers' defined by the three bays on the principal elevation running parallel to each other from front to back. They are connected by large fire-rated pocket doors kept open most of the time – somehow AFL managed to convince the inspector to sign them off – making the transitions from one chamber to another less abrupt.

The central chamber is the entrance lobby, where your eyes are drawn naturally to the back of the house and a new solid oak door with a large clear glass panel in the middle, framing the view of the garden in the distance.

The chamber to the left is the new parlour and here all the Victorian fireplaces, cornices and ceiling roses have been sympathetically preserved and restored. The chamber to the right accommodates a sitting area to the front and the kitchen in the middle, unified by a dropped ceiling with peripheral LED strips. It also contains the dining space to the rear within the new extension.

At the garden end of all three chambers

**Left** Extensive glazing in chunky oak frames delivers the connection to the garden.

**Top left** The central white cube appears pushed up to make space for a barbecue table.



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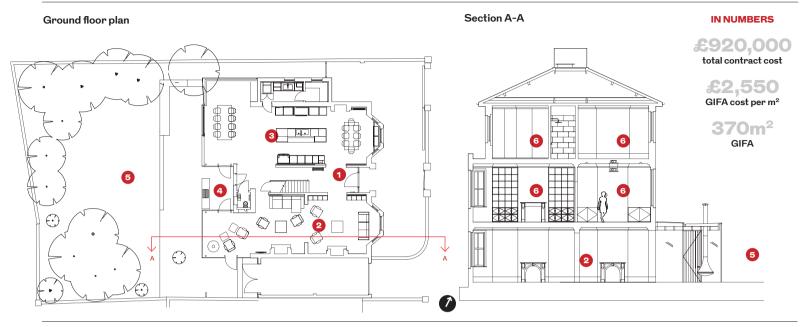
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AFL used expensive and chunky solid oak frames almost 3.5m high, glazed with large panes that fulfil the client's brief for better connection with the garden and outdoor space.

For a 4m deep single storey rear extension, the standard solution would be to run the roof joists or rafters from back to front, but AFL decided to run them parallel to the rear wall of the house, avoiding an awkward clash where the new beams would have met the original house - an arrangement the practice had used before in a smaller scale extension in north London. Top notch concrete beams prefabricated in Denmark were used to satisfy the unusual span with smaller sections, and because they could be left exposed both internally and externally. Nevertheless the beams outside will no doubt weather differently to the ones inside, and only time will tell whether they are worthwhile. Externally, the Portland stone wall on the ground floor was skilfully set at a slight angle to the rear wall line, a barely noticeable but a delightful touch.

The influence of the client's preferences is much more obvious upstairs. For example, on the first landing one is greeted with a full height replica of a tube station wall, complete with the Tufnell Park name. There is also a bath tub in the middle of the master bedroom; it is a private retreat, so why not? AFL's measured rear extension, the sympathetic restoration of Victorian features on the ground floor and the eccentricity of the decor on upper floors make a fine cocktail.

**Architect** Architecture for London Structural engineer Michael Hadi Associates OS Baker Mallett

- Entrance hall
- Parlour
- Kitchen, dining, living
- Covered barbeque area
- Garden
- Bedroom

**Below** The prefabricated concrete beams in the dining area.



There is a logic behind every design decision, and it's evident that the practice is experimenting with something new every time it secures a commission, building on the knowledge acquired during previous projects.

Perhaps it is time for the canonical history of architecture to treat house extensions more seriously as a typology. Such projects offer young and talented architects a platform on which they can test out fresh ideas early in their careers: one can trace the origin of the sculptural quality of Alison Brooks' mature works to her early extensions, for instance. A clever ceiling detail found in a modest extension today could crown a museum hall tomorrow.

AFL seem to be less bothered about intellectualising its designs, but more interested in the act of making buildings. In a sense it is the product of a new era of social media, which has no precedent - and the social media have no time for obscure architectural theories.

It might be a bit premature to predict how this charming yet pragmatic extension in Tufnell Park might influence architecture as a whole. Although stylistically it clearly has a familiar aura at least partially inspired by a certain school of thought, the architects behind it resist any suggestions of a house style - it's too tempting for architectural historians and critics to only look out for repeating visual traits in an architect's body of work, overlooking the new thinking that goes into each project.

ribaj.com The RIBA Journal November 2019



## 2: Intelligence



#### Alex Wright



With other reviews of architectural education on hold, the Quality Assurance Agency has taken the lead in updating regulation. As it goes out to consultation, Alex Wright, chair for the QAA's Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement and head of architecture at the University of Bath, explains

What is a subject benchmark statement anyway?

It has been nine years since the last one. What has changed?

How have you responded?

Does flexibility mean less control of quality?

Can you ensure courses will have the right resources studios, IT etc?

How does it address the climate emergency and safety?

Do both architects and educators comment on the consultation?

It describes how subjects are taught and the competencies graduates are required to have. It comes from the Quality Assurance Agency which regulates higher education institutions. So the statement covers the academic discipline of architecture including those courses without RIBA validation or ARB prescription.

Student debt is now very high. Both the pressures on institutions and the opportunities available to them have changed enormously in the last nine years. Student apprenticeships are just one aspect of that.

We have looked at the framework for courses to make them more flexible and to allow innovation and foster best practice. This might, for example, be around climate change or different modes of study. At the heart of the benchmark statement are the criteria within the EU Professional Qualifications Directive (PQD) which both the ARB and RIBA share, as do the UIA and many other institutions. Even post Brexit these are likely to remain important for international mutual recognition (the PQD also governs roles on nurses and doctors).

If, in a changing landscape, you don't allow for change you end up with the status quo and lost opportunities. It's about setting expectations and promoting best practice.

We have signposted the resources that we think are needed to support architectural pedagogy and studio-based learning – and what is necessary in order to be successful. It is important as universities, like any other sector, are under pressure on productivity.

It has additional emphasis on environmental design and various other issues. If there are major developments in these areas, say around the recommendations of the Hackitt Review, it can be revisited.

Yes, it is about the future education of the profession and consultation is open to all.

To comment go to qaa.ac.uk

#### **ONLY ON RIBAJ.COM**

The reasons for a performance gap are often unknown to the design team but a 'light touch' post occupancy evaluation can reveal what has happened

Fionn Stevenson has six easy steps to effective POE: ribaj. com/sixstepspoe



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



## RIBA targets young minds

The RIBA's Clore Learning Centre hopes to inspire budding architects

#### **Eleanor Young**

Could just a couple of rooms get you excited about architecture? Well yes, they could, if they are the Clore Learning Centre in the RIBA's 66 Portland Place.

But of course they are not aimed at architects, that would be preaching to the converted. These rooms, that officially launched last month along with a learning terrace and study room, have already seen tens of adults and children through their doors.

The design, compared to most public learning spaces, is remarkable. But before we get into that, the thing that really makes them stand out are the education programmes delivered here. Three dimensions, materials and spatial thinking, animate the space. The school-based learning, the National Schools Programme, is free to state schools – with the biggest take up from primary schools – and is delivered by trained educators and architects, many of them architectural ambassadors who are also in practice. This is also taken out to schools across the UK.

Then there are summer schools which have attracted frustrated engineers who want to explore architecture, and print and book makers or students looking to build up their portfolio. Study days and family takeover days of 66 also use the space, as do more theory based classes – currently a six week Bauhaus course running weekly sessions. Tapping into the expertise and collections of the RIBA is at the core of the programme. Marking the launch of the centre, the RIBA held a free Festival of Learning at the end of October.



Before this, delivering education was a struggle here, working in small, dark rooms and carting materials round the building. Clore Duffield Foundation funding brought certainty to the new plans and four spaces were identified to make up the new centre: the studio with a showcase at the entrance, a repurposed terrace and study room. Also on the fourth floor are the easily accessed library and collection, and the council chamber which is borrowed for break out spaces.

An RIBA competition for the space led to 47 expressions of interest and five practices were paid an honorarium to work on designs. Hayhurst and Co won with an entry built on the idea of sensing space – to help people 'understand that architecture is all around us even though we may not realise it ... that architecture is not something that is only experienced in a great monument in the centre of the city but surrounds us every day, everywhere we go.'

The studio works well with the art deco of 66 Portland Place, keeping the material richness of its public spaces. But it catapults you into now with its warm bamboo floors and joinery, the brass frames for hanging displays or curtains and oversized steps so that classes arriving can drop bags into drawers beneath and sit comfortably before getting involved in activities at the table. In cabinets along the outside wall beautifully lit models glow with creativity. It is very different from the stripped back classrooms with display boards and plastic trays where most of our children are taught. It is a room where you feel the potential and a room for exploring the excitement of architecture.

**Above** The centre is designed for learning for all ages.

**Below** Oversized steps along one wall make an instant auditorium.





#### **DESIGN BY WATCHING AND LEARNING**

The collaboration between the RIBA and Clore Duffield Foundation really took off once the project moved into design specifics. An inclusive approach involved visits to observe spaces in use at other Clore learning centres, and RIBA learning sessions at the existing facilities. Hayhurst's Jonathan Nicholls comments: "It's fascinating seeing different age groups – for younger school groups, you see them using the floor a lot to work around the space's limitations, putting presentation materials on the floor and standing to see them. Observation is key to understanding the positives and negatives."

By watching, learning, and exchanging years of knowledge and experience, the team was able to identify and address apparently simple but vital questions, such as: Where do we store bags and coats? Is there running water, and a sink that doesn't splash? Can you reconfigure the space quickly from one session to the next? Where do you store chairs that aren't in use? Do you even need chairs? What's the best way to display work?

The process yielded innovative and sometimes unexpected solutions, each designed to show learners the benefits that an architecturally imagined environment could provide.

#### Simple seating

When a class of excited schoolchildren arrives, the tiered bench seating means they can all sit quickly without needing to set up chairs and tables. The concealed storage also provides somewhere to stow bags and coats quickly so they're out of the way during activities.

#### Multi-purpose fixtures

Showcase cabinets serve both as displays for work done and valuable storage. The white facings, made of recycled yogurt pots, provide acoustic damping and support shutters that provide the darkness needed for projection. When closed at night, the shutters drastically improve the thermal efficiency of the original single-glazed windows.

Above A large open space in the Clore Learning Centre's studio can have tables and chairs for model making. **Below** ... or it can be cleared and closed up for a different sort of space.

**Bottom** Little niches in the joinery allow for display of earlier work.





#### Using light to shape the experience

Tuneable studio lighting offers a range of atmospheres to suit different activities. The learning team can change the colour temperature from a cool blue daylight, which promotes alertness and concentration during learning activities, to a warmer yellow light that's more conducive to group creative thinking. Windows within the cabinetry also have shutters, involving users more tangibly in controlling natural light.

#### Ventilation for better learning

An air source heat pump takes warmth from the natural air outside and reduces levels of carbon dioxide inside the centre — a proven way to enhance learning levels. An air handling unit maintains conditions in a crowded room while the shutters keep noise pollution out.

#### Playing with space

Areas can be partitioned quickly and easily, providing an elegant lesson in use of space. Ceiling-hung brass activity frames make it fast and simple to hang projects on display and can also be used to suspend models and examples. Anchor points enable larger display structures to be secured in place.

#### **Celebrating materials**

The space showcases materials that invite conversation — those that are unfamiliar, environmentally progressive or have some other resonance. Bamboo — which can be grown quickly and efficiently — is widely used. Recycled yogurt pot plastic panels tell a story in the flecks of paper and foil they display. Meanwhile brass fittings echo the bronze and brass used throughout the 1930s building.

#### The Big Sink

Clore Duffield Foundation's guide to ideal learning spaces takes the name The Big Sink, making the point that the smallest details (down to the specification of sinks) need careful consideration. The design addresses such points, with splash-free stainless steel sinks that help contribute to an environment streamlined for learning.

Pete Cornes and Thomas Heath

ribaj.com The RIBA Journal November 2019

## Bringing creativity, play and care to the built environment





The Dulux ColourFutures<sup>TM</sup> 2020 palettes include Creativity, Play and Care, all created to help professionals to capture the mood of the moment in their designs.

An expert panel of colour designers, trend forecasters, architects and editors from around the world developed the palettes to embody the nation's mood on the approach of a new decade.

Fuelled by a greater understanding of the impact society is making on the planet, the universal theme for 2020 reflects a desire to create more opportunities to experience 'A Human Touch' in our lives at a time when advances in technology are making us feel increasingly disconnected from each other.

The Care palette combines a series of colours that have been chosen to allow professionals to create spaces to reconnect. Ideal for use in a healthcare facility, the mix of gentle neutrals including Dulux Colour of the Year 2020 Tranquil Dawn<sup>TM</sup>, allows one colour to flow into the other.

Inspired by the horizon of a lazy spring morning, Tranquil  $Dawn^{TM}$  creates a soothing space delivering an undertone of calm to a hospital environment, which can be combined with tactile furnishings to bring warmth and softness.

Play is the palette that brings transformative energy to a space - creating buildings that allow users to be open and receptive to a playful experience.

Research tells us that 42 per cent of people are seeking out experiences that make them feel like a child again - and it is this play palette that designers in the hospitality and leisure sector can utilise to maximise this desire.

The Play palette energy creates a dynamic look that can be combined with simple and functional furniture to provide the perfect anecdote to the stresses of modern life.

The Creativity palette is rich and highly saturated. It can be used in a modern context against florals or printed cottons to create spaces that are moody and eclectic, yet allow us to celebrate individuality.





Dulux Trade is encouraging design specifiers to facilitate society's need to switch off and take stock; to reflect on how they can promote human connections through design, creating outcomes that will improve occupants physical and mental wellbeing.



To view all the palettes and download the ColourFutures™ 2020 specifier brochure please visit www.duluxtrade.co.uk





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## Updates to the Plan of Work

Sustainability, BIM and procurement have all affected the latest overhaul. So what has changed?

#### Dale Sinclair

The RIBA Plan of Work's most significant update in its 56 year history was undertaken in 2013. That introduced Stage 0, which ensures a building project is the best means of achieving the client requirements, and Stage 7, to acknowledge the life of a building in use until a new Stage 0 – and project – begins.

Now, after five years of use and feedback from architects and the broader construction industry, including clients and architects, the Plan of Work has again been updated and the 2019 version will be issued this month. The free-to-download guidance now con-

tains comprehensive sections on how each project stage works and an expanded glossary which details how each of the topics underpinning the Plan (defined by bold capitalized terms such as Project Brief or Architectural Concept) contribute to a project's success. There is also a section on project strategies and how they allow a multitude of topics, from sustainability to health and safety, to be addressed as a project progresses through each stage. The digital version will be refreshed in 2020.

#### Value of aftercare

The RIBA Sustainable Futures Group assisted the development of the 2019 Plan. Its project strategy section replaces the Green Overlay to provide advice on sustainability outcomes and show the value of undertaking aftercare activities during Stage 6 – including a light touch post occupancy evaluation before the work of the project team concludes.

Replacing the BIM Overlay is a section looking at the increasing complexity of information requirements. Although the pencil or CAD are still used on many projects, more have matured around UK level 2 BIM processes and are nudging towards the challenges of using next generation digital deliverables. These will require less reliance on 2D and more emphasis on keeping models live, using embedded data to drive evidence-based design processes or for asset

An expanded glossary details how each of the topics underpinning the Plan contribute to a project's success

**Below** RIBA Plan of Work 2019 – stages with tweaked names.

and facilities management purposes. A glossary of current BIM terms is also included.

The 2019 Plan of Work responds to feedback on how Stage 2 works and particularly to different approaches to the timing of planning applications. It acknowledges adjustments required at the Stage 3 and 4 interface, depending on the procurement strategy.

Industry has adopted terms such as Stage 3 minus or Stage 4 plus, on the basis that information needs to be extracted from the design process outside the main stage gateways. The RIBA does not recommend use of these terms. Caution is required; for example, it might be possible to extract information in



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#### Intelligence RIBA Plan of Work

the middle of Stage 3 in order to submit a planning application. However, if the stage has not been completed it is unlikely the information will have been fully co-ordinated or includes the appropriate outputs from every member of the design team. Simply, where information is needed at a mid-stage gateway, clarity is needed on both the deliverables and the tasks underpinning them. Also, of course, when the stage is completed in the future, it may require additional rework as a result of splitting the stage into two.

#### Managing the information

The Plan of Work reinforces the intention that Stage 4 includes all the design information required for manufacturing and construction. Stage 4 is the most complex to navigate because the procurement strategy dictates when information for the design team and specialist subcontractors will be produced. The guidance offers advice on this and looks at the need for early definition of how far the design team information will go at Stage 4: will it be descriptive or prescriptive (a decision influenced by, but independent of, procurement)? Will the information be produced by the same design team? Will Stage 4 information be produced before or after the building contract has been signed?

The guidance also acknowledges the challenges of embracing modern methods of construction and the fact that these may need to be considered earlier in the process to avoid traditional construction being embedded in the design.

The final core change is ensuring clarity between the Stage 2 and 3 gateways. It acknowledges that Stage 2 is about getting the architectural concept right and having it signed off by the client and key project stakeholders, while incorporating strategic engineering items and closing the brief. Stage 3 is not about changing the concept. It is about design studies for portions of the building, detailed engineering analysis, adding detail to project strategies and getting the cost plan right. Most importantly, it is about the lead designer managing this information until the building is spatially co-ordinated and ready either to be sent for planning permission, and/or for Stage 4 to begin, acknowledging that draw-down from Stage 4 may be required to conclude the building contract. •

Dale Sinclair is director of technical practice at AECOM



**Above** The Plan of Work 2019 has been updated on sustainability in line with the UN sustainable development goals. It is important to get the process right from Stage 0, as Waugh Thistleton Architects' timber floored offices at Orsman Road, London, show.

#### SUSTAINABILITY CHANGES TO PLAN OF WORK

The unprecedented level of severe climate events indicates that the pace of climate change is accelerating rapidly. The time for words is over. We must act with urgency and deliver real and significant carbon reductions in our built environment.

In response, the RIBA declared a climate and biodiversity emergency earlier this year, and will launch the 2030 Challenge (see page 101) – to target net zero carbon for all new and retrofitted buildings, and to lobby the government to make this a mandatory requirement.

Within this context the RIBA Sustainable Futures Group has been developing a series of sustainability guides to support the new RIBA Plan of Work 2019. These new guides replace previous out of date documents from 2011 and 2013. The overriding aims are to distil and simplify the existing and varied sustainability guidance to create a set of clear measurable sustainable outcomes and targets aligned with the United Nations sustainability development goals.

#### RIBA PLAN OF WORK 2019 INCLUDES THREE MAJOR CHANGES FROM THE 2013 VERSION:

#### Sustainable outcomes

A key change in emphasis is to challenge architects and design teams to design with a focus on sustainable outcomes from the outset of the project. These outcomes and associated targets should be defined and agreed with the client during Stage 1 briefing, reality-checked throughout the design and construction process, and finally verified in Stages 6 and 7 post occupancy evaluation. The definition of sustainable outcomes and associated metrics, together with current tools for measurement and verification, are included in the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes Guide.

#### Plan for use

The Plan for Use is RIBA's interpretation of the 2014 Soft Landings Framework produced by BSRIA and the Usable Buildings Trust, and is one of the new sustainability guides. It aims to encourage a more 'in-use' approach to design, within both the architectural profession and the wider construction industry. The RIBA sees the role of the architect as central to this outcome-based design approach, with hopes that the process defined by Plan for Use will translate into a positive change within practice, discipline and profession.

#### Sustainability strategy

The sustainability strategy is the third key update which maps the sustainable outcomes and plan for use principles through all stages of the Plan of Work 2019. The strategy reinforces the requirement to appoint a sustainability champion and create a context focused sustainability strategy at the outset of the project. Key actions and deliverables are identified at each stage of the plan of work. A major development is to encourage architects to carry out a 'light-touch' post occupancy valuation at the end of Stage 6.

Many of the UK's leading developers already recognise the holistic benefits of achieving sustainable outcomes, for example reducing carbon emissions, enhancing biodiversity, improving occupants' health, lowering operational running costs, and adding significant social and economic added value.

The RIBA believes it is the duty of all architects and the construction industry to lead the transition to a sustainable future that delivers the UN sustainable goals.

Gary Clark is associate director and head of sustainability at WilkinsonEvre Architects

The RIBA Journal November 2019



#### More for less

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Two experts offer a realistic assessment of the viability of tall timber buildings

#### Paul Fast and Ian King

Until recently, the plyscraper or wooden high-rise was considered an impossible flight of fancy. Timber is one of the oldest building materials, yet in the UK it has been mainly used for housing. The Great Fire of London in 1666 left a deep negative association between wooden buildings and fire. And, while wood does evoke feelings of warmth, it is prone to warping and twisting. However, recent innovation means that timber frames are now being used for high-rise and commercial projects too. There are hundreds of wooden framed projects under construction, with over 400 mid-rise buildings being built in Canada alone. Paul Fast of Canadian engineering firm Fast + Epp, which was responsible for Tallwood House at Brock Commons in Vancouver, for a time the tallest timber building proposal in the world, discusses whether plyscrapers will become mainstream and how soon. Overleaf Ian King of Zeroignition explains how to mitigate fire risk and the latest timber innovations.

#### Will plyscrapers become mainstream?

Timber towers are growing in popularity, capturing the collective imagination of built environment professionals. As architects and engineers, we see a unique allure in the prospect of building something that spans longer or rises higher using sustainable materials. Although stretching our limits is a noble objective, doing so just to secure bragging rights misses the mark.



When Fast + Epp was tasked with designing the structure for Brock Commons, the question was not can it be done (no brainer), or we should do it because it would be the tallest timber tower in the world (vain), but rather, can we do it economically? We needed to ask whether we could build a timber structure, with all its inherent sustainability advantages, for the same price as a more conventional steel or concrete building.

There's no avoiding that wood is the weakest material of the 'big three', so it would make sense for heavy lifting to be done by the stronger materials and lighter lifting by the weaker. When building taller with timber, column and wall sizes increase, reducing usable floor space, which can put developers off. The taller the building, the more these realities point to hybrid structures for the foreseeable future, at least until we can quickly grow stronger wood species, which I believe may happen soon. What's more, differential settlement issues due to elastic deformation, shrinkage and creep are exacerbated when building taller, particularly in the case of hybrid construction where core elements are steel or concrete and columns are timber. These designs require rigorous fine tuning which can also affect costs.

Acoustic considerations also have a significant impact on the economics of timber construction. Dry systems are increasingly being researched and developed to replace conventional concrete topping; however, too little mass can be counterproductive from a

## Stretching our limits can be noble – or vain

wind loading perspective when building taller. Successful development of economical acoustic solutions will drive down the cost of timber alternatives.

Weather factors can affect tall timber construction but the development of inexpensive, temporary rain-enclosure systems will enhance the viability of taller timber towers that are often subject to lengthy periods of rain exposure during construction.

On the other hand, harnessing the twoway spanning capability of cross-laminated timber (CLT) will enhance the viability of mass timber in tall buildings. Technically, if CLT slabs are point supported to create a structural system akin to a concrete flat plate, beams are eliminated, erection time reduced, building height diminished and building services more easily installed. However, this approach only works for buildings that can accommodate tighter column spacing such as hotels and residential towers.

'Soft' factors are driving the growing demand for tall timber construction. For some office environments, funky is now in and

Above The world's tallest timber building, Voll Arkitekter's 85.4m Miøstårnet tower, Norway. **Below** Mjøstårnet interior, timber elements and furniture carried through the design.



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T-bar ceilings are out. Many tenants are call-

ing for exposed timber and ample daylight

- in essence a warmer ambience. Having to meet two-hour fire ratings for tall buildings

will, however, once again move the cost dial in the wrong direction as structure either

must be encapsulated or allowance made for

thicker structure that relies on charring for

tering and rapidly growing timber is also on

the rise. Certainly, tall buildings in dense urban centres with high construction costs

lend themselves to timber construction, with

off-site component prefabrication resulting in faster construction and quieter job sites.

in taller buildings. Of course, overcoming

public fear about fire still has a way to go, notwithstanding extensive research results

that should increasingly allay such concerns.

Building codes are rapidly changing to adjust

to new timber realities. In light of these factors, does it make sense to build taller with

wood? In the right location for the right building type, it absolutely does. However,

let's not force a square peg into a round hole. When your timber structure starts groaning, remember there are other materials that

Essentially, the metaphorical door is daily opening wider and wider for timber

The demand for more sustainable construction systems such as carbon-seques-

fire resistance.

#### Intelligence **Plyscrapers**

#### WHERE WE ARE NOW AND WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT

New guidelines

The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) recently issued revised guidelines that recognise timber as structural material. A tall wooden building is defined as being over 14 storeys or 50m. At 85.4m, Mjøstårnet in Brumunddal, Norway, is the world's tallest timber building. This 18-storey mixed-use building contains apartments, the Wood Hotel, a swimming pool, office space and a restaurant. It was designed by Norwegian practice Voll Arkitekter and built using cross-laminated timber (CLT) thin layers of wood glued together in a criss-cross pattern. This alternation of the grain direction strengthens the panels and stops them warping if they get wet.

Fire safety is one reason why timber has not been considered a realistic alternative to concrete or steel, as seen with the blaze at timber-clad Worcester Park in Sutton in early September. However, proper engineering design, correct material choice and effective installation coupled with a robust inspection regime ensure that timber constructions can be as fire safe as concrete and steel options. And, while it is a combustible material, timber can provide the two-hour window required for fire protection due to its slow rate of charring (BSEN 1995-1-2: 2004). For example, The American Wood Council conducted extensive testing into CLT apartment buildings and found that, after the furnishings and contents had been consumed by fire, the exposed CLT self-extinguished due to

#### The importance of design

In the wake of the Grenfell disaster, fire protection design has moved to the top of the design agenda as the challenges posed to buildings by fire are increasingly recognised to be systemic rather than merely product-related. Good design incorporates active protection, which requires human/ computer-based action or motion to trigger a response (fire service alerts, sprinklers, fire extinguishers and the use of fire blankets for example). It also incorporates passive fire protection where measures such as fireresistant walls, floors and doors, fire retardant materials and compartmentation have been designed in.

Most timber buildings under construction, including all the taller ones, use engineered timber such as CLT. This has been treated with fire-retardant adhesive, which ensures passive fire protection is designed into the building. Meanwhile Part B of the Building Regulations requires installation of sprinklers in certain circumstances, such as new residential blocks over 30m tall.

Top left PLP's Oakwood Tower proposal for the City is 304.8m tall.

Right Model of PLP's Oakwood Tower 2, the Netherlands

the char formed on the wood.

#### Certifiably sound

Innovation has been driven by policy and the relaxation of wood-related construction codes across the globe. This relaxation has been partly driven by wood's sustainable benefits and the need for reduced carbon emissions, with studies finding wooden homes to emit 69% less than

Oakwood Tower, a wooden skyscraper designed by PLP and proposed for the Barbican, would, if constructed, be the City's most eco-friendly building. It would also be the second tallest building in London after the Shard. Architects have the ambition, yet safety has to be at the top of the agenda. With the continuing innovation in building materials and approaches, it's time to look at certification once more. All construction materials need to be have been fully tested for thermal, acoustic, fire, airtightness and environmental properties. This process needs to be properly certified through a third party regulator, rather than being self-certified. Marking your own homework, which is completely legal in the current climate, could lead to potential disaster. The fast pace of innovation means statutory accreditation of materials and an enhanced inspection regime need to be top of the industry's agenda.

lan King, chief operating officer, Zeroignition



Paul Fast, director, Fast + Epp

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## SterlingOSB Zero boosts young South African lives

A village creche built in SterlingOSB Zero by Nottingham architecture students has transformed life for Limpopo youngsters and their community



A timber 'creche', built in just 20 days by architecture students from the University of Nottingham, will provide the young children of Deerpark in South Africa with their crucial first learning environment.

The 500m<sup>2</sup> Early Childhood Development Centre, in Mortusi village outside Tzaneen, Limpopo, is the result of a partnership between the Design + Build Studio at the Department of Architecture + Built Environment and local NGO the Thusanang Trust, which trains head teachers to run creches for children up to six years old.

It is one of nine creches built since 2010 by the partners and will provide classrooms, play structures, a kitchen office, and storage for 79 children and teachers.

The project was designed and primarily funded by the 50+ architecture students and 10+ staff at Design+Build Studio, and students were flown to South Africa. It was



built with support from local subcontractors and UK-based engineer Price and Myers. For many students it was their first end-to-end experience of construction.

Norbord SterlingOSB Zero, used in both temporary and permanent applications, was critical to the success of the project. When students arrived on site, with timber and tools, they had less than three weeks to complete the build from the foundations up. A lack of support facilities meant the first day had to be spent erecting temporary structures, including a site office, a kitchen, a workshop, a rubble tip and shade structures, all out of particleboard.

Peter Russell, assistant professor and Studio lead, told RIBAJ: 'It is OSB's ease of use that makes these types of project possible; without a material like that I can't think how we would have done it.'

The main building, with a pitched roof that extends over outside learning areas, features roughly 400 sheets of particleboard, specified to take advantage of standardisation and construction speed.

'We needed something strong, rigid and predictable, in terms of regularity. Students are an unskilled labour force, so our materials had to do as many favours as possible; the fact that every sheet of OSB is exactly the same was one of those favours,' says Russell. In addition, the product's factory straight edge was key in this rural area where dimensional lumber can be unreliably true.

The12mm SterlingOSB Zero OSB3 panels

**Above** Mortusi Village's new creche, built in 20 days by University of Nottingham students and ready to move into.

**Below left** Students used 400 sheets of SterlingOSB Zero, employed for its intrinsic strength and rigidity.

were used in the walls as a full sheathing, which removed the need for cross bracing and expedited construction. The roof truss rafters were overlaid with a 15mm structural deck of SterlingOSB Zero OSB3, covered by a membrane then sheets of corrugated galvanised steel.

Robust interior finishes were required to cope with wear and tear. In some of the classrooms, the particleboard is left exposed on the lower 18 inches of the wall.

'Kids can kick it and bang into it, move furniture against it, and and it's fine. Softer sheet rock material was used above this and is less durable,' says Russell.

The creche was completed in April and is already improving young lives in an area where teaching typically takes place in a one room masonry building often without electricity and running water.

Nottingham students will reap the learning of this invaluable experience, having seen the consequences of building their designs first hand and the impact that good architecture can have on real lives.

The Design + Build Studio is re-visiting all its previous creche projects in an initiative part-funded by the 2019 RIBA Research Fund.

## How to make it hygge when you're high up

What was once a water tank enclosure on the 17th storey is now a SterlingOSB Zero-lined family penthouse atop a listed modernist structure



THE MODERN HOUSE

'This is a unique space so we wanted it to have a really strong identity,' says architect Brian Heron, explaining his decision to finish the walls and ceiling of his penthouse home with Norbord's SterlingOSB Zero orientated strand board. He says the OSB 'gives the space a visual warmth while providing flexibility and adaptability in the location of storage units and furniture'.

If anything, Heron is understating the credentials of the one-bedroom duplex. It was created within the concrete walls of a former water tank enclosure 17 floors up, on the roof of the Denys Lasdun designed grade 2\* listed Keeling House in Bethnal Green, London.

This idiosyncratic apartment is a self-build. Heron is an architect at Ian Ritchie Architects; his wife trained as an architect too. The couple bought the space in 2009, when they were renting a flat on the block's 10th floor. 'I think the only person prepared to take on this project would be an architect who lived in the building,' Heron laughs.

The two-storey concrete shell that they

planned to turn into their new home was small; its footprint was just 20m². What's more, the building's listed status meant that it was not possible to extend outwards. 'The design had to work hard because space could not be gained from outside,' explains Heron. The only exception was the permitted addition of a new external access stair to connect the tank room to the block's existing stair, which stopped at the 15th floor. 'We had to extend the structure above the lift motor room to provide access to the 17th and 18th floors,' he says. 'The new stair core is now within the thermal line of the apartment.'

The planners had also given consent for plywood infill panels on the enclosure's east-and west-facing elevations to be removed. 'The consented design allowed the plywood to be removed and the infills to be fully glazed,' Heron explains.

These glazed elevations now flood the apartment with light. They are formed from a clear-glass central panel, fitted externally, with sandblasted vertical louvres, and

sandblasted glass side panels. Sandblasted elements comply with a planning requirement that the apartment should not overlook top-floor penthouse flats. The solution worked well: 'You get an amazing view out but don't overlook your neighbours and you capture all the available daylight. You also get to see the sun rise and set, which is a real treat,' Heron explains.

Apart from the glazed elevations, the apartment is surrounded by the concrete structure. This is lined with high performing rigid PIR insulation to ensure compliance with Building Regulations while minimising its encroachment on the floor plate. 'If we were not dealing with a listed building, we could have insulated externally to optimise space, but we had to insulate internally,' says Heron.

The insulation is concealed behind SterlingOSB Zero panels which line both the walls and ceiling. 'We did consider having exposed concrete walls internally but, because the sand-blasted glass was a planning requirement and we wanted a polished concrete floor, we were concerned the space would be quite stark. We went for a timber finish to provide visual warmth'.

Birch plywood was also considered for the internal finish but it was the 'slightly more raw' appearance of the SterlingOSB Zero sheets that won over the couple. 'It felt right for the space and because it's a self-build, OSB is a lot more forgiving so the joint and and fixings are easily lost' Heron explains.

SterlingOSB Zero's sustainability credentials were also appealing: 'The OSB we used is manufactured in the UK by Norbord from timber grown in the UK, it's FSC certified and it's more economical than birch plywood,' Heron adds.

Norbord SterlingOSB Zero's appearance is enhanced by the surface-mounted electrical conduit. 'We loved the aesthetic of exposed conduit, which was in keeping with the nature of the space and also had



Opposite SterlingOSB Zero has proved a warm and utilitarian material to line Denys Lasdun's former Keeling House water tank. Above The upper level bedroom space, completely lined in SterlingOSB Zero, also has the main bed frame and children's nook built from the material.

Below Plan and section of the flat showing the new access stair to its upper level.

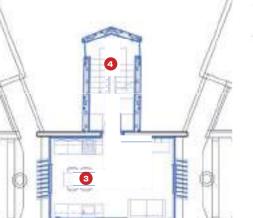
the advantage of enabling continuity of insulation because there was no need to embed conduit within the insulation'.

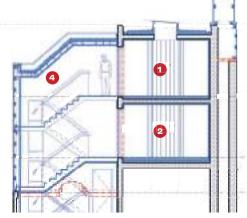
As it turned out, the decision to use SterlingOSB Zero was particularly fortuitous when it came to adapting the design. 'By the time the apartment was ready for us to move in we had a young family, so the design had to evolve accordingly,' says Heron. One adaptation was the design of the couple's bed, which was raised off the ground to create a space for their son's bed beneath. 'My wife and I designed it in OSB over lunch one Sunday and our joiner built it all in-situ,' Heron says. SterlingOSB Zero was also used to form the wardrobe storage and drawers in the bedroom. 'We loved the bed so much



SterlingOSB Zero features in the bathroom too. The toilet cistern and the apartment's mechanical ventilation heat recovery unit are concealed behind OSB access panels. All the OSB is sealed with a fire retardant lacquer.

Heron is pleased with the final result. 'With a dry-lining system using plasterboard, you'd have to put pattressing behind it to put up heavy shelving,' he says. 'Here the SterlingOSB Zero acts as a fullwall pattress and, because it is 18mm thick and attached to timber studs, we can fix to it anywhere and everywhere - very useful for adding storage in such a small space'. •





A BRIEF HISTORY OF KEELING HOUSE

Keeling House was constructed in 1957.

The social housing scheme was designed by Sir Denys Lasdun as a cluster of four 16-storey blocks of maisonettes arranged around a central service tower to vertically recreate the Victorian terrace.

In 1991, a Dangerous Structures Notice was served on the reinforced concrete structure and the following year the residents of the 56 maisonettes and eight studio flats were moved out as Tower Hamlets Council prepared to demolish the building.

But in 1993, the block was given grade II\* listed status. Unable to afford the cost of repairing it, the council sold the structure to a property developer.

A £4 million refurbishment, designed by Munkenbeck+Marshall, followed in 2001, which included construction of a new entrance fover and conversion of the eight top-floor maisonettes into penthouses (the scheme won a RIBA Award in 2002).

Munkenbeck+Marshall also identified the potential of the water tank room for conversion to living accommodation, after the water tanks were relocated to the building's basement.

Although planning consent was granted for its conversion, but the tank room project did not form part of the original refurbishment works and it remained empty until it was turned into a home by Brian Heron and his family.



- Bedroom
- Living room
- Kitchen
- Access stairs



## Exposed OSB beats carpet and wall tiles

SterlingOSB Zero turned an old garage into a creative studio for an architecture practice

A full interior lining of SterlingOSB Zero transformed a tired 1970s bungalow garage in Cambridge into a honey-hued creative studio for up-and-coming practice, Chadwick Dryer Clarke.

The 45m² conversion /extension, at the rear of the property owned by company co-founders Robin and Delphine Dryer, comprises an open plan studio with spaces for six employees, a meeting area with visitor seating and storage, and a self-contained kitchen and toilet.

'We saw the project as an opportunity to create an identity to express to potential clients when they visit,' says director, Robin Dryer. 'We wanted a space that feels creative in its outlook, an extension of our way of thinking and designing, and definitely not a "finished" or corporate atmosphere. We had previously worked in offices with carpets, plasterboard and ceiling tiles etc. This was deliberately trying not to be that.'

The garage walls were upgraded to comply with Building Regulations and covered with an interior layer of 15mm SterlingOSB Zero OSB3. Thicker 18mm panels on top of the open roof joists form the structural deck and the base for a single ply membrane. Roof boards are exposed on the underside to form the pre-finished studio ceiling.

SterlingOSB Zero tongue and groove flooring completes the timber lining and was treated with two coats of the hardwearing lacquer Bona Traffic to resist daily wear and tear. The timber theme continues outside where exterior walls are clad in vertical larch battens.

CDC Studio wanted a rough and raw aesthetic, contrasted with more refined 'things you can touch', such as Anglepoise lamps and Vitra furniture. The relative low cost of particleboard made it possible to pay for these pricier additions.

Left Chadwick Dryer Clarke Architects' former bungalow garage, now lined with Sterling OSB Zero, is now a homogenous extension of its Cambridge office.

**Below** The new interior produes a 'honey-hued' warmth to the space.

'The timber walls contrast with charcoal electric sockets, light fittings and switches supplied by Germany's Gira, bought with the money we saved by using Norbord's SterlingOSB Zero,' says Dryer.

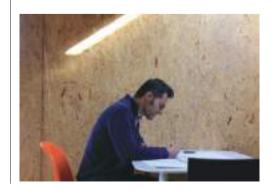
The project was essentially a self-build and the standardised boards proved easy to handle and cut. Panels are fixed with countersunk brass screws that are virtually invisible against the wood and can be easily removed to enable access to electric cabling.

Concerns that cutting the OSB would result in rough and uneven corners, due to the internal woodchip layers, proved unfounded. 'They looked fine after sanding. If I was a joiner, I might have considered mitring them, but that would have added a level of complication,' says Dryer.

The crisp edges are most notable on the window reveals where OSB runs flush with the inside of grey timber Veflac window frames to conceal them from view. The same technique was applied to the reveals for the French doors.

The tough and durable nature of SterlingOSB Zero made it possible to run the timber down to the floor with a slim shadow gap at the base, eliminating the need for skirting boards.

The bold move to apply the material as a finish, not as a sheet material that is covered up, paid off. 'Employees love the creative studio environment. People who visit notice it and remember it,' Dryer concludes. •







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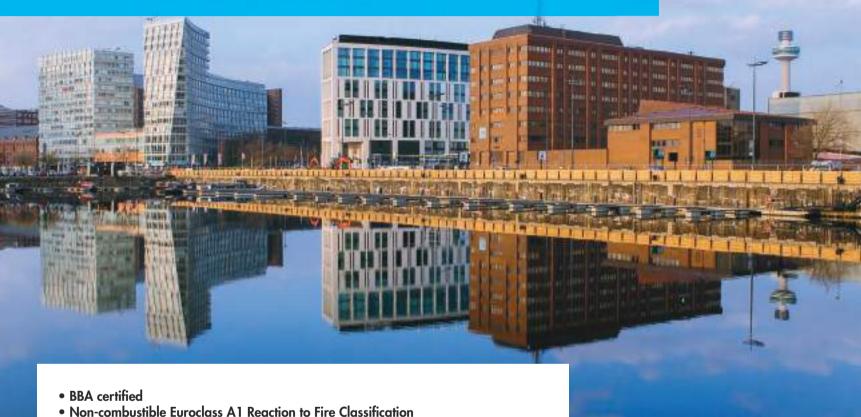
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## 3: Culture

## Live your dreams

Whole, real, places are what architects really want to design – so do, we need them



Hugh Pearman Editor

Would it be wrong of me to suggest that architects, deep down, aren't really that bothered about individual buildings? And can I get to the end of this column without once saying 'place-making'? Gargh, I have failed already. But bear with me.

Of course architects are obsessed by buildings, in every detail. Our social media timelines are full of architects and fellow travellers posting photos of this or that building with an approving or caustic comment, be it a brutalist council block in Aberdeen or a gamey slice of Edwardian Baroque in London's West End or the latest planning proposal for a prime site, anywhere. We're always being reminded that the whole of architecture as a profession is based on the concept of the crit. Thumbs-up or thumbs down, and if it's the latter, dispatch the hapless architect swiftly and move on to the next. The comments sections of architecture websites are happy places for hunters of the snark.

But I contend that this is all just a game. What architects of any ambition really want to design, even if they do not admit it to them-

What architects of any ambition really want to design... is not buildings but entire towns, cities, worlds.

selves, is not buildings but entire towns, cities, worlds. The capriccio – a work of art in which various building designs, often by one hand, are gathered together in an imaginary city – has long been a favourite of the profession, from J M Gandy through Leon Krier and Carl Laubin to Max Dewdney. And when architects make a drawing, they usually can't help themselves when it comes to indicating the surroundings and end up designing the sky as well: the hot-air balloon, the improbably radiant sun, the dystopian cloudscape, the artful flock of birds (such a cliché: avoid).

All of this is counterpointed by this year's Stirling Prize winner, some streets of new and admirably low energy-in-use council homes in Norwich – Goldsmith Street by Mikhail Riches with Cathy Hawley. To go by the response from the more deeply conservative end of the commentariat, you'd think that this was the first time an architect had designed terraces of housing since the 1960s. How short and selective memories are, or how great the ignorance.

Cambridge's Accordia - Stirling winner in 2008, by Feilden Clegg Bradley with Maccreanor Lavington and Alison Brooks - has streets of housing terraces. It is private sector (30% affordable) whereas Goldsmith Street is significant in being new council housing, for Norwich City Council. But both go much further than merely being 'a building'. Each is a district, an enclave (a commercial-retail variant of that is Liverpool One by BDP and others, Stirling-shortlisted in 2009). The almost wholly positive response to Goldsmith Street winning the Stirling - from architects, public and the aforementioned commentariat - tells us something. Just as they used to, architects can still design more than nice-looking buildings. They can design whole areas, better societies.

This is why we run our MacEwen Award – 'architecture for the common good', now in its fifth year. Enter your socially-aware projects now! Deadline November 18 (see p39).

#### **ONLY ON RIBAJ.COM**

While Sam Jacob's vision of Rees-Mogg's house being turned into a waste processing plant in 2050 is an amusing notion in itself, it serves to illustrate Jacob's broader point that history should be productive and useful for the future

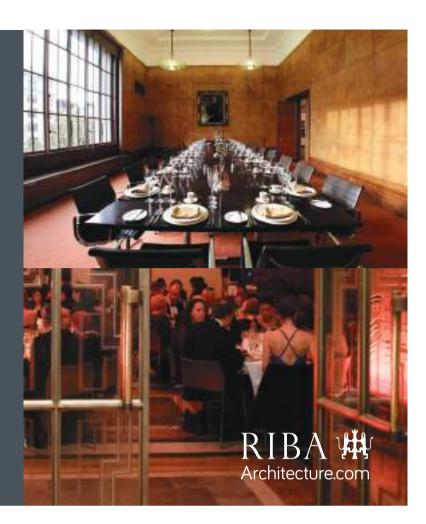
Pamela Buxton enjoys some radical views of architecture: ribaj. com/radicaltoday

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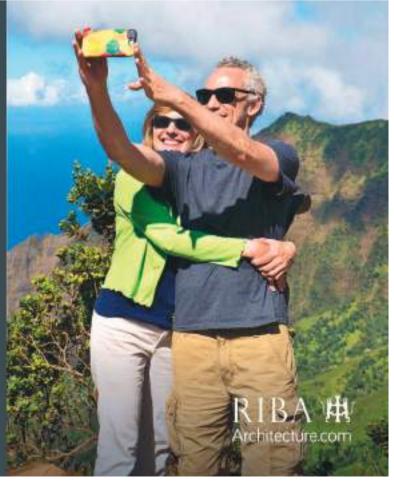
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## Winter wonderland

What is it that's so appealing about snow globes?



Will Wiles

Every Open House Weekend for the past four years, the Art Workers' Guild in London has organised a wonderful event: the Table Top Museums. As many readers will already know, the Guild exists to promote unity between architecture, craftsmanship and the decorative arts. Any opportunity to poke around its home, on Queen Square in Holborn, is to be welcomed, and the Table Top Museums are an unpredictable smorgasbord of human eclecticism and enthusiasm.

The Museums are a collection of collections. Typically they are unexpected, showcasing collections of spherical stones of different sizes, or ephemera related to Anthony Hope's 1894 novel The Prisoner of Zenda, or photographs of dachshunds. Here you can find a selection from Prue Cooper's Museum of Blank Paper, 1720-1920, which is precisely as it sounds: a selection of sheets of unused writing paper of different ages and stocks, in varying shades of off-white. Peter Quinnell displayed his collection of plastic clothes pegs, a whole term of design school on a wooden box, demonstrating the faintly absurd human ingenuity that had gone into refining a single, basic, unimprovable typology. Naturally he had a favourite, the only one moulded as a single piece. Similar in distinctly finite variety was a collection of different kinds of model tree and sheep, including a suspected llama. Entire yet forever inaccessible, they have the fascination of the miniaturised city of Kandor from the Superman comics



Illusions of weather from the snow globe.

Some exhibits were splendid monuments to obsession, such as the meticulous records and photo albums made by a mid-20th-century planespotter. Others had a more disturbing air of unfinished business, such as a found group of unfinished Airfix ships.

Having ooh-ed and ahh-ed and huh?-ed my way around the Guild's hall, I came at last to a table which bore the Kit Jennings Museum of Scintillating Snow Globes. This I greeted with particular enthusiasm. What is it that makes a snow globe so satisfying? Perhaps it's the enclosure offered by the dome, which gives a sense of microcosmic completeness not afforded by, say, a fridge magnet or decorative spoon. Entire yet forever inaccessible, they have the fascination of the miniaturised city of Kandor from the Superman comics.

The fact that the curved dome is brim-full of clear liquid, slowing the movement of the snowflakes, helps the illusion, refracting the light and slightly lensing the image of what's within. The slight distortion or magnification adds to the sense of a telescoped peek at another dimension. It summons to mind the HG Wells short story 'The Crystal Egg' in which the titular artefact, provided it catches the light just right, affords a glimpse of an avian civilisation on Mars. This fracture from one world to another proves fatal for the egg's obsessive owner, but it is at least a contented end.

The quality of the architectural model within a snowglobe - sometimes a single important building, sometimes a selection of landmarks suggesting the skyline of a world city - is rarely very high, or even accurate. But it is enlivened by the swirling cloud of flakes that can be generated with a simple shake, providing a momentary tiny drama of storm and settlement. It's telling that the illusion is completely satisfying even for cities that rarely or never see a flake of real snow, suggesting that the swimming particles are something more than a recreation of a weather event - a symbolic animation providing the difference between a still image and an active, living one, like the grain of old cinema film stock.

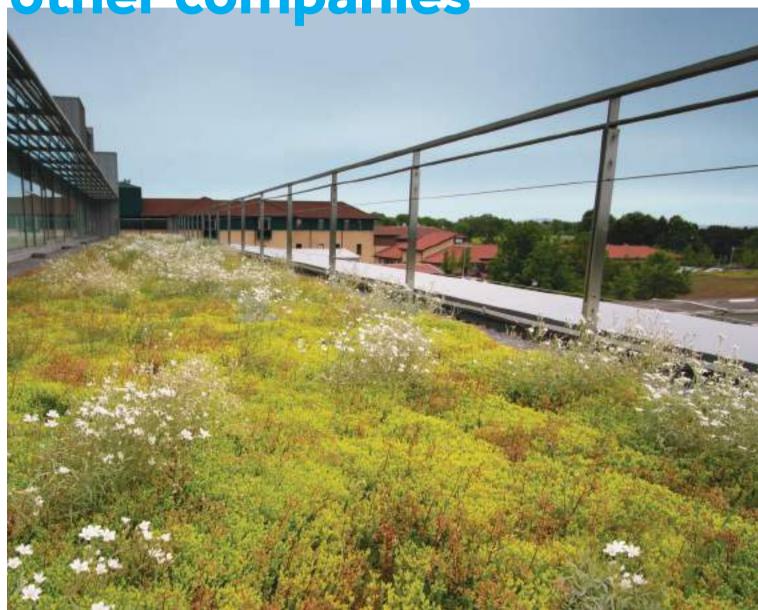
Mass-produced and essentially rather tacky, a snowglobe might at first seem to be a great distance from the Art Workers' Guild's mission of craftsmanship and decoration. But it is a tiny, complete unity between architecture and art, a perfect object in its own way – and, like the work of a collector, its own way is the only way that matters to it.

Will Wiles is an author

#### **WRIT SMALL**

Kit Jennings is nine, and was elsewhere when I inspected his collection so I talked to his mother. We shared in a mystery. They might be sold all over the world, but where are snow globes made? China, of course, in many cases but is there a centralised design and manufacturing centre, where a basic template is adapted to represent Vancouver, Caracas, Istanbul, Bangkok ...? It could be a good setting for a novel.

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## Now walk the walk

The RIBA's 2030 Climate Challenge turns words into action



Alan Jones

Architects understand the climate challenge. But being aware is one thing, minimising and negating the impact altogether are much harder targets to reach. So the RIBA is launching the 2030 Climate Challenge setting targets for practices for all their buildings.

In June the RIBA joined the global declaration of an environmental and climate emergency. The same week, the UK government announced a new law to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Many members and practices have signed up to Architects Declare, joined the recent Global Climate Strike, and increased the sustainability of their projects. The five presidents' agreement on the Future of the Profession now has signatories from architects' institutes from across the world, and calls for supporters to 'lead our profession in the fight for a more sustainable built environment'. The RIBA's Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission report provides vital context.

We know the built environment generates around 40% of the world's annual greenhouse gas emissions and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has set a target to limit the rise in global average temperatures to 1.5°C by the end of the century. It estimates that a further temperature rise of just half a degree would have catastrophic impacts, with rising sea levels, more experiencing water scarcity and severe impact on flora and fauna. From the Ards Peninsula to Cambridgeshire, the Maldives to

Low lying and coastal villages, towns and cities are at extreme risk. Five Solomon Islands have already disappeared



Venice, low lying and coastal villages, towns and cities are at extreme risk. Five Solomon Islands have already disappeared.

Architects have the tools to combine strategic ideas with performance and regulation, choice of material, construction and technology – from initiation to occupancy and use.

For many years members' responsibility to be 'aware of the environmental impact of their work' has featured in the RIBA Code of Conduct. Such requirements are enhanced in its 2019 Codes of Conduct and Practice.

We need governments to regulate quickly, to set higher environmental targets for new and refurbished building, and the RIBA will lobby vigorously for this. But architects in practice must also take a greater lead. That is why the RIBA is launching the 2030 Climate Challenge for RIBA chartered practices.

The RIBA and its expert Sustainable Futures Group have developed ambitious targets for buildings on operational energy, embodied carbon and mains water use. We have engaged closely with other built environment organisations and with the UK Committee on Climate Change, and will be relying on the profession to consider the most important resources that buildings use or embody in the design process and measure the performance of their buildings by undertaking the simplest form of post occupancy evaluation. We are asking chartered practices to commit to work towards these goals on all their projects, bringing their clients with them.

There are tips and tools and CPD events to support practices to deliver more sustainable projects on architecture.com The institute will launch new guidance through the RIBA Plan of Work 2019 and a detailed guide on Sustainable Outcomes aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals later this year. We are also developing a platform to gather building performance data, so architects can learn from their own buildings, and from trends drawn from anonymised data.

As well as the 2030 Challenge and changes to the codes of conduct and practice, the RIBA has enhanced the sustainability criteria for RIBA awards. This year's Stirling Prize shortlist was arguably the most sustainable ever.

The time for talking, stalling and vague targets is over. Time is short: architects and the whole construction industry must pick up the pace. Will you, and the practice you work with, take up the 2030 Challenge?

president@riba.org@alanjones2008

#### **BAUHAUS & MODERNISM**

**RIBA's Beyond Bauhaus** exhibition is open now at the RIBA Architecture Gallery, 66 Portland Place in London. The exhibition is designed by Chilean art and architecture studio, Pezo von Ellrichshausen. and co-curated by RIBA's curator of exhibitions, Pete Collard, and curator of photographs, Valeria Carullo. It takes a fresh look at the development of British modernist architecture, influenced by the Bauhaus movement. For more information visit: architecture.com/ campaign/beyond-bauhaus Bread and butter house extensions are spiced with originality and charm when undertaken by Inglis Badrashi Loddo. These ideas feed into their projects for small developers too

Words: Will Wiles Portrait: Ivan Jones

# Season to taste

It's easy to imagine that there's not much new that can be done with the big house extension – it has become a wearisome cliché, not least for the architects who have to design them. Like many small London firms, Fitzrovia-based Inglis Badrashi Loddo Architects, IBLA, finds that the upwards and rearwards extension of homes for private clients make up a lot of its work. But it has brought to these bread and butter projects the condiments of originality, variety and charm.

'We like buildings,' says partner Jamal Badrashi. 'It sounds really odd, but I think it is something that distinguishes us from other architects. We like old buildings and we like new buildings. We don't have an agenda to change the world – we see ourselves as people who polish and make better things that we find.'

IBLA comprises Badrashi, Patrick Inglis

and Kim Loddo. The trio met studying architecture at Cambridge, and went into practice together in 2000. They had shared rooms and then went to work for different companies. Some time later Inglis was asked to choose some colours for a common room at Westminster School. 'We went out for a meal and decided to jack in our jobs on the basis of one request to repaint some walls,' Inglis recalls.

While they've taken on projects including a Czech cultural centre and chambers for a law firm, the bulk of their work is for small developers and private domestic clients, and in recent years it's been more of the latter. But this has led to a succession of delightful results. A loft at Stapleton Hall Road in Stroud Green uses pale, creamy poplar plywood to unite a complicated roof space without diminishing its inherent intrigue. For another upper level at Dukes Avenue, Muswell Hill,





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an athletic twist of staircase joins with a skylit play landing connecting two children's rooms. And at Shepherds Hill in Highgate, a large rear extension to an already substantial house is divided into a series of clear and distinct interior spaces via a vitrine-like cupola and crisp and delicious roof vaults.

These interesting spaces are the result of confronting some of the tyrannical assumptions that underpin the typical extension – that more is more, that permitted development should be pushed to its outer limits, that if a wall can be taken out it must be taken out, and that you can never have enough open plan.

'People get very excited that "ooh yeah we'll add a really big extension, we'll have a really big space and we can do loads of things in it",' says Loddo. 'Actually you've got to think very carefully about how you manipulate that space and give it nuances and character, otherwise you just end up with a lot of empty floorplate and you're still just retreating to the edges of a bigger space.'

Pushing out houses upwards and backwards can also create a pool of dark, dead space in the middle. They often end up bleached and purged, emptied out by the 'opening up'. 'We spend a lot of time trying to persuade people to knock out less masonry and to keep as much of the original house as they can,' Badrashi says. 'We often have clients who have bought a beautiful Victorian house and they come to us and they want to rip out as much as they can...'

'And you think,' Loddo says, 'why didn't you buy something else?'

In trying to give new spaces at least as much character as the existing house, IBLA has a few recurring tropes – the firm has a taste for built-in furniture, vaults and coffers, expressive roof geometry and feature

We spend a lot of time trying to persuade people to knock out less masonry and keep as much of the original house as they can







Above Loft at Stapleton Hall Road, London, united by pale poplar ply. Left An expansive dormer opens up the 'treehouse' conversion of this top storey bedroom.



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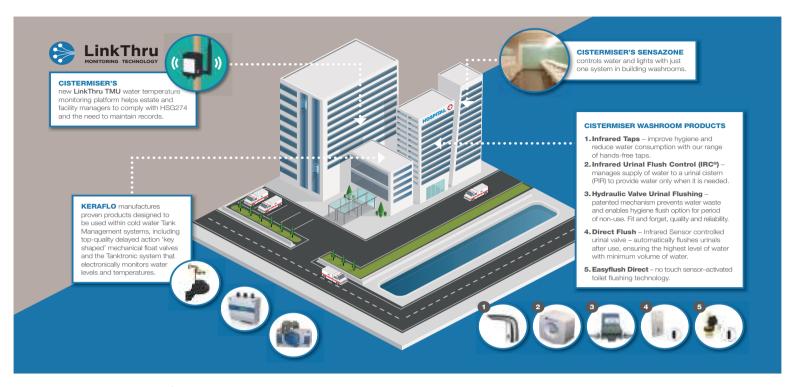
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#### **Culture** Profile

staircases, often in places that might be considered too small for a feature. Loddo calls them 'microcosms' of projects as a whole, 'self-contained and quite crafted elements'.

'Doing nice staircases that aren't, you know, fifty grand is the trick,' says Inglis. 'Staircases that are interesting but slightly subtle and not just expensive for the sake of it are kind of fun.' This leads to treats such as the underside of the stairs at Dukes Avenue, a single sinuous surface of plaster, 'like those absolutely wild plastered curves you get on the underside of Georgian staircases,' he says. The curve has a cousin in the crisp fluted vault of an exercise room downstairs.

These small private projects serve as incubators for ideas that can be deployed in the practice's work for small developers. Often this is about balancing private and communal space in rental flats intended for sharers. So at the Chequered Flag building in Chiswick, a crisp white block with a touch of the Weissenhof about it, the statement stair is a shared one, kicked out into a communal roof terrace like the gangway of an ocean liner. The flats open onto this terrace, an arrangement Badrashi likens to an American motel, which gives a more interesting step from the public to the semi-public to the private than the usual buzzers and lobbies.

Similarly, the large shared landing at the top of those stairs at Dukes Avenue – a play space between two children's rooms – is mirrored in a project IBLA is putting together for young renters, a duplex in which each floor has a bedroom and its own communal space, providing more variety and separation.

Another idea carried from private houses to developer projects is the use of sprinklers to meet fire safety rules, which allows more freedom in layout. The fire-enclosing central hallway, from which all other rooms stem, can be eliminated. This means 'you can do things like the Friends flat, where you walk into a living space and the bedrooms open onto it, which I think is a much more interesting way of having a shared flat,' says Badrashi. 'It frees up possibilities.'

Even on these larger projects, the same IBLA fondness of the detail comes out. At Mary's Mews in Twickenham, a right of way that passes through the site is made a feature by use of a graceful arch. The building as a whole – a four-storey block intended to balance the scale of a street between a two-storey terrace and an unlovely eight-storey





These small private projects serve as incubators for ideas that can be deployed in the practice's work for small developers

**Above** An athletic twist of a staircase in IBLA's designs for a house in Dukes Avenue, London.

**Left** Plywood coffers push up into the ceiling for a roof lantern in this basement turned kitchen.

hotel – is in dark brick, with an expressive corduroy detail along its roof line.

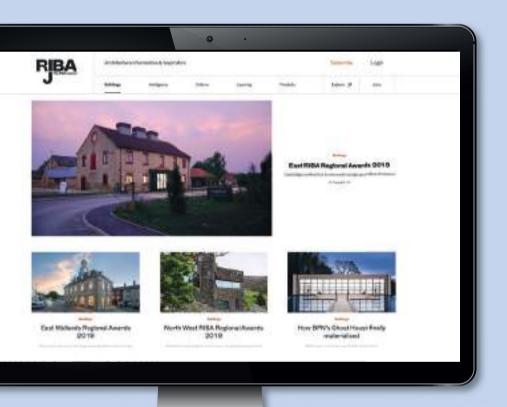
It's almost like a tasteful refurbishment of a neglected building that was there before rather than a new build, and it feels as if that's the way IBLA likes to work. Badrashi disclaims any radicalism: 'We think cities are things that are in progress and our job is to carry them on.' Similarly, Loddo modestly calls the practice 'custodians': 'It's our duty to look after things.' Which is an endearing sentiment, but one wonders if it undersells the energetic thought and creation that animates the joyous civility of their work.

Will Wiles' latest book is Plume

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# Growing pain

The Oslo Architecture Triennale is in step with climate protesters as it tackles the need to change the way we live

#### Words and images: Alicia Pivaro

I arrived in a grey Oslo a few days after the London climate strike and half way through reading Stolen by Grace Blakeley in a state of gloom and bloom – a useful phrase from Jem Bendell's chapter in This is Not a Drill – An Extinction Rebellion Handbook – which perfectly sums up this contradictory, unsettling, exciting moment in the global psyche where we know things have to change.

Enough – The Architecture of Degrowth promotes the newish concept of 'degrowth' but it is very much in step with the huge global movement that is rejecting the hegemony of neoliberalism – the imperative of economic growth with its devastating environmental impact – and desires a radically different world. Chosen from a field of 71, the successful team for the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale are Maria Smith and Matthew Dalziel from Interrobang, critic Phineas Harper and urban researcher Cecilie Sachs Olsen.

Oslo feels like a city drowning in growth.





Below New Munch Museum and Barcode district of 12 narrow high-rise buildings of mixed use regeneration by different architects. The once solitary Opera House (which I swam to across the fjord from a little floating sauna) is now joined by two large new civic buildings. The Deichman Library by Lund Hagem and Atelier Oslo and the new Munch Museum by Estudio Herreros, due to open in 2020, are themselves bounded by the large Barcode and Sorenga districts of housing and high end restaurants. Elsewhere there is inventive reuse of existing buildings such as the wonderful Biblo Toyen, a re-imaged library for 10-15 year olds where no adults are allowed, and the FutureBuilt programme of 27 pilot projects which showcases innovative climate-neutral, high quality architecture.

Sprinkled around this 'business as usual' vision of a 21st century city, over the next two months, the triennale programme is offering a wide range of events around a core of four new institutions of degrowth: library, theatre, playground and academy. The festival includes elements tailored to specific audiences, such as a children's programme or a 72 hour live action role play performance loosely based on Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed. This rich mix of curatorial approaches and collaborative experimentation is to be applauded.

The Library is an exhibition of projects and ideas celebrating sharing, de-commodification, and the democratisation of goods and ideas. The National Museum of ArchitecLeft Place listening provides a collective walking tour or self-guided walk downloaded to your phone that makes play the focus of urban living.

The rich mix of curatorial approaches and collaborative experimentation is to be applauded

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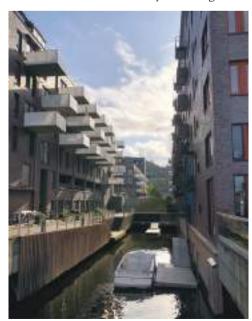
#### Culture Review

ture has been transformed into a lending library where visitors can explore the architecture of a degrowth economy through models, materials, artefacts, games and devices and use their library card to borrow half of them. Here you are encouraged to touch, take, borrow, participate, sit, write and play.

Performance is used to explore core themes at the Theatre. For the opening weekend Rimini Protokoll's Society under Construction (State 2) created a participatory building site in the National Theatre that revealed the power structures and exploitative impacts of the way global investors, construction workers and contractors, public interests and professionals create urban development. Forthcoming events include Home Planet and We Should all be Dreaming.

The Playground, at the ROM Gallery for Art and Architecture, builds on the long tradition of using play to explore and listen to the city as a site of joyful and thoughtful experimentation. We did the audio tour – it was fun, we held hands and danced in a public space. By contrast, the Academy offers a platform for serious discussion and research. The first events were the usual mixed bag; some were considered over-academic, perhaps underlining my feeling that the world must liberate itself from its bizarre internalised systems of reference and modes of communication.

A publication, Gross Ideas, replaces a conventional catalogue (although it would be useful if the website documented all the projects at the Library) and is a collection of short sci-fi stories about the reality of our degrowth



Left The former old container dock is now a new housing and leisure neighbourhood on the fjord with outdoor swimming pool and beach.

Before you can build a better world you need to imagine it first



As the curators acknowledge, such a change would require profound social, political and economic change. Of course there are inherent contradictions in proposing such a radical and fundamental overhaul of the whole system while still having to operate within it – globally and at the scale of this particular form of cultural production. Indeed there are also biennales this autumn at Tallinn, Sao Paulo, Chicago, Seoul, Lisbon, Santiago and Buenos Aires, and against all that cost and effort it must be questioned just how much it is affecting the real world.

So the triennale is full of good ideas and experimental curation for a new generation but many will feel they have seen it before - for example at What you can do with a City, the 2008 CCA exhibition. But now is not the moment to indulge in ennui or déjà vu but rather to feel inspired to be part of a 21st century movement, started in the 1960s and 1970s, that might finally be building to a scale of protest and new thinking that will see a revolution finally happen. The challenge for us all is to work out how to connect with other sectors to build our impact, and in particular to acknowledge the unglamorous day-to-day otherworldliness of the allotment, lunch clubs, civic societies and community projects which provide rare and fragile activities and spaces that place people and planet over profit. As Colin Ward said, these alternative moments are like 'seeds beneath the snow'; let's hope it is finally time for them to bloom. •

Alicia Pivaro is an urbanist, artist and curator

Above Biblo Toyen provides an adult-free, after-school space for young teens which they co-designed and co-curate. Booths and repurposed vehicles and ski lifts provide intimate spaces.

The Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019 runs until 24 November. oslotriennale.no

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## **Nigel Whitbread 1938 – 2019**

Architect of Grenfell Tower who worked with Kenneth Frampton and Elia and Zoe Zenghelis at the forefront of design influenced by Le Corbusier

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

Michael Redfern Woodcock ELECTED 1968, EAST YORKSHIRE

**Graham Alan Paine** 

ELECTED 1974, ESSEX

Andrew Gordon Smith ELECTED 1978, LANARKSHIRE

**James Salter Watson** ELECTED 1979, WEST LOTHIAN

Allan Eric Stuckey ELECTED 1989, MID GLAMORGAN



Nigel Whitbread was born in Kenton near Harrow. His parents had a grocer's shop on St Helen's Gardens in North Kensington and the family moved in 1949 to be nearer the shop. That was Nigel's home from the age of 10 to his death.

After attending Sloane Grammar School, Nigel joined the firm of Clifford

Tee and Gale where he served his apprenticeship. Here he demonstrated a great talent for drawing, for which he became renowned and which he later taught. He went one day a week plus night school to the Hammersmith School of Art and Building, and then became a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

But it was Nigel's time at Douglas Stephen and Partners that was the most influential time in his career. It was a small practice but was doing important things, and was at the forefront of design influenced by Le Corbusier and other modernists. It was there that Nigel worked with architects from the Architectural Association and the Regent Street Polytechnic: Kenneth Frampton who was technical editor of Architectural Design; and Elia and Zoe Zenghelis and Bob Maxwell, who spent most of their careers in the teaching world. Nigel said it was like going to a club with the bonus of doing terrific work.

In the early 1970s Nigel went to work with Clifford Wearden and Associates on Lancaster West Estate. It was a huge job for a small group and it was unusual in London for councils to use private architects in those days. The

whole scheme had been well prepared by the time Nigel joined to lead the team designing Grenfell Tower. While a lot of brick had been used in LCC and GLC buildings, he thought that putting bricks one on top of the other for 20 storeys would be crazy. Instead, insulated precast concrete beams for the external walls were craned into place. The concrete columns and slabs and precast beams, all holding the building together, were also designed in response to Ronan Point, the tower that partially collapsed in 1968. Nigel remarked that he could see Grenfell standing in 100 years' time.

In 2016 I was community artist in residence at Grenfell and invited Nigel to visit. He met residents in their homes for the first time and enjoyed hearing how they regarded the spacious flats (built to Parker Morris Standards) and the stunning views. It is impossible to know the sadness and anger he must have felt at the fire that occurred on 14 June 2017, following major refurbishment.

Nigel retired after working at Aukett Associates for 30 years. His projects had included the Landis and Gyr factory in north Acton and Marks and Spencer's management centre in Chester: two award winning buildings he co-designed. As a director of the practice he had a lot of responsibility, but found time to mentor younger architects.

Nigel was happy in his retirement and in his travels over many years including recent trips to India, the Himalayas and Colombia. He continued to use his skills in helping his local residents' association draw up the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Plan, which was accepted by the local authority under the Localism Act.

He will be remembered by his friends and family as a dignified, humorous, generous and inspirational man. • Constantin Gras

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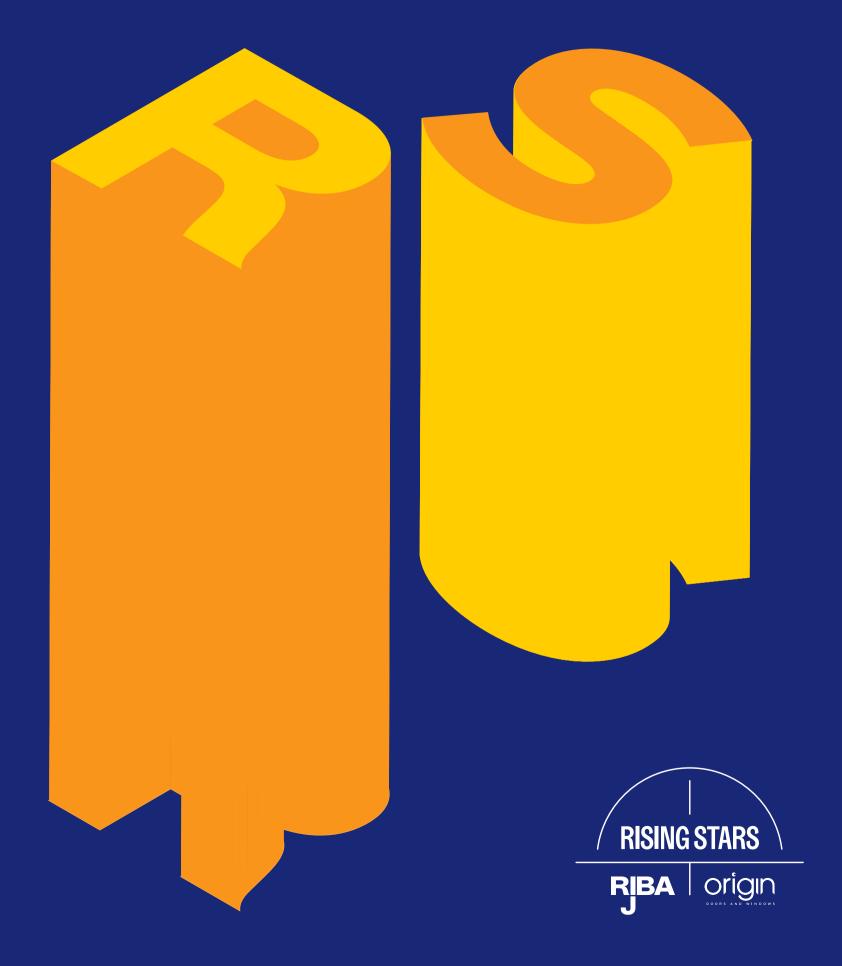
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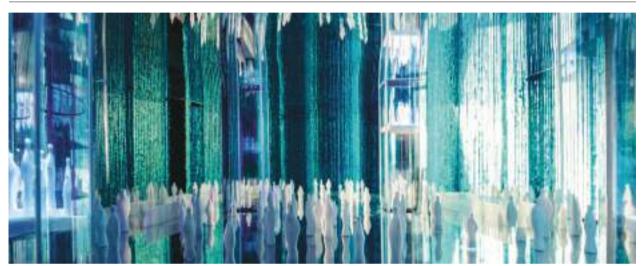
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### 



# DIGITAL FRONTIERS



Digital technologies have arrived in force at Rising Stars 2019. In previous years, we've showcased all manner of specialisms, from pure design to improving mental health, LGBT activism and project management. But digital, strangely, has never really featured in its own right. We wondered whether those eligible to enter the awards felt that it was so integral to everyday architectural life and practice that it wasn't worth singling out. Or perhaps it just seemed as if there was nothing new.

This year, though, is different. As many as half the submissions mentioned digital technologies of some sort. Among them were the use of augmented reality to communicate with clients, research and development in computational design, VR innovations driving projects from conception to completion, integrated thermal modelling and some very clever timber construction software.

What took it so long? We can't be sure, but it sounds as if this year's cohort use and think about these technologies differently to their predecessors – even those who are only slightly more experienced. What's more, these new skills aren't just being applied to design work and client liaison, they're also being used to promote practices through social media (a single Instagram post published by one Rising Stars 2019 entrant received 10,000 likes) and to revive physical networks, including two dormant branches of the RIBA.

Yet in the year when climate emergency finally hit the global agenda, it was little addressed in the submissions, beyond the occasional Passivhaus scheme. You'll still find in the 2019 cohort, however, exceptional design talent, inspirational youth-mentoring and teaching, a humanitarian outlook and groundbreaking projects ensuring that architecture looks after the most vulnerable in society. Another successful year: well done!

Isabelle Priest, assistant editor, RIBA Journal

Origin is thrilled, once again, to be championing the RIBA Journal's Rising Stars 2019.

One of the main reasons for our involvement is because the initiative resonated with us. Like the entrants, Origin is essentially in its infancy in its overall journey and potential. Since establishing in 2001, we've certainly made our mark in the fenestration industry by rewriting the norms with our fresh thinking, innovative product developments, unparalleled lead times and unmatched support for our customers.

The standard of this year's entrants has been hugely impressive. There's definitely a bright future in front of every one of them. We've loved working with the Rising Stars, as they have all demonstrated a strong sense of collaboration, confidence, enthusiasm and passion, which has been fantastic to see and be a part of.

Ben Brocklesby, sales and marketing director, Origin

**Above** Greg Storrar, Ocean of Light finalist scheme for UK Expo 2020.

#### THE 2019 JUDGES



**Peter Morris**Founding partner and managing director, AHMM



**Kieren Majhail** Rising Star 2018 and architect associate, BDP



Sarah Prichard UK MD, Buro Happold



**Simon Henley** Principal, Henley Halebrown



Louise Wyman
Director of design
and development,
West Midlands
Combined Authority



Eleanor Young
Executive editor,
RIBA Journal (chair)



#### JOANNA ASIA GRZYBOWSKA

Diversity champion proactively promoting inclusive building design



Associate, Powell Tuck Associates

Parts 1 & 2: 2011

Joanna Asia Grzybowska remembers looking out of the window while she was growing up in Poland and wishing she could make things look nicer. Both of her parents and her elder sister are architects, as were the parents of her nursery-school playmates, so if becoming an architect wasn't inevitable it was certainly likely. However, Grzybowska has ploughed her own furrow in the industry by becoming an activist for differently abled people. It was this that compelled the judges to name her among the Rising Stars 2019.

Grzybowska moved to London from Poland in 2011 when she came to the UK to celebrate two weddings in the North West and decided never to go back home. Earlier, she had completed her master's at the Silesian University of Technology, worked in Doha as a graphic designer during her year out and spent time in Berlin,

Mycelium Studio's workshops use special suits to mimic the effects of ageing.



before coming to the UK and getting a job at Ian Wylie Architects. She then moved to David Morley Architects for three years, where her roles included project lead on a new sports centre for Reading School and team leader for the redevelopment of Brierfield Mills.

She now has three strings to her bow. Grzybowska is currently an associate at Powell Tuck Associates, where her business development and PR skills earned her a promotion within a year of arriving. She has put in place a social media strategy, organises events and creates exposure for the practice by signing it up for festivals, including the London Festival of Architecture. She is also the founder of the art collective Sisters and Tiger, which encourages collaboration between different professions and aims to increase the number of women in construction through an exchange programme with contractors. Finally, Grzybowska is the director of Mycelium Studio, which she founded to help designers understand the needs of older and less able building users through empathy training workshops.

'She's working in areas frequently overlooked by architecture,' commented Louise Wyman, with Simon Henley observing that Grzybowska is interested in inclusivity, not just of women but also of older and differently abled people. Her commitment to this is demonstrated by her investment in the specially developed simulation suits she uses in her workshops. By limiting the wearers' range of movement, sight, sense of touch, temperature tolerance and ability to carry out everyday tasks, the suits create the impression of ageing by 40 years. Grzybowska runs the workshops to help designers and decision-makers avoid unintentional obstacles to inclusion. In her application, she wrote: 'I believe architecture and daily objects should be designed with people at all stages of life in mind. I think it can be deeply depressing for an ageing person to feel that the world is slowly closing to them, as they struggle to climb the stairs or read prices on supermarket shelves.'

In addition to all of this, Grzybowska is a fellow of the RSA and a RIBA Architecture Ambassador in schools – earlier this year she led two sets of workshops at the Montessori School in Hampstead. It is this committeent to outreach along with her open and determined attitude towards equality, diversity, collaboration, accessibility and equality that made an impression on the judges.

#### What would you most like to improve about the industry?

I am passionate about improving diversity in the industry and extending collaboration between professionals. I am currently working on an exchange programme for women with building contractors, and hope that it will provide an exciting opportunity for architects and constructors.

#### Which existing building or place would you most like to tackle?

I would like to address the state of London's pedestrian and cycling links. My aim would be to flip current priorities and put people ahead of cars, like the Danish model. I hope that the dominance of vehicular traffic in town centres will end, and that they will become safe and vibrant places for people instead. We all have a right to feel the wind in our hair.

# **GREG STORRAR**

Cross-disciplinary visionary, research advocate and multiple award-winner



Architect, Asif Khan Studio Part 1: 2011 Part 2: 2015

'Greg Storrar is an architect well beyond his years,' commented Peter Morris. The project architect of the impressively thorough and considered Old Shed, New House, which won the 2018 Stephen Lawrence Prize, he has an accolade of achievements in architectural design, teaching and wider work that made him a sure member of this year's Rising Stars cohort.

Architect at Asif Khan Studio, Storrar recently moved from Tonkin Liu, where he was associate, to Asif Khan, to lead the £332 million transformation of West Smithfield into the new Museum of London, one of the largest cultural projects in Europe – and a huge opportunity for Storrar. As he has only just switched office, the majority of his work that stood out for the judges was carried out while he was at Tonkin Liu, which he joined after completing his undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge in 2011 and where he continued to work while he was studying for his master's at the Bartlett.

At Tonkin Liu, Storrar project-led numerous award-winning schemes, including Ness Point, a white house on Dover's white cliffs, and Tonkin Liu's office and directors' home Sun Rain Rooms at the rear of a Georgian terrace in London, before even qualifying as an architect. Both received RIBA Awards, the latter also winning an AJ Retrofit Award and first prize in the NLA's Don't Move Improve! awards. For his competition entry for Expo 2020 Dubai, Storrar managed to use his network to get David Attenborough involved in supporting and developing Tonkin Liu's design too.

It was not only the standard of his design work that interested the judges but Storrar's research and peripheral projects too. These included curating a RIBA research grant-funded exhibition and publication (The Evolution of Shell Lace Structure), which he designed, co-authored and edited. This led to the research project 'Shell Lace Stent', funded by Innovate UK, conceptualising a groundbreaking medical device for supporting collapsed tracheas. Storrar managed the patent-filing and commercial development of the device, still ongoing – a process which he feels is a microcosm of the way a very large project works in its level of complexity of legal, research, scientific and collaborative elements. As an indication of Storrar's contribution to strengthening the practice, during his eight years there Tonkin Liu grew from four people to 14.

There is no end to Storrar's activities. Alongside practice, he has taught a BSc design unit at the Bartlett since 2017. Having raised £65,000 of UCL and other grant funding, he has initiated a research project in Robotic Incremental Sheet Forming, demonstrating his



**Above** Storrar project-led Tonkin Liu's Sun Rain Rooms project in London.

#### What would you most like to improve about the industry?

In the face of continued resource scarcity and climate uncertainty, the need for the building industry to address issues of sustainability is well documented. I am exploring how contemporary tools can drive material efficiencies while upholding design quality. This requires close collaboration with specialists within and beyond the field of architecture, as with the medical practitioners on the Shell Lace Stent. I am developing a handbook for R&D collaboration. It is intended to educate and to promote better close-working between small and large architecture practices.



#### MARIA KNUTSSON-HALL

A mastery of simple forms and a passion for football



Associate, Populous

Part 1: 2009 Part 2: 2012

Maria Knutsson-Hall was singled out early on in this year's judging, and her referee's comment from Populous managing director EMEA Christopher Lee stood out: 'Maria is one of Populous' most talented designers. Her work demonstrates the beauty of simple forms, perfectly balancing structure, function and aesthetics while being thorough down to the last detail.'

Knutsson-Hall's journey in architecture began in Lund, Sweden, where she initially found the usual modest expression of Swedish architecture constraining. Her studies led her to work in Peter Cook's studio in London where she began to appreciate the architectural history of her native country, as well as developing a more international outlook and an understanding of the importance of every line and of testing a concept.

She completed her master's at the Bartlett, taking an interest in biophilic design, before joining Populous in 2013. In addition to her architectural work, Maria is a keen teacher, seeing it as a privilege to educate the next generation of architects. She is a university lecturer and is leading an initiative at Populous to encourage younger members of staff to develop their own research projects.

This year's judges, particularly Peter Morris, were impressed by her handling and ability as design architect on the new Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, a hugely complex and lengthy project on which she was responsible for maintaining the highest standards of design from concept through to completion; a five-year journey. They felt it was a significant achievement for someone who had only recently passed Part 2.



Which existing building or place would you most like to tackle?

I'm passionate about football so watching the Women's Super League gain momentum has been very exciting, but unfortunately investment in women's football infrastructure is still poor, especially at a grassroots level. I would like to work with the women's football community to design facilities that strengthen the players as athletes and give them the same opportunities provided to men.

fundamental belief in R&D and answering his own call to arms for architects to progress the profession beyond that which is already proven. Storrar is also an NLA NextGen member and in 2019 was invited to judge the AJ Retrofit Awards and GAGA Awards. His photography has also been widely published. As his referee Jane Duncan states: 'Greg is highly intelligent, creative, charming and erudite, and he's without doubt really going places. Given (and despite) his youth, he has achieved impressive things in his career to date, always applying himself with the utmost commitment.'

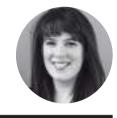
**HUFTON CRO** 

#### MADELEINE KESSLER

Rethinking the remit of practice and networking for infrastructural change, all while curating a Biennale

Associate architect, Haptic Architects

Part 1: 2009 Part 2: 2013



'Madeleine's creativity is joined with an ability to plan,' writes referee Scott Grady of Haptic Architects. These are essential skills when you are charged with delivering the next British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, as Madeleine Kessler is.

Kessler is currently working at Haptic and has previously been at Studio Weave and Haworth Tompkins. But her most impressive work has been in parallel with practice. Judge Sarah Prichard pronounced Kessler a 'force for good' in the industry.

Understanding that some of the most important strategic decisions are made before architects normally get involved, Kessler applied to sit on the Young Professionals Panel at the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), and was selected from 500 applicants to take up one of the 16 places. As part of her work on the panel

she has organised 'infra-cafes', informal events that bring people together across generations and disciplines to discuss infrastructure. Her background first in engineering and then in architecture has no doubt allowed her to make a valuable contribution, as has her quest to understand why certain sites exist, which has led her back to policy. 'How do architects work with politicians and policy-makers?' she asks. 'It's hard for architects to change things on their own.' Kessler has gone on to join the NIC's Design Group, where she is helping to devise the UK's first national infrastructure design principles.

Kessler sees this as part of raising awareness of the architect's trade. 'It's refreshing to see what architects can bring to the team. Lots of people don't understand the value of design; they see it as complicated, expensive and wrapped in flouncy language, but good design can save money in the long run.'



AWARTHTOMPKINS



#### What would you most like to improve about the industry?

Our industry is incredibly insular, often operating in silos. We urgently need to rethink what it means to practice in the 21st century and use our creativity to question the status quo. I would most like to improve the way that we talk about architecture, to widen access to the conversation and question what it means to be an architect today. In order for our profession to survive and best contribute to the sustainable evolution of our cities, it's critical that we become more collaborative and outward-looking, and engage with a wider audience in a more meaningful way.

She also speaks on this – to audiences of both architects and non-architects, she stresses – as well as teaching professional practice at the Architectural Association.

But Kessler is not complacent. 'It's important to rethink practice. "Architecture" is a very traditional model. We need to consider which other disciplines we could work with, and what else we could do.' She has done just that, in practice at Haptic, where she was instrumental in creating a cohesive vision, 'The Haptic Way', and more communally by working alongside the London Practice Forum to introduce resource-sharing. She has also shared her experience both in architecture schools and at National Art & Design Saturday Club classes for young people, and as a mentor for the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. This pragmatism, alongside the broader vision shown in her Venice Biennale curation, particularly impressed the judges.

At the Biennale, Kessler, with cocurator Manijeh Verghese, will be exploring privatised public spaces in the UK. She wants to give the public the tools and strategies to take ownership of their environment. It builds strongly on what she has already done and will hopefully be a starting point for a conversation as much as an exhibition.

**Opposite left** While at Haworth Tompkins, Kessler worked on Battersea Arts Centre.



#### NICK TYRER

Computational design pioneer bringing sophisticated geometries to stadia concepts

Associate director, Pattern Design

Part 1: 2009 Part 2: 2012



The judges had no doubt that Nick Tyrer's design and software skills have played a vital part in the development of Pattern Design, a practice that is defined by its interesting designs in the highly competitive world of stadia architecture. He leads on computational design, research and development.

Judge Peter Morris pronounced it 'sophisticated stuff'. Tyrer joined Pattern less than two years after the original directors split from Arup Associates. His rise to associate director in a short time was highlighted by his referee, Pattern founding director Lindsay Johnston: 'In only six years, using his exceptional abilities, Nick has progressed from a Part 2 to an associate director, aged 31.'

Judge Kieren Majhail noted that Tyrer has skills that are rare and difficult to find. He discovered this at university where he taught himself computational design. But he loves it for the design potential and control – not as an end in itself. This is acknowledged by

Lindsay Johnston: 'One of our best designers, Nick leads design and delivery of the complex geometries required for stadia concepts, facades and seating bowls.' Tyrer uses these tools to focus in on fabrication and to ensure that control over essential design elements is not ceded to contractors.

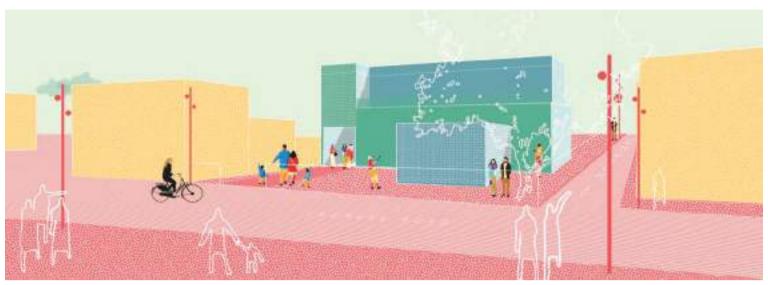
The computational design work, and the research and development that go into it, have helped give this small practice an edge against far larger competitors. The first design bid led by Tyrer, for a FIFA World Cup stadia in Doha, Qatar, was successful (other winning Doha schemes were by Foster + Partners and Zaha Hadid Architects). And Tyrer is currently completing the design of a facade roof and bowl for another World Cup stadium in Doha (above).

In addition, Tyrer has been teaching in the Abstract Machines studio at Leeds Beckett University, working with innovative structures. A recent project with his students was shortlisted for a RIBA North East Award.

#### Which existing building or place would you most like to tackle?

Parc des Princes Stadium, Paris (Roger Tailibert, 1972), a totally overlooked architectural masterpiece in the centre of Paris. It would be a fascinating and intimidating challenge to preserve the stadium's history and the innovative structural design, with beautiful flowing shapes of pre-stressed concrete, while ensuring it is functional, comfortable and safe for both club and spectators.

ribaj.com The RIBA Journal November 2019



#### MUNEEB DAVID

Part 1: 2012 Part 2: 2016

Passionate about the power of architecture to change the world

Architect, Architecture Initiative



It's difficult to find another entry to Rising Stars 2019 written with as much energy as Muneeb David's – an aspect of his character that also shone through in his colleague and referee Janita Han Cresswell's recommendation: 'Muneeb's passion for working with young people and for effecting change is contagious.' Currently an architect at Architecture Initiative, David describes himself as a passionate humanitarian, youth activist and tutor and it was these elements of his submission that drew the strong support of the judges for his inclusion in this year's cohort.

David was born in Lahore, Pakistan. He arrived in Britain aged 12, going on to study at the University of Kent and Oxford Brookes. As an immigrant he found the societal disparities he experienced were eye-opening, contributing to a personal desire to help others that is evident in almost everything he applies himself to.

In practice, David is working on two major education–residential developments, both public–private schemes funded by constructing much-needed housing (40 per cent of it affordable) on the surplus land. Within this field, he is also contributing to a government pilot scheme assessing the potential of surplus education sites and land, typically for residential development, and has carried out around 80 feasibility studies. He has also acted as a design advisor to Oxford Brookes University.

However, it is David's work outside of his regular UK architectural ambit that particularly impressed the judges. Bringing ethical

activism to the building supply chain, he is running a project that provides education to disadvantaged children in Pakistan's often-exploited brick-kiln communities. So far, his organisation has enabled 50 children to go to school. He is also planning to buy the country's first industrial brick machine (with funding from Hult Prize) to help end slavery in kiln communities, as well as designing a new church/community hall/school for a challenging £15,000.

David is involved in youth work in the UK too. He has tutored at undergraduate level and was the founder of a local youth group, where he now volunteers. Its remit is to advocate values that transcend school curriculums, engaging young people with weekly workshops debating topics such as entrepreneurship, ethics and sustainability. He writes in his submission: 'From my experience, a little encouragement can bring great transformation, therefore, I am passionate about mentoring and guiding young people to seek life-changing opportunities and tackle world issues.'

'An effusive thought-leader,' commented referee Han Cresswell. 'Spend ten minutes with Muneeb and he will quickly immerse you in his Latourian concerns: youth, education, systemic poverty, progressive architecture and politics. He lives out his talk with integrity.' Judge Louise Wyman summarised: 'We need people who are practising in different ways.' 'He's doing good stuff,' added Sarah Prichard.

**Above** David's pro bono proposal for a church, community hall and school in Ladheke, Pakistan.

#### Which existing building or place would you most like to tackle?

Although I relish the opportunity to engage in any type of design, I have a personal interest in the educational landscape. I am in the process of trying to work with the Department for International Development, which has built 1,389 schools in Pakistan, an effort totalling £107 million. However, a recent UCL study demonstrates that, owing to poor construction, 783 of them have been closed, affecting 115,000 students. With Pakistani ethnicity, local know-how and experience of education projects I would like to help redress this.

#### BENNI ALLAN

Driving his own practice forward with innovative thinking

Director, EBBA Architects
Part 1: 2011 Part 2: 2014

Benni Allan is a testament to how quickly things can move at this stage of a career. He was shortlisted for Rising Stars 2018 in recognition of his achievements then, but just failed to make it into the final cohort. Undaunted, he reapplied in 2019 – which judge Sarah Prichard thought demonstrated strength of character. With substantially more to his name after an intense year, he has now made it onto the winners list.

Allan excelled in his architecture studies at the Bartlett, attaining a firstclass undergraduate degree and a distinction in his master's, for which he received the top prize for Excellence in Design and Sustainability and was commended for his outstanding vision. The Design Council subsequently named Benni as one of the UK's up-and-coming architects, representing the future of British Design. He practised with Níall McLaughlin Architects, helping to deliver prestigious projects for clients such as Jesus College and Magdalene College, Cambridge, as well as managing the commission of the Irish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale before setting up EBBA Architects in 2017. It was his work at EBBA that really impressed the judges, with Peter Morris observing that it is very strong for an architect only five years past Part 2.

The practice has worked with prestigious institutions in the UK, Europe and Asia, including Tate Modern, the National Portrait Gallery, Bold Tendencies, the Roundhouse and the V&A, as well as local communities and organisations such as St John at Hackney church, for which it is currently delivering part

of a project, alongside John Pawson and Es Devlin. The judges particularly highlighted EBBA's primary-school renovation project in Spain, which had an extraordinarily tight £1,000 budget – something that many architects wouldn't even bother to start. Judge Peter Morris also noted that it had received a considerable amount of press attention and Simon Henley described it as 'really nice work'. The conversion and extension of a pre-school in a historic building in Manchester attracted their attention too. Both the judges and Allen's referee Timothy Brittain-Catlin appreciated his simple but effective low-tech and social solutions as well as a collaborative approach to design and delivery that allows him to get the job done.

Allan is also a trustee of the Architecture Foundation and a RIBA Ambassador, and a keen commitment to education and public engagement runs through his work. 'It's clever, quite innovative and resourceful,' said Louise Wyman.

#### Which existing building or place would you most like to tackle?

Building more with less. Our cities need to densify to be able to accommodate growing urban populations yet, while we need to build more housing, schools and public facilities to cater for this, we also need to address, repurpose and reuse existing buildings in a more economical and sustainable way. As cars move out of cities, and industry becomes hyper-connected without the need for a workforce, many structures such as car parks and warehouses will become redundant. It is the architect's challenge to rethink how best to re-engineer this superfluous building stock to provide safe and enjoyable places for the residents of the future to live, work and play.



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#### HUGH McEWEN

Experimenter extraordinaire, interrogating colour and materials



Partner, Office S&M

Part 1: 2011 Part 2: 2008

Hugh McEwen's portfolio from his six-year-old practice Office S&M, with Catrina Stewart, impressed the judges. Peter Morris singled out McEwen for his 'innovation in materials and outcome'.

A strong thread of experimentation with materials and colour has run through McEwen's career since his days at Metropolitan Workshop. His referee, Metropolitan's Neil Deely, drew out his work there collaborating with manufacturers to develop the ceramics cladding RIBA National Award-winning Mapleton Crescent. Giving the building a texture has made it more grounded in its community and the history of making – the samples are currently on show at the Building Centre.

Deely gives a sense of the juggling of commitments that McEwen has managed. 'It was clear when we hired Hugh that he is an ambitious and driven architect, who had by that point started his own practice and was incorporating teaching on his days off. Hugh is very talented and possesses a great clarity in his verbal and drawn communication, making his ideas extremely compelling.'

To some extent the work has spoken for itself. And quite energetically. McEwen's investigations into colour and materials, including working closely on render with Sto and on terrazzo with InOpera, gave early project Salmen House a distinctive facade and a Germolene-pink exterior with intense green accents in the inset porch and terrazzo window reveals. 'Colour is a material as much as bricks and mortar,' says McEwen. 'It affects the view of a three-dimensional object. I feel it is a discussion that is not being had in architecture.'

The project was well published and led to public lectures at the London School of Architecture, RIBA and the Architecture Foundation. McEwen is also keen to present to other practices, and has given talks on colour to Bell Philips, Morris+Company, and Hawkins\Brown. This collaborative approach has stood the practice in good stead through its first years, working on high-street projects for the Outer London Fund, first with Jan Kattein Architects and later DK-CM and AOC Architecture.

For McEwen it is important that colour relates to materiality. This fed into his teaching projects when he asked his students at Oxford Brookes to develop their own materials. Their proposals for plastic thatch and cladding made from recycled milk bottles were incorporated into the design process for Putnoe House in Bedford. The final scheme employs corrugated cladding made from waste packaging, discovered through student research.

The poster child of McEwen's recent projects is Janus House, east London, a dark extension coated in spray-on rubber originally



developed for oil rigs, which he uncovered by delving into the client's interest in industrial materials. This borrowing has given McEwen great reach, not just in the practice's second success in the NLA's Don't Move, Improve! awards but also with 10,000 likes on Instagram.

Much of Office S&M's innovation is currently applied to homes, where McEwen cut his teeth. And he is happy to step his residential work up in scale with three multi-unit projects in London. But he is also keen to bring his thinking to the education sector where ideas can be researched as part of a learning process and completed buildings become a teaching tool. Office S&M is certainly one to watch.



RENCH+TYE



**Above** Office S&M's Putnoe House features corrugated recycled plastic cladding discovered by a student on McEwen's Oxford Brookes course.

**Opposite** Salmen House, led by McEwen for Office S&M, explores colour in a new-build rental property.

#### What would you most like to improve about the industry?

At Office S&M we don't use brick. This shouldn't be a statement, but in the current architectural climate, it has become one. Brick is expensive to make and lay, has high embodied energy and requires additional structure, all reasons why it's not sustainable. But more than this, brick has become a default response by planners, architects and consultants that has dumbed down architectural discourse and design. It is this that we want to make a statement against the lack of thought and investigation which the new London vernacular has led us to.

# **FELICITY MEARES**

Energetic communicator with digital tools at her fingertips

Associate, Scott Brownrigg
Part 1: 2010 Part 2: 2013



The judges felt that Meares' personality was a strong asset to the practice. Judge Louise Wyman approved: 'She stands out as an individual and is engaging a younger group of people.' Judge and 2018 Rising Star Kieren Majhail was impressed by the range of spheres in which Meares is active, both within the practice and externally, from streamlining internal processes to acting as an advocate for young people.

As project lead and technical architect on an activity centre for St George's College in Weybridge, Meares used visual programming to test the limits of the design and optimise the geometry of the massive timber roof construction. She describes how virtual reality has helped to streamline the decision-making process, allowing for less ambiguity and an improved understanding of a complex scheme. The project includes the UK's largest glass sports floor with LED markings; Meares led on collaboration with sports governing bodies and the German manufacturer, as well as the client, to achieve this.

She is an active contributor to the Future Architects Forum on the subject of digitisation. Her experience on St George's Activity Centre has led to invitations to speak on timber, the role of sports facilities and the importance of improving access to physical activities. As a keen sportswoman and former Team GB member, Meares is a convincing ambassador for sports architecture.





**Below** The massive timber roof of Felicity Meares' project, St George's College Activity Centre.



#### Which existing building or place would you most like to tackle?

So many of the health issues that we are battling today are due to inactivity, and disconnection between people and from nature. I would love to tackle outdated public sports facilities, transforming them into aspirational, motivating spaces that benefit the whole community through the physical and mental benefits of exercise and the outdoors. On a small scale, one place close to my heart that I would love to tackle is Port Erin Lido on the Isle of Man. Restoring this wild place and reinstating the freedom and adventure that nature offers would be very rewarding.

ribaj.com The RIBA Journal November 2019

#### **THE 2019 LONGLIST**

**Irene Astrain** Director-architect, Astrain Studio Benches to buildings in just three years

**Tom Bell** Chartered architect, Roberts Limbrick Architects Rare balance of big ideas and drive

Oliver Boaler Architect, Bennetts Associates
Agility and professionalism – and a vegetarian cookbook for meat-eaters

**Laura Collins** Principal Consultant Architect, Arcadis Analytical approach and confident communication

Joanne Dunwell Architect, Bennetts Associates
Technical and conceptual strategies, pushing sustainability

**Daniel Dyer** Architect, MawsonKerr Architects Successful design with non-traditional procurement

**Shivam Garg** Architect, Roberts Limbrick Promoting mentoring and mental health in Gloucestershire

**Jane Hamlyn** Architect, Atelier 3 Building design dialogue with Cornish planners

**Simon Hill** Associate director, DLG Architects Workplaces, people and a better Leeds

**Simon Kinvig** Associate architect, Broadway Malyan Energy and networking bringing Birmingham together

Fergal Rainey Architect, McGurk Architects Innovation and enthusiasm on Belfast projects

**Amrita Raja** Associate, Woods Bagot Bringing making to practice, making the most of US connections

**Olivia Redman** Architectural assistant, HKS Supporting on competitions and delivery

**Dani Reed** Architect, Child Graddon Lewis Passion for reworking existing buildings

**Emma Smith** Chartered architect and director, Pedersen Smith Entrepreneurial development and architecture

**Alex Towler** Architect, Transition by Design Co-operative and collaborative community problem-solving

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## **Exchange**

#### Salary sanity

RIBAJ has published a salary survey update ('Happiness gets harder to find', October 2019 p71). I am curious to understand why RIBA thinks this is worth doing or indeed that it is in the members' interests to carry out such an exercise. If it is an attempt to raise salaries generally across the profession, I would have thought it is the clients we should be targeting, not members. The data is prepared by 'The Fees Bureau' and apparently 1100 architects contributed. In the RIBAJ article only a sample of salary graphs are provided as 'headlines'. None of these apply any regional weighting, a significant component in our profession.

As far as I'm concerned, the stated figures do not accurately reflect the current salary rates. You can of course obtain more detailed breakdown of salary comparisons from The Fees Bureau - at an eyewatering £225 for a copy of its survey! The information given in this article appears to serve no other purpose but to unfairly raise salary expectations within our profession. Employers (who are also RIBA members) have to deal with the consequences of this. If our profession was littered with fat cat employers raking in huge fees and paying staff a pittance I could see the need to address the imbalance. But, possibly with a few exceptions, it is not.

Members have been seeking to tackle low fees for decades, with little or no success and with very few initiatives coming from the RIBA. Consequently, the finances available to fully recognise an architect's worth are in most cases simply not there. RIBA members have learnt to put up with low financial return because, in my experience at least, they remain committed to what they are doing. The profession should be placing emphasis on raising fee

To the second se

We welcome letters but retain the right to edit them: letters.ribaj@riba.org RIBAJ, RIBA Publishing, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD levels, not a self-flagellation exercise, using inaccurate data, and leaving us all feeling undervalued.

Dave McCall, Bramhall, Cheshire

#### Modernism in retreat?

Is the modern movement dying in the UK...? Brick slips everywhere, gables on high rise. In 90s Liverpool we used to called neo-Victorian warehouse contextualism 'miserable-ism'. I detect a return to such days and it makes me sad. We seem to be moving to a more reactionary period in tune with the current English political scene.

For inspiration I find myself looking outward – Portugal, Chile, Mexico, other Latin countries plus China.

Why is this? Brick gables suggest a traditional 'attic' behind, but a glass prism rising from a flat roof covered in planting would suggest lightness, solar energy, awareness of the need for technological solutions to climate change rather than a reenaction of traditional 'Englishness'.

The international style sought to move away from the traditional and propose a new way forward. Whiteness replaced the sombre, technology was talked about. Even now schemes like Pessac, the Weissenhof estate, the Isokon building and many others shine brightly as symbols of a new age. Discussion of the modern movement in schools and professional circles seems to be almost taboo. Could RIBAI rejuvenate it?

Dave King, founder of Shed: KM, Liverpool

Editor replies: We think of ourselves as studiously neutral style-wise, though some might (and occasionally do) disagree... our aim is to present the best and/or most interesting architecture, however the architect chooses to express that.

#### It takes two

Regarding your Products in Practice piece on the ULCH Proton Beam Therapy hospital project (Sept-Oct 2019 p32), we would like to clarify that the hospital design was by Edward Williams Architects in association with Scott Tallon Walker.

Laura Carrara-Cagni Edward Williams Architects

Happy to make this clear - ed.

#### **Economy drive**

Please check out
Steve Webb's
piece (RIBAJ
October 2019
p38) measuring
carbon in Range
Rover Shopping
Trips (RSTs)...
makes me
think we need
a new type of
conservation area
that requires
only zero carbon
buildings.

Colin Beattie, head of sustainability at John Robertson Architects, via social media

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#### Sunnywood Haywards Heath, 1936

This group of eight modest houses in Haywards Heath, completed in 1936, was a rare foray into speculative housing design for Berthold Lubetkin and his Tecton colleagues. The client, a developer, challenged the architects to create a pilot scheme of modern houses marketable to the ordinary person, with a view to extending the estate to eventually include 60 or more houses.

Cuckfield Council initially refused permission to build, stating that 'the elevations and general character of the designs were unsuitable for the District'. The case would become one of the most notorious planning disputes of the 1930s, with the council accused of favouring the 'pseudo antique villas of the speculative builder' over more cutting-edge design. After a heated inquiry, permission was eventually granted and the houses went on sale advertised as 'The ideal home in a woodland setting'.

The design was unusual for Tecton, featuring rather bland brick facades in reference to the local vernacular. The original consistency of the scheme has since been destroyed as one house has been rendered in white and another fitted with a pitched roof. •

Justine Sambrook



### architectural acoustic finishes

Designed by architects Dexter Moren Associates, the five star Hilton London Bankside near Tate Modern & The Shard, represents the next generation of design-led Hilton Hotels.

Our Oscar Elite exceptionally smooth acoustic plaster was spray applied to the ceiling throughout this stylish hotel lobby, creating a calm & relaxing environment without design compromise.

Photo by Katherine Jane Wood Photography







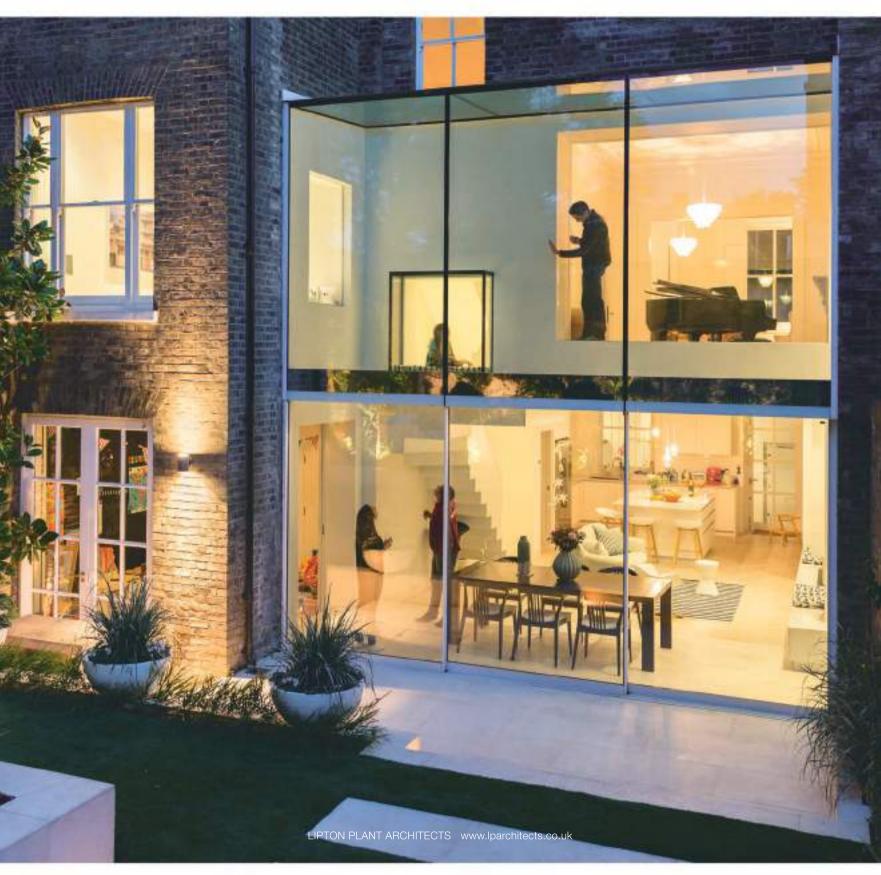








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