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If you open a window then close it a room will regain its target temperature within minutes because the walls act like a big storage heater.

Infrared domestic heating would slash carbon, reports Stephen Cousins: ribaj.com/infrared

Cover image: Tainan Spring urban park in Taiwan by MVRDV, photographed by Daria Scagliola

Long, lockdown evenings...

...have seen me acquainting myself with classic post-war Italian movies. Perhaps there's something cinematic in being two weeks behind Italy in the coronavirus outbreak and if the UK's story plays out the same way their present will be our future. It's as if we're all in an unpleasant sequel to a gruesome original, where everyone knows the plot twist. But it could just as easily be for the new reality these films confronted, the existential dilemmas they raise and the resonances these have with our Covid-19 situation.

Roberto Rossellini's 1945 'Rome: Open City' was a raw, contemporary portrayal of the Nazi-occupied city. Its curfew-imposed streets deserted apart from the rumbling of vehicles seeking out the Resistance. Federico Fellini's 1957 ' Nights of Cabiria', also set in Rome, focuses on the internal emotional resilience of its central character, a poor but feisty prostitute whose lust for life shines brightly through adversity. Most affecting perhaps is Michelangelo Antonioni's 1962 'The Eclipse', a meditation on the superficial materialism of post-war society and the existential loneliness that sits at the core of modern love - mostly shot in an empty EUR.

The final seven minutes of this film are a real-time build-up to the eclipse itself, where the viewer sees the atmosphere of the city palpably change and darken; where streetlamps trigger on in the half-light and a creeping sense of the uncanny unfolds in anticipation of the film's strange emotional denouement. It's a similar unease that plays out every evening in our living rooms as the daily death toll is announced; as we wait, suspended, for normality to return.

Jan-Carlos Kucharek, editor

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More specified:

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Compendium

Recite gentle, please
At its recent RIBA/Varia talk, PiP was charmed to discover that Swedish firm Snøhetta was so named not because of a wish to associate itself with the country’s highest peak but because it sits a cross-laminated timber structure extension. Continuing the theme of upper levels, the firm chose Proteus’ SC gold, zigzag perforated aluminium screen cladding, which blends softly with the sky.

Putting the mesh in Mersey
Part of the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone, Tower Wharf at Wirral Waters in Birkenhead is a £60.5m Grade A office building designed by Falconer Chester Hall Architects. Its reception and main feature staircase called for metal mesh wall and ceiling panels, supplied by Armstrong. Armstrong’s metal mesh ceiling, canopy and buffeting business has been taken over by Knauf AMF to complement the firm’s own product range, including its Heradesign mineral tiles. The expansion complements the Whole K4.5 million Birkenhead Dockland development.

The Roaring ‘20s to 2000s
Everyday life might look like something out of a science fiction movie during the lockdown, but that needn’t be a bad thing. Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey, which sits a cross-laminated timber lattice-form brick facade, behind which sits a sita cross-laminated timber structure extension. Continuing the theme of upper levels, the firm chose Proteus’ SC gold, zigzag perforated aluminium screen cladding, which blends softly with the sky.

50-gun salute
At the 50th birthday celebrations of SAS International, chair Sidhvan McElhinney might forgive her for revealing possible non-adherence to safety regulations – and her age. Speaking at the SASPout, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. Speaking at the SASFest, she recalled playing among the boxes and metal sheets at her age. 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Remote working has plenty of advantages

We are all adjusting to the changes in our lifestyles to stem the advance of the Covid-19 pandemic. For many it’s likely to mean working remotely for the first time. I worked in a traditional office for 10 years and it was with some trepidation that I joined a company whose team is remote-based around the UK and Europe. I thought it useful to share my experience so far.

Digital technology is central to the way in which we communicate and it is the way in which we embrace it that allows such working to be successful. Our core business tools are based on the Google G-Suite, which includes Meet, a virtual meeting room, which can be added to any new meeting invite. Collaborating on a cloud-based file such as a spreadsheet or document allows many contributors freedom to input thoughts simultaneously. This can dramatically reduce the time needed to produce outputs such as bids and proposals.

Many will understand the benefit of cloud-based working with CRM, where information flows around teams much more effectively. Using it with other forms of information has similar advantages. Google’s cloud stores all previous versions of a document, spreadsheet or presentation. This means locating an earlier version is easy and there is no longer the need for protracted file names like ‘rev001, final_absolude_final_for issue’, as is so often the case with traditional digital filing systems.

A software company I work for, Atamate, has identified diversity benefits that remote Working can bring. Home working improves the ability to balance childcare and other caring responsibilities. Statistics show these roles have often fallen to women so flexible working plays a part in addressing gender balance, improving equality and inclusivity. We’ve found too it brings opportunities for those with spectrum disorders such as autism, who can find social interactions in conventional office environments challenging.

The social interaction our working environment provides is clearly an important part of our wellbeing. A study by researchers at Oxford University has noted negligible differences between physical face to face contact and a video call in terms of the effect on subjective mood, suggesting that technology can go a long way towards supporting health as we isolate ourselves during this pandemic.

Dan Cash is a building services engineer involved in design, teaching and research. He is director of consulting at Atamate Ltd.

**Books**

*Reflective Membranes*  
Construction membranes may be hidden after the project is complete, but their role in ensuring proper heat, air and moisture movement throughout the building envelope and safeguarding the health of the building and occupants is essential. Reflective membranes like Reflectashield® TT 0.81 breather-membrane and Reflectatherm Prussian vapour control layer support the natural vapour cycle of buildings and boosts the thermal performance of the fabric through reflective low-emissivity surfaces.

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*Books*  
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*Architectural acoustics: A guide to integrated thinking*  
Pablo Serrano & Richard Donelly. Verso 100tp HB £19.99

Given the chaos that has arisen from the rise of the coronavirus, the themes of this book seem particularly prescient. The argument goes on to note how the architecture and interior design of modern public spaces, but how little the internal landscape of our bodies affects how we interact with others within that landscape. In his very readable essay, Serrano pushes on the link he developed in his *Usurp of Disorder*. The epigraph seems to be the opening: “the auditory of places the New York’s Hudson Yards is a pre-determined, real-world driven community that can only degrade over time. Given configured then, a necessary critical role of the modern urban realm.”

*Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City*  
Richard Donelly. RIBA Publishing. 296p HB £45

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Box bed for three people

What: Tri-Pod, walnut box bed for three
Where: London

Take one two and two down house and add a throuple. With three in a relationship instead of two, suddenly the double bed isn’t big enough – and nor is the bedroom. And where do you get away from each other for a quiet dram or yoga stretch?

Perhaps in – or on top of – a box bed. Architect Alex Scott-Whitby of ScottWhitby Studio, who had already worked on seven micro-projects for the clients, saw that the crawl space of the loft wasn’t enough for an extension but the roof ties meant it could be opened up to the underside of the roof. And dispensing with the corridor and walls upstairs made an airy space lit from windows on both sides, and from above from an existing rooflight.

Could the bed be a four poster? Scott-Whitby sketched it out after his investigation of the loft and proposed that the space on top could be a little retreat under the existing skylight. And instead of an expensive upgrade to windows – to give quiet from traffic and the Heathrow flight path for one of the clients for his sleeping disorder – the four poster became a box bed. This walnut box closes right up or can be opened to reveal bed, wardrobes and tiny staircase – it packs a lot into its 7.5m². Push and release ironmongery ensures everything is hidden until the doors open.

Scott-Whitby worked with a relative of one of the clients, a Part I member of the practice who was starting out as a builder and had originally worked as a carpenter. He created a series of simple IKEA-style construction drawings drawn from the 3D model, which showed how to put together the softwood carcass and add plenty of insulation before it was clad in walnut-faced ply. It was half built before moving on site then completed over a month of the client’s summer holidays. The 1mm walnut veneer was matched and glued on site.

The first discussions were in May, with the throuple able to take possession in August. And the budget of £100,000 was originally set aside, but the actual cost was £25,000, including taking out the walls. “One guy, three months and some material,” says Scott-Whitby.

The space up above the bed has become a true retreat, not just for the rare glass of whisky but as an extra, sunny relaxing space during the enforced isolation of the coronavirus.

The standalone walnut box bed, here partially closed, shares the space with a walnut dresser.

Top right: The bed also has closets for clothes and a tiny stair up to the relaxation space.

Right: In section the scale of the piece can be appreciated.

Below: On site sketch of initial ideas.

Timber finish
- 1mm walnut veneer
- Oak internal joinery
- 8 mm + 3.3 mm clear toughened glass...
By replacing a shopping mall with an undulating lagoon in the heart of a congested city, MVRDV has introduced leisure space, fresh air and architectural sculpture.

**Tainan Spring urban park, Taiwan**

In an act of imaginative re-purposing that takes account of the changing nature of how we shop, the city of Tainan in south west Taiwan has curiously chosen to reduce rather than add to its retail offering. Architect MVRDV has made a significant new public space in the centre of this highly congested city, known as Fort Zeelandia when the Dutch East India Company controlled it in the 17th century. A Dutchman himself, MVRDV partner Winy Maas says he was humbled to be declared winner of a city government competition – set by the former mayor, now Taiwan’s vice president – to rejuvenate the urban area east of the old canal harbour.

Named Tainan Spring, the €4.7 million built proposal has created a 1.5ha public water park in the centre of the city, an “urban lagoon” which replaces a defunct shopping mall that previously stepped from 4-12 storeys along its 180m length and 45m width.

Maas explains that the city wanted to deal with an urban block that had suffered due to the consumer move to online retailing, and was looking to architects to reinvent the space. MVRDV responded to the modern history of the site as well as its past not only by celebrating the water aspect of the former harbourside but also acknowledging the “removal” of the retail mall itself.

This greening is read against the background of the remains of the mall, whose concrete structure looms like a modern ruin over the plaza.
deconstructed the mall down to its basement-level car park and installed inside it an undulating lagoon landscape, which can be gradually ‘flooded’ according to the season. Forming the islets are hillocks where local trees transplanted from the jungle grow and flourish in the new pool area. Yet this greening is read against the background of the remains of the mall, whose concrete structure looms like a modern ruin over the plaza.

But, as Maas explains, that act of removal is something of a sleight of hand, as the design of the new plaza had to be modified by the proximity of the saline canal that leads out to the city’s new port area. ‘The west end of the plaza actually forms part of the retaining wall of the canal, so there were knock-on effects,’ he explains. ‘In Holland we are used to the fact that sea water runs beneath the foundations of our buildings and the same was true here; so in deconstructing the building, we had to deal with resultant hydrostatic pressures.’ So while the mall’s two basement parking levels were retained, with B1 now forming the new lagoon level, the removal of 80% of the building’s original mass necessitated weight compensation in what remained to ensure groundwater didn’t cause upthrust in the retained slabs. It meant a strategy of demolishing the building piece-by-piece. Maas adds that this involved removing the steel for recycling after the concrete around it had been scabbled away. “It was a beautiful act...
of removal and relocation, one done by hand to balance the load on the site by gradually moving the rubble down into the lower basement at level E2. As if to mark the process, the firm even installed a glass floor at B1 level so users can see its final resting place.

Visible on the same level on north and south sides are the requisite water storage tanks and ozone filtration plant. Two sets of these were specified to ensure that if return water contaminates any one of the 180m3 tanks, another can be brought into service. Water enters the lagoon via two floor-set inlets, with return water outlets on the perimeter of the B1 plaza floor. As part of the maintenance regime, the lagoon is completely emptied every Tuesday to allow for a ‘deep-clean’ of the water and the plaza floor. Numerous factors governed the fluid dynamics of the plaza, says Maas. First was the need always to keep water flowing. Mosquitoes abound in Taiwan and dengue fever is a real concern, so there could be no areas where water could pool and allow the insects to lay eggs. Second was the ability to take account of seasonal changes in the rainfall. Water levels are adjusted according to demand with mains water when necessary but generally during the monsoon season they will be higher, at 70cm, and in the dry summer months will be lower, at 50cm.

Water misters set into concrete hillocks in the lagoon help to generate a localised climate. In a city where summer temperatures regularly hit mid-30°C, they can lower the ambient temperature at lagoon level by 2-5°C when activated. The mist performs a secondary function too, contributing to net evaporation levels. The upward movement of air and moisture helps prevent exudate fumes and detracts from the roads above and accounts for rising of lagoon levels; the effect, claims Maas, is palpable: ‘The sunken pool is cleaner than the grass park area we’ve installed at ground level – though we are hoping in the long run that electric cars will deal with the issue altogether.’

Planted in tree pits set into the hillocks, they are accessed for tending by one of the four full-time gardeners during the weekly maintenance. The floor of the lagoon is formed of resin-bound fine pebbles, which offers a good non-slip surface for feet as well as an easy-cleaning regime. Being open to the public 24 hours a day – ‘It’s even busy past midnight’ – meant MVRDV also had to consider the lighting of the scheme. It adopted a delicate approach – lighting, not directly but discreetly, the remaining concrete structure or the individual planting growing out of the lagoon floor, as well as the floor itself. The section of lagoon beneath the road is a sublime space, the firm believes, even though the city owners run your head there, set in concrete trenches accessed from road level.

How to deal with the perimeter areas that bound the lagoon remains a work in progress, but Maas says the half-flooded, abandoned chemical factories that served as the site for some of his scenes, have in a sense, been re-envisioned in a sunnier and certainly less toxic environment. Yet seen in the light of the recent economic chaos brought on by the coronavirus global pandemic, perhaps it is a portent of a dystopian future. Or, in its sublimity, perhaps Tainan Spring can merely be read as a ‘modern ruin’ that picks up where critical US art/architecture practice SITE left off; which perhaps Tainan Spring can merely be read as a ‘modern ruin’ that picks up where critical US art/architecture practice SITE left off; which if so, suggests a happier ending for the deaths of the high street. You decide.

The sunken pool is cleaner than the grass park area we’ve installed at ground level – though we are hoping in the long run that electric cars will deal with the issue altogether.
Specified

1. Brickslot discreet drainage
   ACO
   One morning, when Gregor Samsa awoke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed into a beetle. He lay on his armour-like back, and thought of his life’s ambition to establish an insect water park in the vast, hidden drains that ran through his university campus. He headed out to the longest, straightest, SuDS slot channel, sat astride a fragment of twig, and threw himself in. The efficient flow carried him swiftly to a delightful swale beset by trees and wildflowers. And all around him were a thousand feeding birds...
   aco.co.uk

2. Blanc de Bierges paving stones
   Haddonstone Group
   Inspired by locations where nature is venturing back into territory long ago claimed by man, the MoD at Andover has embarked on an audacious rewilding experiment of its own. Coyotes in San Francisco, boar in Barcelona, and a puma on the streets of Santiago are quite something to live up to – so the MoD has landscaped to attract the most elusive creature of them all. The Andover Sasquatch is known to adore a custard cream; but this cunning trail of biscuits is by Haddonstone – appetising, yet tough enough to survive those mighty jaws.
   blancdebierges.com

3. Extensive sedum green roof system
   Blackdown Green Roofs
   Translated from the original goat ‘Monkeys of Wales We, the Kashmiri Markhor of Great Orme, being established in the outcrop “Llandudno”, issue orders for your so-called civilisation. No new building within the Goatdom shall be constructed without multi-level Blackdown Green roofs planted with sedum, rockery and alpine plants, supplying sustainable, comfortable interiors for Monkeys and platforms above where your Goatish overlords may gambol and nibble in kingly splendour while monitoring and directing your degenerate carryings-on.’
   blackdown.co.uk/

4. Jakoustic reflective fencing
   Jacksons Fencing
   Such a relief! I thought something terrible had happened. Couldn’t hear the children playing in the playground over the back – and no traffic noise even! It’s though every living human has been snatched off the streets of Southwark and banged up! Turns out that Jacksons Fencing really means it when it says the solid 1.8m panels of its Jakoustic Reflective acoustic fencing reduce noise by up to 28dB, aiding cognitive performance, well-being, motivation – and blood pressure. I am so calm!
   jacksons-security.co.uk/

Specified products are compiled from supplied company press releases.
Flexible flooring

Spanish floor tiles are a safe and aesthetically pleasing choice for high-traffic areas, offering a sleek and contemporary look that suits expansive spaces. High performance products are available for the most challenging projects and reassuringly meet tough criteria for slip-resistance, sustainability and other specifications.

NATURAL APPEAL
Advances in digital technology mean that the Spanish tile industry has been able to push the boundaries and create ever more realistic replicas of raw materials whether from the mine, quarry or forest. Production processes are so innovative that tiles can faithfully reproduce the warmth of wood or the rustiness of weathered steel, yet win every time on practicality as ceramic surfaces offer so many benefits and are ideal for a broad spectrum of projects. New inks for porcelain that don’t lose their vibrancy when heated are allowing manufacturers to experiment with colour and design while the use of digital printing has transformed traditional production techniques beyond recognition.

Above Kromatika by Equipe Ceramics has a matt finish that gives a contemporary look to a porcelain tile.
www.equipeceramicas.com

Left Solid by Casafinita is a cement-effect floor tile in four formats.
www.casafinita.com

CREATIVE FORCE
Manufacturers will often work with architects and designers to create special pieces and as the cost of small production runs has come down it’s much more feasible to offer this flexibility. With formats ranging from large slabs and 3D pieces to subway-style bricks or mosaics in a variety of shapes, sizes, finishes, colours and textures, there are distinctive looks available for each and every project. The Spanish tile sector is particularly adept at interpreting the latest trends and some brands employ teams of designers to create intriguing concepts. Oxidised metal slabs and terrazzo-effect tiles with giant flecks are recent creative ideas that work particularly well in porcelain.

Above Elburg by Arcana is a macro terrazzo-effect porcelain tile in neutral hues.
www.arcanatiles.com

Above right Iron Oxide by Museum is a porcelain floor tile inspired by weathering steel.
www.museumsurfaces.com

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION
Ceramics are a safe choice for the environment. Made by combining fire, clay and water, tiles are a natural material and do not give off harmful emissions. They are durable and resistant to sudden temperature change, damp and chemical and biological agents, offering a highly sustainable and lengthy life cycle. And with their hardness and scratch resistance, porcelain tiles are an ideal choice for public spaces with high-traffic areas, looking pristine for many years to come. All these positive attributes are well known by industry professionals, but what is not always realised is that tiles can contain significant recycled content. As environmental concerns move up the agenda, Spanish manufacturers continue to look closely at their production processes and many are working towards a circular economy.

Above Hex Pattern II by Orix features hexagonal tessera in a mosaic format.
www.onixmosaicos.com

Left City Folk by Saloni is a porcelain floor tile with significant recycled content.
www.saloni.com

About Tile of Spain

Tile of Spain is the voice of the Spanish tile industry, encompassing more than 125 tile manufacturers. Renowned worldwide for its inspiring blend of aesthetic and technical brilliance, Spanish tiles draw on a rich heritage of skill and creativity, while remaining at the cutting edge of design. Manufactured in Spain and widely available in the UK, these products embody the spirit of an industry that prides itself on proposing beautiful, meaningful and high-performance solutions to flooring, wall coverings, furnishing and external paving and cladding.

For further information on Tile of Spain go to: www.tileofspain.com
The social benefits of intergenerational projects are known, and the few live schemes point a clear way for the future. They fit the current mood

Words: Josephine Smit

There are times when the conventional publishing process struggles to keep pace with real life events. This is one such time. When I began researching this article at the beginning of March there had been no coronavirus deaths and the question of providing housing for the elderly that was designed to enable people to lead less isolated and better supported lives was, it seemed, being surmounted in little urgency.

In the light of social distancing, self-isolation and loss, and our experiences of fragile food supplies, support and health systems since then, the words of Chris Dobson, director of 3DReid, resonate: “It might be that we are looking at a future where we have to be more supportive,” he said in March. “It’s what we should be doing as a society.”

For today, our priorities are to safeguard people and livelihoods. But when we emerge from this crisis, there will be a need for serious debate about ways of living. Intergenerational living, whereby older people can live independently but within a balanced and supportive community, might be one of the building blocks for a better future, not only for the 1.5 million high risk people in England who were the first to be advised to self isolate or even the 5.8 million people over the age of 65 who generally live alone in the UK, but for all.

Back in town

Retirement housing traditionally set residents apart from their broader communities instead of town or suburban idea, but now they are being brought back into the urban mix. These schemes should be specific to their communities,” says Dobson. That’s true of a project the practice is working on with developer Keyworkers Living, in a site in Craigmillar, Edinburgh.

Dobson explains how: “The area has been subject to quite a lot of redevelopment over the past five years. As a consequence, there has been a huge amount of new housing, there has not been a student presence and later living not has not really been addressed. ’The life’s suitability for those of student accommodation, assisted living and dementia care was sealed by the fact it has several higher education facilities training health professionals located on the way nearby.

This is the practice’s first intergeneration project and it has drawn on resources in numerous sources in developing its design, including the Dementia Services Development Centre’s work at the University of Stirling and Architecture & Design Scotland’s ‘A Caring Place’ initiative, which is looking specifically at ageing and town centres. It also engaged with Heriot-Watt University, whose Place- Age study on developing age-friendly urban environments engaged with the Craigmillar community.

The proposed design has two connected blocks fronting the high street, one containing 164 student bedrooms and the other 66 assisted living rooms. “The blocks have a front door into the street, acknowledging that older residents lead their own lives, although they may need a bit of help,” says Dobson. The assisted living block links to the dementia care facility to create a view central activity space, which both resident groups can use. There are 88 dementia care rooms, a third being specifically for end-of-life palliative cares. Many of the latter will look Artar’s Seat, “We thought that could be something quite powerful,” says Dobson. The view gives them a point of reference, a symbol of home.”

Integrally, the dementia care facility has a mix of types of spaces, so that residents can sit where they feel most comfortable. Institutional ‘nurse stations’ are ruled out, instead there will be more homely-looking basins in the lounge. “We tried to make sure it is a reflection of home, especially for the dementia side, so there are points of reference that should be familiar to people,” says Dobson. The architecture references the predominant housing typologies of Edinburgh, primarily through a contemporary take on the bay windowed entrance block, with the lower scale elements of the scheme echoing the 1910s semi-detached houses found in the area and in other tenement buildings. “We’re picking up on motifs, so it feels of its place and is contextual as we can make it,” he adds.

Fostering community

The shift to urban centres is overdue, says Nigel Saunders, director of Pozzoni Architecture, a practice well versed in design for later living. “Cities have become quite demographically imbalanced, and there is a need to re-balance and provide more solutions for older people,” he says. That is generating a different type of architectural response and product, like the practice’s design for a site between a canal and a busy street in central Chester. The six-storey scheme, which is under construction for operator Belong, has a 72 bed care home at lower levels with 23 apartments for the over 55s above. At ground level, a community hub with a bar, café, gym, hair salon and therapy room will offer services to residents and the broader community.

Each community hub has increasingly popular facilities, a factor that prompted Pozzoni to take the idea further. It established a working group 18 months ago with CEOs from client groups spanning education, health, social care and property consultancy to explore urban mixed use with a later living focus. They are working through the diverse practicalities of different uses, from safety and safeguarding priorities through to ensuring each use has its own identity.

The architect is now developing a brief and concept design based on a notional site to illustrate how ideas might work in practice for a building or series of blocks. The notion of sites – four different environments: public space, retail street, residential and canal side areas. We’ve given ourselves these four different conditions so that we can explore how the different uses might respond and get the right uses for the right location,” explains Saunders. This exercise is firmly rooted in reality, with the concept expected to illustrate both commercial and social benefits. “The anchor to this is how the hub offers opportunities for interaction,” says Saunders. “We see the concept as a catalyst for changing the way cities provide for the aging population.” A care home in an urban setting can serve both its own building and provide a base for domiciliary care for the wider community, he points out. And a school provides for intergenerational educational and encourages families to remain in cities.

As Saunders says, “In this way, the scheme becomes an asset for the wider location of the city.”

Ideas like these are already capturing the interest of clients. “It’s enabling us to take ourselves out of the conventional project brief. Clients are asking: how much of this could we do here?” says Saunders. “Our next step is to...
Eden a real site to work on. ‘The work’s influence is extending beyond a single site. Pozzoni is a member of the housing and planning working group for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s Ageing Hub, Greater Manchester being the UK’s first-age-friendly city region, according to the World Health Organization. The hub is looking at strategic responses and, Sanders hints, ‘the city region could lead in doing something highly ambitious.’

Scaling up

Ideas for intergenerational living are already being taken to a larger scale in Truro, Cornwall, where a site on the city centre’s fringe is set to be developed with up to 500 homes and other uses. For Manisha Patel, senior partner at PRP, the masterplan for the new Pydar district is all about people: ‘Our view is that intergenerational living is about going back to the village model in how communities interact, with support mechanisms in place, physically, socially and across generations. It looks back to medieval mechanisms in place, physically, socially and across generations. It looks back to medieval

The masterplan’s design code demands that facilities are street facing and interact with the public realm. ‘The public realm becomes a very important space for interaction,’ explains Patel. ‘We’re opening up the River Allen for outdoor use as different age groups can use.’ There are plans for activity and nature trails, an outdoor leisure street and an external escalator alongside the innovation hub. The slope from Truro’s high street to the river, which drops by around three storeys, is an accessibility challenge that has been addressed. Some routes through the site will have shops, reflecting Truro’s character, but alternative routes are being provided on this wheelchair accessible scheme.

The masterplan is taking on board research into Truro’s facilities, needs and community views. ‘The outline masterplan code will be able to face the changing nature of shopping, and other aspects of life. We are designing for adaptable buildings,’ says Patel. ‘This is Treveth’s first development and it is ambitious to set high targets in the quality of the building and the public realm, so the development fits in line with societal change. Larger developments could have intergenerational masterplanning.’

For PRP, Pydar scales up thinking on typologies delivered on previous masterplans, including the multi-generational house for Chobham Manor, at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, east London. That design, for builder Taylor Wimpey and, according to Patel, ‘went like hot cakes’. But such innovations have remained far from the norm. ‘On large scale masterplanning, this is being left to the market,’ says Patel. ‘We assume that typologies are taken up by families, but that’s not true, as people are living in different ways. Our policy is not falling into line with societal change. Larger developments could have intergenerational masterplanning.’

Current events could – and ultimately should – change that.

PRP’s Pydar St intergenerational living proposal in Truro, Cornwall, for the city council’s development arm Treveth.

Will integrate and stand the test of time. As well as masterplanning, PRP will design the scheme’s first phase and integrate other smaller-scale, local practices into the process in the future.

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‘A rare achievement for a window manufacturer’

The Velfac system combines performance, style, and competitive pricing, and is also one of the very few systems available with full CWCT test results that can satisfy Chapter 6.9 of the NHBC Standards. Andy Cook, commercial director at Velfac.

‘This is particularly relevant to any area of glazing which passes over floor slabs and which has to demonstrate CWCT-specific levels of weatherability performance,’ he comments, adding: ‘Velfac and CWCT have worked closely together over many years to develop testing rigs and testing sequences designed to push the Velfac product range to its limits, thereby generating impressive performance data which meets NHBC Chapter 6.9 Standards, a rare achievement for a window manufacturer. This means that the Velfac system can withstand even those climatic conditions defined by NHBC as “very severe” in terms of air, wind and water resistance.’

Velfac is also the only composite wood / aluminium window manufacturer able to provide a CE-mark for glazed window walling which incorporates its purpose designed and engineered, and features a wide range of opening functions. CWCT for curtain walling is a legal requirement under BS EN 1183:2005. It is particularly relevant to any area of glazing which passes over floor slabs and which has to demonstrate CWCT-specific levels of weatherability performance, “very severe” in terms of air, wind and water resistance.”

Velfac systems are independently tested and accredited to the specific requirements of the Centre for Window and Cladding Technology (CWCT) which incorporate its purpose designed and engineered, and features a wide range of opening functions. CWCT for curtain walling is a legal requirement under BS EN 1183:2005. It is particularly relevant to any area of glazing which passes over floor slabs and which has to demonstrate CWCT-specific levels of weatherability performance, “very severe” in terms of air, wind and water resistance.”

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Extensive curtain walls and large window screens are no longer reserved only for landmark buildings but have become a feature in projects of every shape and size, from major commercial buildings to residential projects. Specifications window walling is complex however, especially in the light of increasing regulatory compliance and expertise is required to minimise the real – and expensive – risk of non-compliance.

Velfac Window Walling system is backed by an expert in-house consultancy team, which can help you successfully navigate building standards and compliance issues, saving time and budget across the build.

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We really, really, didn’t want carpet,’ says Walters & Cohen’s Cindy Walters of the practice’s King’s School Canterbury International College.

With feelings running high on the subject, the architect had to work hard to persuade the client to go for a hard flooring solution. They can quite rightly feel vindicated. The result, 3000m² of oak flooring extensively throughout the boarding school, turns out to be one of the most popular elements of the interior. ‘Now they love it. It’s what makes the school feel special,’ she says.

And this is quite a special place. It is both home and school to 80 international students, and as such helps students aged 11-16 years adapt to boarding school life as well as to the English education system.

The International College is an extension to the long-established independent King’s School, which is based within and around Canterbury’s historic cathedral precinct. Five years ago Walters & Cohen was commissioned to carry out a masterplan for the whole school estate at a time when the school was keen to add an international college. This was earmarked for a former industrial site, wedged between the school’s sports centre and its sports field slightly further away from the precinct.

The 1.25ha space had lately been used for car repairs but had, says Walters, ‘amazing potential’ with ample scope for new development. Its key building was an impressive 19th century former Malthouse and the site also included a row of small cottages. Walters & Cohen’s feasibility study resulted in plans to renovate and convert the Malthouse into a drama centre and theatre, retain the cottages for staff housing, and add a new build 3,000m² international school. A new civic square connects the school to The Malthouse, which was converted by Tim Products in Practice May/June 2020 ribaj.com

Choosing the right materials was critical to Walters & Cohen at King’s School. Oak flooring holds the interiors together with a warmth that’s cool

Words: Pamela Buxton Photographs: Dennis Gilbert/VIEW
Ronalds Architects. A sports court was added to the north with the whole site is unified by landscapes created by Bradley Hole Schoenaich. An existing garage was retained and converted by Walters & Cohen into a fencing centre.

The new school building is a strong presence that works well with the red brick of the nearby Malthouse. The practice chose a compact courtyard typology, with the building rising three storeys around an inner garden. Teaching facilities are on the ground floor with two upper levels for boys’ and girls’ bedrooms respectively.

“The courtyard typology is quite protective and is an efficient way of getting the right accommodation on the site,” says Walters, adding that the practice had to demonstrate to the client that the building could be repurposed for hotel/conference use if necessary in the future.

On the ground floor, the building has a concrete structure with CLT for the two upper floors. This gives the benefit of thermal mass and the large spans necessary for the teaching spaces. Offsite manufacture was used where possible. The materiality responds to the industrial nature of the site. Ground floor cladding of robust precast concrete panels from Cornish Concrete Products give the appearance of in-situ, board-marked concrete. But the most striking element is the cladding on the upper floors. Here, the architect chose Benchmark CorTen A weathered steel hook-on cassette panels, which have faded edges and are patinated to a pleasing rusty appearance that sits comfortably alongside the Malthouse. These 450mm deep box cassettes conceal the horizontal gutter above the precast concrete. These downpipes, with rainwater channelled into a horizontal gutter above the precast concrete. Unlike the school’s other properties in the heart of medieval Canterbury, this project was, says the architect, the ideal place to use some sort of industrial material. And just as the oak flooring is the key material of the interior, external robustness is run through with engineered oak flooring, pairing domesticity with robustness.

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“a contemporary interpretation,” says Walters.

Inside, the key was to ensure that it felt like a home-from-home, rather than an institution. The aforementioned oak is a big part of this. The architect specified the Havwoods’ HW European Oak engineered flooring throughout most of the building.

“We wanted a natural material that we could use everywhere that would work with the concrete and steel and be easy to maintain,” says associate director Rob Hill. The hope is that this will look better and better as it wears with use.

This warm-looking flooring is combined with an emphasis on transparency on the ground floor, with the courtyard elevation fully glazed onto the garden. Around the edges are student break-out areas with armchairs, oak room dividers, and other elements such as a piano and a fish tank to further reinforce the domestic theme. These areas can be screened off from the main internal circulation corridor by sliding partitions, which have write-on, wipe-off fronts.

“When you are inside, you feel as if you’ll always know where you are. It’s like you’re in a big, big house,” says Walters & Cohen director Giovanni Bonfanti, adding that this means it’s easy for students to orientate themselves within the building.

The only exception to the use of oak is in some of the specialist teaching areas, where Tretford’s Charcoal 620 carpet was used for acoustic reasons. The ribbed carpet is made in Ireland using 80% goat hair.

In the upstairs residential accommodation, the oak flows through the twin bedrooms and study and social areas – again the architect was keen to avoid carpet, which although popular for bedrooms in the UK, is considered much less desirable in many countries.

Fortunately, she says, the school is now ‘over the moon’ with the oak solution, which ‘is what links it all together.’ Certainly the student bedrooms look extremely pleasant with their views over the courtyard.

This is just one of several projects undertaken by Walters & Cohen for the King’s School. The practice recently completed the King’s School Shenzhen International for the same client in China, and is now on site with a new science building for the college at the Cathedral precinct in Canterbury.

Credits

Client The King’s School, Canterbury
Architect Walters & Cohen
Structural engineer Price & Myers
Building services engineer Study & Cowles
Landscape Bradley-Hole Schoenaich
QS Fanshawe
Project manager Fanshawe
Contractor R Durtnell & Sons

Selected suppliers

Precast concrete panels Cornish Concrete Products
Oak flooring Havwoods
Classroom carpet Tretford
Barrier matting Heckmondwike
Weathered sheet metal Kingspan
CLT floor, walls and roof structure KLH
Saftey floor Polyflor
This modern house on a beautiful site overlooked by Oversley Castle was purchased as a shell and then completed by Sam Taylor, the owner of Valla Homes. He chose Tile & Flooring in Bath for the installation of the tiles, flooring and bathrooms. Kerakoll products were used throughout with Barry Montacute, the contracts manager at Tile & Flooring, commenting. ‘At Tile & Flooring, Bath, we now specify Kerakoll products for all our projects. We are very impressed with the performance and the green credentials of the product range. Mark Ivey and Chris Lewis from Kerakoll are always available for advice with all of our projects and I personally value this service.’

One of the major headaches on the site was the bad weather which hampered progress externally where 61m² of 20mm thick porcelain tiles were fixed with Biogel adhesives and grouted using Fugalite Bio – a water-based resin grout that is resistant to UV rays and is waterproof, allowing it to withstand the elements on the hilltop site.

Internally there was an in-screed wet system running throughout the building. The existing screeds were levelled using Kerakoll Eco R10 and R15 self-levelling compound and Keralevel Eco LB which is a levelling compound with extra-rapid setting and drying. Where necessary Primer A and Keragrip E10 were used to promote adhesion. Both laser and wood flooring were specified with 140m² of porcelain and 210m² of marble and limestone as well as 98m² engineered oak flooring in the living area.

All wet areas were waterproofed using the Laminate No Crack Waterproofing system for the floors. This employs Biogel adhesives to form one laminated bond between the substrate and the Aquastop Green membrane and another between the membrane and the tile covering. Nanodefense Eco was used to waterproof the shower walls before tiling. The choice of adhesive and grout depended on the location and room speed dictated by access for other trades: Biogel No Limits and Revolution were both used alongside Fugalite Bio and Fugabella Color.

The oak flooring was fixed using Idrobuild Reinforced anti-cracking sheet and S1 Eco L54 adhesive, a tried and tested product from the Kerakoll wood flooring range. ‘The overall result is extremely impressive and definitely worth the hard work,’ commented Montacute.
Costed

AECOM associate David Holmes provides an overview of floor finishes, for both capital and whole-life costs

Flooring finishes can equal 3% to 5% of the total construction cost and represent a significant investment in the overall project; they are also one of the most heavily used parts of a building, so whole-life costs are as important to consider as capital costs. A holistic approach should be adopted to deliver maximum benefits rather than focus on upfront costs alone.

The following guide rates are for the supply and installation of a range of floor types. The rates should not be viewed as minimum or maximum values, rather they reflect rates typically seen in tendered received. Floor finishes offer perhaps the widest range of products and price levels. Flooring finishes offer perhaps the widest range of products and price levels.

The choice of floor types, quality and colour is truly enormous and great care needs to be given to the decisions made. Costs of the actual floor itself and any substrate requirement vary greatly. It is important to consider product properties and performance requirements relative to the intended use.

Each choice will have some effect on the price, as will the area and shape of the floor which is to be covered.

Installation

The appearance and performance of floor coverings are determined to a large extent by the quality of the prepared base or screed on which they are laid. The design and construction of the subfloor must meet the requirements for hardwearing, soundness, levels and surface regularities, dryness and other design parameters before whatever floor covering is chosen.

Any incompatibility with other trades or unsuitable conditions of work can restrict the ability of the floor layer to provide a neat, well adhered and satisfactory, lasting, floor finish. While the need to provide the correct material through the specification is obviously important, careful consideration must be given to on site quality control to achieve the desired quality finishes.

No allowance has been made for any attendances which may be required eg; concrete, priming, room heating and suitable storage – which needs to be dry, clean, ventilated, waterproof, warm and secure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLOOR TYPE</th>
<th>£/m²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In situ screed and floor finishes; laid level</td>
<td>10.50-14.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self levelling latex screed; 3mm thick on existing sub-base</td>
<td>25.50-31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granolithic; laid on green concrete; 38mm thick</td>
<td>27.50-33.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resin; 2-coat application normally 300-500mm thick</td>
<td>16.70-20.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resin; 2 part system on concrete</td>
<td>56.90-63.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet floorboard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak; 18mm 229mm thick chipboard flooring; 14m2 packs</td>
<td>20.00-24.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprung composition block flooring; court marking, sanding and sealing</td>
<td>170.00-210.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right The Slab Finishers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarry tile flooring</td>
<td>75.00-88.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slate ceramic; inset flooring with alp standard plain tiles</td>
<td>47.50-58.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slated ceramic; inset flooring with alp plain tiles</td>
<td>50.00-63.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glazed ceramic tiled flooring; designer tiles</td>
<td>110.00-130.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrazzo the flooring; 8mm thick white Italian marble aggregate tile</td>
<td>52.00-65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinyl floor sheet flooring</td>
<td>170.00-210.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slate tiles, smooth, straight cut</td>
<td>78.00-95.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portland stone paving</td>
<td>280.00-340.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Travertine marble; polished</td>
<td>270.00-330.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granite; 20mm thick</td>
<td>160.00-210.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parquet wood block flooring; wrought hardwood block</td>
<td>205.00-285.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parquet wood block finish; wrought hardwood block</td>
<td>190.00-250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible tiling; welded sheet or bolt joint tiles; adhesive fixing</td>
<td>52.00-63.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinyl flooring; 3.00mm x 3.00mm 2.00mm thick</td>
<td>15.50-18.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vinyl safety flooring 2.00-2.50mm thick</td>
<td>48.00-59.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vinyl safety flooring; 3.50mm thick heavy duty</td>
<td>58.00-68.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linoleum floor covering; 300mm x 300mm plus 3.00mm thick</td>
<td>41.00-52.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linoleum sheet flooring; 2.00mm thick</td>
<td>32.90-39.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubber sheeted floor covering; 500mm x 500mm x 2.30mm thick</td>
<td>44.00-53.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet; including underlay, edge grippers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavy domestic duty</td>
<td>69.00-78.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy domestic duty; narrow and wide, and sealing</td>
<td>48.00-59.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavy contract duty</td>
<td>48.00-59.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enviro Melling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard; needle punch; plaited; stainless steel frame</td>
<td>320.00-340.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Floors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised access floors; including 500mm x 500mm sheet encased particle boards on height adjustable pedestals 300mm high</td>
<td>50.00-60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised access floors; including 500mm x 500mm sheet encased particle boards on height adjustable pedestals 300mm high; grade duty</td>
<td>67.00-81.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden floor coverings; hooded access floor panels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy duty; fully flexible vinyl</td>
<td>25.00-30.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti static</td>
<td>31.00-34.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needle punch carpet</td>
<td>19.00-23.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specified

1. Herringbone parquet blocks
   Design by Havwoods

2. Purestone ceramic tiles
   Ceramiche Piamma

3. Tessera/Earthscape carpet tiles
   Forbo

4. Taraflex Performance vinyl flooring
   Gerflor

While making researches in the Royal Library for my History of Louis XIV, I stumbled upon the Memoirs of M de'Artagnan, where he relates that on his first visit to Versailles, he met in the antechamber four young men, serving in the Musketeer corps into which he was soliciting the honour of being received, bearing the names of Elst, Bergen, Vuren and Herlit.

We must confess these strange names struck us and it occurred to us that they were purely imaginary, taken from the brochures of the palace's oaken parquet floors... havwoods.com

So it's been like six weeks now, but we've really not been bored. There are just sooo many lovely things we've found to pass the time! So, today, we've been FaceTiming all our friends to get some advice on our gorgeous Forbo 'Tessara Earthscape' carpet tiles. We picked a mixture of 3259 'Yard', 1261 'Oasis', and 3260 'Savannah' to give the impression of a sunlit summer meadow, all green and textured, you knew? But after three weeks of lockdown, it's gone all kind of crazy. We haven't watered it enough. Forbo.com/flooring/en-gl/3258 'Terrain'.

And we've really not been bored. There are just sooo many lovely things we've found to pass the time! So, today, we've been FaceTiming all our friends to get some advice on our gorgeous Forbo 'Tessara Earthscape' carpet tiles. We picked a mixture of 3259 'Yard', 1261 'Oasis', and 3260 'Savannah' to give the impression of a sunlit summer meadow, all green and textured, you knew? But after three weeks of lockdown, it's gone all kind of crazy. We haven't watered it enough.
Nagatacho apartment, Tokyo

Adam Nathaniel Furman got a dream commission from Tokyo, but even he wasn’t quite wacky enough for the client

Words: Michéle Woodger  Photographs: Jan Vranovský

When Tokyo-based clients approached designer Adam Nathaniel Furman requesting a fun, ‘bubblegum’ interior for their flat naturally he was delighted. Handed an almost open brief (a light, airy, open layout with certain private areas), and no time constraints (it was not a primary residence and the project took two years), Furman effectively had carte blanche to deliver his trademark vivid styling. But he was in for a surprise: the clients had even more eccentric tastes than he did, and told him to be less conservative. ‘I started off rather tentatively’ he says, baffled, ‘but they told me to really go for it.’

The result of this fearless step into uncharted pastel territory is a ‘fruit cocktail’ interior (monochrome-lovers shield your eyes now) where orange and baby blue mosaic tiles jostle for bathroom space with a peach-coloured Lixil toilet and yellow Vola taps (Arne Jacobsen, 1960s), and the kitchen is a medley of pink cupboards, a green sink and a green and yellow striped floor. The corners refer to this as their ‘watermelon room’. A lilac carpet, which looks like icing and feels like sponge, competes for attention with orange, green and blue walls. Textures are equally sumptuous, from the laser-cut melamine doors, fine-textured wallpaper and a wooden sculptural screen. A semi-translucent Hi-Macs surface in the kitchen glows in the sunlight. The decor certainly isn’t for the faint-hearted, but it is lush.

Furman’s inspiration is partly derived from memories of visiting Japan as a child in the 1980s. At the time, ‘kawaii’ (cute) culture was emerging, with its pop aesthetic and ‘gender-bending’ colour schemes. Another memory was the palette of public bathhouses, which he has recreated thanks to the ready availability of inexpensive mosaic tiles. The circles on cupboard doors reference the Japanese flag.

The flat itself dates from the 1980s and was dark and dingy with rooms off a narrow corridor and claustrophobically low ceilings, ‘like living in a nightmare’ Furman concludes. One of his first actions was to remove the suspended ceiling, creating a more comfortable height but an uneven surface with a mere 3cm cavity for services. To distract from this, walls are papered white at the top, and in bold colours up to a four-foot ‘datum line’ to divert attention away. While budget was not an overriding concern, Furman balanced certain expensive purchases (imported Danish taps and a Jasper Morrison table) with off-the-shelf products, such as a Japanese ‘unit bath’ – an all-in-one prefabricated bathroom with a 50-year warranty.

Working with Japanese suppliers was challenging yet rewarding, even beyond the language barrier. Construction labour here is highly skilled, completed to exacting standards – and costly. So it is unusual to commission bespoke items, if ready-made alternatives, already very high standard, are cheaper. This is especially true when working with the large construction companies that many well-off clients prefer. Such a set-up proved restrictive for Furman’s crazy English guy asking for complicated weird things! But once a smaller contractor was engaged, commissioning one-of-a-kind items became easier. His two trips to Japan involved day-long meetings, where details were discussed repeatedly and thoroughly – lengthy perhaps, but productive and highly reassuring when managing a project from abroad.

Would he work in Japan again? ‘Hell yes! Japanese workmanship is of exceptional quality, and it’s been great to work with such eager colour enthusiasts’. Finding such collaborative and encouraging clients was the icing on the cake. As Furman admits: ‘Most people take one look at my website and run away screaming!’
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RIBAJ

Specified

1 Column wine cabinet
Fisher and Paykel

‘Darling! It’s real! I am loving quarantine, aren’t you? Roger thought he was being so clever by picking the indoor pool and leaving me with the boot room but HAI! THE SILLY GIT FORGOT I GET THE WINE FRIDGE! Look! Two compartments, 91 bottles, four temperatures: sparkling, white, red and “cellar”. So everything is perfect!

**“Wine inherently does not want to survive.”** That’s an actual quote from Alex Van Viet at Fisher & Paykel – and you know what? Thanks to Alex’s lovely fridge, it won’t – and I might! Chin chin!

fishepaykel.com/uk

2 Dorma Higgs Variflex
Style

Boring fixed walls are so Twentieth Century. Installing movable walls is the new going out, and these Variflex panels from Dorma Higgs have given us hours of fun. Not only can we, with a quick shuffle of the panels, kid ourselves that we’re wandering through Ikea, play a game of “find the lady”, or muzzle yells thanks to their 59dB acoustic reduction, we can also throw things at one another with no consequences other than possibly the need to change scuffed panels when the objects thrown are for – for instance, bricks or knives.

 style-partitions.co.uk

3 Voyage Collection
Vitra

‘Life is a system of signs and symbols,’ says Arik Levy, ‘where nothing is quite as it seems…’ so while city rents continue to draw tears, the space available to us now inexorably contracts – and we must be inventive in our fitting out of tiny rooms. ‘I hope’, says the artist-designer, ‘that the Vitra Voyage collection will help us to indulge ourselves and make time to enjoy our daily rituals’. I hope so too. So how do you like my new hand hygiene-themed home office?

vitra.com

4 Zorac kitchen extreme matt laminate
Rotpunkt

Oh, the dystopian zeitgeist is getting to me. When my dear friend, celebrity chef Anatole Fromage-Fumant, emailed to say he’d just filled his kitchen with shade and lava, my first thought was that he was going into the insect protein business. Pressed further, Ani clarified that he had in fact installed a new Rotpunkt Zorac kitchen in its ‘extreme matt’ laminates. The island’s in ‘Umbra’, and the tall cupboards are in new ‘Lava’. Oh, how we laughed! Though we have also now ordered a one hundredweight of mealworms.

rotpunktuk.com
CORK ROLL

Cork is becoming increasingly popular with architects for offering something that is a highly sustainable and thermally efficient natural material. Our first exploration with the material was perhaps in one of the most obvious of applications – as a spin board for an exhibition. The ‘thick’ cork roll of cork were easily applied to a sweeping curved substructure and offered a great warmth and texture as a material. More recently we are looking at utilizing cork for a community café where it will be inserted within a timber frame to provide both insulation and a backdrop for art displays.

VALCHROMAT

Our competition winning ‘Upside-down House’ design for a playhouse stemmed from a keen interest in exploring the use of colour within our projects. As we develop the detailed designs we are interested in using a material such as Valchromat which is a through-coloured wood fibre panel board. It comes in a broad range of colours and is naturally moisture resistant, suitable for external use when correctly finished. We are excited by the potential of machining the product to form a colourful shingled cladding with additional texture layered into the material that may imbue further details of the narrative of the project.

KERTO LVL

Kerto LVL is a laminated veneer lumber made of three layers of softwood that are bonded together and produced by Metsä Wood. We recently used Kerto timbers on a residential project where we wanted to expose the roof rafters. The space was too large to use standard softwood rafters without inserting regular nogging. Kerto beams offer increased strength and are dimensionally stable. The material is relatively rare in appearance but the overall appearance was unified by applying a stained oil finish. We are interested in further exploring how the structural properties of timber can be expanded through such engineering.

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