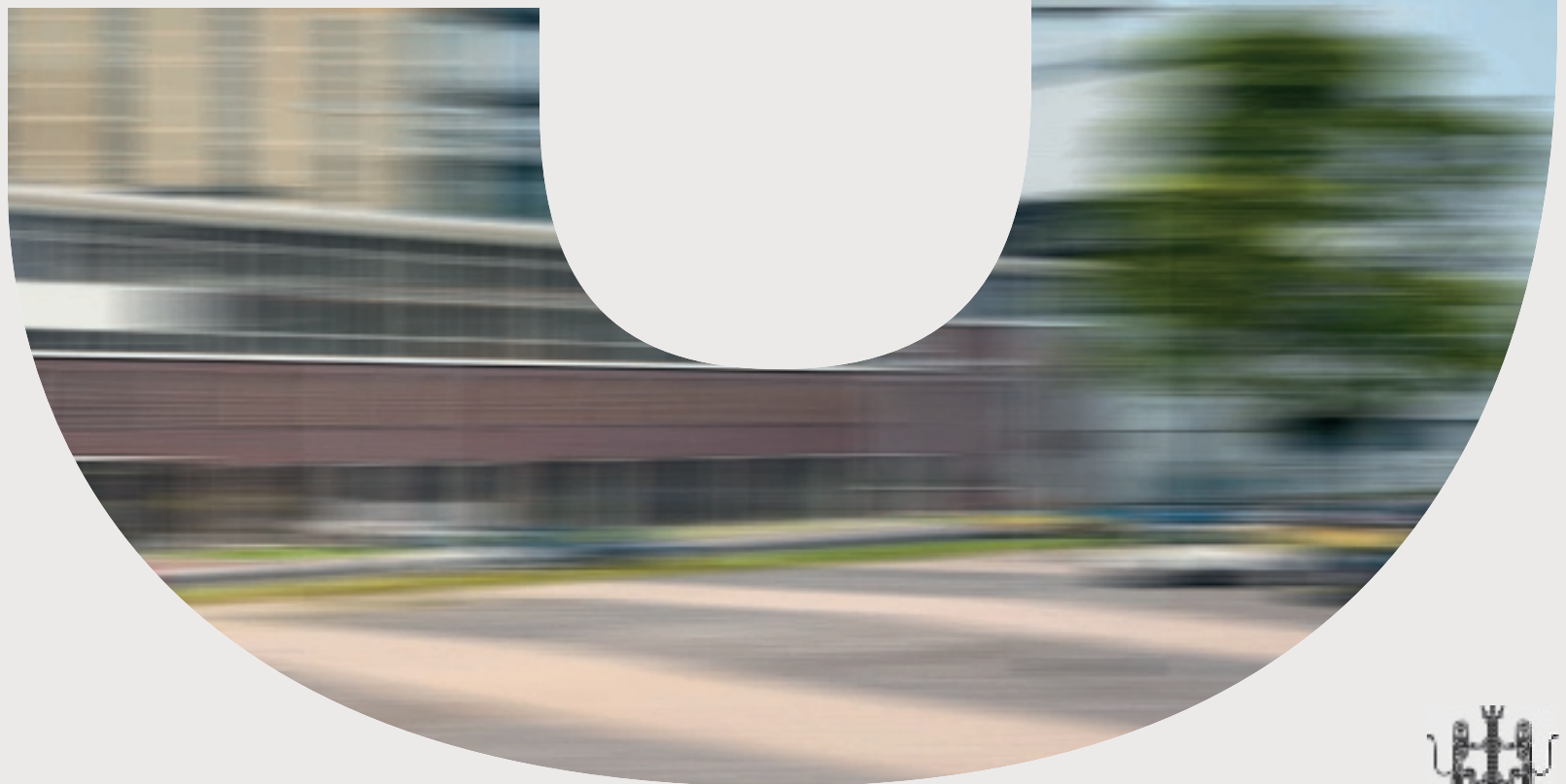


Virtual Interrail
Dutch powerhouse
Swedish gallery
French dentist
Belgian folly
Spanish museum
Polish house

The RIBA Journal

July 2020

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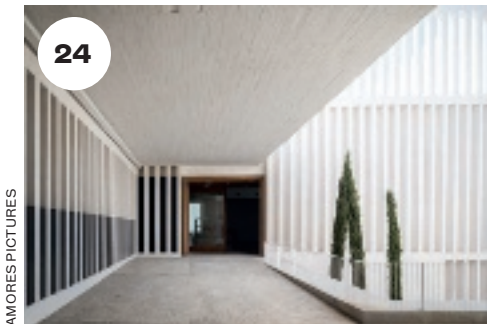
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Merijn



abc Average issue
circulation
28,958
ABC audited June 2019

RIBA



Has home working and virtual sharing given you ideas for
design after Covid? Tell us at letters.ribaj@riba.org

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Water Management
Royal Opera House | London



askACO

Location of case study
The Royal Opera House,
Covent Garden, London.

Project requirements
Open up the Royal Opera
House frontage while remaining
sympathetic to its history to
encourage new visitors to see the
world-class shows.

The solution
A new expansive glazed foyer built
within the current footprint, the detail
subtly mirrored by the galvanised
steel ACO Brickslot gratings.

Lines for performance

Covent Garden has been home to the Royal Opera House for over 260 years. It is a venue that has seen some remarkable 'firsts': the first indoor spotlight, the first time the piano was played in public in England, the first performances of many of Handel's operas, and the first 'ballet d'action', a work with a story told through dance.

Once a gathering place for only the most prestigious in society, it is no longer the exclusive domain of the privileged. A new glass entrance blends seamlessly with the historic building whilst also embracing the surrounding streetscape. A welcoming entrance, a window in and a window out, engaging everybody.



Although the stories inside change, the building remains consistently recognisable whilst continually evolving. The most recent chapter incorporates the slim, elegant lines of MultiDrain Brickslot channels, echoing the detail of the fully-glazed structure, which now invites passers-by to be part of the stories told inside.

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Inside the box –
Swedish gallery
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Clean and polished –
French dental studio
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07

1: Buildings

When you can't travel, you dream of being able to. So this is what we have done in search of the buildings we present in this issue. We conceived of a 'virtual Interrail trip' in which we (and you) backpack our way around Europe, calling in on a half dozen buildings by excellent younger practices – with the bonus of chatting to the architects in question about them.

Perhaps this discussion can be over lunch? So settle down to Hollandse nieuwe haring in the Netherlands, gravadlax in Sweden, confit de canard in France, moules frites in Belgium, Ajoblanco in Spain, and pierogi in Poland. Have a chilled drink too, why not. Er, where were we? Buildings! Also regionally different and delicious. Enjoy our tasting menu. ●

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Developers of anti-viral coatings step up a gear to make buildings safer: ribaj.com/antiviralcoatings

Blue sky thinking at Alex, a Belgian folly
by Atelier Vens Vanbelle, p20.



TIM VAN DEVELDE

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The RIBA Journal July 2020

It's a family affair

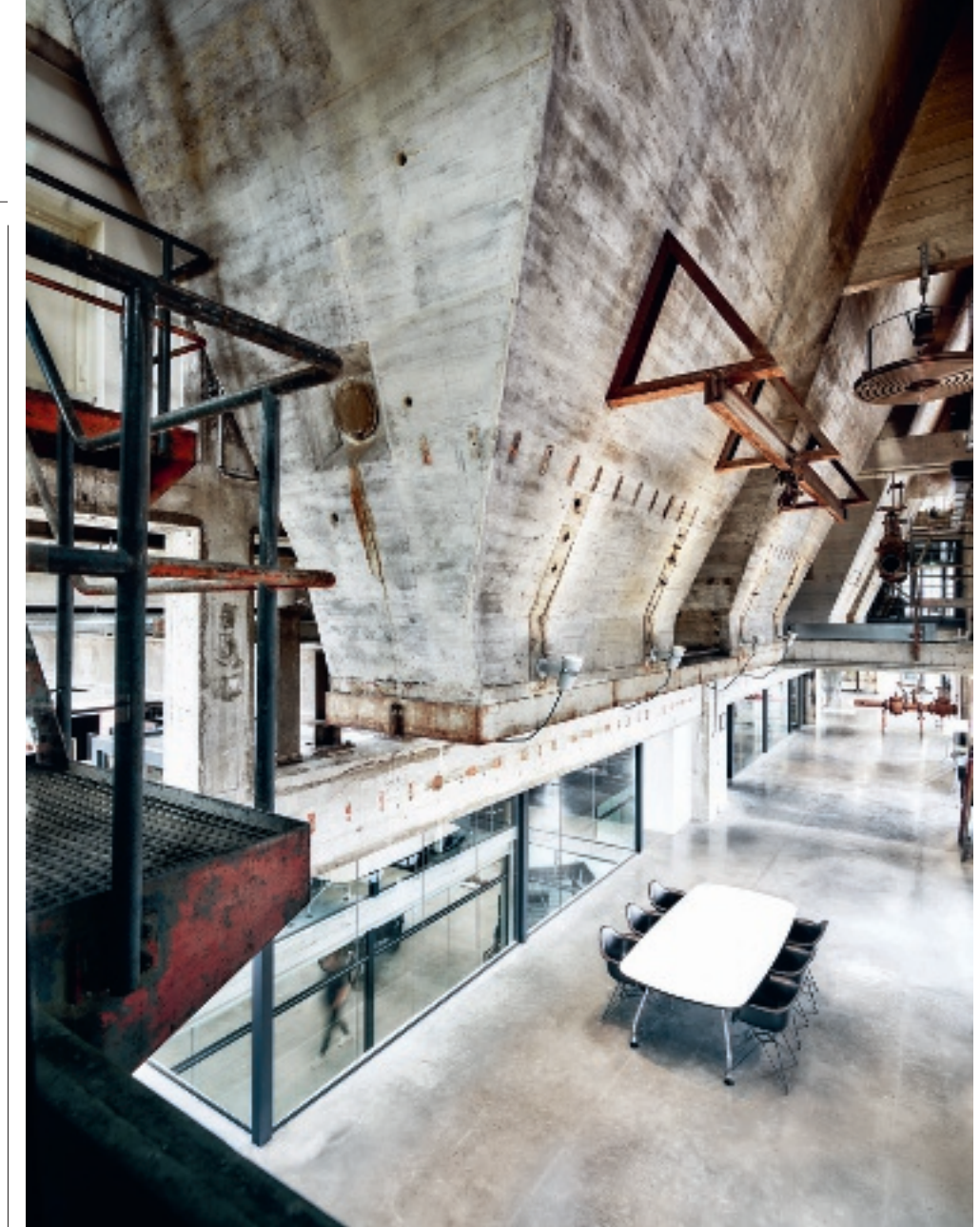
Janne van Berlo has repaid her father's faith in entrusting her with the transformation of this old power station into collaborative offices in Eindhoven

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: Tycho Merijn



This image Main elevation of Innovation Powerhouse, a transformed and extended former energy centre for Philips.

Right Coal chutes atrium where occupiers can come together to collaborate.



How many fathers would trust their 24-year-old daughter with the transformation of a derelict power station into an emerging typology like a shared-working office before they've even completed architecture school? But Janne van Berlo of Rotterdam practice Atelier van Berlo has a dad who did just that. As the director of a large product design agency with 90 employees in three locations, he is clearly someone who has taken risks that have paid off – this was just another. His daughter brought in the extra experience of Eugelink Architectuur and De Bever Architecten at the start, but still.

Janne van Berlo came properly to the project in January 2015, setting up her own practice in her final months at architecture school. Her father had already spent eight years seeking permission to acquire the power plant, a lobbying process that involved getting it removed from Eindhoven municipality's demolition register. His goal was to create

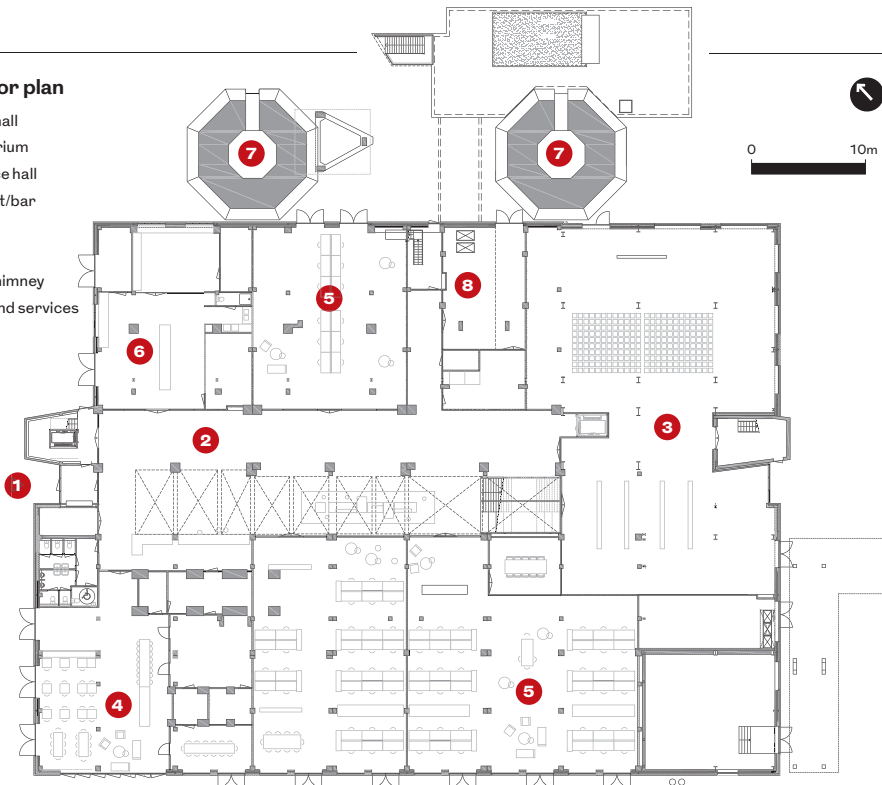
a new office for his agency within a multi-tenanted shared workspace that would drive a creative, supportive and entrepreneurial eco-system of businesses.

The power station used to serve the Philips factories site, an expansive area that became redundant in the 1990s as manufacturing moved abroad. Starting in 1957 it was built in four stages over 30 years as the site required more energy, a period which also saw its fuel change from coal to oil and later gas. Each extension was kept consistent with the original design.

In transforming the old plant into Innovation Powerhouse, Atelier van Berlo was most concerned about how to create a cut-through space between all areas of the building that would make it feel collaborative. The primary move was to create a 5m wide atrium that runs the length of the taller, 28m middle element, where the coal chutes would have been, to draw the front and rear

Ground floor plan

- 1 Entrance hall
- 2 Central atrium
- 3 Conference hall
- 4 Restaurant/bar
- 5 Offices
- 6 Workshop
- 7 Historic chimney
- 8 Systems and services



Credits
Architects Atelier van Berlo, Eugelink
Architectuur and De Bever Architecten
Developer, contractor and project manager
GeVa Vastgoed
Structural engineer Van de Laar
Mechanical installations Kemtec
Electrical installations Verweij
ElektroHulpdienst
Steel windowframes Hesta
Lighting Philips
Furniture Lensvelt

IN NUMBERS
11,000m²
Gross floor area
8,702m²
Lettable floor area

Below Wood and white painted plasterboard balustrades sit alongside concrete.
Below right Both the taller part and lower rear side of the building have been extended with a steel-framed structure.



sections of the building together, and glazing the internal partitions. Next to this central backbone, a skylight spans the full length of the building, bringing light into its otherwise dark centre and revealing the magnitude of the old heavy concrete structure. The other move was to extend the power station laterally with a grey steel grid structure that completes some of the missing symmetry found in the planning drawings. This is conceived as a vertical garden housing an external fire stair, glass meeting rooms and an elevator as well as outdoor social space for occupants.

Meanwhile, the front elevation has been over-insulated and clad, with minimal slit windows inserted to maintain a solid appearance. At the back, the original machine hall brick has been retained but stylistically complementary three-storey windows inserted in the white painted grid steel structure, based on the existing fenestration of the coal chutes. A new steel roof over the existing structure improves thermal performance but keeps the industrial character. The two 80m tall chimneys have become a national monument and are in the process of being restored.

Inside, new floors have been added to create space for 500 desks. More than 2,000m² of the 11,000m² is given to communal areas, including a café and canteen and breakout space that can be used for exhibitions and events. Concrete columns are left exposed, but the design deliberately combines a brutal industrial aesthetic with softer, richer, more luxurious elements like oak panelling and white wall museum-like bannisters to attract scale-ups rather than start-ups – businesses that lease for 10-15 years. Van Berlo's father's company has, of course, moved in but among the 14 occupiers there's also an indoor farm that grows produce under LED lights as well as a car sharing business. ●



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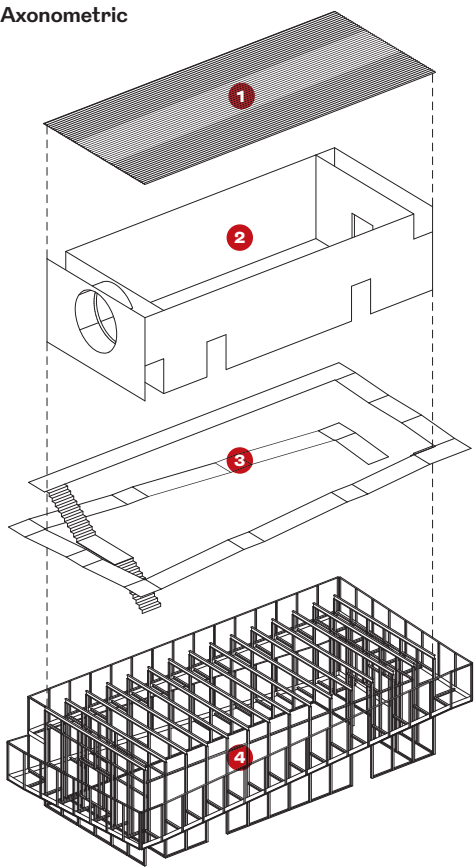
Gallery's silver lining

Boxen is a freestanding steel box in Stockholm's ArkDes, a warts-and-all exposed structure offering an alternative scale

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Johan Dehlin

Below Under the roof of a military exercise hall in Stockholm the gallery sits as a standalone object. The box structure is a bridge from one historic foundation to another.

This is a building as object, one that shows its structure and joints, from columns to nuts and bolts. Boxen is a new studio gallery at ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design in Stockholm. The insertion, by young Swedish practice Dehlin Brattgård Arkitekter, deals with problems of scale, the disjuncture between ArkDes' large 19th century military exercise hall and modestly sized displays. The ramp of the main circulation running round the gallery is clearly visible, but Boxen doesn't touch the walls. The heritage status of the hall won't allow that. And it only gingerly uses the existing foundations; it is constructed as a bridge between them. It has to be a complete box, corrugated steel roof and birch-faced ply walls to stiffen the galvanised



steel frame. Enclosed in mesh, the ramp is a space to be inside as well as to look out of. Architect Johan Dehlin likens this exploration of steel to his earlier work as a project architect with 6A on Juergen Teller's Stirling-shortlist Photography Studio where concrete was the object of study. And perhaps to the practice's exploration of wood in a floating Riddarfjärden baths in Stockholm. Steel provided a system of dimensions and joints to work within, a framework to explore. Though there are some tricks – behind the mesh walls is silver-painted ply masquerading as metal. Exhibitions are condensed in Boxen's white box galleries. Larger exhibits in the hall can be peered at from the ramp. At one end you can see between the two through a grand oculus sliced through the box, just missing a hidden internal stair. This bold gesture 'disregards the structure' say Dehlin and partner Johannes Brattgård, before admitting the painstaking work of ensuring the ramp met it at the right level and that head heights were right. The architects' game with movement is taken on by small children running, adults exploring, wheelchair users ascending the ramp. It is coming back to life since reopening from lockdown at the start of June. ●



- 1 Roof
- 2 Walls
- 3 Circulation
- 4 Grid

IN NUMBERS
264m²
gross area including ramp
156m²
internal gallery area
£180,000
budget

Above The oculus cuts through two walls, flying over the staircase.
Right Inside the gallery. At the top that Boxen's roof sits proud of the wall allowing natural light into the first floor.



Not the usual drill

The proposal for this odd site in Marseille was without a client or purpose – until a local dentist heard about it

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: Lisa Ricciotti



This building's programme fits its form and execution so perfectly it's hard to believe that the project was originally a speculative proposal without a function by French practice Marret & Fernandez Architectes. It was presented as a fully resolved building, a piece of architectural concrete sculpture that already took into account its site – a scrap piece of apparently unusable wasteland on a dual carriageway on the northern outskirts of Marseille, on the way to the huge container port. It could have been a house, office, shop or just about anything else. The design was only modified internally to become a dental studio when a local practitioner Monsieur Tourrolier heard about the proposal in 2017. The design found the client, the programme was made to fit – not the other way around.

It's located in a hot and dusty landscape that blends industrial and commercial between the hills of Verduron behind and the Saumaty-Séon industrial valley to the south. The gantry cranes and shipping containers at the rear of the port rub shoulders with vacant lots, detached family homes on walled single plots, and the warehouse units and offices built recently as part of the area's planning designation as an urban free zone. Traffic on the highway is dense.

Marret & Fernandez exploit the plot, which is shaped like a narrow safety pin. Formed as three distinct, offset, interlocked vertical concrete sheets, the building contorts in all directions, cantilevering over and tip-toeing around between steep embankments and an underground river. The unbuildability of the site explains why only 40m² of the 172m² area could be used for construction.

Inspired by Tadao Ando and Peter Zumthor, the design treats each elevation as a unique pictorial work. The north facade consists of three solid, seemingly barely habitable vertical streaks which exhibit the building's slenderness and provide an intriguing sculptural form. The southern side is a zooming energetic cantilever with a huge square glazed end, giving the treatment room within views towards the harbour. The rear eastern elevation is an all concrete sweep where the panel construction is most visible, while the western interface with the road becomes a 3D

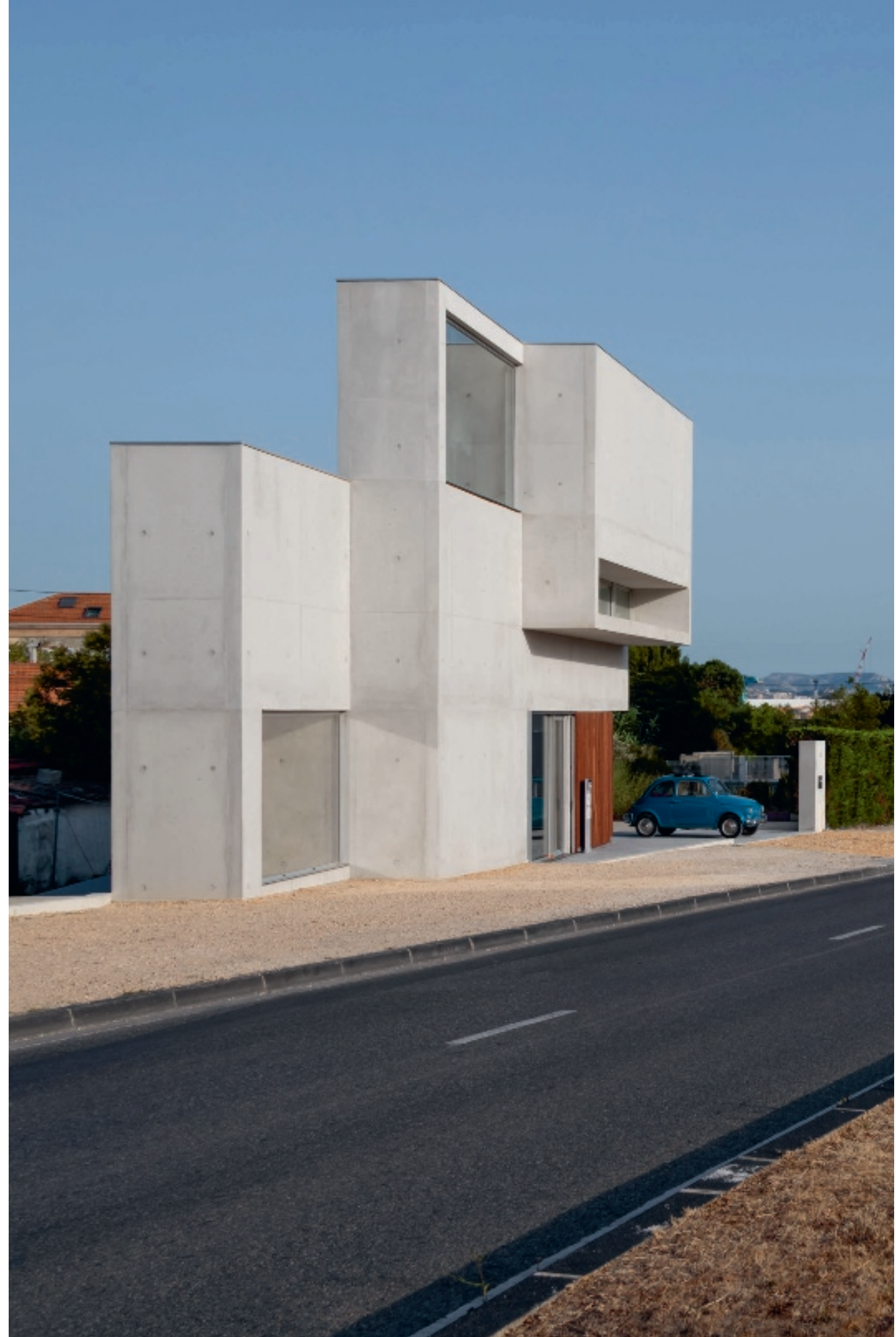
Each elevation has been treated as a unique picture

IN NUMBERS

200m²
GIA

€520,000
Total cost (excluding dental equipment)

€2,600
Cost per m²



Opposite The slender concrete 'streaks' of the northern elevation.

Left The roadside elevation acts like a sophisticated billboard for passersby.



Mondrian artwork of textures, tones, planes and openings. The elevations are so individually characterful that they hardly seem to go together. Yet they generate a memorable image to passersby from every aspect, and the finesse of the detailing and construction, and the small scale, freestanding nature of the project make it inviting and iconic too.

Timber panels by the front door give a flavour of the materials inside, where wood is used next to the exposed concrete structure for adjustable elements – walls, dividers, doors, stairs and joinery. The front door opens into a reception and waiting area with

Above The exposed concrete and timber reception area on the ground floor.

Below left The first floor treatment room with its huge picture window. Here walls are white and more stereotypically dental studio.

Below right The southern elevation's projecting periscope lens looking out to the port.

- 1

Entrance
- 2

Reception
- 3

Waiting area
- 4

Public WC
- 5

Treatment room
- 6

Terrace
- 7

Staff WC and cloakroom
- 8

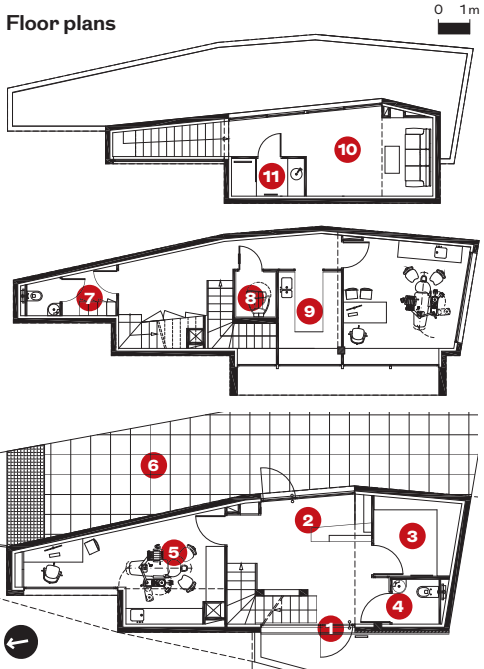
X-ray room
- 9

Sterilisation area
- 10

Staff restroom
- 11

Staff shower room

Credits
Architect Marret & Fernandez Architectes
Client Tourrollier
Chirurgien Dentiste



WC with the first treatment room beyond. Upstairs on the first floor is another waiting area, second treatment room, a sterilisation area, X-ray room, staff WC and cloakroom. The third floor is reserved for staff only with a rest area and shower room. In the basement is the operating theatre with a scrubs ante-space and stockroom as well as patient records storage and a technical plant room.

Out of such a small footprint, the building manages to create 200m² of space conceived with such poetry, lightness and dignity that surely going to this particular dentist would be something of a delight. ●



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Quality in full colour

Equitone’s facade retrofit for the ONS was chosen to blend with the original brick while enhancing protection of the offices behind

A colourful retrofitted facade for The Office for National Statistics features Equitone’s [natura].

A £10 million modernisation project was undertaken to improve the Office of National Statistics’ (ONS) Newport facilities. Home to the newly created Data Science Campus, the facility uses new data sources and technologies to provide statistics for policy makers and businesses about the UK economy.

The campus building not only provides a first-class working environment, it also demonstrates the potential of retrofit to reimagine facade design, presenting a contemporary composition that mirrors the aspirations of the Data Science Hub as an outstanding home for international data and research.

Tri-coloured facade retrofit

In response to existing exterior walls in need of expensive repairs, the ONS worked with Vinci Facilities to design a new rainscreen cladding system, specifying 6,800m² of Equitone [natura] in a combination of colours and panel sizes. Colours from the [natura] range with a low contrast were chosen

We needed to find a solution that was visually striking, but also sympathetic to the original brick colours

Above Equitone Natura cladding at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) headquarters in south Wales.

to complement the tones of the original redbrick building and provide a striking tricoloured facade.

Dave Willett, senior project manager at Vinci Facilities, said: ‘With existing walls needing extensive repairs that would affect the overall aesthetic of the building, we needed to find a solution that was visually striking, but also sympathetic to the original brick colours.

‘We felt that Equitone provided the best combination of quality, versatility and value for money. The adjustability of the mounting system accommodated the varying planes of the original walls extremely well, resulting in a really crisp finish.’ Dave added: ‘Equitone was very supportive at the design stage and maintained their support throughout. There have been no issues



Left Equitone Natura panels can be cut and arranged in horizontal, vertical and angled layouts.

Below Equitone Natura cladding. Large, small and narrow panels can be laid randomly or staggered.

with the product to date and it is looking as sharp and rich in colour as the day it was installed.’

Through-coloured facade materials

Equitone [natura] is one of five fibre-cement ranges that the company manufactures in its Belgium and German plants. [natura] has a smooth, matt appearance which is silken to the touch. Its surface clearly shows the natural fibres, used to make the fibre cement, randomly distributed and making every panel unique. [natura] is available in a range of eight through colours including the recently launched Quartz White, a subtle white tone which has been highly anticipated by architects.

Non-combustible, durable, sustainable

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The facade is resistant to extreme temperatures and frost – perfect for the increasingly unpredictable British weather. The products can reduce thermal bridging and the associated energy consumption required to keep the internal environment temperate. Equitone requires limited maintenance and cleaning, and is resistant to many living organisms such as bacteria, fungi, insects and vermin, thereby reducing the need for chemical cleaning products. Equitone works with architects to develop the range and colours of its materials, delivering designs that are for architects and by architects. ●

For more information on Equitone facade materials, visit www.equitone.com.



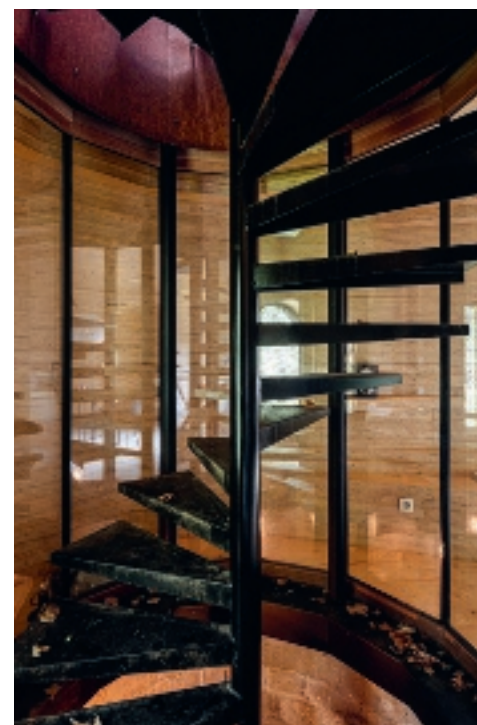
Buildings

Belgium: Home

Not many new buildings are entered through a shed. But Atelier Vens Vanbelle likes to surprise. And that is what the film director client asked for – something outstanding, with a twist.

So you reach this folly through the living room of an ordinary house, stepping out through the chaos of a garden shed and a tangle of bikes. And then down into the rough concrete of a basement tunnel. Strange and a little disturbing is how architects Maarten Vanbelle and Dries Vens imagined this. The little building takes on unheimlich qualities as the long narrow tunnel (surely too long for the building? Where is it taking you?) turns, with no visible end. Then, deep in the building, by a cinema screen and simple bar, there is that seep of cold air as a spiral stair twists you up and up, 7m, to above the folly and into the trees – for what? The indulgence, almost debauchery, of a shower in the tree canopy.

With such a sequence of unpredictable spaces it hardly seems right to explore the more mundane aspects of what Vens and Vanbelle call Alex, after the client. But in other hands this might be referred to as a guest and entertainment suite. The elongated 20m tunnel is perhaps a device to ensure you enter in the heart of the building, at the cinema screen, buried in concrete with garden earth piled over. Above it is a prefabricated timber cave, put together in the builder's workshop



Opposite Down into a narrow tunnel, with light and leaves from above (left) and turning into a film room (this image).

Step down into the unknown

Fantasy becomes reality in this film director's Belgian folly

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Tim Van de Velde

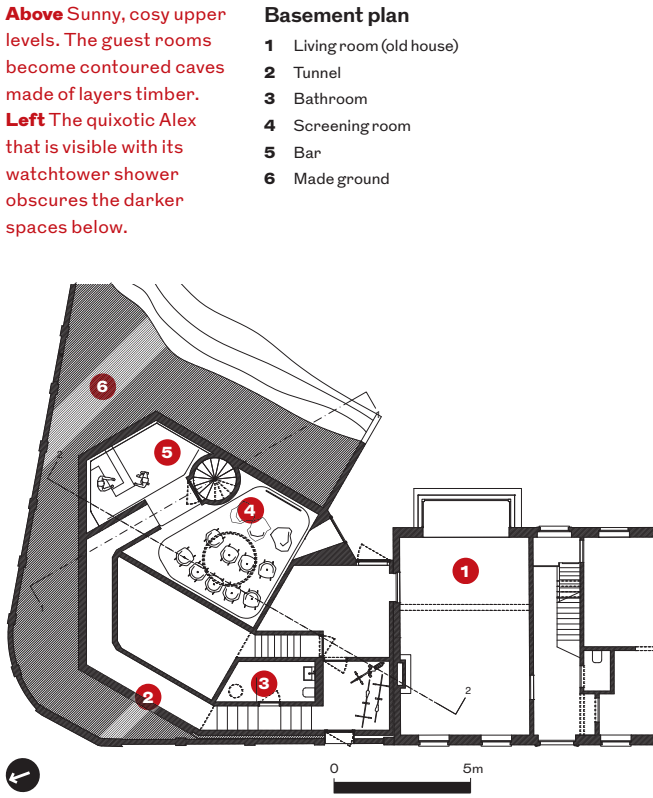


from individually drawn pieces of laminated veneer lumber panels, and transported to site in four sections. This makes comfortable guest rooms overlooking the garden and River Schelde. The shower tower-cum-watchtower and building are clad in Cor-ten, given depth by the builder making ribs in the flat plates.

There are no international film visitors coming to stay at the moment, the client instead takes his book into the trees and sits in the watchtower reading. And it is spill out space for his young daughter. Vens and Vanbelle are currently doing a lot of babysitting. Since they started in practice 14 years ago as students, they have worked together in a practice of two. Between them they travelled the half hour from Ghent and visited every day while the building was on site.

Vens and Vanbelle have also stayed here since it was finished. Did they use the tree-top shower? 'Yes.' And how about visiting the bathroom, back through the tunnel, in the night?

'It was very creepy.'



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A stitch in time

Art gallery raises medieval town to a higher plane

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Amores Pictures

The Spanish province of Extremadura has been battled over for millennia since first being conquered by the Romans. It was a caliphate from the 8th to 12th centuries, and once recaptured by the Spanish, had to deal with an expansionist Portugal to the west. It explains the towers of the walled city of Cáceres, a number of which – notably the 12th century Torre del Bujaco – still guard its old town. But it has another historic enemy – poverty. There’s a reason why the New World shares many place names with those of the province; conquistador Francisco Pizarro was one of its many sons driven to seek fortunes abroad that had eluded them at home.

Extremadura remains the second poorest region in Spain, a stark reality that noted art collector Helga de Alvear was perhaps attempting to remedy with her new Museum of Contemporary Art. This, together with the 2015 Mies van der Rohe Prize shortlisted Atrio Relais & Châteaux hotel by Mansilla + Tuñón, is intended to draw new tourist hordes – and their gold – to the medieval Unesco Heritage City. De Alvear kept on Emilio Tuñón for her museum, to work his magic on a steeply sloping site at the medieval town’s south west corner, where it fights off the more prosaic 20th century expansion in the valley below.

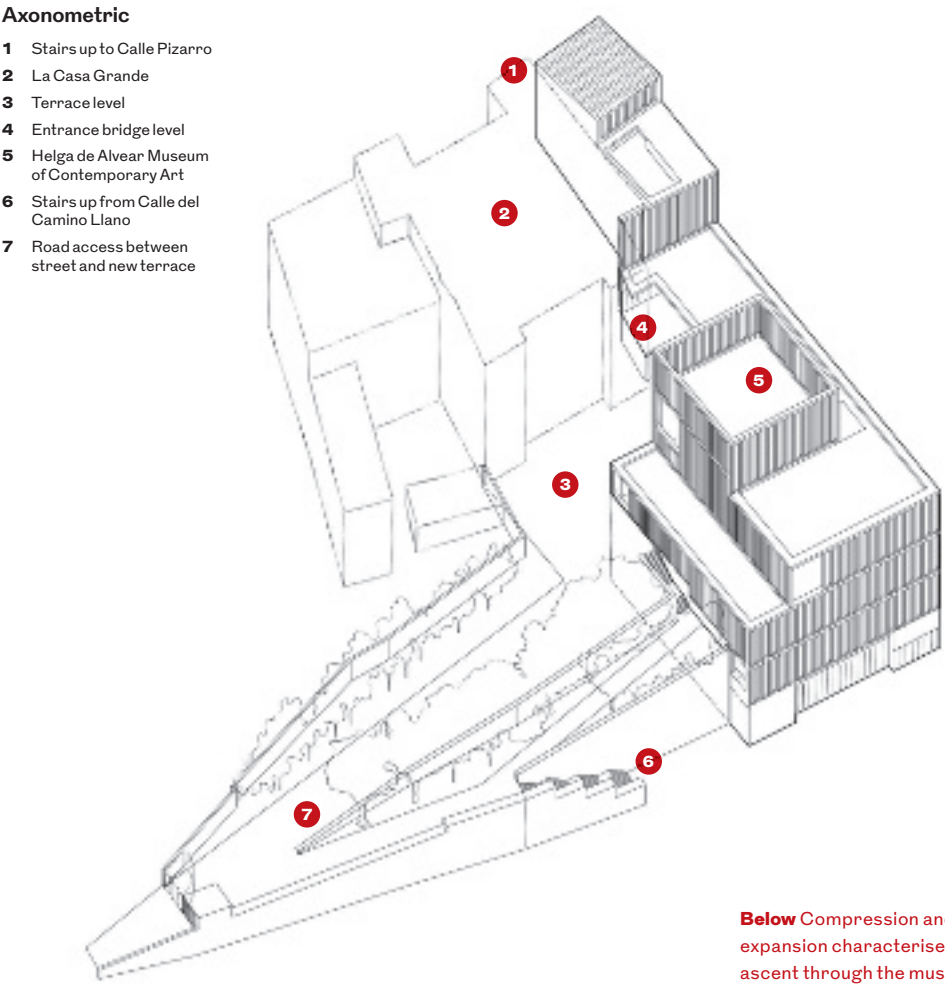
Above View up from the Calle Camino de Llano, marking the medieval border of the old town.
Below The courtyard, just below the entrance bridge and facing the museum, offers potential for public appropriation.



The gallery's size and civic purpose means it has become an urban-scaled intervention

This latest project is effectively a sizeable extension to the Helga de Alvear Foundation's 1913 Casa Grande, the restoration of which had formed the first stage of this commission. But the art gallery's civic purpose, and the size of the project, means it has become an urban-scaled intervention. By developing the language of wall and column that he first adopted at the hotel, Tuñón's museum skilfully stitches together two distinct parts of the city.

Hidden behind an intimated town house facade alongside the Casa Grande, the museum reveals its nature and stature as it cascades down the valley, its storeys defined



Below Compression and expansion characterise the ascent through the museum.





Above The entrance expresses the museum's ethos of a limited range of materials, highly finished.



Above A dark but wide passageway leads down from the old town to the entrance bridge overlooking the courtyard.



Above Elevation from Calle del Camino Llano. The site rises 20m up the side of the valley
Below There's spatial generosity, with gallery ceiling heights ranging from 4m-9m.



in elevation by concrete walls and fins or columns that shift subtly in relation to one another. That nuance manifests in plan too, where the museum's parallelogram is echoed in the detailing of the columns, each of them skewing a touch to face the new town.

Internally, the materials are similarly Cistercian, with industrial concrete float floors offsetting bespoke windows or reveals of oak and fine plaster soffits. Such asceticism is damned to hell with the galleries' sheer size and Tuñón's sectional indulgence of anything up to 9m; but all is forgiven in the spatial drama.

The real beauty of the project however lies in the creation of a new route that brings joy and levity to the laboured task of ascending 20m from the lower street to the old town. An elegant stone stair now draws

people up the side of the valley to a generous terrace offering shadow and verdure, overlooked by the museum's shaded open-air entrance. A staircase to this bridge level then guides them on and up through a wide, covered passageway to pop out from that town house onto the old town's curving Calle Pizarro.

It might not have happened; or could have all been done with the hubris of an institution leaving a public imprimatur. But instead this complex journey from the roadside's hard sunlight to the respite of a raised courtyard, and past the gallery on up through Tuñón's pre-emptive gloomth into the heart of the medieval quarter, is done with humility yet assurance. A large museum that has insinuated itself into the quotidian life of the city. ●

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Out of the woods

Nearby trees are integral to the design of this timber-clad home and studio

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Maciej Lulko

Jakub Kowalczyk and Gosia Łapaj – both just 35 – met as students at Kraków Polytechnic and did their Erasmus years in Amsterdam, taking in the Low Countries’ new architecture while there. It was as students in 2009 that the pair missed out on winning an open competition for the Szczecin Dialogue Centre, placed second to upcoming Polish firm KWK Promes. But the near miss proved an impetus for the couple to set up on their own as Kropka Studio, following in the winner’s footsteps designing high-end homes while developing their brand on social media. Ten years on, they are a small but busy office.

‘Domolas’ – a house and workshop for a successful artist couple in rural Wadowice, 50km southwest of Kraków, builds on the firm’s interests in the local vernacular and contextual appropriation. The earlier ‘House in the Landscape’, in Skarżyce, used gabions of local Ural limestone as a structural facade while its later ‘Split-Level House’ outside

Above Through reflection, largely glazed gable ends help nestle the decidedly black home and studio in the surrounding landscape.

Below Looking to the building from its ‘third’ wing- the line of birch woods beside it.



Kraków divested itself of the staircase by adopting a section of interconnected floor planes at half-levels. It also echoed an old Hoffman lime kiln on the site with its hit-and-miss brickwork base, from which rises a bold, two-storey glazed box of living area, with a hat of black-rendered bedrooms. It’s defensive nature, Kowalczyk says, references the Bodzów fort nearby.

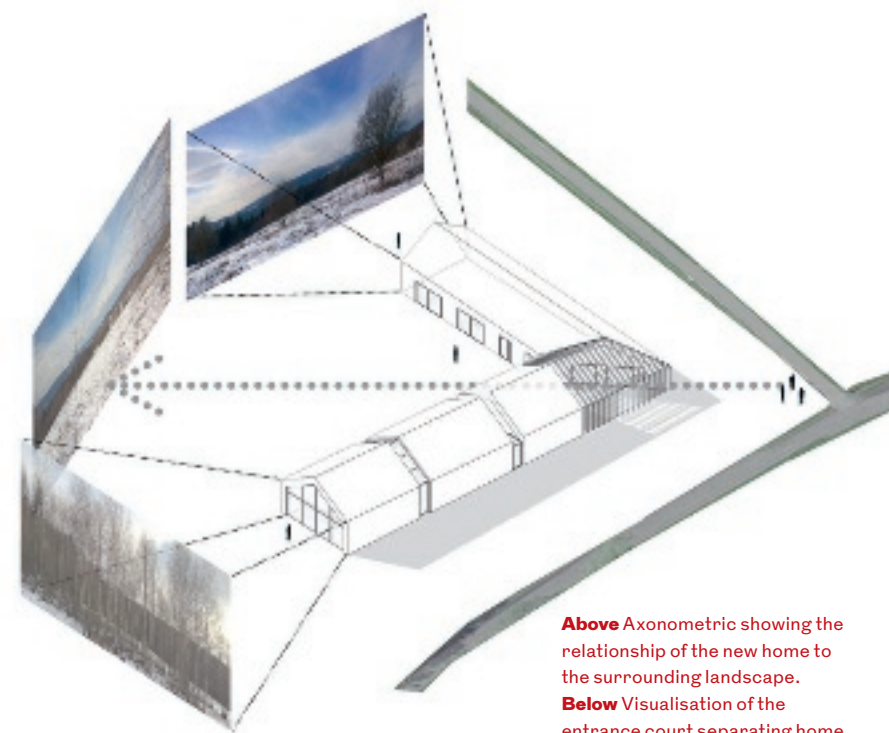
Completing in October, the L-shaped, timber-clad, concrete frame home with a black zinc roof, is one of ‘three wings’. The invisible third wing is the edge of a of a wood of birch trees; the design drawing this verdant boundary into the demise of the home, to form a nascent courtyard in the process. One long wing is the couple’s living space and the other is a large studio/workshop, with two en-suite bedrooms and galley kitchen that allow artists-in-residence to work independently or collaborate. A slot cut into the workshop wing, separating the sleeping and

‘Domolas’ builds on their interest in local vernacular and contextual appropriation

IN NUMBERS

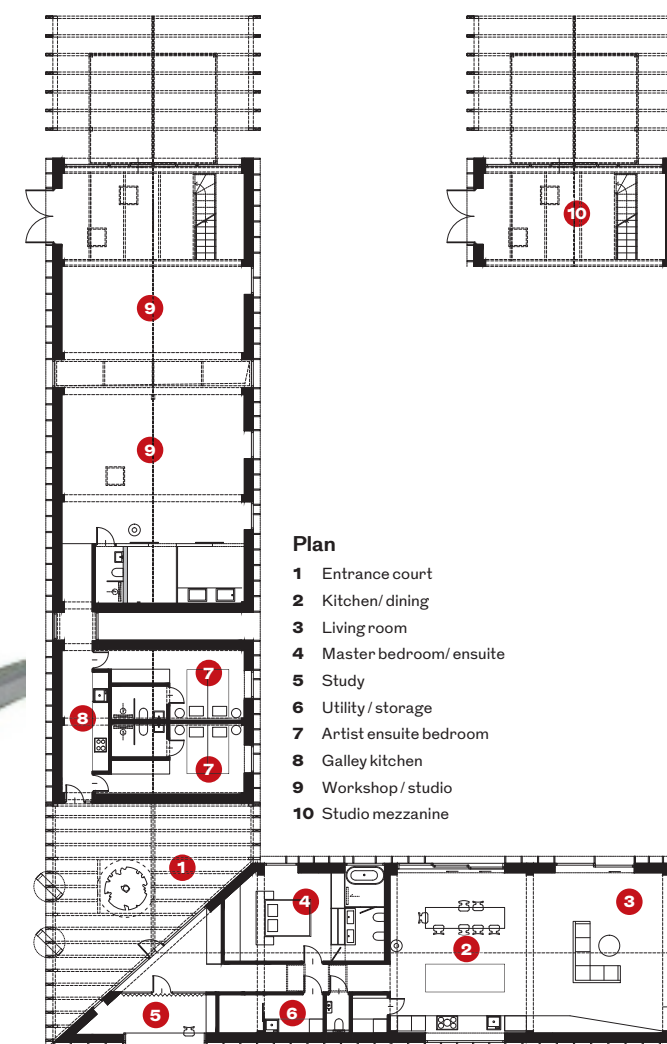
€450,000
contract value

355m²
gia



Above Axonometric showing the relationship of the new home to the surrounding landscape.

Below Visualisation of the entrance court separating home and live-in studio.



studio areas, is resolved with a snappy, all-glass connection.

The larch cladding’s yakisugi treatment is suggestive of the tar-coated timber vernacular of local barn buildings. The design intent had been to extend this up and over the building onto the roof, but the artists curiously balked at the idea, leading to the compromise of the black zinc standing seam roof. Augmenting the walls’ thick insulation, triple-glazed gables frame views of the expansive landscape.

Kowalczyk says that things were booming in terms of quantity, if not quality, before the lockdown was imposed – the after-effects of which might stifle Poland’s young design practices. But as far as Kropka Studio is concerned, the Covid caesura has been cause for a guarded optimism: ‘We’ve gone from designing what we liked to having the time to think about our direction – and what we really love.’ ●





Stay cyber-vigilant working at home

Cyber threats rise hugely with remote working. Here are some pointers to help you stay safe at home

Without exception, remote working is one of the top three critical vulnerabilities that can result in a serious cyber incident

With many architectural practices working remotely, there are a lot of things to consider and guidance will vary by business, but the following checklist from the RIBA's technical security business partner, Mitigo, will help to proportionately reduce the risk of a cyber breach.

Cyber vigilance increased

Staff behave differently in a home-based environment and cyber criminals are actively creating new attacks to exploit the change in business arrangements. Things to watch out for:

1. Acceptable use of a company laptop –

Secure your remote connection – this can go horribly wrong if done incorrectly

Above Don't allow yourself to be exploited by working from home.

practice and personal life should not be blended. The starting position should be work use only.

2. Unattended machines – be conscious of who can see your work and lock your machine when unattended. Set auto lock to a maximum of 5 minutes.

3. Phishing attacks – increased vigilance is vital especially as fraudulent emails and infected videos, related to coronavirus, are already proliferating.

Tip – Staff should re-do cyber training and tests when they start remote working. A simulated attack may be appropriate for a prolonged period of home working.

Effective controls maintained

Important technical controls which are run

centrally in the office network environment do not operate when working outside it. It is important to set up work laptops properly, otherwise they will become increasingly vulnerable. Three controls you should check:

1. Anti-virus – make sure that applications are up to date and configured to proactively scan devices, attachments and downloads. You should consider upgrading to a version with a cloud portal so that control and alerts can be maintained centrally.

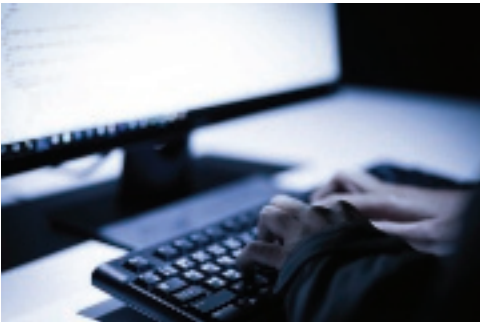
2. Operating systems (Windows or Mac typically) – this is usually centrally managed when connected to the office network, but remote working prevents this. Machines need to be reconfigured to update independently, and staff shown what role they must play in that update.

3. Back-up – this will vary hugely depending on your practice's setup. Seek professional advice on the latest configuration setup required.

Tip – Conduct a periodic check on a sample of devices to check these three controls are working.

Defensive configuration reviewed

The change in working arrangements requires a change in the configuration of the laptop's defences. The machine settings on remote devices will need new configuration. Top three defensive configurations you



Above Hackers are creating new attacks to exploit the change in business arrangements.

Below Make sure your device is password protected.



should review:

1. Encryption (eg BitLocker) – needs to be enabled, without exception, to protect in the instance of a lost machine.

2. Local admin – make sure any local admin rights have been removed from the user's profile.

3. Wi-Fi – laptops should be configured only to allow secure Wi-Fi connections.

Tip – Seek appropriate advice on the changes required to keep all devices safe. Make sure you think carefully about where to keep the encryption recovery keys.

Remote connection secured

This can go horribly wrong if done incorrectly. Advice will vary dramatically depending on your business processes, your IT set-up and the third-party software you rely on. If in doubt, seek support.

1. Update the remote connection software – services need to be brought up to the latest version to ensure they are patched against known cyber vulnerabilities.

2. Don't allow personal devices. Where at all possible, remote machines should be work devices, configured to the points above. Seek advice before connecting home and personal computers to your secure network.

3. Strong authentication – enable these settings on the cloud applications you use, eg MFA on Office 365, two step verification on G suite. Most of the applications, where you log on via a web page, should have something that is stronger than just relying on a password.

Tip – if you must rely on a password, make sure it is strong and unique (not shared or reused), and don't store it in plain sight. ●

RIBA has partnered with Mitigo to offer technical and cyber security services for our members.

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2: Intelligence



Health, safety
& wellbeing



Design, construction
& technology

Shaun Fitzgerald



A co-author of CIBSE's guidance on emerging from lockdown, Shaun Fitzgerald is a Royal Academy of Engineering visiting professor at Cambridge University and member of the SAGE Environmental Modelling Group. He spoke to RIBA about virus mechanics and how we might create environments that mitigate them

Are you worried by the recent spikes in cases in Beijing and elsewhere?

In a pandemic, infected people may transmit from other jurisdictions as well as locally. As reported, this will continue to happen and we'll have to get used to living with it. The point about spikes is to keep the virus at low prevalence that can be flagged up and dealt with.

What are the mechanics of transmission?

There are three transmission mechanisms. Droplets emitted from an infected person of 10 microns or larger behave like projectiles. If they are inhaled it's a direct mechanism. A Fomite mechanism is where viral droplets land on a surface which a person then touches. The third is via smaller viral particles held in air on convection currents, which are inhaled. Evidence is stronger for the first two but we need to reduce the risk of all three.

What does it mean for internal environments and infection control? What about lifts?

Lifts are a challenge. We need to reduce occupancy to maintain safe distances. Even residual viral air in a lift is relevant as exposure time to viral droplets is a factor. Leaving lift doors open when idle may help; CIBSE's recommendation for air dilution leads us to ask if we should operate lifts differently. Contact transmission from call buttons is a concern too; IoT tech on mobile phones might help make lifts hands-free. There may be other opportunities for re-thinking technology use in buildings to enhance our experience even after the pandemic.

Can air conditioning help deal with virus particles or does it just disperse them around a room?

Mechanism 3 is most relevant here. There are two types of air conditioning. One heats or cools then recirculates air and the other supplies fresh air that is fully conditioned before being fed to the internal space. The advice is to provide enough fresh air feed rates to dilute airborne viral particles – but that could mean ramping up fans – it is important that increases in flow rate keep to tolerable limits of noise and draughts. If you use an MVHR system, only recommended filters should be added.

What's one thing architects should do when designing against airborne infection?

You need to return to the three mechanisms and reduce them all. But the general rule is 'get plenty of fresh air in'. Build resilient ventilation to get more air in if necessary. It may mean getting used to room temperatures that are more like those outside in the height of summer, with cooling systems to ensure bountiful supplies of fresh air. In winter we'll have to weigh up whether we supply more fresh air than minimum guidance – but even these rates are much better than scenarios where mass infections are known to have occurred.

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Brian Green's latest check on the industry's temperature: ribaj.com/postcovid-recessionforecast



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



PHOTO COURTESY UCL



Alexi Marmot is professor, facility and environment management, director of the Global Centre for Learning Environments in UCL's Bartlett Real Estate Institute, and founding director of AMA Alexi Marmot Associates

In the UK, about 60% of jobs are done in offices. Imagining the future office after Covid-19 demands deep consideration. And we need to ensure that solutions also incorporate sustainability.

There are two key issues: how to manage the existing office stock, and how the office might change in the future. We do know that office buildings will have to be very flexible. Those that allow for flexibility will be winners.

In the short term, social distancing would demand almost three times as much space as current norms to safely accommodate office workers. As this is impossible to deliver quickly, remote working will continue to be part of the short term solution. Fewer people will go into the office every day. Some will become permanent remote workers, mostly working online from their homes. Others will split their work between home and office.

To accommodate everyone, we need to make better use of existing office space through intelligent ways of using buildings over time. That means scheduling work in the

office so that people come in only when they really need direct physical access to certain people or technology. It may mean two shifts of work in the office – some starting early morning, others starting and ending later – or using offices over six or seven days a week, not just five. It will certainly require scheduling, management and control of entry and egress times. Fortunately, we can draw on over three decades of positive experience of remote work, telework, flexible work and smart work.

In the short term people will inevitably remain reluctant to squeeze back onto crowded public transport for commuting. There's a danger that the private car might re-emerge as the preferred way of commuting, and that low density office parks might again be perceived as especially attractive. While appealing for reasons of individual health, such trends would be a dangerous backward step in terms of planetary health and sustainability.

In future, tall buildings – those that demand users squeeze into lifts – may become less desirable. New office blocks may tend towards lower rise, so people can avoid lifts, instead using the stairs – while observing social distance – and at the same time increasing their physical activity. Two health benefits: lower chance of transmitting the virus, and less obesity by increased physical activity.

Office workers, along with architects, developers, planners and occupiers, will behave cautiously. It won't be 'business as usual' for some time.



Helen Berresford is a partner at ID:SR, Sheppard Robson

There are two strands: the absolutely practical aspect of getting people back to work with physical distancing, and the longer term impact on office design. For both, the culture of the organisation will be hugely important in holding everything together.

Offices will be different in the short term as they deal with health and safety and cleanliness. We're working with clients on the physical effects of running an office with 2m distancing. There are several aspects – how you prepare the building overall and how you prepare the workplace, including facilitating access and security safely. The 2m seating distancing is one key aspect. Then there's the circulation and access routes to desks and tea points. This further reduces occupancy. Cleanliness and facilities management will be more important than ever to businesses – these are the front-line.

Collaboration and drop-in spaces in offices will not be open to normal use in the first wave of returns to work but as soon as it's safe to open them up, there will be a real desire to use them. In the meantime these, and meeting rooms, will be used for physically distanced working – meetings will mostly still have to take place digitally even if people are in the same office.

Longer term, there's an opportunity for betterment. There's a chance to press the re-start button on how people occupy and respect their office environment. It will be everyone's job to think about keeping things clean, and respecting FM protocols that previously may not have been heard.

I think the civic urbanity of offices will not go away – it will definitely return even though it's now recognised that we can work in a variety of remote locations. I foresee a greater convergence of work/life/play – we can't forget what we've seen on those Zoom calls. Those businesses that can manage this humanity and enable it will be those who adapt the best. I think there's a hugely rich vein of diversity that we can draw on to help us rebuild our offices of the future. It's exciting. If there can be a silver lining, it's that companies will have to care and really think hard about their most precious resource – the people who occupy their buildings.

We can press the re-start button on how people occupy and respect their office environment



Business, clients
& services



Design, construction
& technology

How will the office work now?

How will the workplace change after lockdown? Lower buildings? Community hubs for homeworkers? Fewer offices? The first of a section on post-pandemic design starts with where we work

Pamela Buxton

Will the office ever be the same again? As preparations gather pace for a loosening of some lockdown measures, it's clear that the workplace will have to adapt fast to deliver a safe environment that staff can trust.

In the short term, this means enabling physical distancing in the office and a hybrid office/working-from-home combination. But what longer-term mark will Covid-19 leave on the way we design and organise our offices? If many of us can work from home instead, how can designers make the communal workplace a more compelling, and effective, setting? And what do we still need it for?

The office is 'far from dead' but will evolve in response, according to Neil Pennell, head of design innovation and property solutions at Landsec and chair of the British Council for Offices' technical affairs committee.

'We're social beings. We're all missing the office. A lot of people work off that spark that you get with human contact,' he says, anticipating that offices will be planned with the ability to shift to modes that respond to future virus flare-ups.

He has edited a BCO briefing note on the post Covid-19 office that looks at issues such as decreased density, reception and lift protocols, management of meeting rooms, kitchenettes and toilets, greater use of touch-free technology, safe ventilation and other building services, and increased hygiene measures.

In the short term, visible measures that provide reassurance to returning office workers are important. In the longer term Pennell also expects the planning of new offices to involve more generous reception and lobby areas – with safe circulation a particular issue in taller buildings – as well as greater use of materials with more virus resistance, and a deeper, rather than 'tick-box', emphasis on wellness in the workplace.

'It's a sad driver, but this is a fantastic opportunity for the design industry. This will spur some interesting debate and dialogue. Architects and engineers will have to work closer than they ever have before,' he says.

Below, four architects with expertise in this sector share their views on the post-Covid office. ●

Find links to BCO guidance and to see Nicola Gillen speaking go to ribaj.com/rethinkoffices



ILLUSTRATION JASON LYON

Above The future workplace. Will our space use be managed digitally, with circulation and more generous entrance areas?

It may mean two shifts of work in the office, or using offices over six or seven days a week, not just five



Nicola Gillen, EMEA head of Total Workplace London at real estate group Cushman & Wakefield, and author of *Future Office: Next-generation workplace design*

The impact of Covid-19 on how and where we will work has at least two main phases: pre-vaccine and post-vaccine.

In the short term, once restrictions begin to lift, there will be a combination of working from home and in the office. Choice and flexibility will be key, and we're working with organisations to help them understand which roles might work best from home, and to consider the whole journey from home to work, as well as thinking more strategically long term.

At Cushman & Wakefield, we've created the 6 Feet Office concept for social distancing in the workplace, which includes analysis of the existing workplace for virus safety, advice on safe workstations and circulation, and rules of conduct. We're also produced a 'how-to' guide for returning to the workplace, which we've made freely available on our website, based on our learnings from moving companies back into the work environment in Asia, and are also working with Delos and Mayo Clinic on the Well Living Lab, a research project to help prevent the spread of air and surface viral transmission in offices.

In many firms however, Covid-19 will be the catalyst for a more long-term and fundamental questioning of why we should go to work in an office rather than simply doing so as a default. This is an opportunity to change that default, and really question all that money, time, carbon and personal energy that we spend commuting to work.

There are a lot of conversations going on about whether there will be fewer offices – and perhaps there will be. Either way, offices will definitely be different.

Now that we've all done the enforced working from home experiment, it doesn't make sense for every employee to travel long distances just to sit at individual desks not talking. Instead, the office will be based much more on community than a sense of control. And as we spend more time working virtually, the demand for better quality physical environments and experiences will increase.

Face to face is one of the richest forms of communication, and in the new office I think it may become more prized and valued than it was before.

Desks in rows will be replaced by other spaces related to collaborative working and culture building, such as areas for training, induction, collaborative work, social events, networking and conferences. These are the sorts of activities that suit offices best. I also think that office space will become more varied with much fewer desks and many more spaces to meet, eat, exercise and unwind.

Clients who were looking for spaces in central London are now questioning the nature of the space they'll need

Face to face, one of the richest forms of communication, may become more prized and valued



Matthew Blain is regional leader in the UK and Europe for Australian architecture and planning practice Hassell

Covid-19 will challenge office designers to think harder. It will force us to innovate, and force the real estate industry to look at how they market and lease buildings.

We've seen a range of trends towards more agile workplaces over the last five years or so but the biggest blockage to working in different ways has always come from employers regarding security of information and the ability of staff to engage effectively with each other. A big part of that is trust. Now that these blockages have been diluted by enforced working from home, Covid-19 will be the driver that changes how offices will work in the future.

We've got clients who are asking questions about how in the short term they can get back to using their current space through simple measures such as spacing, in combination with shift work and some working from home. As well as cleaning, the big challenge is how you get people into buildings and through lift lobbies. And we have clients who were in the process of looking for new spaces in the centre of London, and are now questioning the nature of the space they'll need.

The office will always be important as a place where people come together to work when they need to. But rather than being a big, centralised office of several thousand people in the middle of London, there might instead be a hub for about 500 people and a network of smaller office 'spokes' where teams can go to work together when required. This might mean that these offices disperse to more high street and suburban locations, maybe even to repurposed former retail spaces.

Office space will be increasingly programmed. Desks won't disappear from them, but the proportion of desk space will decrease significantly and instead these places will become agile, collaborative workspaces that are programmed for use by different teams. There will be less demand for workspace for process workers such as data input, or call centre work. Instead, these employees may work from home but will still need access to a team-building space.

It won't be a landslide change over night. People are tied to long leases. But as those leases come up, the experience of Covid-19 will challenge how offices work. Before, people were naturally afraid of change. Now that the working from home blockage has gone, every aspect of the centralised office will be up for review, and as architects and designers, we need to be at the heart of that conversation. ●

Image courtesy of: Keele University

NICOLE BACHMANN



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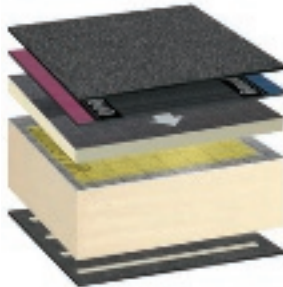
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Health, safety
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Medical mutations

The Covid-19 crisis response in hospitals, GP surgeries and care homes has left its mark, from infection control to remote consultations. What next for healthcare?

Stephen Cousins

The UK has paid a heavy human cost for Covid-19, not to mention a social and economic one, but it would have been higher without the exemplary response of the NHS, which was able to rapidly prepare staff and adapt facilities and processes to handle an unprecedented influx of patients.

The question now is, what lessons can be learnt for the future design of hospitals, as well as other healthcare buildings? Do we need to adapt and refurbish in preparation for a second, third or fourth wave of infections? What will the longer term impact be on building typologies and layouts, strategic planning and investment?

As the outbreak subsides and spaces used to deal with coronavirus are handed back, new protective measures and triage points may be required to separate the infected from the ‘healthy’.

The sudden growth of phone and video consultation could in future free up space for diagnostics and treatment, while office staff work remotely and occasionally access business lounge-type environments on site.

Care homes across the UK were devas-



ILLUSTRATION BY JASON LYON

tated by Covid-19, a situation exacerbated by the fact many are densely populated with residents forced to share bathrooms where infections can spread. Should minimum standards be made more fit for purpose and conducive to health and wellbeing?

These new design considerations are set against a backdrop of an ageing health building infrastructure that’s ill-suited to meet the demands of a growing population, a changing workforce and new technologies.

Christopher Shaw, chair of Architects for Health and senior director of Medical Ar-

Walk 20 minutes in any direction in London today and you hit a hospital; those will have to go

chitecture, which helped the NHS prepare new standards for the emergency changes to hospital facilities, comments: ‘Demand on primary care practices has increased in line with the population in the UK, but despite their being the first port of call in the NHS the infrastructure is mostly awful and the practice model is starting to creak and crumble... We need to see specialist hospitals consolidate skills into larger buildings that serve much larger populations, like the European super hospitals. Walk 20 minutes in any direction in London today and you hit a hospital; those will have to go.’

Prime minister Boris Johnson revealed plans last year to build 40 new hospitals, but in reality just six will be upgraded by 2025, while 21 others will get seed funding to develop plans for upgrades. Critics have claimed this fails to acknowledge the scale of the challenge and the overhaul required.

Many architects working in healthcare will now be taking stock to consider what it means to design for a world far removed from the one that existed just four months ago. Here, four of them share their views.●

To see Charlotte Ruben speak go to ribaj.com/rethinkhealth

BDP



Andrew Smith,
principal and head of
healthcare at BDP

BDP developed designs for most of the Nightingale surge hospitals in England, which are effectively an insurance policy against a second wave of Covid-19 infections. The facilities are temporary, so unless the virus disappears, or a 100% effective vaccine is made available, the UK is going to have to get to the point where the NHS can deal with Covid patients alongside traditional healthcare as normal services resume. It may be necessary to consolidate coronavirus needs into existing hospitals, with strategies including refurbishment, reusing outpatient space or some new build.

In the past the UK had isolation hospitals on city outskirts used to treat things like TB and other infectious diseases. It isn’t acceptable to construct these types of buildings any more, partly because the sites don’t exist, and partly because communities would object to having them on their doorstep. Hospitals will therefore need to adapt functionally to deal with the virus, and public perception will need to improve so they are considered safe.

One idea being developed is streamlining patients in

In care homes, if each resident has a private bathroom it reduces the risk of cross contamination



Danielle Swann,
associate at
Glancy Nicholls
Architects

It is a tragedy what has happened in care homes during the pandemic. The crisis has really highlighted the flaws in traditional care homes and their inherent inflexibility to adequately respond in terms of the physical environment and care and management strategies.

Physical distancing is incredibly difficult to achieve in a care setting, mainly because it makes physically caring for a vulnerable resident almost impossible. It can also have a negative impact on their mental well being.

However, there are several examples of best practice design in the sector, which illustrate how high quality environments that support the wellbeing and safety of residents can also create an optimum environment to deal with a pandemic.

We’ve designed a number of care homes for Derbyshire County Council that naturally lend themselves to the effective management of an outbreak, including the Meadow View scheme in Matlock, which won an RIBA Regional Award in 2018, and a new facility in Belper that’s being used as a temporary Covid-19 isolation unit before the official opening.

A focus on smaller ‘households’, comprising eight to 10 residents and four to five staff during the day, is key and contrasts with traditional care homes that tend to have much higher staff to resident ratio, making social distancing incredibly difficult.

We try to ensure that all residents have their own en-suite bathrooms, which reduces the risk of cross contamination. Corridors are 2.5m wide, so people can comfortably pass each other. There are a range of flexible shared spaces, including smaller breakout spaces along corridors, increasing opportunities to physically distance if necessary.

Layout planning is really important to ensure that households can be accessed by staff and visitors without having to walk through another household. This is about carefully managing adjacencies and progressive privacy lines coming in from the outside.

It has been heartbreaking to see media coverage of families having to stand in gardens to communicate with residents through closed windows. For someone with dementia this can be really confusing and upsetting. In future, care homes could provide safe ways for families to visit and spend time with their loved ones, for example separate spaces in gardens that families can reach without having to go through the main building.

The crisis has highlighted how the risk of infection is

GLANCY NICHOLLS ARCHITECTS

reduced outside and there is already a mountain of evidence that shows how access to external space has a positive effect on health and wellbeing – it should be championed on every care home project.

There's no doubt that coronavirus is influencing current thinking among care home clients and the situation offers an opportunity to raise the game for design and quality of care.

We need to promote an expansion, or an overhaul, of the national minimum standards for care home regulations to drive forward quality design. The current standards were last updated in 2006 and only require a minimum of one bathroom per eight residents, which is one aspect that should be revisited.

The main barrier to reform is funding. Social care has been chronically underfunded for years and needs sustained investment and resourcing from central government. This could drastically improve people's quality of life and dignity and ultimately help reduce the strain on the NHS.



Christopher Shaw,
chair of the 500-strong
Architects for Health
group, founder and
senior director of
Medical Architecture

Pandemics aren't new and we have known for a while about the major threat to aspects of the UK's health infrastructure. The problem is the 2016 testing of Britain's pandemic readiness became obscured by short term contingency planning around Operation Yellow Hammer [for a no-deal Brexit] and was never resolved.

As the first wave of infections starts to become more easily managed, we can see a few things more clearly. Britain has a very low number of acute hospital beds per head of population and since 1961 the numbers have dramatically reduced to a point where, alongside Sweden, we have the least in Europe. About 15,000 more ICU beds are required to match European norms, although Scotland in a slightly better position than the rest of the UK.

Fantastically committed work was done by architects, engineers and contractors in building surge hospitals, but they weren't terribly useful, and the NHS workforce proved itself capable of managing, treating and caring for very ill patients in acute hospitals. We learnt that the workforce could be used more efficiently and effectively by reusing, extending and densifying the existing hospital estate.

Before Covid, 3-5% of GP consultations were by phone or video conference, now it is 50-70%. The transformation talked about for years happened overnight. It seems to work and the public appears happy with it.

Remote GP consultations could see health centres acting as air traffic control for the local population



Charlotte Ruben,
architect and
partner at White
Arkitekter in Sweden

Hospitals are the most complex buildings in society and environments that people inhabit during the most vulnerable moments in life. These buildings represent huge investments so a future-proofing agenda must be highly valued at all stages.

Assessment of our recently commissioned projects in Stockholm – Karolinska University Hospital in Solna and Huddinge Hospital – has highlighted some design features that proved successful during the peak weeks of the pandemic. These include adaptivity, flexibility and humanity, with a healing and attractive environment for patients and staff that is sustainable over time.

The Huddinge case study is fascinating: in just 10 days 23 operating theatres were transformed into 64 intensive care units able to accommodate three patients in each theatre, in a light and safe environment. This was impressive action in the face of the pandemic.

The pandemic will of course also influence the patient experience outside of hospitals. The digital revolution is here to stay, but what will solutions for telemedicine and mobile healthcare units, that bridge the gap between the patient's home and the healthcare provider, ultimately look like and how will they work?

In the longer term I think we will be increasingly looking at hospital, pandemics and digital technologies together in relation to reinventing whole health landscapes: how should we be envisioning mobile units and primary care satellite pods that take the emphasis and pressure off the hospital? How can we redesign homes so that certain medical interventions are possible there? How can we use limited financial resources in the best way for society? These are the kinds of questions we're focusing on now at White – it's a widening of the focus from hospital design to healthcare design.

We're widening the focus from hospital design to healthcare design

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How to sell the high street

For a sector already in crisis, Covid-19 looked like the final straw for physical retail. But four specialists see a chance for growth and change for the better

Pamela Buxton

Physical retail was already in crisis long before Covid-19 struck, fuelled by changing shopping habits and the rise of online in particular. Since the lockdown, overall retail sales plummeted by a record 18.1% in April after a 5.2% fall in March according to the Office for National Statistics. Conversely, the proportion of retail sales spent online rose to a record 30.7% in April compared with 19.1% in April 2019.

Now, non-food retailers emerging from the shut-down must add to that social distancing, one-way systems, entry and queuing outside and more. And then there's back-of-house stockroom and loading procedures. So what's the future for this struggling sector?

'A lot of innovation is needed in retail as an industry. I wouldn't be surprised if interesting things come out of Covid-19 in terms of selling across different platforms, and different experiences of shopping,' says Fiona Scott, co-author of the new GLA report High Streets and Town Centres: Adaptive Strategies, produced as part of the mayor of London's Good Growth by Design programme.

With more people spending time in their

local area not only during lockdown but potentially for some time to come, she sees an opportunity for enterprise on the high street, especially if it was supported by more flexible leasing arrangements and better public realm. And some of the other conditions that have been positives during the lockdown – such as better air quality and wider pavements – could also, she adds, help high street retail to thrive. 'It relies on the strength of the market to be able to respond to that and be enticing and creative and attractive to consumer demand,' she says.

It's clear that whatever the challenges facing the retail sector before, Covid-19 has sent these into a sharper focus than ever.

Below, architects with expertise in the sector consider the future of retail. Friedrich Ludewig of Acme looks at how Covid-19 is fuelling retail's 'existential crisis' and suggests a new way forward. Adam Scott of FreeState envisages a more agile approach to retailing and Adrian Griffiths of Chapman Taylor considers retail's future role as one part of a mixed-use strategy for regenerating town centres.●

To see Adam Scott speaking go to: ribaj.com/rethinkretail



I don't think that retail clients will be calling architects tomorrow to redesign their stores just for Covid-19. That's like repainting the salon of the Titanic, where you should be dealing with the iceberg straight ahead of you. Social distancing was well practised in most shops before the virus arrived, because stores were already rather empty.

That's because retail was already in the middle of a full-on existential crisis before Covid-19. The typology was under serious pressure to evolve, with the traditions of the high street, the department store and the shopping mall disintegrating at increasing speeds. Online retail was working with ever-accelerating pace and market share. Consumers had started to question if conspicuous retail consumption is sustainable in a climate-changing world.

Stores were consolidating and questioning their footprints. The Carluccios and Jamie Olivers of this world were folding one after another. Debenhams and House of Fraser were in and out of administration. John Lewis & Partners announced its lowest bonus for half a century. Was anyone out there still planning new shopping centres the

Friedrich Ludewig is a director of ACME, whose work includes Victoria Gate in Leeds, Eastland in Melbourne, and Dublin Central

way they used to be done, even before the virus arrived?

Covid-19 is therefore not asking entirely new questions, but is an accelerator at a time when the world of physical retail was actively searching for new ways to be relevant. Covid-19 has sharpened the questions by making things that were already quite unsustainable extremely unsustainable. It accelerates the debate about what the purpose of physical space is over online-only offers. The world of retail was brightly on fire before, Covid is adding a little bit more oil to the blaze.

The question for physical retail that emerged way before Covid-19 is a question of basic relevance. If online has more choice, and if home delivery is so much more convenient, and if physical space is so expensive to create and maintain, why does anyone still bother?

The future of physical retail does not lie in scale or range as online will always win on that. However, what the likes of Amazon do not offer is curation and sensation. A good gallerist does not offer me all the art of the world but instead curates their gallery to show very few works from an artist that they feel passionate about. A good nightclub does not play all music but instead offers a very special night, with a special set of tracks, mixed in the moment and shared by me and a few friends only. The future of retail lies in spaces that are local and specific. What will make me leave the house post-Covid-19 won't be cut-price sale offers, it will be curated products, curated experiences, spatial sensations and social interaction.

The high street needs to rediscover its specialisms. Covid-19 has brought people to shop more locally

again. Retailers must build on their local strengths and differences. People like to go to places of knowledge and expertise like a good bookshop or specialist fishmonger. And if some of us stay working from home for a few days a week, rather than all returning to the office full-time, perhaps the local high street has a chance to become more relevant again, as more people spend more of their working day away from the city centres.

Retail will never disappear, but it will stop being perceived as a profit centre, and a standalone typology. Retail will return to its roots, as a space of commerce and exchange at the ground plane of our buildings. Retail will become much more of a placemaking tool. In the future, retail will not be deployed to make money, but to make a place. The right coffee shop and bar on the ground floor will be important to make an office building more than a just a place of work. The boundaries between retail, cafés and places of work will become increasingly indistinguishable. Retail and restaurants will be needed to make a public space feel alive and public. Retail will be an integral part of any mixed-use building, and we think the definition of retail will broaden out to include anyone who welcomes visitors through the door to sell a product, a service or an experience including doctors, architects and carpenters, for example.

Looking ahead, there won't be pure retail developers anymore. Instead there will be mixed-use developers, who understand the value of retail as an active ground floor plane within a bigger scheme. It will be one part of what we need to make a thriving, human-centric city.



ILLUSTRATION JASON LYON



I think there will be a radical re-set across every part of the luxury sector from fashion and accessories to cars and jets, as companies adjust to new volumes, supply chains and ways of doing business. In fashion, for example, Covid-19 will accelerate trends towards operating without seasons, such is the case with Gucci, and will also hasten the end of the runway show; Balenciaga has already shown that you can reach hundreds of thousands with a live screen-based launch and millions through later views.

Even more than before, luxury retail will now be about selling the dream – how to subliminally reach all the senses of the customer by thinking about tactility of surface, the comfort of chairs to relax in, the use of beautiful lighting and mirrors that are supremely flattering, as well as providing little touches like great coffee and service. There

Simon Mitchell is co-founder of architect and designer Sybarite, a practice specialising in luxury retail environments

will be even more focus on the little nuances that will make people feel special and pampered, and inspire them to get out and explore the collections and try on great quality clothes. Luxury bricks and mortar is about the subtle nuances of touch and feel; it is about escapism and transportation.

I've long been an advocate of having less space dedicated to products and more given to the targeted curation of the retail experience, whether that be through great artwork or just space for contemplation and relaxation. The new SKP-S store we completed in Beijing last year in collaboration with eyewear brand Gentle Monster is conceived as a department store of the future, and just 40% of the store is dedicated to the product, compared with a norm of 70-80%. Yet even with the impact of Covid-19, the retail sales have been way ahead of their projection because SKP-S offers an experiential take on retail as we know it.

As designers, we must encourage our clients to operate their stores safely. They need to retrain their staff to be almost like flight attendants. The service will have to be impeccable and focus on the details and the personalisation of service. Retail's future will rely on highly trained staff who really know and understand

their client's needs, aspirations and lifestyle – possibly making appointments in advance so when they're in the store they will have more space, and more privacy, with the guaranteed security that they can easily socially distance.

Air quality is a subject we've been promoting in China with the use of air purification filters for sometime, and that surely has to happen over here too following Covid-19. To be able to filter the air quicker offers a sense of assurance to customers while they navigate stores.

Our European clients are already talking about the need for bigger fitting rooms and anterooms so that you don't get pinch points.

Another thing we can do as designers is look into the use of anti-bacterial materials. We're researching how cedar could be used more widely in stores because of its amazing anti-bacterial properties – that's why it's traditionally been used for sushi counters.

As humans we crave the need to see and touch. We have screen fatigue. We want to be away from flat screens and e-commerce. We anticipate that luxury retail and new forms of department stores in particular can offer this escapism by offering experiential journeys in discovery with collaborations, brand extensions, and with hospitality attached.



CHAPMAN TAYLOR

Adrian Griffiths is a main board director at global architect and masterplanner Chapman Taylor

All retailers can do in the short term is provide a safe environment, as best as they can. As we unlock further, I expect the need for such measures to reduce – I do not expect protective screens to stay between staff and customers forever, for example. I think we will get back to retail as an experience and, for that, staff need to be able to interact with their customers.

In the longer term, Covid-19 is only going to reinforce the pre-existing need to rethink how retailers use space. Someone recently referred to Covid-19 as acting like a

microwave for the retail sector, accelerating its transition.

I think this can be turned into a positive – there is a great opportunity now to move away from relying too much on physical retail spaces and to deliver truly inclusive, mixed-use developments in our town and city centres, which have been undermined by single-use schemes. This means creating town centre developments with the right urban framework to evolve over time, rather than having to be knocked down and rebuilt in an endless, and wasteful, cycle of redevelopment. While single-use shopping centres can be very difficult to adapt to societal change, high streets have been evolving naturally for centuries.

Chapman Taylor has been promoting this mixed-use agenda for years, emphasising that, while retail is still important, it needs to be part of a holistic approach which includes workplaces, leisure, food and beverage, residential and community functions.

We are currently working on major city centre

schemes in Coventry and Bolton. Both embrace diverse uses to build on the urban fabric and history of those places and in doing so, reinvigorate urban centres that had suffered due to over-reliance on a single sector. It is all about rebuilding the community and creating a strong, thriving sense of place.

We can learn positive lessons from life during lockdown, such as the importance of community spirit. People are valuing convenience more and using local shops regularly, which is a good thing because it could strengthen our local centres. Covid-19 could well accelerate the downsizing and demise of department stores, but we will see their concessions coming back to the high street, along with more independent retailers.

Covid-19 has also helped re-emphasise that we are an innately social species and that people want to spend time together. Social distancing is just a point in time. Hopefully, people will not even be thinking about it in a year's time.



FREESTATE

Adam Scott is founder and creative director of experience masterplanner FreeState

Covid-19 shines an extremely uncomfortable light on what we already knew: that for retail, uncertainty is the new certainty. The crisis has exposed an urgent need to move away from stratified mixed-use planning to a much more adaptable mixed-activity approach, one that may well spell the beginning of the end of the anchor tenant – at least in the traditional sense. We need to plan for unpredictable times and for unpredictable spaces. We need to substitute a build-and-they-will-come planning mantra for a much more fluid and adaptable approach to retail.

This all begins with a ramping up of what could be thought of as a fusion in masterplanning between different types, not only combining retail with workplace and leisure, but less obviously with education, healthcare, and experience-based pop-ups. This is not a call for a richer mix of uses, but rather for a richer mix of types of activity. Done well, it promises to be the model for the new retail norm come post-coronavirus.

Secondly, faced with the post-Covid prospect of whole streets of empty retail space, planning authorities will need to think much more in terms of the event. We are going to see more hireable sites programmed for work events, live events, community and retail events. This will be especially relevant as we pass through the various lockdown exit

Faced with the post-Covid prospect of whole streets of empty retail space, planning authorities will need to think much more in terms of the event

strategies, where we will need to spread the constantly morphing retail offer across 24-hour timespans, as opposed to the customary 12-hour fixed-concept day.

Thirdly, we will see a much greater blur in terms of design and operations. Expect the rise of the super-curated high street, which will see a blurring of pop-up, short, and very short tenancies. These start-ups and independents will be underwritten not by the traditional anchor tenants, but by a new type of retail sponsor in a genuine mix of profit, social responsibility, and membership.

None of this is entirely new. It's all out there already. These trends precede Covid-19, some by decades. What is new, however, is the rate with which the present crisis has accelerated the inevitable – the blurring of different types of activities, of statutory permissions, and of the programming of our retail sites. What were counter-cultural trends are now the means by which we will ensure that real-world retail is alive and relevant in whatever follows lockdown.

To design for this, we need to better understand the suitably complex interests of the post-Covid retail audience. This means thinking much less in terms of monolithic destinations, and much more about the real-world customer's journey across a day, month and year. In thinking more deeply about the quality of the experience, we are much more likely to attract and involve people, and in attracting and involving, so the product evolves to further attract and involve.

Stick with the traditional build-it-and-they-might-come approach to retail and people may indeed come – perhaps once, possibly twice. But if instead we embrace a much more agile approach to retail, they will keep on coming – again and again and again.



Talking point

Could your design start a conversation about climate change?

Conversations about Climate Change is a specially commissioned design competition, exhibition and event series to provide a platform for urgent climate debates.

In setting the challenge of creating a ‘conversation’, the Timber Trade Federation (TTF) is calling for innovative, playful and thought-provoking designs from architects, designers and craftspeople.

The TTF, in association with the Building Centre in London, will showcase winning designs in tropical timbers from sustainable sources to demonstrate the importance of this natural resource.

The context

Although 2020 had been designated a super year for climate conversations, COP26, the UN's climate change conference scheduled to take place in Glasgow in November, has been postponed until 2021 because of the global Covid-19 pandemic. But climate change remains an urgent threat to humanity.

Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) is the UK and EU's

action plan to combat illegal logging, subsequent trade and deforestation, by introducing forest monitoring, auditing, multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement with local communities. This landmark shift in governance and procurement means FLEGT licensed timber is a safe, legal, and sustainable form of the product.

‘Responsibly forested timber is an essential part of the solution to emission reduction needed for mitigating the worst impacts of climate change, but tropical forests have often been undervalued and forest land cleared for other uses,’ says David Hopkins, Timber Trade Federation CEO. ‘The EU/UK FLEGT initiative helps combat illegal logging, subsequent illegal timber trade and deforestation. In return for aid and technical support, VPA [Voluntary Partnership Agreements] tropical forest countries

Above VPA countries introduce forest monitoring.

Below FLEGT licensed timber is a safe, legal and sustainable product.



overhaul legal and regulatory governance frameworks. They introduce forest monitoring, auditing, multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement with the local communities who feel the transformative benefits of social and economic change. This landmark shift in governance and procurement means that FLEGT licensed timber is safe, responsible and legal.’

The challenge

Conversations about Climate Change sets architects, designers, and craftspeople the challenge of creating ‘conversation pieces’ from responsibly sourced tropical timber.

Entrants are asked to develop products that score on aesthetics and technical performance. But they must also be ‘conversation pieces’ that stimulate discussion around the role of forests and wood in mitigating climate change and the role of FLEGT in ensuring legal and sustainable forestry and timber supply.

Designers are being asked to respond to this material, and to consider how their role as a specifier is vital for implementing change. The ‘conversation pieces’ could be furniture, sculpture, a model or functional design object – anything, as long as it stimulates a conversation about material provenance and its place in the climate debate, drawing inspiration from the palette of tropical hardwood species selected.

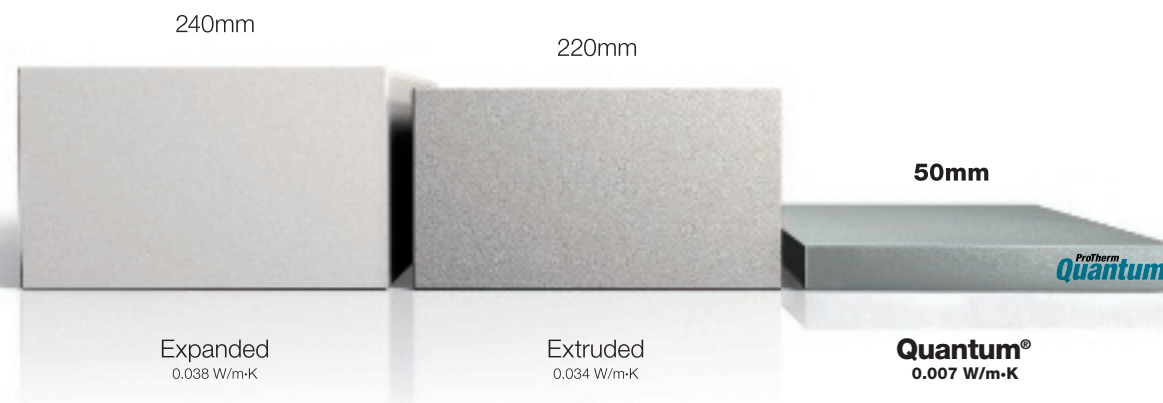
The competition

Six winners will be chosen by an expert judging panel to be fabricated for exhibition. All winners will be provided with FLEGT and VPA tropical hardwood and a £1,000 maker's bursary.

Find out more at www.buildingcentre.co.uk/climateconversations
Entries close on 24 August 2020. The six winners will be announced at the beginning of September. Supported by the Department for International Development.



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Power on past Covid

Building up a practice is a challenge enough. But can pandemic disruption be turned to advantage?

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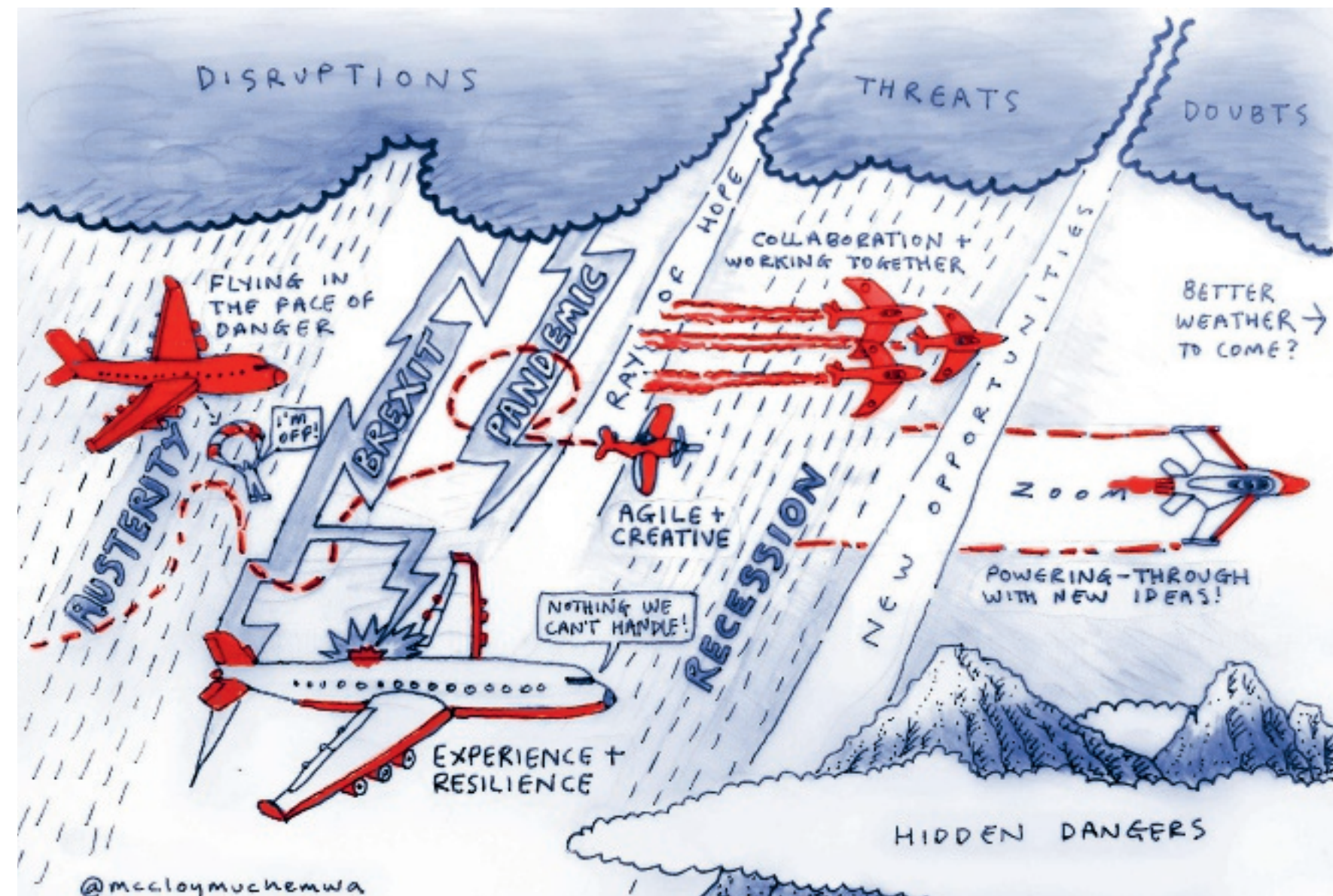
Emma Keyte and Rachel Birchmore

Is the evolution of a practice strategic or one big opportunistic adventure? When we began interviewing practices 18 months ago to discover how they navigate the thresholds of emergence, maturity and succession, we couldn't imagine how dramatically their resilience would soon be tested. Here we look at how disruption – whether due to economic recession, changes in government policy or personal circumstance, or unforeseen events such as global pandemic – can interrupt a practice's trajectory, in the best cases setting it on a completely new evolutionary curve.

In previous articles on ribaj.com, we identified forward thinking, shared values, lack of ego and space for individuals to

develop as important foundations for a resilient practice. The most successful practices use moments of arrival along the way as opportunities to set the tone, recharge the team's energy and act as a springboard towards the next. Is it possible for moments of disruption – rather than arrival – to act as similar opportunities for practice evolution?

For many larger practices, disruption is an inevitable part of the business cycle: they have weathered storms before and have systems in place to adapt. Covid-19 has presented a specific set of challenges in that the pandemic is global (meaning it's not just a shift in geographical markets), and it is not manmade. However, it demands similar tactics from the leadership to other crises. Established practices are often more resilient



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because they tend to have a more collegiate approach, relying less on a single figure to mobilise the response.

Arup's shared values, for example, and Grimshaw's distinctive internal spirit, mean people instinctively rally to the cause in times of disruption. Chris Harding, chair of BDP, echoes this. 'We're built on the idea of constant change, which allows people the freedom to express themselves and act intuitively. It's autonomy within a collective idea. Our design for the Nightingale Hospital came not from a considered strategic effort driven from the top, but from one of our team pulling together the right people, quickly.'

Avoid silos

Changes in government policy can also create significant disruption to practice workflow, as Penoyre & Prasad discovered in 2010 when the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme was abruptly stopped. 'We survived because we had our feet in several sectors,' says principal Mark Rowe, 'but also because we weren't siloed. Our practice structure was fluid enough to adapt.' This flexibility has seen the practice through more recent disruption, first when it merged with Perkins+Will in late 2019, and of course during the current pandemic. 'We've now spent more time working in lockdown than we had in our new shared space,' he continues. 'But

JIM STEPHENSON

Above Resilience can lie in the agility of the team, as BDP found when working on the Nightingale Hospitals.

Below Joe Morris of Morris + Company suggests this is a time to consider the studio afresh.



Our methods are weakened if we merely try to do 'business as usual'

to me the effect has actually been to bring the wider team closer. Adversity has had a bonding effect and helped us to continue developing our new working culture.'

There is a temptation in times of uncertainty to batten down the hatches, cut costs and hope that the business will survive intact. None of the practices we spoke to considered this defensive approach a positive strategy; most, while acknowledging that disruption was often painful, were far more proactive in their response. Some, in fact, saw it as a distinct opportunity to reflect on, and re-set, what they are doing. Jo Cowen Architects, for example, is focussed primarily on the residential market but – in order to meet the very specific needs of clients in that sector – has calibrated its approach to take in development and investment as well as architectural design. 'During the Covid-19 outbreak,' says founder Jo Cowen, 'we've taken the opportunity to look again at our client needs, anticipating how they are likely to move, and repositioning ourselves so that we can best suit the emerging scenario.'

Take stock

Other practices have used the pause of the pandemic to take stock of where they are and, amid the cacophony of voices offering their reflections, are calling for a radical rethink. Joe Morris of Morris and Company, speaking from a mountain of models as part of the Architecture Foundation's 100 Day Studio series, suggested that many of us have simply taken the bad habits of the real office back into our locked-down, virtual one, whereas this should be a moment to consider the studio afresh. 'Our methods are weakened if we merely try to do "business as usual". It isn't just about how we work from our bedrooms; it is also about how we view the value of our work, and those involved in or affected by it.'

This impulse to look at things through a new lens is vital. The practices that stick rigidly to their usual ways of working are more likely to disappear in times of disruption; those who survive tend to be those who

Right Ackroyd Lowrie sees the importance of innovation to survival – from VR headsets and beyond.

make a virtue out of a crisis. A useful perspective is to consider how you might set up a new practice under the circumstances. As Chris Bryant of alma-nac says: ‘Whether you’re setting up from scratch or are more established, at a time like this we’re all start-ups in a way.’ Despite – or maybe because of – the fact that it is nimble, alma-nac has consciously taken time out during lockdown to explore what the likely changes will mean for it. ‘Architecture starts from an optimistic standpoint, and that’s what we’re focusing on,’ says alma-nac co-founder and director Caspar Rodgers. ‘There is only learning.’

Think creatively

Surviving uncertainty – no matter its cause – almost always demands creativity. Dan Nation, co-founder of the Redundant Architects Recreation Association (RARA), was working in a shared workshop space at the time of the 2008 financial crash. As co-workers disappeared overnight, he and the other members of the East London Design Bureau decided to take on the space as RARA. ‘It was an open workshop available to hire for the many architects who had been forced into inactivity. There was no set hierarchy or remit. Our direction shifted according to the skills and outlooks present at any one time.’ Collaborative Design and Build (Co-DB) has since evolved out of RARA and the same values and flexibility that attracted members following the economic recession seem newly pertinent in a post-Covid world.

Gort Scott of Gort Scott Architects suggested that crisis might even become the new normal, taking into account the current, parallel challenges of climate emergency, pandemic and social unrest. Set up after the last recession, his studio grew out of the founders’ academic practice. ‘The way we taught is the way we’ve ended up practising,’ says Fiona Scott. ‘Until now we’ve been quite organic in the way we do things, but Covid-19 has accelerated the need for clarity around our values.’ Refining or re-emphasising a practice’s cul-



JIM STEPHENSON

ture and spirit seems to be an important ingredient for survival in times of uncertainty.

Like many we spoke to, Gort Scott also emphasised the importance of collaboration. Informal groups such as the London Practice Forum, London Architects Group and Londonon bring together like-minded practices to lobby for positive change, promote ethical standards and share resources. For Joe Morris, collective working is both a means of surviving crisis and a hoped-for outcome: ‘It is blindingly obvious that we are interdependent, and that the virus itself is a manifestation of this. We must reflect on the fact that we are all part of a complex system, and that system – and our practice – should use all of its talent to support the interests of all.’

Big moment

Sometimes, disruption can also bring about the unique set of conditions that signal a practice’s big ‘moment’, giving its work heightened currency and acting as an important threshold in its evolution. Ackroyd Lowrie, for example, has focused heavily on the use of virtual reality since forming four years ago. Oliver Lowrie says: ‘It’s obviously a difficult time for everyone, but we set out to change the way our industry works by embracing technology and the pandemic has accelerated the need for innovation.’

The most resilient practices in times of

disruption are likely to be those with a clear purpose and strong identity. They will value collective thinking, whether this is intra- or inter-practice, and demonstrate the creativity, energy and attitude to adapt to circumstances. They will be equipped with a strong reputation and a network of supportive contacts. And they will have optimism about the value of architecture – and architectural practice. As Chris Bryant of alma-nac says: ‘Recessions inevitably bring huge amounts of pain as existing structures crumble, but they also bring new energy and opportunities for us to rethink the way we work.’

See the rest of this series at ribaj.com/resilience
Emma Keyte is a communications consultant and writer. free-projects.co.uk
Rachel Birchmore is a business and leadership coach. arebe.co.uk



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Architectural abuse
– Will Wiles
55

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– profile
58

3: Culture

Feel the width

How can we make residential roads safer – and handsome?



Hugh Pearman Editor

My street is starting to get noisier again: the annual crop of loft conversions, rear extensions and makeovers, mostly paused for the last three months, has resumed. But while everything was quiet, I went out of my front door and measured the width of my street.

This was prompted by an online lecture for the Architecture Centre in Bristol, given by Annalie Riches of Mikhail Riches, who with Cathy Hawley designed the Stirling Prize winning Goldsmith Street development of long housing terraces in Norwich. One of her main points concerned the design of the scheme’s streets. With the support of the highways engineers, they reduced carriageway widths from normal suburban dimensions to 14m – with on-street parking. Also included: sharp corners, landscaped traffic-free areas, judiciously deployed bollards to make sure pavement parking does not happen. Not included: double yellow lines everywhere.

The upshot is a grid of streets which, while not looking retro and being built to Passivhaus standard, is meant to be Victorian in density. So, since I live in a grid of 1890s streets, I went to see how they compare. This is what I found.

In imperial measurements – since that

The upshot is a grid of streets which, while not looking retro and being built to Passivhaus standard, is meant to be Victorian in density

was how it was laid out – my street works out at nearly 64 feet between the facing house fronts, measured bay to bay. That’s 19.5m, so a lot wider than Goldsmith Street.

Broken down this consists of 24ft of front gardens, 15.75ft of pavements including 1ft wide kerbs, and a 24.25ft carriageway. Given all the parked cars, the effective driveable width of the carriageway is around 12 feet or 3.65m. Which is good, as vehicles can’t speed past each other and – like Goldsmith Street – if there’s a dustcart making its way down the street and you’re in a car, you just have to wait.

The generous distance from house to house across the street is accounted for by the fact that these were suburban houses, built on fields just outside the LCC boundary. These were aspirational homes built for the newly emerging middle class commuters. In tighter urban conditions, especially for working-class housing, the density is generally higher and it’s that which Goldsmith Street is emulating.

But plenty of Victorian residential streets are surprisingly wide. Why? Accounts of the time mention children playing in them, even cricket-stumps being hammered into the surface. Riches in her lecture talked of ‘overlooking distances’ and wondered where they originated. Victorian prudishness perhaps – on no account should you be able to see your neighbours in a state of undress. Well, if distance solved that, why did they invent net curtains?

There’s been some discussion about this on social media – much of it condemning unimaginative municipal highway engineers, a common cause between modernists and traditionalists. Unfair, cry the highway engineers, we are designers too, we understand!

Unfortunately the usual suspects – the volume housebuilders – generally just go with basic ‘standard’ over-generous highways layouts, so the problem is perpetuated. We’d like to hear from you on this – your good or bad experiences when it comes to getting humane, congenial road layouts in residential developments. Write to us at letters.ribaj@riba.org. ●

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Culture
Will Wiles

What's what

Will Wiles is starting to wonder what he's looking at



Will Wiles

Some years ago, this magazine was based at Ludgate House, on the south bank of Thames in London. It offered a fantastic panorama of the river and central London, prominently including its near-neighbour, Sampson House, just across the Thameslink train lines.

Sampson House, a brutalist ziggurat in concrete and dark metal, was in dock next to Ludgate House's ocean liner. From our elevated position in the tower next door, it had a heavily-serviced, industrial feel. It was hard to love, but undeniably charismatic, and like all charismatic buildings it generated stories and myths. Its basement was eight, 12, 20 levels deep, depending on who you talked to – everyone agreed it was deep. There was, of course, a nuclear bunker in there, or command centre, or whatever. And – this was the best – it was where your cheques went to be incinerated, assuming they didn't get bounced back to you.

This last story was the best because it was true, or at least true enough. Sampson House was a cheque-clearing and financial data centre for Lloyds Bank, where numbers scrawled in ballpoint became electronic ones and zeros. Whether they were burned afterwards, I don't know, but I hope they were. It's so much more romantic that way, a flash of cleansing flame at the end of the ant-work of everyday finance, a Viking funeral for your fulfilled promises.

But did Sampson House look like an incinerator? It had a proper chimney stack which lent credence to the story – and added to its nautical appearance – as did the industrial ruggedness of its materials and suggestion of menace. How much of the gossip about incin-

How many wicker spaceships are there? And what's so bad about spaceships?

erators and bunkers was simply subconscious anti-brutalism? It recalls Prince Charles's attempt, years ago, to malign John Madin's brutalist Birmingham Central Library as 'a place where books are incinerated, not kept'.

In my last column I said the popular discussion of architecture often resorts to 'a tatty list of derogatory clichés' and promised to return to the subject. And here we are. Though not threadbare enough to be a cliché on its own, the incinerator belongs on the list with the abattoir, sewage works and electricity substation, all of which make appearances when the intention is to compare a building to a utilitarian and drab place with an unpleasant or noisome function. But the 'big three' clichés are the alien spacecraft, prison and airport.

The alien spacecraft is literally anything that appears out of place, with bonus points if it is raised up on pilotis. I was moved to write this column when I saw that objectors had used the analogy for aLL Design's Will Alsop-esque student accommodation proposed for Cambridge. It's a baffling comparison – out of place it might be, but its cladding of scattered battens made it more like a picnic basket or a birdwatching hide. How many wicker spaceships are there? And what's so bad about spaceships? Very advanced bits of kit, they are.

'Prison' makes sense as an insult – an ugly place of confinement, where no one would choose to be. But it's generally used to describe concrete modern buildings, which makes me wonder how many people have actually looked at real prisons. They are either gloomy Victorian brick or cheapo post-80s PFI brick. If there's a distinctive modernist prison anywhere in the country, I'm unaware of it. What new prisons actually resemble is out-of-town warehouses, which I suppose is what they are.

Confusion really takes flight with the airport, intended to evoke an impersonal scale, and a restless absence of place. Euston Station is often disparaged with this comparison, for its large booking hall, now cluttered with retail, and tunnel access to trains. But arguably the reconstructed St Pancras is now more airport-like, with its subterranean departure lounge reached via shopping mall, and people love it. But did it ever look like a railway station? Prince Charles criticised the British Library, next door, as looking more like a terminus than its neighbour. Think on it too long and you start to question what anything looks like. ●

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



Clearing house Sampson House from Blackfriars Bridge in London.

TRISTRAM COMPTON EMPORIS

KNOCKS OF AGES

Condemnation by comparison isn't new, of course, it just changes with the ages, as styles and tastes and scales shift. Yesterday's insults won't cut it – people rarely compare things to stables any more. But some stick in the mind, such as Horace Walpole's sneering about Robert Adam's 'gingerbread and sippets of embroidery'.

HOLLY EXLEY

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The RIBA Journal July 2020

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The seminar by Colin Blatchford-Brown Designing for fire safety in residential buildings, was one of, if not the best I have ever attended. Full stop! Well presented, concise, but enough detail to really take something away with you and make you think. Excellent.

That aside, I really like the webinar format. Extremely convenient and for some unknown reason I found it much easier to concentrate, sitting on my comfortable settee. This will sound terrible, but being able to do my knitting whilst listening seems to help me focus.

Wiebke Rietz, Dipl Arch PgDipCons RIBA CEPH,
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Culture
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Now for the next step

As lockdown eases, recession looms. The RIBA is here to help practices navigate these choppy waters



Alan Jones

We will not return to 'business as usual'. As the pandemic leaves its indelible mark on society, business and our profession, our actions to respond to and recover from its chaos are what will create our new normal and new practice.

While lockdown may have presented opportunities for some architects to make positive changes to their working arrangements and re-evaluate the work/life balance, most have also experienced high levels of personal and professional anxiety, fearing future workloads, reduced salaries, redundancies and the difficulties of working from home.

But now things are starting to move towards a new version of normal. Work on site has resumed, architects' practices are gradually returning to the workplace and businesses seem to be switching from 'response' to 'recovery' mode. We still face unknowns, especially regarding the extent of the financial fallout, but while we cannot be certain what lies ahead we can start planning for it.

It remains the priority of the RIBA to provide our members and practices with the guidance and support to help weather this storm. This means helping map routes to recovery and build future resilience through the RIBA Recovery Roadmap; creating a dialogue around post-pandemic design through our competition Rethink: 2025; and continuing to collect and share intelligence to understand how architects and students are coping.

Launched last month, the RIBA Recovery

The RIBA Recovery Roadmap provides guidance to help members plan their route to recovery

Roadmap provides guidance to help members plan their route to recovery. Split into three phases – response, recovery and resilience – the digital platform contains actions that practices can take across different areas of their business to respond to the challenges; from stabilising finances and supporting staff wellbeing to winning new business and reopening the office. 'Road to Recovery' podcasts will feature member reflections on topics covered in each phase, and these will align with the themes of RIBA Practice Clinics – online events where members can discuss their experiences with peer practitioners.

Guidance in the Recovery Roadmap directly responds to member queries and concerns gathered via our regional teams, information line and surveys. Since March, huge numbers of architects have shared their views through our Covid-19 and Future Trends surveys, helping us tailor our output and provide a benchmark against which practices can compare their experiences.

These insights have also directly informed our lobbying activity with the government: our work to ensure policy makers provide the right support to protect jobs and businesses and take steps to mitigate an elongated economic recovery. We are also incredibly mindful that the handling of Brexit will play a major role in this recovery, and we continue to call for a feasible UK-EU deal that will allow for sustainable growth. We will also advocate for architects as being essential to the many other facets of a successful recovery, of wellbeing, social cohesion, equity and inclusion within private and public space, of place making and identity and belonging.

Whatever lies ahead, the RIBA will continue to support and advocate for members. The RIBA also wants to make it easier for those struggling financially to renew their 2020 membership so has introduced measures including a reduced rate application process for some individual members and an extension to the payment deadline. Find out more by emailing membership@riba.org.

As we move into the next phase, the RIBA promises to support you – our members and practices – in your own routes to recovery; to protect your interests, represent your concerns, and help you build resilience against current and future challenges in the process. ●

president@riba.org @alanjones2008
See more on the Recovery Roadmap at architecture.com/recovery-roadmap



KEEP IN TOUCH

For those lonely in lockdown, architects in the south west are running a series of Quarantine Stories. Short, sharp and sweet, these personal stories give an insight into careers and challenges during the coronavirus and before. Search #RIBA_quarantinestories on twitter or visit RIBA Bristol and Bath on Facebook.

ILLUSTRATION: HOLLY EXLEY

We Made That starts a project by developing the brief with the stakeholders. But it's not altruism that drives their commitment to community and forgotten spaces

Words: Hugh Pearman Portraits: Lucie Goodayle

Better for everyone

It's said often enough that architects need to get out of their professional ghetto, collaborate with other professions and trades, be less concerned with look-at-me buildings and more with the public realm, do solid research, hit the streets and talk to real people more. It's hard to disagree, especially when you are talking to one of the now firmly established practices which does all these things. Here they are, and they are called We Made That.

Holly Lewis and Oliver Goodhall started working together in 2006. Unusually, they set up on their own while at architecture school – the Bartlett – having won their first competition while still Part 1 students. An international competition in fact, for a tiny building: a beach hut at Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire, one of a series by various architects. Their resulting 'A hut for gazing and canoodling' – black bituminous fibreboard outside, pink stencil patterns inside, high-level corner doors swinging open to take in the view – might have suggested a future as buildings architects, quite possibly as designers of



We Made That associate Nisha Kurian.

imaginative one-off houses of the postmodernism-revival variety.

But this was not the way they wanted to go. The pair wanted to be strategists as much as architects, as interested in fruitful urban adjustments as in new buildings. Determined to take on only public sector commissions, they stuck to their guns and made their own niche: more often than not working in what could be described as half-forgotten, run-down, overlooked parts of town. Reviving previously declining high streets, making congenial space for people rather than speeding machines, generally stimulating communities by getting directly involved with them.

Having finished their studies they went full time in 2010. 'We used to say I did the words and Oliver did the shapes and colours,' Lewis recalls. 'It's a bit more complicated than that these days.' We Made That is now an 18-strong firm working in 22 of the 33 London boroughs, and further afield: a masterplan for the district around Runcorn Station anticipates the eventual arrival of HS2



Holly Lewis and Oliver Goodhall won their first competition as Part 1 students at the Bartlett.

services on the upgraded existing railway and makes a new urban quarter next to the terminus of the Bridgwater Canal on the site of a skein of now defunct approach roads to the original Mersey bridge. And the county of Lincolnshire has remained a client: We Made That’s feasibility study into developing creative industries in Lincoln and across the county is under way.

Scanning the list of their projects, you come across such titles as ‘London industrial land supply and economy study’ or ‘Artists Workspace Study’ alongside work that is more clearly landscape, or playspace, or art. If practices of an earlier generation such as muf pioneered this kind of approach in the 1990s, theirs was perhaps more of an arts-based approach. We Made That seems to like nothing better than crunching data.

The day I talked to them, they fielded Lewis and their more recently arrived associate Nisha Kurian, who has worked for a variety of other practices from small to large, commercial and more public-focused. They are chafing somewhat at the restrictions of lockdown – after all, they are all about going out in the field, meeting and talking with people – but like everyone, they are managing, even recruiting. They announced an important competition win in the depths of lockdown: the North Vauxhall public realm delivery plan for Lambeth Council, leading a team including transport planners, engineers, landscape specialists and surveyors. It’s all about the space between buildings and



Above Part of the Park Royal Centre masterplan in West London – the ‘amenity yard’.

transport corridors, in a part of London that is central geographically but distant perceptually, an interesting mix of industrial and residential that can be hard to navigate – and has Damien Hirst’s Newport Street Gallery in the middle and the Garden Museum at the northern end of it. The plans for public engagement – central to their pitch which came before lockdown – can’t now proceed in the way originally imagined of course so are on hold while they develop a new approach.

‘Our first project – the beach hut – meant that we were straight away in the public sector, and our interest in projects for the public has continued,’ says Lewis. ‘We are just following our noses, following our interests. It’s supported by that early stage where we were students, doing projects because we loved

them. You had to be enthusiastic about them, and we are enthusiastic now. I guess it’s like supporting the underdog – underdog places as much as people – thinking that architecture and design and everything we do should be relevant to everybody, not just be the preserve of wealthy people. That shouldn’t be the case. We want to be more egalitarian about where those benefits sit.’

Kurian confirms that it was exactly this that drew her to join the firm in 2017. ‘I’ve worked at places which do a lot of large-scale work for developers, housing mainly. I wanted to work with the public sector more and the philosophy here of working only in the public sector is I think amazing. The approach is a lot less cynical. But also I find the work interesting – especially the community

You start off with a project that doesn’t have a brief... what emerges comes from community engagement

engagement. You start off with a project that doesn’t have a brief – you’re not sure what’s going to come out of it at first because what emerges comes from those discussions. People have ownership of it from the beginning.’

They’ve said previously that they don’t do houses for rich people, and they’ve not changed their stance. If, I suggest, someone was to approach them with a commission for a lovely £25 million one-off house in the Cotswolds, would they really say no?’ Lewis doesn’t hesitate. ‘Sure, we’d say no to that. We haven’t had exactly that, but we definitely get approaches that we say no to. And that’s how our portfolio is defined. I’m definitely not interested in designing a £25 million house in the Cotswolds, but we also get other, more tempting offers that we say no to.’

These are not the kind of architects who turn up to a selection panel meeting carrying a model or drawing of a finished building. ‘Generally we’re trying to sell our clients the process rather than the outcome. We don’t say “here’s our shiny thing”. Sometimes our approach goes down really, really well and sometimes that’s not what they’re after,’ says Lewis.

In their completed projects, buildings – real bits of built architecture – sometimes appear, almost as if by accident or as fruiting bodies from the urban forest floor. Do they, I wonder actively avoid built form? Both laugh – it turns out that this is a conversation they’re having right now about a project in Harlesden. ‘There’s a few more of those fruiting at the moment, we’ve got a couple of interesting projects on canalsides. We’re developing a niche in canalside workspace,’ Lewis says. Kurian explains how her Harlesden workspace proposal is to activate a neglected stretch of the Grand Union Canal on the northern edge of the Old Oak and Park Royal development corporation area. More leisure activities but also there’s room for workshops – perhaps associated with the boat-living community nearby. They don’t know yet, that’s the point – the uses will emerge from



Above In place of defunct bridge approach roads – a new station district masterplan for Runcorn anticipating HS2 services.

Below A relatively rare actual building from We Made That is the East Street Exchange in London’s Walworth, expanding the local library.

the discussion with the community, trying things out.

We Made That is not a hair-shirt practice, Lewis emphasises. ‘I wouldn’t let the community focus of the portfolio distract you from the fact that we’re really serious about the business side of things. We think carefully about how we’re structuring the practice and the projects, the resourcing, empowering people to run projects themselves, being transparent about our finances and practice management, paying people properly, being interested in growth. We don’t see any conflict in doing that and in doing the kinds of projects that we like to do. Being strong and resilient allows us to do more of that.’

They do their work in a joyful, humanistic, demystifying way, it seems to me. They don’t find their work dry nor do they present it as such. The stats are people, and the people inform the designs. It’s understandable that their work has featured in the RIBA’s MacEwen Awards – ‘architecture for the common good’. But all architects and designers secretly hanker after the project they’ve not won yet, don’t they? What is theirs? Both Lewis and Kurian say the same thing in different ways: they would like to see some of these years of research and large masterplanning projects through to completion – including more ‘weird and amazing’ buildings designed by them. But in the meantime they are happy in what they do. As Lewis puts it: ‘There’s something rather lovely about writing your own brief and then delivering on it.’ ●







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Obituary

Ronald Weeks 1937 – 2020

Particularly known for Clifton Cathedral and his contribution to many of Britain's bridges, a deft model maker who played a key role in developing healthcare facilities at home and abroad



Ronald Weeks, who died in March aged 83, was an outstanding and versatile architect, best known for his award-winning Clifton Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Bristol, a virtuoso concrete building constructed between 1969 and 1973.

The grade II* listed Roman Catholic cathedral was designed by Weeks with his colleagues Frederick S Jennett and Antoni Poremba at the Percy Thomas Partnership. This was his first major design for the firm, which he joined in 1965, later becoming a partner, then director and finally chairman in 1997 before his retirement in 2001, the year after he saw his cathedral listed.

A winner of many awards, it is one of a trio of modern churches designed by Weeks on a hexagonal module. The second is St John Vianney Church in Seattle, USA, which he designed with his brother-in-law Roy Koczarski and which opened its doors in 1993. Here Weeks echoed the star-beam roof structure employed at Clifton and organisation of participants around the altar, creating a complex of spaces for social activities and education.

This was followed by a smaller parish church in the town of Weeks' birth, Buckfastleigh in Devon, to replace the former parish church Holy Trinity, which was destroyed by fire. As with the Clifton Cathedral, the new St Luke's Church has a light-filled, star beam roof structure, with a complex of social spaces designed in dialogue with clergy and community and opened in 2004.

He was consultant architect for some of Britain's finest bridges, among them the Prince of Wales Bridge, the second Severn estuary road bridge. Inaugurated in 1996, it is Britain's longest river crossing, its 948m central cable-stay section flanked by two long viaducts, each over

2km long, on a total of 100 columns arranged on a 33m module. Weeks also played a key role in designing the Jackfield Bridge alongside Gifford & Partners in the Ironbridge Gorge on the River Severn in Shropshire, which was opened in 1994. It was described by the Royal Fine Art Commission as 'worthy of the Ironbridge Gorge' and 'an overwhelming success'.

Lesser known but of lasting significance is the key role Weeks played in developing healthcare facilities in the UK and abroad, winning several important commissions for the Percy Thomas Partnership such as Colchester District General Hospital (1984) and the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast (2003). He also designed the Esso HQ in Leatherhead, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (formerly the First Polytechnic Hong Kong), and National Physical Laboratories in Teddington.

Weeks was educated at the Bartlett School of Architecture where he was awarded the RIBA Donaldson Medal and won a scholarship to the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he met Le Corbusier. While still a student Weeks gained 'highly commended' for his design for the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral competition.

At the Bartlett he met his future wife Irena Koczarska who was studying interior design, forming the beginning of a lifelong creative partnership. The couple married in 1961. Herself a talented artist, Irena (who died in January 2018) played a key role in the interior design for many of Weeks' buildings and was integrally involved in designing both the presbytery (Cathedral House) at Clifton and in the calligraphy cut into the concrete floor leading from the narthex to the font at St Luke's.

A keen sailor and accomplished artist and modelmaker, Ronald retired to Buckinghamshire and later Britanny. He is survived by his daughters Sophie and Susie, and by his granddaughter Scarlet. A memorial service will be held at Clifton Cathedral, date to be announced once current restrictions are lifted. ●

IN MEMORIAM

Trevor de Pont Davies
ELECTED 1954, LONDON

Geoffrey Alan Collens
ELECTED 1958, LONDON

Robert Butterworth Kay
ELECTED 1963, CHESHIRE

Frederick Ferdinand Steyn
ELECTED 1964, ST LEONARDS-ON-SEA

John Anthony Kidd
ELECTED 1971, MANCHESTER

Adrian Edward Gwynne Bird
ELECTED 1974, LIPHOOK

Ian Raymond Walker
ELECTED 1987, GWYNEDD

Patrick Kennard Harrison
ELECTED 1968, EDINBURGH

Herbert Maurice John Prins
ELECTED 1952, KEW

John Lindley Burnett
ELECTED 1955, BEDFORD

Kenneth William Mark
ELECTED 1956, SAFFRON WALDEN

Michael Burton
ELECTED 1956, NEW SOUTH WALES

John Pankhurst Griffiths
ELECTED 1956, RYE

Anthony Peter Howard
ELECTED 1956, LONDON

Jack Craig McDougall
ELECTED 1958, GLASGOW

Patrick O'Keeffe
ELECTED 1958, TENTERDEN

John George Pickles
ELECTED 1963, LIVERPOOL

Ian Appleton
ELECTED 1963, EDINBURGH

To inform the RIBA of the death of a member, please email membership.services@riba.org with details of next of kin

Exchange

History Man

Following a ‘virtual’ City of London planning and transportation meeting on 14 May the Times reported the Clothworkers’ Company proposal at 50 Fenchurch street to erect a 36-storey, 78,000 ft² tower by Eric Parry adjacent to the Tower of London. It is one of a cluster of tall blocks adjacent to the Tower of London, namely 1 Undershaft at 247m (also by Parry), and 100 Leadenhall by SOM, which will contribute to a ‘substantial cluster of tall buildings beside the Tower’.

In approving the scheme the Corporation swept aside objections from Historic Royal Palaces and ditched the protected view of the World Heritage Site across the river from the south.

After the decision Parry commented: ‘The proposal will unite more than 800 years of the City of London’s history with its future in a development that will dramatically improve the experience of the city for all.’

Given that none of the public were able to attend the meeting due to lockdown, I wonder if we might ask Eric Parry what he meant by this extraordinary comment?

Nick Snow, by email

Hand made

Owing to the Coronavirus, I was slow to get to read your March 2020 issue, but was much cheered to read about the wonderful Hallé St Peter’s and Kingston University buildings, both designed with care and cleverness, and both of which I expect bring joy and delight to their users.

Then I came to your 11-page ‘Digital Revolution’ section. This is important territory to be examining. That the section consisted of four articles written by the same person, and that the words ‘automated design’ managed to appear in your pages, may well be symptomatic of the subject matter, which aims at the



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production of more with less means. I despair that were such a digital revolution to transpire, as one infers from the articles that it will, it would be very hard to imagine the two above-mentioned buildings coming into existence, and the world would be a poorer place for it.

David Flynn, Dublin

Health kick

Total applause to CSK Architects for asking what sort of ‘fundamental transformation’ should architects be instigating to thwart climate change, thereby raising awareness of toxins in building materials which are contributing towards the poisoning of our planet (RIBA April 2020).

Martin Brown in FutureRestorative (RIBA Publishing), and others, cite the built environment as being responsible for ‘40% of all carbon emissions in the UK’. He also suggests that ‘40% of a nation’s health costs are attributable to the built environment’.

Natural building materials are healthy for our homes, healthy for our bodies and healthier for our planet. Would it be timely now to give healthy materials more of a platform in the RIBA?

Clare Sherriff, via email

Alma pater

Stephen Parnell refers to the Arts Tower which houses Sheffield University’s School of Architecture as being completed in 1966 (RIBA April 2020 p.50). However, I was one of the School’s first year intake to the School in September 1965. The formal opening was by the Queen Mother in 1966.

The paternoster lift was for most a unique and somewhat amusing form of vertical travel. However, that and the two conventional passenger lifts were completely inadequate to cope with the numbers requiring access at 9am to the 20 floors of accommodation above the lower ground floor lecture theatres.

Nevertheless the now refurbished and listed 20 storey tower is a key city landmark and for 55 years has offered lucky architectural students views from its top floors over one of the country’s most interesting and continually evolving cities.

Philip Evans, Kettering

I despair that were such a digital revolution to transpire, it would be very hard to imagine the wonderful Hallé St Peter’s and Kingston University buildings coming into existence

David Flynn, Dublin

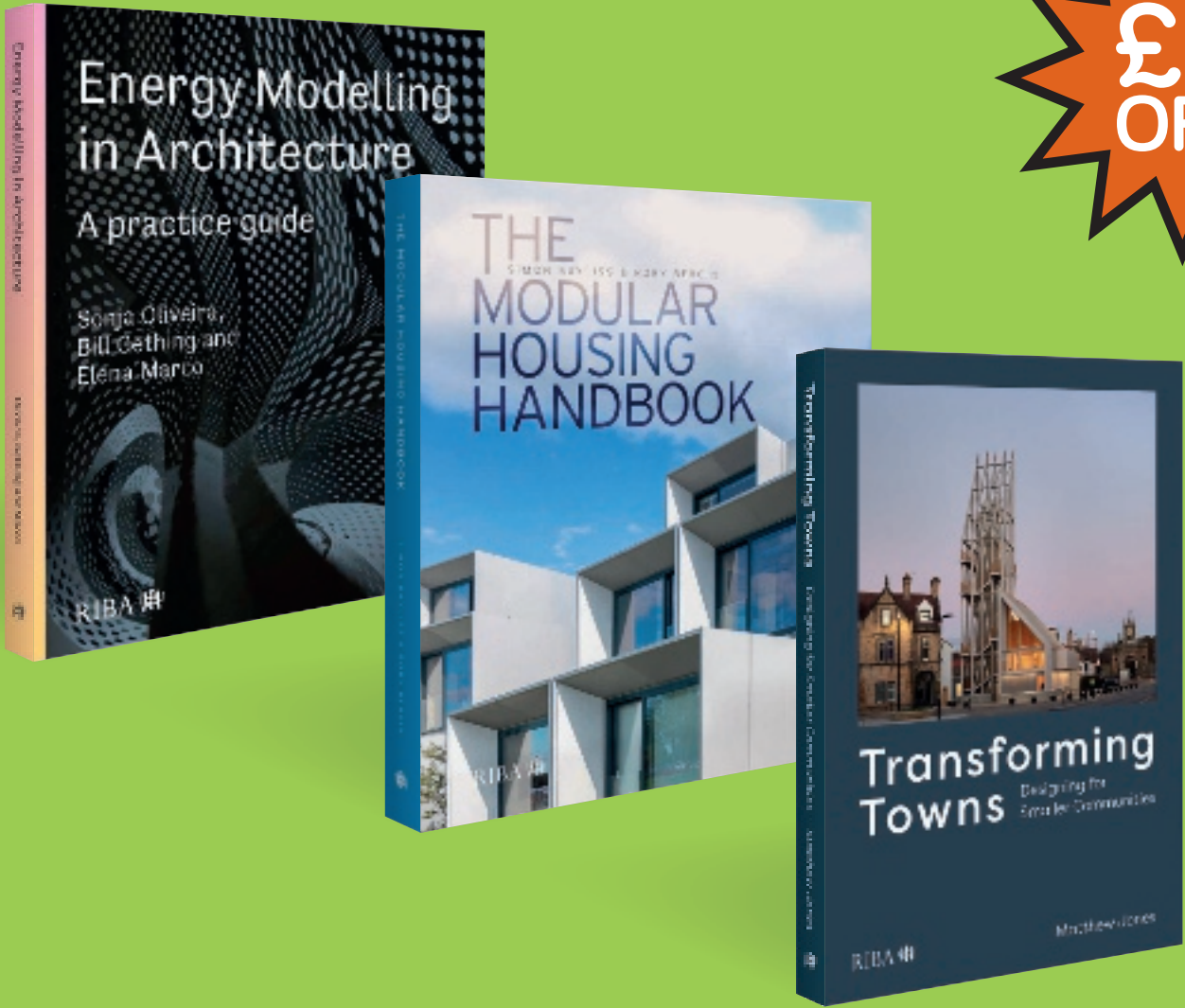
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TWA terminal JFK airport
New York, 1962

With travel severely restricted in the past few months, it is perhaps easier for us now to understand the glamour of flying as it must have been perceived in the 1960s, and as it was then expressively captured in this photograph of the TWA terminal at JFK airport in New York. The building's design by Eero Saarinen, seen at the time as boldly futuristic, had its centrepiece in the winged head house, covered by a thin reinforced concrete shell supported at the corners. The curves of this dramatic structure are repeated inside, linking ceiling, walls and floor in a fluid

internal space. Saarinen sadly died a year before the completion of the terminal, which was therefore overseen by two members of his team, Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo. In 1994 both the exteriors and the interiors of the building were designated a historic landmark by the City of New York; this status didn't stop the demolition of the two structures at the sides of the head house when, almost 20 years after its closure, the terminal was converted into a hotel in 2019.●

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Design
Linda Byrne

Production
Richard Blackburn
Jane Rogers

Head of sponsorship and sales
Richard Tomlin
+44 (0) 20 7496 8329

Account manager,
Midlands and North
Sunil Shah
+44 (0) 7501 466 660

Account manager,
London and South
John Ward
+44 (0) 7741 265 696

Advertising and digital support
Charlotte Collins
+44 (0) 20 7496 8326

RIBA Publishing marketing
Charmian Beedie
Vanessa Newman

Publishing director
Helen Castle

Telephone
+44 (0) 20 7496 8300
Fax
+44 (0) 207 374 8500
Email
firstname.surname@riba.org

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RIBA Journal
riba.org
Published by RIBA
1834 Ltd
Registered office:
66 Portland Place,
London W1B 1AD

Reprographics by
PH Media
Printed by Warners
Midlands plc



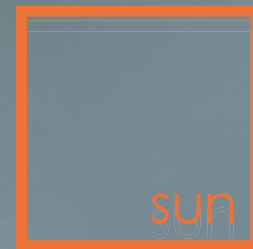
architectural acoustic finishes

SonaSpray fcx – Windermere Jetty Museum, Cumbria.

Oscar Acoustics were specified for the Windermere Jetty Museum in the stunning Lake District. Our SonaSpray fcx acoustic plaster finish, controls noise reverberation without impacting the design, ensuring the acoustic ambience fits seamlessly with the calming surroundings of Lake Windermere.

Credit to Carmody Groarke, Lakeland Arts & Windermere Jetty Museum of boats, steam and stories.





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