

Ghost of suburbia: houses special issue

Rethinking the built environment

David Adjaye turns up gold

The RIBA Journal

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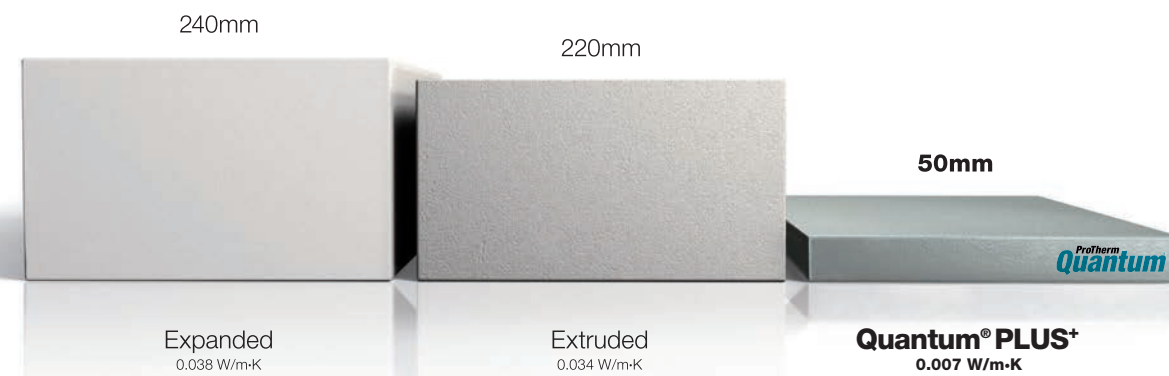
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Rudolf Schindler's modernist Lovell Beach House under construction in 1926



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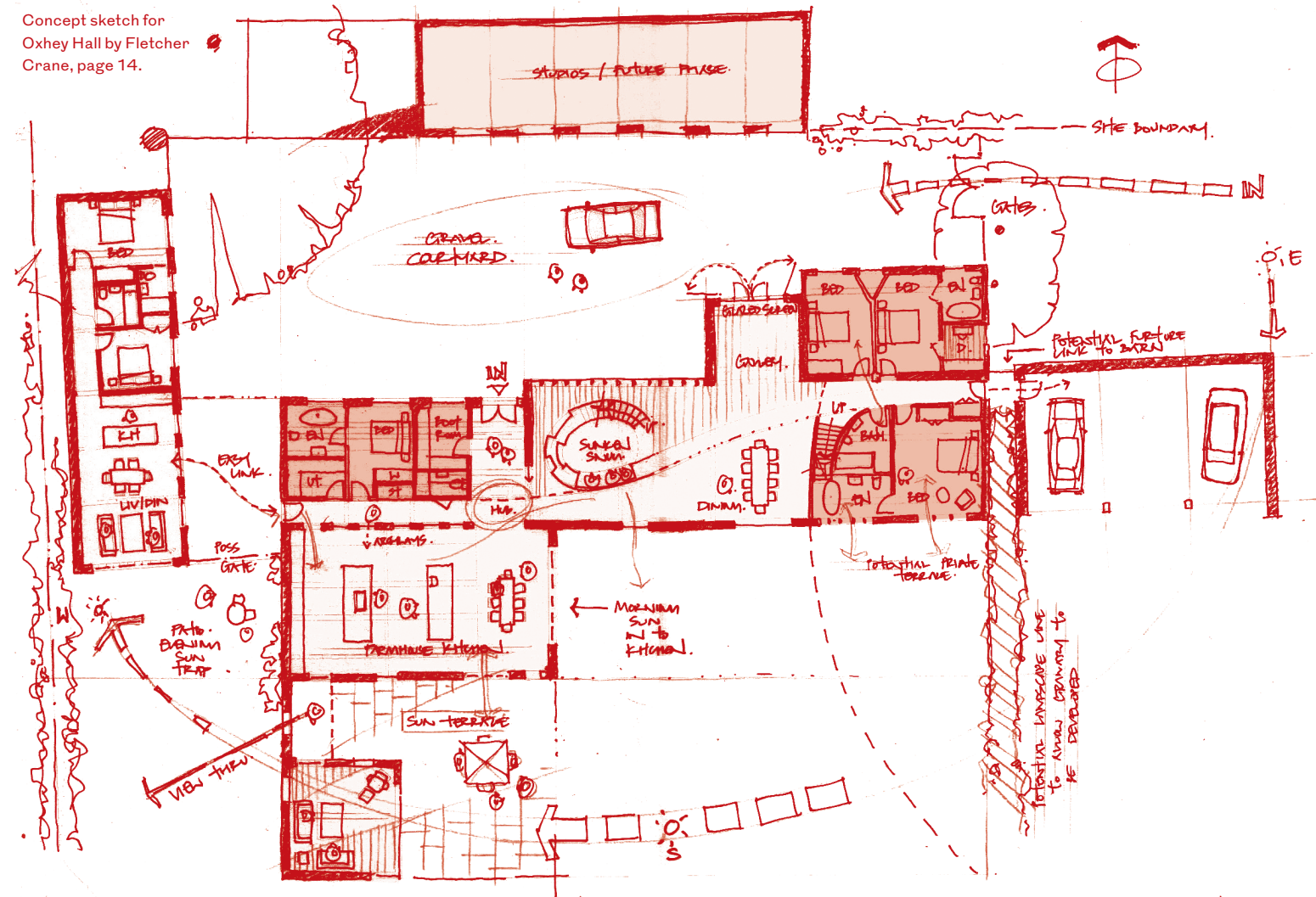
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07

1: Houses

Concept sketch for
Oxhey Hall by Fletcher
Crane, page 14.



This is our annual private house special edition. This year we take over the building section with five standout individual homes. Nearly 50 were submitted as part of our social media call for projects over the summer; others we have been collecting over several months.

As per our previous similar themed issues, one might expect a flurry of new builds, and in appearance, most are. But look beneath the surface and you'll find all sorts of ghostly beings hanging in the corners and skeletons in the cupboard – fitting perhaps for a chilly November.

Surman Weston presents a ghosted version of suburbia in Surbiton, with a splash of California dreaming.

There's a huge polycarbonate X-ray wall revealing the bones of Oxhey Hall farm, abattoir and dairy in Watford by Fletcher Crane Architects. Conibere Phillips unexpectedly treads on top of a Victorian house in London it felt it had no option but to demolish, while a post-war beach hut retreat haunts the form and fabric of Jonathan Hendry's Creek Cottage in Lincolnshire. It distances itself successfully but cannot escape completely.

Finally, the shadow of Piers Taylor himself robotically chopping down trees and splitting logs on the block is lurking in the deep woods around his refurbished home in Wiltshire known as Moonshine. ●

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Suburban dream

It almost looks like a traditional home but Surman Weston's house on the edge of London trips your senses with spirits of California, a noble barn and the ghost of suburbia

Words: Hugh Pearman Photographs: Johan Dehlin

By London standards – and we are right on the south-west London fringe here – this house is a modest, two-bedroom low-budget number, albeit on a sizeable plot of land previously occupied by a much-extended bungalow. This is Surbiton, which is so much of a commuter-generated suburb that for 30 years in the 19th century its official name was 'Kingston-Upon-Railway'. When nearby Kingston-upon-Thames finally got its own railway, they reverted to the Old English name for the area: Surbiton means 'Southern farmstead'. Apt in a way, for there is something of the noble barn about this house.

California comes to English suburbia by way of steel framing and painted perforated brick.

There is something of much else too, for this is a home with multiple visual references. On the one hand you have a young architect, Percy Weston of Surman Weston, fascinated by the surrounding interwar, often half-timbered, occasionally white Art Deco, domestic context, not to mention the white-Deco listed railway station; and on the other you have a very engaged client, boho fashion designer Amanda Winship, who wanted an industrial, almost Californian, aesthetic.

The building they thrashed out between them is a delight, like a ghosted-out version of suburbia. Set well back from the street



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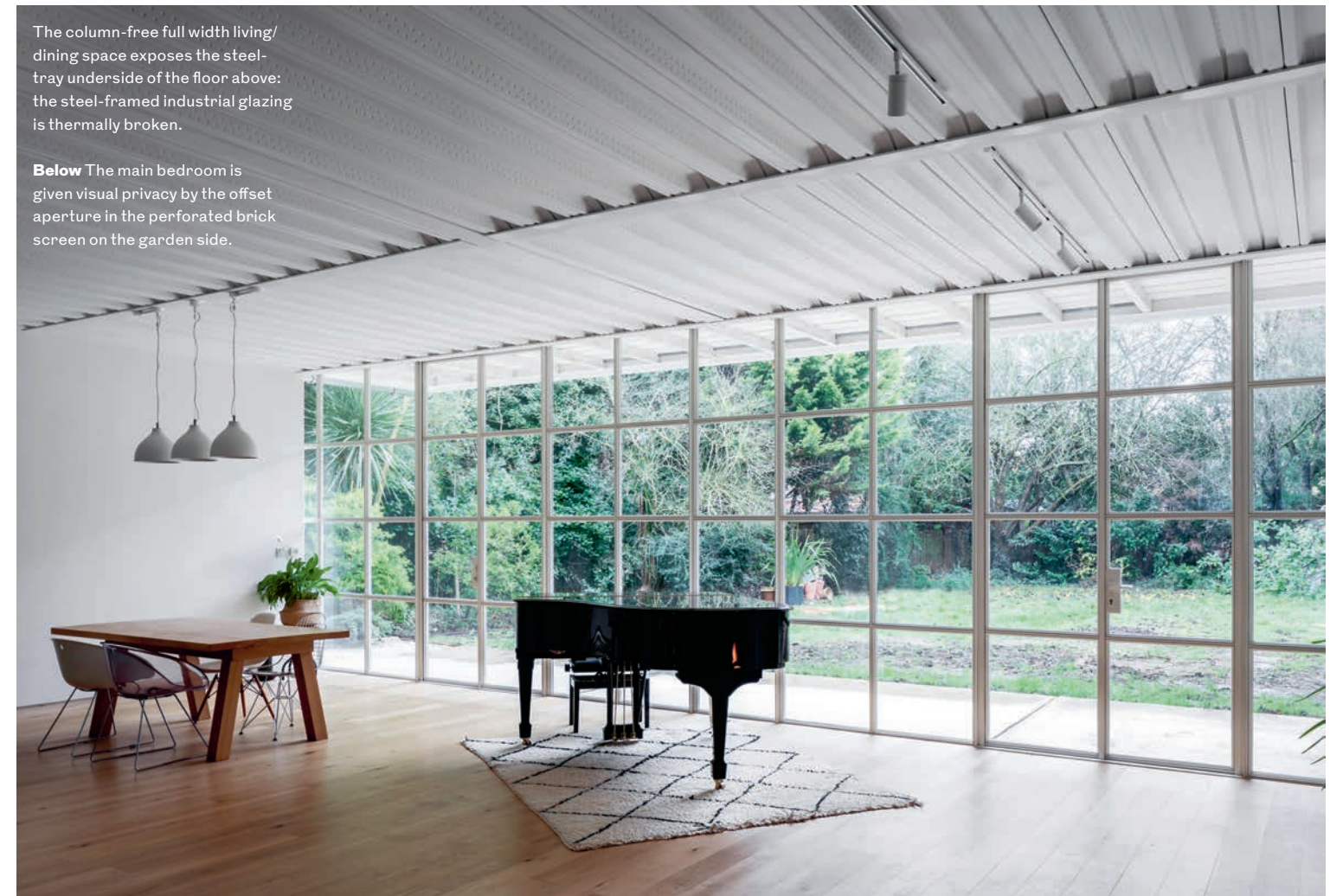


Buildings House

11

The column-free full width living/dining space exposes the steel-tray underside of the floor above: the steel-framed industrial glazing is thermally broken.

Below The main bedroom is given visual privacy by the offset aperture in the perforated brick screen on the garden side.



behind mature trees as many houses here are, implied half-timbering is reinterpreted as an exposed steel frame that is only faintly visible, being painted the same white as its (good quality, handmade) brick infill. Mastic joints between steel and brick take up differential expansion and are also painted out: no cracking has occurred, even after this year's heatwaves.

The face it presents is a gently subverted child's drawing of a house. There is the pitched roof, front door, window. Nothing else (a chimney is tucked away to one side at the back). These simple elements are made hyper-real. The front door and the window are both very large, and arranged not quite symmetrically either side of the centre line. The door is set in a deep angled reveal acting as a porch, with shallow steps rising to it to emphasise its importance.

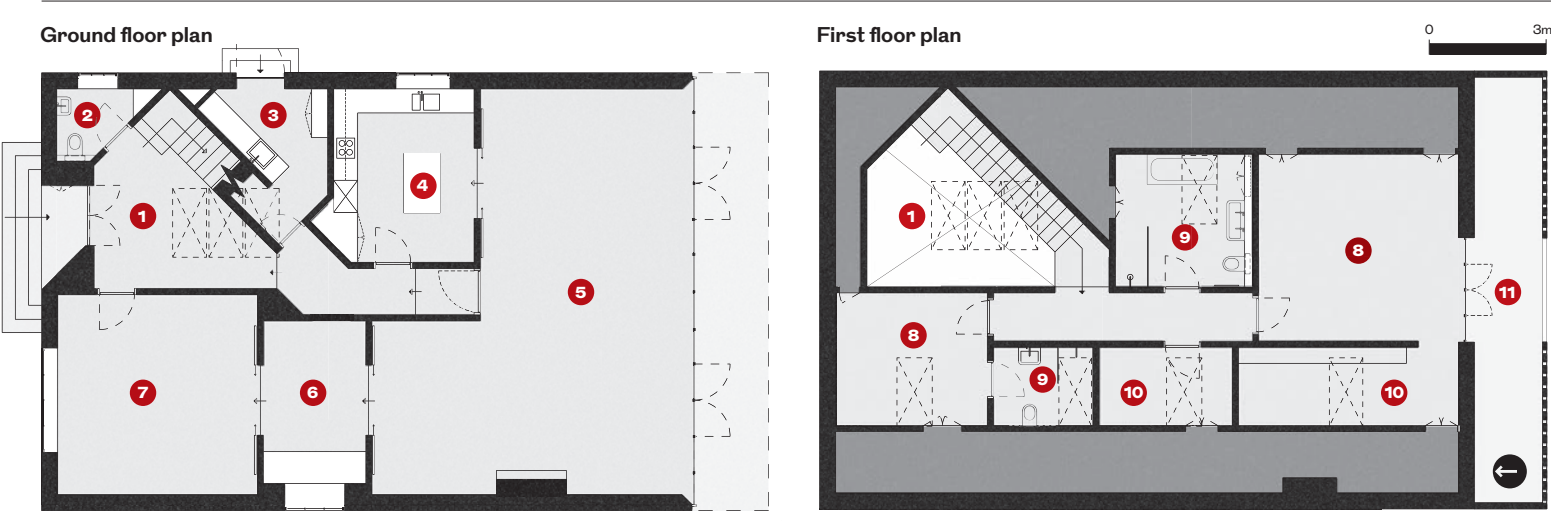
It is on the garden front that the barn makes an appearance. An Alpine granary or hayloft, maybe. Here the roof projects in a



cowl to protect the full-width balcony to the main bedroom. The client wanted visual privacy, so the balcony retreated behind a complete gable-end of perforated brick, again set within the steel structure, here coaxed into a large square picture-frame aperture. It is the same dimensions as both the bedroom window behind it and the equivalent window at ground floor front.

The low flanks of the house, though treated in the same painted frame/brick infill way, scarcely impinge and nor does the super-insulated zinc-panel roof with its factory-sized electrically-opening rooflights: this house is externally all about its front and its back. What is solid at the front melts away at the rear, where the perforated gable hangs above a ground floor of metal-framed, thermally broken industrial glazing. The strength of the exoskeleton allows this look-no-columns feat of visual gymnastics for the two bays and 12m span of the main living room.

Inside finishes are mostly industrial:



- 1 Entrance atrium

2 WC

3 Utility

4 Kitchen

5 Living/dining

6 Study

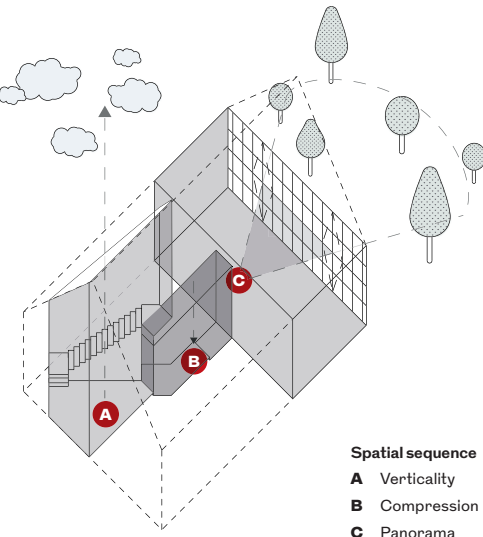
7 Reception

8 Bedrooms

9 Bathrooms

10 Dressing rooms

11 Balcony
- Right Deep reveal to front door.



Left The full height entrance atrium with its concrete stair set at 45° across the plan.

Below The hyper-real house-ness of the street elevation.



and – combined with a carefully-contrived glimpsed ground-floor view right through to the garden at the back – cracks open the orthogonality of the plan. More prosaically, it generates space for a utility room behind the stair and a side door to the garden.

When I show non-architects pictures of this house, the response tends to be that it looks sweet, like a doll’s house. There were no planning objections to the design. In actuality the sweetness is cut with considerable astringency. And as Weston remarks, if anyone in the future wants to strip off the white paint, expose the creamy brick and pick out the exoskeleton in another, perhaps startling, colour, he’d have no problem with it. ●

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Heaven from pennies

Tenacity and an unforgettable dream found a happy ending at Oxhey Hall's 18th century barn

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Nick Kane



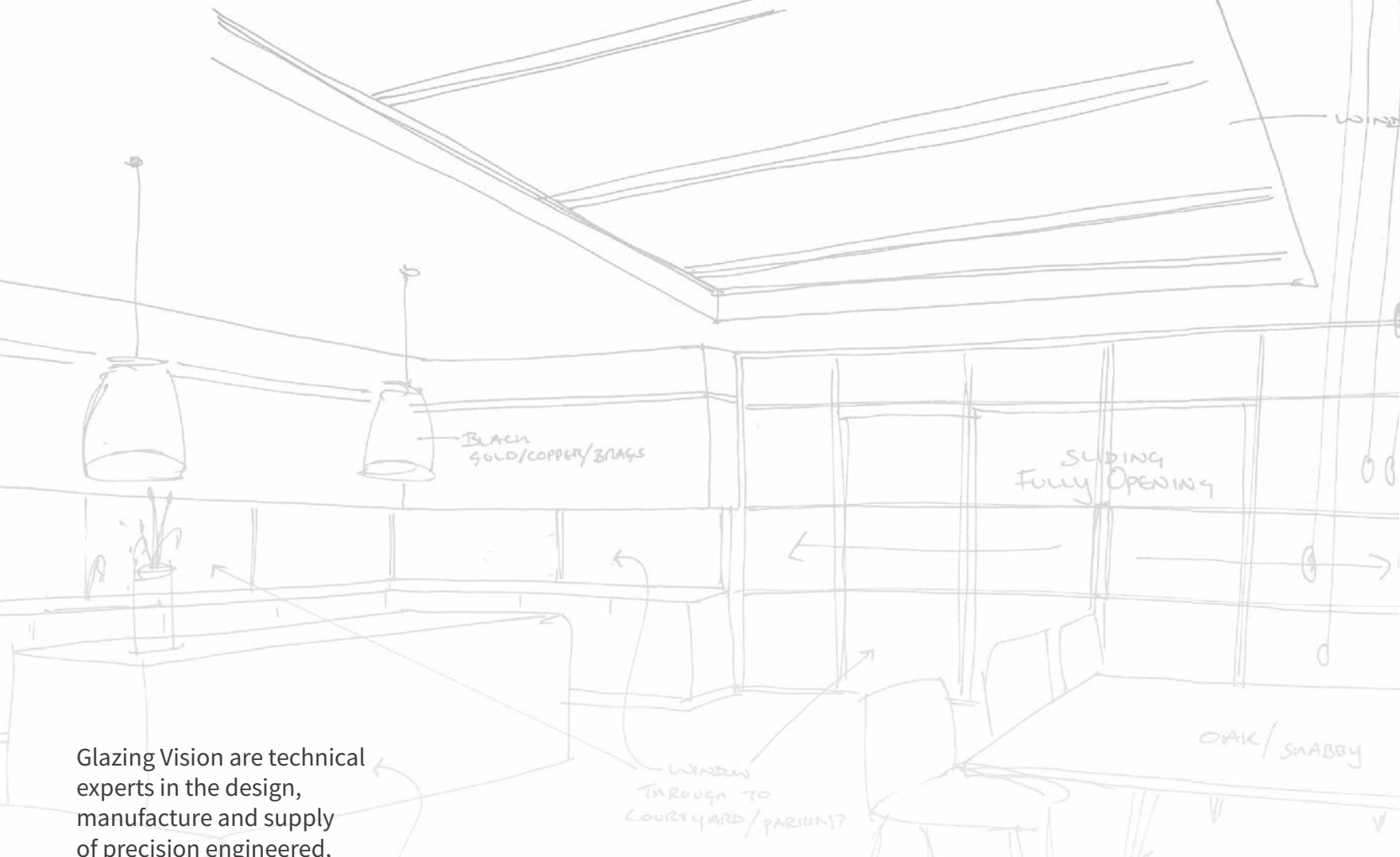
Left The original complex of seven agricultural buildings, as purchased. The shed, far left and granary, far right, will be converted into separate accommodation
Below left Oxhey Hall farm, south elevation. The former abattoir, left foreground, is due to be a 'snug', connected via glazed link back to the dairy, now kitchen, behind.

Dennis Potter must be turning in his grave. The cantankerous screenwriter, who penned Blue Remembered Hills and Lipstick on Your Collar, built a notorious if cancer-killed career stoking the remaining embers of post-war English society's bucolic nostalgia before squirting a heady mix of sex and booze on all of it – to the ire of moral crusaders. So it's odd to find he is the inspiration behind a restored complex of 18th and 19th century farm buildings in Oxhey Hall village outside Watford.

David, one half of a couple who have lived all their lives in the area, most recently in the sedentary comfort of a large 1950s semi-detached home in the village, had been keeping a keen eye on the site for years. 'I put it down to watching his drama 'The Darling Buds of May', all set in a rural idyll where they lived off the land and frolicked among run-down barns...I felt really influenced by that vision,' he tells me. 'And while it was derelict and clearly not the best barn in the world, it had the all rudiments of those rustic feelings.' I'm sure the dead Potter would see a wry irony in the creation of a dream eked from a face-value reading of one of his satirical dramas and a patch of countryside on the edge of Metroland.

It was serendipity that they even got the site; formerly owned by a water utility, which had over the years, says David, put in multiple and ever less ambitious planning proposals for the barn, dairy, stables and abattoir. By the time it gained consent, the barn was set to be split down the middle and converted into two five-bed homes. When it was put on the market in 2014, the clients mustered enough for a low offer but lost out to a big developer.

'Central gabled midstre... braces from posts to tie beams – all straight. Queen struts to collars clasping purlins. Cambered tie beams in midstre with angled struts clasping purlins'. Sounds like one of Potter's saucy screenplay directions, but Historic England's description of the barn's structure was an intimation of the scale of the task – something the new buyer quickly balked at. When the



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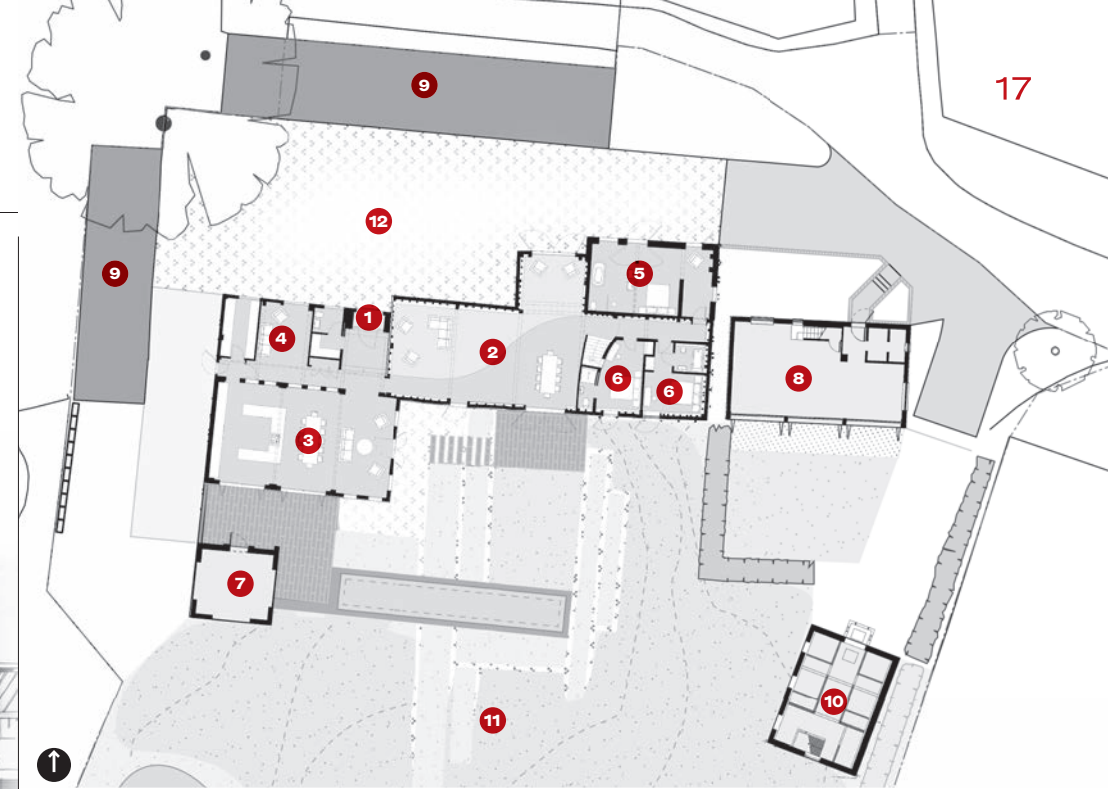
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Buildings House

Below Section showing the two east bays as the bedroom block.
Centre Rodeca polycarbonate sheeting separates the barn from the dairy/kitchen block.
Bottom North elevation at dusk showing the polycarbonate wall. External lighting was made from steel grain feeders found on site.

- 1 Covered porch and main entrance
- 2 Barn/living and dining room
- 3 Dairy/kitchen and TV room
- 4 Parlour/utility room/ WC
- 5 Stable/ensuite guest bedroom
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Abattoir/future snug
- 8 2-bed annexe let
- 9 Shed
- 10 Granary building/1-bed let
- 11 Garden
- 12 Courtyard



sale fell through, the water utility remained keen to liquidate; so much so that 'We got a call from them out of the blue, asking if we wanted to put in the offer again; so we just said yes,' recalls David. Its timbers and weatherboarding might have been decrepit and psoriatic like Potter's Singing Detective; but truth be told, they got it for a song.

Once the clients had reassessed their hand and decided to throw all they had at the project, Kingston architect Fletcher Crane came on board in early 2015. A couple of initial quotes from local builders, combined with its own surmising on the amount of work needed, meant it wasn't long before the firm set to it. Toby Fletcher, formerly of Scott Brownrigg, and Ian Crane, ex-PRP, joined forces to create the new practice; and while both had been associates at their practices, both were hungry to see their own projects through from inception. The clients were impressed: 'Ian and Toby were half our age but they came to the project respecting the her-



itage and with a modern take we hadn't even considered. We saw the site's potential but we needed their expertise and foresight to drive it forward.' And they used it – over the next 18 months, the resubmission to turn the period buildings into a modern, four-bed, single family home demanded the full gamut of planning services – all beyond the client's ken and at times, perhaps, even the new firm's.

By turn Fletcher Crane grasped the gravity of its position; the buildings they took on were derelict, pigeon-infested and part burned-out in an arson attack. Crane remembers his first visit. 'Walking around it, I was so excited I felt the hackles rise on my neck,' he recalls, 'but we went back to theirs – a nice, cosy semi-detached home in suburbia – and it became quickly apparent that they'd never done anything like this before.' And that first client meeting is a reflexive thing, the architect sussing out too how much buy-in to their ideas they will get, but Crane felt reassured: 'David had run his own business and had entrepreneurial spirit and though they were approaching retirement, they both had energy and we sensed they were up for it. But it was a huge financial commitment on their part and responsibility on ours; we knew we couldn't end up with a half-finished building and with them having nowhere to live.'

The architect felt the £500,000 budget, gained by the client selling the business, cashing in pensions early and using bridging finance, made the project 'difficult but achievable'. But it involved some logistics – Fletcher Crane set to work first on the adjacent burned-out annexe, replacing its steel structure and turning it into a two-bed



IN NUMBERS

7

buildings

500m²

gia

100m²

living room

£550,000

construction cost

Right The stepped entrance area leads up to the dairy block's concrete floor and brick wall – and the kitchen space beyond.

Bottom left The open plan ensuite guest bedroom nestles in the original stable stalls.

Bottom right Kitchen/dining, looking west. A glazed link will connect it to the abattoir 'snug' in future.



The barn needed major work, not least underpinning, which involved stripping the structure completely, building scaffolding inside and lifting it on its trusses far enough in the air to dig out the foundations, cast new concrete ones and ground-bearing slab over soil, and sit the whole lot back down on its brick base eight months later. 'It was like hanging a skeleton off a coathanger,' says Crane evocatively, adding that the by the time it was 'dropped' the timbers had been soda blasted and back-fixed with anti-racking lime render carrier board, breather membrane, wood fibre insulation and Douglas fir weatherboarding. In addition, Between Time was responsible for the two-storey bedroom block inserted under two end bays of the barn. This feels a little mean against the 100m² living/dining space but its en-suite, open plan guest bedroom, set in the adjoining stable, is a pure joy; the bed even sits between its timber stalls.

With the barn the star of the show; internally, apart from the gestural flourishes of the curved bedroom block wall and the route to it from the dairy block, architecture whispers rather than shouts. Lime washed trusses crown the former dairy, now kitchen, and its old brick wall is wire-brushed and exposed. This, along with the poured concrete floor replete with its steel tray edge shadow gap, was first contested and is now loved by the client. The architect had to settle for IQ Glass' budget Hedgehog range aluminium glazing, but the thicker, black-painted sections, Crane feels, were ultimately in keeping with the building's muscularity. Similarly, a deep black-painted steel door reveal intimates shifts from one building to another – a fact perhaps evinced only through occupation. More obvious is the architect's

polycarbonate wall between barn and dairy, where daylight ingress is only impeded by the 'bones' of the barn itself, like some huge X-Ray; all are modern takes on the site's industrial nature.

But among the details the real success is one big spatial move. David's pride and joy is the home's brick-floored entrance, and there's a reason for that. Like a Japanese genkan channelled via Lewerentz, its generous area is a soldier's height step up to the kitchen's poured concrete floor. Just as you leave you'll spy through the clerestory light above the Douglas fir front door, the undersides of clay plain tiles, atop the rafters of the fletton porch, showing clearly how it all came together. But for now, the distraction of the bright, spacious kitchen and country view beyond will serve to render the glance left that you'll make almost incidental. And then – Bam! There it is. ●



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cost per m²



Jonathan Hendry Architects has refurbished a scruffy, collapsing beach house in Lincolnshire to merge with the textures of its setting

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: David Grandorge

The front of Creek Cottage faces the beach, the new larch sun terrace to the left.

Right Looking out from the master bedroom over the dunes to the sea. The en-suite is around the wall.



The southern elevation gets deeper towards the creek.

You wouldn't know from the images of this house that it is a refurbishment project. Unusually during a time of 'maximising' everything, it has not been added to or extended in any way. Not to wash the original budget too thinly, a 1960s/70s home has been amended to modern needs and emerges to demonstrate a different way of dwelling – at least for a week at a time.

Creek Cottage is a holiday home and holiday let sleeping six, located on the top of the dunes looking out to the North Sea, 9km north of Skegness in Lincolnshire. It is part of a hamlet of about 30 houses called Anderby Creek that developed organically after the Second World War as a retreat for former soldiers and their families. The eponymous creek bank falls away to the back of the south-

ern boundary of the site. The beach is vast, empty and wild.

The clients, a couple and their children from Harrogate, had been spending a lot of time in Anderby Creek and when a cottage came up for sale decided to buy it. The building was in a bad state of repair. It suffered from subsidence, had previously been underpinned and was buckling under the weight of its concrete tile roof. The day before they made their offer, its concrete balconies facing the sea fell off. The render was flaking too, and like many of its neighbours it was an example of the botched building that characterises the area.

It was all 'a bit bodged, very DIY, hotch-potch but charming in its own right,' says architect Jonathan Hendry, founding director



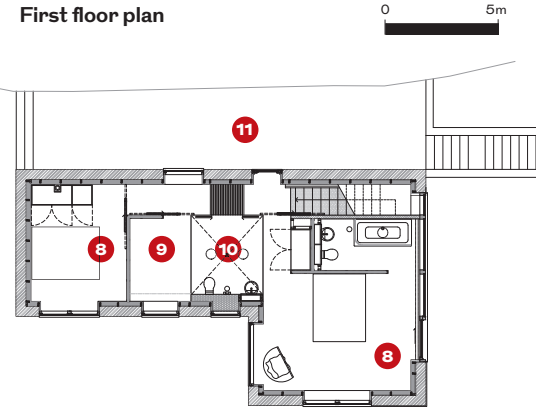


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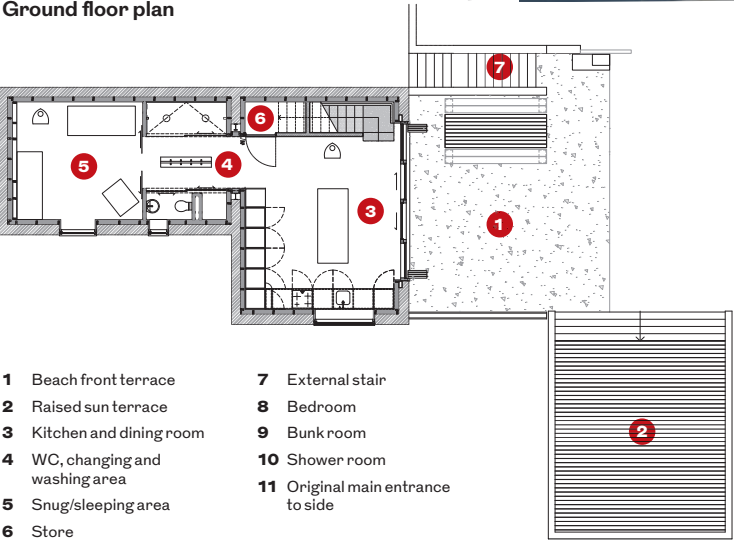
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Buildings House

First floor plan



Ground floor plan



Above The house reuses what was there but roof, render, openings and terrace are updated.

Below Clayworks clay plaster in the kitchen/dining room brings outdoor textures in.



of local practice Jonathan Hendry Architects. 'There was evidence of years of holiday projects laid on top of each other.'

The client came across the firm through the Beach Hut (2017) and Beach Chalet (2012) it had designed along the coast nearby. These were the start of a bigger conversation about dwelling. Because the house is in a major flood zone it is almost impossible to build new, so the project was always about refurbishing the ground floor garage and two-bed layout on the first floor. Hendry was given a free hand to lead the process and explore the potential of the scheme.

The main move was to convert the ground floor into living space, connecting the previously separate levels by inserting an internal stair in the beam and block floor, as well as clearing the walls upstairs to start afresh. Two openings on the beach frontage were extended, injecting light, air and openness. Hendry wanted to make the building feel part of its grassy, sandy, windy setting. The beach is brought right up to the house, into the fabric of its walls, textures and surfaces, with the pearlescent sea in its interior tiles and the natural simplicity of its furnishing reflecting the sparse landscape outside the window. The idea was for people who stay there to question how they live when they return home. There is no sense of the previous building now.

Counterintuitively, the principal approach to the house is from the beach. Chestnut pale fencing defines the boundary, allowing the drift of sand and grass between inhabited and uninhabited. A new enclosed larch deck rises to the front left of the garden, acting as a sun terrace, windbreak for sun loungers and viewing platform to see the sea. The timber is treated with a product that ac-



celerates the weathering process, meaning it skips the ‘pine-looking phase’ as Hendry explains. Below is a store for outdoor equipment.

The house has been re-rendered using a lime mix containing recycled clear and green glass particles that give the exterior a coarse glimmering texture and intriguing variety appropriate to the scene. The enlarged, not quite full-width glazed opening on the ground floor is now the main entrance, a coconut mat and metal grate positioned ready for visitors. Upstairs a door slides along in the main bedroom to reveal a Juliette balcony. The window frames are made from Accoya that comes with a 30-year warranty.

‘They have been stained with a grey oil that picks up the grain,’ says Hendry. ‘The exposed location means materials are particularly important.’

At ground level the windows have external concertina security shutters that sit flush with the render when closed, aluminium on the outside and lined with more Accoya for cosiness inside. The concrete tile roof has been replaced by standing seam zinc to ensure an extra tight envelope for when the property spends long periods closed up out of season. On the terrace, the external stair treads and risers have been retained to the former main entrance that is still there on the side elevation at first floor, but the balustrades have been made more solid and robust. Power float-



Left Clay plaster, polished concrete floor, steel stair, wood handrail and window frame make a composition of colours and textures.

Above Rearward view along the upstairs landing, past the glass box twin shower room.

Right The snug is lined with plywood to create a different, cosier feel for colder nights.

Credits
Architect Jonathan Hendry Architects
Client Private
Contractor JHA Winter & Sons
Structural engineer Simpkins Kenny
Standing seam zinc roof CEL Roofing
External render Ty-Mawr
Clay plaster Clayworks
Lime plaster ARH Tuckers & Son
Polished concrete floor 3D Royal Floors
Joinery Mablethorpe Joinery Services

ed concrete means the terrace is easy enough to sweep clean of the sand that blows onto it. A new barbecue and firepit are designed to make the most of nights outdoors listening to the waves under the stars. Aluminium guttering and downpipes give an additional watery shimmer to the facade. The table and benches were designed by Jonathan Hendry Architects from large chunks of larch, treated with the same weathering accelerant as the terrace.

Inside, this desire for natural materials extends to every detail. ‘The client kept sending pictures of furniture he had in storage,’ explains Hendry, ‘but none of it seemed quite to fit. In the end we were commissioned to specify everything down to the salt and pepper mills and soft furnishings. The only item the client didn’t order from our list of recommendations was the coffee machine because his brother-in-law works in that area. It was unexpected.’

From that terrace, you enter straight into the kitchen/dining room, which is fitted out in a ‘back-to-basics’ manner that, although Hendry says he is a bit cut off from what’s

going on architecturally in the world, is indisputably part of a growing movement, reflected by companies like Another Country that promote the relationship of things and nature. It is designed to bring about a slower living pace for occupants to recharge – the traditional Aga kettle on top of the wood burning stove. The walls are made of clay plaster, again bringing outdoor textures in – here, what Hendry describes as ‘before a violet’ tone.

‘We didn’t want materials that needed to be decorated, or to go down the timber floors and white painted walls route,’ says Hendry. ‘This material has a lot of variety, texture, it’s polished so some areas seem to have movement in them. It is also hand-crafted.’

The matt black fronted kitchen is bespoke too, designed using colour-through MDF called Valchromet and elevated off the ground in case of flooding. The worktop is Caesars-stone. Behind the kitchen is a boot/changing room with a shower on one side and WC on the other. This leads through to an snug space lined in plywood, illuminated around the ceiling by LED strip lighting. A day bed here means it can double as another sleeping area.

Back in the kitchen a blue steel milled stair to the right of the entrance leads to the first floor, which is treated differently. In the stairwell, clay gives way to lime plaster. In the centre of the upstairs plan is a glass box twin shower room with a timber slat platform crossing the corridor outside. It all feels very Japanese onsen/ryokan, blended with a bit of futurism in the sliding doors. Beyond is a bunk room and second bedroom, while at the front is the master bedroom and the en-suite where you can finally enjoy those pearlescent tiles and views of the sea itself. ●



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Falling into line

A 'do-up' Victorian terrace in south London unexpectedly became a new-build for architect/client Robin Phillips

Words: Michèle Woodger Photographs: Conibere Phillips



When architect Robin Phillips and his wife bought a mid-terrace Victorian house in Brockley, south London, little did they envisage demolishing it shortly thereafter. But that is what Phillips (one half of partnership Conibere Phillips Architects) found himself resorting to when he realised that his 'fixer-upper' home was actually a house of horrors. Beyond two building-regs-uncompliant extensions, which he already knew about, there were rotten timber joists, a bay window needing underpinning, further stresses on the roof structure caused by inappropriate use of concrete tiling above, an illegal and leaking gas supply and a rat infestation. With a baby daughter, and not wanting to spend money on a broken structure, the pair took the brave ('foolhardy', Phillips jokingly corrects me) step to start again from scratch.

He decided the benefits outweighed the extra cost and the zero rate of VAT on new homes made the proposition affordable. Although there is the environmental question of embodied carbon and demolition, the new building has greatly improved thermal efficiency afforded by cavity wall insulation, triple-glazed windows, underfloor heating, cork flooring and better airtightness.

'We looked like a missing tooth along the street during the construction works,' Phillips admits, 'and we wouldn't have gone for this option had the terrace been more uniform.' But the row of Victorian buildings had been interrupted by a Second World War bomb, with two differing sets of homes filling the gap. The immediate neighbours

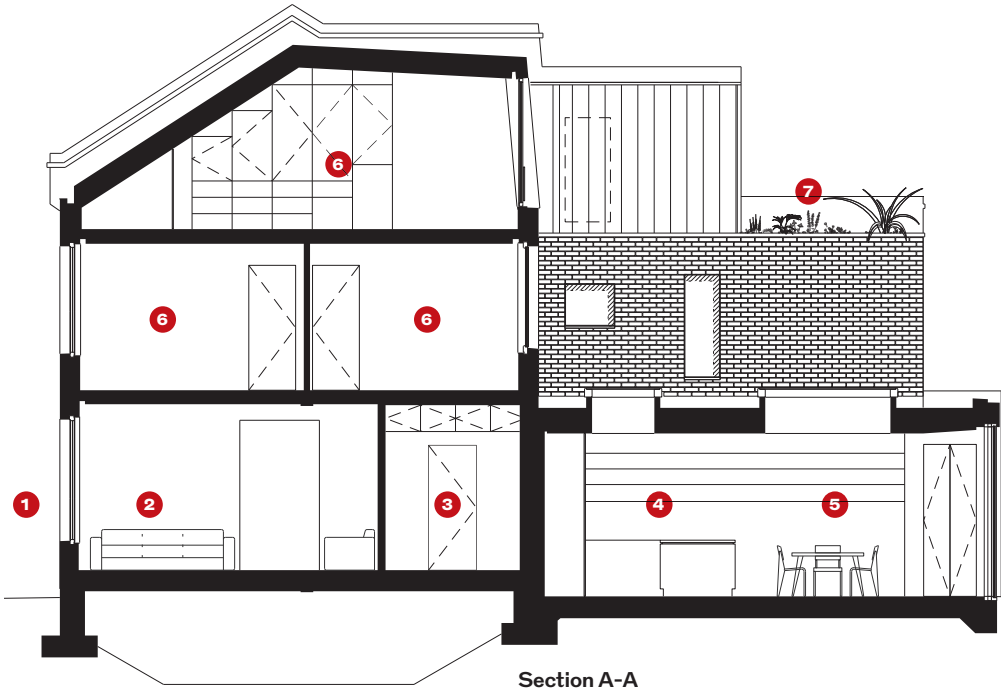


have mismatching facades too; his own now mediates discreetly between the two, with inset concealed-frame windows, a standing seam roof and a neatly recessed entrance. The brick materiality is in keeping with the 20th century homes further along the road.

The new-build works with the language of the street and does not exceed the original envelope (plus an earlier planning permission for extending), with a 150m² floor plan that mirrors the Victorian layout. Phillips investigated more radical changes, but found the alternatives did not work nearly as well. The structural system is similar to the spine wall of the Victorian construction, whereby a middle run of four vertically aligned steel beams are placed party-wall to party-wall, and structural timber joists span outwards from this central point.

Stairs and corridors are kept narrow, maximising space in the adjacent rooms, yet the entire interior is light and airy thanks to consistent use of pale beech ply, large windows, strategically positioned skylights and a direct line of sight between the front and back of the house. On the first floor this is achieved by an open-riser staircase that allows light to percolate from front (south facing) to back, while the horizontal interruptions of the treads give a degree of privacy. The second floor is a generous master bedroom.

Subtle adjustment to floor levels allows a considerably higher ceiling in this roof-space, as well as in the downstairs front



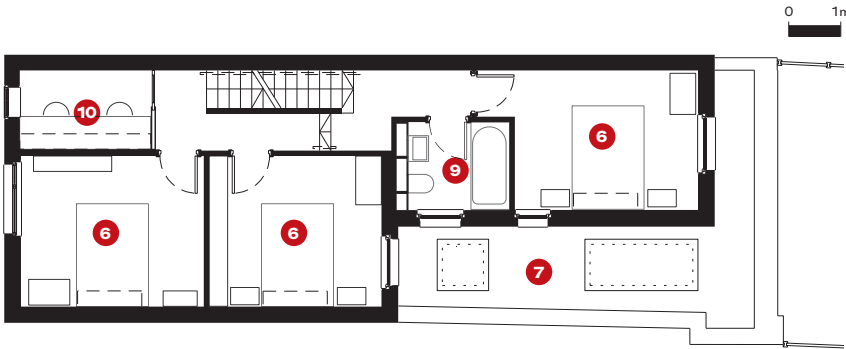
Section A-A

- 1 Front garden
- 2 Living room
- 3 Shower room
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Dining area
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Terrace
- 8 Hall
- 9 Bathroom
- 10 Study
- 11 Rear garden

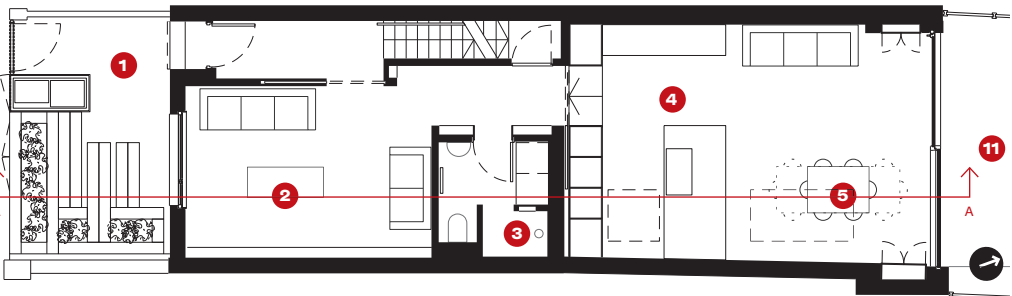
Credits
Architect Conibere
Phillips Architects
Structural engineer
SD Structures
General builders
Create Bespoke
(partial completion only)

Bottom right The staircase is kept as narrow as possible and becomes open-tread on the first floor.

First floor plan



Ground floor plan



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tion area which can disappear behind concealed pocket doors.

The mix of textures in the kitchen juxtaposes nicely with the pared back dining area. This north-facing room is surprisingly light, thanks to an enormous glass sliding door and skylights which contain recessed lighting. Further tracked lighting can be directed according to need; the entire space is flexible to accommodate different family activities and varying numbers of guests.

Rather than a dining table, Philips has used modular IKEA tables to maximise this flexibility. While no 30-something homeowner can escape owning at least one item from here, this is also a throwback to his days at Wilkinson Eyre on the design team for the IKEA Museum at Älmhult, Sweden. Something of the firm's philosophy has rubbed off on Phillips – 'I hate wasted space' – so another major benefit of rebuilding was to dispense with the eccentric nooks and crannies so often encountered in old properties. Instead we find integrated storage spaces, recessed blinds and curtain tracks, and minimal fuss.

Conibere and Phillips formed their practice in 2015, having both worked on large corporate projects at Wilkinson Eyre. But this is the first time Phillips has been both architect and client – 'a steep learning curve'. Procurement, relationships with contractors and time-frames all turned hairy at times, and Phillips' desire to prioritise his paying clients affected the schedule for his own home. He is also forever noticing minor flaws

Above The kitchen is positioned, as in many Victorian refurbishment projects, across the back overlooking the garden.

IN NUMBERS

£400,000
total contract cost

£2,500m²
GIFA

13.73
(DER) kgCO₂/m³

Below One of the new bedrooms with exposed timber.



in the details – the perfectionist's curse.

Conibere Phillips has considerable experience helping clients obtain planning applications for redevelopment, yet this was another area in which Phillips found his own understanding increasing through trial, error and experimentation. Whether due to his professional negotiating skills (or because they believed the next-door house couldn't get any worse), both neighbours were by and large accommodating with party wall agreements. Phillips' lengthy toing and froing with planning applications on the other hand (six months for an extension, six months of soul-searching and a further nine relating to the rebuild), exposes fundamental absurdities within the system despite working in his favour.

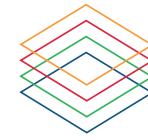
Because the original intention had not been to rebuild, Phillips first gained planning permission for a roof and back extension. As it became clearer that more substantial renovation was needed, he applied for a lawful development certificate to replace the principal elevation, aware that he was pushing it to its limit (the case officer apparently laughed on receipt of the application, acknowledging the ludicrous position).

Phillips then submitted a planning application for a full rebuild, which went to committee with recommendation for approval, knowing that even if rejected by the committee his permissions would likely permit him to carry out the works regardless. It was granted, enabling Phillips to execute his plans and benefit from the favourable VAT position. Quite why a naysaying local planning group – who could have presented at the hearing but didn't – decided to wait until the next day to send a slew of rude messages remains a mystery. Too late: by that stage permissions were cleared twice over.

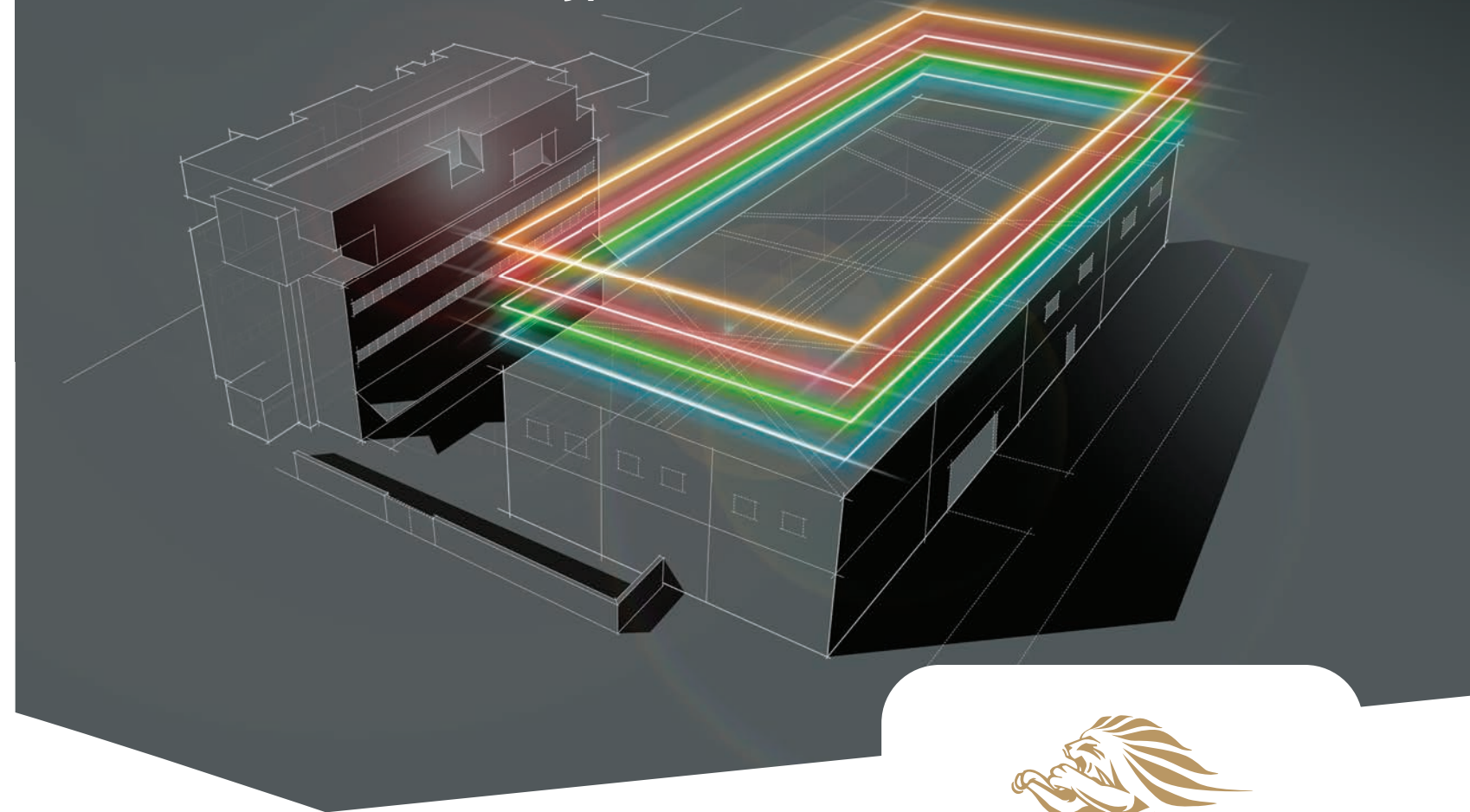
All other responses since then have been positive, and Phillips feels he has contributed to the neighbourhood by demonstrating what can be achieved with good design.

'I want to practise what I preach as an architect,' he explains. 'It would be dishonest of me to live in a pristinely restored Victorian home while encouraging my clients to embrace something radically modern.'

His labour of love has resulted in an elegant, contextual and enviable family home. As for the experience, he says: 'I actually found the process really fun now that I'm past the pain!' ●



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Full metal jacket

A cosy insulated coat now wraps around Piers Taylor's 16 year old timber and glass home extension, muffling up inner warmth and reorganising the marvellous views

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Jim Stephenson

Energy is very light for most people. They get gas piped to their house, electricity zips along wires. Architect Piers Taylor has electricity and gas at his house in the woods outside Bath, but his gas comes in a heavy bottle that must be manoeuvred into place. And when he built the extension to this stone school-house 16 years ago he designed it to be heated by biomass, in particular logs.

A year's supply of wood is a big shed's worth, 20 cubic metres. It is cut from the woods around the house and Taylor chops and stacks it to dry before it gets carried down to the stove. You can see the work and weight in his sinewy arms. It is one reason

why he and his practice Invisible Studio have reworked this slim timber-framed pavilion.

Another is that, even with all those logs, the house felt cold and leaky when winter came and the weather from Wales rushed up the valley to meet it. Visiting on the last truly hot day of September I opted for the shade on the terrace and looking at the chunky oak frame it was hard to believe Taylor's depiction of drafts whistling through the gaps between expressed structure and floor. And the expanses of glass to the bedrooms were cold and exposing, he said: 'When you are young you think only about opening up everything on good days.'

The blanket of woodland has been put to use – warming the house, Moonshine. Now, re-wrapped, it should be more of a refuge from the winds coming over the valley.



So he has reclad it, in corrugated metal. Upstairs the valley panorama has changed from glazed vista to framed views; a north facing clerestory and timber panelling have also been wrapped up with a few holes punched here and there. Taylor estimates that upstairs glazing has been reduced by 50%. And at ground level he's put in an insulated floor with electric underfloor heating backed up by batteries, both PV-fed. Sensors let him know temperature fluctuations overnight – so far only minimal.

The log store and stove are still there but the logs will be moving more slowly. This is not about the sustainability of ideals and abstracts, but practicality. New insulation is layered over old, 150mm continuous rigid insulation, plus 150mm mineral wool (no, not sheep's wool or newspaper but straightforward, high performing standard products). Deeper window reveals are lined with ply. New sliding glass doors are double not triple glazed, the weight would have been too much, but the glass has a U-value of 1.2, significantly better than the original 2W/(m²K). Taylor spent a good few weekends working on the airtightness too and ensuring everything was taped down.

Left The clerestory and timber panelling of Taylor's original designs have gone from the north side of the house. The ground floor keeps its transparency.

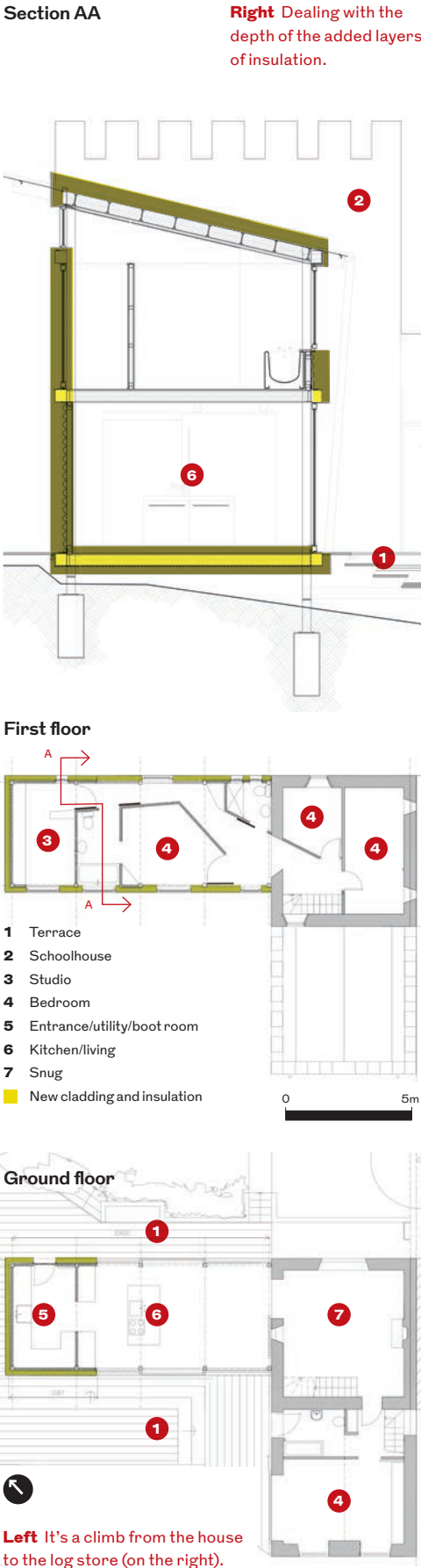
Above The front entrance is contained, taking you into a hard working space with windows above eye level before you are released into the openness of the living space.



Taylor estimates that upstairs glazing has been reduced by 50%

To Taylor there is a certain shame in the building his younger self made with too much in it, too much of Australian pavilions, too much of Glenn Murcutt, too much striving for architecture. And perhaps too long looking at it, even while his architecture was moving on elsewhere. ‘It’s our home and I don’t want it to be about architecture’ he says. For those who saw his series The World’s Most Extraordinary Homes with Taylor perching on a rock explaining and enthusing about some unbelievable cantilever, this may seem unexpected. But that was never the real him, he says.

He had designed the house with the landscape and the view paramount and his architectural apprenticeship in Australia with Glenn Murcutt in mind. And he had spent two years hunkered down in the dark stone schoolhouse with his young family. He wanted architectural expression on this tightly calculated expansion into the greenbelt.



This time there were barely any drawings – a mere six, and three just overlays of original drawings. One quick elevation was sketched to order windows and so the builder would know where they went. To the north side where the land slopes steeply up, a clerestory window the length of the pavilion was swapped for others puncturing the crinkly tin at different heights; indecipherable morse code. The same on the bedrooms facing out to the view. But you still see straight through the house on the ground floor as you approach. The gutters set up a more readable narrative, galvanised and oversized straight from an agricultural catalogue – for sudden downpours but more to avoid leaf fall clogging them and causing catastrophic cascades in all the wrong places.

Over the years in this house Taylor has set up a restless rhythm of projects on site, all built under permitted development for forestry use. Barn, studio, quixotic angular caravan, compost loo, store, log stores times six at least, all with an element of the temporary and a propensity for timber and polycarbonate. They are dotted around the woods. You can see similar methods and elements in his RIBA award-winning work as Invisible Studio for Westonbirt Arboretum and his live projects with students at Reading University. The house is in a way the least remarkable of these but perhaps the most important marker of time, both the age and experience of its maker and increasing professional knowledge about how to make a house that is both light and warm, a testament to sustainable, practical building. ●

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This year has transformed our relationship with the built environment. It has made the nation question how commercial and public buildings look, feel and function like never before. And it's shone a spotlight on the role expert colour use plays in response to the changing ways we live, work and socialise. Dulux ColourFutures™ colour palettes are carefully selected every year to support professionals breathing life into commercial and public buildings. This year is no exception. An expert panel of colour designers, trend forecasters, design specialists, architects and editors from around the world have come together to identify an overarching theme mood or feeling. And they agreed that the mood of the



moment is to have courage. It inspired the choice of Brave Ground as the Colour Of The Year 2021, the connecting thread across all four Dulux ColourFutures 2021 palettes. The strong, elemental colour speaks of generation, vitality, growth and potential, giving architects, specifiers and designers a neutral canvas that allows the Dulux ColourFutures palettes – Earth, Trust, Timeless and Expressive – to shine. They complement the warm and neutral shade of Brave Ground, providing inspiration for professionals to colour scheme for different spaces within a range of commercial and public buildings. Earth echoes the tones of the sea, the sky and the soil, offering a connection to

Above left Dulux announces ColourFutures 2021 – Education.
Above right Dulux announces ColourFutures 2021 – Office.
Left Dulux announces ColourFutures 2021 – Hospitality.



the natural world around us. Bringing the outside in, they are authentic and grounding colours that work naturally together. Trust features earth tones from across the globe. Warm neutral greys and browns complement each other and encourage connection, collaboration and a sense of harmony in spaces. The inspiring yellows and ochres of the Timeless palette help create a backdrop that embraces old and new. Enlivening without being overpowering, they bring positivity and balance to a space. Expressive allows professionals to create spaces that energize and surprise through its stand-out shades of reds and pinks, balanced with soft neutrals.

Helen Hampson-Smith, director of Smith Bros Design, comments: 'Clients are increasingly interested in the impact colour and design can have on wellbeing in the workplace. The huge level of expertise and research that goes into selecting Dulux ColourFutures palettes reassures and engages them throughout the design process. 'As mental health continues to be a top priority for employers I'd expect to see the greens and blues of the Earth palettes used in offices to create calming spaces, where staff take time out to pause and reflect.' Lisa Pilley, Dulux Trade commercial colour services consultant, adds: 'Through an occupant-centred design approach, architects and specifiers can use colour to have a positive impact on people's wellbeing. The Dulux ColourFutures™ 2021 palettes can play a central role in achieving this through grounding tones and surprising shades.'



To view all the palettes and download the ColourFutures™ 2021 specifier brochure visit www.duluxtrade.co.uk.

It was never about landscape as subject – merely image construction



City I, 2017
Photographer: Alexander Mourant
Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek

At the recent MA 'New Grads' show at London's Saatchi Gallery, despite a dutiful one-way file through the rooms, I momentarily stopped in my tracks, holding up the flow. On the wall was Dissipate II, a photo of a Japanese landscape rendered in the deepest, most vibrant blue, its single colour modulating as the eye passed across it. It is one of a series of landscapes taken on a two-month study tour of Japan by Alexander Mourant, a Royal College of Art MA student. Even though he had passed north via Aomori prefecture to Hokkaido, it was only when he got back that a Japanese friend inspired the show's eventual name. 'Aomori' in Japanese means 'blue forest.'

Mourant's area of study is making photography about photography, his own work done using a Mamiya 7 analogue camera, with the negatives he takes developed by hand. He is fascinated not only by the process, but by the concept that bits of you and your history come with you and inform what you see and record. A Jersey lad, he had met an artist there working on the stained glass of an 18th century church, who'd given him a broken window fragment. He had it cut circular and made into a filter, taking it with him to another island, 9,000km away.

The result, in redolent Yves Klein blue, should, he feels, not be read as representations of objects but as objects in themselves; it was never about landscape as subject – merely image construction. Yet despite days spent wandering Tokyo, Mourant exhibited only two city views and this is one of them: 'It was 50% sky and 50% city. I loved that balance – it reminded me of a Japanese wood block print.'

For me, it was a print too. I was taken back to my teens, the summer work I did at an architect firm in my home town and the rounds of teamaking and dyeline printing. Stood in the gallery, staring into diazo blue, it seemed for a second that the room reeked of ammonia.

I told Mourant of a show I'd seen a long time ago of unearthed Frank Lloyd Wright 1:1 dyelines and how impressive I'd found them. 'I love those associations with architectural history you brought to the work,' he enthused, 'and the baggage that you brought from your past.'

MacEwen deadline is approaching: enter now

Have you a project that aids the common good? We are waiting for your entry to our annual competition



The RIBA MacEwen Award is our way of getting to the heart of responsible architecture. We call it ‘Architecture for the common good’ because it celebrates those built projects – in architecture, engineering and landscape – which are of demonstrable and wide social benefit. It brings together the well-known with the up-and-coming, the national with the local. And it’s time to enter MacEwen 2021!

As with all the awards we run at RIBA, it is free to enter and aims to reach previously under-represented parts of the profession. The deadline is Monday 16 November, 2020, 23.00 hours.

Imagine the very opposite of a speculative upmarket build-to-leave apartment tower, the kind that does not benefit its community or even grace the skyline, but merely provides somewhere for anonymous investors to park (who knows, even launder) their money. Imagine also the very opposite of the car-dependent dormitory estates, dominated by crude road layouts, which are the standard product of volume house-builders and somehow contrive to look the

same everywhere. And vast sealed, air-conditioned shopping malls need not apply.

Imagine instead something like some of the previous winners and commendations in the MacEwen Award: a youth centre in South London made from a moved and reconfigured Segal-method timber office building; an ambitious and beautiful public-sector care home in Derbyshire; a Welsh visitor centre that opens up previously private land to the public; a cinema in Newcastle built by its community out of upcycled materials; ingenious social housing on infill sites; Scottish rural workshops made from farm buildings; or our last winner, a derelict former cinema in Liverpool converted into a riding school for city kids.

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



RULES

Projects must be in the UK, crown dependencies (Man, Jersey, Guernsey) or Ireland. Projects must have been broadly physically completed within the two years to the entry date of November 16 2020, and must not have been entered previously for the MacEwen Award. A phase of a longer-term project is eligible.

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

The number of awards and commendations given will be at the judges’ discretion: shortlisted entries will be published on RIBA.com, culminating in the winners and commended entries appearing in the RIBA Journal February issue.

Subject to social distancing rules at the time, those involved will be invited to a winners’ celebration lunch.

ENTRY DETAILS AND REQUIRED INFORMATION

Entries should be submitted online only via the link below.

DEADLINE: Monday 16 November 2020, 23:00

Any queries (but NOT entries) to mac.ribaj@riba.org
Please include the following information in your entry
Name, location and description of project
(300-500 words) explaining the beneficial social impact of the scheme

Credit list of consultants and clients.

Maximum of six images, to include photos and drawings.

ENTER AT: ribaj.com/macewenaward-entryform

Top left MacEwen highly commended homeless shelter and community cafe, Shelter from the Storm by Holland Harvey.
Below Last Year’s MacEwen Award winner, Park Palace Ponies by Harrison Stringfellow



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LC ARCHITECTS (2)

Furniture's finishing touch

Furnishings can be the final piece of the jigsaw in an inspiring building. For LC Architects' Cosmote TV HQ and Studios in Athens, Arper collections supplied that finish to ensure an exciting and creative environment



NIKOS DANILIDIS

Designed by London-based architecture and design practice LC Architects and built in the Greek capital Athens, Cosmote TV HQ and Studios is a new building inspired by contemporary media and the constant flow of information.

A fluid, open space designed to meet the highest specification, the scheme sees the transformation of an existing industrial building into an inspirational combination of hybrid workspaces and state-of-the-art TV studios, pushing the boundaries of innovative architecture and design.

The project is designed to bring together in one building a number of smaller departments, creating an exciting environment for people to work, collaborate and thrive while promoting communication and connection between different teams.

At the core of the design is The Plaza, a dramatic central atrium with cutting-edge acoustic ceiling, entirely furnished with Arper collections including Loop, Colina,

Dizzie and Pix.

It is a flexible space where staff and visitors can network daily, encouraging collaboration and interaction.

A bridge in the heart of the building connects administrative and creative departments with production and technical spaces, creating a seamless spatial connection which fosters cross-departmental teamwork and team spirit. Arper's Colina, Dizzie and Pix collections blend in perfectly with the environment thanks to their flexibility, texture, colour and softness.

The quality of the space is maximised by a series of collaborative internal areas, furnished with Saari, Dizzie and Pix.

The architects' work highlights how design can shape and influence human behaviour and emotions, and is focused on the search for organic forms that are soft and human-centred.

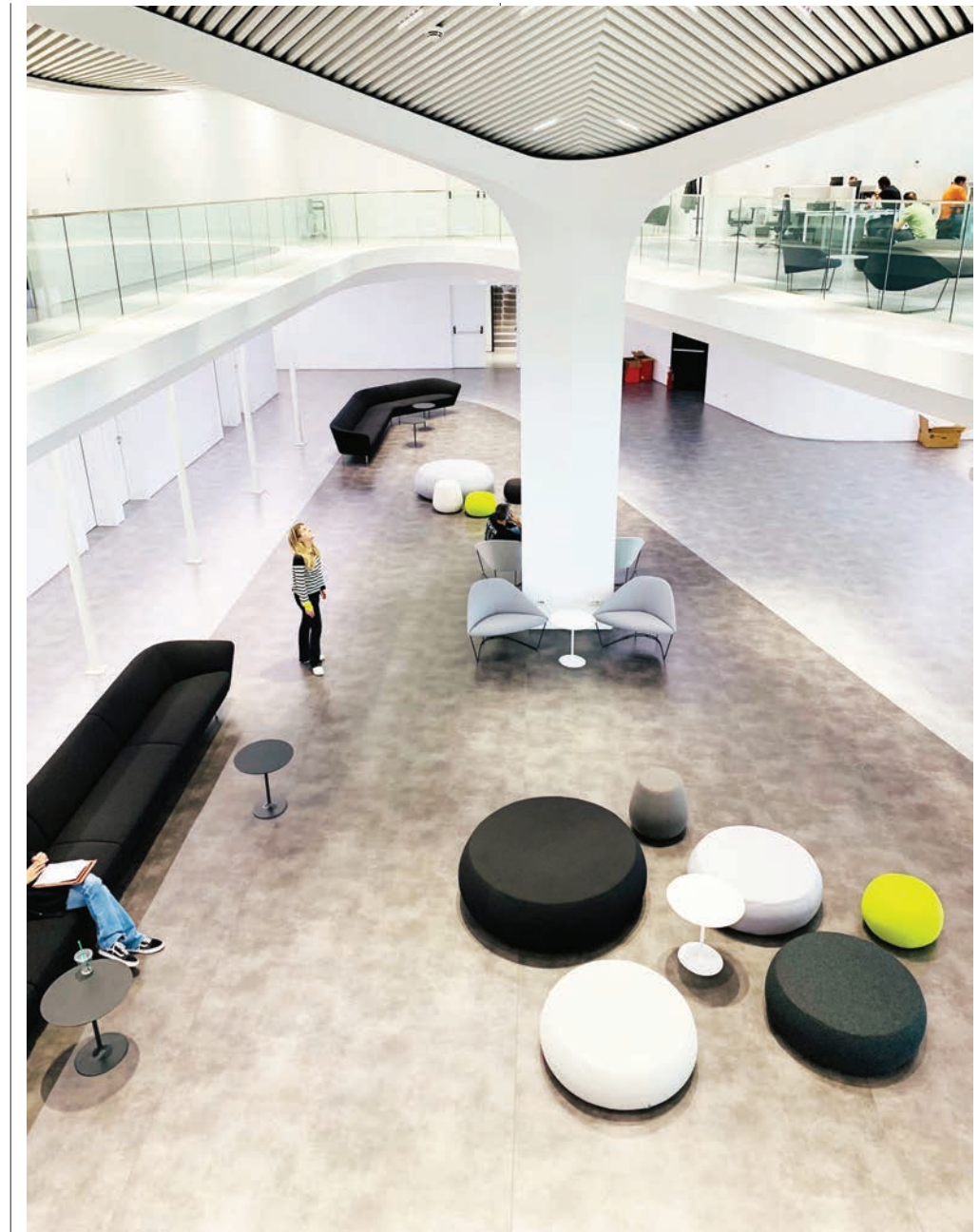
Natassa Lianou and Ermis Chalvatzis, co-founders and directors of LC Architects, stressed the importance of collaboration in their work with Arper: 'Our seamless collaboration with Arper's teams in UK and Italy was key to the project's final outcome. We believe that all elements – large or small, details, textures, colours – contribute to the final co-ordinated architectural outcome.'

'Specifically, in our work, we design signature spaces where all furnishings and equipment are selected very carefully in order to enhance the experiences and emotions that the architecture evokes in users and visitors, while creating an overall exciting space.'

Speaking of Arper's collections as solutions to design requirements, they



ribaj.com



added: 'Architecture and design have the power to alter our behaviours and habits, which means that the selection of each and every piece that completes our projects is key to our work.'

'The simple and clean lines of Arper's collections add the final touch to our project, creating "pockets" of seating or working scenarios in the space,' they continued. 'We believe that furnishing is the actual "touch point" of the users with the space, where they can sit comfortably, feel the soft textures and get inspired by the organic and fluid space they are experiencing.' ●

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On.

Is there a world, in which curiosity is the force that drives every change? And in which a heartbeat is used to synchronise a network? In which pure intuition replaces rationality and “nothing” or “central off” can offer more excitement than “all at once”?

A world that is more than On or Off. One that is also cold and warm, loud and quiet. And in which life becomes a smart experience between On and

Off.

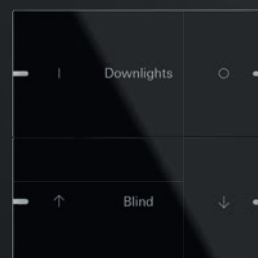


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View from Shanghai
– profile
44

Out and about
– urban realm rethink
46

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2: Intelligence



Conservation
& heritage

Charles O'Brien



The long-time editor of the Pevsner Guides has a new role as listings heritage advisor, a result of Robert Jenrick's shake-up of the planning system. We ask him about the new position, local 'lists' and design codes

What's the name of this new body?

The design advisory body Nicholas Boys Smith is chairing? I'm not involved – it was announced by the government's press office on the same day and stories got conflated! Not sure what it'll be called, but my role is a separate one directly related to local heritage and listing and improving use of local lists in England. I'm advising Robert Jenrick on spending £700,000 across 10 counties to create or improve their local heritage lists.

So there are English counties without any proper lists?

Only about 50% of the country has local lists and some of those are very old. The aim is to galvanise areas where they're outdated or never even been compiled; for instance, Cornwall doesn't have a local list. There's the national lists, but we want uniform adoption of a good standard of local lists to promote input from local societies and the community to get 'Non Designated Heritage Assets' nominated. Currently, they may not be considered in planning and we'd like to change that.

What about the Twentieth Century Society and Victorian Society – surely they're on their radar?

True, these organisations will have regional or local branches so they keep a weather eye on buildings that might not be on the national list but are significant in some way. One would hope that they'll put together their own nominations to add to the new lists but smaller civic groups might want to put forward other buildings that they feel have value in their communities.

What building did we lose recently that we shouldn't have?

Well, as series editor of the Pevsner guides I was working in Surrey recently and there's the sad case of the Birds Eye HQ, Walton Court, in Walton on Thames – a really distinguished 1960s campus office that got demolished for housing. There was a hope it might have reached the national list as it was the kind of building that was certainly important to the locality.

Do you feel the BBBBC's Local Design Codes will create a simple and better planning system- and we'll get rid of what Robert Jenrick calls 'Anywhereville'?

It's not my remit, that's Nicholas Boys Smith's! But design codes have existed before – for instance, the Essex Design Code evolved successfully over time and there has to be this sense of evolution to them – they shouldn't be seen as fixed things. There has to be flexibility to express shifting attitudes and assumptions by the people living in those areas. But yes, you do want a genuine design variety and not 'cookie cutter' communities. Wherever I visit it's the same developments on the edges of the towns. I don't think we want to see that repeated any longer.

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'If I were to describe it as an engineered nanomaterial that can improve the indoor environment, health and wellbeing, would that be an effective driver for its use?'

Bath university's Dan Maskell on why we should look at earthen materials again: ribaj.com/earthenmaterial



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



Design, construction
& technology

Behind the lilong door

Rossana Hu and Lyndon Neri on their Shanghai home, global practice and being local for a change

Georgie Day

Rossana Hu and Lyndon Neri, co-founders of practice Neri&Hu, have been hiding from Covid-19 in their Shanghai lane house. They are a multi-award winning, globe-trotting tour de force, but like the rest of the world, Covid-19 has forced them 'to be still'. And they welcome the rare chance to slow down.

Neri & Hu is a buzzing, interdisciplinary practice. Based in Shanghai, it is international in every sense with projects spanning the globe, an office staffed by individuals who speak 30 different languages and an ambition to bring 'a global world view to a new paradigm in architecture'. Neri and Hu themselves co-hold the John C Portman Design Critic in Architecture post at Harvard Graduate School of Design.

As you might expect of architects confined to the domestic, they have used lockdown as a chance to work on their own house. According to Neri, this is not something they would ordinarily have time for: 'As they say, doctors are usually not the most healthy individuals'. They have spent some of the past six months refining a scheme to tame their wild garden – which has trees taller than houses and renovated ruined outbuildings – inspired in part by Ian McEwan's Concrete Jungle.

Neri and Hu's residence is tantalisingly secret. Despite requests from the likes of Architectural Review and AD, their home has never been published and few have been lucky enough to visit. Not that that has stopped some keen followers trying to take a look. 'It's hard to find our house', Neri



Lyndon Neri
and Rossana
Hu: founders
of Neri&Hu.

explains, 'but we have had encounters. A busload of Japanese students rang the doorbell one weekend. We had to say, sorry, I know you came from Tokyo but...'

Their house is in a typical Shanghainese lane known as a 'lilong', in the once colonial French concession. Hu conjures an image of tightly packed masonry structures, built at the turn of the century, with thick walls. Life is intimate here: 'We know if a wedding happens. Or if someone dies, as incense will be burned in front of their door. There is a constant flow of energy – of characters'.

Rather than retreat from this dense urban context, their house engages. An internal lightwell, which references their Waterhouse Project, creates a voyeuristic moment with too-close neighbours. Neri laughs: 'I open my curtain and accidentally see my neighbour showering, naked – and vice versa'. In another intervention they

recently changed their front door for a set piece composition, which includes a bench and concrete wall. 'The older ladies sit there and chat,' reports Neri, amused again. 'We have big mailbox with a hole – so you stand inside and hear everything they say!' Another neighbour has started to use the wall to advertise her flower arranging business. 'Unintentionally, the door has transformed into a community resource, which is fascinating.'

The house is a duplex – split across two symmetrical houses sharing a party wall. On the ground floor, they own both sides, giving them the luxuriously large yard (for Shanghai) which they are working on. As is typical to their practice, the architecture and interiors finely balance the existing and the new. The remodelled first floor now has large modern teak framed windows, but the second and third the still have the originals. They describe the house and the way they

have worked with it as a 'series of fragments'.

During the pandemic the domestic has generally proved surprisingly flexible. In a sense, 'houses have become cities,' says Neri. 'The dining room which was a restaurant is now a school. Two hours later, when someone wants to watch a movie, it becomes a theatre.' There may be important lessons for architects here. 'As architects we are so engrossed with the idea of labelling and specification... having a bathroom, a living room, a bedroom is a modern invention. Maybe we should start thinking about spaces as opposed to their definitions.'

Cities may be faring less well, however. 'Covid has made people start to look to rural areas again', which is of interest to Hu and Neri who talk widely on the phenomenon of rural-urban migration in China. Around 80% of China's cultural relics are all in the rural areas, and yet a lot of them have been abandoned. '300 villages a day are vanishing, not because of demolition, but because they are not viable. Farmers move to the city to be drivers, brick layers become janitors – things

PEDRO PEGENAUITE (2)



Above Dealing with the domestic: Rethinking the Split House.

Below The courtyard carved out in the centre of Neri&Hu's Aranya Arts Center, in Qinhuangdao, northern China.



NERI&HU

they are not passionate or skilled at. Kids are left to be looked after by their grandparents. This is an unfortunate society.' Covid, they hypothesise, is changing that – 'people are going back home as cities are too claustrophobic. It's happening in China, but also places like New York. It's a healthy thing. There needs to be a time of rest'.

The pair talk passionately about the issues facing China and render Shanghai life vividly. Do they consider themselves Chinese architects? 'No matter what we do, we are Chinese. We love to cook Chinese food. When we are upset this is the language we think in, and inherently we bring our preconceptions and experiences to our practice. But we don't try to make our work Chinese.' Instead of being defined by their nationality, they simply 'try to be good architects' – an attitude they attribute to Michael Graves, whose practice they worked at when they met.

In a sense they are ultimate cosmopolitans. Not only does their teaching and practice span oceans but each grew up as part of the Chinese diaspora. Neri was born in the Philippines and Hu in Taiwan, and both studied and worked in the US before returning to bring up their children in China. 'Citizens of nowhere' however, they are not. Neri thinks this is what makes their work interesting. 'We have inherited Chinese discipline and the American conceptual mindset – and for me the Spanish/Filipino, crazy artistic flair.'

They try to bring this equilibrium between the universal and the particular to their work. Hu says: 'A universal response regarding the state of humanity today can be very different from a regional one. But architects have to try to hold both things in their projects – the specificity of a particular site, programme, client and cultural context, with the universality of mankind building a building.'

These are useful times to think this way, when Covid has swept the world affecting nations equally and differently. It will be interesting to follow their future work to see the what fruits this 'period of rest' bears for Neri and Hu, and how they respond to the inevitable social, economic and cultural changes afoot. Is it a good time to be an architect? 'As architects we have to be good in every circumstance,' they conclude. ●

Georgie Day is an architectural designer and Public Practice associate at Enfield Council. Catch up on Neri&Hu's RIBA + Vitra Talk at architecture.com/campaign/riba-vitra-talks

Places, planning
& communityDesign, construction
& technology

Revolution in the public realm

Public space has far greater importance since lockdown. How can we maintain and enhance its availability and value?

Pippa Goldfinger

As we emerge blinking into the new living-with-Covid world it's evident that the economic carnage wrought will require a longer recovery time than the dread disease that has caused it. Councils reliant on income from tourism and business rates are having to re-prioritize budgets, city centres are empty and public transport is a no-go service for many. And yet there are glimmers of hope: for years the writing has been on the wall for retail-only town centres, city-leaders have been pondering the political fall-out of limiting car use and public health professionals have been warning of the combined evils of poor air quality and an inactive population. Now the push-pull effect of fear of public transport and the requirement of space for social distancing has seen streets given over to cyclists, pedestrians and more recently

(with planning laws relaxed) areas that cafés, bars and restaurants can occupy.

A global pandemic has forced through this worldwide experiment in tactical urbanism and shown how much nicer our cities and towns can be when liberated from the demands of the car (moving and stationary) but will these changes stick or will post-pandemic agoraphobia lead us to abandon the city centres and retreat to an atomised car-dependent future in the suburbs? And what does this latest shock in a long line of horrible surprises mean for the long-vision-masterplan-approach potentially vulnerable to external biological, environmental and economic forces? We spoke with four architects to get their views on how the current crisis is affecting how we view the urban realm. •

Pippa Goldfinger, head of programme, Architecture Centre

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON LYON



Anna Liu
Architect and
director of
Tonkin Liu

Public realm has become our lifeline during Covid-19.

People have felt the detrimental effects of social isolation and lack of access to outdoor spaces. You can see the joy on their faces when they are out in public spaces, catching other people's eyes and smiling and exercising under trees. More than ever, public spaces are used for gatherings and activities.

Having always lamented how public spaces in the UK are under-used, compared with spaces in Asia which are effectively outdoor living rooms, outdoor tearooms and outdoor gyms for all ages, I have seen how this has changed in the UK during the lockdown.

As architects we should design beautiful, non-generic spaces that celebrate trees and planting, birds and bees, and the local community. We should try to tap into the rituals of the local community, how people move through a space and use it, and use this knowledge to shape the spaces and create future opportunities. We should also value the ecological role a public realm has in the larger city.

At Tonkin Liu we use a methodology called Asking Looking Playing Making, which helps us to interrogate the brief, place, and people, and to drill into values rather than listing priorities. Time and again it yields very place-specific insights that enable us to create place-specific concepts.

Every community has idiosyncrasies that should be identified early on, to inform the character of the design. Therein lies the social capital for the community. At Great Yarmouth, as part of an RIBA Future Place project with the council, Tonkin Liu carried out an analysis of the seafront and propose inclusive improvements to the public realm celebrating local culture, heritage, and innovation. We learned much from our research and public consultation workshop here. We learned that the town has a strong lineage of performing arts, with the amazing Hippodrome near the seafront that hosts circus performances. We learned about the strong contemporary art communities, and the fantastic Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust.

We should tap into rituals of the community and use this knowledge to shape spaces



Above Greening symbols for
Greening Great Yarmouth, RIBA
Future Places, 2020.

The Trust has preserved more than 20 buildings that are important heritage assets, has revived community training in survey and construction, and even works internationally. Students from Taiwan and Bulgaria have learned to conserve derelict farmhouses, working hands-on, and coming to Great Yarmouth for further experiences. This type of social capital should be built on, to strengthen sense of community identity and pride of place.

Inhibiting the design and function of good public spaces are two extremes: intolerance and over-programming.

Intolerance leads to too many rules. People who feel like it is 'their park', for instance, can be intolerant of outdoor activities that they do not do themselves and feel entitled to ban them. Signs like 'no ball games, no bikes to railings, no dogs' are symptomatic of intolerances. If you make all these rules you will end up with a pristine but lifeless and soulless public space.

Over-programming leads to too many planned, large scale events that are detrimental to the planting and the local community. Grass takes a long time to recover from having big marquees put on top of it and lots of people traffic. The local community can also feel unwelcome during these events.

There should be a balance of spontaneous local activities – wedding groups, exercise classes, and larger scale gatherings once or twice a year that puts the public realm 'on the map' and attracts people from further afield.



Juliette Bidgood
Juliet Bidgood Architecture
+ Urbanism
Architect and RIBA client
adviser and chair of Design
West – North Somerset

By the end of summer 2019 almost all local authorities had declared a climate emergency. Policies and projects being conceived now are at a point of critical change. Covid-19 has tipped us into recognition that we can act on climate change, adapt and (largely) agree how to do it.

Working with Design West for the West of England Combined Authority I am researching the content of a Placemaking Charter for the sub region that will include North Somerset. We asked officers and members in the four partner authorities (including Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire) what challenges highlighted by the pandemic can inform the charter. How could we capture the quality of life and environmental improvements accelerated by lockdown? We heard about the shift in perceptions of the value of our outdoor environments, of nature and of the value of our own time. People spoke of the need for accessible walking and cycling routes for all and for adaptable, good quality homes and connected communities. There was also an understanding of the role of place in enabling background health and the need to learn from more diverse community representatives.

North Somerset is embedding health and inclusion in policies and proactively working to reduce CO₂ emissions. In July it launched its Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan, which includes: all new homes as zero carbon, the delivery of nature recovery and rewilding, and driving a modal shift away from the private car. Its targets are measured against an evaluation of its current carbon emissions as an organisation and as an area authority. What might once have seemed fanciful seemed real; the space for 'working towards picturing a different future' hard won through the pandemic.

During lockdown, as a design review panel chair, I also saw two design reviews in North Somerset. The first was for 54 Passivhaus homes, including 30% affordable homes proposed by the council as client. The project was already taking an exemplary approach to biodiversity net gain, generating a rich mix of shared gardens and landscapes. The panel highlighted how the design of boundary treatments of public, semi public and private spaces was critical to success. Speaking from their own homes in lockdown, members asked the team to provide more opportunity to work from home or in shared workspaces and to share vehicles and amenities.

Another question raised by our work is: what is good enough since not all projects can be exemplary? Covid-19 seems to have shifted the bar for where good enough can be.

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Intelligence Rethink: Urban realm



James Barnfield
Director, architect and
Passivhaus designer at
Hilton Barnfield

Covid-19 has brought into public consciousness a conversation that has often been confined to spatial design professionals (and thoughtful city mayors) – effective land use – not solely for land value, but for social value.

While Covid-19 requires us all to practice social distancing, it has also encouraged us to get to know our neighbours better, and to better use (and recognise the value of) the shared and public space available to us. Whether it's the park, the street, the corner or the front step, this is space to breathe and interact. We are social beings and, in the Covid environment (post-Covid seems increasingly distant), it's human interaction that we crave.

Hilton Barnfield Architects in collaboration with David Hawes is working with Exeter City Council and Homes England to develop a toolkit for the RIBA-supported Future Placemaking in Exeter. This focuses on liveable environments and human-centric design, facilitated through higher, 'gentle' density developments. It originated in the RIBA's Future Place competition; a programme emphasising the collaborative expertise of local authorities and architects.

The toolkit is developed through the identification of

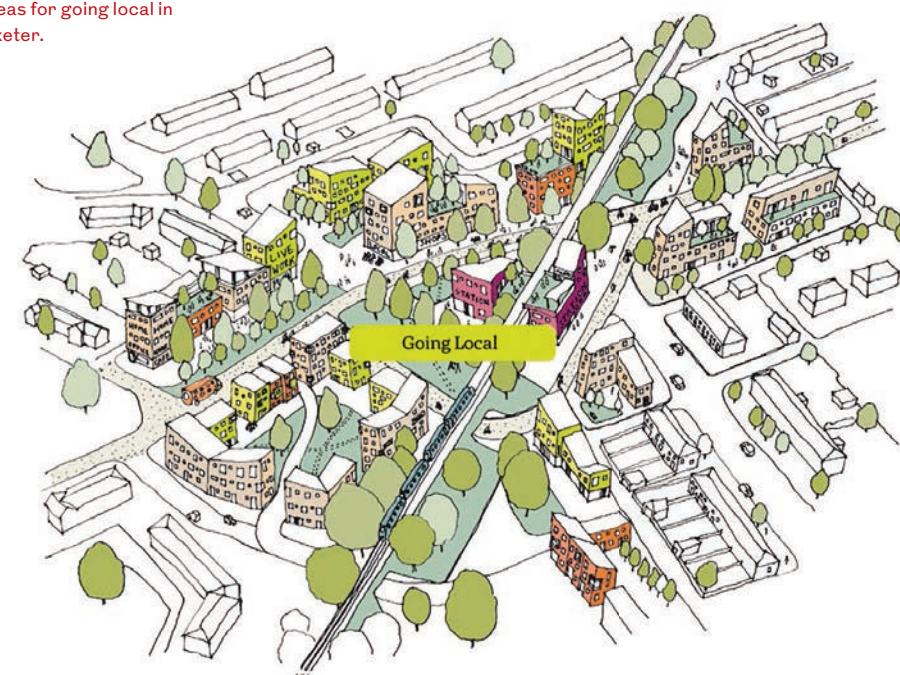
a series of drivers of change; a distillation of all that has influenced Exeter in becoming the city it is - where it is located, and how its communities function - into a series of themes which frame the projection of a view of the future city, born of its distinctive identity and function. This toolkit methodology seeks to achieve a series of shifts in the approach to placemaking, from a vocabulary of 'growth and quantity' to 'quality and thriving economies and communities', from 'site and policy areas' to 'regional, economic and landscape positioning'.

While this work began before the pandemic, Covid-19 is now demanding that all communities look critically at their immediate environments and the use of space.

As cities and towns transition to an unavoidable net zero carbon future, the neighbourhoods and districts which people identify with and function within will adapt. While major cities face well-documented challenges, land scarcity (and thus value) encourages development (often brownfield) that – through good design – often facilitates improved public realm. Smaller cities and towns, however, have been typically vulnerable to sprawl. Covid-19 has opened many eyes to the effective use of space and, in particular, the role of our streets.

The response to the challenges of Covid-19 should demand, therefore, a re-appropriation of existing land use, away from continued road-building, car parking and sprawl, toward human-centric, effective land-use with habitable and civic environments (at numerous scales). Not only can this deliver improved public spaces, it can also encourage us all to be more mindful of resource depletion, given the other pandemic that we must remain focused on, the climate.

Below Hilton Barnfield
ideas for going local in
Exeter.



HILTON BARNFIELD ARCHITECTS



Carl Turner
Architect and founding
director of Turner.Works

One of the certainties of life is that things change. Really, they do. Turner Works has been reimagining how high streets might work in the future (now actually – next week, next month – not years ahead).

The recent pandemic has brought this thinking to the fore, but we already believed the DNA of most high streets and much new development to be deeply flawed, with often huge investment going into the assets (buildings and civic realm) with little focus on people. This approach to development pushes out local people by pushing up prices. At Turner Works our mission is to seed an environment to pull in and support local people and help unlock the potential of places. Our tactic has been the development of meanwhile (or relatively short term) uses.

This might seem inherently short sighted and no way to plan for the future, but we have found that thinking about the short term actually removes many barriers and objections to development as it defuses entrenched opposition, especially if the specific focus is the support of the local community.

We cut our teeth designing Pop Brixton and Peckham Levels. These are both projects that rethink the way the public and private sectors can work together to create a supportive local ecosystem of affordable workspace, event and performance spaces, and food, drink and retail environments combined with public space. The projects also necessitated the establishment of an organisational structure to nourish and support the new tenants. The key is curation; the careful selection and support of not just the businesses, but the events and the community aspects, all working in tandem with what exists in an area, so complementing and not competing.

Turner Works has now developed this thinking at Ashford in Kent, working with the council to reimagine a collection of near derelict buildings opposite the station. The ambition here was not only to create a successful incubator space for creative industry but to change the perception of what Ashford is all about. Plenty of big development was already happening in the town, but there was not much entry level space creation. Our job was to stem the flow of creatives into London and provide an alternative (night time) destination for the younger crowd in Ashford – rather than have them jump on a Eurostar train to Westfield in Stratford, or King's Cross. We also established an organisation to look after the project for five years until it gets going. Strangely, after struggling



Above Turner.Works' agile uses in the micro-plan for SuperWeston.

to let space for the first few months, the pandemic seems to have jolted people into making serious changes in their lives and we have now let nearly all the space. The site has reopened cautiously, and with a large open-air yard at the heart of the scheme and a large translucent shed (the Hothouse) we now have the perfect space for post Covid hang out. Business is on the up!

These projects create a stepping-stone economy where someone can move from a market stall into a small food kiosk or retail unit at minimal uplift in cost. Or from their bedroom study into a co-work desk or small studio space. We want people to grow and move and to keep the pipeline of space open and flowing, in contrast to a normal high street where businesses typically take 10 to 25 year leases. We want affordable space to be available in the future. Enlightened councils and developers are now

We want people to grow and move and to keep the pipeline of space open and flowing

working with Turner.Works exploring this approach at scale up and down the country. In Weston-super-Mare, with several masterplans in the drawer never likely to be implemented, we have been working on the antidote; a micro plan. This incremental approach of layering many small things can have a profound effect on places and can be achieved quickly without breaking the bank. It nurtures local enterprise but it does take a lot of management and support. You can't build it then walk away.

In Weston, we haven't had to change the micro plan much post Covid as we were already imagining a new type of high street, one inspired by festivals and street markets; active rather than passive public space. We have included a drive-in cinema on the roof of the car park. The guys who run the shopping centre are already getting on with it. Instant results. Micro plan up and running. ●

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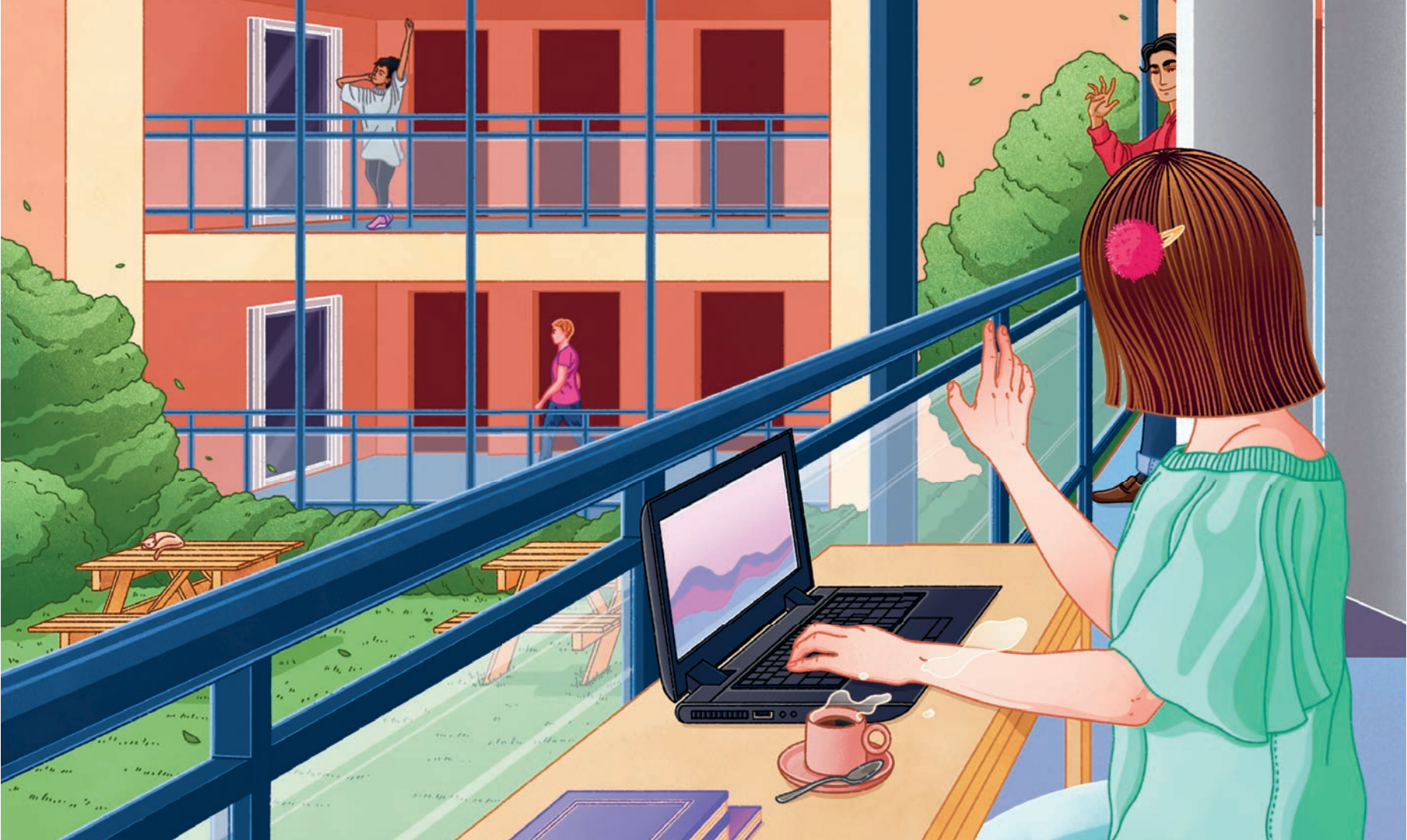
Home design rearranged

Covid-19 has brought into sharper focus the critical importance of homes in meeting our physical and emotional needs

Josephine Smit

Last summer the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government allocated £900 million to more than 300 ‘shovel-ready’ projects to drive economic recovery and deliver up to 45,000 homes, as well as infrastructure projects. But a report by property consultant Savills for housing charity Shelter estimates that this year 171,000 new homes will be delivered in England, around a third down on last year’s total. The report, Impact of Covid-19 on Social Housing Supply and Residential Construction, says that economic ripples from the pandemic could see 15% fewer homes built over the next five years and foresees increased overcrowding in both the social and private rented sectors.

This warning comes as growing research assesses the effects of living conditions on physical and mental health during the pandemic. A Fairer Future – Ending Poverty in Brent, a report from the London borough’s Independent Poverty Commission, highlights emerging evidence indicating a higher death rate from Covid-19 in more deprived areas, among lower paid workers and in areas with higher rates of household overcrowd-



ing, with those from black, Asian and ethnic minority communities most affected.

The Homes at the Heart Campaign, which is backed by the National Housing Federation and other organisations, used the English Housing Survey and a YouGov survey to analyse overcrowding. In, Housing issues during lockdown: health, space and overcrowding, it concludes that almost a third of adults in Britain experienced mental or physical health problems because of the condition, or lack, of space in their home during lockdown and that 30,000 people spent lockdown in a home comprising one room.

‘We have become more acutely aware of how well or not our homes enable us to function – to work, care for others, stay connected with friends and family, and keep healthy and happy. The pandemic has brought into sharper focus the critical importance of homes in meeting both our physical and emotional needs,’ wrote Sarah Weir, CEO of the Design Council, in A Public Vision for the Home of 2030, a report looking at what the public want from their future home. The report informs the Home of 2030 competition, an initiative driving innovation for future affordable, efficient and healthy green

homes, which is backed by the government, managed by RIBA Competitions and has an overall programme managed by a consortium led by BRE.

A study by the Quality of Life Foundation, based on research carried out before and during lockdown, also highlighted how neighbourliness and community contribute to wellbeing. It joins the wealth of evidence being gathered from the pandemic to inform the creation of homes and neighbourhoods.

Below, practitioners working in housing look at how the sector is emerging and could evolve, and the part architects could play. Russell Curtis, founding director of RCKa, sees potential for greater diversity in the urban housing mix and re-intensification of the suburbs. Marianne Heaslip, associate principal at URBED, considers how home working is changing people’s experience of their home and community. Eugene Marchese, co-founder and director of Guild Living and chairman of Marchese Partners Architects, outlines a new model for later living for a sector hard hit by Covid-19. And Manisha Patel, senior partner of PRP Architects, previews some of the features of new housing typologies that could enable more flexible living.



Russell Curtis
Founding director, RCKa

We work across residential, community and public sectors. We have specific expertise in community engagement and thought that not being able to meet people face-to-face would be a real problem. But rather than trying to replicate conventional community engagement online we’ve been working in different ways, and have developed a new toolkit for remote engagement. We’ve found we can achieve greater reach than we might in physical workshops as online engagement allows people to choose their level of participation. We will go back to face-to-face engagement, for sure, but will likely supplement it with online methods.

I can’t see London suffering as a result of what’s happened, but it will stimulate discussions about the future of the city centre and where we accommodate housing growth generally. There are questions over density and location and are already projects coming forward with fewer apartments and more family homes. There should be more diversity in the urban housing mix, although I’m not sure

We have become more acutely aware of how well or not our homes enable us to function



Marianne Heaslip
Associate principal, URBED

In our area of work – urban projects at all scales promoting environmental and social sustainability – clients are being cautious but projects are still happening.

Some businesses and householders have used this time to review projects, while the government’s announcement of the Green Homes Grant in July has also – perversely – prompted people to pause and review what work they will do.

We’re working alongside Carbon Co-op on the People Powered Retrofit community programme for homes in Greater Manchester. We stopped doing home surveys during lockdown but restarted in June with enhanced procedures. We used to interview householders at home about their experience of living in their property. Now we have a video call ahead of the survey and will keep doing that – it’s worked quite well. It gives householders time to reflect and means we aren’t making judgements in their living room.

During the pandemic poor housing conditions have generally meant overcrowding. There often seems to be an acceptance in the UK that our housing is a bit cold, damp and badly ventilated – all risk factors for Covid-19.

Those who were going to nice heated offices and are now working from home may be sat beside a single glazed window and noticing the draughts in their homes. There is generally an upsurge in retrofit enquiries when the weather gets colder. Our enquiries from householders have already risen since the Green Homes Grant was launched, but it hasn’t shifted the demographic so far as far as we can see. Generally our home retrofit clients are either approaching retirement or slightly younger and keen to make their family home an environmentally sound and better place to live.

If we have a boost in retrofit activity, it will have to be carefully managed. There is a concern that if retrofit isn’t done right it will damage the reputation of the industry as well as people’s homes. The Green Homes Grant alone won’t pay for a full deep retrofit, which makes it even more important interventions are carefully planned.

I live in Liverpool 8 and through the pandemic I’ve seen neighbourhood centres like food, arts and environmental social enterprise Squash – who we’re working with – doing food deliveries and keeping communities going. It’s been really pleasing to see such organisations demonstrating their value and resilience in a situation like this. I think we have gained in our appreciation of home and our local environment and I hope that will result in more positive decisions about neighbourhoods like mine in the future.



Eugene Marchese
Co-founder and director,
Guild Living, and chairman,
Marchese Partners
Architects

Covid-19 highlighted how, in many respects, UK models for later living, such as care homes, are not working – with tragic consequences. Rather than hindering our plans for Guild Living in the sector, the pandemic has reinforced the need for what we're doing; Legal & General launched Guild Living just over a year ago to address and change the model. In the UK later living developments either tend to have independent living for the healthy elderly or care settings for the more frail, with no bridge between them. That's the way it used to be in Australia, where we've been focusing on the sector for around 15 years at Marchese Partners. But over the last five years we've seen the emergence in

Australia of developments that combine independent living and care and that's what Guild Living is bringing to the UK. We have developments in Bath, Epsom, Uxbridge and Walton at planning stage and are looking to bring forward six more next year as we want to deliver more than 3,000 homes over the next five years. We haven't needed to rethink the design of our schemes due to Covid-19; instead it has validated our approach. Each scheme has around 250-300 homes: a mix of independent living apartments, care apartments – which are independent but can provide care – and full care suites. Homes are broken down into a series of communities of eight to 12 people. By breaking the scale of the development down, we create family groups so residents are less likely to be lonely and it is easier to support them and potentially manage any virus outbreak. Our developments have been designed with amenities – such as a café, restaurant, wellness centre and children's nursery – which will be open to the local community. If there were an outbreak in one of our small community groups, they could lock down within the building, although the group would still have safe access to lounges and

outdoor areas. We can enable people to live in isolation in our developments, but we don't want them to feel isolated. In March we launched a research partnership with the University of Bath looking at healthy ageing to inform what we're doing, and most recently that has been looking at loneliness and social isolation. We're already testing wearable technology with the aim of assessing 12 key biometrics for physical and emotional wellbeing in a single device – most devices currently available measure a few aspects at best. We're also looking at voice activation, which could benefit less able residents and help minimise virus transmission by reducing contact with surfaces. Whenever there is an event like this it affects the way you're living. Older people will want more choice in how and where they live in the future. Moving into a retirement community is a big step for people and our online focus groups are showing us that people's key concern now is to find a place to live where they or their loved one can be safe. We have a lot of work to do to help the market understand the priority being given to safety. We know we have got to convince people that we have addressed the issues.



Manisha Patel,
Senior partner, PRP
Architects

It's my goal to bring more open space into cities and optimise the spaces we already have

A lot of housebuilders that have been active in the cities have slowed the pace of development, so we're seeing a shift to activity outside town centres. The pandemic has got people thinking about quality of life, physical and mental wellbeing and access to both private and communal space. Open space is as important to the home as internal space now. For schemes that are on the drawing board we are introducing wider corridors for flats and reviewing private amenity space. We are incorporating workspace into layouts, but not within the bedroom because our research indicates that can be negative for mental wellbeing. Instead we're looking at how areas like hallways can be used or spaces temporarily closed off. There is the potential for product designers now to come up with screens or folding walls to close off space for working. Lockdown has given us the opportunity to think about how society will change and that needs to be reflected in housing. Previously, the market wanted grand bedrooms, but now the bedroom has a secondary function, and day-time living spaces – which are often open plan and don't easily allow for separation – matter far more. So will there be demand for smaller bedrooms with workspace elsewhere in the home? These issues need to be debated by industry



and policymakers, as it should affect space standards. We have come up with a number of typologies for future new-build housing. They include features like a studio space in the garden for working, where you can still make a short 'journey' to work. Ideas like this shouldn't be retrofitted by homeowners but incorporated into a new home for flexible use. The front garden became more important for social activity through lockdown, so we're looking at designs where you can put seating there, rather than the usual car. Streets have also become important for social interaction. Liveable streets programmes have taken off in many places, while forms like the mews and the traditional cul de sac have shown themselves to be quite successful in terms of community interaction. To retain communities in cities we'll have to think about access to open space. We've worked on a lot of projects with pocket parks – which are an efficient, but limited way of providing open space – but we have to think about substantial spaces in high density housing developments that will make places attractive and let people exercise and relax in distinct groupings. It's my goal to bring more open space into cities and optimise spaces we already have. I hope we'll come out of this creating a lot more flexibility in housing design. The architect's creativity and space planning skills will be even more important. There is an opportunity to bring open space into buildings and to look at how enhanced private amenity can improve conditions for people living vertically at high density. We've got to ensure no-one loses out and particularly that urban flat living is future-proofed and takes on board the learning from this extraordinary experience, so that improving the living environment becomes mainstream. ●

The science of silence

Silent Windows supplies serious acoustic insulation without compromising on traditional appearance or quality – transforming lives in busy cities



Whatever the source, noise pollution can have all kinds of damaging impacts. Not just on the appeal and the value of a property, but also on the lives and livelihoods of those who live there. We recognise the scale and scope of the challenges faced by both residential and commercial clients. Sometimes, homeowners have to reluctantly move from the area they love, because they believe there's no way to adequately reduce the severe noise levels. The 1.6 million Londoners who have to put up with noise levels of over 55dB are likely to suffer health problems as a result. And hoteliers can lose precious business because of particularly 'noisy' rooms. Also, it's often thought that listed buildings, or those in conservation areas, can't be soundproofed because of planning restrictions.

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* In 2019 Silent Windows secured the UK Enterprise Award for Best Window & Door Manufacturers and Most Innovative Noise Reduction Product



How 'the science of silence' inspired a pioneering approach
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Design, construction
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What has Covid taught us about designing schools?

How best to spend the government's £1bn school building bonanza? Four sets of priorities range from better access and bigger spaces to flexibility and promoting hygiene

Pamela Buxton

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, schools have been balancing safe ways to teach vulnerable and key-worker children with on-line teaching. But having adjusted their procedures to welcome back all pupils and staff for the winter term, school buildings faced their real acid test from September.

Clearly some buildings are better placed to accommodate the required safety protocols than others. Those with flexible space, generous circulation areas and ample room externally with the potential for outside teaching can more easily enable safe movement around the school and make it easier to limit interactions between class or year 'bubbles'. Yet over the last decade, these are the very characteristics that have all too often been squeezed following the demise of the Building Schools for the Future programme in 2010, and the advent of more austere funding measures for new school buildings.

Meanwhile, as schools grappled over the summer with making a safe learning environment in the buildings they've got, the government announced a £1 billion 'transformative' school rebuilding programme. It proposed starting with 50 schools in greatest need of repair, starting construction on the first projects in autumn 2021.

While the programme was welcomed by the Association of School and College Leaders, it feels there is still a long way to go.

'The fact is that we still have far too many

children taught in older buildings which are cramped and poorly ventilated, and there is a lot of ground to be made up in terms of capital spending,' says ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton, who feels that much has been learned in terms of school design from Covid-19.

'In short, it has shown that we need to have plenty of airy, well-ventilated spaces, that are large enough to allow learning and movement around the site to take place while maintaining some sense of social distancing. Equally, we have also seen the importance of having ample outdoors space, which can be used for teaching and activities, and take pressure off the indoor environment,' he says.

Below, three school design experts explain what impact they feel Covid-19 will have on school buildings in the long term. The importance of flexibility is a recurring

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON LYON



ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton feels much has been learned from Covid-19

theme, along with the need to revise the Building Bulletins that govern school design standards.

Flexibility should not be seen as a luxury, believes Meryl Townley of van Heyningen and Haward Architects. dRMM's Philip Marsh sees scope for the use of outdoor classrooms as well as flexible-use creative halls. AHMM's Paul Monaghan calls for a strong vision for the new school rebuilding programme in order to seize the opportunity to deliver exemplary, sustainable, design. ●

KINGA KOREN



Philip Marsh
Director of dRMM
Architects

Short term changes to how schools operate in response to Covid-19 are already being implemented, with a focus on hygiene, compartmentalisation of groups within the school as 'bubbles', staggered timetables to reduce congestion and maximising available space.

Looking further ahead, I'm sure that in all new school designs, senior management teams will be far more focused on Covid-related themes such as the movement of pupils around the school, environmental conditions and hygiene.

The big challenge longer term will be seeking a partial relaxation of the prescriptive nature of the Building Bulletins that define area and acoustic requirements. Only in this way will designers be able to develop new types of additional space that are less controlled and allow more flexibility.

If there isn't going to be any additional scope to build extra space to improve social distancing in schools, we have to think differently. One approach is to extend learning outside the classrooms into the landscape by providing alternative space free from the constraints of current BB standards. We recently made a proposal for a new primary school which includes outdoor classrooms that are a contemporary version of Jan Duiker's 1927 Open Air School; this was built in Amsterdam to help physically weak children gain strength with the help of sun and fresh air. These classrooms could be orientated to the south for solar gain, and make some concession to comfort with a simple glazed façade and canopy. As well as having the benefit of getting the children out into the landscape, such low-cost spaces will free up more room within schools.

Another way forward is to lobby the DfE to accept a more flexible approach to school design to reduce capital cost per metre squared, and increase area as a result. Inherent flexibility should be designed into all new schools so that they can be stripped back and reconfigured to suit the latest educational thinking. Measures could include a single volume, flexible 'creative hall' that could serve for a range of uses from art classes, to design technology, food tech or performance space. This could be a low-tech, glulam portal frame building with a simple roof and walls.

We need to re-evaluate the environmental design of teaching spaces. I would like to see a greater emphasis on delivering exemplary design standards with better naturally-lit and well-ventilated spaces, rather than just achieving compliance.

Currently, we have extremes from each end of the

spectrum, from the utilitarian, public hygiene-focused Victorian Board Schools which maximised light, ventilation and volume, to the hermetically-sealed, acoustically quiet, mechanically ventilated and artificially lit classrooms of the 2020s. These environmental controls, introduced in an endeavour to improve learning, add cost and complexity to every capital project, with maintenance costs that take money away from the core activity of education. Perhaps there's an opportunity to create a post-Covid school typology somewhere between the two, with a range of spaces including both heavily serviced and acoustically controlled boxes and more simplistic, low-tech rooms.

The main environmental focus should be on naturalness: light (excellent), temperature (cooler), air quality (large volume and good changes), acoustic (internal and external) and connection to nature – basically good design. Unfortunately many new classrooms are single aspect and deep plan, relying more on artificial lighting. In our new, engineered timber school for Winttingham Primary Academy in Cambridgeshire, the classrooms are triple aspect, which allows for cross-plan ventilation.

There may be even greater focus on what materials we put into schools. Taking reference from hospitals, we should select materials that are easy to clean and hygienic. Carpet is often preferred as it is easy to maintain, forgiving, cost effective and improves acoustic absorption. But we should consider materials that are more environmentally sensitive and have natural bacteria-killing properties such as linoleum. Schools will also re-evaluate their soft furnishings, such as the comfy chair for the story area.

There are plenty of other potential changes. A free flow of space and movement should be encouraged, by reducing contact with handles and push bars. Corridor doors that suffer the greatest wear and tear should be held open, and doors on toilet clusters removed. The physical and authoritative segregation between pupil and staff areas could also disappear. Perhaps we'll see a return to the Board School specification of wash basins lining circulation spaces.

The opportunity to build new schools is exciting, as the demise of the over-ambitious BSF programme has led to very constrained school funding in recent years. Apart from demanding a better standard of teaching environment, we should be building to a high quality so that the 50 or so new schools benefit from longevity and minimise the annual maintenance cost for the local authority.

Greater focus on the importance of Covid-19 precautions will immediately raise the bar for design, including the need for space to work even harder. I think it could be really exciting.

I would like to see a greater emphasis on delivering exemplary design standards



Meryl Townley
Partner at van Heyningen
and Haward Architects, and
RIBA education ambassador

Most of our schools returned to full occupation in September by working with what they've got – you want to avoid making short-term changes to buildings that don't add value to the school in the future. That's where thoughtful advice from experienced architects can help by creatively using existing areas to facilitate better learning, and to keep everyone safe.

Covid-19 will affect our consultation when developing design briefs. Visiting schools in action is really important to understand what works well and what doesn't, but it will be restricted by schools not operating normally, and current pressures may make teachers and students reluctant to embrace the potential of teaching in new ways. But we can use digital means to present and engage.

Longer term, I hope for a greater appreciation that the tightness of spaces that arises from designing to Education and Skills Funding Agency guidelines makes it harder for schools to cope with unforeseen problems such as Covid-19.

Flexibility shouldn't be a luxury, it's crucial to be able to adapt to the inevitable changes in curriculum and evolving pedagogy to bring out the best in students and staff, and to respond to unforeseen circumstances. Not only classrooms, but in-between spaces for informal learning and quiet places, would benefit from more than the minimum.

At vHH, we design wherever possible to include a variety of spaces for different ways of learning that lend themselves to flexible use. When we re-visited our community school at Barking Riverside, many staff and pupils told us that the loose-fit 'extra' spaces are the favourite bits of the building, as they allow for imaginative teaching and learning.

Perhaps it will be easier to do this sort of thing now, and to include more generous circulation. This follows recent feedback from vHH's primary school for St Gabriel's, Rugby, where the corridor is very wide and classrooms have direct access to play space. This has made the return much easier than in other schools, as it is easier to enable social distancing. But the ESFA guidelines will need to be more flexible to squeeze in more space for informal learning and circulation, and to get the best value

Loose fit spaces are favourites, allowing imaginative teaching and learning

from the funds available, to meet each school's aspirations.

I also believe that as a result of Covid-19, the value of external spaces, and the importance of nature and exercise, are now fully acknowledged as intrinsic to wellbeing. These spaces, which are often compromised, must be retained and maximised in briefs for schools. Even on a challenging urban site such as that for Bow School, vHH maximised and protected the external landscape, which was accessed directly off the dining hall. Multi use sports pitches are on the roof.

The independent sector continues to embrace more generous spatial parameters than state schools in classroom sizes, breakout spaces, circulation and external space. As a result they are better able to cope with Covid-19 restrictions. They were also much better set up with remote digital learning, an inequality that has widened.

As for the new school building programme, I worry that it will be just about repair. It is vital to know how it will be allocated and, among other things, whether there will be recognition of varying local needs. I'd be wary of expensive, automatic, anti-bacterial measures with the potential for ongoing running costs. All materials should be robust and long lasting and easy to maintain and clean. This is one of vHH's integral design principles, and we're really seeing the added benefit of it demonstrated in this situation.

I hope the current situation has highlighted the huge benefits that even modest additional allowances for extra breathing space can make, and that this will inspire the government to a more ambitious approach in the future.



Paul Monaghan
Partner, Allford Hall
Monaghan Morris

In the short term, every school will have to adjust to meet the government's new operational guidelines. Those that were designed to meet Building Bulletin 98 standards, rather than the less spatially-generous Building Bulletin 103 that superseded it, will certainly find it easier.

I recently asked Howard Jackson, deputy principal of Burntwood School in Tooting, London, which we completed in 2014, how it is adapting to the new way of operating. He sees it working very well in terms of bubbles of year groups, with enough classrooms, toilets and other facilities to accommodate one year group on each floor, and the children staying put in one classroom while the teachers move around. Because it was designed to BB98 guidelines, it has more generous corridors, which also helps.

Longer term, there will generally need to be more thought given to the environmental engineering of school

buildings and in particular how we get fresh air in using natural ventilation – air change will be key. Consideration of hygiene and surfaces will also be important in the future.

Generosity of circulation spaces is definitely an issue. I'd like to see the spatial guidelines of BB103 increased by 5-10% to give more scope for this. I think we may see more 'schools within schools' approaches – like there is at our ARK All Saints Academy in Southwark, London – to ensure more separation of years, and also more consideration of multiple entrances and circulation systems. At Westminster Academy we designed toilet areas with two doors at opposite ends. While this was primarily for bullying reasons, it works well in the current situation.

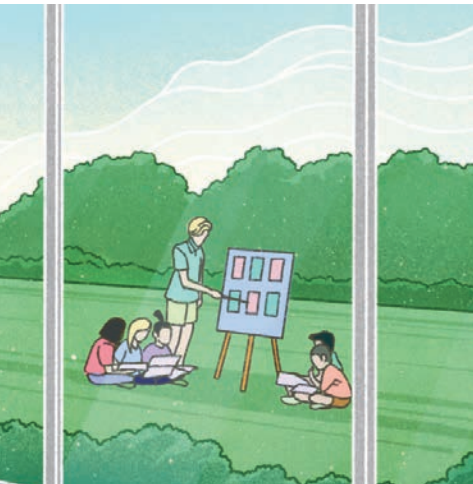
I'd also really like to see some of the thinking that goes into office design going into schools, including more flexibility to change room configurations and settings. We don't know yet what the impact of technology changes will be on the future on school design, but we'll definitely need to think about the role of flexibility here.

The government's new school rebuilding plan is an opportunity to make a statement about what the future of education could be, rather than just making functional buildings. It's going to be a big programme – at £20 million each, that's 50 new schools. I'd like to see the government set out a manifesto for what schools should be like.

BB98 embodied the idea of a school being aspirational

–a real community hub. That was reversed in 2010 in favour of building cheaply and in standardised ways. I'd like to think we could get back to something more like the aspirational approach of the Building Schools for the Future programme. We all know that school design plays a part in improving school performances.

And if the government is spending £1bn, it should be getting buildings with excellent sustainability performance. These should be exemplary and really leading the green agenda, rather than just doing enough to get over the line. ●



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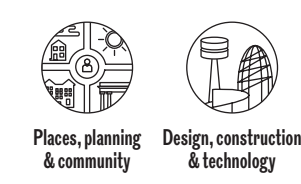
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Homes are a mental health issue

As an RIBA survey reveals the links between home design and mental wellbeing, what do owners want and how can architects help?

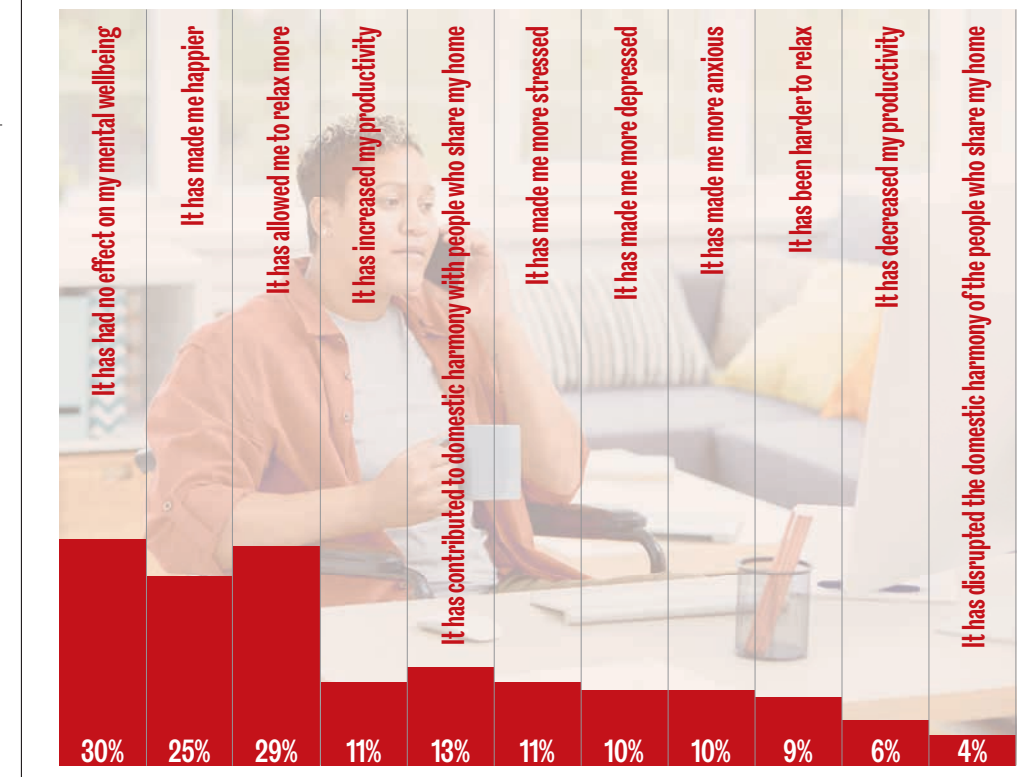
Eleanor Young

The rumour is true: the design of your home does affect your mental health. So confirms a new survey commissioned by the RIBA. An overwhelming 69% of homeowners surveyed over the summer, as lockdown restrictions eased, agreed that their homes' design influenced their mental health, with a third saying that better design could have helped them to relax more. Here we offer a taste of some of the figures, look at the psychological implications and consider how the findings can be used by architects to strengthen their offer when they talk to potential clients.

'Homes are primary sources of attachment to place,' says Eleanor Ratcliffe, environmental psychologist at the University of Surrey. 'They represent self to you and to others and can make you feel happy and in control - which is especially important when things feel out of control.'

The Covid lockdown and continuing strictures have left many homes having to do so much more. 'They have been having to fulfil work tasks, perhaps for a whole family,' says Ratcliffe. Over the years she has studied stress and the value of place in recovering from it. She explains that lot of work on

How has the design of your home affected your mental wellbeing as a result of having to spend more time there during lockdown?



recovery from stress shows that it is harder without clear cut delineations. This was difficult in lockdown conditions and remains so as many continue to work at home. Those delineations could be in the form of behavioural rules or structural changes. One such change might be to create an office so work can be left there. Many respondents seem to recognise this, saying that they would create an office response to the experience of lockdown (17%).

Another key area that emerged during lockdown, says Ratcliffe, is the importance of acoustic privacy - both not to be overheard and to avoid interrupting others. Meanwhile a desire emerged for a closer relationship with nature and the freedom of vistas.

In the survey this tension of conflicting

desires for openness and separation manifests itself in things that respondents would like to change as a result of lockdown. Eight out of 10 (79%) identified one or more of the changes they'd like to make to the design of their home after lockdown. These include: more open plan spaces (14%), more enclosed rooms (9%), more flexible spaces that can be easily divided (8%). But it is obvious no one size fits all, points out Ratcliffe. 'People are desperate to talk about how they feel about their homes. They want an outlet for how they feel about it.'

Climate change issues are still on the agenda for homeowners who want architects to commit to the environment: 27% want evidence that an architect will make their home more environmentally sustainable and 31% want to see the architect's commitment to combating climate change.

The survey was commissioned as part of the RIBA's 'Work with an Architect' campaign to promote architects to homeowners. Launched at the Homebuilding and Renovating virtual show, it comprises a social media advertising campaign, a PR campaign aimed at local and national TV and radio and national newspaper advertorials. ▶

See more at [architecture.com](https://www.architecture.com)

27% of respondents want evidence that an architect will make their home more environmentally sustainable

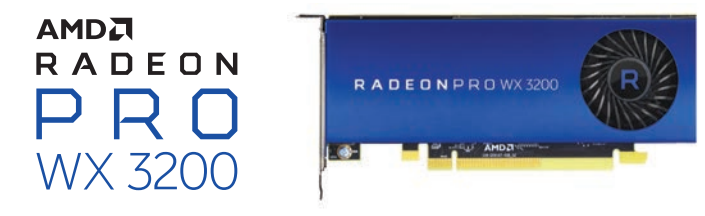
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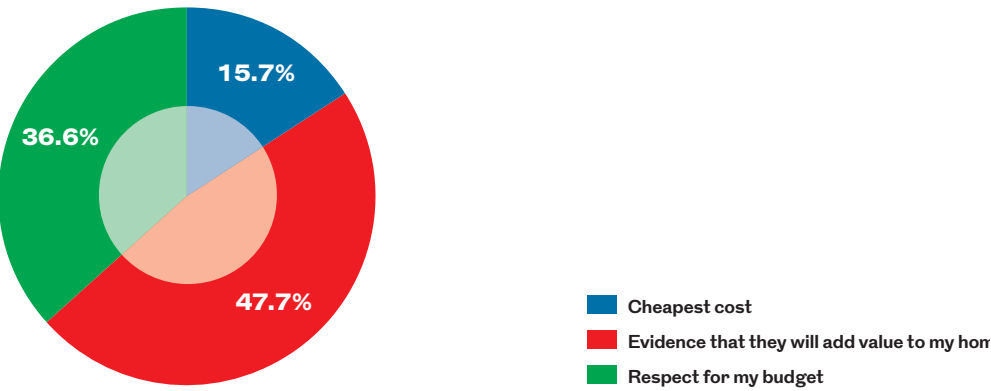


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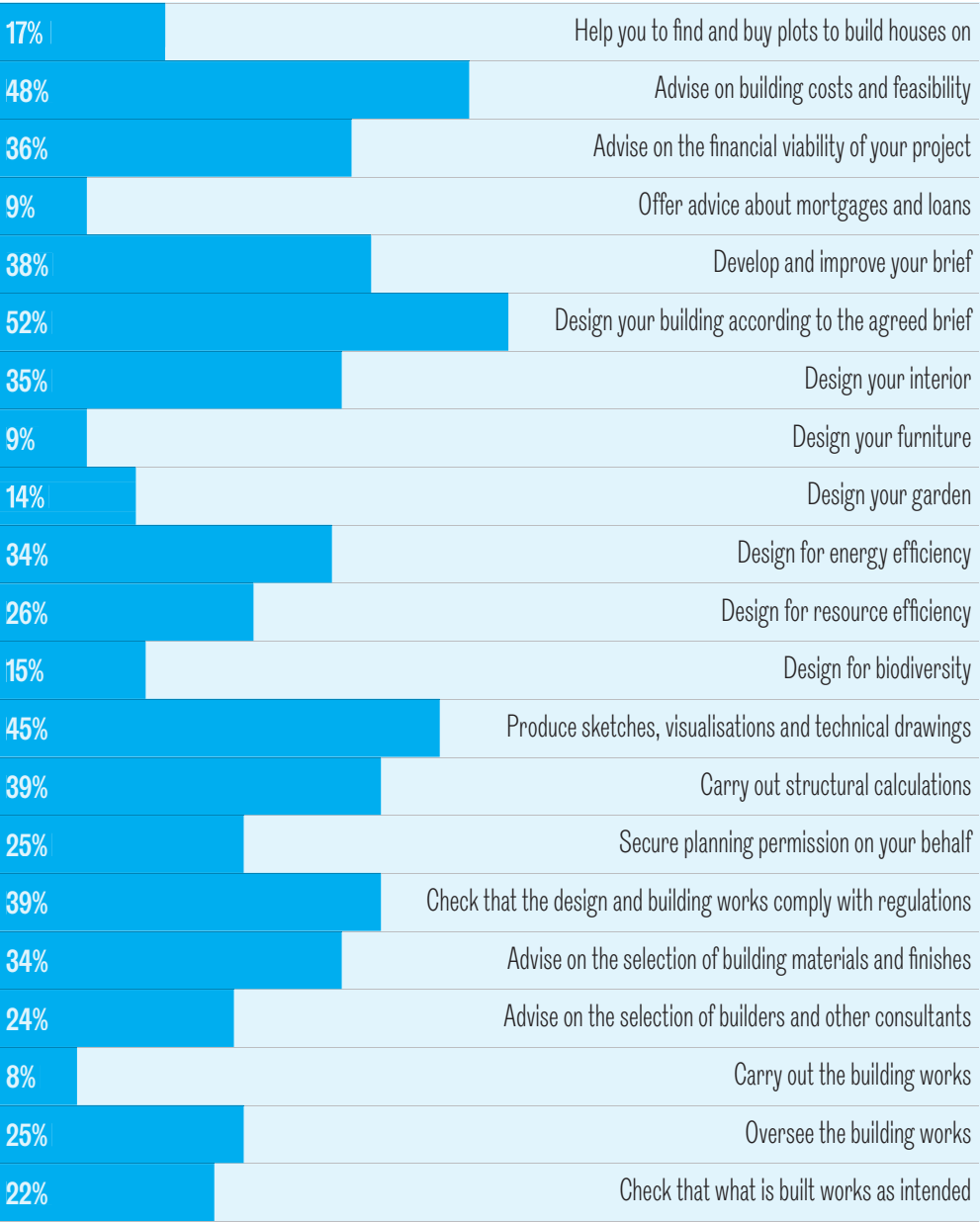
¹ RPW-303: Testing as of March 02, 2020 by AMD Performance Labs on a production test system comprised of an Intel® Xeon® W-2125, 32GB DDR4 RAM, Windows® 10 Pro for Workstations, 64-bit, System BIOS 1.11.1, AMD Radeon™ Pro WX 3200, AMD Radeon™ Pro Software for Enterprise 20.Q1/NVIDIA Quadro P1000, NVIDIA Quadro® Optimal Driver for Enterprise (ODE) R440 U4 (441.66). Pricing based on publicly available information on amazon.com as of April 14, 2020. Prices subject to change. Results may vary. RPW-303

Nvidia Quadro P1000 cost of \$339.00 on Amazon.com viewed on 14 April 2020. AMD SEP of \$199.00. All pricing in USD and may vary regionally. AMD SEP pricing correct as of 01 August 2020.

If you were to appoint an architect to redesign your home or build from scratch, what characteristics are most important to you in each of these categories?



What services do you think architects offer as standard? Percentage of respondents who agreed



Almost 50% think evidence that architects can add value to homes is important

GREAT NEWS FOR YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

The RIBA's poll of 1,500 homeowners aged 24-64 from across the nation is a goldmine of market intelligence for architects and the perfect accompaniment to the recently published marketing toolkit for chartered practices.

If your practice operates in the private domestic (that is, consumer) market, you should take note of its findings and incorporate them into your strategic communications plans.

The poll's most striking result is that 'membership of a professional organisation' is singled out by the greatest number of respondents (61%) as an important factor in selecting an architect – roughly twice as important as having a quality management scheme (36%), a commitment to combat climate change (31%), or having won awards for house design (29%).

Review the extent to which you promote your RIBA membership. Since it is possibly the most important factor for clients looking to select an architect, your marketing communications should emphasise it.

It also turns out that almost 50% of respondents think evidence that you can add value to homes is important, much more so than the cost of your service, which was voted more critical by only 15%.

Note the word 'evidence' here, though. Simple unsupported claims are unlikely to persuade. Perhaps one of the best ways to support claims is with good references: 48% of respondents thought this the most important factor from a list of six options – closely followed by evidence that you listen (43%).

These high-scoring characteristics are worth reflecting in your client communications, perhaps best achieved through a dedicated process of seeking client feedback.

Another headline finding is that 70% agree that better home design could have positive impacts in various ways, with relaxation, happiness and mental wellbeing coming top of the list. Respondents' most important target for home improvement was to reconfigure existing spaces, followed, in order, by extending, creating a home office, and improving levels of daylight.

The granularity of these findings is useful for pitches and what you choose to promote down comms channels (including Find an Architect), allowing you to better align your offer to your target market's needs.

Matthew Thompson

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3: Culture

Don't divide new and old

Conservationism and modernism sit side by side



Hugh Pearman Editor

If you've never been to Newark in Nottinghamshire, I can recommend it. A large and largely intact town dating from Norman times with two railway stations on different lines, the fully-functioning Trent river navigation, a big active market square including several medieval timber buildings, a Town Hall by Carr of York, one of the finest parish churches in England (St Mary Magdalene) and the remains of an impressive castle overlooking the river.

It's not perfect as a town of course – there are the usual bits of insensitive traffic planning, too many land-hungry superstores near the centre, and it is in the constituency of Robert Jenrick, secretary of state for housing, communities and local government who – how to say this? – sails very close to the wind at times. And of course wants to revolutionise the planning system in favour of developers and builders, with a dollop of 'Building Beautiful' spin applied here and a lot of over-sight-free permitted development there.

But never mind him. The reason Newark is in reasonably good shape is, I'm told by Nottingham-based design historian Chris Matthews, down to a good council

What could be more modern than a medieval post-and-beam building?

conservation department, and the efforts of conservation-minded local architects back in the 1970s including noted modernist the late Lincoln-based Sam Scorer as then head of the East Midlands Victorian Society.

It's not necessarily a binary affair, architecture. Being a modernist architect – in Scorer's case with particular expertise in hyperbolic paraboloid roofs – doesn't mean you can't be a good conservationist as well, despite what a few ideologically-driven traditionalist boosters might claim. We must always resist that reductive culture war. And Newark is a good example of this. What could be more modern than a medieval post-and-beam building?

I give you as an example the former White Hart Inn, in Newark's market place. Ruinous in the 1970s but saved and restored, its frontage has been tree-ring dated to 1451, says building historian Nick Molyneux. It is arranged in horizontal, slightly jettied layers as so many timber buildings of this period were. It has ribbon windows (of course arranged in contiguous small panes) and a large ground-level opening leading to the yard behind. It gives the lie to the preposterous theory that vertical emphasis is the only true way to do architecture, and that 'hovering' modernist buildings are in some way inhuman.

Plus of course medieval timber buildings are prefabricated and relocatable, not that anyone has ever tried to shift this one. This is the kind of medievalism that appealed to the high-tech architectural set, especially the Hopkinses. You can see why. And it shows timber can be as durable as any other material.

The old White Hart in Newark is richly decorated with carved motifs and figures and appears to have been quite colourful – none of the default black-and-white here. It reminds me slightly of the work of Louis Sullivan centuries later. It and its kind represent continuity in architecture and point to the future. Imagine: a building, and a way of building, that all sides of the profession can agree on. ●

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Some exhibits tackle big issues facing architects today – Levitt Bernstein's Carless City and Project Orange's uplifting reimagining of the Thamesmead estate in south east London... internationally, my eye was caught by the intriguing Aerial View of Kumasi Mud City, Ghana, by young practice McCloy + Muchemwa with Sophie Percival.

Pamela Buxton wanders round the Architecture Room at the RA Summer Exhibition

15th century ribbon-window modernism in Newark.



HOLLYEXLEY

HUGH PEARMAN

Project: Oughterard National School
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Culture
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Proof of the pudding

Will Wiles traces his interest in architecture back to family meals as a child



Will Wiles

Does anyone remember Ice Magic? Archaeological researcher Rebecca Lambert does, and put that question to Twitter, and now I remember it as well. It was a highly processed chocolate dessert topping made by Bird's and popular in the 1980s, where it sometimes – as a very special treat – graced the Wiles family dinner table. You poured it over your ice cream, and it hardened into solid chocolate.

What witchery kept it liquid at room temperature? I don't know, and perhaps I am better off not knowing, but it was magic indeed. 'An innovation on a par with the bounce on an iPhone screen,' the architect Sean Griffiths contributed to Lambert. She goes under the Twitter handle @LadyLiminal1, and had here identified the truly liminal dessert: a ritual of transformation, a play of different states, from which the participant emerged changed.

The magic began with the packaging, a conical plastic bottle with a top that had a wavy lower edge, like a child's drawing of a snow-capped peak. In packaging terms this was akin to a Venturi/Scott Brown 'duck', neatly uniting a functional container, an evocation of its contents and an instruction: pour this on top of something. The alpine feel was a bonus, with its associations of coldness. And if it appeared on the table, you had reached the summit of dinner, and there were no more worlds to conquer. Like Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, you had ascended to modernity and all nature lay at your feet.

The hardened chocolate layer formed by

Sometimes a nice balance of canopy and support emerged, perhaps resembling one of Félix Candela's thin-shell structures

Ice Magic had an extremely pleasing material quality. The crunch as it broke and the spoon sank into the ice cream beneath was as rare and pleasurable as the first footsteps on deep overnight snow. It also had a delightful, although highly artificial, slipperiness in the mouth as it completed its lifecycle and returned from solid to liquid. Combined with its ritual qualities and precious status as most special treat, this was probably what made it memorable.

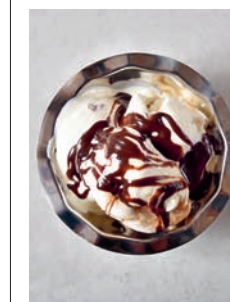
Besides material pleasure, Ice Magic also provided some material education. It was capable of bringing interesting forms into existence. Economy was key – I can still feel my mother at my elbow, moderating the amount I used. The saddest result was when the bulk of your topping slid into a crevice between ice cream scoops, forming a tasty but shapeless lump. Best of all was when it poured evenly over the top of an iced hillock, and ran down the sides. This was most attractive, and gave the best topping-to-ice-cream ratio if you wanted a bit of both in each mouthful.

But it also had architectural potential. If you were lucky in your pour and careful with your spoon, you could eat the ice cream out from underneath the solidified Ice Magic, leaving behind a neat and delicate chocolate dome. In doing so, you recreated some of the most advanced and interesting buildings of the 20th century. Sometimes you got something that was all legs and no top, and resembled William Pereira's spidery Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport. Other times a nice balance of canopy and support emerged, perhaps resembling one of Félix Candela's thin-shell structures, such as his restaurant in Valencia; or, if the ice cream was scooped less tidily, Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal at JFK. If the Ice Magic didn't make it down the sides of the ice cream to form a structural connection to the bowl, you could be left with a complex Zaha Hadid-ish bit of parametric drapery.

As a father, I'm forever telling my children to stop playing with their food, but remembering Ice Magic makes me regret that. Every dinnertime, they get handed a little materials lab with a mixture of differently composed solids and liquids, and endless possibilities. They quickly set to work damming gravy rivers with mashed potatoes and assembling Plattenbau structures from their mini waffles. In thinking only of the peas scattering across the floor, am I stifling the next Pier Luigi Nervi? ●

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

Below Our food: a materials lab.



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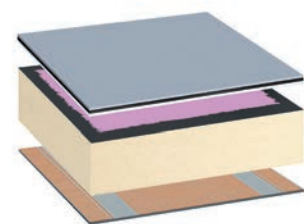
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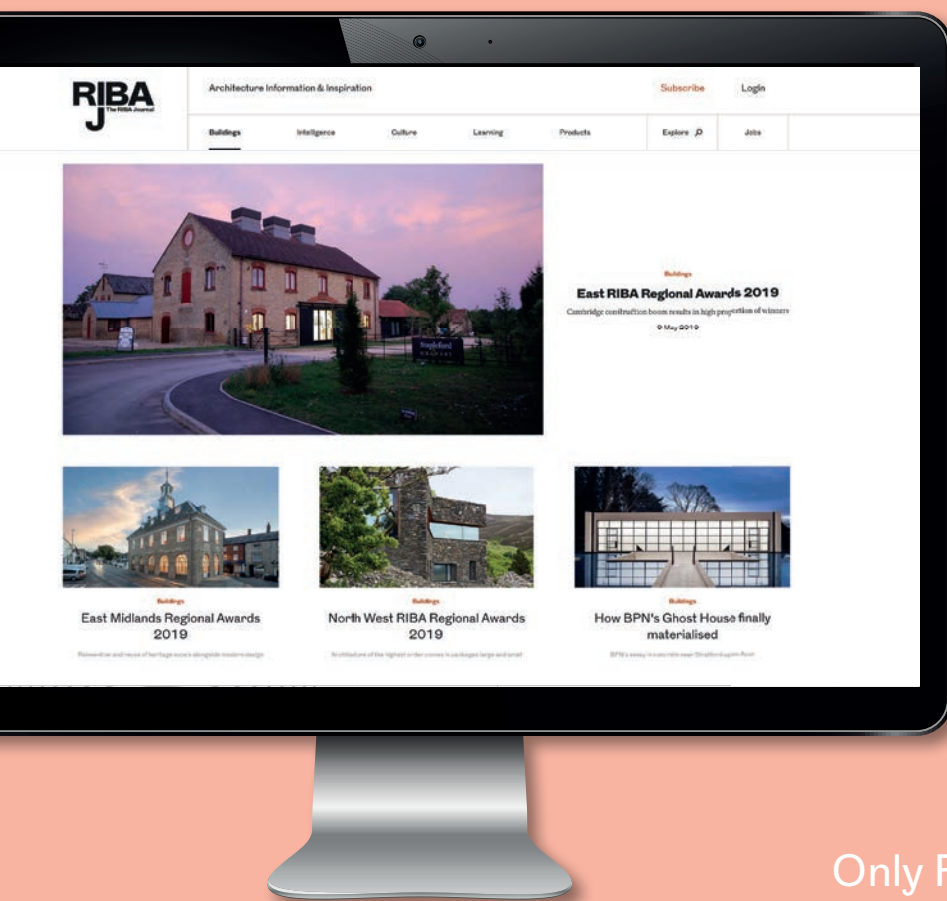
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CRISP RETORT

Is it a bit of a stretch to apply architectural criticism to Ice Magic? Perhaps. But I would like to cite a precedent: William J Mitchell, my late, great predecessor in this spot, once extracted a glorious bit of criticism from different kinds of crisps, and claimed that his 'Bag of Chips Theory' told you everything you need to know about architectural form. I trail in that magnificent shadow.

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Culture
President

Stepping up, stepping in

It's time for action on professional indemnity insurance. RIBA members are doing their bit, the government needs to do the same



Alan Jones

Professional indemnity insurance is on most practice owners' minds. After a decade or so of relatively low premiums, Grenfell and its consequent Hackitt review, along with other construction disasters such as the collapses in Scottish schools, have contributed to the significant hardening of the marketplace. Other factors are also at play, including PII performing badly compared with other areas of insurance, the unreasonableness of bespoke appointment contracts for architects and that certain architects are prepared to sign them.

Architects are valued for their PI insurance, with inappropriately high levels of cover often stipulated by client representatives and related warranties, and with architects present at the project's end they are vulnerable to a contribution to a claim. In 2019 James Burgoyne, in Defining Contemporary Professionalism, confirmed that two-thirds of architects' PI claims are 'sector or situational issues' which means 'essentially being in wrong place at the wrong time' and that 'a firm needs multiple risk management strategies as a series of lines of defence'.

The legacy of numerous potentially unsafe high rise, and not so high rise, high risk

residential buildings looms over the whole construction industry and property market, freezing sales and worrying insurers about retrospective claims.

Some suggest it has remained relatively easy for practices to gain PI insurance. Such a stance neglects the near market failure situation with some insurers having left the market altogether and the rest offering limited cover at a cost, almost all with broad exclusions on fire safety issues.

Although the appetite in the insurance market for architects' PII has got to the point where even a clean claims history and excellent risk management processes do not shield a practice from premium increases and broad exclusions of cover, chartered architects are changing culture and can look forward to being able to better demonstrate competence to provide assurance to clients and the public. In 2019 the RIBA introduced the new online CPD recording platform and in August 2020 The Way Ahead set out how academia and practice must come together to facilitate lifelong learning, mandatory competencies, career trajectories and increasing levels of expertise. The RIBA Academy is live, with online CPD and support, soon, for schools of architecture to address carbon literacy, professionalism, public health and life safety. The new 2020 RIBA governance includes a new standards committee with a remit across education and validation, codes of conduct and competence.

Over the last month I have presented The Way Ahead to numerous RIBA committees, regional councils and nations. Even in these challenging economic times everyone I have spoken to appreciates and agrees with the direction of travel and wants to be involved.

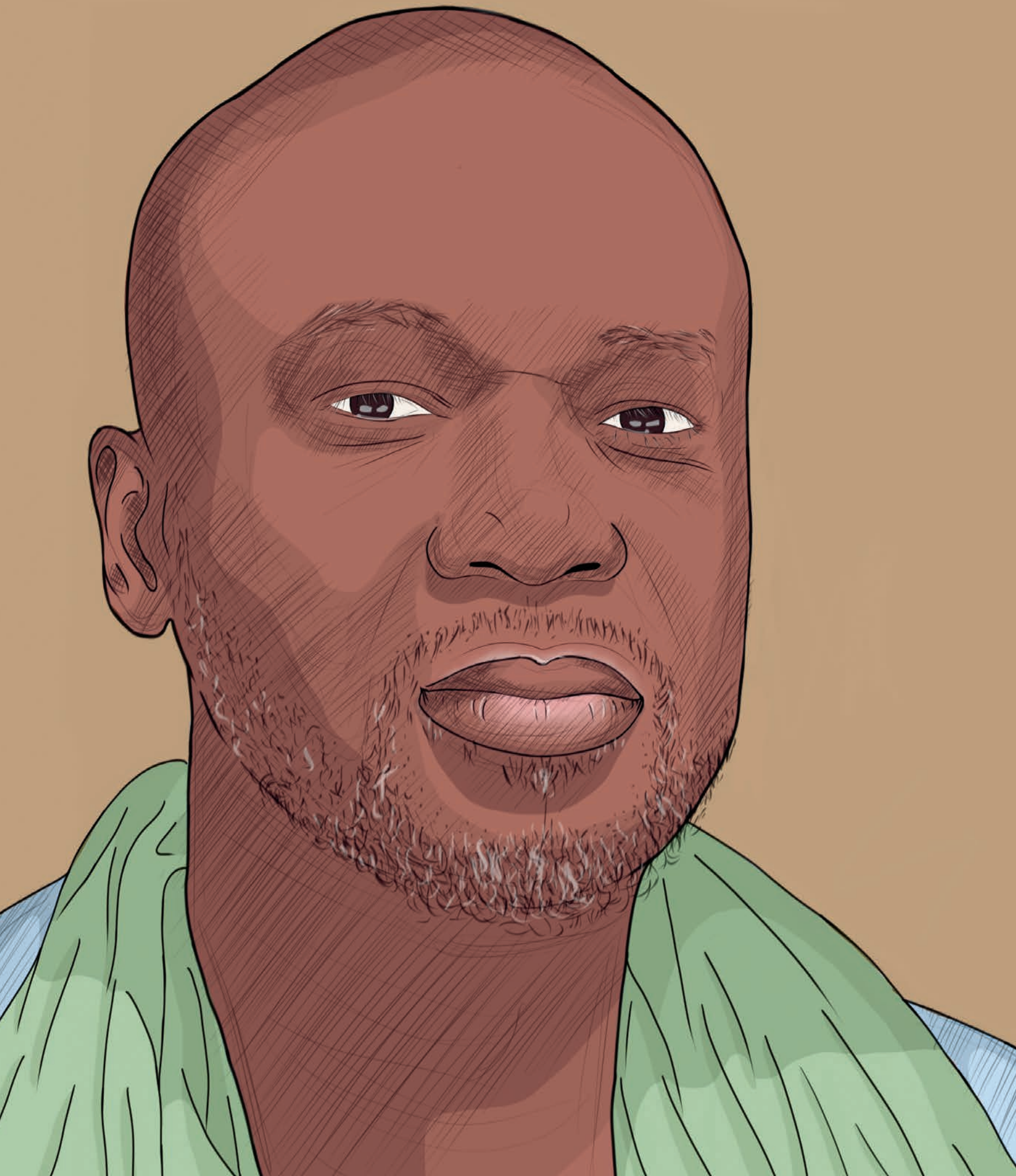
There is a significant change within the RIBA and its membership; we are stepping up, and government needs to step in, to resolve the legacy of 'deem to satisfy' construction by providing industry support funding, as well as underwriting the remediation of unsafe residential buildings and by pressing reset on our industry – on appointment and fees, on procurement of the design team and construction, on competencies of all involved, on reasonable apportioning of risk, on clear roles and responsibilities – creating the conditions in which architects, the only regulated profession in the construction industry, can truly deliver for everyone. ●

@AlanJonesFRIBA

Even a clean history and excellent risk management do not shield a practice from PII premium increases and broad exclusions of cover

PII REQUIREMENT

RIBA chartered members are required to hold professional indemnity insurance even where accepting a fire safety exclusion is unavoidable. Detailed guidance is available in RIBA Practice Note 1 Rev A



Sir David Adjaye, the first black Royal Gold Medallist, on what drives his practice, architecture for an age of pandemics, and why he doesn't want to be considered a role model

Words: Eleanor Young Portrait: Colleen Laurent

A different path

ELEANOR YOUNG You are in Accra, Ghana as we speak. How long have you been there?

DAVID ADJAYE I have been here a year. I moved here to work on the cathedral. I have close to a 50 person office in Accra. With Covid we all decamped at first to our houses, but when the government introduced a method for businesses to go back we did.

EY This is not your first RIBA Medal. You were awarded the RIBA Bronze Medal in 1990 for your student project Respite Centre. Was that medal important to you? Can you tell us about that project?

DA I am lucky to now have two! The Bronze Medal was incredibly important. It was what made my parents pay attention and think maybe I had something, a voice in this profession I was choosing. It was a creative profession and they were nervous for me.

The Respite Centre was slightly biographical. It was a reflection on years of taking my brother to such places. A way

to imagine having disability respites as a valuable and beautiful part of our urban environment and not tucked away.

That was really the torch that set the direction of my desire to have a practice – it wasn't an issue being addressed by the profession. I wanted to use architecture as a way to make the changes I wanted to see in society.

EY That social conviction is very obvious in your early projects like the Ideas Stores and the Bernie Grant Arts Centre. So is your strong interest in materials. How can we help change culture here in the UK so architects of your calibre are designing our schools and hospitals; the infrastructure of the everyday? You did some and what happened?

DA For me it's a hope that with this medal my office is able to do more work in the mainstream in the UK's public sector.

And I hope young architects can have the possibility of doing both private homes and

be engaged in public buildings early on. The competitions system and direct commission to certain generations can help that. Not just the market. I really believe this. Architecture needs to go to the youngest as well as the most established. There is something profound about when it does that and what it contributes to the discipline.

EY Is it possible to retain small project sensibility in a big project?

DA I jumped from designing a nearly 40,000ft² building, the Ideas Store Whitechapel, where we were controlling everything including the light fixtures, to a nearly 500,000ft² Management Institute in Russia. You are operating at this large scale, you have to realise where you can make impact and where you have to allow the systems to work for you. You have to find what your idea is and how you are going to deliver it. And buildings should be judged that way.

EY Many of your projects deal with diffi-



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Culture Profile

I have grown up in my profession having to find different ways to work and attract patronage

cult histories and belief systems – the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, National Cathedral of Ghana, Abrahamic Family House, the Nobel Peace Centre, the Smithsonian. Does the idea behind each building come from these human stories?

DA When I say idea it encapsulates three different parts: form, craft and programme. Essential in any creation of architecture is your attention in those three arenas. You need a certain focus to create and curate the building and for your teams to understand what is important, to know when critical thinking is required.

EY Tell us about that on your current big project, the National Cathedral of Ghana.

DA For me it is a social centre in the 21st century – a place for Accra citizens and Ghanaians to gather both for the everyday and a myriad of other functions including education facilities, and an assembly hall that can support state events of a sacred, spiritual nature, like national funerals. This is very important in West African culture, the life and death culture is much more important than it is in the west; it's much more social, cultural and national.

Then craft, understanding what the lim-



itations in Ghana are and what the innovations are that we want to bring here. Engineering excellence is largely neglected here due to budgets and a culture of making do.

Form. Here it has been about how to make the hall specifically work for the culture of Ghana and West Africa and its background of animism. Our research looked into making make a building that would really engage with that nuance.

EY Have projects been put on hold due to the pandemic?

DA We are lucky we haven't been devastated. In 2009 I nearly lost my business – then I had a lot of commercial work. In this pandemic a lot of the cultural projects have been able to sail through. We have about 20% commercial work in my three studios and some of those did go on hold. But we have been able to redistribute our teams, we haven't had to make anyone redundant. And now more work is coming in as we see how to operate in this Covid world.

EY Might the pandemic offer some new opportunities?

DA We are going to rethink typologies, especially workspace and public space. The pandemic has opened our eyes, we are now in an

age of pandemics thanks to the climate precipice we have reached. We have 20 or 30 more years of pulling back from climate change – if we get on board with it now. And in that time we have to make architecture that is resilient to new forms and mutations and deals with invisible air transmission. We know that science can't make vaccines fast enough.

It goes to building standards. I think they will change requirements on filtration and space standards. We understand that biophilic design is important to human health and immunity, from clip-on greenery to the wider relationship between greenery and the built environment. We have to understand those things are going to be completely incorporated into our new norms.

We have needed something, sadly, to knock us back, to not just look at architecture in terms of values and costs but evolve typologies that contribute to our wellbeing. Modernism was born as a result of tuberculosis. It was born as a way of dealing with diseases, not just an aesthetic.

EY You have long been friends with the best of Young British Artists. You have rubbed shoulders with Barack Obama; Mayor of London Sadiq Khan congratulated you on being awarded the Royal Gold Medal. Your Instagram posts quickly garner thousands of likes. Few architects have this political or popular traction. What does it mean to be operating like that?

DA If it is different it is because I have grown up in my profession having to find a different ways to work and attract patronage. I have always been influenced by different professionals and different people, artistic and political ideas, right from when I chose to study at the RCA. This is how I connect to people and gain intellectual nourishment.

Also in architecture, especially if you



Left The Smithsonian National Museum of African American Arts and Culture was Adjaye's breakthrough project, political and high profile in the US heart of power in Washington DC, its Benin-inspired bronze corona disrupting the neoclassical institutions of the Mall.

Top David Adjaye has moved to Accra to oversee the National Cathedral of Ghana with its dramatic engineered roof form which brings together public, ceremonial and religious uses.

NICOLEHOX

ADJAYE ASSOCIATES



Culture Profile

If you want to do this work it helps to be a public person, which is a great responsibility

work in the public realm, you have a public role. This idea of being a public person who can also discuss the complexity of public architecture is part of being given the privilege to make public buildings.

What is going on with the Holocaust Memorial [the planning inquiry] is profoundly important, we need that public debate. The same with the Smithsonian, I had nine years of being cross-examined by public bodies including Congress. If you want to do this work, it helps to be a public person which is a great responsibility. It's about being able to work in a democracy and share ideas that will profoundly affect people, and explain the benefits.

EY Who are your heroes?

DA Lina Bo Bardi and Oscar Niemeyer in South America. And I admire Hassan Fathy in Africa for his return to traditional values and, in Europe, the reinvention of craft by Carlo Scarpa. These are characters that I love very much.

EY You are the first black architect to be awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal. In the year where the killing of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter has brought a better understand of equality and inequality is the

medal a hopeful sign or an indictment of the profession?

DA It shows recognition of the issues but is also an indictment that it has taken so long. The defence that there hasn't been the talent just isn't good enough. For talent to emerge there has to be support from education to procurement to give someone the ability to shine. And that happens for some races and not others. That is the issue that needs to be tackled continually in a democratic, multi-racial society. It is a systemic issue. I am happy to be celebrated. But I am not the model that I want any kid to follow. This is an exception, me charting a path despite the process. It should be a path because of the process. It is incumbent on all architects and educators. We should work with the greatest diversity that gives us the greatest results.

EY Can architects do more to bring black architects and people of colour into the profession?

DA In the workforce, architects should just see how many people of colour they have and ask where they place people of colour, are they in senior positions? You have to train people into those positions. We strive for 50/50 gender and for the right balance



ADJAYE ASSOCIATES

Top Red concrete panels that shimmer in the light clad this 1,300m² gallery, Ruby City in San Antonio, Texas.

Right The Ideas Store in Whitechapel, London, for Tower Hamlets Borough Council was shortlisted for the Stirling Prize in 2006.

of diversity balance in all three of my offices. We focus on it, that is the practice I want and you have to want it. And to concentrate on making it happen. If you can do, you will find there are talented people out there but the system overlooks them.

EY Architects and their designs have to deal with strong critiques from architecture school though practice and into the public arena. How can we keep this, while encouraging a diversity of ideas?

DA The idea of learning to debate and argue your case is one of the healthiest things to prepare you for the reality of the world. The problem is, yes our profession is dominated by a lot of males. The idea is not wrong, it is the combination of people who are put together to do it that is usually wrong. Sensitivity in about these issues is critical.

EY At 54 you have more time that most Royal Gold Medallists to achieve far more. What are your ambitions?

DA I believe I have a lot more to say. The Gold Medal is not just about lifetime achievement, it is about significant change and contribution to the practice of architecture. It is incredible to have the medal, it gives weight to the agendas I've been promoting since the beginning of my career. The legitimacy it confers will hopefully make it more possible I can do better work in the future.

EY If you hadn't been an architect?

DA I wanted to be a chemist, I wanted to be a pilot. But my hopes were dashed. I was, until this pandemic, flying around a lot, and I think architecture is alchemic, it's the combination of extraordinary – or mundane – materials and it's a kind of magic. ●

'At the top of his game.' Read Hugh Pearman on the RGM announcement at ribaj.com/adjaye

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Shock and awe at the V&A

Darren Waterston's Filthy Lucre tells a dramatic tale of beauty, arrogance and anger

Pamela Buxton

In the late 1930s, Le Corbusier famously daubed bright murals on the plain white walls of E-1027, the villa in the south of France designed by Eileen Gray. This seemingly aggressive act pales into insignificance compared with what the celebrated painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler got up to 60 years earlier when he created the Peacock Room in the London house of his patron, Frederick Leyland. The story goes that Whistler was unhappy with the interior design of the room where his painting *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain* was hung. This room was being created at great expense by the architect Thomas Jeckyll to showcase Leyland's collection of Chinese porcelain. With Leyland away and Jeckyll unwell, Whistler was consulted on colours and seized the chance to instead spend months completely re-painting the room to his own resplendent

designs, to the astonishment of Leyland, who was left with a hefty bill from the money that Whistler had charged to his account. The two formerly great friends fell out irredeemably; poor Jeckyll had a nervous breakdown shortly afterwards and was destined for an early death in an asylum. However Leyland did keep the room, with its splendid golden embellishments, as it was – even if he didn't want to pay for it. The room's name refers to Whistler's wall painting of two golden peacocks representing the artist and Leyland, the latter with tail feathers showering coins.

It's a great yarn, and one which we can thank American artist Darren Waterston for shining a light on anew with his installation *Filthy Lucre* at the V&A, an immersive reinterpretation of Whistler's controversial tour-de-force. Briefly on show before lockdown, this atmospheric piece has now been given an extended run until the end of November.

When Waterston was commissioned to

The peacocks are literally eviscerating each other. There's a violence to it amid all the shimmering decadence

create a painted room by MASS MoCA in Massachusetts – where the installation was first shown – he immediately thought of the Peacock Room as his starting point.

'It's a gesamtkunstwerk that brings architecture, sculpture, painting and design all together into one thing, which is very much my interest,' he says, drawn also to the resonance the story has with tensions between art and money in the art world today.

He was also interested in Whistler's provocative character. 'He was a bit of a troublemaker, very self-promoting... cunning. He knew how to advocate for himself,' he says.

Waterston's approach was to re-imagine the sumptuous Peacock Room in a way that explored its emotional complexity. It is, he says, like 'a surreal fever dream' where things are destabilised and unsettled. After studying Whistler's design in detail – the room is now in the custody of the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian – he created his own eerie and unsettling version, built to a scale 10% smaller than the original to give the space a sense of compression so that it felt 'a bit tighter'. With its collapsing shelves, smashed porcelain (Waterston painstakingly painted 200 pots before smashing many of them) and strong sense of decay, this room clearly conveys a sense of something gone very wrong indeed. Strange accretions sprout from the surfaces like some weird golden fungus. Stalactites hang down off the mantelpiece and some of the shelves. Crimson pots seem to seep as if bleeding, a golden stain spreads across the floor. A melancholic soundtrack of strings and whispered quotes from Whistler ramps up the atmosphere further. Two more subtle elements speak volumes. Waterston has created his own play on the artist and patron peacocks of Whistler's original. In *Filthy Lucre*, they are engaged in violent combat –



Above James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Peacock Room*. The room was the inspiration for Darren Waterston's *Filthy Lucre*.

Below Collapsing shelves, shattered pots and a sense of decay pervade the installation. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.



and it's not only the feathers that are flying.

'I wanted the peacocks to still have elegance but they are literally eviscerating each other – pulling out each other's guts. There's a violence to it amid all the shimmering decadence,' he says.

In his version, the Porcelain Princess is still present in her kimono – the original room was created at the height of the Japonisme craze. However her face is no longer visible. I thought this was because she couldn't bear to look at the state of the room, with its ruined pots and disarray, and so had turned her head so that we were looking at an elaborate hairstyle. But instead, Waterston explains, her face has morphed into a surreal organic bulbous form. It's all rather weird – and wonderful.

Waterston hopes that visitors to his *Filthy Lucre* Peacock Room will go away thinking about the volatility of beauty, and how one piece of art could have created so much beauty but so much destruction and heartbreak too.

He particularly enjoyed working with a multi-disciplinary team to realise the immersive room, which is built in modular sections and tightly choreographed to enable it to tour. Waterston is working with Seattle architect BuildingWork on another architectural installation, a modular Byzantine chapel called the Congregation of Tears. ●

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Culture
Review

Three woofs for dogs' architecture

Famous architects take a canine view of comfort at Kenya Hara's exhibition with dog-scaled architecture

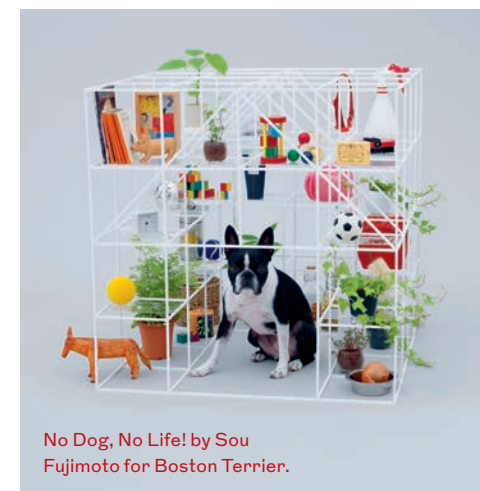
Michèle Woodger

As a child, designer Kenya Hara (creative director of MUJI) owned a dog who – like Snoopy from Peanuts – preferred to lie on top of his kennel rather than in it. It was squeezed into a narrow alley, so the dog developed a taste for rooftop living.

Architecture, Hara observed accordingly, has developed according to human needs, scales and ergonomics. Dogs have adapted to this human-centric setup, but we rarely consider design from our pet's perspective. 'I sense new possibilities,' muses Hara. 'What would come of a dog-scaled architecture?'

Since 2012 he has collaborated with acclaimed architects to create the charming 'Architecture for Dogs', which opened at Japan House in Kensington in September.

In his opening speech, Michael Houlihan, director general of Japan House, observed that 'finding aesthetic pleasure in the functional ordinary' is uniquely Japanese. These



No Dog, No Life! by Sou Fujimoto for Boston Terrier.

HIROSHI YODA (3)

ribaj.com



Beagle House Interactive Dog House by MVRDV for Beagle.

pieces are functional, but delightfully out of the ordinary. Torafu Architects' 'Wanmock' (wan=woof) for a Jack Russell who enjoyed sleeping in his owners' laundry, is a plywood frame with a jumper stretched into a two-layered hammock. Toyō Itō's 'Mobile Home for Shiba', a covered woven structure on wheels, was designed for his elderly Shiba Inu. Hiroshi Naitō's 'Dog cooler' is a curved platform of wooden slats and aluminium tubes that can be filled with bags of ice. Inspiration came from his own dog, cooling itself on the bathroom tiles during humid summers.

We are starting to get a rare insight into our architects' sensibilities. And if, as is said, dogs resemble their owners, do architects' dog buildings resemble their human ones?

In short: Yes. Visually, many of the pieces leave little doubt as to who conceived them. Sou Fujimoto's 'No Dog No Life!' – which seeks to redefine the boundaries between human and doggy environments by housing a Boston Terrier in a hinoki (Japanese cypress) grid frame, populated with household artefacts – recalls his 2013 Serpentine Pavilion.

Asif Khan's 'I see you!' is a minimalist, table-like construction covered in assiduously handmade sheepswool felt, with a crater in the top for a dog to burrow into; inspiration came from watching a friend's dog hollow out a tree stump to hide in. Rather than focus on a particular breed, Khan's piece services all manner of black-furred dogs, camouflaging them and engaging them in a game of hide and seek. The curved, smooth sides derive from dogs' spatial experiences: 'Whereas humans perceive volume, a dog's perspective is horizontal and surface bound', Khan tells us. 'This project forced us out of our comfort zone.

It scrambled our preconceptions as architects, forcing us to imagine the dog as client.'

So what sort of client does a dog make? A Jekyll and Hyde character who initially seems obedient but then bulldozes the architect's perfectionist creation? The prosaic dog owner within me cannot help but question practicalities. Hara Design Studio's paper tipi 'Pointed T', and the fluffy covering of Kazuyo Sejima's (SANAA) den for a Bichon Frisé would not survive my destructive lurcher.

Blueprints of the Pritzker prizewinning architects' designs are available online – though I'd address your dog's chewing behaviours before engaging a contractor. ●

Architecture for Dogs, Japan House, London, 19 September–10 January 2021. Admission free; book at japanhouselondon.uk. More doggie design images at ribaj.com



Dog chair complete with stairs to allow the dog to sit alongside humans at the table.

The RIBA Journal November 2020

John E Dangerfield

1930 – 2020

Australian-trained architect who majored in military and museum/art gallery design, and rejected art school for a more practical career



John E Dangerfield, trained in Australia, became one of Britain’s most accomplished exhibition and museum gallery designers. But his first significant job as an architect in the UK was a large and very different one: from 1962 to 1970 he worked for Basil Spence on projects preparing for and culminating in his Knights-bridge Barracks for the Household Cavalry, with its 33 storey, 94m accommodation tower, on the edge of Hyde Park. He was also site architect for the project. With its brief to accommodate more than 500 soldiers of all ranks and 273 horses within an easy canter of both Buckingham Palace and Horseguards Parade, this was to say the least a highly unusual and complex challenge.

With some continuing work on the Barracks to get him going, he set up John Dangerfield Associates in 1971, steadily moving into exhibition and cultural work. He designed a prizewinning demountable mobile theatre for the National Eisteddfod of Wales, a number of exhibitions for Scandinavian clients (his architectural heroes were Aalto and Schinkel) and in the late 1980s he led the design team for two phases of the Imperial War Museum’s permanent historical exhibition, under the directorship of Alan Borg.

His practice undertook other typologies too, such as the HQ of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in Hampstead, opened in 1985 and still flourishing, and a large refurbishment and extension of the ICI HQ on Millbank. Soon he was attracting commissions overseas such as the large visitor attraction of Singapore’s Fort Siloso on Sentosa Island.

In 1994 his practice became part of Tarmac Professional Services as TPS Dangerfield, and in 2004 moved to Austin-Smith:Lord as A-S.L Dangerfield. During these periods he designed numerous exhibitions, museum

galleries and feasibility studies in the UK and overseas, ranging from the Bodleian and Museum of the History of Science in Oxford to the Museum of Coastal Defence in Hong Kong and the New National Museum of Science and Technology, Thailand. At one point he found himself collaborating with Daniel Libeskind on a design for a Salisbury Cathedral visitor centre to house its copy of the Magna Carta.

The strand of military-related work begun with Spence continued throughout his career in military exhibitions and museums including studies for the Royal Armouries Museum. For the final part of his active career from 2004-9 he returned to solo practice in Shrewsbury. There among other work he acted as consultant to Austin-Smith:Lord on the design of the Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery.

Dangerfield had not entered architecture by a conventional route. Although born in London and raised in Edinburgh in wartime, he and the family moved to Australia in 1947 as his father had become managing director of a large land-management company in Sydney. An art teacher at the Edinburgh Academy had predicted an architectural career for him at the age of 11. In Sydney, he tried a year at art school but decided he wanted to apply his aptitude for art to a more practical career. He duly found himself working in a design office on fixtures and fittings for Qantas and large office projects.

He qualified as an architect by taking the exams after personal tuition – later he was to regret missing the experience of architecture school – and worked in a number of practices at a time when Australian architecture was starting to break free of its British and European (though not Scandinavian) influence. He married Adrienne Penn in 1959 and the couple travelled to Europe in 1962, settling in London that year to begin his spell with Spence. The marriage eventually ended in divorce.

He is survived by Penn, their two children Christian and Tania, four grandchildren, and by Helen McPhail, his partner in life since 2002. ●

Helen McPhail and Hugh Pearman

IN MEMORIAM

David Norman Sutcliffe
ELECTED 1952
WELWYN GARDEN CITY

Michael Gregory Holland
ELECTED 1960
FARNHAM

Robin James Spike
ELECTED 1976
UCKFIELD

John David McCall
ELECTED 1974
HIGH PEAK

Sian Sara Vivienne Jones
ELECTED 1994
LONDON

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Exchange

Fixated on home ownership

I have just read last month’s editorial on the housing market (Price War, p51). You have nailed it with the observation on the crash in 2008 – the amount of available money, both home-grown mortgages and foreign speculative investment, is creating most of the demand. Coming from a country where renting is much more common and accepted, I took a long time to understand the British obsession with home ownership.

I fear this fixation with housebuilding is the only purpose of the planned reform of the planning system with its proposed zones (p38, same issue): the tail is clearly wagging the dog. Most countries with such a system are actually the ones where living in a rented apartment is normal – I wonder whether this irony is obvious to the key forces behind the zoning approach.

Nils Feldmann, Feldmann Architects, Leicester

Upgrade older homes

Your Green Homes Grant story (Recovery need a stronger home improvement fix, p52, RIBA September 2020) correctly identified the importance of improving the energy efficiency of private homes as a vital contribution to reducing the UK’s CO₂ emissions. Architects and surveyors must play a greater role in implementing improvements to the energy performance of the owner occupied UK housing stock. Only our professions have the numbers and skills to deliver the national change needed. We need to be ready to deliver it, while schools of architecture and surveying should introduce the necessary teaching of the techniques and challenges of retrofit.

We should undergo training to fully understand how older properties can be retrofitted to comply with PAS 2030/2035 and avoid past failures. The RIBA and RICS should also argue for a change in Building Regulations to require applicants for large



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domestic extensions to improve the energy performance of the whole property.

The other and much larger group of people who might be involved are ‘home improvers’. There is a major opportunity to improve the energy performance of existing homes when owners are considering major extensions. Retrofit should be a natural part of major extension work and compliance with PAS2030/2035 should be able to be provided by the architect or surveyor.

All that many of us would need is more training in the issues raised by the various technologies and the challenges of applying them sensitively to the existing domestic building stock and understanding of the risks posed. In so many other ways our professions are already well placed to play this role technically and administratively – society just needs to accept decarbonisation is required.

Patrick Manwell, Kingston, Surrey

Stay streetwise

Thank you, Colin Davis, for continuing the conversation of highway vs street design (Exchange, p73, RIBA, September 2020). You are correct that the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges is incapable of delivering residential style streets – as every urban designer knows and every good highways officer should know.

As part of national funding for roads which are intended to open up land for housing, a nasty consequence is that because the roads will initially function as bypasses until the adjacent land is built out, they must apparently be designed to DMRB standards capable of 50mph and associated visibility splays (i.e. 360m radius corners!).

So retro-designing them back in line with the manual for streets when they are enclosed with housing will probably require costly reconstruction or may even be impossible if swales and trees and bunds have been placed along wide margins to mitigate for speed and noise associated with the pre-existing 50mph road. If developers ‘turn their backs’ onto these roads they will not become proper residential streets.

So it’s those involved in highways funding projects who need to appreciate sense of place on streets too.

P Martin, local planning authority officer somewhere out west

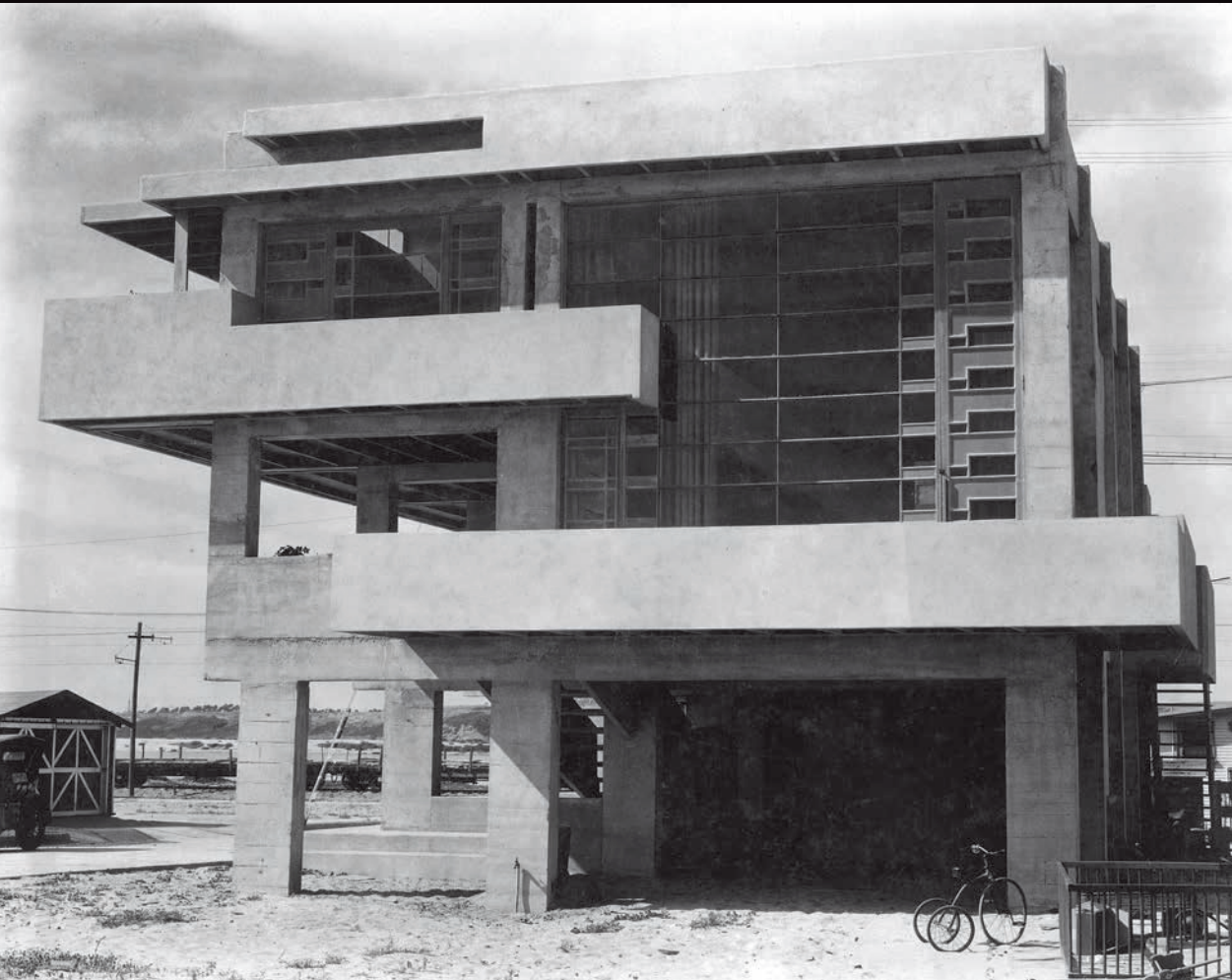
I fear this fixation with housebuilding is the only purpose of the planned reform of the planning system with its proposed zones

Nils Feldmann,
Feldmann Architects, Leicester

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The Lovell Beach House under construction
California , 1926

Rudolf Schindler (1887-1953) was one of the many Central European architects who moved to the United States in the first half of the 20th century, but unlike most of his colleagues he left his native Vienna – where he had trained with both Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos – before World War I, never to return to Europe.

The Lovell Beach House, built by the ocean in Newport Beach, is widely recognised as one of his most important works, as well as an icon of the modern movement in America. Built in reinforced concrete, it clearly reveals its structure on the street front, where the house is raised

above ground level. The two-storey living-dining area features full height windows on two sides of the house, with sea views to the south. The house was listed as a Registered Historic Place in California in 1974.

Three years later, Schindler’s client, Philip M Lovell, also commissioned the famous Lovell Health House in Los Angeles from another Austrian émigré, Richard Neutra. Both architects had a lasting influence on American residential architecture, especially in southern California.●

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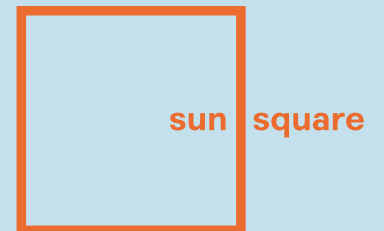
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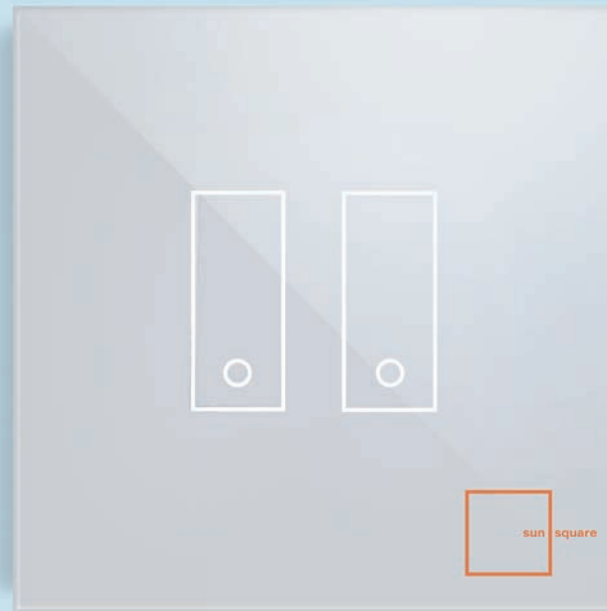
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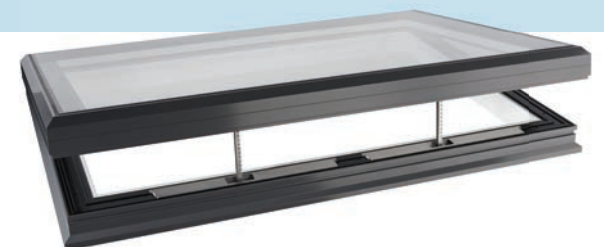
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