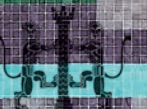


The RIBA Journal

April 2021

£15/€30/US\$35

New chapter: Hornsey Library refit
Students strike on decolonisation
Five practices to set tomorrow alight



On.

What if we were to see more than just black or white? On or off? What about the world in between them? With all its many shapes, colours and contrasts. Or in a breathless black matt.

Are we still even talking about a switch, or are we actually talking about the most exciting way to turn off the light?

Off.

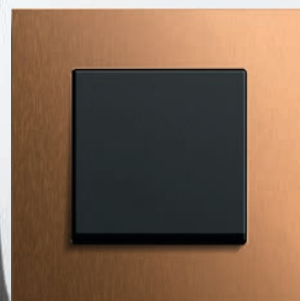


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Hornsey Library facade by Curl la Tourelle Head. Photograph by Kilian O'Sullivan

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The Inkwell, George van Heukelom's HQ for Netherlands railway

'Changing over to hydrogen means simultaneously flicking on the switch across whole regions because pipework either has hydrogen inside, or gas'

Stephen Cousins hears why green energy experts are putting their faith in electric heat pumps: ribaj.com/hydrogenpipedream

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abc Average issue circulation 26,495 ABC audited June 2020

RIBA



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Which of our Future Winners do you tip for the top? Can we decolonise architecture? Is Skyroom a solution? Join in: letters.ribaj@riba.org

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Using fillers
– housing
10

Kids uncaged
– school
20

1: Buildings

**HUMBOLDT FORUM
BERLIN**
Franco Stella
[Read the full story:
ribaj.com/humboldtforum](https://ribaj.com/humboldtforum)

Humboldt Forum, right smack in the middle of Berlin’s Museum Island, mixes exhibition and event spaces, restaurants, and administrative offices. It is a bold architectural statement but its implications go far beyond simple questions of aesthetics and urban planning. Because not only is the building itself daring – it will also house the city’s ethnological collections. Several stakeholders with wildly different perspectives are engaged in this debate, and the building has become the battleground for a vehement political discussion.

Questions are raging about how a society should deal with its past in order to move forward into the future. Should (both literal and metaphorical) skeletons stay in closets – or in this case museum archives – or should the histories of colonial exploitation be openly addressed?

The building occupies the completely razed site of the

communist seat of power, a modernist glass box, which in turn displaced the bombed 18th century Berlin Palace. The new building’s exterior is a complete reconstruction of the baroque palace, except for the modern eastern facade. This was conceived by Italian architect Franco Stella, who also came up with plans for the mostly modern interior of the Humboldt Forum. The site’s mixed use and style make an interesting approach to dealing with German history, but there is little sign of the institution being willing, or indeed equipped, to face the thorny problem of restitution.

Rarely in history has a single building caused so much controversy and contested debate. Once the world awakens from its pandemic paralysis it will be interesting to see how the public reacts to the offers Humboldt Forum makes. [Laura Helena Wurth](#)



ALEXANDER SCHIPPEL

Bumper harvest

St Mary’s Calne and Woods Bagot both have something extra in their pockets with the new library in the school orchard

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Will Pryce

The east elevation overlooks the orchard but a brick skin wraps around and behind it.



At St Mary’s Calne in Wiltshire, the new school library looks out on the gnarled fruit trees of its orchard, evoking the interweaving of books and trees as places of knowledge and imagination. Woods Bagot’s design for the private girls’ boarding school takes the idea a stage further, with tall trunks of steel branching into the roof’s faceted soffit.

The building is embedded in a soft buff water-struck brick which echoes the colours of the limestone that much of the town of Calne is built with. This wraps in a U-shape round the north, south and west facades,

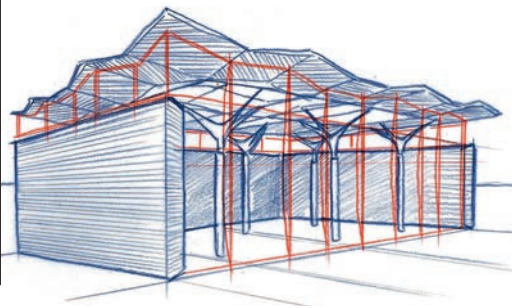


whose slim windows peer out between the bricks, turning the view away from the school service road and through the glazed eastern facade to the orchard, which is flanked by teaching buildings and one of the boarding houses. A notional moat runs around the edge of the building to deal with level changes, bridged delicately at the entrances.

An element of interest and (almost) rustication is added to the facade by the laying of projecting bricks alternately in certain areas. Then it sharpens up again as it is cut through with lines of bronze vents for fresh air intake at the base of bookshelves, and windows slicing down the facade where the free space of the book-lined library shifts into the hard-working bookends of escape stairs and cellular spaces.

The library is conceived as both an academic and a cosy place at the centre of the school. With 80 per cent of the girls boarding, it proved a popular meeting place when

Above The roof is raised up on steel ‘trees’ giving a clerestory right around the first floor (as diagram, below).



IN NUMBERS
660m²
area
JCT
form of contract

schools were open in the autumn. It is designed to work for all sorts of collaborations and conversations, from clubs and talks to reading the newspaper; as close as this school gets to a café. There are clusters of seats, a den sunk into the concrete foundations under the staircase, individual reading pods and places just to rest a book while browsing.

The soffit treatments give a sense of the difference between the ground and first floor. At ground level are neat baffles and strip lights and service trays. The first floor – with a clerestory of frameless glazing around the edge – looks up and out from beneath its canopy of timber triangles reaching off the steel trunks. The lining of books is gently put into perspective by the presence of the sky and the orchard. This library may be signalled as an academic building but the first floor will inspire dreams and imagination as much as it will diligent research.

The library has a modest place in this

Right Brick is given extra texture with a pattern of protruding bricks. And it is sharpened up by the lines of the vents and some sparing windows.

Below A place for dreaming over a book?

typically ad hoc school site of 10ha. It is part of the jumble and overseen by larger buildings. Yet it manages to bring together and complete a quadrangle around the orchard. So it becomes one of a small number of set pieces at the school, the other notable one being the recent development of a knot garden on the edge of the playing fields and the grand sixth form boarding house that overlooks the fields in a mottled, weathering timber.

The experience of timber on the sixth form boarding house perhaps holds the answer to why the ‘trees’ of the library are not designed in wood, with a likely reduction in the embodied energy. Project director Debby Ray was one of the authors of the LETI’s Climate Emergency Design Guide and reflects a little on how the building might have worked harder to reduce energy use, now there is greater awareness of these issues some years on from initial design. Perhaps less glazing to the east and the orchard would have been one move (though she admits it would ‘challenge the parti’), timber trees as structure of course and a tight rein on air tightness, contractor-depending. But there were moves to reduce the embodied carbon with precast concrete beams for the first floor, rather than

- Credits
- Client

St Mary’s Calne School
- Project manager

Equals Consulting
- Main contractor

Beard Construction
- Structural engineer

Waterman Group
- MEP consultant

Vector Design
- Quantity surveyor

Equals Consulting
- Lighting consultant

Atrium
- Fire safety consultant

Ramboll
- Facade consultant

Eckersley O’Callaghan
- Acoustic consultant

Sandy Brown
- Landscape consultant

Camlins
- CDM co-ordinator

Shore Engineering (We Make Shore)
- Approved building inspector

MLM Group

Suppliers

Furniture The Furniture Practice

Bathroom appliances

Geberit, Parklex Facade F, Parklex

Water-struck brick

Janinhoff

Engineered wood plank

Havwoods Bolon by Missoni Zig Zag, Bolon

DM entrance matting

INTRAsystems

Imola Sicily, in Natural, Bush Hammered and Etched Tile, Imola

B-Line display and book lighting

Aktiva

PVD bronze

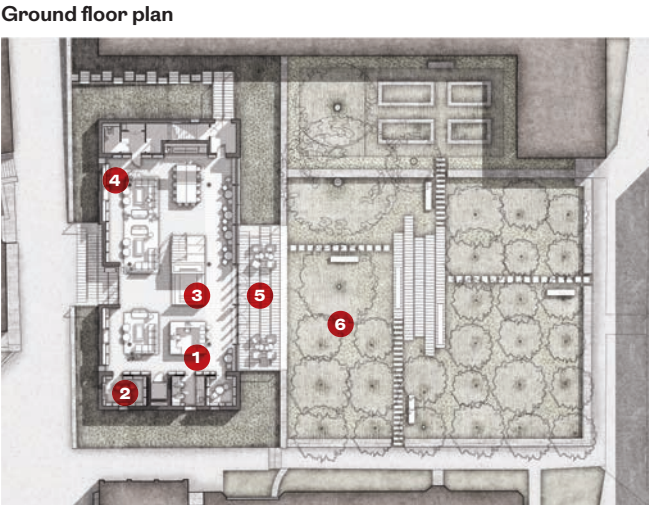
ironmongery Allgood

Mistrale natural ventilation system

Gilberts

in situ. And at least all that glazing to the east is shaded by the fruit trees.

Woods Bagot is better known for commercial fit outs in the UK. But education feels like a natural fit for Ray, who has worked in the sector with Will Alsop and at AHMM. And the practice’s team in Australia has a strong portfolio of education work. The library came to the practice through a contact in that world who had a daughter at the school – and it has spawned another project as Woods Bagot is working with the school on a science, technology, engineering and maths building, currently in development. Could this be a jumping off point for the UK firm in this sector? That remains to be seen and depends a lot on the UK’s new procurement systems and the education economy post Covid. But the library at St Mary’s Calne is a good marker in the ground for beautiful, social, almost civic, building. ●



- 1 Reception desk
- 2 Meeting room
- 3 Sunken reading space
- 4 Tea point
- 5 Terrace
- 6 Orchard



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Every little helps



Bell Phillips is doing its bit for the housing crisis, providing 77 new homes on three infill projects in east London

Words: Pamela Buxton
Photographs: Kilian O'Sullivan

Above Orwell House creates a striking infill on the 1950s Dorset Estate in Bethnal Green.

Bell Phillips Architects is no stranger to the challenges of the council housing infill site. Hari Phillips reckons they've worked on approximately 30 to planning or built stage.

'We've done a lot of car parks and garages sites – the classic infill sites. We've seen them all,' he says.

And in doing so, it tackled the particular challenges that come hand in hand with such projects. These typically include tricky consultation – understandably, no-one likes to lose their car-parking or open spaces. Often these infills are awkward sites that may have been left undeveloped for a reason, whether proximity to noisy road or railway, or for

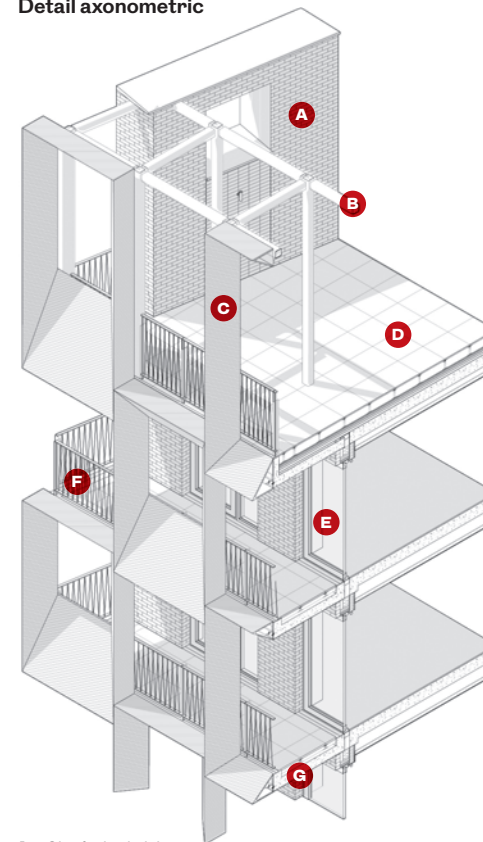
infrastructural reasons. They may well be sites with sensitive contexts, or, contrastingly, sites with a scarcity of significant, surrounding build context to work with.

Bell Phillips has just added three more car park infills to its portfolio, all for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which together provide 77 units of much-needed new social housing. In doing so, the practice has not only navigated most of these issues, but sought to address some of the residual problems of each site.

'It's like micro-surgery. In that small intervention, you're trying to repair past mistakes,' says Phillips.

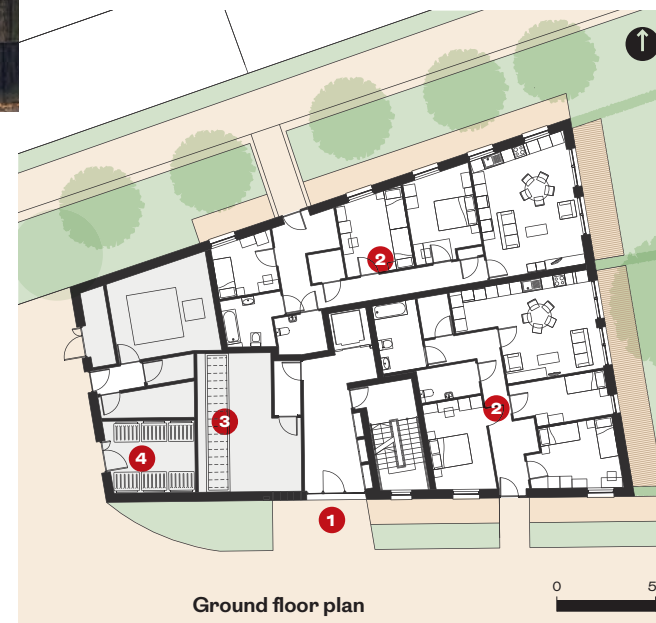
Buildings Housing

Detail axonometric



- A Clay facing brick
- B Steel support frame
- C Pigmented glass reinforced concrete panels
- D Concrete paving slabs
- E Timber aluminium composite window system
- F Galvanised steel, zig-zag format balustrade
- G Exposed concrete soffit with mineral paint finish

- 1 Main entrance
- 2 Accessible apartments with private gardens facing park
- 3 Cycle store
- 4 Refuse store



Ground floor plan



The most visually striking of the three East End projects is Orwell House on Baroness Road, a 20-unit standalone block in the Dorset Estate in Bethnal Green. Here, there was no shortage of architectural context – the modernist estate was designed by Lubetkin, Skinner and Bailey between 1951–57, and features a rich variety of scale and facade composition. The new infill nestles within these and has a rather prime position overlooking a playground and park. It is oriented to address the park while its scale mediates between that of the adjacent buildings.

There is no missing it. Rising six storeys and topped with a roof garden, the otherwise simple grey brick building is adorned with pink, glass-fibre reinforced concrete screens overlooking the park on the east and at the entrance on the west. Designed in reference to the chequerboard design of two nearby buildings on the host estate, this faceted grid acts as a frame to the balcony, with

alternating solid and open balustrades giving a combination of privacy and openness.

Is the colour too much? I'd say not. It's certainly bold and confident – the pink tones surprisingly well with the nearby red brick of some of its neighbouring buildings and makes a pleasing focal point. The contrasting red metal frame behind the panels, however, does jar a little when glimpsed from behind along the sides of the new block.

'We were trying to emulate, but not ape, the older buildings,' says Bell Phillips associate John Lineen, adding that while the intention was for the infill to fit in, there was also the desire to announce the presence of the new social housing, and this the screen certainly does.

'It's a very simple building. The screens were a way of mitigating the monotony of the facade, in the same way pattern was used to break down the scale of the original estate buildings,' he says.

Above The design of the glass-fibre reinforced concrete screens evolved from studies of neighbouring facades.

Right All flats at Orwell House are dual aspect, with living spaces linked externally by balcony.

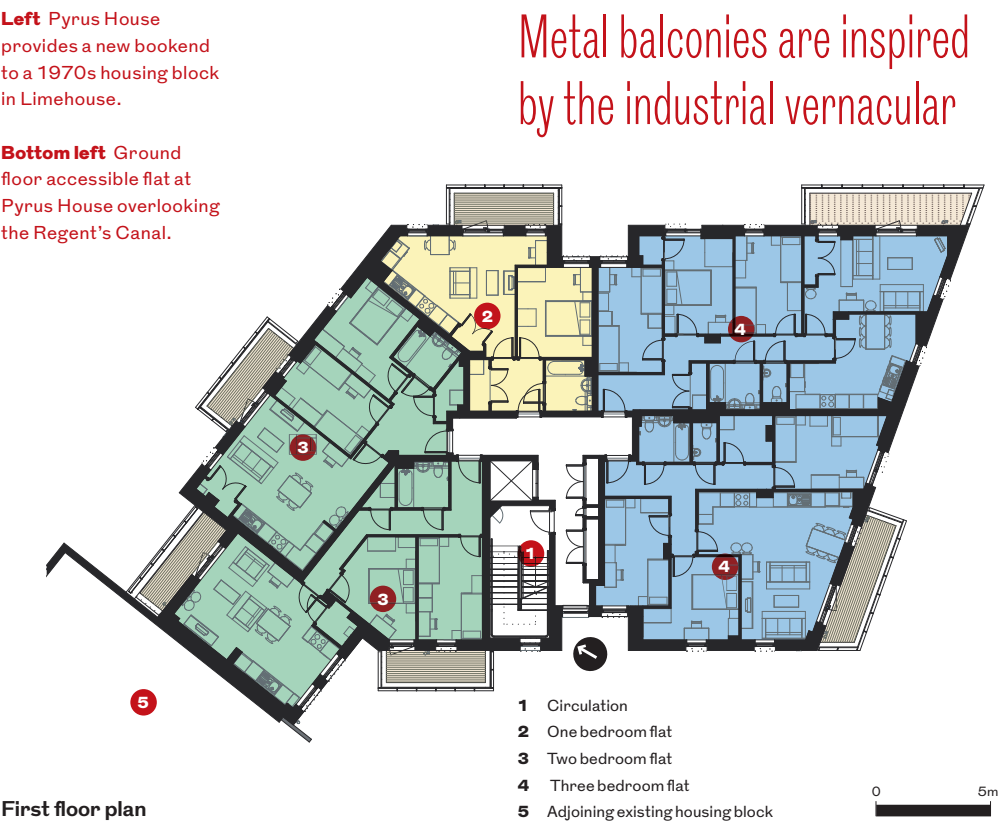
The pink tones well with the red brick of some of its neighbouring buildings





Left Pyrus House provides a new bookend to a 1970s housing block in Limehouse.

Bottom left Ground floor accessible flat at Pyrus House overlooking the Regent's Canal.



First floor plan



Pyrus House negotiates a tough infill site bounded by road, railway bridge and canal.



Metal balconies are inspired by the industrial vernacular

At the 1970s Locksley Estate in Limehouse, there was no such notable post-war architecture to bounce off. Instead, there was plenty of infrastructure, with the end-of-block site bounded by the Regent's Canal, a Victorian railway viaduct and a road. Underground utilities are a classic complicating factor for infill development, and here the big issue was the proximity of a large gas main, which governed the positioning of the new development towards the southern edge of the site, with a communal garden instead over the gas main area. The new 33-unit Pyrus House infill rises seven to eight storeys and forms a new, active end stop to the rectilinear block, which previously halted in a blank facade overlooking the car park. Unlike the other two infills, 64% rather than 100% of the flats are dual-aspect, although it does include a number of generous family duplexes on the top floors with two balconies.

It is the first of two – another block is planned at the other end of the estate. The interventions share the same architectural language – brick clad with soldier course detailing and assertive metal balconies inspired by both the viaduct and the local industrial vernacular. The completed block is faceted in form to allow it to address a variety of aspects from its position at a kink in the canal. Robust rather than elegant, this is an appropriately weighty response to a tough context.

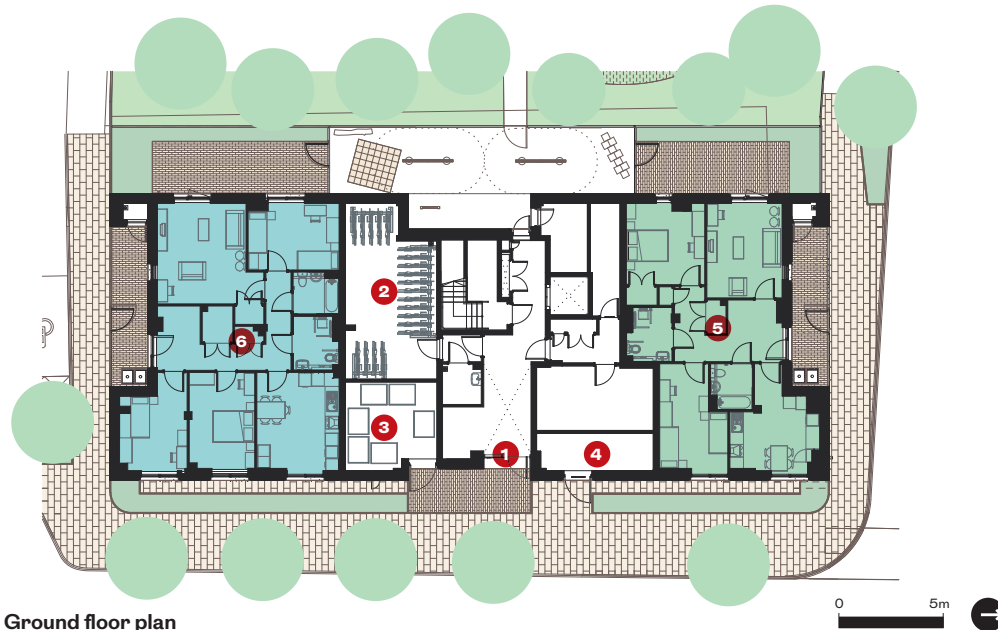


- 1 Entrance
- 2 Cycle storage
- 3 Refuse
- 4 Plant room
- 5 Two-bed flat
- 6 Three-bed flat

It's a good building that's not drawing attention to itself. It just holds the square

Above Levitas House redevelops a former car park to form a fourth, built side to complete Jubilee Square.

Bottom right Entrance to Levitas House, which provides 24 new council homes.



Ground floor plan

The third infill site, Levitas House on Jubilee Street in Stepney, provides 24 council homes in a seven-storey development. With less built immediate context to work with, Bell Phillips performed some urban repair, creating the missing fourth side to an existing garden square. The result provides a more sheltered environment for the central playground and park. It's not a show-stopper, but then it isn't meant to be. The architect was keen to achieve a good piece of background architecture, with the building stepping up and then down to meet the park. The rhythm of the deep, brick clad balconies animates the yellow brick facade to create a quiet, unshowy gravitas. Three different brick bonds add subtle variety.

'It's a good building that's not too ostentatious – it's not drawing attention to itself. It just holds the square,' says Phillips.

Despite the inherently tricky, and often expensive-to-develop nature of many council infill sites, Phillips reckons it's becoming easier to achieve good results for council-developed housing. 'There are challenges, but councils are more experienced now and more aware of how they can get a good quality product out of the design and build process,' he says. 'They are invested. They retain the homes and its their tenants, so they are more concerned with the quality of the product.'

With the second Locksley Estate intervention and several other affordable housing projects due to start on site this year, it won't be long before Bell Phillips extends its infill portfolio even further. ●



60s library swings again

Curl la Tourelle Head Architecture has sensitively refurbished Hornsey's much-loved public facility

Words: Elain Harwood Photographs: Kilian O'Sullivan

Hornsey Library is a modest triumph of the 1960s that deserves to be better known. Much used and loved locally, its architects – Frank Ley and GFS Jarvis – were modest local men. The building was never published in the architectural press, and most experts on the period had never heard of it until it was threatened with closure in 2000. Then a local resident campaigned successfully to have the building grade II listed. Twenty years on, it has been sensitively refurbished and finally recognised.

The building

Until 1965, north London's tranquil suburbs of Muswell Hill and Crouch End had their own borough council, named after the oldest settlement in the area. Dubbed 'healthy Hornsey', it was Conservative yet progressive, preserving local woodland in the 1930s and building a modern town hall in the style made fashionable by Willem Dudok at Hilversum in the Netherlands. The library followed on the street behind in 1963-5 when the council splashed the last of its cash before merging with (Labour) Wood Green and Tottenham to form the London Borough of Haringey. A fountain by Thomas B Huxley-Jones features bronze reliefs outlining Hornsey and its medieval church tower

while a window on the main staircase is etched with a decorative map by Fred Mitchell of Hornsey School of Art.

While it never appeared in the architectural press, Hornsey Library was acclaimed in the Library Association's own journal. For years the association had run trips to Denmark to see the latest in library planning, but it was only in 1960 that a library in Britain was built on the same progressive lines. Holborn Library featured separate children's and reference libraries, a lecture room with its own coffee bar, and – most importantly – its lending library was on two levels. By introducing a gallery for all save the most popular books, the main floor could be left open for exhibitions and talks, with comfy chairs where visitors could relax.

So influential was Holborn that this sounds unexceptional today. Hornsey was one of the first to adopt the formula on a larger site. The double-height lending library is to the left of the broad entrance, with the reference library and lecture hall to the right, placed above the separate children's library and reached via a wide staircase or a lift. Ley and Jarvis's detailing was also rather Scandinavian, somewhat old-fashioned in the heyday of brutalism, but perhaps more inventive. The building's precast panels have



HORNSEY JOURNAL

Right main From the front, Hornsey Library entrance restored but adapted inside.

Right Opening of Hornsey Library on 5 March 1965 by Princess Alexandra.



an abstract pattern resembling raindrops running off a series of blinds and there is a colourful mosaic. The bookcases are brightly coloured and the two staircases boldly cranked, each split into two flights and featuring open terrazzo treads.

The refurbishment

The library’s renovation by Curl la Tourelle Head Architecture is a sensitive one, improving the building’s thermal performance with a new roof, windows and heating system. Inside, the architect has introduced a lift to give access to the lending library balcony and made a clever alteration to the popular children’s library to add space. But the brief recognised that any grand gesture was inappropriate as well as unaffordable. Most of the original features have been preserved, while carefully chosen additional lighting and furniture fit with its 1960s look – a little bit Scandinavian, a little bit Mary Quant.

Curl la Tourelle Head’s first concern was to repair the building envelope to eliminate leaks and draughts. Spalling to the concrete panels may look unseemly, but was deemed not to harm the building’s performance so has been left. Instead money was spent on a new and insulated roof. More difficult was the replacement of the glazing to improve thermal performance, for there are large windows to the street and a full system of curtain walling around an internal courtyard behind the main staircase. The replacement is double-glazed with an anodised aluminium finish but follows the pattern of the old, and it still has opening windows giving natural ventilation – particularly useful in Covid times. The most difficult part, job architect Richard Taylor explains, was to carefully ease out Mitchell’s etched panel from the old curtain walling and put it back into the new. That pane is still a single sheet and it is hard to imagine the delicate operation that has left it looking untouched. The courtyard garden has also been restored so it can be used again, a good example of the care taken on little details that give pleasure.

The interiors

The main internal reconfiguration is to the entrance hall and children’s library. Crouch End is popular with young families, and the children’s library also works with local schools, particularly one for children with learning difficulties. It was made bigger by



Above and left The terrazzo tread staircase to the upper balcony of the lending library.

IN NUMBERS

£2.7m
total contract cost

1,265 m²
GIFA

£2,000
GIFA cost per m²

35.9
(116tCO₂)
predicted
kgCO₂/m³ in use

29kWp
rooftop PV array installed

4,780
linear metres
bookshelf capacity
(including basement)

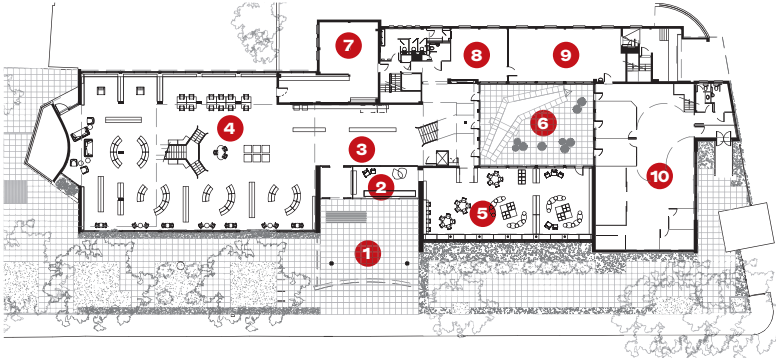


Section

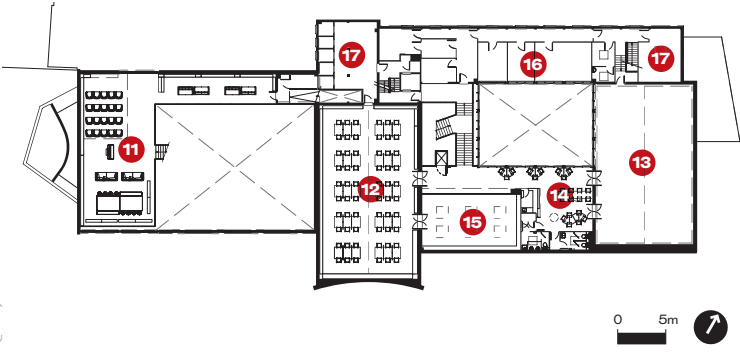
- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Cantilevered entranceway | 7 Staff office | 13 Exhibition hall |
| 2 Children's sensory media and reading room | 8 Buggy store | 14 Cafe |
| 3 Reception 'shopfront' | 9 Community room | 15 Community and youth music library |
| 4 Main library | 10 Tenanted area | 16 Offices and community rooms |
| 5 Children's library | 11 Library mezzanine and silent cinema | 17 Storage |
| 6 Zen courtyard garden | 12 Study room | |

Additional lighting and furniture fit with its 1960s look – a little bit Scandinavian, a little bit Mary Quant

Ground floor plan



First floor plan



Left Spalling on the original patterned concrete exterior has been left so resources could be prioritised on improving the performance of the roof and other parts.

Right View through into the upgraded children's library with its sunburst entranceway. The internal courtyard is visible beyond.



halving the originally very broad entrance. The remaining half will be used for self-serve equipment so readers can check books in and out themselves; the old desk where a librarian once sat in all-seeing splendour will be replaced by roaming staff, thought to be more helpful. New display shelving is chunky plywood, economical but with a nod to Alvar Aalto. The other half of the entrance has been used to create a space for children’s storytelling and events, separated by a new glazed screen and fitted with the latest video, audio and sensory technology. It is linked to the main children’s library, where the entrance is now through an illuminated golden arch, a sunburst through which the young users totter forth from their new buggy park. There are new book bins and low shelving on wheels, comfortable yet wipe-clean flooring and seating, as well as hanging lights.

The other major change is the introduction of a lift behind the entrance display to serve the balcony, part of which houses teenage collections and music. Otherwise the emphasis has been on repair rather than renewal. Bookcases have been restored in a labour of love which involved salvaging and reassembling bottom boards, panels and parapets from those deemed beyond repair. A similar but still more delicate operation in the former reference library involved cleaning the Perspex pelmets to the perimeter bookcases and restoring their concealed lighting, which casts a warm reflective light up the walls. The charming but tiny desks, each cranked to give a little space from its neighbour, have been moved to the café area and replaced by more practical tables with plugs and connectors. The café counter has been repaired, but otherwise it and the lecture room are little changed. IT has been upgraded throughout and is a major part of the building’s transformation. Enhanced LED lighting in the form of hanging globes is inspired by the original fixtures.

Money has only been spent where it shows, and the rear staff rooms – always rather tight – are little altered. However, inefficient heating has been replaced by a low NOx boiler along with a 29kWp rooftop system of photovoltaics. Based on initial use from late 2020, carbon emissions related to regulated energy consumption are predicted at 35.9kgCO₂/m² annually, a reduction of 49 per cent, remarkable for a building with a very stretched-out plan and a lot of glazing. ●



Above and top The children’s library with its new sunny entrance, colourful book bins, seating and flooring.

Credits
Architect Curl la Tourelle Head Architecture
Client London Borough of Haringey
Structural engineer Price & Myers
M&E consultant WME Boom

Quantity surveyor Fulkers
Building surveyor and principal designer OCR Surveying
Heritage consultant Burrell Foley Fischer
Lighting consultant Lichtvision
Main contractor T&B Contractors



Right 1960s original shelving has been restored, but lighting has been replaced with LED versions inspired by the original.

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Magic box on the docks

It's the 3D inventive playground that's the biggest surprise at XDGA's Melopee school in Ghent

Words: Koen Van Syngel Photographs: Maxime Delvaux

A primary school, after-school care centre, nursery and – at the top – indoor and outdoor sports facilities for both school and neighbourhood: at Melopee, in Ghent, all are stacked together in an urban biotope where architecture becomes landscape in a 'green' building.

Designed by Xaveer De Geyter Architects (XDGA), the new building has been baptised 'Melopee', after a poem written by Paul Van Ostayen, one of the Lowlands' greatest modernist poets. The verse captures well the still, canalside nature of Ghent's Old Docks, on whose quays the new facility has been built. Playing a major role in the 19th century during the city's industrialisation, the docks' recent history proved to be less poetic; and when the port facility was moved further out to deeper waters, they were left behind, somewhat marooned.

In 2004, the city's development administration, AGSOB, launched an urban development competition 'City design for the Old Docks project area', which was won by Dutch firm OMA. It proposed a clever 'chopstick' model, in which buildings along the



Seen from across the canal, the school resembles a giant Rubik's Cube, and is of similar complexity.

Opposite At Ghent's Melopee school, many functions are stacked within its steel grid box – and that includes the playground.

waterside were interspersed with fingers of green public spaces. The plan created ‘fluid’ green spaces bringing more ‘air’ and quality from the waterfront deeper into the masterplan area.

The Old Docks is an important part of Ghent. This quarter will get about 3000 new dwellings which, in a city of just 260,000 inhabitants, counts as a sizeable development. As well as extra offices, it was obvious that this new city quarter also needed such public services such as a school, nursery and sport facilities, with the result that this ‘city building’ was conceived and planned in the heart of the development area.

To grasp the genius loci of this place, it’s crucial to understand that some years after OMA’s urban plan was embedded in the masterplan, the city was keen to promote cultural activities on the site. From 2011 onwards, temporary ‘occupations’ became the order of the day and cultural activities began taking place on sites along the Schipperskaai, making this area ‘a site for relaxation and creative manoeuvres’. The so-called DOK summers became real and regular attractions, with cosy flea markets, performances, and visitors just chilling on the urban beach.

The city encouraged the Old Docks’ meanwhile uses to open up this formerly quite closed area and to show its potential as a lively, inspiring and adventurous area. Its historic buildings and harbour infrastructure were envisaged to be used as anchor points in the new city quarter. It was an approach that was the antithesis to the modernist paradigm of tabula rasa and the creation of strictly zoned, monofunctional areas; and it’s fair to say that XDGA took on these aspirations as part of the design essence of Melopee.

Site plan The school is part of a larger OMA-led masterplan for the Old docks area of Ghent.

Right Playground areas, including the slide sand pit, slip around within the steel structure.



IN NUMBERS

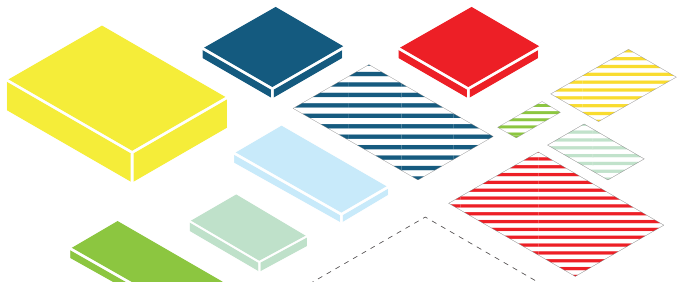
€10m
construction cost

2625m²
plot area

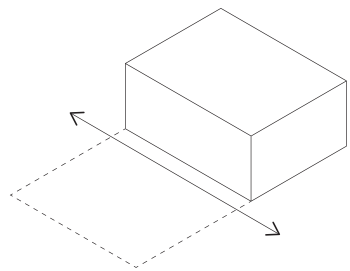
4630m²
interior area

3050m²
exterior area

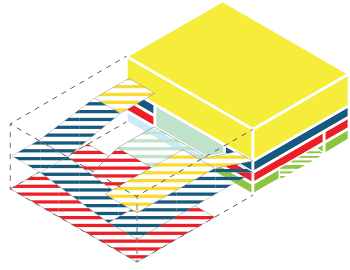
De Geyter started his career at OMA but, since founding XDGA, has built an international reputation for unpretentious, tough experimental architecture and urban design. Beside his practice as an architect and urbanist, in 2002 De Geyter has written After Sprawl, in which he examines the phenomenon of urban sprawl. Via his research he distilled a method for analysing spatial hallmarks of today’s city and investigated new ways to supplant old urban strategies. Rather than just complaining about sprawl, he explores ‘the cracks’ in the urban condition and turns them into opportunities to create spatial quality. To do this he has developed different interventions, formulated in such keywords



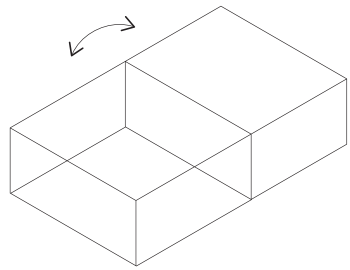
Program + plot



Passage



Compactness



2x volumes

Diagram showing
stacked programme

- Nursery
- Primary school
- Kindergarten + after-school
- Administration
- Refectory
- Sports hall + cafe

Below Exterior spaces readily connect back to interior ones, making the journey through the building a fluid event.

Bottom right Melopee is both a school and a social facility for the new dockside community.



The hall, on the first floor, opens up to a big terrace from which kids can slide down to the ground floor

as: shift, overlay,insert, hide, frame, found, connect, array and add.

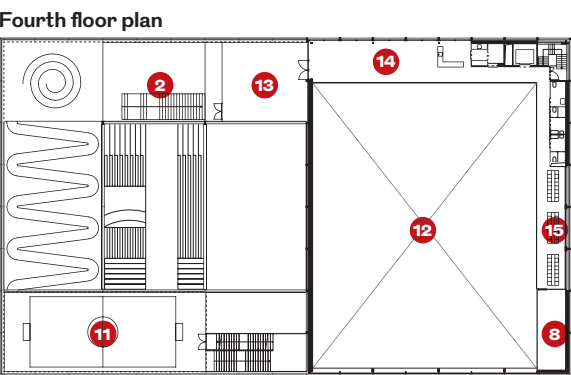
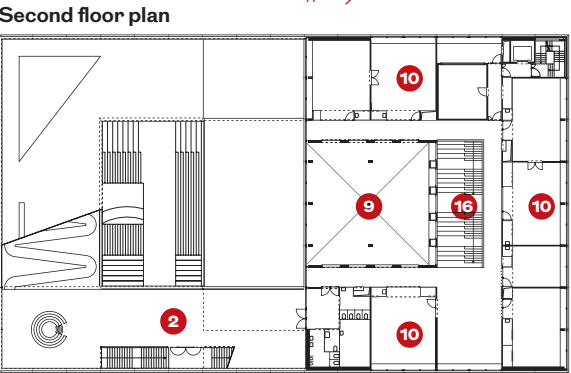
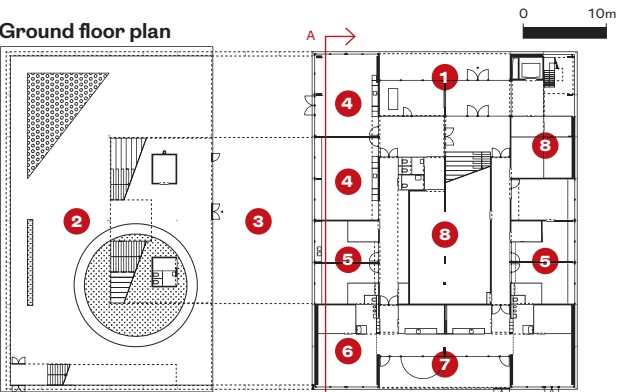
Here at Melopee, it looks like XDGA implemented this urbanistic practice as a tool for creating a building, despite the fact that the practice was facing quite a challenge. The school, after school care centre and sports facilities were given a relatively small plot of land. Not only that, but the masterplan demanded a public right of way through the site. This complicated the school’s layout, particularly the organisation of a controlled, observed playground for pupils. It was clear that on the ground floor, a link between building and playground limited, if not impossible.

XDGA responded with enthusiasm, developing a 3D playground stretched out over five floors. Some of these are curved or inclined planes, over which a path meanders between plants, creating the illusion of a hill. All the playgrounds are attributed a certain colour or geometrical structure, as if the architect has translated the principles of human structures and archetypes that Aldo van Eyck applied at the playgrounds he designed for Amsterdam city government between 1947 and 1978.

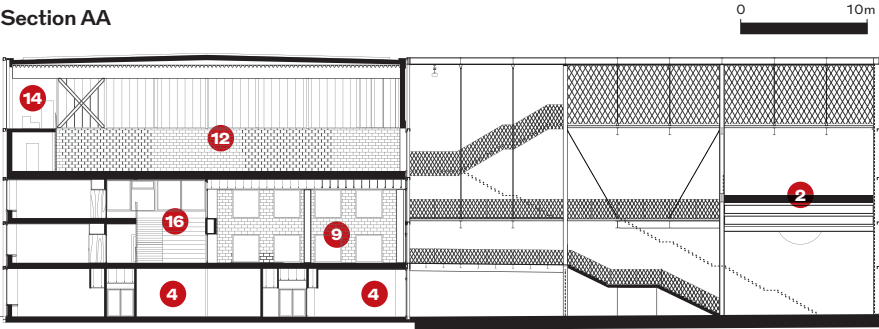
Given the playgrounds’ surface treatment, set in the grid of concrete and steel, the perception of and tactility of the space seems driven by the mineral, abstract language of Zen gardens. Rocks are scattered like a Richard Long land art installation, while a circular sandbox is cut out of the concrete floor. But this sandbox is used also as the landing pit for a set of slides, situated alongside the steps to the first floor.

The magic of these playgrounds, whirling down from the fourth floor, is that they are connected,





- Key**
- 1 School entrance
 - 2 Playground
 - 3 Public passage
 - 4 Staff room
 - 5 Office areas
 - 6 Daycare centre/relax areas
 - 7 Daycare entrance
 - 8 Technical spaces
 - 9 Refectory and hall
 - 10 Primary classrooms
 - 11 Outdoor pitch
 - 12 Sports hall
 - 13 Terrace
 - 14 Cafe/viewing area
 - 15 Grandstand
 - 16 Break out/social area



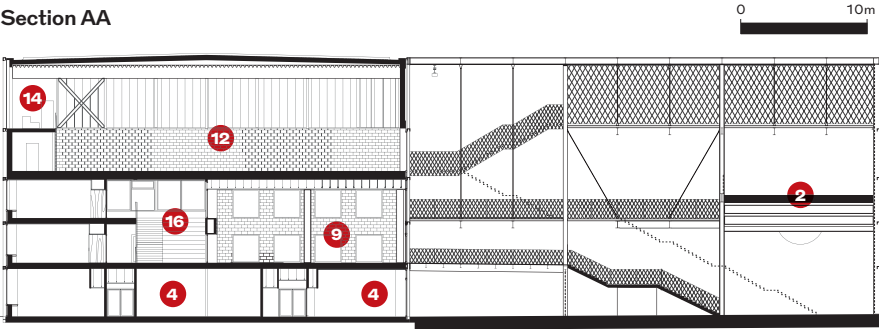
Above An internal grandstand over the sports hall leads directly to the playground spaces outside.

Bottom left Views out from the sports hall show the inter-relationships of internal with external spaces in the building.

framed in a huge, 'green' cage; all these outdoor spaces read as part of one big stacked room. As the outdoor space takes half of the plot, XDGA decided to frame this within a fence with climbing plants. Strategically placed cut-outs create windows on the urban landscape and connect the inside with the city centre; and the structure of the fence echoes the steel structure of the building. Simple use of I-beams creates a spatial grid integrating building and playground. Beams passing over the playground imply a notional 'ceiling', lending a pleasant intimacy.

Surprisingly, the playful structure of open and closed surfaces of the building and the playground possesses an elegance reminiscent of Terragni's 1936 Casa del Fascio but with the physical complexity of a Rubik's Cube. Here, the internal pivot mechanism is replaced by a double height multi-functional hall, which can be used as indoor playground, cafeteria, theatre, etc. The hall is situated on the first floor, and opens up to a big terrace from which kids can slide down to the ground floor. Formed of pink-coloured brick, it acts like vibrant theatre, overlooked through large glazed panels by classrooms and the corridors that serve them. But with its glazed panels and the spaces' general open character, there's a pleasant continuum suggesting that classroom and corridor can be used as one pedagogical space.

Section AA



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A challenge for the architect was to create an ‘open school’ that was accessible after hours for local people to use. An indoor sports hall on the third floor can be reached via a lift or stairs in the corner of the main building; from here it is also possible to break out over the terraces of the 3D-playground as part of the escape route. This becomes a key feature, creating a direct connection between the indoor sports hall and the outdoor basketball court ‘hanging’ in the green cage. Here, the architect arranged the services on two sides around it, to create a balcony above one wing from which the games can be watched. Making a balcony not only introduces an additional key function to the escape route, it also visually connects the hall with the wider landscape of the city.

The Rubik’s Cube analogy fits this building well, because the spatial layout provokes a dynamic spatial condition that triggers curiosity, exploration and play. Stimulating pedagogies aside, XDGA has, at Melopee, suggested an alternative to the institutional and traumatic format of school design. ●

Below Visual associations with Terragni’s work are not out of place here.

Right Games of surface and structure play out on the interior, like the refectory, as well as the exterior.



Credits
Client Sogent
Architect XDGA (Xaveer De Geyter Architects)
Structural engineer Ney & Partners
Mechanical engineer Studiebureau Boydens
Acoustic engineer Daidalos Peutz ingenieursbureau
Contractor BAM Contractors

Below Melopee as a contemporary, municipal intervention in the broader master plan of Ghent’s Old Docks area.



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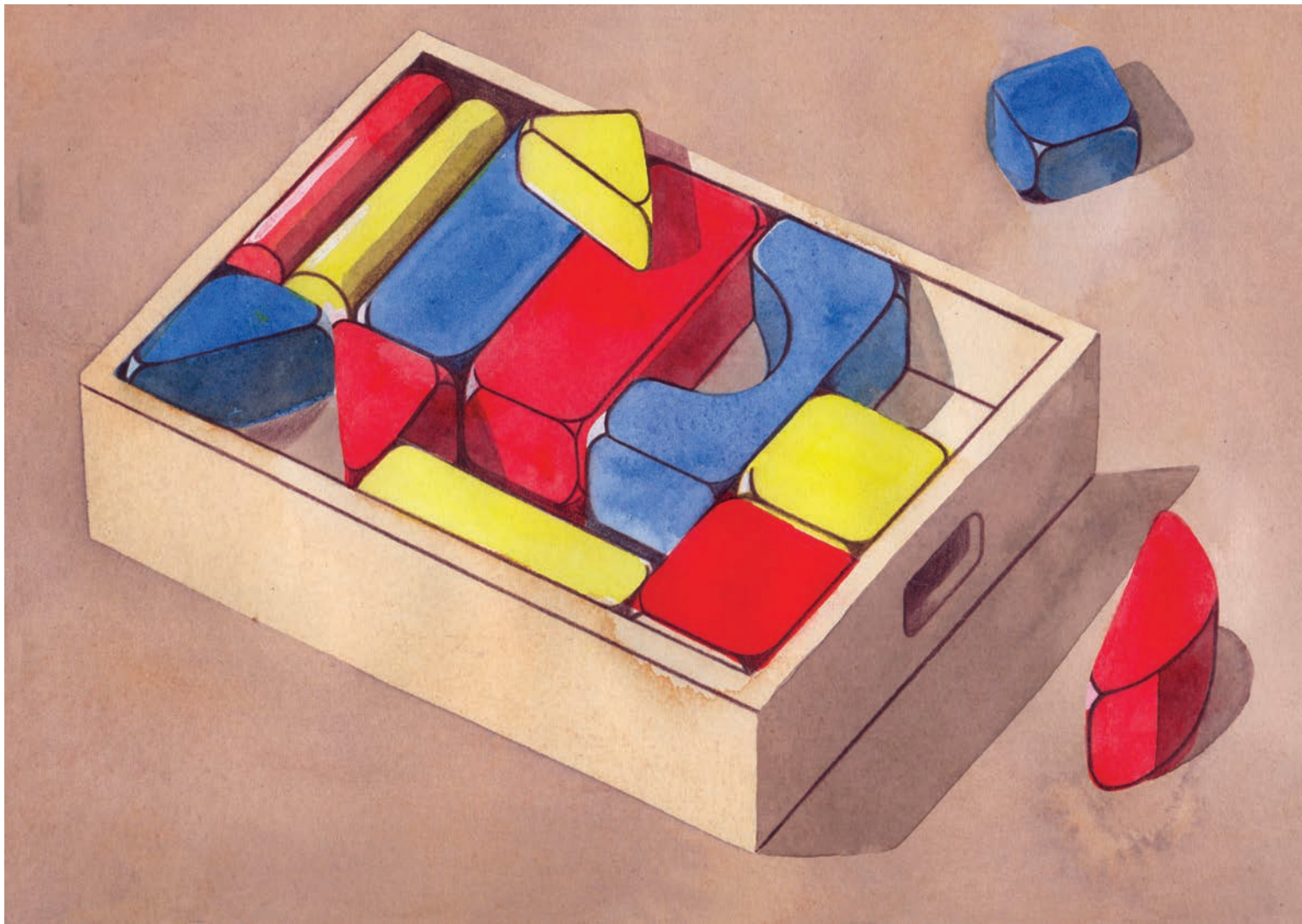
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Shovelling off risk has to stop – but how?

A shift from minimum compliance to ownership and responsibility for safety is needed for construction to move on after Grenfell, and that starts with procurement, heard the final discussion in the Rebooting Construction series



TOBY MORISON

Risk and cost are words that have come to dominate the construction industry's contractual relationships. In its attempts to minimise both, however, the industry has left the greatest risk and cost to be borne by the people who live in its buildings, both at Grenfell Tower and other blocks currently deemed unsafe.

In her Building a Safer Future report, published in the wake of the Grenfell fire, Dame Judith Hackitt highlighted the importance of contractual relationships. 'The procurement process kick-starts the

Other countries are really, truly using BIM, using a profit share model around the whole project, with everyone involved

behaviours that we then see throughout design, construction, occupation and maintenance,' she wrote. 'The agreements made determine the relationships between those commissioning buildings, those constructing buildings and those occupying buildings'.

Hackitt's proposed route to resetting those behaviours and relationships is a new regulatory framework spanning procurement, design and construction, with defined roles and responsibilities in the project team. For higher risk residential

buildings, she proposes a 'golden thread' of information, which would accompany the building through its lifetime, and three gateway points for risk assessment during project delivery – at pre-planning, pre-construction and handover stages.

Cultural change required

But in her interim report, Hackitt issues a warning to the industry, writing, 'Changes to the regulatory regime will help, but on their own will not be sufficient unless we can change the culture away from one of doing the minimum required for compliance, to one of taking ownership and responsibility for delivering a safe system throughout the life cycle of a building'. Construction's flawed relationships and culture were acknowledged by those from different sides of the industry taking part in the recent round table discussion, Rebooting Construction in the UK, hosted by RIBA Journal in association with Hilti. But participants had varying views on how they could be remedied.

Design and build came in for criticism from Hackitt in her interim report, described as 'particularly problematic in facilitating evolutionary design, which fails to be properly documented or reviewed'.

'Design and build can be made to work with the right mechanisms and the resources but it does create certain difficulties in experience,' said professor John Cole, member of the RIBA expert advisory group on fire safety. 'Quite often that's to do with the appointment of an employer representative, in my experience usually being a quantity surveyor or a QS with project manager experience, but rarely someone with technical or detailed design knowledge. And yet they have the responsibility of ensuring that what is actually implemented on site is compliant with the employer's requirements.'

Clients often lack the industry understanding to procure buildings properly, Cole said, contrasting the 75

Often architects that are novated keep trying to pass risk down the line

contractor design portions on a project he recently reviewed with the 15 on a similar project a decade ago. 'Something like 65% of a building's construction value is being designed by people you [the client] don't even know,' he said. 'The subcontractors haven't been appointed, their designers haven't been appointed. Yet you think you've gone through a procurement process that protects you.'

Design and build – referred to by some contractors tellingly as 'design and dump' – is commonly misunderstood, said Will Freeman, design director at Wates and non-executive board member of the Architects Registration Board. 'There is a misconception around how D&B can support the industry and also why it gets a bad name,' he said. 'The contractor employs an architect to take on the design liability, but often architects that are novated don't seem to fully understand that and are constantly trying to pass risks down the line. That needs to be addressed.'

Total BIM

Gary Neal, head of fire at Skanska, argued for greater use of digital design tools, saying, 'We've got no excuse nowadays. Why can't we design a building completely before we've actually stuck a shovel in the ground?'. The point was picked up by Paul Langford, global head of fire protection at Hilti. 'Some projects we've been involved in recently in other countries are really, truly using BIM, using a profit share model around the whole project and they've got everyone – from client to subcontractors – involved in those BIM models,' he said. 'The feedback is that the process has worked out cheaper than if they'd used a conventional approach, so there are models out there that show you

can have collaborative design, especially using BIM as a catalyst.'

Al Beevers, head of health and safety at Argent, went further and proposed an integrated approach to design procurement. 'We should be paying for more co-ordinated, complete building designs, rather than an MEP design and a structural design and an architectural design, almost all done in isolation,' he said.

Early engagement

Finally, the case for earlier engagement was set out by Neil Farrance, partner at Formation Architects. 'I would suggest that early engagement has the potential to reduce costs and abortive work, it reduces the amount of doubling up and reduces inefficiency,' he said. 'It enables the people who are going to be responsible for procuring the packages and building it to input on buildability and there can be a genuine focus on value engineering in the genuine sense of the term; looking to achieve value for money rather than simply trying to cut corners and find ways of saving money.'

He continued: 'Design and dump is often used by clients to try and reduce their own risk, their own exposure, whether it's risk to cost or risk to time, and place that risk with other people. But it doesn't necessarily result in a cheaper building and certainly doesn't result in a better one. There's much greater potential to improve quality, buildability, efficiency, competence, save time and reduce risk.' While participants had differing views on the industry's way ahead, Farrance's words suggested a positive vision for the future. ●

A full list of fire safety round table attendees was published in the first of this series of four in RIBA J, January 2021 (p42-43).

Perspectives on competency and insurance appeared in the February and March issues.



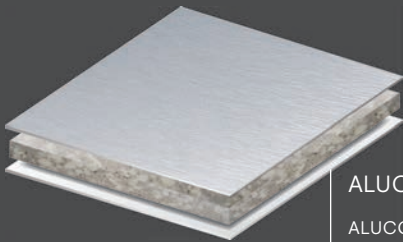
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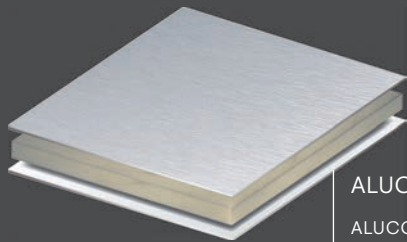


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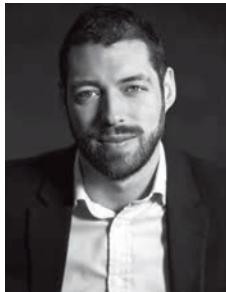
User friendly
– Plan of Use
39

2: Intelligence



Places, planning
& community

Jonathan Manns



The parliamentary Suburban Taskforce has published its first report. Jonathan Manns, who chairs its advisory board, discusses progress on investigating the suburbs

What is the Suburban Taskforce? Why is it needed?

Over the last 30 years there has been a focus on central urban areas. City centres and the countryside have their advocates, but suburbs – where most of us live – haven't received the attention they deserve. The taskforce was established by a cross-party group of MPs and Lords, aided by our knowledge partner UCL and an advisory board, and with government support. It started with open questions: can we define suburbs, what are the key debates, and what policy responses might be needed?

What has the taskforce been doing?

The current phase of research looks at London, where growth pressures are most significant. We initially studied the capital as a whole and then looked at case study boroughs – Sutton and Waltham Forest. We've run a quantitative assessment, pooling data from Estates Gazette, Knight Frank, Colliers and so forth. There's also been qualitative research with a public call for evidence between August and October 2020, in addition to interviews and roundtables.

What are the key findings?

What emerged is that suburbs display various characteristics – to do with scale, connectivity, land use, density and social infrastructure, for example. This cautions against a one-size-fits-all approach and might help to inform the ways we think about change. It's perhaps not surprising that many public responses indicated support for growth if it's linked to improved public services and respectful of local character: a phrase that crops up repeatedly is 'gentle densification'. Capturing these perceptions and contextualising them in new data also helps to produce informed discussions.

Does the pandemic change the picture?

A lot of our data is historic and so describes the period before Covid. We can't simply project those patterns into the future, but equally it is not yet clear how they will change, or for how long. For example, more people are looking at moving to suburbs, but we don't know whether this will continue once we're all vaccinated. It nonetheless underlines the importance of our research.

What are the next steps?

Our data and analysis will feed into meetings of the taskforce and others over the coming months, to be informed by further data analysis. In the summer we will publish a report which draws the research together and contains specific conclusions and recommendations.

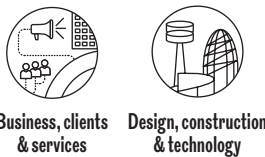
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Non-Western architecture was notoriously caricatured as the stunted lower branches on the 'Tree of Architecture' drawn by Banister Flight Fletcher

How a new post-colonial edition of Banister Fletcher's book was updated for the modern world: ribaj.com/post/colonialfletcher



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



Affordable room up top

As Skyroom’s £100 million plan to drop keyworker housing onto city buildings starts to become a reality, how do architects get in on the action?

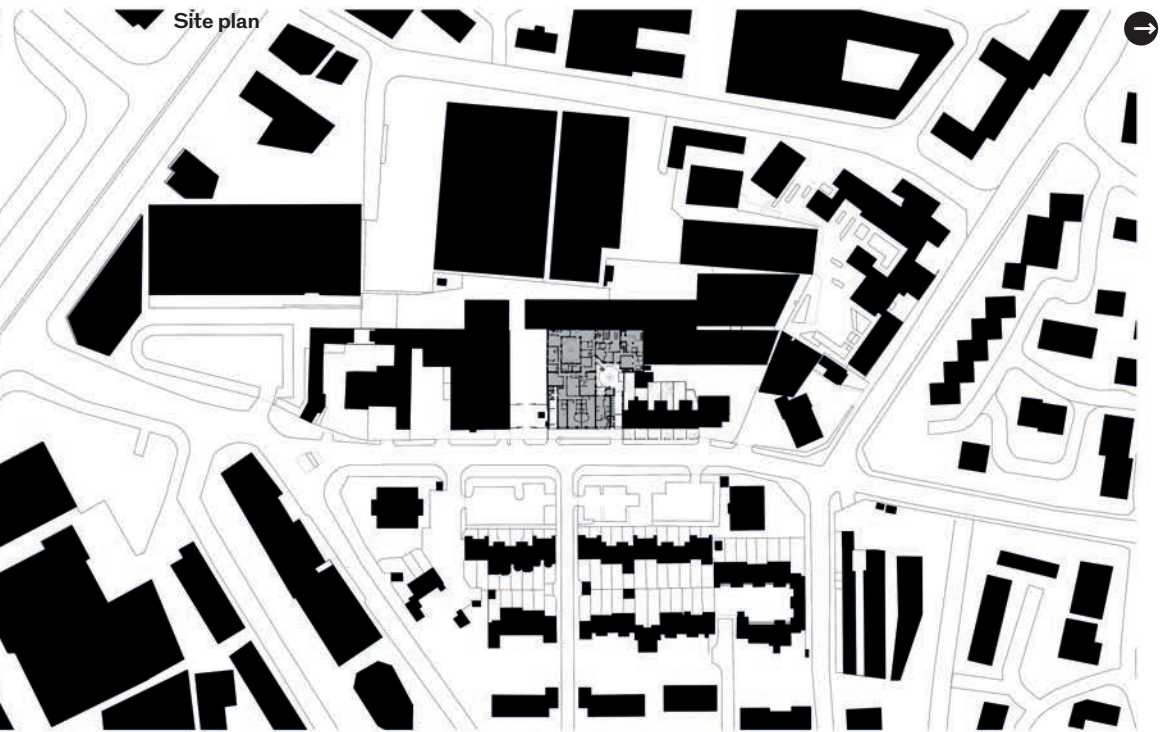
Below Skyroom’s first live project, four storeys in Bermondsey, designed by TDO architecture.



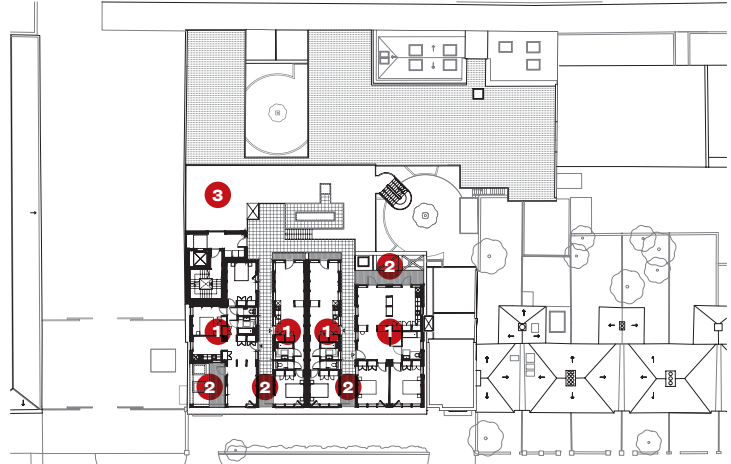
Michèle Woodger

In 2019 an Ipsos Mori poll asked members of the public to identify who in society they trust the most. More than two years and one pandemic later, it’s not difficult to see why nurses, doctors and teachers enjoyed almost 100% of that trust. In 2018 a poll of 15 year-olds also put these professions, plus police officer, within the top five most-aspired-to careers. They are least likely to be an unpopular new resident within an existing community... assuming they haven’t been priced out of the housing market there. London has the highest rate of teachers leaving the profession. The capital’s key workers typically spend over 60% of their income on housing. 62% are looking to move, often citing unaffordability and punishing commutes: hardly statistics to be proud of.

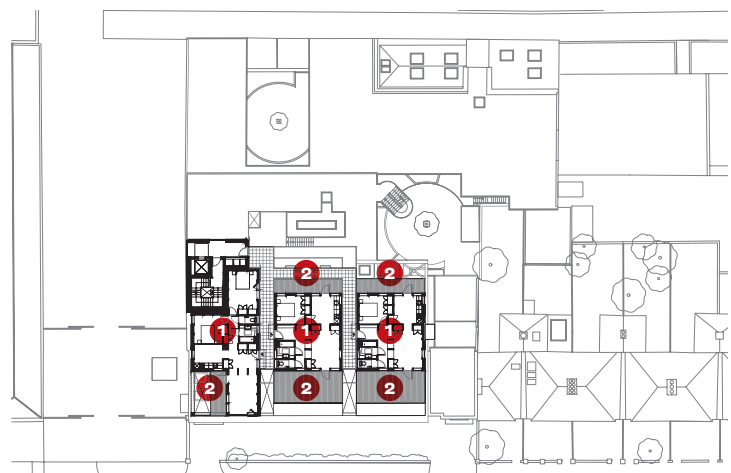
But things don’t have to be this bleak. A one hour shorter commute has been found to rival a 40% pay rise in terms of happiness. And according to the ‘15 minute city’ model



Third floor plan



Sixth floor plan



Site plan key

- Site context
- Existing building
- New build

0 5m

- 1 Proposed new home
- 2 Amenities
- 3 Communal terrace

– where everything an inhabitant needs for housing, transport, socialising, culture and leisure is within a quarter of an hour’s walk or cycle – an improved quality of life is possible for all. This local focus seems particularly pertinent to lockdown times.

An array of such sobering data is presented in ‘Rise Up’, a white paper by Skyroom – a for-profit urban development management company founded in 2018 by Arthur Kay, Lewis Kinneir and James Gerrard. Between them, the trio have experience working for leading architecture practices (RSHP, Carmody Groarke), think tanks, real estate investment companies and clean technology start-ups. Their stars aligned to illuminate a market niche.

What’s the shortage?

If there is one upside of the pandemic, chief executive Arthur Kay tells me, it is that the general public is now far more aware of the key worker housing predicament: ‘It has underlined, highlighted, put in capitals, that this is not a new problem... finally someone is paying attention that they’re having a tough time’. In his view, ‘housing crisis’ needs re-framing. ‘It’s more of a land availability crisis’, he tells me. Rather obviously, it is the short supply of urban land that makes London property ownership – even low-quality volume housebuilder homes – so prohibitive.

Skyroom’s proposition is to capitalise on the airspace above existing buildings. It works with landowners, often local authorities and housing associations, to unlock the value in existing portfolios. Partnering with architects, it puts modular housing on top of existing properties, and then works with estate agents who prioritise keyworkers to buy the new homes. Savings through the use of modern methods of construction (MMC) at scale are passed to the end user as well as generating good returns for investors.

Architecturally, the idea isn’t completely new. The ‘penthouse model’ has existed for decades: place an offsite modular construction with 360° views atop an existing building and sell it at the high end of the real estate market. Skyroom differs by replacing the penthouse typology with multiple storeys of mixed tenure homes.

It’s also not a philanthropic exercise, unlike, for instance, homeless charities Jimmy’s (which has installed modular homes on land leased from Cambridge city council), or



STUDIO ARCHETYPE

Emmaus (which is doing the same atop its headquarters in Bristol). The business must ‘still wash its face commercially’, explains Kay.

Consequently, the firm’s operating model is canny as well as commendable. It has secured £100 million from a large UK real estate investor, which forms Skyroom’s Key Worker Homes Fund. Open until mid-April, this provides development financing to successful projects ranging in scale from a dozen to several hundred homes. Pro-bono technical consultancy is available to all eligible applicants, part of which involves identifying viable development spaces. Architects on the lookout for an opportunity take note: local authorities and housing associations, preferably in partnership with an architect, are invited to make an expression of interest ASAP, before the application window closes.

After a two year slog spent developing technology, securing funding and forming partnerships (such as with Innovate UK, HM Land Registry and Ordnance Survey), Skyroom finally has six jobs in the pipeline and one live project: a four-storey air-space

Craning in the homes will take mere weeks. It’s vital the key worker housing be well received

development in Bermondsey designed by TDO architecture. The scheme, a 15 minute walk from Guy’s Hospital, is for 15 sustainable, dual-aspect, 2 or 3 bed homes, precision-manufactured offsite in the UK. It also involves installing renewable energy sources and a communal outside space for the existing brick and concrete apartment block.

Recognised assets

Bespoke technology and MMC are the cornerstones of Skyroom’s model. Its two specialist technologies are a proprietary podium system (PPS) and a geospatial mapping tool. One is a structural solution to support the additional massing on the existing structure – like an exoskeleton or ‘table’. The latter is used for implementation studies and initiating Stage 1 of the RIBA Plan of Work. It allows for comparatively simple scanning of parts of a city, revealing roof spaces that are ripe for conversion. Skyroom can then present the landowner with the good news that it is sitting on ‘an unrealised and unrecognised asset’.

As for MMC, Kay’s attitude is to ‘like it for what it does, rather than in and of itself’. It offers standardisation to achieve economies of scale, reduces the embodied carbon cost of a project, and minimises time on site and disturbance to existing tenants. On the Bermondsey project, dropping the new homes onto the existing structure using cranes will take mere weeks. It’s vital that the key worker housing should be well received, and ‘respecting and understanding who lives in the building and how we can sincerely invest in

Above The 15 dual aspect homes for the Bermondsey rooftop are manufactured offsite in the UK.

the quality of their lives too, is really important to us’, insists Kay.

Architects looking to work with Skyroom must be bedded in the community and, critically have an in-depth understanding of precision manufacturing and the supply chain, as TDO does. While the concept appears the same across the board, sites vary from supermarkets to apartment blocks to car parks – diverse and unique design challenges.

But what of the pandemic? Aren’t we all deserting the capital for the suburbs these days? Kay is unequivocal: ‘I believe cities will come roaring back and everyone will forget about ever thinking of moving to the suburbs’, he asserts. ‘Be it around economies of scale, minimising environmental impact, increased cultural opportunities ...scientifically and socially cities work’. In any case it has already licensed its proprietary technology and intellectual property to businesses in New York and Dublin, two other notoriously unaffordable places.

So far, Skyroom is a small player in a big and complex market, but Kay’s hope is that it is making ‘small interventions with outsider impact’. Its model places key workers quite literally at the top, so, ‘if we can succeed in providing good quality scalable homes, that can cascade down to society,’ he says. ●

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Platform 5 Architects
Photography: Alan Williams



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Conversations about Climate Change – the virtual exhibition

The Timber Trade Federation (TTF) presents the winners of its design competition in a virtual exhibition and event series. Created in tropical hardwoods from countries embarking upon FLEGT licensing, the six winning ‘conversation piece’ installations each reflect on the intricate relationship we have with the natural world

Photographs: © Chris Jackson / Building Centre

The Conversations about Climate Change exhibition has launched online with the Building Centre in London, showcasing innovative, playful, and thought-provoking designs using responsibly sourced tropical timber. Over 100 entries were received from around the world.

The entries were anonymised and judged on their response to the climate change conversation brief, celebration of the properties of tropical wood, the quality of their design, and their collective impact as an exhibition.

Six winners were eventually selected by a panel of expert judges including architects and designers Adam Brinkworth of Brinkworth, Julia Barfield of Marks Barfield, Andrew Waugh of Waugh Thistleton Architects, London-based artist Yinka Ilori of Yinka Ilori Studio, and the British Retail Consortium’s sustainability policy advisor Leah Riley Brown.

Timber Trade Federation CEO David Hopkins said: ‘Responsibly forested timber is an essential part of the climate change solution; however, tropical forests have too often been undervalued and their forest land cleared for other uses.’ The EU/UK FLEGT initiative helps combat illegal logging and subsequent illegal timber trade and deforestation. In return for aid and technical support, tropical forest countries can progress through the vital stage of VPA (Voluntary Partnership Agreement) which supports the overhaul of their legal and regulatory governance frameworks.

Hopkins continued: ‘This landmark shift in governance and procurement means that FLEGT-licensed timber is safe, responsible and legal. Our competition asked architects and designers to respond to tropical timber, think about the materials they usually work



Above Tree Whisperer by Sheryl Ang comprises a range of tactile tree sculptures which emit pulsing beats, reflecting how different species respond to climate change.
Right Jeremy Yu and Tomos Owen’s Sapele Sound Pavilion (on the left) uses sapele – traditionally used for musical instruments – to create a pavilion ‘soundbox’ playing a ‘soundscape based on the lifecycle of the tree’; while Michael Westthorp’s High Tide (on the right) makes its impact through its starkness. It is a simple teak column marked with the sea level today and that projected for 2120 if man-made climate change continues at its present pace.

with, and consider how the role of materials specifier is vital for implementing change. We hope you come away inspired!’

The winning entries are on display at the Building Centre in London till May (temporarily closed due to lockdown restrictions) as well as online with a 360-degree tour, commentary about FLEGT and interviews with the winning designers.



Extraction by Julia and Julian Kashdan-Brown features a sapele column with horizontal holes drilled through its heart, representing the environmental instability that results from uncontrolled, unmanaged timber extraction.



Above Architect Tom Wilson created miniature Forest Dwellers in multiple wood species. Having previously avoided tropical timber, Wilson was impressed with what he learned about FLEGT through the competition, notably its ‘governmental level and holistic approach to sustainability, both environmental and economic’.
Right Carbon Print by Joseph Pipal underlines the role of the forests and wood in sequestering and storing CO₂ from the atmosphere. It comprises print blocks in meranti, sapele and iroko, made more durable by using the Japanese preservation technique of charring. ‘I’ve been uplifted, as a maker, by the simple realisation that using sustainably sourced wood can help with the climate crisis,’ said Pipal.



WHAT IS FLEGT?
Initiatives like the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) Action Plan are legal frameworks for sustainable timber production. The aim is to reduce illegal logging and keep forests standing by creating sustainable incomes and livelihoods for local communities, thus reducing emissions and protecting biodiverse habitats.
Indonesia is the first country to issue FLEGT licensed timber to the UK and EU, and others including Ghana are working to follow. So far, 15 countries have entered the formal Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process of overhauling their legal, social, business, and environmental infrastructure. To help ensure lasting success, this process engages with communities and civil society on an unprecedented scale. Combined, VPA forests cover an area the size of the EU and account for around 80 per cent of UK and EU tropical timber imports. www.ttf.co.uk/what-is-flegt/

To learn more about responsible timber sourcing, FLEGT, and to find out how the materials you specify today can have a positive impact on the world’s forests, email: lbedry@ttf.co.uk.

https://www.buildingcentre.co.uk/whats_on/conversations-about-climate-change-the-virtual-exhibition

Conversations about Climate Change is a partnership between the Timber Trade Federation and the Building Centre, supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Built Environment Trust. All the timber for the winning designs was sourced through TTF members.



Timber Trade Federation
growing the use of wood





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Nice design— does it work?

Better designs consider how the building will be used, right from the start of the process. How does RIBA's Plan for Use Guide help?

Jess Hrivnak

Lent is traditionally a time for reflection and preparation, so it is fitting that the (Covid-delayed) Plan for Use Guide makes its appearance now.

The RIBA guide is the profession's interpretation of the Soft Landings Framework produced by the Usable Buildings Trust and BSRIA. Plan for Use focusses on the actions that are needed to prepare for the end goal: namely, what needs to be planned and implemented at each of the RIBA Plan of Work 2020 stages to deliver high performing, efficient and comfortable buildings. It concentrates on learning lessons and feedback loops and has three basic components: setting realistic and measurable targets; completing Plan for Use activities; and measuring and evaluating building performance and feedback.

The document provides guidance and encouragement for architects to plan buildings that are successful in use. Plan for Use aims to inspire a more outcome-based approach to design, an approach embedded in the Plan of Work as a project strategy.

Learning from the past

The brainchild of a group of experts, led by Gary Clark and the RIBA Sustainable Futures Group, the guide was written by Mike Chater and joins documents such as the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes Guide to give architects the essential tools to meet the challenges of our times.

Notoriously bad at learning from past



Above People collaborating around the National Automotive Innovation Centre in Coventry, designed by Cullinan Studio.

mistakes, the profession has not traditionally sought out, analysed or evaluated building performance shortcomings to improve successive design projects. In general, reflection and critical learning is something the construction industry as a whole shies away from, mostly for fear of reputational damage or litigation. However, if we are to tackle the climate crisis, inequalities in housing provision, fuel poverty, the accumulating waste burden on our planet and the like, it is vital that we plan for and undertake this reflective and critical learning on the efficacy, functionality and success of our buildings (our 'products') under the strain of occupation.

Cultural shift

With the publication of the Plan for Use Guide and the accompanying case studies, the RIBA is taking a lead on this cultural shift towards designing for measurable outcomes in favour of both people and planet. The goal of the tool is to strengthen the learning within the profession and reinforce the architect's role in raising awareness of building performance in use. Overtime, the RIBA expects attitudes towards Plan for Use within the profession to become second nature, and that this way of thinking will become embedded in everyday practice across all projects at every stage and every scale. The guide outlines what light-touch post

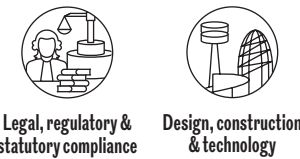
occupancy evaluation looks like, and its role in what the RIBA believes should become architects' standard scope of services.

However, Plan for Use is not just a tool for improving handover: to obtain greatest benefit, it needs to be applied in all eight stages of the Plan of Work. Of course, the benefits will be maximised if it is adopted right from the outset at Stage 0 or 1. However, the ability to do this will depend on project procurement route, and an architect may join the project only at a later work stage. Nevertheless, adopting Plan for Use will still be valuable and undertaking the activities outlined in the guidance for the relevant RIBA work stage will help to produce better building outcomes for everyone.

While the guide is directed primarily at architects, it is intended to also assist clients and other building professionals. It outlines how to apply Plan for Use on different forms of contract, and also includes case study examples to illustrate the practical application in a range of projects, sectors and typologies.

We hope that together with the RIBA Plan for Work 2020 and the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes Guide, the Plan for Use enables more Practices to sign up and meet the ambitious targets of the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge and deliver projects that have the wellbeing of our communities, our planet and future generations at heart. ●

Plan for Use Guide is available as a free download from architecture.com
Jess Hrivnak is a sustainable development adviser, practice, at the RIBA



Being there

Site inspections as well as meetings have gone virtual, and as we adjust to the technology's demands, its benefits look set to continue

Bart Kavanagh

Site inspections are a part of daily life for architects. They enable them to get to the heart of the matter, either to undertake general reviews during construction, to establish existing conditions where refurbishment or alteration is being considered or to establish physical evidence when disputes arise, and the opinion of an expert witness is required. According to HKA's 2020 CRUX Insight Report into the causes of construction project delays, projects where site access issues arise tend to be significantly larger than average, based on the 194-strong sample of UK projects assessed. In part this is because the design and construction complexity of larger projects requires regular site access by the architect to clarify issues as they arise. Notably, our research indicates that more than 70% of extension of time claims involve 'access to site' issues, some 9% ahead of other factors.

Given the criticality of site visits, what happens when everyone is required either to stay at home or to restrict their movements to avoid catching or spreading a potentially life-threatening virus? For example, how would decisions requiring inspection of a part of construction that will quickly be covered up by subsequent works, be made?

Where existing buildings are involved, much design information can be gleaned from the architect's drawings and much about the construction from a good set of as built drawings. What is drawn, however,



ISTOCK LJUBAPHOTO

is not always what is built. Moreover, if the reality on site is critical to the understanding of issues that are either in dispute or central to correct construction, then an inspection of that reality may be necessary to underpin the credibility of the architect's report, especially if a follow up inspection is being made of an area previously visited physically.

In addition, inspections often require the input of more than one attendee. Social distancing and travel restrictions which extend the time taken to get to site can make such visits doubly difficult.

Dismantling construction

Where the issue involves the construction rather than the layout of a building, for example, the fabric will need to be opened up to expose the components installed and the method and quality of the construction. Such areas are often difficult to access; on roofs or high up on external walls. Inspections here will require scaffold towers or access machinery, such as a cherry picker or a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP). These must be installed and operated by skilled

operatives who will need to be on site at the same time as, and often at close quarters to, the inspecting architect.

Dismantling of construction will also require skilled operatives who will usually have to work closely with the architect during the process.

Physical site inspections were inevitably prevented when social contact was prohibited and restrictions on social contact continue to present severe difficulties. For example, if scaffolding wall climbers or a MEWP platform of at least 2m wide are not available, physical inspections on site may be impracticable. Given the impact of site inspections, the need to establish alternative means to conduct them is increasingly critical.

When working remotely from home became a necessity, video-calling and conferencing quickly became commonplace. Most people mastered the software and adapted quite easily to the more stilted environment of the virtual meeting room. As social contact rules eased, the question arose of how to use or adapt this by now familiar technology to carry out virtual site inspections.

Some professional film production companies began to develop and market interactive platforms using YouTube alongside other messaging software. While many of these offer good quality visuals, they require preparation and the use of multiple software applications which are not always user friendly. Additionally, detailed and time-consuming directions may be needed if those operating the interactive platform

The need to establish alternative means to conduct site inspections is increasingly critical

do not have experience of site investigations. Alternatively, established applications designed for video conferencing, such as Teams, Zoom, Blue Jean and others, offer acceptable visuals alongside easy and effective real time communications. This ease of communication, using everyday smartphones or tablets, is of real benefit for an inspecting architect to direct the operative in response to what the opening up work reveals.

Virtual benefits

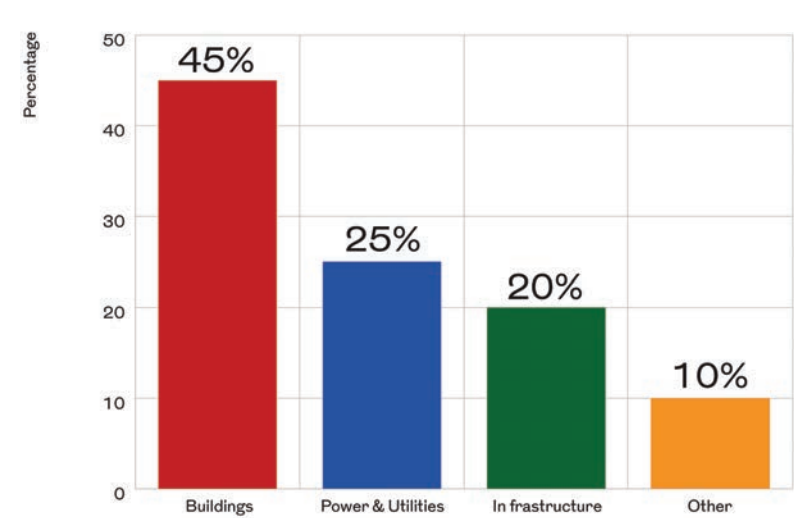
Virtual site visits using these applications can be very effective in helping the architect to form an opinion. As well as providing a vivid visual and oral record of the whole procedure and exposed result, such software can allow other colleagues to join from multiple separate locations concurrently, reducing the need for other participants on site.

As physical inspections on site become a possibility again, safety with respect to the virus will remain paramount. Key elements to be incorporated into the risk assessments and protocols prepared by the architect or expert include: the age and underlying health conditions of staff; the availability and quality of Personal Protective Equipment; training in the effective use of PPE; and whether the site can be reached without using public transport. And an effective risk assessment and method statement by the contractor, to ensure appropriate conditions on the work site, will be an essential precondition for any physical site inspection.

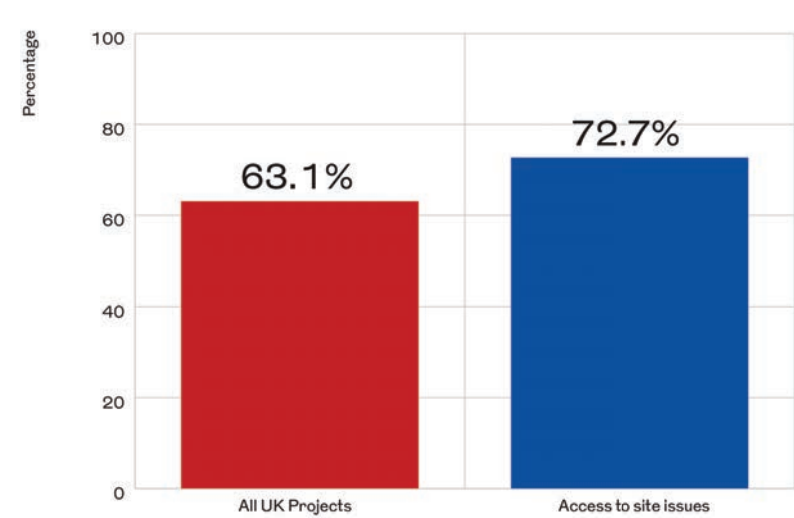
Nevertheless, the virtual site inspection has proved to be a valuable child of necessity. Its practical effectiveness, combined with its cost-effectiveness in eliminating the need to travel to and from far flung sites, is likely to earn this new sibling of the physical site inspection a permanent place in the architect's family of assessment techniques. ●

Bart Kavanagh is a technical director at Probyn Miers | HKA, a chartered architect and a barrister (non-practising)

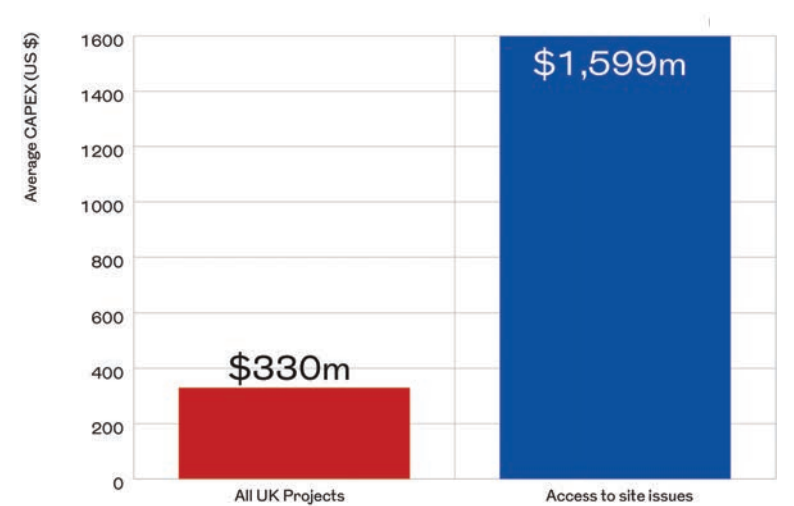
Access to site issues



Average extension of time claimed (%)



Average capital expenditure





Conservation
& heritage



Design, construction
& technology

Time to decolonise

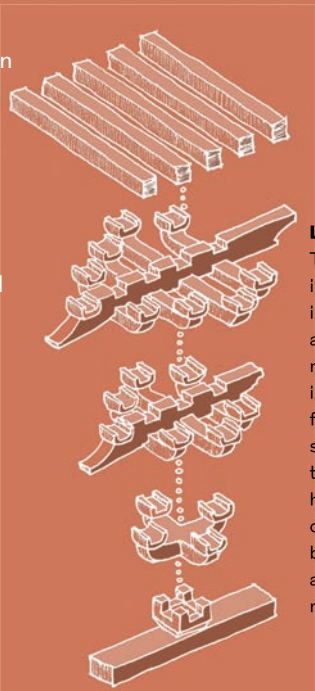
The time for fine words on inclusion is over: a group in Bath is taking decisive practical action to recognise all the world’s architecture, storm the discipline’s privilege and face down imperialism’s legacy

We are taught to be subtle, but too often we are silent. As we build for our society, architecture continues to reflect its political context, when the need for inclusivity clear. Our universities yearn to be beacons of diversity but the lecture hall upholds the status quo and suppresses the voices of many through systemic inequality (further explored by CABA report Architecture and Race). Today’s students, born at a time of higher social and climate awareness, are the profession’s future. Fresh-faced and hoping to ‘do good’ via our designs, we enter an architectural education that heavily favours the privileged. Intricately tied to colonialism, institutional racism is deeply harmful in architecture; its lack of acknowledgment maintains the hush.

Now Decolonise Architecture has broken the silence. We are a collective of students and alumni of the University of Bath — what started as a 200-signatory open letter became a student group tackling racism at a grassroots level. Collaborating with staff across the university, we are enabling a holistic and inclusive education. This method of drawing out experiences, then examining how to address systemic bias in our way of working and our treatment of others could be a model for your university or practice. In July 2020, Decolonise Architecture held an unprecedented online forum within the department which allowed staff and students to openly share their experiences relating to systemic racism and subconscious bias. The event featured

Right Biomimicry: Zimbabwe. The termite mound has been a key precedent for passive cooling techniques. According to inhabitat.com, the Eastgate Centre in Harare uses the same principles to save \$3.5mn in cooling demands.

We should credit architects beyond the Western canon



Left Dougong: China. The Dougong system is a keystone technique in traditional Chinese architecture and uses no fixings. Stacked interlocking brackets form the timber frame structure and transfer the heavy loads from horizontal beams into columns. Multiple brackets add elasticity and earthquake resistance.



preliminary audience talks followed by smaller breakout groups to discuss potential changes. The ideas from the forum were condensed into a report and led to nine action points which have since defined our mission — for instance looking at how social issues are presented, and ensuring social context including slavery or colonialism is included alongside case studies.

Subsequently, we have been working closely with the directors of studies for the BSc and MArch courses at Bath, as well as external groups and organisations. In answer to the RIBA’s reported attainment gap, we have launched a department-specific report tool to develop a more inclusive environment for students of minority ethnic backgrounds and provide support for any student who may experience discrimination. Moreover, regular contact with wider university leadership is scaling up our impact to an institutional level — recent discussions with the university’s Widening Access and Participation team have focused on addressing the cause of lower acceptance rates of BAME students. We aim to halt the culture of students being left behind

as a result of their ethnic and economic background by delivering outreach initiatives with young people from disadvantaged communities.

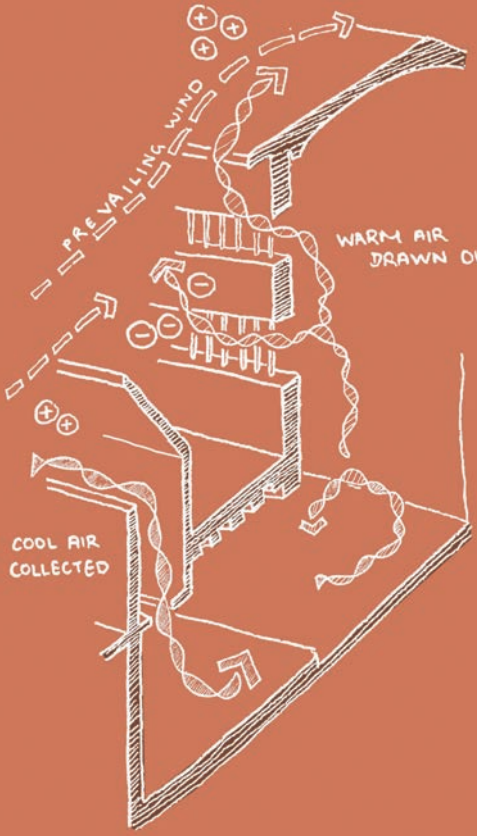
Decolonise Architecture believes global architecture has equal standing to commonly taught conventional examples. Exposure to the depth of international architecture can equip students and professionals alike with a wide palette of precedents. Our team regularly curates an alternative reading list and a weekly newsletter for students that focuses on architects’ ideas and key building studies from around the world. Similarly, we are working with the library to provide literature on topics that address architecture’s relationship with race. Such endeavours form the base of the group’s sustained collaboration with the department to achieve meaningful curriculum change.

From classical to modernism, our cohorts are rarely given the chance to look beyond the implicit red line boundary around Europe and Northern America. DA produces fortnightly? ‘Technology Tuesday’ content to highlight selected structural, environmental and design principles from various countries. These serve as an introduction to the global variety of practical design solutions. As a result, designs that would normally be sidelined as ‘primitive’ are showcased for their effectiveness and ingenuity. These principles of sustainable design have been championed across all continents; we would be amiss to not credit their contribution to our progress today. Where material honesty and efficiency are celebrated, why not start by teaching

Below The Inclusive Review. Six key questions to bear in mind to conduct an actively anti-racist architecture review.

DO I ASK EVERY STUDENT THIS?
This question offers an easy barometer to check if your questions are appropriate. Naturally, conversations with students may vary, but the best way to check for prejudice is to ask yourself the following: ‘Do I ask every student to explain themselves and their origin in this level of detail?’

IS THIS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT?
When relevant it is OK to have conversations on general topics regarding students’ home countries etc, but do not treat the student as a spokesperson. Conversations on these topics aren’t discouraged but remember there is a time and a place — let the student maximise on their time to present.



Above Malqaf: Egypt. In this traditional windcatcher turrets face the prevailing wind and redirect cool air into the building. It warms up as it travels and is drawn out through high level openings. It is now being looked at to meet the artificial cooling demands of Egypt

in depth tried and tested vernacular techniques that have worked for centuries?

Our ‘Spotlight’ content features architects that are conscious of their cultural heritage and take on challenges to defy the norm. The lore of Kahn’s and Lloyd Wright’s is well-founded and justified, but we ought to recognise the presence of equals from around the world. From Francis Kéré’s schools in Burkina Faso to Yasmeen Lari’s affordable housing in Pakistan. These posts aim to highlight placemaking in countries that are undergoing architectural decolonisation. Architecture has never been constrained by region and neither should our

education. We should recognise and credit the talent of architects beyond the Western canon, who have achieved success in their own right.

Architecture is a discipline shaped by collaboration. We have the collective ability to challenge overt and subtle bias. Decolonise Architecture aims to address imbalanced power dynamics and believes that to be silent is to be complicit. By broadening horizons in education, we are taking the first steps towards overcoming the barriers that prevent our profession from being a level playing field. Spreading awareness will always be necessary but by providing meaningful solutions, our industry can evolve into a more equitable space for all.

The Inclusive Review

The Inclusive Review was the first anti-racism initiative implemented with the architecture department at the University of Bath. The review is a flagship developmental tool within architecture but can often display the significant prevailing subconscious bias.

Written by students and approved by the department, the guide contains six key questions (below) which can be used to check whether one’s own behaviour is biased or offensive. In a concise and user-friendly format, many of the guidelines could easily be applied to a range of situations — from interactions in the workplace to internal presentations or daily social interactions. This document is in circulation in the department at Bath and is available for all institutions and workplaces to adapt. ●

All authors are committee members of Decolonise Architecture: @decolonisearchitecture on Instagram

WHERE ARE YOU ‘REALLY’ FROM?
Although some think this harmless, issues arise from the misconception of ethnicity indicating nationality. The question implies distrust and alienation. Give students freedom to explain their background if they wish but do not pry or make assumptions when it is not relevant or stated by them.

HOW CAN I BE AN ALLY?
Remember it is not the student’s responsibility to educate you. If your comments are questioned it will not usually be out of malice. Be open to self-improvement and do not be defensive. If you feel a fellow critic has breached one of these guidelines, stand up for the student; be quick to educate others.



Rafael Viñoly's Rockefeller University project wins the 2020 SEFA Lab of the Year

Rafael Viñoly's award-winning David Rockefeller River Campus places roomy modern laboratories and lush public gardens over a busy highway beside New York's East River

The Scientific Equipment and Furniture Association (SEFA) is a global trade association whose members are among the world's most prestigious architects, lab planners, manufacturers and dealers involved in the design and construction of laboratories.

Judging this competition in the middle of Covid-19 was not without challenges. As a result of the dedication of our talented jurors -- Charles Klee (Payette); Punit Jain (Cannon Design) Laura Carlson (Princeton) Lou DiBerardinis (MIT) Bruce Nepp (Abell Nepp); John Saad (Vanderweil) Dario Tonelli (Tonelli AG) and Pulitzer Prize winning author/architectural critic Paul Goldberger, SEFA proudly announces the unanimous winner of the 2020 SEFA Lab of the Year award.

Stavros Niarchos Foundation, David Rockefeller River Campus
Architect: Rafael Viñoly Architects, Jay Bargmann

The Rockefeller University, located in a garden-like setting on the Upper East Side of New York City, was founded in 1901. Since then the university has maintained its focus on bio-medical research in chemistry, biophysics, chemical biology, structural biology, immunology, virology and microbiology, mechanisms of human disease, genetics and genomics, neuro-genetics, cancer biology, cell biology, morphogenesis and host-pathogen biology.

One metric of Rockefeller University's success is that its scientists have been awarded 25 Nobel prizes, including five in the last 20 years in medicine and chemistry.

Rafael Viñoly Architects was asked to provide large, flexible laboratory spaces, extend campus gardens, maximise existing vistas, connect with existing research buildings and centralise community amenities on a platform that sits 20ft above one of Manhattan's major arterial highways.

The result is a campus extension that is invisible from the University's main entrance and historic campus walks and extends the historic gardens. This is done via two monumental stairways, flanking Founder's Hall, ascending from the main campus walk to rooftop gardens and a promenade overlooking the East River.

The building is a platform for pedestrian-oriented vegetation, a dining commons, new conference centre and centralised offices for the university's senior leadership – each with an individual identity expressed as pavilions within a garden. When seen from the east, the building's 1000ft long continuous horizontal band of steel and glass gently underscores and unifies the beautiful, but disparate, campus buildings that had grown organically over the last 120 years. Between the building and the East River,

the project provides a fully rebuilt linear park that is open to the community and maintained by the university.

A campus that five years ago had no recognizable identity from the east now has a singular, clear yet understated, presence and has two new acres of gardens, 160,000ft² of new research space interconnecting ten existing buildings on campus, and shared common spaces.



Clockwise, from left First Module Installation, Eastern View of River Campus, Flexible Open Lab Space, Sze Donohue Amphitheatre, Lab Support Station

The research space, the Kravis Research Building, occupies two open floors of contiguous laboratory space, each approximately 1000ft long and 105ft deep. Each floor is bisected by a large collaborative space – with kitchen and dining facilities at the midpoint – which looks out across the Sze-Donohue Amphitheatre to the historic Welch Hall facade.

The building was prefabricated in 19 modules to meet logistical requirements in a cost effective and timely manner. Each 750-ton module was constructed in New Jersey, transported by barge to the site, and hoisted by crane onto its foundations in five-hour intervals over 19 nights.

The laboratory casework, write-up desks and support rooms consist of a vertical service module containing power, data, and gases and supporting adjustable work surfaces and storage components. The modules plug into boxes beneath the raised floor. The laboratory casework design allows for benches and support space to be modified in response to changing research modalities.

The project's site is its most sustainable aspect. It renders urban land usable, creates new pedestrian-oriented garden spaces, and brings daylight to over 75% of building spaces. Redevelopment of the East River esplanade renders the city's public space more resilient with its native planting, and creates safe, pleasant public space with bicycle and jogging lanes.

All mechanical equipment is designed to be located in two large mechanical rooms embedded behind the existing schist wall and accessible from the FDR Drive for maintenance. Laboratory exhaust is housed in two towers clad to visually blend into historic buildings.

To view the project video or learn how to enter your project in the 2021 SEFA Lab of the Year Competition visit <https://sefalabs.com>. Entry deadline 1 July 2021



Level-access wet rooms made easy with Schlüter-KERDI products



Having worked alongside architects, installers, and distributors for many years, Schlüter-Systems understand the challenges that come with creating low-height wet rooms. In a bid to combat this, two products have recently been added to the Schlüter-KERDI range, providing level access waterproofing solutions: Schlüter-KERDI-LINE G3 drain and a low-height shower tray within the Schlüter-KERDI-SHOWER-LTS range.

The Schlüter-KERDI-LINE-G3 is a stainless-steel drainage channel which can be fitted without the need for drilling

or screwing. It complies with BS EN 1253, providing a 50mm water seal and anti-blockage based on an 8mm ball bearing test.

The drain is available with central, offset, and dual outlets and is suitable for perimeter or intermediate installation. As is standard for Schlüter linear drains, it also comes with a pre-adhered collar of Schlüter- KERDI membrane to allow for reliable connection to the bonded waterproof assembly.

When the Schlüter-KERDI-G3 was launched in early 2020, Schlüter knew that

the innovative product was just one part of the low-height puzzle. The next logical step was to introduce a compatible shower tray to allow for a flush transition and create level access wetrooms – which led to the creation and unveiling of Schlüter-KERDI-SHOWER-LTS, a range of shower trays made with a preformed slope.

The low-height version of the shower tray has been designed specifically to work alongside Schlüter-KERDI-LINE-G3 drain in the hope of making low-height wet room installations achievable and simple. The drain stands at just 78mm in height, and the low-height shower tray works within these perimeters to create a simple solution.


This is possible due to the formation of the shower tray and the fall of 1 in 80 it provides. As most shower trays currently available have a fall of 1 in 50, the low-height tray from Schlüter offers a significant height reduction whilst also complying with BS EN 5385.

Using a single source solution from one manufacturer is ideal for simplifying warranties and providing the reassurance that the products will function most effectively when installed together, allowing for a long-lasting bathroom.

Both the Schlüter-KERDI-LINE-G3 and Schlüter-KERDI-SHOWER-LTS are welcome additions to the Schlüter-KERDI family, helping to create even more single source system solutions. To find out more about the drain and shower tray, visit: www.lowheightdrain.co.uk ●



Above Schlüter-KERDI-SHOWER-LTS shower trays are made with a preformed slope. **Left** The Schlüter-KERDI-LINE-G3 stainless-steel drainage channel can be fitted without the need for drilling or screwing.



www.lowheightdrain.co.uk

3: Culture



When not photographing buildings, Ben Tynegate’s other job is as a wedding film-maker, creating high-definition mementos of high-end nuptials. He notes that unlike ‘staged’ photos, his films track the day; to capture landscape, spaces, sounds, unexpected or fleeting moments. Drawing on his architecture studies, his films embody a form of perfection in incidence: slo-mo confetti suspended around the happy couple, diners’ faces lit by candlelight, the wide smiles of guests picked out from an Yves Klein blue-soaked dancefloor. These too are constructions of sorts.

His own photos can be rather more contingent. In his free time he’ll swap the kit for a cheap 35mm film camera; one he doesn’t mind losing or dropping. He

takes a shot and then forgets about it. Weeks later he might process them at Snappy Snaps. It’s less about the result than the anticipation and letting go.

This image is not a lost, loose aqua tint from the Stones of Venice but a double exposure taken from both sides of the Rialto Bridge. In its blur of the recognisable and the uncanny, a possible future is laid before us. The Grand Canal has sprung a new tributary, the city has finally sunk into the mud of the lagoon and its glorious palazzi succumbed to ruination. But as Ruskin tells us, it pulls into focus the role of imperfection – and incidence – in beauty. And in its illusory nature, it has us face the hard truth that telling time to stop is like telling love to stay. ● Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Ben Tynegate
Untitled,
Venice, 2012
Canon EOS300
SLR camera

Off Grid 2030

If all goes to plan, we'll be living better and more sustainably in 2030. Show us how you imagine it and win £2500, courtesy of Norbord SterlingOSB Zero



Werner Sobek's 'Triple Zero' B10 Aktivhaus prototype for the Stuttgart Institute of Sustainability. Zero energy, zero emissions and zero waste.

Since the RIBA launched the 2030 Climate Challenge in 2019, Covid-19 and its lockdowns have forced shifts in ways of living and working – and outlook – in directions none would have imagined at the beginning of 2020. And with that enforced recalibration have come new ways of thinking, not just about our environment and the quality of our public realm, but how we live, work and learn at home, with the current limitations it presents and the potential liberations it points to.

With Off Grid 2030, RIBA and Norbord are asking you to imagine what shape that future might have. How might we want to occupy our homes? How might spaces change to reflect new but rapidly establishing patterns of home working and learning? Might these spaces be reconfigurable? Might they fold and open out to sunlight and fresh air if desired? Part of this year's competition brief is to visualise how these spatial aspects might manifest, using SterlingOSB Zero board as

the building block of the design.

The RIBA's 2030 Climate Challenge, meanwhile, sets architects onerous targets. These include net zero whole life carbon and domestic operational energy use of <35 kWh/m²/y, or Passivhaus 11. The 2030 Climate Challenge demands use of heat pumps and no reliance on fossil fuels. Any residual carbon emissions should be offset to contribute to UK renewable energy projects that help decarbonise the national grid. There should be a target of embodied carbon of 300kgCO₂e/m² and water use of <75l/person/day.

We ask you to imagine a home where Norbord's net carbon negative SterlingOSB Zero board will, with super-insulation and on-site renewables, be part of a design that meets those ambitions. Designed for our new reality – zero energy use, zero emissions and zero waste – this is a tall order! But big challenges need big thinking. Show us what you can do, and win £2500 for your climate-busting concept house! ●

THE BRIEF

In this ideas competition, we are asking entrants to design a single-family or multi-generational family home of no more than 200m² GIA. This may be one or more storeys in height. Terraces or courtyards may be addition to this. While the building will be made up of a palette of different sustainable materials, we would like to see Norbord SterlingOSB Zero being used as an integral part of the overall material strategy. SterlingOSB Zero used externally should be protected with a proposed cladding material and/or insulation. Entrants should bear in mind the nature of SterlingOSB Zero and to ensure propositions best utilise its material capabilities. Entrants' designs will consider the RIBA's 2030 Climate Challenge.

JUDGING

Judges will look for imaginative uses of SterlingOSB Zero, as part of a proposal meeting the stipulated criteria. Propositions should consider sustainability, structural and thermal aspects that will help make an environmental exemplar of the design. While other materials will be an integral part of the new proposition, the design should, in the main, employ SterlingOSB Zero. The winning proposal will be the one that, in the minds of the judges, generates a solution that is spatially powerful, visually exciting, and best embodies the aspirations of the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge.

DEADLINE

14:00 UK time on Monday June 21 2021.

ENTRY FORM

Please email entries to ribaj.com/offgrid

SUBMISSION

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

- An explanation of no more than 500 words, describing the building design, stating where Norbord SterlingOSB Zero board has been used and any passive or active methodologies employed to make it fit for the 2030 Climate Challenge.
- Plans and sections showing structure, build-up and material composition.
- Axonometric or any other images.

NOTES

- The judges' decision is final
- First prize is £2,500. Three commended prizes of £250. Shortlisted entries will be notified in writing, with winners announced in September.
- No correspondence will be entered into by the organisers or judges regarding entries and final decisions.

ENQUIRIES

ribaj.offgrid@riba.org

Off Grid 2030 is produced in association with Norbord Europe Ltd

 **Norbord**
Make it better



Will cash for high streets paint the towns red?

Investment to reverse the long decline of town centres is welcome, but let's keep the emphasis on place, not politics, says Eleanor Young

In the middle of town the words are severely incised over the door: 'Girls/ Boys'. Not that it is a school any more. Schools have moved out to the edges of towns and cities, serving new suburbs with spreading classrooms in green playing fields. Hospitals moved too, wards stacked high into the fresh air, away from their narrow, carbolic-doused corridors in the town centre. Did the workshops of main streets decant to the spacious floors and soulless shrubs of light industrial estates at the same time?

The hollowing out of our town centres predates the retail exodus. Once we blamed out of town supermarkets, then online shopping. Now it's the coronavirus lockdowns. But the regular flow of activity necessary for the web of community life – and footfall for shops – was lost to a myriad of well meaning decisions. High streets have been left primarily to leisure activities, to the pleasure of browsing, coffee, mooching and people watching – or perhaps tourism, as defined by doing all these same things away from your home town.

It is recognised now that it is not enough to rely on retail. We have seen some brilliant schemes from architects that bring a dense mix of different uses back to towns and their high streets. There is a slew of grants aimed at adapting these centres and ensuring towns kept up with change: Historic England has put money into heritage high streets; 72 of them shared an £830 million government pot announced in December; and most recently there was the controversial £3.6bn of Towns Fund allocations.

One of the towns that has done well from this is Swindon in Wiltshire. It won £25 million for a bus boulevard in the town centre – where even before the pandemic nearly a quarter of the shops were lying empty. To top that, it got almost as much again from the Towns Fund. This is big money for modest sized

places. A Swindon councillor celebrated, saying: 'A crane is already on the Swindon skyline'.

The Towns Fund puts 'place' at the top of the list of investment – for its role in changing perceptions – and urges winning councils to bring forward land for development. Across the country in Bolton, Maidenhead, Stoke-on-Trent, and many other towns, architects are now uncovering the next steps to bring complexity back to town centres and high streets with everything from urban realm interventions and food vans to refurbished town halls, renewed leisure centres and the possibilities of vacant plots.

It is hard not to speculate on the political motives behind this current Conservative focus on investing in towns (particularly certain towns), rather than cities, and the distribution of ring-fenced money to local authorities who may have desperate need for money in other areas of spending, such as social care. But it is a useful corrective to the way we have long used cities as a catch-all title for the urban condition. 'Towns' fits the way people think and talk about place and identity. Could this be the moment for reimagining their civic infrastructure? If architects can help seed town high streets with activities that make them central to people's lives again we will all be richer for it. ●

ONLY ON RIBAJ.COM

It feels like the mainstream profession has become a dinosaur – we need to rethink the whole role of the architect and not just in gender terms

Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative founder Jos Boys talks to Pamela Buxton: ribaj.com/matrix

Below Rural Office for Architecture's proposals for bringing life back to Tredegar in Wales.



Pay less to print more with HP's new DesignJet Print At Your Service plan

HP's new subscription model makes print a quick, easy and hassle-free service for architecture professionals



Over recent years, industries across the globe have begun to adopt subscription business models. Netflix subscriptions have replaced DVD purchases, Spotify and similar music streaming services have rendered CD purchases all but redundant, and for many of us our mobile phones are now on a monthly contract with comprehensive service packages that even offer future hardware upgrades as a built-in option.

Now, thanks to innovative thinking from HP, UK customers can access new HP DesignJet large-format plotters on a subscription-based, fixed price, full service offer.

HP's new DesignJet Print at Your Service plan has been designed to enable small to medium sized companies – including those in the architecture, engineering and construction sectors – to use HP's DesignJet

technology in an affordable and cost-effective way.

The service runs as a contracting plan, with customers paying a low fee once a month to access not only HP's market leading DesignJet print technology, but also a host of other benefits. Monthly plans start from as little as £34.99, with no upfront hardware cost.

The monthly payment covers the cost of the machine, as well as maintenance, printheads and ink cartridges, offering the ultimate convenience.

One customer that has already taken advantage of the plan is Daniel Powell Studios. They were looking into buying a replacement large format printer and were told about the plan by the team at Plot-IT, part of the Stanford Marsh Group.

Company director Daniel Powell explains: 'We were asked if we would be interested in joining the Print At Your Service pilot scheme... It looked great value without upfront costs so we went ahead.

'The plan is working really well for us and we cannot fault it. The HP ink always arrives in plenty of time and the scheme delivers a cost-effective printing service, without the upkeep and maintenance costs.' Print At Your Service customers

can choose from the very latest in HP's large format portfolio, including the HP DesignJet T250 and T650 models. With a small footprint, these printers have been designed for ease of use and meet the specific requirements of busy businesses in the AEC sectors. Furthermore, the HP Smart App enables users to print on the devices from virtually anywhere, with a smartphone or tablet.

The plan also includes the HP DesignJet T830 multifunction printer, offering plenty of choice and allowing users to pick the exact device – in consultation with an expert if desired – that best matches their business needs.

Customers also benefit from an automatic discount of up to 25% on all HP original inks, meaning they will spend less time searching for the right inks and more time focusing on growing their business. Additionally, ink use is remotely monitored via an internet connection with the HP DesignJet printer and new cartridges are automatically delivered by HP when levels are running low.

Also included in the plan is HP's Next Business Day Onsite Service, making subscribers safe in the knowledge that if they require expert assistance or support from HP, it will be delivered within 24 hours of contact, minimising any downtime they may experience and allowing them to get back up and running quickly.

HP DesignJet Print At Your Service – a smarter plan for smarter business – is available from approved HP partners Plot-IT, DPSB, Ebuyer and the HP Store. ●



For full terms and conditions and to find out more, visit www.hp.com/go/designjet-pays



Left Practitioner Muhammad Sahrum's entry 'Hidden Liberty' from last year. Inspired by Christo and Jeanne Claude, it encapsulates a lot of what it felt like to live through 2020.

EYE LINE RULES

We seek the best 2D representations of a building design or concept through visual means. They may be hand or digitally drawn, incorporating collage or any combination or overlay of methods. Video and straight photography excluded.

Enter in either the student or practitioner category. The RIBA Journal reserves the right to reallocate to a different category if deemed necessary.

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

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

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

The work must have been produced within the three years up to the closing date of Monday 7 June 2021, and not previously have been entered for Eye Line.

Enter at: ribaj.com/culture/enter-eye-line

Information required

Title of work(s) if applicable, and medium.
Name of the author(s) of the work.
Name of organisation where author works or studies.
Email, postal address and phone number.
Dimensions of the original work as presented (or as you would wish it to be presented) in mm.
Date it was completed.

Key dates

Deadline: Monday 7 June 2021, 14:00
Judging: end June.
Winners and commendations announced: August 2021 issue of RIBA J and online.
Exhibition (provisional): August/September



Eye Line 2021: call for entries

Don't waste your lockdown fantasies and imaginings: enter our drawing competition and join an illustrious canon of previous winners

Proving that the pandemic need not be a bar to your creativity, Eye Line 2021, RIBA J's annual, international, free-to-enter competition showcasing the best drawing and rendering skills, is now open for entries. As ever, we ask for images in two categories – student and practitioner – that brilliantly communicate architecture, in any medium or combination of media. And this year we are looking for work that communicates the agit-prop of resistance to the sense of atomisation that we have all experienced over the last year.

We are looking for images of all kinds, from hand-drawn concept sketches to technically proficient and layered renders. For us, 'drawing' includes any method by which the power of an architectural idea is communicated. This includes depictions of existing buildings as well as works of the imagination.

Practitioners and students enter in different categories.

- Student category: images made by those in architectural education or who are submitting images made before final qualification.
- Practitioner category: images made by those fully qualified and working in practice, whether for real-life projects or

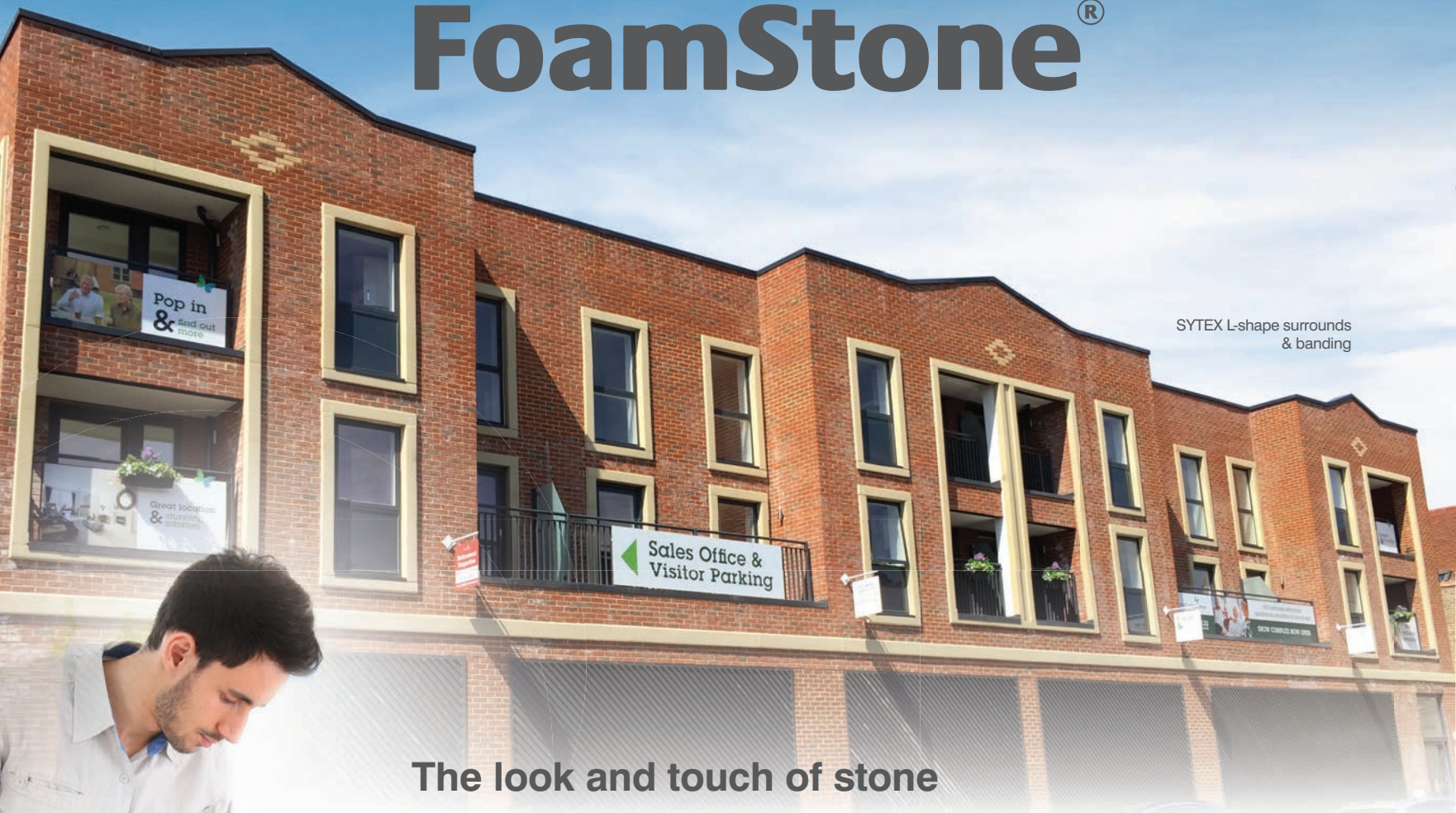
to explore ideas and experiences.

National safety guidance permitting, the intention is to exhibit winners and commendations at the RIBA following a winners' event there and will publish them in print and online. Our colleagues at the RIBA's Drawings and Archives Collection, based in the Victoria and Albert Museum, will inspect our winners for potential inclusion in the collections.

Last year's practitioner winner was LA-based architect Albert Orozco for his stunning 'Platform for Imagined Ruins', a render that effortlessly played upon scale, reality and mythology. And student winner was Arinjoy Sen from the Bartlett School with a beautiful and beguiling series of renders that took the Kashmiri craft of carpet weaving to graphically investigate past histories and future potential. Commendations in all media touched on lockdown, the British and Portuguese landscape, improving classicism – and Bergamo.

Every year we are gratified by the originality, wit and talent represented in the Eye Line entries: a truly international, free-to-enter award conducted online. Practitioners and students – show us your best drawings and join a prestigious cohort of past winners and runners-up. ●

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Culture Opinion

'Spaces gain expression from the lived experience of occupants'



Put a camera in your pencil case

Cinematography would be as useful a skill for architects as drawing, says Tszwai So

My earliest recollection of experiencing architecture without knowing it was from a film I watched as a teenager called *Chungking Express*, the seminal work by hallowed filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai. Set in Hong Kong, it concerns two unrelated love stories told in a fragmented and disjointed style, favouring the details of everyday lives over a conventionally structured narrative. In *Chungking Express* I saw the normal life taking place in the exuberant built environment peculiar to Hong Kong: the cramped convenience store, compact domestic spaces, the filthy interiors of the infamous *Chungking mansion*. The film showed the spaces in which most locals grew up, but we often took for granted.

Wong's early works are inseparable from Christopher Doyle's cinematography. Doyle used a hand-held camera to shoot many of the scenes, while borrowing the in situ neon and fluorescent lights to create the dreamy mood at night. The film was not about love, it was about the loneliness we all experienced living in cities; it was a cinematic experience of everyday life, and the banal building elements pertaining to it such as the windows and the doors were romanticised through Doyle's lens.

Back then I was simply enchanted by the cinematography and thought little of it, but years later I discovered Gaston Bachelard's book, *The Poetics of Space*, in which he re-examines basic architectural components like the attic, cellar and staircase, focusing not on their purposes but on lived experience in those spaces. I realised that Bachelard was narrating the kind of architecture I saw in Wong's film, and spaces could only be given the most meaningful and candid expressions not by the will of the architect, but the lived experience of successive occupants.

Film has become increasingly popular as a medium to communicate ideas in architecture schools in recent years, favoured by many tech-savvy students of Generation Z. 'All architects and urban planners should be trained in cinematography,'

architectural critic Herbert Wright once argued: 'After all, they create the set for the drama that's our day to day lives.' Wright's words remind me of Doyle's pictures in *Chungking Express*.

Some see film as an unexpected form of post occupancy study: 'Film constitutes an accidental archive that makes visible how we live, love, work and sleep in buildings,' said François Penz, professor of architecture at Cambridge who has forensically studied hundreds of moving pictures. Penz's research has also highlighted a tendency to ignore lived experience in mainstream architecture.

In late 2019 as a novice in film making, I was invited to make a sketch set in Hong Kong, in collaboration with Chinachem Group, to represent the city at the now postponed Venice Biennale. The project took the film crew to where my journey began, Wong Kar-Wai's Hong Kong – a city that, architecturally speaking, with all its flaws, is nothing short of magnificent.

The film is entitled *E-motion-AI City*, and part of it is about a two-year-old flâneuse and her as a grown up finding the topography of her birthplace, Tusen Wan, with her feet. Film making and architecture do share a high degree of commonality in their creative and production processes, as both involve storytelling, meticulous planning and an eye for detail weaving every part together while preserving the integrity of the central theme. But just as you can't assume someone who can ride a bike is good at skateboarding, film making and architecture are two very different disciplines. I experienced first-hand the differences while making *E-motion-AI City*, but architects nevertheless could learn a great deal from cinematographers: the way they understand colours, ambience and atmosphere; the way they document and communicate real experiences in the built environment. It brings us back to Wright's point: like drawing, film making should be part of every architect's education. ●

Tszwai So is a founding director of Spheron Architects

PLANE SPOTTING

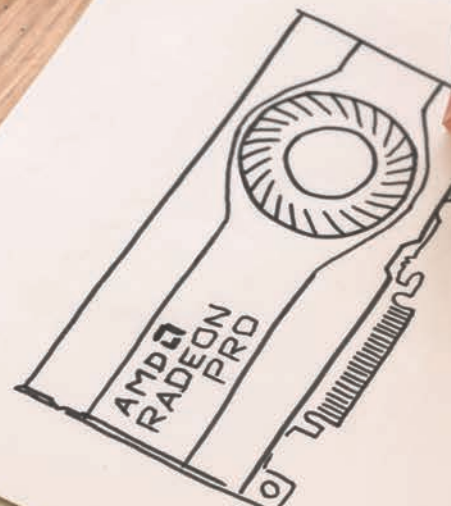
One day while shooting *E-motion-AI City*, we spotted a plane that emerged from the rooftop of a high-rise and swiftly vanished. We waited for two long hours to capture another one with our camera. Exhilarated, we later told our colleague about the epic catch – only to be told there was a well-known mobile app tracking every aircraft in the sky.

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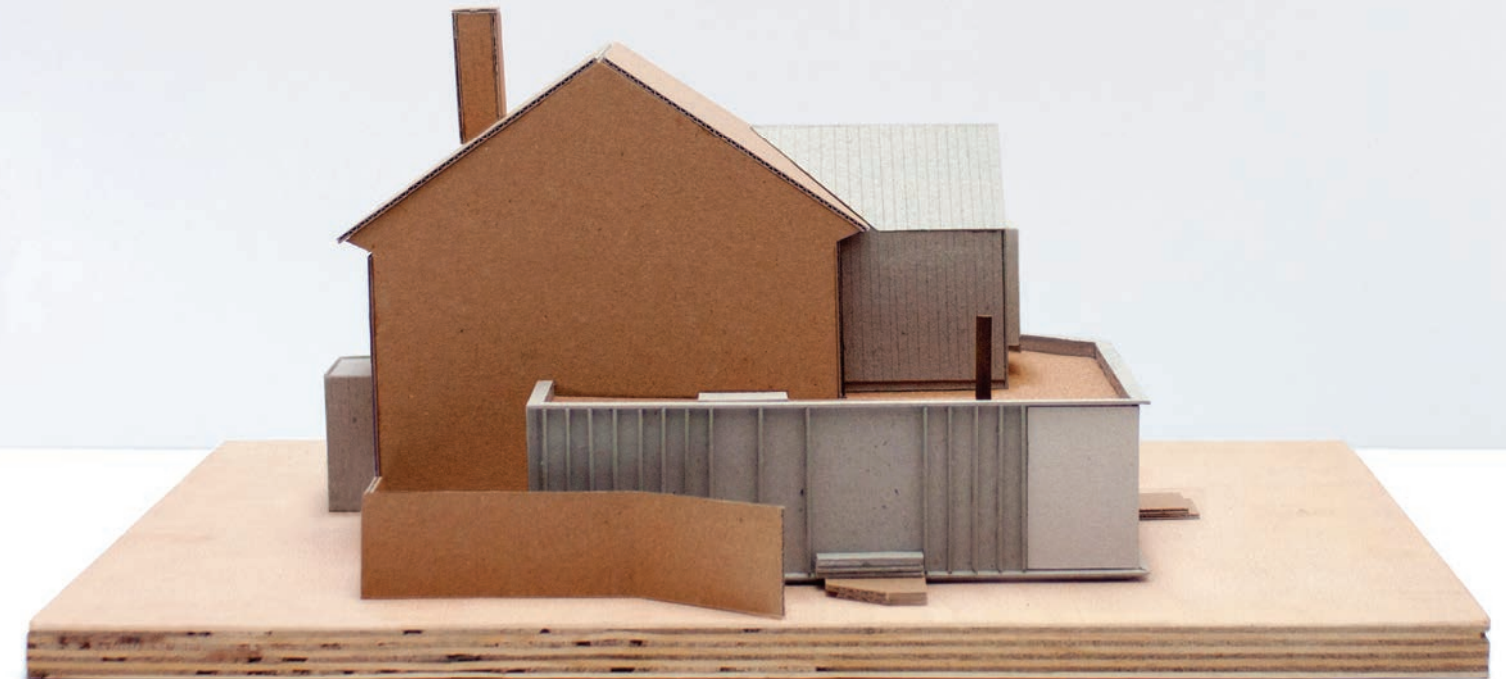


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Culture
Future winners

55

FREEHAUS: MEADOW PLACE



Future winners

In this annual special section, we celebrate five firms from across the UK, all within the first few years of practice. Look out for them as they switch scales and sectors, and shift up a gear – with interesting projects, stories and tips gained and learned along the way. And for some, a lot of drawing.

ribaj.com

The RIBA Journal April 2021

Projects and principles

As its workload recovers from lockdowns, nimtim continues to put community involvement, remuneration and diversity high on its busy agenda.

Words: Eleanor Young Portrait: Agnese Sanvito

‘We are working at 150%,’ says Nimi Attanayake. ‘It has been an incredible year for us.’ She and husband Tim O’Callaghan have been nimtim since 2013. Their diet has been eye-catching, inventive, and often colourful, back extensions and homes from their base in East Dulwich, south east London. Their foundation of private homes, many of which have been published across the world, turned in 2020 into something more tangible in the city they grew up in. This included a mixed use feasibility study in south London, and Croydon’s Brick by Brick competition for Housing for a Better World, which linked them to a network of supportive practices in the same position and led to invitations for Attanayake to join review panels and steering groups. And early this year the practice won an invited competition to re-imagine neglected plots as part of the Becontree Estate’s centenary programme.

It didn’t look like 2020 would be a good year: 50% of its work dropped off, was cancelled or put on hold in the first lockdown and the pair had to make one person redundant. ‘It was a bit touch and go in June or July. We found ourselves with a lot of time on our



Nimi Attanayake and Tim O’Callaghan of nimtim bring playfulness and seriousness to their projects.
Left Early ideas for corner plots in Becontree.



GILBERT LEUNG (3)

hands,’ say O’Callaghan. They now see the value of having taken a step back from busy delivery. They had always tried to do research but last year they reworked the firm’s website, showcasing larger and strategic projects, whether built or not. Tucked in a corner are happy deliveries of domestic projects. After increased posting on social media, particularly Instagram, they have over 10,000 followers. And O’Callaghan did more writing. More importantly they thought about their values and future. ‘We wanted to talk about bigger ideas and to start projecting our ambitions,’ says Tim. ‘It was a chance to really focus on our approach and values... Listening to every voice and turning that into a unique response.’

You can get a direct insight into those values by reading his piece on the practice website about Grenfell. It details publicly not only why nimtim will not specify Kingspan or Celotex products but also, in a nuanced way, the potential for architects to become the ethical and moral guardians of a project: creating safe and sustainable places. It is a bold statement when the practice is stepping up to larger projects in housing and mixed use schemes. And, while it is being lauded by Wallpaper, Elle Deco and Architects’ Journal, O’Callaghan added a note of reality, tweeting that he earned just £21,000 in 2019/20. He puts many of the problems of the profession down to the poor remuneration – including its lack of diversity.

Speaking out about anything isn’t easy. Being a spokesperson and representative on ethnicity and gender is harder, but Attanayake finds she is increasingly asked to do it. In the search for diversity those who are women or from a minority – and are obviously gifted and successful – are in high demand from event organisers, universities, the media, design review panels and competition selectors. It is both a blessing and a curse, especially if you fit into two of those categories like Attanayake who has Sri Lankan heritage. But she takes it with good grace.

Left and below Strategic and community projects are where nimtim would like to take the practice. Seen here are ideas for a Make district, a model for rural working (left) and living (below).

It raises nimtim’s profile, and she says being a mixed practice definitely contributed to the upturn in 2020. And nimtim is playing its part in helping address diversity, including working with the Stephen Lawrence Trust to mentor a student, work with the Architecture Foundation’s Young Trustees and giving lectures and joining panels for various universities.

Nimtim’s shift in gear is inevitably quite slow. Its seven projects on site are all domestic. In the last seven years these have grown incrementally from neighbours and family friends turned clients with small budgets to those with more money and ambitions attracted by their reputation. That was one step up. But can the skills of such projects be applied to others involving whole communities? Perhaps it can via the briefing game nimtim has developed and plays with clients: family members put down counters for different activities showing where they do them now and where they’d like to (along the way making counters for extra activities as needed, like kids playing drums or sword fighting). ‘You get more from this than with straight questions; the counters prompt a conversation,’ explains Attanayake. In lockdown this has moved online to Miro.

For the Becontree project nimtim is imagining hyper-local consultations of such conversations, with a tea urn alongside. ‘It is possible to have genuine co-creation on big projects,’ says O’Callaghan.



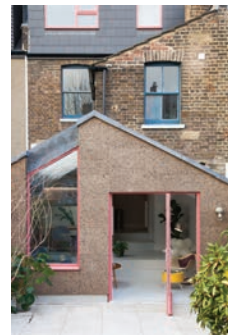


Above An early European competition entry by nimtim showed a high density area of energy and enterprise.

‘Especially now local authorities are involved.’ This method is in its competition bid for a masterplan on London’s Old Kent Road. Working with Stitch and Jas Bhalla, also on the team was a local young peoples’ group and a community group – who played a part in the submission. ‘You have to go in with an open mind, to show you are listening,’ says O’Callaghan.

Playfulness and something rather serious come together in nimtim – it’s tempting to suggest one is Attanayake, the other is O’Callaghan. Particularly given their colour coding of themselves, with Attanayake in black and white patterns and O’Callaghan in block colour, or even better, colours. But never mind what comes from who, this duality seems to run through many of their projects – raising questions and answering them in fresh ways. Take their Generation Game house which had to work for both teenagers and an ageing grandparent. Research for this led to bigger ideas on housing generations together and the need for both intimacy and separation, and nimtim developed this in conversations with locals at for its work on Croydon’s Housing for a Better World competition.

Right and below The twinning of cork and pink window frames has made this extension a hit for nimtim in the media and on social media.



As project sizes grow and with a practice of eight, Attanayake and O’Callaghan have had to step back from design, with some reluctance for Attanayake – she loved being close to clients and choosing materials and fittings. During lockdown the pair were also juggling schooling and care of their five year old adopted daughter; each took 50% furlough. The freedom they sought of being able to control their own time in their own practice is less obvious as work has increased but it is nothing like some firms. ‘I worked at OMA,’ says O’Callaghan. ‘So I know what long hours look like. And they’re not efficient.’ So they operate with some capacity for competitions and bids – enough to give a fighting chance for the next big project.

‘I don’t know if we will ever be a big practice,’ says O’Callaghan. ‘But we would like to be part of something larger,’ completes Attanayake. ●



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Taking a radical sidestep

Freehaus’ Jonathan Hagos and Tom Bell decided to broaden their work beyond the food and drink sector just at the right time

Words: Isabelle Priest Portrait: Ivan Jones

‘I’m glad we did a business plan,’ explains Tom Bell. ‘If we hadn’t planned every step of the way, we would be in a very different position now.’ He is referring to the Covid crisis and the dire effect it could have had on his practice, Freehaus Design, which until recently relied heavily on commissions from the food and beverage sector.

Bell and co-director Jonathan Hagos set up the practice in 2012 and, during its first five-year plan, clients included Benugo, Square Pie, Bocca di Lupo and Yotam Ottolenghi. They were good clients, as were the fees but, explains Hagos, ‘at a certain point we became cognisant that our exposure to more orthodox architectural stuff was missing – for example, most obviously, building foundations.’

‘Food and beverage needed to be a stepping stone,’ adds Bell. So at this five-year point the directors decided to make a curveball hire by recruiting Ana Beatriz Fernandes, a graphic and digital designer, to refine how the studio presented outwardly and refocus towards other types of work. The directors also decided to become more specialised – Bell became a certified Passivhaus designer and Hagos an RIBA conservation registrant. Fernandez added wayfinding and placemaking to the toolkit to provide a one-stop shop for clients.

Today, the main projects on Freehaus’ books are engagement and community-led schemes, many of them backed by the Mayor of London’s Good Growth Fund. It has far fewer food and beverage projects, which is just as well after the year that sector has had.

‘Beatriz helped with logos, tone of voice, the website and how to weave food and beverage into a wider narrative,’ explains Bell. She encouraged the practice to spring clean, relinquish some ambitions and promote others, enabling them to draw out the ingredients of its existing work that could demonstrate broader experience and competencies to clients – social and co-working spaces, cafés and listed buildings, working with multiple stakeholders and multi-headed clients and dealing with rapid turnarounds.

Right The co-working space and café at The Trampery on Tottenham High Street in a former gas company HQ that was burned out during the London Riots.

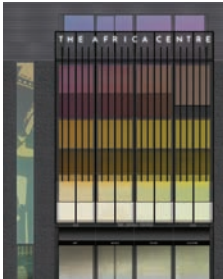


Jonathan Hagos (left) and Tom Bell (right) at Freehaus Design’s Africa Centre, currently under construction in Southwark.



Above The Clement James Centre project expands the site and buildings for a growing educational charity, just around the corner from Grenfell Tower. The new learning centre tries to blend with the domestic architecture around it.

Below and left The new HQ in Southwark for the Africa Centre, formerly based in Covent Garden. The redesigned facade encourages its activities to spill out on to the street and beyond with better outreach, reshaping the organisation’s recent history.



Hagos and Bell met in 2009 when Bell was working at Consarc Architects in London’s King’s Cross and interviewed Hagos, successfully, for a job there. Their paths had crossed before then, but they’d never been introduced. Bell did his Part 2 at the Bartlett while Hagos was there doing his Part 1. Hagos was scouted from the end of year show to work at Squire & Partners, returned to the Bartlett for his Part 2 and then worked for several small firms including Studio Cullinan and Buck Architects.

Bell, on the other hand, spent six years at Wilkinson Eyre working on Magma, Building Schools for the Future and a stint in Hong Kong where he grew up, before joining Consarc. He was keen to see variety in practice, not just big projects, and to be client-facing and also work on a civic scale.

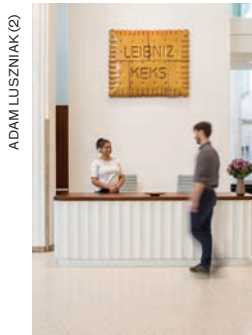
While at Consarc, the two formed many of the values Freehaus is founded on, working on projects such as the Icon Innovation Centre in Daventry and Oriental Club extension in central London.

They left Consarc at the same time – Bell effectively starting Freehaus in his spare room before getting in touch with Hagos, who was working as a production designer with his now-wife Nina Gerada on a feature film concerning migration from north Africa across the Mediterranean (he has also dabbled in making TV commercials). Bell and Hagos spent the first eight months plotting and discussing how to shape the practice.

‘As we knew we wouldn’t be able to draw big salaries at the beginning, the emphasis was on what Freehaus could offer us,’ says Hagos. ‘Tom had got married a few years earlier, I was about to. We knew we wanted to have families and we were conscious of creating a practice that didn’t take over our lives. We wanted a team that would have positive experiences in architecture and the workplace – no one stuck drawing toilet layouts.’

We’re speaking via Teams – Bell in the Cotswolds, where he lives, and Hagos in London.





Above and left Freehaus' reworked entrance hall at the Hanover factory and office of Bahlsen, the manufacturer of Choco Leibniz biscuits. The project refurbished the 1911 building and removed hard security, opening it up more to the public after decades of fear about corporate espionage.

What's particularly noticeable about the three-way conversation is the relationship between the directors. It's not that practice directors are usually fast and loose with each other, but here the their dynamic is extraordinarily cordial, respectful and civilised. There isn't any interjecting, no talking over each other – it's about waiting one's turn to speak, checking the other is finished. Perhaps it shows a thoughtfulness to PR that has been fine tuned over a year of remote working. More likely it seems to signal the circumstances of how they were brought together from an ultra-professional angle and how they have conducted themselves ever since through appreciating their mutual understandings of the subject matter and values, with differences potentially pushed more to the side.

You might expect this backdrop of propriety to lead to work that is lacking in flavour but, strangely, it doesn't – and we wouldn't be featuring Freehaus as a Future Winner if it did. Rather, the food and beverage projects forced the practice to engage with graphics, texture, colour, branding and not be afraid of interiors that are particularly resonant with trends in architecture now. It put Freehaus at the frontline of other business' profit and loss, embedding the idea of socio-economic sustainability. It was also an arena to play out the directors' founding ideals of collaboration, co-design and collegiate practice. The practice started up with a few projects in hand, including the Clement James Centre in north Kensington and an Eritrean community church and Eritrean café (for Hagos's mother in Woolwich), but many of the

Below and right A whole house refurbishment at Wilton Way in east London. Freehaus met the clients through Don't Move Improve meet-ups.



early jobs came through a contact at design agency Here Design. This led it to Ottolenghi, Benugo and schemes on the high street, at Luton Airport, and within cultural institutions such as the V&A, Natural History Museum, Barbican Centre and for a co-working hub at Imperial College in 2018.

'It's about making sure the clients are custodians of their project,' says Hagos. 'When we talk about co-design it is not about shirking responsibility, but a successful and sustainable project is one where the client has authorship early on.'

This thinking and realignment at the five-year point means the practice is now entering competitions (it didn't bother before) and winning them (Rainham Innovation Centre) – and the phone is ringing. It is also going beyond briefs for clients, such as expanding a potential German bakery project into a food business incubator hub in Berlin.

When coronavirus hit, the directors were concerned that the many publicly funded projects might fall by the wayside, but they haven't. To the contrary, the pandemic has reinforced the embedded socio-economic sustainability and objectives in these projects at the Africa Centre in Southwark, the Tramperry in Tottenham opposite where the 2011 London Riots started and at the Clement James Centre, which is in the shadow of Grenfell Tower. The practice's small amount of selected residential work (like Wilton Way in Hackney) has also remained buoyant. It could be just luck, but step inside a conversation between Hagos and Bell for a few hours and it surely doesn't look like it. ●



Project ntu airport hotel, Bremen Architects Westphal Architekten BDA, Bremen Project development Peper & Sohne Projekt GmbH, Bremen Photographer Anke Müller Klein, Hamburg

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Double act

Jessam Al-Jawad and Dean Pike are of one professional mind, building unexpectedly complementary work streams in upmarket retail and social housing

Words: Chris Foges Portrait: Agnese Sanvito

Below Jessam Al-Jawad and Dean Pike photographed in the east London studio that the practice has occupied since its foundation in 2014.

A couple of years after Jessam Al-Jawad and Dean Pike established their studio, its live projects included a boutique on Rome's Via del Corso and a social housing scheme on a disused garage site in Hackney. 'We always wanted a diversity of work that allows us to grow as an office and as individuals,' says Al-Jawad. 'We want every project to be different from any we've done before'. Now six years old and seven-strong, east London-based Al-Jawad Pike has a portfolio that is notable for its range, with quantities of both retail and residential work, but unified by a few common threads. Among them are a taste for weighty, tactile materials and an enjoyment of construction: 'How you put things together in a way that is joyful to experience,' says Al-Jawad.

These shared interests were present from the pair's first meeting as diploma students in a Bartlett unit taught by Níall McLaughlin and Yeoryia

Manolopoulou, recalls Pike. He was already working at David Chipperfield Architects, and introduced Al-Jawad to the practice. Both went on to spend 10 years there, and its influence is present in the practice's 'attitude of reductiveness and intention to keep it simple,' says Al-Jawad. Long association has clearly led to a close understanding between the partners, who habitually describe their interests and opinions in the plural – 'we like', 'we want', 'we think' – and having made a point, smoothly hand over to the other for elaboration.

Departing to set up their own practice wasn't a grand plan. 'It happened quite casually,' says Pike. 'We were doing competitions together and waiting to see what materialised.' Opportunity knocked with RIBA's 2014 Regent Street Shop Windows Project, which paired the architects with perfumier Penhaligon's to develop a temporary installation. They subsequently pitched Penhaligon's with a concept store design and secured a few months' steady income to develop the work. 'It was now or never,' says Al-Jawad. In their early 30s, they were 'old enough to have delivered a lot of work at Chipperfield's, but still young enough to be able to work a bit harder and not be too scared that things might not work out'.

That confidence paid off, and the concept store proposal became 10 Penhaligon's shops in Europe, the US and Asia. More work in the luxury retail sector followed. Four Italian outlets for leather goods maker Celine are lined in grey concrete and nougat-like



Above A two-storey extension to a Victorian terraced house at King's Grove in south London is constructed from blockwork with oak windows and interior joinery.



Left Completed in 2016, a Celine outlet in Rome is intended as a calm counterpoint to the visual overload of the department store in which it sits.

terrazzo, and feature onyx display cases and resin shelving. In Manchester, a flagship store for fashion brand Allsaints employs a tougher palette of concrete and textured render with galvanised steel ceilings and shelving units. Outside the conventional store environment, the practice has designed a pop-up structure for Chloé in Beijing, and elaborate settings for Burberry runway shows at London Fashion Week.

The latest addition to the practice's retail portfolio is a concession for skin-care brand Aesop within the London department store Westfield. Wrapped in a wavy wall of straight and curved terracotta-coloured concrete blocks, it demonstrates the architects' interest in creating strong architectural character through the imaginative organisation of inexpensive materials.

'Working in retail is good for a young office because you get to build quickly,' says Pike. 'The turnaround for a project is maybe six months and then you've got something to show.' Store design also offers considerable scope to experiment, adds Al-Jawad. 'We see retail projects as essays in what might later become a larger piece of work – an opportunity to try things out at a smaller scale where we have quite a lot of creative freedom.'

From the outset the practice focussed on developing parallel strands of residential work. ‘Rite of passage’ back extensions led to commissions for new private houses. At the same time, it was looking to break into social housing. Success in a 2016 competition led to an 11-home development of townhouses and mews homes for Hackney Council, which is approaching completion. Another scheme for the same client is on site.

This work is usefully complementary to the retail projects – slow-cooked, and with the constraints of site, programme and tight budgets that provide ‘different design opportunities and more challenges’, says Al-Jawad. The same sensibility is brought to both fields. In a two-storey house extension on King’s Grove, Peckham, blockwork is used to create architectural character in a way that prefigures the Aesop store. Budget is also an important influence on the studio’s design approach, says Pike. ‘Often there isn’t money for fine finishes; not overloading projects with too many materials is a way of keeping them economical.’

At King’s Grove glazing bars are hidden behind slender beams, and oak joinery meets blockwork in



Above The Mandeville Street social housing scheme, under construction in east London, comprises townhouses and mews, unified by two-toned brickwork and gabled roofs.

crisp, undisguised junctions – details that give the impression of simplicity but are hard to achieve. ‘We didn’t work with top-end builders,’ says Al-Jawad. ‘There’s always a struggle in the execution. It takes hard graft, persuasion and resolve.’ That can mean doing more work than the fee can reasonably sustain. ‘Sometimes you’re prepared to do that for your portfolio, but it doesn’t really work for bigger housing projects when you’ve got salaries to pay.’ There, says Pike, the architect’s inclination to focus on a project’s essential character is advantageous: ‘It’s about not over-complicating the design, and maximising the potential in certain areas – maybe a really nice brick, high ceilings or big windows – that you can protect through the procurement process.’

In its current housing projects the practice has been employed to oversee construction, but that may not be the case in the larger-scale work it is pursuing. ‘There’s a high probability that an architect’s details will be corrupted in the execution,’ says Al-Jawad, ‘so we’re thinking now about how to manage that.’

As well as bigger housing projects, the practice’s long-term aims include being in contention for the sort of large international cultural projects that seemed more common before the financial crisis, should those opportunities come again. In the meantime, says Pike, ‘we are into building and learning through that process. We’d like to continue to grow in size insofar as that allows us to build more, and to try new things. Our ambition is just to continue to produce and realise strong ideas for projects.’ Work to date – pragmatic and refined, varied but consistent – has laid solid foundations on which to build. ●

Below right The Celine outlet in Rome’s La Rinascente department store features terrazzo finishes and resin shelves.

Below Blockwork walls tinted with red sandstone and honey-coloured resin sink units lend warmth to Aesop’s Westfield store.



AL-JAWAD PIKE

SIMON MENGES

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In the wake of the Tiger

Tenacity and realism have paved a steady path for MMAS founders Garreth McMahon and Fearghal Murray in Northern Ireland

Words: Isabelle Priest Portrait: Aidan Monaghan



Above MMAS practice founding directors Garreth McMahon (left) and Fearghal Murray in Belfast.

Below The house at Dungannon is inspired by the clustered buildings of Irish vernacular architecture. Murray and McMahon see parallels with southern European architecture in its courtyards and single room plans.

The bulbs carefully planted by Garreth McMahon and Fearghal Murray are starting to bud at MMAS in Belfast. RIBA first talked to them about doing this profile in early 2019. The duo set the practice up in 2013 but it has taken six or seven years to get financial stability. Only now are they getting the type of work they wanted and are happy with to speak in depth about it. A charming and clever community farm on the edge of the M1 motorway in the west of the city is about to finish on site, and a sprawling country house made of clustered components, clinging to the edge of the fields in Dungannon, will complete in a few months' time. They say that slightly too many projects on paper haven't materialised – perhaps these hang more heavily in their minds than they need to. We were already interested and impressed back then. Though as with other articles, it is a shame we can't now meet in person.

So we are stuck on Teams. Me grounded in London, McMahon and Murray are in their studio in an enormous converted former woollen mill where there are usually around 50 individual businesses.



The office is right at the edge of the Falls Road, a key interface in an urban environment that still shows the marks of its sectarian past. The Cupar Way Clonard peace wall, originally built in 1969, is at the end of the street; the 3.5m tall North Howard Street metal gates interface is just around the corner. The practice will soon be six people, with a new joiner due in April.

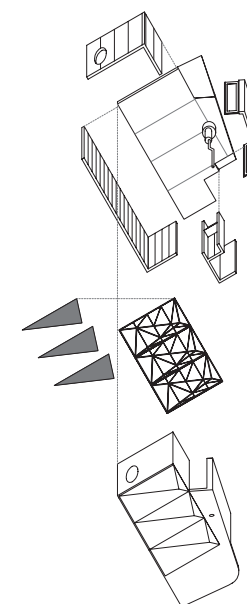
The pair are feeling upbeat; coronavirus has brought about a shift in thinking in Northern Ireland. There is an urgency among political leaders and others that hold the purse strings to give Belfast's public realm rapid attention – to improve how people can move around the city and to consider what to do with commercial spaces when business activity returns. Road engineers have dominated this type of work for decades, but now there is growing recognition that architects should be involved – and not just the big firms. Procurement impediments to commissioning smaller practices are being addressed too. MMAS has been appointed to a few more public realm and community projects that have coincided with the health crisis: a parklet with kiosks in collaboration with OGU on five parking spaces at Castle Place, and a pavement-widening scheme on Adelaide Street. MMAS's portfolio is peppered with diverse projects, but McMahon and Murray had been prepping for this kind of tipping point for some time.

The two met while working at Mackel & Doherty Architects in 2005, right in the middle of the roaring Celtic Tiger economic boom. McMahon had just done Part II, Murray had finished Part I. There was a lot of positivity playing out after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland in the early 2000s. Interesting work was sloshing around. The national and local governments were investing in public buildings, tourism and museums like Titanic Belfast as well as the smaller grain. McMahon and Murray were introduced to architectural practice on a diet of community projects and small interventions like Irish language schools (Ciarán Mackel is a full Irish speaker). These were often temporary and modular, restricted by funding, but had potential to make decent architectural projects. This type of work rubbed off on McMahon and Murray.



Above left and right With views over the Ring of Gullion, the plan of the house at Whitecross responds to the geometries and contours of the landscape with splaying walls and an upper level living space.

Below Design for an artist studio at the bottom of a garden in Belfast, currently under construction. Rainwater will be collected to wash the paintbrushes.



Of course, the Celtic Tiger only lasted so long. By 2012, the 2008 financial crisis had bitten in both Northern Ireland and south of the border. McMahon and Murray had to leave Ciarán Mackel and ended up working together from an attic, starting at the bottom with small residential clients because public procurement processes wouldn't take into account previous experience gained elsewhere – a chicken-and-egg conundrum.

'Post Good Friday there was a lot of tourism-focused investment while other things festered away,' says Murray. 'Recently there's been a realisation that there needs to be urban regeneration in those neighbourhoods.'

'Our approach all along,' adds McMahon, 'has been forceful in identifying blighted sites then doing pro bono work to get involved and make contacts, sourcing leads, pushing ideas towards councillors to prise the door open. But it is a difficult place to practise architecture because you get in with one council and then it changes.'

In these ways Belfast is more of a big town than a city like Dublin and London. The urban farm project





Above Castle Place, a collaboration with OGU Architects, emerged because of coronavirus in Belfast. It consists of a pavilion with a café and a flower stall with vitrines to display images from local galleries.

started pro bono. But McMahon and Murray are not Belfast-grown. McMahon is from County Tyrone, Murray from County Armagh. They came to work here because of the Celtic Tiger optimism, wanting to get to know their capital and be part of progress. Being ‘from the sticks’ has given them a healthy distance in proposing change, but it hasn’t quite gone to plan.

‘Architects can be over optimistic about curing social division,’ explains Murray. ‘Urban problems are common to UK and Irish cities but they are heightened in Belfast. There’s a lot of broken streetscapes... Initially we were frustrated because as architects you want to build but we have realised the role is softer than that. It is about resetting the perception of young and old people – who live, for example, around a wall [built along sectarian boundaries] – and what they want for it. It’s about leading conversations about changing that wall or potentially taking it down.’

But the process for instigating change in these areas is complicated – in the first place even in identifying who owns a wall or interface. And ballooning tourism over the past 20 years has given the walls value. Resistance to change can be strong – even children not around during the Troubles start with a defensive mindset. However, growing work in regenerating the city comes full circle for MMAS which can draw on its early community work experience of very fixed budgets. The pair are inspired by David Leech’s work ennobling buildings by assembling standardised elements. MMAS is now on an approved list to develop feasibility studies for Development Trusts NI, which helps groups acquire public land to pass onto organisations like social enterprises that can make good use of it. It recently made a proposal to reclaim a leftover plot of a 1980s housing estate that people had been using to do

Below Glandore Drive (2016), Belfast, a development of four new terraced houses that take on the external proportions of the neighbouring Victorian terraces.



‘doughnuts’ in cars. The practice wants to make it into a community garden with a protective pergola as a front entrance to the estate. The steel and timber frame is rudimentary but the excitement will be in the detailing.

All the while the domestic work has been ticking over and during the past year schemes that had been on hold since, say, 2017 have returned. Briefs are integrating more home workspaces and the work tends to be rural as McMahon and Murray have always kept a foot back home. But the commissions tend to have very lean budgets as end values rarely warrant a higher-end approach. A scheme extending a Victorian terrace in Belfast called Glandore Drive completed four houses for an unbelievable £280,000, including roof terraces and enhanced bay windows that captured a porch-like space over the front door.

‘No two projects are the same,’ says Murray. ‘We’re always trying to do more with each item’ – a sill is a seat in a house, a clustered house re-establishes a typically Irish vernacular and landscape, a park is a tool to promote social cohesion. There’s also a former workhouse in Clogher that will accommodate a playgroup, Sure Start and Early Years Centre that is sensitive to its austere history but turns the site round to redefine its future. As spring gets under way, MMAS’s approach is blossoming. ●



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Made in Glasgow

McGinlay Bell's directors grew up, trained and now practise locally, including a formative eight-year spell working for NORD

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Portrait: Keith Hunter

Young Glasgow practice McGinlay Bell is living proof of the benefits of staying close to home. Its directors, Brian McGinlay and Mark Bell, hail from Glasgow and Kilmarnock, were made in Glasgow and, for the most part, their frames of reference proudly revolve around this city. Speaking on video call, they initially come across as an odd couple. McGinlay, slickly coiffed in a crisp deep navy shirt buttoned to the collar, seems the model of the driven, aspiring designer; whereas the more grizzled Bell, shy at first and wearing a blue flannel shirt and beanie, appears more like a Firth fisherman. After a while the shirt's conceit of a Vivienne Westwood logo will be revealed; and as for the reticence, like the eponymous lozenge, it's not long before he warms up too.

Setting up on their own in 2016, the two might have carved a niche for themselves in local domestic extensions and one-off houses, but the sense is that they have their eyes on bigger prizes – an ambition thwarted over the pandemic year though they both retain a Celtic optimism in adversity. The practice has just completed their latest home, Bearsden House, on Glasgow's northern fringes, a sizeable and stealth-like private home of full glazing, black-stained timber and dark brick, displaying a clear ability to successfully manipulate materials – especially here in a conservation area. But it's the plan they feel proudest of. 'It had a narrow frontage and a very long plan on a landscaped site, and it was important that the spaces connected back to nature in a particular way,' explains Bell. 'We cut courtyards all through the plan so every part of the building was connected to a garden space; pushing the idea of filtering the home through the landscape ... in the end we could have built it from anything.'

These obsessions with plan and materiality are born of a very specific lineage, both directors having been part of the core team at Robin Lee and Alan Pert's NORD Architects. The two first met in 2001 in their fifth year at Strathclyde University,



Surrounded by their working models, Mark Bell and Brian McGinlay in their new Hope St office in the heart of Glasgow.

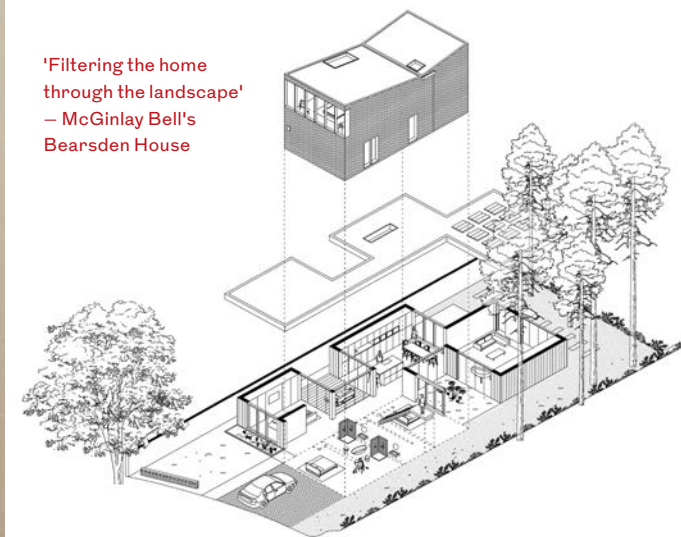


Left The practice's 101 Vincent St project hopes to address recent changes in the way we work.

Right Bearsden House on Glasgow's north-west edge displays the simple material palette that characterises the firm's output.



JACK HOBHOUSE



'Filtering the home through the landscape' – McGinlay Bell's Bearsden House

where they were both exposed to the experimental teachings of Jonathan Charley, Per Kartvedt and head of cultural studies, David Reat. 'They were driven by social, political and environmental issues of architecture and encouraged us to be thinkers, to question, to be optimists!' says McGinlay. The move they subsequently made into commercial practice might seem strange – McGinlay to JM Architects and Bell to RMJM's Glasgow office working under Paul Stallan – but it allowed them to cut their teeth at a larger scale and in office management. 'It taught us about how firms actually run,' recalls Bell. 'At RMJM I was thrown in at the deep end and got the confidence to work on £50 million jobs with 15 builders on site shouting at me; so I was never intimidated by the move to an office of our own and small-scale work.'

But it was the experience at Nord from 2007, McGinlay joining just prior to Bell, that proved formative for them both. The eight years they spent there saw them involved with some of its key schemes, including the 2010 Shingle House in Dungeness for Living Architecture, for which Bell was project architect. NORD's skill with materials feeds into McGinlay Bell's own work. 'The domestic stuff lets you test out the brick, bronze or walnut detail but it's in the commercial realm where these play out,' says Bell.

NORD dissolved in 2015, but the two felt the benefits when they set up on their own. Their elegant and delicately detailed Phase II of the Glasgow Film Theatre followed on from NORD's Phase I, as did the £4 million Maryhill Locks housing in Glasgow – a former NORD project and McGinlay Bells' largest to date. The scheme comprises 40 two, three and four-bed brick 'private affordable' homes for client Bigg Regeneration on a narrow site with a steep level change down to the River Kelvin. The terraces offer views and potential for habitation of the roof spaces, all embellished with decorative metalwork details at the thresholds and openings. It is the kind of project



that, McGinlay hopes, will finally get them noticed for public housing, though Bell caveats this with a refusal to work for the punitively low fees most of these offer: 'We're a small firm; we simply can't afford to do that.'

As it stands, ongoing relationships with former firms and the wider consultant team has kept them in the commercial work they're craving. After being shelved for a year, two commercial projects in Glasgow city centre are coming back to life and, post-pandemic, look like they'll be developing into something more interesting, thinks McGinlay. What was a standard office refurb at 101 Vincent Street now has the potential to address 'the changing nature of office space – how you move away from raised floors and suspended ceilings and talk instead about domestication and control of your own space'.

For their first foray into masterplanning, they are developing a scheme in Dundee for publishing giant DC Thomson. McGinlay says they have to get their head around how to reinvigorate a whole area of the city centre by bringing the client's disused 20,000m² West Ward Works back into active use. Bell recalls a study trip to Berlin and a visit to Hackesche Höfe in the city centre as an influence on their thinking.



DAPPLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Above left A specialist centre for a cycling fanatic client in Newton Mearns, south-west of Glasgow, proposes accommodation bothies for fellow obsessives to indulge in cycling holidays.

Above right The dramatic Phase II of Glasgow Film Theatre, using dark timber, brass and leather, won the 2018 Architecture Grand Prix Scottish Design Award

Below The £4 million Maryhill Locks 'private affordable' housing, with its piano nobile, is lent a continental dignity.



DAPPLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Its office blocks punctuated with public courtyards of leisure and cultural activity are seen as a model for the practice's Dundee proposal for offices and start-up spaces enlivened with live/work, gallery and leisure spaces – 'active public spaces that permeate through the private blocks'. The proposal brings together corporate office space with small business incubation and a 'makers creation campus' with Dundee University. This isn't just about urban planning, it's a broader imagining of what uses might be possible. 'We're helping the client to build a vision of what the programme might be,' says McGinlay.

With projects looking like they will pick up, the firm has just moved into new offices in anticipation. Not before time, I sense. Both partners, having spent a year working remotely while online teaching a cohort of future architects at Strathclyde, are champing at the bit to be a 'live' office again. 'It's the critical dialogue that's missing and we're itching to get back to that play-off from one another to how a project develops,' muses Bell on the missing engagement. 'Catching something on screen as you walk by that could make all the difference to a project – and that we learned from NORD.' ●



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Part 1 Student at Coventry University



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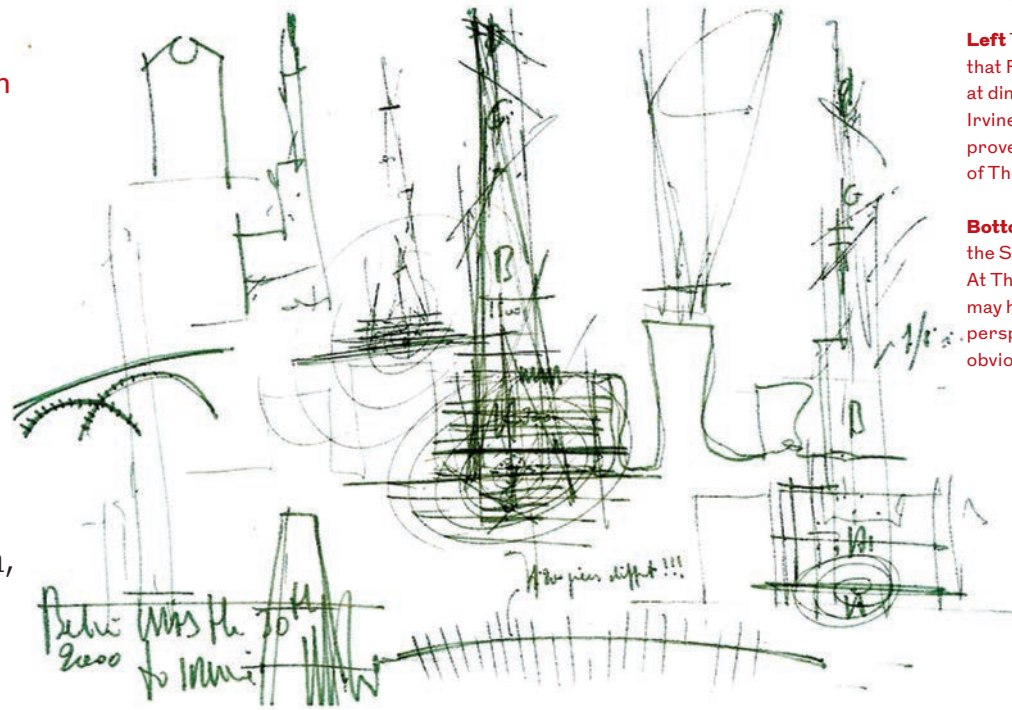
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Left The napkin sketch that Renzo Piano drew at dinner with developer Irvine Sellar, which proved to be the genesis of The Shard design.

Bottom left Views from the Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London, may help develop more perspectives than the obvious one.

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The competition is run by RIBA Journal in conjunction with Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London

FORMAT

Competition entries will be submitted as a maximum 500-word proposal asking what you plan to do with your week at the Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London. It will be assessed anonymously. Judges will be looking for proposals that pique their curiosity, are aspirational and far-reaching, wildly indulgent or boldly prosaic. Fun or serious, we want to know how the experience of being in The Shard can feed into your thinking or practice. Six winners will be selected for six one-week B&B residencies at the Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London, with a £100/day per diem for use within the hotel's bars and restaurants. Winners' partners will have the option to stay as guests at the hotel for two consecutive nights. Winners will be asked to post once daily on the RIBAJ's Instagram feed an image and a thought for our followers.

JUDGES

Ben Campkin, professor of history and theory of architecture and urbanism at Bartlett School, University College London
Rhael Cape, aka LionHeart, award-winning poet and Hon FRIBA
Jan-Carlos Kucharek, acting deputy editor, RIBA Journal
William Mathews, founding partner, William Mathews Architects
Lucy Tilley, associate principal, Adjaye Associates

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ribaj.com/time-to-reflect-enter

DEADLINE

14.00 Monday 17 May 2021

Full terms and conditions on online entry page



A renewed social contract with the world

The RIBA's education initiatives can help raise global professional competence, says Alan Jones

The technological acceleration of the pandemic has made our world smaller and more connected. Online platforms have become the accepted way to meet. Engagement has soared, with online audiences larger, more diverse and with a greater equity of voice. There is still a time-zone segregation in our 'live' world, as well as more local, and personal matters causing disjunction. (The post-Brexit temporary breakdown in supply lines to Northern Ireland comes to mind.)

Zooming back out, everywhere there is a social contract between each profession and the society it serves, and it is the same for architects. Across countries and continents, climate change, public wellbeing and environmental equality are the common issues that must be tackled to create a better physical world. Our way forward is to demonstrate how architects' ethics, values and ability to self-police align to and address these obstacles.

The RIBA has already started along this road and I believe it can help the world by helping architects. Our 2020 education and CPD framework The Way Ahead is the first strategic framework developed by a membership body for architects that recognises the unique identities and interconnectedness of architectural academia and professional practice.

The four RIBA knowledge schedules for the proposed mandatory competences and the CPD core curriculum together define a post-registration curriculum for acquiring and enhancing an architect's authentic core skills and reflect the concerns of a generation of emerging graduates and practitioners to deliver and to address current 'traditional' business models. The schedules will also help anchor the teaching and learning of all those involved in Part 1, 2, and 3 with practice and regulatory expectations.

The RIBA CPD recording platform launched in late 2019, together with the early 2020 Professional Experience Development Record (PEDR), are a positive enhancement to career definition and progression, and support the RIBA's ambitions in respect of specialist accreditations.

The new online RIBA Academy, launched in 2020, already has over 500 hours of uploaded material. It has the potential to offer short courses, content

specifically aimed at providing learners at all the career stages, a forum for debate and a clearing house for global discussion and debate about architecture.

The new 2021 validation procedures are a blueprint for the 110 RIBA-validated architecture schools as well as those seeking validation. The themes and values for architectural education newly emphasise skills for zero carbon design, responsible specification and design for user health and safety, ethical practice and behaviours, supporting social justice for all the communities that architects serve, and understanding how research literacy underscores an accountable built environment.

The longstanding 'earn and learn' RIBA Studio has enhanced its value as a highly credible online vehicle for the cost-effective delivery of RIBA qualifications. Connecting with international partners is an obvious progression. Partnering across all continents would broaden access to this socially inclusive alternative to university-based learning. A recent Nigerian Institute of Architects event highlighted how such a partnership could align its local graduates with the expectations of the UK profession and its regulator.

On the international stage, these initiatives will create confidence, showing how the global competence of the profession can be systematically raised throughout the world. Having equivalence and recognised standards of competence is essential to achieve architects' mobility, responsibility and value. Locally and globally, a renewed reconfigured social contract with the world has to be our new world. ●

@AlanJonesFRIBA



One world: The RIBA has to act locally and globally.

PHOTO: ISTOCK/PEARLEYE PORTRAIT: STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH

GREEN WIN FOR RIBA

The new Environmental Audit Committee report, Greening the post-Covid recovery, echoes the RIBA's recommendations. This was a big win for the RIBA. After considering its policy team's written response to the inquiry and oral evidence, the final report echoed several RIBA recommendations including setting embodied carbon targets for new homes, bringing forward funding for improving energy efficiency and moving towards the use of 'green taxation'.

Influential teacher, writer and practitioner inspired by Scandinavian architecture, artists and the modernist debate, one of the team that designed the Royal Festival Hall



Trevor Dannatt 1920–2021

Trevor Dannatt, who has died aged 101, was a Royal Academician, teacher and prolific writer, and a major figure in the generation of celebrated architects who qualified soon after World War Two. He was closely involved in debate about the language of modernism and ‘humanist’ architecture, which informed his many thoughtful and sensitive buildings.

Dannatt grew up in Blackheath, south London, and attended Colfe’s school where his art teacher, Alfred Hallet, introduced him to the work of Le Corbusier. He studied at the Regent Street Polytechnic from 1938. ‘Within a few weeks I realised what I wanted to do’, he later wrote. ‘I was “summoned by buildings”’. In 1943 he joined Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, moving on in 1948 to his former tutor Peter Moro, who was associate architect with Sir Leslie Martin at the London County Council Architects’ Department, in charge of developing the Royal Festival Hall. In 1952, a year after its completion, Dannatt left the LCC and set up in private practice. He worked informally ‘in association with’ Martin and Colin St John Wilson, and in 1970 formed Trevor Dannatt and Partners. In 1994, his former student David Johnson became a partner and the firm was renamed Dannatt Johnson.

Scandinavian architecture was a pervasive influence – particularly following visits to Sweden and Denmark in the 1940s and to Finland in 1956. Dannatt’s accounts of that trip were published in Architectural Design and the Architects’ Year Book, which he edited from 1948 to 1962. ‘All embodying thought, care for the human dimension, creativity and plastic imagination, always well put together with colour and tactile sensibility,’ he later wrote.

Like many contemporaries he benefited from the expansion of the welfare state, designing educational buildings such as a hall of residence at the University of Leicester (1960) and the assembly hall at Bootham

School in York (1966). Private homes included the now-listed Laslett House of 1958. In 1967, he won a competition to design a conference centre and hotel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and in the 1980s received a commission for the British Embassy there. His practice oversaw the transformation of the Royal Naval College Buildings at Greenwich into university accommodation, and was appointed consultant architect to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

Involvement and collaboration with artists, including his long-time friend Patrick Heron, also deeply influenced Dannatt’s architecture and saw him accumulate a substantial collection of British and European paintings and works on paper, the major part of which was bequeathed to the Whitworth Art Gallery at the University of Manchester.

I was a student at the University of Manchester when Dannatt was visiting professor. It was a transitional time for the school, and at the start of my architectural education in 1975, the outgoing head had not been replaced, leaving a void. His appointment brought much-needed architectural leadership. He spoke of our ‘inner landscape’ of forms, patterns, ideas and experiences, not just of architecture but of all forms of art. This, together with his experience and profile, re-established the reputation of the school and formed a base for its future development. An elegant, lean figure around the studio, his quiet, thoughtful and erudite criticism instilled a confidence, particularly in this former student, and left memories that are still cherished.

In 1953 Dannatt married artist Joan Howell Davies and had two children, Clare and Adrian. The marriage was dissolved in 1991, and three years later he married cancer specialist Ann Crawford who survives him, along with his son and daughter. ●

Stephen Hodder is chairman of Hodder & Partners

IN MEMORIAM

Gerald Michael Langlay-Smith
Elected 1955, Sevenoaks

Gordon Fairlie Polson
Elected 1955, Victoria, BC, Canada

Janusz Seweryn Kent
Elected 1957, West Sussex

Donovan Ross Mincher
Elected 1959, Staffordshire

Frank Gerald John Green
Elected 1961, Horsham

Frederick William Chadwick
Elected 1965, Dorset

John Leonard Pateman
Elected 1966, Kent

Peter Martin Joseph Branston
Elected 1970, London

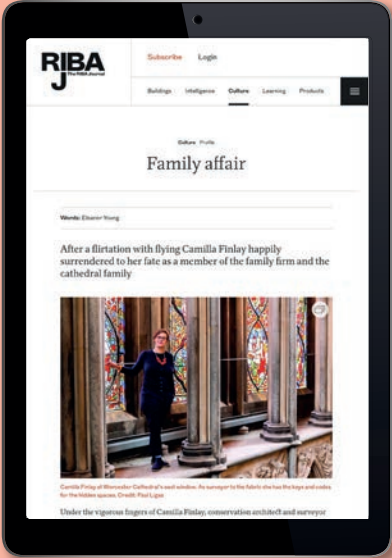
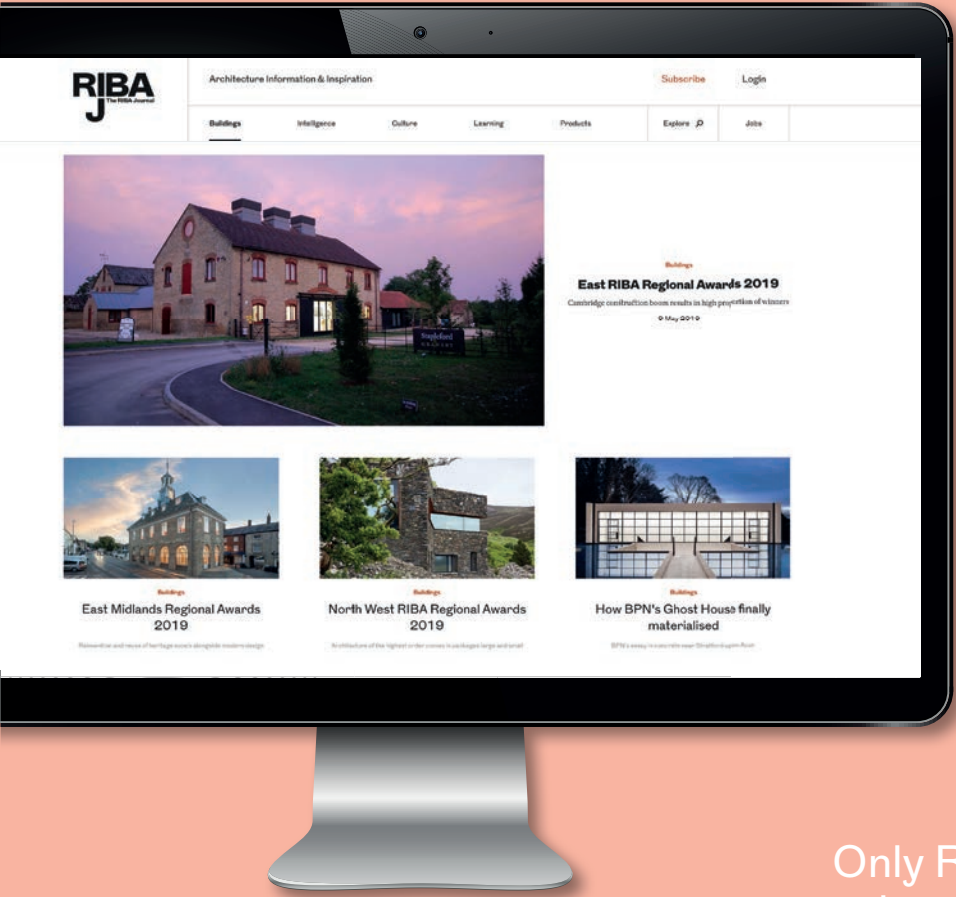
Peter George Kennedy
Elected 1958, Warlingham

Harold Frank Seward
Elected 1954, Leamington Spa

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Culture Feedback

Exchange

Unsustainable attitudes

I lived for 19 years in London before moving back to Australia where I now practice in central Victoria – in a tiny remote village. In the 1990s, I studied architecture at the AA in London for five years, worked at Allies and Morrison for nine years and loved being a part of the great metropolis. At that time, for me, London was the centre of the world. I, like many architects and non-architects in Australia, watched and enjoyed the recently aired Grand Designs House of the Year 2019. Is this an ancient memory in the UK? I loved the winning project, House Lessans, and was very happy that it won the final award. But while I loved seeing many of the very beautiful projects, I was left extremely disappointed that the RIBA relegated THE issue of our time – sustainability – to a side issue, in deference to the purity of design excellence. Surely, surely, by now, we are waking up? OK, this was House of the Year 2019; Perhaps the latest houses (which we have not yet seen over here) are changing their attitude?

I will never, sadly, be as talented as the great Peter Zumthor. But really, rammed concrete? We can all agree that it looked beautiful. What kind of a message does that send to the world of designers? Business as usual, striving to make a beautiful objects, no matter what the cost to the planet. Of course, in an ideal world, the best projects would be both the most sustainable and the most beautifully designed. And if they are not, then it is up to the Institute to throw down the gauntlet to the architectural community and demand that they are. I look forward to seeing an RIBA judge who understands what a Swedish teenager understood back in 2018.

Helena Harry, architect, Maldon, Victoria, Australia

Editor's note: The RIBA Awards has been pushing sustainability up the judges' criteria since the last awards round in 2020 – in line with its championing of change through the RIBA 2030 Challenge.

Something to get off your chest?
Write to us: letters.ribaj@riba.org

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We welcome letters but retain the right to edit them



Above Studio Polpo's
tree theatre set for
Handlebards touring
theatre company, using
mycelium-grown panels.

Below McGonigle McGrath
Architects' house Lessans,
RIBA House of the Year 2019.



Tweetback

ON STUDIO POLPO PROFILE
This is a perfectly balanced & delightful read by @RIBAJ on @StudioPolpo... I can vouch that Eleanor Young's practice profile is absolutely spot on. @von_tweethoff@c_cerulli & Co with Studio Polpo have been a source of inspiration for well over a decade!
Lorenza Casini
[@naturallycyclin](https://twitter.com/naturallycyclin)

Brilliant national recognition of Sheffield social enterprise Studio Polpo: 'an example to the whole profession on bringing together unexpected disciplines, marginal communities, artists and funding to tackle important issues of our day, while having fun'.
Union St
[@UnionStCowork](https://twitter.com/UnionStCowork)

JULIA BARFIELD ON HER OWN INTERVIEW
They say hindsight is a wonderful thing but at the moment we need to look forward and rethink everything. The race to net zero is on.
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‘The Inkwell’ railway head office
Utrecht, 1921

During his frequent travels in Europe, Frank Yerbury, pioneering photographer of modernism and Architectural Association school administrator, photographed the railway head office in Utrecht shortly after its completion in 1921, exactly 100 years ago. This relatively little-known building had been designed by railway engineer George van Heukelom, who was influenced by the ideas of the prominent Dutch architect Hendrik Petrus Berlage and the Amsterdam School, as well as German brick expressionism. The striking structure, which still has many elements of its original interior, is the

largest brick building in The Netherlands: more than 22 million bricks went into its construction, which also required large quantities of oak; to this purpose the state-owned Dutch railway company acquired three ships, a timber company and a forest. In addition, due to the scarcity of building materials after World War One, 21km of old rails were used for the building’s foundations. The building’s water tower contributes to its peculiar overall shape, which explains the nickname The Inkwell, by which the head office is commonly known. ●
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architectural acoustic finishes

Crossway, Birmingham (formerly Civic House).

SonaSpray fc applied to the ceiling throughout the impressive foyer area of Crossway, Birmingham. Chosen for its attractive, lightly textured & seamless finish, SonaSpray fc achieves superb acoustics without design compromise.

Credit to Associated Architects.

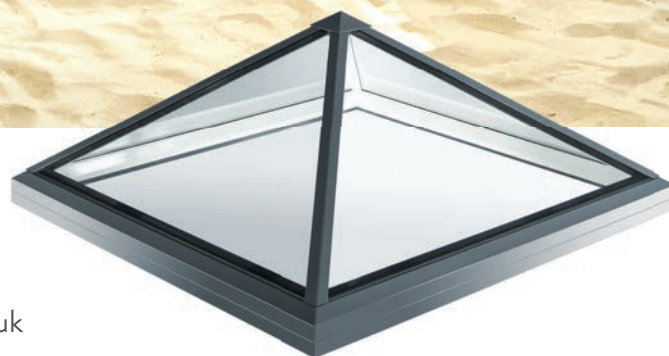




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