Extreme spec
Timber tower,
Skellefteå, Sweden
07
Lighting
Theatre Royal,
Drury Lane, London
08
Special report
School design: can do better
18
Roofing & rooflights
Three bespoke rooflight solutions
22
Interiors
The Old Library,
Liverpool
34
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‘It’s all just a little bit…

...of history repeating...’ Shirley Bassey belted out in the 1997 Propellerheads track, and judging by recent goings-on in global energy markets, it seems she’s right. With the wholesale price of gas spiralling and the domestic gas price cap lifted, it’s not just energy-intensive businesses feeling the pinch. It all calls to mind the OPEC oil crisis of 1973 – when barrel prices quadrupled overnight – but which drives game-changing energy saving and generation initiatives, everything from a “Department of Energy” to radical efficiencies in engine design, biofuel and commercial wind power. Big stuff.

And you’d like to think we’ve wised up. Climate change is accepted by all but the most hardened deniers and is the reason for Glasgow’s COP26 conference, but the question is how to act on it. Newbuild aside, retrofitting our existing housing stock remains one of the UK’s biggest challenges, but this conflates several issues. Insulate Britain’s tactics might be a thorn in the side of anyone within the M25, but the group’s belligerence is driven by the failed Green Deal and current government ECO schemes seemingly carbon-cutting at a glacial pace.

But as we talk about getting insulation on buildings, so much still needs to come off. The cladding deemed unsafe after the Grenfell fire picks up on the fact that in a building industry driven by maximising sites for speculation, the bigger your net area, the bigger the profit. As long as that’s the case and with PIR insulation giving best efficiency in thinnest section, we’ll carry on using hydrocarbon products to reduce hydrocarbon use: history repeating indeed.

Jan-Carlos Kucharek, editor

Contents

04
07
08
14
22
29
30
32
34

Compendium..........................04
Tech IT/Books..........................06
Extreme spec..........................07
Lighting................................08
Specified: Lighting..................14

Analysis: Education................18
Roofing & rooflights...............22
Costed: Roofing & rooflights.....29
Specified: Roofing & rooflights..30
PfP webinar: Health & wellbeing..32

Interiors...............................34
Specified: Interiors..................37
Sign Up...Sign Off....................38

More online...
The system intended for Africa will use liquid waste to create electricity and clean water, with fertiliser as a byproduct
Stephen Cousins discovers that human urine has some unexpectedly valuable uses: ribaj.com/powered-by-pee

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Home working with Jaime Hayon’s Mesamachine for Benchmark
Beams heated towel radiator for Vasco
Italian-inspired seating: The Bergamo sofa from BoConcept
Super-large Synestesia marble effect slabs from LEA Ceramiche

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Cover image: Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London. Photograph: Philip Vile

Patrick Degerman
Megan Taylor-Hufton + Crow

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03

04

07

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08

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22

29

30

32

34

22

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32

32

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03

04

07

08

14

22

29

30

32

34

04

07

08

14

22

29

30

32

34

22

30
Compendium

Low iron
Our disturbing comedy last year into the unknown is perhaps reflected in the theme of Bruges’ Art Triennial 2021, TraumA. Belgian duo Gijs Van Vaerenbergh’s public space intervention, Colonade, proves as challenging as anything it’s done before. Set on the edge of Baron Rozetje Park in the town’s medieval centre, the sculpture is a spatial field of 100 slanted and cross-crossed columns, which seems to defy anyone making their way into it. Reassembling the civic quality of a temple, yet instantaneously subverting it, PiP has yet to find out quite what goes on inside; the field of 100 slanted and criss-crossed columns, which seems to defy anyone making intervention, Colonade, proves as challenging as anything it’s done before. Set on the Bruges’ Art Triennial 2021: TraumA. Belgian duo Gijs Van Vaerenbergh’s public space Low iron

Make that a double
Anyone old enough to remember James Mason as Captain Nemo in the 1954 sci-fi movie 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea might feel at home in the Four Seasons Hong Kong’s new Argo bar, designed by studio AB Concept. The film, a version of the Jules Verne classic, seems to be an inspiration, with the cocktail bar overlooking Victoria Harbour, fitted out like a dead ringer of Nemo’s chameleonic submarine, Nautilus. The pièce de résistance is the 148 faux shagreen cylinders, 72 of which rotate to create functional – and fun! – bottle storage for the bar.

Birching in Ealing
Architect Fletcher Crane has been doing its bit to disturb suburbs with its recently completed Tree House in Ealing, a small family home built in the middle of a terrace, on the site of a former garage. A simple exterior of grey brick, black timber and anthracite metalwork is reflected in its split-level interior, with bespoke ash joinery, terrazzo tiles and delicate metal balustrades. Complementing all this are the Esprit Linoleum-Plywood switches. Part of the ‘Design Line’ range finished in birch wood, they also make it easy to power-up to a smart home system – just as soon as the checked neighbours have calmed down.

Johny by Tom
Given how prolific he’s been in every other room, it was only a matter of time before furniture and lighting designer Tom Dixon made it to the toilet. In collaboration with bathroom brand Vitra, Liquid is his first ever bathroom range incorporating sanitaryware, furniture, taps, shower systems, and accessories – designed to work together as stand-alone pieces. Dixon claims a breadth of inspiration, notably Jeff Koons and his Balloon Dog, and even modernism, ‘The look is complemented by Hayon’s Árbol side table with three different height ‘branches’ on which you can place your cuppa, TV Times and slipsper.

Fifty rings
Established in 1971, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the annual Wood Awards, a not for profit competition recognising good design in timber in both architecture and furniture. The shortlist of 19 construction projects and 13 product designs will be on display at London’s Building Centre until 3 December. There’s a great breath of projects in the architecture category, most of which have graced the pages of the RIBAJ over the last year, one that got away however was SNUG Homes’ wi-hed, one-person, two-storey, four volume home, which is offsite, modular and claims to be net zero carbon. And quick too – it was all lifted onto the plot in two days.

Listen up!
Clear Acoustics’ SoundSpray K15 might be all over the ceilings of P Bennett’s Herbal House office re-fit lab, but the acoustic specialist’s latest survey implies that the acoustic spec central London office re-fit might be the exception rather than the norm. Asking over 200 architects and specifiers on office wellbeing, 42% said clients weren’t interested in end user health, 37% saw budgets as the biggest challenge to better workplaces and a mere 9% said acoustic design was given the attention it deserved. Here the figures come out with social distancing is unclear, but if employers want to get staff back into the office, the findings might, atom, meet listening in.

The crystal amaze
In a world where it seems the separation of truth from fiction comes in a million shades of grey, don’t we all want a little more transparency? Well, NSG Group, owner of Pilkington, might not be offering a panacea for all that social media disinformation, but it is making glass surfaces from which to power-up your pesky but ubiquitous hand-held device – and a lot more besides. Together with product design studio Studio, it’s come up with its P-Tap wireless power technology, allowing both power and data to be transferred through the glass surface. Imagine museum display cabinet LEDs and induction cooking without all those wires too, letting you free-up valuable headspace for more cute kitten vids.

products in Practice November/December 2021 rbaj.com

products in Practice November/December 2021
Early data details help rigorous design

The construction industry contributes to a colossal 39% (WorldGBC) of the world’s carbon emissions and architects have a pivotal role to play in reducing this. In recent years engineers have led the way in good quality data-modelling of building performance, but as these complex models are time consuming they tend to be run in labs. The design is typically conceived much earlier using the skills and intuition of the design team. At Fathom we’ve been testing digital tools that can bring more rigour to the conceptual stages and follow this up with close collaboration to ensure the engineering model is at the heart of decision making.

Detailed 3D models of design proposals have been around for some time, and ViewCity’s model is at the heart of decision making. At Fathom we’re excited that intuitive digital twins, such as ViewCity, and innovative softwares learnt in academia like Grasshopper, can be brought into practice to add rigour to our processes and thinking. We’re also not forgetting the importance of person-to-person collaboration – continued knowledge-sharing is essential to a productive detailed iterative process of design evolution. Our commitment to depth of thinking highlights that the first priority is clearly the right one. •

Justin Nicholls is director at Fathom Architects

Books

Ecological Buildings: New Strategies for Sustainable Architecture

Chloe Linn & Brian Dunning. 180pp HB £39.95

The author offers a whistlestop global tour of 45 sustainable projects in this light, forth right coffee table book. There’s a helpful preface, which artfully introduces architecture’s development in the latter half of the 20th century and its mission legislative context, before we are launched into the projects: from the façade body of the building, individual components are highlighted, image-driven, with pared-down accompanying plans and sections. Probably most helpful is a breakdown of each project’s ‘ecological aspects’, preceding the description, which gives its key takeaways. Hopefully manifesting in better design in the future. The authors, years of experience under her belt and draws a line in the sand at the outset with that expertise: architects imagine their volumes like leaving ground floor living room windows open at night so the space doesn’t get purged – we would never have known that had we not been rigorously questioning.

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Restorative Cities: Urban Design for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Jenny Roe & Layla McCay. Bloomsbury 251pp PB £24.99

Given the bitter experience of the global pandemic, there’s been a sharp rethink about what cities are for. The authors, who are among many to have successfully introduced mental health services to the planning agenda, offer a practical approach to creating urban spaces that are designed to promote restorative and restorative environments, bringing the positive aspects of nature and urban life together. The book is based on a series of case studies from around the world, each one illustrating how restorative design principles can be applied in different contexts. From urban parks to community gardens, the authors show how spaces can be designed to support mental health and wellbeing. The book is illustrated with photographs and diagrams, making it a useful resource for architects, planners, and urban designers.

Inspired by Light: A Design Guide to Transforming the Home

Sally Sherr. RIBA Publishing. 270pp HB £35

Focusing on the often overlooked aspect of light, the book provides a comprehensive guide to understanding how light affects our mood and well-being. The book is divided into sections, each focusing on a different aspect of lighting design, such as ‘daylight’, ‘nightlight’, ‘natural’, ‘architectural’, and ‘technical’. Each section includes practical tips and advice, as well as case studies to illustrate the points made. The book is illustrated with photographs and diagrams, making it a useful resource for architects, planners, and interior designers.

Top Timber structures are hybridised to reduce depth by introducing steel in tension. They also help distribute the tower’s loading.

Above Throughout the complex, including the hotel, internal finishes have been left deliberately minimalist.
Disney’s Frozen is the musical entertaining crowds at the refurbished Theatre Royal at Drury Lane in London, and the choice of production seems apt given the stasis forced on theatrical venues as lockdowns kept crowds away.

The £60 million restoration of the grade II-listed building, with its grand Regency interiors, red carpets and gold leaf detailing, is a welcome distraction for audiences fed up with the TV. It has also been a labour of love for the composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, who self-funded the project and owns and operates the venue through his company LW Theatres.

Haworth Tompkins’ design was conceived to protect and restore the original features of the 1810 building, and update it to meet the standards expected of modern theatres. It has revealed and restored the foyers and staircase – arguably the most impressive surviving sequence of Georgian public interior spaces designed by original architect Benjamin Dean Wyatt. Three of his entrances to the front of house foyer were reinstated and later additions, which segregated the space, removed. New bars and retail space extend opportunities for revenue generation in the new normal.

Fully-accessible circulation includes a new lift and, for the first time in almost a century, the auditorium can be entered directly from street level rather than via the basement.

The auditorium itself dates from the later Edwardian period. This was remodelled and reshaped to create a tighter curve, bringing the audience closer to the stage, and to introduce wider seats, better legroom and improved sightlines. A full technical retrofit includes a flexible stage that can be altered to enable performances in the round.

Always at the forefront of lighting technologies, the Theatre Royal was one of the first to implement innovations such as whale oil, gas and, later, electricity.

That pioneering spirit continues with the groundbreaking use of 21st century stage technologies and the latest low energy LED lamps, fused with original 19th century craftsmanship, including ironmongery and cut glass.

Colin Ball, Lighting director at lighting consultant BDP, says: ‘The lighting is so intrinsic to the space that part of our idea was to create a sense of timelessness – the feeling that the lighting has always been that way, but you can’t quite tell when it was installed.’

This is the West End’s first use of dimming technologies across an entire theatre to maximise flexibility and balances sensitivity and ambiance. LEDs were considered crucial to cut energy consumption and future-proof compatibility and maintenance for the client, although they often struggle with low-level dimming and can visibly flicker.

ETC supplied an advanced theatrical control system that overcomes this issue to deliver a consistent ‘low golden hum’, similar to the original gas lighting in the historic areas, including the Grand Saloon bar and foyers.

Ironically, when we presented our scheme to Andrew Lloyd Webber, he asked if the standard

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lamps in the staircase could be made to fluctuate to look like candle light in the evening,” says Ball. “Happily, we were able to say “yes, we can programme the flicker in”, so it was lucky we chose this rather than a more standard system.”

The lighting team and architect worked closely together to determine how each paint finish would look in daylight and under artificial candle light. Much of the lighting is switched off during the day to replicate naturally lit Georgian interiors.

Drawings, financial records and publications from the long history of the theatre were studied to determine the focus of the lighting in each space, whether low level standard wall sconce or chandelier.

Rather than replicate period fittings, the intention was to make them look contemporary, yet appropriate for 1810, with updated equipment to meet modern illumination requirements. For example, the three crystal pendant fittings in the foyer, by crystal specialist Wilkinson, were scaled up to 1.8m in diameter and fitted with a series of diffuse lamps and chrome spotlights to create a balance of ambient wash and focused spotlighting.

Large chandeliers hung in the Grand Saloon and private rooms started out as 1970s pendants removed from storage. Their red velvet was stripped away and crystal and brass components re-aligned to match longer and slimmer Regency era chandeliers still being used in Windsor, Liverpool and Bath. Each integrates hidden chrome spotlights for table accenting.

Sometimes the shortage of skilled trades for lighting work became apparent, says Ball. “For example, Wilkinson rang to say we had to order the cups for the chandelier lamps straight away because the last crystal glass blower in the UK was about to retire.” All the diffusers in the chandeliers and sconces were hand blown and cut, according to 19th century techniques.

Heritage lighting specialist William Sugg, which still installs and maintains remaining systems in the hands of four muse statues in the Rotunda, could be used as part of the emergency lighting.

The team realised lamps in the staircase could be made to flicker to look like candle light in the evening,” says Ball. “Happily, we were able to say “yes, we can programme the flicker in”, so it was lucky we chose this rather than a more standard system.”

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Heritage lighting specialist William Sugg, which still installs and maintains remaining systems in the hands of four muse statues in the Rotunda, could be used as part of the emergency lighting.
gaslit street lights in Westminster, made all the external lanterns, and the ‘torchiere’ stand-ard lamps integrated into handrails, including those on the cantilevered staircase.

A small scale cross section drawing from 1810 revealed the positions of the lamps on handrails, but not the full design, so BDP’s lighting team looked to surviving buildings designed by Benjamin Wyatt for inspiration.

A suitable original lamp was found in a state-ly home in Manchester. This was laser scanned and 3D printed as a mould to create tradition-al casts. One of the last remaining blacksmiths in the country then cast the lanterns using the same techniques as when the theatre was built.

But it wasn’t all about ornate illumination. Controlled low glare optics and hidden /f_inings were also installed to deliver the required light levels and uniformity for a public build-ing, with a particular focus on level and route changes where crushing could become an issue.

In a moment of inspiration the team realised that lamps in the hands of four muse statues in the Rotunda could be used as part of the emergency lighting solution. ‘It was one of the joys of this project,’ says Ball. ‘No one usually thinks of emergency lighting as anything other than Bug Eye /f_loodlights and ugly bulkheads, which misses the idea of integration.’

To keep light levels as low as possible throughout the day and evening, the optics and /f_inishes of the corridors and spaces were mod-elled as a sequence, so the eye adjusts gradu-ally and comfortably from daylight through to the 50 Lux maximum auditorium interior. ‘It’s about lighting balance, you have to avoid glare, so people aren’t stepping into a dark space immediately after a very bright space,’ says Ball.

The Edwardian auditorium required a stealthy approach to illumination. Existing pendants, balcony sconces and chandeliers were retained and updated by specialist Dernier & Hamlyn with more efficient optics. Large pendants at high level were fitted with pencil-thin narrow beam optics to deliver a uniform light – suitable to read by, without making the pendants themselves too bright.

In addition, integrated and hidden details reveal the ceilings and architectural details, while reflected light from seat-end lettering provides low glare accents to each step to en-sure safe navigation to seating.

Safe navigation in the dark is a theme that will resonate with those involved in the Theatre Royal’s restoration. The pandemic took hold just over a year into construction, so seeing it through to completion came to symbolise, for many, the recovery of the West End as a whole. ‘For nearly a year, virtually the only people you saw around Covent Garden were the people working on this project, that’s how severe the West End was hit,’ says Ball. ‘It became a flag bearer for the sector.’

As Covid restrictions ease and audiences re-turn to this and other theatres, there certainly seems to be light at the end of the tunnel. •

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Jackie Chan
tesis ground-recessed luminaires
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Greetings, oekuk-saram! And kneel, if you value your lives! For I am the spirit of great Taejo, last King of the Joseon and builder of this vast (and beautifully illuminated) Gyeongbokgung Palace!

Oh, alright. I'm not the Emperor's ghost. I'm the palace sparkie, and even after 50,000 hours of operation, 90% of the LEDs in these square 3000k luminaires are still at 90% strength – and the failure rate is less than 0.1%. I got this costume round the corner 'cos I'M BORED.

Troubled by decreasing truancies in local schools, the Learning Trust engaged LightPlanet to signpost routes to external doors in the hope of encouraging pupils to sack off Trig, Latin, Birching and Lacrosse. Instead, the Osram LEDs installed in the largely bespoke Quad profile fittings have only encouraged pupils to arrive early for lessons. The mustachioed bruisers now loiter in bright corridors reading improving novels, before sliding onto their benches and dipping their pens. With 50,000-hour lamp life and a five-year warranty, a return to traditional educational habits does not seem imminent.

Hello Mrs Stylemaven, I'm Merlin Sheldrake. Thanks so much for inviting me. I have to say this is a fungus quite unlike any I've seen before, even in the forests of Panama.

'I've examined the exquisite fruiting body, and I was quite amazed to find that not only is it intermittently bioluminescent, but also it's like glass! The mycelium seems to sprout very neatly through three small pins in the wall, so what I propose is that I use my trowel to clear the area around the spot, and see where it… AAAAARRRRR - RRGGGGGHHHHH!'
A brighter future with Soliscape

Delta Light’s latest lighting system, Soliscape, is versatile and flexible, putting people at the heart of the spaces it illuminates.

“Lighting is a crucial element in helping us to create such places,” said Ben Van Berkel of UNStudio. “In any given location, the Soliscape sound and light-scape (system) makes possible activity-based illumination, alongside acoustic qualities. A sensor-based environment understands what kind of activity is taking place and adjusts to provide the optimum conditions. As such, digitally enhanced environments can be created where technology supports the creation of sensorial adaptive environments in which the user is central.”

Teams from both UNStudio and Delta Light collaborated on the intricate design details, such as placing the module connection on top of the profile to maintain a smooth appearance from below, the way the acoustic panels can move, or keeping it adaptive to position the different modules on either side of the profile. The Soliscape system is not limited to workspaces alone. Its adaptable configuration possibilities give the system a broad range of applications and materials can be used in hotels, hospitality, retail and public spaces. It can be configured to best suit the daily needs and programming of each location.

In addition, more than ever before, today’s spaces are evolving to operate with hybrid functions: the home and offices are blending, and hospitality spaces are becoming meeting places. The ability to adapt lighting and acoustic landscapes for dual or multi-purpose use is therefore an added quality for many of these spaces, an option that Soliscape is able to deliver.

Soliscape combines individual functions in one all-encompassing system, offering a more affordable and efficient tool to work with.

The Soliscape system is a toolbox of flexible components and modules for architects that will enable them to create workable and livable solutions for their projects, combining lighting with acoustics and connected sensing, into an aesthetically appealing solution that can easily link to any building management system. It is flexible and future-proof, as it allows for new materials and functions to be added in the future.

Soliscape has basic framing elements but allows for a variety of complimentary sustainable materials to expand its look and feel. More than 60% of the material in the acoustic panels comes from recycled PET bottles, although different materials can be used within the system to facilitate specific functionalities, from acoustic to decorative to atmospheric. Furthermore, controlled and smart lighting contributes to the overall energy efficiency of the building.

Speaking of his inspiration, Ben Van Berkel said, “We believe that human health and wellbeing form the impetus for a new era of design, that the incorporation of new and emerging technologies in the built environment plays a central role in this. It is not the hardware or the software itself that interests me, but how it can be applied within architecture and urban design to improve our daily lives.”

Soliscape is an adaptive system that will continue to evolve in time. You can keep up to date with present and future developments at deltalight.com where recent product information to support clients at every stage of the lighting journey is also housed.

Delta Light is always looking to the future. By embracing the latest technologies and developments, Delta Light continues to innovate, break the existing mould, and set the pace for a brighter, more advanced lighting industry.

With this in mind, Delta Light is extremely proud to present one of its latest additions to its already strong portfolio. Soliscape is a collaboration with Dutch architectural practice UNStudio to develop an extremely versatile and flexible system, specifically designed to create human-centric environments.

In a world that’s in a state of constant evolution, where cutting-edge technology brings new ways of interacting and experiencing, the physical need for buildings to live and work in will remain. Rather than staying static, these buildings are more and more becoming a reflection of what humans crave in their daily lives, and a response to many new economic, environmental and social movements.

By joining forces, UNStudio and Delta Light have endeavoured to improve the wellbeing of people in society’s rapidly changing work environment, where human health and the well-being of people have become a priority of employers.

Speaking about the changing world, Ben Van Berkel, founder and principal architect of UNStudio, said: “The way we work, live and relax is changing. This new hybrid world is requiring architects and designers to rethink about how we design our cities and buildings, so we can create places that encourage health and wellbeing.”
School design: can do better

After two years of disrupted education, children’s mental health has been put in the spotlight. What can architects do to help?

Words: Josephine Smit

While there has been a focus on making work spaces for adults more playful, creative and inspirational, the places where most chil-
dren spend their working days have largely gone back to basics. There’s little scope for office-style colourful pods, landscaped terraces and indoor slides in the schools delivered un-
der government programmes.

That is a consequence of the Department for Education’s (DfE) focus over the past decade on cost, standardisation and build ef-
ciciency, together with the use, particularly by free schools, of constrained urban sites. Confined corridors and open spaces have helped contain delivery costs, but might also be contributing to British children’s increased unhappiness, as charted by charity The Children’s Society.

‘In many ways offices are way ahead of schools in innovation in responding to well-being and the different ways people want to work,’ says Nick Mirchandani, director with ArchitecturePLB. While employers look to office environments to help attract, retain and get the best from workers, he says, ‘productivity is relatively new as an explicit conversation in schools, and there have been times when it has been denied.’ This is reference to one-time education secretary Michael Gove, who began the Graduate-led focus in 2010. That limited archi-
sects’ opportunities to create more matur-
ing environments — although there are signs of change in the DfE’s evolving requirements.

Delivered with dialogue

The DfE’s Output Specification, which governs school design, promotes health and wellbeing through performance specifications for the in-
ternal environment. ‘There are so many as-
pects to wellbeing. Some are measurable, like
quality and daylighting, and in the state sec-
tor they are really well covered by the Output
specification,’ says Mirchandani. Other fac-
 tors are more concerned with human comfort and wellbeing into designs, but she
believes architects can help redress the balance,
arguing, ‘As designers we need to take respon-
sibility and drive the agenda on what schools
should be about, promoting healthy living and
asking the right questions.’ At the moment, it
is not being put at the front of conversations.

Practising what she preaches, Mantle car-
ries out post-occupancy evaluations (POE) of
the practice’s schools projects, which involves both examining data on building operation and en-
vironmental comfort and speaking to staff and pupils about less tangible aspects, such as their feeling on arrival, which can influence their school day. Small interventions — which are
often down-specified in delivery — can make big difference to children’s experience, as she
explains: ‘For smaller children, that might be
about what door handles feel like or having a
whiteboard at their eye level. For secondary pu-
pils it could be about spaces where they can
develop social skills or having a bench for reflec-
tion.’ And the staff experience is relevant too,
with a revisit to its Brayside Court Primary
School, in Maidstone, revealing that glazed panels beside classroom doors allow daylight and passive supervision of pupils also gave the headteacher a quick connection with staff by walking along the corridor.

POE and round tables with clients and edu-
cationalists have contributed to a shoal of learn-
ing and allowed the practice to identify some essential elements of good school design, in-
cluding being outdoors, a sense of community, inclusivity and flexibility. Last year the prac-
tice developed the SNE Toolkit, an assessment tool it applies to all its projects and measures them against three core principles — sustaina-

Above One of architect ADP’s concept sketches for post-pandemic future schools’ design, with a greater emphasis on pupil wellbeing rather than just the school ‘shell’. Opposite St Matthew Academy, Blackwell, Blackburn, is representative of Architectur

applies a commitment to an effective output specification’.
Historically, everything was delivered to minimum requirements and there was not much aspiration to go above and beyond those. I think that’s changed, mainly because of the drive towards modern methods of construction (MMC) – it has been counter-intuitive to have different widths to corridors – instead of the conventional width of under 2m – with 2m deep light shafts above.

While sustainable design promises well-being benefits, there are factors to reconcile. ‘Opening up the classroom to the corridor so air can travel through presents fire and acoustics issues,’ says Harris. Another problem is ventilation, which has gained prominence with Covid-19. ‘There are quite stringent requirements about how you bring air into a classroom. For example, DfE’s strategy is that you’re not allowed to bring in cold winter air, so you can’t just open windows,’ says Harris. Air must, therefore, be mixed before it gets to the classroom, passively or mechanically. ‘Passive is good for health, but the way we achieve that is quite challenging in practice,’ he adds.

Health and wellbeing gains could also come from the need to maximise passive cooling potential, which strengthens the case for enhanced landscaping, and the adoption of renewable energy technologies. West Coventry Academy will have photovoltaics (PV) on the roof, but where roof space is limited contractors are installing PV-topped canopies in school grounds. ‘That gives good opportunities for outdoor covered dining or teaching spaces,’ says Harris.

Early projects show that simple strategies are the most effective. ‘Passive buildings are very simplistic by nature,’ says Harris. Perhaps, this time round, a return to basics can be better for health and wellbeing.

...
Three different ways with rooflights

Rooflights are a staple of the domestic extension: three ingenious designs show how this ubiquitous device can be superbly individual.

Words: Pamela Buxton

Main image: At Umfreville Rd in London, DHAUS’ centrepiece is the L-shaped roo/f_light that pulls light in from above and the side, to /f_ill a previously dark staircase with daylight.

While domestic extensions yield welcome additional space, they can also create their own problems when it comes to bringing light into an even deeper plan. In the following pages, we look at three Victorian house projects that tackle overhead light with aplomb. Over at Umfreville House, by Office 351b, it makes a virtue of north light by using a saw tooth roof to provide just the right conditions for the colour consultant client. In contrast, the two other projects give the skylights starring roles. Another side return project, Matthew Giles Architects’ Hannington Road, floods the new double height space with light with the help of extensive overhead light. And at Umfreville Road, DHAUS uses dramatic skylights to bring light into the heart of the plan and, in doing so, transforms the experience of the apartment.

UMFREVILLE ROAD, LONDON BY DHAUS

‘It makes you feel like you’re flying through the sky – it’s an amazing feeling,’ says DHAUS co-founder David Ben-Grunberg of the practice’s transformation of a dark maisonette into a light-/f_illed triplex in north London.

Before, a gloomy staircase was the initial impression of the first and second floor apartment, but no longer, thanks to the addition of an ‘up-and-over’ frameless skylight to drench the staircase in light. This addressed the biggest challenge of the refurbishment – how to bring light into the core.

The practice worked with 1st Folding Sliding Doors to create the 1.6m by 1.8m skylight, which combines in an L-shape with a 1.6m by 1m side panel to accommodate light both from above and the side – bringing, says Ben-Grunberg, a magical dimension to the experience of ascending the staircase.

The double-glazed units are set into a concealed anodised aluminium frame to maximise the impact of the sky.

The effect of the skylight is enhanced by the open lattice staircase. For this, DHAUS drew inspiration from the work of architect Taro Tsuruta, a friend of the client, to create a bespoke plywood design by Materialise Creative Design using CNC fabrication, with perforations that allow light to permeate down. The underside is curved to give a softly contoured effect.

‘The stair is an investment piece at about £1000 a tread and was one of the things [the client] wanted to spend money on. Not only is it a nice statement piece but it’s practical for bringing the light through,’ says Ben-Grunberg.

A 2m by 3m inner roof terrace has cunningly been inserted to the side of the rooflight – one of the first upper terraces in the area, he adds.

The other main move was the loft conversion. For this, a dormer roof extension was enabled by structural reinforcements of extra beams and posts. In here, an unusual, giant triangular skylight with a 450mm reveal gives the new bedroom space an eye-catching character from both inside and out.

Measuring 3m by 2.2m by 2.1m and again created by 1st Folding Sliding Doors, which had not previously tackled such an unconventional shape, the metal framed skylight is manufactured in double-glazed glass with low E argon gas. Rather than sitting flush in the roof, it projects by 150mm for better waterproofing by enabling rainwater to drain around the windows and down.

The concealed frame puts the focus on the view of the sky – it is, says Ben-Grunberg, ‘like going into a spaceship.’

Structural engineer: Michael Alexander Engineering

Selected suppliers: 1st Folding Sliding Doors (skylight); Materialise Creative Design (staircase)
Creating a double-height space on one side of the kitchen-diner and replacing a low-quality lean-to. "You get this lovely space, glazed above, full of natural light – it’s quite dramatic and different," says Giles, adding that the architect had "lucked out" with the presence of the distinctive Victorian brick wall, which had at some point acquired dashes of white paint. The bathroom and study windows both look onto this space at first floor level.

All the wall needed, he says, was sealing, plus the addition of the huge skylight, which brings the light down to play on the wall. The rear facade now has new steel-framed Crittall glazed doors and windows.

The bespoke skylight was created by L2i Aluminium, which the architect had collaborated with on several previous projects. After discussions about panel sizes, installation and detailing of the junctions between frames and the main building fabric, it was designed to create the rooflight in four double-glazed panels, each 1.3m wide and framed in powder-coated aluminium. The most complicated part was panel nearest to the rear wall, which opens as a vent via switch-operated mechanism as part of the natural ventilation strategy.

Enclosing the wall space was part of a desire to blur the boundaries between the interior and exterior – previously, the presence of a toilet at the back of the house had blocked views of the garden from the kitchen.

This inside-outside theme continues at the rear of the house, where the kitchen opens onto an "outdoor lounge", a sunken patio area with its own sink to one side and above, a pergola arrangement of timber joists – the hope is that these may one day support a vine.

As well as the kitchen intervention, the architect reorganised the ground and first floors to create a four bedroom family house, with a study overlooking the newly-created double-height space. At the end of the garden is a new gym.

Matthew Giles Architects is currently working on 24 further residential projects throughout the capital.
When Office S&M designed a small, single-storey rear kitchen extension to a house in north London, it wasn’t merely a question of getting in enough light, but getting in the right sort of light too. This was crucial given that one half of the client couple, Keiko Cummings, a colour consultant, would be using the new space for meetings with her own clients so needed a consistent quality of light, which had been difficult to achieve at the front of the house where she previously worked.

As well as dealing with the light, the architect needed to deliver a kitchen space big enough to accommodate 10 people around a table, whether for Keiko’s consultations or socialising. Permitted development would have allowed a 3m rear extension, but by taking in the side return, Office S&M’s design required just a 1.5m rear extension to increase space from 94m² to 114m².

The solution was a series of saw-tooth rooflights, an approach common to studio or gallery spaces but more unusual in a home. The row of three rooflights delivers indirect north light to the enclosed side return, with a further, flat rooflight to the rear, where it is shaded by the back wall of the main house. To neutralise the cold light coming through the roof, the wall was painted gold.

‘Sawtooths were the best way of achieving even lighting,’ says Office S&M partner Hugh McEwen. ‘We looked at some more shaped rooflights but they’d cast shadows and pools of light.’

Office S&M used Velfac V200i fixed windows measuring 1268mm by 432mm with polyester powder-coated aluminium frames in tandem with a bespoke build-up. This was designed to be as thin as possible in order to minimise the overall height of the roof, which rises to 770mm. The solution was a timber roof frame with Kingspan insulation on top and between the beams to give a hybrid between a warm and cold roof.

It was decided to continue the timber to create the structure for the whole extension, with rear leaf of self-supporting cast concrete blockwork. Created in collaboration with Mortias Concrete, the pigmented blocks are scalloped to act as ‘shadow catchers’. A prominent hopper is celebrated in contrasting dark green, and marks the transition to the former side-return.

On entering the extended kitchen, visitors are funnelled away from the cooking area with the help of an angled wall that conceals a new WC, and the orientation of the flooring, which follows the same direction. The new space has the flexibility to position the table at the rear or the side. The clients are currently using the new area beneath the rooflights for their morning yoga.

‘You don’t have to build the biggest space to have quality of space – you can create really wonderful spaces that are compact,’ says McEwen.
Costed

Nicola Herring, UK insights and research lead, and James Garner, global head of data and insights and analytics, at Gleeds, look at roofing costs

There are many factors to consider when selecting a roofing material, such as appearance (including local planning considerations), durability, maintenance, climate/energy considerations, weight and cost. The structure and pitch of the roof will also influence the choice made.

Metal roofs – zinc, copper, aluminium and galvanised steel are increasingly used due to their durability, typically lasting between 40 and 70 years, and their energy efficiency properties. Light is reflected from the surface and the metal can be fully recycled. Metal roofs can be significantly more expensive than other options, and shingle roofs, produced either from sustainable wood or recycled content from plastic, wood fibres and rubber, are a more cost-effective sustainable option.

Green and brown roof tiles continue to be used for their environmental benefits such as reducing the volume of water run-off, improving thermal performance, recreating habitat and improving biodiversity.

The prices below are a guide to roofing costs at third quarter 2021 for an average UK location. No allowance is made for sundry or related preliminaries. VAT is excluded. At the time of preparation, there are significant implications to materials availability and pricing owing to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, so the costs below are subject to quick changes depending on availability and lead times. When specifying products it is important to consider the origin of materials, whether they are to be imported and what the lead times are.

- Aluminium sheet; mill finish; wood roll; insulation 250–300
- Stainless steel sheets; coated steel 250–300
- Lead roof covering; code 7; welded seam; milled lead, pitched roof 250–300
- Stainless steel; terne coated sheet 250–300
- Fibre cement slates 250–300
- Copper standing seam; mill finish; wood roll; insulation 250–300
- Zinc; natural bright Rheinzink; pitched roof 250–300
- Green roof – extensive; growing medium; waterproof layer; separation layer; low maintenance 250–300

Notes are a guide only and are Q3 2021 excluding VAT.

Reynaers Aluminium, you can rely on:

- Achieves many test standards including CWCT (dependent on variants)
- Structural glazing, unitised glazing, roof glazing
- Achieves many test standards including CWCT
- Uncompromising quality and craftsmanship
- Support that matches your project programme, timescale, and budget
- Realise your project aspirations with leading data and insights and analytics, at Gleeds, look at roofing costs
- Together for better
- Sustainability is becoming of great importance in materials selection. Metal roofs – zinc, copper, aluminium and galvanised steel
Specified

1. Centre pivot roof windows
   Keylite
   “Ragamuffin Ragamuffin! Let down your amazingly long hair out of the Keylite centre pivot roof window!”
   “Don’t be a mug! My dad locked it and I don’t know where the key is!”
   “But the flick fit brackets mean you can probably just pop it out again! And the sash hinge finger springs mean you can just slap it back after, in one easy motion!”
   “But I don’t want to damage the integrated expanding thermal collar! And my name is Lorraine! I don’t know your strange window fitter man! And this hair is extensions!”
   keylitteroofwindows.com/

2. Invisio structural glazing system
   IQ Glass
   “It doesn’t look quite how I remember it, Sarah.”
   “But Grandfather! This house was here in Lime Grove when we filmed that seminal first episode of Dr Who in the Toffter’s yard! The one where teachers followed me home from school and discovered we going into the Tardis!”
   “Yes, Susan. Yes, it’s this IQ Invisio structural glass extension. Quite remarkable! It’s thermally broken, and with slim, industrial silicone joints gives the illusion of a much larger space. Almost Gallifreyan in its ‘relative dimensional’ ingenuity, in fact. We should get a quote to have one fitted.”
   iqglassuk.com/

3. Pigmento standing seam zinc
   VMZinc
   “Sit Down there! You smug patriarchalist! You’ve got no idea, have you? Look up for once in your life FOR GODDESS’S SAKE! I am Whitborn Hall Purpose-built student accommodation named after the QUEEN that was Katharine Whitborn: columnist, broadcaster and first female rector of St Andrews! My VMZinc Pigmento standing seams in mineral pigmented pre-weathered zinc and maintenance free! That’s real feminism! LOOK UP, you fool, and see that the future is female, watertight – and GORGEOUS! ‘But OH NO you’re just up to your dianovist eyeballs in Shakira videos’”
   vmzinc.co.uk

4. Roofshield membrane underlay
   A Proctor Group
   “Wear my God to Thee? I love it. The congregation at St Andrews, Bangor, is really going to go for that.”
   “Well, Reverend, it’s not exactly /finishes…”
   “It’s breathable! So no need for a vapour control membrane! This is going to save us THOUSANDS! And look! It’s almost like stained glass! This is going to give those Papists a real run for their money!”
   proctorgroup.com/
Health & wellbeing

Good health just keeps coming back to good design

The diagnosis is clear: better buildings are good for your health. But will the government take the medicine? Michèle Woodger provides a review of PiP’s latest webinar on health and wellbeing.

The effectiveness of our healthcare buildings, and architecture’s effect on wellbeing in general, have been duly questioned by the pandemic. In his opening remarks, webinar chair Ian Carlos Kucharek revealed that only two RIBA Award winners were health buildings in 2021—perhaps reflecting a tendency towards safe, well-meaning yet anodyne design in this sector.

But this isn’t always the case. Recent additions for the Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust and Maggie’s Centre are inspirational. Though architects have little control over politics and policies, it is possible to implement health-promoting design wherever we can.

Architect and author Sumila Singh’s GRE distinguishes instead. Her executive director of an NHS trust. Disappointingly, design is not particularly valued by the NHS. In fact, architectural design often favours lowest-cost options—ironically, at the expense of patient welfare. The very environment which is meant to be healing is in fact hurting people while pharmaceutical and medical innovations have moved on, architectural ones have not been allowed to evolve in this sector.

Chetwood Architects, has witnessed this at community level to reduce the burden on public health understanding, she argues. Through preventative urbanism, architectural solutions have been developed. But this isn’t always the case: recent additions to existing hospitals are ‘a forest of columns’. Street references ‘a forest of columns’. Street talks us through the challenges of minimising visual impact, reducing the footprint, and balancing counter-intuitive elements such as removing trees for car parking, while addressing the great outdoors. Lockdown brings is the UK’s first three storey logistics building, designed to be wrapped in sustainable warehouse design, offers ways to improve the wellbeing of workers and local residents alike. Less frequently consulted are the externalities of such buildings, which involve and elevate the value of architecture.

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The Old Library, Liverpool

Restoration combined with playful interventions has renewed the civic status of a grand old library by converting it to multiple community uses

Words: Will Jennings  Photographs: Hufton+Crow

‘This one is almost at the end of my street so I’ve been round a few times, on the last occasion to chase away some kids I saw climbing in with spray cans. It’s been in the same semi-stripped state for years and nothing much has happened until recently when all the cherry blossom trees were cut down and red wooden hoarding went up.’

These are the words of one user on urban exploration website 28dayslater.co.uk, discussing the former Andrew Carnegie Library in Tuebrook, Liverpool. The building frequently appears in posts since closing in 2006, with urbex practitioners (who generally respect and don’t damage the heritage they visit) discussing the former Andrew Carnegie Library (also known as ‘two-faced building – open and accessible to the public, but also private and secure for children’), with the ground floor effectively diagonally split into distinct spatial uses.

Public visitors enter via foyer and corridor, arriving at the central café and reception in the former lending room. The new reception desk, servery and state-rooms are unashamed modern interventions, highlighting new functions but not competing with the existing rich fabric.

Adjoining, a former reading room has been restored, offering space for support groups, community clubs and private hire. Uptown, rentable hot-desks surround the reception area with four set into refurbished book-cases, hinting at a new interior, while a new extension/first floor but also making a joyful addition to the kids’ space. Wrapped in fabric acoustic panels with strip lighting to the soffit, it delivers a tower ceiling height for the children and helps turn what would be a daunting and echo-filled space into one better suited to play, learning and interaction.

Externally, the building has re-found its civic and local landmark status. All new external openings are framed with acme boxing, hinting at neo-interior, while a new extension for a children’s eating space and kitchen is clad in terracotta tiles, inspired by the green tiling within. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly for some of the new occupants, a new external fire-escape staircase doubles as the route to the southern roof space into landscaped play areas, and sufficient depth for reading and play模子。A Perkhams library-like pod on stilts fills the space, not only containing rentable offices accessible from the first floor but also making a joyful addition to the kids’ space. Wrapped in fabric acoustic panels with strip lighting to the soffit, it delivers a tower ceiling height for the children and helps turn what would be a daunting and echo-filled space into one better suited to play, learning and interaction.

The centrally-placed nursery adds a complementary use of tiling inside. A pod of rentable space above impinges on the nursery space, lowering the scale and creating much-needed acoustic attenuation.

Above Lilies seem different from the outside, but the Old Library’s internal changes are intimated by the fascia’s slide.

Right above: Kitchen/refectory space is expressed in external ceramic tiles, reflecting the profile of the tiling node.

Right below: Crisply detailed oak hot desks on the upper level for community clubs or private hire.

design needs that don’t neatly fit the existing architecture or the brief’s other spatial uses. It has led to what project architect Stuart McGrath calls ‘a two-faced building – open and accessible to the public, but also private and secure for children’, with the ground floor effectively diagonally split into distinct spatial uses.

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The children’s space is altogether different, requiring specific design solutions. Original high-level windows offered perfect reading light for library users, but are less suitable for baby, toddler and pre-school occupants. OMI cut new windows and doors through the deep walls, offering views and access into landscaped play areas, and sufficient depth for reading and play spaces. A Perkhams library-like pod on stilts fills the space, not only containing rentable offices accessible from the first floor but also making a joyful addition to the kids’ space. Wrapped in fabric acoustic panels with strip lighting to the soffit, it delivers a tower ceiling height for the children and helps turn what would be a daunting and echo-filled space into one better suited to play, learning and interaction.

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Products in Practice November/December 2021
A journey to a peaceful mind
Introducing Voyage designed for Vitra by Arik Levy.

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Specified

1. D-Neo Monochrome bathrooms
Duravit
No! I will not kneel in obeisance, and I have not brought you ‘tribute,’ whatever that is.
Look, I really like your new Oak Terra veneer and minimalist styling, the walk-in shower, and the fact that all your pieces are designed to work in the smallest space. Yet your generous oval countertop basin gives the washing area a modern feel, but I WILL NOT BE FOUING ANY LIBATIONS DOWN IT!
Stop talking to me, spooky mirror! I only came in here to strain the spuds!
duravit.co.uk/

2. StoSilent distance acoustic system
Sto
After a hard day designing the sound of boot lids in the anechoic chamber, I like to unwind by enjoying the peaceful ambiance of the atrium walkways here at the National Automotive Innovation Centre. It’s all thanks to the StoSilent Distance suspended ceilings, with their 96% recycled glass boards, and Natureplus-approved StoSilent Décor M stipple-sprayed finish, that I can return home each night to a freshly home-cooked meal prepared by my harassed wife in a house full of underives – and still maintain a sense of benign peace with the world.
sto.co.uk/

3. Tarasafe Ultra safety flooring
Gerflor
The World’s Oldest Aquarium! Colourful clownfish, magical seahorse or captivating jellyfish? Which do you love? Here at SEA LIFE Brighton you can see them all! Over 5,000 of them!
Did You Know?
Brighton Aquarium opened in 1872, making us the oldest continually operating aquarium in the world! Our seawater tanks are fed from the nearby sea twice a day! The coral reef alone is a 750,000-litre display! And high-traffic glass fibre-reinforced carbon fibre-free Tarasafe Ultra vinyl keeps slipping and sliding where it belongs! In the sea!
gerflor.co.uk

4. Volumekitchen fit-outs
Deanestor
‘Slaying it, @Jessica92. We’ve got white Deanestor quartz worktops, oak-effect breakfast bar, and a full set of integrated Zanussi appliances. And in this building there are 682 other cool AF Jessicas and Michaels, all sitting down right now to divine home-cooked veggie shepherd’s pie.’
‘Wow! OTP or what? I feel like we’ve found our people, you know?’
‘Yeah, goals AF, but you know what? Not one of these pies will be as good as yours, bae.’
‘They’re all the same, @Michael87. HelloFresh delivered 683 vegan boxes this morning.’
deanestor.co.uk/
We opted for FSC-certified Iroko to create a new timber jazzy as part of the retrofit at our Kenton Road project. This hardwood is a strong, durable timber that can deal with the knocks of everyday life. Changes in the weather conditions result in minimal movement, which is an advantage for the doors and windows. After applying with various test samples of finishes, we treated the iroko with Omni UV protectant, which deepens its tone and helps to bring out the grain while preventing the natural colour from fading. The result was a rich and quick-drying looking timber arrangement, which we repeated throughout the home.

We used a 12mm sheet to create a textured wall at our Queens Road project, where we needed to align several uneven existing walls to create one continuous backdrop. The non-wood fibre sheets come in different thicknesses, with a natural variation of the wood fibre visible on the surface, adding depth and texture. The colour is consistent, and the ethically sourced timber has minimal movement, which is an advantage for the doors and windows.

PENDANT LED BULB

The ethical impact of our design decisions are important to us. Cheap lighting can often be imported without knowing who’s been exploited in the process. So we love the way Volt Light cares about its supply chains. This simple pendant bulb, made from hand-blown glass, lights up without the need for additional continuous fittings. It’s affordable and in a well-defined design. We paired the bulb with a brass fitting to hide the cap of the bulb. The LED filament runs along the length of the bulb, giving a subtle glow to the glass. We’ve arranged this pendant both as a cluster in a double height space and as procession of lights along a kitchen island.
BLACK IS THE NEW BRASS

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