Wood wows Edinburgh residents

Why architects are turning to unions

Sarah Allan, Whitehall's chief architect

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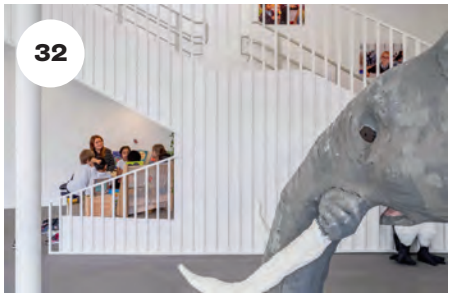
1 Buildings



KILLIAN O'SULLIVAN

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Average issue circulation 25,160
ABC audited June 2021

Better living with timber, better working with unions, and better learning in better schools – what do you make of it? ribaj.com

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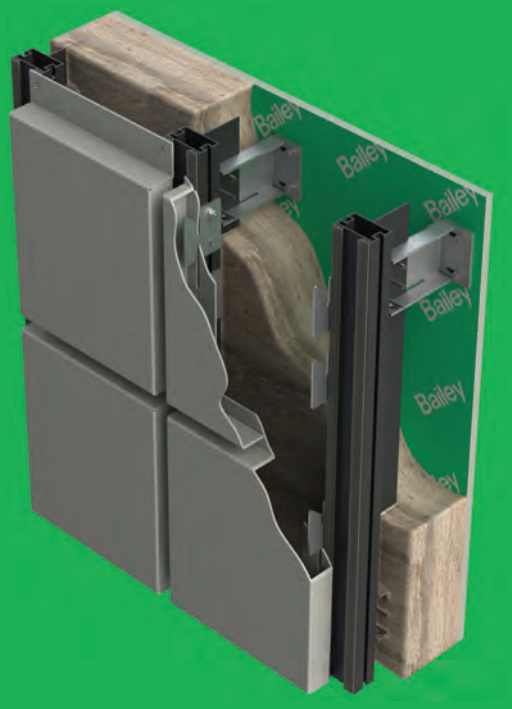

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1: Buildings

VICTORIAN PRIDE CENTRE LGBTIQ+
ST KILDA AUSTRALIA
BAU & GRANT AMON ARCHITECTS
Read the full story:
ribaj.com/victorianpride

When, aged 19, James Brearley moved to St Kilda, Melbourne's seaside pleasure ground, he had a touch of punk rock about him. He had studied at RMIT in the city and done a stint with Alsop & Lyall in London. Now, decades on, his practice BAU works all over the world but he was exhilarated to see that Australia would get its first pride centre in his backyard. It felt part of a groundswell of support for LGBTIQ+ people, following a 2016 referendum that gave the go-ahead to same sex marriage.

Reflecting St Kilda's history of 'exotic' queer space, his design, with neighbouring practice Grant Amon Architects, has turned St Kilda's arches and cupolas into a building of flamboyant curves. Rough and smooth precast concrete creates a colonnade with balcony above on the main drag of the suburb, bringing life into the street which is still emerging from Covid restrictions. Inside, a sinuous shell slinks up the atrium. Here you will find Gay Stuff markets, exhibitions, a café and a bookshop. Behind the scenes are the homes of the many LGBTIQ+ bodies that made this building happen, Joy Radio and queer support services among them. You might visit this 6200m² building for medical check ups, to find a hot desk for the day or to get down to some research in the Australian Queer Archives.

So why did Brearley and the design team dub this the unfinished building? And what does it mean for the way it is designed and used? Read the full story on ribaj.com. ● Eleanor Young

JOHN GOLLINGS

New look on the loch

Denizen Works has made a bold reinterpretation of the traditional Highland retreat with Hundred Acre Wood on the banks of Loch Awe

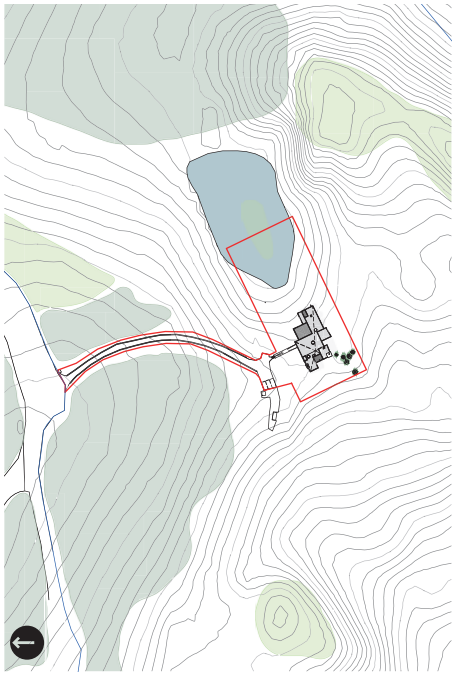
Words: Helena Webster Photographs: Gilbert McCarragher

In the 1840s privileged families began spending the summer in the Highlands, immersing themselves in leisure activities such as shooting, fishing, exploring and entertaining family and friends. This fashion came to be known as the 'Highland Season'. It was initiated by the romantic writings of Walter Scott, and fuelled by the patronage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, reaching its zenith around 1880.

The building frenzy that accompanied this seasonal influx of visitors produced a new type, the Highland retreat, which soon gained conspicuous presence on the barren hillsides and isolated loch sides. Its accommodation was designed explicitly for entertaining groups – something between a country house and a shooting bothy. Such commissions also provided a vehicle for exploring the 'true' nature of Highland architecture. We have inherited the splendid results of this heady period of building; from Scott's own baronial version of the Gothic Revival at Abbotsford (1814), through the fairy tale turreted excesses of John Rhind's Ardverikie House (1878), to the simple neo-medieval restraint of Robert Lorimer's Ardkinglas House (1906).

Left West elevation, with chamfered window reveal to the double-height dining hall.

Above South elevation; the house is part of a wider masterplan for the 40ha site.



The craze for the Highland Season died down after the social and economic upheavals of the First World War, though the demand for Highland retreats never completely ended. In recent years we have seen Francis Johnson's neo-classical Strathconon House (1987), Moshe Safdie's Khanian Corrour Lodge (2004), Dualchas' modern vernacular Slatach, (2007), and Robert Webb's turf-roofed Fiag Lodge (2013).

Denizen Works, which recently completed Hundred Acre Wood, a 650m² Highland retreat near Loch Awe, Argyll and Bute, appears on paper to be particularly suitable to interpret this uniquely Highland typology. Murray Kerr, who trained at the Mackintosh School of Architecture, founded the London-based practice in 2011 with an explicit interest in making architecture that was rooted in place. The practice had already completed several Highlands and Islands projects, notably the RIBA Stephen Lawrence Prize-winning House No 7, Tiree (2013), and the recently completed Mannal House (2022).

The client for this new retreat was a couple, Glasgow-based David and Margaret, who had bought 40ha of ex-Forestry Commission woodland on a hillside above Loch Awe on which to build a seven-bedroomed retreat for their extended family, and to reinstate the native woodland. After eight years of collaboration with Denizen Works the first phase of the project – the main building – is now complete, to be followed later by a garage, a games room and extensive replanting of the estate.

From the main road the house is approached via a forestry track through the wooded hillside. Visiting to review the building, it felt an isolated and romantic place, well hidden from the tourist gaze. An old shepherds' hut on wheels soon marked a right turn, quickly followed by the first sighting of the retreat – a sequence akin to a picturesque 'reveal'.

There it was, a bold accretion of heavy defensive forms rising resolutely from the wild landscape

Right Fireplace in the snug and view through living room.

Opposite Long section, floor plans (second floor not shown) and the barrel vaulted dining room.

The clay-plastered hall is sized to house a 5.5m Christmas tree.

There it was, a bold accretion of heavy defensive forms rising resolutely from the wild landscape in defiance of the Highland weather. This brut yet strangely picturesque composition evoked an eclectic range of sources, from medieval tower houses and castles (including the nearby 15th century Kilchurn Castle) to Mackintosh's Hill House, Alvar Aalto's Maison Louis Carré and Charles Moore's Sea Ranch. The whole was finished in harling, a tough weather-resistant aggregate finish commonly used in Scotland. But this was no ordinary harling. The Glasglo aggregate, made from recycled TV screens, glinted in direct sunlight giving the building a magical quality.

A tall over-scaled opening, with deep chamfered edges finished in a more granular aggregate, beckoned the way from the car to the entrance. A wide, heavy door opened into an intimate lobby, with boot room attached, in which to shed the layers of clothing associated with being 'in' the Highland landscape.

The lobby opens to a vast double-height hall – the literal and symbolic heart of the house. Oversized reception space has always been an important feature in a typology intended primarily for communal activities; Phillip Webb's

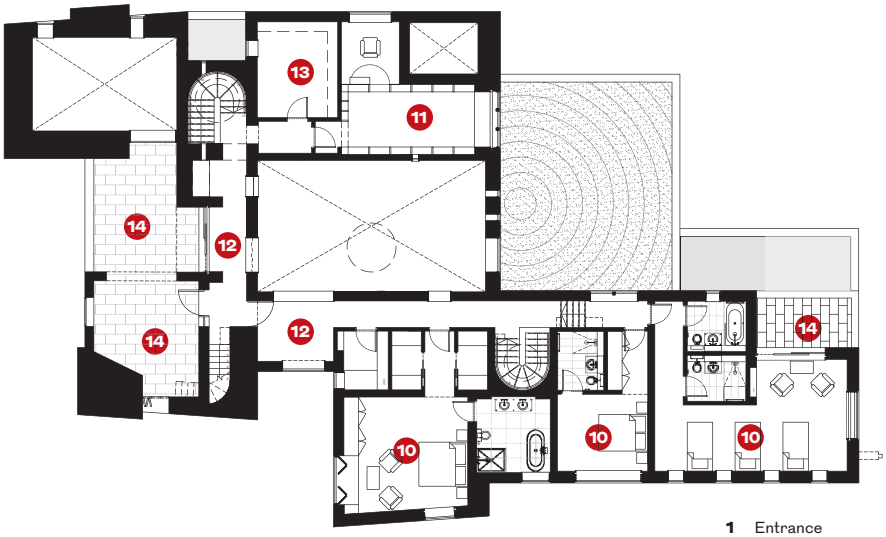
Arisaig House (1864) is a prime example. Here the architect drew additional inspiration from the sculptures of Eduardo Chillida, conceiving the building form as a hollowed out solid, with the hall at its core. This central space, which was originally designed to house an 5.5m Christmas tree, works for orientation, activity, circulation and access, and has a theatrical quality akin to the three-storey circulation space in Le Corbusier's Maison La Roche. While the hall felt daringly spare, more reminiscent of the unadorned interiors of medieval Scottish tower houses than Mackintosh's 'feminine' interiors, its textured clay walls dotted with mica, polished concrete floor flecked with tiny shards of mirror, and James Turrell-like oculus lined with gold leaf, gave the space a wonderfully opulent feeling.

Tantalising glimpses of sublime views over Loch Awe drew one through the hall to the principal rooms – the dining room and living room. Like the hall, the dining room felt daringly simple, containing just the essential elements for the ritual of communal eating; a 4m-long table, 16 chairs, an antler-like over-table light and a tiled hearth to bring a primal warmth. In a manner akin to Adolf Loos' concept of Raumplan, the vaulted space appeared

East-west section

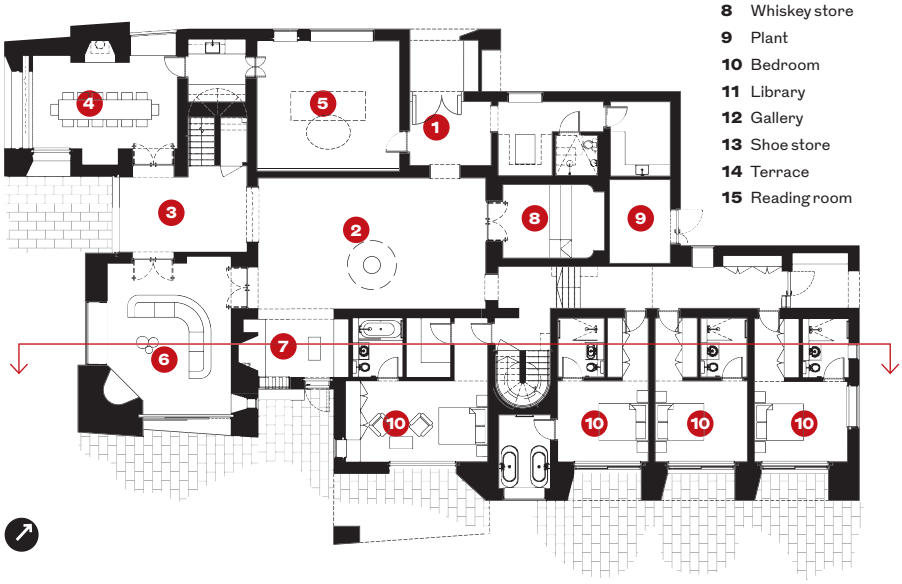
0 5m

First floor plan



1 Entrance
2 Hall
3 Reception
4 Dining hall
5 Kitchen
6 Living room
7 Snug
8 Whiskey store
9 Plant
10 Bedroom
11 Library
12 Gallery
13 Shoe store
14 Terrace
15 Reading room

Ground floor plan



to have been designed around the dining ritual. Unlike modern open-plan living, the kitchen is in a separate room accessed through a tiny stainless steel-lined pantry. There, again, ritual appears to have dictated the design: a whole wall of stainless steel panels forms the backdrop to an enormous Aga – both the symbolic and practical focus.

Across a lobby from the dining room was the more intimate living room. Here a vast curved Chesterfield sofa faced a hearth that is carved poché-like into a thickened wall, flanked by two large windows with sublime views over Loch Awe. The ubiquitous watching of television seemed to have been superseded by the draw of the natural elements; earth, air, fire and water.

Back in the lobby, a top-lit staircase with a semi-circular tower-like landing leads to a first-floor gallery giving views down into the hall and provides access to further public and private rooms. A left turn took me past Margaret's private realm – the shoe room – to the library. The atmosphere in this intimately scaled space was at once warm, sensual and studied. The room is lined on two walls with dark timber floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, with a large window facing the loch on the third side. The window seat and ceiling were finished in opulent purple leather procured from a firm local to the client's Glasgow house. Playfully, a small window connects the library to the dining room below, and a secret door gives access to a private study. Here were more Loosian overtones – this time the simple use of rich, unadorned materials.

After exploring the first floor bedroom wing, with its simple but functional rooms and exuberant copper-themed bathrooms, and climbing the fairytale tower staircase to reach the cinema/reading room, my final destination was the roof terrace. Set between the dining room and living room below, the external space, with its primitive hut-like hearth, reconnects with the external world. Feeling a little like the wanderer in Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting, I was reminded that the Highland landscape should not be viewed just as a picture but needs to be experienced corporeally to be fully appreciated.

Driving back home I did wonder how the spare aesthetic of Hundred Acre Wood would be received by those with no prior knowledge of its antecedents. Regardless, this reimagining of the Highland retreat provides a brave and intriguing demonstration of the way that primary lessons from past sources, both typological and stylistic, can be filtered through an unashamedly modernist lens to create an architecture that connects meaningfully to place. ●

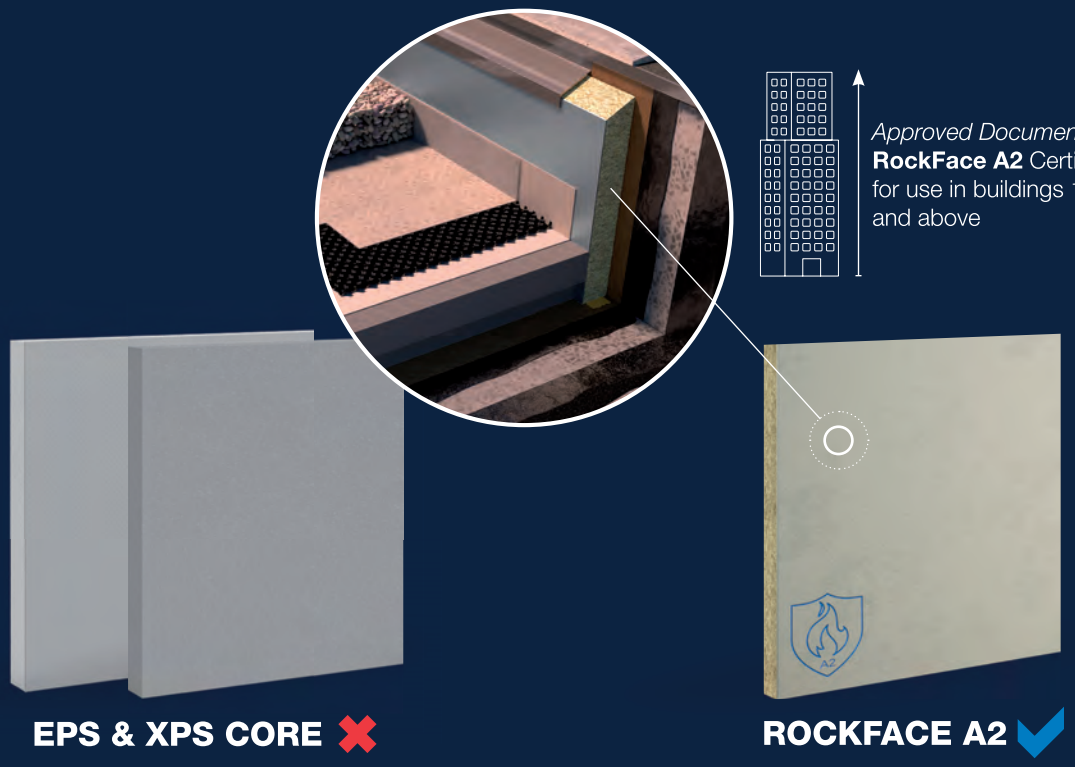
Helena Webster is an architect and academic

Left Covered roof terrace below the second-floor reading room.

Above The living room was designed around a hearth and L-shaped sofa.

Below The house slopes down to the east, where a small loch is planted with reeds to filter waste water.

Credits
Client Private
Architect Denizen Works
Contractor Colorado Construction
QS Morham & Brotchie
Engineer CRA Edinburgh
Timber kit designer FrameTech Design
Lighting design Arup



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Better than good as new

Bio-based materials, reuse, the circular economy, local suppliers and trades... How has the Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership's office refurbishment turned out?

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Soren Kristensen

Leaning on the reception desk, signing in at Entopia in Cambridge, a jagged crack in the marble catches my eye. This is the first sign that there is something special about this apparently everyday conversion.

Of course, readers of the RIBA Journal will already know the name of Entopia, the home of the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. We have been following its progress through each stage in the RIBA Plan of Works. Now we reach completion and handover at stage 6. As befits a project for a client like this it has high ambitions – for bio-based materials, building local sustainable construction capacity, working with the circular economy and being a great place to work. In this attempt it was aiming at three major certifications: Passive House's EnerPhit, WELL Gold and BREEAM Outstanding.

With architects from Architype, Feilden and Mawson and others we have been through the painful guesswork of designing for airtightness before the building was opened for inspection, getting the new windows signed off despite the conservation area, working with tradespeople to ensure the knowledge was in place for the complex wall build-up, and sourcing second hand. Now it is all ready to open. The teams are coming into their new building for culture workshops and Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership is ready for a more visible future in the centre of the city, on the main route from the train station into the heartlands of the university.

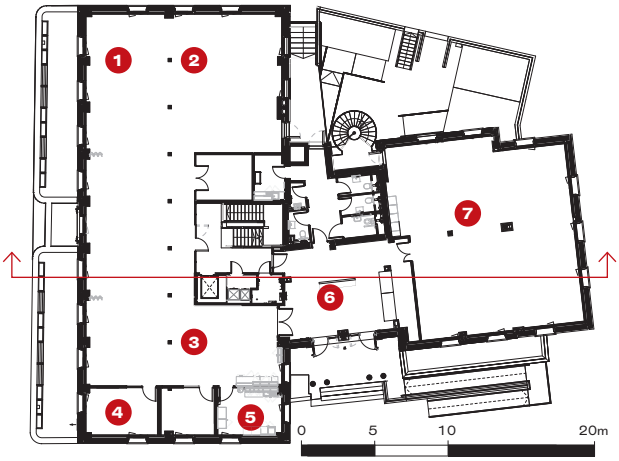
Opposite, above A cut-through of Entopia.
Opposite, below Side street entrance to the Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership.
Above A reworked reception desk at the entrance to Entopia.
Left The cracked marble reception desk is one of the 'dings' the institute is embracing in its quest for the circular economy.

Except for this crack. Wendy Bishop of Architype and CISL chief operating officer Anna Nitch-Smith have known about it for a while. The reception desk is not quite new, but definitely not 'pre-loved' – it was a Netflix reject from the fit out of an office it took on. But when the original maker Benchmark started to resize it for CISL it struggled with the fixing – glue. And so a little crack formed, now quite a substantial one with a chunk missing too. But there is no sending it back. Bishop has just found the right gold for it to be mended in a visible way, Japanese kintsugi style.

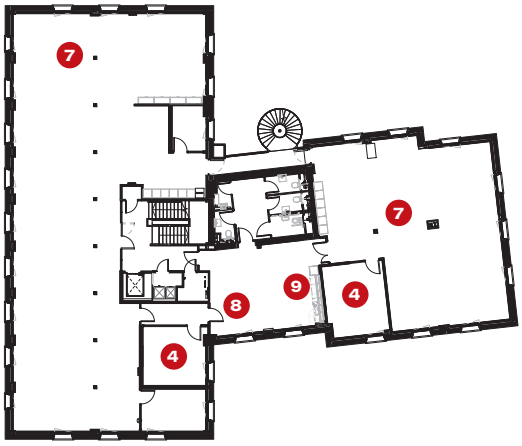
The mending is a statement of intent – that to use resources well you have to reuse them and accept what Nitch-Smith calls affectionately 'marks and dings'. That's important, as this is a deliberately ordinary building. I confess to being a little underwhelmed when I arrived; the drama is all off stage, in the process. The experience is of a good, practical, friendly office. But this was also part of the intention. One of the banners on the building reads: 'This is not an ordinary project. But it needs to be.'

A day looking at projects in London early on helped those involved settle this. 'Some were rough and shaggy,' says

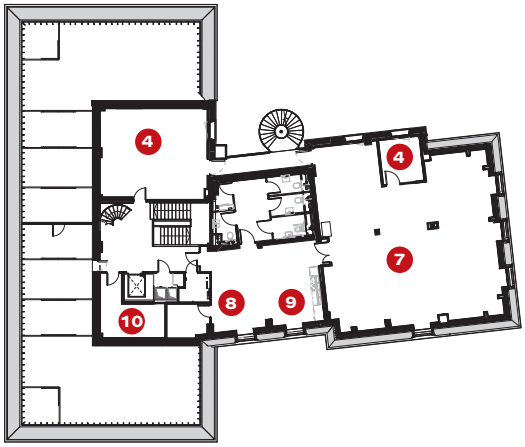
Ground floor plan



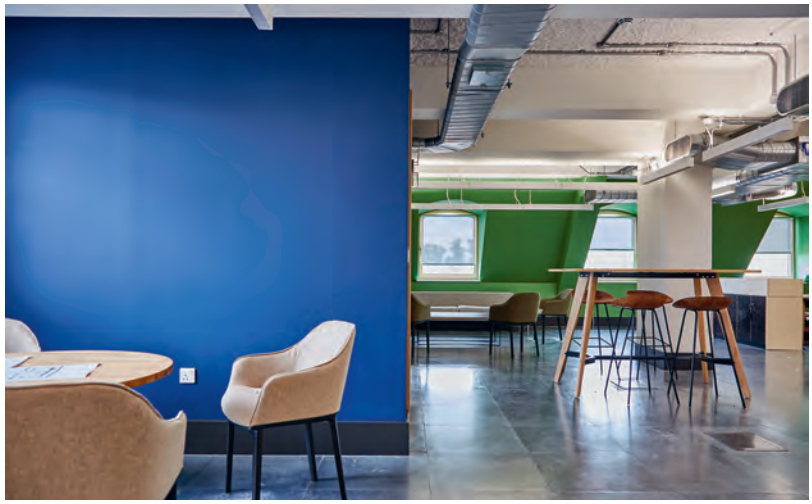
Second floor plan



Third floor plan



1 Entopia Space
2 Informal event space
3 Canteen
4 Meeting room
5 Servery prep
6 Reception
7 Office
8 Social Hub
9 Tea point
10 Plant



Top Hemp fabric covers the booths.
Above Project space under the eaves for multi-disciplinary institute teams to gather to launch new sustainability initiatives.
Below SonoSpray coats the ceiling.

Bishop, 'But CISL is always talking to corporates. It didn't want the hessian sack look, it needed to look like an office building.'

There are plenty of fascinating office buildings, so this seems like a missed opportunity. And there were plans for more texture, which would bring an aesthetic of re-use. Columns were meant to be left as exposed concrete. But once the boxing was off the rusting rebar made it clear some would end up more patched than original, and plasterboard seemed the kindest option. This was one of the few opportunities to add texture; the bid for airtightness excluded scrape and reveal on walls as insulation and plaster were an essential part of the wall build up.

What is visually as well as technically experimental is the exposed raised-access floor, the dull metal tiles stretching through office areas. The project team inspected a Brighton project where contractor ISG had used reclaimed raised access floors and one in a Cambridge building where they were newly installed as the final finish. The decision was based on the carbon cost

TAYLOR MAXWELL

The Hand & Flower

Paul Murphy Architects have restored and extended former pub, The Hand and Flower in Chelsea, London, into an eye-catching and contemporary mixed-use development.

The £3.5m scheme accommodates 1,020m2 of both living units and amenity spaces. The former pub has been additionally modified internally to house retail areas on the ground and basement levels, with a further floor of living space added in the expanded mansard roof.

The new-build succinctly connects to the former pub with a modern, glazed vestibule, leading to a three-storey build containing two flats and a 'penthouse' duplex. The build comes at a time of broader change to the local area, as 1,800 new homes are due to be complete south of the site by 2022.

Taylor Maxwell worked closely with Paul Murphy Architects to specify and supply long format bricks to this project. Long format bricks provide a sleek and elegant finish, particularly suited for the location of the build in Chelsea, London.

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Photography by Simon Kennedy.

Top A repurposed steel frame supports PVs and provides shelter up on the new roof terrace.
Above Triple-glazed windows were key to the airtightness strategy and to keeping the interior a calm and quiet space.

of carpet and the floor's hard acoustic surfaces are offset by cellulose spray on the ceilings. The regularity of the metal tiles almost strips them of materiality, but it makes you look twice.

Often the ops team, especially when they have joined part way through a construction project, see the missed opportunities most keenly. For COO Nitch-Smith her only 'could do better' is the wish that CISL hadn't underestimated the staff effort involved, doing day jobs alongside a hugely involved construction project was draining – especially since the institute roll more than doubled over that time from 60 to 140. 'Sure, we got some things wrong, but that is part of our learning and that of others,' she says. The building is not finished for her; the final wiring grommets are going in and will be followed by desks, and she has plans to work with local horticultural students to design planting on the rooftop. And she is figuring out how to create an asset register, probably a digital twin, that will both tell the story of some of the objects and provide maintenance and certification information for the future to bolster the beast of institutional memory.

The old telephone exchange that this building started as has gone from being the rather drab neighbour to the neo-Georgian University Arms Hotel to a handsome plainness, sharpened up by aluminium window surrounds, that holds its own on the busy street. Nitch-Smith hopes it will give the Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership a higher profile with students and the university. There are already signs that it is – though perhaps not as expected. The day after its opening three slogans were stencilled on the building by Extinction Rebellion: 'No oil, no arms, no empires'. It was a reference to the invitees, His Royal Highness Prince – now King – Charles, Rolls-Royce and Boeing and oil company BP. This shows the careful line that CISL has to tread, working alongside corporates to improve sustainability. Now this building is delivered, more of the team's energy can go into making that happen and making change towards sustainability. Entopia should be a constant reminder of those ambitions. ●

IN NUMBERS

£10.54m
total contract cost

£3,586
cost per m²

2,939 m²
gross internal floor area

NEC3
form of contract

Credits
Client University of Cambridge
User Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership
Contractor ISG
Project manager 3PM
Cost consultant Gardiner and Theobald
Architect (Stages 1-3) and Passivhaus designer (Stages 1-3) Architype
Architect (Stage 4 onwards) Feilden + Mawson
M&E Engineering (Stages 1-3), Acoustics (Stages 1-3), Structural engineering (Stages 1-3) and BREEAM and WELL consultant (all stages) BDP
M&E engineering (Stage 4 onwards), Passivhaus designer (Stage 4 onwards) and acoustics (Stage 4 onwards) Max Fordham
Structural engineering (Stage 4 onwards) CAR [Cambridge Architectural Design]
PH certifier MEAD
Principal designer iM2

Suppliers
Timber aluminium composite windows Internorm
External doors Moralt Ferro Passiv
Window reveals and other bespoke metalwork Harlestone Group
Diathonite insulating plaster and Gutex insulation Ecological Building Systems
Rocksilk soffit liner Knauf
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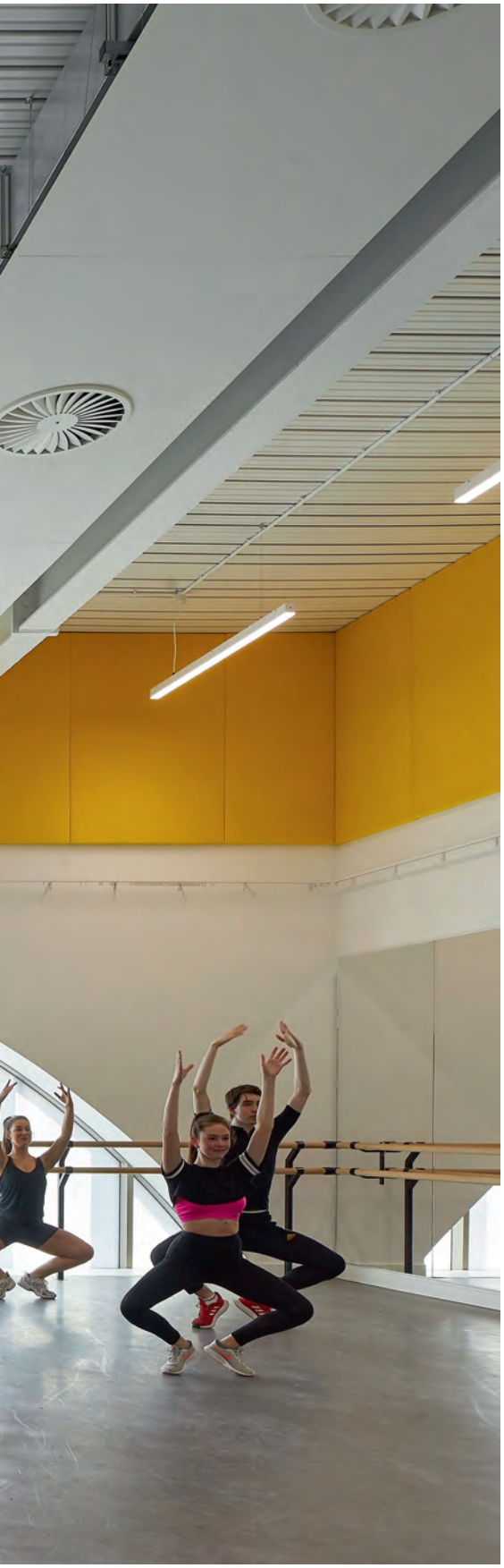
Above Square-planned, 6m high dance studio.
Opposite The new block fills a courtyard framed by existing buildings.



Renewed space gives ArtsEd students room to move

Expansive gestures and unfettered flourishes leap to the fore with De Matos Ryan's enlarged and remodelled performing arts school

Words: Will Jennings Photographs: Hufton + Crow

It wasn't hard for photographers Hufton + Crow to find willing volunteers to pose in the new De Matos Ryan-designed dance studios at west London's ArtsEd. 'The students were desperate to be in the photos,' says director José Esteves De Matos. 'If they weren't in shot, they rushed towards the camera.' Perhaps this is a benefit of creating architecture for performers who bring life, energy and activity the moment plaster is dry. But a downside is that the building never sleeps, and construction of a phased project must fit around the academic calendar, community functions and a tightly packed occupation of the site.

Just over a century ago, Grace Cone and Olive Ripman – both dedicated to education integrating specialised arts training – formed the Cone Ripman School. Later renamed ArtsEd, it offers both secondary education and degrees in acting and musical threatre. ArtsEd moved several times before settling into a 1930s former Chiswick Polytechnic building, its home since 1986. It gradually gathered uncomfortable additions, squeezing more and more into existing buildings, becoming cluttered with imperfect learning spaces for day school and higher education students. An inner courtyard was occupied by Portakabins and indoor cupboards appropriated as acoustically atrocious singing studios.

One option was to relocate again, perhaps to a bespoke building funded by income generated through selling its 7,100m² buildings – sure to be of interest to developers of luxury flats overlooking the surrounding Arts & Crafts Bedford

Park Conservation Area. In some ways, it would have been the easier thing to do, but the school wanted to remain in the community. The institution is respected by neighbours and used for evening classes and community projects – a reason De Matos believes the planning application received little local opposition. The decision was made to remain, though the architect faced a Rubik's puzzle to reimagine the site's spatial use, and plan architectural solutions which could be enacted without disrupting the teaching programme – all in a tight and landlocked site.

'We started with a space audit into all the rooms, and the school had a scheduled requirement of spaces,' he explains. 'We then rejigged every space to try and group them from a safeguarding point of view so that separation [between day school and higher education students] could be maintained.' It was a process of carefully listening to the clients' needs, then eking centimetres from the building, which had evolved through daily use and immediate needs more than logic or strategic planning. The solution was a three-phased masterplan whereby the completion of phase one would allow an initial rejig of the school's spatial uses, freeing up parts of the building to be demolished or reimagined for phase two, and so on into phase three.

Above A central void forms a new social nucleus for the school.

Phase one, now complete, saw the tired Portakabins and a low-level gym removed to make way for a four-storey volume central to the site, and stitched into original buildings. The new block provides a wealth of spaces: two large rehearsal rooms and a dance studio on the ground floor, with a suite of new classrooms above, alongside storage, offices and an internal balcony forging new connections and bringing clarity to what had been a warren of corridors.

On upper floors the practice could stretch and perform some architectural choreography. The three spacious, high-ceilinged dance studios gain a strong personality courtesy of a repeating arc window motif, an architectural rhythm referencing musical notation and choreographed movement. Importantly, it also helps articulate the function of the place to those outside – night-time silhouettes animate the facade while bronze-finished steel cladding and repeating vertical fins

Below Remodelled space in the existing building (left) and a top-floor studio in the new block.

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Project: Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge
Client: R H Partnership Architects
Main contractor: SDC Limited

Facade designs are intended to evoke movement.

imply the energy and drama within.

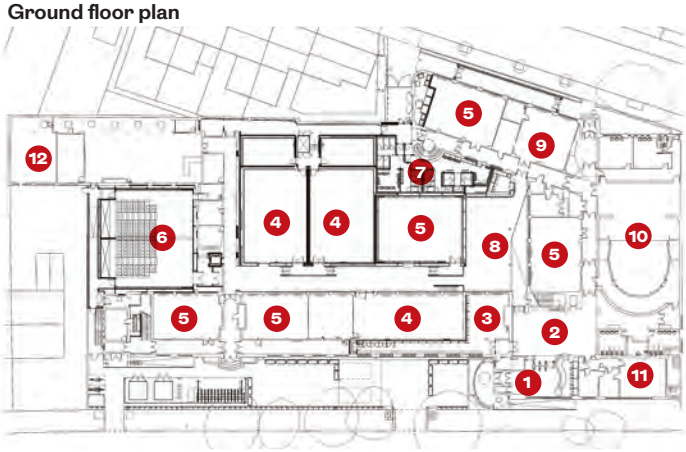
A shared corridor here leads to another generous balcony social space. These two overlapping balconies offer a visual connection between day school and higher education students while retaining physical separation, allowing for moments of unplanned use by students bursting to sing, dance, and perform. 'It gets quite boisterous,' says architect Pete McMahon. The designers didn't want the place to become sanitised through their tidying up.

The central void is a key moment, connecting not only floors and student cohorts visually and sonically, but also old and new buildings. The balconies overlook what was once the dingy external courtyard, now a full-height indoor space allowing light onto the ground floor communal entrance. Where students had entered the building and immediately split into a nest of narrow corridors, this soaring internal courtyard makes a cohesive heart, with the external facade brought inside – emphasising a story of adaptation and reinterpretation.

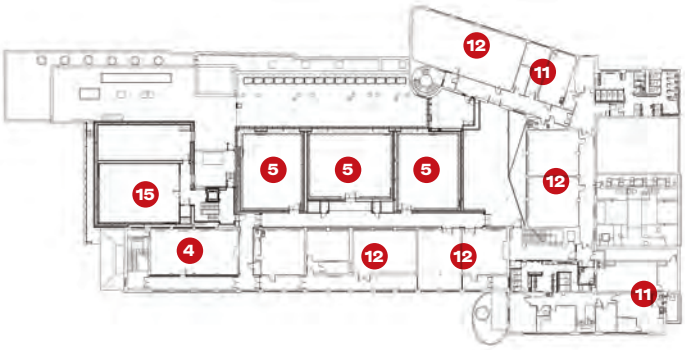
The floor above is largely taken over by a rooftop garden offering a moment of escape and views across the railway line and leafy gardens towards the West End where many will go on to perform. According to De Matos, on the roof you can engage with the city skyline and feel part of London within a major institution – which otherwise felt very distant in this residential neighbourhood.

Eventually, phase three will bring a whole suite of rooftop acting and dance studios, repeating the arching window aesthetic, though the timeline is not yet known as the sequential masterplan allows for pauses and tweaks to the scheme. It means the school can observe how incremental changes to the building serve students' needs, and with impacts of Covid, energy prices, Brexit and imminent recession, such a

Ground floor plan

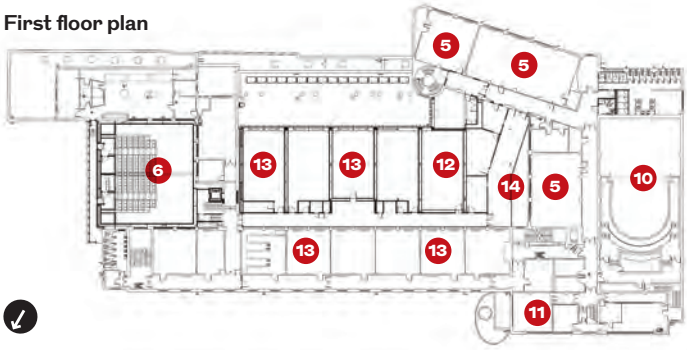


Second floor plan

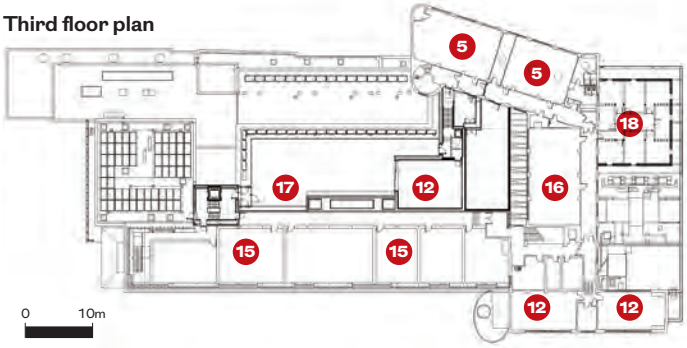


1 Entrance
2 Foyer
3 Library
4 Rehearsal room
5 Dance studio
6 Multi-purpose space (future phase)
7 Dressing room
8 Multi-use space
9 Workshop
10 Theatre
11 Office
12 Acting studio
13 Classroom
14 Void
15 Studio (future phase)
16 Gym
17 Terrace
18 Offices (future phase)

First floor plan



Third floor plan



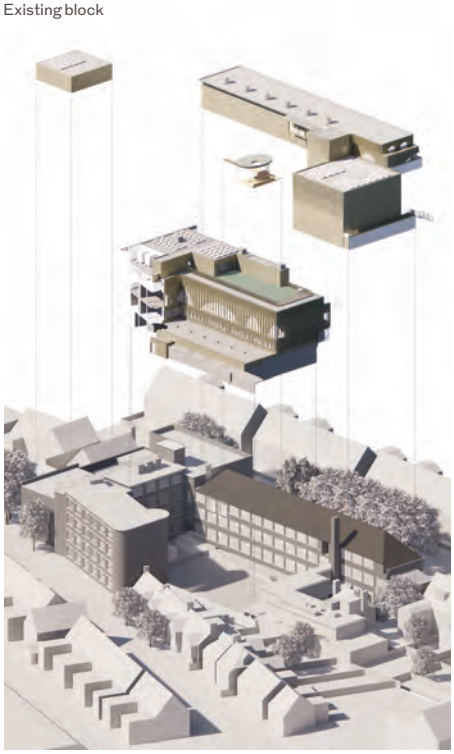
Above Render of rooftop studios planned for phase three.

Below A multi-use space and rooftop studios on the 1930s building are planned for future phases. Phase one comprised 2,875m² GIA new build and 2,815m² refurbishment, with a total contract cost of £6 million.

Below right A small extension to the south provides additional storage

Credits
Client ArtsEd
Architect De Matos Ryan
Project manager Synergy
Quantity surveyor McBains
Structural engineer Price and Myers
MEP engineer P3r Engineers
Acoustics and theatre consultant Charcoal Blue
BREEAM Blew Burton
Principal designer Jackson Coles
Contractor Feltham Construction

Future phases
Completed phase
Existing block



phased programme allows the school to constantly monitor costs and strategy. 'As the school develops, and more funds are generated, we hope we'll get to a point where the roof can have dance studios built on top,' says De Matos.

There are other benefits too. Staff and students live with the evolving scheme, informing changes to subsequent phases. 'These projects take time, and what a group of teachers or students believe they need now might change,' De Matos explains. By way of illustration, he talks of a short-lived request for a full-scale studio theatre with a gallery in the round, and a tension grid for lighting. With the school's vastly improved rehearsal spaces, however, the planned Studio Theatre will be simpler with less technology and rigging, focussing resources on higher quality rehearsal space.

Formed in 1999, De Matos Ryan has several theatres and school projects in its portfolio, with deep understanding of the specifics of front and back of house, employing a varied aesthetic. 'Over the 20 years all our projects have had very different identities to suit the clients. If we engage in consultation, community engagement, co-design, it is a shared process, so we can't say from the start, "This is what it's going to be".'

A collaborative approach has long been espoused by the firm, and explored in other school projects. In the early 2000s it was invited onto the Sorrell Foundation's joinedupdesignforschools project, pairing architects with schools to improve facilities collaboratively with students themselves. 'The criticism of the Building Schools for the Future programme was that students were not part of the process,' says De Matos. 'It was architects and teachers saying "This is what we believe a school should be", and those who were in the school were not party to that conversation.'

De Matos Ryan carried out an ideas consultation with students at Hockerill College, later contracted by the school for a codesign transformation of the refectory into a space for food, socialising, and study. Later, for £20,000 the practice refurbished Charlotte Sharman Primary School's playground with colour, life and pop-up structures.

Such schemes were 'very much part of a conversation about how schools evolve and requirements change,' says De Matos, with the practice often invited to co-design 'mini projects that could be delivered in four or five weeks to re-adjust spaces and add a level of human touch' once a new school was occupied and the space had been experienced. Following completion of phase one at ArtsEd, De Matos Ryan will take this approach with all users – staff and students.

De Matos says the project is, 'in a very sustainable way, about reuse, refurbish, appropriate and repurpose' – visible in the way the older building is physically being built into, making formerly external walls internal, forming the central atrium abutting modern balconies, and enlarging spaces to provide a new understanding of what had always been present but with a new logic and efficiency.

It can also be seen in the holistic durational masterplan, tight enough to cohesively reconsider the site and support the client's future vision, but flexible enough, in both time and space, to adapt to changing needs, shifting budgets, and new learning about the building as it is lived in. ●

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Sound and vision

Fraser/Livingstone Architects has combined strong acoustic performance, sustainable design and aesthetic success with six CLT-framed apartments in Edinburgh

Words: Shukri Sultan Photographs: Fredrik Frendin

PICTURE CREDIT EDGE

Simon Square, a contemporary tenement built on a constrained site.

Once a common sight in Edinburgh, late 16th and 17th century timber framed buildings are now few and far between. Most have been demolished, with only fragments to be found behind rendered facades on Lawnmarket, in the city's Old Town. However, the bid to cut carbon emissions has seen a timber renaissance, spearheaded by Fraser/Livingston Architects – whose project Simon Square has greatly improved the acoustic properties of cross laminated timber, bringing it into line with the country's stringent technical guidance.

This contemporary tenement is Scotland's first developer-led cross laminated timber building. It is tightly nestled between two storey pink pebbledash terraced flats on one side and a 1930s four storey stone clad tenement on the other. The

Axonometric of the building within the site.

Internally, the serrated form creates saw-toothed rooms with defined centres.

practice has built six new flats – five with one bedroom each and a two-bedroom duplex on the upper two storeys – achieving maximum value for the developer without compromising quality. Four of the apartments are equipped with juliet balconies, while the duplex comes with a rooftop garden and the ground floor flat has its own small outdoor space.

'Given the constrained site and proximity to the neighbouring building, getting it past planning was the biggest challenge,' explains lead architect Ayla Riome. Before approaching the practice the developer had worked with another architect whose designs failed at planning stage.

To satisfy the planners, Fraser/Livingston designed a chamfered rear elevation to avoid overlooking. This serrated form echoes a staggered row of Victorian bay windows. Softer chamfering is used on the street-facing facade to create a sheltered entrance.

At the rear of the site the original 4m boundary wall has been lowered to 2m, allowing more light to reach both the new homes and neighbouring buildings. The flats are accessed from a communal

IN NUMBERS

425m²
gross internal floor area

520m²
gross internal + external floor area

£1.2m
approx construction cost

£2307/m²
construction cost

East elevation

This image Bedroom with juliet balconies. **Bottom left** All communal areas are powered by solar panels.

stair, with the power used in the shared area sourced from solar PV panels.

Interiors are warmed and brightened by exposed timber and generously-sized windows – which is greatly needed in the dreich city. Although buyers were given the option of whitewashing the timber, none chose to do so. When asked about their experience living in the new flat, one resident commented: 'I like it, the exposed timber reminds me of a cabin or ski chalet and the windows, compared to the flat we were in before, are glorious.' They also remarked that during the summer heatwave the flat 'felt like a greenhouse' but acquiesced that so far their energy bills have been remarkably low and are fairly confident that their new homes will help them weather the inflated energy bills hitting the nation.

Externally, the CLT structure is clad in brick, with white lime 'slaister' render, giving the building a satisfying, monolithic solidity that echoes the stone tenements of Edinburgh. Central to the design is the question of how the high density achieved by the stone tenements can be continued in an innovative sustainable way. Malcolm Fraser, who sits on the Mass Timber Alliance, believes timber is the structural material of the future, but advocates for the use of CLT rather than thin engineered timber coated in toxic treatments.

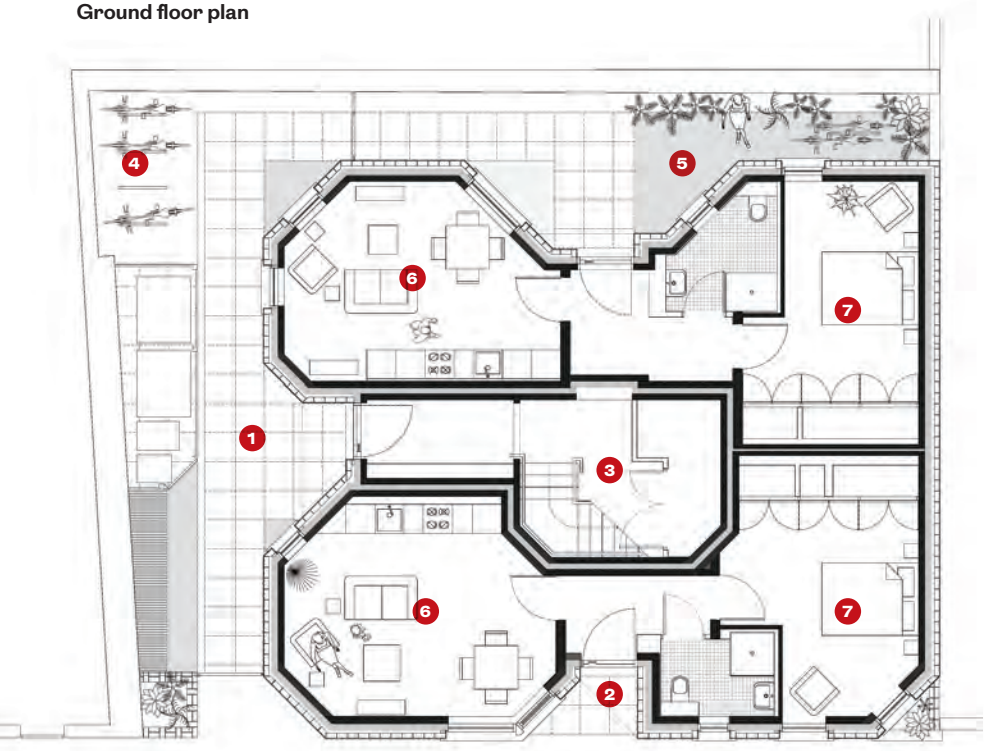
Above Generously sized windows supply ample light and framed views of local buildings.

Below The duplex has an open plan living, kitchen and office space which residents enjoy.

He points out that due to the country's high acoustic control requirements – which demand a 56dB reduction in noise, much higher than England's and one of the highest in Europe – CLT used in housing is often concealed behind plasterboard which results in a loss of the material's tactile qualities. The practice has used exposed timber in previous projects, such as the Arcadia Nursery and Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, and is experienced in its benefits, citing research undertaken in Austria which has shown that exposed timber interiors can lower heart rates, contributing to a calming environment. Through the use of acoustic wall hangers, wood fibre insulation and plasterboard in the ceiling only, Fraser/Livingstone has managed to exceed these already-high acoustic standards by 6dB. That allows the timber, that residents are so fond of, to remain exposed.

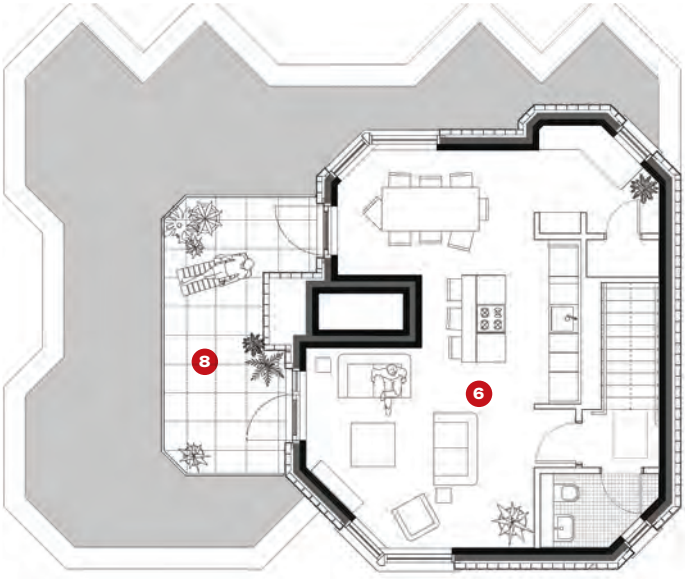
This is an important development

Ground floor plan



1 Shared entrance court
2 Entrance to ground floor flat
3 Communal stairs
4 Bicycle storage
5 Small private garden
6 Open plan, living, kitchen and dining space
7 Bedroom
8 Duplex roof top terrace

Third floor plan



Credits
Architect Fraser/Livingstone Architects
Client Seven Hills Investment
Structural engineer Elliot & Company Consulting Engineers
M&E consultant Harley Haddow
QS David Adamson Group
Acoustic consultant Robin Mackenzie Partnership
Main contractor True Build
Principal designer David Adamson Group
CLT supplier Egoin Wood Group (CLT Supplier)

Timber may be sustainable in materiality, but it is less so for its air miles

in the use of CLT, but more needs to be done. Although Scotland has the largest area of woodland in the UK, with a total of 1.34 million ha – of which only 737,000 ha are FSC certified – more than 90% of the timber used in Scottish construction is imported European softwood. And as Scotland has no CLT manufacturers, the timber used in this project was also imported from Europe. So timber may be sustainable in its materiality, but it looks a lot less so when its air miles are taken into account.

Added to that, the industry still has a lot to learn about the material, and few contractors are very experienced with using CLT at such a large scale. Meanwhile, the Mass Timber Alliance is working to improve this by supporting the development and availability of standard test data on the material. As we work towards creating a more sustainable industry, Simon Square is an important precedent for reimagining the vernacular in a sustainable, inventive way in the developer-led market. ●

Right The practice designed a chamfered rear elevation to prevent overlooking.

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A different world

Hayhurst & Co has brought security, confidence and excitement to pupils in a deprived part of London with its rebuilt Edith Neville Primary School

Words: Chris Foges Photographs: Kilian O'Sullivan

A visit to Edith Neville Primary School in London's Somers Town offers a flashback to happier times in educational design. It's the sort of ambitious, generous and situation-specific building that routinely filled architecture magazines and awards lists for a few years in the late 2000s, until the government had an abrupt change of heart and insisted instead on standardisation and Gradgrindian efficiency.

Inside, Hayhurst & Co's intricate, light-filled building is bursting with architectural ideas and extraordinary spatial events, but none is simply indulgent: every move is rooted in a coherent educational ethos – and evident empathy with young children.

Outside, above a plinth of textured concrete blocks, the two-storey white-rendered structure is wrapped in a perforate veil of white steelwork and pleated metal that gives it an animated, enigmatic character – more so than comes across in photographs. The same palette of materials is adapted to form a deep, layered screen wrapping the whole school campus. It's both a distinctive emblem and an ingenious response to the particular challenges of site and brief.

Despite its central location, sandwiched between Euston and St Pancras stations, Somers Town is one of the city's most disadvantaged districts. Much of the neighbourhood comprises exemplary social housing laid out on a loose grid, built in various styles over the last century, but more than half of its children still live in poverty. Until now, those attending Edith Neville also had to contend with a cramped, dingy 1970s building that was condemned

Below An undulating parapet roof screens PV panels. The school, whose undisclosed cost is said to be at the upper end of the normal range, is rated BREEAM Excellent.

even before it opened. Hayhurst & Co's replacement, on the same site, is the lynchpin of a neighbourhood renewal programme initiated by Camden Council in 2014.

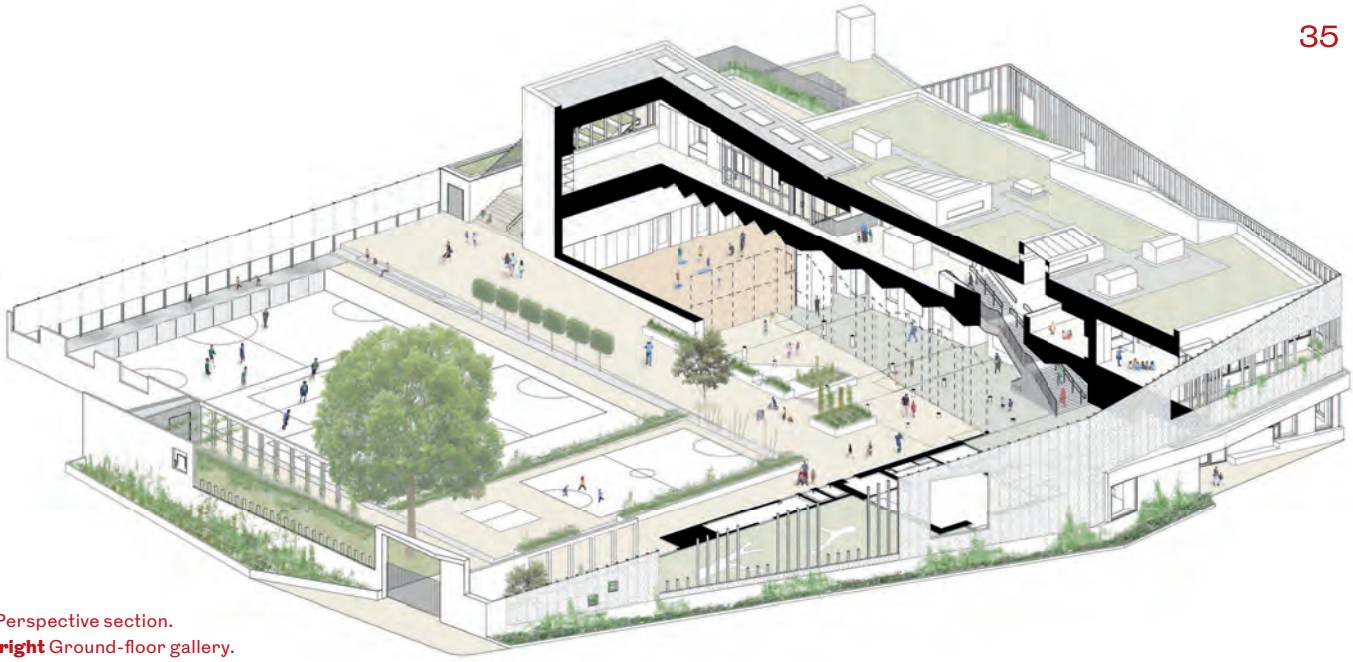
To its credit, the local authority took a bold approach, selecting five small and medium-sized practices to handle the various pieces. Hayhurst & Co was appointed on the strength of two impressive primary schools in Croydon. Adam Khan Architects has designed a castle-like children's play centre and social housing, opposite the school. Nearby, a 25-storey tower of private-sale flats by dRMM is approaching completion. Mixed-tenure housing and a community hall by Duggan Morris will be realised by successor firm Morris & Co. For all this, DHDSA acted as masterplanner, involving all the architects in a collaborative process to ensure no net loss of green space; public realm between the buildings has been recast as a linear landscaped park snaking through the estate.

Above Visualisation by DSDHA of the new school, housing and community facilities arrayed around a linear park. The Francis Crick Institute lies to the south.

Above right Playspace for reception classes, with open-air potting shed.

Below Perimeter fence viewed from the south-west.

Getting the whole scheme to work involved giving up a little of the school's site to the park, but Hayhurst & Co was itself required to ensure no reduction of external play space, plus an increase in accommodation. Moreover, the existing building had to remain in use until the new one was complete. The firm's answer was to put a two-storey structure on the eastern edge of the square site, aligning Purchese Street. The park runs around the south and west sides, while the school site abuts the backs



Right Perspective section.
Below right Ground-floor gallery.

of terraced houses to the north. Upward extension to three storeys is anticipated should Edith Neville want to expand from its current 1-to-2 form entry. Roof terraces make up for lost playground space.

Stacking accommodation is a compromise of a kind, says Nick Hayhurst – 'any educationalist will say they want a pancake school, with kids close to the ground' – but one creating opportunities that have been fully exploited as the sheltered terraces effectively extend all classrooms. Climbing plants are beginning to make their way up tension cables stretched across openings in the filigree facade, softening these outdoor rooms.

For passers-by, the site perimeter should soon resemble a vertical extension of the park – a central aim in the design, says Hayhurst. Other more important factors emerged during early consultation with pupils. 'People can be cynical about those exercises', says Hayhurst, 'but sometimes they produce nuggets that stick with you'. One of those was a curious recurrence of penitentiary-type lookout towers in children's drawings of their ideal school. 'The headteacher explained that they just didn't feel safe in the old school, where strangers could approach the playground fence'.

If engendering a sense of security became a high priority – one of the project's eight 'manifesto' principles – so too did conveying an impression of openness. The school regards itself as a piece of community infrastructure, where socially isolated parents might meet one another, and the client was determined that no-one should be deterred from entering. 'The relationship between the boundary and public space was the biggest design challenge', says Hayhurst. The collaged walls resolve this seeming contradiction very effectively through subtle cues. Planted beds form a kind of moat inside and out, and much of the sense of enclosure is merely implied by an open framework of posts and beams that rises to meet the building's roofline.

On the western edge, a rugged steel and concrete gatehouse marks the point of entry for all parents, who gather in the colourful, verdant playground – conceptually an 'oasis' in the heart of the school and the estate. Though relatively small, every inch is well used. There's enough empty space to let off steam – few pupils have outside space at home – but strategically placed trees and freestanding fences define 'slow' zones on the perimeter for quieter play.

From there the youngest children make their way to ground-floor reception classes via a separate courtyard, while their older siblings climb outdoor stairs to the first floor. A separate street entrance on the south-east corner also serves a family drop-in

Credits
Client London Borough of Camden
Architect Hayhurst & Co
Landscape Howard Miller Design
Structural and civil engineer Price & Myers
MEP, environmental engineer and acoustics Max Fordham
Fire Warrington Fire Exova
BREEAM Currie & Brown
Project manager Capital PPC
Main contractor Neilcott Construction

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Left Above the street entrance lightweight metalwork screens learning terraces and makes a trellis for climbing plants.

Below left Shared spaces such as the gallery are over-scaled for a seven-classroom school, anticipating future expansion.

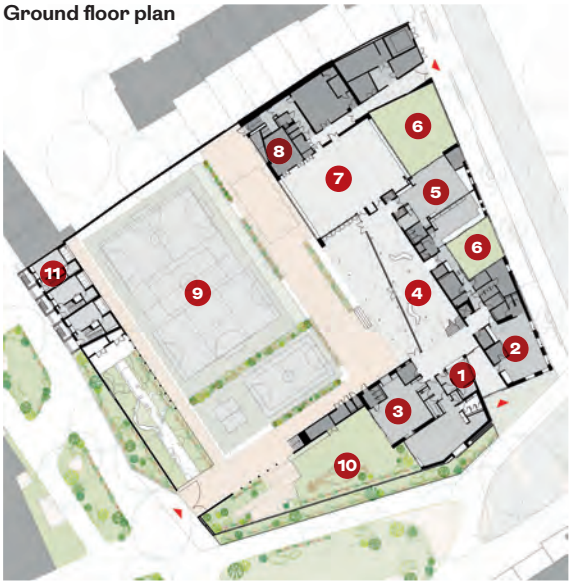
centre. Wherever you enter, first impressions are much the same: it's bright, open – with views out in every direction – and remarkably serene.

'The clients wanted a "grown-up" building', says Hayhurst, 'not a patronising multi-coloured nursery'. At the insistence of the then-headteacher, all interiors are white – the better to show off pupils' creations in orderly displays. It's much friendlier in the flesh than that sounds, and if the ascetic decor does impose a certain discipline that's welcome, says current head Ruby Nasser. 'We feel a responsibility not to ruin such a beautiful building, but none of us wants to go back to the clutter of the old school'.

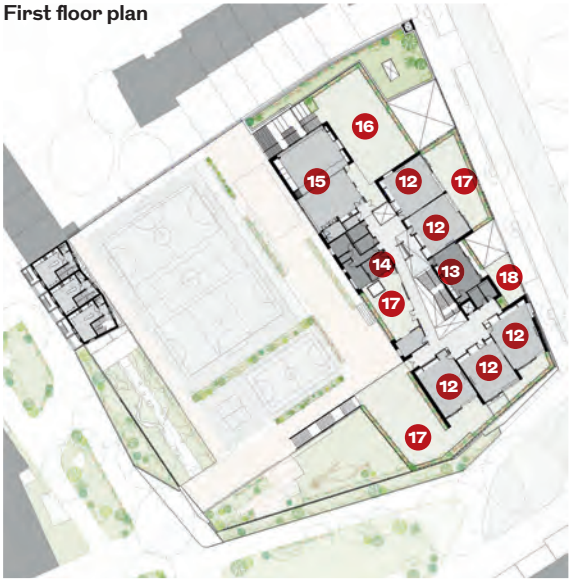
The centrepiece is a capacious room at the heart of the school – a circulation route doubling as a gallery – whose floor slopes gently down towards the assembly hall at the far end, set almost 1m below ground to allow a continuous first-floor level above. Full-height windows are inset so that the upper floor shelters an outdoor play space, from which chunky concrete steps rise to the playground. 'It's the prospect-refuge theory', says Hayhurst. 'You have big views out, but there's no vulnerability as you are hunkered down in the landscape'.

Although the building's principal structure is CLT (entirely hidden from view), a few steel columns are dotted about the gallery. It might have been possible to do without them, but the architect enjoyed the way they echo the trees beyond the glass. Another resonance with the view only becomes apparent at child-height, when the London roofs of a nearby Georgian terrace chime with the folded

Ground floor plan



First floor plan



1 Reception
2 Family drop-in centre
3 Early years
4 Gallery
5 Nursery
6 Courtyard
7 Hall
8 Kitchens
9 Playground
10 Early years play area
11 Proposed houses by Hayhurst & Co
12 Classroom
13 Staff
14 Headteacher
15 STEAM
16 Science terrace
17 Learning terrace
18 Staff terrace

planes of a slatted timber ceiling. Both illustrate a deliberate effort to represent the city within the building at a relatable size.

Scale is a pervasive preoccupation, particularly apparent in the provision of cosy nooks to which children can retreat – a quality the architect Herman Hertzberger has called 'cupboardness'. He gave as an example a 'little library' tucked beneath stairs. Exactly that is found at Edith Neville, where children can perch with a book on a raised platform under the main flight. Similar spaces abound, from a skeletal playground 'potting shed' that doubles as a Wendy house to a room-within-a-room in the nursery. On my visit there were blankets and cushions – evidence of nesting – in deep niches within built-in storage in classrooms.

Above, every classroom has a big 'shopfront window' looking onto the central circulation area – another pragmatic device with playful or poetic effect. Staff can keep an eye on goings-on within, while children's displays brighten the common areas. Thoughtful and beautifully executed, they typify the care and intelligence found throughout. Its effect has been profound, says Ruby Nasser. 'Some parents cried when we first showed them around'. The children are noticeably calmer, she notes, and have greater self-esteem – not least because their school is a match for flashy buildings springing up on every side of Somers Town. Too few new school heads could say the same, but it's what every child deserves. ●

Its effect has been profound: some parents cried when we first showed them around

Above The hall, like all ground-floor rooms, has a folded timber ceiling.

Below Thick classroom walls incorporate storage and 'shopfront' windows.

Below right Purchese Street facade.

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MacEwen 2023 opens

Are your designs socially responsible? Our competition to celebrate architecture for the common good awaits your entry

How can we empower the people who use streets, cafés, squares, schools and the rest of the important buildings and places that make up our built environment? As increases in the cost of living bite, we need towns, villages and cities that give users agency, creating opportunities for play, for conversation, for community. Over the years the RIBAJ MacEwen Award has recognised projects that give users a chance to be part of the process of design and making. It has rewarded schemes that help clients to support those in need – like last year's commended entry, St Margaret's Community Church (above) that brings the community together around shared activities – and to go beyond that to serve a wider public, to enliven a street and create a sense of place. We are looking for architecture that builds dignity and joy, and puts the people who live, work and play in and around it in the driving seat.

The RIBAJ MacEwen Award is our way of getting to the heart of responsible architecture. We call it 'Architecture for the common good' because it celebrates those built projects which are of wide and demonstrable social benefit. It brings together the well-known with the up-and-coming, the national with the local.

So, now it's time to enter MacEwen 2023!

THE MACEWEN AWARD is named after Anni and Malcolm MacEwen. She was an urban planner who pioneered a conservation-based approach to regeneration in both town and country, he was a campaigning journalist and former editor of this magazine.

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JUDGES 2023

Takeshi Hayatsu founder, Hayatsu Architects
Kathy MacEwen planner and daughter of Malcolm and Anni MacEwen
Anthony Staples associate, RCKa, MacEwen Award 2021 winner for Nourish Hub, west London
Eleanor Young editor, RIBA Journal (chair)

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2: Intelligence

HOW TO PLAN FOR SUCCESSION
LEANNE TRITTON, EXECUTIVE CHAIR, ING

At ING we became interested in the subject of succession through our own experience – we've been developing our own plans – and our work as communications consultants to architects: it's one of the issues keeping practice founders awake at night. Often it's the elephant in the room; neither founders nor staff find it easy to raise, even though both need to plan their futures. So to stimulate those discussions we commissioned a research report – nine case studies on practices ranging from Grimshaw to ADAM Architecture.

Agreeing financial and legal matters can be complicated, but there are established ways to do it. Much more difficult is the emotional aspect. It can unearth hidden resentments. Concerns over identity, legacy and culture all come into play. Small things become big issues, so it can be useful to bring in an experienced third party as a guide.

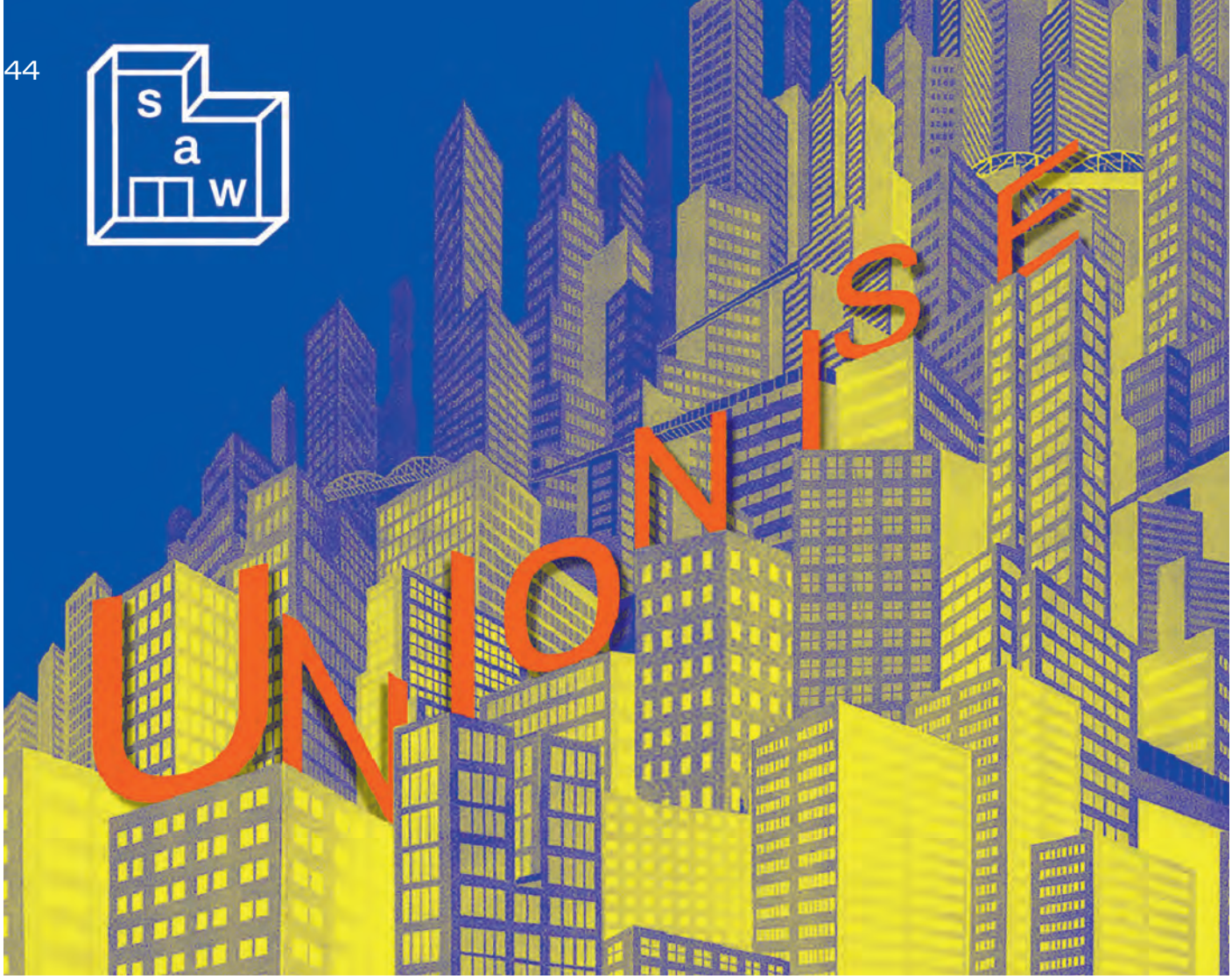
Timing is critical: founders shouldn't leave too soon or too late. It's also important to plan far ahead. Founders often have different personality types to the people they hired, and it takes time to prepare the right structure. Creative businesses can be poor at management training, and future leaders may need to acquire additional skills. Even young practices should bear it in mind. It's fine to stay small and close a practice at retirement, but if the aim is a financial exit it helps to grow in the right way.

We all know about firms that fail to thrive following the founders' departure, but there are also many that successfully evolve. Conscious planning makes the difference. It's encouraging to look at businesses like RSHP, now in its third incarnation. Get succession right the first time, and a practice might go on for generations.

'Concerns over identity, legacy and culture all come into play. Small things become big issues'

Left ING's report, The Practice of Succession, is written by journalist Jonathan Morrison and available from 5 October at ing-media.co

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



MEMBER OF UVW-SAW

The fight for a better industry

Architects are joining the resurgent union movement, but it's about more than better conditions for workers. A happier workforce will make a stronger industry, advocates tell Shukri Sultan

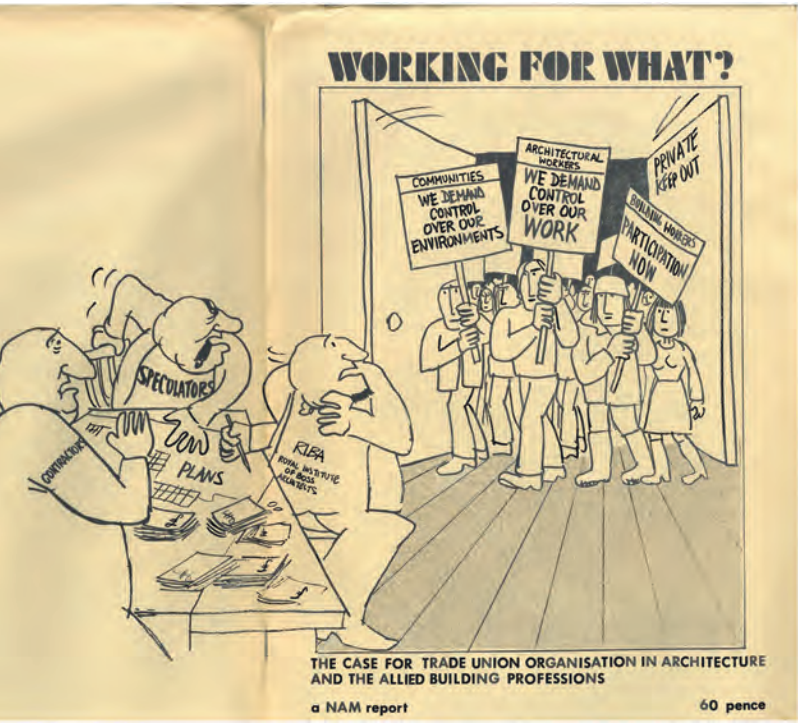
Business, clients & services

Arthur Scargill and the miners, Mick Lynch and the RMT workers – that's what usually comes to mind when we think of unions, rather than an architect. However, this has begun to change. The labour movement in the architectural sector has seen a resurgence in the last few years, with grassroots organisations such as the Section of Architectural Workers, (SAW) part of the wider union United Voices of the World (USVSAW), forming in late 2019 and Future Architects Front (FAF) in 2021.

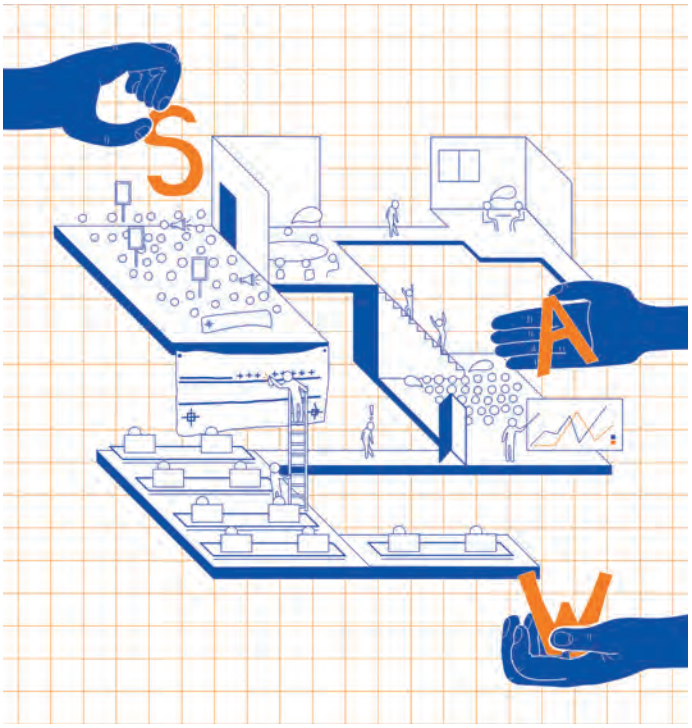
Born out of a two year long Workers' Inquiry – which surveyed the conditions of the industry – SAW is the first attempt at unionisation of British architects since the New Architecture Movement (NAM) in the 1970s and 80s. Decades later, members of SAW find themselves still facing the issues highlighted by NAM in its pamphlet Working for What?, such as unpaid overtime and overwork.

Propelled by unethical conduct such as furlough fraud by some practices during the pandemic, SAW and FAF have come to the forefront of the industry as key agents for change. The recent election of Muyiwa Oki as next RIBA president is testament to their growing influence and power. A husting organised by FAF saw Oki selected as a candidate, to represent 'architectural workers', a term central to the group's formation and organising efforts.

It is an inclusive term encompassing



NEW ARCHITECTURE MOVEMENT, LOUIS HELLMAN



MEMBER OF UVW-SAW

anyone in the industry that does not have the power to hire and fire, so widening the discussion to include technicians, administrators, office cleaners and all those that contribute to the production of architecture. The term holds a lot of power, as Marisa Cortright – author of 'Can this be? Surely this cannot be? Architectural Workers Organizing in Europe' — highlights: 'There is no "architectural" struggle, but there is a labour struggle, to which we all belong'. The term forges a connection between those in the built environment sector and the wider labour movement.

Challenge on fees

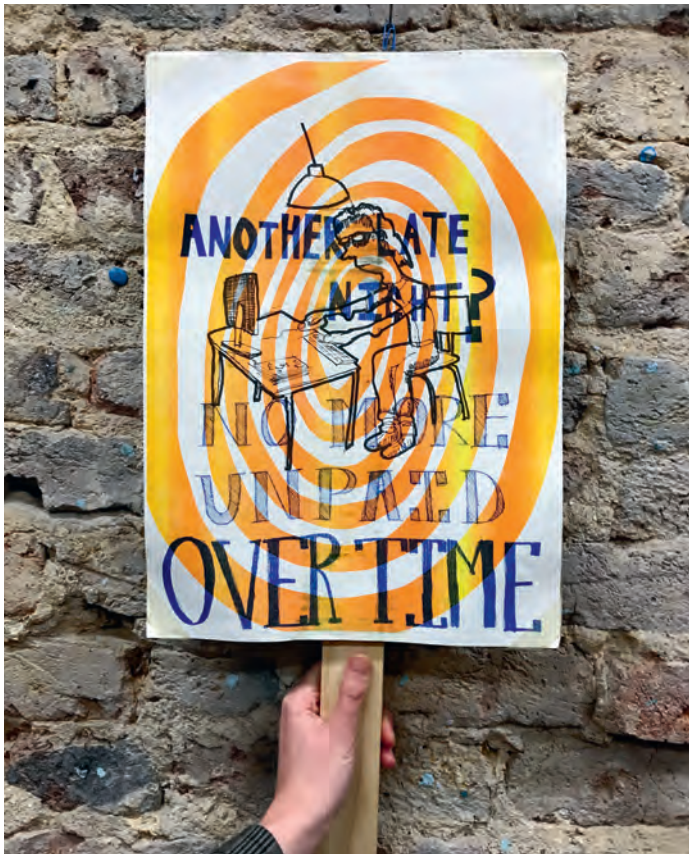
With an architectural worker as the RIBA president elect, there is a real possibility that the demands of NAM, now continued by SAW and FAF, will be met. Oki has promised to end unpaid overtime in RIBA chartered practices, a crucial but challenging pledge to enact. When asked about those challenges, SAW co-ordinator Tia Duong responded: 'I understand that the industry itself is underpaid via clients fees but our demand to be paid fairly for our overtime will hopefully result in bosses demanding better, higher fees from their clients. Perhaps then we will see an end to firms racing to the bottom, trying to pitch the lowest. So this collective pushing from us workers is necessary, because what else can we do?'

Above Muyiwa Oki ,RIBA president elect.
Opposite The union employs a graphically strong language to convey its message.
Top left Front cover of NAM report: Working For What? 1977, featuring a cartoon by Louis Hellman.
Top right UVW-SAW poster.

History itself shows that the union demands are not only possible but a fundamental right. Unions have been instrumental in securing a minimum wage, maternity and paternity leave, holiday and sick pay – from which we all benefit now. Besides, the demand for paid overtime is only the beginning.

Current RIBA guidelines recommend a minimum salary of £20,000 for part I architectural assistants. If they were to work 40 hours a week, they would just about scrape in above the minimum wage. Responses to the surveys conducted by FAF and SAW have seen reports from architectural workers working an average of 60 hour a week. This, if they were on the recommended salary, would reduce the hourly rate to £6.41 – significantly below the minimum wage.

Furthermore, the issue is not due to the client's inability to pay higher fees, explains SAW co-ordinator Noah Power: 'A lot of clients are developers or real state companies worth billions; they can



ETHAN WEATHERBY, BRICKS MAGAZINE

Left Placard posters designed by UVW-SAW.
Above Group photo taken in the early days of the union.

afford the fees. But there's this internal competition in the sector to provide the best services for the lowest fees possible, which automatically writes in unpaid labour.' Prioritising profits at the expense of staff wellbeing is unsustainable and detrimental to the industry.

However, the focus of unions isn't just finance, but overall change. 'Unionising is not simply a hostage negotiation where you're demanding a ransom. The point of unionising is that it gives you a seat at the table. It gives you a role in the governance of the organisation. It's not about gutting a company and running it into the ground, but about the workers having a say over how it is run, how funds are distributed and how decisions are made,' explains Charlie Edmonds, co-founder of FAF.

Ethical goals

Unions are vehicles to help bring about a more ethical workplace designed to hold the industry to a higher standard. As well as improving workplace conditions, they are working towards education reform and implementing real change to deal with the climate crisis.

Rather than fearing unions, employers could embrace them and work towards achieving their demands. If you need any more convincing, look at Sweden, home to the highest paid architects in Europe, with around 80 to 85% of the profession unionised. The Swedish Association of Architects has successfully lobbied for laws such as the 'Stamped Living Environment', which endeavours to create 'a sustainable, equal and less segregated society' through design and architecture. Perhaps the reluctance to embrace unions stems from a culture afflicted with anti-union rhetoric, evidenced and perpetuated by politicians' response to RMT strikes this summer. Even Kier Starmer, leader of a party that – in the words of Ernest Bevin 'grew out of the bowels of the trade-union movement', has pledged to 'crack down' on unions. It is this culture that has created the perception of union members as nefarious shirkers. Yet as Powers explains, unions aren't 'trying to sink the architecture industry or give architects a bad name. We genuinely want change because we care about the work that we're doing, we care about architecture and we want people to stay in the industry.

> We want change because we care about the work we're doing, we care about architecture, and we want people to stay in the industry

'We're trying to save the industry because there are many people that overwork themselves into mental health crises and end up leaving,' he adds. FAF co-founder Priti Mohandas is one of many disillusioned architectural workers who has left the profession: 'I made a very conscious choice to leave that professional conveyor belt and pursue a PhD because here I can say what I want and share my ideas without fearing the repercussions it might have on my career,' she says.

Whatever your position on unions, the architectural workers' revolution is here and making significant changes. Oki's election is proof that these workers are not a fringe group that can be ignored, but are instrumental shapers of this industry. With inflation and energy bills skyrocketing and global warming increasing, the industry needs the courageous work of SAW and FAF to help create a more ethical, sustainable industry for us all. ●

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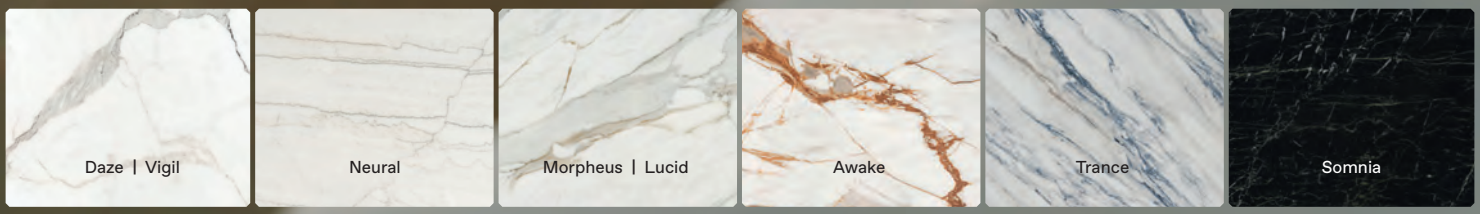

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Energy arriving in Kent in the form of liquefied natural gas. The cost of energy is major driver for the economy.

JAMES BELL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

How to build economic resilience

How might practices identify routes to resilience in a challenging economic climate? Experts from the Bank of England, Glenigan and the RIBA provide crucial insights into the current and future economy. Michèle Woodger reports

Business, clients & services

Rampant fuel costs, inflation, rising interest rates and imminent recession, labour and materials shortages and industrial action: not the 1970s but 2022, where the UK economy is once again in a fragile state. How this affects the architectural industry is the subject of the RIBA Economics Panel webinar, which, by outlining the UK's economic forecast over the next two years, hopes to steer architects along paths to resilience.

Today's 'anomalous and extraordinary [economic circumstances] make it all the more challenging for practitioners to navigate their businesses through the current climate,' said RIBA publishing director and panel chair Helen Castle in her opening address. For this reason, RIBA has launched the Business & Career Resilience Hub, with resources to help practitioners during these difficult times.

The webinar started from the macro-level vantage point of Lai Wah Co, deputy agent of the Bank of England, who discussed the August 2022 Monetary Policy Report. Then it homed in on sector-specific and practice levels as Allan Wilen, economics director of Glenigan, and Adrian Malleson, RIBA's head of economic research, presented the RIBA's Future Trends and Business Benchmarking surveys.

The UK's economic outlook is, in a word, 'uncertain'. Wah Co reiterated that Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation is forecast to peak at 13%, largely due to the energy-related repercussions of the war in Ukraine. Interest rates, which had been rising 'modestly' over the past year also saw a sharp step up by 0.5% this month. 'There is uncertainly around whether these might increase', she continued, 'or if they have already topped out and now warrant cuts, given the recession we are anticipating' – a recession which could go on for five quarters, necessitating a long recovery. Nevertheless, she assured us, 'the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will do whatever it takes to bring inflation down to 2.0% – no ifs or buts'.

The critical questions are how rapidly inflation will fall, and to what extent it will impact household spending power. Again, energy prices dictate the answers. Announcements from Ofgem regarding October's energy price cap are due at the end of August, but, according to the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, consumers are already spending less. Over 60% of respondents said they would reduce non-essentials, and around 25% admitted using their savings.

Unemployment is at a historic low of 3.8%, yet the labour market is surprisingly tight, and companies are struggling to recruit and retain staff, which is feeding through into salary inflation. 'Workers are using their bargaining power to compensate for the squeezes to their working and living conditions by taking industrial action', Wah Co went on. A tight labour market could linger for another year, but unemployment could start to rise in 2024, she warned. 'There are lots of uncertainties in the forecast. It could be better, or it could be much worse.'

Based on Glenigan's UK Construction Industry Forecast 2022-24, Allan Wilen agreed that we are 'looking at a subdued picture for couple of years'.

A survey of the National Federation of Roofing Contractors confirms what many know anecdotally: supply chains are hampered by pace, materials availability and prices. In data from the ONS/BEIS, construction material costs have gone up 25% since 2020. But there are tentative signs that shortages – while still bad (roofing tiles and ready mixed concrete, for instance, are still below pre-pandemic levels) – are improving.

Projects are also taking longer to

make it to site. Some were suspended during Covid; others are being sent back to the drawing board by pinched clients, affecting lead times. And developers are reappraising the financial viability of projects, focusing on the pipeline rather than new ventures.

Adding to this insightful analysis is the RIBA's own research (most recently July) which offers a good dataset from architects specifically – and a glimmer of hope. Since 2015, chartered practices' revenue grew year-on-year, reaching £3.16bn in 2019 and falling to £3.02bn in 2021. 'We are now seeing pressure mounting', said Adrian Malleson, although institute data reveals that architects have retained profitability so far, largely through effective business management, reducing overheads and expenditure to keep profits stable. 'Key to weathering the storm is effective business management,' he said.

The Future Trends survey, which gives a monthly snapshot of attitudes to future work, revealed that, despite 'a really quite terrifying drop in workload' at the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a rapid recovery over the last year which has now plateaued. Moreover, a historically low level of only 8% agreed that 'a lack of work over the past month led you to be personally underemployed', meaning that workloads are currently 'healthy'.

However, The Future Trends Workload Index, which tracks how architects believe their workload will fare over the coming three months, shows a 'softening of optimism'. In July, 18% of practices expected their workloads to decrease, and confidence is likely to deteriorate further. 'If the Bank of England's predictions are correct, we are going to have a long journey back to confidence,' said Malleson, 'and confidence is related to output.'

Architecture firms have retained profitability so far, largely through effective business management

Above The £22 million G Park Blue Planet, designed by Chetwoods for Gazeley in Stoke-on Trent, part of the growing logistics sector.

CHETWOODS

So where are the silver linings? While the sector has been hit by the same external shocks as everyone else, distribution of the disruptions has not been felt equally across sub-sectors – with cautiously positive implications.

Private housing's 2021 'mini boom' (attributed to homeowners' demand for more space, home-working requirements and the stamp duty reduction fuelling market activity) is now unwinding. The 'big squeeze on household income is dampening activity,' said Wilen, and planning applications are stalling. But this may not be felt immediately: 'The private housing market sustained many architects through the pandemic,' said Malleson, and it is the only sector in which, according to the Future Trends survey, architects did not expect a fall in workload over the next three months.

In the health sector, change is slow but positive: 'It takes time for NHS trusts to identify their priorities but they are trickling through', Wilen stated. In education too 'there is a strong underlying need for capacity... [with] tentative signs of government money coming in'. But among the membership there is less optimism so far: 'Despite the "build, build, build" agenda, we failed to see an uptick in confidence in public sector work,' said Malleson.

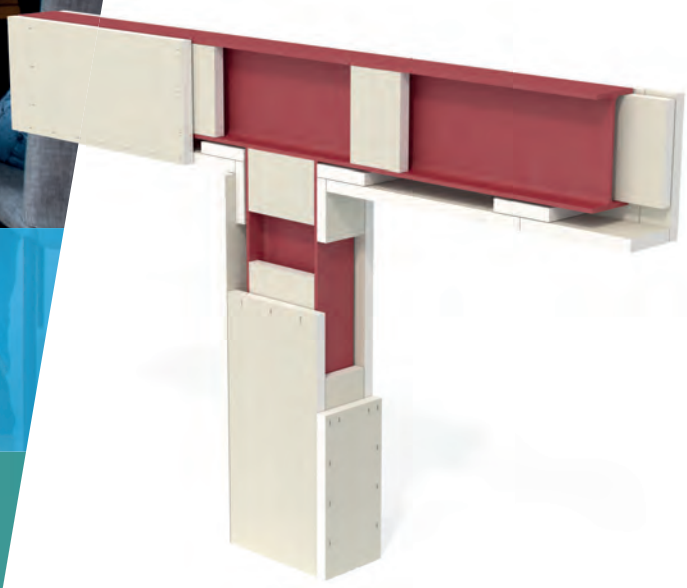
Offices are in a state of flux due to hybrid working. Over the medium term, the requirement for floor space is diminishing but this creates demand for refurbishment and redesign. 'Can they be reimagined?' asks Wilen. Further opportunities present themselves in technology upgrades and in improving the office experience to maximise collaboration when workers do go in, and even office to residential conversion.

Whereas the leisure and hospitality industry is most adversely affected by the squeeze on household spending, one area of strength is industrial buildings. A growth in online retailing, which peaked during the pandemic, has driven a need for logistics hubs and smaller distribution centres. In 2021 this area grew 55% , and a further 11% in 2022.

The architectural market is heavily based in London, with 63% of revenue generated here. But, throughout the pandemic, 'the regions fared better than London', said Malleson. 'The markets were more resilient.' Notable hotspots included the north and west of England, and Wales. Will this lead to a more balanced picture for the architectural industry? Hopefully so. The dispersal of people due to the pandemic, and perhaps some promised 'levelling up' funds from the government, might present growth opportunities.

Finally, sustainability is key area of concern and of possibility. In her presentation, Wah Co shared details from the Bank of England's Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) which outlined climate risks to the country's financial system. These risks are of direct relevance to the architectural industry, ranging from remediation of acute crises such as floods and heatwaves, to longer-term social and infrastructural changes. 'The energy crisis we are seeing may be stimulating interest in renewable energy and changing behaviour', she commented, and certainly this is one area in which architects can excel.

Our rising energy costs 'don't reflect the true cost' for the environment, rounded off Malleson. 'The prioritisation must be to meet the 2030 climate challenge... It is already hot, there are fires, we are running out of water – now is the time to act'. Challenging times, but positive action can be taken from these difficult messages. ●



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Timber frames scale new heights

Waugh Thistleton director Andrew Waugh explains why timber was a necessary alternative to steel and concrete for the construction of The Office Group's Black & White Building in London

Words: Andrew Pearson
Photographs: TOG

Above Visualisation of the completed building. Timber louvres provide natural shade, reducing solar gain on the facade and boosting natural light.

The Black & White Building is a major step forward for the development and construction industry. A mainstream, grade-A office, it comprises two wings, five and six storeys tall, linked by central core containing stairs and lifts. The super structure is built entirely from timber.

Why build in timber?
The business case for sustainability has never been more compelling so the ambition to build in timber was there from the beginning. The Office Group came to us because of our expertise in designing in timber.

This building uses four different types of engineered timber: it has a laminated veneer lumber (LVL) frame, cross-laminated timber (CLT) floor slabs and core, glulam curtain walling and tulipwood solar shading. The building's embodied carbon is only 410kgCO_2e/m^2.

LVL is a relatively new material, what makes it appropriate for the structure of this project?
LVL is really fabulous and a very efficient use of the tree. When you plank a trunk, you are making square things out of a round object, so you use about 60% of the tree. Veneers you use 95% of the tree; you effectively put the trunk on a massive spiraliser that spits out sheets of veneer – up to 100m at 3mm thick. You slice that up and layer it.

The LVL for this project is made using beech from a sustainably managed forest. It's as strong as steel, so we get the kind of internal spans achievable with a steel frame but with a structure that weighs just 20% that of steel. That means columns can be skinnier and beams shallower so we can reduce the height of the building, saving material throughout.

But because the building is lighter, the issue you do have is wind loading, so you're always thinking about how your structure will respond to shear forces.

How do you assemble an LVL structure?
This is a structurally efficient design. We tender the timber element of the project early on at Stage 2, so that we can work with a timber contractor and manufacturer to establish the design

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with them. This timber contractor was Hybrid Structures.

The LVL structural frame is bolted together using a system developed by Waugh Thistleton working with structural and facade engineer Eckersley O'Callaghan, and with structural and civil engineer Engenuiti working alongside the timber contractor. We wanted to fireproof the steel connections by concealing them within the frame in order to utilise the fire-proofing ability of the timber structure. And because the timber components are engineered to be slotted together, the entire structure can be easily disassembled, piece by piece.

Beams are an inverted T-section, held to the rectangular columns by a lateral plate. CLT floor slabs are dropped into the beam recess, which saves the depth of the CLT on every floor. All the gravitational load is taken by the LVL. By sitting within the frame the CLT locks it tight, acting in diaphragm for the shear forces, which, along with the core, provide the stability.

Located in the middle of the two office wings, the building's core houses a CLT staircase and lift shaft. It is constructed as a solid box entirely from CLT, so is incredibly strong. Additional stability is provided by steel cross-bracing integrated into the lightwell facade, adding enough stiffness to prevent the building twisting excessively.

What foundations are used?
Piled foundations support a concrete cassette basement formed of a basement slab and walls supporting the ground floor slab. This gives latitudinal and longitudinal stability because we're building on top of a buried box. Connections for the LVL columns are embedded in the concrete.

The basement, which contains 41% of the building's whole life carbon, has space for 94 bicycles. We've calculated that each one will have to cycle for over 1000 years in order to repay the carbon embedded in the concrete.

How is the building clad?
We've used a timber curtain walling made from softwood glulam which

Above The hybrid LVL frame with CLT slabs has been designed to create open workspaces with no structural partition walls.
Left Logistics meant that the rear wing of the office was built first, followed by the CLT core before the front wing is assembled.
Below The LVL timber frame has been engineered to be slotted and bolted together. This will enable the entire structure to be disassembled at the end of its life.

Top CLT is used to form the building's lift shaft, which forms part of the central core.
Above Even the internal staircase is built using CLT.
Above right Detail of the ground floor reception. Air handling runs are attached directly to the soffit of the CLT floor slabs.
Below Render showing the ground floor pulled back from the facade to allow light into the concrete cassette basement level.

supports the glazing. On the outside vertical, thermally modified tulipwood louvres provide solar shading. An advanced sprinkler system drenches the facade in the event of fire. The cladding is as lightweight as possible to minimise the supporting structure.

Is the construction process different for a mass timber building?
It changes from being a construction site to an assembly site. The building is assembled from 872 pieces of timber, each one designed in BIM. The file then migrates to the factory to create cutting diagrams for the timber.

Assembly is a choreographed performance. Every piece arrives on a truck labelled with where it should go. Logistics meant the rear wing was built first, then the core and then the front.

The frame is assembled halfway up to allow access to the assembly bolts. We backfill it with CLT slabs for stability, and then put up the rest of the frame followed by the remaining CLT.

Was building insurance an issue for an all timber building?
The toilet floors are plywood and not CLT because our early conversations with insurance agents revealed that the insurance industry's concerns were primarily about long term water ingress. Even though leak detection systems are fitted they were worried about dripping taps, leaking pipes and the floor being flooded and losing its structural integrity, so we replaced CLT in the toilets with marine plywood supported on joists, which is on their list of approved substrates.

Did this innovative scheme have any Building Regulation compliance issues?
There were issues around dynamic live floor loads because Building Regulations and BCO guidance are antiquated and assume an intensity of use that no longer exists. Because compliance is not performance based, we had to make the timber floors fit the properties of concrete floors, so we had to use thicker CLT slabs – not for structural reasons but to meet the dynamic criteria. ●

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Planning should be plan-led

How do all these identikit homes on the edges of towns and villages get through? We need to stand with planners not against them, says Hana Loftus

TEAMJACKSON ISTOCK

Above We need to fight for better places, beyond identikit houses.

Places, planning & community

How often have you wondered how the acres of identikit housebuilder development on the edges of towns and villages get through the planning system, while you are mired in weeks of negotiation over a small extension? The truth is that planners are often forced to accept projects that fall far short of the placemaking ideals that drew them there.

Most of the country has no up-to-date local plan in force, making planners near-powerless to control development. If a council cannot demonstrate, by having planned development in the pipeline, that local housing demand will be met, then the National Planning Policy Framework states that any new development proposal at all should be looked on favourably. While councillors can refuse speculative applications at planning committee, they are virtually guaranteed success at appeal. And the developments permitted by this process don't need to worry about placemaking, community or car-dependence – all that matters is keeping up a supply of homes.

This 'five year housing land supply' rule is meant to be an incentive for councillors to put up-to-date plans in place, but it's not working. New development is so unpopular with local voters that councillors increasingly refuse to approve any schemes at all. From Oxfordshire to Kent, elected members are ditching new local plans – pulling the plug on years of work by officers and hundreds of thousands of pounds of reports and consultations, and even rejecting them after they have been passed by the Planning Inspectorate. Some planning committees are even rejecting proposals on sites actually allocated for development in their Local Plans: indefensible decisions which are inevitably overturned at appeal.

These councillors can claim on their campaign leaflets that they have pushed back on development – conveniently blaming the Planning Inspectorate for overturning local decision-making. But all they have done is waste taxpayers money and demoralise their planning officers, while allowing unrestricted development to take place in the worst of locations. In the face of climate breakdown, these councillors open the door to thousands of homes on car-dependent sites, by cynically refusing to plan proactively for development close to jobs, services and public transport.

Architects come in all shapes and sizes, and some will be doing well from this breakdown in planning – producing site layouts for cookie-cutter development is easy and profitable. But if what you entered the profession to make durable and inspiring buildings and spaces – what the RIBA stands for – you should be deeply concerned. Without a functional planning system, with spatial plans and placemaking goals guiding development, developers don't need architects of any quality. Our role will become limited to heritage projects, one-off houses and the trophy architecture of pavilions and 'signature' towers.

> Some planning committees are even refusing proposals on sites actually allocated for development

Architects need to stand up for a plan-led system, while making constructive recommendations to improve it. We must stand with planners, not against them; call out the cynicism of local politicians chasing votes with half-truths; educate communities about the way planning really works. Genuinely meeting our housing needs – affordability, quality, sustainability and quantity – needs wider housing and land market reform, but spatial planning is part of the solution. We need the right homes in the right places – as planners try to achieve through local plans – and will continue to as our needs and circumstances change.

Planners and architects love to complain about each other, but at heart both want the same thing – to leave a legacy of wonderful places. We may disagree on what makes a great place – on style or density or mix – but we can't have those debates without a framework within which decisions can be made and followed through. It's time to recognise that we need planners and planning, and to work with them rather than blaming them for failures that are all too often down to their political masters. As we approach another year in which national political uncertainty will provide an excuse for local prevarication, architects should be louder than ever in backing long-term planning for the public good. ●

RIBA AWARDS 2023

"Winning a RIBA Award has helped tangibly with the team, office morale and the appreciation that their work really matters. Beyond this, we are seeing that our profile is certainly heightened as the RIBA Awards are very well followed throughout the architectural and construction community."

David Tigg, Director at Tigg + Coll Architects

Image: House for Theo and Oskar by Tigg + Coll Architects. © Andy Matthews.

Entries open 1 November 2022 and close 12 January 2023, 5pm (GMT)

Visit architecture.com/awards

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People pleasers

With a distinctly people-oriented flavour, this month's round-up of planning approvals emphasise community, leisure and landscape schemes around the country

Conservation & heritage | Places, planning & community | Architecture for social purpose

The Commonwealth Games may have finished, but TODD Architects is celebrating a win in Birmingham with a new hotel and entertainments space in a huge at-risk renovation project. Meanwhile, HOK Architects, Buckley Gray Yeoman, and Hawkins\Brown all gain consent for different approaches to community focused housing, GT3 Architects embeds the landscape with physical activity, and in York Feilden Fowles gets permissions for a destination for rail enthusiasts.

DEVONSHIRE GROVE, CAMBRIDGE

Total site area: 12.3ha
Client: Railpen and Socius
Architect: Buckley Gray Yeoman
Landscape architect: LDA Design
Planning authority: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
Planning ref: 22/01982/FUL

Cambridge is set to welcome another ground-breaking housing scheme following Buckley Gray Yeoman's win for a new neighbourhood focused on wellbeing. With landscape central to its design, landscape architect LDA is working on a scheme of over 120 new trees and a community food garden that take up 50% of the site.

The remaining 50% comprises over 11,000m² of workspace aimed at SMEs and startups, 70 build-to-rent homes (20% at affordable rates), and a community space with a pavilion, creche, and open-plan studio. Devonshire Gardens is planned around active travel, with 539 bicycle spaces and only four electric car club and two disability car parking spaces. The project connects to the Chisholm Trail, which when complete will provide a 26km walking and cycling route from Trumpington to St Ives, mostly on a former railway line.

The eight blocks wrapping the central space are brick masses; the largest, sawtooth-roofed commercial block along the railway line acting as an acoustic buffer between the line and other buildings.

SOCIAL HOUSING AND HEALTH CENTRE, HAVERING

Total site area: 0.39ha
Client: London Borough of Havering Housing Services
Architect: Hawkins\Brown
Landscape architect: B|D
Planning authority: London Borough of Havering
Planning ref: P0461.22

A central courtyard in this scheme offers security for resident families and protects the children's play space from three roads that edge the site. Three storeys of residential units occupy three sides of the site, above circulation, offices and community space. On the fourth side is a new health centre and two floors of housing.

As well as two wheelchair-accessible homes, a range of unit types offer various bed configurations as families require. In four location, units can be interconnected to house a family of up to eight.

The project incorporates communal and amenity spaces specifically considering the needs of the community. A visitor breakout room enables residents to meet visitors who, for safeguarding reasons, may not have access to residential levels, and a secure reception also offers a comfortable place for meetings or other uses.

RAILWAY MUSEUM, YORK

Total gross internal area: 3542m²
Client: National Railway Museum
Architect: Feilden Fowles
Planning authority: City of York Council
Planning ref: 21/02793/REMM

The National Railway Museum has been in York since 1975, subsequently growing in a somewhat disconnected fashion to accommodate its collection.

This scheme aims to bring some clarity and cohesion to the buildings scattered across its site. Located centrally between the existing buildings, the new Central Hall is a drum that will be the main arrival space for visitors. From here new paths will lead to existing collection spaces at ground level while inside, a balcony looks down into the hall and frames views out towards the city and historic railway landscape.

Either side of the orientation drum, two open-plan spaces connect through to the existing buildings. To the east will be the new café, a large open-plan room offering connections to the newly landscaped Museum Square outside and through to the Great Hall. To the west is a new 800m² Railway Futures Gallery, a space for changing displays.

Harm to the significance of the Central Hall is offset by retention of the main internal space without subdivision

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HUB, BEDWORTH

Gross internal area: 5587m²
Client: Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Architect: GT3 Architects
Landscape architect: Colour
Planning authority: Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Planning ref: 038702

A new swimming pool is the centre of a new sports space which will see the surrounding Miners' Welfare Park transformed into a space of exercise and activity. Project architect Matt McCreith says that GT3 approached the project 'more like a community building as opposed to being a leisure centre that is only sports focused'.

To do this, the architect sought to embed the hub into the park setting, creating an approachable building that feels 'part of the park landscape' rather than sitting on it. One element of this approach is to form the building of three masses, the central section having a transparent feel with entrances on both sides so it can be used as a route through the park even for those not stopping to use the hub. One of the other two blocks is clad in timber while the other has an aluminium cladding system referencing the town's ribbon weaving industry history.

The hub itself contains a 25m pool and smaller learning pool, as well as a sports hall and studio and fitness spaces on the first floor. Most of the planning application, however, concentrates on the external elements, with a scheme designed alongside Colour landscape architects' plan for the 89,000m² site. This envisages an 'active landscape' incorporating: a green gym; cycling tracks for learners, racers, and boarders; a stage area for performances or fitness classes; a football pitch and various other play and active uses which are designed into the topology of the site. Paths will run throughout, including a 1km loop designated for running and cycling which also forms part of the Mega Loop, a perimeter path for those counting their daily steps.

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT, CENTRAL METHODIST HALL, BIRMINGHAM

Gross internal area: 12,185m²
Client: Press Up and Oakmount
Architect: TODD Architects
Planning authority: Birmingham City Council
Planning ref: 2022/02598/PA

Coinciding with the Commonwealth Games is an arts festival with a free exhibition in Birmingham Museum which documents The Que, a much-loved music venue in the city that was added to the At Risk Register in 2017.

TODD Architects' plans give the building a 150-bed hotel, bars and restaurants and, continuing its cultural legacy, a 1,500 seat 'luscious' event space. The richly decorated terracotta facades will be restored and a three-storey stepping-back extension, occupied by the hotel, will replace the existing roof. The rescue of at-risk buildings of such scale inevitably involves compromises, and the council conservation department recognises that replacing the curved roof with the hotel extension causes a degree of harm to the significance of the Central Hall. It notes, however, that the loss is offset by the retention of the main internal space without subdivision and with a planned programme of use. Historic England, Birmingham Civic Society and the Victorian Society have backed the proposals.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING, EALING

Total site area: 6,132m²
Client: Broadway Living and The Diocese of Westminster
Architect: HOK Architects
Planning authority: Ealing Council
Planning ref: 220545FULR3

A site comprising two parcels of land owned by Ealing Council divided by a larger plot owned by the Diocese of Westminster is set to become housing. A land swap between the two parties has made the plot viable, with land that the council was renting to an adjoining school falling into ownership of the Diocese in return for land to the east, currently occupied by school classrooms, becoming council owned. As the school is reducing its capacity it does not require all its classrooms, meaning that 92 affordable homes, delivered through Ealing's wholly-owned housing company Broadway Living, will be able to fill the site.

Bicycle parking and space for 28 cars is at the centre of the site, enclosed by two mansion blocks and a row of mews houses and covered by a 600m² 'play deck' that provides a secure space for children. Of the residential units, 84 will be at London Affordable Rent with eight available through shared ownership, with a mix of occupation levels from one bed flats to four bed houses. The blocks are buff brick, with the architect deploying a range of techniques and bonds to add variety and texture. Balconies work to the 3.6m modular grid the whole project is designed to.

HOK has landscaped a new public park to the north of the site, connecting visually into the greenbelt. It plugs into the broader Healthy Streets approach of the scheme with outdoor gym furniture and exercise areas with a 'low budget approach' to an urban garden. This retains existing tarmac and leverages existing site conditions, low maintenance grasses and perennials in planters across the space with taller grasses and bushes planted at the site's boundaries. ●

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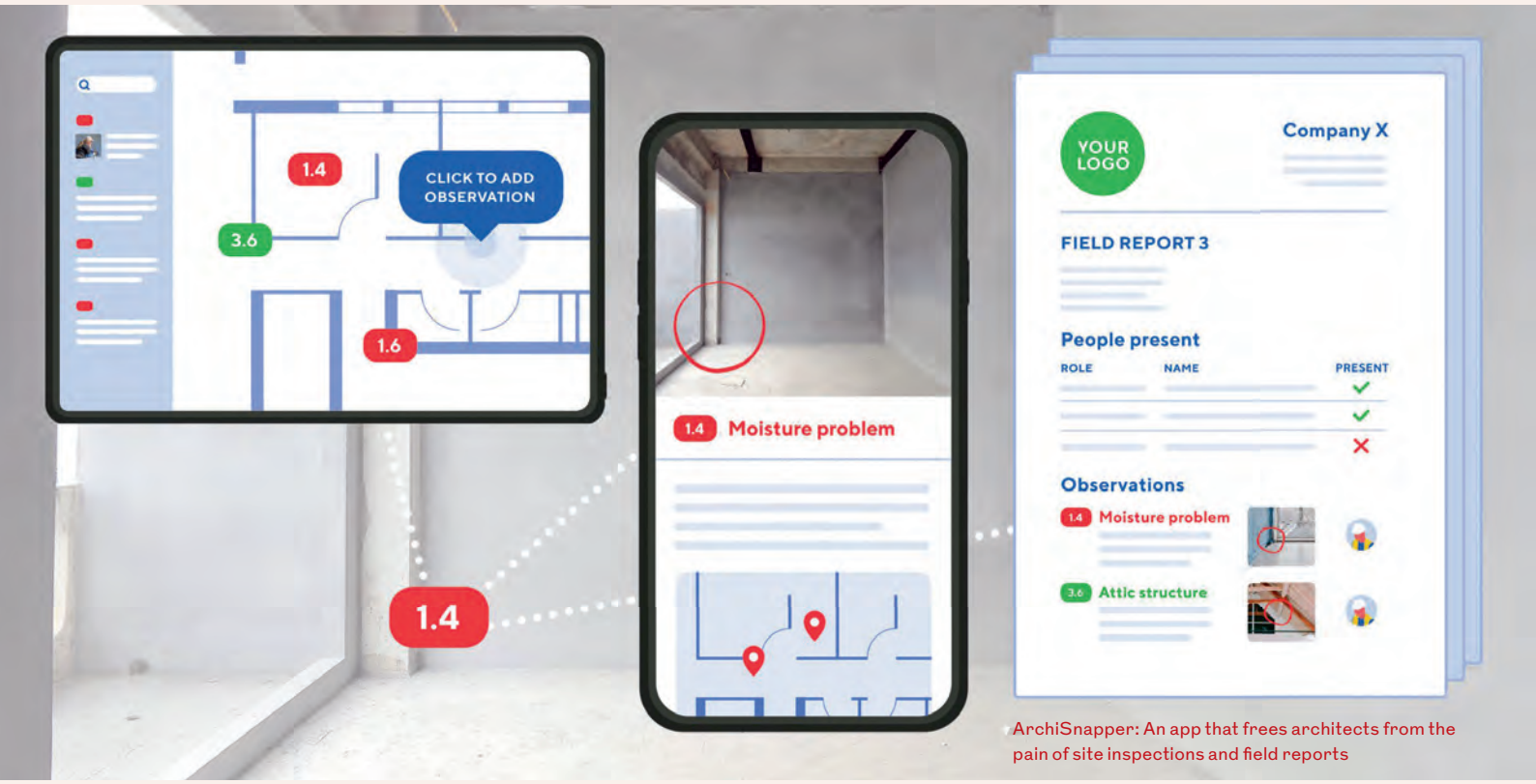
ArchiSnapper: the #1 app for site inspection reports for architects

Digitising site inspection reports has been a game-changer for architects by saving them hours of write up time once they get back in the office. And in today's environment of tightening time and budget demands, Deltek has found clients treating that advance as critical to their workflows

Deltek + ArchiSnapper



ArchiSnapper: An app that frees architects from the pain of site inspections and field reports

Drafting site inspection reports is a time-consuming activity for architects.

First, on the site inspection, they must write notes on paper, annotate printed floor plans, and take photos. Back in the office there's transferring the photos to the PC, annotating them and floor plans, deciphering and writing out the handwritten notes, struggling with the layout in Word... Over and over again.

It's an administrative hassle that easily takes multiple hours per site report.

Enter smartphones and tablets

In 2012 a small team Belgian software development team started working on a mobile solution to this pain point.

The first iPad with a camera had been released to the market a year earlier; the time was right to develop a mobile solution for site inspection reports.

The first version of ArchiSnapper was released on April 1, 2013.

Using a smartphone or tablet to document data while on site, the report is essentially ready when you leave.

ArchiSnapper users say the app saves them at least an hour per site report, and so several hours per week.

They can now spend that time on useful project work, streamlining processes or bringing in new clients. They can stop working earlier to pick up the children from school, for an extra workout, or to meet family and friends.

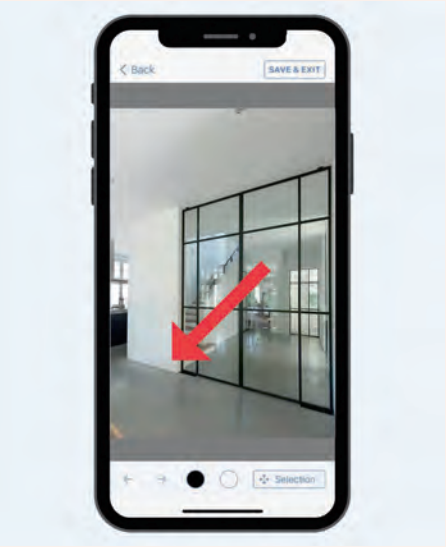
'ArchiSnapper reduces the amount of time for our site observation reports by about 50%,' says Dan Sigler, business technology manager at Jordan & Skala Engineers. 'All the administrative and busy work we used to do is now handled automatically with ArchiSnapper. It lets us focus on the site visit – observing the site, documenting what's going on – instead of worrying about managing images, organising them in the right folders and inserting them into a report.'

Today ArchiSnapper is part of Deltek – the leading global provider of software and solutions for project-based businesses.

The product is used by more than 10,000 architects worldwide to save hours of time with their site inspection reports.

Above Locate items on floor plans

Below Use ArchiSnapper to snap and annotate photos on-site



Below Generate branded PDF reports

Companies such as Allies and Morrison, CallisonRTKL, Ramboll and Sweco are using the product to save time and to work in a more digital, standardised and streamlined way.

As the reviews on Capterrra or Google demonstrate, architects really love this product, because they can tell that it was purpose built for them and for their specific workflows and requirements.

You can check out a sample field report at bit.ly/3RvSQ58.

Further digitisation of site management for architects

Over the years, the ArchiSnapper team started to automate other aspects related to site management for architects too.

For example, it is now possible to collaborate with contacts that are assigned to pending items, so they can give feedback on these specifics and submit them for approval when solved. This way, all communication is centralised in one place rather than spread over different channels such as WhatsApp, email, and phone calls which is inefficient and can cause information to fall through the cracks.

You can also draft and share a Gantt plan, so that everyone involved in the project gets an accurate and up to date view on the planning along with the site inspection report.

Other available functionalities include the option to request documents from third parties so they can upload them for review and approval, showing project locations on a map, and performing inspections based on checklists.

The most important feature of the product, however, will always be simplicity. By keeping the focus on simplicity and ease of use, the product is very straightforward for architects to get started with.

And ArchiSnapper doesn't require hours of training to get started either. ●

Are you interested in giving Archisnapper a try for your next site report? Try it for free for 14 days. Do you have questions or would like to get a demonstration of the product? The ArchiSnapper team is happy to help. Send your question to support@archisnapper.com

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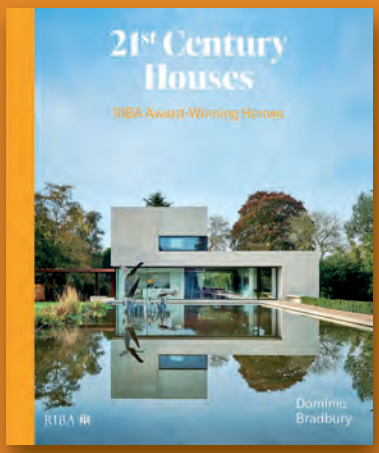

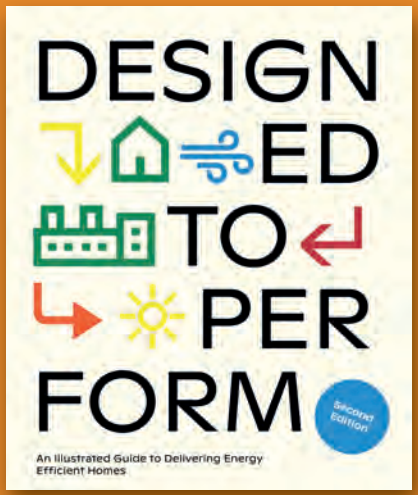

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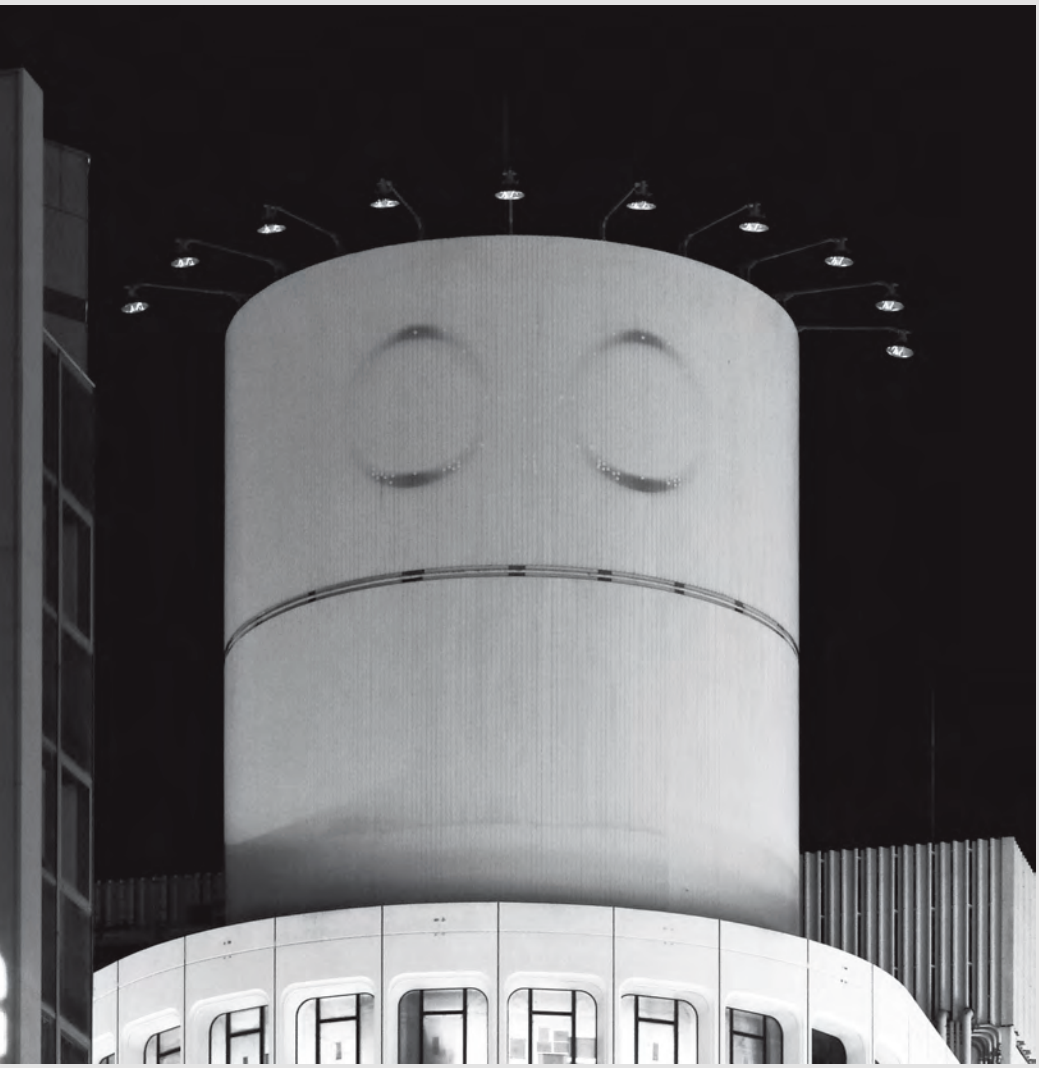

Francois Blanciak
Jinnan 1-21
Tokyo, 2015
Nikon Coolpix P610
Tokyoids: The Robotic Face of Architecture by François Blanciak. MIT Press 2022

'Tokyoids', by National University of Singapore associate professor Francois Blanciak, on the face of it presents itself as a picture book of Tokyo buildings that happen to look like robots, but its essays run to more philosophical levels. The architect spent seven years living and studying in the city, fascinated by the gradual recalibration of his sense of urban beauty – which, until then, had been set by growing up in Auxerre's medieval beauty.

Perhaps it was his year spent a decade earlier at Frank Gehry's LA office, negotiating its complex CATIA software, that triggered Blanciak's fascination with the digitisation of architecture; while the book's images focus on robot architecture in the most literal way, the text draws out his thesis that 'robot aesthetics manifested in architectural theory long before the birth of robotics as a modern science'.

References span millennia, from Vitruvius to the 13th century 'scale books' of Villard de Honnecourt and on to Descartes, who inspired French artist/architect and physiognomist Charles LeBrun. He attempted to codify all human emotions by applying a grid to the face to 'standardise' expressions of grief, anger or joy as little more than a collusion of Cartesian lines.

Curiously, Blanciak returns to Gehry and his post-modern forays into anthropomorphism, but not before giving due credit to Jean-Jacques Lequeu, oft-lost in the shadow of Boullée and Ledoux, whose eccentric 'Architecture parlante', he argues, is the genesis of modernism.

With each chapter named after an emotion, this image appears in 'Wrath': a building as 'angry bot' – or perhaps just Lequeu's glaring omission from the architectural canon.

Jan-Carlos Kucharek

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The frameless insulated sliding doors by Swiss manufacturer Sky-Frame blend naturally into their surroundings, creating a seamless continuity between indoors and outdoors and blurring the line between where the living space ends and the view begins. SKY-FRAME.COM
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'How can architects embed these events, this community life, into their process and designs?'

Made for sharing

Shared space is a key ingredient to make cohesive communities, and architects are perfectly positioned to help put it in place, says Eleanor Young

You have probably spotted the orange plastic of Halloween tat at your local supermarket; in Poundland you are tripping over it. I don't know how it is in your area. Is it pumpkins in the windows and families with jaunty witches hats on tiny children, chatting to neighbours as they share sweets? Or is it lock your doors and turn your lights off as hollow-eyed kids in masks take over the streets with a fearful energy?

We are used to city centres being used for protests. But other streets and other backdrops tend to lead a more regular life with a daily ebb and flow of cars, vans buses, and – if you are lucky – people. I remember when the Olympic torch came by our flat and we hefted the kids onto our shoulders to get a view over the press of the crowd. Some of you may have gathered at the edge of your piece of Scotland to wave past the cortege of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth en route to Edinburgh.

There are few opportunities for truly local gatherings, although they do so much to reinforce and give depth to community ties, combatting the famous loneliness epidemic that was with us even before Covid 19. They feel like part of history: village fairs, street parties, morris men. There are special days still – some villages in the Cotswolds welcome local morris dancers into gardens in turn. Carnivals in my childhood home town meant a float for every local group from singers to playgroups and young farmers – giving a great chance to show off or just to spot the people you knew, in ridiculous costume.

We still have the imprint of these activities in built form, market streets, squares which are now more traffic junctions and car parks – yet when the occasion calls they can double as something a little more interesting. Advocates of meanwhile space understand the importance of a happening, something that takes community effort and working alongside one another, that endows a place with a sense of itself.

As new housing estates, urban and village extensions balloon from more established centres, how can architects embed these events, this community life, into their process and designs? Can local consultations also be places of friendly exchange? Can the opening ceremony include neighbours as well as dignitaries? Can a landscape of sustainable drainage systems find place for a gathering space, without a road closure for a street party (a bureaucratic headache when it came to this year's Jubilee celebrations). Are there places to pause and chat away from the traffic? Could there be community storage for a canopy and trestle tables? Is there a bench to sit and check your raffle tickets? Can semi-private spaces shared between neighbours give locals the permission to use them together?

Privatisation of space has been seen as the ghoul at the feast in developments like King's Cross and Liverpool One. But even in scarce publicly-owned spaces in residential streets, explicit permission is needed to make space communal. Architects can serve an important role in that; giving streets a chance to be active communities.

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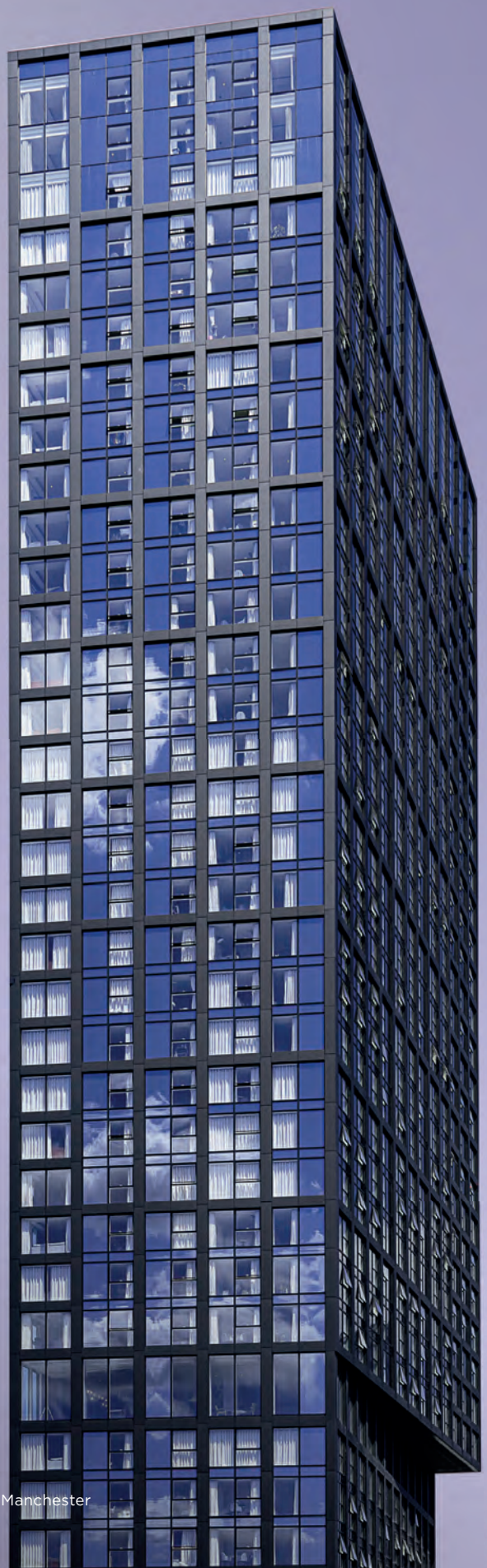
The Queen unveiled the central clock tower... and on the same day visited her first public house, the Pied Piper

The Queen's reign through eight buildings: ribaj.com/queen-elizabeth-ii

STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH PHOTO: HOMER SYKES/ALAMY

Left We need more of this in our streets.



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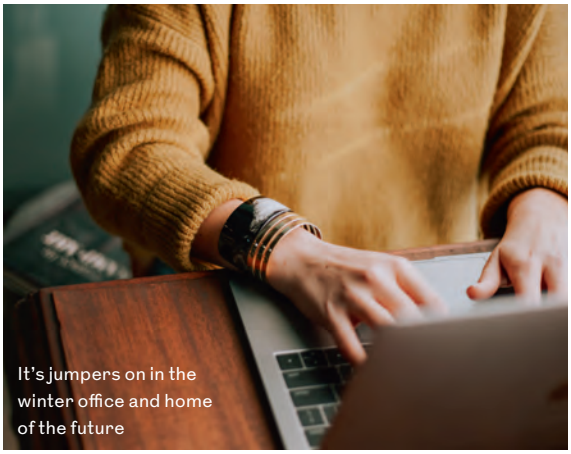
Live wisely, design better

Energy price hikes have made climate change personal. As we muffle up, design is even more important, says Simon Allford

COP27 is next month. The RIBA will be there as it will be an important event. The construction industry as a whole will continue to champion the vital need for better standards and regulations to help drive change. But of course no-one can sit by waiting for Godot!

The war in Ukraine, serious inflation and the dramatic increase in domestic energy bills means everyone is facing the financial as well as environmental costs of a fossil fuel reliant world. What can those of us working in the design and operation of the built environment do to mitigate it – and perhaps point the way to a longer term solution? Domestic air and/or ground source heat pumps involve capital outlay and logistical challenges beyond most households, especially in the short term. So what are the short term fixes for households, places of learning and indeed of work?

Crude as it may sound, there needs to be a recalibration of what we consider comfortable conditions. This will not deal with fuel poverty, but makes good sense in terms of personal health and energy resources; whatever the source, careful husbandry is critical. Inhabited environments are kept at much higher temperatures than they were even 30 years ago, which has had a significant impact on air quality, particularly as carpets can nurture domestic pollutants. So, what does sensible look like? In areas of dense occupation – such as classrooms and places of work – increasing air changes per hour since Covid makes sense so long as we are not heating and then expelling that air. For there is a very real tension between natural ventilation and temperature comfort – between say Passive House and natural ventilation – and indeed ideas of air changes and air quality. This is a subject we need to interrogate.



It's jumpers on in the winter office and home of the future

STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH PHOTO: CHRISTINE HULME, UNSPLASH

In recent working and learning projects – where surplus heat is often the problem – we have been encouraging clients to accept higher and broader temperature ranges. This involves an acceptance of different levels of comfort and a change in attitudes to clothing – returning to very different winter and summer wardrobes and relaxing the idea of 'uniforms', both formal as at school or perceived as at work. This fits with the post-pandemic increase in hybrid working. In an optimistic world of incremental improvements it can also be made to work with wellness initiatives and encouraging a more active lifestyles. And regarding hybrid working: if you are working in two or more places at a very flexible (and so variable) pattern, you need to heat and service them all – which is inherently energy inefficient.

But fuel poverty will have the greatest impact in homes. Aside from longer-term plans to increase insulation, use green energy, improve the efficiency of heat sources and any financial assistance from government, we need instant design action. For now, that looks like a return to Banham's idea of a well-tempered environment. But instead of taking the futuristic forms of François Dallegret's images of a transparent world of a bearded man in shorts well stocked (pre wi-fi) with hi-fi, consider another great draughtsman, Osbert Lancaster and his 'Homes Sweet Homes'. His world is the domestic reality in which so many of us live. Banham resided a flat in an outdated Victorian building, where winter comfort relies on appropriate clothing and bedding and currently unfashionable curtains. Unfortunately, architecture will not be able to help much this winter. But we need to use its harsh lessons to make sure this crisis has a positive influence on our thinking and on our clients'. The future requires an integrated design response at every level – from fabric to form! ●

TUNE IN TO HEAR THE 2022 STIRLING PRIZE WINNER REVEALED

RIBA will broadcast a special 30 minute show live from this year's Stirling Prize celebration. Hosted by one of architecture's rising stars, Hamza Shaikh, it will feature live interviews as well the reveal of the UK's best new building. Look out for the streaming link and tune in!

At His Majesty's service: Sarah Allan outside St John's Smith Square, just east of the Home Office.

It's been a politically turbulent year for Sarah Allan, head of architecture at the Planning Directorate. But as the new government takes over, two big themes dominate her time – levelling up and design codes

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Portrait: Agnese Sanvito

Balancing act

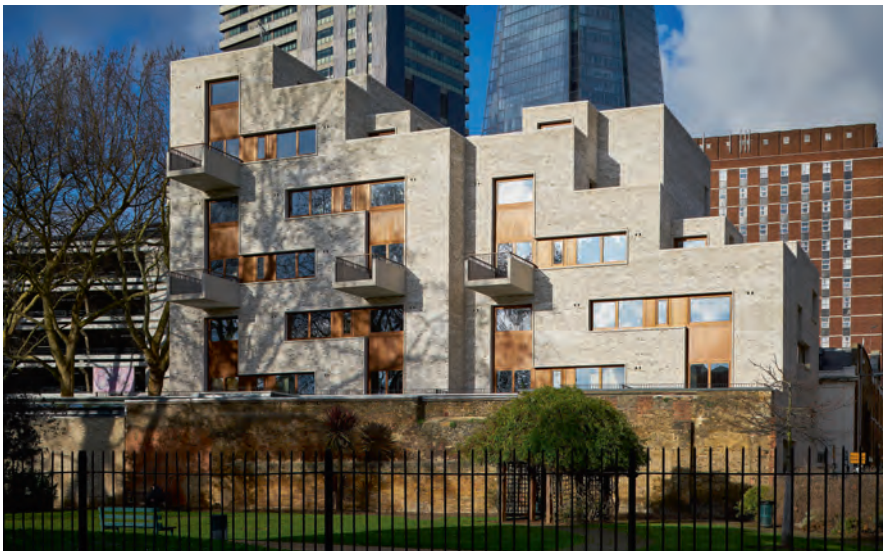
Just after Liz Truss announced her new cabinet, Sarah Allan must have been wondering what was in store. For not even a year into her role as head of architecture at the Planning Directorate, two days after Simon Clarke became secretary of state at Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and two months after her last boss Michael Gove was sacked by an outgoing Boris Johnson, it must have felt like the revolving doors at the Home Office.

But sitting at a café banquette, Allan, demure and un-power-dressed, seems as unphased as any civil servant should be. A youthful 52, with more than 25 years' working as an architect, urban designer and project manager in both public and private sector, Allan made no assumptions about what the job would involve. 'I didn't want to pre-empt it – so much is happening in the world outside my day job that it's just been a fascinating insight to how civil servants have to manage flux and change,' she tells me. But despite my pressing, she is very clear about the non-partiality of the role, stating from the get-go that: 'It's ministers who make policy decisions and we provide them with advice', before dropping in: 'But it's not just a different organisational structure – it's like entering a different universe'.

Succeeding former PRP boss Andy von Bradsky, Allan answers to chief planner Joanna Averley. Her role is partly to implement the National Model Design Code (NMDC) and National Design Guide (NDG) that von Bradsky drew up before he left, but also in the mix are the policies in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB), which attempts not just to address the disparities between the north and the south, but countrywide within cities themselves.

So, what prepares an architect to help spearhead such ambitious governmental policy? Training at Kingston and then the Bartlett, she completed her diploma in 1995 and worked at a number of small practices – not least FAT – before enrolling for a Masters in the London School of Economics' Cities programme in 2001. And while acknowledging the Bartlett's role in developing acuity in wider problem-solving, it was, she thinks, the cities programme that best prepared her for this role. 'The course gave us a lot to think about – socio-economic drivers, that geography matters and the broader influences that shape places,' notes Allan. 'In short, why some places succeed and others don't and how you might possibly change that.' The education certainly set her up for her next job as a CABE Enabler in 2003, where she met Averley – staying until just before David Cameron's decimating Bonfire of the Quangos in 2011.

Below AHMM's Weston Street, a development that Allan project managed, developed Solidspace's fascination for split-level living.



TIMOTHY SOAR

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Allan's next role, from 2012, as a project manager at East Hampshire District Council, allowed her to put into practice all the work she had done supporting clients while at CABE. Here, delivering 'early win' housing projects and developing aspects of the masterplan for Whitehill & Bordon eco-town, a regeneration project on former MoD land, exposed her to the political side of local government and the complex needs of communities affected by development. The job was, she says, aided by the 'eco-town' appellation, meaning that while there was a strong environmental case to bring to the community, it was fed too by her own optimism. 'Some people were understandably resistant to change but I always felt sure that if we picked the right design team, tested proposals and engaged them in the right way, we could overcome that.'

Then there were the nine Solidspace years, of which Allan speaks with most affection. The six-strong developer, headed by Roger Zogolovitch, was a far cry from the office of 2000 that she finds herself in now; but as a self-funded family business it allowed them to experiment in ways unthinkable for most developers. 'It makes me smile to think how besotted we all were with split level,' Allan recalls, 'but it created complex, sophisticated home layouts at a time when there wasn't either much experimentation or craftsmanship'. Its apotheosis, she says, was the housing with AHMM in Southwark, which she delivered: 'All Solidspace projects felt in some way like pilots, but Weston Street got the proportions right and residents really love living there,' she adds.

In her current role you sense that her skills in experimentation and surprise aren't needed but that her project management skills are, involved as she is with the NMDC roll-out. The Planning Directorate is supporting 25 'Pathfinders', formed of 21 local authorities in Devon 'from Darlington to Teignbridge' and four neighbourhood planning groups, to deliver design codes. The NMDC sets out the process and detailed guidance to help local authorities and communities prepare them and agree local standards. And in the way that Allan was given a boon by user feedback at Weston St, she's glad community groups are part of this: 'It's great to have them involved with central government at this stage. They'll bolster guidance and ambition in the nascent design codes.'

In allocating funding to help develop the codes, whether for design coherence, reduced car use or net zero ambitions, it should be seeing those Pathfinders – and by extrapolation all local authorities – work towards them. She is aware how hard it's been for LAs, historically deprived of funding and access to skills (a RTPI report last month identified a 43% fall in LA funding in real terms for planning in the last decade), so she's procured a contract with the Design Council to provide support and review the codes as Pathfinders develop them. It's all part of an aim 'to share that learning with LAs when it's rolled out'.

SARAHALLAN

Above Unesco-listed Zollverein XII Coal Mine Industrial Complex outside Essen, part of the Emscher Landschaftspark – an inspiration for Allan's own ideals for regeneration.

And what of 'Building Better Building Beautiful'? The enigmatic 'Office for Place' has yet to transpire and the advisory board, chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith, still sits within the directorate like a sleeper cell, although it has input on the design code Pathfinders. Asked for her view on its aesthetic values, Allan recalls the resistance she felt at Whitehill & Bordon. 'There are clearly aspects of traditional homes that people resonate with, be it proportions or materiality, but we need to talk about design in terms of things outside our control – hot summers or the increased flooding risk for instance – and these point to building our homes differently to how they were built 200 years ago.' And this, she feels, feeds into a bigger discussion about design. 'When I worked on the eco-town I saw first-hand how people do care about how their streets work, and if there's over-congested parking outside your home, why that might be and how you might deal with it. I'd like to think people are open to engaging in conversations not just about what things look like but how places actually work.' Allan connects place not just with locality but wider geography, economy and infrastructure, arguing that 'you can't just silo issues'.

The aim, she explains, is that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will give clarity to communities as local plans will be simplified and the introduction of Supplementary Plans will give more weight to local design codes – 'bringing a concise, clearly defined and graphic element to how your neighbourhood might change in the

future.' Quizzed about how she reconciles design quality and engagement with the political will just to simplify the planning system to speed it up, she pauses briefly. 'It's difficult as the planning process can at times feel like a war of attrition with everyone taking a position. But having clear principles at the outset about where development should or shouldn't happen, or how the streets and public realm should be designed, works in the interest of developer, community and local authority.' She adds that the Planning Directorate's digital team is also looking into future changes 'not just to application validation but facilitating digital engagement with communities on local plans' adding an element of soft power to the process too.

Allan steers away from any comment on the cladding scandal as a 'Safer Buildings Division' matter, but given that 'resources' is one of the National Design Guide's 10 principles, and that Caroline Flint, chair of the advisory Committee on Fuel Poverty, has charged government in light of the energy crisis to come up with a strategy on the matter, retrofit is hard to dodge – even if it does ostensibly sit with Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). 'Its complex,' muses Allan again, 'but doing it house by house isn't the solution – I see it as more about neighbourhood scale retrofit. South Bank University worked with Lambeth Council to look into how you might activate supply chains to promote retrofit and maybe there's scope in that for a national strategy'. Allan stares at me silently when asked about whether she thinks we'll hit the 2050 zero carbon targets as things stand.

Below Allan in St John's Gardens, a stone's throw from DLUHC's Millbank HQ.

AGNESE SANVITO

As for the levelling up agenda, she admits that being able to deliver to areas that need the jobs, housing and facilities that they haven't had so far remains a challenge, especially where housing economics make it hard for private developers to turn a profit. She sees a couple of ways to address the conundrum; in part by giving control to LAs to work together as combined authorities to think more strategically about places, but also in the development arms of LAs, unhampered by LA politics but with the skilled teams needed for faster and better quality housing delivery. She cites Barking & Dagenham's development arm 'Be First' as one of the design code Pathfinders, 'working on a retrofit project in Becontree to see how they can create design consistency among individual owners when extending or upgrading the performance of their homes.'

There's no escaping the scale of the levelling up task. Allan refers to the Olympic Park's Chobham Manor Quarter as a success story with the caveat that it is due only to the billions pumped into it and its location in the prime London market. So what projects inspire her to think real levelling up can be delivered? For that, she returns to a fact finding tour during her CABE days to Germany's Emscher Landschaftspark in the Ruhr, revitalising a string of cities along a river 'so polluted the EU wouldn't even let it be called a river.' An International Bauaustellung (IBA) project carried out at regional scale, it was, she explains, a great example of an initiative testing different types of development and building models. 'The IBA brought together all those city mayors to agree core policies that each would adopt using architecture – and art – to enact change.' Initially delivered as a 10-year programme, its success was bound into an overarching concept for the region. 'Those delivering it stayed there for two decades; and that, for me, was the most important lesson. It needed those drivers of change in place and commitment to the vision, building long-term relationships with the municipalities to see it through'.

In her context, such commitment may prove a tough call. For while Allan might appreciate the need for a long-term view – and the Civil Service she works in was founded on that very precept – government tends to see the world through four-year long lenses. The planning system needs yet to address economic polarities, housing need and net zero challenges, and Allan will be aiming to ensure levelling up doesn't mean watering down.

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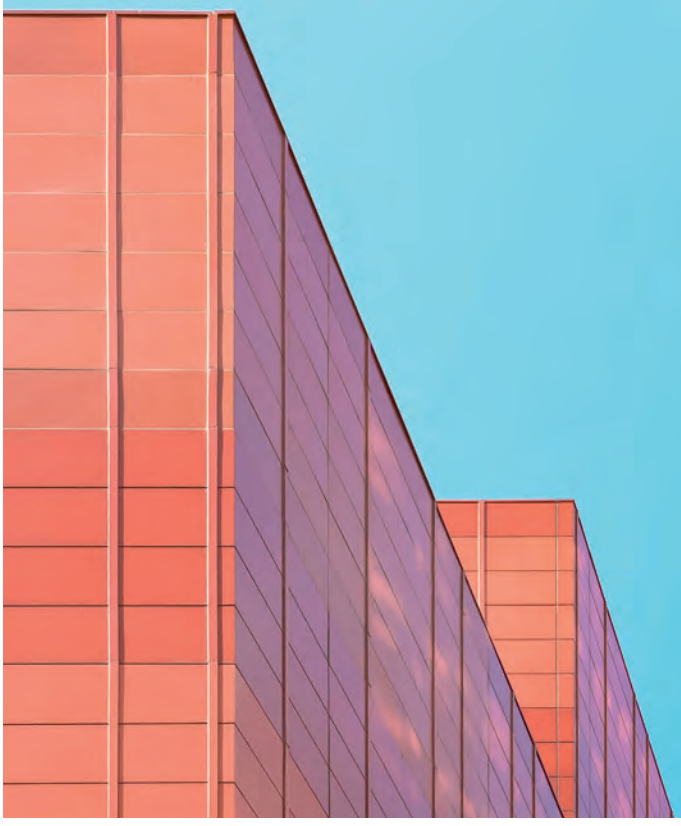

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Every building tells a love story

Aline Saarinen was the first architectural publicist and made Eero's work a household name. Stephen Parnell enjoys a new book examining their partnership and the power of the press

ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Above Photograph of Eero and Aline Saarinen on holiday, from the papers in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

I started writing about architecture 15 years ago to help fund my PhD research into architectural magazines. When I saw my name in print above my first article, I was embarrassed that I was working out what I thought in public, but excited to think I was contributing to 'the discourse'. I've since learned about how this discourse is constructed and how it constructs architecture – things that aren't taught in school and are misunderstood in practice. The press has a significant role to play in this construction, a role that remains undiscussed and unstudied.

On 13 April 1928, 14-year-old Aline Bernstein wrote in her diary, 'Before you begin something – think of its beginning, its middle, its end, and its consequences, then if you are willing, do it'. Like many teenage girls over the years, Aline was privately documenting her crushes and the letters she wrote to and received from her beaux du jour. This unremarkable document shows how she seemed to find her self-worth through what boys thought of her, but also how she was working out her thoughts and feelings through practising prose and poetry. So far, so normal.

WAYNE ANDREWS/ESTO; EERO AND ALINE SAARINEN PAPERS, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Left Gateway Arch, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial at St Louis, Missouri, designed by Eero Saarinen and photographed under construction in the late 1960s.

Fast forward to 1953 and Aline (then) Louchheim, a well-respected art critic for the New York Times, wrote The Case History of a Romance to architect Eero Saarinen, a racy birthday card in which she explicitly documented their brief romantic liaisons. Louchheim was divorced with two children and engaged to Edgar Kaufmann Jr. Saarinen also had two children with the sculptor Lily Swann but was trying to end this marriage as it no longer suited his ambitions. Aline and Eero were married the following year and Aline became head of information services at Saarinen & Associates, 'the first architectural publicist'.

When Eero Met His Match is the story of Aline and Eero's personal and professional relationship and the rise of architectural publicity. It is a fascinating behind-the-scenes exposé of the relationship between architectural practice and

EERO AND ALINE SAARINEN PAPERS, 1906-1977, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Above Aline B Louchheim in the back of a car.

the media which exploded after the war and continues to form the basis of how architecture works today. It's also about fame, ambition, insecurity, love and lust (it would make a terrific movie). The author, Eva Hagberg, claims she wanted to 'pull back the curtain' for 'everyone to see that sometimes people became famous because someone handled them really well, that there was no real relationship between merit and fame'. After all, Eero was not as good an architect as he thought he was or thought he needed to be to enter the architectural pantheon. Critics tended to agree that he was more a building stylist.

Architectural histories usually focus on how architecture represents the grand narratives of social, cultural, political and economic forces, overlooking the specific everyday forces that contribute to a building's realisation. But architecture, like history, is made by everyday people living everyday lives who have everyday feelings and desires – including ambition, falling in and out of love, and finding one's self-worth. These micro-forces of the inner self can motivate people to move mountains, as Hagberg notes: 'So much of what happens in the world happens because of love'.

My own research into Architectural Design magazine looked at the editors' lives to ask how architects were selected to be 'given ink'. I have written about the personal and professional entanglements of Monica Pidgeon, AD's editor in the post-war years (and a love junkie like Aline), and about the life of her technical editor Theo Crosby and the brutalist house he built for love.

When Eero Met His Match: Aline Louchheim Saarinen and the Making of an Architect
Eva Hagberg
Princeton University Press, £25.00, 232pp,HB

Eero committed his life to architecture to prove himself worthy of the love of his famous architect father, Eliel Saarinen. While his wife and children inconveniently obstructed this commitment to work, Aline promised that 'as long as it is architecture who is your best girl, I'm quite content to be second-best'. She was beautiful and besotted, glamorous and connected, independent and intelligent, gave his buildings meaning through stories, and could get him on the cover of Time magazine. Eero established his own identity on winning the St Louis arch competition in 1948 but his most famous building is the TWA Terminal, now a hotel at JFK airport. Hagberg shows how Aline invented the bird metaphor with which this building has become synonymous. It's the beginning of the icon.

Hagberg was a publicist herself while doing her own PhD – on which this book is based. Her emotional sensitivity and insight into how architecture works add depth and credibility to her interpretations of Aline and Eero's professional relationship. Her anger at the sexism in the world underwrites the analysis, which can sometimes become a little laboured. But it is refreshing how the chapters alternate between her autobiographical experiences representing architects in the USA and this historical narrative, exposing both Aline and Eero's relationship and the invention and mechanics of architectural publicity. It's compelling reading.

My own motivation to write architectural history resonates with Hagberg's. 'It's crucial for historians to understand how the media and publication eco-system works', she explains, 'We've been taught to ignore personal lives.' Ultimately, it's our inner life that motivates us to do what we do: to discover our self-worth, our identity, our meaning, whether for fame, reputation, security, the greater good, or for love.

Eight years after they married, 51-year-old Eero died from a brain tumour. Many of the buildings we know him for remained unfinished: Aline saw to the legacy. But his son Eric's personal trauma persisted. He produced a film in 2016 in which he describes how he spent his entire life resenting his father for abandoning him 63 years earlier and only achieved closure through visiting the buildings for the film. I wonder if he read Aline's teenage diaries. ●

Stephen Parnell is an architectural writer and teacher at Newcastle University. His biography of Architectural Design magazine will be published by Harvard Design Press in 2024

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Design Review director at CABE, whose earlier work on the adaptation of the Royal Festival Hall in the 1990s transformed conservation guidance

Diane Haigh 1949 – 2022

Diane Haigh's impact on the development of her students and younger colleagues, on the integration of historical research and practical conservation and on the successful adaptation to contemporary conditions of historically significant buildings was profound. In the field of design review her influence was unequalled. Wherever she contributed, her relentless pursuit of excellence made for a better, more humane environment.

Born in Kendal, she studied at Cambridge and subsequently worked in research at the university's Martin Centre and in practice with her husband, William Fawcett. In the early 1980s, with two small children – Eleanor and Francis – they moved to Hong Kong, where she taught for three years. On return to Cambridge she led both undergraduate and postgraduate studios and was, for over 20 years, director of studies in architecture at Trinity Hall – hugely respected by both the college and the students.

She first came to wider notice in the mid 1990s for the restoration (with William) of five Arts and Crafts houses by Hugh Mackay Baillie Scott – about whom she wrote an outstanding book (Baillie Scott: the Artistic House) and curated an international exhibition.

As a director at Allies and Morrison from 1996, her intellectual rigour, design skill and ability in interdisciplinary collaboration were fundamental to the much-admired adaptation of the Queen's House at Greenwich (1635) and the Royal Festival Hall (1951). In the former, the intervention is so brilliantly executed that it is almost invisible. In the latter, an unloved auditorium gained a new life and the changes to the rest of the building, honouring its original form and restoring its detail, revitalised the site. English Heritage acknowledged that Di's work on these buildings transformed its guidance on conservation principles and influenced the National Planning Policy Framework.

In 2007, Di was appointed director of architecture and design review at CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), responsible for running review panels on significant projects across England. She expanded reviews to cover a wider range of buildings and ecotowns and launched the publication of Design Review: Principles and Practice. Under Di, rather than being swamped by its huge programme, CABE's design review process became both better defined and more transparent, inclusive and diverse – and perceptions of the organisation were transformed.

In 2011, following her return to Allies and Morrison as a consultant, she co-edited The Fabric of Place, an exploration of how places work and of what design can contribute to their evolution. Widely used as a primer on architecture and planning courses, it has run to two editions.

From 2014 onwards, Di was closely involved in Cambridge planning. As chair of the local Design and Conservation Panel, she led design review in the rapidly expanding city and played a significant role in the design development of Eddington, the university's new city quarter. At the time of her unexpected death, she was planning a new book and exhibition on Baillie Scott.

Over the years, her impaired mobility became increasingly apparent. But the respect in which she was so widely held was primarily on account of her many outstanding achievements. To this must be added admiration for her steely determination, generosity and extraordinary ability to engage with people. ●

Peter Carolin is an architect, editor and former head of architecture at Cambridge

IN MEMORIAM

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Peter Ensor Williams
ELECTED 1954, MIDHURST

Donald Meyer
ELECTED 1962, UPMINSTER

Abilio Anacleto Joseph Barros D'Sa
ELECTED 1976, LONDON

John Sidney Stanley
ELECTED 1978, TAUNTON

Anthony Charles Tomlin
ELECTED 1982, MAIDSTONE

Anthony Lynch
ELECTED 1980, LONDON

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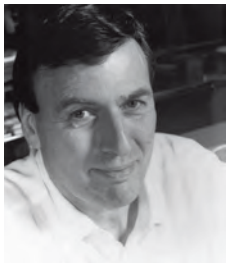
Outward looking RIBA president who was pivotal in creating the Stirling and Stephen Lawrence prizes, a creative designer and financial brain at RRP for 25 years



Marco Goldschmied 1944 – 2022

Marco Goldschmied was a great friend of architecture, whose eyes were always on the bigger picture. On becoming RIBA president in 1999, his mission was to transform the role from an inward-facing one concerned with looking after the profession, to an outward-looking one that set out to grab the public's attention.

When I started working at the RIBA in 1996, Marco, then chair of the Awards Group, led the small group that established The Stirling Prize. He saw the prize as the most eye-catching goody in architecture's shop window, yet was always aware of the risks of populism. 'The upside,' he once said, 'is that architecture has benefited; the downside is that we have moved out of the slightly cosy professional world into the wider world.' Where, of course, architecture always belonged.

One of the prize's most piquant moments came when sponsorship failed in 2009 and Marco stepped in with the cash. He was obliged to hand over the £20,000 cheque to his then-estranged business partner Richard Rogers, the winner for Maggie's Hammersmith. Pained smiles all round.

Born in England to an English mother and Italian father, Marco studied at the AA – where he later taught, as he did at Glasgow School of Art. He was a key part of the Piano & Rogers team that won the 1971 competition for the Pompidou Centre, and in 1977 was a founder partner of the Richard Rogers Partnership. He was later its managing director until his departure in 2004.

Every successful architectural practice needs a financial brain. Although a creative designer who had worked on the Lloyd's Building, Old Billingsgate and Channel 4, Marco designed little after becoming the firm's MD. Richard may have been the business getter but Marco made sure the client was happy and the bottom line protected.

His concern for the business of architecture extended to others too, and his last campaign was, typically, on behalf of smaller practices. He called for a new form of Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) that would protect architects from opportunistic claimants and hikes in premiums, wishing to replace it with a model based on a community of interest and mutual trust.

But Marco was always concerned that architecture should be about the betterment of society and not just the big projects his practice increasingly worked on. He befriended the family of Stephen Lawrence, the black teenager who had wanted to be an architect before he became the victim of a racial murder. Marco proposed and funded a prize as part of the RIBA Awards that would be given to the best small budget project of the year. He despised tokenism: the prize has always been about quality (and scale). And ever generous, ever thoughtful of architecture's future, he gave double the prize money to fund bursaries for less well-off students at the Architectural Association. He was also an early supporter of the London School of Architecture whose raison d'être was to establish a more diverse profession.

Marco married Andrea Halvorsen in 1969 and they had one daughter and four sons, Emma, Ben, Asa, Dan and Matthew – who followed his father into architecture. His quirky breadth of interests included 20th century European history, etymology and skiing, also working for Amnesty International and the Medical Foundation for the Care of the Victims of Torture.

Marco Goldschmied fought for quality in architecture, for it being a matter of collaboration and an international affair, and for the underdog. His final fight was with lung cancer – perhaps the only one this big, brave, funny man ever lost. ●

Tony Chapman is an architecture critic and former head of awards at RIBA

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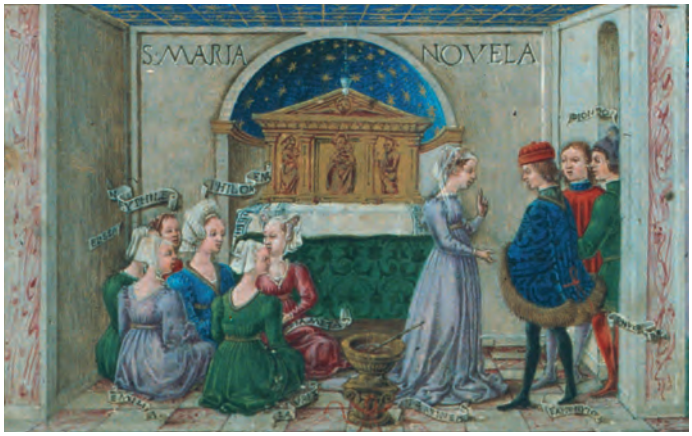

THE PICTURE ART COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Above The narrators of the Decameron. Bodleian Library, MS Holkham misc 49f 5r detail. Unknown illustrator c1467.

My first experience as a judge of the West Fraser SterlingOSB Zero/RIBAJ competition (now in its eighth year) was eye-opening, fun and informative. The entries were thought-provoking and creative, showcasing a variety of brilliant architectural minds. As the marketing manager at West Fraser (trading as Norbord), I work with a lively team of colleagues and agencies and we are always on the lookout for new ideas of how to talk to our customers – the architect being one group I wanted to know more about.

In the real world when an architect is designing a building that will stand for years and be inhabited by many, the considerations are various. It has to work, and products such as ours have to be on the radar (my job!)

The judging process gave me more of an idea of how to address the brilliant people who design our world. I am also stronger now in my technical knowledge and questioning, so am looking forward to working with our team and looking at how we can inspire architects.

I'd like to thank all of the judges for giving up their spare time and for their vast knowledge of the thinking and process that goes into building a structure. Mostly I'd like to thank the individuals and practices that entered for taking time out of busy schedules.

Timea Cooper, marketing manager, West Fraser UK

Produced by the RIBA Journal in association with West Fraser

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Doocots
Ella Walklate, Reini Celmins, Alexander Vile and Adam Spreckley

Escaping the turbulence of modern life

When Giovanni Boccaccio penned his Decameron in the mid 1300s, little did he realise that his work, in the centuries that followed, would go on to inspire many other masterpieces of European art and literature. His collection of short stories, told by 10 young people riding out the Black Death in a Tuscan retreat, has been interpreted in genres literary, musical and artistic by illustrious names ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer to Margaret Atwood via Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Botticelli and Rubens..

Now RIBA Journal and West Fraser have given literary-inclined architects the chance to aspire to similarly lofty heights in the seventh annual SterlingOSB Zero competition, The Retreat. Entrants were invited to respond architecturally to Boccaccio's prescient tale of avoiding the plague, by designing an escape for up to 10 people. Here, helped by their built surroundings, the protagonists could retreat from the turbulence of modern life.

In such a place, occupants would form meaningful connections – with each other and with the surrounding landscape – such that they too might be moved to create their own stories.

The main criterion was, of course, that the retreats must be constructed from SterlingOSB Zero board as their primary material, exploiting the material's properties as a lightweight, durable and sustainable option. Its applications range from structural, to surface finishing and even to construction hoardings. Realistic aspects of the material's properties and capabilities had to be respected, such as its need for adequate external weatherproofing, in order to fully explore and celebrate its potential.

Boccaccio's 10 fictional narrators delivered 100 nested tales, some romantic, some political and some tragi-comic. The competition entries were similarly varied in their responses, from the prosaic to the sublime. Perhaps inspired by the literary premise, or by the enforced seclusion of pandemic lockdowns, 'a lot of thinking went into the narratives behind the designs this year,' according to chair of the judges, RIBA Journal deputy editor Jan Carlos Kucharek. Entries such as Chris Simmons' long-listed Clearing were held securely in place by a strongly presented story.

Judge Stephen Proctor noticed that 'there was an interesting balance between urban and rural retreats', one example being Ella Walklate, Reini Celmins, Alexander Vile and Adam Spreckley's commended Doocots, set in Glasgow. The relative freedom of the competition criteria 'really gave people the scope to think about creating a retreat anywhere they liked – and they went with it,' said Kucharek.

Some of the entries responded with political critique (retreating from society's ills) others with romantic and poetic scenarios

Some of the entries responded with political critique (retreating from society's ills) others with romantic and poetic scenarios. Some were highly practical, others fantastical. David Russell Young's winning entry The Keep, for instance, envisaged a dystopian future where 10 people retreated to a medieval castle (forging an aptly chronological link with the era of the Decameron) in which they discover more recently historic SterlingOSB Zero additions from the current year 2022. Through these light-touch interventions sensitively inserted into the existing structure, the people were able to continue their own stories thanks to a thoughtful and implementable architecture.

Contrastingly, Rob Annable and Justin Pickard's fantastical Oriented Strand Grottoes evokes a watery fenland world of stalactites, mycelium balloons and weathering OSB structures, which leave behind a skeleton of floral and fungal life. Their romantic folly of sorts is a unique response to an often-overlooked property of OSB: its ability to decompose without environmental harm. 'It seems completely kooky but it is romantic in a very sublime way,' commented Kucharek.

'There was a looseness to the designs not seen in previous years,' he added. A fevered morning's debate between the judges – who also included Kristofer Adelaide, Debby Ray and Timea Cooper – resulted in a varied and highly intriguing selection. Just as Boccaccio's 10 fictional narrators formed a literary device framing the 100 stories, here SterlingOSB Zero propped up the fanciful imaginations of the competition winners.

Judges

Kristofer Robert Adelaide
architectural director,
Kristofer Adelaide Architecture

Timea Cooper
marketing manager, West Fraser UK

Stephen Proctor.
founding director, Proctor & Matthews Architects

Debby Ray
head of design,
Greenwich Peninsula, Knight Dragon

Jan-Carlos Kucharek.
deputy editor, RIBA Journal (chair)

First place (£2,500 prize) The Keep

David Russell Young

In a post-apocalyptic future, nine townsfolk retreat to Scotland's west coast. There, within the walls of a historic keep, they encounter a series of modular SterlingOSB Zero structures dating from the historic year 2022, nestled amongst the corbelled turrets.

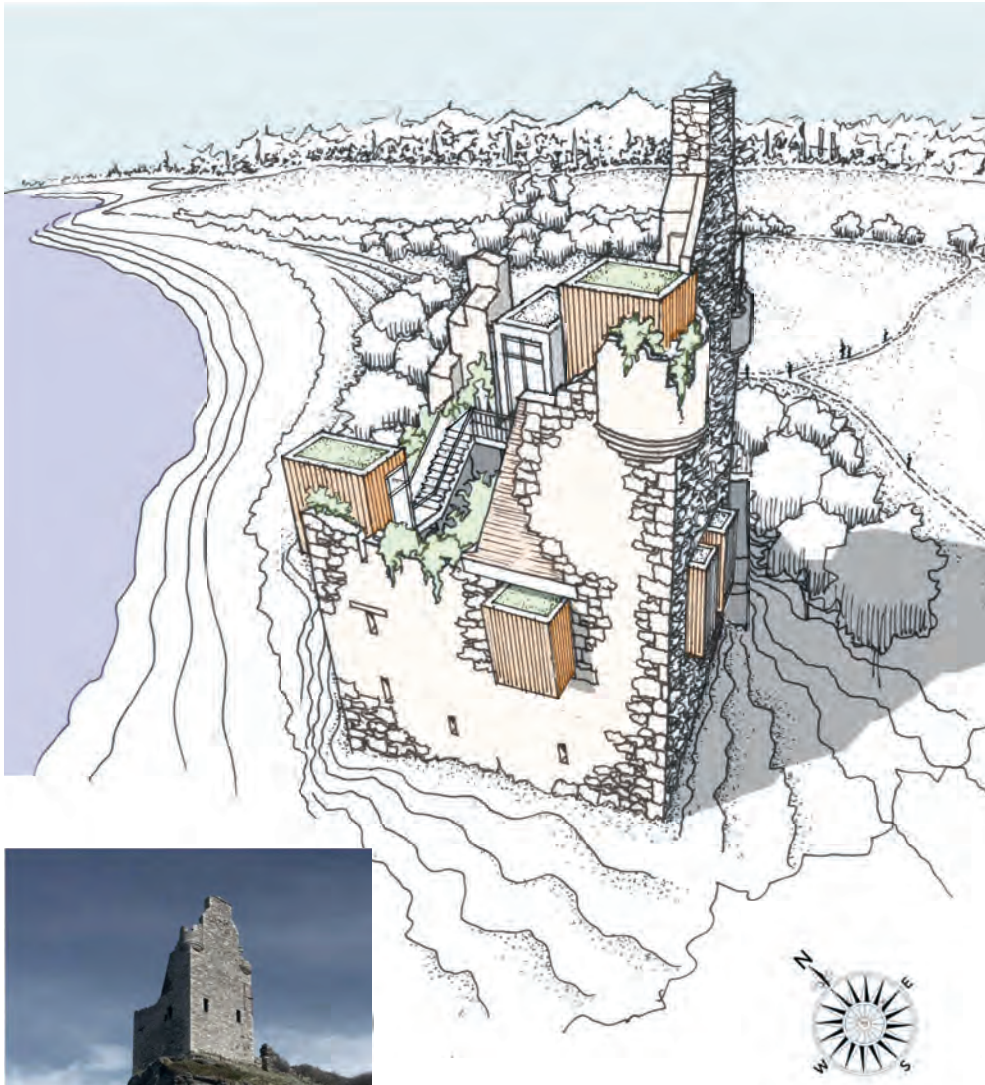
Young's winning design embeds nine habitable lightweight cells into the stone fabric of a crumbling castle. Each cell is placed according to existing platforms and niches, accessed through reconstructed existing elements and a network of open timber steps, bridges and platforms.

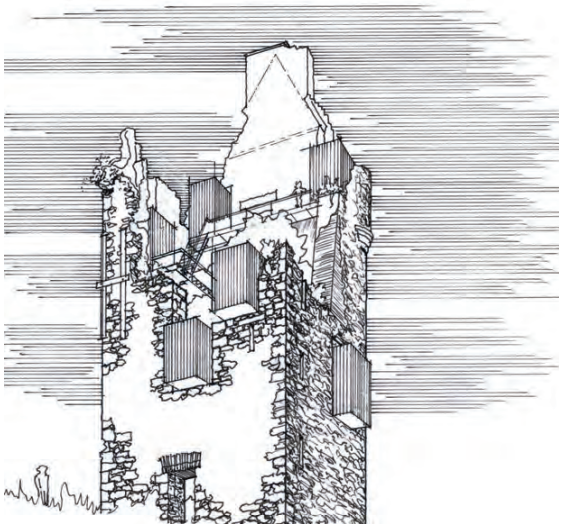
As in Boccaccio's Decameron, the players in this scenario are retreating from a hostile world to share their stories. Throughout its history, the castle has been both 'a refuge and a defensible enclosure', and the SterlingOSB Zero insertions resurrect the castle as not only a place of seclusion and security but also conviviality. 'The built form is in one composed building, but you can encounter a lot of experiences in that one building,' said judge Kristofer Adelaide.

The nine SterlingOSB Zero insertions require minimal modifications to the ruins. They are prefabricated from OSB SIPs and clad in larch. Inside they contain a workspace (where stories are composed in solitude), basic toilet provisions and a sleeping platform accessed by ladder. The spaces are consciously introverted.

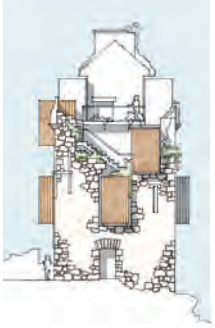
At the base of the keep are communal gathering spaces, such as a refectory and kitchen, constructed on suspended CLT platforms and supported on screw-piles. These open onto an enclosed garden. 'I like that there is a courtyard created by the ruin, and that they have not built into that void,' said judge Timea Cooper.

'I like that it is a retrofit,' added fellow judge Debby Ray. 'That it made use of found spaces is commendable in itself, but I also like that you can translate the concept to other crumbling old buildings.' This was a view shared by all the judges. 'This is my favourite,' said Adelaide. 'There is a realism to it that celebrates the material.'



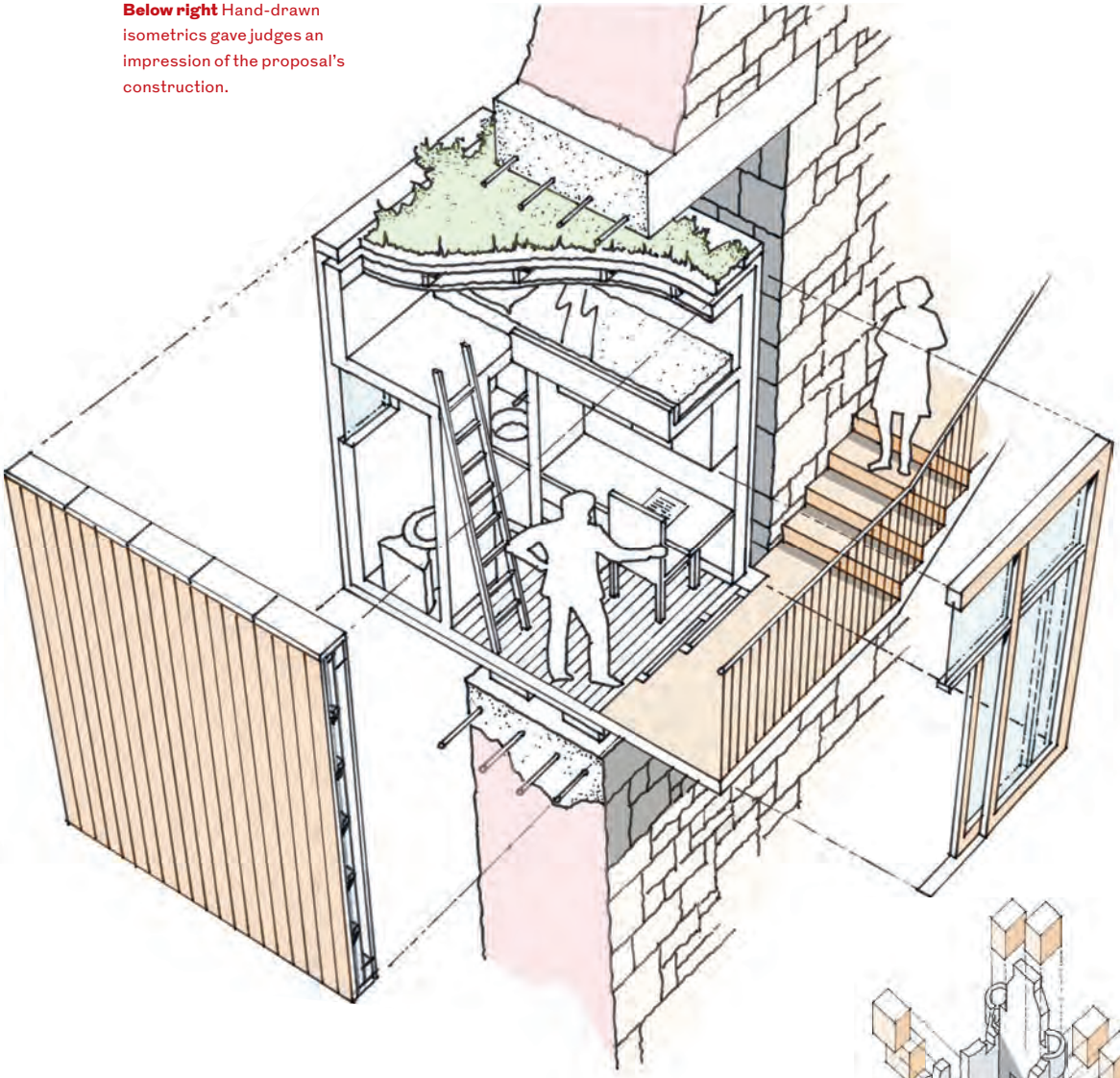


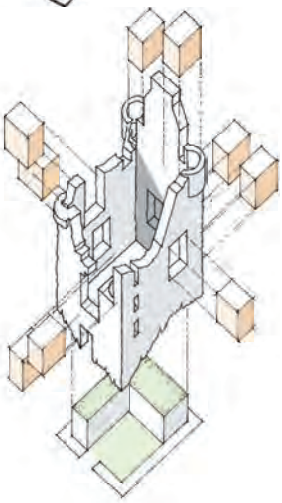
Top The strong presentation technique gave the judges a good feel for the project. **Above** The choice of site, by its nature, elicited a sense of drama and romanticism. **Right** The idea was notable for its sheer simplicity.

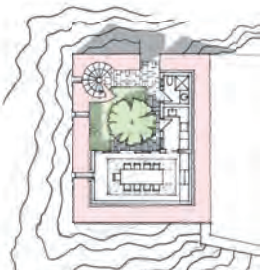


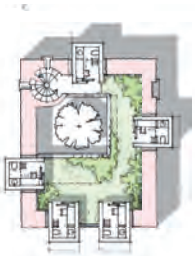
Left Elevations convey the introverted nature of the new interventions on the old structure.

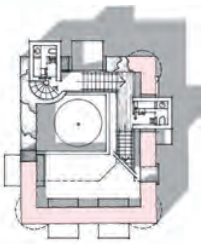
Below right Hand-drawn isometrics gave judges an impression of the proposal's construction.

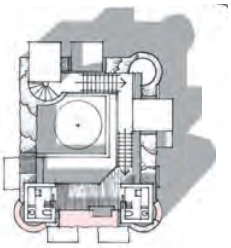












Left Plans showed the different types of spaces being generated as residents ascend within the castle's walls.

Commended (£500 prize) Oriented Stranded Grottoes

Rob Annable (Axis Design Architects) and Justin Pickard

"Wetlands, grottoes, rural remediation, extremophiles, methanogenesis, will-o'-the-wisp, flora, fauna, fungi, fenlands and the sublime. Retreat! Re-peat!' Annable and Pickard's unique and otherworldly design works with the end-of-life material properties of SterlingOSB Zero to give something back to a fenland environment and perhaps even reignite the 'delusive light' of a will-o'-the-wisp (Milton, Paradise Lost). Judge Kristofer Adelaide remarked that it was 'the only entry that takes the idea of the material decomposing', adding: 'I'm impressed by the strength of its conceptual nature.

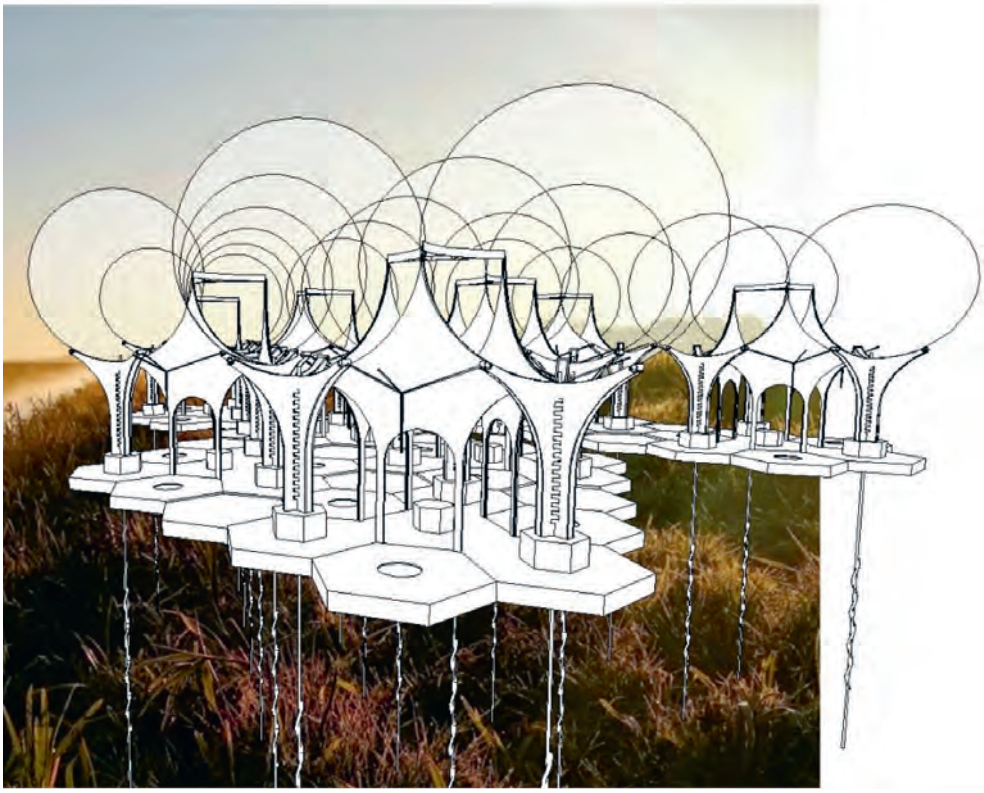
The retreat is a Vicnenzo Scamozzi-inspired shaded grotto-portico, with pools, niches and tableaus with statues. It is intended as a retreat for the flora and fauna of the fens, offering them a safe haven from the climate-based threats to their watery landscape.

Underpinning this fanciful vision is a serious look at environmental concerns and an effort to understand the science of material decay. 'Studies have proposed ways to restore ecological diversity and abundance through rewetting and replanting,' argue the designers, 'however, wetlands' natural production of methane ... could exacerbate climate change through "pollution swapping".'

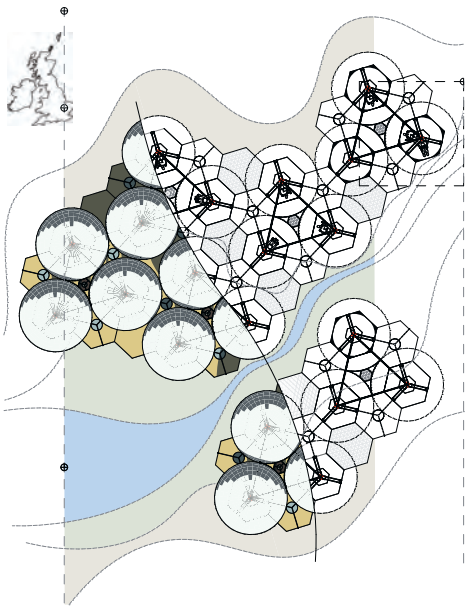
The project's complexity of bulbous forms are positioned in a hexagonal formation across the landscape on cork matting with SterlingOSB Zero transferring the load through screw-pile anchor points. Above each cell, a balloon roof stores methane created by the single-celled organisms that thrive on decaying matter. This methane is used to feed various technologies elsewhere. Rainwater is channelled via stalactite formations into pools below.

'Like fen plant life turning to peat through anaerobic conditions, the grotto's eventual failure is anticipated. Sinking into the surface, consumed by flora and fungi as biogenic carbon storage, the process can begin again,' explain the designers.

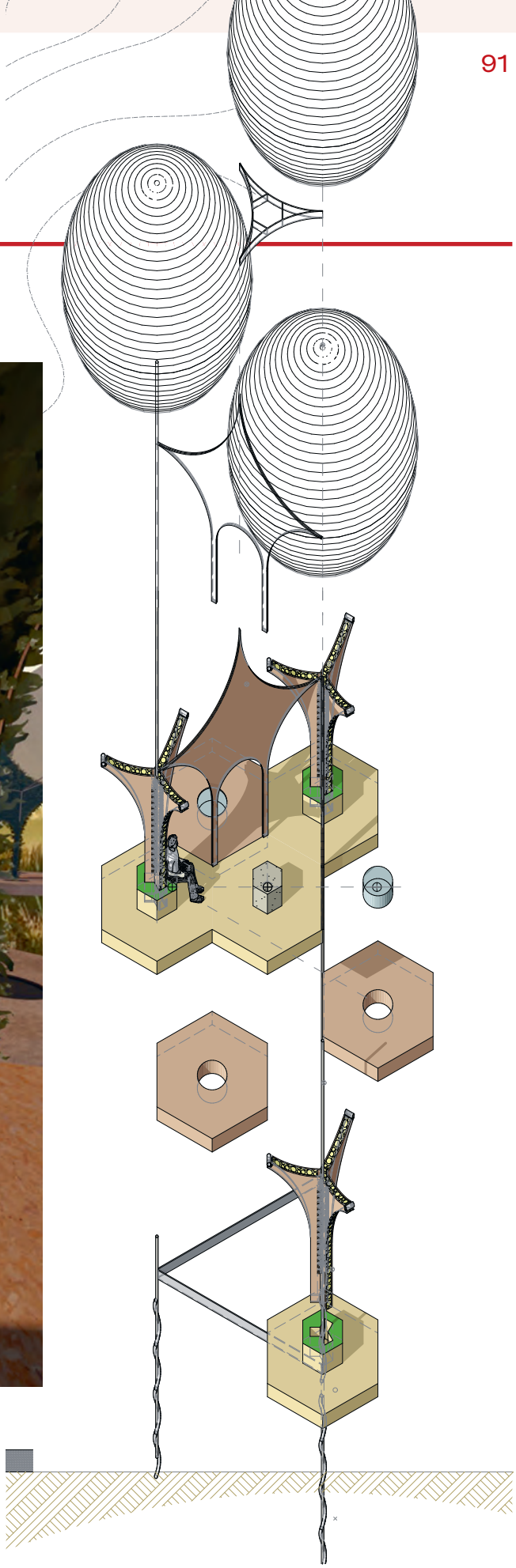
'They have really tried to understand the organic systems and how the natural world and the SterlingOSB Zero comes together,' said judge Debby Ray. Jan-Carlos Kucharek added: 'They're using OSB as a petri dish to allow other things to grow – a sacrificial decomposition. This entry excels, because it interrogates what it can be and how it relates to the natural world. It is poetic on the level of the picturesque, even sublime.'



Above Like fen plant life turning to peat, the grotto's distant but irrefutable failure is anticipated.
Right At the structure's 'end of days', when it eventually 'fails', methane swamp balloons take over, holding the vegetative forms in tension.



This image Ultimately infiltrated by parasitic organic life, the grotto becomes a meditation on mortality and sublimity in the manner of the picturesque.
Right Sitting on hexagonal pads, the arched SterlingOSB Zero forms create a romantic landscape designed to become inhabited by mycelium and fungi.



Underpinning this fanciful vision is a serious look at environmental concerns and an effort to understand the science of material decay

Commended The Twice-built Retreat

Tom Birch and Elliot Nash

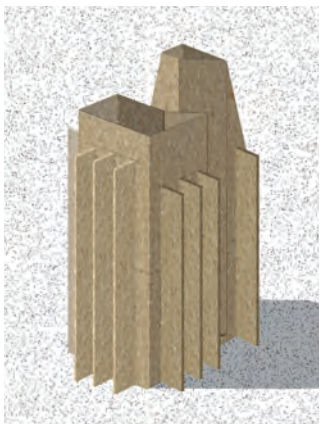
'When taken as a verb, "retreat" deals with multiple instances of time; it refers to a retracing back to somewhere once visited before the present,' write architects Birch and Nash. Their retreat is constructed twice over: a SterlingOSB Zero skin is used as formwork shuttering for concrete, which imprints its texture on the cast surface; the OSB is then employed to wrap this concrete tower in a corridor of stepped floors, walls, shutters and roofs in an occupied perimeter.

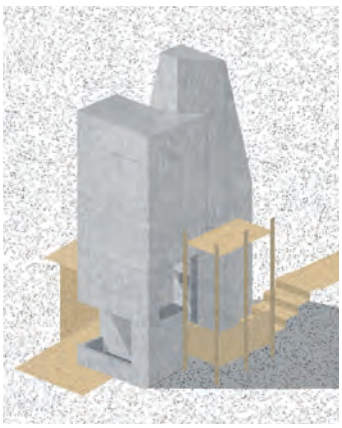
The concrete is stained with materials local to its location ('slate from the Welsh quarries, tin from the Cornish mines, or redbrick dust from demolished London buildings' or, more sustainably, rammed earth) to make it contextual. SterlingOSB Zero however remains the protagonist through its involvement with each of the building's surfaces and structures. As with the Japanese tatami mat system, the retreat takes its modular dimensions from the standard measurements of SterlingOSB Zero sheeting.

'I really liked the idea of taking the SterlingOSB Zero, using it as structural formwork then reconfiguring it to make the forms within the voids you have created,' said judge Stephen Proctor. 'It is about contemplation, you can retreat into it without a view.'

Referring to the 1:25 model the designers specifically created, Proctor remarked: 'A lot of thought has gone into it. It reminds me of a Rachel Whiteread.'

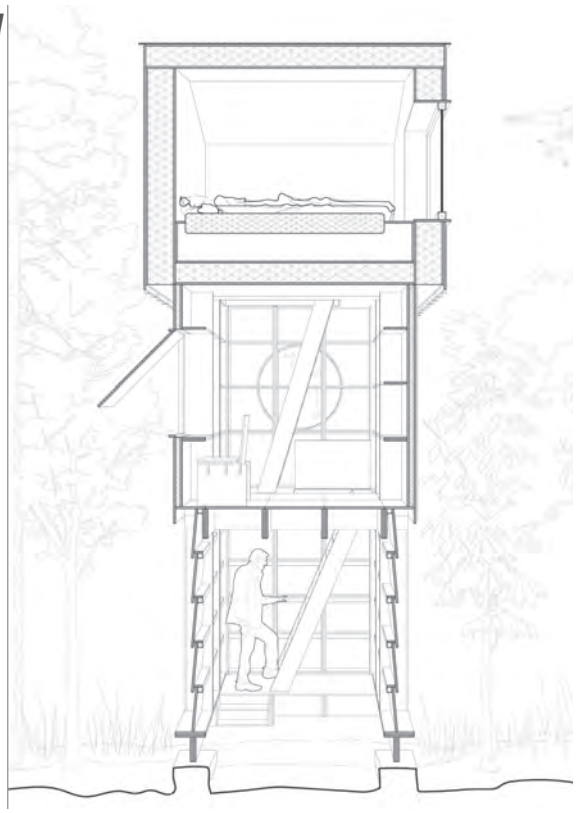
This image The judges appreciated the sophistication of the physical modelling techniques employed by Birch and Nash.
Below There was conceptual strength to the idea of the SterlingOSB Zero formwork being used to make the created voids inhabitable.





Commended Doocots

Ella Walklate, Reini Celmins, Alexander Vile and Adam Spreckley



This proposal questions whether it is possible to 'retreat' in the centre of a city. Its site is on the Forth and Clyde Canal, 20 minutes north of Glasgow's centre. 'Well known to Glaswegians, "doocots" are private pigeon lofts, built on public land and usually found on the banks of the canal,' the designers explain. These playful, informal structures are usually constructed from found materials and contribute to the architectural character of the canal.

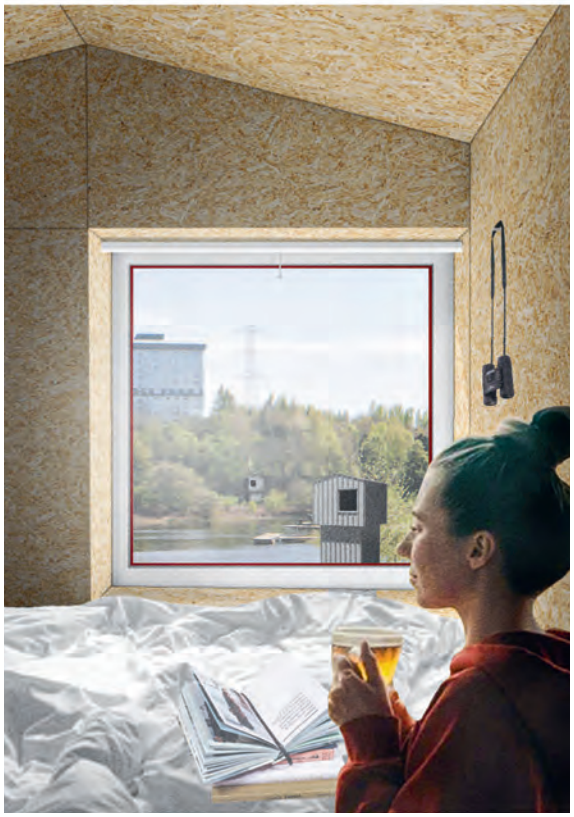
The proposal involves 10, single-occupancy SterlingOSB Zero frame structures plus a communal building situated directly on the water for cooking and washing. The SterlingOSB Zero post and beam lattice structures, built economically using standard lengths of material, contain a step out at each level to give them a top-heavy, playful character, and are clad in zinc.

The SterlingOSB Zero posts are raised from the ground on rocks for weather protection. The basin is reached by a reinstated drawbridge, and the site is naturally separated from the city by the canal on all sides, like a moat providing residents with a degree of detachment from the city.

'The proposed Doocots celebrate the life of the city with views of vibrant wildlife on the Forth and Clyde Canal, the ever-changing Scottish skies, and Partick Thistle Football Club,' say the architects (though some of the judges were dubious about the location). Nevertheless, the research into local context and architectural styles impressed, with judge Debby Ray describing the proposal as 'beautifully presented and creatively hijacking a quirky vernacular ... I like the idea that it is a bit DIY.'

This reflected Jan-Carlos Kucharek's view: 'Reifying the "doocot" up into a space for contemplation on a gritty canalside ... there is something beautiful about that.'

Top right A detail section brings a pragmatic buildability to the Doocots proposal.
Below Judges enjoyed the scope of the Doocots entry, looking at the intervention even at city scale.
Right Internal visualisation .



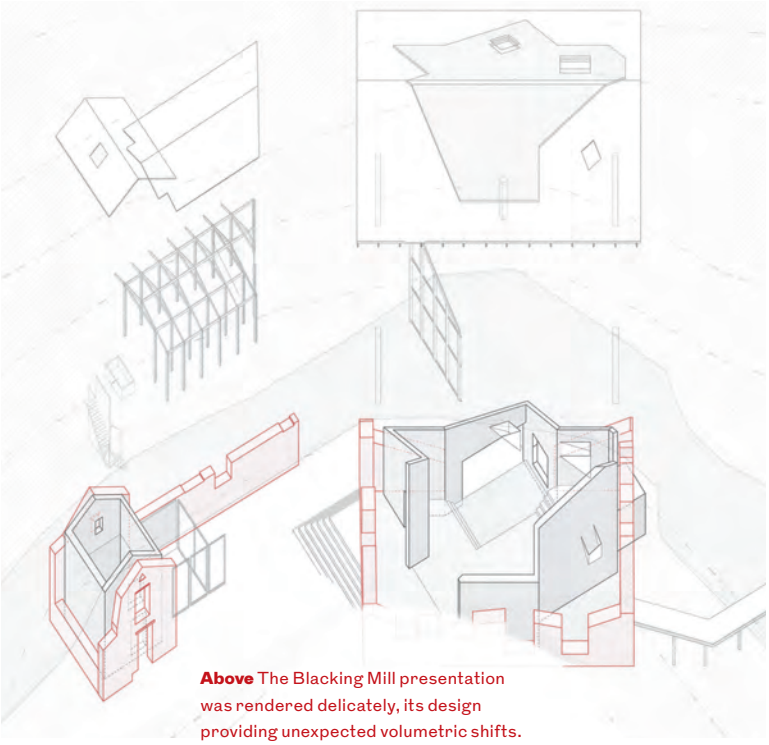
Longlisted

Blacking Mill – Jess Hollis

Located within a derelict former mill in the Lake district, Jess Hollis's 'simple and nicely rendered proposition' preserves a 19th century blast furnace through a light-touch SterlingOSB Zero intervention.

The mill's external form is preserved while, internally, prefabricated SterlingOSB Zero modular cassettes rotate the orientation to create unexpected spaces. Varying floor levels and lighting establish distinct zones. 'The unexpected courtyards and internal spaces of the Blacking Mill are reminiscent of Giovanni Boccaccio's notion of the retreat within a walled garden,' says Hollis, 'while the spatial characteristics evoke Charles W Moore's Orinda House.'

Within the cassettes, SterlingOSB Zero acts as both lateral bracing and permanent formwork for hempcrete insulation. The OSB is internally exposed and externally weatherproofed with cork cladding. 'It's beautifully drawn,' said judge Stephen Proctor, 'and I like the idea that the original building didn't respond to the curve of the river, and I like that the new bit twists in the space and there is something poetic about that.'



Above The Blacking Mill presentation was rendered delicately, its design providing unexpected volumetric shifts.

Below Simply clad in corrugated steel sheet on the outside, SterlingOSB Zero slats create a small but complex and permeable set of interior experiences.

a-haven – Mirjam Kuntu and Karolina Przynarowska

a-haven is a cliffside retreat on the Aberdeenshire coastline in an otherwise treacherous landscape. It is a beacon that navigates visitors inside, where framed views through the SterlingOSB Zero panels dividing the plan give the impression of being one with the cliff.

The SterlingOSB Zero sandwich walls are externally clad with corrugated steel (suitable for its location near the sea) while inside, the walls are left exposed. The internal division for a quiet and a social zone is achieved through a cascade of freestanding panels.

This was a 'solidly considered, serious proposition which creates an interior spatiality using the material,' said judge Jan-Carlos Kucharek. Debby Ray added: 'It is simple, it is quiet, it is not shouting, it is effective.' Which is what a retreat should be.

Aurora Retreat – MAZi Architects (Katerina Examiliotou and Despoina Papadopoulou)

The Aurora Retreat proposes a creative escape on the banks of Loch Lurgainn, from which to observe the Aurora Borealis. Each of the 10 cabins is intended for a sole occupant to 'isolate, contemplate and create'. A shared observation lounge with a sunken table allows the guests to dine and share stories.

The cabins are constructed from lightweight SterlingOSB Zero SIPs with OSB-clad interiors, which pleased West Fraser's Timea Cooper. 'SterlingOSB Zero doesn't have to solely be used for structure,' she said. 'Here it is in the interior finishes as well, so it is not a one-sided view.' Kristofer Adelaide also commended the detailing. 'They have made holes to make it better acoustically,' he said, 'they have used it as a peg board, they have thought about SterlingOSB Zero acting as a finish material.'

Aesthetically, the cabins embrace the night sky with a black textured envelope in carbonised wood and openings inviting the sky in, creating a 'transcendent experience'. Stephen Proctor commented: 'They are little observatories, which I think it is rather nice.' Kristofer Adelaide added: 'I like the connection to the outdoors ... I think it could be built.'

This image Considered use of SterlingOSB Zero, both as structure and finish, appealed to the judges.

The Clearing – Chris Simmons (Studio Chris Simmons)

In Chris Simmons' proposal – rendered, said Jan-Carlos Kucharek, with 'great graphic technique' – five couples who are friends retreat from the city to 'somewhere where they can live their lives more simply and holistically and be more in touch with nature'. Conveniently, the group contains an architect and a carpenter. Together they locate an equally convenient oak tree in a forest surrounded by five smaller trees.

This configuration lends itself to a pentagonal structure, created from standard-sized SterlingOSB Zero panels filled with sheep's wool insulation, erected on the ground then hoisted into the treetops. The same series of ropes and pulleys supports a waterproof fabric roof, which channels rainwater.

In time, the children of this new community themselves dream of creating their own retreats. 'It tells a story,' praised Timea Cooper. Kristofer Adelaide agreed. 'It is so different from the others in terms of presentation,' he said. 'The idea is very romantic.'

Above Simmons' graphics were striking and evocative.

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RIBA COLLECTIONS

Puerta del Sol
Toledo, 13th-14th century

In medieval Spain, during the gradual reconquest by the Christian kingdoms of the territories previously ruled by Muslims (collectively known as al-Andalus), many districts retained a mainly Muslim population and those cities remained centres of learning and medicine. As Islamic Andalusian culture continued to exert its influence, a new type of art and architecture evolved that acted as a bridge between the Gothic and Romanesque from the north of the country and the Moorish from the south. Usually referred to as Mudéjar, it blended Christian and Muslim elements and was widely adopted for several centuries, especially in Andalusia and Aragon. Another important Mudéjar centre was Toledo, which has traces of Islamic architecture in all its Romanesque buildings. The Puerta del Sol, a city gate built by the Knights Hospitaller between the 13th and 14th centuries, is a magnificent example of Mudéjar military architecture. Its Islamic features, such as the horseshoe and blind multifoil arches, are so dominant that for a long time the Puerta del Sol was considered a pre-conquest city gate. ● **Valeria Carullo**

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

Reprographics by
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Printed by Warners Midlands plc

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