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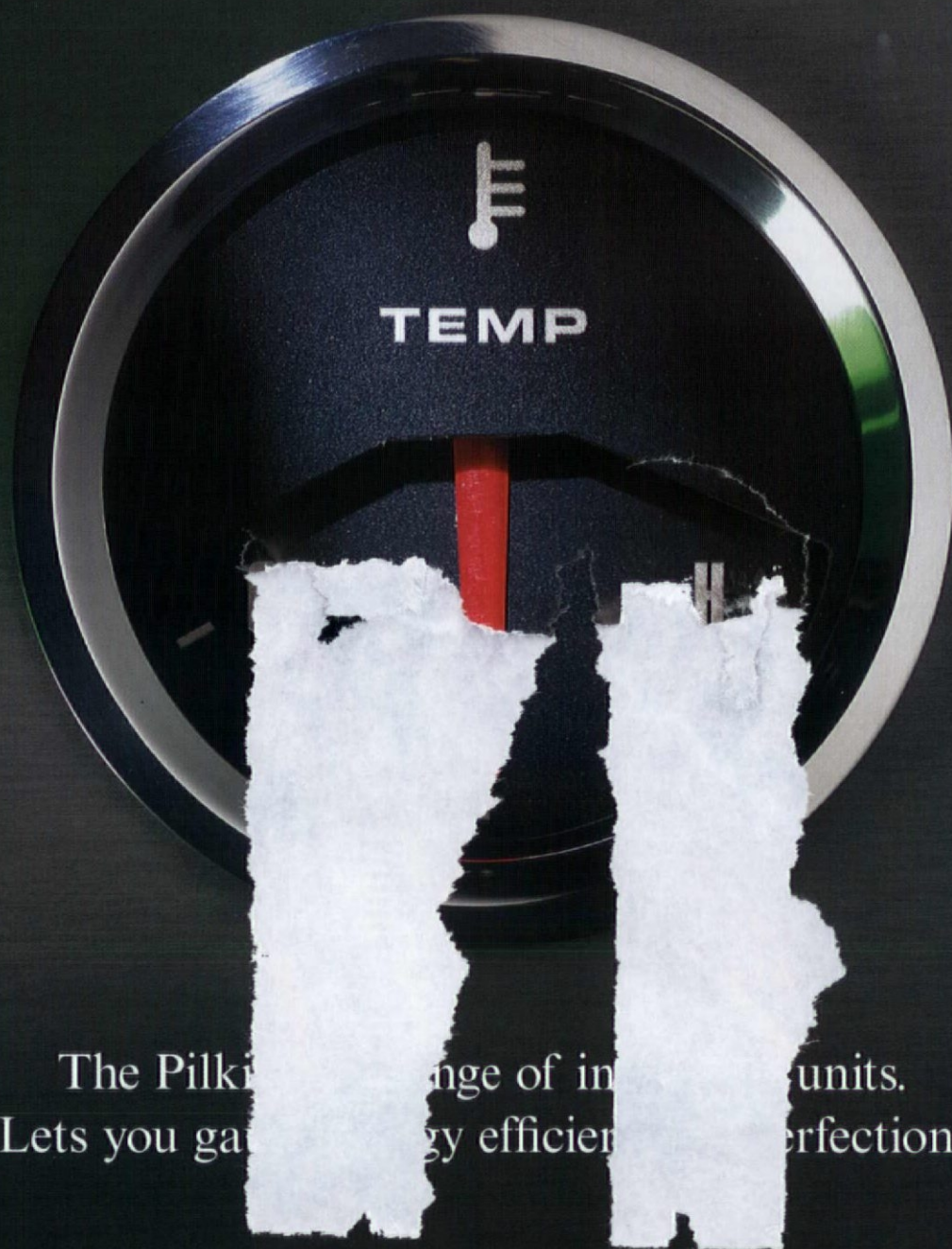
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CHRIS GASCONE/VIEW



Simon Conder Architects has won this year's AJ/Robin Ellis Design Build Small Projects competition for its extension to a 19th-century house in London's N1 (pictured). Second prize went to Buckley Gray for the refurbishment of Solar House, a 1970s building in Stratford, east London. Third place was shared by Baart Harries Newall for the Concord College Students Canteen in Shropshire and Adams & Sutherland for the Evergreen Adventure Playground project in Hackney, London. The Small Projects exhibition is at the RIBA until 1 May. Simon Conder is profiled on page 24.

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Artwork for projects by Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin: Benjamin Jacquemet-Boutes

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**'I would make the Mall traffic-free. I would animate it with things the Queen Mother rather liked, like a drink: you could have bars there, though I wouldn't go over the top.'**

Will Alsop on a memorial to the Queen Mother. *Evening Standard*, 10.4.02

**'This familiar segue of regeneration into hyperbole suggests that even the most brilliant architectural interventions have more to do with wings and prayers than with verifiable science.'**

Jay Merrick on PR hype for Ian Simpson Architects' Urbis building. *Independent*, 11.4.02

## aj news

### SIX IN WOKING FRAME

Six practices are battling it out to design Woking Galleries, a new £6.5 million cultural centre planned for Woking in Surrey. Marks Barfield, John Miller + Partners, Jeremy Dixon, Edward Jones, Bill Dunster Architects, Brookes Stacey Randall and Walters and Cohen have been shortlisted, with a winner to be announced in May. +

### GLASS INNOVATION CALL

The Bombay Sapphire Foundation has called for entries to its new £20,000 annual glass design awards for innovation in contemporary glass design. The closing date is 30 June. For entry forms call 020 7224 0994 or e-mail [foundation@bombaysapphire.org](mailto:foundation@bombaysapphire.org)

### BUDGET NEWS ONLINE

For analysis of Gordon Brown's Budget log on to AJPlus. +

### HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

The Civic Trust and English Heritage expect 800,000 visitors to their Heritage Open Days event between 13 and 16 September. Hundreds of properties will open their doors to the public as part of a European initiative in 47 countries. Contact 020 7930 9294 from July.

### URBAN STREET LIFE

This year's Urban Design Week is on the theme 'Street Life' and will run from 16 to 22 September. Urban Design Alliance's fifth annual event will include a conference and lecture. Further details from June will be posted on [www.udal.org.uk](http://www.udal.org.uk)

**For the best jobs in architecture turn to page 50 or visit [www.careersinconstruction.com](http://www.careersinconstruction.com)**

# New vision for Elephant and Castle

Southwark council has commissioned a new development vision for the regeneration of London's Elephant and Castle after pulling the plug on KP Architects' £1 billion masterplan. Tibbalds TM2 is to produce a new plan for the area after the council pulled out of negotiations with developer Southwark Land Regeneration (SLR) last week. SLR won the bid to develop the plan in June 2000, which included designs by Foster and Partners, Ken Yeang, Benoy and HTA Architects.

Southwark's project coordinator Jon Abbott said the council would not be talking to the architects in the original consortium with a view to keeping them on board. However, some of the key elements within it could remain. It will pursue the principle of high-quality, tall buildings on the site - but whether this would be Ken Yeang's original design was yet to be decided, Abbott said. And while a plaza - similar to that designed by Foster and Partners - is likely to be part of the future development, the practice's role is 'open to question'. The council is now inviting fresh bids from potential developers.

But the original design team has vowed to continue pushing for its plans. Brian Pattenden, senior associate director of Benoy, which was due to develop a subterranean shopping centre, said all four practices were presenting a united front. 'We're not giving up that easily,' he said.

Negotiations between Southwark and SLR broke down last week after the two failed to agree on financial arrangements. According to Abbott, the breakdown followed a change in the agreement over social housing. Southwark had originally briefed SLR to produce an 'innovative' solution to the area's social housing. However, the council was not happy with the proposal it presented - which included the wholesale transfer of the council's

housing stock into private management. Having decided to keep control of its housing stock, Southwark decided SLR's financial bid was no longer acceptable.

Southwark will now remain in control of the social housing element of the scheme, and HTA Architects' scheme could be the one it pursues.

Some observers have blamed Southwark for the crisis. Patten-den said the council had 'lost its balls' and was 'chickening out'. Another accused it of inconsistency in its handling of the project. Graham Neil, chair of the Elephant and Castle Residents Regeneration Group,

welcomed the chance to look again at the plan: 'There's a lot more cohesion among the community than there was two years ago and we will rise to this challenge.'

Southwark expects no further progress with the plan until after the council elections in June.

Zoë Blackler



Ken Yeang's tower in the SLR plan



Toyo Ito has joined forces with Arup to design this year's summer pavilion on the lawns of London's Serpentine Gallery. He is the third world-class architect to take up the challenge, following Zaha Hadid in 2000 and Daniel Libeskind with Arup in 2001. Painted white steel sheets will be welded together to create the main structure - the design of which is based on an algorithm and resembles a ziggurat. The shapes created in the roof and walls will be filled alternately with glass and white aluminium panels.



**'... Every time you build a flat, you condemn some family to live in it, some child will grow up in it; their view is what you put there: you ration their space, their sunshine their privacy.'**

Sir Peter Shepherd, who died last week, in his presidential address to the AA, 1954.

**'Sure, I'd be poorer, but so what? I'd be just as happy.'**

Will Alsop imagining life as a full-time painter, *Daily Telegraph*, 13.4.02

**'... Certain buildings, certain architects generate a strong emotion. It is hard to explain, but if I am lucky, I can find this feeling, these emotions, slowly and quietly in the darkroom...'**

Architectural photographer Hélène Binet on emotion, *Guardian*, 15.4.02

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## Solo Aussie designer Glenn Murcutt wins Pritzker Prize

Pritzker Prize judges have turned their backs on the trend for 'celebrity and glitz starchitects' to award the solo Australian designer Glenn Murcutt this year's crown. The 66-year-old 'Pritzker Laureate' works in Sydney but travels the world teaching and lecturing.

His trademark Modernist homes are 'scrupulously energy conscious', said Thomas Pritzker, president of sponsor Hyatt Foundation. Murcutt's designs were neither large-scale nor luxurious, and often used materials like corrugated iron, said Pritzker. He worked alone and drew from wide-ranging influences from Mies van der Rohe to Australian woodsheds.

Jury chairman J Carter Brown, chairman of the US Commission for Fine Arts, said Murcutt was unique. 'In an age obsessed with celebrity, the glitz of our starchitects backed by large staffs and copious public relations, Murcutt is a total contrast.'

The architect receives a US\$100,000 (£70,000) grant and bronze medallion based on designs of Louis Sullivan on 29 May in Rome. Murcutt is also touted as a future Royal Gold Medal winner.

His designs include homes in New South Wales, such as Magney House, a long, rectilinear plan with curved roof in Bingie Bingie.

Architecture critic and jury member Ada Louise Huxtable said: 'Murcutt is totally focused on shelter and the environment, with skills drawn from nature and the most sophisticated design traditions of the modern movement.' Marco Goldschmied said: 'He's done a lot of interesting things and is consistent'. And he suggested that Archigram would make a good future winner and could use the money to archive its work, currently shoved under beds and in cupboards.

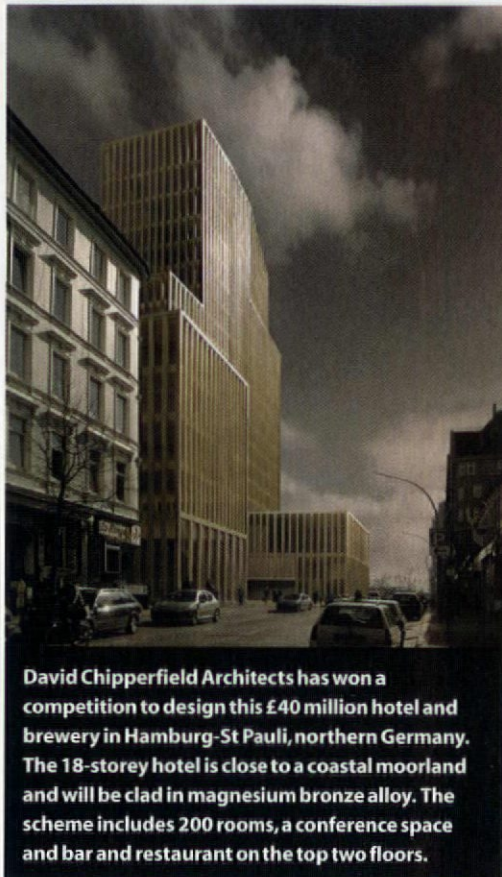
The annual Pritzker Prize, honouring a living architect with vision and commitment, started in 1979 with Philip Johnson the first winner. James Stirling won in 1981, Tadao Ando in 1995, and Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron won last year.

Jez Abbott

## Hodder Associates facing court over unpaid cleaning bill

Stephen Hodder is facing an appearance in the small claims court after failing to settle a window cleaning bill for just £150. Hannah Clancy of Barringtons window cleaners told the AJ she had been pursuing Hodder since February 2001 for payment.

Hodder asked local firm Barringtons to clean the windows of his National Wildflower Centre in



**David Chipperfield Architects has won a competition to design this £40 million hotel and brewery in Hamburg-St Pauli, northern Germany. The 18-storey hotel is close to a coastal moorland and will be clad in magnesium bronze alloy. The scheme includes 200 rooms, a conference space and bar and restaurant on the top two floors.**

Liverpool on 9 February last year to prepare the building for a photo shoot. According to Clancy, there is no dispute that the work was done or that it was done to a satisfactory level.

After numerous assurances from the practice that a cheque was in the post, Clancy has set about seeking the £150 plus £25 costs through Liverpool County Court. Clancy told the AJ that because it was such a small sum she had decided to dig her heels in. 'It's sheer stubbornness that I'm going ahead with the court case,' she said. 'I've heard these people are supposed to be very good architects but it's so underhanded what they've been doing.'

And she added: 'I know other people have had problems with payment too.'

One young photographer employed by Hodder Associates told the AJ he had been pushed to threaten court action after pursuing an unpaid invoice for more than six months. He said he knew of other photographers who had had similar problems and warned against working for the practice.

Stephen Hodder told the AJ that the practice had unwittingly got involved by instructing the cleaners on behalf of the client and had ended up footing the bill. 'There is a dispute and it will be solved,' he said.

### 7 WEEKS TO GO



9-13 June 2002,  
NEC, Birmingham, UK

A highlight of this year's Interbuild will be 50/50, an exhibition which presents the best buildings and products of the past 50 years and makes predictions for the next 50, based on interviews with a range of experts. This week, on page 12, Techniker structural engineer Matthew Wells explains why Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House, which 'changed the way that architects and engineers work together,' gets his vote.



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### Q&A

# 76%

... of voters in a poll on the AJ's website think CABE should target the tabloid press to spread the word on good architecture.

Respondents: 70

**This week's question:**  
Who should win next year's Pritzker Prize?

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## Alsop dreams of Tuscany... in Barnsley

Will Alsop has produced a vision for the Yorkshire town of Barnsley – inspired by the Tuscan village of Luca. The 30-year plan, to encircle the former-mining town with a wall, will create a sense of containment and help Barnsley to rediscover its identity as a 21st-century market town, Alsop said.

The wall will trace the limits of the town centre. Constructed over the next few decades, it will be eight to nine-storeys high, 12m wide and punctured by gateways. Parkland will run along the top of the wall, so walkers can circumnavigate the town. Visitors will leave their cars beneath

it, and electric trams and buses – along with walking – will be the main forms of transport. Alsop's vision is part of a plan to revitalise Barnsley's currently underpopulated centre and boost its resident population from 2,400 to 11,000. As people move back into the centre, the land beyond – blighted by decades of bad housing developments – will gradually be returned to farmland and a freeze placed on future planning permission. The first step towards the vision will be the creation of a laser halo over the town marking out the proposed route of the wall.

*Continued on page 8*



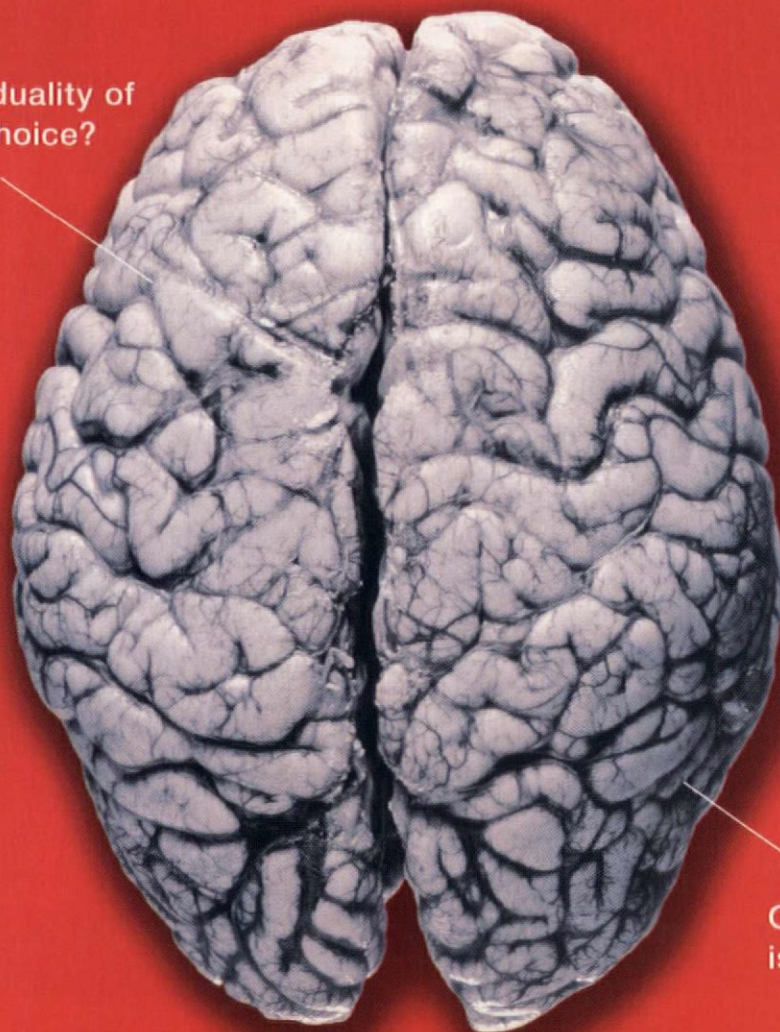
Alsop's vision for Barnsley, inspired by the Tuscan village of Luca (top), creates a wall that encircles the town centre (middle). By increasing density within the centre, the surrounding land can be returned to agriculture (bottom)



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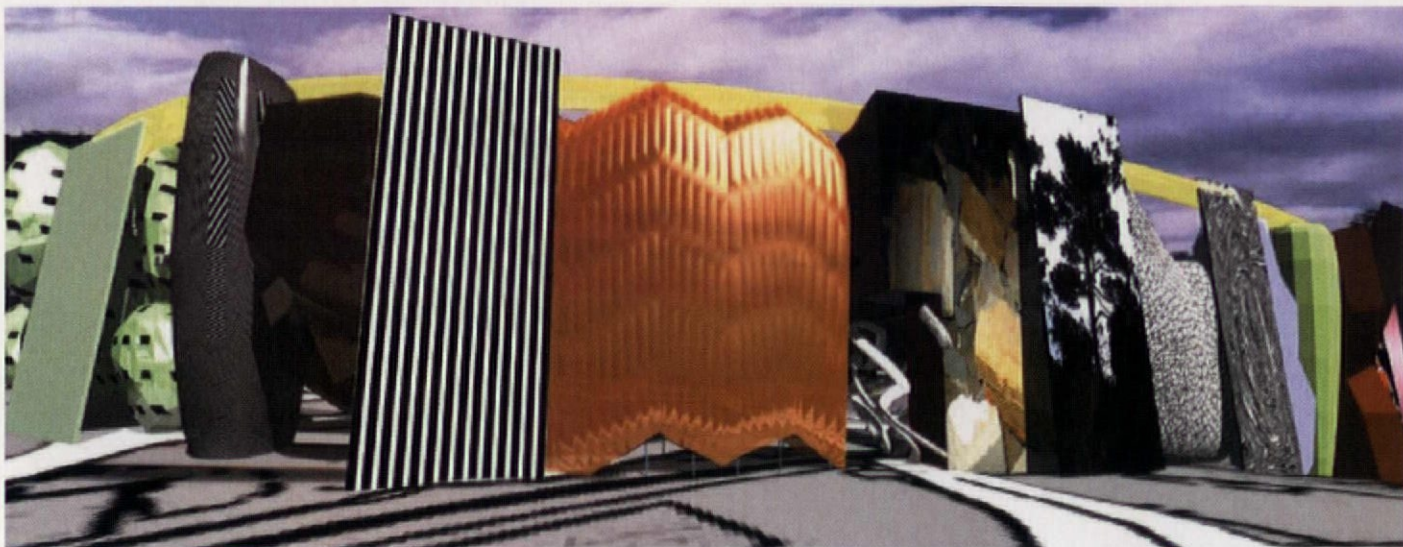
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The wall will be topped with a walkway with views across the countryside (top and top-middle). In Alsop's vision, Barnsley town centre will be built upwards to help increase density (bottom-middle). 'If everything in the town was a school then the music department could be the concert hall' (bottom)

*Continued from page 6*

Alsop said his plan is a holistic vision for a new way of living. 'There's no use just tarding up a square, you must deal with life in the town,' he said.

'The next phase is to look at the institutions that make up the town. If everything in the town was a school then the music department could be the concert hall,' he suggests.

Barnsley is one of six towns – with Doncaster, Scarborough, Wakefield, Huddersfield and Grimsby – in a £1 million visioning project by Yorkshire Forward. The regeneration body could invest hundreds of millions of pounds in Barnsley alone, according to its head of urban renaissance Alan

Simpson. Alsop's vision is being developed over a four- to five-month consultation period with local people that began in January. A video of the results will be screened in May and followed by a detailed masterplan.

'We're trying to keep it all at the level of dreaming,' Alsop said. 'These exercises with the great and the good miss out the dreaming stage. They want to get to the meat and miss out the sugar. If you miss out that phase you're lost.' The video, to be shown 'on a Friday night at the local cinema with wine and popcorn', is his way of making sure people have access to that dreaming process.

Zoë Blackler

18 April 2002



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## Foster's 'St Mary Axe' swings into view

The Swiss Re building – now rebranded as 30 St Mary Axe to emphasise its 'historic' site in the City of London – is already approaching its halfway stage, as other towers proposed for the capital languish in planning's no-man's-land. The core of the 'gherkin' scheme, hailed by Lord Foster as London's first 'environmentally progressive' tower, is already up to level 16, while the 40-storey project's steel diagrid defining its curvilinear form is not far behind, having reached level 14. And, when the tower reaches practical completion in October this year, that external structure will comprise 342 elements of the A-frame steel, weighing 10,000 tonnes.

Foster's Ken Shuttleworth said the building's 'dynamic, visually exciting form' had been extensively tested for regulations compliance, and that it would perform well in the unlikely event of an aeroplane hitting it. 'You'd have a large hole, but it wouldn't fall down,' he said. But more important than security considerations – despite it being built on the site of the IRA-bombed former Baltic Exchange – were the scheme's design and low-energy features, built in after a 'fun' five-year planning process that saw off 90- and 70-storey Foster tower projects proposed for the same site.

'It's going up super-fast,' Shuttleworth said of the scheme now progressing at a rate of two floors every fortnight. 'The nice thing is that we started with some drawings. We don't anticipate any problems – it's been drawn to death.'

The 180m tall building will be completed in the 'last quarter' of 2003, some 33 months after work began in January 2001. And, following a press visit this week, agents are marketing the scheme to prospective tenants – mainly lawyers and financial services companies.

The building will feature enclosed lightwells inside the double-skinned, energy-efficient facade. These, now picked out in darker glass to emphasise the 'swirl' shape and minimise solar gain, spiral on a 5° rotation for each 'finger' of floor up the building. The lightwells bring in daylight and provide the possibility of natural ventilation through opening windows in the exterior perimeter. Meeting areas will be clustered around them in the offices inside.

Reinsurer Swiss Re will be the first tenant, occupying floors 2-15, while 16-34 will be ready for tenant fit-out on a phased, short term basis from mid-2003. The top floors, sitting above plant, culminate in a domed reception, bar and restaurant and act as dedicated hospitality facilities for tenants, their clients and guests – though not the public. And the building's tapering, wind-tested form means more space at street level, where a new plaza has been created around a double-height entrance, along with 1,500m<sup>2</sup> of retail space and six-storey annexe building.

The tower, 'bang on schedule' after early weather delays, contrasts with the two other main schemes which will have a major say in London's future skyline – Heron Tower, the 222m tall scheme by KPF, and the 306m, £350 million London Bridge Tower by Renzo Piano and Broadway Malyan. Heron is awaiting a decision this summer after a public inquiry and London Bridge has been issued with an Article 14 holding directive by Stephen Byers. But St Mary Axe is swinging towards completion.

David Taylor



Top: a new landmark for London. Middle: the unclad diagrid as seen from street level. Above: the four-storey entrance and landscaped plaza



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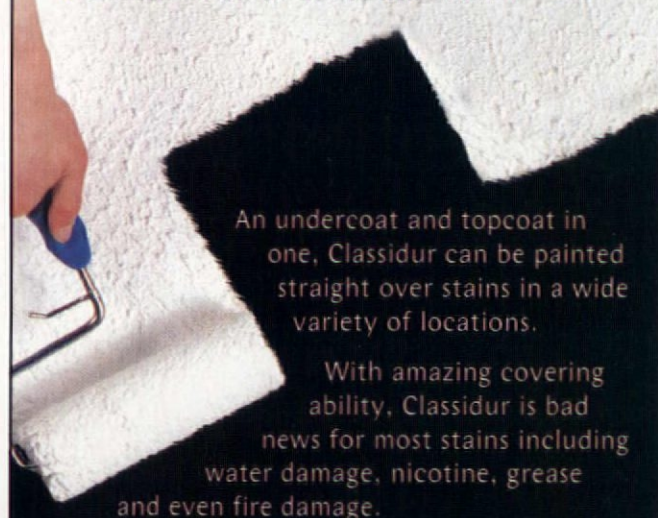
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# 50 50

**MATTHEW WELLS**

Structural engineer, Techniker

## What is the best building of the past 50 years?

The Sydney Opera House. It changed the way architects and engineers worked together and it set the scene in which I work. It is supposedly a piece of astonishing engineering, but it's a collaboration. Between 1957 and 1961, the 'unbuildable' competition-winning architectural scheme was gradually bent to suit the available technology and analytical capacity.

## What is the most significant innovation of the past 50 years?

Arup Associates' integrated practice of the 1960s and '70s. Since then the contribution of engineers has come to be more controlled by the architect's conception of what engineering should be.

## What is the best building product of the past 50 years?

The continuous flight augered pile, invented in North America in 1953. A great big corkscrew is driven into the ground and then slowly pulled out. As it comes up, concrete is poured down its hollow middle. You don't need expensive casings because the hole is supported by the concrete going in. It's fast, cheap, perfect for weak and rotten ground and has been critical in the development of marginal sites. Because they are sometimes sensitive to over-hasty operators, they are a good source of supervisory and practical training for young engineers.

## What innovation do you hope to see in the next 50 years?

Engineers will make a contribution to sustainable building by focusing on lightness, elegance of use and the minimum of means. This will come about primarily from continued instrumentation and observation of real buildings and checking these against, for example, the original computer models. So the computer processing of data will be key in developing a database of actual building behaviour.

*These interviews by Sutherland Lyall will form the basis of the 50/50 exhibition at Interbuild 2002.*

## ARB welcomes trade union chief Bill Morris to its ranks

Bill Morris, one of the biggest hitters in the trade union movement, is one of three new appointments to the board of the Architects Registration Board.

Morris is the first black board member and is a high-profile, likeable heavyweight, said acting chair Owen Luder: 'The ARB is all about dealing with people: architects, clients and consumers, and he has a lifetime's experience to offer.'

Luder said the ARB was delighted with the choice, which is made by Privy Councillors on the advice of the DTLR. The ARB has no say on who is appointed to its board. 'We've seen and heard him on the news and he's a very balanced sort of person and ideal for the ARB.'

Morris has been general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union since 1991 and is a non-executive director of the Bank of England.

ARB chief executive Robin Vaughan said the appointment of an Afro-Caribbean board member inevitably sent out the right message 'when you think of the criticisms made of the profession'.

But he said: 'He is a man of huge repute and eminence and that is the message that should come from his joining the board. The fact that he's a black man is neither here nor there.'

Former RIBA president Marco Goldschmied agreed and also welcomed the appointment of the second new board member, Jane Rees. She served as an acting registrar of ARB from 1999 to 2000 and 'was always on the ball', said Goldschmied.

Rees, a regulatory consultant, was a registrar and secretary of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council from 1986 to 1998. The third appointee, independent consultant Freida Stack, was most recently the deputy parliamentary secretary of the Co-operative Parliamentary Office.

Jez Abbott

## Camden battles for return of Farrell at Swiss Cottage

Camden council is talking tough to try and bring Terry Farrell & Partners back on board for the controversial Swiss Cottage project.

Brian Woodrow, chair of the council's development control committee, said it was looking at 'legal remedies' after the architect dropped out of the £75 million scheme (AJ 11.4.02). Farrell claimed developers Barratt and Dawney Day sidelined the firm.

Woodrow said he had chaired the meeting 'to approve the damn thing and I'm extremely unhappy'. The scheme was so controversial two meetings were held over five-and-a-half hours to hear objections on the use of public space, he said.

Meanwhile, Sir Terry Farrell and the council blitzed the phones at the weekend to try and smooth out a solution, Woodrow said. 'Terry sounded very upset and we made arrangements to meet the council leader. Jane Roberts feels as angry as I do. If we don't have a straight legal remedy, she's willing to have a go at Barratt personally. They are trying to get more local authority work through PFI.'

Woodrow said Sir Terry Farrell denied Barratt's claims that he had 'unilaterally' walked



Ian Simpson Architecture's Urbis building, the £30 million Lottery-funded exhibition space in Manchester, is close to completion. The six-storey centre in the 'Millennium Quarter' of the city (created after the 1996 IRA bombing) will celebrate the experience of urban living. The 8,000m<sup>2</sup> building is clad in pre-patinated copper and green glass. A top-floor restaurant will provide panoramic views across the city.

out on the project. Sir Terry was unavailable for comment.

Roland Grimm, from lobby group Camden Sports Campaign, hoped the council would use the split to save the existing sports hall and pool. 'This has been an absolute disaster and a shambles. Sadly most people are resigned to its loss.'

## Foster and Chipperfield fight it out for £210m LA museum

Five of the world's finest architects are fighting the final stages of a competition for a museum design costing up to £210 million. The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County has shortlisted David Chipperfield Architects, Foster and Partners, Swiss practice Herzog & de Meuron, Steven Holl Architects from New York and Boston's Machado and Silvetti Associates.

The teams will design additional buildings, as well as refurbish the museum's 1913 beaux arts-inspired building, in a project totalling 50,000m<sup>2</sup>.

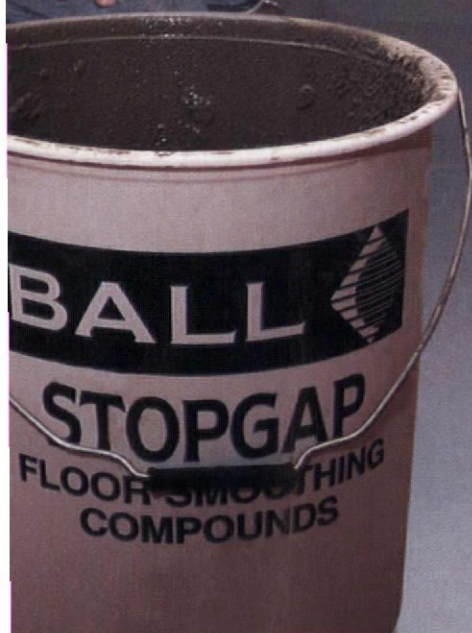
Final selection of the architect is due this summer, with the winner given until 2004 to come up with a design. Work on the first phase is expected to last for three years and cost £65 million. The museum stands in the heart of Exposition Park, a 65ha public area south of downtown LA.

Ann Muscat, executive vice-president and project director for the new museum, said the goal was to give to the community a world-class museum of natural and cultural history.



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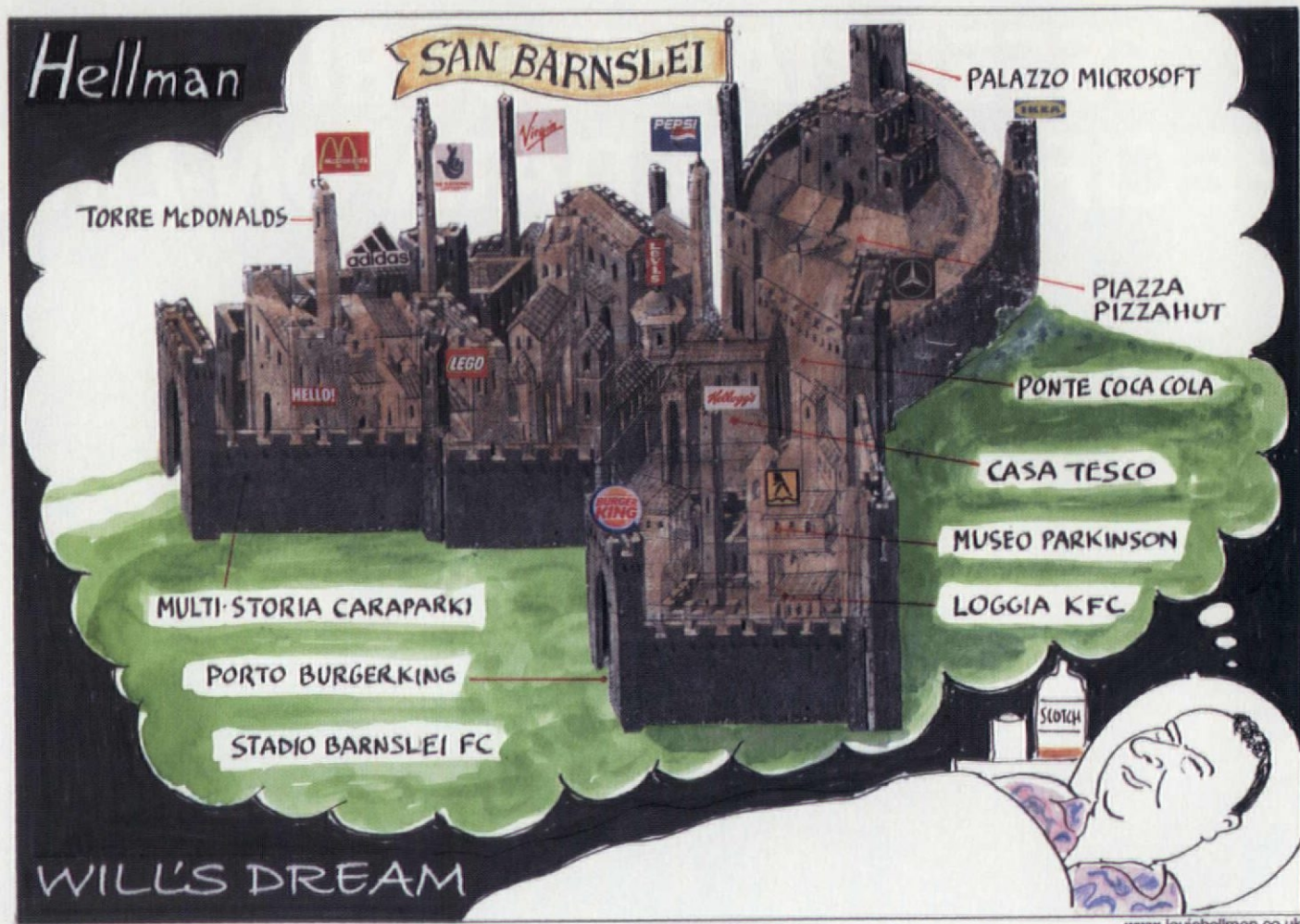
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## vital statistics

- The original £40 million estimate for the Scottish Parliament building has risen to £266 million, according to *The Economist*, which says EU rules forbid specifying local materials because it gives the suppliers an unfair advantage over those from other EU countries.
- Property-related activities take up about 15 per cent of GDP, making it one of the UK's largest sectors. The British Property Federation found that the sector employs 7 per cent of the workforce (about two million people), that commercial property assets are worth more than £625 billion, and that investment in commercial property takes a third of UK investment.
- Britain's fourth-biggest housebuilder, Bellway, sold a record 2,306 homes in the half year to February and saw interim profits rise by 11 per cent to nearly £40 million. It sees no end to the housing boom and says the market did not suffer after 11 September.

## Victoria Huttler reviews... ideas for a new cultural centre in Sittingbourne

This exhibition in Sittingbourne includes entries from 66 practices from as far afield as the USA and Japan. Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council invited architects to create a focal point for the town centre, to incorporate a community centre, library, heritage museum and other facilities including exhibition and conference spaces. The cultural centre is part of a long-term vision for Sittingbourne by Swale Borough Council which includes the creation of a cultural quarter for the town.

Sittingbourne has a traditional linear centre built around the A2 – the old Roman road running from Dover to London – and, other than its shopping centre, lacks a real heart. Having spent my school years in the town, I could relate to one submission, which noted: 'There is a feeling of time stood still about the place.' Little has changed in the 14 or so years since I had last visited, and a project like this in Sittingbourne, which could do much for the town and its people, is long overdue.

A number of the schemes, exhibited anonymously, refer to Sittingbourne's historical and social context: its brickmaking and paper industries, its sailing barge building on the Swale estuary and its surrounding hop fields. Ideas for the building include an appropriately named

'brick box' – referring to 'the architectural language of the town' – and a six-storey organic landmark that makes comparisons between Sittingbourne and Bilbao that could not fail to put the town firmly on the map.

For such a major public building like this, it is important for the schemes to speak to the public as well as the judging panel. Some of the boards show complex circulation plans or abstract models that are unlikely to translate easily for the lay person.

Though important to fully explain the schemes, the language could be simpler. One practice introduces its solution with: 'We see the node building as likened to an actively recombinant virus' – unlikely to mean much to the casual passer-by popping in during their lunch hour. Similarly, others displaying impressive CAD visuals or photo montages of the building in its context were seductive but failed to address more important issues.

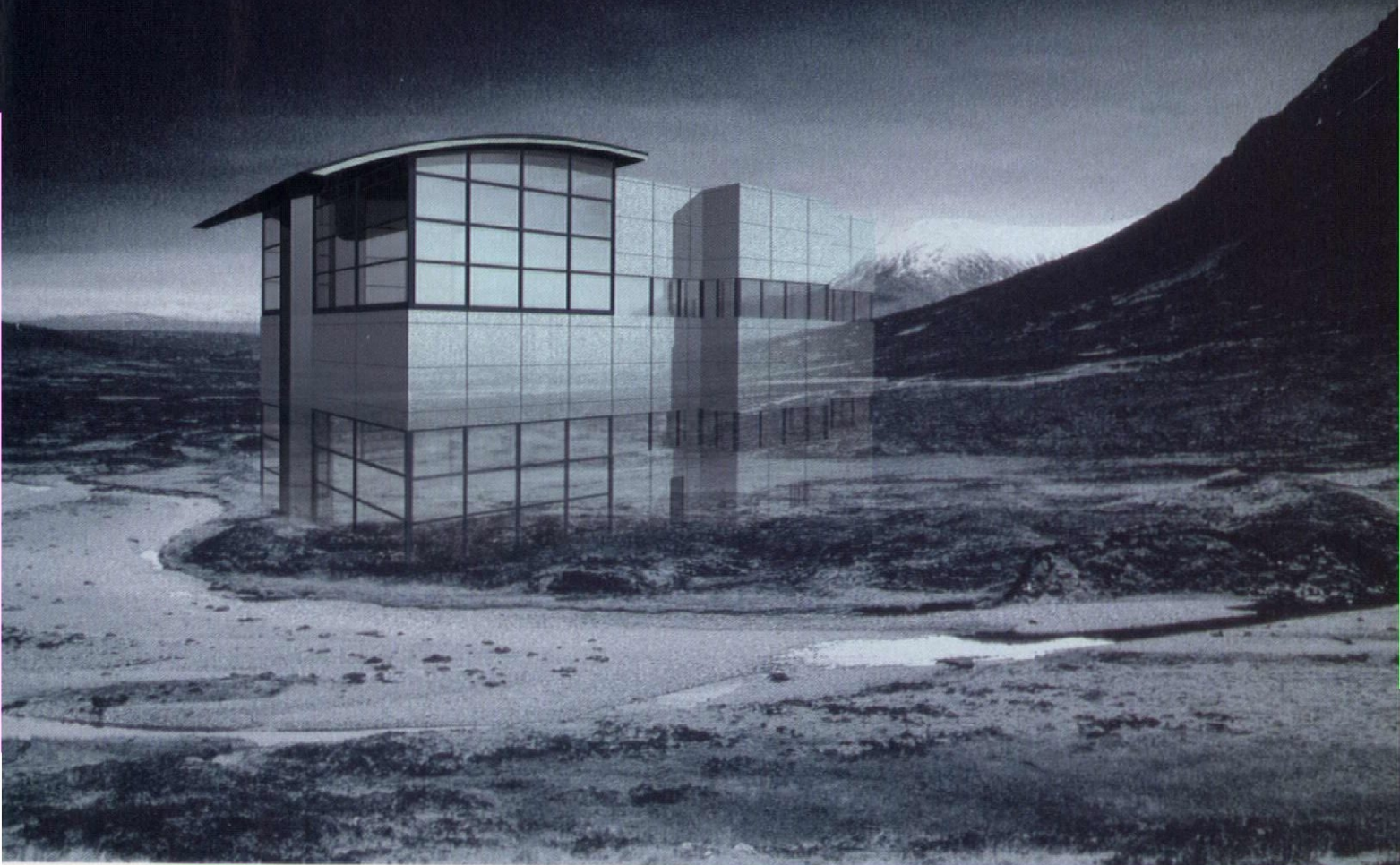
Exhibitions like this play an important role in creating a sense of involvement and ownership for the public and should aim to encourage and not alienate it.

AJ columnist Will Alsop chaired the judging of the competition and the winner will be announced shortly.

The exhibition is on display at Phoenix House in Sittingbourne until today. On May 6 it goes on display at Swale House in Sittingbourne for two to three weeks before moving on to the RIBA on 5 July. For further information, contact Ruth Gage at Kent Architecture Centre on 01634 401166



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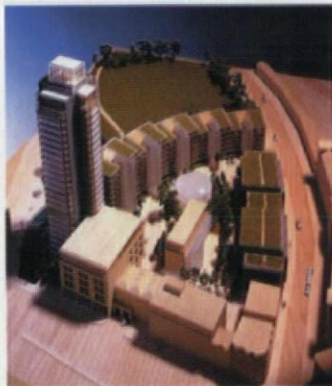


## ALSOPTO TALK AT SPECTRUM

Will Alsop will be giving this year's AJ/Spectrum Lecture on Wednesday 15 May at 6pm in the lecture theatre at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London. The event is part of the interior products fair Spectrum. Entry is on a first come, first served basis. For free admission to Spectrum, pre-register at [spectrum.exhibition.co.uk](http://spectrum.exhibition.co.uk) or tel 0870 4294420.

## BIG NAMES FOR THE RIBA

David Chipperfield, Zaha Hadid and Kjetil Thorsen are kicking off a series of RIBA talks on architecture and relevant contemporary issues. The three will discuss their recent museum projects with Chipperfield speaking at the V&A on 19 May, Hadid on 26 May and Thorsen on 16 June. For more details contact Architecture and Museums on 020 7942 2211.



John McAslan & Partners has won over planners with a £60 million mixed-use scheme (above) on the site of a former gin distillery in London's Deptford. The scheme includes a 26-storey tower and the conversion of two Victorian distillery warehouses to create flats, offices, live-work units, a cafe and a bookshop. The project is due to start on site later this year. +

## ONLINE COLLABORATION

How to manage projects online is the focus of a conference in Leeds on 15 May. 'Project Collaboration' is run by Construction Plus, the online arm of AJ publisher Emap Construct. Contact Joanne Head on 020 7505 6745 for details.

## YOUNG VIC AUDITIONS FOUR

London's Young Vic has shortlisted four architects for a £6 million rebuild of its William Howell-designed theatre. They are Adjaye Associates, Marks Barfield Architects, Tim Ronalds Architects and Haworth Tompkins. A winner will be chosen in May. +



Judges hailed the Westminster scheme (left) as an exemplar of urban design while Magna was only 'commended'

## Westminster and Magna in awards reversal of fortunes

Wilkinson Eyre's Magna has failed to impress the judges of this year's Civic Trust Awards announced today. The Stirling Prize winner was placed in the trust's third-place 'commendation' category.

Michael Hopkins and Partners triumphed, with its Nottingham University Jubilee Campus scheme, taking one of just seven prestigious 'special awards'; while the controversial £255 million Portcullis House/Westminster Station scheme picked up one of the 50 second category 'awards'.

Sir Michael Hopkins submitted his Westminster Underground Station scheme as a combined entry with the much-criticised Portcullis House – a move that may have cost him last year's Stirling Prize. But the Civic Prize judges concluded that the project was an exemplar of urban design, and awarded it the special Sustainability Award.

The Civic Trust Awards are judged on design excellence, but also on the relationship between the projects, the environment and the community in which they are set. There are four categories – seven 'special awards', 50 'awards', 79 'commendations' and 49 'mentions'.

Awards manager Eleanor Murkett admitted the decision to only commend Magna was 'a bit controversial'. But although the scheme was commendable, 'it didn't come across as an "exemplar" in terms of putting Rotherham on the map,' she said. Judges were also concerned that access to the site would be difficult for wheelchair users.

The Civic Trust Awards rotate on a two-year cycle between urban and rural projects. This year



was the turn of urban projects, so Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners' £57 million Eden Project was not eligible. For the same reason, Alsop Architects had to wait until this year to enter award-winning Peckham Library, despite completing it in 1999 and winning the Stirling Prize in 2000. +

Zoë Blackler

## CABE awards £90k grant for Cambridge centre launch

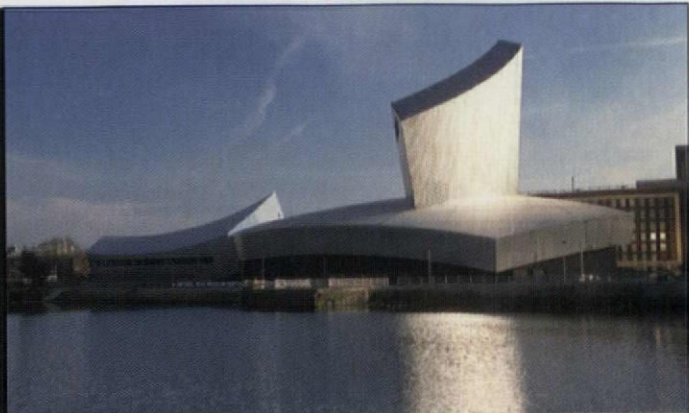
Design chiefs in East Anglia are launching a new architecture centre after CABE awarded it a £90,000 start-up grant. The funding will last for two years. Cambridge Architecture Centre is due to open in the summer following the appointment of a director.

Peter Carolin, former head of the architecture department at the University of Cambridge, is leading a board of trustees in the search. He wants someone with 'political nous' and PR expertise as well as admin and coordination skills. The first task for the director will be to launch a website and schools' education programme, said Carolin.

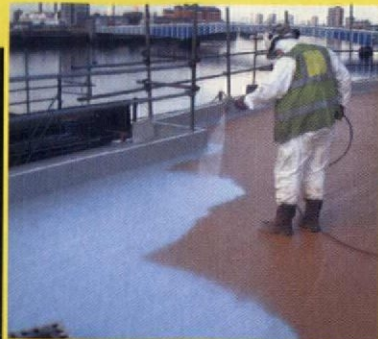
The centre, on a site in King's Parade, will need to raise an extra £125,000 on top of the CABE grant, and survival was going to be 'pretty tough', Carolin said. RIBA's eastern region set up an earlier centre in 1992 but was forced to close it in 1997.

'The first centre was too RIBA-oriented,' he said. 'This will be broader based with people who are not necessarily architects but committed to sustainability, the public realm and transport.' The time was right for a second centre because Cambridge was under massive pressure to expand, he said.

Daniel Libeskind's £30 million Imperial War Museum North in Manchester is now complete. It represents three shards of a shattered globe symbolising conflict on land, air and water. The earth shard contains exhibition galleries, an administration block and main entrance area; the water shard houses a restaurant; while the 55m high air shard offers panoramic views across the city. It will open to the public on 5 July.







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## Practice now relies increasingly on 'one stop' information support

"Major time savings – of at least two-thirds in research time – benefit not only individuals but also the time management and efficiency within the practice." Paul Johnson, Senior Systems Administrator at Stanley Bragg Architects in Colchester sums up today's industry view on the importance for faster and easier individual access to comprehensive supplier and regulatory

**"Major time savings for individuals and the practice"**

information plus other essential construction design services (eg: specification details and CAD support etc).

With the advent of internet-based services available via dedicated PCs for each individual within the practice (replacing their earlier CD-ROM 'single PC' license for the practice), the time and efficiency benefits for each project – most noticeably at peak pressure times – have been welcomed by all.

### Download, not browse

Individuals can now short-cut browsing 'searches' by downloading required materials to their desktop. This also cuts dramatically the time they need to spend

### Research on 'information overload' by Newcastle University put to good use

Researchers at the University, partnered with NBS, developed a search engine powered by complex techniques termed 'data mining' that enable busy users such as architects, surveyors, engineers and contractors to quickly locate very specific information from large volumes of raw data.

Information 'overload' has become a major concern across many industries, not just for the stress conditions (known as Information Fatigue Syndrome) but also for the serious toll on costly professional time. The internet has been found to be a major cost hazard in this respect.

The development of the 'data mining' techniques have been put to very successful use in the powerful new search engine (and user interface) developed for the new generation of the RIBA·ti Construction Information Service online that, in its first introduction more than a year ago ahead of any serious rival, already earned a great deal of loyal support among construction professionals. With its dynamic new search engine now well tested and performing to expectations, stress levels should start a rapid recovery.

online – so colleagues gain from faster access to the information provider site.

### One search portal, many answers

Paul Johnson points also to the essential need for 'one stop' information services.

RIBA·ti Construction Information Service (CIS) plus Specify-it is their prime source for the multiple project types they deal with. Technical Indexes linked sources provide all the relevant information required, so they have not felt the need to venture far beyond these databases.

Another, not insignificant, benefit has been the increased enthusiasm shown by individuals in use of the technology. There is added incentive due to its relevance for CPD and cutting edge skills.

## More than 18,000 CAD drawings online in new joint venture link

The new joint venture partnership announced by Technical Indexes and FastrackCAD will enable immediate downloads of drawings in CAD digital format from over 70 of the top UK building component manufacturers. Over 40,000 CAD drawings have been downloaded by specifiers in just 12 months.

Specify-it.com subscribers (via tionestop.com) will now enjoy a seamless connection to the FastrackCAD web site and architectural CAD databases

FastrackCAD drawings are compatible with AutoCAD 2002 and are produced to the highest industry standards (conforming to ISO9002 procedures) – making them invaluable for the precise planning and specification of building products.

The additional benefits of online CAD downloads will greatly enhance the time and costs savings for users of Specify-it.

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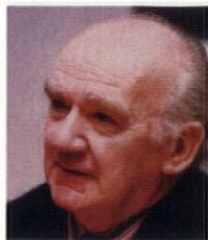
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# Sir Peter Shephard: 1913-2002

Using principles which are as fresh and relevant today as they were in the '60s and '70s, Sir Peter successfully combined the three disciplines of architecture, planning and landscape in a way that few others have managed. By Robert Hughes and Steven Pidwill

Sir Peter Shephard, who died last Thursday aged 88, was one of two architects who worked with Sir Patrick Abercrombie in the 1940s preparing the Greater London Plan. His interest in planning developed from there, particularly the idea of planning based on architectural form, not just general principles.

Sir Peter then moved to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning for three years under Sir William Holford. One of two architects and two engineers designing the original masterplan for Stevenage New Town, he became deputy chief architect at the age of 35 when there was 'great enthusiasm but no money to build anything'.

After a brief return to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, he joined Derek Bridgewater's small practice in Liverpool. Gabriel Epstein became a partner seven years later in 1955, and in 1964 the practice of Shephard & Epstein – which by that time had some schools experience but nothing larger – won the commission for the new University of Lancaster, to be built on a greenfield site some three minutes from the city centre. The resulting Development Plan – essentially flexible mixed-use buildings along a linear pedestrian spine with circulation and car parking arranged around a perimeter loop-road – was drawn impromptu as a sketch in the selection interview. It

has stood Lancaster in good stead ever since, as has its marriage of pragmatic humane Modernism and long-term landscape design.

Essentially one of the leading liberal practices of the 1960s and '70s, Sir Peter described it as 'a kind of school of architecture' working mainly on university and housing projects. The principles evolved then by Shephard with Epstein are as fresh and relevant today. In a short piece, entitled 'The Spaces In Between', describing the Landscape Development Plan for the University of Pennsylvania, Sir Peter argued that 'if a campus has an image in the mind as a place to be loved and admired it is likely to be formed not so much by the buildings as the spaces in between'. Always primarily concerned with how people would use buildings, how places would grow organically and how materials would last – in preference to the individual 'statements' of what we might now call signature architects – the approach of the practice at that time was equivalent to the concern for sustainability today. Although very successful in public housing, the practice eschewed the contemporary rush towards high-rise solutions in favour of a high-density, low-rise approach. The resulting stripped-down, but durable Modernism, has survived successfully in the London boroughs of Newham, Islington and Camden, recognised by a

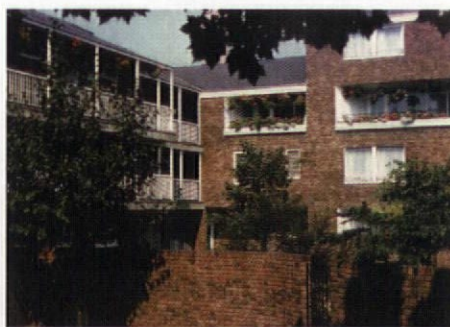
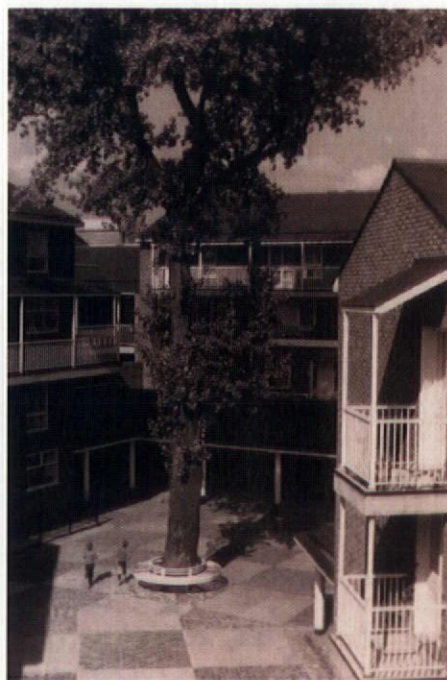
string of Civic Trust, Housing Design and RIBA awards.

Sir Peter was knighted in 1980, having been president of the Architectural Association from 1954-55, the Institute of Landscape Architects from 1965-66 and the RIBA from 1969-71. A natural teacher, he was Dean at the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania from 1971-78, introducing a new undergraduate course of environmental design which taught architecture, planning and landscape as one discipline.

Renowned for his drawing skill, he effortlessly penned exceptionally beautiful and keenly observed sketches of animals and birds while ostensibly engaged in committee or business meetings. He was the epitome of the venerable English gentleman – always polite, never lost for the right words and with many amusing and disarming anecdotes to hand, his vast experience and significant achievements worn lightly.

We will remember him fondly for the part he played in establishing the character of the office as a liberal studio, for establishing architectural principles that continue to endure, for his warmth and sense of humour, and his delightful ability to boil weighty subjects down into plain English – such as 'fun, reputation and money' as the objectives of the practice.

*Robert Hughes and Steven Pidwill are directors of Shephard Epstein Hunter*



Top left: Sir Peter Shephard's pen and ink drawing of development proposals for part of London's Bloomsbury, 1969. Bottom left: townscape drawing of Tunsgate in Guildford, 1965. Middle and top right: Piggott Street housing development in Stepney, east London, designed around an existing tree. Bottom right: Lancaster University's 1970s Alexandra Square, connecting its flexible mixed-use buildings along a linear pedestrian spine





## Better to risk mockery than allow design to stagnate

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## editorial

In 1847 a train driver crossing Robert Stephenson's bridge over the River Dee noticed a 'sinking' sensation before five carriages and the girders crashed into the river below. The Royal Commission which was established to investigate the failure was dubbed – by no less a figure than Isambard Kingdom Brunel – 'the Commission for Stopping Further Improvements in Bridge Building'.

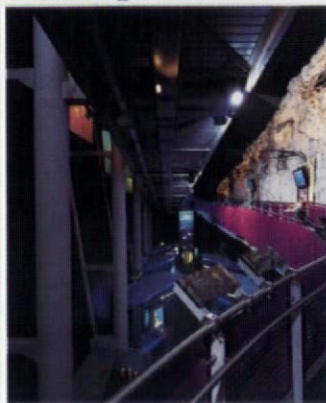
The causes and effects of this – and various other mishaps which haunt the history of construction – are described by Clive Richardson in this week's technical and practice section. Arguing that disasters have been essential triggers to improvements, both in technical knowledge and in legislation, Richardson pleads for a little more tolerance towards those who design innovative structures which turn out to be flawed. Nowadays, of course, we are a little less sanguine about threats to human safety. It is no longer acceptable to view the odd accidental death as an occupational hazard and an inevitable cost of change. But modern society is also increasingly well-equipped to accommodate controlled experimentation. The combination of stringent building regulations, the threat of litigation and the spectre of public scrutiny (aside from basic human decency) are sufficient to persuade clients to cover the costs of combining innovation with minimal risk. Take the glazed roof/public promenade at Sunderland Glass Centre: the top layer of glass began to crack but additional layers below ensured that there was never any danger of anybody plunging through the roof, or of those inside the building being hit by falling glass.

If construction remains a risky business it is largely due to an unacceptably cavalier attitude towards safety on site. Far more people are injured by slothfulness, sloppiness or downright stupidity than by the antics of adventurous professionals prepared to push the boundaries of design. Perhaps we should be a little less quick to mock cracking glass, swaying bridges and leaking roofs. Reputations are more at risk than human lives. Development demands a spirit of adventure. And the only people who can be absolutely certain of safeguarding their reputation are those who resolutely play it safe.

Isabel Allen

## letters

### Role of exhibition is vital to a design's success



Thank you for your excellent review of *The Deep* in Hull (AJ 11.4.02). As one of the last of the big Lottery projects, it is a dramatic achievement and a testament to the possibilities of multidisciplinary collaboration.

Sir Terry Farrell spoke at the Hull School of Architecture on 21 March and gave an excellent account of the genesis and progress of the design. With a prompt from one of my colleagues, Sir Terry acknowledged the crucial role of the exhibition designer, John Csáky Associates, in realising the overall concept for the visitor experience.

Tellingly, Sir Terry expressed his belief that architecture and exhibition design form a continuum of interests. The urban relationships of built form and communicative experience of content are equally important to the creation of design concepts for visitor attractions. This is one of the great lessons of the past decade, which future clients would be wise to acknowledge by appointing design teams of requisite expertise right from the beginning of a project.

With this in mind, I take exception to one of your reviewer's comments. The interiors of Farrell's Centre for Life in Newcastle upon Tyne were not 'commandeered' by the exhibition designers (AJ 6.7.00). Event Communications produced an

excellent exhibition for the designated exhibition spaces. It threads its way through a forest of unnecessarily distracting columns and beneath a superfluous skylight in a way that explores and delights in the transition from ground level organic space to mezzanine dark space. More importantly, it provides a full two-and-a-half hours of entertainment and education and addresses a diverse audience very successfully. If the interior architecture is not perfect, neither is the exhibition. Perhaps both architects and designers were still learning about this type of collaboration at the time.

There are some sloppy details of finish, and cleaning the exhibition must be a nightmare. Like the exhibition in the Centre for Life, *The Deep's* also includes views down into the exhibition space. The difference is that they are more controlled and the tops of free-standing exhibits more considered. The quality of graphics, audio, audio-visual and 3D exhibitry is what we have grown to expect in recent years – excellent.

The weakest links are always the interactive elements, not because the communication design is any less successful but because of the difficulty of sustaining a programme of exhibit maintenance, evaluation, redevelopment and replacement.

I sincerely hope that *The Deep* generates the income necessary to renew its high-quality exhibitry – for year-on-year success, repeat visits and audience development are the names of the game.

*Dr Geoffrey Matthews, Hull School of Architecture*

### We must work together to maintain control

I am writing in response to Zoë Blackler's article regarding calls by the ARB to gain control over



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Check out new images and stories from the website's news offering, such as the new look proposed for the De La Warr Pavilion. The scheme (right) has been designed by John McAslan and Partners.



The Architects' Journal welcomes your letters, which should preferably be typed double-spaced. Please address them to the editor at 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, fax them on 020 7505 6701, or e-mail them to [angela.newton@construct.emap.com](mailto:angela.newton@construct.emap.com) to arrive by 10am on the Monday before publication. Letters intended for publication should include a daytime telephone number. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

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the use of the word 'architectural' (AJ 28.3.02).

The British Institute of Architectural Technologists (BIAT) is aware of this issue and has in the past liaised with the government on such moves. It continues to monitor the situation with considerable interest and some concern.

As your readers are no doubt aware, any proposals would have to be the subject of full consultation with all affected professions, and BIAT, as the qualifying body in architectural technology, would have to be an integral part of the consultation process to ensure the protection of its members' status. Full members of BIAT, designated MBIAT, are qualified professionals – competent to work in their field, which is complementary to the role of architects – and they are widely recognised as such.

We have no doubt that there are unscrupulous and unqualified individuals who mislead the public. We are keen to work with the other professional bodies, including the ARB, in whatever way we can to protect the public. We have a healthy relationship with the ARB and believe that it is also positive about working with us on this issue.

Part of this protection must be to ensure that qualified architectural technologists are able to maintain their vital role in the construction process.

*Les Bourne, senior administrator, British Institute of Architectural Technologists, London*

### Protect our role, ignore bureaucratic labels

The protection of title is hardly an effective means of achieving protection of the profession, the consumer or the environment. It is a label of status and, above all, without the protection of function, describes architects as pedantic elitists.

I spent numerous years at

university learning about the principles of design and how society, politics and technology have informed design throughout history. I also learned about contracts, specifications and law/statute. I have been applying this knowledge since, and all the while faced positive and negative criticism of my efforts. I would hope that this qualifies me to be able to design buildings, not to a title.

Architecture is a new profession. It is a label describing a group that protects its membership. It is, like all professions, exclusionary by virtue of this alone. Architects have become scapegoats for the increasing ugliness of the environment. The bureaucratic mazes that need to be negotiated stifle quality just as much as they attempt to control rampant development for profit. Add to this gross ideological conservatism massaged by constant media propaganda. Mass media is the voice box of idiots without editing. Not every voice should be heard, but the media is edited by the power behind the will.

Woe is me for not living during the Roman Empire. Architectural language (not the clothes that buildings wear but the matter of their space) always describes the era's attitude. Then, huge arenas to demonstrate power over the people. Now, stacked offices to demonstrate our placeless complicity with financial power. And endless repetition of country rural cottages in suburbia to demonstrate our nostalgic distaste for this modern world we all comply with.

So protect architects' function, protect socially and environmentally conscious design, not elitist bureaucratic nonsense about the label you call yourself.

*Conor McKee  
London*

### Get the story straight on urban renaissance

We read with interest Irena Bauman's challenging letter concerning the Yorkshire Forward Urban Renaissance Programme (AJ 14.3.02).

Unfortunately, the letter may have given your readers an erroneous impression based on a genuine misunderstanding of the philosophy behind the programme. We feel we must put the record straight.

The Regional Urban Renaissance Programme is ambitious, designed to secure 'long-term... civic commitment...' and wider community involvement, including local professional practices. The challenge was where to begin. Alan Simpson, when appointed director of urban renaissance by Yorkshire Forward last year, picked up the gauntlet.

A two-year period was set for work on the genesis of a long-term regional Urban Renaissance and, at the start of that period, a three- to four-month catalytic, creative engagement with a group of towns was proposed.

'Town-teams' were generated in those places from within the community and to provide civic leadership. Urban design practices were invited to tender through the appropriate public procurement processes and to rise to the challenge. Considerable interest was shown by professional practices in this country, mainland Europe and North America. As a result of this competition, a panel was established to develop specific responses in the towns themselves through their 'town-teams', and to help create a framework for the development of a full regional programme.

Our particular role is to act as adviser to Alan Simpson and his colleagues, with whom we form a core steering group for the programme, while also being part of the wider Urban Renais-

sance Panel in our own right, based on our regional knowledge and experience.

From the start, as regionally based members, we have advocated the development of the creative involvement of regional practice from urban, landscape and building design and within education. The broader aim is to evolve a sustainable urban design culture woven into economic, social and cultural regeneration initiatives.

Invitations were issued at the '4x4 series' to gauge interest in the process of forming a strong regional base to diversify and support the experience derived from the initial creative impetus. This is consistent with the aim of the programme rather than a 'quick-win' approach. The most appropriate process, once defined, will be formalised and well publicised. We hope it will attract full and wide regional interest.

*John Thorp, Narendra Bajarla, Robert Powell, Urban Renaissance Panel Steering Group*

### Just two men with a pick and a wheelbarrow



I write with reference to your article on the work at the Royal Albert Hall (AJ 21.3.02).

Can it be really true that two men dug the ventilation tunnel by hand? If there is any justice, these men must be named and honoured.

A plaque in their memory should surely be erected at the tunnel entrance. The construction industry needs its heroes.

*Eugene Doyale, Middlesex*



Take a look round key buildings of recent years, using the IPIX pictures on our site. The buildings can be viewed in 360° using the computer mouse. Go to [www.ajplus.co.uk/photos](http://www.ajplus.co.uk/photos)

We've added more buildings to our inspirational website, [www.ajspecification.com](http://www.ajspecification.com). They include Evans and Shalev's Truro Courts of Justice and Richard Murphy's Tolbooth Arts Centre.

Carey Jones Architects has started work on this £150 million dockside scheme in Leeds. Find out more about Clarence Docks – including 600 homes, a hotel and footbridge – from the web's news section.



## letters extra

### Shake off this apathy – stand up and be counted

The RIBA ballot papers arrived this morning. The thing that immediately struck me from the election statements was that George Ferguson alone felt it necessary to include a list of his nominees. Some impressive names are included, but will these same people also be voting for him?

There is nothing in the rules to say that a member must vote for the candidate they nominated. I would be willing to nominate any member who is enthusiastic enough to stand. The main problem is apathy – on past record only 25 per cent will bother to vote.

I want to see change. I nominated David Thorpe but will be voting for Annette Fisher.

**Nick Waterhouse, Middlesex**

### Cut off in the prime of my ballot paper

I noted in the recently received ballot papers that the final paragraph of my statement was cut off with the word 'Encouraging...'

The final paragraph should have read: 'Finally, we need new and young blood in the profession from diverse backgrounds, culture and gender. Encouraging established practices to take placements from schools as well as universities – consciously including women and minorities in those selections. Promoting these skilled young men and women, and demonstrating through example that excellence does cut across all boundaries. These are incentives that are rewarding to all who choose to get involved.'

Please visit [www.fisherassoc.ltd.com](http://www.fisherassoc.ltd.com) for further information.

Finally, I don't understand why George Ferguson keeps writing about Will Alsop not resigning from the RIBA, as if it were all down to him.

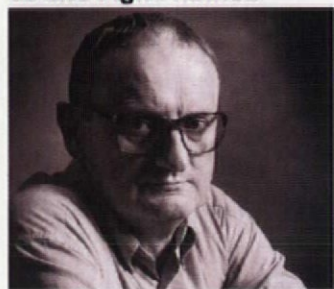
Just to correct a few miscon-

ceptions about this, I met with Will last Friday who confirmed that not only would he have not voted for either of the other two candidates, but that he had in fact already sent in his ballot papers and had voted for me.

I hope others will follow suit.

**Annette Fisher, Fisher Associates, London SW10**

### Match the right people to the right homes



It appears it is mainly developers and Martin Pawley (AJ 4.4.02) who feel that future housing needs can only be met using green belt land.

The public perception of idyllic country living has all but gone, following years of land pollution, flooding and foot-and-mouth disease, and despite the lack of transport systems necessary to make urban areas work better, regeneration has already started.

Rising house prices – a continuous and natural process – has been a particular godsend to tatty urban areas which for decades have been deteriorating. People regenerating their homes in ever-increasing numbers now see the crisis as one of providing equivalent improvements with schools, medical needs, facilities and jobs etc, to match aspirations in their areas. It takes time and a million houses shortfall over 20 years would be more serious if you were talking about four-bedroom detached houses with three parking spaces – you are not. The movement of people – single and couples – into appropriate accommodation

that suits them, rather than family houses, will reduce that deficit.

The greatest contribution to sustainability would be people living in the correct accommodation, not necessarily building new homes.

Architects are delivering the goods by not building large estates of family houses in green belts, but by turning their attention to the priorities of the town, instead.

The countryside should be valued for what it is, not for its potential development value and its lessening use for farming does not lessen its attraction and environmental value any the less.

**Rex Hawkesworth, Portsmouth**

### Ditch the rules and look to what people want

To take Martin Pawley's article a little further, any local plan revision these days appears to be predicated on the notion of something the government likes to call 'sustainability'.

There is little attempt to consider what people actually need, and want. Naturally, the countryside needs new development, like any other part of the UK, in order to survive; and vigorous efforts by the planning system to deny development can only contravene natural justice and economic good sense.

I consider that I am equally justified in saying that low-density, loose-fit industrial and residential development in the countryside to satisfy the needs of rural dwellers, is as, or more, sustainable than high-density, highly serviced development in urban areas. It is also what an increasing number of people aspire to.

Many people will recognise the modern nightmare of new high-density housing estates on the edge of industrial towns, where each breadwinner has a car (seldom less than two per

household) and where one breadwinner may travel 50 miles down a motorway each day to a business park, and one breadwinner has to take the children to school(s), go on to a job, collect the children, go to the supermarket, take children on to evening activities etc. Nor can they provide for themselves.

The rural dwellers could do this, too, but also have the option of having workplaces and home close by each other, and of providing for themselves.

Most of us will recognise Brittany as a mainly rural area. Its people embrace the concept of ribbon development on the outskirts of their villages, where local entrepreneurs can set up in business on an equal footing to their urban competitors. Farmers have always had to be inventive people and are as a result very resourceful. Their skills need to be encouraged at or very near to their homes.

I say cut the crap, look at what is needed and set in place the means of achieving economic regeneration. Ditch the suffocating rulebooks and draw up a loose-fit framework for new and urgent development.

**Richard Hewart-Jaboor, Shrewsbury**

### Lighten up and take it for what it really is

Really, what is the problem with that young fogey Mr Stampy feety (AJ 11.4.02)? Astragal is architects' one page of fun, where one must realise no one's beliefs really matter a jot. Perhaps we should take a stab at the stern face of *Journal of Architectural History*, or snook a poop at the directionless *Things*.

Come on Gavin, you must admit that Foster's weight far outreaches that of Alsop or even Broadway Malyan. He is without doubt the contemporary Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

**Rose Peeters, Bunwell, Norfolk**





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will also

## No certainty of outcome for the RIBA drawings collection

The V&A's recent unveiling of its architecture gallery and the decision of RIBA Council to continue plans for the drawings collection to find a permanent home there imply certainty of outcome.

But, as in life, freedom of action and certainty of outcome are the province of cats and the very rich. The apparent certainty of the future location of the collection is in reality dependent first on a successful Heritage Lottery Fund application (the track record on this is not encouraging) and second, on the RIBA and the V&A being able to raise several million pounds to complement any grant.

Supposing one of these elements fails to materialise. Are there other options?

If the works were curated by the Royal Academy it would be possible for it to show a continuous and varied exhibition at all times as well as, I believe, continue to add to the collection more easily – I am sure that other architects

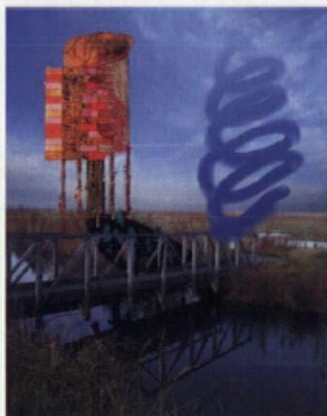
would be more likely to contribute work if they could see that its keepers were using it and displaying it in an intelligent manner.

These days, museums have no money to acquire anything. The V&A, for example, would like to buy one of my own works (pictured) but, sadly, it cannot find the money. The RIBA collection, on the other hand, has never asked. If someone did, I would give one – or even two – because I would feel honoured to be part of a continuum in a wonderful collection.

The drawings in the hands of the RA would

be more visible and more special than if they were buried in the vastness of the V&A. The RA is an organisation of practising artists and architects who would have the chance to actively use the archive as a part of their work.

Of course, the name 'drawings collection' today is dubious, as fewer architects are actually drawing. They more actively explore other media, notably the computer. No doubt the amblings into electronica will further develop into films. I welcome the development because the 'architectural drawing' (however elegant) has proved highly unsuccessful in its ability to communicate to the layperson.



The new media is slowly becoming a much more successful vehicle in promoting both dialogue with the client and the public at large. All this development is not being added to the existing collection and for this reason, the new home and more importantly the curatorship of the

collection needs to be determined now.

In its new accommodation, the RA undoubtedly has the flexibility not only to provide exhibition space, but also a cinema that would allow programmes of new work to be screened. Indeed, the collection could well become a centre for architectural and urban consultation.

But, of course, for the collection to go to the RA would also require a successful grant application and successful fundraising. As I said, it is easier being a cat.

*WA, from my desk at Parkgate Studio*

'The V&A would like to buy one of my own works but, sadly, it cannot find the money. The RIBA has never asked'

people

Simon Conder has won this year's AJ/Robin Ellis Design Build Small Projects competition with a stunningly elegant garden room (pictured) in storey-height timber and glass panels and some seemingly risky structural glass, courtesy of engineer Dewhurst MacFarlane.

Conder says the whole structure seemed rather floppy before the glass was fitted. Then everything locked into place.

Fascinating as this kind of thing is, and however good his practice may be at it, Conder has had enough. 'I don't want to do any more small-scale domestic work,' he says.

'Yeah, yeah, yeah,' you say to yourself. Since when have small practices been able to pick and choose as simply as that? But Conder's alternative vision is not of wallowing in the lucrative delights of fat cat mega-scale commercial development. He says. 'I quite like the idea of the intellectual challenge involved in making money. But we are small because we want to do it all ourselves: we find it difficult to delegate, especially delegating working drawings.' So no design and build there.

The Conder practice's work had been in the £50,000-£400,000 bracket. Now it is working on a couple of commissions worth several millions each: the public sector work is starting to come in. Conder is finding that housing associations are veering uncomfortably in the direction of commercial developers. Happily, given Conder's need to do everything and not delegate, he has persuaded one housing association client not to do design and build. But he has plainly been personally persuasive. He says: 'Whenever I get out there, it's clear that their idea of architects is not ours. We are not trusted on grounds of value for money and of reliability. But as a practice we have had to learn how much things cost because quite often our small-scale work hasn't had the budget to include a quantity surveyor.'

Conder wants to work with the public sector. It is not just because the projects are bigger but because he has a commitment to the idea of the role of architecture in the public service. 'It dates back to the time I was at college,' he says. 'We inherited the general propositions of our previous generation.'

That generation had largely worked only in the public sector because of the straitened commercial circumstances after the end of the war. It is a position he has come to from enforced periods of introspection. In the depths of the early '90s recession, lots of



**Despite his success in winning this year's AJ/Robin Ellis Design Build Small Projects competition, Simon Conder is determined to move away from small-scale domestic schemes and is committed to working in the public sector**  
by sutherland lyall. photograph by guy jordan

## the big issue



practices lost jobs with cataclysmic speed. Conder was no exception. In six months his office lost 90 per cent of its work and the office went from 12 staff to two. He says: 'All that closing down meant I had to think about what I really wanted to do. Lots of people simply gave up architecture.'

His arguments against small domestic commissions are deep-seated but they also turn on their exigencies. There's the fact that this scale of work involves close-up relationships with clients. Conder is either weighed down by experience or overly self-deprecating about his ability to understand clients. This kind of work is also at too small a physical scale to allow much in the way of architectural invention and you have to go to extraordinary lengths to get the detail right because the client is going to see it every morning over the cornflakes. And eventually hate you for it. Conder is probably incapable of not having to get every detail right. He has

done some really inventive things, such as the polycarbonate and timber rooftop gazebo at a converted warehouse round the corner from his office (AJ 27.1.00). Then there are a number of elegant fit-outs in adjacent warehouses—plus a rubber-clad beach house starting soon on the Dungeness shingle near the late Derek Jarman's house and stone garden. He says: 'We started off with the idea of not doing any drawings to see if we could relate to the ad hocness of the surrounding dwellings. That didn't last long. But we found this wonderful German rubber roofing called Prelasti. They'll make up all the elevations with cut-outs for windows and doors in their factory and ship it over.'

Because he is the son of Neville Conder, as in Casson & Conder, you might think he suffered from the famous architectural father effect. Not so. He has been determined from the beginning not to let it get in the way.

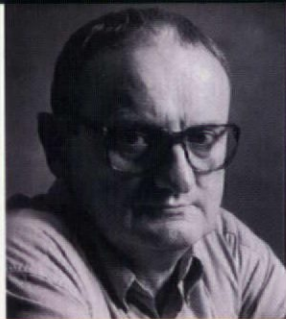
He went to the AA and the RCA. After this

he went to work at Basildon New Town, then producing some very interesting housing. He says: 'I was given great chunks of work to do which was very unwise because I had almost no experience.' But he began learning the architectural nuts and bolts at Basildon and later at Lambeth, under Ted Hollamby.

In 1984 he started his own practice in the darkroom of his typographer partner, Chrissie Charlton. She moved with him to a couple of rooms over Zwemmers in the Charing Cross Road, then to an office in Shoreditch, not far from the present Conder office in the basement of an old warehouse off the bottom of Islington's City Road. He bought the building with a group of artists who have now all sold out to City types.

There, in what was once a half-flooded wreck, there is a big, cool, grey and white space with about six staff working at VDUs and the odd drawing board. And some models of cool, bigger buildings yet to come.





martin pawley

## When opportunity comes knocking, a tide of untrained opinion floods in

News that the United States Office of Homeland Security (the Federal body established in the wake of 11 September), has been inundated by so many security ideas that their inventors are having to wait five weeks just for an acknowledgement, has prompted interest in the fate of ideas in the hands of governments for the first time since the end of the Cold War. In America, the Pentagon, too, has had to take on extra staff to help evaluate 12,000 ways to defeat terrorism sent in by the American public, and 'In-Q-Tel', the business venture fund backed by the CIA, is receiving nearly 200 business proposals a month along the same lines. Elsewhere, notably in the EU, there may be different priorities, but the same scouring of the pot of invention is going on nonetheless.

Of course, one must allow for duplication, as there always is in such circumstances. In the 19th century, there were universal government requests for proposals for escape-proof prisons, unsinkable battleships and quick-firing small arms, but much of the ingenuity deployed was frittered away trying to bypass key patents. By 1900, the emphasis had changed, with the largest prizes reserved for adventures such as the first successful heavier-than-air flight, the first heavier-than-air flight across the English Channel, and eventually the first across the Atlantic both ways.

In the 20th century, the tack changed again. In Britain, towards the end of the Second World War, more than 1,600 designs for prefabricated houses were submitted to the then Ministry of Works as a response to the announcement of an 'Emergency Factory-Made' housing programme. In the end, these 1,600 were winnowed down to less than a dozen types, of which only four were produced in any numbers – a disappointingly low success rate that is typical of any free-for-all where private citizens compete with established manufacturers with their own engineers.

The thing about these events is that they are not only open competitions in the established sense but also a low-cost trawl through occult or untrained opinion. Nonetheless, although little information has been released on the American proposals, it would be very surprising if a good number of them did not come from the High-Tech wing of the architectural profession.

Certainly the 1975 Mountbatten Report on 'escape-proof prisons' contained much architectural evidence in addition to the surprising quantity of

amateur nonsense it took on board. See, for example, the farcical suggestion that prison bars should be made of glass tubes filled with indelible dye so that any convict who escaped by breaking them would turn red or blue and be instantly recognisable.

Three years before the Mountbatten Report on prisons was published, there was a request for proposals from Chile, where a beleaguered Unidad Popular government – whose most memorable slogan was 'Casa o muerte!' (houses or death) – was desperately trying to build houses without money. In 1972, the

government held a conference on the housing problem that was attended by architects, system builders and housing fanatics from all over the world. At that time, the Chilean government's five-year plan called for 400,000 units per year by the end of this period, and the foreign experts were there to explain how it could be done.

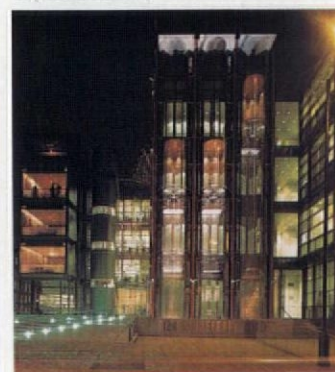
Like the US government 30 years later, Unidad Popular was bombarded with suggestions, but in the end, the amateurs and fanatics – including one who proposed using bottles instead of bricks and converting car body panels into cladding for houses – were forced to give way to hard-nosed Cuban government representatives promoting a large production plant for an East German concrete panel system, which had originally been supplied to Cuba as part of a Soviet aid programme.

**'The Pentagon has had to take on extra staff to help evaluate 12,000 ways to defeat terrorism sent in by the public'**

## a life in architecture

nick  
ross

*Crimewatch's Nick Ross does not think he has one favourite building, but in his top 10 would be Richard Rogers' Channel 4 headquarters in London (pictured). 'It's just what a flagship HQ should look like for a broadcasting patron of the arts – fun, but handsome, sitting well in its environment and, so far as I have experienced it, functional too.'*



Another choice would be Brookes Stacey Randall's water tower on London's Holland Park roundabout. 'A functional overflow for the London water ring main, which might easily have been a disfiguring tower,' says Ross. 'But it's been designed as a glass work of art, illuminated, with cascading blue water, and – once again – fun.'

Ross' dislikes are many. They include the huge shopping centre and bus garage above Hammersmith Tube Station – 'a squat, dull, unintelligent accretion of dreariness,' he calls it. 'No doubt the designers will blame the clients, but somewhere there must be an architect who thought that he or she was giving of their best.'

Ross goes on to decry 'the ribbon development around so many cities, old as well as new – almost unrelentingly dull and plodding'; 'most holiday housing in the west country, a disgraceful affront to the landscape'; and 'the steady expansion of shopfronts everywhere out across the pavements from what were once handsome old terraces'.

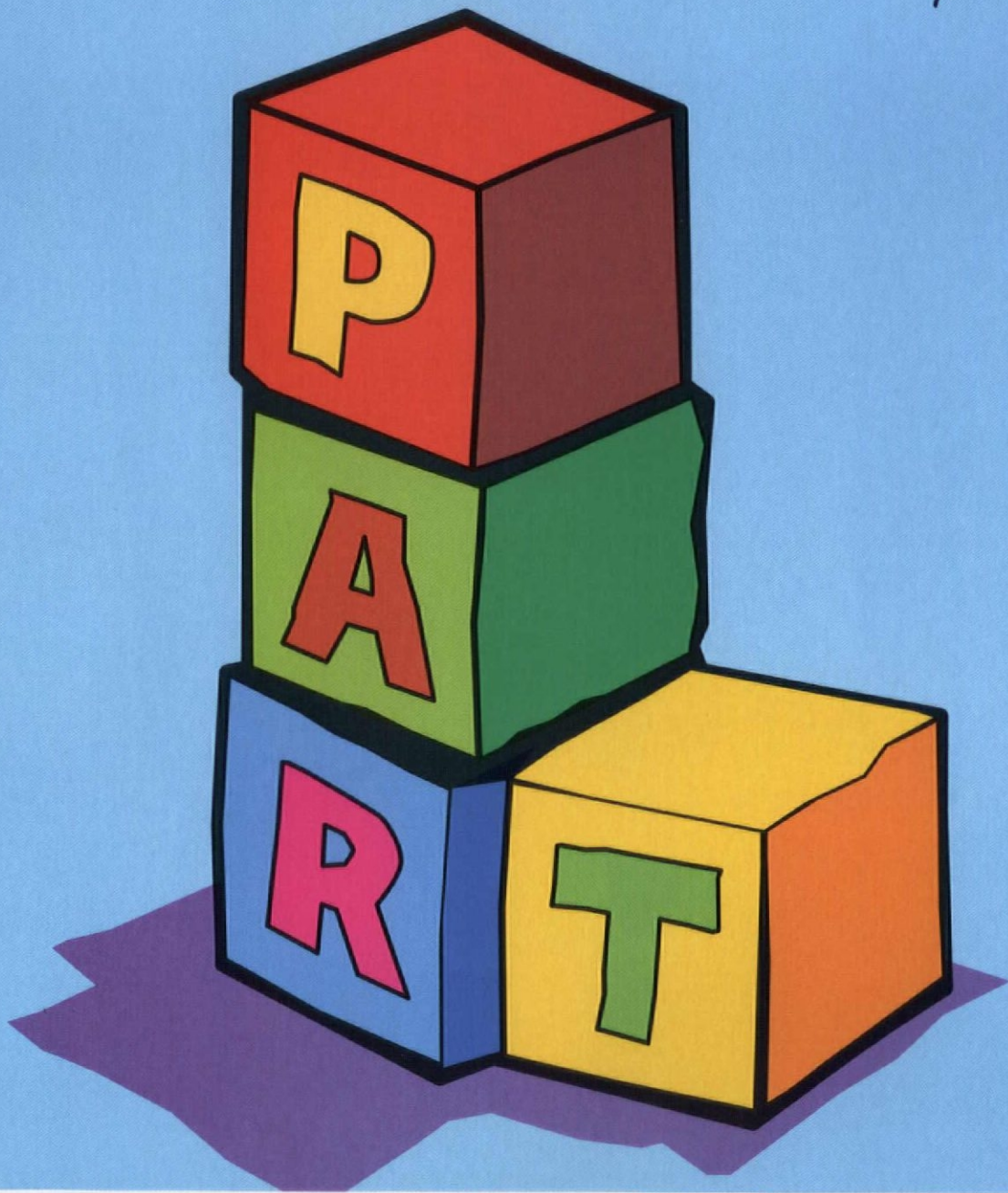
His final comment was unrepeatable: 'I fear I might be beheaded as a result.'


Eleanor Allen

18 April 2002



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# Gone to ground

**Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin's new projects for the Loire, responding both to historic patterns of settlement and more recent industrial use, are deeply embedded in the landscape**

By Robin Wilson





The Charier office headquarters will be situated in a former quarry and partly embedded in the rock



The project list of Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin has seen a marked shift from global to regional in recent months. Site-specific strategies developed in locations such as Fredrikstad on the southern coast of Norway, and Sokch'o on the Sea of Japan in South Korea (AJ 8.2.01), have begun to find favour in their home region of the Loire.

Achieving international recognition as a prerequisite for gaining domestic commissions is a familiar pattern in the career of many French designers, but the proliferation of Lewis-Potin interventions in the Loire has much greater potential than simply cultivating a local client base.

Rural settlement and land use in the Loire is characterised by a particularly active and primal relationship with geology. By reference to the traditions and continuing practices of stone, mineral and slate extraction, and the uncommon density of troglodyte dwellings in the region, Lewis has directed this first wave of local projects towards a confrontation with the geological substrata.

Lewis' design process is characterised by the wealth of visual and material evidence gathered in the period of site observation, and how those clues and traces are directly cannibalised to compose the new object. Construction becomes more a question of reassembling the site, converting the existing terrain into what he terms a 'host landscape'. The architectural object becomes the hub of a set of transpositions which seek to bind landscape and structure together, physically and aesthetically.

As the Eden Project has demonstrated, the scarred industrial landscape is still not seen to have a value in itself. Even though thousands came to watch Grimshaw's structure taking shape in the former clay pit, that unique context was destined to be suppressed. Now grassy knolls, reminiscent of a service-station picnic zone, multiply there (as Lewis notes with disappointment).

All of the four Loire projects will include quasi-troglodyte buildings – a concept which the team has already started to bring to realisation for a school at Fredrikstad. The Loire has a particularly rich heritage of troglodyte dwellings, the best known being those cut into the river valley escarpments. Lewis explains that troglodyte solutions to habitation have particular thermal practicalities: they maintain a constant temperature of about 15-16°C throughout the year.

At Louerre, in the Maine et Loire, the task in question is the construction of a low-budget Maison de la Forêt – a multifunctional cultural and research centre, requested by the equivalent of the regional forestry commission. During negotiations with the client, the site for the building was shifted from an unpromising location in the centre of a ploughed field to the edge of woods.

This enabled a more diverse series of material transferences between the context



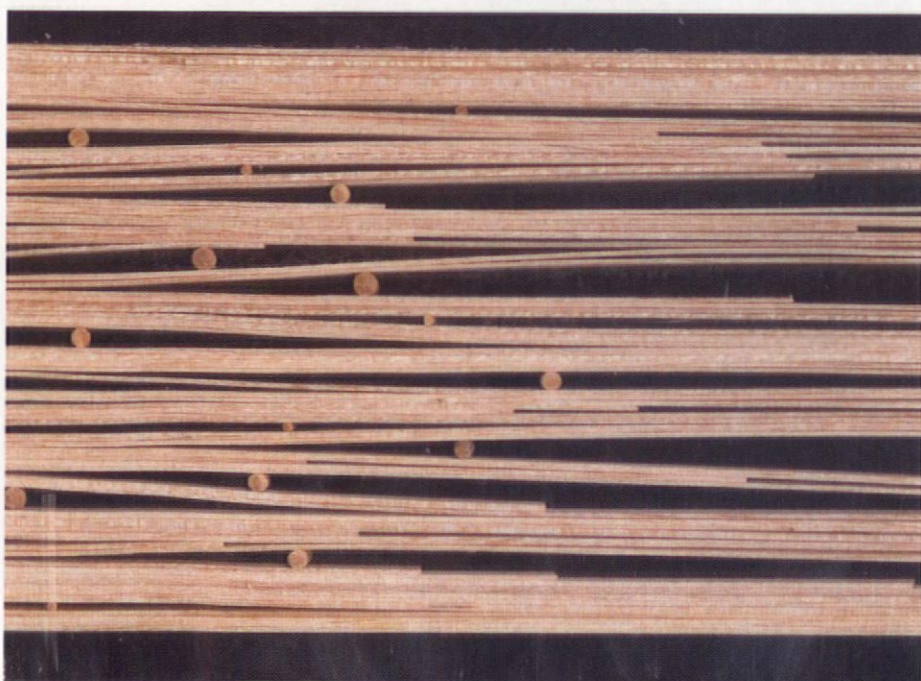
**Top: troglodyte dwellings in a valley escarpment of the Loire. Centre: Michael Heizer's *Double Negative*, Nevada, is similar in concept to some of Lewis' work. Bottom: construction in progress at the Fredrikstad school**







**Top: model of the Maison de la Forêt, Louerre. Centre: local precedent for Lewis' interventions comes in this map of subterranean spaces in the area. Bottom: the outer layer of the Maison de la Forêt's facades is comprised of chestnut strips put under tension with acacia wedges**



and the new object to ensue, initially forming around the use of local wood for the facade. The troglodyte aspect was also an evolution of the initial brief, supported by reference to cave dwellings in nearby villages and to local traditions of stone extraction.

The work at Louerre will begin with a square-cut excavation into the rock strata beneath the edge of the wood. The first phase of refilling this extraction will involve the creation of a concrete staircase, which will eventually be the platform for an exhibition space. The building will emerge from the extraction at a shallow pitch.

This composition shares similarities with the Displaced/Replaced Mass series by Michael Heizer, one of the seminal works of late 1960s American Land Art, comprising a sequence of trench excavations with single stone masses tipped back into the negative volumes. There are also a number of direct conceptual alignments between Lewis' work and Heizer's desert excavations – his *Double Negative* in Nevada, for instance.

At Fredrikstad, in particular, the construction process follows a similar, reciprocal pattern between the extraction and placement of mass – a scouring and excavation of a granite core within the site; a geological event in miniature, blasting bodies of rock left proud by glacial recession and then assembling massive fragments as part of the fabric of the new buildings.

The main body of the Maison de la Forêt will not be directly cannibalised from the material of the extraction, but largely composed of materials representative of the nearby woodlands. The outer layer of all four facades will be made of finely cut strips of chestnut, spliced and put under tension with acacia wedges. The frequency and thickness of the wedges, and thus the permeability of the chestnut bands, will vary according to orientation. This extraction-insertion ensemble will thus, in essence, combine those two archetypal objects of rudimentary refuge: the cave and the wood cabin. (Potin also mentions that the cabin aspect references the agricultural vernacular forms of wood drying sheds.)

To either side of the building the rock strata will be sheared vertically and recesses created for storage, including locally produced sawdust fuel for a wood-burner heating system. The space beneath the projection of the main building will be fitted with greenhouse technology, and serve as a laboratory for visiting school groups.

Lewis' work gnaws at the logic which makes an antithesis of primitive assemblage and high design, rustic simplicity and urban sophistication – categories which Modernism only partly succeeded in eroding. In this sense we could look to Alexander Pope's grotto at his estate at Twickenham as an early-18th century precursor to Lewis' neo-troglodyte programme. In Karen Lang's essay 'The Body in the Garden' (in *Architecture, Landscape and Memory*, Spon Press), Pope's grotto and shell temple is described





**Top: quarry site for the Charier HQ.**  
**Left: aerial view of the site. Opposite page: view out from the Charier offices**

as being a 'primitive' response to the abstractions of city life. Originally a link passage between Pope's villa and the landscape, it rapidly evolved into a multi-chambered place of reflection, a bejewelled and encrusted bunker retreat from his political and commercial career.

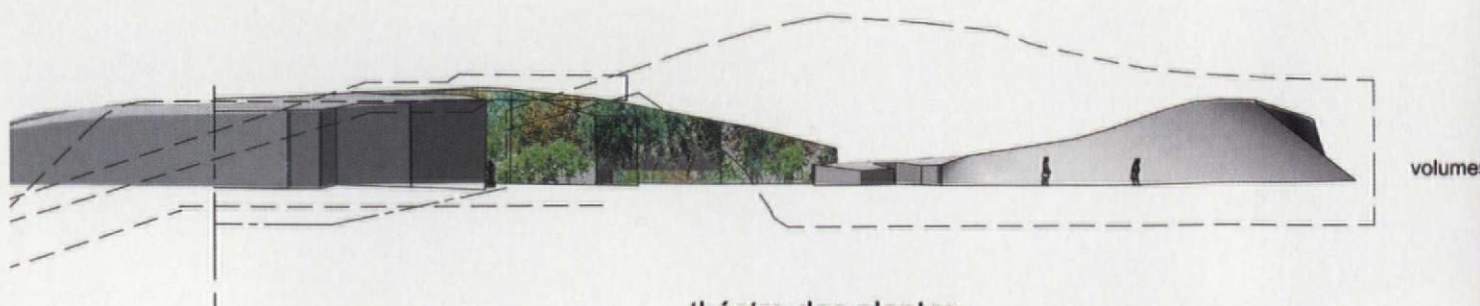
For Lewis, though, the engagement with geological substrata is already much more than an ironic gesture toward Primitivism, and is very much central to the commercial and sociological aims of his practice. A project in an abandoned quarry at Donges, in the Loire-Atlantique region, will be particularly significant in this respect.

The commission is for the office headquarters of the private, commercial enterprise, Charier. The company is involved in diverse environmentally related activities, such as waste management, mineral extraction and processing, and it owns a total of 14 quarries. Again, negotiations were necessary to convince the client to forego a conventional solution and to exploit the potentials of its own, rubble-strewn backyard. Despite the logical

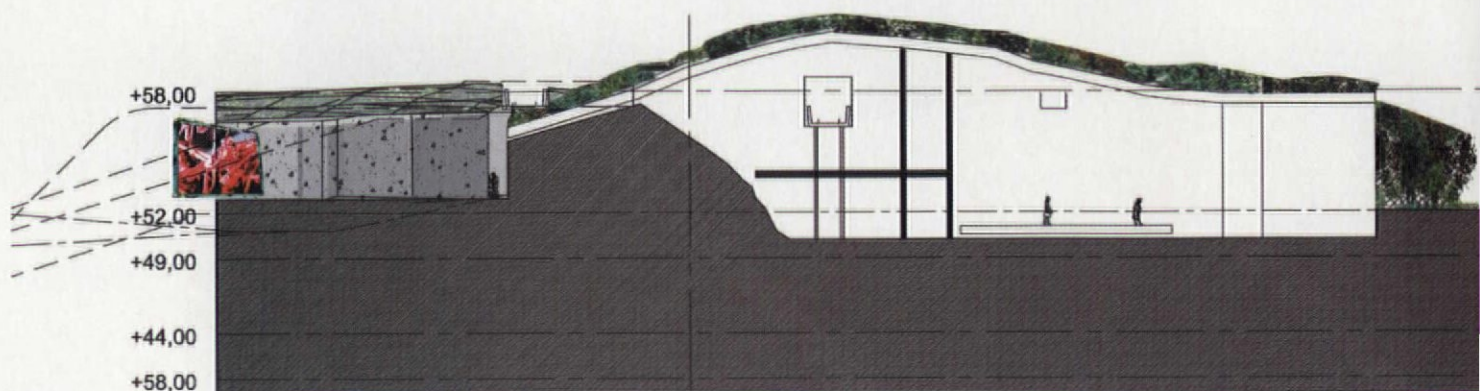




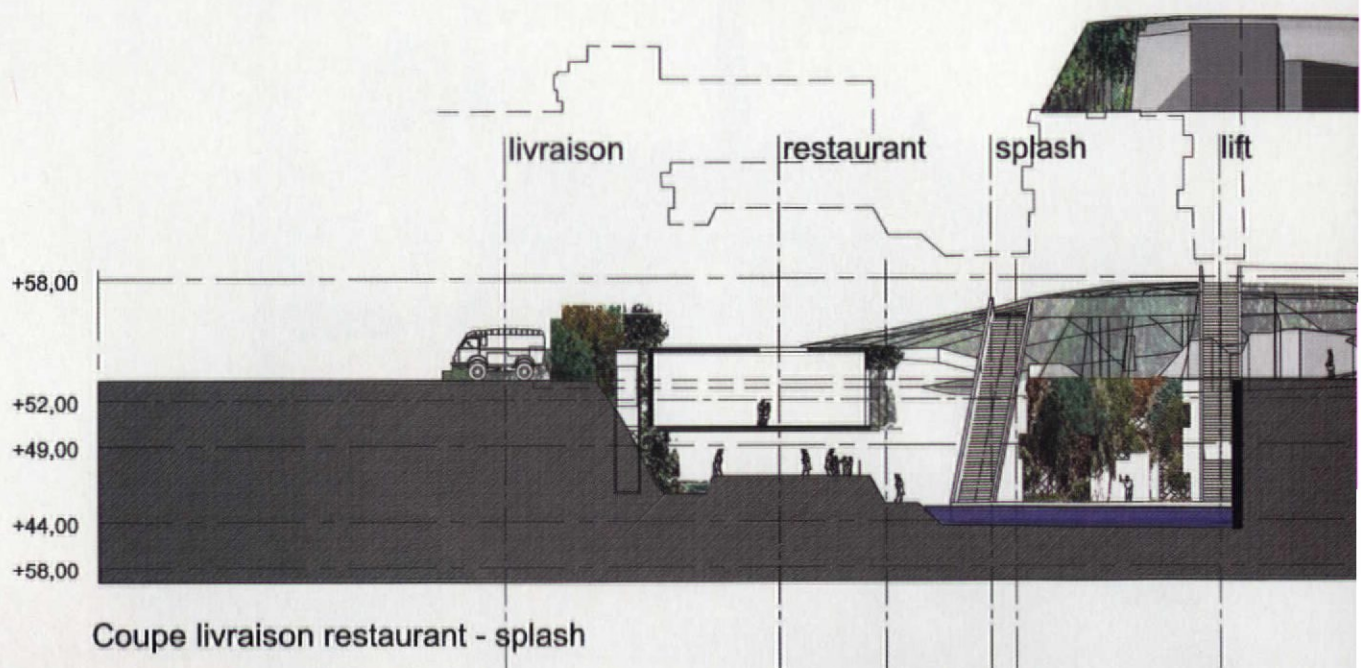




théâtre des plantes



Coupe /Montagne - théâtre des plantes - centre d'interpretation



Coupe livraison restaurant - splash



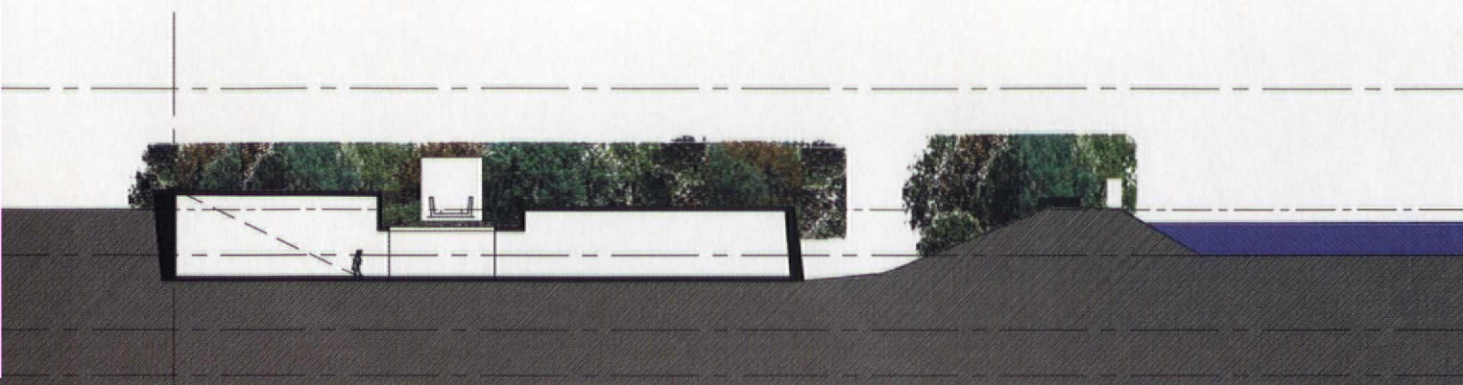
Top: sections of the  
Parc du Végétal.  
Far left: site model.  
Left: the greenhouse

roof will be inscribed  
with an image of the  
Loire. Above:  
material samples

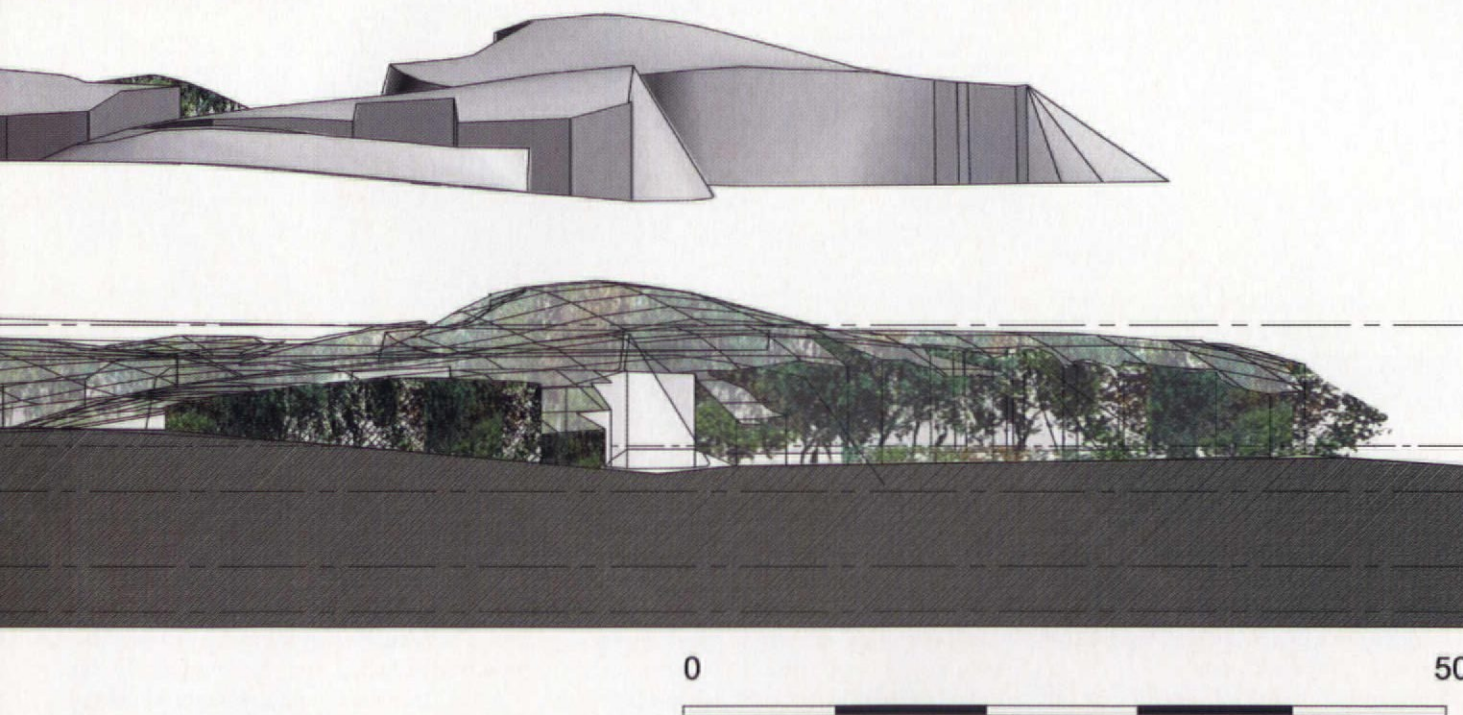


implants en talus et soutènements

## centre d'interpretation



implants en talus et soutènements



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association of site and client, this is an important symbolic victory, as it amounts to a reversal of the received wisdom of public relations: the scarred landscape will become the seat of corporate identity.

The offices will occupy an intermediary tier in the terraced, south-west corner of the quarry, a position which will provide an open vista onto the Crossac marshes to the east. The shape of the main complex broadly repeats that of the corner of the quarry face behind it. But rather than simply running in parallel to that profile, it is pivoted into a truer alignment with the east, causing

six of the 19 rooms of the forward section to converge and be buried, by varying degrees, into the rock.

Two are completely embedded and connected to the exterior by horizontal concrete shafts. While the office spaces remain in contact with the exterior and the main facade, the communal rooms – the restaurant and three conference rooms – form a secondary layer of genuine cave volumes, cut into the main body of the geological mass.

In a similar way to the assemblage of the Fredrikstad school, the Charier offices will

be partly clad in the rock extracted for its interior spaces. The facade will, in fact, be a composite of real stone and concrete casts, made from polyester moulds of the quarry face. This is typical of Lewis' attitude towards materials: the real and the artificial are on an equal footing.

In what is potentially the team's most significant long-term project in the region – the creation of a Parc du Végétal at Angers – the relationship with the substrata begins with the aggravation of an existing, natural wound. There is a fault line and natural canyon in the Plateau de la Mayenne, north





Initial sketches for the Tours project take inspiration from ancient earthworks such as Maiden Castle in Dorset

of Angers, within which the park will comprise a 25ha strip. This fault line will be excavated to a width of 20-25m, and service and public facilities will not so much be built as interred. They will occupy recesses cut into the sides of the canyon, with their facades simply demarcated by the controlled exposure of the rock strata.

Other buildings will include graphic-bearing, sunken greenhouse structures, integrated with a remodelled surface terrain and planted roofs. The greenhouse roofs will be inscribed or 'tattooed' with an image of a stretch of the Loire river, as seen in a satellite photograph, at a point where its characteristic islets and sedimentation banks are prevalent. The landscape's most active geographical force thus becomes crystallised as an image, as man declares himself a rival geomorphological agent to the forces of nature.

The team will also be responsible for integrating the park with the wider topography. It will be one element in the reclamation of a 150ha section of the

plateau, which was previously the site of an aerodrome. Its demise saw the zone become an indeterminate no-man's-land, encroached upon by the spread of suburb industry, and crossed by major and minor road networks and the remains of a light railway. This effectively gives Lewis and Potin the opportunity to structure the northward expansion of their home town.

Two belts of vegetation will be established to either side of the park – a monumental framework through which to guide future patterns of land use. Broadly speaking, they will run parallel to the central fault-line canyon, but extend to the limits of the wider, wasteland territory – and beyond. To the north-east, the vegetation will traverse a nature reserve at the base of the plateau escarpment, and then continue for a short distance into the landscape beyond the Mayenne River.

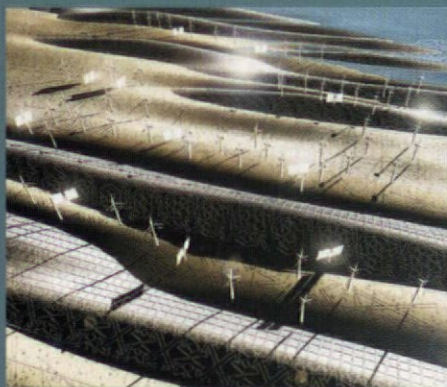
The park is intended to provide a focal point for the local horticultural industry, one of the mainstays of the economy of Angers, and will incorporate public attrac-

tions, research facilities, light industry and housing. The vegetation strips will act as unifying host environments for these diverse elements, effectively being vegetal sutures linking industry and leisure, natural and artificial habitats.

The reduction of the Loire to a satellite-derived graphic, and the marking of the landscape with trans-topographical plantations, again recall the sort of manoeuvres that were performed under the name of Land Art. Explicit relationships are forged between technology, artifice and environment; the plateau will become the site where local, regional and global phenomena and forces are layered and allocated new roles.

Similar equations are at play for a project in the southern fringes of Tours, where work has begun on a water catchment station. This competition was won with the help of a spectacular geological strata model, with a flat image of the proposed catchment earth-formation as its surface layer. Lewis is restructuring the landscape according to the simple analogy of the concentric ripple





Lewis and Potin's major foreign projects have so far been located on coastal fringes. The latest evolution of this theme involves the coast of the peninsula of the State of Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

Working with the Science Centre, Paris, and the Nantes-based design group Bloc, they are preparing a section of the eastern coastal strip for diverse development – including wind farms and, potentially, a small port and an offshore marine research facility.

Based on the appearance of weathered, archaeological remains in the desert, they propose to inscribe the zone with an Islamic pattern, made from concrete inserts formed from the sand they will displace. The drawings even see the pattern (taken from the 16th-century tomb of Sultan El Ghoury) continuing beneath the shallow coastal waters.

This process has the vital function of stabilising the coast prior to development, but will also turn the zone into a vast earthwork tattoo, visible from aircraft operating at Doha airport.

formation of a raindrop entering a volume of water. As with the Loire graphic, an image of fluidity is processed into solid matter. Only at Tours, the scale ratio is inverted: the scheme will involve the movement of some 90,000 tonnes of topsoil – a resource procured from the building sites of new housing projects in the same section of the Touraine suburbs.

But this work's inescapable analogy is with ancient tumuli or earthwork fortifications. In particular, Lewis cites Maiden Castle in Dorset. The station's northern flanks, where it borders the Cher river, will also reveal a structural kinship with tumulus formations, in that stone embankments will emerge from the earth folds. These are the outer walls of a tunnel cavity within the earthwork, which will serve as an exhibition space.

From the exterior, the exposed stone layer also has a representational function. It is meant to be perceived as a surface emergence of the hidden geological strata, the rim of the vast subterranean vessel of per-

meable and semi-permeable rock. Topiary and willow plantations will be 'moulded' to mimic the folds of the 9-10m-high embankments and create vegetal tunnels.

The resurrection of the troglodyte impulse implies an atavistic journey back into the origins of architecture, and the birth of the contradistinction between the built object and the landscape formation. Lewis and Potin are undoubtedly retracing certain pre-urban cultural ties with environmental context.

But the true significance of their work lies in the fact that this return is not made under the auspices of a marginal, alternative ideology, but is the result of a complete embracing of technological advancement toward the refinement of the expression of site.

Through the agility of their design process, the scarred industrial landscape becomes a field of endless possibilities – a ready-made geological laboratory which should be mined further in the name of a radical aesthetic, not suppressed by the bland cosmetics of the landscape norm.

#### CREDITS

##### MAISON DE LA FORÊT, LOUERRE

**ARCHITECT:**  
Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin

**COLLABORATORS:**  
Tanguy Vermet, Thierry Maître

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:**  
Stéphanie Laurent

**SCENOGRAPHER:**  
Lucie Lom (Marc-Antoine Mathieu and Philippe Leduc)

**WOOD ENGINEER:**  
CNDB (Jean-Yves Riaux)

##### AMÉNAGEMENT D'UNE STATION DE CAPTAGE, TOURS

**ARCHITECT:**  
Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:**  
Stéphanie Laurent

**COLLABORATORS:**  
Chadi El Chami, Tanguy Vermet, Thierry Maître, Benoît Rougelot

##### PARC VÉGÉTAL, ANGERS

**ARCHITECT:**  
Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin, with Denis Brillet, Benoît Fillon, Stéphane Lagré, Pascal Riffaud, architects

**COLLABORATORS:**  
Tanguy Vermet, Thierry Maître, Chadi el Chami

##### SIÈGE SOCIAL 'CHARIER', DONGES

**ARCHITECTS:**  
Duncan Lewis and Hervé Potin, with Anne-Flore Guinée, architect

##### KVERNHUSET UNGDOMSSKOLE, FREDRIKSTAD

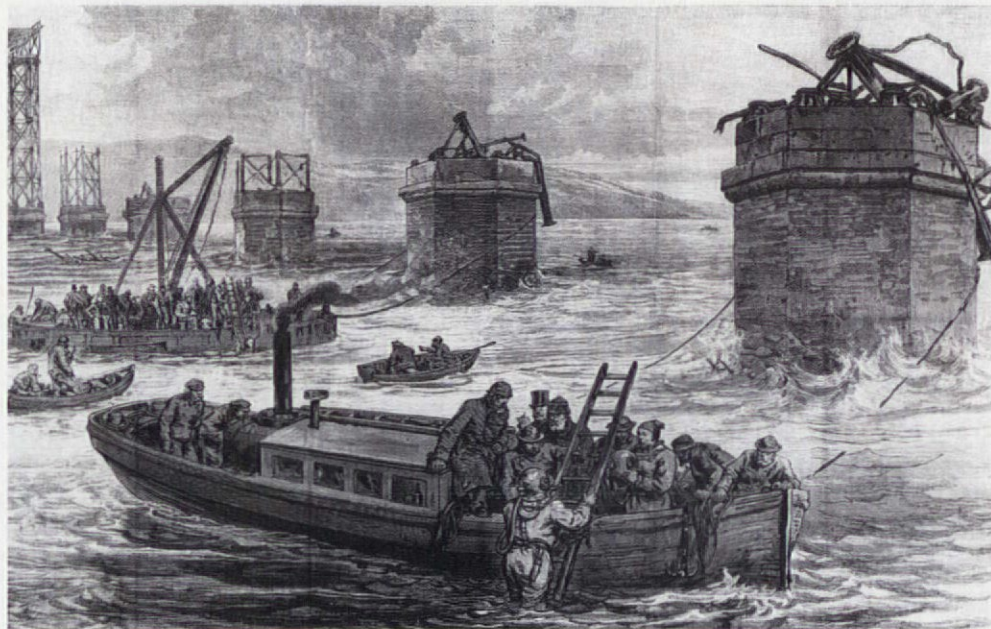
**ARCHITECT:**  
Duncan Lewis associated with Pir II arkitektkontor AS (Ogmund Sorli, Mette Melandso)



## Trial and error

From Roman times to Ronan Point, it is a good thing that building designers have risked failure as a means to an end

BY CLIVE RICHARDSON



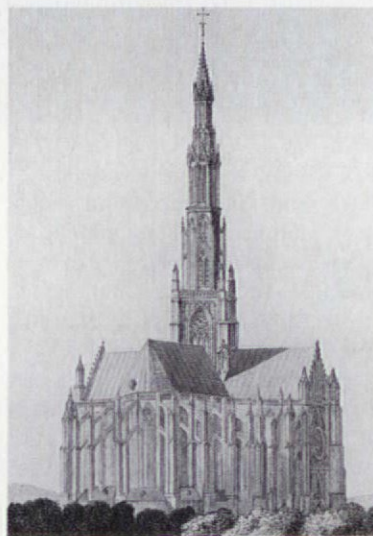
About 1247, work began on the choir of Beauvais Cathedral. It was completed up to the eastern piers of the transept by 1272. Then on 29 November 1284 at 8pm, the great vaults of the choir fell, and the divine service ceased for 40 years.

Medieval masons did not have the benefit of mathematical methods to design structures; they worked to rules of geometric proportion. When something collapsed, they tried new avenues. If successful, the masons were bolder the next time. So it goes.

Gothic cathedrals, according to Jacques Heyman<sup>1</sup>, stand by virtue of a more or less delicate balance of forces; the thrusts are taken through the flying buttresses to the main buttresses, and so to the ground. Beauvais had collapsed because the lateral thrust of the 48m-high vaults did not have sufficient abutments, exacerbated by buckling of an eccentrically loaded supporting pier. The fraternity of masons learned the lesson, and at the cathedral of Troyes, the lateral buttressing was twice consolidated in the 1360s and in 1402.

Between 1564 and 1569, a 153m-

**Above: Tay Bridge showing the collapsed section in the distance.**  
**Right: Beauvais Cathedral as it was completed in 1569 before the collapse**



high stone tower was added to the transept of Beauvais. About two years later, the crossing piers were beginning to lean. The chapter delayed for two years and repairs were not started until 17 April 1573. Some 13 days later, the tower fell. Although no one was killed, the tower was never replaced, and Beauvais became what it is today, a choir and transept without a nave.

Cathedrals continued to be built and extended in post-medieval times. Improved mathematical skill and engineering principles began to be applied to other grand structures, such as bridges, railways, and canals; but trial and error remained.

### Made from girders

In the 1840s, Robert Stephenson chose cast-iron girders for his railway bridge over the River Dee. Cast iron had long been known to be weaker in tension than compression, so he compensated by designing larger bottom flanges. Similar girders had been successful before, so Stephenson simply made them bigger. But he did not realise that such linear scaling up would erode the girders' safety margins, where buckling instability became critical.

The bridge opened in 1846, and vibrated under passing trains, but the absence of trouble with similar structures forestalled closer scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> The following year, five inches of ballast was added to cover the timber planking on which the rails were laid. The driver of the first train across the newly ballasted bridge felt it 'sinking' under him, and so opened the throttle to rush across. Only the locomotive reached safety; its five carriages and the girders crashed into the river.

The most likely cause of failure was buckling of the tall cast-iron girders with their unequal flanges, after the small safety margin had been eliminated by the addition of the ballast. Five people were killed and 18 injured. The loss of life called for a coroner's inquest, which in turn led to a Royal Commission to look into the application of iron in railway structures.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel gave evidence to the Commission. He argued against rigid rules for bridge building and even called the investigating body 'The Commission for Stopping Further Improvements in Bridge Building'. He believed that with proper care in eliminating non-homogeneous aspects and other imperfections, reliable iron castings could be made 'of almost any form, and of 20 or 30 tons weight'.

But Brunel and many other engineers did not bargain for the variability of the tensile strength of cast iron, as well as its low strength. Nor could they cater for the deceit of



some unscrupulous foundries, who would disguise poor castings with Beaumont's Egg: a mixture of beeswax, fiddler's rosin, finest iron borings and lamp black.

### Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay

*'So the train mov'd slowly along the  
Bridge of Tay,  
Until it was about mid way,  
Then the central girders with a crash  
gave way,  
And down went the train and passen-  
gers into the Tay!  
The Storm Fiend did loudly bray,  
Because ninety lives had been taken  
away,  
On the last Sabbath day of 1879,  
Which will be remember'd for a very  
long time.'*

William McGonagall

The Tay Bridge disaster<sup>3</sup> prompted the first public inquiry in this country. The findings were inconclusive but the tensile reliability of cast iron had long been doubted by engineers.

Despite such major tragedies, the construction industry was generally successful, keeping pace with an unprecedented population boom – from nine million in 1800 to 45 million in 1930 – and despite using mainly semi-skilled labour and limited technical input.

But after the Second World War, the country was virtually bankrupt, with the largest debt of any nation in the world. Infrastructure was weak and of the 12m dwellings before the war, eight per cent were destroyed, and 28 per cent were damaged. Finding new ways to build quickly and cheaply was an urgent demand; stretching scarce materials further, and using a labour force whose skills had been depleted by the war.

Tried-and-tested buildings were abandoned in favour of new styles, materials, and techniques, such as the Scandinavian large panel system (LPS), first used in the UK in 1956. Factory-made precast concrete, storey-height wall panels and floor plates were stacked and tied together on site, like a house of cards – but they went up quickly.

### Dying for a cuppa

And so it was that on 16 May 1968 at 5.45am, Ivy Hodge, a spinster of



**Above: London during the Blitz.  
Right: Ronan Point collapse, 1968**



Canning Town, east London, awoke in her 18th-floor flat at Ronan Point<sup>4</sup> and went to make a cup of tea. She struck a match and sparked off a gas explosion which changed forever the way engineers design tall buildings.

Hodge's flat was on the corner of the tower block. The explosion blew out the external wall, taking away support for the floor above. The corner collapsed progressively upwards

to the top of the 24-storey building, and then the falling debris overloaded the 18th floor, which collapsed progressively down to the ground. Four people died and 17 were injured.

Miss Hodge survived to tell the tale to the public inquiry. Gas supplies were removed from similar tower blocks, and a programme of strengthening was commenced. Two years later, in 1970, the Building Regulations were changed to require new buildings over five storeys to be better tied together, and to have alternative means of support in the event of losing a load-bearing element.

Only five years on, the Building Regulations had to be changed again, to deal with another ill-conceived post-war innovation: High Alumina Cement (HAC) in precast concrete construction, to speed up the setting of the concrete. HAC had been manufactured in the UK by Lafarge since 1925 and used principally for its good resistance to chlorides and sulphates. But after the Second World War, it was more widely used for its rapid hardening qualities.

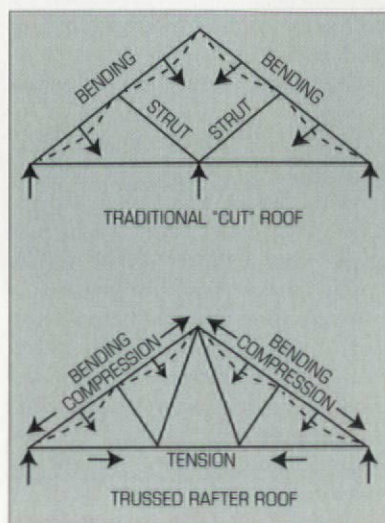
But, gradually, doubts began to rise about the reliability of HAC concrete. On 8 February 1974, a swimming-pool roof collapsed at Sir John Cass' School in Stepney<sup>5</sup>, a building which had been constructed between 1965 and 1966 using prestressed HAC concrete roof beams, which spanned 10m between solid brick walls around the pool.

The beams were tested, and their failure was attributed primarily to chemical change of the HAC concrete with a substantial loss of strength. Then the weakened concrete had been attacked by sulphates from the plaster roof finishes, causing its disruption and collapse.

### Caveat emptor

In 1975, the 'deemed to satisfy' status of HAC was withdrawn from the Building Regulations, and guidance on the strength and durability of existing HAC structures was given by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC) subcommittee. Buildings were exempt from appraisal if they were residential, and not more than four storeys, and without persistent leakage or heavy





condensation, and their beams did not exceed certain spans.

Many existing HAC structures have since performed satisfactorily, according to the Concrete Society's technical report No 46, 1997 'Calcium aluminate cements in construction – a reassessment'. HAC continues to be used for non-structural uses such as tidal barriers, roads, runways, screeds, sprayed concrete, and foundry floors.

Another vexatious post-war innovation, still in use today, is the trussed-rafter roof, although when they were first introduced from America in 1962, they were involved in a spate of collapses, such as the Sports Hall at Rock Ferry School, Birkenhead in 1976<sup>7</sup>. The trussed rafters were unbraced, buckled sideways, pushed over one gable end, and collapsed. After so many failures, perhaps Rock Ferry School was the final straw. The Building Regulations were amended in 1976 to make rafter bracing mandatory.

How had we come to this position? Before the advent of trussed rafters, most timber-pitched roofs were a collection of rafters variously supported by purlins and struts off internal walls. The rafters were principally expected to resist only bending forces. However, trussed rafters enabled clear spans between external walls, so now the rafter members were put in compression as well as bending – a treacherous combination of loads for any slender structural member.

This subtle, but fatal, change in

the way rafters were being used escaped many designers and builders. Bracing was often not provided, and sometimes failure resulted. There are still many unbraced roofs in existence today, just waiting for a strong gust of wind.

## Parking laid to falls

LPS buildings, HAC concrete, and unbraced trussed rafters were but three of many immediate post-war problems. By the 1980s, most of them had manifested themselves, and we had time to reflect upon the shortcomings of those desperate post-war years.

We began to enjoy a new era of good construction until, on 21 March 1997, dozens of multi-storey car parks throughout the UK faced long-term closure and eventual demolition after the sudden collapse of part of a 1965 car park in Wolverhampton<sup>8</sup>.

No one was hurt when part of the top floor of NCP's four-storey Pipers Row car park crashed down to the floor below. There were no cars on the top two floors; the columns simply punched through the upper floor. The car park had been built using the 1950s American-developed lift slab technique, whereby slabs are cast on the ground, lifted up the columns, and locked into place. The regularly inspected car park had not been showing signs of deterioration, and the sudden failure of an unloaded structure without signs of distress, was particularly disconcerting.

Within weeks it was revealed that all flat slab structures without drop-heads, not just lift slabs, built in the 1960s and 1970s, were at risk from catastrophic punching shear failure. The structural design code at that time was CP 114; 1957. It gave inadequate guidance on flat slab design. A new code, CP 110, remedied the situation, when it was published in 1972; enhanced by BS 8110 in 1985.

After the Pipers Row collapse, it was feared that ageing flat slabs designed to the old code CP 114 could pose a widespread problem<sup>9</sup>. The Standing Committee on Structural Safety (SCOSS) reiterated its 1994 recommendations that owners and operators of existing multi-storey car parks should commission

structural appraisals periodically, and such appraisals should include deterioration due to road salt, progressive collapse, and edge barriers. That advice is still relevant today.

## Don't panic

We should remember that the vast majority of buildings in this country outperform the expectations of their designers and builders, lasting longer, and often with far less maintenance than originally intended. In conclusion, trial and error has always been with us and will remain so if design and construction is to continue developing and improving.

While error is not desirable, we cannot eliminate the risk of failure unless we simply repeat what has succeeded before. Designs would then stagnate – we would not have, for example, the recent trend in modern bridges. Foster's Millennium Bridge in London may have wobbled, but its trial exposed the error which has now been rectified. Because of it, we are able to delight in its design for years to come. Perhaps society at large can repay such delight by greater forbearance when failure occurs.

Clive Richardson is a structural engineer and technical director of Cameron Bedford Consulting. Contact [clive.richardson@camerontaylor.co.uk](mailto:clive.richardson@camerontaylor.co.uk)

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7. BRE CP 69/76 (Rock Ferry).
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Founded in 1976, SCOSS is an independent body supported by the ICE, IStructE, and the HSE, to maintain a continuing review of building and civil engineering matters affecting the safety of structures<sup>10</sup>. Visit [www.scoss.org.uk](http://www.scoss.org.uk) A version of this article was presented at the RICS Briefing, Nottingham University, 12-14 April 2002. See [www.rics.org.uk](http://www.rics.org.uk)



# Computation matter

RIBA's Digital Tectonics conference highlights the growing alliance between architectural design and digital technology

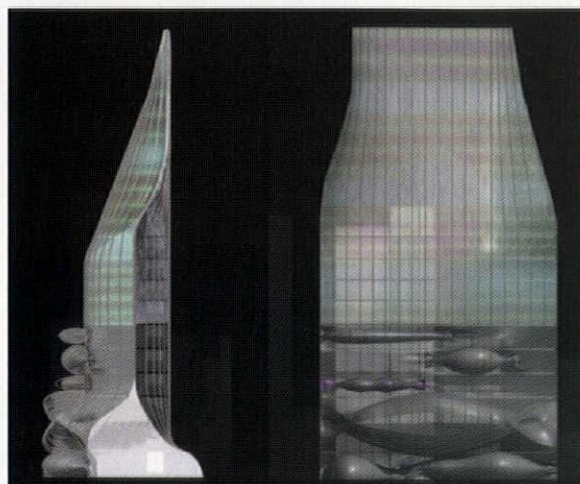
BY JOHN GOODBUN

The Digital Tectonics conference, held last month at the University of Bath Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, was the second in the RIBA Future Studies series. It set out to 'focus on how digital technologies have opened up new possibilities in the fields of architectural design, structural engineering, material composition and construction technique, and in particular, new collaborative ventures between architects and engineers'.

In spite of some lazy sub-Deleuzian jargon, a number of clear themes emerged – some with significance beyond current computer-based design interests. This was not least because the computers in question were not exclusively digital. Physical 'computers' such as Frei Otto's form-finding soap bubbles and Antonio Gaudí's self-stabilising suspension models were returned to on a number of occasions (Manuel de Landa), to remind us of the computational abilities of organised matter – and that ultimately it is at this interface of the analogue, the digital and the subject, that the most interesting work will happen.

Gaudí appeared on a number of other occasions. Mike Cook asked if Gaudí's models were concerned with production or representation, while Neal Leach called for a general 'post-Gaudían digital practice'. But for many, the high point was Mark Burry's extraordinary account of more than a decade of involvement in the ongoing construction of Gaudí's Sagrada Família. Here were stories of animation, time-active within the space. CAD projections of the geometry revealed 'paramorphs' (figures of variable topography, constant topology), transforming as they danced from bay to bay. 'This is beyond figurative sculpture – there is movement in the stone,' Burry said.

One might ask again if the formal and conceptual congruities between Gaudí, various strands of expres-



**This design by FORM moves away from uncommunicative shining surfaces**

sionistic architecture, and a number of areas of contemporary architectural work, have yet been thought through sufficiently.

Greg Lynn's practice, FORM, continues to ask some of the most advanced questions. Lynn referred to working with corporations within the automobile industry, which are now retooling 'parametrically': allowing, within certain envelopes of variation, any number of instant permutations of production lines.

The bottleneck, he said, is now at the design end: how to produce controlled novelty – and the desire for it – fast enough. Exploring new possibilities of architectural practice opened up by such fabrication technologies, Lynn's practice has invested in a milling (CAD/CAM) machine, allowing a move into building production as well as design.

For Lynn, the spatial logic of this new design economy must be articulated through what he calls a 'featured' development of surface (using repetition, rhythm, pattern etc), and 'the need to think through the problem of ornament'. If nothing else, this is a welcome move away from the increasingly uncommunicative, shiny expanses promoted by architecture's fashion publications.

The main dilemma for Lynn

(revealed in his asking Kristina Shea earlier in the afternoon about her formal decision-making) is one of determining value and meaning in his work. Her answer suggested that engineers are more ready to admit the influence of taste in decisions. 'I select the most elegant solutions,' she said.

Yet it became clear during the conference that process-driven architects continue to hope for specific rational meaning in their work, normally through the valorisation of procedures (generally in design or production), that they are most associated with. Simultaneously, there tends to be a marginalisation of value associated with how architecture is consumed. There is a conspicuous absence of a subject. Users are conceived as nothing other than the most passive and untheorised consumer of commodity fetishism.

Lynn is smarter than this and, when asked about the social in his work, replied: 'What is more political and social than aesthetics? Aesthetics was invented to link economy, politics; the social and structural.' Aesthetics was there to unify subject and object, to articulate both the qualities of the object, and the subject's experience of confronting it. How do we empathise, project and construct ourselves into and out of the work? This debate cannot be one-sided. Apart from an early vague mention of 'erotic form', Lynn was unwilling or unable to discuss work in sufficiently emotional, physical or psycho-libidinal terms – that is to say, in terms of what it is like to experience it, to consume it, whether individually or socially.

The cognitive maps we make out of our experiences define our imaginations. So does the contemporary experience of the super-smooth surface, whether in advertising, film, or in the perfect shine of a thousand virtual architecture images, produce mental maps so total and immaculate that it is impossible to imagine any enclave in which to hide and resist? Lynn's timely reassertion of translating pattern and ornament into space may prove a most political experience.

Jon Goodbun is a director of WaG Architecture, and teaches at the University of Westminster





## Court in the act: just what's so great about the House of Lords?

I have spent the past two weeks in the House of Lords. This is no mean feat. A brief in the House of Lords comes rarely, if ever, and is usually for a hearing of a day or two at most. Their lordships decided, however, to hear four appeals, each of which raised points on the Civil Liability Contribution Act 1978. The appeal in *CRS v Taylor Young Partnership and Hoare Lea & Partners* was the last of the four, so I was required to attend them all. 'What's so great about the House of Lords?' my daughter asked when another late night in chambers led to dereliction of my domestic duties. It is difficult to encapsulate all that is great in five points but let's have a go.

The House of Lords is the highest court in the land. There is, save for those cases with a Human Rights Act angle, no further court of appeal. It is where new law is made and, as such, anything can happen. Usually barristers spend their time trying to fit the facts of their particular case within the parameters of other precedents decided along similar lines or, if the case is against them, trying to distinguish their case somehow.

In the House of Lords, if you think the judge got it wrong, you can say so. Even more shockingly, you can submit that a Court of Appeal case was wrongly decided. Only when considering decisions of their lordships themselves do advocates need to tread more warily.

Despite being the highest court in the land, the five law lords who make up the panel do not sit in a courtroom. They sit in the Palace of Westminster in a committee room, at the end of a labyrinth of corridors and staircases, with a view over the River Thames. The room is bursting with an abundance of High Gothic and Pugin details, with walls decorated wholly in keeping with the Lord Chancellor's stated preferences. Despite these magnificent surroundings, the judges do not wear robes but sit in lounge suits. The law reporter explained that this was because, so far

as the machinery of government was concerned, the House of Lords is not a court at all, but just another committee reporting to Parliament.

The tribunal's informal attire contrasts starkly with the formality of proceedings. The court documents are produced on pages with letters down the side, a challenge for even the most confident user of Word, with double-sided photocopying in bound volumes. The Law Lords are attended by ushers who eschew the usual crimplene suit and well-worn gown in favour of white tie and tails. The room is cleared before their

lordships enter, and counsel loiter in the corridor in order to bow to each judge before resuming their seat.

Counsel in the case are usually senior QCs, and it is a rare privilege to watch as the Bar's most experienced leading counsel are put on the spot by five of the legal profession's most penetrating minds. Not for the faint-hearted, I can tell you.

As one of the silks confided, it is like making a bungee jump and not knowing whether the bridge will stand up. You will not be surprised to learn that when Lord Bingham fixed me with his

beady eye and asked me a simple question about timetabling, I promptly forgot what day it was and confused my opponent with a well-known boxer with a similar name.

By far the best thing about the House of Lords, certainly as far as my daughter is concerned, was the gift shop. A tiny kiosk located deep in the labyrinth, open only to users of the building, it turns over £1 million a year selling rather nice House of Lords paraphernalia: smart leather goods, glassware, claret, spirits, stationery. Every day I came clanking back from court with carrier bags full of goodies for friends and family.

So, what is so good about the House of Lords? The answer, from my daughter at least, seems to be a bar of fine white chocolate and a teddy bear jigsaw.

Kim Franklin

## 'We're not estate agents and we don't like experts'

Don't jerk my heart-strings, I know how the mindless savagery of the planning police, and house prices, force architects to live in Edwardian and Victorian houses. But for those architects who secretly quite like older places there is a site, Period Property UK, at [www.periodproperty.co.uk](http://www.periodproperty.co.uk).

Apart from properties for sale, it has a forum, insurance advice, specialist services, tips for renovating and so on. It looks just the thing. But why didn't an architect think it up before this? Mind you, Robert Tavendale, managing director of Period Property UK, does not like experts. His press release rants illogically: 'So-called "experts" cause millions of pounds worth of damage to listed buildings and old properties every year.' I'm sure he cannot mean English Heritage.

Odd then that there is an expert agony uncle, Malcolm, who sounds like a nice, clever chap and is apparently an expert in sustainability. It is not just experts. Tavendale pales at the idea that his site might be in the business of estate agency. You and I know why anybody might want to make that claim.

However, what this site does is to work with estate agents by charging them for displaying property ads on the site. But it doesn't sell houses: 'What we do is sell our ability to sell houses.'

Gobbledegook though this seems to be, there is a real lesson for website developers. It is stickiness. People, who will at some time want to buy an old house, will come back and back for free information about things like maintenance and management, which ostensibly are side issues to the main task of flogging old houses.

One in 12 European males is colour-blind. The navigation of websites is based partly on colour recognition. Check [www.btexact.com/people/rigden/colours](http://www.btexact.com/people/rigden/colours) and find out how colour-blind people see, and how to design sites that are as intelligible to them as they are to us.

[sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com](mailto:sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com)



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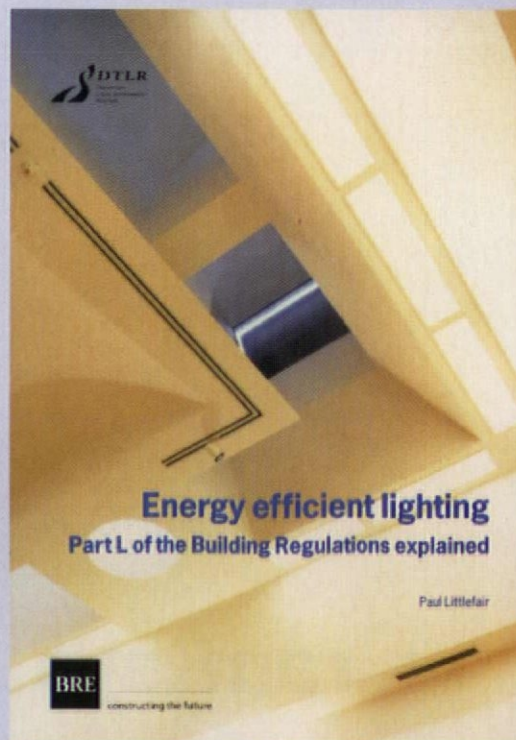
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## London

### Physical and Computer Models:

**Convergence and Divergence** *Monday 22 April, 14.00.* A seminar at the Building Centre, 26 Store St, WC1. Details 020 7692 6209.

**Art of the Model Maker** *22 April-15 June.* An exhibition at the Building Centre, 26 Store St, WC1. Details 020 7692 6209.

**Atelier van Lieshout** *26 April-16 June.* An exhibition at Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Rd, NW3. Details 020 7435 2643.

**AJ Small Projects Award** *Until 1 May.* An exhibition at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1 (0906 302 0400).

**Modern Data Management: Gain without Pain** *Wednesday 1 May.* A Colander course at the Building Centre, WC1. Details 020 8771 6445.

**Barbara Delaney** *Until 3 May.* Paintings at the Friends Room, V&A Museum, SW7 (020 7942 2277).

**Marketing and Brand Imaging** *Thursday 9 May.* A Colander course at the Building Centre, WC1. Details 020 8771 6445.

**Cities Fight Back** *Thursday 16 May.* An AJ conference at the RIBA with speakers including Lord Foster, Jon Rouse and Nicky Gavron. Details Martin Davies 020 7505 6650.

**Hardcore: Concrete's Rise from Utility to Luxury** *Until 25 May.* An exhibition at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details 0906 302 0400.

**Hélène Binet** *Until 1 June.* Architectural photographs at the Shine Gallery, 3 Jubilee Place, SW3. Details 020 7352 4499.

**Stephen Hughes** *Until 1 June.* Marginal urban sites in photographs at Photofusion, 17A Electric Lane, SW9. Details 020 7738 5774.

**Will Alsop: Beauty, Joy and the Real** *Until 8 June.* An exhibition at the Sir John Soane Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2. Details 020 7405 2107.

## Eastern

**A Measure of Reality** *Until 28 April.* An exhibition at Kettle's Yard, Castle St, Cambridge. Details 01223 352124.

**Construction Safety Conference** *Thursday 23 May.* A conference at the BRE, Garston, Watford. Details Angela Mondair 01923 664775.

## East Midlands

**RIBA CPD Event: BS8300 Code of Practice** *Friday 26 April.* A seminar at Leicester. Details 0121 233 2321.

## Northern

**Developing the Communities of Tomorrow: Sustainability and Housing**



## INDEPENDENCE DAY

The exhibition 'Nigel Henderson: A Parallel of Life and Art', focussing on Henderson's contribution to the Independent Group in the 1950s, was reviewed enthusiastically by Kenneth Powell when it opened in Sudbury (AJ 18.10.01). From 25 April it can be seen at the Architectural Association, 36 Bedford Square, London WC1, continuing until 14 June (020 7887 4000).

**Regeneration in the North of England** *Tuesday 14 May.* A CIEF conference at the Earth Centre, Doncaster. Details www.ciria.org.uk

## North West

**Christophe Egret (Alsop Architects)** *Thursday 25 April, 19.30.* A lecture at the Foster Building, University of Central Lancashire, Preston. Details Doug Chadwick 01254 59835.

**Rendering the Unseen: Art & Architecture in Japan** *Until 31 May.* An exhibition at the Holden Gallery, Manchester Metropolitan University. Details 0161 247 1911.

**A Matter of Art: Contemporary Architecture in Switzerland** *Until 31 May.* An exhibition at the CUBE Gallery, Manchester. Details 0161 237 5525.

## South Eastern

**RIBA CPD Event: Building Regulations Update** *Thursday 25 April, 16.00.* At Le Meridien Hotel, Gatwick. Details 01892 515878.

**Sustainable Building** *27-28 April.* An event at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Chichester. Details 01243 811363.

**Ian Breakwell** *Until 28 April.* An installation at the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea. Details 01424 787900.

## Building the Homes of Tomorrow

*Tuesday 28 May.* A CIEF conference at the County Hall, Maidstone, Kent. Details fax 020 7222 0445.

## Southern

**Arne Jacobsen** *20 April-23 June.* An exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, Pembroke St, Oxford. Details 01865 813830.

**Paul Finch** *Wednesday 24 April, 19.30.* A lecture at the Nightingale Building, Southampton University. Details 023 8059 7707.

**Frank Woods** *Thursday 25 April, 18.00.* A lecture at the Portland Building, Portsmouth School of Architecture. Details 02392 842086.

## South West

**Urban Plymouth: Regeneration with Inspiration** *Thursday 2 May.* A conference at Plymouth. Details 01752 233304.

## Wessex

**Peter Frie/Gary Breeze** *Until 12 May.* At the New Art Centre, Roche Court, East Winterslow, near Salisbury. Details 01980 862244.

**Regeneration Through Conservation: Reviving Our Urban Communities** *Friday 24 May.* A conference at The Watershed, Bristol. Details Charlie Bisnar 01732 220151.

## West Midlands

**RIBA CPD Event: How to Attract New Clients and Win Their Business** *Wednesday 24 April, 14.30.* A seminar at Birmingham (0121 233 2321).

**Office Manager Health & Safety Course** *Wednesday 15 May.* A RIBA course at Stoke-on-Trent (0121 233 2321).

**Which Contract? (Refurbishment and Small Works Projects)** *Thursday 9 May.* A Construction Study Centre course at Birmingham. Details 0121 434 3337.

## Yorkshire

**Add/Remove** *Until 26 April.* Sculpture and landscape by Estell Warren at Leeds Design Innovation Centre. Details 0113 2945720.

**Tania Kovats/Richard Devereux** *Until 12 May.* Two exhibitions at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton. Details 01924 830302.

**Project Extranets** *Wednesday 15 May.* A one-day Emap Construct conference at the Hilton, Leeds. Details Joanne Head 020 7505 6745.

## Scotland

**Fieldwork** *Until 26 April.* Art/urban regeneration for Trongate etc. At the Tron Theatre, 63 Trongate, Glasgow. Details 0141 552 4267.

**Scottish Design Awards 2002** *Until 28 April.* An exhibition at The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow. Details 0141 225 8414.

**RIAS Convention 2002** *Friday 3 May.* At Inverness. Speakers include Alvaro Siza and Nicholas Grimshaw. Details RIAS Events 0131 229 7545.

**Ruth Vollmer** *Until 5 May.* Sculpture and drawings at Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Details 0131 248 2983.

**Improving Construction Site Communication** *Thursday 9 May.* A BRE workshop at Glasgow. Details Alastair Stupart 01355 576244.

**India of Inchinan** *Until 26 May.* An exhibition at The Lighthouse, Glasgow. Details 0141 225 8414.

## Wales

**RSAW Design Forum: The Design Culture of Wales** *Monday 22 April, 18.30.* At the WSA, Cardiff. Details 029 2087 4753.

**Wendy James (Studio Libeskind)** *Thursday 25 April, 19.30.* A lecture at Faenol Fawr Hotel, Bodelwyddan, St Asaph. Details 01745 815600.

**RSAW Access Auditing and Inclusive Design** *25 & 26 April.* At Cardiff Bay. Details 029 2087 4753.

**RSAW Spring School: Design-Led Regeneration** *Friday 17 May.* At Portmeirion. Details 029 2087 4753.



# Sculptural vision

RICHARD WESTON

## Visionary Gardens: Modern Landscapes by Ernst Cramer

By Udo Weilacher. Birkhäuser, 2001. 288pp. £45

From flower-filled gardens in the Ticino to compositions of Zen-like austerity, Ernst Cramer ran the gamut of 20th-century landscape design. But the catalyst for renewed interest in his work among young Swiss designers was one extraordinary project: the Poet's Garden, designed – and destroyed – in 1959 (pictured below).

Born in 1898, Cramer trained as a gardener. He embraced the vision of 'Liberated Living' extolled by Sigfried Giedion, but the new ideas were too progressive for his early private clients and so he turned to horticultural shows for opportunities to innovate – and to startle a largely conservative profession. A 1933 demonstration Pool Garden featured a functional shower in place of a fountain, while the later Hospital Garden offered rest terraces screened by gridded, L-shaped glass walls arranged in a fan shape, like an Aalto library.

During the Second World War, Cramer immersed himself in Switzerland's burgeoning Modernist culture. He joined the Swiss Werkbund and got to know Johannes Itten, Max Bill and Alfred Roth, who launched the



campaign for 'Die gute Form' at a Basel trade fair in 1949.

Echoing the progressive mood, his style became more abstract. Geometric figures appeared in paving and details, and then expanded to take over entire designs. By 1958, in a seminary at Menzingen, the topography was rendered crisply geometric and a striped carpet of paving with alternating, variable-width bands of black asphalt and pale quartzite, was laid ceremonially across a large plaza. Clear and austere, it was landscape's equivalent of Swiss School typography.

And then, seemingly from nowhere, came

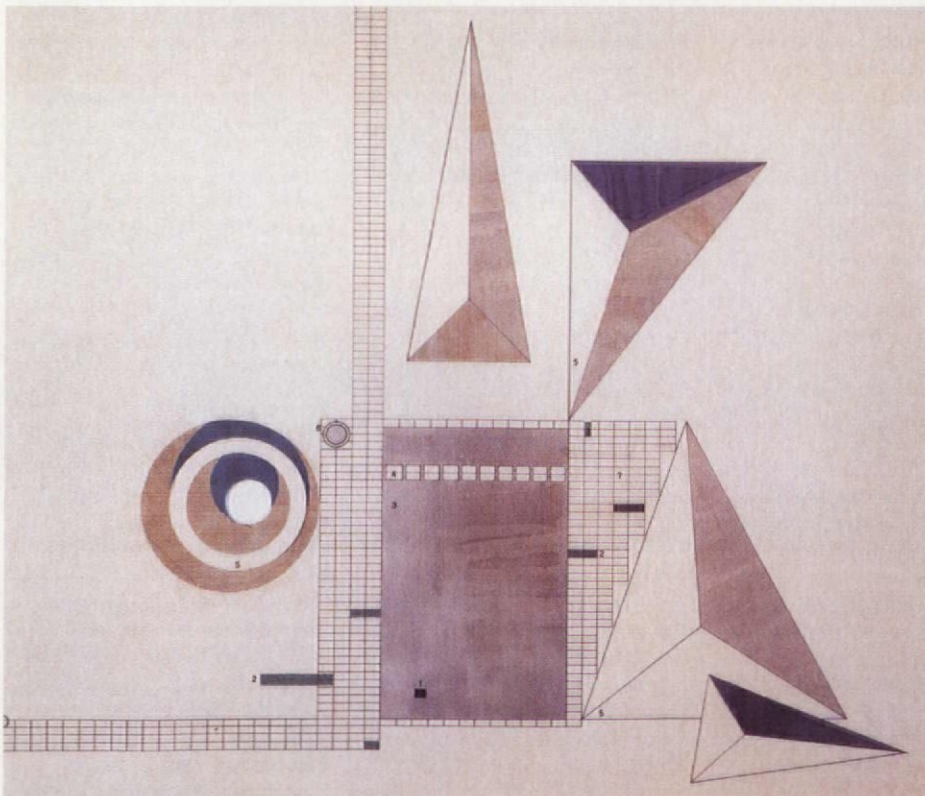
the Poet's Garden. Four grass-covered tetrahedral mounds and an asymmetrical grass cone were deployed around a rectangular pool and paving, on which pre-cast concrete cable-cladding elements were placed and stacked to form benches, like premonitions of Minimalist sculptures.

Asserting its independence from the setting, the composition was aligned to the compass, reinforcing the feeling that it was more like Land Art to come than anything from Cramer's, or almost anyone else's, immediate past. Giacometti and Noguchi might have provided inspiration (both had been published in Switzerland) and Cramer certainly drew freely on diverse stimuli – a cemetery in Blözen, for example, featured Mondrianesque gates which were far less persuasive than its banded plan.

The Poet's Garden asserted the right to treat the garden as an autonomous work of art, and other commissions – private gardens, inventive playgrounds, corporate plazas, cemeteries – received increasingly sculptural treatment. Cramer's mastery of manipulating the ground into geometric planes, swelling mounds or volcano-like planters is everywhere apparent, and following a student's example he took to modelling earth forms in table salt, whose angle of repose conveniently mirrors that of many soils.

For the horticultural show in Hamburg in 1963, he created the Theatre Garden (above left), a set-piece sculptural composition in concrete inspired by a visit to Brasilia. It did not rival the Poet's Garden, however, and to my eyes the most intriguing of the later projects was a 1967 design for a cemetery in Volketswil. Composed of three intersecting egg shapes, the plan looks as fresh as the day it was drawn and might easily pass as something by OMA, but at the time did not even merit a mention in the competition report. Cramer's architectural style, with its reduced palette of plants and materials, and use of non-native species, was coming under increasingly vicious attacks from eco-purists who accused him of raping nature.

Depressingly few of Cramer's projects survive, and many that do have been altered almost beyond recognition. Profusely illustrated with archival photographs and drawings, Weilacher's meticulous study is a fitting tribute. As history, it is especially valuable for paying close attention to the intricate web of collaborations from which the designs emerged. And as a study of landscape practice, it contains a treasure trove of ideas which may well excite a new generation of designers. *Richard Weston is a professor at the Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University*







## Perfect harmony

GILLIAN DARLEY

### La Foce: A Garden and Landscape

By Benedetta Origa et al. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. 320pp. £35. (Distributed by Plymbridge 01752 202301)

When Iris Cuttle met Antonio Origo in the 1920s the project that they embarked upon, along with marriage, was an ambitious attempt to break the cycle of impoverishment and agricultural dereliction of one corner of south-eastern Tuscany, the Val d'Orcia. Here, under the shadow of a massive extinct volcano, Monte Amiata, and the curious 'creti' – parched mounds of white earth, their surfaces appearing to dissolve into fissures from rain and wind – was little for the eye or the spirit. A landscape given form by aridity and exposure, this was a desert that should not have been, long ago stripped of its cover, both vegetation and habitation.

Far away from the fashionable villas which encircled Florence in the hills at Fiesole and Settignano, the world of wealth

and impeccable taste inhabited by families such as the Actons, Berensons and Strongs, and from which Miss Cuttle came, the young couple began the arduous task which Iris Origo described in her book *Images and Shadows*. From 1924 onwards they tried to tame the landscape, to stop the erosion, irrigate, rebuild the farms, change the crops and introduce rotation.

With their primitive beliefs and dire poverty, the people reflected the scenery. Grants from Mussolini's ambitious programme of agricultural improvement, transforming Italy from the Maremma to the marshes of Lazio, were invaluable financial help, and the Origos extended their scheme to provide social amenities (schools, an orphanage, a workman's clubhouse among them).

Yet later in the war, La Foce was also to be a centre for resistance, as Iris Origo told in her extraordinary *War in the Val d'Orcia* – a moving tribute to the humanity of those dour people of southern Tuscany and a glimpse of the steel in her own remarkable personality.

Despite the political upheavals which brought the end of the *mezzadria* system of share-cropping in the 1950s and '60s, despite the near-sale of La Foce in the 1970s after their father's death (foiled by the state of the market), the Origo daughters Benedetta and Donata have kept La Foce, and with *agriturismo* (largely built upon the fame of their mother's books) succeeded in turning the corner. This book celebrates almost 80 years of growth and change, through Benedetta Origo's telling of the story, Morna Livingston's photographs, Laurie Olin's drawings and John Dixon Hunt's essay on Cecil Pinsent.

Some years ago, exploring the area, I happened upon the little cemetery and honey-gold travertine chapel which Cecil Pinsent built in the late 1930s in memory of the Origo's son Gianni, who died of tubercular meningitis at the age of seven. Surrounded now by family and the graves of the *contadini*, it is set on a sloping site hollowed out of the scrawny oak woods, a place of memorable and poignant beauty. Then I knew something of the Origos but nothing of Pinsent.

Cecil Pinsent remains a shadowy figure: Uruguayan born, AA student, friend and architectural partner of Geoffrey Scott, he appears to have become a kind of in-house architect to the Berensons and their circle, through whom Iris Origo met him. Pinsent had a sense of theatre in landscape design, a taste for unlikely scale and form, and an eye for subtlety.

To his Classicism he added a very discreet modernity, of a kind which wears well. He worked continuously at La Foce from 1924 until 1939, on the house, garden and on buildings all over the estate. One detail demonstrates his skill. The paved stone path which leads under a long curving arbour from the garden to the cemetery is crisply edged on one side (the outer edge), while the stonework on the other side elides gently with the grass. As the pergola ends, the path becomes a grassy track through the woods. Pinsent uses the lie of the land, the texture and handling of different surfaces and the setting itself to make a real journey, however limited its distance is in reality.

*Gillian Darley writes on landscape and architecture*



# A confident profession

ROBERT HOLDEN

## Making Spaces

Edited by the Federation of German Landscape Architects. Birkhäuser, 2002. 181pp. £30.  
(Available from Triangle Bookshop 020 7631 1381)



When interviewing applicants for landscape architecture courses, I recommend three professional landscape magazines: one of them, German. I advise they look at *Garten und Landschaft* 'because Germany is a wealthier country, with more landscape architects and a longer established landscape profession than the UK – and, if you do not speak German, you can always look at the pictures'. But it is relatively difficult for non-German readers to really find out about the

German profession. Now this book supplies us with understandable pictures (in colour).

A bilingual German/English publication by the Federation of German Landscape Architects (to mark its biennial landscape prizes), it gives a good insight into how the German landscape profession sees itself. It consists of seven essays, which sandwich a presentation of the prize-winning schemes of 2001. Of the prizewinners, some projects are familiar: the Latz's Duisburg Nord Land-

schaftspark, the 2000 Hanover Expo gardens, and Richard Bodeker's Central Park, Riyadh. But others are not well known in the UK. Lohrer/Hochren's City of Munich Crematorium is impressively austere, while the spa park at Bad Saarow-Piesckow is a delightful piece of picturesque woodland design by Harald Fugmann and Martin Janotta. All these schemes are supremely competent constructions and designed with panache.

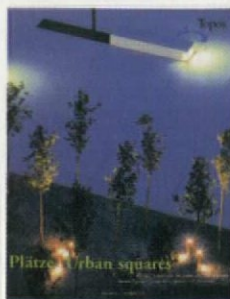
The joint first prize went to Joachim Kleiner for the delta of the River Reuss on Lake Lucerne and to Atelier Loidl for the reconstruction of Schinkel's Lustgarten, in front of the Altes Museum (left). City and countryside schemes represent what German landscape design is about. In 1935 the Schinkel design for the Lustgarten had been made into a parade ground, which the DDR had listed as a historic monument. Since 1994 there had been a series of competitions and designs for tackling this space, which debated whether or not to keep the topography of Hitlerjugend parades. The decision to do away with the parade ground is a reversal to an older Germany, but not uncritically so.

The River Reuss delta restoration also captures older cultural qualities. The river was canalised in 1851, and Joachim Kleiner has recreated the former lakeside ecology by making a delta, in an exercise of large-scale landscape engineering.

If the book is a sandwich, the substance is really in the wrapping of essays. These not only use the prize projects as evidence in a survey of current German landscape design, but include an interview of historical importance with Hans Luz (who designed at Osaka, 1970, and the Stuttgart BUGA of 1977).

The well-illustrated essays are contemplations on the meanings of landscapes, anthropological, climatic and post-industrial; the whole is a picture of a confident and very lively profession, whose work should be better known in the UK. This is a book for anyone seriously interested in landscape architecture, and it should certainly be bought by landscape school libraries.

Robert Holden teaches at the University of Greenwich



## Urban Squares and The Netherlands in Focus

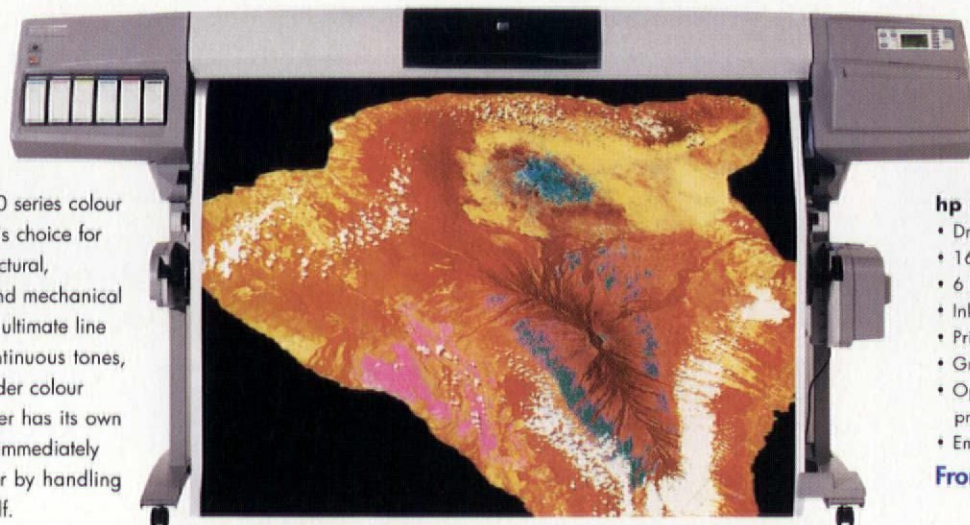
Callwey/Birkhäuser, 2002. Each 128pp. £22.50

Though few people are likely to throw away their copies of the landscape quarterly *Topos*, its pages are now being recycled according to theme, with 15-20 projects in each volume. *Urban Squares* collects European examples published in the journal since 1993, including Patel Taylor and EDAW's recent Royal Victoria Square in London's

Docklands. In *The Netherlands in Focus*, MVRDV's Winy Maas makes the case for 'light urbanisation' as an antidote to 'planned mediocrity', and Adriaan Geuze and West 8 are much in evidence. Indeed, one of their schemes, the well-publicised Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam, appears in both these collections. The *Urban Squares* piece is more sceptical ('While the aesthetics are convincing, they are also its Achilles heel'); it being one of *Topos*' strengths that its writers are not loath to criticise or raise questions.



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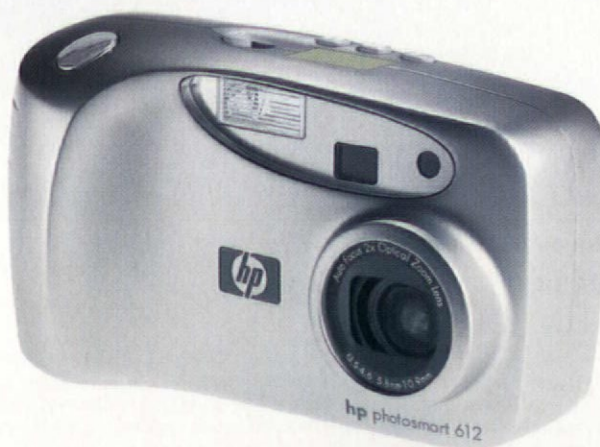
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## people & practices

**Ryder** has recruited **Alan Palmer** as principal architect. He will be working from the practice's London office.

**Axiom Architects** has appointed **Paul Morris** as a director of the practice. **Nick Wiseman** has now retired.

Chiswick-based practice **Acanthas Lawrence & Wrightson** has appointed **Wyndham Westerdale** and **Ian Brocklebank** as associates.

**Essex Goodman & Suggitt** has moved to 34 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AU, tel 020 7689 1434.

**Project Orange** has moved to 1st Floor, Morelands, 7 Old Street, London EC1V 9HL.

**Gollifer Associates** has changed its name to **Gollifer Langston Architects** and has moved to 48 Poland Street, London W1F 7ND, tel 020 7734 2134.

**South Gloucestershire Council's** property consultancy has moved to Nibley Court, 3 Turner Drive, Westerleigh Business Park, Yate, Bristol BS37 5YU.

**Building Services Group** has appointed **Tony Cassidy** to head up its new M&E cost management division.

**ORMS** has appointed **John McRae** as an associate.

Consultancy **Babbie Group** has appointed four new board-level managing directors, **Bob Duff**, **Gordon Masterton**, **David Baird** and **David Fawcett**.

● Send details of changes and appointments to Victoria Huttler, *The Architects' Journal*, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, or e-mail victoria.huttler@construct.emap.com



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Replies, in confidence, to Patrick O'Hanlon

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The district surrounds Cambridge. It shares in its vibrancy and is subject to its development pressures. In recognition of this, the salary of the post is currently under review.

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For an informal discussion, contact Rob Walker on (01223) 443180.

Applicants should initially request details and application forms by telephoning (01223) 443224 (answerphone).

Closing date: 10th May 2002.

Applicants who have not been contacted within three weeks of the closing date may assume that, on this occasion, their application has been unsuccessful.

No agencies please

The Council will recruit, retain and develop people based solely on their abilities to perform the job. Posts are open to job sharing.



## Appointment of Architect

The High Commission of India, London proposes to undertake a programme for construction on a vacant plot adjacent to 8 South Audley Street, which is a Grade II listed building. The property is located in the prestigious Mayfair area of London in a highly controlled conservation zone of Westminster. The plot area is approximately 300 sq. metres.

2. The programme consists of design of a block of 6 residences for officers of the High Commission with plinth areas of 170 to 220 sq. metres. The residences should follow the zoning guidelines prescribed by Westminster city council.

3. The requirements are as follows:

(i). Residences (apartments) - 6 Nos.

- (a) Large entertaining area with separate living and dining rooms
- (b) Three bedrooms with attached bathrooms
- (c) Kitchen with ancillary facilities (laundry machines, small storage room)

(ii) Domestic Assistants - 6 separate units

One room with attached bathroom (all six quarters can be designed either on the top floor or individually attached to the main flats on each floor)

(iii) Parking space for 10 cars in the basement.

4. Interested Architectural practices who wish to be appointed for this Project may please send us their proposals and fees expected (either as a percentage or a fixed sum). Fees expected for preparation of preliminary concept designs, if required, may also be indicated as at least 6 companies are expected to be short listed. Company profiles and other major projects executed may also be included and forwarded by 31st May, 2002 to:

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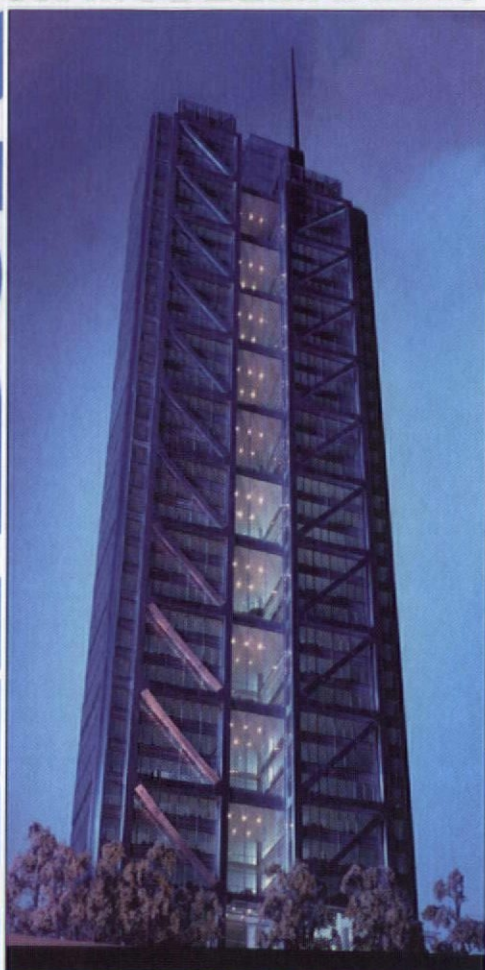
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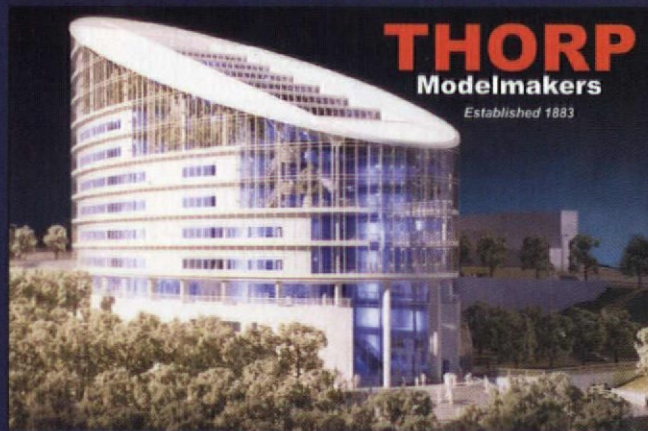
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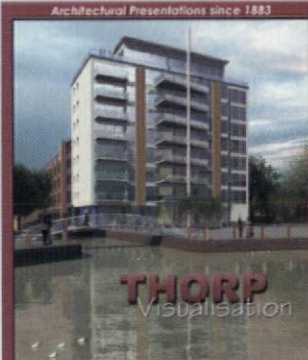
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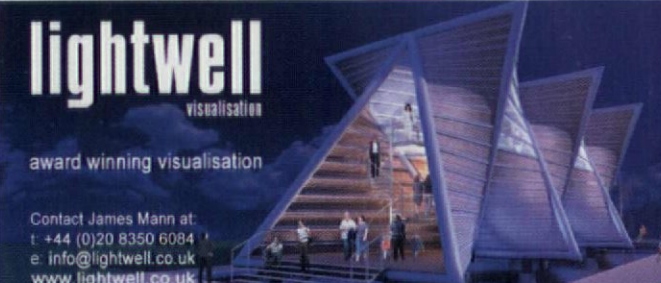



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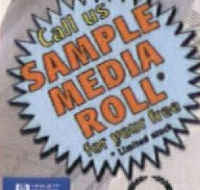
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## archicharades



Champagne goes to Gerald Cowham of Heppenstalls in Huddersfield who correctly identified Carlo Scarpa from the clues in our 'archicharades' competition last week. Can you identify the famous architect from this week's clues? Send your answers on a postcard please, by first thing Monday morning, to: AJ Astragal, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, or fax your entry on 020 7505 6701. The first correct entry pulled out of the hat wins a bottle of bubbly.

### Local focal

**W**atch out for a competition announcement in the near future concerning two town hall extensions, one on the north, one in the south. The intention is to prompt thinking about the nature of municipal democracy in the 21st century, and thus derive a new form of town hall architecture. The competition is being prompted by the **IPPR** think tank, and will be organised in conjunction with the two local authorities and *The Architects' Journal*. The first stage will be open and will ask for practice statements and an indication of approach to the brief and to the site (definitely no designs!) A shortlist will be picked for each project and the practices will be paid to produce designs for the second stage. The intention is to build the results.

### Talking shop

**T**o Blains Art Gallery in Mayfair, where artist **Ben Johnson** has been exhibiting some of his latest works. My old friend **Peter Murray** of Wordsearch had organised a party of friends to enjoy the canvasses, showing buildings by **John Pawson**, **Claudio Silvestrin** and **Lord Foster**. Accompanied by **Lady Foster**, Norman was to be seen chatting with RIBA presidential hopeful **Annette Fisher**, who in turn sought campaigning advice from ex-president **Bryan Jefferson**. Cornish architect and lifeboatman **Jonathan Ball**

seemed to be on good form, celebrating some good news from the High Court regarding his tussle with Tim Smit of the Eden Project. **Ivan Massow**, recently hounded from the chairmanship of the ICA for his views on conceptual art, clearly found Johnson's hyper-realist work more to his liking, as did society portraitist **Tim Yeo**. Invited by Peter Murray to give a 'brief 10-minute chat about his work', Johnson silenced the chattering group for a full 35 minutes with a spell-binding talk on his career and influences (Lord Foster and **Sir Jack Zunz** were top of the list). There was not a murmur from the assembled throng. That man can talk as well as paint. Many remember Ben Johnson's lecture at the RIBA several years ago. Is it time for a reprise?

### Déjà mangé

**M**y old friend **Lord St John of Fawsley** shows no sign of tiring in respect of his Building of the Year Award, run by the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust (which he chairs) and BSKyB. As ever, the award ceremony will be held at the Savoy, followed by a 'buffet luncheon', which always reminds me of one of his Lordship's catchphrases when the commission held its receptions in St James's Square. 'I believe some light refreshments are available downstairs,' he would intone. 'Not too light, I hope.' Quails' eggs and bumper glasses of champagne were always the order of the day. Perhaps that could be repeated at the Savoy.

### City competition

**F**oggo Associates' office building on Queen Victoria Street in the City of London won the prize for best City building from the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects this year – and was presented at the annual dinner of the Company at the Mansion House on Tuesday evening. The Merrill Lynch office complex by **Swanke Hayden Connell** was highly commended – in previous years there was only a winner. Let's hope this award continues to flourish, and that perhaps more commendations might be considered.

### In the money

**S**ome folks prefer anonymity rather than being included in those 'rich-list' tables that the papers are constantly publishing. That does not apply to **Tony Pidgley**, head of housing developer the Berkeley Group, who I note is speaking at the RIBA conference at Interbuild in June. According to a profile in the *Sunday Express*, Pidgley is 'adamant' that he is worth more than the £48 million he was recently credited with having. Still, with a salary of only £600,000pa, things must be quite tough for Pidgley. But not quite as tough as they were for his son, **Tony Pidgley Jnr**, who left the Berkeley Group last year to start his own company. He tells the *Sunday Express*: 'At the end of the day, people will work the hours demanded if they feel rewarded, and I didn't on a £275,000pa salary.' Don't you just know how he feels.

### Deep throat

**R**IBA president **Paul Hyett** was stricken with laryngitis, but managed to cope on Radio 4's *Any Questions* programme last week, which was more than its chairman could manage, confusing Hyett with Nick Clough and getting their names muddled up. Architecture scarcely featured on the programme, but given the problems of the Middle East, that is hardly surprising. Perhaps the programme should be invited to Portland Place.

### Joint forces

**G**ood to see the RIBA and CABA working together on the Future Studies Committee, where **John Worthington** of DEGWH has succeeded **Russell Brown**, chair for the past two years. There must be something catching in the idea – I gather that the idea of joint working is being extended to the European competition.

### Well reviewed

**I** spy no less a person than **Ted Cullinan** in the portals of the Reform Club – wearing a tie! This unusual event took place at a dinner for the CABA design review committee, where I am told Ted (an invited guest) gave typically astute and witty after-dinner thoughts on continuity and change. The gathering seemed to enjoy asparagus, lamb and syllabub and excellent-value Reform Club wines. Perhaps this too will become an annual event.

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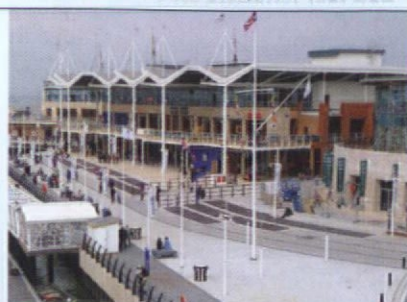
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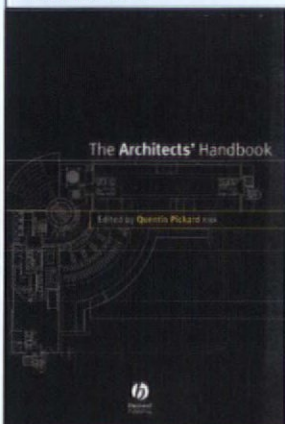
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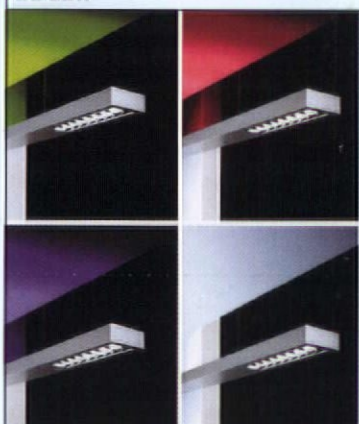
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