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NICHOLAS KANE/ARCAD

Rem Koolhaas' Dutch Embassy in Berlin is the latest in a spate of buildings which appear to be informed more by abstract theory than by the immediate architectural context. But is it really any less contextual than 'conventional' design? On pages 24-38 we argue that the current crop of signature buildings can be read as attempts to embrace, rather than ignore, the existing urban fabric.

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**Grimshaw unveils  
its Melbourne  
Station plans**  
» pages 6-7



**Surprise discovery:  
Mies van der Rohe's  
secret villa**  
» page 8

**aj** news

# Quango boss fuels fashion fears

The government's chief construction adviser has demanded that architects ally themselves with fashion and textile designers in the building design process.

Dennis Lenard, the boss of quango Constructing Excellence, has waded into the ongoing row over the role fashion designers should play in architecture.

Lenard told the AJ that 'there is a lot architects could and should learn from the other design professions'.

He said he would use his position as head of the new agency – an amalgamation of Rethinking Construction and the Construction Best Practice Programme – to campaign for fashion, graphic and fabric designers to take a key role in the design of buildings.

Lenard's comments contribute to the ongoing debate into the role that fashion designers such as Wayne Hemingway and John Rocha should play in architecture (AJ 13.11.03).

'Creativity needs to drive the construction process,' Lenard said. 'At the moment architects do not use enough of the other design professions.'

'We need to try to get the other professions involved in buildings. It should not just be the preserve of architects. I know this idea will not be greeted warmly by the architecture profession but it is something I strongly believe in.'



**Dennis Lenard: calls for fashion advice**

However, Lenard's comments were greeted with scepticism by Hemingway, the founder of fashion label Red or Dead, who sparked the current debate with his Gateshead housing estate for Wimpey Homes.

'You should not think about fashion when you are designing buildings. I am not a proper fashion designer and this is why I think I can do it,' Hemingway said.

'If this is a way of getting architects to think more creatively and stop having their designs dictated by structures then it would be a positive,' he added. 'But we should be wary of giving formally trained fashion designers too much influence.'

RIBA president George Ferguson agreed. 'I would react strongly against fabric and fashion designers taking the lead on building design,' he said.

'It would be disastrous if we ended up with a kind of fashion architecture, which would be very superficial. As soon as other designers take control of standards the quality would suffer.'

'If you look at what Wayne Hemingway did in Newcastle, the architect he worked with was not credited at all on the scheme,' he added. 'There would be a real danger for construction in this country if using other designers was seen as the solution to boring housing.'

Ed Dorrell



The results of the European 7 architectural competition have been announced. Among the 186 winners, runners up and honourable mentions was this scheme for Salzburg by Nerea Calvillo. This year's competition – which attracted 2,031 submissions for 68 different proposed sites throughout continental Europe – aimed to focus on Urban Scale. The biennial event encourages 'young professionals' to submit schemes for existing sites with the chance that the winning project for each site will actually get built. This year, following controversy over the British contributions to both European 5 and European 6 (AJ 30.01.03), the UK failed to provide any potential sites for submissions.

## Fifteen honoured in CABA's alternative Festive Five Awards for good design

CABA has unveiled its Festive Five Awards, the design watchdog's alternative honours for 'championing good design'.

This year it has handed out 15 awards in three different categories: public sector organisations, private companies and individuals.

CABA chief executive Jon Rouse highlighted Horsham District Council chief executive Martin Pearson, who retires this year. Rouse said he deserved the award for 'spending the best part of 15-20 years trying to knock a suburban town into shape'.

Rouse also said he was pleased the BBC had landed a prize. He said this award was made in memory of the project director on MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard's redevelopment of

Broadcasting House, Chris Evans, who died this year. 'Evans was really the driving force behind that project,' he added.

The other awards in the public sector organisation category went to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Octavia Housing and Care, the North West Development Agency and Bournemouth Borough Council.

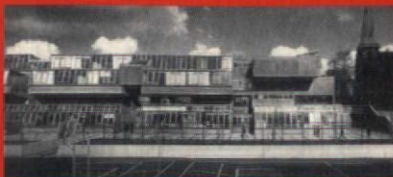
The remaining individual winners were Liverpool councillor Beatrice Fraenkel, Hastings head of regeneration Caroline Lwin, Bury headteacher Clare Barker and NHS trust chair Alastair MacDonald.

In the private company category the winners were Swiss Re, Berkeley Homes, Grosvenor Estates, the Argent Group and 3Es Enterprises.



“Maybe we would have done better if we were lollipop ladies”

George Ferguson laments the dearth of architects in the New Year's Honours list » page 10



Tessa Jowell refuses to reconsider listing Pimlico School » page 10

## New planning shake-up lacks spirit, says Rogers

Richard Rogers has called on the government to give teeth to its forthcoming planning bill in a speech to the House of Lords.

The urban task force chair criticised the planning shake-up as 'long on structure but short on aspirations' during the House of Lords' second reading of the bill on Tuesday.

The debate, the first time the upper chamber has considered the new legislation, was intended to tackle the spirit of the bill rather than particular details. Others speaking included Lord Rooker for the government, Baroness Hanham for the conservatives and Baroness Hamwee for the Liberal Democrats.

Rogers pointed to the bill's failure to make a single mention of design or the need to ensure the highest quality design. And he called for a proper definition of sustainability that would include the protection of ecosystems, the reduction of waste and the combatting of polarisation and exclusion.

'I welcome the duty contained in the bill to have regard to the achievement of sustainable development,' he said. 'But such a duty is actually meaningless without a proper definition of sustainability on the face of the bill.'

He also called on the government to lead by example, by harmonising VAT, encouraging greater densities and greater use of brownfield sites.

### MINERVA TO GET GO-AHEAD

Grimshaw is set to win approval for its Minerva Tower in the City of London. The corporation's chief planner has recommended that the planning committee approve the 50-storey office building at its meeting next Tuesday.

### BERMONDSEY AFTER EIGHT

The Architecture Foundation and Urban Catalyst have shortlisted eight practices for their affordable housing project at Bermondsey Square in south London. Block Architecture, dsdha, FAT, Pierre d'Avoine Architects, S333, Urban Salon, Weston Williamson Architects, and William Russell Architecture and Design are all in the running. A final selection will be made in February. +

## Fierce row erupts between rivals over Croydon Gateway proposals

A war of words has broken out between the two rival consortia vying to develop a large brownfield site in central Croydon.

Stanhope, the developer behind proposals by Foster and Partners and CZWG for the 'Croydon Gateway', has reacted with fury to news that an alternative scheme by Michael Aukett Architects has secured planning permission.

The firm's chief executive has launched a savage attack on the Michael Aukett project, insisting it is financially unviable and will fail to regenerate the area.

The two projects are currently neck-and-neck in the battle for the 5-hectare site. While Michael Aukett and its backer Arrowcroft have planning permission, Stanhope owns almost all the land. If the Michael Aukett proposal goes ahead it will require a raft of compulsory purchase orders for the property.

But Stanhope is determined that its own project – which is currently awaiting the outcome of a planning inquiry – should win the tussle and has vowed to take any CPOs to court.

Croydon Council gave the Michael Aukett scheme its backing because it will provide the area with a 12,500-capacity arena, an amenity the Stanhope consortium claims is unviable.

Stanhope chief executive

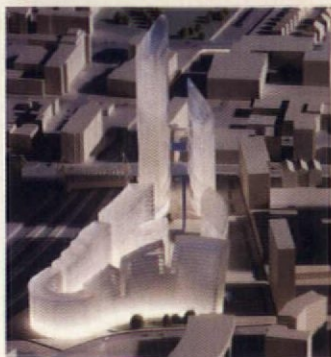
David Camp told the AJ that Michael Aukett's scheme 'should not be allowed'. He said: 'As the majority site owners, we have raised a number of valid issues about the viability of the arena scheme and its ability to regenerate the surrounding area.'

'It is dependent on CPOs that will inevitably delay any project other than ours for many more years. We have not bought the land simply for it to be taken away from us. We have taken legal advice and it seems we have a strong defence against any CPOs. It is a real shame we have reached this very difficult impasse.'

A spokesperson for the Arrowcroft and Michael Aukett consortium dismissed Stanhope's criticism. 'There is no doubt the arena is viable and the scheme should go ahead. We are determined to push ahead with the compulsory purchase orders and get our project started.'

'We have the support of the business community, the local population and the council. Our project received only 24 planning objections. This is almost nothing for a scheme of this size.'

Ed Darrell



Top: Michael Aukett's proposal.

Bottom: Foster and CZWG's scheme

### IRAN REBUILD APPEAL

Architecture for Humanity is calling on architects to help rebuild the earthquake-ravaged city of Bam in Iran. To offer services or financial aid, email [csinclair@architectureforhumanity.org](mailto:csinclair@architectureforhumanity.org) with the subject header 'Iran Earthquake'.

### COLOUR COMP CALL

Registrations and applications are invited for the Keim/AJ 'Streets of Colour' competition to mark Keim's 125th anniversary. Applicants are invited to choose part of a street and propose a new colour scheme for it – or its restoration to original colours. The intention is to implement the winning scheme, which will attract a prize of £2,500, with second and third prizes of £1,500 and £1,000 respectively. Judges will include Will Alsop, Cezary Bednarski, Helen Hughes of English Heritage, and Keim MD Gareth Davies. Paul Finch will represent the AJ. Selected entries will appear on the Keim stand as part of the Architecture Pavilion at Interbuild in April. To register, go to the Keim Mineral Paints website at [www.keimpaints.co.uk](http://www.keimpaints.co.uk)



# Grimshaw set to create waves in



Grimshaw has unveiled the latest images of its new Southern Cross railway station in Melbourne, Australia.

The £156 million project – which has now started on site – will completely overhaul the existing Spencer Street station, aiming to create 'a new landmark for the city'.

The project, drawn up in association with local office Daryl Jackson Architects, will upgrade the existing facilities, incorporate a new coach and bus terminal and taxi rank, and provide retail and office space on the 10.2ha site.

The principal features of the new terminal are the Grand Arrivals Hall and a single 'wave' roof structure. Designed to let in maximum light, the transparent domed enclosure makes the entire interchange visible from every entrance. Described by Grimshaw as the 'focal point of the entire project', the roof has been developed to work in

conjunction with the external weather conditions, taking advantage of prevailing wind directions to ensure that ventilation is consistent throughout the year.

From the outside, the curved roof design also aims to complement the architectural styles of buildings in the surrounding area, providing a 'visual bridge between the existing city centre and the new Dockland developments'.

Other improvements include new air conditioning, seating, escalators, ticket barriers, passenger lounges, baggage check-in areas and waiting areas.

The city council has set the beginning of the 2006 Commonwealth Games, which are being held in Melbourne, as the deadline for construction completion.

Ed Dorrell



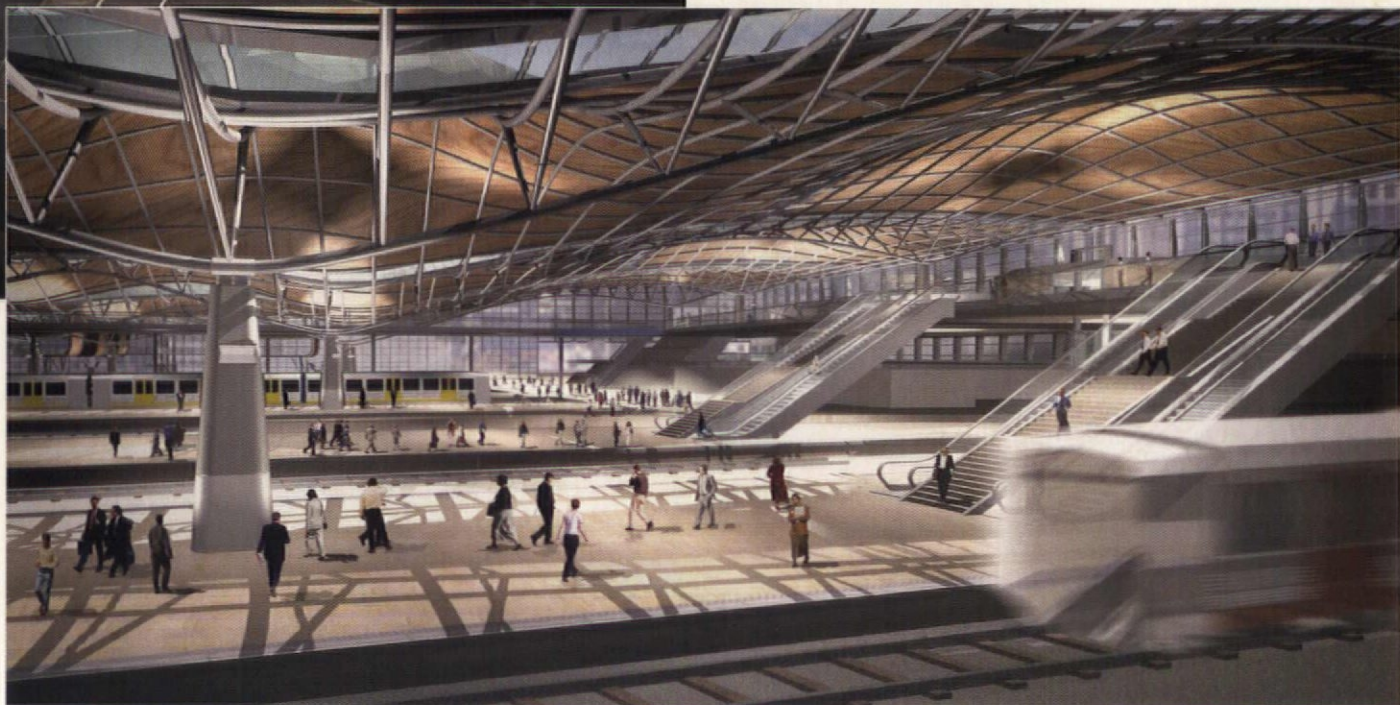
# Melbourne rail station redesign



Access all areas: Southern Cross station is accessible from four sides



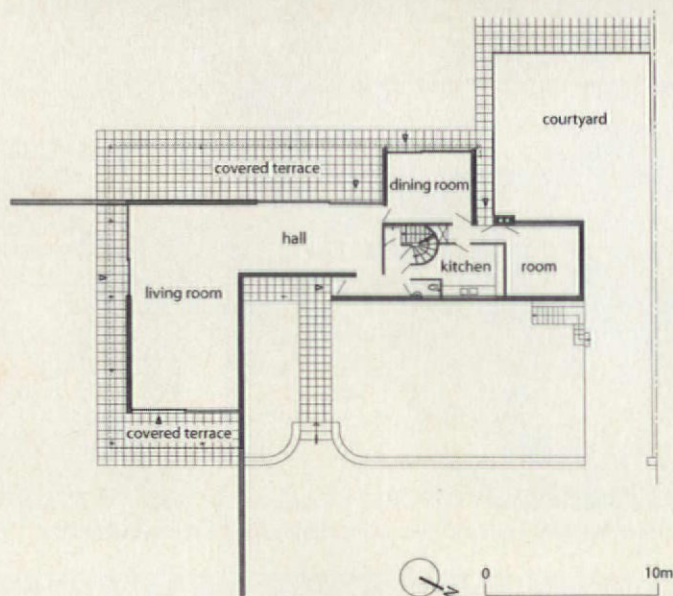
The transparent enclosure allows maximum light into the building



The single roof structure and open plan give commuters a complete overview of the station interchange



# Experts uncover secret Mies villa



A previously unknown villa by Mies van der Rohe has been discovered in Germany.

Mies experts are convinced that the Villa Heusgen in Krefeld is a genuine and rare example of his domestic work.

It was built for the Heusgen family between 1931 and 1932, soon after the completion of Mies' most famous domestic commission, the Tugendhat House in Brno.

Its designer's identity was a guarded secret, known only to client and builder, until architect Karl Amendt bought and lovingly restored the villa.

Amendt claims the house is a realisation of ideas developed by Mies while director of the Bauhaus, to create the perfect dwelling for a young modern family.

Architectural historian Christian Wolsdorf, head of the architecture department at the Bauhaus Archive, said the building contained several elements that proved its authenticity. He ruled out the possibility that it was an imitation by another architect.

The two-storey white building, which overlooks a generous lawn, is entered through a concealed entrance. The ground floor contains a sequence of living spaces, with bedrooms arranged simply on the first floor.

Zoë Blackler





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# Architecture gains two honours

The profession has secured just two awards in the Queen's New Year's Honours, bringing to an end the bumper crop of the last few years.

Welsh conservation architect James Douglas Hogg received an OBE, while Straw Bale House-designer Sarah Wigglesworth picked up an MBE. However, the news has been marred by the revelation that hundreds of nominees have turned down awards in recent years, among them the architects Cedric Price, Charles Holden and Walter Segal.

Ten architects appear on the confidential list of 'refuseniks' that was leaked from Whitehall before Christmas, along with the likes of L S Lowry, Albert Finney and Nigella Lawson.

Holden, who overhauled the design of the London Underground, twice turned down a knighthood and Price rejected the offer of a CBE in the 2003 New Year list.

Price's friend Simon Allford said he suspected on another day the great visionary might have accepted the award. 'It was the maverick in him. You never really knew what he was going to do.'

Michael Manser declined the offer of a CBE, not in

protest but from remorse at his own failure to combat Prince Charles' assault on modern architecture while president of the RIBA.

'I felt strongly that I missed an opportunity and the fallout has been considerable,' he said this week.

'I felt badly about it for a long while.' Manser was finally convinced to accept the honour the third time it was offered.

Current RIBA president George Ferguson told the AJ he was surprised at how few architects had been recognised this year. 'It's very strange that at a time when architecture is getting greater recognition this isn't reflected in the honours,' he said. 'Maybe we would have done better if we were lollipop ladies or did one of the many things recognised in the

community. But we're not as cuddly as that.'

However, Jon Rouse said the dip was simply a return to the status quo after an exceptionally successful couple of years, during which knighthoods were awarded to Nicholas Grimshaw, Terry Farrell and Richard MacCormac. +

Zoë Blackler



Sarah Wigglesworth: MBE

## And those who have refused:

Godfrey Allen –  
OBE 1943, CBE 1957  
Charles Holden –  
knighthood 1944 and 1951  
Philip Bagenal –  
OBE 1956, CBE 1966  
Edward Bevan – MBE 1964  
Stephen Bower – CBE 1973  
Kenneth Campbell – CBE 1973  
Walter Segal – OBE 1982  
Allen Matheson –  
OBE 1987, CBE 1997  
Michael Manser –  
CBE 1988, 1993  
Cedric Price – CBE 2003



## RIBA backs down on Clients' Guide

The RIBA has bowed to public pressure and withdrawn its Clients' Guide after critics attacked its decision to publish market research into architects' fees.

Small practitioners were dismayed when the institute, under the insistence of the Office of Fair Trading, replaced its Fee Guidance with the research (AJ 4.12.03).

Practice committee members ordered staff to drop the document over concerns clients would use the statistics as a tool to force down fees. It was on public sale for just one day.

An RIBA spokesperson said it needed time to look into alternatives. 'A revised edition without the fee information is to be issued as soon as possible,' she added.

# Immunity decision leaves council free to demolish Pimlico School

John Bancroft has relaunched a campaign to save his Pimlico School building after the Department for Culture, Media and Sport paved the way for its possible demolition.

Bancroft is preparing for a legal challenge after culture secretary Tessa Jowell refused to reconsider the building for listing, instead granting owner Westminster council a five-year 'certificate of immunity'.

The council is now free to draw up options for the building, which could range from refurbishment to wholesale demolition. The certificate of immunity blocks further attempts to seek protection for the 1960s building for the next five years.

Bancroft claimed the decision reflected the government's erroneous policy towards educational buildings. He said it was short-sighted to be 'tearing down schools that have loads of life left and putting up glittering new buildings'.

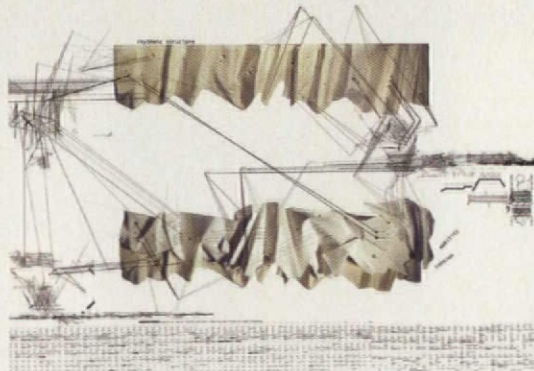
The Twentieth Century Society's casework officer Eva Branscome agreed the 'highly sculptural' Brutalist building was a 'very strong design' and worth saving.

However, the secretary of state, in her decision not to reconsider the latest listing recommendation, ruled that it was not of 'sufficient architectural quality' to justify protection, citing its shortcomings in terms of solar gain and its high maintenance costs.

Roger Hawkins, director of hawkins|brown, who was responsible for drawing up a redevelopment plan several years ago, said he was pleased the building remained unlisted. He said his scheme had 'preserved the character of the school but with adaptive changes'.

Westminster is now bidding for a grant from the Department for Education and Skills' 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, the size of which will determine whether it can begin afresh with a new building or be limited to refurbishing the old one.

## STUDENT SHOWCASE



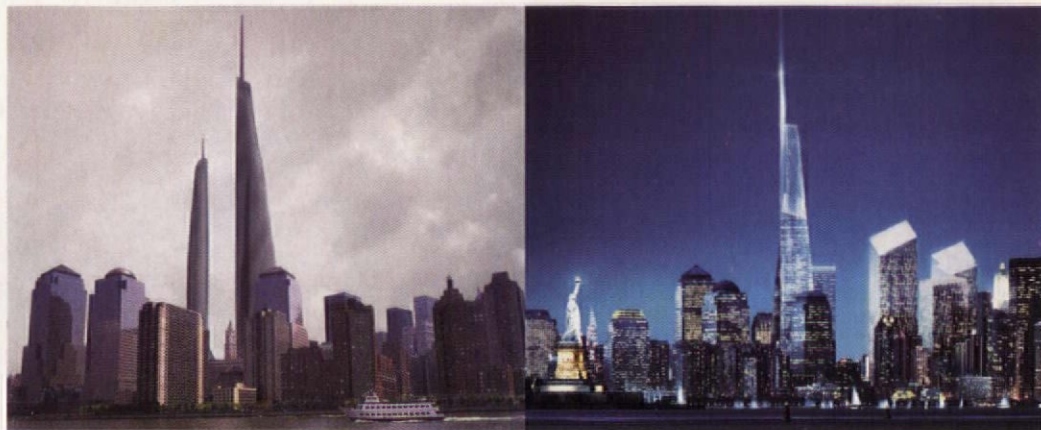
*Architectural Microsound* is a project by Massimo Minale, a student in unit 19 at the Bartlett. His work deals with recent technological advances that allow us to probe and manipulate microsound, the short-lived sounds under the skin of the musical note. We can dissolve the traditional blocks of music and architecture into a more fluid and supple medium. Particle densities evaporate and mutate, giving birth to fluid landscapes, spanning across continents and slipping through the cracks of seven musical timescales from supra to sub-sample. Minale's tutors are Neil Spiller and Phil Watson.

*Student Showcase* is sponsored by Students' Union, a website set up by Union in association with *The Architects' Journal* at [www.students-union.net](http://www.students-union.net). To submit work for publication in *Student Showcase*, email a publication quality image to [ajstudentshowcase@emap.com](mailto:ajstudentshowcase@emap.com)





# UK practice flattered by 'striking similarity' of Freedom Tower design



A small Bristol-based practice has claimed the new design for the World Trade Center, recently unveiled by Daniel Libeskind and David Childs, bears an uncanny resemblance to its own competition entry.

Angus Meeks Architects, which submitted its tower design in the 2002 competition, told the AJ that 'although we do not suspect any foul play, it is nice to know that our idea was so close to what is actually going to be built'.

Director Roger Ellams said the office immediately noticed 'a striking likeness' between its skyscraper proposal (left) and the Freedom Tower design pro-

duced by competition-winner Libeskind in collaboration with SOM's Childs (right).

'On seeing the latest scheme we were struck by the similarity with the design for the landmark tower from our own proposals,' he said. 'It is odd because we drew up the proposals very quickly as a bit of a joke.'

'It appears that great minds think alike,' he added. 'However, unfortunately, we believe that this current proposal is still less elegant than our original.'

But Ellams insisted there was 'absolutely no chance' the practice would sue.

Ed Dorrell

## Heritage groups slam runway plans

Government plans to build new runways at both Stansted and Heathrow represent 'the biggest threat to Britain's heritage since the Blitz', architectural lobbyists have warned.

Both SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings have attacked the transport secretary's pre-Christmas announcement as 'completely unreasonable'.

They are furious that Alistair Darling has effectively signed a demolition order for up to 100 listed buildings, including two scheduled historical monuments.

A runway adjacent to Stansted's current site would, according to SAVE's Adam Wilkinson, cut a swathe through some of the South East's most historic countryside, while in the Heathrow area Harmondsworth's Grade I-listed Great Tithe Barn would also have to go.

Wilkinson told the AJ that heritage campaigners are 'furious'. 'We cannot believe that so many highly important buildings might simply be demolished,' he said.



## A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

16 March 2004, RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London, W1

Almost all European architects work in or among old buildings.

The third annual Architectural Review conference, *Intervening in the European City*, will examine some of the most creative contemporary interventions.

The line of speakers includes distinguished and innovative architects from all over Europe, including:

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- MASSIMILIANO FUKSAS
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# Streets of colour

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Your entry will need to be supported by the local authority because the winning scheme will actually be implemented and become a testimony to the winner's creative insight. This will involve completing an additional 'approval' form in association with the relevant department of the local authority.

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- » **2nd Prize £1,500**
- » **3rd Prize £1,000**

#### THE JUDGES

- » Will Alsop RA
- » Cezary Bednarski, Architect
- » Helen Hughes, Head of Historic Interiors and Decorative Finishes, English Heritage
- » Gareth Davies  
M.D. Keim Mineral Paints UK
- » Paul Finch Editorial, Director of The Architects' Journal

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# Streets of colour

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#### THE PRIZES

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» 2nd Prize

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Street, part of street, or general area which your entry will revitalise (if known at this stage):

#### RULES and entry criteria

Entries must feature a real street or part of a street or general area, preferably one which has fallen into a state requiring renovation. This may be in respect of the original colour or a new colour scheme.

Entries must be submitted on two A1 mounting boards suitable for judging and exhibiting. All information including up to 250 words of rationale should be included on these boards together with relevant photographs, montages, visuals, etc.

A complete Keim point colour specification will be required.

You will need to gain the support of the local authority and/or property owners when you develop your entry.

In the first instance a registration should be completed, following which entrants will receive relevant technical information from Keim Mineral Paints together with the official entry form and local authority clearance form which will need to accompany the official entry.

Towards the closing date, all registered participants will be sent a reminder of the actual closing date for submission of entries.

The panel will judge the 12 best schemes by the end of February 2004. The winning and short-listed entries will be published in a special AJ supplement.

Entries will be on display on the Keim stand AP09 in the Architecture Pavilion at Interbuild in April and the work will be planned for implementation during the summer.

All entries must be supplied with copyright clearance and entries will not be returned unless specifically requested. The sponsors cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage to materials submitted and will have the right to publicise any designs in any manner deemed appropriate. Entrants will be informed of the sponsors' intentions to publicise their work.

The judges' decision is final on all matters relating to this award competition and no correspondence will be entered into.

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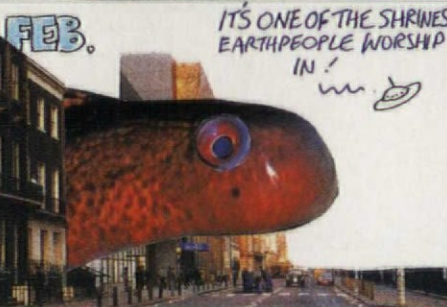
# OLD HELLMAN'S ALMANAC FOR 2004

**JAN.**



Final compromise on the design of *Ground Zilch's* Freedomtomakemoney tower in NY. Winning architect Emanuel Wunderkind will design the door furniture and sanitary fittings and site owner Harry Goldswine's architects, Schememore Owning and Meddle, the rest.

**FEB.**



Opening of Futile System's neo-biological style Selfcentre megastore in Smethwick in the form of a giant pink parasite. The landmark building is in the revolutionary 21st century shopping centre replacing the old revolutionary 20th century Bullshite shopping centre. Smog.

**MAR.**



RIPBA President-elect Doris Uhu pledges to stick to her manifesto to stamp out sexism in offices, appoint an all woman Council, destroy the British Architects Registration Board (BARB) and continue to wear red underwear. Brit firms get McDonalds kitchen contracts in Iraq. Mist.

**APRIL**



Opening of Frank Lee Gharish's controversial new Loony Toones Opera House in Santa Barbarian, California, based on plastic refuse sacks. Gharish is also to design floppy twin towers in Worthing and a disabled toilet on stilts in Auchtermuchty. Fog, sleet, gales.

**MAY**



Furore as Runnymede District Council grant listed building demolition consent to *Greenslime*, a house designed by the Edwardian architect Sir Eduard Escutcheons. The owner wants to replace it with the uncompromisingly modern *Moth House* by Laurel Wormwood. Damp.

**JUNE**



This year's temporary pavilion for the Turpitude Gallery in London's Jekyll Park will be designed by the deceased architect Louis Karnak via a medium. Expanded vermiculite sprayed onto an aluminium frame will simulate the master's signature mass insitu concrete forms. Haze, ice.

**JULY**



Exhibition at the Institute for Contemptuous Arts of the work of the trend-setting young Office for Architectural Fashion (OAF) who have also won the competition to design the Channel 5 Sauna and Massage Centre in Blue City. Ram Kikkhaas gets the RIPBA Gold Medal.

**AUG.**



Deputy PM John Pispott issues a directive that 75% of the new High Occupancy Value Engineered Levels of Sustainability housing developments (HOVELS) use Predetermined Relocated Environmental Feasibility Affordable Building Systems (PREFABS). Condensation.

**SEPT.**



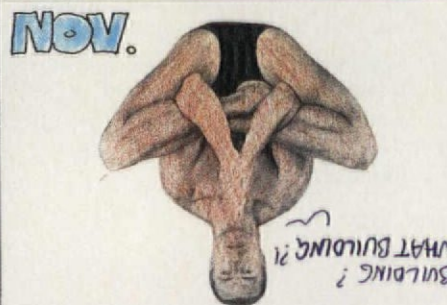
Retrospective exhibition opens at the Design Mausoleum of the 1960s Superfluoustudio radical group based in Baloni, Italy. The group proposed a space-age techno culture which imagined no possessions, no countries and the world living as one replaced by a grid. Hot.

**OCT.**



Superstar Ram Kikkhaas returns his RIPBA gold medal in protest because "architects are a bunch of obsolete, self-deluding lackeys of global commerce and power politics." Kikkhaas has just designed the Ministry of Truth in P'Yongyang and the *Cnut* store in Madhatten.

**NOV.**



The 2004 Crackling Prize is awarded to the Ruritanian minimalist practice Warthog and Demeanink for their Labial Yoga Meditation Centre in Dogford in South London. The big Prikster Prize goes to Gøttland architect Bygg Jørn, designer of Hobart's Chamber Music Hall.

**DEC.**



Willy Alsoft launches his masterplan for the re-degeneration of Bath. The city is to be flooded leaving only major monuments such as the Abbey, the Royal Crescent and Circus, the Royal Baths and so on, interconnected by a series of sausage-like inframegastructures.





**MARLEY**  
**GOLF**  
**CLASSIC**

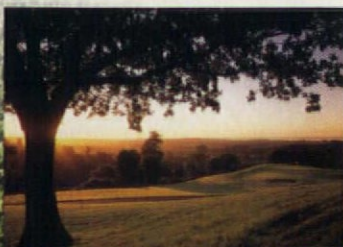
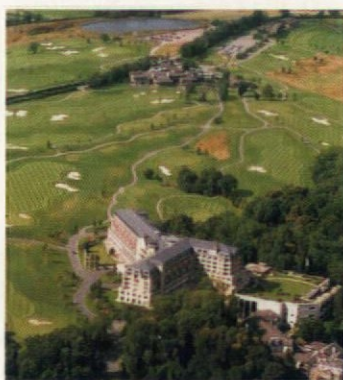
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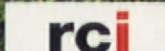
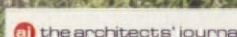
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# Russia's new space race



The pressures of big business and the whim of the mayor are transforming Moscow rapidly. Can these drivers result in the creation of any architecture of value? Ruth Slavid reports

The Hyatt Ararat is Moscow's newest, and most expensive, hotel, but what the city needs desperately are good quality two-star and three-star hotels

'Irish architects are fine, and the British are OK as well, but Americans and Germans are too slow.' This is the verdict of Timor Batkin, deputy general manager of Don-Stroy, the leading provider of upmarket housing in Moscow. His company, founded 10 years ago by two men who are now just 32 and 34, is symptomatic of the new wealth and energy transforming Moscow – for good or ill.

Don-Stroy currently has a million square metres of accommodation under construction, in a city that builds about 5 million m<sup>2</sup> a year. It categorises its developments as deluxe, premium or business class, depending on the location, size and the number of facilities, such as spa centres. For example, whereas a business-class scheme will have one-and-a-half to two car spaces per apartment, in deluxe this rises to three to four – catering not just for the residents but also for their bodyguards.

Batkin believes that, for the affluent, these buildings will entirely supersede the Stalinist era apartments. People are taking more interest in buying property. 'Five years ago, people with money bought a Mercedes first,' he said. 'Now they buy a flat first, then a Nissan, and then perhaps a Mercedes.'

So what does all this have to do with architecture? In one sense, not much at all. Asked what drives him, Batkin freely admits: 'money and square metres'. The company employs its own in-house architects for everything except the occasional, more complex, retail scheme, of which it plans to construct more next year. For one of its deluxe housing projects, in a sensitive position almost next to ABK's British Embassy, the company looked at employing Philippe Starck. But it became impatient and 'now we have done the building without him'.

But Don-Stroy's buildings are certainly having an influence on the fabric of Moscow. Batkin describes a building of 50,000m<sup>2</sup> as 'small' and his giant blocks are unmissable. One he calls 'the eighth grace' in a reference to the seven graces, the Stalinist Gothic landmarks that include Moscow University and the Ukraina hotel.

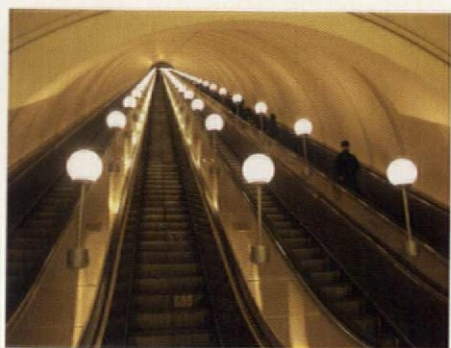
Batkin is also virtually the only person with anything good to say about the architectural taste of mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who has a massive influence on what does and doesn't get built in the city. Although he

complains that 'the mayor doesn't like spires, he likes pyramid roofs', he says that 'on the whole he has pretty good taste'. In fact the mayor, whose most notorious commission is an unmissable but hideous 60m statue of Peter the Great by his pet sculptor Zurab Tsereteli on an island in the Moskva river, favours a kind of milk-and-water Post-Modernism. He is also trying to impose an outdated model of zoning on the amorphous city, creating a giant business and government centre called Moscow City. This will contain a new government block, the subject of an international competition with a murky outcome. Mikhail Khazanov's practice has been appointed, despite having been placed joint fourth in the original alongside Alsop Architects' scheme of a slab block with some smallish blobs attached to the face. Also in the same complex is Erick van Egeraats's scheme for two towers combining offices and apartments (AJ 18.12.03).

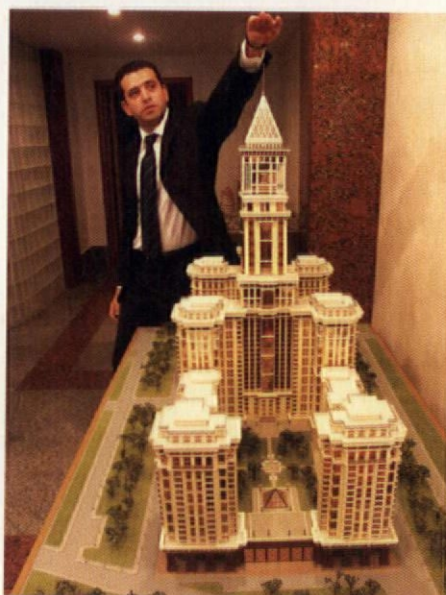
The increase of foreign architects working in both Moscow and St Petersburg is encouraging, since for too long architects have been isolated. Ostozhenka Architects, which is named after the street where it is based, collaborated with Alsop on one office project. But most of its work has been in Ostozhenka Street itself, a disused area which has been given new life. Although none of the buildings stand out individually, the architect has endeavoured to combine new-build with some retention of facades, which is rare in a city that too often has a bulldozer approach to its heritage.

If this small-scale intervention seems relatively insignificant in the scale of Moscow, which is certainly not a beautiful city, then this is also true of much of the most imaginative architecture. Architects are let off the leash most freely in restaurants and interiors. Vladimir Kuzmin and Vladislav Savinkin have recently created the Cocon-Club (AR 11.03), which creates fascinating plywood shapes within one of the oddest speculative buildings – a PoMo extravaganza that one would expect to be designed for a very specific client. Other projects include a highly idiosyncratic apartment full of bright colours, boys' toys and a fireman's pole, and a house in the suburbs that can





Above left: the newest metro station has the city's longest escalator. Centre: major works are planned for the Bolshoi. Right: Boris Shabunin's Casa Blanca



Clockwise from centre: Timor Batkin of Don-Stroy plans the city's 'eighth grace'; the hotel Ukraina and the Lenin library are two of the finer legacies of Stalinist architecture; suburban housing, much of it hideous, is a growth area; the city is lively and vibrant

only be described as a radical reworking of the log cabin.

Building outside the city centre is another way architects can find to express themselves. Boris Shabunin, one of the first architects to set up a private office, has worked on a number of private houses. One of these, for a photographer, is a relatively Modernist building dubbed 'Casa Blanca', situated in a gated road outside Moscow. Plots are small because land prices are rising astronomically. The client at Casa Blanca has worked closely with the architect to add personal touches ranging from powered library steps to a snow trap that allows him to cool down after a sauna. In contrast, he seems blind to the irony of having, right next to his house, an off-the-peg log cabin for servants.

There is little that is discreet in any of these projects – Moscow is a city where the

point of money is to flaunt it. Public projects are more conservative. The newest metro station, although boasting a magnificently long escalator, is almost modest in comparison to some of its magnificent predecessors.

The Bolshoi theatre, home to Moscow's world famous ballet and opera companies, is to have major improvements to its facilities that will bear little resemblance to its impressive external envelope. Fortunately, an underground river – believed to be a hazard to the building – has ceased to flow, allowing excavation below the existing structure to provide more cloakroom and bar space, as well as effectively extending the wings of the stage on another level. The orchestra pit will also be enlarged to accommodate a Wagnerian orchestra. Nikita Shanguin even hopes to restore the tilting stalls floor, which allowed the floor to lie flat so the audience could

dance after a performance. Other changes will help restore the acoustics that had been spoilt by previous interventions.

Who will carry out this work? Not a Russian contractor, says deputy director Anatoly Iksanov. 'Experience of this type of reconstruction scarcely exists in Russia. It will be cheaper to use an overseas contractor.'

With skills at a premium, architects beginning to emerge from the doldrums, and a huge urge for change and investment, Moscow will be a fascinating market over the next decade. But with the dictates of money and the whims of the mayor dominating, development is unlikely to be well-considered or intelligently controlled. This, however, has been the case for most of Moscow's history. And as Timor Batkin of Don-Stroy says: 'It is not possible to plan ahead five years in Moscow – perhaps you can plan for two years.' So who can tell?





## While we struggle to inject life into cities, Corb preferred his silent

Our overview of current attitudes to the city (p24-37) argues that even the most radical 'statement' buildings accept the basic mantra that architecture should respond to and contribute to the city. And, despite the cacophony of maverick voices, there is universal consensus as to the type of urban realm we should be aiming for: a vibrant, thriving community where ample public spaces are peopled by happy social citizens. Will Alsop's blobby paradises seek to inject existing cities with renewed civic pride through busy bars, restaurants, cultural venues and shops. The size and enthusiasm of the crowds which gathered at the opening of the Graz Kunsthaus is deemed a self-explanatory measure of the building's success. Even arch-radical Rem Koolhaas buys into the fundamental premise that dead city centres are to be avoided at all costs when he cites pedestrian-free streets as one of the more ominous characteristics of his abhorred 'generic cities'.

As is so often the case, it falls to Le Corbusier to challenge perceived wisdom, at least according to the particular interpretation outlined by Simon Richards in *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, reviewed on p45. According to Richards, Le Corbusier saw urban design as a means of creating an environment that would encourage solitude – a prerequisite both for relaxation and for intellectual, creative or spiritual contemplation. Nightclubs, cafes, restaurants and theatres were condemned as germ-ridden and stressful. Freeways, on the other hand, were lauded for prioritising the calming, safe isolation of the motor car over the stressful chaos of the conventional street.

This reading of Corb's views serves as a reminder that the prevalent attitude to urbanism is as much to do with zeitgeist as with common sense. While it appears utterly instinctive to worry whether Zaha Hadid's plans for a community of towers in Beijing will overcome the problem of 'void space' evident in Corb's *Ville Contemporaine*, it is an entirely contemporary response. The deserted streets of Chandigarh cast one of the darkest shadows over Le Corbusier's reputation. Yet, by his own reckoning, they could be his most unequivocal success.

Isabel Allen

## Koolhaas' city of the future is a nightmare

I have just received the University of Lagos students' copy of the AJ (13.11.03) with the article by Martin Pawley drawing attention to the knock-on effect of power failures.

In Nigeria, we know about these since the National Electric Power Authority supply is what the local media refer to as 'epileptic'. We live and work in Lagos State, where some areas have been without a supply for several months. Our own offices in Somolu and on Lagos Island have cuts on a daily basis, which means that we go onto standby power with a UPS system in order to maintain our PCs and Plotters. We are among the lucky ones able to afford generators and the fuel to run them.

We keep a log of 'generator hours' and, even with care, our Lagos Island engine ran for 116 hours during November – and that was a good month. As I write we have had piped water for only three days during the past four weeks. We have never had a sewage system and rely on individual septic tanks and soak-away pits where the water table is sometimes very near the surface.

Most people cannot afford standby power so the forests continue to disappear as wood is required for cooking stoves. All Nigerians are managers – since they manage to survive these conditions and they will have to continue to do so since the infrastructure of Lagos, with a current population of about 12 million, expected to rise to 24 million within the next 10 years, has little or no chance of catching up with basic requirements.

But beware – Rem Koolhaas, after a research period in Lagos, has announced that all cities will be like Lagos in the not too distant future and describes ours as being at the forefront of globalising modernity. 'Lagos is not

catching up. Rather, we may be catching up with Lagos,' he said.

As we regard Lagos as a never-ending nightmare for Lagosians, we would suggest that Britain must begin to realise that by commercialising all infrastructural services and insisting on the cheapest, tomorrow's problems are being created.

Certainly, if we ever retire to Europe we shall try to locate in the middle of a field with a standby generator, borehole and satellite dish!

John Godwin, Lagos

## Portsmouth can't afford to lose Tricorn

Here is one architect reporting affection for the Tricorn Centre. Portsmouth, which has played such an important role in British history, can hardly boast such a rich galaxy of distinguished buildings that it can afford to see one destroyed. The Tricorn has been empty and neglected for years, but during that time considerable advances have been made in technologies for the cleaning and conservation of concrete. We have all noticed that public perception of what is beautiful or ugly works on the pendulum principle and reaches its nadir just before a fresh and positive evaluation.

Kate Macintosh,  
Winchester

## Board's imposition must be minimal

That the business regulatory team of the Cabinet Office is likely to review the functioning of the Architects Registration Board provides a timely opportunity to assess its conduct of affairs.

When it comes to the role of institutions, the crucial question is what minimum impositions are required to support and encourage best practice and protect clients from incompetence?

During my many years in



education as head of a school of architecture, the division of these functions between the RIBA and ARCUK was clear cut, the former having evolved sophisticated mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring educational standards and rewarding best practice, the latter registering graduates from the RIBA 'recognised' courses. The RIBA, as a cultural institution, establishes and maintains standards advised by its most distinguished practitioners and educationists.

The registration board has responsibility for quasi-judicial judgments concerning defaulting architects.

The division of function, based upon mutual trust, operated effectively. Progressively this trust was eroded during the late 1980s by a small clique in the ARCUK Board of Architectural Education, which challenged the validating status of the RIBA, by 1991 proposing its own, highly prescriptive, education criteria.

No critical evaluation was offered to justify this action, or revision of principle. My objections to the Board of Architectural Education were presented on 6 December 1991, but no refutation of my criticisms was offered.

The new act as set out and presented in parliament seemed to recognise that the RIBA's internationally respected validation procedures should continue, whatever body replacing the registration council discouraged from challenging or duplicating these functions.

What appeared as categorical assurances were given in parliament that the new body would be minimalist and would not duplicate the work of the RIBA.

It was required only to 'prescribe' qualifications for entering the register, and those

concerned with possible duplication of role considered this would provide adequate 'checks and balances' without resorting to the excesses threatened by ARCUK.

The distant fears I expressed in 1991-92 have been revived due to the actions of the reconstituted registration board. It has progressively imposed judgments on the performance of schools independent of the collective findings of validating panels jointly constituted with the RIBA.

The clear distinction between the roles of the ARB and the RIBA have thus quite rapidly been eroded. Short term, for cash-strapped schools, this has necessitated the diversion of resources and the dilemma of divided authority.

Long term, should the ARB continue its progressive incursion into the RIBA validation procedures based upon the mutual trust of respective roles, the future of the Royal Institute as the Learned Society for the architectural profession cannot, in my view, be assured.

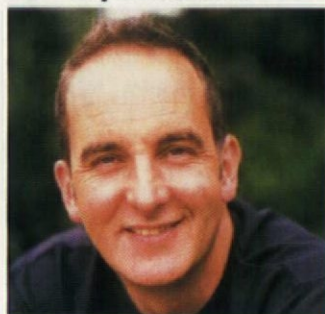
The ARB has no authority beyond the UK whereas the RIBA validates many courses around the world, thus providing a passport for overseas talent to contribute to our culture, with reciprocal opportunities for our graduates.

The dissipation of RIBA authority in its own bailiwick would prove disastrous, culturally and economically.

The Regulatory Impact Unit must be encouraged to analyse what minimum impositions are required to regulate the practice of architecture and then to assess whether the recent actions of the ARB fulfil expectations based upon this principle and interpretation of the act as presented to parliament.

**Allen Cunningham,**  
*Eymet, France*

## Head in the McClouds over Ely Cathedral



While I too must respond to the articulate enthusiasm of Kevin McCloud and greatly enjoyed *Grand Designs*, I must advise some restraint in accepting his portrayal of his past as described by Kevin Telfer (AJ 13.11.03).

Being the designer responsible for the entire interior lighting of Ely Cathedral, I take exception to Kevin claiming it. His involvement was only to carry out, as a manufacturer, the renovation of two old gas torchieres, which now sit either side of the high altar. While his work was excellent, it does not warrant the false claim he makes.

**Graham Phoenix, design director, light matters, London**

## Loyalty has its place – but not at any expense

It was a revealing, if uncharacteristic, letter (AJ 27.11.03) signed by the director of planning regarding the application approvals for the listed Malting House in Cambridge; with scarcely a reference to the actual issues raised earlier, the planning department clearly preferred to dwell on the personal.

This may have its origin in the normally commendable wish to defend staff. Loyalty has its place, but not at any expense. Conservation officers, for instance, do not and cannot be expected to have encyclopedic knowledge. When, as here, four Arts and Crafts experts have commented in detail in their

own territory, such views require full representation.

These experts and the neighbours (whose collective views I was asked to represent as the single permitted spokesperson – as Mr Studdert, for whose ability I have a considerable regard, was fully aware) were entitled to expect a balanced planning officers' report to the lay committee. Yet the report, for instance, was disproportionately long on the comments of Darwin College, the applicants, quoted almost verbatim, and seriously short on others' views. The report concluded with the recommendation 'approve'. Could it be that, in the planners' own words, it was the process and the officers' report that were 'disingenuous and patronising'?

The basis for decisions on such applications is seldom straightforward. With regard to this unique Smith and Brewer family residence in a unique location, all that locals and the independent experts required was proper representation and acknowledgement, leading to informed committee discussion of the information presented in their detailed letters.

At least the neighbours can understand the process and attitude that prevailed at meetings when I attempted to present their case in three minutes.

Cutbacks in staffing take their toll; it is sad that the normally good work done in the city is marred by this particular response. Perhaps it is a one-off aberration, but there are implications – apocalyptic no, disturbing yes.

**David Owers, Cambridge**

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**Architect, planner, developer and surveyor, Valerie Owen has certainly seen the profession from many different sides. Now she's keen to teach others the lessons she has learnt**

## Rules of engagement: Allford stakes out his territory

Following a brief conversation with the editor at the St John restaurant in Clerkenwell (while delighting in a significant share of a whole roast suckling pig followed by a week of digesting), I now find myself embarking on a new project – this column. How appropriate it is that I was passed the baton by Will Alsop, following a chance encounter in the same venue on a different evening. I could sign off now: *'From a paper-clad table at St John...'*

However, as with all things architectural, it's not that easy. So what does the year hold, and what will be the 'conditions of engagement'? It strikes me that the easiest way to predict any conditions likely to arise as supposedly vital new areas for discussion is to flick back through the history of the recent, and indeed not-so-recent, past. And if parallels of the conditions we might face are sourced through study of the past, what of the options for an architectural response? Are they, too, to be found lurking in precedent? The answer for me is undoubtedly a resounding 'yes'.

This is not a pessimistic clarion call for navel gazing or introspection, but an opinion about the importance of context to the making of architecture. That context for me is political, financial, historical and social – the latter too often forgotten in our explorations of architecture. It is an opinion that I will doubtless return to. After all, that too is what columns are all about: supporting platforms, freeing up facades and the recycling of ideas.

Which leads me to consideration of the old favourites of architectural discussion: long hours,

low pay, bloody-minded clients; the stupidity of the planning system and the harsh realities of democracy in action; the culture of blame and risk so beloved of health and safety apparatchiks (the vultures of the world of safety are scarcely interesting enough to attract even this modest term of abuse); the highs and lows of colleagues and rivals; the claims – true or false – of the protagonists of the latest 'ism'; the failure of the architectural press to embark upon a campaign of intelligent architectural criticism; the endless haggling between RIBA and ARB and the linked debate about the nature of architectural education. The latter point is still, ironically in

an age of 'lifetime learning' (itself another glib catch-all phrase), assumed to be the responsibility of the schools to take on and the profession to moan about.

Why, considering all of the above, do we do it? Because architects are necessarily optimists – a view I share with my predecessor Will Alsop; optimists engaged in the business of

examining, repairing or making new the environment around us, with the idea of 'freeing things up' and allowing for the potential for life to be improved a little. We are rarely in a position to change the world, and we are probably at our most destructive when we aspire to.

Which brings me back to one of the many apposite aphorisms of the late Cedric Price: 'No one should be interested in the design of bridges – they should be concerned with how to get to the other side.' I can think of no better justification for the recycling of ideas.



Getting to the other side

'This is not a pessimistic clarion call for navel gazing, but an opinion about the importance of context to the making of architecture'

One of the most often-repeated doctrines in schools up and down the country is that an architectural education prepares students for a great deal more than simply practice. If this holds true, the worlds of business and politics should be littered with former architecture students proving that the horizon-expanding experience of late nights in under-resourced university studios has turned them into a sought-after commodity. But this simply isn't the case.

There is, for example, only one architect in the House of Commons. And, let's be honest, Sidney Chapman is not exactly known for the creative and dynamic thinking that should be associated with the wonderful, wacky world of architectural education.

It is for this reason that London First managing director Valerie Owen proves to be such a surprise. She is not a practicing architect and hasn't been for some years, but has instead made a successful career working first for surveyors and developers Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) and latterly promoting business. One might assume this is because she has fallen out of love with architecture – she is, after all, also qualified as a planner and surveyor.

But no. Owen is still very much obsessed with the business of designing great buildings and she is a member of the RIBA council to prove it.

Liverpool-educated Owen – a lively 47-year-old – meets me at her offices just off Trafalgar Square and immediately suggests popping out for a coffee because 'it is so much more interesting than a boring old meeting room'. I am struck by a sense of boundless energy despite the fact that she insists she's coming down with the flu.

So first things first. 'Why don't you practice anymore?' I ask as we settle in a slightly peculiar tourist cafe. But Owen doesn't exactly answer the question straight, instead waxing lyrical about how she had enjoyed practice hugely when involved. It transpires that Owen managed to fall out of the profession when she was signed up to open an architecture office for JLL – a move that led indirectly towards a glittering career 'developing offices throughout the capital'.

And then, three years ago, a bolt from the blue. 'I suddenly decided to jack it





CHARLES GLOVER

## Architects first

all in and travel round India for three months, leaving my husband back in London,' she tells me with a glint in her eye, born of the knowledge that people are normally surprised by this information. In all honesty, it takes a substantial leap of faith to imagine Valerie Owen chilling out in a flea-infested backpacker hangout on some hippy trail. It doesn't go with the serious-businesswoman-on-the-fast-track image. But apparently it happened.

Upon her return from this period of subcontinental contemplation, she decided to radically restructure her life. Having walked out on a high-flying career in property – Owen was JLL's youngest ever director – she decided to tone down the ambition. Part of the 'new Valerie Owen'

manifested itself in an astonishing decision with her husband to adopt three children all at once and, in a related move, 'look to get into the public sector'.

This is where London First appeared on the horizon. Owen saw it as an opportunity to continue her business career while simultaneously finding time for her new family. She tells me that it has also given her the chance to look at issues that would be close to the heart of anyone with an architectural training.

Housing and the government's determination to foster a residential building boom has obviously become something of a preoccupation. However, the standard stock answers are left very much in the cupboard as she gives short shrift to the Piers Goughs and Will Alsops of

this world, who would be keen to foist blobs on the great British semi-detached-dwelling public. 'House-buyers are very conservative, partly because of bad experience from timber-framed housing in the '70s, but mostly because people have had their fingers burnt in the equities market and, rightly or wrongly, are looking for their homes to provide a pension,' she tells me. Sounds to me like the inner-developer has got the better of Owen on this one.

On a bit of a roll, she moves swiftly on to the perennial issue of architectural low pay and there's no mistaking the commercial business background in the monologue that follows. 'I believe the profession should promote a more commercial approach to professional fees, reflecting value capture as well as project cost.

'For example, developers can maximise their returns early on by securing a valuable planning consent or change in land use. The design skills required to optimise intensification of a site is simply not reflected in fee scales. We need to move architects further up the food chain.' Phew. I've rarely heard so many buzzwords dropped into one sentence. But if you can decipher the management speak, it all makes a lot of sense.

All good politically correct stuff, but do not expect Owen to start holding court on the issues surrounding the paucity of women in architecture.

Looking moderately pained when the issue arises, Owen points out that the issues of 'remuneration, working conditions and high risk' affect everyone in the job and, as a result, people should not just be focused on gender. Obviously these problems affect some women more than their male counterparts, she adds, but 'what we need is more collective leadership and ownership of these problems, tackling them head-on for the benefit of the profession as a whole'.

And then it strikes me, as our conversation begins to tail off. Am I looking at the first female president of the RIBA? Not for the first time in our hour-long conversation, Owen surprises me.

'I believe the president should be elected on her or his ability to do the job. It is true to say a woman president is likely to attract more media attention and secure more air time when promoting the profession, but this should not be the driver,' she says, with a knowing look.

Not a straight answer. But neither is it a denial. If Owen does decide to take up the baton from George Ferguson, the architectural profession across the UK will not know what has hit it.

Ed Dorrell





# The Prince is in the tower again – does this mean more carbuncles?

It is sometimes comforting to remember that there has always been architectural criticism of a sort, most memorably perhaps in the heyday of the Prince of Wales when the heir to the throne had great success with such witticisms as: 'It looks like a municipal fire station with a sort of tower for the bell', and 'It looks like an assembly hall for secret policemen'.

These were his critical summations of the unsuccessful National Gallery Extension project of Ahrends Burton and Koralek, and Birmingham City Library. Two remarks destined to join the young foye's bestiary alongside 'It looks like a toad' – Sir John Gielgud's description of the National Theatre – and 'A broken 1930s wireless set', the Prince's learned summation of Sir James Stirling's hapless effort at No 1 Poultry.

Of course it is easy to pour scorn on this quaint outburst of demotic savagery 20 years later, now that the mystique of architecture has been reinstated at the head of the table of modern mysteries, but there were times back in the 1980s when the whole status of the profession seemed to be at the mercy of the Prince's men.

We have all forgotten that as recently as 1988 more than half the respondents to a newspaper poll were in favour of the creation of a Royal Architecture Office empowered to call in and review all major designs. But instead of calling for the impeachment of the Prince and taking this outrageous proposal straight to the European Court of Human Rights, the RIBA cautiously invited HRH to dinner at Portland Place. The result was a decade of half-modern buildings; urban 'stealth bomber' office blocks and out of town superstores like monster country cottages.

Today these buildings can be seen to have been dealt with absurdly charitably by the critics, but

it took 10 years for the panic Prince Charles had caused to die down.

The resurgence of High-Tech, when it occurred, was shockingly brief. Of the Post-Modern decade it could at least be said that because its products looked like buildings despite their jokey pediments, funny coloured stonework and so on, they could be described using the old language of tra-beated rectangles and columns and swags. This was not the case when High-Tech really started liv-

ing up to its name and using advanced computer software to establish intersecting lines in space that could not be drawn or modelled in any other way.

This has created a situation recently epitomised by the normally factual monthly flier *View*, which is put out by *Architectural Photography* every month. Building on a definite trend over the last few months its most recent front page seemed to me to finally transcend any popular notion of what today's architecture 'looks like' and to replace it instead with three photographs that could have been pictures of anything. The first could easily have been a giant mollusc on the seabed; the second a twisted drive shaft from a monster truck; and the third a 10 mile-long conveyor belt for transporting iron ore somewhere in the Messabi

mountains of Minnesota. In fact, the first is a design for an opera house in Tenerife by Santiago Calatrava; the second is part of the titanium skin of the Bard Theatre in Annandale, New York, by Frank Gehry; and the third is a challenging shot of part of the European Southern Observatory in Chile.

It is perhaps tiresome to insist that these images are unrecognisable when some at least are known by their names, but is it not likely that sooner or later their sheer abstraction must prove a provocation to the Prince himself, or at least one of the younger corgis.

'There were times back in the 1980s when the whole status of the profession seemed to be at the mercy of the Prince's men'

## Paul Zara

Conran Design

**When and where were you born?**

13 May 1961, Lewes, East Sussex.

**What is your favourite building and why?**

Mies' Lake Shore Drive Apartments. Just perfection.

**What is your favourite restaurant/meal?**

Fresh fish and white wine, anywhere outside, by a beach in the Med.

**What vehicle(s) do you own?**

I don't use a car on business ever, probably because we have a dirty old Renault Scenic. It gets my two young boys and all their gear around.

**What is your favourite film?**

*The Fountainhead*. I'm aware of Ayn Rand's dodgy beliefs, but it's fun to see an architect superhero for once.

**What is your favourite book?**

*Le Grand Meaulnes* by Alain-Fournier.

**What is your favourite 'design classic'?**

Concorde. I hate BA for stopping it, an evil act of dream-killing. They should at least have given Branson a go...

**What is the worst building you've ever seen and why?**

The Judge Institute, Cambridge, by John Outram. Pompous.

**Who or what is your biggest architectural influence and why?**

Stuart Moss crop, my former boss. An excellent critic and an awesome presence. Well underrated.

**Who is the most talented architect you've worked with?**

Andrew Mahaddie, my tutor at college and a colleague at Conran Roche, now at YRM. He draws like an angel, teaches like a saint and makes me laugh until I cry.

**If you hadn't been an architect, what would you have been?**

A maths teacher, a scriptwriter or a graphic designer.

**What would your advice be to architectural students?**

Do it for love, not money. Recognise and value your skills, but don't try to be a superstar, just try to be good.

**What would your motto be?**

There's nothing clever in complexity; there is a good reason for the right angle (partly stolen from fellow director Matthew Wood).



# Architects' Working Details 9

aj

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# What's it



# all about?

**In awarding the Royal Gold Medal to Rem Koolhaas, the establishment appeared to give credence to his damning analysis of our cities. But does flamboyant, big-gesture architecture really reject the urban context? Or is it just an old approach in a new guise?**

By Barrie Evans. Main photography by Nicholas Kane/Arcaid





It may be premature to pronounce urban design dead. But it is not in the best of health. Planning continues to be a process of attrition over development control, prioritising the assessment of individual buildings over broader urban vision. Even a big site is often treated as an end in itself, an island. The headlines go not to urban designs but to the gestural: schemes that contest most strongly the assumption that an existing designer called 'context' already has everything under control.

Blobs, in particular, inspire strong feelings in the orthogonally minded. Future Systems' blue pincushion for Selfridges in Birmingham featured as an AJ Building Study, where we praised it as an effective backdrop for St Martin's Church and contextual enough (AJ 9.10.03), but the building also made it to the *Architectural Review's* Outrage page, where editor Peter Davey dismissed it as 'a blue blancmange with chicken-pox' (AR 10.03). Alsop's Bradford was given equally short shrift in the next month's Outrage; this spot could become coveted.

Blobs and the fragmentary are becoming more common – not least because technology, which has often been stealthily influential in the past, has made them affordable. But are they really a threat to the urban fabric of

Britain? There are, in fact, few of them – hardly an epidemic. And the complaint of anti-contextualism is not necessarily well-founded. Peter Cook and Colin Fournier's Kunsthau in Graz won a competition for a landmark in what is a city of architectural contrasts. While it is intended to be a symbol of the avant-garde for once-sleepy Graz and a piece of one-upmanship in relation to aloof Vienna, it can also be loosely described as contextual. As Cathy Slessor pointed out in the *Architectural Review*, 'the Kunsthau can be regarded not simply as a fashionable grotesque but as a genuine extension of the region's tradition of architectural boldness and invention. Cook and Graz go back a long way, and the new building reflects an expressive empathy with the city and its evolution' (AR 12.03). In a city of 250,000 inhabitants, literally thousands queued up on the opening day. As I stood looking, a passer-by advised me to swing the camera round, to better capture the drama of the old and new together. It is well-liked: the people of Graz do not

**Popular approbation is not the only measure of architectural merit**

appear to need our sympathy.

As a one-time Birmingham resident who watched the city-centre edge around Digbeth fall apart, speeded on its way by the building of 'urban motorways', I would counter the criticism that Selfridges is not contextual by the question: 'what context?' The matter of whether you view Selfridges as an entertaining backdrop to St Martin's is, of course, a matter of personal choice. But a focal point is welcome and the Brummies seem to like it. As with Graz, popular approbation is not the only measure of architectural merit, especially in the long term. But whose city is it? More problematic, surely, than Selfridges is the rest of the megastructure, clad seemingly contextually, except for its lack of authenticity – a big box pretending to be a lot of buildings.

### **Blob radieuse**

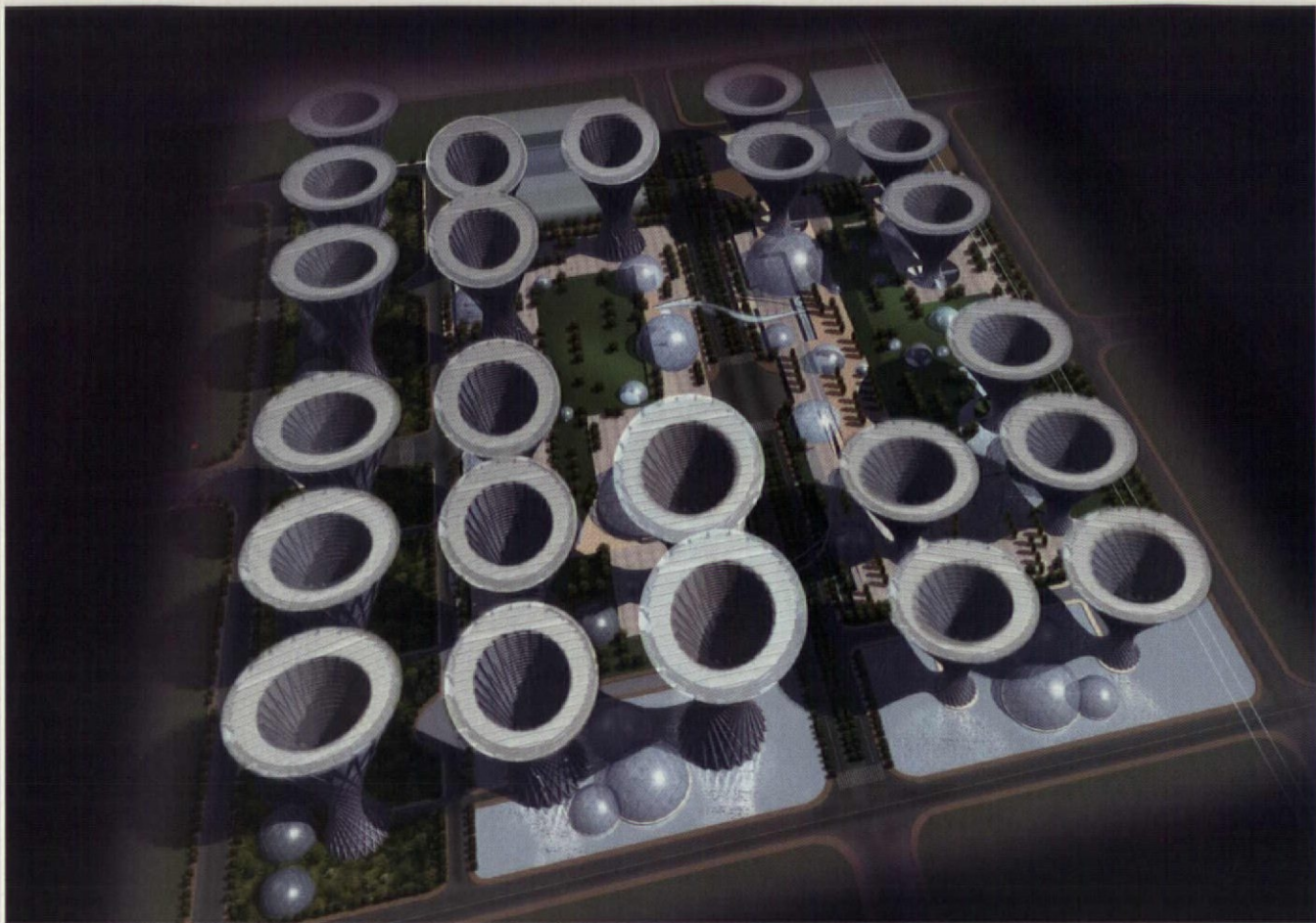
We are beginning to see embryonic attempts to create 'communities of blobs'. Frank Gehry's competition-winning King Alfred scheme in Brighton, designed with Piers Gough, comprises a cluster of his trademark sculptural forms, a mini-version of the type of development that is being bought wholesale by cities such as Beijing. There, two British practices, Botschi Vargass and Zaha





Opposite: Future Systems' Selfridges adds its presence to the already chaotic urban context. Top: Peter Cook and Colin Fournier's Graz Kunsthaus continues the region's tradition of architectural boldness and invention. Above: Can Gehry's Brighton scheme add anything new to the urban realm?









Opposite: Botschi Vargas' (top) and Zaha Hadid's (bottom) proposals for new urban quarters in Beijing. Meanwhile, London builds its blobs in splendid isolation, notably Foster's Swiss Re (above) and Renzo Piano's Shard (right)



NEWCAST

Hadid, have won competitions to design whole city quarters that are essentially expressionistic retakes on Corb's ideal city. Still in the early stages, it remains to be seen whether schemes such as these will prove more successful at overcoming the problem of 'no-man's land' between the towers than their Modernist precursors were.

For the time being, the UK builds its blobs in isolation. In London, that stretched-airstream blob that is St Mary's Axe (née Swiss Re) and Piano's Shard are the exceptions that prove (ie test) the rule that context rules. Tellingly, when CABE asked questions about how successfully the Shard dealt with public-realm issues, the inquiry inspector dismissed them as not significant. At least projects such as these are big enough to go to public inquiry and thus get a better chance to make arguments about quality of design. But what about our other buildings? Public inquiry cannot be an effective process of urban design. No wonder the local authorities from Walsall to Barnsley have gone wild for Will Alsop's 'visionary' masterplans. Here, at last, is an approach that appears to marry the political and economic necessity of large-scale urban planning with the current taste for populist – and undeniably popular – formal Expressionism.

Alsop's approach to urban design has been widely criticised, most eloquently and vociferously by Leeds architect and CABE commissioner Irena Bauman, who dismisses his city visions as 'one-off branding concepts'. But is Alsop's eagerness to imbue

individual cities with off-the-peg identities (Barnsley as Tuscan hill town, Bradford as Park City) any more dangerous than sitting back and allowing historically varied cities to lose their identities to the inevitable demands of commerce? Alsop's visions are, at least, an effective means of injecting a breath of fresh air into a moribund planning process, a reminder that it is possible to dream and think big. As Alsop puts it, 'the biggest threat to doing anything interesting is lack of inspiration'. The intention is to aid creative thinking rather than provide a blueprint for development.

Bauman has criticised Alsop for being too inflexible, arguing that, for example, the vision of a city wall surrounding Barnsley simply does not lend itself to partial realisation. But many of Alsop's big ideas have the advantage of engaging, as opposed to obliterating or reinventing, the existing urban fabric. In Bradford, in particular, it is easy to imagine enough of the various fragments of the masterplan being implemented to capture at least some of the spirit of the vision. In the absence of an authoritarian all-powerful top-down planning

regime, the visions are unlikely to be implemented in their entirety.

### Playing it Kool

The reality of the role of the architect within the free-market economy has been addressed head on by this year's Gold Medallist Rem Koolhaas. Koolhaas' extensive and pioneering contributions to urban theory rest on his acceptance of the fact that, with the exception of a few authoritarian regimes, urban design is not 'under control' and most certainly not under the control of architects. The challenge for the contemporary architect is to be realistic about the nature of the urban realm – to seek to understand it rather than to control it. Taking the world as he finds it, Koolhaas' approach has been to try to clarify and reformulate the questions that should be asked rather than propose solutions. His built schemes such as his new Berlin Embassy contain pointers but they are inevitably hidden among the practicalities, which must, of necessity, inform any built scheme. It is his theories – incorporating concepts such as 'Bigness' (the Large and eXtra-Large), 'Generic Cities' and 'Junkspace' – that hold the bigger picture.

### Bigness

Bigness, Koolhaas notes, has no specific theory, yet it is an urban issue. It 'does not seem to deserve a manifesto, (is) discredited as an intellectual problem'. But not for Koolhaas, who expounds on the subject at length; a summary of his thinking characterises 'A Big

**With the exception of a few authoritarian regimes, urban design is not 'under control' and most certainly not under the control of architects**





Will Alsop's masterplans for Barnsley (above) and Bradford (below) apply his idiosyncratic architectural approach to the wider canvas of the city. Right: OMA's Dutch Embassy in Berlin is informed by Rem Koolhaas' theories on urbanism



**We struggle to reconcile the desire for control with the relentless pursuit of profit and the desperate need for employment, hospitals, housing and schools**





Building' as one that can no longer be controlled by a single architectural gesture; one where the elevator makes the classical repertoire of composition, proportion and detail moot; a building whose depth is such that the facade can no longer reveal what happens inside so the humanist expectation of honesty is doomed – 'architecture reveals, Bigness perplexes'; big buildings are entering an 'amoral domain – their impact independent of their quality'. Taken together: 'Bigness is no longer part of any urban tissue. It exists; at most it coexists. Its subtext is fuck context'.

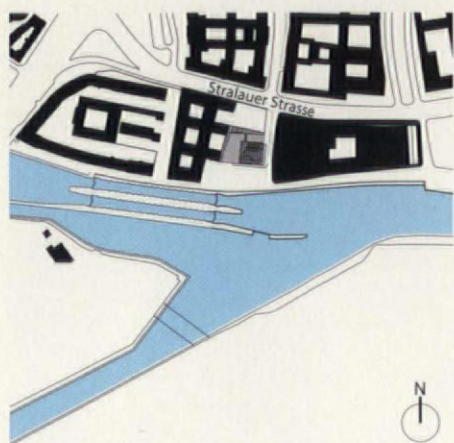
In a range of projects in his book *S,M,L,XL*<sup>1</sup> – surely the largest practice brochure in the world – Koolhaas works out some ways to address this territory, particularly the use of circulation routes in structuring space and, where appropriate, avoiding the easy option of the featureless 'flexible' space.

### Generic cities

At first sight the 'Generic Cities' critique<sup>1</sup> of fast-growing emerging cities, particularly in Asia, has little bearing on what Koolhaas calls the older, specific cities, typically European cities with established shape, history and culture. His framework is that these fast-growing New World cities may start with a masterplan but rapidly descend into a free-for-all in both planning and architecture.

They inevitably decline into Post-Modernism, in the shallow, architecturally pictorial, sense. Anything that doesn't work is replaced in a continuous cycle, allowing for just enough retained 'history' to keep the tourists amused. One city is like another – generic.

But is the distinction between generic and specific cities really so clearly defined? Elements of the generic cities as described by Koolhaas are all too familiar: eerie calm in the monofunctional business district; roads that make no allowance for pedestrians; shopping as the only public activity; atria as voids (though 'the name is a guarantor of architectural class'); and competing,



berlin embassy site plan

increasingly local infrastructure – planning makes no difference. What Koolhaas sees as non-plan at work is something we share with the cities of the New World. Yes, we have powerful development control through planning authorities and strong conservation interests. But we struggle to reconcile the desire for control with the relentless pursuit of profit and the desperate need for employment, hospitals, housing and schools.

### Koolhaas in Berlin

Which brings us to Berlin, a place with more than something of the generic city about it. Despite all that publicity describing Potsdamer Platz as the city's new heart, the Platz itself remains an enormous unresolved traffic intersection – perhaps this is its destiny. The new area we associate with the name lies to its south-west, an area of ground-scrappers ranging from the very reserved (Moneo) to the many overwrought. What strikes you now, though, is how small, how relatively insignificant it is in Berlin as a whole. Mitte – the old middle – does little better, its refurbished (or replicated) buildings mixing with featureless post-war tower-block housing. As with the generic city, Berlin hardly has a centre. Potsdamer is no substitute. And as you look out across the city, over still-open spaces, you see knots of blocks – density in isolation – just as you



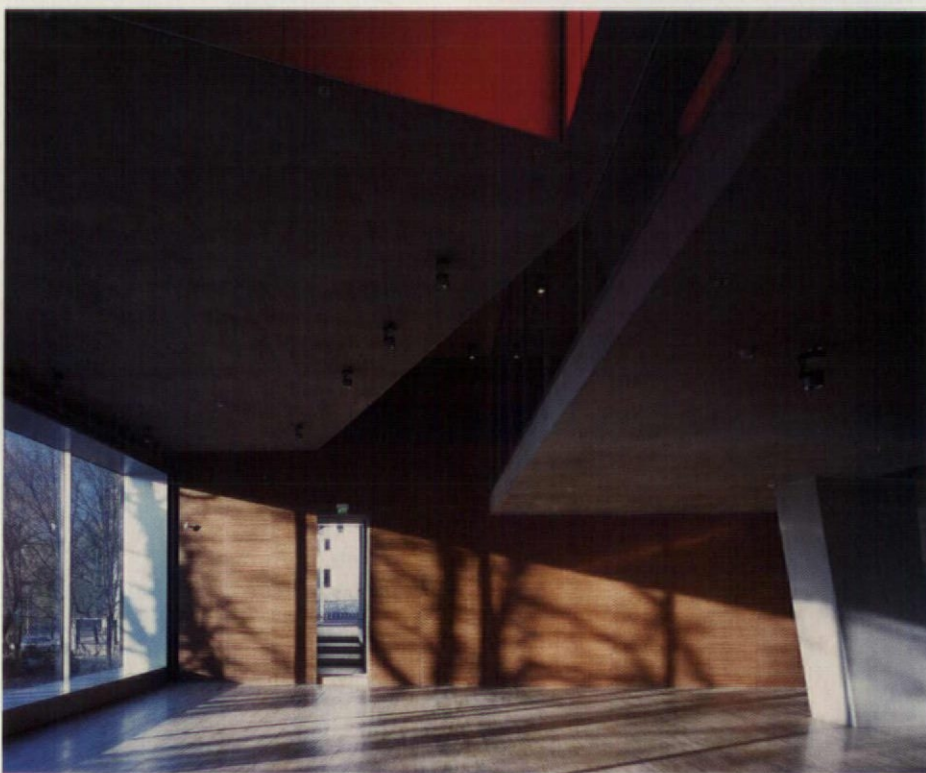
do in a generic city like, say, Seoul.

Koolhaas' new Dutch Embassy has to face his own questions about how the architect addresses urban anomie. The embassy is in Mitte, among ordinary stone-and-render offices and (better) medium-rise flats. The embassy chose a site where the minor Klosterstrasse meets the Spree river – the only Dutch view in Berlin, according to the embassy, with its river walls tight against the pavements and barges lined up on the far bank. The embassy is a complex, hard-thought building, certainly not eXtra-Large, but nevertheless reflecting some of Koolhaas' urban preoccupations. The most immediately noticeable is context. As Koolhaas commented<sup>2</sup> on the generic city and non-place interior space that goes with it (what he calls 'Junkspace'), 'our buildings are more and more able to really disconnect from these realities, or to try to make the best of them'. In Berlin the emphasis is on disconnection.

The embassy is a 27m cube facing the river to the south, on Klosterstrasse to the east, and to the north and west is framed by

**The most important coherence is not formal but programmatic – 'a continuous pedestrian trajectory... we imagine the surface as pliable, a social magic carpet'**

Right: the cube (left) wrapped by mesh-faced wall building; the entrance ramp runs beneath fire escape bridges. Below: multipurpose room. Opposite: the 'skybox' cantilevers out above the entrance and is clearly visible from the street



an L-plan wall-building faced in perforated grey-white metal mesh, leaving the cube in splendid isolation from the lesser functions of the wall building (staff flats, services, escape stairs) and set apart from the neighbours. A curious stance for an embassy, (only now are embassies tending to become introverted because of security). But while you can argue about logic and symbolism, the visual effect of the cube against the wall-building with the light filtering through the perforated metal is stunning.

### Junkspace

Koolhaas' architecture is one of complexity and contrasts, and this embassy is no exception. The main organising idea here is the 'trajectory', the route to and through the building, as it has been of late in the Kunsthal in Rotterdam and at Euralille. This intensely worked sequence can also be read as a response to another of Koolhaas' critiques of urban life – 'Junkspace'. When you work your way through the entertaining writing, that might be read simply as the spleen of a (youngish) grumpy old man



lamenting the death of progress, you find a view of interior space to parallel the generic city ideas of the outdoor realm<sup>3</sup>. Again, it is about space that is fundamentally generic rather than specific, but for interiors such as offices and malls there is another layer, a countering of vacancy with the artificial – Junkspace eventually attains some (inauthentic) specificity by being dressed up as something else, usually nostalgic or fantastic (Disneyesque).

Koolhaas takes the trajectory as the key device for making space meaningful in this building, and it stimulates related and contrasting architectonic rules without and within, such as that the doors on the trajectory inside should be as thick as the structural walls in which they lie. (One door is some 400mm thick, centre-pivoted, around 4m wide, incorporating shelving.)

The trajectory begins on Klosterstrasse, where passing the ground-floor visa section, you follow ramp or steps up the side of the cube beneath bridges to the escape stairs, to seek the main entrance on the north-west

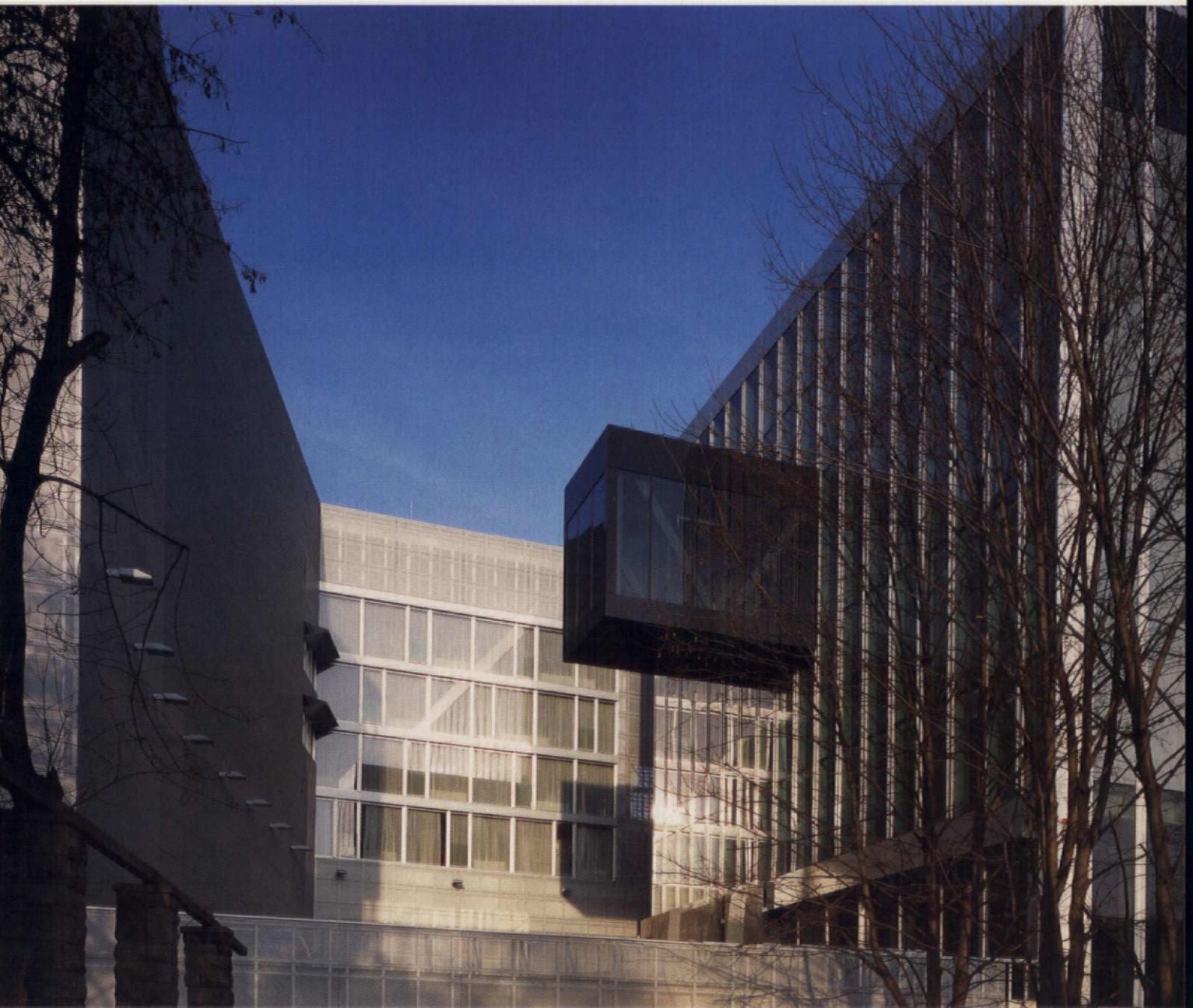
corner. There a generous entrance lobby provides access to a large public space, the prosaically named multipurpose room. Although this is the extent of the public realm in administrative terms, with sliding glass security doors acting as a barrier to the main body of the building, formally – and visually – the route continues with a clearly defined, but deliberately circuitous, trajectory.

Starting with steep steps, a reference to the Dutch domestic tradition, it zig-zags on through the building as a mix of steps and ramps to the top-floor cafe and through the opening roof on to a roof terrace. Throughout the journey, the trajectory ducks and weaves, narrows and widens, sometimes so low that the lighting is provided at floor level. Some of the time this trajectory is near the heart of the building, but at other stages it is expressed on the facade or, in one case, bursts through as a cantilevered green glass box for the length of one wall, providing strong contrasts to the otherwise pristine cubic exterior.

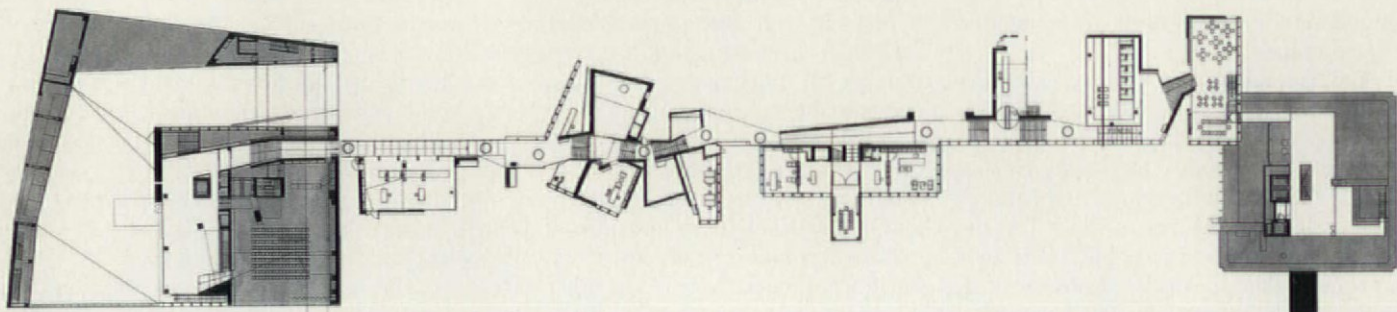
To emphasise that this whole trajectory is a

folded space in its own right, no mere means to an end, it is all lined in aluminium, including the floor. Apart, that is, from the glass box; occasionally subverting his own architectonic rules is a feature of Koolhaas' work, building the complexity and contradiction, holding the spectre of Junkspace at bay, elaborating the requirements of programme more than inventing architectural form from context. As Koolhaas said of Euralille<sup>4</sup>, the most important coherence is not formal but programmatic – 'a continuous pedestrian trajectory'. And, of the Bibliothèques Jussieu competition, 'we imagine the surface as pliable, a social magic carpet; we fold it to generate density then form a "stacking" of platforms; minimal enclosure makes it a building'.

The trajectory anchors this 'interior world' to its surroundings in two respects. Firstly, as a formal extension of the ground plane and, secondly, as a means of constantly manipulating and drawing attention to views of the outside world. At most turns the far prospect, up or down, is an orientating





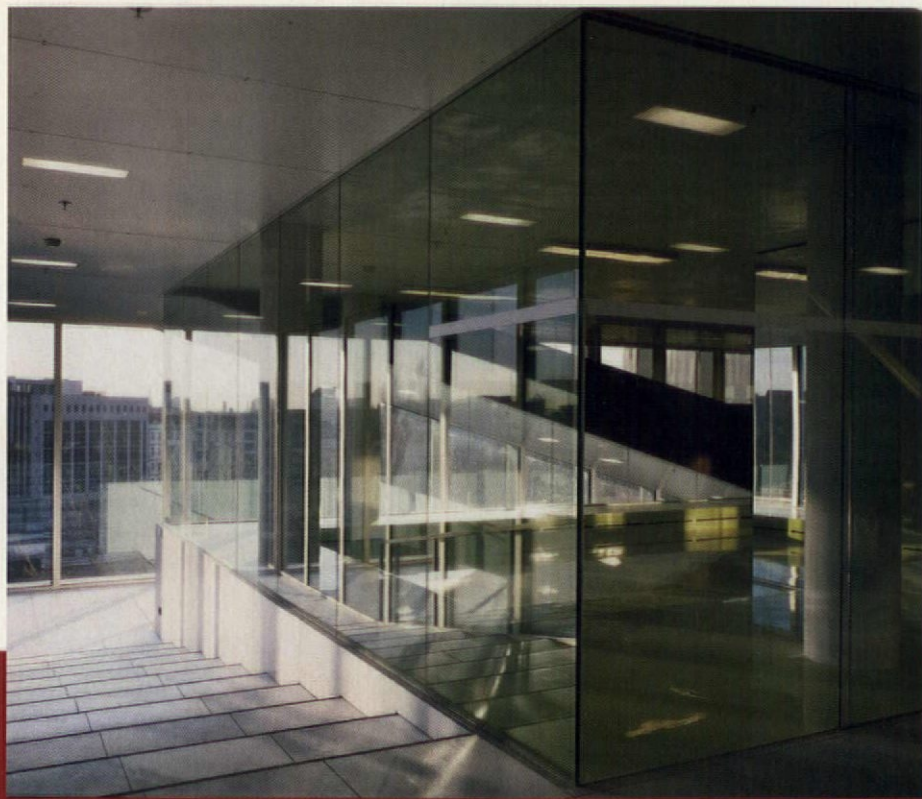


view to the outside. In the longest diagonal across the building, the view is of the east Berlin communications mast, The Alexander Tower. This view is framed by an opening Koolhaas has made in his surrounding wall-building to the north. In view of Koolhaas' professed willingness to accept and work independently of the city in its found state, and, implicitly, to be accepting of future change, it is particularly interesting that the embassy has, in fact, paid the city in order to ensure that this key view remains unobstructed in perpetuity – effectively crystallising a portion of Berlin's history exactly as it is.

Despite the depth of the building, these terminating glazed areas do much to animate the trajectory with the strong light of a continental-interior type of climate, supplemented by illuminated handrail slots and varied other sources, including coloured translucent film on occasion providing obscured glimpses into surrounding offices. There is a lot of variety here, the core of the building turned into a thread. It is said that much of diplomacy occurs in corridors. The







Opposite top: the trajectory of ramps and steps stretched out. Far left: inside the 'skybox'. Left: cantilevered ramp. Above: fitness room. Below and right: shifting geometry of the trajectory



trajectory does need to be a strong space, especially because, for security, many of the spaces along it are behind opaque doors.

### AuthentiCity

If Junkspace is empty, or filled with the inauthentic, in Berlin Koolhaas' search for the authentic complements the 'necessity' of a trajectory with the hard-line authenticity of the structure. There is not a sheetrock partition, says job architect Michelle Howard proudly. Offices may have space-dividing storage furniture screening and the perimeter is clad, but all walls, whether lined or exposed concrete, are structural. They cross each other, transferring loads as the irregular plan works up the building.

Koolhaas' aesthetic/idealistic commitment to 'authenticity' was such that he was

prepared to overcome the many practical problems implicit in such an approach (the client had hoped for an 18-month construction programme). From starting on site in March 2000, the contractor started pouring the walls without realising the indeterminacy the structure would have during construction. Work stopped for six months while construction planners were brought in. Some of the lower floors needed continuous propping for six to 12 months until the top of the building was cast and thus locked up the structure. Additional casting complexity came from the dubious decision to embed much of the services in the slab – water, electrics, curtain tracks and more. (Air conditioning works separately from the slabs, with the trajectory at positive pressure, adjacent spaces at neutral pressure and the

**It is particularly interesting that the embassy has paid the city in order to ensure that this key view remains unobstructed in perpetuity – effectively crystallising a portion of Berlin's history exactly as it is**



double-skin facade at negative pressure acting as an air-return.)

At times, says Howard, there were six architects standing there, holding their breath as a slab was poured. No second chance. The resulting workmanship is remarkably good and the exposed soffits contribute much to Koolhaas' characteristic semi-industrial aesthetic. Clearly, there were financial implications as well, though no one is saying what the building will cost.

But such heroic determination says more about Koolhaas' desire to express the buildings as a continuation of the city than it does about the quest for structural authenticity *per se*. With a conventional plan and section, 'honest' construction would have been relatively straightforward. The complications were a direct result of the supremacy awarded to the trajectory; at lower floor levels each 'floor' actually has several levels as it meets the ramped trajectory. (A floor-by-floor building model was kept on site to explain this complexity to builders, not just for the structure but for others working off it such as sprinkler installers.)





## Material support

The approach to authenticity is carried through to materials and components – little treated and coated – what you see is what you get. The palette is quite simple, the complexity coming from setting rules and occasionally subverting them and using the palette in different ways in different spaces. For example, the rule of aluminium lining to the trajectory, including the floor, is occasionally broken with coloured glass or timber. Other principal spaces are exposed concrete and ‘tiger’ wood (so named for its pattern). Koolhaas would have liked to bring other woods, too, from former Dutch colonies, plus Persian carpets, resin desks... but for the budget. In the travertine-floored multi-purpose room and the conference room, a folding wall lining of polycarbonate sheet (with services behind) is back-lit by unshaded

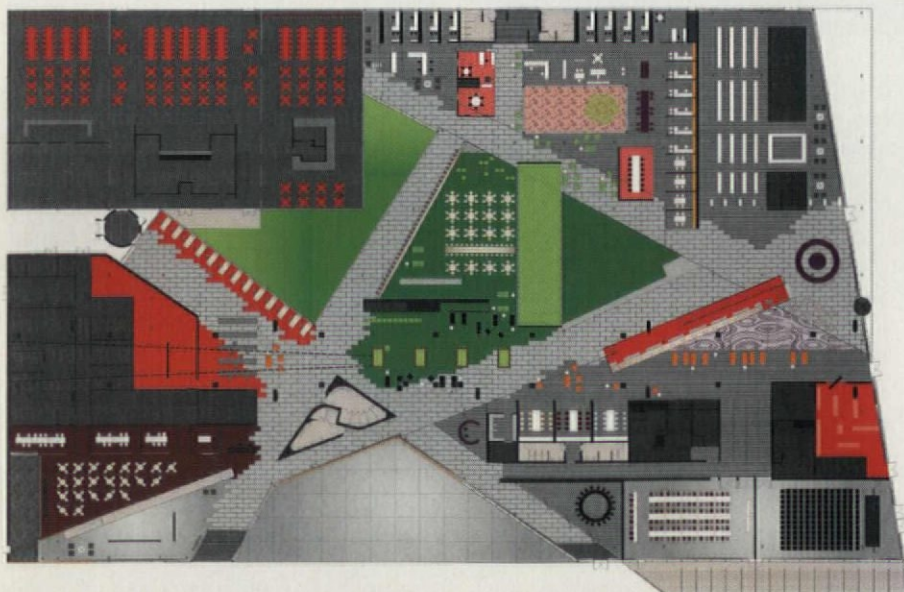
vertically hanging fluorescent tubes.

Nevertheless, Dutch egalitarianism demands a certain uniformity across the office space for the 70 or so staff – exposed concrete with resin-finished concrete floors, simple timber desks and standard 1.9m divider/storage units. (Offices are belatedly being enclosed with custom glass partitioning by Koolhaas to provide acoustic privacy, and probably to meet the Dutch staff’s expectations of cellularity.) Although the ambassador does get extra space, the most flamboyant architectural gesture goes, not to the ambassadorial office but to a meeting room – a healthy manifestation of democratic principles, but also, again, a significant contribution to the urban realm. Dubbed the ‘skybox’, it is a steel-framed box, entered through limousine-black glass doors, that cantilevers out above the entrance and is clearly visible from the street.

## Island race

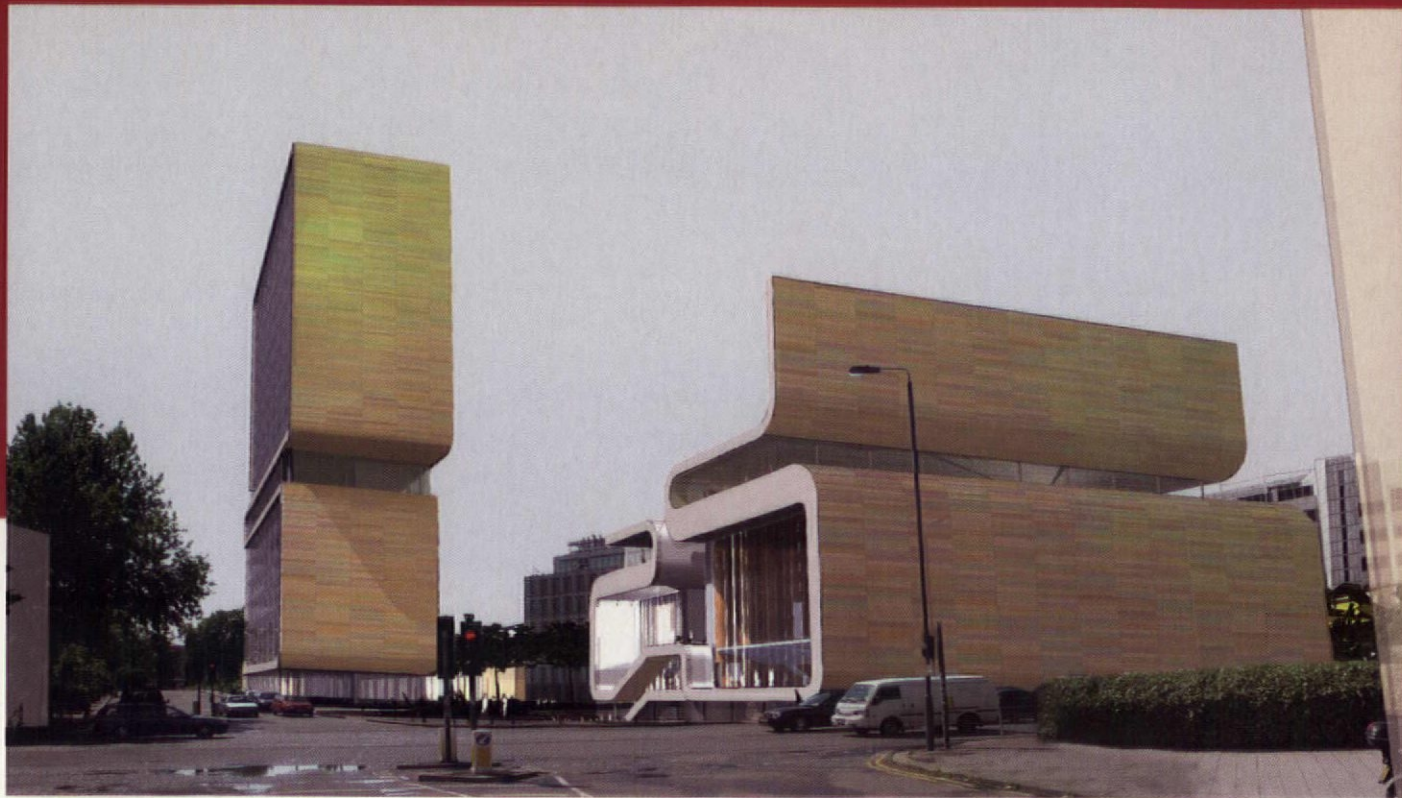
The intensity of the architecture is concentrated on the inside of the embassy. The cube-breaking expressions of the trajectory on the outside beckon you inside as much as they create a formal presence on the street. There is some street presence, which has an island quality. The cube, the exterior space of the ramp and the wall-building all serve to reinforce the significance of a single continuous route. At Koolhaas’ IIT Chicago campus, the desire-line routes, the ‘pavements’, are within the building enclosure.

A similar approach is being adopted by a new breed of ‘digital architects’ such as Foreign Office Architects. In the designs for FOA’s BBC Music Centre, the ground melts into the building envelope; walls and floors are expressed as a seamless folded plane. A broader look at the practice’s work reveals



Top: Foreign Office Architects’ Yokohama Ferry Terminal (left) and BBC Music Centre (right). Above: Koolhaas’ IIT Chicago campus – the pavements are





that, given less restricted sites, the distinction is eroded altogether. At Yokohama Ferry Terminal (AJ 12.9.02), it is impossible to distinguish between ground and building.

These and other gestural buildings can be read as representing a frustration with the increasingly generic quality even of our own once-specific cities and with stasis in urban design. Given the absence of a process for proceeding more generally, for developing, agreeing and implementing new urban visions, these projects can be read as attempts to pioneer a new urban design on an-architectural-project-at-a-time basis, in most cases the only recourse available. As such, their often island-like quality, far from suggesting a rejection of context, can be understood as an attempt to understand, respond to – and even to model – new urban contexts appropriate to the 21st century.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> OMA, Koolhaas, Rem, and Mau, Bruce, *S,M,L,XL*. The Monacelli Press. 1995 edition.
- <sup>2</sup> Repeat (A Chicago-based architecture archive), 2003. At [www.lynnbecker.com/repeat](http://www.lynnbecker.com/repeat)
- <sup>3</sup> 'Junkspace' is a section of the *Harvard Design School Project on the City 2: Guide to Shopping*. Edited by Chuihua Judy Chung et al. Taschen, 2001. The argument alone is available at [www.btgjapan.org/catalysts/rem.html](http://www.btgjapan.org/catalysts/rem.html)

## Visiting the embassy

Security is tightening as we write. Twice-weekly tours were planned. Now there will simply be a DVD, made by Koolhaas and the embassy, running in the public lobby. Whether the outdoor ramp or the site perimeter stay so open remains to be seen. Further images and information are on the embassy website at [www.niederlandeweb.de](http://www.niederlandeweb.de)

## DUTCH EMBASSY CREDITS

### COMMISSION DATE

1997

### TENDER DATE

July 1999

### START ON SITE

March 2000

### OFFICIAL OPENING

March 2004

### GROSS INTERNAL AREA

Offices 4,500m<sup>2</sup>,  
housing 1,500m<sup>2</sup>,  
parking 2,200m<sup>2</sup>

### CLIENT

Netherlands Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

### ARCHITECT

OMA: Rem Koolhaas,  
Ellen van Loon,  
Michelle Howard

### STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

Arup Berlin,  
Royal Haskoning

### SERVICES ENGINEER

Huygen Elwako

### MAIN CONTRACTOR

Kondor Wessels

### SUBCONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS

Cube facade Anders;  
perimeter wall facade  
Boetker; interior and  
security glazing, resin  
counters Ela Mech;  
interior cladding  
and office partitions  
Lindner; bathrooms,  
polycarbonate SMW



within the building boundary (left); the FOA oeuvre applied to a wider terrain – where does the context end and the building begin? (centre and right)



# Roll up, roll up

There's a mundane way of building a bridge across a waterway... and then there's the Heatherwick way

BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

This time last year, Thomas Heatherwick was basking in the glory of winning the Bombay Sapphire Prize for his glass bridge; an annual award specifically aimed at rewarding the most innovative use of glass in modern design. Innovative it certainly was: constructed solely of clear structural glass, it spanned some 20 metres and its simplicity meant that the technological advances underlying its realisation were strangely understated.

The bridge, intended to be part of the pedestrianised routes around the revamped Paddington Basin, came a cropper when it was decided that the location for which it was intended, needed vehicular access. That is to say, the bridge would have to be openable, something that the glass bridge was neither designed for nor capable of. As Heatherwick says, with characteristic nonchalance, 'it was a case of "back to square one"'.

Fortunately, Heatherwick and his long-time engineering partner are in the old-school tradition of being dedicated tinkerers; constantly playing with ideas, shapes and clever ways of doing things. Often after the event they work out applications for their ideas.

'After all the planning discussions, the Paddington Basin development is actually turning out to be an interesting place to be'

Effectively, they are latter-day inventors and, as described in *The Times* recently, Heatherwick identifies himself as 'a bit of a bridge nerd'. Therefore, as is often the way of historic coincidences, they had already spent months and months playing around with a new style of bridge design mechanism that seemed ideally suited to the circumstances.

## Basin cut

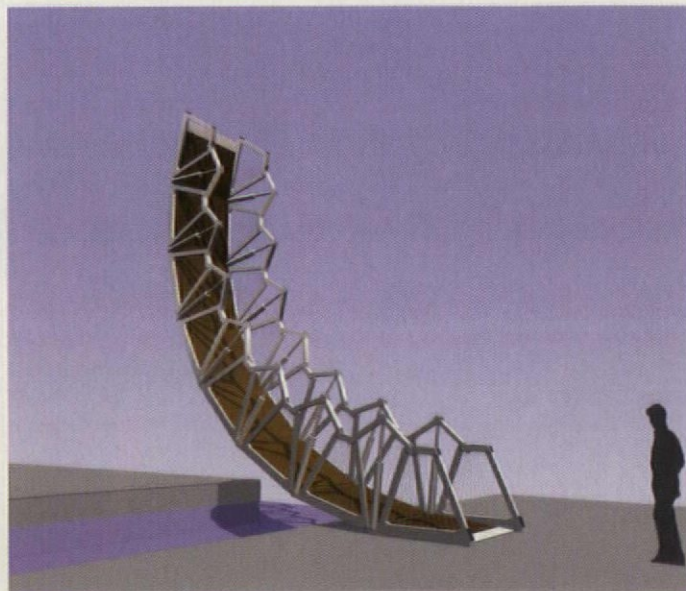
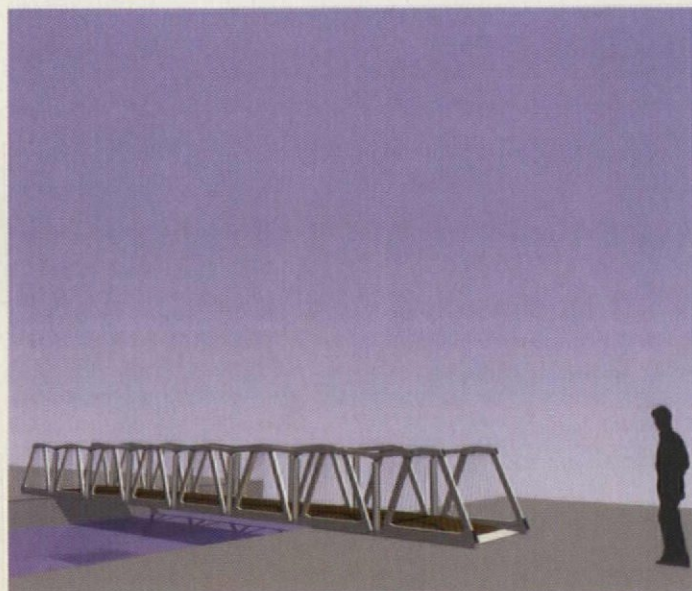
Paddington Basin is one of those places that, on paper at least, should be as business-friendly and spiritually dead as much of, say, Birmingham's Broad Street canal-side developments. However, in reality, after all the planning discussions goings-on, the intervention of CABE, several redesigns, a number of false starts and an investment of £300 million, the Paddington Basin development – masterplanned by Terry Farrell and farmed out to a number of first-class architects – is actually turning out to be architecturally impressive (in parts) and an interesting place to be.

Designed into an overall site area of more than 4 hectares, it will provide nearly 250,000 square metres of devel-

opment space, not to mention the ubiquitous cafe, bar and restaurant scene. Developer Chesterfield, in partnership with British Waterways (which owns the freehold of the basin and surrounding land), began enabling works and upgrading some three years ago and the site is starting to take shape. While most of the buildings are scheduled to be finished by the end of 2004, the masterplanned project work, in total, is due to be completed in 2007.

The first phase comprises 'The Point', the prow-shaped building by Terry Farrell & Partners, which is situated at the crank in the canal and comprises 23,000m<sup>2</sup> commercial space. Nos 1 and 2 Waterside are designed by Richard Rogers and have recently become the anticipated central headquarters of Marks & Spencer on the eastern edge of the site. Split into two buildings, as the name suggests, the sales blurb quaintly notes that they are 'capable of functioning independently or jointly' and that 'a canal inlet and shared bridge entrance over the water act as central focus between the two structures'. It is here that Heatherwick's bridge is now being installed.

Approximately 20,000 people are expected to walk along the canals, over the bridges and into Paddington Station, not to mention the many thousands more promenading, commuting or just exploring the erstwhile hidden crannies of west London.



The new opening bridge at London's Paddington Basin spans 12m and its curling action, caused by the pressurised expansion of oil-filled pistons, can



## Animal instincts

Three bridges have been commissioned for the basin development – by Langlands and Bell, Marcus Taylor, and Thomas Heatherwick Studio. The first is a steel and etched glass structure; the second is a cylindrical bridge, which was intended to gracefully grow across the water, but doesn't quite; the third is a masterful piece of sensuous design that carries all the hallmarks of the current fad for zoomorphic architecture, but with none of the pretensions. This is Heatherwick's opening bridge that curls up into a ball, resembling, at various stages of its action, a taut elbow joint, a scorpion's tail or a curled up marmoset (the pretensions are absent from the design – not necessarily from the descriptions). While architects and engineers are busy searching for the wackiest new ridge opening motion, Heatherwick's bridge has relied on simplicity, beauty, geometry and proportionality. This is a truly satisfying bridge.

The design premise was that opening bridges tend to have, what Heatherwick terms, 'a point of dislo-

cation' – a broken joint that severs the unity of the bridge structure into two. What he wanted to explore in this design was a bridge that transformed itself; turning itself from one object into another. The question he posed was what if, instead of a dislocation between the two banks, the bridge rolled up so that, theoretically, the two banksides touched each other?

After toying with various geometries, using Bailey Bridge-type technology of triangular structural components with a flexible decking, which unravelled while being restrained by cables – a bit like unravelling caterpillar tracks – they refined the concept down to minimise the appearance of external forces acting on the bridge. As an object lesson in design reduction, the bridge now has total

integrity as an object in itself. They have striven to give it the appearance of an intelligent – almost conscious – opening action through its integral lifting mechanism. Instead of the bridge being pulled up by ropes and pullies, or pushed up by

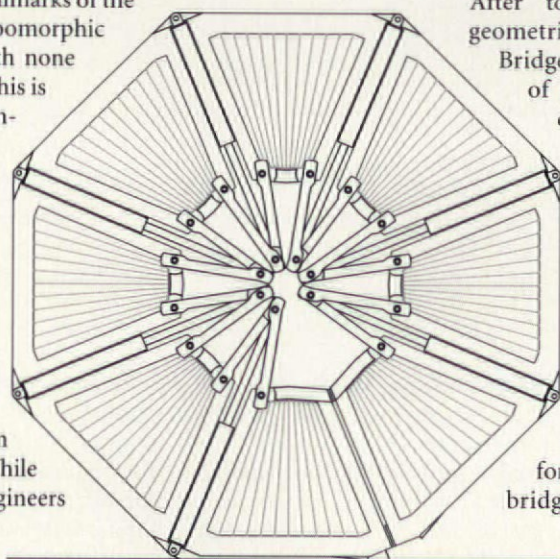
Gateshead Millennium Bridge-type rotational motors, Heatherwick's team worked on including the pistons driving the action to be within the bridge design.

## Proud erection

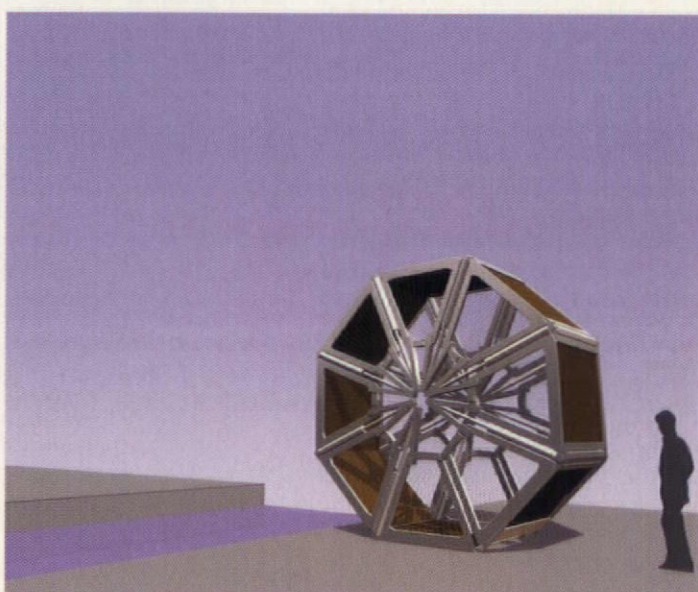
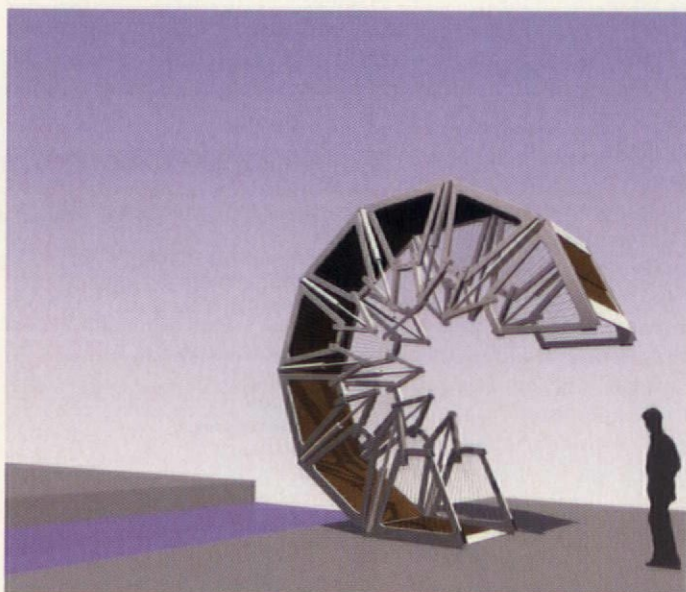
The bridge comprises eight segments. In its spanning phase, each segment is a rhombus with a parallel top and bottom chord and two sides at  $67.5^\circ$  to the normal. Between each segment is an upright that carries the handrail and acts as an infill baluster. (Note that each segment has fine radial wires as guarding, although the designers were able to convince the planners and building control that, since the entire waterway surrounding the bridge has no guardrail separating the bankside from the canal, then providing regulatory-compliant balustrading was unnecessary.)

The upright baluster is an oil-filled piston fed along pipes in the bottom chord of each segment. When operated, oil flows through the feedpipes to each piston causing them to expand and exert pressure on the handrail – hinged at mid-point – pushing the handrail out of line and pulling the rigid segments together. The tendency of the piston forces on the rhomboid is to convert it to a triangle and force the structure to revert into eight triangles, making up an octagon.

The fixed segment is bolted down to the bankside, anchoring the structure from the forces acting on it by the

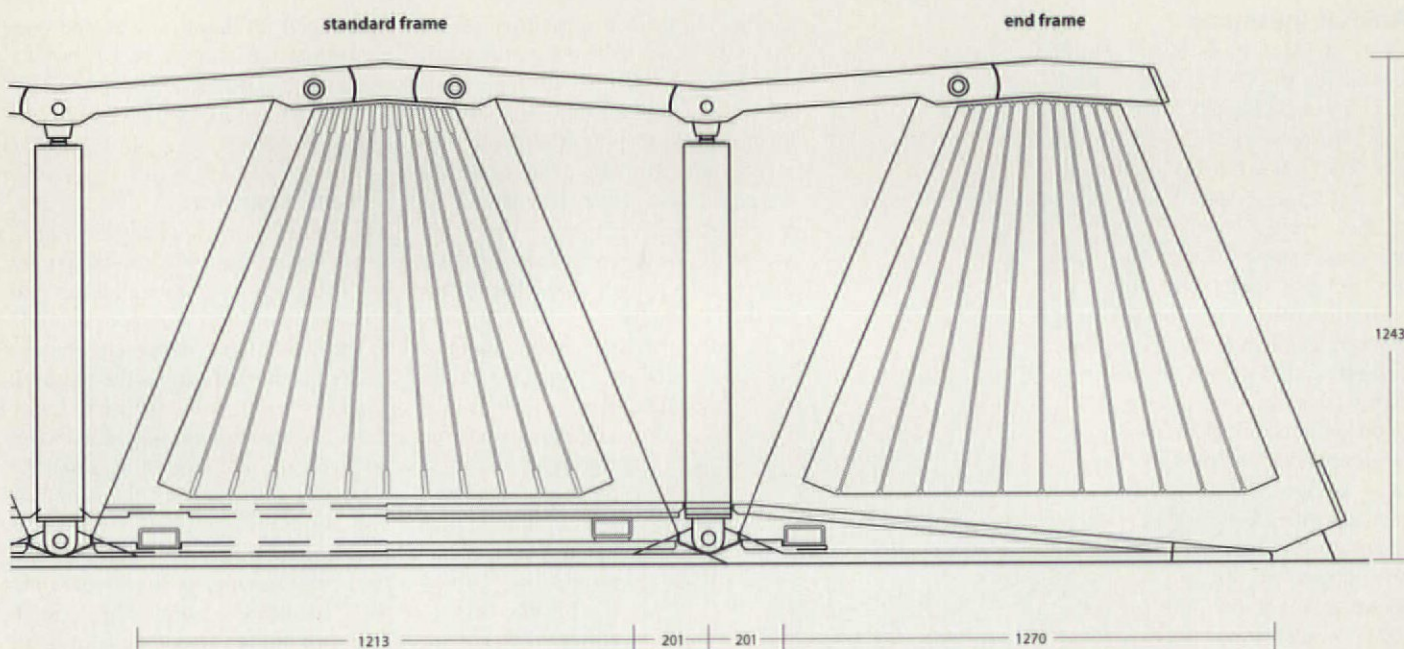


**The bridge transformed into a different object**



be stopped at any point in its roll – 'much like the arm of a JCB,' says designer Thomas Heatherwick





lifted cantilever and by the piston torque from the other segments. The oil flow to each piston is computerised so that piston forces alter as the bridge lifts and as the pressures on different segments shift as the action continues. Initially, oil flows into the pistons near the anchored segment deal with the cantilever loads, then flow towards the lifting end as the bridge starts to curl, and finally towards mid-point as the bridge resists gravitational forces on closure.

Heatherwick's favourite position is the initial lift, when the free end is just 150mm off the ground and 'appears to be yogic flying'. As the bridge lifts, so the pumping action, like blood pumping into the veins, provides resonant images of Clinton's penile disorder writ large. Fortunately, this resemblance is only fleeting as the impressive completeness of the engineering design becoming apparent. It is only gradually that it begins to dawn on the first-time observer that, turning back on itself, the bridge is actually going to roll itself up. As it curls gracefully to a stop, the impressiveness of this simple, yet complex, bridge sinks in. The whole thing lasts for just 90 seconds (and so the sexual analogy is complete).

### Piston broke

The bridge is activated from a control panel set on a CCTV mast and

'It is only gradually that it begins to dawn on the first-time observer that, turning back on itself, the bridge is actually going to roll itself up'

includes a form of 'dead man's handle' so that accidental use or the approach of imminent danger can be averted by insisting on there being an observer at all times.

The bridge will be down through the night and activated by day only. When raised, pedestrians can still access the full canal-side route, but will have to make a slight detour around the end of the mooring bay.

At present the site is being prepared and the bridge manufactured off site. Heatherwick is keen that the bridge 'leave no mark' on the site and so there are no concrete pads, fixing points or suchlike; the bridge simply rests where it lands in its unfurled state (there will be concrete pads under the paviers, but these will be unseen). Ramps onto the bridge are integral to the structure.

Currently, the bridge is undergoing manufacturing tests and is being curled up and unfurled to replicate three years' action compressed into one month's testing regime. After that, the bridge will be stripped down, bearings and pistons replaced and given new moving parts and then its manufacture will be complete. It will be shipped to site in its curled up state, ready for installation in spring this year.

As well as this bridge, this year will see the unveiling of Heatherwick's

Bofthebang, the UK's tallest sculpture situated outside Manchester's Commonwealth Stadium (the title is taken from athletes' competitive anticipation of the starter's pistol; always hoping to be away from the blocks on the 'B' of the 'bang'). He is also the guest curator at the Conran Foundation Collection at the Design Museum. Just to complete the busy year, the glass bridge is also going to be built... on another site and for another client, but not too far away. Watch this space.

Looking back on the profile of Thomas Heatherwick written 18 months ago (AJ 12.7.01), it was clear that his time hadn't yet arrived. Maybe 2004 could well be the start of something big.

### CREDITS

#### CLIENT

Paddington Basin Developments

#### DESIGN

Thomas Heatherwick Studio

#### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Anthony Hunt Associates

#### HYDRAULICS

Solent Fluid Power, Primary Fluid Power and DJW Consulting

#### CONSTRUCTION

Littlehampton Welding

#### PROJECT MANAGER

Mace

#### QUANTITY SURVEYOR

Gardiner & Theobald

#### PLANNING SUPERVISOR

Mace

#### PLANNING CONSULTANT

Montagu Evans



# Three coins in a fountain

The government is going with the flow, commissioning Foster and Partners to design a water feature at the Treasury

BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

Charlie Dimmock has performed an interesting balancing act over recent years, simultaneously making 'water features' both a laughing stock and a commonplace in the British garden of the 1990s.

Every garden centre now has a range of pumps, pool liners and cherubic GRP Mannekin Pis look-alikes, to enhance the gravel-strewn patios of the great suburban semi. And just to show that the government is of the people, the Treasury Building at 1 Horse Guards Road has just had one installed. Maintaining a certain aloofness from the plebs, though, this one has been designed by Foster and Partners, in conjunction with landscape architect Gustafson Porter – rather than knocked up by Tommy Walsh and a couple of Irish navvies. It is part of an overall design that has just helped the building to win the respected British Council of Offices' London Region and National Refurbished Workplace Award.

The overall refurbishment scheme was the first PFI project to use a contract based on the Treasury's Standard Terms and Conditions, which seems to have played a part in reducing bid costs and added to the 'value for money' criteria, as reported by the Treasury's own website in October.

One month can be a long time in politics and as we go to press the *Daily Telegraph* reports that Gus O'Donnell, the Treasury's permanent secretary, admitted recently to a House of Commons select committee that he wasn't sure why the Treasury's departmental admin budget had increased by one-third. Subsequently, it has been revealed that most of the increase will go on the annual service and lease payments 'for its swanky refurbished building, complete with water feature'.

Christopher Fildes wrote that the original fixtures, fittings and external works 'spoke of conscientious cheeseparer' as an example of fiscal prudence to other departments. The Treasury's new bravado reflects its

**Flash, bang, wallop, water feature:** The calm water of the photograph belies the turbulence below ground



confidence actively to intervene in the affairs of all departments. In this respect, Gordon Brown walks on water, you could say.

The two new water features are set within the central courtyard to provide a constant depth flow of water, with each pond separated by a walkway. Each opposing pond is fed by a 9m horizontal sheet of water that rises at the courtyard perimeter and runs across 6m of shallow gradient slate to the collection pond at the central bridge.

In order for the courtyard to be used as a function space, the brief required that the area be able to be run dry and to safely accommodate

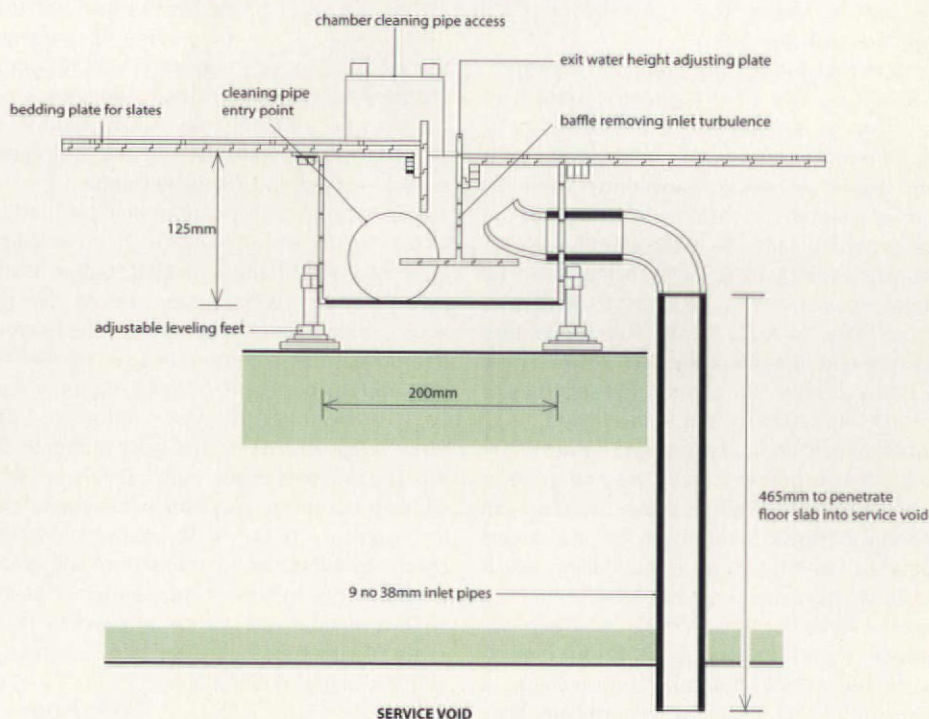
foot traffic. To this end, the outlet – or feed slot – had to be reduced to 20mm to prevent heels from getting caught and the protruding lip of the adjusting plate be kept to a minimum to avoid trip hazard.

'This,' says ACO Technology's Roger Brigham, 'directly affects the feed characteristics, making the mechanism used to control the outlet profile even more critical.'

To moderate the flow of water – which is pumped from a feed pipe in the external service void at approximately 450mm below the chamber – a series of baffles has been introduced within the two rectangular feed chambers. These are set on adjustable feet to level the chambers before bedding in. Each chamber, which is 300mm wide, 150mm deep and the full 9m long, has inlets at 1.3m centres that discharge onto the inner face of the inverted T-baffle, thus reducing the inlet turbulence and allowing the water to gently rise over the external lip in a smooth flow pattern.

The result is a constant 4mm flow depth along the entire length of each outlet, which produces the look of a permanently wetted surface – just enough to give the appearance of a pool, while also enhancing the quality of the slate lining.

For more information call 01462 816666







## Water waste as compensation culture ignores the big picture

You may remember the case of the unfortunate Mr Marcic (AJ 26.9.02). His property, located at the lowest point of Old Church Lane in Stanmore, Middlesex, endured serious and repeated flooding because the nearby foul and surface water sewers were overloaded. The statutory sewerage undertaker for his area was Thames Water Utilities Limited and Mr Marcic claimed against them for private nuisance and for breach of his right to respect for his home, under the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). The trial judge found that the nuisance claim failed, but that the HRA point succeeded. The Court of Appeal had upheld both claims. Despite this promising start, Mr Marcic was to be disappointed by the decision of the House of Lords.

In *Marcic v Thames Water Utilities Limited* (2003) the House of Lords addressed some of the problems inherent in claims by private individuals for compensation from public bodies. When rejecting both of Mr Marcic's claims, its lordships' essential message was not to lose sight of the big picture.

Thames Water owed statutory obligations to a wider public under the Water Industry Act 1991.

Its powers and duties were subject to the supervision and control of the director general of water services, appointed by the secretary of state. One of its obligations, to provide an adequate system of sewers, was enforceable by means of a system of enforcement orders. If the director general failed to make an enforcement order, proceedings for judicial review could be brought against either the director general or the secretary of state. Thus, Thames Water's obligations to provide adequate sewers were policed by the director general, the secretary of state and, ultimately, the public law courts.

But Mr Marcic had not reported Thames Water to the 'sewage police'. Instead, he had gone to court claiming that Thames Water owed him an individual common law duty to lay new sewers to prevent flooding to his home, failing which they should pay him compensation.

The law lords held that Mr Marcic's claim was inconsistent with the bigger statutory picture. Thames Water could not control the volume of water entering its sewerage systems and they

were obliged to accept new connections even if they risked overloading existing sewers. In those circumstances it would be surprising if parliament had intended that, whenever flooding occurred, every householder whose property had been affected could sue the sewerage undertaker for an order that they build more sewers or pay damages.

The enforcement procedures under the Water Act were designed to prevent claims by individuals. Instead, when flooding occurred the director general could consider whether to make an enforcement order – not from the position of the individual householder affected, but in the context of the wider considerations spelled out in the statute. The individual would have a claim only if the water company failed to comply with any enforcement order made. If individuals had, at the

same time, a right to sue, it would, as they put it, 'set at nought' the statutory scheme and oust the regulatory role of the director general. The operation of this scheme left no room for an individual's common law claim in nuisance.

Similarly, the Human Rights Act was not there to provide absolute protection to property generally or residential property in particular. Instead a balance was to be struck between the interests of the individuals whose homes were affected and the interests of all customers and the wider public.

This decision clearly cannot be described as a victory for 'the little man'. Nor will it be welcomed by those who believe that if public bodies provide poor service they should be held accountable and made to pay. It does, however, demonstrate a common misconception that may underlie our current compensation culture.

Local authorities, statutory undertakers and other public bodies do not exist purely to protect the interests of the individual. They have a wider public role to play. Much as a requirement, for example, to pay delayed rail passengers token compensation detracts from the greater need to invest in service improvements, an individual's entitlement to claim payouts in the event of statutory failure is wholly inconsistent with the bigger public picture.

Kim Franklin

## Celebrating the structures of the supernatural

Time, at the beginning of a new year, to reflect on architecture's stranger byways. Remember that extraordinary bit of primitive architecture, the Palais Idéal, conceived and built by the Hauterives postman, Ferdinand Cheval, in a little village in the hills between Lyon and Grenoble. Cheval died in 1912, but his creations (there is a smaller version in the cemetery) remained, were admired by the Surrealists and appeared in a lot of books in the early '70s when there was that interest in *found* objects and, by extension, *found* architecture. The work of an unself-conscious and untutored *primitif*, the Palais was exemplary of this phenomenon and tied up with a concurrent architectural interest in linguistic structuralism. Cheval seemed to personify one of Levi Strauss' archetypes, the *bricoleur*, the person who made his way using only native wit and exigent tools and materials.

As far as I can discern, nobody at that time was aware of America's Palais Idéal – more accurately the Coral Castle, the work of Edward Leedskalnin, who died in 1951. You can visit it at Homestead, Florida, where in 1936 Leedskalnin had moved it when his original site was threatened by housing developers. According to an overly credulous *Wired News* report, ([www.wired.com/news/roadtrip](http://www.wired.com/news/roadtrip)) the low-loader driver for the move was never allowed to see how Leedskalnin loaded blocks of coral. Word spread that he used the 'magnetic powers of the earth'. I quote the website at [www.coralcastle.com](http://www.coralcastle.com): 'Since it is documented that no-one ever witnessed Ed's labor in building his rock gate park, some say he had supernatural powers. Ed would only say that he knew the secrets used to build the ancient pyramids.' Since archaeologists now seem to say these were boring old blood, sweat and lots of rope, maybe that's what Ed used too. Actually, he did. The Coral Castle site has photos and several movies that *Wired* seem not to have looked at. They include a couple of photos showing how Ed used a sturdy tree-trunk tripod and a block and tackle to... lift coral blocks. Schmagnetic, stupornatural. [sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com](mailto:sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com)



## London

### Ecohouse Student Design Competition

14-31 January. An exhibition at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details 020 7580 5533.

### Bauhaus: Designing Utopia Until

15 January. An exhibition of photos at the Michael Hoppen Gallery, 3 Jubilee Place, SW3. Details 020 7352 3649.

### Construction: The Challenges and Opportunities Ahead Friday 16 January.

A conference at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details from website [www.montgomeryevents.com](http://www.montgomeryevents.com)

### John Riddy: Recent Places 16 January-10 February.

Photographs at the Frith Street Gallery, 59 Frith St, W1. Details 020 7494 1550.

### Optic Nerve: Abstract Colour

Photography Until 17 January. An exhibition at Photofusion, 17a Electric Lane, SW9 (020 7738 5774).

### Roadside Architecture Until 17

January. Photographs by John Margolies at the Building Centre, 26 Store St, WC1. Details 020 7692 6209.

### The Office Until 18 January.

An exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery, 5 & 8 Great Newport St, WC2. Details 020 7831 1772.

### Constructive Visions Until 18 January.

An exhibition at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details 020 7307 3888.

### Stephen Shore: Until 20 January.

Photographs of 'everyday' America at Spruth Magers Lee, 12 Berkeley St, W1. Details 020 7491 0100.

### Eric Ravilious: Imagined Realities Until

25 January. A centenary exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd, SE1. Details 020 7416 5320

### Sergio Risalti: The Theatre of the Italian City Tuesday 27 January, 19.00.

A lecture at the Royal College of Art. Tickets (free) 020 7590 4567.

### Urban Challenge Thursday 5 February.

A debate on issues created by London's increasing density. At the Royal Geographical Society. Details 01273 202022.

### Donald Judd 5 February-25 April.

A major retrospective at Tate Modern, Bankside, SE1. Details [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

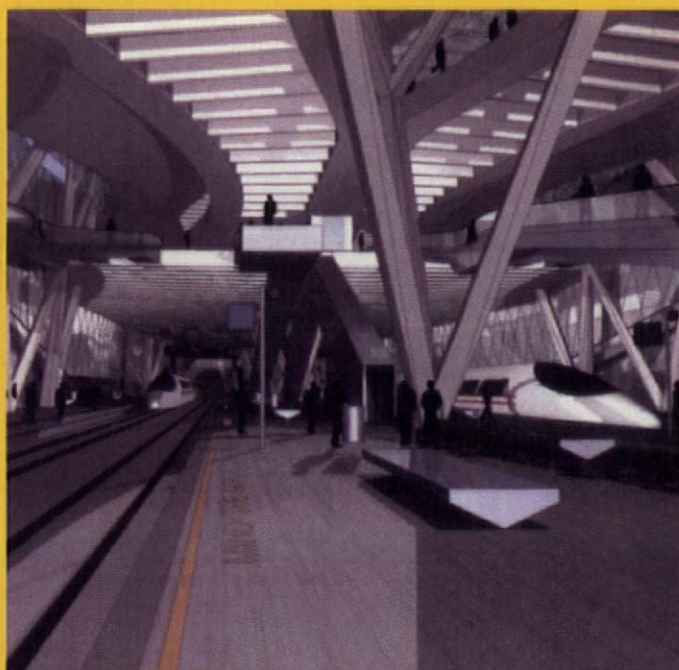
### Gold Standard: How to Create Olympic Standard Office Buildings Tuesday

10 February. An AJ conference at the Cavendish Conference Centre, W1. Details 020 7505 6745 or visit [www.goldstandardconference.com](http://www.goldstandardconference.com)

### Bricks & Water Until 28 February.

The architecture of London's waterworks – an exhibition at Kew Bridge Steam Museum. Details 020 8568 4757.

### The Smithsons: The House of the Future to a House for Today Until 29 February.



## HOME AND AWAY

Foreign Office Architects' exhibition at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts continues until 29 February and a book exploring all the featured projects in great detail – *Phylogenesis: FOA's Ark* (Actar, £25) – is now available. But just how does FOA fit into the present architectural scene? See p24-37.

An exhibition at the Design Museum, Shad Thames, SE1. Details 0870 833 9955.

### Gerhard Richter: Atlas Until 29

February. An exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, Whitechapel High St, EC1. Details 020 7522 7880.

### Foreign Office Architects: Breeding Architecture Until 29 February.

An exhibition at the ICA, The Mall, SW1. Details 020 7930 3647.

### ar+d Emerging Architecture Awards, 2003 Until 2 March.

At the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details 0906 302 0400.

## East

**The Unhomely Until 11 January.** An exhibition at Kettle's Yard, Castle St, Cambridge. Details 01223 352124.

### Lime Plaster Friday 30 January,

14.00. A lecture at Cressing Temple, Essex. Details Pauline Hudspith 01245 437672.

### Repair and Conservation of Historic Joinery 12-13 February.

A course at Cressing Temple, Essex. Details Pauline Hudspith 01245 437672.

## North West

### The Impossible View Until 11 January

2004. An exhibition of panoramic paintings and photographs at The Lowry, Salford Quays. Details 0161 876 2020.

### Ian Simpson Wednesday 14 January,

19.30. A lecture at the Grosvenor Museum, Grosvenor St, Chester. Details Mark Kyffin 0161 236 5567.

### Access All Areas Thursday 26

February. An AJ conference on the DDA at the Lowry, Salford Quays. Details 020 7505 6745 or [www.ddaconference.com](http://www.ddaconference.com)

### Best Studio featuring Ian Simpson Architects; Design Berlin Until 8

March. Two exhibitions at CUBE, 113 Portland St, Manchester. Details 0161 237 5525.

### David Adjaye: Asymmetric Chamber

Until 8 March. A CUBE exhibition at the Tea Factory, 82 Wood St, Liverpool. Details 0161 237 5525.

### The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act

Until 28 March. An exhibition at Tate Liverpool, Albert Dock, Liverpool. Details 0151 702 7402.

## South East

### RIBA CPD Event: CDM And All That

Thursday 22 January. At Gatwick. Details 01892 515878.

### Inside Out: Investigating Drawing

Until 25 January. An exhibition at Milton Keynes Gallery, 900 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes. Details 01908 676 900.

### The Georgian Tradition Thursday 26

February. A day school led by Neil Burton at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Chichester. Details 01243 811464.

## Wessex

### Zebedee Jones: New Paintings Until

25 January. An exhibition at the New Art Centre and Sculpture Garden, Roche Court, East Winterslow, Salisbury. Details 01980 862244.

## Yorkshire

### Eduardo Chillida Until 29 February.

Retrospective exhibition of the Basque sculptor at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield. Details 01924 830302.

### Other Criteria: Sculpture in 20th

Century Britain Until 28 March. An exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds. Details 0113 234 3158.

## Scotland

### Rodney Bender: Glitter is Important

Thursday 15 January, 17.30. A Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies lecture at Edinburgh College of Art. Tickets Moira Seftor 0131 221 6072.

### Wood Plastic Composites: Opportunities in the Construction Industry

Wednesday 21 January. A conference at Dundee. Details 0131 220 9292.

### Glasgowbridge: International Designs

for the new Glasgow Bridge Until

28 January. An exhibition at The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow. Details 0141 221 6362.

### Louise Crawford and Stéphane

Guéneau Until 31 January. Nocturnal photographs of Paris and Glasgow at Streetlevel, 26 King St, Glasgow. Details 0141 552 2151.

### Lightness at The Lighthouse Until

1 February. An exhibition at The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow. Details 0141 221 6362.

### Matthijs Bouw (One Architecture)

Thursday 5 February, 17.00. A lecture at Robert Gordon University, Garthdee Rd, Aberdeen. Details 01224 263700.

### Maggie's Exhibition Until 8 February.

At The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow. Details 0141 221 6362.

## Wales

### Anthony Hudson Thursday 22 January,

19.30. A North Wales Society of Architects' lecture at Faenol Fawr Hotel, Bodelwyddan. Details Peter Stonebridge 01745 815600.

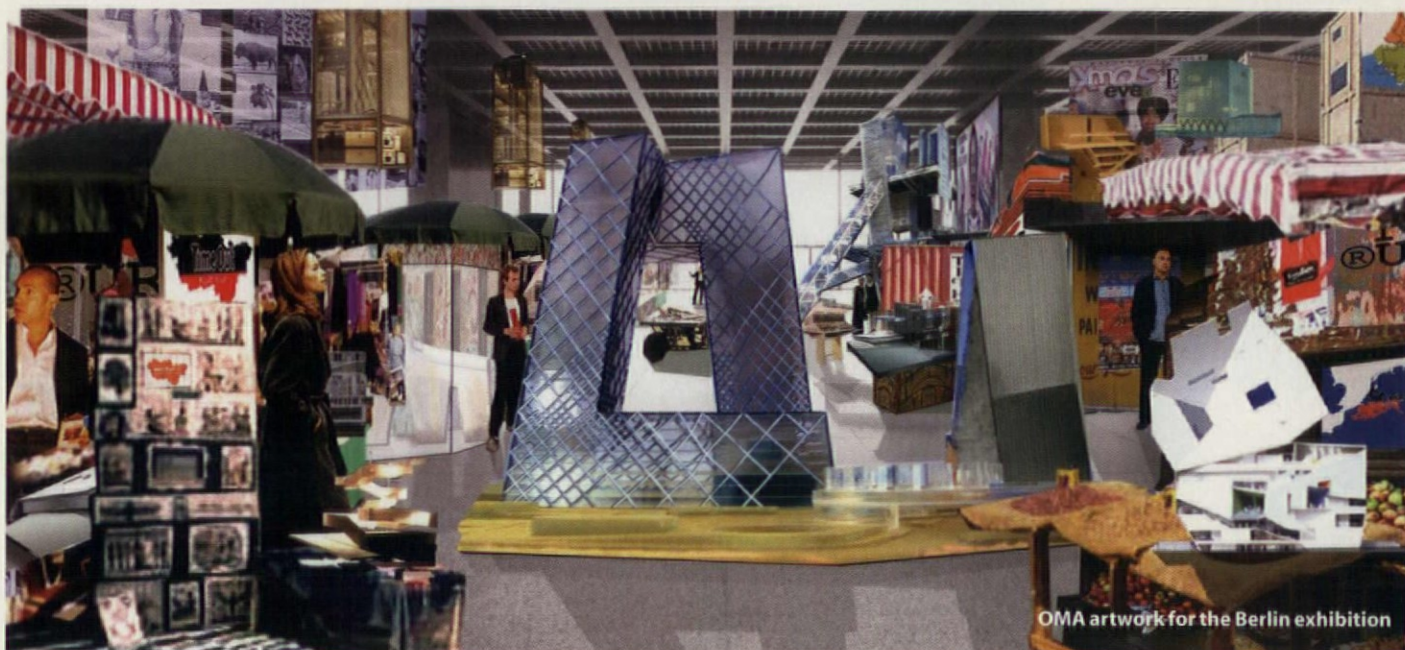
## International

### The Snow Show 12 February-31 March.

Ephemeral work by 15 architect-artist teams at Kemi and Rovaniemi in Finland's Lapland. Details [www.thesnowshow.net](http://www.thesnowshow.net)

Information for inclusion should be sent to Andrew Mead at *The Architects' Journal* at least two weeks before publication.





OMA artwork for the Berlin exhibition

# Industrial espionage

THIBAUT DE RUYTER

**Content: Rem Koolhaas/OMA/AMO – Buildings, Projects and Concepts since 1996**

At the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, until 18 January and then at the Kunsthal, Rotterdam, from 27 March

We all know that exhibiting architecture is not about architecture itself but, rather, several means of representation. Sometimes a foundation opens its archives and tries to bring a specific point of view. Then, in the context of history, the smallest sketch or the tiniest model gains an incredible value.

With 'Content', Rem Koolhaas, his architectural office OMA and its think-tank AMO, have decided to show all that they produce on an everyday basis – as if a crazy archivist has opened boxes and displayed the treasures he found, with no specific hierarchy. On the ground floor of Mies' Neue Nationalgalerie of 1962, hundreds of blue foam models and other working materials are presented. There are booklets for building projects, a sculpture by Tony Oursler with the face of Rem Koolhaas reading 'Junkspace', faxes sent by Cecil Balmond, material samples for the Prada buildings, Candida Höfer's photographs of the new Dutch Embassy in Berlin and a little shop trying to sell T-Shirts embossed with logos of the projects presented.

If *S,M,L,XL* was a bombastic book, a never-before-seen object in the history of architectural publications, 'Content' is its direct continuation in the question of architectural exhibitions. During the last eight years only a few publications, mostly maga-

zines, have presented the projects of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Therefore, when you enter the Nationalgalerie, the shock is astonishing. It is as if the 3 kg-heavy *S,M,L,XL* was falling on your head.

Displaying the projects in a rather free and random plan, the sections are divided only by low walls, pasted with the now classic OMA collages, mixing statistics, diagrams, terse aphorisms and newspaper images. Just a few boards hanging from the ceiling allow you to find your way in this crazy supermarket. The light coming from suspended neon tubes and curved mirrors (which let the few attendants keep an eye on the visitors) emphasises the shopping-mall atmosphere. Even the models are protected with the little magnetic anti-theft devices you now find in book or record shops.

The exhibition presents OMA's projects since 1996, from the CCTV Headquarters to the Campus Center at the IIT in Chicago via the Casa da Musica in Porto. A few early landmarks are added, discreetly placed in the exhibition space: a model of the Rotterdam Kunsthal, another of the competition entry for the Très Grande Bibliothèque de France in Paris. These two late 1980s projects present Koolhaas' relationship with space: how up becomes down; how a ceiling turns into a

ramp and becomes another floor; or, simply, how space can wind up on itself to produce architecture. It is easy to see the Netherlands Embassy in Berlin or the Seattle Public Library as direct sequels of those projects. If there is a will in 'Content' it is probably to show how, since the completion of the Utrecht Educatorium, all the theories and experiments of OMA have become everyday working tools of an architecture office.

The House in Bordeaux, designed in 1994, is another landmark to which 'Content' brings a new vision. Since the original owner died, his family has removed the working desk from the elevating platform and changed the relationship within the house; now a gigantic 'pillow' is in its place. To see a replica of it here is moving. There is almost no other document about the house (one model, two photographs and a video) and so this section stands out, humble and restrained – qualities that we don't normally connect with the works of Koolhaas.

*S,M,L,XL* quickly became a bible for students and a reference for trendy architecture books. But there is little chance that 'Content' will become a new archetype of architecture exhibition. It is too controversial and disturbing, too megalomaniacal and attractive. But by showing all that stands behind the scenes of its projects and buildings there is no doubt that, once again, Koolhaas will influence his numerous followers. So architects armed with digital cameras shoot in all directions at the exhibition, trying to sense the secrets that make OMA run.

Thibaut de Ruyter is a writer in Berlin. See the building study on p24-37



# Seeking solitude

ELAIN HARWOOD

## Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self

By Simon Richards. Yale University Press, 2003. 296pp. £27.50

This is a disturbing book but with a compelling central idea: that Le Corbusier turned his back on society in a search for knowledge and an inner self. He spent every morning painting in his studio, although between 1923 and 1938 he exhibited none of this work. His interest in the individual can be seen in these paintings, in his motif of the hand and in the Modulor – a whole proportional system for building based on the individual.

Simon Richards looks at contemporary theorists Georges Bataille and Albert Camus, whose work Le Corbusier knew, and suggests that all three were seeking a spiritual sanctity by means of physical withdrawal from society. For the years in which other commentators have identified a spirituality in his work, circa 1947–53, Richards concentrates on *Le Poème de l'angle droit* – a cycle of poems and lithographs by Le Corbusier (see picture). This was a personal, internal quest based on Pascal and Jung, which Richards likens to the alchemist's reclusive search for gold, both in real terms and in the mind. Jung wrote of a special place for searching the soul, perhaps a tower (like Jung's own at Bollingen) or temenos, which Richards relates to Le Corbusier's city plans.

Le Corbusier's *Ville Contemporaine* and subsequent plans for new cities were not designed to create a more open, communicative society. They were planned so the individual could be alone, being intellectually creative or in some other way contemplating the spirit. Richards suggests that Le Corbusier felt nightclubs, cafes, restaurants and theatres to be good only for wasting time, swapping germs and fraying nerves. Sport was admitted because its rules were laid out and it was healthy. By reducing commuter time, people had more time to be alone. And the street, the centre of social intercourse, was eliminated in favour of the freeway where one is isolated within the car. Interplay is necessary only for the economic and physical maintenance of the city, a limited form of civic pride.

Le Corbusier's plans form the basis of so much 20th-century town planning, yet Richards argues that Le Corbusier sought to build the antithesis of what most people wanted. Perhaps he retained something of the Swiss traditions of small-scale canton

government and heterodoxy. Or was it just that he wanted a technocracy of one?

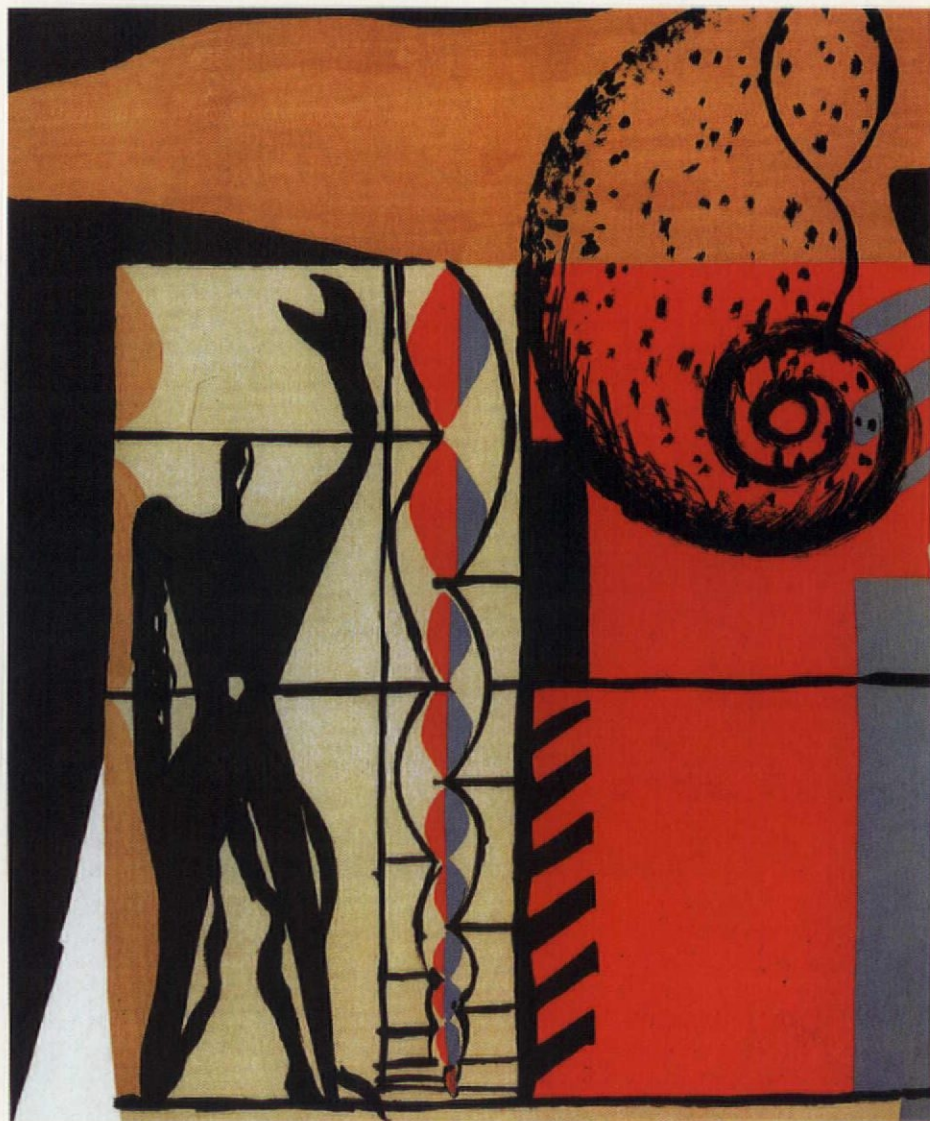
Le Corbusier became attracted to the idea of government by small guilds that were beneath capitalism and party politics, and were individual, progressive and violent. This appears in his critique of American society, *When the Cathedrals Were White* (1937), and introduced him to the fringes of right-wing syndicalism. These extremists were prepared to overthrow the government by force, and Le Corbusier illustrates the riots of February 1934 as 'an awakening of cleanliness' in *La Ville Radieuse* (1935). In order to build his solitary city he joined the

Vichy government's reconstruction committee, only to irritate everyone around him.

Le Corbusier did create something of the solitude he sought in, of all places, India. Richards recalls being in Chandigarh for India's Golden Jubilee in 1997 and finding the streets deserted. He had to resort to watching the celebrations elsewhere on television. Now he understands why.

Richards forgets, however, that other architects of the inter-war years moved towards domesticated privacy, including that impeccable socialist, Raymond Unwin. 'We must give the individual a place in which he can live and meditate, retire from the bustle and noise of life,' he wrote in 1926. And what a relief it must have been to escape one's in-laws, as Young and Wilmot recorded a generation later. It is only now that we are reinventing the gregariousness of the city.

Elain Harwood is an architectural historian with *English Heritage*





## In Search of Architecture: The Watercolour Albums of Thomas Graham Jackson RA

At the Royal Academy, London W1,  
until 30 January

Thomas Graham Jackson was an architect more at home in the Royal Academy than the RIBA, writes *Brian Edwards*. His exceptional facility as an architectural draughtsman eclipsed his talents as a designer and though Jackson produced some fine buildings, such as the Examination Schools in Oxford (from 1876), it is as artist and author that he left his mark.

Jackson was well connected and had the means to travel both as a student at Wadham College, Oxford, and afterwards, under the encouragement of his Hampstead neighbour, the architect George Gilbert Scott. Like many of his generation Jackson tried his hand at all the decorative and applied arts, even entertaining the idea of making a career as a painter. But the drawings and watercolour sketches made on his 50 or so separate study visits to Europe and Asia were not mere private records but an archive able to inform his architectural designs. It is these sketchbook studies which form the backbone of this fascinating exhibition.



The Domes of Périgueux, 1901

Jackson felt that architectural practice in the England was narrow and dogmatic compared with Europe. As the curator of the exhibition James Bettley explains, he was more at home with the kind of dynamic fusion of architecture,

sculpture and painting found in the work of Bramante and Michelangelo. The many drawings on display show how Jackson used pen and coloured wash to study the structural as well as decorative properties of the Gothic and early Renaissance buildings in France, Italy and beyond. He announced to Scott that his travels had cured him of 'medievalism', preferring instead the richness of 'judicious eclecticism'.

Such sentiments drew Jackson into influential circles at the Royal Academy and later at the Art Workers' Guild. Elected an academician in 1896, he spent his final years travelling on the Orient Express, stopping off to sketch material for his books, such as *Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture* (1913) and a seven-volume sequence on Gothic and Renaissance architecture from England to Turkey. Although Jackson was no lightweight as an architect or restorer of ancient buildings (such as Winchester Cathedral), it is as one of the greatest architectural draughtsmen and scholars of his generation that he is best remembered. The sketches on show are testament to the power of drawings of existing buildings to inspire the architecture of the future.

*Brian Edwards is professor of architecture at Edinburgh College of Art*

## Warsaw

By David Crowley. Reaktion, 2003. 208pp. £16.95

This book is timely given Poland's imminent EEC membership and the need for mutual understanding, writes *Adam Kawecki*. It is neither a guide to architecture nor to the social economy of Warsaw. However, with an admirable grasp of Polish history, essential to understanding this not immediately appealing city, David Crowley explains the complex background to the grey pre-1989 environment and changes since. He explores three topics – commemoration of the past, shopping patterns, and housing – to demonstrate how public space has been represented and used by those claiming authority over the city since 1944, and by those living and working there.

The chapter on monuments in ruins is crucial. This explains the significance of Warsaw's monuments – whether permanent or temporary, original or reconstructed, imposed from above or created by public will – and how the selective nature of collective memory, together with dominant attitudes and ideologies, have affected their interpretation. The author reveals also the ghostly presence of what is no longer there; buildings and their inhabitants forever gone yet remembered or selectively forgotten.

Crowley's review of shopping is incomplete. The conflict between officially approved



Post-war housing on the outskirts of Warsaw

'civilised' forms of shopping and irrepressible anarchic street markets is interesting but lacks consideration of the fact that people's shopping habits are governed largely by polarising economic circumstances.

On housing, *Warsaw* tackles the legacy of gigantic, appallingly built, dormitory suburbs and related issues of public and private space. How to renew them with limited resources is posing growing demands on housing authori-

ties; similar to problems in the UK but infinitely greater, as some estates house over 100,000 inhabitants.

Overall, Crowley takes a somewhat pessimistic view of the future of Warsaw's public spaces, given the crass edifices built recently for and by multi-nationals and the moral and financial bankruptcy of city authorities disinterested in the value of the public domain. *Adam Kawecki is an architect in London*



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Property consultancy **Drivers Jonas** has appointed **Sandra Stubenrauch** as graduate planning surveyor and **Claire Galbois-Alcaix** as marketing manager. Both are based in the London office.

**The Parr Partnership** has made **Neil Davidson** of the Gateshead office a partner and **Noëlle Wright** of the Birmingham office an associate.

**Hoare Lea Consulting Engineers** has promoted **Stephen Buckley** to associate.

Graduate interior designer **Katie Southall** has joined **TPS Consult** and will be completing a one-year placement at Nottingham Trent University.

**Brian Mortimer** has been made an associate at **Oxford Architects**.

Midlands-based **BLB Architects** has appointed **Rob Blakemore** as team leader, major projects, **Mark Cowley** as assistant job architect and **Andrew Mann** as team leader.

**Peter Ross**, consultant to **Ove Arup & Partners**, has been appointed as the new **TRADA** president.

North West housebuilder **Hargreaves Homes** has appointed **Jon England** as technical manager.

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

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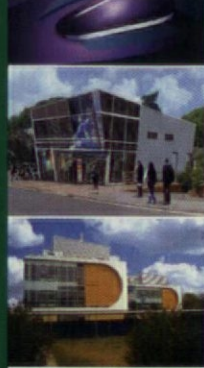
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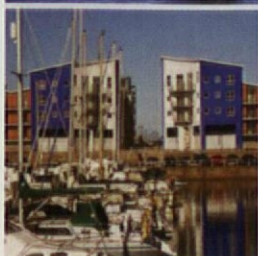
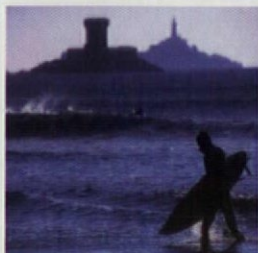
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Further information on the RCI can be obtained from [www.rcisurvey.co.uk](http://www.rcisurvey.co.uk), or by contacting Dr Emma Parry at [emma.parry@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:emma.parry@cranfield.ac.uk) or on 01234 754 408.

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## competitions

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### NEW OFFICE SPACES FOR SALISBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Expressions of interest are invited for the design of a new extension to the existing listed building that houses the Salisbury council offices. The council has agreed to bring together, under one roof, all its office-based activities on the site of its present main office, an adjoining car park and former swimming pool. Up to six practices will be invited to a competitive interview. The deadline is Monday 22 December.

### LYTHAM QUAYS

An open two-stage competition, run on behalf of Kensington Developments, to develop a 29.2ha site adjacent to the Ribble estuary, 1km from the centre of Lytham St Annes in the north-west of England. The site enjoys views over the mudflats and salt marshes of the estuary and of the Irish Sea, the Pennines and the Welsh Mountains. Kensington Developments is seeking ideas for the design of a new pedestrian-only village. The requirement is for a mixed-use development of tourism, culture, environment, business and residential. The end value of the regeneration will be about £650 million. The deadline for first-stage designs is 9 January.

### E COLLEGE

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is calling for designs of the college for the future. The challenge is to put together ideas for a new style of learning environment for the 21st century. Deadline is 30 January.

### LANDMARK EAST COMPETITION

Open ideas competition on behalf of the East of England Development Agency to generate ideas for a major landmark or landmarks to attract significant funding and stimulate long-term economic benefit for the region. Deadline is 18 February.

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#### Assistant Architect / Technician – Hampshire – To £30k pa

Our client is looking for a number of experienced staff with good construction knowledge, to be involved in the design and/or job running of projects. Residential experience is essential along with Vectorworks, ArchiCAD or manual draughting skills. Ref AR3

#### Technical Co-Ordinators – Hertfordshire – To £35K pa + benefits

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Interview w/c 9 February 2004

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#### Architect

**Based: Manchester**

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Pay: Based on exp.

Ref: 2464

#### Architectural Techs

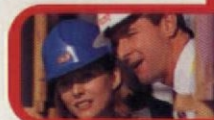
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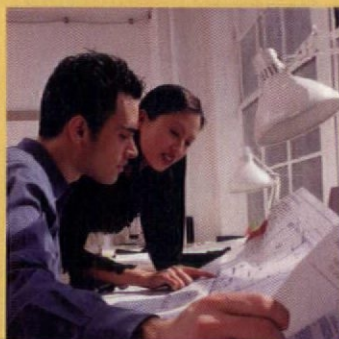
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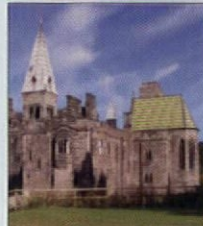
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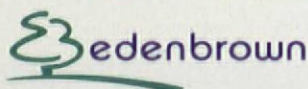
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**HEWI**

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Due to the immense demand for the reading University findings on colour and tonal research, turnquest uk ltd has designed in conjunction with this repost a colour palette to easily assist architects and designers to select adequacy in colour contrast between door finishes and door furniture as demanded by the new approved document Part M, Access to and use of buildings.

**ANTRON**

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 302**



INVISTA, formerly Dupont Textiles & Interiors is to premier Antron® Fibres at DOMOTEX 2004 from 17 to 20 January 2004. In addition to featuring in the contract and retail sectors, Antron® products will also be shown in carpet styles and constructions specifically made for the growing transportation market, including rail, shipping and aviation. The INVISTA stand is in Hall 4, Stand S210.

**MAYTAG UK**

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 304**



Maytag UK will be taking up residence at the KBB 2004 exhibition at the NEC Birmingham in January. They will be showcasing a vast selection of new products and some new categories too. Admiral, Maytag and Amana will be on display featuring refrigeration, laundry, dishwashing and cooking. Maytag UK can be seen in Hall 18 Stand K109.

**EUROHEAT**

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 306**



Euroheat has introduced even more choice to its range of Harmony gas stoves with the harmony 34 and 44 models now available in a traditional log effect as well as coal. The logs are very realistic in design and the company has invested in developing the appearance and formation of the flames so that they resemble those of a real log burning stove and not a clinical blue gas flame.

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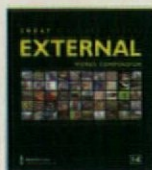
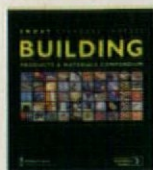
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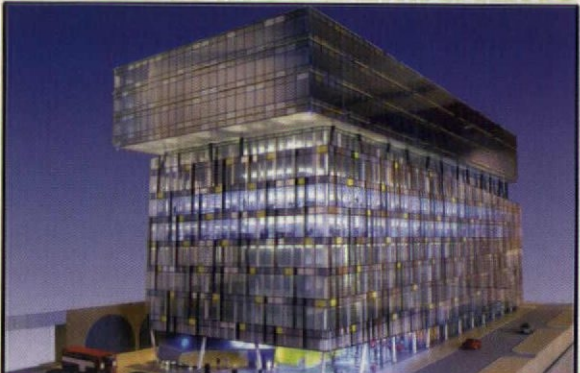


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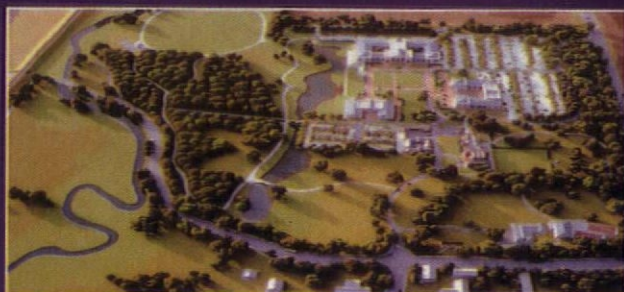
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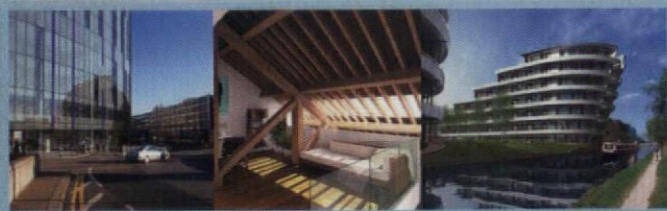
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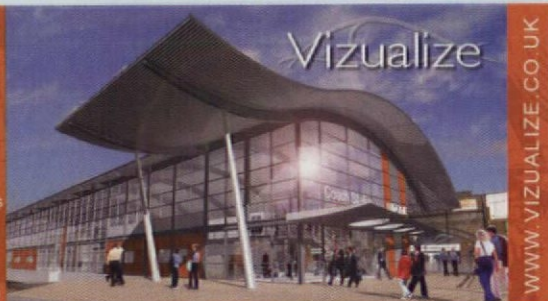
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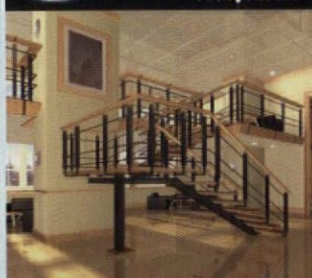


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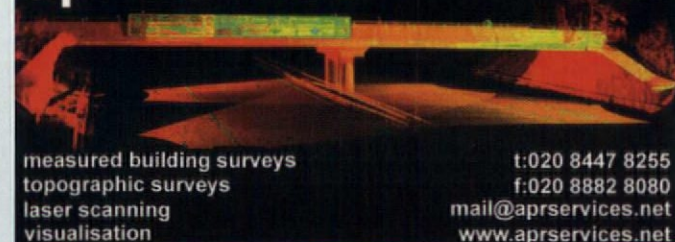
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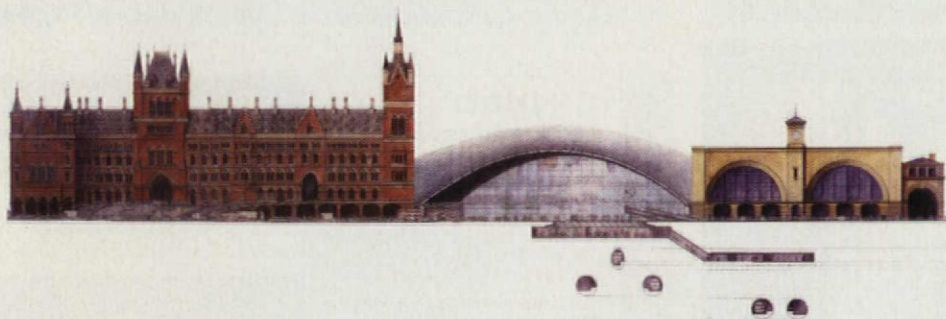
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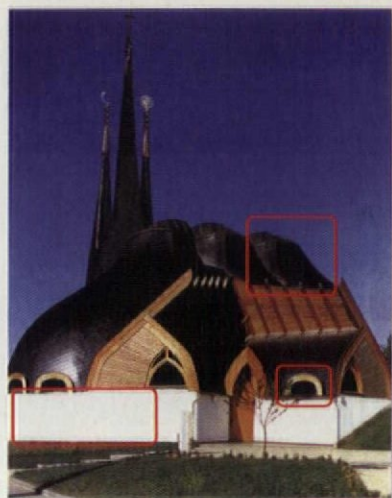
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## the ones that got away



Astragal's new competition will feature schemes that, for better or worse, stayed on the drawing board. Can you identify this project and its architect? Post your entry, to arrive by first thing Monday morning, to AJ Astragal, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, or fax 020 7505 6701. The first correct entry to be pulled out of the hat wins a bottle of champagne. The winner of the final Ring the Changes of 2003 was Florence Jones of Wycombe.



### Wind of change

So far they haven't had much publicity, but environmental engineer **Battle McCarthy** has pulled off a real coup in relation to the SOM/Libeskind Freedom Tower project to replace the World Trade Center in Manhattan. Its proposal for a wind 'chimney' running through the mega-tower, despite early scepticism on the part of developer Larry Silverstein, is a full part of the design unveiled before Christmas. 'Battle McCarthy puts wind up Manhattan' would be Astragal's headline to mark the design, which incorporates a wind turbine set to generate a certain amount of electricity on the project. This is not the only stateside project the firm is involved in: working with **KPF** on a new stadium for the New York Jets, BM has come up with a zero-energy strategy that, among other things, means parking facilities are more or less non-existent in the proposal. Crikey!

### Jinxed imperial

Despite the smiles at the unveiling of the Freedom Tower, the weeks prior were fraught, with two architectural teams jockeying for position as the final design emerged. **David Childs** of SOM wanted a 1,600ft office building, plus mast; Libeskind held out for 1,450. Eventually 1,500 was agreed. I am quoting these heights in imperial measures because that is what they have been designed in.

Early BBC coverage of the tower design described its height as '538 metres', thereby missing the symbolic significance of its height being 1,776ft, ie commemorating America's independence. Oh well, metrication freaks never did have much of a sense of humour. Or history.

### Battle of the SOM

Oh to have been a fly on the wall in the offices of SOM on the night of 4 December. Libeskind Studio staff, who had been working on the joint project, tried to take photos of the latest model and get their hands on computer renderings of the SOM designs, leading to an unseemly row which was reported in the *New York Post* under the headline 'Madhouse; Ground Zero designers at war'. In the ensuing battle of the design's final form, honours appear to have been about even. The spirit of Libeskind's original competition-winning proposal is evident in the David Childs scheme, but there is little doubt that the basic form of the building is as SOM intended. Watching the design evolution will be interesting; no doubt **Larry Silverstein** will end up banging the table and shouting at the architects (again) somewhere along the way.

### Home front

Is PFI going to emerge as the procurement form of choice for affordable housing in the South East? There is scant mention of it in the review on housing by **Kate**

**Barker** submitted to government before Christmas, with the full report still to come. Rather simply-mindedly, Barker blames the dearth of such housing on rigid planning regimes and the failure of the housebuilding sector to get involved. But these explanations are deeply flawed. Government is responsible for targets and the overall working of the planning system. And the housebuilding sector has never built affordable housing except when contracted to do so by the public sector. The reason for the shortage is simple: councils stopped building homes in 1979 under Mrs Thatcher, and Tony Blair has continued that policy. End of story. Now Barker wants more prefabrication as though that, in itself, can solve the 'problem'. Treasury minds are now wondering whether, in view of what it perceives as the success of PFI in delivering schools, hospitals, prisons etc on time and budget, it could not do the same for housing, bypassing housebuilders and creating new relationships with local authorities as housing enablers. PFI consortia might use prefabrication in new ways, but as a matter of practicality, not dogma.

### Scotch missed

Presumably we will see the results of the inquiry into the Scottish parliamentary building some time this year, though it would be unwise to place bets on exactly when. However, Astragal will stick a neck out and

predict the following findings: a lot of flim-flam about who knew who in the procurement process, of which much will be made but really being of little importance; most of the 'overspend' will be correctly identified as being the result of client changes and a very odd way of defining cost by the late **Donald Dewar**; and about 20 per cent will be put down to poor contract management, not entirely surprising given that the client never defined or controlled the project from the outset. The parliament will try to blame the late **Enric Miralles** and the contractor, but it has been largely the fault of the politicians.

### French leave

Exciting thoughts from the Gallic sage **Jean Baudrillard** in *Mass. Identity. Architecture* (Routledge). His selected writings on architecture get off to an unpromising start when, interviewing Jean Nouvel, Baudrillard announces: 'I've never been interested in architecture.' But that doesn't prove a hindrance. 'Beaubourg is a monument of cultural deterrence,' he opines. 'Within a museal scenario that only serves to keep up the humanist fiction of culture, it is a veritable fashioning of the death of culture that takes place. The masses rush toward Beaubourg as they rush toward disaster sites, with the same irresistible élan. Better: they are the disaster of Beaubourg.' Plenty more where that came from...

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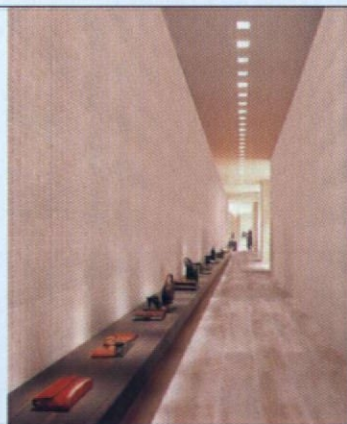
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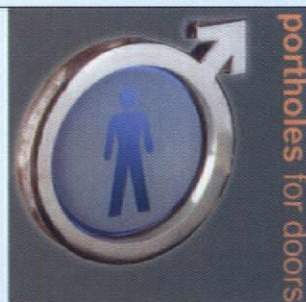
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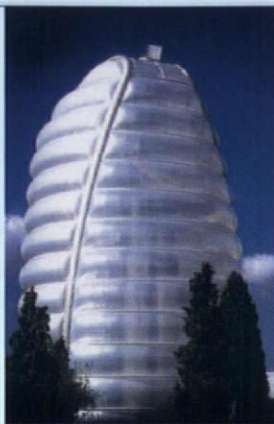


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## TITON

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A prestigious new housing development in the heart of historic Canterbury has been fitted with Titon trickle ventilators and window fittings to help create the ideal living environment. Heritage Court consists of six luxury town houses, two detached cottages and three apartments. The buildings have been built to a high specification and indoor air quality was high on Clague's, the award-winning architects, agenda.







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
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