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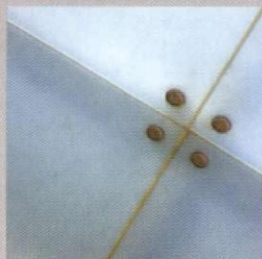
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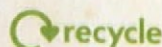
This concept design for a new Euston Station forecourt has been shortlisted for the RIBA's Urban Space by Design competition. The proposal, dreamt up by Bell Travers Willson, includes plans to remove the existing kiosks and street furniture and replace them with two large elliptical terraces and an enclosed garden space for office workers, and is intended to create a 'dynamic antidote to the hard Modernist context' of the station. An exhibition of all the competition finalists will go on display at London's City Hall in June.

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**Cover**

Obernai school, Alsace

Photograph by Nigel Green



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**“All the good architects end up in the House of Lords; unsuccessful ones end up in the Commons”**  
 Sydney Chapman reflects on his retirement » page 6

**Spotlight on Herzog & de Meuron**  
 » pages 10-13

**aj** news

# Damn density, say Conservatives

Shadow planning minister John Hayes has invited the wrath of the architecture community by saying that ‘he doesn’t give a damn about density’ and demanding architects buck up their ideas.

Pushing the boundaries of Conservative Party policy, Hayes also called into question the future of CABE in its present form.

‘I don’t give a damn about densities,’ he told the AJ in an exclusive interview last week. ‘I’m not slightly interested in how dense the development is. This is something that should relate to local needs and concerns. I want to give planning back to the people. We will create new duties for local authorities to originate more far-reaching local planning guidance.’

He continued: ‘Every local authority should have a duty for its own design appraisal in a role like CABE.’

Although he admitted there was some demand for a centralised body that could respond to local requests for design advice, Hayes said that if the bar of architecture was raised on a local level this would call into question the need for safety-net quangos like CABE.

After citing his favourite piece of London architecture as ‘St Paul’s Cathedral, closely followed by Poundbury’ and stating that ‘much of what was built in this country between 1955 and 1995 wouldn’t be missed’, the minister commented: ‘I think that the architectural

community can rise above the mediocrity. I call on your readers to draw up a blacklist of blight.’

Commenting on Prince Charles’ Dorset brainchild, the minister said: ‘I think Poundbury was inspired by an earlier age. People weren’t nervous about building pastiches back then.’

The comments come in the week that the Conservative Party launched its manifesto, stating that it intends to ‘halt Labour’s plans to concrete over our green fields’ and promote brownfield development.

In response to Hayes’ comments, RIBA president George Ferguson said: ‘His comments on density show a lack of understanding of the relationship between density and the preservation of green space. It’s the other side of the same coin.’

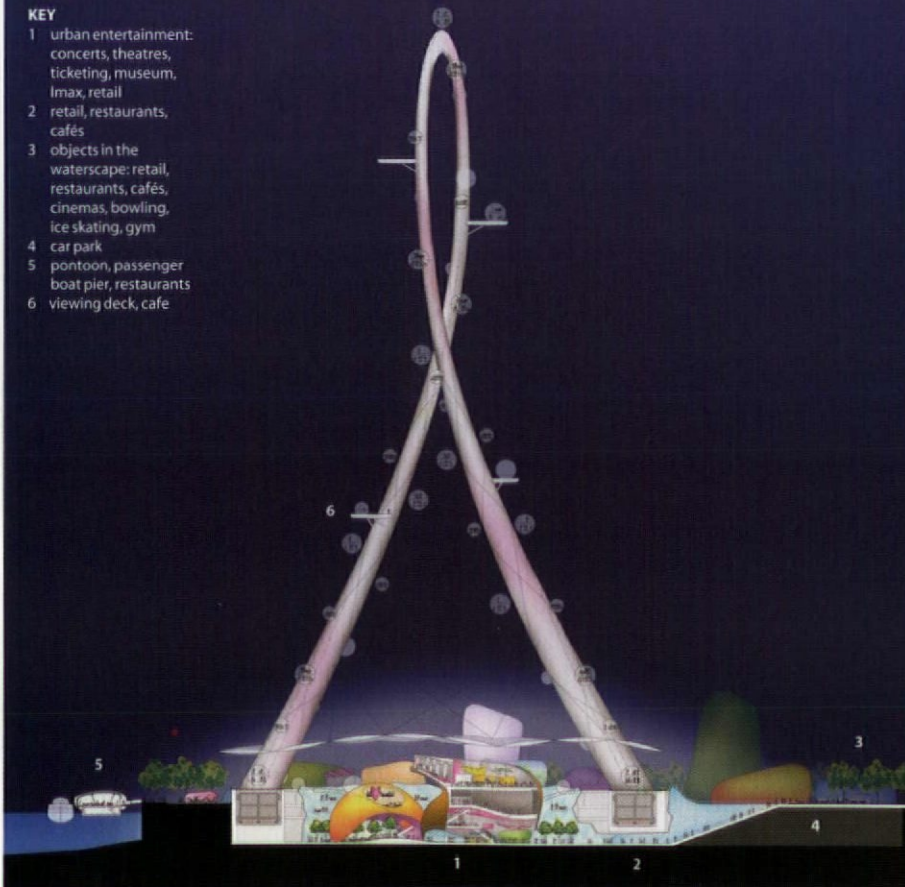
‘I think architecturally we have to look forward to what is relevant today. St Paul’s will hopefully remain relevant for a thousand years, but it’s no solution to our housing and public buildings problem.’

‘He needs to send out the right signals regarding good contemporary architecture, such as the Welsh Assembly building. With regard to his views on recent buildings, much has been built without even seeing an architect. Every politician has a responsibility to promote good design,’ Ferguson added.

Rob Sharp

## KEY

- 1 urban entertainment: concerts, theatres, ticketing, museum, lmax, retail
- 2 retail, restaurants, cafés
- 3 objects in the waterscape: retail, restaurants, cafés, cinemas, bowling, ice skating, gym
- 4 car park
- 5 pontoon, passenger boat pier, restaurants
- 6 viewing deck, café



Alsop Design has been given the thumbs up by the mayor of Shanghai for this 250m-tall observation tower on the banks of the Huangpu River. Already dubbed the Shanghai Kiss, the structure will rotate once every four hours, giving visitors constantly changing views of the city as they travel up the tower’s ‘legs’ in pods. The scheme will incorporate an ‘urban entertainment complex’ beneath the towers, including a Digital Showcase City promoting new technology. Engineered by Arup, it is hoped the Kiss will be open in time for the city’s World Expo in 2010.



**“Having taken a lot of legal advice,  
we believe that we have the evidence”**  
Kent Institute of Art and Design starts legal proceedings  
against Don Gray » page 16

Carey Jones  
shapes up  
in Leeds  
» page 16



## Peabody report reveals BedZed grass may no longer be greener

A lead research manager at the Peabody Trust has slammed key elements of Bill Dunster's award-winning BedZed eco-development.

The fundamental problems highlighted by Claire Bennie include 'contaminated' run-off water from green roofs, underperforming photovoltaic cells and a lack of privacy for residents.

Speaking at AJ's Designing for Sustainability conference, Bennie's outburst pre-empts an official report into the success of the scheme, which is due out in June.

The £15 million carbon-neutral development was opened with much fanfare in 2003. However, a post-occupancy survey by the trust seems to show all is not well in Surrey's Wallington wonderland.

One of Bennie's main criticisms was that good design had come second to environmental concerns. This had led to houses being built to maximise the amount of sunshine entering them, which in turn meant their backs faced the street.

The high density of the scheme also resulted in a lack of privacy. According to the survey, one resident said: 'I don't like the fact that visitors see the most private areas of our home first.'

In addition, the survey revealed some residents were demanding increased car parking, in particular for guests, family and friends.

More unusual problems include the homes' distinctive roof cowls groaning in the wind and acoustic problems between the flats.

Bennie also admitted there were teething problems with the environmentally friendly combined heat and power plant – especially the costs associated with taking 'a great big pile of ash to landfill every month'.

The green roof did not escape criticism either. Bennie confessed it had not been installed very well and was producing too much run-off, none of which was usable, according to Thames Water.

The amount of energy being produced by the site's photovoltaic cells was also called into question. Bennie added that 'we're not getting much electricity to be honest'.

However, Dunster denies many of those living in BedZed are disgruntled and believes any problems can be overcome.

He also stated that he had just finished developing a new stealth cowl and added: 'Those residents that use their conservatory properly, shutting the internal glazed screen, and planting the well-ventilated sunspace, both stay cool in summer and achieve inexpensive privacy.'

● See conference report, page 39

Richard Waite

## Paddington landowner set to approve new tower scheme in further blow to Farrell

Terry Farrell & Partners' Paddington Health Campus received another major setback this week as a pivotal landowner partner was expected to approve its own plans for the land in question.

As the AJ went to press, Paddington landowner PDCL was set to approve a new tower scheme by a 'prominent US-based architect' to replace Richard Rogers' long-running proposals for its site at the Paddington Basin development in west London.

The announcement follows the collapse earlier in the month of PDCL's negotiations with health authorities for a land

swap to develop a large-scale £1 billion health campus based on Farrell's original drawings.

The announcement of the new plans lays to rest long-standing proposals by the Richard Rogers Partnership for the site.

Rogers submitted initial plans to Westminster council three years ago, which were subsequently amended.

The architect has since placed plans for its 28-storey Grand Union Building on the back burner after being granted planning permission in 2002.

It is understood that PDCL decided not to pursue the Rogers plans because the demands of

the site had changed dramatically since planning was submitted.

A Westminster City Council spokesman denied proposals for the health campus had hit the rocks and said the council was still talking to authorities at the Department of Health and PDCL about taking the scheme forward.

The Grand Union Building was set to be the centrepiece in the final phase of the Paddington Basin development.

The site is located on the waterside at the far eastern end of the Paddington Basin scheme, between Harrow Road and the basin itself.

### SIX SORTED FOR MAILBOX

A six-strong shortlist has been unveiled for the second phase of Birmingham's Mailbox development. The list has pitted four of the region's highest-profile practices against two well-known offices from London. Associated Architects, D5, Kinetic, and Glenn Howells Architects are set to battle it out with Marks Barfield and Ken Shuttleworth's practice, Make. ➤

### EUROPEAN AWARD FOR OMA

Rem Koolhaas' practice, OMA, has scooped this year's €50,000 Mies van der Rohe Award. The office's Dutch Embassy building in Berlin beat British finalists Norman Foster and Future Systems to win the 2005 European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture. ➤

### NO MORE GRACE FOR ALSOP

Will Alsop looks to have missed a second chance to design a new building on the controversial Fourth Grace site in Liverpool because of continuing action by the Northwest Development Agency. However, developers Neptune and Countryside Properties, who were involved in the earlier scheme with Alsop, have been given another chance after withdrawing compensation claims against the agency, following the collapse of the 'Cloud' scheme.

### SCOTTISH CABE LAUNCHED

Scotland's answer to CABE was formally launched at a special meeting on Monday at Glasgow's Lighthouse architecture centre. The organisation – which replaces the old Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland – will carry out many of the same functions as CABE, including an extensive Design Review programme. ➤

### ARCHITECTS RETURN TO TATE

Tate Modern is to host an exhibition of the work of Herzog & de Meuron to mark the gallery's fifth anniversary. It will run from 1 June to 29 August.



# Second board member quits ARB

The ARB has been rocked by the second resignation this year of an elected board member. The sudden departure of Nick Tweddell, a long-term critic of the board's activities, comes just weeks after Ian Salisbury shocked observers by stepping down.

Both members received high levels of support at the last election for the profession's board representatives two years ago.

The news was greeted with concern from RIBA president elect Jack Pringle, who claimed there was 'clearly something wrong'.

In his resignation letter, seen by the AJ, Tweddell claimed the board's current attitudes had left him unable to carry out his duties.

'It has become impossible to deliver and discharge my duties to the board and to the profession,' the letter says.

'Although assurances have been given since my election that proper attention would be given to accountability and openness, I have found the reality for myself as a board member to be quite the opposite.

'If information is restricted from elected board members, then where is democracy? Where is trust?

'I feel that the ARB is currently in competition against the charter

bodies,' the letter added. 'I cannot continue to support such an organisation, while believing that I am providing a useful and necessary service to the public and my profession.'

Pringle said the resignation should be troubling for the board. 'It strikes me that we have elected member after elected member resigning from the board and this is not coincidence,' he said.

'There is clearly something in the operation of the ARB that elected representatives find so unacceptable that they resign,' he continued. 'It must be in the board's constitution and we are working to get this reformed.'

But ARB registrar and chief executive Robin Vaughan said there was nothing for the board to worry about.

'There is no situation for us to recover from,' he said. 'All that we do when someone resigns is to invite the next person down on the electoral list to join the board.'

'Those members of the board who have considered opinions will stay at the table,' he added. 'The minority will resign and the majority will stay and continue the sensible debates we have.'

Ed Dorrell

## Howard pays tribute as Commons' only remaining architect retires

The only architect in the House of Commons bowed out this week, to praise from Conservative Party leader Michael Howard.

Sir Sydney Chapman – who was first elected in 1973 – left Parliament for the last time on Monday, telling the AJ: 'I've got mixed feelings. I'll miss the responsibility, but I realise it's

about time that I stepped down.'

'All the good architects end up in the House of Lords; unsuccessful ones end up in the Commons,' he added.

Howard paid tribute to Chapman's contribution to architecture, planning and politics. 'That he found time in his career to be vice-president and a member of the RIBA as well as a

long list of professional bodies is testament to his energy and considerable ability,' he said.

'In an age of the increasing professionalisation of politics, few MPs have contributed so much to an outside profession as well as Parliament. He brought a wealth of experience to politics and will be sadly missed in the Commons,' Howard added.

Chapman's retirement comes in the wake of the departure of another of architecture's Westminster allies – former co-chair of parliament's architecture group, Debra Shipley.

She announced earlier this month that she would not seek re-election. Shipley, Labour MP for Stourbridge, is recovering from an operation in hospital.

The Manser Practice has released these images of a series of new offices and a director's residence for the British Council in Karachi. The 1,000m<sup>2</sup> building was commissioned, designed and tendered in three months and will be constructed using both pre-cast and in-situ concrete over the next six months. The project – designed to withstand a bomb blast – includes a new guard house entrance into the secure compound.





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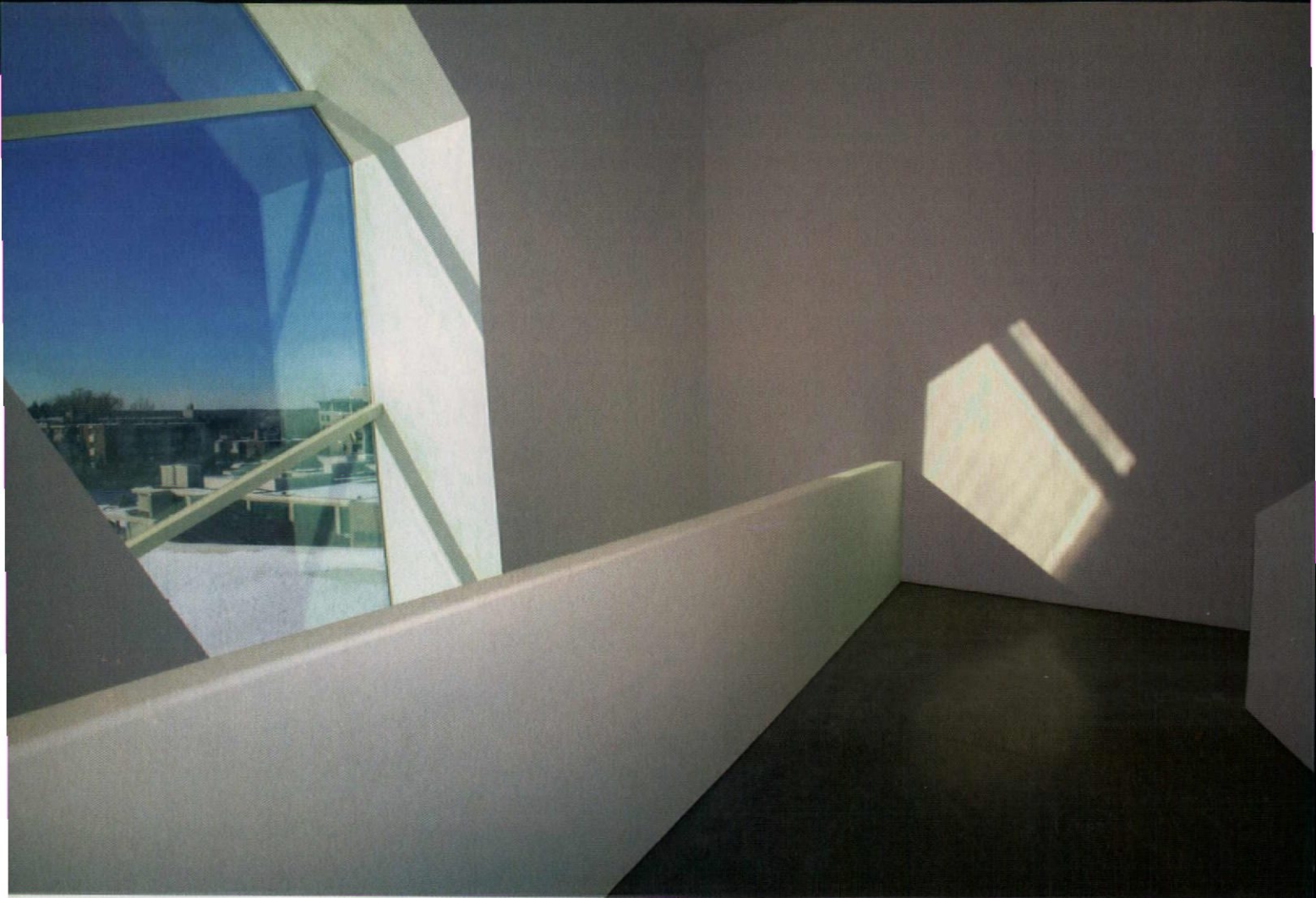
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# HERZOG & DE MEURON GO WEST

Herzog & de Meuron's (H&deM) first completed building in the US, a \$67.5 million (£35.7 million) extension to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, opens this weekend – and will no doubt be mobbed.

Not that this is the Walker's first time in the architectural spotlight. Since 1971 it has had a striking Modernist home – a cluster of plum-coloured brick boxes by Edward Larrabee Barnes (who died last year), which has proved very popular with artists and curators.

But the centre's director, Kathy Halbreich, thought it could seem a little forbidding, and that it did not allow the Walker to function as an art centre rather than a museum.

She wanted to stress the distinction between a place simply showing artworks and one

accommodating a theatre, cinema and diverse media, fostering connections between disciplines, rather than compartmentalising them (as New York's new MoMA has done). It should have the buzz and interaction of a 'town square', says Halbreich.

The Walker selected H&deM after 'an extensive search', but is cagey about other contenders. Two positive factors were the practice's long-time engagement with art and artists, and its proven ability to handle a project of this scope. Its brief was to keep the Barnes building 'as pure as possible', but to give the extension its own distinct character, and especially make its public spaces more welcoming.

The site is at the south-western edge of downtown Minneapolis,

beside an eight-lane highway (though there is a footbridge nearby). In contrast to Barnes' tight orthogonal building at the north, H&deM's addition is looser in plan, its main elements part-rotated in turn as it spreads south.

It is meant to mediate between the city to the east and a garden to the west – designed by Michel Desvigne – which forms part of phase two of the project, along with demolition of the adjacent Guthrie Theatre (being rebuilt by the Mississippi to a design by Jean Nouvel). At present, squares of turf give the general idea.

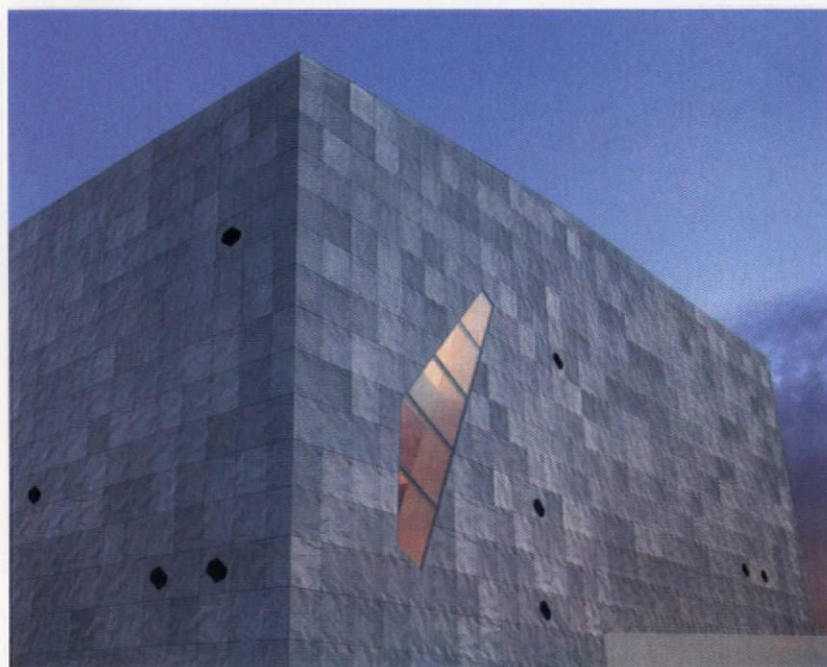
The eye-catching feature of the scheme, literally dazzling at times, is the faceted tower, an approximate cube, which houses the McGuire Theatre, as well as a special events space and an

upmarket restaurant, both looking onto the city through large eccentric windows.

As with the copper bands of the Basel signal box or the coloured polycarbonate of the Laban Centre, what makes the tower special is H&deM's treatment of its skin. It is clad with panels of aluminium mesh, each embossed with a complex faceted pattern, and though the metal is already very sensitive to changing light and weather, the faceting makes it even more so.

It's sure to suggest a host of similes – 'crumpled silk' and 'frozen lake' are two already in print – and given Herzog's love of fashion, the allusion to fabric is apt. For while Barnes' clean-cut building is a sober-suited model of Midwestern rectitude, H&deM's extension





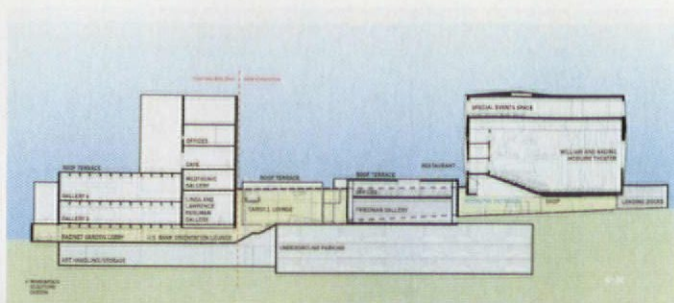
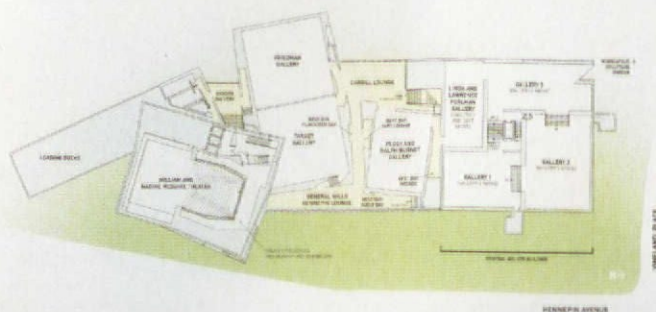
**Opposite page:** view through the large irregular window on the west face of the new tower. **Above:** gallery entrances off the Cargill Lounge, with chandelier by Herzog & de Meuron. **Left:** the aluminium skin

is straight off the catwalk – icily glamorous and exotic.

The aluminium is swept beneath a dramatic glowering cantilever and into the low-ceilinged Hennepin Lobby. Inside the extension, H&deM has kept continuity with Barnes by using the same brick and terrazzo, and indeed the new galleries – which increase exhibition space by a third to 40,000 sq ft – are similar to Barnes': calm, column-free, orthogonal and flexible, though almost totally dependent on artificial light.

Where H&deM differs is in otherwise avoiding right angles, which is fine in plan, the spaces contracting and expanding. But walls are canted, apertures determinedly askew (whether entrances to galleries or the many





windows), and furniture likewise. This becomes a bit relentless and, like last season's clothes to the fashionistas, may soon seem mannered or dated; a glib way to be 'expressive' or 'dynamic' and not be the Barnes.

The Baroque foliage pattern that appears on the embossed metal panels of the intimate, black, 385-seat McGuire Theatre, and more vividly as 'fretwork' at the threshold of galleries, may divide opinion too. But the conjunction of materials – aluminium, greenish glass, polished white plaster (like Scarpa's stucco lustro), variegated brick – gives the interior a definite allure, the transitions between city and garden are well-modulated,



**Barnes' original building on completion in 1971, seen from the busy highway that runs beside the Walker**

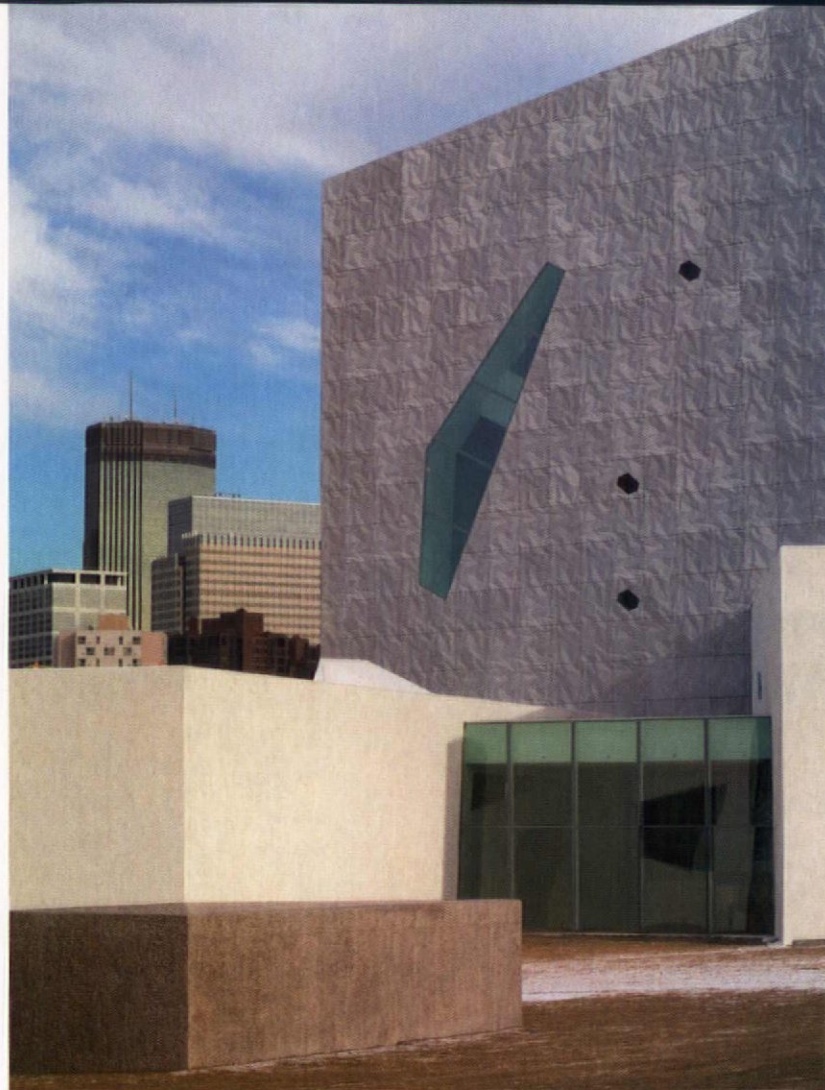
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The west side of the building is to become a garden, designed by Michel Desvigne. In the foreground is a 'Skyspace' by James Turrell

and the social spaces inviting (especially the garden-facing Cargill Lounge).

What the opening exhibitions demonstrate is the strength (and idiosyncrasies) of the Walker's permanent collection. H&deM has pulled off a difficult trick, enabling curators to present work with flair, free from distraction – which lets that collection shine – while introducing the user-friendly features the Walker required. But the social side of things shouldn't rule out contemplation, at least when the opening crowds subside.

Though the restless angularity in parts of the new addition may come to irritate some returning visitors, this vibrant building could well spark the creative cross-connections that the Walker wants. And given the respect shown to Barnes in the process, his reputation can only be enhanced.

Andrew Mead

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Jestico + Whiles has released this image of a Hilton hotel set within Foster and Partners' More London development on the Thames South Bank. The 250-room hotel, due for completion in summer 2006, provides extensive office space supported by a health club, cafés and restaurants, within a landscaped setting. The design consists of three interlinked 'strips', which attempt to mediate between the disparate contexts of the historic Tooley Street Conservation Area and More London's contemporary towers, progressing from nine storeys on Tooley Street to 13 storeys towards the waterfront.



## Insurers endorse 'homes on stilts'

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has given its backing to radical proposals to build houses on stilts in the Thames Gateway area.

Last week the Liberal Democrats demanded that new homes and businesses in the area must be built 'several feet above the ground like in Zanzibar' to prevent flood damage.

It now appears the ABI believes the proposals could work as part of a larger package to reduce potentially massive insurance claims.

Sebastian Catovsky, policy adviser on natural perils, said: 'I am pleased they have picked up on this. I think it is very helpful.'

'You can't just rely on using the planning system to reduce the costs of flood damage, because so many houses will have to be built on the flood plain. We have to think about other ways of reducing the flood risk, and by making buildings more resilient it will impact on insurance in a good way.'

According to a report published by the ABI earlier this year, the costs of flood risk caused by new developments in the Gateway area could add more than £47 million to the UK's annual insurance bill.

Lib Dem London Assembly environment spokesman Mike Tuffrey said: 'With over 85,000 homes in total planned for the Gateway's flood plains and £19 billion-worth of assets at stake, it's vital that new and innovative ways are put forward to reduce the threat of flooding.'

He added: 'Without sustained cooperation and financial backing, some new buildings in the Gateway will be in danger of turning into uninsurable and uninhabitable white elephants.'

## Medium-sized partnerships under threat from new accountancy rule

A new accounting guideline will hit architects' revenues and cause havoc to the way they manage their businesses, accountants have warned.

The Accounting Standards Board, the organisation that sets professional standards, has published new guidance that could cause serious problems for the accounts of many medium-sized partnerships.

Senior accountants have warned that architects will no longer be allowed to declare tax at intervals throughout a construction project, but will instead have to pay every time a contractor is paid.

The changes are part of the publication, *Urgent Issues Task Force Abstract 40 – Revenue Recognition and Service Contracts*, which advises on accounting for

turnover derived from contracts for professional services.

'What this means is that the accounting bodies have come firmly off the fence regarding ongoing contractual work,' Menzies Chartered Accountants' technical partner Andrew Cook told the AJ.

'Where currently work is carried out over a length of time, as in the case of architects, those offering a service might only do their accounting at significant stages, such as the submission of a planning application,' Cook continued.

'But after this abstract comes into force, it will mean architects accounting as they go along, for example, related to the amount of time an architect spends on a drawing.'

'As a result it's as unpopular

among the accounting community as it is likely to be among architects,' he added.

When the accounting standards board issues an order it immediately becomes general accounting practice.

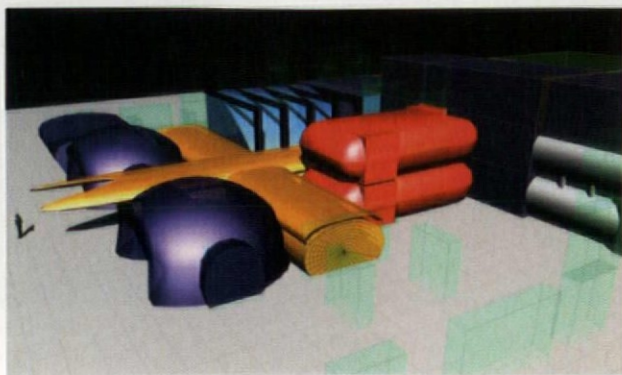
Practices that submit accounts to Companies House that do not apply to generally accepted accounting practice are likely to face severe financial penalties.

The abstract insists that, as a matter of principle, there must be no difference between the accounting required for long-term contracts and other contracts for services.

The abstract concludes that revenue should therefore be gathered as the project continues, reflecting the architect's partial completion of the contract.

Rob Sharp

### STUDENT SHOWCASE



Michael Havlik of the Academy of Art, Architecture and Design, Prague's faculty of architecture, designed the 'Diplomatic Chameleon' as his entry to the UK Czech Embassy's Architecture for Democracy competition. His aim was to create a large space that could be used in a variety of ways, based on an orthogonal modular grid, allowing the creation of different embassies for the different countries they represent.

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)







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# Kent launches legal bid over head's defection

The Kent Institute of Art and Design (KIAD) has started legal proceedings against Don Gray and the University of Kent over the ongoing crisis at the Canterbury School of Architecture.

Lawyers have instigated a civil action on behalf of the institute after the university headhunted Gray, its head of architecture, to set up a new school (AJ 7.4.05).

KIAD's acting director, David Buss, said that senior management was astonished when 'Gray announced that he was leaving just before the most important term of the year'.

Differing claims remain over whether Gray had intended to see out his notice period – which would have seen him work up to the end of the year – or whether KIAD forced him to leave immediately.

But Buss – who has internally appointed further-education specialist David Hayward as acting head of the architecture school – said Gray's decision to join the university had left the school with serious problems.

'This development was sprung on us out of the blue, with no warning, in the middle of March, and it has caused an enormous amount of concern in the student body,' he said.

'Obviously I'm not going to expand on the legal action we're

taking, except to say that, having taken a lot of legal advice, we believe we have the evidence. Our priority now, though, is to concentrate on providing architectural and interiors education for the students who have been left at the school,' Buss added.

Meanwhile, there is still uncertainty over the ARB's prescription of the school. Confusion worsened this week after it emerged that KIAD's prescription is already obtained through the University of Kent, because KIAD itself is not a university.

The ARB's head of education, Jon Levett, told the AJ the 'situation is certainly very difficult' for students in the middle of Parts I and II.

'The situation for the rest of the year is clear; prescription will remain at KIAD's Canterbury School of Architecture. But what happens next is not at all clear,' he said.

'The information that we have received is that KIAD is committed to continuing the provision of architectural education and is determined to replace the members of staff it has lost.

'But both KIAD and the university will have to submit information and we will then attempt to come to an agreement on participation,' Levett added.

Ed Dorrell

## Council ends 20-month deadlock at Bath Spa by firing contractor

The 20-month deadlock between Bath and North East Somerset Council and contractor Mowlem over the Bath Spa debacle has been brought to an end. With the words 'enough is enough', the local authority has dismissed the firm from the project.

Councillor Nicole O'Flaherty, executive member with responsibility for the spa, said: 'This certainly wasn't an easy decision. The time had clearly come when the council needed to intervene and take positive action. I see this as the end of a nightmare and the start of a new beginning.'

Despite controversy as to whether architect Grimshaw or Mowlem was to blame for faults on the spa complex, such as peeling paint and leaks across three floors, the architect has been

retained as contract administrator for the project.

A council spokesman said: 'We're not sure yet whether we will be appointing a new contractor in the same role that Mowlem filled – whether it will be one firm or a number of specialists.'

The council took direct control of the project by removing the contractor and appointing contract administrator Capita Symonds in February. It will audit the state of the building before possibly completing it using specialist contractors.

The council rejected an offer from Mowlem in March to finish the job for a reported £26 million, with the council citing a catalogue of errors, omissions and events that represented a breach of contract by Mowlem.



Carey Jones Architects has been given the go-ahead for this 18,000m<sup>2</sup> residential development in Leeds city centre. The Flax Place scheme for Oakgate Group will form part of the ongoing £37 million regeneration of the city's East Bank area. Work on site is expected to start before the end of the year and it is hoped the project will take around 18 months to complete.

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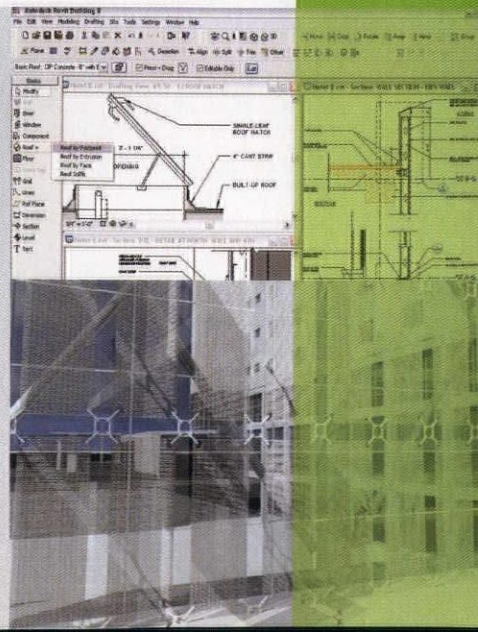
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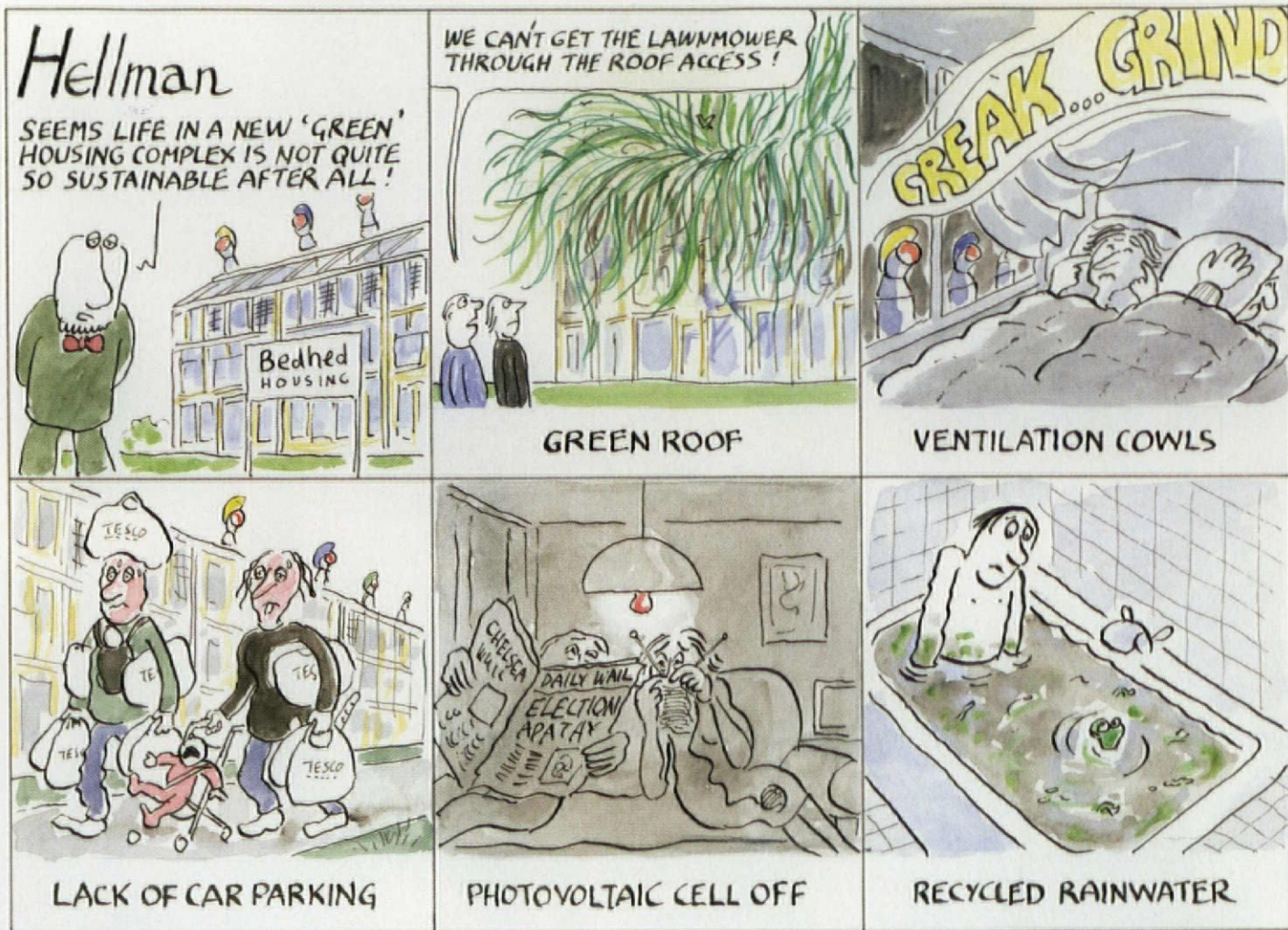
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## who said what

# 'What the devil is it?'

Tom Dyckhoff on the Casa da Música. *Daily Telegraph*, 12.4.05

**'Koolhaas takes architecture out for a walk and hides behind a tree and watches it panic'**

Hugh Pearman also on the Casa da Música. *Sunday Times*, 10.4.05

**'The British bus station is rarely glamorous. The very words conjure images of some grim, diesel-soaked, piss-streaked, fluorescent-lit hellhole'**

Jonathan Glancey on the new Vauxhall bus station. *Guardian*, 11.4.05

**'The thought crossed my mind that if I am taken there as a patient, I hope I am already unconscious'**

Katherine Heron, head of architecture at the University of Westminster, is not a fan of Llewellyn Davies' extension to University College Hospital. *Guardian*, 11.4.05

## vital statistics

- The government's education select committee has warned that the number of children struggling to read when they leave primary school is 'unacceptably high'. Academics say 120,000 children a year are falling behind.
- Drinking just one or two glasses of wine affects breast-feeding by increasing the time it takes to release milk and reducing the amount of milk women produce, a team at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia said this week.
- The collapse of MG Rover could land the UK with a £50 million bill to safeguard the company's pensions. Staff will be able to call on the industry-funded Pension Protection Fund if the final salary pension scheme is left with a shortfall.
- Numbers visiting Britain from the eight new European Union countries have risen 153 per cent year-on-year, figures released by the Office for National Statistics show. Around 88 per cent of visitors said they planned to stay for less than three months.





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## Will UK architecture ever stop wearing its learning on its sleeve?

The one depressing aspect of Duncan Lewis' buildings (pages 27-34) is that you can tell, at a glance, that they are not in the UK. It is not so much the blue hue of the skies or the dryness of the vegetation, as a certain scruffy casualness. This is architecture that doesn't wear its learning on its sleeve. For all its clever use of hydroponics, thermo-moulded plastic and elevated floorplates, it retains the thrown-together charm of the garden shed.

Take Lewis' social housing project in Valencia, which sits directly above an orange grove. The low-key execution suggests a straightforward diagrammatic response to the challenges of the site. The orange grove has specific requirements in terms of light and space. The housing is perfectly able to function seven metres up in the air. Simple.

British buildings may sit on stilts, but in a look-at-me sort of way. The landscape – or cityscape – may be 'untouched', but it is also overwhelmed. Metaphorically, if not literally, it is consigned to the shadows.

Or take the school in Alsace, which presents its clever hydroponic panels as common-or-garden clumps of moss, worn with the effortlessness with which one might throw on an old scarf. Compare this to the sedum roofs that adorn British business parks, which appear to be worn somewhat self-consciously, like a newly purchased hat.

Why is it so unthinkable that Lewis, who is British, could exercise his peculiar brand of architecture at home? Is it that our quest to control and to quantify has rendered us incapable of appreciating an aesthetic that relates to transience or bricolage? We can only recognise quality by evidence of effort. And we can only sanction architecture on the basis of certainty and permanence.

How do you issue planning guidelines and design codes for a building that starts life as a structure clad in vines and that will one day be covered in fruit. Or for a structure whose metal-framed panelled facade will eventually be devoured by the vegetation it contains?

Isabel Allen

## CABE is not responsible for CUBE's closure

Getting the public involved in architecture and design issues is a pivotal part of CABE's work. One way we achieve this is by supporting 16 Architecture and Built Environment Centres. This programme was set up in 2002 and provides £1.78 million to the network. That funding has helped it expand rapidly, so that collectively their geographical reach is about 25 per cent of the English population.

The news that CUBE in Manchester will close is therefore a setback. But there is no truth in reports that CABE has 'fallen out' with CUBE or that we have not supported the centre. We have been making a grant of £50,000 a year and, had it not been for its imminent closure, would have been providing the same funding for the new financial year.

CUBE's closure is related to a historic debt that neither CABE nor the Arts Council nor the Department for Culture could do anything about, because it would have been considered wrong to use public funds to clear up a past problem of this sort.

It is also important to stress that this is not the end of the story. Over the past few months we have been working with RENEW, the regional centre of excellence for the north-west, on an options study that will help funders make informed and realistic decisions about the way forward for an architecture centre in Greater Manchester. We are sure there is a need for one.

And CABE will be working hard to ensure that whatever emerges after CUBE will thrive.

*Richard Simmons, chief executive, CABE*

## The ARB needs holding back by a robust RIBA

It would appear from recent correspondence that in the Ian Salisbury/RIBA/ARB debate, the

ARB protagonists, in their apparent determination to personalise a serious matter, are in danger of losing the plot.

The central issue surely is the role of the ARB as intended by Parliament when passing the Registration Act in 1998. Hansard records this as being:

- 'to create a minimalistic body setting criteria for admission to the register; preventing misuse of the title architect; disciplining unprofessional conduct and setting fee levels';
- 'to reduce costs accordingly';
- 'to ensure that the Board concentrates on the core functions of registration and discipline';
- 'not to extend the functions of the board to cover financial or insurance matters';
- 'to allow the RIBA to continue in the predominant role in architectural education without the board duplicating that role.'

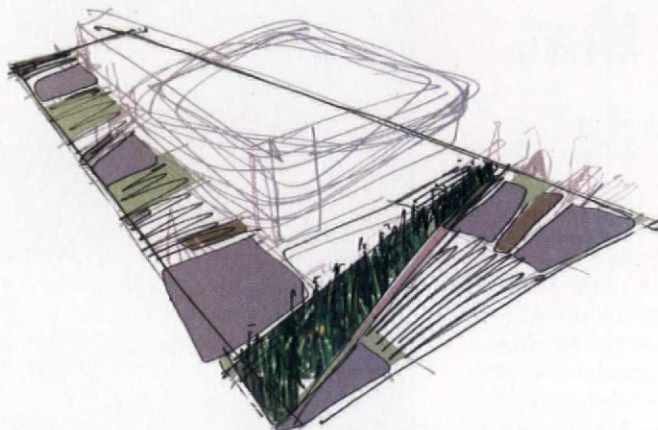
The ARB appears to have ignored all these objectives and has significantly widened its role in the process, and to fund it all has accelerated the rate of increase in the retention fee to six times the rate of inflation.

Perversely, the RIBA has not been as robust in attempting to constrain the ARB as one might have hoped, possibly in the belief that most members don't actually care. While accepting the somewhat supine attitude of many members to the activities of their professional body, I suspect this is not the case with regard to the ARB. Maybe a stronger, more cogently argued case would see more members rising to support their institute, bearing in mind the *Highton Report* survey, which showed most of the profession wanted practice and education controlled by the RIBA, not the ARB.

What was it Burke said? 'The only thing necessary for the triumph...'

*Nick Allen, Allen Tod Architecture*



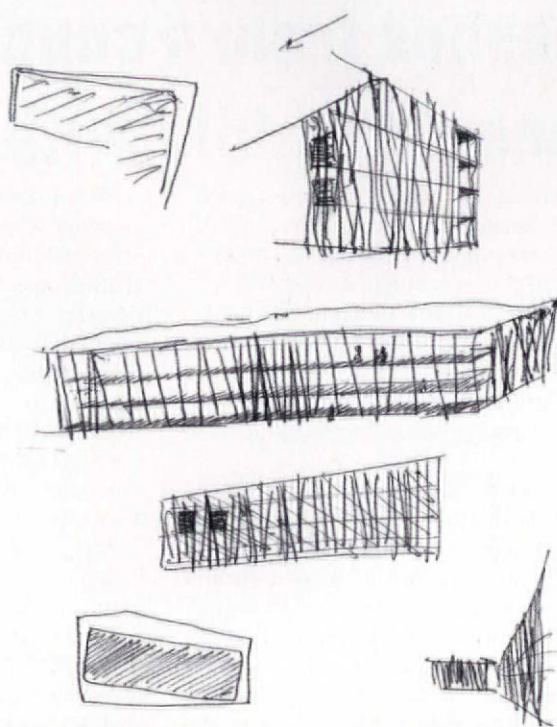


### A wider vision please, if you want inclusion

I was interested in the drawings of the Derby media arts centre and the Paris scheme (AJ 7.4.05, pages 4 and 18 respectively).

I don't claim to be an expert on architecture as I work in social research, but these images don't tell me anything about the design or detail of the proposed buildings. I am surprised to see them printed in your publication. If architects are serious about making their work accessible to a wider audience, promoting vague images such as these is misjudged at best.

*Jayne Clough, Liverpool*



### Steel windows suffered historical secrecy...

It might seem that English metal-window manufacturers are undeservedly castigated as stubborn (AJ letters 31.3.05 and 7.4.05) for the failings of architects to decide and positively instruct how to align glass sight edges in adjoining opening sashes and fixed lights.

Alignment is not correct nor wrong in every or any particular design context, but is a conscious choice to be made – by the designer. That has long been available to, and a responsibility of, architects in selecting and managing component supplies.

There have been and still will be difficulties. My recollection is that in purpose-made 'metal', or more particularly steel windows, design niceties were very well provided for, at least from the 1930s onward, by the 'Universal' hot-rolled steel section large, medium and small ranges, although less readily in

the cheaper domestic 'Standard Metal Window' ranges to BS990 and the BS1787 industrial 'Standard Sash'.

However, through decades of shortages following the end of the war in 1945, purpose-made window subcontract quotations were often rushed on preliminary small-scale drawings with skimpy, if any, quality specifications, and orders were won on sharp competitive timing as well as pricing – with price-fixing allegations engaging Parliament's attention around 1960.

Belated design rethinking was unwelcome after an order was landed on vague preliminary details, with tight time and cost allowance for shop drawings and production programming conditioned by material scarcities.

Architects had difficulty in countering discouragement, in the paucity of textbooks and traditional understandings. Joinery workshops were shown proudly

to invited visitors, while steel-window factories and details of available framing and coupling sections seemed jealously guarded secrets.

Recent AJ correspondence suggests secrecy persists, lest architects get too knowledgeable and demanding. As a side issue, domestic steel windows of the 1930s had a reputation for rusting quickly, before neglect of painting was established as the cause and galvanising accepted as essential to assure long life.

John Allan at Lubetkin's Finsbury Health Centre and at 66 Froggnal has respected the limits of meddling to 'improve' historic survivors. Making better known the design versatility there and in other newer examples might rekindle a greater market share for English steel windows.

*Dan (aka Vivian) Levett, London*

### ... but it's still possible to specify as you like

In response to 'Another missed

window of opportunity' (AJ letters 31.3.05), Giovanna Forte asks: 'Is there another AJ reader out there who can tell me why window manufacturers can't sort this out?' She was referring to the line of opening lights in glazing not lining through with the fixed lights.

The answer is they can if the specification is right. I don't know why, but architects seem to enjoy drawing glazing accentuating the opening light by not lining it with the adjacent fixed light. I don't, and I doubt anyone could guess which are the opening lights from pictures of my house.

*Richard Harrington, chief executive, Nightingale Associates*

Please address letters to the editor at *The Architects' Journal*, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, fax 020 7505 6701, or email [angela.newton@emap.com](mailto:angela.newton@emap.com) to arrive by 10am on the Monday before publication.





## Lessons from a country that doesn't meddle with medals

On returning from Zurich, I was struck by the contrast between the resplendent wealth, clarity and continuity of Switzerland (from the detail of an infrastructure of bollards to trains/signage/architecture), and London, which offers an altogether different model of continuity. Here, links with the past are made through an understanding of degrees of change, recognising difference rather than similarity.

I was recently given Sam Lambert's 1951 publication (illustrated by Osbert Lancaster) *London Night and Day: A Guide to Where the Other Books Don't Take You*. This introduction to London as a 24-hour city describes another place in another time: where bowler-hatted men walk around St James'. And yet many of the places are recognisable. Street names remain, as does much of the architecture; it's just that it has been re-clad or reinvented. Even if the architecture has gone, the street line will be familiar.

Incidentally, who honestly remembers buildings once they have been demolished? They are usually forgotten long before the new architecture emerges.

Traffic is worse, though I am advised that there are no more cars now than there were then (a fantastic statistic if true), so only the ways of the traffic engineer and an obsession with one-way systems can explain our sorry state. What stands out as different is the infrastructure that the fear and loathing of cars has called into being: the horrific signs, barriers, lights, cameras and, worst of all, traffic wardens – the latter having less to do with traffic as an offence and inconvenience than with revenge and revenue.

London deserves a medal – the RIBA's Royal Gold Medal. Such an accolade for London may sound like a stupid idea, and I would agree, but if you can give one to Barcelona, why not our capital?

The trip to Zurich also identified a new paradigm of architectural regionalism: not of materials or addressing steep slopes, but of other ways of managing cleaning regimes. How else can the Swiss build all those wonderful unbroken super-sized horizontal windows that illuminate their interiors and modulate their facades? Who cleans them and how? I don't know and I don't care. Is there no health-and-safety report demanding a rotatable pane cleanable from the interior? Are there no thermal standards?

In fact, I imagine the ever-prepared Swiss have both and a lot more, including a sense of perspective. Theirs is a generous architecture of sensible consideration rather than the rulebook. How unfortunate that the new regionalism is 'regulatory regionalism', based on rights, not delights.

Even if you accept that, to the tourist, the grass is always a little greener, the best of what we saw in Zurich reflects a more generous and intelligent attitude, one where quality is expected, desired and paid for. The late Philip Johnson's aphorism that the three key architectural criteria were 'get the job, get the job, get the job' might, you suspect, be replaced by an altogether more civilised idea about drawing details, drawing details, drawing details.

The important point is confirmation that really good architects understand that detail and the big idea are inseparable. You need one to make the other work. Indeed, the fact that you know the detail can be built might allow you a little more time to think about the idea.

And it is on this basis that the best Swiss architects are proceeding. This explains why the Swiss don't give medals to cities: they have a fundamental understanding of the metropolis as a constant, which allows them to enjoy the buildings within it.

'The best of what we saw in Zurich reflects a more generous and intelligent attitude, one where quality is expected, desired and paid for'

NVB Architects was photographed by Tim Soar at 3.05pm on 11 August 2004 in Frome, Somerset

'Our office comprises two contrasting open-plan elements: a restored Grade I-listed former Nonconformist chapel and a modern extension to the rear, which we designed. The chapel houses a thriving arts and performance space on the ground floor, with our drawing office on a mezzanine level above. The mix of art, music and architecture provides a stimulating environment for us to work in and makes a positive contribution to what we do. As I write these words after work, the saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis is practising with his band downstairs. Tim chose to photograph this space, which is used regularly for informal meetings and reviews. It occupies a commanding position at the top of the new extension and has enormous amounts of natural light and stunning views across the rooftops of Frome and onto Westbury White Horse eight miles away. We are exclusively CAD based, but there are regular creative sessions such as this, where pencil and felt-tip sketches on rolls of tracing paper are used to explore ideas and resolve design issues before they are drawn up on computer. This review process has become ever more important as the size of the office has increased from 20 to 30 staff in the past 18 months. This particular session was a review of sketch proposals for a new community centre in east Dorset, though most of our work is in the education sector.'









# Where huge numbers of anything are concerned, money will follow

**Bob Ghosh**  
Kinetic

Sixty-five years ago, when this dear island of ours was in even greater danger from continental Europe than some think it is today, with German tanks already lining the cliff tops of northern France and the French government in flight from Paris and drafting surrender documents, the British prime minister devised a mammoth gesture intended to keep France in the war at all cost.

In the event, the measure Winston Churchill proposed was dramatic, but also impossible, for it offered the French people equal citizenship with Britain, which is something like France giving Germany to Argentina. Actually, such propositions are not quite as rare as one might suppose. Unusual but not unprecedented, might be a better descriptor.

Such measures became part and parcel of the unsatisfactory settlement of the treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain that brought an end to the Great War of 1914-18, for, as part of the Peace Settlement of 1919-20, most of the states of Central and Eastern Europe were required to sign treaties or make declarations ensuring that their racial minorities would receive equal treatment under the law. These rights were guaranteed by the League of Nations, which conspicuously failed to uphold them 20 years later.

About 100 years before that reorganisation of a continent came the Louisiana Purchase, the biggest land sale in history, wherein the US purchased from Napoleon Bonaparte's France the whole of the Mississippi Valley up to the Rocky Mountains, an area of 830,000 square miles acquired at a cost of only \$15 million in 1803. Another 60 years passed before another historical anomaly came along.

On this occasion the government of Imperial Russia was eager to sell and the US government was eager to buy. By 1867 a deal had been worked

out and Alaska had changed hands for \$4 million. Then the most recent stand-off, the US versus Canada in the matter of another border dispute, was resolved in 1903 by means of neutral adjudication. The Canadian government opened its cheque book and ended a longstanding border dispute over Alaska, which was finally settled at a territorial level.

Now I am sure we all understand that this is merely speculation, all the figures are round num-

bers, surnames only and so on, but the point is that wherever huge numbers of anything are concerned, money will come tumbling after. Thus, if it was possible to buy 8,300 square miles of prime virgin plantation in America's deep south in 1803, then it would be reasonable to expect to have to pay at least double the same sum to make the same transaction 100 years later, and probably three times as much after 300 years. The difficulty, of course, would be finding a responsible client body, eager to make such a transaction, human mortality being what it is, on such uncertain terms.

Meanwhile, we have to make do with leaseholds of 999 years (already challengeable in law), freeholds that are borrowings in all but name; £5 meals in a million restaurants; and an improbable estimate of 67 million credit

cards in circulation, the grand total adding up to a much-quoted £1 trillion debt – the bulk of it consisting of mortgage and credit-card transactions.

So what can be done? Nothing could be simpler, but first we must divest ourselves of any reliance upon the remedies (chiefly, doing nothing) offered by all the parties, and rely on history instead. For example, the history of mass population movements in the 20th century. Or why not spread our net a little wider? Why not see what the going price is for equal citizenship with France on the Bourse?

'We must divest ourselves of any reliance upon the remedies (chiefly doing nothing) offerered by all the parties and rely on history instead'

**When and where were you born?**  
Leicester, 1966.

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

Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois. A truly timeless building that fits the site more perfectly than any other building on any other site.

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

The tiger prawns at Taj Bengal in Calcutta, India.

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

A blue Audi A4.

**What is your favourite film?**

*Fargo* or *The Big Lebowski*. The Coens are pure genius.

**What is your favourite book?**

*Process*; *A Tomato Project* is the one I look at most often for inspiration.

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

Probably the Citroën SM that looked like the *Pink Panther* car.

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

The White House in Washington DC, for what it represents.

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

Mies. He understood material, scale and detail like nobody else.

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

My fellow director at Kinetic, John Shakeshaft.

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

A celebrity chef.

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

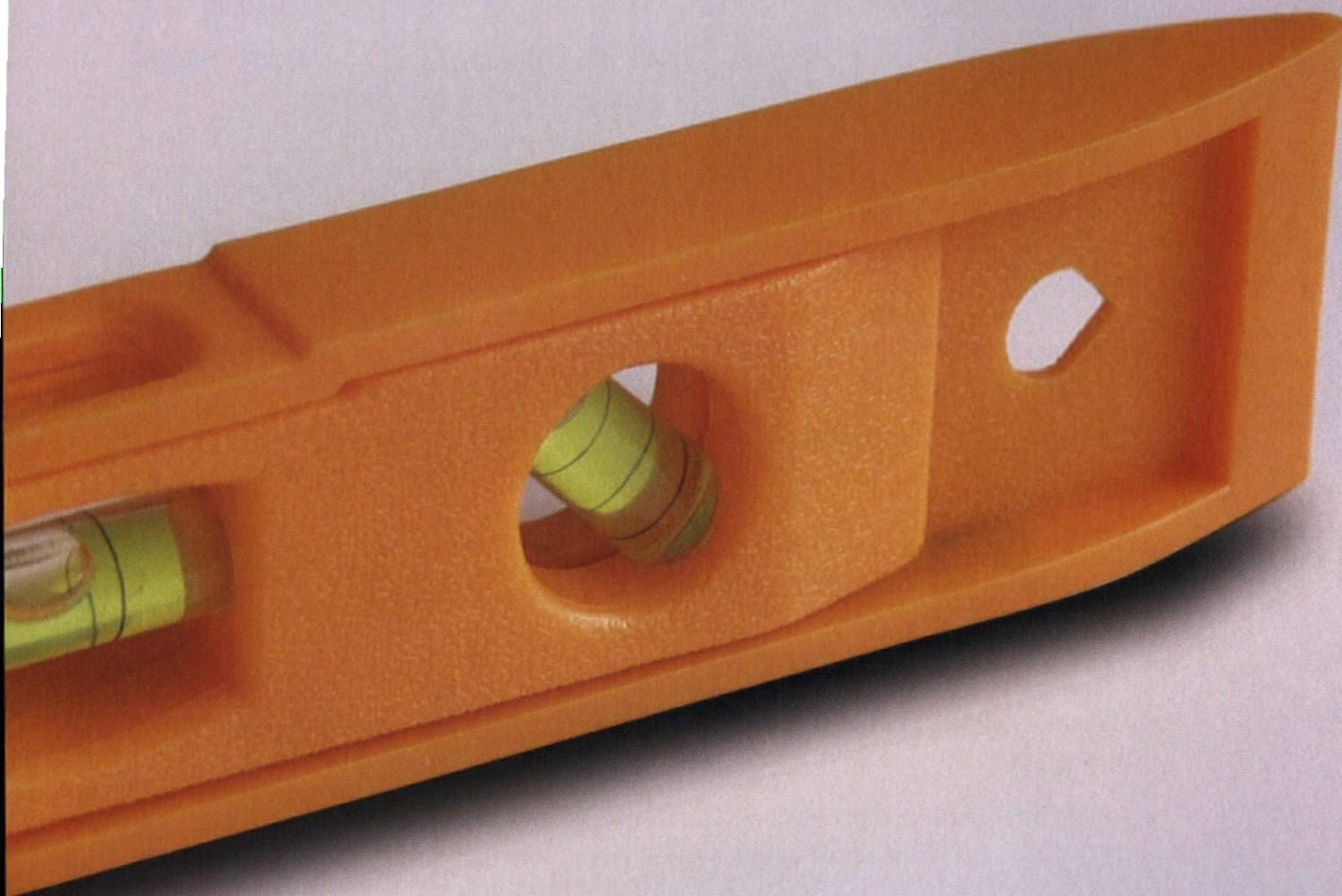
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# NATURAL GROWTH

**In their treatment of the exterior of a school at Obernai in Alsace, Duncan Lewis and Scape find new ways of integrating building and landscape, in a project that will continue to evolve**

By Robin Wilson. Photographs by Nigel Green



Details of the facade, with its hydroponic panels. Eventually, the whole outer skin of the building will be formed of plant matter, harmonising with lichens on nearby trees





Adapting found, natural materials has been a consistent tactic of site integration for the British-born architect Duncan Lewis and his Bordeaux-based studio, Scape. In previous projects this has involved either the direct use of the site's resources as building materials – the processing of found wood or stone – or more sculptural techniques, such as casting.

Studies for schemes in the Loire proposed subtle dialogues with the region's exposed geology, including its mimicry through the creation of concrete casts. In southern Norway, at the edge of the town of Fredrikstad, trees felled during site clearance provided both cladding and decorative detailing: brightly coloured tree casts in thermo-moulded plastic are seen on the facades of the school's classroom blocks (AJ 22.5.03).

The cast replicates an element of the

immediate environment, transferring it to the surface of a building, where it becomes ornament. But Lewis' use of casting was not simply some contemporary, site-specific evolution of the theme of 'rustication'. Behind it lay the idea that the relationship between architecture and landscape could be rethought at a much deeper level.

Lewis always intended that the building would express a natural and dynamic process; that it would grow, evolve and seasonally increase its degree of connectivity with its site. At Obernai, in the region of Alsace, progress in this direction has come by way of an unusual application of an agricultural technology: namely, hydroponics.

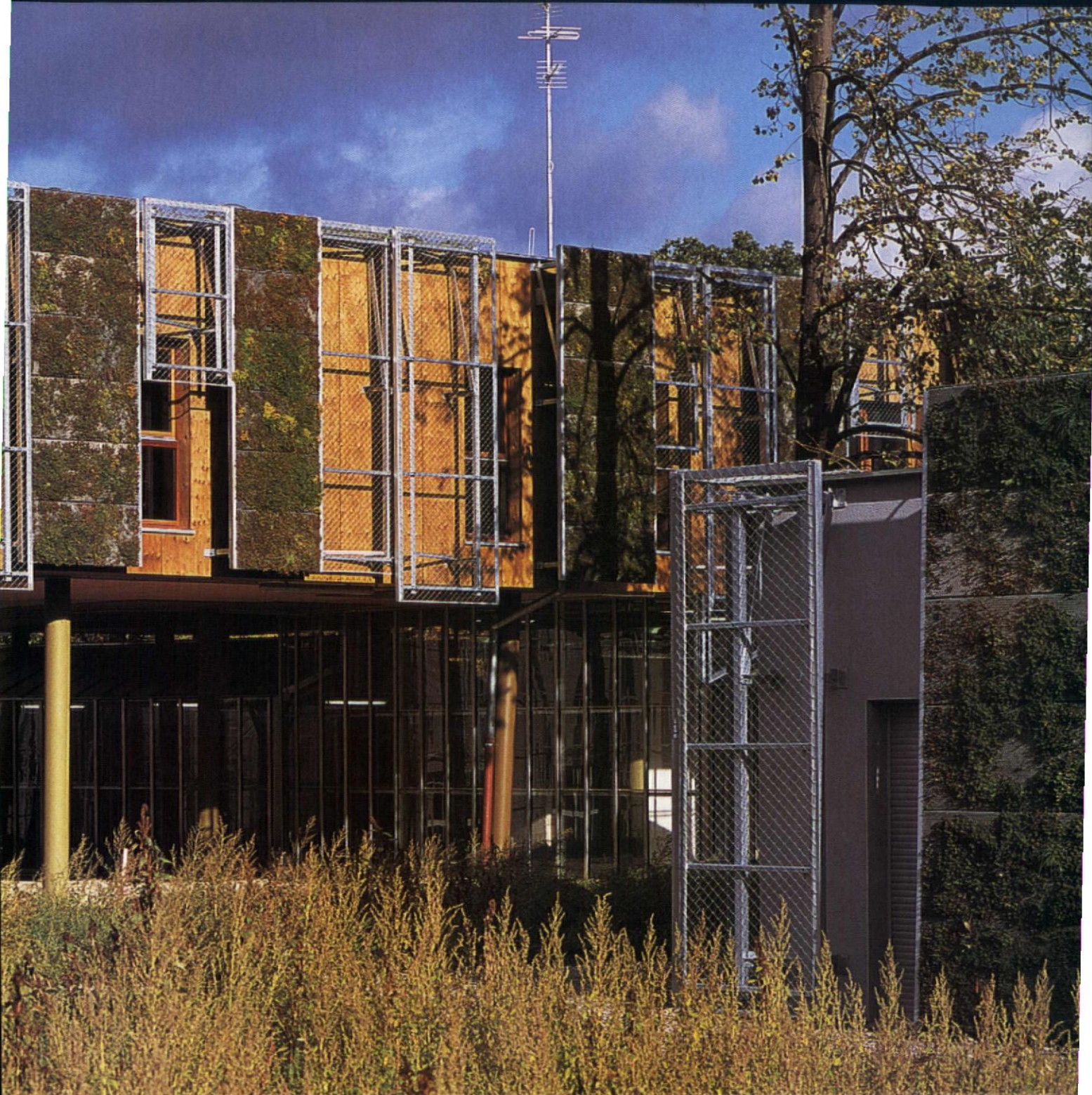
For Obernai's new school, situated on the edge of town, between garden suburbs and parkland, Lewis has moved a significant

step closer to the realisation of, as he puts it, 'architecture as ecosystem'.

Unlike the school at Fredrikstad, where Lewis was involved in all aspects of the project, at Obernai he was responsible for both the architectural and landscaping strategies of the exterior of the school, but not its interior design. This let him focus attention on a more thorough solution to the skin of the building. The vertically mounted hydroponic panels, which occur on all elevations of the school, were developed in collaboration with a company called Soprema, also from Alsace.

A full-scale prototype panel was tested on site, through all the seasonal changes of a year. The panels comprise a metal framework, which receives individual boxes of vegetation supported by a 40mm layer of soil substitute – a peat, perlite and vegetal fibre





mix. A hydroponic drip system, attached to the rear of the panels, irrigates throughout the year and introduces extra nutrients approximately every six months. In all, there are over 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of panel surface, supporting more than 50 different species of plant.

These are mosses, lichens, grasses, small Alpine shrubs, a few miniature succulents – essentially tundra species, capable of existing on meagre nutrients and shallow soil depths. Here and there, self-seeded specimens have found their way between the controlled planting and seem equally happy to root on the vertical. Grouped and positioned according to their capacity to tolerate shade, a more-or-less even degree of growth has occurred on all facades and, in general, productivity has exceeded expectation.

The frameworks are simply bolted onto

the building's inner skin – concrete in some areas, copper-sulphate treated ply-panelling in others. Metal beams support the panels away from the building at marginally varied angles and depths, giving an effect of shallow relief. The hydroponic plants will, in fact, make up only half of the facades' vegetal mass when the complex reaches maturity. Bare metal frameworks interspersed between the panels are to receive the downward growth of vines, which are planted on the roof of the school, and climbers will spread from their bases. The outer skin of the school will eventually be formed entirely of plant matter. Its maintenance will thus be gardening.

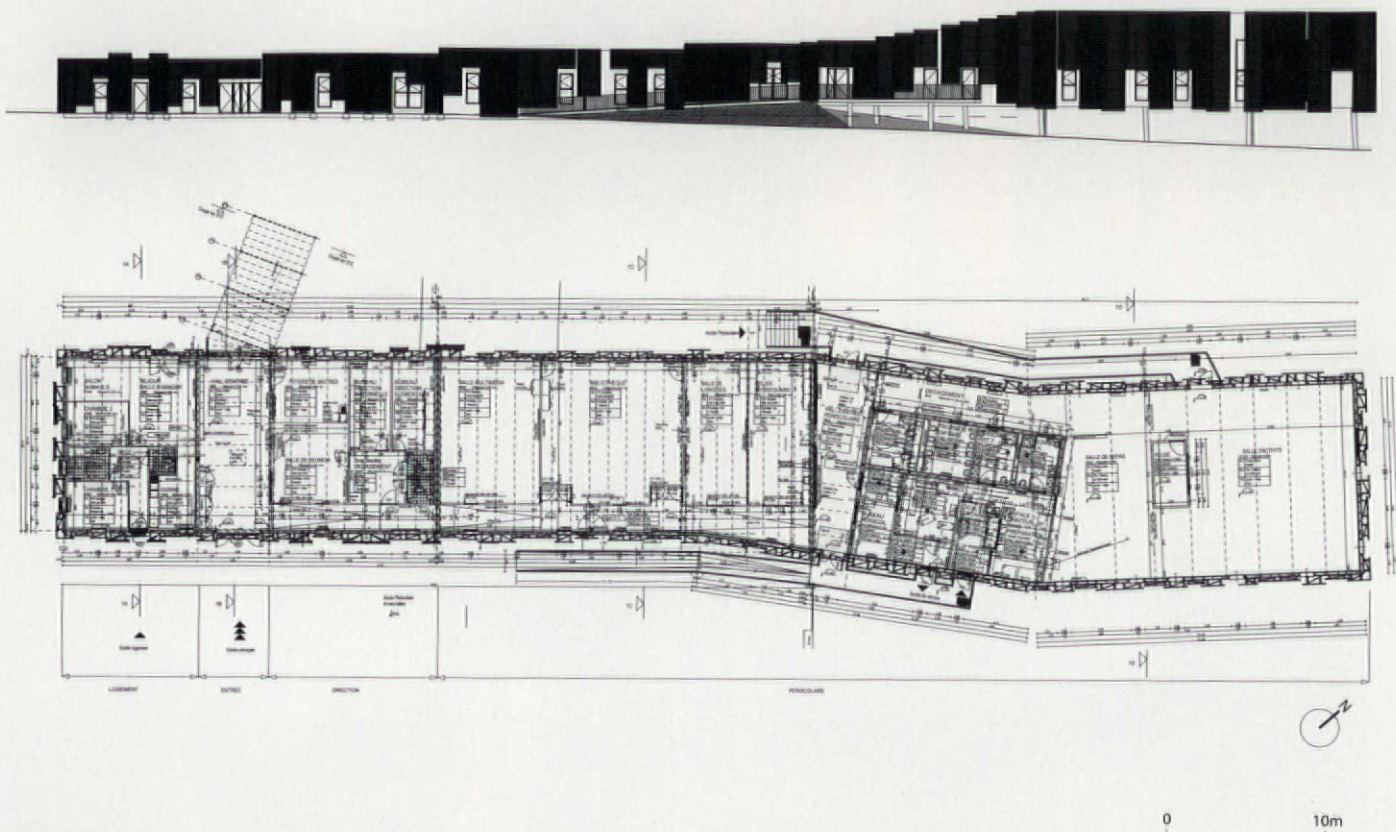
There are functional, even pragmatic aspects to the role of the vegetation. Lewis hopes that the plant groupings will be distinct enough to provide colour coding and

directional orientation for the complex. The vines and creepers will act as sun filters, and create a diversity of ambient qualities in the interior. The plant mass as a whole is expected to promote thermal inertia for the buildings.

When I visited the Obernai school, the surrounding terrain was still a building site. But seeing the building in this state demonstrates more acutely that this project is not just a question of architecture in a landscape, but of architecture as landscape reconfigured. Nature has been disturbed and reassembled with advantage. The designed, architectural 'ecosystem' both mimics, and will eventually merge with, the ecosystems around it.

The school's vertical meadows echo the lichens on the bark of the site's mature trees. A branch of one tree has been severed just short of the top of a hydroponic panel on an





**Above: plan and east elevation of the school. Opposite page: as the plants grow, the school will increasingly be absorbed into its surroundings**

elevated section of the school – from certain angles it appears to grow into it. Maintenance will undoubtedly continue to prevent such fusions, but on a more delicate level – of leaf, twig, frond and blossom – the surface area of contact between the building and surrounding plant life will increase, until ecosystems interpenetrate: the crossing of insect colonies, the sharing of parasitic plant species, cross-fertilisation.

The potential interpenetration of architecture and landscape systems is anticipated by the visual dynamic established between the building and its wider context. As one might expect, the panels disturb the distinction between foreground and background, as they have an almost identical tonal value to the surrounding landscape, and are affected by light in a similar way.

The facade also stages a complex game

with our conventional expectations of architecture. From certain views the panels make the physical limits of architectural form indistinct; from others, they appear as slices cut out of the building. When seen *en masse* from an oblique angle they even appear like mirrored surfaces, as if they were glass panels reflecting a landscape, or passing reflected views between them.

The theme of the vine runs throughout Lewis' conception of the building, informing its spatial logic and its relationship to the wider landscape, which is dominated by the wine industry. He wanted to continue the linear geometries of viticulture found outside the town into this new, municipal building at its edge. The school comprises three strips of building, running in a north-south axis, linked at the southern end by a circulatory passage formed by adapting standard

greenhouses. This tripartite division corresponds to the three communities housed within the complex: a nursery school to the west; an elementary school in the centre; and facilities for town groups and administrative and assembly rooms to the east.

Each strip relates differently to the topography of the site. The eastern section rises from ground level up on to pilotis where the ground dips toward the municipal park to the north. The central section is entirely elevated, on the same irregularly angled pilotis. To the east the building remains earthbound and, moving through it, one descends with the slope of the site.

The second phase of landscaping will increase tree density on the site, and include planting of actual rows of vines between the three linear strips of school building. In fact, the view from a hill north of Obernai shows









**Above left and right:**  
fixing the trays of  
plants onto the  
metal framework of  
the panels, which  
are irrigated by a  
hydroponic drip  
system at the rear

that Lewis is not the first to breach the boundary between town and country in this manner. A number of small plots within the town are already under cultivation as vineyards.

Lewis' use of vines has other implications, as it dissolves not just the town/country distinction, but also puts into play a number of others. It crosses the divide between the agricultural and horticultural use of plants, between practices of industrial husbandry and municipal gardening. Questions arise, for instance, about the status of the fruit of this interstitial garden. Will the yield be communal or harvested privately, or will it simply be decorative? If decorative, does one regard the rotting of the fruit on the vine as part of its decorative cycle, or does one harvest anyway to preserve the vines' neatness?

One might say, then, that Lewis' vine garden just creates dilemmas for future maintenance contractors. But those grey zones of confusion between botanical categories and

landscaping practices perhaps give glimpses of his true radical credentials. They underline the fact that his ambitions for a synthesis between architecture and landscape are not driven merely by aesthetics.

Lewis' designs ultimately address issues of habitation in the broadest sense of the term. They pose a playful challenge to our current modes of living. The school community will develop and evolve patterns of habitation and learning specific to the school's unique set of propositions.

Here, institutional conventions that separate landscape from town, recreational space from spaces of rules and control, and work from play, are questioned by a series of playful hybridisations. A school where people circulate through greenhouse passages and the building grows daily; this Obernai project is a courageous realisation of the kind of system that, until now, has been largely in the realms of speculation or fantasy.

#### **CREDITS**

##### **CLIENT**

Town of Obernai

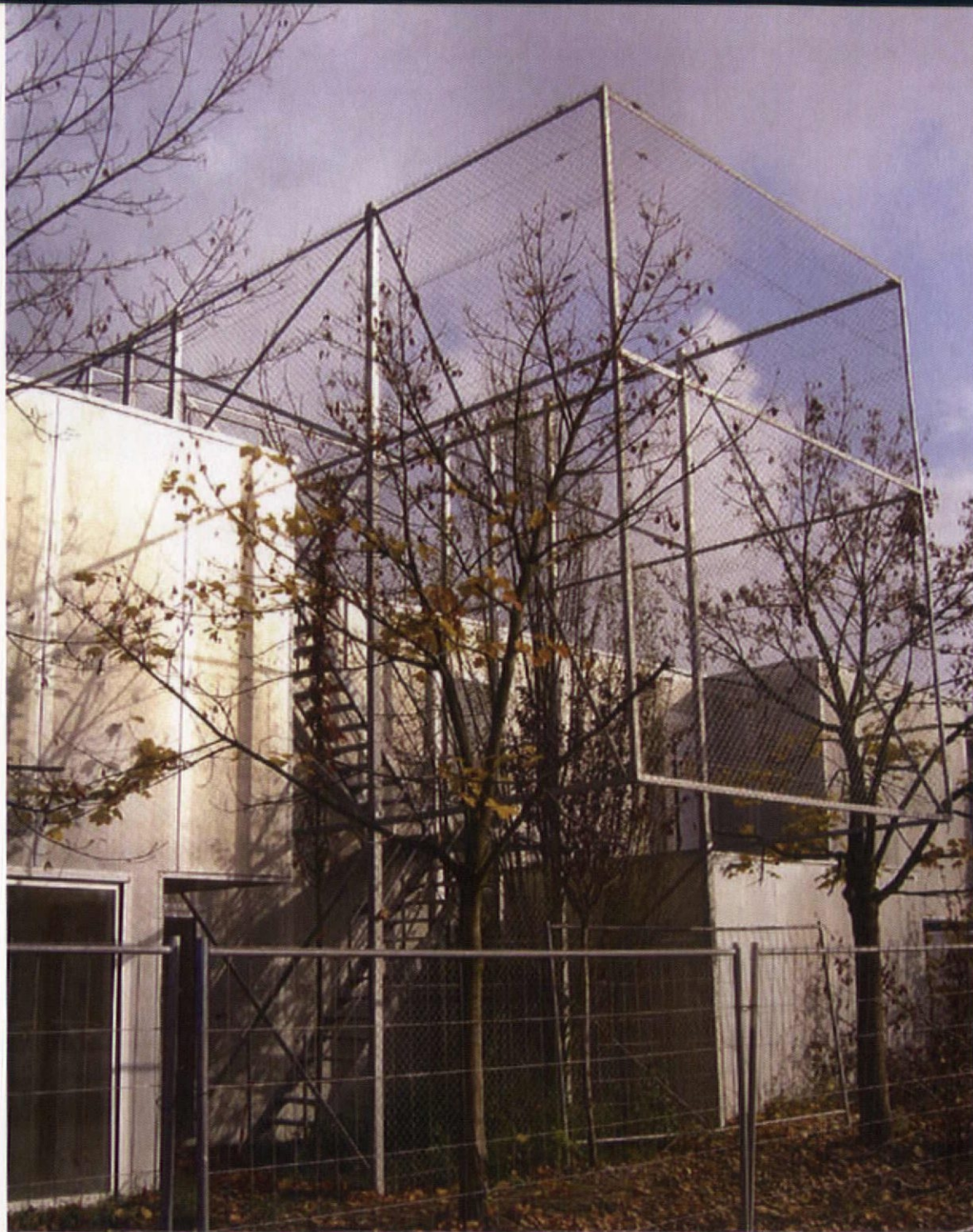
##### **ARCHITECTS**

Duncan Lewis/Scape Architecture with Klein and Baumann

##### **HYDROPONICS**

Soprema





Wire-mesh frames on the Mulhouse social housing contain tree plantations, and sometimes extend to demarcate the roof terraces



#### **SOCIAL HOUSING, MULHOUSE**

In the town of Mulhouse, south Alsace, Lewis, in collaboration with the Nantes-based group Block, is overseeing the final construction phase of a street of social housing. Jean Nouvel, Lacaton & Vassal, Shigeru Ban and Mathieu Poitevin are also working on projects for the same site. It adjoins a 19th-century workers' garden city, designed by engineer Emile Muller.

Lewis drew in particular on the way Muller surrounded clusters of dwellings with belts of garden, and how generations of residents have customised the standard accommodation to meet changing needs.

Like Muller, Lewis groups four dwellings under a single roof, but has created apartments of varying sizes, with adaptable spaces – provision for mezzanines, for example – and encourages a much greater degree of openness to the exterior. One of the apartments has a double-height bay, while

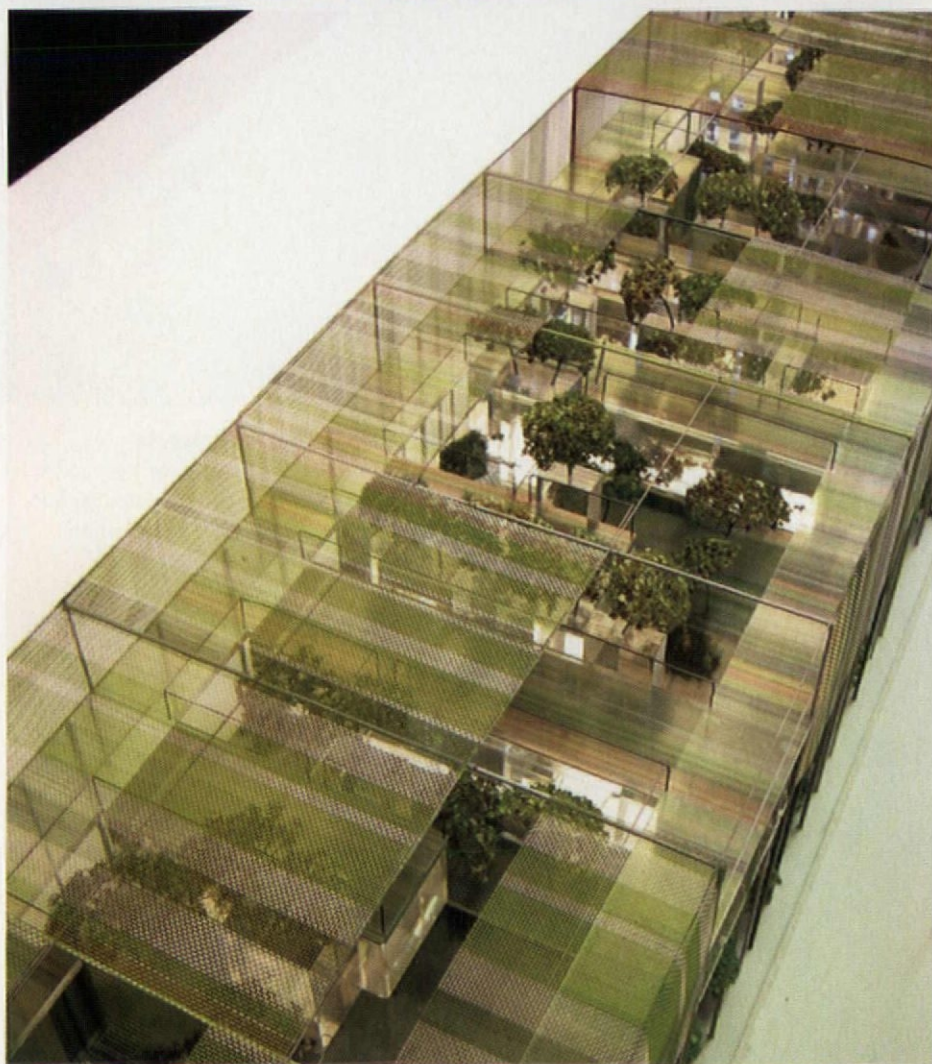
another profits from a large cantilevered room on the first floor. These blocks are then attached to wire-mesh frameworks, which contain tree plantations. Some extend onto the roof to demarcate the terrace space. Lewis foresees that the frameworks and their staircases will be customised gradually, either lightly, as terraced gardens, or perhaps more heavily, as actual extensions to the interior.





#### **SOCIAL HOUSING, VALENCIA**

Lewis has produced designs for an ambitious social-housing project for the Spanish city of Valencia. A metal framework construction will elevate communal-deck access to 7.5m above the ground. This height allows the existing use of the site – as an orange grove – to continue undisturbed. The grove will then be duplicated inside the building: 150 orange trees are to be planted on its upper decks. Inhabitants will drop down 2.5m into bedrooms from the main deck – which Lewis refers to as a 'road' – and will have access to a communal area above. The design of the latter is influenced by the local agricultural vernacular of 'cold houses', which have slatted roofs to provide shade for plants. Lewis wants to encourage a mode of living akin to camping. There will be extensive use of cheap and adaptable materials – such as agricultural netting and cane fencing – for the outer skin and spatial partitions.



**Top: living over an orange grove. Right: aerial view of model**



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## LEDs and gentlemen

Smartslab offers innovation in public-space displays – not that you'd have known it from the presentation

BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

I recently attended the preview launch of Smartslab, an innovation from Tom Barker, ex-Mind Zone, ex-Arup, and bright not-quite-so-young-as-I-once-was thing behind consultants. Forty invited guests gathered in the swish surroundings of The Hospital in Covent Garden to witness the final stages of a product that I had first seen in prototype two years ago.

For a professional gathering of putative funders and buyers alike, there was something worryingly naff about the presentation. Tom Barker is a great technologist and innovator, but public speaker he ain't; and when a hippyish, Smartslab spokesman

'When a Smartslab spokesman announced that parts of the display had been "shit", it lent a Gerald Ratner-esque quality to proceedings'

apologetically announced that parts of the presentation had been 'shit', it all lent a certain Gerald Ratner-esque quality to proceedings.

One of the problems was that nobody really saw fit to say what the product was, what its technological basis was, why it was important, what it did or how it did it. Elementary errors. It wasn't that everyone else in the room except me was in the know – as is so often the case – because two bemused BA personnel left at the same time as me and said they hadn't got a clue what they had just seen.

Funnily enough, once explained, Smartslab can be seen for the fascinating tool with imaginative potential that it really is. Given that few of AJ's readers were there – and even if you were, you would be none the wiser – allow me to explain.

### A powerful hex

Smartslab is a 600 x 600mm tile comprising two outer sheets – the front face being translucent – containing a honeycomb cross-wall centre that holds apart the two outer skins. Within this composite, each honeycomb compartment contains an array of three primary-colour LEDs, which can be adjusted to create almost any out-turn colour, intensity and hue. The light emanating from each honeycomb compartment is diffused through the translucent face of the composite to further blend the individual light and ensure a true colour spread and fixity across each isolated compartment.

Smartslab suggests that by manipulating the red, green and blue LEDs in each honeycomb compartment, 16 million different colours can be produced. These independent adjacent colour pixels (or 'hexels' as they have been dubbed from their shape),

enable pictures to be built up that can then be projected from the surface of the tile. With clever software development, manipulating the colour in each LED, moving images can be shown in each hexel, in rapid succession. Smartslab also boasts that the hexagonal design (modelled on a fly's eye) has 18 per cent finer resolution than standard square pixel designs of the same area.

### Building a picture

As tile is laid upon tile – building up a wall of the intelligent light system – the picture can grow from poor-resolution computer screen size to panoramic Technicolor vistas.

Fitting within most standard cladding and floor-grid systems, its inherent structural integrity enables it to be built up, laid flat or raked and withstand up to 5kN/m<sup>2</sup> loadbearing force. It can be used internally or externally (given that it is described as 'water and vandal resistant') and can even be configured as a three-dimensional object; for example, as a cube with different or flowing displays on each face.

As a wayfinding tool for large public spaces, Smartslab can be a directional wall sign with the potential for interactivity, or be a coloured walkway able to change colour depending on your chosen route.

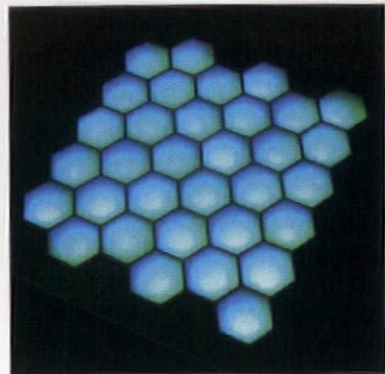
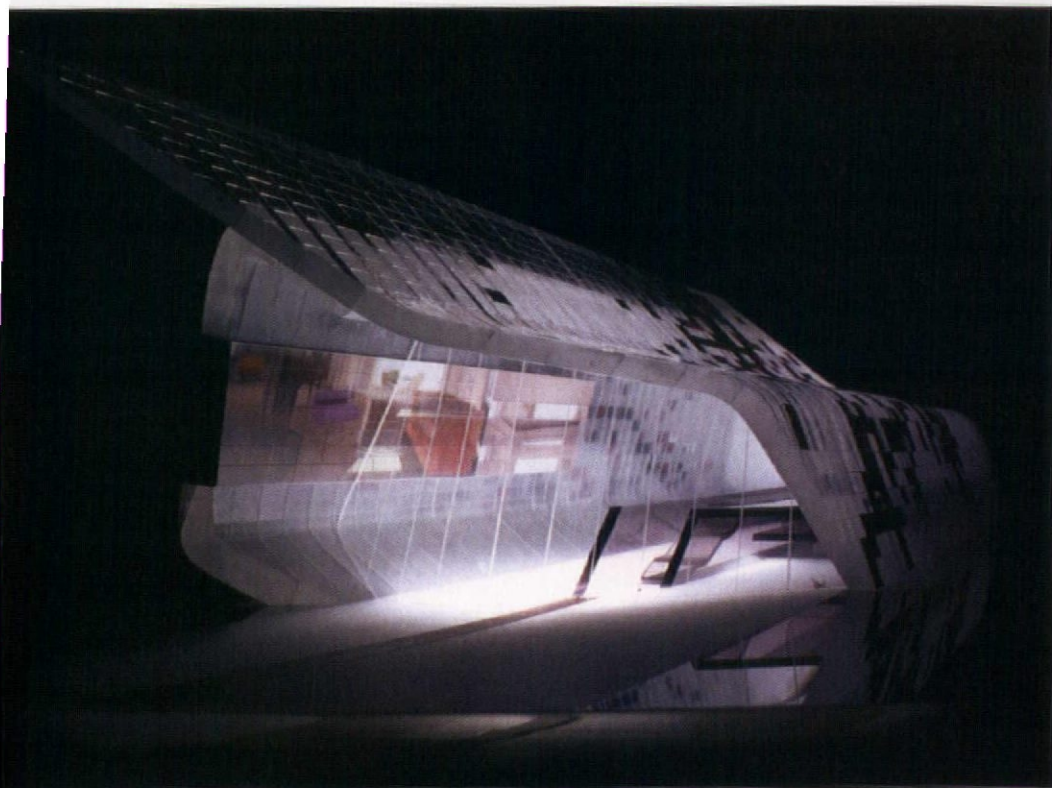
At the moment, the more tiles, the simpler the graphic capability; and the further away from the surface, the better the resolution.

One tile will support basic logos; one to three panels will support ticker-tape text; four to six panels will adequately display photo images; and anything above that will handle moving images. Although it is only time before smaller and smaller hexels will be developed, this product is currently trying to find a home in the advertising, public display, entertainment and intelligent signage market, where it is usually seen from a distance.

At the launch event, each tile was distinct from its neighbour because, as someone said, the colour modelling between the tiles had not been







Left: Smartslab was featured in the Guggenheim Museum in Tokyo. Above: each honeycomb compartment contains an array of primary-colour LEDs. Far left: 'hexels' in use

fine-tuned (we were left to guess what the undue haste had been to set up this launch). This is now being rectified and we were told that, apparently, this is simply a software issue: cleaned up, the wall of tiles will display no colour discrepancy.

One of the better images is of a stained-glass window, where, even in its current stage of development, the banding between tiles can be accentuated to look like leadwork. The LED display can then be programmed to replicate the changing subtleties of sunlight or cloud passing behind the image as the light-picture changes its intensity – even though the image is actually being projected rather than illuminated from behind.

#### Screen saver

So what's the difference between this technology and bog-standard LED display signage or plasma-screen technology? After all, anyone standing in King's Cross station cannot help but be forced to view the gigantic BBC24 screens, and a visitor to Piccadilly

Circus will recognise the simple moving LED images of Coke bottles and burger-chain adverts. Both seem perfectly adequate to the task.

In one of his lucid moments, Barker insisted convincingly that Smartslab is a major improvement on conventional LED displays and plasma screens in its affordability, potentially limitless size of application, adaptability, colour separation and resolution.

In fact, architect Jim Heverin – once again standing in for the perpetually absent Zaha Hadid – explained that Smartslab had been chosen for the blighted Guggenheim Museum in Tokyo for all of these reasons. Heverin said that he wished he had incorporated them across the entire elevation rather than just a 600m<sup>2</sup> portion of the front walls.

The next advance, already being developed, is with a 'heightened reality' sound system being developed by Illustrious, the proponents of surround-sound immersive acoustics. There is no reason why the tile

itself could not become the speaker, offering highly targeted, directional sound direct from the image centre (see reference to FeONIC in AJ 12.8.04, page 39).

Bizarrely, given that the tiles are vandal-proof, there is also a potential 'finger-painting mode' in development that will allow people to activate the LED light source by simply touching the tile, thus bringing graffiti artists in touch with modernity and, presumably, doing a little bit to reduce ozone emissions from aerosols.

To be generous, most of the presentations at the launch had to be vague due to the newness of the technology and the fact that industrial espionage is a very real worry for young inventors. But suffice to say that, clear or not, Smartslab is an exciting product that can only get bigger and better. It is one of the rare inventive British technologies for the 21st century. An impressive advance – however badly it is explained.

For more information on Smartslab, email [info@smartslab.co.uk](mailto:info@smartslab.co.uk)





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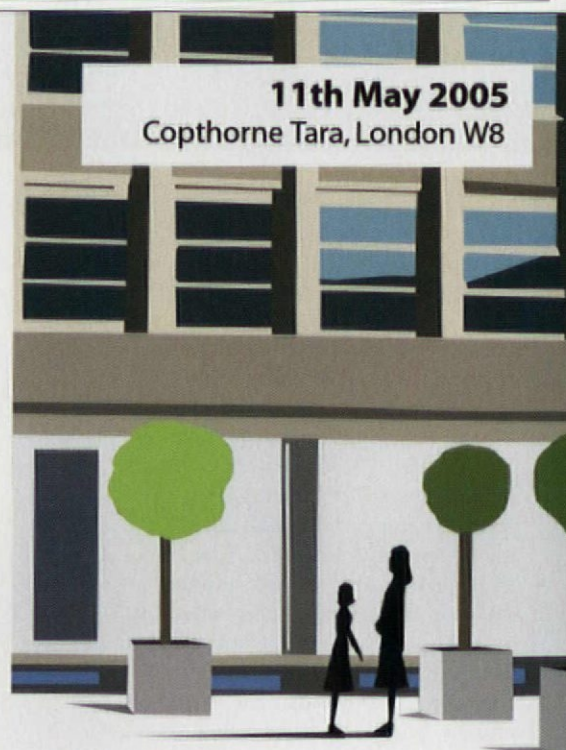
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## Friends of the earth?

Transport myths, wine-growers' predictions and Marxist termite mounds: Designing for Sustainability had them all

BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

I had arrived at 8.30am in the RIBA's Jarvis Hall, as I had done on innumerable occasions, to have a pre-conference coffee and digestive. I was unfashionably early.

I checked in and, again, as on innumerable occasions in the past, they apologised for not having my badge ready and wrote me another one. As I sipped my coffee and read through the delegate pack – about medical ethics – it dawned on me that I was in the wrong venue. In a change to usual practice, the conference I was registered for, Designing for Sustainability, would be starting in 30 minutes in Piccadilly. My motorised dash across London would undoubtedly be considered unsustainable, but I arrived in time, wheezing dangerously high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and with my armpits a clear 5.8°C above 1990 levels.

### Planning for change

Chairman Paul Finch, recently elevated to editor of the *Architectural Review*, roused everyone with his charge that generic specification – or product substitution, as he called it – was effectively saying: 'I don't care what we use.'

**A bit creaky and not as efficient in construction as the hype has previously suggested: Claire Bennie put the boot into Bill Dunster's BedZed**

He insisted that a useful point to get out of the day was to try to clarify responsibilities, and for architects to realise they were in a position to take a lead on matters of sustainability. 'A meaty court case where someone is prosecuted for the damaging effect of their choice of materials would do a world of good,' he said.

Chris Twinn, leader in Arup's building-engineering sustainability group, outlined the legislative and financial framework driving sustainability. He said: 'The whole basis of the planning system is now premised on sustainable development.'

Caricaturing those who do not agree with the simplistic claims of the dangers of global warming as diehards versus the devotees who have seen the light, Twinn charted a middle 'balanced' course of mainstream application to look at reaching a reduction in 'resource consumption' to around 20 per cent of current standards. To avoid 'dangerous interference with climatic systems without sacrificing economic development requires 50-70 per cent reduction in global greenhouse gases,' he said.

Romping through the somewhat

intimidating guidance documentation, he alighted on The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, which will become law in January 2006. This will require designers to implement a common methodology for calculating their buildings' energy performance, which is to be monitored by independent experts, and for energy-performance certificates to be displayed in public buildings.

For all buildings with a cooling capacity of over 12kW (a figure so small as to encompass almost all buildings) an inspection shall assess the 'air-conditioning efficiency and the size compared with the cooling requirements of the building. Appropriate advice shall be provided to the users on possible improvement or replacement of the air-conditioning system or on alternative solutions.'

Twinn also drew on social-policy requirements to illustrate his point. In suggesting we all use too many 'resources' (although this was not defined), he noted we could have perfectly 'wholesome' showers with half the water capacity of a power shower.

An unquestioned point raised in Twinn's presentation was that if, as he stated, the UK will have the climatic conditions of Marseilles by 2080 (a 'statistic' generated from British wine producers, not the most independent source of meteorological data), is the headlong rush to higher insulation standards going to result in stiflingly hot houses in the future?

### Language problems

Claudine Blamey gave a rather stilted presentation about how, for property-investment company British Land, the 'primary goal is to increase shareholder value, and one of the key ways of doing this is through implementing sustainable processes – sustainability is the foundation stone of our company's future.'

Words like 'transparency', 'responsibility' and 'early consultation' peppered her speech, although there were other phrases, like 'we're doing the right thing and coincidentally avoiding having our name splashed across the papers for using timber from unsustainable sources'.

However, her presentation of a bog-standard commercial development as the paragon of renewable



energy virtue, complete with some leftover space described as a 'sustainable piazza', left me unconvinced. It worried me that some of the discussants might be trying to sidestep criticism by clinging to an all-purpose defence of sustainability.

Andrew Wright of Andrew Wright Associates got things back on track with some exciting schemes and a discussion of the architecture without much use of the 's' word.

These schemes were presented in their own terms, like a confident final-year crit. He talked of 'buildings finding their own expression' and asked whether the architecture 'added to life and enjoyment': admittedly slightly studenty and hedonistic, but refreshingly so. He spoke about reducing energy bills, rather than the more moralistic concept of reducing energy.

While his slide into 'intelligent design' and the old Marxist termite mound cliché left me cold, it was all a rather engaging cross between Bruce Goff and Bill Bailey.

Paul Hyett, as always, is great fun. Provocative and challenging, complimentary and endearing, he asserted that, by using more and more technology, 'instead of alleviating human suffering we are intensifying it'. His brand of populist 'science' was backed up by tabloid photographs of floods,

'The great transport myth, that it is good to deny people access to personal mobility, is simply asserted by the great and the good who don't actually live there'

forest fires and tornadoes, which were apparently marshalled to the defence of his claim that we are knowingly leaving this planet 'in a worse condition than when we inherited it'.

Hyett's critique of the parlous state of healthcare buildings was informative. More efficient construction was imperative, he suggested, given that healthcare facilities are the least sustainable building types and that there are 87 schemes in development.

He ended on a melodramatic quote from Lord Ezra: 'Time is running out.' How true. We broke for lunch.

### Wacky phrases

Receiving the moral baton, Laurie Chetwood, chairman of Chetwood Associates, said his work was all about 'helping the cause'. The rallying vision included a scheme with just 19 car spaces for 248 units in Brighton, which we were all meant to applaud because 'as you see, it's a pretty sustainable agenda'.

'Triple bottom lines' were interspersed with 'psychosocial DNA' graphics; 'success-driven strategic enterprise' was mixed with 'deliverability' indices; and 'multi-dimensional frameworks' flowed into 'eco-templates'. The schemes were perfectly pleasant, but he was second only to Alan Thomas from the BBA for an indulgence in Google-search graphics downloads. It was not research and I began to wonder how many people actually talk like this.

The most engaging presentation was by Claire Bennie, a research manager at the Peabody Trust. She presented a critique – or an audited report-back – on Bill Dunster's BedZed development. This was a refreshingly honest appraisal of a rarely criticised project.

The problems were many, she said. The much-vaunted density – an automatic sustainability point-scorer – has a detrimental effect on residents' privacy. By designing for solar orientation, the gable ends had been presented to the street instead of a more humane frontage.

The green roof spec was reasonable, but not installed very well, leading to 'difficult to locate' problems. Residents were actually annoyed about the lack of car parking. This last issue is very interesting and challenges a great

transport myth, whereby the idea that it is good to deny people access to personal mobility is simply asserted by the great and the good who don't actually live there. Residents wanted car parking spaces primarily for family and friends, a demographic often ignored by social sustainability pundits.

Bennie continued: there were 'lots of teething problems with the wood-chip CHP', not least the practicalities and cost in removing a 'great big pile of ash to landfill every month'; acoustic problems between flats are exacerbated because of the ventilation stacks; the feature cowls creak when they turn into the wind; the green roof run-off is 'contaminated' and Thames Water will not allow its use (plus it gets too much run-off and have to throw lots of it away).

Still not finished, she went on: the reclaimed timber incorporated lots of wastage because it wasn't sized to suit the job, and some residents complained about its quality. Reused steel was oversized because of limited availability, but it was deemed worth it to minimise the embodied energy – and then it had to be shipped 'half-way round the country to be painted'. Her final admission about the photovoltaic cells, that 'we're not getting much electricity, to be honest' and that 'it costs about 17 per cent more for "greenness"', was a fascinating rollercoaster ride through the realities of a sustainable project.

She said where post-occupancy manuals ask such things as 'did more birds come to visit our green roof?' it should be 'time to stop the green-wash'. For all the radicalism, Bennie was keen to reclaim sustainability from the bullshit – suggesting, for instance, that amending people's travel patterns is the biggest factor to be addressed. 'It is,' she said, 'only a limited amount of social engineering that we can do.'

This suggests she is not averse to curtailing liberties for 'the cause'. Even so, her presentation was entertaining and challenging. That she has simply challenged people to fine-tune their sustainability audit criteria may not be as radical as it seemed at the time, but, all the same, it is a first-class argument.

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- Sustainable and Secure Building Act 2004
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
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# Spring clean your finances

Keep abreast of your financial planning by following our simple guide to wills, insurance and investments

BY LOUIS BAKER

The typical approach to financial planning among architectural partners tends to be a combination of evasion, blind panic and then frustration at loss of control, poor performance and mountains of incomprehensible paperwork. To avoid the false security of keeping one's 'head in the sand', a sensible, planned, methodical approach must be adopted. So where to start?

Working backwards, it is essential that the partners have an up-to-date will. Consider how you would want your estate to devolve: it is unlikely that the rules of intestacy (how the law dictates your estate will devolve in the absence of a will) will mirror your wishes.

How will your spouse's/partner's will and yours interact with successive death? Again, it is even less likely that intestacy rules will be what you both want. Getting a lawyer to draft the will will cost a bit, and you will need to develop and adjust your plans in consultation with your spouse and for tax efficiency, but it will be worth it.

## Wife and servants

All too often we simply have insurance terms imposed on us when taking out a mortgage, or through the firm's employment or partnership 'package'. Considering this afresh when planning a will highlights whether you need an income stream in your absence; perhaps a capital sum to pay for a nanny annexe in your spouse's absence; or even term insurance to pay the nanny. Perhaps all three for your children's guardians in both your absences.

You might discover a forgotten account doing nothing; the odd PEP, TESSA (now TOISA) and ISA. Perhaps some privatisation and demutualisation shares. Those too busy to plan deposit accounts can have built up substantial balances.

'If you are not working, it takes a sizeable investment portfolio to generate an income of £37,000'

Add them all up to see what rainy-day fund is tucked away.

But on top of that, where should the rest be held? Can aggregating them boost the return? Should it all be in cash, or is it time to buy a spread of equities? Are those demutualisation shares now ones that you would choose to buy if you did not already hold them? With the mix determined, how should you hold them?

ISAs are free of income tax and capital gains tax (CGT), but they do have annual charges. Don't just buy one for the tax break – decide how you want to hold your funds first and then check that there is a suitable ISA to match your needs.

## Espousing the benefits

Differential tax rates become a factor to bear in mind. Presumably, as a higher-rate taxpayer you will have extra tax to pay on your bank interest, income and dividends. Your spouse is able to have taxable income of approximately £37,000 before becoming a higher-rate taxpayer.

If you are not working, it takes a sizeable investment portfolio to generate investment income of £37,000. In many cases, tax will be saved if shares and deposit accounts are held in the name of the non-working or lower-earning spouse. There is also a clear need for a non-earning spouse to agree on any long-term financial plans.

Essentially, decide on the level of risk you are prepared to take with your savings and then decide on the vehicle – again, a tax-efficient one such as an ISA, if it matches your overall criteria, may be attractive. When it comes to planning for retirement, the issues are the same. How much will you need, in the form of income and in liquid capital? Pension funds are tax-efficient, but at the expense of some

restrictions. Ideally, pension funds should be balanced with other long-term asset holdings to provide some financial flexibility in retirement.

Once you have gone through this 'spring clean' exercise, you will be able to identify the extent to which you have surplus income or capital to invest in 'riskier' investments. See the box below for a flavour of what is available. If you are considering this, make sure you understand the product (not just the marketing spin) and the risks involved.

The spring clean is now complete. Break down the exercise and it can be achieved in easy steps that are not too daunting. And once you have established your financial planning base, it is far easier to update and develop as life, family and business circumstances change. There is therefore no excuse not to turn over a new leaf.

*Louis Baker is head of partners' tax in the professional practices group of Horwath Clark Whitehill. Tel: 020 7842 7100*

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## Adjudicators could be given the power to decide jurisdiction

At last! The Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) consultation paper on amendments to the payment and adjudication provisions of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 has arrived, writes *Kim Franklin*.

The original timetable for Sir Michael Latham's review of the Act envisaged that consultation would take place in October 2004 and any necessary reform proposed by spring 2005.

The roadmap diverted sharply on the presentation of Latham's report, when construction minister Nigel Griffiths gave a prompt response to some aspects of the review, but then stalled the general consultation.

These delays and the impending general election prompted some commentators to wonder whether the review was to go ahead, or whether all the good work of the payment and adjudication working groups would be forgotten by the new government/chancellor/construction minister.

Such thoughts were scotched on 22 March, when the DTI released its 120-page paper. Perpetuating the original theme that problems with the payment regime prompted the review, the document rejoices in the title *Improving Payment Practices in the Construction Industry*.

But dig deep and you will find the proposals for adjudication lurking in the final chapter.

The intention is to enable parties to construction contracts to reach agreement on what should be paid and, where they cannot agree, to make an informed referral to adjudication. Reference to adjudication is intended to be made without the disincentive of unnecessary challenge. The proposals are intended to simplify the payment provisions by defining what is meant by 'an adequate payment mechanism' and requiring withholding notices to provide details of the remaining amounts. These proposals are welcome, not least because the payment provisions are a mismatch of logic, defying requirements on time periods, dates and notices.

There are no proposals to change the scope of the Act. This was to be expected after the minister's prompt response of October last year. Thus the present exclusions for residential occupiers,

PFI and process engineering will remain. Equally, the Act will continue to apply to contracts for architectural and engineering services. The contentious entitlement to refer disputes 'at any time' does not even get a mention.

There are no proposals to amend the requirement that a construction contract be 'evidenced in writing'. The statutory definition of what amounts to evidence in writing gave rise to some confusion, exacerbated by court decisions, including the Court of Appeal's decision in *RJT Consulting v DM Engineering* (2002).

The DTI is considering five proposals intended to encourage the use of adjudication:

- preventing the payment of sums awarded into 'trustee stakeholder accounts' pending litigation, other than when the recipient is insolvent;
- empowering adjudicators to rule when their jurisdiction to act is challenged;

- enabling adjudicators to overturn 'final and conclusive' decisions such as final certificates;

- extending adjudicators' immunity to claims by third parties; and

- requiring adjudicators to be both impartial and independent of the disputing parties.

The potential power to decide jurisdictional challenges is perhaps the most

interesting. Hitherto, while adjudicators have been able to express a view as to whether a contract is a construction contract as defined by the Act, and whether they are therefore entitled to act as adjudicator, such views were non-binding. The unsuccessful party was able to challenge the adjudicator's jurisdiction when contesting enforcement in court.

Empowering adjudicators to decide jurisdiction would reduce the number of contested enforcements. It would also oblige adjudicators to decide the very legal issues the courts have struggled with since the advent of the Act.

Do adjudicators want that responsibility? Would you want them to have it? Get a copy of the paper at [www.dti.gov.uk/construction/hgcra/hgcralead.htm](http://www.dti.gov.uk/construction/hgcra/hgcralead.htm) and respond to the DTI. *Kim Franklin is a barrister and chartered arbitrator at Crown Office Chambers. Visit [www.crownoffice-chambers.com](http://www.crownoffice-chambers.com)*

## Microsoft sees no threat from Linux upstarts

This column has always advocated a broad and sceptical view of computers and computer systems. All right, not always the Mac. But it is interesting to see how the corporate-government world is cautiously toe-in-watering alternatives to the Evil Empire, aka Microsoft, such as beginning to install the relatively safe Firefox in place of virus-not-unfriendly Internet Explorer, and Linux in place of Windows.

Regular readers will remember my toying with Mandrake Linux and the free alternative to MS Office, Open Office. I condemned the latter only on the trivial (to non-journalists) grounds of its difficult-to-find word count. I installed Mandrake, but got bogged down with the internet connection.

Firefox take-up around the globe has reduced Explorer's share to less than 90 per cent: still a massive percentage but the analysts are getting anxious.

The UK has remained loyal to Microsoft. Until now. Last week the government set up the Open Source Academy. It seems to follow a report (read it at [www.ogc.gov.uk/embedded\\_object.asp?docid=1002367](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?docid=1002367)) that says: 'Open Source software is a viable and credible alternative to proprietary software for infrastructure implementations, and for meeting the requirements of the majority of desktop users.' The italics are mine because although Linux is already used widely in the server world, it has hitherto been deemed a tad novel for desktop users.

So now the Open Source Academy, according to eGov Monitor, 'will develop new operating system (OS) business applications designed for local government, targeting areas where alternatives to proprietary software are lacking. Among its other plans are to carry out large-scale case studies of OS use, including a study of the relative security of an OS solution compared with a Microsoft desktop infrastructure.'

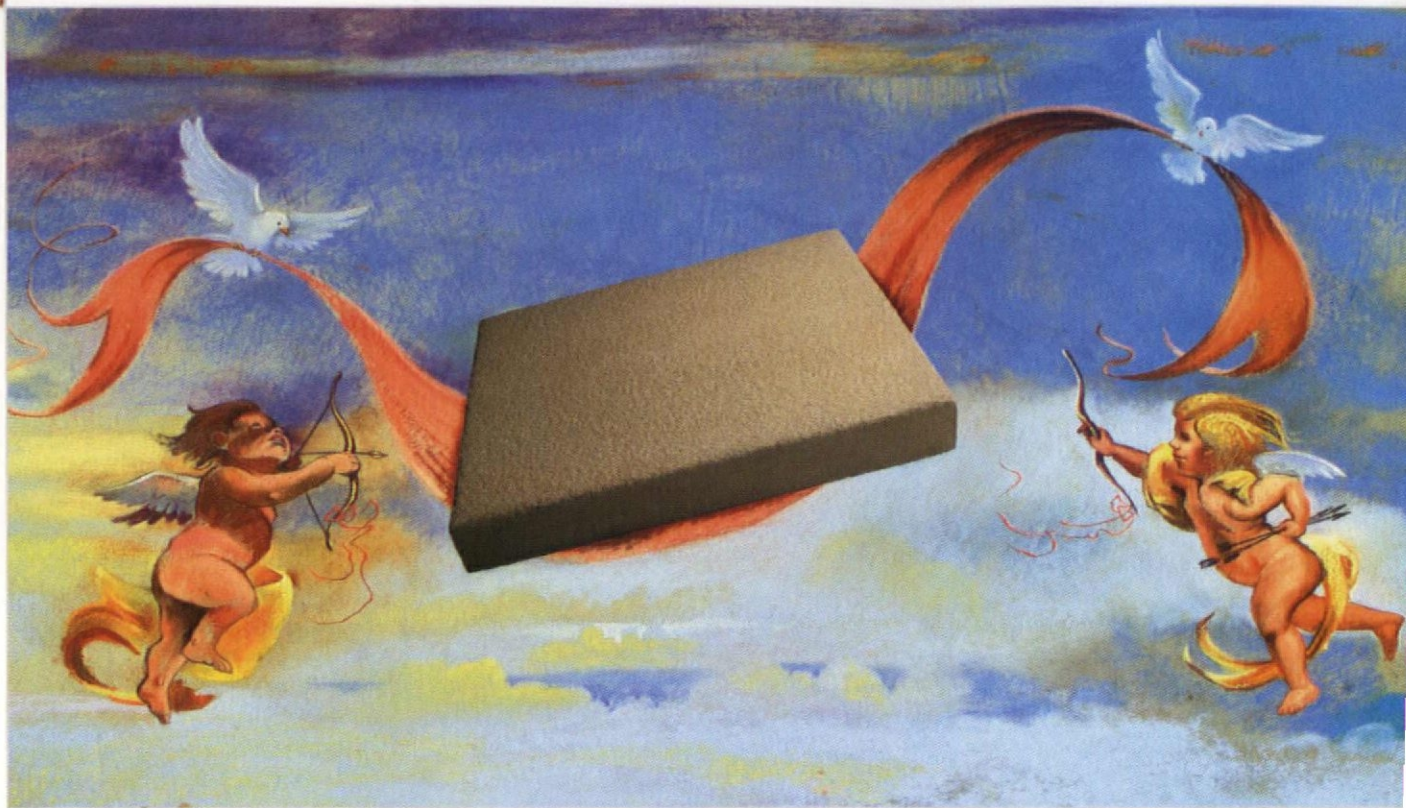
This is a government-backed initiative. Microsoft must be breathing a sigh of relief.

*sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com*

'Empowering adjudicators would reduce the number of contested enforcements'



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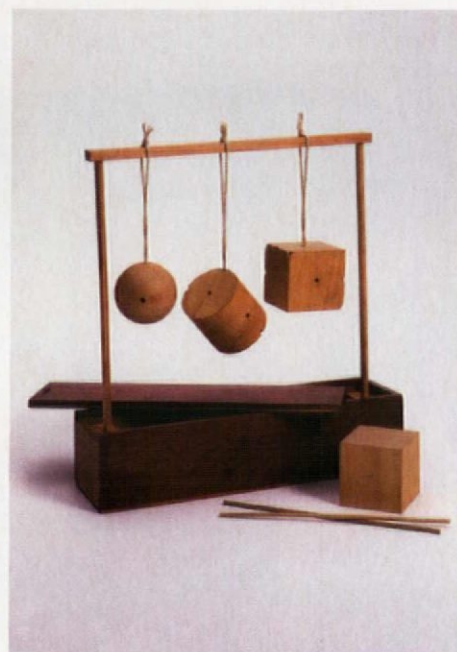
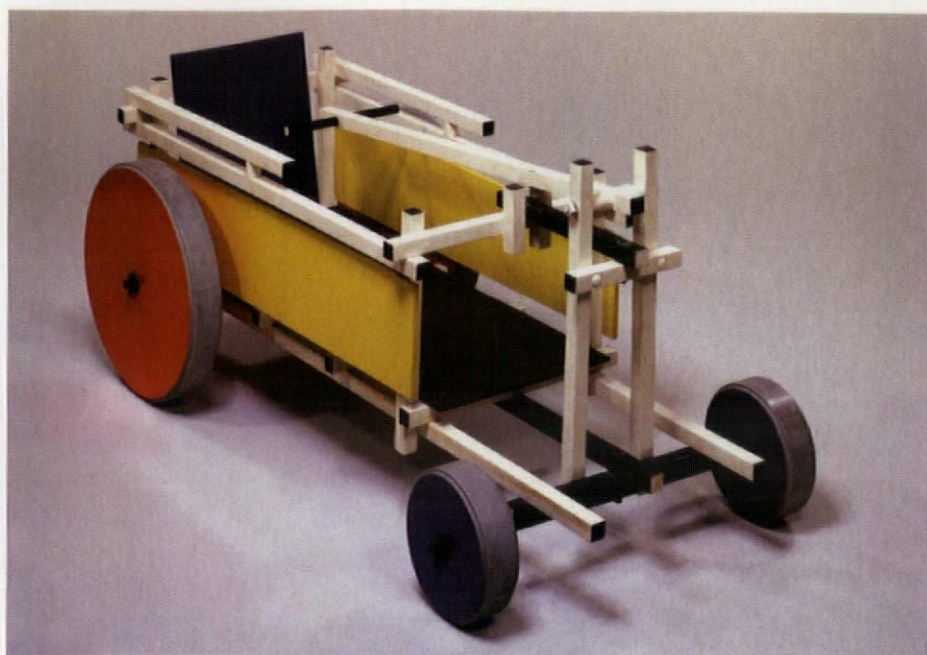
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## Child's play

ANDREW MEAD

**Only Make Believe: Ways of Playing**

At Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until 5 June

A recurring theme in studies of Frank Lloyd Wright is the influence of Friedrich Froebel's teaching tools, which Wright played with devotedly as a child. 'The smooth shapely maple blocks with which to build, the sense of which never afterward leaves the fingers: so *form* became *feeling*. And the box with a mast to set up on it, on which to hang with string the maple cubes and spheres and triangles,' he writes in *An Autobiography*.

Froebel called these teaching tools 'gifts' (there were 20 of them in all), and they feature in the first room of 'Only Make Believe' – a new exhibition in Stanton Williams' galleries at Compton Verney, curated by the novelist and critic Marina Warner. As well as the suspended cubes and spheres, there are boxes of little coloured rods and papers for folding and cutting – materials that children would manipulate with increasing sophistication as they followed the 'occupations' that Froebel suggested.

The theme of this first room is 'Creating Forms', its exhibits including such basic elements as the 10 wooden cubes, finely graded in size, that make up the educationalist Maria Montessori's 'Pink Tower'. Playing with this would foster manual skills along with a feeling for proportion, while children would be free to arrange the cubes in many different

ways. Rather more prescriptive is *The Little Architect* – a booklet of circa 1920, with a kit of parts to cut out and assemble into a miniature building.

There are examples here of architects designing for children – Rietveld's Beach Buggy of 1918, a mobile cousin to his Red Blue Chair, and Ernő Goldfinger's 'alphabet playtray', where the infant's task is to slot each wooden letter into the right-shaped recess. Also on display is a 1942 drawing by Goldfinger, showing 'a typical modern type of urban enclosure': an idealised scene in which mother and child play harmoniously on a sunlit terrace, against a backdrop of green space and housing blocks – Ernő's utopia.

More contemporary is 'a doll's house for a new era' – the Kaleidoscope House (2000) by artist Laurie Simmons and architect Peter Wheelwright, which has walls/windows of multicoloured translucent plastic, that slide to make it less routinely cellular than it seems at first.

'When seeking new forms, our path is first irrational, then increasingly rational,' says a text on the wall, quoting Bauhaus teacher Gertrud Grunow. But the emphasis in this first part of the show is definitely on the rational – on play as a means by which children situate themselves in the world

physically and eventually make an ordered contribution to it.

That emphasis shifts abruptly, and a heady mix of fairy tales, puppets, psychoanalysis and Surrealism – mediated by two dozen or more artists – makes play, creativity and childhood itself seem more shadowy and perturbed. Then architecture returns at the end, with a cube-shaped room by the young Polish artist Monika Sosnowska, who occupied all of London's Serpentine Gallery with an installation late last year. While that was a disappointment – just an angular sub-Libeskind 'labyrinth' – this work at Compton Verney is much more engaging, the painted forms on the walls and ceiling creating an illusory architecture at odds with the room's actual boundaries.

Stretching boundaries is maybe one point of the show, at least as far as its architectural subjects are concerned. Almost always we see Wright, Rietveld or Goldfinger in just an architectural context, which can become rather precious: a world of carefully judged proportions, precise lines and balanced forms. By putting them in such disparate, sometimes disturbing company, 'Only Make Believe' shows what the search for such harmony must always contend with: the threat, or the lure, of the irrational.

Above left: Rietveld's Beach Buggy. Above right: Froebel's Cube, Sphere & Cylinder



# Crystal vision

RICHARD WESTON

## Alpine Architecture: A Utopia

By Bruno Taut, with an essay by Mathias Schirren. Prestel, 2004. 128pp. £25

Conceived towards the end of the First World War and published in 1919, Bruno Taut's *Alpine Architektur* has long been out of print in English. And it has never appeared – as it does here – with large, near-facsimile quality reproductions. Although its importance has long been recognised, and some of the key images are familiar, this edition is a revelation.

*Alpine Architecture* was conceived as a Picturesque tour of a world transformed. We begin at a mountain lake, move up a rugged canyon crossed by glass bridges and an arched lattice with 'harmoniously tuned Aeolian harps', to emerge in the Alps, where we encounter a 'Crystal Building'.

In the second of five sections we soar 'Above the Sea of Clouds', where glass ziggurats and arches enhance the mountaintops. 'The Crystal Mountain' offers a catalogue of Taut's architectural vocabulary – and a valley has become a colourful flower, at once botanical and astronomical. This section concludes with 'The Cathedral of the Rocks', a five-aisled structure of rock-hewn grottoes and a glass-vaulted nave, which, like the previous drawings, was a 'pure' fantasy.

Next, Taut uses specific locations in Switzerland, the Italian Lakes and on the Riviera, and some of his 'interventions' may cause the modern reader to recall the work of Christo. Then comes the 'Appeal to the Europeans', and with it the core of Taut's message: 'Nations of Europe! Shape your sacred assets! Build! Be a thought of your planet, Earth, which wishes to adorn itself – through you.' Further transformations of real locations – the Monte Rosa chain, the Matterhorn – give way to a plea for large-scale 'Earth's Crust Building', and finally to visions of the entire solar system, stars and nebulae as works of art.

To anyone unfamiliar with the singular fusion of Neo-Romanticism and Neo-Idealism out of which Taut's ideas emerged, this might all sound faintly ridiculous. Happily, Mathias Schirren's exemplary introduction offers a wealth of insights and connections.

Taut's central theme, as is well known, was derived from the poet Paul Scheerbarth's vision of a glass architecture. Equally important was his conception of the architect as both a leader of the people and an impersonal medium

through whom cosmic laws were communicated. An avid reader of Ruskin, whose ideas on Alpine rock-needles find a formal echo here, Taut was also familiar with the writings of Gottfried Semper.

In both, he clearly warmed to arguments for the observation of nature as the basis of order and ornamentation – which, in Greek, as Semper pointed out, were denoted by the same word, 'cosmos'.

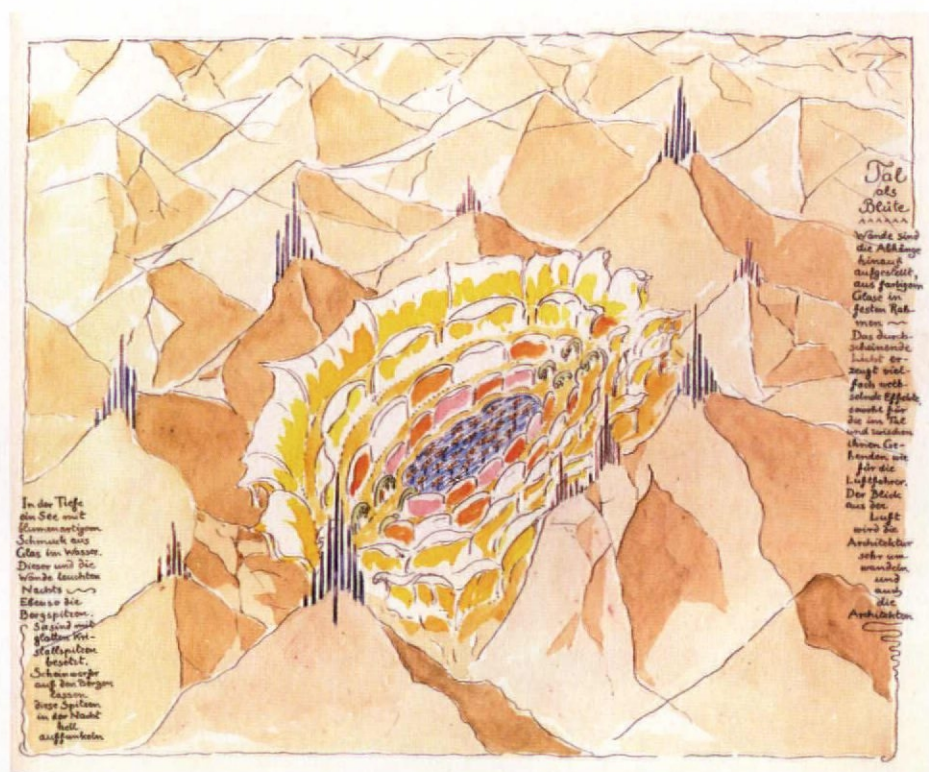
Even more decisive for Taut were the ideas of Gustav Theodor Fechner, who questioned the materialism of modern science and advocated a principle of 'universal animation' through which animals and plants, stars and planets, were interwoven into a living whole, to which we can relate through empathy. It is precisely this vision that Taut communicates so effectively in his words and drawings.

The idea of transforming a valley into a

glass representation of a flower would find an echo, over 30 years later, in Frei Otto's proposal to roof an entire valley-system with fabric structures. But whereas Otto's was an essentially technocratic proposition, Taut's, in the wake of war, was a vision of a universe in which our productive resources are devoted to peaceful ends.

Despite the depth of ideas that went into its formation, *Alpine Architecture*, like all works of art, persuades us through its form – through a delicacy of line and subtlety of colour that evoke an organic vision that is never sentimental or cloying. Taken literally, Taut's proposals were megalomaniacal; but his drawings are wonderfully intimate invitations to reverie, and I would want them on my desert island.

Richard Weston is professor of architecture at Cardiff University



Taut's drawing of a valley transformed into a glass version of a flower



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# A casebook history

KENNETH POWELL

## The Presence of the Case Study Houses

by Ethel Buisson and Thomas Billard. Birkhäuser, 2004. 336pp. £45

Looking back on 17 years of the Case Study Houses project in 1962, Esther McCoy, the writer who definitively established the significance of the programme in the history of post-war architecture, recalled the radical climate in which it was conceived and developed. 'There was something electric in the air, a particular sort of excitement that comes from the sound of hammers and saws when they have been silent for too long.'

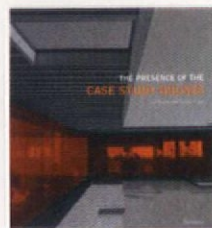
After the great depression of the 1930s and the constraints of the war years, when barracks, airfields and factories were the priorities, architects could again turn to the design of houses, bringing into play new materials and technologies that had come to the fore during the war. 'The day of the architect was in sight,' wrote McCoy. 'His fortunes, which sag with each drop in the economy, were bright for the first time in a decade and a half.'

The Case Study Houses (CSH) programme, launched by magazine editor John Entenza in 1945, was intended as a practical initiative to address the urgent need in the US for more new homes, to encourage innova-

tion in the interests of economy and speed of construction, and to further the evolution of a distinctively Modern approach to the design of the typical American family house. The setting was California, a territory conducive to novel thinking about the house, as the pre-war projects of Schindler and Neutra confirmed. By 1962, 23 houses had been completed, including the famous Eames House at Pacific Palisades and ones by Raphael Soriano, Craig Ellwood and Pierre Koenig.

The steel-framed houses built after 1950 by Soriano, Ellwood, Koenig and others were to have an influence that extended beyond the US – Team 4's Reliance Controls factory and the early houses of Richard Rogers were directly inspired by them. Michael and Patty Hopkins acknowledge the influence of the Eames House on their own, now canonic, Hampstead residence. Julius Shulman's famous night-time shot of Case Study House 22 is one of the most alluring of all visual images of Modern architecture.

Ethel Buisson and Thomas Billard's book is conceived as 'a journey into the present reality of the Case Study Houses'; one



Far left: the studio of the Eames House

undertaken, moreover, by 'representatives of old Europe confronting the achievements of the New World'. At times the writing is so eccentric in tone as to be impenetrable. One house is described as an 'image of excess on this coast, overinflated with silicone and amphetamines currently in vogue'.

Yet the book represents a potentially interesting investigation of the long-term prospects for radical and fashionable architecture when it passes from the field of the contemporary into that of the historic. Helped by the generally welcoming response of present-day owners, the intrepid French architects (Buisson is a Princeton graduate) somehow managed to gain entry to most of the surviving houses. Thornton Abell's CSH7, built in 1948, proved a problem. The owner has a ferocious dog, 'threatening to call a patrol of the local militia, a group that the stranger did not particularly want to meet face to face'.

Writing in 1962, McCoy reported that the houses had generally proved 'excellent investments', but some owners, it seems, remain totally unaware of the significance of their homes and some of the houses have sold for modest prices.

The residents of CSH18 bought it only for the (stunning) views of the ocean and were amazed when a charitable foundation proffered a grant to assist with restoration. Ellwood's CSH16 is owned by 'a thin and fine lady of a certain age' who has lived there since the house was built. It is well cared for, but CSH20 is in poor condition, the great pine tree that was a key feature of the garden chopped down. CSH28, the last of the Case Study Houses completed in 1966, appears to the authors a betrayal of the ideas of the programme, 'a mediocrity displayed and pronounced like a conventional manifesto of the go-getter American bourgeoisie'.

Useful for its plans and for a wealth of contemporary illustrations, this is a rather self-indulgent and opinionated book, out-classed by recent studies by, for example, Neil Jackson and David Jenkins. Nor is it of much use as a guidebook. The idea behind it was terrific, but I was left wondering if I'd want a visit from Buisson and Billard.

*Kenneth Powell is an architectural journalist*



## London

**Amanda Levete** *Tuesday 19 April, 19.00.* A lecture at the RCA, SW7. Tickets 020 7590 4567.

**Marc Treib: Reciprocity – Thinking on Land and Building** *Wednesday 20 April, 18.30.* The RIBA/Landscape Institute Joint Discourse at the RIBA. Details [www.l-i.org.uk](http://www.l-i.org.uk)

**Farshid Moussavi: FOA** *Monday 25 April, 18.30.* An RA lecture at the Geological Society, Piccadilly, W1. Tickets 020 7300 5839.

**Fieldtrip/Landforms** *Until 27 April.* Two touring shows from The Lighthouse at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details 020 7580 5533.

**Submission Documents That Win** *Wednesday 4 May (pm).* A Colander course at a London venue. Details 020 8771 6445.

**Past, Present & Future of St Martin-in-the-Fields** *Until 6 May.* An exhibition in the crypt of the church, Trafalgar Square. Details 020 7766 1100.

**Value, Culture and Commerce** *Monday 16 May, 18.30.* A forum at the Royal Academy, W1. Details 020 7300 5839.

**Rob Cowan** *Wednesday 18 May, 18.30.* A lecture by the UDG director at The Gallery, 77 Cowcross St, EC1. Details [www.udg.org.uk](http://www.udg.org.uk)

**Sculpture in the Workplace: Stone** *Until 3 June.* A group exhibition at One Canada Square, Canary Wharf. Details 020 7418 2257.

**Avant-Garde Graphics 1918-34** *Until 5 June.* An exhibition at the Estorick Collection, 39a Canonbury Sq, N1. Details 020 7704 9522.

**International Arts and Crafts** *Until 24 July.* A major exhibition at the V&A, Cromwell Rd, SW7. Details [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

## East

**RIBA CPD Event: DDA Update** *Thursday 28 April, 13.15.* At New Hall, Cambridge. Details 01223 566285.

**The World, Abridged** *Until 1 May.* A group exhibition at Kettle's Yard, Castle St, Cambridge. Details 01223 352124.

**Will Alsop: Art and Architecture** *Wednesday 25 May, 19.30.* A lecture at the New Campus, Hertfordshire University. Details 07971 789882.

**Henry Moore and the Challenge of Architecture** *Until 31 October.* An exhibition at Sheep Field Barn, Perry Green, Herts. Details 01279 843333.

## East Midlands

**RIBA CPD Event: Party Wall Act** *Wednesday 27 April, 13.45.* At the National Water Sports Centre, Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham. Details 01522 837480.



### AFTER EDEN

Patrick Shanahan's large colour photographs record the transformation of the disused clay pit of Bodelva into Grimshaw's tourist-thronged Eden Project. They're at Ffotogallery, Turner House, Plymouth Road, Penarth, until 22 May (Wed-Sun, 11.00-17.00). Details [www.fffotogallery.org](http://www.fffotogallery.org)

**Richard Wentworth** *Thursday 28 April, 19.00.* A lecture at the School of the Built Environment, Nottingham University. Details 07881 922537.

## North

**Delivering 21st Century Learning Environments** *Tuesday 17 May.* A half-day seminar at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Details 020 8255 7860.

## North West

**Vito Acconci: Sight/Sound/City** *22 April-12 June.* An exhibition at FACT, 88 Wood St, Liverpool. Details 0151 707 4444.

**Resource Efficiency in Construction** *Friday 22 April.* An ICE conference at The Lowry Centre, Salford. Details 020 7665 2312.

**Richard Wentworth** *Until 24 April.* A retrospective at Tate Liverpool, Albert Dock, Liverpool. Details [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

**Graham Stirk** *Wednesday 27 April, 19.30.* A lecture at the Grosvenor Museum, Grosvenor St, Chester. Details Mark Kyffin 0161 833 2037.

**100 Years – 100 Chairs** *Until 5 May.* An exhibition from Vitra Design Museum at CUBE, 113 Portland St, Manchester. Details 0161 237 5525.

## South

**RIBA CPD Event: Party Wall Act** *Thursday 12 May, 13.30.* At Shinfield Grange, Shinfield, nr Reading. Details 0118 969 8051.

## South East

**Traditional Timber-Frame Construction** *Thursday 21 April.* A course at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Chichester. Details 01243 811464.

**RIBA CPD Event: All About Lighting** *Tuesday 26 April, 10.00.* At Parkers Building Supplies, Uckfield. Details 01892 515878.

**Lucy Orta: New Work on Organic Architectural Forms** *Until 15 May.* An exhibition at the University of Brighton Gallery, Grand Parade, Brighton. Details 01273 643010.

## Wessex

**MBM Arquitectes: Footprints in the City** *Until 15 May.* An exhibition at the Architecture Centre, Narrow Quay, Bristol. Details 0117 922 1540.

**Kenneth Armitage** *Until 3 July.* An exhibition at the New Art Centre, Roche Court, East Winterslow, near Salisbury. Details 01980 862244.

## West Midlands

**RIBA CPD Event: Smart Practice** *Tuesday 19 April, 14.00.* A seminar at Ludlow. Details 0121 233 2321.

**Retail-led Regeneration in Historic Towns** *Thursday 21 April.* An English Historic Towns Forum conference at Birmingham. Details 0117 975 0459.

**Delivering Sustainable Buildings** *21-22 April.* A RIBA conference at Austin Court, Birmingham. Details 0121 233 2321.

**RIBA CPD Event: Buildings Regulations Update** *Thursday 19 May, 14.00.* At the Bishop Mascall Centre, Ludlow. Details 0121 233 2321.

## Yorkshire

**Simon Hudspith** *Thursday 14 April, 18.00.* A lecture at the Brunswick Building, Leeds Metropolitan University. Details 0113 2832600.

**Peter Fawcett** *Wednesday 20 April, 18.00.* A lecture at Sheffield Hallam University (Pennine Lecture Theatre). Details 0114 225 2836.

**RIBA CPD Event: Natural Ventilation in Low Energy Building Design** *Wednesday 27 April.* At The Orangery, Wakefield. Details 0113 2456250.

**Tony Hunt** *Tuesday 3 May, 18.30.* A lecture at the Performance Centre, Bretton Hall. Tickets 0113 343 2263.

**Bill Woodrow + Richard Deacon** *Until 5 June.* New sculptures at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton. Details 01924 832631.

## Scotland

**Sacred Sites on Skye** *Until 29 April.* Photographs by Caroline Dear at the RIAS Gallery, 15 Rutland Sq, Edinburgh. Details 0131 229 7545.

**Glasgow International Festival of Contemporary Visual Art** *Until 2 May.* Details [www.glasgowinternational.org](http://www.glasgowinternational.org)

**RIAS Convention 2005 5-6 May. At Glasgow, with speakers including Fumihiko Maki, Glenn Murcutt and David Mackay ([www.rias.org.uk](http://www.rias.org.uk)).**

**6,000 Miles** *Until 7 June.* An exhibition with the Scottish coast as its starting point. At The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow (0141 221 6362).

**Evergreen** *Until 3 July.* A group exhibition at Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Details 0131 248 2983.

## Wales

**Richard Weston** *Thursday 21 April, 19.30.* At the Galeri, Victoria Dock, Caernarfon. Details Peter Stonebridge 01745 815600.

**RSAP Spring School: Client-Architect Relations** *Friday 22 April.* With Clare and Sandy Wright as guest speakers. At Portmeirion. Details 029 2087 4753.

## International

**Andrea Palladio and the Veneto Villa: From Petrarch to Carlo Scarpa** *Until 3 July.* An exhibition at the Museo Palladio, Vicenza. Details [www.cisapalladio.org](http://www.cisapalladio.org)

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





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#### Project Architects, London - to £34,000 + Benefits

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#### Senior Project Architect, London - to £40,000 + Benefits

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#### Senior Design Architect, London - to £40,000 + Benefits

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#### Project & Senior Architects, London - to £36,000 + Benefits

This large, well-known design led practice, based in EC1, seeks applications from self-driven and ambitious qualified architects. Being capable of managing projects and the client interface, you will also have good conceptual skills, and a thorough understanding of technology and buildability. Successful applicants will have 5-10 years post qualification experience coupled with project delivery experience in the Transportation, Retail, Education, Workplace or Urban Living sectors. You will also be Microstation literate, although cross-training will be considered. Ref: 10266

### CONTRACT VACANCIES

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**Senior Technician, London - to £22ph**  
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**Mid-Weight Technician, London - to £20ph**  
Retail fit-out projects - AutoCAD/Microstation.  
Ref: 10109

**Senior Technician, London - to £22ph**  
Residential and commercial projects - AutoCAD.  
Ref: 10151

**Mid-Weight Technician x 2, London - to £18ph**  
Retail & entertainment projects - AutoCAD.  
Ref: 10153

**Architectural Assistant, London - to £16ph**  
Large-scale shopping centre project - AutoCAD.  
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**Senior Technician, Hertfordshire - to £22ph**  
High-density residential projects - AutoCAD.  
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**Mid-Weight Technician, Berkshire - to £18ph**  
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## people & practices

**Covell Matthews Architects** has promoted **Hector Black**, based in its Edinburgh office, from company associate to director. The practice has also promoted three Aberdeen-based employees. Local associate **Andrew Mowat** has become company associate, while chartered architect **Andy McNair** and interior designer **Angela Milne** have both become local associates.

**Bob O'Neil** and **Jonathan Petrie** have left their respective practices to form a new practice, **O'Neil&Petrie**, based in Kendal, Cumbria.

**Daniel Taylor**, managing director of **Metro Design Consultants**, has been appointed to the **Creative and Cultural Skills Council's** board of trustees.

**Chameleon Business Interiors** of Howden, Yorkshire, has appointed **Sam Cox** as interior designer, with responsibility for project management.

**Greg Cooper** has been appointed chief executive of the **British Board of Agrément**. He will replace **Peter Hewlett**, who retires in June after 17 years' service. **Martyn Reed** has been appointed as operations director of the board, with responsibility for inspections and certification.

**Siegenia-Aubi**, manufacturer of window and door hardware and ventilation solutions, has appointed **Alastair Wheeler** as national sales manager.

● Send details of changes and appointments to Anna Robertson, *The Architects' Journal*, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, or email [anna.robertson@emap.com](mailto:anna.robertson@emap.com)

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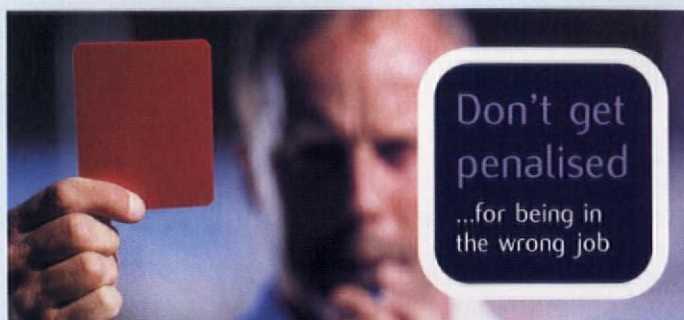
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Application forms can be obtained from the Human Resources Section, Learning and Leisure Department, 8th Floor West, Merriam House, 110, Merriam Centre, Leeds LS2 8ET, or telephone Leeds (0113) 247 8382, Minicom Leeds (0113) 247 6004, E-mail address [LS.leisure.recruitment@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:LS.leisure.recruitment@leeds.gov.uk).

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#### Senior Architectural Technician - Oxfordshire - Perm - £30K+

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#### Architectural Technician - Manchester - Perm - £30K

This large national practice with their head office based in Manchester are currently seeking talented architectural technician individuals to join their practice and aid in expanding the projects that they have recently been winning throughout the North West of England. They have several projects running at present including multi-million pound commercial, residential & leisure work. The suitable candidate will have at least 2 years practical experience at an architectural practice, and preferably with a relevant qualification Architectural Design or Building Studies. The suitable candidate must also be proficient with AutoCAD, and have good all round technical skills & abilities, to apply please attach your CV and send to, [dane@aps-recruitment.co.uk](mailto:dane@aps-recruitment.co.uk) (Northern Consultant).

#### Senior Architect - SW London - Permanent - £35-40K

This practice has 5 offices based in the UK; the practices based in the SW London require Senior Architects to join their 8-spoke practice. This well established practice has grown due to current and future workload expectations. They are a multi sector practice with large multi million pound residential and commercial projects. You would be expected to manage a team of assistants and technicians; so previous team management will be essential. They are looking for someone who has a minimum of 5 years post part II qualification experience, who will be able to fit in with the existing team. In turn you will be rewarded with a competitive salary and benefits package. [george@aps-recruitment.co.uk](mailto:george@aps-recruitment.co.uk) (London Consultant).

#### Architectural Technician - City London - Permanent £25-30K

UK practice requires Architectural Technicians to be based in their London office. This company has 2 vacancies in London for Architectural Technicians wishing to pursue a career within a well established multi sector practice. They are looking for people who will progress within the practice. You should be a self starter with the motivation to develop long, strong interpersonal skills and a genuine desire to progress. You will need 2-3 years AutoCAD and detailing experience, with strong clients facing skills. [george@aps-recruitment.co.uk](mailto:george@aps-recruitment.co.uk) (London Consultant).

#### Architectural Technician - W1 London - £25/25K

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## competitions & awards

Details of RIBA-approved competitions are available from the RIBA Competitions Office, 6 Melbourne Street, Leeds LS2 7PS, tel 0113 234 1335, web [www.ribacompetitions.com](http://www.ribacompetitions.com), email [riba.competitions@inst.riba.org](mailto:riba.competitions@inst.riba.org)

### A FORUM FOR THE NORTH

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, in conjunction with its external funding and development partners, has launched a new competition to design 'The Forum'. The centre will house a museum, library, gallery and community facilities, and will be located on a strategic site in Castleford town centre. The deadline for expressions of interest is 22 April.

### LONDON'S TUNNEL VISION

Cross River Partnership and Spacia, the property arm of Network Rail, are launching an international ideas competition for a network of railway arches in central London. The competition forms part of a wider strategy to transform London's viaducts. The 'Light at the End of the Tunnel' competition gives a choice of three sites: Waterloo, Vauxhall and London Bridge – and the brief is available now.

### OXFORD'S BONN VOYAGE

Oxford City Council with its partner, the West End Steering Group, invites submissions from artists, urban designers, landscape architects, architects and town planners for the redesign of Bonn Square in Oxford city centre. Students of the same disciplines are also encouraged to take part. The competition will take the form of open ideas, with a submission deadline of 26 April.

### KYRL'S QUAY SPACES

Cork City Council is holding an open, one-stage design ideas competition for waterfront sites and urban spaces on Kyril's Quay, Cork, as part of the Cork European Capital of Culture 2005 programme. Contact Jill Jacob on tel 00353 1 6691463, email [jjacob@riai.ie](mailto:jjacob@riai.ie) or visit [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie). The closing date is 20 April.

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### Architects

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Our client is an award winning practice specialising in retail, residential, commercial and public buildings. They are seeking first class design Architects who are keen to develop careers in a design environment where the attributes of London connections are transposed to rural working. Ideally you will have a minimum of 5 years' PQE although candidates with the right design credentials and inspirational approach will not be ruled out. Skills will include a deft hand at sketching and drawing, presentation capability with CAD and DTP and a personality where conveying ideas with enthusiasm to colleagues and clients alike are irreplaceable. In return, following a qualifying period, on offer will be a highly competitive salary with health insurance and other attractive benefits. **Based: Berkshire Ref: DEB/5851**

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#### Recruitment enquiries

Laurie Shenoda  
Tel: 0207 505 6803  
Email: laurie.shenoda@emap.com

Nick Roberts  
Tel: 0207 505 6737  
Email: nick.roberts@emap.com

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CLOSING DATE: 12 noon on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2005

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The Kent Institute of Art & Design is planning to merge with The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College to create a specialist University for the Arts. This new university will have 6,500 students and will be the only arts university in the UK to have a School of Architecture which includes the study of Interior Architecture and Interior Design.

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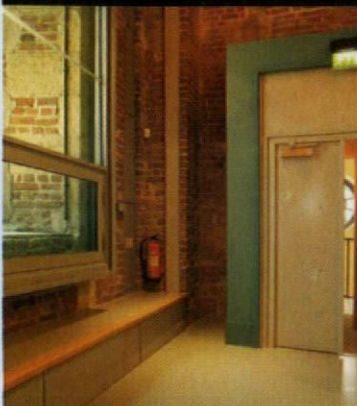
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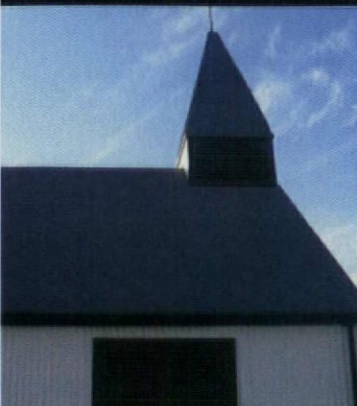
**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 301**



Audiences can hear every note that the London Symphony Orchestra plays without interference from neighbouring traffic, thanks to the 14 acoustic doorsets that IAC of Winchester has installed in its new facility. The award-winning LSO St Luke's, as the building is now known, is a converted 18th-century, Grade I-listed building in a busy part of London.

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Anderson Icopal Thermaweld roofing membrane from Icopal has been used to renovate the roof of the dilapidated Norwegian Church at Port Tawe, Swansea, as part of a major redevelopment of the docks area of the town, carried out by the Welsh Development Agency. Icopal designed a specification that would replicate the appearance of the original roof.

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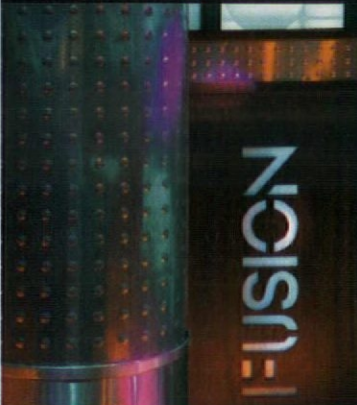
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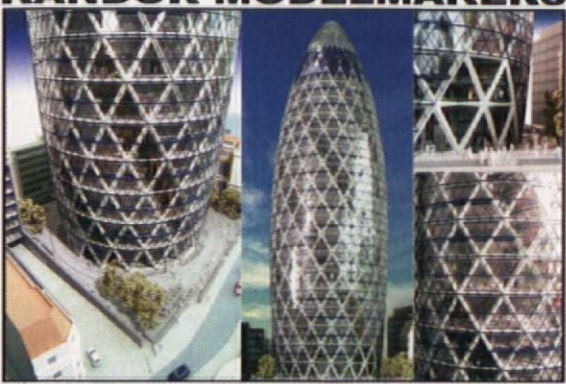


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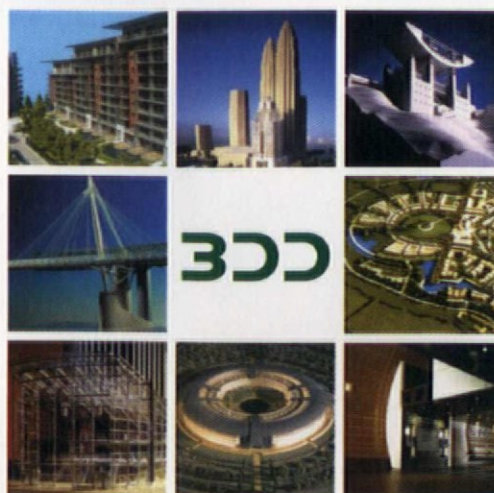
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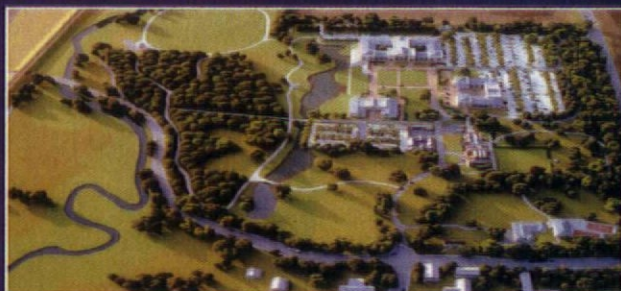
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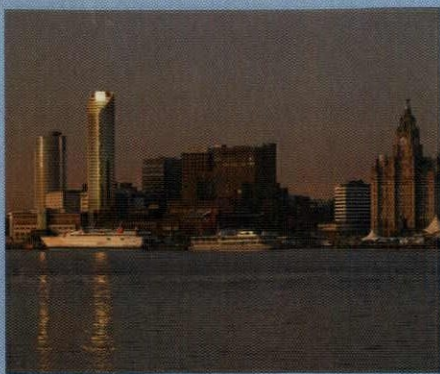
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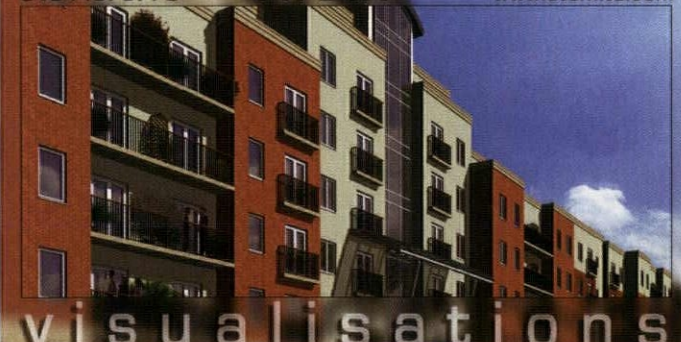
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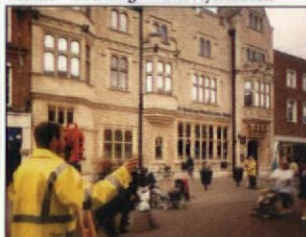
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## Election tattle

**S**o the government has finally put us out of our misery and told us when the general election will be held. Let no one mislead you that architecture or design are going to be key issues. **Tony Blair**, **John Prescott** and their chums are more than happy to spout about 'quality architecture' when at events such as Delivering Sustainable Communities earlier this year, but anyone who tries to persuade you they give a damn about anything other than proving who can run the economy better is misleading you. For example, **Charlie Kennedy** has apparently adopted almost the entire RIBA Manifesto for Architecture. This is not a key sign that he really understands the importance of planning reform and the concerns of the architectural community; it is almost certainly because neither he nor his advisers have the time or inclination to think about it. Sad but almost certainly true.

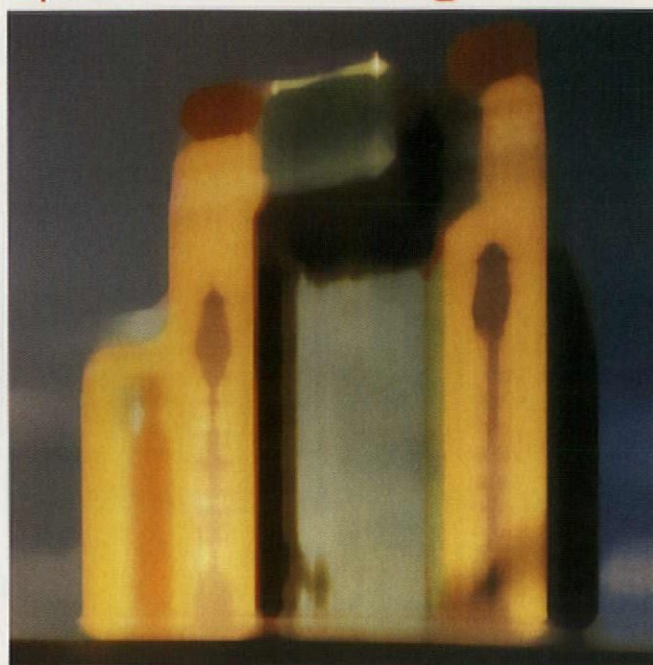
## Our fishy theory...

Nice to see the Liberal Democrats finally catching up with the AJ by demanding that the **Thames Gateway** should become a city on stilts to alleviate the threat of flooding. Those of you with reasonable memories will remember the AJ highlighting that the government was looking into building 'a Venetian-style city on stilts' (AJ 1.4.04). Quite how many readers at the time realised this was an April fool spoof is uncertain, although the real authors of the story had hoped the bylined **Noah Plimsoll** ought to have given it away. The fact that the story also quoted a **Vissen van Dijk** ('vissen' being the Dutch for fish) was also placed as a pointer to the hoax. The rendering by my old journalist friend **Rob Gregory** could also have been a clue.

## ...landed anyway

What no one could quite have clocked at the time of writing was how close to the truth the spoof piece actually was. We have since heard rumours that even **ODPM civil servants** weren't sure if it was real or not. Since this time

## spot the building



'Spot the Building' asks you to identify a well-known and recently completed building. To make it just a little more difficult we have had fun playing with the image. If you can decipher it, post your entry to arrive by first thing on Monday morning to *The Architects' Journal*, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, or fax 020 7505 6701. The first correct entry pulled out of the hat wins a bottle of champagne. The building featured in the last competition (AJ 7.4.05) was the Ice Hotel, in Jukkasjärvi, Swedish Lapland. **Damon Johns of Space Design Solutions in Salisbury** was the winner.

last year the Thames Gateway's progress has been stuttering to say the least. In large part this has been because of the threat of flooding. Insurance companies are screaming about it and inevitably housebuilders are following suit. Can you really blame them for not wanting to build if the insurers are refusing to play ball?

## Venetian blues

From the outside, the idea of a new modern **Venice in London's** backyard seems like an interesting design challenge for Britain's architectural community. But can anyone realistically imagine mass housebuilders taking to the idea – it's hard enough getting them to talk to an architect for their normal developments. And if they're not prepared to look at the stilts option, is the whole Thames Gateway experiment doomed already?

## Feilden good

A quick word for one of our better regional practices,

**Feilden + Mawson**. For it has won the contract to oversee the transformation of Middlesex Guildhall into the new Supreme Court – not **Norman and his friends** on Thamesbank. If you'd been following the national press coverage last week, you'd have thought it was all Norm and no one else. In fact, Feilden + Mawson was odds-on favourites to take on the project already and thought, sensibly, that it was a good idea to bring in Foster to look at the entrance, since he is already doing Parliament Square. The simple fact is that the practice appointed was Feilden + Mawson. Credit should be given where it's due.

## Builders in tuxedos

The **Chinese government** has taken no risks commissioning refurbishment work for a new embassy building in Lancaster Gate. To avoid any chance that a British secret agent sneaks in disguised as a contractor, dressed in full black tie beneath his

hard hat and donkey jacket, the People's Republic has shipped over 12 of its most loyal comrades from Beijing to do its muscle work for it. The name of the firm? The imaginatively named **Beijing Construction Company**.

## Party in progress

Niche residential developer **MacDonald Egan** certainly knows how to throw a nice party. It can also pick a great venue – which is perhaps unsurprising for a business that specialises in spotting opportunities for 'creative' regeneration schemes in gritty parts of south London. Last Thursday's bash was held in one of its current 'works in progress', a building site deep in the heart of Southwark. For one night only the former house and commercial building welcomed a jazz ensemble, projectors and bar to become the playpen for a raft of property men and architects. The partygoers included collaborators on other MacDonald Egan projects, such as **TP Bennett** and **Hawkins\Brown**. Astragal looks forward to receiving an invite to the next one.

## Kingsway whispers

Look's like **David Chipperfield** has his work cut out at the LSE, where he has just won a competition to redesign a massive new building the school has bought on Kingsway. The shortlist included **Eric Parry** and **Alford Hall Monaghan Morris**. I was pottering through the school the other day on the way to a meeting when I overheard a conversation. 'Have you seen that winning design for the new building,' one said to the other. 'Yeah, it's rubbish. There's no way any of us will be able to use it,' came the reply. Astragal doesn't doubt Chipperfield's design skills, but it sounds like he's got a major communication job ahead of him as well.

## Driven to artistry

If anyone's down in Bethnal Green between now and the end of the month, pop in to **Oh! Art** on Derbyshire Street and have a look at an exhibition of photos of Pakistan's Painted Vehicles by **Peter Grant**. Quite fantastic.

astragal



## GREENWOOD AIRVAC

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 201**

An attractive development of 193 apartments on the shore of the River Aire in Leeds has been equipped throughout with Greenwood Airvac central extract systems, to improve air quality, eliminate condensation and provide maximum comfort for residents. The luxury development, Whitehall Quays, includes one- and two-bedroom apartments, office suites, leisure centres and restaurants.



## METAL TECHNOLOGY

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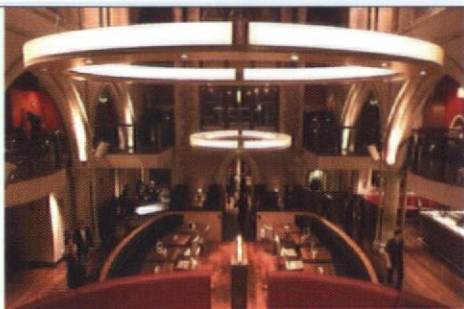
To a striking design by McAlister Armstrong & Partners Architects, contractor McAleer & Rush chose Metal Technology and fabricator Coulter Windows to supply and install 300 Part-L compliant high-performance tilt-and-turn windows, glazed doors, ground-floor treatments and structural glazing to the new 248-room Jury's Hotel in Leeds. For further details visit: [www.metaltechnology.com](http://www.metaltechnology.com)



## ILLUMA LIGHTING

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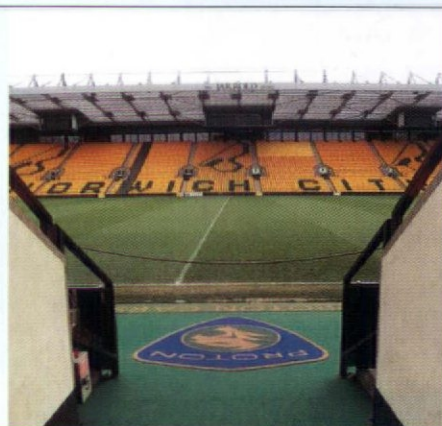
A new branch of the Pitcher and Piano chain has used 12V 50W dichroic reflector lamps in miniature, shallow-depth Project Downlights from Illuma. The low-voltage black baffle fittings were specified by Peter Veale, of Firefly Lighting Design, as the most cost-effective anti-glare solution. The black baffle helps to reduce glare from the low-voltage lamp.



## KINGSPAN

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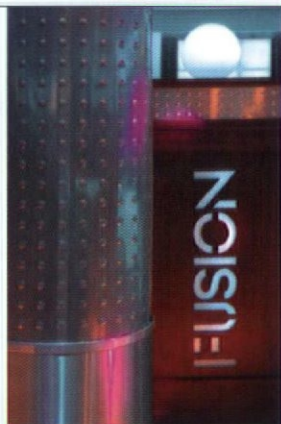
A total of 2,000m<sup>2</sup> of 60mm Kingspan Kooltherm K10 Soffit Boards was installed beneath the tiered seating areas throughout the new Jarrold Stand and the in-fill section between the new stand and the Peterborough stand at Norwich City Football Club.



## GOODING ALUMINIUM

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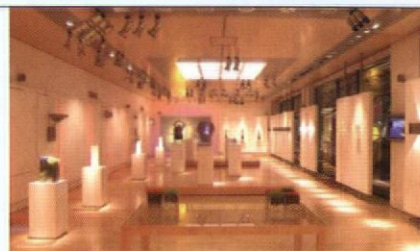
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## IGUZZINI ILLUMINAZIONE

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 206**

The concept of iGuzzini's state-of-the-art showroom at the Business Design Centre in London, devised by Maurizio Varratta, conceives the premises as a place where the attention concentrates on light. The walls are lined with a selection of products from the extensive range offered by iGuzzini; this selection varies over the course of the year according to specific and differing selection criteria. Specifiers and designers are invited to call in for demonstrations and assistance with lighting calculations.



## STANNAH LIFTS

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 207**

Stannah Lifts is supplying and installing three vertical platform lifts and a passenger lift into a very exciting venture in Bristol. The SS Great Britain, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's first iron ship, is the focal point of a brand new innovative visitors' museum at the ship's original dry dock within the Great Western Dockyard. Stannah is taking a crucial role in the conservation project by providing a range of lifts for visitors to access all areas of the site.



## LAFARGE PLASTERBOARD

**AJ ENQUIRY NO: 208**

The first school to be built in the community of Bradley Stoke, Gloucestershire, is using Lafarge Plasterboard's Megadeco systems to meet high levels of sound reduction and the long-term durability needs of a modern school. Bradley Stoke Community School is situated on the outskirts of Bristol and close to two major motorways – demanding high levels of sound insulation. Lafarge Plasterboard has supplied systems for all partitions and linings. In addition, Cormet mass-barrier suspended ceilings were used in conjunction with Lafarge's new range of acoustic hangers in the music rooms.








# Levolux

## Realise your vision



Wellcome Trust - Michael Hopkins - Tensioned Blinds

Inspired by architecture, Levolux innovates, from state of the art aluminium aerofoil fins to internal shading solutions. Light, heat and glare - all controlled by effective, discreet and often unique, solutions. Harnessing the emerging possibilities of building technology, Levolux pushes the boundaries to achieve your vision.



BRISE SOLEIL ● AEROFOIL FINS ● LOUVRES ● EXTERNAL BLINDS ● INTERNAL BLINDS

**LEVOLUX**  
DESIGNED TO CONTROL

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