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a part of Emap Communications Ltd. Printed in the UK  
by William Gibbons Ltd. Origination and colour  
reproduction by Graphics (Kent), Sidcup, Kent

## MURRAY'S ANALYSIS SETS OUT A BLUEPRINT FOR THE RESCUE OF CUMBERNAULD

By Isabel Allen

When George Ferguson unveiled his hit list of the UK's most hated buildings, everybody squirmed. There was distaste for such shameless populism; debate about the wisdom of presenting the serious business of demolition as a prize in a nationwide party game; and a sense of impending doom as the RIBA president blithely paved the way for yet another bout of public architect-bashing. Our fears were confirmed when the idea was seized on by Channel 4.

Against the odds, architects are coming out of it rather well. Geoffrey Copcutt, who designed Cumbernauld shopping centre, the 'building-which-most-deserves-to-be-destroyed', is dead, which leaves the task of defending the project to objective (as opposed to defensive) observers. Gordon Murray, of Gordon Murray + Alan Dunlop Architects, has challenged the simplistic depiction of Cumbernauld as a symbol of the folly of architectural utopianism. Describing it as

'the one construction in Scotland where the theoretical is manifest in the reality', he redefines it as an example of the disjunction between architectural theory and the technological and cultural conditions with which it has to engage. While this may sound like nit-picking, his analysis sets out a blueprint for a practical rescue plan. Double-height and open-plan spaces which have been compartmentalised to comply with fire regulations can now be reinstated thanks to new technologies. Strategies to attract multiple uses could bring the project closer to Copcutt's original vision of a bustling town centre – with nurseries, library, social club and hotels.

The populist call for demolition may yet be overshadowed by Murray's observation that 'if there has been any crime committed in Cumbernauld, it is one of municipal neglect'.

*Demolition is on Channel 4 on 17-20 December at 8.00pm. The next issue of the AJ is on 12 January.*



## CONTRIBUTORS



Ken Powell, who reviews the Mario Botta exhibition on page 45, is an architectural critic, author and historian. He has recently written a book about 30 St Mary Axe



Steven Spier, who reviews the Nobel Peace Centre on pages 25-34, is head of the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow



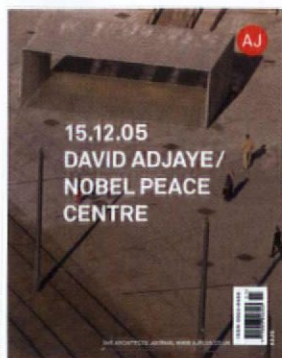
Thomas Heathenwick, whose sketchbook features on page 58, is a designer whose work ranges from products to buildings, urban design and public art



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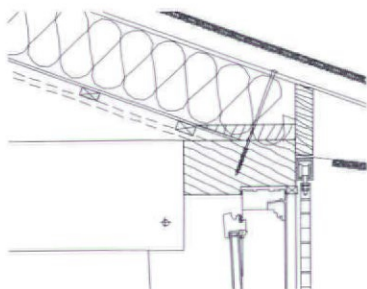
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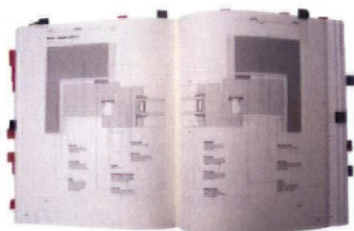
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#### 5TH STUDIO BUILDS IN CITY MASTERPLAN

Practice 5th Studio has won permission to construct the first building in Richard Rogers' huge £725 million masterplan for the area surrounding Cambridge station. The local firm won the green light for the scheme – a 'gateway' to the Ashwell Group's huge 'cb1' project – last week.

#### TILL TO GO TO VENICE AS BRITISH PAVILION CURATOR

Jeremy Till, the Sheffield School of Architecture professor, is to curate the British Pavilion at next year's Venice Architecture Biennale. The British Council also shortlisted teams including Peter Murray and the Architecture Foundation in their hunt for the curator. See pages 12-13.



#### BARCLAY WINS AT KIELDER

Charles Barclay Architects has seen off nearly 230 other entries to win the Kielder Observatory Competition. The office beat five other shortlisted entries, including the London trio of Kevin Carmody, Andy Groarke and Chris Hardie, who recently won the Coney Island Parachute Jump competition.

#### FITZROY ROBINSON DIES AGED 91

Herbert Fitzroy Robinson, the founder of Aukett Fitzroy Robinson, has died aged 91. During his 45-year career, he built up his firm – which started as Fitzroy Robinson & Partners – into one of Europe's largest. Among the buildings designed by the firm are Angel Court and a bank for NM Rothschild & Sons.

#### ST MARY'S BOSSES IGNORE HEALTH CAMPUS REVIEW

The bosses of St Mary's Hospital, who led the failed Paddington Health Campus plan in London, have started working on a new scheme before addressing an explosive independent review into their previous effort. Four MPs have contacted the National Audit Office to call for an investigation into the situation.

#### PREDOCK TAKES AIA GONG

Architect Antoine Predock, who is based in New Mexico, has been awarded the 2006 American Institute of Architects Gold Medal. The 69-year-old, who is famed for his 'regional theory', will pick up the award, which is considered by many to be on a par with the RIBA's Royal Gold Medal, in November.

#### CHARITY AIDS EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

Charity Architecture for Humanity has launched a competition to aid the Kashmir earthquake relief effort, following the recent humanitarian disaster in Pakistan. The charity, run by Cameron Sinclair, is calling for designs – in the form of pictorial diagrams – of earthquake-resistant housing.



#### ALLIES AND MORRISON IN AFRICAN CAMPUS COMPETITION

London-based practice Allies and Morrison has joined international big-hitting firms Massimiliano Fuksas, Rafael Viñoly and Rem Koolhaas in the final six vying to build the new campus for the African Institute of Science and Technology, which will be based in Abuja, Nigeria.

#### CABE BACKS KPF SKYSCRAPER IN LONDON

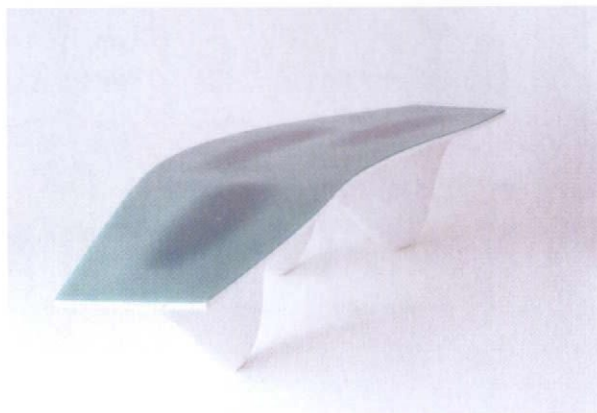
CABE has backed KPF's massive DIFA Tower, London's tallest proposed skyscraper, in direct opposition to English Heritage. In comments released earlier this week (12 December), the design review panel welcomed the building's 'potentially beautiful architecture'.

#### WARNING OVER HERITAGE

The head of the Edinburgh World Heritage site has spoken out over threats to the heritage status of the Scottish capital. Director Zoe Clark has damned four developments that threaten Edinburgh's historic centre, including Foster and Partners' plans for Quatermile.

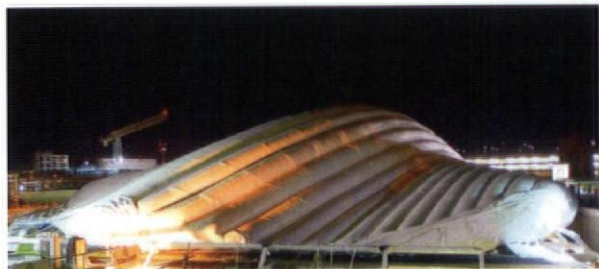
#### PRESCOTT IN HOUSING LAUNCH

John Prescott has moved to defend the controversial Pathfinder programme of housing demolition in the North of England, while also unveiling a shortlist for a new housing scheme in Liverpool. The list includes Studio Egret West, Union North and Feilden Clegg Bradley.



#### ZAHA TABLE GOES FOR £170,000 AT AUCTION

A table designed by internationally renowned architect and Pritzker-Prize winner Zaha Hadid has been sold for a staggering £170,000 at an auction in America. The prototype Aqua Table, with a blue, silicone-gel surface, was bought by an unknown bidder for US \$296,000 at a Phillips de Pury & Company sale last Thursday.



#### HEATHROW ROOF BLOWN UP BY ARCHITECTS

Birmingham-based practice D5 Architects and balloonist Per Lindstrand have designed an inflatable roof for Heathrow Airport's bus and coach station. The 1,100m<sup>2</sup> translucent structure is made from a white PVC-coated fabric. It was inflated last week.

#### MOVE TO SAVE SIGNAL BOX

A battle has begun to save one of the last remaining 19th-century signal boxes in the North West. The Type IIa Midland signal box at Wennington, Lancashire, is the only building of its kind left on the Lancaster to Skipton railway. It is due for imminent demolition in January of next year.

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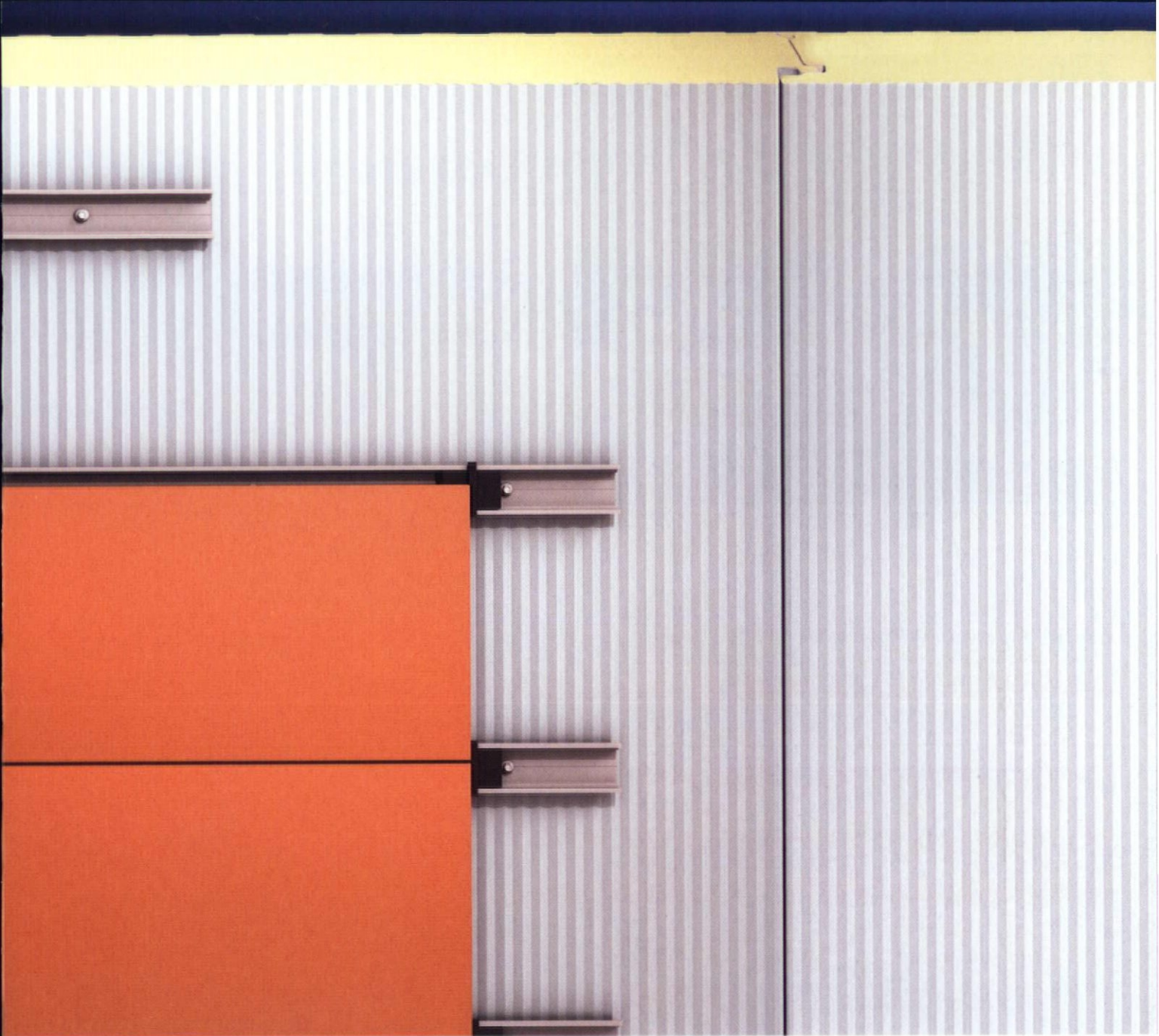


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JOHN WIBBERLEY

Pell Wall Hall, which is undergoing restoration, is the last country house built by John Soane

## SOANE HOUSE FUTURE IN TURMOIL

By Richard Waite

The future of John Soane's Pell Wall Hall – his last country estate – is in crisis, it has emerged.

Experts who worked on an initial restoration of the Grade II\*-listed mansion in Market Drayton, Shropshire, have hit out at the way in which the building is currently being renovated.

And fears have been stoked by rumours that the local architect asked to draw up plans for a modern extension, Rodney Bellamy, has been dropped and that the property could go back on the market.

Former Soane Museum director Margaret Richardson, a key member of The Pell Wall Hall Preservation Trust (PWHPT), which rescued the derelict building in the late '80s, said: 'The situation is pretty awful really – this is

what happens when you lose control over the project. It's awfully sad.'

Between 1989 and 2003, the PWHPT put £1 million of English Heritage money into trying to 'authentically' restore the once-ruined 19th-century house.

But, due to a lack of funds, the charity sold the property and trust chiefs launched a search to find a buyer who could complete the meticulous work they had undertaken.

However, the new owners, Kay Johnson and Chris Vassiliou, have unveiled a series of proposals for the building which have shocked trust members.

Among them are plans to build a steel and glass balcony on the side of the house – a move which has won the backing of council planners

and which was also expected to get the committee go ahead last night (14 December).

Other proposals already considered by North Shropshire District Council include two applications for interior work as well as plans for a portico – all of which have been turned down because the schemes were 'not historically authentic'.

Architect John Wibberley, a Soane expert and a founder of the trust, along with fellow architect Barry Clayton, is especially worried about the number of 'inappropriate' applications being submitted.

'It's a scattergun approach in which [the owners] hope they get at least a few proposals approved. Some of the additions are simply inappropriate,' he said.

Wibberley admitted a complete restoration of the

mansion, which was seriously damaged by fire after years of neglect in 1986, will be a huge undertaking.

But he said he had been disappointed by the approach of the new owners, who were selected from more than 1,000 expressions of interest when the property was first put up for sale. He said: 'The applications have come as a surprise to us.'

'We sold it in good faith and had all sorts of assurances. But they haven't done what they said they intended to.'

The estate agents Jackson Stops & Staff, which originally sold the house, have denied the property is back on the market.

# VENETIAN MIND

By Ed Dorrell

Jeremy Till has been around the architecture scene for a pretty long time now and he knows just about all there is to know about it.

But even he must have been surprised that – when the British Council launched the search for someone to curate its 2006 Venice Biennale pavilion with a specific focus on the regions – so many Londoners still applied.

In winning the project, Till, a well-known professor at the Sheffield School of Architecture, had to see off opponents from throughout the capital, all of whom seemed to believe that they were qualified to assess the architecture of the regions. An attitude that seems a little weird, to be frank.

And while Till is understandably diplomatic about this, he does look

surprised that architects with very little experience of life in the regional fringe thought they were qualified to take on the job.

Till is talking to me in an independent Clerkenwell coffee shop, having refused point blank to visit the Starbucks next door, and is still clearly basking in the joy of his win, which was announced last Tuesday (6 December). It becomes apparent very quickly that he considers the Venice gig to be one of the biggest things that has ever happened to him professionally.

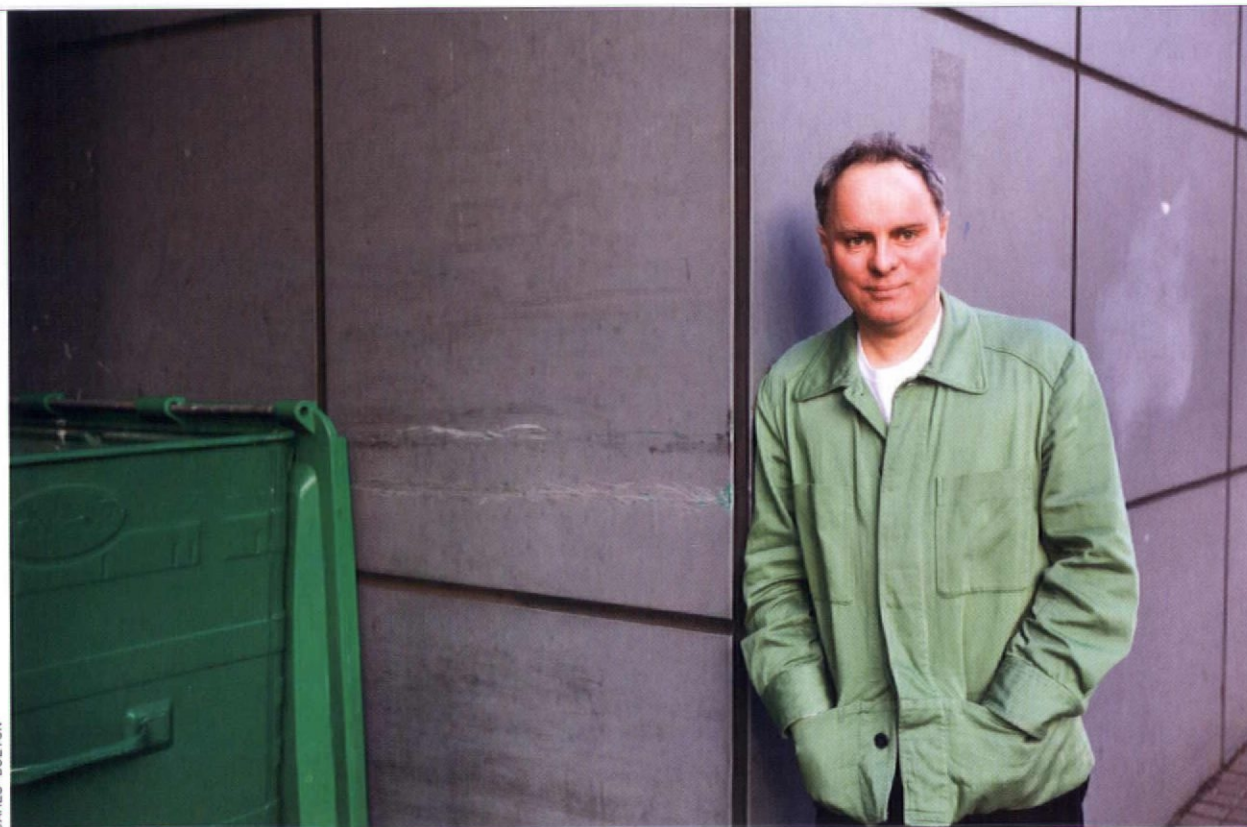
Being politic, Till would disagree. He would say that it is not about him. He would say that this is one of the biggest things that has happened to his 'team'. And what an eccentric but interesting unit he has

gathered around him. It takes in Designers Republic, the international graphics firm, a Sheffield experimental theatre company called Forced Entertainment and Till's long-term partner Sarah Wigglesworth.

Perhaps the most remarkable component is the Illustrious Company, a new firm set up by Martyn Ware, formerly of the Human League and Heaven 17, and Vince Clarke, of Erasure, Yazoo and Depeche Mode fame. The '80s electro-pop heroes have fast developed an international reputation for weird and wonderful music soundscapes.

What can be certain is that this eclectic crowd will certainly produce something a little different to that which was brought together by Peter Cook 18 months ago.





Jeremy Till will take his revolutionary views to Venice as curator of the British Council pavilion at the 2006 architecture biennale

While the 2004 pavilion was admired by some, Cook's cross-section of the British scene had a mostly mixed reception.

It seems fair to say that the Till team will not expect to have to repel any accusations of blandness. While the focus of the 'installation' – probably the best word for what is planned – will be the city of Sheffield, it will also be a general critique of the way that architecture is normally displayed in shows.

It will, of course, also relate to the work being carried out by the all too London-focused Ricky Burdett, who is curating the Biennale as a whole. The London mayor's architecture advisor is determined that the 2006 event will look at the development of all cities.

The space allocated to Till for his Venice ideas is made up

of one large central room, which will feature several unusual exhibits – constantly evolving sound, light and even models – with smaller rooms opening off it. These will probably be a little more mainstream but will still have an interesting innovation – they will look at Sheffield on a variety of scales, from 1:1 to 1:10,000.

Thus, according to Till, the exhibition will make the observation that cities exist – and develop – on a 'micro and personal scale' for people who live there, as well as the grander size that 'architects and planners work on'.

Till, it seems, is increasingly determined to trigger a revolution in the way that architects look at themselves and their role in society. 'In architectural shows there

is far too much enthusiasm for models and for the traditional. We need to explore the other ways of looking at architecture,' he says.

'For example, everything will be moving and changing in the main room. It will not be static. It will never be exactly the same at any particular time. This will reflect the way that cities constantly change.

'Cities are moulded by all of us, by all the people who live there, not just architects and planners. This is not explored in traditional architecture shows.

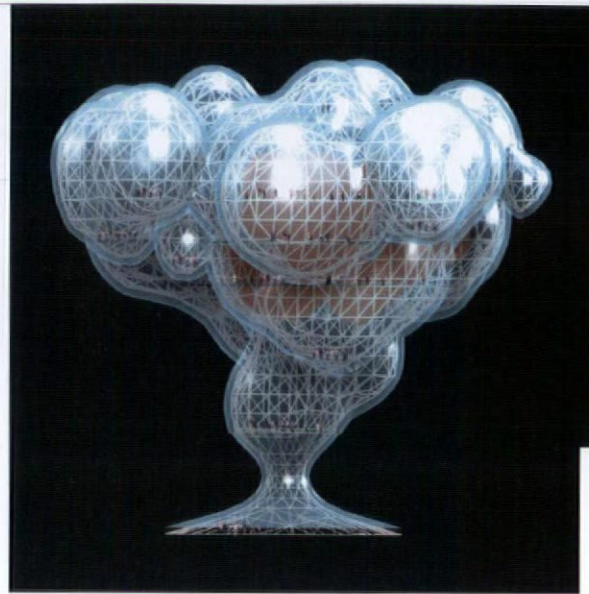
'Architecture is just a contingent discipline to the other forces at work,' he says, with the sudden look of a zealot. 'The trouble is that architects do everything that they can to resist it.'

And this desire for change seems to be the general theme of almost all that Till has recently undertaken. For example, he is convinced his work at the Sheffield School of Architecture is at the vanguard of a revolution in architectural teaching. By way of illustration, he has done away with crits.

'Many schools mistake adventurous form for adventurous thought. They think they are being radical when in fact they are deeply, deeply reactionary,' he says, obviously nodding to the Architectural Association, where he failed to become chairman earlier this year.

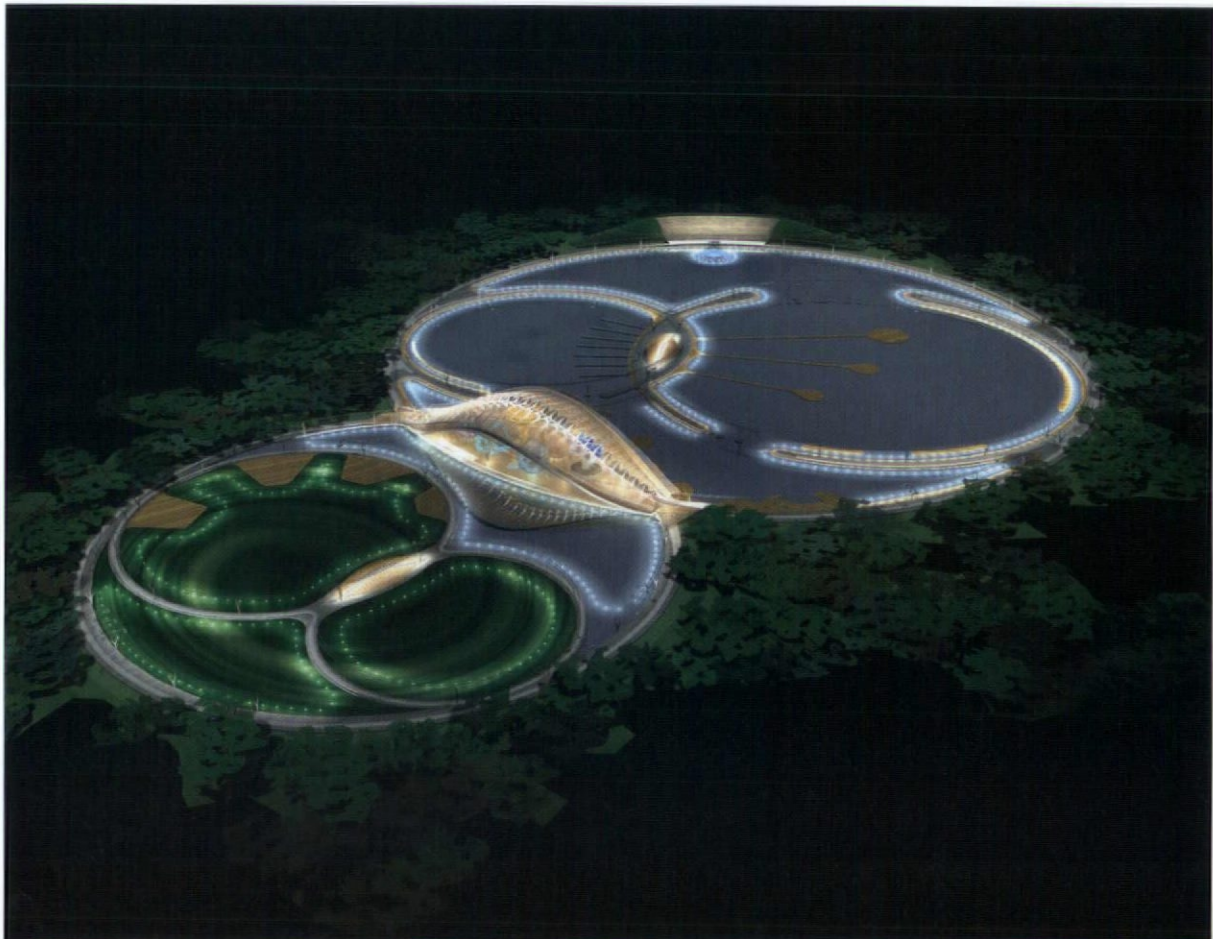
This self-styled radical has, it seems, a lot to prove in 2006 and it will be fascinating to see how this manifests itself in Venice. Don't be surprised if it's ever so slightly wacky.



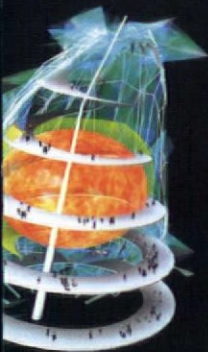


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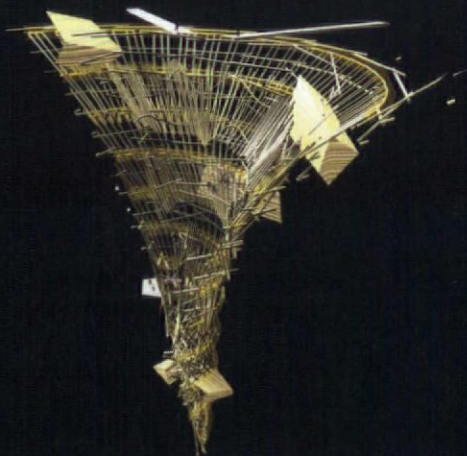
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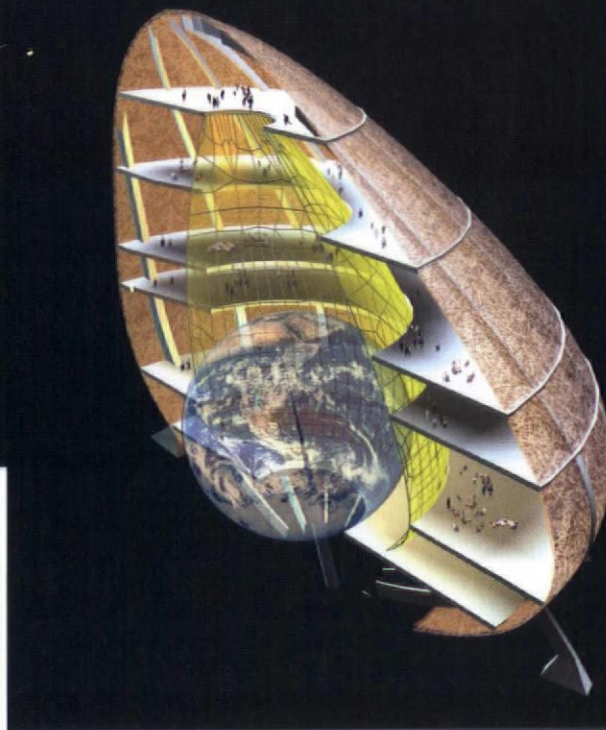




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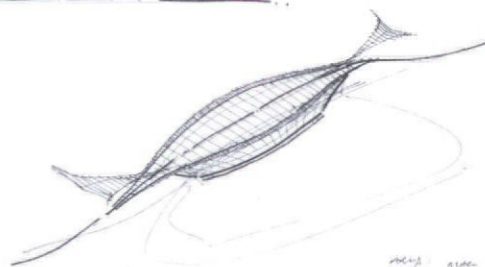


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### ARUP PLANS ECO-PARK FOR CHINA CITY

Arup Associates has designed this 'landmark' tourist attraction as part of plans to build the world's first carbon-neutral city in China. The Dongtan Energy Centre will become the showpiece of a massive public park in the heart of the new Eco City on Chongming Island at the mouth of the Yangtze River, near Shanghai. Sitting between two themed zones – the Earth Circle and the Water Park Circle – the main building will house six pavilions which will feature both educational exhibitions and theme-park rides. The tallest of these structures will be the 68m-high Wind Pavilion, complete with its own skydive jump and 'tornado experience'. London-based practice principal Declan O'Carroll said: 'Projects like Dongtan show environmentally sensitive buildings are not only technical but poetic.' Once complete, Eco City will have a population of nearly half a million and will rely almost entirely on renewable energy sources.

*By Richard Waite*



6.

1. The main building sits between the Water Park Circle (top) and the Earth Circle (bottom)
- 2, 3, 4 & 5. Designs for four of the pavilions – water, solar, wind and material resources
6. Fin canopies will exaggerate the sweeping forms of the Dongtan Energy Centre, as this sketch shows



## JANUARY

The year started on a sad note with the premature death of **Richard Feilden**, a founding partner of **Feilden Clegg Bradley**, writes **Ed Dorrell**. The architectural world perked up after **Zaha Hadid** won the competition to design a new Architecture Foundation HQ in Southwark (right). Danes 3XN unveiled a new scheme for the Fourth Grace site in Liverpool and **Erick Van Egeraat** closed his London office.



## FEBRUARY

February wasn't that dissimilar, with the two biggest stories being that **Zaha** won another comp – this time for London's 2010 Olympic pool – followed by another significant obit: **Philip Johnson's** death in New York, aged 98. Additionally, **Terry Farrell** opened his new Home Office building in Southwark to popular acclaim (below). Oh, and ARB troublemaker **Ian Salisbury** resigned from the board.



## MARCH

'Crossrail could sink Barbican' screamed the headline on the biggest story of the year, warning that burrowing under the '60s icon (left) could leave the flats in big trouble. Following this drama came rumours from up North that Manchester's successful architecture centre CUBE, run by **Graeme Russell**, was in big trouble. Unsurprisingly, it then effectively closed, to widespread mourning among Mancunians.



## APRIL

Architects overwhelmingly support the Labour government, was the predictable outcome of the AJ's pre-election survey. But with such an unpalatable right-winger, **John Hayes**, as shadow planning minister, this was no bad thing. Other developments in April included a heated exchange between Canterbury University and the Kent Institute of Art and Design over the former's plans for a new school of architecture.



## MAY

No one was shocked that **Tony Blair** had won the general election – thus guaranteeing the future of PFI – or that BDP had yet again come top of the AJ100. We were rather more surprised that **Ken Yeang** (right) was joining, of all people, Llewelyn Davies. **Richard Rogers** had a spat with arch Classicist **Quinlan Terry** over the Chelsea hospital and **Brett Steele** romped home as AA chair.



## JUNE

The AJ not only reported the news but also became the news with its multi-award winning redesign, led by art editor **Sarah Douglas**. Also hitting the headlines was the AJ's wildly successful rebirth of the 40 Under 40, which featured at the V&A. Other stories that didn't feature the AJ included KPF's plans for the massive DIFA Tower (above).



## JULY

Did you hear that London won the 2012 Olympics? Apparently there'll be a lot of work in it for architects. The following day the capital was bombed by terrorists. Reid architect **Lee Harris** was among those killed in the attack. Architectural news was put in perspective. But it was good to hear that **Hugh Broughton** had won the high-profile Antarctic base competition (*below*). He's off there next month.



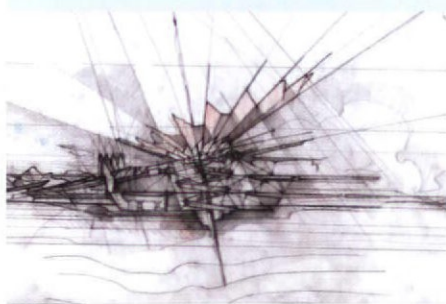
## SEPTEMBER

There was a hefty helping of *schadenfreude* in September when **Prince Charles'** proposed extension to Poundbury faced locals at an appeal, where they described it as a 'carbuncle'. **Jack Pringle** became RIBA president. **Ricky Burdett** was picked to curate the 2006 Venice Architecture Biennale. **Ian Ritchie** angered Southwark by winning his appeal for his Potters Fields scheme (*right*).



## NOVEMBER

**Prince Charles** will have been cheered that his old nemesis Mondial House was to go, but less happy that Fletcher Priest was behind the replacement. **Richard Rogers** re-appeared with Urban Task Force II, which seemed largely designed to prove that he was right the first time round. And **Laurie Chetwood** revealed plans for another wacky house, this time in the Andes (*below*). Those Chileans will be pleased.



## AUGUST

The silly season. Not a lot happening. But there were still some cracking stories at [www.ajplus.co.uk](http://www.ajplus.co.uk). Among them was the collapse of one of the government's Design Code pilots in Ashford, the reporting of the RIBA's Accredited Architects in Building Conservation register to the Office of Fair Trading and **Aukett** designing a new building around a Buckminster Fuller dome (*right*).



## OCTOBER

**Ritchie** made it into the news again – he was thrown off most of the huge White City shopping centre. The same happened to **Richard MacCormac** at the Beeb. Also unexpected was that bookies were left out of pocket when the Scottish Parliament won Stirling. Good news though for Heneghan Peng, who won the vast Giants' Causaway comp (*above*), and **Toyo Ito**, who picked up the Royal Gold Medal.

## DECEMBER

December's been rather busy so far. **Eric Kuhne** has revealed he is designing the world's biggest ever tower in Kuwait. Eek. **Rem Koolhaas** will be doing the 2006 Serpentine Pavilion. **Zaha**'s already in trouble over the Olympic Swimming Pool budget. **Terry Farrell** has left the contentious South Kensington tube project. **Jeremy Till** will curate the British Pavilion in Venice. All a little tiring.



*'There would be a queue 50,000 long to light the touchpaper. It makes you suicidal just to look at it'*

A local's view of Cumbernauld shopping centre, the most-loathed building in the poll for Channel 4's Demolition. *Guardian*, 13.12.05

*'If there is one man who should be watching the programme, it is John Prescott, who seems intent on repeating many of the mistakes of the 1960s'*

Giles Worsley on Demolition. *Daily Telegraph*, 10.12.05

*"I Was Dancing in the Lesbian Bar" by Jonathan Richman – seriously'*

The song Ron Arad wants played at his funeral. *Guardian*, 10.12.05



#### MUSICAL YOUTH

At the **AR Emerging Architecture Awards** was **Paul Davis**, of **Paul Davis and Partners**, who was telling all of his glamorous history as part of the London rock scene. Lighting sets for **Duran Duran**, houses for **Roxy Music** and run-ins with the **Rolling Stones**. All fascinating. One gets the feeling Paul's career in modern commercial architecture is a little mundane compared to his incarnation as design guru to the stars.

#### FEELING A BIT SHEEPISH?

Perhaps the most entertaining gossip floating around the room at the **New London Architecture** Christmas bash was about his noble-ness **Norman Foster**. Would Norm really turn up to launch next summer's **London Architecture Biennale** by herding a flock of sheep

across the Millennium Bridge?

Apparently he'd been keen to take part when it was first mooted earlier this year, but now his enthusiasm may be waning. He has the Foster brand to protect after all.

#### GREER APPEARS

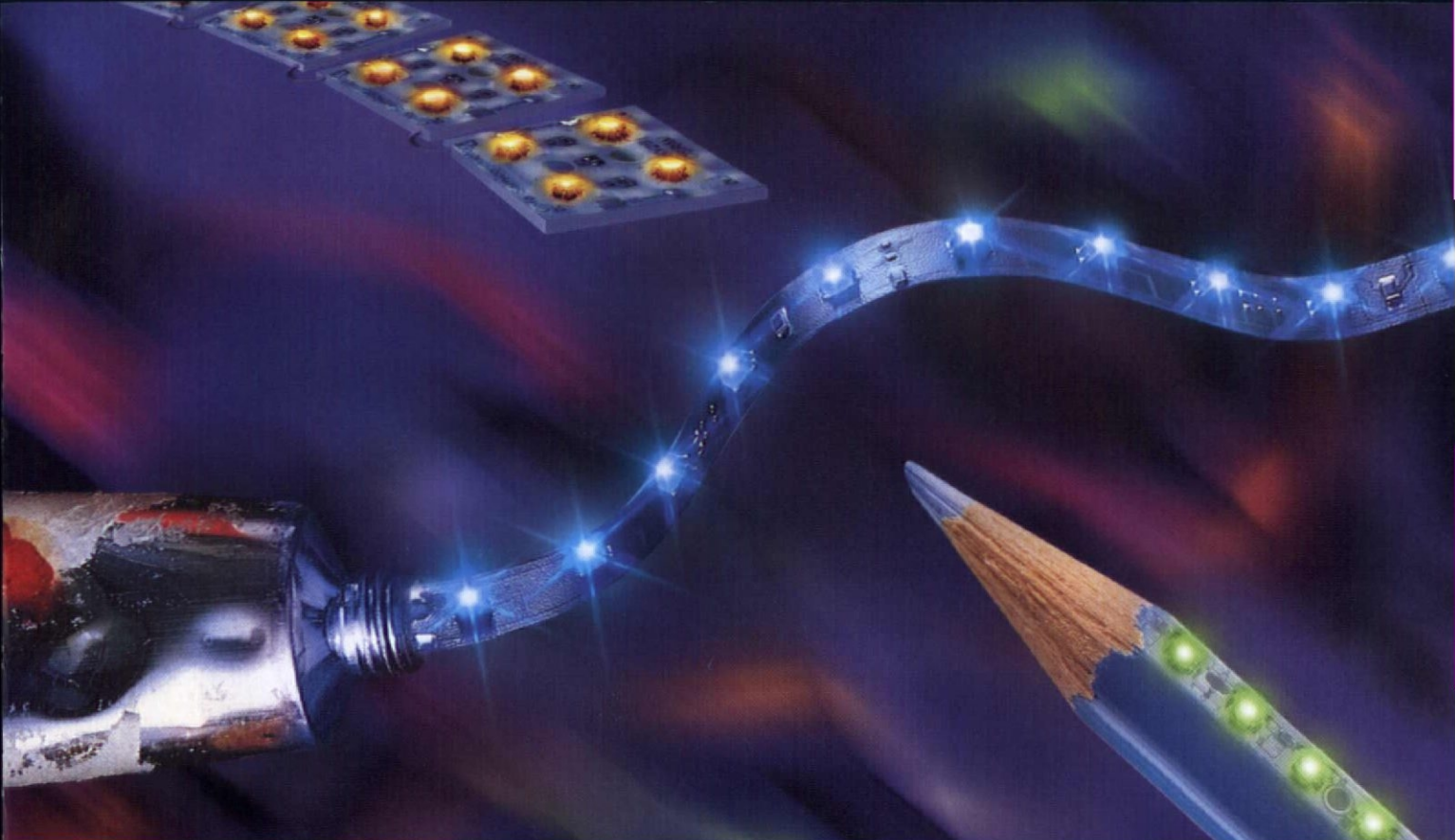
Among the proud students, parents, teachers and professionals celebrating the award of the President's Medals at the **RIBA** last week was feminist **Germaine Greer**. She enjoyed the evening but didn't seem over-enamoured of architects. 'I find them far too expensive,' she opined. 'If I want something done I tend to instruct a builder.' Greer is still trying to find an architect to design her prefabricated multi-unit houses and research centres in the Australian rainforest. Greer wants them to be made

of steel and polycarbonate, and has specified details down to the colours of the cushions, but she can't find anybody who quite shares her ambition and her budget. 'They want to do it in stainless steel,' she fumed.

#### BUILDING UP AN APPETITE

When he's not busy working for consultancy **CIVIX**, architect **Dan Bone** likes nothing better than tucking into a nice plate of *cinghiale in salmi* (wild boar in red wine sauce) or *salsicce farcite al tartufo* (truffle-stuffed sausages). Now Dan has put his money where his mouth is and published *An Appetite for Umbria: The People, the Places, The Food*, written by his wife **Christine Smallwood** and packed with photographs, recipes and restaurant tips ([www.appetiteforumbria.com](http://www.appetiteforumbria.com)). *Buon appetito!*

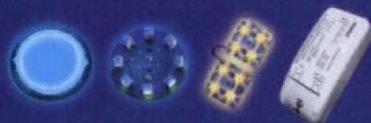




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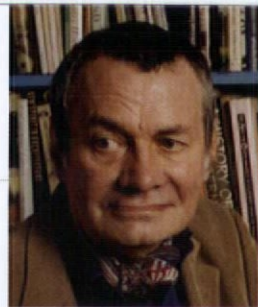
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## IN REACTION TO STIFLING THEOCRACY, YOUNG IRANIANS DON'T WANT TO DISCUSS TRADITION AND HISTORY – THEY WANT MODERNITY

To visit the Gulf once in a year may be regarded as a misfortune; to go twice looks like carelessness. But not, perhaps, when returning for an event set up by the people who run the excellent Aga Khan Award for Architecture. They had organised a seminar on architectural journalism and criticism in Kuwait. Few places could be more in need of architectural criticism than the small oil-rich state.

Yet, as Tarak Mohamed Abdelfatteh, who edits *Al-Bena'a* in Saudi Arabia, pointed out, there is no criticism in Middle Eastern culture and the Muslim world in general, where criticism is considered to be impolite. Many countries have no democracy, so no public expressions of opinion: for instance, city planning can't be criticised as it's government policy. This is compounded by the fact that there is no differentiation between architects and engineers, and civil engineers tend to run the combined profession.

But even where architectural writing flourishes, as it does (relatively) in Europe and North America, what good does it do? Ingeborg Flagge, director of the Deutsches Architektur Museum in Frankfurt, stated that most

architectural criticism is worthless: it is almost always public relations for flashy object buildings designed by superstar architects; always concerned with the latest, yet always obituarial, because it is written after buildings are completed. Mohammad Abdelbaki, editor of *Alem al-Bena'a* in Cairo, pointed out that 'in developing countries, architects are considered to be elitist' and so of little consequence, and critics even less. 'Are we [the critics] the blind trying to lead the blind?' asked Robert Ivy, editor of *Architectural Record*.

Omar Akbar, director of the Bauhaus Foundation in Dessau, castigated architects and critics for ignoring the 900 million people who live in the slums of the world. Yet clearly, in some parts of the world, architectural criticism does have consequences for wider society. Darab Diba, editor of *Architecture and Urbanism* in Tehran, explained that in reaction to stifling theocracy, young Iranians do not want to 'talk about notions of identity; they don't want to discuss tradition and history. They want Modernity: a wider platform with richer diversity. The models are in the West'. Yet both Timur Turekulov, editor of *KumbeZ* in

Kazakhstan, and Dina Sattarova, editor of *Design and New Architecture*, from Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, stressed the importance of tradition and regionalism in trying to resist globalisation and Russification.

Clearly Kuwait City has drunk deeply from the abundant springs of globalisation. Like almost everywhere else in the Gulf, clapped-out American PoMo, all glass and air conditioning, is the main source of inspiration. But the place is not (yet) as bad as Dubai. It has more parks and is less sliced up by urban freeways. And, as the exhibition of projects by the Kuwait Society of Engineers (Architectural Division) showed, more towers are on the way: boxy, twisted, plain, coloured and pregnant in the most unlikely places. Jassim Qabazard, deputy chairman of the society, says the professional climate is changing and that architecture capable of using the abundant supplies of energy from the great radiant heater in the sky will be emerging. I hope he's right, but it's difficult to be very optimistic.

*Peter Davey is the former editor of The Architectural Review. Email [ajcolumnists@emap.com](mailto:ajcolumnists@emap.com)*





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### NEW CHARTER WILL HELP PROVIDE A BETTER SERVICE

Your technical and practice editor, Austin Williams, acts more as a columnist than a journalist.

Richard Brindley, practice director at the RIBA, and I met Austin to explain the Chartered Practice Scheme as a way for smaller practices to avoid being bypassed by more managerially aware firms, but he has published his own views, as he said he would (AJ 08.12.05).

Quality systems may not affect the quality of aesthetic design a client receives, but they will affect the technical quality and administrative effectiveness of the work provided. Clients are often unhappy with these aspects of architects' service, so good systems will increase client satisfaction and reduce the risk of error.

Architecture is about more than aesthetics: it's a professional service. Chartered Practice status is for firms wanting support for, and validation of, their professionalism.

*Richard Saxon, vice-president, RIBA*

### GOOD DESIGN SHOULD JUST BE PART OF THE PLAN

As a town planner I always enjoy reading the AJ, an excellent magazine and far better than *Planning!*

Regarding your article 'Leaving Design out in the Cold', about the government's response to the Barker Review

(AJ 08.12.05). How much more encouragement do architects need to produce creative, high-quality design?

Yvette Cooper was justified in getting irritated by the AJ's question regarding design. There are piles of documents and initiatives from the ODPM, CABE, etc encouraging good design (*PPS1, Building for Life, Better Public Buildings*, and *By Design* to name a few) and, as far as I'm aware, no law against it. But isn't good design what architects are supposed to produce? As a development-control planner in a local authority, the quality of design by RIBA chartered architects that I see is, frankly, appalling.

For years I was told to keep my big nose out of design and leave it to the architects who knew best and now find myself getting the blame for poor design because 'the planners' approved it! Can I make a plea to all architects reading this – stop whingeing on and show us what you can do! Start producing the goods day by day, show an understanding of context and character and make my life easier – please!

*Paul Baxter, Watford*

*Please address letters to: The Editor, 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. The Architects' Journal reserves the right to edit letters.*

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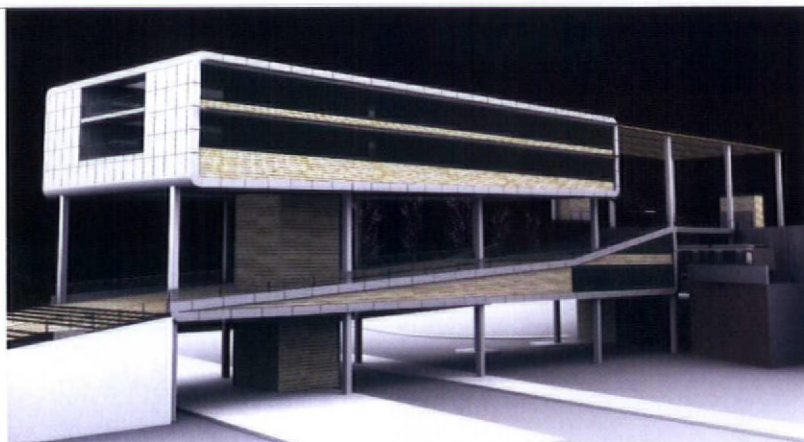


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Johnny Yu, a fifth-year student in the bio-climatic unit at Manchester School of Architecture, designed this living bridge. Intended to link Manchester and Salford, it sits above the existing dual carriageway and viaduct. The concept is based on the motion of two tectonic plates beginning to slide on top of each other (the tectonic plates of Manchester and Salford). A continuous landscape is placed between the two plates, which acts as the main connecting platform for the two cities. Yu's tutor was Greg Keeffe.



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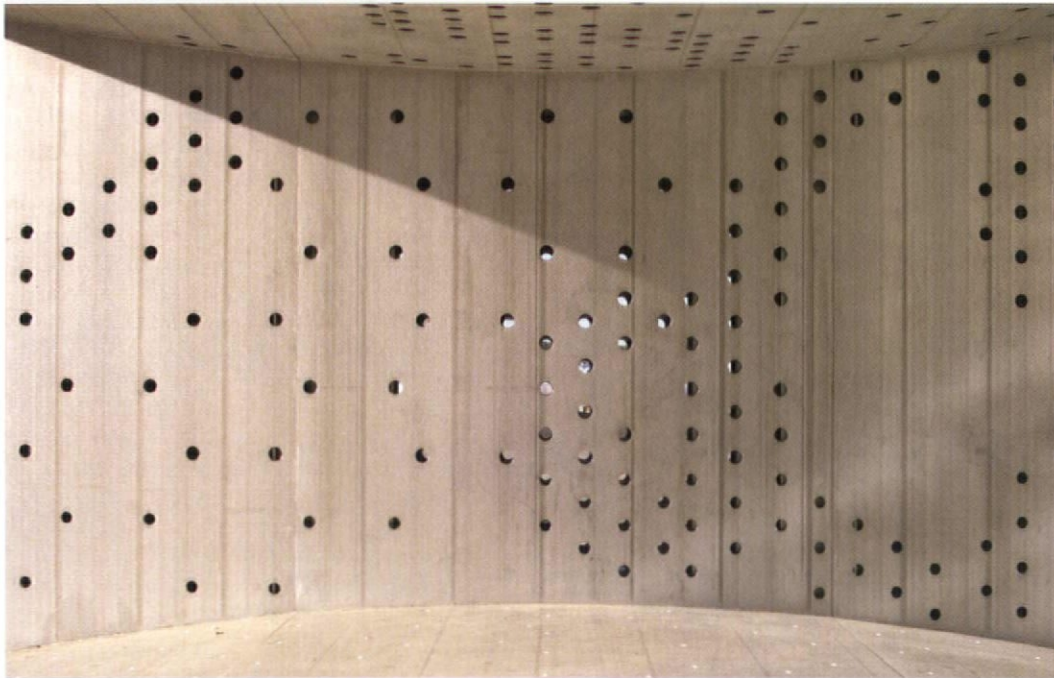
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# DAVID ADJAYE/ NOBEL PEACE CENTRE





## ADJAYE TOOK THE PRACTICAL AND RADICAL STRATEGY OF IGNORING THE BUILDING FORMALLY AND MATERIALLY

*By Steven Spier. Photography by Tim Soar*

*David Adjaye established his own practice in 1994 and quickly gained a reputation for reconstructing cafés, bars and private homes. Adjaye/Associates is now involved with major public projects, such as the newly completed Ideas Store in Whitechapel, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver and the Bernie Grant Centre in Tottenham.*

At the end of the long Cold War, even the most cynical among us dared to believe that the world's attentions and efforts might turn a little towards minimising conflict and the use of arms. Instead, we learned yet again that the cause of peace is the most elusive of goals and needs promoting. The Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo opened 11 June 2005 and aims to 'promote peace through reflection, debate and involvement, by bringing major and minor conflicts to the public eye'. And if that wasn't challenging enough, it is also supposed to be a major tourist attraction and commemorate both the Nobel Peace Prize and its founder (and the prize choices are sometimes controversial: Henry Kissinger received one, for example, but Mahatma Gandhi did not).

Finding an architectural expression for this complicated brief would be a challenge, especially since the given venue is a small former train terminal. Adjaye/Associates received the commission in 2002, when its portfolio was still mostly residential, but the practice was already known for the unabashed sensuality of its use of materials and its seductive ability to be both architecturally ambitious and relaxed. The Peace Centre proves once again that Adjaye is capable of some stunning architecture,

but raises questions of the meaning of materials and spaces and how literal or narrative such choices can or should be.

Accepting the premise that the Peace Centre should be easily accessible as a bar and restaurant, its prominent location facing the harbour is excellent. Oslo, like most European cities on water, is moving its port, railway lines and industry away from the city centre and creating residential and commercial use there. The Peace Centre is part of a 121,600m<sup>2</sup> development of the area, for which the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) won a design competition in 2002, but almost all of it will be behind the train terminal. Nevertheless, such a soon-to-be bustling location will no doubt help make the centre a major tourist attraction.

The old Vestbanen train terminal is the last remaining 19th-century structure in the area and is bounded by Oslo's stunning brick City Hall, Akershus Castle and the Aker Brygge Waterfront Development. It has a huge public space in front of it, a largely undifferentiated plaza on the waterfront, which OMA recognises is a problem: 'Confronted with the largest urban plaza in Oslo – a summer paradise and a winter void – our proposal suggests an interior counterpart: an 'urban living room'. The terminal itself caused numerous problems for Adjaye. The building is a creamy yellow, Italianate confection from 1872 with arched windows of various sizes and patterns. Two towers with chamfered corners and a three-bay facade, topped by a row of skinny, arched windows separated by engaged columns clinging on to a sloping sill, define the entrance. The two sides of the building splay out and





1. The Vestbanen train terminal has sentimental value, but floats in the plaza like a meringue in a bathtub

back from the facade. While the terminal has sentimental value in Oslo, its composition is incredibly inelegant and it floats in the space of the plaza like a meringue in a bathtub. As you might have guessed, the building is under the strictest preservation protection.

Adjaye was well aware of the possibly lethal effects of such an urban and architectural context and took the practical and radical strategy of ignoring the building formally and materially. For the exterior he designed a horizontal, aluminium-clad gateway that is the exact opposite of the terminal in every way. An identical form, though slightly smaller and in a different material, is the first thing one encounters, almost bumps into, in the foyer. Most unfortunately for one's experience of the centre, the preservationists detached and separated the exterior volume from the existing facade, which means there is no transition into the building, and no connection between inside and out (one is not even allowed from the exterior to know that the centre exists; the only indication is the exceedingly discreet signage painted on the facade). The lack of a transition to the centre unnecessarily heightens an already inward-focused approach.

On opening the door, one is faced by the long black wall of a rectangular form. Though one does not need to enter this rectangular object to proceed to the reception, going inside is rewarding. The seemingly random series of small holes punched into all its surfaces are illuminated in a changing pattern of green and red that marks major cities of the world, creating a map. If you put your ear up to the lights you can hear voices from

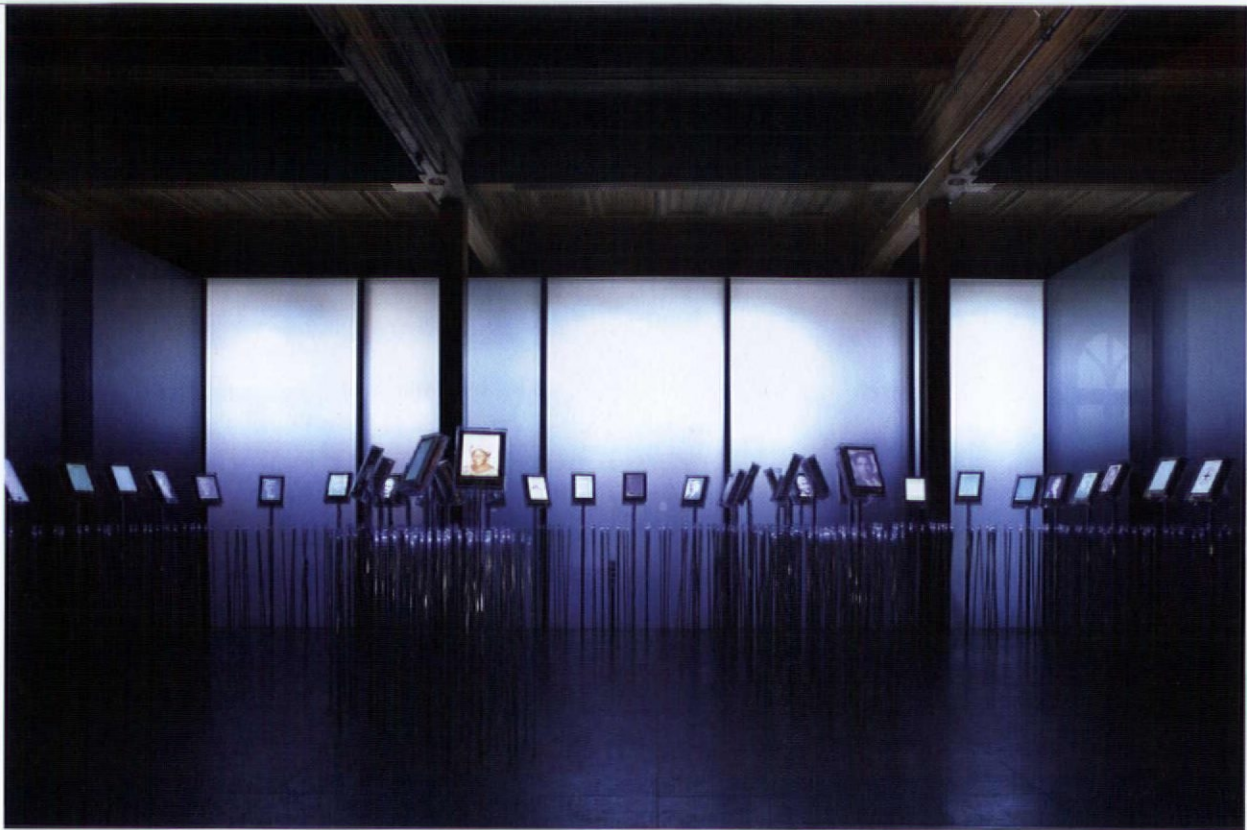
various countries speaking in their own tongues on issues of peace and conflict (the building's information structure and responsive behaviours were designed by Timon Botez and Eric Gunther).

To the right is the reception area with a book and gift shop. Every surface – floor, walls and ceiling – is painted a hot, glossy red. As surprising as the colour or its shade is, it doesn't actually jolt. It is hard to know what the red is meant to mean, though I fear violence, but the choice of it could just as well mean fashion. There is an original bared column and beam in the centre that is cleverly and gently reduced to a museum piece itself.

From the reception one enters the temporary exhibition space in the small former train shed. Up against one side, to the right, is a shiny brass tunnel with images about the current peace laureate projected on one side, and a tiny niche to the right that displays the medal itself. Adjaye has described this as the spatial experience of the idea of the medal, and it is in this space that the annual award ceremony takes place. Again, the golden colour could have been a too-literal metaphor for honouring the laureate, but being totally surrounded by polished brass surfaces, with a video projected on one wall and its shimmering reflection mixing with one's own, is a powerful, almost hallucinatory, architectural experience. Like the black box of the foyer, it successfully mediates between abstraction and narration, a direct architectural experience and an easy literalism.

From the black painted interior of the temporary exhibition space one takes an escalator along exterior windows





2.

up to a flexible gallery for temporary exhibitions that is, bewilderingly, lined in rough timber stained blue/grey. This vaguely refers to Norway and the seaside – the windows in this room do face the harbour, but it is not clear why these associations, or such a rustic feeling space, are relevant in an international gallery in a capital city. Off it is a small screening room.

In the centre of the building is the Nobel Field, programmatically and architecturally the highlight of the centre. It is beautiful and moving. One enters a dimly lit, tinted and frosted glass box set off from the existing room through short, ramped bridges to discover a field, or a bed of reeds, of approximately 1,000 1m-tall flexible tubes with a red LED light on each tip. Manicured into a scalloped form, the edge is further defined by individual screens for each Nobel Peace Prize laureate, which reveal that person's story when approached. There is also a haunting and hypnotic soundscape, which Adjaye helped design. This is a space to linger in, that encourages contemplation as well as the acquisition of knowledge. The metaphor of a garden for peace is well established but is transformed into something abstract that is both didactic and emotional. This is a difficult ambition to sustain, but just what is needed for the centre. Interestingly, while Adjaye is known for his interest in the physicality of materials, this installation is the centre's most ethereal.

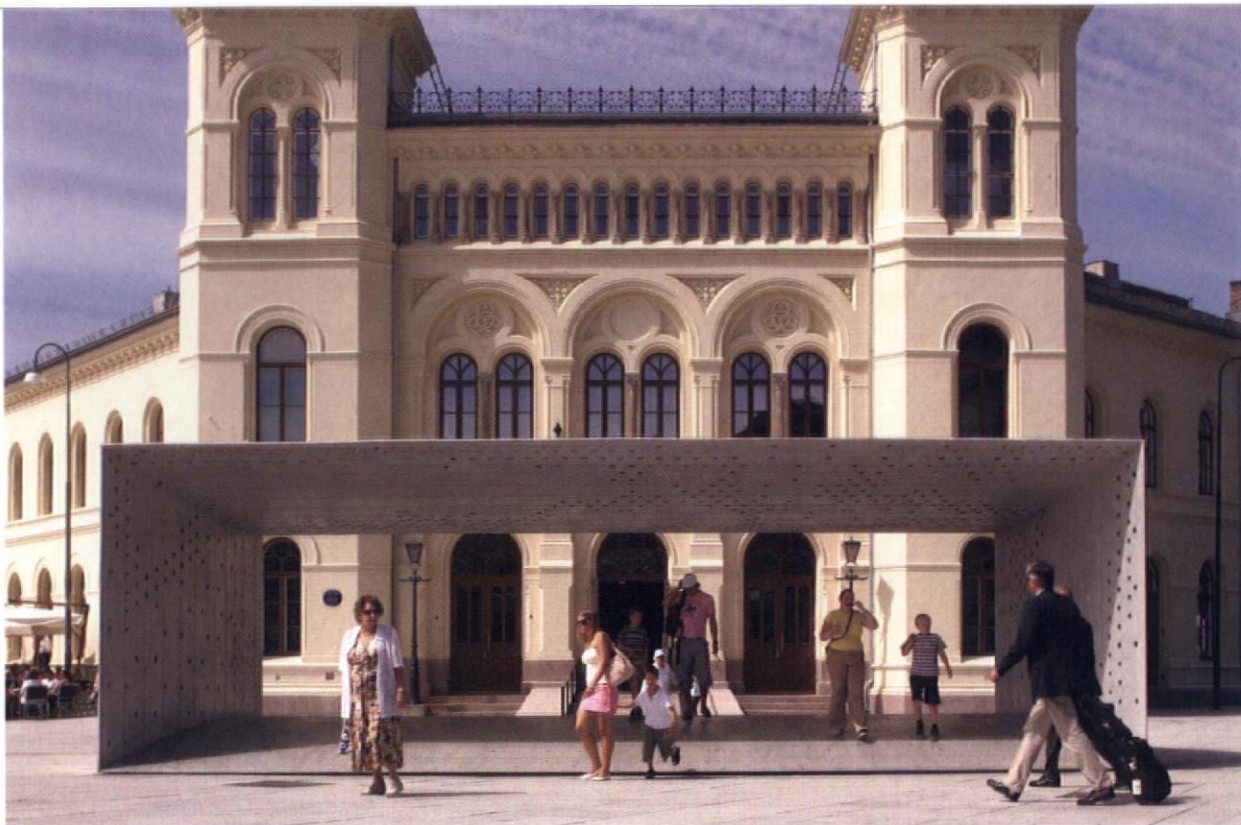
The rest of the exhibition spaces on the floor should provide a transition from the hermetic power of the Nobel Field, but one is abruptly in places that are primarily didactic with little

architectural presence. In a small room in one of the towers is an interactive, overscaled book through which one can learn about the life of Alfred Nobel (1833–1895). He was the Swedish inventor of a controlled way to detonate dynamite and held 355 patents that generated an immense fortune, all of which he left to support annual prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and peace. Only the last prize is awarded in Oslo. Images are projected onto the pages as you turn them, with infrared sensors reading your hand movements to illuminate areas. This is clever, but impractical in a centre with ambitions to be a major tourist attraction.

The last rooms, called Wall Papers, allow one to get more in-depth information on the prize laureates, the prize itself, world conflicts and how to get involved in fostering peace. The rooms are covered in wallpaper that shows either a postage stamp-sized head of the laureates in various colours, or the patterns generated by the lights of the first entrance boxes. This lighthearted, even kitsch, display seems frankly out of context with the rest of the interventions, though a legitimate strategy in its own right. It highlights a tension in the centre's programme between the needs for contemplation, information and encouraging action. There is a very clever and engaging mechanically interactive interface on the wall where you slide pointers to access hundreds of articles (conceived by Paul Amble).

After having been through a series of contained, materially varied environments, the exit to the ground floor seems undesigned and not intended as part of the controlled circulation





3.

and experience of the centre. And the permanent video piece by Marjetica Potrc, from Slovenia, is fantastic, but its installation does nothing for the space or her work. You then walk back through the side of the dark, temporary exhibition space to reach the Café de la Paix. It is covered in a pattern of shades of green and heavy black lines, a wall and ceiling mural by the acclaimed London painter Chris Ofili, for whom Adjaye famously designed an East End studio in London in 1998, as well as his solo installation in the British Pavilion at the Venice Art Biennale in 2003. The colours' foreignness in Norway is a good thing and refreshing, especially in the seasonal Nordic gloom, and the colour is the complement of the reception's red. But again, the green strikes me as too literal and romantic a symbol of peace, as pleasant a room as it is.

The Nobel Peace Centre raises difficult issues of the role of architecture in such programmes and the means by which architecture can convey meaning or feeling, especially when the programme is largely didactic and its material virtual. Adjaye's strategy of installations within the terminal is a strong one, but runs the risk of either the architect or the spectator wearying of yet another experience; put differently, it creates the problem of how to differentiate them and how to join them, which is especially acute within an existing building. There are two stunning and moving installations, but a strategy of material differentiation and a lack of attention to the in-between creates an unsatisfying rhythm through the centre. If some of the interventions are more successful than others, all of it is nevertheless carried off with panache.

2. The dimly lit 'Nobel Field' encourages contemplation as well as the acquisition of knowledge  
3. The horizontal, aluminium-clad gateway is the exact opposite of the Italianate train terminal in every way



4. The foyer; if you put  
your ear to the lights you  
can hear voices speaking  
about conflict and peace





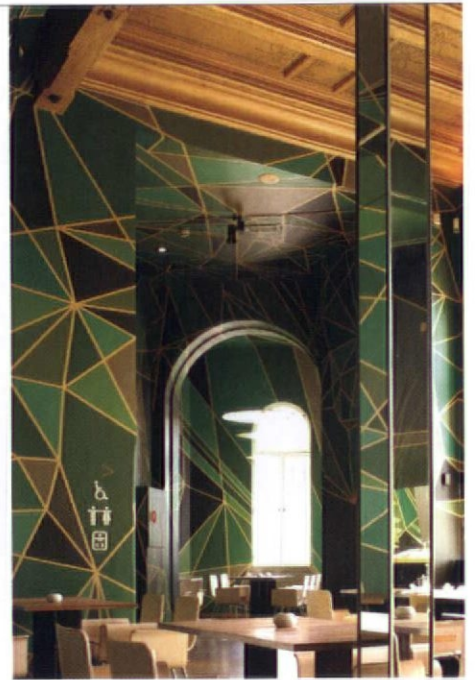






5.

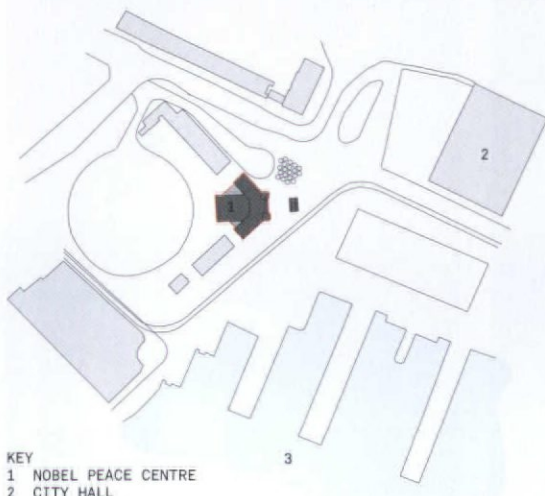




6.

5. Being surrounded by polished brass surfaces is a powerful, almost hallucinatory, experience  
 6. The wall and ceiling mural in the Café de la Paix is by Turner Prize winner Chris Ofili



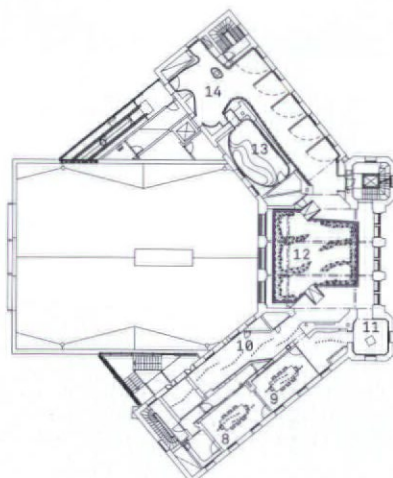


- KEY
- 1 NOBEL PEACE CENTRE
  - 2 CITY HALL
  - 3 HARBOURSIDE

Site plan

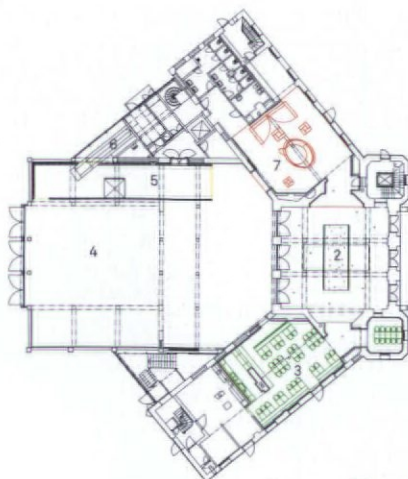


Axonometric

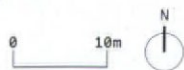


First-floor plan

- KEY
- 1 CANOPY
  - 2 REGISTER
  - 3 CAFE/RESTAURANT
  - 4 MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE
  - 5 LAUREATE AWARD SPACE
  - 6 ESCALATOR
  - 7 RECEPTION/BOOKSHOP
  - 8 CONFERENCE ROOM
  - 9 EDUCATION ROOM
  - 10 E-ROOM
  - 11 NOBEL CHAMBER
  - 12 NOBEL FIELD
  - 13 PROJECTION ROOM
  - 14 TEMPORARY/CONTEMPORARY



Ground-floor plan



## Credits

Total area of project  
1,401m<sup>2</sup>

Construction sum for project  
£4 million

### Architect

Adjaye/Associates: David Adjaye,  
Rashid Ali, Jennifer Boheim, Hannah  
Booth, James Carrigan, Nikolai  
Delvendahl, Mansour El-Khawad,  
Wen Hui Foo, Caroline Hinne,  
Paul La Tourelle, Yuko Minamide,  
John Moran, Karen Wong

### Client

Nobel Peace Centre

### Project managers

Grete Jarmund, Paul Amble

### Local architect

Anders W Andersen

### Interactive installations

Small Design Firm: David Small

### Specialist contractors

AVDesign (Nobel Field), Idema  
(Nobel Field), Intravision (Register),  
Hydro Aluminium (Canopy)



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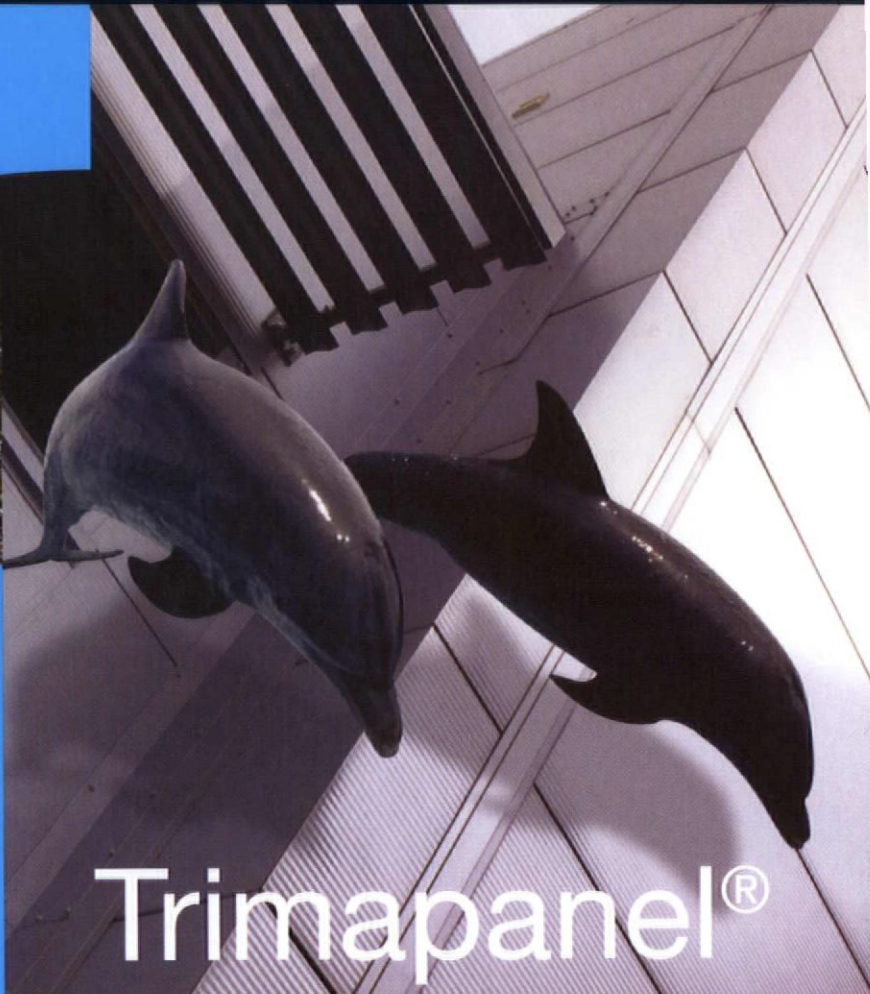
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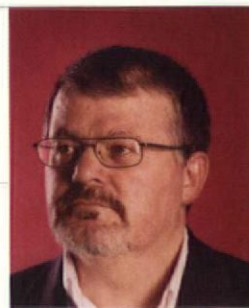
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## TALKING THE TALK

*By Austin Williams*

At AJ's 'Creating Sustainable Architecture' conference, David Lloyd Jones of Studio E presented the interesting thesis that an environmental aesthetic needn't look 'earnest'; Ted King of the ODPM gave us a few clues – but not many – about the new Code for Sustainable Building; and Duncan Baker-Brown of BBM Sustainable Design presented a refreshingly honest, warts-and-all run-through of his recycled materials projects. His use of coppiced chestnut in Glulam beams could catch on and, by using fairly untreated lambs' wool as insulation, which 'smells a bit when it gets wet', he said it is 'easier to detect leaks'.

King insisted that the proposed nationally recognised qualifications for surveyors for self-certification schemes is not meant to develop into a new construction profession, but be a modular extension of the architects' professional qualification. Furthermore, the government intends to publish

a new Code for Sustainable Homes to increase standards over and above building regulations, developing the EcoHomes standard with 'star ratings' (three stars being the minimum requirement).

Meanwhile, last week the ODPM announced the successful launch of the Bristol Accord. Even though it doesn't have the same ring to it as the Rio Summit or the Kyoto Protocol, a lot of the sustainable community's agenda has been invested in this agreement, which has been negotiated as the last official act of the UK's EU presidency.

The Bristol Accord attempts to quantify the characteristics of sustainable communities, which it has narrowed down to eight key points; they should be:

- active, inclusive and safe;
- well run;
- well connected;
- well served;
- environmentally sensitive;
- thriving;

- well designed and built; and
- fair for everyone.

'Fair for everyone' is a wide brief that calls for communities to cater for 'those in other communities, now and in the future'. 'Environmentally sensitive' communities 'actively seek to minimise climate change'; while 'well-designed communities' includes the stipulation that layouts should 'complement the distinctive local character of the community'. It omits 'enjoyable communities', which are, to my mind, places where managerial Eurocrats keep their noses out of ordinary people's lives, or 'real communities', where local people are given the honour of deciding for themselves whether they want to be seen as a 'generic community' anyway.

The accord succeeds in creating further tiers of debate, paperwork, research and sanction. Next November, after more meetings, ministerial commitments and the 'establishment of an expert

group', all this will result in the Sustainable Communities Skills Symposium (SCSS), which aims to 'build capacity in the generic skills required for creating sustainable communities'.

Maybe by next November I might understand this double speak sufficiently to be won over. Until then it sounds like simply a chance for another tier of quasi-autonomous civil society advocates to interfere in community development – whether communities like it or not.

Each member state has pledged a magnificent Euro 10,000 (£7,000) to set up the SCSS and the European Investment Bank has a central role in making it work. Lending to projects will be conditional on meeting the new criteria – which, it is hoped, will complement the Code for Sustainable Building. And, like the never-ending sustainability conference circuit, we have come full circle. Nice work if you can get it.





1.

## ALL GREENHEART USED WAS SOURCED FROM LONDON DOCKLANDS' SCRAP

*By Austin Williams*



2.

The first major all-timber building since the Great Fire in 1666 has been built in London. Set in the verdant surroundings of Lincoln's Inn Fields, the single-storey, open-plan linear structure has been designed by Cameron Scott of Timber Design and commissioned by the London Borough of Camden to serve as a 120-seat restaurant, owned by food writer Patrick Williams. The building is modular and mainly constructed in cassettes off-site meaning that, should the need arise, the building can be demounted with minimum adverse impact on the land around – and under – it.

Costing £280,000 to design and install (excluding fit-out), the project provides an unbroken internal space by constructing a structural post and beam system held together with traditional mortice and tenon joints fixed with pegs, supplemented with galvanised-steel brackets – each individually designed by Timber Design – to take the wind loads and lateral stresses.

Three trenches were dug to remove the grass and topsoil but also to get down to London gravel – a suitable bearing course for the timber 'piles'. This bearing level varied between 1m and 2m below ground level and recycled concrete hardcore was imported and compacted to bring the deeper dig up to a consistent 1m depth across the site.

At 3.6m bay locations, 800 x 800mm-square x 75mm-deep greenheart pads were placed with 100mm-square bearers with falling ridges which were approximately levelled. 350 x 200mm greenheart vertical posts – known as timber grillage foundations – were fixed to rise to above ground level with timber

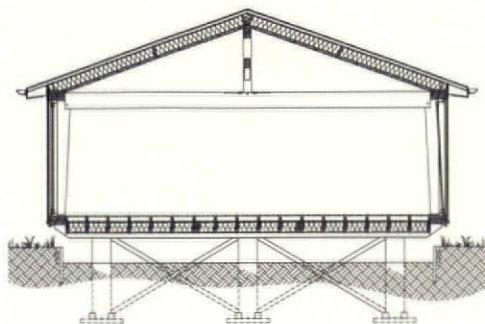
cross-bracing. The underfloor area was then backfilled with excavated material to leave a 500mm 'crawlway' for future repair access.

On top of this foundation grid, 350 x 200mm greenheart main floor beams were laid in place to level. Then three cassettes per bay width were installed, each comprising 195 x 75mm floor joists (laid perpendicular to the main beams) filled with Warmcell insulation held in place with Panelvent sheathing at the bottom and topped with FCS WBP ply. Joints between cassettes were gasketed and given a final levelling with 85 x 47mm softwood battens at 400mm centres and a sheathing floor with finishes by the restaurant owners.

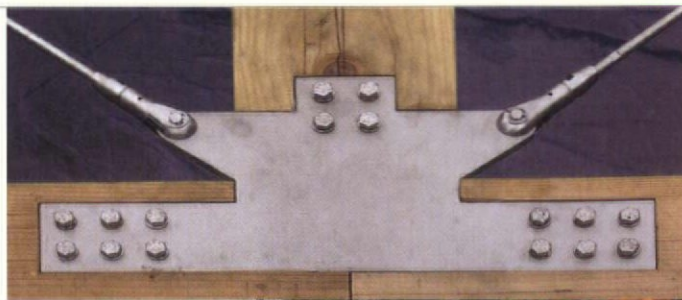
Douglas fir tapered posts take the 300 x 200mm Douglas fir main beam, which in turn carries the king posts and longitudinal bracing, all tenoned and pinned. The steel cable ties are held in discreet brackets chased into the beams to minimise visual intrusion. Such design detail for a feature never to be seen indicates the care that has gone into this simple building. The roof cassettes (4m long x 1.2m wide and with a U-value of 0.18) were erected before the glazed walls were brought to site, and the entire roof was installed in one day. The standing-seam covering is 'micro-engraved' to replicate a lead finish.

All greenheart was sourced from London Docklands' scrap and none was treated, not even cut ends. Scott suggests that the building should last at least 50 years – notwithstanding the vicissitudes of the restaurant market in London.





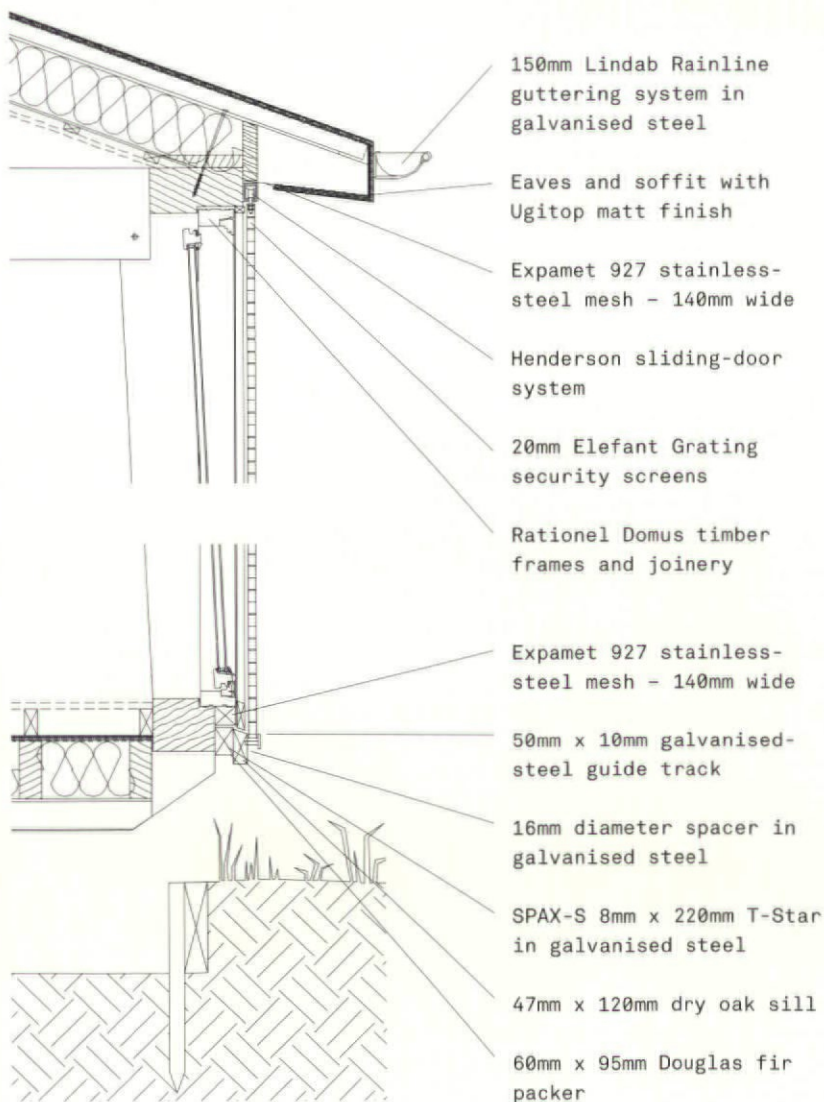
Section



3.



4.



1. The roof gable was the only part built on site
2. Ridge-beam and king-post bracing
3. A hidden cable bracket
4. Grillage foundations before backfilling

## Credits

### Client

London Borough of Camden

### Architect

Timber Design: Cameron Scott,  
www.timberdesign.com

### Engineer

Andrew Smith Consulting Engineers:  
David Yeomans and Andrew Smith  
Project management

Econstruction: Giles Frampton  
Main contractor

The Timber Frame Company:  
Jim Blackburn

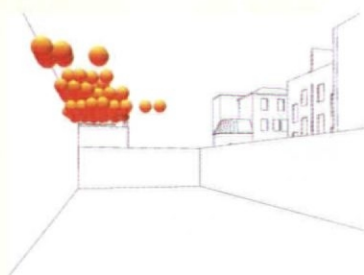
Structural steelwork

Hercules CSMD: Rob Crang

Photos

Cameron Scott: Mark Winwood





1.

It is not often that a client lets you spend even six months on the pre-design. But Gianni Botsford has taken the eight years since he left the Architectural Association (AA) to complete a house in Notting Hill, London. With that timescale, six months is almost nothing. And the research, carried out in conjunction with Arup, has paid off – with a very happy client and an intelligent and distinctly personal plan.

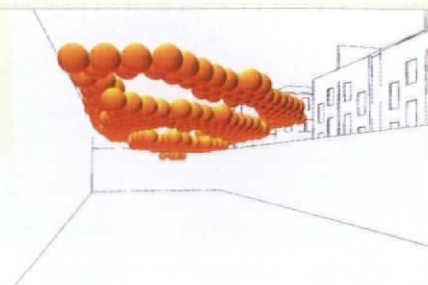
At the AA, Botsford was a student of the legendary John Frazer, guru of evolutionary design computation and intelligent and interactive building design systems. Frazer developed the notion of evolutionary architecture as 'an attempt to achieve in the built environment the symbiotic behaviour and metabolic balance that are characteristic of the natural environment'.

Architectural concepts become descriptions in a genetic language, which produces a coded script of instructions for form-generation. There is still doubt about exactly how to code structural form in these genetic algorithms and, similarly, how to deal with conflicting and ill-defined criteria. Yet the innovation is coming close to that goal of intuition-free and artistry independent design, based not on the architect's visual and spatial genius but on the hard reality of the programme as defined by the site, client, location, local building ordinances and the like.

Architects say that this is what they do anyway. But they only really do it because the data changes. Altering the orientation

## THIS COMES VERY CLOSE TO INTUITION-FREE ARCHITECTURE

*By Sutherland Lyall*



2.

of, say, a sun louvre has a knock-on effect on a whole series of things, from the assessment of the design of the elevations to the number of summer cooling devices that are needed. Importantly, when the newly created data is re-run, the overall results change, so this is an iterative process.

Data can be anything from desirable traffic conditions in a city-wide plan; to maximum allowable housing densities; to the cost of door handles. At Notting Hill, the basic data was: sunlight, daylight, the site and the client's brief. The latter included a small chapel and an antipathy to traditional east-facing bedroom windows. The less-than-ideal site was a 15m x 40m x 10m hole in the local environment with one side 5m higher than the rest. The 'hole' was created by the properties surrounding it on all but the street side. As well as involving 14 party wall agreements, this meant that getting light in was going to be a problem.

Andy Sedgwick at Arup, which has been supportive of Botsford's work, used the Radiance program to produce the daylight and sunlight information. This is a lighting program developed at Lawrence Berkeley National Labs which has been used by NASA on the Hubble repair programme. It uses ray-tracing techniques to compute the amount of light travelling through a point in a given direction – effectively operating as an artificial sun machine.

The first analysis took the form of a three-dimensional 1m x 1m x 1m grid, populating the 'hole' with what are called





3.



4.

- 1 & 2. Clouds of balls represent environmental conditions at the top plane of the site
3. Real-life model used to inspect data as a group
4. Another way of visualising sun and daylight data over time

voxels at the 6,000 or so grid intersections. Voxel imaging is currently used mainly in CAT scans and magnetic resonance imaging, but is also starting to be used in computer-game design. Voxels can be thought of as three-dimensional pixels, which have information to do with, say, temperature, sunlight, colour and wind direction attached.

Radiance could cope with daylight and sunlight data: temperature, time, shading and so on – a total of 12 attributes for each of the 6,000 voxels. These were data-mined using in-house and AA-developed software and, following Botsford's evaluation, were modified and returned to Arup for fresh processing. Each iteration took a couple of weeks, which explains the six months. At the same time, client data was incorporated.

The early part of this work concentrated on finding the best position for the 60m<sup>2</sup> garden that the client wanted. This, together with the effective requirement that bedrooms should be on the ground floor, began to define the best locations of rooms, though not necessarily their inter-relationships. Botsford emphasises that throughout this six-month preliminary period no design drawing was done. He says: 'The only drawing done was of the data. It was quite difficult to understand the data and to visualise the information and its potential consequences. The ball diagrams we did were quite useful, but it is important to remember that they represent data and not architecture. There were also models whose layered contours represented the edges between the high and low levels of daylight and controlled sunlight.'

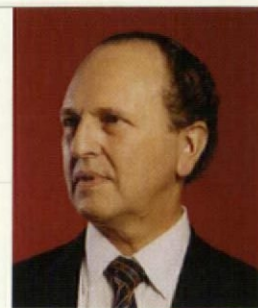
At the beginning, Botsford says: 'We began to understand what the site was and how, for example, the houses to the south affected the site more than a church, closer by and due south. A lot of what we were looking at was avoiding preconceptions.'

'Eventually, the client wanted to see what the house was going to look like,' Botsford says, 'and we were able to make some quick moves on the basis of what we had. So we did a first shot – and the data changed. We realised that this could go on forever and that it would be a future aim to find a way of fixing elements within this data soup. The analysis thereafter was a more conventional design process.'

Could this all be done with a less compliant client? Botsford says that the preliminary stage should take a lot less time. And he has carried out a modified version of the process on a major masterplanning project where it was possible to identify plots of building land which met all the developer's criteria and develop a layout – rather than simply taking a punt and talking it up in the presentation.

The completed house has high ceilings, top lighting, shafts of light penetrating to the ground, gardens and an intriguing plan. Commentators have been bemused that the preliminary processes seem to have produced no more than a very competent Modernist house. But what else should they expect? At least the strategic spatial decisions were based on hard, real environmental analysis rather than the equivalent of monkeys and typewriters.





## THINK LOCALLY

By Brian Waters

Britain is building too many small homes – two-bedroom flats – and not nearly enough family houses. The annual shortage of three-bedroom homes is now put at 350,000<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, our dwellings are sub-standard by international comparison. The Policy Exchange has published two papers<sup>2</sup> which look at this.

They find that Britain's new houses are only 76m<sup>2</sup> on average – a far cry from the 109m<sup>2</sup> in Germany, 116m<sup>2</sup> in the Netherlands or 137m<sup>2</sup> in Denmark. Britain's stock is also comparatively old, with 38.5 per cent of dwellings built before 1945. In Italy, Germany and Austria this is below 30 per cent and in Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Finland it is below 20 per cent. But while these figures suggest the British dwelling stock is of rather poor quality, nowhere, over the past three decades, has house price inflation been stronger than in the UK; British property prices have more than tripled.

It seems that the rest of the developed world enjoys living in modern, spacious and affordable accommodation, while we 'live in houses where single-glazing windows moving against each other can hardly be cleaned and hot and cold water runs from two separate taps' as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* recently parodied.

Policy Exchange research fellow Dr Oliver Hartwich says that the planning system has made it possible to control, and effectively to restrain, the housing supply. However, a planning system that produces such poor-quality housing could only persist over time because it was justified on the grounds of some public interest. He said: 'The British have been led to believe they are living on an overcrowded island, that the countryside has almost disappeared under concrete and that building on brownfields and protecting greenfields is absolutely necessary. Nothing, could be further from the truth.'

Debunking each of these myths, Hartwich points out that far from being overcrowded, only around 8 per cent of the UK is urbanised; urbanisation is much higher in the North West than the South East; plants and animals thrive in low-density residential areas; and agricultural land is overprotected and subsidised.

To see if other countries are more successful in delivering bigger, better and cheaper homes, Hartwich compared the situation in the UK with that in Germany, Switzerland, Ireland and Australia. Of the four countries examined, Ireland and Australia derive their planning systems from the British model and the housing problems bear a strong resemblance to the British situation, with rising prices and frustrated first-time buyers.

He said: 'Germany and Switzerland, in contrast, operate localised zoning systems under which local planners and politicians are directly

confronted with the effects of their decisions. Local politicians know that their budgets largely depend on attracting new residents, and planning policy has a strong influence on their budgets. This forces the local politicians to engage in competition (literally) to make their cities more "attractive" – meaning both pleasant places to live and places that will draw more inhabitants.'

If this is the key to their success – a localised and incentivised system of competition in planning – then it should not be difficult to figure out the important lessons for Britain.

1. RICS five-year housing review
2. Unaffordable Housing – Fables and Myths; Bigger, Better, Faster. Visit: [www.policyexchange.org.uk](http://www.policyexchange.org.uk)

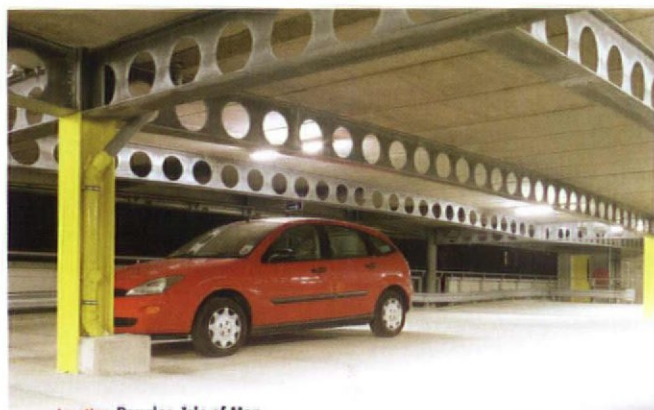
Brian Waters is principal of the Boisot Waters Cohen partnership, visit [www.bwcp.co.uk](http://www.bwcp.co.uk)



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## SHOULD YOU BACK THE MAC?

In the spirit of Xmas accord, I have been working on a Mac for the past couple of weeks. Alright, it was the only spare computer available during a stint at AJ Towers.

The first two days were marked by extreme irritation across the AJ subs' desk as I asked important but infantile questions about the Mac version of Word, the answers to which were actually available by hitting Help or more usefully via the methodology known as 'suck it and see'. I have, in my defence, to say that nobody claims that being able to open the CD drive without inner Mac knowledge is exactly intuitive.

OK, so was I simply bowled over by the Mac experience? Er, what experience would that be exactly? I have always run Windows in a Mac-like way – using icons on the desktop rather than menus. And Mac Word is, well, PC Word with a few local differences. So, as I suspected, for the average Joe who uses computers in the office as opposed to completely believing in them, there is not really a lot in the Mac v PC controversy. Except that Mac cases and accessories are designed and PCs usually look like car crashes.

Glad I have sorted that out then. Noël.  
[sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com](mailto:sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com)

## TEACHING OF TORTS

There are some types of claim that are guaranteed to have the lawyers running for the text books, writes *Kim Franklin*. When one building has withdrawn the support it provided to another, for example; or if a civil servant has been guilty of 'misfeasance in public office'. The nuisance claim about the pigeon droppings on the rail commuters is another good example. The common feature of these actions is that they are all based on the law of tort.

With contract, once you know the rules, the legal analysis tends to slip into place. With tort, however, you have no agreement between the parties from which to distil and make sense of the documents. Nor do you have an Act of Parliament to puzzle over and construe. Instead, you have to turn to a long tradition of decided cases relevant to your problem. That's where the textbooks come in.

Armed with the authorities, you can then work out on which side of the line your case falls. Is the claimant entitled to a remedy or not? The problem with claims based on tort is that each claim is different, so where do you draw the line?

The problem was illustrated neatly in the case of *Laiqat v Majid* (Judgment 22.6.05), which concerned allegations of invasion of airspace. Such

a claim conjures visions of intruding tower cranes, low-flying aeroplanes and other projectiles but, in fact, this case concerned an extractor fan which protruded from the Khyber House, a hot food takeaway shop in Bradford. The claimants and defendants were related to each other but had fallen out.

The claimant and her family sought an order for the removal of the extractor fan because it trespassed on their land and was a nuisance. The extractor, which was about 1.5m-high, was located about 4.5m above ground level. The casing, which was of galvanised mild steel, protruded 750mm into the claimant's rear yard. At the trial the judge found that, while the extractor was 'not particularly attractive', it did not interfere with any 'normal activity' in the garden and was not, therefore, deemed to be a trespass.

The appeal judge reviewed the cases on invasion of airspace, which ranged from signs protruding by mere inches from a single-storey tobacco shop, to the over-sailing boom of a tower crane. In one case, the defendant used a low-flying aeroplane to obtain aerial photographs of the claimant's country residence.

One line of cases said that adjoining owners had no right to erect structures overhanging their neighbours' land.

The other said that the right to airspace did not extend to the stratosphere, but ran out where it was no longer necessary 'for the ordinary use and enjoyment of the land and structures on it'. Above that height, the individual has no greater rights to the airspace than any other member of the public.

Having drawn a line through the atmosphere, the appeal court had no difficulty in deciding that the extractor fell well below it and was, therefore, a trespass.

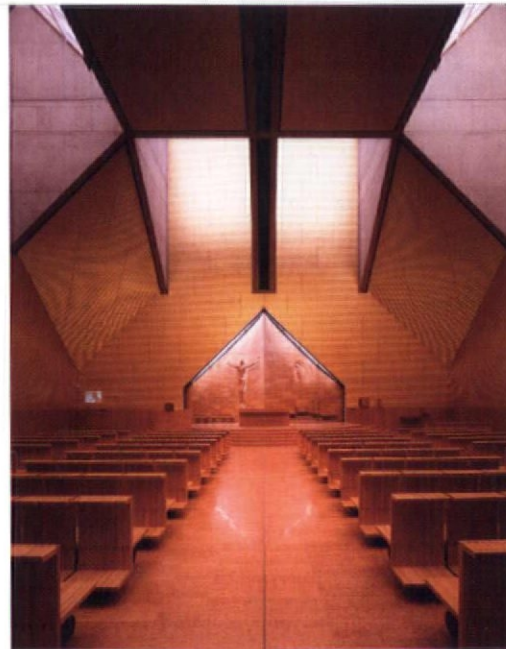
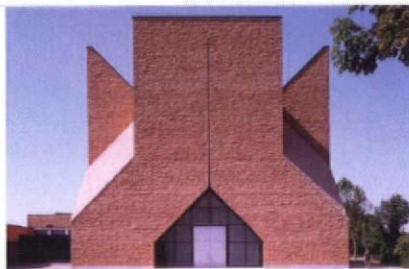
*Kim Franklin is a barrister and chartered arbitrator at Crown Office chambers in London. Visit [www.crownofficechambers.com](http://www.crownofficechambers.com)*



## EXHIBITION

By Kenneth Powell

Mario Botta: The Architecture of the Sacred: Prayers in Stone  
At the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1,  
until 14 January



ENRICO CANO

Exterior and interior of Botta's church in Seriate

Minimalism, Neo-Modernism, 'the new simplicity' – these are the characteristics of current Swiss architecture. The work of Peter Zumthor, Gigon Guyer, Diener & Diener and, best known, Herzog & de Meuron typifies this approach and has made Switzerland a major force on the global architectural scene and certainly an influence in the UK.

The architecture of Mario Botta appears to be completely at odds with the ethos of Minimalism and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, yet Botta is one of the leading Swiss architects today, and the interest generated by his recent lecture at the RIBA suggests that his work is well regarded in this country, though he has yet to build here. Accompanied by a handsome book (Editrice Compositori, £34), this is a

striking exhibition. Drawings, excellent photographs and some stunning models make it a show that really should not be missed.

By British standards Botta, now in his 60s, is an exotic figure, his work strongly rooted in history and an overriding preoccupation with form. His is an architecture of masonry, stone and brick, of solids and voids, of memorable shapes. In Britain, it begs comparison with the later work of James Stirling, but could equally be damned by association with the meagre legacy of Post-Modernism, a movement which some in this country find not just aesthetically offensive but morally too.

Such an association would, however, be mistaken. Botta is, of course, an Italian-speaking Swiss from the Ticino and

studied in Milan and Venice before collaborating on projects with two titans of Modern architecture, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn. A preoccupation with the cylindrical form emerged as early as 1980 with the house in Stabio, a project much revisited by other architects who share Botta's central concerns. It surfaced again in larger projects such as the new cathedral at Evry, France, and the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, completed in 1995.

There is nothing in Botta's work of the facetiousness of the worst of PoMo. Along with the urban concerns of the Italian tradition, Botta was imbued with a regard for the Romanesque churches and dignified farm buildings of his native region as well as an enthusiasm for the Baroque

of Borromini. Churches do not figure prominently in the work of most contemporary architects, but Botta has designed many – 11 are shown in this exhibition (and one synagogue) and they range in scale from a tiny cemetery chapel near Lucca to the Evry cathedral. All are numinous structures, loaded with meaning; some of them (the church at Mogno, for instance) set in sublime landscapes.

Botta has been distinctly under-appreciated in Britain. This exhibition convinces me, at least, that he is a truly major architect in the mould of those great figures whose work was such a potent inspiration for him, and certainly the most significant church architect alive today.

*Kenneth Powell is a London-based architectural journalist*

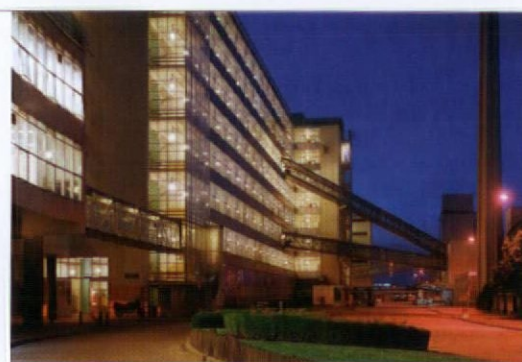




## BOOK

By Richard Waite

Hong Kong:  
Front Door/Back Door  
By Michael Wolf.  
Thames & Hudson,  
2005. 120pp. £29.99



## BOOK

Van Nelle: Monument  
in Progress  
Uitgeverij De Hef  
Publishers, 2005.  
294pp. €69.90 (£47)

Michael Wolf's Hong Kong is not the neon-lit, never-stop tourists' dream from the travel brochures. His city seems strangely empty – an eerie, dirty landscape almost entirely devoid of people.

Photographs of endless, concrete tower-block facades meet with close-ups of makeshift chairs in grimy back alleys to create an intriguing, unpopulated world. But even in the pictures of the skyscrapers there are hints – like bright curtains or washing lines – that point to an existence behind the anonymous exteriors.

These vast canvases of modern, high-rise architecture often resemble textile designs. In many of them it is difficult to get your bearings, with few clues to help you understand the scale or orientation of the repetitive rows of balconies,

windows and air-conditioning units. It is hard to believe some of these massive, never-ending panoramas have not been created by stitching different photographs together.

The surprise in this book – with its 71 beautiful colour images – is the contrast between shots of towering apartments and more intimate portraits of life at ground level. Pictures of mops wedged behind mucky pipes, and paper cups rammed on metal fences expose the reality of the daily grind and the squalor of parts of the city.

To tie these images together Wolf relies on recurring splashes of colour – but if there is one criticism of this beguiling book, it's that this leads to some contrived set-pieces. A dyed pink poodle on a table is a step too far and an unneeded artificial diversion.

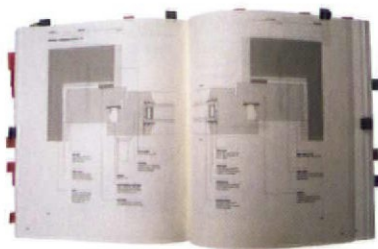
With its gleaming curtain wall and tremendous dynamism, the Van Nelle factory, by a canal on the outskirts of Rotterdam, is one of the Modern Movement's great early monuments, writes *Andrew Mead*.

Designed by Brinkman and Van der Vlugt with Mart Stam, and largely completed by 1930, this huge plant for processing tea, coffee and tobacco continued to function – with changes of ownership and a shrinking workforce – until the mid-1990s, when its future became pressing. Partly converted and renovated, it is now the Van Nelle Design Factory, housing 50 or more businesses and several architectural practices (though one prospective lessee, the wonderfully named Now & Wow nightclub, sadly fell by the wayside).

So the subtitle of this bulky book, 'monument in progress', is spot on, and all the issues around the Van Nelle's re-use are just one strand of an enormously thorough account of the building's past and present. In scope and detail, it rivals Karel Ksandr's benchmark book on Loos' Villa Muller.

*En route* it addresses questions of authorship (how involved was Mart Stam?); puts the Van Nelle factory in context with Brinkman and Van der Vlugt's other work and Modernism generally; explains construction and re-use with plenty of technical detail; and marshals a wide range of images, old and new, to become visually enticing. For many buildings such treatment could be overkill, but this mini-monument is something that the Van Nelle deserves.





1.



2.



HELENE BINET

3.

## CRITIC'S CHOICE

By Andrew Mead

Books Of The Year:  
a selection of the best  
books reviewed in the  
AJ in 2005

### Álvaro Siza: Private Houses

By Alessandra Cianchetta. Skira, £39

'Without ever trying too hard, Siza gets all the moves right'  
(Murray Fraser, AJ 31.03.05)

### As Built: Caruso St John

a+t, £26

'A simply excellent monograph' (John Pardey, AJ 06.10.05)

### Constructing Architecture

Edited by Andrea Deplazes. Birkhäuser, £34

'A source of reference and inspiration to both architects and students' (Stephen Bates, AJ 20.10.05)

### Jørn Utzon Logbooks: Volumes I & III

Edition Bløndal, £35 each

'Will build the reputation of an architect who has much to offer as a correction to our image-driven culture' (Alan Powers, 21.04.05)

### Louis I Kahn

By Robert McCarter. Phaidon, £49.95

'A solid student textbook' (Elain Harwood, AJ 09.06.05)

### Mies van der Rohe: The Krefeld Villas

By Kent Kleinman and Leslie Van Duzer. Princeton Architectural Press, £25

'This is incisive writing' (David Wild, AJ 03.11.05)

### Modern: The Modern Movement in Britain

By Alan Powers and Morley von Sternberg. Merrell, £35

'A beautiful book, packed with ideas, elegantly written'  
(Kenneth Powell, AJ 21.07.05)

### Philip Webb

By Sheila Kirk. Wiley, £29.99

'What must be the standard reference for the modern reader'  
(Dean Hawkes, AJ 21.07.05)

### The Charged Void: Urbanism

By Alison and Peter Smithson. Monacelli, £45

'The Smithsons' currency has never been greater'  
(Jonathan Sergison, AJ 05.05.05)

### The Dictionary of Urbanism

By Robert Cowan. Streetwise Press, £29.95

'I wonder how we ever did without it' (Joe Holyoak, AJ 28.04.05)

### 2G 34: Sergison Bates

Gustavo Gili, £21.50

'Sergison Bates has a carefully cultivated oeuvre that fits the 2G format well' (Neil Gillespie, AJ 10.11.05)

For full reviews of these and more 'Books of the Year'  
visit [www.ajplus.co.uk](http://www.ajplus.co.uk)



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**Interiors Technician,**  
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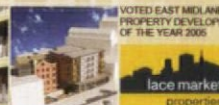
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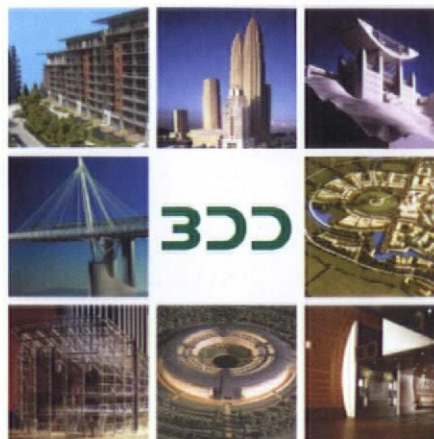
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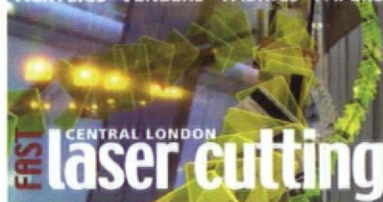


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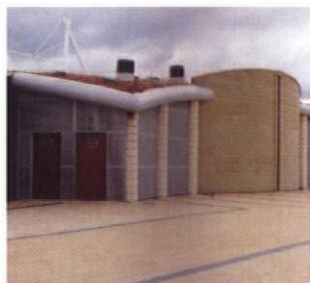
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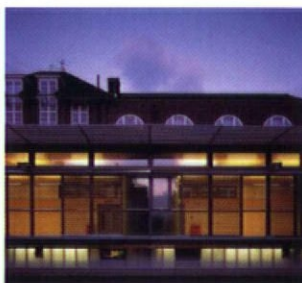
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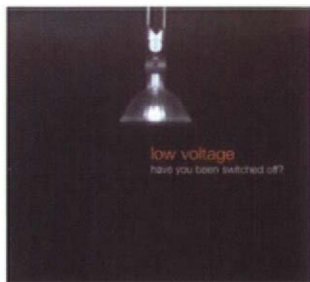
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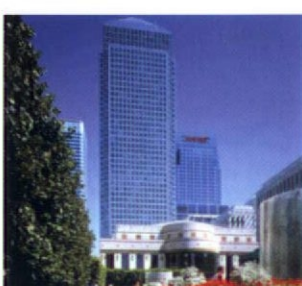
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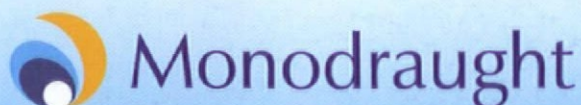


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