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BISHOP MUST DEVELOP A LIGHTNESS OF TOUCH SO GENTLE IT IS INTANGIBLE

By Ed Dorrell

It seems apt at the time of the Conservative Party conference to ponder the right-wing concept of 'small government' – that the economy and the country benefit if the state adopts a 'lightness of touch' in dealing with individuals or businesses.

This magazine has little business coming down on either side of the socialist-capitalist debate. But the appointment of Peter Bishop (see pages 12-13) to head up the new organisation Design for London, brings the question sharply into focus. Does the capital really need yet another tier of architectural governance?

When Labour set up CABE in 1997, most architects greeted the birth of the quango with open arms, and it has largely done a good job.

Then in 2000, with the creation of the position of Mayor of London, Ken arrived. Livingstone was handed the power to draw up the London Plan and to veto developments. The mayor is also in charge of the London Development Agency and Transport for London,

both of which are heavily involved with development in the capital. And, of course, there are the boroughs themselves; English Heritage; the Royal Parks; and any number of conservation groups to contend with. It is all becoming a bit much.

Design for London, a Livingstone invention aiming to 'integrate' design policy in his growing empire, represents yet another box to be ticked for architects.

But is it really necessary? Will it not overlap with just about every other organisation out there? Will it make any difference at all – other than as an obstacle to wealth creation?

Bishop says that his role and the role of his organisation are yet to be entirely defined. He must see this as an opportunity. He must make sure that he develops a 'lightness of touch' so gentle that it is almost intangible. This is his only option if he doesn't want to be considered just another meddling civil servant.



CONTRIBUTORS



Peter Thompson, who writes about the specification of a glazed facade on pages 41-43 of the Technical & Practice section, is a facade engineer at Buro Happold



Neil Bridge, who photographs Will Alsop and Palestra for the cover and Building Study (pages 25-37), is a photographer whose work has been in Arena and the Independent



Joe Holyoak, who reviews Design Like You Give a Damn on page 45, is an architect, urban designer and a reader at Birmingham School of Architecture

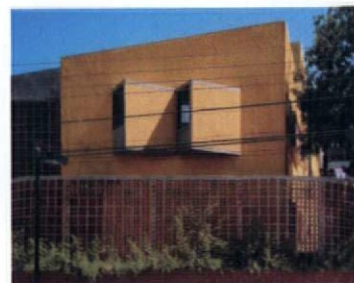
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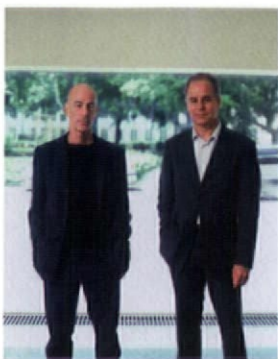
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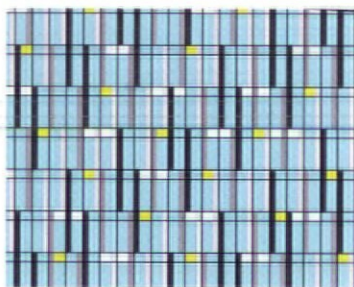
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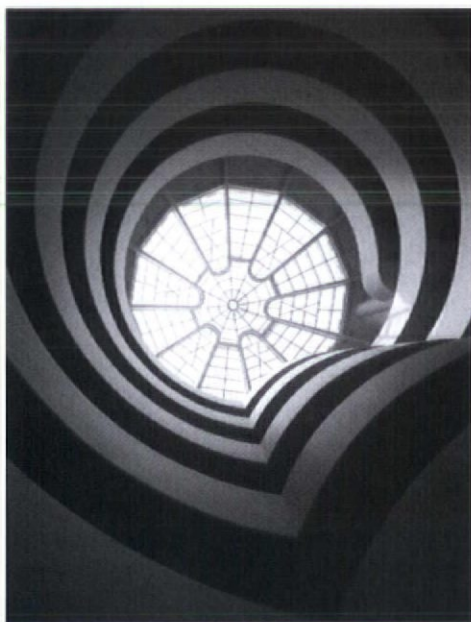
THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

- Alsop slams appointment of 'manager' as London's design director (see pages 12-13)
- **Regeneration boss attempts to play down Pathfinder legal blow (right)**
- Designers sought for 'people's playground' in Blackpool
- Southampton practice embroiled in negligence claim



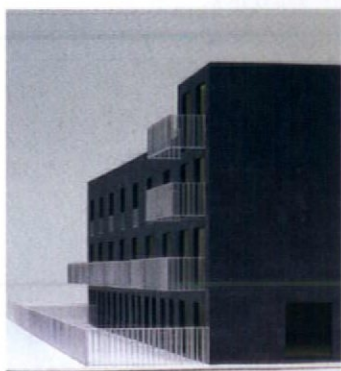
FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

- CBE slams MAKE's Cube scheme for Birmingham
- Arts Council cash gets Levitt Bernstein's Colston Hall project back on track
- Arup report 'shows zero-carbon Olympic village is within reach'
- **Work finally starts on refurb of New York's famous Guggenheim (right)**



MONDAY 2 OCTOBER

- **Brum viewing platform to break Midlands height record**
- Enfield 'throws out rule book' to reject KSS' Spurs training ground
- Bloc wins the V&A's battle of the 40 Under 40 young guns
- Green campaigner George Monbiot plans Gehry exposé



TUESDAY 3 OCTOBER

- Final hurdle set to be cleared as King's Cross S106 deal agreed
- Construction students threaten to boycott 'badly designed' Bond Bryan building
- Gehry plans to 'better Bilbao' with museum for France's richest man
- **Fretton gets thumbs-up for Cheeky Chappy Brixton scheme (left)**



WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER

- **Second Hodder swimming pool closes amid rumours (above)**
- ARB removes Glasgow designer from register
- Zaha finalises design for new civic building in Montreal
- Canterbury Cathedral calls for £50 million to stave off 'structural disaster'



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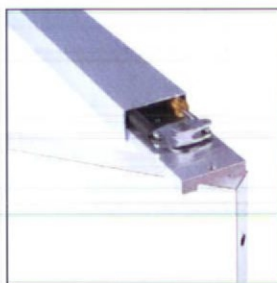
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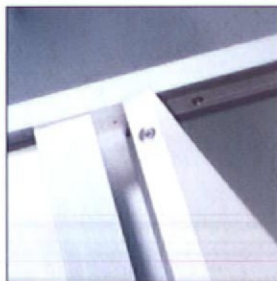
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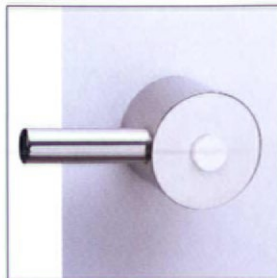
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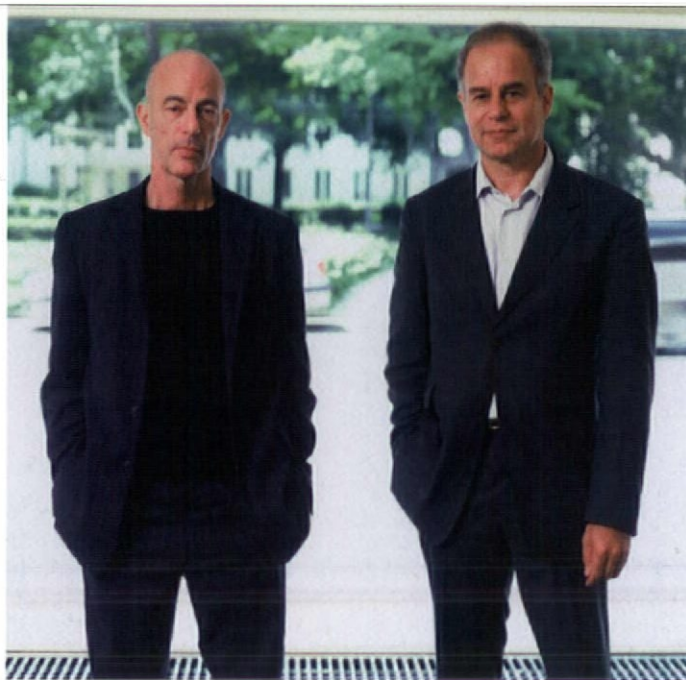
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1. Jacques Herzog (left) and Pierre de Meuron
2. The seminal Goetz Collection, Munich

SWISS STARS SCOOP GOLD

By Richard Waite

Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron has won this year's RIBA Royal Gold Medal.

The prestigious award, which was due to be rubber-stamped by the RIBA council yesterday (4 October), will be handed to the practice in recognition of its worldwide architectural achievements.

The decision catapults the practice into a star-studded hall of fame. Previous winners of the 158-year-old honour include Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier.

Founded in 1978 by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, the practice is best known on the global stage for its work on Tate Modern and its eagerly anticipated Olympic Stadium in Beijing.

The two Basel-born architects have lived almost parallel lives, having studied

together at the ETH in Zurich before forming their practice.

With partners Christine Binswanger and Harry Gugger, the firm has more than 150 staff in offices in Basel, London, Munich and San Francisco.

Herzog and de Meuron are no strangers to success, having shared the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2001.

The practice also won the Stirling Prize three years ago with the Laban Centre in Deptford – and couldn't be considered previously with its Tate Modern scheme because, at the time, the project architect Gugger did not have a UK-recognised Part 3 qualification.

The Stirling Prize rules were changed as a result.

One of Herzog & de Meuron's earliest appearances on the UK architectural radar was the seminal Goetz

Collection building in Munich, which was visited by Tate supremo Nicholas Serota. It is thought this trip helped secure the practice's appointment to redesign the Bankside power station site.

The firm has since landed major cultural projects – such as the Walker Art Gallery extension in Minneapolis and the de Young museum in San Francisco – as well as stadia and other high-profile schemes around the world.

And in July the practice was asked back to London's Bankside to design the all-new 'glass pyramid' extension to Tate Modern.

Before the practice is handed the annual Gold Medal, the council's recommendation must be personally approved by the Queen.

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

By Richard Vaughan

The appointment of London's first design director was not without irony. For when Peter Bishop takes up his new job in January, he will be doing so in the Palestra building – designed by one of his main competitors for the role, Will Alsop (see *Building Study*, pages 25-37).

The selection of Bishop came as a surprise, with Alsop and Ricky Burdett seen as being favourites for the job. But there is no doubt in the winner's mind that he is the right choice; despite grumblings over the role being given to a 'manager', not a designer.

With nearly 30 years of experience working in London, Bishop has overseen some of the capital's biggest developments and is under no illusion how great an undertaking it is.

'I think to have this idea of needing to be a designer is

missing the point of the job,' he says. 'And I hope to be sitting with Will Alsop soon having a good talk over a drink.'

Bishop adds: 'I'm not a big name in design or architecture but I don't have to be – I know how cities work.'

'This job is about giving focus. It doesn't matter how brilliant a designer you are if you can't implement designs and bring ideas together. It's not just about being a manager.'

Bishop will be heading up design in the Mayor's new Design for London (DfL) team, bringing together existing teams from the Greater London Authority (GLA), the London Development Agency, and possibly Transport for London.

The details of the new design director's role are still being worked out, but Bishop says he will be looking to

'advise, change, channel and shape ideas', as well as create an open dialogue about the future of London.

'DfL has to engage with all Londoners, and we will be trying to get as many people excited about their city as possible,' he says.

'It has to operate on a range of levels, unifying broader themes with more detailed ones, such as looking at the psychology of a city, right down to studying the detailed design of streets.'

He adds: 'I also want it to be flexible and permeable. We'll be looking at seconding people in and out of the unit, trying to establish good working relationships with architecture schools throughout London.'

The enthusiasm with which Bishop speaks about his new role is immediately obvious.



Local authority veteran Peter Bishop was a surprise choice for the new role of London's design director

He claims to have 'the best job in Britain', and is quick to allay fears that DfL may take powers from other design bodies.

There have been concerns from CABE over how the two bodies will sit together, but Bishop says he is mindful that the DfL should complement such organisations – to be a 'natural forum, which does not duplicate work'.

The positive messages coming from London's new design guru are unlikely to appease everyone, but the role has been successful in other European cities, such as Barcelona, and Bishop will be looking abroad for inspiration.

'I don't have a blueprint to follow – I think I would be very dangerous if I did,' he says. 'But I will be looking elsewhere, as there's an awful lot that we can learn.'

'We will be completely open to ideas, and hopefully, in a few years' time, people from other countries will be coming to look at what DfL is doing.'

Bishop is well aware the UK is perceived as being too conservative in its architecture, and this is at the top of his list of things to change.

To do this, he is not afraid of employing the services of international architects. DfL, Bishop says, will be picking the best of British and international practices.

'You can only really count on one hand the number of foreign architects building in London, although they are working on some of the stand-out schemes in the city,' he says.

'But there are an awful lot of extremely good young practices coming through at the moment, and hopefully

there will be a willingness from them to get involved and work with us.'

For the time being, Bishop will carry on as director of culture and environment at Camden Council, but he is keen to begin the design debate.

He says, 'There is an awful lot of talk of the effect of tall buildings on London's skyline, and rightly so. But there is the widely overlooked problem of how buildings meet the ground.'

'All too often big developments can create a vacuum, as the 'edge' areas of the scheme are left behind. I want to look at integrating the edges of developments, a field of design still generally neglected.'

Which begs the question: will Bishop be entirely comfortable with the idea of calling Alsop's ambitious high-rise Palestra scheme 'the office'?

PETER BISHOP – CV

1976

Manchester University: degree in town and country planning

1978

London Borough of Westminster: worked in development-control team

1980

London Borough of Islington: head of policy-research team

1984

London Borough of Tower Hamlets: head of implementation and landscape department

1985

London Borough of Tower Hamlets: director of planning

1987

London Borough of Haringey: head of property, planning and architecture department

1997

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham: director of environment

2001

London Borough of Camden: director of culture and environment

2007

Design for London: director

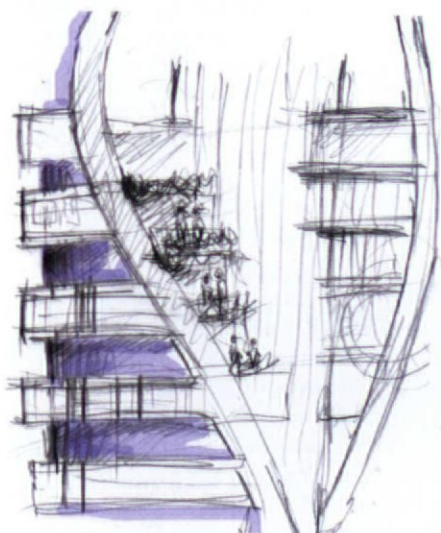
MAKE GETS IN A TWIST

MAKE Architects has unveiled these images of its proposals for a 35-storey skyscraper in Hong Kong. If the tower wins planning permission it will join a number of high-rise schemes springing up west of the old Hong Kong airport, where building height used to be restricted to just 11 storeys due to low flight paths. Mirroring the shape of the Zantedeschia lily, the 150m-tall mixed-use residential and leisure building will wrap around a central core and boast a series of 'spiralling' terraces. Project architect Frank Filskow said: 'We want people in the apartments not to have to live completely inside all the time.' Each floor will contain only two flats – most with four bedrooms to accommodate extended families.

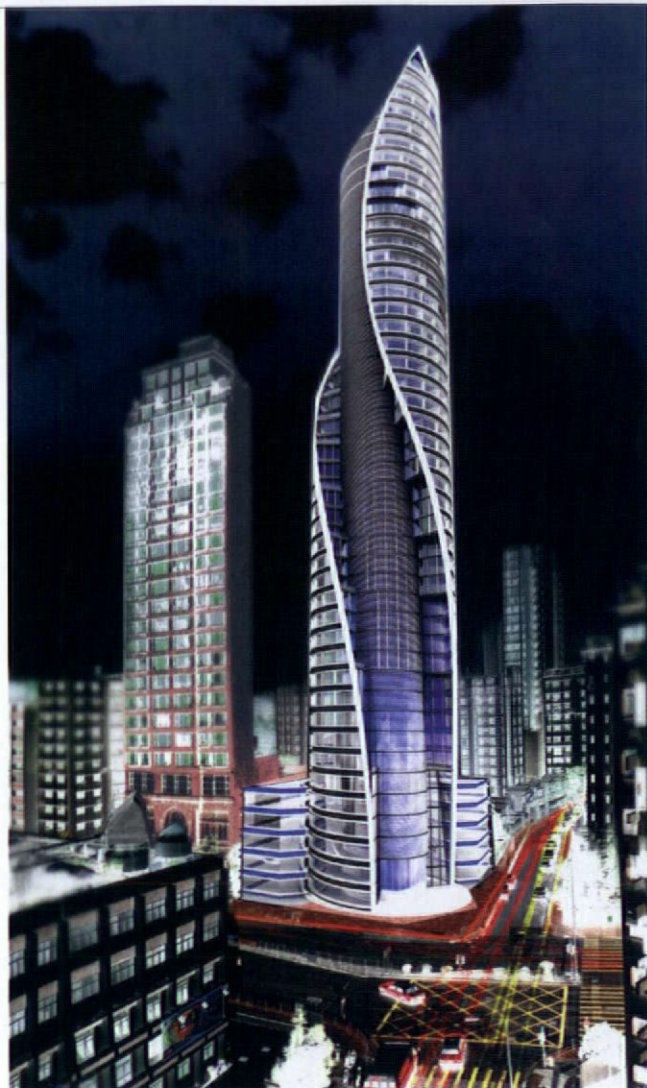
By Richard Waite



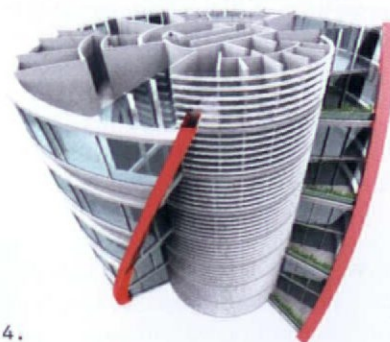
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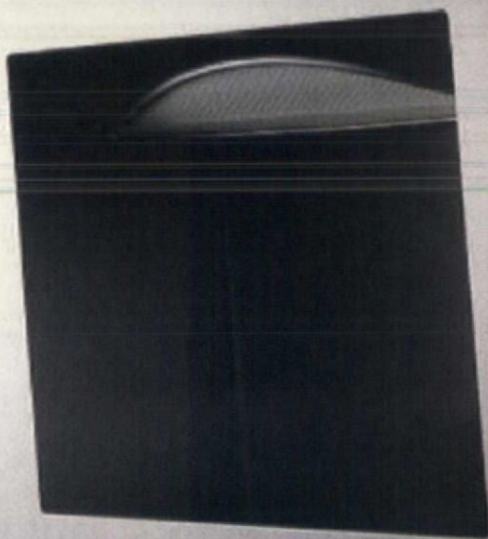
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1. The Zantedeschia lily inspired the scheme
2. Concept sketch
3. The Hong Kong tower will wrap around a core
4. The building will boast 'spiralling' terraces

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COLIN BOYNE 1921 – 2006

By Peter Carolin

'Colin Boyne's consistent effort through the AJ... supporting and encouraging architecture as a useful, cooperative art – rational, humane, socially responsible and technically competent – has been a heroic contribution,' wrote Hugh Morris after the former AJ editor's retirement from the Architectural Press in 1984. Boyne died last week, aged 85.

Wounded in the Burma campaign and invalided out of the Indian Army, Boyne went to the AA in 1943, after which he took up a job on the AJ, becoming editor in 1953 and holding the post until 1970, when he became chairman of the AJ and AR editorial boards.

The post-war period presented huge difficulties to architects and Boyne had great sympathy for them. The AJ employed research fellows

to create a comprehensive information system. From this emerged the A4 system, the AJ/SfB classification system, and the hugely successful Element Design Guides which, in 1961, boosted the AJ's circulation from 14,000 to 22,000.

Boyne and the AJ played a major part in changing the profession – instigating the abandonment of the practice of chief architects taking sole credit for their firm's projects, the shift in emphasis from private practice to far greater public-sector representation on the RIBA Council, and the commissioning of a ground-breaking survey of the profession.

One of Boyne's finest moments as a journalist was after the collapse of Ronan Point in 1968. Hearing about it on the morning news, he

went straight to Newham, convinced the emergency services that he was an official, and was consequently the only journalist allowed on site. It resulted in a wonderfully measured article.

A master of pithy prose, Boyne wrote leaders to exact length, by hand. Weekly post-mortems could be bruising affairs, with mutterings about the lack of campaigns, the omission of critical information, or an unconvincing case-study. He made us realise that architectural editing is a particular skill, and instilled in us a strong sense that we were holding the journal in trust for future editors and readers.

Passionate about the countryside, he and his wife Rosemary built their own house in Kent. Despite his war wounds, Boyne's journey to

work involved a one-mile walk to a country bus and then a train up to London. A sometimes glowering presence, he was also a kindly person who could cut to the heart of a difficulty with practical help.

Towards the end of his time at the Architectural Press the feuding among its owners, the sales to United Trade Press and Maxwell, and the changing architectural climate caused Boyne much grief. Three years ago, reviewing a book on post-war reconstruction in Britain, he concluded that from about 1956 onwards 'post-war architecture as a social art started to be replaced by a return to the traditional form of architecture as conspicuous display, delighting architect, client and, of course, the media'.

Peter Carolin is a former AJ editor

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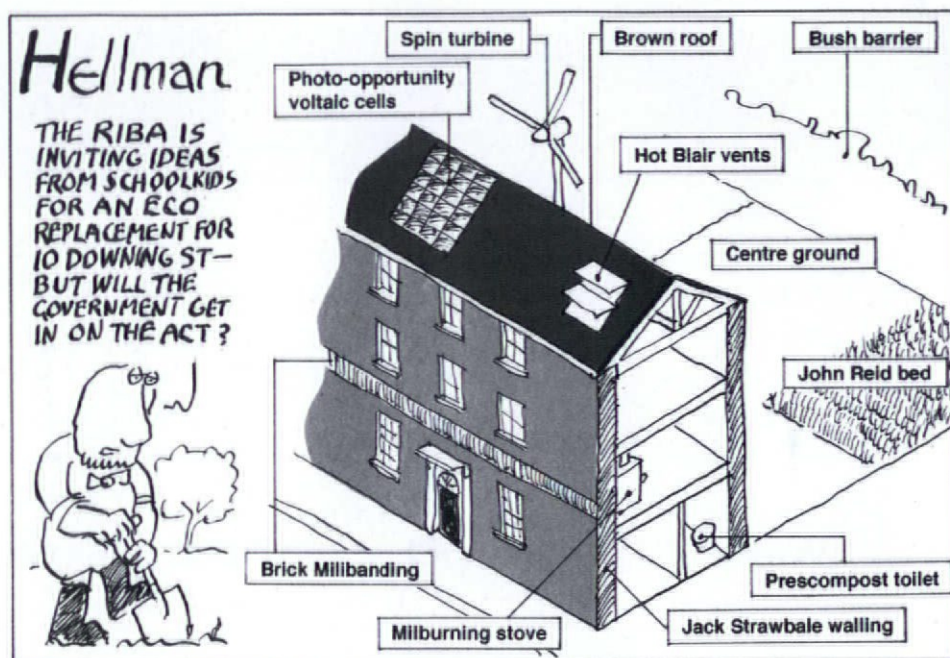
James Howard Kunstler.
www.energybulletin.net,
28.09.06

'A sewer of vulgarity, greed and architectural short-termism'

Stephen Bayley on Oxford Street. *Observer*, 01.10.06

'I realise that nothing of such spectacular elegance could have been built by a generation of rationalists'

Roy Hattersley on Canterbury Cathedral as it launches a restoration appeal. *Guardian*, 02.10.06



SLIM PICKINGS

Oh, the fickleness of celebrities. The latest star guilty of having his cake, then stuffing his face with it, is international DJ **Fatboy Slim**. The Brighton-based record spinner recently joined local campaigners to stand against a proposed development by **Alan Phillips Architects**. The scheme called for the demolition of an Art Deco building, which Mr Slim was rather fond of. So the development was dropped. But Astragal hears that Fatboy now hopes to use another Phillips project as the backdrop for his latest video. Cake, anyone?

HEIR TO BLAIR?

Sniffing around the Labour Party conference in Manchester last week, Astragal had the pleasure of bumping in to fresh-faced upstart **David Miliband**.

The recently-appointed Defra top dog, tipped to one day take over as leader of the party, was having a nosey around the RIBA truck, which featured ideas by Manchester schoolchildren for an eco-replacement for 10 Downing Street. Miliband was amazed the students took just three days to turn out the designs. 'Architects get paid for weeks and weeks for designing something like this,' he observed. How they chuckled in the RIBA lorry. Miliband was far cannier when Astragal asked him if he would consider an eco-home if he became PM. He sidestepped that one easily with a bland Defra-based retort. He also turned down the chance to be photographed 'provocatively' next to a photo of a 'green' No.10 door. They're not as daft as they look, these MPs.

THE JOY OF ARCHITECTURE

Excitable readers will be waiting with bated breath for the latest biography of **Frank Lloyd Wright**. The reason for this sweaty-palmed excitement is that this ain't any ordinary book. *The Fellowship*, according to reports, is a steamy saucepot of an architectural bonkbuster. Page eight sees the authors, **Roger Friedland** and **Harold Zellman**, describing the teenage protégé daydreaming about sex and drifting into his 'moist dream space'. And page 17 sees an bizarre account of Frankie watching his mentor **Louis Sullivan** at the drafting table, 'the languid lines coursing through his ornamental detailing' – to the point where he becomes 'ashamed by his own pleasure'. Astragal's getting a little hot under the collar...

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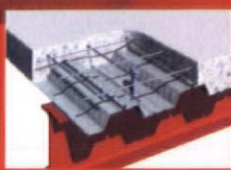
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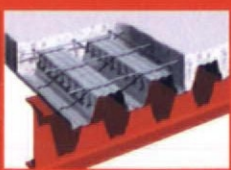
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ONLY TIME WILL REVEAL THE TRUE SUCCESS OF SMC

Your tribute to SMC (AJ 28.09.06) with the diagram captioned 'the rocketing turnover of the SMC Group sums up the firm's relentless financial progress' misses most of the point. Rising turnover doesn't necessarily mean financial success.

Obviously turnover will rise as SMC buys up firms, as will the profit total. But the City will not be fooled in the long term as such figures are irrelevant to a firm's success – and longevity – unless the profit percentage of turnover is at a high enough level to keep SMC going, taking into account the initial capital outlay, and the earn-out capital, yet to be found, to those former partners and directors of the firms joining the group.

Congratulations to SMC for its initiative, courage and speedy progress, but it would be interesting, and instructive, if you could monitor the situation in comprehensive follow-up articles.
David Rock, Harleston, Norfolk

A TRANSATLANTIC DEFENCE OF LORD ARCHER

AJ 17.08.06 has just reached me here in sunny California, so at this late date I read Astragal's snide remarks on Jeffrey Archer.

The nominal premise of 'correction' is to enable people to reflect on and reform their behavior. In Archer's case, perjury must have looked especially stupid from the vantage point of prison.

There's also an assumption that once people have served their sentences, they are to be given another chance. Martha Stewart comes to mind. If she showed up at Florence Hall in similar circumstances, would Astragal describe her as a cheat and wonder aloud why anyone would want her? I really doubt it.
John Parman, Berkeley, California

IT IMPROVEMENT IS AN ISSUE OF PEOPLE

Most people will read your piece on Grimshaw's knowledge-management system (AJ 21.09.06) and see that there are tools to solve a problem that they have. By all means invest in technology, because it will help to solve many other problems, but do not expect an intranet/extranet/portal/database to solve your knowledge-management problem. This is a job for people.

As to the particular product, I think it is a good one. Microsoft also has a strong offering with Sharepoint, which is going to get much better with the release of Office 2007 and Vista. Anyone thinking about investing in such a system should wait until the dust has settled on the product release before dipping their toes in the water. In the long term, my money is on Microsoft Sharepoint. How do I know this? Call it intuition if you will!

Finally, I think that the diagram of when to purchase a new system is complete tosh. I have a Filemaker system which is not getting more expensive to maintain, and I don't see any evidence that other systems are getting cheaper to install. In both cases the people are the main cost, not the software, and skilled people are not getting cheaper.

Rory Bergin, IT manager, HTA Architects

IS IT REALLY TIME FOR A CHANGE OF PRACTICE?

The RIBA has postponed the introduction of its Chartered Practice Scheme by six months to allow practices more time to prepare for its requirements.

The institute has pledged that the cost of the scheme will not fall on the membership generally, but will be entirely self-supporting. This delay can only increase costs for participants.

Might now be the time for the RIBA to consider the scheme's abolition? It is an interventionist and divisive proposal which seeks to support only those practices that sign up to it and leaves the others out in the cold.

Should not the RIBA support all practices, or leave practice support to an all-inclusive body such as the Association of Consultant Architects?

Tom Jestico, Jestico + Whiles

ART SHOULD HELP US IMPROVE OUR ARCHITECTURE

Part of the problem of what we call 'art and architecture' – which your editorial highlights admirably (AJ 21.09.06) – is that it is often seen as a syncretism rather than the centre of a range, with conventional art at one end and conventional architecture at the other – with landscape architecture a bit closer to the middle.

This is creative placemaking; it is not simply a matter of a greater contextual sensitivity or a decorative practicality, but an understanding of the deeper nature of 'place'.

While the Element House is an exquisite example of an architectural artwork, its comparison with the Welsh Assembly is not well chosen. While the 'lipstick on the gorilla' syndrome – where a last-minute, often out-of-character addition is made to a mundane building by way of satisfying the 'percent-for-art' requirement – has been far too prevalent over the years, not all buildings can be total artworks, and I understand that the commissions in the Welsh Assembly were undertaken with the full cooperation of the architects and with a sensitivity to their vision – something which, in my opinion, is immediately apparent on visiting the building. No 'tussle' and no 'lipstick' here.

In my own experience of collaboration over a number of years with artist Pandora Vaughan, I have found the influence entirely beneficial in questioning habitual architectural thinking and in setting a new creative course by these different horizons. While 'art and architecture' does require its own set of skills, its essence is available to us all as better creators and makers.

Buildings are not necessarily the most important part of architecture. When we are able to understand that, then we will be on our way.

Huw Meredydd Owen, Dobson:Owen Architects, Pwllheli

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 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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SMC ALSOP/ PALESTRA



1. Palestra sets a pattern for future development in the vicinity of Tate Modern

WE DON'T WEAR GREY SUITS EVERY DAY – WHY SHOULD WE BE STUCK WITH GREY BUILDINGS?

By Kenneth Powell. Photography by Neil Bridge

Will Alsop first set up practice in 1981 with fellow Architectural Association graduate John Lyall. In 2000 he formed Alsop Architects and in the same year won the RIBA Stirling Prize for Peckham Library. This year the practice, which now has offices in London, Singapore, Toronto, Beijing and Shanghai, joined the SMC Group to form SMC Alsop, where it continues to push for 'risk-taking' design.

Blackfriars Road is currently one of London's development hotspots, as developers and their architects line up to transform the area with new office and residential developments. While Southwark Council ponders the future of Blackfriars Road as the site for a new cluster of tall buildings, including the Beetham Tower, Will Alsop's very much medium-rise Palestra has been not only completed on a site opposite Southwark tube station but also fully pre-let, with Transport for London (TfL) taking the entire building and subletting two-and-a-half floors to the London Development Agency (LDA). The LDA will have its own front door at ground level, with a public exhibition area housed in a typical Alsop 'pod', a species most of us first became familiar with at the Stirling Prize-winning Peckham Library, just a couple of miles from Palestra.

Characterised by Charles Jencks as an architect who has 'self-consciously pursued the iconic building as a goal in itself', Alsop is revealed in this project as a rational builder who can cope with the spec development agenda and produce a highly saleable product. Palestra (which started as 'Southpoint' and is likely to be

renamed again by TfL) is one of a series of recent buildings – the Fawood Children's Centre, the Goldsmiths' College block at New Cross and the Queen Mary medical school – by Alsop's practice (now SMC Alsop) that manage to be economical, practical and also visually memorable, adding that element of enjoyment that Piers Gough did so well in the 1980s, but which today seems to be Alsop's preserve.

Called 'Palestra' because the site was once occupied by a boxing venue (the word derives from the Greek for a sporting arena), Alsop's building replaces Orbit House, an unremarkable 1960s Seifert job, used as a store by the British Library. When Orbit House was built, Southwark was a bridge too far for potential office tenants, but everything changed with the advent of the Jubilee Line extension, the development of The Cut, and a new Richard MacCormac-designed Tube station on the corner of Blackfriars Road. (The new Southwark station, which links to Waterloo East, was intended, like some of Charles Holden's Northern Line stations, to carry a development on top; this has so far failed to materialise.) Planning consent for Southpoint/Palestra was given in 1999 – before the opening of the extended Jubilee Line – the clients being Stuart Bailey and Mallory Clifford of Blackfriars Investments (also the initial clients for Alsop's Victoria House scheme in Bloomsbury and the proposed Puddle Dock across the Thames in the City). A few years passed as Bailey and Clifford looked for development partners – there was scepticism that a development so far from the river would work commercially.



2. The building stands opposite MacCormac's Southwark station and forms an effective end-stop to The Cut



3.

There was equal scepticism from letting agents that Alsop's architecture was tailored to the tastes of the market. 'We don't wear grey suits every day – why should we be stuck with grey buildings?' Alsop asked. He proposed that Palestra be a building with strong form and vivid colour. The formula had worked elsewhere in the commercial field – at the Harbour Tower in Düsseldorf, for example. With Palestra, Alsop proposed to expand the decorative agenda, working with Pilkingtons to develop new techniques for baking coloured patterns into the glazing. The agents, in love with grey metal, effectively vetoed the idea. As Alsop's project architect Duncan Macaulay says, their advice now seems perverse: 'We were seen as arty and insufficiently commercial, but the use of colour is a strong element in the high profile of the building, and is what attracted TfL', he believes. The glazed envelope now features nothing more than panels of vivid yellow. 'We got knocked back somewhat on the colour issue', Alsop admits – while expressing satisfaction with the building's final appearance (see pages 37-39).

Behind the facades, the 28,000m² Palestra is actually a very streetwise commercial proposition, with big 3,000m² floorplates, 100m long on a 7.5m grid with a maximum width of 36m, and condensed central cores. Initially, there was provision for a dealing floor, subsequently deleted from the programme. One bank looked at the building, Macaulay recalls, and rejected it on the grounds that there was 'social' housing across the street. The context is actually memorable, with the elevated railway line into Charing Cross enclosing the site to the north and the tracks

into Blackfriars striding across the Charing Cross line immediately to the east. The low-rise setting means that views out of the building are excellent. There was extended debate with Southwark planners about the height of the development, and a proposal to add a layer of penthouses did not find favour. In other respects, the completed project is very much as it had been envisaged seven or eight years ago. The key architectural idea is clearly that of breaking up the box by cantilevering the upper floors over the road. At the seventh storey the floor steps back to provide a generous external terrace – another extravagant gesture in the eyes of agents but, again, one that helped to sell the building. At its eastern end, the building leans 2.5° out of vertical.

Palestra was developed on a design-and-build contract, with SMC Alsop novated to Skanska, and Richard Ellis as project managers. Alsop's designs appear, however, to have been faithfully realised, with a good standard of internal detailing. The main reception area is a light and elegant space, enlivened with artwork by Kate Dineen which everyone, apparently to the annoyance of the artist, compares to giant Smarties. The 'cunningly sloped' (Duncan Macaulay) reception desk is a classic Alsop design. For him, the key feature of the building is the way in which it meets the street. The ground level is partly open, the upper floors appearing to rest on characteristic Alsop-esque legs. This covered space was intended to be public domain: there were ideas for a café or shops here. Now the LDA's shop window will be the attraction, displaying a changing selection of current development projects.



4.



5.



6.

3. Union Street

4 & 5. The reception area is enlivened with artwork by Kate Dineen. The desk is an Alsop design

6. Corner of Union Street and Gambia Street

For those emerging from the Tube station – the principal public-transport gateway to Tate Modern – this space is a natural marker at the end of Union Street. Just as satisfying are the more distant views of the building, especially as seen from The Cut, where it forms a very effective end-stop. Illuminated at night, it has an equally positive presence as the soffit of the tilted box lights the space beneath. The scale of the building is extremely well-judged for its location and sets an obvious pattern for future development in the immediate vicinity.

SE1 (or 'South Central' in agent-speak) seems to be booming – even with some assistance from the public sector, which looks likely to underwrite a start on Renzo Piano's 'Shard' in 2007. The contentious issue of height continues to dominate much of the debate about future development in Southwark. Although there is a case for building high close to the river, buildings on the scale of Palestra fit more comfortably into the urban fabric of inner Bankside. While developers clamour for riverside sites, Southwark Council's *grand projet* (extending over the next 15 years) is the redevelopment of the Elephant and Castle. The future success of this area is dependent on its connection to Bankside and Borough, and Palestra points the way to further development in the Blackfriars Road/Union Street/St George's Circus area where, again, high-rise buildings would be inappropriate.

Palestra is clearly an important project for Alsop – his largest to date in Britain if the Jubilee Line station at North Greenwich, with its major civil-engineering component,

is excluded. Southwark is now an established office location, with Norman Foster's More London still growing and Allies and Morrison's Bankside 123 scooping up some excellent lettings. Both these developments include a number of office buildings plus areas of public space and retail/hotel/cultural facilities. Both are middle-rise schemes, on a scale comparable to Palestra. Where the latter scores is in its boldness, swagger and sheer effrontery – its refusal to be polite and put on a grey suit.

Much has been written about Alsop's professional problems (and the difficulties affecting The Public arts centre in West Bromwich) in recent months, some of it distinctly gloating. But there is no evidence that SMC Alsop is a spent force, nor that its creative fangs will be drawn by the new proprietors – as Alsop says, 'they want us for what we are'. A certain strand of British architectural criticism has never warmed to his work, but the Palestra project is a major advance for his practice. It is also one of the most exhilarating new commercial buildings to be completed in London for some time, with a pizzazz, dare I say it, that rivals Seifert on top form, back in the days of Centre Point.



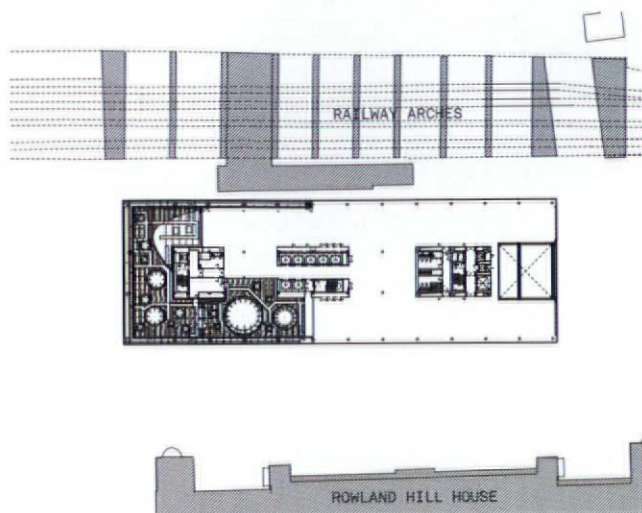


STRUCTURE

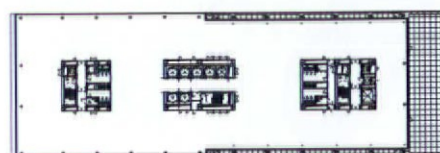
The client wanted a signature building for a speculative-office price. To achieve this, a conventional steel frame was used, with concrete slabs on metal decking to meet the unconventional demands of the architecture. Buro Happold introduced a number of key differences to the structure, allowing it to be built using normal methods but creating a technically different finished product. Examples are the raking columns, column construction, the large cantilever and twin-beam floor construction. This was accomplished while building directly above the Jubilee Line extension and accommodating existing piled foundations from the previous building. Palestra has raking columns at two levels which exert large horizontal forces on the building. A column set at an angle will exert a percentage of the vertical force it carries as a horizontal force, in direct relation to the column angle. The large cantilever also exerts a large horizontal force. We wrote a computer program that allowed Alsop to play with the column angles in all locations, yet know that the building still worked in terms of foundations and column sizes. The design team could adjust the complex column layout until late in the construction programme with confidence that the structure would work. The column construction is very high strength and requires no secondary fire protection. This was achieved using composite columns designed to European Codes. A circular hollow section (CHS) outer tube was reinforced by an internal CHS and both tubes filled with concrete to form a solid section. Under normal use the column works as a steel tube with reinforced concrete internally. Under fire conditions the outer tube is sacrificed and the column works as a reinforced-concrete column. At the west end of the building, the upper box is offset by one grid width from the lower, creating a three-storey-deep 7.5m cantilever over Blackfriars Road. This impressive feature was achieved without the introduction of any visible diagonal elements in the facade, nor any disturbance to the internal floor space. Twin cellular beams span the standard grid of 12 x 7.5m. The beams pass in pairs either side of internal columns – more efficient than conventional steel beams which stop and start at columns. Palestra takes advantage of continuity, yielding beams up to 35 per cent lighter. Despite various cantilevers, transfer structures and raking columns, the structure was built in a 600mm zone within a 900mm overall structure, services and finishes zone. This is impressive given the geometry and the 12m clear spans. It is feasible to expect the steel frame would be heavier than a conventional frame, but by utilising continuity and the strength of composite construction, the frame weight per square metre is the same as for a normal frame.

Andrew Lacey, Buro Happold

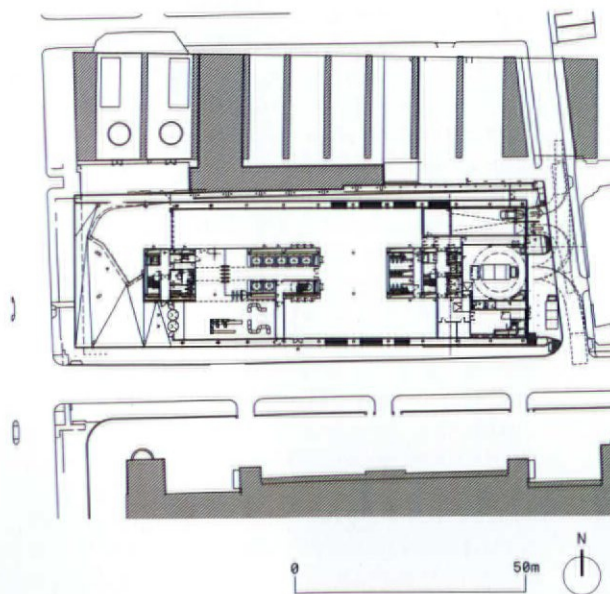
7. The main floors appear to rest on Alsop-esque legs



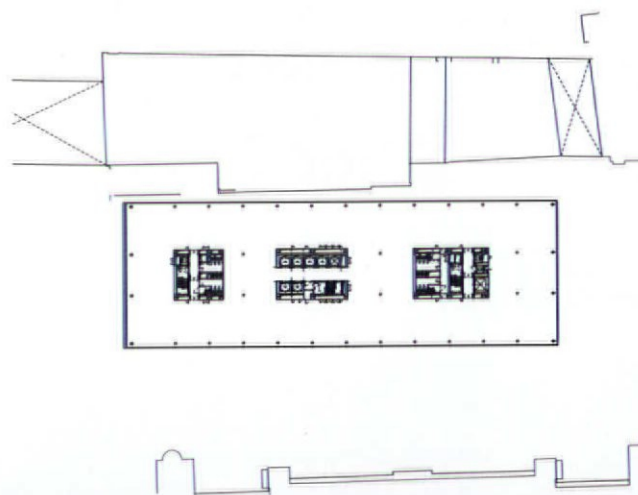
First-floor plan



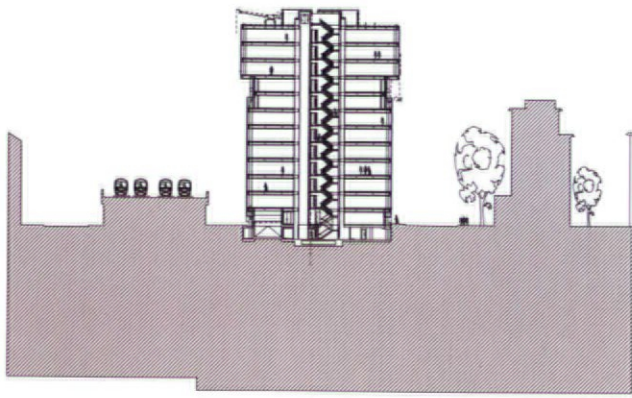
Seventh-floor plan



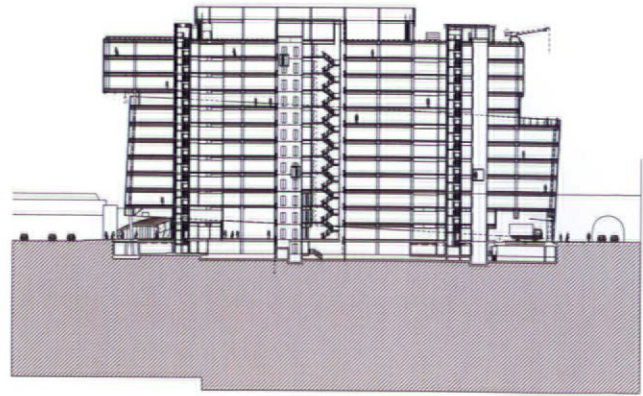
Ground-floor plan



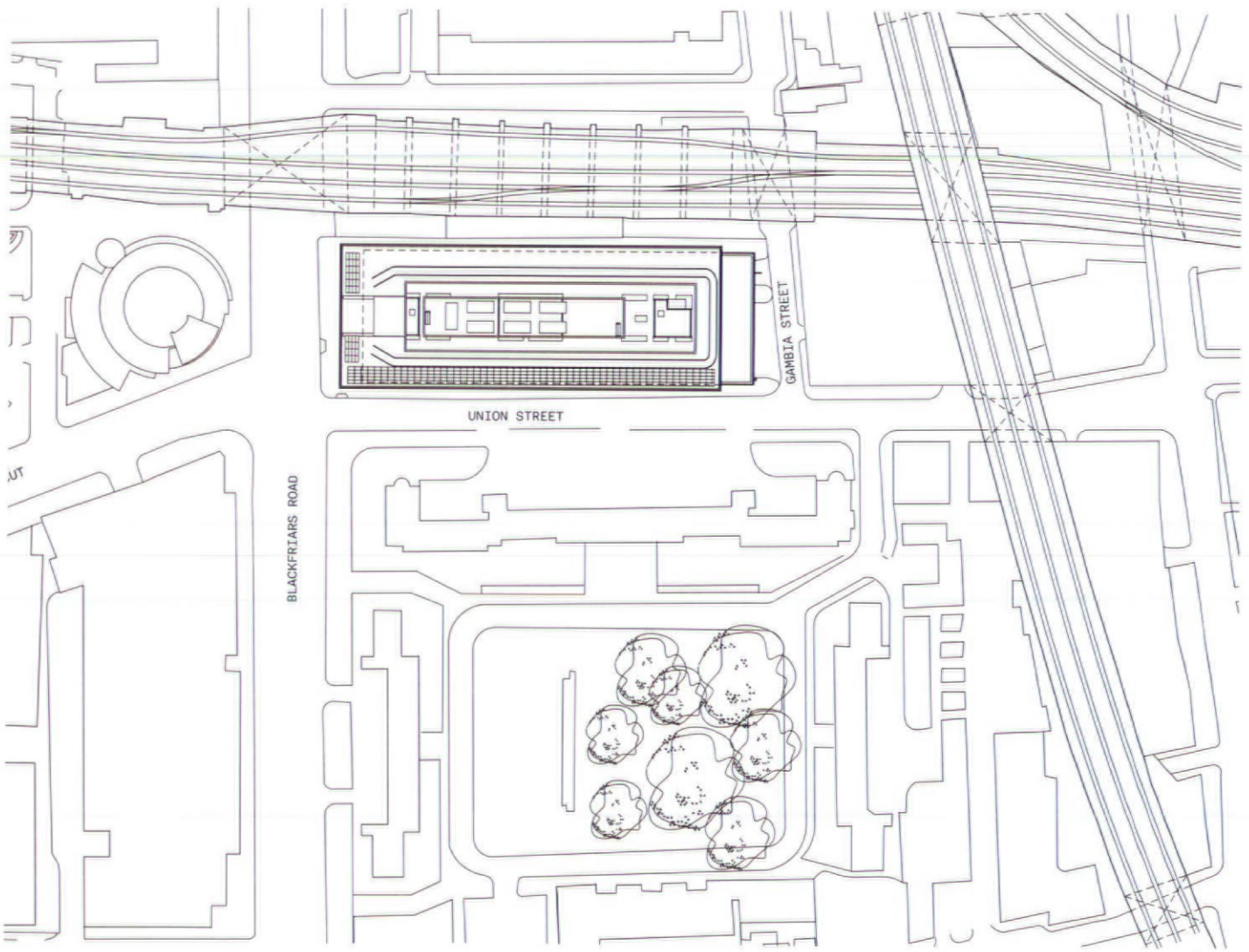
Fourth-floor plan



Cross section



Long section

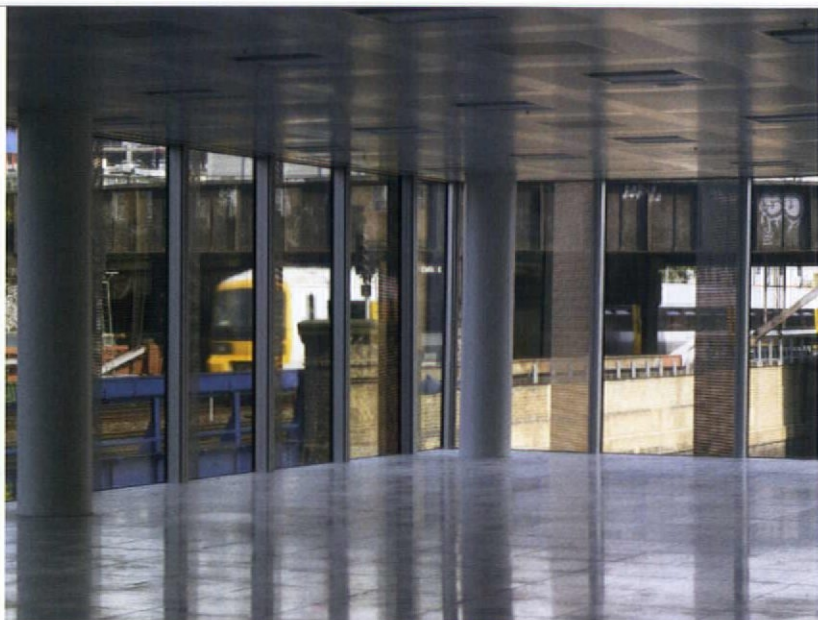
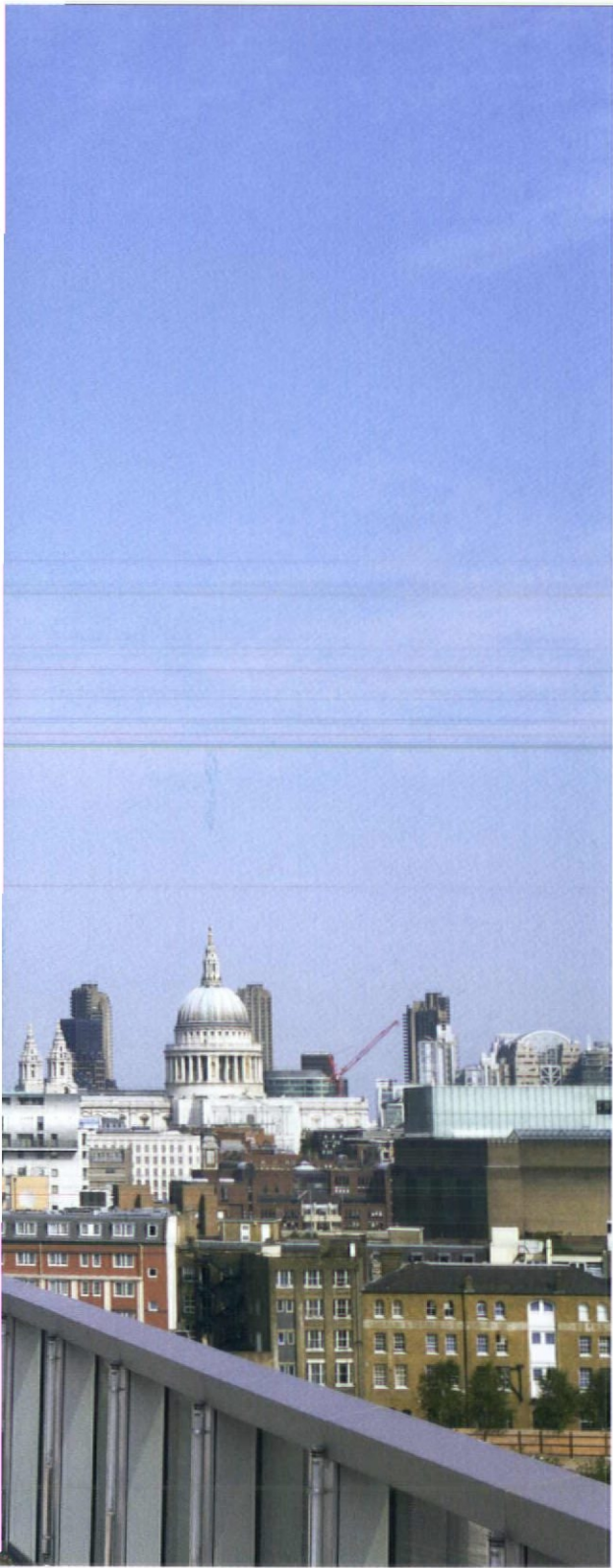


Site plan





8.



9.



10.

- 8. The 'extravagant' seventh-storey terrace helped to sell the building
- 9. Railway lines enclose the site to the north and east
- 10. The low-rise setting makes for excellent views

Costs

Costs based on gross internal area.
Cost analysis refers to final account

SUBSTRUCTURE

Foundations/slabs	£111.78/m ²
Bored cast-in situ piling; reinforced-concrete pilecaps; 4m-deep reinforced-concrete basement and suspended ground-floor slab. Perimeter sheet piling excluded from contract	

SUPERSTRUCTURE

Frame	£149.86/m ²
Structural steel frame, mainly tubular steel columns and cell-form beams; intumescent-paint fire protection	
Upper floors	£66.20/m ²
Profiled metal deck with reinforced-concrete topping, powerfloated	
Roof	£15.38/m ²
Single-membrane waterproofing layer; Roofmate insulation with ballast/paving slab finish	
Staircases	£16.78/m ²
Steel staircase; polished-steel balustrade/handrails	
External walls	£237.40/m ²
Unitised-frame panel cladding with multicoloured fritted double glazing; ground-floor stick system; back-painted glass cladding to entrance area; unitised-frame glazed balustrades; perforated rainscreen/louvres to loading bay and transformer rooms; metal profiled cladding to roof plant room	
External doors	£5.75/m ²
Two 4m-high, 2.5m-diameter revolving doors to front entrance, generally all other doors glazed; roller shutters to loading bay and car park ramp	
Internal walls and partitions	£57.28/m ²
Fair-faced block walls in basement. All other core and staircase walls are plasterboard dry lined and insulated, including risers	
Internal doors	£48.73/m ²
Generally painted solid-core flush doors, with oak-veneered flush doors to the WCs and cubicle; Allgood ironmongery	

INTERNAL FINISHES

Wall finishes	£16.70/m ²
Painted finish to plasterboard core walls; WC walls combination of black granite tiling, back-painted glass, stainless steel and oak-veneered panelling	
Floor finishes	£51.07/m ²
Medium-duty fully accessible raised floor to office areas; screed to lift and stair lobbies; proprietary raised-floor system to toilets, with black granite tile finish; black granite and limestone paviers to reception area	

Ceiling finishes	£67.86/m ²
1,300 x 1,300mm steel megapanel suspended-ceiling tiles on a 200mm-wide C-profile grid; plasterboard margins and ceilings to WCs and core lobbies	

FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

Furniture	£7.49/m ²
Reception desk; statutory signage; entrance turnstiles to lift lobby in reception area	

SERVICES

Sanitary appliances	£19.01/m ²
Good-quality ceramic and stainless-steel sanitary fittings and equipment, including vanity units	
Disposal installations	£12.54/m ²
Rainwater installation; soil and vent stacks; condensate drains	
Water installations	£10.95/m ²
Hot- and cold-water installations	
Space heating/air treatment	£229.45/m ²
Four-pipe fan-coil system; packaged roof-mounted chillers; heating installation; car park, WC and plant-room ventilation systems; BMS system	
Electrical services	£110.88/m ²
Mains and submains distribution; lighting installation with integrated ceiling light fittings and emergency lighting; small power, life-safety standby generator. Floor boxes and underfloor cabling excluded	
Lift and conveyor installations	£79.10/m ²
Ten lifts, including one 3,000kg goods lift; special lift-car finishes; security systems; goods scissor lift; turntable and roof-mounted window-cleaning equipment	
Protective installations	£50.13/m ²
CCTV; sprinkler/dry riser installation; access control; intruder/fire/voice alarms; lightning protection	
Communications installations	£1.25/m ²
Basic telecommunications system to landlord's areas	
Builders' work in connection	£25.89/m ²
Access platforms; steel support to plant; holes; chases	

EXTERNAL WORKS

Landscaping, ancillary buildings	£28.77/m ²
External granite and Yorkstone paving; granite setts to loading bay; fencing, balustrading and gates; retail pod adjacent to main entrance	

PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCES

Preliminaries, overheads and profits	£314.34/m ²
Preliminaries; edge protection; contractor design fees; monitoring of adjoining buildings and bridges. Note: elemental rates include overheads and profit and also include subcontractor preliminaries	

Cost summary

	Cost per m ² (£)	Percentage of total
SUBSTRUCTURE	111.78	6.44
SUPERSTRUCTURE		
Frame	149.86	8.64
Upper floors	66.20	3.82
Roof	15.38	0.89
Staircases	16.78	0.97
External walls	237.40	13.69
External doors	5.75	0.33
Internal walls and partitions	57.28	3.30
Internal doors	48.73	2.81
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	597.38	34.45
INTERNAL FINISHES		
Wall finishes	16.70	0.96
Floor finishes	51.07	2.94
Ceiling finishes	67.86	3.91
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	135.63	7.81
FITTINGS AND FURNITURE	7.49	0.43
SERVICES		
Sanitary appliances	19.01	1.10
Disposal installations	12.54	0.72
Water installations	10.95	0.63
Space heating and air treatment	229.45	13.23
Electrical services	110.88	6.39
Lift and conveyor installations	79.10	4.56
Protective installations	50.13	2.89
Communication installations	1.25	0.07
Builders' work in connection	25.89	1.49
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	539.20	31.08
EXTERNAL WORKS	28.77	1.66
PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCE	314.34	18.12
TOTAL	1,734.59	100

Cost data from David Wright, Faithful + Gould

Credits

Tender date
 September 2003
 Start on site date
 November 2003
 Contract duration
 34 months
 Completion
 October 2006
 Gross internal floor area
 37,400m²
 Contract
 JCT with Contractor's Design incorporating Amendments
 1, 2 and 3 and special client amendments
 Total build cost
 £64.9 million
 Total cost
 £140 million
 Client
 Blackfriars Investment Ltd (BIL) and Royal London Asset
 Management
 Architect
 SMC Alsop
 Project manager
 CB Richard Ellis
 Structural/geotechnical/facade engineering
 Buro Happold
 Quantity surveyor
 Faithful + Gould
 Planning supervisor
 Faithful + Gould
 Main contractor
 Skanska
 Planning consultant
 Montagu Evans
 Wind consultant
 BMT
 Demolition contractor
 Keltbray
 Detailed lighting contractor
 Pinniger & Partners
 Concept lighting consultant
 Janet Turner
 Acoustic consultant
 Cole Jarman Associates
 M&E consultant (contract stage)
 Aukett Europe
 M&E consultant (design stage)
 Buro Happold
 Subcontractors and suppliers
 Facade contractor Permasteelisa; steelwork contractor William Hare;
 M&E contractor Skanska Rashleigh Weatherfoil; foamwork and
 concrete contractor Mitchellson; suppliers of facade Permasteelisa;
 ironmongery Allgood, Skanska Rashleigh Weatherfoil

A 'POD' MADE FROM GRP (GLASS-REINFORCED PLASTIC) PANELS

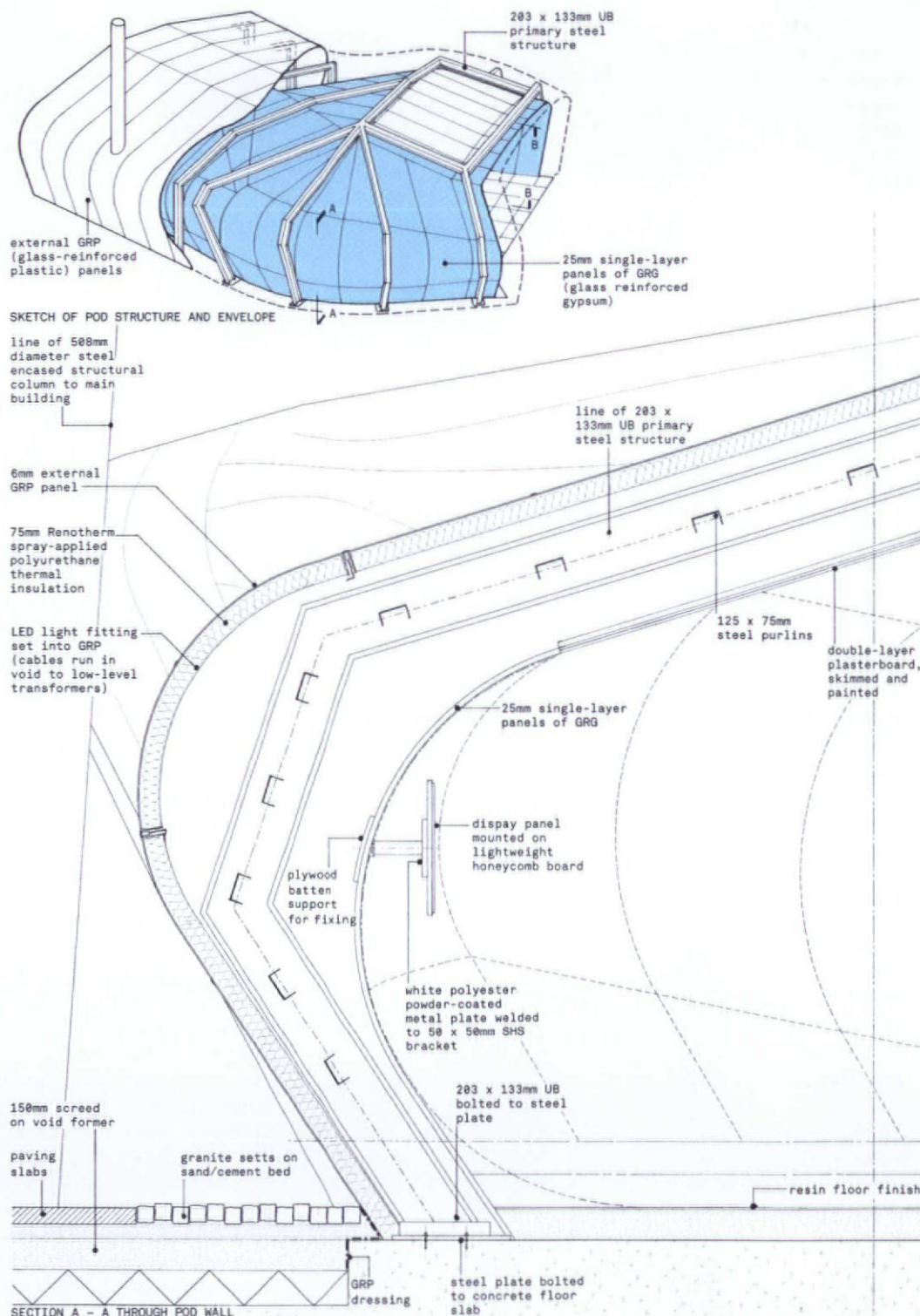
The 'pod' is an organic pebble-like object, nestled under the sloping soffit of Palestrea. It forms the main entrance to the LDA's offices, exhibition space and a reception to the ground-floor conference area.

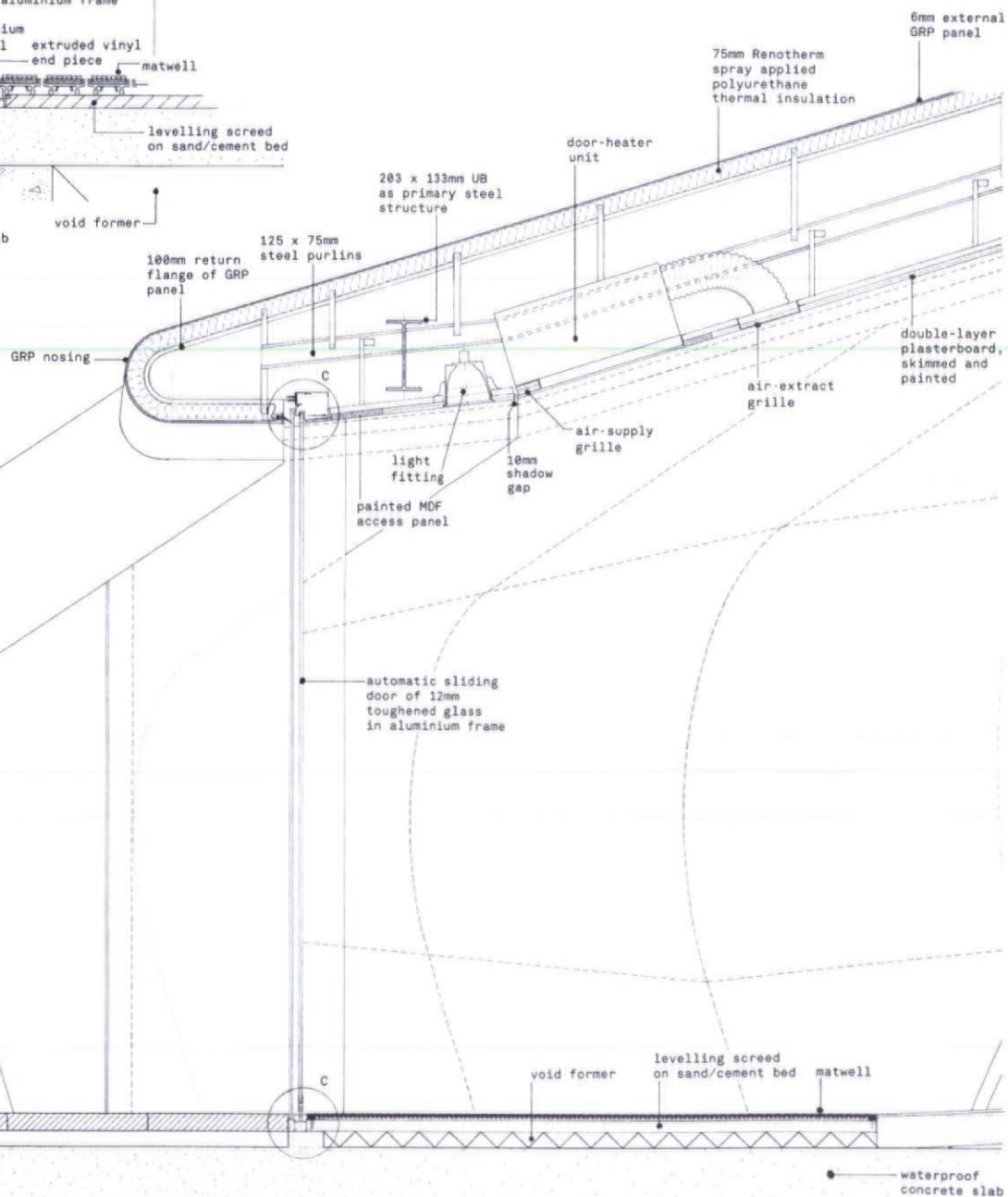
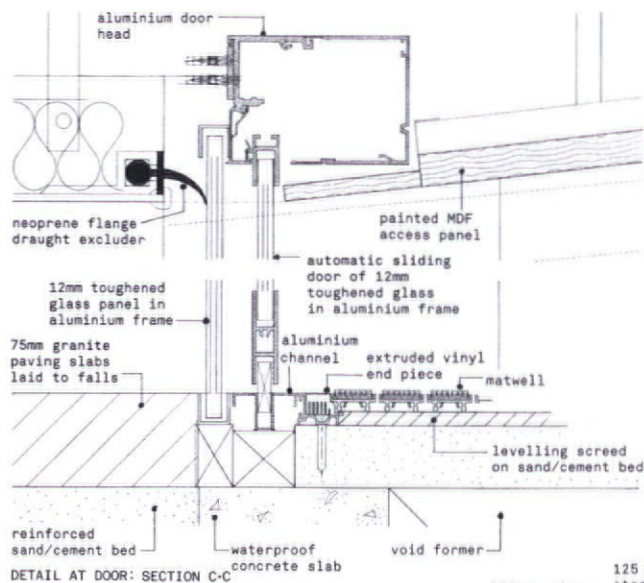
The pod structure is a series of steel frames of 203 x 133mm UBs supporting an outer skin of 6mm GRP panels and a suspended inner layer of 25mm GRG (glass reinforced gypsum) panels. Their complex shapes were achieved using a full-size plywood model to form convex and concave negative moulds for internal and external panels. Some panels have complex double curvature; others are flat and a number are identical.

The primary steel structure was bolted to the concrete floor slab. The GRP panels were installed with neoprene gaskets sealing the joints and the inner surface was sprayed with 75mm foam insulation. 125 x 75mm steel purlins were fixed between the UBs, and service runs were installed. Finally the internal GRG panels and plasterboard were fixed.

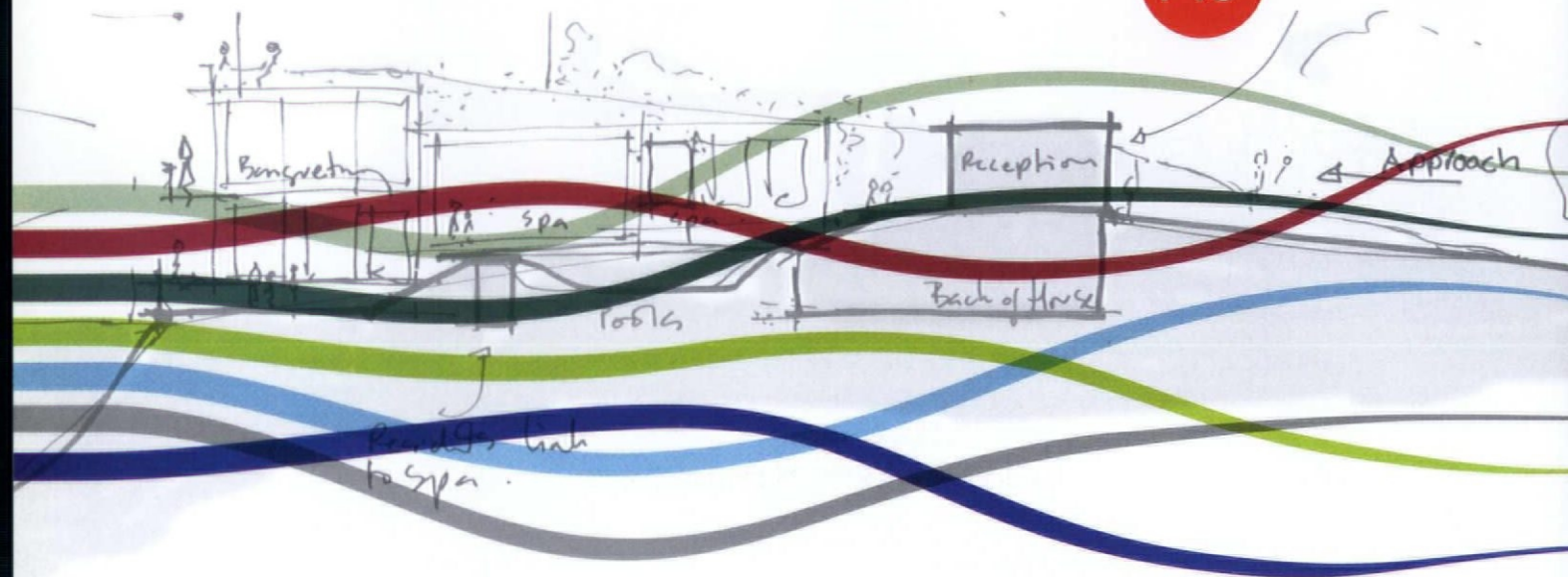
The cavity between the GRP skin and plasterboard (limited to 800mm to comply with fire regulations) holds services including the sprinkler system, air conditioning, electrical supplies and provision for the LED light fittings embedded in the external skin. Cabling to audio-visual LCD panels in the exhibition space is contained in a cavity behind.

By Susan Dawson





18th October 2006, RIBA, London W1



Drawing provided by Austin-Smith Lord Architects

colour in design 2006

Taking an informed approach to colour selection

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A SPECIALIST FACADE ENGINEER CAN HELP RESOLVE DESIGN ISSUES

By Peter Thompson

1. The new office building has
a complex glazed south facade

The specification of a glazed facade is by no means a simple task. This article examines the complexities of specification, supply chain and technology in the innovative glazed facade of SMC Alsop's Palestra.

As the technology of buildings progresses, new materials, processes and products are continually being developed in the search to provide better performance. Suppliers constantly strive to improve the performance of a particular material or process. Many construction products have a long and fragmented supply chain. For example, a raw material is processed to a bulk form, semi-fabricated and perhaps applied with some type of finish, and sent off for another fabrication or treatment process. It is then delivered to another product supplier (as a raw material to be combined with other similar but different raw materials) to be further fabricated or sub-assembled; supplied to another system supplier to be sub-assembled into his product; and, finally, installed on site as a component. The terms may vary with different product areas, but such a long sequence is not unusual.

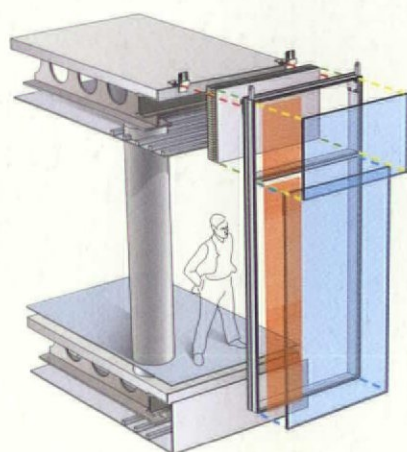
The sealed double-glazed units used in the unitised curtain-wall system at Palestra exemplify a product with a particularly complicated supply chain, which incorporates toughened and/or laminated glass with a solar control or low-E coating on the glass. This is one of the most common ways of cladding modern glazed buildings and is widely used throughout the industry. For the architect, who is responsible for the design of the form and aesthetic concept of the building, it is becoming

increasingly difficult to keep up to date with all the technical developments in specific product and material areas, especially those with long and complex supply chains.

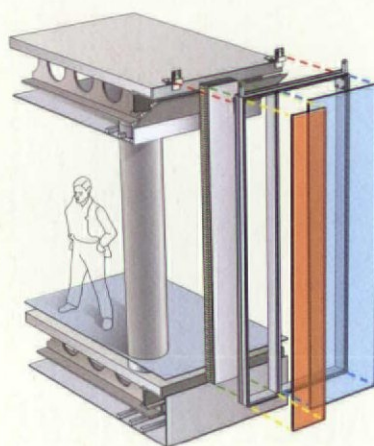
This has led to three problems:

- individual suppliers may develop processes which are not always compatible with all other possible processes either upstream or downstream from them in the supply chain, so it can sometimes be impossible to incorporate a particular required performance-enhancing characteristic;
- the architect at the top of the design process, as the accepted primary specifier, may not have enough specialist technical knowledge or time to deal with the first problem; and
- no single party in the fragmented supply chain has the breadth of design responsibility to control or manage the reconciliation of the conflicting design and performance issues, though one or other may be handed this responsibility. As a result a specification may be issued with a number of performance requirements, each perfectly reasonable in its own right, but impossible to satisfy in a single solution.

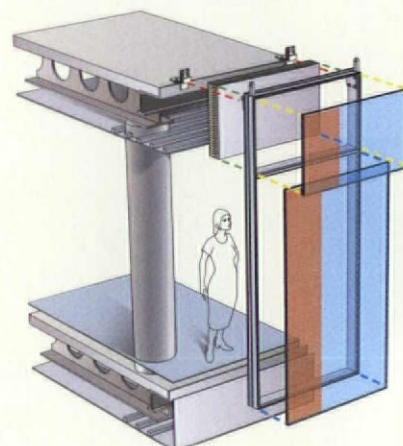
When this problem occurs with materials in the building envelope, as with the double-glazing example shown above, a specialist facade engineer can help by filling the gap between architect and supply chain and by bringing specialist technical knowledge to bear, developing the design with the architect so that it can be provided by the supply chain and meet the performance requirements.



2.



3.



4.

2. Body-tinted glass and coloured perforated mesh
3. Body-tinted glass and glazed fritted spandrel
4. Partly fritted glass panels

Buro Happold Facade Engineers carried out this task for SMC Alsop's Palestra (see *Building Study*, pages 21-33). The glazing, of which there is a high proportion on all four facades, had to satisfy Part L Building Regulations, which meant high levels of control of energy loss in winter and of solar gain in summer. Parts of the glazing also had to provide good acoustic insulation; and as all the glazing was full-height, it had to provide full restraint against barrier loading to prevent falls through the glazing for uniformly distributed loads, line loads and point loads.

The first problem was to decide how to reconcile the need for a reasonable number of solid panels with high insulation, necessary to meet Part L2 insulation requirements, with complex arrangements of colours.

Three combination solutions were examined:

- body-tinted glass in front of vertical bands of coloured aluminium perforated mesh panels for the glazed areas, and similar mesh panels in front of white metal-faced insulated spandrel panels for the non-vision areas. Although this met aesthetic requirements, it was difficult to access the inside face of the glass for cleaning;
- full-height body-tinted glass for the vision glazing, with separate glazed lookalike insulated spandrel panels with full ceramic coating on their glass outer panels. This required an external joint between the panels at the junction of the colours, which was not the preferred aesthetic; and
- glass panels, fritted on part of their surface for the vision glazing, and similar panels in front of solid insulation for the non-vision

spandrel panels. This gave the preferred seamless joint detail, but is an expensive approach because the rate for fritting the glass is applied to the whole panel, not just the fritted area.

While these options were being evaluated, attention was focused on the actual fritting process. The architect wanted a dual-colour frit, with different colours visible on each side of the glass. As frit is a fired-on ceramic, this meant that two different-coloured (liquid) ceramic solutions, one over the other, had to be applied to the same surface and exactly aligned using the silk-screen printing process. Normally a dotted pattern is used, but it was very difficult to align the two colour screens, so the pattern had to be changed to a linear one. Various experiments were made with different colours. Because the frit is not actually opaque, one colour can influence the appearance of the other. The frit also affects the shading factor of the glass, which has some effect on solar gain and compliance with Part L2. (The amount of framing also has an effect on the overall insulation U-value for Part L2.)

When the relationship of glazing with solid panels, frit colours and patterns had been agreed, the next step was to distribute all the processes in the supply chain among the various panes of glass and their available surfaces. This is often the most complicated part of the process, with numerous constraints on the design. Faces of the glass panes are numbered one to four from the outside inwards. The frit should be on face two, but so should the solar control coating for faces exposed to solar gain. The low-E coating used to prevent heat loss is not required where

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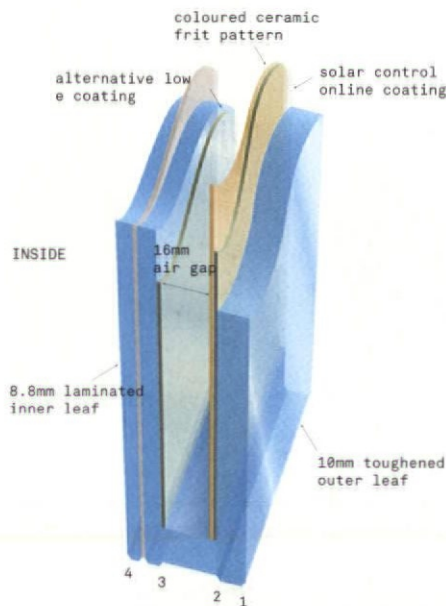
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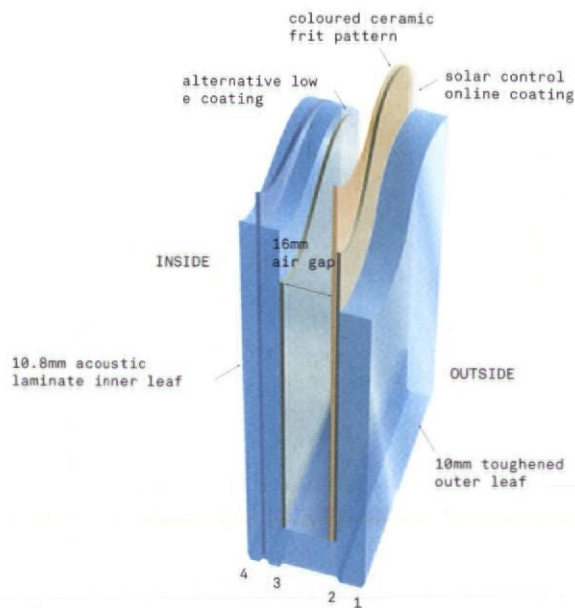
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5.



6.

5. Detail through glass showing

coatings and specification

6. Detail through glass in

area requiring acoustic control

a solar-control coating is used, but it is required on north-facing elevations, where it has to be placed on face three in order to achieve maximum effect.

The safety containment balustrade loading and glazing safety codes could have been satisfied by using toughened or laminated glass, as both comply with the required standard. But because of the stoving process for the frit on face two, monolithic heat-strengthened glass was used for the outer pane. For cost reasons a solar control film applied in bulk on the production line was used; a limited choice – and hence performance – to hard-coat films. This film would be applied first and frit colours applied over it. Soft-coat films are less durable before they are assembled into the inside of double glazed units, so might be prone to damage and/or discolouration during the processes of fritting and handling.

The image (above left) demonstrates a solution for the glass coatings. The inner pane of glass had to comply with low-level glazing safety requirements and accept the low E coating on face three. To provide the high acoustic insulation required in certain situations, a special acoustic laminate film was used – the most economical way to provide acoustic insulation. All the inner panes were laminated, some with special acoustic laminate films, but this was still not enough to achieve the required acoustic performance and so one of the laminate panes was increased in thickness to provide additional mass. This had the additional benefit that with two panes of dissimilar thickness there is a further

gain in performance; the resonance that occurs with similar pane thicknesses is avoided.

The image (above right) shows a solution for the acoustic-control areas. Although these solutions are fairly conventional, the complexity of the design process described above shows that many possibilities need to be addressed. The aforementioned description is very much simplified and reduced; there are a number of other factors, such as thermal shock on the glass, which affect the final choice of materials and processes that have not been covered at all. Equally critical, the final choice of colours and glazing make-up was also influenced by visual appearance.

The case study demonstrates the technical complexity of a modern construction material, and shows the need to employ technical specialist skills to resolve all the design issues and provide a viable solution that can be delivered by the supply chain from within their standard processes. The provision of facade glazing is clearly not a simple task.

Peter Thompson is a facade engineer at Buro Happold

ARCHITECTURAL CAPITALS ARE JUST NOT BRITISH

I decided to upgrade a Windows 98SE computer to WindowsXP. At the end of a day of repeated failures I had an epiphany: baiting Apple fanatics has been fun, but my new mission is to bring about the downfall of the Evil Microsoft Empire.

But before this great work commences let me take a tilt at those anti-British architectural web authors who follow the German habit of capitalising certain nouns. Actually in German they capitalise all nouns. The British habit is to capitalise 'Architect', 'Engineer' and sometimes 'Client', but never, of course, 'contractor'.

The best modern authority on this is the great Lynne Truss, author of the seminal *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*. Word has come of her new site at www.lynnetruss.com. I've just looked at it. And er, just go back and read the book. The site is a promo, listing works, CV and the names and addresses of her agents. You can tell I'm disappointed.

But this is a sharing column so after such a disappointing week I can confidently offer you news of former AJ newshound Ian Martin. His site, at www.martian.fm, is scatological, rude, insightful and very funny. sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com

NO GOING BACK?

When adjudication was in its infancy (at the end of the last century) there was much debate about the how the new process would work in practice, writes *Kim Franklin*. One of the many imponderables was the identity of adjudicators. Would they be project managers, certifiers or, as it turned out, predominantly quantity surveyors? One thing most people were sure of at the time was that they would not be lawyers. Michael Latham, who, Prometheus-like, had fired up the process in the first place, would, we were told, be driven to an early grave if adjudication were hijacked by the lawyers.

Fast-forward 10 years and perhaps we shouldn't be surprised to find that, happily, Latham is alive and well, but that adjudication, a formal process for the resolution of construction disputes, some worth many millions, is now regularly conducted and frequently decided by construction lawyers.

Another early imponderable was how adjudications would be conducted. The statutory provisions gave little guidance and left a great deal to the imagination of the parties or the adjudicator. Now that the lawyers have their feet firmly under the adjudication table, are the tried and tested procedures of litigation to be grafted on to the process?

This was one of the questions which arose out of the complex proceedings generated by the M6 toll road. Midland Expressway Limited (MEL) contracted with the CAMBBA Construction Group, a joint venture comprising Carillion, Alfred McAlpine, Balfour Beatty and AMEC, to design and construct the toll road to provide an alternative motorway route in the Birmingham area. It was completed in December 2003 – since when there have been numerous adjudications and now three decided cases. Not for nothing did Mr Justice Jackson describe the litigation as 'a minefield'. The latest episode, *Midland Expressway v CAMBBA* (No.3) (Judgment 13.06.06) concerned a claim for the indirect costs of a design change to the road layouts at the intersections between the M6 and the toll road. These layouts were known as 'tiger tails', named after the white lines placed on the motorway to guide converging drivers.

The court endorsed the adjudicator's findings that indirect costs for the change to the tiger tails had not been claimed, were not disputed and could not therefore have been referred to adjudication. The judge also considered whether CAMBBA would have been entitled to withdraw a disputed claim from the scope of adjudication. MEL, relying

on the rules in litigation, argued that once a party made a claim, they should stick with it. The judge pointed out that adjudication was a very different process from litigation. There was no rule that parties should be forced to press on with bad claims. It would be 'bizarre' if there were. Adjudication should not, the judge concluded, become a game of chess in which the tactical skill of the players determines the outcome. Instead, adjudicators should approach procedural issues with both fairness and common sense.

This decision represents something of a victory to CAMBBA and perhaps to Michael Latham's original vision.

Kim Franklin is a barrister and chartered arbitrator at Crown Office Chambers in London. Visit www.crownofficechambers.com



REVIEW

BOOK

By Joe Holyoak

Design Like You

Give a Damn

Edited by Cameron Sinclair
and Kate Stohr.

Thames & Hudson,

2006. 240pp. £16.95



Day-care centre at Fuba-Caminho, Brazil, by Jáuregui Architects

JASON SCHMIDT

Once upon a time, architecture was thought to have a social purpose. Corb probably went a bit too far in *Vers une Architecture* when he claimed that architecture could make the revolution unnecessary, but architects did believe they should use their skills to make a better, healthier and more equitable world. Up until the '70s this belief informed both practice and teaching; architectural culture was dissatisfied with the world as it was, and restless to change it.

Today, architecture seems happy to serve the established interests of government and commerce, and the profession seems to think of itself as a branch of showbusiness. Every small action of Danny, Rem and Zaha is treated as significant, out of all proportion to its contribution to a better

world – or despite its failure to make a contribution at all.

Sorry to go into grumpy old man mode, but this book is refreshingly in opposition to the self-absorption of architecture today, which is very encouraging. It is concerned with how architectural design, with minimal resources, can assist societies to cope with poverty, disease and disaster. The bulk of the book consists of 80 illustrated case studies – most of them in the developing world, many involving self-build processes, and almost all of them inventive examples of how good architecture can make people's lives better.

A few familiar names feature: Shigeru Ban (houses in Kobe and Rwanda made from paper), Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio (a beautiful chapel in Alabama with a

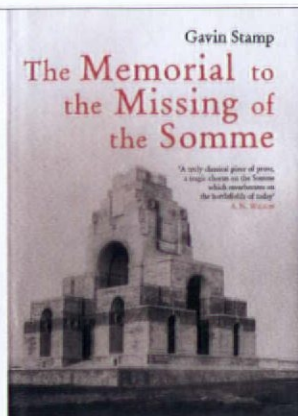
curtain wall made from Chevrolet windscreens), Arup Associates (latrines in Tibet with solar-powered ventilation), and a shelter like a folding umbrella designed by Future Systems for Ethiopia. But all the case studies (with one bizarre exception) demonstrate the ubiquity of resourcefulness and ingenuity among designers across the world, when faced with pressing human need. Sadly, many of them also demonstrate the parallel failure of political commitment to allow these initiatives to achieve their full potential.

The book is edited by architect Cameron Sinclair and journalist Kate Stohr, who in 1999 founded Architecture for Humanity, which has since grown into an international force of considerable influence. It is beautifully designed by

Thames and Hudson, and is a visual pleasure as well as inspiring. It is not perfect, though: the title is clumsy, the cover design bafflingly perverse, and although the case studies are thematically organised and each is well described, a wider context for many is absent.

Even the book's most minimal case study illustrates the idea of design being the effective allocation of resources in response to need. In 2003 an architect in Baltimore, finding that 70 homeless people had died of hypothermia in the city over 10 years, organised a campaign; 800 sleeping bags were distributed, and nobody died that winter. How often is architecture that effective?

Joe Holyoak is an architect and urban designer and reader at Birmingham School of Architecture



BOOK

By Kenneth Powell

The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme
By Gavin Stamp.
Profile Books, 2006.
214pp. £14.99

Most of the British population was too preoccupied with the World Cup on 1 July to recall that it was the 90th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Somme – 'the most violent and ruthless battle in the history of the world', as a survivor later described it. At 7.30am that day, British troops began to go 'over the top' to attack the German lines. By the end of the day the British army had suffered 60,000 casualties, a third of them dead.

The battle raged into the late autumn, by which time the total number of casualties, British, German and French, had topped a million: all for 'six or seven miles of pulverized, muddy territory and destroyed villages'. On the Allied side, some 73,000 men remained unaccounted for, their bodies lost in the mud, blown to pieces

by shells, left to rot. Edwin Lutyens' Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval, a short hop from the Channel ports, was built to commemorate them. It was unveiled in 1932, its completion largely ignored by the press – the *AJ* devoted a paragraph (no picture) to what Gavin Stamp describes as 'the greatest executed British work of monumental architecture of the 20th century' designed by 'the greatest of British architects, of any generation'.

Stamp's account of Thiepval is a miracle of compression, providing the necessary context. The idea of the war memorial, it seems, emerged only after the Great War. (The dead of Waterloo, officers excepted, were dumped in mass graves.) It was the inspirational vision of Sir

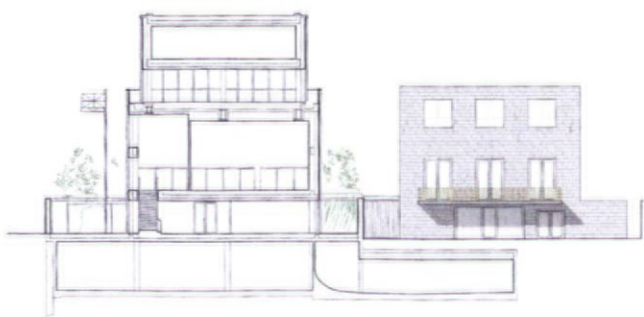
Fabian Ware, who set up the War Graves Commission, that ensured that leading architects were commissioned to design British cemeteries in France and Belgium, and it was at Ware's insistence that a simple headstone marked the graves of all, officer or common soldier. Stamp's architectural analysis is succinct – and masterly. Far removed from the conventional triumphal arch, the Thiepval memorial, he explains, is essentially a tragic, not a triumphant structure; its three-dimensionality rooted, as was Lutyens' work, in the Gothic Revival.

With Britain currently engaged in a series of pointless foreign wars, it isn't hard to sympathise with the passionate stance of Stamp's text, at odds with the arid apologetics of contemporary revisionist

historians who seek to make excuses for the 'repellent' Earl Haig and his like. 'One of the least attractive aspects of the English is our refusal – manifest facts to the contrary – ever to admit we were wrong, or ever behaved in anything but an upright, heroic, honourable way, while former enemies are demonised.'

The greatest strength of Lutyens' Thiepval – and equally of his Cenotaph – is its universality. The revisionists, who think it was worth sacrificing a million lives to prop up the collapsing British Empire, can read into it what they like, but both Lutyens' masterpiece, and this remarkable book, speak only of the 'pity of war'.

Kenneth Powell is an architectural journalist



BOOK

By Edwin Heathcote

Designing the Warsaw Embassy: Tony Fretton Architects
Navado Press, 2006.
27.50 euros (£19)

The embassy has a curious genesis as a typology: a hermit-crab appropriation of nice villas in leafy urban quarters, it's defined by second-hand rather than purpose-built structures.

So it's appropriate that the Foreign Office called on Tony Fretton after seeing his Red House in Chelsea. Fretton can work with Classical solidity and decorum, while making buildings of radical intent which recall Judd or Flavin as much as Schinkel or Loos.

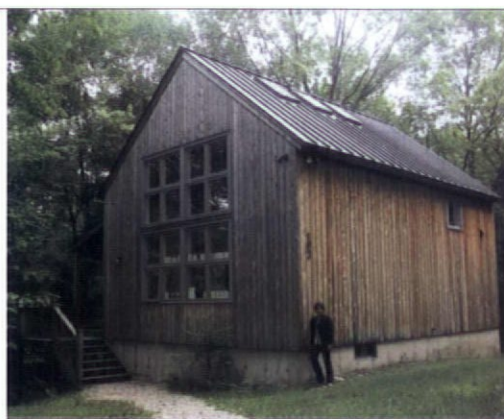
This is an odd little book on a yet-unbuilt project by an architect who shines in realising the object. Little of the struggle to find an architecture capable of expressing the embassy's mixed messages (security and solidity versus openness and accessibility, etc.) comes through here in the office's rather dry text, but some of

the complexity emerges in Adrian Forty's superb essay at the back.

This is serious architecture – clear in its intent and symbolism, in its language, and in the setting out (principally the separation of villa and office), which allows Fretton to explore the English tradition of hospitality in the ambassador's residence, and the symbolic and diplomatic role of the house as opposed to the institution.

Fretton has successfully struggled against Britain's descent into a banal corporate/commercial aesthetic over the last two decades and the Foreign Office could not have made a more informed choice. This *amuse bouche* leaves me hungry for the final object.

Edwin Heathcote is the *Financial Times'* architecture critic



CRITIC'S CHOICE

By Andrew Mead

Ian Ritchie's Courtyard Theatre for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) at Stratford-on-Avon was warmly received in AJ 07.09.06, but – given that it's due to be dismantled in 2010 – it's just the curtain-raiser for the main attraction: Bennetts Associates' reworking of the RSC's 1932 theatre by Elizabeth Scott. That building's limitations are all too clear today but, as Pevsner pointed out in his Warwickshire volume, 'it was a radical statement in England at the time'.

Bennetts' new RSC scheme is prominent in *10 Projects* – an exhibition at Edinburgh College of Art until 21 October – alongside the inevitable Hampstead Theatre and Wessex Water and the practice's first venture abroad: a hotel in Amsterdam's Oosterdok which slots into an Erick van Egeraat masterplan (www.eca.ac.uk).

Scott's theatre needs urgent remodelling; with another '30s survivor, the De La Warr Pavilion, the task was to renew the original. The restored De La Warr is one of four Mendelsohn buildings to feature in Graham Ellard and Stephen Johnstone's *Motion Path*, first seen in Bexhill-on-Sea (AJ 01.06.06) and now at the gallery attached to Soane's Pitzhanger Manor in Ealing until 28 October. Presenting each building in videos on three small adjacent screens, this is a game attempt to convey how we actually experience architecture, particularly in the interplay of stasis and movement it creates – a fixed viewpoint and a roving one (www.ealing.gov.uk/services/leisure).

As a coda to this year's major shows on Modernism, particularly the one at Tate Modern on Albers and Moholy-Nagy, there's an exhibition of paintings by Alex Calinescu at Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, 15 Brooks Mews, London W1, from 6–28 October (www.sarahmyerscough.com). Calinescu made these works during her residency at the Albers Foundation in Connecticut earlier this year – her studio there is pictured above. 'No aesthetic connection to the Alberses is necessary, only the intention to work in a concentrated way,' says the foundation's website on the (invited) residencies. It's an excellent source on the Alberses' art and thinking (www.albersfoundation.org).

For forthcoming events visit www.ajplus.co.uk/diary

EXHIBITION

By Jaffer Kolb

New Office

At the Building Centre,
Store Street, London WC1,
until 28 October



Clive Wilkinson Architects' Mother advertising agency

'New Office' is a show of missed opportunities. This is a shame, because office architecture is largely underserved by the mainstream design press, and there are countless new office projects under way in London.

Curated by New London Architecture (NLA), the exhibition only briefly touches on some of the theoretical issues facing office designers, breaking them down into categories such as Technology, Location and Branding. But these themes aren't specific to workplace design, and their fleeting mention has little bearing on the projects.

The show focuses primarily on changing technology, and specifically on the greater mobility offered by an increasingly wireless world. The curators have included

a usable public workspace, complete with office chairs, desks and wireless internet, to demonstrate the flexibility of office environments. Herein the show sets up an internal contradiction: 'the office' may be becoming increasingly elastic as a spatial term, yet only traditional office structures are put in the exhibition.

In structure, focus and content, 'New Office' is a disappointingly underachieving relative of Paola Antonelli's 'Workspheres' exhibition at New York's MoMA in 2001. 'Workspheres' emphasised not only how technology transformed office architecture, but also how office architecture is unique in its balance of public and private, humanity and efficiency, and the need for complex infrastructure and spatial flexibility.

NLA's exhibition tangentially expresses some of these issues in the projects section, which shows 25 recently completed London-based offices. Curiously, seven firms all have two or more designs included in this otherwise small show.

Several of the projects provide interesting examples of restructuring offices around egalitarianism and communication. In one such project, for the Mother advertising agency, Clive Wilkinson Architects has designed a communal racetrack-shaped table, in lieu of desks, to enable up to 200 employees to work side by side. The Capital One building, by MCM Architecture, and AukettFitzroyRobinson's Sun Microsystems both contain systems in which employees

can move easily throughout the office, to different desks and in different configurations on a project-by-project basis.

While modular and flexible office design has been standard since the 1960s, when Robert Probst designed the Action Office for Herman Miller, the concept of freedom and mobility within the office could have potentially interesting implications for workers now.

It is such under-explored directions that mark the missed opportunities of 'New Office'. The show suggests numerous points of theoretical departure that are left hanging, while its framework – those themes outlined at the beginning – is uninspiring. The free catalogue does little to compensate for an overall lack of clarity.

Jaffer Kolb is a writer in London

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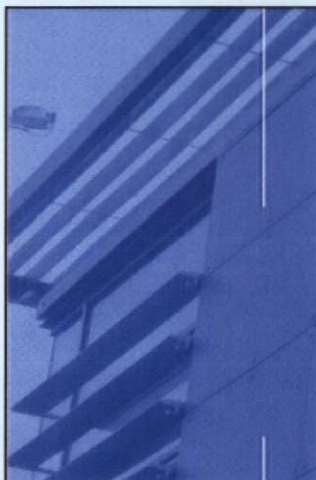
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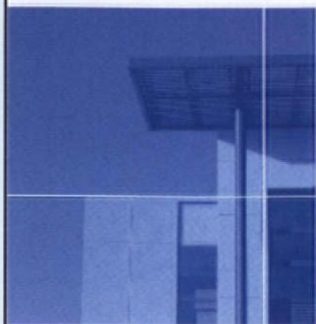
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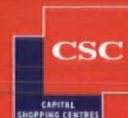
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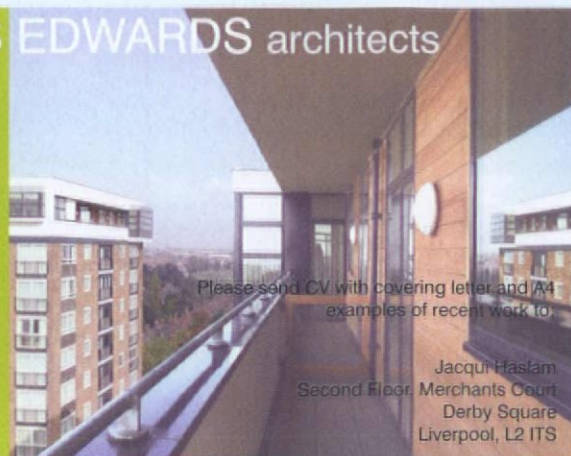
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Feasibility Study

West Berkshire Council intends to relocate a 3-19 age Special school and a 4-11 Primary school onto the site of an 11-19 Secondary school to create a brand new state of the art learning and community facility in the form of an all through learning campus.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be around £45m and is designed to be self-financing through government grant and an optimal agreed disposal of the Special school and Primary school sites together with part of the Secondary school site. The most advantageous method of disposal of the land resource available to the benefit of the Council is also open to proposal by interested parties as part of the development scheme.

Expressions of interest are therefore invited, in whole or in part, from consultants with a proven track record in the area of large multi-school developments to undertake a feasibility study that will include, but not limited to; disposal options, provision of accommodation schedules, site valuations, site usage options appraisal, procurement options appraisal, budget estimates and planning and highways investigation and advice.

Expressions of interest should be submitted by email or in writing to the address below by no later than midday Monday 9 October 2006, any received after the deadline will not be accepted.

procurement@westberks.gov.uk

or

E.A.O Lesley Lucking, Corporate Procurement Unit
West Berkshire Council, Market Street, Newbury
Berkshire RG14 5LD

A copy of the Feasibility Study Brief and the Council's Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) will be issued following Monday 9 October.

Comprehensive fees bid and completed pre qualification questionnaires, should be returned by no later than midday Monday 30 October 2006, any tenders received after the deadline will not be accepted.

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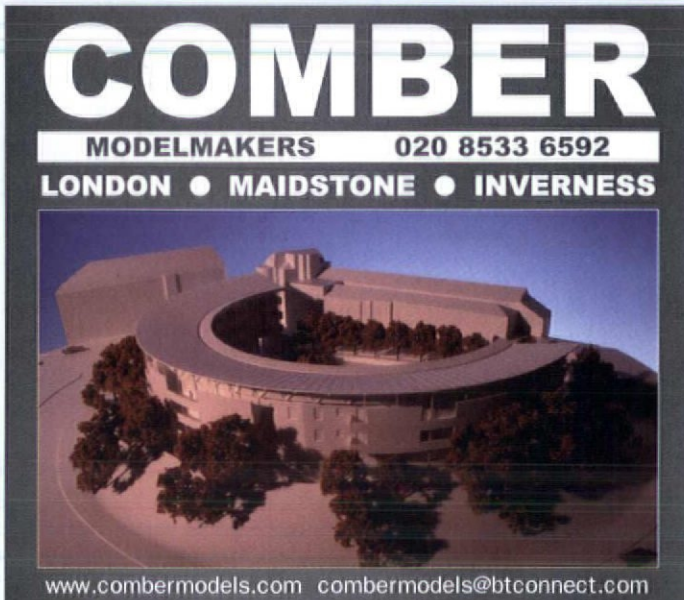
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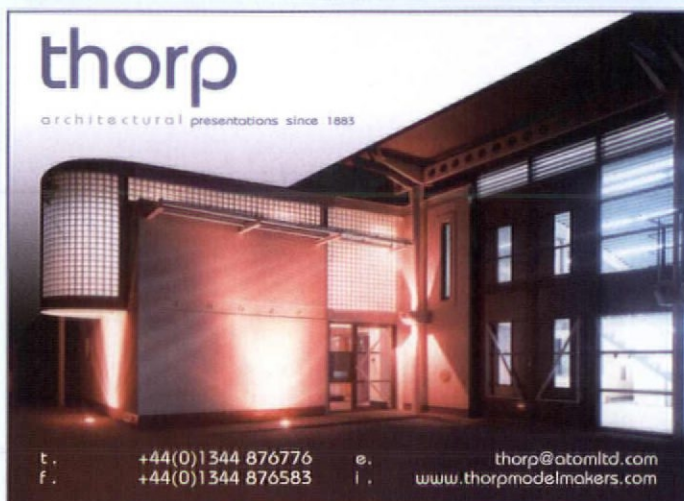
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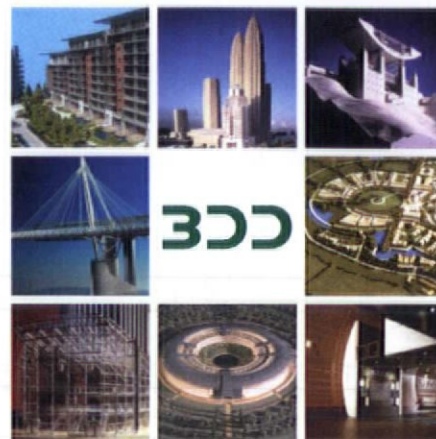


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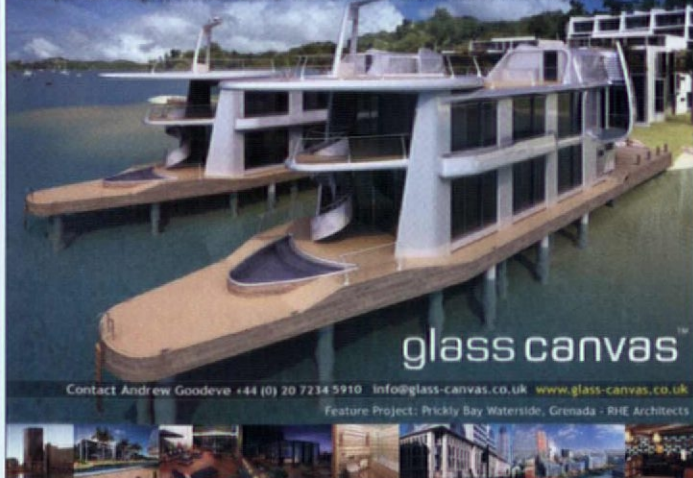
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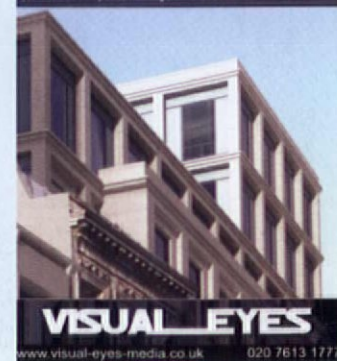
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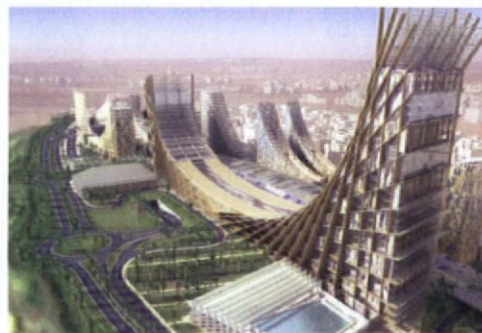
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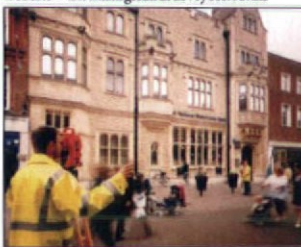
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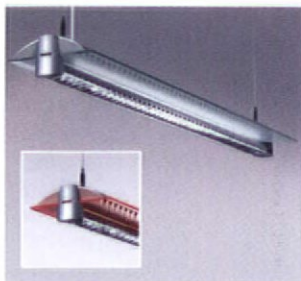


Contact sheet from the photo shoot of Will Alsop
for this week's front cover. By Neil Bridge

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The Hacer Atmos is a fusion of die-cast, extruded and specular aluminium integrated with glass. The contemporary design offers superb performance due to the curved wing, louvre, fluorescent lamp and high-frequency gear. The glass can be replaced by coloured filters to produce a striking 'neon' feature.

METAL TECHNOLOGY



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Stobo Castle, Peebles, dating from 1805, now boasts a luxurious spa complex with a dramatic 27 x 5.9m curved glazed facade in System 17 from Metal Technology. Nineteenth-century architecture was successfully fused with 21st-century comfort in the £5 million modernisation programme.

PENDOCK



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50 decorative column casings from Pendock have been installed at Birmingham NEC's refurbished piazza. Specified by Seymour Harris Architecture, Pendock-Radius casings conceal the existing concrete structural columns. A series of numbered narrow elliptical casings provide highly visible entrance signage.

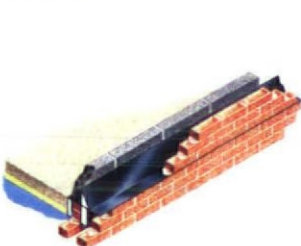
BERKELEY HOMES



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Atspeed's swift, reliable service helped ensure the successful completion of this landmark regeneration project by Berkeley Homes. A major distributor of lintels, fixings, steelwork and other products for the building industry, Atspeed will locate the best deal, provide technical advice and a fast turnaround.

CAVITRAY



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The new Ground Bearing Floor Insulated Cavity System (GBFICS) is a unique and speedy one-piece solution for insulating and protecting the ground-floor slab perimeter against damp and harmful gases such as radon or methane – eliminating the need for numerous elements to be brought together on site.

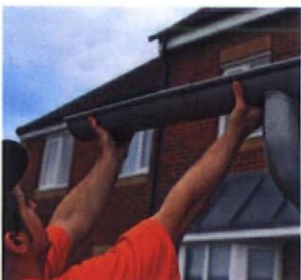
LAHARD WOODFLOORS



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Carver, Italy's largest producer of wood-flooring products, is now available in the UK. The range includes adhesives, lacquers, oils and maintenance products. Water-based products are compliant with EU emission standards. For stockists, contact Carver@lahard.com or Lahard Woodfloors on 0208 848 0015.

VM ZINC



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Pluline D is a ready-to-glue rainwater system made from pre-weathered VM Zinc, specifically designed for houses and conservatories. It is delivered in special kits with gutters, concealed brackets, stop ends, corners, running outlets, downpipes and self-locking pipe brackets.

ROOFLIGHTS SAVE ENERGY

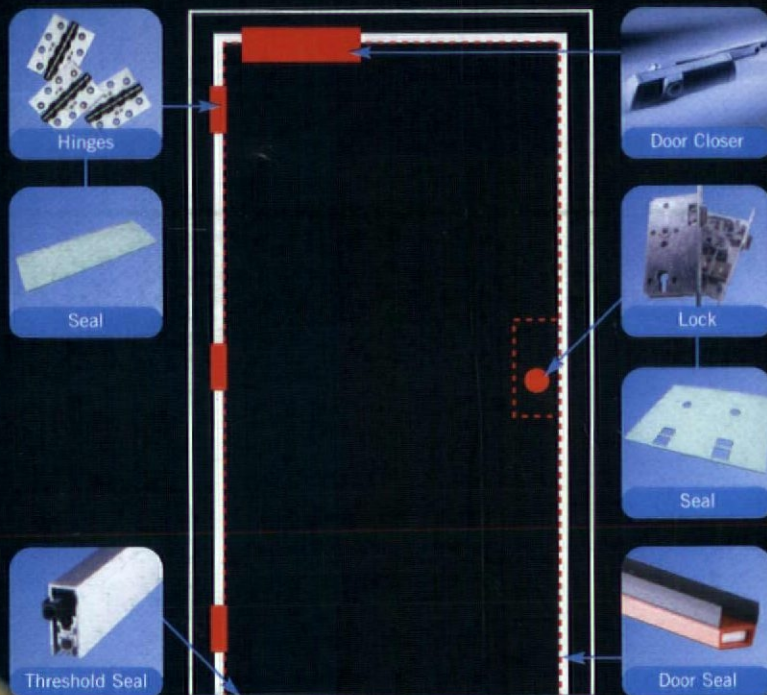


AJ ENQUIRY 208

New research from the Institute of Energy & Sustainable Development at De Montfort University has revealed that rooflights save energy – by reducing the need for artificial light and providing passive solar gain. For more information call Brett Martin Daylight Systems on 0845 6088 999.

ARE YOU LEGAL?

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005



Are you aware of the new fire safety legislation which came into force on 1st October?

Under the new Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order (RR[FS]O) from 1st October, 2006, the building occupier or responsible person must carry out a risk assessment on the fire safety of the property. This assessment was previously carried out by the fire service before issuing a fire certificate. However, fire certificates have now been abolished and the fire service will be used to do spot-checks to see if buildings comply. Failure to comply could lead to you being fined or imprisoned.

Your risk assessment must include the checking of all fire doors and emergency exit doors to see if they meet the requirements of the new legislation.

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