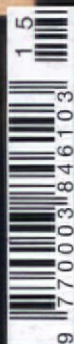


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CAN A TRULY GREAT BUILDING OVERCOME THE POLITICS OF ITS DESIGNER?

By Ruth Slavid

The recently released Italian film *The Family Friend* takes as its setting the city of Latina, using its decaying Fascist-era architecture as the backdrop to the actions of a central character who is repulsive, evil and corrupt, yet fascinating enough to hold the viewer's attention. The director, Paolo Sorrentino, who owes a great debt to Fellini, treats architecture in a way that makes most viewers entirely comfortable. Fascism is evil, hence the architecture is tainted, and an appropriate setting for a malign anti-hero.

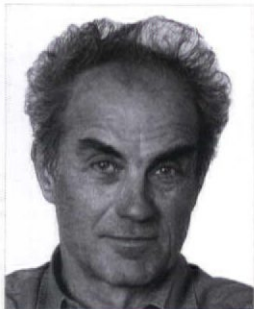
Engaging with architecture of this era becomes much more uncomfortable if one admires it. This is the situation elucidated by Jonathan Sergison in our Building Study on the work of Giuseppe Terragni (see pages 23-37), and by David Wild in his witty collage for the cover. Given that Terragni's key building is the Casa del Fascio, there is no room for pretence. The only slight comfort is that Italian Fascism has a somewhat less evil reputation than Nazism.

Architecture occupies the middle ground in relation to the politics of its creators. Music, especially without lyrics, can be abstract enough to escape ideological taint. The written word, because it is so explicit, is tied much more firmly to its creators' beliefs. The visual arts sit somewhere in between, with architecture having the additional baggage of a social programme.

You can't ignore the position of the designer, but can a truly great building overcome it? Consider another Italian building – Wilkinson Eyre's just-unveiled design for the ideologically impeccable Amnesty International in Milan (see pages 12-13). Suffering through being a building that has as yet no site, and thus no sense of context, it is uncomfortable in a totally different way from Terragni's work. Reminding us that ideology is not everything, it returns us to Terragni with the understanding that, while we may not condone the position adopted by the man, we can still appreciate the architecture.



CONTRIBUTORS



Paolo Rosselli, who photographs the work of Giuseppe Terragni in Como on pages 23-37, is a photographer in Milan who originally trained as an architect



Jonathan Sergison, who focuses on Terragni's Casa del Fascio on page 25, is co-founder of Sergison Bates Architects and visiting professor at EPFL in Switzerland



David Wild, who discusses Terragni's Sant'Elia nursery school on page 30 and created the collage for the front cover, is an architect and writer

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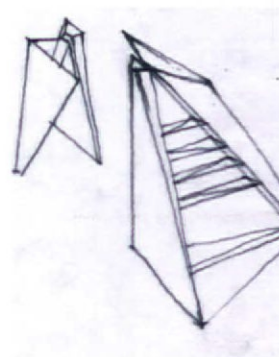
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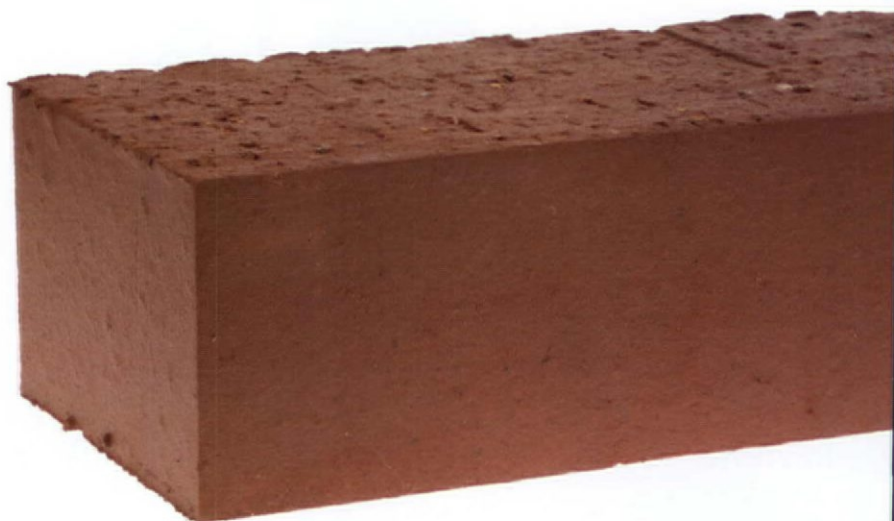
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FRIDAY 13 APRIL

- BBC scraps historic-buildings show 'Restoration'
- Feilden Clegg Bradley nets lottery cash for Somerset museum (right)
- Make submits Glasgow 'white gold' office block for planning
- Chipperfield to design luxury villas on Portuguese coast



TUESDAY 17 APRIL

- Brewster Bye and Yoo to design Ian Simpson's Lumiere interior
- Heritage groups blast planners over 'fast-tracked' KPF Smithfield scheme
- Zaha bags outline planning for south London academy (right)
- Allies and Morrison City tower could cause TV interference, claims BBC

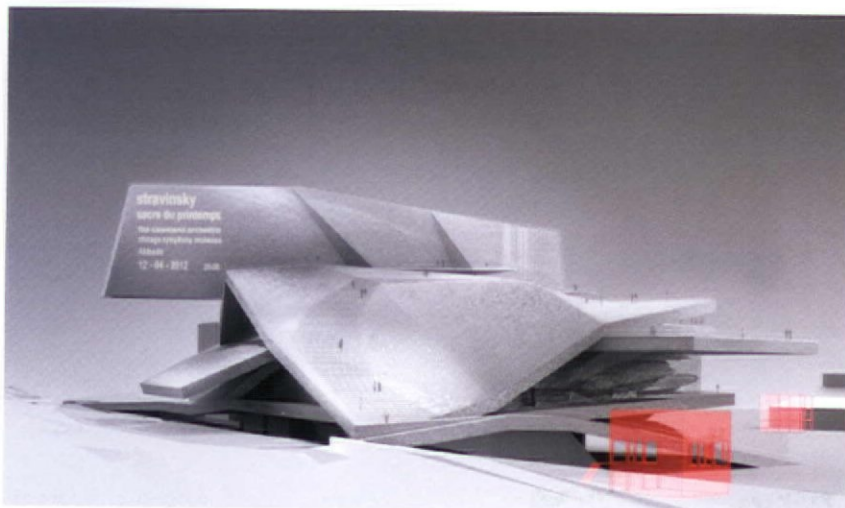


THURSDAY 12 APRIL

- Liverpool's £1 billion Baltic Triangle scheme finally collapses as workers leave site
- Tadao Ando fends off Zaha to seal Venice win
- English Heritage calls for Squire's City skyscraper to be scrapped
- Axis Mason wins go-ahead for Kodak Tower after redesign

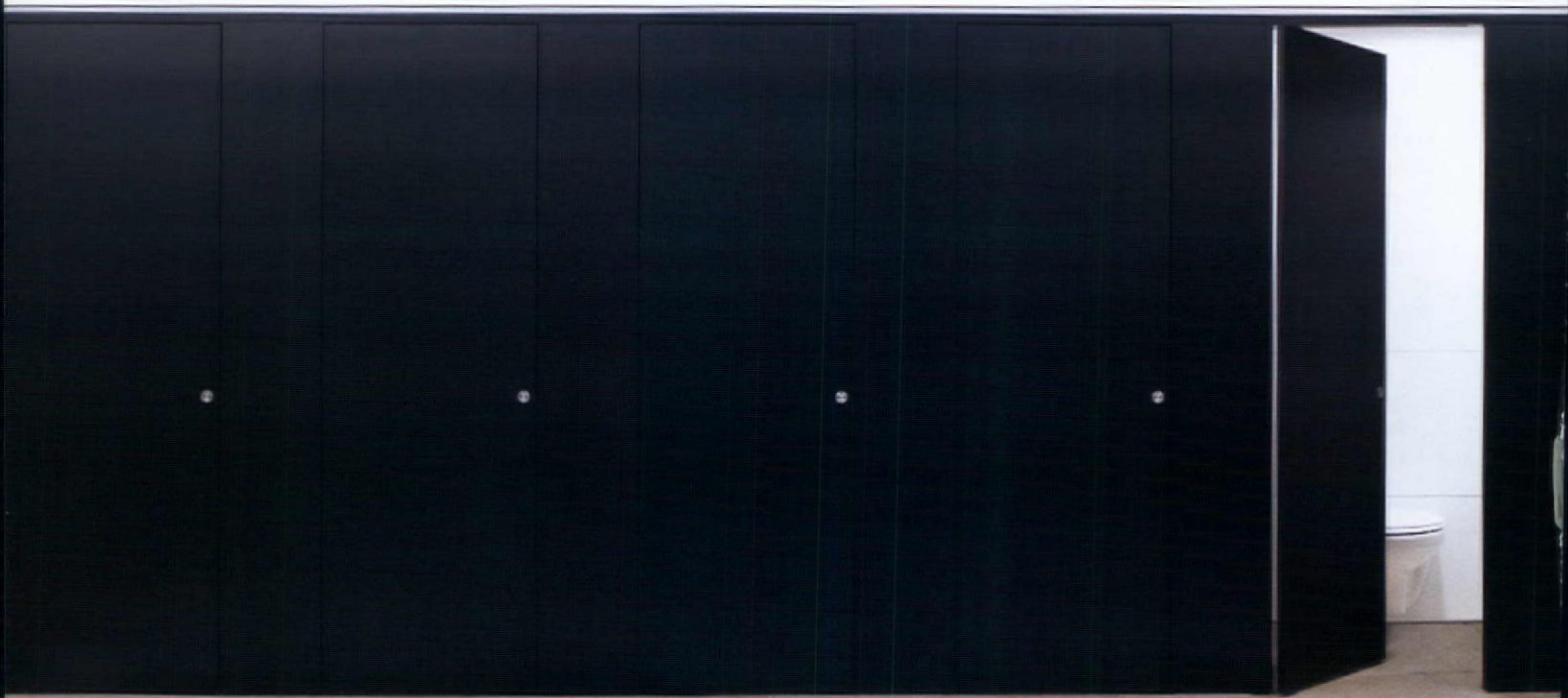
MONDAY 16 APRIL

- PRP profits plummet by 50 per cent
- Allies and Morrison Winchester scheme set for major CPO battle
- Grimshaw reveals new Eden Project extension
- Space Craft and Feilden Clegg Bradley in Medway comp final



WEDNESDAY 18 APRIL

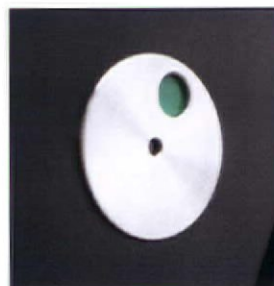
- Sheppard Robson teams up with gold-medal cyclist Chris Boardman for Velodrome comp
- Nouvel triumphs over Zaha for Paris orchestra concert hall (left)
- Broadway Malyan's Hampshire plans on hold
- Simpson to better Beetham with new Manchester skyscraper



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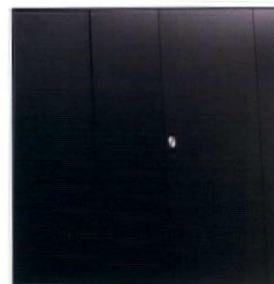
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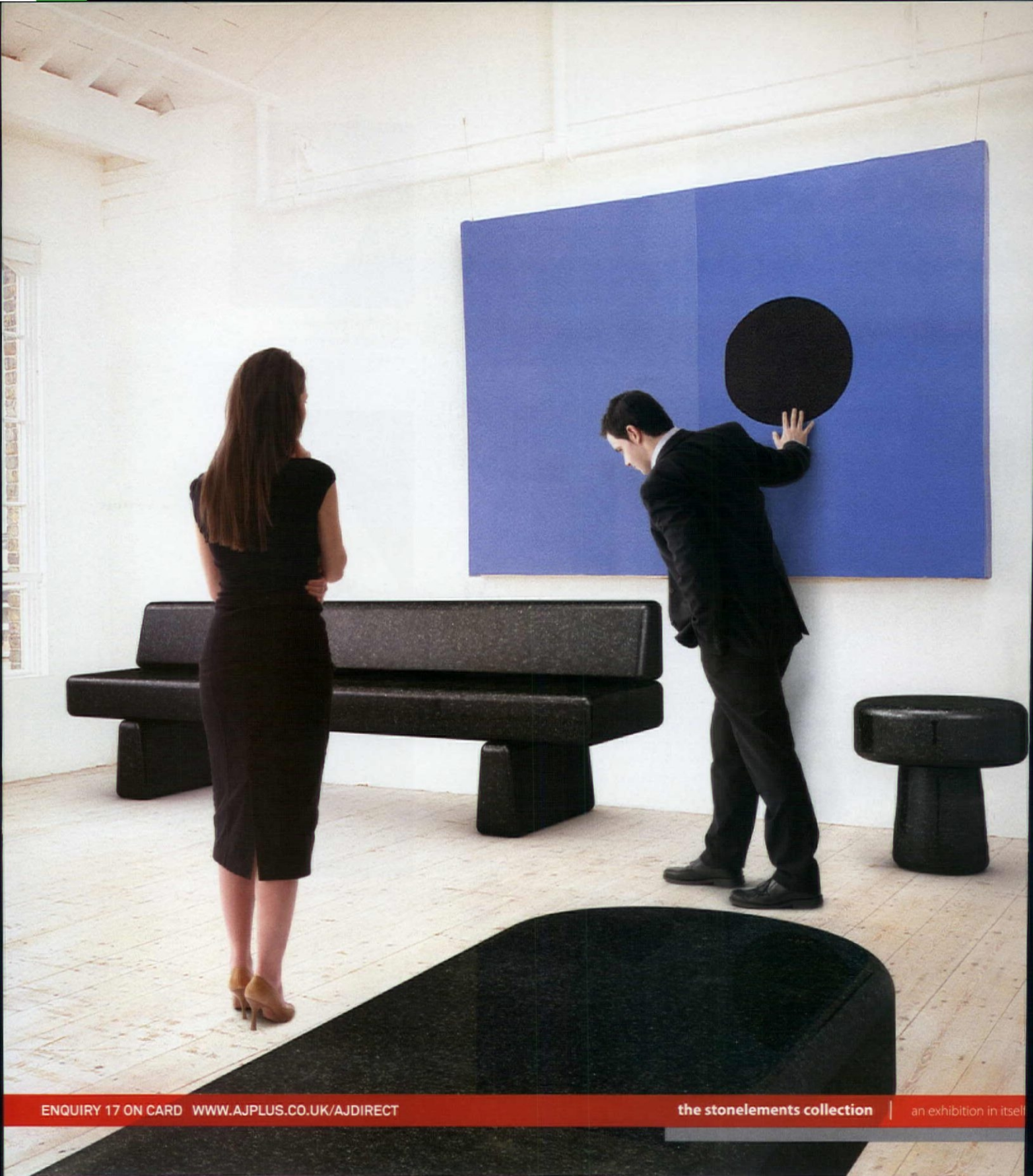
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Foster and Partners' commercial spaceport design follows the development of the SpaceShipOne vehicle

FOSTER ENTERS SPACE RACE

By Richard Waite

Foster and Partners has drawn up concept plans for a commercial spaceport in New Mexico, USA.

However, despite the practice's initial input, it will now have to compete against some of this planet's rising stars to land the full commission to design the terminal and hangar facilities for space flights.

The AJ can reveal that New Mexico state authorities have decided to launch an international open competition to find an architect to develop the design of the \$200 million (£100 million) spaceport.

Covering a 70km² site close to the mysterious Roswell airforce base, site of an alleged UFO crash, the spaceport will become the headquarters and mission control for Virgin boss Richard Branson's space-tourism arm Virgin Galactic.

Two years ago the aviation entrepreneur set up the world's first commercial space travel business and has already commissioned five new 'spaceliners' from the US team behind the history-making SpaceShipOne vehicle.

The craft was awarded the X prize in 2004 after it reached 100km into space twice within a fortnight.

It is hoped future space flights could cost as little as £100,000 per passenger and Branson is billing the new terminal as a 'five-star destination experience to accommodate customers, their families, and space enthusiasts'.

Speaking about Foster's future role in the design of the new port, Rick Homans, cabinet secretary of New Mexico's economic-development department

and the driving force behind the Spaceport project, said he would not rule out his continuing involvement.

He said: '[Foster and Partners] informally offered to show Virgin and us some ideas, which were great.'

'We are looking at putting the design of the terminal/hangar out to bid – we are a state agency, so we have specific procurement rules and laws.'

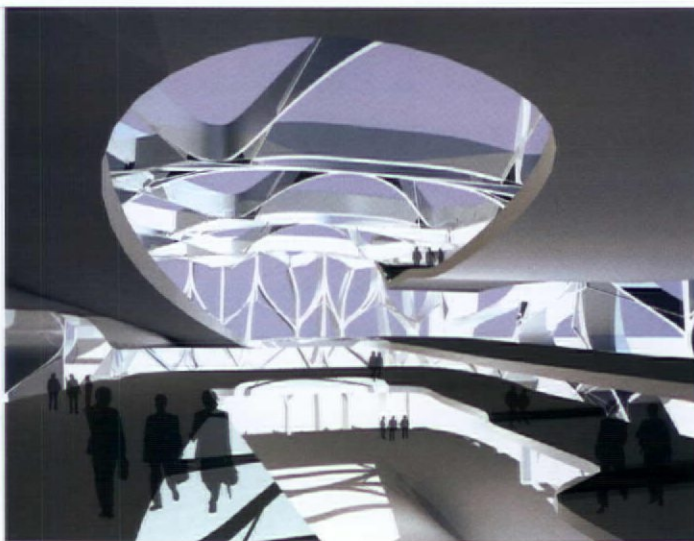
He added: 'We would hope Foster would submit a proposal.'

Homans has previously stated that the New Mexico base could be fully operational by 2010. Meanwhile, further spaceports are proposed for other parts of the world, including the first European terminal in Sweden.

WILKINSON EYRE PROMOTES HUMAN RIGHTS

Wilkinson Eyre has revealed these images of a new cultural centre planned for Milan, Italy, in collaboration with human-rights charity Amnesty International. The scheme, called the House of Human Rights Cultural Centre, has been designed by the London-based practice but has yet to be assigned to a specific site. According to Amnesty, the centre will be a new 'progressive public space' which will act as a focal point within the city for the discussion and promotion of human rights. The 5,000m² development has a striking 'curvilinear' facade, which will be created through the arrangement of precast-concrete elements. The scheme will include an IT resource centre, exhibition spaces, an auditorium, conference spaces, offices, retail spaces and a café, and will act as an educational and cultural centre focusing on the defence of human rights.

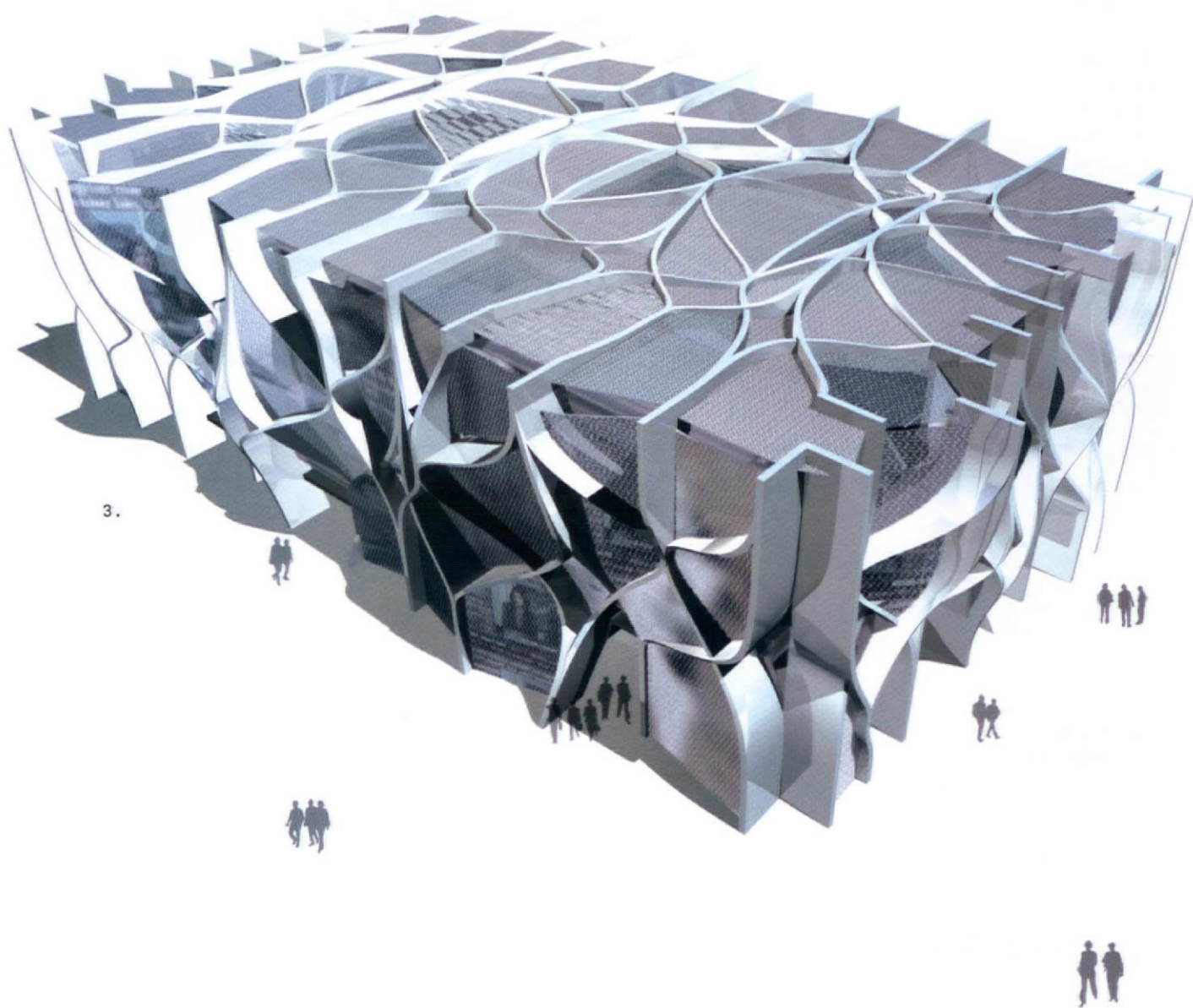
By Richard Vaughan



1.



2.



1. The House of Human Rights Cultural Centre, for charity Amnesty International, will be sited in Milan, Italy

2. Section

3. A 'curvilinear' facade will be created through the use of precast-concrete elements

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- further legislation to follow a review of energy standards after the May 2007 Scottish Executive election.

SCOTLAND SET FOR ITS OWN PART L

By Max Thompson

On 1 May, Scotland's equivalent of England and Wales' Part L energy conservation Building Regulations becomes law, but what does the new Section 6 of the Scottish Building Regulations mean for architects practising north of the border?

The immediate effect of the looming legislation will, according to gm + ad project director Jim Dick, lead to a stampede of architects heading to building-control officers in search of building-warrant applications.

'If we get a building warrant before 1 May,' Dick says, 'we can be reviewed under the old system.'

Although, like most Scotland-based architects, Dick welcomes the introduction of the new beefed-up Section 6, he says that no one is really sure

what the ramifications will be. 'Even the building-control officers don't really know how it will pan out,' he says.

Any Scottish practice worth its salt really ought to take the new law in its stride, not least because many practise in England and are already familiar with Part L.

'Our London studio has obviously been working with Part L and of course we share this common knowledge,' says Ewan Anderson of Make's Edinburgh studio.

Besides the obvious environmental benefits, there are other reasons why Scottish architects should welcome the changes, one of them being the increased leverage that Section 6 will give them over commercial agents.

Anderson says: 'Although the running costs of green

buildings are lower, this is not recognised by agents, who don't value greener buildings.

'Good buildings need to be green, and in the absence of any other carrots, this stick is the best we've got.'

Despite the mostly positive reception of Section 6, many observers will remember that in April 2005, when Part L was introduced south of the border, there was a collective intake of breath – particularly as architects pondered a built environment *sans* glass. In Scotland that intake may well be deeper, as the 1 May amendment is to be followed in a few years with even tougher regulations that will leave the England and Wales legislation looking positively limp.

Joanne Boyle, of the Scottish Building Standards Agency (SBSA) – the body in

charge of drawing up Section 6 – says additional amendments will depend on which ministers are voted in following the Scottish Executive's May election.

She says: 'It is likely that there will be changes within four years... whenever it happens, it will be more stringent,' warns Boyle.

Scotland's architects now have to buckle down, just as their southern counterparts did when Part L came into force in England and Wales.

Gavin Peart, head of energy at SBSA, is confident that his nation's architects will cope. He says: 'Yes, to a certain extent the design of buildings will be affected, but design will not be compromised and people will find ways to comply.'

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ZERO-CARBON DESIGNS ON NOTTINGHAM

Marsh:Grochowski Architects has submitted these proposals, which aim to convert a vast swathe of Nottingham into a new zero-carbon community, for planning permission. The £40 million regeneration scheme, dubbed the O Zone, will overhaul the Meadows area of the city and, according to the practice, is the only scheme in the UK to redevelop an existing residential area into a zero-carbon community. The focal point of the plans is a £9 million tower featuring a funicular lift rising up the slope of a supporting structure to a viewing platform. Standing 60m tall, the tower will provide visitors with impressive views across Nottingham, and will generate at least 60 per cent of its energy from the sun and the River Trent. Around the tower will be a lagoon, a restaurant, a café, a children's play area and exhibition spaces. Marsh:Grochowski is leading a team including Arup, Gleeds, landscape designer LDA Design and the Nottingham Energy Partnership. It hopes to secure funding for the scheme from the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks programme, but will face heated competition for this cash from the likes of Grimshaw's Eden Project extension (ajplus 16.04.07) and Make's Sherwood Forest visitor centre.

By Richard Vaughan



1.

1. The centrepiece of Marsh:Growchowski's planned zero-carbon community in Nottingham will be a 60m-tall tower offering extensive views across the city

2. The site is in Nottingham's Meadows area



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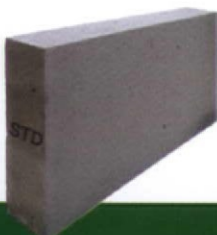
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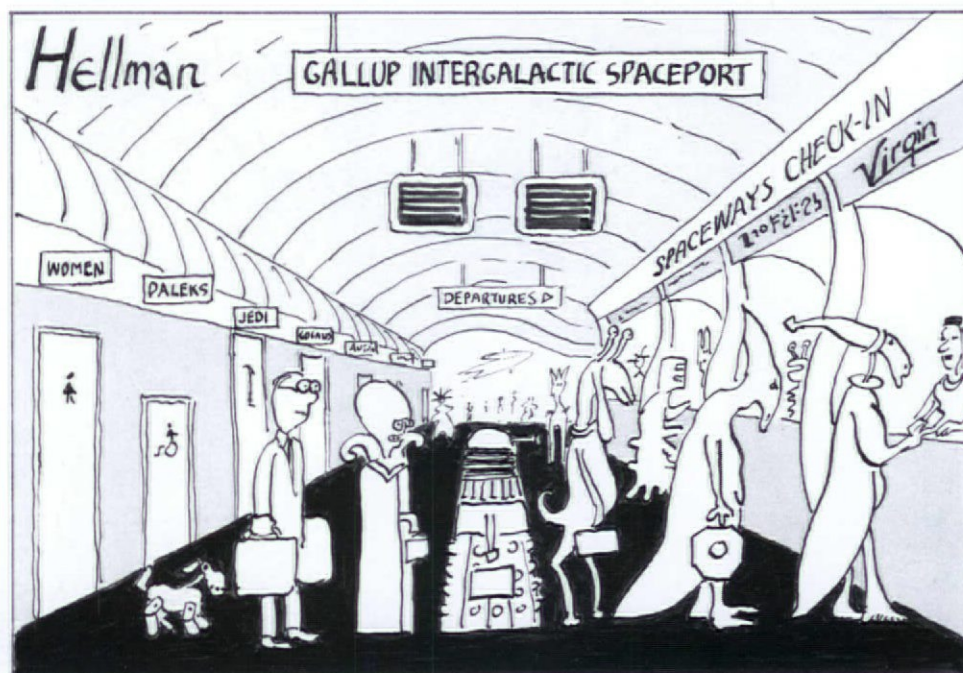
Richard Morrison on Network Rail's demolition plans. *Times*, 10.04.07

'Someone who is out on the streets protesting is doing a much more important job than I am'

Oscar Niemeyer. *Financial Times*, 14.07.04

'I'm still struggling. I always worry what my next project will be or how it will work out. So I'm struggling all of the time'

Tadao Ando. *www.cnn.com*, 11.04.07



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CURRYING FAVOUR

Astragal has been on the receiving end of a bizarre communication from 'The Lord of Harpole, in the Parish of Wickham Market, UK', who turns out to be **Abdul Latif**, Britain's first Bangladeshi lord of the manor and proprietor of the Curry Capital restaurant on Newcastle's Bigg Market. Lord Harpole says he is 'delighted' to inform us that he has created the world's hottest curry – which he has dubbed 'Curry Hell'. He is inviting Astragal, and any readers who may be interested, to sample said curry, available in vegetarian or non-vegetarian form, and with a side order of naan bread, pilau rice or chips, absolutely free of charge. That is, as long as you manage to eat the entire portion. If not, a princely sum of £6.95 will be applied. Lord

Harpole also points out that a takeaway Curry Hell is available anywhere in the world – but you will have to come to the restaurant to pick it up. Any readers who fancy the challenge should visit www.curryhell.com.

BROUGHT TO BOOK

Discontented rumblings continue to tarnish Future System's Prague library competition victory. First the Czech Chamber of Architects complained that the green and purple sea-creature-like blob had breached UIA contest rules. Then came the rumours that some of the other competitors were threatening legal action to have the result overturned. Even so the National Library seems happy with the choice. In fact the client appears so confident that the knockers will be

silenced that it has even started printing T-shirts and books with the Future Systems project on the front.

CROSS ABOUT THE RAIL

So despite some furious lobbying from Astragal, the government has chosen to ignore the call for a monorail in London, and instead opted for Crossrail. This network has been 17 years in the pipeline, and looks set to finally be given the thumbs-up by **Tony Blair**. Crossrail could soon be linking London with such wonders as Slough, Langley and Taplow in the west, and Romford, Brentwood and Shenfield in the east. Had the government taken on board Astragal's idea of a monorail, however, Londoners could be gliding to and from work high above the buildings, just like **The Jetsons**.

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DIANA FOUNTAIN IS A VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS

It may console Neil Porter of Gustafson Porter (AJ 29.03.07) to know that on a steaming hot July afternoon last year there were far more people cooling off at the Diana Memorial Fountain in Hyde Park than were across the road at the Rem Koolhaas-designed Serpentine Pavilion.

In terms of 'behind-closed-doors' testing of landscape projects, it is not uncommon for designers to snag play features by inviting the children of design and/or construction teams to a pre-opening party on site. Had that happened on the Diana project, the firm might now be enjoying justifiable acclaim for a carefully conceived, well-executed and popular project whose fundamental failing is only the exuberance with which it was embraced by its initial visitors.

Alan Tate, associate professor of landscape architecture, University of Manitoba, Canada

ASTRAGAL IN A MUDDLE OVER GEHRY DETRACTORS

I find myself wondering who supplied Astragal (AJ 05.04.07) with the conflated version of no less than three of the objection speeches made at the planning committee meeting to determine Frank Gehry's King Alfred scheme. It is all attributed to me and given as proof of poor-quality objections. I have mused that perhaps it came from one of the drama students drafted in to pretend to be Karis supporters that day. One hears that they were given a party before arriving at Hove Town Hall for the meeting.

The speaker before me, Louise Stack, made a point about regeneration possibilities by drawing a comparison between the 1930s King Alfred building and Tate Modern's origins. I made no mention of either building in my own speech which followed.

However, I did indeed suggest that 'the cutting edge has moved on' from the likes of Frank Gehry. And it has. In my speech I suggested (horrors!) that sometimes the cutting edge is about the kind of restylings that FAT does, rather than total demolition and a mega-squillions new build. And I did cite and show two examples of FAT's fabulous work.

I also gave a third example of what I consider to be cutting edge now: Will Alsop's Doodle – a new-build tower, proposed for City Road in London, covered in 'siphons' (designed in solar gain) and Bruce McLean artworks. This is the future. Gehry uses expensive non-renewable materials and provides huge clodhopper carbon footprints. In Los Angeles his concert hall was heating up the environment so catastrophically that it had to be sanded down, and his Guggenheim Bilbao is rusting.

The King Alfred building faces the southern skies over an uninterrupted sea – an absolute gem of an opportunity to design a zero-carbon building, but this was never even considered.

Oh, and it was Tom Chavasse, a retired CEO of two roofing companies, who spoke about the potential problems with the Kalzip roof.

Valerie Paynter, Save Hove

GLOBAL WARMING IS AN ORTHODOXY, NOT A FACT

I imagine many people are as confused as I am after Channel 4's *The Great Global Warming Swindle*. Letters in the AJ by Professor David Strong (22.03.07) and Kate Macintosh (29.03.07) condemning the programme did nothing to clarify the issue. Neither contained any science, except generalised claims, and accused programme maker Martin Durkin of communist sympathies. Are we really still worried about 'reds under the bed'?

The 'detailed analysis' in the *Independent*, referred to by Professor Strong, claims that the global cooling that occurred between 1940 and 1970 has been 'explained' by scientists as due to sulphur dioxide (SO₂) release that no longer happens. But others have said that, thanks to China, SO₂ levels are higher than ever.

No one seems to have answered the point that, if global warming is caused by greenhouse gases, then surely warming would be occurring in the stratosphere. No one has responded to the scientist in *The Great Global Warming Swindle* who was working in Alaska and said that icebergs drifting off the ice cap have always been a normal occurrence. No one has answered the point about fluctuations in CO₂ due to human activity being insignificant compared to what can occur naturally. And, above all, no one has disputed the fact that ice-core data shows temperature change preceding CO₂ build-up, not the reverse.

Aside from these arguments, as a non-scientist I suggest that the following observations are incontrovertible:

- we know that 80 per cent of greenhouse gases are produced by livestock as methane, and so we are wasting our time unless we address this particular problem;
- the best guess is that fossil fuels, at present consumption, will be severely depleted in 50 years, thus we will all be 'green' eventually, whether we like it or not;
- we live in what earth scientists call an interglacial period – the last ice sheet, which covered most of England, only retreated 10,000 years ago; and
- we live in an era easily gripped by orthodoxies – this is particularly true in academic and scientific fields, where speaking against the orthodoxy could be professional suicide.

Perhaps of overriding importance is the point made in *The Great Global Warming Swindle* that the application of the precautionary principle to climate change is causing untold misery in the developing world. Preventing people in Africa from exploiting their coal reserves and having modern power stations is condemning them to a life without electricity. We should applaud Martin Durkin for stressing how, in trying to avoid a bad outcome (which is not at all certain), we are creating one that definitely is.

Peter Kellow, Finistère, France

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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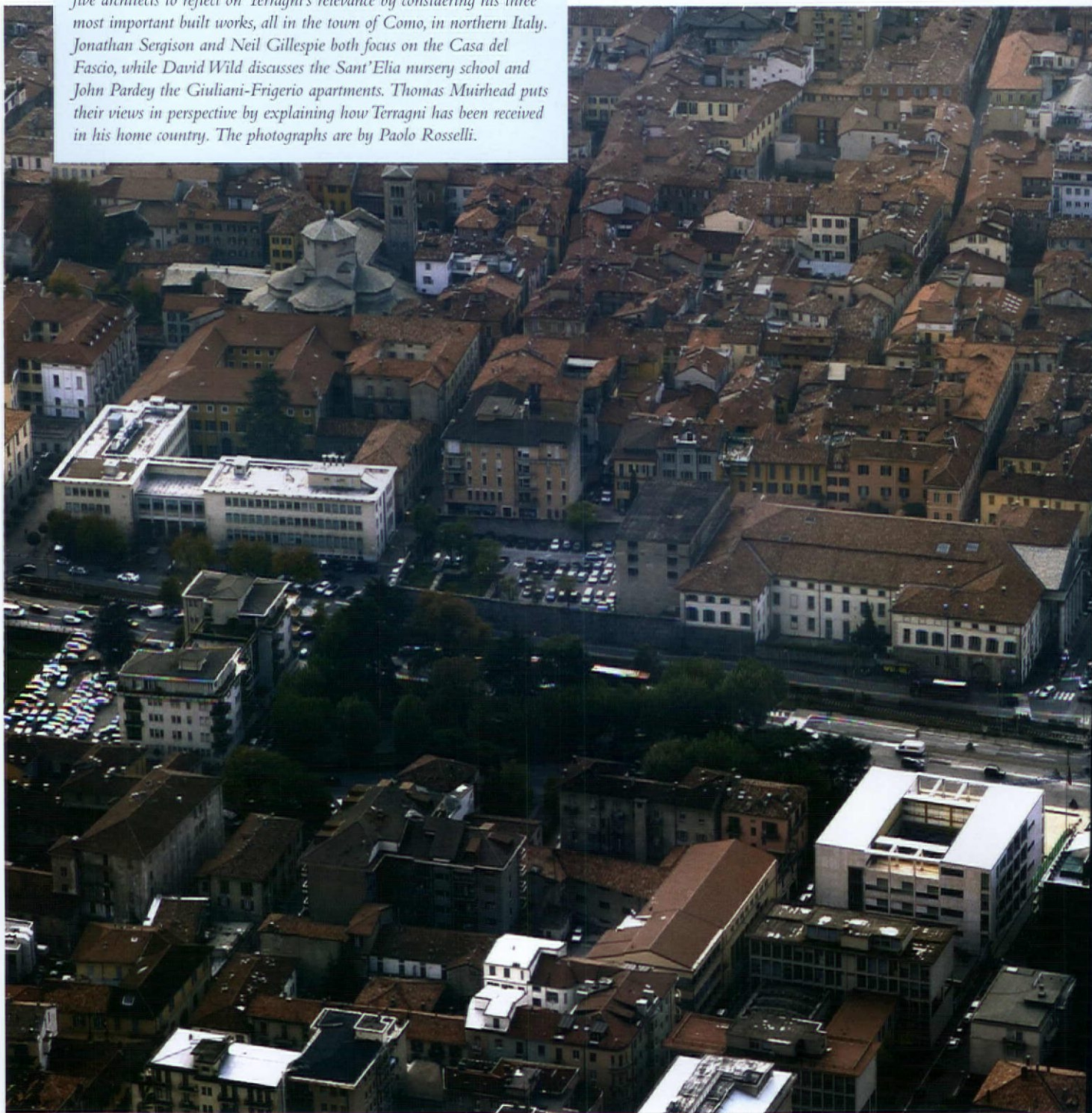
TERRAGNI/ COMO



1. Detail of the north-east facade of the Casa del Fascio

BUILDING STUDY

In his brief career, Giuseppe Terragni (1904-1943) designed several key buildings which continue to intrigue and inspire. The AJ asked five architects to reflect on Terragni's relevance by considering his three most important built works, all in the town of Como, in northern Italy. Jonathan Sergison and Neil Gillespie both focus on the Casa del Fascio, while David Wild discusses the Sant'Elia nursery school and John Pardey the Giuliani-Frigerio apartments. Thomas Muirhead puts their views in perspective by explaining how Terragni has been received in his home country. The photographs are by Paolo Rosselli.





CASA DEL FASCIO, 1932-36

By Jonathan Sergison

My relationship to the architecture of Giuseppe Terragni is problematic. I am drawn to his work but feel cautious for two reasons. Firstly, his political position creates a dilemma. As an architect I have social and political responsibilities and I need to develop my own position with respect to these. In this sense, I feel a certain revulsion at the free choice Terragni made to align himself with the Italian Fascist Party.

The second difficulty I have is with the strong reliance Terragni placed on a strict ordering system, notably the golden section, employed as a means of determining the proportion and organisation of buildings. While I admire the rigour of this approach I could never subscribe to it as a way of working, because its rigidity denies the possibility of a form of adjustment that could well work against the system but improve the whole. There is a case for things to be proportioned by the (well-trained) eye and not some predetermined schema – a position that is ultimately more inclusive and tolerant.

I am nonetheless drawn to Terragni's buildings and hold them in high regard. As physical objects, as inhabited buildings, they move me. Above all, they are the work of a highly gifted architect who was in control of his own relationship to the art of architecture. This is something one experiences all too infrequently, mostly in incidents or parts of a project, but rarely as a whole.

The Casa del Fascio is one of my key architectural references. As an urban object it is exact, and situated precisely in relationship to the cathedral, neighbouring buildings, railway lines and roads. It can be read as an urban villa with an enclosed, covered courtyard space at its heart. Equally the Casa del Fascio had a very public role to play and the blank panel to the right of the front facade was conceived as a space for fixing propaganda images. This condition could probably be seen as the consequence of Terragni's difficulty with an overall symmetry and, more precisely, it assisted with the handling of the corners and reading of the building as a four-sided object.

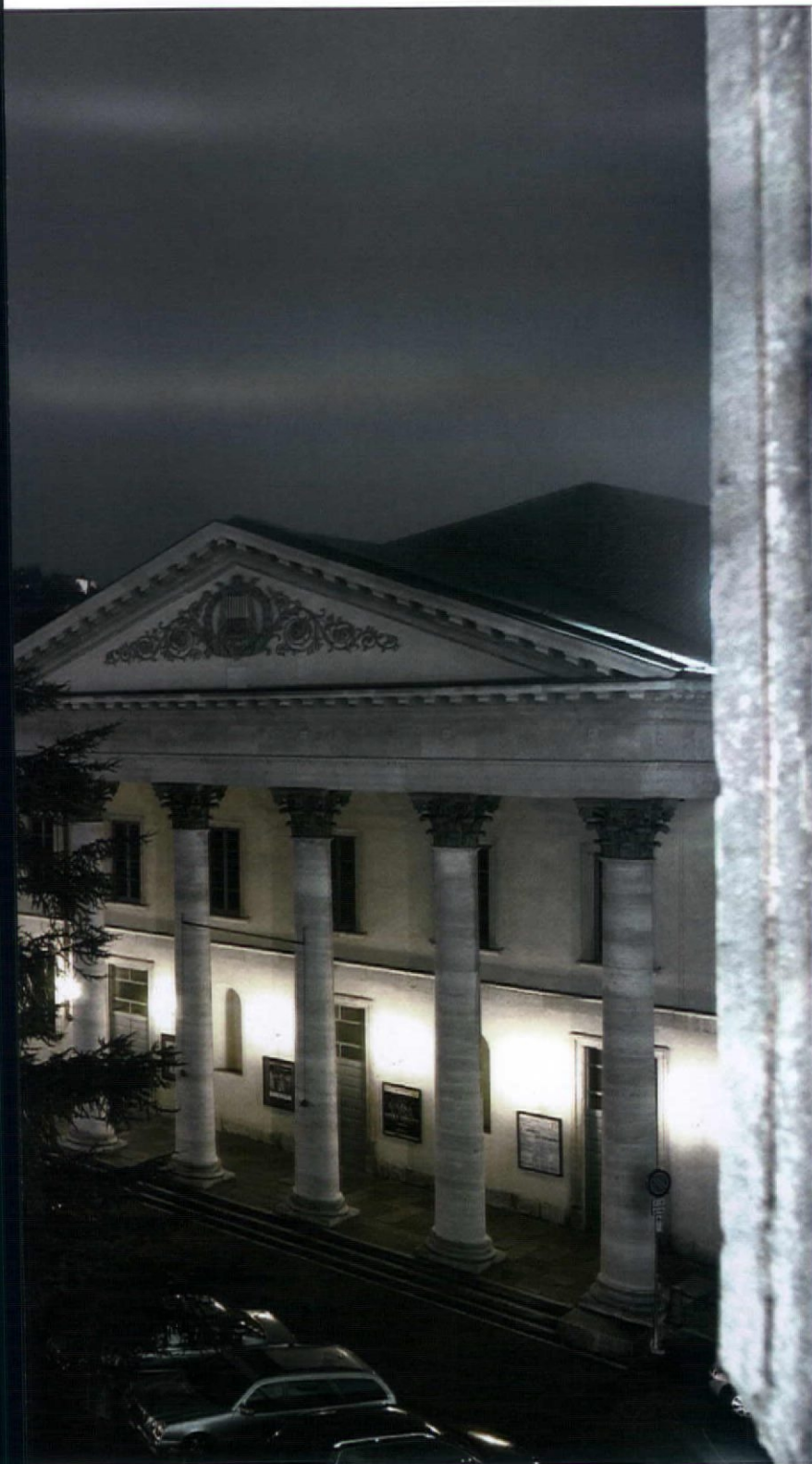
Closer inspection reveals a highly exacting control of the stone cladding. The sizing of the structural members makes it clear that this is not a tectonic facade, but one which explores the freedom accorded by the frame structure. In this respect it projects a very modern image, further emphasised in the frame section sizes on the side elevations and balcony loggia spaces on the front elevation. It strikes me that Terragni was very aware of the ambiguity at work in the manipulation of material (stone) and structure in the making of these facades. The lessons they hold move and provoke me.

So how can I declare my alignment to a creative production whose ideological position I find suspect? May I suspend my beliefs in order to enjoy an aesthetic experience and learn from it? These are questions I am at a loss to answer. In a similar way, I am moved by the non-secular architecture of Dom Hans van der Laan. I have doubts about his self-determined ordering and proportional system, but find his few buildings I have visited evocative, powerful and exact. I do not need to be a practising Christian to be aware of their power.

I am also drawn to 18th- and 19th-century town houses – above all, I appreciate these buildings for what they are without feeling the need to subscribe to the social structure they supported in the first instance. And, similarly, I am moved by the architecture of Giuseppe Terragni without feeling a need to endorse his position.



2. View from the Duomo across the Piazza dell'Impero with the Teatro Sociale on the right



CASA DEL FASCIO

By Neil Gillespie

In his book 'The Wanderer and His Charts', Kenneth White speaks of a 'nomadic intellect', an agile intelligence that moves from one source to another but that is also drawn back constantly to a few essential texts. As architects we steer an erratic, unmapped course through a shifting territory of ideas and theories. Navigating by means of markers, key buildings, figures or texts, we gauge our progress or direction by reference to these absolutes.

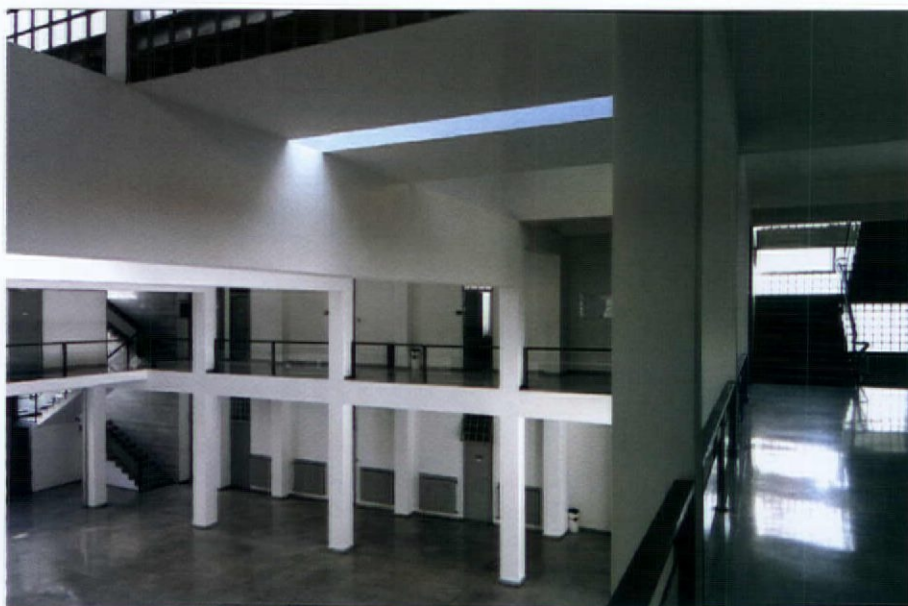
Libera's Malaparte House, Lina Bo Bardi's House of Glass, Herzog & de Meuron's Stone House, Lewerentz's St Mark's and St Peter's churches are part of my constellation. What connects these buildings, beyond haunting me, is that I have not visited them. I have not experienced the reality of these places, the smell or taste of their interiors, their relationship to their site. I am sure experiencing these buildings directly would only increase my admiration and understanding of them.

Some buildings, however, need to be confined to the imagination, and for me the Casa del Fascio is one of them. From a Northern perspective, one often longs for a Southern climate, a migration to the sun. Casa del Fascio exists as a rationalist mirage, a perfect prism set in a Southern context. Its pure white immaterial form appeals to a Northern imagination. Reality, I fear, might diminish its abstract perfection.

The building appears as a clear, absolute form: a half-cube some 33.2m in plan, 16.6m in height. It expresses a moment of revelation or lightness – lightness as defined by Italo Calvino, who refers to 'lightness like a bird' rather than a 'feather'. There is an acute sense of control, precision and purpose about the building's prismatic form.

However, like a crystal – an apparently stable form that can in an instant be both dissolved or revealed by light – the Casa del Fascio's form conceals a complex and contradictory story. The plan is hollow. It culminates in a double-height covered court, a void at its core. Each facade is different, each a different essay in Cartesian composition. The mass of the building is constantly eroded, saved from mutation and collapse by an underlying grid that continues the sense of surface, thereby restoring the prism.

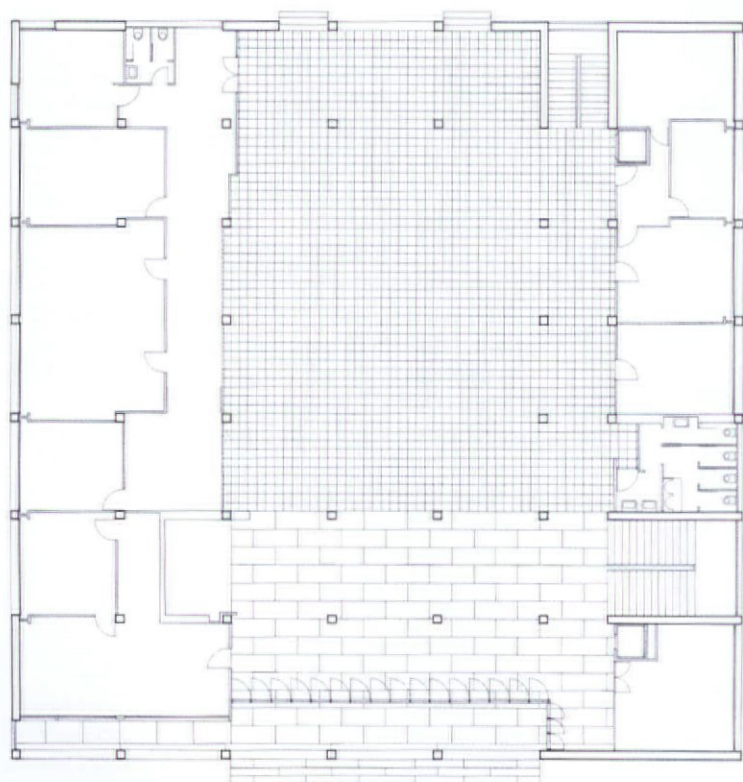
There is an image taken some time soon after completion that sets the Casa del Fascio against the Duomo and Mount Brunate beyond. The building is seen in contrast, in opposition to its context. As such it throws them into a kind of enhanced reality. Unlike the Malaparte House or the Stone House, that emerge from their sites, or the House of Glass, which merges with the site, or St Peter's, which becomes an extension of the site, the Casa del Fascio stands apart from its context. Its enduring influence is in its irrelevance to reality.



3.

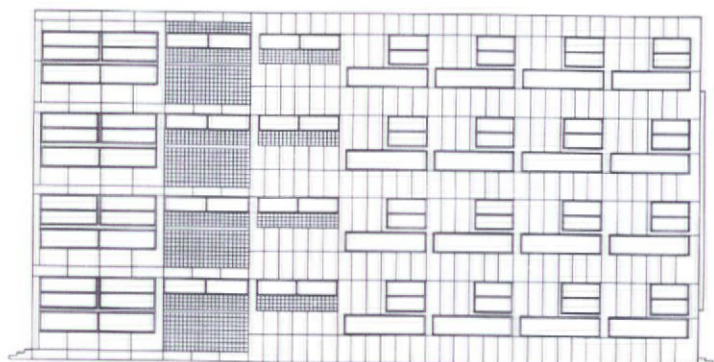
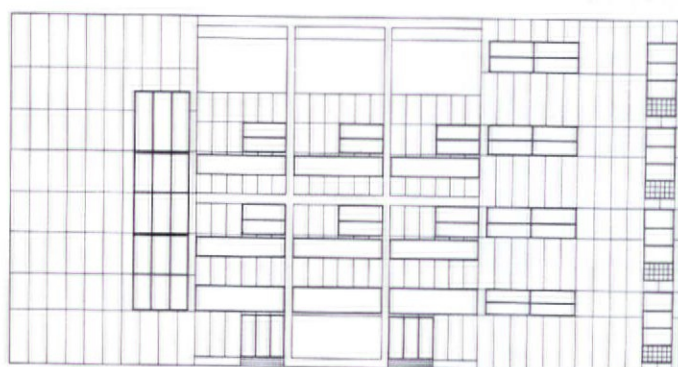
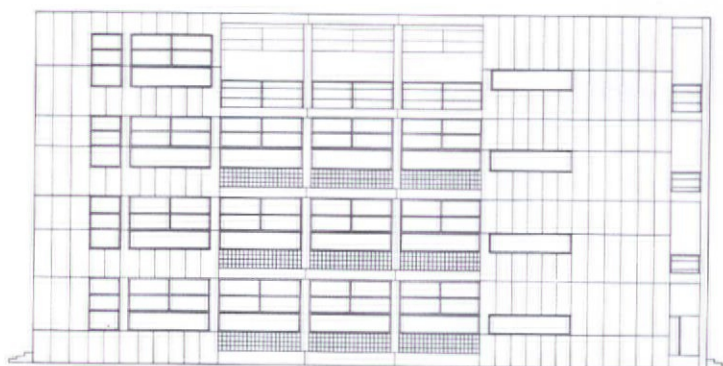
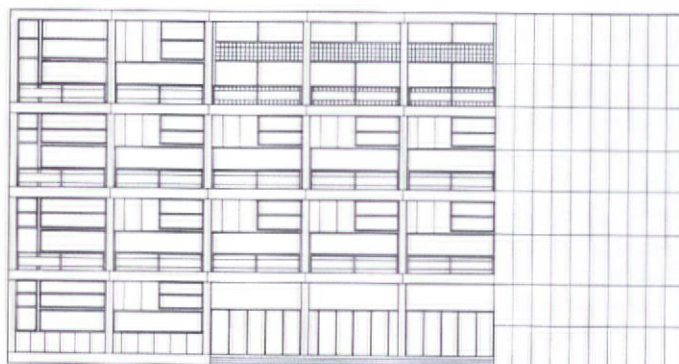


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3. The Casa del Fascio's assembly hall, with the building's main staircase seen at the right

4. Detail of the south-east facade

5. Ground-floor plan

6. A clockwise tour of the Casa del Fascio's facades, beginning with the entrance front at the top

6.

SANT'ELIA NURSERY SCHOOL, 1936-37

By David Wild

It's 1937, and Mussolini's Blackshirts are helping the Fascists put the clock back in Spain. The cost of this insurgency means a cut in the budget for the Sant'Elia nursery school: all that remains of the proposed second storey is an outdoor roof terrace, accessed by a generous dog-leg ramp. It is a masterpiece nevertheless: a testament to the increasingly beleaguered progressive wing of rationalist architects within the Fascist state.

Terragni and his engineer brother Attilio have constructed an object lesson of transparency and light, with a remarkable grandeur that belies its single storey. That's perhaps a residual effect of the missing upper floor, but high ceilings are common in this region, and together with a plan that brings cross ventilation to all areas, these tall spaces are cool in summer. Meanwhile, the relatively small glazing module acknowledges the scale of the children, and a further mediation is achieved by Terragni designing all the children's furniture himself, on the lines of the tubular metal and leather chairs for the Casa del Fascio.

In best Modernist fashion, the building thankfully does not follow the outline of an awkwardly shaped site. Anchored at one corner by the kitchen block, it floats across the longest dimension, offering the maximum outside space on the east side, away from the street. A beautiful photograph in the 'Opera Completa 1925-1943' shows how the central courtyard, on a north-south axis, acts as a lens to focus beyond the mundane surroundings, toward the bosky hillside and crowning tower in the distance.

This image also illustrates just one example of how the interplay of structure and surface is manipulated with consummate skill, never at the expense of function: the glazed envelope either in front or behind the frame, depending on orientation.

Terragni takes this a step further with a freestanding frame on the east side. With its canvas awnings billowing in the breeze and sheltering the outdoor teaching space, this must be one of the most poetic images of the Modernist open-air school.

These classrooms can be opened up into one space, and the partition and storage wall that separates them from the corridor shows a degree of abstraction that continues the theme of shifted planes – something Terragni has in common with the compositions of his painter friend Mario Radice. This marriage of rationalism and abstraction was lost, as the reactionary style of Piacenti became the official style of Italian Fascism.

Terragni was drafted into the army in 1939. Invalided on the Russian Front, he returned home to die in 1943, renouncing the Fascism he had joined, 'having seen only their mask and not the true face,' as Giulia Veronesi puts it.

With the face that he provided, the Casa del Fascio in Como remains one of the greatest buildings of the Modern era. Lacking the taint of occupancy that almost saw this headquarters demolished after the war, the school, carefully restored, seems as fresh today as when it opened 70 years ago.

'The philosophical and historical culture in Italy was too expert to accept the rationalistic justifications of the French, or the technical and utilitarian determinism of the Germans, or the empiricism of the English,' said Bruno Zevi.





7. A scene in the Sant'Elia refectory, with its generous volume



8.

8. The courtyard focuses attention on the hillside and tower in the distance

9. 'Poetic Modernism': an archive image of children under the canvas awnings

10. Detail of the framing device at the entrance to Sant'Elia

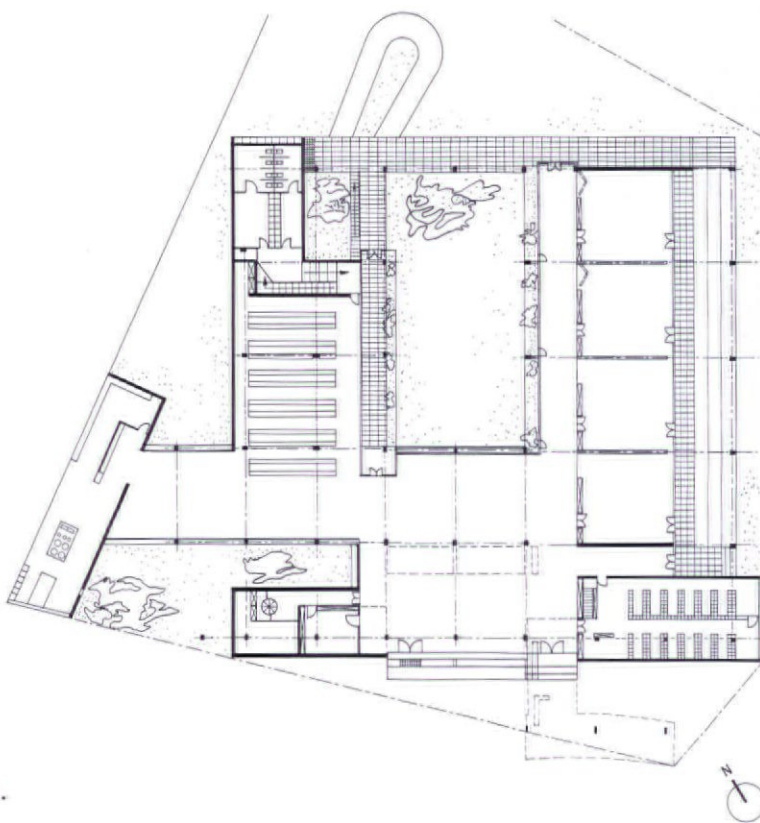
11. Plan of the school



9.



10.



11.



12. The north facade of the Giuliani-Frigerio apartments



GIULIANI-FRIGERIO APARTMENTS, 1939-1940

By John Pardey

Terragni entered my consciousness one wet afternoon in the library of the South Bank Poly during my second year of studies, when I came across Peter Eisenman's PhD thesis 'From Object to Relationship: Giuseppe Terragni'. His study centred on the Giuliani-Frigerio apartment block in Como and it really opened my eyes to how volumes could say more than just their innate forms, by expressing relationships between what seems like implied inner and outer volumes – and from this 'space between', succeed in creating a fertile architectural language.

The Casa Giuliani-Frigerio, completed after Terragni was called up to fight in Mussolini's army and not long before his premature death, is in many ways his most sophisticated work. A five-storey building containing 14 apartments, it sits at the end of a block that also includes his Novocomum building of some 12 years earlier – the product of a precocious talent aged just 23.

With sketch designs made before his departure, over the next two years Terragni sent design drawings back to his assistant Luigi Zuccoli, who took care of the detailing and construction. Terragni apparently was a workaholic, a man totally wrapped up in architecture, and the monotony of military life must have given him ample time to dream up complex readings and depths to each aspect of the design.

The north facade of the Giuliani-Frigerio building overlooks Via Sinigaglia, and despite containing only bedrooms and bathrooms, provides a neat demonstration of how Terragni, perhaps instinctively, simultaneously creates 'subtractive space' (as if cut from a solid) with 'additive space' (as if made in layers).

By pulling a three-storey bay forward of the main volume to align with the front edge of a cornice above, a new layer is defined – and this bay is then shifted sideways, to reveal windows left like striations where the bay once was. Instead of a solid corner, the facade is revealed as a plane, with floor plates returning along the side facades to form separate but interdependent facades.

So with this one facade, Terragni reveals several layers and implied movements – relationships – to create depth and richness. This combines with his use of the golden section in plan, section and elevation, with results that are not only deeply intelligent but also simply beguiling.

There is another moment in Terragni's work, from the Villa Bianca in Seveso, that I return to time and again. The main living space projects out as a stone-clad bay, and this bay then sits within a framed opening that further contains a roof garden – so that the roof of this box then becomes a projecting terrace. As if this was not enough, Terragni floats a beautifully delicate white frame around the projecting bay forward of the main volume to create a space – a layer – that now contains a slender poplar tree.

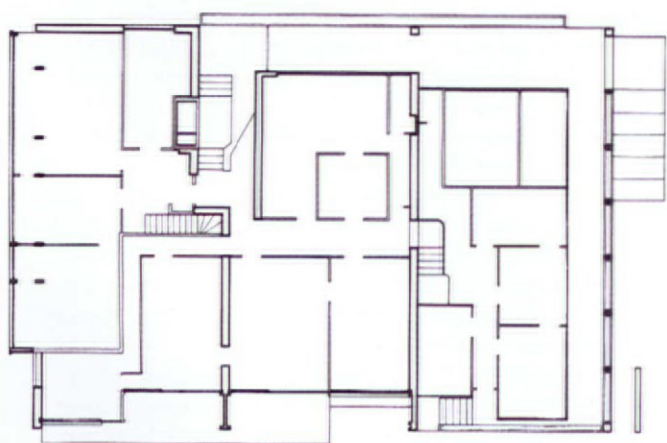
The house feels as if a calm, rectilinear box has been frozen a millisecond after it had exploded, with the hidden volumes bursting their way out of a box, and once again, it is the 'space between' that provides such richness and depth.



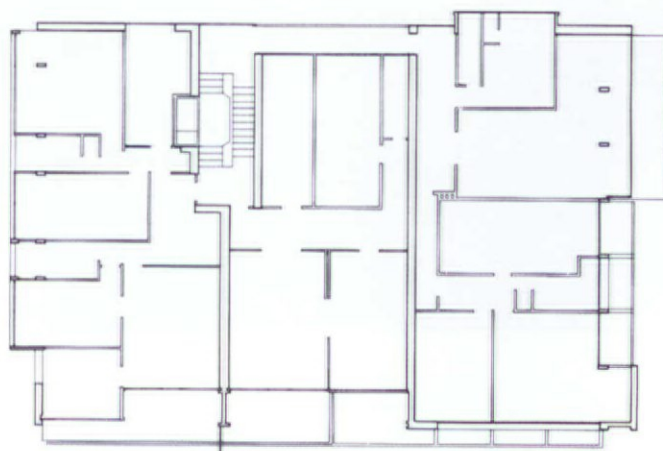
13.



14.



15.



16.



- 13. South facade of the building
- 14. Detail of the east facade
- 15. Ground-floor plan
- 16. Typical floor plan

AFTERWORD

By Thomas Muirhead

Discounting a sycophantic Enrico Mantero, who in 1982 extolled 'the great teachings of the master', for most Italian critics it remains ineluctable that Giuseppe Terragni's most important commissions, including the Casa del Fascio, came through influential Fascist party family members.

Moreover, as Manfredo Tafuri demonstrated in 'The Subject and the Mask' (1978), Terragni's abstract architectural language, much admired by non-Italians, in its very withdrawal specifically embodies something significant about that degenerate period. No amount of post-facto rehabilitation can get around this, even if it is by Bruno Zevi, who in the 1960s had reinstated Terragni by publishing his work.

Daniele Vitale (Rassegna, 1982) focused on the discontinuity of Terragni's oeuvre, its 'different souls and different lines of investigation'. The Novocomum (1927-29), for instance, may look like 'white architecture' in monochrome photographs, but Terragni's colour scheme was in fact discordant blues and yellows. Conventionally planned and 'far from being a machine à habiter' it is 'nothing but a perfectly normal apartment block'. But his gasworks project (also 1927) was quite different: an assemblage of industrial forms and spaces, strongly informed by Futurist ideas about dynamic machinery.

The abstract purism of his 1936-37 Sant'Elia nursery school in Como was successfully amalgamated with a warm empathy for small children, and his 1936 steel-and-glass project for Brera Art School (with the equally talented Luigi Figini, Gino Pollini, and partner Pietro Lingeri) remains one of his best compositions – what Vitale called 'the most advanced and complete of any of the directions Terragni was taking'. Yet the following year he retreated into rhetorical form-making in two overblown 1937 projects for Mussolini's new chancellery in Rome. Seen in hindsight, his grossly overscaled Cortesella megastructure (1940) was emblematic of rationalist insensitivity to context; 'without the slightest compunction', writes Vitale, it proposed demolishing the entire medieval centre of Como.

But Terragni's abstraction had already been denounced in Casabella in 1938 by Giuseppe Pagano who, after the completion of the Casa del Fascio, noted that 'some architects will do anything to make a name for themselves with meaningless formal inventions – architects of real ability who waste time on strange confections that endlessly explore subsidiary aspects of architecture... formalist indulgences that eat away like a woodworm from the inside, destroying the healthy principles of rationalist architecture.'

Tafuri dismisses the Casa del Fascio as 'an enigma: totally silent and completely abstract, it sits there frozen. Its relationship to the city is mute and engages in no dialogue; the surrounding buildings and spaces simply exist; Terragni has nothing to say about them.' Pagano had warned against Terragni's seductiveness – 'Let us never make the mistake of accepting this empty rhetoric of agitated formal inventions' – but many still fall for it. For Italians however, Terragni is not the central figure, and his work was no more important than that of his many gifted contemporaries, about whom still far too little is known outside Italy.

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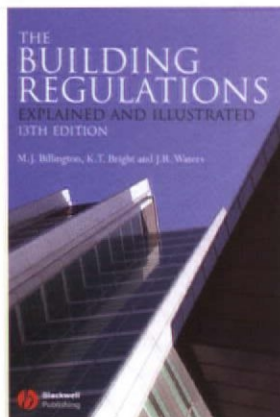


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2.

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24 April 6.30-9.30pm
 RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1
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 The Building Centre, 26 Store Street, London WC1
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BOOKS

The Building Regulations: Explained and Illustrated
 M J Billington, K T Bright and J R Waters
 Blackwell Publishing, 2007, £55
 The 13th edition (previous edition 2004) of a classic text includes revisions to six Approved Documents (Parts A, C, F, L, M and P) published in the intervening years.

Understanding JCT Standard Building Contracts
 David Chappell
 Taylor & Francis, 2007, £18.99
 Eighth edition (previous edition 2003) of a clearly written guide to the most widely used JCT contracts, including the Standard Building Contract (SBC); the Intermediate Building Contracts (IC and ICD); the Minor Works Building Contracts (MW and MWD); and the Design and Build Contract (DB).

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE IS VITAL FOR ARCHITECTS

By Hattie Hartman

Lack of effective communication between architects and clients can result in dissatisfaction at both ends. But training in communication and presentation skills can help architects to bridge this gulf and gain the trust of clients.

Have you ever stood up to make a presentation and completely frozen? Or pitched for a job and bumbled your way awkwardly through the interview? The good news is that help is available. Many practices, and the RIBA CPD programme, acknowledge that communication skills are critical for architects and training is essential. There are people who can help you overcome your fears and understand how to develop your own personal style of what Judith Gilmore of Effective Communications calls 'powerful presentations'. Though public speaking may come naturally to the chosen few, most of us can benefit from a bit of coaching, be it in a group or one on one.

To get the most out of these sessions, you have to be ready to bare your soul. Complete confidentiality and trust from all participants is required. I recently attended two such workshops in the dual role of participant and fly-on-the-wall journalist. The style and nuances of the workshops differed but common themes emerged and many of the tools were similar. In both instances, participants were asked to make short (five minute) presentations in front of their peers which were followed by personal feedback on content and delivery from the leader and fellow participants, who act as 'mirrors', commenting on the good and bad in your presentation. It immediately becomes up-close-and-personal.

With clients ranging from Foster and Rogers to David Morley and van Heyningen and Haward, Santa Raymond of Santa Raymond Consultants runs in-house or off-site workshops called 'Communicating and Presenting'. An architect and interior designer with particular expertise in the office sector, Raymond has spent several years as a client advisor. She developed her communications workshops in response to a perceived communications gulf between excellent architects and dissatisfied clients. Like the car salesman, says Raymond, you need to be able to 'listen to the subtext' and build empathy with your audience. One way to achieve this is by eschewing jargon – Raymond cautions: 'make it so your grandmother can understand.'

Raymond believes that the most important factor in getting people to listen is the personality of the presenter – not what you say. According to Raymond, this can be established in the opening minute. She advises workshop participants to visualise a challenge that they enjoy prior to an important pitch, and then transfer that calm and confidence to the presentation – it might be skiing a field of moguls, holding a difficult yoga pose or dancing with a partner. A natural conversational tone, with pauses and eye contact, are as effective as a polished performance. And a key point for architects: visuals should be used to *reinforce* a talking point not to introduce one. Handouts should be given only at the end of a presentation – otherwise you risk losing your audience. It's all about 'winning trust and confidence, not about showing you're an expert'. And remember to be enthusiastic and 'make it fun'.



Consultant Judith Gilmore cites research that shows body language and voice projection are far more important than content in a presentation

As Raymond says, you have to 'put yourself in other people's shoes', and be attentive to how what you say is received, 'visually, verbally, intellectually and emotionally'. Preparation is key. If the content is crisp and well-honed, you are free to focus on delivery. Gilmore recommends a template and cue cards for any presentation: start with a compelling hook to grasp the audience's interest; give three supporting arguments with a bit of detail; and conclude by reiterating your core message. She suggests writing out your introductory and concluding sentences and listing the remainder in bullet points. 'It's good to rehearse your core message in your head on the way to the meeting,' says Gilmore. Raymond suggests arriving early to check out the room and any AV equipment. Raymond and Gilmore both stress the importance of smiling, posture, body language and strong vocal projection.

Much of this advice is common sense. But how do you actually internalise it to improve your own personal performance? The key is to make – or in some cases, force – workshop participants to engage in the process. The two workshops I attended were quite different in format. Gilmore's was a three-hour evening session for a group of 10, while Raymond's was an all-day affair for four. Both say that having six to eight participants is ideal – enough to create a dynamic exchange and still allow time for individual feedback. There seems to be a clear advantage in anonymity between participants. Nevertheless, many practices opt to conduct this training in-house – but sometimes off-site to create a sense of detachment from daily work.

EXPERT TIPS FOR COMPELLING PRESENTATIONS

- Prepare, prepare, prepare. If your content is ready, then you can focus on delivery;
- get inside the head of your client/audience;
- know who's who in a meeting so you know who to direct the various parts to;
- phrase it so that your grandmother could understand – no jargon;
- check out the room and the AV equipment ahead of time;
- mirror client behaviour and body language;
- don't be afraid of silences;
- say tough things in a sympathetic way;
- less is more when it comes to visuals;
- use visuals to reinforce a talking point, not to introduce one;
- only give handouts at the end of a presentation – otherwise you could lose your audience;
- smile and make eye contact; and
- be enthusiastic and 'make it fun'.

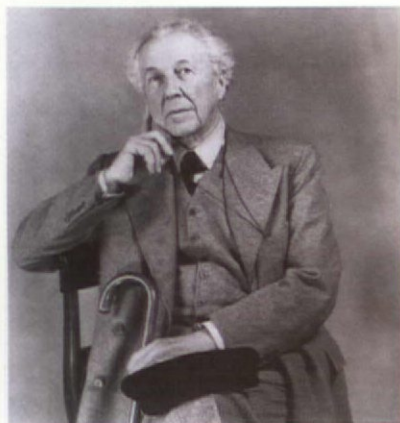
Santa Raymond, Santa Raymond Consultants

Raymond's all-day workshop uses a short questionnaire to establish the parameters of the issues to be addressed, and participants then exchange stories of heart-stopping presentation moments. The day alternates between role play and presentations by participants, and short lectures from Raymond on topics such as chairing meetings, pitching for work, dealing with an aggressive contractor, PowerPoint presentations and body language. Raymond's strength lies in establishing a rapport between members of the group and creating a sympathetic atmosphere which allows for honest and constructive criticism. It is compelling stuff.

Gilmore, by contrast, is an extremely professional performer with 20 years of experience and a wide range of clients – around a third of which are architects, including Atkins, Aedas and SMC. One of her services is coaching on how to win work. 'Don't let your audience be agonised by the agony of the presenter,' says Gilmore. Her business grew out of wishing to overcome a deep childhood fear which resulted from a traumatic solo performance with the school choir. She is entertaining and high-energy and, like Raymond, full of practical tips.

Both Raymond and Gilmore say that it all boils down to trust. People buy people, not schemes or pretty pictures, they say. 'Do I trust her?' is the main question a prospective client asks. Training can help you learn how to win this trust.

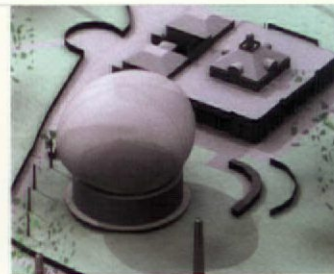
For more information visit www.effectivecommunications.co.uk and www.santaraymond.com



1.

FOR THE ENTHUSIAST AND THE CYNIC ALIKE

By Stephen Gage



2.

1. Wright on the technology of construction

2. Koolhaas on the collaboration of architect and engineer at the Serpentine Pavilion

Rethinking Technology: A Reader in Architectural Theory
Ed. William W. Braham and Jonathan Hale, Routledge, 2006, 488pp, £25.00

This compendium of important architectural texts from the 20th century varies from the lucid to the deeply impenetrable, offering scope for the budding enthusiast and the budding cynic alike. The format is similar to Neil Spiller's *Cyber Reader* (Phaidon 2002). An introduction sets out a conceptual position, followed by 54 extracts, each with an introductory page by the authors. Both the general and the individual introductions are shorter than Spiller's – too short to be read as a parallel text, but informative nonetheless.

The authors argue that – at least for architects – the word 'technology' has become synonymous with 'system' at the start of the 21st century, and that as a result, theories about technology are either utopian or dystopian. This approach is dubious because it leads to a selection of sources that demonstrate a progressive disengagement with the material value of technology when it is employed in the creation of the built environment. It might have been more appropriate to treat technology in the 20th century as a set of interlocking themes. The authors' approach has obliged them to largely ignore the explosion of systems thinking that took place in the mid-to-late '60s. There is no reference, for example, to Nick Negroponte, John Fraser, Cedric Price or Gordon Pask.

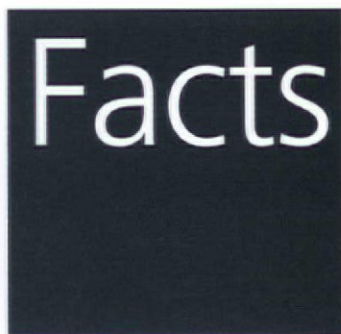
The book starts in 1901, with Frank Lloyd Wright's impassioned and visceral description of the world in which he constructed his buildings and ends with the abstractions of Manuel

Castells' 'space of flows'. Both the machines that make the stuff of architecture and the stuff of architecture itself are curiously absent in the latter part of the book. This is a pity. There are architectural theoreticians who are hands-on makers of things at the start of the 21st century, for example Nick Callicott (*Computer-Aided Manufacture in Architecture – The Pursuit of Novelty* (Architectural Press 2001)) and the Australian Mark Bury among others. They also do not fit the critical frame of the book. The result is that today's practitioners will probably find the book less and less helpful, although it does include Rem Koolhaas on working with engineers as the text for 1995 and a reprise of Frank Duffy's argument for long- and short-life constructional elements as the text for 1997.

Academics should look at the index before buying, although only the most erudite will fail to find something or someone they have never read. Many aspects of technology can be best explained visually; there are few illustrations in the book. It is, however, excellently referenced and the inquisitive reader will find the illustrations elsewhere.

For this reviewer, the unexpected pleasure was to find Bruno Latour, whose clear and witty paper 'Mixing Humans and non-Humans Together' is a joy to read. It is worth buying as a sampler for this reason if no other.

Stephen Gage is professor of innovative technology at the Bartlett



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A SKETCHY APPROACH TO SEARCHING

You grappled with those really sophisticated methods of searching the internet for information. And then gave up. The moment of truth came when you suddenly had to do a really fast search for information. Not having done more, for some time, than occasionally type in a few possible words, you had forgotten all the tricks – like the difference between quote marks and a plus sign.

Well, be very afraid because complex search engines are about to be big. Still, there's a cute diversion: search engines based on your sketch of what the thing roughly looks like. The ones I've come across call for quite a bit of user input as the shape becomes more and more refined. Or less and less blob-like. I'm surprised that some enterprising product dealer hasn't signed one up.

Some URLs: <http://tools.ecn.purdue.edu/~cise/dess.html> for Karthik Ramani's research at Purdue University; <http://shape.cs.princeton.edu/search.html> for the approach of Princeton's Thomas Funkhouser, with added text. Not to mention www.sketchandsearch.com for Applied Search Technology's CADFind Sketch and Search. And you thought drawing was dead. sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com

LIGHTING UP

Some time ago I wrote about a rights to light case concerning a new building in Vincent Square, central London, that faces on to an open space used as playing fields by Westminster School (AJ 19.10.06), writes *Sue Lindsey*. The defendant's neighbouring building is on the site of the old Rochester Row Magistrates' Court and Police Station. The claimant failed to persuade the court that it had a right to light through windows in an entrance lobby that had been obscured by panelling throughout the 20-year prescription period.

However, the court did agree that the claimant's right to light through two windows lighting the basement stairs had been infringed by the defendant's new building. Having held that damages were appropriate recompense, rather than an injunction, the judge recently saw the parties again to assess the amount of damages to be paid (*Tamare v Fairpoint*, 08.02.07). So how much is light worth?

The parties agreed that the correct measure of damages was either damages for the claimant's loss of amenity, or damages to compensate the claimant for the loss of the right to get an injunction – whichever proved higher. As the loss of amenity was small, the judge had to use the latter measure, but to do this the court had to answer a rather

strange hypothetical question. If, at the date of the breach, the parties had negotiated a payment from the defendant to the claimant that bought off the claimant's right to seek an injunction to preserve its right to light, what settlement would they have reached?

The judge had to decide what would have been a fair result of a negotiation between hypothetical reasonable and commercial people. Expert evidence was available as to the profit the defendant would make on the part of the development that infringed the claimant's rights. The parties could have approached their hypothetical negotiation by the claimant being paid a fair percentage of that profit, but not enough to deter the defendant from building at all. After all, the defendant would bear the risk of the development and wish to recover a substantial proportion of the profit for taking that risk.

The judge concluded that in this particular case the hypothetical negotiators would have split the difference between the experts' profit figures, and then paid one third of the agreed profit figure to the claimant. Taking into account the limited nature of the infringement, that one-third share would have been rounded down rather than up.

The judge thus arrived at the neat sum of £50,000.

He tested this sum by asking himself the question: 'Did the deal feel right?'. The judge concluded that it did.

In reaching his decision the judge considered the limited case law, and extracted from it a list of eight principles to apply when making an assessment of damages for infringement of a right to light. This list is likely to be of interest to anyone actually engaging in a real negotiation, as well as those reconstructing one after the event. The full judgement containing this list can be seen at www.bailii.org (case citation [2007] EWHC 212 Ch).

Sue Lindsey is a barrister at Crown Office Chambers in London. Visit www.crownofficechambers.com

EXHIBITIONS

By Gillian Darley

Opulence and Anxiety:
Landscape Paintings from
the Royal Academy
Kate Whiteford: Airfield
2007
Both at Compton Verney,
Warwickshire, until 10
June



Kate Whiteford's 'Airfield'

This spring at Compton Verney the emphasis falls on landscape. A portentously titled exhibition, 'Opulence and Anxiety', is the result of a fishing expedition at the Royal Academy which veers from the fabulous to the frankly execrable. Almost all are diploma works, so the artists' own choice, but what has been trawled from the murky waters around Burlington House seems to offer more insight into the nature of an increasingly marginalised institution than into the condition of British painting (and still less that of landscape painting).

Yet the Victorian retreat to the rural was far more complex than just a fear of industrialisation. George Vicat Cole submitted *Autumn Morning* as his diploma work in 1891. Abinger Church tower, grazing sheep, long shadows and a hint

of smoke are all the stuff of rustic cliché, but off to the right more smoke emerges from the trees. This is pretty unlikely to be, as the catalogue would have you believe, a 'swathe of morning dew', but evidence of the continued vitality of industry in this corner of Surrey, where the gunpowder and paper mills were still in full production.

Having set the tone with glorious paintings such as William Hodges' 1778 view of Benares or Turner's own diploma offering, *Dolbadern Castle*, the visitor is forced to face the stultifying offerings of late Victorian and Edwardian Royal Academicians – a relentless diet of Highland cattle, snow-bound flocks of sheep and rainbow-hued skies. The 20th-century selection does little to redress the balance:

Algernon Newton's peculiarly haunting canalscape apart, there is not much to linger over. The show is bound to be a crowd-pleaser but I would question whether the accumulated deficit of British academic art, even after the justifications in the catalogue, can ever be in credit.

More coherent and convincing, Kate Whiteford's companion exhibition 'Airfield' is divided between indoor exhibits (wall paintings, works on paper and video) and outdoor ones – a 'landing strip' stamped onto the lawns and *Point Blank*, a distant eye-catcher in the mist.

Her thoughtful exploration of the intricate layers and levels of landscape and archaeology at Compton Verney includes an aerial video of Capability Brown's serpentine lake snaking

through the parkland, reuniting the original scheme, long since split into various ownerships. Aerial stills of the local airfield during wartime equally reveal its short but busy past.

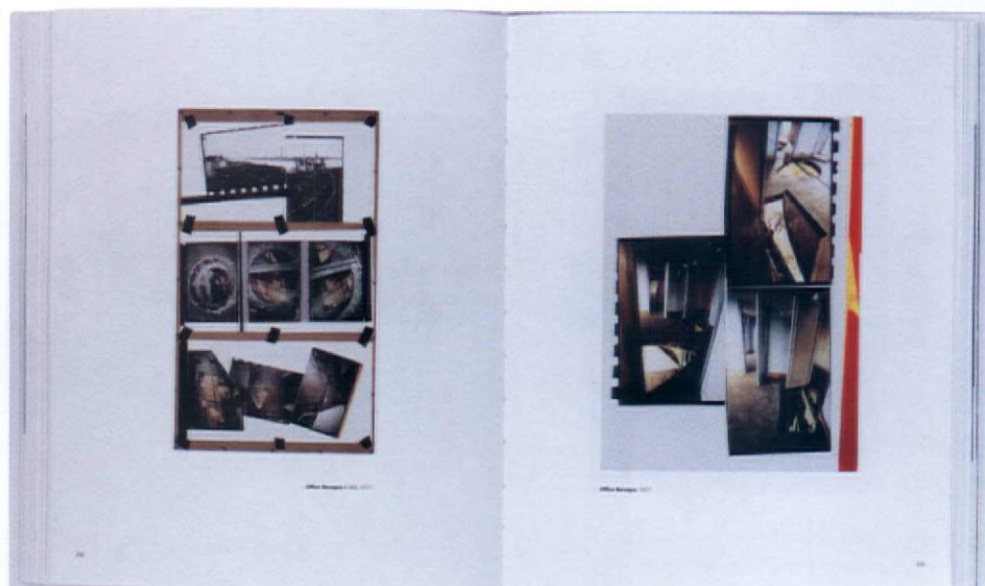
There are now plans to trace and reopen Brown's series of lakeside paths at Compton Verney. Historic evidence and recent marks, archaeology and the accumulation of wear, all combine to reveal a peculiarly (or typically?) complex history of a small patch of the English landscape. And Whiteford's investigation of the seen and unseen gains an extra dimension when you discover that during the war Compton Verney was requisitioned and served as a camouflage-research station.

Gillian Darley writes on architecture and landscape

BOOK

By Andrew Mead

Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings
 Edited by Gloria Moure.
 Ediciones Polígrafa, 2006.
 430pp. £36. Distributed by
 Art Books International
 023 9220 0080



Like his contemporary Robert Smithson, Gordon Matta-Clark died in his mid-30s, but like Smithson his brief life was full of creativity. In many books or magazines, though, their careers are encapsulated in a single image: Smithson's in *The Spiral Jetty*, his Land Art monument in Utah's Great Salt Lake; Matta-Clark's in *Splitting*, the suburban house in Englewood, New Jersey, that he bisected. This book is a corrective then, showing everything that Matta-Clark did (inspired or not).

While Smithson's salt-crusted jetty re-emerged from the water a few years ago, and can still, with time and trouble, be visited, Matta-Clark's works now only survive in films, sketches, photographs and texts. Occasionally in museums you find some material residue of his actions: a freestanding piece

of stud wall removed from an empty property; a cube of molten glass that could be from a latter-day Pompeii. But mostly we're left to sift through images and words.

In doing so, one sees just how prescient Matta-Clark was, in advance of today's agenda. He studied architecture at Cornell but was wary of the profession ('I don't think most practitioners are solving anything except how to make a living'), yet worked with buildings and the urban landscape all his life. Not with the offspring of Lever House or Seagram, though. He was drawn to the derelict, to wastelands and city margins – those structures and places that corporate America ignored.

Matta-Clark's most eye-catching works were the 'cuts' and dissections of buildings that

followed on from *Splitting*: two town houses by the Pompidou for *Conical Intersect*; a warehouse on a New York pier for *Day's End*; some Antwerp offices for *Office Baroque*. And 'Baroque' is the word for the spatial sequences that Matta-Clark created, chainsawing his way through walls and floors to often vertiginous effect, and anticipating the angle of the sun like a constructor of Stonehenge.

Not that many people saw all this for real: 'The grandiosity lasted about 10 minutes until the police arrived,' Matta-Clark said of *Day's End*. But some sense of these interventions survives in the montages of multiple images that Matta-Clark made (much like those of Enric Miralles years later), and we can infer what they were like to experience.

His annexing of abandoned buildings wasn't only for aesthetic ends. While believing that 'people are fascinated by space-giving activities', Matta-Clark had a social mission too. Central to this book is his critique of housing conditions (not least their spatial confinement), but he foresees today's gated communities in saying: 'I would not make a total distinction between the imprisonment of the poor and the remarkably subtle self-containerisation of higher socio-economic neighbourhoods.'

Along with this was his questioning of what was valued and discarded in a society so casual about obsolescence. And already in 1971 he was using detritus from the Lower East Side to fabricate shelters for the homeless – a commitment to



BOOK

Bunker: Along the Atlantic Wall
By Guido Guidi.
Electa, 2006. £24.99.
Distributed by Art Books
International 023 9220
0080

recycling seen today in the work of Shigeru Ban and many others.

But given his usual oppositional stance, one can't help wondering what Matta-Clark would think of 'sustainability' now being a mantra, and asking what he would have gone on to do. While there would have been no shortage of derelict buildings for him to deal with, his brief career suggests he would be always pressing on.

This book gives us Matta-Clark in his own words, which are sometimes repetitive, and there are minor blemishes – e.g. the scrambled picture references. But it's beautifully presented on high-quality paper and proves that, as with Robert Smithson, there's much more to Matta-Clark than just a subject for a dutiful PhD.

The heavy concrete defences (walls 3.5m thick) that the Germans constructed on the Atlantic coast in the Second World War were the subject of Paul Virilio's *Bunker Archaeology* (still in print); and with Claude Parent, Virilio went on to build an almost literal bunker in his Church of Sainte Bernadette, Nevers. The proto-Brutalism of these structures makes them a congenial subject for photographs, and Guido Guidi's don't disappoint, if overall there's less sense of materiality in them than in Virilio's, as the boardmarked concrete is often consumed by light.

The book is Guidi's contribution to a continuing project called The Atlantic Wall Linear Museum (www.atlanticwall.polimi.it) – a substantial source of reference on these sombre remains.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

By Andrew Mead

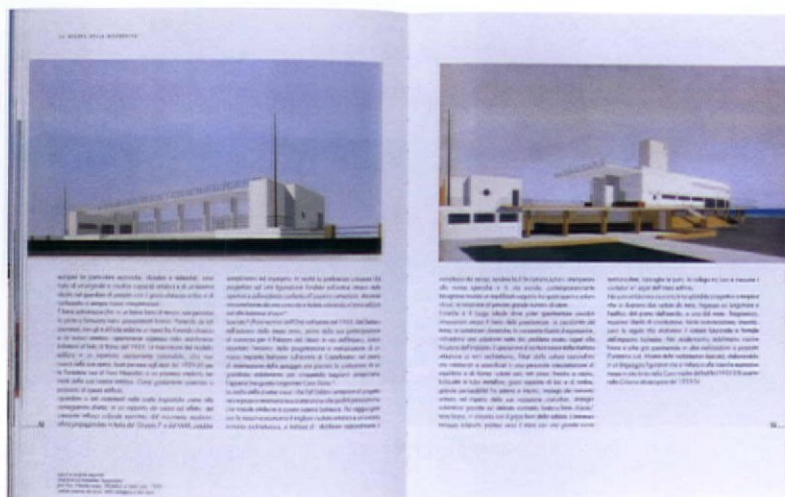
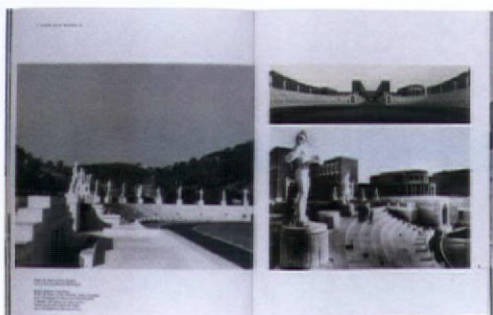
Though its building by Frank Gehry must be a mixed blessing, the Vitra Design Museum exerts an influence far beyond its Weil am Rhein site with its substantial travelling exhibitions – the Design Museum, the Lighthouse, and Manchester's Cube have all staged them in the past. Given Vitra's remit, they tend to feature objects more than architecture, but in the absence of equally ambitious home-grown initiatives, we shouldn't complain. Next year Liverpool hosts Vitra's big Le Corbusier show; meanwhile Vitra is the source of two exhibitions in Scotland's Six Cities Design Festival, which is now under way.

At the City Arts Centre, Edinburgh, there's *Living in Motion: Design and Architecture for Flexible Dwelling*, which began touring back in 2002, and places today's emphasis on mobile lifestyles in a broad cultural and temporal context – so Mongolian yurts get a look-in, as well as Breuer, Prouvé and the Eames. Just open at Glasgow's the Tramway is *Airworld*, focusing on the design and architecture of air travel since the early days of flight. Other non-Vitra shows in the festival, all coming up in the next few weeks, are at Aberdeen, Stirling and Dundee, with *New, Old, Green* at Castle Wynd, Inverness, developed with the Museum of Finnish Architecture, sounding the most promising (www.six-cities.com).

This spring's major show at the V&A, *Surreal Things*, is stronger on frocks than paintings, charting stylishly the way that the supposedly transgressive aims of Surrealism were swiftly neutered by the worlds of fashion, advertising and interior design. Le Corbusier's De Beistigui apartment, Kit Nicholson's designs for Edward James' Monkton, Kiesler's Art of This Century gallery and a playground and swimming pool by Isamu Noguchi, add some architectural interest.

But anyone visiting the V&A for this should also call in to the adjacent gallery of photography to see *Eugene Atget: Unintentional Surrealist?* – a small show of Atget's images of early 20th-century Paris, drawn from the museum's holdings (pictured above). One can readily imagine a selection that makes a better case for Atget as a proto-Surrealist, but whether of alleyways, gardens, staircases or shopfronts, his photographs always cast a spell (www.vam.ac.uk).

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



BOOK

By Kenneth Powell

Enrico Del Debbio
By Maria Luisa Neri et al,
with English translation
by Thomas Muirhead.
Idea Books, 2006.
439pp. 49 euros (£33)

Nearly half a century ago, Henry-Russell Hitchcock devoted just 24 pages of his *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* to 'architecture called traditional in the 20th century', but he looked forward to a time when it might be evaluated properly. This monumental study of a leading Italian Classicist of the last century is a welcome part of that ongoing process.

Enrico Del Debbio (1891-1973) is best known for Rome's Foro Italico (originally Foro Mussolini and inaugurated to mark the 10th anniversary of the Fascist seizure of power), with its Stadio dei Marmi and other buildings devoted to the Fascist cult of physical fitness. Born in Carrara – the products of whose marble industry lavishly adorn the stadium – Del Debbio practised and

taught in Rome from 1914 onwards. In common with the Milanese Novecento group, he looked to the country's Classical tradition as the prime source of renewal for Italian architecture after the First World War. His vision of modernity was not as the social and artistic revolution envisaged by the Modern Movement but as 'the assertion of the values of a transfigured Classicism brought to a contemporary expression'.

In common with many other Italian architects who thrived during the *Era Fascista*, Del Debbio has been stigmatised by post-war Italian critics and largely ignored internationally. An obvious exception to this process of exclusion is Giuseppe Terragni. Yet the gulf between the two architects, friends who saw themselves as 'working and

struggling honestly and disinterestedly for a modern Italian architecture', is not so great as some care to imagine. Del Debbio's unbuilt project for the Rome Casa del Balilla (a club for young people) of 1932-33, for example, was severely rational and 'Modern'. His Foreign Ministry in Rome (designed in 1937 as the capital's Fascist headquarters but constructed in 1956-59) is one of the outstanding progressive Classical buildings of Europe.

One of the great strengths of post-war Italian architecture is its sense of continuity with the movements of the 1920s and '30s. His Fascist links forgiven, Del Debbio returned to practice during the 1950s and '60s (and resumed teaching in the Rome faculty of architecture until driven out by Bruno Zevi).

His work remains under-regarded, largely for political reasons. His fine church of the Holy Saviour in Pantelleria, Sicily, was needlessly demolished as recently as 2002.

This impressive book, based on the architect's own archive, is a model for future research into and publishing of 20th-century 'traditional' architecture. It underlines the point that progressive or 'stripped' Classicism was the dominant theme in the public architecture of the inter-war years, and underlines the case for a re-evaluation of that theme in Britain in the work of masters such as E Vincent Harris and Charles Holden.

Kenneth Powell is a London-based architectural journalist

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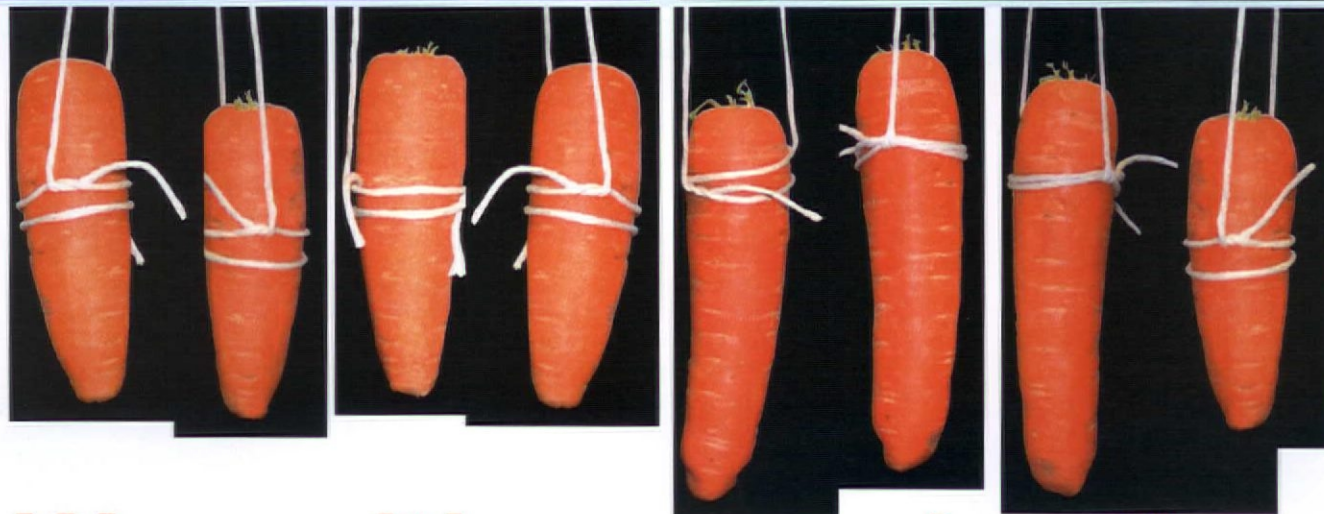
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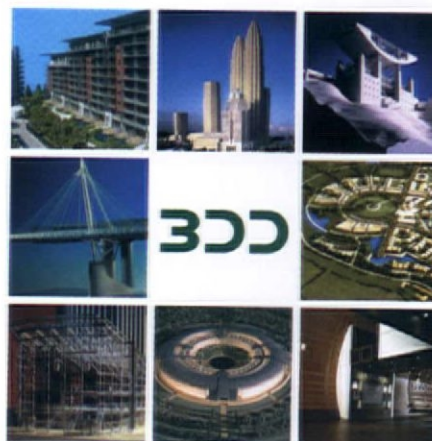
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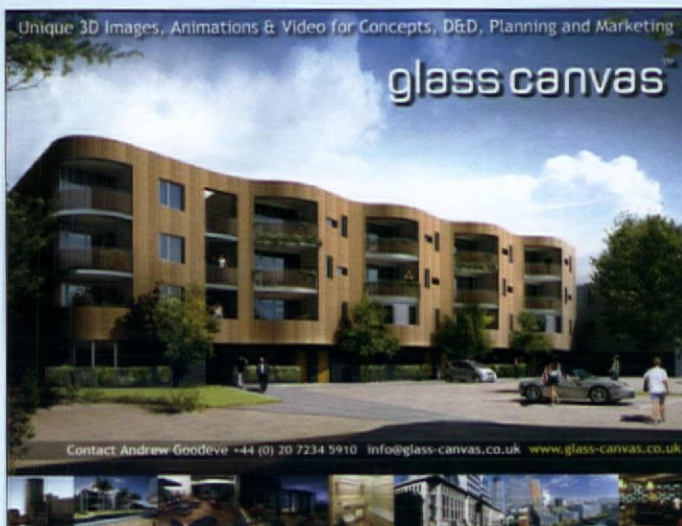
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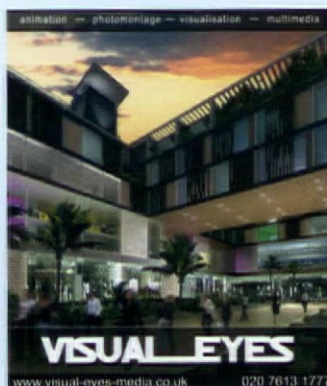
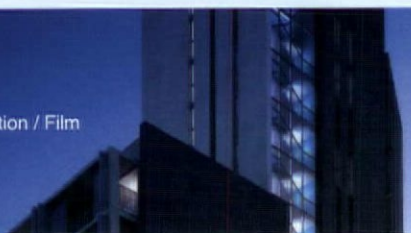


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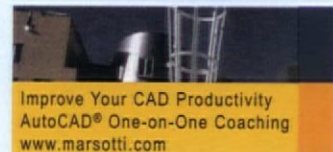
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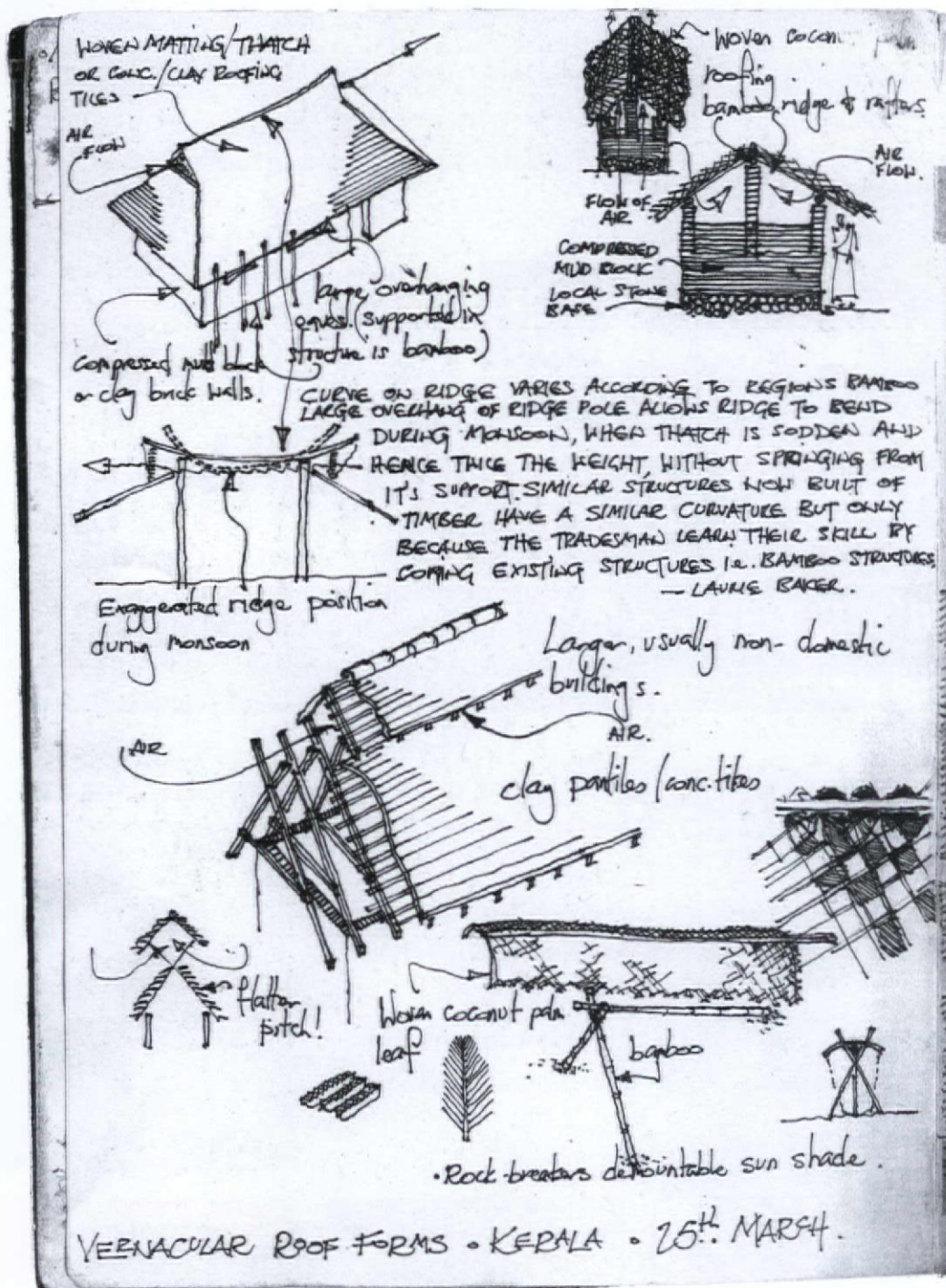
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