

AJ

**31.05.07**  
**MANGERA YVARIS/  
VALLDOREIX**

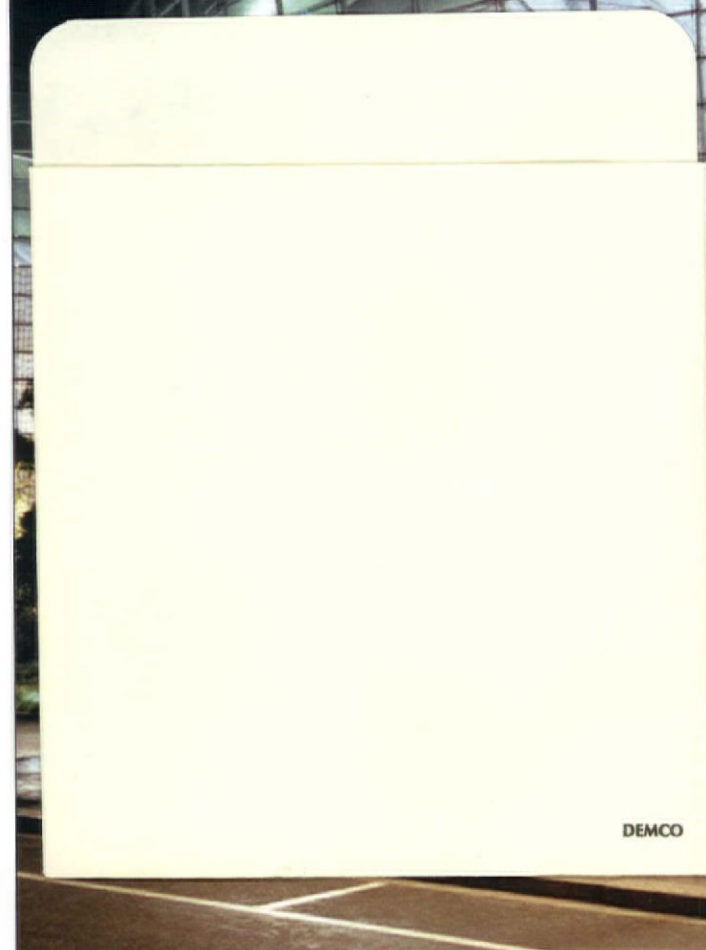


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# ARCHITECTS MUST BEWARE THAT NEW TECHNOLOGY DOES NOT DEVALUE THEIR SKILLS

By Hattie Hartman

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Computers are transforming the way we design and build, as two projects featured this week demonstrate. Mangera Yvars' Villa Valldoreix in Barcelona (*see the Building Study on pages 25-35*) and a Foster/Buro Happold City Academy in Peterborough (*see Technical & Practice on pages 40-43*) have movement at their heart – in fluidity of form and the way we engage with the buildings.

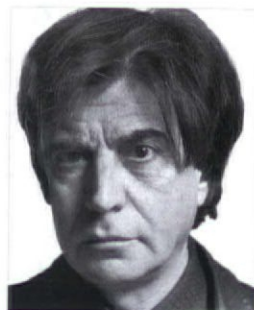
In a subtle folding of space, Mangera Yvars' Valldoreix emerges out of the landscape. Built and unbuilt space – both exterior and interior – merge into one another with a fluidity impossible without the use of the computer. The site literally wraps the house as a path, with gently asymmetrical steps leading us up a ramp to the roof. Inside, joinery merges with walls to create stairs and kitchen work surfaces. Routes through the house yield unexpected relationships and views, which, together with careful handling of light and deployment of sensuous materials, makes this an architecture of visual delight.

At Fosters + Partners' Thomas Deacon Academy, movement of students has been a key concern. Complex people-movement modelling by Buro Happold has enabled refinement of public circulation to maximise safety, minimise bullying and, of course, achieve 'value for money'.

Sophisticated modelling will only increase with the spread of BIM (Building Information Management), and design teams are becoming integrated in the life of a project earlier and earlier. While this may be good news for engineers, architects must beware that it does not devalue their skills. Architects must adapt quickly, not only to keep pace with changes, but to maintain a controlling eye on projects as they go through iterations of computer modelling.

The attention to sensual delight which is possible in a suburban villa is not appropriate to a vast secondary school, but neither should that delight be sacrificed in the pursuit of firmness and commodity through the computer.

## CONTRIBUTORS



Carlos Ferrater, who writes the *Building Study* on Mangera Yvars' Villa Valldoreix on pages 25-35, is director of Carlos Ferrater Architects in Barcelona



Alex Wright, who reviews an exhibition of Anthony Caro and Sheila Girling's work on page 48, is a teaching fellow in architecture at the University of Bath



Piers Ford, whose work features on the *Sketchbook* on page 58, is director of Piers Ford Architects in Ayamonte, Spain, and previously worked for Arup Associates



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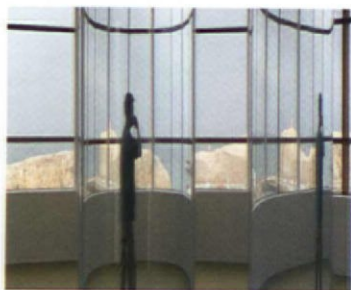
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People-movement modelling and fire engineering at *Foster/Buro Happold*'s Thomas Deacon Academy

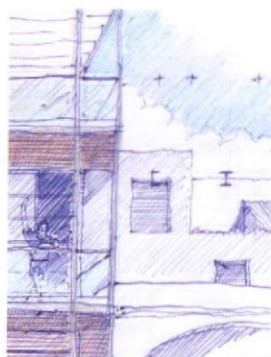
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- *Richard Murphy Architects* – conservation architects
- *Foggo Associates* – architects
- *University of Wales Bangor* – space-planning manager
- *University College for the Creative Arts* – senior lecturer

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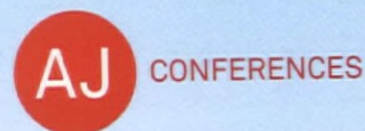
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#### FRIDAY 25 MAY

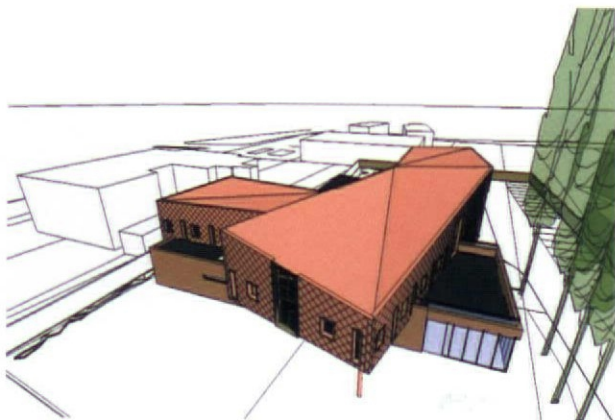
- Fire hits Moscow TV tower – Europe's tallest freestanding structure
- Sandy Wilson's Pallant House extension scoops Gulbenkian Prize (right)
- Partial listing protects Walthamstow dog track
- English Heritage finally names new chairman



PETER DURANT

#### TUESDAY 29 MAY

- Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands chops down South Bank tower scheme
- Allies and Morrison unveils long-awaited Royal Festival Hall revamp
- Second time lucky for Carey Jones and Make in Wandsworth (right)
- Stephenson Bell wins planning for Cheshire house



#### THURSDAY 24 MAY

- Tories call for halt to 'skyscraper frenzy' in the capital
- Foster reveals high-end winery (above)
- Architects throw weight behind anti-Israeli settlements campaign
- Rudolph home spared the wrecking ball



#### WEDNESDAY 30 MAY

- Ian Simpson reveals plans for massive Glasgow hotel scheme
- Smith Lance Larcade & Bechtol's Barnet scheme backed following NHS addition
- Listed '60s Geoffrey Chaucer School faces wrecking ball as last-ditch bids fail
- McHugh Stoppard gains planning permission for striking old peoples' home (left)



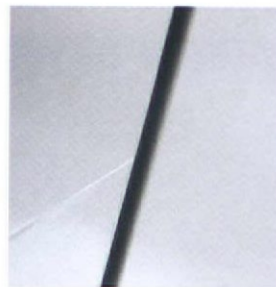




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**KIERAN LONG NAMED AS AJ EDITOR**

Kieran Long has been named as the new editor of the Architects' Journal, succeeding Isabel Allen. An architecture journalist, critic and teacher, Long will take up his position on 2 July. Long helped launch Icon magazine and has written for a host of architectural newspapers and publications. He is also the former deputy editor of Building Design and World Architecture magazines. Long said: 'I'm greatly looking forward to taking over this very special magazine. The potential is there to turn it into a genuinely critical journal with influence on behalf of the profession and a critical role within it. I hope to bring a new generation of writers and contributors to the AJ, and involve the entire readership in a developing architectural discourse.'



# SIMPSON BACKS BRUNSWICK HEIR

By Richard Waite

Studio Egret West (SEW) has landed the project to design a replacement for Ian Simpson's doomed Brunswick Quay skyscraper scheme in Liverpool.

Intriguingly Simpson, who was kicked off the £120 million project in January, has now claimed that angry comments made following his exit influenced developer Maro's decision to plump for ex-Alsop duo Christophe Egret and David West.

After his departure from the much-delayed and repeatedly rejected 51-storey project, a frustrated Simpson said Maro had turned its back on 'ambitious design' and was looking instead for a 'non-iconic, lower-density scheme'.

But Maro has now appointed the up-and-coming SEW to take the waterfront project forward – rejecting bids

from Broadway Malyan, BDP and local practice DTR Ormrod.

'I think what I said went to ensuring the quality of the new design,' Simpson said.

'I was disappointed and anxious that something poor was going to be built instead. But being provocative opened the door to a more creative approach and, in my heart, I had hoped something like this would happen.'

'It's an excellent result all round and I'm happy to be proved wrong... I know both the guys [at SEW] and I think it will be good for Liverpool,' he added.

Meanwhile, it is understood that SEW and Maro have already had early discussions with Liverpool City Council (LCC) and that initial feedback was 'very positive'.

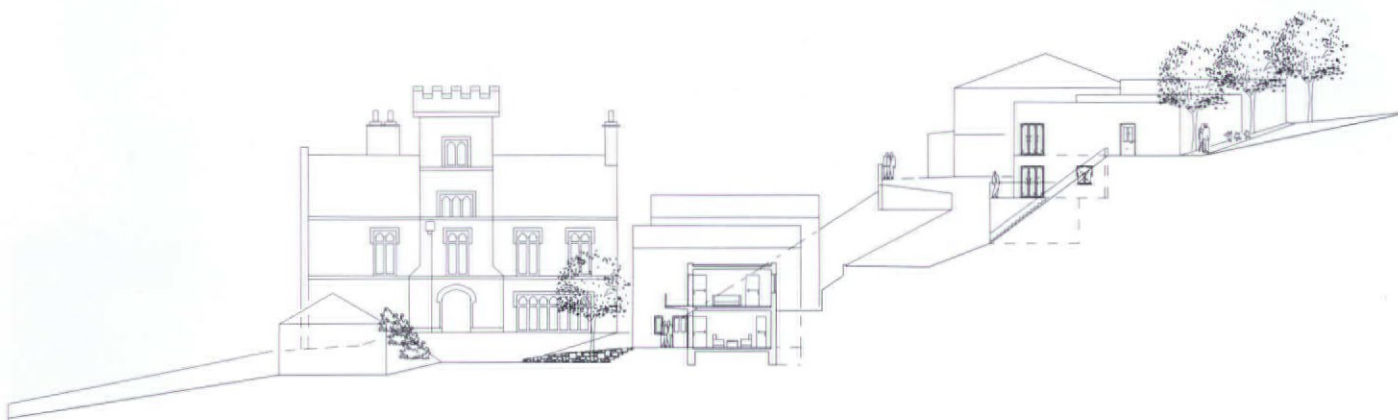
The new design team, expected to unveil a scheme that is dramatically different to Simpson's, will be anxious to get the authority on board.

During nearly four years of delays and setbacks Simpson failed to woo the council and, as he became increasingly exasperated, launched a withering attack on LCC.

Now Maro's Jamey Hargreaves believes he has found the winning formula. 'This site needs a scheme of vision and character, and we believe that SEW is the practice who can achieve that,' he said.

The appointment also gives SEW a second chance to build big on Liverpool's waterfront, following the collapse of Will Alsop's Cloud proposals. Both Egret and West worked on the original Fourth Grace scheme before it was ditched.





1.

## M2R BEATS PLANNERS IN CORNWALL

By Max Thompson

If one needs proof that perseverance pays, London-based practice m2r has the perfect example in its £4 million Whitsand Bay project in Cornwall.

Designed in partnership with German firm Hohenzollern Architekten, the 21-holiday home development, for private client Jess and Marie Earle, will nestle into the hills of the southern Cornish coastline, a few miles west of Plymouth.

Despite a design which m2r director Axel Rostock says is 'in playful rhythm with the landscape,' the development has only recently been approved for planning following a three-year running battle with Caradon District Council.

The struggle finally ended in victory for m2r, after a judicial review at the end of last year ruled that councillors had

been unreasonable in voting down two previous applications. Unusually, the council was ordered to pay costs believed to be in the region of £60,000.

The saga began in 2004 when the Earles sold the sprawling Whitsand Bay Hotel – the hamlet's sole 'landmark' building. However, the couple retained the right to develop the surrounding land and commissioned m2r and Hohenzollern to draw up a scheme featuring 28 contemporary holiday homes.

Despite initial backing from Caradon's planning department in October 2004 councillors rejected the scheme and, in April 2005, a scaled-down application featuring 21 homes was submitted.

Rostock says that, with the council planning department onside, he was confident that

the amended scheme would succeed. But, two days before the hearing, the planning department executed a surprise about-turn and withdrew its support.

'We were bitterly disappointed,' says Rostock. 'After two-and-a-half years of being on our side they suddenly recommended it be refused.'

But rather than give up, m2r employed planning consultant Lawrence Associates to fight its corner at a three-day hearing.

'Six weeks after the hearing we were told that both previous planning decisions had been overruled, and full costs were awarded against the council, indicating that we had been treated unreasonably by the councillors,' says Rostock.

Now m2r is eager to press on with the scheme, which

Rostock describes as 'very contemporary and modern'. Each house will feature a huge window looking out on to the sea, plus a private terrace, sauna and jacuzzi. They will also be environmentally friendly.

'This development will be a low-carbon-emission one, featuring biomass-fuelled heating, wind turbines, photovoltaic panels and rain water-harvesting equipment,' explains Rostock.

The scheme will start on site in January 2008 and will be built in two stages. The homes on the upper hillside are due for completion in mid 2009, with the others following some 10 months later.





2.

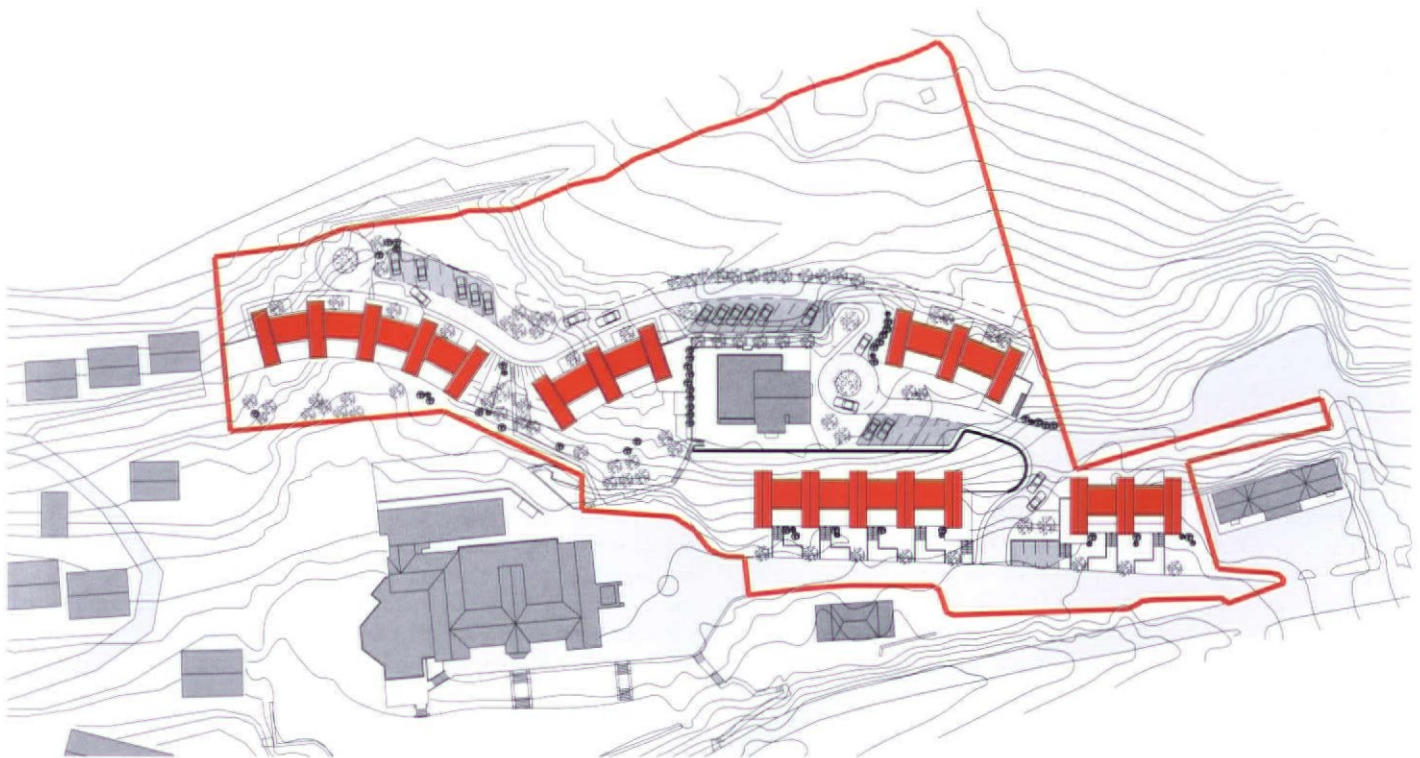


3.

#### 1. Section

2 & 3. m2r's 21-home development was designed in partnership with Hohenzollern Architekten, and will include wind turbines and photovoltaic panels

#### 4. Site plan



4.



# EDINBURGH LEADER BLASTS GLASS

By Clive Walker

It's a truth universally acknowledged that a new council leader in possession of a working majority must be in want of radical policy change.

Newly elected Edinburgh council leader Jenny Dawe seems to confirm this hypothesis. In a disturbing move for city architects, the Liberal Democrat has wasted no time in jumping aboard the anti-development bandwagon.

'I just don't understand the trend for putting up glass boxes these days,' she says. 'In 30 years' time... they will be seen as eyesores like David Hume Tower at Edinburgh University.'

Whether Dawe's controversial stance reflects pride in Edinburgh's illustrious built environment or a darker, more disturbing prejudice against innovative development remains unclear. But her

criticisms are about as welcome as Prince Charles taking over as president of the RIBA.

A cluster of flagship projects known to be on Dawe's radar include Malcolm Fraser's Caltongate scheme and a massive £58 million expansion of Edinburgh Zoo, to take place over 20 years. She is also targeting Aedas' reworking of Haymarket Station, which includes an option – now looking unlikely – to demolish the existing station and Ryries Bar, both listed buildings.

'I can't see the justification for demolishing buildings of high quality. Just because they are old, it does not mean they should be knocked down,' Dawe told the *Edinburgh Evening News* last week.

For Aedas' John Kingsley, project architect on Haymarket and formerly project architect

on EMBT/RMJM's Scottish Parliament, Dawe's outburst is a worrying harbinger for Edinburgh's architectural future. 'I hoped that the Scottish Parliament would break down barriers to modern architecture in this city,' Kingsley says, 'but they are still there.'

'It's more difficult to practice modern architecture in Edinburgh – there just isn't the same freedom that there is in the rest of the UK. But there's no reason why good architecture can't sit alongside historic architecture – the Scottish Parliament would suggest this,' he adds.

Edinburgh, a designated World Heritage Site, is Scotland's undisputed top tourist attraction. But it is also a working capital and not a mere museum piece. If the city is to retain its status as a



Malcolm Fraser's National Centre for Dance in Edinburgh is the kind of 'glass box' design criticised by council leader Jenny Dawe

progressive, business-orientated metropolis, then politicians will need to adopt an enlightened approach to modern architecture.

A city leader bemoaning the trend for 'glass boxes' might note that the Georgians loved generous windows. The Victorians, meanwhile, would probably have celebrated the advanced technology that today's glass uses, argues Malcolm Fraser of Malcolm Fraser Architects.

Dawe recently blasted Fraser's contribution to the £300 million Caltongate development – which will transform a huge swathe of Edinburgh's Old Town – describing it as 'hideous and grotesque' (*ajplus* 23.05.07).

Fraser agrees that glass is often used carelessly, particularly when architects

'can't be bothered to think of anything else'.

However, he highlights the contradictions in Dawe's attacks. She lionises Edinburgh's listed built environment, but her views on the Grade B-listed David Hume Towers suggest that she is advocating selective preservation of the cityscape.

Last week Dawe attempted to limit the damage of her earlier comments by saying that she had been speaking as an Edinburgh layperson, not as the council leader. 'Whether I remain unenamoured or become enthusiastic, I would not dream of influencing colleagues on planning committees,' she said.

But this *volte-face* does not wash with Fraser. 'I'm not clear where she draws the line between her personal views and her leadership ones,' he says.

Dawe's stance appears, on the surface, to signal a return to the 1980s, when only faux-Georgian stone development was deemed acceptable in Edinburgh.

Even Historic Scotland has progressed from this myopic standpoint and, to its credit, has adopted a holistic approach to balancing the city's heritage with the urgent need for a modern, progressive built environment.

Alison Blamire, a board member on the powerful Architecture and Design Scotland and director of Arcade Architects, is disappointed by Dawe's retrograde rhetoric which, she argues, is a recipe for 'very dull architecture'.

'There has to be a continuum between the old and the new,' Blamire says. 'We need to get away from

this climate that in Edinburgh, architecture can't be modern.

'We have to take a mature point of view and encourage enlightened design,' adds Blamire, whose practice transformed an Edinburgh traffic roundabout into a 'tropical island' last weekend as part of Scotland's first Six Cities Design Festival.

City planners are said to be 'spitting nails' over Dawe's outburst. Edinburgh is already a difficult place to get approval for new and radical architecture and Dawe's comments – whether as a layperson or a city leader – will do little to free Edinburgh from safe but lacklustre modern architecture.

No one is suggesting that Edinburgh should risk its World Heritage status to further progress. But a risk-free policy is a formula for mediocrity.





1.



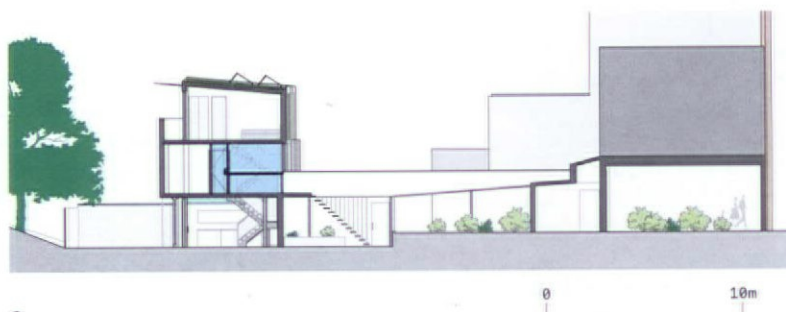
2.

1. The Crawford Partnership design features a green roof and photovoltaic panels
2. The tight plot backs on to a railway line
3. Section
4. Ground-floor plan

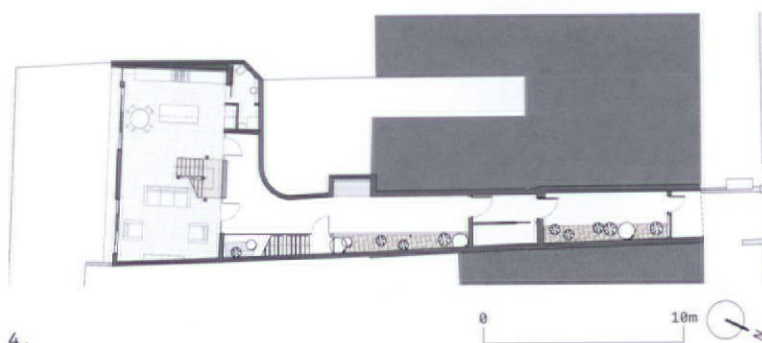
### GREEN LIGHT FOR LONDON ECO-HOUSE

Crawford Partnership has won planning permission for this eco-friendly house in West Hampstead, north London. The London-based practice was given the go-ahead from Camden Council for the 205m<sup>2</sup> live/work unit, which will be squeezed into a tight plot backing on to a railway line, currently occupied by a semi-derelict, two-storey brick building. To maximise the available built space, the house occupies the entire site, with access to the property limited to a narrow 'undercroft' passage running between neighbouring houses. A green roof, photovoltaic panels, a ground-source heat pump and a greywater recycling system helped Crawford Partnership achieve the low-energy specification of its private client, while the location near a railway line required some design wrangling to meet acoustic and vibration regulations. The project is one of a series of developments by the practice that use derelict backland plots for modern housing. One of these, its Snowden House II scheme in North Kensington, was a finalist in the 2007 AJ Small Projects competition (AJ 18.01.07).

*By James Pallister*



3.



4.





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- Publishing life cycle assessment and life cycle costing data for Colorcoat® products.
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### To benefit from Confidex Sustain™ zero carbon building projects will need to:

- Ensure Corus Colorcoat HPS200® and/or Colorcoat Prisma® pre-finished steel are specified for exterior of roof and walls.
- Ensure Corus Colorcoat® liner is specified for interior of roof and walls.
- Use a Corus Colorcoat® assessed cladding system.

Full details of these are available at:

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**Visit:** [www.colorcoat-online.com](http://www.colorcoat-online.com)

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'A London Victorian house may not have a dormer added to its roof, but the entire city skyline can be wrecked with 50-storey towers. These are not rules but prejudices – and money talking'

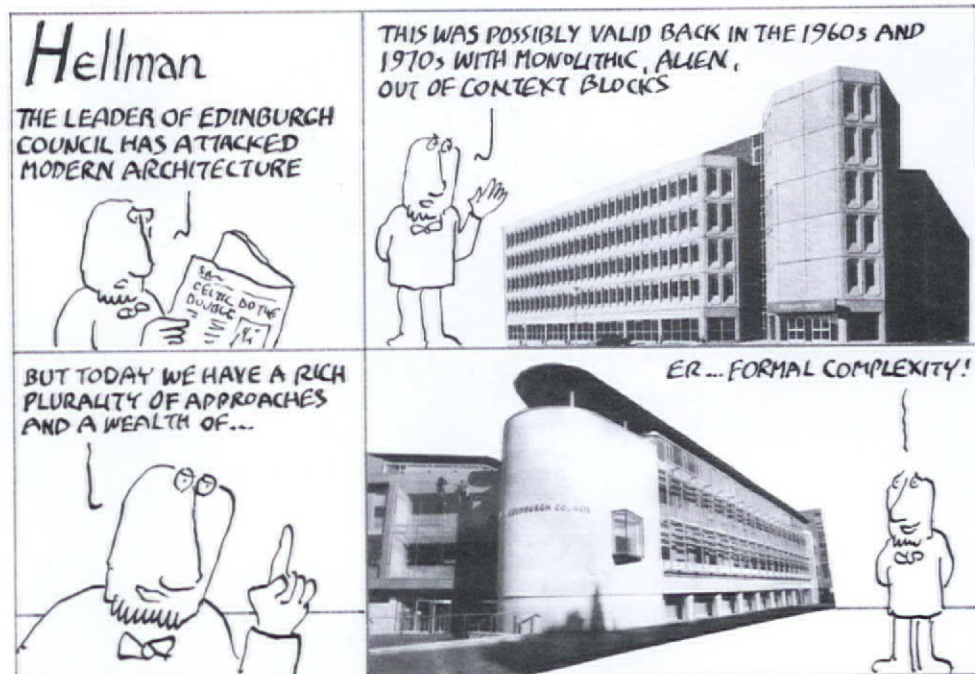
Simon Jenkins. *Guardian*, 25.05.07

'A period of mindless modernity and posturing egomania allied to grasping commercialism, all masquerading as "culture"'

'Piloti' on the present decade. *Private Eye*, 25.05.07

'We want the incompetent hysteria to stop'

Jan Nemecek defends Future Systems' Prague library. *Prague Daily Monitor*, 28.05.07



WWW.LOUISELLMAN.CO.UK

#### GENDER INEQUALITY

There were no long faces on the Assael table at the AJ100 awards night on 23 May, despite losing out to Jestico + Whiles for the title of AJ100 employer of the year. **John Assael's** practice had been a hot favourite to land the accolade following its success in *The Times* similar, but obviously less important, league table. But Mr A looked like the happiest man in the world all evening. Perhaps it was because of his 'bevy of beauties' (phrase used with kind permission of the *Daily Star*) – with the Assael table replete with a number of architectural honeys. Astragal is not one for gender stereotypes, but presumably the male members of the practice were watching the European Cup final, which took place on the same night.

#### PRIVATE MEMBER

It was odd to hear the familiar tones of **John Humphrys** of Radio Four's *Today* programme without the presence of an early-morning cuppa steaming away on the bedside table; but it was even odder to hear those same dulcet tones convey a story about the size of the outgoing prime minister's private member. But, as the host of the AJ100 awards, that's exactly what he did. Humphrys was recounting a conversation he had overheard in which **Cherie Booth** joshed that her husband was a 'five-times-a-night' man. It ended with Humphrys re-enacting a 'well endowed' Tony standing some distance away from the urinal as he went about his business. Most guests found this bawdy tale highly amusing, but there were several dissenters among

the Anshen + Allen contingent, one of whom was overheard complaining that the tale was yet another example of Humphrys' anti-Labour grandstanding. Touchy!

#### CARAT AND STICK

Diamonds are a girl's best friend, but they're proving a kick in the proverbial baubles for **Frank Gehry**. Gehry is being sued by Californian company, Circa Publishing Enterprises, which claims he defrauded them. The firm contends it had a gem of a deal with Gehry for the exclusive rights to produce, distribute and sell Tiffany's Gehry-trademarked jewellery. But Gehry didn't turn out to be the diamond geezer Circa thought, with the company claiming he didn't properly inform them of another deal he had struck with Tiffany.



# it's your call

The new 2007 CDM Regulations came into force on 6 April with important implications for architects, their clients and contractors on projects of all sizes.

With CDM 2007, health and safety hazards must be highlighted and resolved at the earliest stage. Identifying and managing risks from falls during maintenance should form a key part of the design process - as reinforced by the 2005 Work at Height Regulations.

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## VILHELM WOHLERT DESERVES GREATER APPRECIATION

I read with sadness of the death of the Danish architect Vilhelm Wohlert (ajplus 15.05.07) – I had not seen it recorded elsewhere. I suggest that the AJ considers publishing a fuller appreciation of this fine architect whose work from the 1950s onwards was of a consistent and exemplary architectural standard.

In the late 1970s, I wrote my diploma thesis at the Cambridge School of Architecture on the work of Wohlert and Jørgen Bo, looking at the wide range of high-quality public buildings and beautiful private houses that they designed together and separately. Wohlert's projects ranged from an elegant optician's shop in central Copenhagen, to the restoration of Neo-Classical Danish monuments, to work on schools and university buildings.

I visited Wohlert at his office and home at that time and have happy memories of his hospitality, and his kindness in showing me some of his meticulously detailed and carefully considered work. He was a delightful, unassuming, modest man.

Many British architects have been inspired by Wohlert and Bo's Louisiana Museum of Modern Art at Humlebæk – a series of linked pavilions extended sensitively out into the landscape in subtly-developed phases. There is, however, much more to admire and appreciate about the work of Vilhelm Wohlert.  
*David Billingsley, Aberystwyth*

## A PATIENT'S POSITIVE RESPONSE TO MOORFIELDS

Well said, John Lyall (Letters, 17.05.06). As an architect and a recent patient at the new Moorfields Eye Hospital, I strongly endorse his support of Penoyre & Prasad's excellent building (AJ 26.04.07), which demonstrates a contextual response to its site, and a plan which works with great efficiency internally, giving new life to this great London institution.

*Nigel Woolner, Chapman Taylor Architects*

## FIRE PROTECTION NEED NOT UPSET AESTHETICS

I was very interested to read about Inskip + Jenkins' restoration of Moggerhanger House (AJ 03.05.07). The painstaking investigative work has resulted in the careful and attentive restoration of an outstanding example of Georgian architecture.

Having worked on a large number of heritage projects, as well as representing the UK on the EU-funded project to evaluate fire risk to European cultural heritage, I am acutely aware of the challenges that these projects pose to the design team. The same challenges also provide a great opportunity for innovation. So it was immensely disappointing to see, in two of the photos, smoke detectors located on the ceiling, especially as one of the rooms was described as having the most important interior in the building.

With a little imagination it is possible to provide an equal or greater level of protection with minimal impact on aesthetics. At the very least, smoke detectors of the type shown can be painted to match the background, but a far better effect can be achieved by using some of the other technology available to the fire engineer.

In heritage buildings, where any intervention should be minimal, the appointment of an experienced fire engineer can avoid such absurdities and can provide a fire-protection strategy that meets the needs of the various stakeholders in a way that is sympathetic to the building.

*Steve Cooper, director, Cundall Fire Engineering*

## BRUNSWICK BOOK IS IN FACT A 'TOUR DE FORCE'

Patrick Hodgkinson's letter (AJ 17.05.07) about the review of Clare Melhuish's book on the Brunswick Centre (AJ 03.05.07) was harsh. Melhuish may have started out as a journalist but she has spent years studying the Brunswick as part of her research towards a PhD. To call her 'unscholarly' is grossly unfair. She also clocked up hours of interviews with residents, including me and my family, and her book is in many ways an anthropological *tour de force*.

Hodgkinson's other point – that she is 'mealy-mouthed' – is even less justifiable. There are few more enthusiastic supporters of the Brunswick than Melhuish. Ironically, the building currently seems more under threat from its own architects, Levitt Bernstein Associates and Hodgkinson himself, who have designed a hideous 'eye-catcher' that will sit above the Renoir cinema and wreck the loggia on the east side of the Brunswick.

*Adrian Friend, architect and Brunswick resident, Friend and Company*

## ARCHITECTURE IS ABOUT PASSION, NOT MONEY

Is size of practice and profit more important to the AJ than design excellence? Architecture should be portrayed in its true light – a passion-driven – not money-orientated – vocation.

May you also consider smaller practices who have design, not profit, at the heart of their work. I'm aware the AJ promotes small projects and young architects, but feel that there is a whole market of medium-sized practices that miss out on the same publicity to aid and inform progressing Part 3 students looking to develop through working on projects of an appropriate scale.

*Thomas Quinton, London NW5*

## MEMORY VEIL INSPIRES HEAVENLY EVOCATION

William Morris explains our vision of a memory veil eloquently (Letters, AJ 24.05.07). Yet how much more interesting for him to construct it through our evocation. Everyone has their own idea of heaven, but seldom after a first date.

*Gordon Murray, gm+ad architects*

## CORRECTION

Anshen + Allen is not the largest practice in the South West, as reported in AJ 24.05.07. The region's largest firm is Stride Treglown.

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



# CALL FOR ARCHITECTS

## ATHLETES VILLAGE – STRATFORD CITY – LONDON

The Lend Lease led consortium and the Architecture Foundation are seeking architectural practices from around the world to design all elements of the Athletes Village for the 2012 Games.

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We are looking for good design, intelligent thinking and high quality execution, evidenced in previous work of the entrants. Extensive experience, or experience at a large scale, is not essential.

Architects are invited to apply to join a panel of practices, from which teams will then be selected to design individual elements.

For further information see [www.villagearchitectspanel.com](http://www.villagearchitectspanel.com)

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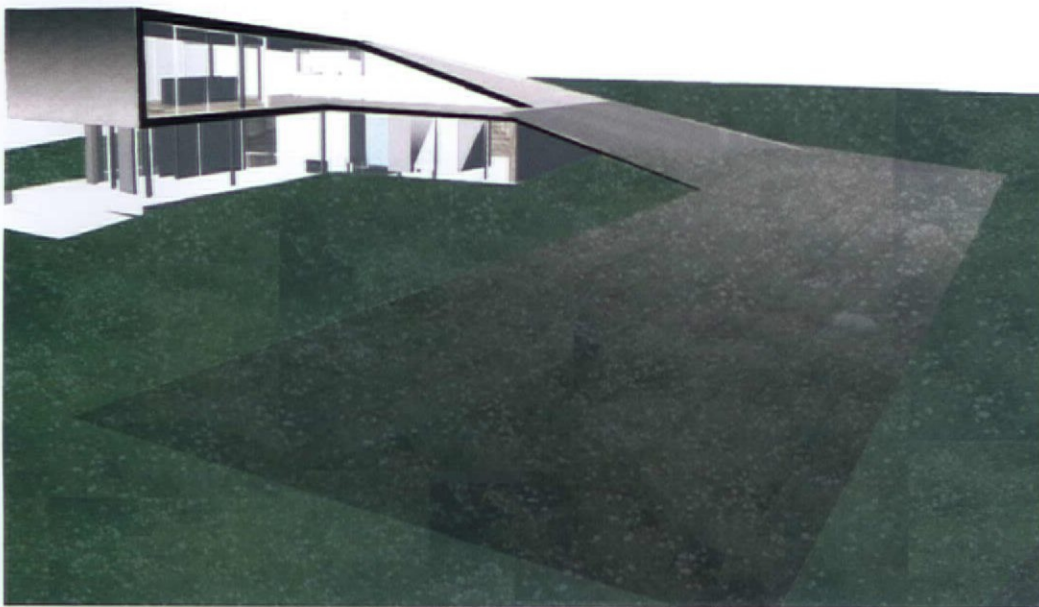
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# MANGERA YVARIS/ VALLDOREIX



1. The villa emerges from the garden



## IT IS A HYBRID STRUCTURE THAT IS NEITHER HOUSE NOR GARDEN BUT BOTH

By Carlos Ferrater. Photography by Dominik Gigler

*Mangera Yvars Architects (MYAA) was established in 2001 by Ali Mangera and Ada Yvars Bravo. Prior to this, both partners worked in London, Ali Mangera for Zaha Hadid, and Ada Yvars for Florian Beigel, Pierre d'Avoine and David Chipperfield. Selected for the AJ/Corus 40 Under 40 exhibition at the V&A in 2005, the practice has offices in Barcelona and London.*

Valldoreix, the site of MYAA's new Villa Valldoreix, is a village in the hinterland above Barcelona. Like many surrounding villages, it was a weekend retreat for city dwellers, a place to go to destress. In a British context, Valldoreix can be seen as the Hampstead Garden Suburb of Barcelona – a semi-idyllic retreat, neither rural nor urban, but a convenient compromise between the two.

In the past, Valldoreix was reached by a 40-minute journey along a meandering mountain pass. Now, with a newly constructed tunnel cut through the mountains, the distance to Barcelona is compressed to 10 minutes, transforming this former village into a suburban extension of the city. With the scarcity of land driving forward new infrastructure and transport projects, the phenomenon of urban expansion is now common to all villages around Barcelona.

Valldoreix is an overlap of open and built areas, with the resultant spaces being genuinely ambiguous and hard to define. There is also an interior/exterior fluidity to Valldoreix which is a Mediterranean tradition. Historically, the buildings within Valldoreix and other similar villages consisted of bourgeois villas,

based on the *Masia Catalana* – the ancient Catalan farm. These buildings use local folk vernacular such as arches, decorative roofs, and floral window bars. It is within this supposedly staid context that MYAA has designed Villa Valldoreix – a small but highly significant work.

Since 2001, Ali Mangera and Ada Yvars have developed a multicultural team that is trying to create an architecture which goes beyond the stand-alone objects that are all too common today. Their understanding of landscape is one which encompasses ideas of territory and topography as well as the social and political conditions of the immediate locale. As a consequence, this young practice can provide a complex and sophisticated architecture strongly rooted in context and culture.

Through its involvement in mixed-use projects, MYAA has developed a seam of work which is hybrid and flexible. These schemes have allowed the practice to combine culture, religion, leisure, sport, shopping, living and working spaces in challenging ways. Its designs are informed not by a deterministic conception of architecture, but rather by one which allows for flexibility, randomness and social reorganisation – experimentation which might lead the way to a new generation of buildings.

New construction techniques and advances in computer modelling throw up new possibilities. We can manipulate established relationships between function and form that once seemed immutable; we can build shapes that once seemed impossible. Construction details no longer require an obvious logic.





2. The L-shaped footprint organises both the house and the outdoor space

Against this backdrop, MYAA can be seen as a kind of architectural research laboratory. It has embarked on a search for materials and new ways of building, while exploring a new generation of landscapes (urban, degraded, peripheral), even experimenting with the possibilities of 'no place' – what Ignasi de Solà-Morales refers to as '*Terrain Vague*'. It is within this context of 'no place' that MYAA has developed such projects as its competition entry for the Thalassotherapy Centre in Gijón, and the Eco-Tower in Barcelona.

Prior to the Villa Valldoreix, MYAA had already brought this approach of experiment, flexibility, and innovation in the use of space and material to the design of Spanish housing. In 2005 it completed a terraced housing scheme in Ulldecona, Tarragona, some 200km south-west of Barcelona, which was awarded the Delta Del Ebro Triennial Prize for Architecture.

This Ulldecona scheme is based on a shifted volume, which enables variations in plan and section. The plan is freed by allowing modules to form different spatial configurations and, depending on the configuration, a single house can accommodate two to five bedrooms. A single square module is used for windows, balcony projections, cut-outs, gardens, and terraces, establishing a rhythmic composition on the facade. The building becomes a unity – and the whole is not just the sum and repetition of identical houses. The project establishes a new route for terraced houses and housing developments generally, as unfortunately the prevailing trend in Spain is for the mass production of identical houses.

In its Valldoreix scheme, MYAA deliberately sets out to avoid the cliché of the Spanish villa. Instead, the project is an attempt to colonise the totality of the plot, turning it into a space for topographic and landscape experimentation. The concept explores the relationship of full/empty; or built and unbuilt space. The L-shape footprint organises the outdoor spaces as much as the interior, providing a clarity of function and orientation. The villa itself can be seen as a continuation of the garden; a hybrid structure that is neither house nor garden but both. The roof and floor planes emerge from the garden and are an extension of former garden pathways. These pathways converge and lead up to the roof.

Although the villa is defined by the garden from which it emerges, the routes and pathways which run through the house give it an enigmatic internal character. These pathways and corridors merge and diverge to become bookshelves, kitchen cabinets and furniture. The contrast between the different parts of the house emphasises the idea of intermediate space. The public areas are diaphanous and crystalline, while the private areas on the ground level are more intimate, and related through regular openings to the garden – divided into discrete areas through the planting of jasmine, fruit trees, pines and grass.

Light performs an important role, subtly tailored to the necessities of the different areas. At night, artificial light creates a complex and rich stage scene, transforming the house completely and giving it a sophisticated and mysterious image.





3.

With the materiality of the house – perhaps the most sensitive part of any building – MYAA has made a splendid effort. Prefabricated cement-board cladding panels, glass windows and translucent polycarbonate volumes provide an alternating and banded exterior silhouette. The internal flooring is a bold black pigmented concrete, set against a reddish Jatobá wood flooring, extending to form an exterior terrace and edge to the house.

The carpentry and attention to detail is extraordinary in parts and raw in others. The double facade conceals tall window shutters to the bedroom areas, set against a raw concrete ceiling. The ceilings are shuttered concrete, which adds to the rough-and-tumble 'interior/exterior' experience. The main staircase acts as a sculptural piece of furniture as much as a route between floors. It effectively 'becomes' the kitchen at ground level and the library on the floor above. The in-between space is the timber and polycarbonate dining area whose profile resembles a scaled-down version of the building itself.

The limited palette of materials reinforces the project's main aims. The gesture in which the house emerges from the landscape, and organises space through audacious folding, is the overriding image of the scheme.

With the Villa Valldoreix, MYAA has defined a place by constructing a new landscape. In recognising the Mediterranean condition of the site, innovating on the diagram of a villa, and implementing new construction techniques, it has conjugated tradition and modernity in a brilliant architectonic exercise.



4.





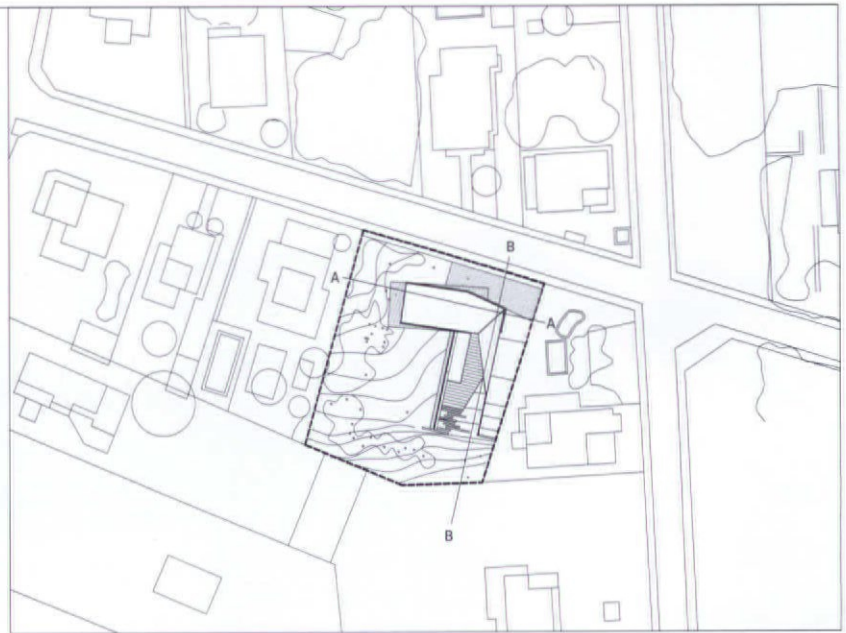
3. The route through the garden eventually arrives at the villa's roof
4. Cement-board cladding panels and translucent polycarbonate define the exterior



## STRUCTURAL CONCEPT

The building sits on concrete pad foundations, which are stepped to follow the contours of the ground. The floors and roof are built in reinforced concrete which was left exposed with shutter marks. The rear raked section of the house merges with the landscape of the garden. This part of the house is a green roof with reinforced concrete retaining walls on either side. The green roof helps to maintain an even temperature in the building through the summer and winter months. The external walls of the building are in clay brick but are not loadbearing. This is a typical and cost-effective system for buildings of this scale in Spain. The original concept was to have a monolithic concrete structure for the building. Because of cost constraints, we used steel square hollow sections which also helped to provide a more slender profile to the columns. The columns at ground- and first-floor level are not aligned, to help distinguish the two spaces. The upper level is also cantilevered at the lounge area to provide a shaded outdoor dining area.

*Ali Mangera*



5. Site plan



6 & 7. Construction in progress: the house combines reinforced concrete with steel columns and non-loadbearing clay brick walls

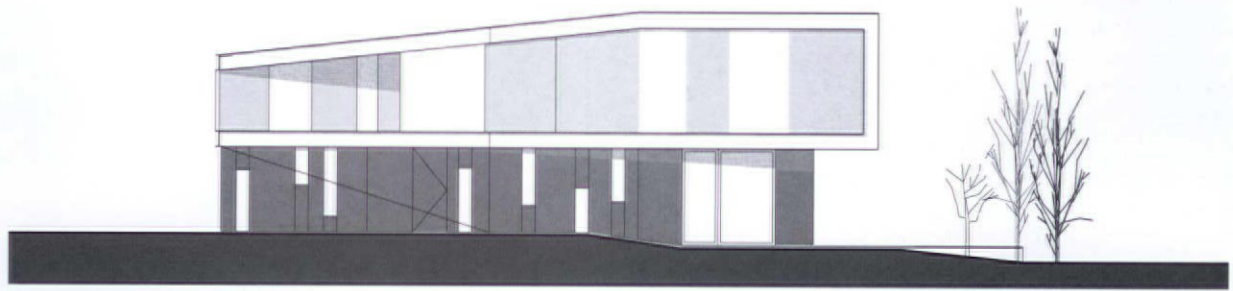


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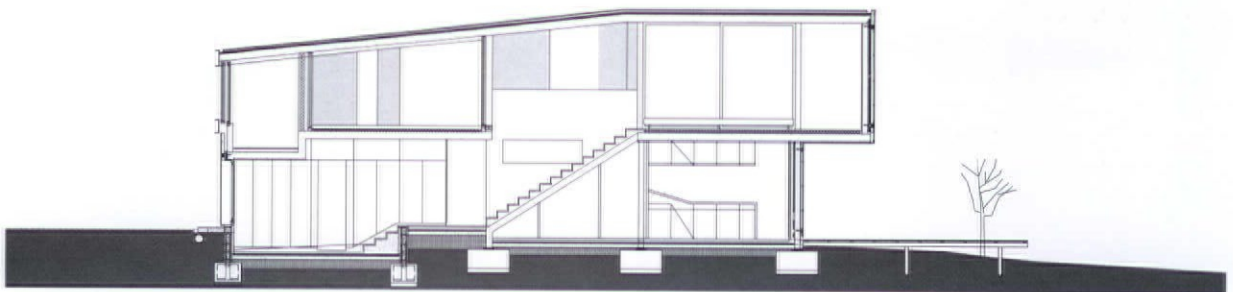


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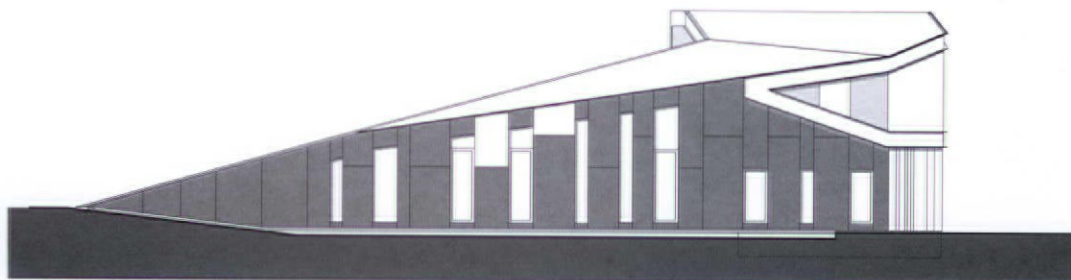




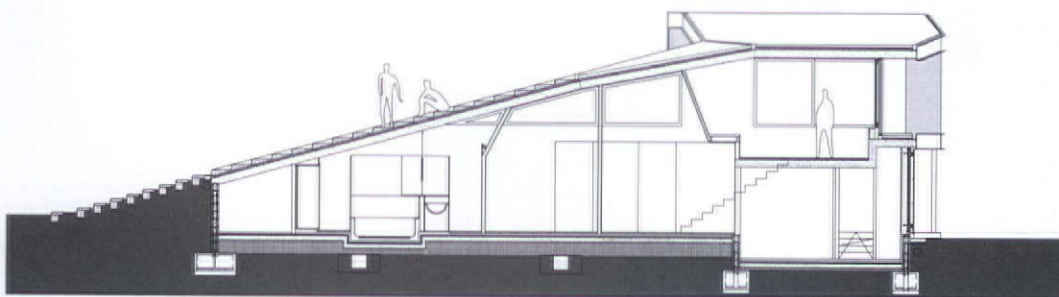
8. North elevation



9. Section AA



10. East elevation



11. Section BB

0 10m





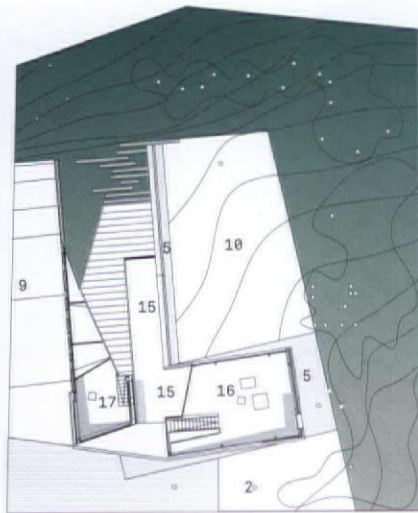
12. The limited palette of materials includes red-brown Jatobá wood



13. Not just a route between floors, but a sculptural piece of furniture



14. Ground-floor plan



15. First-floor plan

#### KEY

- 1 ENTRANCE
- 2 OLIVE TREE
- 3 HOUSEKEEPER
- 4 KITCHEN & DINING
- 5 TIMBER DECK
- 6 PEACH & APPLE TREES
- 7 BEDROOM
- 8 MASTER BEDROOM
- 9 JASMINE
- 10 MEADOW
- 11 FIG
- 12 PINES
- 13 SECRET GARDEN
- 14 PATHWAY
- 15 TERRACE
- 16 LOUNGE
- 17 STUDIO







16. The lounge has a shuttered concrete ceiling and black pigmented concrete floor



## Costs

### DEMOLITION

Demolition of existing house £41/m<sup>2</sup>

### SUBSTRUCTURE

Foundations/slabs £55/m<sup>2</sup>

Excavation; pad foundation; damp-proof membrane; concrete slab; rigid insulation

### SUPERSTRUCTURE

Frame £35/m<sup>2</sup>

Mild-steel columns

Upper floors £123/m<sup>2</sup>

In situ concrete slabs

Roof £80/m<sup>2</sup>

In situ concrete slab; single-ply membrane; rigid insulation; black concrete finish; green-roof system and pebbles

Staircases £22/m<sup>2</sup>

Concrete slab covered with 3cm Jatobá hardwood, including Jatobá panel cladding for handrail and walls

External walls £191/m<sup>2</sup>

Lower level: cement-board cladding on two-skin brick wall concealing internal shutters. Upper level: 4cm-thick polycarbonate

Windows/external doors £232/m<sup>2</sup>

Lower level: aluminum-frame windows, including aluminium reveal with MDF-lacquered internal shutters. Upper level: sliding and fixed windows

Internal walls and partitions £14/m<sup>2</sup>

Blockwork walls; 4cm-thick polycarbonate partitions

Internal doors £20/m<sup>2</sup>

4cm-thick top-to-bottom sliding doors, lacquered white

### INTERNAL FINISHES

Wall finishes £27/m<sup>2</sup>

Plaster and paint; porcelain tiling and white marble; 30 x 60cm tiles

Floor finishes £68/m<sup>2</sup>

Black concrete screed on circulation spaces and upper level; Jatobá hardwood flooring in bedrooms and dining room; external decking in Ipe hardwood

Ceiling finishes £11/m<sup>2</sup>

Exposed concrete soffits

### FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

Furniture £55/m<sup>2</sup>

Kitchen units part of central staircase, panelled in Jatobá hardwood; integrated wall lighting; blinds at upper level

### SERVICES

Sanitary appliances £20/m<sup>2</sup>

Four bathrooms; white sanitaryware with chrome fittings; built-in showers

Disposal installations £15/m<sup>2</sup>

Drainage, storm-water drainage and rainwater system piped to soakaway

Water installations £29/m<sup>2</sup>

Hot- and cold-water installation; outdoor sprinkler system

Space heating/air treatment £41/m<sup>2</sup>

Runtal wall-mounted and floor-standing radiators; two gas boilers

Electrical services £25/m<sup>2</sup>

Electrical distribution; power, lighting and main switchboard

Protective installations £11/m<sup>2</sup>

Security alarm

Communication installations £14/m<sup>2</sup>

TV; telephone services

Builders' work in connection £41/m<sup>2</sup>

### PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCES

Preliminaries, overheads and profit £207/m<sup>2</sup>

### EXTERNAL WORKS

Landscaping £24/m<sup>2</sup>

External Cenia stone paving; pebble area; grass area; jasmine wall; green roof; trees and flowers in a total area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>

*Costs supplied by Mangera Yvars Architects and converted from euros*



17.



## Cost summary

	Cost per m <sup>2</sup> (£)	Percentage of total
DEMOLITION	41	3.0
SUBSTRUCTURE	55	4.0
SUPERSTRUCTURE		
Frame	35	2.5
Upper floors	123	9.0
Roof	80	5.8
Staircases	22	1.6
External walls	191	14.0
Windows/external doors	232	16.0
Internal walls and partitions	14	1.0
Internal doors	20	1.5
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	717	52.5
INTERNAL FINISHES		
Wall finishes	27	2.0
Floor finishes	68	5.0
Ceiling finishes	1	0.1
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	96	7.0
FITTINGS AND FURNITURE	55	4
SERVICES		
Sanitary appliances	20	1.5
Disposal installations	15	1.1
Water installations	29	2.1
Space heating and air treatment	41	3.0
Electrical services	25	1.8
Protective installations	11	0.8
Communication installation	14	1.0
Builders' work in connection	41	3.0
GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL	196	14.3
PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCE	207	15.1
TOTAL	1,367	100
EXTERNAL WORKS	24	

## Credits

Tender date  
 2003  
 Start on site date  
 2004  
 Contract duration  
 Two years  
 Gross internal floor area  
 House 190m<sup>2</sup>; landscape 1,000m<sup>2</sup>  
 Form of contract  
 Spanish building work contract  
 Total cost  
 378,000 euros (£259,000)  
 Client  
 Gonpadion Promocion Inmobiliaria  
 Architect  
 Mangera Yvars Architects, Barcelona office  
 Structural engineer  
 Jorge Blasco  
 Technical architect  
 Xavier Torcal  
 Main contractor  
 Construcciones Baro



18.

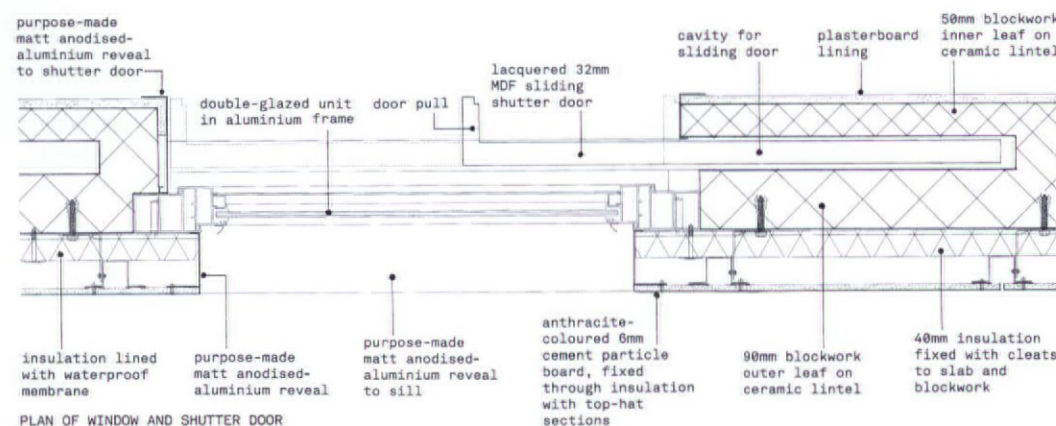
17 & 18. On the terrace



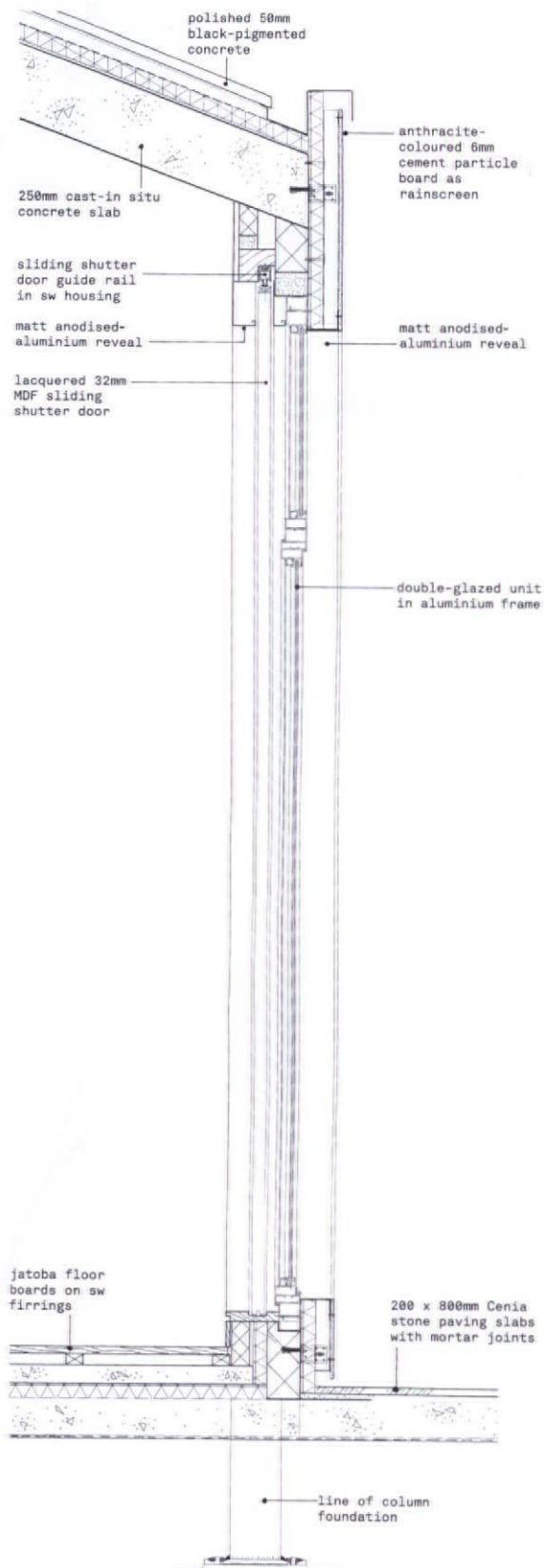
The roof and first-floor slab, both of cast in-situ concrete, are supported by a structure of steel columns. The blockwork walls, a 50mm inner leaf and a 90mm outer leaf, are lined with insulation and a waterproof membrane, and clad with a ventilated rainscreen of cement particle board, fixed back to the blockwork.

*By Susan Dawson*

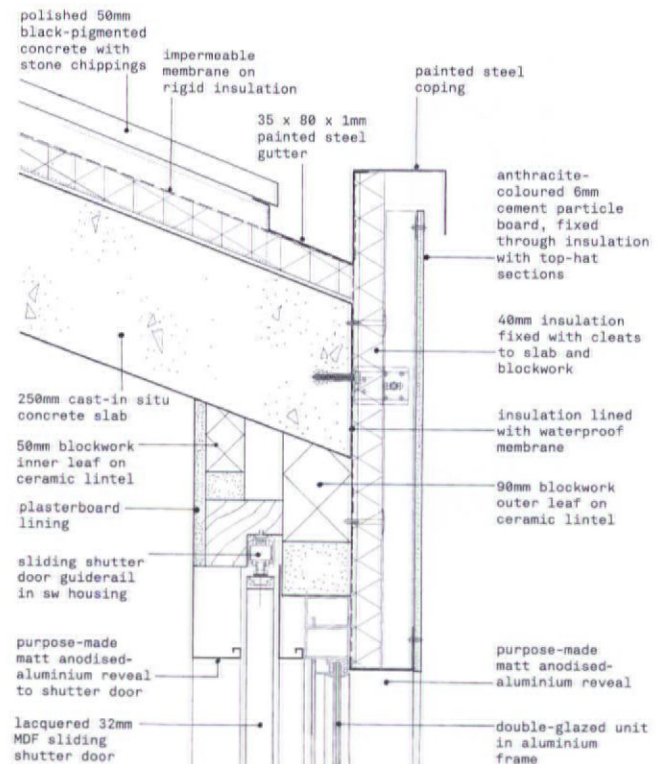
*Editor's note: This detail is published to demonstrate the principles of a sliding shutter door and rainscreen wall. The house is in Spain, where construction regulations are significantly different to the UK Building Regulations.*



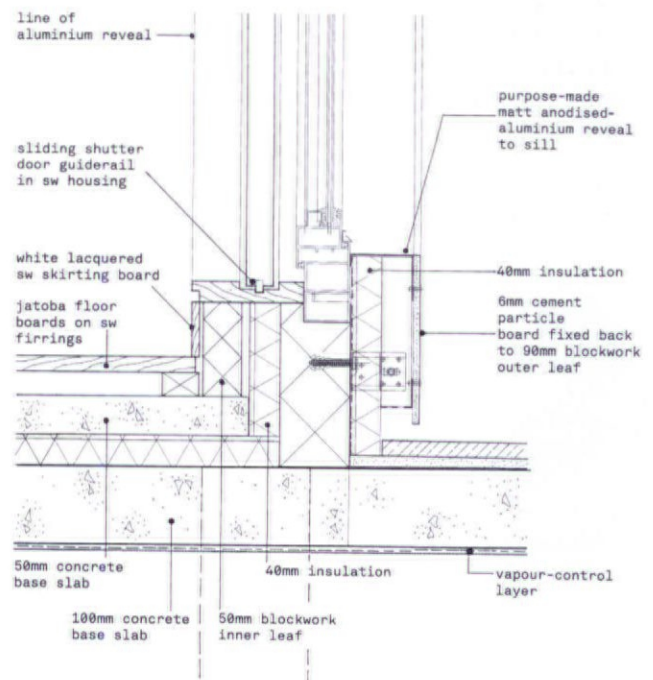




SECTION A - A



DETAIL AT EAVES AND WINDOW HEAD



DETAIL AT SILL



# ATKINS. inspire

recognising women  
in the built environment

in association with

every  
woman

6th July 2007

Riverbank Park Plaza, London

[www.inspireevent.co.uk](http://www.inspireevent.co.uk)

Atkins Inspire – recognising exceptional women working in the UK built environment is delighted to announce that the finalists for the inaugural awards are now available to view online.

[www.inspireevent.co.uk](http://www.inspireevent.co.uk)

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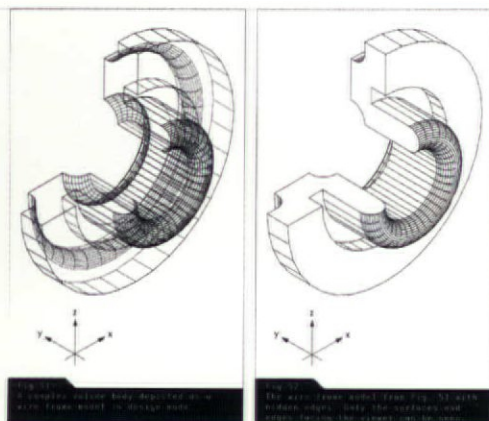
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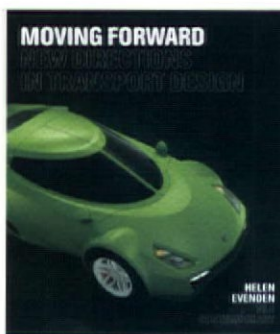
Construction News | The Architects' Journal | New Civil Engineering | QS Week

Finalists announced, visit [www.inspireevent.co.uk](http://www.inspireevent.co.uk)





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1. The ins and outs of wire-frame models (Books)
2. The latest in transport (Books)

## THIS WEEK ONLINE

- Timber is the latest addition to the Materials section. Recent articles on timber framing, cladding and finishes are combined with 23 studies of timber buildings from our online database. A list of information sources for timber is also now online.

- Our Materials coverage also includes information on cladding; doors, windows & ironmongery; flooring; H&V; landscape; lighting; and masonry and steel. See [www.ajplus.co.uk/materials](http://www.ajplus.co.uk/materials)

## TECHNICAL NEWS

- Parker Morris for tomorrow? At the AJ's recent Affordable Housing conference, David Birkbeck from Design for Homes demonstrated a website which sets out space standards for 21st-century housing. Originally developed for the GLA (but never adopted) by a group including David Leavitt and John Watson, the standards were picked up by Design for Homes as a consumer tool and have recently been adopted by the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships. [www.swingacat.info](http://www.swingacat.info)

- Reducing site waste is a challenge for projects aiming to be sustainable. But DEFRA could be coming to the rescue with its new legislation, currently in consultation over site-waste management plans. Make your voice heard before 9 July by visiting [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) and following the 'Consultations' link to 'Climate Change and Environmental Protection'.

## TECHNICAL EVENTS

*Changing Communities: Does Architecture Have the Power?*

**Until 15 June**

Buro Happold, 17 Newman Street  
London W1

The work of DSDHA  
[www.burohappold.com](http://www.burohappold.com)

*The Impact of New Procurement Methods on the London Olympics and other Major Projects*

**4 June, 1:45-5:45pm**

CIRIA, 174-180 Old Street,  
London EC1V

[www.ciria.org](http://www.ciria.org)

*OFFSITE 2007*

**11-14 June**

BRE, Watford

Six full-scale houses and a school; exhibits and seminars on MMC; and sustainable technologies

[www.offsite2007.com](http://www.offsite2007.com)

*Building Better Schools Summit*

**26 June, 9:15am-6:15pm**

Academy of St Francis of Assisi,  
Liverpool

[www.bcse.uk.net/schoolsweek](http://www.bcse.uk.net/schoolsweek)

## BOOKS

*Basics CAD*

Jan Krebs, Birkhäuser, 2007, £9.90

Another book in the Basics series intended for students, this easy-to-follow guide offers a useful overview of basic principles for beginners. Over 90 pages, the book covers visualisation, data flow and how to navigate a virtual drawing board. An antiseptic but clear presentation at the right price.

*Moving Forward: New Directions in Transport Design*

Helen Evenden, V&A Publications, 2007, £19.99

Even if you are not a futuristic automobile fan, but especially if you are, you will enjoy browsing the latest offering from the V&A Contemporary series, which looks at cars for the future. The last chapter looks at transport interchanges: shelters, stations and airports; some familiar and some not.





NIGEL YOUNG

1.

## MODELLING CAN ENSURE THE DESIGN IS ON TRACK

By Hattie Hartman

*Sophisticated modelling techniques demand a good synergy between architect and engineer and between different engineering disciplines, as this case study of a Foster + Partners/Buro Happold collaboration shows.*

The Thomas Deacon Academy in Peterborough, the largest of 47 academies completed to date, will amalgamate three existing secondary schools to house 2,200 students when it opens in September. Returning from a recent visit to Thomas Deacon, Ty Goddard, Director of the British Council for School Environments, described the school as spectacular. 'This is not all "wow" factor,' says Goddard. 'It is a very visual environment which oozes respect for young people.' He also notes that the project is 'majorly ambitious, both educationally and technically.'

The academy's website says that 'it is important that the pupils never feel lost in their own Academy'. Foster + Partners, which has five academies under its belt and three more in the pipeline, tackled the size issue by creating six colleges within the school, which are expressed in architectural terms by amoeba-like pods. A triple-height central concourse provides visual orientation, doubling as circulation and breakout space.

The academy's specialisms – science and maths – will be highlighted on plasma screens in the concourse, but sports and performing arts also figure high in the curriculum. Classrooms, orientated north and south, are wrapped around a sinuous building perimeter to maximise natural light and ventilation. IT rooms, the theatre, the gym and the kitchen – spaces which do not require

daylight – face east and west where an absence of windows means solar gain is not an issue. Thomas Deacon has received criticism in the broadsheets recently for its lack of playground, but Goddard says this misses the point entirely because there is plenty of recreational space on the site.

Thomas Deacon has proved a design challenge for both architect and engineer. 'The good thing about working for Foster,' says Andy Nicholson of consultant engineer Buro Happold, 'is that they push their consultants quite hard. The design of the central concourse and its curvy roof required good synergies between [engineering] specialisms, especially people movement, fire, services and acoustics,' adds Nicholson.

People movement simulation has its origins in fire egress. At Thomas Deacon, it has been used to understand the flow of students through the school and to identify counterflows and blockages – potential hotspots for bullying. Darron Haylock of Foster + Partners says this simulation assisted the client in achieving value for money because the school didn't want to use fire-escape stairs for vertical circulation and needed to optimise the number and configuration of the stairs. Haylock finds people movement simulation an extremely useful tool which the practice has gone on to use in other projects.

As a baseline for the simulation, Buro Happold collected real data on student movement at the existing Thomas Deacon school, rather than working from guidance documents. Peak times proved to be lunch, morning arrival and afternoon departure. The





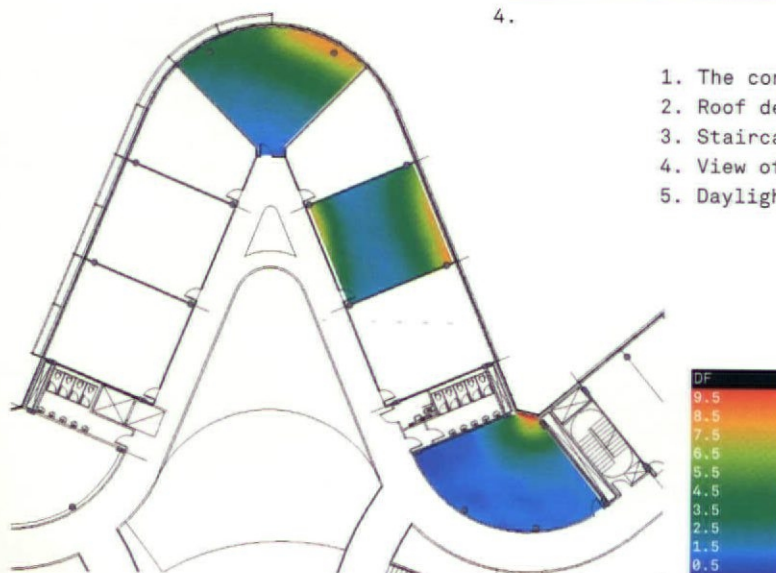
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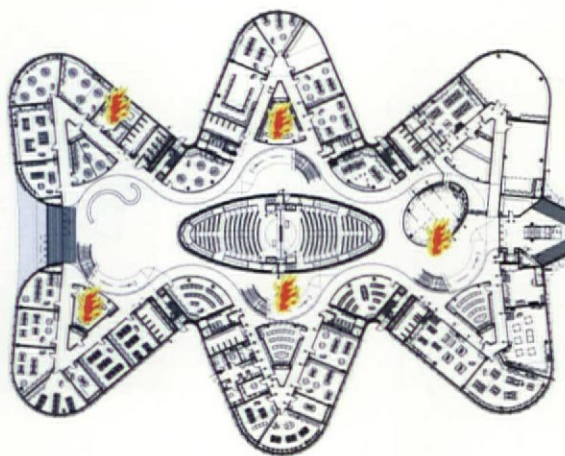
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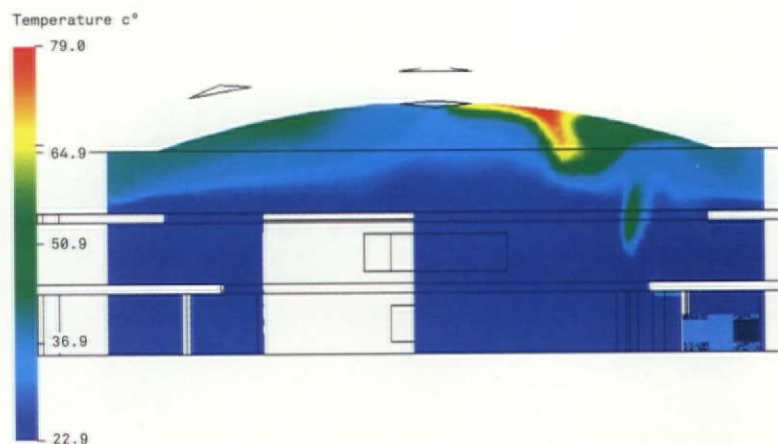
1. The concourse at Thomas Deacon Academy
2. Roof detail
3. Staircase in concourse under construction
4. View of concourse showing balconies and stairs
5. Daylight studies of classrooms





6.

6. Likely fire locations were assumed to test evacuation scenarios



7.

7. CFD studies were used to study smoke layer heights, visibility and travel

resultant design changes included adding bridges, adjusting the width of stairs, and widening and relocating doors. 'Models are just tools to give you confidence that the design is moving in the right direction,' says Nicholson. Computer modelling may increase confidence, but one can argue that it has resulted in a deskilling of the architect, who has become increasingly dependent on a wide range of consultants to crunch numbers and interpret results.

Fire engineering was also critical at Thomas Deacon, particularly because arson is a major source of fire in schools. According to the Arson Prevention Bureau, an average of 20 schools a week have a major fire. Proactive fire prevention measures include: a laser beam which runs the full perimeter of the school and is linked to a remote monitoring system; and locking refuse, a potential fire starter, in stores 15m away from the building. A good interface between fire and security design, undertaken by Faber Maunsell, avoided the use of redundant fire-safety systems.

The fire strategy was developed by looking at the impact of particular fires on the life safety of the occupants and the building. Potential fire locations were agreed with the client and Building Control, in order to work out worst-case scenarios. These were then analysed with CFD modelling to determine the size and location of roof vents necessary to keep smoke 2m above the floor at second-floor level to ensure safe evacuation. The people movement modelling was used in emergency mode, rather than using a separate evacuation model. A final aspect of fire prevention is what Buro Happold calls the 'circle of safety' – fire maintenance

procedures. A report on fire safety sets out operational management and checklists for use by the academy.

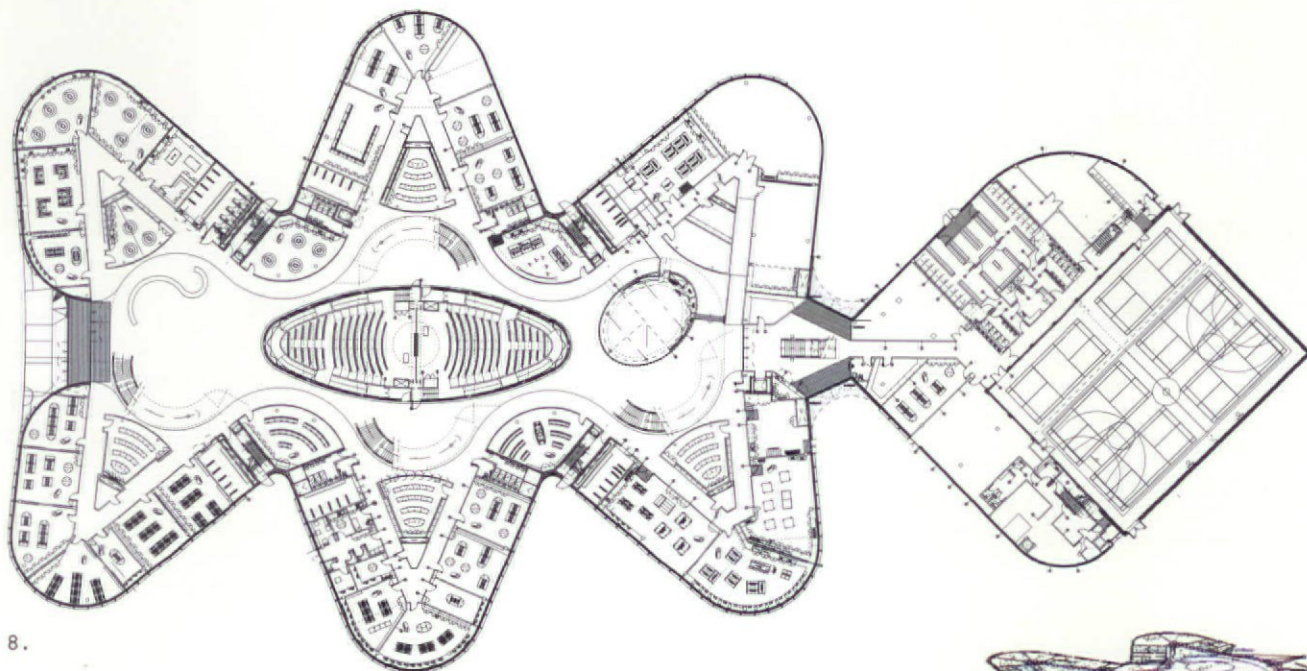
An important engineering overlap between fire and services looked at the natural convective currents in the concourse to understand the stack effect. Environmental engineering also helped establish optimal classroom depth by studying natural ventilation, concluding that a classroom could be a maximum of 2.5 times its height to maintain indoor air quality. Night cooling is achieved by locating high-level windows close to ceilings and all concrete ceiling soffits are exposed to increase thermal mass.

One of the more complex aspects of the design is a 3D roof – rapidly becoming a Foster trademark – which incorporates structure, acoustic attenuation, roof vents and lighting. In a first for Fosters + Partners, mirrors were integrated into the curvature of the roof to illuminate landlocked spaces. Projector lights from below are directed on to the mirrors and reflected back into the rooms below.

Buro Happold has also used post-occupancy evaluation of previous academies to inform design at Thomas Deacon. Easy energy savings are being made by ensuring that lights and equipment are switched off out of hours. Lighting controls have been modified so that security lighting, which represents only about 10 per cent of all lighting, is clearly labelled and can be switched on and off separately.

A critical assessment of the Thomas Deacon Academy will only be possible when the school opens its doors in September.

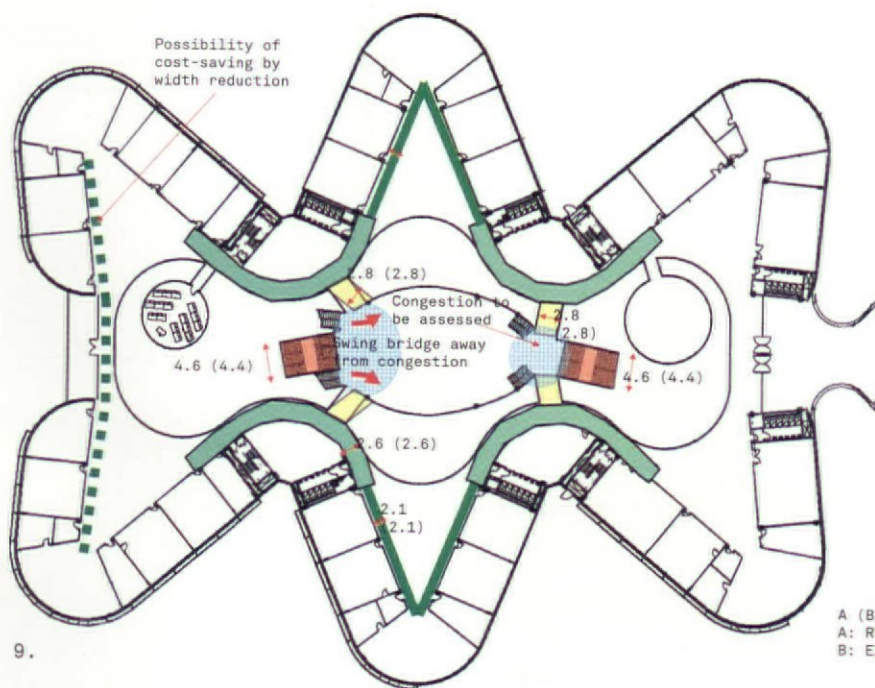
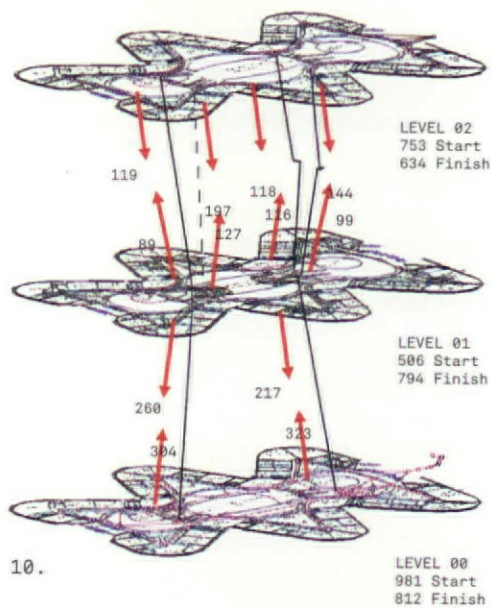




8. Ground-floor plan

9. People movement analysis was used to optimise sizes and location of corridors and stairs

10. Typical stair movement profile







## WHEN IT COMES TO COMPUTERS, SIZE MATTERS

My in-tray is full of announcements about mini PC computers. Before you Apple, er, devotees chorus about how these are all rip-offs of the Mac Mini, just remember that a range of Windows computers of mini dimensions was on the market long before Steve Jobs announced the Mac model of titchy Ives-designed minimalist perfection. No marks for innovation; full marks for hype.

But what all these tiny computers share, because they have to pack a lot into very little space, is extremely average performance, no chance of an upgrade and bags full of associated physical kit to make them function – plus the usual rats' nest of cabling. There is not a lot of point in small if the desktop acreage of kit is, politely, sprawling and your kids can't play World of Warcraft in anything but very low resolution, very slowly.

And that's not to mention the unfeasibility of slipping a mini PC/Mac in a pocket and cycling off to see a client. Has anyone ever seen a spare keyboard, mouse and monitor all lying around at the same time? And then there are the squawks when your client's office manager catches you fiddling with them.

*sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com*

## ON THE TURN

In my line of work there is seldom any realistic correlation between the sums at stake and the complexity of the issues in a dispute, writes *Kim Franklin*. If anything, the rule of inverse proportion seems to apply – this means that the smallest of claims can give rise to the most taxing of legal conundrums. On the other hand, claims for £10 million can turn on the meaning of a single line of the contract.

Equally, there is little correlation between the value of a building contract and the size of the claim if it all goes horribly wrong. The cost of proving a new factory floor, for example, bears little or no relation to the losses that are incurred while the factory is closed down and the failed screed replaced. If the occupants of the defective building are engaged on particularly lucrative pastimes – the money markets for example – the sky is the limit.

Wily contractors try to limit their liability for these losses by a contract term which either excludes liability for particular sorts of loss or limits their liability to an overall cap. Whether these exclusion clauses work or not depends upon the nature of the contract and clause.

If the contract contains provisions that are particularly onerous or unusual they should, in the words of Lord Denning,

be 'printed in red ink on the face of the document with a red hand pointing to them' before they bind the recipient. Back in the 1980s a picture library imposed a holding fee of £5 per day for transparencies that were held beyond the permitted period of 14 days. The return of 47 transparencies four weeks late led to a charge of £3,783.50. The court characterised this as 'exorbitant', not least because of the fact that the unsuspecting recipient had not been properly notified of it.

So how was it for Green Piling Ltd? The firm contracted with AIG Remediation (now Encia) to construct piles for a Shepherd Homes development in Hartlepool. The parties agreed a total price of £250,000. Of the 94 homes built, 41 subsequently showed signs of settlement said to be caused by defects in the piling design. The potential losses for 12 homes were of the order of £3 million and the estimated total claim was £10 million. But Green Piling's contract included the magic words, 'Our maximum total liability is limited to the Contract Price'. So could they escape the £10 million claim for a £250,000 price tag?

In *Shepherd Homes v Encia Remediation* (Judgment 26.01.07), the court held that the limitation of a contractors' liability to the amount of the

contract price was not particularly unusual. Green Piling had given fair notice of the provision to Encia, which, as part of a large international group, had the superior bargaining power. It could have contracted with other piling contractors on terms which did not include the cap – but at greater cost. As there was nothing unusual or unreasonable about the provision, Green Piling was entitled to rely on it.

This was one of those cases where a £10 million claim did indeed turn on the meaning of one line of the contract.

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



## INSTALLATION

By Andrew Mead

Roni Horn: Library of Water  
At Stykkishólmur,  
Iceland, until 2032



ARTANGEL

In Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, the explorers begin their descent in western Iceland on the Snaefellsnes peninsula, with its glacier, craters, caves and basalt columns. Jutting out from the peninsula's north coast is the small windswept town of Stykkishólmur, where, on a bluff facing the Atlantic, is a modest building from the 1950s that was once the local library. After interventions by the American artist Roni Horn, this has now become the Library of Water – unlikely as it seems, the latest project of London's arts facilitator Artangel.

Still remembered especially for having instigated Rachel Whiteread's *House*, Artangel has a long track record in matching artists to unusual sites: a gentlemen's club in St James'; the Roundhouse before John

McAslan restored it; the streets of Whitechapel. This is its first project abroad. Some of Roni Horn's work could be loosely labelled Minimalist – two truncated solid copper cones of hers are at either end of one of the old military buildings at Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation in Texas, and she's made equally reductive pieces in cast glass, aluminium and gold foil. But her practice is too various to pigeonhole, comprising drawings, texts, photographs and books as well as her cryptic alluring objects.

A thread connecting much of her output is Iceland, where Horn has travelled annually for 30 years, affected deeply by the volatility of the country's weather and geology. You can experience a week or more's weather in a day there, or from a vantage point see several

weathers at once: storm clouds as grey as lava in one direction, sun or mist in another. And given the hot springs, geysers and continuing volcanic activity, the ground you walk on seems barely stable, as if the landscape is still taking shape. Yet amid all this flux, says Horn, Iceland is where she learnt to see: 'The atmosphere is an optic lens, focusing each view and its components into vivid and stunning clarity.'

It took her some while, she adds, to turn her experience of Iceland into art, not just succumb to its postcard-friendly scenery, but she went on to make a series of idiosyncratic and beautifully produced books under the title *To Place*. Sheepfolds, samples of lava, and swimming pools (both man-made and natural) are some of their subjects. So before creating

this Library of Water, she's shown an impulse to classify (or at least group together) things that aren't usually classified, while water has figured in her projects outside Iceland too – notably in numerous close-up photos of the Thames, in which the river takes on multiple identities depending on the weather, light, current and degree of pollution.

In appearance, the building housing the Library of Water is a 1950s reprise of inter-war Moderne – now spruced up but unremarkable except for its fenestration and position, both of which Horn exploits to the full. It's a library not with stacks or shelves but floor-to-ceiling columns: 24 of them, 3m high, each filled with water from different glacial sites in Iceland. In most of them the liquid is flawlessly clear, in others foggy;





GUDMUNDUR INGOLFSSON

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but even at the bottom of the clear ones a sediment is settling – black volcanic particles or a yellowish residue.

The columns are clustered quite closely near the centre of the installation, dispersed towards its edges, and they're alive with reflections, refractions and distortions – splintering the room and surrounding landscape into luminous slivers and ghost-like images, which are reconfigured with your slightest movement.

Horn says: 'I chose some glaciers that might not be around in a decade. I liked the absurdity of archiving water but it's frighteningly appropriate. I could never have done this as a purely visual thing, it's the scarcity of the material that matters.' But the 'visual thing' is totally engrossing – you just keep on looking.

There's also a linguistic dimension. The floor is of vulcanised yellow-grey rubber, with words in English and Icelandic picked out in a lighter colour: over 50 adjectives for describing the weather, such as wet, wild or gloomy. As for the Icelandic: well, *stormasant* one can probably guess, but what do *tryllt*, *kyrtt* or *suddalegt* mean? Of course there's a translation on hand.

Some of the terms are opposites, others much more closely related (how does 'calm' differ from 'serene'?), so in starting to apply them to the scene outside the library, or to a context other than the weather, this floor of words asks you to make precise discriminations. As an entity, then, this installation is an instrument to fine-tune your responses – your vision, your language, your thinking.

Like all libraries – or like the magical little boxes Joseph Cornell made, with their bottles full of powders or liquids, their driftwood and maps – the Library of Water is a site of mental travel too, of journeys to sites one will probably never see (those glaciers). 'The existence of these unseen but accessible places is of consequence to each of us. They function to keep the world large, hopeful and unknown,' says Horn.

Her project continues with an accumulating archive of stories about Iceland's weather (a selection has been published in *Weather Reports You*, Steidl, £20), and the library isn't only for tourists – various community uses are planned, including a room for aspiring female chess players and the Stykkishólmur Chess Club, and a writer-in-residence's studio.

Artangel has a 25-year lease on the building, so perhaps there's no need to rush, but until 19 August in Studio Granda's impressive Reykjavík Art Museum there's a substantial show of Horn's work, which opens with photos of ice blocks from a disintegrating glacier, adrift in a misty lagoon. They return you to her source of inspiration – Iceland, in all its singularity – and to one of her comments on Verne: 'His fiction could be an actual description of this place. All his episodes of geological wonder are already lined up out here in plain sight.' A trip to Horn's Library of Water is sure to substantiate that.

*Stykkishólmur is a two-hour drive from Reykjavík and there's a daily bus service. For further details visit [www.libraryofwater.is](http://www.libraryofwater.is)*





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3.

ARTANGEL

1, 2, 3, & 4. The columns of water reflect each other and the scene outside - the scattered buildings of Stykkishólmur. Inset in the floor are English and Icelandic adjectives for the weather



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## EXHIBITION

*By Alex Wright*

Anthony Caro and  
Sheila Girling  
At the New Art Centre,  
Roche Court, East  
Winterslow, Salisbury,  
until 16 September

1. Toronto Flats, 1974
2. Sunnyside Flats, 1974

Roche Court is one of those unexpected treasures of the countryside with which England is blessed. Nestling in the Wiltshire landscape just outside Salisbury, it is the home of Madeleine Bessborough's New Art Centre, which was originally established in London's Sloane Street before its flight to the countryside.

In recent years Roche Court has been embellished by two award-winning small extensions by Stephen Marshall of Munkenbeck + Marshall. His Artists' House (AJ 14.02.02) and barely-there gallery are beautifully minimal additions to the domestic informality of the 19th-century house. These buildings and the setting alone make the journey to Wiltshire worthwhile.

From now until the end of the summer, Roche's normal

selection of 20th- and 21st-century art from the likes of Richard Long, David Nash and Anya Gallaccio is shown alongside a temporary exhibition of the works of one of Britain's most respected artist couples: Anthony Caro and Sheila Girling.

Girling's work seeks to explore ideas of materiality and the weathering of architectural surfaces in a variety of climates, but it is Caro's sculptures that will probably appeal more to readers of the AJ. From his ground-breaking exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in the early 1960s, to the end of the 20th-century, his sculpture has seemed to hold a special fascination for architects; in opening the exhibition, Norman Foster paid homage to Caro for the inspirational quality of his work.

Roche Court has brought together 12 of Caro's *Flats* series of monumental steel sculptures for the first time in Britain. They date from his visits to the York Steel yard in Toronto in 1974, where he was able to exploit the company's industrial plant to manipulate, and compose with, thicker and heavier steel plate than he had previously been able to use.

As is often the case, photos of the sculptures fail to convey the physical qualities of the work. Despite their sheer weight and monumentality, there is – as with Caro's earlier primary-coloured sculptures – something disarmingly playful and engaging about these works. They really appear to deny their physical materiality, which is none too readily achieved with several tons of steel plate.

Set in the parkland gardens around the main house, the steel's warm, deep sheen takes on the appearance of luxuriant dark chocolate. Each of the 12 pieces appears casually composed, much like chocolate decorations on a gourmet dessert, their shavings and slithers, curling and fractured, in precarious piles. With the rain still glistening on them as they were at the opening, the sculptures looked straight from the fridge: an extraordinary garnish on a quintessentially English bucolic landscape idyll.

If such an unlikely confectionery analogy leaves you either sceptical or salivating, a trip to Roche Court is highly recommended.

*Alex Wright is an architect in Bath and a teaching fellow in architecture at Bath University*



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web: <http://www.bangor.ac.uk>

Please quote reference number 07-6/235 when applying.

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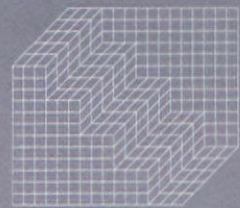
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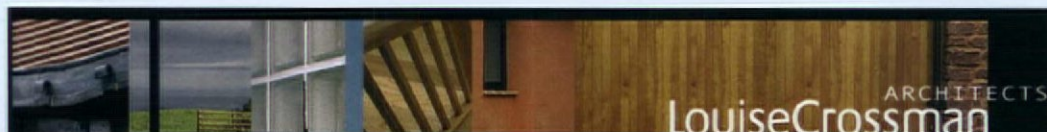
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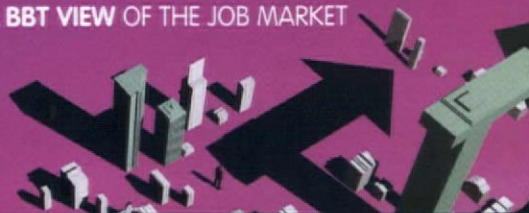


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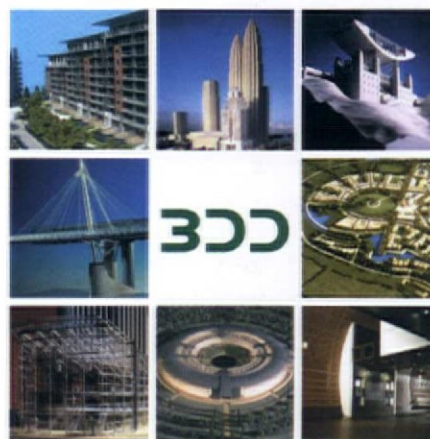


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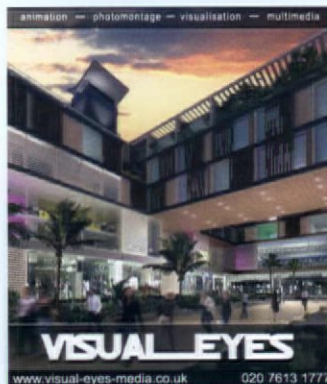
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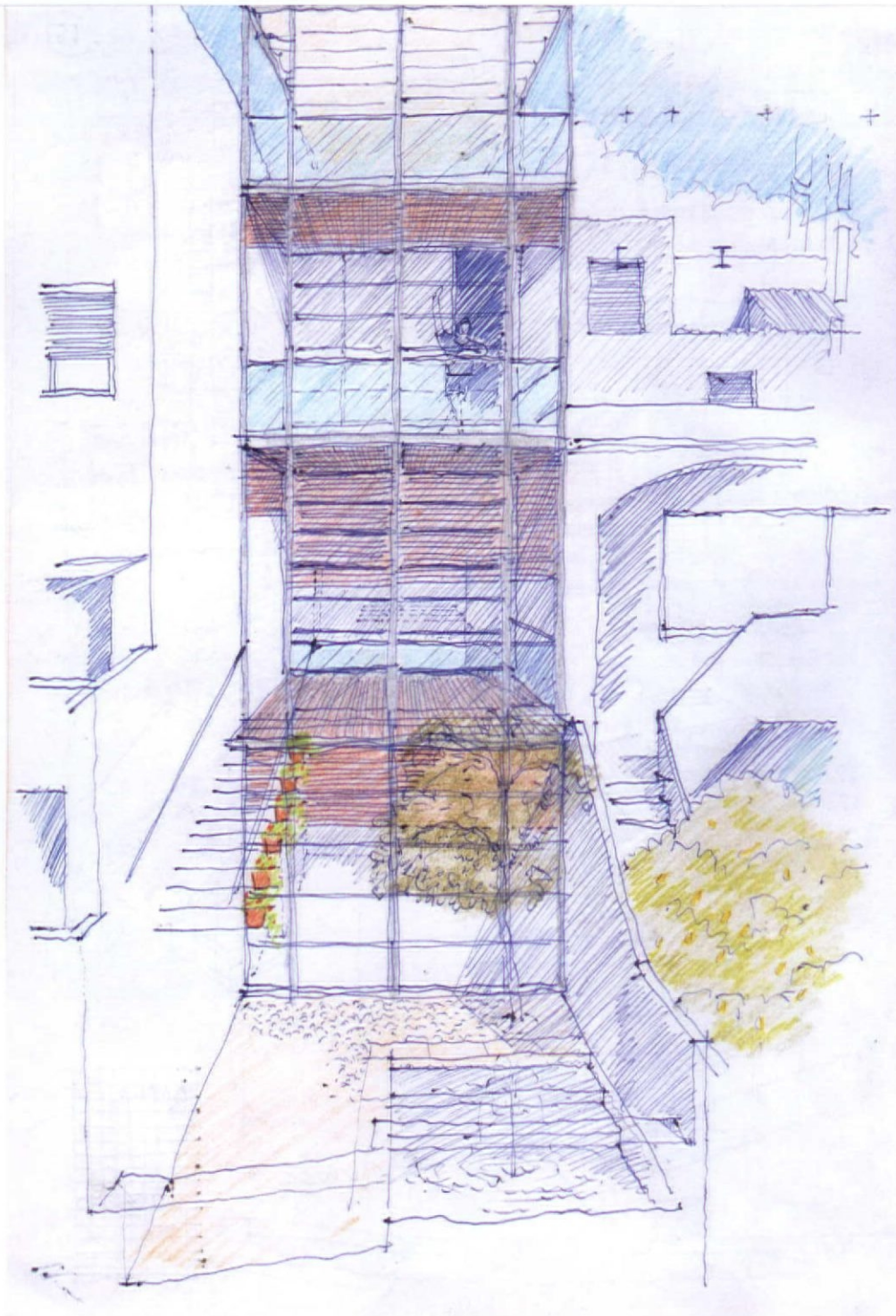
Lucy Herdsman on:

020 7505 6873

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Sketch for the architect's own home in Ayamonte, Andalucia, Spain. By Piers Ford



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## HÄFELE



### AJ ENQUIRY 201

The new E3 folding-door system from Häfele can be used in walls of up to 16m in width for a seamless interface between houses and gardens, patios and terraces. The stainless steel and non-ferrous materials used in the hardware construction result in outstanding corrosion resistance.

## GOODING ALUMINIUM



### AJ ENQUIRY 202

Gooding Aluminium's new 172-page 'Let There be Aluminium' handbook is packed with new-generation aluminium products, fixing solutions and materials, as well as photographic examples of real-life projects. Specifiers can apply now for their free copy at [www.goodingalum.com](http://www.goodingalum.com)

## VORTICE



### AJ ENQUIRY 203

Vortice is the only manufacturer of ventilation systems able to prove that its ranges of domestic and commercial fans comply with the requirements of the BS EN 13141 standards. The new regulations require an 'installed performance' and demand that the completed assembly follows CIBSE's good-practice guides.

## BRETT



### AJ ENQUIRY 204

Brett is to supply 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of T-Flow permeable paving, a sustainable drainage solution, for a £5 million golf course and leisure development at Shirleywood, Leeds. Brett will also supply natural stone for the complex and was chosen for its quality products and excellent customer service.

## ROCKWOOL



### AJ ENQUIRY 205

Rockwool Insulation, the leading manufacturer of stone-wool insulation for thermal, fire and acoustic insulation, has extended the scope of its FirePro TCB Cavity Barrier range, which is designed to reduce the risk of fire spread in timber-framed constructions. [www.rockwool.co.uk](http://www.rockwool.co.uk)

## WAVIN PLASTICS



### AJ ENQUIRY 206

OSMA SiTech is a new low-noise push-fit soil system available from Wavin Plastics, which provides a cost-effective and time-saving solution for plumbers. SiTech is made from a mineral-filled polypropylene, which increases pipe density so only needs to be encased in 25mm-thick mineral-wool wrap.

## ILEVEL TRUS JOIST



### AJ ENQUIRY 207

Spatial Roof from iLevel Trus Joist has been used on a housing development in Bradford, Yorkshire. The Spatial Roof system offers a simpler and quicker way to build attic roofs by creating an attic room as a separate floor and roof, rather than a combined unit, and creates extra useable space.

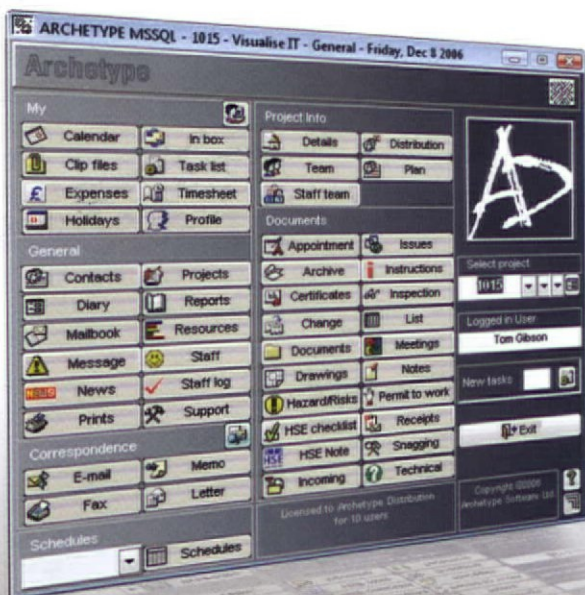
## VORTICE



### AJ ENQUIRY 208

The HRU ECO 3 RF Heat-Recovery System is a unique and innovative system that exceeds the Part L Building Regulations and is equipped with quiet, energy-saving DC motors. Married with a clever construction of heat exchanger, this results in an efficiency of 95 per cent.





## "Time is running out - 30th June is approaching"

Does your practice have a Quality Management System in place? if not Archetype helps achieve RIBA Chartered Practice Standards.

Following a recent directive that RIBA have issued to their members where they clearly state that in order to qualify as a "Chartered Practice" one of the criteria that must be met is "Quality Assurance".

"An Architectural Practice" must operate an appropriate "Quality Management System".

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# "ARCHETYPE HELPS ACHIEVE RIBA CHARTERED PRACTICE STANDARDS"

Many Architectural firms have trawled the Internet for an appropriate package that will address this issue and have stumbled across Archetype.

QA is only one of many features that Archetype software brings to a practice ie good practice management procedures, increased efficiency and production and above all whilst Archetype is producing documents and managing daily tasks it is also managing Quality Assurance.

The function of the software is to assist Design team members in the Construction Industry, to produce and manage Project correspondence, email etc. in a more efficient manner and be able to retrieve the files quickly.

Archetype provides all the facilities you need for managing drawings, drawing revisions and drawing issues, when was it last issued and to whom, what is the issue history of a drawing etc. Archetype has the ability to manage both incoming and outgoing emails on a project by project basis.

The software is also designed to improve productivity and manage quality assurance as the user creates information within the Project. Producing complicated schedules, managing snagging items are all made easy with Archetype. There is also a full time recording and Job Costing facility, which produces reports and manages fees for projects.

### Quality Assurance

Archetype integrates easily into Quality Control Systems and may allow your quality control procedures to be simplified.

### Testimonials

"...congratulations on a superb application. It has seriously improved our relevant procedures, has impressed BSI who provide our QA accreditation (our assessor had not seen such a system before and was over the moon with it) and everyone comments on how professional our documentation comes across."

**Ashley Wyatt**  
Building Design + Management

"Before Archetype, we had many different systems with different formats for all of our administrative tasks and had been trying to find one system that would do all of the tasks as one program. Archetype does just that. Our documents are now standardised allowing us to concentrate on the information in the document, not which font to use or which program to use to do it. We have been using Archetype now for a year and would recommend it to any practice looking for a comprehensive document management system."

**Keith Cameron**  
Patience & Highmore

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