

03.04.08

Working Detail
*The glazed screen at
Bijlmer Station – p38*

IT in Practice
*Digital city modelling;
assessing CAD skills; and
buyer's guides to laptops
and digital cameras – p41*

Jean Nouvel
*The AJ talks to
this year's Pritzker
Prize winner – p14*

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BIJLMER STATION

Grimshaw Architects in Amsterdam – page 26



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Contents

News

- 05 Construction costs sink Grimshaw's **New York transport hub**
14 Pritzker Prize winner **Jean Nouvel** talks to the AJ about
architectural 'clones' and famous dinner guests
16 Hazels Blears proposes **yet another planning shake-up**

Comment

- 20 **Leader** The government needs to know what design quality is
22 **Patrick Lynch** goes back to nature with Wright, Corb and Aalto
70 **Ian Martin** takes to the streets of Spitalfields

Features

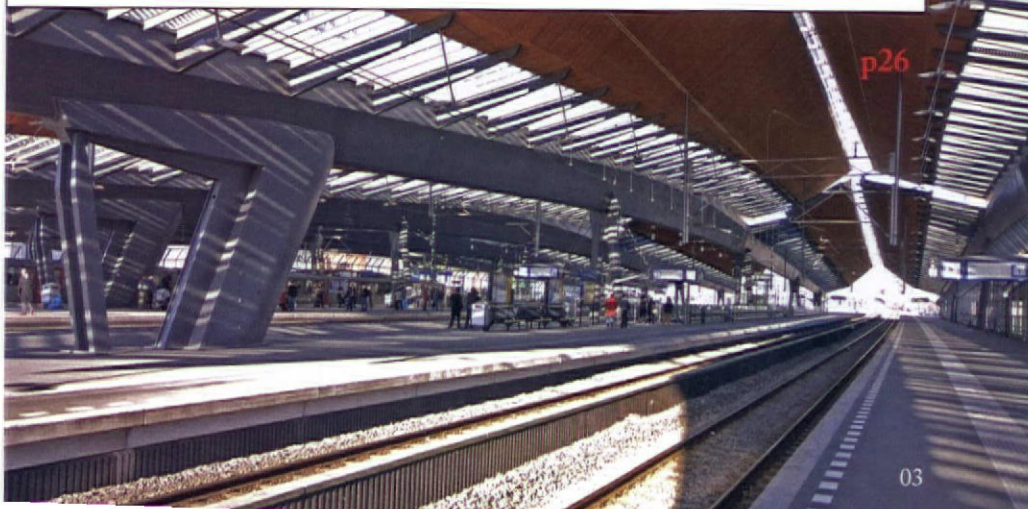
- 26 – 37 Grimshaw Architects' **Bijlmer Station in Amsterdam**
41 – 53 **IT in Practice** **Digital city modelling**; assessing CAD skills,
and buyer's guides to laptops and digital cameras
57 – 61 **The Critics** Jean Nouvel **gets cocky** with perfume bottle

Jobs & Classified

- 63 Classified advertising
66 Top five jobs: **Bespoke; Centurion; BBT; Hunter & Partners;**
Leicestershire County Council

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p26

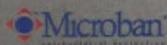
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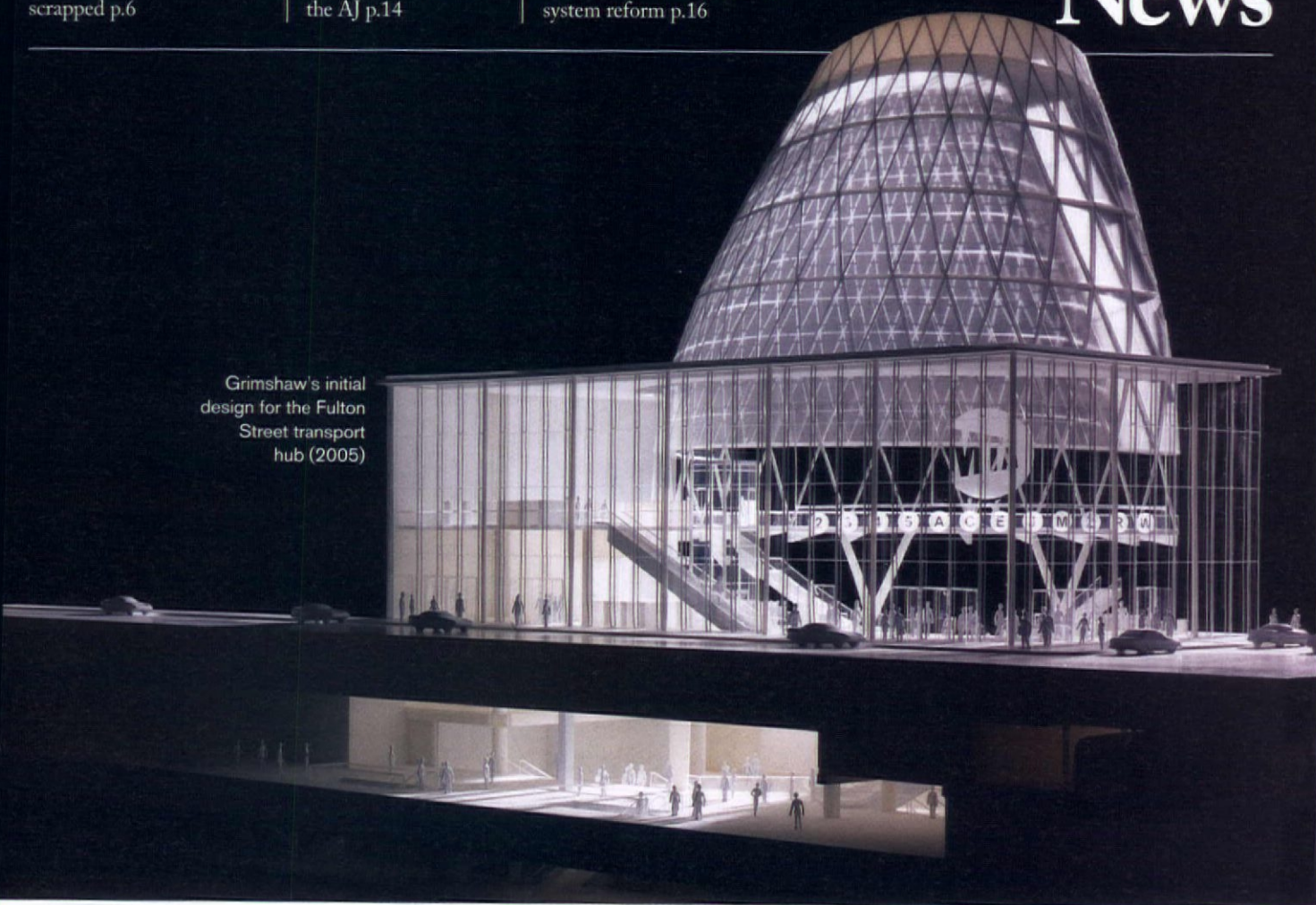
Benson + Forsyth's Beamish Visitor Centre scheme scrapped p.6

Pritzker Prize winner Jean Nouvel speaks to the AJ p.14

Hazel Blears prepares to unveil yet another planning-system reform p.16

News

Grimshaw's initial design for the Fulton Street transport hub (2005)



GRIMSHAW'S NEW YORK TRANSPORT HUB DITCHED

Fulton Street proposal is victim of rising construction costs

Grimshaw Architects' proposals for the vast Fulton Street transport hub project in Lower Manhattan, New York, have been scrapped due to soaring construction costs, the AJ can reveal.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which is funding the scheme, confirmed that the project will be dramatically pared back from Grimshaw's original design – for the second time in two years (see AJ 31.05.06). It was also unable

to confirm if Grimshaw would remain involved.

Local newspaper reports had claimed that costs for the scheme had ballooned to nearly \$1.2 billion (£600 million) from the original \$750 million (£380 million) budget and that any 'above-ground' element on the site could be scrapped altogether.

Speaking to the AJ, MTA spokesman Aaron Donovan said: 'Scrapped is an overstatement. We're in the middle of a 45-day review on what will be built there.

'It's not going to be nothing built above ground [sic], we will build something, but we can't say what yet.'

The 45-day review comes to an end later this month, and according to Donovan, follows the continuing rise of construction costs that is affecting 'not just us, but is hitting builders throughout the world'.

Grimshaw was appointed with Arup in 2004 to create a completely new transit hub, adjacent to Santiago Calatrava's

World Trade Center Interchange, as the original was creaking under the pressure of more than 270,000 passengers a day.

The focal point of the original design, revealed in 2005, was a 34m-high glass dome, designed in collaboration with artist/engineer James Carpenter. This was scrapped in May 2006 when construction costs on the overall scheme soared by \$50m (£25 million) forcing a redesign.

Grimshaw declined to comment. *Richard Vaughan*



TIM SOAR

CHANGING LANES This is HOK's transport interchange at Heathrow's Terminal 5. According to Richard Spencer, HOK head of airports, the 277m-long, four-track station is 'working like clockwork'.

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

STARS BATTLE IT OUT FOR BRUM LIBRARY

A stellar shortlist of seven firms has been announced in the contest to design the new Birmingham Library. Foreign Office Architects, Foster + Partners, Hopkins, Mecanoo, OMA, Schmidt Hammer Lassen and Wilkinson Eyre will compete to bag the £193 million project, which spells the end for John Madin's 1974 Brutalist Central Library.

CABE GIVES VERDICT ON OLYMPIC DESIGNS

CABE has released its design-review comments on five of the most important projects for London's 2012 Olympic Games. Although 'broadly encouraged' by the progress on the stadium and Aquatic Centre, the commission's panel has grave concerns about the procurement of the stadium bridges and Aquatic Centre bridges and how the projects 'are being split up'.

HADID VIES FOR VILNIUS

Zaha Hadid has been pitched into battle against Daniel Libeskind and Massimiliano Fuksas to design the new Solomon R Guggenheim museum in Vilnius, Lithuania. The three starchitects will show off their designs next Tuesday (8 April) at a special exhibition in the Baltic city.

ROGERS CALLS FOR GREATER 'CLOUT'

Architects should be placed at the heart of all government decision-making when it comes to the built environment – that was the message from Richard Rogers last week (27 March) in the first architecture debate to be held at the House of Lords for four years. 'Design champions should have the clout to influence design quality on government objectives about the built environment,' said Rogers.

Read all these stories and more at WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK

LACK OF FUNDS SINKS BEAMISH PROJECT

Benson + Forsyth's competition-winning Beamish Museum Visitor Centre scheme in County Durham has been shelved.

Project backer Beamish Joint Committee has ditched the high-profile 'gateway building' at the open-air museum following the collapse of the funding package.

The contest was thrust into the limelight two years ago when the committee – made up of council and museum representatives – controversially decided to vote on Benson + Forsyth's appointment, despite the firm being named as victor by the RIBA jury (AJ 28.09.06).

Now it has emerged that the committee has failed to secure enough cash for the £12 million scheme after unsuccessfully bidding for money from both the Heritage Lottery Fund and the North East Regional Development Agency.

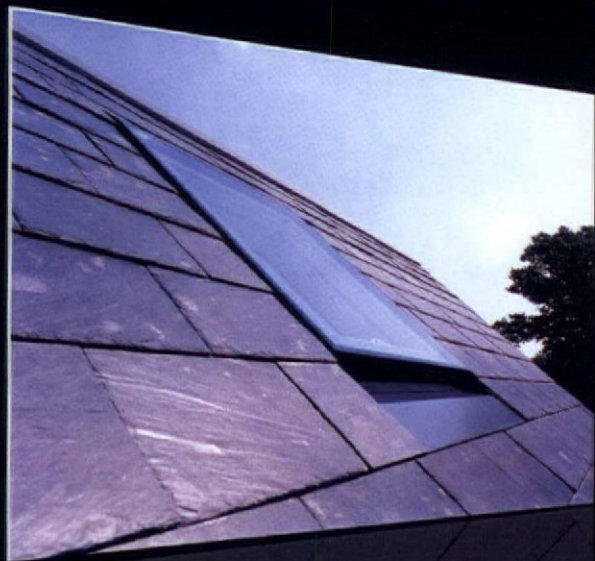
A spokesman said: 'It has become apparent that the project would not gain funding as it could not justify its cost on the basis of the benefits to be provided. The Joint Committee has come to the conclusion that it would not be prudent to continue and has decided not to proceed with the visitor centre project.'

Meanwhile, the AJ has uncovered that the Northern Rock Foundation also snubbed the museum's application for a much-needed £500,000 donation – despite having the funds available.

Rob Williamson, policy director at the foundation, the troubled bank's charitable arm, said: 'There was simply no point in them having our money when they didn't have the big bucks in place.'

It is understood the practice had prepared all the planning drawings before being told to stop work. A source at the firm said it was 'dismayed' and blamed a 'lack of leadership'. *Richard Waite*

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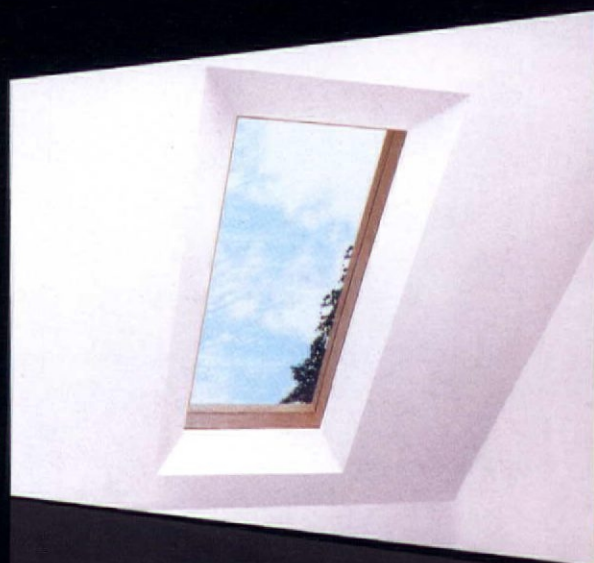


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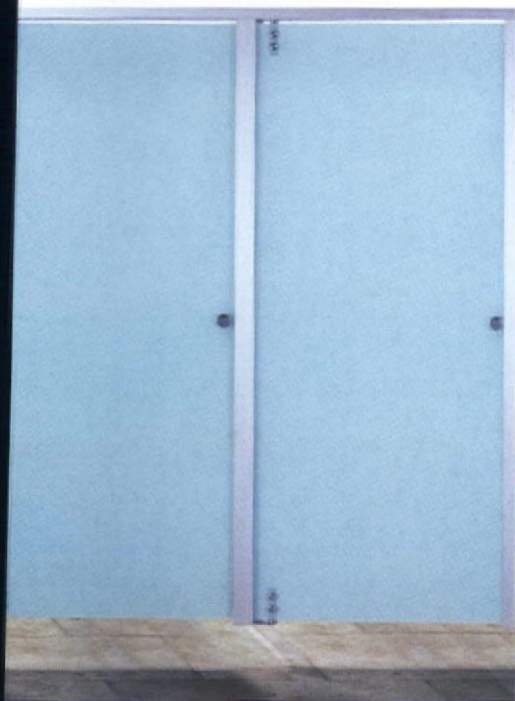
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LONDON GETS MAGGIE'S CENTRE This is London's first Maggie's Centre. Designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (RSHP), the day-care facility for cancer patients and their families – named after the late wife of critic Charles Jencks – is on Fulham Palace Road in west London, near RSHP's office. Red walls wrap the entire building, with light entering via the raised roof. Previous Maggie's Centres have been completed by Frank Gehry, Page\Park and Zaha Hadid. RSHP's centre will open later this month. *James Pallister*

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GOVERNMENT'S HERITAGE BILL 'NEEDS INVESTMENT TO SUCCEED'

The Draft Heritage Bill, published by the government yesterday (2 April), cannot achieve its aim without huge investment, a heritage group has warned.

The bill – which has been welcomed by Heritage Link, an umbrella group for 86 heritage organisations – aims to create a single, open and accountable regime of heritage protection, removing 'unhelpful distinctions between listing, scheduling and registering buildings.'

But Heritage Link chairman Anthea Case warned: '[The bill] cannot achieve its purpose without sufficient resources to implement

it and skilled practitioners on the ground to support it.

'Local authorities are already overstretched and will have an even greater role in delivering historic environment services,' added Case.

Meanwhile, RIBA president Sunand Prasad said he was 'disappointed' with Culture Minister Margaret Hodge's 'resistance to listing buildings less than around 75 years old'.

Prasad said: 'There is a severe danger that irreplaceable and precious heritage will be lost because of... short-term commercial considerations.' *Max Thompson*

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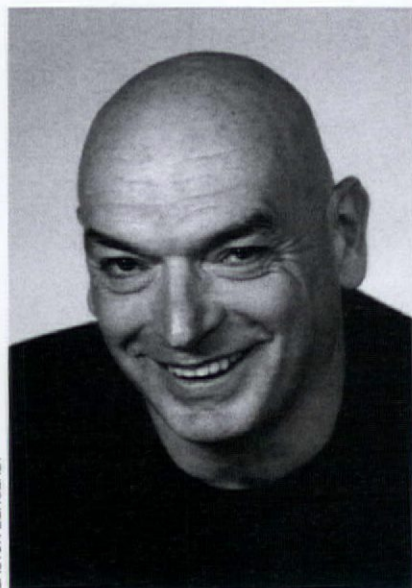


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To find out more about the material of the future contact www.sustainablesteel.co.uk

Below Jean
Nouvel
Right The
extension to the
Reina Sofia
Museum,
Madrid

Below right
The proposed
Abu Dhabi
Louvre



'I FIGHT AGAINST GENERIC DESIGNS'

Pritzker Prize winner Jean Nouvel talks to *Max Thompson*
about 'clone' architecture and dining with Frank Gehry

Why did the Pritzker jury pick you?

I won because I have a special profile, I hope. And because, in this world where generic buildings are the obsession, my attitude is to always research 'specificity'. I create different buildings with different feelings of colour and techniques.

And I always have the same attitude – to research the best

building in the right place at this moment. For me, I have no preferable idea of what I will build – I work with the analysis of a lot of parameters – words, ideas and concept. Not the automatic repetition of habits.

Do you have a favourite building of your own?

No. I have no favourite. For me architects and cities are like



JEAN NOUVEL'S CAREER SO FAR

- 1945 Born August 12, Fumel, France
- 1970 Forms first practice with François Seigneur
- 1971 Completes first project – Plateau Beaubourg, Paris
- 1972 Graduates from École des Beaux-Arts, Paris
- 1976 Co-founds Mars 1976 movement
- 1978 Co-founds Architecture Biennale de Paris
- 1987 Completes Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris
- 1989 Wins Aga Khan Prize
- 1993 Made an honorary fellow of the AIA
- 1994 Founds Ateliers Jean Nouvel; completes Fondation Cartier, Paris
- 1995 Made an honorary fellow of the RIBA
- 1998 Wins Gold Medal from French Académie d'Architecture; completes Dentsu Tower, Tokyo
- 2001 Wins RIBA Gold Medal
- 2003 Completes Torre Agbar, Barcelona
- 2005 Wins Wolf Prize
- 2006 Completes Musée du Quai Branly, Paris
- 2007 Teams up with Foster + Partners to design Walbrook Square, London; appointed to design One New Change, London
- 2008 Wins Pritzker Prize

people; they have different characters, some are fat, some are thin, some are gentle and some are very angry a lot of time. For me, all buildings are alive.

I like the differences; how do you prefer a social-housing building to a museum or a theatre?

What do you think your legacy will be?

A testimonial of an attitude – an epoch. I am very different from a lot of architects who use always the same typologies, the same materials and techniques. This is not a criticism, but I am the opposite.

When you travel round the world you meet all the clones. All these buildings always the same,

'Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, Toyo Ito – I have a lot of friends!'

they have no roots. I fight against generic designs for specific architecture – that will be my legacy.

How are your two London schemes [Walbrook Square, in partnership with Foster + Partners; and Land Securities' One New Change] proceeding?

One New Change is under construction and we are doing the foundations. At Walbrook Square we are completing the final details.

When you visit the UK what is your overriding impression of its architecture?

I knew London before, but I was really surprised in comparison with France at the energy of the city now. In Paris it is difficult to build, but here in London you

have a confidence in the modernity and the evolution of the city. It is important if the city wants to stay alive to be in a perpetual evolution.

I hope it will change in Paris, but since a long time now it is not a lot of energy. The energy in London is strong.

If you could invite any architects, past or present, for dinner, who would you invite?

(Laughs) I have no problem with that! I will have dinner in the next few days with Frank Gehry and I also have dinner with Norman Foster sometimes. Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, Toyo Ito too. I have a lot of friends! You know the architects who are players are a little bit like tennis players – they are very often in the same competitions.

With your work with Norman Foster on Walbrook Square, who is the driving force?

It was a very interesting experience. I worked with both Norman and Spencer de Grey. At the beginning it was more difficult, because the teams were a little bit threatened by the other one. After a few months it was really perfect and just a great adventure.

Would you work with them again?

Yes, we go on to work on common situations like in Sydney [an office scheme for developer Frasers – see AJ online]. We aren't doing the same buildings but we are on the same site, we make a decision together – we are always working together!

Read Deyan Sudjic's comment piece on Jean Nouvel on page 21

BLEARS SET ON 21ST REFORM OF PLANNING ACT SINCE 1947

'The planning system is bust,' says RIBA president Sunand Prasad. 'But not in theory, only in practice.'

However while Prasad believes the regime is theoretically solid – though heavily under-resourced – Hazel Blears, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, disagrees. Last week she told CABE that without substantial change the system would simply be 'unable to do the job it was designed for.'

She followed this by announcing a start-to-finish 'red tape

'The planning system is not equipped to do its job'

busting' review (AJ online 26.03.08) to be headed up by Joanna Killian of Essex County Council and David Pretty, the former chief executive of Barratt Developments to 'weed out the bureaucratic hurdles' and create a leaner, more efficient system.

In doing so, Blears has heralded yet another reform of the process and launched the 21st major restructuring of the Planning Act since 1947.

At least Blears recognises there is a major problem, says Prasad. However the RIBA president believes that yet more 'tinkering' is not the answer. He says: 'The reforms enshrined in the 2004 Planning Act in theory required

a more proactive approach from authorities, calling for real planning rather than simply development control.

'Unfortunately on an operational level the system is not equipped or resourced to do the job it has been set.'

So what exactly does Blears want? Speaking at CABE's central London headquarters last week, Blears outlined all sorts of changes, including making planning 'more democratic, greener and more supportive of high-quality design.'

She added, though, that embedding design quality through legislation was not the answer – she said instead that good design quality would result from changing minds within planning authorities. One for CABE perhaps...

However, Blears did promise to blitz the amount of paperwork needed at application stage. Presumably this will mean that the supposedly simpler 1App 'standard' form, which comes into force on next week (6 April), might also come under scrutiny. Association of Chartered Architects (ACA) planning advisory group chair Andrew Rogers says the latest form – available in 26 varieties – along with revised validation procedures, could signal a 'leap deeper into the bureaucratic mire'.



Blears' review team is also considering a new 'proportionate system' dependent on the size of the scheme, which would create yet more procedural variants.

Blears wants authorities to use more technology 'such as e-planning' – a system which has met with varying success across the country to date. Haringey Borough Council, for example, only accepts drawings under 5MB, no larger than A3 and only in black ink.

Overhauling the post-approval pre-build stage, with Blears citing an unknown case in London where it took 15 months after the committee go-ahead to agree conditions, is another goal.

But Matt Bell, director of campaigns and education at CABE, thinks many of the pre-application 'bottlenecks' identified by Blears could be addressed by the government. He says: 'We need to resource planning teams sufficiently and reward them for building better as well as building

more. Incentives matter.'

The managing director of Rolfe Judd Planning, Keith Hill, warns that the new initiatives will only succeed if 'those responsible for producing proposals consult those in the industry as much as those involved in local government'.

He added: 'They also need to look at limiting the degree of influence third parties have in the process – this country's ever-increasing nimbyism.'

'We need to reward planners for building better – incentives matter'

However as Michael Heseltine, himself a former Environment Secretary, once said: 'There are no votes in planning reform.' Does Blears know this? She could end up following the well-worn path, stumbled down by most of her fellow planning reformers, and accidentally make an unwieldy bureaucratic machine even worse. *Richard Waite*

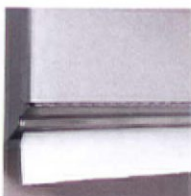
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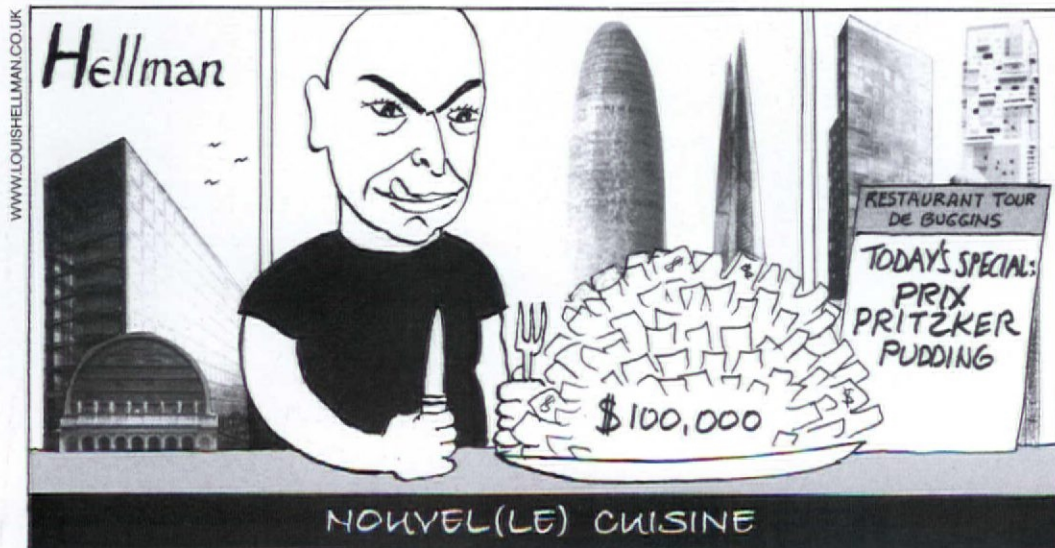
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BANGED UP

Poor old **Thomas Heatherwick**. Astragal understands that the situation surrounding his B of the Bang sculpture in Manchester has just become a little more (or perhaps a little less) prickly. Nearly a dozen spikes of up to 10m in length had to be removed this week to make the piece of art safe. Engineers even had to close off one lane of the road to carry out the work. Heatherwick and three subcontractors involved with the sculpture – Packman Lucas, Flint & Neill Partnership and Westbury Structures – are about to be hit with a £2 million High Court writ from Manchester City Council following a number of problems.

BEAUTIFUL MIND

Jonathan Glancey's paean to this year's Pritzker Prize-winner **Jean Nouvel** was introduced in the *Guardian* this week with the line: 'Jean Nouvel has won the Pritzker prize. It's about time his delicate

genius got its due'. Let's just take a look at this poor, overlooked genius' career so far, shall we? For his work Nouvel has won, among others: the Gold Medal of the French Academy of Architecture; the RIBA Royal Gold Medal; the Aga Khan Award for the Arab World Institute; honorary fellowship of the American Institute of Architects; France's National Grand Prize for Architecture; Italy's Borromini Prize for the Lucerne Culture and Congress Centre; Japan's Praemium Imperiale; the Wolf Prize; the Arnold W Brunner Memorial Prize in architecture; and the International Highrise Award for the Agbar Tower. Definitely underappreciated (read an interview with Nouvel on pages 14-15, and a review of his perfume-bottle design for Yves Saint Laurent on page 57).

POWER HOUSE

What with the impasse between **Ken Livingstone** and **Boris Johnson**, Astragal wonders if Labour should look for another

London mayoral candidate. The city would do well to have an architect as mayor, suggested **Jaime Lerner**, architect/urban designer and former mayor of Curitiba in Brazil, to a rapt audience at Somerset House this week. Lerner accompanied this comment, in his talk accompanying the current London Open City exhibition, with a clear nod to **Richard Rogers**, who was discreetly installed in the front row in his lime-green jumper.

GEHRY BAD

An architect emailed Astragal this week with some reaction to the AJ's coverage of **Frank**

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Gehry's proposed pavilion for the Serpentine Gallery (pictured below), to be erected this summer. 'Guardian readers hate Gehry too,' read the email. 'Here's what one bloke said in a comment on the paper's website this week: "I'm having some building work done, and this looks just like the inside of the skip that's on my drive." Hahaha.'



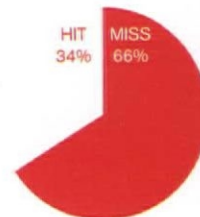
THIS WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Gehry's Serpentine Pavilion: hit or miss? (see right for result)

Next week's question: Which architect who has not yet won the Pritzker Prize deserves to do so: Peter Zumthor, Charles Correa, Kengo Kuma or Carme Pinós?

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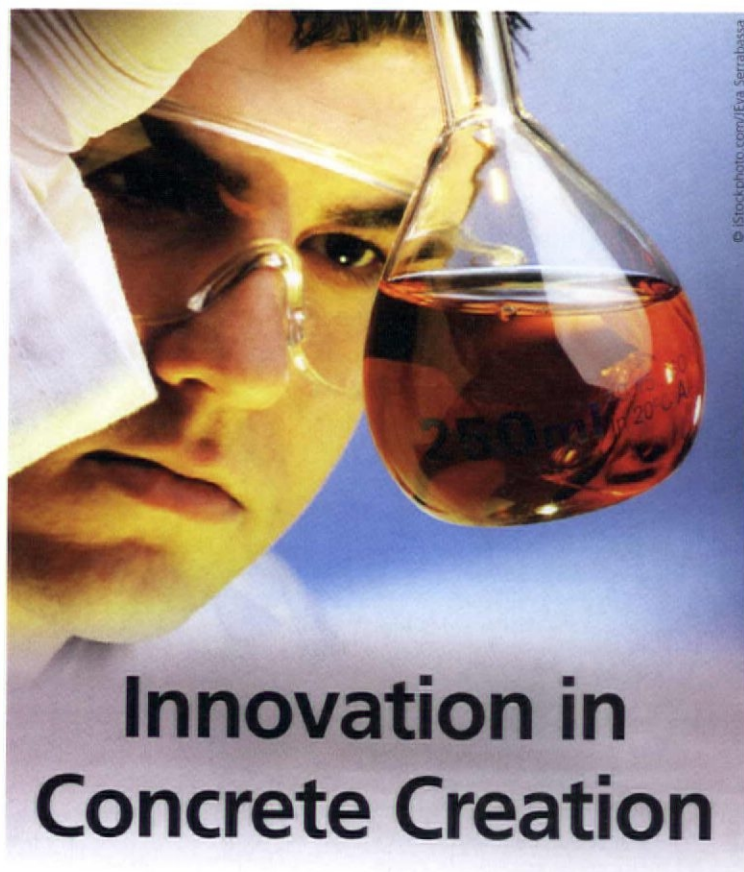
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Leader & Comment



Leader Hazel Blears needs to recognise architectural quality before she can endorse it, writes *Kieran Long*

I want a moratorium on government ministers, civil servants and architects using the phrase 'high-quality design'. It has become a catch-all term that rolls off the tongue in meetings I attend with government and local authorities, but people seem to have forgotten that it describes no more than an aspiration.

If you read Communities Secretary Hazel Blears' speech about planning reform (www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/beautyvsbrutality), you'll see a government minister searching for a more detailed way of talking about architecture. The speech is called 'Beauty vs. Brutality', and is the most significant speech from a senior minister about the character of our towns and cities for years. I'm really glad she's trying to have the

conversation, and CABE (which hosted the speech) and the profession need to help her.

What would you say to someone who cited, as Blears does in her speech, the following three buildings as examples of 'good design': Ironmonger Row baths in East London, Imperial War Museum North in Salford and Peckham Library?

You would probably begin by praising the taste of someone who recognises the value of a modest inter-war public building, even if the aesthetic (brick with stone dressing) was hardly cutting edge for 1931. You would add that the icon-making indulged in by Daniel Libeskind in Salford and Will Alsop in Peckham is all very well but is mainly about PR value.

You would almost certainly say that Libeskind's work always disregards the context in which he works, despite his claims otherwise. You might suggest that the civic and social aspiration of the baths is what its architecture expresses (through references to the past) and holds frozen in those dun bricks, and that a one-size-fits-all aesthetic like Libeskind's can never hope to match that.

Does Blears, or her speechwriter, know what they are saying when they praise an architect like Libeskind? We need to help give government the language it lacks, so it can really interrogate what lies behind demands for 'high quality'. To do so, we need to take them at their word.

kieran.long@emap.com



Opinion Northern Irish architects face the same questions of identity we Scots did 10 years ago, says *Gordon Murray*

In 2003 I was asked to participate as external examiner at an architecture course run by the University of Ulster at the highly regarded and radical Belfast College of Art. The course set out to reflect that radicalism in a wider exploration of the identity of Northern Irish architecture. As a Scottish architect, this resonated with me, as a decade ago architects in a newly devolved Scotland were questioning similar themes of identity.

For us Scots in 1997, Annette Becker, John Olley and Wilfred Wang's *20th-Century Architecture in Ireland* arrived as a ready-made manifesto. The final paragraph of Sarah Cassidy's essay 'The Cultural Identity of Ireland in Literature and the Built Environment' stood out. 'City and architec-

ture are no longer the forgotten, the unmentionable, but become an integral part of identity. Robin Walker, Cathal O'Neil and Peter Doyle all either studied or worked under Mies in Chicago. They returned to Ireland with their interpretation of his work and translated it. With others these architects played a role in enhancing and broadening Irish cultural identity. For as Oscar Wilde declared: "It is only by contact with the art of foreign nations that the art of a country gains that individual and life we call nationality."

Competitions and awards are central to raising design quality

This is also true for Ulster. The European Modernist tradition can clearly be seen in Frances Pym's Breuer-like extension to the Ulster Museum (1964), and in Laurence McConville's Convent Chapel in Cookstown (1963). Nor can anyone doubt the brilliance of the churches of Liam McCormick, after whom the top prize of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) Awards is named.

Now, with the expansion in the Northern Irish economy following the social and political stability of recent years, many smaller

practices are finding opportunity in the vibrant competition system run by the RIBA and the RSUA, which actively encourages public bodies to participate. John Cole, chief executive of the Health Estates Agency, has implemented an innovative public procurement process, which has led to Belfast- and Dublin-based practice Todd Architects' joint venture with London firm Penoyre & Prasad to deliver a series of medical centres.

Scotland has had almost 10 years of an architecture policy, launched by the Scottish Executive. At the heart of this is an awareness that design competitions and awards are central to raising quality. Architecture requires a series of engagements to make it happen, and thus awards are also a commentary on the commissioning process, the planning process, and the procurement process.

But policies, awards, competitions and design reviews can only go so far. Raising quality in the built environment requires simply that the citizen demand more of their built environment and of those who create it. *Gordon Murray is a partner in Gordon Murray + Alan Dunlop Architects*

Email comment@architectsjournal.co.uk



Opinion The Pritzker jury has finally recognised Jean Nouvel's imagination, skill and showmanship, writes *Deyan Sudjic*

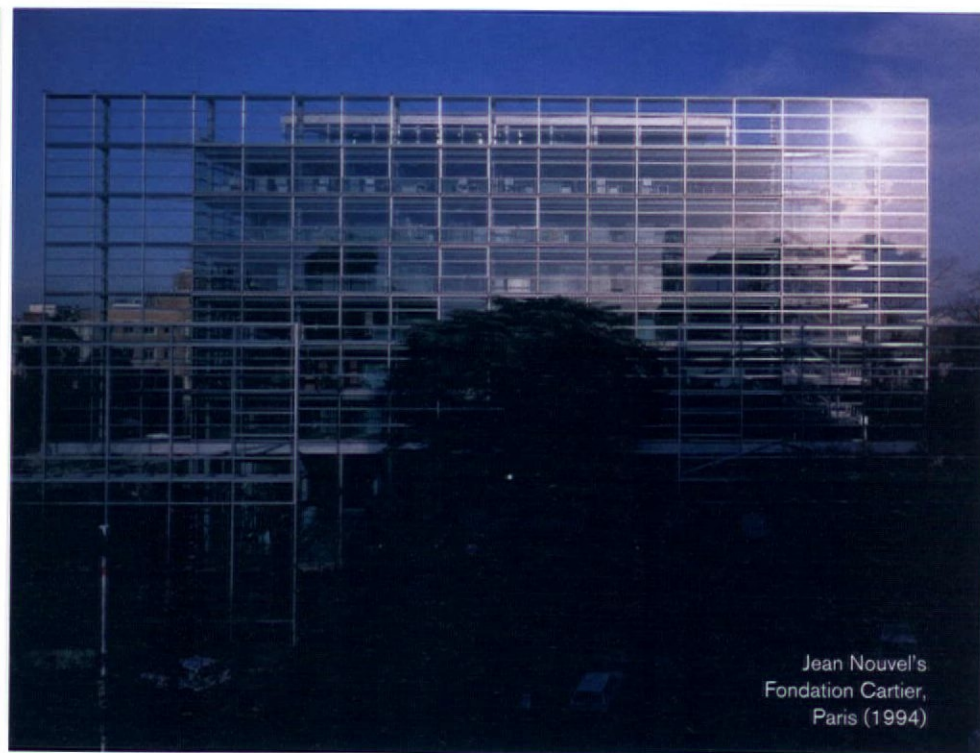
The Pritzker jury has already given one French architect the prize: Christian de Portzamparc in 1994. This decision looked a little odd at the time and looks even odder now that the jury has finally got around to giving it to Jean Nouvel, who could have won it then, and has subsequently proved himself a more and more impressive figure; one who has come to dominate French architecture and to have built a world-wide practice.

Portzamparc won pretty much on the basis of one project; the Cité de La Musique complex in Paris. It was the apotheosis of a certain kind of chic French shape-making, which petered out not long afterwards. Nouvel is made of tougher stuff. He delights in celebrating immateriality. He tries to design buildings whose impact is virtually

He disappeared from the black-clad crowd and returned dressed from head to toe in white

impossible to convey in drawings, like the Fondation Cartier, with its multiple overlappings of frameless glass. There are hardly ever any models: when he exhibited his work at the ICA in 1993 it was in the form of an extended slide-show. And his Dentsu Tower in Tokyo is a beautifully ethereal attempt to dissolve a glass skyscraper into the sky.

But at the same time, Nouvel is ready to try many different approaches, sometimes with mixed results. The Musée du Quai Branly in Paris piles idea on idea to discomfiting effect, and his addition to the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid fails to gel. His Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis on the other hand, is a handsome tribute to the mid-Western tradition of grain elevators, a celebration of the history of drama, and a bold attempt to make a building into public space.



Jean Nouvel's
Fondation Cartier,
Paris (1994)

Rather than big gestures, Nouvel prefers the big idea: the mechanised facade of the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, the paint on the raw walls of his Nemausus low-cost housing project in Nîmes. He is after all a product of the country that gave us literary deconstruction, and it is possible to interpret some of his work in that sense.

You might be tempted to call it cerebral, if it wasn't for the obvious relish that Nouvel takes in showmanship. When he was awarded the Golden Lion in Venice a few years ago, he disappeared from a crowd full of black-clad architects to shed his own black Yamamoto suit, to return to collect the trophy dressed from head to foot in white.

And while his fondness for dissolving materials might sound like a form of minimalism, Nouvel, with his fondness for the good things of life, produces architecture that relishes the sensuous qualities of materiality.

I remember having lunch with him at the Pompidou Centre. When the second bottle of Lynch-Bages arrived he happily started signing napkins for the autograph hunters who had gathered. Not entirely surprising,

since the Pompidou's facade was draped in his portrait on a banner three storeys high.

Nouvel is building a lot now. He is doing what will be the most striking new residential tower in Manhattan, 75 floors next to the Museum of Modern Art. There is work in the Gulf for a branch of the Louvre. There is even a project in London – One New Change. He has also been able to pursue a parallel career in furniture and product design, translating his approach into tables, chairs, and even into chocolate. The latter was a transparent box for Cailler, with a chocolate assortment laid out inside according to the percentage of cocoa that they contained, like a periodic table. (See page 57 for a review of his design for Yves Saint Laurent's perfume.)

In a year when the Pritzker jury could have chosen from a range of gifted architects, from Kazuyo Sejima to Peter Zumthor, Nouvel is a deserving winner.

Deyan Sudjic is director of the Design Museum

Read an interview with Jean Nouvel on pages 14-15



Corb and Wright struggled with the tension between architecture and nature, says Patrick Lynch

Architecture is an activity that involves mixing things that don't naturally mix together. This does not suggest that there is anything unnatural about our species' desire and need for architecture, nor that it is not natural for opposites to attract each other. But architects are contrarians constantly attempting to yoke together parts of the brain that want to deny each other sovereignty.

Similarly, our desire for views and light usually confront the need for protection and for preservation of energy, and architecture is the quest to resolve and reconcile these antinomies, to place these antagonistic aspects into balanced disequilibrium. Too much defence and our work is leaden, unleavened and dumb; too much earth makes a house a tomb. Too much lightness and openness denies us any access to imagining how we might actually dwell somewhere.

These opposites are succinctly analysed by Luis Fernández-Galiano in *Fire and Memory* (MIT 2005) as the chief characteristics that differentiate Frank Lloyd Wright's and Le Corbusier's architecture. The former always situated family life around a fireplace, thus invoking a cosmic symbol as the centre of dwelling; a mythical setting, centred and

grounded in a cave-like atmosphere. Wright invokes rhythmic daily life and timeless archetypes and you can sense that he is straining to place ordinary domestic life into wild settings, or to recover some of the power of the wilderness in suburban settings.

Fernández-Galiano suggests that Jung might be the unconscious inspiration for Wright's pyrophilia. Certainly, the psychologist Carl Jung sought to describe dwelling in symbolic terms, evoking poetic myths that challenged

the central aspect of dwelling from stasis to movement, from fire dance to cloud walk, from kitchen-sink drama to cinematic flight; as if Daedalus' labyrinth had mutated into his son's aeronautics. Such levitation had an Icarus-like fate, and the centrally heated flat-roofed, partly steel framed, rendered, block work house was beset with leaks, and at one point was a neglected ruin and used as a barn. Corb used to pretend that it had been demolished, and only the Second World War

Both Fallingwater and Villa Savoye throw you out into the world

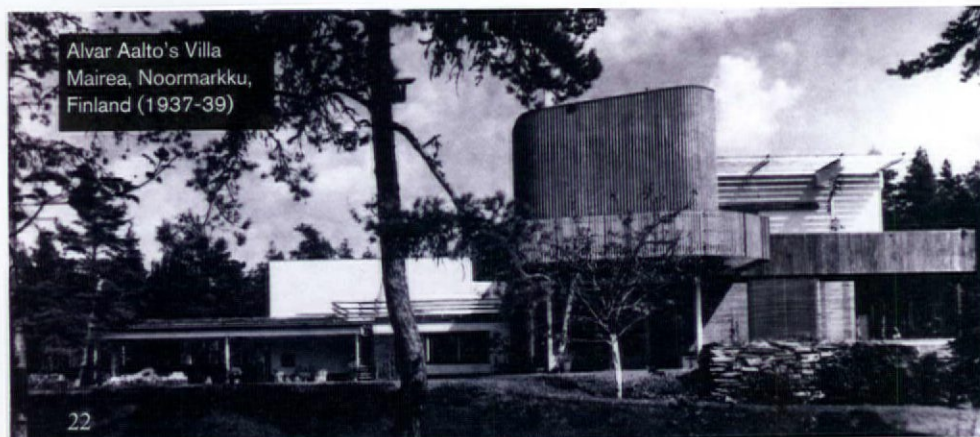
the hegemony of a historical modernity and the future-cult of technology.

Le Corbusier, like Wright, was also a curious admixture of shaman and seer, poetic philosopher, persuasive polemicist and professional self-mythologiser. At various times Corb tried to apply lessons from Bugatti or the Wright brothers or Cunard liners to the design of buildings, with suitably various results. His Villa Savoye reoriented

saved him from a costly claim for damages and accusations of professional negligence.

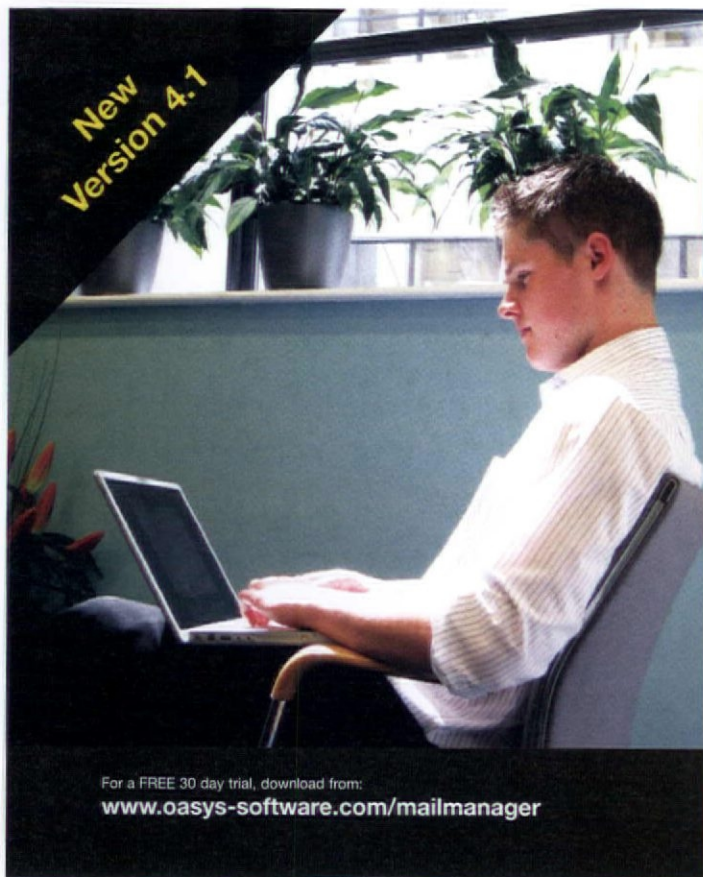
Similarly, Wright's response to Corb's fame and his own fading reputation, Fallingwater, has also been beset by the sort of structural problems that one might expect from building a cantilevered cave over a waterfall. Both it and Villa Savoye throw you out into the world and celebrate the delicious perversity of our desire to dwell in a state of tension within nature, a poise that appears effortless but is in fact strenuously unnatural and contrived.

Both architects offer vital examples of the contrary nature of architecture. I have burned into my architectural memory another image of modern dwelling. A photograph of the Gullischen sisters lounging beside Aalto's corner fireplace at the Villa Mairea shows the glass wall of the living room slid fully open, with the 'background' forest forming a 'fourth wall'. The swimming pool and clouds complete this elemental mixture, held together and apart by architecture.



Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea, Noormarkku, Finland (1937-39)

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Letters

FRESH PREJUDICE

The heavyweight Northern Irish practices who are challenging the Royal Society of Ulster Architects' (RSUA) policy on competitions have a good point ('Ulster firms cry foul at contest clique', AJ 20.03.08). Awards and publications are nice to have as a way of assessing design quality, but I expect most savvy clients will demand something more analytical from those advising on competitions.

Awards rarely cover operational success and most assessors fail even to ask the client if their users are satisfied with the building. There is almost no reporting of post-occupancy reviews, and if these are published they are

largely ignored by the design community as a learning experience. And it's a well-worn joke that building users are rarely seen in-situ when the architectural press is invited to review a new building – because they haven't actually moved in!

Design quality is a consequence of creativity, economics and function, not something that is applied at the outset of a project. The way to nurture good design is to match a resourceful architect with a committed client. Defining design quality is elusive but it needs to be more than column inches and prize certificates. Advisers – especially those who promote professional knowledge like the RSUA – need to help clients develop a broader critical base to assess quality.

When we run competitions we make a great deal of effort to understand what the client is seeking in an architect, and we use the competition to stimulate a dialogue between all parties, including users and those who have a stake in the success of the building or project. To do what the RSUA seems to advise, and artificially exclude those who offer a fresh approach but lack awards, is wrong.

Malcolm Reading, Malcolm Reading Consultants, London W1

SMALL IS EDGY

While I am always pleased to see small practices given opportunities in big designs, I was surprised and disappointed to see no

mention of the leading-edge computing that small firms can deliver in the AJ's interview with Tom Russell of the London Development Agency ('Smaller firms are at the leading edge', AJ 20.03.08). I'm not talking about the ubiquitous parametric study project that awaits an as yet undeveloped material or process, and thumbs its nose at topical problems such as sustainability, the shortage of affordable housing, or building better schools and hospitals. After all, we have the starchitects for that.

Small practices are the pathfinders in the field of architectural computing. We can turn a few boardroom-isms on their head. It's not 'too risky', won't 'have prohibitive training costs' and doesn't 'have a problem



integrating with our existing system'. It isn't hard to see why small practices and new technology go together so well – we are fresh out of the box, we don't have legacy systems or legacy staff (that can never be upgraded!), and technology choices are made and understood by the founders of the practices themselves. If a system I have implemented doesn't do the job, I have to stay up all night, figure out where I went wrong and have it fixed by the morning, instead of issuing a directorial grunt, flaying a few underlings and heading for the safety of my pencil case.

Computer-enhanced workflows focus on spending as much time designing as possible – not radical at all, but very good for getting lots of eyes on solving

hard problems. For this reason, I believe small practices have a higher density of design minds.

The truth is, most work in medium and large practices is done in 2D and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. This is because the people with the power to make choices do not understand and are not willing to engage with modern computing and its benefits.

I accept that there is no question that involving a small practice, perhaps without direct previous experience in a field, holds some risk. In the future though, I hope that when individuals like Tom Russell are seeking something unique from smaller practices, it will not only be leading-edge design, but the way it is delivered. There is risk in

adopting innovative workflows, but there is just as great a risk in the failure to invest in small practices that understand the next generation of architectural computing.

Robert Klaschka, Markland Klaschka, London SE1

TALL GIMMICKS

Scanning a recent edition of the *Evening Standard*, I came across a story illustrated with an image of some horrendous tower-block apartments. Why have the poor folk of Croydon been continuously picked on, suffering the ravages of greedy developers and their in-waiting architects since the Second World War? The latest invasion by Foster, Alsop

and Shuttleworth is continuing this sad travesty.

These ugly and inhuman towers belong to the unfortunate Dubai. Where has good old Modern architecture gone? Real architecture is a social art, employing the sensitive use of space, knowing construction and a feeling for people. Not anymore, it would seem. Instead, structural gimmicks and self-conscious artefacts. No more gardens for Croydon – simply imprison people in these contrived megalomaniac towers.

There are hopefully still some stalwarts of Modernism with a social meaning – David Chipperfield, Allies and Morrison, Ted Cullinan, and others of like sensitivity. *S H Eagleson, Worthing*

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ON TRACK

Grimshaw's Bijlmer Station brings both High-Tech and humane touches to a gentrifying neighbourhood, writes *Jaffer Kolb*



Bijlmer Station, Amsterdam, by Grimshaw Architects

When Princess Máxima of the Netherlands opened Bijlmer Station last year, the escalators slowed as she descended from the platform to the ground-floor entrance hall amid the grand High-Tech gestures and expansive timber soffit of Grimshaw and Dutch firm Arcadis Architects' recent project.

A steel band played, singing rang through the building and a crowd nearing 20,000 cheered. It was all too appropriate that the Argentinian-born princess, known for her work integrating immigrants into Holland, would be there for the event, and that her entrance would be fittingly... multicultural. >>

This image Much of the area around the station is still under construction as the neighbourhood grows



This page Gaps between platforms bring light to the lower level and accommodate the large, angled A-frame columns that support the roof

Right Grimshaw's steel and glass elements are balanced by the Oregon pine soffits



GER VAN DER VLUGT

Bijlmer is a neighbourhood to the south-east of Amsterdam's centre. Planned in the 1960s, the area features expansive, low-density housing estates situated mostly to the east of the railway tracks that connect the area to the city centre to the north and Utrecht to the south. When the neighbourhood was conceived the plan featured a two-tiered circulation infrastructure, with roads and rails supported by viaducts and pedestrian and cycle pathways kept to the ground. Photographs from 1972 show that while housing was under construction, little else existed in the area; it was very much the planner's flat featureless plane.

During the 1970s and '80s, the Dutch government began housing Amsterdam's growing number of immigrants in affordable housing in Bijlmer and the crime rate soon rose, giving the area a certain reputation and a high level of diversity. In 1996, the Amsterdam ArenA, the 50,000-capacity home of Ajax football club, opened, bringing a high volume of visitors during games and events. The stadium is on the west side of the tracks, with the majority of housing to the east.

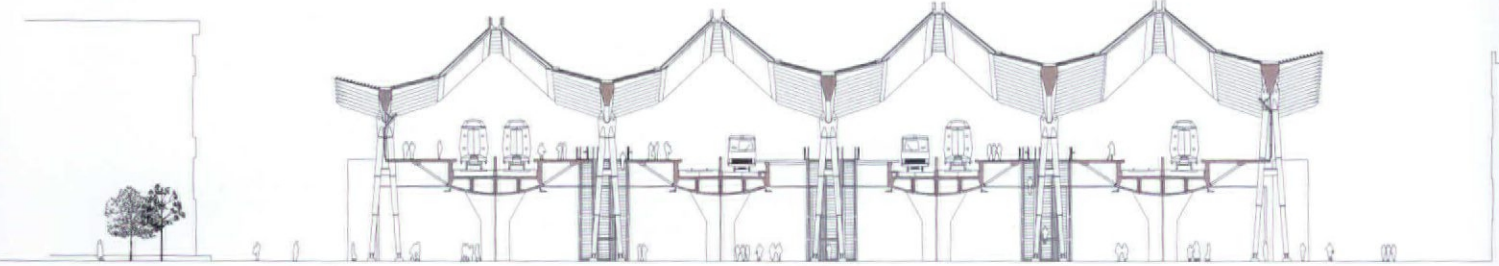
The existing train station, a boxy, utilitarian concrete structure made of the generic kit of parts of all stations along the metro line from Amsterdam, connected the two sides through an 8m-wide tunnel. From pictures, it looks an exercise in bad space-management – you can almost hear the muggings taking place in the dimly lit, narrow corridor under the station.

With the stadium under construction, the City of Amsterdam saw an opportunity. It commissioned a masterplan by Pi de Bruijn of Amsterdam-based de Architecten Cie., the same architect responsible for the design of the enormous adjacent office building >>

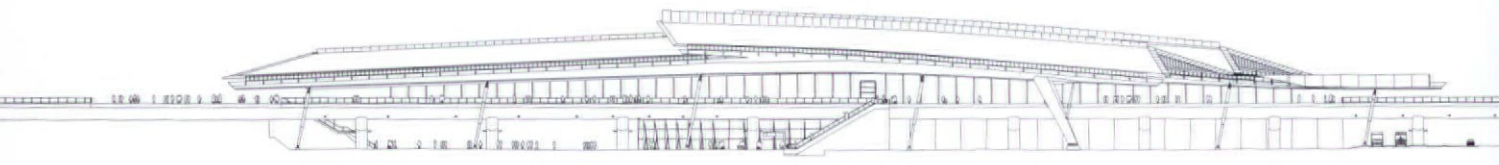
A steel band played, singing rang through the building and the crowd cheered



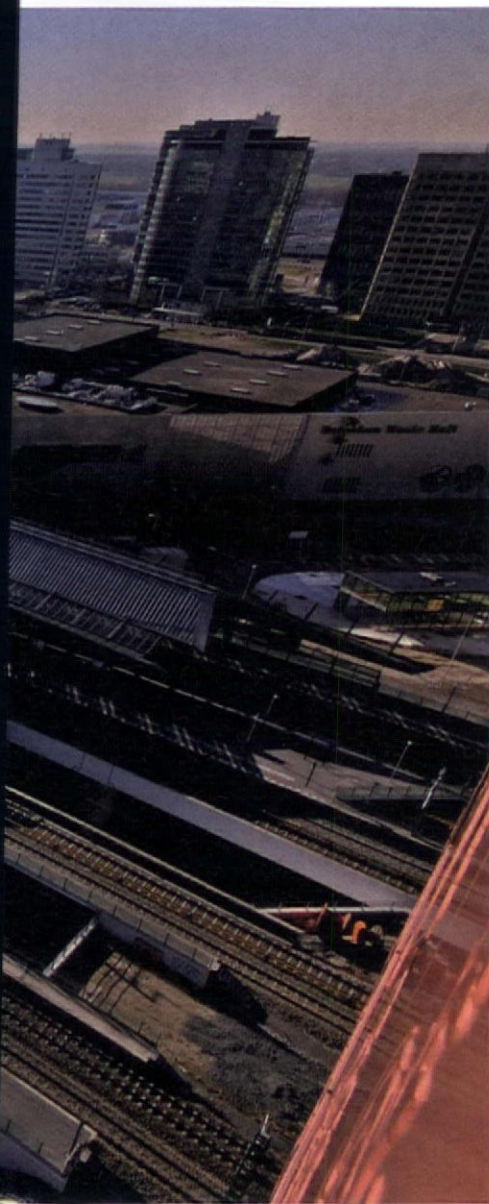
This image A view south reveals the extensive housing blocks and new office buildings that characterise Bijlmer



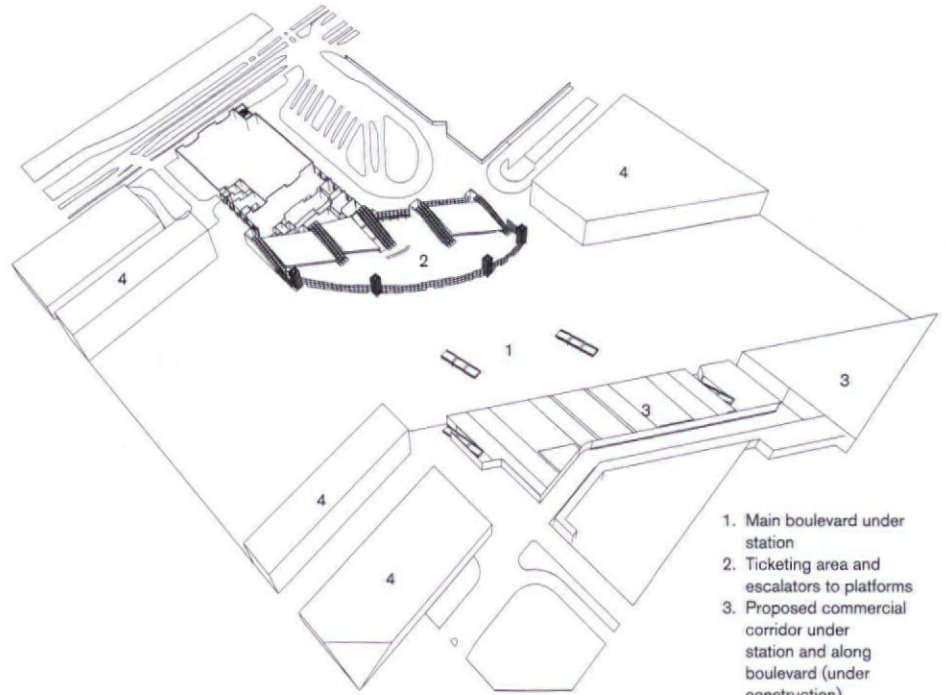
Cross section



Long section



Roof axonometric



Site plan

1. Main boulevard under station
2. Ticketing area and escalators to platforms
3. Proposed commercial corridor under station and along boulevard (under construction)
4. Existing office building

completed in the 1980s. De Bruijn designed a 70m-wide boulevard that began at the court created by his building and cuts under the railway station and up to meet the stadium, retail, and office space on the other side.

'This would never happen in the UK,' Grimshaw partner Neven Sidor says. 'There were two clients: the city wanted a better connection that would help the community while ProRail [the Dutch government organisation in charge of rail infrastructure] wanted six new rail and two metro tracks in the station.' The station would thus mediate two distinct areas of the neighbourhood to create a more cohesive pedestrian system.

When the station was first conceived, ProRail planned to use Amersfoort-based firm Arcadis Architects, with whom they had worked in the past. 'When the city realised the budget and projected scale of the project [which is designed to host up to 60,000

passengers per day], they decided they wanted an international architect attached,' says Sidor. Grimshaw was selected through an interview process, with the condition that they would work as equal partners with Arcadis. All decisions made by either firm would be subject to approval by the other. 'It actually worked quite well and, believe it or not, out of the group there was no alpha male so there were few problems,' Sidor continues.

Early on, the team decided that the station would work with the axis of the boulevard, which cut diagonally across the north-south line of the rail. The station is based on a diagonal matrix of columns on the ground floor, and spans over the 70m-wide boulevard. The choice is successful, and the station neatly and logically fits the plan – working with rather than against it.

From the exterior, the building is dominated by Grimshaw's usual glass and steel. >>

*Bijlmer in 1972
was very much
the planner's flat,
featureless plane*



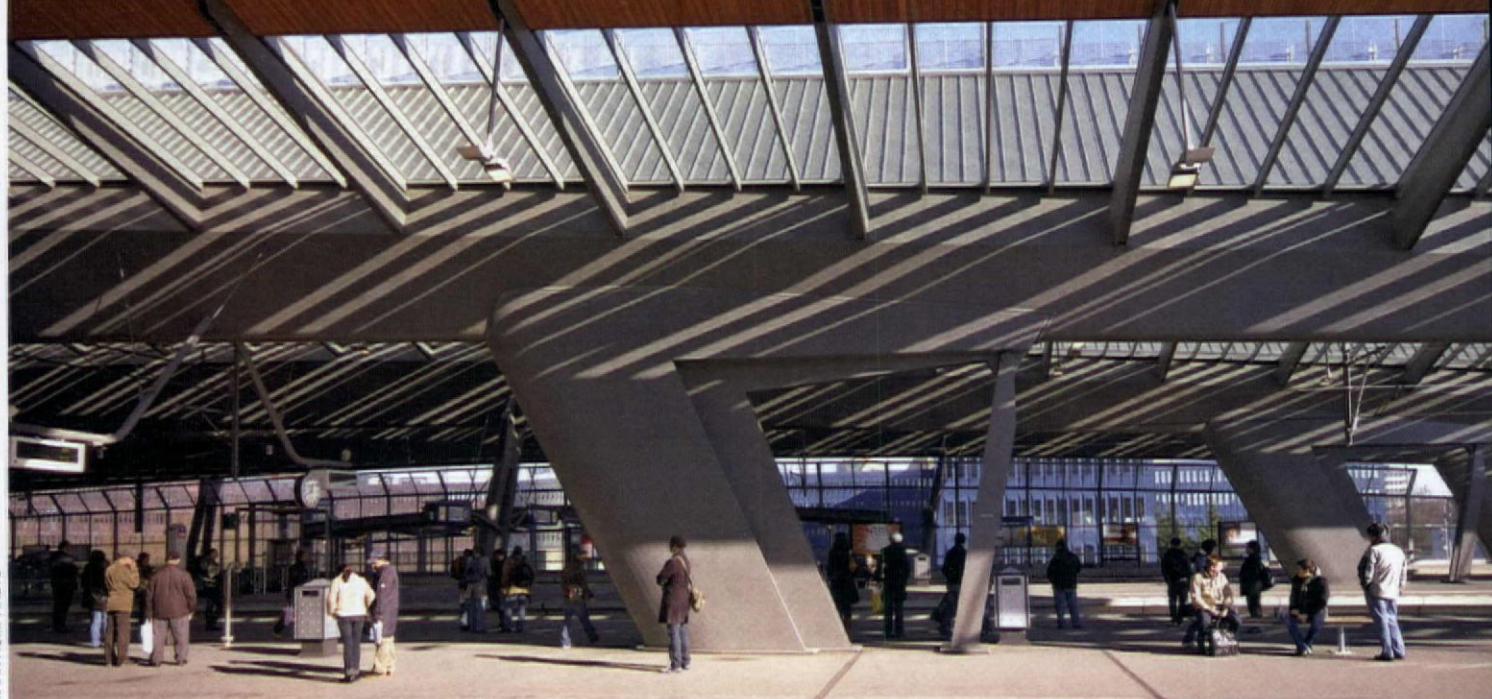
This image

All the bits of kit from the station are overshadowed by the epic scale of the building and its structural elements



This image
Large movement
connections bolt
the long roof beams
to the ground

Below right By lifting
the platforms an
additional 2m, the
area under the station
avoids being dark or
oppressive



The roof glazing filters down a generous amount of daylight

Long louvres flank the sides of the building and control wind swelling. 'Without the louvres, it also looks somewhat naked,' says Arcadis project manager Jan Schouten. Additionally and unsurprisingly, large structural elements with impressive girths and spans comprise the majority of the decoration here. The main entrance is demarcated by the faultline created where the two parts of the roof overlap (see sections, p30). 'In most stations you have a station hall,' says Schouten, 'but here we designed around the entrance, so we created a break in the roof.' It's a subtle move that seems to work.

Two structural systems support the building. The concrete columns and viaducts (pictured right) hold the eight rails and five platforms while the roof is supported by a steel structure. Because the station had to remain operational throughout construction,

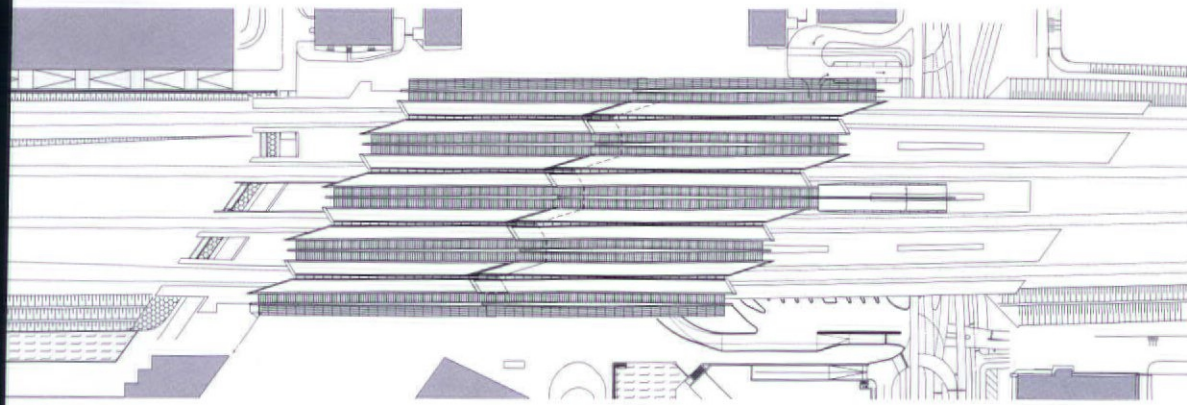
phasing was paramount, particularly as the client and the designers agreed that the platforms were to be lifted up 2m in order to maximise light and space in the circulation area and boulevard below.

For the concrete structure, the designers first opted for a system of paired columns connected by beams, arranged in a similar matrix and cast in situ. Given the matrix, there were a number of problems that would require individual solutions – the buses that serve the station, for example, didn't have enough room to turn at the drop-off point, which would have required rearranging the columns in that area.

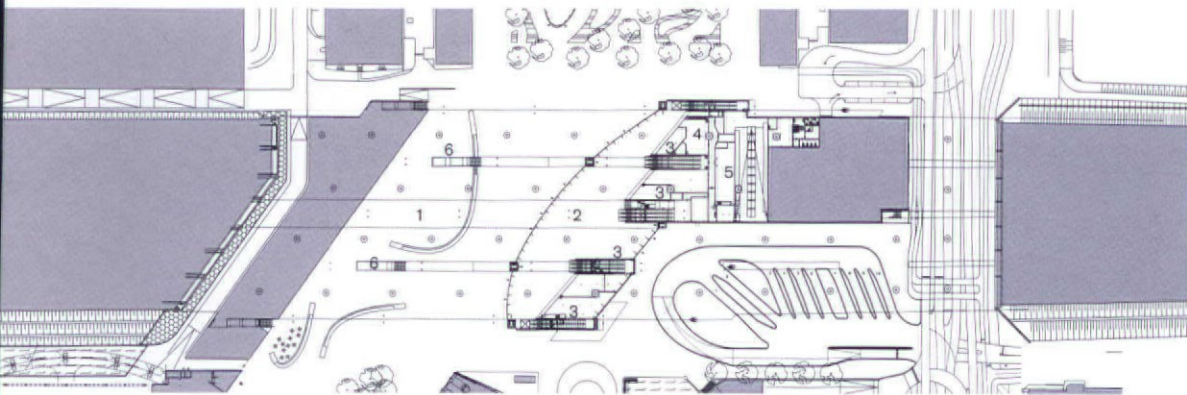
According to Sidor, a 'eureka moment' came about when one of the team suggested that instead of two columns, there could be one larger column capped with a concrete saddle to direct loads downward. While tight in places, it worked within the proposed matrix without any problems thanks to the smaller floor area required, and could be precast and erected on site.

While when approaching the station, your eye is drawn to the immense glass and steel structure of the exterior envelope, the predominance of concrete is immediately >>





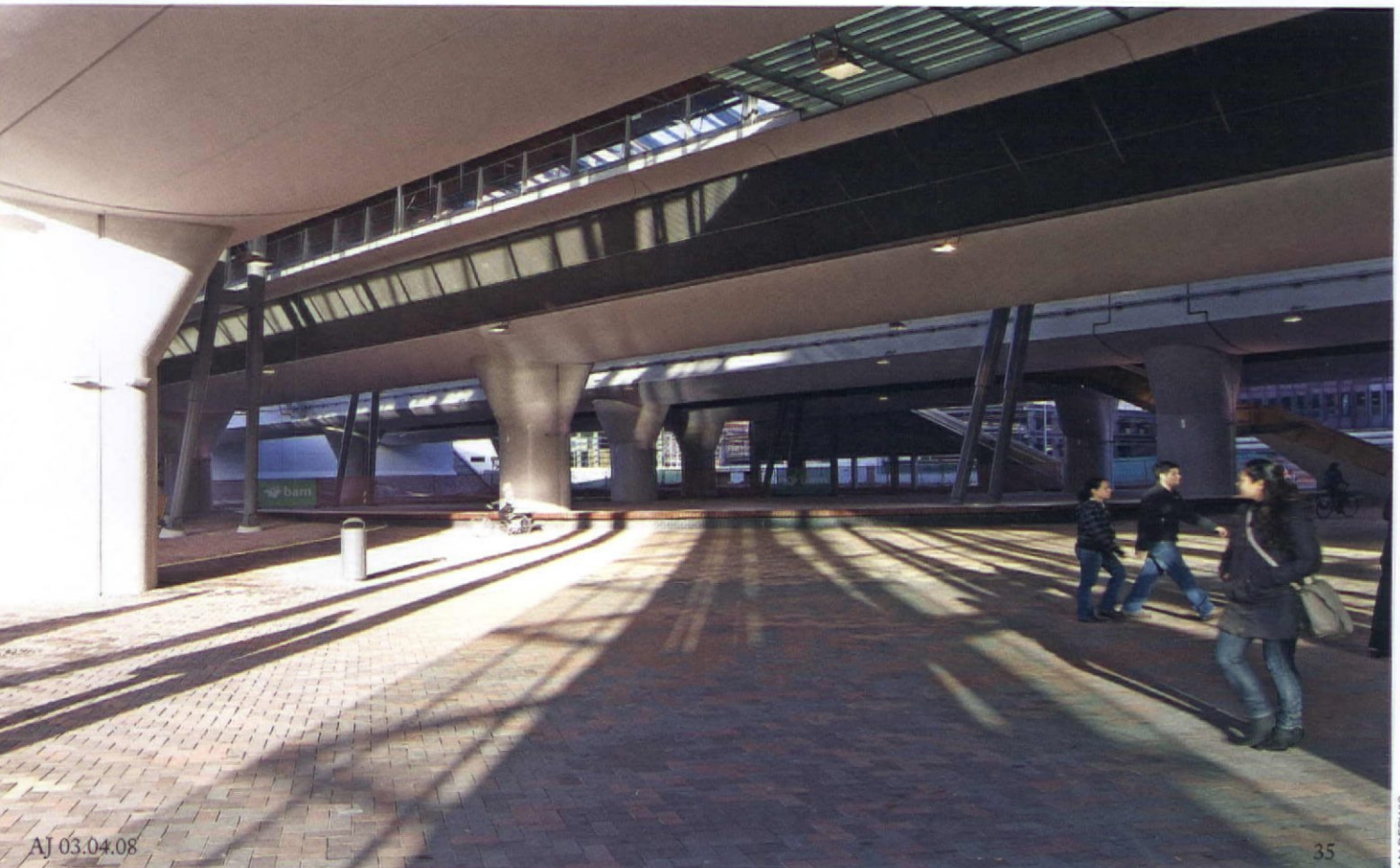
of plan



ground-floor plan


1. Open-air extension of boulevard
2. Screened-in ticketing area
3. Escalators leading to platforms
4. Café
5. Services
6. Stairs leading to platforms

0 100m





This image Large
louvres are both
decorative and
functional, reducing
wind swelling around
the building



felt in the building's undercroft, where you walk through and along the boulevard, turning, if you're a passenger, towards a large glazed windscreen demarcating the station's entrance. The columns are large and covered in mosaic tiles to prevent graffiti. The palette of the lower level is warm, and the glazing on the roof filters down a generous amount of daylight to the lower floor. While the boulevard is thus 'under' the station, the high ceilings, open air, and light mitigate any potential oppressiveness.

The station comprises five main platforms. Large holes punched out between each bring light to the interior of the ground floor and each is served by its own escalator. In section, the roof is a series of spines supporting upwards-angled ribs that, in turn, support the glazing and timber soffits (*see sections, p30*). The timber panels reach up towards one another, creating the impression of a pitched roof with an open-air break in the middle. The spines, which the architects call the booms, are anchored to the ground floor on the south end of the building by large moment connections (*see left*) that lock the structure along the long (north-south) axis.

Moving north, each boom is supported by a series of angled A-frame columns on flexible pins that accommodate small degrees of longitudinal movement caused by thermal expansion and contraction of the boom. These A-frames extend through the gaps between the platforms. Though rather clumsy (they look like giant compasses), they are the most obvious expression of the Grimshaw touch.

Otherwise, the High-Tech is perfectly at home in a railway station, and the large, exposed structural, grey-painted elements work well in overshadowing the innumerable bits and bobs that have been installed by ProRail. 'You do your best to tally up all the small things that might go into a station like this,' says Sidor, looking rather disappointedly at a thin, hanging rectangular speaker, 'But in the end there's always more.'

The roof's glass panels form a secondary grid to the matrix of concrete columns below. Where the columns form a series of parallel-

grams, these panels are all at right angles, which the client chose to save money as the glass wouldn't have to be custom cut. This choice, out of the hands of the architects, does create a visual shift in how the space is perceived. From below, the angling of the building to match the boulevard is quite clear.

In addition to the exposed structure, the star of the station is the Oregon pine soffits. Timber is a rarity in railway stations, particularly of this size, and here it succeeds in balancing the High-Tech, glass-and-steel monotony that could otherwise make this project a rather predictable product of its type.

The platforms' cutouts ensure that the timber is visible from the lower level, which was important to the architects in terms of one of their basic design strategies. 'The gaps in the platforms mean that wherever you are in the station, you can be observed from many places, which means you feel safer. Seeing the timber adds to that – it's a warm material that you don't expect,' describes Sidor. The importance of creating a secure environment emerged from the failings of the last station, and is one that, at least during my visit, seems to have been resolved quite successfully.

The promenade through the station, which could easily have been botched, is light, spacious, and feels safe. The building itself balances the High-Tech features typical of its designers with material warmth from the tiles and timber. It's a station I'd get off at just to step outside and look around, which is exactly the effect it should have. Hopefully the surrounding neighbourhood is ready for the likely onslaught of gentrification that will likely soon follow. ■

Start on site date January 2002

Contract duration 10 years

Total build area 32,000m²

Form of contract UAV contract for viaducts and platforms, UAV-gc contract for roof, glazing and all the finishing

Cost 130 million euros (£100 million)

Client ProRail

Architect Grimshaw/Arcadis Architecten

Structural and services engineer/quantity

surveyor Arcadis Architecten

Main contractor Besix Nederland BV

Annual CO₂ emissions The station does not provide a climatic enclosure, so no figure is available

*The angled A-frames
are the most obvious
Grimshaw touch*

WORKING DETAIL

A glazed screen suspended from the roof structure

A glazed screen runs at the platform edge; it consists of laminated glass in an aluminium glazing system which is raised off its steel frame supports by circular steel spacers – for ease of maintenance and visually to separate structure and glazing.

Each steel frame – of 120 x 60mm RHSs and CHSs – is cranked at the top and suspended from the primary roof beam by a pair of brackets. The frames were erected with gaps between which were then filled with infill glazing. The top section of each frame is a slightly different length to follow the curvature of the primary roof beam.

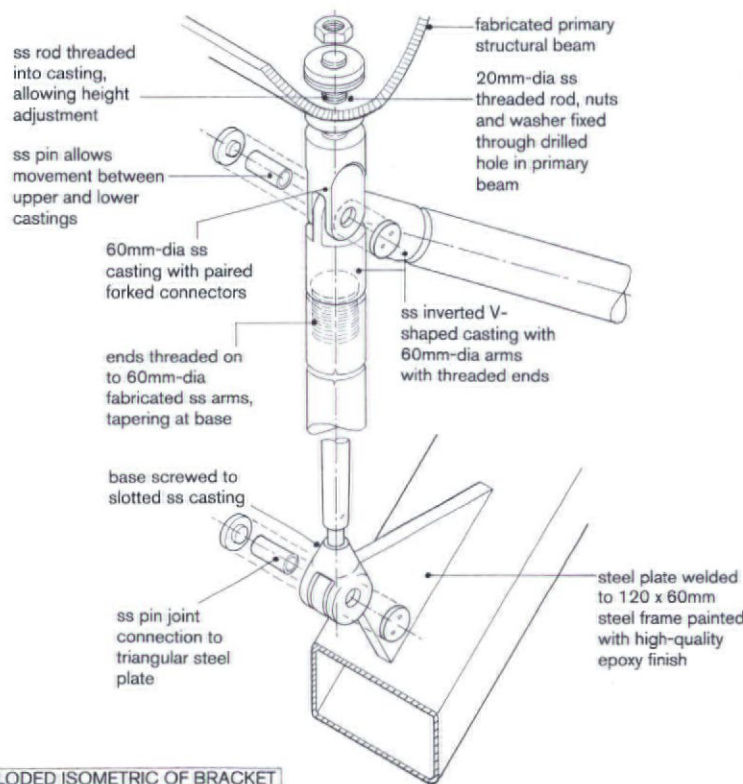
The brackets consist of stainless-steel castings connected by pin joints and adjustable arms which allow for tolerance and movement.

At the base, the lowest horizontal frame member is fixed to a fabricated steel channel; it slots over the raised plate which forms the platform edge. Channel and plate are located with pairs of stainless-steel bolts with nylon heads; the nylon heads allow three conditions of movement and tolerance:

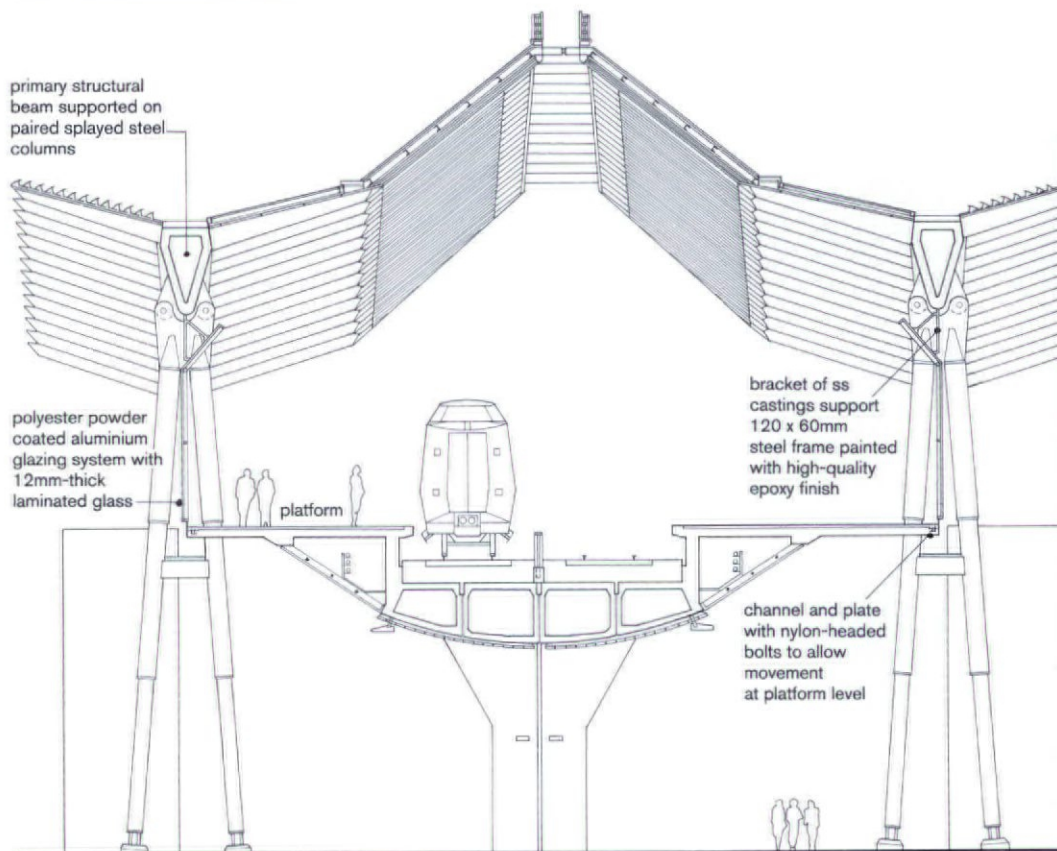
- the base of the glazed screen is secured and braced against horizontal wind pressure;
- the screen can move up and down as the primary roof beam deflects due to load or expansion/contraction; and
- the platform edge can move in and out, a horizontal movement caused by the stopping and movement of trains.

The stainless-steel castings were made using the lost wax process and have a bead-blasted finish.

Susan Dawson

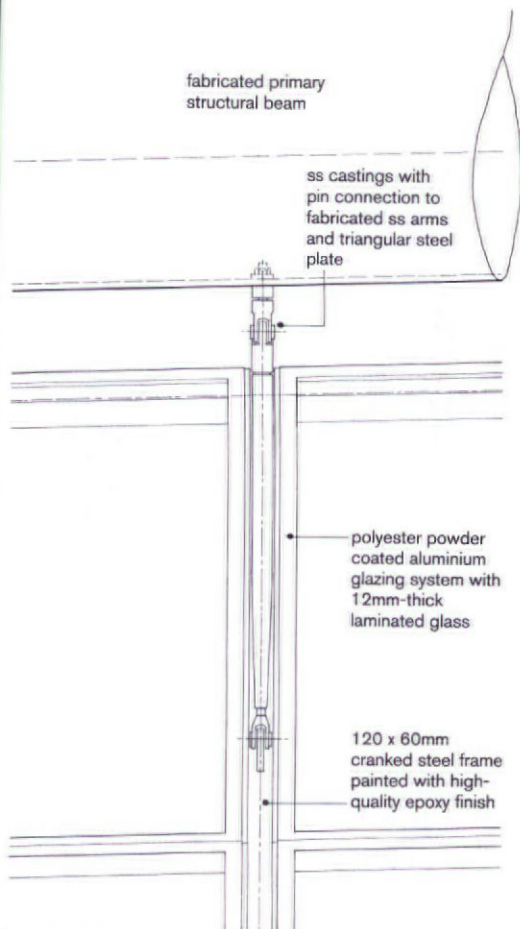


EXPLODED ISOMETRIC OF BRACKET



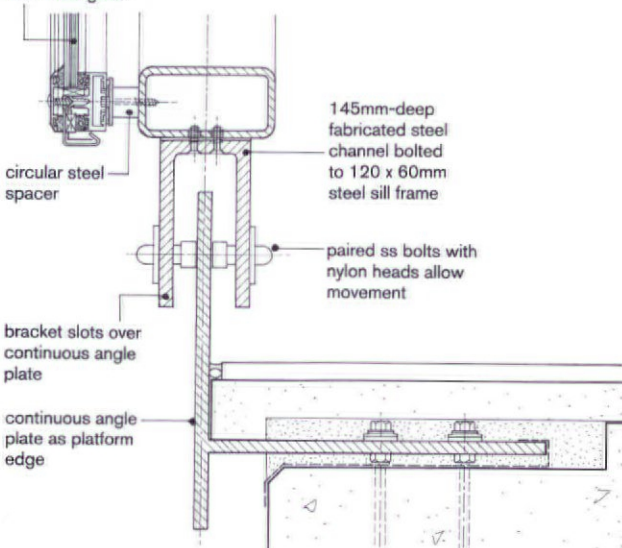
KEY CROSS SECTION THROUGH PLATFORM

Note: all stainless-steel castings made using the lost wax process, with bead-blasted finish

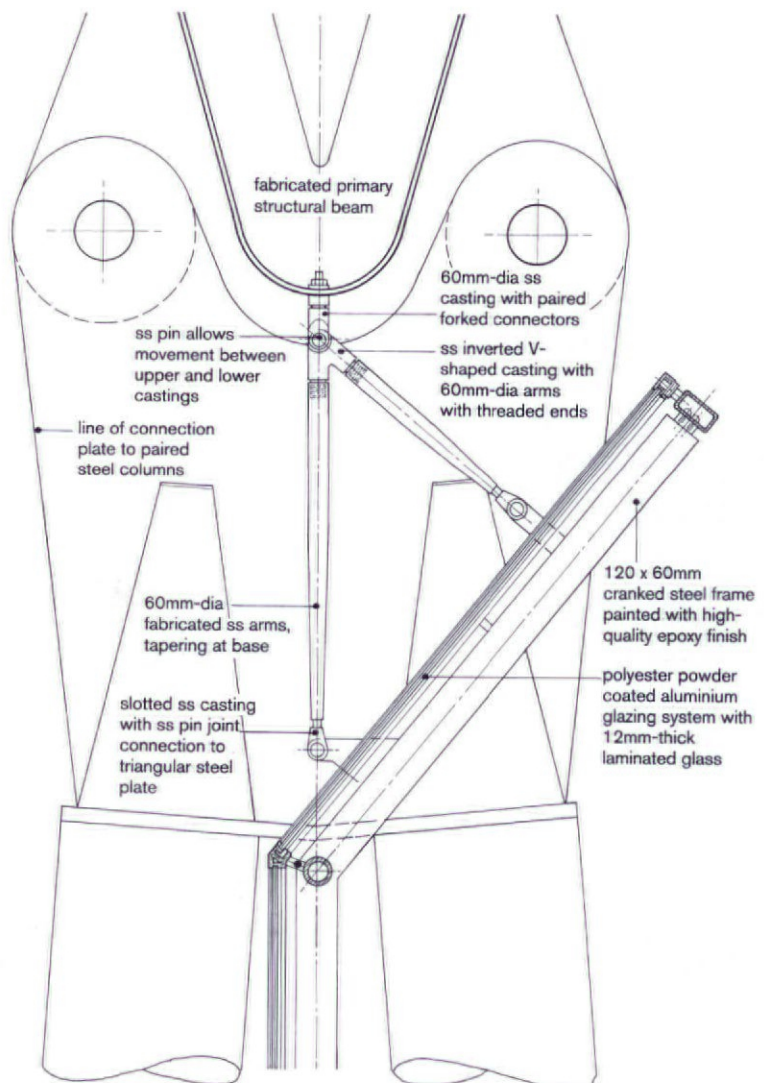


ELEVATION OF BRACKET AND GLAZING

polyester powder coated aluminium glazing system with 12mm-thick laminated glass



DETAIL AT SILL/PLATFORM



polyester powder coated aluminium glazing system with 12mm-thick laminated glass

steel channel bolted to 120 x 60mm steel sill frame

channel and plate with nylon-headed bolts to allow movement at platform level

DETAIL SECTION THROUGH SIDE WALL GLAZING



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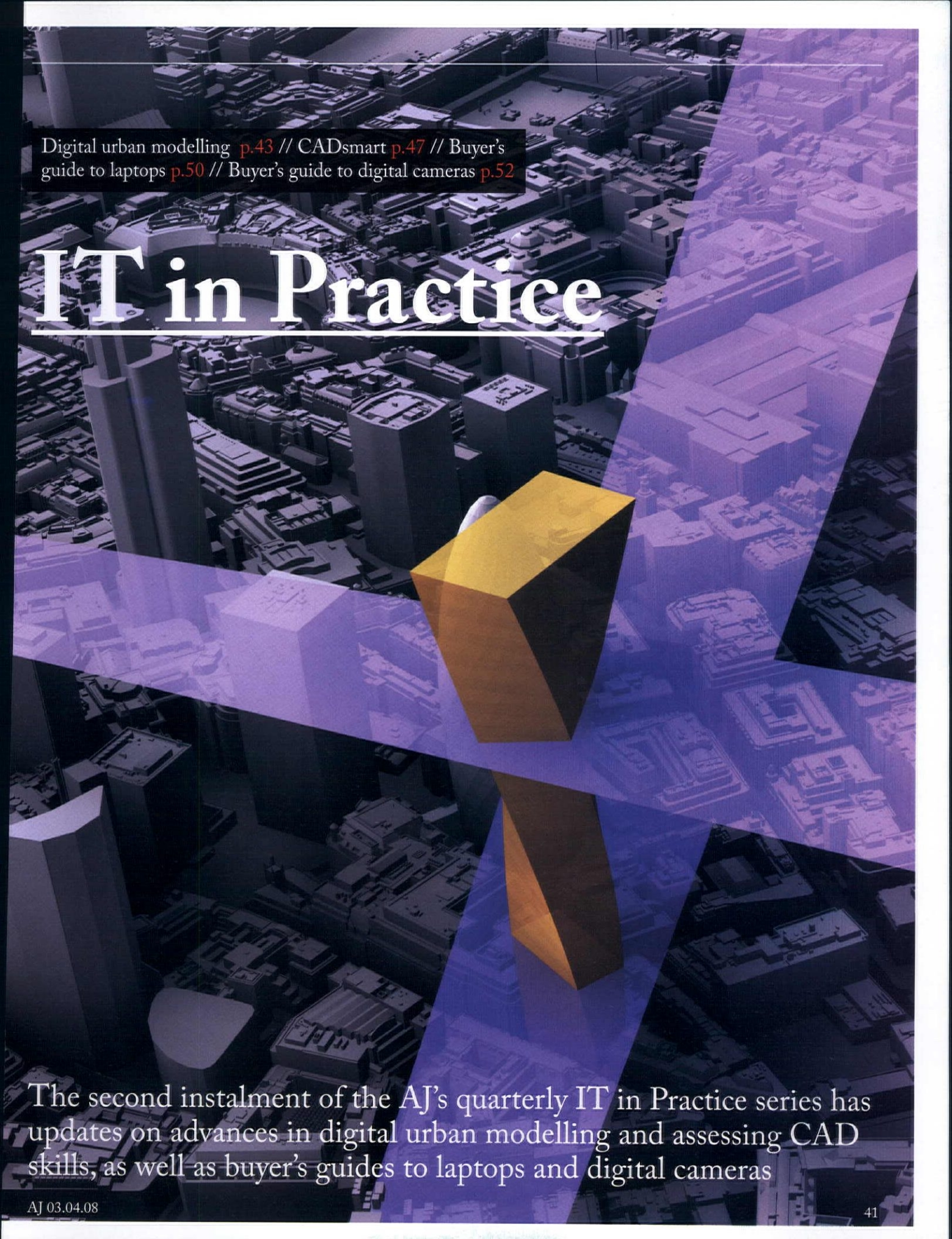
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An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, with a 3D architectural model overlaid. The model consists of a yellow cube and a purple, translucent, multi-faceted structure that resembles a stylized star or a complex geometric shape. The city buildings are visible in the background, and the overall color palette is dominated by purples and blues.

Digital urban modelling p.43 // CADsmart p.47 // Buyer's
guide to laptops p.50 // Buyer's guide to digital cameras p.52

IT in Practice

The second instalment of the AJ's quarterly IT in Practice series has updates on advances in digital urban modelling and assessing CAD skills, as well as buyer's guides to laptops and digital cameras

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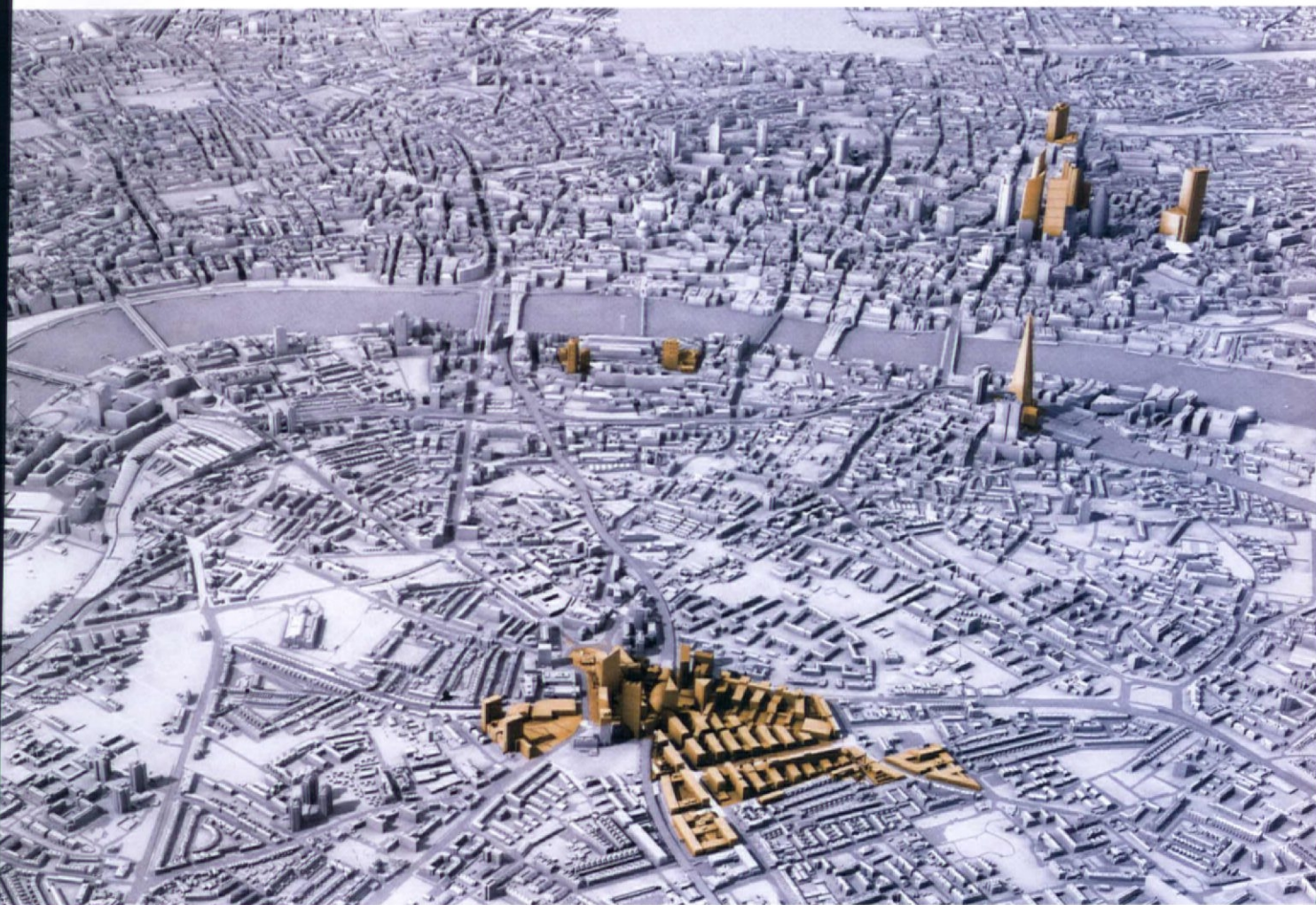
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DIGITAL MODELLING

VIRTUAL CITIES

Advances in digital modelling mean architects can now easily view their proposed buildings in context, writes *Sarah Ichioka*

**Above GMJ**

Visualisation's digital model shows how London might look in 2010, when proposed developments such as the Elephant and Castle masterplan (foreground) and buildings like Renzo Piano's Shard London Bridge have completed

With planning policies in the UK and abroad increasingly promoting the densification of urban centres, tools that can help architects navigate these often challenging contexts – rife with protected view corridors and concerned stakeholders – are increasingly valuable. An emerging breed of detailed and interactive digital models of cities is helping architects maximise their proposed buildings within the restrictions of a given site, and more effectively communicate the substance

of their designs to clients, planners and the public.

The authors, owners and origins of these models vary widely: from private-sector consultancies marketing directly to architects, to city governments and academic institutions attempting to make built-environment decisions more publicly accessible. Over the last five years, UCL's Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA), has developed a 'Virtual London' model that includes >>

3 million buildings. Similarly, the City of Glasgow commissioned the Digital Design Studio (DDS) at the Glasgow School of Art to develop two 3D digital models, due for completion this spring, which represent nearly a quarter of the city's built surface.

Meanwhile, companies like London-based GMJ Visualisation are designing digital city models for specific clients. GMJ has developed most of its 36km² 'CityModel' of London through the accumulation of sites modelled for individual commissions, and licenses it for use by architects and planners.

'Most cities will have their own dedicated virtual representations within the next five to 10 years'

While designers have long been able to create basic urban models directly in geographic information system (GIS) programs, which are traditionally used by planners to attach socio-economic data to 2D plans, the technology for generating and manipulating urban digital modelling is evolving rapidly, with increasing compatibility between CAD- and GIS-based programs.

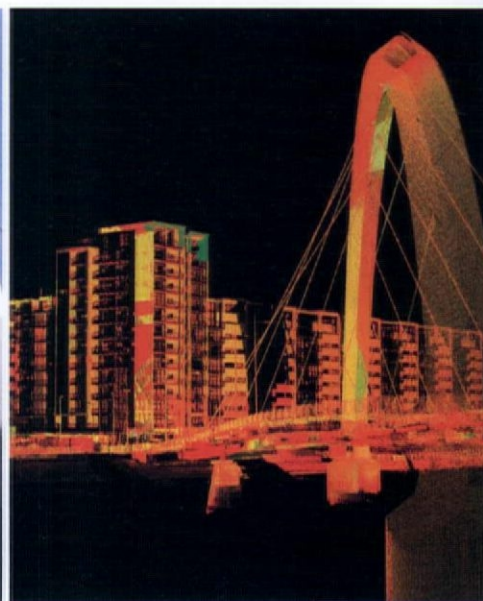
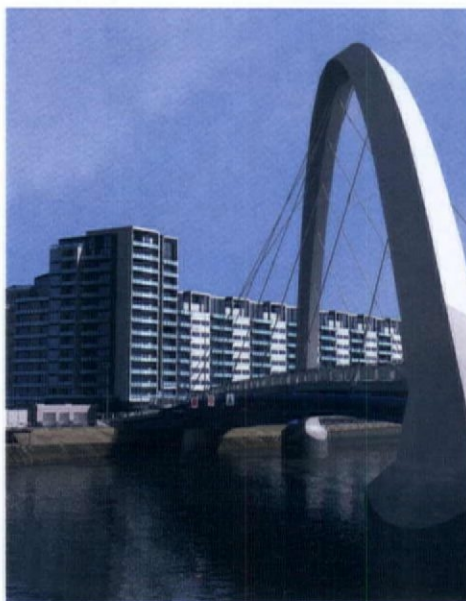
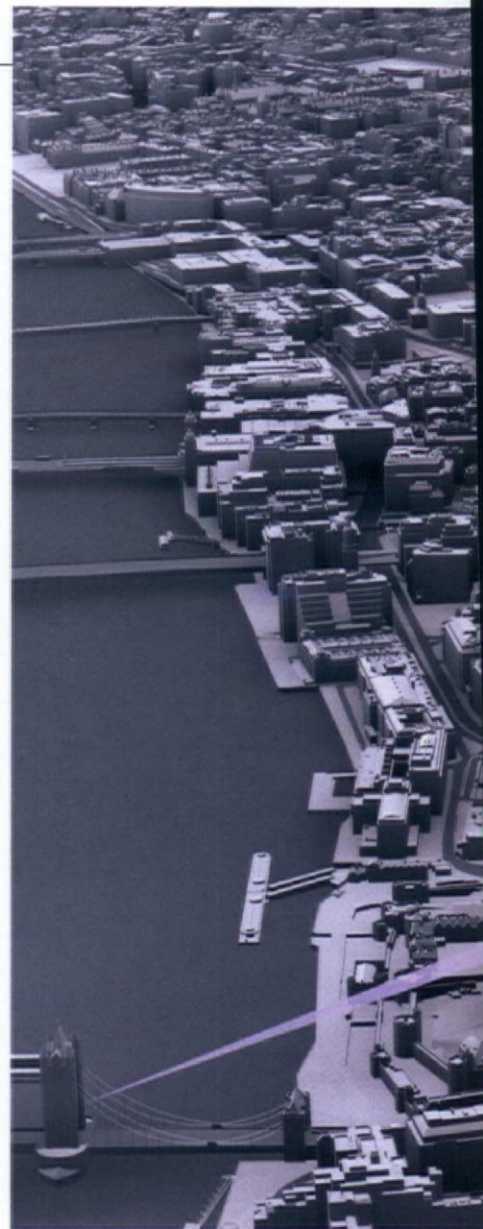
And the value of city models is increasing as they become more detailed, which is enabled through new analytical technology. Urban 3D models have for some time relied upon photogrammetry, which determines geometric qualities about an object based on photographic images of it taken from different points. But now surveyors are using a relatively new remote sensing technique called LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging System) – essentially three-dimensional laser scanning of surfaces. 'This technology is revolutionising topographic terrain mapping' says CASA director Michael Batty.

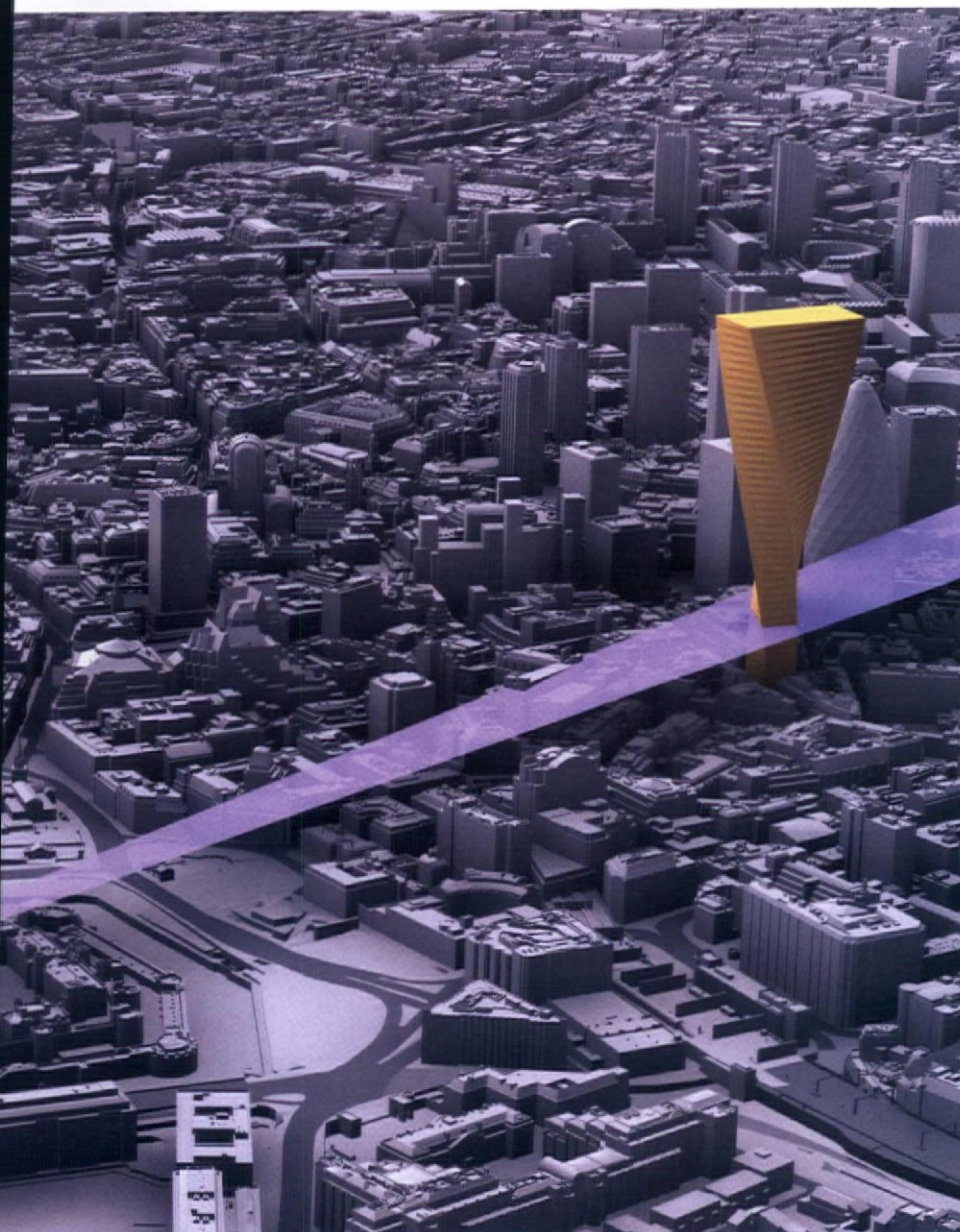
GMJ uses high-resolution aerial imagery aligned with survey data for its models. Its surveyors use Leica Geosystems high-definition scanners positioned at 50m intervals, which results in a resolution of up to 4cm in accuracy and a level of detail that includes air-conditioning units and chimney stacks. The benefits of scanning include accuracy to real world. The DDS model of Glasgow, with details accurate up to 6mm, was also produced using Leica 3D scanners.

Users can incorporate regulatory parameters such as height restrictions and strategic view corridors, which are useful early in the design process. 'Sometimes a client lets their imagination run wild, but we know the building will still have to comply with regulations,' explains Neven Sidor, a partner at Grimshaw, which has used GMJ's London model for three projects in the last six months. Placing the building in a larger urban model is a valuable and easy way to show clients how the building could and should relate to its environment.

The software can also yield accurate and detailed depictions of buildings in their surrounding contexts. KPF used GMJ's London model for a mixed-use development off Oxford Street. 'Because of the building's location on a narrow street, we knew it would be perceived obliquely. The model enabled us to choose views that accurately reflected the perspectives of people on the street,' says KPF design manager Bart Kavanagh. In addition to producing 2D verified perspectives, rapid prototyping machines can transform digital models into physical models (see IT in Practice, AJ 24.01.08) or made publicly accessible via interactive web platforms.

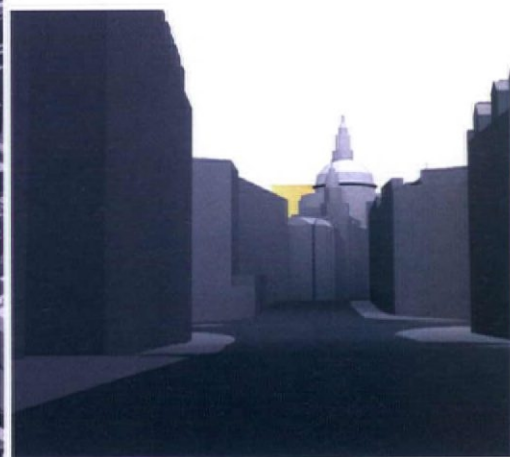
The models' flexibility and responsiveness may save costs. Grimshaw's Sidor says:





Clockwise from left
Visualisation in GMJ's Virtual London model of how a hypothetical proposed tower (yellow) would impact on a view corridor; Impact of St. Paul's protected view corridor on a hypothetical building; Glasgow's Clyde

Street rendered from a digital model by Digital Design Studio – 23 per cent of central Glasgow has been digitally modelled; Image of Clyde Arc derived from 3D laser scan; rendered image of Clyde Arc



'We found for our Minerva Building project in the City of London, where we had to generate some 50 verified view montages, that the standard VVM-generating procedure [in which a model of a building is inserted into an existing 2D image and adjusted for perspectival distortion, reflection and

GMJ has developed its London map by accumulating sites modelled for individual commissions

shadows] is long and expensive. In comparison, GMJ's London model is relatively quick and affordable to use.' GMJ can provide a digital 3D build envelope of many central London sites starting from £1,500 with a turnaround time of a day or two.

Douglas Pritchard, of Glasgow's DDS, predicts that 'most medium- and large-sized

cities will have their own dedicated virtual representations within the next five to 10 years.' This is an international trend, with cities from Singapore to Copenhagen now developing and using digital city models.

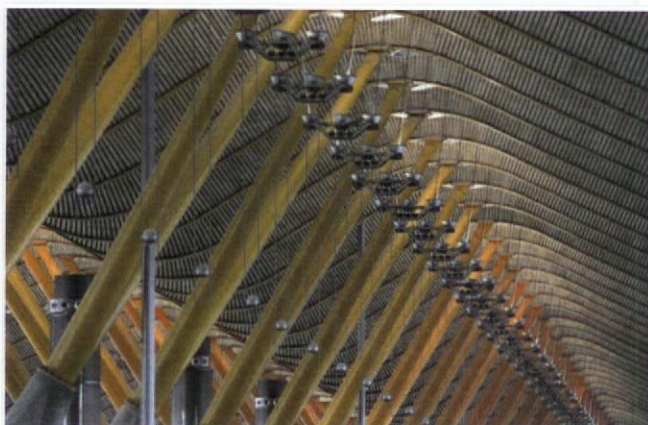
Proper stewardship and accurate maintenance of these new models is a significant issue. For Glasgow, says Pritchard, the city should act as steward for the urban model. 'If it's owned and managed by the city, contextual claims can be centrally certified as accurate', he says. 'Accountability is essential in the development of urban models,' says John Frazer, chair of the international d_city network, which encourages technological knowledge transfer between cities.

One thing is certain. The proliferation of digital urban models means that architects no longer have any excuse for not looking beyond the boundary of their sites. ■





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ENQUIRY 20 ON CARD WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK/AJDIRECT

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Submissions will be judged by our panel, consisting of Gavin Harris (designer of Allgood's White Collection), Kieran Long (Editor - AJ), Ruth Slavid (Editor - AJ Online and Special Projects) and Neil Holmes (Sales Director - Allgood). Highly commended entries will be displayed on the Allgood stand at the 100% Design exhibition in September, where the winner will also be announced.

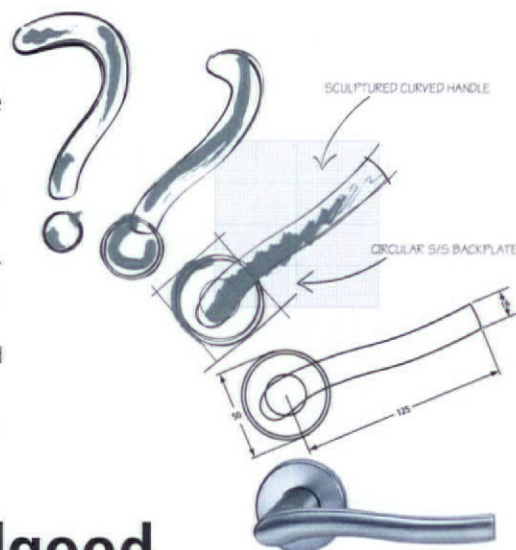
Deadline for entry is Friday 9th May 2008. For competition details and how to enter, please visit **www.allgood.co.uk**

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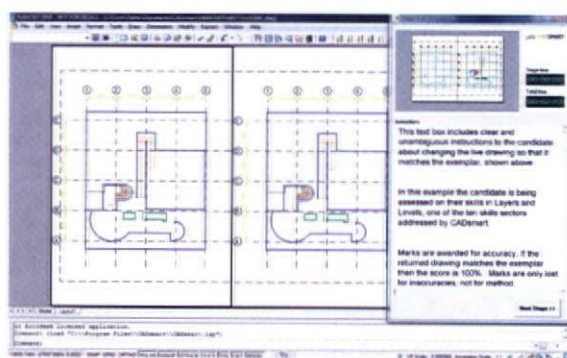
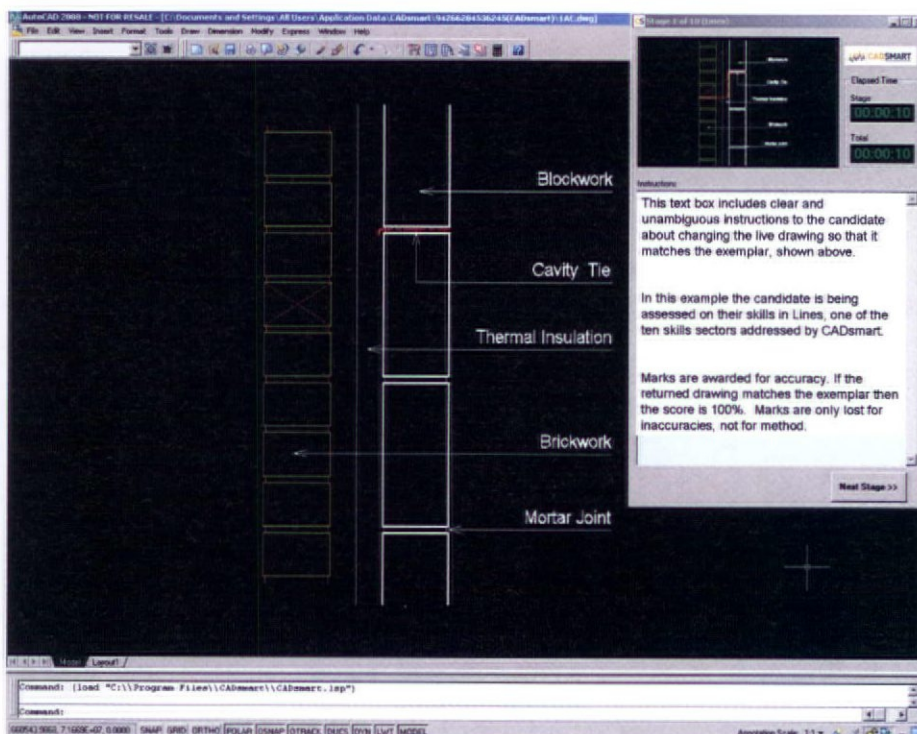


ENQUIRY 21 ON CARD WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK/AJDIRECT

CADSMART

MEASURING SKILLS

CADsmart is a clever program which allows employers to assess employees' CAD skills. But it must be used wisely, says *Alastair Parvin*



Above and top CADsmart assesses 10 areas of skills, such as Layers and Levels (above) Lines (top) while a clock ticks away in the corner of

the screen. An exemplar window at the top-right of the screen shows the objective of each exercise

The idea behind CADsmart is very simple. It's an automated exam which tests CAD skills and working speed. A user is presented with 10 randomly selected tasks that are to be completed against the clock (it ticks away in the corner of the screen). The individual's performance is then tallied against all previous scores, and presented as a set of charts and statistics which places their competence in relation to an average score. The software also provides individual feedback on the methods used to complete each task, so you can learn from your mistakes.

CADsmart aims to provide an objective measure of CAD users' efficiency, allowing practices to better target training to existing employees, and to assess the skills of job applicants at interview stage. The distinction between these two possible uses is crucial.

As a means to assess current employees, CADsmart represents a long-awaited solution to the challenge of targeting appropriate training to CAD users. The only comparable screening process is Autodesk's User Certification exam, currently being piloted

Practices risk missing out on applicants who learn fast and may ultimately be better designers

in the UK. This exam must be taken at an authorised Autodesk training centre (there are about 55 in the UK), unlike CADsmart, which is offered in a practice's office.

Norman Buckberry, Autodesk manager for customer learning, says that the certification exam has been developed in response to customers' need to identify competent users. 'The last thing a practice needs when staffing a multi-million pound project is to find out that staff don't have the required skills,' he says.

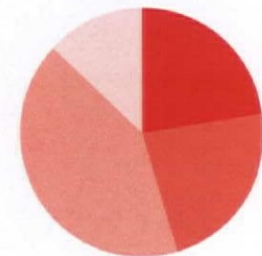
A number of practices using CADsmart for employee training have found it to be measurably effective. By assessing regularly, engineer Rambøll Whitbybird was able to match CAD skills across a large number of offices for the first time. Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners has used CADsmart on a >>

This page
The CADsmart website's customer log-in area records and presents performance results

in a variety of charts and graphs. Data can also be downloaded into Excel for further analysis

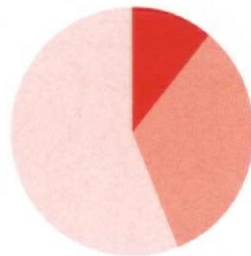
PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

■ Excellent
■ Above average
■ Below average
■ Poor



Employee Scores

No. of assessments 32
Average score 63.8 per cent
Average time 1 hour 41 mins



Interviewee Scores

No. of assessments 9
Average score 40.7 per cent
Average time 1 hour 12 mins

QUARTILES

Fast but inaccurate.
Training will reduce re-working and help avoid project delays

QUARTILE 2

20%

QUARTILE 4

37%

Fast and accurate.
Top performers who will lead CAD performance improvement

AVERAGE:
65% SCORE
75 MINUTES

Slow and inaccurate.
Not recommended for a position requiring good CAD skills

QUARTILE 1

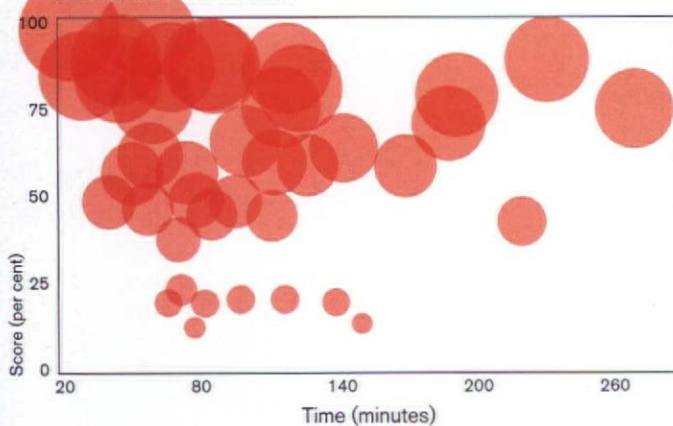
23%

QUARTILE 3

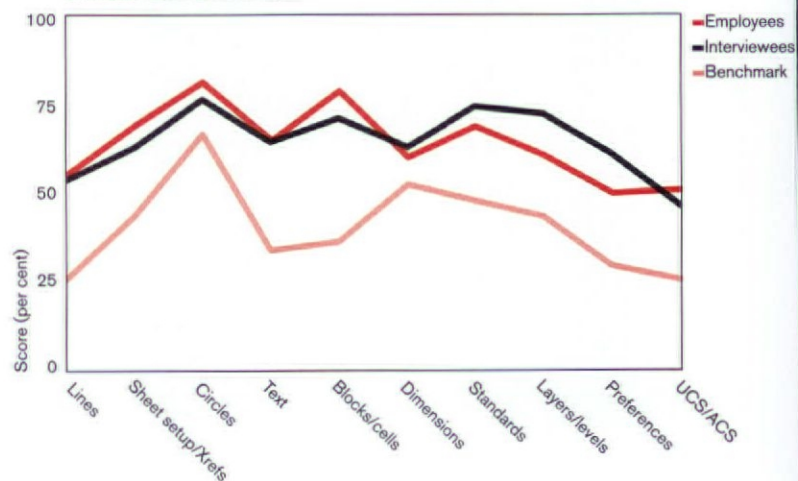
20%

Slow but accurate.
Training will increase productivity

PERFORMANCE SPREAD



STAGE PERFORMANCE



project-by-project basis to make sure that project teams are equipped with appropriate CAD skills. As CADsmart's marketing director Tony Brown says: 'If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.'

The second suggested use of CADsmart is as an interviewing device. The danger with this is that, of course, such a mechanism favours candidates who are already CAD-skilled, so practices risk missing out on applicants who learn fast and who may ultimately be better designers.

Should we rely on objective measures of 'efficiency' in an industry that relies on creative thinking? The idea of offices or job applicants competing on CAD competence rather than content is quite a dark and Dickensian one. It might be temptingly easy for employers to hire compliant, CAD-ready

workers, but it's important to ask whether that may be terminally shortsighted. It is, after all, a lot easier to teach CAD than it is to teach those other, less quantifiable skills that a designer needs.

The best applicants know this, and it is here that the buoyant job market provides a

CADsmart has been used to make sure project teams are equipped with the appropriate skills

twist. As David Davison of RTKL says: 'If they already had four or five other job offers, we'd get people literally walking out at interview stage, refusing to take the test.' As a result, some CADsmart users have shifted from interview-stage screening to assessment for induction-training. Other firms, including

Dyer Architects, have considered the psychological aspect of taking the test within the office. Rather than testing in a classroom-style setup, Dyer has installed CADsmart at users' desks so the experience is less intimidating.

Used improperly, systems like CADsmart could become the grinder's organ over the proverbial CAD monkey, encouraging production-centric employees over those who can learn fast, solve problems and communicate well. But used wisely it can help identify future employees and optimise practice working. ■

CADsmart is a CAD assessment tool, operating on AutoCAD and Microstation, with plans to extend into a 3D capability this year. Visit www.cadsmart.net


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BUYER'S GUIDE, BY GREG CORKE

LAPTOPS

HINTS AND TIPS

• With laptops there is always a trade-off between performance and size – smaller machines aren't as fast. The higher the GHz, the faster the processor. Powerful processors and big displays, however, will drain batteries more quickly, but low-voltage models improve battery life.

• A minimum of 1GB RAM memory is necessary to ensure smooth operation, but more is needed to load up big data sets or to work across multiple applications. Hard-drive capacity is not so important unless you're dealing with lots of huge CAD files.

• New solid-state hard drives are smaller, but much more durable and power efficient. Powerful graphics cards, such as the Quadro FX family from Nvidia, are necessary for 3D CAD.

• All the featured laptops come with wireless Internet access, but for an Internet connection accessible wherever you may be, mobile broadband is becoming increasingly popular and data costs competitive.



2 DELL PRECISION M4300

Dell has an excellent pedigree in workstation-class laptops and the Precision M4300 is no exception. The Core 2 Duo T7500 processor gives it plenty of power and the Nvidia Quadro FX 360M graphics card will run most 3D CAD software comfortably. It's not one of the smallest or lightest laptops, but you do get an excellent 390mm screen to play with. It also scores highly in terms of connectivity with wireless Internet, Bluetooth and mobile broadband and, of course, it comes with a very attractive price tag. www.dell.co.uk

1 HP COMPAQ 8710W

This latest model from HP is an incredibly impressive laptop, which rivals most desktop systems in terms of performance. The build quality is superb, it features a full-size keyboard with numeric keypad, and the display is rich and crisp, though some may find that the 1,920 x 1,200mm resolution makes it hard to see icons and toolbars clearly. The only downside of the 8710w is its size, making it more of a desktop replacement than an out-and-out laptop, but there are few tasks or 3D CAD models too big for this machine. www.hp.com/uk



NOTEBOOK	PROCESSOR (CPU)	MEMORY (RAM)/HARD DRIVE	GRAPHICS CARD/SCREEN SIZE/RES
1 HP Compaq 8710w	Intel Core 2 Duo T7700 (2.4GHz)	2GB DDR2 RAM/120GB 7,200RPM Serial ATA	Nvidia Quadro FX 1600M (512MB)/430mm TFT/1,920 x 1,200 pixels (WUXGA)
2 Dell Precision M4300	Intel Core 2 Duo T7500 (2.2GHz)	2GB DDR2 RAM/160GB 7,200RPM Serial ATA	Nvidia Quadro FX 360 (256MB)/390mm TFT/1,680 x 1,050 pixels (WSXGA+)
3 Panasonic Toughbook Executive CF-T7	Intel Core Duo ULV U7500 (1.06GHz)	1GB DDR2 RAM/80GB Serial ATA (shock resistant)	Intel GM965 (up to 384MB shared memory)/305mm TFT/1,024 x 768 pixels (XGA)
4 Sony Vaio VGN-TZ32VN/X	Intel Core 2 Duo U7700 (1.33GHz)	2GB DDR2 RAM/64GB solid state	Intel GMA 950 (256MB)/280mm TFT/1,366 x 768 pixels (WXGA)
5 Apple MacBook Air	Intel Core 2 Duo (1.6GHz)	2GB DDR2 RAM/80GB 4,200RPM Parallel ATA	Intel GMA X3100 (up to 144MB memory)/335mm TFT/1,280 x 800 pixels (WXGA)



4 SONY VAIO VGN-TZ32VN/X

Those not normally affected by gadget lust probably will be when they set eyes on Sony's latest diminutive laptop. The TZ32VN/X is stylish, lightweight and slender and like Apple's MacBook Air features a remarkably thin screen. The ultra-low-voltage chip means battery life is excellent but performance is significantly lower compared to larger laptops. With a 64GB solid-state hard drive durability is enhanced as there are no moving parts. Finally, with mobile broadband built in you can connect to the Internet anywhere you can get a mobile phone signal.

www.sonymstyle.co.uk



3 PANASONIC TOUGHBOOK EXECUTIVE CF-T7

Panasonic's ruggedised notebooks are protected against falls, liquid spillages, dust and impact. The low-voltage processor and heavy-duty battery of the CF-T7 give it exceptional battery life. It also features an adjustable strap under the casing and touch-screen functionality for one-handed operation. For Internet access on site mobile broadband is an optional extra. The CF-T7 is not a particularly powerful laptop, but is ideal as a general-purpose machine for site visits. For even more protection against damage, check out Panasonic's semi- and fully ruggedised products.

www.executive.toughbook.eu/en



5 APPLE MACBOOK AIR

Apple's industrial design is legendary, which is one reason why its notebooks are so popular with architects. The latest MacBook Air is an incredibly slim machine, but it loses out on functionality and performance as a result. There is no DVD drive, and the hard drive is less responsive, and the processor slower than other MacBooks, but it is still more than capable for general business applications and 2D CAD. The MacBook Air runs Apple's own OS X Operating System, but its Intel chip can also run Microsoft Windows. It has looks to die for and is light and compact, but for more power/functionality check out the classic MacBook or MacBook Pro.

www.apple.com/uk

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802.11a/g/Draft n + Bluetooth 2.0 + Mobile Broadband (HSDPA) (Vodafone)/3 x USB/1 x Firewire	361 x 263 x 35mm/2.9kg	8X DVD+/-RW	Windows XP Professional (32 bit)	£1,005/three-year next-day on-site warranty
802.11a/b/g + Bluetooth 2.0/ 3 x USB	268 x 214 x 28mm/1.4kg	N/A	Windows XP Professional (32 bit)	£1,275/three-year return to base
802.11a/b/g/n + Mobile Broadband (HSDPA)/2 x USB	277 x 198 x 23mm/1.2kg	8X DVD+/-RW	Windows Vista Business	£1,786/one-year return to base
802.11n + Bluetooth 2.1/1 x USB	325 x 227 x 4 to 19mm/1.4kg	Optional USB DVD SuperDrive	Mac OS X Edition	£1,189/three-year on-site warranty (AppleCare)

BUYER'S GUIDE, BY GREG CORKE

DIGITAL CAMERAS

HINTS AND TIPS

- Digital SLRs provide more control over your photos and flexibility with lenses. For architectural exteriors a standard zoom (18-55mm) will give you a good range but for interiors you may need to invest in a super-wide-angle lens (10-20mm) for best results. Compacts are generally easier to use than SLRs, and 'prosumer' compacts offer many of the manual controls you'd find on an SLR.
- The higher the number of megapixels the bigger your prints, but don't get too concerned about this. A 12 megapixel camera will print top-quality pictures at 330 x 254mm while a 6 megapixel model will still print at 330 x 167mm.
- In film cameras, ISO ratings were used to denote how sensitive film was to light. In digital cameras you can set the ISO scale with higher ISO ratings, which gives brighter photos in low light.
- Larger LCD screens make it easier to compose a photo.
- You will need to invest in an additional memory card, as built-in memory is small.



2 NIKON D40

The Nikon D40 is a great entry point into the world of Digital SLRs. It's incredibly easy to use, with a number of excellent point-and-shoot features. It has 6.1 megapixels and it doesn't have a dust-reduction system like the Canon EOS 400D and Olympus E-510, but starts up quickly as a result. It should also be noted that it doesn't support auto-focus when using non-auto-focus lenses. However, if these features aren't important to you it's an excellent entry-level SLR with an attractive price tag too. www.nikon.co.uk

1 CANON EOS 400D

Canon's entry-level digital SLR is one of the smallest in its class but can be uncomfortable for those with large hands. Image quality is superb and operation is simple. The EOS 400D features a new self-cleaning dust function which uses ultrasonics to shake dust off the sensor at power-up. The 63mm display is clear and bright and turns off automatically when the photographer places their face against the viewfinder, in order to reduce glare. www.canon.co.uk



DIGITAL CAMERA	MAX RESOLUTION	LENS RANGE (35mm EQUIVALENT)	ISO SPEED (EQUIVALENT)
1 Canon EOS 400D (lens kit)	10.1 megapixels (3,888 x 2,592)	18-55mm	100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600
2 Nikon D40 (lens kit)	6.1 megapixels (3,008 x 2,000)	18-55mm	200, 400, 800, 1,600, 3,200
3 Ricoh Caplio GX100VF	10.0 megapixels (3,648 x 2,736)	24-72mm	80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600
4 Canon Powershot G9	12.1 megapixels (4,000 x 3,000)	35-210mm	80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600
5 Olympus E-510 (dual lens kit)	10.0 megapixels (3,648 x 2,736)	14-42mm & 40-150mm	100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600



3 RICOH CAPLIO GX100VF

If you're looking for a simple-to-use compact with an unparalleled wide angle capability with low distortion then the Ricoh Caplio GX100 is the camera for you. The 24mm-72mm lens is the best wide angle in its class and is significantly wider than most compacts which stop at 35mm. This can also be extended a further 19 mm using an optional wide conversion lens. The camera itself is incredibly slim and features near SLR control should you require it, providing a great alternative to those want the benefits of an SLR without the bulk. www.ricoh.co.uk

4 CANON POWERSHOT G9

The PowerShot G9 is Canon's top-end 'prosumer' compact boasting excellent build quality and a range of controls to rival many Digital SLRs. The zoom range is impressive and it is an excellent choice for picking up architectural details, but it may struggle with interior shots. However, it's also compatible with wide-angle, telephoto and macro supplementary lenses. It offers the biggest number of megapixels (12.1) out of all five cameras and the 76mm LCD screen is superb. Image quality is good and it shoots excellent movies. www.canon.co.uk



5 OLYMPUS E-510

The Olympus E-510 double-zoom kit is the most expensive of the five cameras but it does come with two good lenses – a wide-angle 14-42mm and a telephoto 40-150mm. This is the cheapest way to buy lenses and provides great flexibility for all types of architectural shots. The E-510 is particularly comfortable, responsive in use and the picture quality is excellent. The E-510 also comes with anti-shake technology and the dust-reduction system is extremely effective. www.olympus.co.uk

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63.5mm (230,000 pixels)	SD, SDHC	126 x 64 x 94mm/475g	£249 (after £30 cash-back from Nikon)/12-month warranty (to three years after registration with Nikon)
63.5mm (230,000 pixels)	SDHC, SD, MMC (26MB internal memory)	112 x 58 x 25mm/220g	£369 (with viewfinder kit)/two-year warranty
76mm (230,000 pixels)	SD, SDHC, MMC, MMCplus, HC MMCplus, (32MB memory card supplied)	106 x 72 x 43mm/320g	£349/12-month warranty
63.5mm (230,000 pixels)	CompactFlash Type I/II, x D	136 x 92 x 68 mm/460g	£529/two-year warranty



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PRODUCT

Jean Nouvel's virility

James Pallister reviews Pritzker Prize winner Jean Nouvel's design for L'Homme Yves Saint Laurent

No, it's not a penis. Calm down class. Jean Nouvel's package for Yves Saint Laurent's L'Homme fragrance 'symbolises a fully assumed virility', according to the accompanying blurb. Crikey. Is that right, Mr Nouvel? That's right, the bottle is meant to 'fit easily to a man's hand while stimulating different aspects of his imagination'. Which bits exactly?

The bottle came to me anonymously – a black bag with leather handles and a discreet YSL logo. Inside was a matt black box with YSL printed in gloss-varnish and French architect Nouvel credited in lower-case sans serif as the designer. A black, dense foam cuboid encases the glass bottle – a less feminine version of Nouvel's Torre Agbar skyscraper in Barcelona. According to the mood boards in the bilingual marketing puff, itself sandwiched between two rather flaccid pieces of 8mm neoprene, the foam casing was informed by the moulded tool cases that house drill bits and power tools. Grrr.

A hexagonal opening at one end of the cuboid allows the bottle to be pulled out by its base. The bottle itself measures up (well above the national average) at 190mm. Sliding it out, the effect is like extracting a mini nuclear pile; easing it in, it's akin to administering an enema. Made from heavy plastic, the bottle's base doubles as the top of the atomiser. Its shape, unsheathed from its casing, hammers home the whole ensemble's unabashedly phallic appearance. It's all starting to get a bit embarrassing, frankly. The jaunty float that rises to the top of the liquid is a 'poetic evocation of a fishing float', according to Nouvel. It also looks like some kind of dodgy

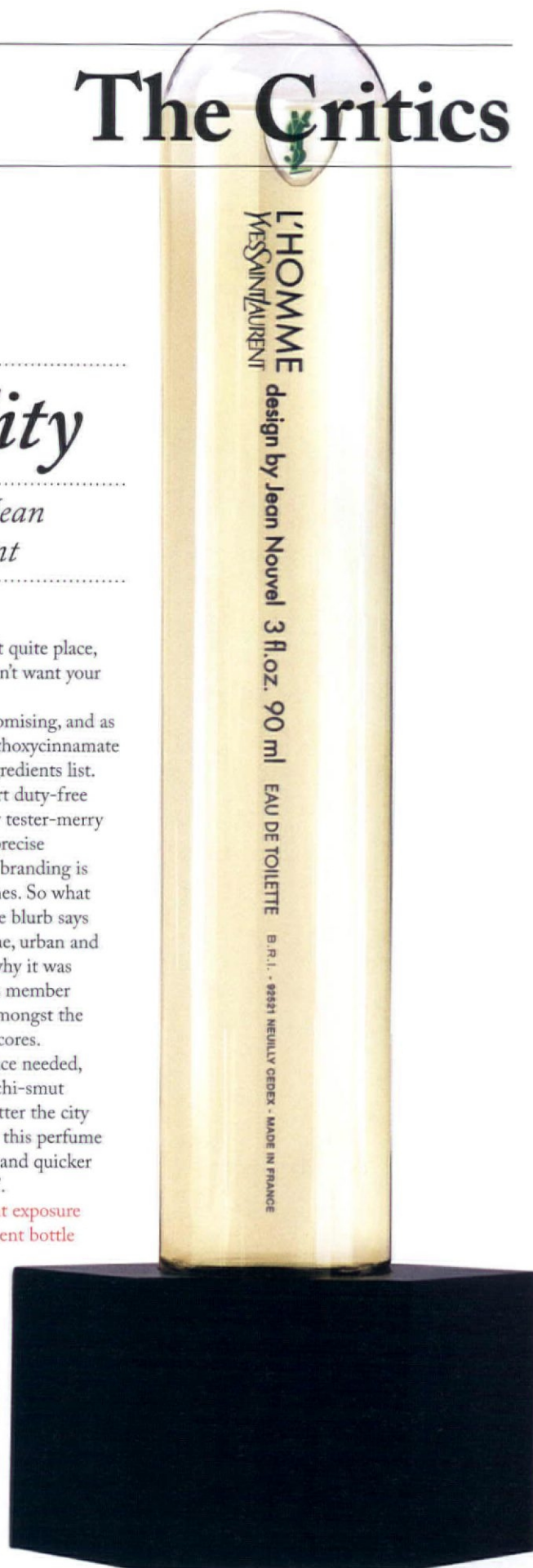
tickler whose purpose you can't quite place, but you're damned sure you don't want your mother to see.

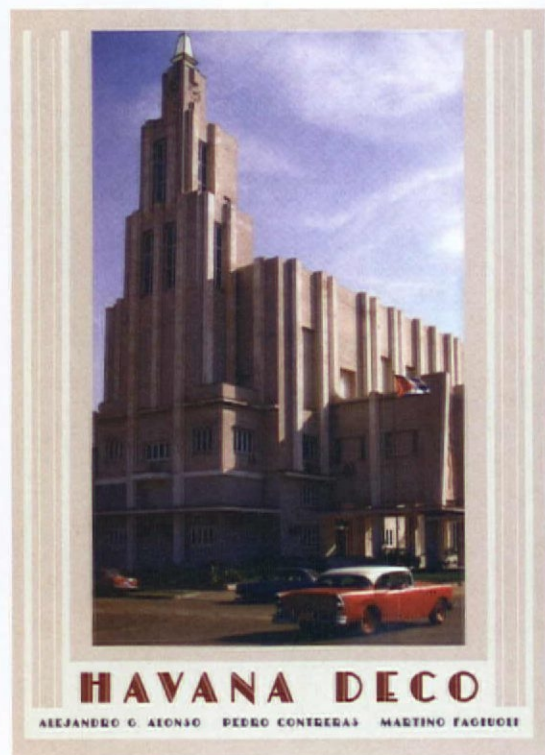
The scent itself is uncompromising, and as synthetic as the ethylhexyl methoxycinnamate and propylene glycol on its ingredients list. It is like walking into an airport duty-free shop that has been set upon by tester-merry teenagers. But more than the precise concoction of scent and water, branding is all-important to luxury perfumes. So what kind of man wears Nouvel? The blurb says 'his universe is deeply masculine, urban and contemporary'. That explains why it was addressed to me then. Nouvel's member is right at home on my desk, amongst the crumbs, coffee cups and apple cores.

If ever there was any evidence needed, perhaps in some theoretical archi-smut debate, that Nouvel wants to litter the city with his magnificent erections, this perfume bottle would be called to the stand quicker than you can say 'phallocentric'.

Resume: Nouvel seeks indecent exposure with his cocky Yves Saint Laurent bottle

Right Jean Nouvel's 'magnificent erection' for Yves Saint Laurent





The Art Deco interior of the Catalina Lasa mansion in Havana

BOOK

Another Cuba Libre, please

This kind of book is only as good as it looks, says Cezary Bednarski

Havana Deco by Alejandro G Alonso, Pedro Contreras and Martino Fagioli. W W Norton & Co, hardback, 192pp, £24

The languid pace of pre-revolution Buicks, Cadillacs, Chryslers, Chevrolets, DeSotos, Dodges, Fords, Lincolns, Pontiacs and Studebakers bouncing about on potholes is what catches the lens of the average visitor to Cuba. The usual backdrop is the country's spectacular colonial architecture, but it must be said that nothing goes so well with American 'sofas on wheels' as Art Deco. In Havana, one finds a plethora of very good, albeit neglected, buildings from all stylistic periods of the 20th century, but the architecture of the Art Deco period is as much *terra incognita* to the world as the island itself before 1492.

Independent Cuba was born in 1902, and it was around then that Art Nouveau appeared in Havana, drawing more from

Catalan Modernism than the French or Belgian idiom. Eclectic public buildings were followed by fine examples of Art Deco – drawing as much from Europe as Miami – which in turn preceded the emergence of Modernism, all against the background of an ongoing interest in neo-colonial styles. Even Cuban Modernism was deeply informed by the country's architectural heritage.

Cuban architects have produced many masterpieces worthy of world recognition, and so every book on the Cuban built environment is valuable. However, *Havana Deco* by Alejandro G Alonso, Pedro Contreras and Martino Fagioli is confused: neither a quality-print coffee-table volume with exquisite shots, nor an academic or even

informative study. Its index gives the game away – although it tries to cover a great deal of subjects on its 192 pages, from architecture through fittings and details to visual arts, this volume is lightweight and superficial.

Fagioli is described as 'a well-known Italian photographer' – unfortunately he is neither well-known (besides his few Cuban picture books), nor that inspiring. Matters are not helped by the sloppy picture editing, with a number of shots that should have been rejected ending up in print. Edificio Triángulo, a building located around the corner from my Havana home, is completely out of focus, as is a full-page shot of Edificio López Serrano, the best of Havana's 'skyscrapers'.

The Solimar building by Manuel Copado,

INSTALLATION

Down the rabbit hole

CJ Lim's *Alice in Wonderland*-inspired underground structure lacks real depth, says **Shumi Bose**

Seasons Through the Looking Glass, V&A tunnel entrance, 28 March 2008-29 March 2009

This cardboard structure is the second Tunnel Commission, installations occupying the entrance to the Victoria & Albert Museum that connect it underground with South Kensington tube station. CJ Lim, who designed the piece, is best known for his teaching (at the Bartlett, London) and some acclaimed drawings (exhibited in the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2004), and this is one of his few realised projects.

Inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lim says that his piece is intended to recall the moment when Alice falls down the rabbit hole and finds herself in a garden. The result, writes Lim, is 'a cartouche-shaped topiary bejeweled with rose blossoms that tapers to a crown before sprouting an array of forked branches whose shadows fence across the grand vaulted ceiling'.

The trellis-like structure is made of pieces of laser-cut cardboard, forming a tent shape – oval at the bottom, coming to a central spine at about head height and then spreading out to enclose the overhead fluorescent strip light. 'It grows towards the light, like a real plant,' Lim explains. Circular holes that punctuate the cardboard ribs dimly recall mazes and topiary, though Lim's own justification has more to do with wordplay on the 'Looking Glass' title. 'The mirror,' Lim says, referring to the real looking glass facing the tunnel entrance 'extends the garden into infinity'. Rolled up T-shirts, like rosettes, are wedged into the framework.

On the opening night the structure was sprayed with rose essence, which, together with a recording of Vivaldi's 'Spring', wafts through the tunnels in an attempt to engage the senses of the potential visitor. The installation will occupy the space for a year, undergoing seasonal modifications: it will be splashed with red paint during summer, and re-blossomed in winter with rolled up woollen scarves in place of the T-shirts.

Lim says that this project is posing questions about natural and artificial materials, and Lewis Carroll is territory he has worked with before. However, unlike his acclaimed drawings and abstract maquettes – one of which can currently be seen in the V&A's China Design Now show (AJ 27.03.08) – the effect of *Seasons through the Looking Glass* is simply not aesthetically intriguing enough to leave one with interesting rather than irksome questions.

Resume: Lim's cardboard take on Lewis Carroll will get curiouiser and curiouiser as the year goes on

built in 1944, could easily be claimed by the Modern movement in Cuba, however handy it might have been for inclusion under the 'Deco Streamline' chapter. In this context, it is curious that the Santeiro building by Emilio de Soto, from 1937, is not included – it is certainly from the same mould as Solimar, if not more dramatic and habitable.

There is not a single plan in this book. Thus, the Hospital de Maternidad Obrera in the Marianao district's inescapable symbolic

Matters are not helped by the sloppy picture editing, with shots that should have been rejected ending up in print

dimension has totally escaped the authors. The building was devoted solely to maternity and womanhood, and the sex is represented symbolically, if graphically, in plan.

All in all, this is a rather insubstantial production, but considering the dearth of published information on 20th century architecture in Cuba, it is still one I will place in the Cuban section of my bookshelves.

Resume: One can never have too many Cuba Libres, but this portrait of Havana is rather blurry



Rolled-up T-shirts in CJ Lim's *Seasons Through the Looking Glass*



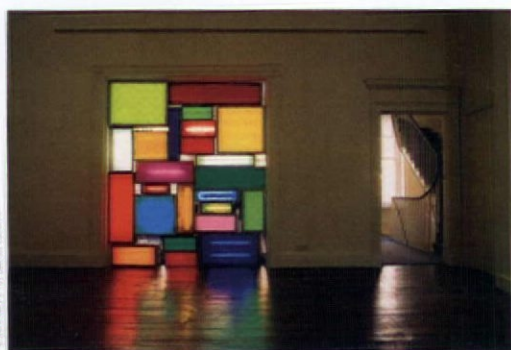
Critic's Choice

Batchelor's book covers the whole spectrum of colour's influence, says Andrew Mead

As creator of art works such as *Barrier* (2002, pictured below) and author of *Chromophobia* (2000), David Batchelor is the ideal person to edit *Colour* (£12.50) – an anthology of writings on the subject, published jointly by the Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press. As Batchelor admits in the introduction, it's 'an unruly assortment' of some 120 texts, dating from what he takes to be the onset of Modernity in the 1850s. Charles Baudelaire rubs shoulders with Rem Koolhaas in a melee of artists, architects, novelists, philosophers and poets.

Inevitably Le Corbusier's 'A Coat of Whitewash' is here, hymning the virtues of 'a background of white', though Corb's attitude to colour was more complex than this piece suggests. His contemporary, the artist Fernand Léger, declares that 'the transformation of the wall by colour will be one of the most thrilling problems of modern architecture'. Sculptor Donald Judd discusses red and black with an awareness of the 20th century's whole new palette of synthetic hues. Koolhaas sees colour as 'a treatment that can affect reality in a more subtle way than mere paint'.

There's a satisfying balance between practitioners and theorists – the latter including Ludwig Wittgenstein on colour, perception and language, and critic/novelist Umberto Eco on how cultural factors condition the colours we see. The anthology begins with a number of aphorisms (Josef Albers: 'Colour deceives continuously') but many of the texts have a condensed, aphoristic quality. *Colour* is a book whose contents seem to exceed its 235 pages.



ANDREW WILKINSON



BOOK

If it ain't Baroque, don't fix it, says Neil Manson Cameron

The Baroque Architecture of Sicily. By Maria Giuffrè, photography by Melo Minnella. Thames & Hudson, hardback, 288pp, £48

If one definition of architecture is the manipulation of light and shade, then Sicily's Baroque architecture represents a supreme episode of chiaroscuro. From its roots in the myriad hybrid traditions of Sicilian culture, it evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries into one of the most bizarrely distinctive idioms of architectural expression in Europe – a localised style characterised by a taste for gloopy excrescences and theatrical excess.

During much of the period covered by Maria Giuffrè's book, *The Baroque Architecture*

of Sicily, the region was nominally controlled by Spain or Austria, but the continuing power of the local aristocracy and church remained the key factors which allowed architectural patronage to flourish. Its strategic location between Europe and Mediterranean trade routes allowed Sicily enormous economic importance. This resulted in numerous foreign invasions, which gave its culture richly diverse strands, but the consistent tendency towards decorative complexity from the 12th century onwards illustrates the strength of Byzantine influence. It is this gluttonous taste for visual embellishment and elaboration which gives Sicilian Baroque architecture its distinctive feel, as if the power of the sun itself were able to carve out depth, shadow and drama.

Amplly demonstrating the potential for disaster to precipitate unforeseen achievement was the great earthquake of 1693, which destroyed most of the significant buildings in the Val di Noto in the south-east of the island, affecting over 50 towns and 300



Left San Francesco Saverio Church, Palermo, Italy



villages. It was this devastating event which led to the mature evolution of Sicilian Baroque, resulting in such extraordinary developments as the new town of Noto, now a World Heritage Site. The churches and palazzi of towns such as Modica and Ragusa were extensively rebuilt in the first decades of the 18th century, and a generation of talented architects such as Rosario Gagliardi and

The gluttonous taste for visual embellishment gives Sicilian Baroque architecture its distinctive feel

Giovanni Amico were sustained by the insatiable need for new or reconstructed buildings. The latest developments in Roman architecture were brought to the island by Sicilian-born Giovan Battista Vaccarini, with works such as his inventive completion of the facade of the Duomo at Catania.

What this large-format book does better than any other study of Sicilian Baroque is to

illustrate it beautifully. For me, the photography of Melo Minnella is its most effective contribution. The text shows some unfortunate qualities, both of a book originally written in another language and of the tendency of Italian architectural writing towards flaccid characterisation. The best overview on the subject is still Anthony Blunt's *Sicilian Baroque* (1968), a classic of British art history, and Stephen Tobriner's *The Genesis of Noto* (1982) brings technical and historical expertise to the extraordinary architectural aftershocks of the 1693 earthquake. This new publication is to be welcomed as a wonderful visual resource, but it is by no means the last word.

Resume: The Italian tendency towards sweet nothings spoils this otherwise beautiful tome

The AJ would like to extend sincerest condolences to the family of Neil Manson Cameron, who passed away since the writing of this review

5 THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

1 *Towards a New Architecture*

Charles Knevitt, director of the RIBA Trust, discusses Le Corbusier's seminal book, *Vers Une Architecture*.

3.30pm on 4 April in the Friend Room, Christ Church College, Oxford

2 *Jürgen Partenheimer*

Climb the spiral staircase of Birmingham's Perrott's Folly and experience artist Jürgen Partenheimer's installations (pictured below).

Until 25 May at Perrott's Folly, Birmingham
www.ikon-gallery.co.uk

3 *Suburban Futures*

Learn about building sustainable neighbourhoods in outer urban areas in this exhibition. Until 8 June at The Architecture Centre, Narrow Quay, Bristol. www.architecturecentre.co.uk

4 *Landscape and Industry*

Witness the changing landscape of Stoke-on-Trent via historical images and the work of photographer Michael Collins.

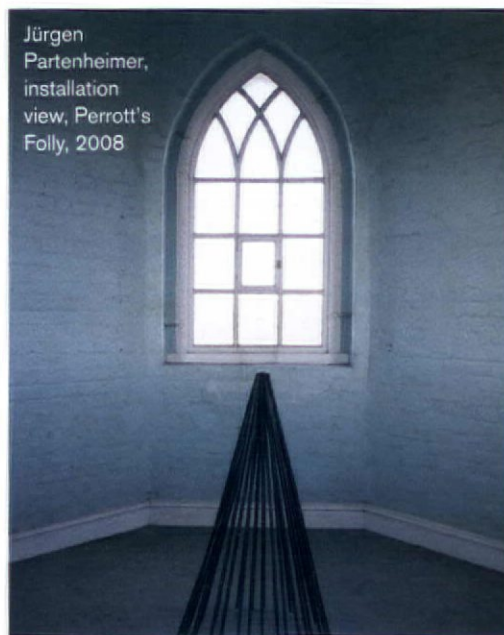
Until 15 June at The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Stoke-on-Trent
www.stoke.gov.uk/museums

5 *Maison Tropicale*

Last chance to meander through Jean Prouvé's 'flat-pack' house on the banks of the Thames.

Until April 13 at Tate Modern, Bankside, London

Jürgen Partenheimer, installation view, Perrott's Folly, 2008



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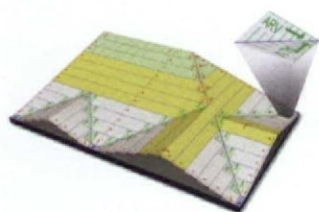
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JUST – the first product in InterfaceFLOR's FairWorks range of groundbreaking flooring with a fair-trade ethos – is being launched at this year's Design Prima show. JUST draws on local skills and materials from India and is backed by a Sustainable Livelihoods policy to produce a flooring product which is both sustainable and stunning.

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AJ ENQUIRY 202

LA Architects has used highly insulating Kalwall cladding from Stoakes Systems in a spectacular way at the Dereham Leisure Centre in Norfolk. Kalwall's diffused daylighting creates a uniform ambience which eliminates shadows and glare, and makes blinds unnecessary. For more information visit www.stoakes.co.uk

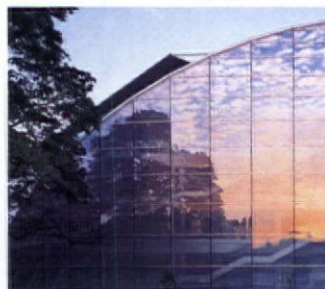
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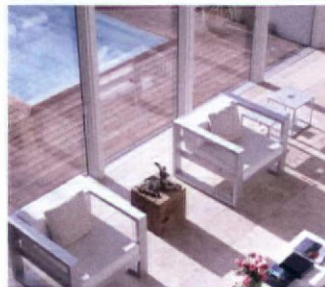
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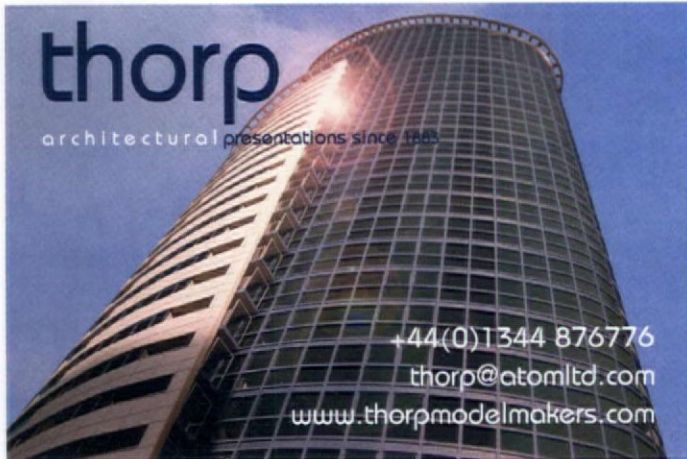
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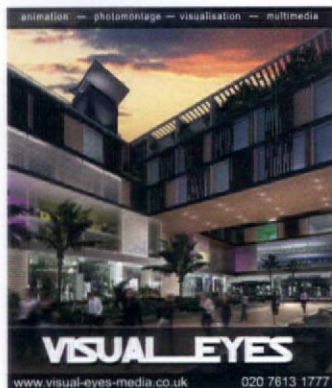
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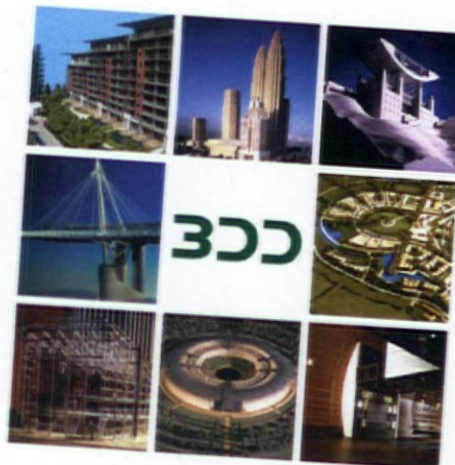
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Ian Martin. Art counsel: my week of blood, sweat, tears and Spitalfields...

MONDAY. In Spitalfields, where corporate plunder of the area's cultural assets has galvanised the conceptual art community.

I'm one of 30 houseguests invited to 'be human art' at Julie Beaker's latest acquisition, Draping Fold, a Grade II-listed 18th-century weaving works. She recently bought it, 'cash deal, four tarrants' which I later discover is millionaire slang for million. Also, I think 'human art' is some sort of tax wiggle. None of us has to do much, except when Antony Gormley pops round for a sherry. **Then we all climb into our identical Antony Gormley suits and stand absolutely still, looking blankly at each other, to wind him up.**

Retro fondue 'supper' at 2am, with lively conversation about the corporateness of evil.

TUESDAY. After a catered 'breakfast' at 3pm that challenges our perception of breakfast and pushes the boundaries of catering, it's off to the new inside-out community centre created by Rebecca Panelfold for a residents' meeting installation.

How breakfast times change. In the militant muttonchopped loonpanted 1970s, campaigners saved Spitalfields buildings simply by squatting them. It was a triumph for the conservationists, indeed for anyone in Huguenot clothing on a bicycle.

A generation on, the Mature British Artists have avoided heritage middle management altogether by buying up the buildings for whatever they cost. And having bought them are then bugged if they're going to allow developers to drop **huge glistening polyps of luxury office space** everywhere.

The protest meeting seems a little unfocused. The Mitchell brothers have assembled a harrowing montage of tiny limbs piled up around a Hawksmoor church. Shazz Mavisbank's filmed herself ranting about the Mayor of London from inside a moose's head. Angry works have been donated by nearly everyone in Tate Modern – glazed protest pottery, melancholy magazine cuttings, drawings of bomb-shaped bankers, splattery watercolours depicting 'New Philistan' and reams of scribbled abstract pain. Could it get any worse than this? Ah, here's our peasant lunch, and a grumpy-looking French DJ.

WEDNESDAY. Trouble in Spitalfields. Graffiti artists are now supporting the campaign against commercial development. Street art has appeared overnight. **A stencilled rat with Boris Johnson's head drives a digger.** Two property developers nakedly embrace. A dancing pound sign wears a cowboy's hat. The parking signs have been cloned to read 'Shit Off Moneybags'.

The conceptual artists are very cross. They do not want vulgar jokes sprayed all over their Georgian brickwork. Julie assembles everyone in the old tripe pantry, now painted out in Farrow & Ball Phlegmish Green, to explain that the proper place for vulgar jokes is **INSIDE** a gallery. We're issued with graffiti removal sprays and activist smocks, and sent out to reclaim the streets for conceptualism.

THURSDAY. Day off from human art, so I go to the local, The Notapipe. It's a pub outside (covered with ironic graffiti) and a bar inside (plastered with ironic art). I know

where I belong. In the ironic bar, with several other weak-willed houseguests. Some have clearly been in a bitter mood for hours. 'You know she's getting £400 a day for each of us off the Arts Council. Oh yeah, **very fucking figurative I'm sure...**'

FRIDAY. Submit expenses claim for conceptual subsistence. Later, **accept cash bribe to stand lookout for graffiti artists.**

SATURDAY. Spitalfields art community five-a-side football. Conceptual vs Graffiti. Who will prevail – the insiders or the outsiders? Strong squads on both sides. **Conceptual: Mavisbank, Gosh, Fimble (cpt), Gurnington, Mape. Graffiti: Gutsy, Ballys (cpt), Knobbsy, Arsey, Pranko.**

For the first five minutes the Conceptuals play in a 2-1-1.5-0.5 formation, then just sort of mill about. The Graffitis huddle around their goal, smoking. Gosh squanders his side's best opportunity of the game, heading high from a Mavisbank delivery and then moving into a mixed-media phase. In the 41st minute Gutsy nicks the ball and does one. He never comes back. Who's won? In a way the British art consumer is the real winner, although the drinks are on Julie later at the Notapipe.

SUNDAY. Wake up in the recliner. Whoa, was it all just some psychogeographical dream? No. But also yes. **Imaginary journeys through a culturo-mental hinterland** can be exhausting either way. I nod off again.

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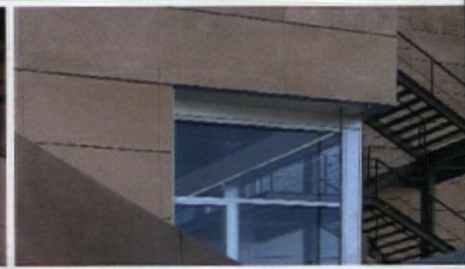
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