

# THE THREE TOWERS

*Union North refurbishes Manchester  
council flats for Urban Splash – page 34*

AJ

10.04.08

Technical & Practice  
*Updating Mies van der  
Rohe's Crown Hall – p46*

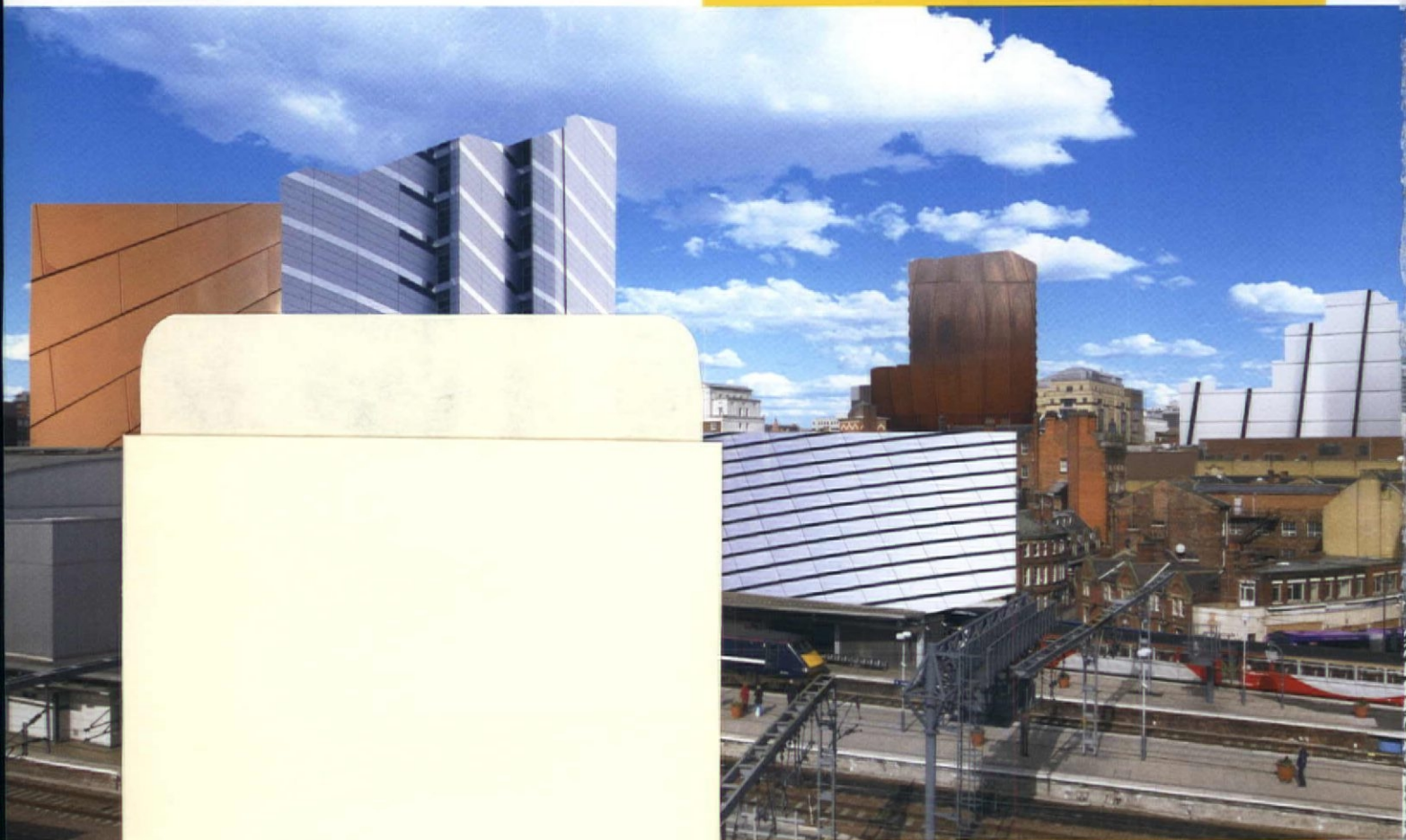
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# Contents

## News

- 05 SMC severs all links with **Stewart McColl**
- 06 Plans for **Olympic fencing arena** dropped
- 18 CABA voices fears over future school design

## Comment

- 23 **Leader** We need to have more faith in big projects
- 24 Architects for Aid's Victoria Harris on **working in the world's most dangerous places**
- 66 **Ian Martin** meets the Spritzer Prize winner

## Features

- 30 – 33 **Planning** Road-testing **the new 1APP form**
- 34 – 43 Union North refurbishes **three ex-council blocks** in Manchester for Urban Splash
- 52 – 57 **The Critics** Peter Greenaway's Last Supper

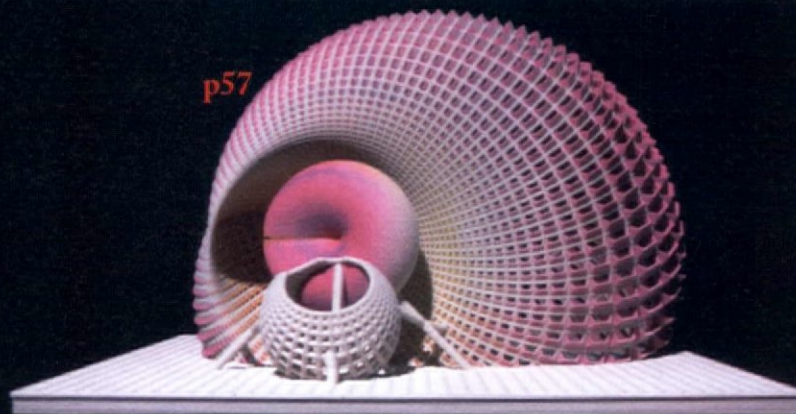
## Jobs & Classified

- 59 Classified advertising
- 62 Top five jobs: **Bespoke; Centurion; Historic Royal Palaces; Anglia Ruskin University; Sheffield Teaching Hospitals**

## This week online

Peter Davey applauds the genius of John Buonarotti Papworth  
[WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK](http://WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK)

p57



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SMC founder  
Stewart McColl

## SMC CUTS TIES WITH GROUP FOUNDER STEWART MCCOLL

The SMC Group is to ditch the SMC prefix and rebrand, severing all links with its founder, Stewart McColl.

The firm's managing director, Chris Littlemore, confirmed that London-based brand design consultancy Brand & Consult had been appointed to create a new name and corporate image for the group, which employs 602 people and includes Will Alsop's Battersea-based practice.

Littlemore said: 'We are reviewing our options regarding the group brand and it is early days. A rebranding would help provide the group with a platform from which to move forward following the successful restructuring.'

Commenting on the proposed change, Alsop said: 'This is a good thing and very necessary.'

SMC stands for Stewart McColl and Stewart McColl has nothing to do with the business any more.'

Colman Architects managing director, Trevor Colman, who was an associate at McColl's own London-based practice McColl Architects, and who spurned a subsequent takeover offer from SMC, said the newly appointed SMC board was right to distance itself from its founder.

'The SMC brand is associated with fantastic growth and weak performance,' said Colman.

'Stewart had always dreamt of creating the architectural equivalent of [advertising giant] WPP. But while advertising companies can be a bit "fluffy", architecture firms have to have substance – their clients need it.'

Since its formation in 1996, SMC has embraced an acquisi-

tional strategy, which peaked in 2006 with the purchase of nine architectural practices, including Alsop's for £1.8 million.

But since an all-time share price high of 196p in January 2007, its worth has continued to plummet to an all-time low of just under 7p at the end of last month. And last week it posted a £3 million operating loss that Littlemore said was 'purely down to the firm's exceptional circumstances' in what he described as 'challenging times' (AJ online 03.04.08).

While McColl refused to comment on the forthcoming rebrand, he was adamant that he 'would stay in architecture'. However, Littlemore said that involvement would almost certainly not be with his old firm: 'It is highly unlikely,' he said.

McColl has a 3 per cent stake in SMC, but has so far not shown any interest in selling up the shares which, as AJ went to press, were worth just over 10p each.

*Max Thompson*

### THE CURRENT SMC FAMILY TREE

(Date acquired in brackets)

- Alsop (2006)
- Charter Architects (2006)
- Corstorphine & Wright (2002)
- Covell Matthews (2006)
- Davis Duncan (2006)
- DTR:UK (2005)
- Facilities Management (2007)
- Gower (1998)
- Hickton Madeley (2006)
- Hugh Martin (2006)
- Jenkins & Marr (2006)
- Parr (2006)
- Penrose (2006)



# PLANS TO BUILD 2012 OLYMPIC FENCING ARENA DITCHED

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) has abandoned plans for an 8,000-seat temporary fencing venue in East London's 2012 Olympic Park.

ODA chairman John Armitt said the Games' fencing tournament would instead be staged at ExCeL, in London's Docklands – a move he claimed would save the ODA £70 million.

Although Armitt said the move was yet to be officially sanctioned by either the International Olympic Committee or fencing's

governing body, the Fédération Internationale d'Escrime, he claimed that confirmation was 'a near certainty'.

In August 2007 the fencing and basketball venues were released as a joint OJEU. Wilkinson Eyre and KSS Design Group were selected from the 10-strong shortlist, which also included Grimshaw Architects, to design the basketball venue.

The same shortlist was vying to design the fencing hall.

Armitt said the weightlifting,

which was to be staged in ExCeL, will now move to the Millennium Dome, and the basketball arena will fill the gap in the Olympic Park masterplan left by the fencing hall.

The 'old' basketball site, in the Olympic Park, will be occupied by 'back-of-house' facilities.

Andrew Taylor of Patel Taylor Architects, which entered a bid for the fencing arena with Bligh Voller Nield and Arup, said: 'It's a good decision to make use of existing buildings where we can.'

A spokesman for the British Fencing Association said the organisation was not concerned by the news: 'In Athens we were miles away from the main stadium and in Sydney we had to be bussed in to Darling Harbour.'

The scrapping of the fencing hall leaves the Eton Manor sports complex as the sole remaining major venue awaiting a design team. David Morley Architects and Adjaye/Associates are among those on the shortlist. *Max Thompson and Kieran Long*



## STANTON WILLIAMS UNVEILS KING'S CROSS PAVILION

This image (*left*), is the first picture of Stanton Williams' new pavilion at King's Cross in London – part of its recently approved campus for Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

The £180 million scheme will sit in the heart of developer Argent's 800,000m<sup>2</sup> regeneration project and is the first scheme in the development to secure detailed planning permission.

As well as the new canalside pavilion, the Stanton Williams scheme will see the conversion of a listed Victorian granary complex into 39,000m<sup>2</sup> of space for the university (*below*) and the creation of a new public space, the size of Trafalgar Square, in front of the college.

Work is expected to start in the summer.





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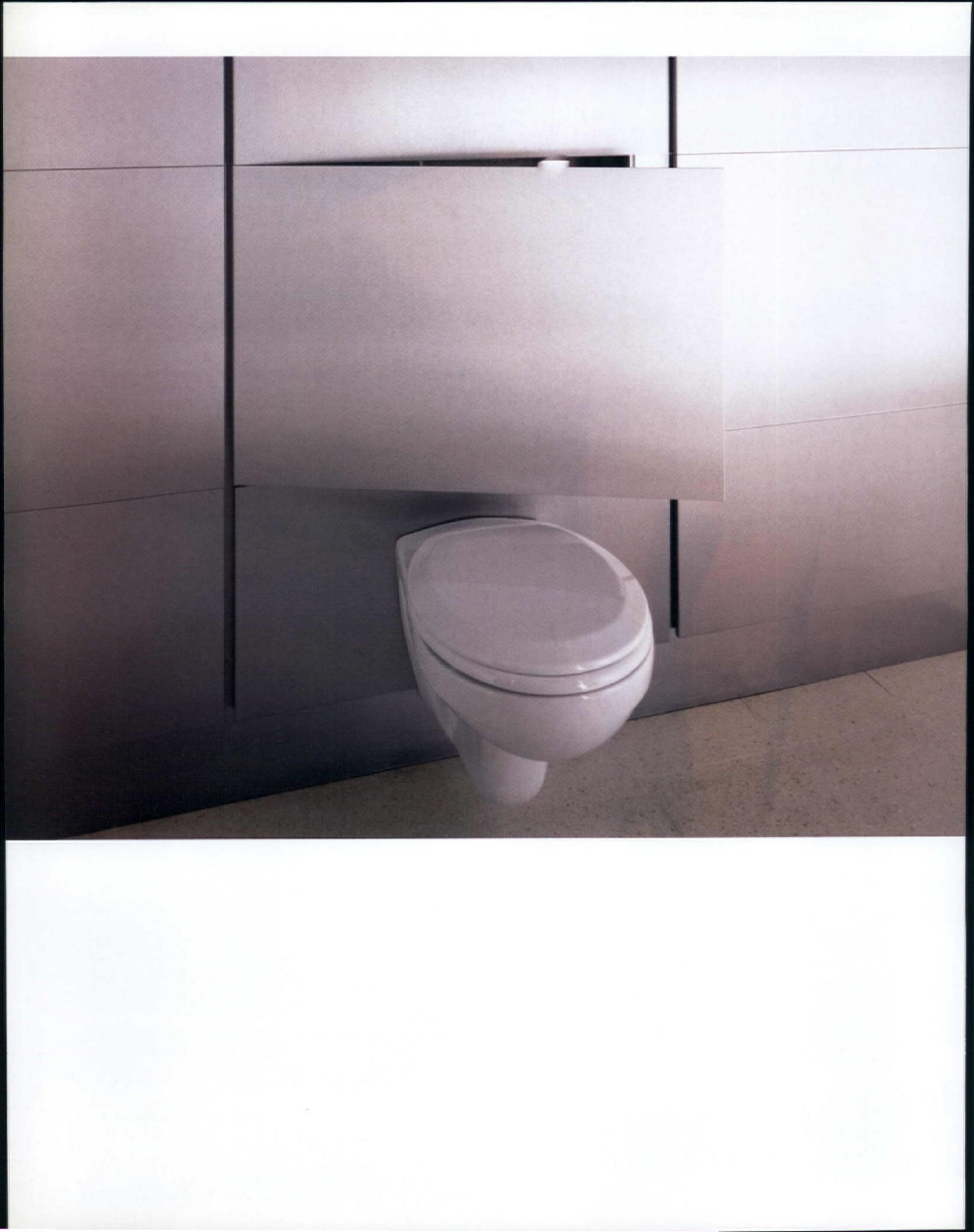
This is Woods Bagot's just-completed Qatar Science and Technology Park building, designed by the firm's London and Dubai offices, which makes up part of the emirate's 2,100,000m<sup>2</sup> Education City. The £263 million building has a 98,500m<sup>2</sup> floor area and will house research and development centres for a number of firms, including General Electric and Shell. *Richard Vaughan*

AJ 10.04.08











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# MAJOR UK FIRMS IN NEW YORK STRIFE

Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, RMJM, and Foster + Partners have all had New York schemes put on hold, drastically cut back, or redesigned.

Following news that Grimshaw's original Fulton Street transport hub proposal had been scrapped (AJ 03.04.08), it has emerged that Rogers' high-profile \$1.6 billion (£800 million) expansion of the Javits Convention Center has been significantly scaled back due to political wrangles.

The latest proposals for the project are 45,000m<sup>2</sup> smaller than the original and are described as a 'modest renovation'.

Meanwhile, it has also been confirmed that the practice's 185,000m<sup>2</sup> Silvercup Studio complex on the Long Island City

Waterfront is on hold. The \$1 billion (£500 million) mixed-use development, which won approval in mid-2006, has stalled due to issues over protracted land sales and the delayed removal of power plants from the site.

Elsewhere in the city, the American credit crunch has also started taking its toll. RMJM has already seen its 19-storey 'Paranoid Tower' (AJ 30.11.06) mothballed.

RMJM chief executive Peter Morrison confirmed the recession was biting. He said: 'The perception [of a significant slowdown] is right. There's a feeling of "let's wait and watch for six months".'

'One of ours has definitely been put on hold. I've heard the same happening to numerous

others, especially large offices.'

Morrison warned the jitters in the US could soon be felt in the UK. He said: 'There has been a nervousness in America much longer than it was actually perceived – whereas in the UK we are just getting started on it.'

Meanwhile Foster + Partners has insisted its long-awaited tower in Lexington Avenue (AJ 09.02.06), immediately behind Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building, has not hit the buffers despite so far failing to gain all-important 'zoning approval'.

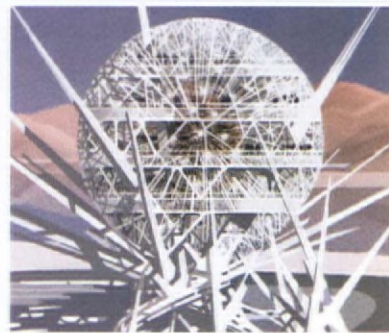
According to the practice, delays have resulted from changes to the building's interior – originally intended as offices – which has now been redesigned as a hotel.

*Richard Waite*

## THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

### CHETWOODS UNVEILS DESERT RETREAT

Chetwoods Architects has unveiled its design for a \$300 million (£150 million) retreat for world leaders in Nevada, USA. The spherical, six-storey Universitas Leadership Sanctuary complex (*pictured below*) has been described as a 'giant flower' with petals that collect solar, hydro and wind energy. The scheme will sit above a dam 17km from Las Vegas.



### EPCS COME INTO FORCE

The new Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) came into affect for all large commercial buildings and new homes this week. All non-domestic buildings put up for sale or rent of larger than 10,000m<sup>2</sup> will need an EPC assessment. The rules will come into force for all other non-residential buildings in October.

### 'PESSIMISM' OVER ZERO-CARBON TARGETS

The UK's leading housebuilders have admitted they are 'deeply uncomfortable' about their ability to achieve the government's targets for all new homes to be zero-carbon by 2016. David Strong, government adviser and chief executive of construction consultancy Inbuilt, said: 'When we asked the house-building industry whether it can deliver under the existing rules there was a mixed and mostly pessimistic view.'

Read all these stories and more at  
[WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK](http://WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK)

**HOUSE OF ORANGE** This is Foster + Partners' 'Project Orange' in Moscow. The 15-storey mixed-use design, centred around a gallery, was commissioned by firm Inteko, owned by Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov's wife, Yelena Baturina.







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**LONDON'S RESIDENTIAL MARKET Tuesday 10 June**

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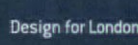
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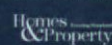
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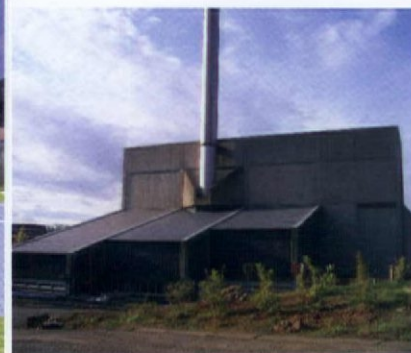




**Left** Studio DuB's plans to convert Womersley's boiler house into five flats

**Below** The building has been derelict since 2001

**Bottom** Proposed east and west elevations



# STUDIO DUB REVEALS PLANS FOR WOMERSLEY BOILER HOUSE

Edinburgh-based Studio DuB has applied for permission to convert Peter Womersley's recently-listed Dingleton boiler house in Melrose, Scotland, into flats.

The boiler house was built by the Scottish Modernist in 1977 to power a psychiatric unit at the former Dingleton Hospital. Despite being derelict since 2001, it recently became the fourth Womersley building to be listed by Historic Scotland in less than a year (AJ online 20.07.07).

Now Studio DuB has submitted plans to Scottish Borders Council for five apartments within the Brutalist concrete block. According to

practice principal Gordon Duffy, the building's striking chimney could be used 'as a flue for multi-fuel stoves in the proposed residential units'.

Former architect and Womersley expert Rebecca Wober said: 'The [Studio DuB] plans are surprisingly feasible and it is fantastic to think that the building may live again. The quality of the shuttered concrete is rather beautiful and it is an extraordinary building for its time and area.'

Deborah Mays, head of listing for Historic Scotland, said: 'We carried out a survey of Womersley's work in 2007 and it encouraged the debate about giving listed status to Modern architecture.'

'The majority of feedback was positive, which I think is an indicator that more and more people are recognising the significance of architects like Womersley.' *James McLachlan*





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# BSF – BUILDING SCHOOLS TOO FAST

Fears are growing that the public-private partnership that delivers BSF schools will encourage speed of construction over quality design, reports *Richard Vaughan*

The government's £45 million Building Schools for the Future (BSF) procurement process is 'intense, expensive and time-consuming' and to make matters worse, its 'contractors are going to want pay-back'.

So says Capita Architecture director Richard Woods, who is working on BSF schemes in Lancashire and Nottinghamshire. But Woods is not talking about the schools currently being designed – although they have already drawn stinging criticism from CABE. He instead is worried about the schools which will be designed five years from now, once a public-private partnership called the Local Education Partnership (LEP), is in full flow.

CABE is also concerned about the quality of schools that will be built once a LEP is formed – the partnership created once the contract is signed between the contractor-led consortium and the local authority. The design watchdog believes that these schools could be of worse quality than those already being produced.

CABE's head of enabling Mairi Johnson says: 'In theory the client and supply chain can take as long as they want to deliver schools once the LEP is formed, but the contractors will want to get them up and running as soon as possible to get a return.'

Johnson added that as no schools have been procured and

built in the later stages of an LEP, it is an 'unknown world' for local authorities, and so CABE wants to 'revamp' its design-review process to include schools designed later in the process.

'This is when the public sector finds out exactly who they are dealing with. During the bidding time the consortia will do anything to get the bid,' she says. 'Once they no longer have to bend over backwards, they may try to get the schools up as

quickly as they can.'

One source working for a major contractor involved in the BSF programme said that the design standards should be set from the initial school designs at the bidding stage.

'CABE should be encouraging the initial schemes to push the design benchmarks,' he says. 'The cost is benchmarked from the original scheme.'

One architect working on a BSF school who refused to be



**Right** Marks Barfield's Michael Tippett School, Lambeth, the most recent BSF school to be built, which was completed just 21 months from design inception





**Far left** Wilkinson Eyre's Bristol Brunel Academy, the first school to open under BSF  
**Left** CABE's Mairi Johnson

named said there is also the danger of contractors and architects using their best people during the bidding process only.

'Most of the time the "A Team" will win the bid, then the "B Team" will be brought in to actually work on the project,' he says. 'It's one of the brutal commercial realities.'

However, Partnership for Schools (PfS), the agency charged with the task of delivering the BSF programme, says it has the checks in place to ensure quality schools will be delivered.

A PfS spokeswoman said: 'All LEPs are required to deliver 'continuous improvement' year on year, and this includes design quality in all BSF schools. Improvement is measured by a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and in the case of design, based on the Design Quality Indicators (DQI) for schools.'

According to the Construction Industry Council, DQIs are effectively a tool kit and can easily be customised by the client to achieve their desired preferences.

But Woods believes that although the DQIs are the best LEPs can hope for, they are 'unlikely' to ensure good BSF design.

'This is a really important issue for BSF,' he says. 'Having the DQI tools is not a guarantor for good design. A bad school can do

well with DQIs as it draws on human perspective.'

Bristol City Council helped draw up the LEP process as it acted as a pathfinder on the first wave of the BSF programme, and it believes the measures are robust enough.

Bristol Council's BSF client manager Bob Rutherford says: 'While I can understand CABE's concerns, we believe the KPIs and DQIs should work, but they haven't been put to the test yet.'

'A local authority can help itself by making sure they have a design champion to give advice, as well as using the DQI tools.'

He adds: 'There is an assumption that LEPs are totally commercial, but we don't believe that to be the case. Those involved in LEPs want to build well-designed schools.'

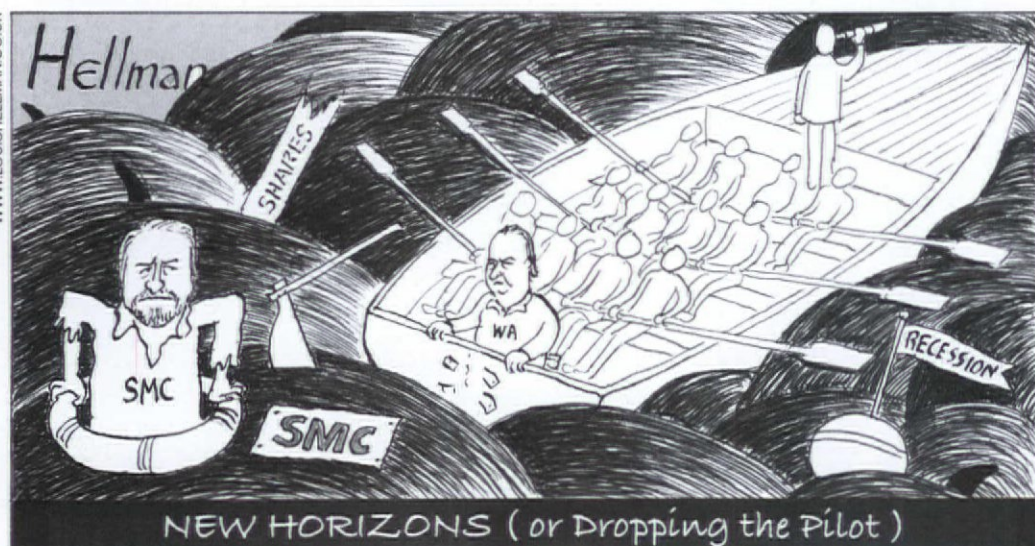
#### HOW AN LEP IS FORMED

- Local authority puts BSF contract out for tender via OJEU notice.
- Bidding consortia reduced to shortlist of two.
- Each consortium designs two to three sample schools to RIBA stage D.
- Preferred bidder selected and financial close agreed.
- Local Education Partnership formed between consortium and local authority.



# Astragal

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## NEW FACES

The little things matter to the RIBA. Apparently moves are afoot to give nice new uniforms to the reception staff at the institute's Portland Place HQ in London, in order to bolster its public face. The change follows the ongoing review of the RIBA brand, which also came up with a catchy mnemonic to capture the institute's worst traits: Reactive, Insular, Bureaucratic and All over the place. The cost, however, of all this branding work, including the standardisation of the logo, has not been small. Since 2000, the folk at Portland towers have shelled out £342,000, with another £178,000 expected to be forked out on 'Building the Brand' by 2011.

## ROYAL AFFRONT

Communities Secretary **Hazel Blears**, who recently announced yet more planning reforms (AJ 03.04.08), has now taken a wee

swipe at the **Prince of Wales**. Actually she has turned the tables on Critical Charlie by having a pop at his beloved village idyll, Poundbury in Dorset. Speaking to the Fabian Society, Blears reportedly said that if she were 'feeling cheeky' she would say the 160ha development was nothing more than 'an aggrandisement of the benefactor rather than [showing] real concern for the residents'.

## WISE WORDS

At the Architecture Foundation's first Real Architecture talk at Tate Modern last week, **Will Alsop** gave his theory on gaining philosophical confidence. In his view, in your 20s you discuss 'philosophies' and in your 30s these become 'concepts'. From your 40s to your 50s 'ideas' become 'notions', and eventually 'when you get to 60 you haven't got a fucking clue'. Alsop also slurred his words sufficiently to rebrand the developer of choice 'Urban Splosh'.

## SUITS YOU

Astragal enjoyed a wonderful lunch in one of London's five-star hotels this week, which was crowned with a few large brandies. Marvellous. During the third Napoleon (the drink, not the angry little man) the conversation turned to one of architecture's more flamboyant characters. A character who has, of late, rather fallen off the radar – **Stewart McColl** (see *News* on page 5). It turns out that the bearded Scot (pictured right) used to perfume his hands before meeting any of his clients. And even better, the ebullient chappie used to buy bespoke

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suits with his initials, SMC, forming the pinstripe. What a dandy!



TOM HOWARD

## THIS WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Which architect who has not yet won the Pritzker Prize deserves to do so: Peter Zumthor, Charles Correa, Kengo Kuma or Carme Pinós? (see *right for result*)

**Next week's question:** Will Building Schools for the Future result in good school design?

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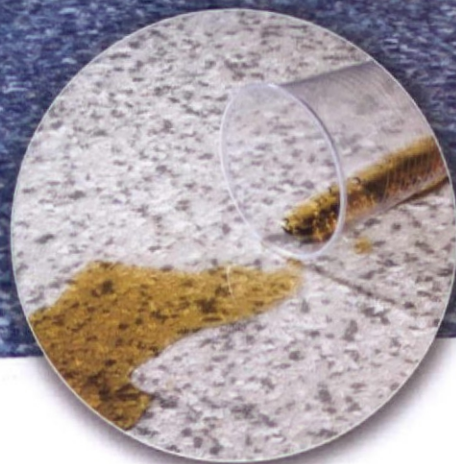




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**Architect  
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Commercial Units,  
Eden Valley Business Park  
Budget -  
£4,000,000**

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**Architect**

**Project - Commercial Units, Eden Valley Business Park  
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Information provided by Emap Glenigan from Interbuild visitor attendance





## Leader Long-term vision, not short-term derision, is needed for the success of large projects, says *Kieran Long*

Touring the Olympic site would give anyone involved in construction the frisson of excitement that comes from seeing a whole industry geared up to carry out a single task. The logistics of such a project are awe-inspiringly complicated, and the site as I saw it this week – a mud pit, with carefully prepared sites awaiting the various contractors to begin in earnest – has a sense of calm before the storm about it.

But there is also an understandable paranoia from some of those involved. I was asked last week by Sky News to be in a debate about whether Terminal 5 shows the UK is incapable of delivering large-scale construction projects like the Olympics effectively.

The Sky interviewer cited as evidence a raft of what she perceived to be disastrous projects: Wembley, the Jubilee Line Extension, Scottish Parliament etc. I love all of these schemes, but found it difficult to answer the over-budget/late brickbats. Must we accept that the public and media will always find something to criticise about big projects, no matter how brilliant they are?

I suppose if the recent capitalist makeover of the Millennium Dome's identity proves anything, then it is that the PR cycle is shorter than ever. All of the projects above can expect to have revisionist histories written about them before the decade is out. The fact that the Dome (or O2, as it is now called) was

the backdrop to the final stage of the Olympic torch's progress through London at the weekend caps a quite remarkable turnaround for 'Tony's empty tent'.

I don't have any answers to how the construction industry can make itself more popular when public approbation comes so quickly. We have to hunker down and console ourselves by having longer memories than most. The proof of the Olympic architecture will not be in how well the biometric ticketing system works or whether there are enough toilets, but in the buildings' capacity to represent 2012 to future generations. And that question is yet to be answered by the designs seen so far. [kieran.long@emap.com](mailto:kieran.long@emap.com)



## Obituary FaulknerBrowns founder Harry Faulkner-Brown is remembered by his former pupil *Terry Farrell*

Harry Faulkner-Brown, who died on 10 February at the age of 87, came into the lives of us Newcastle students in the fifth year of architecture school in 1960. He provided, right from the very first moment of introduction, a completely new level of energy, motivation and enthusiasm. His message was clear: expand your minds, look at the bigger picture and engage with real life.

Much later when we became friends. He reminisced about his early years; how he worked at a lowly level in the school of architecture, how he was promoted and encouraged to choose architecture as a profession by a professor Edwards. I could see that the bright curiosity and enthusiastic keenness were there from the start. Harry did not mess about and no sooner had he arrived

back here in the '60s, after 12 years in Canada, than he set up in practice, got nice projects, won awards (including a RIBA bronze medal for Jesmond Library) and recruited clever graduates and rapidly gave them senior posts and partnerships. It was as though his period in North America was a preparation for the return to his home city where, when he got here again, he was going to take the place by storm. And he did.

With hindsight none of this was rash, everything was, in Harry's inimitable,

### **We set off at a clattering brisk pace, up and down lanes and over stiles**

responsible, grown-up manner, properly thought through in business, professional and creative terms. I watched his firm grow and create buildings of real distinction. This record of achievement continues in his name, even if he is no longer involved. I know he regretted not continuing for longer with his practice, but typically he rolled his sleeves up and reinvented himself while the practice he founded went on and did well. It will always be a great credit to him.

It was during these later years that I really got to know Harry on a personal basis. He

had the greatest gifts of energy and enthusiasm for life, which he passed on to all around him. I remember he once thought to persuade me to apply for the vacant post of head of the Newcastle School of Architecture.

I stayed with him and his wife Maxine at their lovely house in Alnwick. In the morning he wanted to talk while we went on (what he called) 'a short walk'. We set off at a clattering brisk pace. Up and down lanes, over stiles and I was trying to think and talk back about serious issues at hand. I don't know how far we went but he was so impressive I thought he was the one to do the job at the school of architecture, and when I got back I felt like I was the one who should be 'retired'. It was in the mid '80s, so Harry must have been at least in his mid 60s then!

I think of Harry as a mentor for all things in life, not just architecture... his positive thinking, his ability to combine toughness with fairness, and his belief in young people and trust in them.

What an inspiration he has been to all that were lucky to know him and be near him.

*This is an excerpt from a eulogy read out at Harry Faulkner-Brown's memorial service on 4 March*



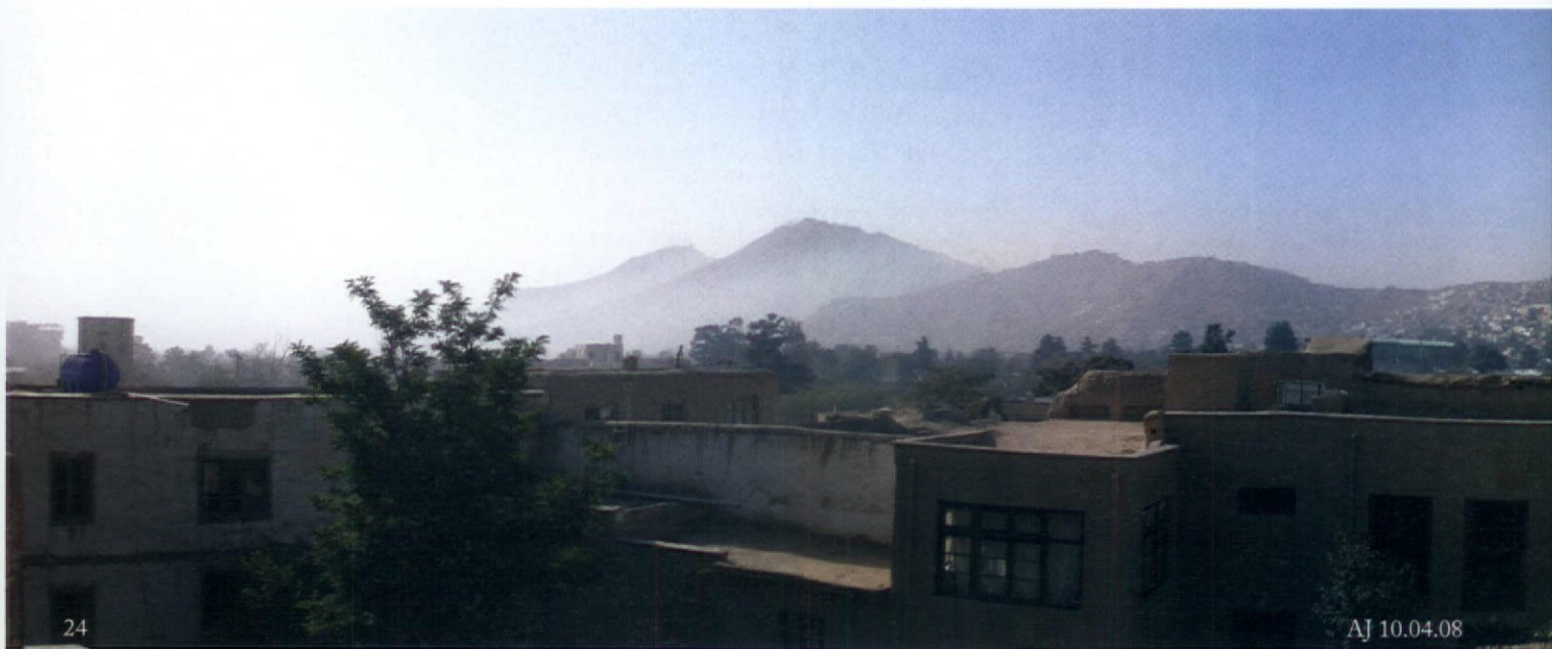
## Opinion Working for Architects for Aid might mean dodging gunfights, but you get some fine monuments to yourself, says *Victoria Harris*

I was in Palestine in the middle of the tumult of the second intifada, so I decided to visit the birthplace of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. One of the best times to see some of the world's finest architecture is during times of war, occupation or civil unrest. Visiting Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem usually involves battling formidable queues of tourists, and when you get to the tomb there is pressure to have a quick look and get out of the way. It's similar at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem – usually only the upper three-quarters is visible, and only from a range of half a metre. But because of the situation in Palestine when I was working there in 2005 (at the time the infamous West Bank 'separation wall' was under construction) there was no-one else around with interest in the sites. Being able to enjoy the finest monuments and architectural sights almost totally alone is one of the unexpected benefits of working in the more troubled locations of the world.

One of the first rules for working in a hostile location with Architects for Aid (A4A) is that you should not hang out in places where expats are likely to go. A pub or restaurant full of foreigners is an obvious target for someone who wants international coverage of their grievance. Rules are there to be broken however. When Andre Ullal (who contributed to the A4A blogs on [www.architectsjournal.co.uk](http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk)) joined us in Kabul we gave him the rule book, but after finishing his time with us Andre was asked to stay on working directly with Turquoise Mountain Foundation on the Kabul restoration project. He was happy to agree and probably just as

### **A4A employees were not allowed to take advantage of the service allowing guests to sign a gun out**

happy to chuck out the rule book – as he then continued his blog in AJ with stories about evenings enjoyed with the International Security Assistance Force troops at the only pub in Kabul. The pub was at the Gandamak Lodge, set up by a British journalist and named after the home of George MacDonald Fraser's notorious Sir Harry Flashman character. Flashman's less than conventional ways (he was renowned for his 19th-century racism and sexism) live on at the Kabul lodge, where A4A first stayed when it started







working in Afghanistan. A4A team members were not, for example, allowed to take advantage of the service allowing guests to sign a gun out at reception each morning.

In total there were a dozen A4A architects who went to work with the restoration project in Kabul's old town of Murad Khane with the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, which was featured in Grant Elliott's diary (AJ 06.03.08). The team started the project from scratch and included community consultations, developed by Aedas' Tamara Hall. Some of the volunteers were in Kabul for several months working with intermittent power and the occasional earthquake. Widya Sujana was

### **We have a man in Pakistan – but only for as long as the grammar on the FCO website doesn't change**

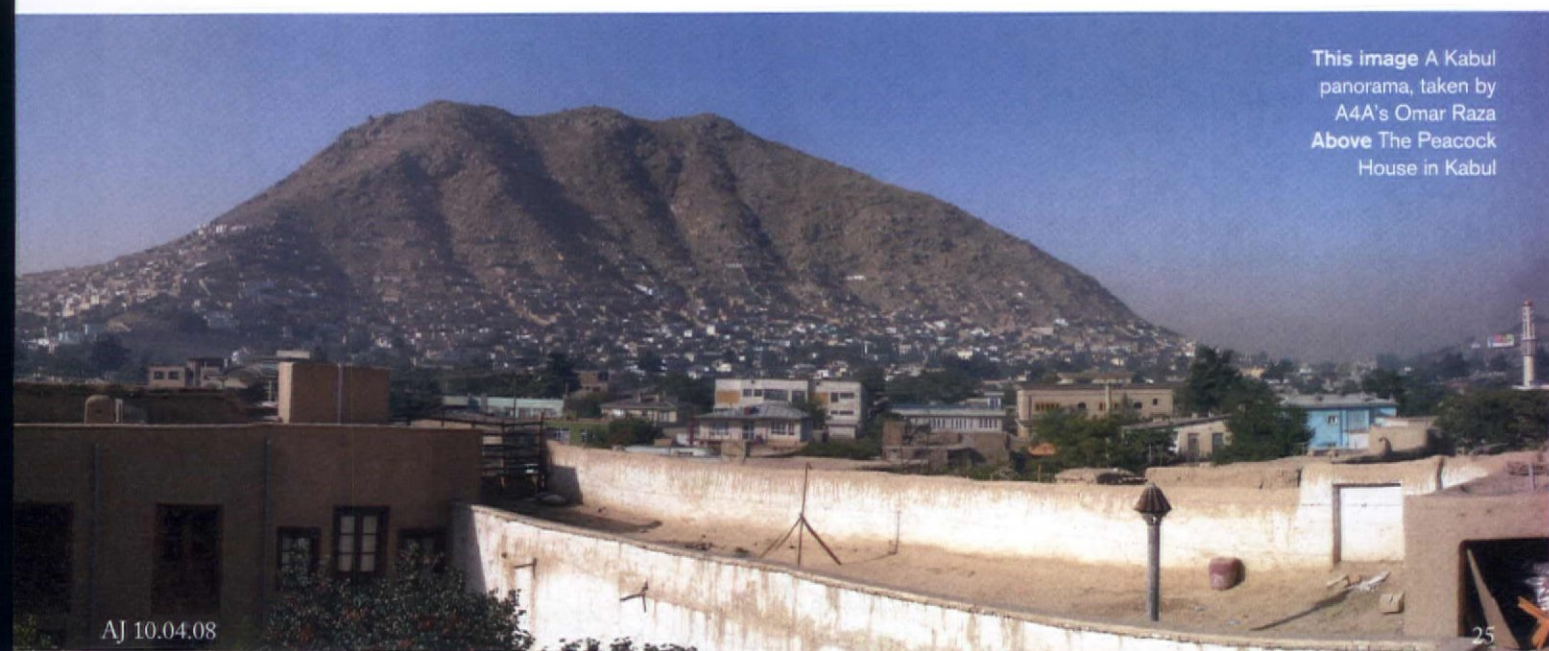
one of the longest serving – spending over six months there. Angel Pascual, an urban planner, extended his three-month sabbatical from Islington Council to six to remain on the project. All of them had eye-opening experiences. The visits to the Bamiyan Buddhas, which were partially destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, were particularly memorable.

A4A is continuing to work in some of the more unstable places of the world, although the situation in Kabul has prevented us

sending more staff for the time being. We have to make regular decisions about the good sense in being present during times of unrest. I was in Islamabad last year when the fighting began outside the Red Mosque. The UN and Red Cross sent an email telling everyone to stay indoors and recommending only essential outings for all NGO workers in the capital. Then 20 minutes later they asked if we would mind popping by for a meeting – taking a back route to avoid the crowds. Ultimately, the situation calmed down and the crowd busied themselves repainting the mosque red.

Sometimes our presence in a country depends on punctuation. Sam Woodbridge is back in Pakistan – but only as long as the grammar on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website doesn't change. When the FCO recommends not travelling to an area, we don't go. However, currently, the FCO website recommends not visiting 'Swat, North West Frontier Province (NWFP)'. We are active in NWFP. But not in the sub-region inside it called Swat. So Sam checks regularly to make sure the comma between 'Swat' and 'NWFP' has not changed to a semicolon. That would mean that both Swat and NWFP as a whole are out of bounds. His work therefore depends on a dot in a rule book. You can't be too careful.

Victoria Harris is chief executive of Architects for Aid



This image A Kabul panorama, taken by A4A's Omar Raza Above The Peacock House in Kabul





# As Sennett says 'making is thinking', and we must celebrate the virtue of craft, writes Patrick Lynch

Much play is made in Greek philosophy on the meaning of poetry as *techné poesis*, and it is still generally accepted today that when we speak of the 'poetics of making' we are also referring to a sense of ethical vocation. Something well-made exhibits a fine character, and thus virtue is considered beautiful. Richard Sennett begins his book, *The Craftsman* (Penguin, 2008), with the admission that its author's 'guiding intuition' is that 'making is thinking'. Sennett's 1977 book *The Fall of Public Man* concludes with an assessment of the changing role of 19th-century musicians from choirmaster/composer to virtuoso performer. The decline of musicianship in favour of showmanship that Sennett laments mirrors almost exactly the changes in the role of the architect in the 20th century, from august professional to social reformer to the more recent phenomena of st.architect.

The obsession at the AA with 'emerging technologies' is an attempt to find a way out of the impasse of st.architectural subjectivity via the objectivity of computerised processes. Yet Sennett points out something that should cause us to pause: 'The physicist Victor Weisskopf once said to his MIT students who worked with computerised experiments:

In a chapter entitled 'Material Consciousness' Sennett describes the 'metamorphic richness' of a potter's craft both in terms of 'the poetics of making' and 'the transformation of the type-form' that occurs when you make the same thing with different materials and techniques. He describes this as a 'political act... in the fundamental matter of

## Metaphors of industrial production replaced those based upon the body

"When you show me that result, the computer understands the answer, but I don't think you understand the answer." The trouble is architects make design judgements; no-one else makes them for us, but we neither make them alone, unconsciously, nor in a vacuum.

establishing one's presence objectively'. Developing naturally from 'The Potter's Tale (Metamorphosis)' is 'The Bricklayer's Tale (Presence)', where Sennett directs our attention to the anthropomorphic descriptions of weathered brickwork in 18th-century England that looks like 'an old man's weathered face'. Such metaphors were worn away by the 'puritan scorning of such tropes'. Metaphors of industrial production replace ones based upon craft and the body.

But Sennett offers us the Baker Dormitories at MIT by Alvar Aalto as an example of the relevance of the beautiful today. Aalto claims the bricks 'were fired in manually stacked pyramids, using oak for fuel', and the various colours that resulted meant that despite the walls being built from bricks 'approved without sorting' there is no hint of fault or bad workmanship. Sennett believes the occasional overburned brick 'makes the viewer see the regular bricks fresh; the contrast brings forward the character of both'. For a craftsman these blemishes might be unacceptably imperfect, but for an architect aware of craft there is virtue in imperfection.



Alvar Aalto's Baker Dormitory, MIT (1947-48)



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# Letters

## RACING AHEAD

While I am sure that the Royal Society of Ulster Architects and its members have their own priorities in any response to Malcolm Reading's letter (AJ 03.04.08), in my Comment piece in the same issue ('Northern Irish architects face the same questions of identity we Scots did 10 years ago'), I was attempting to broaden the picture on awards and competitions.

In our experience, awards and competitions in Ulster are frequent, short and sharp in their resolution. For competitive interviews there is consistently a breadth of criteria under consideration, including 'project management capability', 'skilled

manpower proposed to resource the project', 'previous experience of projects of equal size and complexity', and financial status as well as 'design quality'.

In the two-stage open-design competitions, in which anyone can enter (the first stage is anonymous), the caveat is that if a young, inexperienced firm or an individual architect reaches the second stage, they have to team up with a practice with a track record in delivering high-quality multi-million pound projects.

Where Northern Ireland is well ahead of Scotland is in the number of agencies who recognise this approach and support it.

*Gordon Murray, Gordon Murray + Alan Dunlop Architects, Glasgow*

## WORLDS APART

I read Gordon Murray's Comment piece with interest (AJ 03.04.08). What he seems to have overlooked is that, since Ireland was partitioned in the early 20th century, the matter of identity in Ireland, and particularly in the north, has been a thorny one, to say the least.

The politics of identity is pervasive in Northern Ireland, particularly in towns, where one's religion at birth frequently determines the school you attend, the company you keep, the political opinions you develop, and the sports you play. This separation is pervasive, real and continues in the present day.

The relative identities of

individuals and communities are a constant bone of contention, on which rivers of ink have been spilt (some by yours truly). To try to resolve the past decades of (willed) segregation and (inflicted) conflict through a few measly buildings, however innovatively procured, is not going to wash.

The questions of identity, in an architectural sense, may be similar, but the social context in which they are asked is a world away from Scotland.

*Paul McKay, Belfast*

## FREE TO BUILD

So Hazel Blears wants to 'weed out the bureaucratic hurdle' of the planning system? As the AJ





reminds us, tentative reform risks making 'an unwieldy machine even worse' (Agenda, AJ 03.04.08).

The cure for planning frustration surely does not lie in tweaking and compounding difficulties, but rather in radical reformation leading quickly to technical and performance controls only. Unless we have the courage to allow the built environment the freedom from censorship allowed for the last 50 years in publishing, the theatre and the visual arts, we will never have a real basis for the healthy growth of an architectural culture.

Presently, the lottery of planning decisions produces compromise and fudge. This is no basis for a mature and naturally developing appreciation, nor an evolving and widespread shared

critique of what is truly worthy and what is actually unworthy. *Anthony Perry, Anthony Perry Associates, Southsea, Hampshire*

## BACK TO BASICS

For me, creating good low-carbon design goes way beyond collaboration between architects and engineers ('Joined-up working', Sustainability in Practice, AJ 20.03.08). It involves the removal of the barrier which identifies 'architect' or 'engineer' as separate entities. In my eyes there are no barriers or boxes that cannot, or should not, be deconstructed when the time is right to do so.

Rather than being governed by job titles, we should be governed by the logic of physics and the

beauty of nature. These things will drive a rational solution that 'meets the needs of the present'.

In an architectural practice or an engineering consultancy, it is the individual's ability to think laterally that helps him arrive at a good design solution. It seems the industry has forgotten the basics along the way somewhere. In the race to develop ever more detailed and sophisticated tools and knowledge, we have become fragmented.

*Andy Ford, Fulcrum Consulting, London EC1*

## THE PAWLEY LEGACY

Although I didn't know Martin Pawley well (Obituary, AJ

13.03.08), I always enjoyed his form of inquisitive journalism and criticism. Out of the blue in 1996 he offered me a practice profile in *World Architecture* magazine, a spot normally occupied by large international practices. It marked a turning point for our practice, then Chris Wilkinson Architects, and allowed Jim Eyre and I to get to know Martin better.

He was incredibly well informed on a broad range of subjects, but at that time he was full of stories about Buckminster Fuller, having been researching his book on the subject. Martin was a great character who will be sorely missed, but his books will live on to educate future generations of inquisitive architects.

*Chris Wilkinson, Wilkinson Eyre, London EC1*

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# A VARIABLE STANDARD

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Launched this week, the 1APP standard national planning application form aims to cut red tape. But, says *Brian Waters*, results may vary across local authorities

Following several years of consultation papers, 6 April saw the introduction of the new 1APP 'standard' national planning application form. This is accompanied by complex new requirements for validation.

1APP is actually one form with 26 variations which are to be used depending upon the particular approval(s) sought. An applicant completing 1APP electronically will fill in one form containing only questions relevant to the particular type of application.

The aim is to encourage 'e-planning' and to make electronic submissions the norm. However there remain severe limitations to the system, and large drawings and documents still generally have to be printed in multiple copies and mailed along with the fee cheque in the hope they get matched with the form submitted electronically. You can either go directly to the Planning Portal ([www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)) or be taken there from the local planning authority's site. (Until 6 May authorities will accept their old forms).

But first you have to be in a position to submit a valid application, and this is where the game has changed. Following guidance for local authorities on validation (see AJ 04.10.07) planning authorities may publish on the internet lists of requirements needed to

make an application valid. They should by now have consulted on these lists, but some are still doing this, and they have also been freed to issue and revise their lists from time to time. The government says they 'should have regard to [Communities and Local Government's (CLG's)] strong advice... that they adopt a proportionate approach'. They have to select from lengthy lists issued by DCLG as being appropriate for each kind of application but they cannot, as once suggested, add their own local requirements.

Thus it now becomes necessary to check the authority's list for your application(s). Many have chosen to include many or most of those items suggested by the government. You will have to decide which are relevant to your application, and be prepared to argue the case item by item if you omit any you consider inappropriate. Authorities should aim, says the guidance, to determine whether applications are valid within three, five or 10 working days, depending on the size of the proposal. They then have to date validation on the day following receipt of the application.

Such assessments are far more onerous than before, and authorities will find it easiest to reject as invalid applications which do not tick every box. The sheer volume of material



Application for Planning Permission.  
Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Publication of planning applications on council websites

Please note that with the exception of applicant contact details and Certificates of Ownership, the information provided on this application form and in supporting documents may be published on the council's website.  
If you have provided any other information as part of your application which falls within the definition of personal data under the Data Protection Act which you do not wish to be published on the council's website, please contact the council's planning department.

Please complete using block capitals and black ink.

It is important that you read the accompanying guidance notes as incorrect completion will delay the processing of your application.

1. Applicant Name and Address

Title:  First name:   
Last name:   
Company (optional):   
Unit:  House number:  House suffix:   
House name:   
Address 1:   
Address 2:   
Address 3:   
Town:   
County:   
Country:   
Postcode:

2. Agent Name and Address

Title:  First name:   
Last name:   
Company (optional):   
Unit:  House number:  House suffix:   
House name:   
Address 1:   
Address 2:   
Address 3:   
Town:   
County:   
Country:   
Postcode:

3. Description of the Proposal

Please describe the proposed development, including any change of use.

Has the building, work or change of use already started? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please state the date when building, work or use were started (DD/MM/YYYY):  (date must be pre-application submission)

Has the building, work or change of use been completed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please state the date when the building, work or change of use was completed: (DD/MM/YYYY):  (date must be pre-application submission)

ENR 0010001 12/0012 (Revision 1.0)

10. Materials

If applicable, please state what materials are to be used externally. Include type, colour and name for each material.

	Existing (where applicable)	Proposed	Not applicable	Don't know	Drawing references if applicable
Walls			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Roof			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Windows			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Doors			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Boundary treatments (e.g. fences, walls)			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Vehicle access and hard-standing			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lighting			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Others (please specify):			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Are you supplying additional information on submitted plan(s)/drawing(s)/design and access statement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please state references for the plan(s)/drawing(s)/design and access statement:

ENR 0010001 12/0012 (Revision 1.0)

11. Vehicle Parking

Please provide information on the existing and proposed number of on-site parking spaces:

Type of Vehicle	Total Existing	Total proposed (including spaces retained)	Difference in spaces
Cars			
Light goods vehicles/public carrier vehicles			
Motorcycles			
Disability spaces			
Cycle spaces			
Other (e.g. Bus)			
Other (e.g. Bus)			

ENR 0010001 12/0012 (Revision 1.0)

means that generally applications will be far more time-consuming and costly to prepare.

There is a wide variation between local authorities in the requirements and the way they have been presented. Here are some examples in reverse order of helpfulness:

- Elmbridge Borough Council: 44 requirements, no guidance.
- London Borough of Brent: 27 requirements, no guidance.
- London Borough of Islington: 28 requirements, some guidance.
- London Borough of Ealing: 10 requirements, some guidance.
- London Borough of Haringey: 21 requirements, full guidance.
- Waverley Borough Council: 20 requirements, full guidance.

Where there is no clear guidance, you are at the mercy of the authority's discretion.

The complexity of the exercise is well demonstrated by the consultation on their validation checklists just published by the London Borough of Westminster. The document runs to 47 dense pages!

It will be essential for architects to consider these requirements for information, much of which requires specialist input, at an early stage. If in doubt efforts should be >>

The London Borough of Ealing asks for 10 required items in planning applications

23. Industrial or Commercial Processes and Machinery

Please describe the activities and processes which would be carried out on the site and the end products including plant, ventilation or air conditioning. Please include the type of machinery which may be installed on site.

Is the proposal a waste management development? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the answer is Yes, please complete the following table:

	Not possible	The total capacity of the void in cubic metres, including engineering surcharge and making no allowance for cover or restoration material (or tonnes if solid waste or litres if liquid waste)	Maximum annual operational throughput in tonnes (or tonnes if liquid waste)
Inert landfill	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Non-hazardous landfill	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Hazardous landfill	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Energy from waste incineration	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other incineration	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Landfill gas generation plant	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pyrolysis/gasification	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Metal recycling site	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Transfer stations	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Material recovery/recycling facilities (MRFs)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Household civic amenity sites	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Open windrow composting	<input type="checkbox"/>		
In-vessel composting	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Anaerobic digestion	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any combined mechanical, biological and/or thermal treatment (MBT)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sewage treatment works	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Recycling facilities construction, demolition and excavation waste	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Storage of waste	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other waste management	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other developments	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please provide the maximum annual operational throughput of the following waste streams:

Municipal	
Construction, demolition and excavation	
Commercial and industrial	
Hazardous	

If this is a landfill application you will need to provide further information before your application can be determined. Your waste planning authority should make clear what information it requires on its website.

24. Hazardous Substances

Does the proposal involve the use or storage of any of the following materials in the quantities stated below? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

If Yes, please provide the amount of each substance that is involved:

Acrylonitrile (tonnes):  Ethylene oxide (tonnes):  Phosgene (tonnes):   
Ammonia (tonnes):  Hydrogen cyanide (tonnes):  Sulphur dioxide (tonnes):   
Bromine (tonnes):  Liquid oxygen (tonnes):  Flour (tonnes):   
Chlorine (tonnes):  Liquid petroleum gas (tonnes):  Refined white sugar (tonnes):   
Other:  Amount (tonnes):  Other:  Amount (tonnes):

ENR 0010001 12/0012 (Revision 1.0)



made to consult planning officers to seek a definitive, written agreement as to what is appropriate and then to budget and timetable the work for agreement with the client. Allow provision for extra cost and time where the authority insists on more information that you consider to be necessary. The additional amount of your time will also have to be factored into your fee agreement.

The irony of Communities Secretary Hazel Blears' announcement of a 'red-tape-busting review to weed out the bureaucratic hurdles' (AJ 03.04.08), will not be lost. This was promised for last autumn in the Planning White Paper and the Association of Consultant Architects has lobbied for a delay to the introduction of the new process pending its outcome, but alas has failed.

## *Westminster's guide to validation checklists runs to 47 dense pages*

Faced with an intransigent authority, the only remedy will be to take the application to appeal (which will last eight or 13 weeks from submission) with clear arguments as to why the additional information demanded is disproportionate and so not in accordance with government guidance. If the Planning Inspectorate agrees with you they will be able to determine your application as an appeal.

Finally and fundamentally, your application needs to be compliant with policy in order to gain approval. Here again is a recent complication to deal with. Last September saw the abolition of Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) under the 2004 Planning Act even though most authorities do not yet have their replacement Framework Plans in place. So you now have to check the authority's website and find what are called 'saved policies', where some old UDP policies have been allowed an extended life. Only recently adopted UDPs continue and then only for three years from adoption. In the absence of relevant local policies, national or regional policies now prevail.

## USING 1APP

# Planning consultant *Andrew Rogers* tries his hand at 1APP's online interface, and encounters incomprehensible error messages and helpful Planning Portal staff

- Proposal: Demolition of a house on a large plot and construction of a pair of semi-detached houses.
- Location: Crouch End.
- Conservation Area, London Borough of Haringey.
- Architect: Weldon Walshe.

This was a revised submission following a planning refusal and extensive pre-application discussions. The architect had produced a good set of drawings, the client had consulted with the neighbours and commissioned BRE daylight and arboricultural reports, the project manager had drafted a comprehensive construction method plan, and, as planning consultant, I had prepared a full design and access planning statement. I was ready to submit the application electronically using the 1APP form, which Haringey has been using since the end of February.

## STARTING OUT

First stop was Haringey's website, where advice on 1APP is available with the borough's Local Information Requirements. According to the website these 'may include some or all' of the list of 21 items – in addition to the seven mandatory national requirements for a full planning application that includes demolition in a conservation area.

Fortunately, Haringey's list is shorter than the full list of 42

items allowed by government advice and includes guidance on whether particular information will be essential.

So, on to the application form. For Haringey applications this can only be accessed through the Planning Portal website ([www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)), where I had to register. My first six choices of username were either already registered or not acceptable (too short or too long).

The website goes through the options for creating a new application according to type of proposal, and the application is broken down into sections headed Overview, Forms, Supporting Documents, Fees, Payment, Check and Submit. Clicking initially on Forms brings up a blank page for each part of the form and I was off.

## JUMPING HURDLES

All went well until I got to question 25: Hazardous Substances. I ticked the 'no' box and received a prompt from the computer: 'numeric field', with an 'OK' button, which I clicked. The same thing happened when I tried to go forward or back. Undaunted, I tried the Overview section (fearful that boxes 1-24 completed might be lost, although this did not occur – the system seems to save everything automatically). And started again



**Right The Planning Portal website  
Below Andrew Rogers  
gets to grips with a  
1APP application**

on question 25. The same thing happened. I went to the Frequently Asked Questions section but none of the 328 questions related to this problem.

By now it was after 11 o'clock and time for a coffee break.

Returning to the task, I decided to contact the portal directly (tel. 0117 372 8200) and got through to a helpful lady who told me that this was a problem with the Safari web browser and that I should use Firefox. I went to the Planning Portal's website on Firefox and was pleased to discover the partly completed form as I had left it in Safari. Question 25 was completed.

I moved on to the Supporting Documents section. This requires completion of three mandatory boxes, where files can be added, headed Design and Access Statement; Site and Other Plans; and The Location Plan. Each one must be completed and have a file attached. And this was the next problem – how to attach more than one drawing to the Site and Other Plans box, which would not accept multiple files.

So, after more attempts, including going back to Safari where I found that the attachment of files is a lot easier than with Firefox, I tried the lady at the Planning Portal again. She told me to put one drawing in the Mandatory Documentation box

and all the others in the Optional Documentation box.

But then I realised it was time for some lunch.

The attachment of information was now going well and I had dealt with 10 drawings, the daylight and tree reports and four photographs, when I got to the Project Manager's construction-method plan. Although the previous files sometimes took several minutes to attach, this one took longer. Eventually it came up with the message 'an error has occurred: the request doesn't contain a multipart/form-data or multipart/mixed stream, content type header is null'. Now I'm not used to dealing with computer-speak, so this message may as well have been in a foreign language.

Then I remembered the notice on the wall of Haringey's planning office about online applications – use .pdf not .jpg files, no large drawings to be scanned (I'll have to send copies of the photographs by post), and no files larger than 5MB. Sure enough, the project manager's file was 5.8MB, so I removed a few of his illustrations and, hey presto!, through it went.

#### THE FINISH LINE

At last I had finished. The application has a reference number and the Portal advises me that I 'should expect a response

[from Haringey] within 10 working days'.

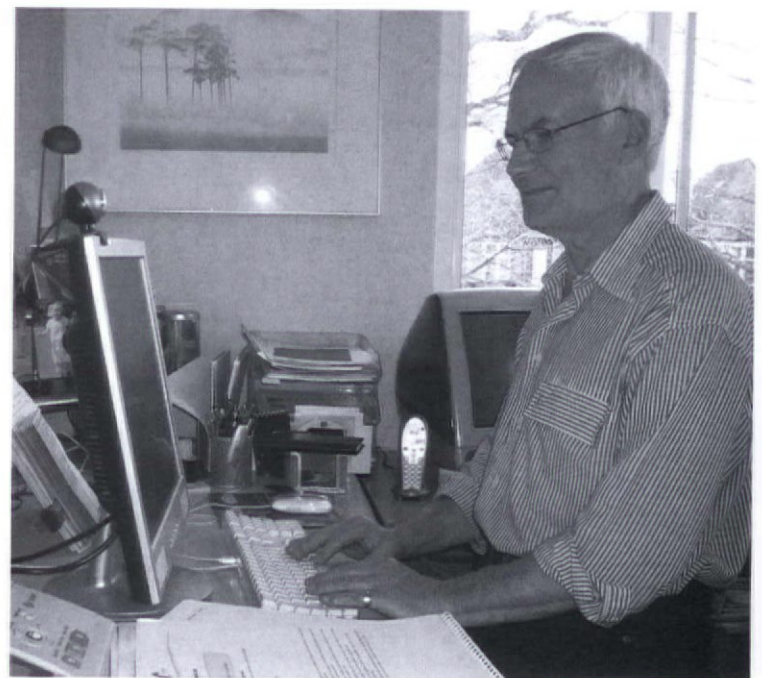
It has taken about five hours, compared to the 20-30 minutes that it took to fill in Haringey's old four-page form by hand last time – although I hope my next application will be a lot quicker now that I know the ropes.

#### THE VERDICT

There are good and bad things about the new procedures. The forms are straightforward and user-friendly (as long as your browser accepts your answers!) and everything is backed up as you go along. It's good that the forms are now tailored to your

application, leaving much redundant detail out. But you do need to be very clear before you start about what information your council will require.

And then there are the IT horror stories, such as the councils that can't print anything larger than A3. Introduction of 1APP was deferred twice, CLG says, because of IT problems. Even now it is unclear how many planning authorities can deal with a full range of online applications. The Planning Portal has acknowledged that there will be teething problems and sees this as a 'first phase' towards complete e-planning. ■







**Left** The demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, St Louis, in 1972

**This image**  
Phase two of the Three Towers, as seen from the 'Emmeline' tower

# DON'T RAZE, REFURBISH

Developer Urban Splash and architect Union North's Three Towers scheme is a viable alternative to demolishing council flats, says *Rob Gregory*. Photography by *Paul McMullin*

'Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on 15 July 1972, at 3.32pm (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or several of its slab blocks, were given the final coup de grâce by dynamite... This moment became a media event... because the world wished Modern housing to die an ignominious death.' So writes critic Charles Jencks in *Critical Modernism*, his 1996 update of *What is Post-Modernism?*

Budget, brief, programme: measurable priorities in architecture are easy to define.

The notion of 'social engineering', however, is more contentious – people rarely agree on how much construction professionals can help communities, as wild claims of success (thank the policy-makers) and failure (blame the designers) abound. But occasionally, leading individuals substantiate their status by describing the immeasurable with confidence. David Chipperfield did this recently in his 2007 yearbook, summarising the architect's greatest challenge in one line: 'To fight battles that no one asks us to fight.' >>











Emmeline original elevation



Emmeline redeveloped elevation

*Urban Splash felt there was little wrong with the towers. They just needed some TLC*

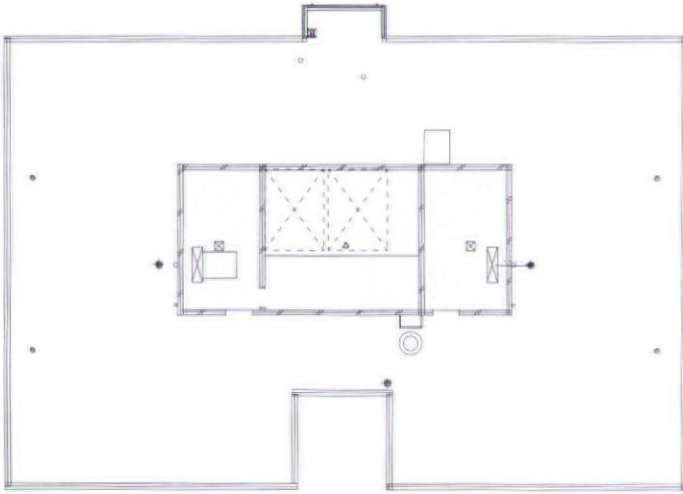
'Our clients,' Chipperfield wrote, 'are not only those who commission us, but also those who occasionally visit, pass each day or work in the buildings we design'. Anticipating and addressing the undescribed demands of others is where true success lies. In this pursuit, what is most exciting is when an architect's natural inclination to amplify the brief is supported and driven by their client.

Manchester-based Urban Splash is such a client, a developer which makes bottom-line decisions without paring down its aspirations to a builder's basics range. The company built up its reputation by leading a responsive UK market to the concept of loft life through the regeneration of industrial shells in Liverpool and Manchester, but has resisted specialising,

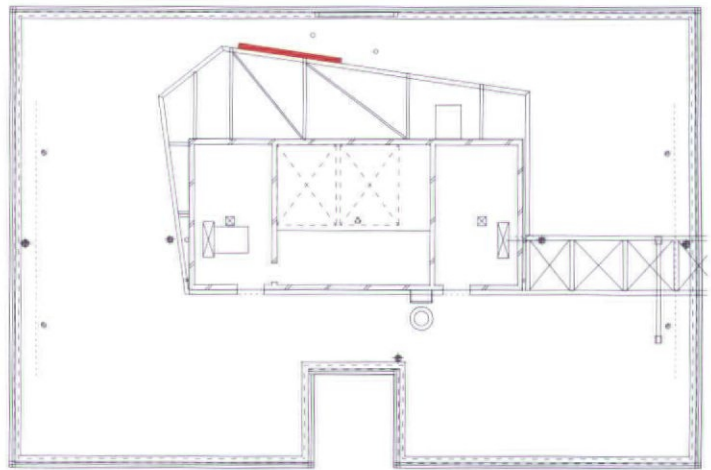
instead pursuing diverse new modes of development by making even the most unlikely stakeholders key figures. Having adapted traditional types, such as the terrace house with ShedKM at Chimney Pot Park in Salford, and promoted the resuscitation of Modern landmarks, such as Park Hill in Sheffield with Hawkins\Brown, on this project Urban Splash chose to tackle the problem of the council flat; those stumpy, mid-rise, neglected buildings that exist in almost every British city. And it employed Union North, a Liverpool-based practice which describes itself as 'restless, creative and humanistic'.

In January 2001, as recalled by Union North's Lance Routh, the brief for the project





Emmeline original roof plan



Emmeline redeveloped roof plan

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Living room | 5. Kitchen          |
| 2. Bedroom     | 6. Services         |
| 3. Balcony     | 7. Bed/sitting room |
| 4. Bathroom    |                     |



Emmeline original typical floor plan



Emmeline redeveloped typical floor plan

was unsurprisingly 'vague'. Urban Splash rarely issues definitive briefs. According to deputy chief executive Nick Johnson, in a market dominated by box-ticking, Urban Splash maintains its three golden rules in the delivery of 'proper places' as being unprofessional, unaccountable and irresponsible. This, of course, should be taken in the spirit of provocation with which it is given. While it works hard to maintain market dominance, Urban Splash's methods are undeniably unorthodox, which has on occasion limited its ability to produce compliant bids, particularly when seeking to break into the more risk-averse London market. On home turf, however, its rules of engagement repeatedly produce the goods, and on this occasion, the

measurable brief was to bring the spatial and environmental qualities of 180 former council flats in Collyhurst up to and beyond market standard, with the immeasurable being to change people's perception of this much-neglected part of central Manchester; an area that when viewed from the train that passes over one of its viaducts reveals surplus housing stock, comprising many derelict Victorian and post-war homes.

Manchester City Council was looking to dispose of some of its unwanted buildings, offering six derelict 1960s blocks by way of informal tender to a suitable partner that would deliver the refurbishment of the blocks over a period of time. Urban Splash was attracted by the site's proximity to the city

centre, just 2.5km north-east, and felt that there was actually very little wrong with the buildings as they stood. All they needed was the sort of TLC and investment that had been absent during a decade of dereliction. The densities were in line with current targets, and in terms of compliance with Part L of the Building Regulations, the robust concrete frame provided an ideal starting point for a necessary upgrade: simply reconfigure openings in the brick walls, infill balconies with SIPS (a structurally insulated panel system), and hang rainscreen on cladding rails that span from floor slab to floor slab (in this case using a product with real timber veneer by Prodema). Job's a good-un, you could say. Clearly, however, there was more to it than >>





## *The Jenga-like timber towers respond to the post-industrial habitat*

that. The context was also a key consideration.

From the outset the design team included landscape architect Gross.Max, which helped create a robust vision for the area that could be sustained as the places were constructed. Recalling hours spent walking the site, the designers were immediately struck by qualities of what they describe as a 'strange pocket of land' that borders the River Irk as it flows in and out of culverts towards the city centre. In this context the reimagined image of the buildings as a trio of Jenga-like timber towers responds to the post-industrial habitat characterised by the birch-lined landscape that subtly alludes to Collyhurst's past, its name originally meaning 'wooded hill'. Market forces also had a key influence, with the final technical solution expressing subtle changes in the market. Urban Splash has a streetwise understanding for the sort of market that its developments will attract and sustain, and as such the team spent intervening years balancing potential values with various scopes and specifications of works. As Routh recalls,

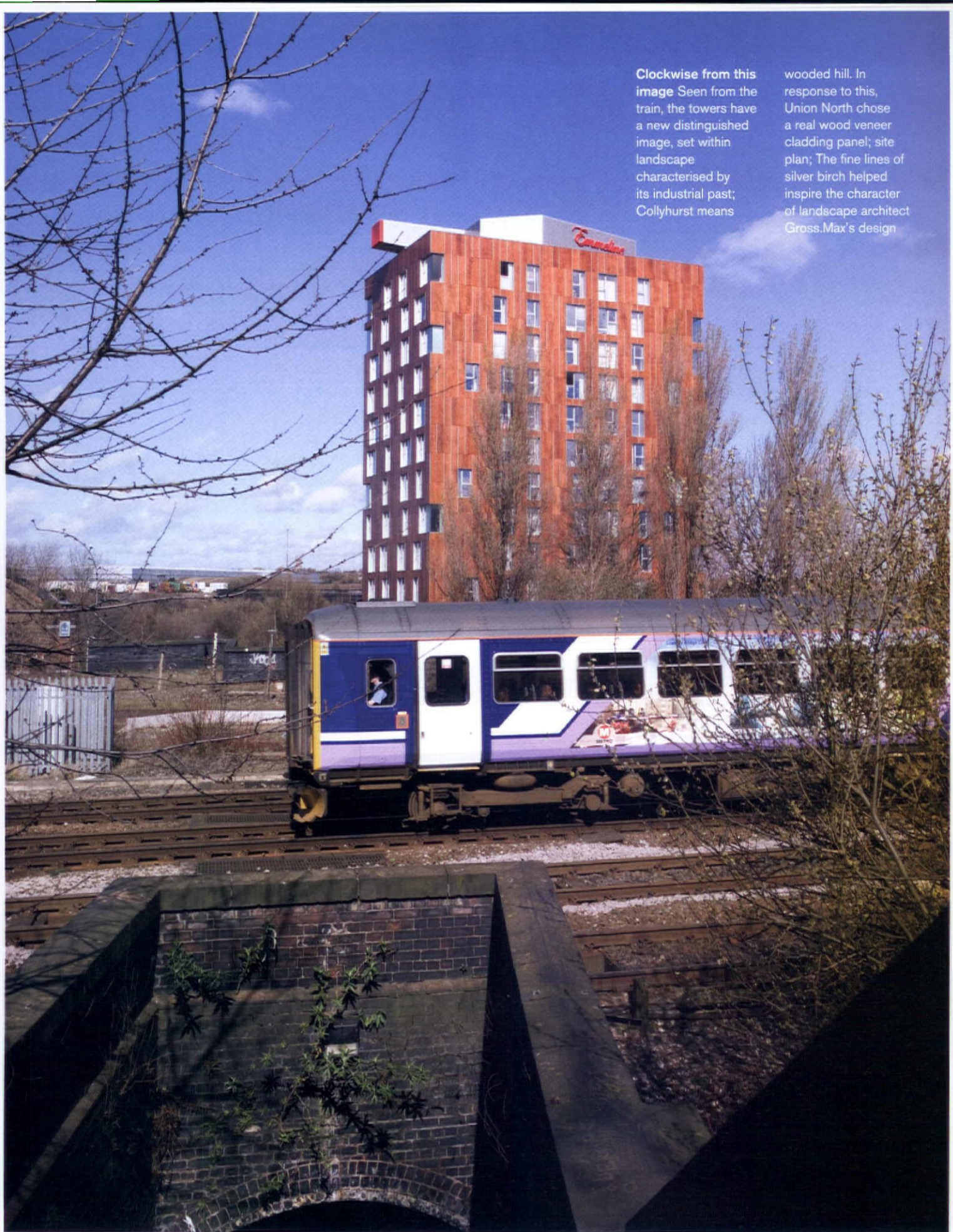
during this period almost every conceivable option was tested. The team even considered adding more floors, and when values were low, they considered just replacing the windows. As demand for one- and two-bedroom flats rose, however, the option to completely over-clad the building eventually became more viable and emerged as the preferred option. At this critical point a commercial judgement was taken, and it was literally 'go, go go', with the design team and Urban Splash's own construction company Build leaping into action.

Beyond this, the strategy itself is relatively unremarkable and the team makes no overblown claim to innovation. With one or two notable exceptions, nothing here is more advanced than the sort of tried-and-tested strategies promoted on structural engineers Price & Myers' online guide to refurbishing towers ([www.sustainingtowers.org](http://www.sustainingtowers.org)). What is different, however, is the confident spirit in which the moves have been made, and the consistency with which the designer's >>



**Clockwise from this image** Seen from the train, the towers have a new distinguished image, set within landscape characterised by its industrial past; Collyhurst means

wooded hill. In response to this, Union North chose a real wood veneer cladding panel; site plan; The fine lines of silver birch helped inspire the character of landscape architect Gross.Max's design

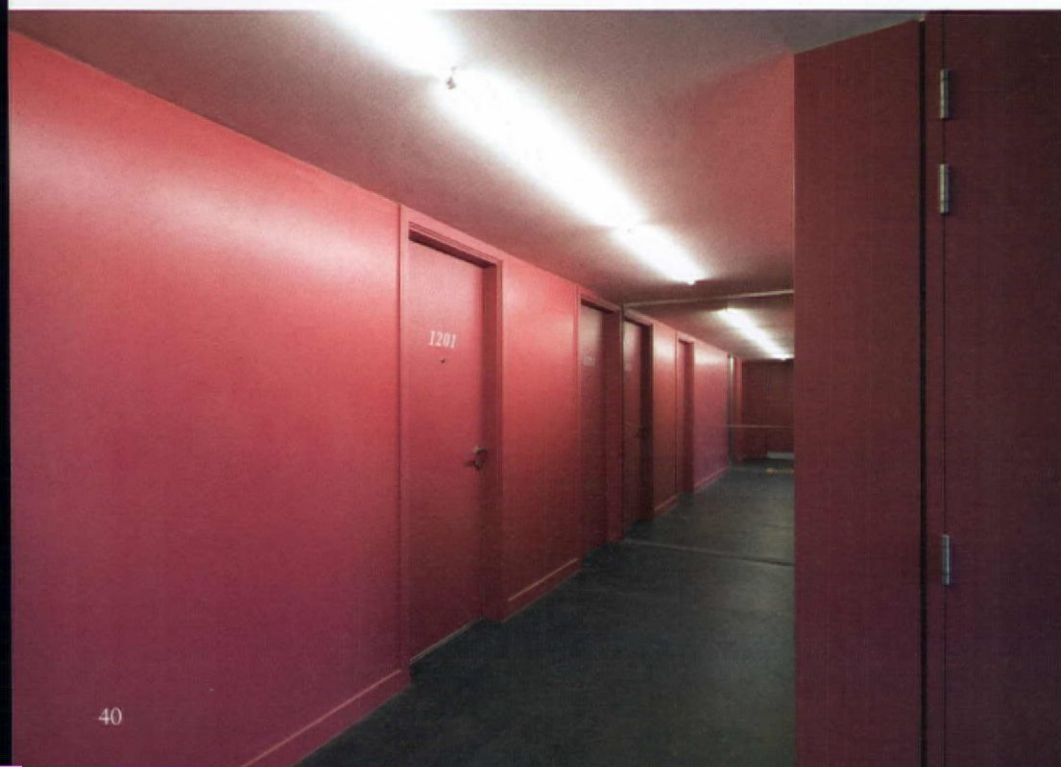
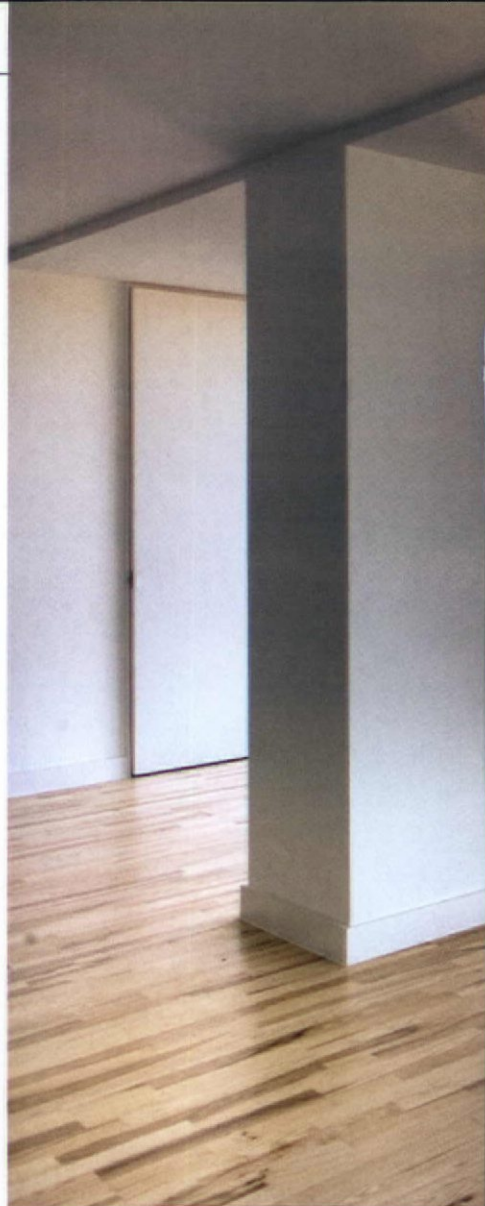




**Clockwise from below** The communal lobbies are freely ventilated and daylit by glazed louvres; On ground-floor level are bold vinyl prints; The

reconfigured kitchen/living/dining space incorporates space previously given over to an external balcony; Each kitchen has a decorative splashback

and a utility cupboard with provision for washing machine; Bold colours bring vibrancy to the upper floors







attention to detail has been applied. At every level from car-park to lobby to kitchen-counter splashback, a degree of finesse has been applied as the architects consciously avoided doing the 'typical council job', which would traditionally involve the application of ridiculous pitched roofs, garish cladding, and crude vandal-proof detailing. Here it genuinely feels that just the right balance has been struck between contemporary style, sophistication and utility, with the distinctive cladding composition addressing the buildings' previously stumpy image. Whether you like the re-branding or not (with the towers named after the Manchester-born Pankhurst suffragettes – Emmeline, Christabel and Sylvia), it cannot be disputed that this scheme sets the standard for the resuscitation, reinvention and reuse of the many miserable tower blocks that blot our urban hinterland.

In plan each of the five flat types have been improved, with the four corner units enveloping balconies to provide wider and more flexible kitchen/dining/living rooms, and with the central studio flat using space gained from the elimination a lift to provide a proper one-bedroom unit. While the loss of a balcony may disappoint some, at a time when the micro-balcony has become a meaningless designer tag of so-called luxury apartments, in reality, floor-to-ceiling windows provide exceptional views, and generous halls provide sufficient space for the pushchairs, cycles and laundry that usually clutter external shelves. Interestingly, however, the loss of the balcony is not absolute, as a sense of subdivision is maintained by the retained column. As suggested in the marketing images, ideally this perimeter strip should be kept free of furnishing, maintaining access to the full-height windows and providing an area >>

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*A perfect place for  
planning a night out  
somewhere on the not-  
too-distant horizon*









## *This project shows it is possible to breathe new life into old bones*

that invites a micro-promenade; the perfect place to pace up and down while making arrangements on the phone for a night out somewhere on the not-so-distant horizon.

What is also refreshing is that there is a consistency across the market sectors, with all three towers completed to the same specification, regardless of the status of the final occupant. Completed a year ago, the first tower (Emmeline) was sold on in its entirety to an independent investor, (a necessary evil when financing such a project). Phase two will see the completion of Christabel, which has already sold out to a mix of private investors and owner occupiers, and Sylvia, which is being offered to local residents under English Partnerships' First-Time Buyers Initiative (a scheme that enables buyers to purchase a share of their home, with no rent to pay on English Partnerships' share and with fees only kicking in after three years that will be capped at 3 per cent) on 14 April before the main public launch on 25 April.

With work on the final two towers nearing completion, it is impressive to see how

efficiently the construction process is managed. Employing the same mast-climbing rig used to perform routine council maintenance up the road, these buildings have been completely transformed without the need for cranes, or scaffolding, or sophisticated engineering. On a more generic level, whether or not social engineering actually exists today, it is indisputable that redundant towers like these can have a damaging hold over the neighbourhoods they overshadow. Totemic of current moods, buildings can express both the symptoms of a depressed community at worst and the optimism of regeneration at best. What this project demonstrates is that even if Jencks was right, and if Modernism did die on 15 July, 1972, at 3.32pm (or thereabouts), it only did so momentarily. Resuscitation is possible and we should not go about wasting embodied energy, and eliminating places that do have distinction. As Will Alsop recently stated in discussion with Urban Splash and a number of its currently engaged architects at Tate Modern: 'When we knock down buildings, we also knock down the theories behind an architectural generation.' Clearly not everything in the 1960s was ill-conceived, and, as Urban Splash and other enlightened developers are beginning to realise, it is possible to breathe new life into dry bones and to advance established architectural theories. ■

**Left** Vertical emphasis is given to the cladding with narrower horizontal panel joints. Corner windows also provide stunning views

**Above** The contractor adopted mast climbing rigs more typically used for maintenance to make the construction process as efficient as possible

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**Start on site date** 6 June 2005  
**Contract duration** Until 1 September 2008  
**Total build area** 148,906m<sup>2</sup>  
**Form of contract** JCT MC98  
**Cost** £13.4 million  
**Client** Urban Splash  
**Architect** Union North  
**Structural** Joule Consulting Engineers  
**Services engineer** Miller Consulting  
**Quantity surveyor** Simon Fenton Partnership  
**Planning supervisor** Rawlings Consultancy Services  
**Main contractor** Urban Splash Build  
**Landscape architect** Gross.Max  
**Annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions** 48kgCO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>

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World  
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# Go!

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With 16 categories covering 96 building types, the biggest architectural awards programme is designed to showcase your latest completed buildings, big or small, from anywhere in the world

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Production  
Religion and  
contemplation  
Shopping  
Sport  
Transport

### Judges include:

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Cecil Balmond  
Stefan Behnisch  
Richard Burdett  
Sir Peter Cook  
Neil Denari  
John Denton  
Mark Dytham  
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Massimiliano Fuksas  
Nabil Gholam  
Zaha Hadid  
Margrét Harðardóttir  
Francine Houben  
Christoph Ingenhoven  
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## Big Fish Little Fish

*Jonathan Hendry of Jonathan  
Hendry Architects backs smaller  
practices to the RIBA*

It's Tuesday morning at 10.00am, and I arrive at the RIBA in Leeds. My role for the day is to judge the shortlisting of the 2008 RIBA Yorkshire Awards. We start the day by reviewing each project. There are 13 in total and only two of them have a contract value of less than £1 million.

The RIBA Awards are structured in such a way that if a project wins a regional award it is then entered for a national award, the winners of which form the shortlist for the Stirling Prize.

It suddenly dawns on me that smaller projects do not receive the same level of consideration that multi-million-pound projects do. The reason for this must surely be the lack of scale. Before I leave at the end of the day, I ask the RIBA to consider setting up a separate award solely for these projects.

The logic is that there needs to be an award which gives recognition and exposure to smaller and younger practices. A prize like this would hopefully encourage smaller practices to enter such awards. Based on the entries I have seen this year, this just doesn't appear to be happening at the moment.

The following day I receive an email from the RIBA stating that an award for smaller projects will hopefully be in place for next year. We wait with bated breath.

Next issue: John Prevc, partner at Make Architects



The green-screen structure and access decks for ShedKM's residential scheme

## EIGHT-STOREY GREEN SCREEN PLANNED FOR LEEDS

For those looking to bring vertical gardens to dense urban projects and tight sites, green screens may be a simpler and equally effective alternative to green-wall systems. They can also be flexible and cheaper, as seen on a recent project by green-screen specialist Mobilane for a new 104-unit residential building in Leeds by ShedKM. At eight storeys, the project is the tallest application of Mobilane in the UK.

'In addition to costing less, we went with Mobilane because it can stand freely and lets in more light,' says Ian Killick, project architect at ShedKM. The practice is using the project to provide some greenery on site. 'The garden will reduce local pollution levels and provide privacy,' explains Killick.

The structure, which has passed through planning, will sit perpendicular to the housing units on the site. The system comprises two steel-framed screens back-to-back, with maintenance access between and a lift core in the centre, which serves the units via narrow bridges. Steel planters are hung from this frame, which is bolted on ground level to a concrete underground car park serving the flats.

Mobilane screens, which are usually used for perimeter walls, are a standard height of 2m. This project required an additional metre to match the 3m floor heights of each level. These modules, each of which supports separate planters, will stack eight-high to match the number of residential storeys.

Mobilane will custom-build the taller modules, seeding ivy in the planters. 'They pre-grow the plants in their nursery in Cheshire to ensure full coverage as soon as the screens are installed,' says Killick.

'Due to the extra height, they think ivy will take 18 months to grow to 3m.' Ivy was chosen for its thick, even coverage and Mobilane researched the nutrients and water quantities needed to maintain the plants' health in relation to specific site conditions.

Dick Lauwerijssen, technical director at Mobilane, says: 'This project tested us technically but we think we can go even higher. We are currently working with a practice in Germany who want to go to 100m but that will take some working out.'



# MODERNISING MIES

The team updating Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall had to contend with staff who remembered him personally, writes *Catherine Croft*

With its meticulous welded steel detailing, Crown Hall is the most significant building on Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) campus and the building in which he taught from 1956–58, in his final years as director of the IIT's architectural programme. Crown Hall was built between 1951 and 1956, and in 2003 the IIT commissioned an international team to safeguard the building's seminal status while transforming it into an environmentally friendly structure.

The team, which included Chicago-based architect Krueck + Sexton, Chicago conservation specialist Gunny Harboe, London-based environmental engineer Atelier Ten and

Stuttgart engineer TransSolar, was required to make up for 50 years of poor decisions and ad hoc adaptations.

When it was first completed, Crown Hall was reasonably environmentally friendly. There was no air conditioning, and the glazing provided good light for the large free-span studio space, while the original sandblasted tempered glass and shading from surrounding trees reduced solar gain. Unfortunately, that glazing was replaced in the 1970s with a laminate with a white interlayer at low level, which absorbed more energy and heat. This problem

## **The building's main lights had been left on round the clock for years**

was exacerbated by the advent of computers and problems with glare. As the blinds went down, task lights were turned on. Atelier Ten's Patrick Bellew recounts with horror that he was told that the main lights were on round the clock and had not been turned off for years.

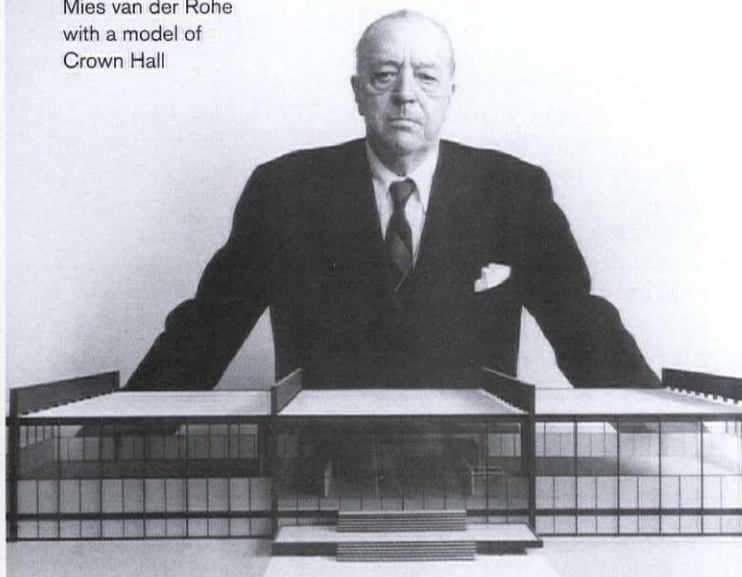
The installation of summer cooling in the 1970s added to overall discomfort as cold air was introduced through diffusers designed for heating, causing chilly downdraughts. Low-level ventilation flaps, which had to be opened and closed manually and in unison, had fallen into disrepair and their function largely forgotten. 'It's like sailing

a very large ship,' reflects Krueck + Sexton's Mark Sexton. 'You needed to make skilled mid-course corrections all the time.'

To resolve these and other problems, Bellew thought initially that double glazing was a possibility, as it would have reduced heating demand in the winter and improved comfort conditions at the building's perimeter. But he had not reckoned with 'the Mies police' – architects and staff, some of whom remember Mies personally – who vociferously protested against major changes to the building's fabric. Double glazing would have required what Gunny Harboe calls 'radical changes to the glazing detail'. This peer pressure, as much as the various preservation organisations, guided the project from the outset.

But in order to meet performance requirements and satisfy codes, it became clear that the building would have to be reglazed. To solve the problem, the team settled on increasing the size of the stops. After extensive debate and full-scale mock ups, a tapered detail was used, so that the profile at the front edge remains exactly 16mm, satisfying the demands of Mies enthusiasts. A laminate glass with a low-E coating was rejected on aesthetic grounds in favour of a return to a tempered glass sandblasted at low level. Computer control of the sandblasting process has now made it possible to apply the >>

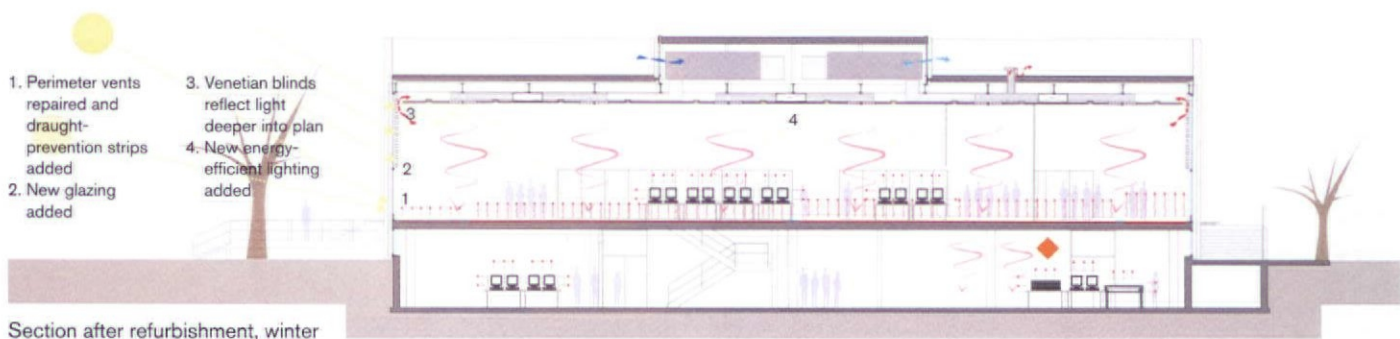
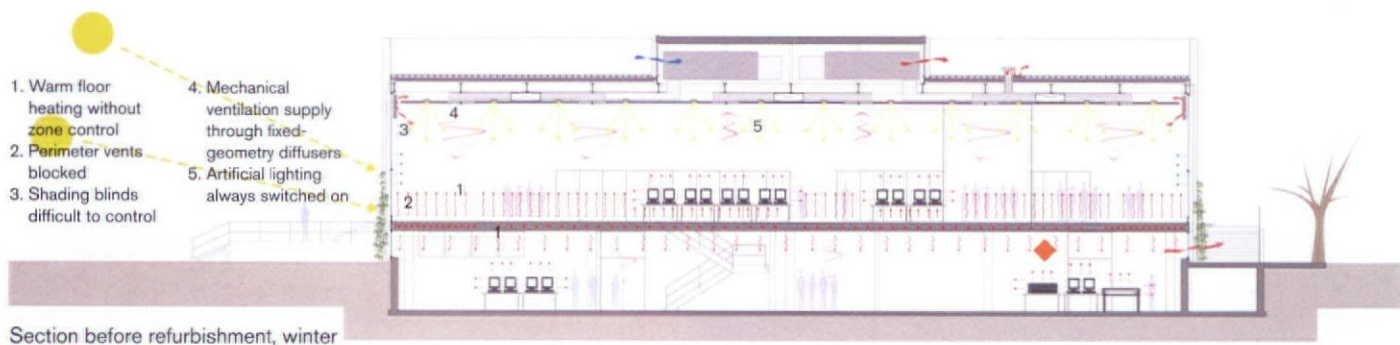
**This image**  
Mies van der Rohe  
with a model of  
Crown Hall



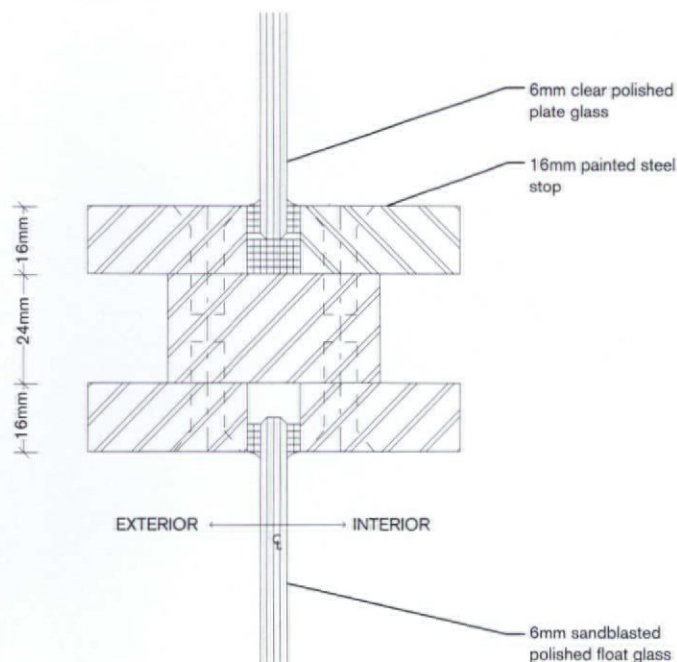




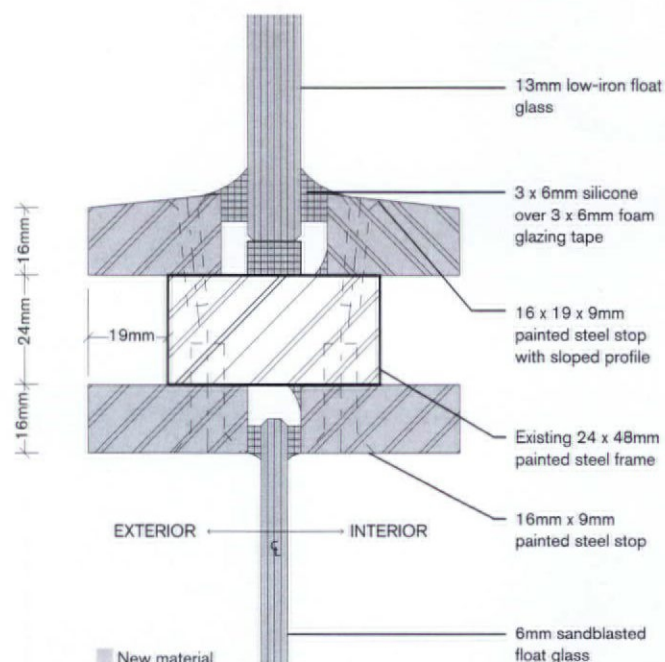
This image Crown Hall after the first phase of refurbishment







Original window detail



New window detail with tapered stop to maintain 16mm profile

finish to tempered glass without shattering the sheet. An epoxy coating inside minimises dirt build-up. Sexton is delighted with the softer effect of the new glazing, which he likens to a Japanese paper Shoji screen.

The low-level ventilation flaps have been refurbished, though they have not been automated, primarily because the idea of mechanisation was seen as anti-preservation. Further environmental improvements include

### Sexton likens the new glazing to a Japanese paper Shoji screen

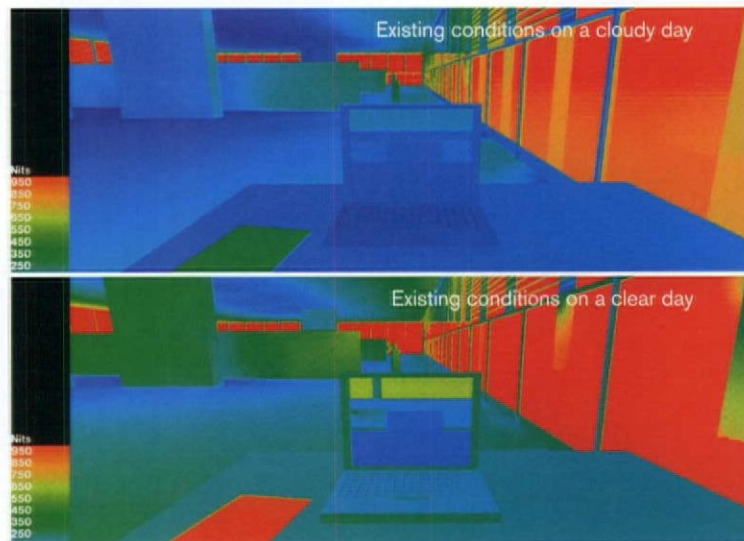
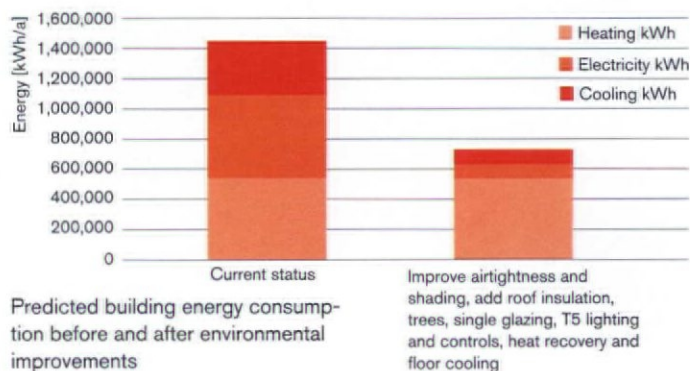
additional roof insulation and the adaptation of the heating system to provide summer cooling.

Another of Mies' design solutions – trees strategically planted for shade – was compromised by an outbreak of Dutch elm disease in combination with a new pathway cutting through campus that required the felling of many trees. The refurbishment team added new planting.

Fundraising is under way for the next phase of work, which will address the lighting. The

existing lamps are to be replaced with high-efficiency dimmable T5 light sources, and new controls and an automated management system will minimise their use. Furthermore, new blinds will be installed, with concave rather than convex louvres and a highly reflective upper surface. Motor boxes will be installed to allow mechanical tilting, but they will still be raised and lowered by hand.

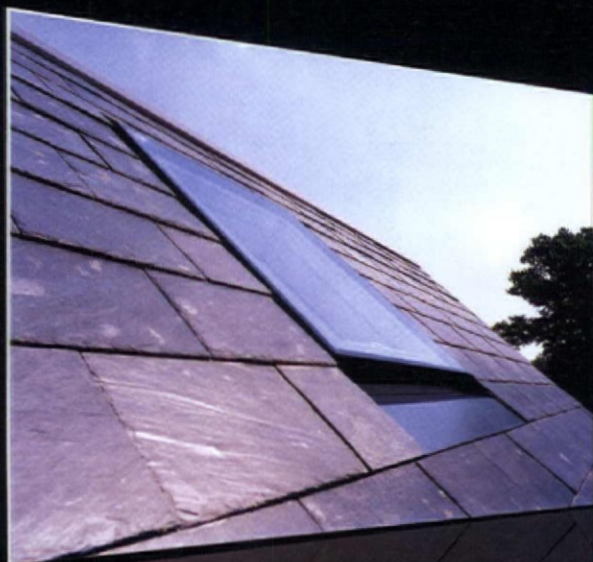
While Sexton initially thought that bringing in 'European frou-frou was a crazy idea' that would just generate expensive impractical suggestions, he is now a total convert, working with Atelier Ten on several new-build projects, such as the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago, which completed last year. With a projected overall reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 60 per cent once all the work is complete, the 'Greening of Crown Hall' as the client titled the project, shows that with careful analysis and largely low-tech tweaking, Modern Movement buildings can be made to perform to very reasonable standards without compromising their design. ■



Daylight studies of glare on a computer screen, before refurbishment



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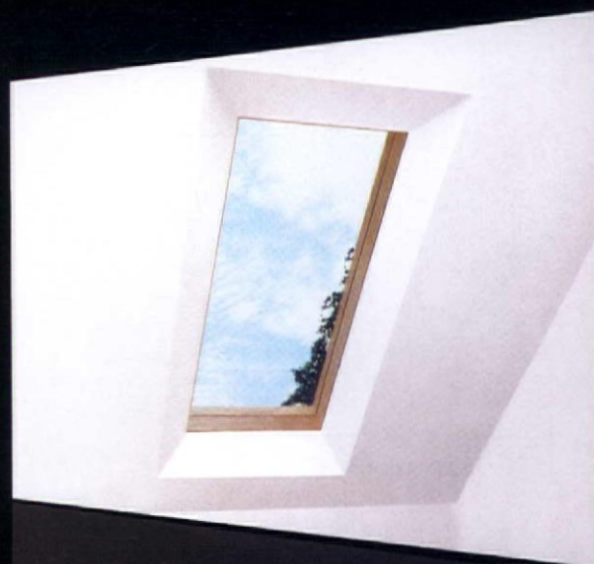


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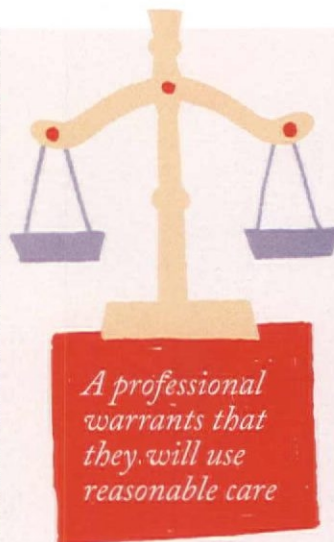
# BACK TO BASICS

## What is the legal difference between a professional and a contractor?

*This monthly column by barristers Kim Franklin and Sue Lindsey will examine the broad legal issues surrounding architecture. This first instalment looks at the difference between the standard applied by the courts to professionals, such as architects, and that applied to contractors.*

### WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL?

The courts have shied away from giving a comprehensive definition of the word 'professional'. They recognise, however, that a profession involves an occupation requiring intellectual skill, or manual skill powered by an



intellect, such as sculpture or surgery. Generally the professions have four characteristics:

- the nature of the work is skilled and specialised;
- practitioners are usually expected to be committed to certain moral principles;
- professionals generally belong to a professional association; and
- most professionals have a high status in the community.

### WHY DOES THIS DEFINITION MATTER?

The legal distinction between a professional and a contractor is fundamental to the question of their respective liability if things should go wrong. A contractor agrees to do specifically what they have been asked to and, in so doing, guarantees their

product. A professional warrants only that they will perform the agreed task with reasonable skill and care. As judge and jurist Lord Denning said: 'The law does not imply a warranty that a professional will achieve the desired result, but only a term that they will use reasonable skill and care. The surgeon does not warrant that they will cure the patient. Nor does a solicitor warrant that they will win the case.'

The distinction between the different duties owed by contractors and professionals is at the heart of most construction claims. A professional owes a common-law duty to exercise reasonable skill and care in their job. If they are in breach of this they are liable to be sued for negligence. The standard by which they are judged is the standard of a similarly qualified professional. A professional could, for example, fail to design a bridge that remained stable, could specify a cladding material that fell off, or could perform an unsuccessful surgical operation. They would only be found negligent, however, if they fell below the standards of their profession. It is for this reason that nearly all professional-negligence claims are supported by the expert evidence of a fellow professional. In this respect an engineer's views of an architect's design or a quantity surveyor's opinion of an architect's





*'So what makes a professional?'*

*'Professions have several characteristics:*

- the nature of the work is skilled and specialised;*
- practitioners should be committed to certain moral principles;*
- members may belong to a professional association.*

*As a professional, you may be liable for negligence, which may lead to longer, more complicated proceedings.'*

certificate are at best of little legal assistance and at worst inadmissible.

On the other hand a contractor owes a contractual duty to perform the contract. If they fail to do this they are sued for breach of contract. The only question is whether they did specifically what they agreed to do in the contract. 'I did my best' or 'I did what any contractor would have done in the circumstances', are not legal defences available to a contractor.

## DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE LEGALLY?

When you realise that professionals are liable in negligence whereas contractors are liable for breach of contract, it becomes apparent that a whole raft of different considerations apply to the two types of claim.

The point from which the time for bringing a claim starts to run is different for claims in negligence and contract: in contract it is the date of breach; in negligence it is more complicated. The

limitation periods are different: in contract it is six years, or 12 years if the contract is under seal; in negligence, again, it is not so straightforward. The defendant's losses are also measured in

different ways: in contract the defaulter is required to put the defendant in the position they would have been had the contract been performed; in negligence the defendant is entitled to be put in the position they would have been had there been no breach.

## WHEN ARE PROFESSIONALS LIABLE?

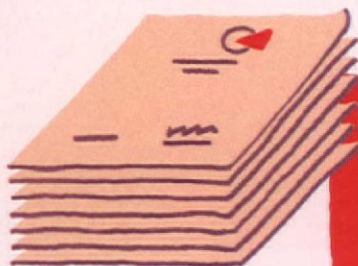
The most important distinction is usually whether or not they are

liable in the first place. This point is widely misunderstood within the construction industry.

Common thinking goes along these lines: the professional was engaged by a contract to do a certain thing – design foundations that will hold up, design a building in the right place, advise the client where to put their money for the best results – that kind of thing. They didn't do it. The house has subsided, the leisure centre is in the wrong place, the investments have completely failed. The professional has breached their contract. They are liable. They have to compensate the defendant. You don't have to go to law school to know that.

But those following this line of thinking will be falling into a common misapprehension. Yes, professionals are usually engaged by a contract which sets out the services they are required to provide and the terms upon which they are prepared to provide it. Nevertheless, that does not make them contractors. Instead, the law implies a term (even if it is not spelt out expressly) that they will exercise reasonable skill and care when carrying out their functions under the contract. It does not expect them to guarantee results. Thus even if the foundations have failed or the cladding dropped, the designer will not be liable if they exercised reasonable skill and care.

*Professionals are liable for negligence, whereas contractors are liable for breach of contract*





# The Critics

EXHIBITION

## Greenaway's Last Supper

Dezeen.com editor **Marcus Fairs** reviews film director Peter Greenaway's latest projection, launched as part of the Milan Furniture Fair, opening next week

Leonardo's Last Supper, 16 April-29 June at the Refectory of the Friary of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, with a cloned version of the painting in the Cortile della Rocchetta in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, 16-21 April

The sun will rise, the sun will set, shadows will move across the room. Characters will emerge briefly from the gloom and retreat again. There will be the sounds of chatter and eating and drinking as diners seated around the long table enjoy their meal.

In terms of narrative, this is about all that will happen in filmmaker Peter Greenaway's next production, but the lack of a script is deliberate. This month, during the Salone Internazionale del Mobile, Milan's annual furniture fair (16-21 April), Greenaway will direct a series of performances involving Leonardo da Vinci's painting *The Last Supper* that amount to a radical assault on the written word's supremacy over the image.

'We're all text merchants,' Greenaway said during a discussion held in London to announce the project. 'Most people are visually illiterate. That's why we've got such a ridiculously stupid cinema. It's not an image-based phenomenon; it's a text-based phenomenon. Every time you see a film you can see

the director following the [screenplay].'

Greenaway, whose films include *8½ Women* (1999) and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989), recently pronounced the 'death of cinema'. 'I feel very, very pessimistic, but I do have an enormous amount of enthusiasm about what happens next, because I do think that the digital revolution has wiped the slate clean and we can begin again.'

Entitled *Leonardo's Last Supper* and funded by the Milan Furniture Fair's parent company Cosmit, the project involves projecting with sophisticated digital technology directly onto Da Vinci's fragile artwork, which is painted on the wall of the refectory at the Santa Maria delle Grazie church. In a series of 20-minute performances, Greenaway will use light and sound to animate the painting.

There will be no voiceovers or captions, but rather an audio-visual fusillade that will illuminate – literally – overlooked details of the artwork. 'There's an incredible musical play of hands and feet and gestures,' he

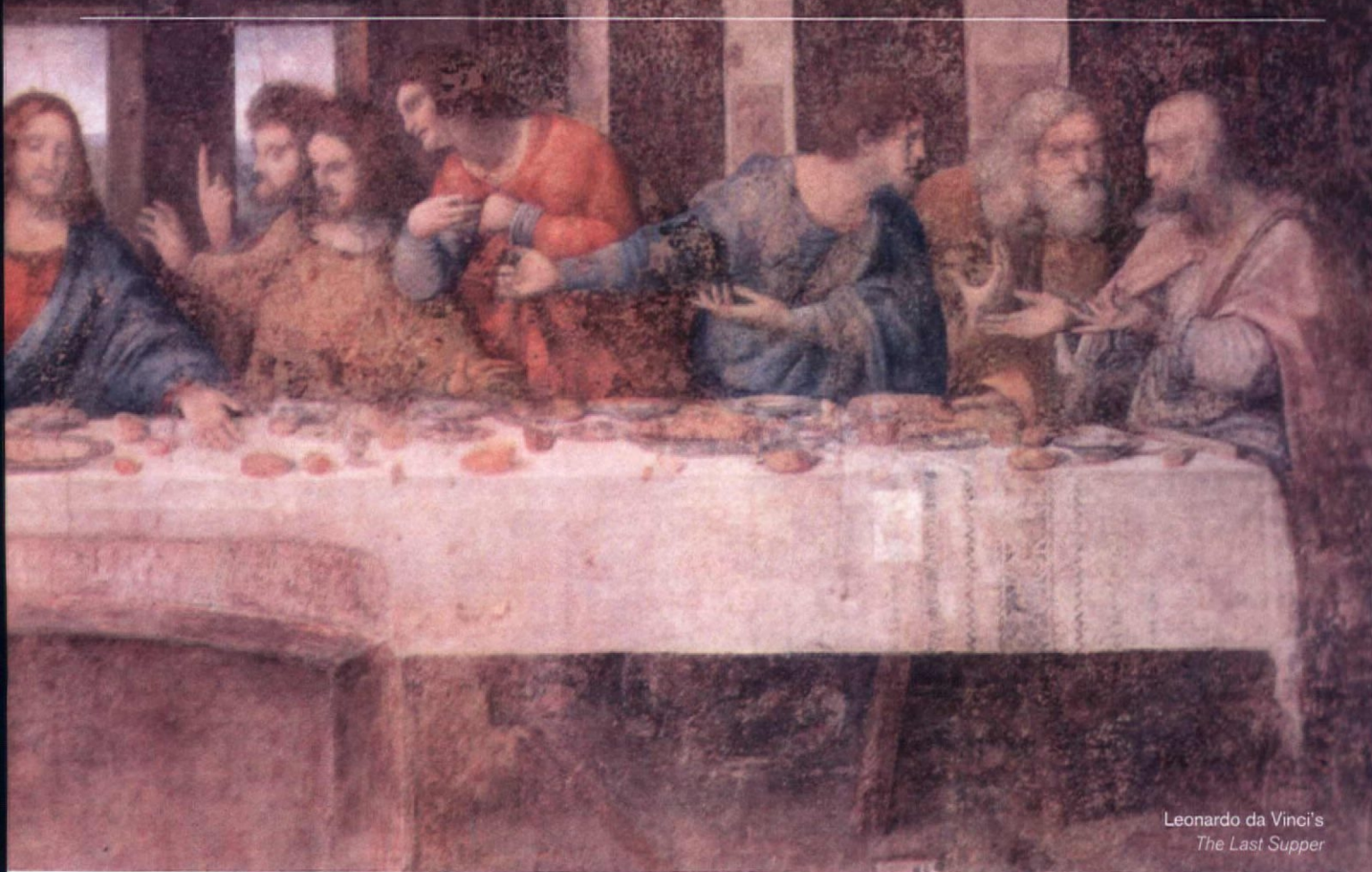
explains, pointing to a reproduction of the painting on a computer monitor, 'which some people have interpreted and actually musically mutated as a symphonic form that works both backwards and forwards. We'll examine that with light and with music.'

*The Last Supper* is one of the most scrutinised artworks of all time, with Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* ('I have nothing against it; I don't want to be culturally snobbish. It's another way to get people to look') being merely the latest attempt to decipher its mysteries. Greenaway claims he will bypass occult hypotheses in favour of quotidian details, although these must surely be of similar complexity: how should a biblical plate in a 15th-century painting sound when dropped? Should Leonardo's disciples speak with Lombardic, Tuscan or Aramaic accents?

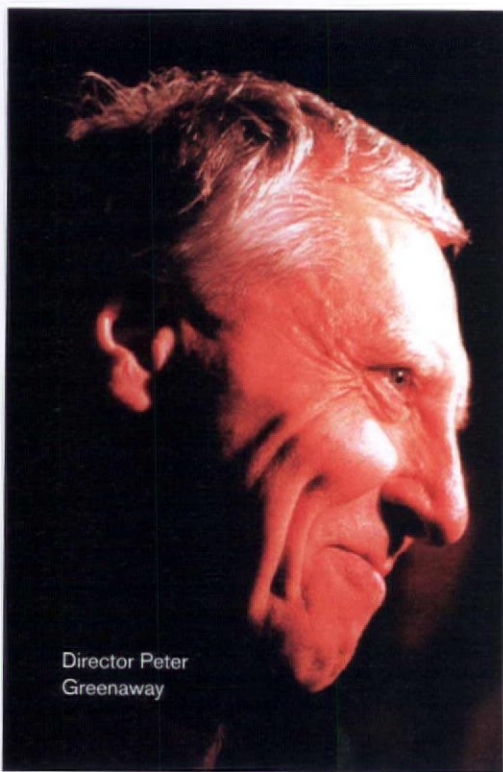
Greenaway suggests deeper readings too. The placing of bread rolls on the table, for example, may be a heretical reference to



In this section // Peter Greenaway's *Last Supper* //  
 An interview with David Adjaye // Back Issues revisits  
*Robin Hood Gardens* // Critic's Choice // *The Endless City*



Leonardo da Vinci's  
*The Last Supper*



Director Peter  
 Greenaway

planetary movements: 'Pluto was certainly not known at the time, but it is said that Pluto is envisaged by the particular combination of objects on this table. We will write that out and project it on the ceiling of the refectory so you can understand the multi-layer hypertexts which Da Vinci has powerfully instigated into this painting.'

The Milan project is the second in what Greenaway hopes will be a series of interactions with the world's greatest works of art (Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, Veronese's *Wedding of Cana* and Picasso's *Guernica* are among his future prospects), and its precursor was an interpretation of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, which he directed in 2006.

Projecting onto the painting in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, Greenaway showed how by altering the lighting conditions (simulating, as he will in Milan, dawn through to nightfall) and the weather (he drenches the subjects in simulated rain), and adding sound (including cockerels, drums and

gunfire), a static 2D image becomes more comprehensible to the average viewer.

With the Rembrandt project, Greenaway hinted at, but did not elaborate on the secrets the painting might contain. Instead, these were saved for a feature film, *Nightwatching* (2007), which speculates that the work contains a coded reference to a murder committed by Rembrandt's clients, who then set out to destroy him in revenge.

But is it true? Greenaway shrugs. 'I've always argued there's no such thing as art history, there are only art historians. In a curious way Edward Gibbon writing *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is no more valid than Ridley Scott making *Gladiator*. But why shouldn't we have interpretations? We might find them vulgar. We might find them uninformed. But it does something profound: it gets you to look at the damn thing again. And that's very, very important.'

**Resume:** Jesus and his disciples will raise a glass to Greenaway next week in Milan





## INTERVIEW

# *The unpindownable Adjaye*

*Kaye Alexander speaks to David Adjaye on the eve of his OBE presentation*

David Adjaye: In Conversation, 18 March, at the Parasol Unit, 14 Wharf Road, London N1

I had been warned against being too 'general' in my interview with David Adjaye. There have been many 'general' interviews with Adjaye – as though he is still, as it were, being 'introduced'.

Adjaye compounded this notion with his talk last month at the Parasol Unit in London. Unwilling to give a rank of importance to his ideas, his presentation consisted of a whistle-stop tour through almost his entire oeuvre since the reformation of his practice – from his *Dirty House* for artists Tim Noble and Sue Webster (2003) to the just completed Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver.

Adjaye spoke about each project with the conviction of a competition pitch, his offhand nonchalance belying an obvious delight. By

describing himself as the sum of his cumulative projects, Adjaye insists that we get the full story – he is not willing to be defined by just one project. Seeing his projects back to back, the only common denominators were the

*'The gentrification of East London is bizarre because it looks like not that much has happened'*

presence of some kind of grid expressed in the facade and his frequent collaborations, one of the mechanisms he has built into his practice to keep things fresh.

After the talk, I challenge Adjaye to sum up his architecture in one phrase and he laughs. 'It is evolving,' he says, 'but there are key things I always set up and there are key

things that are not allowed.' He would elaborate on neither. The conversation quickly turns to East London, the loose theme of the lecture series and where Adjaye has based his practice but never lived, 'apart from a brief stint at Hoxton Square, right at the beginning.' I ask him about the changes he has witnessed, and instigated. He laughs again: 'I mean, it has radically changed, of course, but not visually, not that much! East London is the latest in gentrification, which is bizarre to me because it looks like not that much has happened. But everyone values everything in a completely radical way.'

Adjaye puts this down to the 'thinness' of developments which 'focus on the building product that can be sold via brochures rather than the empowerment of the public realm'.









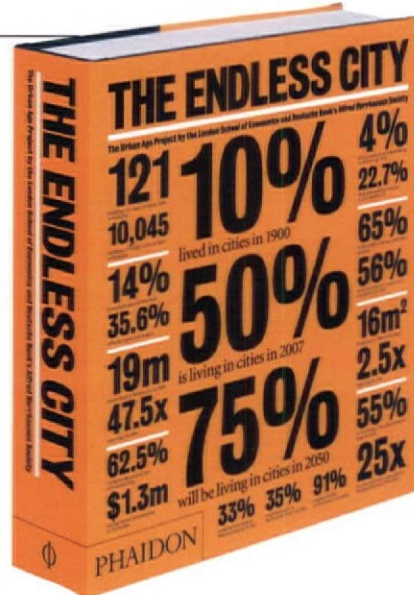
## Critic's Choice

This book's homage to construction is only intermittently interesting, says **Andrew Mead**

What's the connection between a Beijing building site in the run-up to this year's Olympics and a painting by the Renaissance artist Piero di Cosimo? The answer comes in *Construction Site: Metamorphoses in the City* (Lars Müller Publishers, £29.90) – a disparate collection of texts and images on the theme of construction compiled by the department of architecture at ETH Zürich university. Cosimo's painting shows a palace being built and the point is that construction technology – especially where there's cheap labour, as in China – is little different four centuries later: it is still 'essentially a manual craft'. Referring to experiments in Switzerland and Japan to develop automated systems of construction (ETH has a bricklaying robot, see AJ 27.03.08) the book asks how long this will be the case.

A range of perspectives come into play, with the building site seen as a nuisance, a spectacle, or a promise that is seldom fulfilled. These sites act as business cards for construction companies, says one essayist, who also recalls Mies' remark that only when skyscrapers are being built do they reveal the 'audacious constructional thinking that informs them'. Perhaps the most dramatic image is of Germany's largest building site today, a new trade-fair centre in Stuttgart (pictured below).

*Construction Site* is irritatingly over-designed and some of the artists' contributions are pointless. But former *Deutsche Bauzeitung* editor Wilfried Dechau's piece, 'The Beauty of Incompleteness', and an interview with Austrian architect Dietmar Eberle tip the balance to make the book worthwhile.



## BOOK

### 'Why should I care?' asks Jaffer Kolb after reading *The Endless City*

*The Endless City: The Urban Age Project*. Edited by Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic. Phaidon, hardback, 512pp, 2,000 illustrations. £35.00

Why write criticism when it's done for you, in the very work you're critiquing, no less? At the end of Phaidon's recently published *The Endless City*, I came across a line by Rem Koolhaas in his essay 'In Search of Authenticity'. He writes, 'It is quite shocking that there has been hardly any theoretical description of the city by architects – of how it performs and how it should perform', later describing, 'the current malaise, the dearth of new ideas and the recycling of old ones'.

*The Endless City* suffers from this point, but does so with fantastic elegance. The book, true to Phaidon's form, is stunning. For two days, passing colleagues pawed it out of my hands to look at the bold cover and beautifully clear graphics. My subsequent request for a private office was callously turned down.

But before pursuing a clichéd beauty-without-substance argument, it would be remiss to ignore the value of the book. What it does, it does quite well. It is good at figures, a strength proudly announced on the black-on-orange cover. Statistics on urban growth, economics, real estate and transportation usage are complete and well-presented, and the book does a fine job of summarising urban theories and debate from the last 20 years.

*The Endless City* begins with some

introductory texts, followed by key background and data on New York, Shanghai, London, Mexico City, Johannesburg and Berlin. Next up is a series of essays on a range of issues, from Richard Sennett on the public realm, to Anne Power on housing in cities, to Herzog & de Meuron on 'The Particular and the Generic'. At the close, there are a series of projects exhibiting the values espoused in the book and a glossary of terms.

But what determines the content of this book? Who are the writers and why those cities? Rather unapologetically, *The Endless City* is introduced with an essay describing the work of Urban Age. Yes, that Urban Age, the think-tank begun in 2004 at the London School of Economics and the mastermind behind the Venice Architecture Biennale 2006. The book is co-edited by Ricky Burdett, director of Urban Age, and all of the contributors – including co-editor Deyan Sudjic, director of the Design Museum, London – are on the advisory board of the Urban Age Project.

And this is where my attention begins to wander. Because for me, the question isn't what is Urban Age, but rather, why should I care? And I've been asking myself this question since I first came across the project back in 2005. According to Burdett and executive director Philipp Rode, 'Urban Age has moved from a loose association of urban experts to a more formal network of city leaders, academics, designers and professionals – from a group of urban nomads to an urban tribe, as Saskia Sassen has described it.'

The first thing this description makes me think of is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 1983), but encumbered by the stink of affectation. Where Anderson identified transnational communities with shared epistemological backgrounds and connections within diasporas, here we have a group of urban academics with little rolling suitcases dragged behind them for common

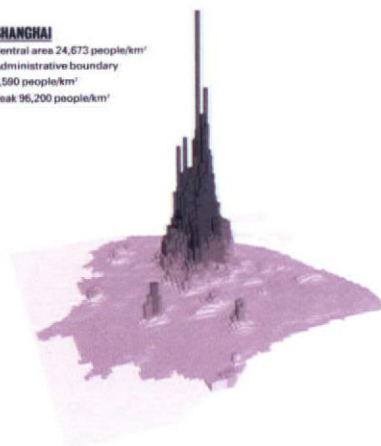
*The essays are written in the kind of jargon that makes urbanism today an indulgent, unhelpful discourse*

ground. For they are the transnational literati, but who is listening, and to what?

One problem, evidenced by *The Endless City's* launch on 12 March, is that there are too many chefs in the kitchen over at Urban Age HQ. That event, which was supposed to be a



**SHANGHAI**  
Central area 24,673 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Administrative boundary 2,590 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Peak 96,200 people/km<sup>2</sup>



**LONDON**  
Central area 7,805 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Administrative boundary 4,800 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Peak 17,200 people/km<sup>2</sup>

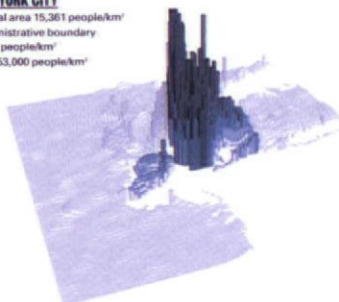


Population  
densities in six  
major cities

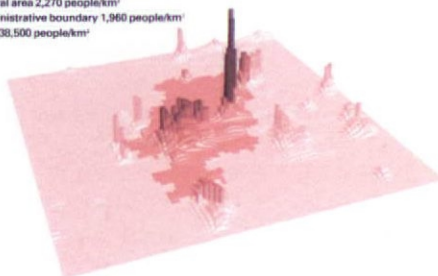
**MEXICO CITY**  
Central area 12,541 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Administrative boundary 5,880 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Peak 48,300 people/km<sup>2</sup>



**NEW YORK CITY**  
Central area 15,361 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Administrative boundary 9,600 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Peak 53,800 people/km<sup>2</sup>



**JOHANNESBURG**  
Central area 2,270 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Administrative boundary 1,960 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Peak 30,500 people/km<sup>2</sup>



**BERLIN**  
Central area 7,124 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Administrative boundary 3,810 people/km<sup>2</sup>  
Peak 21,700 people/km<sup>2</sup>



dialogue between Burdett, Sudjic, Enrique Peñalosa (former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia) and Richard Rogers, suffered from the polyphony of several people proclaiming their own agendas while engaging minimally. Similarly, while *The Endless City* is a fantastic source of information, the individual pieces suffer from the lack of an editor that can make them work together. The impact of the essays is mitigated by the relentless tirade of similar-but-different arguments, which are written in the kind of globalisation-densification-diversification jargon that makes urbanism today an indulgent, unhelpful discourse.

*The Endless City* and *Urban Age* are best at description, and worst at prescription. There are a lot of questions – in each essay, and implied by all the data – but no convincing answers. I share Koolhaas' frustration over the dearth of new ideas about urbanism – there are none posited on these 510 pages. Instead, the book is a celebration of the work of *Urban Age*'s writers, directors and associates. It's a summary and a starting point, but in order to have any kind of resonance, it needs to offer somewhere to go.

**Resume:** The interminable tirade of globalisation blah-blah makes this an endless read

## 5 THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

### 1 *Beyond Measure*

Explore the applications of geometry in architecture, science and art, illustrated by 3D prints created by Foster + Partners with artist John Pickering (pictured below).

Until 1 June at Kettle's Yard, Castle Street, Cambridge. [www.kettlesyard.co.uk](http://www.kettlesyard.co.uk)

### 2 *We Tell Stories*

Interact with must-read online digital stories, including *The 21 Steps* by Charles Cumming, a London-based mystery that unfolds over a Google satellite map. [www.wetellstories.co.uk](http://www.wetellstories.co.uk)

### 3 *Tyne Salmon Trail*

Follow the Tyne Salmon Trail and discover 10 unique 2,000mm<sup>2</sup> cubes by Xsite Architecture. Various locations along the River Tyne until December 2008. [www.tynesalmontrail.co.uk](http://www.tynesalmontrail.co.uk)

### 4 *Set in Stone*

See Stephen Carter's remarkable paintings of the London Westway flyover, part of an exhibition of work inspired by architecture. Until 26 April, PM Gallery & House, Ealing, London. [www.ealing.gov.uk/pmgalleryandhouse](http://www.ealing.gov.uk/pmgalleryandhouse)

### 5 *Blood on Paper*

Co-curated by Elena Foster, wife of Norman, this exhibition of art books is an impressive collection of sculptures, books and paintings. Opens 15 April at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)





# Products

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Readers may also obtain information about these products by filling in the enquiry numbers on an AJ enquiry card. Advertisers wishing to promote their products on these pages should contact Abigail Reed on 020 7728 4553.

## METAL TECHNOLOGY



### AJ ENQUIRY 201

Metal Technology's System 17 provided architectural glazing to the new Technology Incubation and Resource Centre in Omagh, Northern Ireland. The Omagh Enterprise Company invested £1.2 million to help draw innovative businesses to the area. The architect for the project was ADP, with contractor McCann Bros.

## STOAKES SYSTEMS



### AJ ENQUIRY 202

Kalwall has been used at Loughborough University's new engineering centre, designed by architect David Morley. The highly insulating cladding is widely used in schools because it creates a remarkable uniform ambience which is ideal for teaching, study and play. For more information visit [www.stoakes.co.uk](http://www.stoakes.co.uk)

## CLAXTON BLINDS



### AJ ENQUIRY 203

Claxton Blinds is one of the leading commercial window-blind companies in the UK, specialising in interior window projects for any requirement. Some notable projects from Claxton Blinds include Tower 42, the Canary Wharf Tower and the Citigroup Tower. For more information visit [www.claxton-blinds.com](http://www.claxton-blinds.com)

## CORUS



### AJ ENQUIRY 204

BMP Architects has specified Corus' premium Colorcoat HPS200 pre-finished steel for a new leisure complex just outside Peterborough. The product was used in Silver as part of a Corus Panels and Profiles Arcline 40 wall-cladding system and D46 roof system, and is covered by the market-leading Confidex Guarantee for up to 30 years.

## TRIMETALS



### AJ ENQUIRY 205

As more industrial and housing projects require dedicated cycle storage, the unique Protect a Cycle range from Trimetals should be considered as the practical and secure solution. Featuring a 25-year metal-panel guarantee, the product is fire-resistant, maintenance free and has four locking points. [www.protectacycle.co.uk](http://www.protectacycle.co.uk)

## TILE OF SPAIN



### AJ ENQUIRY 206

The new Dunas collection by Tile of Spain member Vives is a range of white-body wall tiles inspired by undulating desert sand dunes. The range of 20 x 40cm contoured tiles is available in seven colourways including Metallic Champagne (pictured), Lime, Black and Red. For more information visit [www.vivesceramica.com](http://www.vivesceramica.com)

## TARKETT



### AJ ENQUIRY 207

Having been part of the global Tarkett Group since 2004, Tarkett-Marley Floors is taking an important step forward by focusing on one brand under one name: Tarkett. Tarkett's manufacturing plant in Kent is now the Group's centre of excellence for the production of slip-resistant flooring, the majority of which is distributed within the UK.

## TROAX UK



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Industrial-safety specialist Troax UK has simplified machine safety with the introduction of an easy-to-fit machine-guarding package. Based on its Rapid Fix machine fencing and an innovative new fixing system, the package offers versatility and speed of installation, providing a simple and cost-effective way to ensure personnel safety.

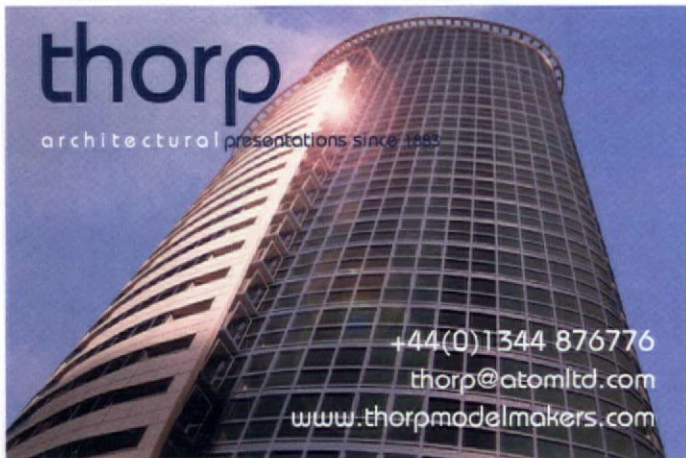


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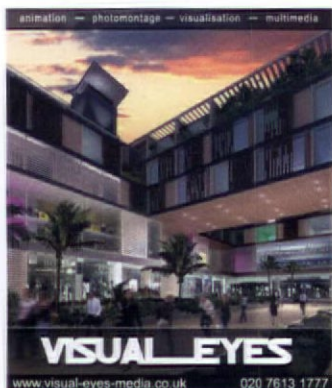
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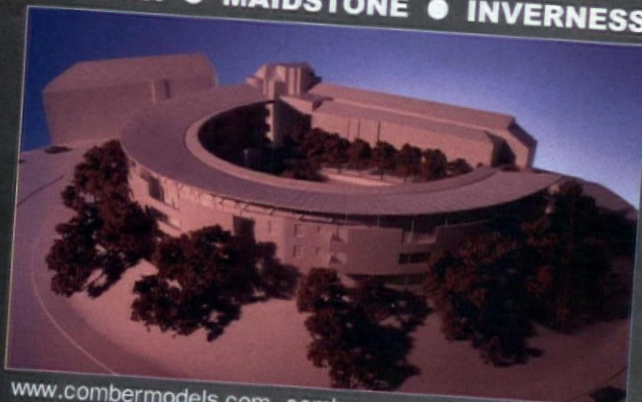


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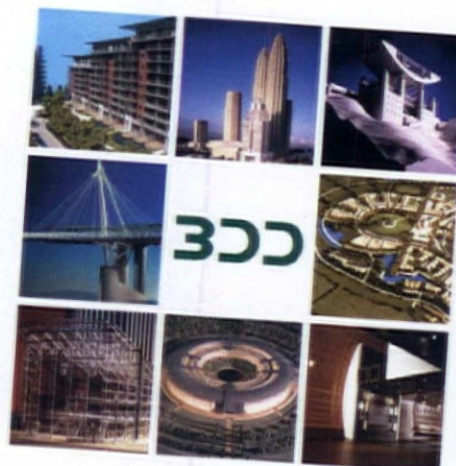
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POST REF: D.4.4

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For more information about these posts please contact Stuart Hindmarch, Design/Contracts Manager on 0114 226 8585.

Closing Date for both posts: 30 April 2008

To apply, download job details and an application pack at: [www.sth.nhs.uk](http://www.sth.nhs.uk) Alternatively, call 0114 271 3570 (office hours) or 0114 271 2396 (24hrs).

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### School of Art, Design & Architecture Department of Architecture & 3D Design

The University is committed to providing excellence in design teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level and providing a high quality learning environment. Architecture has a great base in a converted textile mill beside the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. Staff are friendly, energetic and positive.

### Senior Lecturer in Architecture (0.5 FTE)

£34,094 - £43,190 pro rata (effective 1 May 2008)

Ref: 3696

You will be expected to play a leading role in the management and delivery of our Architectural and Interior Design Foundation Programme, which is a one year study period designed for students who do not have standard academic qualifications for entry onto a degree course. Successful completion of the course allows progression onto BA (Hons) Architecture, BSc (Hons) Architectural Technology or BA (Hons) Interior Design.

You will be an architect, an architectural technologist or an interior designer with a strong design portfolio, a range of practice-based and teaching experience. You will have a Masters level qualification (or equivalent) in a relevant subject and you must have, or be willing to undertake, a teaching qualification. You will also be expected to be able to contribute to teaching elsewhere at all levels and will therefore have additional expertise in one or more of the following areas: Architectural Design, Architectural Technology, Contextual Studies. **Interview date: 20 May 2008.**

### Lecturer in Computer Aided Design (0.5 FTE)

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At University Centre Oldham, following successful recruitment to the Foundation Degrees in Construction and Architectural Technology and Interior Design, the portfolio of courses that we offer is expanding, with new degree courses in Property Development and Construction and Project Management proposed from September 2008. Because of the success of the University Centre in this area, the academic team is now looking to appoint a full time Lecturer in Construction.

We are looking for a professional with up-to-date experience of the construction industry to assist in the implementation and development of the new degree programmes.

You should be educated to at least first degree level (or equivalent). Some experience of teaching is essential, together with a knowledge of course structures and development.

Within a team, you will be expected to help co-ordinate the teaching programmes, and to teach in at least two of the following subject areas: Building Surveying, Home Inspection (HIPS), Property Development, Quantity Surveying, Architectural Technology, Construction or Project Management.

You will also be prepared to contribute to teaching from time to time at University Centre Barnsley and at Huddersfield University. **Interview date: 22 May 2008.**

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# Ian Martin. Wikitecture, petrified existentialism and a barking-mad icon

**MONDAY.** I'm preparing a lecture for the department of wikitecture, Memehampton University. It's one of the newer unis. The website makes it sound like Plato's grove. Leafy. Attracts young enquiring minds. And 'non-materialist', as it exists on the internet only.

I will be asking questions such as 'in the search for architectural truth, is it OK to use Google?' And 'can a built environment shaped by the human mindswarm ever be better than one designed by some numpty old tosser with a knighthood?' I will be answering yes to both, as this is exactly what they want to hear and the fee's not bad.

**TUESDAY.** My old friend Jean-Eric Nonmerci calls. Now he's won the Spritzer Prize he's planning to curate his own retrospective. Great, where? 'Do not enquire of the where' he says, a little brusquely and in French. 'For me, all wheres are alive and different. We must strive to understand whichever where we are in, then liberate and transcend that where. Only then are we able to create the there...'

You can see why they gave him the prize. Not only is he a bald structuralist in a leather jacket, he bangs on about 'the spirit of the place' in a slightly unhinged way. He's like a bouncer with a PhD. I suggest calling the exhibition Genius Loco. 'No. It shall be called Petrified Existentialism, Colon, Adventures In Experimental Space. Now if you will excuse me, I have a cultural moment to define in Belgium.' He hangs up.

Spritzer laureates tend to take themselves extremely seriously. I liked it better in the old

days of the Perrier Award, when relatively unknown architects did stand-up at Edinburgh and made jokes about erectile dysfunction.

**WEDNESDAY.** Morning: design a perpendicular farm. Afternoon: design a diagonal bell tower. Evening: design a supine British Embassy.

**THURSDAY.** Jean-Eric calls again. 'Please do not interrupt. I have been using my massive brain to think about certain things, and to research myself. Why have I won the Spritzer? Because, I hope, I am specific. For me architects are like people in many respects. Some are wealthy, some are oblique a lot of the time, many are just clones. Pif! I am the – what would we say – opposite.'

He explains in great French detail how he will curate his retrospective not in an exhibition space 'like other exhibition spaces, designed for exhibitions' but in his own head. How then will he transmit his ideas to the public? 'Public. Paf! Publics are like other publics. I seek the specific. I will address individuals only, unravelling for them the odyssey of my work. Concentrating perhaps on the earlier buildings...' And how will these individuals be selected? 'I will simply choose a door that looks promising, then knock on it. An individual will open the door. Pof! I begin.'

A Structuralist's Witness now. Jean-Eric certainly is a random, yet specific, guy.

**FRIDAY.** Lunch with Darcy the architecture critic and his new companion,

Bauhaus the dachshund. Today, Bauhaus is clad in thousands of tiny translucent glass panels set behind fake miniature louvres.

'Gorgeous or what?' Darcy asks the dog. They both know it's a rhetorical dilemma. 'Who's my lovely little Torre Agbar then?' Yip. 'You are.' Yip. 'Yes you are.' Yip. 'Oh yes you are.' Yip yip. I've had enough. 'Look, mate. If you're the Torre Agbar, you need to be VERTICAL, don't you?' I yank the little turd up by his collar. Yuf. Darcy and the rest of the pub are appalled. The 'apex' is apparently at the tail end.

**SATURDAY.** Bloody wikitecture. My lecture begins at 11 sharp, special voice-recognition software converting my speech into open-source text. I get literally three words into my address before the electronic heckling starts.

'Ladies' and 'gentlemen' are both hyper-linked on the screen, and from various interactive simulcast lounges the wikitecture debate is launched. Disambiguations ('ladies: see women') are posited and refuted. A charrette is mooted on the history and/or purpose of gentlemen in architecture and/or the wikiverse. I'm even getting hate mail: 'Cite error: Invalid <ref> tag; no text was provided for refs named, you simpering bastard!'

That's it, I'm out. Terrestrial architecture may be infuriating, but at least it's slow.

**SUNDAY.** Suspend life/work balance in the recliner.

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