The RIBA Journal January 2025 Vol 132 Issue 01

Piano plays host at Paddington

Scott Brownrigg's silent movies

Top class: President's Medals

Lake | Flato: men with a mission

The RIBA Journal
January 2025
£15/€30/US$35

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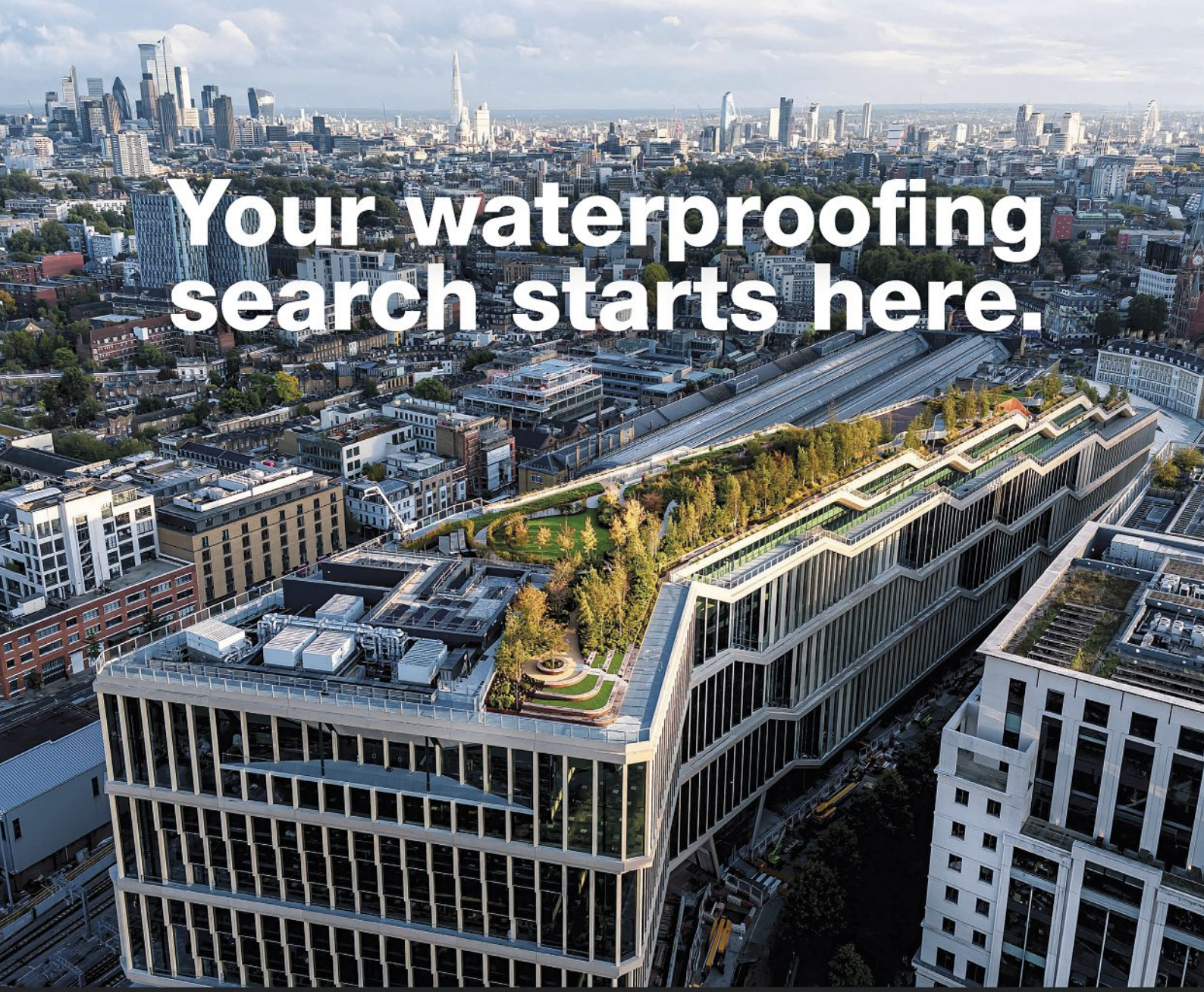

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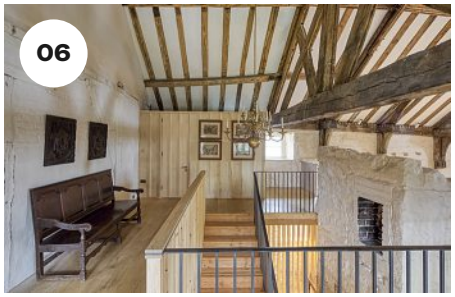
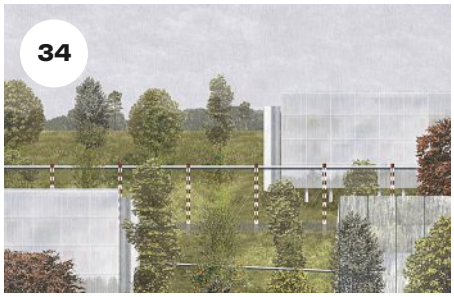
1 Buildings



JOHN MILLER

On the cover
Paddington Square by Renzo Piano Building Workshop photographed by Hufton + Crow

2 Intelligence



JOE FRANKLIN

3 Culture

LARA SWIMMER

'A lot of people have created retrofit-type apps, but the missing piece is getting the homeowner on board'
AI to boost homeowner renovations app: ribaj.com/home-notes-ai

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Average issue circulation 24,034 ABC audited June 2021

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1: Buildings

WOOD UP
PARIS XIII
LAN ARCHITECTURE
Read the full story:
ribaj.com/wood-up-paris

Is timber a functional proposition for housing in Europe's densest city? Seven years ago, LAN Architecture and developer REI Habitat won a City of Paris competition to provide an answer that met required density and carbon standards, while creating a template for future projects. The result is Wood Up, a landmark on the Seine rising 50m – the most allowed for residential buildings in Paris – and the tallest mass timber building in France. LAN's website labels its experimental genesis 'an unprecedented typological exploration'. Co-founder Umberto Napolitano bluntly calls it 'a nightmare'.

A three-storey concrete base tackles the drop to the river. Above, the principal material is beech, transported by barge from Normandy. Two rings of glulam columns ascend the facade grid, behind which sit 132 modular apartments, able to expand horizontally and vertically. Inside, beech columns and pine beams are conspicuous and fragrant: 'You are living in wood,' says Napolitano. Otherwise, floor-to-ceiling windows dominate: 'In the end, this is a glass building, with a wooden system of columns and beams'. So cityscapes fill each flat, whether sunsets over the Île de France or the waste-incineration plant in Ivry.

Wood Up provides generous shared space, including a roof garden with individual plots and a two-storey void accessible to all residents: 'It's a gamble. We'll be interested to see how it works, and if it can be reproduced elsewhere,' says Napolitano. To date, reaction to Wood Up has been positive, but he worries about fetishising timber: 'Wood currently has an image that doesn't allow debate, but for me, everything is related … once you radicalise an answer, it is not the right answer.'

It's a considered reflection on a project that delivers environmentally and economically, but also as a piece of city. ● John Jervis

JAVIER AGUSTÍN ROJAS

Return to glory

Cowper Griffith Architects' painstaking restoration and conversion of the mediæval Calverley Old Hall preserves and updates with charm, warmth and surprise

Words: Flo Armitage-Hookes Photographs: John Miller

Not many mediæval landmarks are cheek by jowl with garages, mid-century houses and bamboo plants. Yet Calverley Old Hall, located in a village between Leeds and Bradford, is at home among the piecemeal landscape. Approaching the property, it appears like a cluster of sandstone cottages, all different heights and orientations. No facade or element is regular: walls are bulging, windows askew and stones dappled with soot and traces of historic features. Inside and out, it's a patchwork of spaces and forms.

Built and expanded by the prominent Calverley family across centuries, the house was sold in 1754 and divided into workers' accommodation. The Landmark Trust bought the site in 1981 and minor works were undertaken to create a small holiday let. However, most of the site remained unoccupied

Below Once situated in an expansive landscape, Calverley Old Hall is now inward gazing.

and in need of drastic repair. When the building was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in 2016, it was time to act. Cowper Griffith Architects won the competition to rescue and renovate the building into accessible and sustainable holiday accommodation for 10 people, a community-use space and a one-bedroom flat.

As with Witherford Watson Mann's acclaimed reinvention of Astley Castle for The Landmark Trust, it was evident that a contemporary solution was needed. Full restoration of Calverley Old Hall would have required speculation and erasure. And it's unclear, for a building with so many iterations, which period one would restore it to. Both client and architect chose to show the building's layered fabric and make new interventions intelligible. 'It has lived and is living', reflected Landmark's historian Caroline Stanford.

Establishing circulation and connecting fragmented spaces were the crux of the project. Cowper Griffith Architects tried to decipher the original volumes and routes by studying documentary evidence, working closely with an archaeologist and teasing out clues on site. The renovation has reinstated a first floor level in the Solar Block, positioned front and back doors along the historic cross passage and removed 19th century partition walls and ceilings.

It's not a scheme with broad strokes. Each space has a distinct history and required unique treatment. The only way to comprehend its complexity and nuance is to explore the building room by room.

PETER COOK

Above Bespoke wood panelling breaks up the lofty Great Hall.

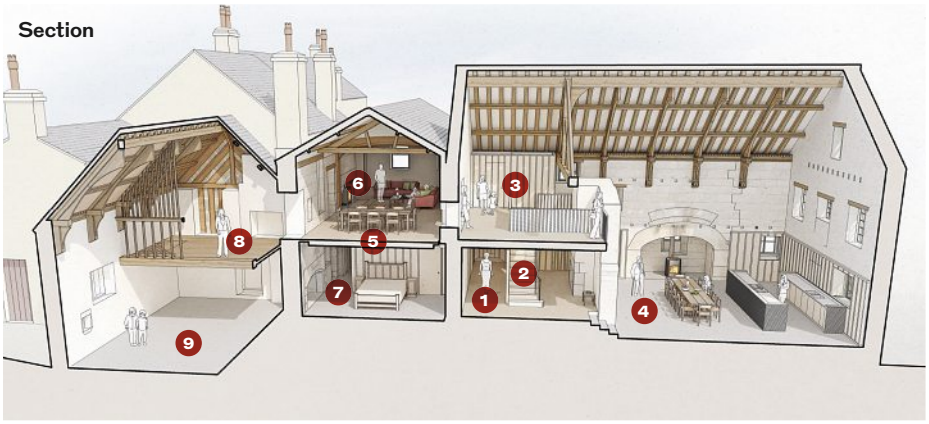
Below Softwood slats line the former cross passage and new staircase.

The 14th century Solar Block before the works.

To start at the beginning, the main entrance opens into a full-height area with a new glulam staircase and platform lift tucked behind. The Great Hall, now a kitchen and dining space, is located to the right, with three bedrooms and bathrooms to the left. On the first floor, a main living space leads off into two bedrooms with bathrooms and the chapel gallery. The chapel has an entrance at the front of the property, whilst the community room and flat have separate entrances to the rear.

The Great Hall is an astonishing three-storey space topped by a cantilevered hammer-beamed roof. It's lofty but doesn't feel cavernous. New bespoke solid and veneer oak panelling lines the far end of the room at ground

PETER COOK



COWPER GRIFFITH ARCHITECTS LLP

Above Looking into the Great Hall. A craggy viewpoint connects the ground and first floors.

Below A new floor 'floats' in the Solar Block.

1 Cross passage
2 New staircase
3 New lift
4 Great Hall
5 Solar Block
6 Living space
7 Accessible bedroom
8 Chapel gallery
9 Chapel

level, delineating the kitchen area and breaking up the elevation. It also quietly corrects the out-of-true walls and hides insulation and wiring. The kitchen units and island, also oak and oak veneer with polished concrete tops, were designed by the architects and constructed by The Landmark Trust's in-house team. They thoughtfully cater for wheelchair users; surfaces pull out at a lower level, there is knee space under the sink and plenty of room for manoeuvring. These modern additions sit comfortably within the historic space, providing a softness and domesticity without competing or contrasting.

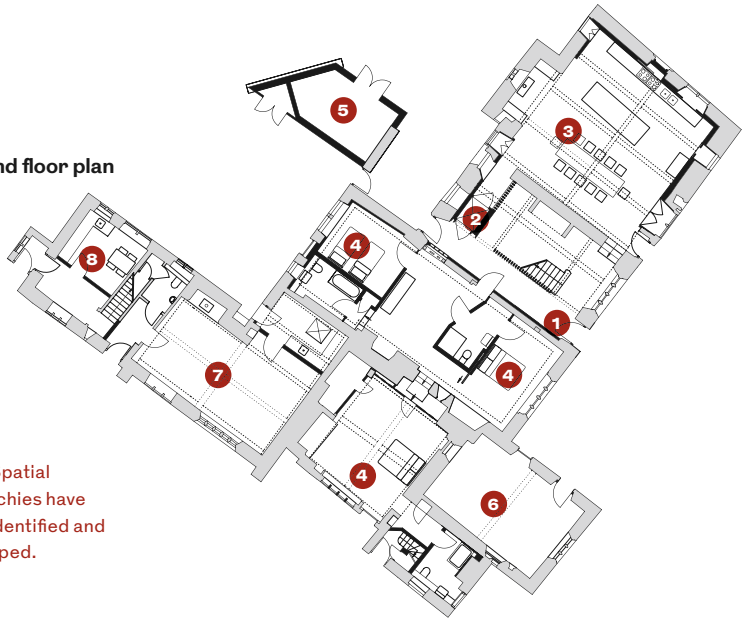
A craggy parapet offers an unexpected view of the ensemble at the top of the staircase. Cowper Griffith retained a 17th century wall between the entrance area and Great Hall up to shoulder height on the first floor, to allow connections across levels. Peering over, you can imagine playful interactions between guests – kids pretending to fire arrows over the 'battlement' or adults signalling down for a cuppa.

> The c.1560 paintings have been delightfully described by a conservator as 'the Tutankhamun of Yorkshire'

This viewpoint also affords a closer look across the cantilevered roof and spere truss. Repairs have been made, but the beams retain their crooked, jaunty charm. Carving peters out towards the southwest end of the space where the spere truss is carved on only one side. Stanford explains that decoration used to be reserved for the 'high' end of a room, not the 'service' end. Cowper Griffith has elaborated on this hierarchy of details and materials – a tactical move to keep within the project's tight budget. For example, oak has been used in the Great Hall (a primary space) but soft wood was deemed appropriate for a slatted screen and partition muntins in the entrance area (a secondary space).

Walking into the living area, it is not obvious that the room is the project's biggest technical achievement. Only when you trace its edges and see that the floorboards are consistently a centimetre from the walls, do you realise that you're floating. By the 21st century the historic two-storey Solar Block had become a single volume. Cowper Griffith wanted to reintroduce a floor and separate the space into a living room above and bedrooms below. However, to minimise the weight applied to the historic masonry, the floor had to be suspended. It only connects to the walls in four places, despite containing all the services. The result is masterful and modest.

Ground floor plan

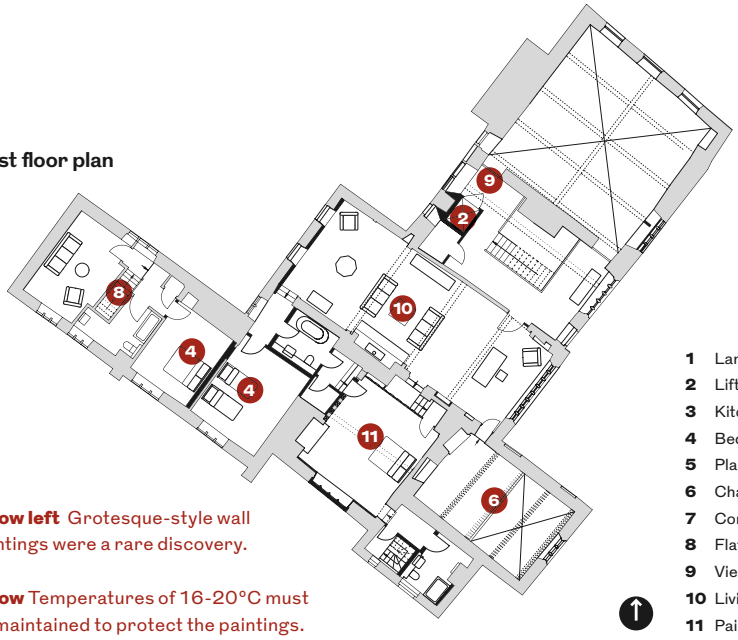


Left Spatial hierarchies have been identified and developed.

Less demure is the painted chamber. In 2021, floor to ceiling grotesque-style wall paintings were discovered in a first floor bedroom. They had been boarded over and hidden, and were remarkably intact. The c.1560 paintings are believed to be unique and have been delightfully described by a conservator as 'the Tutankhamun of Yorkshire'.

Griffin-like creatures curl into vertical patterns around Tudor roses, ornaments and winged men across red, white and black panels which repeat throughout the room. There aren't any signs, protective glass or alarms – just a small timber lip at floor level and an instructions sheet at the end of the bed. It's breathtaking, overwhelming and a bit unsettling. It feels like the design could swallow you up or animate at any moment. I wonder how soundly I'd

First floor plan



1 Landmark Trust entrance
2 Lift
3 Kitchen dining space
4 Bedroom
5 Plant room
6 Chapel
7 Community room
8 Flat
9 Viewpoint
10 Living space
11 Painted chamber

Below left Grotesque-style wall paintings were a rare discovery.

Below Temperatures of 16-20°C must be maintained to protect the paintings.

Reclaimed fabric, such as tiles, timber and slate, has been repurposed and new materials sourced locally

sleep with all those little painted eyes watching me.

In the background, Cowper Griffith has skilfully integrated climate regulation measures. The building management system pumps preconditioned air into the chamber, which is extracted through a small grill on the southwest wall. A new window with solar glazing and an external wooden louvre filters the light and reduces solar glare.

Meaningful efforts address the building's environmental impact, despite the limitations of Grade I listing. A ground source heat pump, which required six 150m boreholes and a new external plant room, provides hot water and heating. Secondary glazing, insulation and underfloor heating have been installed and photovoltaic panels line a south-facing roof pitch. Reclaimed fabric, such as tiles, timber and slate, has been repurposed and new materials sourced locally.

It's certainly an inward-looking property, with internal vistas replacing views of a once-expansive landscape. However, The Landmark Trust has commendably connected the building with its current surroundings through the offer of a community room, on site internships and outreach programmes.

Calverley Old Hall does not flow seamlessly – nor should it. It's a warren of surprises, difference and exploration which embraces the historic character. Yet significantly, the large living room and Great Hall anchor the scheme, providing open, communal spaces for gathering and spectacle, and all-importantly aiding navigation. ●

Credits
Client and project management Landmark Trust
Architect Cowper Griffith Architects
Structural engineer The Morton Partnership
Services engineer Bob Costello Associates
Archaeologist FAS Heritage
Wall paintings Opus Conservation
Accessibility Phil Chamber Consultancy
CDM co-ordinator Philip Waller Consulting
Wall paintings adviser Tobit Curteis Associates
Main contractor Dobson Construction
M&E subcontractors Front Five Building Services
Joinery Stapleton Joinery
Roofing Tidswell Roofing

IN NUMBERS

£5.1m
total project cost

1021kWh/yr
predicted renewable energy generation

7
pv panels

380
objects of archaeological interest

Above Layers of history are legible throughout.

Below In November 2024, the building was removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

WIDE BOARD ENGLISH OAK

FLATPLANED FINISH
AS SUPPLIED TO CALVERLEY OLD HALL

GROWN IN GREAT BRITAIN

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ENGLISH OAK

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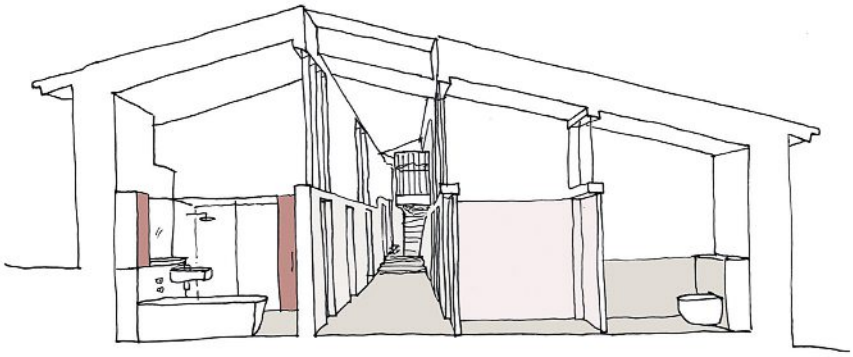
House room

There's no clutter to be seen in Prewett Bizley's serene, airy The Orchards – the stuff of life is all stowed away, allowing the space to flow

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Andrew Meredith

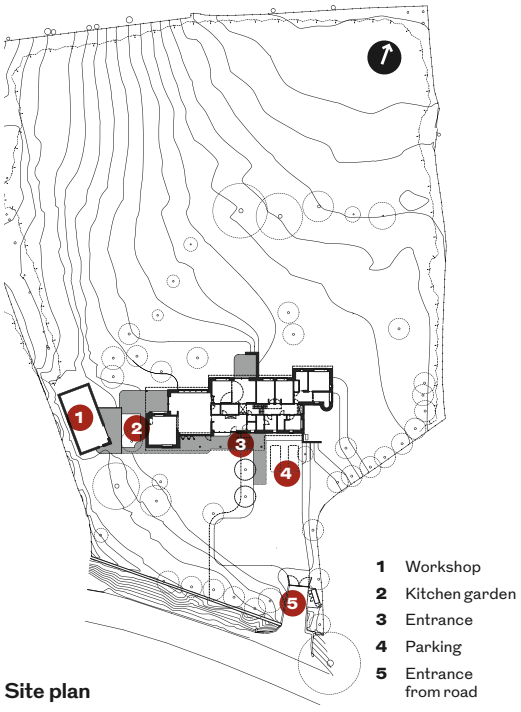


Above The section is used to good effect, here showing the end of the sleeping wing.

This image At The Orchards levels are used to bring delight to the smallest of spaces – here the utility room.

If the right place to start talking about a public building is the entrance then surely the right place to start with a home is in the bedroom, from where the inhabitants experience it afresh each morning. So here it is: a modest double bed, a picture window looking out over the Somerset fields leading to the floodplain confluence of two small rivers, delicately fluted oak joinery at the headboard. But very little else.

The young couple who live at The Orchards had dwelt in tight Victorian spaces in London and then in a tall, narrow house in the nearby market town of Frome as they built this home. With one young child and then another on the way they were used to things being on top of them. Walking round with the architect, Graham Bizley of Prewett Bizley, they explain their logic: plenty of



Site plan

A two-bed or two-study pop-up faces north, making the most of the landscape views.

A pocket door divides the two: 'Our youngest didn't realise there was a room there for some months'

space for things, but out of the way. Then you can live with few things visible, and enjoy the clean lines.

Those clean lines delineate the flow of the house, floating over the polished concrete floors and running from one space into another with the odd cheekily exuberant curve, where the lines take a little skip. You see this happy little curve in circular or semi-circular windows, in the top edge of the panelling, on the rounded corners of built-in benches. Ply-panelled walls hold the secret to the sharpness of the lines with banks of almost invisible cupboards, high, low, even right in front of you at the front door, where you don't realise there is an expansive boot room with rails of coats and shoes on angled display. The visible pegs hang empty. Nicola and Fred (not their real names) demonstrate every little hidey hole with delight on their faces. They can pad off to the coffee machine, tucked away in the larder, without tripping on stray socks or a muddy shoe.

The kitchen flows into the snug living room – except when it doesn't – and the living room itself is tucked away as a pocket door springs out to divide the two. 'Our youngest didn't even realise there was a room there for some months,' says Nicola. There are none of the awkward corners of wardrobes because there is a dressing room. In fact, there is very little furniture because the basics are built in.

Stepping out of the larder (or better, pantry) with our hot coffee, we are back to admiring the lines: the kitchen island, the picture window and the landscape, with no overbearing high-level cupboards and not a complex appliance in sight. 'Though we have put

Credits
Client Private
Architect Prewett Bizley
Main contractor Make Group
Structural engineer Fold Structures
Heat pump and MVHR design Kaspar Bradshaw
Ecologist Nash Ecology
Joinery – kitchen, all birch ply linings, cupboards, built-in storage etc Young & Norgate

Below Entrance hall: visible pegs are for special coats only. The boot room is behind panelling.
Below right The pocket door in the living room snug can close to create a panelled box.

IN NUMBERS

£1.87m
total contract cost

303m²
GIFA

£6172/m²
GIFA cost

42.9 kWh/m²
annual electricity use

A1-C4: 565kg CO_2e
whole-life carbon

JCT ICD
form of contract

plants there instead,' says Nicola in mock disbelief at the alternative clutter they have conjured up. She sits alongside the window by the covered terrace to work in an uncharacteristically intense set of shelves with a small built-in desk, but she also ranges around the house as she takes calls, or hides away upstairs in one of the pair of guest rooms-cum-studies when the children come home.

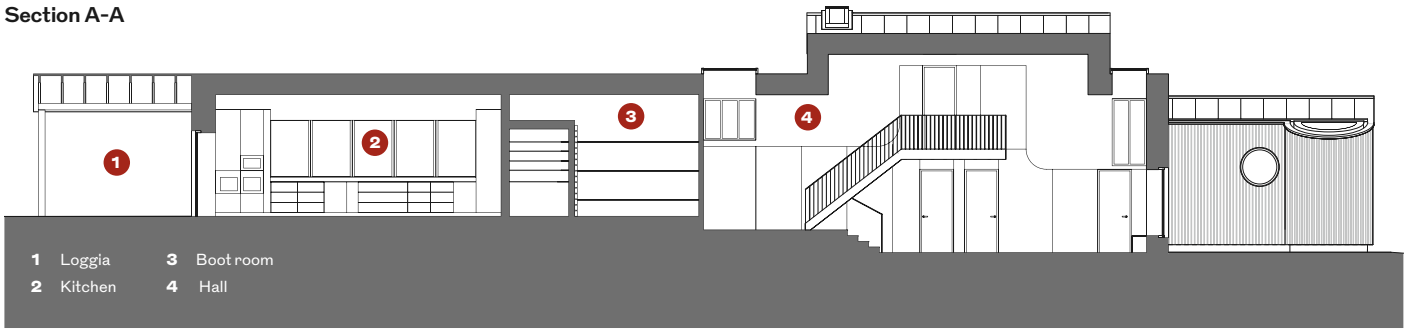
Experienced through the eyes of Nicola and Fred this is a house of savoured moments. We will come back to those, but first to try and understand the art that is behind this home. On the first view of the information on the house it is the plan that attracts your attention – and admiration. It has a kind of modesty to it: a rectangle with a central corridor but at each end the living spaces and main bedroom are offset, creating their own outdoor spaces. The entrance (behind a desirably simple pivoting metal gate) and kitchen face south, onto fruit trees. But not directly, because there is a wide verandah to stand under and watch the rain pour down, or to soak up the

A symbolic chimney breast, sliced into with the recurring motif of the semicircle, anchors the living room snug.

Below The kitchen table gives southward views to a loggia and old apple trees.

Below right Painted panelling in the hall curving up alongside the spare steel staircase.

Section A-A



low winter sun or shelter from the hot summer one. Here the brick plinth steps up and out as a bench for wellies to be pulled on. On the other side of the house the loggia catches the long view and some of the south-west light.

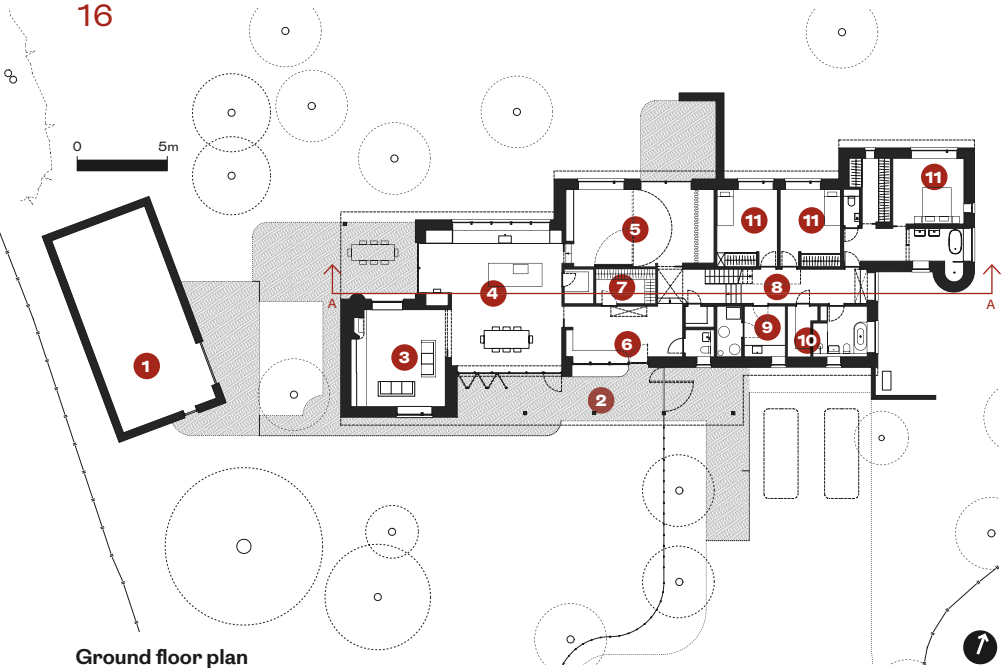
But what you can't get from the plan is the spatial delight in the levels and volumes, up to the underside of the shallow pitched roof. The bedroom wing is hunkered down into the falling ground, so you step down into it, even as the ceiling rises at the apex of the room. It makes it easy to believe that Bizley really does design from below, as suggested by his worms-eye view axonometric (but flick through the thick book of sketches he bound for Nicola and Fred and it is clear he looked at it every which way). Here the ply panelling is painted, with the curve used around the house mediating the different heights.

Bizley imagined this like a street on a Greek island, light coming from above, a narrow stair (oh so delicate), a view out to water (though the retaining pond doesn't fill up too often). It has become more than a corridor, with children using the steps to perform from as they scoot out of their bath to the window seat, where wet hair is brushed into shape.

At second level are the spaces for those close to the family: children coming for a party, houseguests going to the two rooms upstairs. The large room labelled as a multi-use room was split in two when I visited: a gym to one side (screen and cycling machine easily hidden away of course) and a playroom to the other. This is also the party room and overflow guest room (with futons stored in deep cupboards under the eaves).

At the lowest level are the modest

Tadelakt plaster and mirrors to the end bathroom that sits as part of the bedroom suite.



Ground floor plan

1 Workshop
2 Loggia
3 Snug/living room
4 Kitchen
5 Multi-use room
6 Entrance hall
7 Boot room
8 Hall
9 Utility
10 Laundry
11 Bedroom

family bedrooms under exposed timber rafters, and the joyful service areas and bathrooms. The utility room is a reminder of what a privilege it is to design homes on a decent budget: an intense terrazzo-coloured room with everything thought through and resolved – from drying space to pull-down ladders for more storage; it is bigger than many peoples' kitchens. Both bathrooms have natural light from above and from more than one side; the toplit shower, which pushes out from the rectangular form of the house, makes a statement of its own about the pleasure of ablutions. Finished in smooth tadelakt plaster, it benefits from the whole-house MHVR and low humidity.

Air quality was an area of professional interest for Fred so the chimney breast of the living room is just symbolic, as the bioenthanol stove needs no chimney. A semi-circular window punches a hole in the heavy, curving chimney breast.

Externally, one could see the form of the house as looking a little awkward – the pop-up two-bedroom section lacks the harmony of the interior. And, perhaps in the future, planting and landscaping could further mediate between inside and out to ensure that what could seem a plain house becomes as deeply embedded in its Somerset landscape as its residents are in the home itself.

Colours are used sparingly. Borrowed light is used generously.

Suppliers
Bricks Wienerberger PT445 Wheat
Waterproofing Visqueen
Thermal break insulation in masonry Perinsul
External wall and roof insulation Warmcel (blown cellulose)
Ground floor insulation below DPC Kingspan Greenguard (XPS)
Windows and doors Velfac triple glazed
Bi-fold doors Solarlux
Rooflights Glazing Vision
Metal roof Greencoat PLX
Rainwater goods Lindab
Underfloor heating Omnie TorFloor
Internal linings (timber panelled) Fermacel
Engineered oak flooring Ted Tod
Bioethanol fire Chesneys

There are window seats in the children's rooms.

This Image
Bath House, Somerset

Below The Orchards

BRETT CHARLES (2)

How MAKE makes it happen

Making a design into reality is what MAKE is all about – and close attention to the ambitions, concept and every detail is the key for a business that sets themselves high standards for client satisfaction

Woodpecker, Worcestershire

The Orchards was built by MAKE Group. The company's mantra – 'We make places we can be proud of' – is reflected in its high-specification buildings and exceptional homes, new and old.

Founded in Bristol 10 years ago, MAKE now has bases and projects around the UK. They are fortunate to be in the position to be selective and choose to work with architects on projects that both are genuinely interested in building, and where they both have an opportunity to be proud.

MAKE's projects require meticulous attention to detail and an evolving understanding of the latest trends, specifications and standards. As Graham Bizley says when working with MAKE on The Orchards, no two projects are the same, so the MAKE team is used to being challenged.

So what sets MAKE apart from other contractors? The company was created to challenge the industry standard, to strive to be better and to take genuine pride in its work. This commitment holds the business to a higher standard. Just as much as the homes that they build, the relationships they build with clients

ANDREW MEREDITH

like Nicola and Fred and architects like Graham Bizley are vital to the company. MAKE cares as much about the experience of delivering a project as it does about the end product.

MAKE prides itself on helping both the client and the architect to realise their vision.

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MAKE

Silence is golden

Lights, cameras, shhhh.... It seems too quiet at Scott Brownrigg's Shinfield Studios near Reading, but that's just what these mega film stages need

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Photographs: Daniel Shearing for Curo Construction

Aside from the background white noise of M4 traffic from the north, there's an almost eerie silence at Shinfield Studios outside Reading. This quietude is especially strange since the new film and TV complex is huge – the UK's largest newbuild.

But first to the context. Domestic film-making history is a long one, starting with Ealing Studios in 1902 and burgeoning with Shepperton and Pinewood in the 1930s – and it's ongoing. Government tax credits make the industry highly competitive internationally, and with the cultural shift from traditional movie studios and cinemas to new generators of online film and TV content like Netflix, Disney+ and Apple TV, global appetite for entertainment is growing exponentially.

The BFI's 2020-21 audit put UK film industry turnover at nearly £21bn, with high-end TV (HETV) online production increasing by 265% in the same period. This has resulted in a new generation of facilities around London to feed demand: Sky Studios in Elstree, Longcross in Surrey and the ongoing expansion of Warner Bros Studios at Leavesden in Hertfordshire. A recent Knight Frank report cited the development of 1 million ft² of new stage space in 2023, with a further 2.6 million ft² needed by 2028.

Scott Brownrigg's Shinfield Studios, owned by US independent film and TV studio platform Shadowbox Studios, takes the UK 1 million ft² nearer to realising that aspiration. Set on a greenfield site just east of the Berkshire village of Shinfield, the £250 million facility has 18 state-of-

With some of the stages 15m tall, the scale at Shinfield is as epic as you'd expect from the film industry.

the-art stages, with two of them – at 43,000ft² each – being the largest fully sound-proofed and air-conditioned in the country – along with 38 support workshops, 130,000ft² of admin offices, nine-acre filming backlot/parking and a social 'hub' building. Perhaps I've just hit a hiatus between the latest Ghostbusters movie and the latest streaming craze, but wandering the deserted service zones between huge sheds, the quiet is as notable as the scale.

You might think that a massive development such as this would have caused rancour in the local community and resistance from planners, but it didn't. While Shadowbox was sourcing financial backers, it engaged Scott Brownrigg in 2017 as consultant to help it find a site close to the capital, where most freelance film technicians and post-production facilities are based. 'We needed a certain space quantum – about 60-65 acres – and there weren't many sites that big in the London area,' recalls Scott Brownrigg director Jason Lebidineuse, adding that it came down to a toss-up between a site in Borehamwood and here. Two things clinched it: 'Not only was it not on greenbelt land but we had previously gained outline planning permission at Shinfield with freeholder Reading University for a proposed science park, which in the end was only partly built out,' he explains. 'Since we weren't starting from zero, we could put forward a new proposal for the site more quickly. That was good for Shadowbox, which was keen to hit the ground running.'

SCOTT BROWNRIGG (3)

- Sound studio
- Workshops
- Office
- Workshop/office
- Amenity
- Stages MEP plant/ ancillary use
- Decked car park
- Main site entrance.

Below The massive studio complex lies just south of the M4 motorway.

IN NUMBERS

£250m
construction cost

18
sound stages

38
workshops

1,600-4,000m²
sound stage areas

12,100m²
office space

Between 2018 and 2021 the architect and client team worked with a 'very supportive' Wokingham Council and liaised with local groups to progress the proposal – the latter were very open to an idea on this scale. 'What the community didn't want was another housing estate putting more strain on local roads and services,' says Lebidineuse – although meetings were as much about what they did want. 'To bring jobs into the area in the creative industries was a real plus for the them, as was outreach potential – not just to Reading University's film media faculty but to local schools as well.'

What's striking about the planning process was the amount of support for the proposal, not only from Shinfield Parish Council, Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Reading's FE technical college, but letters from individuals keen to have a say on a development that might affect their kids' future careers. This helped the scheme gain permission in December 2021. Part of its Section106 agreement was a new 80-seater cinema/community hub that has just opened in the village. Dean Horne, Shinfield Studio's head of studio operations, says 70% of his site staff live in the area. The village, it

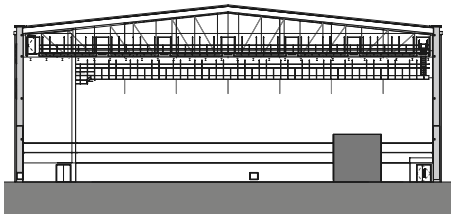
What was striking in the planning process was the level of support for the proposal

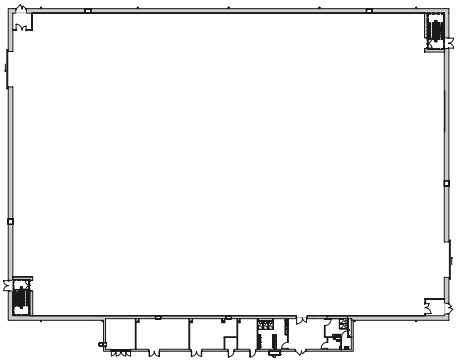
seems, has not only been put on the map, it's feeling the benefits.

Huge, but sitting benignly the landscape, it's curious that all that magic happens in a place that looks so like a distribution centre; although Scott Brownrigg has made moves to ameliorate this. Lebidineuse states that a 'picturesque' placement of buildings is at play, which sees taller, 15m-high stages placed towards the centre, with lower ones and workshop spaces grading down to the periphery of the site and also serving as an effective sound buffer for the M4 motorway beyond them.

With the conversion of 26ha of greenfield land to stages and hard surfacing, the drainage strategy was crucial to a high-worth film industry where a flooding 'down-day' is not an option. The architect keyed into natural falls across the site and existing ditches – one bisecting the development and one on its east boundary. This obviated a need for balancing ponds but with level thresholds aside stage zones, surface drains feed into 4500m³ of below-ground cellular or tubular attenuation tanks to mitigate potential high volumes of surface water run-off.

Two admin wings and a large portico mark the formal entrance.


Section with steel truss and gantry system

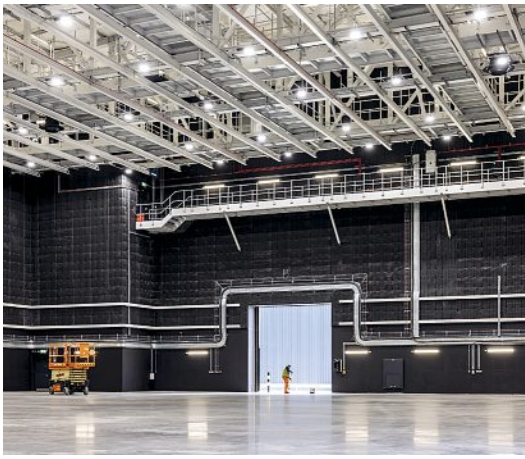

Stage plan with ancillary block

Below Single-storey workshops are here built into this two-storey iteration, with offices above.

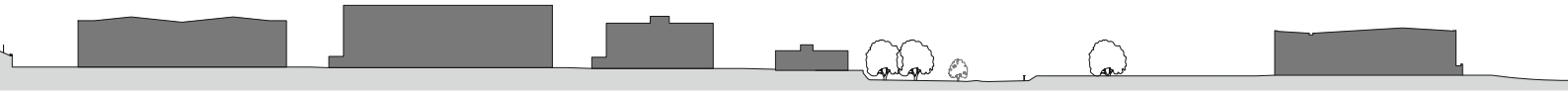
Below right Specialist elephant doors help stages to meet the strict acoustic requirements.

On the south side, and to animate the campus, are the studios' admin offices, with their bold brises-soleil, at the entrance of the site. Their two wings flank a large portico that leads to the stages beyond, its deep inner face lined in bright yellow steel panels, which Lebidineuse concedes would have been more Hollywood if the D&B contract had not seen the proposed high-resolution LED screens value-engineered out.

Beyond this, the site is characterised by huge aluminium-clad steel sheds, with stages numbered in satisfying gargantuan yellow, though they are otherwise subtly coloured in anthracite grey to help it meld into the landscape. Stages address each other across an access road sandwiched between 7m-wide aprons for the requisite A-lister Winnebago, trucks or generators. All can plug into the low stage ancillary blocks facing the aprons, with 2100amp power kit, toilet blocks and air conditioning plant. This is high volume/



Site section AA showing massing and natural drainage slopes



low feed, to deal with heat gain from thousands of LED lights or to maintain a constant 20°C, while also being quiet enough not to affect a working set.

Stages, with their fine poured screed floors, range from 1600m² to 4000m². The latter, at around 78m by 51m by 15m high, seems vast when empty, allowing you to read its 6.3m-centre grid of 4m-deep steel trusses, which incorporate a high-level gantry, allowing crew to access small, transversal runway beams at 2m centres, supporting lighting rigs and sets. But there is also that uncanny absence of echo for spaces so big – largely down to the duvet-like acoustic blankets on internal walls. Some, made by Insul-Quilts, a 70-year-old LA firm – naturally – a non-reverberant Lebidineuse describes as 'the industry standard'.

An accelerated build programme demanded rapid block completion as well as bringing stages into use even as others were going up (7,432m² of space was built in six months), so their 800mm-thick walls were built in two phases. 'The steel frame went up first, then we made a weather line of the "external" side of the internal skin,' the architect explains. 'This meant internal linings could be completed by one sub-contractor as the external skin was built by another.' Obviously, stages are as much about stopping noise getting in as out. Ghostbusters was being filmed in a stage here while 500 people were busy constructing the ones round it.

Ghostbusters was filmed here while 500 people were busy constructing stages round it

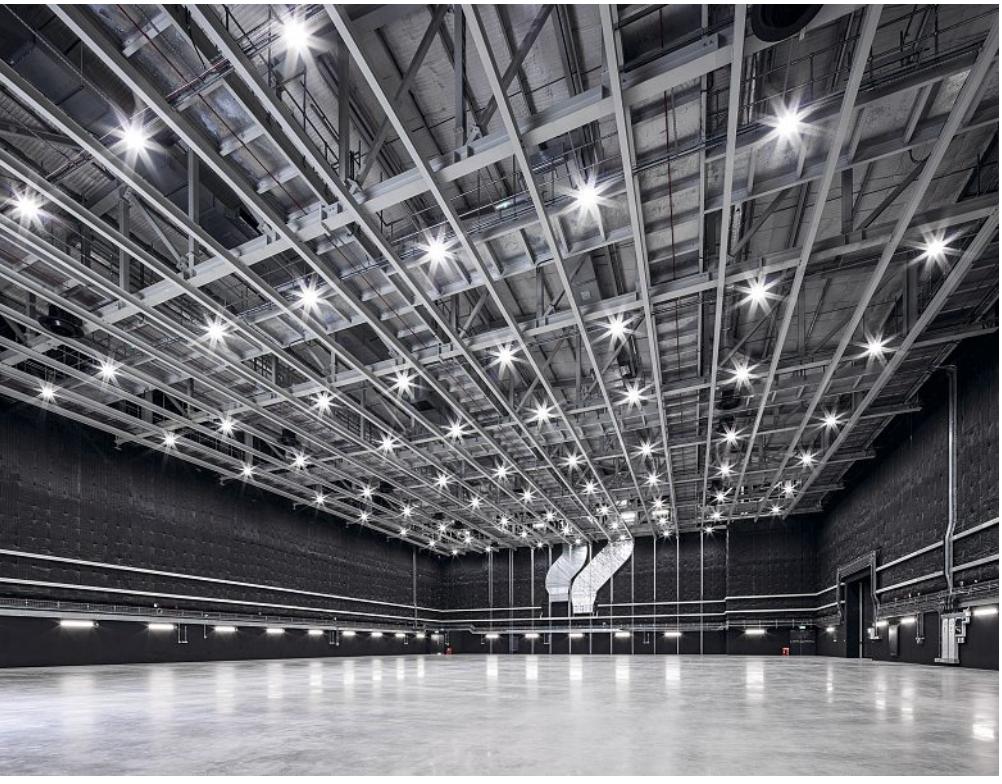
So we return to that quirky silence. Nick Durup, director at acoustic consultant Sharps Redmore, notes that while mineral wool, with its acoustic, thermal and fire properties, was used throughout, the number of plasterboard layers for sound intrusion depended on whether it was in a wall facing a motorway or field, in a roof or party wall build-up. If it seems odd to make such complex specifications, Durup says it yielded enough material and programme savings over the site to make it worth doing. The onerous NR25 rating specification that it meets ranks this complex with a concert hall. 'It's a very low level of sound,' emphasises Durup, 'equating to about 30dBA, which is how the human ear would perceive it. Think of the level you'd want in a bedroom at night – quite something considering the location'.

No noise problems from Shinfield's blockbuster neighbour then; just something huge and quiet in the distance, like Norma Desmond's memories of her silent films in 'Sunset Boulevard'. 'You used to be big,' says the movie's cunning but ultimately doomed screenwriter on first meeting her. 'I AM big,' the spurned star retorts. 'It's the pictures that got small.'

Credits
Architect, principal designer & CDM co-ordinator Scott Brownrigg
Client Shinfield Studios
Structural engineer Sweco
M&E consultant AWA
QS Stace
Main contractor Curo Construction and Life Build
IT Hoare Lea
Acoustic consultant Sharps Redmore
Landscape consultant Stantec
Project manager Bidwells
Approved building inspector Bureau Veritas

Below Air-source heat pumps form part of the studio air-conditioning strategy.

Bottom right The hub building, with its terrace, forms a social focus for the studio complex.



SCOTT BROWNRIG

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Box

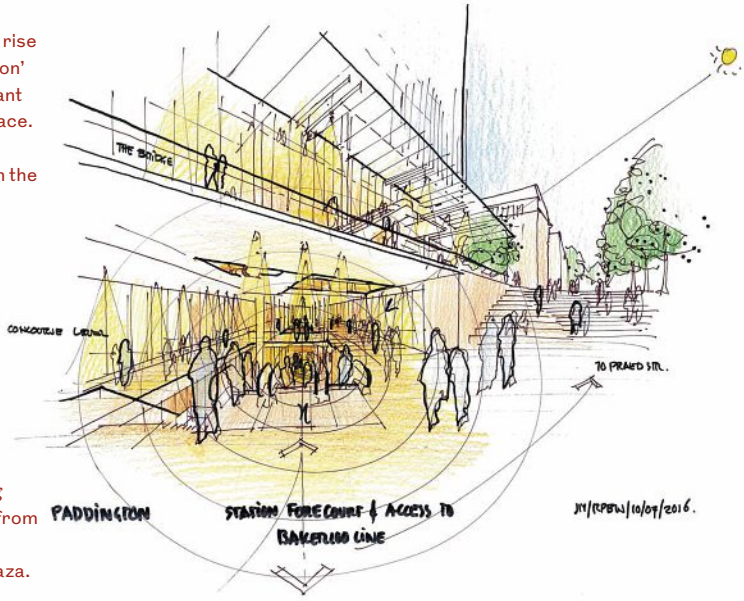
clever

Renzo Piano Building Workshop's carefully detailed 18-floor Paddington Square brings a dose of sleek sophistication to west London's mainline station, along with improved public realm and Tube access

Words: Hugh Pearman
Photographs: Hufton + Crow

Left External lifts rise to a rooftop 'pavilion' housing a restaurant and a viewing terrace.

Right Sketch from the station entrance.



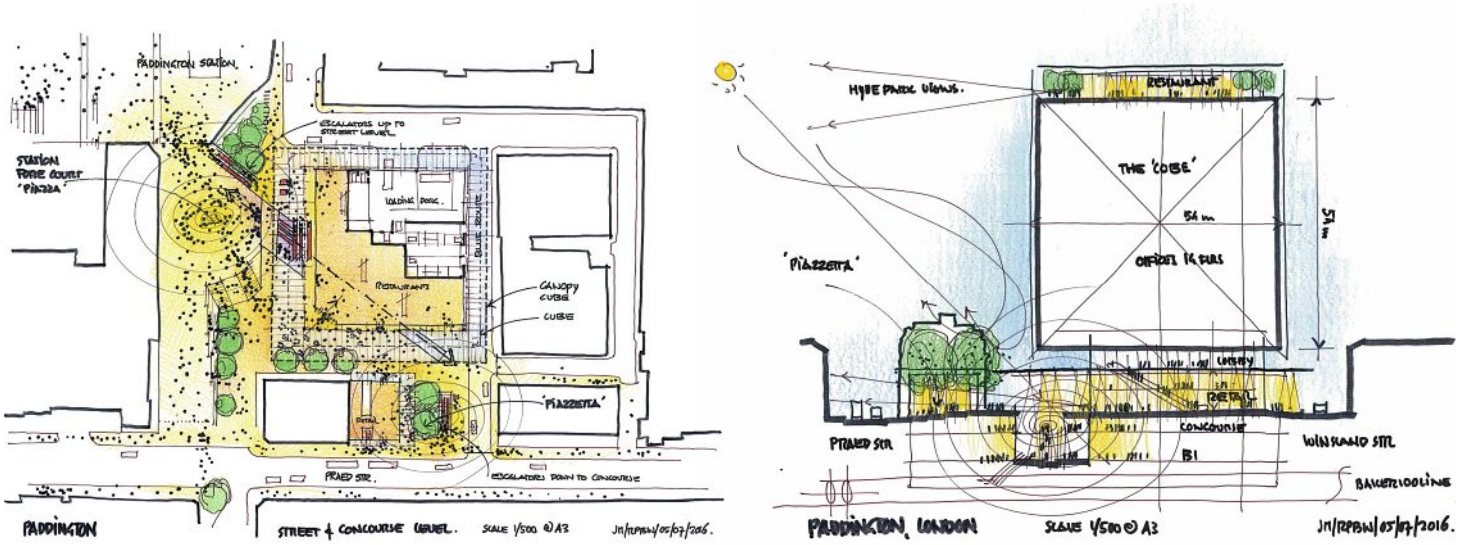
Below The sloping station approach from Praed Street now adjoins a public plaza.

There are very few streets named after architects in London (or anywhere, come to that). But now we have an addition to this select band. Tanner Lane might sound like a medieval alley in the City, but no: it's the brand new street that loops around Renzo Piano's Paddington Square. It immortalises Sir Henry Tanner (1849-1935), Office of Works architect of the rather fine but unlisted 1892 red brick and brown stone Royal Mail sorting office that was demolished to make way for it.

There was quite a preservation battle over that, headed by the Victorian Society and Save Britain's Heritage, to no avail: no trace of Tanner is to be found here now other than the new street name. Instead you get a great big white cube of an office and retail building set between Brunel's Paddington Station and the rambling St Mary's Hospital complex. This is fortunately no ordinary spec office block, in that no Piano building is ever entirely ordinary. The 55m by 55m box is set high, 12m above grade, with two levels of retail and a London Underground station beneath.

The exterior of the 18-storey Paddington Square demonstrates the Renzo Piano Building Workshop's (RPBW) love of precise detailing, the 75cm module of the facade with its slender slotted white vertical fins being much more finely-grained than the norm. It is designed to be visually solid from some angles (pale stuccoed walls are common round here), and glassy from others.

Narrow horizontal brises-soleil slice across the otherwise vertically organised cladding, while a stack of small balconies pops out to enliven the elevation on the south-eastern elevation towards Praed Street. At the north-western corner closest to the railway terminus, greater vertical emphasis is given by a pair of freestanding scenic lifts



serving the big (415 covers) rooftop restaurant with its terrace. That is due to open later in 2025.

The 'cube' is the central portion of a building which is organised classically into three sections: base, shaft and top-knot – though the top and bottom sections of the sandwich are inset rather than projecting. The full-height glass cladding is very necessary to light the floors in a building that is much deeper-plan than the norm, something emphasised by the fact that the rectangular core is placed off-centre, towards the north-east side. Maximum depth is 20m from wall to core rather than the standard 12m, with floor-to-ceiling heights of 2.9m.

Above left Sketch plan of public realm.

Above right Sketch section; three public levels sit below the office floors.

Below left Exposed structure echoes 'lacy' ironwork in Brunel's station.

Below South-east view from the Grand Union Canal.

There are no atria, though deep notches are taken out of the corners. These allow a typical dematerialising Piano detail: the facade glazing projects slightly beyond the enclosed volume at these inset corners. The developer has certainly taken a risk to maximise floorplate dimensions in this way but it seems to have paid off in this very well-connected location. An anchor tenant, investment fund manager Capital Group, has taken nine interlinked floors.

Externally the building with its exposed structural steelwork is perhaps as delicate as anything this bulky can be, and it gives as much as it can to the public realm on a tight site. RPBW

It is designed to be visually solid from some angles, and glassy from others

The office lobby opens onto an outdoor terrace.

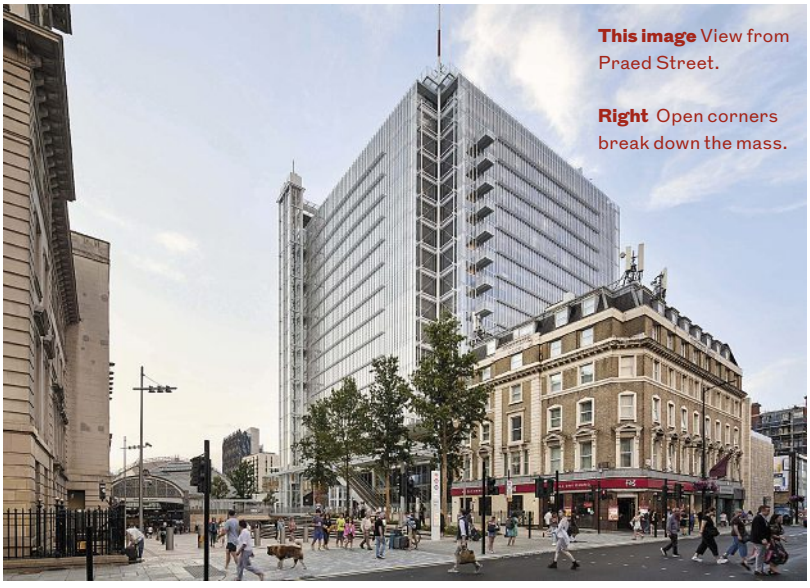
project partner Joost Moolhuijzen likes to point out that the team 'kept its promises' or even bettered them when it came to the streetscape and transport improvements. Its frame tapers inwards at the base to make space, primarily to carve out the wider and pedestrianised approach to the station that is as close to a 'square' as the plan allows. Previously this was a vehicle route descending behind a wall from Praed Street to the fourth span extension (1913-15) of Brunel's original three-span train shed. At the top there was a rabbit-hole Bakerloo Line tube station entrance. Now there is a large new Bakerloo foyer built into the base of the Piano building, right by the main station entrance into the fourth span at this corner.

There is a prequel to this story, the 'Paddington Pole'. As originally proposed by the Sellar Property Group, the developer behind Piano's Shard at London Bridge, with its Singaporean-owned partner Great Western Developments (GWD), this was to be a 254m cylindrical residential 75-storey tower with lower buildings at its base in the Shard manner. That was presumably a ranging shot for the planners in this low-to-medium rise district. Predictable outrage resulted, the application was withdrawn, the artillery was recalibrated and the Pole was replaced with the Cube. The public realm and public transport enhancements were broadly the same in both designs.

The entrance lobby to the office floors starts above the retail podium. You arrive via an open-air bank of escalators sheltered by the building's overhang and the mast-hung glass skirt that runs round it, doubling as pedestrian canopy and downdraught deflector. You move into a broad reception/lounge area leading to a café, gym and the double-height lift lobby. The atmosphere is touch-down clubbable in the way of such shared areas in big blocks now, pleasant enough but nothing special (separate interior designers were involved).

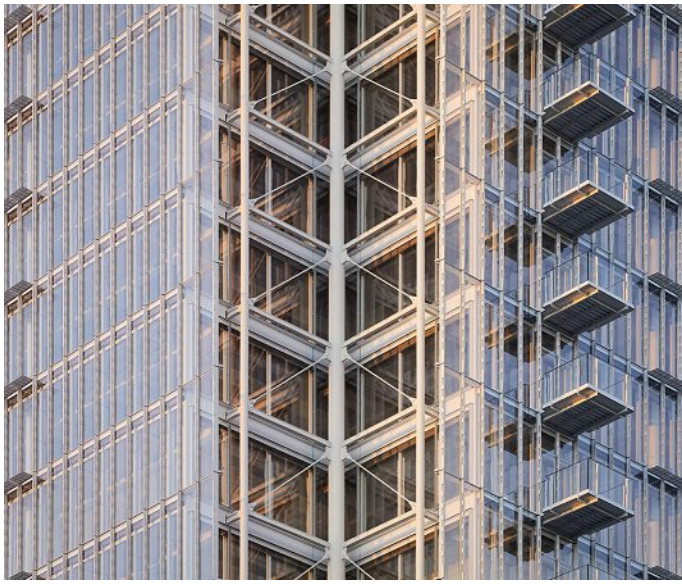
The bank of lifts in the tall lobby whizz you to your floor – in my case I got to see the sections that have yet to be fitted out and so inevitably resemble all other empty spec office blocks with their generic raised floors, vaster than usual in this case. Care has been taken with the ceilings, though, with no equipment projecting lower than the bottom flange of the girders spanning between the tubular steel columns spaced at 9m intervals.

Credits
Client Great Western Developments with Sellar Property Group
Architects Renzo Piano Building Workshop with Adamson Associates
Consulting architects William Matthews Associates, Jack Carter Architects
Main contractor Mace
Structural, facade and MEP engineer WSP
Space planning TP Bennett, MSMR, PRS Architects

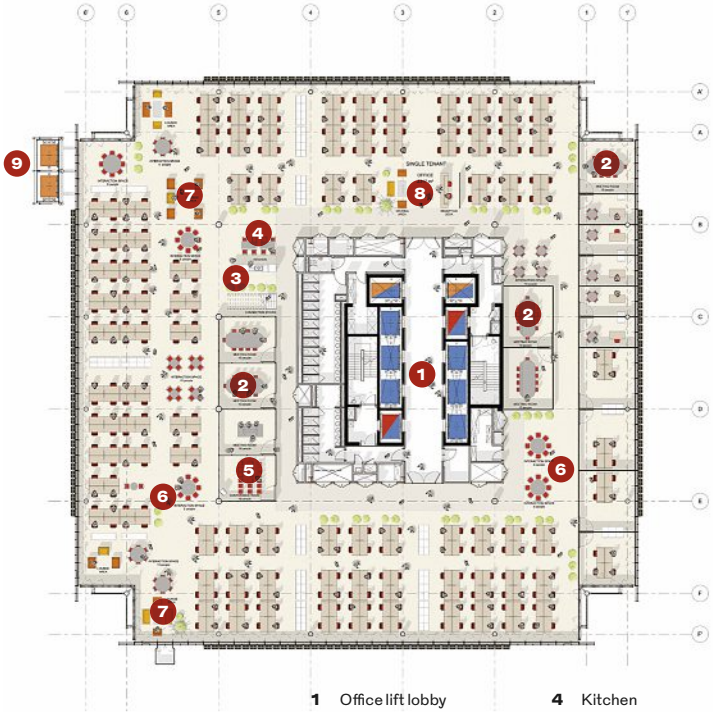


This image View from Praed Street.

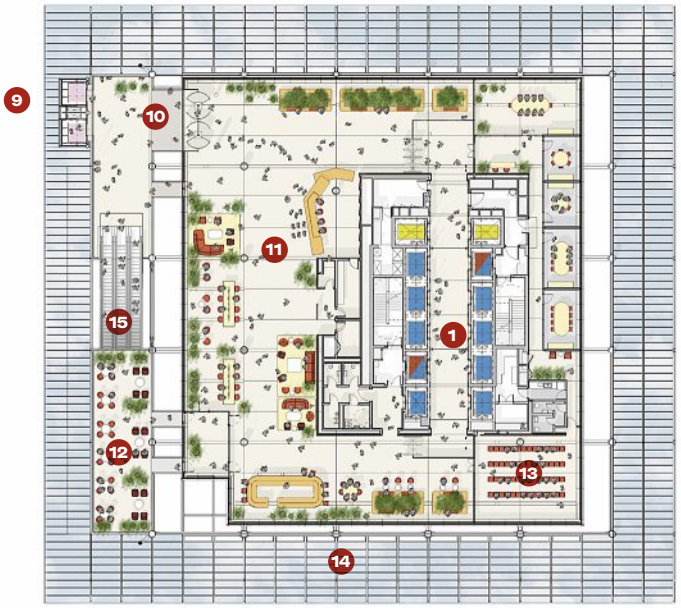
Right Open corners break down the mass.



Typical floor plan



Second floor plan



1 Office lift lobby
2 Meeting room
3 Link stair
4 Kitchen
5 Conference room
6 Interaction space
7 Lounge area
8 Waiting and reception area
9 Scenic lift
10 Main lobby entrance
11 Main lobby
12 External terrace
13 Office space
14 Glass canopy
15 Escalator to ground

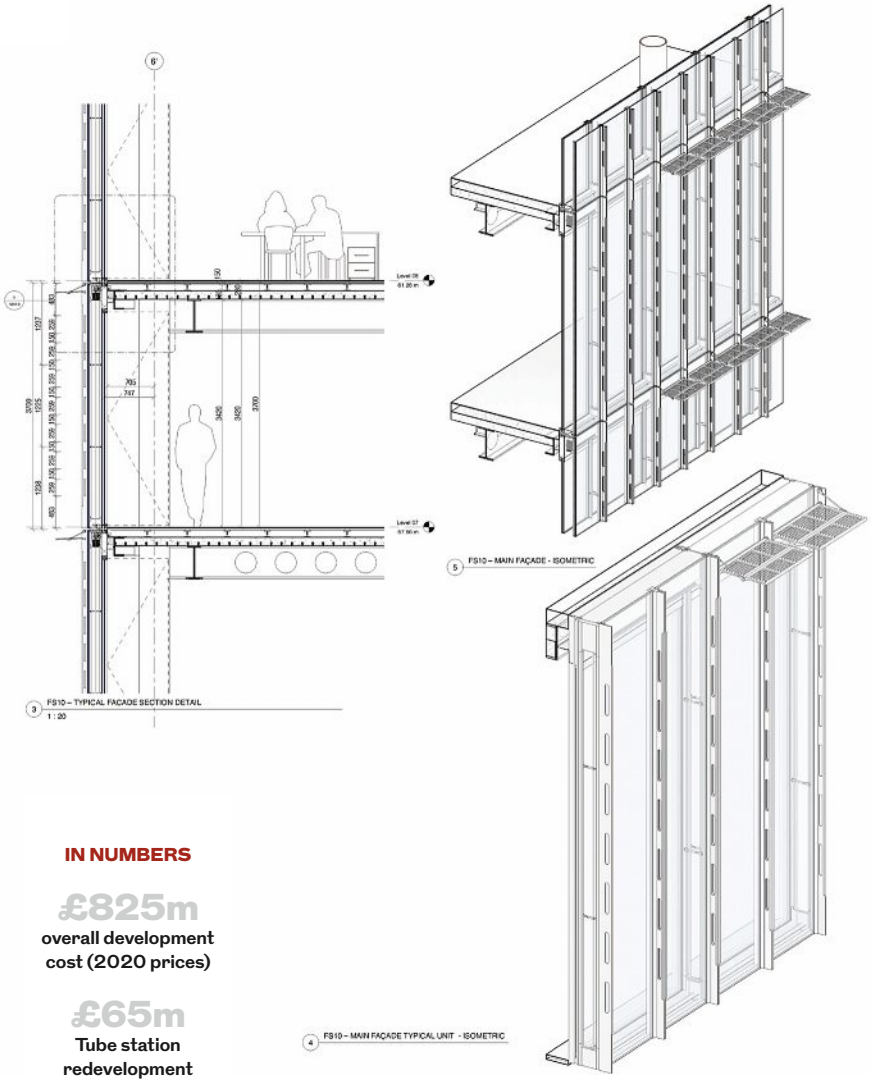
View north-west from lobby over Winsland Street.

This care extends to how the ceilings are seen from below. Although as usual tenants are given a largely free hand with their fit-outs, here a broad ceiling zone around the perimeter of each floor is sacrosanct so there is a uniform appearance from street level. Equally, the solar-control perforated blinds are contained within the double-wall cladding so those – which respond automatically to weather conditions – are also uniform all the way up.

The facade, moreover, has natural trickle ventilation within it, designed to reduce solar overheating. As a whole the block is sealed and air-conditioned, though a number of measures ranging from banks of PV panels on the roof to a large bike garage in the basement (pretty much standard now in London) are hoped to keep it to its BREEAM 'Excellent' target.

What most of us will experience is the base section. It's a small retail mall down there, the usual selection of eateries and clothing chains, on the whole a cut above the generally more downmarket shops in the area.

Overall Paddington Square is a civilised, intelligently thought-out place. Pointless to argue whether it's a better or worse piece of architecture than Tanner's sorting office, given the huge leap in scale. There's no denying that an important chunk of the area's working history has gone for a spec development, but this one is better than most in making a cut-above building work pretty hard for the public. ●



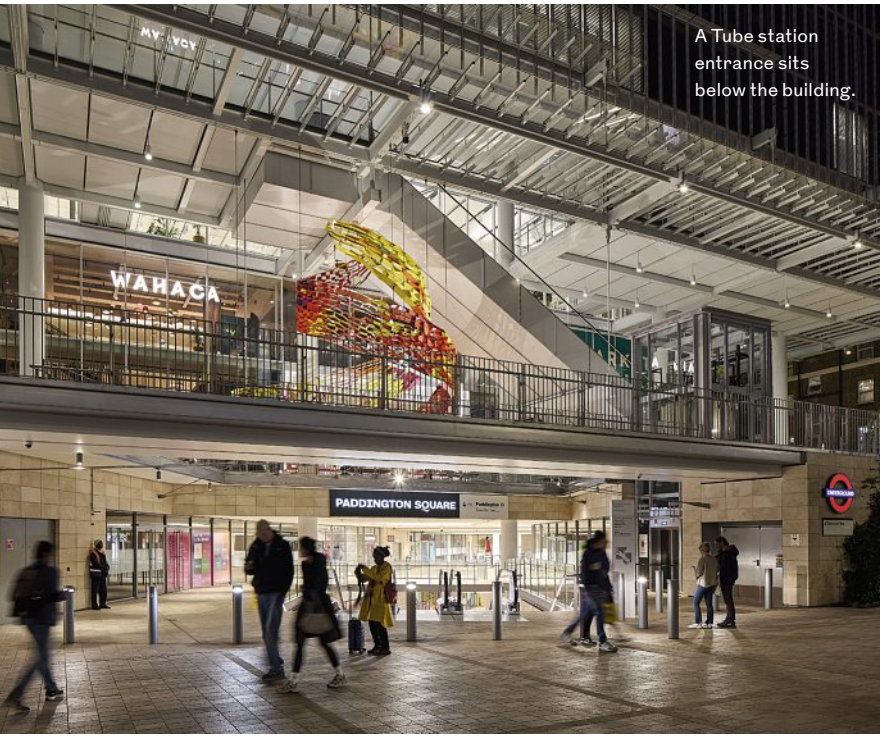
IN NUMBERS

£825m
overall development cost (2020 prices)

£65m
Tube station redevelopment

40,000 m²
total area

Above Main facade double skin.



A Tube station entrance sits below the building.

This image Rules for tenants ensure consistent night-time illumination.

Old and new blend beautifully at historic Cotswold home

Modern living and amenities complement a heritage setting, enhanced by Conservation Rooflights from The Rooflight Co., creating an attractive and comfortable environment for the whole family

Ashleigh Clarke Architects has transformed a historic structure in the Cotswolds to create a versatile, aesthetically pleasing space, aligning with the local architecture and environment while meeting the homeowner's brief. The project involved the addition of a pool house including a gym and children's playroom, alongside landscaping and a swimming pool.

Due to the building's location in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the pool house is a one-and-a-half-storey structure that harmonises with the existing property and landscape. Thoughtfully placed Conservation Rooflights by The Rooflight Co. maximise natural light and ventilation and complement the premium design intent.

A comprehensive approach to the project involved demolishing an existing outbuilding and its reconstruction as the new pool house structure. The result is a seamless blend of old and new, with the pool house and surrounding buildings framing a picturesque courtyard. The linear form of the pool house, complete with a pitched roof, presents a complementary architectural addition to the original structure.

Ashleigh Clarke Architects expressed its satisfaction with the Conservation Rooflights, highlighting their perfect match with the Cotswold aesthetic and the consistent support and information provided by The Rooflight Co. during the project.

The Rooflight Co. is the longest-standing expert in natural top lighting in conservation settings, with a legacy of inventing The Original Conservation Rooflight which is widely used in the industry. As the renowned company for authentic and high-performing rooflights that complement high-quality architectural construction, The Rooflight Co. played a crucial role in delivering the functionality and aesthetic requirements of the project. Successful collaboration between Ashleigh Clarke Architects Ltd and The Rooflight Co. has resulted in a harmonious blend of old and new, showcasing meticulous attention to detail and expertise in design and construction.

The Rooflight Co's high-quality conservation rooflights will enhance the aesthetics and functionality of your projects. Elevate your design with authentic and top-performing rooflights tailored for conservation settings.

THE ROOFLIGHT CO. COTSWOLDS

Below The Conservation Rooflights combine traditional design with modern performance.

Below right Eight Conservation Rooflights were positioned evenly on both sides of the ridge.

For more information on The Conservation Rooflight, please contact hello@therooflightco.com or visit www.therooflightco.com

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2: Intelligence

LEARNING THROUGH LIVE PROJECTS
JANE ANDERSON, 2024 WINNER OF THE RIBA ANNIE SPINK AWARD

For me, the thing that's fascinating about live projects is that they're such a natural way for students to get involved in the complexity and interconnectedness of real projects. Abstract issues that can be hard to teach – the weather, conflicts of interest, money, safety, physical labour – become accepted as things you deal with as a designer. And students realise that it's not just about them – that design is a social activity, and people will respond to what they put out in the world. It can be inspirational seeing your very first project through from start to finish, witnessing its impact. In the process, you learn that it's not you making up something on your own – you're collaborating, learning how to talk and listen, to negotiate and compromise, but also how to take decisions and make things happen in your community. That level of trust and responsibility means a huge amount. Students take it seriously, trying to deliver their absolute best, and gaining experience and confidence for years to come.

Colin Priest and I set up the Live Projects Network in 2012 to provide much-needed information at a time when interest was growing rapidly. We thought, let's gather these projects from around the world, see what they've got in common, and collate them online in an open, accessible way, so people can make contacts and explore different models. Despite their variety, all of them confront systemic issues of how change happens in society, and they are always current – whatever is going on in architecture is going on in these projects. Material reuse, for instance, is being explored by our Year One students, who are designing and making a building from ultra-locally sourced waste. And there's always a need somewhere – communities are increasingly skilled in collaborating with universities to solve problems, offering their own expertise along the way.

Things have moved on since we started. For one thing, people who were taught this way are now doing the teaching, which I find amazing. In my experience, live projects can be incredibly powerful and formative for students, for their tutors and for communities.

'It can be inspirational seeing your very first project through from start to finish, witnessing its impact'

Below Jane Anderson is programme lead for undergraduate architecture at Oxford Brookes University and co-founder of the Live Projects Network, an online resource that acts as a point of reference and connection for live projects, and promotes their use in education.

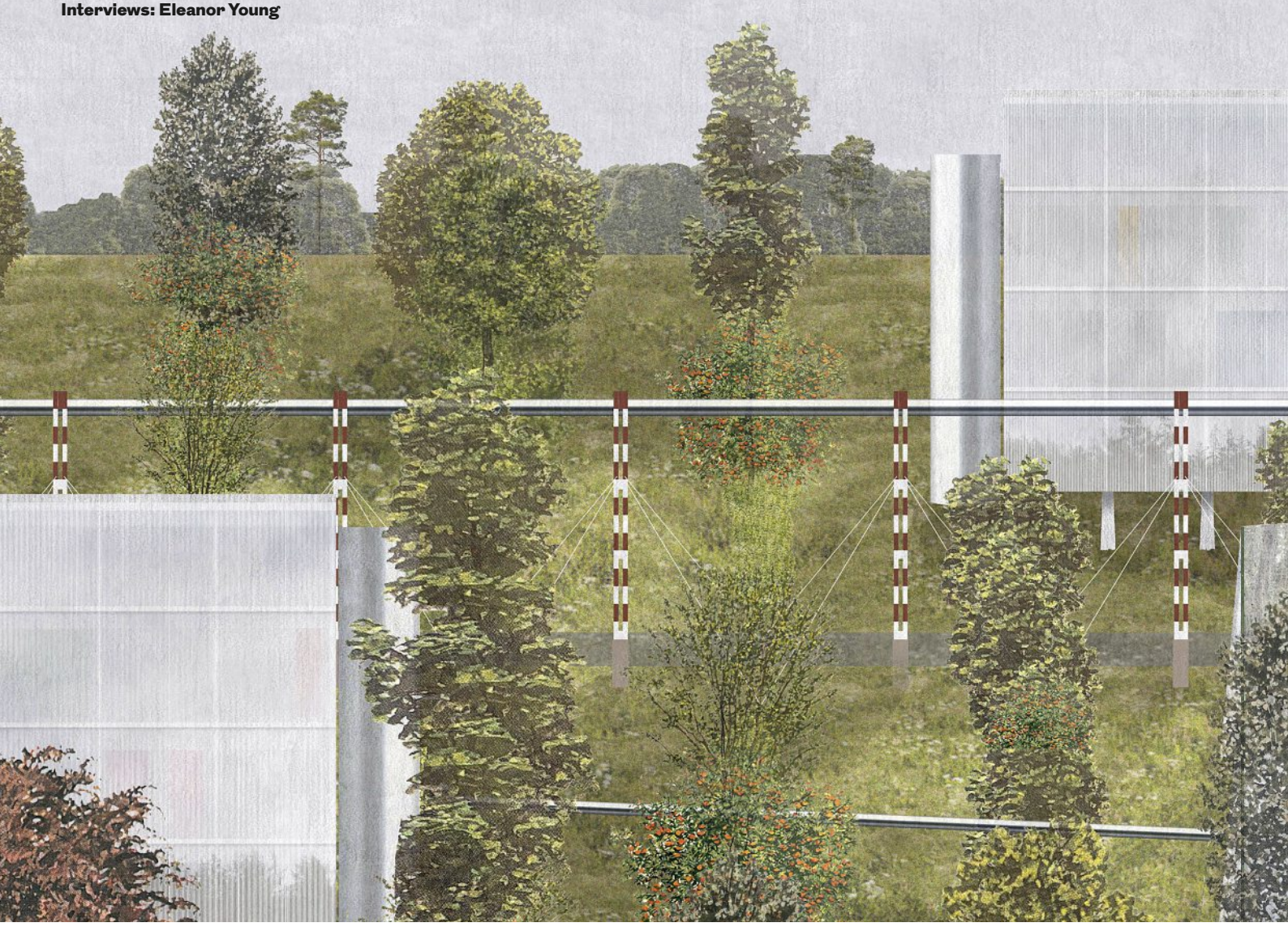
OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Intelligence is officially approved RIBA CPD. Look out for icons throughout the section indicating core curriculum areas.

President's Medals 2023

People stand at the centre of this year's student awards, with Victor Williams Salmeron addressing place and identity, edges and remembrance to take Bronze, Joe Franklin winning Silver with his counter-culture solution to housing and environmental crises, and Bianca Zucchelli's dissertation exploring human impact on place via Italian pieceworkers

Interviews: Eleanor Young



JOE FRANKLIN (2)

Joe Franklin
Ultra Town
Kingston University, UK
Tutors: Nicholas Lobo Brennan, Astrid Smitham

Joe Franklin takes the belt of countryside for the shelved HS2 as a site for a forested new town, a 'weird' place in the woods for counter-culture and temporality: Ultra Town. There is a clue to his inspiration for Ultra Town in a shot of trucks and buses forming their own settlement, lined up at the Castlemorton rave, a festival for travellers that turned into a huge party in 1992. His parents are in the scene, in their truck; this is a world that he was introduced to and is familiar with. 'When people felt the pressure we feel today, in the housing market, this was a form of resistance,' says Franklin.

He draws on this model and sets about forming the successor to the suburban escape from the city with a 50-year plan that first consolidates ecological diversity – starting with the pioneer species, the silver birch, recolonising mono-cultural fields. Ancient woodlands and symbiotic plant species all feature. 'Trees are going to play an increasingly important role in our future. How can we encourage their growth, alongside our own expansion?' he asks. Thus this project tackles what Franklin identifies as the UK's dual crises of housing pressure and ecological decline.

Service runs are threaded along the site on low pylons, with wires and tubes held together with characterful stripes.

This image Striped, elevated service runs mark out territory between casually arranged blocks.

To each side are the timber structures, designed on Passivhaus principles, that can be adapted as factories, fire stations or sports halls. They can also be modified as homes with a zig-zag plan to successive apartment entrances over a south-facing timber deck that helps manage solar gain. 'Quite a formal architectural response,' he admits. Franklin is more used to designing for tight urban sites and enjoyed the freedom of parking these truck-like forms 'casually' around service runs along the green HS2 highway. He hopes it is recognisable but uncanny, following his investigation into the concept of 'ultra' – or 'beyond' in Latin – a term that has been adopted by fashion and high-performance kit.

He is optimistic about entering a new political age of new towns with responsible development and responsible growth, which points to a healthier place. From Clancy Moore Architects' studio in Dublin, where he is now working, he hopes that any such large-scale projects can take a long term view and be supported through their early years establishing themselves.

SILVER MEDAL HIGH COMMENDATION
Callum Geddes Symmons
Making Public
Mackintosh School of Architecture
Tutor: Thomas Woodcock

SILVER MEDAL COMMENDATIONS
Maria Wood
Architecture Class
Newcastle University
Tutor: Adam Sharr

Sam Beckwith Flint, Xhesika Biçaku, Bethany Clarkson, Thomas Dutton
The Consumption of Landscape: A Grand Tour for the 21st Century
University of Liverpool
Tutor: Marco Iuliano, James Jones, Valentino Capelo De Sousa

Ryan Speer
Tolerance and Reuse: Forming a New Sutton Cultural Common
London Metropolitan University
Tutor: Takero Shimazaki, Jennifer Frewen-Mobsby, Paolo Pisano, Katherine Nolan, Alex Butterworth

SILVER MEDAL COMMENDATION + AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AT PART 2
Nathalie Marj
Protocols for Beirut's Unbuildable Lots: Designing Non-Sectarian Spaces
École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne
Tutor: Charlotte Malterre-Barthes; Yves Pedrazzini; Nagy Makhlouf

SERJEANT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DRAWING AT PART 2
Jack Oaten
Miercholts New National Timber Reserve
Kingston University
Tutor: Nicholas Lobo Brennan

Above left The timber structure adapted for housing.

This image Almshouses with the archive tower behind.

Right Williams Salmeron suggests a shift from the sterile places of care to one layered with narratives.

Victor Williams Salmeron
Forget Me Not
University of Kent
Tutor: Victoria Lourenço

Forget Me Not is an exploration of decay but perhaps also the beauty of ageing gracefully and the part that plays in place and identity. A meditation on buildings of care and the people in them – in this case former carers – throws up a rejoinder to the non-places of sterile airports and hospitals identified by writer/philosopher Marc Augé.

The site might be considered a non-place itself, sitting between Chatham and Rochester in Kent and on the edge of both, a place of meeting peripheries. 'Historically edges have been the place of outcasts,' explains Victor Williams Salmeron. Here there were many smaller communities and no defining style. But on the ruins of a Victorian chapel and a car park he proposes an almshouse.

It is materially rich, taking in the ruins it is built on, making a patchwork collage of materials from abandoned warehouses, now demolished, much in brick. 'Brick embraces decay well, it already has the irregularity and unexpectedness of dirt,' says Williams Salmeron.

The plan reinterprets and is reminiscent of a hospital – the non-place familiar to former carers who the almshouse is for.

An intensely considered roofscape sees high rooflights draw in daylight at different times of the day in each home – giving each a sense of individuality. The rain, too, has its own paths drawn out for it across the homes, collecting, channelling, weathering. The interior walls are conceived as another treasure trove of experiences, with the tops of the white walls retaining the marks of previous inhabitants, that build into a poetry of references.

Hidden away in plan, yet ever present as the tallest building on the site, an archive rises, a grander architectural gesture, and a way of honouring memory by storing artefacts of residents' lives in a visual way, in niches in the cast limecrete wall. 'It is a kind of sacred space, says Williams Salmeron. 'It is the idea that architecture is much more than an edifice, it is about the people who live in it.'

VICTOR WILLIAMS SALMERON (2)

On the ruins of a Victorian chapel and a car park he proposes an almshouse

BRONZE MEDAL PANEL

Elena Marco (Chair) Professor of teaching and learning of architecture and built environment, pro vice-chancellor, and head of the College of Arts, Technology and Environment at the University of the West of England (UK)
Simon Chadwick Director at StateStudio; senior university teacher and deputy head of the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield (UK)
Jamie Fobert Founding director at Jamie Fobert Architects (UK)
Kudzai Matsvai Architectural designer and educator (UK)
Betty Ng Founding director at COLLECTIVE, and adjunct associate professor of architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)
Oana Stnescu Founding director at Oana Stnescu Studio (USA and Romania)

BRONZE MEDAL HIGH COMMENDATION

Devon Tabata
Civic Stone: Kirkgate Square
Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
Tutors: Kieran Hawkins, Nicky Thomson, Darren Park

BRONZE MEDAL COMMENDATIONS

Bowen Tan
Next Nature Manila
Architectural Association
Tutors: Ricardo De Ostos, Nicholas Zembashi

Roisin McMillan
Rage Against the Pristine
University of Cambridge
Tutor: Alida Bata, Donald McCrory

Dilikeremu Duolikun
Aiwan: A Gathering Place
University of Nottingham Ningbo
Tutors: Yat Ming Loo, Giaime Botti, Yimeng Wang, Kathy Hui Zhang

Yaowen Zhang
Land, Building, Dwelling
Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL)
Tutors: Chee-Kit Lai, Doug John Miller

AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AT PART 1

Sasha Farnsworth
Womb Temple: Lunar Re-Birth
Coventry University
Tutor: Hossein Sadri, Tulika Gadakari, Satvinder Sohal, Jose Romera Garcia, Issias Yohanes

SERJEANT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DRAWING AT PART 1

Jaehyun Byeon
Fabricated Identities: The Museum of Faith and Fashion
Cardiff University
Tutor: Alexis Germanos

Bianca Zucchelli

The Eel, the Dowry and the Seamstress

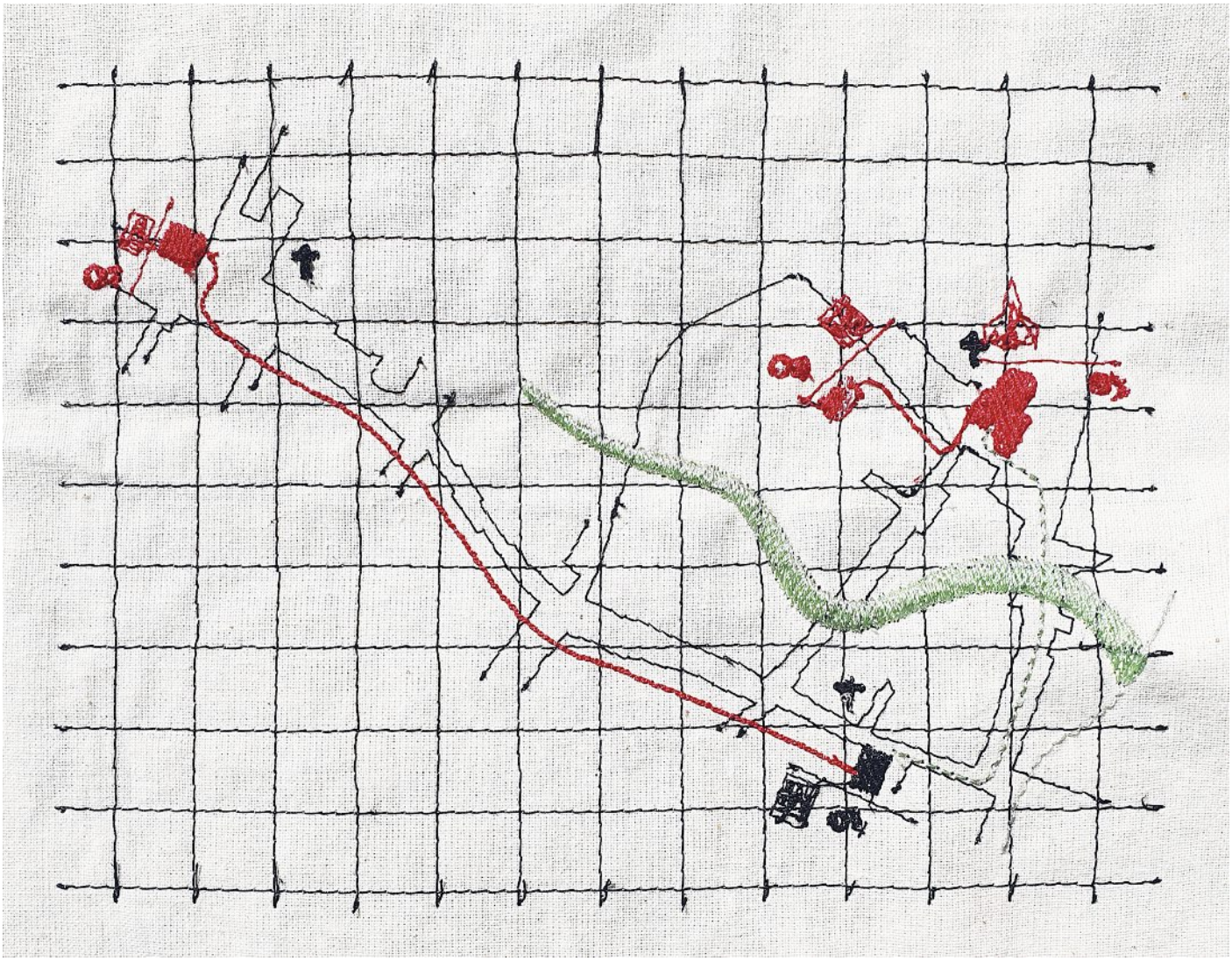
The Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL), UK
Tutor: Edwina Attlee

It was into her grandmother's world, the small Italian fishing village of Comacchio, that Bianca Zucchelli delved for her dissertation. Zucchelli's research and interviews with her grandmother and her seamstress friends in Comacchio – sometimes known as Little Venice for its lagoon – revealed it as a place of making, with a textile industry that is all but invisible.

Zucchelli unearthed a network of interconnected places where women took in piece-work. The locations that are mapped range from convents where classes were set up with looms on which girls were trained from the age of five, to 'laboratory' work spaces that have now become shops. Often the women would work in just the attic or a chair placed in the street at the front of the house. At the centre of this scattered industry was the kitchen table, which was a place to weave as much as for housewives to cook and serve meals on.

BIANCA ZUCCHELLI (2)

This watery world of weaving and sewing which circumscribed the lives of its female workers is explored through an eel-tailed avatar in a fictionalised account of a woman's life, to encompass many women's experiences through a singular lens. Zucchelli embroidered maps of the town with the steps of the short journeys through a woman's life,



and the skills and processes involved. 'It was very hard doing the sewing, it gave me a lot of respect for those who did it,' she says. The story is shot through not only with industrialisation but also fascism; the role of women was encapsulated in the slogan 'the motherland is also served while sweeping one's own house' (1935) and from 1927 there had been strict rules on women receiving salaries. Piece-work allowed some freedom to earn.

This dissertation draws a picture of Comacchio as a 'boundless invisible factory' in its own right. It is a reminder of how much happens that is not fully embodied in physical spaces, but how this invisible activity can enrich our understanding of place. It is also a reflection of a now-global industry and all the issues that raises. 'This was driven by companies from Florence outsourcing – so paying less. Now that is on a more global scale,' reflects Zucchelli. ●

Above left Some of the textiles worked on in Comacchio.

Right One of Zucchelli's embroidered maps.

Above Women working on textiles.

DISSERTATION MEDAL PANEL

Samir Pandya (Chair) Reader in architecture and director of global engagement at the School of Architecture & Cities of the University of Westminster (UK)

Yorgos Berdos Lecturer in contemporary practice at the University of Dundee, and teaching fellow in computational design and visualisation at the University of Edinburgh (UK)

Juliet Davis Head of the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University (UK)

Zeynep Kezer Professor of architectural history and director of postgraduate research at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape of Newcastle University (UK)

Mpho Matsipa Associate professor at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL (UK)

André Tavares Architect, curator, writer and researcher at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (Portugal)

This draws a picture of Comacchio as a 'boundless invisible factory'

DISSERTATION MEDAL COMMENDATIONS

Niamh Douglas
Behind the Pas de Deux: Unveiling the Spatiality Embedded within Degas' 'The Rehearsal of the Ballet Onstage' (1873/4)
Queen's University Belfast
Tutor: Gary Boyd

Mariam Pinto-Rodriguez
Irish Town, Gibraltar: Street Expressions of Migrant Identities
Manchester School of Architecture
Tutors: Huda Tayob, Ewan Harrison

Anna-Lena Mueller
(Un)Gardening: The Mine and The Allotment
Aarhus School of Architecture
Tutor: Alicia Lazzaroni

Méabh Minnis
Blueprints, Economic Booms and Blow-Ins: The Impact of Globalisation on Rural Settlement Patterns, Explored through the Bungalow Boom of 1970s-90s Ireland
London South Bank University
Tutor: Igea Troiani

Scarlett Barclay
Cripping the Picturesque
Central Saint Martins (UAL)
Tutor: Thomas Dyckhoff

Daylight from Above Awards

Nothing enhances a design like natural light. RIBA Journal and VELUX invite your entries to the Daylight from Above Awards, showcasing the best and most effective naturally toplit architecture, for the chance to win £5000

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Have you completed a project where daylight is central to a successful outcome? The 2025 Daylight from Above Awards, organised by VELUX in partnership with RIBAJ, celebrates projects where the arrangement, use and enjoyment of buildings has been transformed by the introduction of natural light as an integral element of a larger architectural idea.

We are seeking outstanding examples in two categories: Light, Space and Atmosphere; and Heritage Conservation. Winners in each category will receive a £5000 prize, with £1000 for commended entries. Submit your projects using the form at ribaj.com before 24 February 2025.

Category 1: Light, Space and Atmosphere

Top-light can produce startling beauty in interior spaces, and add skyscapes and a sense of the weather to the architect's palette. It can also be the key that unlocks opportunity in spaces deep inside a building's plan, or on constrained sites. The Light, Space and Atmosphere category will recognise projects where daylight design has played a decisive role in the transformation of domestic spaces.

Eligibility and assessment criteria

The Light, Space and Atmosphere category is open to new and adapted residential projects in the UK,

completed in the last three years, that incorporate any VELUX sloped or flat roof window as part of a considered and creative approach to daylight.

Judges will be looking for projects that show both rigour and imagination via the introduction of natural light. Consideration will be given to: design for daylight to enhance comfort through illumination and control of shadows, contrast and glare; orientation and attention to light direction to manage sun exposure over time; design of interior spaces and surfaces to register the presence and quality of light; the energy impacts of natural light and solar gain; and the skilful use of daylight to enrich both the architecture of a building and life within.

Category 2: Heritage Conservation
Adaptation and renovation of historic and heritage buildings requires special sensitivity. Introducing daylight can not only alter their outward experience, but also require structural adjustment or alterations to interior finishes. A special category in the Daylight From Above Awards recognises the first generation of projects that use products from the new VELUX Heritage conservation roof window range to enhance historic and heritage buildings, in sympathy with their character and value.

Eligibility and assessment criteria
Entries to the Heritage Conservation category will be assessed on the skill and judgement with which historic and heritage buildings of any type have been adapted through the introduction of new VELUX Heritage Conservation roof windows. Consideration will be given to: introduction of natural light in ways that enhance the appreciation of existing structure; protection of sensitive or important fabric; placement and installation of roof windows as a considered response to architectural character and local context; strategic use of daylight to prolong or enhance the use and enjoyment of historic and heritage buildings.

VELUX

Opposite Filtered daylight washes the walls of a new home.
Above Launched in 2023, Heritage conservation roof windows open new possibilities in the renewal of historic buildings.
Below Light and the play of shadows. Atmosphere and ingenuity — with natural light used to unlock and enhance domestic spaces — will be celebrated in the 2025 Daylight from Above Awards.

ANDREA SEGLIANI

EVALUATION PANEL

Entries will be assessed by an expert jury

Gianni Botsford
Director and head of design at Gianni Botsford Architects, whose work includes outstanding homes such as Light House and House in a Garden

Percy Weston
Architect and co-founder of Surman Weston, whose Peckham House was shortlisted for the 2024 RIBA House of the Year prize

Deniz Beck
Conservation architect, founder of Deniz Beck Partners and of the Sustainable Conservation Trust

Richard Williams
Senior architectural development manager at VELUX

Chair: Chris Foges
Contributing editor, RIBA Journal

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Design, buy, build: how we do it all

Villa Fontaine, a nine-unit luxury residential building on Sydenham Hill in London, is by architect/master builder Craftworks. Using quality materials and modern construction technologies, it's the latest expression of the firm's ethos, which aims to disrupt conventions of traditional procurement. Founder John Smart takes us through the project

Words Jan-Carlos Kucharek
Photographs Edmund Sumner

Design, construction & technology

What is Craftworks' background?
It was a response to the idea that 'no-one listens to architects and no-one trusts a developer!' I set up in 2005, using my student loan, as a one-stop architect/developer/contractor and we've not had a client since. It upends the traditional architect role; we are manufacturers of sorts, designing, making and selling a product – buildings. We love the agency it gives us – a direct relationship with a building's construction that avoids all the contracts and administration complexities. We are working at a range of scales; nine flats here but also nine houses in Bermondsey and 24 apartments in Southwark. There are 15 of us in Craftworks but we also have our own building firm that fluctuates between 25-50 people, who are able to move around our live sites.

So what are the challenges?
There's not necessarily more profit as there are inefficiencies bound into using your own labour. There's the day-to-day complexity of project management – you can be buying every nut and bolt being used on site while discharging planning conditions and juggling lead times. The range of work demands a lot from our staff and architects from normal practices can find it hard to assimilate. They have to leave what they've learned, at the door – it's almost be a different career. Clyde Russell, the architect who worked on Villa Fontaine, has developed every detail and handled every component that's been installed; he's connected to every interface.

What was its planning context?
Sydenham Hill was historically affluent and when we designed this apartment block, we wanted it to look as if it was part of the area's well-established villa typology; this was what we took to the planners. On the front we put a contemporary interpretation of the classic facade of large bay windows and inset loggias, all in Petersen K48 brickwork. The building essentially has front and back facades – flank walls are blank – as much for simplicity and cost as to respect neighbours. Side and rear elevations have rainscreen cladding outer face of Petersen C48 240mm wall-hung tiles on rails fixed to timber studs, which gives it a strong sense of barn-like agricultural building. Planners were sold on this

aspect, its formal symmetry, the hipped roof with its 'kick' and more diminutive dormers. It went through quite easily.

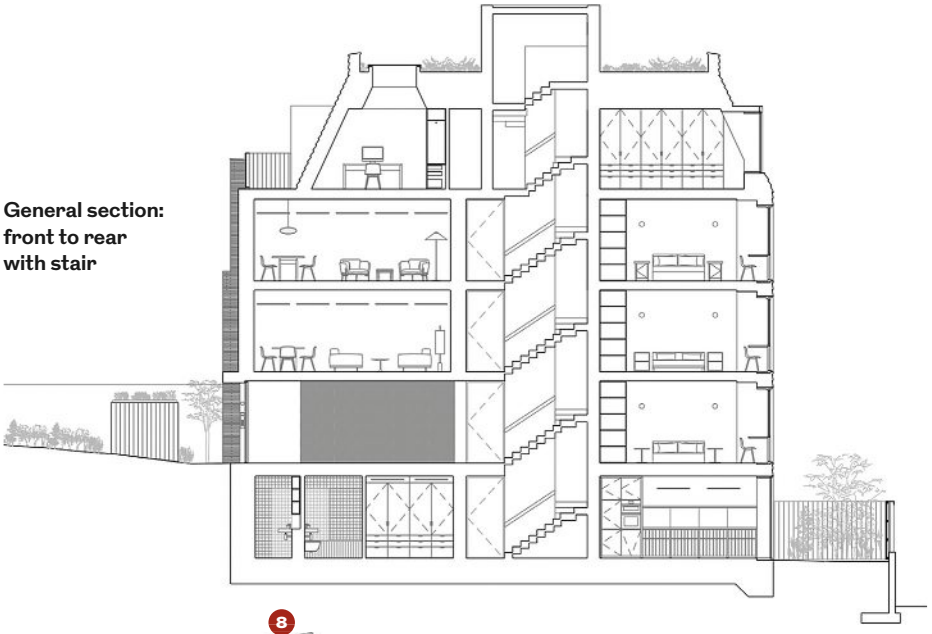
What was your structural approach for the block?

We are building six single-occupancy houses out of CLT nearby and while there was no problem with it there, it became impossible to use for a multiple-occupancy residential building. The design had to perform from fire, thermal mass and acoustics perspectives and that ultimately drove the decision to go with a hybrid concrete frame structure. We did mitigate this by using 175mm-thick insulated clay block Poroton walls as the infill structure, with lower embodied carbon and great thermal properties.

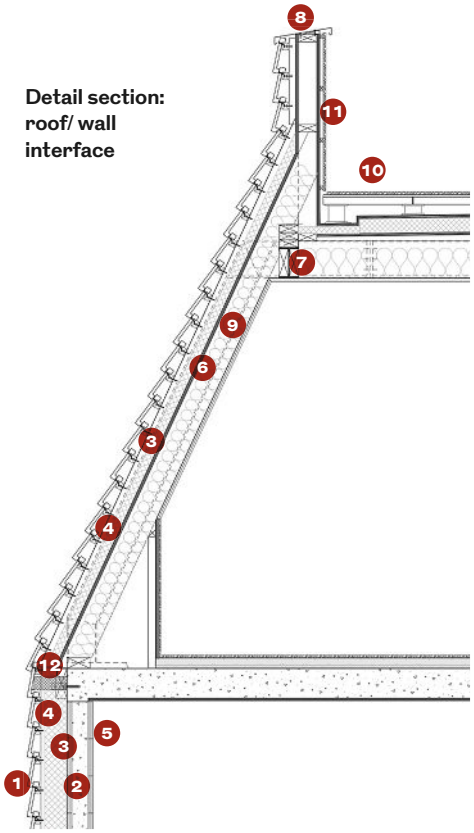
We also used tri-ply timber as permanent formwork for cast floor slabs to become the ceiling soffit finish. It's used as the lining for internal metal stud partition walls too, helping create the acoustic performance you'd expect from a higher-end scheme. The timber stairs were prefabricated off-site, brought in and assembled over four days. The Petersen Kolumba bricks and tiles specified were as good as we could afford. It might look like we're being on trend but as architect developers we have genuine investment in our material choices.

Opposite Villa Fontaine's front elevation, with its loggia of Petersen Kolumba brick, reflects the area's historic formality.
Opposite below More informal Petersen Tegl wall hung tiles dominate on the hipped roof, flank and rear walls.
Below The projecting brick loggia facilitates dual aspects to apartments.
Bottom Living spaces have tri-ply ceilings, Douglas fir floors and architect-designed kitchens.
Right The roof is a steel structure with timber infill and Rockwool insulation.

General section: front to rear with stair



Detail section: roof/ wall interface



1 Petersen tile on timber cross battens and stud
2 Poroton 175mm block
3 Breather membrane
4 Mineral wool rainscreen insulation
5 Mineral wool insulation/wall lining/ plasterboard
6 Structural grade marine plywood
7 Steel roof frame
8 Aluminium coping
9 C24 Timber roof frame
10 Roof deck on concrete pavers on pedestals
11 Douglas fir cladding
12 Firestop to roof

CRAFTWORKS (3)

We're a one-stop architect/ developer/contractor ... we love the agency it gives us – a direct relationship with a building's construction

CRAFTWORKS (2)

Left Poroton blocks form compartment walls. The CLT stair, by Stora Enso, was prefabricated from a kit of parts and then assembled on site.
Below Architect-designed services co-ordination ensured that heating, plumbing and ventilation were accommodated in the tightest of spaces.

What about the internal design and linings?

A priority was to create a lot of storage space lining the internal corridors, with ample provision for washing machines and larger items. These were built-in and formed from CNC-cut ply, with phenolic-finish doors sourced from Finland. The interior material palette is very simple and specific, with exposed tri-ply timber finishes or clay plaster walls. We use this on internal bathrooms too as it's porous and breathable.

Internal compartment walls are Poroton clay blocks infilled with concrete and tri-ply and insulation while partition walls are tri-ply either side of metal studs. All electrics run along them and anticipate potential bed positions for instance, building flexibility into the design. Floors are made up of 175mm concrete on 18mm spruce tri-ply with 20mm insulation, 45mm poured screed and an 18mm solid Douglas fir T&G floor. Bathrooms have underfloor heating beneath a linoleum finish.

The kitchens' timber joinery was designed by us with high-quality cast worktops. Cooker hoods are a pet hate of mine, so we just used a high-power fan that vents directly out through the infill wall. The reaction by purchasers to this 'exposed' aesthetic generally has been really positive.

On the lower ground floor we had large hinged doors and fixed glazing leading out to the terrace, as this was cheaper than bi-folds. Double-glazed timber doors and windows were by Nathan McCarter Joinery – it took two days just to source the brass handles that we wanted at a price that we were prepared to pay. The rooflights that we fitted in the central part of the top floor penthouse were by Roofglaze. And as we were buying in bulk, we managed to negotiate a good deal with CP Hart for the bathroom baths, sinks and brassware.

How did you co-ordinate service runs?

We didn't use a services engineer so had to design the heating, plumbing and ventilation runs ourselves. This appears back-to-back between kitchens and bathrooms in plan, as risers running up the centre of the building. They are super-efficient area-wise.

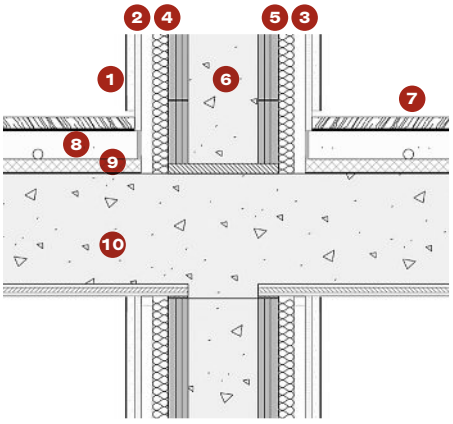
We ensured, for instance, that boiler flues ran directly out to flank walls to avoid high level duct runs, which would have meant dropped ceilings and lowered our generous door heights. Some of the plumbing and MEV service run is behind a bespoke hinged access panel in the shower wall and is compressed, fully integrated and co-ordinated.

Most service engineers would just allocate an oversized riser to all this, but we wanted every inch to work as real estate for us if possible. Although nobody sees it, we and the operatives that installed it are really proud of it. It took time to design, was executed with a high level of craft and the finished job looks like it belongs in a submarine!

What are the lessons learned?

Every project we do challenges us to consider the cost of good design and how we add value. The build was expensive – at around £3500/m^2 – but it was affected by Grenfell, the Covid pandemic and rising inflation rates due to the war in Ukraine. This all had knock-on effect on design, programme and material costs which we had to respond to by changing the specification as we went along. On reflection we might have avoided the hip roof to the penthouse flat, and one of its bedrooms is top-lit only, and we might have introduced more efficiencies in plan.

We made around a 15% profit on this one – lower than originally envisaged but we're not a hard-nosed developer expecting a 25% margin. Circumstances forced us to keep revisiting the design to see how we could make it work harder without compromising the build quality we wanted. We get more savvy with every project we complete, but one thing's for sure – we will be using those Poroton blocks again! ●



Compartment wall/floor slab interface

1 Clayworks finish on plasterboard
2 Fermacell
3 Gypliner single
4 Mineral wool acoustic insulation
5 Parge coat
6 Poroton clay block infilled with RC
7 Solid Douglas fir T+G flooring on adhesive
8 Gyvlon Eco screed with under floor heating
9 Jablite EPS70 insulation on dB Acoustic Mat
10 Concrete slab on tri-ply permanent formwork

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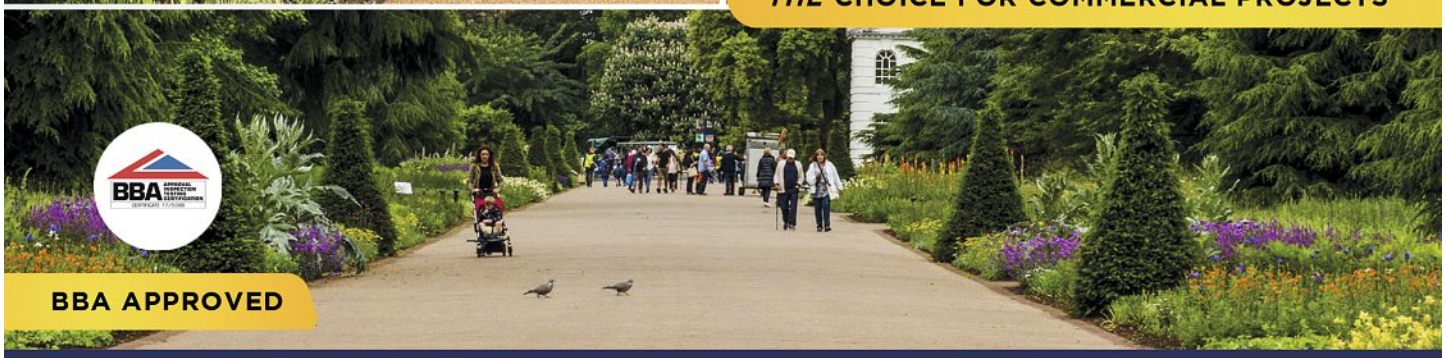

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How to find more homes without building anew

Use the existing housing stock better and incentivise downsizing, say planners, architects and finance experts

In an effort to tackle the housing crisis, the government has firmly nailed its colours to the mast of building 1.5 million houses during the course of this parliament. Few expect this ambitious figure to be hit. But as well as that concern, many in the sector want much more retrofitting of existing housing stock, repurposing existing buildings and creating incentives for downsizers to free up the housing market. So what is the best way to achieve both aims? And how can architects best influence this debate and get progress on delivery? Can the country summon up the skill and the will that produced the London 2012 Olympics, matched with good people, funding and a deadline?

Eleanor Young, editor of the RIBA Journal, led a discussion of designers, planners and housing experts at the RIBA in October. The session was supported by the Family Building Society. Below we look at the key themes to emerge.

Make it easier to downsize

Tony Crook, professor emeritus of town and regional planning at the School of Geography and Planning, University of Sheffield, pointed out that even if the government target was reached, which was unlikely, it would add less than 1% to the housing stock each year.

'But there's a great opportunity to take the existing stock, both housing and commercial, and use retrofit techniques to re-purpose and modernise that for modern housing. And an important part of that is enabling retirees to downsize from the properties they are occupying.'

Crook pointed out that most retirees own properties outright but often they were energy inefficient and no longer suitable, particularly for the 40% of these who had some disability. Retrofitting blocks in city centres in a way that is sustainable, affordable and planned well could suit their needs better. It was suggested that reducing stamp duty for older people could provide an incentive to downsize. Mark Bogard, CEO, of the Family Building Society, said his organisation had commissioned research from Crook and Christine Whitehead, emeritus professor of housing economics at the Department of Economics, London School of Economics (LSE), on creating a coherent housing policy. This had found that paying stamp duty was a key deterrent to moving.

Though it was acknowledged that giving older people such a financial break might not 'look good politically', Whitehead said 'If your goal is to "ungum" the housing market, do it because it's better for the greater good, and you generate more money when people move because of the economic activity associated with moving.'

The general consensus was that older people were more likely to downsize if housing was available either in town centres or with easy bus links into town centres – rather than 'in the middle of nowhere'. And retirement villages, with lots of onsite facilities, are only affordable at the high end of the private market.

There were also calls for greater diversity of tenure and housing to suit all ages in developments, including for multi-generational families. Where there was innovation, it tended to come from local authorities, observed Sowmya Parathasarathy, fellow of urban design and masterplanning at Arup.

One issue flagged up during the discussion was that there was little provision in the National Planning Policy Framework for housing for older people. However, Amy Waite, associate director at Mikhail Riches, thought that it was not necessarily a good thing to think of older persons' housing as a completely separate identity. She pointed to the success of the second phase of the Park Hill flats redevelopment in Sheffield where Mikhail Riches had been the architect. 'The demographic at Park Hill is lots of young professionals and downsizers, and what has been amazing is the sense of community that comes from young and old people living there together.'

Create new housing opportunities in the original new towns

There was a degree of scepticism expressed during the discussion about government's appetite to build new towns, despite Parathasarathy being on the New Towns Taskforce. Instead, there was a feeling that more 'love' and investment should be being directed to some of those built 65-70 years ago along with other towns and cities.

Paul Karakusevic, co-founder of Karakusevic Carson Architects, pointed to better use of existing space found within the first generation of the UK's new towns – including

THE FAMILY BUILDING SOCIETY

This RIBAJ roundtable was produced in association with the Family Building Society: www.familybuildingsociety.co.uk

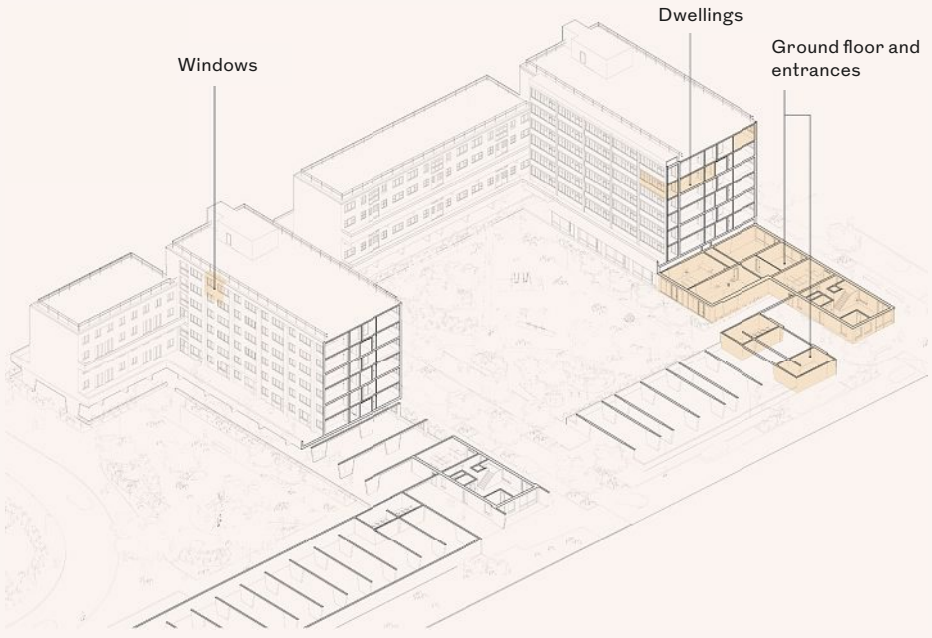
TIM CROCKER

one where his practice had recently been commissioned to do a feasibility study for the council – where there is extensive under-utilised land and overly generous road layouts. Speaking of this scenario, he said: 'You could close some roads and re-allocate empty low-rise retail space and car parks and build new housing and mixed-use districts within town centres. There are schools, stations, bus stations, empty shops and acres of publicly owned land. It seems to me illogical to be building on remote airfields that lack any infrastructure when you have perfectly good functioning towns already well established with embedded communities and developed economies, fabulous local infrastructure and ready to go transport connections.'

It was noted that demand for offices had reduced across towns and cities, leaving a glut. Jonny Buckland, architect and creative director at Studio SAAR, said the practice had become involved in a bid by a community group in Taunton, Somerset, to take over an empty former Debenhams store, under new legislation on High Street Rental Auctions intended to unlock regeneration.

Above Park Hill Phase 2, a major reworking of existing flats in Sheffield by Mikhail Riches, was shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize.
Below Diagram showing retrofit areas of focus from Karakusevic Carson Architects' guide Retrofit Social Housing.

However, while such schemes could be converted to residential, it was noted that others and brownfield development more widely could not. Existing sites may lack the necessary infrastructure for housing, and with huge up-front costs, affordability becomes a barrier, unless government is willing to pick up the costs.



KARAKUSEVIC CARSON ARCHITECTS

TIM CROKER

Above 2050 Homes in Nottingham, a refit of social housing by Studio Partington, an RIBA Award winner.

Repurpose existing buildings as homes

As well as making the numbers stack up, another major challenge flagged up during the discussion was technical complexity. As Amy Waite, associate director at Mikhail Riches, pointed out: 'There's a lot of work on retrofit processes and systems and standards. They will take us just so far, but there will never be a one-size-fits-all solution to all the different building stock.'

Her practice was working on a scheme to turn a 1980s supermarket in the West Midlands into flats, which like other retrofit schemes necessitated flexibility and being able to design in ways that would suit the building, rather than shoehorning the design to fit policy. Waite said that although they had won the competition for this scheme by proposing to retain the building, maintaining the existing fabric may not always be the best approach and any scheme needed to be considered from a holistic perspective including the energy performance, the embodied carbon and the existing community.

There was another plea for retrofit to be considered more widely than simply as part of the decarbonisation drive. Richard Partington, director of Studio Partington, was frustrated that funding for retrofit is normally for single measure improvement, yet there is often a great opportunity to improve homes and neighbourhoods. 'The kind of things local authorities are doing with the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund, for instance, are just the simplest, least intrusive things they can get to government standards, rather than looking at the housing stock and saying, "all the roofs on these homes are going to need replacing within the next four or five years, or all the kitchens are going to need replacing. So why don't we combine the capital repair with the energy improvement, and assess whether the homes are suitable".'

That said, scaling-up of retrofitting in all its guises is hampered by the lack of skilled people – from those who could fit heat pumps, to installing insulation correctly. 'I think it would be amazing if we took that on as a real mission, right from architectural education to engineering to all the building trades, because there's so much work to do,' Parathasarathy concluded. ●

Tony Crook sadly passed away last month

WHAT CAN ARCHITECTS AND OTHERS DO TO ENSURE WE HAVE THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES?

Sowmya Parathasarathy, Arup
As architects we come up with amazing individual projects, but we talk quite a lot to our own discipline. We need to have very many more substantive conversations with related disciplines, be they funders or economists or government policy makers, because all our good ideas will only remain smaller projects unless we can influence people who can actually unlock things further up the food chain.

Jonny Buckland, Studio SAAR
Co-design and increasing our skills to communicate with the people that we're working with is vital. It's about how we can facilitate design conversation and not dictate design conversation.

Richard Partington, Studio Partington
As architects we have to provide the overview and the ambition and sustain that all the way through a project. It's not about design, it's about the way that architects can interact with all the different participants.

Amy Waite, Mikhail Riches
We have to stop talking about retrofit as being different to architecture. I think that will stop cowboys doing things and causing so much damage. The things that make projects successful are the things that foster community, because in retrofit projects you're not dealing with an empty site or empty building. You've got people and lives and histories there. We need to ensure more meaningful consultation, rather than talking about just numbers, otherwise we're going nowhere.

Tony Crook, University of Sheffield
Planning needs to be more visual and architects need to be more place-based. It's important for designers to do work on the wider geographies, beyond the site, and work with other professions, because we do know that the place, as well as good buildings, produces value.

Paul Karakusevic, Karakusevic Carson Architects
Thinking about city architects and their role in strategic decision making on national infrastructure, transport, housing investment, education and health projects: there should be strategic architects across central and local government. Every metro region needs one, as does every local council and every city. Architects bring incredible common sense to these conversations. There has to be spatial design, strategy and common sense in the room. Only then will we get the investment and development in the right places. Big decisions will be improved and will save money in the long term, for example on HS2.

Christine Whitehead, London School of Economics
Architects can help ensure that the right homes are in the right places by talking clearly about cost – and when they put forward different options for schemes that cost different amounts of money, explaining what those differences are in words which make sense to the local authority or to the economist or funder.

MAWSONKERR/ OLI STURDY

Should we prepare for growth in 2025?

After several years of financial uncertainty and high interest rates, speakers at the latest RIBA Economics Panel, from the Bank of England, the RIBA and practice, considered the outlook for the industry this year

'In case you have been enticed to join us today by the prospect of growth in 2025, I am going to start with a caveat,' warned Helen Castle, director of publishing and learning content at RIBA, chairing the latest RIBA economics panel. 'Today's discussion centres on growth, but low growth for 2025, as very recent events are tempering optimism.' Indeed, with the world still absorbing news of a Trump Presidency 2.0, and, in the UK specifically, a change of government and recent budget – economic sentiments include both caution and hope.

'Certainly, the budget on 30 October had some positive news for architects,' Castle continued, with promises from Chancellor Rachel Reeves of construction investment, more social housing and infrastructure, changes to the planning system, and investment in cladding remediation and energy-retrofit. Conversely, increased employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs), from 13.8% to 15%, will surely affect practices' margins.

Bank of England forecasts

The Bank of England released its quarterly Monetary Policy Report on 7 November (less than a week before the webinar), and Lai Wah Co, deputy agent for Greater London at the Bank of England, discussed the decision to reduce the base rate by a further 0.25% since August (it now sits at 4.75%) – 'a welcome decision for everybody', she observed.

'We think that [the government's approach to taxation and spending] will boost economic activity, meaning that economic growth will be a little bit stronger than before the budget, which is a positive thing', she said. 'We are likely to continue with further gradual rate cuts,' subject to the economic environment.

But now for the caveat. Knock-on effects from the base rate cut include possible inflation increases. And 'although inflation has come down a lot from the highs of the last few years, we are concerned about the pace of this, and that it stays low over the near term'. Headline CPI inflation has fallen below the 2% target, but a rise is predicted within six months, tempering the good news. With luck, this could be a 'hiccup'.

> There's an improving growth outlook, but the figures are relatively low by historic standards and it's not a particularly robust picture

Above MawsonKerr's Whitburn Coastal Conservation Centre. Panel member Will Mawson shared his experience.

It's also possible that future rate cuts will be paused, partly depending on whether certain areas, such as services inflation, prove to be 'sticky' and 'tie the bank's hands'. As Wah Co explained, services inflation shares a close relationship with wage inflation, given that services are domestically generated and labour intensive. However, survey respondents from the Bank of England Decision Makers Panel do anticipate lower rates of wage inflation in the next year, despite a recent 'plateau'.

In short, 'we think that UK GDP growth will average roughly 1% this calendar year 2024 and pick up to about 1.5% next year', Wah Co concluded. '[That's] an improving growth outlook, but these figures are relatively low by historic standards and [it's] not a particularly robust picture.'

An architecture-specific view

For Adrian Malleson, RIBA head of economic research and analysis, the above signals good news for the sector,

especially following the 'rollercoaster' few years during which practices have taken a beating from goods inflation, supply chain difficulties and client hesitancy. 'Our hope is that the new government may provide some more stability and certainty,' he said, and indeed it has signalled a 'substantial increase in house building, with a 1.5 million target, although that's going to be challenging to achieve… as well as much needed investment in our public estate'.

Malleson used data from the RIBA Business Benchmarking and Future Trends surveys as well as insights from the Construction Products Association (CPA). Noble Francis, economic director of the CPA, said its data corroborates that 2024 has been difficult with construction output having fallen, yet it sees growth returning in 2025 and 2026.

Architects' work generally precedes construction output, 'so we can expect the benefits of growth in 2025 and 2026 to come a little sooner for the profession', hoped Malleson. In support of CPA predictions, the Construction Purchasing Managers' index has also risen from -46 to+54: 'In residential construction activity, the overall picture is one of higher levels of new business, and additional recruitment in the construction sector'.

The RIBA's latest survey data also shows that chartered practices increased revenue in the last year, although growing profitability has been a challenge due to salary increases, practice costs, insurance costs and increased fee competition in the market. There's more positive news on the global stage with year-on-year growth reported in international revenue. 'The UK maintains its position as a global hub of architecture and its position of contributing strongly to the UK's balance of payments,' confirmed Malleson.

Historic overview and future trends

The last few years have certainly been a 'wild ride' added Malleson, but RIBA data clearly shows an encouraging 'consistent pattern of growth emerging over the last few months'.

BANK OF ENGLAND MONETARY POLICY REPORT NOV 2024

Annual inflation rates for components of CPI: core goods inflation is weak, but services inflation remains elevated, albeit reducing.

According to Future Trends data, 'the stand-out message is that business conditions, after a very difficult time, are improving'. Practices are anticipating increasing staffing levels, with the RIBA trends workload index now at +3, 'demonstrating growing optimism'.

Sector-specific view – private housing

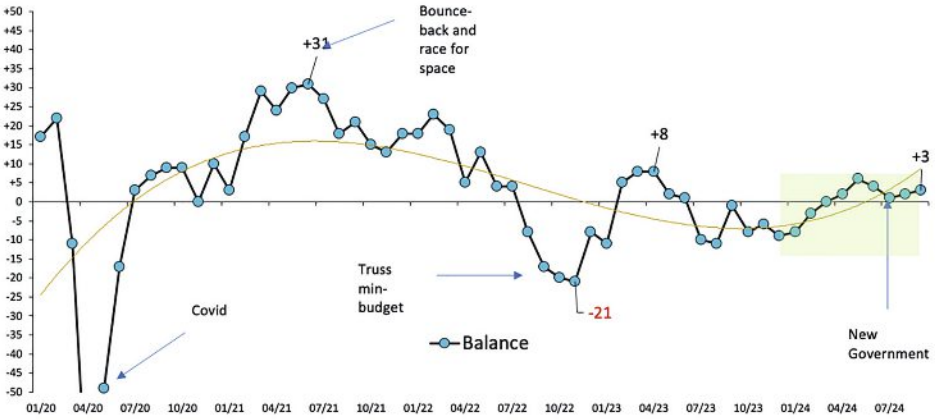
News from the work sectors monitored in the latest survey is encouraging. Private housing, so important to smaller practices, was in the doldrums (at -23 points) last year, due to issues with planning which tended not to favour smaller projects, as well as clients unsure of whether they could afford home improvements. This is now changing.

Speaking from a personal point of view, Will Mawson, co-founder and director of Newcastle-based MawsonKerr Architects, observed: 'What we've seen is a growing confidence … over the last 18 months, we'd seen a real flatlining of inquiries on our bread and butter, one-off housing projects. But, since the election really, there seem to be quite a lot more inquiries coming through.'

Commercial projects

For commercial projects, the latest figure from Future Trends is +8 (having been -7), with certain niche areas doing particularly well, including data centres, student accommodation and sports venue projects. Office retrofits are another continuing area of growth.

Testifying to this was panellist Nicola Gillen, international partner and managing director, EMEA advisor at global real estate company Cushman



The 'wild ride' since 2020 of the Future Trends workload index; the shaded area demonstrates a consistent pattern of growth.

MAWSON KERR/ OPEN STUDIO/ RENDERLOFT

Above MawsonKerr's Vaux Home of 2030.

> We'd seen a real flatlining of inquiries, but since the election there seem to be quite a lot more

Wakefield. 'In the office sector we have broadly two client bases, investor developers on the supply side and occupiers on the demand side. From an occupier point of view, there's always a drive for cost savings but they are also really focused on employee wellbeing and engagement,' she said.

The office is no longer 'somewhere we all troop to every day by default... people have more choice than ever before, and the more virtual work becomes, the more important the role of physical place is in our communities, and our health, in binding us together. Occupiers are very focused on that.' As a result, 'architects that can focus on employee experience and how to accommodate a range of activities are those that will be busiest first'.

From the investor/developer viewpoint, 'those who have buildings or sites in prime locations are busy, as clients are looking for the best connected, highest quality, sustainability target-reaching designs that they can afford'.

Public sector

The public sector, which has for a long time showed a negative outlook, seems to be creeping back, perhaps fuelled by the government's acknowledgement of the urgency to make the public estate safe and fit for purpose with remedial work and retrofit work. There is also a recognised need for new facilities, including hospitals, GP surgeries, prisons, schools and universities.

Sustainability as a driver of growth

Two important points emerged on this topic. The first was from Gillen, on commercial projects: 'Investor developers are [very concerned about] carbon reduction and social impact,' she said. 'Cushman Wakefield put out a report last year which showed that 76% of commercial buildings are at risk of obsolescence by 2030 if landlords don't act to improve their EPC ratings in line with the latest regulations.' This means there is a 'tsunami of work that's coming towards us' to set this right, she suggested.

For private residential, Mawson highlighted his practice's sustainability expertise as a key USP in gaining and retaining work. 'All of a sudden there is an appetite for sustainable buildings,' he said. There is a specialism, an understanding of building physics and metrics, and a 'language' around sustainable design, which helps 'gain client confidence' and win work on complex 'multi-headed' projects.

Positive signs in sight

The interest rate fall seems to be working in inverse proportion to architects' confidence. As Mawson neatly put it: 'Conversations have defrosted over the last six months, which isn't necessarily leading to us open the champagne but there's hope these projects are moving forward. It's not a rapid upturn,' he explained, 'but a steady understanding of what's happening ahead.'

TAKEAWAYS FOR PREPARING FOR GROWTH

- **Get ready for remedial work**

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves revealed the government's intent to invest in the planning system, cladding remediation and energy efficient retrofit, suggesting openings for architects in these areas.

- **Sustainability pays**

Clients have 'a real agenda' for sustainable building design, argued Will Mawson, but their budgets are constrained. Understanding sustainable construction puts architects at an advantage to help clients' money go further.

- **Make workplaces worthwhile**

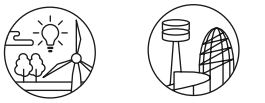
'Physical still trumps virtual' in many workplace settings, said Gillen. But employees are now focussed on their 'carbon footprint, their wallets in terms of the cost of commuting, and the wear and tear on themselves as individuals, particularly those in mid-career balancing other responsibilities'. Now, the role of workplaces is to 'enrich the human experience' and architects capable of delivering this will win work.

- **Have awkward conversations early**

'Ideally not scaring clients off', joked Mawson, but making sure that budgets and aspirations are understood and agreed with all parties, early, is essential. If information comes later in the project and 'shocks' the client, it can completely destroy the relationship, and lead to project stop-starts.

Refuse and reuse provide a circular economy in Belgium

A combined waste collection centre and skatepark in Belgium raises the bar on materials reuse by using structural timbers saved from demolition elsewhere. Architect 51N4E speaks to Stephen Cousins about how the frame was moved and repurposed



Recyparks are an increasingly popular resource in Brussels, enabling residents to offload their waste and unwanted bulk items in locally-situated shipping containers ready to be taken away for reuse or recycling.

A 2016 architectural competition launched by regional waste management organisation Bruxelles-Propreté called for the design of a new Recypark on a 5,000m² plot running alongside the main canal in the centre of Anderlecht, a major municipality in the region.

The concept of reuse was at the heart of the brief. The competition-winning design, by architects 51N4E and Witteveen & Bos with materials salvage company Rotor, proposed a combined Recypark and public skatepark/green space, housed in a large open-sided hall supported on a repurposed structural frame.

ROTOR DC

Above Making waves: Reusing timber structure on the combined recycling facility and skatepark challenged conventional approaches to design and public procurement.

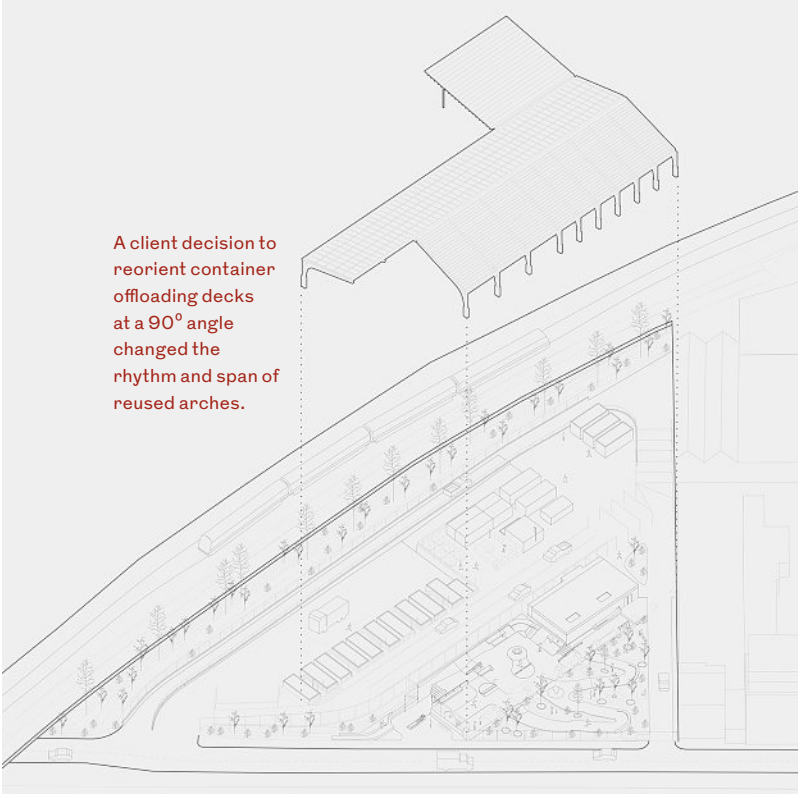
Doing it differently

A pioneering approach, involving the disassembly, transportation and storage of an existing structure, followed by its reassembly on site, was a first for Belgium, challenging conventional approaches to design and public tendering.

An initial research phase in preparation for the competition saw Rotor identify four existing buildings with appropriate structures for the hall and 51N4E develop a 'loose-fit' design that could be adapted to accommodate each of them. The skatepark aspect of the scheme was designed by Witteveen & Bos for under the east side of the hall, helping to encourage the scheme's acceptance in the neighbourhood.

Bruxelles-Propreté eventually settled on a former equestrian centre slated for demolition in the city of Liège, around 100km from Brussels. Its 26m-wide boomerang-shaped glulam timber arches were in a decent state of repair and would give the project a strong identity.

In an unconventional move for a publicly-funded project, the client bought the hall from the owner before detailed design and had the frame



Above The former equestrian training hall was bought by the client, carefully dismantled, then stored before construction.

Below Reused half-arches were bolted together in pairs to boost robustness.

carefully dismantled during demolition and stored in a warehouse in Nivelles, south of Brussels.

Alternative opportunities

Yann Gueguen, architect at 51N4E says: 'It was nice to be able to work with timber as we would never have chosen it if we were starting this project from scratch. Steel is generally much cheaper than new timber, faster to erect, and avoids fire protection issues.'

There were many complexities attached to reusing historic timbers, but the architect implemented design strategies to help mitigate the risk, notably reserving salvaged elements for less demanding parts of the structure (around half the arches are new), over-dimensioning them and designing specific reinforcements.

There was a lack of documentation on the existing building, including its age – it is thought to have been built between 1970 and 1980 – dimensions of the timber beams and method of fabrication.

Visual investigations revealed that several arches were too badly damaged to reuse and the bases of the others were rotten or had been chewed by horses. It was decided to cut them 1m from the bottom and mount them on concrete bases. Similarly, the tapered ends of the beams, at the top of the roof pitch, were cut and replaced with steel connections.

Project requirements changed as the design evolved, affecting the approach to reuse. For example, a decision to reorient the angle of container loading decks, accessed via gaps between adjacent arches, effectively widened the gaps, lengthening the required beam spans and ruling out the use of existing arches over that section of the hall.

51N4E(3)

Reused beams are instead grouped together in a tighter arrangement at the north end of the hall covering a 'small fractions area' including a 'recyclerie' where objects in good shape can be picked up by other residents.

These beams were installed in pairs – two half arches bolted together – to increase the load bearing capacity. In all, 20 arches taken from the riding centre were installed, with the remaining 17 beams newly-manufactured versions.

Improvised solutions

With no recognised working methodology for this form of reuse, the project team was forced to improvise solutions when it hit obstacles.

Gueguen says initial destructive testing to verify the structural performance of each glulam proved an inaccurate and arduous process that started to delay the construction programme. As a result, Belgium-based engineer Greisch was appointed at a late stage to take responsibility for the structural design of the reused glulam and to verify its structural performance.

A chain of custody document was also produced, on the advice of Rotor, containing all information on the timbers gathered during the competition phase and setting out precise

responsibilities of every stakeholder involved in reuse, including the design team and contractors. The document was a form of contract signed up to by everyone involved.

'The goal was to set responsibilities for each actor so that if something went wrong we didn't start to point fingers. There was now a clear mission from the start to the finish line,' says Gueguen.

Independent checks

In another step away from the construction norm, engineering partner Seco Belgium was brought onboard as an independent external supervisor to double-check all the calculations and verify quality throughout design and execution, including delivery on site. This proved vital in convincing insurers to underwrite the project.

Although Greisch had extensive experience of building renovations and upgrading existing structures, Recypark was its first job testing and designing for reused components.

Undamaged samples of beams not being used in the building were subjected to multiple tests, including for timber type and density, bending resistance, and the impact of ageing. A spectrograph test identified the type of glue used for lamination. In assessing the architect's structural design, Greisch found that all bending and shear forces decreased, and stresses were relatively small compared to the original building.

Arnaud Pineur, timber expert and project director at Greisch, says: 'We concluded that the architect's design, which is based on conservative assumptions and almost no information about the structures, could have been significantly scaled up to support larger loads, if necessary.'

The engineer was also required to verify the stability of the structure based on Eurocodes, which do not yet take into account reused components, so performance had to match that of a structure made from newly manufactured components.

'Design codes are based on a typical structural lifespan of about 50 years and we were reusing a structure that was already 40 to 50 years old, so we had to make sure reusing it was not going to be a problem,' says Pineur, adding that this was the trickiest part of the job.

51N4E

SEPIDEH FARVARDIN

Above The tops of the beams were removed, due to rot, and joined with steel connections.
Left An angled beam, sandwiched between curving half-arches, supports a roof canopy designed to prevent rain from damaging the reused structure.

Finding a solution meant revisiting the original scientific article used as the basis to develop the Eurocode in order to recalculate a safety coefficient value for the structure's extended lifespan.

'We concluded that the impact of the reused structure, and its ageing, on the safety coefficient is pretty limited, and the Recypark structure should last for another 50 years,' says Pineur.

Much like a skatepark, the project had its ups and downs, as reflected in the eight year timeframe between concept and handover this September. Clearly the industry has a way to go before a fully developed reuse circuit for this kind of structural component is in place.

Materials salvage companies like Rotor operate in Belgium, and are building business models based on the collection, qualification and selling of reused items in large enough quantities to service markets like construction.

What next?

The main goal for the future, says Pineur, is to ensure that these individual initiatives work together to create a system, 'perhaps at the scale of a country', to deliver in sufficient volumes to support the design and delivery of buildings. Timing and storage issues must also be addressed, he adds, to ensure that a resource that is available today can be bought and made available to build when a project gets to site.

On a positive note, Gueguen says the overall cost of choosing reused glulam on Recypark was equivalent or slightly cheaper than building the arches new, despite the additional overheads related to transport logistics, renting a storage facility, materials studies and testing etc.

Recypark's approach has also changed the attitude of main contractor Eiffage, which now plans to incorporate multiple reused elements in the conversion of a historic synagogue into a dance school in Belgium.

'The most important thing we learned is that we can build with materials from existing buildings, removing the need to fabricate new products,' says José Rangel, project manager at Eiffage. 'It's important to look for products set for demolition and give them a second life … you have to change your mindset and be convinced you will find what you need,' he concludes.

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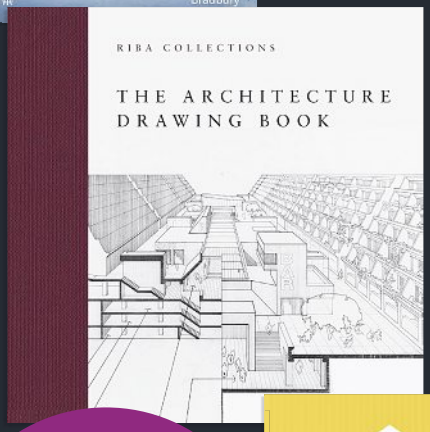

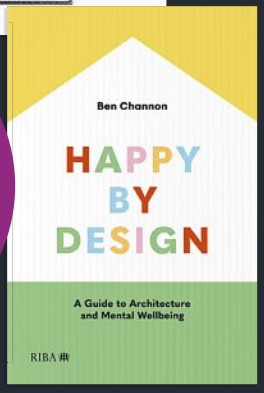

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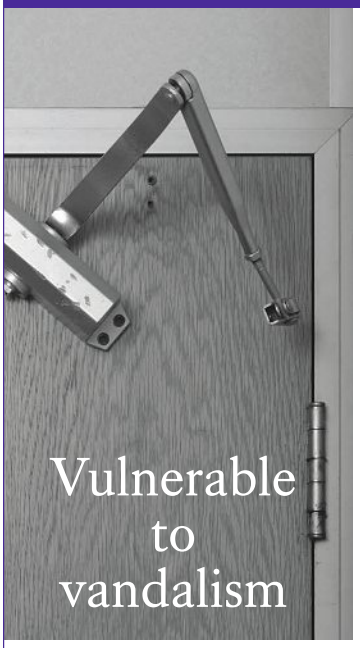

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3: Culture

Canadian photographer Krista Jahnke concedes that, while studying architecture at Ottowa's Carlton University, architecture was never the primary inspiration for her studio work. Instead she found herself drawn to art, particularly the cubism of Picasso and Braque; their compositions intimating their own form of spatial geometry. She says she felt her studio work too was more about physical modelling than drawing. Photography was initially a means of representing her models in two dimensions; but it became increasingly abstract; forensically close up, read as baroque layers or in soft focus, the images became an end in themselves; the subject rendered incidental.

What happens when the world is your model? Jahnke tells me that she never travels without her camera drone; here, while accompanying some architect friends on a trip around Italy. The prelude to this image had been a slow, winding drive up the opposite side of this valley near Carrara. On the way they passed dusty ramshackle workers' villages, populated by those whose job was cleaving the stone from the hillsides. They were rudely photogenic; Jahnke regrets not having stopped to capture them on film.

The drone takes in the view in a way that Jahnke, even from her final vantage point, could never have done; and from there, the abstraction she'd once sought at the micro scale is replicated at the macro. Nature assaulted by humans for more than 20 centuries, this ancient, now fractal, landscape assumes the qualities of the best contemporary art – timeless, though modern.

Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Krista Jahnke
Quarry, Carrara, Italy
2023
DJI Mavic II camera drone


Photo John Duncan Filmmaker

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Photo Nanne Springer

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'What do the skyline silhouettes being designed now tell us about the culture and ideas of architecture?'

The sky's the limit

Even in the depths of winter, views of the sky can raise our spirits. Do architects always make the most of it, wonders Eleanor Young

What shape is the sky for you? In the Fens big skies stretch out, a dome over the landscape, touching the edges of fields and dykes with occasional interruptions of telephone wires, and the isle and cathedral of Ely visible for miles around. In Manchester the brick of the Northern Quarter severely truncates the sky, making it barely a presence until you climb onto the tram and head out past a gathering storm of high-rise around Castlefield. In the Victorian suburbs, away from the drama of elevated trams and towers, dense streets channel a flat-footed strip of light, broken only by chimneys, roof extensions and TV aerials raking the clouds.

Architects control this oft-forgotten experience in the streets and squares of cities and towns. What do the skyline silhouettes being designed now tell us about the culture and ideas of architecture?

First there is the 'super' pitched roof used to outline large buildings or the tops of blocks of flats, many modelled on Herzog & de Meuron's VitraHaus in Weil am Rhein in Germany. But now you are as likely to see them on flats in east London. They give a homely, recognisable, child's-drawing-simplicity to outsize blocks.

And then there is the apology. An apology for existence… You see this on big box warehouses along the motorway, masquerading as landscape and sky as the hues change over the height of the building from greens through to blues. But do they even have the colour quite right? Grey surely is the dominant colour of a British sky.

More recently we are seeing scallops taken up to the sky, the trend for scooped surfaces reaching a new level – sometimes with scalloped facades extended into a scalloped roofline (yes, there can occasionally be too many scallops if you follow current architecture). You can see it on the rooftop extension of the reworked department store Arding & Hobbs at Clapham Junction in south London, designed by Stiff + Trevillion. It is whimsical and perhaps a little cartoonish, but who wouldn't want the sky to be trimmed into rounded, cloud-like edges? It feels a confident and optimistic move.

The flat roofs of Modernism are getting a run for their money – and not just from architects trying to hide plant on top of their designs. It is a symptom of the way ideas are quickly disseminated and shared – a phenomenon that has accelerated rapidly in the age of social media – and visual concepts are among those most often picked up and run with. And for those that open up the sky just a little more to those down on the street, it is welcome.

Left Arding & Hobbs, Clapham Junction, extended by Stiff + Trevillion.

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The primary architectural goal was to create a typological proposal that would adapt to the challenges of the 21st century, aiming for a democratic house

The story behind RIBA International Prize winner Modulus Matrix
ribaj.com/modular

STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH PHOTO:RICHARD CHIVERS

In oil-rich Texas, sustainable design is a bit of a non-starter. AIA Gold Medal winner Lake | Flato takes an oblique route to achieve the seemingly impossible

Words: Flo Armitage-Hookes Portrait: Courtesy of Lake | Flato Architects

The persuaders

'Environmentalism is a bad word [in Texas],' confides David Lake. 'We never use it,' concurs Ted Flato. The oil state is not known for its sustainability – yet the 2024 American Institute of Architects Gold Medal winners are driving cultural shifts among designers, clients and the wider public in practical and persuasive ways.

Both Lake | Flato founders grew up in Texas and have thrived on the opportunities and challenges posed by the state's hot temperatures, low rainfall, expansive landscapes and sprawling urban patterns. Although they now work on projects US-wide, the practice is still based there, with offices in San Antonio and Austin.

Sustainability isn't a new issue for the firm; it's inherent to and inextricable from its dedication to context and landscape. 'It came naturally to us,' explains Flato. Since the beginning, in 1984, Lake | Flato's buildings have responded to their specific conditions and actively connected to the environment. Ranches were an early staple which established and honed the practice's approach, before it moved to more complex projects and technical solutions. The all-American typology demanded passive cooling measures, semi-outside spaces and engaging with the landscape.

Recently, the pair spoke in London at the 2024 AIA/RIBA Keynote Lecture and visited a few practices. They emphasise London's contrast with Texas. Grimshaw, Heatherwick and Chipperfield are doing extraordinary architecture here, they say, but they sure as hell aren't doing any ranches.

'Shade, shade, shade, shade, shade, water, water, water, water, water,' says Lake, counting off each repetition on his fingers. Both founders spent most of their youth outdoors – kayaking, sailing, hiking, fishing and camping – and know first-hand what's required in hot climates.

This was put to the test designing Arizona State University Polytechnic Academic District on the site of a decommissioned airbase in the Sonoran Desert. Five new buildings sit lightly across a 14-acre site with open-air atriums, projecting porch-like balconies, angled roofs and steel louvres. Native desert planting, reinstated by landscape architects, is surprisingly lush – colourful flowers and leafy trees sit alongside cacti and shrubs. A new desert gully crucially improves water harvesting. You get the sense that the scheme couldn't exist anywhere else. It's highly functional yet fine-tuned to, and clearly of, its locale.

Opposite David Lake (left) and Ted Flato (right) established Lake | Flato in 1984.

Below Carraro Residence (1990) reuses a steel-framed structure and features a large screened porch.

HESTER + HARDAWAY

Left Desert landscaping at ASU Polytechnic Academic Campus (2008) is attractive and improves water harvesting.

Right Shade and air circulation dictated design at ASU Polytechnic Academic Campus (2008).

BILL TIMMERMAN (2)

Lake | Flato is also in the business of persuasion. The phrase 'everything's bigger in Texas' does not apply to sustainability, and environmental arguments are a hard sell. However, presenting them from a practical standpoint has won people over. Of the regularly occupied space in Austin Central Library, which completed in 2017, 80% enjoys natural daylight. But rather than frame this from the start as an energy saving measure, Lake | Flato flagged exactly how much money the client would save on energy bills over time and how it would improve the feel of the space. 'It starts with, why is this going to make their world better?' explains Flato. 'Then indirectly it becomes, why will it make the world better for others?'. With each new client, it's an incremental process of developing trust, educating, navigating them towards low carbon decisions and resource efficiency. 'The ultimate success,' he adds, 'is that when we leave them, they become advocates, bragging about how well their building works.' Project by project, little by little, Lake | Flato is changing minds, creating ripples, and making sustainability make sense.

Both view Texan architect O'Neil Ford as a mentor and credit him with galvanising their design philosophy. They worked under him for five years and speak with admiration about his re-use of historic buildings, technical innovation, contextual approach and artful practicality. Lake holds up a copy of the book The Architecture of O'Neil Ford: Celebrating Place. It's well-thumbed and Post-It notes bookmark pages.

Animating urban downtown areas and making them viable, social hubs are also part of the practice's remit. 'Over time, we've sprawled apart,' sighs Lake. 'Europe is shaped by trains and we, unfortunately, are shaped by the car.' Meagre public transport means there are few district hubs and insufficient communal spaces. Yet, these downtown areas will be crucial in absorbing Texas' rapidly increasing population. The state is already home to 30 million people and the Texas Demographic Center projects that this will rise to over 47 million by 2050. An urgent solution is needed to increase density in considered ways, while preventing encroachment into open landscapes – where apparently there are few planning restrictions.

Lake | Flato's Pearl Brewery District in San Antonio, completed in 2017, offers a compelling

Below Marfa Ranch (2020) connects to desert grasslands with lightweight breezeways and porches.

CASEY DUNN

model. The abandoned 10.5ha brewery site appeared to offer little; a few older buildings and a scattering of warehouses. However, in seven phases over 18 years, it has been transformed into a varied and lively area where people want to live, shop, spend time and leave their cars. New and repurposed buildings host a melting pot of homes, hotels, restaurants, bars, offices and the Culinary Institute of America campus. Most striking of all is the outdoor offering. Open plazas, small pockets of green, an uncovered amphitheatre and a river walk weave between the structures. Looking at film footage, it's clear that everyday life is unfolding; people are eating outside, standing by market stalls, walking dogs and playing in fountains.

Initially, however, the brewery client took some convincing. 'He didn't believe that people wanted to live downtown!' exclaims Lake. But they took him on a journey to Seattle, Portland, Vancouver and Mexico to demonstrate that a lively pedestrian district was both possible and desirable. 'The thing about Ted and I,' Lake continues, 'is that we don't give up. We have incredible tenacity.'

Throughout our meeting, the warmth and friendship between the two was obvious. They readily admit that their ideas don't always align, but value the difference and discussion. There's a gentle rhythm to our conversation; Lake switches topic, Flato guides it back to the question, and together they generate new thoughts and musings, handing their tale back and forth. I barely have to say a word.

Above Everyday life unfolds in the transformed Pearl Brewery District (2017).

LARA SWIMMER

Left Austin Central Library (2017) aspired to be the most daylit public library in the US.

NIC LEHOUX

Today, 40 years after founding the practice and now with 150 staff, their roles have inevitably shifted. 'Our job now is being thoughtful, practical editors,' reflects Flato. They advise at key moments, facilitate collaboration across studios and feel they are still learning and having fun. They've nurtured an ethos which is no longer entirely theirs. It's been shared and adopted by others, both inside and outside the firm: 'We're confident that as soon as we stop showing up, the work is still going to be really good… We're lucky they still want us!' Staff have left over the years and set up their own Lake | Flato-adjacent practices across the state. A network of designers and clients who aspire to create better built and natural environments, in contextual and climate-conscious ways, is accumulating. Like O'Neil Ford before them, David Lake and Ted Flato have become mentors to the next generation in Texas.

Time to banish burnout

An RIBA study has revealed a disturbing culture of overwork, low pay and mental stress. We must make wellbeing more than a platitude, urges Muyiwa Oki

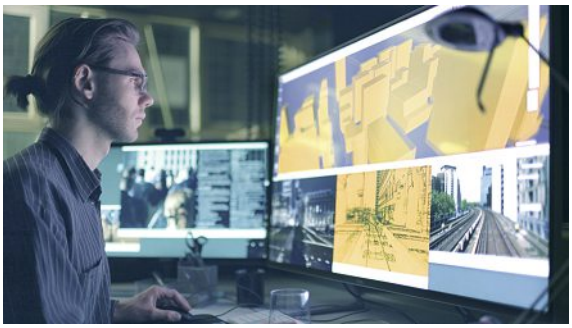
You hear a lot about workplace culture these days, usually alongside words like 'balance', 'wellbeing' or – more ominously – 'burnout'. And the architecture profession, with its sweeping ideals and sometimes punishing demands, is no stranger to these matters. We're an industry that thrives on values, precedent, and vision, yet we've also developed a dangerous relationship with overtime, long hours, and a culture that can often take more than it gives.

The RIBA Council has been diving into this issue – looking beyond the rhetoric and toward real data. I have commissioned an investigation into the issues of practice at architecture offices. This research will form the basis of our approach to rectify the problem. We've heard from experts across disciplines, from schools of architecture to employment agencies, and gathered insights from both sides of the Atlantic.

The first result? A survey of over 1,400 contributors paints a sobering picture: overtime is rampant, compensation is often absent, and many emerging professionals aren't even getting the Real Living Wage. It's time we ask ourselves: is this the culture we want to cultivate?

One area of concern is long hours and unpaid overtime. Our survey findings present a challenge to practices and RIBA about workplace conditions and employee wellbeing. We found that:

- **Overtime is prevalent in the profession.**
- **Most respondents were not compensated for this additional work time.**
- **Low pay, exacerbated by additional hours without compensation**
- **Many of those working in practice rely on additional sources of income to meet their living costs.**
- **Practices are often seen as not providing sufficient support for their staff.**
- **There is often a marked difference in how practice work is viewed (and remunerated) between early-career staff, and those more senior.**
- **Young, early-career staff are more likely to be dissatisfied with their pay and conditions than older, more senior staff.**
- **Most respondents viewed their role as being detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing.**



Left Architecture has developed a dangerous relationship with overtime and long hours.

RIBA chartered practices operating in the UK are required to pay at least the Real Living Wage. In November 2024 we issued a Practice Note to make clear that practices need to take care that hours worked without pay or time in lieu do not drag an employee's hourly wage below this level.

Those that are in their earliest career stages are most vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment. That is one reason why, in our engagement with ARB, we are advocating strongly for educational reform to get students to the point of registration within five years. We also need to work with practice to develop standards that can ensure early-career architects are protected and supported during these crucial years, and we will be exploring the development of a new model RIBA employment contract to help with that.

Our own evidence is complemented by recent research conducted by the ARB, and extends far beyond issues with pay and overtime, revealing widespread discrimination and sexual misconduct within the workplace. This type of behaviour cannot – and will not – be ignored. While some practices are already leading by example, encouraging inclusive and respectful cultures, the evidence is clear that the entire profession must act.

The findings of our survey make it clear: change is essential. We must address the culture of unpaid overtime, low wages, and insufficient support for young professionals.

STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH PHOTO: ISTOCK | LAURENCE DUTTON

Architectural historian and Royal Gold Medallist, whose erudition, empathy and insight have influenced the history of ideas for three generations

Joseph Rykwert 1926 – 2024

Joseph Rykwert leaves a vast corpus of writings and teachings which has redefined the place of architecture in the history of ideas. His capacity to see beyond conventional historical narration, his omnivorous erudition and fundamental empathy were perhaps given impetus by his youthful experience of traumatic displacement. Born into a prosperous Jewish family in Warsaw in 1926, he escaped perilously to exile in 1939.

As a student at the Bartlett and AA he became associated with the Jewish diaspora gathered around the Warburg Institute, including his teacher Rudolf Wittkower. He embraced Catholicism; Church Building, published by the Vatican in 1966, sought to explain Christian architecture not as an autonomous compendium of styles and forms, but as places shaped to house a mutable set of human rituals.

Rykwert became deeply connected to currents of modernism. He worked in Milan for Ernesto Rogers, befriended Gio Ponti, doorstepped Le Corbusier for a job, and championed the elderly and forgotten Eileen Gray. Those connections are reflected in a design for a 1960s London nightclub lined in Loosian fur, and a Chelsea housing complex drawing on Gray and Le Corbusier.

Vigilant to the dangers of banalisation in the International Style, a significant historical course-correction came in his book The Idea of a Town (1963). At a time when Western rationalist urbanism was primarily oriented to favour faster traffic and social segregation, it used archaeology and anthropology to describe the birth of Roman cities as a process anchored in intuition, ritual and spirituality, and became an inspiration for Italo Calvino's book-reverie Invisible Cities.

His own favourite book, The First Moderns (1980), challenges the view of early modernists that they were effecting a decisive break with the past. Developed with his PhD students at Essex University, it posits that the schism in the history of ideas beginning in the 17th century was far more important, detaching science from a previous harmony with the arts and religion.

Rykwert and his second wife Anne Engel co-authored a book about the brothers Adam, though he regretted that she declined recognition as an equal partner. His vast The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture (1996) meanwhile reframed classicism not as a finite taxonomy of building components but as a protean and inconsistent process touching on the broadest aspects of culture.

Alberti was a figure of enduring interest: an architect engaged in many fields including sport, poetry and philosophy. Rykwert found perhaps the closest contemporary parallel to a renaissance polymath in Ivan Illich, the priest and historian of ideas. The two taught in parallel at the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1990s, developing a moral vision for architecture. Illich focused his teaching on Rykwert's volume of essays The Necessity of Artifice (1982), which captures his fizzing range of interests, from the meaning of seats to Semper and the 'dark side' of the Bauhaus.

Rykwert's book On Adam's House in Paradise (1972) perhaps resonates more strongly in the context of ecological crisis. Having recentred attention on the human through most of his work, he introduces the question of non-human agency through the persistent paradigm of the first building. As he suggested at the celebrations for his RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 2014, it could be read differently now – beginnings implicating endings more poignantly in our time. He is survived by his son Sebastian and step-daughter Marina Engel.

Andrew Todd is an architect and former student of Joseph Rykwert

IN MEMORIAM

John Bryan Hilling
ELECTED 1958, CARDIFF

Kenneth Harrison
ELECTED 1969, VIRGINIA WATER

Frank Todd Dewar
ELECTED 1972, BEXLEY

Geoffrey John Hircombe
ELECTED 1973, PENZANCE

Andrzej Franciszek Blonski
ELECTED 1974, LONDON

Kenneth Scaddan
ELECTED 1976, PORTSMOUTH

Jeffrey Roger Merriman
ELECTED 1980, WATERLOOVILLE

Kit Powell-Williams
ELECTED 1979, LONDON

Clive Petch
ELECTED 1981, STROUD

Christopher Richard Newman
ELECTED 1992, EXETER

Clive Douglas Robinson
ELECTED 2003, KENILWORTH

Celia Geyer
ELECTED 2001, THATCHAM

To inform the RIBA of the death of a member, please email membership.services@riba.org with details of next of kin

EDWIN SMITH / RIBA COLLECTIONS

Madeley Court gatehouse
Shropshire, 16th century

The relative dereliction, haphazard accretions and partially bricked-in door and windows shown in the photograph cannot hide the graceful proportions of this beautiful Renaissance gatehouse, once part of Madeley Court in Shropshire. The gatehouse was clearly lived in when Edwin Smith captured it on camera – small plants on windowsills, curtains and a bicycle left outside the entrance all signs of human presence. Madeley Court had been built as a grange in the mid-16th century by Sir Robert Brooke, who would later become Speaker of the House of Commons. The site had been previously occupied by a 13th-century monastic grange, whose traces are still visible in the building. Remodelling of the north-west range took place in the 17th century, and a large walled formal garden added. From the following century, however, the manor house went into steady decline and was uninhabitable by the 1970s, when it was restored and later converted into a hotel. It is now Grade II* listed, while the gatehouse, also restored and less altered over the centuries, is now Grade I-listed. ●

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Published by RIBA 1834 Ltd
Registered office:
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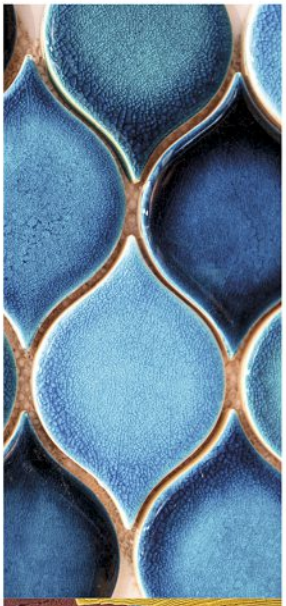

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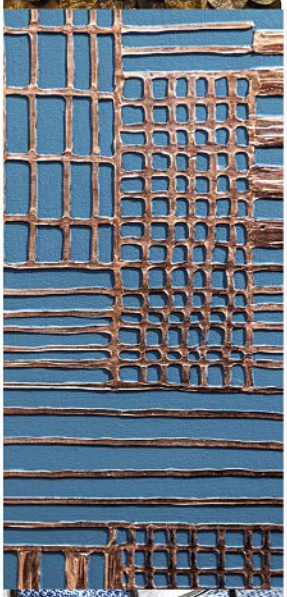

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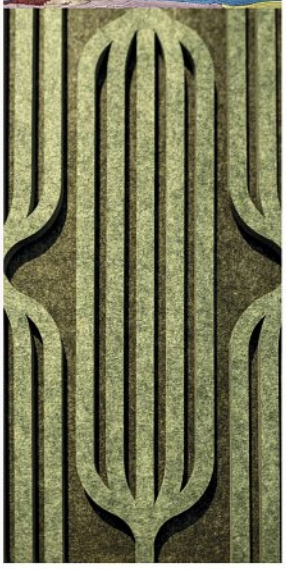

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