The RIBA Journal November/December 2025 Vol 132 Issue 10

Remembering Farrell and Grimshaw

Studio Weave's brutalist barn renewal

Piers Taylor on learning from the local

Lighting Heatherwick's Xi'an tree

Assemble collective's 15-year evolution

The RIBA Journal
November/December 2025

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Heritage, daylight and quiet craft

New artist studios in a reimagined Cornish school building

A derelict outbuilding in Newlyn is now home to three accessible, light-filled artist studios. Built with local materials, traditional techniques, and **VELUX Heritage conservation roof windows**, the project balances conservation and creativity.

Scan to read more about the project and **VELUX Heritage conservation roof windows**

PROJECT DATA

Location:	Newlyn, Cornwall
Architect:	Rolfe Kentish Architect
Year:	2023 – 2025
Photography:	Pip Hambling

1 Buildings

HUFTON + CROW

On the cover
Factory for Herman Miller, Bath, designed by Farrell Grimshaw Partnership, 1977. Photo: John Donat / RIBA Collections

2 Intelligence

JOSÉ HEVIA

SPEC: LIGHTING
This issue, our technical section showcases the deep impact the right illumination can have on a project

3 Culture

HANNAH THUAL

'It's not just about being able to stand up and present – it's about being able to truly communicate'
Why architects' soft skills are crucial in the age of AI: ribaj.com/soft-skills

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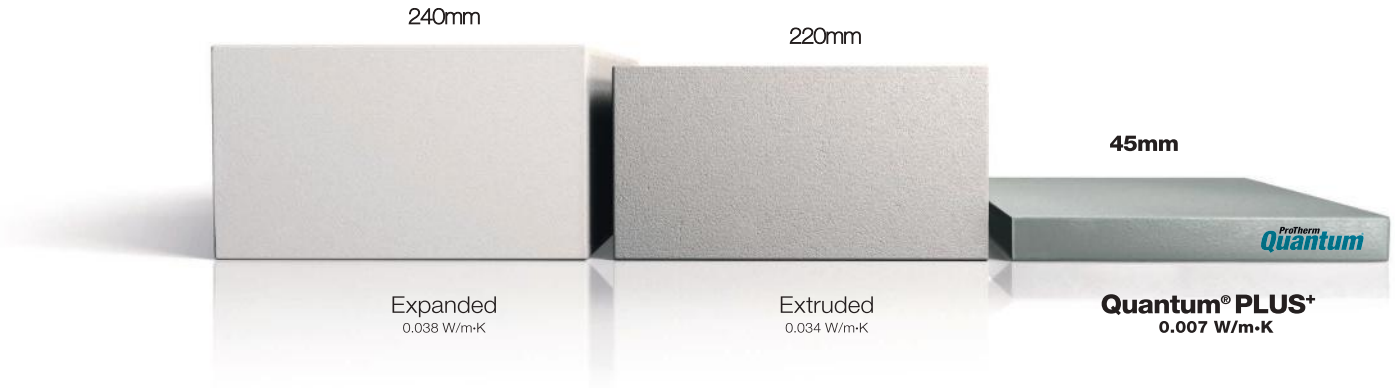
Farrell and Grimshaw's best buildings, WOHA's micro-urbanism and a playful park pavilion from Carmody Groarke: ribaj.com



The depth of board to achieve an R-value of 6.250m²K/W – rounded up to the nearest standard depth.

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U-value chart

Depth of insulation required

U-value req. W/m²K	Quantum® (mm)	Extruded (mm)	Expanded (mm)
0.15	60	220	235
0.14	70	230	255
0.13	70	250	275
0.12	75	270	295
0.11	80	290	320
0.10	100	320	355

Sample range of U-values based upon a typical roof terrace construction with a 200mm concrete substrate and product Lambda value as noted.

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Bracken House, FT Building, London.
Due to the proximity to St. Paul's Cathedral, there was limited height available for insulation on this extensive refurbishment. To meet the required 0.18W/m²K U-value within the existing 75mm insulation zone, **ProTherm Quantum PLUS⁺ Hybrid** was used with **ProTherm Quantum PLUS⁺ Pure** over the existing concrete plinths.

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1: Buildings

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ASIF KHAN STUDIO
Read the full story:
ribaj.com/tselinny

Tselina in Russian means 'virgin lands': the name of Khrushchev's 1953 campaign to settle the steppe of northern Kazakhstan with young volunteers, largely Russian, to boost grain production. Ten years later the 1,600-seat Tselinny cinema was built in Almaty, then capital of the Soviet Republic, to celebrate the policy – which ended nomadism in the region but turned the country into one of the world's largest grain producers. The cinema was sited to conceal St Nicholas Cathedral and on its walls, the celebrated muralist Yevgeny Sidorkin depicted Kazakh figures moving from paganism to literacy.

Asif Khan Studio has converted this structure, left semi-derelict after the Soviet empire's collapse, into the Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture. It was co-designed with his Kazakh wife Zaure Aitayeva, also a co-director of the practice. The vast 18m-high auditorium has been rehabilitated for experimental performance and art. Sidorkin's mural, once thought lost after decades of adaptation as a furniture showroom, photo booth and pizza parlour, has been restored; its missing sections are marked in white render. A new two-storey structure wraps the building like a thick curtain, housing workshops, offices, a café and a rooftop restaurant. A tearoom faces the cathedral, cut off by a fence but hinting at future shared public space.

The architects have also acknowledged memory itself. Many locals believed a replica of the mural on the building exterior was the original. Khan and Aitayeva have addressed this 'second site' of collective imagination by inscribing abstract voids into the facades, recalling the lost copy. Local river stones and fossil-rich limestone used in landscaping reassert geological time over Soviet modernism.

Most striking is the new entrance: 105 vertical fins form a cloud-like foyer, a poetic counterpoint to the rectilinear cinema. Khan recalls seeing a cloud over Almaty, likening it to Tengri, the pagan Kazakh sky god. Whether literal or metaphorical, the gesture symbolically reopens the building to layers of alternative meaning. The Tselinny cannot overthrow the embedded colonial relations between Kazakhstan and Russia; only people can. But it is a luminous new public space, pushing architectural conservation to the edge of its capacities.

Tim Abrahams

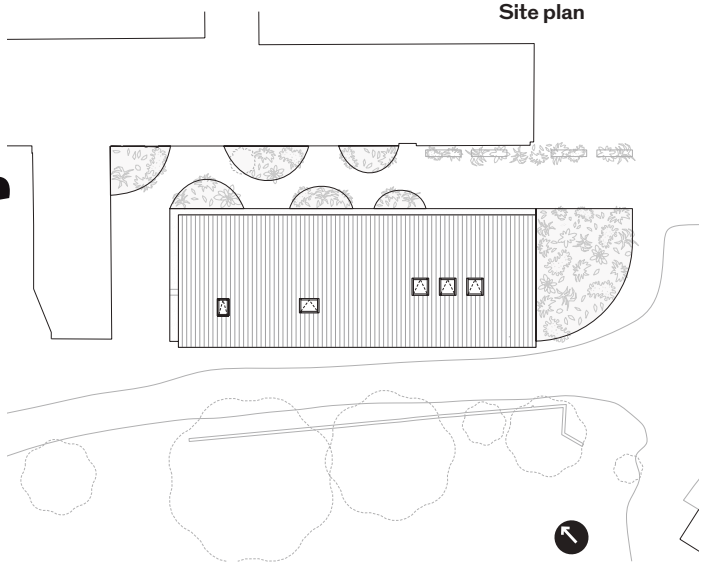
LAURIAN GHINITOIU

Eye of the beholder

Yearning for a return to rural life, Studio Weave founder Je Ahn saw untapped potential in a dowdy 1970s barn – and created a spare yet special home

Words: Chris Foges Photographs: Lorenzo Zandri

Site plan



Valley views from the courtyard garden.

Studio Weave's conversion of South Barn makes virtues of necessity. Exposing the original timbers and blockwork has revealed a certain rough-hewn charm in a workaday structure with no obvious qualities beyond its utility. And a tight budget for the renovation is reflected in equally pragmatic alterations, enriched by imagination and ingenuity to make a robust, characterful home for practice founder Je Ahn.

Having grown up in rural South Korea before spending a couple of decades in London, Ahn had hankered for a return to the countryside, and scoured southern England for the right renovation project. He was alerted to the dilapidated hay barn on the Isle of Wight by a friend, Joseph Kohlmaier, who was working with Gianni Botsford Architects to convert a pair of disused cowsheds next door – the RIBA Award-winning Old Byre.

The barn itself was nothing special: a 1970s open-fronted shelter with a monopitch roof and solid walls of concrete blocks laid edgeways, all in decidedly ratty condition. But it was in a promising spot – part of a cluster of weather-beaten buildings on a working farm outside West Cowes, surrounded by open fields and on high ground that drops away to the south, into the valley of the River Medina.

Replacement would have been an option, but Ahn was determined to retain as much of the barn as possible – everything, it turns out, bar the asbestos roof. Here, the building's ordinariness was an advantage; planners placed no importance on its outward appearance so thermal upgrades could be dealt with by overcladding, allowing the structure to remain exposed inside, and with it the patina of age.

His neighbour had taken the same approach, and Ahn used matching corrugated fibre cement cladding to make an ensemble. Detailing is bracingly simple: with no fancy eaves or gutters, roofing sheets just oversail the facade by a few inches. Approaching along the farm track, the low-slung grey building with a few small windows could be taken for another of the humdrum

A glazed screen on the southeast corner is part-shaded by barns opposite.

sheds and depots that pepper the edge of the coastal town. "The house didn't need to stand out – it needed to be tough enough to stand up to salty winds, and to look like a farmer might have made it," says Ahn. "It feels very appropriate in the English countryside."

The unmade track passes along the west-facing back side of the barn, where it is dug into sloping ground. With the slope of the roof, the east elevation rises to two storeys and faces a range of older barns across a narrow farmyard. Ahn considered putting bedrooms at the back of the building, away from the yard – leaving all the double-height space for the living areas – but in the end preferred to give every habitable room direct access to the outside. One end of the rectangular footprint comprises a tidy jigsaw of bedrooms, bathrooms and utility rooms, while the other half is a single open-plan space.

This had to serve several purposes: a place to relax alone or to entertain large groups, and an occasional workspace. A curiously ambiguous scale seems to suit all occasions. "It's a sort of big-small space," says Ahn. In one corner, where the ceiling rises to 4.5m, big windows pull in the valley view and draw guests towards a built-in bench that stretches along the south wall. The opposite corner, where the roof is lower and a wood-burner perches at eye-height, is snug on winter evenings.

Above Lightweight furniture, including a 1970s Robin Day sofa, allows the living area to be rapidly adapted for work or social events.

Above right The existing west wall was underpinned and injected with a liquid dpm, and a French drain dug in the raised ground outside.

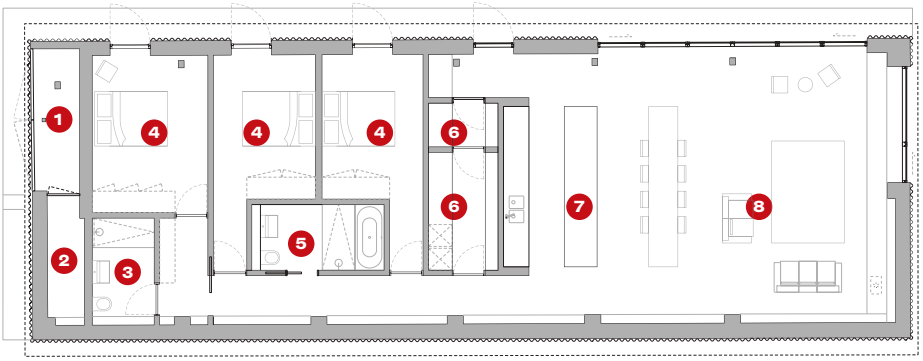
Warmth also comes from salvaged materials which have had just the gentlest of clean-ups. Messy gobs of mortar still spill from between blocks speckled with efflorescence. Their utilitarian character is echoed in new materials. Cheap pine boards clad the kitchen island and frame deep rooflights set into a soffit of corrugated steel. That was a practical choice, since the lightweight sheets could span between wide-spaced rafters without overloading the structure, but one that underscores the building's agricultural origins.

Material selections were also driven by the skillset of the contractor, Imphouse. Building sea walls had given the Island-based company an expertise in concrete, which Ahn has used in place of the timber intended for his bench, and stainless steel for the kitchen counter, getting a fine finish and saving money.

"For us, construction drawings are just guidance, not the final word," he

Ground floor plan

1 External store
2 M&E
3 Shower room
4 Bedroom
5 Wet room
6 Utility
7 Kitchen
8 Living room



says. “Everyone involved in a building brings their own ideas, and if they want to change something then we can have a conversation.”

Imphouse also has a specialism in lime render – developed doing church restorations – which has been exploited in finishes that subtly distinguish each room. In the kitchen area, a crosswall with a sandy texture and deep terracotta hue answers the rusty roofs across the courtyard. In the bedrooms render is sponged, trowelled or finished with a putty knife, softening the agri-brutalism of bare blockwork and crinkly tin.

Economy extends beyond the visible surfaces. Ahn laid underfloor insulation directly on a chalk bed, topped with the structural slab containing pipework from an air-source heat pump. Canny use of off-the-shelf products also kept costs down. The large glazed screen to the garden, which looks like pricey bespoke joinery, is in fact a standard Velfac system bolstered by some additional steelwork. The trick was to question suppliers to discover how much customisation was possible, and to identify the priorities in setting out – where to be precise, and where to leave tolerances that allow for uncertainty while shopping around for deals.

‘The house didn’t need to stand out – just to stand up to salty winds’

In all, the project was delivered for just £1,685/m^2 – a fraction of the typical spend. “I wouldn’t quote that to a new client,” admits Ahn. “It was only possible because I made quick design decisions based on the products that were available, and gave up some control to the contractor.”

An equally pragmatic approach shaped the landscaping conjured up by Ahn and garden designer Tom Massey, who have also collaborated on two gold medal-winning gardens at the Chelsea Flower Show. Where rainwater naturally pooled on the uneven hardstanding, they chopped out half-moon-shaped flowerbeds that double as drains and create a winding path through the courtyard. Beds and cattle troughs are filled with colourful specimens rehomed from a Chelsea exhibit. Elsewhere, self-seeded plants sprout from cracks in the concrete.

“This is not a show garden,” says Ahn. “It’s more like a curated weed garden”. Inside and out, he has looked at the ordinary with a sympathetic eye, and made something very special. ●

Above The cement cladding of South Barn matches that of the adjacent Old Byre.

Bottom left One of two bathrooms can be used as an en-suite, by closing pocket doors in the corridor.

Below All three bedrooms in the 158m^2 house are lit by glass doors to the courtyard.

Credits
Architect Studio Weave
Structural engineer HLS
Services engineer Webb Yates
Horticulture Tom Massey Studio
Contractor Imphouse

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2025

People powered

In Glasgow, Bennetts Associates' Citizens Theatre refurb strikes a fitting balance between retained historic grit and fresh expressions of openness

Words: Jennifer O'Donnell Photographs: Hufton + Crow

Gutsy, engaging and unmistakably Glaswegian, the Citizens Theatre has reopened following a lengthy renovation led by Bennetts Associates. The project reflects the history, culture and community of a beloved institution, delivered through sheer grit.

Opening as Her Majesty's Theatre and Royal Opera House in 1878, the building has weathered the changing context of the Gorbals in the city's Southside, from Victorian grandeur through decline, demolition and regeneration. It has survived adaptation, fire and multiple extensions while remaining a cultural anchor and a vital link between heritage and renewal. Its present name came in 1945, when the Citizens Theatre repertory company moved in; known as the 'Citz', building and company are intertwined, with an irrepressible spirit that has helped ensure their survival.

Bennetts Associates was appointed to renovate the theatre in 2012, and its doors

View to the court from the first-floor bar.

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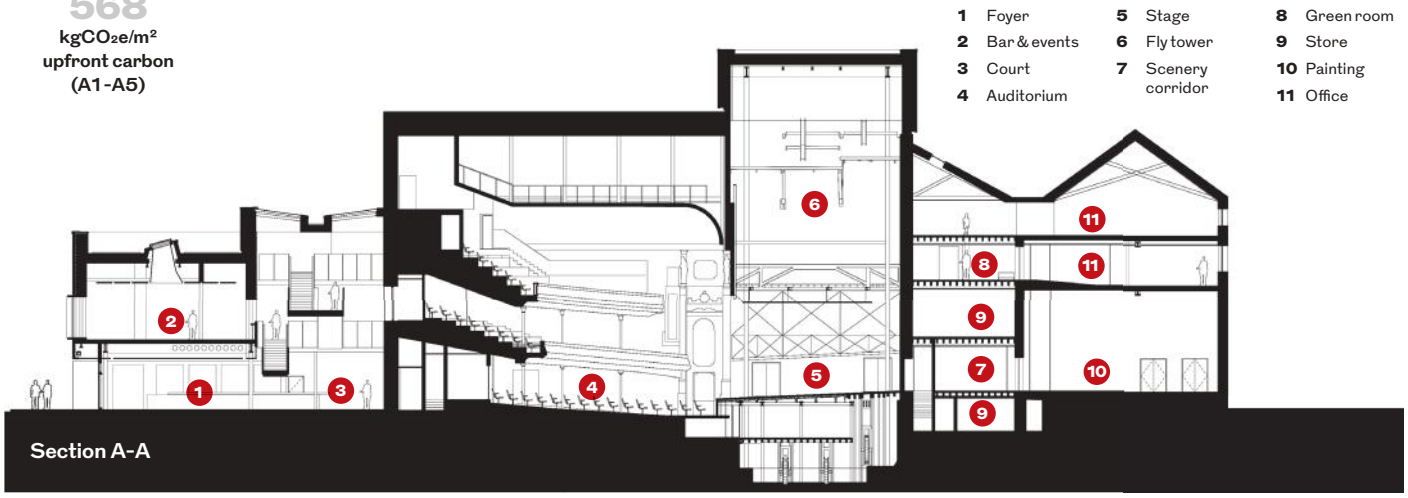
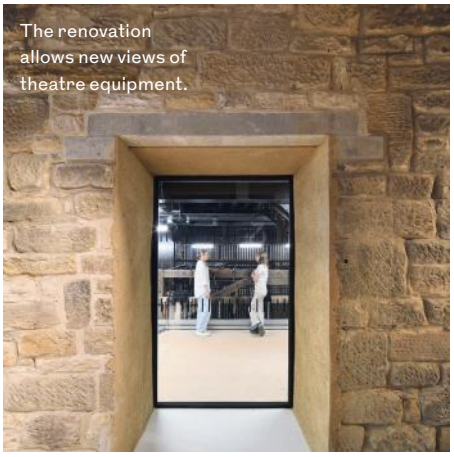
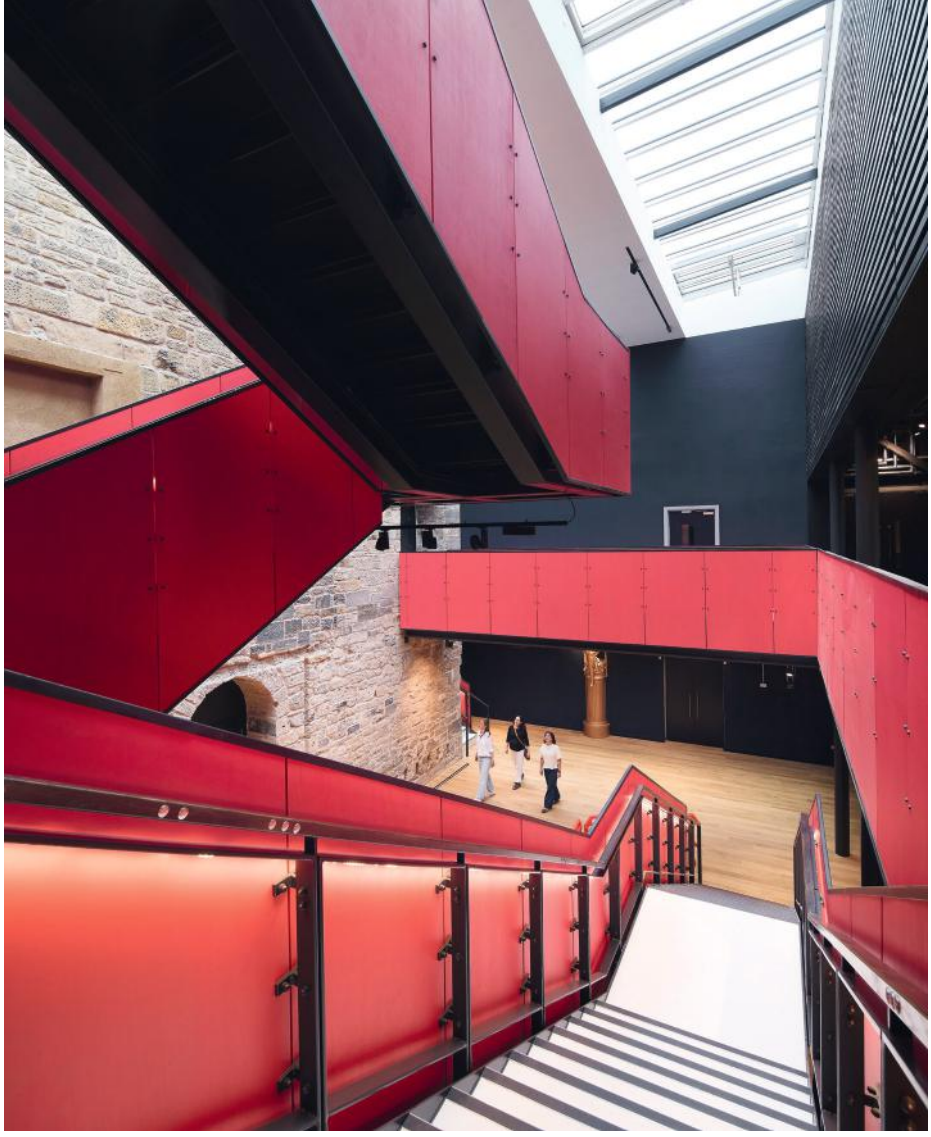
upfront carbon
(A1-A5)



finally closed for redevelopment in 2018. As a Glaswegian I can attest that this was a keen loss, but the brief set out to secure the theatre's future, to preserve the Victorian auditorium and heritage features, and improve accessibility, opening the venue up to its community. Thirteen years on from the project's inception, the defiant building has reemerged in spite of Covid disruptions, rising material and labour costs, and subsequent programme and budgetary pressures. A lesser team might have given up, but dedication and real care have reunited the company with its home.

Striking against dreich skies, the Citz reasserts its presence on Gorbals Street, drawing you into a building that feels alive and inhabited. Key design moves are confident, combining a sensitive auditorium refurbishment and a new L-shaped extension that works hard to provide street frontage, a revitalised foyer and front of house spaces. A new 152-seat Studio Theatre and rehearsal room allow


The renovation allows new views of theatre equipment.

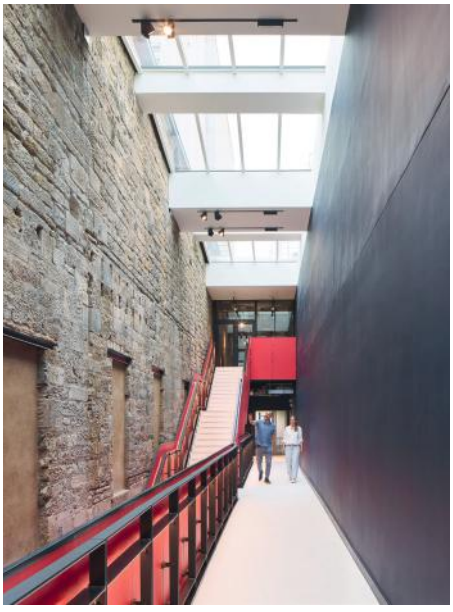


more productions from a wider range of theatremakers. Accessibility measures and reorganised circulation knit the building into a coherent whole.

Originally, the Citz shared a mighty neoclassical facade with its neighbour, the Palace Theatre. This was lost to fire and replaced in the 1980s with dull buff brick. Bennetts' extension transforms its appearance once again – and it's punchy. A black brick box holding a bar and events space floats above the entrance, changing to metal cladding along its side. This wraparound extension is tenemental in scale, its brick referencing the new residential vernacular of the Gorbals. Glowing neon signage and views inside bring the building to life, along with a parapet-height row of statues from the original facade – a quirky move that adds welcome detail to a pared-back design. A new fly tower, crucial to the theatre's modernisation, makes itself known from the street as the building's highest point.

Inside, the balance between retaining historic character and creating a building

Above The toplit court between the new foyer and the auditorium recalls passageways and yards that once defined the site.



Below Sandstone walls of the Victorian theatre are left exposed.

open to its community is clear. Front of house areas reimagine the street pattern and courtyard that once occupied the site. Passing the café, you enter the 'court', a light-filled circulation space defined by the Victorian auditorium's envelope and a new pink staircase. This impactful moment of compression and release draws attention to the auditorium's sandstone walls, which add depth and character to the space. Details such as joist pockets and arch tops in the exposed stonework trace the building's layered, complex history, leaving no doubt that this place is part of Glasgow's story.

The auditorium itself appears almost unchanged and instantly recognisable, its intimacy retained. The patina of decades has been preserved even as the space has been upgraded, with an increase in seating capacity, level access, a new band pit and crucial improvements to ventilation and heating. This decision to retain and celebrate the theatre's heritage shapes each stage of the visitor's journey from street to seat. Outside, the stone statues – four Greek goddesses, Robert Burns and William Shakespeare – set against black brick and neon signage form a distinctive roofline that feels surprising, yet unmistakably the Citz. Inside, gold-painted elephant statues have also returned. Once part of the Palace Theatre, rehomed in the Citz during its 1980s refurb, they bring playful familiarity and a point of continuity to the new foyer.

Other connections come via glimpses into the theatre's inner workings. From Gorbals Street, there is a direct visual and physical link all the way through to the backstage and production areas. Carefully placed viewing windows reveal the fly tower, historic stage machinery, and a working Victorian paint frame – a massive structure dating back to 1894, used to paint largescale backdrops. By opening up the usually hidden workings, the project team has embedded the Citz's outreach, education and accessibility mission into its architecture, giving local groups, students and visitors a sense of participation in the life of the building. "We've not just created new spaces," says Bennetts director James Nelmes. "We've revealed and enhanced what was there, letting the building's rich history speak to future generations of visitors, performers, and workers."

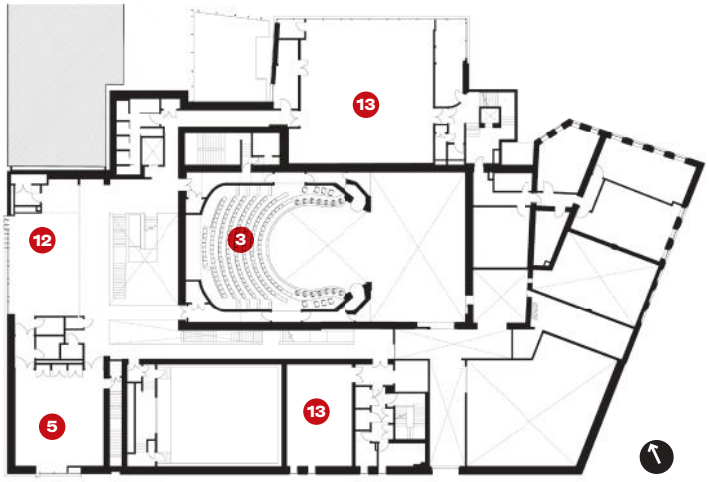
Above A construction workshop is among improvements to back of house areas.

Top right An events space above the new Studio Theatre overlooks the street.

Ground floor plan

1 Foyer
2 Court
3 Auditorium
4 Stage
5 Learning & events
6 Studio theatre
7 Workshop
8 Scenery corridor
9 Paint frame
10 Painting
12 Store
13 Bar & events
14 Rehearsal

First floor plan



The building does have a knockabout quality, which feels right for a producing theatre: a site of experiment, development and making as well as performance. This is not a place designed just to be looked at; it exists to support the work that happens here. There are signs of budget constraints in some pared-back material choices and the limited extent of external works, but criticism here would miss the point.

While architects might obsess over details, this reinvention prioritises accessibility and inclusivity, giving the public and theatremakers a sense of ownership. There is a true bond between the building and team members, who have managed to hold on to the spirit of the Citz.

This passion came across as I toured the building with Nelmes and the theatre's technical director, Graham Sutherland. I came away with a strong impression of the care that has gone into the project, reflected in the result. Stepping out into a rainy afternoon, I felt lifted by what has been achieved. Projects like this deserve the spotlight; the renewed Citz is unabashedly bold. It will be lived in and loved, giving the company a fitting home and inviting everyone to take a seat in a building that truly belongs to Glasgow. ●

Jennifer O'Donnell is co-founder of Glasgow-based practice O'DonnellBrown

MARK LIDDELL

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Architect
Bennetts Associates
Main contractor
Kier Group
Theatre consultant
Theatreplan
Acoustics consultant
Sandy Brown
Structural engineer
Struer Consulting Engineers
M&E consultant
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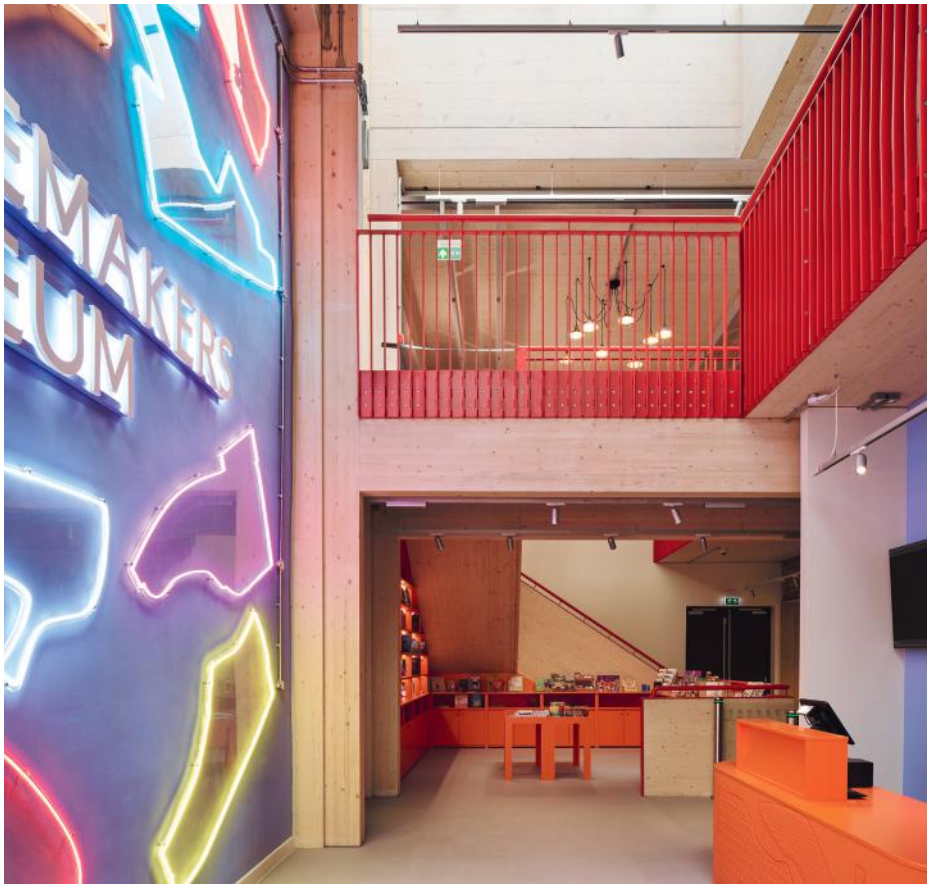
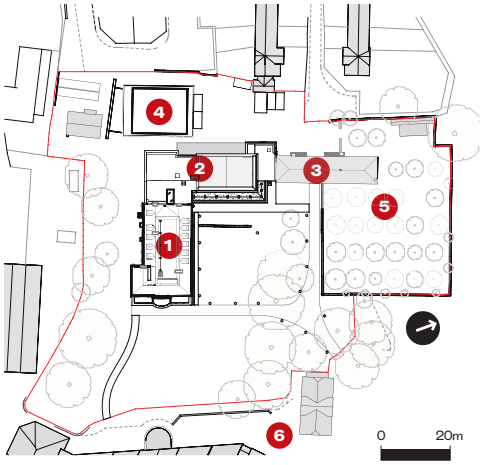
Fit for purpose

In Somerset, Purcell's new Shoemakers Museum celebrates local employer Clarks – and pleasingly unites a patchwork of historic structures

Words: John Jervis Photographs: Nick Guttridge





Above Site plan with the Grange (1); new link building (2); barn (3); archive (4); orchard (5); and entrance to Clarks Village (6).

Left Standing at the main entrance, looking towards the skylit atrium with its bold colours and exposed timber.

It turns out I've been to Street before. Driving through the West Country, my wife and I stopped at its leading attraction, Clarks Village outlet centre, built in the 1990s over the famous shoe firm's factories as production moved overseas. But I'm taking her word for this. An expertly realised non-place, it leaves no memories. Tellingly (and shamefully) we never made it to the actual high street of 'Somerset's largest village', now stripped of brands, its 1970s shopping centre shuttered, awaiting demolition for retirement flats.

But, on the evidence of my taxi driver and its flourishing independents, Street is doing pretty well, with much of its prosperity still wrapped up in Clarks. Founded in 1825 by two Quaker brothers, the firm is headquartered here, despite the family's sale of a majority stake in 2021. An early and enthusiastic adopter of the factory system and mechanisation, Clarks grew rapidly from the late 19th century, shaping much of present-day Street in the process: its heavy 1880s public hall, rows of housing, various schools and institutes, an elegant 1930s lido and the likeable 1960s theatre. And of course, Clarks Village.

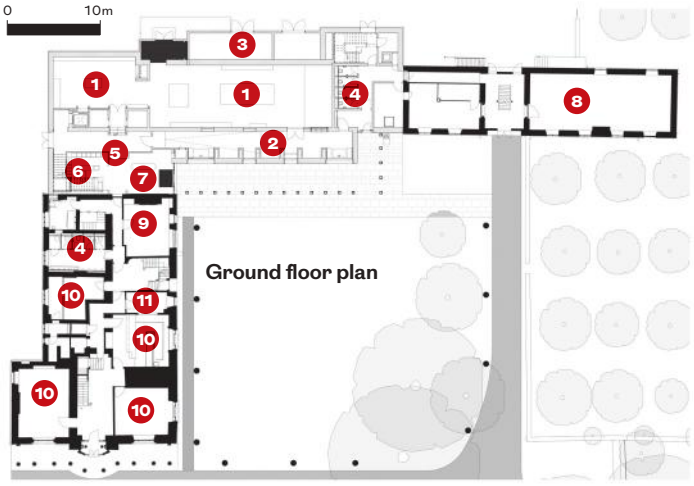
In September, the latest Clarks-related amenity opened its doors. The Shoemakers Museum has been designed by heritage-oriented Purcell Architecture's Bristol studio, appointed in 2022 after a closed competition for local architects. Replacing a small predecessor on the high street, the museum has been almost entirely self-funded by the independent Alfred Gillett Trust (named after a Clark cousin and amateur palaeontologist), which is dedicated to preserving and sharing the firm's collections. These include 31,000 shoes, 500 shoemaking machines, extensive archives and a major collection of ichthyosaur fossils, unearthed in Street's quarries as they were worked for their distinctive Blue Lias stone during its Victorian expansion.

Transforming the Grange, the trust's Grade II-listed home, into a viable museum in time for Clarks' 200th anniversary involved tight purse strings, a tighter deadline and, in the words of Alasdair Ferguson, senior architect at Purcell, "a crazy brief". Located on the outskirts of Clarks Village, the Grange is demure, hiding its 16th-century origins behind a polite Georgian facade. A substantial 17th-century barn sits alongside. To preserve these heritage assets and valuable green space (including an orchard and established oak trees), while providing modern open-plan galleries and a jigsaw of other facilities – a revenue-generating café and shop, a library, community areas and staff offices – was a serious challenge.

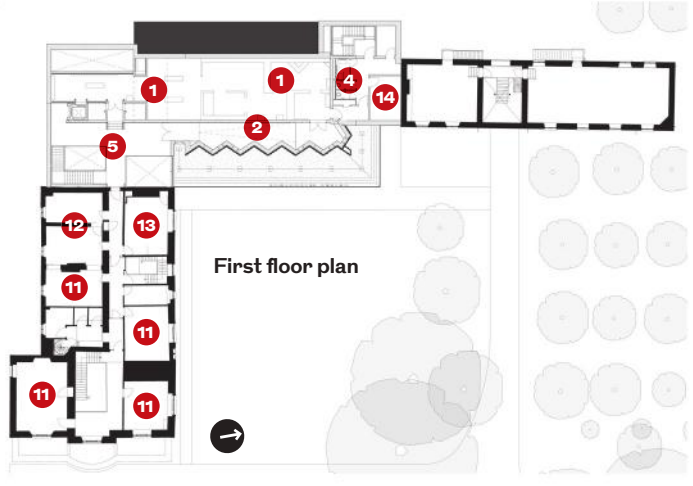
The solution involved demolishing both a prosaic, underutilised and leaky single-storey block added in the 1970s to link the two historic buildings, and some Victorian mission creep at the back. As well as space, any replacement had to provide an identity for the museum without dominating these neighbours, a trick Purcell's two-storey structure pulls

off skilfully. At grade, a modernist arcade draws visitors to the entrance, echoing the Grange's Italianate colonnade. Above, a folded facade of orangey-pink tumbled bricks gives depth and character to a necessarily monolithic volume, chiming with the barn's roof tiles in colour and craft. The Flemish bond incorporates projecting headers, canted bricks, occasional gaps and dog-toothed edges, echoing the perforations, pinking and stitching of Clarks' shoes. A scattering of handmade bricks adds patina, but care was taken to minimise specials. Even the angle of the folds was dictated by adapting saddleback capping bricks to the purpose. The stepped corbelling is decorative but functional too, giving the roof a straight edge to minimise water ingress, protecting the timber structure. Onsite ingenuity avoided the time and cost of formwork: steel brackets with resin anchors and helical ties lock bricks to timber.

Questioned about this foregrounding of brick over Blue Lias, Ferguson points to the desire of clients and planners that the new addition read as distinct, as well as to time and cost, with brick's modularity facilitating precision, speed and even patterning. He also mentions the expanse of brick factories that used to border the Grange, dominating Street's environment and economy; a single chimney still stands as a reminder of industrial realities. Stone was, however, salvaged from the demolished block, redressed and used internally and externally to match the barn, as were a Victorian doorway and a Tudor window, itself recycled by 19th-century builders.



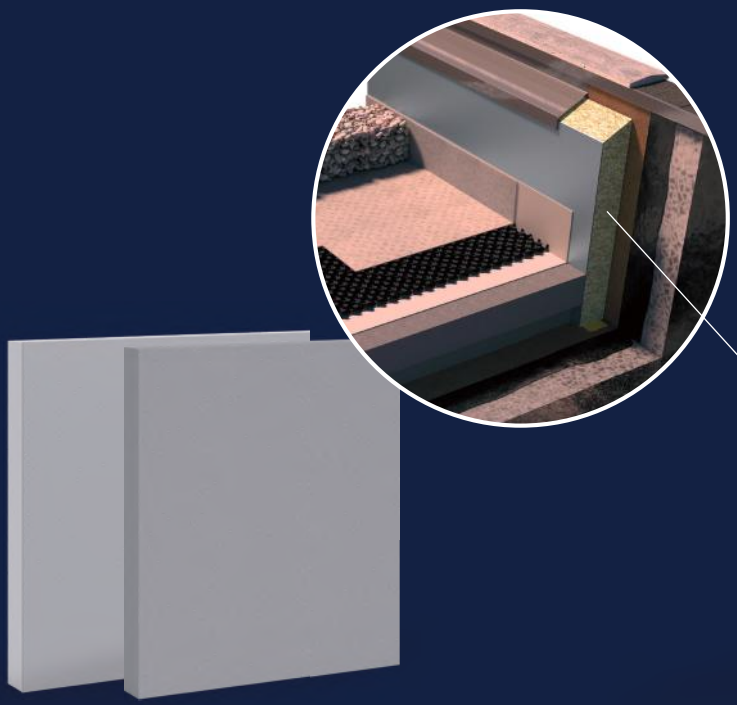
1 Main galleries
2 Circulatory street
3 Plant room
4 Washrooms
5 Atrium
6 Shop
7 Reception
8 Fossil gallery
9 Community room
10 Café
11 Offices
12 Library and reading room
13 Accession
14 Storage



Above and bottom left An elegant colonnade in wet-cast stone provides a covered walkway to the main entrance.

Credits
Contractor
RIGG Construction
Structural and civil engineer Mann Williams
Exhibition designer
Nissen Richards Studio
Fit-out contractor
Realm Projects

Suppliers
Glulam
Buckland Timber
CLT Hasslacher Norica Timber
Windows Internorm
Bricks Northcot
Cast stone
Vobster Architectural
Roofing Bauder
Lime mortar/render
Ty-Mawr Lime



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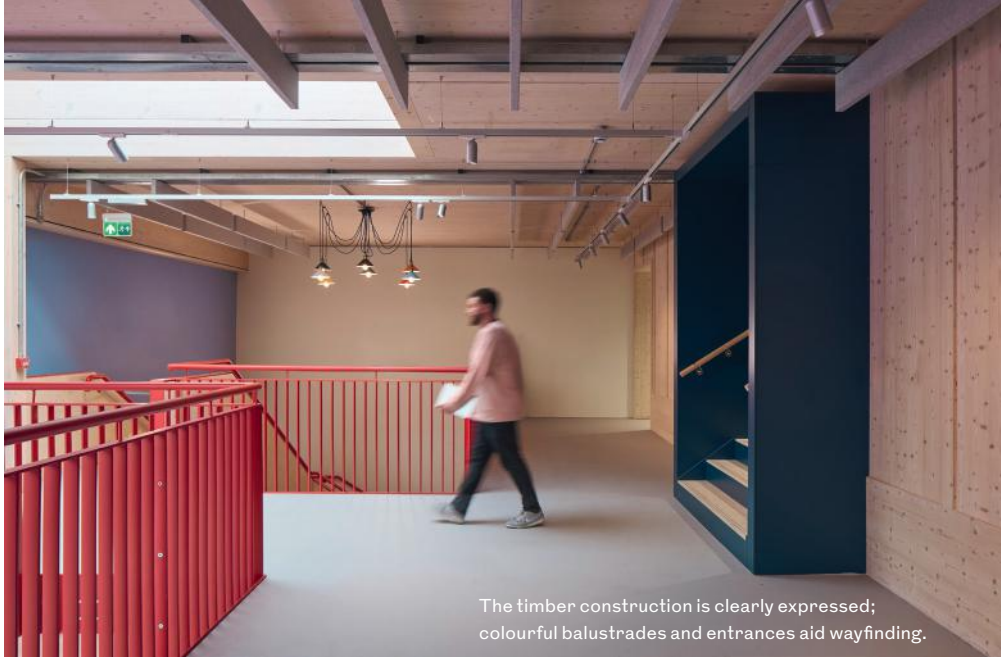


The timber construction is clearly expressed; colourful balustrades and entrances aid wayfinding.

Sustainability drove material choice, with the structure built largely of glulam (from Buckland, its only UK manufacturer) and cross-laminated timber (from Hasslacher in Austria). Passivhaus modelling steered the early massing, and AECB U-values and airtightness provided valuable frameworks (windows are triple-glazed), but these guidelines are applied pragmatically rather than prescriptively, with certification eschewed for fabric-first solutions adapted to the specificities of project and heritage. Despite air-source heat pumps and photovoltaics on the roof (the latter providing 100 per cent of energy at peak), Ferguson emphasises, "We aspired to create a rich, dense, contained fabric, packed with insulation, rather than relying so much on renewable energy technology. Our concern was to make the shell as good as it can be, allowing bolt-ons as technology evolves. Hopefully we'll have a carbon-negative building in 10 to 15 years' time."

Two examples of pragmatism: to match the 275mm depth of the longest available brick ties, 25mm was shaved off insulation between brick and CLT on the upper facade. Impact on U-values was minimal, but a steel frame was avoided, saving significant amounts of time, money and embodied carbon. A hybrid timber-concrete composite was used for flooring slabs (220mm CLT topped by 110mm concrete), harnessing the strengths of both materials, thus enabling wider structural spans, column-free galleries, fewer fire-resistant and acoustic layers, and visible CLT soffits.

This timber is celebrated in the entrance and atrium, from the exposed glulam beams and columns to an alluring CLT staircase wrapping around the shop. These double-height spaces are filled by colour and light: red handrails and balustrades provide intuitive wayfinding to mitigate a complex inheritance, as do blue portals leading to the galleries. The lower display focuses on Street's development; Clarks' involvement in religion, education and women's rights; and the processes and experiences of

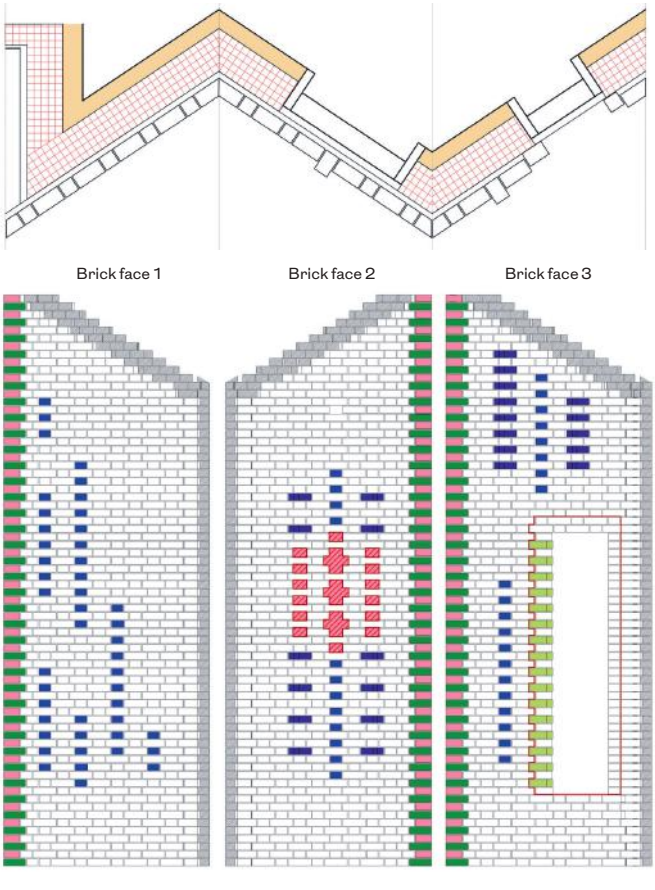
The CLT staircase provides an inviting yet contained space for retail.

IN NUMBERS

2,219m²
GIA (total site)

£5.4m
contract cost including fit-out

305
kgCO₂eq/m² embodied / whole-life carbon



Right To save time and cost, and aid reusability, the facade's detailing was created with just six types from the British Standard range of brick specials.

shoemaking (including a production line for desert boots, rescued from the firm's Weston-super-Mare factory). The upper level dives into the tangible nostalgia of shoe designs; print and television advertising; the notorious shoe sizers; and point of sale, including recreated shops from the 1950s and 1980s.

The atrium also offers access to the Grange – now housing a café in its attractively refurbished interiors, plus communal and staff areas – and to internal streets running alongside the galleries. These provide a buffer for light, as well as convoluted access to a no-frills fossil display in the barn. At the base of the stairs, an emergency exit leads to an empty plot on the south of the site, next to an archive built in 2012. Planning permission has been given for a dedicated fossil gallery here, unlocking a scenario in which the barn becomes a café and events venue (services have already been put in place), freeing parts of the Grange to host more intimate exhibitions.

The experience of slotting a new building into assorted, uneven layers of history has left Ferguson even more convinced that CLT is the future of construction: "Given the lack of straight lines, stitching in the superstructure stretched from four to six weeks, but that's still amazingly quick. It just needed a big chainsaw, so it wasn't too hard to clean things up to fit." There are other stories to tell, for instance about heritage, community and procurement: 70 per cent of suppliers came from within a 25-mile radius. Biodiversity loomed large too, requiring a badger hotel, swift bricks and bat boxes, as well as access to tunnels that were once (allegedly) carved underground as far as Glastonbury, and now host maternity roosts for highly protected lesser horseshoe bats.

The phased approach results in an occasional unresolved air, perhaps to be expected of provisional solutions in recalcitrant spaces put to temporary use. But as a crucible of industry, religion, culture, suffrage, social change and fossils, Clarks, and thus the Shoemakers Museum, carries vast local significance – forcefully expressed by staff and visitors – as well as national and international impacts reaching to Portugal, the Caribbean and beyond. This brave project adds memorability and meaning to Clarks Village, and provides another reason to stop at Street. Let's hope that money can be raised quickly to complete the vision. ●

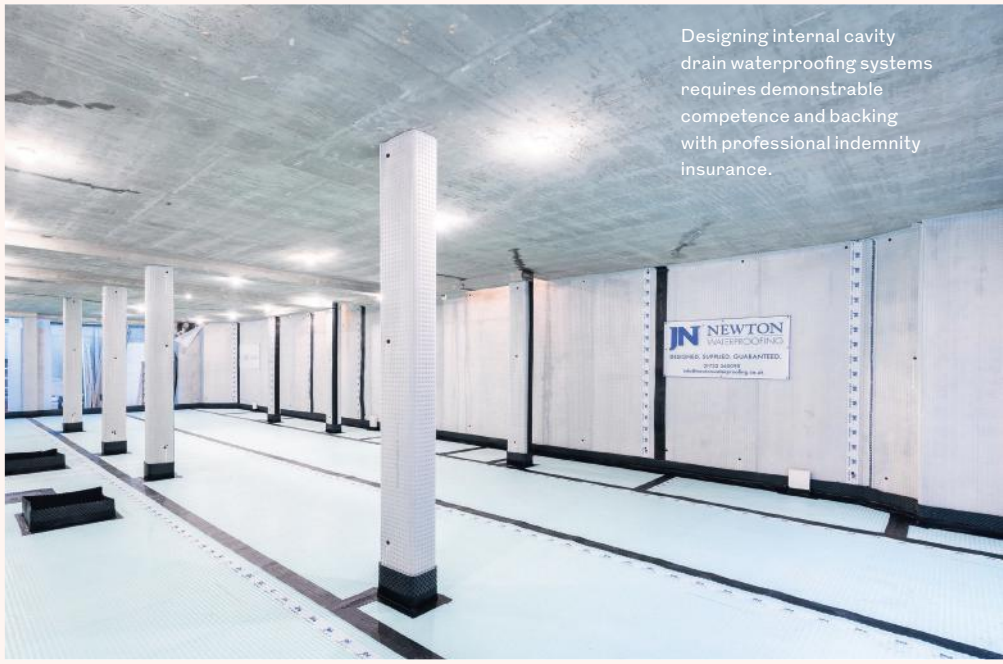
Above left On the ground floor, the Grange's Georgian interiors have been refurbished to house the new café.

Above Large column-free galleries provide flexible display space, here dedicated to the processes and communities involved in shoemaking.

Below The upper galleries include a 'shoe wall' of classic Clarks designs, an evocative collection of point of sale, and shop fit-outs from the 1950s and 1980s.

A watertight relationship

Newton Waterproofing's comprehensive PI cover, backed by proven expertise, offers full compliance with the Building Safety Act and sets the gold standard in contemporary specification



Designing internal cavity drain waterproofing systems requires demonstrable competence and backing with professional indemnity insurance.

For specifiers navigating increasingly complex regulatory requirements, understanding the critical intersection between professional indemnity (PI) cover, professional competence, and waterproofing design has never been more important.

The Building Safety Act represents the most significant regulatory shift in construction since the 1980s, and means waterproofing failures can expose specifiers to substantial financial risk.

"Specifiers and principal designers are now accountable for demonstrating competence in all design elements, including waterproofing. Even in an environment where professional indemnity insurance is more restricted, it is still absolutely critical," explains Warren Muschialli, managing director of Newton Waterproofing.

Waterproofing failures represent one of the highest-risk scenarios in construction – because water ingress can compromise structural integrity, create health hazards, and necessitate extensive and expensive remedial work, often requiring temporary relocation of occupants.

"Many specifiers are discovering that their existing PI policies may not adequately cover waterproofing specialisms," notes Muschialli. "The Building Safety Act essentially requires you to know your limitations and act accordingly. If waterproofing isn't within your demonstrated competence, you must engage specialists who carry appropriate cover and expertise."

Compliance with British Standards represents another critical dimension of professional liability in waterproofing. The Building Safety Act reinforces the importance of adherence to established standards, creating clear accountability for specifiers who deviate from recognised best practice without adequate justification.

Specifiers who fail to adhere to these standards, or who specify non-compliant products, face increased liability exposure.

Proven competence

Given these challenges, partnering with specialist waterproofing companies that carry comprehensive PI insurance represents a strategic approach to risk management. Newton Waterproofing, which has more than two decades of continuous PI cover specifically for waterproofing design, enables specifiers to transfer design responsibility to an organisation with proven competence and appropriate insurance coverage.

"We don't just supply products – we provide comprehensive design services backed by extensive PI cover," explains Muschialli. "When specifiers engage our design services, they're handing waterproofing liability over to specialists who carry the right insurance and can demonstrate their competence."

For specifiers who are serious about managing professional risk while delivering superior outcomes, the combination of appropriate PI insurance and specialist partnership represents the gold standard in contemporary waterproofing specification. This approach ensures compliance with Building Safety Act requirements and provides robust protection for both the specifier and the client.

"Professional indemnity insurance isn't just about protecting against claims – it's about demonstrating professional competence," concludes Muschialli. "In waterproofing, where the consequences of failure can be severe, comprehensive PI cover backed by proven expertise represents essential business protection."

newtonwaterproofing.co.uk

View of Goldsmith Mews from the main road.

1 Main road
2 Parish hall
3 Goldsmith Mews
4 Car park

Intricate plotting

Office S&M's Goldsmith Mews scheme in Kent makes striking, nifty use of a brownfield site – despite some tangible planning compromises

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: French+Tye

If you stand in front of the parish hall in the village of Chalk in Kent, there's a big signboard highlighting all the local historical buildings. It features photographs of them and a map indicating their locations. They include the Victorian school hall, as well as the Old Forge and Craddock's Cottage.

The signboard depicts a Kentish rural character to this settlement of timbered and weatherboarded buildings, sited on quiet lanes. It also draws attention to some of Chalk's fairly illustrious history. Charles Dickens holidayed in the village, is said to have spent his honeymoon and written The Pickwick Papers from one of its houses, and was inspired by the Old Forge for Joe Gargery's forge in Great Expectations.

However, the majority of the photographs on the signboard are, tellingly, in black and white. Many of the historic buildings represented have long since been demolished or lost. The Victorian school hall was replaced by the parish hall in the 1960s and then rebuilt in the mid-2000s, although you wouldn't recognise it. The 'village' is today an outer suburb of Gravesend, and you would be hard pressed to find the peaceful and charming Kent vernacular present in Dickens' time among the generic ribbon development along treeless tarmacked roads and estates of postwar housing – homes themselves much altered with dormer extensions and paved driveways since they were built 60 to 70 years ago. The River Thames is around 1km to the north, just over the green estuary flats which are also rapidly being built over with wiggly cul-de-sacs of red-brick units delivered by commercial housebuilders.

It is in this context that Office S&M's Goldsmith Mews – a terrace of four townhouses for a normally London-centric developer, Stem Homes, up a ramped access road to the side of the parish hall – makes a bold blue splash.

The project sits in an elevated position, set back and up from the main road. In front, towards the Thames, is an open car park. To the east is the rear of the parish hall and its garden, and around the remaining sides is existing housing. The scheme replaces 16 underused garages and is essentially

a leftover, infill site more typical to an urban setting. Office S&M came to the project in 2019 and won planning for three houses. The site was then sold with the planning permission in 2020 to Navneet Vij of Stem Homes, who was attracted by its design and kept Office S&M on. Vij subsequently acquired an additional wedge of land to the rear, which is what enabled three dwellings to become four.

Perpendicular to the road, the first three houses have three bedrooms, while the extra one at the rear is a two-bed. This detail came about as a result of the other context in which Goldsmith Mews has been designed: the need for the site to comply with reasonably demanding but fixed supplementary planning document (SPD) requirements. These included that the three-bed houses have 10m-long gardens, and each house have 1.5 car parking spaces. While the fourth home is larger in square metres, its garden was not considered big enough to serve a three-bed home.

IN NUMBERS

£1.2m
total contract cost

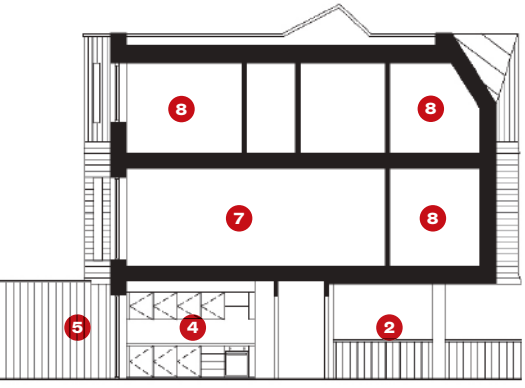
405m²
GIFA

£2,963
cost per m²

Right The front entrances and buttery yellow undercroft.

Below The garden-side elevation has matching yellow downpipes and window frames. The homes are all zero-gas.

Section A-A



Despite its courageous outward appearance, Goldsmith Mews' design is a complicated balance between a close reading of the local context and re-establishment of the vernacular, and an unsexy physical realisation of those SPD requirements. The end result does all these things in various ways.

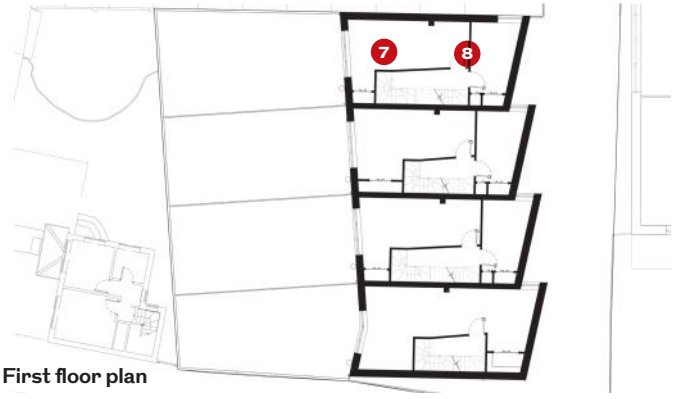
On the former, the project aims to reconnect with the largely lost local vernacular displayed on that signboard. The project adopts the weatherboard common to Kent. At ground floor homes are clad using vertical butter-yellow fibre-cement planks chosen

Above The front elevation is staggered so each house has two aspects and views of the River Thames.

Left A bold blue addition among the surrounding residential gardens.

1 Ramped access road
2 Parking undercroft
3 External store
4 Kitchen and dining space
5 Garden
6 Two-bed house
7 Living space
8 Bedroom

Second floor plan



First floor plan

Ground floor plan

for durability and non-combustibility, which create a kind of garden fence feel. At the first floor, and above on terrace ends, cladding uses the same board positioned horizontally in a lavender-blue colour. There are also other seasidey details, including porthole windows at the front entrances.

At the same time, the design incorporates some of the more modern features of the immediate area. From the road the scheme presents as the gable end of a house – a front and back wall with a pitched roof. However, in a subversion to the norm, the roof has already been extended on both sides with dormers akin to those added to the postwar homes all around. It's almost the archetypal form of a house, but with the blue of the powder-coated aluminium roof blending with that of the first-floor weatherboarding.

Lastly, the design is about working the space between the limitations of having to provide enough parking at the front and enough garden to the rear, and finding answers to the problems of the site. These requirements meant that the ground floor was necessarily squeezed, which Office S&M overcame by incorporating an undercroft for the parking. The push-pull for space means there is a kitchen/dining space on the ground floor, but the main living room is on the first floor. Likewise, because of proximity to neighbours and the children's nursery that operates in the garden of the parish hall, the project could only have windows to the north, towards the Thames, and to the west. The footprint is a staggered zig-zag on the eastern elevation that allows each house the same light and views.

Regulations around the garden, parking and accessibility leave the daily living area slightly tight

The dual aspect constraint is not particularly discernible inside, especially since the higher-up bedrooms in the roof eaves have views onto the Thames. More noticeable is how regulations around the garden and parking, and Part M codes for a substantial ground floor WC, mean the living area ends up slightly tight.

These homes are an excellent, well-built, lively use of an unloved brownfield site, far better than the alternative scheme of commercial homes on green fields going up metres away, so one can't help but feel the push-pull in design when it comes to these external factors couldn't be more specific and pragmatic. We need more of this kind of tightly knitted development, but it must be competitive against other types in the spaces it provides to ensure it is viable and as attractive to homeowners.

Credits
Client Stem Homes
Contractor
Land Development Property Group
Architect
Office S&M Architects
Approved inspector
Harwood
Engineer PRP
CDM principal designer
CDRM Services
Landscape architect
Maude Pinet
MEP NRG Consulting
Noise RBA Acoustics
Planning
Maddox Planning
Site investigator
Soiltechnics
Structural engineer
Foster Structures
Transport
Paul Mew Associates

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Cedral
Zinc cladding PREFA
Windows H-Fönstret
Doors SnickarPer

Left View from the kitchen towards the butter-yellow front entrance with its porthole windows.

Right The ground-floor kitchens have simple grey units and overlook generous gardens.

Making a clean sweep

Considered design and technological advances mean toilets are becoming more pleasant and hygienic spaces, a RIBAJ/VitrA webinar heard

A change in design direction for the care sector as Covid-19 took hold provided a "steep learning curve", said James Potter, director (technical) at WGP Architects, during a webinar, sponsored by VitrA Bathrooms, on designing for hygiene.

London-based WGP was keen to apply its trademark lean, sustainable approach to designing care homes at a time when considerations around contagion and pandemic control came to the fore. An initial proposal to revamp a 100-bed facility through a fabric-first approach, with exposed fittings and services, was shot down by the client due to "concerns it would accumulate dust, impacting on cleaning regimes and therefore hygiene". The architect was duly compelled to enclose ceilings, pipes and fittings behind timber.

Potter's admirably frank presentation kicked off the webinar, which explored how thoughtful design and innovative hygiene technologies can enhance wellbeing and deliver spaces that speak to both form and function.

Below The dramatic entrance to Hugh Broughton Architects' refurbished public WCs at Embankment near Cleopatra's Needle.

DIRK LINDER

VITRA

Above VitrA's Sento range, with its wall-hung pan, offers easy cleaning for family bathrooms.

WGP's challenging first experience triggered a "crusade to try to understand how care homes are designed, what makes a good one, spatially, and how to cater to different types of people". These insights were channelled into Olive Grove, a 60-bed Northamptonshire home currently in planning. Here, accommodation is subdivided into semi-autonomous zones better suited to people living with dementia, while a secure access via a link building between a café and the main building helps modulate external interaction with occupants, avoiding the spread of infection.

Similar principles were applied to Haverhill, a timber-clad 64-bed care home in Suffolk, which recently received planning approval. The concept of semi-autonomy here runs through everything: "into the building footprint" of the series of terraced blocks set out to follow the topography of the site; "into the day spaces and how everything fits together".

Where shared bathrooms in care homes can encourage physical interaction and viral spread, at Haverhill each living unit has an en-suite. Inspired by the humanistic design principles applied by Alvar Aalto, its blocks weave through existing woodland. Along with heavily planted rooftop gardens, this gives residents a direct connection to nature to support health and wellbeing.

From lush biophilia to lurid legionella, Allan Randall, contract manager at VitrA, highlighted the tech innovations helping prevent germs in residential and commercial bathrooms.

When designing public washrooms in hotels or other high-footfall sites, architects should "consider the user's journey in the bathroom: map out the touchpoints; consider how design can make it more hygienic and sanitary". Automatic flushing toilets and hands-free taps and soap dispensers all boost hygiene while increasing user comfort and leaving a positive impression.

Specifying sanitaryware with a surface glaze can, Randall notes, repel dirt and inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria by up to 99.9 per cent. Furthermore, wall-hung toilets have fewer touchpoints and are easier to clean beneath than conventional WCs. For a plush hi-tech experience, smart WCs feature an automatic opening and closing lid and a spray nozzle that cleans itself before and after use.

Public loos are often outdated and poorly maintained, so it was a relief to hear from Emma Watson, senior architect at Hugh Broughton Architects, about a local authority appointing the practice to update its facilities. As Watson related in her presentation on the Westminster Toilet Project, Westminster City Council is in the process of refurbishing eight of its busiest public toilets in tourist locations, the first two of which, on Victoria Embankment and Parliament Street, opened earlier this year.

A standard palette of materials and fixtures was adopted across all sites. Cubicle partitions and doors in PVD stainless steel with a gold finish were specified over traditional flimsy cubicle systems, while a 'linen' surface texture prevents stickers from adhering. Handmade blue ceramic wall tiles with gold mosaic linear detailing reflect Westminster's brand colours, and porcelain terrazzo floor tiles resist dirt while ensuring slip resistance. Touch-free features, including contactless payment on entry, automatic flushing toilets and vanity units with a three-in-one tap, soap dispenser and hand dryer, help minimise the spread of germs.

Anti-social behaviour is as much an issue in Westminster as anywhere else, and Watson made "interesting discoveries" speaking with borough service operators about the challenges they face maintaining public toilets. A tamper-free and safe design for sharps disposal involves a "concealed chute coordinated within wall tiling to deposit any used needles within a medical-grade sharps bin in the back of house area".

But a series of engaging artworks help keep visitors' minds off such matters, and Hugh Broughton Architects worked with artist James Lambert to integrate his colourful designs, which draw on local context and history, into the wall tiles. Embankment features an image of the Sphynx inspired by nearby Cleopatra's Needle; Piccadilly Circus will include a representation of Eros. "Graphics are applied to the tiles using a screenprinted transfer, which is refired in a kiln to bake the image in, so the art tiles' finish is consistent with the blue wall tiles for an integrated effect," Watson concluded.

WGP ARCHITECTS

Visualisation of WGP's Haverhill care home in Suffolk, where en-suites offer privacy and pre-empt future pandemic scenarios.

Right Schwarzman Centre's Great Hall is now the largest fully covered public space in Oxford.

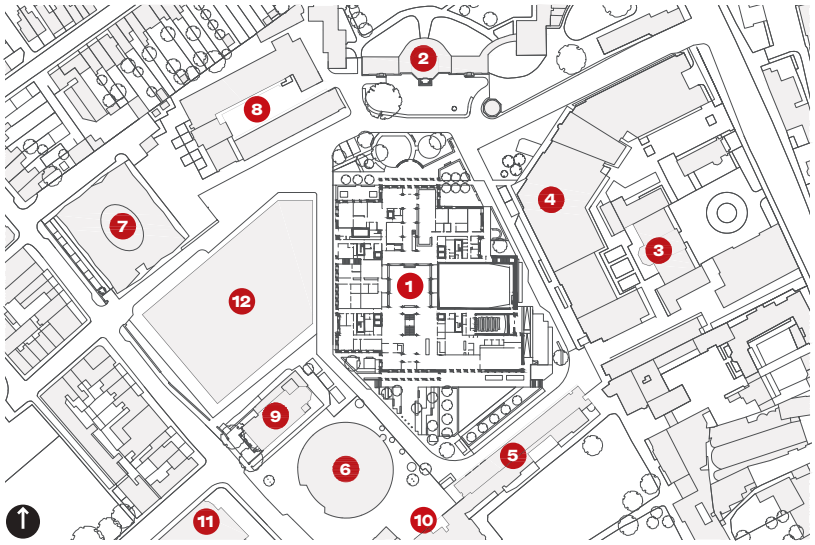
Back to the future

Hopkins Architects' Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities meets the weighty ask of being 'a contemporary take on a traditional Oxford building'

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek

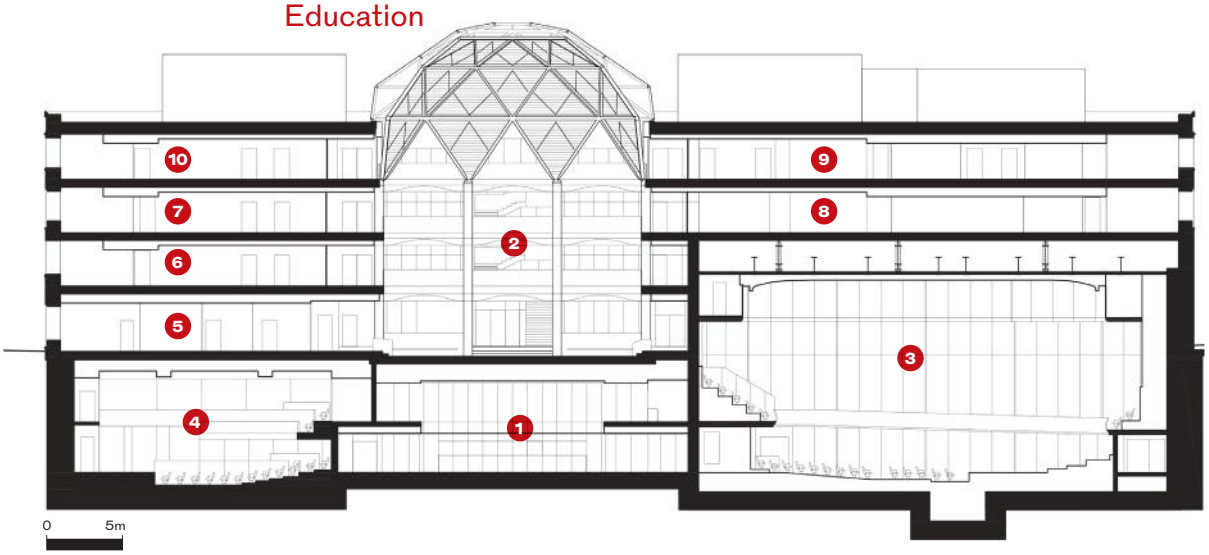
Spoiler alert: first-timers wanting to get a sense of what Oxford's Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities looks like could do worse than stand at the junction of Walton and Beaumont Streets and look north. A way ahead you'll catch a glimpse of its low, triple-glazed, steel polyhedral dome, while a look left gives a near view of Worcester College's entrance; arched loggia, library piano nobile and pediment recessed between projecting dining hall and chapel wings. Keep both in mind as you walk up to the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ).

1 Schwarzman Centre
2 Radcliffe Observatory
3 The Old Infirmary
4 Andrew Wiles Building
5 Somerville College Extension
6 Blavatnik School of Government
7 Radcliffe House
8 Gibson and Harkness Buildings
9 St Paul's Church
10 Site Ratan Tata building
11 Oxford University Press
12 Future development plot



HOPKINS ARCHITECTS

DAVID LEVENE



Section AA

1 Foyer
2 Great Hall
3 Sohmen Concert Hall
4 Theatre
5 Seminar spaces
6 English
7 History
8 Oxford Internet Institute
9 Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics
10 Medieval and Modern Languages

HOPKINSARCHITECTS

The 4ha ROQ site was formerly the gardens between the 1770 Radcliffe Infirmary to the east and James Wyatt's quirky but charming octagonal 1794 observatory tower to the north (now Grade I listed). With the gardens lost over time to low-grade hospital expansion, after the university bought the whole infirmary site in 2007 and cleared it for development, it has since become a menagerie of architectural interventions.

Hawkins\Brown's brick Radcliffe House offices and medical centre zig-zagged about on the Jericho side in 2012, while the pincer movement of Viñoly's Mathematical Institute succeeded in amputating the old infirmary to the east from its site in 2013. Two years later, south of it, Níall McLaughlin intervened with a long red-brick and timber wall of student bedrooms for Somerville College. That same year, Herzog & de Meuron's round, glassy and brassy Blavatnik School of Government forced the Oxford University Press, 19th-century St Paul's school building and HJ Underwood's run-down but picturesque Greek Revival church to take a good long look at themselves – whether they wanted to or not. Meanwhile, the heart of the ROQ site sat empty and hoarded-off, awaiting funding for a humanitarian transplant.

Which makes the appearance of Hopkins Architects' new classicist Schwarzman Centre quite a shock, not least because of its sheer size. I still had muscle memory of Bennetts Associates' 2010 scheme for the site, with its five-storey U- and L-shaped intersecting blocks. It envisioned a bunker library set beneath a grass courtyard, its 'lantern' a glass eye blinking up at the observatory and sky beyond, as if they'd taken Jim Stirling's 1967 Faculty of History in Cambridge and buried it. In reality, the view may have only reified the town-and-gown division – with us all looking at the stars but only some of us 'in the gutter' – but it was certainly bold. Hopkins' basement is, paradoxically, both far less – and more – performative.

IN NUMBERS

25,300m²
GIA

4,290m²
publicly accessible space

0.66
$m^3/m^2/h$ @50Pa airtightness achieved

0.12
W/m^2K external envelope U-value

It's unclear when the design went from the original brief of consolidating seven humanities departments and their libraries, plus two institutes, from the 20-plus sites they were working out of, to adding a publicly accessible 500-seat concert hall, 250-seat theatre, state of the art black box, recital hall, gallery and cinema. Maybe it was the same time as Blackstone co-founder Stephen Schwarzman donated £185m, the single largest university gift since the Renaissance. Apparently, he wanted "a contemporary version of a traditional Oxford building", recalls Professor William Whyte, who project managed for the university, adding "but that could mean almost anything – and this was Hopkins' response to that challenge".

Rationalist south (and north) faces of Clipsham stone create an institutional formality.

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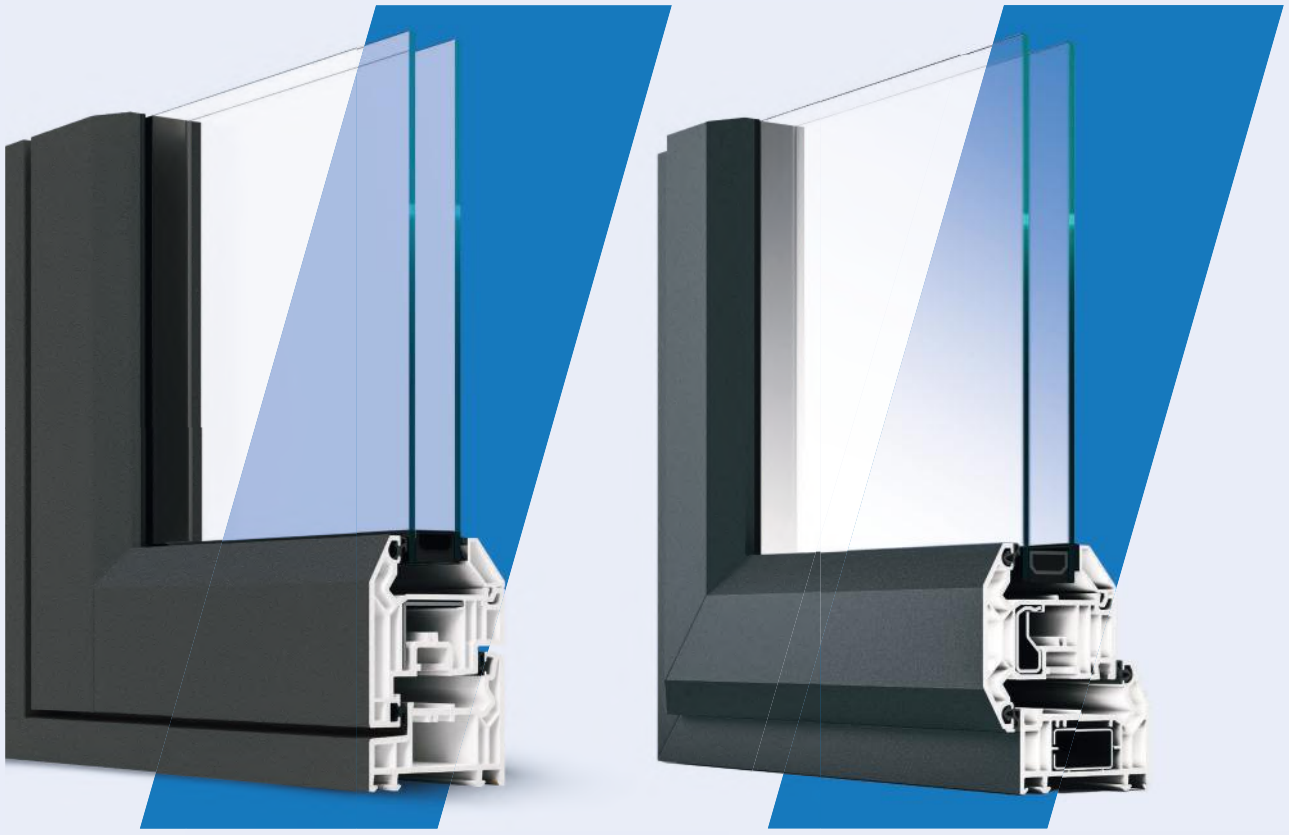

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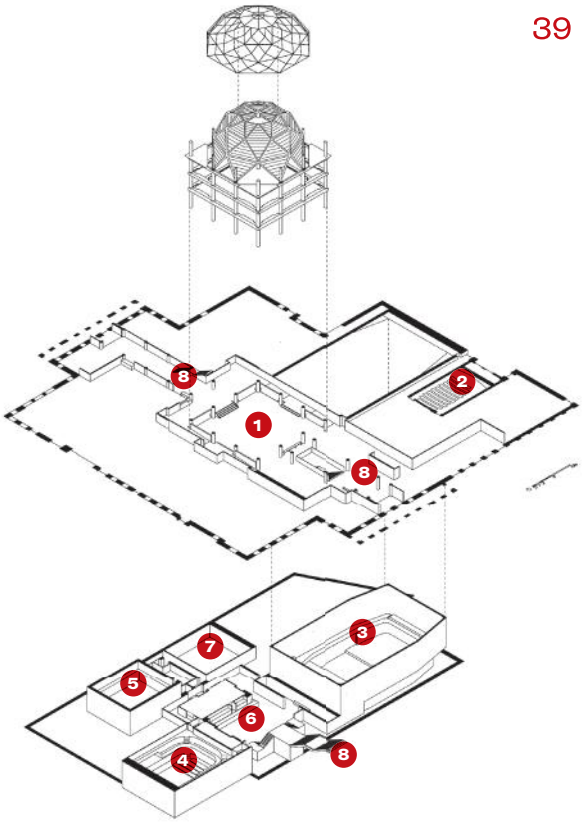
Being the first Oxford University building ever to welcome in the public, there's a sense the firm felt the burden of history, seeing its design as a nod to the 'university civic forum' of Clarendon Building, Sheldonian Theatre, Bodleian Library, Old Schools Quadrangle, Radcliffe Camera and university church. This is meant to be read not only externally, in terms of the relationship of the Centre for the Humanities relative to other buildings on the site, but internally – a new Schools Quadrangle looking down over the public route through the building to the Radcliffe Observatory.

Discussing design development, Hopkins principal Andrew Barnett also highlights the project team's studies of the language, rhythms and quirks of college buildings – as well as Oxford planners' Carfax Tower height limit – as drivers in formulating a modern lexicon for the centre. Giles Gilbert Scott must have addressed the same conundrum in 1940 at the north end of the civic forum, where weighing up a sensitive context led to the Art Deco stone classicism of his Weston Library. Collegiate facade proportions govern; so Worcester, say, reflects Weston, and Hopkins has come to the same conclusion at the ROQ – except on steroids.

Axonometric

1 Great Hall
2 Cinema
3 Sohmen Concert Hall
4 Theatre
5 Black box
6 Foyer
7 Recital hall
8 Public route



HOPKINSARCHITECTS

Below Glass dome and oak shade were separated for cost reasons. Smoke venting is nestled in the space between them.

HUFTON+CROW

At 25,300m², the Schwarzman Centre is twice the area of the Weston Library, but it is bound by the same constraints. Going out or down were the only options, and its Clipsham stone-clad north and south facades of projecting corps de logis and side wings are predictably very broad indeed. They appear as textbook Rationalism: pared-back detailing and deep-cut window openings, running to about 4m to top of loggia arch, a little over 5m to piano nobile line and 13.5m to its top, with a 16.5m parapet line – much like the Weston. To diminish scale, the third floor is set back towards the wide wings' line. But notably, the building plan is so deep that its dome – with its apex matching the Carfax's (and Weston's) 22.5m, doesn't even register.

This makes passing through the loggia into the building's Great Hall all the more surprising. Barnett mentions that it was a coincidence that its 19m internal diameter accorded with the Radcliffe Camera's; but he emphasises that this is an accessible space that welcomes the public in, rather than taking the latter's closed-door approach. Rising the full height of the building to the faceted glass and steel dome, there's no doubting the volume's drama. This is accentuated by a beautifully made oak solar shading structure, springing from the floor below and elegantly resolving into a dome via eight of the square atrium's 12 perimeter columns. Made of fine-cast

concrete, the columns connect with elegantly sinusoidal-faced beams, above which run solid oak balustrades; it all exudes quality. Further along, the double-height vestibule on the north side accesses the 'Bodleian space' and Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, as well as giving a fun view up to students beavering away on the north side's upper library levels. Hopkins has made the route to and from the observatory something special.

Past security barriers, humanities departments occupy the first to third floors, accessed off the perimeter lobby that looks down into the atrium beneath the dome. With entrance doors set on the cardinal points, Whyte draws out comparisons with the Old Schools Quad – but I'd leave it at that. With money lavished on the atrium itself, the spec here feels more quotidian: no department names etched into stone or even timber, but letters glued onto glass above oak-framed partition systems. The smooth, cast-concrete soffits and highly coordinated exposed service runs I was expecting are instead generic suspended ceiling panels that even run into the 'hero' library spaces. The same holds true for a fairly utilitarian carpet, which leaves a sense of feast or famine – with the public realm surprisingly enjoying the lion's share.

The basement reinforces this: a wide stair draws the public from the south entrance's stone floor down to a grand, deep-red and oak-lined lobby and bar that presages a whole new live performance offering for both the university and city. The small theatre space, black box and recital room are all technically impressive in their own right but it's the concert hall – the world's first Passivhaus example – that creates a jaw-dropping moment.

Set beneath massive steel trusses holding up the upper east side of the building, its 500 seats sit below walls lined in thick, cast, polished, curved GRC panels, whose crisp interfaces run down through to the oak panels below them. These in turn align

Above The Great Hall was designed to deliver the 'wow' factor.

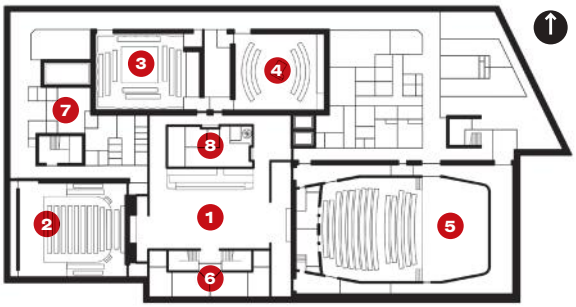
Below left By contrast, the library feels more constrained and workaday.

Below Less expense was spared on carpets and ceiling soffits.

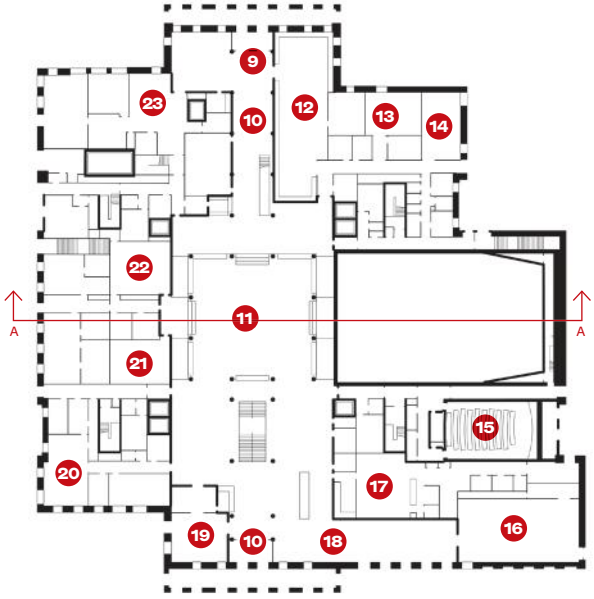
DAVID LEVENE (2)

Subcontractors
M&E services Crown House
Piling and structure Expanded Piling
Facades Vetter
Windows and doors Britplas
Hybrid steelwork Severfield
Dome Novum
Performance space fit-out James Johnson
Timber linings WJL
Joinery Quest

Right The oak ceiling of the double-height north vestibule.



Basement level 2



Ground floor plan

Level 1 floor plan

0 10m

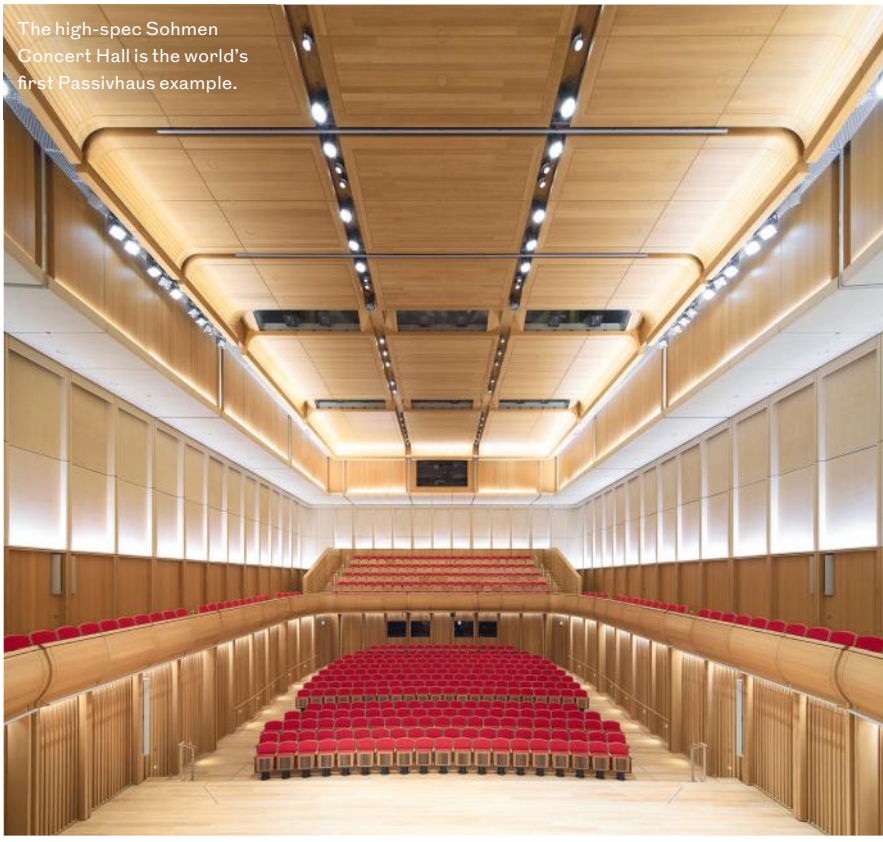
HOPKINS ARCHITECTS (3)

1 Principal foyer
2 Theatre
3 Black box
4 Recital hall
5 Sohmen Concert Hall
6 Music practice rooms
7 Backstage area
8 Bar and prep area
9 North vestibule
10 Welcome lobby
11 Great Hall
12 Bate Collection of Musical Instruments
13 Music practice rooms
14 Learning centre
15 Cinema
16 White box
17 Catering
18 Café
19 Institute for Ethics in AI Events Centre
20 Boardroom
21 Seminar spaces
22 Lecture theatre
23 Bodleian Humanities Library
24 Perimeter tutorial rooms
25 Concert hall technical loft
26 Music department
27 Institute of Ethics in AI
28 Lecture theatre
29 English department
30 Graduate study desks

with oak fin walls at stalls level, to help create this highly tuneable space. Even the solid oak balcony balustrades have each been hand sanded. From the trusses hangs a crafted timber ceiling inspired, says Barnett, by those of the college halls. Unlike Bennetts' unexecuted subterranean exhibitionism, Hopkins' Humanities centre definitely chooses to hide its light under a bushel.

Or behind stone. I didnt quite buy into the stated idea that entrance loggias suffice to identify the Schwarzman Centre as public-facing. It's hardly Mengoni's Milan Galleria, and its pared-back arches still resonate as an institutional building. But consider the melange of styles on display on the periphery, with one big plot yet to develop and Morris+Co adding to the mix with the scalloped facade of its Ratan Tata building for Somerville,

HUFTON + CROW (3)

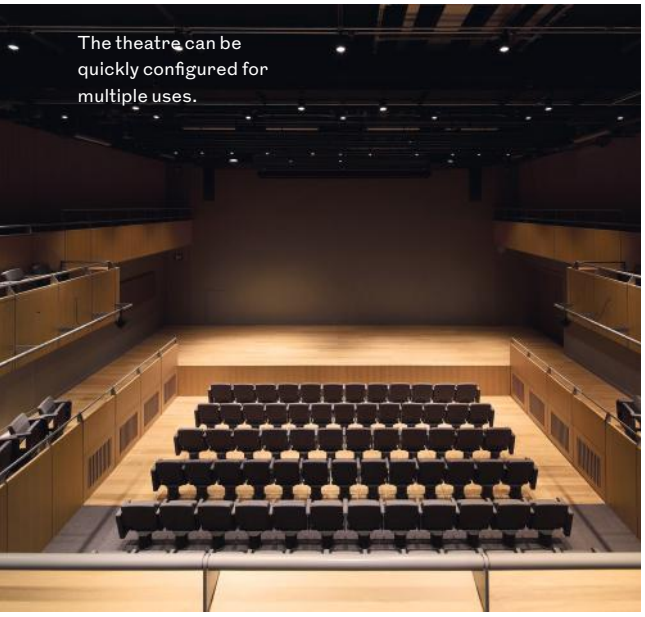


The high-spec Sohmen Concert Hall is the world's first Passivhaus example.

DAVID LEVENE

which has just got planning permission. The argument can be made for a conservative response to act as a central still point.

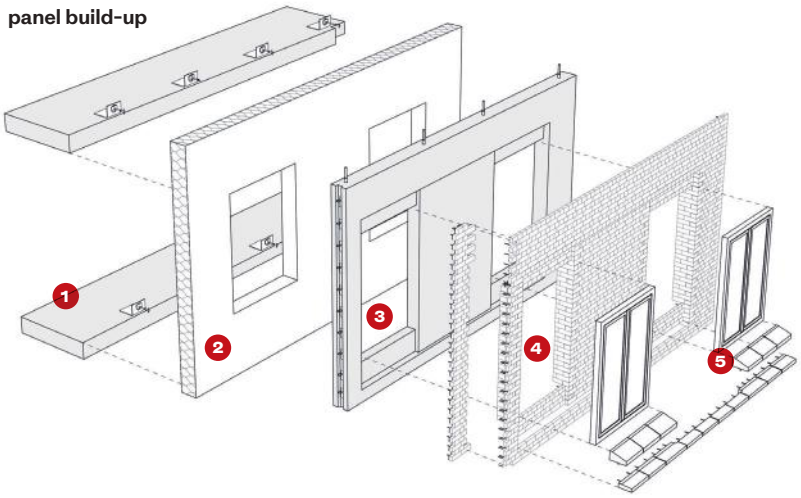
Accomplished, yes. Sustainable – it aims to be. But does its architecture say something about the nation's bunker mentality? Hopkins won the international competition in early 2020, just after the UK officially left the EU, and weeks before lockdown. With the design developed remotely, it gained planning consent soon after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and went out to tender during the hyperinflation that followed. Partly due to that, it was 97 per cent procured in the UK – with the 3 per cent that made it over the Channel ironically for the tech kit to make the concert hall Passivhaus. All factors bound into its Gilbert-Scott Rationalism, Empire heft. With a reactionary political climate at home and diminished UK standing abroad, it feels to me a child of its time and place. I've great belief in the Schwarzman Centre's potential to deliver a fantastic cultural offering for the city in the future. But maybe it's a history faculty of sorts too.



The theatre can be quickly configured for multiple uses.

HUFTON + CROW (2)

MMC brick east and west wall panel build-up



1 RC floor slab
2 300mm mineral wool insulation
3 165-270mm prefabricated concrete panel
4 50mm handmade brick slips
5 Windows and cills

Top left Wyatt's observatory is visible from the library levels to the north.

Below The centre might reference past glories but does so with conviction.

Credits
Client University of Oxford
Architect Hopkins Architects
Construction partner Laing O'Rourke
Structural designer (novated) AKT II
Building services designer (novated) Max Fordham
Fire engineer Fire Ingenuity
Theatre consultant Charcoalblue
Acoustic consultants Arup / Max Fordham
Passivhaus consultant Etude
Landscape designer Gillespies
Project manager CPC Project Services
Cost consultant Arcadis
Contractor architect Purcell

HOPKINSARCHITECTS

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The best under the sun

How can architects demonstrate their social value in social housing?

Ibstock
At the heart of building

Defining, measuring and consistently delivering social value is a complex business. A RIBAJ roundtable hosted by Ibstock set out to find effective ways of embedding it into projects and professional practice

Streets and squares are important elements of Hawkins\Brown's plan for Agar Grove in Camden, London.

FRANCESCO MONTAGUTI

"Social value is twofold: impact in our local community as a practice; and in our projects, bespoke support for the communities we're working in." This is how architect Jo McCafferty explains what is, for many, an unwieldy term. Levitt Bernstein, where McCafferty is director, has been committed to uplifting communities since its foundation in 1968, so the studio is well equipped to meet the 10 per cent minimum social value weighting stipulated on government contracts.

However, defining, measuring and consistently delivering social value is complex, with tension arising between perceived box-ticking and genuine, people-centred impact. Also unclear is how different sectors approach similar goals. Are housing associations, developers and designers working at cross-purposes or in parallel?

These topics were addressed at a RIBAJ roundtable on social value, hosted by building materials manufacturer Ibstock. It focused on practical initiatives, systemic challenges, and aspirations around embedding social value into projects and practice.

What are we dealing with?

It's perhaps easier to define social value by what it isn't. It is not simply provision of buildings, but of opportunities: jobs, training, education, childcare and sometimes even basic necessities like food. Nor is it about charity handouts.

For Connie Jennings, director of stronger communities at WHG, social value delivery is about "creating the environment for social justice, so our customers have equitable access to services and support, so they can live

their best lives". In other words, a framework for self-sustaining, thriving communities, where people have opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Social value is by definition a far-sighted endeavour, rather than short-term symptom alleviation. Quick fixes may give a "sugar rush" of pleasure at delivery, as Phil Catcheside, partner at Hawkins\Brown, describes it, but real social value has long-term impact. And systemic change requires deep learning from communities. As housing association Poplar HARCA has found, understanding residents' lives and aspirations, paired with ambitious efforts to influence structural conditions, can be a decades-long process. "You start off with the seeds of what could happen, but if you don't have the watering, or the tending as you go, you don't really get value," Babu Bhattacherjee, chief communities officer, explains.

Spheres of influence

One discussion point is whether social value delivery can be hyperlocal, global, or both. Housing associations are anchor organisations, employing locally and able to impose contractual obligations on subcontractors to do likewise. The same can apply to private housing developers when the will is there. Siân Rebourg, head of social value at Hill Group, believes delivering social value "is the right thing to do, and not just because of statutory requirements". Many of Hill Group's initiatives – such as tackling homelessness and offering training pathways – had been implemented intuitively ahead of formal measurement systems. Rebourg's role has been to systematise this work by embedding groupwide strategies, KPIs and supply chain expectations, expanding social value beyond the local.

Meanwhile, building products manufacturers such as Ibstock often find their localised efforts go unnoticed by clients. Occasionally, says Emily Landsborough, head of environmental, social and governance (ESG), clients will scrutinise a human rights policy or similar, but will overlook the potential of partnering for local community benefit.

'Homes and jobs change people's lives; everything else is peripheral and feelgood – except childcare'

"We feel there is a gap in connectivity between specifiers and materials suppliers," she explains. "Obviously we want to sell building products… but we also want to demonstrate where we can have a greater social impact."

Ibstock already invests heavily in community endeavours around its long-established 34 UK factories and quarries, as a large local employer. Yet "very rarely from a subcontractor do we get questions about it", laments Landsborough. "I'd love them to ask, do you know where your materials come from, and what additional value can you get from that?"

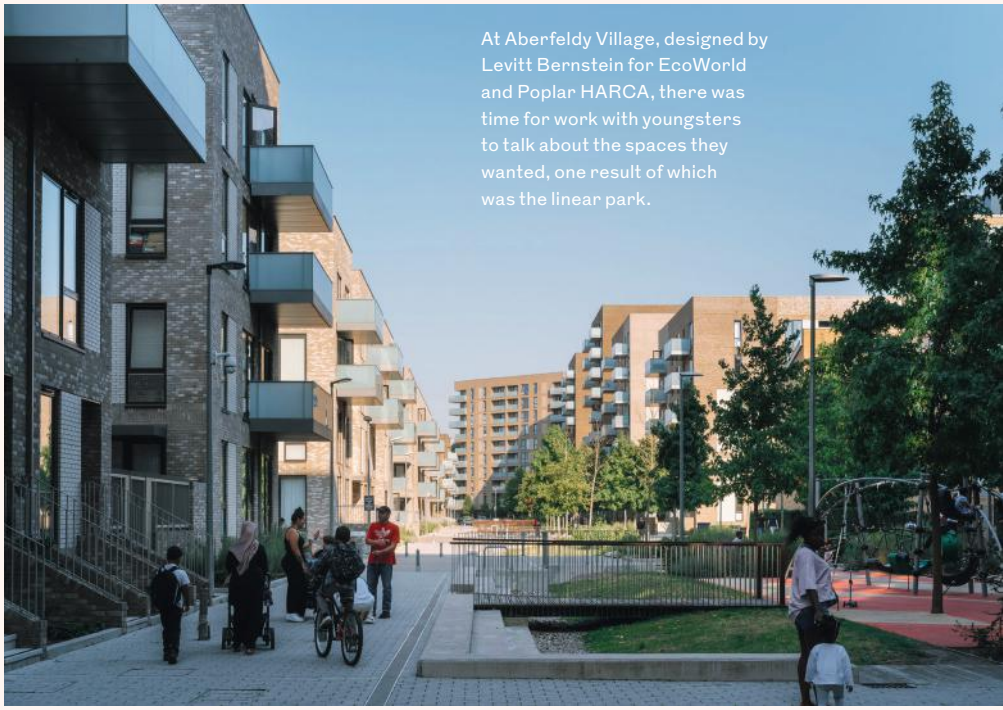
Of course, procuring local materials – engaging with local vernacular – is strongly aligned with architectural thinking; that's nothing new. But, as ever, not so for many specifiers. Still more needs to be done to communicate this message. Landsborough cites one example in which a contractor, initially insistent on importing bricks to a site near an Ibstock factory, was won over. That said, she adds, "it was not the social value argument that won the contract" but the carbon impact: competing ESG requirements can drown each other out.

Delivery and challenges

"Homes and jobs change people's lives; everything else is peripheral and feelgood" except, crucially, childcare, believes Jennings. If overlooked in scheme development, childcare is a structural barrier to employment.

Effective social value delivery requires flexibility and responsiveness too. In Rebourg's experience, research prior to commencing a private housing scheme may identify certain priorities, but community engagement reveals different needs once a project is live. Post-occupancy feedback may uncover other requirements still. For Hill Group, maintaining resident liaison throughout helps ensure continuity between aspiration and delivery.

This comes as no surprise to architects working on regeneration schemes. McCafferty highlights the



TIM CROCKER

At Aberfeldy Village, designed by Levitt Bernstein for EcoWorld and Poplar HARCA, there was time for work with youngsters to talk about the spaces they wanted, one result of which was the linear park.

‘It would be better if all parties discussed a project’s collective social value’

complexity of sustaining meaningful involvement across decades and generations. “At Aberfeldy Village [a 13-year-long project with Poplar HARCA] the resident steering group grew to about 100 people,” she says. “Parallel conversations with parents and their teenage children gave brilliant insight into what was really happening.”

Authentic engagement also values residents’ time and insights. Bhattacherjee warns of overburdening people with participation demands – communities must also be “allowed to live their lives”. WHG, meanwhile, paid community champions to rebuild trust in a regeneration scheme. Tokenistic consultation breeds cynicism – yet despite their transformative potential, more involved consultations are rarely measured in procurement scoring.

Measurement frustrations

Other frustrations with the system also exist. Rigid tender matrices (from clients), and their direct opposite, lax attitudes towards obligations (from contractors) are problematic. In many London-based local authority projects, overly stringent rules exclude otherwise perfect apprenticeship candidates (example: applicant lived opposite construction site, but postcode was from neighbouring borough; result: funding denied). Conversely, in the Midlands, Jennings has had to “hold contractors’ feet to the fire” to ensure they are recruiting locally, not parachuting in.

Architects have always been driven by social purpose, Catcheside argues, but procurement structures push quantification in a profession that values quality. Hawkins\Brown developed its own overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work to embed social value with good design at each project stage. Effective measurement remains an unsolved quandary.

WHG

Sector fragmentation continues, too. Industry players each make isolated pledges, duplicating some efforts while leaving other needs unmet. It would be better, McCafferty argues, “if we all talked together about what the collective social value of a project might be, [in support of] an integrated offer”. This applies especially to subcontractors, often the least engaged. Current procurement and measurement systems can constrain ambition, misdirect effort, or overlook design’s true value.

Social value by design

Ultimately, social value means safe and secure housing, improved health outcomes, reduced loneliness, youth opportunities, dignified employment, trusted childcare, and community resilience. Design is not ancillary to these: it is the foundation.

For architects, Jennings has a reassuring message: “Don’t underestimate what your day-job does… your social value is in the design of homes that people are proud to call home.” Moreover, “don’t get hung up on methodologies and weighting”, she says. “Think about the people that live in those homes, because that’s the legacy you’ll leave behind.” ●

Above WHG’s Nightingale House has one- and two-bed flats for people aged over 55 in Wolverhampton’s former Royal Hospital. Communal areas help bring neighbours together.

TAKEAWAYS FOR ARCHITECTS

- Houses are more than buildings. Well-designed homes shape health, dignity, and opportunity, which “ripple out like pebbles in a pond”, says Jennings.
- Embed social value in design. From material choices to Plan of Work overlays, design decisions can support social value throughout.
- Deep community learning. Long-term, meaningful engagement gives residents agency and ensures solutions respond to real needs.
- Advocate for better measurement. Current frameworks undervalue the qualitative, but architects can continue to strive for methodologies that focus on design.
- Break down silos. Open conversations can align social value commitments and prevent duplicated effort.
- Support access to the profession. Work experience, mentoring, and inclusive recruitment diversify architecture and extend social value beyond projects for the next generation.

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2: Intelligence

RAISING AN ANCIENT TOWER ON STILTS

CHRIS MACNICOL, CHARTERED STRUCTURAL ENGINEER AND ASSOCIATE, ARUP

Arup has been involved with the 50 Fenchurch Street project with Eric Perry Architects since the planning application in 2020. The Clothworkers' Company owns the site and was seeking a new hall and development opportunities. Building below the 700-year-old All Hallows Staining church is part of the landscape scheme: it's Grade I listed; you cannot move it. The company's new livery hall will be under the tower, with entry at ground level. On top will be an L-shaped, 36-storey mixed-use building.

One of our first sketches set out how we might build underneath. First, we had to to understand its foundations, which are 2.5-3m below ground level. We started with a series of 2m-deep underpins. These were done sequentially by manually digging 4m-deep trenches around the foundations in 1.5m^2 blocks. It was painstaking work carried out over nine months and in around 20 sections, starting in one corner and moving to the opposite side while monitoring movement, vibrations and tilt.

The underpins are reinforced concrete, fixed at the ends with couplers to join sections. They form a raft under the tower which was then connected to four 400mm^2 steel section plunge columns, or 'stilts', embedded in piles. Next, the excavation of the three-storey basement began, which is why you see the raft suspended on four stilts in photos. The excavation finished in August; now, we are building up the new building's main foundations.

The plunge columns are temporary; we will move the load onto permanent concrete columns, which are being built. Eventually the columns will meet the underside of the raft and we will transfer the load over using a series of hydraulic jacks at the heads of the plunge columns.

This is being done alongside careful monitoring. The tower has moved, but within expected limits, and uniformly. I don't expect trigger limits of about 20mm, based on the tower's condition and derived by conservation accredited engineering consultant the Morton Partnership, to be hit. There are still a few stages to go though, notably that transfer onto the final columns, and London clay at the low level reacts slowly to changes in pressure; so we may see the tower move upwards then. In time though, the area will be opened up, making the ancient building active and accessible for the first time in years.

'Manually digging 4m-deep trenches around the foundations was painstaking work, carried out over nine months while monitoring movement, vibrations and tilt'

Below All Hallows Staining church is seemingly suspended in mid-air in the City of London while the Clothworkers' Company new livery hall is built underneath.

OWEN BILLCLIFFE

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

Process over product

Piers Taylor highlights three projects that show why architects need to shift towards engaging more deeply with local conditions, people and ecologies

Architecture for social purpose

Places, planning & community

Below Quinta Monroy, Chile, as residents have developed it from the half houses built for them.

VICTOR ODDÓ

My book, Learning from the Local, is an architectural provocation and a critical reappraisal of what it means to build with, through and for place in the 21st century. Against a backdrop of globalised architectural production, ecological crisis and cultural homogenisation, the book refuses both the nostalgic reification of vernacular style and the abstract universalism of modernist orthodoxy. Instead, it offers a plural and contingent framework for engaging with locality as process, relation and negotiation.

Across multiple continents, it repositions architecture as a relational act, grounded not in visual coherence or historical pastiche but in the dynamics of material agency, social authorship and environmental ethics.

The book proposes that meaningful architecture arises not from control, but from attunement. The question shifts from "how should buildings reflect their surroundings?" to "how might they co-evolve with them?" This shift foregrounds practice over product, process over purity, and participation over authorship.

The problem with "local"

Notions of the "local" are currently extremely topical in architecture – and in politics. Architects are quick to claim that their buildings "fit in","belong" or somehow capture the "spirit of place". But more often than not, such claims are entirely superficial, relating to a cursory aesthetic reading of a romanticised vernacular rather than any examination of the wider relational networks that might give a project real local meaning.

If architects are serious about working with the local, they need to move beyond aesthetics and instead engage with the messier, more relational processes that shape belonging. This means starting with community ambition, designing frameworks that empower users, and working within ecological and material networks.

Specifically, three projects featured in the book – East Quay in the UK,

Quinta Monroy in Chile and the Reggio School in Spain – show how this can be done in different ways. Each offers practical lessons for architects seeking to move beyond lip service and towards an architecture that truly learns from the local.

JIM STEPHENSON

Local architecture emerges from community authorship, not stylistic gestures

Left A series of conversations with the community framed the brief for East Quay.

East Quay, UK: begin with community not form

In the coastal town of Watchet, Somerset, East Quay stands as a striking reminder that "local" is not a specific aesthetic but a process. It was designed by my own practice Invisible Studio, along with Ellis Williams, for the community organisation Onion Collective. But the project began not with a design brief but with a series of conversations. The question was not "what should the building look like?" but "what should it do for Watchet?"

The town faced real challenges: economic decline, the threat of generic waterfront development and a lack of cultural infrastructure. The Onion Collective – a group of five local women – decided to act. They initiated a process of dialogue with their local communities and it was only after a shared vision had been articulated that architecture entered the discussion. Watchet needed a place that could anchor community life, attract visitors, and provide opportunities for local makers and businesses – and critically, through doing so, make the town stronger culturally, socially and economically.

From this vision emerged East Quay, featuring studios, galleries, workshops, a café and accommodation, stitched together in a way that reflects the multiplicity of local ambitions rather than a single design concept. The building may look unusual but it grew out of Watchet's own aspirations.

The wider lesson for architects here is to begin with listening, and to use design as a tool for asking questions rather than imposing solutions. The "local" here is not a style but a governance structure – authorship shared between community and architect.

At Quinta Monroy the spare forms were designed to be added to.

VICTOR ODDÓ

Quinta Monroy, Chile: design frameworks for empowerment

If East Quay shows how local can emerge from community ambition, Quinta Monroy, designed by Alejandro Aravena's practice, Elemental, demonstrates how architects can design frameworks that enable communities to build their own futures.

Located in Iquique, Chile, the project addressed a pressing problem: how to rehouse 100 families living in informal settlements on centrally located land, with an impossibly low budget. The conventional approach – relocating families to the outskirts in uniform housing blocks – would have severed social networks and pushed the urban poor further into marginalisation.

Instead, Aravena asked a radical question: what if we build only half a house? Elemental provided residents with a concrete frame containing the essentials: kitchen, bathroom, roof and structural support. The other half was left deliberately empty, inviting residents to expand, adapt and personalise their homes over time in any way they saw fit.

The result is a patchwork of self-built extensions, balconies and painted facades. What could have been a conventionally designed housing block has become a vibrant and unique neighbourhood, shaped by the people who live there. Crucially, the way that the buildings make and define civic infrastructure – the courtyards, the street edges – was designed to enable a cohesive whole regardless of how the buildings were adapted by the residents.

Quinta Monroy is really challenging for many architects, in that they need to think less about designing finished

Reggio School, Spain, is clad in sprayed cork, connecting it back to its local ecology.

OFFICE FOR POLITICAL INNOVATION

objects and more about designing frameworks. Locality here is not about fitting in stylistically but about enabling empowerment, giving residents the tools to shape identity on their own terms. To truly learn from the local is to leave space for it to grow.

Reggio School, Spain: work with ecological networks

Locality is not only social and cultural; it is also (increasingly) ecological. The Reggio School in Madrid, designed by Andrés Jaque and his Office for Political Innovation, shows how the local can be embedded through material sourcing, circular economies and ecological intelligence.

The building is unconventional. It is clad in sprayed cork, a natural material that provides insulation and encourages biodiversity. Its windows come from surplus material destined for landfill, its walls are made from unfinished concrete that celebrates thermal mass, and its surfaces are patched with reused and reconfigured components.

The building may look eclectic, even eccentric, but to those who understand its making, it tells a story of locality reframed as ecological entanglement. This story is also part of the didactic experience for the pupils who study there.

For Jaque, sustainability is not about hiding complexity, smoothing away difference or building performance metrics. It is about showing how architecture connects to broader networks: forests, supply chains, waste streams and pedagogical systems. The school is not just a place for children to learn; it is itself a teacher. Every surface, material, and junction communicates lessons about resourcefulness, resilience and environmental responsibility.

The key lesson for architects here is to treat the local as an ecological web and not merely an aesthetic category. Source regionally, work with waste and reveal material provenance and then locality will emerge that is not about nostalgia but about creating new forms of belonging through environmental care.

First steps toward an authentic local

What do these three projects tell us? East Quay shows that local architecture emerges from community authorship, not stylistic gestures. Quinta Monroy demonstrates that empowering frameworks allow identity to evolve from within. Reggio School proves that ecological locality requires rethinking materials, supply chains and pedagogy. Together, they remind us that learning from the local is not about superficial imitation but about deeper engagement with the processes that shape places.

For architects looking to begin, there are a few practical steps to move beyond stylistic tokenism. Start with listening. Map stakeholders, histories and ambitions before you design. Design for incompleteness. Leave room for communities to adapt, extend and reshape. Audit materials and systems. Ask where things come from, what they cost ecologically and how they can be reused. Value process over product. Locality is enacted through relationships, not appearances. Be open to contradiction. Sometimes belonging comes from contrast, not conformity.

Ultimately, the most meaningful "local" cannot be designed in advance. It emerges over time, through the messy interplay of people, materials and place. The challenge for architects is to create the conditions where this can happen: to design buildings that are porous, provisional and alive to change.

If "local" is to be more than a marketing slogan, it must be treated as a verb rather than a noun. We do not make local buildings; we make buildings that allow the local to surface. And that, perhaps, is the greatest lesson of all.

Rather than prescribing how architecture should look, my book offers insights into how it might come into being – more collaboratively, more modestly and more attuned to the complexities of place and people.

The value of truly learning from the local lies not in its resolution of architectural identity but in its capacity to hold contradiction: to celebrate precision and improvisation, authorship and collectivity, vernacular rootedness and formal experimentation – to reimagine architecture not as a universal discipline but as a locally responsive and culturally situated practice. ●

Piers Taylor is an architect, academic and broadcaster. His book, Learning From the Local: Designing Responsively for People, Climate and Culture, is published by RIBA Publishing and available from ribabooks.com

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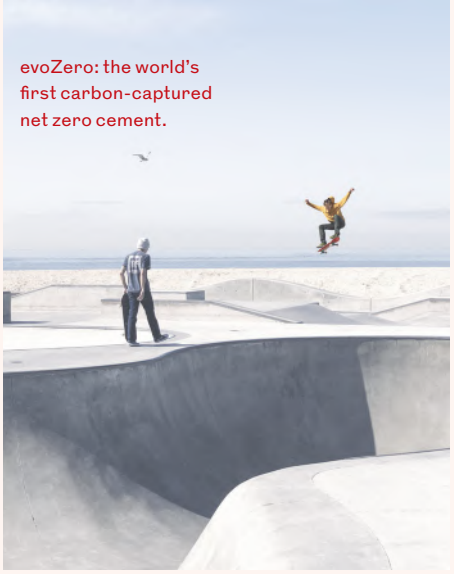
Heidelberg Materials' evoZero cement, which will be manufactured in the UK from 2029, makes it easier for architects to specify a carbon-neutral building material with confidence

evoZero is the world's first carbon-captured net zero cement – and has an important role to play in helping to create the low- and zero-carbon infrastructure of the future.

Cement is the 'glue' in concrete, the most widely used building material in the world, and until now its production has been carbon intensive. But that is changing, as Heidelberg Materials UK has started construction of a carbon capture and storage (CCS) plant at its Padeswood cement works in north Wales. Here, the company is building the world's first carbon capture facility to enable fully decarbonised cement production, and will produce evoZero carbon-captured net zero cement in 2029.

However, evoZero is already available in the UK from Heidelberg Materials' Brevik plant in Norway, which was the world's first industrial-scale carbon capture facility and opened in June 2025. Here, 50 per cent of emissions are captured (approximately 400,000 tonnes per year), while the Padeswood facility is designed to capture almost all emissions – around 800,000 tonnes per year.

"Sustainability is no longer optional – it's essential," says Ian Innes, major accounts director at Heidelberg Materials UK.



evoZero: the world's first carbon-captured net zero cement.

Innes described evoZero cement as a "game-changer [that] sets new standards" for sustainable building materials. "It offers a transparent, externally verified and traceable carbon accounting process for its net zero status," he said, "making it easier for architects to specify carbon-neutral building materials with confidence."

evoZero achieves its net zero footprint via the application of CCS technology, which removes the CO_2 emissions from the production process but does not change the chemical composition or performance of the cement.

This is great news for architects wanting to contribute towards low-carbon construction and net zero targets, while maintaining the performance and durability of traditional concrete.

Heidelberg Materials Padeswood cement plant

Contact the Heidelberg Materials team to find out more about evoZero at: heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/evozero

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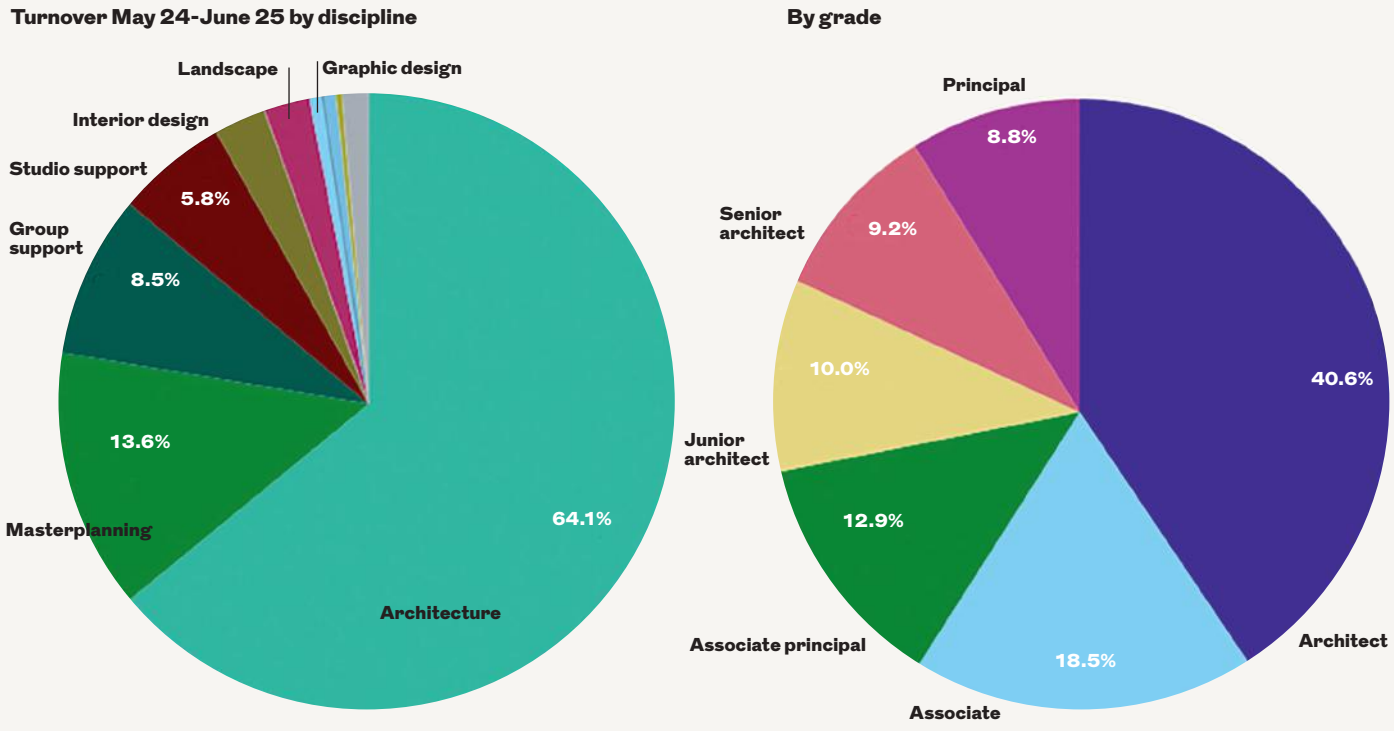
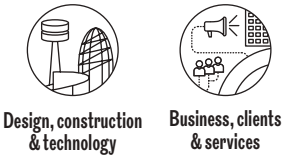


BROADWAY MALYAN

Creating a data-informed enterprise

Embracing data is critical to the future of architectural practice, says Sabrina Klor



Like many architects, I began my career driven by the ambition to design and contribute towards a more resilient and sustainable built environment that serves society. But over the years, I found myself increasingly drawn to what makes an architectural business work.

Ultimately, that became the springboard to my role as Broadway Malyan's chief operating officer (COO). Rather than working at project level, my remit was broader. It included operational strategy, systems integration, process standardisation and enabling the business to scale sustainably across regions, sectors and disciplines. It's about joining the dots between finance, people, projects and technology to create a cohesive, data-informed enterprise.

That said, not every firm needs a full-time COO. For smaller practices, fractional or advisory support can still bring the necessary structure and insight.

What is data?

In architectural practice, data is often misunderstood. People tend to think of it narrowly – as financial reports or timesheets. But data is any information that helps you understand how your business operates: who's working on what, how long it takes, how much it costs, how your clients engage, and whether your people stay, for how long and the progression they make.

At its best, data empowers practice leaders to make decisions based on patterns, insights and foresight, not guesswork. But too often the data that's held is fragmented – stored across different systems, siloed between disciplines or inconsistently recorded. That fragmentation was one of the first challenges I addressed when stepping into my leadership role. Over the last few years, we have implemented consistent reporting protocols, begun to unify systems and introduced the concept of a "data lake" in a context-sensitive, achievable way.

Once all the data sets have been collected into a data lake, cleaned and processed, we can start to deliver dashboards that draw from different sources to help us make connections we couldn't see before.

One example of this is analysing the correlation between the number of drawings in a project and its profitability. At first glance, it might seem as though more drawings simply

Above Cross cutting data on fees shows new ways to understanding how projects are performing and the relationship with clients, giving the chance to reset by changing upfront expectations with clients.

BROADWAY MALYAN

Left The use of a digital twin for Broadway Malyan's Kallang Kolam masterplan in Singapore is an example of how increasingly complex datasets guide project briefs.

reflect project complexity or scope. But when we started comparing drawing outputs against fee levels, team size and duration, clear patterns began to emerge. In some cases, an unexpectedly high volume of drawings was a red flag for inefficiencies: unclear scope, excessive client changes or internal over-delivery not aligned to fee.

This insight prompted us to revisit our project planning templates and fee proposals to make drawing expectations more explicit from the outset. We're also using this data to inform training for project leaders on scope control and to develop smarter tools that monitor drawing volumes in real time, flagging when they deviate significantly from the norm.

From numbers to narrative: culture change in practice

Moving to a data-informed culture requires a mindset and behavioural shift. In creative industries, there's often scepticism about metrics; concerns that they'll compromise design quality, feel intrusive or take time away from the drawing board. And yes, change-fatigue and resistance to inputting data consistently and accurately is real.

That's why cultural transformation must sit at the heart of any digital strategy. Data should be reframed not as control but as clarity. Good data has the power to help us identify where people are stretched, where projects need extra support and where we can improve. It also helps us anticipate problems before they have an impact on clients, colleagues and the business itself.

For example, by cross-referencing design review feedback with staff resourcing and retention data, businesses can begin to understand not just how designs evolve, but how individuals grow within the organisation.

An unexpectedly high volume of drawings was sometimes a red flag for inefficiencies

WHAT 'GOOD' LOOKS LIKE: A PRACTICAL ROADMAP

Whether you're a sole practitioner or a global studio, the fundamentals of good data practice are the same

1 Define your core data categories

We use a simple model: Finance, Projects and People. That covers everything from fee recovery to team engagement

2 Standardise your inputs

Use consistent naming conventions, templates and workflows to ensure your data is accurate. Simple data entry points are key. Without this, even the best tools will fail

3 Centralise and connect

Link your systems so you can see relationships between costs and outcomes, time and value, wellbeing and retention

4 Automate where possible

Manual reporting consumes time and creates errors. Automation allows your team to focus on analysis, not admin

5 Embed learning and leadership

Train people not just on how but why. And make leadership visible. Change must be driven from the top down and the bottom up.

Even modest improvements like standardising project folders, simplifying invoice tracking or automating timesheet entries can yield disproportionate gains in clarity and efficiency

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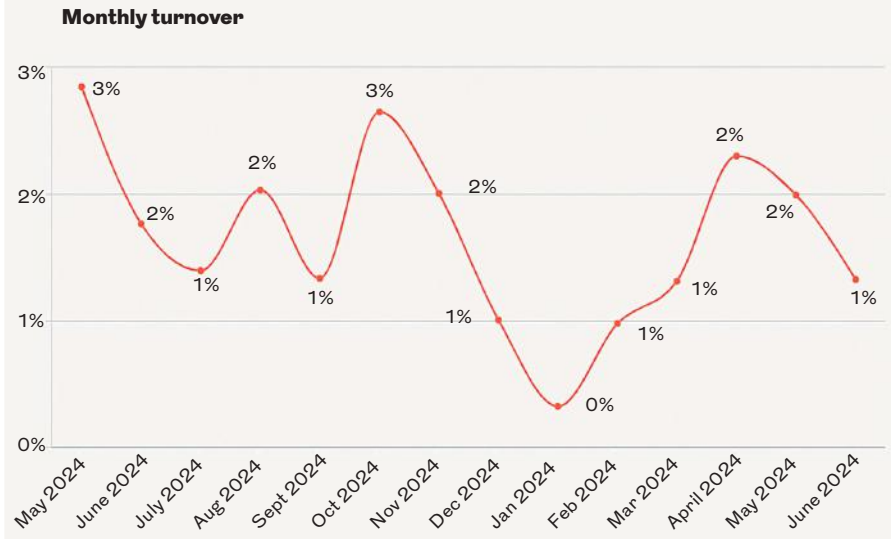

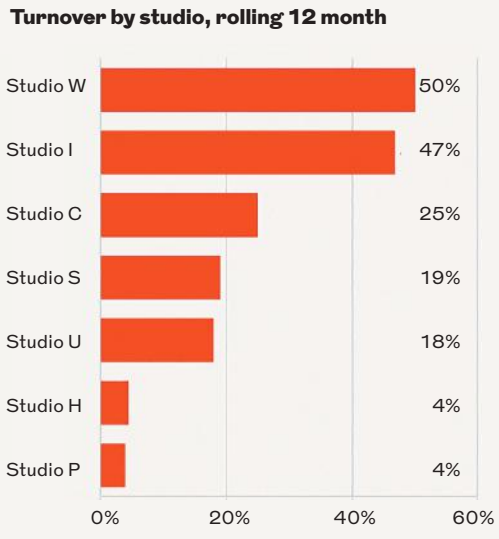

BROADWAY MALYAN

The power of this approach lies in its ability to highlight talent earlier – well before traditional metrics like title or years of experience would signal readiness. It supports more intentional career development by identifying where targeted mentoring, tailored project exposure or specific training might unlock even greater potential.

Ultimately, change happens when people are invited into the process, not subjected to it. And we're investing heavily in training, not just to operate tools, but to understand their purpose. Most importantly, we now have a team dedicated to being the custodian of our data model.

Above Dashboards showing resourcing can help give insight into projects and – at a deeper level – emerging talent.

Looking ahead: AI, agility and the future practice

The next phase for architectural practice is being shaped by AI and automation. But to harness their full potential, practices must lay the groundwork through clean, structured and connected data. That's why we've shifted our digital strategy towards action.

Broadway Malyan has appointed a new head of knowledge sharing and transformation, a role specifically focused on preparing the business for AI integration. This includes establishing robust and secure data lakes, setting up governance frameworks, and ensuring ethical and secure use of AI tools. We're actively piloting use cases right now.

For example, we've begun training custom large language models (LLMs) on our internal design guides, project reports and feedback logs.

The goal is to create an AI-powered assistant that, within seconds, can answer staff queries such as "what's our precedent for mixed-use design in tropical climates?" or "what's the typical Stage 3 resourcing plan for a 250-unit apartment block?"

Beyond design, we're using machine learning algorithms to flag outlier project behaviours, for instance, identifying when drawing volumes deviate from historic norms or when resource allocation doesn't align with scope progression. This data intel helps us step in earlier to course-correct, reducing risk and improving delivery outcomes.

Crucially, our focus is not just on shiny tools, but on capability-building.

> Ultimately, change happens when people are invited into the process, not subjected to it

We are developing our internal AI readiness framework, a roadmap that guides each of our core disciplines through stages of maturity, from awareness and training to deployment and continuous improvement. This includes a series of live learning labs, use-case showcases and feedback loops to ensure adoption is not just top-down, but iterative and peer-led through designated champions.

In the end, the firms that thrive won't be those that invest the most in these new tools, they'll be the ones who operationalise them fastest, link them to real outcomes, and embed them in the culture of everyday work and decision-making. That's our aim.

Build the architecture behind the architecture

Good design is data-driven whether we admit it or not. It relies on understanding time, cost, performance, feedback and process. And as a profession, we need to stop treating operational excellence as an afterthought. It's not glamorous but it's foundational.

If we want to grow sustainable, resilient, inclusive practices, we need to start with clarity. Capture the right data. Connect it meaningfully. Embed the culture to use it well.

And, above all, stay curious. ●

Sabrina Klor was group chief operating officer at Broadway Malyan at the time of writing. She is now chief executive officer at 10 Design

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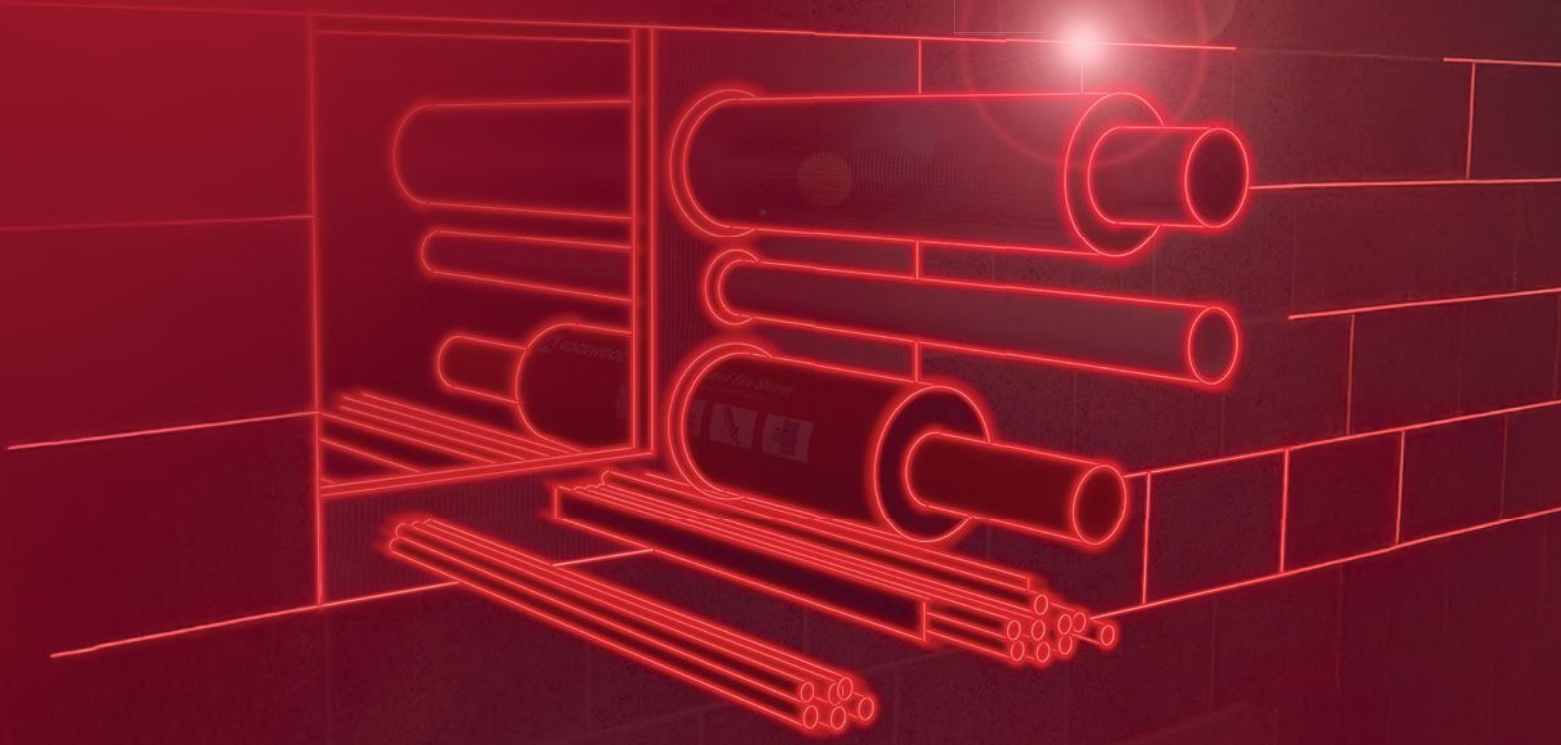

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Insta success

A new generation of architects is using Instagram to promote not only their work but themselves as individuals, writes Bridget Goldberg

Business, clients & services

Architects are picking up solid followings on Instagram by carving out a niche around personal branding. Some share thoughts on architecture as a profession; others dive into their personal journeys, offering a peek behind the curtain of their lives.

Many are choosing Instagram over LinkedIn to build clients for private endeavours outside their work for practices. These range from architecture to communications. Established professionals use Instagram to help pivot from being at a firm full-time, while others balance working for a practice with solo projects. Students and graduates, meanwhile, share their studies and experiences with others looking for advice.

Why do architects invest so much time in content creation while juggling a career? The motivation is consistent: build a personal brand that can further one's career – a career that can vary from architecture projects to coaching sessions and communications work.

Below Social media can help boost an individual's career development.

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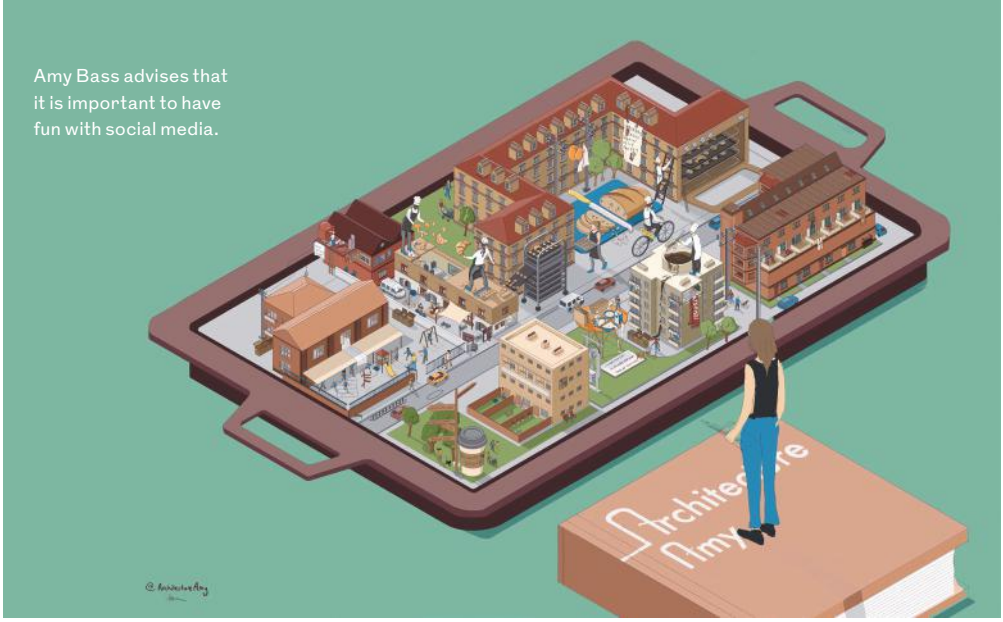


@ARCHITECTUREAMY

A career transformed

Chris Simmons, a former director at Squire & Partners, turned to Instagram years ago, posting architectural sketches, then expanded into commentary on the architecture profession and career content. Earlier this year, he was made redundant and has since refined his focus on helping architects market themselves effectively. "Building an audience online has transformed my career," he says.

His confrontational posts challenge industry practices, and feature messaging akin to a therapy session, with phrases like "We need to talk". His content has led to consulting work in coaching leaders, entrepreneurs and directors in the built environment industries, as well as contributing to publications, podcasts and sponsorships.

Simmons now runs his own architecture practice, Studio Chris Simmons, as well as a branding consultancy, and says 60% of his income comes from social media-related activities. Work varies from brand deals or collaboration with companies (software/recruitment/materials, etc) to hosting a podcast, conducting freelance interviews and writing, career coaching and social media consulting. Only 40% of his time is spent on traditional architecture work.

Frequent posting, authenticity and transparency are crucial. Amy Bass, who gained 100,000 Instagram followers in just a year by documenting her student journey and time at Foster + Partners, notes the importance of maintaining consistency. "It is very, very time-consuming," she says. "I definitely underestimated how hard content creation was before I started."

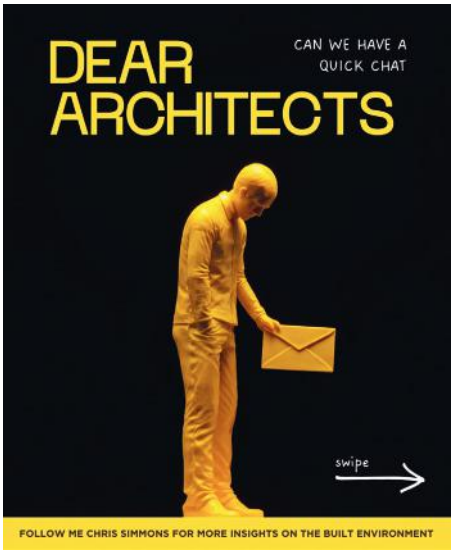
She adds: "Consistency and authenticity are key, which everyone in the world of architecture will know is a challenging thing to keep up," but she notes that even more important is to have fun with the process.

Bass, who graduated with a first from the Bartlett, and is now studying at Parsons in New York City as a Fulbright scholar, documents her journey through her account, ArchitectureAmy. She posts colourful architectural illustrations, videos of housing projects, and glimpses into her personal life. But despite her viral online success, she remains focused on pursuing a career as an architect rather than pivoting, as many have done, into communications and creative consulting.

Dale Whitfield, who is behind the Instagram account Fields of Architecture, focuses on educating homeowners and other clients about upfront fees and business plans. His numerical approach offers insights into practice management. He believes architects and firms can learn from his unique business management strategies, particularly in terms of exposing the realities of practice management.

His advice? Present a clear, unique offering, and market the process, not just the portfolio. "My fixed fee table, clear deliverables and optional add-on services help clients understand value upfront, upsell my service and avoid awkward conversations later," he says.

Whitfield balances hours working at a practice with his own endeavours, and says he feels fortunate his employer allows him to also work privately. "Many



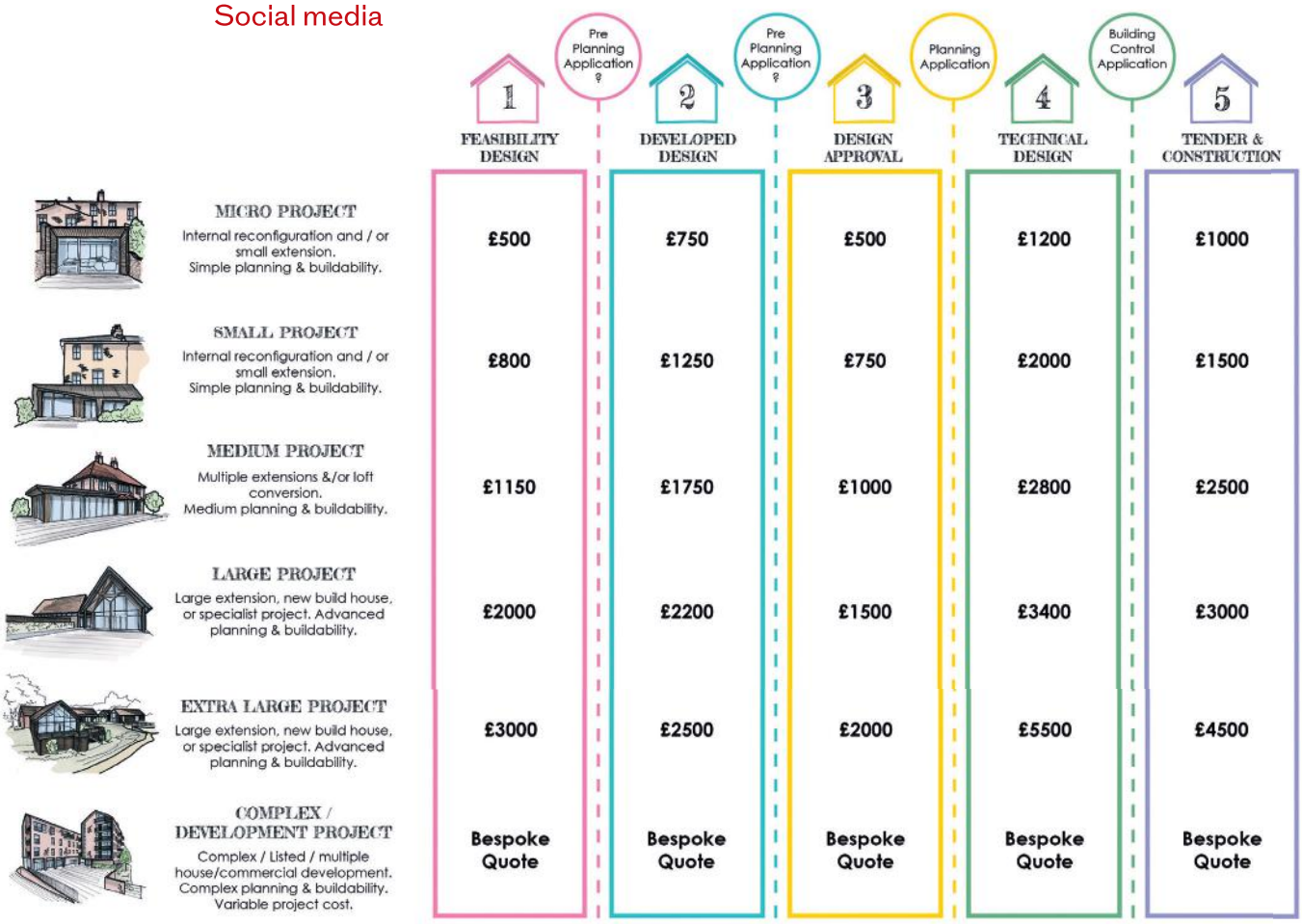
CM SIMMONS

Left Having an online audience has helped Chris Simmons weather his redundancy and build a new career.

Right Simmons' posts challenge industry practices.

Ex Squires director Chris Simmons says 60% of his income comes from social media-related activities

CM SIMMONS



DALE WHITFIELD

Above Dale Whitfield spends around 10 hours a week on social media, which supports his personal projects.

wouldn't," he says, though he notes that there is minimal overlap in project scales. He works 20 hours a week at the practice, 20-to-30 hours for Fields of Architecture, and spends an additional 10 hours focusing on social media marketing. His Instagram account generates 50% of his income from personal projects.

A focus on individuals

The architectural landscape is changing. Individuals are driving the conversation alongside established media, organisations and businesses. While they may seem like full-time content creators, they are blending social media with their professional lives, promoting personal, independent work that breaks the mould of traditional architecture careers.

A forthcoming RIBA book, Architectural Influence: Mastering Content Creation and Social Media Marketing, outlines this trajectory, offering a practical guide for architects and designers on how to use social media as a tool for visibility, networking, acquiring opportunities and profile building. Its author, Thomas Rowntree, selected 21 top social media creators in the architecture profession, examining what makes them successful.

Their voices are a valuable resource for any architect seeking to promote their career as an individuals, as opposed to the traditional way of virtually hiding within practices, and architects can learn a lot from these examples.

Simmons believes Squire & Partners missed an opportunity when it laid him off "because personal accounts have so much more reach than business accounts, and I could have brought attention and value to their business.

"When I got made redundant, I wanted to share this online too, as it needs to be spoken about more. This led to lots of interesting and supportive conversations with the rest of the architecture community, so I think it was very beneficial."

LESSONS FOR OTHER ARCHITECTS

- Encourage your team to engage with social media
- Educating clients can bring them to you
- Use social media to pivot your career and develop new areas of work
- Offer up your experience to help others

They are blending social media with their professional lives, promoting personal, independent work

Architectural Influence: Mastering Content Creation and Social Media Marketing, by Thomas Rowntree, is published by RIBA Publishing and is available from RIBA Books

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As the evolution of the workplace places greater demands on architects to create purposeful spaces that actively support human performance, focus increasingly turns to the application of high performance, sustainable glass screens which ensure the movement of natural light is maximised.

Identifying trusted products and supply partners to tick all the boxes in this specialist sector has become increasingly challenging. Within this space, Indeglas has spent the past 25 years perfecting a unique design methodology, now positioning the firm as the trusted 'go to' source of knowledge for some of the UK's leading design teams and their construction partners.

Utilising learning from the past and data from recent neurological research, while embracing sustainable materials in partnership with key supplier DEKO of Denmark, Indeglas is uniquely positioned to bring proven, trusted support at every stage of the process, pushing the boundaries of design while ensuring fully compliant installation.

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Below A selection of different door types is available.

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JAMES RETEIF (2)

Lights down low

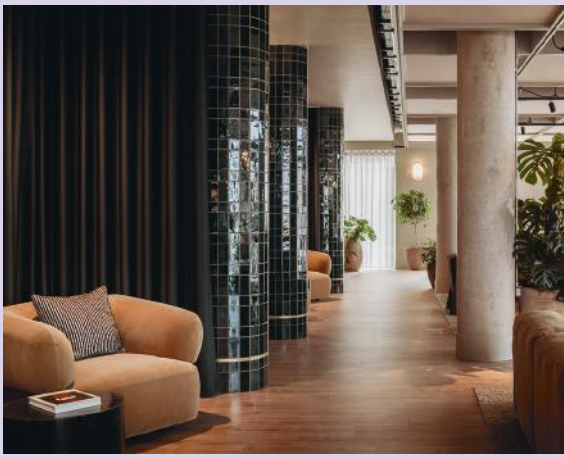
At the new Mason & Fifth Westbourne Park hotel in west London, interior architect TiggColl has created a soft, meditative ambience in which lighting choices play a key role in guests' experience. Pamela Buxton checks in

It's no wonder the swimming pool at Mason & Fifth Westbourne Park is one of the new hotel's top Instagram moments. Beautifully tranquil, the space comes alive in a feast of dappled, reflected ripples when a swimmer moves through the water, courtesy of the carefully curated lighting.

This alluringly moody ambience is one of the characteristic features of the hotel, which opened this summer. A 12-storey redevelopment of the former Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association head office, the Allford Hall Monaghan Morris-designed complex provides 332 rooms, the majority long-stay, on the banks of the Grand Union Canal. Overseen by operator Mason & Fifth's creative team, several designers have been involved in the development's diverse interior environments, which include the Meadow co-working space and Canal restaurant, as well as various resident amenities. Interior architect TiggColl has designed most of these key guest areas, including the extensive 360m² entrance lounge, which sets a distinctively atmospheric tone.

The design is inspired by the surrounding west London context, with a grab-bag of contrasting references including the nearby concrete flyover of the Westway, the peaceful canal setting and lively markets. The result, according to founding director Rachel Coll, channels refined Notting Hill elegance juxtaposed with urban grit. This is particularly the case in the exposed concrete columns and services and in the two key design features in

ROB PARRISH



the lounge. A statement fabric canopy flows around the bar, hung in concentric ripples, leading guests and visitors deep into the lounge while drawing down the lofty ceiling height and concealing some of the services. The other standout element is the reflective ceramic tiling on the bar and undulating rear walls. Created using deep green Domus Lusa tiles, the finish is a recurring theme that serves to unify the varied guest spaces throughout the hotel.

"The tiled, reflective surfaces and movement of the canopy are supposed to evoke the sense of movement of the canal, and are very much enhanced by the lighting," says Coll. "We looked at metal mesh [for the canopy], but I think the fabric gives a softness to it. There's enough structure to it that you can read the architectural wave," she adds.

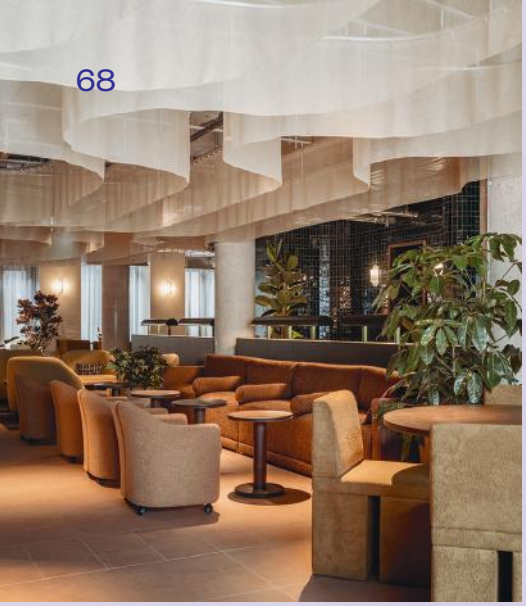
The expansive space is broken up by distinct areas of seating and tables, with planting used generously throughout. Sheer curtains shield the external walls and soften the natural light, while a pop-up retail concession is positioned near the entrance.

"We aimed to create spaces with a very different ambience and where people feel comfortable spending time, and lighting plays an important part in that," says Coll, who worked with lighting designer Phil Caton of PJC Light Studio throughout the project.

Rather than a uniform lighting approach, Caton specified a Reggiani track system with adjustable spotlights. "That lack of uniformity throughout the space is important, creating pockets of informality and privacy," he says.

ADAM FIRMAN (2)

Opposite top The fabric ceiling in the bar/café, hiding lighting and services, is a statement move in the Mason & Fifth main lounge area.
Opposite middle AHMM's tower for Mason & Fifth fronts onto the canal. External stairs to the reception lead up from the towpath, on the right.
Left Ceramic tiles line undulating rear walls in the hotel lounge.
Top Natural and artificial skylights are set in a contoured ceiling in the tranquil pool room.
Above Indirect lighting lends a softness to the basement wellness studio, which has windows onto the pool.



JAMES RETEIF

Opposite top Column sconces offer a counterpoint to the track lighting's soft focus in the downstairs lounge area.

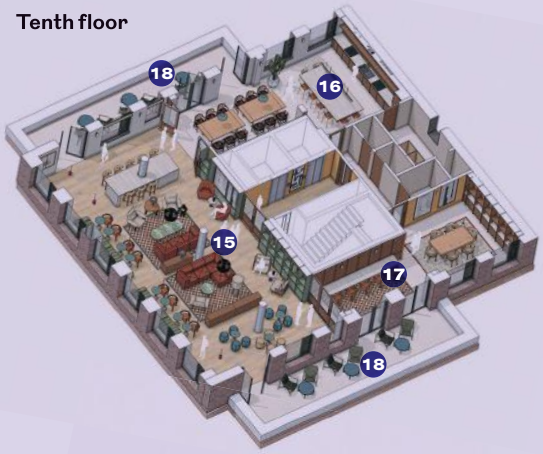
The tracks enable accent lighting for surfaces and finishes, furniture, artwork and retail display, where the density of spotlights is increased. "When you look across the field of view, your eyes are already being drawn to what's been lit rather than the light fittings themselves, which provide fairly low brightness," explains Caton.

On the gauze fabric canopy, after a linear lighting approach was explored and rejected, concealed spotlights were selected to provide localised pools of light on the fabric and offer a hint of focus here and there. Additional pendants highlight the bar. On the tiles, the spotlights are an effective way of emphasising and playing off the tactile and glossy surface, especially on the curved niches that TiggColl created to animate the rear wall.

"While the colour of the tiles is obviously important in setting the mood, we chose muted and singular tones to allow them to act as a lively backdrop, with the light play across their surface then becoming a focus, rather than the colour itself," says Coll.

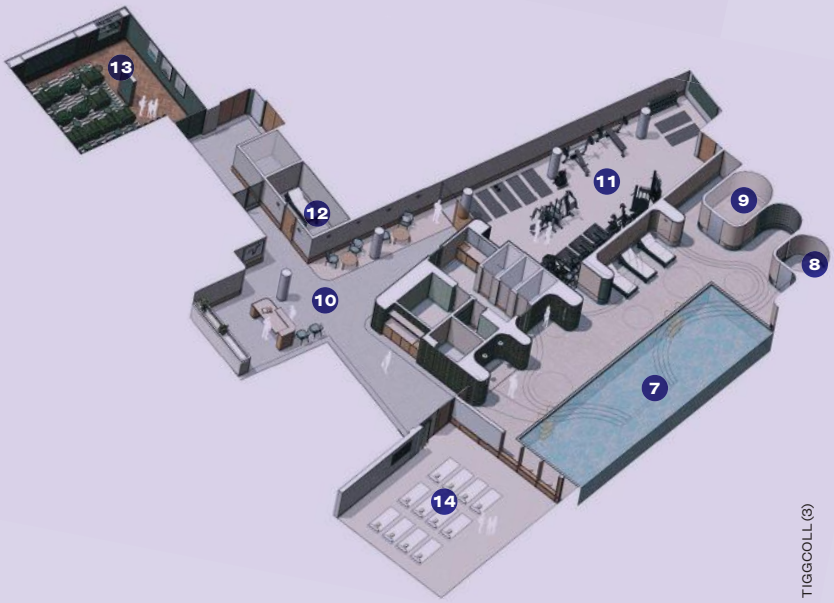
Residents can enjoy a selection of music on vinyl in the adjacent 'listening lounge'. Here, the ceiling height has been lowered to give more intimacy with the introduction of a feature decorative grid, from which are suspended Zico accent bulbs with silver crowns on the underside to soften and reduce glare. Mono Lighting linear lights integrated into the alcove shelves give focus to

Tenth floor



Upper ground floor

Lower ground floor



1 Reception
2 Entrance lounge
3 Pop-up shop
4 Café and bar
5 Listening lounge
6 Guest lounge
7 Pool hall
8 Steam room
9 Sauna
10 'Grounding' reception
11 Gym area
12 Treatment room
13 Cinema
14 Wellness studio
15 Panoramic lounge
16 Guest kitchen
17 Study area
18 Terrace

TIGGCOLL (3)

eba

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Above The tenth-floor dining area is characterised by super-sized domestic-feel pendant shades. **Above right** Comfortable seating in the tenth-floor panoramic guests' lounge.

Left The tenth-floor lounge also includes smaller seating areas for relaxation or work. **Below** A cosy niche in the downstairs main guest lounge. Lighting highlights key artworks and planting throughout.

ADAM FIRMIN (2)

artwork and objects on display in the alcoves, while decorative floor lights create additional interest. "Those different layers are what helps to build an atmosphere," says Caton.

Guests also have access to a ground-floor working lounge area as well as a rather more spectacular 10th-floor 'panoramic' lounge, again with Reggiani spotlighting in conjunction with a fabric ceiling canopy. Here, the vibe is more relaxed, with a variety of seating areas. A nearby communal kitchen features Saturn-like pendants, which have also been specified over the ground floor marble reception desk, hanging above the island worktop.

The lower-ground-floor gym and spa, the Grounding, is the other showstopper. The tiled walls recur around the core of the space, with dramatic dappled light in the foyer achieved by the use of yet more Reggiani spotlights around a metal ceiling grille. This, says Caton, "creates a nice, randomised pattern on the floor". Brighter lighting is introduced over the reception desk and to highlight planting.

All the key facilities are visible from here, including a yoga studio and the Instagrammable swimming pool. Here TiggColl opted for the same Domus tiles, but this time they are predominantly off-white on undulating perimeter walls, with overhead lighting introduced by four circular skylights and two artificial backlit rooflights set in a contoured ceiling. Four uplighters are embedded in the bottom of the pool to amplify reflections of the ripples in the mirror and tiled wall. Glimpses of the perimeter sauna and steam rooms reveal a glow of warm, low-level lighting. It is safe to say that this gym is a world away from the harshly lit norm.

"There's no reason to overlight a gym. You can still keep the mood as long as there's enough light for the functions you're doing," observes Caton. He specified a combination of linear lights above the equipment, decorative wall lights, ambient lighting on tracks, and pockets of light on key accent areas such as the water station. Another natural rooflight completes the area's atmospheric ambience.

A few months on from the opening, the client is delighted with the overall occupancy, and by how well-used the entrance lounge is by both hotel guests and the general public. "There's a real softness to the space," notes Claire McPoland, design director of Mason & Fifth. "I think the lighting is a huge driver of that." ●

JAMES RETEIF (2)

Architect AHMM
Interior architect TiggColl
Interior designer for Canal and Meadow A-nrd
Creative direction Mason & Fifth Design Studio
Curation, procurement and styling Interior Address
Client Cheyne Capital
Operator Mason & Fifth
Lighting PJC Light Studio
Selected lighting suppliers Applelec (artificial skylight); Flos (cinema lobby downlights); Kemps Architectural Lighting (sauna/steam rooms); Lutron (front of house control system); Mono Lighting (concealed linear lighting in listening room, cinema, studio and Meadow); Orluna (kitchen, cinema and pool downlights); Reggiani (lounge, Meadow, restaurant track and spotlights, gym linear lighting, spa foyer); Wibre (pool lights); Zico (listening room overhead lighting).

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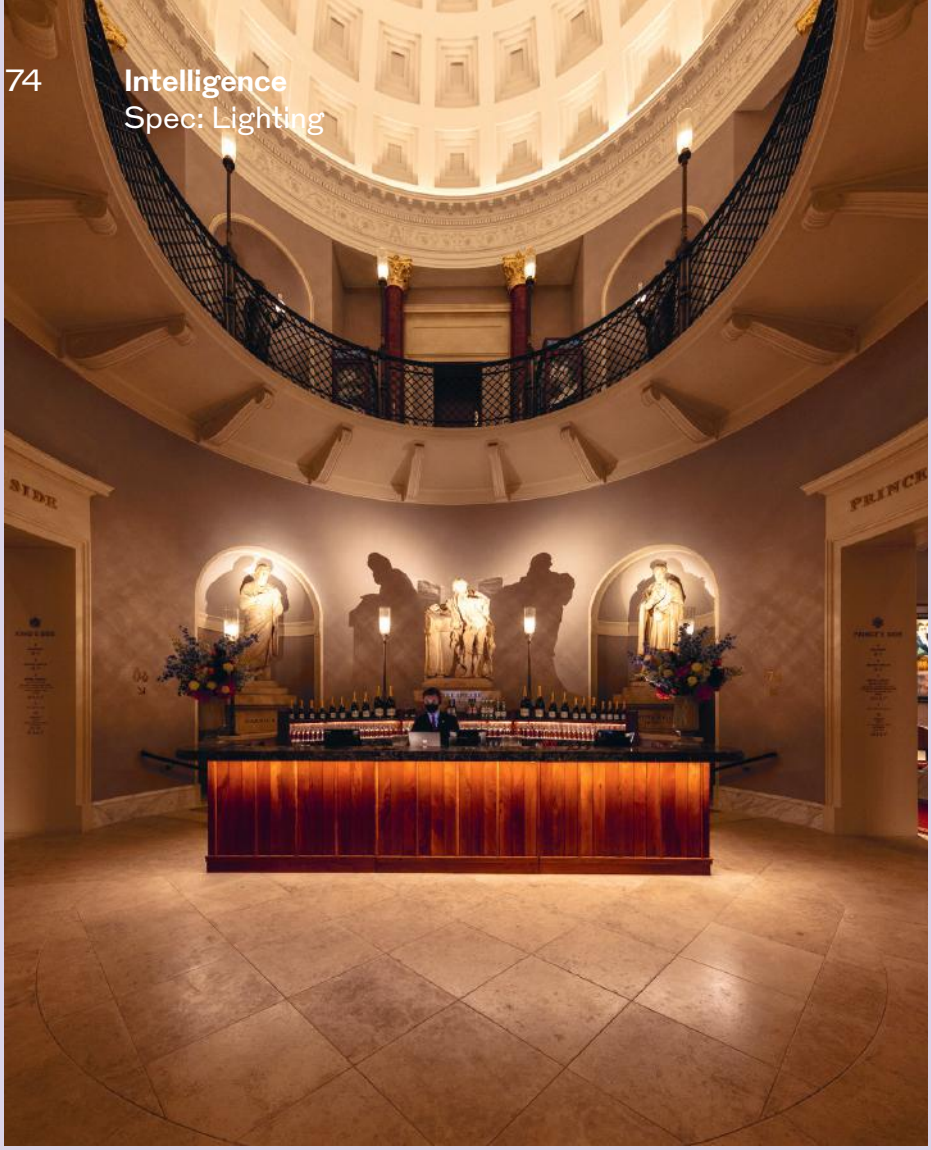


PHILIP VILE

Setting the stage

Tom Niven, director and co-head of lighting at BDP, discusses how the practice's work has augmented the magic of the theatre experience at three major projects around the UK

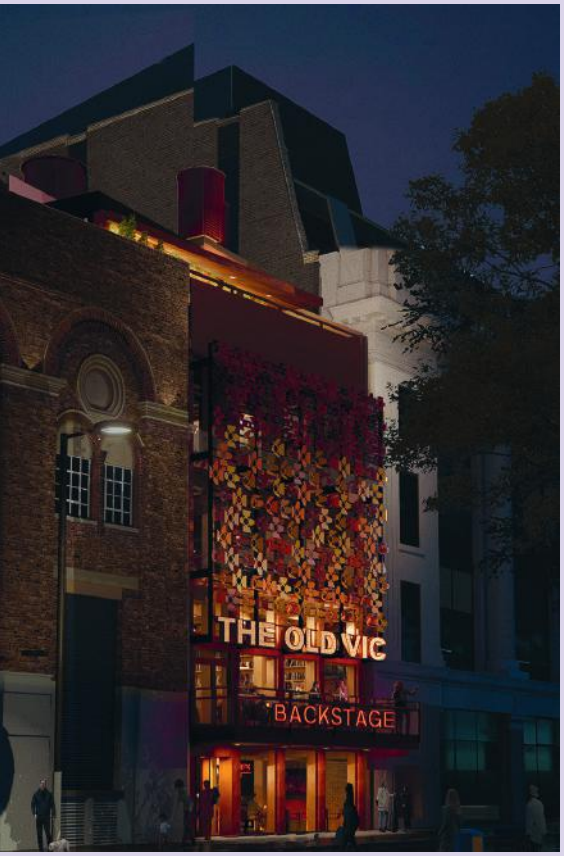
Light and theatre are intrinsically interwoven. Lighting is immensely powerful in evoking wonder, joy and intrigue, all of which are essential parts of the magic of theatre.

While theatrical lighting takes centre stage during the performance, a venue's architectural lighting is critical for the visitor experience from the moment people arrive. When both come together to create the whole, they create some of the finest cultural and artistic experiences in the country.

← Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London
A key component of Andrew Lloyd Webber's brief for the Theatre Royal was to move the ticketed areas deeper within the building, thus returning the front of house spaces to the public. The Lane restaurant was created on the first floor, with the Rotunda bar serving more informal drinks on the ground floor; both are accessible to the general public as well as theatregoers.

The lighting uses modern LED technology, integrated within a historic envelope. We started by looking back to enable us to look forward, reviving original designs for torchéres and chandeliers throughout the front of house spaces. These all needed integrating within an ETC lighting control system, which is an extension of that used in the main performance space. The dimming performance of our architectural lighting was essential, so extensive testing was undertaken to find the best-performing lamps available.

TOM NIVEN



HTA

← The Old Vic Annex, London

Designed by Haworth Tompkins, the Annex extends the hospitality offering at the Old Vic with a new bar and social space, Clore learning centre and roof terrace. Our design for the facade brings the theatrical experience right to the public realm and outside the building. Several hundred barn-door accessories from historical stage lighting have been salvaged by The Old Vic, refurbished and painted to create a unique brise-soleil to the southwest glazed facade.

We worked closely with a fabricator to develop a bespoke lighting cassette to illuminate the barn doors. From desktop testing to full scale mock-up, warm light has been used to subtly highlight the internal facades of selected doors. This is fully integrated into the front of house theatrical ETC control system to allow the client to control the content. A subtle, dynamically changing movement of light ripples across the facade throughout the evening, giving theatregoers and visitors to the bar a taste of the magic they can expect inside.

↓ Aberdeen Music Hall

The two-year restoration project for the Grade A-listed Aberdeen Music Hall was focused on modernising the venue's facilities and removing barriers to all age groups. The main performance hall and front of house areas were supplemented with much-needed new educational and multipurpose spaces, with studios and hospitality facilities also added.

The lighting served to subtly highlight the Music Hall's historical features – such as its almost 200-year-old domed roof – and to balance that with appropriate levels of illumination to support accessibility. A subtle, warm white light scheme was used to tastefully highlight the architecture in a sensitive way.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements and modern design standards drove a lot of the public area designs. Illuminated handrails were used extensively to light level changes safely, without touching the historic fabric of the building.

↙ Factory International, Aviva Studios, Manchester

At the other end of the spectrum sits Manchester's Aviva Studios, the newest purpose-built theatre in the UK and the largest publicly funded project since the conversion of the turbine hall at Tate Modern. Its OMA-designed, monolithic concrete structure houses a huge 5,000-seat auditorium and warehouse space, plus event, rehearsal and office spaces.

The foyer follows the early concepts of Lasdun's National Theatre, creating an ultra-flexible performance area that is completely open to the public. The lighting in the foyer has flexibility at its core, with an infrastructure of track-mounted, addressable spotlighting that can also be overridden and controlled by an AV desk. Theatrical lighting bars are used extensively throughout the foyer to provide ultimate flexibility for performance. The architectural lighting complements the hospitality spaces, with low-level detailing to the bars bringing the levels down after dark.

DAVID BARBOUR

The leading light for nine decades

Coolicon's iconic lampshade, patented back in 1933, created a perfectly lit environment for the UK's skilled workers – and almost a century on, its signature design and quality continue to outshine the competition

Original 1933 and Large 1933 Design Coolicon Lampshades in Jet Black.

STELLWERKOST, FOR EDISSON

From humble factory beginnings to a British design icon, the trademarked Coolicon 1933 lampshade is a utilitarian pendant light of human scale and proportion. Designed originally to hang low over skilled-task work areas in factories 90 years ago, this classic lampshade is faithfully handcrafted in Britain today. Steeped in a rich product history, it won the hearts and minds of a nation and will continue to do so for generations to come.

The signature Coolicon vented gallery design, originally developed to efficiently dissipate heat from incandescent bulbs and now giving longevity to their LED successors, is expertly thought out to distribute light both above and below. It releases a glow from the lampshade's open galleries onto ceilings above, while focusing light from its reflector onto working surfaces below, making for rooms that feel brighter and larger. It is available in two sizes; each design can be used to efficiently guide and tailor light in accordance with the lighting needs of a space.

The Original 1933 Design Lampshade™, true to its industrial roots, casts a concentrated task light onto surfaces below, creating a perfect working environment when used over desks and kitchen surfaces. The Large 1933 Design Lampshade™ observes the same proportions but at a grander scale to provide more ambient light above with a softer, wider cone of illumination below. This shade is versatile enough to hang high in open plan spaces or low over dining tables and other focal areas.

Coolicon lampshades are still hand finished in vitreous enamel, using 16 original colours. A time-honoured process of firing steel at temperatures exceeding 800°C, to fuse it with a glass-like enamel surface, results in a finish of unmatched brilliance and durability. Unlike modern powder coatings or synthetic paints, enamel retains its deep rich colour over decades. A process that has stood the test of time, alongside a novel design and considered construction, continues to set Coolicon lampshades apart from the mass-produced shades of today.

MARTIN HJORTSØ

Above Large 1933 Design Coolicon Lampshades in Original Green at Willys Bistro, Denmark.

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THE KING'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE 2023 INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Rapid growth strategy

In Xi'an, China, Speirs Major Light Architecture faced a knotty challenge designing lighting for a fast-emerging city district and the living sculpture at its heart, reports Jan-Carlos Kucharek

SPEIRS MAJOR LIGHT ARCHITECTURE/ HDA (2)

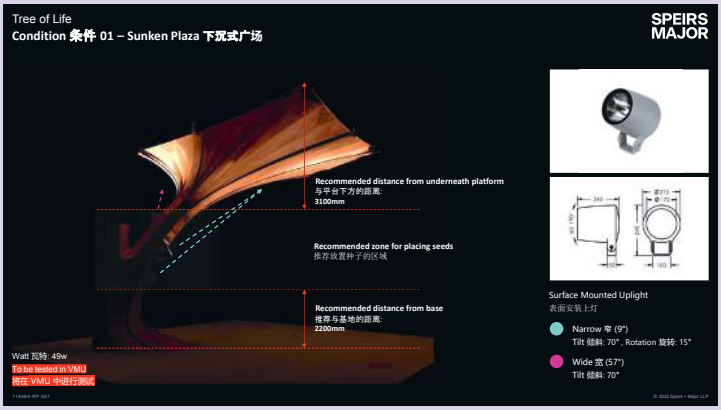
Above The Tree of Life structure consists of 56 stepped steel terraces running up round a steel lift core.
Below right The Tree of Life sculpture rises out of the retail podium basement to form the focal point of the CCBD commercial development in Xi'an.

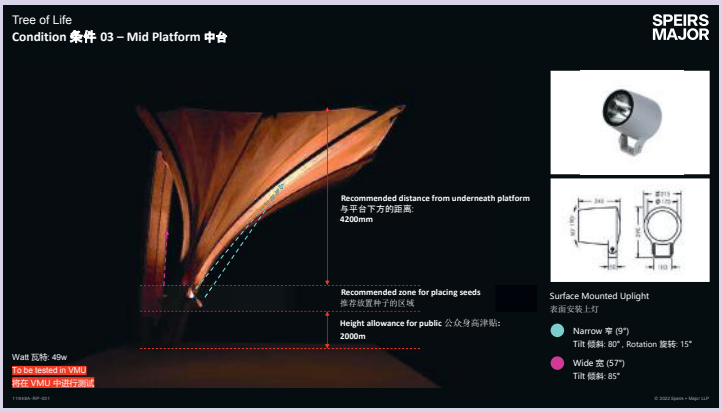
Visitors arriving by day at Xi'an Centre Cultural Business District may at first be struck by the sheer scale of project's four huge towers, but before long interest may shift to the curious pocked, glazed surface of the ceramic cladding on the steel structure of the podium that sits at their base. Designed by Heatherwick Studio, this retail complex's shallow curved roof forms resonates with the city's great history– the Terracotta Army site lies on its eastern edge – and with Heatherwick's biophilic drive, which aims to introduce vernacular and sensory components, such as texture and intricacy, into modern design.

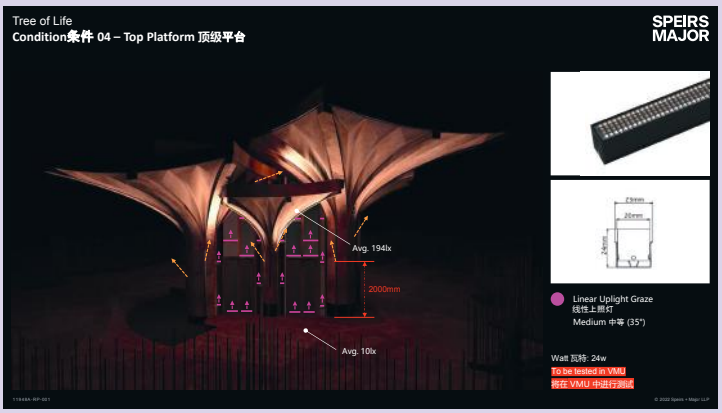
But if the 155,000m^2 complex is about the material by day, at night it's about nature. Its 77,000m^2 of new public realm landscaping is centred around Heatherwick's Tree of Life sculpture, a 57m-high steel 'petal' structure holding up 56 stepped terraces, connected by staircases, each one its own biome emulating Silk Road landscapes, from alpine tundra to Xeric shrubland to dry steppe. Speirs Major Light Architecture (SMLA) came on board to design the lighting strategy for the retail complex, and also the lighting of this living sculpture, which needed enough of a site presence to hold its own against the four towers and the adjacent Shaanxi TV Tower, but also enable visitors to experience its planting in the subtle way it was intended to be.

A highly accelerated construction programme – the whole project went from concept to completion in three years – drove the design decisions, not least the latter-stage lighting ones, explains SMLA associate partner Benz Roos. "When you work with Heatherwick, even on a project of this scale, his concern remains with how humans interact with the design – and therefore with the details ," he says. At concept stage this elicited a lot of physical experimentation and hand-modelling, while at delivery it involved formulation of lighting guidelines for the installers. "We were aware installation and adjustments would be occurring on site so fast that a didactic approach to the lighting design simply wouldn't cut it," Roos goes on. "We had to rely on general design principles that would result in the finesse we wanted, while making it workable for the site team."

Illuminating the Tree of Life structure itself was the first concern. Roos says the obvious strategy would







Above The Tree of Life aimed to celebrate the tree form, orchestrate basement views, promote connections between levels and highlight the vegetation. **Left** Lighting guidelines for the lower-level sunken plaza suggesting tilt and angles for narrow and wide beam luminaires. **Left middle** Mid-platform guidelines for the same fixtures but recommending a much tighter zone for placement. **Left bottom** Top platform approaches to lighting, including linear strip lights to highlight the lift door apertures and overrun.

have been to light the form from the new office towers around it. But this 'flood' of lighting didn't align with Heatherwick Studio's intent. "They were keen that lighting of the structure's branches and terrace 'petals' should be visually distinct from the biomes; discreet and low-level, with the ambience of a night walk in a forest," Roos recalls.

Formed with a steel lift core at its centre, the stepped landscaped terraces rise up and out of the podium basement, each one supported by a branching 'stem' of eight steel members, between which are set 'saw-tooth' GRC soffit panels. SMLA decided the best way to create the dramatic contrast required was to light this all from below – meaning attaching luminaires to the steel stems. Roos explains that from the outset, these were envisioned as 'seed pods', delicately appended to the main structure.

The strategy involved splitting the structure into four zones according to height: sunken plaza, transition, mid-platform and top platform. Due to their varying height and size, these demanded different approaches, in terms of luminaire strength, beam width or angle, to the lighting of the structure. Detailed studies were carried out via Grasshopper in Rhino and specialist software Relux at SMLA's London office, analysing lighting implications of different bulb strengths, angles and positions based on Heatherwick Studio's Rhino model and the Revit model from the contractor. Luminaire design was then coordinated with the executive lighting designer in China, HDA.

Coordination was more complex than it sounds, since adjacent platforms could be affected by any one stem's lighting. "Clash detection in this instance meant any lighting position that interfered with the user experience," continues Roos. "It was very hard to focus lights correctly at the right angles. Seed pod beam angles and positions had to highlight platform soffits without 'blasting' parts of the structure with light or interfering with the more subtle effects going on above them." SMLA's original intent was to use a 2,200K temperature 'warm white', but there was a cultural sensitivity of this as

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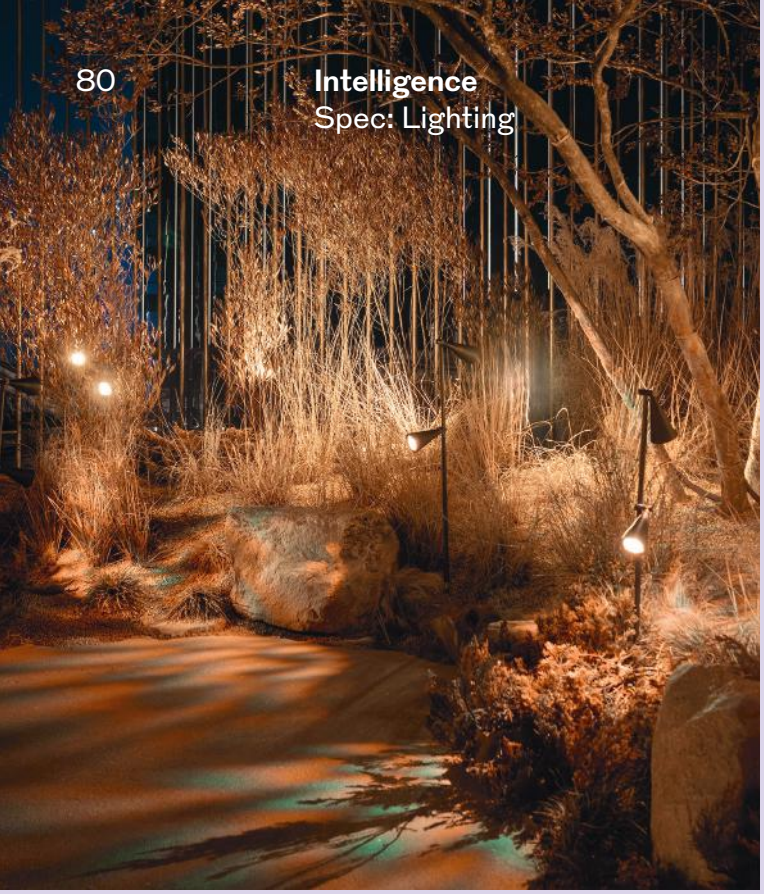

Left The tiny bollard luminaires, with bespoke cut metal gobos, create a unique dappled effect on the terrace planting. **Below left** LED strip lighting, inset below nosings, guides users up the staircases connecting terraces. **Below** Discrete rather than flood lighting enabled the terrace structure to be celebrated while facilitating a more subtle approach with the vegetation.

SPEIRS MAJOR LIGHT ARCHITECTURE/ HDA (3)

being too warm. The firm settled on a 'cooler' 3,000K white.

With structure being fabricated and assembled at pace, the studies formed the basis of lighting guidelines, issued to the Chinese contractor along with drawings setting out the nature of any luminaire and positioning parameters. The contractor would judiciously install the lights on the stems and return the drawings to the London office with actual positions denoted. SMLA would then perform its own analyses again to check the effect and either ratify it or request a move. This was a novel but necessary approach, Roos says, giving the office a little control amid the exigency of the construction process.

The lighting strategy for the planted terraces themselves was addressed through a similar but more nuanced approach. "The way plants are lit is important since different colours emphasise different characteristics of a plant," advises Roos. "Obvious aspects are that an autumn tree might look better lit in a warm, white light – but it's more complex than that."

Roos adds that theatricality and creative expression have a big part to play in such lighting design. "Lighting can be used to emphasise natural colours and make planting more vivid, or used reductively to neutralise them, so the emphasis turns to the plant's texture or form," he says. "Tweaking the light quality has a real impact on how plants are perceived by the viewer."

To create the dappled natural forest light effect, initial approaches involved projecting powerful, high-level lights down onto planted terraces, with the intention that shadows from larger plants would create the cool, variegated effect being sought. But Heatherwick Studio found such lighting's glare and directness problematic. Instead, SMLA worked with the practice on designing bespoke, low-luminosity fixtures that could nestle discreetly at low level, set within the planting itself.

The firm developed thin steel section 'bollards' ranging from 600mm to 1,200mm in height, with a RGBW, 4,000K temperature, low-energy luminaire set in a fine steel cone shade. To emulate dappled light, the team experimented with gobos, physical templates generally used in theatre lighting. Finely CNC cut from thin metal, these simple discs have been fixed in front of the pinpoint luminaires to create the effect, with one gobo type projecting up or down a minimum of 300mm from any plant line and another type projecting down to create the dapple effect on the stone pathway. The latter are spaced at 1,000mm to 1,500mm centres in order to ensure constant, safe illumination levels for users.

Given the number of platforms, changes of vegetation types and layout variance, it was again clear that bollard positioning could not be didactic, but carried out according to SMLA's set of general principles that the installer could work within. Being RGBW digital modules, the subtle lighting approach can be radically altered as occasion calls for; to saturate in red, for instance, for Chinese New Year.

As with the lighting of the Tree of Life structure itself, the procurement required compromises – and SMLA relinquishing detailed control in the wake of breakneck speed that saw a vast city block go from concept to completion in 36 months. Centralised power begets, it transpires, highly efficient and swift procurement streams that the West might only view with envy, notes Roos. Now the switch has been thrown on Xi'an CCBD and the seemingly natural-lit megasculpture at its centre, the sense is that SMLA was challenged and thrilled in equal measure. ●

Smart emergency lighting that cuts energy use and brings peace of mind

Challenger Lighting's Ulti-Mate solution uses Bluetooth connectivity and advanced lens technology, enabling efficient spacing of LEDs and reducing both energy and service costs over time

Challenger Lighting operatives recently carried out an installation on a London retail site of smart emergency lighting solution, Ulti-Mate, from Challenger and TM Technologie. The project uses Bluetooth technology to communicate with 39 onsite fittings for emergency lighting, testing, reporting failures and imminent failures.

We reduced the emergency lighting units from 82 to 39, lowering costs for the future via advanced lens technology – the key component, maximising light distribution – and lithium batteries. Not only did we achieve specified emergency light levels across the site, we also cut energy and service costs over time.

Our Bluetooth technology has no impact on onsite activities or customer IT systems, since it beams information directly back to our head office for evaluation. This activity does not detract, however, from customers carrying out their own regular onsite tests.

Above Extensive use of robotics in manufacture.

Bottom Challenger Lighting head office.

Bottom right TM Technologie head office and manufacturing facility in Krakow.

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CHALLENGER'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Challenger is committed to advancing its revitalisation strategy through targeted investments in mobile workshops, enabling efficient onsite repairs with minimal disruption to customers. Our newly developed mobile units are equipped to service LED components ranging from track spots to units up to 1,600mm in length. This initiative not only supports the circular economy by extending product life cycles, but also reinforces our dedication to a more sustainable future.

We provide costs and solutions to prospective clients without obligation. It has become evident that in many cases, management and staff do not fully understand emergency lighting testing procedures, or indeed have the ability to identify emergency fittings since typically they refer to the exit signs – not the total content of the site. Our systems remove the burden of responsibility from the staff and provide concise management information, which is available 24/7 via our Gosport head office.

Ulti-Mate's discreet LEDs have been proven as the leading performer in this area, enabling greater spacing and energy saving – inclusive of wireless back-to-base technology. They offer an ideal solution for futureproofing emergency lighting in open areas and corridors. ●

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Costed: lighting

Following sustainability trends, lighting choices are influenced by efficiency, with design and specification increasingly led by performance and certification schemes such as MEES, BREEAM and LENI. In many sectors, lighting is still a significant part of energy end-use: last year, 15 per cent of electricity use in UK offices came from artificial lighting. System type and spec vary based on function and end-user needs, so costs differ widely across building types. Here, Turner & Townsend alinea provides some helpful price-range context

The ranges below are representative of a per-fitting cost, intended to reflect typical market prices across a range of common LED lighting types as of Q4 2025. Rates are inclusive of supply, subcontractor markup, install, and wiring costs, but exclusive of lighting control. This can diverge markedly from the stated ranges based on factors such as economies of scale, specification, construction approach, phasing and constraints.

Commercial/office	
Track	
Rate per luminaire for mid-range to high-end specification, inclusive of track, wiring to track and plug in luminaires:	
• Track-mounted downlight	£300-£400
(based upon 4,000mm track with eight downlights)	
Suspended	
Rate per luminaire for mid-range to high-end specification, inclusive of suspension cables:	
• Pendant (prime cost £250)	£450-£500
• 1,200mm linear luminaire (prime cost £350)	£550-£650
Surface mounted	
Rate per luminaire for mid-range to high-end specification:	
• 600mm linear luminaire (prime cost (£300)	£500-£550
• Downlight (prime cost £250)	£450-£500
Recessed	
Rate per luminaire for mid-range to high-end specification, excluding the cutting of apertures:	
• Ceiling recessed downlight (prime cost £200)	£400-£450
• 1,000mm recessed linear (prime cost £300)	£500-£550
• 5,000mm linear strip lighting	£750-£1,000
Emergency	
Rate per standalone non-maintained 3-hour luminaire:	
• Exit sign (prime cost £250)	£400-£450
• Recessed downlight (prime cost £125) exclusive of cutting of apertures	£300-£350
External (commercial)	
Public realm	
Rate per luminaire or per metre for mid-range to high-end specification:	
• Landscape uplighting (prime cost £400) IP66, inclusive of ground spike	£750-£800
• Wall-mounted downlight (prime cost £470) IP67	£800-£850
• Linear per metre for fixing to curb/integrating to fixtures (prime cost £110/m) IP67	£400-£450
Terrace	
Rate per luminaire for mid-range to high-end specification:	
• Recessed spotlight to soffit, with emergency provision (prime cost £608) IP66	£850-£900
• Surface-mounted adjustable spotlight to soffit, with emergency provision (prime cost £480) IP67	£650-£700
Data centres	
Wall-mounted	
Rate per luminaire for a functional, low to mid-range specification:	
• 1,600mm, IP66, beam luminaire (prime cost £90)	£150-£200
• 381mm, IP65, wall mounted (prime cost £123)	£250-£300
Suspended	
Rate per luminaire for a functional, low to mid-range specification, inclusive of suspension cabling:	
• 1,600mm IP66, beam luminaire (prime cost £90)	£250-£300
Surface mounted	
Rate per luminaire for a functional, low to mid-range specification:	
• IP20 downlight (prime cost £92)	£250-£300
• IP20 pendant (prime cost £193)	£430-£480
• 1,600mm, IP66, beam luminaire (prime cost £99)	£250-£300
Recessed	
Rate per luminaire for a functional, low to mid-range specification, excluding the cutting of apertures:	
• 597mm, IP20, linear (prime cost £162)	£400-£450
Emergency	
Rate per standalone non-maintained 3-hour luminaire:	
• Recessed downlight (prime cost £178)	£400-£450
• Ceiling-mounted downlight (prime cost £160)	£350-£400
• 1,600mm surface or suspended linear luminaire (prime cost £159)	£400-£450
• 597mm, IP20, luminaire for escape route lighting (prime cost £102)	£250-£300
• IP40 wall-mounted exit sign luminaire (prime cost £88)	£250-£300
Residential	
Rates per fitting for low-to-medium specification fit-out within apartments:	
• Pendant	£70-£90
• Downlight	£90-£110
• Wall lights	£120-£140

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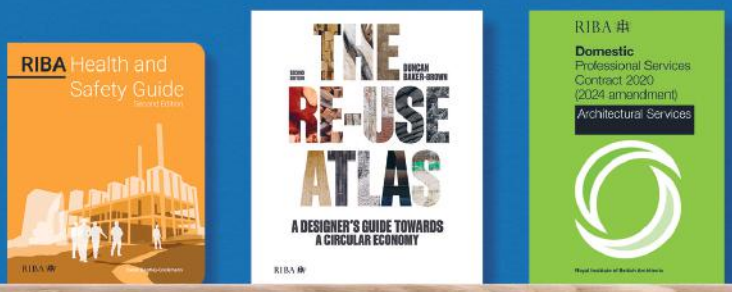

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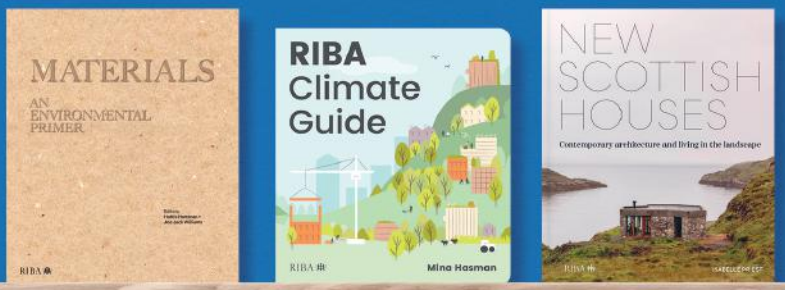

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RISING STARS 2025

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LUKE O'DONOVAN

Tools and collaborations mark out this year's cohort of 10 Rising Stars. They are not only working out better methods for themselves but using their vocational drive to create and develop tools for early design optioneering, to put carbon assessment into action and to engage users and potential users while delivering behaviour change. They are exploring, using data, testing, and sharing the results and tools.

We also have a real sense of Rising Stars getting their hands dirty, working alongside crafts people, makers and contractors, as well as members of the public in co-creation, bringing people on board with empathetic and strategic communication. Sometimes that means reframing the issue and putting it in terms people can relate to. This cohort has the skills to step back from immediate concerns and give this perspective.

It is architectural process at its best and the built results are a testament to that. The judges were impressed with the tectonic richness of design and the way materials are used to craft space – sometimes even the tiniest of spaces. We look forward to this cohort scaling up their work.
Eleanor Young, editor, RIBAJ

THE 2025 JUDGES

Dion Barrett
Architect-turned filmer and Rising Star 2024

Oliver Bulleid
Executive director, London Community Land Trust

Julia Loughnane
Architect and director in charge of people and place, David Chipperfield Architects

Ricardo Moreira
Managing director, XCO2

Eleanor Young
Editor, RIBAJ (chair)

Top left "I have come to see architecture as a powerful tool." Jemima Harold-Sodipo, project architect on Wolves Lane Community Hub, Wood Green, London.

WHITNEY DUVALL

ANTHONY GRIEVESON

ON A MISSION TO PROMOTE LOW-CARBON CHOICES

Director, Studio Grieveson Part 2 2013 Part 3 2016

According to Anthony Grieveson, architects "can, and must, play a central role in delivering the systemic change required for a low-carbon future".

He aims to demonstrate this through both his own practice and wider advocacy for low-carbon architecture.

"Minimising the embodied energy of materials, maximising the performance of buildings in use, and prioritising retrofit and reuse are central to my work," he says.

He sees private residential projects as opportunities to push boundaries, reframing briefs around creative use rather than new build, and developing low-carbon alternatives to conventional construction. This often involves collaborating with smaller contractors to encourage a move away from the norm of concrete and steel.

"By reframing timber construction in familiar terms, such as pointing out that a timber-framed extension would be like building a dormer extension but on the ground, I have been able to break down resistance and support a shift in mindset," he says. "These conversations have led to the real adoption of lower-carbon methods on-site, proving that education and collaboration can change entrenched practices."

His approach is epitomised by St George Villa, a self-built deep retrofit and extension, which he describes as both a personal manifesto and a testament to how sustainable construction can deliver "beautiful, enduring design". This project minimised concrete, avoided steel and prioritised natural, low-embodied carbon materials. Almost all demolition waste was reused on site, diverting 24 tonnes from landfill.

Beyond his practice, Grieveson is a design chair of East London Waterworks Park, which aims to acquire and transform a 6ha Thames Water depot for wild swimming and biodiversity. Through co-design workshops and extensive community engagement, this initiative demonstrates, he says, how architects can lead transformational, community-driven change.

"He does small work well with a low-carbon emphasis," said judge Julia Loughnane. "There definitely seems to be joy as well and good thinking in his work."

The judges also applauded his willingness to engage with small contractors to encourage a change in mindset towards lower carbon construction. "He brings an empathetic approach to working collaboratively with small contractors," said Dion Barrett.

STUDIO GRIEVESON

Above Studio Grieveson's St George Villa, east London. An extension avoiding steel and with minimal concrete, prioritising low carbon materials.

STUDIO GRIEVESON

Left Studio Grieveson's highly insulated timber-framed extension in Walthamstow Village, London.

What piece of architecture do you most admire?

I am actively exploring the use of stone as a low-embodied carbon structural material, inspired by projects such as Clerkenwell Close and Finchley Road by Groupwork. Stone offers durability, circularity and beauty while dramatically reducing carbon compared to steel and concrete. I am interested in the ways that it can be applied at the domestic scale, challenging the assumption that low-carbon innovation is only viable for landmark schemes. I want to show that material innovation can be part of everyday architecture, ensuring sustainable choices are not limited to high-profile projects but available to all.

YUTA SAWAMURA

YURIKO YAGI

PROPONENT OF EXPERIMENTAL, SMALL-SCALE INTERVENTIONS

Co-founder, Pan- Projects

Part 2 2014, Part 3 2017

Faced with a lack of opportunities to build as a young architect, Yuriko Yagi took matters into her own hands.

"I could not wait for opportunities that might never arrive," says Yagi, the co-founder of London-based collaborative design studio Pan- Projects.

"Instead, I chose a different path: to begin with lighter, smaller interventions – pavilions, mobile structures and installations – that condense ideas into compact forms but resonate far beyond their scale."

This is exemplified by Paper Pavilion, a 10m^2 building in Copenhagen, created from discarded printed matter collected across the city. Designed for the Chart Art Fair in 2018, it was later acquired by Kunsthal Charlottenborg museum, where it functions as the reception desk.

This was followed the next year by Floating Pavilion Ø, a floating public space on canals, supported by the Danish Art Foundation in collaboration with the City of Copenhagen. Both provoked discussions on the vision of public spaces.

In Kortrijk in Belgium, the FOS project introduced monumental fabric installations to reactivated abandoned textile factories. The Entwined Matters series of installations in Valga, Estonia, turned fragile textile off-cuts into durable and striking forms, and demonstrated Pan- Projects' interest in thoughtful reuse of industrial byproducts.

Pan- Projects' most extensive project is Earthboat in Japan, a design for mobile cabins, prefabricated in CLT and installed without foundations. There are now more than 100 in rural sites across the country.

Yagi sees these projects as a sign that lighter architectural interventions can become impactful statements, and that architecture can remain a public voice even in challenging times.

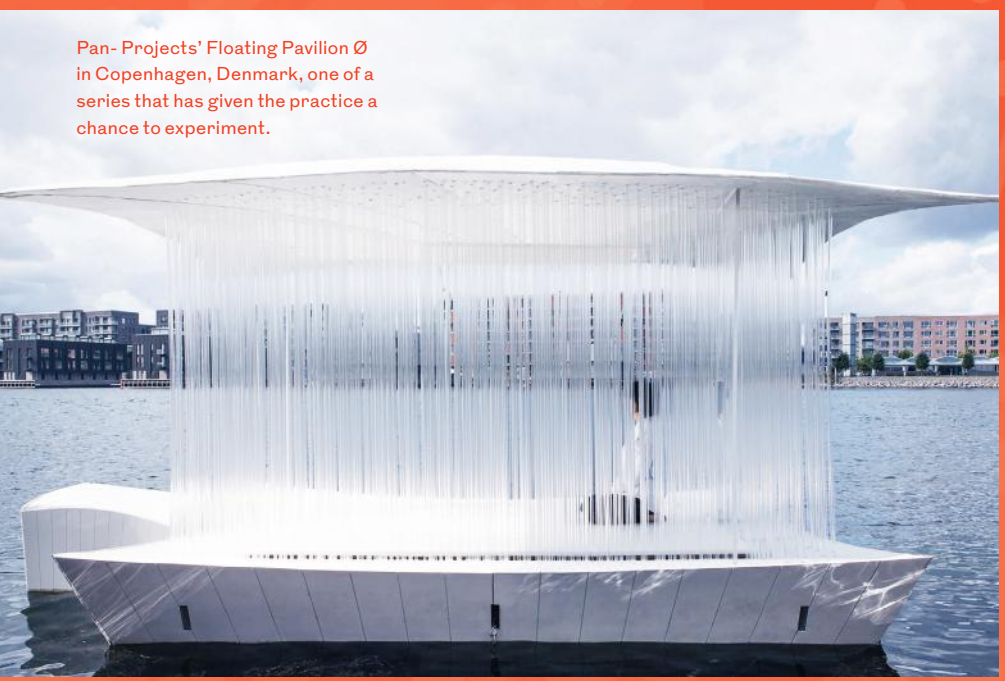
"I want to encourage more young architects to take a similar path: not to give up, but to find approachable ways through which our voices can still be built and heard," she says.

She is particularly interested in reuse, not only for its sustainability value but as 'a radical cultural vehicle where conceptual discourse and new spaces can emerge'. Ongoing Pan- Projects work includes a self-initiated project to regenerate a listed art-deco hotel in the Japanese city of Kobe, which had been abandoned and left to decay.

Yagi's work was described as "inventive and ambitious" by judge Eleanor Young, while Ricardo Moreira commended how she had "found a path for young architects to self-generate projects and be able to build while keeping true to their convictions".

What piece of architecture or placemaking do you most admire?
I admire architectures that are small in scale yet expansive in meaning. The Japanese teahouse, and particularly Sen no Rikyū's Tai-an, is described as a space where the cosmos is contained within a few tatami mats – a masterpiece of condensation. Similarly, pavilions in picturesque gardens are favourites of mine, creating worlds far larger than their physical size. I am also drawn to experimental pavilions that carry the ambitions of their generation. The Crystal Palace remains one of the greatest examples – a short-lived, yet legendary, structure.

Below Earthboat mobile cabin in Nagano, Japan.



Pan- Projects' Floating Pavilion Ø in Copenhagen, Denmark, one of a series that has given the practice a chance to experiment.

LEFT: DAVID HUGO CABO/RIGHT: EARTHBOAT

STUDIOFOLK ARCHITECTS

What piece of architecture or placemaking do you most admire?
The Oodi public library in Helsinki exemplifies participatory design. Engaging over 3,000 residents, Oodi incorporated community input directly into its design. The library offers a highly flexible range of uses – from traditional services to maker spaces, play areas, cooking spaces, music studios and event venues – nearly all free and accessible. With 50% of Finland's population using public libraries monthly, Oodi demonstrates how community-driven design can make individuals feel truly invested in both the space and its programming.

STUDIOFOLK ARCHITECTS

EDWARD POWE

CHAMPIONING COLLABORATIVE CONSTRUCTION PROCESSES

Architect and director, StudioFolk Architects
Part 2 2016 Part 3 2019

Even the smallest interventions can be enriched by collaboration, says Edward Powe, founder of London and Kent practice StudioFolk Architects.

"When I established StudioFolk, my goal was to find new ways of working that are more collaborative, and more enjoyable as a process," says Powe, who was previously an associate at DK-CM.

This belief was demonstrated in a 7m^2 extension to a Grade II-listed townhouse in east London, where the practice worked with ceramicist Charlotte Moore and stone mason Edgar Ward, and engaged early with the contractor. A second phase will involve Ward carving reliefs into the sandstone brick, a reduced embodied carbon alternative to fired clay.

Another micro project, Morden Moments, proposes collaborations with local schoolchildren and artists to create new public realm seating as part of the 2026 London Festival of Architecture.

As well as co-creation, another of Powe's passions is the use of natural materials and a sustainable approach to architecture. Both, he believes, should be "the default, rather than an exception".

He adds: "We're doing a lot of stone at the moment. We're really passionate about swapping out very high-carbon materials for those that are low carbon, ideally locally sourced."

This is demonstrated at the Orchard, the practice's biggest project to date. The new-build house is under construction on an archaeologically sensitive site in Devon, and has a hybrid structure of stone bricks on the ground floor with a timber-frame upper structure.

Although still in its early years, the practice has built up a diverse portfolio, with residential projects supplemented by an office fit-out and a mixed use community co-working and events space.

Judges praised Powe for both his collaborative, co-creation approach and his design strengths. "It feels like he's doing a lot of thinking and doing, combining use of natural materials, craft and collaboration," said Oliver Bulleid.

Eleanor Young praised his dedication to giving even the tiniest project the "energy and creativity of co-creation".

Above left Community centre – a proposal for a historic walled gardens in Devon, by StudioFolk Architects.

Below Mile End Stone Extension, London, by StudioFolk Architects in collaboration with Charlotte Moore Studio.

JAMES RETIEF

FREDDIE ARMITAGE

DRIVEN BY COLLABORATION WITH CRAFTSPEOPLE

Founder, Studio Armitage
Part 2 2016 Part 3 2019

Pool house of stone and glulam for a natural swimming pond by Studio Armitage with Noble Stonework.

While a student, Freddie Armitage worked on building sites, laying stone, rendering walls and learning directly from tradespeople. This experience shaped a design approach he describes as "rooted in making and informed by the realities of how buildings are built".

Armitage recently established his own London practice after working at Níall McLaughlin Architects, Bell Phillips and David Chipperfield Architects. He likes to collaborate closely with craftspeople to understand how historic construction methods can inform current architecture.

This is demonstrated with his design for a stone and timber pool house. Developed with stonemasons, joiners and ecological pool specialists, it combines traditional dry-laid stone construction with a glulam structure. The project has led to research into high-performance stone assemblies that integrate traditional techniques with current sustainability standards.

In Yorkshire, Studio Armitage submitted a planning application for a new brewery and taproom in Holmfirth.

LUCA HALLAM

ROC H BIEL

GIULLIANA GIORGI

RESEARCHING UK STONE QUARRIES AND MODULAR STONE SYSTEMS

Architect, Allies and Morrison;
associate lecturer, Ravensbourne University
Part 2 2018 Part 3 2022

"I believe in radical optimism as a form of activism," says Giulliana Giorgi, an advocate for the use of low-carbon, natural materials.

"Young architects inherit a context of climate emergency, biodiversity loss and social uncertainty. My response is not resignation but an insistence that we can prescribe the futures we want. For me, that future is regenerative: one where human and environmental health are inseparable."

Giorgi combines a one-day-a-week teaching role with four days a week at Allies and Morrison, where she has curated exhibitions, events and guides on natural materials as part of the practice's Climate Change Group. She is a driving force on the development of the Stonut, a prefabricated structural stone system that adapts precast concrete technology to stone. The project aims to prototype a modular system that integrates structure, glazing and insulation.

She is also researching the use of indigenous stone in UK construction after winning a grant this year from the RIBA Scott Brownrigg Award for Sustainable Development. The project, due to launch on a public platform in November, includes the creation of an open-access interactive map of all UK stone quarries, and aims to position stone as a viable low-carbon structural alternative.

Giorgi, who describes herself as "a little bit obsessed with materials", has

The design includes a load-bearing stone facade combining salvaged stone from the site with locally sourced ashlar.

His projects at Níall McLaughlin included a house in Suffolk that reinterpreted medieval timber-frame structures and used non-load-bearing brick infill made from local clay. Armitage was responsible for the external wall packages and technical coordination. The project demonstrates his "interest in the synthesis of factory-made and handmade components, and site-sourced material", says referee Chris Snow, a senior architect at Níall McLaughlin.

"Freddie has the key ability to make judgments by eye and trusts his critical instincts," says Snow, who also praises Armitage's "encyclopaedic" knowledge of buildings and architecture, and strong conceptual grip.

The judges appreciated Armitage's practical knowledge of construction. Dion Barrett commended his willingness to collaborate with tradespeople. "Listening to and working with them will bring out the best use of the materials," he said.

What existing problem would you most like to tackle?
I would like to tackle the vast amount of unoccupied, council-owned buildings in the UK by adapting them into well-crafted, low-energy homes. In France, recent legislation encourages the use of natural and bio-based materials, and this has lifted the quality and environmental performance of everyday architecture. Too much of our built environment is shaped by financial speculation. As Kate Macintosh said, we are "a housing market with an economy attached". I believe in architecture rooted in place, materials and care; serving people through reuse, retrofit and long-term thinking.

New brewery in West Yorkshire, with reclaimed stone, ashlar and a larch glulam frame.

Opposite Natural Materials exhibition at Allies and Morrison, organised by the Climate Change Group.

Right Fieldwork research at one of Burlington Stone's quarries.

What existing problem would you most like to tackle?
I want to address the urgent need for healthier, low-carbon buildings through the use of locally sourced natural materials. My studies have revealed that sustainability and human health are inseparable. My goal is to find ways to mainstream natural-material construction at scale, responding both to our increased housing pressures and planetary wellbeing.

recently taken an online course on healthy materials and toxicology, and is an enthusiastic participant in hands-on building workshops.

"It's a shame that we've lost a bit of our agency as architects and designers in actually being able to work with the material at source," she says.

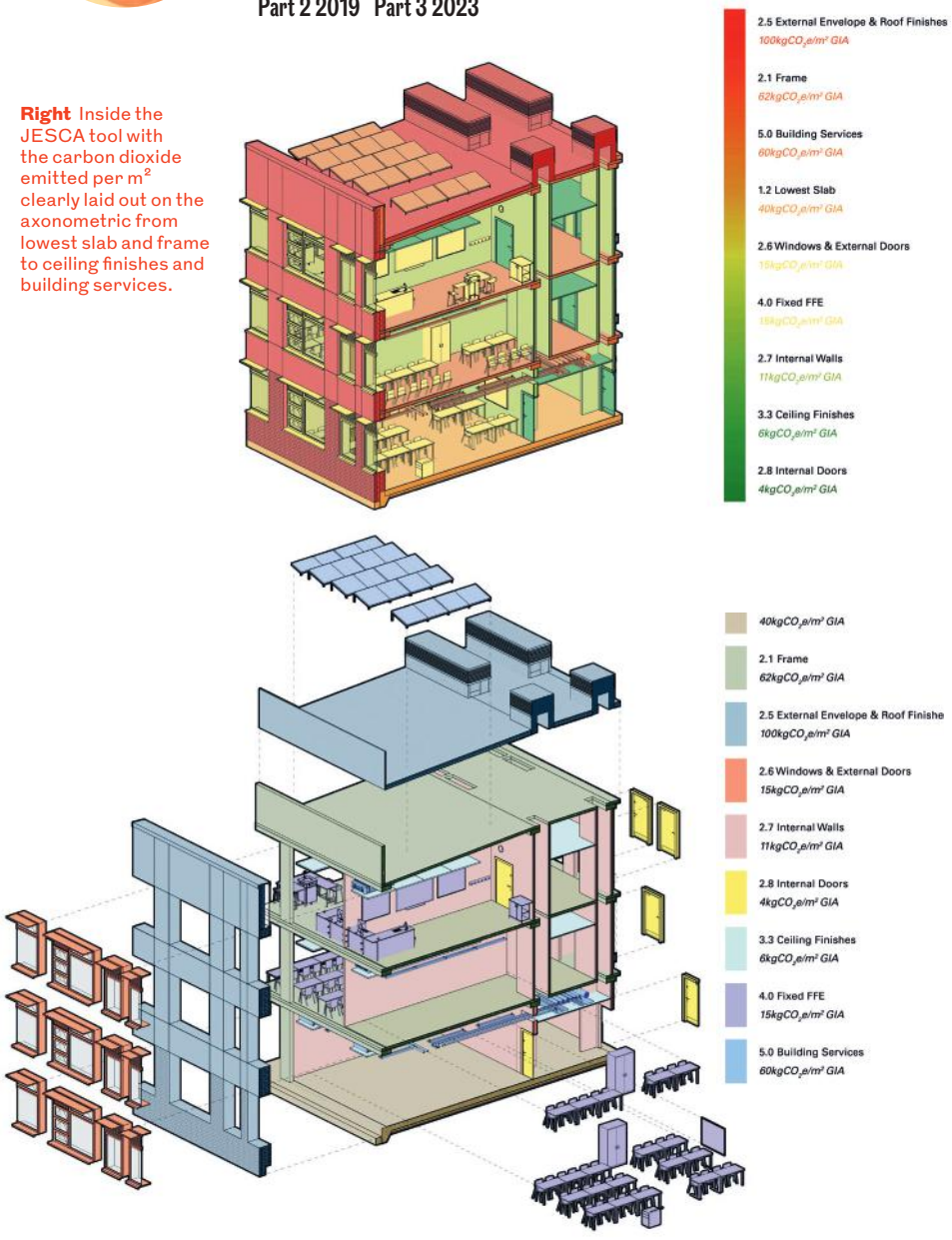
The judges were impressed with the breadth of her advocacy as well as her research collaborations, particularly the quarry map. "She's creating a resource that can help others to use stone more widely," said Ricardo Moreira.

Eleanor Young, meanwhile, praised Stonut as "systemising what seems to be a craft", with the potential to make stone a scalable construction technique.

JAMES ANDERSON

COMMITTED TO DATA-DRIVEN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Architectural assistant, Jestico + Whiles
Part 2 2019 Part 3 2023



Right Inside the JESCA tool with the carbon dioxide emitted per m^2 clearly laid out on the axonometric from lowest slab and frame to ceiling finishes and building services.

JESTICO AND WHILES

What existing problem would you most like to tackle?
I would love to tackle, through architectural design, the ongoing issue of "complex waste" produced in cities. Urban centres generate vast streams of waste from electronics and composites that current systems can't easily process. This material contains critical raw elements, yet we export its value and import its harm. I would use architecture to interrupt that linear flow, turning disposal into repair, separation and making; turning anonymity into public ritual and agency.

Frustrated by a perceived "disconnect" between designers and carbon auditing, James Anderson set out to develop a tool that enabled easier understanding of embodied carbon impact right from the outset of a project.

The outcome is JESCA (Jestico + Whiles Early Stages Carbon Assessment), which Anderson designed, tested and rolled out within the practice's BIM process. The internal tool draws on environmental product declarations from the One Click LCA library and aligns outputs to key industry guidance, highlighting carbon hotspots and allowing comparison of generic options.

"I'm motivated by turning complexity into simple, useful tools that let architects design low-carbon buildings by default," Anderson says.

Such tools, he hopes, will help "democratise" carbon quantification, which he feels is at risk of becoming a very specialist job. "And I don't think it should be," he says. "I think every designer should be able to have a go."

Anderson delivers training on data-driven sustainable design at Jestico + Whiles and manages the practice's carbon reduction plan. He has also led one of its school projects – a primary in Croydon – through the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard pilot programme as part of the development of the new standard.

Referee Julie Désormiers, an associate director at Jestico + Whiles, praised him as a "highly talented and thoughtful designer" who has played a "pivotal" role in developing carbon reduction tools.

Anderson is currently studying for his Part 3. He sees himself as continuing to work on data-driven carbon reduction and would love the opportunity to work on a project from the outset to this end.

Judge Ricardo Moreira was impressed by Anderson's "original thinking and leadership", adding that this is particularly impressive in a junior member of staff.

Judge Eleanor Young praised the JESCA tool as "practical action on climate change that enables early design decisions on carbon use".

JEMIMA HAROLD-SODIPO

ARCHITECT WITH AN EXPERTISE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Architect, Studio Gil
Part 2 2017 Part 3 2021

Jemima Harold-Sodipo describes her practice as "rooted in listening, building trust, and designing spaces that reflect and sustain the communities they serve".

She is praised by Studio Gil founder Pedro Gil for elevating the quality and ambition of the practice's work.

"Her precise methodology, strategic mindset and keen design eye make her exceptional at moving seamlessly between big-picture thinking and detailed resolution," he says.

Harold-Sodipo, who worked for the humanitarian architecture agency Article 25 after her Part 1, found herself naturally drawn to social impact-driven work and increasing access to quality design

"As a Nigerian-British female architect, I have learnt to identify and empathise with the needs of some of the most vulnerable," she says.

She particularly enjoys the engagement side of the work.

"That's definitely the joy that I find in architecture – being able to speak to people one-on-one, people who are actually going to be directly impacted by the projects," she says.

For the Waterden Green Space for Teenage Girls project in the Olympic Park, she co-led participatory workshops with girls aged 12-to-18 from east London. Capturing the girls' perspectives was key to building resilience into the project.

"Over time, the girls became increasingly engaged, vocal and trusting, teaching me the necessity of patient, reciprocal engagement," she says.

She is also working on a renovation to the Edmonton Methodist Church, and is project architect on the Wolves Lane Community Hub, both in north London.

"By engaging with clients and participating in their events, I learned the importance of protecting the spirit of a place," she said of the latter.

The judges were enthusiastic about the community focus of her work. "Her built output shows her desire to create equitable space," said Eleanor Young, while Oliver Bulleid praised her empathy for less heard voices.

PEDRO GIL

Below Harold-Sodipo was project arcitect for Wolves Lane Community Hub.

Above Harold-Sodipo at a co-design event for Waterden Green Space for Teenage Girls.

What piece of architecture or placemaking do you most admire?

I am struck by how the London's landscape is constantly shifting. In 2017, when I visited Francis Kéré's Serpentine Pavilion, I was instantly taken by its vivid blue timber walls and branching steel canopy. Beyond the beautiful geometric patterning and clever rainwater funnelling roof, I was inspired by the dynamism contemporary African architecture brought to the centre of London. The project is my reminder that global culture can be just as responsive as local culture.

LUKE O'DONOVAN

KARAKUSEVIC CARSON ARCHITECTS IMAGERY

MIMI BARR

A COMMITMENT TO DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY SOCIAL HOUSING

Senior development manager, The London Borough of Camden
Part 2 2017 Part 3 2021

Having grown up in council housing herself, Mimi Barr is on a "personal mission" to maximise the delivery of high-quality social housing through her work at Camden Council.

"I bring both architectural expertise and lived experience of social housing to every project I am a part of," she says. "I am committed to tackling the economic and political challenges of delivering new, high-quality social homes, and to finding ways of maximising delivery."

Barr credits a revelatory talk by Daisy Froud on community engagement and a live project on a housing estate with Camden Council, both when still a student, as opening her eyes to how architects can work with communities at the earliest project stages.

After previously working for Burd Haward Architects, she jumped at the opportunity to move client-side in 2023.

"I realised I wanted to be in delivery," she says. "I wanted to be making the brief, designing it, working it through to construction, and having that lessons-learned process."

She identifies the delivery of Highgate Newtown Community Centre as a highlight. Challenges include a late change of brief during construction to deliver temporary accommodation for Afghan refugees. She led on triaging and resolving defects for the newly housed families.

"My role was making sure that we could keep good quality design throughout all of these quick decisions," she says, adding that seeing families being able to cook for the first time in two years was "very rewarding".

Current projects include a large estate-regeneration project in Gospel Oak.

She has found her architectural training invaluable. "Architecture grounded me in problem-solving and strategic thinking," she says, "skills I now deploy to unlock housing delivery and to ensure that new homes are not just built, but built with dignity, purpose and lasting impact.'

Judges were hugely impressed with her "unsung hero", behind the scenes role. "Her energy, enthusiasm and ability to deal with all the crap and come out with some good stuff the other side is something the profession needs more of," said Oliver Bulleid.

RACHEL FOREMAN

ADVOCATE FOR ENGAGEMENT-DRIVEN SUSTAINABILITY

Architect, alma-nac Part 2 2020 Part 3 2022

Net zero student engagement workshop.

ALMA-NAC

Rachel Foreman is memorably described as "the Swiss army knife of architects" by her referee, alma-nac director Chris Bryant. "She has developed an impressive breadth of skills so early in her career and, most importantly, applies them confidently across complex projects," he adds.

Foreman joined alma-nac in 2022 and now leads the practice's drive towards net zero as a sustainability champion, creating its first sustainability tracker for project delivery and leading its B-Corp accreditation.

"I have been championing sustainability from all angles," she says, "exploring alternative avenues beyond a building's fabric to drive holistic change through user engagement, education and empowerment."

This is demonstrated by her design and delivery of a pilot behaviour change programme to reduce energy use across 23 schools. Commissioned by the Department for Education, the project included a workshop day at each school to enthuse both young people and staff

Barking Energy Centre, London.

ALMA-NAC

What piece of architecture or placemaking do you most admire?

I admire building designs that look at sustainability through a longer-term, holistic and site-specific lens, in addition to material accreditations, such as the Weston at Yorkshire Sculpture Gallery by Feilden Fowles, or Astley Castle by Witherford Watson Mann. These two examples combine longevity as well as low embodied energy to create buildings that will stand the test of time and be around for reuse in the future.

Left Model showing plans for Gospel Oak estate regeneration, one of the projects on which Barr is working client-side.

and make them agents of change. This resulted in an average energy reduction of 31% in the top five schools. Foreman hopes to scale engagement-driven sustainability across more existing schools, and champion embedding this into all new projects.

She is also project architect on Barking Energy Centre, a civic building designed to make energy production visible to the public via large windows that display the complex systems. Information about energy generation is included in the landscape. Foreman, who led all construction design elements, hopes the landmark building will demonstrate how architecture can educate and empower communities on energy production.

Judge Dion Barrett was particularly impressed with the effectiveness of her school energy use reduction programme. "As architects, some of the most effective solutions don't involve building at all, yet still draw on our expertise to make a real impact," he said. Eleanor Young added: "'It's an impressive, scalable solution, drawing on participation."

DEEPAK SADHWANI

DEDICATED TO EMBEDDING SUSTAINABLE, LOW-CARBON THINKING

Founder, ZeroBuild; senior building physics engineer, Energy Systems Catapult

What existing problem would you most like to tackle?
Housing is not a commodity, yet delivery lags far behind demand. Homelessness is rising, and councils are facing huge temporary accommodation bills. I strive to tackle this; to find smarter ways to build by unlocking challenging small sites, forging unlikely partnerships, and testing new funding routes. My ambition is simple but urgent: to accelerate the delivery of truly affordable homes, at scale, without losing sight of the communities they serve.

Keen to aid decarbonisation on a grand scale, Deepak Sadhwani shifted from architecture to building physics and started a new career creating tools to guide carbon reduction decisions. This enables him, he says, "to specialise where design decisions have the greatest leverage: before a single brick is laid".

He became fascinated with the idea of scale while working on complex megaprojects at the Indian practice of Morphogenesis. An MSc in sustainable mega buildings at Cardiff helped shape his new direction and he found a suitable home for his ambitions at Energy Systems Catapult, whose mission, he says, is to "decarbonise the whole UK".

Here, Sadhwani designs data-driven tools to aid the delivery of net zero homes, including his flagship project, the Optioneering Tool. This integrates energy use, overheating risk, PV generation, battery logic, life-cycle cost, circularity and operational and whole-life carbon into one decision-ready dataset. .

"The innovation is the marriage of rigour and clarity," he says. "Designers, councils and funders can now compare performance standards, fabric, orientation and systems with cost–carbon–comfort-circularity trade-offs made visible and credible."

For retrofit, his projects include the City of York Retrofit Demonstrator, for which Sadhwani co-created a virtual demonstrator to show the impact of individual measures.

With his own ZeroBuild company, he recently authored six QA/reporting tools, including one that is open-source.

He hopes his tools can help tackle the twin challenges of poorly performing new-builds and those requiring deep retrofit.

"I aim to embed data-driven optioneering as a default step at planning stage, so every home is designed with the right fabric, services and layout," he says.

Sadhwani has also embarked on training to become an AI engineer. Impressively, he still finds time to keep his hand in designing houses in India, where he has an architectural license, and last year designed and oversaw the construction of two net zero homes.

Judges praised his efforts to drive uplifts in sustainable practice through work such as the Optioneering Tool, described by judge Ricardo Moreira as "a very ambitious tool in terms of integrating so many aspects of environmental performance in buildings".

ENERGY SYSTEMS CATAPULT

Above Virtual pathway for retrofit

What piece of architecture or placemaking do you most admire?
I admire the contrasting yet complementary placemaking of Symphony Park in Manchester and Coal Drops Yard in London. Symphony Park reimagines urban residential living with green spaces, clean geometry and a sense of calm that feels rare in dense cities; while Coal Drops Yard brilliantly reuses industrial heritage to create a vibrant public-commercial realm.

THE RISING STARS 2025 SHORTLIST

RORY CHISHOLM
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
DONALD INSALL ASSOCIATES
Conservation-accredited advocate for beautiful and informed contemporary interventions in historic buildings

BENJAMIN CONNELL
DESIGNER AND ARCHITECTURAL ILLUSTRATOR,
CONCRETE CLOUDS
Champion of the power of hand-drawing through his distinctive and engaging architectural illustrations

WILL JUDGE
ARCHITECT, RURAL OFFICE
Impressive all-rounder, combining teaching at Cardiff University with diverse work at a west Wales practice, where he leads interdisciplinary design and community engagement

ALEX KNOWLES
ARCHITECT, FAULKNERBROWNS
Demonstrates a passion for heritage through both his practice work and his successful campaign to secure the future of the Belfast Assembly Rooms

CONOR MOSES
DESIGN LEAD, PATCH
Tackling high street regeneration and social isolation through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings for workspace and cultural use

TOM RIMMINGTON
ARCHITECT, JTP
Co-leader of both a new community engagement methodology and a social value strategy at his practice, where he also drives communications strategy and mentorship

DEEPTHI RAVI
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN SPECIALITY,
PLP ARCHITECTURE
Dedicated to embedding sustainable, low-carbon thinking across practice projects, including a circular office fit-out of PLP's own studio

DANIEL STILWELL
ARCHITECT AND HISTORIAN,
CHARLES HOLLAND ARCHITECTS
Uses his knowledge of architectural history to enrich the work of the practice, including research for new forms of rural housing.

ALEX SUTTON
DIRECTOR, STUDIO SUTTON
Studio leader dedicated to transforming underperforming commercial assets through adaptive reuse and human-centred design

KAZUMASA TAKADA
CO-FOUNDER, PAN- PROJECTS
Explores how overlooked materials can become architectural drivers, both through his practice's work and teaching at the Royal College of Art

Produced by RIBA Journal
Editor: Eleanor Young
Words: Pamela Buxton
Designer: Linda Byrne
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3: Culture

Simon Menges
Turner Contemporary, Margate 2011
DAYI 4x5 with 65mm Nikkor lens

It took two years at TU Berlin for it to dawn on Simon Menges that he might not make a very good architect; looking back, had he not bought into a close friend's wild endorsement of the course, he thinks he'd have done filmmaking. Moving on to study photography, the discipline still left an imprint, like silver bromide exposed to light.

One of two students to apply for a pair of 2008 placements in China, the trip's prospect was only marred by Menges' uncertainty over what he'd do there. But when David Chipperfield's Shanghai office needed a photographer to document derelict 1930s buildings, to be restored as part of its huge Rockbund commission, it took a punt on him.

So did Wolfgang Tillmans: when Menges came back to Berlin two years later it was to apprentice at the artist's studio. Bathed for four years in the safelight of experimentation, he found time to reframe the scope of his own architectural work.

An invite one day by a DCA director to go for a jaunt out to Margate became, over the journey's course, more businesslike in intent; Menges recalls his unease, realising he had only 10 large-format frames left. Stood back, a vast sky suffused by high cloud, the Turner Contemporary's crystalline form was captured as Viking sunstone, glinting with a cracked shell's pearly iridescence. ● **Jan-Carlos Kucharek**

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'The most insightful architecture may be that which recognises the order hidden within what appears chaotic'

Making order out of chaos

Eleanor Young asks: can we find room for both disorder and harmony in architecture?

Trigger warning – you might find this a bit woo… But it is grounded in real discussions with great architects, so I'll risk it. The subject is what is disorder and what is harmony, and how architects can channel one or the other. And which is best.

I am out one evening, at a book launch for Learning from the Local (see page 50). Author Piers Taylor of Invisible Studio highlights the idea of loosening the architect's grip on design ideation, narrative and detail. As he finishes up his energised explication of his book, the questions begin, with ideas from all sides.

This concept was powerfully illustrated by one project in the book, Sarah Wigglesworth Architects' Straw Bale House. Here, the ideal of locally grounded design met the reality of execution when subcontractors went their own way, sorting the mixed concrete chunks for the gabions so the grey side was presented outwards, contrary to Wigglesworth's hopes.

Does drawing on local ideas, empowering people and working with the local ecosystem – coupled with loosening control – necessarily create a friendly, higgledy piggledy sort of architecture that grounds it in place?

From the audience Niall McLaughlin is drawn into a question, or perhaps a provocation. He suggests that Taylor may be "staging a disorder". The best work, he asserts, is when we are looking towards harmony.

Yet perhaps the dichotomy between harmony and disorder is less a binary choice and more a function of perception. Anna Liu of Tonkin Liu reflects on the question later, asking whether disorder is really more about how we see things.

We can observe this in the natural world: zooming in on the apparent chaos of the branches of an ash tree. When we get up close we eventually perceive the ordered nature of the leaves, arranged opposite one another across the stem. It all feels a bit Jedi mantra: "There is no chaos, there is only harmony."

Breathing deep in yoga at the end of a frenetic day of cross-cutting demands, screen-screwed eyes coming slowly back into focus, I would gently opt for order and harmony. But making my way through the city, with this and that catching my eye – signs, doorways, lights, cyclists, vapers, bollards – I am enlivened by the sights and the movement. Disorder is energy! Disorder is fun!

Perhaps the goal is not to eliminate perceived disorder, but to understand its underlying structure. The most insightful architecture may be that which recognises the order hidden within what appears chaotic, grounding us not just in place, but in a more complex, energy-rich reality.

And finally, goodbyes. On the cover you will see Nicholas Grimshaw and Terry Farrell's Herman Miller factory in Bath, completed in 1977 as their 15-year partnership drew to a close. We look back at the lives and work of these two remarkable architects (pages 116 to 120). We are also using the image to say goodbye to this format of the magazine: your next RIBAJ will be landing in January, with an exciting new design to chime with the new ribaj.com and the RIBA rebrand.

Left Zooming in on the ash leaf.

STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH PHOTO: ISTOCK | MALERAPASO

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'Character can emerge out of repair, retaining traces of occupation while supporting another stage of inhabitation'

Reordering the "good bones" of an artist's home
ribaj.com/beck-road

Curating your career

Revitalising architects' lifelong learning opportunities can deliver huge benefits, both for individuals and for the overall health of the profession, writes Chris Williamson

Last month I reflected on how my inbox is dominated by two concerns: low fees, together with commensurate low salaries, and a greater need to influence politicians, media and decision-makers. I wrote about my plans for greater visibility, setting up a 'shadow cabinet' to engage with government, and collaborating more widely. This month I want to outline plans to re-energise our continuing professional development (CPD) or, as I prefer to call it, lifelong learning.

Our CPD is already seen as gold standard in the profession, an offering that helps boost architecture's profile, credibility and continuous improvement. Building on the work of the RIBA Academy, I would like to develop online lifelong learning modules so that architects can shape their own career path. Adding more specialisms will demonstrate our value, developing architects' knowledge while helping to showcase our worth, in turn increasing our fees and salaries.

Online lifelong learning modules will help encourage diversity in the profession. If a graduate wants to complete the journey to become an architect as soon as possible or move in a different but parallel direction, we need to accommodate that. It will also ensure accountability and help show we are up to date and well informed. If we want greater respect and better fees, we have to continually improve.

The benefit of CPD is that it enables architects to curate their own careers, to specialise or, where appropriate, to retrain. Someone with 40 years' experience may need different lifelong learning than a recent graduate, so flexibility is key.

As mentioned, CPD will provide the basis to increase salaries and fees by fostering greater specialisms and skills. It can facilitate greater flexibility for a broader range of architects – for example, those returning to work after a career break could return with new or enhanced skills – and it could help with salary benchmarking.

In general, it would, similar to our current offering, allow participation at the user's own pace with informative, educational and entertaining modules that can be completed on the bus, on the train, at lunch or at home, while automatically filling in a log book and providing certification. The ability to go back and try again also takes the anxiety out of traditional exams.

When I worked in South Korea, Singapore or China I was always impressed by the hunger for education and for constant improvement. We need to make this more enjoyable and less stressful. I have recently completed two intensive online courses that were both educational and entertaining. One was to qualify as a certified BREEAM assessor for infrastructure projects, and the other to understand the skills to be a successful non-executive director. Both were about 120 hours of study with positive new learning outcomes, much of which was outside either RIBA or ARB standard CPD frameworks.

Many institutes around the world would like to collaborate with RIBA, and as we continue to encourage new members overseas, raise standards and build a global community, continually enhancing our offerings, including CPD, remains key.

I have concentrated here on lifelong learning for those already on their architectural journey. Next month I will write about inspiring schools and the community. ●

STEPHANIE WUNDERLICH

GARETH GARDNER

Left Carry on learning: maybe about BREEAM. Squire's Space House in London is the largest listed building in the UK to achieve BREEAM Outstanding.

DISCIPLINARY SANCTION: PUBLIC REPRIMANDS

Following separate unrelated hearings before the professional conduct committee on 17 July and 21 July 2025 respectively, RIBA's hearings panel found Mr Lee Robert Adams (membership no 12725624) and Mr Marek Maciej Redo (membership no 20027067) guilty of breaching RIBA byelaw 5.1.7 in that they acted in breach of the RIBA code of conduct (2021). The panel decided that the sanction for this be a public reprimand.

Restoring a shrine to human courage

A major conservation project by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has renovated and sustainably updated the Menin Gate memorial in Ypres, Belgium

VISITFLANDERS

In the heart of Ypres (Ieper) in Flanders, the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing is not just a monument; it is a solemn register of sacrifice. Standing in the place where countless soldiers marched towards the First World War battlefields, a visit to the Menin Gate is an unmissable part of any trip to the West Flanders region of Belgium.

Designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield with sculpture by Sir William Reid-Dick, it was dedicated in 1927. This magnificent arch records the names of more than 54,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who perished in the Ypres Salient during the First World War and whose graves are unknown. Engraved into its Portland stone walls, these names represent the profound tragedy of war, a poignant testament to those "to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial".

That sacrifice is marked each evening at 8pm, when traffic stops and buglers of the Last Post Association sound the Last Post beneath the massive arches. This moving ceremony has been performed nightly since 1928, symbolising the town's enduring gratitude.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) recently completed a major restoration project to ensure that the memorial stands proudly in perpetuity. The work started in 2023 and went beyond simple renovation. The respectful effort included structural repairs and careful, sustainable efforts to conserve original materials. Historic brickwork was repointed and energy-efficient lighting was installed, as well as a state-of-the-art eco-roof to encourage biodiversity and protect the structure for the next century. The iconic lions atop the monument were also carefully and expertly restored to preserve the historic integrity and original craftsmanship.

A visit to Ypres and the Menin Gate memorial offers a profound connection to human courage. Bear witness to a legacy that will never fade, and ensure that the names of the fallen are never forgotten.

The view underneath the Menin Gate memorial in Ypres today.

visitflanders.com
facebook.com/FlandersFields1418
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Below The unveiling of the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in 1927.

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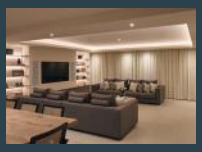
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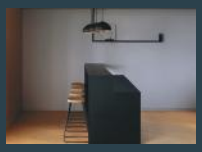
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By INOVARA

Urban renewal

A new appraisal of how UK cities were shaped in the second half of the 20th century updates the work of its celebrated forebears. It's a tasty mix, but Hugh Pearman is left craving more

Top right Strange bedfellows: Westgate House and the Union Rooms in Newcastle. In The Modern British City, John Pendlebury explores conservation in postwar towns.

Below Southampton's modernist Wyndham Court is celebrated by Owen Hatherley.

There are all kinds of inherited narratives about the tumultuous changes that shaped the UK physically and socially in the postwar-to-millennium timespan. A new book, The Modern British City 1945–2000, makes a concerted academic attempt to reappraise the period from our standpoint 25 years into the 21st century.

There are 27 contributors, many of them younger specialists in a range of disciplines: architecture, urbanism, history, culture, sociology, geopolitics and conservation. Their self-appointed task was to turn what began as a conference in 2014, then a networked discussion group called SPUD (Society for the Promotion of Urban Discussion), into a published study. But not a survey: instead contributors were encouraged to "say something new and interesting about cities and urban experience in modern Britain". The mission was "to explain to the interested reader why cities look and feel the way they do".

The resulting essays are grouped thematically into six sections: ideas, people, places, economics, politics and (loosely) travel. Inevitably some resist this categorisation and could easily jump themes. I found it simpler to consider each essay on its own terms, dipping in and out at will.

For instance: being quite old, I have lived through some of the history that's described, so I was drawn to Holly Smith's account of the community architecture movement, something that was in full flow when I first started out as a writer at the tail end of the 1970s. London's Covent Garden and Spitalfields had been saved by these people. Local residents were trying to stop the South Bank being overrun with offices, even though they were designed by a conflicted Richard Rogers, who I found one day manning a stall with wife Ruthie at Waterloo Station, trying to explain that he was on their side really. The housing co-op Coin Street Community Builders was the winner there.

Smith is good at winkling out what happened to that movement – how it was hijacked by the late Macclesfield businessman-architect Rod Hackney and others to be a front for Prince-Charles-approved traditionalism. This is something that continues today, as poshos with a conservative style agenda claim to have the backing of the people – and science. We're a long way from the activist squatters, disaffected GLC architects and determined long-term residents who started it all in the capital. The evictions and

'Different eras, approaches and ideologies get thrown together – the Victorian industrial city, so hated by postwar planners, now exists as part of the modern post-industrial city's mix'

Above The evolution of Leeds' waterfront.

DAVID ELLIS

bulldozing of communities also continue today – though as privately financed 'estate regeneration' rather than publicly funded 'slum clearance'.

John Wyver's run-through of how British cities were depicted on film is good, as is Elizabeth Buettner's nuanced account of the growth of urban multiculturalism resulting from immigration as the UK reached a point of full employment and shortage of workers. John Davis looks dispassionately at gentrification, tracing its roots back to interwar Chelsea rather than the generally accepted 1960s Islington. Owen Hatherley returns to his native Southampton to discuss its strange invisibility given the glory of its monumental 1960s housing megastructure, Wyndham Court, by Lyons Israel Ellis. Otto Saumarez-Smith considers the 'left-behind' cities of Middlesbrough and Stoke-on-Trent, and the oddness of Ironbridge in Shropshire, surrounded and rescued by the new town of Telford. He suggests the omelette, with lumpy bits, as a better simile for cheek-by-jowl cities than Cedric Price's celebrated scrambled eggs analogy. Different eras, approaches and ideologies get thrown together. The Victorian industrial city, so hated by postwar planners, now exists as part of the modern post-industrial city's mix.

Other picks are Matt Cook's account of queer urban life in four cities (Manchester, Leeds, Brighton and Plymouth), and Keith Vernon's history of the urban impact of ever-increasing numbers of students – though he only touches briefly on the extraordinary and seemingly endless boom in speculative private-sector student accommodation, preferring to concentrate on how student populations moved into declining centres, not without conflict.

Saima Nasar's description of London's Notting Hill starts with the vicious and sometimes fatal 1950s race riots leading to the famous Carnival as a symbol of contested territory. Rightwing 'send them home' rhetoric was the same then as it is now, and the violence much worse. The area had a dangerous reputation in the press until the end of the 20th century. Notwithstanding gentrification, it remains a touchstone for race relations in the UK.

It's instructive to compare Laura Balderstone's detailed account of the activities of people in the relatively affluent Leicester suburb of Oadby with Nicholas Bullock's portrait of life in the tower blocks and Victorian terraces of East London's Newham, "caught between centre and suburbs" – now going upmarket in parts and exporting its homeless elsewhere.

The ambition of this book is to stand alongside earlier lauded works such as the multi-authored 1973 work The Victorian City: Images and Realities edited by HJ (Jim) Dyos and Michael Wolff. The editors of The Modern British City are quite open about this – TMBC is both a homage to that forebear and an actual updating of it to bring into play the UK of modernity.

There is an afterword, by the Cambridge cultural historian Peter Mandler – which is a summary. There are no 'findings' or calls for action resulting from all these accounts, other than "this seems a good time to reassess modern urban history, as the extraordinary renaissance of work in this area by early-career scholars has demonstrated".

In the end, that's it: this is a showcase for newer voices and interpretations of a now relatively distant period. Well worth it, but I was hoping for a bit more. Perhaps a manifesto. ●

The Modern British City 1945–2000, edited by Simon Gunn, Peter Mandler and Otto Saumarez Smith. (Lund Humphries, 496pp, £65)


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Scotland's new wave

Isabelle Priest on the tide of ultra-modern, architect-designed homes being built in Scotland's most remote locations

Taigh na Coille, Sutherland, by WT Architecture, hunkers into the contours of the hills at the same time as stepping up the slope.

DAPPLE PHOTOGRAPHY

An exciting and innovative movement has emerged in Scottish architecture. Over the last two decades, Scotland's most remote and rural locations have become the sites of ultra-modern, architect-designed homes, conceived with a serious empathy for the natural environment.

The first of these types of homes that I visited was Heaste, designed by Mary Arnold-Forster Architects in 2018. This experience opened areas of discovery for me as RIBAJ managing editor, writing and commissioning articles about the homes being built in Scotland's landscapes and the architecture practices working on them. That same year, Lochside House in the West Highlands, designed by Haysom Ward Miller Architects, was named RIBA House of the Year.

Over the subsequent seven years, the number of contemporary homes being built in Scotland – and the practices working on them – has proliferated, given additional momentum by the pandemic. The rich diversity of projects, clients, geographical locations and architecture prompted me to write my book New Scottish Houses: Contemporary Architecture and Living in the Landscape.

The idea for the book came out of a collaborative process between my journalistic work, the enduring appeal of these articles to RIBAJ readers, and the realisation that no comprehensive book on these houses existed already. That makes a book placing these private houses side by side with their peers particularly timely. It covers 24 projects but could have easily featured twice that number and maintained the same variety and quality.

The oldest project is House No 7 on Tiree, designed by Denizen Works in 2013, but most have been built in the past five years. The newest are hot off the press and almost still unseen.

The trend for this work traces its beginnings to the turn of the millennium on the Isle of Skye – a result of advances in infrastructure and technology, reactions to the types of houses then being built in rural areas, a search for a more authentic, contextual architecture, and even the embarkation of a cultural renaissance. However, the geography of the projects included in New Scottish Houses is spread across the country. Hence the chapters are arranged around north, east, south, west, central and the islands.

Likewise, the book shows the ever-expanding group and cross-pollination of architectural firms working on such projects. New young practices are establishing all the time, including Izat Arundell, whose Caochan na Creige house is

DAVID BARBOUR

JACK HOBHOUSE

displayed on New Scottish Houses' front cover.

But what makes these projects important to learn about now? The in-depth building studies of each project cover all manner of home types, including principal dwellings, modern farmhouses and holiday hideaways. What unites them is a desire to be embedded within the natural landscape. Architects designing for themselves additionally enjoy the freedom to experiment with new ideas, materials, techniques and technologies.

Many are newly built, others sensitively unfold from existing buildings, or use the fabric found in place. While there is no specific set of principles, what links the work is an ambition to be deeply contextual. Four areas of focus emerge that identify the houses and bring them together as a collective body of work: landscape, culture, construction and sustainability.

The often-extreme geographical and climatic conditions that are the driving force behind many of the clients' desires to live in these locations can have a direct impact on the design of the houses. Generally, the more tranquil the setting, the more challenging the works. The houses are located on private islands, on the coast, by lochs, on top of or on the side of mountains, on hillsides or sweeping landscapes, or at the end of long tracks far from the nearest hard-surface road. Many are off-grid from some or all mains services, or are limited by protections for the natural landscape or wildlife. The projects find answers on how to build and live comfortably and well in the wildest and remotest of settings, often with minimal resources and equipment. These are lessons that can be applied far beyond national boundaries.

This brings us also to the subject of sustainability. Many of the projects in New Scottish Houses offer a multitude of solutions to the climate crisis through their superior thermal performance, pioneering and committed use of natural materials, passive designs and integrated renewable energy technologies or low-carbon design in embodied or operational energy.

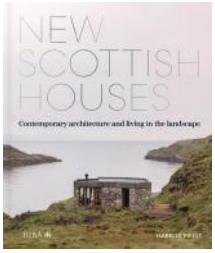
The architecture practices involved in this work are aware of their role in combating carbon-heavy design, and of the responsibility of designing suitable and sustainable homes in such precious, stunning landscapes. Many feel they are experiencing the effects of changing climate first-hand, bearing additional responsibility to design appropriately as well as to connect with the search for retreat.

Although this book celebrates the private homes being designed in rural and remote Scotland, it is also about how to design beautiful contemporary houses in landscapes, and the practitioners who are mastering new ways of working, designing and building that can be universally appreciated and learned from.

DAVID BARBOUR

Above left and bottom left Glendale Cottage, Stirlingshire, by Ann Nisbet Studio, uses techniques such as contrasting colours and open sightlines to make it ageing and dementia-friendly so its inhabitants will be able to live in it for longer, despite its rural location.

Above right Island Retreat by McGinlay Bell is a complete upgrade of an off-grid 1980s house on a private island. Construction had to be carefully considered as access is by small boats and there are no cars or roads.



New Scottish Houses: Contemporary Architecture and Living in the Landscape, by Isabelle Priest, is available from major retailers and ribabooks.com, £45.

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Since its formation 15 years ago, Assemble has evolved and its personnel shifted – but the influence of the multidisciplinary collective has steadily grown

Words: Flo Armitage-Hookes Portraits: Hannah Thual

Gathering force

"The places that we occupy are a big part of what we do and who we are [now]," reflects Mary Anderson, a partner with the Assemble collective. The unconventional group, which works across the fields of architecture, design and art, has from its inception recognised the value of the shared artisan yard. Now 15 years old, it runs three workspaces around London and has etched interdisciplinarity and collaboration into its organisational fabric – enriching projects and creating new opportunities.

Arriving at Leaside Yard, Assemble's base in Bow, east London, it's unclear whether I'm entering an architecture studio or an industrial space. Stacks of crates, materials and fragments of former projects are bundled between a squat brick building, shipping containers and warehouses. Nearby, cars thunder past on a busy A-road. It's practical and unpretentious: a place for making, storage and working together – for both the collective and its tenants.

Leaside Yard, set up in 2023, is the newest site created and managed by Assemble for designers, fabricators and artists. All three of its locations are kitted out with specialist facilities: Bow has a carpentry focus, Brixton centres on fashion and textiles and Woolwich is a hub for manufacturing, film and music. In all, there are 60 tenants and, over the years and across former locations, Assemble has accumulated an impressive network of skilled makers.

The workspace model grew organically from an early affordable studio project, Yardhouse, and became separate (on paper at least) from the design business in 2017. Beyond providing a regular income stream, the enterprise has underpinned some of the collective's most engaging design work.

Opposite Mary Anderson and Giles Smith reflect on 15 years of Assemble.

The Blue, a project which reinvigorated a historic market in Bermondsey in 2022 with a clock tower at its centre, was delivered in collaboration with many of Assemble's tenants – including Hayatsu Architects, a furniture maker, a metal worker, a graphic designer and more. "It was trying to make something that was collectively authored by lots of different practices, people, organisations and individuals. As a result, it has a much stronger character than if we had solely authored the entire project," reflects Anderson's fellow Assemble partner Giles Smith. The pooling of skills produced a unique, carefully considered and richly textured result – with robust oak benches, a demolition-waste-flecked water fountain and tin can tiles – in what would otherwise be a small public realm project.

Below Creating fabric cyanotypes in Leaside Yard for installation project Sunfast at Shedhalle Zurich.

IREM GÜNGEZ

ASSEMBLE

There's been a noticeable shift from Assemble's DIY beginnings, when members would quickly upskill to actualise a project – whether sewing curtains made of roof cladding for The Cineroleum or self-building Folly For a Flyover. "I think we've learned that the value in making things yourself is not that you need to make everything… People with clearly defined expertise are so valuable, and we can learn so much from them. But I think you appreciate that all the more when you've [previously] tried to do something yourself," says Smith.

Opportunities for hands-on making are still embraced, but more often as a design tool or way of learning. Instead, there seems to be a refined understanding of how and where members' skills best lie. "We're good at bringing people together, facilitating and designing for that [making] expertise," says Anderson.

This is evident in Assemble's ongoing community project, Granby Four Streets, in Liverpool. As well as revitalising four derelict streets, this spawned a local architectural ceramics enterprise, Granby Workshop, in 2015. Since forming, the workshop has manufactured tiles and terrazzo for various Assemble projects in Granby, for The Blue and for a nearly completed student housing project for St Anne's College at the University of Oxford. "We have a strong ongoing relationship and love working with them," says Smith warmly.

Above left Over the years, collaboration with skilled makers has replaced a more DIY approach.

Above right Durham Wharf, Hammersmith, under construction: artist studio and gallery projects have become a fruitful niche for Assemble.

Below left Sewing curtains made of roof cladding for The Cineroleum, Clerkenwell, 2010.

Below right The Blue, Bermondsey, 2022, thrived on collective authorship.

ALEXANDER MCLEAN

Assemble's approach to securing new design work has also shifted. "Early on, there were lots of self-initiated projects in which we were almost taking an idea and finding some funding… And it feels like the practice has evolved into being a bit more client-focused," Smith continues. This was partly down to the dwindling availability of public grant funding, but it also reflected a desire to pursue more diverse and permanent work, emboldened by the success of Assemble's first major project, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art in New Cross, in 2018. Assemble created new gallery spaces by converting rooftop water tanks and redesigning the rear of the building, proving it could complete significant works for a cultural institution.

Whether consciously or not, the collective has carved an 'artist-adjacent' niche for itself. Recently, Assemble has been commissioned to work on various studio and gallery projects, including the transformation a former train

HANNAH THUAL (2)

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ASSEMBLE(2)

Left Le Magasin Electrique, France, 2023, for Atelier LUMA: Assemble is winning work overseas.

Right Assemble's 2015 Turner Prize exhibition launched ceramics enterprise Granby Workshop to a wider public.

depot into a workspace for design and research laboratory Atelier LUMA in southern France; a collection of live/work artist studios at the former home of artists Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden in Hammersmith; and the renovation of the Mu.ZEE art gallery in Ostend, Belgium. Members' strong relationships with makers, experience of how studios operate, and ever-expanding back catalogue of high-quality creative projects has given the collective quite the edge.

However, the legacy of Assemble's early adventures endures – for better and for worse. The group is grateful that its profile still attracts fantastical and unusual opportunities, such as transforming a Grade II-listed house in Spitalfields into a community centre and creating a 4m-high thatch dog in Regent's Park.

Yet Assemble's proven ability to work with very little has attracted some misguided propositions. "I think some of those early projects generated an illusion that things can happen for nothing, when actually they all take lots of work and time and effort and money," says Smith. "You get quite a lot of people coming to us saying, 'We've got no money, we've got a piece of land and we need something to happen here.'" But even Assemble members can't magic up value without cold hard cash – and nor should they.

A notable portion of the group's work is now overseas, which has helped mitigate the challenges of working in the UK. "It's really hard to get work here as a small business. Our procurement systems are not set up to support them… Working in other places in Europe, you see much more supportive processes, where they actively encourage young practices to do work," Smith tells me, while acknowledging that Assemble has been luckier than most.

Since forming, the collective has won the Turner Prize, been elected a Royal Academician, is the subject of recently published monograph by critic Aaron Betsky, and has produced a stream of inventive projects. Remarkably, Assemble has stayed tight-knit and, though people have joined and left, the number of partners has risen from 12 in 2010 to 18 in 2025. In the meantime, its success and influence have only multiplied.

Below Ten of Assemble's 18 partners at Leaside Yard, prior to the group's 15th birthday celebrations.

HANNAH THUAL

The Grimshaw founder, high-tech pioneer and Eden Project architect has died aged 85. Hugh Pearman looks back on a truly memorable life

Sir Nicholas Grimshaw 1939–2025

"It's difficult, architecture," Nick Grimshaw once told me with his usual candour. "It takes a long time to really feel confident about it. I think I'm beginning to understand it now."

This admission came at the start of the 1990s, by which time he was well established as a 'high-tech' innovator but still running a relatively small practice that was delivering its largest and most prestigious job yet: the Waterloo International rail terminal. Its glazed, curving trainshed referenced the glory days of Victorian railway building in a very different aesthetic, more organic than mechanistic. This was completed in 1993 and remained Grimshaw's favourite building because of what it represented: mainstream acceptance, the trust of important clients justified. Having previously built mostly on urban fringes – from factories and retail sheds to ice rinks – now his work was at the centre of things. The large international practice that Grimshaw became really started there.

Nick may have been tall and instantly recognisable with his owlish glasses and pale floppy hair, but he was by character a reticent individual and no natural salesman or networker. The 1980s had been the postmodern decade in the UK, and his industrially inspired component-based architecture was anything but PoMo, even if it was to go through a phase of being more expressionist than functionalist. Grimshaw found that his work was deemed unfashionable by some. How to get more attention, and better commissions? In 1988 he decided to splash out on an unusual exhibition at RIBA.

Called Product and Process, it was dominated by full-size pieces of actual buildings and prototype castings. The exhibition drew the crowds, among them a delegation from British Rail. This, they decided, might be the kind of architecture suitable for their imminent international terminal.

Above Grimshaw was a pioneer of high-tech who sometimes called himself a traditionalist, emphasising the craft aspects of architecture.

Below Buckminster Fuller visits the Bayswater student hostel; Grimshaw put bathroom pods on a helical ramp to maximise efficiency.

GRIMSHAW (3)

Born in Hove with an aircraft engineer father and artist mother, Grimshaw was perhaps unconsciously influenced by both those two occupations himself, though his father died when he was only two. After leaving Wellington College at 17 he first tried Edinburgh College of Art, which he found stuffy and dull. Things were not like that at the Architectural Association, to which he won a scholarship in 1962. He was taught by the likes of Peter Cook and Cedric Price.

On graduating he teamed up with Terry Farrell, a year older. After setting up a studio in a Canonbury basement owned by Grimshaw's uncle George, they rented one in Windmill Street, Fitzrovia which they shared with trendy Archigram, finding themselves in the creative architectural whirl of the time. Farrell/Grimshaw lasted 15 years but its founders' concerns always diverged. For a key early job, the 1968 Bayswater students' hostel, Farrell focused on converting the original buildings while Grimshaw designed his spiralling plug-in 'service tower' of steel, glass and prefab GRP bathroom pods. All attention was on that: Bucky Fuller came to visit.

The two collaborated more fully on the Park Road 10-storey apartment tower overlooking Regent's Park (now listed) for a co-ownership housing society: housing designed on industrial-building principles, clad in horizontal sheets of corrugated aluminium, with radiused corners and strip glazing made by a maker of bus

TIM STREET-PORTER

Left Grimshaw and Farrell both designed Park Road and got a 40-strong housing co-op to build and live in it.

PETER COOK / VIEW

Right At Waterloo, the curving site is dealt with by adjustable tubular steel portal frames and lapped sheets of glass.

windows. Each ended up with a (very differently done out) penthouse apartment there.

Nick went on to do the industrial sheds such as those for Herman Miller, while Terry took on the housing and complex urban planning exercises. Eventually as Farrell moved deeper into PoMo, that old rock-group bugbear, 'artistic differences' became too much: Grimshaw was the one who jumped ship. He never really got on with his former partner again but, as so often in such circumstances, both flourished independently.

Prior to Waterloo, Grimshaw's most lauded buildings were the beautifully composed Financial Times printworks in east London and the Expo 92 pavilion in Seville, with its virtuoso water-cascading glass facade. This was a pioneering low-energy response to its setting's extreme heat. Next came a decade of millennium lottery-funded building projects, chief among them Cornwall's Eden Project. There, Grimshaw resorted to geodesic domes as a practical response to the uncertain topography of the quarry it was built in: the domes intersected with each other and the uneven site like soap bubbles. Cruelly denied the Stirling Prize it was tipped to win, Eden was one of its era's most successful buildings, both critically and with the public.

In the 21st century Grimshaw took his work international, first setting up in New York, then Melbourne, Australia. He was serious about America: along with other partners he took the exams and interviews necessary to practise without necessarily having to pair up with a local firm. A key early project in the States was the timber egg-in-a-glass-box EMPAC (Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center) at Troy in upstate New York, while Grimshaw's calling card in Australia was the undulating-roofed Southern Cross railway terminus in Melbourne, which won RIBA's Lubetkin Prize for overseas work.

Knighted in 2002, Grimshaw was president of the Royal Academy from 2004 to 2011, a post he again took seriously, stepping back from practice and – always collaborative in how he worked – bringing forward the younger generation of partners. He received the Royal Gold Medal in 2019 and that, he decided aged 79, was the time to bow out: he officially retired later that year, though continued to advise and to help in establishing the practice's Arts and Architecture Foundation, dedicated to easing the path of less privileged young people into architecture and creative industries. He is survived by his wife, Lavinia, and daughters Chloe and Isabel.

Below left The ETFE biomes of the Eden Project reinvent a Victorian typology for new purposes.

SHANNON MCGRATH

Below right The roof of Southern Cross is shaped to vent diesel fumes from the station by harnessing the prevailing winds.

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The designer of postmodern icons such as the MI6 and TV-am buildings was also a firm believer in helping communities to shape where they live

RICHARD GLEED

Sir Terry Farrell 1938 – 2025

Sir Terry Farrell was one of the leading figures of a generation that took British architecture global. The latter part of his career would see major projects completed in Hong Kong and China, though, thanks to its appearance in several James Bond films, he will always be remembered for the MI6 building on London's River Thames.

MI6 was one of a triumvirate of large-scale projects where the postmodern approach Farrell had developed since the late 1970s found its most monumental expression. That evolution decisively set him apart from other leading figures of his generation: Richard Rogers, Norman Foster and Nicholas Grimshaw, the latter with whom Farrell formed what in retrospect seems a rather improbable partnership.

Yet amid these radical shifts, Farrell remained true to his principles. In fact, he argued, stylistic changes in his work served as evidence for the underlying consistency in his architectural and urban sensibility: a deep-seated belief in the need for architecture and urban design to draw from its context and contribute to a city that works for everyone.

Above Farrell won acclaim as a PoMo pioneer, an urban designer and an advocate for the citizen's voice in the development of cities.

FARRELLS

Below Vauxhall Cross building for MI6, London

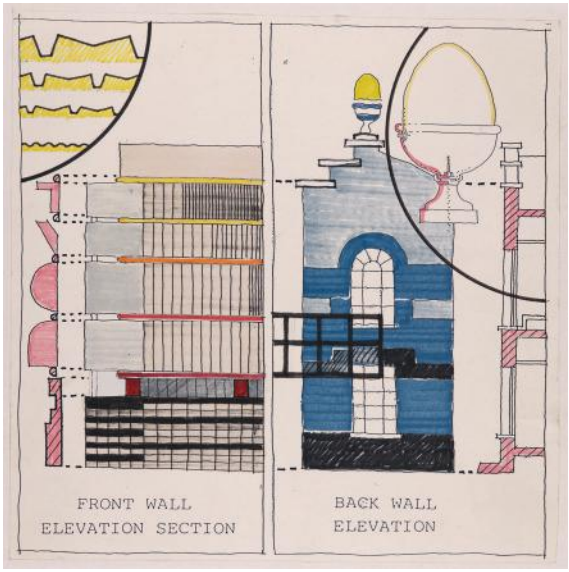
Farrell grew up in Newcastle upon Tyne – then on the cusp of a modernist transformation – imprinting on him a belief in architecture's positive potential, but also a clear sense of the damage it could do. After graduating from Newcastle University he won a Harkness Fellowship to study at the University of Pennsylvania – a major achievement for a northern working-class lad. At Penn, he was taught by Louis Kahn and Denise Scott Brown, whose sociological approach to the built environment was greatly influential.

Returning to the UK, Farrell joined the London County Council architects' department, for which he designed the wonderfully sculptural ventilation shafts for the southbound Blackwall Tunnel. There he met Grimshaw, who was in many ways his polar opposite: a privately educated southerner who had studied at the Architectural Association. Nevertheless, they set up a practice and soon made a name for themselves as key figures in the emerging high-tech movement.

They won wide acclaim for an early project for student flats near Paddington, for which Grimshaw designed a futuristic service tower while Farrell renovated the Victorian terraces. But it also presaged their later split. Already Farrell was sensing the limits of the technological approach and that modernism itself was entering an aesthetic and ideological cul-de-sac.

In 1980, Farrell set up his own practice, moving decisively towards what was already being

Left Embankment Place development over Charing Cross station in central London.



RIBA COLLECTIONS

Right Sketch of the front and rear elevations of the TV-am building.

described as postmodernism. Initial projects were small with limited budgets. A Doric temple for Clifton Nurseries playfully riffed on its Covent Garden location. The nearby Comyn Ching triangle showed how postmodernism could enable new forms of urban repair.

Then came the era-defining TV-am building in Camden, which reimagined an old industrial building in a riot of bold forms and colours and symbolism, including the famous eggcup finials. All the while, Farrell was working with Charles Jencks on what became the Cosmic House. While Jencks was certainly an influence on Farrell's thinking (as was Robert Venturi), he eschewed the critic's sloganeering and evangelism.

Then, seemingly all of a sudden, Farrell's work dramatically increased in scale. Between 1990 and 1994 he completed the MI6 building, Embankment Place, rising above Charing Cross Station, and Alban Gate on London Wall, an elegant three-dimensional composition of multiple levels illustrating how postmodern approaches could be used to make sense of complex urban sites.

The 1990s and 2000s saw major work springing up all over the UK, as well as Farrell's expansion into urban design and masterplanning. In his home town of Newcastle he planned the regeneration of the quayside, recasting this redundant, formerly industrial part of the city as a vibrant public space.

Farrell also began to find work at ever-increasing scale in Asia, where he had been an enthusiastic visitor since the 1960s. The project that set things in motion was the Peak in Hong Kong (1995), a transport and retail complex that Farrell turned into a stunning landmark high above the bay. Major transport projects followed, such as Guangzhou South station, West Kowloon station and Beijing South railway station. Then in 2011, Farrell got one over his peers by completing the tallest building by a British architect – KK100 in Shenzhen, which in typical Farrell fashion was conceived as a vertical urban district.

Throughout his career, Farrell was a vocal champion for the central role that local communities should play in shaping where they live. That belief lay at the heart of the government-commissioned Farrell Review of the built environment in 2013. Identifying a fundamental disconnection between the planning process and the people it aimed to serve, the review recommended that "every town and city should have an 'urban room' where the past, present and future of that place can be inspected". Such urban rooms now include the Farrell Centre in Newcastle , which he funded.

Although he was knighted in 2001, Farrell never became part of the establishment. As a person, he was kind and generous, yet fiercely determined in his belief in equality of access and social mobility that he saw as lacking in architecture and broader society.

Buildings are often seen as an architect's most important legacies, and Farrell will be remembered for an unusually eclectic body of work that was, nevertheless, united by clear underlying principles. But beyond his built work, Farrell's legacy lies in his passionate advocacy for the city as a collective endeavour that everyone should have a voice in shaping. ●

Owen Hopkins is director of the Farrell Centre in Newcastle

FARRELLS

Right Rear (canal-side) view of the TV-am studios in Camden, London, 1981.

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Tribune Tower, Chicago
Raymond Hood and John Mead Howells, 1925

One of Chicago's most iconic skyscrapers, the Tribune Tower, celebrates its centenary this year. An international design competition was launched in 1922 by the Chicago Tribune to create "the most beautiful building in the world", which would house its new downtown headquarters. More than 260 entries were received from practices in the US and over 20 other nations, mainly European. Of the submissions, Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen's was considered by many to be the best, and became influential on the next generation of skyscrapers. However, it only took second place, and the winning entry was designed by New York architects Raymond Hood and John Mead Howells. Their project incorporated both Art Deco and neo-Gothic elements and appealed to the newspaper owners' sense of nostalgia and history. Other entries included those of Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut and Adolf Loos, whose design of a giant Doric column was perhaps the most original of the competition. The Tribune Tower, now designated a Chicago Landmark, was converted into luxury residences in 2021. ●
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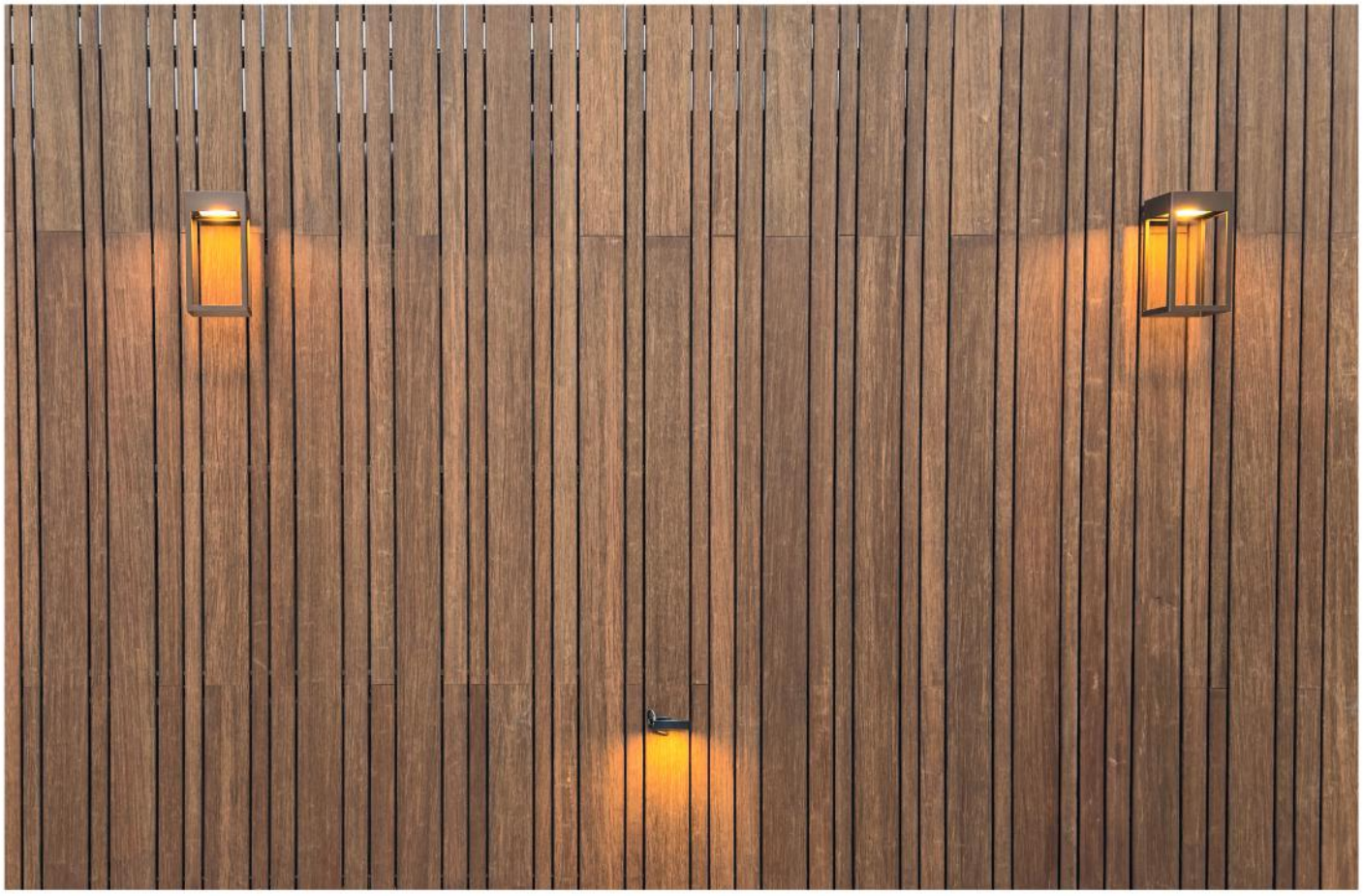

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