
The New Europe

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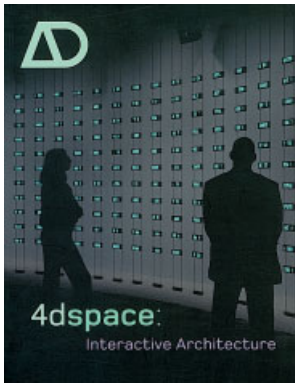

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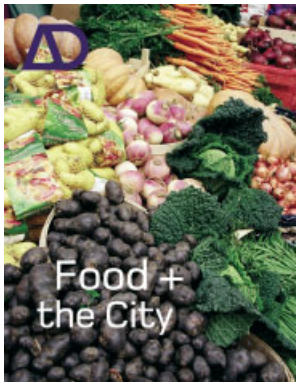

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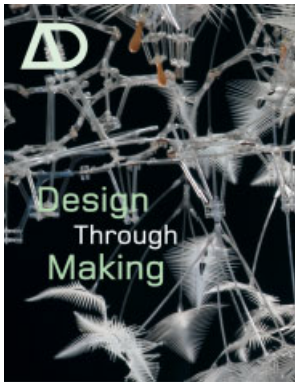

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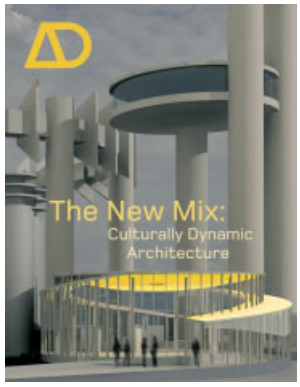

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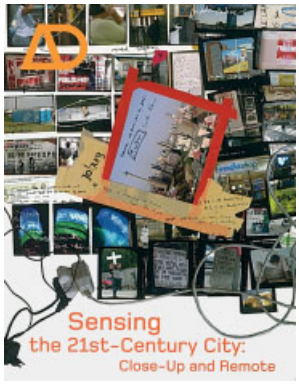

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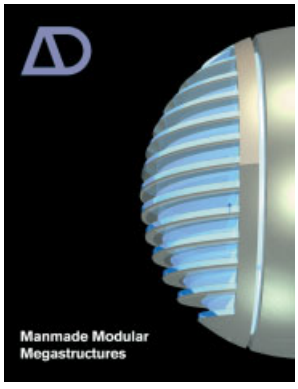

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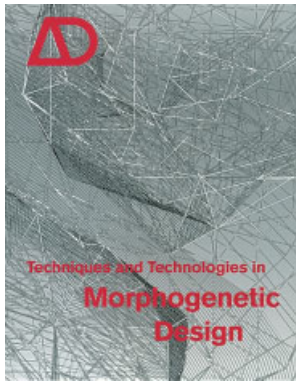

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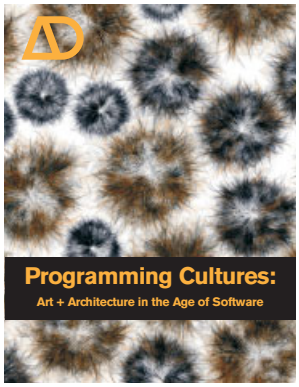
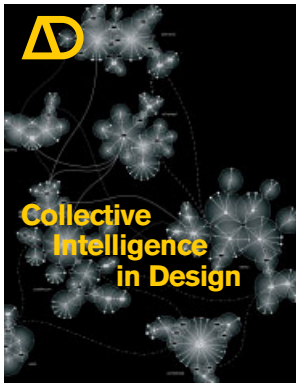


July/August 2006, Profile No 182

Programming Cultures: Art and Architecture in the Age of Software

Guest-edited by Mike Silver

An exploration of the relationship between software engineering and the various disciplines that benefit from new tools, this title of AD, which was inspired by a Symposium at the Pratt Institute in New York, focuses on how artists and architects are writing new codes to solve visualisation and data-processing problems. It extends the potential of programming for architecture far beyond the scope of popular, appropriated systems such as Form-Z, Maya and 3D Studio MAX. Programming is advocated as a discipline central to the development of design and a key to unlocking new ways of working rather than as a mere service to generative design and construction. *Programming Cultures* features the work of seminal figures such as Frank Gehry, Greg Lynn and John Fraser. It also presents the important new work of emerging young designers like Casey Reas, Evan Douglis and Mike Silver.



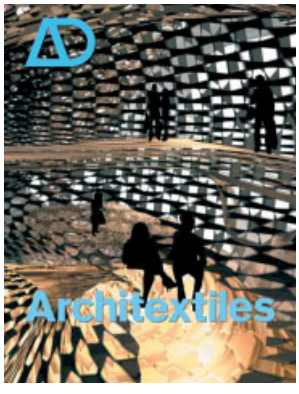
September/October 2006, Profile No 183

Collective Intelligence in Design

Guest-edited by Christopher Hight and Chris Perry

Exploring how today's most compelling design is emerging from new forms of collaborative practice and modes of collective intelligence, this title of AD engages two predominant phenomena: design's relationship with new information and telecommunications technologies and new economies of globalisation. With the shift from the second machine age to the age of information, the network has replaced the assembly line as a pre-eminent model of organisation. With this shift has come the introduction of numerous alternative modes of social, economic and political organisation in the form of peer-to-peer networks and open-source communities. This has radically altered conventional models of collective invention, and has challenged received notions of individual authorship and agency, questioning the way in which traditional disciplines organise themselves. Such reorganisation is apparent within architectural practice, as well as within its participation in a greater cultural context of increasing interdisciplinarity. For the design disciplines, this includes the emergence of new forms of collective intelligence in a number of different fields including architecture, software and interaction design, fashion, typography and product design.

Collective Intelligence in Design includes contributions from: Servo, EAR Studio, the Radical Software Group, United Architects, biothing, Continuum (working with the Smart Geometry Group and Bentley Systems), Hernan Diaz-Alonso and Benjamin Bratton, Gehry Technologies (working with the AA/DRL) and MIT's Media Lab. Additionally, the issue features essays from a diverse pool of academics and designers, including Brett Steele, Branden Hookway, Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, and Michael Hensel, as well as an extensive interview with Michael Hardt, co-author of two important and influential books on contemporary issues of globalisation, *Empire* and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*.



November/December 2006, Profile No 184

Architextiles

Guest-edited by Mark Garcia

This issue of AD explores the intersections between architectural and textile design. Focusing on the possibilities for contemporary architectural and urban design, it examines the generative set of concepts, forms, patterns, materials, processes, technologies and practices that are driving the proliferation of this multidisciplinary design hybrid. *Architextiles* represents a transition stage in the reorientation of spatial design towards a more networked, dynamic, interactive, multifunctional and communicative state. The paradigms of fashion and textile design, with their unique, accelerated aesthetics and ability to embody a burgeoning, composite and complex range of properties such as lightness, flow, flexibility, surface complexity and movement, have a natural affinity with architecture's shifts towards a more liquid state. The preoccupation with textiles in architecture challenges traditional perceptions and practices in interior, architectural, urban, landscape, and fashion design. Interweaving new designs and speculative projects on the future, *Architextiles* brings together architects, designers, engineers, technologists, theorists and materials researchers to unravel these new methodologies of fabricating space. This title features the work of Will Alsop, Nigel Coates, Robert Kronenburg, Dominique Perrault, Lars Spuybroek and Ushida Findlay. As well as contributions from Bradley Quinn, Dagmar Richter, Peter Testa and Matilda McQuaid, it encompasses new projects and writings from young and emerging designers and theorists.

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May/June 2006

The New Europe

Guest-edited by
Valentina Croci

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Editorial

The European Union (EU) has gained an ignominious reputation for stultification. With its unwieldy bureaucracy centred in Brussels, its administration and parliament has become the butt of endless political jokes. The new BBC Europe Editor, Mark Mardell, in his weekly diary recently characterised the EU's institutions as that of an aspirant feudal power of the Middle Ages, with the European Commission as king attempting to 'rule a country that is only just emerging as a country and may never make it';[1] hardly a progressive image for a dominant global power base. The sense of stagnation surrounding Brussels was amplified last year by the rejection of the eu constitution in national referendums in both France and the Netherlands. The union's enlargement by 10 new member states in 2004 and the imminent addition of Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, with Turkey under negotiation, has meant that it has become increasingly difficult for established member states to come to a consensus as to an immediate way forward.[2] It is as if it is becoming necessary for Europe to shed its existing skin.

In counterpoint to 'Old Europe', this issue of AD celebrates 'New Europe', and marks the biennial of the entry of the 10 new member states into the union in May 2004 – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia – representing altogether more than 100 million citizens joining the European Union. It focuses on the cultural experiences of these countries and the impact on their architecture of joining the EU. All are countries in flux, united by their single point of entry but little else. For many of them, becoming part of Europe is part of a wider process of joining the global economy on a new footing. This is most true of the ex-eastern bloc states. The economic, social, political and cultural conditions of these countries, however, vary so widely that any blanket statement can all too easily result in overgeneralisation. From the beginning of this issue, guest-editor Valentina Croci has placed an important emphasis on the local view. Rather than remotely gathering information from abroad, she initiated this project by researching architectural correspondents in the new member states who were capable of giving the view from the ground (Edwin Heathcote who is London based, but is Hungarian speaking, being the one exception to the rule). This has proved an exceptionally gruelling task for contributors and editors alike, as authors were required to write in English – for most of them a second language. It has, however, been one of the most satisfying issues of AD that we have published since I have been editor. This is largely due to the perseverance and stamina of Valentina Croci (with help in the later stages from Caroline Ellerby and Lucy Isenberg). Valentina and myself took authors through second, third and fourth drafts, and she was never satisfied until both the content and structure of the texts were right. The result is an entirely unique and authentic view of architecture in emergent Europe. AD

Helen Castle

Notes

1. Mark Mardell, 'Europe Diary: Feudal Power', 20 April 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4925520.stm.
2. Nicholas Watt, 'Nothing Doing', 21 April 2006, www.guardian.co.uk/eu/story/0,,1758491,00.html.

Sadar Vuga Arhitekti, Arcadia Lightwear office building, Ljubljana, 2000
Sadar Vuga Architekti's work has come to represent the resurgence of architectural culture in eastern Europe. The partners, Jurij Sadar and Boštjan Vuga won the design competition to design the Chamber of Commerce in Ljubljana in 1996 when they were barely 30 years old. As at home in an international setting, they continue a modern tradition of high-quality Slovenian architecture that has its roots in the work of Jože Plečnik.

New Europe: Place(s) Without a Sense of Place?

The 10 new member states of Europe are united by no more than historic synchronicity – a single point of entry into the EU in May 2004. Guest-editor Valentina Croci introduces this title of Δ by explaining both the circumstances that some of these countries share, particularly those of the ex-Soviet bloc, but also the very different conditions the nations grapple with as separate entities. Despite the many disparities between countries, she finds an underlying consistency in the concerns voiced by the local contributors, as the respect for individual national identities and a sense of place emerge as paramount.

Irwin, *Dreams and Conflicts*, 2003
In this work, Irwin, a Slovenian group of artists invited to the 50th Biennale of Art in Venice, portray themselves as they spent the 1986 exhibition, when they slept on the street in front of the city's Santa Lucia station. The image calls attention to the sudden passage of the new EU member from a clandestine state to a member of the club: from intruders to fellow citizens.

Europe is 'an idea in motion, a territory with ideal borders'.[1] What was once the boundary between eastern and western Europe, in the second half of the 20th century, is now the centre of the European Union (EU). In May 2004, the EU was enlarged to 25 countries, increasing in population from 382 million to 561 million. It has become a union of diversity, a kaleidoscope of unique histories and problems that assume different forms, depending on one's point of view. Thus this issue of Δ is a summation of partial viewpoints, an ongoing investigation of these regional contexts: 10 new member countries that are once again historically linked. The contributors are architects, academics and journalists who live and work in the places they write about. As insiders, they can draw on the local memories and professional resources of the geographic and cultural contexts under examination, and are therefore able to provide direct accounts of the historic changes taking place.

For the former Soviet-bloc countries, becoming part of the EU has meant reacquiring a common historic past, as well as cultural ties that had been suspended by decades of dictatorship.[2] However, the overturning of the symbols of the recent past has more to do with the process of rebuilding a national identity after independence was gained in the early 1990s than with annexation to the EU. This process is still under way and the contributions to this issue reveal a number of crucial problems, related not only to the passage from communism to a free market economy, but above all to the difficulties faced by architects in dealing with new client types, the fragility of public administrations and the obsolescence of urban and architectural infrastructures.

The future of this transformation is impenetrable, because the recent past, by now ideologically distant from the present, can no longer act as a safety net or a model to oppose.[3] The question now is which historic and cultural elements should be preserved, and which must inevitably be cancelled. Moreover, what is the best critical approach to take in renovating the structures built by the regime? A major problem of such reconstruction is the risk of historicising architectural artefacts, with the inherit danger that monuments might acquire new metonymical and propagandistic values.[4] On the other hand, an uncritical adoption of the economic practices and the cultural – or architectural – models of the West must also be avoided. The answer should probably be sought in the memory of each new member country, in the traces that link its national history to the urban spaces as they present themselves today, and in the interpretive investigation of the manner in which the new emerging social classes conduct their daily lives.

Contemporary architecture in such countries as the Czech and Slovak republics, Poland and Hungary seems to be retracing the Modernist tradition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, promoted during the 1930s by the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) conferences. This interwar period represents an important window of independence, during which CIAM-Ost participants investigated their own identities in parallel with common references to the Modern Movement. In fact, on a local level, Modernism has been combined with vernacular traditions, thereby assuming distinct political and symbolic connotations. In Hungary, for example, the distinctiveness of the local architectural expression lies precisely in the conflict between Functionalism and Organicism.[5] A clear understanding of the historical influences of local architecture is fundamental for determining to what point they can still provide valid points of reference today. For example, contemporary Slovene architects are confronting their investigations with the research by Jože Plečnik, Edvard Ravnikar and their successors of the Ljubljana school.

In the former Soviet-bloc countries, the distance between the models imposed by the regime and the new democratic values, as evidenced by the sudden passage to the free market, has resulted in a state of abandonment of the historic city centres and a massive edification of outlying urban areas. Such cities as Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda in Lithuania have seen an upsurge in the real-estate market for terraced houses and middle-class apartments of upwards of 50 square metres (538 square feet), with interiors that attempt to adhere to the cosmopolitan models of glossy magazines. These new housing models are replacing the *Plattenbau*, the enormous housing blocks that were once a symbol of social equality and which today stand out like relics of a past that is difficult to reconcile with the individual's need for social affirmation.[6] Analogously, shopping malls and large chain outlets are the manifestation of the uncritical passage from a regime of total control to a society manipulated by advertising and by the utilitarian logic of commercial interests. Indeed, many developers, often the only ones involved in the renewal of the urban fabric, prefer to fill in the empty spaces along the outlying thoroughfares rather than deal with the traces of the recent past impressed upon city centres, a situation that is causing urban functions to disintegrate. 'Capitalism creates a new reality alongside the old one and markets this illusion as illusion – rather than demolish, it simply allows the disused old reality to wither away of its own accord.'[7]

So what is the role of architects in this process? In response to the total deregulation of urban planning tools, architects themselves are becoming developers, in the sense that they deal directly with clients and with local administrations, acting as mediators in the definition of individual interventions within a region. However, their actions often seem confined to small chirurgic operations at the mercy of the demands of clients. Thus they are working in a very different climate than were the architects of Old Europe, one in which local authority planning systems are well-organised and enforce strict regulations, both in terms of the planning of public services and in the conservation of architectural heritage.

Kaspar Goba, *Moorland*, 2003
Latvian artist Kaspar Goba conveys the sociopolitical aspects of Latvia through an investigation of the country's various ethnic groups – Latvians, Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Poles. His *Moorland* project focuses on the workers at the peat bogs of Seda, sent from Moscow in the 1950s to 'Sovietise' the Baltic countries. Tools from long ago are still in use, and the train is the only means of transport. The customs and languages in the region bear witness to a Soviet identity that no longer officially exists, but nonetheless is still present.

Veronica Zapletalová, *Summer Houses*, 2003
Chatas, or summer houses, represented the only form of private property tolerated by the regime of the former Czechoslovakia. Their popularity peaked after 1969. Czechoslovakians spent between 100 and 120 days of the year in their summer homes, and to those who were forbidden from travelling this was almost like being abroad, which goes some way to explaining the practice of decorating country cottages with seafaring themes. In addition to portraying the cultural heritage of a precise historic and regional context, the *chatas* provide an opportunity to study the daily living habits of a population caught between official policies and their subversion, living habits that thus form the basis for the conception of a national identity.


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Andreas Savva, *Now as Before*, 2002
In this series of photographs, Cypriot artist Andreas Savva juxtaposes recent images of Turkish and Greek refugees with photographs taken in 1974, the year of the Turkish military intervention against the coup d'état on the part of Greece. To Savva, time, history and political changes are the catalysts behind the destinies and identities of individuals.

A different, yet equally problematic, situation is the real-estate market in Malta, complicated by its seasonal influx of foreigners. A British colony until 1964 and a member of the Commonwealth until 1979, Malta maintains implicit ties with the UK. Facilitated by the bilingualism of its inhabitants, these ties are expressed principally in the large number of foreigners who live here on a seasonal basis. Despite the fact that the real-estate market in areas affected by tourism has always been controlled by government regulations, there is little consideration on the part of tourism professionals for the quality of the residential architecture and the environmental impact of building practices. It is thus hoped that the architects of Malta will find, like their colleagues in the former Soviet-bloc countries, opportunities for contextual research in selected individual projects. Rather than focusing only on formal solutions, it is vital that they begin to investigate time-based strategies and a multifaceted approach to development that takes into account the seasonal influx of inhabitants, the distribution of infrastructures, investor programmes and limited economic resources.

It is difficult to say what Europe means in terms of architecture, as many of its new members have not yet had time to identify their own orientation or to question their own 'interrupted' cultural roots. It is clear that the contemporary architectural production of the individual countries of the New Europe – but also of the Old – is focused on problems that are more national than European in character. This is because architecture must deal with the contradictory situations and compromises that politics has not managed to rectify. An extreme case is Cyprus, where the conflict between the Greek and Turkish communities is yet to be resolved. Emblematic of this situation is the city of Nicosia. Militarily divided since 1974 into Turkish and Greek zones, the city cannot function as an organic whole because it is subject to both physical barriers and divergent planning schemes.

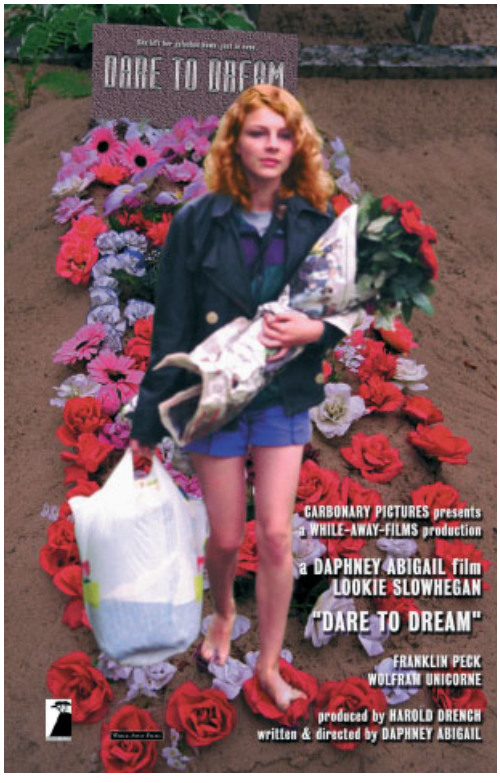
The faculties of architecture of the new members of the EU are growing exponentially. Consequently, so is the number of architects,[8] who by now are able to compare their experiences directly with Western models and participate in international competitions. In this new climate of open exchange, the hope is that participation in international architectural research and debates will be combined with attention to local problems and contexts, without succumbing to the global models of architectural trends. Sensitivity and respect are necessary on the part of all those involved, lest the new members of Europe become places without a sense of place, their cultural and historic heritage held together only by Euro banknotes. AD

Translated by Maureen Young

Notes

1. Francesco Bonami, in *Instant Europe, Photography and Video from the New Europe*, catalogue of the exhibition curated by Sara Cosulich Canarutto, 'Villa Manin Azienda Speciale', Codroipo, Italy, 2004, p 7. All images here are taken from the 'Instant Europe' exhibition at Villa Manin, Centre for Contemporary Art, Codroipo, Italy, 12 December 2004 to 1 May 2005.
2. For further information on the ideological confusion of the '*Homo Sovieticus*', caught between the tsarist and Soviet empires, see Mauro Martini, *L'utopia Spodestata*, Einaudi (Turin), 2005.
3. An excellent analysis of the architectural problems of the former Soviet-bloc countries is presented in David Crowley (ed), *Socialist Spaces, Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, Berg (New York), 2002.
4. The conversion projects of a number of buildings that had been symbols of the former socialist regime reveal a desire to superimpose new cultural and historical values. See, for example, the huge complex on ul.Marszalkowska in Warsaw by J Grabowski, S Jankowski and J Knothe. This palimpsest of cultural symbols tied to a succession of historical periods is discussed in an essay by Bohdan Tscherkes, 'The architectural identity of "European Suburbs": the perception of Ukraine', in Cor Wagenaar (ed), *Ideals in Concrete: Exploring Central and Eastern Europe*, NAI Publisher (Rotterdam), 2004, pp 59–64. Tscherkes examines St Michael's Cathedral and Independence Square in Kiev.
5. Katalin Bogyay (ed), *Hungarian Architecture Today: Modernist and Organic*, catalogue of the exhibition at RIBA, London, curated by Sandor Vaci, HCC, 2004.
6. See Jannie Vinke, 'The transformation of collective housing estates', in Wagenaar, op cit, pp 132–9.
7. Theo Hauben, 'Places without a sense of place: new icons in Central and Eastern Europe', in Wagenaar, op cit, p 74.
8. See the data presented in the exhibition catalogue *Collage Europa*, edited by Aaron Betzy of the NAI of Rotterdam, 23 October 2004 to 2 January 2005. For example, in the Czech Republic, with a population of 10.2 million inhabitants, there are 3000 registered architects and 1700 students in three schools of architecture; in Poland, 10,000 students at nine schools; in Slovenia, with a population of 2 million inhabitants, there are 10,000 architects and 5000 students in the six schools of architecture. The level of education is traditionally high in Slovenia.

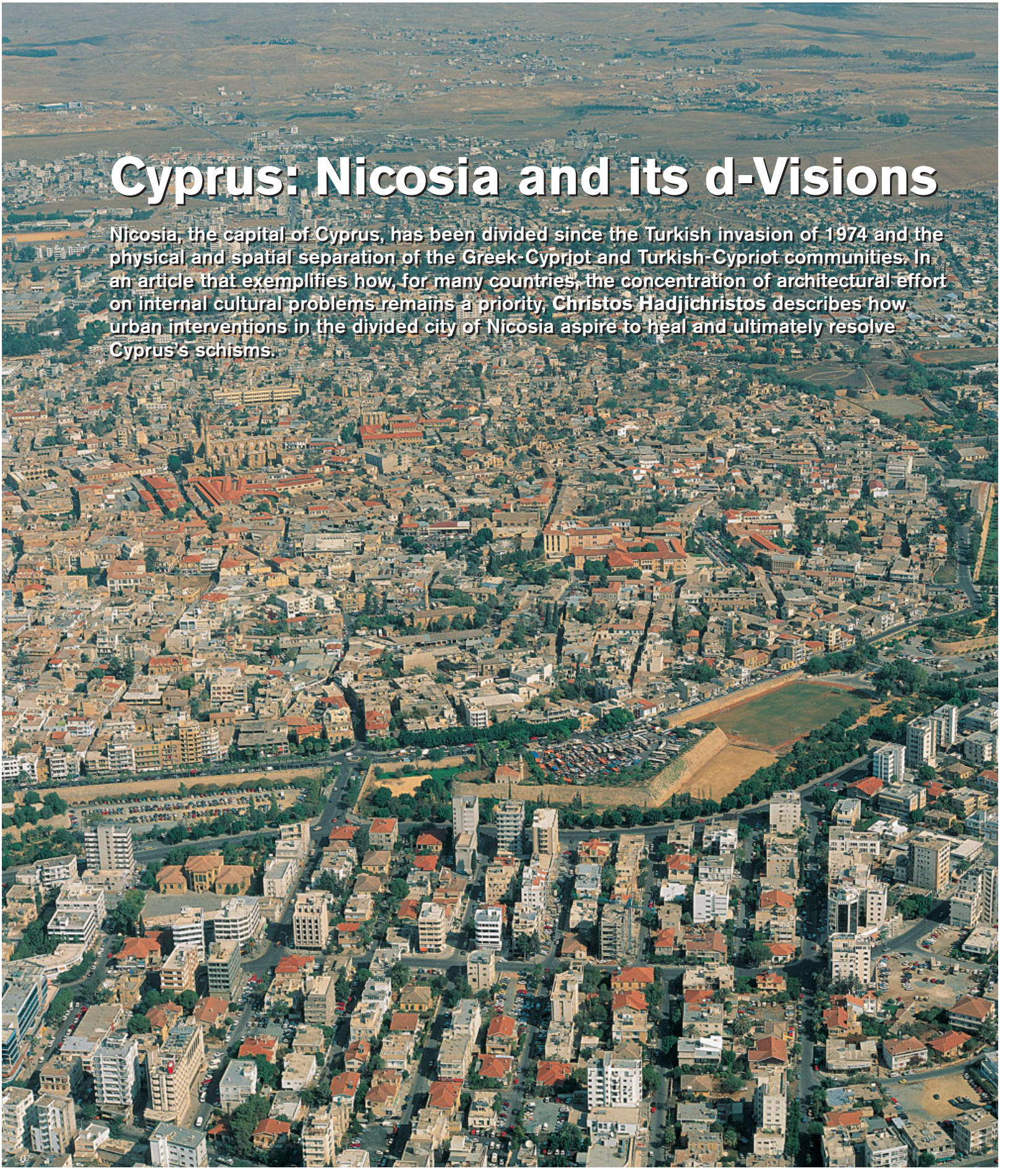
Lucia Nimcová, 'Zilina', *Slovak Women* series, 2003
Slovak artist Lucia Nimcová uses the camera to capture fleeting expressions and everyday gestures of ordinary people. In his *Slovak Women* series, Nimcová reveals the social condition of women and their main cultural models within Slovak society.



Liina Siib, 'Dare to Dream' and 'Oblivion Bugs', *Movie Poster* series, 2001
Estonian artist Liina Siib uses the languages of advertising and film to transform contemporary stories into fairy tales, everyday people into icons, and major political and cultural themes into parodies.

Cyprus: Nicosia and its d-Visions

Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, has been divided since the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the physical and spatial separation of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities. In an article that exemplifies how, for many countries, the concentration of architectural effort on internal cultural problems remains a priority, Christos Hadjichristos describes how urban interventions in the divided city of Nicosia aspire to heal and ultimately resolve Cyprus's schisms.



Aerial view of Nicosia and the Venetian walls.

For such a small geographical area, the diversity of Cyprus's landscape is impressive: while largely semi-arid, the island also features two forested mountain ranges, hilly terrain, fertile valleys and a dancing coastline. The architectural landscape presents similar characteristics. Scattered within a predominantly chaotic/cacophonic built environment, its architecture ranges from archaeological/historical sites and vernacular settlements to contemporary compositions that attempt to critically address the local.

The quality of architecture has greatly improved recently as projects are now awarded through architectural design competitions. And it was through such a process that Zaha Hadid and Patrick Schumacher (the design team also includes the Turkish-Cypriot architect Saffet Bekiroglu and the Greek-Cypriot architect Christos Passas) secured the commission for the redesign of Nicosia's Eleftheria Square, the main public space in the south. The proposed architectural intervention is described by the designers as part of a much larger planning gesture that aims to organise and synthesise the Venetian walls, the moat and the fringes of the two parts of the city (inner and outer) into a unified whole. The moat becomes a green belt that surrounds and unifies the Venetian walls whilst at the same time, by being topographically inflated upwards, creating wide and accessible connections to the level of the surrounding streets.

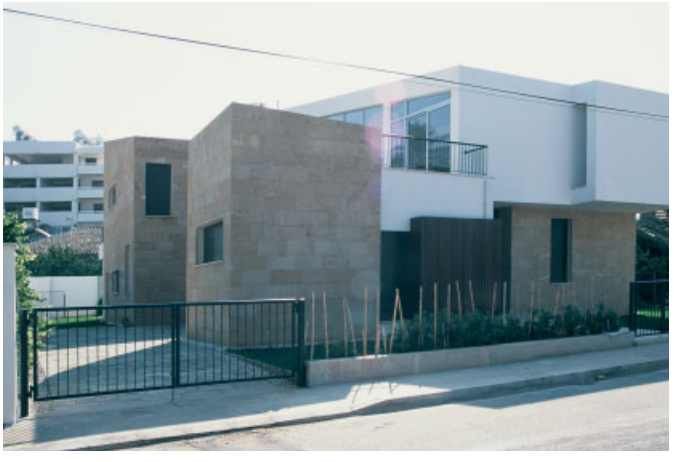
Nicosia has been the capital since the 10th century, when the population moved away from the coastal areas to escape Arab raids. During the Middle Ages it developed into a Western medieval metropolis. The walls still standing today were built during the Venetian rule (1489–1570) and, designed by Giulio Savorgnano, a Venetian fortress engineer, their purpose was to protect Nicosia from Ottoman attack. During this period, and the three centuries of Ottoman rule that followed, the only entry points into the city were the Guiliana Gate, the San Domenico Gate and the Del Proveditore Gate (today known as the Famagusta Gate, Paphos Gate and Kyrenia Gate respectively), which would open at sunrise and close at sunset. At the end of the 19th century, the relocation of the British colonial administrative offices outside of the walled city triggered the opening of bridges linking the old city with new settlements beyond. The first bridge was built in 1882, on the site of what is now Eleftheria Square.

Cyprus gained its independence in 1960, but the complicated relationship established by the new constitution between the Greek-Cypriot majority, the Turkish-Cypriot minority and the three guarantor countries (Greece, Turkey and Britain) created a series of catastrophic events that culminated in 1974, with the coup by the Greek junta to overthrow President Makarios and the Turkish invasion resulting in the spatial partition of the island. The 'green line', a dividing line 185 kilometres (115 miles) in length and varying in width from a few metres at some points within the walled city to as wide as 5 kilometres (3 miles) in rural areas, extends east and west, keeping the Greek-Cypriots in the south and the Turkish-Cypriots in the north.

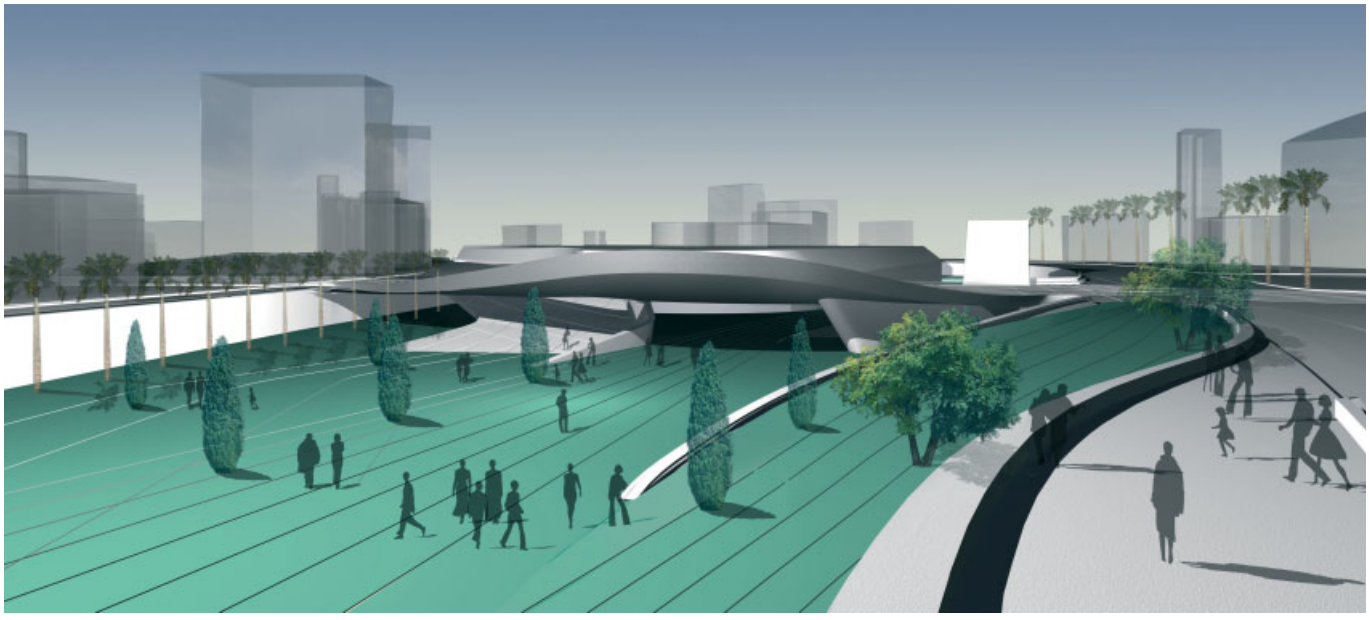
However, the need to continue the construction of a common sewerage system in Nicosia at the time required a coordinated management and planning strategy for the divided city. In 1977, with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the two communities decided to cooperate, and the creation of the Nicosia Master Plan in 1978, which attempts to coordinate city planning between the two halves of Nicosia so that it can function as a whole if reunited, was the successful outcome of this first collaboration.

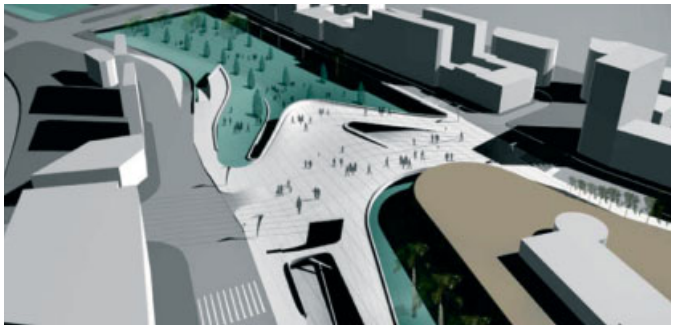
After a detailed assessment, by the late 1970s a long-term plan for the city's future development was in place. It

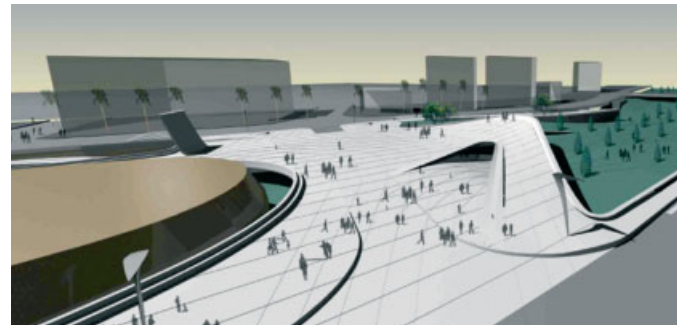
Haris Hadjivassiliou with V Troullides, Hadjivassiliou House, Nicosia, 1989
Here the architect has used elements such as plain white walls, volume within a volume interior spaces that embrace a courtyard, and vaulted ceilings to create an overall simplicity based on sophisticated proportioning.



Saffet Bekiroglu, Boyaci House, Nicosia, 2005
The Boyaci House near the Ledra Palace crossing differentiates itself from its surroundings by its unusual composition of volumes and combination of materials.







Zaha Hadid Architects with Patrick Schumacher, Saffet Bekiroglu and Christos Passas, Eleftheria Square competition proposal, Nicosia, 2005
In this winning proposal, sensuous curves of concrete create connections between the walled city, moat and surrounding urban fabric.

Chrysanthos Chrysanthou and Eraclis Papachristou, Student housing, University of Cyprus, Aglantzia, Nicosia, 2004
An arrangement of 'blocks' connected through a series of ramps creates a variety of in-between spaces.

Büyük Han was a traditional-style inn built in 1572. It is one of the historic buildings that has recently been restored.

currently includes around a hundred projects funded locally or by foreign organisations, and attempts to revitalise the city by strengthening administrative functions and services, rehabilitating residential areas, improving traffic flow and transportation and creating a visually identifiable city centre.

Unfortunately, according to the report presented by the Nicosia Master Plan team during a workshop held at the city's Ledra Palace in September 2004, despite the efforts mentioned above all major indicators of regeneration within the walled city, such as population and employment, are showing serious decline, the number of vacant housing units and those in poor condition in the centre has increased, while comparatively few buildings have been restored. Clearly, the main problem is the division of the city, which encourages outward growth away from the core, with the private sector turning to the suburbs, which as a result have become the centres of population and employment growth, diminishing further the sense of centrality and unity.

The walled city is currently inhabited mainly by foreign workers who are attracted by low rents and good public transport. Efforts to attract the local population into the centre have been compromised by, among other reasons, the lack of parking spaces and the fact that buying a house within the walled city may turn out to be a comparatively expensive choice, due to recent increases in property prices and because renovating an old structure is still costly, despite the financial incentives offered.

With a predominantly regulatory approach, the planning department on each side of the green line thus produces a separate local plan, and these vary in terms of how close they are to the principles and approaches of the Nicosia Master Plan. Consequently, the report mentioned above warns that further loss of centrality and opportunities for regeneration will create a major risk of further degradation. Thus, it goes on to stress that what is urgently needed is a comprehensive bicommunal 'vision' and the establishment of a new apparatus for all the planning, financial, implementation, management and other government interventions necessary for the conservation and welfare of the area.

After exploring alternative regeneration solutions, a 'Strategy for Urban Heritage-Based Regeneration' was selected as the most promising for the revitalisation of the core of Nicosia as it 'adopts cultural tourism and education as the "prime movers" to stimulate future residential and commercial activity ... The focus is on turning the history of the Walled City into a sustainable development resource, acting as the "prime mover" for further residential and commercial investment. The outer business core will be a "beneficiary area" whose commercial viability will receive a major boost. The area of the buffer zone can offer space for tourism and education facilities and thus can glue the Walled City according to the Nicosia Master Plan vision.'[1]

However, any effort to bring more life into the centre is

The ‘end’ of Ledra Street in the Turkish-Cypriot north.

The ‘end’ of Ledra Street in the Greek-Cypriot south.

Entering Nicosia from the south. Development in this area of the city is rapidly increasing to accommodate large organisations and private companies, only a kilometre away from one of the refugee housing areas.

greatly compromised by the presence of the green line, which does not allow the city to function as a spatially organic whole. Space is the medium that provides the possibility for co-presence and co-awareness, both important for the existence or emergence of what has been referred to as 'virtual community', the raw material for communities to develop: 'Co-present people are not a community, but they are part of the raw material for community, which may in due course become activated, and can be activated if it becomes necessary. However, even without conversion into interaction, patterns of co-presence are a psychological resource, precisely because co-presence is the primitive form of our awareness of others.'[2]

It is clear that any political or other differences between the two communities have been reinforced and exaggerated by spatially separating one from the other. With all that has happened, what may actually be needed is some form of joint revolution, which should produce its own space: 'A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses.'[3]

Despite the failure to solve the political problems, an encouraging development is the decision taken on 23 April 2004 to open up crossings that allow each community to visit the other side. The most central crossing point thus established is that of Ledra Palace in Nicosia. Interestingly enough, the Venetian walls built to protect the city, or at least the moat surrounding them, are now used to keep it divided, since the distance between the Turkish and Greek communities is increased by forcing the crosser go around the walls and down and up the moat. The crossing takes its name from the Ledra Palace Hotel encountered on the way. Once the

Crossing the green line. The Nicosia Master Plan booth is on one side of the crossing, with the Ledra Palace Hotel (UN headquarters) behind it and a deserted military post in front.

Sarayönü Square is the northern counterpart of Eleftheria Square in the south, the main public space north of the green line, for general use as well as hosting cultural events, protests or political rallies.

Originally a Latin church dedicated to St George, Büyük Hanam was built during the Lusignan period and converted into the Grand Turkish Bath during the Ottoman rule.

largest hotel in the capital, it now houses the United Nations headquarters, the venue for many bicommunal meetings, including many of the talks aimed at resolving the political situation. Being the tallest building in the area, and situated at the point where the passage bends slightly, it commands and surveys the entire length of the crossing route. A recent addition, just in front of the Ledra Palace, is the Nicosia Master Plan information booth found opposite a deserted army post.

There is now talk of further crossings. One of the candidate points is the end of Ledra Street in the heart of the walled city. If realised, the commercial centres of the two halves will be practically reunited, re-establishing the north–south axis that runs from Eleftheria Square in the south to the Kyrenia Gate in the north. Such a development would change the spatial and, consequently, the overall relationship between the two communities.

The difficult task of joining the two halves of the city after so many decades of their functioning and growing independently is further complicated by the fact that the form such reunification will take seems to be one carried out in jerks and partial gestures that are predominantly political. Instead, what is needed is a syntactic analysis of space that addresses how different ways of dealing with the green line and beyond affect the configurational characteristics of the city as an organic whole.

Perhaps even more challenging is how Nicosia will deal with its histories, its memories, its present, its future, its visions. Any society's present is linked to its past through its tradition and history, and to its future through its visions and utopias. But, 'in the age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered',[4] what mainly comprises the present is a wide spectrum of spaces for the 'other', what Foucault calls 'heterotopias'. What, then, is the relationship between such a present and its memories and visions? How can the city of Nicosia allow its people to coexist with the 'other' within an organically functioning urban environment without forcing them into a relationship of collage that will be inevitably made out of fragments? A medium traditionally used to unify is monumental space, which expressed/created the required 'consensus' in the society in which it was found.[5] But if there is no 'consensus' to express, what kind of space will work towards creating some basic form or version of it, thus allowing the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot city-mate cultures to coexist?

With the common vision of a European future, and if indeed left alone, the current challenge facing the two communities in Cyprus is to constructively deal with their histories and their pasts. Nicosia cannot but continue as the stage on which many acts of the play are performed. As a divided city it may have much to tell, but more importantly it has much more to promise. AD

Notes

1. Nicosia Master Plan, *New Vision for the Core of Nicosia*, Summary Report, September 2004, p 12.
2. B Hillier, *Space is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 1997, p 186.
3. H Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell Publishers (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA), 1991, p 154.
4. M Foucault, 'Of other spaces: utopias and heterotopias', in Neil Leach (ed), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, Routledge (London), 1997, p 350. (Originally in *Lotus*, 48/9, 1985/6, pp 9–17.)
5. Lefebvre, op cit, p 220.

Alexandros Livadas, Supreme Courthouses, Nicosia, 2005
The new Supreme Courthouses are an example of 'layering' between the existing and the new. The old and new buildings are connected by a bridge, while a glass surface covering the area between them exposes an archaeological site below.

Latvia: The Future in Riga's Past

Situated at the crossroads of international trade routes, the historical architecture of Riga, the capital city of Latvia, was shaped by tides of different social and cultural groups that over many centuries left their mark. It is notable for its rich mixture of Gothic, Baroque, Russian Classical, German Art Nouveau and Finnish Modernist buildings. Janis Lejnieks describes why now, after the stultification of the Soviet era, as much of its 19th-century building stock is threatened by decay and dereliction, Riga needs to invest in new, high-quality architecture that will revive the dynamic cultural traditions of the city.

Riga city centre was designated a World Heritage Site in 1997 in recognition of its outstanding architecture: the Old City with its surrounding semicircle of boulevards; and the downtown, an extensive area where elegant six-storey Art Nouveau apartment buildings stand side by side with 19th-century working-class two-storey wooden dwellings. Such a mix of social classes and building types is the direct result of the amazing speed of development that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century but was brought to a halt by the devastation of the First World War. Never again did Riga experience such a sharp rise in population. The figures are astonishing: 517,000 before the First World War, 185,000 after it, only reaching 353,000 prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. In the Soviet era there were miserable changes in the downtown – some large public buildings went up and some wooden buildings came down, leaving unsightly gaps in the urban fabric. Enormous efforts went into creating new residential areas and the population climbed to almost 900,000.

The Second World War was disastrous for the Old City as its very heart, Town Hall Square and the surrounding blocks, was heavily bombed. After regaining independence in 1991, local public opinion identified Riga's 1960s buildings, which had risen unimaginatively from the ruins, negatively with the Soviet regime. There was little desire to preserve them, but considerable enthusiasm for restoring the old medieval icons. Consequently, over the last decade much effort has gone into rebuilding Town Hall Square.

Sestais stils architects, Town Hall, Riga, 2003; Kubs architects, Kamarina nams office building, Town Hall Square, Riga, 1999
Town Hall Square was rebuilt to the specifications of local politicians during the 1990s as faithfully as possible, with great respect for its past. Sestais stils architects (Ugis Bratushkins, Inara Dzene, Ina Kulilovska, Dace Medniece, Vita Polkovnikova, Dace Rampane and Eriks Zile) added the new roof of the Town Hall to the copy of the Classical facade. The composition of the Kamarina nams office building to the right was developed by Kubs architects (Zane Kalinka and Peteris Venckovitch) from the design of the original facade, which is known from existing prewar postcards.

There is still much public debate about the character of the new buildings, the so-called 'infills' in the Old City and the downtown, as only the semicircle of boulevards can be considered completed. These examples of contemporary architecture are derisively labelled 'boxes of glass and steel' by hysterical conservationists. They prefer to argue that the urban fabric has been restored and any gaps that remain can be filled in only by using traditional building materials – stone, brickwork and plaster. Moreover, only small-size buildings with sloping roofs should be allowed.

In Riga, architects' work is subject to a stringent set of protocols as the two competing institutions – the State Inspection for Heritage Protection and Riga City Inspection for Heritage Protection – and their supervising ministries are not favourably disposed to architectural innovation. It is argued that the streetscape of downtown, characterised by an eclectic mix of buildings of varying heights, should stay as it is, apart from patching up the holes with the same size buildings as those being replaced and converting some former industrial buildings for new use.

Does not such an approach entirely ignore the *Zeitgeist*? Isn't this a singularly unimaginative and reactionary response? The 21st century is defined by the global economy and this influences the ethnically diverse culture of Latvia, now also a member of the European Union (EU). Surely the aesthetic effect of such a lacklustre vision is baleful? Latvia's capital is widely considered an architectural gem because it has been influenced and shaped over time by various national and social groups; the strength of Riga's cultural heritage lies in its diversity, ranging from the Romanesque to the modern-day, which together represent every possible architectural style.

Riga, a member of the Hanseatic League, was established in 1201 by German merchants. The Old City acquired its Gothic and Baroque character as a tradesmen's city surrounded by defensive walls. Gradually, the Germans became a minority in this Latvian-/Russian-/German-speaking city after their state, originally governed by the Livonian Order of Teutonic Knights, was captured by the Russian emperor Peter the Great in the 18th century. Even so, Germans remained the dominant cultural influence in Riga until the turn of the 20th century. The few examples of Russian Classicism in the Old City and the eclectic apartment buildings that line the semicircle of boulevards, are the main architectural contribution from the tsarist period, not forgetting the wooden structures erected according to 19th-century pattern books from St Petersburg.

Latvians began to participate in the architectural life of their city only when the Faculty of Architecture was opened in Riga Polytechnic in 1869. At the beginning of the 20th century, in the heyday of Art Nouveau, Finnish-influenced Latvian architects forged their own style of National Romanticism for the newly emerging Latvian bourgeoisie. Between the world wars, when Riga became the capital of the newly established Latvian state, the municipal Bauhaus-style buildings competed with edifices from the Monumentalist era commissioned by the government. After the Second World War, Latvia was incorporated into the USSR, and so has a legacy of Soviet official-style buildings, as there are, too, examples of 1960s International Style.

Nevertheless, the political upheavals of the 20th century had little effect on the centre of Riga. The most radical changes in its structure had already occurred when the 17th-century ramparts built by Swedish governors were torn down in the 1860s and the semicircle of boulevards – one of the main beauties of the city – was created. The building boom of the early 20th century added a third dimension to the so-called Art Nouveau centre, or downtown, of Riga. The reconstruction of old Riga began in the interval between the world wars. In the summer of 1941 the authentic heart of old Riga was devastated by war, but the downtown escaped unscathed.

Arhis architects, Gertrudes Centrs office building, Baznicas Street, Riga, 2003
The inclusion of fragments from the original wooden building on this site posed a risk to the architects (Andris Kronbergs, Brigita Bula, Eduards Beernaerts and Vilnis Schlars), who had to bow to pressure from conservationists. The sophisticated double-skin facade includes old and new wood.

Riga's indisputable architectural masterpieces have already been noted: the Old City, the semicircle of boulevards and downtown. However, the urban structure has undeniable weaknesses. One is the poor condition of Riga's remaining wooden buildings. They have survived despite all kinds of adversity, beginning with the 19th-century prohibition on the erection of wooden structures in central Riga and ending with the Soviets' campaign of the 1980s aimed at demolishing the wooden housing stock.

Now these old, mid-19th-century wooden houses are again under threat. Investors are becoming increasingly keen to put up new constructions in the already densely built up six- or seven-storey city as the building code still allows building to a maximum 21.3 metres (69.9 feet) cornice height and 24-metre (79-foot) ridges. If rows of old one- or two-storey wooden houses, mostly working-class dwellings, do survive, they will be a rarity in 21st-century Europe. A prerequisite for retaining this unique heritage would be financial compensation from the state and/or municipality for the owners of these wooden buildings.

Paradoxically, the weakness of Riga's historical centre – namely the 'holes' in the urban fabric that need to be patched up – is the very feature that creates the opportunity to develop this cultural heritage. The 'collar' of the centre consists of a row of sections that allow functional reuse. Structures in former factory and warehouse districts can be adapted to other uses. Riga has a choice. The city can become actively involved in setting an agenda for the development of more mixed-use areas, including shopping malls and entertainment facilities; or it can stand back and allow unfettered property development, so allowing the inevitable destruction of 19th-century industrial buildings and the erection of probably unsightly new apartment blocks in their place. Riga has only two old, relatively small shopping arcades: Berga bazars and Upisa pasaza, both of which were built before the First World War and are eclectic in style. Well-designed new arcades would increase the architectonic value of peripheral areas built in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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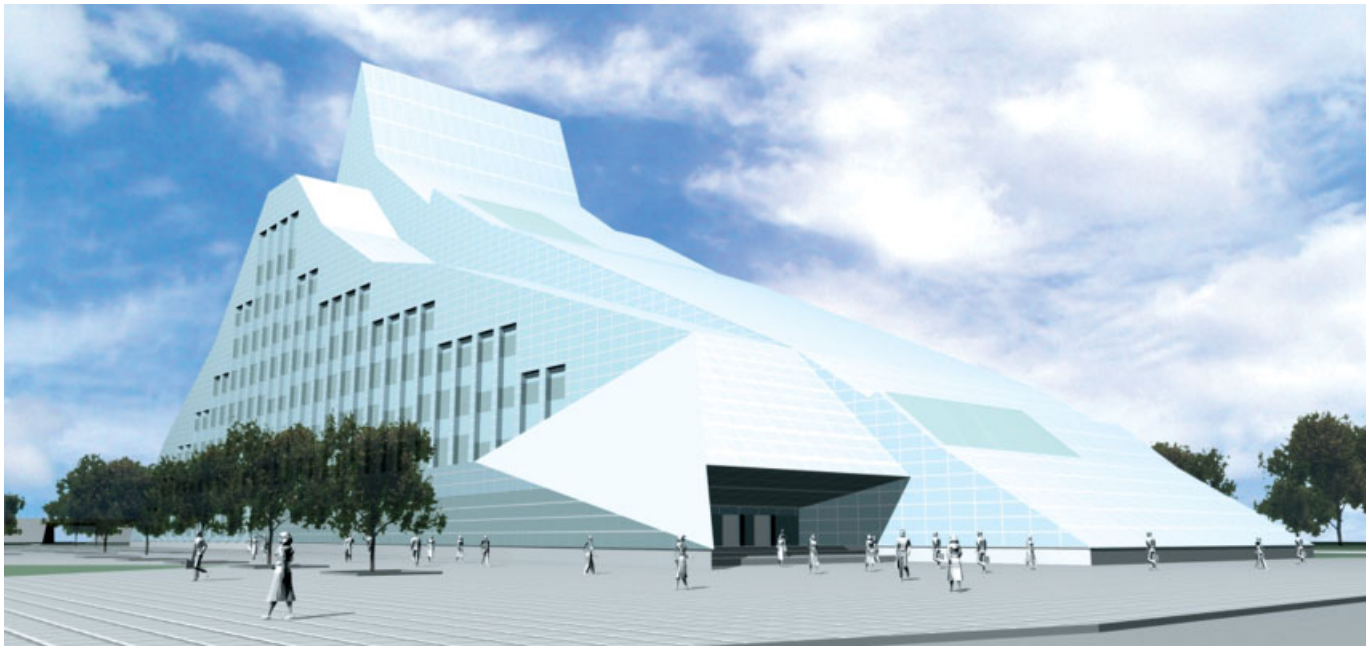
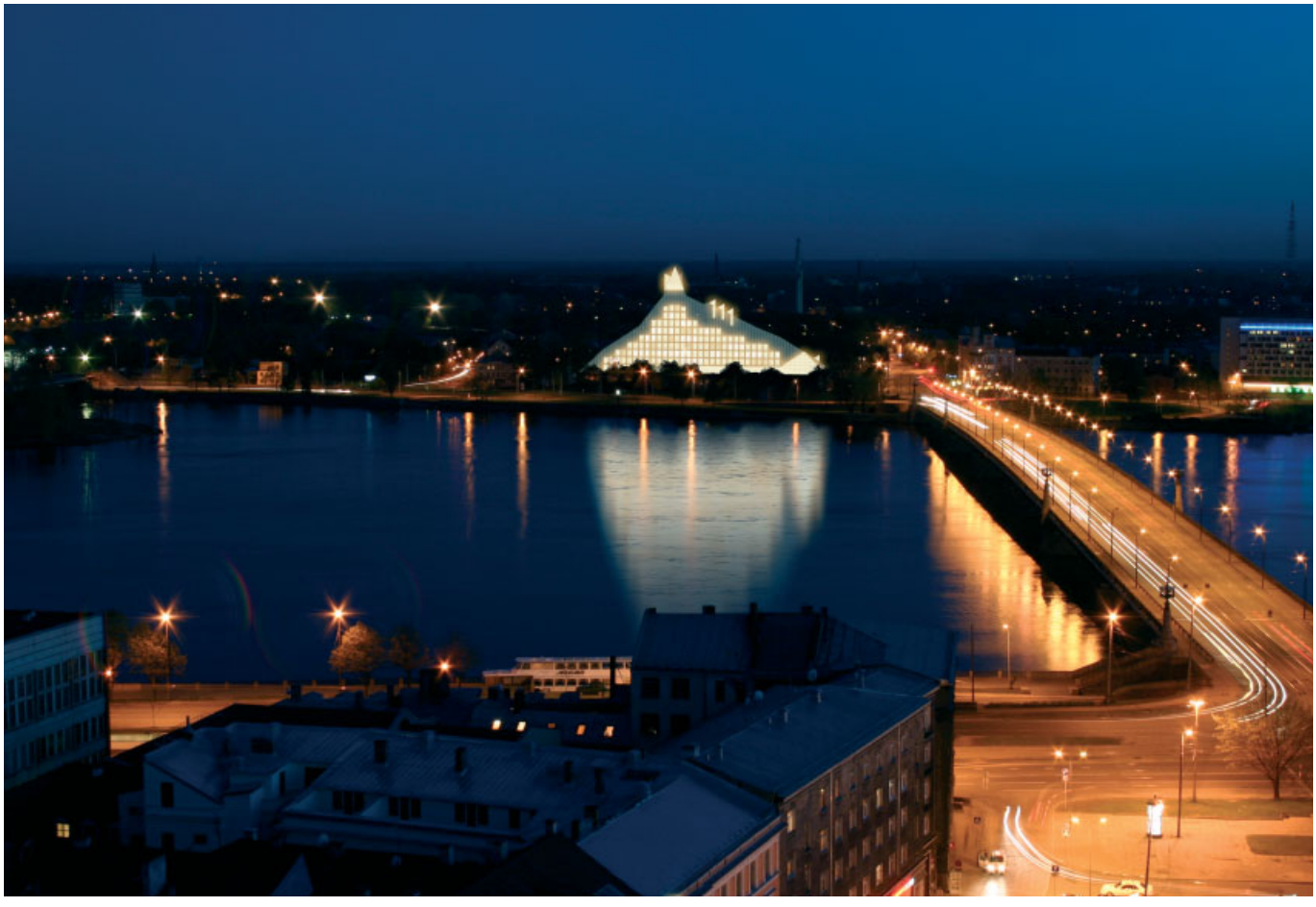
Silis, Zabers & Klava, Mercedes-Benz trade centre, Krasta Street, Riga, 2004
Conflating the company's powerful image with the *genius loci* of this showcase of Riga, by architects Andris Silis and Peteris Klava, the Mercedes-Benz building has become the true landmark of this traffic junction.

The southern part of old Riga, now desperately run down with many sections still unrenovated since the destruction of the Second World War – rows of abandoned houses and real slums – is a prime candidate for regeneration, albeit there are some projects already under way to revitalise this dilapidated area.

But there is a real risk of a negative scenario developing, one in which no support is forthcoming, whether from the city, the state or international organisations. Building owners are left to deal with their problems on their own: taxes to raise and tenants who cannot afford to pay the rent. On the outskirts of Riga's historic centre, crime is on the rise, buildings are abandoned and gradually collapse. New shopping malls and business centres are springing up only outside Riga's historic centre and on the main traffic thoroughfares leading to the nearby resort of Jurmala, to Moscow, Tallinn and Vilnius. Any new developments go up only in the shape of gated communities on the picturesque outskirts of the city at some 10 to 20 kilometres (6 to 12 miles) from the centre. In architectural terms, the city's historic component has shrunk to old Riga, the semicircle of boulevards and the main streets in the centre. The southern sections below Marijas Street, which might be





Gunnar Birkerts and Associates (USA) and Modra Gelza birojs (Latvia), Latvian National Library, Riga, 2005–
Latvian-born American architect Gunnar Birkerts developed his design based on the folk-tale metaphor of the Crystal Mountain as an allegory for the country's determined fight for freedom.

Zaigas Gailes birojs architects, Hotel Bergs, Berga bazars, Riga, 2003
Here, the architects' (Zaiga Gaile, Iveta Cibule and Liene Griezite) reconstruction of the original 19th-century brickwork and the added penthouse are the final touches to this, the largest of Riga's historic shopping arcades, which was successfully restored in the 1990s.

termed Riga's 'East End', have become a sort of grey zone, with all the characteristics of slums anywhere.

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. This thought is echoed by the Latvian poet Rainis, who said: 'Only that endures which changes.' Of course, adapting historic buildings to modern uses will not be the only aim of construction. Among newly erected buildings, there will certainly be some that will be worthy to compete for the status of cultural heritage site at the end of the 21st century. The most likely contenders will probably be in Pardaugava (on the left bank of the Daugava), where the Latvian National Library, multistorey office blocks and hotels are scheduled to be built on the islands Kliversala and Kipsala. Since the 1930s these areas have been considered extensions of Riga's centre.

In 1969, when an international competition for the reconstruction of Riga's centre took place, the Estonian team submitted designs for a group of high-rises there that would function as the 'alter ego' of old Riga. It seems likely that this project will be completed in the near future, as the first high-rise, the Hansabank Building, was finished in 2004. The height of new buildings is subject to statutory planning regulations and has been set at 121 metres (397 feet) for the zone directly abutting the World Heritage Site, to take account of the most distinctive feature of Riga's skyline, the 121-metre (397-foot) high St Peter's Church, which was built in the 17th century by Rupert Bindenschu, the Strasbourg Master.

It is an intriguing question as to who will be among the outstanding architects of Riga. Until 1780 all the city's master builders came from abroad. But since its own School of Architecture was opened in the 19th century, Riga has been far less hospitable to foreign practitioners. Only a few international competitions took place in Riga during the 20th century, mostly after the state regained independence in 1991. As Riga held itself aloof from the international architectural scene, there is correspondingly less international interest in the city's 21st-century architecture. An unfavourable outcome can be avoided only if the city fathers are prepared to be more open. Thus, the prognosis for the conservation and enhancement of Riga's cultural and historic heritage at the end of the 21st century goes hand in hand with the policies the state chooses to pursue.

International companies provide economic investment for the new commercial buildings, such as Mercedes-Benz's trade centre at Krasta Street in Riga, the new Riga Airport and the renovation of hotels. The need for new public spaces is an important driving force for new architecture. Unfortunately, the design for the Latvian National Library, which has been on the drawing board of Gunnar Birkerts, the Latvian-born American architect, since the early 1990s, has only recently got the governmental go-ahead. The latest endeavours are more promising, with the international competition for Riga's Concert Hall announced in autumn 2005. Both buildings will be located on the waterfront, right opposite the Old City. On a positive note, the demand for new commercial and public buildings, as well as for renovated and new-build housing, has markedly increased in the past few years. Δ

Identity Game: Czech and Slovak Architecture Magazines as Travelogues

Svatopluk Sládeček, NEW WORK, Observation Tower, Brdo Hill, Czech Republic, 2005
The latest Czech version of a landscape dominant. This fortified stony observation tower was designed by younger-generation architect Svatopluk Sládeček and received an honorary mention for landscape architecture at Grand Prix 2005, awarded by the Society of Czech Architects.

Meanings inevitably shift with the point of view of the commentator. Maria Topolčanská investigates the shifting identities of Czech and Slovak architectures over time, from the postwar era through to the present. Creating an analogy between the historic travelogues of the past and the assumptions of the Western media, she emphasises the need for local architectures to be disseminated through locally organised platforms and press.

'... the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting.'

Milan Kundera, 1996[1]

New Europe recalls the imaginary of new territories, the disclosure of the hitherto unknown reality of what lies behind the borders of the previously inaccessible. International media reporting of cultural identities in the recently accessed European Union (EU) countries is not unlike the travelogues of those engaged on the Grand Tour in the 18th century, with a hint of the fabulous adventures of Marco Polo, perhaps with the satiric nuance of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

One of past's many interpreters, a Saxon evangelist Heinrich Pröhle, in his travelogue *Aus dem Kaiserstaat* published in Vienna in 1849, commented on the city of Bratislava (the present-day capital of Slovakia) with the following anecdote: the citizens flouted the ban on smoking in public places by playing an 'identity game' if the police appeared. Taking advantage of the city's position at the cultural crossroads of Austrian, Hungarian and Slovak influences, which forced people to speak several languages, the game consisted of simply changing identity when expedient. In other words, if the police addressed the culprits in German, they responded in Slovak; to a warning in Hungarian, they replied in German, and so on – always

answering as innocent foreigners in their own city, pretending they did not understand. Their fluid identities, the result of conscious evasion, served the citizens as a useful tool for the elegant sabotage of the rules imposed by the courts in Vienna. It enlarged their individual space of freedom.[2]

Another interesting documented journey, but a specifically architectural one, refers to the event that took place in September 1935 during the 3rd International Meeting of Architects in Central Europe. A veritable roll-call of central European towns was represented: Prague, Hradec Králové, Zlín, Brno, Bratislava, along with Vienna and Budapest. Under the imposing title 'Actual Evolution of National Architectures', the journey (later documented in a special issue of *l'Architecture d'Aujourd 'hui*) was aimed at identifying the then specific central European Modern architecture.

With the exception of individually organised or group architectural trips to and from Czechoslovakia in the prewar years of the 1930s and during the exceptional period of the 1960s, the processes of sharing and exchanging information on architects' work (regardless of which of the politically divided post-Second World War territories they built in) continued to be problematic for a long time and the mutual awareness of the two European scenes – the western and the eastern – was severely unbalanced.

Vlastimil Dohnal, Observation Tower, Vel'ká Homol'a Hill, Slovakia, 2001
The latest Slovak version of a landscape dominant. The open wooden structure of this observation tower was designed by older-generation architect Vlastimil Dohnal and was a finalist for the ARCH 2002 prize awarded by the Slovak *ARCH* magazine.

In general, before 1989, travelogues were extremely popular, for it was the time of closed borders in former Czechoslovakia. The more difficult it was to travel and to experience other people, places and cultures, the more eagerly readers subscribed to travel magazines that functioned as intermediaries, bringing them illustrated fragments of these realities.

In the field of architecture, despite mostly heavy restrictions on cross-border travel, awareness of international trends was high thanks to the few issues of Western architecture magazines that were being collected like gold dust in private or public libraries as the vital link between indigenous professionals and the outside world. As a matter of fact, the Czechoslovak architects who did manage to work under the control and constraints of state politics were – thanks to their access to foreign magazines and sporadic travel – surprisingly well informed about international architectural trends. But unpublished abroad, even their most prestigious built projects remained unknown to the international public.

The ground to be (re)covered here is the mediated space allocated to the coverage of exceptional local architecture as it is showcased on the covers and within the pages of architectural magazines and their forerunners, among them the travelogues mentioned earlier. Unless it is clarified, it might be a contentious issue to read identity into the architecture of the Czech and Slovak territories by means of only a few illustrated examples with their unspoken and complex historical background. The effort to bring these projects to the notice of the wider architectural fraternity is motivated by a conviction that it is precisely architectural magazines as a means of immediate two-way communication that can help to capture the temporality of any territorial identity, the degree of resistance to or absorption of architectural trends.

Though written in Czech and Slovak and unread abroad, local magazines act as a useful window for the international architectural press, providing access to vital information on the projects considered significant in the two countries.

Polarities

'No contemporary work of Czech architecture bears signs that could be given a name national.'

Alena Šrámková, 1999[3]

An openness towards the international architectural community as well as its obverse operated in both countries periodically. Czech and Slovak territories shared the periods of political isolation, but their architectural landscapes were never simultaneously and equally open to impulses from outside: when the Czech avant-garde was open to the experimental trends in Paris and Berlin, Slovak architecture was closer to Viennese influence and thus enclosed within the boundaries of a more traditional and formal approach.

***Architekt*, the magazine of the Society of Czech Architects, began as a fortnightly newspaper in the 1950s. This front page documents the Ješťed Television Tower designed by Karel Hubáček, for which he was awarded the UIA Perret Prize in 1969.**

***Projekt – Revue of Slovak Architecture*, the magazine of the Society of Slovak Architects, was already playing an important role in the 1960s and1970s. The covers of that period gestured architecture only by abstract fragments such as this plan of the Snail Shopping Centre designed by Ivan Matušík in 1959.**

The time lag in the penetration of new ideas to interested practitioners on the territorial peripheries was directly related to their geographic distance from such centres as Vienna, Berlin and Paris.

These polarities, between 'open or closed' and 'central or peripheral', are easier to understand when applied to Czech or Slovak architects' relations with the international scene, but sticking separate labels of identity on to these two architectural territories implies some deep-rooted difference between these historically and geographically close countries.

To go back to the 'identity game' mentioned earlier. The speed of change, the temporality of the characteristic features of one country's architectural production, its consistency over time, is the subject of this comparison, which sets up a hypothesis that if there is, in architecture, a Czech identity, then it is slow and if there is a Slovak identity, it is fast.

These attributes are open to both positive and negative interpretation and are not confined exclusively to architecture.

Architectural Magazines: 1950s to 1989

Building on their rich prewar tradition of magazines on architecture in Czechoslovakia, two of the local professional journals that originated in the 1950s and have since seen an unbroken run of publication are *Architekt* (before 1989 published in Prague as *Czechoslovak Architect* and sharing the same editors as *Architecture of CSR Magazine*) and *Projekt – Revue of Slovak Architecture*. Both started out as official press releases, for the national unions of architects in Prague and Bratislava respectively. Both experienced periodic confrontation with the censors, but obligatory political propaganda aside, their pages nevertheless capture the osmotic access of international trends into the local environment long before the political change in 1989; and provide a chronology, if sadly only partially complete, of the then best work of contemporary Czechoslovak architects.

By their very nature, the public buildings usually demonstrate 'the goodness of the state'. In spite of the fact that the public architecture built in the former Czechoslovakia carries the added burden of the 'beneficence' of the previous, communist regime, the local 'grand projects' published in the pages of *Architekt* and *Projekt* do confirm their timeless and internationally acceptable values. As early as the late 1950s, the influence of the International Style was easily discernible in Czech and Slovak architectural production and on occasions like Expo '58 in Brussels the Czechoslovak pavilions became showcases for the large state architectural offices led by their chief architects. The Czech architectural output, though, was much more aligned to the Functionalist forms (like the Tower on Ješť'ed Hill by Karel Hubáček, a member of the famous SIAL group), while Slovak architecture tended to expressive forms and aesthetic gestures (for example, the Crematorium in Bratislava by Ferdinand Milučký, 1964–9 or the Slovak Radio Broadcast Building by Štefan Svetko, 1962–1985).

These and many other buildings did not display any overt liaison with the regime, either in terms of their programmes or in their formal language (in contrast to those buildings erected mainly in the 1950s under a politically imposed style of social realism). While much space in both the Czech and Slovak press of the 1960s to 1980s was devoted to barely disguised propaganda toeing the official line on urbanism, public building, housing and industrial production, surprisingly enough, these projects and buildings were not ideologically 'monumentalised' or praised on the pages of the countries' architectural magazines. It was not necessary to emphasise the obvious politicisation of both architectural scenes that was occurring within the large state planning offices – then the only possible sites in the state for architectural creativity and production. The hidden critique of the position of the architect within this system, one impossible to verbalise, was inscribed in seemingly harmless but cunning caricatures that appeared regularly as magazine illustrations.

The censorship that operated in architectural magazines is easy to detect when one tries to find out what is missing from their pages. The editorial boards of

Jan Šrámek and Alena Šrámková, Na Mustku Administrative Building, Prague, Czech Republic, 1983
Together with her husband Jan Šrámek (the co-architect of the Czech Embassy in London, which was awarded a RIBA Architecture Award in 1971) and after his death, Alena Šrámková designed this administrative building in the late 1970s and early 1980s. it was reconstructed by Šrámková in 2004.

both magazines were appointed and changed according to the political climate. An example of censorship at work is the phenomenon of the virtually unpublished villas and houses built for the cultural elite. This pertinent omission makes for an illuminating insight.

The era between the 1960s and the 1980s saw few outstanding examples of family houses, either commissioned or built, but those that were completed were usually denied equal coverage in the official architectural press – the quality and individuality of the private houses such as the villa of Czech film director Věra Chytilová (1970–5), by architect Emil Přikryl, did not conform to state propaganda and so was not published officially. In comparison to their Slovak counterparts, there are in general more Czech architects, such as Emil Přikryl and Alena Šrámková, who before 1989 could not build many of their published projects for public buildings and whose family house projects built for private clients did not appear in the professional press. The exceptional family houses built in Bratislava in the same period are the personal villas of prestigious architects such as Ilja Skoček, Ferdinand Milučký or Ivan Matušík. Their built public buildings and large housing estate projects were widely published long before 1989, but their residences, built between the 1960s and 1980s, have only recently been given wide publication.

Magazines after 1989

In the period after 1989, the year the political regime changed, and prior to 1993, the year that saw the break-up of Czechoslovakia, the architectural situation was reversed and it was Czech architects who actually built more 'new' architecture and whose projects were more widely published. No comparable architect with the drive and vision of the Czech Alena Šrámková appeared in Slovakia immediately after the political change. In Slovakia only Martin Kusý and Pavol Paňák (BKPS), are highly influential as individual architects – and they really are exceptions – exerting wide influence on the local architectural scene, in comparison to such practitioners as Šrámková or Přikryl (both masterly educators too) in Czech lands. In Slovakia there are no 'schools' of architects whose work shows some consistency with the philosophy of their 'masters'. Thus, following their almost unconsciously achieved political separation, the two parts of the former Czechoslovakia offer a promising field for research on whether there has ever been such a thing as separate Czech and Slovak identities in terms of architecture.

A strong approach to architecture is much more clearly discernible on the Czech architectural scene – its Slovak counterpart is much less coherent, is much more obviously subject to outside influences, and its memory of Modernism more superficial.

Resistance to innovation is definitely much stronger among Czech architects. At first glance, practitioners from abroad might be prompted to think that this 'regressive' stance, still constructing buildings under the influence of Functionalism, holds back the Czech architectural scene

***Zlatý řez* (*Golden Section*) magazine has been reporting on contemporary projects from the Czech Republic and abroad since 1992. It publishes theories, essays and interviews covering art and architecture of the 20th and 21st centuries.**

compared to the advances in western Europe. However, for Czech architect Petr Pelčák, this holding back is conservativism as a search for balanced continuity between the past and the future that could avoid the situation where local architecture is 'forced to stand in the shit'.[4]

According to leading Czech architectural historian Rostislav Švácha, in his recent book (the only one to attribute a distinct identity to the Czech architecture of the last 15 years) *Czech Architecture and its Austerity: Fifty Buildings 1989–2004*, the Czech tradition of austerity 'is a tradition of the moral and ethical thinking on architecture'.[5] He puts forward the view that it is so because of the profound influence of architect Alena Šrámková on Czech architecture from the 1970s and 1980s to the present.

The first complete history of Modern architecture in Slovak territory, that by architects Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, *20th Century Architecture in Slovakia*,[6] presents architecture in Slovakia not as dominated by any particular integrity, but rather as the product of its diversity and complexity in relation to the country's position both at the crossroads and on the periphery.

The change to the architectural scene after 1989 has been far more radical in the Czech Republic, with consequences both for the academic staff in schools of architecture (for example, urgent calls for professors and heads of design studios to take up teaching positions at the largest faculty of architecture in Prague) and for practice (numerous younger offices started up and saw their projects come to fruition). In contrast, in Slovakia, changes to the architectural scene and academic environment have not been so uncompromising.

New Central European Architectural Magazines

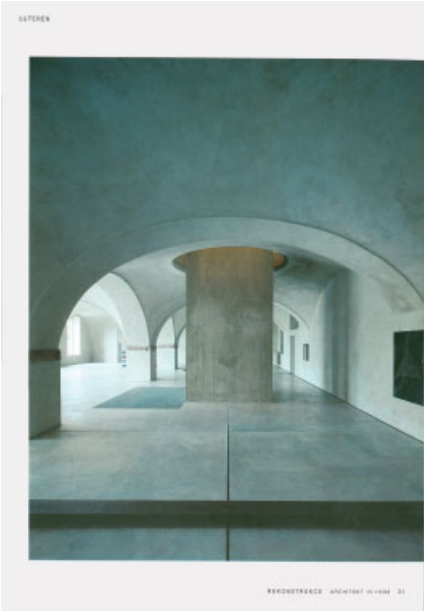
The years around and after 1993 saw an influx of new architecture magazines on to the market. Alongside revamped versions of the official Czech magazine *Architekt* and Slovak *Projekt*, new independent magazines were founded that enjoyed considerable success: in 1992 *Zlatý řez* (*Golden Section*) started publication in Prague; in 1995 *ARCH for Architecture and Other Culture* rolled off the presses in Bratislava; and, most recently, in 2001, *era21* in Brno.

Since their foundation, the two 'Euro-peripheral' territories and their own interior landscapes have been accorded more media coverage than ever before, so confirming the statement of Rostislav Koryčánek, the first editor-in-chief of *era21*, that 'while the centre provides the manual, the periphery provides the oxygen'.[7] This preoccupation with the periphery is apparent throughout these magazines, but especially in the pages of *era21*. Since its first issue, it has emphasised this preoccupation not only by promoting the architecture being built in the periphery, but by airing peripheral concerns in the architectural press and affording them equal weight with the coverage elsewhere accorded to mainstream topics (ecology of architecture, gender architecture, etc). The magazines *Architekt* and *Golden Section*, on the other hand, devote significant space to theoretical writing on architecture and to architecture produced abroad by Czech architects.

Two of the few examples of local works of architecture that met with an enthusiastic reception, both from the foreign architectural press and local critics writing for local architectural magazines, were the Gallery of Benedict Rejt in Louny (1993–8) near Prague by Czech architect Přikryl, and the Family House in Stupava (1997–2000) near Bratislava by Czech and Slovak architects David Kopecký and Jan Studený.

These two cases serve to illustrate the 'slow' and 'fast' forms of Czech and Slovak architectural identity. The project to transform the former brewery into the gallery in Louny is a carefully and slowly elaborated study in the timeless forms of contemporary architecture. Started in 1993 and finished in

Alena Šrámková, Lukáš Ehl, Jan Hájek and Tomáš Koumar, Family House, Jirčany, Czech Republic, 2002
Alena Šrámková's influence on contemporary Czech architecture has been constant over many decades, the result of her many collaborations with leading contemporary architects. Most of her built projects are from the period after 1989. The house in Jirčany provokes its suburban environment with its simple yet firmly fortified form.



Emil Přikryl, Gallery of Benedikt Rejt, Louny, Czech Republic, 1998
The gallery's director, Alica Štefančíková, was awarded the *Architekt* magazine prize for initiating this low-cost reconstruction of an old brewery. The architect designed the exhibition area to oscillate on the edge of timelessness. The public's polemic response to the gallery does not detract from the fact that this is an example of Czech architecture at its finest.

1998, the first phase of renovation was followed by a further phase of intervention and refinement. Time seems to stop at the sharp edges of the solid and plain interior; the absence of fashionable decorative elements is striking. The house in Stupava, on the other hand, is a fast-track project, very radical for its Slovak context and a building that clearly acknowledges its affinity with Western trends. The fast design and planning stages in 2002 were followed by a period of even faster construction of a 'box' created entirely out of glass, concrete and prefabricated sections. However, the clients were not entirely happy with the 'box', and so it was skilfully metamorphosed into a more traditional white-plastered house.

This polarity between the gallery in Louny and the Family House in Stupava shows an obvious difference, that between being firmly situated in the world and being worldly in the sense of knowing what are the global architectural trends. The architecture of Přikryl may be seen as slow, in the sense of operating with memory, while the adaptable box by Kopecký and Studený appears as fast, in operating by forgetting.

The anecdote taken from Heinrich Pröhle's travelogue revealed another particular cultural tendency, that of negation. While this mechanism can be seen to operate in the individual identities of the Czech and Slovak territories, it manifests itself differently under different social conditions. The pre-1989 state control over architectural production elicited a sophisticated reaction – a purposeful naivety on the part of architects; the official culture found its response in a heavy Brutalism and expressive formal experiments. While the negation is present in such architects' creations as a moral attitude, as the profound architectural moralist and thinker Alena Šrámková confirms, this negation alone cannot

Jan Studený and David Kopecký - KSA, Family House, Stupava, Slovak Republic, 2000
Awarded the *ARCH* magazine prize in 2001, this family house was almost unequivocally well received by the local architectural scene, where works of the young Czech/Slovak team Jan Studený and David Kopecký are now setting current trends. However, a few years after the house was completed the client became unhappy with the transparent facade, and this suburban icon of newness was eventually replaced by a conventional plastered version of the same house.

generate a consistent style. Contemporary democratic Czech and Slovak architecture achieves its best quality in those rare moments when the works negate the present, pervasive architectural snobbery with simple, almost banal forms. But to point out the mutual difference, Henrieta Moravčíková, editor-in-chief of the Slovak *ARCH*, identifies the defining features of Czech architecture as 'the insertion of a certain joke, maybe of human scale, of delicacy or smallness into otherwise very simple, pure architecture'.[8]

There are fresh examples of the introduction of a positive quality of 'smallness', a possible irony too, in the peripheries of the new territories, such as works by Svatopluk Sládeček (NEW WORK) based in Brno, in the eastern Czech Republic, and Irakli Eristavi (ZEROZERO) based in Prešov, in eastern Slovakia. Independently of their locale, both offices create architecture of more self-referential objects, autonomous figures in ambiguous contexts. Their approach may well constitute the real identity game as it is actually played out in the territories of both architectural scenes.

Identity Rooted in Reality

There exists a stereotypical view of Czech architecture as conservative, attached to its Modernist memories, that in contrast sees Slovak architecture as more open to impulses from outside. But as is shown clearly by Czech radicalism on the one hand, and Slovak superficiality on the other – the respective strategies by which each territory dealt with change after 1989 – it is not conservative traditionalism versus liberal progress that is to be deduced from this comparison.

At the risk of oversimplifying matters, it is possible to discern that what slows down the Czech architecture from rapid assimilation of fashions and trends is its radicalism and, in some cases, the understanding of architecture as a field where a moral stance is required.

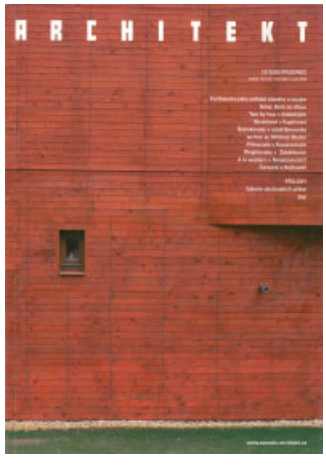
Slovak architecture, on the other hand, particularly if one looks at its representations in contemporary magazines, seems to advance or slow down according to the perceived loss or revival of illusions.

It is difficult to see a direct continuum from Czech Cubism (its evolution more isolated than radical over time) or the radicalism and longevity of Czech Functionalism to the proposed 'slow' identity of contemporary Czech architecture, but there are social and cultural indicators that support the hypothesis of slowness: for example, the present Euro-scepticism and the procrastination over the introduction of the euro.

On the Slovak side, these 'slow' phenomena are counterbalanced by the much faster and broader integration by local architects of Postmodern trends as early as the 1980s, only to be abandoned a decade later, with equal alacrity, in favour of Neomodernism before being recently reintroduced in the rhetoric of architectural publications on new media design. Nor is this ability to absorb changes of direction quickly exclusive to architecture – the independent Slovak political system underwent periods of destabilisation that are currently overcome by one of the fastest growing national economies fuelling one of the fastest reforming agendas on the continent. The country is scheduled to be one of the first in central Europe to introduce the euro currency, and strong support for the EU project is evident right across the social spectrum.

New Platforms for Multiple Identities

The work of young Czech and Slovak architects is outstandingly individualised, but it is to be seen side by side in only a few newly available contexts (on the Internet or at exhibitions) that connect the various, often divergent, streams, offering a multicentred grid instead of the previous polarities of west–east, memory versus forgetting, slow versus fast.



Svatopluk Sládeček (NEW WORK), Family House, Rajhrad, Czech Republic, 2003
The recent works of Svatopluk Sládeček enrich the spectrum of local architecture with a freer and more playful way of building on the experiences of strong Czech Functionalism and Modernism.

‘Wonderland’ (www.wonderland.cx) is a bottom-up network and open-ended project linking teams from nine countries (Austria – the initiator – Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Croatia and Slovenia). Interestingly enough, even within this geographically diverse selection, for those Czech and Slovak architects whose work was displayed in an exhibition that toured nine European cities between 2004 and 2006, the opposing paradigms of practice – the one wedded to memory, the other eager to replace every trend with something newer – were architectural features clearly visible in the pixelated landscape that was the medium for the works of participating teams. The spontaneous selection shows that young Czech architects in their 30s have a greater likelihood of constructing their projects in the long term, and that most of them are still designing buildings under the influence of the Czech Functionalist and Minimalist tradition. By contrast, most of the Slovak participants exhibit only their virtual projects, confirming their strong affinity with new technology and new trends in contemporary architecture; yet these projects are still on the drawing board, unable to overcome unfavourable local conditions. The built projects that are presented in the Slovak selection either end up unused, are rebuilt by clients or have been built abroad.

The Wonderland initiative has brought out a new architectural magazine, also called *Wonderland*. A guidebook for and about young architects, it is a new type of architectural publication, intended to complement the existing architectural press that deals primarily in trends and fashions in architecture.

Irakli Eristavi (ZEROZERO), Apartment houses, Prešov, Slovak Republic, 2005
Winner of the *ARCH* magazine prize in 2005, the ZEROZERO studio founded by Irakli Eristavi demonstrates that there is definitely something happening on the local peripheries. This successful social housing project cleverly solves the decades-long dilemma of how to tackle the problematic contexts of mass housing estates.

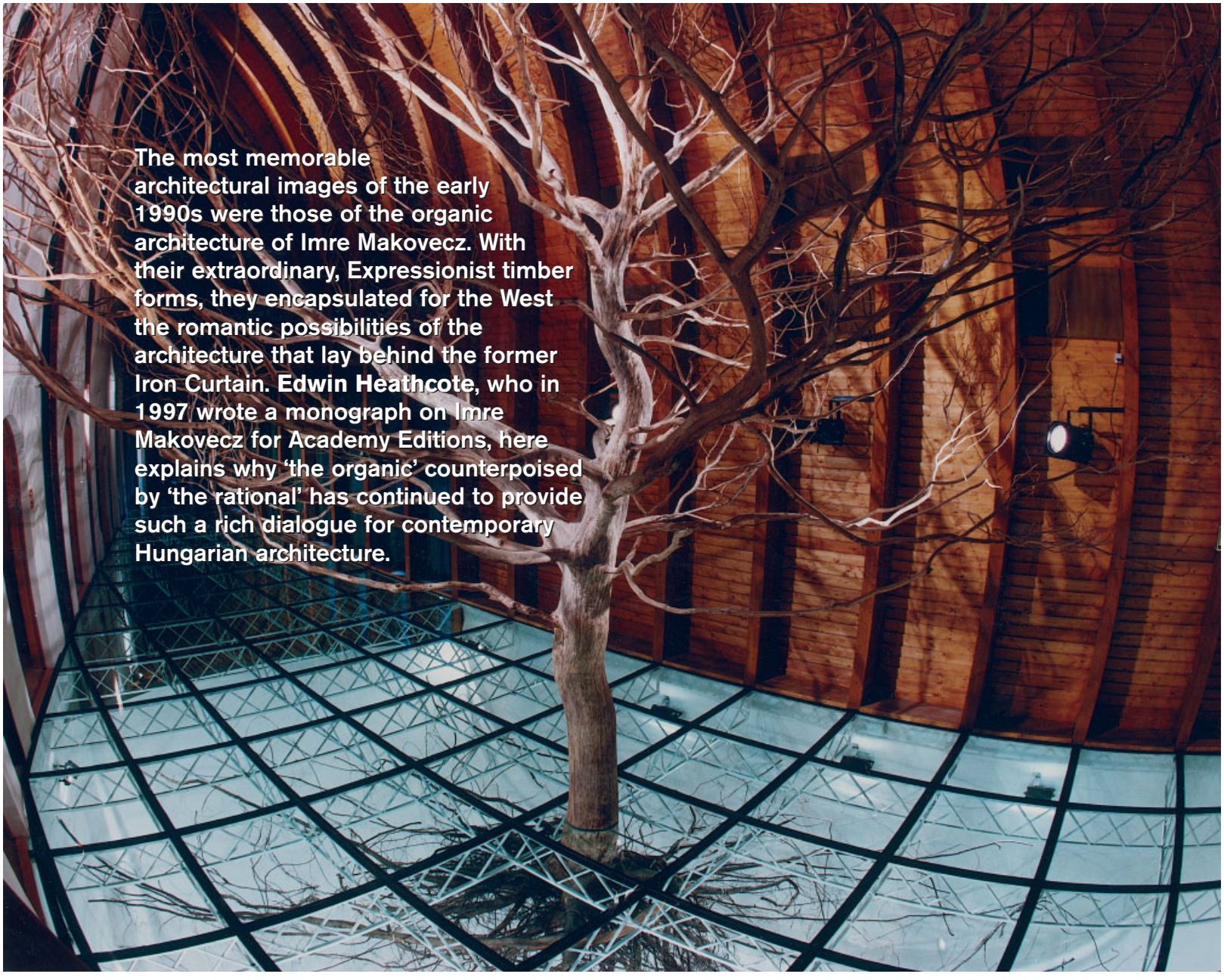
The ‘Young Blood’ project and exhibition network set in train by the Centre for Central European Architecture in Prague (www.ccea-info.org) has similar aims to the Wonderland initiative, seeking to open up the international architecture scene for young Czech and Slovak practitioners towards countries with adjoining borders. Architects from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Austria who are considered to be artists, sociologists, philosophers, as well as managers in their own right, are given an exhibition space and media coverage to explain their contemporary positions. Through the intentional misspelling of each nationality in the exhibition notes – ‘I am a Young *Czeck* Architect’; ‘I am a Young *Slowak* Architect’ – the audience’s mind set is jolted; they are forced to confront their preconceptions and instead appreciate what it really means to be a central European.

Many new travelogues on the newly accessed EU states are being produced.[9] The anecdote mentioned earlier, the switching of identities to evade repression, anticipates today’s unavoidable encounter with the dangers of imperfectly perceived local identities on journeys for which time is the key and a sense of humour a highly desirable prerequisite. AD

Notes

1. Milan Kundera, *Slowness*, Harper Collins (London), 1996.
2. Jozef Tancer, ‘Podoby mesta: Bratislava očami cestopisov (Image of the city: Bratislava in travelogues), *Anthropos*, No 2, 2005, p 61.
3. Alena Šrámková, ‘Současná česká tvorba a jeji koreny – anketa (Contemporary Czechwork and its roots, 1989–1999), *Architekt*, No 1, 1999, p 26.
4. Petr Pelčák, ‘Několik poznámek současné architektuře’ (Some notes to contemporary architecture), *Architekt*, No 12, 1998, p 46.
5. Rostislav Švácha, *Czech Architecture and its Austerity: Fifty Buildings 1989–2004*, Prostor (Prague), 2005, p 303.
6. Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, *Architektúra Slovenska v 20 storočí* (20th-Century Architecture in Slovakia), Slovart (Bratislava), 2002, p 511.
7. Rostislav Koryčánek, *‘Názor na architekturu* (View on Architecture), *era21*, No 3, 2005, p 4.
8. Henrieta Moravčíková, ‘Zmenila se citlivost – interview (The sensibility has changed – an interview), *Architekt*, No 12, 1998, pp 38–9.
9. A new magazine, *Ad architektura*, has appeared on the Czech scene and, with the appointment of the first foreign chief editor of *era21*, Japanese architect Osamu Okamura, local architecture is now receiving wider coverage abroad.

Hungary: The Organic and the Rational Traditions



The most memorable architectural images of the early 1990s were those of the organic architecture of Imre Makovecz. With their extraordinary, Expressionist timber forms, they encapsulated for the West the romantic possibilities of the architecture that lay behind the former Iron Curtain. Edwin Heathcote, who in 1997 wrote a monograph on Imre Makovecz for Academy Editions, here explains why 'the organic' counterpoised by 'the rational' has continued to provide such a rich dialogue for contemporary Hungarian architecture.

Imre Makovecz, Hungarian Pavilion, Seville Expo, 1992
In his Hungarian pavilion, Makovecz uses the idea of the tree with its roots exposed to explore his notion of a world beyond view, a world of darkness and imagination that runs parallel to our own. It became the most visited pavilion at the expo and defied the vacuity and technocratic superficiality usually associated with expo design.

Dezsö Ekler, Disznókö Winery tractor building, Tokaj, 2001
Certainly one of the most extraordinary agricultural outbuildings in recent history, Ekler's building nestles into the hillsides upon which the vines grow and seems to embrace the earth.

For well over a century now, both architectural debate and practice in Hungary have been dominated by two seemingly diametrically opposed strands – the rational and the organic. Although the bulk of what is actually being built may not now, and may not have traditionally, fallen within either category, it is these twin poles which have given the country its international profile and which have animated an aggressively polarised and politicised architectural scene.

Just as Expressionism and the Bauhaus share roots in the Romantic Medievalism of postwar Germany, both Hungarian Rationalism and Organicism can be traced back to the specific cultural condition that existed in the late 19th century, an era in which Budapest began to compete for dominance with its twin capital in the Austro-Hungarian empire, Vienna.

Austrian rational theory from Semper, through to Wagner and Loos, exerted a profound impact on architects in Budapest, but their ideas about the entanglement of meaning with structure and decoration were interpreted in extremely different ways, ways almost always associated with the production of a national identity through architecture. Frigyes Feszl (1821–84) developed a delicate and unique Neo-Renaissance style using ancient Hungarian motifs, but it was his Organicist contemporary Ödön Lechner (1845–1914) who took such ideas to their logical conclusion, creating in the process an architecture comparable to that of Gaudí (who was similarly using his art to create a Catalan national synthesis in opposition to Spain, the dominant power). Lechner's buildings, most notably his Museum of Applied Arts (1893–6), blended symbolic myths of origin and Hungarian folk decoration combined with startlingly rational techniques of construction and planning. But it was Lechner's finest student, Béla Lajta (1873–1920) who best exemplified the inspirational link between the modern and the organic, and whose *oeuvre* forms the critical bridge between the rational and the national.

Little known in the West, Lajta's work lies somewhere between Art Nouveau, the national Romanticism of Jože Plečnik, and the qualified, paradoxically conservative Rationalism of Adolf Loos. His early landmarks include profoundly affecting tombs, executed using archaic and archetypal forms and an inventive Monumentalism. Yet by 1911, when Loos was building his epoch-defining Goldman-Salatsch store in Vienna, Lajta had built the Rózsavölgyi House, amongst the most stripped-down and severely rational buildings of its era. All that remains of the romantic are the spectral threads of folk ornamentation appearing as string courses. Before the dawn of the First World War, Lajta had progressed to a kind of proto-modern Monumentalism that presaged the Deco and Italian Fascist forms of the 1930s.

What Lajta achieved in creating a successful and contemporary architecture of place remains unprecedented, and it was the polarisation brought by socialism that brought to an end any sense of the possibility of the two sides coming together any time soon to create again this extraordinary, fecund union.

Hungary as a nation was decimated after the First World War, with two-thirds of its territory stripped away. The country's greatest talents were pushed abroad by either economics or politics, and the story of Hungarian Modernism is dominated by émigrés from László Moholy-Nagy and Marcel Breuer to Ernö Goldfinger and Pierre Vago, none of whom made any significant physical impact on their home country.

The interwar period saw the emergence of two architectures. The first was heavily influenced by the Bauhaus, its finest proponent being Farkas Molnár (1897–1945), who studied at Dessau, worked with Gropius and realised the first building design to emerge from the Bauhaus: the Red Cube House of 1922. Molnár then returned to design a series of inventive and influential villas. The second *oeuvre* was a Rationalism heavily indebted to Italian Fascist architecture

that, despite the success and dissemination of the Functionalist style, became the default Modernism and officially sanctioned state style of the interwar years. The Modernists were, as elsewhere in Europe, progressive and broadly socialist, their commissions coming from enlightened councillors and wealthy left-wingers. Thus, when the socialists were elected after the war and Hungary was subsequently annexed to the eastern bloc, the inheritors of the Modernist mantle were pushed to the fore in the vast state commissions that began to redefine the Hungarian landscape.

Hungarian architecture remains effectively defined by the reactionary and the progressive, but in the perverse atmosphere of post-communism those positions are impossible to reconcile with any notions we may have in the privileged and long-democratic West. Socialist Modernism became associated with the status quo, not with progressive ideals, while radical architects, including the unique Organic school, were nevertheless fuelled by nationalism, conservatism and their opposition to the state.

Just as utopian Modernism in the West became tainted by its association with poor-quality mass housing (the failures of Pruitt-Igoe and Ronan Point), the panel-housing (so-called because it utilised Soviet system-made precast concrete panels) that still announces arrival at the outskirts of every Hungarian, indeed every eastern European, city, similarly destroyed traditional and utopian fantasies of a progressive, liberating Modernism. That some very fine buildings were erected in the communist era, from factories to hotels and sophisticated urban schemes, proved easy to forget in the understandably heated and polarised discussions that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall (partly made possible by Hungarian liberalisation) in 1989.

Unlike some other ex-bloc countries, Budapest has not been transformed since the fall of communism. Its relatively liberal governance during the last couple of decades of satellite status allowed the city to change in a gradual and controlled manner, succumbing to few of the brutal city-centre visions that devastated other capitals, notably Bucharest and Bratislava. The relative economic stability inherited from the old regime (albeit one sustained by huge debt) led to a rush of investment once the Iron Curtain was drawn, the results of which have been mixed and piecemeal, but not tragic. Foreign investors have also been instrumental in the renovation of important historic buildings, such as the extraordinary Secessionist Gresham Palace, now a Four Seasons hotel, which has reawakened an already significant public interest in the high architectural quality of the urban fabric. What remains unresolved is exurbia. Hungary is following the model of suburbs and retail sheds surrounded by junkspace and poor socialist housing in its midst. Regulation in city centres has led developers to build around, rather than in, cities, and the results are ill-planned, unsustainable and all too familiar.

Under the socialist regime, the best-known and most effective opponent of system building and the social and political effects of state-sponsored Modernism was Imre Makovecz, who remains one of the few internationally recognised Hungarian artistic figures. Makovecz seamlessly, thoughtfully and effectively moved from resistance to communism to resistance to globalisation, and his contribution to the debate makes him worth looking at in a little more detail.

Born in 1935, Makovecz began his career working for the state, producing a series of expressively sculptural concrete buildings inspired by a potent blend of American Organicism (Wright and Goff) and central European Expressionism (in particular, Rudolf Steiner). His implacable political opposition cost him his career and he was, literally, exiled to the forests where, away from inquisitive official eyes, he worked constructing a series of small timber summer-camp buildings that were to become extremely influential. During the 1980s he became a cult figure among students and intellectuals fascinated by his potent blend of historical and ethnographic reference, nationalism, artistic brilliance and Steiner-influenced philosophy. He began once more to build, small local buildings financed by communities and parishes with minimal state intervention. His architecture can be read very much as a continuation of the work of his forebears at the turn of the century.

Makovecz's extraordinary architecture had an impact far beyond the country's borders. It chimed with an international rejection of the corporatisation of late Modernism and with the emergence of Postmodernism. The reliance on folk motifs, on a Manichaean recognition of darkness and light, on the mapping of human motion employed as envelope, on traditional carpentry skills and on a spiritualism long neglected (or at least little articulated) in Western architecture, provided an escape route, a reawakening of symbolism. His Hungarian pavilion at the 1992 Seville Expo revealed his work to an international audience, and the stripped tree at its heart, set into a glass floor, its roots exposed, formed a memorable cipher for his attempts to reveal a Jungian parallel world of darkness in which we must exist along with our memories and our ancestors.

But Makovecz's work remained marginalised. Despite an increasingly active school that followed in his wake, the norm remained first late-, then post-, then revived Modernism, and the general standard of the country's architecture remained poor, even at the highest, state-sponsored level. Quite how poor was recently illustrated by the astonishing National Theatre, an aesthetic refugee from Ceaucescu's Romania. This appalling building embodies the kitsch that continues to dog the country, and continues to raise issues about how the country wants to define and represent itself through architecture.

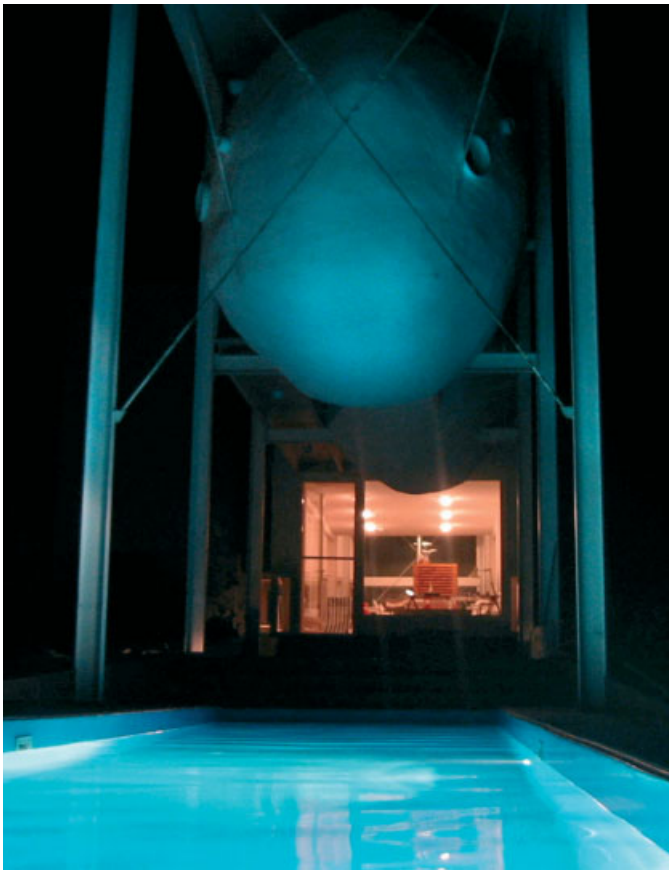
The last couple of years, however, have seen significant change in Hungarian architecture. Almost certainly this has to

Hungarian architecture remains effectively defined by the reactionary and the progressive, but in the perverse atmosphere of post-communism those positions are impossible to reconcile with any notions we may have in the privileged and long-democratic West.

Zsuffa and Kalmár, Town Hall, Budaörs, 2005
The courtyard is articulated in heavy stone, as if hewn from the rock of the hills behind. The rigorous language of the colonnade evokes the Italian-influenced interwar architecture of civic Budapest, the deliberate introduction of a formal grandeur then broken down by asymmetry; this is the image of municipal ambition set self-consciously against geology and geography.

Új Irány Group, Millennium Cultural Centre, Budapest, 2001
The illuminated facade of the former Ganz manufacturing works re-envisioned as the Millennium Cultural Centre.

Ferenc Bán, Summer House, Tokaj, 1998
The eccentric pod suspended above the pool of Ferenc Bán's sci-fi summer house in the Tokaj wine region.



do with the emergence of a younger generation of architects who have been educated, and who embarked on their careers in the wake of communism. Fascinatingly, the preoccupations of a century ago prevail, the rational and the organic still setting the agenda for debate and practice.

Organic architecture, which originally positioned itself in opposition to the repressive artificiality of the communist state, has repositioned itself against globalisation and international homogeneity. Its influence remains out of all proportion to its actual size, yet its coherence and the way its constituents have organised themselves into a school with their own apprenticeship programme and publications gives it a powerful critical voice.

As successors to the national Romantic and Expressionist traditions they have, perhaps predictably, found their greatest victories in rural settings. The churches of Imre Makovecz, particularly those at Paks, Siófok and Százhalombatta, created powerful and meaningful centres for communities that had suffered under collectivisation and the decline of industry. Dezsö Ekler's exquisitely sculptural Disznókö Winery in Tokaj provides a recognisable symbol for the revived wine-growing region and is sufficiently bound to earth and topography to express, architecturally, the notion of *terroir* so often lacking in clinically executed, show-off winery buildings. Organicism has traditionally been more connected with the rural than with the urban, its *raison d'être* has been the revivification of rural life and tradition in a nation still very centralised around its capital. This has inhibited its urban reach, but also made possible extraordinary architecture in impoverished communities. Architects working for starvation fees, with local builders and craftspeople involved in the community, have managed to create inspirational buildings using local skills, techniques and materials. Schools, town halls, civic centres have succeeded in giving powerful identities to struggling communities.

The rational tradition in Hungarian architecture continues to refer to both the Monumental Rationalism and the overt Functionalism that defined the country's interwar years as well as the cold clarity of New Modern. Unlike Organicism, the Modernist tradition has no binding school. This has ensured it is more disparate, encompassing everything from Neo-Bauhaus to post-Koolhaas, but also that it is more adaptable, that it becomes the default position.

The extraordinary new town hall at Budaörs, by Zsuffa and Kalmár, is an unapologetic return to the era of municipal Monumental, its trabeated architecture an unequivocal expression of civic power blended with a sculptural sophistication in its formal composition that recalls contemporary Swiss work. GEON Studio's WET Research and Innovation Centre, however, presents the kind of self-effacing, quietly efficient Modernism more familiar in western Europe, but still relatively rare in Hungary.

The private house, which had been the crucible for Modernist experimentation in the 1930s, but which was pushed aside as a means of architectural expression in favour of communal living during the communist era, re-emerged as a significant genre at the end of the 1980s. The majority of houses built then, as now, are strikingly inarticulate, but a small number of extremely interesting works have nevertheless emerged. Ferenc Cságoly's Budapest apartment house, now more than a decade old, managed to combine elements of both the organic and the rational in a spiky Expressionistic composition. Ferenc Bán's own house (1998) evokes some of the weirder experiments in Japanese architecture in its blend of severity and blobbiness. Zsuffa and

Inarchi, MEO Contemporary Art Collection, Budapest, 2001
Stripped back to structure, this former industrial building creates the now familiar foil for contemporary art in a small-scale contemporary of Tate Modern. If the industrial interior of the gallery evokes Herzog & de Meuron's Tate Modern, the cheaply realised, highly effective elevations presage the Swiss architects' Laban Dance Centre.

Kalmár's houses and their understated Tokaji winery add significantly to the contributions of Portuguese and Swiss schools in the acknowledgment of, and integration into, a Modernist formal language of local material and vernacular tradition. The apartment block, which had been the single building type that defined the cities and was refined to a sophisticated Franco-German derived typology, has become the worst of offenders with many appalling examples initiated by dim developers with an eye to profit and little else.

The move towards the rehabilitation of industrial buildings that has flourished in western Europe has also taken root. While the trend for lofts is only now taking off, a number of major manufacturing structures have been taken over for cultural purposes. The most ambitious of these is the Millennium Cultural Centre in Budapest, designed by László Benczúr, József Weber and Ákos Takács, which was formerly the Ganz locomotive works. A new glazed facade on the main manufacturing site breaks the building open, exposing to the new urban space a highly theatrical interior, while the facade of another structure becomes the backdrop to a stage.

Inarchi's MEO Contemporary Art Collection, also in Budapest, is, despite its much smaller scale, a more interesting structure. The first and only privately funded public art gallery in Budapest, it is housed in a former tannery. The building's public face is clad in polycarbonate panels, backlit in assorted colours, in an effort to produce a cost-effective and striking hoarding that does not attempt to compete with the old building's stolid weight. The use of this device predates and predicts Herzog & de Meuron's adoption of the same elevational treatment at London's Laban Dance Centre.

The fundamental opposition between the rational and the organic has set up an extremely rich dialogue in contemporary Hungarian architecture. While much of the organic output can be easily dismissed as kitsch, and most of the rational as pastiche moderne, the debate has spurred an increasingly lively scene. The question of whether there is such a thing as a distinctively Hungarian school beyond the relatively coherent confines of Organicism is debatable. The broader architectural world remains largely unmoved by efforts to define architecture in national terms. There is little or no sense that architects are searching for national identity through formal expression; certainly the well-travelled and educated emerging architects are unlikely to be hung up on the issue, but neither are Hungarian architects making an international impact. Both Switzerland and Portugal have shown how a Modernist tradition that continually refers to the vernacular and to the memory of type is not only not a paradox, but can lead to a coherence that actually travels extraordinarily well. There is perhaps still a sense of denial among the Rationalists, which is balanced out by the occasionally fanatical adherence to place of the Organicists, which has precluded any notion of a middle way, potentially to the detriment of the development of Hungarian design.

It has taken the extreme, often profound theatricalism of Makovecz's experiments to acknowledge the rifts caused by the establishment of a communist state and to evoke the shadows and the darkness at the heart of the nation's history. The bland corporate glass facades that have universalised the streets and business parks of the West have rapidly taken root in Hungary as corporations clamour to take their chunk of a new market; commercial architecture is as dim here as elsewhere. The debate about nation, architecture and expression rumbles, often acrimoniously, along. Entrenched positions have failed to inhibit a fast-evolving, diverse and increasingly youthful scene which remains open to international influences and which, while it does not seem likely to produce a Modernist consensus comparable to that we see in other small countries like Switzerland or Norway, is still capable of producing surprising, soulful and occasionally powerfully affecting architecture concerned with reintegrating Hungary into the physical and cultural fabric of the central Europe from which it was so brutally torn 60 years ago. AD

Slovenia: An Architectural Heritage Moving Forward

Slovenia has a rich history of Modern architecture. Its capital, Ljubljana, is well known for the distinctive buildings of Jože Plečnik as well as those of the Secessionist and Functionalist eras. Since opening up to the West in the early 1990s, a younger generation of Slovene architects has been propelled to the fore, who have been able to benefit from the advantages of exposure to international teaching and ideas. Andrej Hrausky describes the historical and national context in which contemporary Slovene architects work and asks how their output might relate to it in the future.

Josip Vancaš, City Savings Bank, Ljubljana, 1904
At the turn of the 20th century, during the period of Slovene nationalism, only architects of Slovene origin, like Josip Vancaš, were allowed to build in Ljubljana. His Art Nouveau architecture had its roots in the school of Otto Wagner in Vienna, where more severe Classicism could be found.

Slovenia, not to be confused with Slovakia or Slavonia, lies where the Adriatic Sea, the Alps and the Pannonian plain meet. Once a province of the Roman Empire, it was ruled by the Habsburg monarchy for more than 500 years, then was part of Yugoslavia up to the declaration of independence in 1991. In 2004 the country became a member of the European Union (eu). Its territory has been crossed by routes linking ancient Rome with Byzantium, Vienna with the Adriatic Sea, the Balkans with Europe. By road it is 400 kilometres (250 miles) south of Munich, 380 kilometres (240 miles) southwest of Vienna and a friendly 250 kilometres (150 miles) east of Venice – the cultural centres that over the centuries have influenced Slovenian art and architecture. With a nation of just 2 million people speaking the country's own language, in cultural terms Slovenian influence in neighbouring countries is limited, with the exception perhaps of Krainerwurst, a special kind of sausage familiar in the German-speaking world, and Lipizzaner horses (a special breed from the Lipica region).

The contemporary Slovene architecture of the past decade has been created within the new environment of the independent state. Architecture is historically bound to the place of its creation, and it can be understood only if one is familiar with certain historical, political and climatic conditions.

Ljubljana, the country's capital city since 1991, has always been the centre of architectural development. In Roman times it was a *castrum*, called Emona, and after 1335 became an important base of the ruling Habsburgs on the route towards the Mediterranean, its cultural influences coming subsequently mainly from Venice and Vienna. After the fall of the Protestant movement around 1600, when Slovenia became a predominantly Catholic state, the centre acquired its Baroque style. But in 1895, whilst the country was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ljubljana was badly damaged in an earthquake. The response from the monarchy was impressive, and among the first to offer a plan for the reconstruction of the city was Camillo Sitte, at the time the empire's most acclaimed urban planner. However, Ljubljana's proud Slovene mayor did not want German experts to participate in the reconstruction. Instead, he contacted a Slovene, Maks Fabiani, a distinguished professor in Vienna and an associate of Otto Wagner. Though his urban reconstruction plan was only ever partly realised, Fabiani did design a number of buildings in the city which, together with the constructions by the Croat Josip Vancaš and local architects such as Ciril Metod Koch, created Ljubljana's Secessionist landscape.

After the postwar disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovenia became part of Yugoslavia. In 1921, the Faculty of Architecture was established at the University of Ljubljana. Its founder, Ivan Vurnik, was a disciple of Otto Wagner in Vienna. But like many non-German architects, Vurnik too considered Wagner's architecture to be an

Ljubljana Town Square showing the Town Hall (1719) and Robba Fountain (1751) with Saint Nicholas' Cathedral (1706) in the background.
In the 18th century, Ljubljana town centre took on its Baroque appearance. Architects and artists came mainly from Italy: for example, the Robba Fountain was created by Francesco Robba of Venice, and the cathedral is the work of Andrea Pozzo, a Jesuit from Rome, with interior paintings by Giulio Quaglio, a scholar of Tintoretto.

expression of German culture, and thus tried to develop a Slovene national style instead. In this vein he invited Jože Plečnik to take the post of professor of architecture in Ljubljana. However, Plečnik opposed Vurnik's romantic 'creating' of a national style and instead established his own interpretation of Classical Regionalism, attempting to redesign Ljubljana as the capital of the Slovene people, with all the monumentality this entailed. The Žale Cemetery, the National and University Library, the church in the Ljubljana district of Siska, the bridges over the Ljubljanica river – these are only the most important interventions in the city that can be rightfully called 'Plečnik's Ljubljana'.

Plečnik paid little attention to the international architectural developments at the time and instead devoted all his efforts to the *architectura perennis* (the eternal architecture, also the title of his book). His reputation enabled

Jože Plečnik, Prelovšek Apartment, 1933
Plečnik was not a pure Classicist, but simply believed that by incorporating the Classical architectural language of columns, arches, pyramids and obelisks, his work would also be understood in the future, just as ancient architecture is understood today. He believed that the responsibility of architecture is not limited to the present time, but extends over the lifespan of a building.

Jože Plečnik, Chamber of Commerce (now the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia), Ljubljana, 1927
At a time when it would have been very easy to follow Le Corbusier's 'instructions' (the 'Five Points of New Architecture' from 1926), Jože Plečnik embarked on his own course, developing his 'eternal architecture', which ignored developments in the Modern Movement.

Ravnikar graduated under Plečnik's tutorship, before working for Le Corbusier. In a way similar to that of Alvar Aalto in Finland, Ravnikar, too, tried to find a compromise between the International Style and Slovene heritage.

Jože Plečnik, The Three Bridges, Ljubljana, 1932
Instead of replacing the old bridge over the Ljubljanica River with a larger one, Plečnik preserved the existing one and added two smaller pedestrian bridges on either side of it. This solution was not only cheaper, but also enabled him to take the large Preeren's Square over the water towards the town hall. He said: 'We should not destroy what our fathers have done well.'

France Tomažič, Villa Oblak, Rudnik, Ljubljana, 1933
Tomažič was the first assistant to Professor Jože Plečnik. However, he was later to leave his teacher and begin practising in the Modern style. His Villa Oblak is one of the most important buildings of the Modern Movement in Slovenia. However, the arch on the facade signalling the entrance, an element almost unknown in Modern architecture, is clear evidence of Plečnik's influence.

Herman Hus, 'Small Skyscraper', Ljubljana, 1931
Herman Hus was one of a group of Plečnik's students who, after visiting the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1925, rejected his teaching and became followers of the Modern Movement. Hus designed the 'Small Skyscraper' to look higher than the six floors permitted by urban regulations.

him to influence the architectural tastes of his clients. However, when August Černigoj, the only Slovene to study at the Bauhaus, prepared an exhibition of the new artistic currents in Ljubljana in 1924, he remained largely misunderstood. However, by the late 1920s, Functionalism was flourishing. Its protagonists were Slovene architectural students who studied in Vienna with Professor Peter Behrens, or disciples of Plečnik who later turned away from their master. They used Ljubljana's *Arhitektura* magazine and a few instructive books as instruments to introduce new ideas to the broader public, and founded a society that organised exhibitions on a regular basis and attempted to promote architectural competitions. Among the most prominent representatives of this movement were Josip Costaperaria, Herman Hus, France Tomažič, Ivo Špinčič and Feri Novak. In addition to these, between 1929 and 1940, seven young Slovene architects went to work in Le Corbusier's studio in Paris, though their influence was not felt until after the Second World War.

Though the postwar period in Yugoslavia was marked by socialism, as early as 1948 a dispute arose between Stalin and Tito, the president of Yugoslavia. As a result, Socialist Realism was never to become the official artistic style, as was the case in other Warsaw Pact states. In Slovenia, the young generation of architects, led by Edvard Ravnikar, were able to take advantage of this, and continued in the style of prewar contemporary architecture. Ravnikar graduated under Plečnik's tutorship, before working for Le Corbusier. In a way similar to that of Alvar Aalto in Finland, Ravnikar, too, tried to find a compromise between the International Style and Slovene heritage. In 1946, he became professor at the Ljubljana Faculty of Architecture and the creator of, and driving force behind, the so-called Ljubljana School of Architecture. This development gave rise to a number of talented architects – among them Oton Jugovec, France Ivanšek, Stanko Kristl, Milan Mihelič, Savin Sever and Miloš Bonča – whose work made its mark during the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when politics particularly favoured architectural endeavour, for developments in architecture were seen as a mirror of social prosperity.

After the Ten-Day War in 1991, Slovenia became an independent state, though there had been changes to its political constitution prior to this. Such profound changes, from a socialist country run by a single political party to a capitalist democracy, from part of the former Yugoslavia to an independent state entering the EU, affected the whole of society and were made possible only with the demise of the unrealistic notion of two worlds – eastern and western Europe – ignoring each other. In contrast, architecture has always been a global phenomenon, eastern Europe with great effort historically trying to follow Western models – a difficult task due to lack of information, limited opportunities to travel, or simply because of poor standards of living and a shortage of skilled labour and lack of suitable technology. Thus new ideas came slowly.

Edvard Ravnikar, Town Hall, Kranj, 1960
The town hall is an early example of Ravnikar's search for a regional version of the International Style. The building has a pitched roof and symmetrical facade characteristic of the country's traditional architecture, but its modernity is not in question. Plečnik's influence is evident in the careful detailing and treatment of materials, qualities still found in the Slovene architecture of today.

Under the new system, eastern Europe attempted to compensate for the delays in its earlier development. However, this brought challenges of a new kind, primarily the difficulties involved in changing the mentality of a society still deeply rooted in the past. Unlike the middle generation of architects, the youngest generation finished their studies under the new system and were educated in the new spirit. The education system also underwent reform. Whereas in the past the Ljubljana Faculty of Architecture (the only one in the country) had been dominated by two strong personalities – Plečnik before the war, and Ravnikar after it – over the past few years the image of this school has gradually become more pluralistic, and workshops led by visiting foreign professors are organised. In addition, more and more students are studying abroad – almost impossible under the socialist regime.

The scope of activity of this younger generation of Slovene architects is both far more international and far more ambitious. This 'six-pack' generation (the name is derived from the title of an exhibition presenting six young Slovene studios) have taken the somewhat complacent architectural scene by surprise and have won several important competitions. Many of them are relatively young to have been assigned such major projects, and this has aroused great interest among their peers abroad. Slovenia is now considered (somewhat exaggeratedly) the country of great opportunity for young architects.

Young Slovene architects such as Jurij Sadar, Tadej Glažar, Vasa Perovič, Boštjan Vuga, Matija Bevk, Aljoša Dekleva and Tina Gregorič continued their studies mainly at the Architectural Association (AA) in London or the Berlage Institute in Amsterdam, during which time they acquired some fresh architectural ideas, as well as increased self-confidence. They have received a number of international awards, followed by considerable media coverage, and have no problem in (ex)changing cultures, languages and ideas. This generation is now ready to contribute on an equal basis to the global culture of architecture.

A key building that has become almost an icon of contemporary architecture in Slovenia is the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry headquarters in Ljubljana, by Sadar Vuga Arhitekti. Completed in 1999, this major work was commissioned to architects who were just a little over 30 years of age at the time they won the open competition in 1996. The building is located in a suburban area, where it had to fight for recognition. The architects thus decided to locate (indeed suspend) the public premises vertically in front of the space containing the offices, leaving the front platform above the underground parking area empty. The building therefore forms a square, adding to its overall monumentality. The main facade is a mosaic of spatial volumes, some smaller and some larger, according to the functional needs of the individual premises. Thus the face of the building has a monumental and more dynamic structure, particularly because the individual storeys are slightly shifted, as if placed one on top of the other in a completely nonchalant way. Because the halls are higher than the offices,

the number of storeys is different at the front and rear facades (five storeys at the front and seven at the rear). The architects used this difference to design a vertically dynamic interior space, replacing the Classical entry hall and locating the lobbies on the upper storeys.

In multicultural terms, can we all profit from the cultural particularities that new countries to the EU are bringing with them? And what is so individual about Slovene architecture? Should it really be rooted in the past and not part of global civilisation? National culture cannot develop in isolation; on the contrary, it can move forward only by learning from developments elsewhere in the world. As philosopher Mladen Dolar says, the only rule in the development of Slovene national culture (or any other) is the constant rejection of its essential values at any present moment. In other words, the growth of national culture can only be made possible by accepting and adapting new, global values and concepts, which by definition always break with the traditional. If there is a national expression in architecture, it lies not in the style itself, but rather in its implementation. Global architectural ideas are adapted to local conditions that are defined by wealth, technical development, climate, legislation, education and so on.

But there is another very important aspect: national thinking (so often exploited in jokes), which is reflected and defined by language. We cannot think without words, therefore language defines the limits of our thinking. The Slovene language is spoken by just 2 million people, and thus has a special impact on the way they think and act. Together with their traditional feeling for materials and details (inherited from Jože Plečnik) and consideration for the local context (inherited from Edvard Ravnikar), this will ensure the continuation of individual Slovenian architecture in the future. AD

Sadar Vuga Arhitekti, Slovenian Chamber of Commerce headquarters, Ljubljana, 1999
With this first major project, Sadar Vuga Arhitekti marked the arrival of a new generation of Slovenian architects. The practice was formed after the political and economic changes in 1991, and the young architects brought fresh ideas and ambition previously unknown in Slovenia. The Slovenian Chamber of Commerce headquarters was widely published abroad and brought international attention to the emerging generation.

Estonia: The Remarkable Afterlife of the Linnahall Concert Hall

Raine Karp and Riina Altmäe, Linnahall Concert Hall, Tallinn, 1980
The low three-storey structure, combining the concert hall and ice rink as well as a hydrofoil and heliport, occupies a considerable portion of the city's harbour area.

Built in 1980, the Linnahall Concert Hall in Tallinn, Estonia, is a fairly recent but nonetheless controversial Soviet monument. Having been highly praised on its completion for its bold architectural solution, within a decade its close associations with the previous regime meant that it had fallen into disrepute. Developers, who realised the economic potential of the site, were quick to seize on its controversial history and called for its destruction. Andres Kurg looks at the changing role of the Linnahall in Tallinn over time and asks what the future might now hold for it.

View from the Linnahall to the seafront, showing the hydrofoil dock and heliport.

Almost every city of the former socialist camp has a landmark building that poses a problem for its new liberal government and invokes heated discussion centred on issues of politics and nostalgia. Case studies on Ceausescu's palace in Bucharest, or reflections on what to do with the Palast der Republik in Berlin, have created a new genre in the growing literature on the 'post-socialist' condition, one that takes its place next to the socialist-realist propaganda or concrete systems-built residential areas that are the stereotypes of how eastern Europe is perceived in the West.

The Linnahall Concert Hall in Tallinn is another such site, posing as it does new questions as to the place of the country's Soviet heritage and socialist architecture of the past within the city today and in the future. Rather than belonging only to the past, can the Linnahall build some sort of continuity between the urban developments of the past and those of the future? More generally, could this case offer a way of going beyond the still prevailing accounts of eastern European architecture as grim and grey, ugly or weird, and understand its logic from a different viewpoint?

Named after Lenin, the concert hall was completed in 1980, ready for the opening of the Moscow Olympics yacht races to be held in Tallinn that summer. Of the numerous Olympic buildings erected the same year, it was the largest and most prominently sited, and as a multipurpose cultural centre its future post-Games looked bright. The building included an ice rink, a 4600-seat concert hall, an exhibition and dance hall, a bowling alley, cafeterias and hundreds of square metres of walkable roofs, terraces and squares. Rather than stacking these functions on top of each other, the programme was spread out over a large area between the old city centre and the coast, on previously industrial harbour sites. Its location determined the low height of the building, in order to preserve the iconic views to the medieval Old Town from the sea. Thus its considerable size can only really be appreciated from an aerial photograph or map. With its almost windowless concrete and grey limestone construction typical of a bunker or depot, it is easy to miss it at street level.

As the first public building that opened up to the seafront it was situated on the coast between an industrial area and a factory site owned by the military. It also had to be built over railway lines that led from the industrial areas to the harbour and separated the site from the access routes. Thus the steep stairs and the raised platform of the building act as a sort of bridge for visitors to the concert hall and ice rink. Because of its insistently symmetrical shape, which resembles a ziggurat, the building has often been interpreted through the metaphor of Mesopotamian or Pre-Columbian American architecture. However, the inclined exterior walls of the concert hall area, which are covered with grass, are a more contextual feature of the building, resembling the 17th-century bastions around Tallinn.

One of the architects responsible for the concert hall, Raine Karp, has retrospectively spoken about his fascination with the architecture of medieval fortifications and, significantly, his two later major structures in Tallinn – the Centre for Political Education (1985) and the National Library (1992) – both demonstrate a similar bulkiness to the Linnahall, use similar materials and refer to medieval typologies. Yet during the construction phase of the Linnahall, which began in 1976,

View of the street facade. The steep stairs and raised platform lead to the main entrances of the concert hall and ice rink.

Karp preferred to compare the structure to Japanese Metabolist architecture. Indeed, as a leading designer in Estonia's largest state design office in the Soviet period, he had, in the late 1960s, visited Japan and been clearly fascinated by its buildings. The other architects of the building were Riina Altmäe, Karp's assistant in this large-scale project, and Ülo Sirp, who was in charge of the team of interior designers.

The building was a success in official circles in that it earned several architectural awards – a Grand Prix from the Interarch World Biennale in Sofia (1983) and a Soviet Union State Award (1984) – and much attention from the press. Its expansive symmetrical form adorned glossy books about the Olympics, and Soviet accounts of architecture culminated with reviews of the Linnahall's grand amphitheatre-shaped auditorium. However, in its somewhat hollow rhetoric – the initial design idea included a wide symmetrically placed avenue running from the Linnahall up to the high-rise hotel in the city centre, and a scale that despite contextual gestures imposes its own conditions on the surrounding environment – in local artistic and architectural circles it was seen as too 'rational' and too 'grand', and lacking the 'irrational substance'[1] of the playful Postmodernist design of the period. More importantly, though, it was considered an alien monument, official, formal, Soviet. Even if in the 1980s it was packed with members of the public enjoying the first Western rock bands to play in Estonia, or attending flower parades, it was generally still regarded with contempt rather than pride.

Changing City

When Estonia regained independence in 1991, the subsequent changes in property ownership had a significant impact on Tallinn's economy, the processes of privatisation and restitution also dramatically transforming the urban space and its role. As historical and legal continuity with the first Republic of Estonia (1918–40) was one of the fundamentals of this regained independence, returning the properties nationalised in 1940 to their prewar owners became one of the most important parts of this process of legitimisation. This meant a virtually instant change: the whole land, which so far had belonged to the state, now became private property. The changes were also easily accomplished and readily accepted due to the sharp conscious break with the demonised past. Deregulation, which coincided with ongoing land reform, left the municipality of Tallinn with less property than ever before. It also coincided with a lack of faith in master plans as a form of central planning, and also with the practices of giving minimal attention to public space, public transport and infrastructure, and the transfer of the housing industry to private developers. This wave of privatisation was endorsed by the neo-conservative government, who welcomed market liberalism as a progressive path of events, an opportunity to catch up with the living standards of the West. These economic changes of the mid-1990s also gave rise to a building boom in Tallinn, which led to the construction of a number of bank and business premises, monumental high-rises and expansive suburban shopping malls. This was seen

as the right time to fill the empty plots in the downtown area, to express the rapid economic progress of Estonia in architectural form.

On a symbolic level, there was strong pressure to erase from the city any physical representations of the Soviet era, ranging from removing monuments and rebuilding houses, to simply recladding old structures with new facade systems. The restitution of the property situation to that before 1940 seemed also to mean a return to this period in terms of the negation of the more recent Soviet past. Attempts to forget the 50-year-long Soviet period, as if it never existed, did not, however, take into account that this denied people their personal memories. This may be one of the reasons why, 10 years later, the post-Soviet societies were hit by a wave of nostalgia, with a vengeance.

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View from the Linnahall roof, a raised square on top of the ice rink, with the city centre in the background.

The amphitheatre-shaped auditorium of the building seats up to 4600 people. The ceiling is covered with purpose-designed acoustic panels.

During the 1990s, the location of the Linnahall Concert Hall attracted several new facilities to its megastructural body: a hydrofoil port, a heliport, a nightclub, a popular bar and even an (unofficial) outdoor pool for children that had earlier been used to collect cooling water for the ice rink. The concert hall also began to host Jehovah's Witnesses meetings, the rock concert audience switched to musicals, and Russian superstars frequently staged their glamorous shows at the venue. But at the same time, the rapidly built structure, with hundreds of square metres of walkable roof space, was slowly decaying and badly in need of renovation.

In 2004, Tallinn municipality, still the owner of the space, tried for the third time to sell the building, one of its last centrally located larger properties, to cover its budget deficit. The potential buyer was primarily interested in the site, not the building, eager to get rid of the Soviet monument and in its place create an exclusive residential district whose well-heeled inhabitants could have their yachts on their doorsteps. However, the concert hall had been listed as an architectural monument since 1992, and permission to demolish it would have required a change in the law. Subsequently, the buyer launched an extensive media campaign in an attempt to convince the public that sooner or later the building would disappear anyway, that it did not fit with contemporary requirements, was a site primarily for the Communist Party elite, and even that concerts on this scale would at some point cease to exist. Investment specialists were called in to assess the financial viability of the building as an entertainment centre, but they could not find a good enough reason for renovating the hall. Though the stage of the auditorium had initially been designed as a multipurpose arena that could be adapted to accommodate bigger performances, there had not been time to realise this potential in the rush leading up to the Olympics. In addition, turning the hall itself into a contemporary multipurpose space would have required major rebuilding in order to flexibly accommodate smaller conferences or meetings at the same time.

Support for the building from local citizens, on the other hand, was unexpectedly strong. The Linnahall was now seen as an important part of Tallinn's history, with people recounting visits to the first performances there. Most importantly, its solid concrete-and-stone architecture was strikingly different to the rapidly built metal-and-glass high-rise boxes that had been erected in the city over the last 12 to 15 years, and it was thus viewed as unique and rare. Suddenly the Linnahall was on everyone's mind, with people actively taking part in the debate and suggesting all number of grounds for its preservation. The sale was eventually revoked at the end of 2004, and the municipality has started to find ways of renovating the building, though no work has been planned so far.

To property developers, the concert hall building was just a waste of developable land, too low and with too much indefinite space, but most importantly it could not be

The foyer spaces in front of the concert hall, with stairs leading to the cafeteria and bar space underneath (now used as storage space).

The long entranceway to the concert hall, with stairs leading down to the ice rink on the left and with outdoor seating on the right.

marketed piece by piece. Its logic lay in the Soviet period where, within the context of state ownership, its designers had not had to worry about the cost of the land. Whereas after its completion the building, with its symmetries and clear lines, was viewed as too rational, utilitarian and unexciting, by the beginning of the new century this rationality had, in contrast, come to be viewed as completely nonfunctional and, from the point of view of property developers, wholly impractical. For the public, on the other hand, the meaning of the Linnahall had changed from an official and perhaps even alien Soviet monument to something that was part of Tallinn's identity. In the middle of the rapidly changing city it had become an alternative to the uniform 'shopping malls/office spaces/leisure centres' – a space that refused to conform to the dominant patterns of thought.

Yet what if, apart from landownership, there has been no real radical break between the transformation of the city in the late 1970s and now, but rather a continuity? Recent urban studies encourage us to view the changes in post-socialist cities over the past 15 years in the context of larger global economic restructuring and the so-called postindustrial city.[2] The conversion to the free market and extensive privatisation in the 1990s were, then, not only a reaction to the planned socialist economy and state-socialist ownership, but part of a broader neo-liberal reform, a continuation of the tendencies of deregulation that in the West had started in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, the closing down of several of Tallinn's industries was the result not only of the collapse of the Soviet market and the end of their material supplies, but also of the general movement of industrial production away from the city and, eventually, to the developing world. If this is true, when, then, to locate the start of the postindustrial city in the eastern bloc? Could it be that this was actually prior to the changes of the 1990s?

The Linnahall site, an industrial area on Tallinn's coast, was chosen above two other locations in the early 1970s partly because of its central location, but also because, according to concert hall architect Raine Karp, the building had the potential to 'reconnect the city with the sea, and the surrounding territory with the city', transforming the coastal territories into public leisure spaces. Industry and the military had 'robbed' the city of its seafront; now it was time to get it back and return it to its public. Thus it was at this point that Tallinn's traditional port areas started to be valued for their scenic waterfronts rather than as production facilities and transport hubs. The latter functions were removed from the city centre, and the coastal areas redeveloped to create tourist attractions and leisure facilities: concert halls, cafeterias, cultural and entertainment centres. The decision to build the Linnahall here could, then, mark the beginning of the redefinition and transformation of the urban space before its real beginnings in the 1990s; the start of the postindustrial city could be considered separately from the political changes. In that case, the Linnahall Concert Hall would stand simultaneously as a monument to a bygone era and as a sign of the beginning of a new one. The question is, however, how these two things might co-exist on the same site and in the same structure? This would require not only a rethinking on the part of potential developers, sacrificing their preconceived profit schemes and conflict-free futures, but also that supporters of the Linnahall confront their current nostalgic fantasies of the building as existing only in the past. ⌂

Notes

1. Ain Padrik, 'Linnahall', *Ehituskunst* 2–3, 1982–83.
2. Judit Bodnar, *Fin de Millenair Budapest: Metamorphoses of Urban Life*, University of Minnesota Press (Minneapolis, mn), 2001.

Poland: Transforming Factories into Cultural and Educational Facilities

The recent transformation of disused industrial plants into educational and cultural facilities in Poland is a phenomenon that affords rare insights into the substantial changes that are taking place in the country's economy and its very social fabric. The dramatic change in the political system, from a rigid, centrally planned industrial economy tightly controlled by the Soviet Union, to a democracy seeking to be a dynamic member of a global order, has brought a pressing need for people with the specialised skills and expertise of tertiary education. For the first few years of Poland's transformation, having tertiary education meant having work, vital in a country that from the early 1990s had to battle the previously unheard of phenomenon of unemployment.

Poland is still among those countries for which the price of raw materials is more significant than the price of the work, a situation that makes recycling of existing buildings more financially efficient than replacing them with new ones. In the five examples that are explored here, the sorts of results that have been achieved in western Europe through carefully devised renovation and urban renewal programmes have been brought about through a much more haphazard process.

Poland has a long tradition of preserving the country's historic architectural monuments. Half a century ago the Old Towns of Warsaw and Gdańsk were reconstructed after the destruction of the Second World War. At the time this rebuilding was heavily criticised by professionals around the world as anachronistic. But 30 years later the Old Town of Warsaw was included on UNESCO's World Heritage list, not

KD Kozikowski Design, Polish Baltic Philharmonic, Gdańsk, 2005.

Architecture has an important role to play in the refurbishment and renovation of existing building stock, often leading to the wholesale regeneration of run-down and derelict areas. Hubert Trammer looks at how the redevelopment of five disused industrial sites in Poland has been driven by the need for new educational and cultural facilities and the widespread availability of abandoned manufacturing bases.

because of its historical merit, but because of its reconstruction. To date, more than a dozen Polish cities have rebuilt their historic cores. In some cases, the 19th- and 20th-century industrial architecture remains undervalued. In others the renewal programmes are inadequately funded. Few such programmes really work. In most cases the renewal of the life of such buildings results rather from the happy coincidence of individual actions. The difficulties encountered today have their roots in the strictly regulated spatial planning of the communist era, which usually went hand in hand with ill-advised investment. From the beginning of the 1990s, the mechanism of a free market economy was regarded as a better spatial planner than any regulations dreamt up by financial experts, an opinion shared even now by many politicians and businessmen. As a consequence, local authorities in Poland tend to support the initiatives of anyone who offers hope of creating new jobs. Moreover, official bureaucracy is often convoluted. Sometimes corruption is an added problem. On the other hand, in many cases town planners still tend to locate new investments in empty fields rather than regenerate older stock. A good example of this kind of investment is Kraków, where the public university is building a new campus outside of the city in line with a master plan created by architects and endorsed by the town's authorities in the 1990s, despite the fact that the city has huge postindustrial wastelands near the centre. These wastelands are being bought up by private investors for development. One of the sites is now a private school of higher education.

Three of the five schemes presented here were commissioned by private clients, suggesting the important role that the private sector has to play as a catalyst for these types of development. Two of them are private tertiary schools that started life operating out of rented rooms. The post-industrial buildings were bought, renovated and extended, with work financed out of the students' fees and through bank loans that are also paid back out of tuition fees. The third scheme is the work of a composer who created a company whose members have invested their money in transforming a former factory into a cultural centre. Here, alongside cultural activities, commercial concerns are included, the revenue from which should allow the backers to recoup their investments.

The projects selected differ in terms of architectural approach. The Warsaw School of Social Psychology provides an example of the deep transformation of an existing building. The Warsaw Management Academy of the Society of Economic Enterprises, on the other hand, is part existing post-industrial building, with only very basic changes to adapt it to the needs of the academy, and part modern extension. The Fabryka Trzciny Artistic Centre illustrates how a disused building can be reinvigorated, where elements of the former factory were skilfully incorporated to create the interior's particular atmosphere.[1] In the case of the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising and of the Polish Baltic Philharmonic, the exteriors of the former power stations were renovated and the interiors adapted to accommodate their new functions. The creation of the museum entailed not only changes to the building's exterior, but considerable work in inserting new elements, rather than removing the existing ones.[2] In the case of the Philharmonic's concert hall, externally there is little aside from the amphitheatre to indicate the dramatic change of function. The need to provide a large auditorium entailed the removal of much of the existing structure.[3]

Though examples are predominantly drawn from Warsaw here, it is not because industrial reuse is confined to the capital; many schemes are under way in other Polish cities and provinces. It is rather that in Warsaw there appear to be large sums available for investment, which means that new building can be undertaken at a more sophisticated architectural level. Outside Warsaw, a common shortage of capital in most cases results in the preservation of the existing building stock and adaptation to new use by the simplest means.

One of the effects of the economic changes of the past 15 years has been the collapse of many factories. In addition, some industrial plants (especially coal mines) were closed under the terms of government-driven reorganisation of the national economy. Because of the end of the Cold War the size of the Polish army is being considerably reduced and the army is abandoning many former military bases. The effect of these processes is to render redundant a large number of buildings, plants and areas formerly owned by the army. Demography also plays an important role in Poland. The martial law and the economic depression of the 1980s were responsible in large part for the high birth rate, which peaked in 1983. The effect was that in terms of the 15 to 25 age group, Poland has the largest number of young people of any European country. The boom in higher education was not, however, solely driven by demography; heightened awareness of the benefits of education was also widespread. Most people realised that higher education was imperative for success. In Poland the number of students has rapidly increased from less than 400,000 in 1990 to nearly 1.9 million in 2006. Nearly two-thirds of these students finance their own education. Of the 1,800,500 students enrolled in the academic year 2002/03, 528,820 studied at 252 private schools of higher education.[4] Prior to 1989 there had only been one private tertiary college in the whole country (the University in Lublin run by the Catholic Church).

All these factors – political, demographic, cultural – have had an important impact on the scale of the reuse of buildings and vacated areas in Poland. It is significant that in most cases the reuse of old buildings is not the result of renewal programmes, but has simple economic causes. The previously most run-down districts of towns have come up in the world because their abandoned factories are being refurbished as office buildings, residential properties or cultural venues. Most of the private schools of higher education are located in abandoned industrial or military areas or buildings because of their moderate cost.

However, Polish architects direct most of their attention to new buildings designed in line with international architectural trends; transformation and reuse are phenomena that can be observed in virtually every corner of the country, and reflect the profound transformation of the country's economy, infrastructure and social consciousness. Aside from the examples mentioned above, there are former factories, disused coal mines and military bases that are being transformed for housing or commercial use. Very often the refurbishment is low cost and involves minimal structural changes. Sometimes it entails some destruction of the original building, something which may well have a positive impact on the neighbourhood. In Poland there is enormous potential for reuse, not only in terms of the sheer quantity of buildings available for such transformation, but also because Poles are powerfully attached to their history – in this case as it appears in the architecture of their past. Nearly everywhere there are nongovernmental organisations, groups of artists or interested private individuals who seek to revive the former architectural glories of their city. For most of them this means the traditional city as it was between the two world wars. But for a few, it is a chance to conserve and regenerate the late Modernist architectural visions of the 1960s and 1970s.

Notes

1. Jerzy S Majewski, 'Fabryka Trzciny', *Architektura-murator* 1(112), 2004.
2. Jerzy S Majewski, 'Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego', *Architektura-murator* 5, 2005.
3. Maciej Lewandowski, 'Filharmonia Baltycka', *Architektura-murator* 4, 2005.
4. *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland*, 2003.

Marek Solnica and Grzegorz Kepler, Warsaw School of Social Psychology, Warsaw, 2001

In 1999, the Warsaw School of Social Psychology purchased the former electrical generator factory in the Grochów district and is refurbishing it step by step. Over a decade ago, the neighbourhood was dominated by industry. Now most of the factories have been refurbished and are given over to new functions. One former factory houses a law court, another the premises of a publisher. Some accommodate the offices of small businesses which pay rent. There are, too, buildings that remain empty; some were demolished to make way for housing projects and, last but not least, a few of them are still operational. The building bought by the school originally had simple Modern architecture with a reinforced concrete skeleton, large glazed surfaces and grey brick cladding. During refurbishment (by architects Marek Solnica and Grzegorz Kepler), the existing internal structure was preserved, but the external character of the building was partially changed. The facade, which has been given additional insulation, is now finished with yellow plaster. And parts such as the main entrance and staircases are highlighted in yellow brick cladding. The original entrance pavilion has been removed as well as the extensions at the courtyard side, and the interior space newly divided. At ground-floor level, the corridors were placed along the courtyard facade; on the upper floors they were positioned in the centre of the building. The lecture halls were situated on the column-free fourth floor. Initially, people living in the neighbourhood of the school were sceptical about it. However, the situation was completely reversed once the building opened. The school initiated Wspólne podwórko (The common courtyard), an organisation that works with socially disadvantaged children and young people from the neighbourhood. The influx of students and academic staff has made the area more lively and encouraged the opening of cafés, restaurants and a club.

Czuba Latoszek, Extension to the Warsaw Management Academy of the Society of Economic Enterprises, Warsaw, 2005
In contrast to the Warsaw School of Social Psychology, which started by refurbishing its buildings and occupies each phase as it is completed, the Warsaw Management Academy of the Society of Economic Enterprises moved straight into the former TV-set factory in the Szmulki district after only the most basic renovation. Subsequently, in 2005, this main block of the school was extended. The elliptical form of most of the building's new wings is a radical departure from the original factory design. The architects, Czuba Latoszek I Partnerzy, have achieved visual continuity through the complementary scale of the buildings and the incorporation of metal panels of the same colour as the bricks of the adjacent buildings. Financing the extension required a large outlay by the academy. Because of this, for some years to come the main part of the school will consist of two contrasting parts: the almost unchanged former industrial building and the newly constructed portions with their more expensive solutions, such as acoustic panels and prefabricated glass facades. While this area of Warsaw has always retained its diversity in terms of buildings and their functions, nevertheless it has always been considered the poor suburb of the city. Many of its inhabitants are impoverished and socially deprived, and some attempts have been made to change this. Almost a century ago, in 1907, one of the Polish noble families founded a basilica, one of the largest churches in the Warsaw area. Today the neighbourhood is gradually coming up in the world, a situation for which the academy is not solely responsible. The area around the basilica is an important venue for social events. These are organised not only under the auspices of the Church, but involve other nonreligious initiatives.

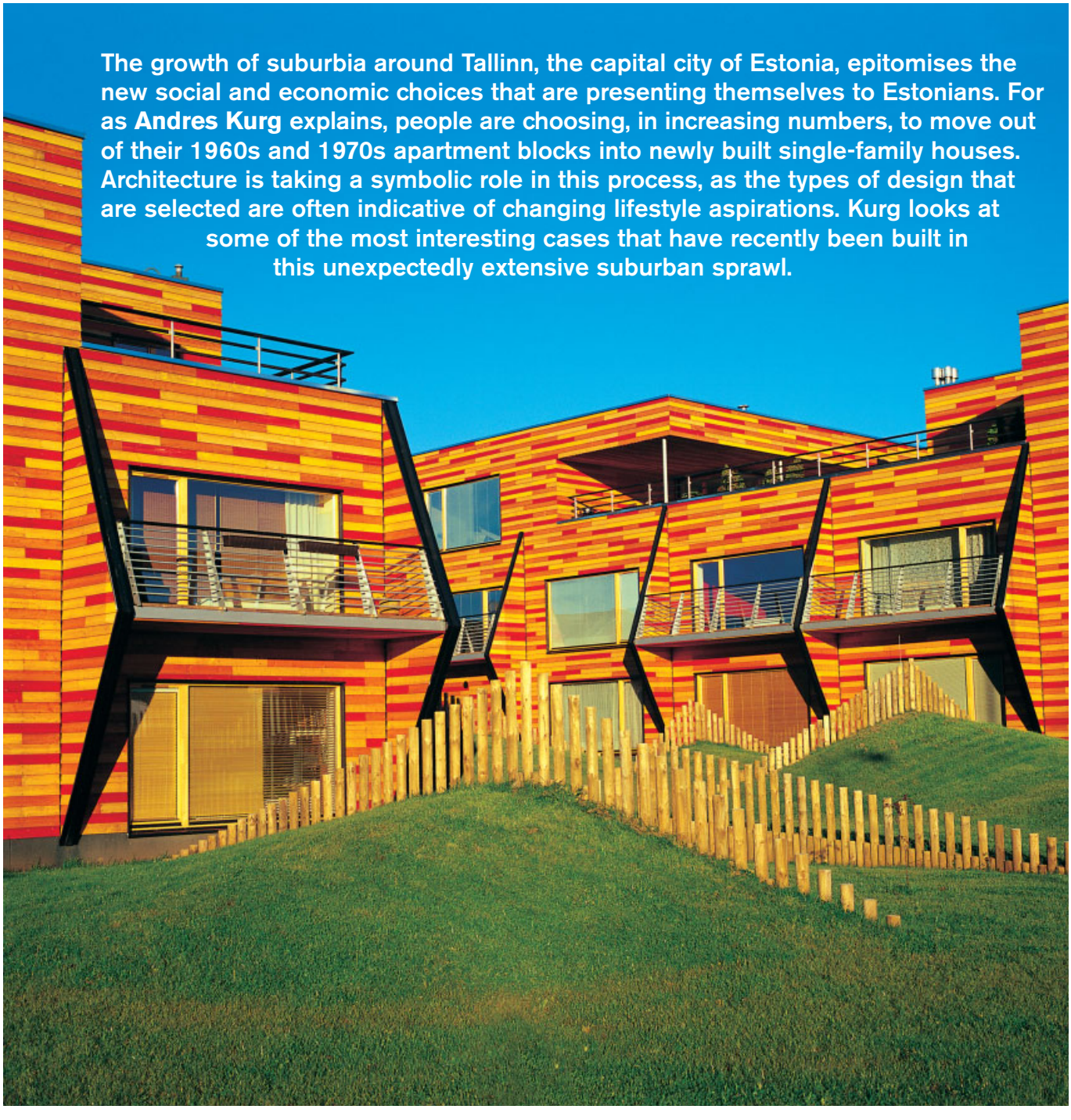
Kulczyński Architekt, Fabryka Trzciny Artistic Centre, Warsaw, 2003
The famous composer of popular music, the Pole Wojciech Trzciński, masterminded the creation of this private arts centre, located 300 metres (980 feet) away from the academy and basilica, in a former factory which he rents. The building has been renovated and rearranged to accommodate its new function and houses a theatre, an art gallery, two multipurpose halls, a bar and a restaurant. Despite the relatively extensive alterations, most visitors assume the factory is virtually unchanged because the architects, Kulczyński Architekt, have skilfully incorporated some of the building's original features to create new ones. They have also inserted some amusing touches: there are prefabricated toilet cabins, normally used in train carriages; and as the backdrop to the bar at the rear there are bottles filled with fake alcohol. The composite structure of the building's interior allows for the creation of different spaces, each with its own distinctive character. Fabryka Trzciny has become the venue for a host of events, ranging from concerts to art exhibitions, conferences to theatre performances, from lectures on architecture to fashion shows, product presentations and corporate parties. It has become an A–list address and, as such, plays an important role in changing adverse opinion – which is widespread in Warsaw – about the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, this positive impact is considerably reduced by the fact that the building is under guard and most of its guests arrive by car, which prevents them appreciating that the nearest tram stop, some 300 metres (980 feet) away, is safe, even late at night.

Studio Architektoniczne, Museum of the Warsaw Uprising, Warsaw, 2004
In contrast to Fabryka Trzciny, its location chosen specifically because of the character of the area, the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising (www.1944.pl) is situated in the former Tram Power Station (1905–08) due to the nature of that building's construction. Most importantly, it is a publicly funded initiative with a significant political message. The Warsaw uprising was one of the defining acts of heroism of the Second World War, but it remains relatively underappreciated on the world stage. A museum to commemorate it has been planned, albeit at another location, since the beginning of the 1980s. For former combatants, their families and many others, the difficulties encountered in attempts to construct the museum were symbolic of the minor importance accorded such patriotic acts in modern Polish politics. The museum eventually opened on 1 August 2004, on the 60th anniversary of the start of the uprising, the fulfilment of a promise by Lech Kaczyński, who had been elected mayor of Warsaw in September 2002. There was not much time if the promised date was to be met, so the museum had to be located in a pre-existing building that belonged to the city. Refurbished to house the museum by Studio Architektoniczne (with exhibition design by Nizio Design International), it was opened on time although construction work was still ongoing at the time of writing. The construction of the museum was the jewel in the crown of Kaczyński's time as mayor of Warsaw, and probably contributed significantly to his election as president of Poland in 2005. The facades of the building have been renovated and the plaster put on the bricks in the 1970s removed. The multimedia exhibition was set up inside. In the interior, the architects have added to the building a grid of concrete beams and poles that raise the roof to form a tower with a viewing terrace. The fractured form of the tower is intended to symbolise the ruins of the destroyed city. Around the building there is now a commemorative park. Thanks to its attractive design and good marketing, the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising has become one of Warsaw's major tourist attractions and has played an important role in nurturing patriotism among the younger generation of Poles. The punk rock group Lao Che has even brought out a CD with songs about the uprising, and the museum invited the band to give a concert in the grounds of the park. It is anticipated that the large number of visitors will stimulate change in this hitherto uninspiring neighbourhood, and encourage the emergence of a new, lively area for the city. At the moment the area is dominated by former factories, most of which have been transformed into offices for banks and IT companies. Some of the factories are still empty, while others are rented out as warehouses.

KD Kozikowski Design, Polish Baltic Philharmonic, Gdańsk, 2005
While the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising has the potential to stimulate positive development in its neighbourhood, the Polish Baltic Philharmonic in Gdańsk, situated beside the maritime museum and the new marina, can play an important part in bringing new life to an area that has been acclaimed for its industrial buildings as well as its ruins from the Second World War. The former power station, built between 1897 and 1898 on the island of Ołowianka, was operated until 1996 and has now been transformed into the philharmonic hall with adjoining conference facilities, according to the design by KD Kozikowski Design. The building is located just across the river from the Main Town, reconstructed after the Second World War, and ranks among the most popular tourist attractions in Poland. The facades of the power station have been renovated and only partially altered, while the interior has been largely gutted and replaced by one appropriate for its new function. The centre of the building is the main concert hall, which can be easily reorganised for different uses. The increased height of the building above the main concert hall has been enclosed within brick walls that do not attract attention. On the river side, an open-air stage with a plastic roof has been added. Part of the building contains restaurants that can be accessed from outside. The north wing, which originally housed workshops, has been transformed into office space for renting out, guest rooms and conference facilities. Part of the complex contains the renovated 17th-century granary, which has been transformed into a hotel. Δ

Estonia: Expanding Suburbia – White Neomodernist Villas and Beyond

The growth of suburbia around Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia, epitomises the new social and economic choices that are presenting themselves to Estonians. For as **Andres Kurg** explains, people are choosing, in increasing numbers, to move out of their 1960s and 1970s apartment blocks into newly built single-family houses. Architecture is taking a symbolic role in this process, as the types of design that are selected are often indicative of changing lifestyle aspirations. Kurg looks at some of the most interesting cases that have recently been built in this unexpectedly extensive suburban sprawl.



Kosmos Architects, Housing in Laagri, 2003.

In 1999 in his election campaign, the future mayor of Tallinn proposed that the former Soviet housing estates surrounding the city should gradually be pulled down: 'The people of Tallinn no longer wish to live in apartment blocks. Estonians, just like other Europeans, want to live in private houses.' His words articulated sentiments that had been widely held for a decade: a desire to replace the standardised apartment in the Soviet-era prefabricated residential blocks – felt to symbolise the homogeneous socialist city – with single-family suburban dwellings. But there was a problem. However much disliked, Tallinn's concrete estates nevertheless then provided shelter, as they still do, for nearly 200,000 people – almost 50 per cent of the city's inhabitants. Replacing these with single-family dwellings would have required construction of a suburb that would extend over an area larger than that occupied by the present city. A mammoth, unrealistic undertaking.

In the early 1990s, in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the privatisation of housing, the change of ownership from the public to the private sector, was instrumental in altering the structure of cities. New suburban developments, however, only started to spring up more generally at the end of the decade. By this time the Estonian economy was on a secure footing, living standards had risen and, most importantly, banks were offering affordable home loans.

After independence, it was in Tallinn, Estonia's largest city, that the economy developed most rapidly, most of the new enterprises started up, and the real-estate market enjoyed a relative boom. Already, at the beginning of the 1990s, responsibility for housing had been transferred from state control to private developers. Municipal housing came to be seen only as last-resort accommodation for those who could not afford anything better or as service apartments for the police, or dwellings for those who had lost their homes as a result of fire. Tenants were looked down on, their status considered a stopgap on the way to 'real ownership'. In a conscious rejection of the Soviet ethos of state ownership, the dominant belief now required that everybody become an owner-occupier – as in so much else, distaste for the privations of the Soviet era had generated strong opposition to any form of collective living.

In housing, the resulting urban sprawl seemed to be the answer. The first residents in the new suburban developments even preferred to wall off their housing areas into gated communities, as if to underscore their newly won privacy. Today, however, thousands of people have moved to the new suburban developments in Tallinn's environs, and the market now offers a wide choice in terms of price, privacy, architecture and social make-up.

Design Choices

From the mid-1990s onwards white Neomodernist villas became the design of choice for young 30-something buyers, mostly bankers, stockbrokers or hoteliers. Their choice was a conscious gesture to differentiate themselves from a previous generation of *nouveau riche* suburban dwellers in the late 1980s and early 1990s, who bought bulky catalogue houses or 'as seen on TV' sumptuous mansions. Set against this elitist consumerism, white boxes seemed to offer rationality and discriminating taste. Further, because they harked back to the architectural styles of the 1920s and 1930s when the country was independent, choosing them was a sign of appreciation of tradition as well as an espousal of contemporary living.[1] For example, in a popular holiday spot in Pärnu, known for its 1930s Modernist buildings, architect Kalle Vellevoog designed a whole group of new summer houses, all in a conspicuously Neomodernist idiom for clients who already owned similar houses in Tallinn. Rather than efficiency or functionality, it is their visual image that defines this group of buildings. Here, design serves simply to enhance, as a symbol of economic status, marketing an image and a look.

A suburban housing development in Aaviku, near Tallinn, designed by Emil Urbel Architects in 2002, presents a similar case. A project undertaken jointly by the local municipality and a private developer, the brief was to provide cheap housing for young families. The Neomodernist features of the structures here, their unity and designer signature, became the main selling point together with making identifiable good taste available to a more modest consumer. The typical elements of Neomodernist villas – for example, flat roofs and ribbon windows, and a living room with a large glass wall opening out to the garden – are all present in the Aaviku houses, but here their incorporation is mostly symbolic, for they lack programmatic justification (the flat roof is actually a slanted roof concealed behind a horizontal parapet, and the large glass wall faces the blank rear wall of the next house). The colour scheme of the houses is significant: choosing between four possible colours, future home-owners had to keep in mind that no two houses of the same colour were allowed side by side. All houses lie on an east–west axis facing the same direction, which affords 'light and air for everyone' as well as a layout that ensures sufficient privacy to prevent neighbours looking into each other's properties.

Those who inhabit this kind of suburbia are not the community-minded individuals of the past, happy to live in relative proximity, but rather those for whom privacy is to be guarded at all costs and their neighbours shunned. However, the privacy afforded by owning one's own house and garden is mere illusion. Metropolitan anonymity and collectivity – qualities despised in the Soviet-era prefabricated residential blocks – have followed the inhabitants to suburbia without their realising it.

Note

1. Ingrid Lillemägi, 'The third coming of white houses', *Maja: Estonian Architectural Review* 3, 2002.

JVR Architects, Summer Houses, Pärnu, 2001–02
The group of white Neomodernist villas near the beach at Pärnu consists of six two-storey buildings. The housing, by architect Kalle Vellevoog, is intended primarily for use during the summer; an outdoor swimming pool points to an extravagant lifestyle in a climate where summer lasts barely three and a half months. Although contextual in its Neo-Functionalist detailing – Pärnu was known as a Modernist spa in the 1930s – the houses also borrow from global Neomodernism, signalled by their occasional exposed concrete walls, spacious wooden terraces and metal windshields.

Neomodernism as a conscious design choice and status symbol for Estonians emerged in the mid-1990s, for what was the third time in the country's 20th-century architecture: as well as in the 1930s, purist white boxes were popular in the 1970s when they stood in opposition not only to the drab uniformity of Soviet architecture, but also to the Finnish-inspired organic Modernism that had dominated the country's architecture in the 1960s.

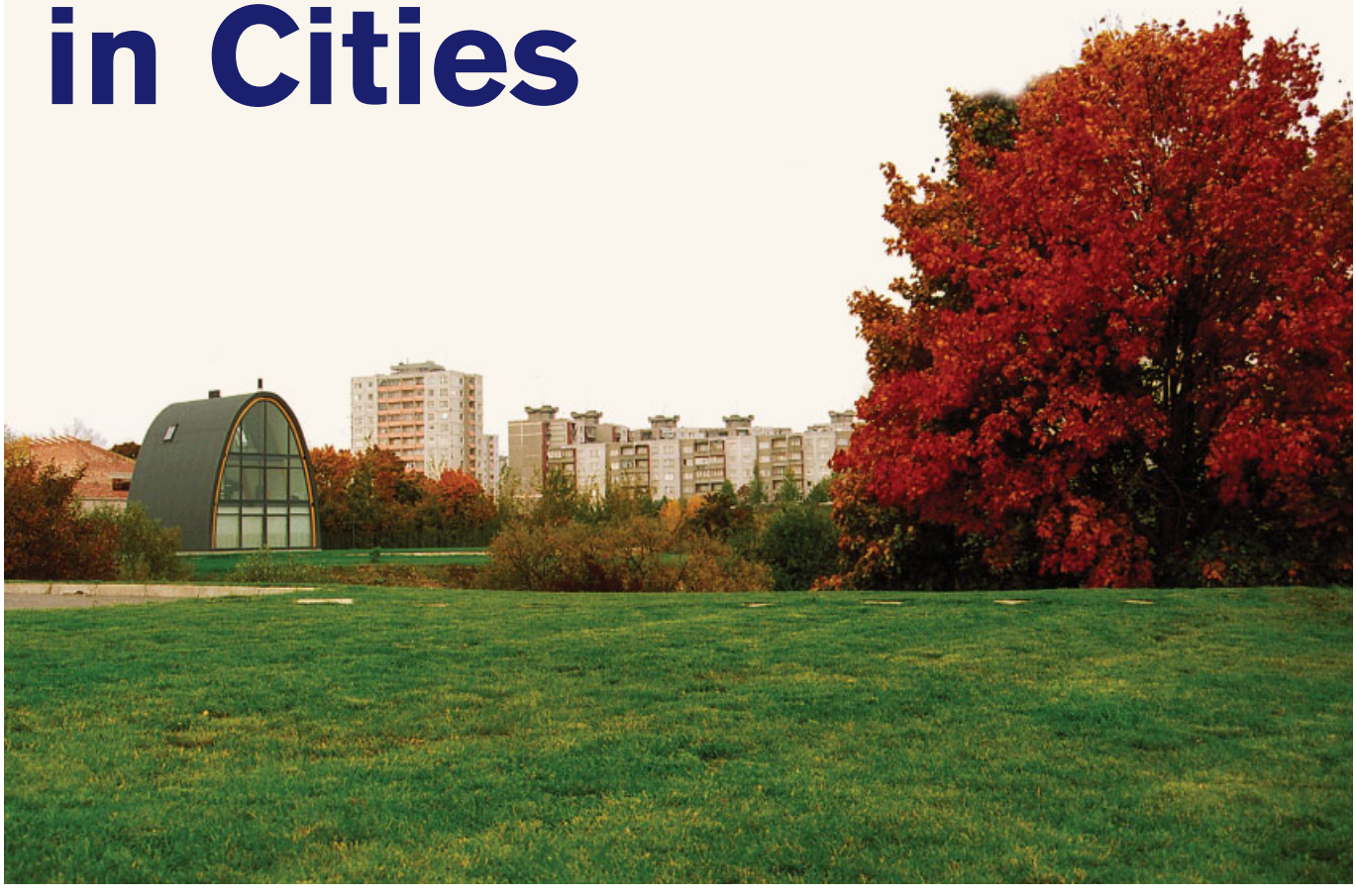
Emil Urbel and Indrek Erm, Emil Urbel Architects, Aaviku residential area, Tallinn, 2001–03
In 2001, the Tallinn municipal authorities held a competition to find a developer and architectural solution for a 7-hectare (17-acre) piece of land situated on the outskirts of the city. The rationale as well as the justification for this municipal initiative lay in the tendencies characteristic of residential construction in the 1990s, when private capital alone provided Tallinn with extensive suburbs, resulting in the majority of better-off taxpayers officially residing outside the city boundaries. In order to stop the exodus of well-heeled citizens from town, the municipal authorities employed their tactical advantage over private investors by attaching economically advantageous 50-year building permissions to property within the city limits. This benefit, combined with economical building methods and architectural concepts, reduced the price of such houses considerably in comparison to the cost of other, similar, single-family homes. Participation by the municipal authorities ensured good road and sewerage systems, as well as children's playgrounds and uniform street furniture – significant infrastructure, but nevertheless elements usually neglected in developments carried out by private contractors. Aaviku is made up of 67 houses of six different types, both single- and two-storey, ranging in area between 84 square metres (904 square feet) and 144 square metres (1550 square feet).

3+1 Architects, Black House, Viimsi, 2002
The wooden Black House is situated near the coast in a prosperous Tallinn suburb. The ground floor is a circular wall-less space divided into kitchen, living and study areas, organised around a central volume with a glass-walled sauna. Sitting in the sauna, one can look out over the garden and the forest. On the first floor the three bedrooms are closed on the street side but open up to a common terrace overlooking the garden. The architects (Markus Kaasik, Andres Ojari and Ilmar Valdur) used a regular grid for the floor plan, creating a tension between the flow of functions in an unarticulated space and the underlying rigid, formal structure. For 3+1 Architects, this house is one in a series of several small suburban dwellings, each of which aims to respond to the programme in a different way, to this end often using an abstract geometrical configuration that overlays the final result. In this way the practice endeavours, among other things, to sidestep the still dominant notion of architectural style and focus on creating exciting interpretations of the programme that are functionally efficient.

Kosmos Architects, Housing in Laagri, 2003
This development consists of three row houses centred around a common yard with apartments varying in size from 55-square-metre (592-square-foot) one-bedroom flats to four-bedroom apartments with large terraces. The triangular staircases add a sculptural feature to the otherwise rather simple rectangular rows, while the wooden boarding is irritatingly colourful: the landscaping partly follows the rhythm of the houses. The architects, Ott Kadarik, Villem Tomiste and Mihkel Tüür, consciously position their work in opposition to the prevailing version of good and elegant architecture. Thus they are also very conscious of the media attention this excites, and their clients appreciate the enhanced value such publicity gives these projects. While such outspoken architecture might put off potential buyers for whom these buildings appear to lack dignity, it may well attract those creative types whose interest is stimulated by its novelty. In contrast to the white Neomodernist villas of the 1990s, this architecture has found a ready market among designers, advertising executives and IT professionals. However, in the case of Laagri, the problem for the architects was also how to transform a dull suburban landscape into a desirable site for potential buyers. How to transform a place bereft of natural attractions into an appealing spot. On a site located between Soviet-era uniform housing and a local school's sports stadium, their unusual approach has paid off; after completion the houses also featured in several mortgage advertisements for young families, showcasing the progressive lifestyles achieved through first-rate design.

Okas and Lõoke Architects, Summer House, Saaremaa, 2002
The summer residence, in three parts, is located near the coast on a western Estonian island, on the site of an old farmhouse. The main building, sauna and a guesthouse encircle a common courtyard and follow the plan of a former farmhouse yard. The guesthouse shares a roof with an open kitchen and a terrace. The volumes of the buildings thus remain in dialogue with the traditional architecture of this coastal village. In this way global architectural trends meet the local context in an almost seamless fashion. Yet, the inner sides of the shutters that close the large windows are painted in Modernist primary colours of red, blue and yellow so that it is also possible to ignore the context and wrap oneself in a purist interior. The partnership of Jüri Okas and Marika Lõoke was among the first independent architectural practices established in Estonia in the 1990s. Their Neomodernist and Minimalist structures have mostly been situated in an urban context and the architects have chosen to position themselves in a postindustrial realm rather than in that of rural leisure. The typology of the summer house is thus an exception in these architects' practice. AD

Lithuania: Assembling in Cities



Gintautas Natkevicius Architects, Arka House, Kaunas, 2001
Built on the edge of the Silainiai slope, the house reminds one of a sculpture and has probably the best panoramic view of Kaunas.

A period of accelerated urbanism in Lithuania has coincided with a slackening of the planning system. This has inevitably unleashed a degree of urban chaos – with individual house-owners and developers building, largely unchecked, whatever they desire. Amidst this unruly, if burgeoning built environment, Audrys Karalius highlights some significant architectural schemes, many of which pick up the torch of the architects who were designing in Lithuania's formative interwar years.

Paradoxically, at the beginning of the 21st century it seems that Lithuanians must learn to live in the city all over again. After the extensive growth of the country's cities during the Soviet period of the 20th century, they must now quickly learn the urban alphabet of a free market in order to avoid the great number of urban mistakes and the incoherent development of their cityscapes. On occasion, building erupts into what seems like an attempt to outdo leading European centres in terms of design. The desire is to copy, to assimilate their architectural trends. Unfortunately, this quickly leads to inadequate context and decisions based on speed rather than judgement; predictably, the result of this sort of rush is a cityscape that has more in common with a vibrant cartoon – too little gravitas and sense of history, too little desire to accommodate the past with the innovations of the present.

In random places like Kaunas and Vilnius, skyscrapers emerge, their unregulated height exceeding that of neighbouring buildings a dizzying 30 times. Seemingly without a thought to conserve Kaunas's historic centre, a shopping mall, 'Akropolis', of 56,000 square metres (603,000 square feet) is under construction there, a giant menacing the small shops in the adjacent pedestrian avenue that is an impressive 1.5 kilometres (1 mile) long. Cynicism in the face of progress? But what is now the River Nemunas's attractive waterfront will become the site of a multilevel car park for the shopping mall and will be further ravaged by the construction of a tunnel.

During the Middle Ages, Lithuanians governed their own kingdom and at first controlled the major part of the region; later, the area enjoyed a two-nation state hegemony with Poland (1569–1795). It was a golden period; affluent and liberal-minded noblemen settled in Lithuania, and craftsmen and merchants from the country and abroad were attracted to its cities because of the social and commercial freedom they offered. Many towns were built in that period and members of many nations established themselves in Lithuania's cities. The collapse of the two-nation state brought dramatic change. Of the intervening 210 years to the present, the great majority have seen Lithuania ruled by others, mostly by Russians.

The country's deep roots in the rural way of life – its gentle seasonal rhythms, close-knit communities, devotion to nature and the Church – was fertile soil in which the Lithuanian nation could survive. There was no urge for progress; rather a general feeling of security and continuity provided by a strong sense of national identity, tradition, language and religion. In former times (1795–1918), Lithuanian cities were populated mostly by Russians, but Moscow did not care much about sleepy provincial towns on the edge of its great empire.

To understand the processes now at work in Lithuania's cities we need to go back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the country regained independence for a short period (22 years) after the First World War and embarked on reforms in many areas, an endeavour driven by huge enthusiasm. Lithuania's rich agricultural land once again attracted wealthy farmers, and intellectual life received a generous impetus – an advanced system of national education was initiated and several universities, museums and theatres were established. In 1931, in Kaunas alone, 1415 new houses were built (the same number there had been in the whole of Kaunas in 1914 prior to the outbreak of war). This brief period was like a breath of air, rescuing a drowning man and giving him a new lease of life.

Indisputably, this short but very active interwar period set the groundwork for the country's national architecture and indeed for the whole culture. Kaunas became the provisional capital city and saw a wonderful rebirth of architecture. Many remarkable public buildings and office and housing developments were erected. Historicist and Secessionist trends were replaced by rational solutions and a return to traditional vernacular styles and methods using simple architectural forms, ornament and decor. High quality of architecture and construction became the norm.

After studying at western European universities, Vytautas Landsbergis-Zemkalnis, Stasys Kudokas, Karolis Reisonas, Feliksas Vizbaras and other architects realised their most notable projects, exemplars of Rationalism and Traditionalism in their homeland. Although much of their output was destroyed during the Second World War, several remained: the Officers' Palace (designed by Kudokas), the Central Post Office and Lapenas Apartment House (Vizbaras) and the Church of the Resurrection (Reisonas); all please the eye by their carefully thought out composition, purity of style (Rationalist and Traditionalist) and fine proportions.

However, it is Vytautas Landsbergis-Zemkalnis (father of President Vytautas Landsbergis, who steered Lithuania through the complexities of de-Sovietisation) who should be acknowledged as the leading architect of the period. It was he who was responsible for the design and realisation of the headquarters of Pienocentras, the residence of the papal nuncio, several apartment blocks and office buildings; in particular, his Research Laboratory approaches the radiance of 'white architecture' – simple geometrical forms, white stucco and black-framed horizontal windows – as propagated by Le Corbusier's Functionalists.

Even the depressing effects of half a century of Soviet occupation were not able to suppress entirely the distinctive features of Lithuanian architecture and values that had been formed during the interwar period. The 'command' architecture imposed by the USSR and its deadening system was powerless against quiet cultural resistance. Lithuanian pathos was juxtaposed with the Soviet mania for ugly, soulless standardisation. Indigenous architects' attention to context and nature while creating architectural spaces, the sense of proportion and sensitivity to construction materials withstood Moscow's decorative pomposity.

Of course, huge damage was nevertheless sustained in the field of architecture. In the context of the Cold War arms race,

Feliksas Vizbaras Architects, Lapenas Apartment House, Kaunas, 1933
A short but very active interwar period established the groundwork for modern Lithuanian architecture.

Arnas Funkas Architects, Private house, heart of Kaunas, 1933
During the interwar period, Kaunas became the provisional capital of Lithuania and enjoyed a wonderful architectural rebirth. High-quality architecture and construction became the norm.

enforced industrialisation required new industrial complexes. The country's cities expanded, ignoring their heritage and natural context, denying logic and the traditions of vernacular urban development, rapidly losing their identity. Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Siauliai and a host of smaller cities were transformed beyond recognition. Despite the desperate efforts of architects to forestall insensitive and inappropriate developments, new housing resembled giant ghettos (typically more than 90 per cent of new housing stock was prefabricated panel-houses) with depressing spaces, architecture and, unfortunately, produced a dismal quality of life for their inhabitants. Soviet standardisation turned architecture into a political instrument used to further the grey lines of *Homo sovieticus* production.

Paradoxically, just when everything, especially private initiatives and property, was forbidden, some leaders of the Soviet grey economy took advantage of the corrupt system of planning regulation and 'freak' houses appeared in suburbs. Mostly they went up incognito in marginal 'red bourgeoisie' areas and nobody took responsibility for the architecture. These bizarre anachronistic houses still surprise by their dimensions, style and forms, albeit in terms of design their contribution is slight. However, just like every mutated organism, they are worthy of research in order to diagnose their rationale and prevent such corrupted development. Maybe one of the reasons behind them was investors' inordinate greed, ignorance of professional architects' skills, a desire to dominate and an absolute disregard for living cultural traditions – the materialist's brash assertion that more is more.

In a Soviet-driven context, those individual Lithuanian architects who kept to the true course and created the backbone of the country's national architecture after the 1990s 'singing revolution' should be mentioned. The brothers Algimantas and Vytautas Nasvytis, Vytautas Bredikis, Vytautas Dicius, Algimantas Leckas and Nijole Buciute realised a number of high-quality projects, which as positive exceptions to the dominant Soviet architecture provided pointers to progress in what was then the prevailing miasma.

Meanwhile, the architectural office of Vytautas Edmundas Cekanauskas managed to execute a few outstanding cultural buildings and an interesting residential area: Lazdynai, in Vilnius. Ground-breaking 1970s Finnish architecture, and Alvar Aalto its foremost exponent, together exerted a profound influence on Lithuanian architecture. Clear forms and environmentally friendly volumes started to be seen to flirt with Lithuanian pines and the soft landscape, an innovation that enraged Soviet architectural ideologues.

Bombastic symmetry, dominance of the landscape by heavy, rigidly marshalled compositions did not find favour in Lithuania. Cosy spaces, buildings that blended comfortably with the surrounding countryside, were appreciated more.

The Lazdynai housing development (designed by Cekanauskas and Bredikis) literally builds on these characteristics. Their typical apartment houses are located sensitively to harmonise with natural contours, echoing the landscape's undulations, creating attractive spaces for living. Their urban structures follow nature in the Finnish way and successfully create nonstandardised, individual and varied spaces, both larger and smaller forms deftly inserted into the natural landscape.

Looking back on 16 years of urban development in an independent Lithuania, it is obvious that the development is neither as orderly nor as mature as might have been expected. Undoubtedly, the relics of the Soviet era, the effects of subsequent privatisation and economic and administrative reforms have rebounded on the republic, creating problems in terms of architectural arrogance, blatant mistakes and 'reinventing the wheel'.

From the indigenous perspective, urban development in Lithuania is severely hampered by local authorities unready for rapidly changing urban and architectural processes, a dearth of highly qualified specialists (especially urban planners), and a chaotic system of building regulation and enforcement coupled with a potentially corrupting 'hand in glove' relationship between the authorities and business.

The state has not invested enough in city planning. A few cities have new, post-Soviet general plans, but that is of little help in the process of accelerating urbanisation. Paramilitary, centralist Soviet city planning was simply replaced by a petit bourgeois urban mess. Each investor was free to create his own 'dream', while municipalities were powerless to coordinate such a free-for-all of improvisation in order to ensure at least a minimum of harmonisation.

Now, when the national economy is buoyant investors do not want to participate in the lengthy processes of urban planning, so a lot of mistakes are made. The boom in the housing construction industry in Lithuania is reminiscent of a tsunami. A gigantic wave in the form of an advantageous credit environment, rising wages and a desire for improved living conditions to replace the Soviet panel-houses, has propelled the housing business. Some 6000 apartments are built every year. However, investors would like to put up three times as many if municipalities could prepare and approve urban planning projects and permits more quickly.

Because of Lithuania's postwar circumstances, its middle class is relatively underdeveloped, and so is relatively unselective in terms of domestic architecture, a factor in the inferiority of private housing. Glass facades, modern engineered blocks and the opportunity to live on the 15th floor in the very heart of the city – that is all Lithuanians can hope for or expect at present.

Typical Soviet block, Siauliai city centre, 1975
During the Soviet period, housing lost its indigenous identity and came to resemble a giant ghetto with depressing spaces, architecture and lifestyles.

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Uostamiescio projektas, Apartment block, Klaipeda, 2005
Architect Edmundas Andrijauskas completed an apartment block of 65 flats inside the Soviet housing quarter, so enriching the previously strange, anonymous space.

Vilniaus architekturos studija, Apartment block, Santariskes, Vilnius, 2000
The team under the leadership of architects Romualdas Kirdulis and Kestutis Kisielius may be deservedly proud of their strong contribution to better-quality housing in Vilnius.

JAD Architects, Apartment block, Uzupis, Vilnius, 2005
The project of three small houses was realised inside a 19th-century housing block, which still retained its cosy suburban atmosphere. In this context architects Tadas Balciunas and Vytautas Bieksa recycled historical forms with grace.

Rolandas Palekas Architects, Housing estate, Nugaletoju Street, Vilnius, 2002
A group of eight houses on the edge of the city creates bright images for a new-generation village, very close to the Lithuanian dream.

Architect unknown, Residence near Vilnius, 1988
At the end of the Soviet period, strange anachronistic houses appeared in the suburbs, demonstrating inordinate greed, a desire to dominate and the materialist's confidence that more is more.

Algimantas Leckas Architects, Zilvinas residential complex, Palanga, 1969
Clear forms and environmentally friendly volumes started to flirt with Lithuanian pines and the country's soft landscape, enraging Soviet architectural ideologues.

Successfully bucking this trend of mediocrity is the team under the leadership of architects Romualdas Kirdulis and Kestutis Kisielius (Vilniaus architekturos studija) who have made significant contributions to better-quality housing in Vilnius. The Santariskes block for middle-class residents (75 square metres/807 square feet is still an unattainable dream for most working-class people) is one of those where an attractive atmosphere for living is created by the use of comparatively modest construction techniques and materials.

The legacy of Soviet urbanism is scattered, uneven urban development with strange anonymous spaces. In a brave departure, architect Edmundas Andrijauskas (Uostamiescio projektas) completed an apartment block of 65 flats near the city centre of Klaipeda, within the former Soviet housing quarter. Simple, vertically divided volumes, sunny glazed loggias and good taste enriched the whole inner space of the block.

Attempting to conserve the architectural inheritance of Lithuania's past while creating new housing is a complicated task, but it is one in which architects Tadas Balciunas and Vytautas Bieksa (JAD Architects) have been markedly successful with their development in Uzupis, near Vilnius's Old Town. The project comprised three small houses (12 flats each) and was realised in a 19th-century housing block, which has retained its cosy suburban atmosphere. The architects resurrected historical forms with grace, and provided standards of comfort approaching the model of the romantic Old Town.

Despite enhanced architectural quality and living standards, apartment blocks in Lithuania did not turn out as Lithuanians had hoped. Among the reasons for this disappointing outcome might be the pull of the countryside, the privileging of an innate individualism, and the intention to be different simply for difference's sake. If there is any possibility, most Lithuanians choose to live in individual cottages. Usually a house bears little stylistic resemblance to its neighbours, because every owner has his or her say in the design process and gives many 'valuable suggestions'. This is why even a street of theoretically similar houses looks like a row of children sired by different fathers.

A nice exception to this is a group of eight houses on the edge of Vilnius by Rolandas Palekas Architects. Here, small (150-square-metre/1615-square-foot), traditional houses located in a pine wood create bright images of a new-generation village.

The Juodas House in the Kaunas suburb of Viciunai by Sarunas & Asta Kiaune Architects is somewhat similar in conception. A former fishermen's village turned suburb, over the past 50 years Viciunai has become quite heavily built up with houses in a hotchpotch of styles. In contrast, the recently completed Juodas House does not seek to deny its neighbours, but rather serves as a timely reminder of how new-generation building should be. Elegant in form, strong in colour, it radiates a positive energy all the way down the street.

Now, in the early years of the 21st century, it is possible to find Lithuanian architecture that is moderate, laconic, solid and respectable and pure in style. It is reminiscent of the interwar period, except that for the moment such architecture is available only for single-family houses and not for large projects. Villa Geltona by Vilius & Partners Architects in Palanga, and the L House project realised by Ramunas Raslavicius Architects in Kaunas, are pleasing examples, where form supplements function by means of culture-sensitive design rather than by complicated architectural gymnastics.

Usually a Lithuanian engaged in an architectural project to be set in natural surroundings hardly controls his emotions. It seems that driven by nature he somehow makes unwise decisions. Probably while under the influence of the magical power of nature and the panoramic view of Kaunas city, Gintautas Natkevicius Architects designed the Arka House on the edge of the Silainiai slope, its abstract shape more that of a sculpture or landmark than a house for everyday living.

Sarunas & Asta Kiaune Architects, Juodas House, Viciunai, Kaunas, 2005
Here the architects do not seek to ignore the neighbourhood, but rather to show how new-generation architecture should be in terms of sensitivity to context. Elegant in shape, the house gives off positive energy all down the street.

Vilius & Partners Architects, Villa Geltona, Palanga, 2000
This cosy villa in a resort city is somewhat reminiscent of the interwar period in Lithuania, when moderate, laconic, respectable architecture was a sign of good taste among intellectuals and businessmen.

Ramunas Raslavicius Architects, L House, Vytenai, Kaunas, 2005
Young architects created a couple of single-family houses where form supplements function by means of culture-sensitive design, not through pointless architectural exhibitionism.

Unfortunately, despite what seemed an original architectural solution, the building failed to become a well-loved family home.

Evaldas Adomonis Architects chose a different approach for their building in Vilnius. The architects did not prioritise form over content, and did not give shape disproportionate prominence. Their building allowed its inhabitants unobstructed views of the hilly landscape of their capital. The house did not become pure, photogenic formal sculpture and the life in it a movie. It was simply a pleasing unobtrusive space for living.

Evaldas Adomonis Architects, house in Kankliu Street, Vilnius, 2000
The architects did not prioritise shape over content. Instead they sought to provide comfortable living with excellent views of the city.

However, probably the most important thing in life is content, not shape. There are endless possibilities for different trajectories in terms of arrangement of space, access to views, original blends and architectural improvisations. Respect for the individual – Lithuanian architecture will be recognised by this, not by exhibitionist displays intended to astonish the world or stylistic variety for its own sake that approaches in diversity animals in a zoo.

In the meantime, Lithuanians have a lot of urgent business to attend to. We must improve planning mechanisms to encourage urban quality, and streamline bureaucratic processes to render them more efficient and attractive for investors. In order to achieve high-quality architecture we must open up the profession to architectural competitions and not revert to the method of contracting a project to the lowest bid. And most of all, we must address the qualifications of our architects, especially of urban planners – only by raising standards in architecture and related professions will it be possible to improve urban quality nationally. To this end resources should be targeted as generously as possible, valuable foreign experience should be acquired and absorbed, and the aggrieved stance of old-fashioned academics and hidebound municipal clerks for the most part discounted. Δ

Malta: Housing and Real Estate, 1980–2005

Over the past two decades, private house ownership has expanded exponentially throughout Europe. Over the past decade, this has intensified with the desire and ability among wealthier northern Europeans to own second homes in sunnier climes. It has not only driven up house prices in pockets of Europe, but has also impacted on the social and cultural lives of local communities in 'desirable locations', having an adverse effect on the quality of the built environment. Lino Bianco describes the situation in Malta and how, after decades of largely uncontrolled development by real-estate investors, the government is taking stock and encouraging through investment in architectural education, and property legislation, the growth of an indigenous architecture that is contextual, sensitive and energy-conscious.

As in other European Union (EU) member states, in Malta property has long been viewed as a secure investment. Property development in the country increased steadily throughout the 1990s, and then rose sharply just prior to and after Malta's accession to the EU in 2004. While its impact on socioeconomic factors has been the subject of a number of recent studies, the evolution of Maltese architecture over the last quarter-century has long been recognised by government, heritage-sensitive nongovernmental organisations (NGOS) and the media in general. Over this period, the conception and implementation of building schemes, local plans and other policies affecting housing and real estate were strongly influenced by both central government and the private sector. However, the balance shifted from the former to the latter after the change in government in 1985, from a Labour administration led by architect and civil engineer Dom Mintoff, to a Nationalist administration and their liberal economy in 1987. The south of the island is a Labour stronghold, and the north predominantly Nationalist. Industry is located mainly in the south and, thus, investment in quality housing stock for locals and foreigners focuses on the north.

In recent years, the residential property market has been boosted by the government's introduction of only a nominal penalty for residents who repatriate undeclared funds held overseas. In the tourism industry, the decline in the British market has been offset by an increase in visitors from continental Europe, particularly Germans, Italians and French, to embrace incentives for business and cultural tourism. This diversification has had an impact on the real-estate market with a shift towards more Europeans

Old and new: the prototype for the redevelopment of Tower Road.

Multistorey buildings along Tower Road.

Various, Tower Road residential development, Sliema, 1980–90
A breach between old and new: a change in height restriction and in building typologies. Increasing pressure on land, relaxation of height limitations and excessive speculation have devastated the traditional coast road of Sliema. Where predominantly two- to three-storey, early 20th-century terrace houses used to stand, there are now only multistorey apartment blocks geared to the real-estate market. These residential blocks have destroyed the traditional coast road in a misguided effort to develop residential architecture suitable for both locals and foreigners. Recognition of the fatal attraction of this building typology has seen the development of an architecture that seeks to identify itself with the new spirit of place.

Multistorey buildings facing Ghar id-Dud Bay.

purchasing property in Malta. Nevertheless, the island remains a popular destination with British retirees.

Environmental Planning Awareness
In 1992, the Development Planning Act made law the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands prepared in 1990, a strategic land-use plan developed specifically to take into account growing environmental awareness in Europe. This plan, which limited land available for real-estate development, established policies for the protection of the island's natural and cultural heritage, and restored and upgraded the value of the building stock within development zones. Furthermore, it recognised the need to increase urban densities in order to conserve and manage land within development schemes efficiently and discourage development outside such areas, so putting a check on inroads into the natural landscape.

Increasing awareness of environmental degradation whether natural, cultural or human, prompted a surge in impact studies and the implementation of measures designed to mitigate damage from proposed architectural projects. The Structure Plan provides for environmental impact assessments. EU directives address developments, including large housing and real-estate proposals, by furnishing guidelines that have been requested locally at the planning stage. Unbiased impact assessments are useful and effective analytical tools to assess the sustainability and compatibility of an architectural proposal with its surroundings. Geocultural, natural, aesthetic and land-use surveys facilitate the development of conceptual design sensitive to the spirit of place at a given time. Mitigating measures put in place during the planning process ensure an architecture that is sensitive to its surroundings even if the desired statement would have preferred differentiation to integration.

Residential Typologies
The main real-estate demand in Malta is for residential properties. Apartments are preferred over maisonettes, terraced houses, town houses, character homes and villas. The

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View of Portomaso from Tower Road, Sliema.

BD Associates, Portomaso residential development, St Julian's, 1995
This waterfront residential development in Portomaso, covering 12.8 hectares (31 acres) and including a 110-berth yacht marina, is the result of the redevelopment of a prominent site in St Julian's by the Tumas Group. Complementing the project is the five-star Hilton Malta Hotel and the Portomaso Tower, the highest multistorey building erected in Malta to date. This innovative project was the cutting edge of local real-estate development and is considered a bench mark for quality residential accommodation. The multilevel apartments have their own unique architectural identity, which combines the fatal attraction for high-rises with the speculative drive to optimise land revenues.

most common residential type is the house, which accounts for 42 per cent of the total housing stock, including terraced, semi-detached and fully detached residences. The second most common such type is the apartment. Houses are prevalent in the South and Central Local Plan areas, while the North Harbours Local Plan area contains the highest number of apartments, the main typology acquired by foreigners. Apartments vary in price from the cheap to the very expensive and thus cater for a broad clientele.

In fact, all over the island permission to build is granted most often for apartment block development. The balance between apartments, houses and maisonettes shifted in the late 1990s. Meanwhile, the number of terraced houses being built has declined, a change considered positive in the context of the Structure Plan's second goal: the efficient use of land.

Despite the antagonism of planning officials towards high-rise construction, land demand meant that the typical two- and three-storey residential units were replaced by multistorey ones, giving way to new design philosophies and building systems, namely reinforced concrete frame structures. Earlier legislation, still in force, required the use of local unrendered limestone in building elevations and thus conditioned the overall built-up aesthetic of the load-bearing masonry structures. The multistorey solution replaced the traditional panorama of low-rise towns along the coast, like Sliema and St Julian's, with one of reinforced concrete frame structures.

The Built Aesthetic and the Real-Estate Market

The main areas targeted for development to meet both local and foreign demand for residential units were the coastal areas in the northeast of the island, namely St Paul's Bay, St Julian's and Sliema, towns which were designed on the British terraced house model for use as summer residences by the local middle class. These towns were characterised by a low-lying streetscape with rhythmical elevations based predominantly on the varying colouring of timber apertures. The pressure of land values and speculative development led

One of the entrances to the Portomaso apartments.

to the systematic destruction of these coastline streetscapes to make way for high-rise apartment blocks.

Demographic factors have also impacted on the demand for property development. Investment by locals in the housing market is encouraged by the political climate. Until the 1980s, the Maltese government subsidised the local housing market in order to raise living standards. Today, Maltese nationals regularly purchase a second residential unit as an investment. The cost of such units is significantly higher in the coastal areas of Sliema and St Julian's, especially for apartments. While this may indicate a strong preference for the area on the part of foreign buyers, it also illustrates this traditional tourism product's heavily reliance on the British market. Of the foreign real-estate market, 90 per cent is accounted for by EU nationals, predominantly the British. During the early 1990s, foreigners buying property on the island accounted for 6 per cent of total property sales and 18 per cent of total turnover. The following years saw a downturn, with foreigners contributing only 3.4 per cent of turnover in 1997.

With the boom in multistorey construction in the 1990s, the traditional quality of the place, the *genius loci*, had altered to a new spirit of place that is symbiotically linked with the *genius seculi*, the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times. Place was differentiated not integrated.

In 2000, this figure rose as foreign contributions increased to 10 per cent of turnover. (These figures are conservative estimates as they are based on the Property Price Index, which is itself based on the contract price of the property and, following the introduction of the capital gains tax in 1993, the declared value on these contracts is frequently under-reported.) Foreigners may acquire only one property except in specially designated upmarket areas such as Portomaso, Chambray, Tigne Point, Manoel Island and Cottonera.

Despite Malta's welfare state and welfare society, concepts that have long been exploited politically, housing policies and designs have mostly developed in isolation from the landscapes for which they were intended. In 1983, large tracts of the island, far from existing urban areas, were made

View of Portomaso apartments overlooking the yacht marina.

available for real-estate development by the government through the home-ownership scheme, a scheme that was suspended in 1993. The land-use philosophy underlying local planning, whereby socioeconomic issues are not its focus, resulted in real-estate developments lacking either a sense of community or place. It gave rise to ghettos whose occupants could associate and identify themselves not with past experiences, but only with the present realities dictated by insensitive housing schemes, whether public or private. Such housing developments are spacious, but are divorced from the identity of the place and its history. Until the early 1990s, the emphasis was more on interiors, in large measure due to intensive efforts at cultural synchronisation. The role models, both for local housing and for the assumed foreign lifestyle, were the interiors as portrayed in the popular US television series *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. With the boom in multistorey construction in the 1990s, the traditional quality of the place, the *genius loci*, had altered to a new spirit of place that is symbiotically linked with the *genius seculi*, the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times. Place was differentiated not integrated. Still it played a critical role in establishing an identity – as the slum architecture of tomorrow.

The New Aesthetic

Awareness of the rape of the traditional urban skyline and the damage done to the sense of place, means the years since the late 1990s have seen a marked trend towards regional and contextual architecture; sensitive, energy-conscious design is beginning to emerge. A reaction to the travesties perpetrated by earlier ill-considered urban planning and architectural design, one that is rooted in a renewed search for a local identity – an identity reinforced by public awareness campaigns for sustainable development – is integrating architecture with the environment. While acknowledging the possibility of architectural solutions that make a statement that is differentiated from the site, emphasis is now placed on

View along Tal-Fjuri Road.

Godwin Vella, Twin Houses, St Paul's Bay, 2000
Situated on a gently sloping site off the St Paul's Bay bypass, the Twin Houses are a speculative project by the architect to develop two terraced houses. They are accessed from the upper level where the public road runs. Although height restrictions for the area allow two floors above road level, these houses are only single storey. Here, the architectural philosophy is contextual in inspiration. It respects the physical typology of the site, and panoramic views of St Paul's Islands are maximised, while the building is oriented to optimise daylight with minimal heat gain during summer.

integration with surroundings and complementing the site. This neocontextual revival is rooted in the search to contribute to the realities of the present and the future. It is a renewed call for a morality in architecture, not just in Pugin's terms, but in its sensitivity to current ecological realities, to the spirit of present and future.

Architectural design education from the late 1980s onwards was significantly oriented towards tackling issues related to contextuality, respecting both the topography and the history of the place, thus seeking to foster a better fit in terms of the relation of a building to its site. In 1990, the duration of the course at the University of Malta, a combined degree in architecture and civil engineering, was streamed between courses in building engineering and architecture that followed on from three years' study in architectural design. This streaming led to improved quality of architectural design and better executed projects. The result of this education is evident in the output of Malta's young graduate architects. Furthermore, students following the building engineering stream were better equipped to meet the challenges posed by the emerging residential typologies. Height restrictions, the speculator's measure of profitability in the real-estate market, are being humanised through a new concept of place that nurtures a sense of identity and supports a type of community. A good illustration is the sensitively designed, Minimalist, speculative development of the Twin Houses, designed by an architect (Godwin Vella) who graduated from the University of Malta in the early 1990s.

For architecture to be sustainable, design will have to address local and foreign markets, increased environmental planning constraints and the socioeconomic realities of Malta.

With the country's accession to the EU, Malta's architects are being challenged to update and upgrade their building standards, to address impacts and to design mitigating measures for development proposals. Malta, an archaeological paradise and the site of some of the oldest freestanding architectural structures, dating back several millennia, reasserts its Mediterranean dimension with EU accession. It has renewed its geographical and geocultural identity, a renaissance of a new architecture sensitive to space, place and time.

EU directives regulating the science of building, workmanship and standards have to be adhered to and taken into account in new architectural projects. Research in environmental and material sciences needs to focus on the

behaviour of building materials in the local environmental setting and ensure compliance with European standards as set down in the respective directives.

The Architecture of Tomorrow

The liberal economy of the Nationalist administration led to a redevelopment of residential zones on the northern coast of the island while the southern region of the island was ignored. Development in the northern part destroyed the traditional identity of the place and replaced it with a contemporary, locally developed architecture, acontextual to the site except for the predominant views – an important criterion of direct financial relevance to the real-estate market. These developments were life experiments that rendered contemporary architecture in Malta unpopular with both locals and tourists, and with architectural and planning professionals. The development of the south of Malta is likely to be a reaction to this: an architecture with renewed interest in the landscape, both cultural and natural, including its memories; an architecture based on the identity of the place and its past. Malta's accession to the EU reinforced the island's identity through a unity in diversity. As the traditional, vernacular, Islamic-inspired courtyard house architecture was the response to local climatological and cultural considerations, so tomorrow's residential architecture in Malta will provide a holistic response to environmental health considerations. The challenge of architecture in the Malta of tomorrow will be to address the soul of the community, to create true essays in contextuality. In embryonic form, this future is already present. The education of the country's young architects ensures this.

A significant rise in the number of architects available to the construction industry, developers faced by a shortage of land for development and increased environmental awareness, coupled with other financial constraints such as a hike in water and electricity bills, all impact on the quality of the built environment. For architecture to be sustainable, design will have to address local and foreign markets, increased environmental planning constraints and the socioeconomic realities of Malta. To optimise the site and its environs, the challenge is to integrate building so as to generate a renewed sense of place grounded in the spirit of the region's traditional architecture while at the same time taking into account contemporary technology and material culture. Δ

View along the St Paul's bypass.

Ingarden & Ewy' Architekci, Polish Pavilion, Expo 2005, Aichi, Japan
View of entrance detail: glass, wickerwork and steel, meticulously constructed yet quite poetic.

New Polish Architecture – Seeking to Establish Order?

Poland is a 'shifting country'. In the postwar era it shifted geographically – 300 kilometres (186 miles) to the west – and since 1989 it has been undergoing enormous political and economic transformations. It is one of the leading ex-Soviet bloc economies. Such huge changes, however, come at a price. The combined expiration of a comprehensive planning system and excessive bureaucracy provides difficult and uncertain conditions for architects. Marta A Urbańska explains how a generation of young, enterprising Polish architects have equipped themselves to deal with this 'quicksand-like situation' by becoming great improvisers and jacks of all trades, as savvy about development, planning and finance as they are about design.

The so-called New Europe (the very term sounds like a coinage of norm-loving Brussels bureaucrats, or did it hail from across the Atlantic?), the former eastern bloc countries recently admitted into the European Union (EU) probably still appear as interlopers in the family of the original member states. The new additions are commonly viewed as interesting yet rather poor relations, whose ways are not quite suited to those of, what is to the newcomers, an all too established society.

This stereotype, a legacy of the bad old days of the iron fist of communist Big Brother and Iron Curtain repressions, does not really equate with Poland's present-day reality: the country has been not only at the forefront of political reform, but the leader of economic regeneration since 1989.

In tandem with Poland's burgeoning transformation into a 21st-century democracy, international interest in the country is growing, and tourists of every level of demeanour and income now flock here, mostly, of course, to visit its incredibly preserved historic cities. So, are the Poles to be viewed as noble savages finally relieved from oppression, or simply as arrivistes? The emerging and fascinating new Polish architecture, designed to respond to the immediate needs of rebuilding the country, but also inextricably linked to issues of cultural identity, provides a few useful answers.

Even though this magazine is devoted to recent architectural events, it is impossible to imagine the absurdly difficult conditions and constraints to which present-day Polish architecture is subject without referring to the past and its consequences. In the West, where architecture is increasingly self-referential, and the degree of abstraction is high and the taste educated, such obsession with context, both the historical and the physical, may seem excessive. However, as architecture is a political art, it is still marked in Poland by the country's turbulent history. The golden age of Poland lasted from the late 15th to the early 18th centuries and saw the construction of magnificent vernacular, Renaissance and Baroque architecture – Catholic and Orthodox churches, synagogues, castles, palaces, ideal cities, manors – set in the vast expanses of the old Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, once the largest state in Europe. Out of some 100,000 manors, once the most pronounced architectural features of the Old Polish landscape, a mere 2000 have survived into the 21st century, half of them in ruins. Since Poland's loss of independence at the close of the 18th century at the hands of the Russians, Prussians and Austrians, who mercilessly looted the country, liberty and cultural identity have been crucial issues for Poles.

The 19th century saw national uprisings, cruel repression, and the breaking of laws that were imposed on a proud nation by the occupying powers. Needless to say, this legacy of contempt for the law has a lot to do with the present state of affairs. The full independence of Poland – won by the sabre during the First World War – lasted for only 18 years. Nevertheless, prewar Modern Polish architecture is splendid and provides an unceasing source of inspiration for today's architects. The Second World War deprived the state of half its territory, and deprived us of 6 million citizens and two-thirds of our cultural heritage, including the total destruction of Warsaw. The loss of the prewar generation of intelligentsia, who fell prey to both the Nazi and the Soviet occupations, haunts the state of Poland to this day, as do the territorial changes and enforced exodus. Poland is, according to my favourite definition, a shifting country – it shifted 300 kilometres (186 miles) to the west, forfeiting the fine cities of Lvov and Vilna – and the resulting loss and deep rifts are still evident. The dreary communist regime, although much more lax than in the Soviet Union itself, was no friend to any tradition, to say the least.

Has the country retained some of its cultural identity? That is the question. And our young architects, busy with construction, what are they looking for in their projects? Are

Ingarden & Ewy' Architekci, Polish Pavilion, Expo 2005, Aichi, Japan
The pavilion as the logo of Poland: the metaphorical combination of recent technologies and ancient craftsmanship, two-dimensionally bent steel and wickerwork, glass and the music of Chopin, all capturing the Polish spirit, proved to be a great success in Japan.

they endeavouring to find a pragmatic solution to the immediate problems of their respective sites, starting from the most basic needs, such as building essentials like petrol stations or modern industrial plants? Are they seeking national styles, international styles, to exhibit a quality of wit, or are they engaged in a serious attempt to endow their new buildings with poetic expression? How do they deal with the conspicuous changes to every aspect of life in Poland and the raging chaos manifest in the spatial disorder?

Poorly enforced and thought-out laws and a lack of imagination on the part of local administrations, both state and regional, result in a lack of valid spatial planning. The old plans expired by law in the year 2000. Only some 15 per cent of Poland is covered by valid plans; in large cities, like historic Kraków, the figure amounts to a meagre 5 per cent. Faced with the absence of valid plans, which otherwise entail laborious and extensive preparatory work, approval by vote and adoption as local law, the architecture departments of communes and towns are issuing permits based on the so-called 'law of the good neighbourhood'. This 'Bandaid' approach refers to analyses of the immediate surroundings and is not only time-consuming, but also devoid of broader spatial perspective. Obtaining a building permit is a process of veritable martyrdom, for both architect and client, and may take up to two years after the appropriate papers have been filed. Excessive bureaucracy and the lack of cash in society as a whole create a rather messy picture. In addition, there is no aid in the form of billions in hard currency, or regular maintenance of the infrastructure, both of which are commonplace immediately to the west.

Shall we, in the words of the Polish saying, sit and weep aloud then? Let me refer you to one German example, albeit a rather mythical one: that of a *Lügebaron*, or the notorious but charming liar Baron von Münchhausen. He famously saved himself from drowning in a swamp by pulling himself up by his own pigtail. Why the analogy? In the words of the jazzy duo Przemo Łukasik and Łukasz Zagala, founders of medusa group, one of the trendiest architectural offices in Poland: 'The profession of architect has undergone ... a major change. We are not just architects in the strict sense anymore; we're

also becoming graphic designers, developers, and creators ... [The field] is very broad, very flexible and requires of us a totally new approach ... we have often had to find a site, and then a way of financing a project we dream about. Then we have to find an investor, a client and actually, it is only at the very end that we get a chance to design it. It's a kind of paradox, but this is exactly the situation we have to live in. Well, we're not complaining too much about this situation.'[1]

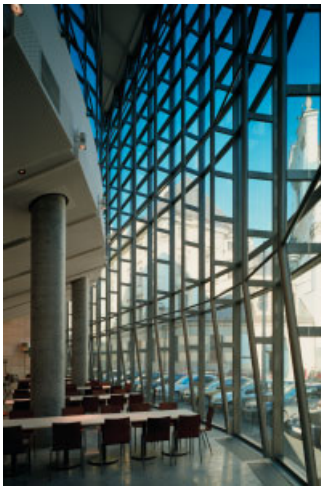
Architect Zbigniew Maćków adds humbly: 'We have the ambition to be an ordinary, average practice that solves everyday problems, and architecture is the last of these problems ... the legal problems, ownership issues, plans and such like. If we're lucky enough ... to design a building in the end, we're happy.' This epitomises the condition of architects here, at least the situation for young architects. In fact, the need to engage on so many fronts is also a source of strength; fighting the daily obstacles, contradictions, deficits and absurdities requires lots of inventiveness, flexibility and that old Polish quality – the ability to improvise.

Instead of describing high-powered practices, like APA Stefan Kurylowicz & Associates and JEMS, or Romuald Loegler, who build huge, fine and sleek commercial and public buildings, I have chosen to present the younger generation here. All the architects showcased are under 50, and most of them under 40. They mainly studied in Poland, but many of them, typically for the enterprising Poles, either continued their education, or worked, abroad: in Holland, France or even Japan. Their modesty might be excessive, as in the case of medusa group, Maćków Pracownia Projektowa and KWK Promes architekci – three of the talented architectural practices that have recently emerged in Poland – but they are building architecture by every available means, even radical ones. They are based in Silesia, the industrial, or postindustrial region that is full of disused coal mines, old manufacturing plants, prefab blocks, old Prussian architecture and has an unemployment rate of nearly 20 per cent.

Dealing with the raw context is what matters for all of them, as is the case of the Kraków-based practices of Biuro Projektów Lewicki Łatak and Ingarden & Ewy'. In fact, as Poles are very sociable and love to talk, the projects presented below seem to be as eloquent about the context as the architects themselves. The variety of their commissions is typical, ranging from single-family houses to state buildings. From small to large scale, architects have to try to make it, usually starting with small private commissions, progressing to designing housing for developers (recently a booming trade), and finally advancing to commissions given by the public purse – communes and the regional and state administrations. These last usually prove to be the most complicated due to both legal and budgetary constraints, a situation that is certainly expected to improve with the hoped-for arrival of large funds from the EU coffers. Whether the administration is ready for them – and is prepared to spend them on quality architecture – is another matter. Big corporate commissions are rather a rarity in these architects' circles.

The first project, and one that is already quite famous, is the Bolko Loft, Łukasik's own house, an extremely low-cost conversion of an elevated former lamp depot for the now defunct coal mine-cum-steel mill in Bytom. Unbelievable but true – yet typical of the absurd conditions here – miners had to climb up in order to get their lamps before descending again to the mine itself. The works bore the proud name

medusa group, Bolko Loft, Kruszcowa Street, Bytom, 2003
medusa group partner Przemo Łukasik converted this derelict mine-lamp depot into his own house – as witty as it is unexpected. View of the stairs and the former coal-mine tower.

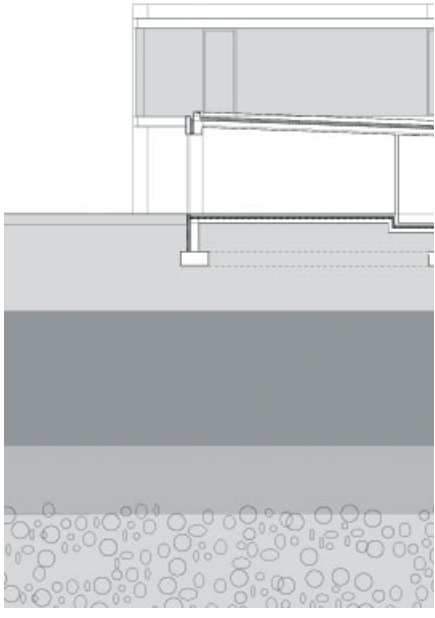


Maćków Pracownia Projektowa, Faculty of Law and Administration, Wrocław University, 2002
Left: Side elevation showing the sober, Modernist face clad in travertine. Right: The airy and glazed interior includes a piazza in front of a Baroque church.

'White Eagle'. Łukasik acquired the derelict depot, on eight reinforced concrete legs, in 2001, exposed the steel structure, deliberately left its grey industrial tones, added the bathroom and a dressing room in red and set off to live there with his family two years later. In the meantime, medusa group has been involved in the conversion of numerous industrial buildings in Upper Silesia, as well as with witty designs such as a table without legs, an award-winning object promoting social interaction during your lunch or coffee break. If you leave your table companion, the coffee will inevitably spill!

In a similar vein, Maćków Pracownia Projektowa, despite the understated approach of its principal, is rebuilding the small industrial town of Siechnice near Wroclaw in Lower Silesia with considerable success. Projects are funded by the regional government, but are also supported by enthusiasts in various central offices. Maćków looks on his work as a great adventure: 'But actually, it's not architecture that is most important here. What *is* most important is the fascinating process and adventure that come from the fast development of Siechnice, of its infrastructure, based on purely human enthusiasm and the desire to tidy up the surroundings. At the beginning, it was a terribly neglected area ... cowsheds, stables ... These were replaced by a sports hall, and the wave of fascination that it started soon generated new ideas: to build a stadium, games fields and a number of similar facilities. People got high, so to speak, and started to extract money from various institutions: Lotto games, the Central Sports Office and such like.'

KWK Promes architekci, Silesian Soil House, Katowice, 2002
Stunning consequence: from tectonic shift in Silesian soil to a house.



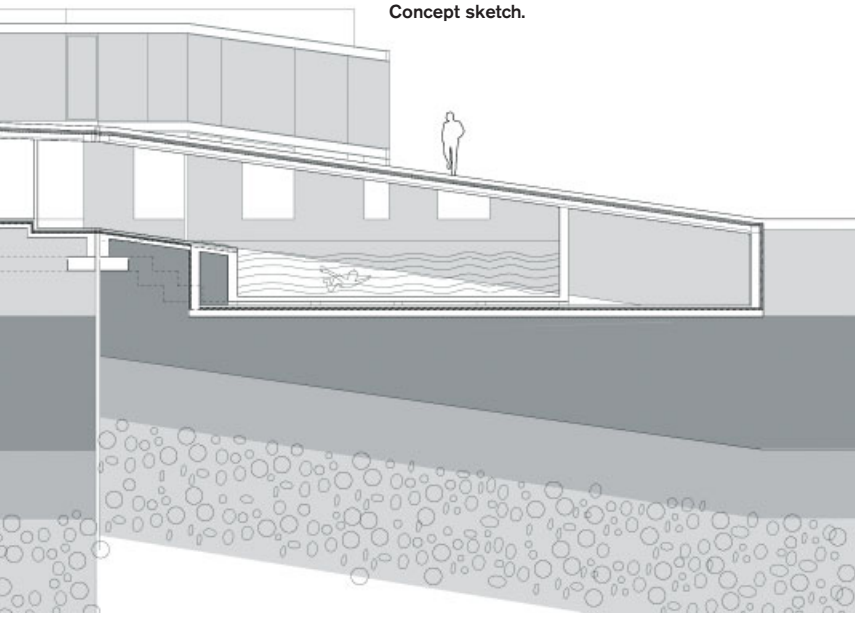
The architects design both spatial plans and architectural volumes, truly like the famed Modernists, from a teaspoon to a town. Their inspiration is the local Expressionist buildings left by the disciples of Max Berg. Maćków admires the geometry, discipline and craftsmanship of 1920s architecture and applies these principles in his own work, and also to those buildings completed elsewhere, such as his impressive new Faculty of Law and Administration that faces the Baroque complex of Wrocław University.

Next come the cases of architecture both rigorously logical and poetically metaphoric. The first of these is also located, one might even say embedded, in Silesia. Robert Konieczny, the KWK Promes architekci partner (and the second half of Marlena Wolnik-Konieczny) says: 'We designed the Silesian Soil House in 2000. It is located near Katowice, on a beautiful site, which, however, had one drawback: fourth category mining damage, involving the possibility of tectonic shifts ... Then someone had the idea of making the roof ... touch the ground, making it possible to walk from the upper floor directly onto the garden ... so that it looked like an element emerging from the ground, prompting an association with the geological result of tectonic uplift, which was actually the main problem of the site. Subsequently, the design began to "align itself" on its own. A ribbon emerging from the ground became its main motif, going around the perimeter of the grey cuboid solids, tying in with the cube-shaped houses in the neighbourhood.'

But there is no perfect happiness, as the Eastern saying has it: the architects were hamstrung by their own mistake, forgetting in their sketches about the landings in the ramp, and only after a month and a half, when 'the client was starting to get a little nervous', did they come up with an experimental solution: a ramp with bent planes on its course. The last, but not the least experimental, house in KWK's programme is the recently completed Aatrium House in Opole. It has a geometry that is both rigid and literally as twisted as the name, as well as the tallest window panes (5.5 metres/18 feet) in Poland, which were set in place by hand. The office is keenly interested in innovative, geometrical models of residential spaces.

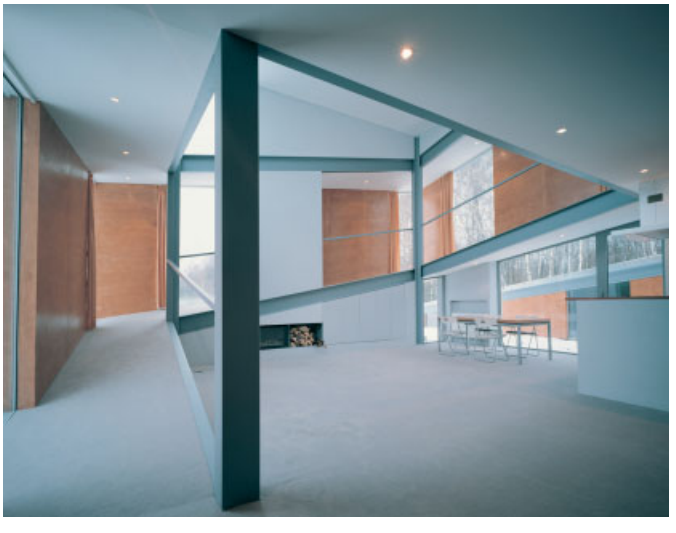
Similar qualities – intellectual, rational or even mathematical – are also highly esteemed in Kraków, at least in the two interesting young architectural practices there. One of them is Biuro Projektów Lewicki Łatak. Its architects have worked together for 10 years, recently successfully managing the jump from smaller commissions to larger public projects, a transition that inevitably involves larger complications, as was the case with their competition entry for the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (2004). This venerable institution, founded in 1364, is currently building its new campus in a picturesque setting on the outskirts of Kraków. The long, linear building, designed with mathematical precision, followed both an axis joining the historic city centre with the campus, and the slight slope of the terrain. Rumour has it that the length of corridors rising as ramps proved to be a bone of contention for the former rector of the university (regrettably a professor of literature rather than a pure scientist), who finally rejected the award-winning project despite the clarity of the mathematical analogy.

On a totally different agenda, one that looks to Poland's past as opposed to its future, in an act of commemoration of



Concept sketch.

Views of the interior with the innovative ramp, which is the main element of the house.



Biuro Projektów Lewicki Łatak, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, competition entry (1st prize), 2004
Perspective hovering above the grass.

Biuro Projektów Lewicki Łatak, New Concord Square (Square of the Heroes of the Ghetto), Kraków, competition entry (1st prize), 2004
Under construction: night view. Overscale chairs are situated on the former central square of the ghetto, as a mute expression of the absence of their owners who were deported to Nazi death camps.

the dark side of the country's history, the tragedy of the Jewish Ghetto in Kraków has finally achieved its richly deserved material commemoration. The competition to design the memorial was won in 2003 and is currently under construction, commissioned by the City of Kraków. The rising surface of the New Concord Square, or the Jewish Ghetto Heroes Square, will be paved with cobblestones. The overscale metal chairs, 'both traditional and ahistoric', as Lewicki observes, will be set on it as a reminder of the furniture stacked there by the inhabitants of the ghetto, who were dragged by the Nazis to the concentration camps. This mute expression of absence has the potential to become a true architectural monument, despite the absence of overtly dramatic gestures.

Another poetic architectural monument, even if an ephemeral one, was constructed in 2005 by the office of Ingarden & Ewy'. The brilliant and eye-catching Polish Pavilion for Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan, has proved a great success (and certainly not just because of the beer on offer courtesy of the sponsoring brewery). Krzysztof Ingarden assisted Arata Isozaki in the construction of the Centre for Japanese Art and Technology 'Manggha' in Kraków in the early 1990s. His ties with Japan include the design of the Polish Embassy in Tokyo and the School of Japanese Language in Kraków. In the Polish Pavilion, the architecture of Ingarden & Ewy', usually informed, Minimalist and elegant, attained the heights of metaphor. This was achieved by a highly inventive response to the guidelines of the Polish Chamber of Commerce: to illustrate the themes of the music of Chopin and the salt mine in Wieliczka! The most interesting element is, according to Ingarden, the elevation. 'It was supposed to show an affinity with the Polish landscape, and thus symbolically relate to Chopin's music ... The [universal Polish] association of Chopin's music with the Mazovian landscape and the willows – provided an impulse to look for a method to use willow withes to form the elevation of the building. Wicker (*Salix* Sp.), being a variety of willow, proved a perfect material for this purpose. Namely, when

woven, it is susceptible to spatial forming; it is light, cheap, and it also ties in with the Polish tradition of arts and crafts.'

The bent steel frames for wicker were designed using the most advanced CAD techniques. 'It is a unique combination of "high-tech" design methods with "low-tech" production,' says Ingarden. Thus the cutting-edge Western technology and precision construction methods joined with traditional vernacular craftsmanship and materials. Wickerwork has been known here since the dawn of time, while 3-D modelling arrived only relatively recently. This situation mirrors that of the state of Poland itself, aspiring to the highest achievements in industry, the arts and sciences, while simultaneously battling the lows of inadequate infrastructure and acute underfunding, more than a dozen years after the heroic Lech Wałesa proudly announced the construction 'of a second Japan' in Poland, signalling the green light for rapid technological progress!

Apropos Japan. In professional circles there is a growing interest in recent Polish architecture, especially since the organisation of the international exhibition '3-2-1: New Architecture in Japan and Poland' (curators: Krzysztof Ingarden, the man whose brainchild it was, and Dorota Leśniak). The exhibition toured Europe, or rather Old Europe, to considerable acclaim, and even received plaudits in China's *World Architecture* magazine. And talking of the Far East, it is pertinent to recall here that Maciej Nowicki, author of the once famous *Raleigh Arena,* wrote his final letter from India (where he was working on the Chandigarh project before his tragic and untimely death in 1950). Under the influence of oriental wisdom a Romantic idealist, like most Old School Poles, he maintained that architects should not behave like fools with an attachment to material things, but rather that they should seek to establish order in the world. Whether this is feasible for architecture is first and foremost a very material thing, and whether his younger compatriots will succeed in establishing any order amid raging chaos remains to be seen. Perhaps one should aim to posit a clearer goal. Poland is a rather unpredictable country, as are the Poles themselves. We hope to navigate the chaos we have inherited, to rebuild our country, to raise architectural culture to a higher level in line with the achievements of ... the young architectural practices whose work I have described above. Time, architecture's best critic, will certainly reveal what we have done to our space – and whether we have succeeded in rising to the challenge that we were bequeathed. AD

Note

1. All quotations are from Magdalena Poprawska and Marta A Urbańska (eds), *Kierunki/Directions: Seminar Accompanying the 3-2-1 Exhibition*, trans Jerzy Juruś, Centre of Japanese Art & Technology 'Manggha' (Kraków), 2005, courtesy of the publisher.

Ingarden & Ewy' Architekci, School of Japanese Language, Kraków, 2004
Night view of the Minimalist, elegant project against the background of the Manggha Centre designed by Arata Isozaki (with Krzysztof Ingarden).

Slovenia: A New Generation

During the Soviet era, Slovenia was renowned as an architectural oasis for experimentation on the western borders of eastern European greyness. Miha Dešman describes how this small but significant nation has maintained its taste for design innovation, despite the shifting economic and political conditions of the past two decades. He outlines what present-day Slovenia has to offer a greater Europe and the special qualities of its contemporary architecture.

For Slovenia, the 1990s saw a period of political transition during which a new state was being formed, with Slovene architecture trying to accommodate itself to the new conditions and reassert itself in the wake of the crisis brought on by the end of the socialist regime. Slovene society quickly adapted itself to the new, capitalist economy and was swift to see the possibilities of the emerging telecommunications industry. Slovene architecture was opening up and connecting to contemporary European trends as well as embracing a new generation of architects and investors. Since Slovene architecture never experienced the clean break with its traditions or became commercial in the way so characteristic of eastern European countries, the architecture of the past few years has been both a continuation of tradition and a reflection of transition. Nowadays we see Slovene architecture preserve its clear and independent regional characteristics (just as it did in the 20th century, with architects such as Fabiani, Vurnik, Šubic, Plečnik and Ravnikar to the architects of today), expressing the tensions and stark contrasts of the landscape between the Adriatic and the Alps, between Venice and Vienna – its unique character which contributes significantly to the colourful mosaic of our common European architectural culture.

Slovenia used to be a sort of oasis for architectural innovation on the western border of eastern European drabness. The small country kept its role as a site for experimentation even after the declaration of independence. As Slovene architectural space is relatively limited, and trends can easily be clearly and fully expressed, it soon became the sort of territory where new, contemporary trends can be read. The potential of a period of transition can be realised either

Sadar Vuga Arhitekti, Condominium Trnovski pristan, Ljubljana, 2004
This luxurious residential building comprising15 units lies in the centre of Ljubljana, right next to the famous Ljubljanica river-banks designed by Jože Plečnik. The stepped terraces and weeping willows offer a starting point for the conception of the building's facades. The pixels of ceramic tiles are an abstract reflection of the river-bank's autumn hues while the building's shape allows it to make the most of natural lighting while at the same time providing large exterior surfaces to each residential unit. It expands into the neighbouring space with its terraces, balconies and winter gardens. The flats are connected by a shared lobby, the construction of which recalls Le Corbusier's projects, with concrete flowerbeds and benches. The building is surrounded by a narrow, semi-private garden with piers that provide it with specific thematic content.

Nicholas Dodd, Mag Tadej Glažar, Vaso J Perović and Arne Vehovar, Primary school along the River Rinža, Kočevje, 2003
The insertion of the school into the forest provides a lyrical setting that brings together the experience of critical regionalism and aesthetic Minimalism. This is an architecture with a very mysterious and archaic link to the wilderness of the forest. The large, perfectly proportioned building serves as a counterweight to the surrounding wilderness, yet it installs itself there with a Cartesian logic of the 'right angle'. On the brink of civilisation, a pure geometrical space has been created. The project excels in its innovative and simple design, the quality of execution and materials, and in the holistic approach it adopts to the relationship between architecture and the environment, to the insertion of the former into the latter. The visible concrete and larch-wood are the materials used in the construction of all wings of the school, while the external space is formed by a necklace of glades, each with a specific programme, connected by a circular path.

positively or negatively. As the new values are not yet firmly established, excesses are sometimes possible. There is almost a sense of anything goes, a situation that allows young and relatively inexperienced practitioners to build important works of architecture.

Larger and better organised countries with building regulations firmly in place cannot afford to work in this disorganised way – hence the paradox that the possibility for experimental excess is lost in these larger and more established architectural environments. In any of the countries of Old Europe it is absolutely impossible that the same investor would build both the best and worst school or apartment block at the same time.

New Strategies of the Younger Generation

The fact that the Slovene architectural scene has been a hive of activity over the past few years cannot be attributed purely to coincidence; rather, it is the outcome of carefully planned individual strategies. The secret to the success of the younger generation lies mostly in their systematic approach and proactive stance in the face of the varying conditions of the architect's work in this new environment, with its multiplicity of contexts.

The need for indigenous architects to prove themselves on the national and international stage stimulated initiatives to organise one-man as well as group exhibitions of Slovene architecture. Some of the architects have already espoused the traditional vernacular and are oriented more locally: exhibitions by members of the Architects' Society (held biannually), the annual exhibition of the Piranezi Prize or the exhibition of the Plečnik Prize nominees showcase their work. The work of other architects is organised as travelling exhibitions and shown all over Europe: 'Six Pack' showcases the output of a group of six young Slovene architectural offices and has travelled all over the world; 'Baustelle Slowenien', which provides an overview of the past 10 years of Slovene architecture is currently touring Europe. Recognition of contemporary Slovene architecture is evidenced by numerous architectural prizes gained by young Slovene architects, and the widespread publication of their work in architectural magazines, as well as the accolade in the form of the invitation to Sadar Vuga Arhitekti and Ofis Arhitekti to participate in the most recent architecture biennale in Venice. The widely acclaimed office building for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, designed by Sadar Vuga Arhitekti, acted as a turning point which heralded the present flowering of indigenous architectural activity. In recent decades, sometimes as few as two or three – sometimes not even one – important new buildings appeared; but the situation has now changed drastically with quite a few innovative and original buildings completed each year.

For young Slovene architects, architecture is not simply an art form; nor do they see it as a purely commercial venture. Rather they perceive architecture as part of an extensive

cultural nexus with economic, social, technical and technological dimensions. They are dedicated to the simultaneous and systematic development of their solutions on two levels. One level represents conventional architectural issues: function, construction, form, detail and aesthetics. The other focuses on efficient marketing, obtaining and organising work, its promotion and postproduction activities in general. A fusion of pragmatism and creativity.

The architects presented here do not take short cuts and do not cut corners in their work. Their projects constitute a thorough and careful investigation of reality, one that involves an understanding of the contemporary world, art and different lifestyles, and seeks common ground between their home country and the world as a whole, between the local and the global, between tradition and Modernism, and between architectural and non-architectural themes. Each of these buildings thus represents a synthesis: programme, history, tradition and technology are integrated with the particular characteristics of each project and investors' requirements to crystallise into the finished product. The projects are distinguished by their constructional and technical rationality, their artistic clarity, their investigative approach, and the language of their architectural expression; individuality is not imposed, but is related to the functionality, sense and inner logic of each work. The result is a space with its own individuality and character, a space sensitive to changes in atmosphere and light, a space that shines as a convincingly integral work of art.

Showcased here are mostly smaller-scale projects that define the context into which they are cast. One of their main characteristics is that they are specifically tailored to their location; should the location change, then so would the programme. This holds true for buildings located in the suburbs just as for those in smaller towns or in the middle of the countryside. This contextual principle of designing has its roots deep in Slovenian architectural tradition and as such is shared by every successive generation of Slovene architects.

Part of engaging with contemporary reality is the capacity to organise and run their own projects, a relatively new phenomenon and one that is evident only among the younger architectural practices. By displaying a constant uncompromising commitment to every phase of the creation of a work of architecture, be it meeting investors' demands, providing basic design and detailed plans, or realisation – including daily visits to the building site – these young architects are setting their own new, high standards.

In order to prosper, architecture needs a favourable social climate. The Dutch, who are well aware of this fact, strongly

Sadar Vuga Arhitekti, Arcadia Lightwear office building, Ljubljana, 2000
Sadar and Vuga Arhitekti are a sort of new 'brand' in Slovene architecture. Their work could be described as spectacular architecture, seeking to express the possibilities of the time, of the new technologies and new aesthetics. Arcadia separates itself from the urban skyline as a black box, hanging in the air, literally flying in the face of the laws of tectonics. Its message is reduced to the company logo, a graphic design with the mute cube serving as its own giant billboard. Communication with this building is not architectural in the traditional sense of the word. There is no entrance. Under the unnatural console, there is a curved reflecting surface that functions as a continuation of the strategy of alienation.

Once inside, the game of deformations and hide-and-seek continues. The upward-sloping ramp is too steep and lit by large round ground lights, leading into a big, tall and completely dark showroom. Here, there is another steep ramp – only this time lit from the side – that turns to a balcony overlooking the volume of the showroom, and then ascends once more. The journey ends in a terrace with a view and houses a luxurious loft.

The interior of the building is thus a montage of sequences that intensify the suspense. The strategy of effect is here executed in its purest form.

support the export of their national architecture. Slovenia is still waiting for the formulation of a consistent national architectural policy, one that will safeguard the country's rich traditional heritage while also encouraging modernisation, thus ensuring Slovene architecture can fulfil one of its most important roles: the shaper of Slovene national identity. Most private investors as well as contemporary politicians, the public and government do not have a clear conception of the meaning and importance of architecture. But the situation is getting better. One of the most important factors in this process is the very alive praxis of the architectural competitions. An established tradition, nevertheless these competitions guarantee a constant striving after fresh ideas, new architectural concepts and the replacement of the older generation of buildings, so stimulating new high-quality architectural works. In future, these public competitions will also allow foreign architects to compete on equal terms with Slovene practitioners.

Between the Global and the Local

No matter which approach I adopt in trying to analyse the pluralistic character of recent Slovene architecture, I always arrive at a duality of positions. Some trace continuity from the Slovene school. This is a fruitful, sensible position, according to which architecture is a culture that has to do with a space and context which may be national, geographical or historical (Mediterranean, Alpine, wood, stone, etc). Perhaps Frampton's term 'critical' is appropriate here. In the present article this type of approach is represented by the Livek holiday homes, the Glazija residential and office building in Celje, the renovation and adaptation of Ravne Castle and the primary school on the banks of the River Rinža Kočevje. Others, especially young architects, have a different mind set: they think 'glocally', a composite term to convey a looking back to the local from their global position. They are more interested in the media, in the architecture of sensual experience than in 'cultured' architecture, their attention gripped by the importance of market effectiveness rather than ethical validity. In this context, we might mention the Arcadia Lightwear office building and Condominium Trnovski pristan in Ljubljana, as well as the Maksimilijan residential and office building in Celje. Between these two major trends a number of hybrid positions exist, such as those represented by the XXS Residence in Ljubljana, and the Marines office building and warehouse in Celje.

Although everywhere there is a trend towards globalisation and its concomitant homogeneity, the importance of indigenous culture is gaining ground, raising its profile, so that it poses a real challenge to and restraint on Western cultural influences (specifically American), preventing their dominance over the whole field of culture. Privileging the indigenous avoids extremes, such as extremist isolationism, but also eschews a culturally subordinated and overly open access to global society. The aim is to unite both approaches and find the balance between them – reinforcing a distinct national identity while at the same time remaining open to foreign influences – a kind of 'glocalisation', therefore, both global and local in orientation.

Between Tradition and Contemporaneity

Over the past 10 years, Slovene architecture has made its way from contextual to site-specific architecture. And what precisely are the contextual and the site-specific ? In fact, they are one and the same thing, differing in terminology rather than in essence. There is a common trait, a trademark of Slovene architecture, and that is its hidden continuity. A bond with our fathers manifests itself in constant comparison, in the forging of a relationship, in a searching for new solutions, but also in rebellion against the past and the reinterpretation of our predecessors' work. Slovene architectural reality typically absorbs information and inspiration from the national collective consciousness, from the deeply rooted

Rok Klanjšček, Klemen Pavlin and Aljaž Lavrič, Livek holiday homes, Livek above Kobarid, 2003
The architect succeeded in fulfilling two requirements that are normally difficult to meet simultaneously, and in a very innovative manner at that. One is creating an attractive modern architecture that meets the demands of the investor; the other is working within the requirements and limitations of heritage conservation and the regulations protecting local architecture. A group of small apartment houses perches on the edge of a platform, corresponding in scale to that of local rural buildings. Shared spaces, the swimming pool and additional programmes are located in the cellar that affords a view from under the edge of the platform. Here, the architectural language is inspired by local building traditions, shapes and materials (stone, metal and wood), while at the same time being fully streamlined, clear and schematic.

Marko Appolonio, Nina Crljenko, Lena Krušec and Tomaz Krušec, Glazija residential and office building, Celje, 2004
The composition of the block of flats stems from its urban placement perpendicular to the direction of the road. The articulation of the block is very pronounced, even declaratively schematic. We could call this a homage to the Ljubljana Faculty of Architecture as the building attempts to find efficient and conceptually clear answers to confront the emerging urban chaos. The front of the building is situated next to the road and represents the main area with office spaces. This makes sense both due to the prestigious nature of the location, next to the main road into town, and in relation to the noise of traffic. The main offices are finished in an urban style with a more expensive facade skin made of glass lamella. The main volume of the block consists of two parallel, interconnected structures: the southern one contains the flats and the northern, service one houses vertical communications, storage spaces and other service spaces. Between the two, there is a lighting canyon traversed by entrance bridges. The western, residential facade of the block overlooks the park, to benefit from the view and to afford greater noise reduction. Protruding balconies hark back to the 'White Modernism' of the 1920s and the vogue for things Dutch. The facade of the service building is finished in Copilit glass, in keeping with the theme of its purpose and lending it an elegant Minimalist aesthetic.

Nande Korpnik, Maksimilijan residential and office building, Celje, 2005
Slovene Modernism of the 1930s was, in contrast, for example, to its French manifestations, contextual despite the use of a new grammar and syntax. The Maksimilijan residential and office building takes the essence of this slightly provocative contextuality as its starting point, fitting confidently into the space of the city with its rounded shapes and Modernist banded windows. It positions itself into the heterogeneous environment with distorted shapes that follow the directions within the space. Above the horizontal stereometrically perforated structure, there is a glass command bridge that through its nautical metaphors gives the building its specific identity. With its dynamic shape and the forceful use of colour, the building becomes the centre of the urban area, connecting its heterogeneous constituent parts, and reshapes it into an articulated urban metaphor.

The attachment of Slovene architecture to the European mainstream has occurred on several levels, and these represent a kind of temporary map of the current situation of architecture in Slovenia.

Maruša Zorec and Maša Živec, Renovation and adaptation of Ravne Castle into the Central Carinthian Library Complex, Ravne na Koroškem, 2005
This renovated castle, with its public function and bold architectural approach, is a good example of the successful modern renovation of a historic building. The project to renovate the castle and turn it into a regional library complex was outlined in 2001 via a dedicated architecture competition. The willing cooperation of the large team of experts involved in the renovation process, especially architects and conservationists, resulted in a convincing, high-quality transformation of the castle complex. The oldest segment of the castle was preserved in its entirety and reconstructed, while the staircase, a post-Second World War addition, was removed in order to allow the opening up of the cloister to create a visual connection with the park. Two castle towers have been reconstructed. In two historically less significant wings of the building there were bolder interventions, which continue outside the body of the building in a controlled manner. The extruding elements contribute towards a new function of the historic structure, with an architectural interpretation of the bar code as the general motif that delineates the relationship between the old and the new on a level of graphical sense. Although its solutions are fresh and innovative, this project retains a more conventional perspective, faithful to the individuality of the original architecture in the continuity of the building.

Dekleva Gregorič Arhitekti, XXS Residence, Krakovo, Ljubljana, 2004
A residential house is a laboratory of new architectural ideas, and at the same time the most accessible theme for young architects trying to prove themselves. XXS is no exception to this rule. Two young architects built their first house in which they tried to establish an architectural and organisational rationale that stems from the new concept of habitation and a modern cultural background not based on previous paradigms. The need for representation of homeliness, stability and hierarchy has been dispensed with, resulting in an absence of rooms in the classical sense – the house is a loft. Its standard equipment is new technology where hardware complements software, forcibly introducing residents into the global media and communications network. At the same time, it is an intimate landscape, a continuation and at the same time an interruption of the urban public landscape and rural living. It is a construction that provides a framework for the lifestyle of modern urban nomads.

models of thinking and acting and from the national myth. Even the brand generation is not immune to it. Sadar and Vuga, in their facade for the condominium, cast an eye on Fabiani's Artaria House in Vienna. With the facade for the XXS building in Ljubljana, Dekleva and Gregorič follow Semper's *Stoffwechsel* theory just as Ravnikar did with the Trg republike Square complex.

This 'burden' of tradition and context is a specific characteristic, indeed quality, of Slovene architecture, including its most modern manifestations. As a rule, attempts to evade it falter. This is nothing new. Even Ravnikar had to leave for Paris to work under Le Corbusier after studying and cooperating with Plečnik, just to be able to liberate himself from the (too) strong influence of his teacher. After Ravnikar returned to Ljubljana he never denied the principles he had learned from Plečnik; he just expressed them in a new, more modern idiom.

In the past two or three years, there has been another attempt by the new generation to redress the balance of power on the architectural scene. This is an interesting phenomenon, one that reintroduces Slovenia into the company of countries with relevant new architecture. Architecture professionals who have taken postgraduate courses abroad after graduating in Ljubljana are beginning to take charge.

Between Centre and Periphery

In today's unified Europe, the significance of the identity and quality of the built environment is growing. With the information revolution making information available to everyone, the centres are not necessarily more interesting than the periphery. This is particularly true of the rapid, sometimes vertiginous, rush towards the globalised future, which leaves much unresolved. However, the new information technology of the Internet has the advantage that it eliminates the time lag that was formerly typical of Slovene architecture, then always a few years behind developments in the major architectural centres. The situation has now been turned on its head: the architecture of delay has become real-time architecture. Works by young Slovene architects are published in international architectural journals and so become available to the European public the moment they are built.

The attachment of Slovene architecture to the European mainstream has occurred on several levels, and these represent a kind of temporary map of the current situation of architecture in Slovenia. Throughout the country, there are examples of high-quality architecture and they are more widespread than this presentation alone might have one believe. Aside from Ljubljana, with its excellent Faculty of Architecture, Maribor, competing with Graz in Austria in architectural terms, is also of interest; then there are the innovative projects realised in Celje and other smaller Slovene towns. All this activity should come as no surprise: with its motorway network, Slovenia has become one big interconnected urban region, making it possible to visit the Pannonian plains, the high Alps and the Mediterranean coast all in one day. The complex fractality of the country south of the Alps is thus also reflected in its complex architecture, which is certainly on a par with its European counterpart, and in some cases even anticipates it. Δ

Marjan Zupanc and Matjaž Gril, Marines office building and warehouse, Celje, 2005
The building is in the new industrial zone and situated next to a main road leading into the city – a fairly common location and a fairly common example of the explosive expansion of Slovene cities. The design of the building stems from its constructional conception. The main space, a two-storey warehouse, is built from prefabricated concrete sections. The office space, next to the warehouse, is a concrete structure assembled on site. It is a building mode that allows for flexibility in organising the multistorey public spaces (entrance hall and showroom) and smaller administrative areas. At the same time, two storeys for storage can be transformed into three storeys of offices if needed. Both programmes of the building – the storage and offices – are unified. The articulation of the volume in turn inspired the finish of the facades. The exterior is of Copilit glass backed by thermal insulation, while the interior is fitted with robust concrete sections. This is an architecture that deals with the 'sordid' reality of the world of trade, and yet thematises it in a poetic way. The links are more neo-realistic than symbolic, whereas the poetics, with their precise relationship to the lighting, are closest (other than architecture) to photography.

Contributors

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Miha Dešman is an architect. Born in 1956 in Gornjigrad, Slovenia, he graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Ljubljana in 1981. He has been a freelance artist since 1982. He was a postgraduate student at the Venice University of Architecture (IUAV) from 1983 to 1984. Since 1990 he has headed a design studio with Katarina Pirkmajer Dešman. Their projects have won awards in numerous competitions, and their work has been featured in Slovenian and foreign architectural magazines. Miha has been editor-in-chief of *AB* magazine since 1995. He has published articles in magazines at home and abroad, and lectures and holds workshops at universities and institutions for culture and architecture in Ljubljana and internationally. He is also head of the Architects Association of Ljubljana.

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Andrej Hrausky is the director of the DESSA Architectural Gallery in Ljubljana. A trained architect, he organises exhibitions, and writes and lectures on Slovene architecture. He has been a member of the editorial board of *AB* magazine since 1975, a director of DESSA (the Association of Freelance Architects) since 1982, manager of the DESSA Architectural Gallery since 1989, director of Arhé architectural office since 1990 (all in Ljubljana). He is also on the editorial boards of *Arc* magazine (Bratislava), *Architektur aktuell* (Vienna) and *GAP* (Graz).

Audrys Karalius was born in 1960 in Vilnius, Lithuania. He is an architect and critic, and editor-in-chief of the architectural journal *Statybu Pilotas*. In 1992 he established Audrys Karalius Architects and created a number of public, commercial and housing projects in Lithuania, Latvia and Moscow. His work has been shown in architectural exhibitions in Lithuania, Berlin, Cologne and Edinburgh. In 2003 he received the Metras 1/5 national architecture award.

Andres Kurg is an architectural historian and a researcher at the Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn, where he studied art history. He studied architectural history at the Bartlett School of Architecture. He has recently published on tourism and post-socialism and the city, and co-edited *A User's Guide to Tallinn* (with Mari Laanemets), in 2002. He is currently preparing a PhD on art and spaces in 1970s Estonia.

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Maria Topolčanská is a practising architect. She graduated from the Faculty of Architecture STU in Bratislava and in 2000 received her masters in architecture and urban culture from ETSAB UPC Barcelona, where she is currently a PhD student in the theory and history of architecture. She works as a junior researcher in modern and contemporary architecture at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, also in Bratislava. Her articles have been published in the architectural journals *Architektura & Urbanismus* (Bratislava) and *DC Papeles de crítica arquitectónica* (Barcelona), and she is a regular contributor to the architectural magazines *ARCH* (Bratislava) and *A10* (Amsterdam).

Hubert Trammer was born in Warsaw in 1975. He studied architecture at the Warsaw University of Technology, where he teaches at the Faculty of Architecture, and the University of Karlsruhe. He also teaches at the Faculty of Architecture of Bialystock Technical University. He has published many texts in Polish architectural monthly *Architektura-murator*, and guest lectures in Warsaw, Suprasl, Poznan and Gdańsk. He was also a tutor at the student workshops OSSA 2005 in Wroclaw. As a member of the Foundation of Polish Architects, he organises monthly lectures by Polish and foreign architects, and is himself a practising architect.

Marta A Urbańska was born in Krakow. She studied architecture at the Krakow University of Technology (UT), from where she received her PhD, and at the Staedelschule in Frankfurt on Main under Peter Cook. Between 1990 and 1995 she worked in several Berlin architectural offices, and is currently an adjunct professor at the Krakow UT, as well as an architectural critic and writer. Her many articles have been published widely, and she has edited and translated several books on recent architecture, including *Co to jest architektura/What is Architecture?* (Krakow, 2002, second volume forthcoming), as well as a number of anthologies. She has also organised and moderated numerous conferences and public debates on architecture.

Berlin's Empty Heart

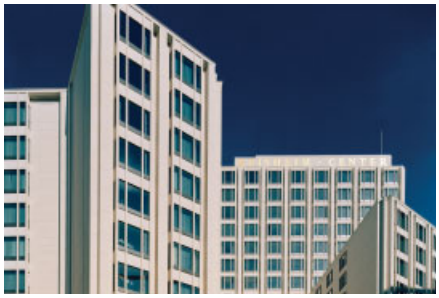
In the early 1990s, all the energy and enthusiasm for the newly unified western and eastern Europe seemed to centre on Berlin, and the reconstruction of the city's Potsdamer Platz in particular. Now, well over a decade later, with the completion of the Beisheim Center, the final piece in the redevelopment of the Platz is in place. Howard Watson asks why, at a time when Berlin is being hailed as one of the most vibrant and artistic cities in Europe, there should be a vacuum at its very heart.

The Beisheim Center in Berlin, designed by architects Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht with an additional apartment building by David Chipperfield, is one of the final stitches in the reparation of the political and physical fissure of Potsdamer Platz. In the 1920s, before heavy bombing during the Second World War and the further clearing of buildings to make way for the 1961 Wall's death-strip, Potsdamer Platz was the dynamic, cultural heart of a decadent, fizzing city. It was the transport centre of Berlin, abuzz with cafés, beer halls and fashionable stores. In the post-Wall era, the area naturally became the focus of the reunion of Berlin and the centre of architectural regeneration, with an array of buildings by internationally esteemed architects that was supposed to symbolise a united, forward-looking city.

Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht, Beisheim Center, Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, 2005
Above and opposite top: The towers of the Chicago School-inspired Beisheim Center, which completes the Potsdamer Platz development.

In the mid- to late 1990s, the most popular building in Berlin was the red Info Box, a temporary structure overlooking the building sites of the Platz. It was the focus of perhaps the greatest architectural marketing plan of the contemporary era, and millions of optimists strode up its steps to see the schemes for the post-Cold War future of Berlin. With the opening of the Beisheim Center, the physical regeneration of Potsdamer Platz is virtually complete, so perhaps it is time to stand in another, imaginary info box and try to work out why it is almost impossible – even for the most stubborn of those optimists – to look at the results without regret.

The initial developments, including Helmut Jahn's Sony Center, Renzo Piano's and Christoph Kohlbecker's Daimler-Benz complex (including the Hans Kollhoff building) and Giorgio Grassi's A+T have each already had to endure their fair share of slings and arrows. Yet there was always hope that once the development was completed, despite reservations about these individual projects the square would have its own magic that would enable it to return to its prewar status as the cultural heart of Berlin. However, now that the Beisheim is in place and Potsdamer Platz is more or less fully skirted with buildings, a deeper problem has become apparent, and distrust of those first buildings has become crystallised: while the post-Wall city has quickly returned



to being an edgy, cultural centre and a natural home for radical, contemporary artists, the Platz itself is an emotional vacuum. Potsdamer Platz should have been a celebration of Berlin. However, it seems to be utterly at odds with the vitality of this great, unique city and the strong creative and communicative impulses of Berliners.

The Beisheim Center is not about to score highly on the list of Berlin's radical new buildings. For the most part designed by the firm that is responsible for the master plan of the entire Potsdamer Platz development, the exterior of the center is rather alien to historical perceptions of Berlin style. Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht has found inspiration in the 1920s and 1930s, though not in the golden age of this city: the building could have been taken, stone by stone, from Chicago or New York. In fact, its most obvious forefather is the Rockefeller Center, not least because it is funded – to the tune of 450 million euros – by one of Germany's most famous entrepreneurs: Professor Dr Otto Beisheim, a John D Rockefeller Jr for modern Germany.

Totalling 16,500 square metres (177,600 square feet), the development is fronted by two 18-storey towers that stand on the Platz next door to the Sony Center, and spreads outwards to meet the Tiergarten with Henriette-Herz-Park on one side and Eberstrasse on the other. The principal building is made up of the Ritz-Carlton hotel, with the right-hand section rising up to form the Tower Apartments. The facade is cream Branco Rosal limestone, which earned the architects the German Natural Stone Award 2005, while the shape and detailing of the exterior is very suggestive of the early Chicago school, with Louis Sullivan and William Le Baron Jenney cited as key influences. The stone, the regimented windows with their conservative square bays, the projecting canopy of the hotel entrance and the receded, stepped summit combine to offer an antithesis to the steel, glass and curves of the Sony Center.

Inside, the building does hark back to Berlin's past, with Peter Silling's interior drawing heavily upon the designs of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, the master of several of Berlin's most notable early 19th-century buildings.

The Beisheim Center, Helmut Jahn's Sony Center and Hans Kolhoff's Potsdamer Platz No 1 all point towards the centre of the Platz.

By far the most interesting aspect of the Platz, which otherwise is a dull failure in urban planning, are two matching pavilions that lead down to the underground transport system. The steel frame and glass structures create an aesthetic link to Mies's Neue Nationalgalerie.

With dark wood, marble and luxurious fabrics, the Ritz-Carlton is already gaining a reputation as the best of Berlin's traditional five-star hotels. Surprisingly, the old-fashioned grandeur of its interior sits comfortably within its Art Deco-influenced shell. The 14 Tower Apartments, each approximately 220 square metres (2370 square feet), are serviced, American-style, by the hotel. The residents can choose to have the interiors decorated by Silling in the Schinkel mode.

The Beisheim Center also includes a Marriott Hotel designed by Bernd Albers that has a 10-storey atrium featuring a huge, illuminated copperplate wall sculpture, two office buildings, by Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht and Modersohn & Freiesleben, and, most notably, the Parkside Apartments designed by David Chipperfield. The building pays homage to Emil Fahrenkamp's Shell Haus (1930), one of Berlin's most significant early steel-framed buildings, which is situated nearby. The rounded corners of the Parkside building echo the ripple of the Shell Haus facade and evoke the idea of a stone being smoothed by water. The grey-limestone exterior is broken up by the irregular pattern of the apartment balconies, which afford views of the Tiergarten, Henriette-Herz-Park, the Sony Center and, with a little neck-craning, Norman Foster's Reichstag dome.

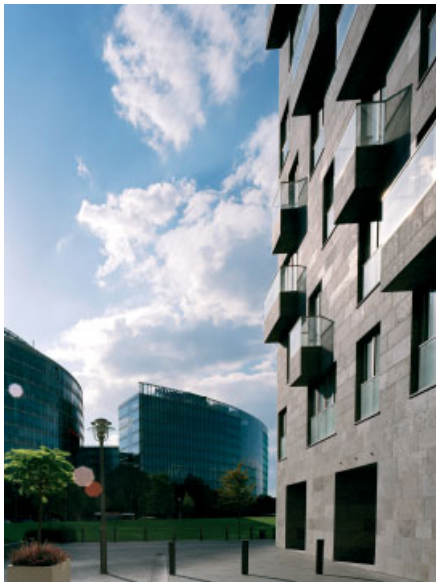
Overall, the Beisheim Center may be a more conservative development than its neighbours, but perhaps this will give it an aesthetic durability and, in the long term, a critical immunity. It may not be innovative, yet it stands its ground with a stately self-assurance and lends Potsdamer Platz an air of permanence. By contrast, Jahn's Sony Center looked too tricksy and attention seeking to some when it opened in 2000, while to more progressive observers it has become at best a little dated and, at worst, a high-profile tombstone of what can be classed as the specifically Millennial architectural era. For some of its detractors, one of its principal crimes is that it follows the American urban model of the entertainment, leisure or shopping centre as one large, enclosed, single-architect building. Jahn broke away from the Hilmer & Sattler street plan, based on the historical layout of the area, to follow this model, rather than addressing the traditional European inclination towards street-based variety.

The Daimler City complex may be more European, in that it incorporates individual components designed by different architects and also has open public squares, but its prefabricated terracotta facades make it seem like a southern European toy town. Foreign financial models also affect the development, particularly in the form of the Arkaden, a covered mall that again is more American in character. The Marlene-Dietrich-Platz, a tiered open space with sculpture and water features surrounded by the IMAX cinema, music-theatre hall and casino, should have a European energy, but also carries with it a sense of cultural failure: the gap between the major buildings suggests that another street drama or vista is going to unfold, yet the eye immediately hits the rear of Hans Scharoun's and Edgar Wisniewski's Staatsbibliothek, completed in 1978.

This is a reminder that for all the work that has gone on in Berlin since reunification, the buildings of West Berlin's Kulturforum – including Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie (1968), and Scharoun's Philharmonie (1963) and Kammermusiksaal (1987), as well as the Staatsbibliothek – have not been intelligently linked to the reborn cultural centre of Potsdamer Platz. Also, at ground level, there has always been a sense that the Kulturforum buildings do not seem like a forum at all: they are sometimes rather perceptively described as standing like individual cows in a field. The poor, bankrupt city of Berlin still needs to address the dislocation that is particularly felt by the much-needed tourists who come to this area. It may be disingenuous considering the scale of work since reunification, but one cannot resist thinking that it would have been a good idea to solve the problems of the Kulturforum district at the same time as the Potsdamer Platz. was redeveloped.

It is, of course, justified to analyse how the various projects have dented the purpose and possibilities of Potsdamer Platz. However, the failure of

The Beisheim Center's Parkside Apartments, designed by David Chipperfield, overlook the Sony Center, the Tiergarten and the Reichstag.

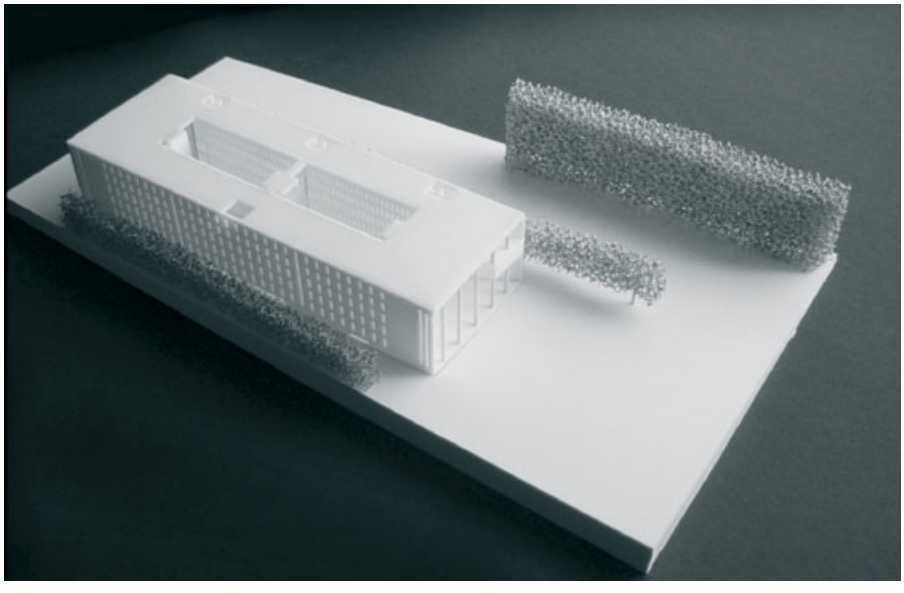


the development lies beyond subjective responses to the individual buildings. Berlin's planning director, Hans Stimmann, has been criticised for curtailing the passionate ideas of the likes of Rafael Moneo and Piano, but it is the centre of the Platz itself that is the most sorry testament to conservative attempts to create a false harmony for the whole project. Potsdamer Platz was one of the most traffic-heavy places in Europe in the 1930s, so one can hardly complain that the new master plan is also traffic-centric. However, the Platz now lacks any identity beyond that of a convergence of massive roads that could be anywhere in the world. As a landscape it is so devoid of character and so detached from urban vitality that it seems to deliberately amalgamate the worst of both eastern bloc and American planning. The grey, blank sections of paving that form the pedestrian part of the Platz are completely without personality – alienating and disorientating, their sole purpose is apparently to provide a vantage point from which bemused hordes can view the mixed bag of perimeter architecture. This in turn makes the buildings appear self-aggrandising, and subjects their success and failures to an artificial scrutiny; they cannot be judged within the fabric of the city. Once a remaining section of the Wall has been examined, the cultural purpose of the Platz itself – a celebration of the reunion of East and West – dissipates.

Rather than capturing the café society, street life and rough-and-ready mix that makes Berlin an enduringly captivating and culturally inspiring city, in the end the Platz seems to be a tone poem to the joys of the motor car and the American model of commerce. The shards of the tall buildings should be exploding outwards from a dynamic cultural centre, but the heart of Potsdamer Platz is a vacuum, as in the exploding shed of Cornelia Parker's 1991 artwork *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*. During the Wall years, trams passed through without stopping. Today, motorists speed through a more contemporary desolation. AD+

Howard Watson is a writer and editor specialising in the arts and culture. He is the author of *Bar Style* (2005), *Hotel Revolution* (2005) and *The Design Mix: Bars, Cocktails and Style* (2006), all published by Wiley.

District Court of Justice, Katowice



Archistudio, District Court of Justice, Katowice, Poland, due for completion 2008
Currently under construction, the law court is one of several new civic institutions planned for the district to the west of the existing centre of Katowice, which between them will attempt to embody emerging ideals for the future.

On visiting Katowice in southwest Poland, Jeremy Melvin met up with Archistudio, the architects of a substantial new judicial precinct that is due for completion in 2008. He describes how in this scheme, which is so demanding even in its circulation requirements, the practice has been able to combine pragmatism and foresight with 'elegant and dignified expression'.

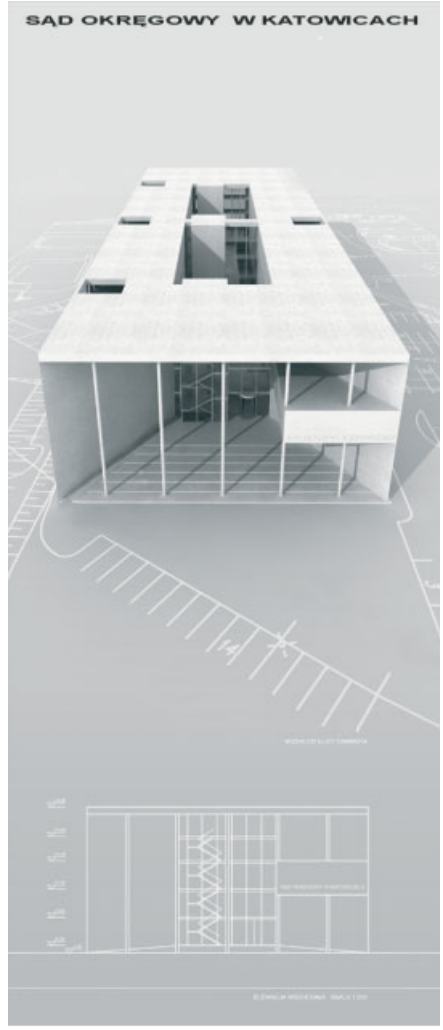
Architecture has a vital role in establishing and consolidating civil society, not because it directly induces certain forms of behaviour, but because it can, under some circumstances, represent ideals, facilitate their operation and inculcate them into the body politic. This is the principle that underlies Archistudio's competition-winning design for a District Court of Justice in Katowice, an industrial city in the southwest of Poland. With 56 separate courtrooms, the proposal is vast and presents the familiar logistical nightmares, such as circulation, typical of large law courts. Such generic issues are made all the richer by the tension between Katowice's powerful urban character and a tight budget that precludes overt flourishes.

Winning the competition for the project in 2003 took Archistudio into a new league. Then just a little over 10 years old – founded by Thomas Studniarek and Malgorzata Pilinkiewicz in 1992 – the firm spent its first decade on small retail and domestic commissions. Such fare is familiar to young architects in western Europe and the US, but in Poland, where the relationship between design and shopping hardly existed and budgets were tiny, these commissions were much more significant.

After gaining experience in Canada, London and the Netherlands, Studniarek and Pilinkiewicz decided to base themselves in Katowice because, as it was at the time part of an industrial conurbation with a population of around 6 million, they believed it could not fail to become a major metropolitan centre. Though lacking the immediate photogenic qualities and cultural kudos of Krakow, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) away, Katowice does have a distinct architectural character. Many of its finest buildings date from Poland's period of independence between 1919 and 1939, their iterations of modern design showing that collectively the country's architects were well aware of contemporary developments in Vienna, Prague and further afield – though they still managed to produce a giant, Neoclassical, concrete-structured cathedral.

Katowice's potential may have taken longer to mature than Studniarek and Pilinkiewicz had hoped, but this is

Exploded isometric (above, with part plan) and cross section (below). The composition and assembly of the building is necessarily simple, yet within a straightforward diagram the design manages to satisfy the complex spatial and circulation requirements of the programme.



Aerial view (above) and front elevation (below). Archistudio manages to convey the idea that justice is open and logical, even though the building lacks the budget of 19th-century predecessors, such as GE Street's London High Court.

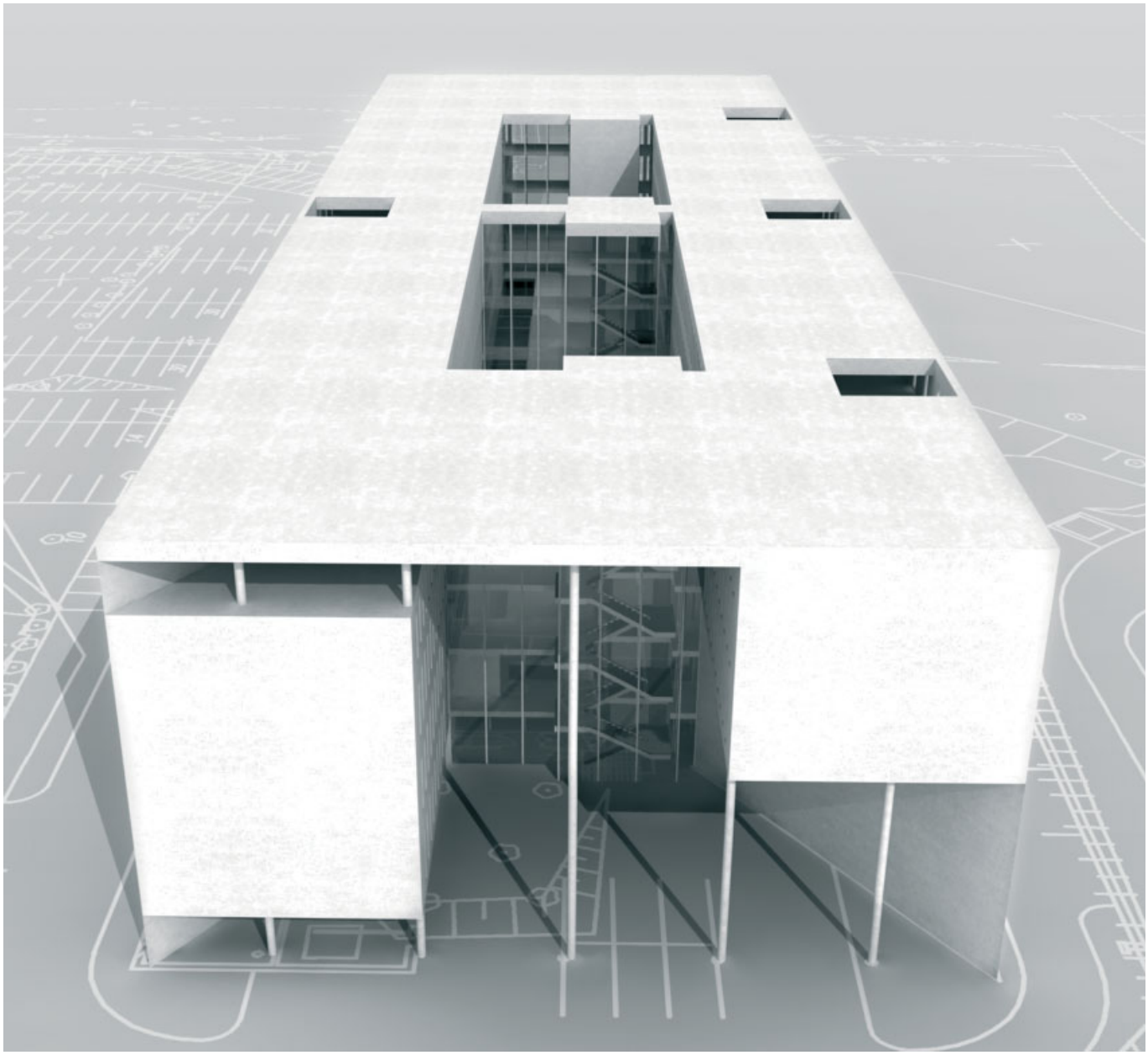
hardly through their own lack of effort. Both were active in a younger group of architects who gained control of the local chapter of SARP (the Society of Polish Architects), which persuaded the city council to let them have the ground-level premises in which they have established an architecture gallery, and also initiated competitions for rethinking sections of the city centre. Thus Archistudio has made some progress in demonstrating how architecture really can make a difference, and the practice's growing reputation among architects in Poland was reflected in its selection in 2004 as one of 10 Polish firms for inclusion in an exhibition that placed the duo's work alongside Japanese architects like Kengo Kuma and Shigeru Ban. However, rarely do political and economic time scales coincide with those of dynamic young architects, and it took some time for promise to turn into reality.

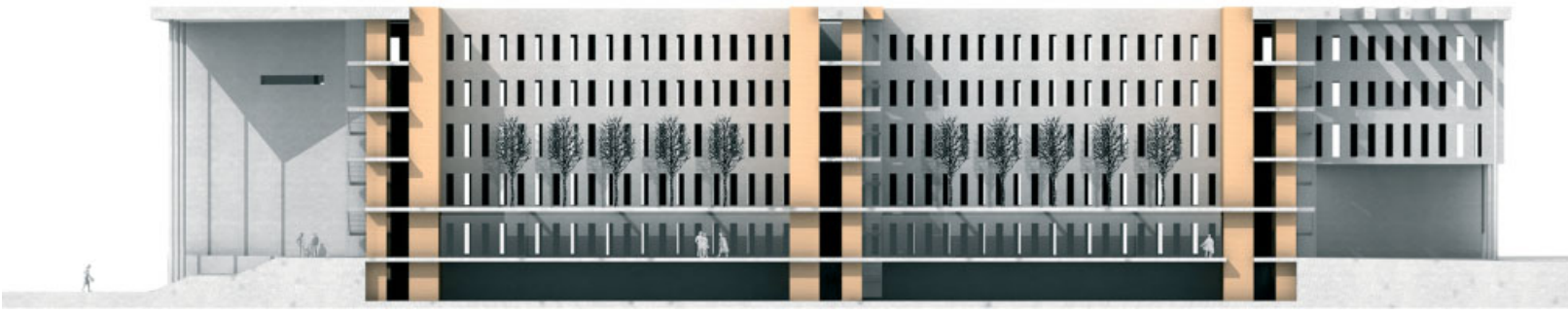
The new law court, now under construction and due for completion in 2008, is one of a number of major civic institutions planned for a new district of public buildings in the west of the city centre. This alone implies a challenge, as between them these new buildings will have to create a sense of civic values that has yet to be made explicit, and in a street pattern devised for traffic movement rather than public amenity. The site lies between two parallel roads, Francuska and Damrota Streets. The first is the main north–south artery in this part of the city; the second, though also an artery, will eventually be lined with these new institutions.

Inevitably, the shape and character of the site have had a powerful influence on the design of the law court, but what makes it notable is the way Studniarek and Pilinkiewicz have used these parameters to advantage, and introduced ways of offsetting their weaknesses. Conceiving the design as two long, thin wings on the northern and southern sides of the site with an atrium between them stresses the shape of the site, yet also makes sense in terms of function. Primarily it offers a practical basis to deal with the circulation, both internal and external. On the outside it means judges can be separated to the west from the public to the east; other users such as staff and prisoners can approach from their own entrances to the north or south, and car-parking allocation follows naturally. Internally, public circulation hinges around the atrium, creating a natural and dignified public space, something like an updated version of GE Street's magnificent Salle du Pas Perdu in the London High Court, with plenty of scope for intermediate stairs, lifts and bridges for public access to the five floors of courtrooms on either side, while private circulation for judges can be concealed within the two solid wings.

This design strategy also suggests a logical way of grouping the court chambers in fours, each of the four chambers in any group arranged back to back, two facing the atrium and two

Below and opposite top: The judge's entrance on Francuska Street uses the same architectural language as the public entrance, but here to suggest greater privacy and protection.





Long section. The long courtyards act like public spaces within the building.

looking to the outside: access to the judges' private spaces is from the rear, while the public enters from the front. It also allows for phasing: the first phase includes the northern wing and vertical circulation, with the southern wing to follow.

Amid all these practical advantages, the layout seems to hint at a sense of systematic repetition that might imply the inevitability of justice. In a country in which justice was long compromised, this may be appropriate.

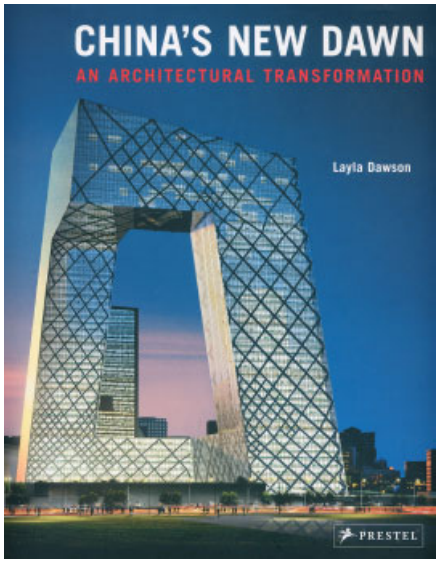
But the idea that justice can operate as an abstract system is only one side of the story. It also has to be able to identify and descend to the particular circumstances of each case, and by analogy a law court design should be able to engage with the particular conditions of its site as well as resolving generic problems such as circulation. The main entrance at the eastern end, approached from Damrota Street, suggests a balance between public space and the space of justice. Splayed entrance walls point to a recessed glazed facade, gathering people and inviting them to enter the building, while on one side the sealed volume of a court chamber projects over the gathering visitors, reminding them of the purpose of the building and giving it a sense of importance. The same sense of tension between justice and freedom is reflected in the use of calm, natural materials, which Studniarek and Pilinkiewicz describe as having 'a slightly severe touch'. The judges' entrance on Francuska Street to the north is more private, and leads to their circulation pattern, which does not connect to the public zones.

Underlying this design is a strong sense of practicality, and one of its motivations comes from the architects' belief that Poland's future depends on the effort put in now. By meeting the practical demands of programme and cost, Archistudio demonstrate that the future is achievable and, by giving this urge elegant and dignified expression, they suggest it might also be optimistic. If the cultural products of the late-Soviet era suggested how practical aims could be perverted, here Archistudio demonstrate how they can be ennobled. AD+

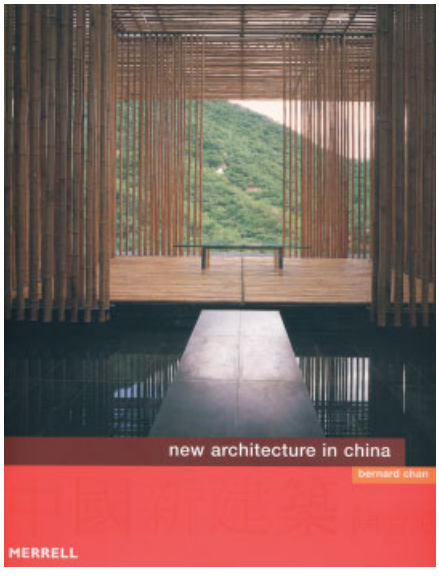
Cross section. The interior continues the simple and rational clarity of the exterior.

Contemporary Architecture in China Compiled

Edward Denison and Guang Yu Ren, authors of *Building Shanghai* (Wiley-Academy 2006), a narrative history of Shanghai's architectural development, review two new books on China that focus solely on its 21st-century resurgence.



***China's New Dawn: An Architectural Transformation*, by Layla Dawson, Prestel, 2005, £25 hb, 192 pp**



***New Architecture in China*, by Bernard Chan, Merrell, 2005, £29.95 hb, 240 pp**

Zaha Hadid has described China as 'an incredible empty canvas for innovation'.[1] With China's open door more than ajar, it is unsurprising that the clamour of Western architectural firms joining the current scramble for China is only slightly dimmer than the unrelenting din of the country's construction industry. The hubbub surrounding this phenomenal period of growth has been documented in two recent books – *China's New Dawn* by Layla Dawson, and *New Architecture in China* by Bernard Chan – both of which share common ground in their attempts to explain the significant, and often not so significant, events taking place in the field of architecture in China today, and in their jaw-dropping view of this subject.

The two titles are broadly analogous and focus on recent or proposed architectural projects. Two-thirds of the 37 case studies that make up Dawson's ground-breaking survey appear in Chan's much larger sample, which is impressively illustrated in a well-presented book. Chan's experience and local knowledge also help raise *New Architecture in China* above the growing crowd of titles by foreign authors who, by their very nature, often fail to grasp the complexities and subtleties of this relatively inaccessible and recent subject.

This perennial problem is exposed in *China's New Dawn*, the introductory text to which contains abundant inaccuracies, confirming both a lack of understanding of the subject and the impossibility of tackling such a vast topic in 16 pages. The result is a subjective essay that reads as a Western-centric travelogue supported by journalistic interviews, sweeping generalisations and superfluous snapshots rather than an incisive architectural analysis based on comprehensive research and illustrated with professional photography. The reader is served snippets of information that fail to demystify the subject, while basic mistakes (for example, identifying the first mayor of Shanghai's statue on the Bund as Chairman Mao; using the China Academy of Art, a prestigious school of traditional painting, as an example of one of China's many architectural schools; and stating that Pudong's 'business spires', built in the 1990s, had been revered since the 1980s) undermine the authority of the overall argument.

Beneath these errors lies a more profound concern that exposes a common failing among commentators to negotiate the contradiction implicit in Western sentimentality towards China's rapidly changing urban environment. Dawson is critical of China's disregard for its historic environment, yet from the opening pages her book represents another directory of repeatedly published and vacuous contemporary computer renderings from self-acclaimed foreign architectural projects. Couched in this architectural discourse is an arrogance of Western mentality that decries the obliteration of China's urban heritage while promoting the foreign projects

that enjoy enormous rewards for participating in its destruction. The pertinent point that China's regulatory system is also guilty of failing to manage the country's lust for modernity and nurture a confident domestic architectural language is touched upon by Dawson, but the complexities of this debate are lost in the brevity of the text.

It would be foolish to assume that Chinese architects are not also participating in this free-for-all, but the optimistic claims by both Dawson and Chan that Chinese architects are equals of their foreign counterparts appear dubious when the majority of their case studies are from recurring foreign firms which undoubtedly take the lion's share of major projects. However, it is among a growing band of Chinese architects such as Liu Jiakun, Ma Qinyun, Zhang Yonghe, Cui Kai, Zhu Jingxiang, Wang Lu and Rocco Yim that one finds examples of genuine sensitivity and innovative design. These smaller projects, given good exposure by Chan, provide ample reason to be optimistic and are perhaps the few examples that live up to the title of his book.

In both books, the sheer volume of high-profile major projects makes the introductions read like hastily composed appendages, and leaves the titles struggling to contribute greatly to our understanding of the intricacies of China's architectural story so far. The catalogue format, though uncomplicated and expeditious, creates a sense of frustration that such a relatively small snapshot of architecture in this vast nation is all we are allowed, while attempts to delve beneath the surface prove how fraught such adventures can be. Dawson's statement that Beijing had to wait until 2004 for a building designed 'at the people's level' is one of many such examples. The building in question, Paul Andreu's National Theatre, has been so heavily criticised in China for its lavish budget and for serving only the country's elite, that for some it symbolises the abyss that exists between the state and the masses – a division that mirrors the ancient relationship between the compelling Forbidden City nearby and the once exceptionally proportioned surrounding neighbourhoods.

This methodological shortfall reverberates in Hadid's observation, which presupposes the irrelevance of cultural and historical context when designing new projects in China. The 'empty canvas' on which the whims of the world's architects design their versions of utopia is in fact the world's most ancient culture, with an urban heritage that was until recently so complete, so diverse and so culturally rich. The wholesale eradication of this heritage, which equates to one of the most barbarous periods in architectural and urban history, has yet to be given adequate exposure. By constraining a focus on recent trends, these books fail to meet the challenges inherent in the unique opportunity they have been given. Although they have their place, their position represents just one side of the debate. A shift is needed to redress this imbalance so that discussions about urban development in China recognise, for example, the accounts of the innumerable displaced residents and their dwellings that have been razed to make way for many of these 'outstanding projects'.

Sadly, for the time being, the world is preoccupied with ogling unremarkable high-rise, glass-clad creations, while many developers exploit the ruin of China's urban heritage to bolster flagging company portfolios. When we have lost enough to justify poignant reflection, the perpetrators will not be held accountable: they can relinquish responsibility under the pretext of modernisation, while their dubious endeavours will live on in libraries. In China, the tide has already started to turn. In years to come, we can expect a flurry of similar titles on contemporary China, mourning the loss of what we had, when what we had has long since gone. AD+

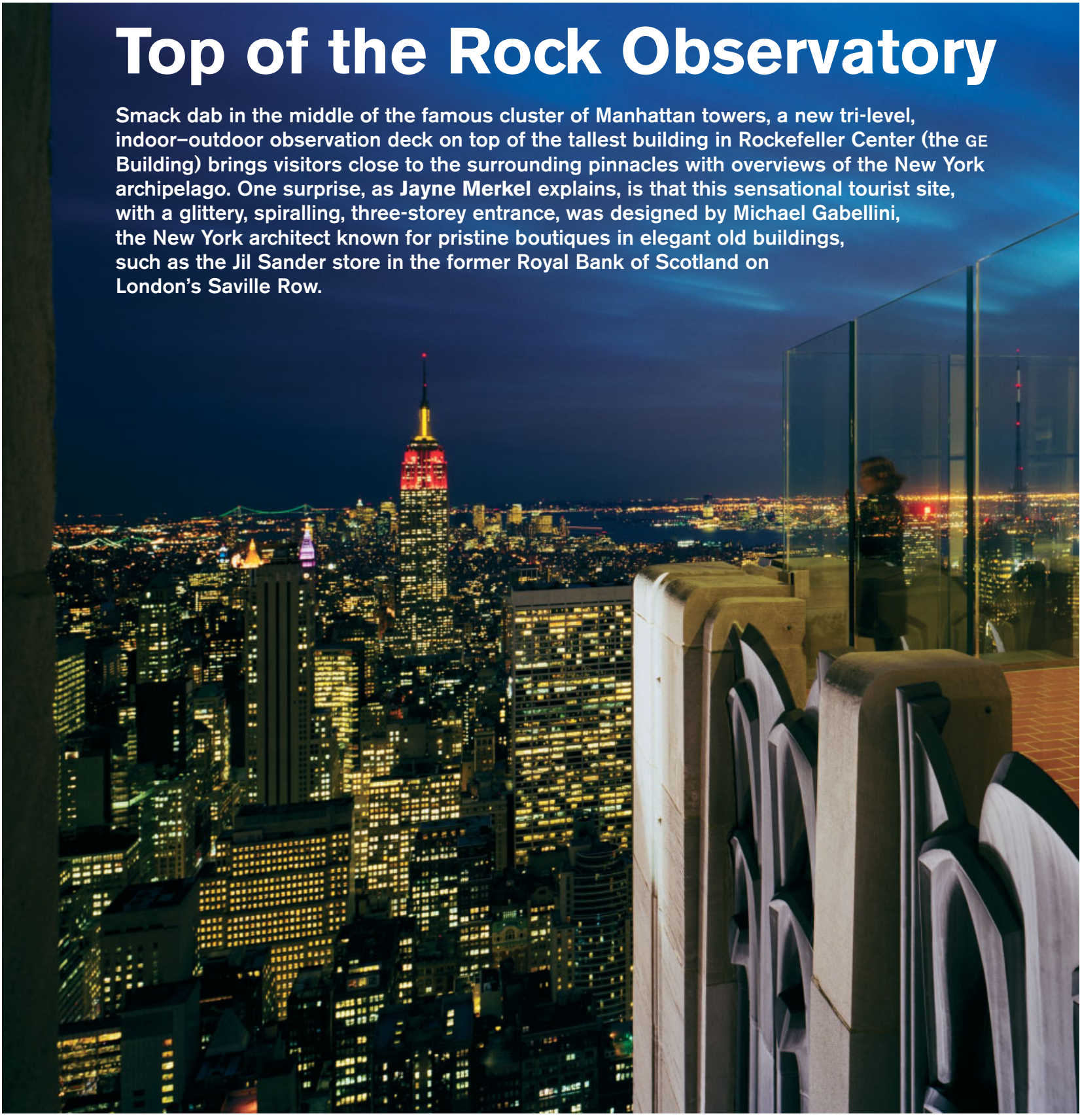
Note

1. In Bernard Chan, *New Architecture in China*, Merrell, 2005, p 15.

Guang Yu Ren, architect, and Edward Denison, heritage consultant, writer and architectural photographer, divide their time between the UK and China, concentrating on cultural heritage preservation and urban development. They have published several international titles and presented numerous papers on urbanism, cultural heritage and design. Their most recent book, *Building Shanghai: The Story of China's Gateway*, is published by Wiley-Academy, 2006, £39.99 hb, ISBN 047001637X, 258 pp, with over 300 illustrations, mostly in colour.

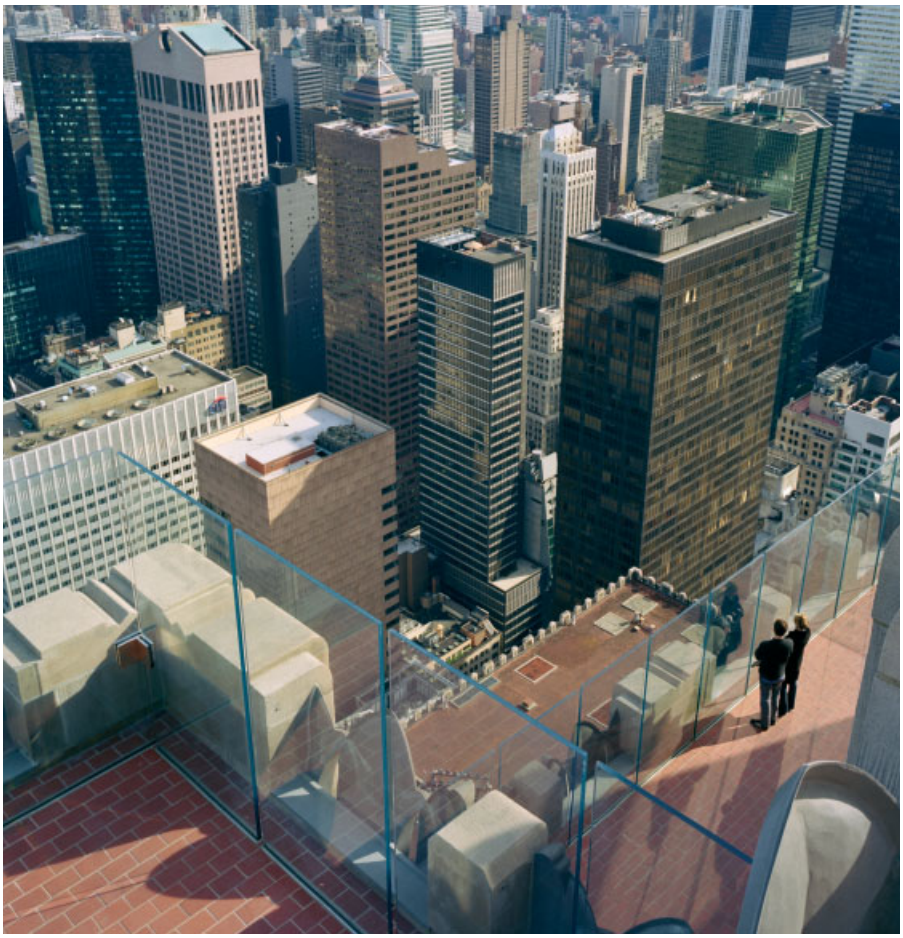
Top of the Rock Observatory

Smack dab in the middle of the famous cluster of Manhattan towers, a new tri-level, indoor–outdoor observation deck on top of the tallest building in Rockefeller Center (the GE Building) brings visitors close to the surrounding pinnacles with overviews of the New York archipelago. One surprise, as Jayne Merkel explains, is that this sensational tourist site, with a glittery, spiralling, three-storey entrance, was designed by Michael Gabellini, the New York architect known for pristine boutiques in elegant old buildings, such as the Jil Sander store in the former Royal Bank of Scotland on London's Saville Row.



It is suddenly clear that subtlety is not the only weapon in Michael Gabellini's arsenal, for Rockefeller Center is no Avenue Montaigne in Paris (where he placed the Parisian Jil Sander shop in a 19th-century *hôtel de ville*) or Calle Largo XXII in Venice (where he built a Minimalist Salvatore Ferragamo store in a Renaissance palazzo). Rockefeller Center is a complex of 11 throbbing Art Moderne office buildings, shops, interior passageways and gardens that stretch between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in the heart of midtown Manhattan. Its interior streets are jammed with tourists in blue jeans and trainers who have come to see outdoor broadcasts of the morning 'Today' television show or to buy tickets for Radio City Music Hall follies.

In his Top of the Rock Observatory, Gabellini has matched the glamour of the New York skyline and put on a show with as much glitter as a Las Vegas showgirl. Whether visitors enter the Rockefeller Center building from 50th Street or from the snappy underground concourse of shops (where subway stations and the famous Rockefeller Center ice-skating rink are located), the access to the observation deck begins at the lower-level area, where the ticketing is located. Here, visitors encounter a crystal chandelier with a 10-metre (35-foot) drop – the largest Swarovski has ever made. This transparent centrepiece is modern – an abstract shimmering



Michael Gabellini, Top of the Rock Observatory, Rockefeller Center, New York, 2005
At night, the observation decks seem to be an integral part of the glamorous city all around. The stepped-back construction of the building is visible from the observation decks, where visitors can look down on lower balconies while perusing the long-range view.

The grey terrazzo, elliptical entry staircase rises three storeys to a mezzanine where a small museum prepares visitors for their trip to the observation decks.

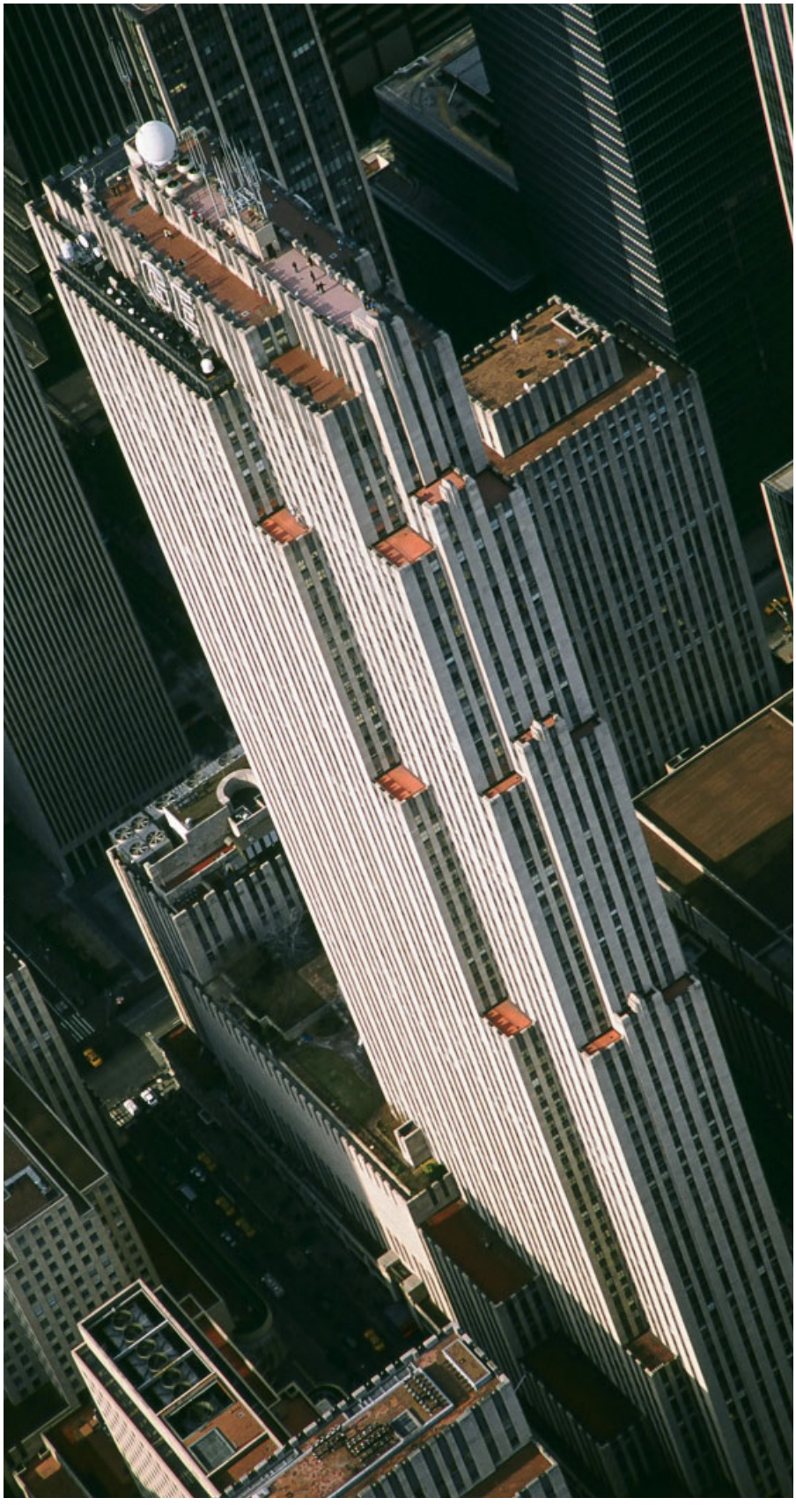
Visitors can also cross an I-beam suspended from the ceiling, just as the workers did 75 years ago, only without the risk of falling as a glass floor has been installed on both sides of the beam.

tube of luminous pixel strands covered with cylindrical clear topaz and smoke crystals, all hanging from an elliptical mirrored disc on the ceiling and lit to emphasise their ephemeral qualities. It is part light sculpture, part chandelier, and surrounded by a stairway that seems to have been designed for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers to dance down. Sheathed in graduated grey terrazzo and lit from gently curved recessed coves, the staircase recalls the great ocean liners and the dance spectaculars in the Busby Berkeley movies from the time when the Rockefeller Center was built (the 1930s).

Gabellini has captured the centre's Art Deco spirit without exactly replicating motifs from the streamlined building. The staircase winds up to a small museum on the mezzanine, which provides the build-up for the viewing experience on the 67th, 69th and 70th floors (the 68th contains mostly mechanicals). The building of the Rockefeller Center is described using an original basswood model, archival images, plasma video screens and life-size murals of construction workers. Visitors can also cross an I-beam suspended from the ceiling, just as the workers did 75 years ago, only without the risk of falling as a glass floor has been installed on both sides of the beam.

Mezzanine-level exhibits describe the building of Rockefeller Center on murals and in movies, models and archival documents. Visitors can even scale an I-beam the way the construction workers did long ago.

Opposite: The view from the observatory encompasses Central Park and the dense collection of buildings that surround it.
Below: Rockefeller Center dominates the buildings that comprise the Art Moderne complex



The sky shuttle, with its black Corian walls, lets visitors observe their rapid journey up to open air and natural light through a transparent glass ceiling on to which rapid sequences of Rockefeller Center imagery are projected.

While visitors queue up for the 'sky shuttle' elevator up to the 67th floor (where outdoor escalators with awning-like roofs move them between all three of the upper floors), a cocoon-shaped theatre shows films about the RCA Building (the original name of Rockefeller Center, which is still used by many today).

The sky shuttle, with its black Corian walls, lets visitors observe their rapid journey up to open air and natural light through a transparent glass ceiling on to which rapid sequences of Rockefeller Center imagery are projected. Sapphire blue lights flash within the shaft as the shuttle passes key vertical thresholds.

And there is no anticlimax on arrival at the final destination. The view is spectacular. The expansive, wrap-around Grand Viewing Room on the 67th floor, reclaimed from old utility closets, is now open to the public for the first time. A new rock-crystal wall, also fabricated by Swarovski and designed by Gabellini Sheppard Associates, surrounds the escalators, stairwells and remaining mechanical

The architects defer to the view and existing ornamentation on the three upper floors where the observation decks are located. Their only indulgence is a rock-crystal wall around an interior space on the 67th floor which, like the chandelier in the entrance, was fabricated by Swarovski. The faceted wall, which resembles a diamond ring spread out on a massive scale, encloses elevator shafts, stairwells and mechanical equipment.

equipment. At the eastern end is an enclosed triple-height space with the proportions of a chapel called the 'Weather Room' because it is saturated with natural light from 3.6-metre (12-foot) windows and offers protection from the elements on the new outdoor terraces to the north and south. Instead of metal fencing, Gabellini has used tall, clear-glass panels to protect visitors from falling while they enjoy unobstructed views over the city.

The open-air decks here, above the famous Rainbow Room nightclub, are part of the original building fabric, but were not part of the original observatory like those on the 69th and 70th floors, which were accessible to the public until 20 years ago. On these floors, Gabellini and his colleagues merely cleaned and repaired the historic balconies, but otherwise allowed the wide open spaces of the decks, with their stylised cast-aluminium decoration and red-tiled floors, to speak for themselves. At the western end of the 69th floor is a tasteful gift shop, and an enclosed 'Skyroom' on the eastern side overlooks the Weather Room the way a choir overlooks a chapel. The 70th-floor observation deck crowns the building. Here, the historic Art Moderne railings are sufficient (wall-high glass panels are not necessary) because there are other observation decks just below.

What makes this observatory, said to have cost $75 million, different from the one at the Empire State Building and others elsewhere in the US is that it occupies three gigantic floors and contains interior as well as outdoor spaces. Visitors are above the city and in it at the same time.

In a country where popular tourist sites like Las Vegas and Disney World offer the ersatz, the six-storey, 1950-square-metre (21,000-square-foot) Top of the Rock Observatory provides a genuine experience at one of New York's most glamorous sites, one that allows visitors 360-degree views across the city centre and all five surrounding boroughs with their waterside locations; and helps them understand the architecture of what has been described as the greatest urban complex of the 20th century. The vertically striped, stepped-back buildings of various heights in Rockefeller Center were designed by the Associated Architects (Reinhard & Hofmeister, Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray, Raymond Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux) for RCA, RKO, US Rubber, Time-Life, the Associated Press and Eastern Airlines between 1932 and 1940. (Most of the buildings have since changed hands and names.) There is also the International Building, British Empire Building, La Maison Française, Palazzo d'Italia and the stepped-down Channel Gardens.

The new owners of Rockefeller Center, Tishman Speyer, were wise to capitalise on the fact that many tourists first come to see the city from the perspective they already know from their television screens. They wave to friends back home watching the 'Today' show, which is broadcast from the NBC Studios next door. Now they can see that the real thing is even more glamorous – and infinitely more interesting – than the simple shining world of TV. Δ+

The observation decks resemble the wide decks of ocean liners from the time the complex was built. The orb and antennae on the top deck provided information for the first Doppler weather reports and continue to do so for NBC News. Large sheets of very strong optical glass prevent viewers from falling while providing unobstructed views of the city beyond.

Keith Williams Architects, Unicorn Theatre for Children, London, 2005
The main auditorium is in the shape of a Greek amphitheatre, creating an intimate setting and allowing unrestricted views of the stage throughout.

Theatre Beyond Child's Play

Howard Watson describes how at London Bridge, Keith Williams Architects has produced a permanent home for the Unicorn Theatre for Children with 'a grown-up building for kids'. Devoid of primary colours or Disneyesque spectacle, its elegant, intelligent design is tailored to the practical requirements of its audience, but subtly inspires 'with innovative, surprising touches'.

One of the smaller buildings that form part of the huge 'More London' project, the regeneration of the Tooley Street area of London Bridge, is also one of its most architecturally successful. Master-planned by Foster & Partners, More London is reportedly the largest commercial development in London since Canary Wharf, and includes 279,000 square metres (3 million square feet) of office and retail space (as well as a depressingly bland Hilton hotel). Some of the office buildings and new public spaces prove to be relatively interesting, but it is a small theatre on the development's perimeter that really catches the eye.

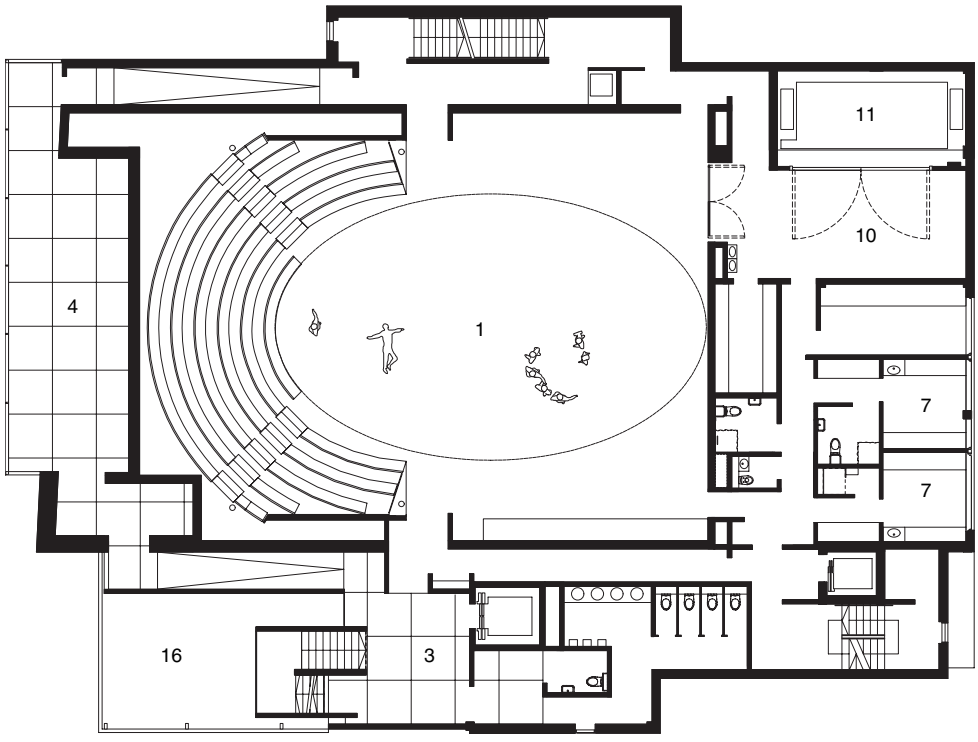
Designed by Keith Williams, the Unicorn Theatre is the first purpose-built children's theatre in the UK, which has given the architect a fresh chance to think innovatively about the form, structure and mood of this type of building. The result is rather surprising. The Unicorn theatre company had several short-lived and shoe-horned associations with particular venues, most notably the Arts Theatre in the West End, but has finally come to rest in a building that celebrates the company's new-found permanence with a graceful solidity.

The exterior of the building is impressive, sincere and interesting. It is made up of a series of boxes with projected elements and uses a wide range of materials, with off-white rendering, steel cladding, dark-grey brickwork, blue tiling and glazing establishing its different components. Most notably, preoxidised copper cladding covers the entrance facade and also stretches inside across the foyer ceiling. Outside, the copper forms a box that projects from the main body of the building and has a certain grandeur that announces the theatre entrance. Framed by this copper, a glazed box bursts further out to form an overhang. There is another glazed, bar-like box – the actors' green room – that breaks through the rendered, street-side facade. Suspended above street level, it provides views down the street for the actors, turning convention on its head since green rooms are usually secret worlds buried deep within a theatre.

The extensive use of glazing emphasises the theatre's involvement with its environment and its desire to become an integral part of the community. It also lets in an unusual amount of natural light for a building genre that traditionally shuts out the world, improving office and rehearsal spaces for staff and performers. The projected elements push the building out to converse with its surroundings and are particularly fitting for an art form that focuses on the projected voice and storytelling.

One would think that, at least inside, the design would pander to short attention spans, but it doesn't. The Unicorn is a 'grown-up building for kids', as Keith Williams calls it, which manages to combine a surprising dignity and veracity without being too austere. This is a world free of bright colours, big round shapes, plastic play areas and gaudy baubles. 'We decided early on that it wouldn't be the right thing to do,' Williams says. 'In no way does the work [of the theatre company] try to patronise children' – and the building reflects this.

The programmes cater for children aged four to 12, a wide age group for both logistical and aesthetic reasons. A 12-year-old would soon tire of (or at the very least feel patronised by) a space designed for a four-year-old. Since the company wants children to keep on returning as they grow up, without ever feeling that they have outgrown the place, children are thus catered for in a series of small gestures that aid, rather than detract from, the aesthetic of the building. The fact that the design was influenced by a three-year consultation with children at a local school makes its sense of composure all the more surprising. While design for children often seems to be aimed at those with the shortest attention spans, the Unicorn raises the bar, with stone flooring, walnut furnishings, white



KEY

1 - 340 Seat Weston Theatre
2 - 120 Seat Clore Theatre
3 - Foyer
4 - Meeting Room
5 - Rehearsal Room
6 - Offices
7 - Dressing Rooms
8 - Wardrobe
9 - Wcs/Plant/Storage
10 - Scene Dock
11 - Scene Lift
12 - Café
13 - Box Office
14 - Stage Door
15 - Green Room
16 - Education Studio
17 - Void

Stage level: thrust stage mode

KEY

1 - 340 Seat Weston Theatre
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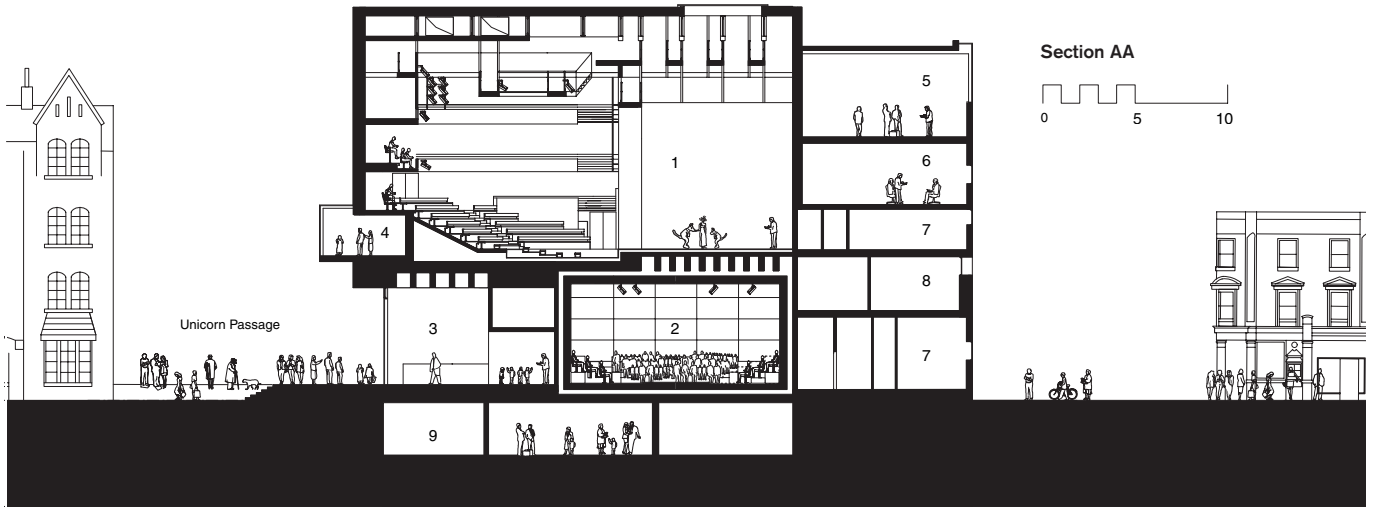


Section AA

The exterior of the theatre is made up of a series of projecting boxes in contrasting materials. The main entrance is set within the glazing underneath the preoxidised copper-clad box.

plaster and exposed concrete – a mixture of materials that follows the brief of the Unicorn's artistic director, Tony Graham, who wanted something 'rough and beautiful at the same time'.

The two entrance doors, set in a glass box at right angles to, and part of, the glazed facade of the ground floor, are a little difficult to find, and hold a certain amount of risk for overenthusiastic children. Inside, at one end of the L-shaped foyer, is a very adult, walnut-themed café-bar. Walnut benches have purple-blue panel insets, and with low, revolving purple pouffes provide the major splash of colour. Set within the stone floor, a large panel of clear glass looks down on David Cotterrell's *Underworld* installation, a computer projection of images of the sky glimpsed through buildings. It is intriguing for adults and captivating for children, who are the first to brave stepping into the centre of the glass panel for a better view; and representative of the overall stance of the Unicorn – inspiring children with innovative, surprising touches, the unfolding of a story rather than 'crash bang wallop' effects. Such a nonpatronising approach ensures that adults are more readily drawn into the game. Other gestures include a walnut frame on the wall, which for adults is an art exhibit, but for a six-year-old is a perfectly sized seat. The right-hand section of the foyer is dominated by a concrete staircase that twists upwards towards the main auditorium like a procession route to the theatrical adventure.

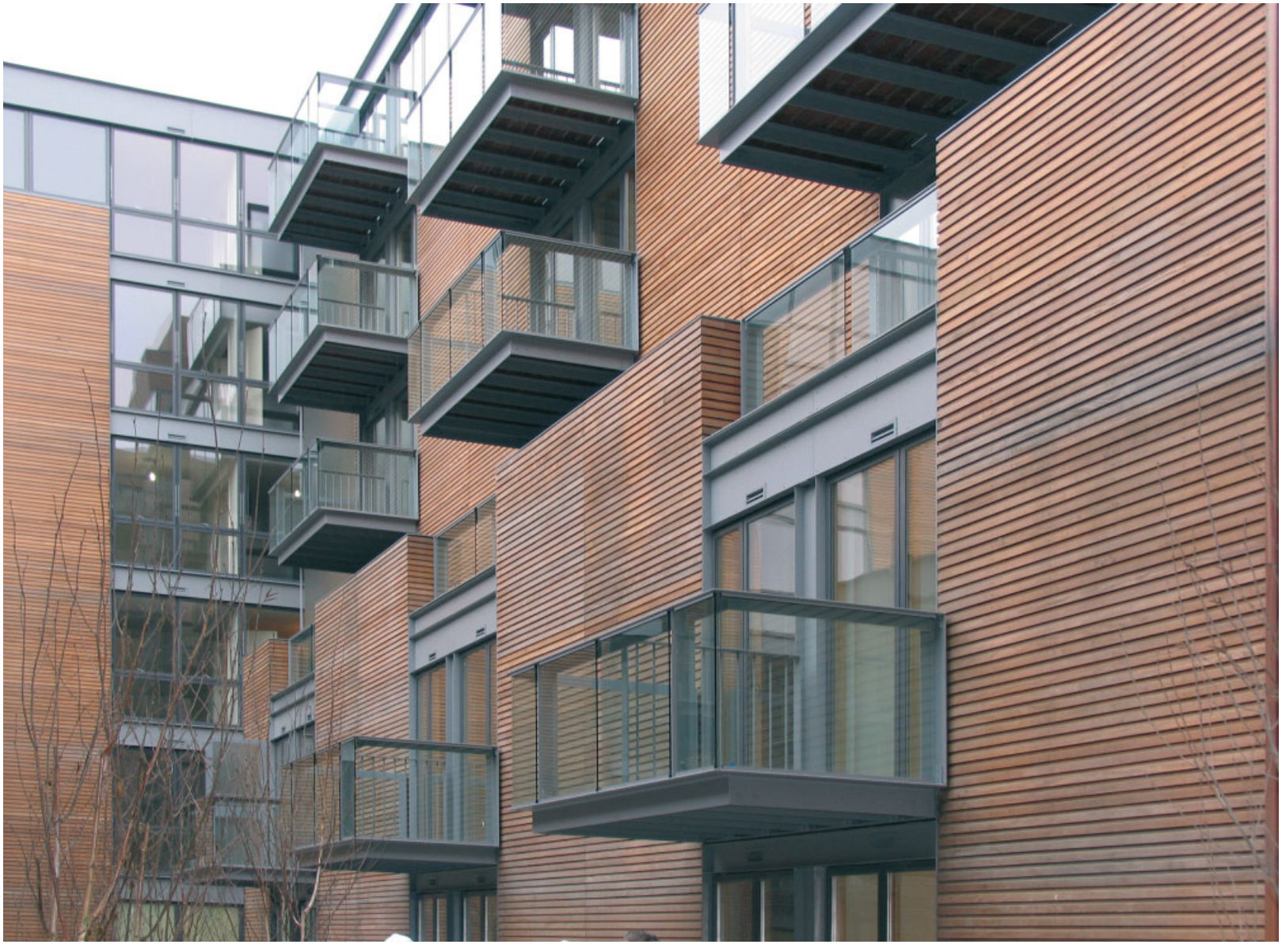
The Unicorn has a small, black-box studio theatre with a capacity of 110 as well as the main 350-seat Weston Theatre. For the latter, Tony Graham was hoping to create a space that has both 'fabulous intimacy and epic quality'. After all the linearity of the outer shell of the building and its facilities, it is surprising to discover that the Weston is curved in the style of a Greek amphitheatre, giving an immediate intimacy to the space and following the 'tree in a clearing' approach whereby the audience naturally cups around the focal point – the storyteller.

Throughout the Weston, the architect has shied away from the theatre aesthetics of the Victorian and Edwardian era: there is no trace of red and gold plushness, while the idea of a formal proscenium arch around the performance area, thereby presenting theatre as a picture book, has been abandoned in favour of greater integration. With children in mind, the lowest seats are in a very shallow pit that sits only a little below the level of the stage, thus front-row punters do not have to permanently crick their necks upwards to get a view of the players. This shallow pit is embraced by two walkways that reach out directly from the stage so that the performers can bring the play into the audience, maximising the interactivity of the performance. Beyond the arc of this walkway, two levels of raked, curved seating rise quite steeply, so even the furthest seat is still near to the action. All in blue, the seating is made up of unnumbered banquettes that take into account children's free-form spatial relationships, which often contrast with adult preferences for regimented order. In addition, the low seat-backs mean that the views of four-year-olds are less likely to be obscured, and the banquettes are on sturdy steel frames that should survive rough-and-tumble.

In a happy accident, unbeknown to both architect and client, the road running alongside the theatre, down towards the Thames, was called Unicorn Passage in the 18th century. Here, the Unicorn theatre has found permanence in an ideal place that seems destined to suit the company's intent. D+

Nile Street: Mixed-Tenure Housing

Bruce Stewart describes how Munkenbeck and Marshall, a practice whose work is more often associated with high-end design, have, at a site in Hackney near the City of London, produced a complex scheme for Peabody that is considered in its treatment of mixed tenure.



Munkenbeck and Marshall, Nile Street mixed-tenure housing, London, 2006
The varied palette of materials has been skilfully and simply detailed to create an elegant social housing development in the heart of London.

Where possible, the views out of the site have been exploited to the fullest, providing the apartments with glimpses of London's changing skyline.

Continuing a very successful career as one of the UK's more thoughtful architectural practices, Munkenbeck and Marshall have just completed a mixed-tenure housing development for the Peabody Trust Housing Association, in London. The practice, founded more than 20 years ago, has had a varied and critically acclaimed history. Projects undertaken during this period have ranged from the deftly detailed retail interior shop space for Yohji Yamamoto and the Orsino restaurant in London, via award-winning schemes such as the Roche Sculpture Gallery in Salisbury, to large urban-planning proposals. Throughout all of the firm's completed works runs a consistent strand of searching enquiry and innovative solution: low cost does not mean a reduced aesthetic sensibility – the experience of the end user is vital to the processes brought to bear.

The Nile Street project for the Peabody Trust continues this design methodology. Located in the Shoreditch area of London, it consists of key-worker units, affordable-rent units (for Peabody Trust tenants), shared-ownership and private-sale apartments. This mix of tenure is unusual for the Peabody Trust in that it includes, for the first time in a project solely undertaken by the housing association, homes that are completely for private sale (instead of the usual shared-ownership schemes), making the trust a developer as well as a registered social landlord (RSL).

In other, private, schemes such as Albion Wharf by Foster & Partners (see 'Home Run', AD Vol 75, No 6, Nov/Dec 2005), the inclusion of affordable housing is a direct result of government policy. In developments of more than 20 units, a percentage of the total number must be allocated as affordable units for those on lower income levels.[1] The management of such social housing elements is then adopted by a housing association – the Peabody Trust in the case of Albion Wharf – which is involved from the outset as to the requirements and specifications of the affordable accommodation.

Such a mix of tenures, private and affordable, has, in many other schemes, led to a separating out of the two market groups with a clear distinction in which sector is housed where. The affordable element is often placed on

Allocation of Nile Street units

South Block

Total of 71 units over nine floors:

30 x one-bedroom shared-ownership flats on ground, first and second floors (75% for Corporation of London, 25% for London Borough of Hackney), approx 47 m^2 each, price £200,000–250,000
27 x one-bedroom private-sale flats, approx 48 m^2 each, price £235,000
14 x two-bedroom private-sale flats, approx 73 m^2 each, price £298,000–490,000 (on the remaining upper floors)

North Block

Total of 78 units over six floors:

77 x one-bedroom key-worker studios, approx 30.5 m^2 each, rent £70+ per week
1 x one-bedroom key-worker flat, approx 38 m^2 each, rent £70+ per week

East Block

20 affordable-rent flats over five floors that will provide social rented housing for Peabody Trust tenants:

5 x one-bedroom flats (two-person), approx 45m^2 each, rent £62.30 per week
5 x two-bedroom flats (four-person), approx 65m^2 each, rent £77.49 per week
10 x three-bedroom flats (six-person), approx 87 m^2 each, rent £ 85.81 per week
Youth centre on ground floor: 250 m^2

West Block

Total of six units over three floors:

6 x two-bedroom private-sale flats, approx 76 m^2 each, price £298,000– £315,000

Rental and capital values are approximate and subject to change.

Adapted from the Nile Street Fact Sheet, Peabody Trust, 2005. Used with kind permission.

the less attractive areas of a site, and can often be of a lower quality in terms of finishes. It has been argued that there should be no such demarcation, as it may lead to social stigmatisation, but there are equally strong, practical arguments that, when handled sensitively, the separation can be more beneficial for those in the housing association accommodation, as space standards in such mixed-tenure developments are generally better than in the social housing sector.

The careful and well thought out separation of these sectors is also desirable for the housing associations themselves, in terms of how the portion of the scheme that is managed by them can be maintained. At Nile Street, the planning of the project as a whole has led to the almost total allocation of each unit type to a specific block, but this has in no way led to a compromise in the quality of the accommodation provided or in space standards. The project is very high density, with 175 homes arranged around a central courtyard on a 3035-square-metre (32,700-square-foot) site that was purchased by the Peabody Trust from Hackney Borough Council. The shared-ownership scheme prioritises council tenants and housing association residents, including key workers, from the Corporation of London and the London Borough of Hackney. The location, on the corner of Nile Street and Provost Street, is ideal for the provision of key-worker studio apartments as it is adjacent to Moorfields Eye Hospital and close to the City.

The provision of such a large and varied number of apartments on a relatively small site was a challenge for the architects. In addition, quite strict local authority planning requirements, in terms of the surrounding area, also had to be taken into consideration. Bounded by an interwar housing estate to the north and west, a primary school to the south, and more recent housing for nurses from Moorfields to the east (none of which are of any particular quality), the new scheme by Munkenbeck and Marshall needed to tie in with existing building heights and lines (the boundaries of public and private realms). But despite the restrictions, the finished buildings are quite distinct, largely due to the palette of materials used and the intelligent massing of the four blocks that make up the project.

CLARION QUAY	G 0-29%	F 30–39%	E 40%	D 41–49%	C 50–59%	B 60–69%	A 70–100%
QUALITATIVE							
Space-Interior							A
Space-Exterior							A
Location						B	
Community							A
QUANTITATIVE							
Construction Cost						B	
Cost-rental/purchase						B	
Cost in use					C		
Sustainability					C		
AESTHETICS							
Good Design?							A
Appeal							A
Innovative?						B	

This table is based on an analytical method of success in contributing to a solution to housing need. The criteria are: Quality of life – does the project maintain or improve good basic standards? Quantitative factors – has the budget achieved the best it can? Aesthetics – does the building work visually?

Along the Nile Street (west block) and Provost Street (north block) elevations, prepatinated copper cladding has been used, with the remainder of the scheme clad in wood. All of the apartments here are further articulated by balconies that not only provide essential external space, but also add a sculptural element. It is this careful handling of the external spaces that contributes considerably to the success of this project. The central courtyard is planted with silver birch trees around a water feature and surfaced with white gravel. While all the apartments on this, internal, side can appreciate the relaxed nature of this amenity, a decision has been made to restrict physical access to it, with the keys to the gate held by the concierge, to maintain the quality of the space.

Further external space is provided for the tenants of the smaller key-worker studio apartments, on the northern side of the site, with the creation of a large roof terrace. It is in the planning and consideration of these units that the architects have been particularly successful. Each studio also has a private balcony, further increasing the amount of usable space, with sliding glass doors ensuring the amount of natural light let in is maximised. In another clever move, the entrance to each studio is a usable internal space, increasing the number of designated 'habitable' rooms. This not only provides useful extra space, but enabled the architects to raise significant extra funding for the development (approximately £45,000 per unit). The funding has been used to keep the quality of the internal finishes and fittings to a very high standard, achieving the best possible environment for the key-worker tenants.

This high level of finish is also maintained in the flats for rent to Peabody tenants, and is a very good minimum against which the units for sale, either privately or by shared ownership, compete. Throughout the scheme this attention to detail, and the sincere belief that all sectors of the

The articulation of the Nile Street facade brings life and dynamism to a previously run-down and dull area of east London.

housing market are entitled to the best possible quality of space and amenities, raises this project above so many of its contemporaries.

Each of the blocks has its own entrance and foyer. However, the consistent use of materials throughout ensures that there is no visual demarcation between each of the tenure types. In addition, to help sustain the mixed-tenure community, a youth centre that had fallen into disrepair was reinstated as part of the brief. This space, below the rented accommodation to the west of the site, will eventually be used for a variety of purposes, and as such the architects were asked to include a soundproofed space for practising musical instruments. As well as including a crèche, there is also a significant amount of outside space for the users to enjoy, which will also be available for the rest of the residents in the area.

The architecture of the Nile Street development takes its user base very seriously, and provides the often talked about intangible notion of 'added value' for its residents. Great care and imagination has gone into every level of the thinking behind this scheme, with each tenure base considered equally. In these terms, Munkenbeck and Marshall are leading the way regarding the future of the provision of affordable housing in the UK. AD+

Note

1. However, some local authorities and housing associations in areas outside the southeast of England (for example, in and around Greater Manchester), may have a surplus of housing and this policy is therefore not applicable to any larger private housing developments.

Bruce Stewart is currently researching and writing *The Architects' Navigation Guide to New Housing*, to be published in early 2007 by Wiley-Academy. He trained as an architect and is currently a college teacher at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL London.

McLean's Nuggets

Travelling Light

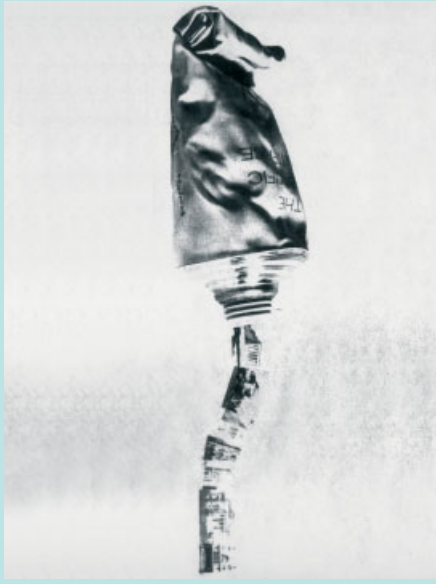
According to figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), a return transatlantic flight from London to New York can produce up to 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide ($C0_2$) emissions per passenger. Rather, though, than restrict air movements through tax on aviation fuel and other punitive measures, thus limiting our ability to traverse the globe with relative ease at relative inexpense, we might look at the weight of what we are actually flying. I am, however, not referring to those of fuller figure, but the flying thrift store that is our luggage. On a fully loaded Boeing 747 carrying 500 passengers, a full take-up of the luggage weight allowance will account for a not inconsiderable 12 to 15 tonnes of luggage. Why not travel light or with no belongings at all? What is so special about our personal clothing that cannot be purchased, rented or borrowed elsewhere? In 2004, China exported clothing worth 16 billion euros to the European Union (EU). Why fly it back around the globe? Initiatives in the low-cost airline sector from Ryanair and Flybe to ultimately eliminate checked-in bags on European flights include tariffs for hold baggage and an increased carry-on allowance. The UK government is also promoting 'carbon offsetting', encouraging air passengers to donate monies to emission-reducing initiatives elsewhere in industry. Why not carbon-offset your luggage altogether and leave it at home?

John Zerning's transportable holiday home, designed to fit in a suitcase: timber (birch) dowel and nylon parachute (total weight 41 kilograms/90 pounds) first constructed 1972. See ⌂ Vol XL III 2/1973.

Grey Matters

A return of the generalist was recently witnessed in a rare London appearance by modular man John Prewer. A former student of Buckminster Fuller, Prewer has been involved in modular building since leaving architecture school almost 40 years ago, and was responsible for the UK's first modular housing scheme at the end of the 1970s. He believes that Fuller's interest in architecture was the useful potential of the architecture student schooled equally in social, environmental and physical sciences. Prewer's current interests take in an appropriately bewildering range of technologies that include gyroscopes, personal transportation devices (PTDs), electricity-producing semi-inflatable kites, combined piling and ground-source heat-pump installations, vacuum insulated panels (VIPs) for modular building and fog nozzle technology to replace the traditional domestic shower. The fog nozzle project is a direct development of Fuller's observation that the atomised water vapour of fog is an extremely effective cleaning agent that can drastically reduce water consumption. Originally conceived as an integral component of Fuller's Dymaxion Bathroom of 1938, Prewer's fogging technology is affordable and, combined with pressurised air, is both physically and physiologically effective. Prewer has never been so busy, and with current environmental imperatives in mind is intent on strategically deploying his time.

Meanwhile, in Surrey, semi-retired applied mathematician George Daglish is putting together a nascent project group providing semi-permanent shelter for post-natural disaster reconstruction. The team includes the 43-year-old Space Structures Research Centre under the supervision of Professor Hoshyar Nooshian. The research centre has been responsible for the development of Formian, parametric surface modeller software using Formex algebra, and has hosted the extraordinary 'Space Structures' conferences that take place every nine years. With social imperatives in mind, Daglish's team are hoping to develop a techno-yurt, or similar ubiquitous shelter, for rapid deployment, which can be locally assembled and hopefully succeed where other 'designed' solutions have failed even to be implemented, leaving lowest common denominator technological/temporal solutions of tarpaulin or tin shack.



Autotectonics – 'The choice of choice', from JH Frazer's final Architectural Association thesis project of 1969.

Autotectonics: The Environmental and Social Imperative for a Self-Organising Architecture

In the academic malaise and consumerfest of pre-Christmas London 2005, the inspirational John Frazer delivered a remarkable seven lectures in five days, presenting a synopsis-in-progress of the new art and science of autotectonics, also the title of a book to be co-authored by Samantha Hardingham. Autotectonics challenges the linguistic orthodoxy of architecture with the devilish 'arch' replaced by the self-motivated, self-powering, self-sustaining 'auto'. Day one of the lectures began with 'The Story Tellers' Tale Part I', an introduction and historical background, followed by 'The Citizen's Tale' highlighting the underutilised resource of participatory design. Project collaborations with wife Julia Frazer included electronically augmented tools for self-design/self-build with Walter Segal, Cedric Price's autodidactic Generator project and the community-generated planning of future Groningen with Christian Moller of S333. Day two, 'The Architect's Tale', examined what useful role may be left for the designer in the building industry, illustrated through Frazer's work with Gehry Technologies (GT) and the Digital Project Ecosystem initiative, of which he is international research coordinator. GT's Digital Project (the software) allows for the finite control of the 3-D (digital) blueprint. This 3-D database could at once empower the designer or relegate him or her to a mere stylist. Frazer ended the second morning by describing the process of seeding design, the importance of generic design and the use of the computer as a virtual prototyper. Day three, 'The Building's Tale' (and not, incidentally, the builder's tale, although central to Frazer's thesis), is the thoughtful use and implementation of technology alongside the tacit knowledge of the builder. Frazer believes that previous incarnations of the 'kit of parts approach' to prefabrication were misappropriated, with off-site prefabrication being used 'to prefabricate the wrong bits'. The promise of so-called rapid prototyping technology and computer-controlled manufacture re-establish a useful link between designer and fabricator through digitally controllable media, and Frazer cites FAB LAB by MIT's Neil Gershenfeld as the seed of a new approach to the development and use of digitally manipulatable fabrication tools. He also stresses the importance of designing your own tools and discusses the isospatial modelling techniques he pioneered as early as the late 1960s, continued in the research of Nicola Lefever at the Architectural Association (AA) in the early 1990s and, most recently, utilised by architect and former student Gianni Botsford (Gianni Botsford Architects) to determine the solar logic and 'sky facade' of the extraordinary new St John's Mews house in west London. Day four was 'The Computer's Tale'. Active computing is the only type in which Frazer is the least bit interested, with parametric techniques representing the lowest acceptable level. He is more concerned with the generative potential of the cellular automata pioneered by John Horton Conway, or genetic algorithms (GAS). GAS were said to have been useless for ill-defined 'design' problems, but Frazer finds the issue of conflicting criteria interesting (useful even) and posits the notion of the computer as an 'extended phenotype' (after Dawkins). The last day presented two lectures in one, 'The Storytellers' Tale: Part II' and 'The Environment's Tale'. The first encapsulated the week-long event, defining the possibilities of autotectonics – the notion of seeding design through generic thinking, or designing acorns rather than trees; looking at a 'realignment of roles' between the designer, client and builder; and encouraging the autotectonic model of the self-motivated designer. 'The Environment's Tale' provided the imperative for the lectures: Frazer presents new roles and responsibilities for the generic designer to begin to genetically code design information, to use massive computing power as a temporal compressor, to engage in the evolutionary/developmental (evo/devo) debate and look for design theories in epic volumes like John Miller's *Living Systems*, and not within lookalike pseudo-science. Frazer is not interested in orthodoxies or accepted truths, nor bamboozled by artless applied science or the digitally whittled; 'intentionality', he says, is still key. His theory of autotectonics is collaborative, open-ended, breaks the rules if they need breaking and lays down a challenge to the protectionist profession of the dullard architects who do not usefully serve society. Δ+

'McLean's Nuggets' is an ongoing technical series inspired by Will McLean and Samantha Hardingham's enthusiasm for back issues of Δ, as explicitly explored in Hardingham's Δ issue *The 1970s is Here and Now* (March/April 2005). Will McLean is joint coordinator of technical studies in the Department of Architecture at the University of Westminster with Pete Silver. Together they have recently completed a new book entitled *Fabrication: The Designer's Guide* (Elsevier, 2006).

Architectural Design

The New Europe

Guest-edited by Valentina Croci

In May 2004, Europe was redefined. Ten countries – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia – joined the European Union (EU). Two years on, the full impact of the forces this historical event has unleashed has yet to be understood. For not only is the expansion having an unequivocal bearing on 'old' Europe, it is also helping to change the countries of 'new Europe'. As the economic and the political balance of the enlarged EU is being redrawn, the identities of the newly joined countries is in flux – the majority of the joining states being under Communist rule less than two decades ago.

Contemporary architecture in these 10 countries necessarily presents itself as a process that is anything but linear. It must deal with hybridisation, with new global trends, as well as with the permanence of structures and national heritage. Architects, mostly practising in the private rather than public sphere, are contending with the various political inconsistencies of administrations undergoing change.

The very different panorama in each new member state avoids generalisation. As a broken mirror, this issue of AD does not pretend to provide anything but a partial – though authentic – view of the very crucial issues that contemporary architecture has to cope with. Local contributors look at the transformation of the city and national heritage, while also spotting a new generational fringe of local architects. The ethnic diversity drawn by this publication excites with its cultural richness, but also raises the looming question of what the identity of the new Europe might constitute in the future.

AD+

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