

**PAPERSPACE**

**ISSUE 20**

**ROOTS / ROUTES**

## EDITORS' NOTE

Welcome to the twentieth issue of Paperspace magazine, where we delve into the essence of design, reflecting on the profound significance of both our origins and the journeys we undertake through the hybrid theme of **Roots / Routes**.

Within these pages **Roots** represent the foundation upon which our creativity blossoms—a tribute to our history, culture, and individual lived experiences that shape who we are as designers. Here, we celebrate the diverse backgrounds and traditions that act as a wellspring for innovative ideas and distinctive styles.

Simultaneously, we navigate the dynamic concept of **Routes**. We, as creators, recognize the importance of exploration, experimentation, and forging new paths in sustaining the vitality of our fields. These **Routes** represent the interconnected web of design journeys—both physical and metaphysical, tangible and abstract—that traverse landscapes, cultures, and disciplines. They challenge us to rethink the status quo, transcend boundaries, and adapt to an ever-changing world.

Throughout this issue, you will encounter the works of talented young minds who have seamlessly interwoven their **Roots** with the diverse **Routes** they have undertaken. Their thought-provoking articles, captivating features, intricate illustrations, and introspective musings aim to cultivate a deeper reverence for design's resonant narrative. Beyond the sketches and words, there lies an evocative story that connects us all — a story that speaks of resilience, discovery, and the beauty of human expression.

Our gratitude extends to our donor practices, the Paperspace team, and to all our contributors, whose passion and dedication breathe life into the pages of this magazine. As we navigate this issue, let us find inspiration in the journeys of others, as well as our own. Let us celebrate the diversity of our **Roots**, embracing the strength of our shared experiences while welcoming the boundless possibilities found along new **Routes**.

Thank you for reading.

Jesper-Jay Harrington  
& Daria Shiryaeva

Editors-In-Chief  
2022-2023

Paperspace is an independent architecture and design magazine based in Bath. We host an array of international contributors and are entirely student-led.

Paperspace is proud to commemorate a decade of publishing with this 20th biannual issue. All our past issues can now be accessed digitally through the archive on our new website:

[www.paperspacemagazine.com](http://www.paperspacemagazine.com).

This issue is limited to a print run of only 200 copies. So, if you hold in your hands a paper copy – the ideal format – we hope you sense the same joy in reading as we felt during its creation.

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## A RADICAL SIMPLICITY: ARCHITECTURE FOR THE AGE OF CLIMATE CRISIS

'By these stones shall we be judged.' We must embrace a simpler, more natural architecture designed conscious of the environment and with the full life of the building and its parts in mind, writes Alexander Whitwell. Graphics by Anais Lau, photography by author.

Much of our history is occupied by the search for identity through architecture: the creation of something to express the truths of the time it was made. Enlightenment architects devised sacred geometries as an expression of the new age of reason. Victorians retreated to Gothicism for its connection to the simplicity of the past amidst the industrial revolution. The high-tech movement dreamed of a dramatically adaptable, elastic future: the end of history.

History does continue, however, and we now find ourselves in a time of extinction – the age of the climate crisis. The precariousness of our existence becomes ever more tangible with every flood, wildfire, and hurricane, and architecture's part in bringing us to the edge ever more apparent. You are well versed in how we got here, no doubt, but where do we go next? What architecture will express the truth of our time?

Initial ideas that present themselves relate to reducing embodied carbon in our buildings and their construction. This

is vital. Elements derived from plastic used in architecture often have a design life of less than 100 years, but may take centuries to decay in landfill. The embodied carbon of elements like PIR insulation (the most common kind, made of plastic) is astronomical, and yet it will spend most of its life in the bin. Swapping out components for lower carbon, renewable options is a start, but can we cut them out altogether?

Today's conventional construction methods haven't been around for long. Cavity walls became widespread in the UK in the 1920s and 30s, and since then construction techniques have increased in complexity, bringing in more and more elements and components to solve the myriad problems which arose as the earliest trials started to falter through their lifespans. The nature of cavity walls makes them almost impossible to repair, so we've reached a point where buildings are being demolished because a membrane, for instance, has come to the end of its life, while the masonry could stay robust for centuries more. Just like in smartphones,

Behind: The trabeated stone exoskeleton of 15 Clerkenwell Close

built in obsolescence often forces users to build new rather than reuse what they have. This way of thinking stems from our economic settlement; it's in the construction industry's financial interests to make buildings which are hard to maintain, and easier to demolish and rebuild instead.

But a new way of thinking is coming into focus. An approach, built from our *zeitgeist*, is taking hold: conscious of the lifespan of buildings and designing to suit, turning to architecture which has stood for thousands rather than tens of years for structural inspiration, using low-carbon materials in a way which allows them to be reused when the building's time is up, and designing for adaptability.

One of the groups pushing a different approach is Feilden Fowles. Edmund Fowles describes his practice's approach as 'low-tech', summing up the methodology as a reaction to the over-technologisation of construction. One thing which the practice's work clearly expresses is an understanding of the life span of buildings. This is best explored by comparing two buildings:

Feilden Fowles' Studio in London and The Weston in Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The former is a fully demountable timber frame structure built as part of a temporary city farm in Waterloo, less than five minutes from Parliament. The land it's built on is only leased to the farm and practice as a meanwhile use – plans to demolish the area to rebuild it as luxury flats are underway. This has forced Feilden Fowles to consider more than usual the end-of-life of the project. The studio is designed to be deconstructed, moved, and rebuilt on another site in the future. Spans are derived from the natural length of timber elements, reducing construction waste, and some materials used are already in their second life; the bricks which pave the walled garden were on the site when the practice inherited it.

On the other hand, The Weston (an art gallery for Yorkshire Sculpture Park) is designed to endure for many lifetimes. It reflects a pragmatic approach to sustainable design, using concrete in places to ensure the durability of the project alongside a timber frame. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the project is one that

is never seen. Typically, art galleries require significant environmental conditioning to protect artworks, adding a huge operational carbon cost. At The Weston, Feilden Fowles used a network of unfired clay bricks under the floor which condition the air as it passes through on the way to the gallery. It's an inert, natural solution which will last, and doesn't require the constant maintenance that a conventional, powered solution would. These two buildings demonstrate opposite results, but with the same practical approach: an understanding of what would be most sustainable in the context of the life of the building.

For structures intended to outlast us, it's interesting to draw on the construction methods used in buildings which we know outlasted their builders. Amin Taha and his practice Groupwork, working alongside the Stonemasonry Company, have experimented with stone construction methods both innovative and ancient. Groupwork's 15 Clerkenwell Close employs trabeated construction – as found in the Parthenon – but updated to suit a modern block of flats. The Stonemasonry Company has worked on

several projects where almost all structure is delivered in stone, creating something extremely durable, and which will age and decay in a natural, manageable way. If the building does need to be deconstructed, the stone can be reused again and again.

A building constructed in this manner might last hundreds of years, but its original use will not. The way we live today would be almost unrecognisable to an Ancient Greek, and the way we live in the next thousand years will be entirely different again. If we intend for a structure to last, it must continue to be useful. Apparata's House for Artists is today a series of living spaces. They're already designed to be incredibly adaptable in their current function. Inhabitants received a manual for their flat when they moved in; locations of studs, interior materials, and suggestions for potential configurations. Already, this is transformative for the life of the building. One flat could have ten lives with different people who shape the space in radically different ways, without the need for any major construction works, drastically reducing carbon costs. The approach becomes even more interesting



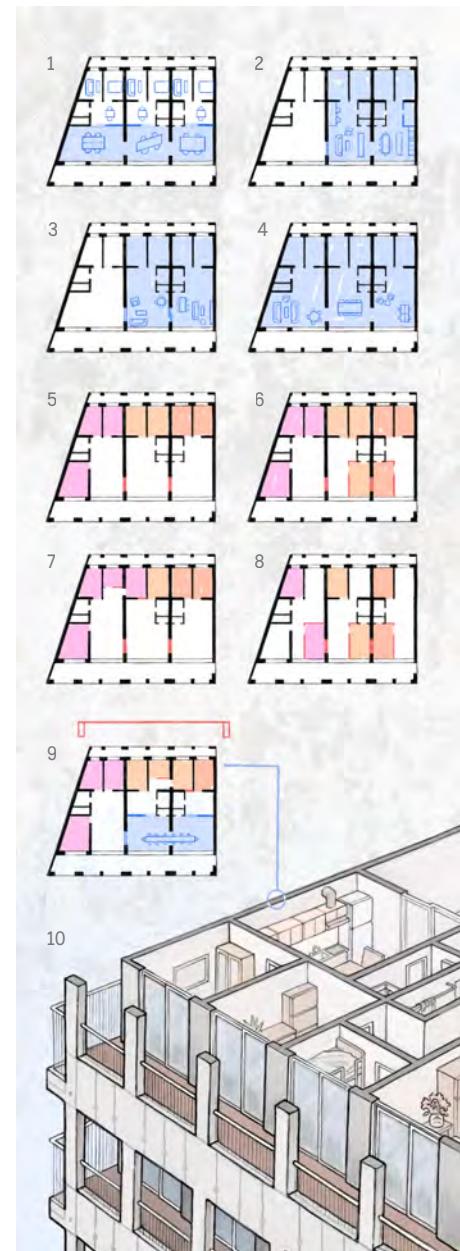
Above: Cutaway drawing of the natural air conditioning at The Weston



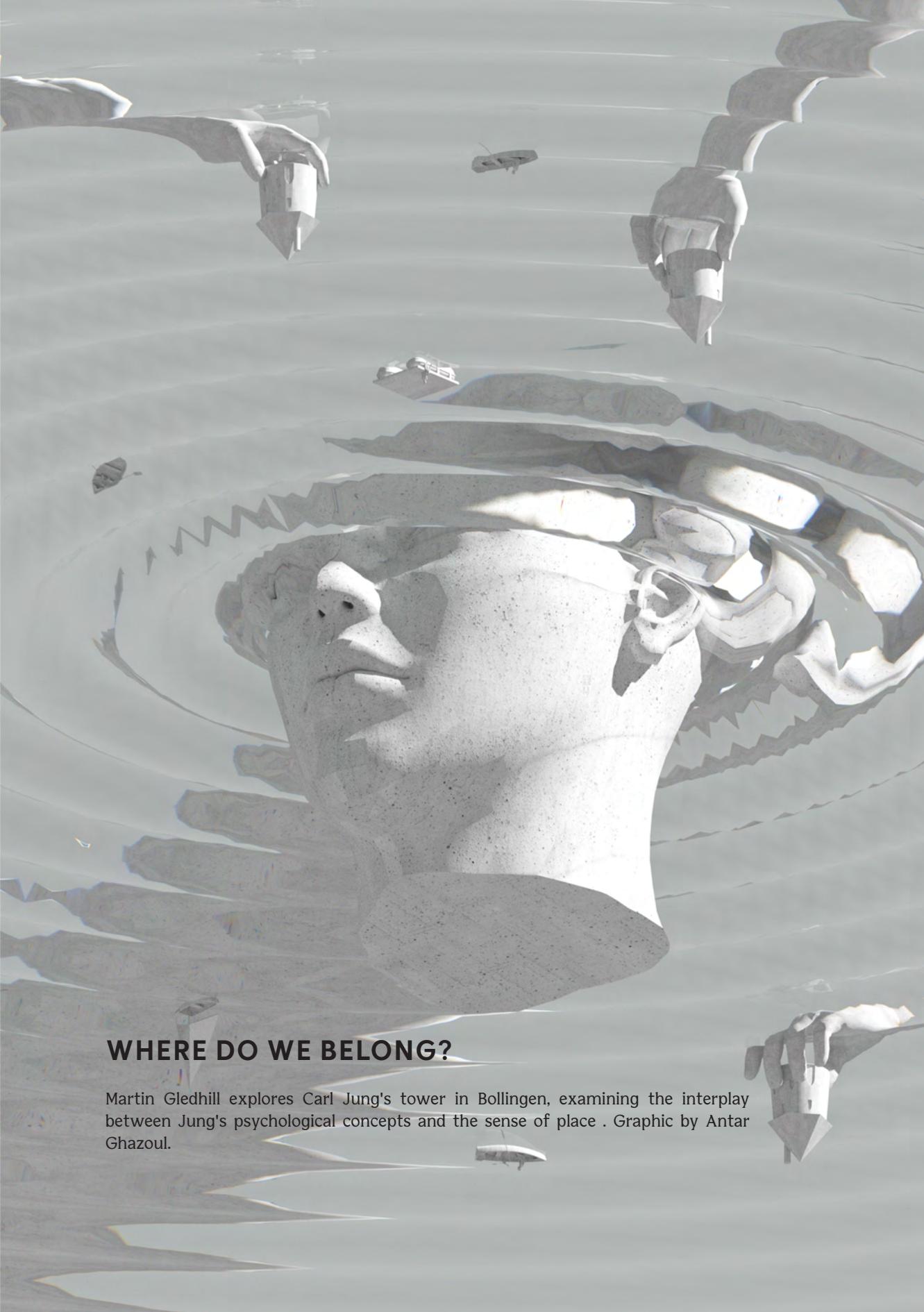
Above: The ultra-lean timber frame at Feilden Fowles Studio

when you consider how the building might evolve beyond living spaces. Indeed, Apparata drew up plans as part of the design process for how the building might be converted into a school, or an office block – again with minimal to no structural changes.

The built legacy of the past 100 years is already falling apart. The paint is already peeling off crumbling modernist blocks. New London Vernacular brick slips are already dropping off the concrete frames they adorn. If we continue like this, we are condemned to build, demolish, and build again in a cycle which will take us to extinction. An alternative way is possible; it requires careful, design-led architecture with a zealous attention to sustainability. We must slow down and embrace a simpler, more natural architecture designed conscious of the environment and with the full life of the building and its parts in mind. What will we leave behind for the next generations, and what will their future look like?



Above: Plan configurations for House for Artists; plans 1-4 representing various cohousing scenarios and 5-8 representing layout adaptability; plan 9 combines both and is represented in image 10



## WHERE DO WE BELONG?

Martin Gledhill explores Carl Jung's tower in Bollingen, examining the interplay between Jung's psychological concepts and the sense of place. Graphic by Antar Ghazoul.

When I was at university (during the previous century!), Clare Cooper's enchanting paper 'House as Symbol of Self' (1974) was doing the rounds of the studio. The paper ignited in our group a preoccupation with belonging and a sense of place that was a physical as it was psychic, and which ultimately led me into the psychology of Carl Jung (1875 -1961). Although at one time Jung was the heir apparent to Sigmund Freud (1856 -1939) and the psychoanalytic school, they subsequently diverged in an ideological split that condensed around the architecture of the human psyche.

For Jung the unconscious extended beyond the personal into the strata of the collective, the territory of myth, symbolism, the poetic, the numinous and the Self (capital intended). In Jung's conceptual system, the Self as the regulator, centre and totality of the human psyche is orientated towards wholeness, in contrast to its agent the 'ego', the 'I want', which when uprooted from its 'psychic ground' is more often ruled by reductivism and impulse rather than holistic purpose.<sup>2</sup> Freud and Jung were both extraordinary thinkers, but their divergence would seem to encapsulate a schism between two ways of thinking about

the confluence of tangible and the intangible in what we might call *Psychic Place*. Interestingly, both their sons, Ernst (1892 – 1970) and Franz (1908 – 1996) respectively were architects, one overtly modern and the other more traditional, nonetheless their common architectural lexicon bridged their fathers' divide.<sup>3</sup>

In response to the 'acrimonious split' which precipitated a breakdown in Jung as much as a breakthrough in his ideas, over the course of thirty or more years he conceived and realised a retreat on the shores of Lake Zurich, variously known as 'Bollingen' or 'The Tower'. Here, by Jung's own admission, he made 'a confession of faith in stone',

a psycho-architectural testament where he was 'sustained by the atmosphere' and '[saw] life in the round, as something forever coming into being and passing on'.<sup>4</sup> For followers of a functionalist logic, the building has been read as a nostalgic lament that renounced modernity and was governed by a neurotic, esoteric intent. Alternatively, in a more empathetic understanding, through the Tower's poetic syntax Jung constructed a sense of Self, both *in* and *as* a Place. Whilst the details of this enigmatic house on the lake are intriguing (the subject of a personal obsession for me at any rate), in its essence Jung's Tower at least for this author poses a question - what is *our* sense of place?

If a vibrant and enduring sense of place, is as I contend one where psyche *and* matter, the rational *and* poetic imaginations are reconciled, can this ever be achieved in the cultural paradigm in which we presently exist? Indeed, Jung diagnosed an inherent malaise in modern culture, a disenchantment resulting from the tyranny of the rational, the quantifiable and the visible. Jung's psychological system endeavoured to re-enchant<sup>5</sup> through a recognition and assimilation of the symbolic, and in his study of alchemy he observed an integrated relationship between the transformation of matter and the evolution of the psyche. In spatialising disenchantment through the metaphor of 'home', we might diagnose the collective state in which we find ourselves as a *solastalgia* - a melancholic homesickness experienced *in* the home as opposed to a *nostalgia* experienced *away* from home.<sup>6</sup>

Both conditions can be understood as an alienation from Home, a psychological condition and a philosophical position that arguably lays at the root of the ecological crisis – a disconnection from the earth and place, where matter is rendered inert, and the psychic is all but exiled as 'subjective'. The consideration of such issues and their consequences has preoccupied many a theorist notably the phenomenologists,

but in Casey's *Fate of Place* (1997)<sup>7</sup> we find a poignant distinction between place as a void or a vessel. Is space an absence or a presence? Given that this question lays at the very heart of architecture, should we not look more closely in our education at the psychological and philosophical histories of place<sup>8</sup> as well as developing a more 'hands on' and poetic understanding of the tectonics of construction - to simultaneously engage with the physical *and* the metaphysical? After all, one of the principal tenets of analytical (Jungian) psychology is the transcendent function – the creative potential of opposites rather than the surrender to dualism. Musicians call this the reconciling third.

Some ten years have now passed since Marie d'Oncieu a fourth year first called by into my office to discuss the idea of a magazine with the intent of voicing students' ideas and fostering a collective literary space to which all could belong, unfettered by the curriculum and the pursuit of grades. Through a combination of tenacity and some creative accounting the first issue of Paperspace was printed and has continued ever since. Whilst both Marie and I have left what was once our architectural home up the hill, I wonder if in the next phase of Paperspace it might be an agent of change in furthering the rebalancing of architecture and resituating it within a greater awareness of the history of ideas about place that surround it? To paraphrase the American ecological poet and novelist Wendell Berry - What we stand for is what we build for.<sup>9</sup>

## Footnotes:

[1] From 'The Psychology of Transference' (CW16, Plate 12/p.322, n.1). Original image from the *Mutus Liber* (Plate 11).

[2] I do not mean to imply that Freud's system can be viewed as such nor that it is any less valid, only that in developing it Jung posited a transformational and transcendent tendency in the human psyche.

[3] As a result of their collaboration the correspondence between Freud and Jung was published in 1974.

[4] Jung, C.G. *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. Recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard and Clara Winston. London: Collins and Routledge & Kegan Paul 1963 (1961 German version), pp. 223/237.

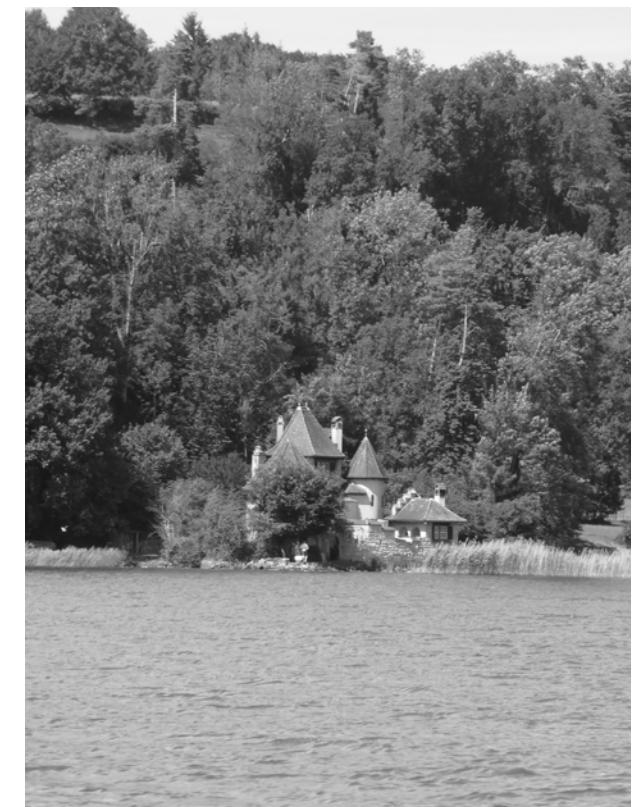
[5] For a wider assessment c.f. Main, R. (2022) *Breaking the Spell of Disenchantment – mystery, meaning and metaphysics in the work of C.G. Jung*. Chiron Publications.

[6] An idea introduced to me by Paul Venables – Re-enchantment and the Ecological Unconscious, a lecture delivered at the BCPC Member's Spring Conference on 14th May 2023.

[7] Casey, E.S. *The Fate of Place – A philosophical history*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press 1997.

[8] C.f. The Thinkers for Architects series, published by Routledge.

[9] 'What I Stand for Is What I Stand On'.



Jung's Tower in Bollingen

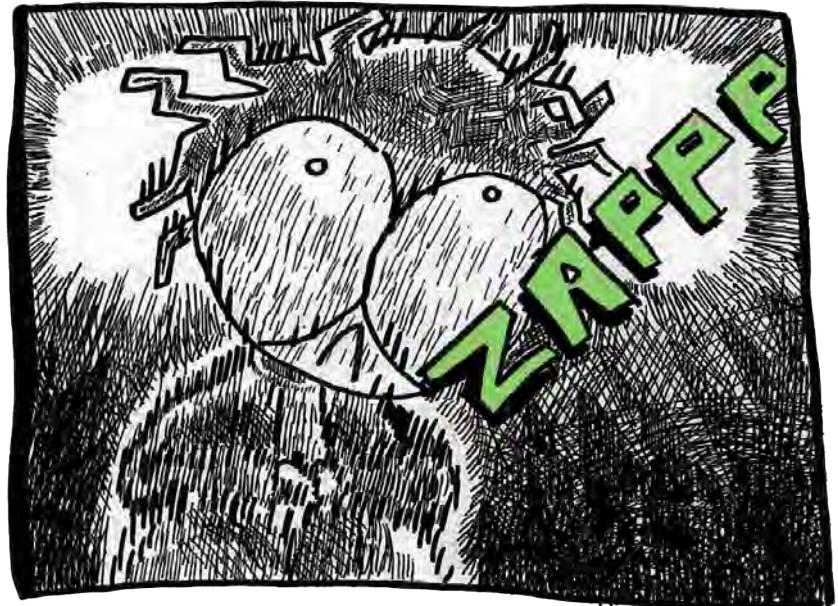


Comic by Skai Campbell

SINCE LEAVING LONDON, I GET REALLY NOSTALGIC RIDING THE TUBE



I DID USE TO HAVE A THING ABOUT THE SPARKS, THOUGH



WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I SAW A SCENE FROM 'FINAL DESTINATION'



I THINK THE RAT STARTED CHEWING ON THE WIRES ON THE TRACKS...

I DON'T KNOW THE EXACT CHAIN OF EVENTS...

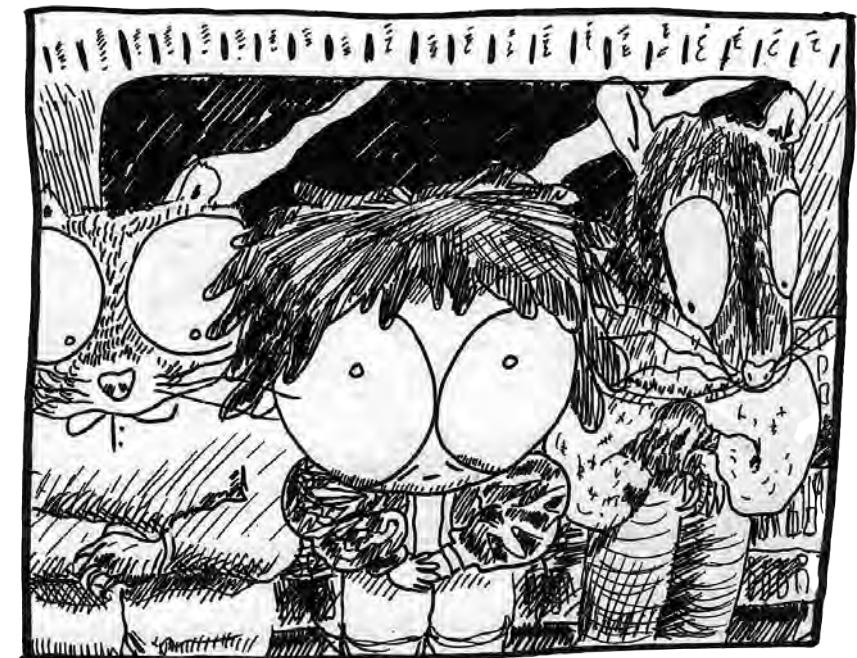


...BUT THERE WERE A LOT OF FLASHES...

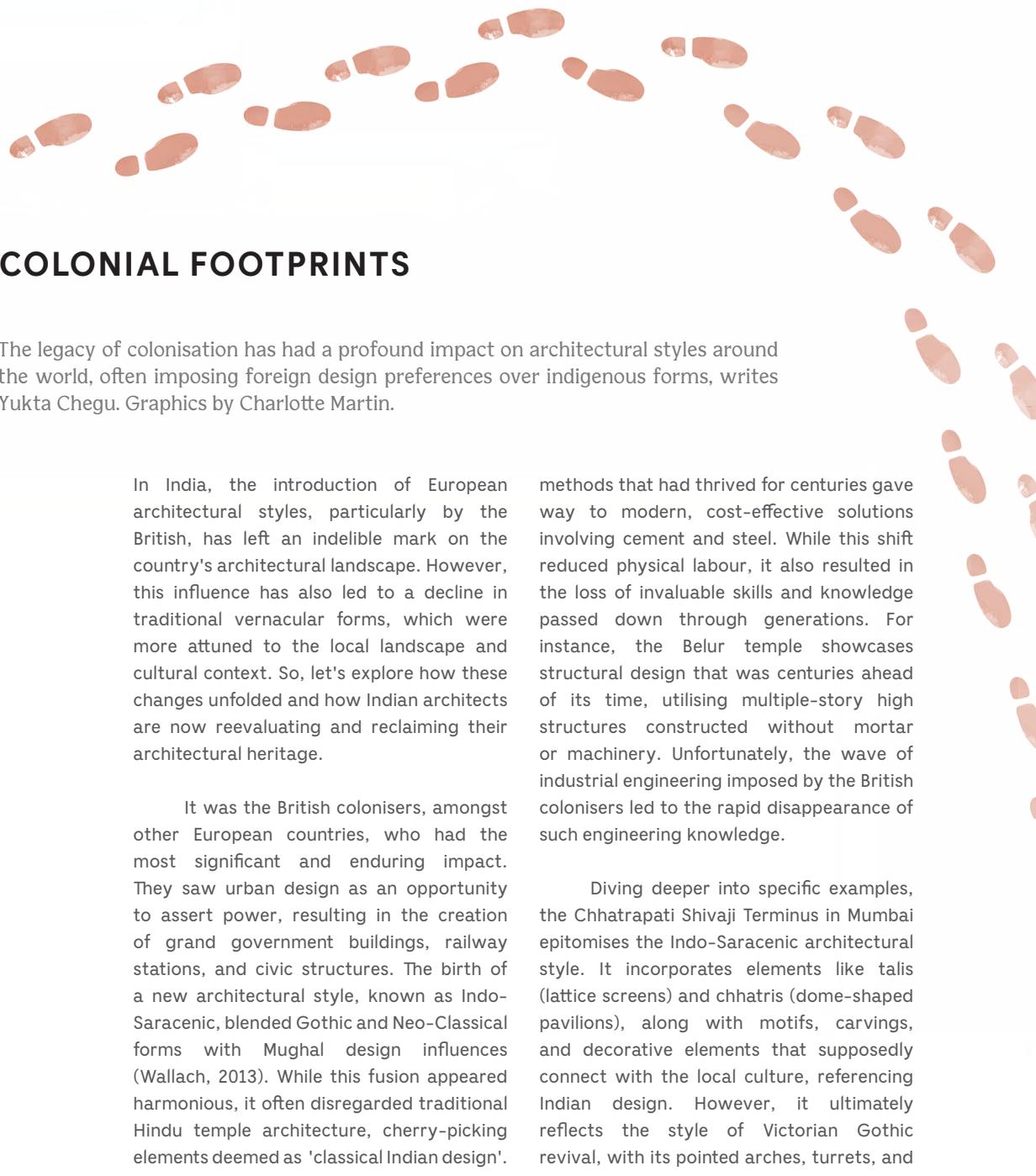
AND THINGS DIDN'T END TOO WELL FOR THE PASSENGERS



BUT EVENTUALLY I GOT OVER THAT



THOUGH... IT IS STILL GOOD TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THE RATS.



## COLONIAL FOOTPRINTS

The legacy of colonisation has had a profound impact on architectural styles around the world, often imposing foreign design preferences over indigenous forms, writes Yukta Chegu. Graphics by Charlotte Martin.

In India, the introduction of European architectural styles, particularly by the British, has left an indelible mark on the country's architectural landscape. However, this influence has also led to a decline in traditional vernacular forms, which were more attuned to the local landscape and cultural context. So, let's explore how these changes unfolded and how Indian architects are now reevaluating and reclaiming their architectural heritage.

It was the British colonisers, amongst other European countries, who had the most significant and enduring impact. They saw urban design as an opportunity to assert power, resulting in the creation of grand government buildings, railway stations, and civic structures. The birth of a new architectural style, known as Indo-Saracenic, blended Gothic and Neo-Classical forms with Mughal design influences (Wallach, 2013). While this fusion appeared harmonious, it often disregarded traditional Hindu temple architecture, cherry-picking elements deemed as 'classical Indian design'.

Alongside changes in architectural form, there were shifts in construction techniques and materials. Traditional

methods that had thrived for centuries gave way to modern, cost-effective solutions involving cement and steel. While this shift reduced physical labour, it also resulted in the loss of invaluable skills and knowledge passed down through generations. For instance, the Belur temple showcases structural design that was centuries ahead of its time, utilising multiple-story high structures constructed without mortar or machinery. Unfortunately, the wave of industrial engineering imposed by the British colonisers led to the rapid disappearance of such engineering knowledge.

Diving deeper into specific examples, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai epitomises the Indo-Saracenic architectural style. It incorporates elements like talis (lattice screens) and chhatris (dome-shaped pavilions), along with motifs, carvings, and decorative elements that supposedly connect with the local culture, referencing Indian design. However, it ultimately reflects the style of Victorian Gothic revival, with its pointed arches, turrets, and intricate detailing. While it is celebrated as a remarkable architectural achievement and a UNESCO World Heritage site, it also serves as a reminder of the city's whitewashed

history, where colonial influences have overshadowed the indigenous cultural roots.

Another example is the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, designed by Edwin Lutyens. Lutyens' approach to Indian architecture was questionable, with statements like 'I do not believe there is any real Indian architecture' (Evenson 1959, 93). This ignorance and lack of appreciation for the country's rich architectural heritage was highly notable in his design. The grand building was embellished with superficial Indian elements, such as lifeless stone parasols, to create an appearance of cultural sensitivity. However, they were ultimately an imitation of imported details superimposed on a Gothic plan, lacking a genuine intention to embrace architectural traditions.

With the country's newfound freedom also came a declined reliance on international influences: Indians were reclaiming their own soil. The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, designed by renowned architect BV Doshi, reflects a departure from colonial aesthetics. It incorporates fundamental vernacular principles, such as courtyard designs and shaded walkways inspired by traditional Indian courtyard houses.



Tower of the Coles Centennial Telugu Baptist Church

Doshi's emphasis on the use of locally sourced materials not only reduces the environmental impact, but also establishes a strong connection with the region's natural resources. His design embraces vernacular influences while incorporating western-influenced techniques, such as the use of steel and glass in construction, resulting in a design which is both forward-thinking and culturally sensitive.

As we reflect on the evolution of Indian architecture influenced by colonisation, it becomes clear that both roots have been cut and new shoots have grown. Architects are now recognising the significance of global events and political changes, and are striving to reconnect with their cultural heritage to create sustainable and socially conscious architectural developments. By learning from the past and integrating traditional knowledge with modern advancements, India can forge a new path that honours its architectural legacy while embracing a forward-thinking approach.

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# PREVENTING A BRUTAL END

As we plunge deeper into the climate crisis, we must learn to embrace and transform our existing built environment, argues Hannah Kennedy. Graphics by Skai Campbell.

Few words in an architect's vocabulary are more divisive than brutalism. By my own admission, I have always found concrete buildings to be uninvitingly austere, lacking a comforting sense of warmth that natural materials, such as timber, provide. At present, however, our obsession to keep up with ever-changing stylistic trends is posing a serious risk to increasing resource scarcity. Across the country an aesthetically-driven offensive on brutalist architecture is unmistakable in the relentless demolition of concrete structures, irreversibly losing iconic moments in design history. As beauty is in the eye of the beholder, surely we cannot justify plunging ourselves deeper into the climate crisis because we have failed to embrace and transform our existing built environment?

Concrete has been highlighted as a key culprit for climate change, with cement contributing to 8% of annual global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Chatham House, 2018). In recognition of the vast amount of embodied carbon that is tied to the construction of brutalist buildings, it is imperative that we embrace the opportunities and challenges of their reuse. Rather than solely degrading them into a rubble, to be concealed in

foundations, architects should aspire to celebrate reused concrete elements as defining features.

Copenhagen-based practice, Lendager, exemplifies how a run-down car park can be transformed into an inspiring and sustainable workplace. Through complimenting the cool tones of concrete with the rich tactility of timber, Karstadt Re-Parked expresses an elegant harmony of man-made and natural materials. Reflective of its name, the proposal centres around a playful reassembly of reused structural elements from Berlin's Urban-straße car park and the Karstadt department store. Although, cynically, the scheme could be viewed to be a greenwashed justification for the demolition of the Karstadt building, to clear land for a new department store, the fundamental principles at the heart of the design are a progressive step towards a more circular economy.

The design draws focus to reused structural elements from Berlin's Urban-straße car park, exposing reused concrete columns, beams, and floor slabs in recognition of the building's brutalist origins. Leading by an innovative approach,

Lendager proposes to preserve the existing car park and its concrete core, only removing the floor slabs of every other floor, which will then be cut to their new size.

The power of Lendager's design manifests itself in the building's captivating language of contrast, producing unique spaces that embrace the car park's brutalist spirit, whilst also providing a soft elegance that it once lacked. Expanses of glass, achieved by collaging timber window frames together balance out the solidity of the concrete shell, providing a greater connection to the outdoors. These bays of playfully-composed frames are repeated across the building's courtyard and street facades, reflecting the systematic modularity of the original car park.

Internally, the rooms are shown to be flooded with natural light through the floor-to-ceiling glazing and the courtyard, redolent of the enticing glow that illuminates the ramp of the Urban-straße car park. The proposed office spaces successfully respect the comforting sense of certainty provided by a modernist grid system, aligning timber platforms between adjacent concrete columns and beams. The creation of these smaller pods, that could be used for team meetings, provides a sense of intimacy that is often lost in highly open plan spaces, without constructing permanent dividers that deviate from the car park's functional spirit.

Ultimately, Lendager's scheme shows how reuse can transcend just a rearrangement of components through using it as an opportunity to challenge the perceptions of those opposed to a building's original style. Through preserving its key features and drawing upon memorable moments of the users' experience, the proposal boldly captures the essence of the brutalist car park. For me, the design undeniably proves that even our most unloved spaces have the capacity to become vibrant and exciting environments to enjoy for many years to come.



## 23 LESSONS | INDESEM 23

INDESEM (International Design Seminar) is a biennial hosted by the Delft University of Technology. The week-long programme brought together a cohort of students, professionals, and academics from around the world with the aim of exploring innovative ideas and approaches in architecture through a series of workshops, lectures, and exhibitions, all organised around the theme of 'Boundaries'.

The essence of architectural practice involves navigating a myriad of factors that influence the design process. The programme instructed young designers to look beyond the physical and social boundaries of their field, beyond the limitations imposed by materials, technological advancements, social norms and regulations and ask: How can I work with these constraints? By investigating and leveraging these boundaries, architects are empowered to foster regeneration and innovation, rather than confining themselves within self-imposed limits. *Jesper-Jay Harrington*.

Boundaries are an indispensable facet of the design process. A poor designer neglects boundaries, whilst a skilled one responds to them.

Architecture is not a puzzle to be solved; rather it is an endless array of puzzle pieces awaiting invention and rearrangement.

A true architecture of our time will have to redefine itself and expand its means. Many areas outside traditional building will enter the realm of architecture, as architecture and 'architects' will have to enter new fields. All are architects. Everything is architecture.

With rules, architecture acquires a universal essence. Limitations ignite the spark that propels the engine of design.

Architecture is political space. Designers serve as ambassadors of democratic and progressive values. Embracing such values in theory alone is futile, they must constantly be reflected in our work and the projects we undertake.

Humankind possesses a collective stewardship of the natural world. The right to roam must be transposed onto the built environment.

Cultural contexts must inform and translate architectural form across transnational boundaries. Thus, boundaries must inform the process and methodology of design.

Architects should embrace a stance of critical optimism

A boundary exists at the handover of the building. Architects must be stewards of their work, nurturing the enduring relationship between the building and its surroundings.

'I design to solve problems not to stir emotions. However, if emotions are stirred, it brings me great pleasure' - Eduardo Souto De Moura

A poet writes to reveal, not merely to write poetry. To write (or design) for the sake of writing (or designing) can never be the primary drive behind creation.

'The beauty of life lies in its contradictions. I need tension. It is this unrest that is vital to architecture' - Eduardo Souto De Moura

'Architecture is not an art but a social activity' - Herman Hertzberger

'Create the conditions that enable people to make spaces their own, aligned with their personal needs. You must first create space to leave space' - Herman Hertzberger

True luxury comes from the freedom of use. Be generous with space and you will unlock a wealth of opportunities.

An undefined space will invariably be occupied for the majority of the time. Jean-Philippe Vassal proposes that at least 50% of the plan remain unprogrammed.

Economy serves as a vector of liberty; aspire to achieve more with less.

People understand their requirements far better than any architect ever could. Many simply require the chance to uncover what these needs truly are.

Nurture your soul - architects devoid of one will be the first to be replaced by AI.

We are living through the second Copernican Revolution, where Intelligence no longer revolves around humanity.

The capitalist mode of architectural production will intrinsically favour AI as it maximises returns on investments. 80% of traditional architects will be forced out of practice. The greatest antagonism will lie not between AI and humanity, but between humans using AI and those not.

We cannot escape the presence of AI; it is here to stay. The question to confront is who will bear the brunt of its consequences and who will reap its benefits.

What architects need to design right now is not another building, but the very future of their profession.



## LIVING ARCHITECTURE

Environmentally sustainable design is gaining traction and awareness in the construction industry; yet even as it progresses, it is already miles behind, writes Tara Hodges. Graphics by Zichen Ma (Isaac).



The industry is now unavoidably faced with the responsibility to innovatively combat climate change – to interrogate the very processes by which we interact with the built environment.

A fundamental part of this is the materials with which we build and the impact each has on the modern vernacular and its new generation of buildings facing this incredible challenge. In response to this opportunity for change, the last decade has seen the emergence of numerous research programmes searching for sustainable, biodegradable alternatives to the prevalent materials produced via fossil fuels in a predominantly linear life cycle. One such sector is fungal architecture, exploring the use of mycelium – a fungal root-like webbed network celebrated for its natural resilience to its climate and high tensile strength<sup>1</sup> – as a highly sustainable, biodegradable material produced via a circular process<sup>2</sup>.

In the past 10 years, multidisciplinary research teams have built on existing knowledge and application of this material, exploring its capacity in a range of different structure types<sup>2</sup>.

Mycelium is already being used in industry, pioneered by companies such as Ecovative<sup>2</sup>, who have developed processes by which mycelium is manipulated into practical, efficient components such as insulating, fire resistant foam and 'mushroom' packaging<sup>1</sup>. Most notably – and most relevant to architectural applications of mycelium – Ecovative produce brick-like mycelium-composite modules, which were used in 2014 in The Living Studio / Arup's Hy-Fi pavilion in the MoMA<sup>2</sup>.

There have been several mycelium-based installations since, experimenting with the material both as an inert, structural element, such as MycoTree<sup>2</sup>, and as a living, growing substance, harnessing its

growth pattern and adaptability to climate, such as the Shell Mycelium pavilion<sup>2</sup>. The 2017 MycoTree used the versatile material as a self-supporting structural element<sup>2</sup> designed using a hybrid of digital parametric design and a traditional truss-like approach. In response to mycelium's limited capacity for structural loading and rigidity, bamboo and steel joints were employed at various junctions<sup>2</sup> – a key example of an integrated process making use of new and existing building materials and strategies.

In comparison, the Shell pavilion, built in 2016 for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, is made up of a wooden frame and panel structure, with living mycelium panels loaded on top<sup>2</sup>. The concept was to allow the fungus to grow and dry out naturally in its external climate, rather than curate the material offsite. While in reality the mycelium dried out before being able to bind and fully cover the structure<sup>2</sup>, the scheme pioneers the use of live mycelium and highlights the challenges and extensive process of introducing a new material to the construction industry.

This sector is continuously developing and expanding on existing knowledge of the material through several research programmes. For example, since 2020 a collaborative team of architects, computer scientists and mycelium specialists<sup>4</sup> have been investigating fungal bio-composites, using mycelium as a base material in combination with various plant-based fibres, with the aim of enhancing the raw substance's strength and stiffness<sup>5</sup>.

A different programme is exploring the function of mycelium as a 'healing' agent in concrete. The widely used material is prone to small cracks which threaten its structural capacity – a weakness which various researchers are trying to minimise through the application of various biomaterials<sup>6</sup>.

## PAPERSPACE

Mycelium has been experimented with in this capacity due to the nature of its growth pattern and its strength and suitability to the extreme climate. However, this particular area of research has been hindered due to limited technology and resources in this field and the vast variation in concrete composition<sup>6</sup>. Clearly, though significant breakthroughs and achievements in this area have been made, there is still great scope for further development of this material, and many others.

The consistent aim across each of these applications is to gain a more extensive understanding of mycelium's properties, in order to inform its unique use in the construction industry<sup>2</sup>. Much as masonry elements have categorized their own building process, and the use of steel frames revolutionised the built environment as part of the Industrial Revolution, mycelium has the potential to fundamentally alter how we view construction and inform its own highly sustainable vernacular. Given the opportunity, this could be a core part of a widespread industry 'wake up' – an 'environmental revolution' of sorts – achieved not only through the innovation of research teams and designers, but also through the necessary ability of the profession to embrace change and evolution as it is faced with a new era of design.

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## ROUTES



Photography and drawing by Elliott Bryant-Brown

## ROOTS

## QUAKING IN MY ROOTS

Matthew Leer's investigation into the mythical properties of Aspen leads him on a journey of self-discovery.

I hope this doesn't read as a story of learning to appreciate the small things – I like to think that I can just about do that already. Instead, I'm hoping to show how exciting it is to make use of that appreciation and let it draw you deep into a subject.

I've read a fair amount about aspen trees over time, from discussions of 'Pando,' the clonal colony of aspens that is one of the largest single organisms on the planet, to its nickname of the 'quaking aspen' due to its intense shaking in the slightest breeze. I was particularly interested in the folkloric beliefs of the tree's psychic properties; a shield of its wood is said to protect from unseen spiritual forces whilst a crown of its leaves may allow the wearer to make a return trip to the underworld.

When reading one such article, I realised that I had never knowingly come across one of these trees in the wild. Of course, I may have passed them before, though just not recognised them amongst the dense crowd of other leaves and trunks. As someone who prides themselves on their frequent and sporadic journeys through the forest,

I was left wondering just how much I had missed on these walks simply because I didn't know what to look for.

To make up for what I might have passed by, I would have to go out and locate an aspen for myself. The prospect of a hunt was exciting to me – the chance to ramble with a purpose. Not only that, I had been wanting to take up wood carving again, and thought it would be appropriate to carve a traditional item associated with the tree. I was relieved to find that aspen wands were occasionally buried with the dead across the British Isles – potentially the easiest route due to the simplicity of carving a branch into a more detailed stick rather than crafting an entire shield, but a much more achievable task. I took to the hills of Bath in search of the signature rounded leaves that would lead me to my quarry with no set idea of where I was headed other than the next cluster of greenery on the horizon. After a good few hours and a good few miles, I seemed to be only finding ash, birch, hawthorn, and horse chestnut in a repetitive show of these familiar faces – my mission unsuccessful.

Considering my blind hope in expecting to simply happen across an aspen, I realised I may need a little more guidance prior to my next hunting trip. I then discovered the NBN Atlas, a compilation of species of all manners across the UK with fairly precise locations of where they might be found. It went against my own personal code to rely on a map to lead me to my destination, and so I only let myself be guided to the rough 1km<sup>2</sup> area I might be interested in. I learned that aspen generally doesn't come into leaf until nearer the summer, and so would have to rely on other factors to identify my target in early spring. After spending some time learning of the tree's habits and preferences, I felt ready to head out on my travels.

I found that, once I had learned what to look for, every detail in the environment around me seemed a little stronger whilst keeping my attention open for the signs I needed. I was noticing each buttercup angled towards the mid-morning sun, the ivy interspersed between flares of evergreens, the jarring sight of fake plants in the front gardens of an unfortunate number of houses. Although these specimens had nothing to do with my hunt, I couldn't help but look more closely at everything just to see what I might have otherwise walked by unawares. Upon being tricked by some particularly circular ivy leaves and far-off silver birches, I was continuously surprised by the excitement that came about whenever I thought I had found a clue. A detective catching out a red herring, I was just driven with more determination to get back on the right path.

Venturing onwards, worry set in as I saw a clearing littered with a variety of felled trunks a little ways ahead, though it didn't take long to be reassured that none of these cadavers belonged to my aspens. Still, I spent a little time around these log piles to see what they had to offer. If I were a more discerning forager, I would have made use of the elfcup mushrooms growing on a mossy riverbank nearby, though limited confidence in my abilities made me think it wiser to leave them be.

Following this trail of mushrooms along the bank brought me to a golden retriever rolling through the shallow waters and, whilst watching this show of joyous abandon, I noticed a collection of suspiciously identical-looking trees. Pale bark gave way to rough cracks towards the ground, younger branches reaching out with a rich, red hue. Whether it was the thought of finding what I was searching for after hours of clambering through woodland or the thought of knowingly laying my eyes on something new, I hadn't expected to be feeling so much anticipation.

In order to feel confident in my identification, I needed evidence of the aspen's signature leaf. I was hoping that some induviae would remain on the branches to provide an easy answer, though this wasn't the case. Digging through layers of decaying wood, worms, woodlice, and general mulch, I found what I needed. A dry skeleton of itself, I unearthed the one sign I needed to tell me that I was amongst the aspens.

I spent a good while with the trees. I noticed the various lives I was sitting with, snails trekking along mossy stumps, strikingly pink earthballs littering the ground. It felt oddly cathartic to be here, making up for the years I may have overlooked the aspen. I like to think that I am fairly connected to nature already, though looking to actively engage with the environment made this connection feel so much more personal.

Collecting some suitable carving branches, I headed home. I had completed what I set out to do, though was unable to shake the mindset of observing everything with a newfound intensity. I found joy in the alder leaf beetles that had flooded a hawthorn bush across the bank, noticed a vortex in the river that dragged debris below the rocks to a nearby stretch of rapids, smiled at the cartoonishly cliché bird tracks leading to the water's edge. I would have appreciated these things before, though couldn't help but feel I was seeing everything with a fresh curiosity.

There were times when this curiosity almost did more harm than good, my mind a little too invested in the trees. Observing one particularly diseased ivy almost got me hit by a van, prolonged eye contact with a cow saw me nearly step into the ribcage of a creature long-gone, and the wheeling of swallows left me ignorant to the grass of the field falling away into dangerously unconsolidated marshland. Regardless, I came out of the day unscathed and with a collection of branches, a plethora of photos, and only one leg covered in mud.

Carving the wand was a suitably peaceful end to the journey. I was left taking in each detail in the branches, each darkened grain boldly shooting through the timber, each woodworm hole evidencing a place in its old environment. This representation of how powerful it was to invest myself in an adventure is reminding me to keep looking closely at the spaces around me. Be it walking through the city and making note of the various carvings in the stone, or yet another forest of previously unnoticed seasonal visitors, I seem to have learned so much since my journey simply by remembering to be an active presence in my environment.

All I did was take a walk, find a tree, and carve a stick. Assigning a little extra weight to each step brought about an excitement that is persisting in the way I think. As far as I'm concerned, I'm just waiting until I happen across an aspen in the wild again – I won't be passing them by anymore.

## SLOWING DOWN ARCHITECTURE

'Rome wasn't built in a day' – so why do we expect this of our cities of today, writes Lola Leforestier. Graphics by Owen Hill.

Construction methods are more advanced than ever, yet our buildings less durable. Buildings that are supposed to stand for 50 years are designed and constructed in mere months. As a result, new-builds are frequently faulty – one project I have been working on whilst on placement had been leaking after just five years.

This nursery and day-care centre was built in 2018 using easy and rapid lightweight modular construction. Although allowances should be made for the testing of new technology, five years on the buildings' shortcomings are clear. The lightweight envelope means that the school is prone to over-heating, a critical issue in an environment for young children many of which have varying disabilities or long-term health conditions. The playground has significant drainage issues, a hazard in any school, and the building is prone to leakage. Surely watertightness and shelter from exterior conditions is not an undue ask from a building younger than the children using it?

Fast food and fast fashion have recently been the centre of debate – associated with cheap labour, poor quality,

and disposability. This phenomenon can be seen in various industries, and construction is no exception. I have termed this fast architecture. This is the rapid assembly of cheap, new structures with limited lifespan and low material recovery rates, which account for over 30% of UK waste<sup>1</sup>.

There used to be an understanding that quality takes time. St. Paul's Cathedral was built in 35 years; the Taj Mahal in 22; the Parthenon in 15, and the famously unfinished Sagrada Familia has been under construction for 141 years. Even Bath's famous Circus was conceived over more than 30 years and constructed in 15<sup>2</sup>, in contrast to the recent developments at Bath Riverside, the first phase of which popped up in just two years<sup>3</sup>.

Understandably, as technology has developed, contractors and developers have chosen faster and cheaper construction methods to maintain profit margins, abandoning more labour-intensive traditional building methods. Speed is of the essence; time is money.

Fast architecture is a symptom of our economic system. Capitalism requires continuous growth; stagnation is its enemy.

ROUTES

In a landscape where empty space is at a premium, developers are mowing down existing buildings from which to grow the next tower block cluster. If our buildings did not need to be continuously rebuilt, growth across the industry would slow.

It could be argued that the unboxing of cheap, new high-rises, especially in the capital, is the logical response to the soaring demand for housing. However, with the highest percentages of unoccupied homes in the UK<sup>4</sup>, London's housing crisis is not purely caused by a lack of space. The problem is economic as much as it is physical. London does not have a lack of housing, but a lack of affordable housing.

Large scale redevelopments such as those in Elephant and Castle are marketed as the shiny new solution to the housing crisis, with developer Lendlease boasting 2050+ affordable new homes<sup>5</sup>. Although the Elephant and Castle scheme does demonstrate transparency in the relocation of residents, with most locally rehoused<sup>6</sup>, the existing buildings themselves only date back to the 1970s and needed significant refurbishment as early as the 1990s, meaning that rehousing these people could have been prevented entirely. Their limited lifespan can be pinned down to poor quality construction as well as a lack of maintenance. This is in stark contrast to the nearby brick Victorian warehouses, more than twice as old but continuing to serve as attractive and practical homes and offices.

Similarly, social housing is being decimated. 22,895 social homes were demolished in the last ten years, with only 12,050 built to replace them. Estates such as Heygate in Newham have notoriously pushed residents into voting for the regeneration of a neighbourhood which would force them out<sup>7</sup>. This involved knocking down structurally sound social housing, long neglected by the council. Residents struggled with pests,

asbestos, and lack of maintenance, issues which eventually gave the council grounds to demolish the whole estate. Had the original buildings been built to last and maintained accordingly, the estate could have served its residents for several more decades.

It is fruitless to attempt a complete return to traditional building methods – these were phased out for a reason and are no longer compatible with today's needs. When William Morris promoted the idealistic Arts and Crafts movement, he was already championing a dying way of life. We need to draw from the principles of vernacular and historic architecture without attempting to replicate it.

This includes reducing the scale of our interventions – as far back as 1961 Jane Jacobs pointed out the problems with attempting to overhaul an entire neighbourhood at once, instead advocating for diversity of building types and ages<sup>8</sup>. Although planners have begun to better integrate residential, retail, office and leisure spaces within schemes and attempt to create subtle visual differences from one building to the next, new-build schemes retain a homogeneity that translates to a lack of diversity in its users.

We also must re-examine our use of materials. This can prove difficult as we expect higher performance from our buildings, the cheapest way to obtain this often being through high carbon impact materials and systems which cannot be easily recycled. It is often more labour-intensive and expensive to dismantle and reuse materials than to hire a wrecking ball<sup>9</sup>. This is in part due to the high cost of labour but also due to the types and quality of materials we use.

One alternative is leasing rather than buying building materials. This is already being trialled by TU Delft<sup>10</sup> who are piloting a

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St Paul's Cathedral, London

35 years



Taj Mahal, India

22 years



Parthenon, Greece

15 years



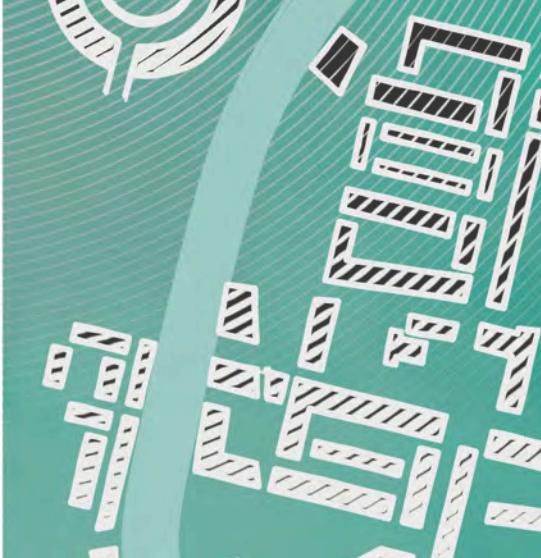
The Circus, Bath

15 years



Bath Riverside, Bath

2 years



façade leasing initiative. The modular façade is the property of the manufacturers, who are responsible for repairing and replacing units. Once the buildings' life is over, they can reclaim and reuse the façade elsewhere. This has already been proposed for a wider range of building materials, such as steel frames<sup>11</sup><sup>12</sup>. This would allow components to be higher quality and ensure their maintenance, compared to the current system where manufacturers and contractors are no longer responsible for the building after completion, meaning that they have limited accountability.

Increasing the accountability of main contractors and developers for the quality of their buildings will be key. The shift from traditional contract types to design and build means that although architects are still assigned most of the responsibility for the performance of the building, key decisions are driven by the contractor and their profit margins. Creating legal and economic incentives for the contractor-client to improve the quality of new construction could be a key, albeit slow step in halting the progress of fast architecture.

What we need is less construction and more consideration. New builds, each a slight variation of the former, lose their shine as soon as they become occupied. They are designed to be bought but not inhabited. Likewise, the neighbourhood loses its shine as its diversity, social, visual, and economic, is pumped out. For this reason slowing down architecture will be key in the development of our cities – we need to take more measured decisions, not only on how to build, but also on whether to build at all, if we want to halt this epidemic of fast architecture.

## MAP JOURNALLING

### Edinburgh

My journey to work in one direction and in the other direction into town - it is along the canal, which was a highlight of tranquility during my time there



### Cismar

Cycling routes in the small town of Cismar, where we would spend our holidays



### Cologne

My most frequent route: from home to the city centre and to the airport



### Bath

From home into town, to the University campus and to Bristol for my 2nd year placement, the route connects all these destinations

### Dénia

My family's journey on holiday in Dénia from the apartment to the beach and the pier

Bamboo that was 'new' a few Chinese New Year's ago

Statue of Buddha, the smell of the incense my father left burning after his morning prayers



## SUMMER HOLIDAY MORNINGS

A scene from ten thousand kilometres away I often daydream of, and the objects that are imprinted on my brain from homesickness. *Kathryn Lee*

## ADDING HILLS AND VALLEYS TO FLATLAND

In a world homogenized into Flatland, Fathom Architects aims to restore uniqueness through place-centred design, preserving identity in architecture. Writing by Justin Nicholls. Graphics by Daria Shiryaeva.

We live in Flatland, a term coined by Lefavre and Tzonis which describes how the world is rapidly becoming homogenised. We inhabit spaces regulated at 21 degrees, have a unified education, share the same information, use the same phone, wear the same clothes and eat the same food. Culturally, socially and physically, everything is becoming the same.

Architecture, being one of the few things that is geographically fixed, can resist this. At Fathom Architects we think deeply to enhance and heighten 'the subjective and emotional attachment people have to a place'<sup>1</sup>. We like to unpick the complexity of a locale to give '...priority to the identity - the ecological, social and cultural features - of the specific site and region to which their projects belong.'<sup>2</sup>

We research a locale's built heritage and context to draw clues from urban character, building massing, façade expression and material selection. An exploration of cultural roots and social heritage can also provide identity.

Why was this place created? What was here before? Who were its inhabitants? How

do we fuse past narratives with what people need in the present?

By folding research into our wider design process, we hope to create places that carefully reflect their unique identity - to enhance local quirks and characteristics. Put simply, if you were to pick a building up and place it somewhere else, it shouldn't make any sense. With some deeper thinking and a little extra care, we hope to add some hills and valleys back into flatland.

### References:

- [1] Tim Cresswell - Place - A Short Introduction 2004 p7
- [2] Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis - Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalisation 2012 p viii

### Further Reading:

- Tim Cresswell - Place - A Short Introduction 2004
- Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis - Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalisation 2012
- Rasmussen London - the Unique City
- Paperspace Issue 19, Fathom Architects - Weaving Facades with Identity 2023

### Almshouses, Blackfriars Road, London

This building comprises 62 contemporary almshouses for local elderly residents in need along with community uses and landscape, supported by a 22,500sqm workspace.

The façade is inspired by the historic use of Blackfriars as tenter grounds. Richly detailed terracotta façades reference the 18th century textile process of dyed fabric being stretched and pinned outside to dry - conceived as pinned fabric between tenterhooks, articulated with pleating, gathering and softly curved corners.

Community spaces at ground level open onto 950sqm of new landscaped outdoor space which works hard to be both public and communal, screened and open. The site's urban grain has necessitated a new type of space - neither London Garden Square nor traditional Almshouse development but something else - something rooted in its place.



### No6 Babmaes St, St James's London

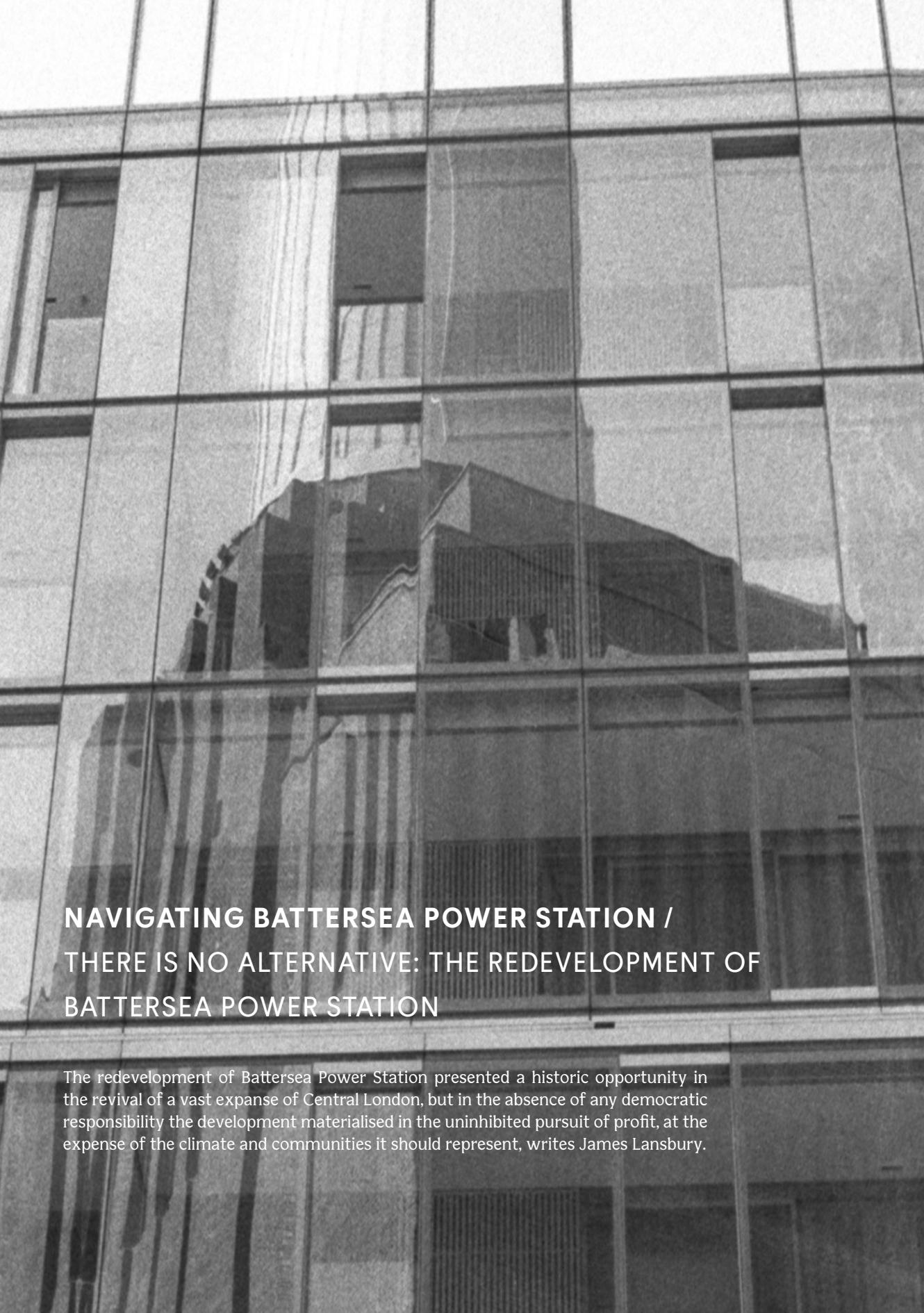
A new concept in social and flexible workspace for The Crown Estate, created in response to evolving office and wellbeing needs. Celebrating the raw concrete shell of the existing 1970s structure and combining it with finely crafted interiors has created a characterful urban sanctuary with a variety of spaces for people to connect and re-charge. Design inspiration was taken from the heritage of St James's as well as art and furniture from the 1970's.



### The Pod, White City Place, London

A mobile podcasting studio, designed to reference the BBC's broadcasting heritage of Stanhope's new White City Place development. The concept draws on loudspeakers and the movement of sound to create a disrupted cube with a bold pattered façade generated from the first spoken words transmitted: 'One, two, three, four. Is it snowing where you are Mr Thiessen?' A bespoke digital script translated the recording into 350,000 printed pixels using a colour palette drawn from DNCO's branding for White City Place.





## NAVIGATING BATTERSEA POWER STATION / THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE: THE REDEVELOPMENT OF BATTERSEA POWER STATION

The redevelopment of Battersea Power Station presented a historic opportunity in the revival of a vast expanse of Central London, but in the absence of any democratic responsibility the development materialised in the uninhibited pursuit of profit, at the expense of the climate and communities it should represent, writes James Lansbury.

In the approach to Battersea Power Station from Chelsea Bridge, 'A sense of place' is stated before your descent to the riverside path along the Thames, but as the spectacle of the redevelopment is introduced, these words become lost. Once contextless, now challenged by reflections, the mirrored landscape confronts you with advertised luxury and consumerism.

London is a constantly changing city. With cranes as much of a recognisable feature to the skyline as any landmark, the city's position as one of the financial capitals of the world is continuously demonstrated within the built environment. Where capital has focused much of its attention to forever transform is Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station, an area historically inhabited by light industry and dominated by the proud cathedral of industry that now stands as testament to the economic and social relations of modern London. Navigating this space provides an understanding of how social order is imposed by architecture, and its devastation enacted on cities.

*As your vision narrows below Grosvenor Railway Bridge, the constant monotony heard overhead relates to the previous image of trains passing parallel to your movement crossing the Thames, with the image of verticality and cranes at oblique angles beyond this a symbol of a changing London. The bridge, along with its brick arches extending along the tracks now sheltering restaurants and bars, remain as few reminders of what populated the area before cranes, steel, faux brick and concrete gained supremacy, symbolising the economic activity that once had hegemony over Battersea. Where fragments survived here, at Nine Elms they saw total defeat, the past devastated to allow a complete social model of neoliberalism to triumph. This mentality of conquest allows the area*

to be estranged from the urban fabric of London, renouncing past social relations and the communities it overshadows.

The centrepiece of Nine Elms, the new US Embassy, brings monumentality to the district otherwise characterised by forgettable assertions of the buildings in its vicinity. A remarkably defensive structure, a moat, ditch and secluded steel and concrete barricade are utilised to allow protection from every approach, and this landscaping as fortification has more understanding as military engineering than any aesthetic pursuit. At contrast to 'hostile vehicle mitigation'<sup>1</sup>, this architecture of paranoia is at variance with the circular road encompassing Battersea Power Station, that conforms to the ascendancy of car-oriented infrastructure on the urban fabric of London, and whose justification doesn't seem to reach further than an avenue for the procession of supercars.

Decommissioned in 1983, coal ceased to be unloaded to the icon of London during the time that its mines increasingly became the site of the pitched battle of Thatcher's tenure, its demise a symbol of a changing Britain. This period did not only witness transition in energy production, but the advancement of neoliberalism in the United Kingdom, that would become the ideological basis for the redevelopment. Further detached from its embodiment of public utility following the privatisation of electricity seven years after its closure, the vision of shareholders would proceed to exercise total authority over Battersea Power Station.

Beyond the overpass, and after nondescript glass apartments, an incredible juxtaposition is revealed between the previous house of mirrors and this colossal monument of industry. Confronting the river, it defines an era as



strikingly as its redevelopment does of our contemporary era. Once providing a fifth of London's demand for power when electricity increasingly began to be an aspect of every home, it now serves a far smaller and more exclusive demographic of London.

Advancing towards Battersea Power Station, its governance immediately astounds, the impact felt here indifferent to modern efforts to restrict its monumentality from sight. In your position as its opposite, its complete visual domination renders any attempts to relate to its scale inadequate. This effect is emphasised in the verticality of the

art deco ornamentation, the enthusiasm towards the improvements brought to the lives of Londoners articulated in brick, as a cathedral of the twentieth century.

Parallels extend far beyond the scale of Battersea Power Station to ecclesiastical architecture, as association between the temple of industry and St Paul's Cathedral is visible in their enduring relationships to the skyline of the capital. London's modern expression has challenged the silhouettes of both monuments, as St Paul's unmistakable impression on the skyline of London once transcended the city, but is now surpassed by it. The same revolution has empowered glass and steel at Battersea Power Station, where shadows are cast onto the brick cathedral by construction adjacent. Ecclesiastical power has been surpassed by inaccessible economic might, and Battersea's 'industrial melodrama' has conformed to the same fate, its resignation testament to the dominance of economic relationships that define the modern city.

The new life proclaimed of Battersea Power Station only truly begins beyond the façade, and it is within this great expanse where the corruption of this monument to a cathedral of consumerism is evident in high-end retail, inescapable advertisement and idolatry of commodity. Desecrated from their once admirable use, the colossal turbine halls are now dedicated to competing images of consumerist satisfaction, a transformation which subverts this vast space to become incredibly restrictive. The only activity permitted is attained through expense, and within this interior where history has become ornament, life is distorted and appropriated for commercial interests.

Whilst it is true that all architecture is political, a greater definition is that architecture is a material representation of

social relations. The *tabula rasa* of Nine Elms and occupation of Battersea Power Station exhibit an ideology of human experience defined by economic relationships, present in the initiation, form and function of the development, and is further experienced in your sense of detachment whilst navigating the area.

The recognition of architecture as the most expensive art form is rendered inadequate to communicate the vast wealth associated with the £9BN redevelopment of Battersea Power Station. After being designated 'underutilised', the land was identified as an 'opportunity area' in 2004, endorsing it for development, but with this vision beginning to be realised in its totality, what is clearly exhibited is instead lost opportunity and opportunism.

Before its current manifestation was absolute, various proposals for Battersea Power Station were announced. In 1983, a competition by the Central Electricity Board elevated a design proposing a museum of industrial heritage, and this was succeeded in 1986 by a plan from the developer of Alton Towers for a high-tech 'Fun Palace', the aspirations of Cedric Price<sup>2</sup>. Praised by Margaret Thatcher among its industrial ruins, this vision was abandoned 4 years later, and the land changed hands multiple times accompanied by various excited proposals until in 2012 a Malaysian consortium secured Battersea Power Station.

The consequences of this acquisition have been dramatic. A gated community of luxury flats occupies the monument alongside international luxury brands, whilst 11,000 families remain on a waiting list for housing in the same borough<sup>3</sup>. A development that should have resulted in at the very least 1270 'affordable' homes produced only 386, with a 50% aspirational 'affordable' housing target and a minimum of 35% negotiated down to 15%, and then

further reduced to 9% citing 'technical issues'<sup>4</sup>. The redefinition of affordable housing as 80% of market value in 2011<sup>5</sup> has assisted in the monetisation of even this provision, to the point in which even these statistics are meaningless to convey if any social benevolence at all has been provided by the development. A victory for the developers, empowered to realise £16 million pound luxury penthouses<sup>6</sup> and the notorious 'Sky Pool' that looks down with disdain upon communities where 40% of children live in poverty<sup>7</sup>. Grand expressions of modernity contrast with a monument of faded industry, alongside the juxtaposition between ostentatious wealth and austerity.





Here, at the frontier of new London, the division between the two Batterseas is strikingly defined. Whilst cranes began to overlook Patmore Estate to materialise the domineering vision of shareholders, Wandsworth Foodbank opened its doors to address the increasing crisis facing the area. Shadows are cast by modernity onto the working class neighbourhood that has become a symbol of London's inequality. Once possessing a view of the Houses of Parliament, this now disenfranchised community is marginalised by capital.

*'Can we become agents of our own context again?' - Anthony Gormley*

The redevelopment of Battersea Power Station presented a historic opportunity in the revival of a vast expanse of Central London, but in the absence of any democratic responsibility the development materialised in the uninhibited pursuit of profit, at the expense of the climate and communities it should represent.

Design, architecture, established this culturally inhospitable and socially destructive environment, with contributions by Frank Gehry and Norman Foster among others central aspects in the triumph of the proposal and its subsequent dominion. This 'social reign of appearances'<sup>9</sup> deflects and dissipates political critique when the narrative of the developers has hegemony.

An alternative social model confronts your visit to Battersea Power Station, visible in the position of Churchill Gardens beyond the Thames. Riverside social housing, in conflict with the thought of discarding social tenants to be out of view and where land values are lowest, represents an ideology in which citizens are not subordinate to capital.

Moving beyond the vast interior, progressing through Malaysia Square necessitates observation of a notably underwhelming space, the imagination of Bjarke Ingels Group. Its name echoes Canada Square of Canary Wharf, dedicated to the original developers of the financial stronghold, where this 'model of private ownership and control'<sup>10</sup> truly began in London. Continuing, to visit Patmore Estate is to reject the spatial direction provided by the development, and witness 'affordable' housing provided by the project rejected to the peripheries of the site alongside garages and service entrances where land values are less advantageous.

Designed 'to accommodate a balanced cross-section of society, with the highest standards of housing for all'<sup>10</sup>, it demonstrates an alternative avenue for ambition.

Just beyond the domination of the Nine Elms 'opportunity area' is Bonnington Square, a verdant community established in resistance to demolition. Through direct and legal action, once desolate and bomb damaged streets now accommodate flourishing wilderness, a housing co-operative, community gardens, and an alternative narrative to the 'regeneration' presented one street away.

Along the river is also the South Bank, where arts and cultural venues, restaurants, shops, co-operative housing, green areas and facilities for residents co-exist to create a beloved urban environment. A proposal with great influence from the The Coin Street Action Group, named after a humble street behind the Thames, its assembly saved the Oxo Tower and 'successfully incorporated a social focus into the developers' agenda'<sup>11</sup>, at odds with the tyranny of financial speculation.

To capitulate to the notion that 'there is no alternative' to free market fundamentalism is to be in opposition of history, and its prolific examples of community defiance to demolition, derogation and the dictatorship of capital. Alternatives to the neoliberal city exist, even under its omnipresent influence, because human behaviour is so profoundly at variance with it. Whilst the economic terrain is not to our advantage, it is us who have agency over what narrative has cultural hegemony.

The transformation of Battersea Power Station has not diminished its status as a monument, but it has redefined its symbolism.

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# YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Discussing food through the lens of culture and identity, You Are What You Eat explores the relationships and communities built around food and the intimacy ingrained in one's eating habits. *Elliott Bryant-Brown and Olivia Oben.*

Cooking first became a part of my life when I arrived at university, daunted by the autonomy of adulthood. It didn't take long for eating to turn from a comfort to a chore, from my Mom's roast potatoes to for-the-sake-of-it pasta in deadline week. My appetite became inversely proportional to my workload. It took a lot to learn to love food again, a journey typified by tiny, trivial moments with the people I love: we sat in kitchens we would never see again, having conversations we would forget about. Always unified by and indulging in the meal in front of us.

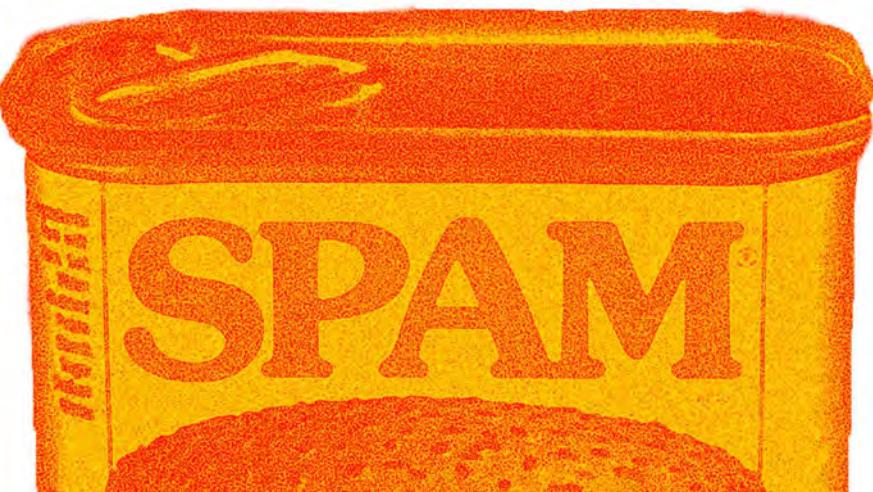
Since moving to London, I have shared many of these moments with Olivia, whose love for food transcends the table, its influence seeping into her work and identity as a designer. As such, her recent publication, You Are What You Eat, explores the socio-cultural importance of food in relation to the Filipino experience. In an effort to more deeply understand her methodology, style, and motives, I asked Olivia about identity, curation, homesickness, the city, and her relationship to food. This is why You Are What You Eat, in her own words.

I'm a designer and photographer: I like to communicate through photos. I

focus on socio-cultural themes, mainly themes pertaining to the Filipino culture and experience, which is pretty broad. Anything can be the Filipino experience if you're Filipino, which is why I want to document it. I want to capture the nuances and differences in what we experience, but also the similarities that arise from how we were raised. I value my identity and its influence on my work, but I'm not held back by it; I'm not confined to my own perspective. I don't want to approach the theme of identity or examine the Filipino experience through a generalist lens -

**the Philippines is a big country, we have so many different cultures and languages - it's misleading to regard it as a monolith through monolithic experiences.**

Homesickness certainly plays into my work: being away from home made me realise how much I cherish and value it. Being away from everything that I've grown accustomed to has taught me the value of identity and who I am as a person, as a Filipino. I think the concept of home away from home is really important to me now: homesickness has pushed me to be more perceptive and observant of my culture.



**I've struggled between two worlds - Manila and London - my heart is split between two places, and I don't know if I'll ever feel that sense of solid home again.**

But I realised that home is all about people: home is where the people I love are. The people within London certainly inspire my work - their stories, cultures, and experiences - more so than the city itself. Within my personal experience in the Philippines beauty is very linear, it's one thing, it's a standard. In London, although there is still a standard, beauty is more complex. It comes in different shapes and forms; people are so open to different types of beauty.

**Cooking and eating are so important to me. Cooking allows me to connect with my food; it reminds me that food isn't a curse but a blessing.**

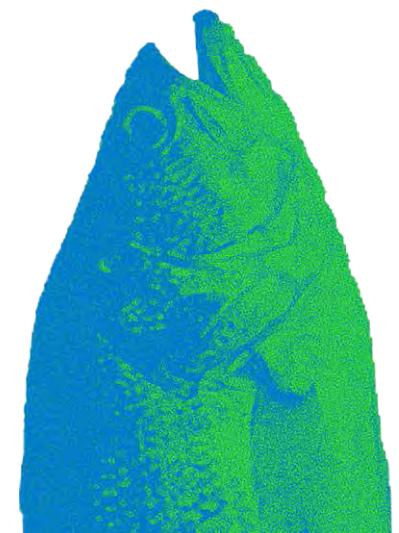
It's a tool that allows me to connect and bond with people: I'm really thankful to food for the relationships it has given me. It's rekindled so much love inside me. I want to show people that food is so important, not only for our health but also socio-culturally. It brings people together, it communicates love, it has so many cultural ties, and is so important to our day-to-day lives. I want people to be more appreciative of the nuances in their food life. I want them to explore their own relationship with food, and if this relationship is negative (I want to reach people who have varying experiences with food) I want them to rekindle their relationship with food and realise its importance again. Food is good for you; food brings people together.

For the publication, I reached out to friends and family for written works such as essays, poetry, and recipes. I chose people who I knew had a very unique relationship

with and perspective on food: I wanted them to share that. My mom taught me everything about food; she taught me that food is a way to show someone how much you love and care for them. She's a trained chef; I remember her making me gourmet chicken nuggets as a child, which was just so special for me. She's why I love food and I'm so thankful to her for that.

**You Are What You Eat is dedicated to her.**

Read the full publication here:  
[graduateshowcase.arts.ac.uk/project/430065/cover](http://graduateshowcase.arts.ac.uk/project/430065/cover)



Behind: twins, quezon city (photographed by Olivia)



## WHAT'S PULLING THE STRINGS?

Karoline Woggon untangles the origins of puppetry, its storytelling function, and its capacity to bridge cultures and convey complex narratives through simple figures.

Whilst my recent interest in puppets developed through the internet - with research, documentaries and watching filmed performances - I remembered that I had actually been introduced to this art form quite extensively as a child. From finger puppets on the bedroom ceiling at night, to learning physics in elementary school using Chinese shadow puppetry, and Punch and Judy productions in school. My mother also has a few puppets that I played with as a child. Hand puppets made by artisans in East Germany, and two traditional rod puppets from Bali – all exquisitely beautiful art pieces.

Even as a child I was enamoured with the careful craftsmanship in the puppets I saw. I didn't understand the time or effort that went into them, but somehow, I still revered these objects - I understood that they were precious, and would take any excuse to take them out and admire their faces. Children have a great curiosity and patience to study the world around them - this childish awe is always present in my memories of the puppets.

In my recent research, I came across many different definitions for puppets and puppetry, as well as countless different types of puppet forms. I tried to keep my definition as broad as possible: *A puppet is a figure or object that is manipulated by a puppeteer, either directly or through a secondary link. A puppet is commonly modelled after a human, animal or mythical/religious being and has been found in almost every culture.*

The origins of puppetry are not entirely known, but it is theorised that the first puppets developed in ancient India or Egypt, perhaps even 6000 years ago. These would most likely have been figures modelled after humans or gods, and used in ritualistic practices. Throughout time, different cultures developed many different

forms of puppetry, but it's main function has always remained the same. Namely, to tell stories, be those for ritualistic, spiritual, moral, or entertainment purposes. Puppetry developed independently in many different countries, with different formats in different geographical locations. Despite this, puppetry can be seen as a bridge between all these different cultures and generations, since it was used to pass down knowledge and stories through time. Since most cultures have had a form of puppetry, this speaks to the idea of puppetry responding to something deeper within the human experience that leads to this art form.

There are many different types of puppets all over the world, but I wanted to name a few. Shadow puppets made of leather or paper developed in China as far back as 3000 years. Initially seen as something just for royalty, it soon spread as an art form for all classes.

Interestingly, Vietnamese puppetry is one of the only forms of water puppetry. Here, the puppets seem to walk on a shallow bed of water, which disguises the rods used to move the puppets. This developed as a form of education and entertainment on the flooded rice fields that were worked in Vietnam 700 years ago – it is still prominent in the country today.

The traditional form of Japanese puppetry is one of the most famous: Bunraku puppetry. This involves a life-sized puppet with complex movements being operated by two or three puppeteers that each have control of a different area. These shows originated as a way to tell religious and moral stories. Such is the value of this traditional puppetry in Japan that puppeteers and puppet makers hold the honour of being 'National Living Treasures'.

In Ancient Greece, puppets were also used – probably in the years before the theatre became common. They were needed to act out the scenes found in written texts by great authors.

Italy had a large impact on puppetry in Europe – specifically marionette puppets, which were initially used in churches before they were banned. After this ban, the shows became more daring and focused more on entertainment and comedy. The puppetry forms seen in Britain, France and Germany were inspired by Italian 'commedia dell'arte'. In England, Punch and Judy emerged as the most common puppetry theatre, whereas in Germany and Eastern Europe puppetry was and still is often set to opera music and can last hours long.

The modern, western idea of a puppet just being something to entertain children with, is relatively new and also mostly inaccurate. Nevertheless, puppetry in the West still has an adult audience – puppets can now be commonly found on the stage with human performers. Examples can be found in many West End shows such as The Lion King, War Horse and even Frozen, in order to create large-scale characters. There are also puppet shows that perform ballet pieces, tell traditional stories, or perform opera.

Overall, puppetry is a fascinating subject of study. Almost every child has a memory of puppetry, be that as simple as making shadow puppets with their hands on the walls, watching the Muppets, or sock puppets made to stave off boredom. The prolificacy of this medium of storytelling means it must innately hold something that makes it so universal. It could be its simplistic nature, being that it is an easy medium to set music or a story to. Or maybe there is something within human nature to enjoy this influence over an object that almost seems

human. Or perhaps there is a simple delight to see such performances, something that speaks to people as art or music does – a desire to see more within these figures and believe their illusion.



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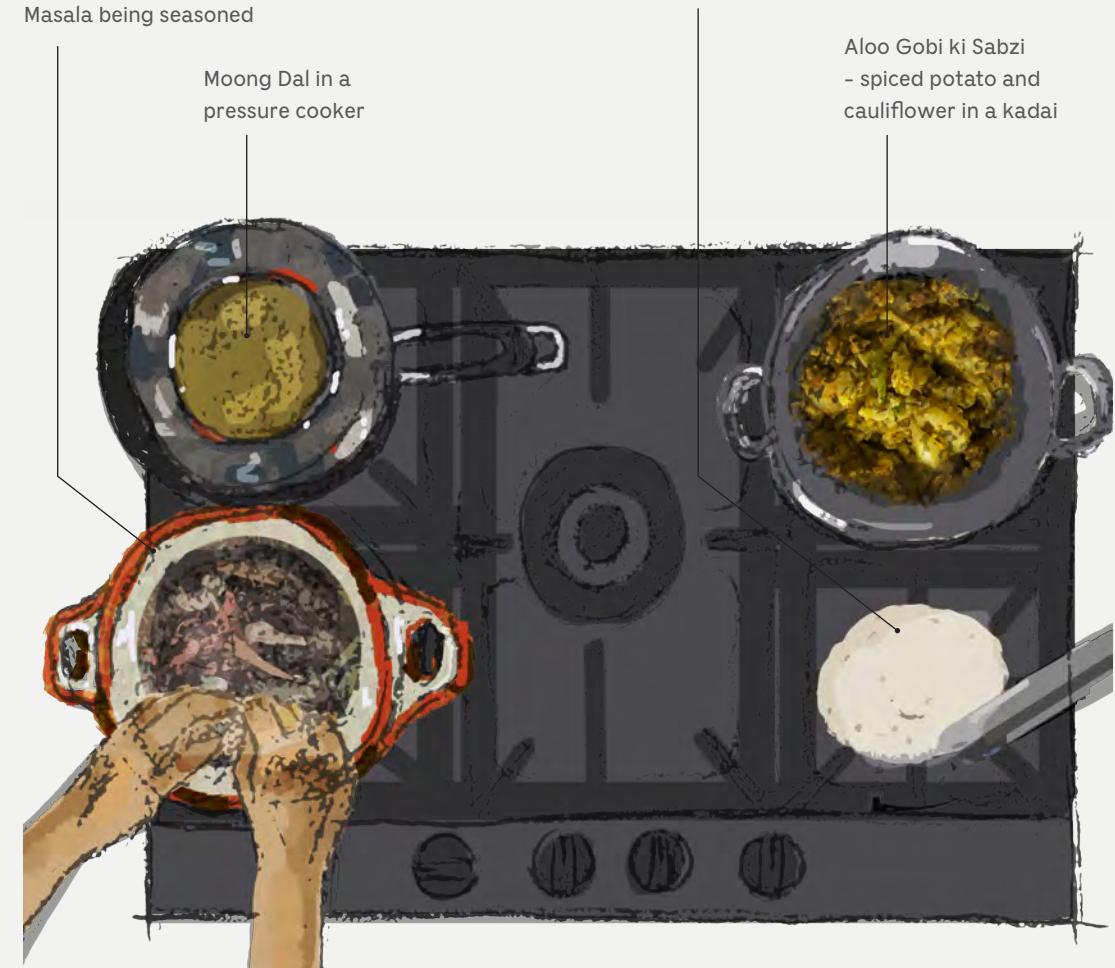
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Whole spices for Garam Masala being seasoned

Moong Dal in a pressure cooker

Tava (stovetop) roti being inflated over a flame.

Aloo Gobi ki Sabzi – spiced potato and cauliflower in a kadai



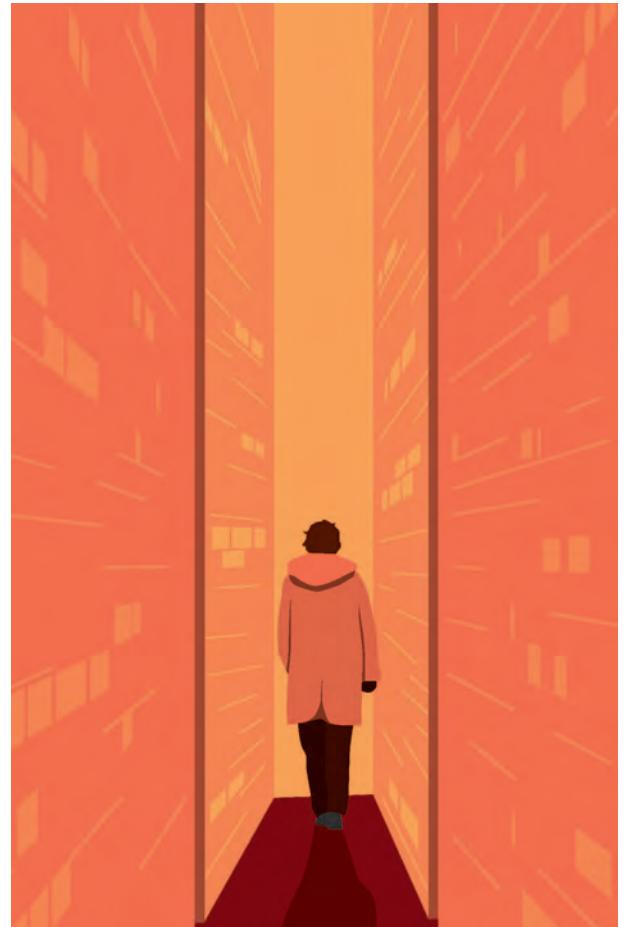
## A TYPICAL MEAL IN AN INDIAN KITCHEN

The beginnings of the familiar garam masala start off by roasting multiple types of whole spices, which are then crushed using a mortar and pestle. This aromatic mixture is used in vegetable dishes (sabzi) like aloo gobi. This graphic shows the journey of the garam masala on the setting of a stove top.

This is accompanied by moong dal, a protein-packed lentil dish, and roti, which is an airy Indian bread. A gas stove is essential for this type of cooking as the roti needs to be heated on a direct flame to inflate. **Anushka Gupta**

## ALLEYWAYS: URBAN ATTENTION SEEKERS

Embarking on an exploration of alleyways, Viviana Vargas Sotelo offers a heartfelt ode to these often overlooked urban gems. This journey delves into the nurturing conditions that enable alleyways to thrive and their invaluable role in enhancing the urban landscape. Graphics by Arunima Satish.



London - An energetic explosion of movement, mess and never-ending noise.

Having grown up in the city and also experienced living away from it, I've developed a unique appreciation for its colourful chaos. With seemingly endless opportunities for entertainment and learning, it's no surprise so many people set up shop here. I'm privileged to be a Londoner and, as such, wholeheartedly embrace these experiences and the hustle they come with.

That being said, even the most outgoing of individuals need moments of solitude, and sometimes I'm not particularly social.

When studying for exams, I would often visit Westminster Reference Library, seeking a change of surroundings and an excuse to get out of the house. Sheltered from the hustle and bustle of London, I found solace in the library's quiet and tranquil atmosphere, offering a welcome escape from the hectic pace of daily life. The library was an incredibly valuable resource and one I took for granted when I found myself in quarantine in 2020.

Whenever I made the journey, I had a choice of transport: I could walk, a route that would take over an hour but felt worthwhile when the spirit of *carpe diem* struck, or I could opt for public transport. The library itself lies beyond the northern edge of Trafalgar Square, easily accessible by bus or tube, with both leaving me on the square's southern edge. Upon arrival, a straightforward stroll across the square and through a passageway nestled between the two National Gallery buildings brings you to your destination.

On one particular occasion, a scorching but brilliantly bright June summer's day, I embarked on this exact journey, expecting to encounter its usual smoothness and efficiency. Instead, I came across an impasse;

The Square was closed.

With a furrowed brow and an exasperated sigh, I altered my route around towards the passageway, the heat already forming beads of sweat on my forehead. This path, or the Jubilee Walkway as it is formally known, provided a cool respite from the harsh sun. Crafted from Portland limestone, it radiated a warm, inviting gold hue as the sun's rays bounced off its walls (AIA, 2019).

The space between the two buildings isn't excessively narrow, yet it provides ample shade. Adding to this shelter is a skybridge, raised one or two storeys above ground to allow visitors to move between buildings without exiting the complex.

This arrangement arises from the separation of the Sainsbury Wing entrance from the main Wilkins Building. As I walked underneath, a smile graced my lips, and I instinctively slowed my pace anticipating the welcome coolness.

Here, I felt safe and content. The



passageway's meticulous maintenance ensured its appeal, even on cloudy days or at night, with well-placed lighting and a pristine condition. The Jubilee Walkway connects Trafalgar and Leicester Square - both pivotal meeting points and entertainment hubs - each possessing a slightly different character. The passageway thus acts as a crucial viaduct, ensuring a smooth flow of foot traffic between the two districts. This is an alleyway of success.

That being said, not every narrow space grants passersby the same experience. The Jubilee Walkway can be considered an alleyway, but there are numerous others which radiate a different atmosphere.

Researchers from the Journal of Real Estate Research in the Greater Dallas-Fort Worth-Denton metroplex in the US concluded that 'alleyway subdivision design discounts sale prices [of properties] about 5%... because [they] can attract criminal activities... [and] are often poorly maintained' (Guttery, 2002). This salient fact sadly holds true for many built-up areas, including both cities and suburbia. In contrast, if these alleyways were well kept and looked after, they could potentially adopt the look and feel of the Jubilee Walkway. However, achieving this transformation demands significant effort and a heightened awareness from the local governing body to uphold high standards.

Although the Palladian style of the National Gallery may not share an overt aesthetic connection with the Walkway, it's undeniable that parallels exist between it and the alleyways nestled in the heart of Bath. The entire city, built in this signature style – here using Bath stone in place of Portland – allows for the incredibly narrow streets to have such enticing charm. The low scale of buildings allows for the light to cascade into the streets, whilst the undulating topography adds an element of intrigue, as hidden gems lie beyond the initial sightlines, guiding pedestrians along unexpected alleyways. The city's overall cleanliness contributes positively to this charm, amplifying the allure of alleyways such as The Corridor to the thousands of visitors that pass through every day.

As a result of their popularity and seamless integration within the city's must-see spaces, these alleyways have ascended in importance within the urban hierarchy. This shift holds particular significance given the rising trend of pedestrianisation in Bath and the gradual reduction of vehicular presence. I feel safe in Bath, just as I felt down the Jubilee Walkway. While I've never visited Dallas, I've certainly explored alleyways in various cities worldwide, including

London, where feelings of insecurity have occasionally surfaced.

This attention given to the tiniest segments of an urban landscape, I believe, serves as a crucial determinant of its safety, and is often overlooked. 'Show me the alleyways of a city, I shall predict your city's prosperity', said no one in particular, but I believe this essence must be considered and integrated holistically when planning new constructions or retrofitting existing structures in urban environments. Bath serves as an exemplary model for how cities should become and, slowly but surely, more are aligning with its principles. 'Alleyways are attention seekers', I concluded – much like people. At times, they simply need a little bit of love to flourish.

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Artwork from family friend in memory of her dog that passed away

Broken microwave and dishwasher reused for storage

Plastic grocery bags saved and reused as trash bags

Oven used more for storage than baking or roasting



## EIGHTEEN YEARS

This is the kitchen of the apartment in Hong Kong I have lived in since I was born. It was renovated in 2005 – now the kitchen shows the patina of eighteen years, the wear of every meal and memorabilia. Electronics are only disposed of when they are in complete disrepair and removable, resulting in defunct equipment being re-purposed for storage. *Anais Lau*

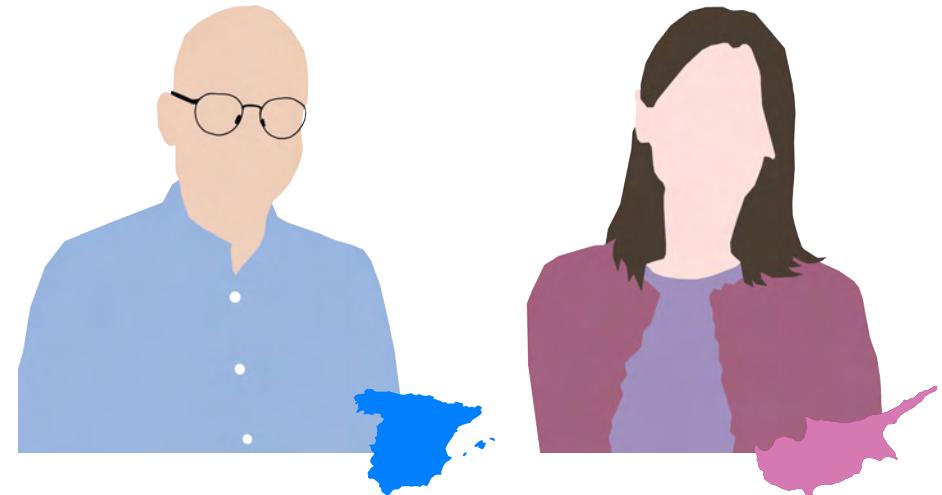
## FOREIGN TALENT

In her investigation into the lives of international architects in the UK, Daria Shiryaeva explores four perspectives on the industry from those who have moved from abroad: their challenges, achievements, reflections, and future hopes.

Since I arrived in the UK six years ago, I have had the same questions and uncertainty: how will I be perceived in this country when I enter the workforce? Will I be welcomed, or would I have been better off at home?

This question became more and more relevant as I began studying architecture at university. I feared I had made a mistake, and began comparing the educational system of the UK to that of other countries, questioning if those countries took a greater technical approach to architectural education than England.

As I gained connections with other international professionals and students within the architecture industry, I realised the commonality of my struggles and uncertainty. In light of this, I sought to talk to four of my colleagues - Antonio, Marina, HoSung, and Ru - and investigate their concerns, differences, and aspirations as international architects.



Antonio, originally from Valencia, Spain, came to the UK due to the crisis that hit Spain and Southern European countries. Whilst comparing our systems of architectural education, we discovered that the approach in Spain is similar to that of my home country, Russia. There is more focus on the understanding of building services, the structure of design, and construction. However, Antonio praises the three-part structure of architectural education in the UK, which he says allows students to gain more practical skills and a hands-on experience early in their career. In Spain, on the other hand, becoming an architect requires the completion of a five-year Bachelor's program and a one-year Master's course<sup>1</sup>.

Marina is a Part 1 Architectural Assistant in London who completed her Bachelor's degree at the Bartlett School of Architecture. She was born and raised in Cyprus. Marina wanted to become an architect from an early age, and, like most aspiring architects, thought the subject was a perfect marriage of arts and sciences. However, she has since been disillusioned, and says: 'the role of the architect today is mostly design or art focused; it may not have been exactly as I envisioned, but I was never disappointed by the outcome'. The most striking differences, for her, are in the attitudes of architects towards heritage: 'Unfortunately, Cyprus does not have as strict regulations as the UK regarding preserving historical buildings and sites, which has led to the destruction of many beautiful old buildings, nature conservation areas, and even historical sites. It is an island with many different occupants, which translates directly into its rich architectural styles. However, in recent decades, the island's cityscape has grown rapidly without regard to its cultural roots. Of course, similar trends are evident in many countries, but the efforts to regulate this phenomenon in the UK seem more effective.'



HoSung is a Part 2 Architectural Assistant from Architectural Association School, however, he got his first bachelors degree in Seoul, South Korea. In his response, he emphasised that the profession of architecture is very closely linked to politics. 'When I thought about learning architecture while majoring in social welfare,' he says, 'I believe I connected the profession of an architect with its political potential. Democratic approaches to architectural projects and tackling significant topics such as housing, public facilities, and cultural facilities were appealing to me.' It is true, with the election of the new President of RIBA, Muyiwa Oki, it is becoming increasingly clear that the responsibility of the architect is not only to consider the physical aspects of a scheme but also the socioeconomic, ensuring an efficient and accessible space for all users.

Ru is a recent Part 2 graduate from the University of Bath who moved from Malaysia to the UK for higher education. During his architectural education in the UK, Ru's main challenge was understanding art, literature, and popular works referred to in lectures that were more familiar to home students. With the curriculum typically and disproportionately focused on the Western canon, this problem is not uncommon. All students would benefit if the curriculum paid greater attention to Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe, broadening architectural knowledge and encouraging independent exploration.

Ru says "...I don't think nowadays there is much difference between the UK and Malaysia [...]. It is almost impossible to name a 'Malaysian' style for its vernacular architecture due to its rich and complex cultural history. However, the early years of Independence and the formation of Malaysia as a new federation during the 50s and 60s have seen local and foreign architects creating a collection of significant buildings - for example the Parliament Building and Independence Stadium -with their unique take on modernism for the new nation.' The book, *The Merdeka Interviews*, provides a great reference to Malaysian architecture of that period through transcripts of first-hand interviews with architects, engineers and artists involved.'

It is challenging to find a job in the UK due to bureaucratic restrictions implemented by the government. However, the situation is slowly improving, with roundtable discussions in 2018 clarifying to the RIBA the desire of international architects for flexibility. This has led to the institution to call for the number of visas approved annually to be uncapped.<sup>2</sup>

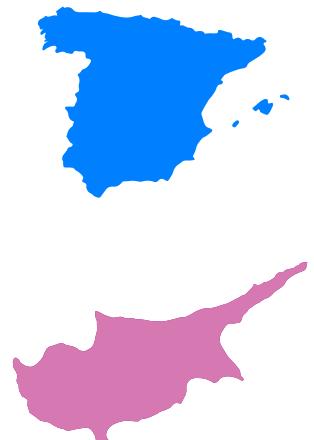
The stories of Antonio, Marina, Ru, and HoSung show that every international architect brings value to the drafting table. It is unfair only to allow a small selection of large London-based firms to enjoy that. Making the UK a more welcoming country for international talent by abolishing unnecessary 'red tape' will give foreign architects the confidence to plan their future with more certainty.

In my interview with HoSung he cleverly analogised the architectural industry and the need for engagement with international talent: 'A diverse group, based on various approaches and interpretations, has the potential to create outcomes that go beyond conventional and repetitive results, bringing forth previously unprecedented possibilities. In agriculture, a crop with only one characteristic is highly susceptible to a specific disease or pest, but a variety developed with multiple genetic traits becomes more resistant to existing diseases or environmental risks. In a similar way, the more external perspectives are integrated into ideas, the more creativity and healthier ideas may emerge. This is an important question for creating a more diverse and leading architectural culture in the UK, given its internationally significant position'

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## THROUGH THE SPACES OF BE[LONG]ING: WONG KAR-WAI'S HAPPY TOGETHER (1997)

Anais Lau analyses the cinematic spaces in Wong Kar-wai's 'Happy Together' (1997), unraveling the complexities of displacement, *non-lieux*, and queer identity in a transient world. Graphics by Daria Shiryaeva.

### PROLOGUE

Provisionally titled *The Bueno Aires Affair* during production, based on the works of Argentine novelist Manuel Puig, *Happy Together* seemed to have taken a detour from what it was intended to be. As cinematographer Christopher Doyle recollects, 'We came to Argentina to 'defamiliarise' ourselves by moving away from the spaces... of the world we know so well... So why do we still tend towards bars, barber shops, fast-food joints and trains?... We're stuck with our own concerns and perceptions.'<sup>1</sup>

This may be best linked to Augé's *non-lieu*, or non-places in English, described as 'space[s] which cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity'.<sup>2</sup> The characters' experiences align with Augé's observation on a paradox:

'a foreigner lost in a country... can feel at home... only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores, or hotel chains.'<sup>3</sup>

### NON-LIEUX

*Non-lieu* are 'characterised by a... detachment between an individual and the space traversed as they... become 'merely a gaze'<sup>4</sup>. Merriman notes the play with the French legal term *non-lieu*, the court judgement denying proceedings due to a lack of evidence – here there is a denial of the event and the space<sup>5</sup>. Though, Augé's observations of *non-lieux* are limited by his position as an affluent French professor, and Merriman argues it should be read as one man's reflections on his encounters in late-capitalism. Indeed, the characters in *Happy Together* are queer working-class Asian immigrants, contrary to Augé's status in 1980–90s Paris.

*Happy Together* makes proper use of the *non-lieu* of Buenos Aires, evidenced in the frustrations of the film crew when they found themselves returning to familiar spaces. Wong recalls: 'One of the location managers was so mad at me...

fig 1. The apartment in *Hotel Riviera*.

### ROUTES

'We have so many beautiful buildings and streets in Buenos Aires. Why do you always pick those back alleys, those poor buildings?'<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps most saliently it barely grazes even the idea of Buenos Aires; as Provencher notes that the normativity underlying analyses of Fai and Po-wing's 'lack of assimilation' into Buenos Aires consistently served 'as the basis of scholarly criticism of the film as being about anything but Argentina'.<sup>7</sup>

### CHANGE OF SCENERY

Opening with a scene of Fai and Po-wing's passports being stamped at immigration, one may be reminded of Augé's observation of airport arrivals, 'the user of the non-place is in contractual relations with it (or with the powers that govern it)... [and] is reminded when necessary that the contract exists... [that] relating to the individual identity of the contracting party'.<sup>8</sup>

This marks their passports with an evident act of identification, not only in arrival but also in departure. In one of their fights, Fai hides Po-wing's passport in the apartment, refusing to return it in an act of possession, as a denial of his autonomy, denoting the passport as an item of identity and movement – a permit of sorts and one of the few items of identification between the state and the traveller.

### HOTEL ARGENTINA

Fai and Po-wing's main domestic environment is set in a *non-lieu* – a rundown room in the *Hotel Riviera*. Van de Velde notes the paradoxical nature of this domesticity where the setting of their home in a hotel

'undermines the stability of... home and aligns domestic space more with spaces of transit... bring[ing] with it a lack of rootedness... [and] permanence', a reminder of their exile.

The public-facing counterpart to the transient domesticity are Fai's workplaces and their associated spaces, such as *Bar Sur* and the Chinese restaurant. As much as these spaces are *non-lieux* – dissociated from the locality of Buenos Aires, they are where Fai practised most of his social relations beyond Po-wing, connecting with other Chinese-Asian diaspora and meeting the Taiwanese traveller Chang.

The *abattoir* in particular bore a powerful depiction of homesickness. In the after-hours of Buenos Aires, Fai realises his night shift closes a temporal distance between him and Hong Kong, and imagines in his mind an inverted cameo of driving on one of its highways.

Highways are one of the many other spaces which Augé delineates as *non-lieux*, though this instance is not as clear cut: when thinking of a specific *non-lieu* in thinking about home, it cannot be said that it remains as a *non-lieu* anymore — it has

become a place of memory and belonging. Now Fai is [day]dreaming of

**an 'abstract space [that became] strangely familiar... over time'.**

#### THE PALIMPSEST OF HISTORY

Augé observed that solitudes coexist in *non-lieux* without creating any social bond or even a social emotion<sup>12</sup>. Earlier places become listed as 'places of memory'<sup>13</sup>; in *non-lieux* history becomes 'only an idea... nothing to be seen'<sup>14</sup>.

This may be both observed and challenged in *Happy Together*, where tourists watch tango performances at *Bar Sur*. Here, the Latin dance becomes the embodiment of history as a spectacle. Inversely, Fai and Po-wing's tango differs – scholars note the parallels between their identities and those of Italian immigrant men in the 19th century<sup>15</sup>. Quero notes their tango '(re)lives its commonly 'hidden' homo(erotic) social origins<sup>16</sup>.

Another layer reflecting Argentina's homosociality is featured in Fai's cruising. He traverses the seedy side of Buenos Aires, having encounters with anonymous men, rarely verbally addressed directly, only depicted. Quero notes the *machismo* culture in Argentina, with homophobia being associated with the very Italian immigrants who also engaged in tango<sup>17</sup> – creating a denial of queerness reinforced by the nature of *non-lieux*.

Nevertheless, anonymity is both liberating and isolating. *Non-lieux* create the shared identity of the users, causing a 'relative anonymity... [that] can even be felt as a liberation'; a person entering a *non-lieu* is temporarily distanced from his usual determinants<sup>18</sup>. Here is the unspoken agreement that all that happens remains secret. Augé notes the 'space of non-place creates... only solitude and similitude<sup>19</sup>'; and Fai remarks,

'Turns out that lonely people are all the same.'



fig 2. Fai and Po-wing dance the tango in the communal kitchen.  
Quote: 'Turns out that lonely people are all the same.'



fig 3 (above). Tango by the window

fig 4 (next). Po-wing passes out on the steps of *Bar Sur*.

Quote (next): 'There should be two of us standing here.'

#### THE TRAVELLER'S SPACE

The main couple are immediately displaced from their aspiration of travel, the Iguazu Falls, to the lamp, a lighthouse among the decrepit surroundings the characters continuously traverse. Van de Velde notes its representation of 'spaces of romantic possibility beyond the problems of Fai and Po-wing's relationship<sup>20</sup>'. As the film progresses, it becomes the 'keepsake of a moment in their relationship<sup>21</sup>' where there was hope – Fai arrives at Iguazu by himself and confronts the fact that 'there should be two of us standing here.' Simultaneously, Po-wing finds his passport returned and collapses into bitter sobs as he realises that it was the last time of starting over.

Augé notes that travel constructs a fictional relationship between the traveller's gaze and the landscape. They become spaces in which the individual feels as if the position of the spectator were his own spectacle, so

**the 'traveller's space may... be the archetype of non-place<sup>22</sup>**

The film's destinations become such, where the aspiration of a romantic union becomes a spectacle for Fai and Po-wing at Iguazu, and for Chang the release of Fai's troubles at Ushuaia.

The film ends on Fai alighting at a MRT station in Taipei, near home but not quite, as Danny Chung's cover of *Happy Together* plays upbeat – almost manic – in contrast to Piazzolla's sombre *Tango Apasionada*. Some remark this as a disappointment; Cameron notes that the process of reunification is never completed, leaving the audience with an 'unfinished vector of movement<sup>23</sup>'.

**FINALE**

What of the Hong Kong spatial identity that appears to be reconstituted in Buenos Aires? Wong recalls his response to his location manager,

**'Well I don't know why but maybe this is a kind of projection, that I can only project my Hong Kong experience in Argentina, and I'm trying to create my own space in that city which I can work in and I can understand<sup>24</sup>.'**

Does this mean that Hong Kong identity is that of uncertainty and displacement? Cameron notes that identity is constantly in motion and suggests the closest Wong gets to describing Hong Kong is its instability<sup>25</sup>. I would suggest the proliferation of *non-lieux* makes them familiar everyday environments in the city, so much so that the characters and Wong seek them out even on the other side of the globe.

Augé's *non-lieux* depict homogeneous states of social relations, though in taking a closer look at life beyond the contemporary West, I also suggest that they are much more heterogeneous. In uncertainty there is certainty – the familiarity of indeterminacy that follows the longing for *be[long]ing*. Augé also observes that the 'possibility of non-place is never absent from any place'<sup>26</sup> – I would say the inverse is also true.

Nochimson suggests that Wong's films point to the permanence of liminality, even accepting and extending its presence to his portrayal of places and relations<sup>27</sup>. *Happy Together* is a consideration of Hong Kong's liminality with Buenos Aires as a vantage point, just as Chang was the vantage point for Fai to evaluate his relationship.

**Uncertainty is both disappointing and liberating, but perhaps by holding close a queer futurity, through confronting the contingencies of the present<sup>28</sup>, might we be able to move forward from the rotating lamp of 'starting over'.**



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## 'A HOME IS MORE THAN A ROOF AND FOUR WALLS'

Jo Ashbridge is the Founder and CEO of architecture charity, AzuKo. AzuKo works with disadvantaged communities to improve living conditions, both in Bangladesh and the UK. *We're on a mission to end housing poverty by co-designing housing and infrastructure, delivering construction training and supporting communities to understand their housing rights.* Interview by Rishita Ahmed.

**AzuKo's vision champions 'a just world, in which every person enjoys the right to dignified living conditions'. Can you pinpoint a moment or experience that motivated you towards this cause?**

17 years ago I volunteered on a housing programme in rural Vietnam. I wanted to give back, and gain construction experience, learning from builders and craftsmen about what it really takes to build. The programme supported families living in housing poverty, and built new homes that could better withstand the climate. It completely changed my view on architecture, and what architecture could do.

Good design improves lives, and should be available to everyone. The reality is, it's only available to the few who can afford it. Since then I've been doing my part to build a fairer world.

**What does the word 'Roots' mean to you, especially in the context of what you do?**

Great question. It stirs up two thoughts.

A home is more than a roof and four walls. It's somewhere you feel rooted, and from which you have the necessary 'building blocks' to thrive. I've worked all over the world, and for many years out of a backpack, but my roots will always be in the northeast of England.

'Roots' also makes me think of a complex network, which is largely unseen or underappreciated, but vital for growth. You could compare this to 'community'. In many informal settlements where AzuKo works this sense of community – of sharing, and unity – is particularly strong, and something which other places could learn from.

**What are three physical functions, that in your opinion, a house should serve?**

Safety, security, and most importantly in my opinion, dignity. It should support a person's self-respect. It's a human right.

**What are three emotional functions, that in your opinion, a home should serve?**



I'd argue the three above, with one more – sense of ownership. Having a sense of control of the place where you live is vital for people to feel confident to invest in improving their homes. Which is why aid, in most situations, is never the simple answer. People don't want handouts; they want the opportunity to lead their own development.

**For anyone who may not be aware, could you summarise what the current housing crisis, in Bangladesh and other countries alike, is and why there is an urgency for the design industry solve it?**

Bangladesh has come a long way in improving housing standards of the poor, but still has a long way to go. The country faces multiple challenges – socioeconomic fragility, climate vulnerability and high conflict risk. Poverty is deep and widespread.

Those working in the design and built environment sector have important skills to



share. I urge those reading this to take time to consider how they can make this world a fairer place.

**When working closely with communities in disadvantaged parts of Bangladesh, what has surprised you the most about the people?**

Bangladesh is a country of true hospitality. People are warm and inviting. I consider it a second home, and always feel welcomed wherever I'm working. There isn't really a tourist trail (which is also its beauty) but if you have the opportunity to visit I'd recommend it. AzuKo works rurally, and the concept of sustainability, and the practice of recycling aren't buzz words they're part of everyday life. Squeezing a second, third (or tenth!) use out of an item is a given.

**Could you give an example of a challenge that you were faced with out there, and how it was resolved?**

Language is a barrier. So much of culture, and therefore why things are the way they are, is wrapped up in language. Without being completely fluent, there's potential for misunderstanding. AzuKo works with incredible local partners, together we're able to navigate this issue. We're constantly listening, and learning.

**What is one thing that you considered to be true about design, that your experience working for this cause has proved otherwise?**

Architecture school is a wonderful experience. It's a time to think big, to test ideas, and you make friends for life in studio. But there are a few areas, or ways of thinking, that I don't think are helpful. One example is working on design briefs with no consideration of budget. This is not just about the business of architecture, but



also the appreciation of money and what it means in reality for a client.

At AzuKo we're so conscious of every pound, every taka. We work with extreme poor communities, the choice of a material, the result of a certain detail, the balance between form and function is absolutely critical. It can be the difference between an improved housing technique being replicated, or not. It can mean supporting another family in need. It matters.

**Are there any concepts or strategies from your architectural experiences in Asia that you think designers in the West can benefit from?**

In most, if not all the countries I've worked in, designers and architects are put on pedestals; hailed as the experts in the room. Those we look up to, are called 'star-chitects'. But good design, design that improves lives, doesn't just come from the mind of one person who has a degree. The best design comes from having diverse minds around the design table, and most importantly having lived experience as part of the discussion. Our greatest breakthroughs at AzuKo have

resulted from serendipitous chats over cups of tea with a neighbour. I think all designers, architects and engineers, everywhere would benefit from an extra dose of humility.

**Lastly, as a Bath alumni, do you have any words of advice for the next generation of designers reading our anniversary issue?**

Give more to the world than you take. Humanitarian architecture might not be for you, but figure out a path that treads lightly on our planet, and considers all people. This might mean going against the grain, pushing back against the system you find yourself in. It's worth it.

*AzuKo is a true example of what design should, and needs, to be used for in our society. Too many of us use our talents to fulfil egocentric goals, rather than pulling these skills together to incite change. I hope this conversation has reminded any designers reading this issue that the creative sector is not solely rooted in the artistic pleasure our work provides - we can make a real difference.*

For more information about AzuKo, visit their website: [azuko.org](http://azuko.org).



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The cover design is that of banyan tree roots growing across Paperspace logos tessellated across the page. Banyan trees are a common tree species in Hong Kong, their aerial roots growing wherever possible — thus this design pays homage to the city I grew up in. Special thanks to Miss Puiyu Yau whose photograph of banyan tree roots growing between the gaps of street bricks in Pokfulam provided inspiration for the design.

*Anais Lau*

