PO BOX
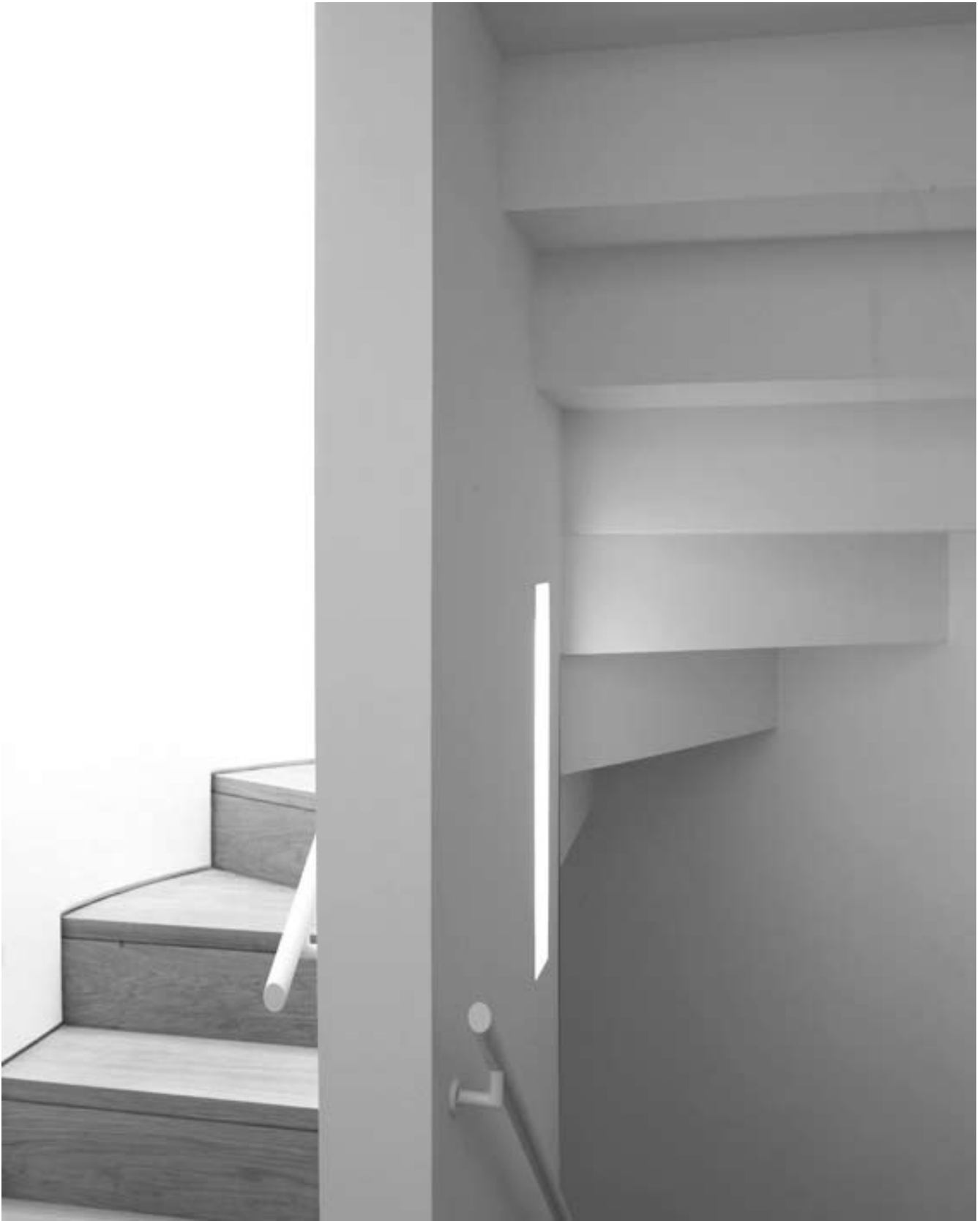# Summer 2010

Staircase, Orange Cottage, Lavenham

CONTENTS

This collection of essays has been a year long project. It represents a modest but determined attempt to triangulate between theory and practice, between the world of ideas and the world of building. At Project Orange we are interested in practical theory. We do not have a single dominant mode of practice, rather we see our projects as narratives or stories. By collecting them together we make a body of work.

While so much of architectural education is based on the notion of speculation and the representation of ideas, by contrast the business of making buildings becomes subsumed by the process of construction. Although there is an inevitability to this reality, the result for practice is that the space for articulating and teasing out ideas can be lost.

Diverse approaches do not cancel each other out, rather they are co-ordinates on the spectrum of architectural possibility. Here the themes of these collected short stories were chosen by each member of staff, the only brief was to explore an aspect of architectural culture that could be illustrated in the work that each person had been undertaking. We find, therefore, that we begin to move from practice to theory. Some of the essays re-tell aspects of discourse that may be familiar while others offer a more personal viewpoint.

We see the results as part of our ongoing conversation on the relationship between what we do and why we do it. Less a manifesto and more a work in progress, this pamphlet engages in the real world through reflecting on the past and speculating on the future.

James Soane
May 2010

FOREWARD

DR MATTHEW BARAC

On the city streets of London, Dublin, Sheffield, in plush interiors that touch the body and mind, in penthouses, loft apartments, rural retreats, on the internet, in takeaway restaurants, hotel lobbies, cocktail bars and ski lodges, houses and homes, getaways, country estates and holiday hideaways, in glossy magazines, Sunday papers, lists of movers and shakers, at conferences, on television, in conversation: Project Orange is making its mark on design today.

This throwaway 'zine is the fourth in a series of catalogues of diverse outputs, each of which brings a different 'show and tell' sensibility to the work of the practice. While the first objectified categories of architectural production in a mock trade catalogue, the second pulled back behind the lens of the camera, emphasising imagery over space. The third captured a point of transition for the practice, between a body of work and the buildings that combined to make it. Measuring the success achieved by Project Orange to date, that book was launched in a major art gallery – surely the mark of having 'arrived'.

But having arrived, James and Christopher and their team have become restless. They want to head back to the studio and the street – to pick away at the shiny surface of the brand that they have created to reveal the depth and dynamism beneath it. This means arguing about details and worrying over everyday habits, asking lots of questions and resisting the readings that commentators and critics have brought to their work.

And so we have PO Box. Here, instead of the conspiracy of lifestyle glamour and fashion-forward taste that we have come to associate with Project Orange, we find different points of view brought together in the nuts and bolts of design: on drawing boards, in conversations by the water cooler, in aspirations or afterthoughts about how things could have turned out otherwise.

Such an impulse to reflect can signal many things; here it indicates an office that is coming of age. In wider debate, the discipline of architecture has finally started to catch up with its sister professions, recognising the value of inscribing its own modes of practice into a virtuous circle of learning and innovation. As veteran academic Leon van Schaik sets out in his 2005 book Mastering Architecture, for practitioners the research impulse necessarily starts with self knowledge. On the cusp of maturity, Project Orange has begun to get to know itself better.
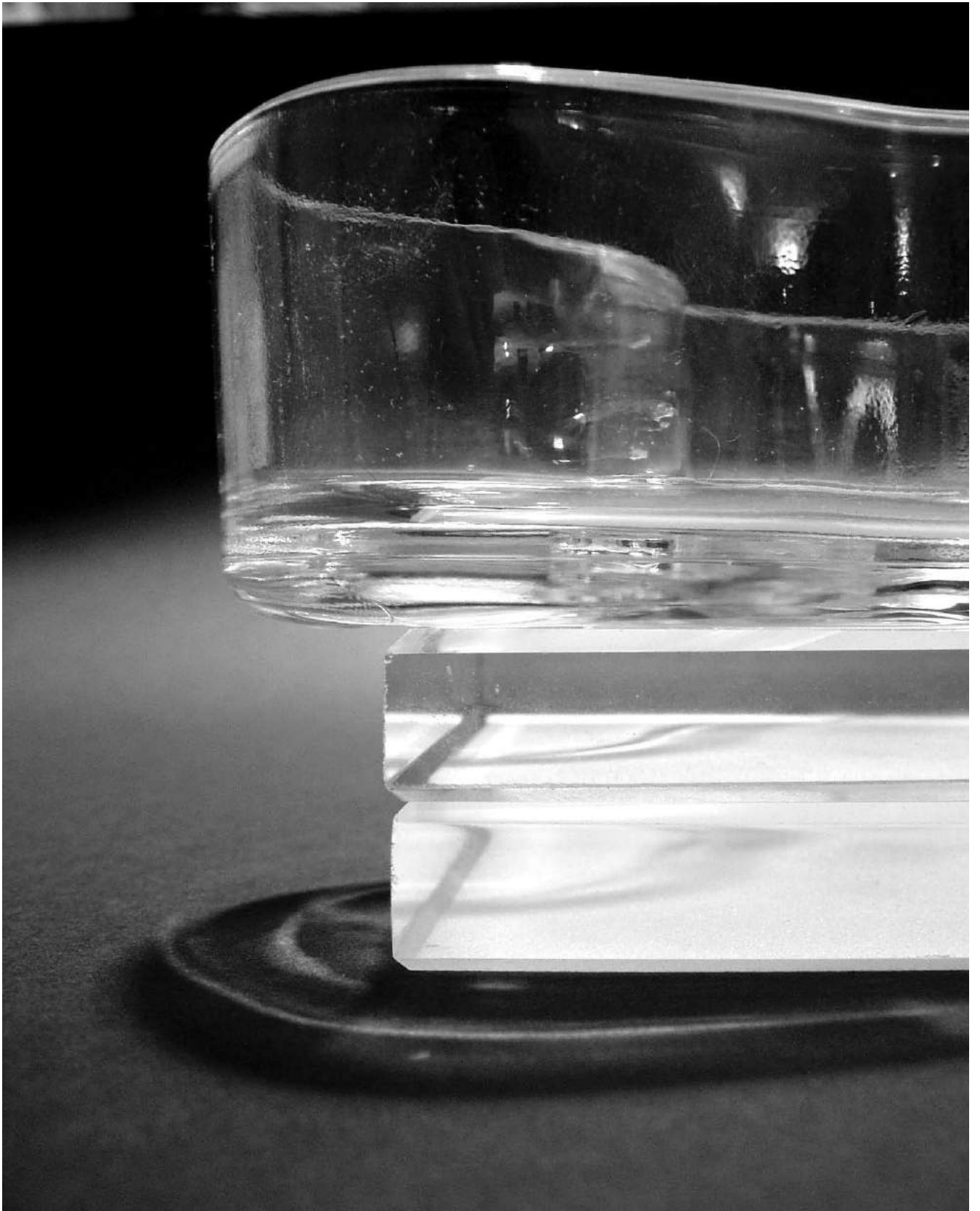
I   *Concept model. 266 Glossop Road, Sheffield*

INDIA MODERN: Search for authenticity and meaning from afar

GAURAV SHARMA

"No, we have to come down a different road altogether, one which commences from quite another starting point. This is the challenge that the architects of the non-western world must face."

Charles Correa, 'Chandigah is 50 and Young!' 2003

When I consider my own pathway into architecture, the unfinished agenda of 'India Modern' has always held a special fascination. India's master architects – Correa, Doshi, Rewal, Stein et al – brilliantly articulated their response to the challenges of the era through their designs. For them, mid-century modernity was not only about experiencing historical change, but also about cultural crossovers: from west to east, and east to west. In works from the 1970s through to the early 90s, one can trace the search in which these architects and urbanists were engaged for an authentic design vocabulary rooted in its place and time. This linear process was broken by the dynamics of globalisation, which served to open up the Indian economy as it atomised everyday life worldwide. In the aftermath of these faceless, high-octane and global forces, the subtle early dialogues seem all but forgotten.

My story cuts to the UK. I was excited when I first saw Delhi Deli, a take-away restaurant in London's Battersea designed by Project Orange in 2002, which could be equally at home in Bharwari or a thousand identical peri-urban districts in India. This is one of the strengths of the design. Its instant sense of place is built on a collision of the traditional and modern India: 'Bollywood in Suburbia'. This small project has big attitude.

Soon after I started work at Project Orange, in 2008, I was struck by a key concept of the then recently completed Park Hotel in Navi, Mumbai: 'East meets East'. James Soane explained to me that the phrase was coined in response to the uncritical consumption of a Western model in the hospitality industry, particularly by the Indian middle class, and how it is "destroying all things that make India special and unique". The idea was that it would be more interesting to reappropriate the motif of the journey east, displaced from its assumed point of origin in Europe to rather make cultural connections that acknowledge India as part of the Asian sub-continent.

Globalisation has the effect of redrawing the world map according to centres of power, money, and the media. Trade of all kinds, including cultural exchange, depends on the priorities of the non-geographical networks thereby created. With its colonial history and English widely adopted – certainly in schools and institutional life – the inclination in India has been towards English-speaking countries in the West. But I think it has become important to rebalance this equation, and to look to others in the East. With its enormous population and range of lifestyles, this also means exploring and looking within, to India's diverse states and cultures.

I am working on the new Park hotel in Pune. In this project, we are exploring the idea of the hotel as a kind of cultural institution, designed from the outside-in and also from the inside-out. We want to ask how a hotel can create a dialogue with the city and offer a place where the exchange of ideas can happen. Given the role of a hotel as a 'home from home' in a global age, the notion that it can be an anchor point for negotiating what it is that makes a place feel unique is not so far fetched.

Architecture and design must cope with very crucial issues that contemporary society throws at it. In the context of 21st century India this raises the prospect of returning to the question of modernity, or finding another pathway for addressing what might constitute the urban identity of the future. In the current state of flux, what is important is to keep the conversation

Central Atrium at The Park Hotel, Navi Mumbai, India

Completed External Facade, Park Hotel   Mounds of gravel wait to be turned into concrete   1
Workmen on bamboo scaffolding   2 3
View of re-usable temporary supports   4

going and reopen some of the dialogues that were drowned out by the corporate roar of the nineties. Whether conducted here or there, at home, in the workplace, or in a hotel, it is an ongoing search for authenticity and meaning that is worthwhile.

Q&A

Guarav Sharma/James Soane

<u>You once said that hotels have a 'culturally critical position in society'. How true is this in the Indian context, where hotels are considered elitist and where only the rich or foreign travellers stay in luxury hotels?</u>

I would still stand by the fact that they are culturally critical but I think your observation that the actual access to a hotel is very marginal is also true. This is something, which has always been the case and perhaps will remain for some time; it is the question of luxury that is elitist. With the rise of the middle class, the sort of design work we do is perhaps more democratic because it does not access a language of Colonialism or Classicism. It is more contemporary. I also think that hotels still have a very important role at a sort of institutional level, in terms of meeting places. The idea that the hotel is somewhere you entertain people - cultural events are held there and that's where society goes to be seen and to share events - is prevalent in Asia generally.

<u>Do you see a common thread in PO's work in India?</u>

I think there is a hybrid process going on. We are both borrowing from India and we are overlaying ideas that come from our own culture. What we gain from India is the sense of craft, making things and the use of material. All the projects that we have worked on in India have used the opportunity to collage a number of materials and crafts in a playful and inventive way. I also feel that there is this interesting dialogue between Modernism as a big overall idea and Regionalism. I think somehow the project of a hotel is a very interesting vehicle to explore that tension. Where, in India, some of the most luxurious hotels do recall, quite literally, the ancient and Mughal styles, I think we've resisted that.

<u>Interiors tend to create worlds within worlds. How important is 'place' in contemporary Interior Design? Should a Chinese restaurant inside a hotel in Delhi be different from say a Chinese restaurant within a hotel in London?</u>

That's a very clever question. I think there are two things here, one of which is that the sense of place is absolutely at the heart of design, full stop. The way in which the profession of architecture has separated out interior and exterior has been extremely detrimental and has led to a lack of confidence in understanding an interior. The interior has been divorced from the exterior and people actually worry about the moral question of how the two things relate. The point is that the inside of a space obviously has a functional aspect that has to do with shelter and comfort but it is also about creating ambience and the sense of well-being. Whether it is in a hospital or a hotel becomes absolutely critical. I suppose the interesting question is what I call 'authenticity'. How do you make an interior have a thematic or narrative that is related to its function? So the Chinese restaurant is a very good example. Clearly, one is referencing a tradition; in the case of our design for a Chinese restaurant it is a motif, but what one is attempting to do is to translate those motifs into something which makes it bespoke to that particular location.

<u>At a time when numerous international practices are working in India, do you think there is an Indian identity in Architecture & Design? Is there a British Architectural & Design identity? Do you think talk of identity is relevant in an increasing globalising world?</u>

The question is very relevant and the truth is far more so for many other countries. China is the other obvious country where the amount of building work that is going on does not reflect this kind of architectural conversation and this is a problem. It happens in Britain too, often in the housing market, but its effect in India is on a vast scale and far more problematic. I am sure within the elite of architectural education there remains a very poignant series of conversations. I am also aware that there are many individuals who are working on projects which, demonstrate a

kind of global awareness with fantastic results. However I fear that if their work does not become mainstream their sphere of critical influence will not be visible.

<u>In emerging India the agenda of the India Modern seems to have been replaced by Capitalist Modernism? Do you agree?</u>

In many cases it has. A very good example is the Vasant Kunj in Delhi where we did a project. It is a global mall and would not look out of place in Singapore, Tokyo or Shanghai; it has nothing to do with India. It is just a palace for shoppers and I think it is a missed opportunity, really. But maybe it is not very surprising because the same forces are operating globally so the same solutions result.

<u>What do you think authenticity means in Interior Design and how relevant is it in hotel design?</u>

I think, authenticity means that, as a guest who is a non-designer, you gain a huge amount of pleasure and enjoyment from being in a place. You may not know why, but it actually creates the sensation of belonging and that you believe in it. It is not a stage set but is something grounded. As a designer it is a very important part of our role. I think the problem is that most architects don't enjoy the conversation any more about how that world operates. They become uncomfortable with the interior because it is seen as a realm of limitless possibilities where the rules are not clear; but that's where the freedom comes in as a designer, you create the rules.

I   *Garden and rear facade at The Park Hotel*

FROM MASTER MASON TO CAD MONKEY

ROBIN SJOHOLM

As architects, we do not make buildings. Rather, we produce the information that makes buildings. The production of this information – primarily drawings – is a practice tradition that dates back to the Italian Renaissance, when the role of being an architect was first self-consciously fashioned, a role that had existed since the priest-like design activities of Imhotep in ancient Egypt but that first took the form of a profession in the example of Sir John Soane (1753-1837). The act of drawing is now established as both an integral part of the design process, as well as the formal representation of ideas, concepts, and instructions, which are then put to use by others to construct buildings.

Today, our primary tool for making the information that is used to make buildings is the computer. A powerful tool, the computer gives the architect the ability to construct complex representations of almost any shape or form, providing an interface for engaging at any scale. It also offers the platform for dynamic modelling and for the exploration of ideas and concepts in three dimensions.

Yet the computer is only a dumb machine. It cannot respond – like a human being can – in terms of architecture's fundamental properties: the need for an understanding and familiarity with the tactile and the physical aspects of architecture. For the artisan, the investigation of ideas is fully connected with the physical world, and with the process of making. Yet as architects, in our daily immersion in the realm of the computer, we are far removed from the actual process of making. Instead we must draw upon knowledge, experience and research in the making of information.

Surrounded as I am, and as we all are, by computers and images that separate rather than connect me to the actual processes of producing a building, I hold a romantic view of a time when the architect, as 'master builder' or 'mason', would have had an intimate connection to the making of a building. This is not to diminish the value of drawing, or to criticise those designers who are unconcerned by the tactility, spatiality, or physicality of the works that they produce. Yet, at least amongst those architects in my generation – a generation that has come to be collectively associated with the not entirely flattering nickname 'CAD Monkeys' – I do not believe I am alone in feeling that there is a sense of loss associated with persistent use of computers. Of course, computers are now integral to the way we work, but too often they take the place of picking up a pen and sketching, or the tactile exploration of design through making models and prototypes.

Providing us with the facility to immediately design and draw with unquestioned precision, another consequence of computer aided design processes is our obsession with being in control. Order and control is, of course, necessary, yet within the real world of making we must embrace tolerance, flux, and the unpredictable. Indeed this is essential to the idea of thinking through sketching, to the movement from a vague visual idea to something more refined. As I experienced in my work on the Cemetery Road project in Sheffield, a building site can be noisy and messy, full of activity in a way that appears chaotic compared to the silent orderliness of the computer screen. It was frustrating to realise that my desire for control over the scheme naturally meant I had to make compromises. If my experience had instilled a better sense of balance between the flux of 'making on site' and the exactness of 'making on screen' I would have been better equipped to choose those moments when it is important to be precise.

Learning from this practice, I want to move towards a manifesto for practice today. But first, I wish to recall a recent Project Orange office trip to St Catherine's College, Oxford, designed in the 1960s by Danish architectural great Arne

I   *Courtyard, Cemetery Road, Sheffield*

Jacobsen. As both an architect and industrial designer in a time before personal computers, Jacobsen had a clear understanding of making. At St Catherine's there is evident harmony and coherence. Every piece of the composition, from the buildings to the smallest element, is imbued with craftsmanship, from the human scale of his signature dining cutlery to the scale of perfectly crafted cruciform pre-cast concrete columns towering at each side of the hall, which effortlessly support the great beams above.

Our office trip inspired me to visit an earlier Jacobsen example while summering in my family home in Sweden. At Skovshoved, in a Copenhagen suburb, stands his gloss-white mid-1930s petrol station, with its iconic canopy evoking images of the golden age of Route 66. This simple structure is an architectural gem. Echoing the gesamtkunstwerk approach of St Catherine's College, Jacobsen's obsession with touching every aspect of the design is evident. Yet alongside the obsession for control is a deep understanding of the materials, the spaces made, and the physical experience of architecture. This awareness leads to a sense of confidence in the material richness of the work as a whole, expressed down to the detailing of the glossy white ceramic tiles that wrap up and over the façades.

Jacobsen was a master architect, and a master maker. He embodies a bygone era and a way of working now out of date. But I lament the loss of his age; of the give and take embedded in his design processes. Through his experience as an industrial designer, his hands-on awareness of materials, and his relationship with craftsmen, Jacobsen genuinely understood design as a process of making.

My manifesto for modern practice, and my own ethos at Project Orange – a practice where we celebrate carefully made spaces and objects, is to strive to create a stronger bond between the architect and maker. Some points of departure for my manifesto include:

• Architects should be involved with craft guilds and organisations, learning from the companion system in France where time and money is invested to sustain craft traditions and promote craft innovation.

• We should embrace small projects, looking for opportunities to develop prototypes and to collaborate with skilled craftsmen.

• We must develop strategies for collaboration with craftsmen and cottage manufacturing on large scale projects. This may be in the form of specifying repeat prototype elements.

• Procurement processes should not be so obsessive about risk, as this stifles innovation. We also need to find ways of mitigating the restrictions of modern day timescales and budgets, promoting the value of craftsmanship at every level.

• Linking architectural education to craftsmanship through modules and exchanges would give student architects a better understanding of designing through making, rather than simply producing another generation of 'CAD Monkeys'.

Petrol Station, Skovshoved, Copenhagen   1
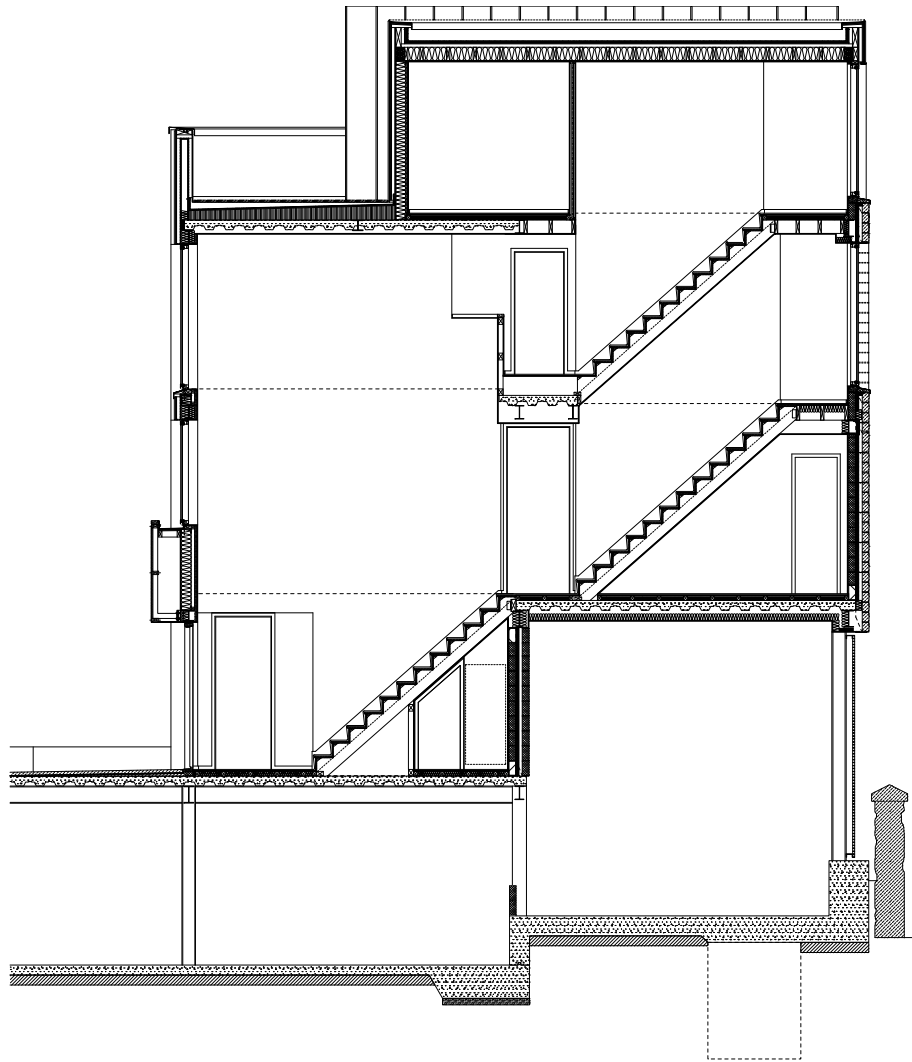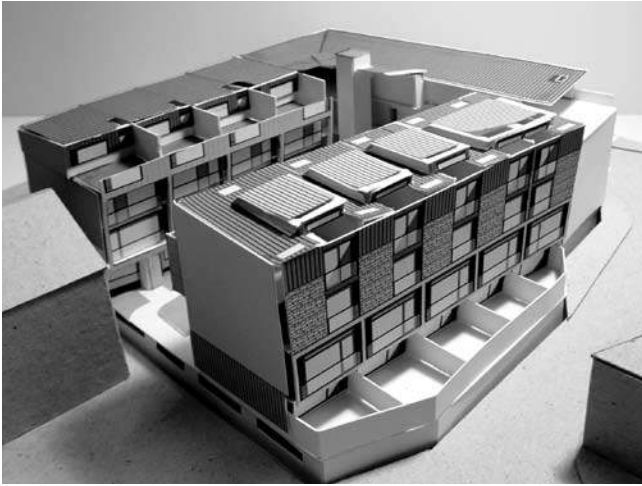
1 2   *Development model, Cemetery Road*
3   *Rendered walls within courtyard*
        Cross Section through Townhouse

COMPLEX SIMPLICTY

HELEN WOODCRAFT

Well-designed things often go unnoticed, and sometimes intentionally so. Notwithstanding the attractiveness of the new – of objects and buildings that say "look at me" – good design is also about fitting into the flow of ordinary life. In such a reading, architecture comes to be the art and production of a second nature, of the built environment that we inhabit as if we take it for granted. But in fact each building is, to a greater or lesser extent, a prototype that meets precise needs and aspirations. Management of the transformation from needs and aspirations to second nature – from idea to actuality – is the essential role of the architect.

This transformation is a process that must be predicted, controlled and directed within the parameters of legislation, financial viability and construction, all the while keeping a check on changes that may affect the value of the final product. The practice of architecture inevitably commences as a visual, representational exercise, one that is ultimately transformed into spaces that we encounter by means of perception, rather than through the abstract grid of concepts. In a much quoted passage social and spatial philosopher Henri Lefebvre notes:

"…the architect ensconces himself in his own space … (a) conceived space (which) is thought by those who make use of it as true, despite the fact that it is an object itself."

Given the object-like quality of this space – Lefebvre's 'space of the architect' – the task of design always involves a movement from spatial concepts to spatial perceptions: from intentional, linear relationships associated with graphic representations to the complex, comparatively unstable, multi-sensory and simultaneous world of lived reality. Translating the architectural 'big idea' into a building that retains its original design concept is a challenging process incorporating not only the requirements of structure, servicing, regulations and practicalities of construction,

but also a creative concept within which the nuances of design interpretation are embedded. Small scale details must be tested against the overall picture; large gestures measured and reappraised at each stage. An ongoing give and take alternately broadens and narrows the designer's attention in order to deliver the idea without diluting it. This demands not only lateral thinking and forward planning, but also clear communication.

Take the example of the Whitecross Street house, an award-winning project completed in 2009 on a central London site, which faces a tight urban street on its east side and overlooks a small park to the west. The architectural character of this building is derived from its form and its materials, which act together in a controlled collage of textures, colours, and volumes. Metaphors of enclosure and openness inform the materiality of the envelope. A copper armature around the exposed parts of the dwelling provides a sense of security, while the more domestic, protected elevations are clad in hand split oak shakes and reclaimed brick. While the design concept relies on the interpretation of the copper skin as robustly volumetric, constructional logistics means that it cannot be built as a seamless skin. The technical task is therefore to achieve the illusion of a continuous armature by means of a practical, buildable design solution.

In this case, bands of copper cladding are wrapped around the building in a regular rhythm. This regular banding and, crucially, its continuity around the corners, ties the copper part of the building into a defined mass that is distinct from the volumes formed in timber or glass. Window openings are formed as syncopated gaps in the rhythm of the banding; in this way they appear to belong to the visual language of the copper, rather than being holes punched through its surface.

The simplicity of the finished detail obscures much of the complex forward planning required to achieve it. Copper is a malleable material; each sheet is applied by hand, overlapping the next to form a weatherproof seam. Sheet sizes are standardised, and methods of joining one to the next, forming corners, sills and parapets, have been long established through traditions that relied for generations on craft knowledge transferred by apprenticeships and in guilds, skills that are increasingly hard to find. To achieve the design objectives for this building, the copper seams had to appear continuous, turning corners and wrapping around sills and reveals. Site-formed edges and seams were meticulously aligned with one another, and with window openings.

Yet the copper's carefully crafted simplicity is not skin deep. Interweaving the design concept, constructional strategy and technical detail, the banding of the cladding was set out on a secondary grid derived from the skeleton of the building's steel frame. Giving expressive form to the idea of a protective armature, the copper sits proud of adjacent elements finished in timber and brick. Each of these materials calls for different wall build-ups, so setting out from the structural grid has to account for relative wall thicknesses and, at the same time, respond to the narrative of enclosure established by the design concept. A bespoke window design integrates the glazing into the skin, with reveals, head and sill apparently continuous. This is anchored back to the steel frame, with structural openings and the off-set of reveals needing to be checked against seam dimensions. This exercise is repeated and cross-checked for each window type, all documented and drawn to represent the 3-dimensional working out of details at corners, projections, recesses, and junctions with other materials.

The provenance of a building which, in its finished functionality and formal richness, is simply 'there' – we take it for granted – is a story of forward thinking, 3-dimensional visualisation, technical knowledge and the brokering of good working relationships between consultants, client and contractor. It is worth noting that despite the apparent simplicity of the end result – the culmination of complex processes of design and coordination – it exhibits an essential depth and wholeness. It is more than the sum of its parts. These parts include the place where we started, the abstractions of graphic representations and the material components of its construction.
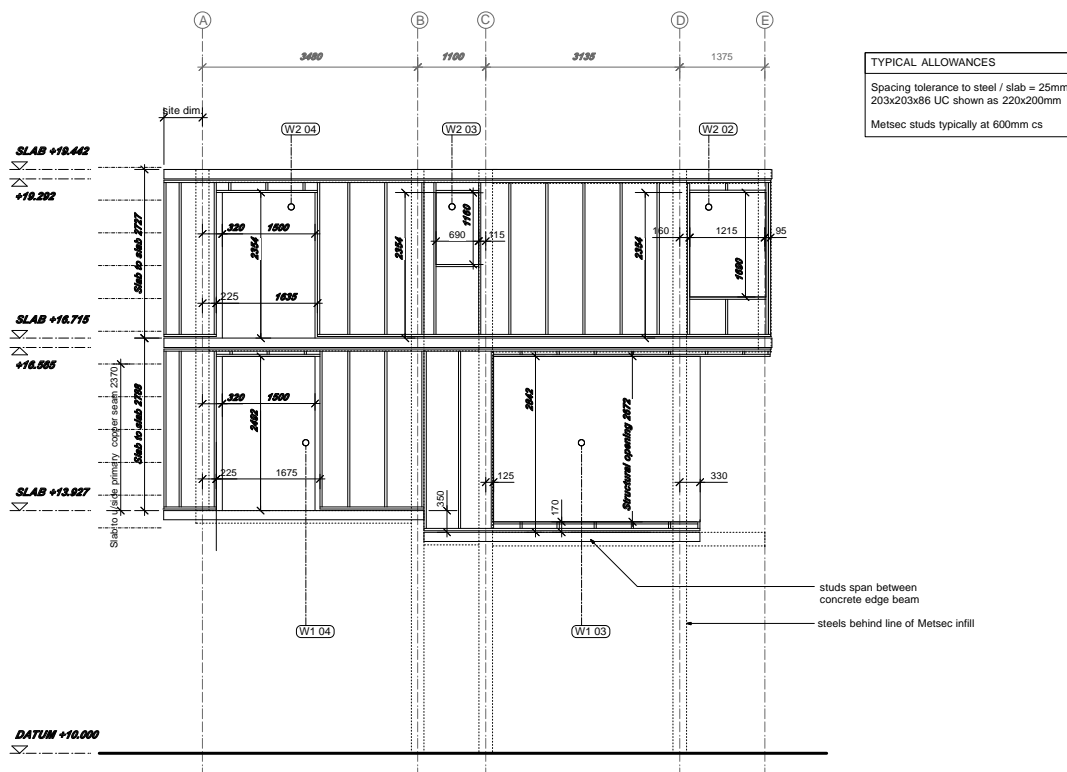
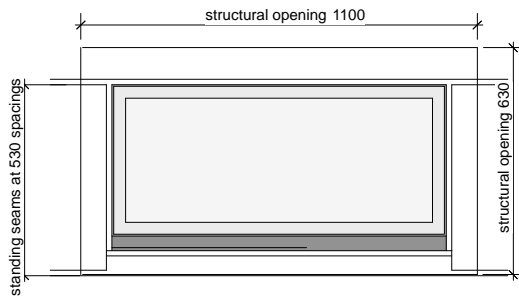1 *Construction drawing showing setting out for copper facade, Whitecross Street, London*
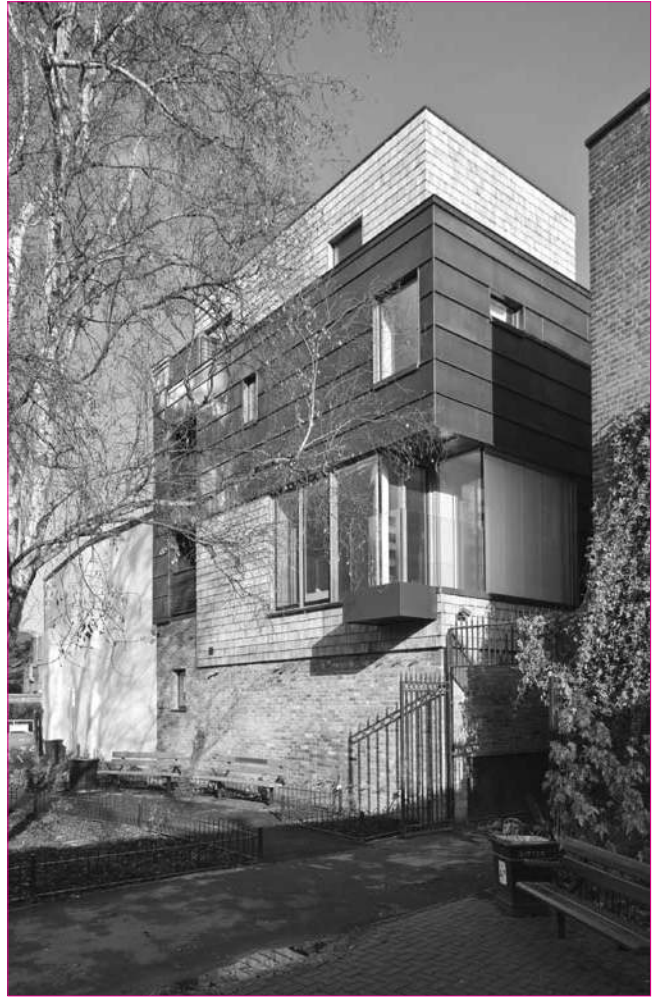
Shingle corner details with glass balustrade   Panorama of living area   1
Facade detail from terrace   2 3
View of facade seen from Fortune Street park   4

structural opening 1100

structural opening 630

standing seams at 530 spacings

W1 08 and W2 01

window size 1076

window size 593

internal linings extend to this line

structural opening 690

structural opening 1160

2No. standing seams at 530 spacings

W2 03

obscured glass

window size 666
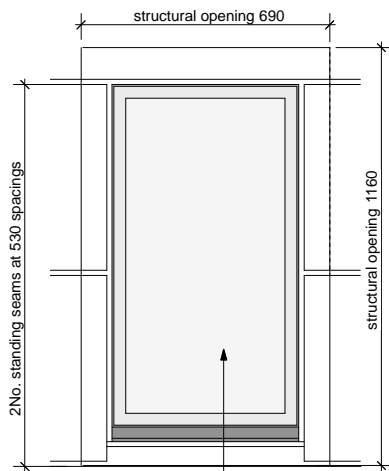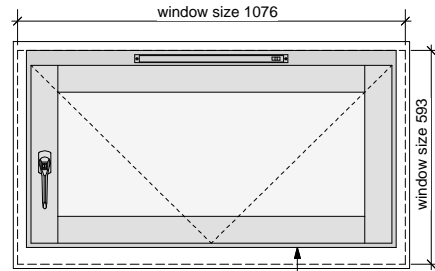
window size 1123

1 2   *Early CAD model*
3   *Window detail on main facade*
        Family of specially designed windows

INSIDE THE BOX

BARRY STIRLAND

The hotel bedroom is a fascinating design challenge because of the seemingly infinite number of possible variations on its basic spatial component: a rectangular box. The model of the box is self-evident: individual rooms are accessed from 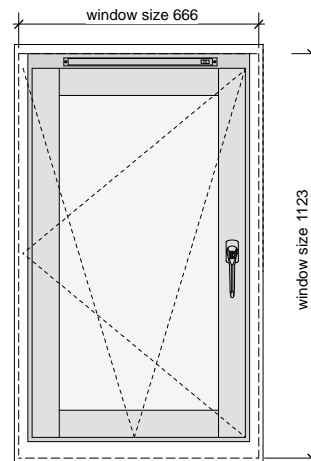either side of a corridor, parallel to the building's outer walls. Bedrooms are then formed with divisions between external envelope and circulation. Layers of elaboration naturally add to this paradigm, but a rectangular box nearly always contains the hotel room experience.

Depending upon the rating of a hotel, its rooms must contain certain things: a bed for sleeping, a shower for washing, and a desk for working. Next on the inventory are the chair, the light, the wardrobe; then TV, fridge or 'minibar'. The design exercise is to configure these elements at a human scale, bearing in mind the spatial and economic constraints of the hotel formula. Multiplied next to one another and across corridors, stacked up floor upon floor, these boxes – together with shared spaces, servicing, management and all the extras offered – add up to the profits or losses sustained by the hotel. A few extra millimetres on the room plan quickly add up to sizeable costs when replicated a hundred times. Spaces within the box have to be formed in response to the needs, desires and aspirations of the guest (as well as those whose job it is to build and service the hotel), while also considering the minutiae of interior design.

Le Corbusier's well-known Cabanon, the tiny holiday house he built for himself on the Côte d'Azur in 1952, is an exemplar of the hotel room. A painstaking essay in the arrangement of interior space, it strikes a careful balance between control and responsiveness. In just 15 square meters Le Corbusier assembled everything that was necessary for work and rest, with no elements other than those essential for his personal fantasy of a retreat. By contrast, his vision of collective living in the Unité d'Habitation – several were built, the first and best known in

Marseilles begun in 1947 – takes the idea of a spatial unit and multiplies it 337 times over 12 floors to create a living city raised off the ground on chunky béton brut legs.

Demonstrating exceptional craftsmanship, and attuned to its author's particular preferences, the Cabanon is personal and unique to Le Corbusier. The Unité, on the other hand, addresses itself to a universal 'modulor' idea of the individual. While less explicitly tailored to individual taste, the concept of the latter assumes that occupants will personalize their homes to suit preferences and lifestyles of their own. The world has changed since the 1950s, and we now live life at a pace with globalised expectations, especially for the holidaymaker and business traveller. Hotel customers of today demand generic functions and services from their accommodation, no matter where it is.

For an existing hotel in Hoxton, London, Project Orange designed a concept bedroom to be built as a prototype, with a view to rolling out the design in the future. To meet the brief we developed a 'budget chic' approach that reflects local character. Since the nineties, Hoxton has become a trendy East London quarter, popular with the fashion-forward creative industries. Much gentrification has occurred, with former industrial buildings being converted to offices and lofts. However, the urban fabric retains the grit and earthy glamour beloved of artists and nightclubbers associated with the neighbourhood.

Our interpretation of the context led us to propose a bedroom framed by walls that show the signs of wear and tear associated with warehouses and industrial buildings, with newer, more luxurious artefacts placed within. The walls, floor and ceiling reflect something of the prevailing edgy urban condition, while the loose furnishings offer comfort, providing guests with what they need and want. A selling point, from the hotelier's perspective, is that individual rooms

1 *Visualisation of new bathroom design, Poultry Hotel,*
London

can be easily inhabited with all the convenience, amenity and security of a conventional hotel, yet offer something extra – an aesthetic experience that links the user to what is hip and cool about this part of London.

Although the design suggests that the room has been 'found' within a matured urban fabric, it is in fact newly constructed. Rough, raw plaster finish is applied to the walls; the concrete slab is painted and on the floor a pre-distressed carpet is laid. Similarly, the built-in bed and desk are constructed from reclaimed floorboards. By contrast, loose furnishings are shiny and new. Contrived though this is, we believe that the juxtaposition of comfortable, indulgent objects with the room's distressed surfaces evokes a local authenticity that can be enjoyed by guests.

Our design concept acknowledges that most guests want the convenience and security of a conventional hotel – a box like any other box – but at the same time they want a room that offers something more. At Project Orange, we imagine hotel rooms as stage sets against which guests inhabit their own fantasies – of participating in a world of edgy grit, but at the same time enjoying the luxurious life of a *fashionista*. Reaching into the flight-case minibar for a beer, the salesman will imagine, for a moment, that he is a rock 'n roll roadie on tour; arriving from the other side of the world, the fiftysomething holiday-makers will enjoy the frisson between plush fabrics and distressed walls, leaving with the lasting impression that they have been part of the 'real' London.

Birds Eye plan view, Hoxton Hotel, London 1
Cut away section 2

1 2   *Interior View of Le Corbusier's Cabanon*
3   *Furniture detail, Hoxton Hotel*
       View of bathroom from bed

MATERIAL TRANSFORMATION

ALESIA JEGOROVA

The application of patterns to surfaces

Pattern is everywhere, in and on almost everything: printed on tile, paper and fabric, dyed, rubbed or applied, in gingham checks, floral, block repeat, tossed layout, botanical, square, packed; crafted into textile, embroidered, woven, in herringbone, geometric, abstract, ethnic, folk, curvy, Greek key, irregular repeat; carved, etched or stained into and onto glass, plaster, stone, concrete, in graphic, engineered, foulard, mosaic, naturalistic, Art Deco, calming, stylized, tartan, naturalistic, straight repeat, optical art, striped, negative space ...

For students of art and design, of architecture and landscape, of taste and culture, pattern is a wide-ranging field. A key publication in its history is the Grammar of Ornament (1856) by Owen Jones, one of the most influential design theorists of the nineteenth century. His magnum opus, which illustrates patterns sourced from around the world, became a handbook for designers, and hinted at the potential of pattern to bring ideas and references together. Still influential today, this textbook appears on the reading lists of many design courses and no self-respecting designer would be without one to hand (or at least bookmarked on their web-browser!) Another important contribution to discussion about pattern in Britain, and particularly with regard to the history of the domestic interior, is that provided by designer and lifestyle pioneer William Morris. His remarkable Art Nouveau influenced flower patterns were instrumental in the rise of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

At the start of the 20th century, broader references took the lead on innovation. The Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna workshops), established in 1903 and associated with well-known figures such as Josef Hoffmann and Gustav Klimt, had a lasting influence way beyond its modest size. Interest in Art Deco style,

which flourished in the 1930s, was recently revived in the UK thanks to a major exhibition at London's Victoria & Albert Museum in 2003. This movement witnessed root and branch changes to the role of pattern in design, which was powerfully influenced by ideas of abstraction that were being developed in art, through developments such as Cubism, and architecture – then in the throes of early Modernism's innovations.

Deconstructed plant forms and geometric shapes, often limited to one or two colours with strong contrast between light and dark, dominated pattern up until the forties. After the Second World War, designers were inspired by the sense of freedom and new beginnings associated with the baby boomer era, creating dynamic and stimulating patterns inspired by art, architecture and science, known at the time as "contemporary" style. British influence was, however, increasingly squeezed out in the 1980s, a period during which companies experienced the impact of the downsizing of the market due to its control by multi-national firms and the promotion of trade policies that disadvantaged small scale producers. However, towards the end of the last century, a fresh introduction of cultural energy and better national promotion of design led to renewed activity in small scale workshops and within the design industry. This was supported by new technologies: computer–generated and digital programmes have had a powerful impact on the design and production of patterns, patterned objects and patterned surfaces.

Project Orange has integrated bespoke patterns in a number of projects large and small, several of which are illustrated. Bringing a slice of 'jazz age' Manhattan to the Fitzwilliam Hotel in Belfast, patterns were applied to the bathrooms according to a continuous black and white motif laid out in mosaic tiles. The hotel's first floor restaurant deploys a related pattern in playful

mobile timber privacy-screens. Their continuous unique pattern provides a thematic link to visual motifs used elsewhere in the hotel, and a material link to the restaurant's overall concept: a traditional oak room housing three dining carriages.

In the hotel restaurant at the Chiswick Moran Hotel, we designed a striking feature: a series of screens of polished stainless steel and rotating green Perspex. The colours and shapes contribute to an ambience that is at once smart and sleek, while at the same time retro and jaunty. Traditional ornament and ethnic Indian patterning were reinterpreted using clean lines and modern shapes for application at the Park Navi Mumbai hotel.

A sculptural relief ceiling provides complex patterns in the Fitzwilliam penthouse in Dublin. Here, the concept was to create a strong but moody set of rooms characterised by dark timber, high gloss lacquer and the shifting ceiling plane. Project Orange also celebrates pattern three-dimensionally on building exteriors. An existing single storey building – originally a print works – was extended and refurbished to provide new housing and recording studios at Field Street in London's King's Cross. A façade of oxidised, overlapping copper 'scales' soften the dominant geometry of the building and create a sophisticated continuous pattern.

These examples go some way to demonstrate how pattern can communicate a mood or draw out the design concept of a project. Pattern is able to fuse very different references – from the past and the present, East and West, local and global – thereby connecting things which are otherwise kept apart. Pattern can create a background reference that keeps things in your mind in an almost subliminal way: an example of this is seen in the bathroom tiling at the Fitzwilliam Hotel, Belfast. This takes the hotel's signature motif – the letter 'F' for Fitzwilliam – and pushes it through processes of, to echo Owen Jones, abstraction and ornamentation in order to come up with something new: a bespoke pattern. This ability – to bring 'jazz age' Manhattan into dialogue with traditional English oak; to marry Indian craft with retro-Modern nostalgia – is a clue to the true power of pattern.

1   *Recent motifs used in various projects*
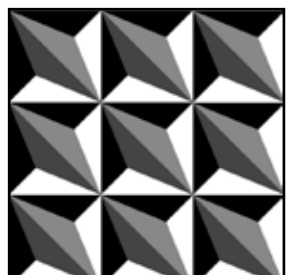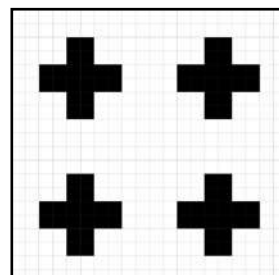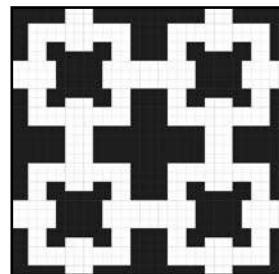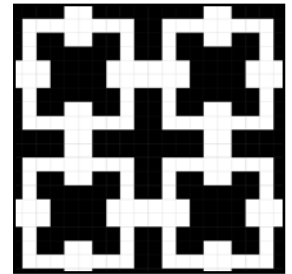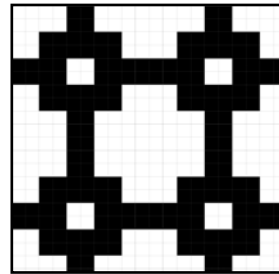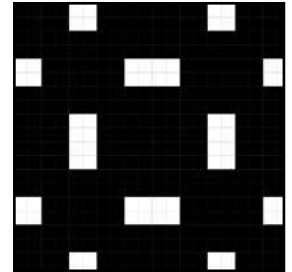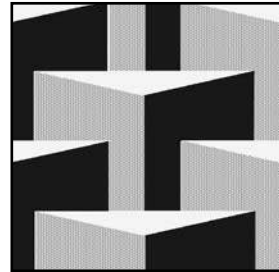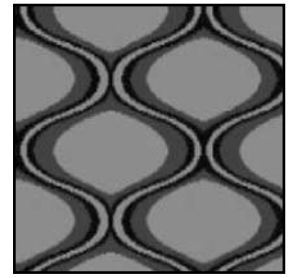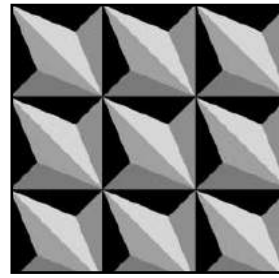
Standard bedroom, Fitzwilliam Hotel, Belfast   *Metal grille to bar*   1
Conference room with specially designed carpet   2 3
Bathroom with patterned mosaic walls   4
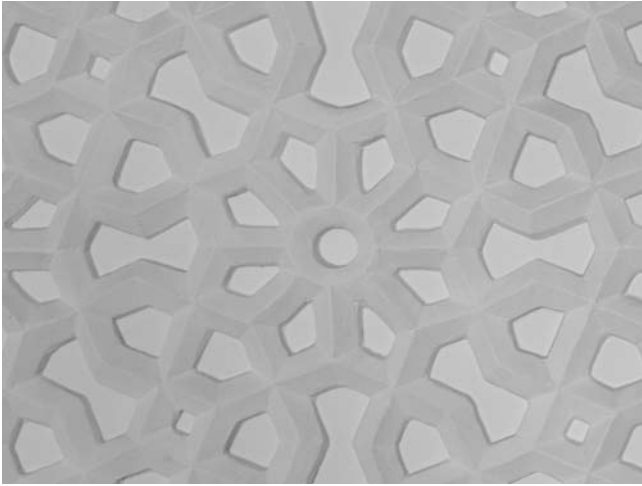
1 2 *Hand made Jali work, Navi Mumbai, India*
3   *Screens to I-talia restaurant, New Delhi, India*
    Shaped copper tiles, Field Street, Kings Cross, London

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

RACHEL COLL

Although it can be argued that working on any residential project involves understanding and embracing the everyday, these are not the words I would use to describe the task of designing a bespoke domestic interior. Whether inserted into an existing building or as the inside of a new shell, a design for the upper end of the market brings its own particular demands, and its own special challenges.

On the surface, all residential refurbishments fulfil the same problem-solving function: the re-working of an existing space to suit a new brief. However, refurbishment is also always an opportunity for something more. It is an opportunity for allowing architectural processes – processes of creativity and reinvention – to infiltrate the experience of life at a domestic scale. A job-list of high-specification private homes provides the designer with an always-changing laboratory in which to test details, materials and techniques. But the knowledge gained is not just of a technical nature. It is also, and more importantly, knowledge about the fit between the spaces of the home and the everyday lives lived within it. The detail drawings and images on the following pages are compiled from three recent London projects: a Grade 2 listed Georgian townhouse, a 1980s loft apartment next to the Tate Modern, and a flat in a 1930s purpose-built mansion block.

A bespoke interior offers luxury beyond just a high-end specification. A unique detail generated to suit a particular situation indicates that the way something has been put together – a junction between a floor and a wall, or the way a staircase springs from a stone floor – has been thought through and deliberately made. It carries the signature of the designer. A crisp shadow gap following a door frame, designed to allow a breathing space between timber frame and plasterboard wall, has not simply 'happened' but was carefully drawn and then dutifully constructed.

The place that we called 'home' while growing up was, more than likely, traditional in style, filled with standard (and entirely acceptable) skirting boards, architraves, dado rails and cornices, there to offer protection to surfaces but also to cover up the junctions. The clean lines of much modern detailing do not allow for rough construction – for processes of progressive 'covering up' – but instead require careful articulation and precise craftsmanship. Shadow gaps are often used to mediate between materials, separating them delicately. A door lining is detailed to allow a 10mm gap between the timber and the adjacent plasterboard wall; a recessed channel creates a 10mm gap between a flush skirting board and the wall finish above. The skill required to achieve such unfussy junctions translates into a sense of luxury that appeals to many clients wanting to improve and personalise their homes. Subtle details embody the trace of the designer's hand; they show that someone has been there, providing a one-off quality that adds value.

Many a client appreciates the unique aspect that this brings to the everyday. However, there is also a demand for aftercare; quiet details often demand higher levels of maintenance to preserve the care embodied in their creation. The absence of skirtings and architraves can make for a fragile world, suiting only a certain type of vigilant client. For me, the joy of the bespoke domestic design is about being able to commit resources – one's time and the client's money – to this level of detail. It means that something quite simple and 'everyday' can be designed and made specifically for its purpose.

Importantly, the detailing process entails thinking about what the home really is: how it works, and how it is inhabited. Briefing for a design project usually begins with a review of the layout, to refine the flow of spaces. Once defined, this spatial sequence and configuration can be embellished, to enrich the experience of use and give precision to what makes spaces memorable.

Every special moment can be investigated and – if appropriate – indulged, from purpose-made joinery to ergonomic handles, from doors and windows designed to suit particular openings and particular views, to handrails shaped to individual situations, all adding to the sense of luxury and style that comes with a space that makes you feel it was designed down to the tiniest detail.

1   *Staircase, Gallery Lofts, London*

Allow for veneered MDF back panel, stained to match light grey ash to storage wall

Allow for constuction of plasterboard boxing out to softwood frame, to align with service riser boxing out as indicated

30
10

120

170

50 70

10
30

55

Allow for rounding of corners to handrail

Allow for 30mm solid timber capping piece to form handrail, stained to match storage wall

Allow for Gyproc Styletrim edge reveal BGM 105 let in to groove in handle and top piece, to create 10mm shadow gap between timber and plasterboard

Allow for supply and installation of KKDC "TiMi" linear LED strip lighting from Lumino recessed as indicated

www.kkdc.com.au
Lumino tel. 01279 635411

900

Gyproc BGM105 styletrim to form shadow gap back to stone as indicated

15mm high gloss black lacquered MDF panelling Colour REF: TBC

PO to approve sample prior to commencement of work

Rebated edge detail to form 3mm shadow gap between panels

Minimal split batons fixed back to wall structure

12.5mm plasterboard

min 15

75mm SW studs with Isowool insulation to cavity as indicated and12.5mm plasterboard

Detail of flush handrail   1 2
Corner shadow gap   3
Staircase and Mezzanine, Gallery Lofts, London

30

Top-left door detail (plan)

- Solid timber door frame to match door finish
- Painted HW packer to form 10mm shadow gap to frame
- Existing wall
- 54mm veneered solid core MR MDF FD(30) door. Door to be flush with adjacent wall panelling to Hall as indicated
- 10mm thick Pyran 30 fire glass. All timber framework to be in hardwood; density and detail to manufacturers recommendation. Beading to be minimised to one side only as indicated.

(dimensions: 10, 30, 25, 25, 54, 12, 12, 100)

Bottom-left door detail (section)

- Painted HW packer to form 15mm shadow gap to frame
- Existing wall
- Lowered ceiling to hall
- Solid timber door frame to match door finish
- 54mm veneered solid core MR MDF FD(30) door. Door to be flush with adjacent wall panelling to Hall as indicated
- 10mm thick Pyran 30 fire glass. All timber framework to be in hardwood; density and detail to manufacturers recommendation. Beading to be minimised to one side only as indicated.
- HALL

(dimensions: 30, 15, 14, 25, 100)

Top-right framing details

- 18mm spray painted MDF wardrobe doors clad with 6mm toughened glass mirror
- Existing wall lined with 12.5mm painted plasterboard
- 18mm high glossmulti-coat polyester lacquered MDF fixed panels
- Rebated edge detail to form shadow gap between panels

(dimensions: 5, 2)

Bottom-right framing details

- 18mm high gloss mulit-coat polyester lacquered MDF fixed panel/wardrobe door - lower edge of door to align with top of shadow gap over skirting
- 18mm solid oak plinth to match skirting
- Light recess to take LightGraphix LED Light tube or similar approved
- 18mm shop sprayed MDF shelf carcass

(dimensions: 18, 18, 60, 25)

1 3   *Flush joinery at Cramner Court, London*
2 4   *Door and joinery details, Cramner Court*

Corner Cupboard Details, Charles Street, London
Framing details, Charles Street, London

WORLD OF COLOUR

MICHAEL VEAL

An overview of Project Orange's use of colour

"The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most."

John Ruskin (1819-1900), writer and critic of art, architecture and society

The topic of colour appears to have been the subject of debate as long ago as 300 BC when Aristotle debated 'disegno versus colore'. His theory argued that colour is secondary to pure line drawing and represented beliefs that were hotly debated during the Renaissance.

Widely regarded as the most important architect of the twentieth century, Le Corbusier's attitude towards colour in architecture influenced views that still provide for debate today. A 1911 train journey to Eastern Europe, which he referred to as his *Voyage d'Orient*, led him to write about his enthralling experience of colour, linking it to physical pleasure: 'When the blood is young and the spirit healthy … sensualism affirms its rights.'

However, by the 1920s his allegiance to white emerged as more relevant. For Le Corbusier and many of his contemporaries, Adolf Loos included, white symbolised order, truth and purity. Using it became an ethical act, whereas the use of chromatic colour was a matter of aesthetics.

Later on, in 1925 Le Corbusier's *Purism* compared architecture to painting, recognising the importance of colour as a compositional force. But he continued to argue for the superiority of white, categorising colour as 'second nature', which we may presume to mean second best. He developed two colour palettes or *claviers de couleurs* for architecture and interiors. With the charts he wanted to create a standard range of independent colours for architects to use, each chosen hue corresponding to a specific psychological profile that would trigger, so he claimed, an emotional response.

For most architects colour is often little more than an afterthought, added at the end of the design process and is always subject to taste. Colour often has less importance than structure and form. This is, in part, because colour preference is seen as a matter of personal choice, rather than being defined by objective processes of spatial design.

At Project Orange, colour is a starting point. The general approach of the studio emphasises its graphic power; we treat surfaces and spaces as pictorial elements in a composition. At every stage of design development – from concept sketches, to the schematic phase, to the definition of a spatial strategy and right through to production information and finishes – colour is a vital element in the architectural creativity.

While we don't sign up to Le Corbusier's moralising about white, we follow his lead on how colour can be full of allusions and associations, and we use colour in a way that contributes to and spatialises a mood. Often clients come to us in order to get help with the process of visualising what they're looking for. We take what the client tells us and some of the references they provide, and use these as briefing clues to put together a 'concept book' for each project. This will communicate a mood, providing a 'lifestyle preview' of how things could be. From this we will progressively build the colour palette for the project

James Soane has said that 'colour ties into our narratives,' and this way of working – using colour as a participant in the stories our projects tell, and to enhance the visual elements of line, structure and form – is part of the studio culture. In projects ranging from privates apartments in London, hotels in Ireland to bars and restaurants in India and Russia, colour constitutes a primary organising principle. Colour use is filtered through a layered approach to tones, pattern and texture. It is sometimes raucous and sometimes

subdued; alternately subtle and severe. At one moment it will pay a compliment, and at the next provide a contrast.

Glossop Road/Sheffield, United Kingdom
For over three decades the Glossop Road building was home to a family-run china and glass shop, which had come to occupy the whole block. Project Orange was briefed to redevelop the site with a new retail store and offices together with 22 apartments.

Two different kinds of geometry – a flowing curvilinear facade and a hard-edged rectilinear core – meet in the architectural concept of our proposal. The three public façades of the building are wrapped in jet-black, machine made brick; strips of yellow and red glass in the windows refer to the building's history of decorative glass.

Chalet 7/Crans Montana, Switzerland
Chalet 7 has been designed as a luxurious alpine retreat. Located near the village of Crans Montana in the Swiss Alps and combining a traditional ski lodge with more global and opulent twists, the lodge has a strong emphasis on the use of materials. Rustic timbers contrasts with sculpted furniture.

Light oak panelling lines the public areas, while dark timber is used in the suites. In the après-ski heaven of the lounge bar, a contemporary cast concrete fireplace takes centre stage; suite hearths encourage guests to gather round an intimate fire.

Strong primary colours are used in a stylized way to showcase a material play of contrasts: light vs. dark timber, granite vs. limestone, and bronze vs. polished stainless steel.

+7 Hotel/St Petersburg, Russia
Formerly an apartment block, the hotel is housed in a 19th century building located within the Museum Quarter of the city. Here, the official line is that our design philosophy reinterprets a classic setting with contemporary interventions. In reality what we have proposed is something of a conceit inasmuch as the concept fuses myriad aspirational references in designs that tread the chalk-line between bling and bravado.

The lobby, black-panel clad with a herringbone marble floor, immediately captures a mood of subdued grandeur. Not so subdued are several art-piece accents: a maroon velvet daybed, a black crystal chandelier, and a yellow lacquered wardrobe. In a similarly theatrical approach that invites guests to treat their experiences as high art, the restaurant's muted grey walls provide a backdrop to riotously red banquettes and an immaculately inlaid hardwood floor.

Each bedroom boasts a wallpapered lobby, leading into a classical panelled space featuring an eclectic mix of furniture, all to bespoke designs by Project Orange.

The Park Hotel/Navi Mumbai, India
Mixing traditional Indian patterns and textures with clean lines and graphic shapes, the hotel interiors tell the story of India's celebrated appropriation of Modernism. Free-form pods are inserted in an otherwise open ground floor reception to house the front of house facilities. A plaster-finished orange bar breaks out to the terrace area, while the entrance lobby houses a snug and is covered in hand finished plaster Jali.

A large abstract glass mosaic in light blue, grey and orange dominates the poolside and creates a graphic pattern that provides a contrast to the black tiled ellipse of the swimming pool. The neutral palette of the bedrooms is lifted with flashes of colour in the artwork, cushions and bed throws, all contributing to the chic authenticity of the place.
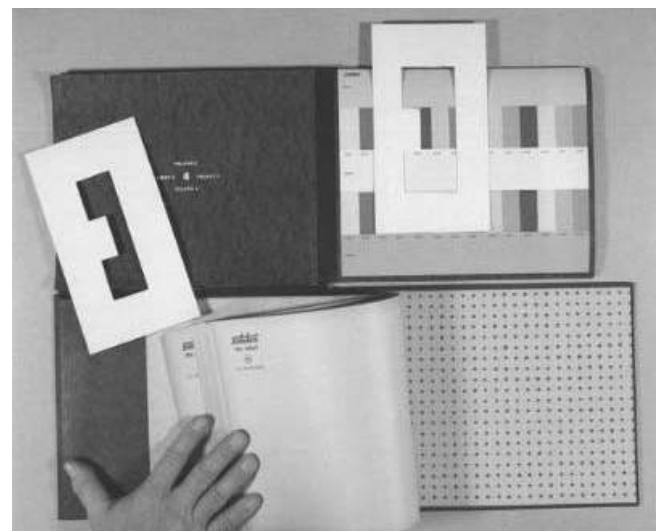
Guest bedroom, +7 Hotel, St Petersburg, Russia
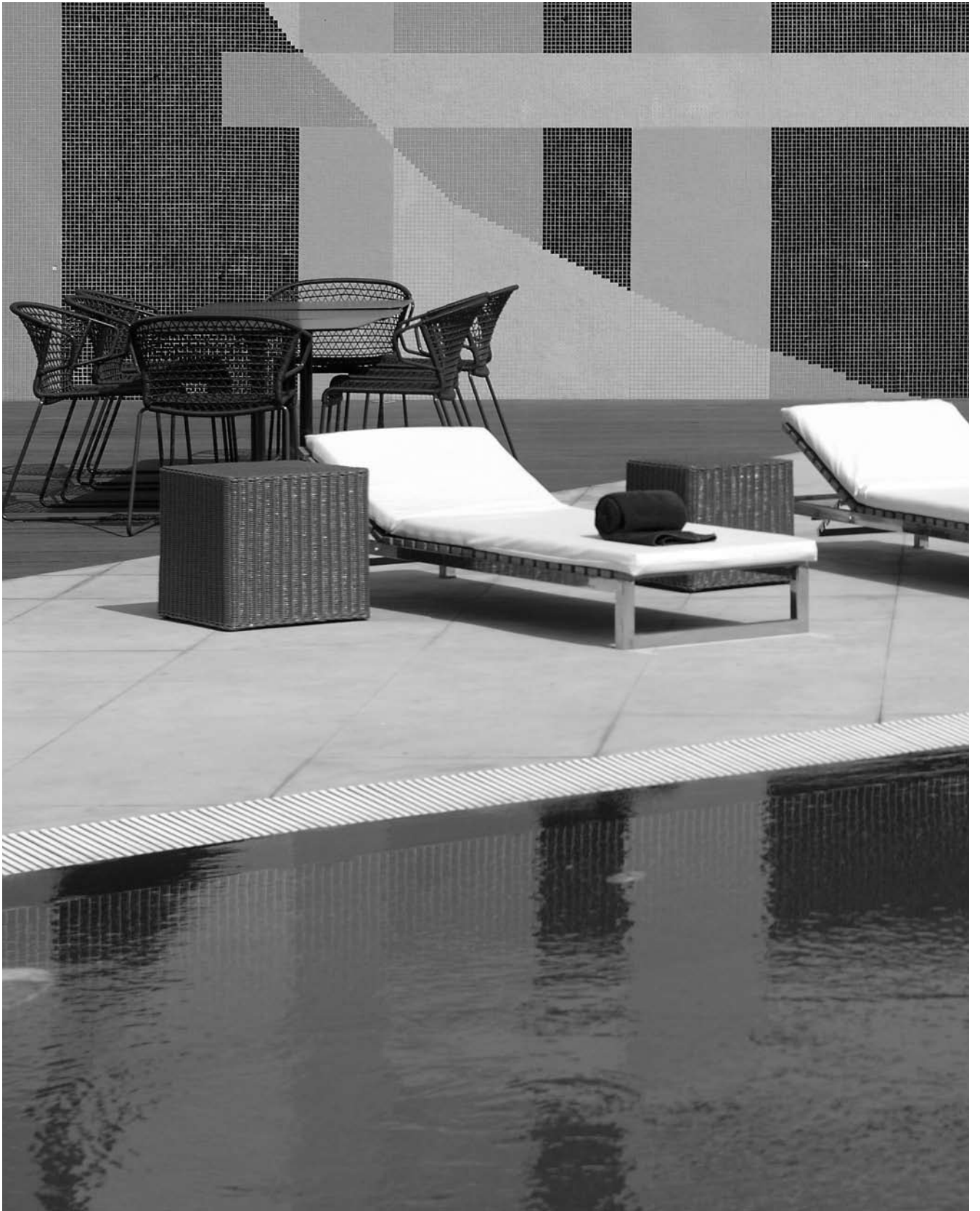
1   *Pool side and mosaic wall, Navi Mumbai*

CABINET CULTURE
RUTH SILVER

There is something really rather lovely about cabinets, don't you think? They are containers for the things we tidy away, not wanting to see – like bills and paperwork. They give a home to the objects we love to empty out, look through and place back from where they first came – like cogs and shiny marbles. They are even mere storage for things we take for granted every day. Dinner plates, cutlery, teacups. Why then, do I find them so appealing?

I have collected things for years. Cats, stamps, postcards, letters, bits of machinery and stationary; robots, pens, doll's house furniture, and photos of street names. There is nothing I love more than to take a drawer full of things, empty it out, clean out the drawer and put everything back in again. Cathartic or just plain silly, there is something satisfying about acquiring a collection and looking after it.

For me, the cabinet is both an object and an idea. It is a place to assemble something in the literal sense, or a visual prompt for us to gather information, collage together ideas and thoughts with a view to making a proposal.

Cabinets have long held a place in cultured society, and have their own place in the history of the domestic interior. During the Renaissance, the Wünderkammer or Wünderkabinett became the item of choice in the wealthy traveller's home. Collections were displayed within an ornate piece of furniture housing curios, art objects and natural objects of interest, all collected on travels. Throughout the seventeenth century the term 'museum', particularly within Europe, evolved as an expression that denotes the viewing of such cabinets, more often displayed within its owner's home. Indeed the famous Ashmolean Museum, Oxford started out life within the home of John Tradescant, where visitors were invited to view 'the ark'. It was not until the nineteenth century that a museum came to mean a public building.

Looking further into the metaphors and meanings of cabinets, and thinking about concepts and institutions such as the Parliamentary cabinet, or places of real or imaginary retreat such as log cabins, tree-houses, and the notion of a *boîte en valise*, interesting parallels can be drawn. All of them worlds in miniature – microcosms for ideas, information, think tanks, collections, or simply just a place to enjoy peace and quiet. This notion lends itself particularly well to the way architects work during the formulation of a design concept – the winning concept sketch within the sketchbook, the cropping of a presentation image, and the editing out of unwanted material.
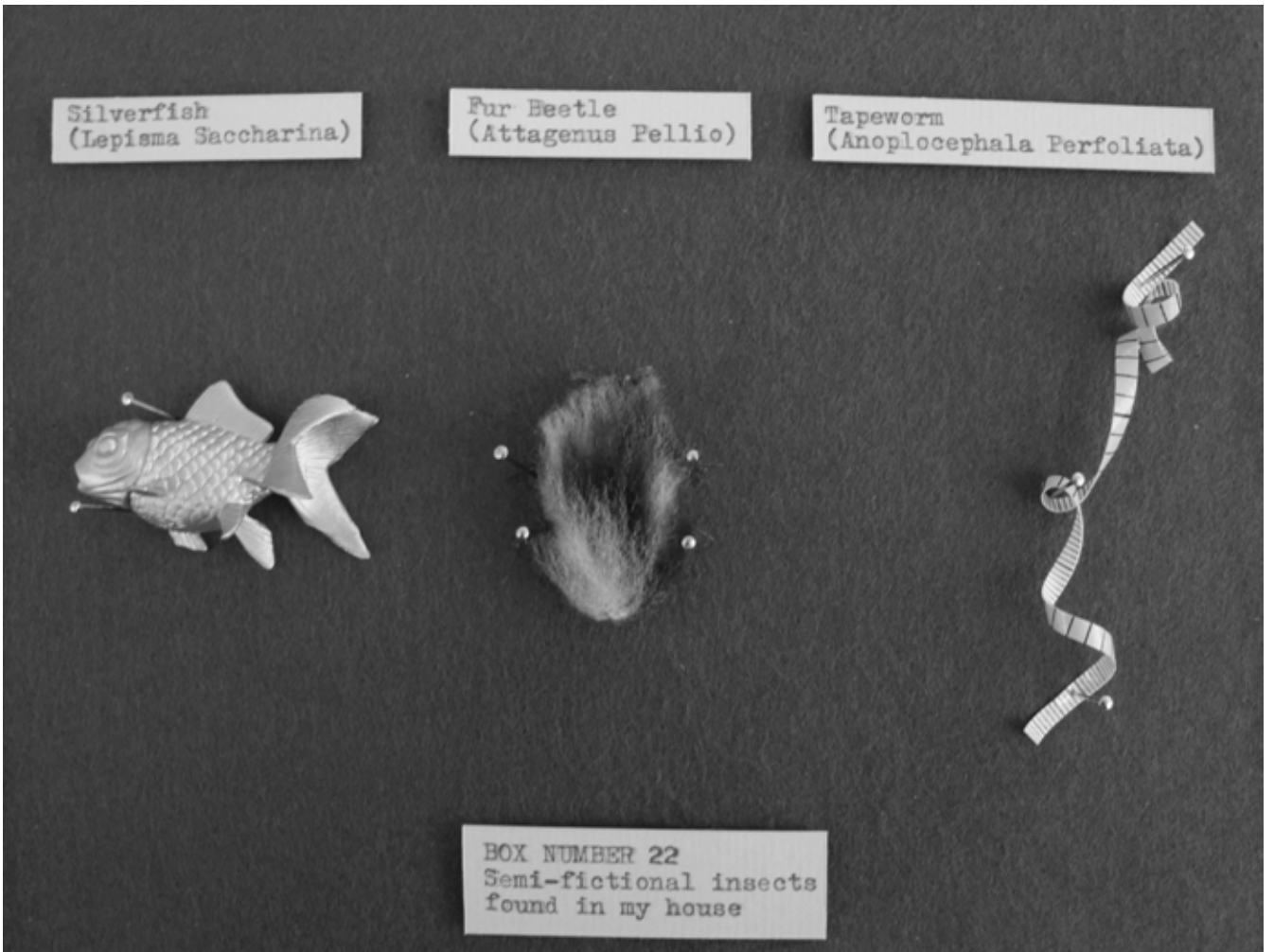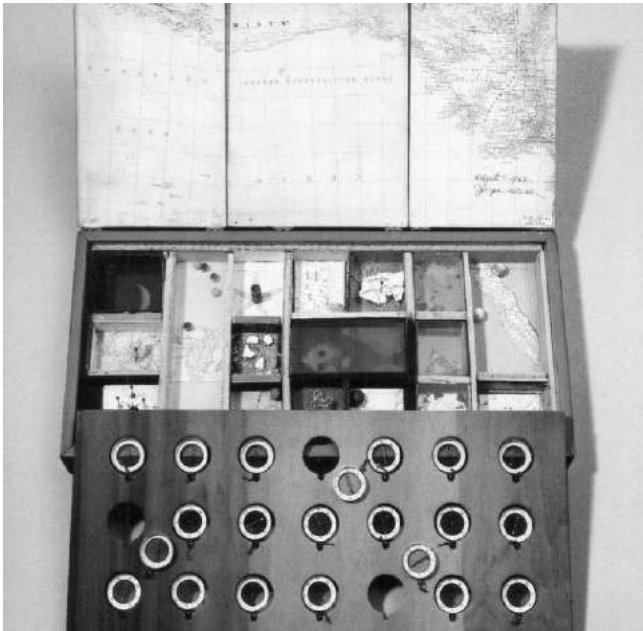
'Cabinet culture' is a phrase I have coined to capture the art and design discipline's love affair with the cabinet. As architects, there is something in the way we process and present information that lends itself so perfectly to the motif of the cabinet. The sample box, the paint chart, the labelling of a drawing, the job-file; all these examples have some essence of 'cabinet culture' embedded within them. Indeed, at Project Orange we have collections of things assembled together, from our office shelving to our sample room; from our presentation boards to objects for inspiration.

No surprise, then, that cabinet aesthetics have translated seamlessly into our architectural vocabulary. Framed openings, pivoting doors, the vitrine or shop window, not to mention an obsession for detail and the quest to specify the exact hinge for a particular application. These design preoccupations reflect a way of imagining new spaces that draws on the scale, style, and capacity for ordering the world suggested by the metaphor of the cabinet.

In this short exploration, themes have been identified for closer examination through visual comparison. They are understood within the rubric of collage, collection and composition. Each combines a variety of things – projects that

1 *Composition: Rubber sink with cupboard above,*
   Judd Street, London

I have completed at Project Orange; inspiring objects and photographs, and images that I have collected knowing that one day that would be useful.

Collage cabinets bring diverse ideas and points of reference together in the manner of what anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss called *bricolage*. Although they may have nothing explicit in common, the pieces of a collage are bound together as so many fragments of a life lived, or snippets of a conversation overheard, or bits and bobs picked up on holiday and then pasted into a sketchbook. At 85 Judd Street we used techniques of collage to bring a material richness and interpretive depth to the design of special spaces, creating an architecture that feeds the imagination.

Collection cabinets, such as libraries, stamp albums and ornithological display cases, bring order to things from the same family, or classify and categorise objects found, made, or acquired. We do this with the knowledge we obtain over our lives, and architectural styles and methodologies are no different. Seen in retrospect, the mid-century Modern Case Study Houses of the American west coast offer their own catalogue of design tests and typologies – a laboratory for developing a new visual and spatial order.

Composition cabinets communicate ideas not only by virtue of what they contain or display, but also through their arrangement. What is above and what below; which objects are at the front or the back? How are relationships between the bottom, middle and top expressing hierarchies that derive from aesthetic ideas of beauty and proportion, and how do these ideas translate into visual hierarchies that are useful and relevant in architectural design? Cabinets defined by composition are like maquettes of buildings, providing a scale model or visual analogy for the priorities that become second nature to the experienced designer. Compositional exercises are the staple diet of Project Orange, and our everyday work – whether at the computer screen, cropping photographs for publication, or mocking up a building elevation – constantly test and sharpen our design skills.

Collection: Display shelves, Project Orange Offices   1
Collection: F&B Paint Chart   2

Silverfish
(Lepisma Saccharina)

Fur Beetle
(Attagenus Pellio)

Tapeworm
(Anoplocephala Perfoliata)

BOX NUMBER 22
Semi-fictional insects
found in my house

1 2   *Collage: Roses Des Vents, Joseph Cornell*
3   *Collection: Pit Rivers Museum, Oxford*
             Collage: Box Number 22, Ruth Silver

THE CARROT VS THE STICK

ABI TUTTLE

Green Innovation and Good Design:

Do you love that feeling too? Of being caught off guard by a play of light; of looking up to an unexpected corner of sky? Or of rediscovering how textures can fill out a moment, as you catch your reflection in a shiny black floor, or sink your sockless feet into deep pile carpet?

The business of architecture is the business of space, and at Project Orange we invest a great deal of effort in managing and optimising spatial experiences – the 'carrot' of architecture; the stuff that makes you care about places as opposed to the (less interesting but equally important) practical stuff. We like to surprise and provoke as well as to comfort and delight. We believe that good design plays a key role in improving the quality of life. Churchill himself is quoted as saying "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us".

Implicit in Part L of the Building Regulations is the recognition that if architecture is about improving the quality of life and enhancing our wellbeing it also has to address the many facets of its environmental impact. 2007 Figures[1] indicate that in Britain the production of building materials accounted for 10% of carbon dioxide emissions and the construction industry for one third of all the waste, with 20% of new building materials on the average building site being simply thrown away at the end of the job. No surprise that environmental issues are creeping up everyone's agenda. And it is crucial that technologies and legislation continue developing to address these issues, so that the authorities have a 'stick' with which to goad the industry into producing greener buildings.

We do our bit at Project Orange, applying principles of passive design and best practice benchmarks. Building regulations and targets are met and exceeded; relevant technologies selected and integrated. All this we look to do intelligently,

and as seamlessly and beautifully as possible.

We do recognise, however, that these efforts only address the tip of the iceberg so we are developing tools to embed more evolved strategies into our design and procurement processes: green inventories, checklists of high and low-tech solutions, and the cultivation of a network of like-minded consultants.

This is all very well – more boxes to tick and more beans to count – but what about the delight and satisfaction that must accompany the design process if its results are to lift the spirits, improving our quality of life and enhancing our wellbeing?

The case I want to make here is for more inspiration – more flair and fun – to be brought to the green agenda. These could be the missing ingredients that would galvanise people into endorsing, paying for and subsequently delivering beautifully green buildings. Current debate is framed in terms of legislation, performance targets and metaphors that are technological rather than about human beings. Mechanistic allusions are everywhere in the press: a BD review describes MGM architects' 2009 housing scheme as 'deep green machines for living in'[2], and another calls a Hopkins building for Yale University a 'green learning machine'.[3] RIBA president Ruth Reed is getting into the act too: in the September 2009 RIBA journal she observed that 'We're finally moving towards the Corbusian view of the building as machine after all this time'.[4]

Intentionally or not, the translation of qualitative concerns into mechanical metaphors puts the emphasis on the technical performance of these solutions, paying little regard to the resulting spatial quality. As a result, 'quality of life' and 'wellbeing' are thought of in terms of checklists and scientific data, squeezing out the spark of inspiration which must surely be at the source of

every good design decision. The time has surely come for a more sophisticated conversation about environmentally responsible design, one that takes into account the products and outcomes of so much applied technology.

One of the models that tackles the green debate in a particularly interesting way is the 'cradle-to-cradle' approach advanced by architect William McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart.[5] Here performance and inspiration combine rather than allowing one to dominate the other. This approach considers the issues at all scales, thinking through design problems holistically in a way that is refreshingly optimistic as well as pragmatic. It opens the door for designers to get involved at a whole new level.

In summary cradle-to-cradle challenges the belief that human industry must inherently damage the natural world. Taking its lead from nature, it prizes effectiveness over efficiency, proposing a new model for manufacture whereby products and by-products (waste) actually nurture the environment rather than harm it. In this way, cradle-to-cradle reconceptualises waste so that human activity and consumption becomes a good thing rather than a detrimental one that has to be reduced and contained (which usually means buried). McDonough and Braungart's book explains how their model applies at all scales, from product design to urban scale master planning, and indicates how to go about implementing this new methodology in our work and in our lives.

It also speaks to us as designers as it identifies the potential for ingenuity, acknowledging our fascination for innovation. By making more of the human capacity for creativity, cradle-to-cradle offers an intellectual resource for addressing the man-made problem of waste. The call is no longer to 'reduce, reuse and recycle', but rather to rethink manufacturing; to reconsider the meaning of ownership so that consumerism evolves from being an environmental taboo to becoming a positive contribution. Given that the material lifecycle is a key consideration in any environmentally responsible construction strategy, the opportunities for the architectural community are staring us in the face.

Cradle-to-cradle illustrates the potential of joined-up thinking where, when considered holistically, the whole becomes far greater than the sum of its parts. Learning again from nature and ecosystems, the benefits of applying these strategies (for example in energy or water management) appear in measurable economic terms as well as pragmatic environmental performance.

The pragmatics of performance are being tested in pilot projects from which lessons will be learnt. In 2006 the Chinese government commissioned a new eco-village – Huangbaiyu in Benxi, Liaoning – with over 400 buildings conceived according to an interpretation of cradle-to-cradle philosophy. It seems that much has been lost in translation in its application on the ground [6], illustrating the challenges of turning theory into practice.[7]

Yet, even if concepts such as cradle-to-cradle do need to be adapted in order to work within the cultural and economic constraints of particular contexts, it is essential that attempts to intelligently apply such environmental principles are continued, lessons learnt and fed back into research and development processes. As the fate of other visionary ideas in the history of architecture shows – Le Corbusier's views on urban renewal are a good example, corrupted as they were by misinterpretation, often in the hands of financially stretched local authorities who failed to grasp the very human ambition behind his designs – the spark of inspiration behind an innovative ideas must be safeguarded if it is to be allowed to mature and become widely accepted.

At a smaller scale than whole new communities, cradle-to-cradle inspired products are becoming available,[8] a number of which are aimed at the construction industry. However, the weighting used in assessing the value of these designs still prioritises technical performance. These are the more easily measurable criteria; investing in features and attributes that can be objectively quantified, rather than qualitative attributes that are considered subjective, can be more simply justified by the research and development departments of manufacturers eager to sell to new markets. However, this 'objective' approach tends to result in objects that have little

'subjective' appeal: we are yet to be seduced into selecting these products.

Our reflections on environmental issues in design practice have brought us back to the place where we started: innovation is not only about nuts and bolts but also about flair and fun. Too much emphasis on technical solutions means that the image we have of sustainable architecture is far from seductive. Could it be that this element – the element of seduction – is the elusive 'silver bullet'? If we turned the same skills and talents we use to make our proposals eye catching, luxurious, or heart-warming towards a green agenda – skills and talents that aim to tempt people to try something different, to spend money on pampering themselves or to indulge in something new – could we generate the impetus to propel us towards the tipping point at which environmentally positive choices become so embedded in our culture that we no longer remember the alternative?

Imagine this future; imagine the conversation: 'Do you remember life before mobile phones? Do you remember Part L? Do you remember the time when environmentally buildings were called 'green' to mark them out from the crowd?" Surely the time has come for a bit more carrot?

References:

1: Figures cited by in the Guardian by Ashley Seager in an article available online at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2007/feb/28/communities.society

2: A review of Studio MGM's 'deep green living machine' is available online at: http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=428&storycode=3141376

3: A review of Hopkin's 'green learning machine' is available online at: http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=428&storycode=3147893

4: Profile of Ruth Reed by Hugh Pearman, RIBA JOURNAL August/September 2009, p.32.

5: William McDonough and Michael Braungart (2002) Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things, (New York, NY: North Point Press)

6: BBC Feature by Deyan Sudjic entitled "Making Cities Work: China" available online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5084852.stm

7: This Frontline World investigative report exposes some of the shortcomings of the HuangBaiyu project as built: http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/green_dreams/

8: The cradle-to-cradle criteria achieved by MBDC products are listed online at: http://www.c2ccertified.com/

Ford car - innovations in component design   1
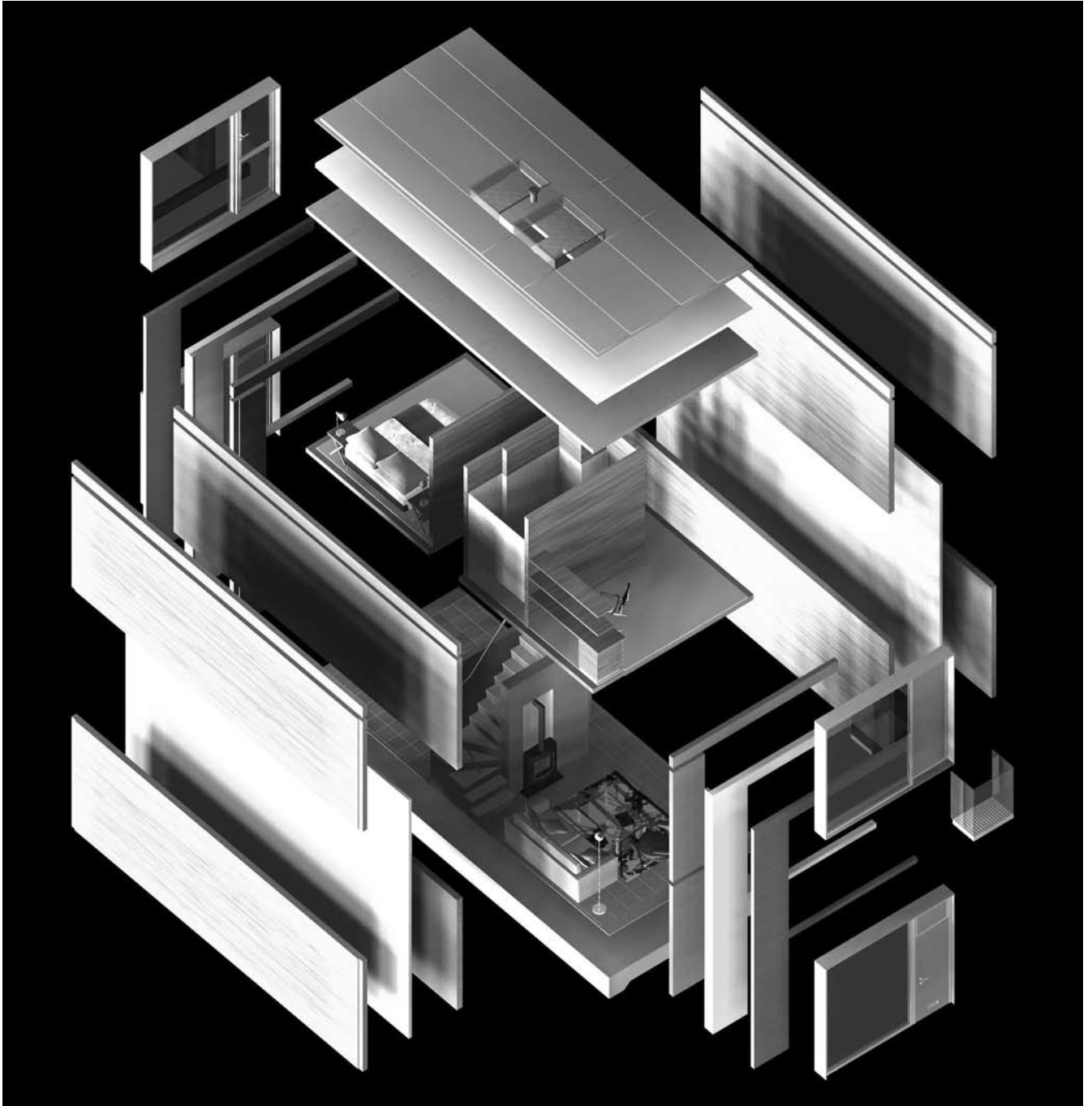
1   *£60k House design, Project Orange, 2007*

IMITATION IS NOT THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY

CECILIA SJOHOLM

Adding to an Historic Building

Adding something new to an existing building, especially if it is listed, requires careful consideration; indeed, it calls for a whole set of skills and sensitivities, and a particular interpretation of the architect's 'duty of care'. Several questions are thrown into relief by the design process. What is the appropriate relationship between tradition and newness? Can design reconcile modern ways of living with conservation concerns? Is architectural imitation the sincerest form of flattery, or is it just pastiche?

Many well respected architects have developed signature approaches to this challenge. One approach is illustrated by Peter Zumthor's Truog House, Switzerland. Here, use of the same material on the existing building and the addition creates continuity, but the difference between them is picked out subtly in the detail. In Tilty Barn, Essex, completed in 1995 by John Pawson, the interior joinery to the living room is 'freestanding' without any visual connection to the existing walls. This creates clarity between the modern insertion and the armature provided by the beautiful 18th century Dutch style barn, demonstrating a concern to engage more explicitly with the intersection between old and new, whilst retaining the integrity of the existing house.

Project Orange is currently engaged in a number of schemes that fall into this category, ranging in location from Inner London developments to country estates. Despite the diversity of projects on our books, what ties them together is a general method or design philosophy. We always aim to find a particular key: a starting point for the alterations and additions process. Our focus is on enhancing rather than destroying the character of the building we are working with. A pivotal concern is, therefore, the dialogue between the historic fabric and the new proposal.

The Old Corner House is a 16th century timber-framed house in the village of Walberswick, Suffolk, in need of restoration and invigoration. Our work follows several other adaptations made over time to suit the priorities that various occupants have had. These include a brick casing to the front and the gables, and a number of incremental extensions, quite different in their detail but relatively consistent in terms of overall character. The task demanded that we should take a view on the juxtaposition of new and old. We decided to develop an architectural language whereby new additions would be clearly detached from the existing house, and to use this method consistently – both in the joinery or furniture-scale elements and in terms of the extension construction at the scale of the building.

The new extension is therefore treated as a modern, separate building, but with a respectful nod to traditional morphology. It takes the form of a freestanding outhouse, alluding to the architectural language of the nearby fishing huts, with their black timber and white painted windows. The connection between the new extension and the main house is set back from the building perimeter, to highlight the separation between the two: almost creating a gasket or shadow gap in a way that gives both buildings room to breathe. This creates a positive tension, whereby the character of the old and the new are separately defined alongside one another other, aiming at promoting dialogue between the two rather than disguising the addition in pastiche detailing.

Material use on the new building is different from the existing house, which is timber framed and rendered. The inset link introduces lead and glass, and the extension is finished in black stained timber cladding. Despite the references to local vernacular, the addition is detailed with simple lines and modern characteristics, with much larger window areas and less fenestration.

The character of the existing house has been retained and enhanced. Windows and doors are in jaunty non-alignment, and where the traditional materials are repaired and reworked, traditional details and methods are largely reproduced. As such, the new work continues the historic development of the main house, where alterations are not hidden, but it does so in a manner that promotes a sense of respectful neighbourliness, acknowledging that the original house did, after all, get there first!

Within the original house, the new bathrooms are designed to demonstrate their separateness from the historic fabric. Joinery floats above and in front of the existing structure, and new additions exhibit clean lines and unblemished material and details compared to the quirky uneven finish typical of old buildings. Changes to the existing façades have been addressed with a great deal of care. While openings are retained as originally intended, window panes and fenestration correspond with contemporary building techniques, showing that the house is – after all – part of the real world, inhabited in a modern way. This approach accepts the found history of continuous adaptation to the house. It neither imitates the old, nor does it attempt to recreate it in a 'chocolate box' idiom.

At the Old Corner House our design philosophy aims to consolidate the historic character of the original, bringing it up to date and augmenting its charm and facilities with a handsome addition. We have chosen to avoid pastiche additions and 'invisible' alterations, to treat the new and old as distinct but related elements, engaged in a friendly and courteous conversation. The changes we are making will signify the continued use and ownership of the property, adding to changes accumulated over the years and serving as a continued reflection of the history and development of this much loved old home.
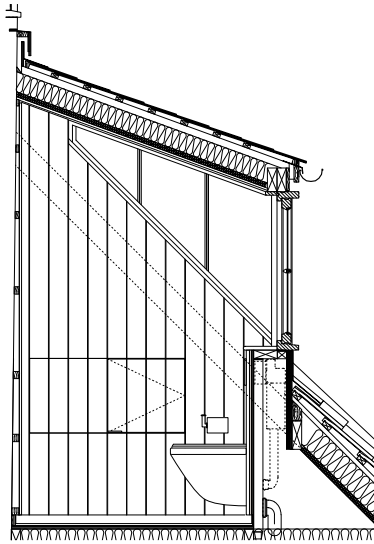

1   *Cross section through original house showing elevation of new-build extension*

View of rear elevation   1 2
View of front elevation   3
Drawing of rear elevation

46
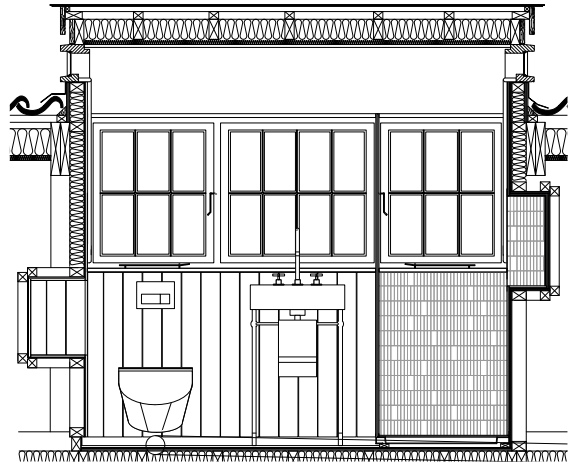
1   *Cross Section through dormer window*
2   *Rendering showing attic bathroom*

COUNTRY LIFE

CHRISTOPHER ASH

To design one's own house is perhaps the ultimate aspiration of any architect. It is also commonly and rightly perceived as a pure expression of the architect's style, and / or (where relevant) theoretical position. Unfettered by the exigencies of an independent client, the architect is expected to invest the project with a cornucopia of ideas, to later become manifest in uncompromising built form.

This is not always how it turns out, as we, as the Directors of Project Orange discovered when designing our own home in the village of Lavenham in Suffolk.

Lavenham is the jewel in Suffolk's crown – a medieval town rich with prime examples of the vernacular of oak frame, colour washed render and clay peg tiles. It is in the very heart of this context that we acquired the site to build a new house, Orange Cottage. The process that followed was one that, rather than give free rein to personal architectural dogma, instead challenged prejudices, suppressed ego and illuminated our understanding of the primary qualitative aspects of domestic architecture.

The site was acquired with consent in place for a three bedroom detached house, and it was to this scheme that we were obliged to return after planning applications were rejected for our first proposals. These were a not unintelligent response to our own brief, architecturally ambitious yet, we believed, sensitive to the extraordinary context. That these schemes should have fallen foul of a draconian and overly subjective application of conservation policy would surprise few architects.

The question arose therefore, whether to proceed with (a version of) the scheme that had consent. This presented two problems, first the issue of authorship – would this ever be "our" design, and second, would we ever want it to be our home.

These problems are of course closely related and have at their root the issue of what the building would say about us as people in general and as architects in particular.

The proposed house presented a single tall gable to the street supported to either side by a larger and a smaller single storey lean-to structure, the former containing a garage. The house was detailed in brick and render with a bracketed and jettied upper storey, barge boards and subdivided timber casement windows.

The troubling aspect of this approved design lay not in its use of vernacular form, or in its dull layout, but rather in the ersatz detail that betrayed a shallow aspiration to historical verisimilitude. In understanding this, and reframing the process as one of reconfiguring and remodelling an as yet un-built building, as opposed to a new build proposition in the conventional sense, we were able to engage with the project in terms of a new objective, the pursuit of contemporary authenticity within a vernacular tradition.

The site lied on a hill and annexed a substantial side garden to a small cottage that left a gap in an otherwise continuous street frontage. The proposed house was well placed within the site, respecting neighbouring building lines, a listed boundary wall and the canopy of adjacent mature trees. The archetypal pitched roof form continued a pattern of cascading gables that define the townscape.

Development of the designs omitted the garage from the proposals and allowed the formal and spatial integration of the lean-to structures with the primary laconic volume, enriching a composition that is finessed with the inclusion of an over-scaled brick chimney to the east.

An analysis of the design must consider not only form, but also spatial configuration, materiality

and detail, all of which make reference to the local vernacular. Form has been described above. Spatial configuration is conceived to facilitate a relaxed informal lifestyle (this is a weekend house for a couple who entertain) whilst maximising the volumetric possibilities of the pitched roof and lean-to structures.

It is characteristic of many medieval timber framed Suffolk houses that habitable spaces are linked in surprising and unexpected ways. Stairs may be grand or tucked away into pockets, rooms connect directly to other rooms, screens and passages demarcate primary and secondary spaces, galleries and soaring volumes appear when least expected. A sympathy for these qualities informed the spatial organization of Orange Cottage.

Central to the plan is the compact winding stair, the curved form of which anchors the largely open plan ground floor, staking the house to its site. The stair finds its negative echo in the curved brick enclosure to the water feature viewed on axis from the front door, a device conceived to link the house to the formally arranged garden. Accommodation is distributed around the stair and includes spaces for music making, living, cooking and eating. Each area affords a variety of views and spatial connections to it neighbours whilst retaining a distinct identity, an effective zoning, which is further defined by a change of floor level that gives primary emphasis to the sunken living area.

Functional designation also gains subtle emphasis through manipulation and detailing of the ceiling plane. The entrance lobby and rear door to the garden are connected by a lowered flush bulkhead, creating a powerful axis from the public (street) through the private (garden) and anchoring the rectangular dining table. This ceiling line continues in the soffit of the cantilevered "smoking porch" above the garden door. The main reception areas, living and music rooms, are defined by a higher white painted beamed ceiling that flows from front to back, interrupted only by the vertical penetration of the stair. Finally, ancillary spaces comprising the kitchen and the library / desk area are characterised by the open vaulted ceilings of the lean-to structures in which they are located and which render legible from

within the form and massing of the house as a whole.

On the upper storeys, the highly efficient location of the stair at the centre of the plan minimizes circulation area, whilst achieving drama through volume. The landing at second floor level is no more than a bridge connecting rooms to the front and rear of the plan, crossing a void over the landing below. This affords dramatic views up to the apex of the roof containing a vast skylight flooding both landings with natural light.

External detailing of the house presented the greatest challenge. In order to purge the project of ersatz styling, there was a temptation to follow a reductivist strategy through which any reference to traditional detail is totally avoided. Alert however to the dangers of less simply being less, a language was pursued that acknowledged the origins of historical precedent without aping historical details. The result thus retains lime rendered facades above a projecting brick plinth, contrasted with solid brick supporting elements of lean-to structures and chimney. Barge boards and jetties were omitted from the gables, the junction of roof and rendered façade instead being made through a simple weathering projection of the roof tiles, articulated by a recessed shadow joint. Likewise fascias were avoided at the principle eaves where it was decided to clearly express the substantial rafters of the principle roof.

Windows are a defining element of the facades and are emblematic of the qualitative nature of the house as a whole. Frames and casements are all of solid oak; a material whose use has obvious precedent in the surrounding Tudor buildings. Linings to windows are the full depth of the timber framed walls and meet render and plaster to the outside and inside alike with an articulated shadow joint. Windows in the brick lean-to elements are placed deep in the reveal to express the full thickness of the brick skin in marked contrast to the flush detailing in the rendered surface.

Fenestration to the street façade is intentionally laconic with simple casements whose proportions echo those to historic neighbours but whose detail is entirely contemporary. To the

rear the arrangement of central gable, brick lean-to and chimney is rendered more abstract by the arrangement of projecting oak linings that break forward of the wall plane and unite full height glazing, oak panelled screens and external door in a single double height composition.

Oak is also a fundamental component of the materials palette that defines the interior of the house. Not only windows, but also all internal doors are set within full depth solid oak linings, the door leaves themselves being a contemporary version of a solid oak boarded door. This establishes a hierarchy in which important joinery elements including upper floors, the stair, kitchen and library are all in oak whilst secondary elements are finished in painted routed MDF redolent of tongue and groove boarding including wardrobe doors and wall linings to all bathrooms.

The interior is characterised by materiality and texture that enrich both the experience and reading of the spaces. Exposed painted joists, brick floors, painted brick, oak and bronze are materials and details that have been used in Suffolk houses over centuries. In Orange Cottage we aimed to find a contemporary expression that capitalises on the simple yet beautiful qualities of these elements without recourse to debased historicism.

The completed Orange Cottage is not what we anticipated when first speculating on the design of our own house, yet is almost certainly better for it. It is a distillation of the local vernacular: the pared down aesthetic contains the essence of Tudor Lavenham whilst avoiding any pretence of belonging to a century other than its own. It is also a fantastic home.

In the words of one architectural critic:

"This is a house that lacks ego… This isn't a show home or laboratory for architectural experiments: it is a house designed to be lived in. It manages to be subtle without being timid, fitting neatly into its environment but not overawed by it…."

Grant Gibson, RIBA Journal, March 2007

Exterior view down Prentice Street   1
Interior showing kitchen/dining   2

1   *Rear elevation, Orange Cottage, Lavenham*

END PAPER
JAMES SOANE

To me a sketch isn't something precious or necessarily beautiful. Rather it is a kind of shorthand exploring an idea. It could be a diagram, a colour, a smudge, a cross section or a 3-d view.

Architects have, until very recently, used sketches to illustrate a concept. They do not aim to communicate a total experience, but to capture an essence. The inexorable rise of computer software has promoted the image-as-photograph. It is possible to conjure up sophisticated and complex imagery that blurs the boundary between fantasy and reality. Such explorations are wonderful and yet potentially flawed; in part because they are so tantalising and real. It means there is no longer a gap between the idea of a project and its outcome. There is little left to the imagination and like a photograph, it is a moment in time. The editing is down to the author, and, while it purports to be 'truthful', it is anything but. There is also the added distraction that clients and consultants feel it is therefore possible to change and amend the design easily.

I am all for transparency and am aware that, to many, the process of architecture remains rather elitist at best and egotistical at worst. The participation of all interested parties is important, as is the process of design, which is collaborative. However at what point does changing the design, once it appears to be so tangible, affect the premise or narrative? This is where the architect has to tread a careful line - of course it is possible to change the image, to manipulate the content and alter the intention - but the real question is how does one read the 'final' image with respect to the original idea or concept? In other words, the difference between the image and the built work is that the physical manifestation is infinitely more complex and permanent.

Recently we entered a competition for Urban Splash to design a 'book-end' building on their New Islington Tutti Frutti site. While the brief was for a mixed-use building, with residential above retail, it was clear that they were looking for a process, not an end product. We decided to make a sketch book and sketch model, as a way of exposing our rather autobiographical methodology and to push our own agenda. During the two weeks we were working on the pitch, I travelled to Switzerland and Russia. This left plenty of time to doodle and think. Initially, however, there is always the concern that the sketch would not be convincing or attractive. It was important therefore to keep going and make lots of sketches.

We began by exploring an organic architecture, based on a playful understanding of 'Tutti Frutti' as an ice-cream flavour, full of nuts and candy. The direction seemed somewhat willful - so we bought a box of Quality Street chocolates and made models from the contents. This narrative suggested that the cladding could be understood as a wrapping that would be different depending on the final programme and massing. On a technical level it also allowed us to make a building that appeared complex, but which used the same cladding system throughout, just with a different finish. This addressed the limited budget as well as the client's desire to create an arresting landmark building.
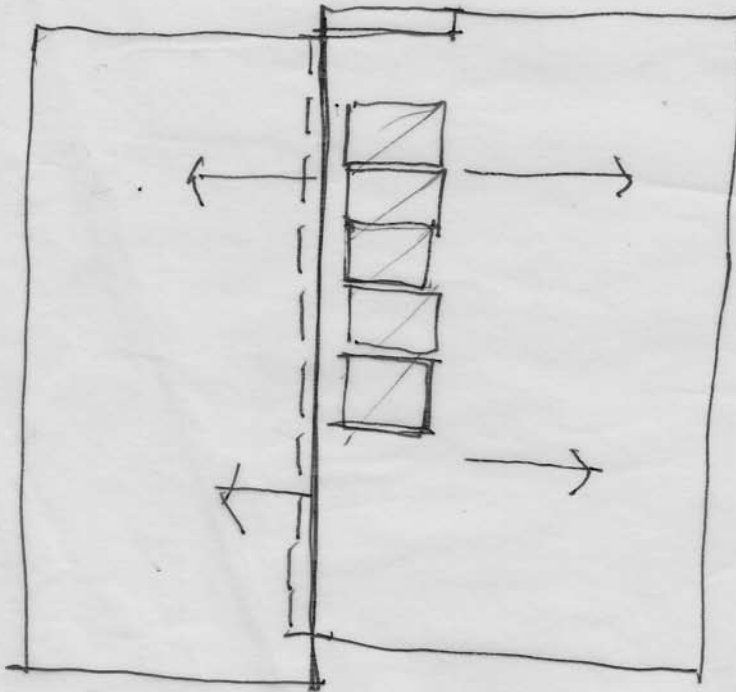
Despite our train being cancelled and arriving two hours late for the interview, we presented just the sketchbook and the model. The unintended consequence of having such a small object to read meant that everyone was pouring over the book as we told the story of our thoughts. It became an intimate and personal conversation. We were delighted a few weeks later to find we had won.

On reflection, the most positive outcome was the realisation that the value of the sketch and the unfinished drawing was appreciated. The client seemed to enjoy the potential.
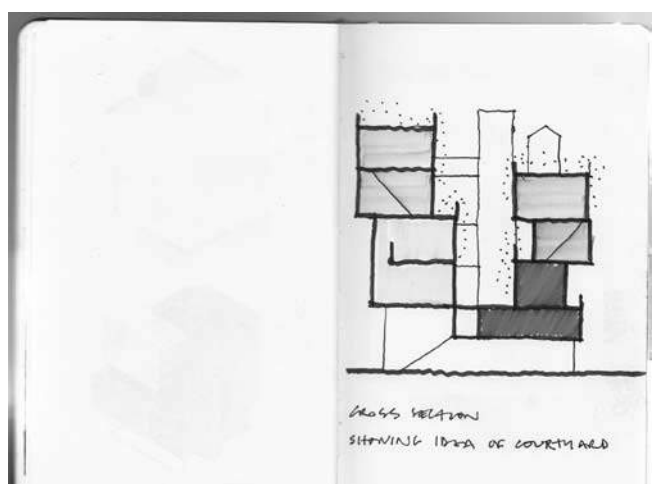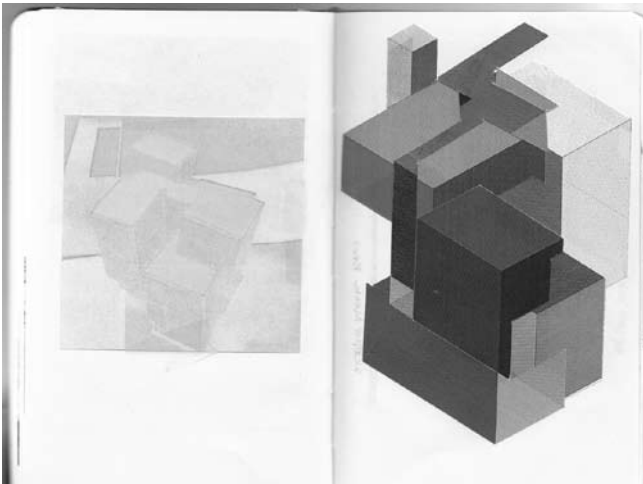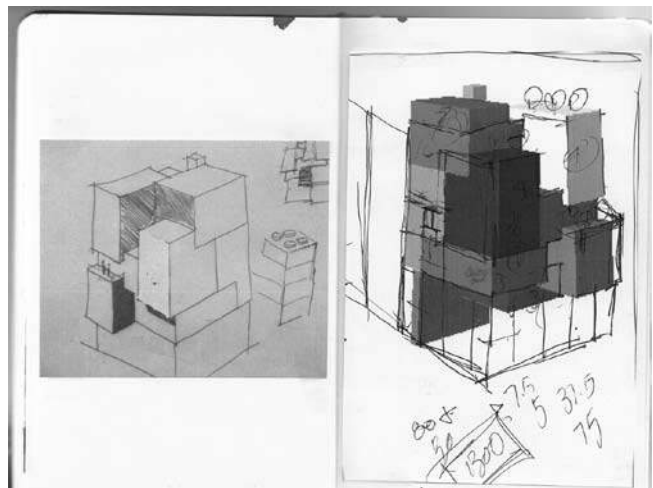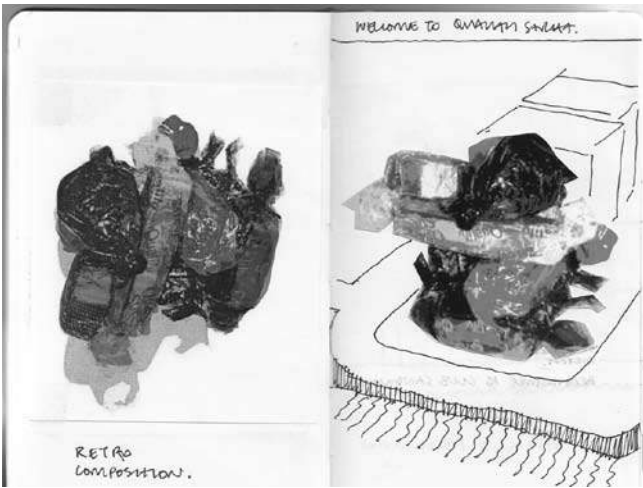
CAD ROOM.

electronix

Prep room

multimaterials.

ideas
creating

3D making

SECTION.

section

Roof Plan.

| Oakham School, development sketches

?Niche frame.

COVE

COVE

Love

STORAGE.

↕(?)
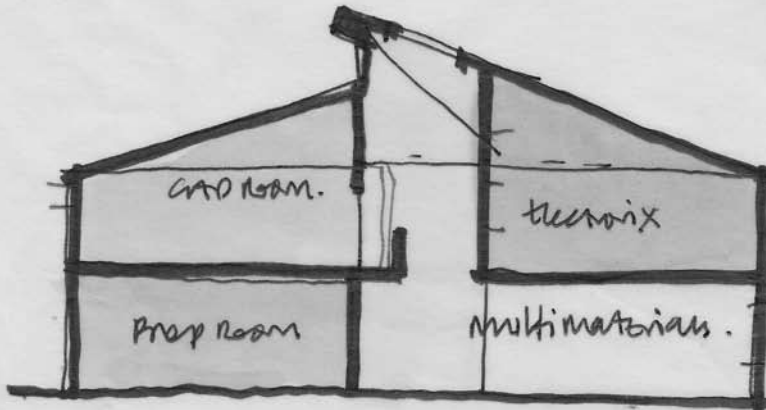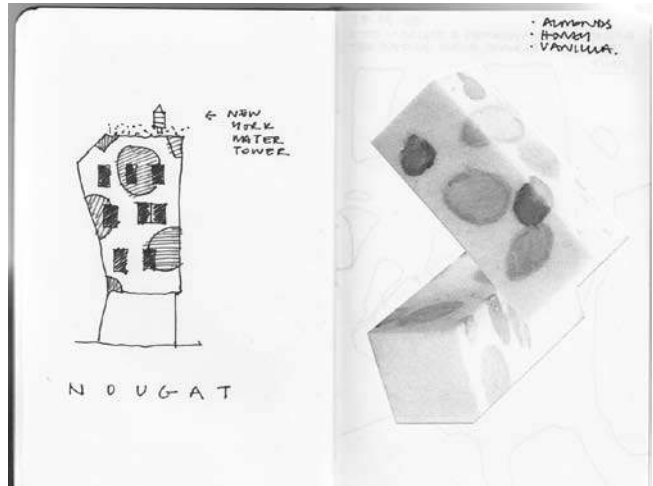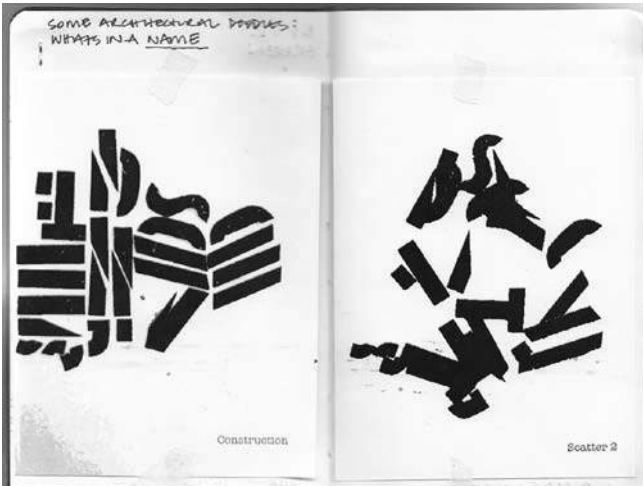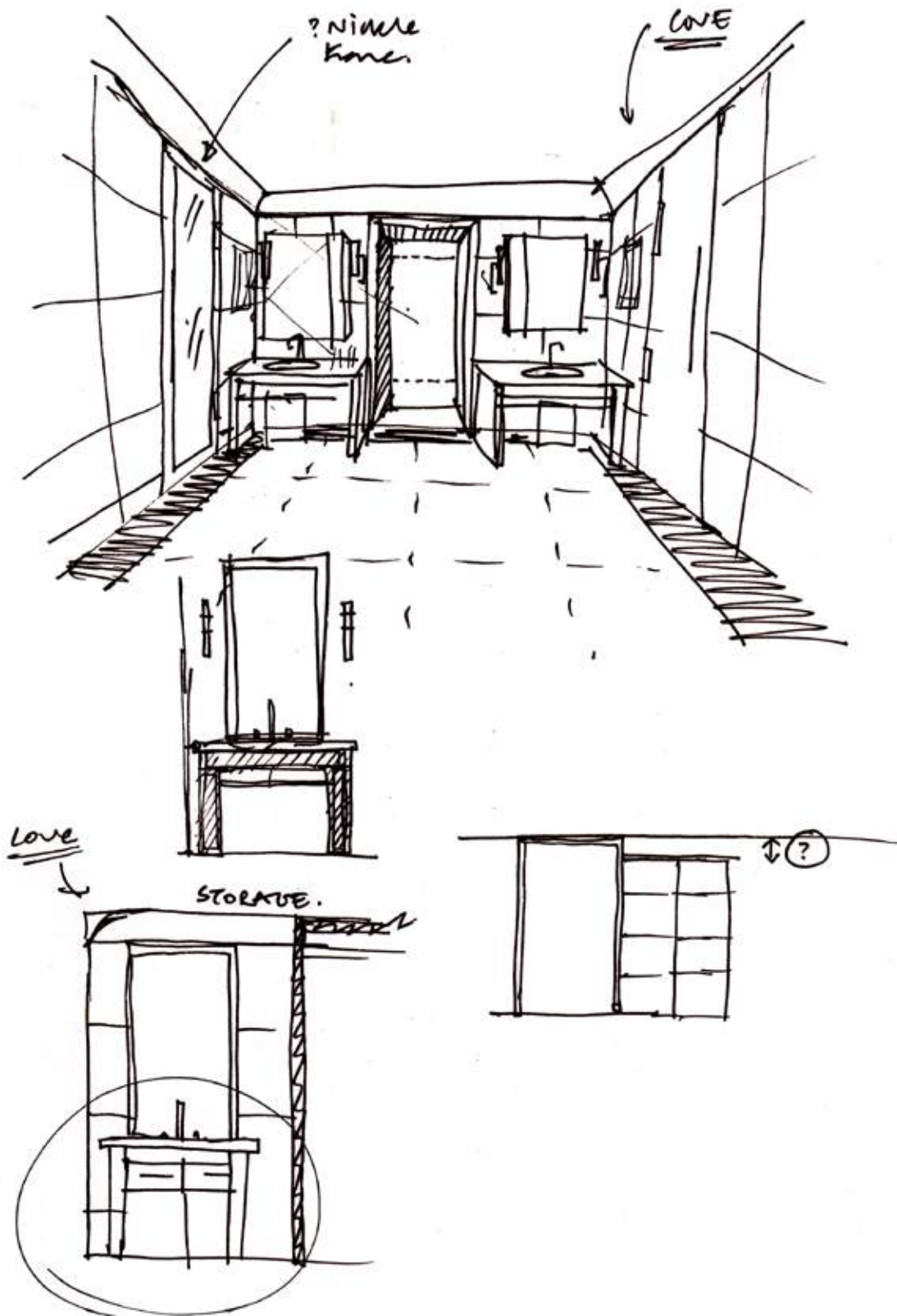
1   *Design sketches for new apartment bathroom, Moscow*

1   *Caption to image as numbered in key*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Previous Pages: Collages for Competition for new building - Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, 2009
Above: Project Orange Office Trip, Oxford, 2009
Opposite: Cemetery Road, Sheffield

www.projectorange.com