Products in Practice May/Jun 2021

RIBAJ

PiP

If the past is never dead, or even past . . .

. . . the six practices just shortlisted to upgrade the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing might be wise to remember William Faulkner's warning. From the Goliath Chipperfield via Asif Kahn to David Kohn, alongside close neighbours Caruso St John and Witherford Watson Mann, are the contenders all being offered a poison chalice?

After all, the building's the stuff of infamy: Prince Charles' 1984 'carbuncle' speech at the RIBA's 150th anniversary dinner and the subsequent ditching of ABK's high-tech competition winning extension for Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's postmodern riff. But history deals a cruel hand – Venturi's 1991 Pritzker Prize would not, despite appeals, be retrospectively extended to Scott Brown, and some even say their gallery coup deprived them of the Royal Gold Medal itself. Learn from Las Vegas: you win some, you lose some.

So do not go gentle into that good fray, Annabelle Selldorf of New York's Selldorf Architects – the only non-UK firm on the list. I'm sure fellow American Scott Brown will keep a keen eye on developments. Hailing from the city that made Edward Bernays, godfather of public relations, it's almost a given that you'll be able to 'vastly improve the welcome experience'.

But note: neither the original nor latest of the building's architects escaped trouble. Historian HR Hitchcock opined the Trafalgar Square face of William Wilkins' 1838 gallery was 'excessively episodic', and Dixon Jones, the last to work on it, had to shut up shop last year. So be careful what you wish for: the Wilkins jinx might actually be a thing, and the saga set to run and run. ●

Jan-Carlos Kucharek, editor

SÉBASTIEN GODEFROY/TK ELEVATOR

ADAM PARKER

VADESIGN LLC

More online...

It took just 42 hours to design the first concept using Spacemaker – as against 56 hours working up the same concept conventionally

Stephen Cousins discovers how AI-driven design frees architects to let their imaginations soar: ribaj.com / aispacemaker

FRENCH + TYE

PiP's on Pinterest! See the latest products on our Pinterest feed: pinterest.co.uk/productsinpractice

Sink the pink: The Funen low-back chair from Eilersen. Also available as a high-back

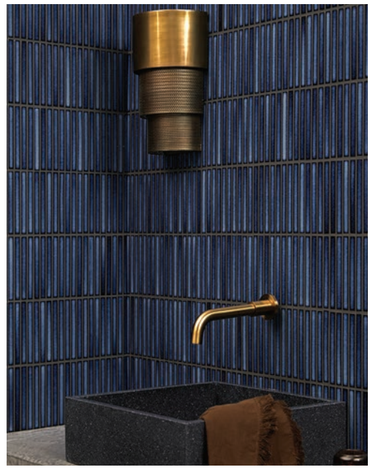
Contemporary room divider by Tom Pigeon for furniture designer and maker Roger Lewis

White – like Moby Dick – but tiny! Starck's Cape Cod range for the smaller bathroom

Kitchen's gone all Cartesian: horizontals and verticals of Rotpunkt's Daylight Grey HPL range

Cover image: Vilkaviškis Bus Station, Lithuania. Photograph: Norbert Tukaj

Compendium

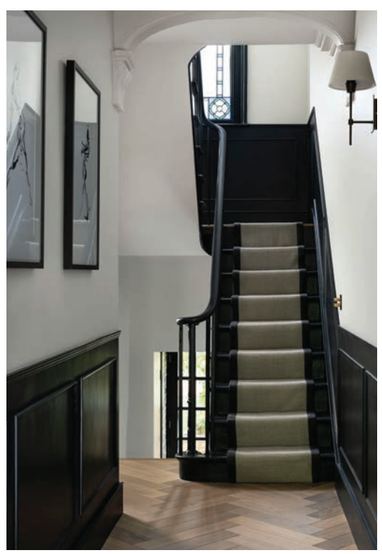


Have a break...
You may be aware of the Japanese concept of wabi-sabi with its acceptance of transience and imperfection – and it's amazing where one can see it play out. A Kit-Kat bar for instance; not the chunky ones – which are functionally and proportionally just wrong – but the originals. For which has the greater beauty? Two fingers connected, whole, perfect; or snapped in twain, that exquisite instance before consumption? Such thoughts spring to mind with Domus' new minimalist Yubi range of Japanese-inspired, finger-shaped mosaic tiles. Available in six earthenware tones and all lusciously glazed with a contrasting, coloured edge. Yum yum.

JOHNNY UMANS

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe
Our Low Countries installation artist/architect of choice, Gijs van Vaerenbergh, has not let lockdown get in the way of production, bringing its talents to the recently restored Neo-Romanesque Saint Odulphus Church in the town of Borgloon, Belgium. Inspired by the halos of the saints on its wall frescoes, the firm has created an enormous one itself – HALO, suspended in the church's transept. The huge, gold-painted aluminium ring is suspended 4.1m above the ground, but at 15m in diameter, it disappears off into the side aisles and the apse too. While you will never see the ring in its entirety, its form is singular enough to let blind faith fill in the blanks.

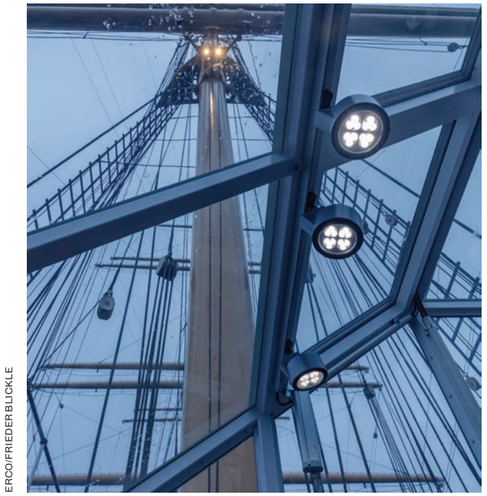
Facilitating the Lambeth Walk
Stockwell based _ingArchitects has been doing its bit and keeping it local – notably with its restoration work on a family home in Lambeth's 19th century Lansdowne Gardens conservation area. While sticking to a dark, traditional, Victorian palette of colours throughout, it has brought the place bang up to date with the flooring technology, if not its look. The firm specified Havwoods' engineered Fendi boards in a lively herringbone pattern running through the public rooms, while adopting the more sedately arranged Venture Plank Fendi boards in the sleeping areas to ensure that any resident flâneurs are afforded some much-needed shut-eye.



DAVID BUTLER

Flushed with pride
There's a lot to be said for judging the quality of a building by its loos and I'm sure Piraccini + Potente Sustainable Architecture would agree. Italian architecture magazine The Plan has selected it as the winner in its 2020 awards in the home efficiency and technology category for Piraccini's own Passivhaus private home in Cesena in Italy. His sustainable solar thermal hot water is channelled via Duravit lines ME sanitaryware, designed by Philippe Starck. But the highlight of it all is his DuraSquare washbasin and stand outside on the bedroom terrace, allowing lovely views of the Savio river behind him in the shaving mirror.

DANIELE DOMENICALE



ERCO/FRIEDER BUCKLE

Port Out Sausage Home
'Laws are like sausages,' said Otto von Bismarck, the German grandee who oversaw the reunification of the country in 1871. 'It's better not to see them being made.' And that's coming from a citizen of a country that's synonymous with wurst. But to help it fulfil its culinary destiny, clipper 'The Peking' was built in 1911 by Blohm + Voss, helping Germany to speedily import Saltpetre from Chile. This was to supply in the necessary quantities the 'curing' nitrates for its burgeoning sausage industry. The four-masted 'Flying P-Liner' barque is now lovingly restored and moored outside the German Port Museum in Hamburg. Fully illuminated by ERCO fittings, her lean splendour is evident to visitors and Hamburgers alike.

ON TarkOFFsky
The last time Meljac, 'the leading French name in upscale switches' appeared in PiP, it was five years ago. Or was it? Perhaps its 'Butterfly' range of semi-precious dimmers were just a figment of an overactive imagination. Or a trick of the light. I can't be sure about anything anymore. Now 'they' have apparently brought in hot designer Marc Newson to create the 'Solaris' collection of high-end solid brass light switches, 'the result of 18 months (millennia? light years?) of painstaking research and development'. Tonight, as we orbit, I will ask the hallucination of my late wife what she thinks about its 'flattened toggle and flush, concave push button'; though I anticipate she may well not have a view.

Soap stone
God knows, we could all do with a bit of self-indulgence right now. Perhaps that's why PiP's eye was drawn to Cullifords latest SapienStone ceramics range, which seems to promise unbridled opulence, though hopefully at a reined-in price. Ranging from veined green and classic white marble effect to 'concrete style', the surfaces are heat, light, scratch and chemical resistant and at 12mm thick, can be used on worktops, doors and splashbacks for a fully homogenous aesthetic. Available with integrated sinks even, it shows that even if you weren't born to bathe like a Roman senator, you can always wash up like one.

Two's company
No good will come of meeting your double, as Dostoevsky is happy to point out – and it's a maxim that TK elevator has fully taken on board in its lift design for architect Jean-Luc Crochon's Trinity Tower at La Défense in Paris. The building's 33 storeys are served by eight twin elevators, where two cabs share the same shaft, optimising passenger flow rates and reducing waiting times. Equipped with separate traction chains, controllers and cables, one lift serves floors 0-15 and the other floors 15-33. Quite what happens when two passengers simultaneously call the lift for floor 15 is anyone's guess, but one assumes that's what the firm's intelligent destination selection control device is for.

SÉBASTIEN GODEFROY/TK ELEVATOR

Time is ripe for next step in digitisation

One of the big changes I've found in lockdown is clients and collaborators growing comfortable with online meetings. It has been hugely liberating to discuss projects without the need to spend up to a whole day travelling for a one hour meeting. While there will always be times when a building must be visited, I hope most of my meetings will continue to take place online.

With online meetings, the space becomes a more positive neutral ground, with attendees having all their necessary resources to hand. This allows us to capitalise on the new digital literacy to shift the focus of collaboration to within the virtual environment of a BIM model itself – in much the same way paper would be in a physical meeting.

But concerns around remote working are well-founded. A survey by Harvard Business School found that since moving out of offices and into homes, the working day had increased by an average of 48 minutes. Zoom fatigue is a familiar lexicon as people jump from one meeting to the next without time to process, rest and digest. The CEO of Citigroup has declared Friday's 'Zoom free', and an RIBA survey last November showed 45% of respondents reporting an increase in working hours and 48% reporting a negative impact on mental health.

The future of work will undoubtedly comprise a mixture of 'old normal' and some 'new normal'. While many of us are feeling tired of living online, the industry can take advantage of this new digital literacy to improve outcomes. Productivity in construction still lags well behind the national average. Six months before the first lockdown, an article by McKinsey & Company indicated that the industry still trails in digital uptake, and many companies' digitisation initiatives had failed to deliver value.

The same article highlights the need for digital projects to focus on collaboration, and this resonates for me. In the past, as an engineering consultant I have seen BIM used as a 3D tool to be passed between different organisations. Often the information exchange included screen grabs of the model marked up by hand. At tender stage, this BIM model was often exported to a set of 2D PDFs, issued to a contractor, who would then produce their own BIM model, because contractually it is difficult for the original BIM model to be adopted for use in construction.

BIM will only improve project outcomes if collaboration is entirely within the BIM environment itself. Models need more detail and to truly resolve co-ordination so that no further design is required during construction phase, reducing the associated risks to a project programme. However, I fear it is our procurement traditions that are limiting our ability to maximise the value of digital technology. A contractual overhall is needed so information in the BIM model can be passed from one phase of a project to the next, and ultimately become an asset for the client to manage the property at handover.

While the digital tools available to us haven't changed during the pandemic, perhaps our capacity and appetite to use them has. ●

Dan Cash is a building services engineer and director of consulting at Atamate

Counter-Covid shopping list

PiP checks what might be flying off the shelves

BE.SAFE
ID Surfaces
Panel manufacturer Swiss Krono has launched BE.SAFE, a new anti-bacterial treatment claiming to offer triple protection from viruses, bacteria and fungi. It can be used across its Krono One World range of '128 decors and any material combination in melamine faced chipboard, MF, MDF and compact density fibreboard'. Available through UK distributor ID Surfaces, the surface additive attacks viruses, bacteria and fungi and eliminates pathogens. It maintains effectiveness and built-in protection through the life cycle of the decorative surface and has been tested to ISO 22196:2011-08 Plastics – Measurement of anti-bacterial activity on plastic surfaces.
idsurfaces.co.uk

Purelight Flow UV-C luminaire
LED Direct
This apparently 'uses wavelengths of 253.7 nm and allows for effective disinfection'. LED Direct says its radiation 'distorts micro-organisms' genetic material and renders them incapable of reproducing' – backed up by Boston University's National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratory. It comes in Standard Flow and Hybrid versions. Standard Flow has UV-C tubes held in a chamber, through which the device pushes airflow to sanitise and disinfect it, and can be in used in offices, schools and hospitals with high volumes of foot traffic. Hybrid uses a direct light source, sanitising both surfaces and air, but can only be activated when no people are present.
leddirect.co.uk

Ultraleather Pro IFR
Ultrafabrics
The Martindale Rub is an abrasion test simulating the natural wear of a seat cover, in which a textile is rubbed against a standard abrasive surface with a specified force. Ultrafabrics' Pro IFR textile not only survives 120,000 of them but adds antimicrobial protection to its flame retardancy and stain resistance. Created in a Japan, the textile, available in 10 shades, uses Takumi Technology to give the premium polycarbonate material both strength and longevity. With EPA-registered antimicrobial protection and able to withstand regular cleaning and disinfection with bleach solutions, it's suited to hospitality, healthcare and 'interior marine applications' – think yachts!
ultrafabricsinc.com

ACTIVE SURFACES
Iris Ceramica
Iris Ceramica's ACTIVE SURFACES seem more active than usual, after analysis at the University of Milan's Department of Bio-Medical Sciences to verify their antiviral properties against Covid-19, in collaboration with the firm's own R&D department. Research suggested ACTIVE SURFACES could 'eliminate 94% of SARS-CoV-2 after only four hours of exposure to low intensity UV light (natural light and traditional light bulbs even at low intensity). The PR states this adds to ISO certificates (ISO 21702 – ISO 18061) obtained in respect of four other viral strains: the H1N1 and H3N2 pandemic influenzas, Enterovirus 71 and the Poliovirus.
activeceramic.it

3D-printed sculpture

RYAN TYLER MARTINEZ

What Purple STEAM pavilion
Where Durham, North Carolina, USA

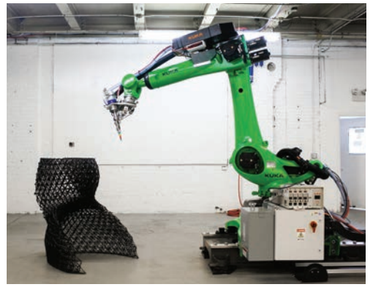
Newly installed outside Vines Architecture's main public Library in Durham, USA, is architect Volkan Alkanoglu's art pavilion 'Purple STEAM'. At 5.4m tall, 9.75m long and 4.8m wide, it is one of the largest completely 3D-printed public sculptures yet built and is the result of his collaboration with Tennessee-based 3D printing specialist Branch Technology, who, with previous experience with the likes of NASA, was well placed to help realise the design.

Inspired by a Facebook questionnaire that Alkanoglu sent out to the library's users, the choice of an abstract design was further informed by interviewees' two favourite books – Alice Walker's Pulitzer prize-winning The Color Purple and Crockett Johnson's 1955 children's book Harold and the Purple Crayon. The subtlety of colour choice evidences itself at morning and evening when the light draws out purple's constituent blues and reds.

While the form might emulate Harold's squiggles, it was generated by complex algorithmic optimisation of shape, structure and volume 'because in the world of 3D printing, volume equals cost', explains Alkanoglu. The form was initially modelled in 3ds Max and optimised via Grasshopper and Rhino. They then had to write the G-Code that allowed Branch Technology to run it through its proprietary software to allow its robots to create the 40 building block forms that would be assembled to make the finished piece. The firm used a fleet of 6-axis robots using ABS filament strands impregnated with carbon to give additional strength. The C-FAB system used builds in small structural cells that go on to create the larger space-frame mesh characterising the final form. And it learned as it went along. 'Every real piece was scanned and compared to the digital model to check for compressions or deviations,' says Alkanoglu. 'That created a constant feedback loop that modified the fabrication process.'

VA DESIGN LLC

Top The sculpture in position outside Durham's public library in North Carolina.
Above Close-up of the C-FAB space frame mesh, formed of carbon-impregnated ABS filament, that is the building block of the design.
Below One of the 6-axis robots that built the sculpture's constituent elements.



BRANCH TECHNOLOGY/ RUDY CORN

Curiously, given the highly digitised nature of the individual elements, the firm used nothing more than zip ties to assemble them. But while connections were all on planar faces, those faces were at varying angles, so needed an engineer's input to the positioning and number of zip ties to ensure loads were transferred down efficiently. 'When they proposed the ties I thought "wait a minute!" – but it really was the best way to put them together and I loved the contrast of high and low tech,' says Alkanoglu. Though he adds that the light weight of the total structure, just 218kg, meant the engineer was more concerned with its uplift component in high winds than any downward loadings.

As Branch Technology warrantied the sculpture, the choice of ABS filament rather than the more sustainable and biodegradable PLA filament was their decision. But the architect says the benefit of 3D printing is that you only use what you print; his previous free-form projects were done using timber or metal and had created wastage from milling or cutting processes. Though the fabricator is looking into more sustainable means of 3D printing, he adds.

Alkanoglu is now commissioned on a much larger, 20m tall sculpture by a lakeside in Denver but here, with colour grading up the sculpture, the challenge will be whether to paint it fully assembled or to apply the gradations locally to the individual pieces before assembly – requiring digital rather than analogue means of application. Colour by numbers or by hand? Having put the 'Art' in 'STEM', perhaps Alkanoglu should ask Harold. ●

Glazing for affordable housing – better quality brings budget-saving performance

Slim frames boost light and aesthetics, while high insulation promises not just comfort but lower bills too with Velfac's cost-effective windows

The government's Affordable Homes Programme will add up to 180,000 new properties to the UK's housing stock, meeting demand from those unable to afford current house prices or rents, and helping kickstart the economy through construction.

While this increased provision is undoubtedly welcome, affordable homes have a mixed reputation when it comes to quality and durability. As a result, the drive for more homes is a chance to realise the benefits of specifying those higher quality products, especially glazing, which can have a positive impact on both buildings and residents. A well-constructed, well insulated and well ventilated home is nicer to look at, more comfortable to live in, and will deliver a healthier indoor climate free from problems such as damp, draughts or condensation. A home which is cheaper to heat and maintain is a benefit for anyone on a limited income, and the building will sustain its market value for longer.

Velfac aluminium/timber glazing is frequently installed in affordable housing projects, specified for its cost-effective design backed by specialist expertise. The frame offers a low maintenance aluminium exterior and low U-values and is slim to maximise natural light. With compliance built in, the system can speed up project sign-off and minimise costly remedial work.

Our in-house specialists can also deliver the in-depth technical expertise required to identify the most appropriate design, performance and installation solutions, including budget-saving options such as outsourced design services and cost consultancy.

Velfac glazing demonstrates how 'affordable' and 'high quality' are not mutually exclusive terms – as in the following projects.

Colindale Gardens, London (left)

Over 22,000m² of Velfac composite glazing is now installed at Colindale Gardens, the new community being built in north west London by award winning developer Redrow. Set over 19 ha, Colindale Gardens combines high quality apartments and townhouses with extensive landscaped gardens and resident's facilities. The development provides much needed housing for the local area and includes affordable options and homes for first-time buyers.

Velfac aluminium / timber windows and patio doors are installed in 11 multi-storey residential blocks across the Colindale Gardens scheme. White-painted internal Velfac timber frames help to create stylish and contemporary interiors, while the slim frame construction also brings additional daylight into every home. Externally, the low maintenance aluminium frames provide a focal point for the dramatic, brick-built external facades, which have become a local landmark.

Excellent thermal insulation makes an important contribution to Colindale Garden's low energy design, and all ground floor glazing is also SBD accredited. In addition, the Velfac system's environmental credentials support Redrow's sustainability strategy.

A strategic mix of double and triple glazed Velfac units deliver optimal acoustic performance across a site which borders a nearby railway line – all achieved without interruption to the facade finish, thanks to uniform frame sightlines. This combination of design versatility and operational performance, together with cost-effective pricing, has helped Velfac secure a series of contracts at Colindale Gardens, as the added value Velfac provided could not be matched by alternative window systems.

Avondale Square, London (below)

At this seven-storey block of 18 affordable homes, reForm Architects used Velfac glazing to deliver an innovative building which meets demanding daylight and energy targets while also guaranteeing low lifetime costs.

'We specified Velfac for a number of reasons,' says reForm director Andrew Dawes. 'The composite frame is very popular with tenants as they like the warm inner wood frame and the security of external aluminium. By installing Velfac triple glazing we could also meet the ambitious low energy targets set by Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, and those of the City of London Plan. And triple glazing provides excellent acoustic insulation – ideal, given the busy inner city location – and the windows meet Secured by Design standards.'

The low maintenance Velfac system – which needs no repainting for the lifetime of the unit - is also a real benefit for affordable housing, adds Andrew. 'Our clients are increasingly specifying higher quality, more durable building products to avoid the inevitable cost-catch up that comes with cheaper alternatives, and this was certainly the case when specifying Velfac.'

Natural light was also important: 'Dual aspect windows increase daylight, further enhanced by slim framed Velfac units, and meant we could maximise daylight with fewer windows – further improving the system's cost effectiveness.'

Vilkaviškis Bus Station, Lithuania

Balčytis studija's sweeping design is so much more than a bus station. It's a landscape, civic hub, event space – even a tourist destination

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Photographs: Norbert Tukaj

The 16th century market town of Vilkaviškis in southwest Lithuania, while small, was not spared the horrors of WWII, with a Nazi massacre of its Jewish population leaving the town virtually levelled. Later Soviet occupation of Lithuania saw more erasure of town's past; rather than restoration, a war-ruined church was built over with a petrol station, its cemetery sacrificed to make way for anonymous post-war urban expansion. Recent history has been hard on the town of 11,000 in more subtle ways, its younger population draining off to the capital Vilnius and second city, Kaunas. It was in this context, east of the petrol station, that architect Gintaras Balčytis' Balčytis studija was asked to engender not only a sense of arrival and departure for the town's new municipal bus station, but a sense of place for the local community that would cultivate feelings of civic pride. The result is the 2022 EU Mies Prize-longlisted bus station, merging the logistical demands of a modern bus terminus serving a regional catchment of 40,000, with a new public space in a pocket park west of the town centre.

The 2000m², white concrete terminus replaces a banal 400m² structure dating from 1975. South of the town's cultural centre, it was the municipality's wish that the new station should contribute to the town's cultural life,

Right The bus station on the west side morphs into a full-scale landscape intervention in a pocket park on the east side facing the town centre.

Products in Practice May/June 2021

Top Stainless steel mesh separates the park from an outdoor growing area for the bus station's garden store. It has become a draw for bird life.

Above Full height glazing and robust zig zag section aluminium rainscreen cladding characterise more utilitarian facades on the bus station side.

Above right Roof thickness is 180-220mm depending on steel column centres. Free-standing 800mm red illuminated signage nods to Russian Constructivists.

says Balčytis, sited as it is about 300m west of the old centre. For client Kautra, the country's largest intercity bus company, it was an opportunity for a statement building benefiting from the increased footfall that such a proposition could bring. The architect was appointed after designing its much larger, 12,000m² terminus in Kaunas in 2017.

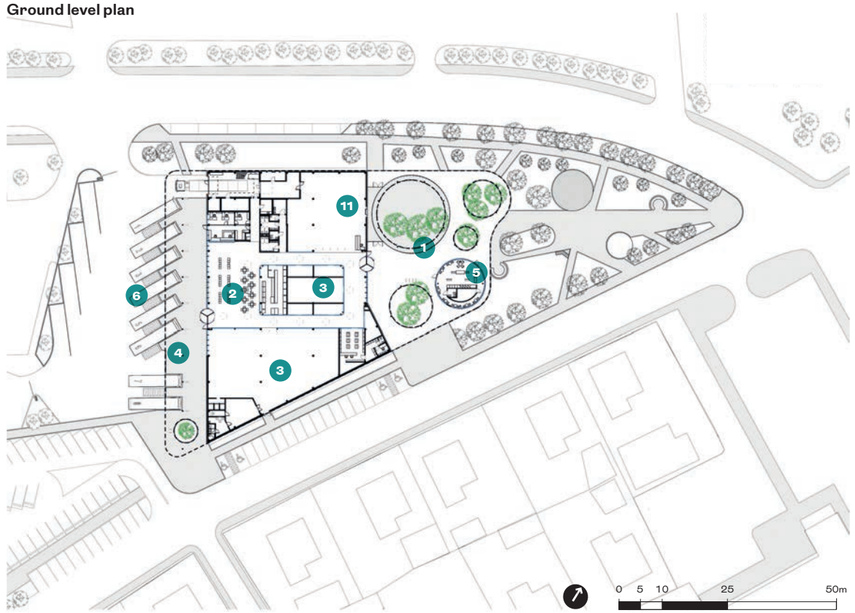
The design has been executed virtually as it was first presented to the town's mayor. Inspired by Japanese architecture, both in its traditional and contemporary forms, the architects' hybrid design was for a low-lying, concrete and steel building addressing the existing terminus apron on the west side as well as mitigating its relationship with the pocket park to the east. Now, a large 180-220mm concrete roof, set at 7m above the ground and supported on slender 200mm steel columns, covers the station and stretches out over the park, punctuated with huge holes that allow the existing trees to continue growing past and through it. A constituent of this reach into the park is a cafeteria and dedicated planting space, offering the potential to stage events on the park side.

Part of the project's success was in the development of the programme for the site. The client

Site plan

1 Public space beneath building roof
2 Passenger hall
3 Shops/ small business/ commerce
4 Bus passenger concourse
5 Cafeteria
6 Bus apron
7 Cultural centre
8 Cinema complex
9 Supermarket
10 Petrol station
11 Garden centre

Ground level plan



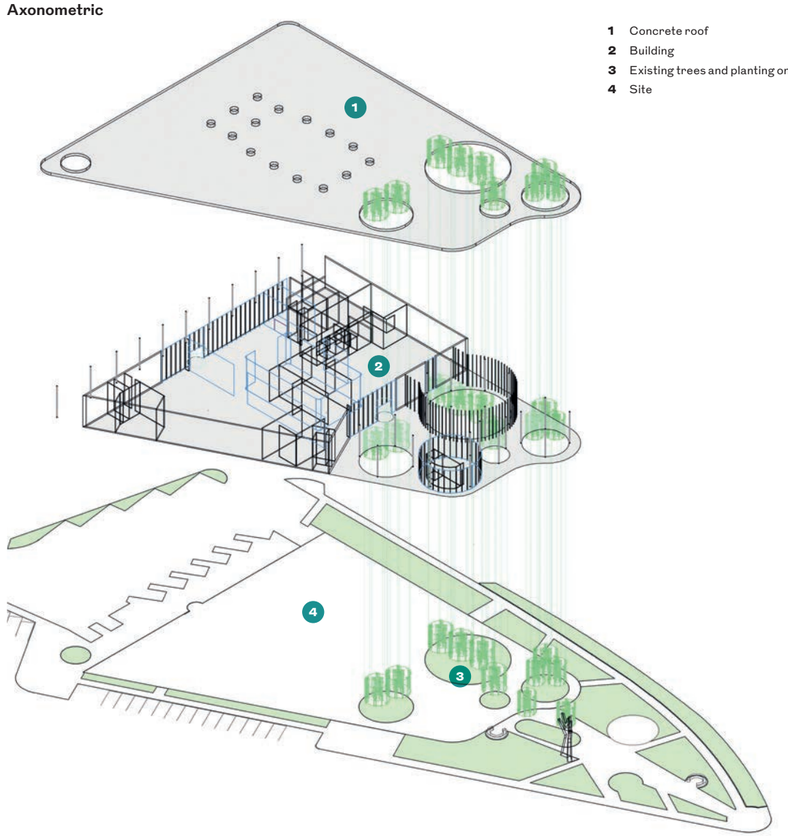
Right The circular cafe on the park side, serving local produce, is intended to be a community hub and the focus of future events post-pandemic.

and architect spent a long time negotiating with local interests to work out the optimum commercial brief; it was a given that the station had to function as more than just a shopfront to six 'departure' and two 'arrival' coaches. Balčytis explains that after initial conversations with major supermarkets as anchor stores, a more tailored approach was adopted that took account of local needs and interests. A local store selling clothing and household goods now serves as the main anchor. And while a local flower and plant shop serves a secondary role, at 300m², its presence developed the plan of the station, with one of the external circular zones given over to displaying its wares separated by a permeable 'wall' of white-painted stainless steel perforated mesh. Smaller units are, among others, occupied by a charcuterie, selling cured meats from local farms; the café, meanwhile, roasts its own coffee. These interventions are a key aspect of the design's success, bringing local specificity to the commercial offer.

Construction of the station on the triangular park site, along with the new apron and associated parking, began in spring 2019 and completed a year later. Despite the complexity of effectively building within a parkland setting, Balčytis says that he was encouraged by the fact that, surrounded by roads, the pocket park had established itself and thrived. Nonetheless, the job required specific logistics, he explains. With the more mature lime trees on the site, a 6m radius gap was maintained around the trunk to ensure construction did not encroach on the root network. To avoid the ground drying out while foundations were dug, temporary maintenance channels were inserted around trunks, part of the enabling works to keep trees adequately fed and watered, before being removed once works were completed. Interestingly, while the building is owned by the client, ongoing facilities management is in the hands of the municipality, which required its agreement when it came to the specification of external surfaces and finishes.

This is behind the minimalistic specification of materials – concrete, double glazed structural glass panels, steel columns and the characterful zigzag aluminium rainscreen cladding that covers the walls of the bus station. Balčytis had learned lessons from specification of less durable high pressure laminate internal

Axonometric



1 Concrete roof
2 Building
3 Existing trees and planting on site
4 Site

Left The pocket park mediates between the infrastructural component of the brief and the town's old centre.
Below The low-lying concrete coach station offsets its embodied carbon by using heat from the ground below the tarmac apron.

Client UAB KAUTRA, Vilkaviškis City Municipality
Architecture studio Balčytis studija, Kaunas
Engineering design and project manager Ž Radvilavičiaus projektavimo biuras
Structural design UAB Ekointera
Heating ventilation and air conditioning HVAC UAB Prosfera
Construction consultant/ project manager UAB Projektų Valdymo Kompanija
Contractor UAB Vilkasta

finishes on the bus station at Kaunas, and here 'wanted materials to be simple but long lasting' – which accounts for the internal exposed concrete surface finishes as well as its stainless steel mesh ceiling. The exposed concrete surfaces continue externally too – converting to coloured concrete setts on the path areas from a cement screed finish internally.

And while the use of concrete in a natural setting might seem counter-intuitive, Balčytis thinks this is only half of the argument. He did investigate the use of structural timber but claims that the building's municipal use precluded that for fire reasons; and the concrete, he feels, is appropriately robust for the building's practical purpose.

By way of reducing the carbon footprint, the architect convinced the client to dispense with fossil fuels to heat and cool the building and double the outlay to use ground source heat pumps. The pumps' rods are installed in a grid set-up, sunk to 14m beneath the tarmac of the bus apron, part of the site's 11,000m² total area, allowing the terminus to meet energy performance requirements for a Class A+ building. Once photovoltaic panels are installed on the roof this year, the development will be self-sufficient, using energy from renewable sources. Initially reticent about the installation of this and the rainwater harvesting system, the client has found operational costs so low over the last year that it plans to adopt the same systems in future bus stations.

The 1200m² exterior space beneath the roof has been used during the day, especially during lockdown, and subtle lighting of its concrete soffit by uplighters attached to the steel columns has been appreciated by those using the park at night. The bus station itself is already making waves; Balčytis explains that the cafe owners are developing a programme of evening and daytime events. And articles in the national press have led to a mini Bilbao effect, with people from all over starting to visit to see it. But, drawn by the Constructivist-influenced Avenir font of the station's bold, red signage, the architect hopes the new bus station will, ironically, encourage local residents to stay precisely where they are. ●

Specified

1
Lundhs Blue Larvikite
Lundhs Real Stone

Papa Smurf arranges to meet me at his new Smurf Lagoon Resort project, and greets me courteously with a jug of a Curaçao cocktail that he tells me is named in honour of the exclusive retreat.

'Norwegian Larvikite' he drawls, in the mid-Atlantic accent of an established global star, indicating the glittering feldspar crystals at the bottom of the pool. 'We love it. It's unique and indestructible. Very much in keeping with Smurf brand values.'

Papa has certainly come a long way since his early days on Top of the Pops.
lundhsrealstone.com/uk

2
Week-End outdoor furniture
Studio Brichet-Ziegler/
Petite Friture at Viaduct

Are you Anish Kapoor? Or associated with Anish Kapoor? If so, please note that you are not allowed to sit on or near this vibrant indoor-outdoor furniture. This is Yves-Klein®'s blue – and don't you forget it.

If you're Stuart Semple, however, you are allowed to both sit here and blend equal parts of ultramarine pigment and Médium Adam secret sauce - just so long as you call it 'Bloop' or something, and not 'IKB'. If you're not Stuart Semple, please relax on a stackable aluminium seat and enjoy that saturated grained epoxy colour.
viaduct.co.uk/

3
Style B railings with J finials
Jacksons Fencing

Great Sankey Parish Council is a blessed sanctuary where Jackie Weaver, valiant head of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils, clearly has authority. They've not only designated their council field a public amenity, but the £160,000 refurbishment includes drainage, planting, a bespoke gateway, and 59m of Jackson's Style B galvanized and powder-coated tubular steel railings with 'J' finials. Very nice. Very budget-friendly. And crucially, with concealed panel-to-post connectors, vandal-proof. As the parish is only 20 miles from the flaming pit of Handforth, that's probably wise.
jacksons-fencing.co.uk/the-edit

4
CFT540 pole mounted luminaires
WE-EF

Exterior, night.
[ELYOT SINGS]
When one is lonely the days are long
You seem so near
on your five metre al-u-
minium pole my dear
Each night my UV-stabilised shatterproof cover
Yearns for its LED lover
sealed, and sweet.
Someday I'll find you
Moonlight behind you
marine-grade cast alloy
gleaming
True to the dream I am dreaming
warm and white
3000k light
If I draw near you
We shall stand
Hand in hand
Time is so fleet
Why shouldn't we meet?
[AMANDA] You absolute fool!
We're concreted in!
– from Nöel Coward's 'Private Lights'
we-ef.com

The benefits of dual-certificated fire doorsets

Architects and specifiers selecting fire doors for residential buildings need to be confident that they will perform as they should. That is where third-party certification makes a difference

Door-Stop International has launched its new Fire and Security Dual-Certificated Doorset; a timber core product with GRP facings that is third-party certificated using a robust base of primary test evidence as the foundation for certification.

How can Door-Stop help architects?

Full traceability of all doorset components
Door-Stop operates a strict, digital, factory production control system designed to provide complete control and traceability. Those same factory control processes are regularly audited by independent UKAS-accredited auditors.

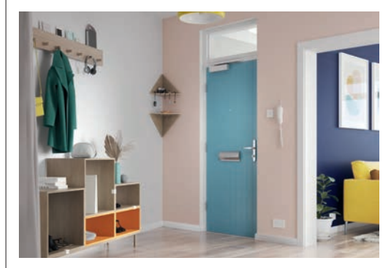
Specifiers, buyers and residents can easily access the key features of the specification and associated certification. The certificate details the doorsets' raw materials and components, the testing process and certification. Each doorset has a unique serial number to aid traceability.

Independent third-party testing
Door-Stop only undertakes fire tests on products that are manufactured under the witness and verification of an independent third party. This means an accurate specification and certification for every door that is installed – not a 'golden sample' that has been engineered just to pass the test. The Door-Stop Fire and Security Dual-Certificated Doorset is Certifire-accredited by Warringtonfire. Certisecure, a scheme recognised by Secured by Design, has been used to demonstrate its security credentials.

Multiple tests make up primary test evidence
Furnace testing results are subject to variation, so Door-Stop runs multiple tests to make sure that the sample door passes in accordance with the specification and certification.

The Door-Stop Fire and Security Dual-Certificated Doorset has been furnace tested from both directions (even though for timber fire doors it is not a requirement) to provide additional assurances to building owners and occupants.

This primary test evidence forms the basis of the certification and demonstrates that the pass was not a 'one-off'.



Top The new Door-Stop Fire and Security Dual-Certificated Doorset in poppy red with arched top glazing.
Above The doorset in duck egg blue with TS 008 security and fire letter plate.

Digital golden thread
Door-Stop manufactures each doorset from start to finish as there are no second chances with fire doors. Door-Stop checks for product compliancy at each stage of manufacturing which is tracked and monitored against a bespoke 'Critical to Safety framework' designed to review the components we use and the manufacturing process. This creates a golden thread of information that aids traceability for all stakeholders; specifiers, installers, building owners and residents.

The most onerous designs in the doorset range have been tested and the entire doorset range is dual certificated for fire and security. Dual certification provides the assurance that the doorsets can perform to both standards.

Technical support and advice
Door-Stop International provides detailed instructions and training materials to ensure doorsets can be installed in line with certification. Competent installation means the doorset should perform as designed and assists installers and building owners in meeting their legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of residents.

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U-value chart

Depth of insulation required

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

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

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Quality, planning and profit collide as office-to-resi grows

Changing working habits and a shift to adaptive reuse will see more office-to-resi conversions. Responsibility and regulation will be vital

Words: Josephine Smit

Office-to-resi is the most prosaic of terms. It is perhaps fitting for an activity that has traditionally had a low profile, while providing bread-and-butter work for architects and healthy profit for developers. Now, however, residential conversion is in the spotlight, as property owners consider the future of offices and other buildings. If a shift in the tectonic plates of commercial property takes place, it could unleash a new wave of conversions and redevelopments, some likely to be delivered with the aid of permitted development (PD) rights, which the government has extended from merely converting offices to allow for demolition and redevelopment to higher levels, some upward extension and, potentially, high street conversions.

Every PD extension brings fresh controversy, with the potential conversion of tranches of beleaguered high streets and urban centres prompting particular concern from industry bodies. Oliver du Sautoy, head of research at property consultant Lambert Smith Hampton, sees both the opportunities of PD for investors and developers and the challenges its application at scale could present for places. He says of office-to-resi, 'If the policy isn't delivered sensibly and buildings are cherry picked there is a danger that the core of a central business district will be broken up and lose its critical mass.'

'The high street PD might see a rush of quite poor schemes coming forward. It is hard to think of many uses that couldn't be converted,' says The Bartlett School of Planning's Ben Clifford. Concerns stem from a legacy of bad PD office conversions, their inadequate living spaces crammed with those in greatest housing need. Clifford has charted PD's progress over the past six years, including in a study for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). He estimates that around a third of PD office conversions have been of fairly high design quality and reuse town centre buildings well, with the rest poorly designed and/or inappropriately located for residential.

In the face of mounting concern, including calls for architects to boycott PD, housing secretary Robert Jenrick made policy changes, requiring homes created via PD rights to meet Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) from this April and to have 'adequate natural light in all habitable rooms'. The introduction of space standards is significant and welcome, says Clifford: 'It will reduce the bad. But on daylight it doesn't say that you have to have a window, and I've already seen plans for upward extension where the top floor residents will have skylights only'. Developers also continue to be free of Section 106 obligations under PD.

These policies and post-pandemic economics will shape developers and investors' decisions on whether to refurbish, redevelop or repurpose. The message from architects is that, however residential conversions are delivered, they and their clients have a part to play in balancing viability with liveability and sustainability.

JAKOB SPRIECHTERSBACH

Above RCKa's Arklow Rd project in Lewisham. A 1920s former commercial block, Astra House, saved for 30 microflats for client Pocket Living. **Right** Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt's refurbished nine-storey, 1970s office building into 185 studio-2-bed apartments for build-to-rent developer PLATFORM_.

> If buildings are cherry picked there is a danger that the core of a central business district will be broken up and lose its critical mass

Refurbish v rebuild

'There is a realisation that refurbishment is preferable to replacement,' says RCKa Architects director Russell Curtis. 'But the economics need to work and it may be necessary to accept fewer homes. The economic framework isn't necessarily in favour of refurbishment.' The architect faced this conundrum when working with developer Pocket Living at Arklow Road in Lewisham, a 1920s former commercial block considered for demolition and rebuild, until the council planners' admiration for it led Pocket Living to apply for full permission to convert.

Pocket's projects are generally new builds, where its formula of compact homes, discounted from full market value, works efficiently. 'It has a well-established and refined layout, which is quite difficult to reconcile to an existing building,' explains Curtis. 'The project was less flexible than a typical conversion because of the rigidity of Pocket's 38m² one-bed flat. We had to bring the two together.' Specifically, standard units had to be combined with 4m floor-to-floor heights and a fixed external window position. 'We couldn't make the units wider so we took out all the windows in the existing elevation and effectively built a new thermal envelope behind them,' he continues. 'The new window positions are disconnected from the existing windows and that allowed us to overlay the openings in an interesting way.'

The existing four storey building contains 30 apartments, but a replacement would have provided more, as modern floor-to-ceiling heights would have allowed for additional storeys. This left the scheme with a viability gap, which was remedied by extending upwards with two new storeys containing 14 larger two bedroom apartments, for market sale. But a solution like this can't always be found, Curtis says, citing his practice's current project to demolish and rebuild a hostel for homeless families in Camden. 'A feasibility study was carried out to see if we could refurbish, but it wasn't viable,' he explains, as the one bedroom studios were unsuitable for families, floor-to-ceiling heights were low and other factors, such as acoustic separation couldn't be resolved.

WESTROCK

> The high street PD might see a rush of quite poor schemes coming forward. It is hard to think of many uses that couldn't be converted

The architect hasn't used PD for conversions but is now using it for some airspace schemes. 'In change of use it seems to be fairly well established, but in upward extension it still seems to be extremely unpredictable,' says Curtis. 'We've had an upward extension scheme refused at committee, although it was PD.' He has mixed feelings about PD, saying it ought to be 'like any other tool in planning'. Delivering quality projects is not down to PD itself, but to those applying it, he believes: 'It needs a responsible client and a responsible architect.'

The aim of conversion

Around a quarter of D5 Architects' workload is in conversion, with projects ranging from offices to a laboratory-to-residential conversion, and has used PD on a number of schemes where clients found buildings difficult to let. 'PD is an entry level decision on the developability of a building. It helps in getting it to market but the design decisions are still the same,' explains Ian Saunders, partner with the practice.

Part of the speed to market comes from the limited documentation usually required for the prior approval process: drawings plus transport and highway impact survey, contamination and flood risk assessment and an acoustic report. Saunders says, 'The level of design commitment is lower because you're looking at footprint rather than detail, so you can often go in at RIBA stage 2. As there's a 56 day process with only the four reports, the project tiers down very quickly and the developer gets certainty potentially months earlier.'

That helped developer Elevate with its Queensway House scheme, on the edge of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter conservation area, says Saunders, even though the relatively small scale of the project meant it would have been subject to a minor planning application and was below the Section 106 threshold. The street corner block has been converted to mostly three bedroom apartments for market sale, with one home on each of the five floors of the L-shaped building, the lowest being a ground and below ground duplex. With loft styling, 142-207m² of space and triple aspect, the homes reflect Elevate's aspiration for a design-led scheme of larger scale apartments.

The architect combined the application for prior approval with a minor application

D5ARCHITECTS/TOM BIRD

Left D5 Architects' Queensway House on the edge of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter for developer Elevate.

for external changes – to add large triangular balconies to the rear of the building and infill a yard to help create the duplex home. 'The hybridised approach is useful to get the conversion in the bag,' says Saunders. 'It allows development certainty to be married with design quality'.

For Saunders, conversion is about tapping into potential, whether of an older building's heavyweight structure or a post-war office's generous ceiling-to-ceiling height. 'Conversion is not about how many units you can get in. It's a question of what you can do with the building – aspects like maximum daylight to habitable rooms and quality of space' he says. 'PD doesn't have a lot to do with that'.

A broader perspective

In central Crawley, West Sussex, architect Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt was asked to give a 1970s-built, nine-storey office building with a 110m frontage a residential face as part of its conversion. 'That is the limitation of working with existing buildings and the challenge of re-use,' says Matthew Chamberlain, director at the practice. 'We introduced a rhythm of bays along the facade to break down the overall scale of the building and make homes more identifiable,' he adds, bronze coloured aluminium fins being complemented by light and dark grey render.

> The next generation of vacant office and retail buildings will need an all-round sustainable approach to adaptive re-use

The scheme was one of two debut projects by build-to-rent developer PLATFORM_ , both of which were delivered with the help of PD, alongside applications for external changes to improve appearance and thermal performance. Chamberlain says PD's speed helped the developer get off to the right start: 'They were bringing a brand into existence and the alternative would have been purchasing consented schemes'.

The 185 homes in PLATFORM_ Crawley range from a 35m² studio to a 62m² two-bed apartment, which is compact but well designed, says Chamberlain. 'The building floorplates were quite shallow so areas were squeezed but the apartments are incredibly light. They have 10m or 11m frontages, with 6m deep space, so they feel spacious.' Gyms, lounges, storage rooms, roof terraces and other amenities also have to be factored into the space in private rental and co-living developments, he says, and as a build to rent developer PLATFORM_ has a long term interest in keeping tenants happy. 'We work with clients that understand the long term value of the building they're creating,' says Chamberlain. When clients don't, the course of action is clear, he says: 'As we've all seen from Grenfell, architects shouldn't be taking on projects if they are not comfortable with them or they undermine their position.'

While debates about PD often focus on square footage, early PD schemes deserve equal scrutiny for their failure to upgrade thermal performance, argues Chamberlain. 'Regulation wasn't there to require that, so people may have bought apartments with problems that will need to be addressed in future. When we look at projects we look at the whole thermal envelope, the daylighting and how the building operates.'

With their complex mix of environmental, social and economic challenges, the next generation of vacant office and retail buildings will need an all-round sustainable approach to adaptive re-use. 'We believe the most sustainable way ahead is to maximise the potential of the building stock we already have,' says Chamberlain. To that end, the practice is working with developer First Base on new uses for a former Debenhams department store in Swindon, which could include homes and business space.

Chamberlain talks of existing buildings, particularly on the high street, as the building sites of the future. 'After 20 years of pursuing new build, it is going to be an interesting shift in my career,' he adds. Other architects may be making a similar move, and how they address the difficult questions raised by conversion will be crucial for future living and urban centres. ●

Spanish floor show

When it comes to high performance, Spanish floor tiles score top marks for durability, sustainability and ease of maintenance. They are the safe choice for a broad spectrum of projects and perfect for high-traffic areas. The variety of designs, formats and finishes means there is a tile for every architectural need

A safe choice
Durable, hygienic and resistant to fire, water and chemical stains, porcelain is a practical solution for expansive high-traffic space. It is suitable for any surface from wet zones such as bathrooms and kitchens to prestige areas such as receptions. As porcelain is frost-resistant, it is ideal for the UK climate and can be used outdoors on terraces, paths and patios. Many tile ranges offer anti-slip versions as well as 2cm thicknesses that broaden their applications.

Sustainable
Ceramics have a long lifecycle and many products are not only recyclable, they also contain significant recycled content. The Spanish tile industry has worked hard to address ecological concerns, creating Environmental Product Declarations (DAPs) that help the end-user understand each product. Factories are constantly reviewing their production processes and many are working towards a circular economy.

Stylish
Pioneering tile producers continue to push forward the aesthetic capabilities of their products. Sophisticated digital printing techniques allow surfaces to replicate the look of other materials – wood, marble, cement – yet retain all the benefits of ceramics. The Spanish tile industry is justly famous for its large-format porcelain slabs with their high-tech finishes, but it offers so much more, keeping pace with trends and creating imaginative new looks that will enhance every project.

RAQUEL DAMIÁ

Above Nikoi by Vives: terrazzo-effect porcelain used in a restaurant project by the Vitale Studio.
www.vivesceramica.com

Right Dreamy by Museum: marble-effect 'All in One' porcelain that combines anti-slip and softness.
www.museumsurfaces.com

Tile of Spain is the voice of the Spanish tile industry, encompassing more than 110 tile manufacturers. Renowned worldwide for an inspiring blend of aesthetic and technical innovation, Spanish tiles draw on a rich heritage of skill and creativity, while remaining at the cutting edge of design. Manufactured in Spain and widely available in the UK, these products embody the spirit of an industry that prides itself on proposing beautiful, meaningful and high-performance solutions to flooring, wall coverings, furnishing and external paving and cladding.

Above left Diurne Oxide by Dune: metal-effect porcelain in a 60x120cm format.
www.duneceramics.com

Above right Flora by El Molino: glossy porcelain in a 62x120cm format that comes in three colours.
www.elmolino.es

Left Lithops by Aparici: geometric terrazzo-effect porcelain in a 20x20cm format.
www.aparici.com

Left Fenice by Grespania: stone-effect porcelain available in three formats.
www.grespania.com

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Further information:
www.tileofspain.com

Regent's Crescent, London

If shoes say it all about a person, floors certainly do that in buildings. And in apartments that sell for up to £18m, quality must be unsurpassed

Words: Pamela Buxton Photographs: Adam Parker

Left Originally completed in 1820, Regent's Crescent has been rebuilt and returned to residential use by PDP London. **Below**: View of the crescent from the top of Portland Place.

Regent's Crescent is a quite remarkable development in many ways. Both its pedigree and location are exceptional – a sweeping John Nash-designed terrace situated just to the south of London's Regent's Park. Yet even more remarkably, despite being grade I listed, this is almost entirely a new build. And thanks to PDP London's faithful facade recreation, few of those strolling by on their way to the park would guess it dated from 2020, rather than 1820.

This is super-prime residential – apartments start from £2.9 million and rise to nearer £18.6 million, with garden villas from £5.3 million. And with those price tags, comes a meticulous attention to detail – from the clay chimney pots atop chimneys that are purely decorative but authentic to the original design, to flooring specs scrutinised to the millimetre to get just the right size of knot in the oak and the exact degree of veining in the beautiful stone tiling.

PDP London completed the £180 million project for investment consortium PCW, with interiors designed by Millier. The 16,800m² development has 67 apartments in the west crescent plus a terrace of nine mews houses, with a communal garden in between. The new build also ties into two retained 1960s residential wings at the rear.

To add to the site complexity – as well as those 1960s buildings, PDP had to contend with a 3.5m level change and the vibrations of four underground lines passing beneath, which required the whole structure to sit on dampening bearings.

PDP was originally asked to look at a scheme that retained the crescent building, but quickly realised that a rebuild was the only viable way to create the layouts and cores required for its return to residential use, along with all the amenities and servicing that super-prime

A double staircase sweeps down from the main entrance on the crescent to the reception. Interiors are by Millier London, which combined pale limestone flooring from Tasca Stones with contrasting dark metal detailing.

requires. Nor would facade-retention deliver an authentic Nash appearance. This was because the crescent had already been rebuilt with a new facade as offices by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners in the 1960s, following extensive wartime bomb damage. So there was precious little of the original fabric to go on – although some Nash plasterwork and rubble was fished out of an ice house that was discovered in the rear garden, and must have been filled in during earlier rebuilding.

Instead, PDP proposed re-building it 'properly and in a scholarly fashion' according to associate Iain McLellan. This involved extensive research into the Nash original, collaboration with English Heritage, and working closely with engineer AKT to recreate the load-bearing brick facade with appropriate period details and a slightly higher mansard than the original. The new facade, which varies in thickness from 215mm to 450mm, was then dressed in lime stucco and a breathable paint, and topped with a steel-framed, slate-topped roof. The colonnade of Ionic entrance columns that provide a rhythm to the crescent elevation was recreated in cast concrete, alongside grand front doors with Regency-style fanlights.

Once the crescent had been demolished

The common areas and show apartments have a calm, understated quality rather than showy ostentation

(aside from an original portion flanking Portland Place), replicating the exact original setting out of the crescent – and its Ionic-columned entrances in particular – was a challenge. The architect achieved this setting out with a radial grid from an origin point in the crescent gardens opposite. PDP had far more freedom at the rear, which is more contemporary in character while seeking to complement the front elevation. Here, the design respects the radial plan and incorporates limestone, brick, photo-voltaic panels and bespoke leaf-design balustrades and small areas of terned steel.

The new crescent incorporates a variety of apartment types ranging from one to five bedrooms across five residential floors. Generally speaking, there are 10 apartments per core, with no more than two entrances per floor. Apartments include one-bedroom lower ground floor units – some of these have been bought by owners of larger units as staff accommodation. Ground/first floor apartments make the most of ceiling heights of up to 4.25m, and include some duplex and split-level triplex. These 'grand' apartments are generally designed with the most heritage details while the other apartments have a more modern interpretation of Regency details. The latter includes lateral units running the depth of the building on the second floor, and duplex penthouses on the upper two floors. Six units have their own entrances on the crescent.

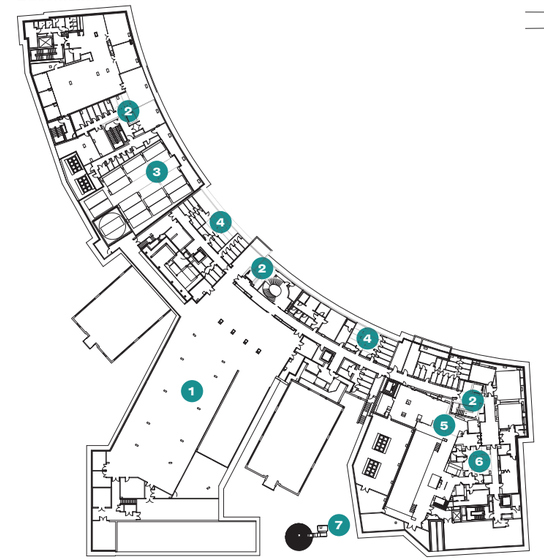
The new garden mews houses have a lightweight CLT structure and a more contemporary aesthetic. They are supported by a Vierendeel truss, which spans the restored ice-house beneath the mews. Shared amenities including swimming pool, spa, cinema, and business suites are in the main building's basement with a car stacker and plant for the pool in a further basement level.

The common areas and show apartments have a calm, understated quality rather than showy ostentation. Millier London, as sub-consultant to PDP for the interiors, aimed to create classic and beautiful homes with gravitas.

'We were inspired by Regency style and the

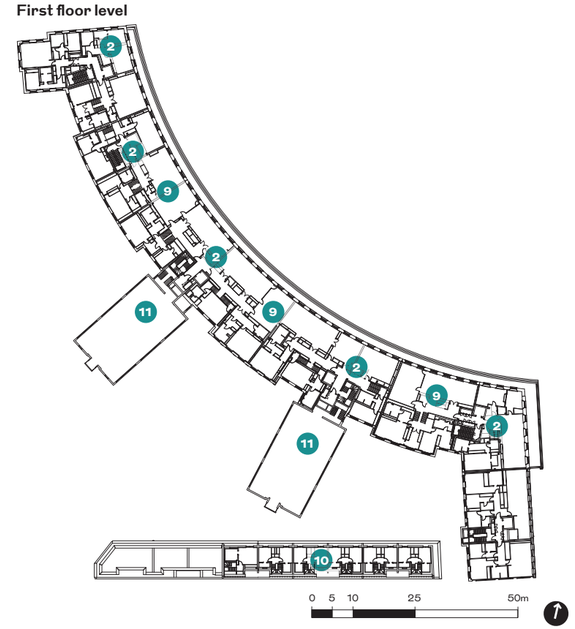
CIT

Basement level



Ground level

First floor level



1

1 Car park
2 Core
3 Car stacker
4 Storage
5 Gym and pool
6 Changing area
7 Nash ice house
8 Main entrance
9 Apartments
10 Mews houses
11 Existing block
12 Gardens

Site plan

PDP LONDON(4)

Right One of the grand crescent show apartments. Here, oak flooring by Ted Todd was used in a herringbone pattern.

CIT

building itself,' says Millier associate architect Valeria Doro. 'But we didn't want to create just a replica of the Regency look. Instead, we wanted to bring in a balanced contemporary and modern luxury living with the use of certain materials and finishes used throughout the scheme, but applied differently. Focus on charm, grandeur, elegance and architectural proportions have been constantly leading us throughout the design process.'

Arrival is given a sense of theatre by an elegant double staircase, which makes use of the level change to lead down from the crescent to the double height reception area, and the garden beyond. This is the hero, says Doro – there is no need for a conventional statement chandelier.

The staircase fans out at the bottom, its sweep accentuated by the rippling design of the steel balustrade. The materials and detailing exemplify one of Millier's key approaches – the use of pale stone flooring with contrasting accents of antiqued metal finishes such as inlay, balustrades and ironmongery. Honed finishes add a sense of patina.

Finishes needed to be robust and of the highest visual quality. Italian, Greek and Turkish marbles were chosen to recall neo-classical influences. For the main entrance, other circulation areas and some lobbies, Millier wanted a light stone with a consistent, 'blended' appearance, and specified Alpine White limestone by Tasca Stones, after travelling to Turkey to select the slabs with the required characteristics. This is used in 600mm by 600mm tiles with flush limestone joints and minimal grout detail.

'We didn't want too much vein for the lobby, as that can be hard to control and can make it look too busy,' explains Doro.

Another, far darker Tasca Stone tile with orange and white veins – Portoro Brecciato Marble – features in the lift cars. For the tranquil swimming pool and other amenity areas, Millier wanted flooring with a similar appearance to the Alpine White of the main entrance but needed an alternative to limestone, which doesn't react well to chlorine. The solution was Domus's Natural Limestone porcelain tiles, which are more practical for poolside use while maintaining a similar appearance. These are used with a bush-hammered finish on the floor, but honed for a softer effect on the walls. The 14mm thickness gives a strong edge to evoke a monolithic, floating floor over the water.

Above Limestone flooring was specified in the lobbies and circulation areas of the split-level show apartments.

Left Show flat master ensuite, featuring Greek Galaxy floor and wall tiling from Campolonghi, and metal detailing to shower screen and cabinets.

Below Dressing room for one of the master bedrooms. Timber flooring was deemed more suitable than carpet for such high-end apartments. The crescent rebuild incorporates apartments ranging from one to five bedrooms.

Italian, Greek and Turkish marbles were chosen to recall neo-classical influences

CIT (4)

The small, plush screening room has a soft dark carpet from Westex (Vogue Galena) with a silken weave which, along with the dark blue acoustic panelling, helps create a moody atmosphere. The flooring for the gym needed to be suitable for high traffic, and for this Millier specified Bolon woven textured vinyl.

In the crescent apartments, Millier decided against carpets – these are not deemed sufficiently high-end for luxury residential – and instead specified timber as a durable, comfortable, warm, luxurious and timeless material. The mid-tone Tolland Artisan Oak flooring by Ted Todd was chosen for both reception rooms and bedrooms. Great care was taken over the specification – the grading report specified 13 characters including the size of knots and tones, with the oak needing to be virtually knot-free. The chosen oak is 20mm engineered board including a 4mm solid oak layer on top, finished in burnished hardwax oil. This is used in various ways, including herringbone pattern in 120mm by 600mm boards in grand reception rooms and in simple 220mm by 2000mm planks in the bedroom and dressing room running parallel to the facade.

Four different stones by Campolonghi are used as flooring in the crescent apartments' bathrooms, which were manufactured as pods in Italy. All are honed to give a patina effect. In the master ensuite, Greek Galaxy, a white marble with small veins, was chosen for its soft character, used in large format 1200mm by 800mm on walls and 600mm by 600mm on floors to give a continuous brown-toned veining effect.

In further bathrooms ensuite, the floor and wall tiles include Volakas Ventato, a pure white stone with some strong grey-purple veins, and Tundra Grey, a mid-tone silvery grey. The most striking flooring is New St Laurent, a dark stone with sparse white veins, which is used in some of the powder rooms of the larger apartment to give a moody ambience.

In the more contemporary mews bathrooms, porcelain tiles by CI Tile were specified.

The design is evidently doing its job – despite Covid, the newly-completed development is 60% sold. Meanwhile, this newest of grade I listed buildings already looks like it's always been there, its familiar Nash exterior quietly concealing super-prime accommodation within. ●

ADAM PARKER

Top The swimming pool, one of many communal amenities in the basement. Porcelain floor and wall tiling by Domus supply the required durability with the appearance of limestone.

Above Regent's Crescent seen from Park Square. The rebuild retains its grade I-listed status.

Client PCW Planning and Development
Development manager CIT
Architect PDP London
Interior architect/designer Millier London
Structural engineer AKT
MEP Consulting Engineer Hilson Moran
Contractor Midgard
Selected flooring suppliers Campolonghi **(bathroom);** Domus **(amenity areas);** Tasca Stones **(common areas and lobbies);** Ted Todd **(oak apartment flooring).**

Costed

Nicola Herring, executive quantity surveyor at Gleeds, assesses floor finishes

Floor finishes are an important consideration for a project, as they need to be suitably robust and also create the right environment and ambience. Floor finishes are required in a wide range of different building types and there are many floor types available to suit the nature of the project – be it residential, commercial or another setting.

To achieve the desired appearance and performance it is equally important to ensure the right substrate. The substrate is important to achieving a neat finish as it will pick up any issues with levels/surface irregularities and the like.

As floor finishes are a heavily used element of a building, whole life costs can be considered, reviewing maintenance and replacement timescales to ensure that the correct selection for the intended use is made at the outset. Depending on the use of the building there may be other considerations, such as acoustics, hygiene, fire, safety, etc. There may also be heritage or conservation matters to consider if refurbishing an existing building.

There can be many factors influencing costs of floor finishes, such as the shape of the rooms/area (as an irregular shape may increase wastage), the quantity, substrate, where the finish is to be sourced, and quality. The following guide rates are for supply and installation of a range of floor types, reflecting typical rates seen in tender returns. The rates do not include costs for main contractor preliminaries or overheads and profit, nor professional fees/other add-ons. The rates also do not allow for any attendances such as power, protection, storage, etc.

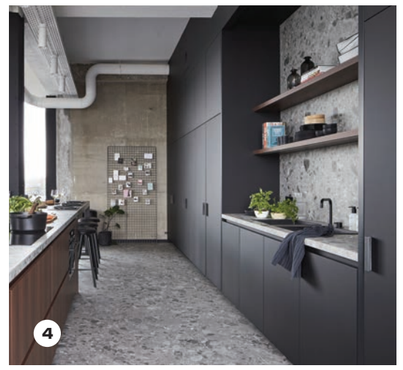
At the time of preparation (1Q21) there are some implications from Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to consider the origin of materials, whether they are to be imported, and what the lead-in times are.

Rates are a guide only and are Q1 2021 excluding VAT. They do not include any contractor prelims

Floor type	£/m²
In situ screed and floor finishes; laid level	
Self-levelling latex screed; 3mm thick on existing sub-base prior-receiving floor finishes	7.50-12.50
Cement and sand (1:3) screeds; steel trowelled; 100mm thick	25.00-32.50
Granolithic; laid on green concrete; 38 mm thick	35.00-50.00
Resin; 3-part solvent-system; up-3mm thick	50.00-65.00
Sheet/board flooring	
Chipboard; 18mm-22mm thick chipboard flooring; t&g joints	17.50-25.00
Wrought softwood t&g strip flooring; polished; including fillets	30.00-40.00
Sprung composition block flooring (sports), court markings, sanding and sealing	150.00-225.00
Rigid tile/slab finishes	
Quarry tile flooring	140.00-170.00
Glazed ceramic tiled flooring; anti-slip standard plain tiles	47.50-60.00
Glazed ceramic tiled flooring; designer tiles	110.00-130.00
Terrazzo tile flooring 28mm thick white Sicilian marble aggregate tiling	65.00-85.00
York stone 50mm thick paving	170.00-210.00
Slate tiles, smooth; straight cut	90.00-110.00
Portland stone paving	280.00-340.00
Roman Travertine marble paving; polished	275.00-330.00
Granite paving 20mm thick	230.00-300.00
Parquet/wood block finishes; wrought hardwood block floorings; 25 mm thick; polished; t&g joints	150.00-200.00

Flexible tiling; welded sheet or butt joint tiles; adhesive fixing	£/m²
Vinyl floor tiling; 330mm x 333mm x 2.00mm thick	20.00-30.00
Vinyl safety flooring; 2.00-2.50mm thick	35.00-45.00
Vinyl safety flooring; 3.5mm thick heavy duty	45.00-60.00
Linoleum tile flooring; 333mm x 333mm x 3.20mm thick	40.00-50.00
Linoleum sheet flooring; 2.00mm thick	35.00-45.00
Rubber studded tile flooring; 500mm x 500mm x 2.50mm thick	50.00-60.00
Carpet; including underlay, edge grippers	
Heavy domestic duty	40.00-75.00
Heavy contract duty	50.00-70.00
Entrance matting	
Barrier matting with polished brass/stainless steel frame	300.00-500.00
Access floors	
Raised access floors: including 600mm x 600mm steel encased particle boards on height adjustable pedestals 300mm; light/medium grade duty	40.00-60.00
Raised access floors: including 600mm x 600mm steel encased particle boards on height adjustable pedestals 300mm; heavy grade duty	60.00-80.00
Common floor coverings bonded-access floor panels	
Anti-static vinyl	30.00-40.00
Needle punch carpet	20.00-30.00

Specified



1
Taralay Libertex
Gerflor

"Hello! I'm the one in the pink top! Why are you staring at us? Do you like my puffy skirt? I love my puffy skirt. I love to sniff this new flooring, too! The men laid it very fast with no smelly glue! It is 30% minerals, 20% renewables, and gots a 95% recycled textile backing! I know letters, like 'A+ for indoor air quality'. I know numbers too, like 'VOC emissions after 28 days are below 100 micrograms/m3'. Come and sniff our lovely floor! You can lick it if you like, too!"
gerflor.co.uk

2
Loft porcelain stoneware tiles
Porcelaingres

Saga Norén greets us at the door of her new apartment, which, surreally, is half in Sweden and half in Denmark.
"I've gone for a 'deserted road bridge' look with the indoor/outdoor flooring", she smiles. "The porcelain stoneware tiles in 'Loft Dark' blend the materiality of concrete with the elegance of stone, and the small iridescent particles make it easy for me to find my way around when the lights go out. They're durable and easy to maintain, and they stand up well to brutal scrubbing, which is good, you know... in my job."
porcelaingres.com

3
Form LVT range
Amtico

Sir,
I write to draw attention to the tiles recently installed in your public washrooms. The biophilic designs are a danger to the honeybee community. We are experiencing head injuries as a result of the deceptive hexagonal laying pattern, and, worse, being subjected to inappropriate stroking by humans who, when challenged, claim to 'love feeling nature'. The textured tiles come in six stone and thirty wood variants, and are also offered in Parquet, Basket Weave and Pavestone patterns. Any of those would be safer for your many Apis Mellifera customers than the aptly named 'Hex'.
amtico.com/

4
Pure LVT in Terrazzo Light Grey
BerryAlloc

Supporters of detained historical palaeontologist Mary Anning are comparing her case to that of Wikithingy Gandalf Julian Assange, and have pledged to fund her fight for justice after police were called to a housewarming party where she was accused of lifting the 612mm2 click-fit tiles to investigate the geology she believed lurked underneath. Sadly, the 5mm 'Terrazzo Light Grey' tiles revealed only electric subfloor heating. Anning has since acknowledged that BerryAlloc's tiles and planks come in thirteen other naturalistic designs, and that her ex-friend's lifetime residential warranty has been invalidated.
idsurfaces.co.uk/

Schlüter-Systems expands on shelf range for even more stylish storage possibilities

Top The Wave shelf creates simple elegance.
Middle A smart finish with the Square design.
Bottom The Pure pattern is minimalistic and contemporary.

Already a popular choice with homeowners and architects alike, the range of shelves created by Schlüter-Systems is a simple way to add storage to your wetroom or bathroom. With three new style variants joining Curve and Floral in the Schlüter-Shelf range, there are now even more options available to create the perfect look.

The Square design features small squares for a smart, uniform aesthetic.

The Pure shelf, akin to its name, is a simple and minimal design which lets the tiles take centre stage.

Lastly, create an elegant yet subtle statement with the Wave variant.

Those familiar with Schlüter products may recognise these patterns; creating the new design variants to match those of the Schlüter-Kerdi-Line drain grates means that a cohesive finish is easily achievable. Alternatively, there is the potential to mix things up and make a statement – whichever you choose, the options are only limited by your creativity.

Not only are there now five patterns available in the range, Schlüter has also expanded the finishes to give even more aesthetic choice. This means that matt brilliant white, matt graphite black, natural beige grey, natural cream and natural blonde are included in the textured colour finishes available.

As with all products in the Schlüter-Shelf range, there is flexibility with placement due to the three different application choices on offer, meaning you are not held back by the space you have available.

Suitable for corners, the Schlüter-Shelf-E comes in three shapes: triangular, pentagonal, and quadrilateral. Installation is easy as no drilling is required. The shelf simply integrates into the grout lines with the use of a sealant. This option is ideal for smaller spaces as the shelf can be slotted in seamlessly.

A benefit of choosing this shelf is the versatility that comes with it – the shelves can be retrofitted between grout lines, creating an effortless update without having to make big changes to your bathroom. There is also far less risk of water ingress as the finished coverings and waterproofing beneath won't be penetrated.

Shelf-W, a rectangular shelf designed for tiled walls, can be installed anywhere in the wall area if it is in tandem with the tile.

Lastly, the Shelf-N is the perfect companion for the popular prefabricated shower niches of Schlüter-Kerdi-Board-N to create even more storage space.

Whatever bathroom or wetroom aesthetic you are after, with the new range of styles and finishes, Schlüter is bound to have a shelf that will finish it off perfectly. ●

Above Schlüter prefabricated shower niche with Floral shelf.

Schlüter Systems®

Find out more about the products and services available by visiting www.schluter.co.uk

An introduction to the Architectural Colours

Paint & Paper Library's 'Architectural Colours' palette is a sophisticated yet user-friendly, colour-by-number system, designed to provide simple alternatives to pure white

Paint & Paper Library's 'Architectural Colours' offers 95 graduated shades in a palette that moves from light hues to restful neutrals, from warm to cool tones. Colours are presented from the top to mid-section of the colour card, creating their own neutral selection.

To create all the shades, colourists at Paint & Paper Library have taken the same base pigment in each column to formulate gradually stepped colour families. Using different strengths of the same pigments produces subtle nuances of shade: used in conjunction, these gradations of tone empower experienced professionals to achieve a subtle and harmonious interior scheme. When used deliberately, they deliver interest, excitement and are able to direct the eye in even the most neutral of schemes.

Paint & Paper Library colour card

The Architectural Colours are arranged chromatically in 19 groups of five gradual shades, numbered I, II, III, IV and V. They range from light to dark, depicting the strength of the pigment used. Each tone can be used, either individually or in effortless combination, on ceilings, cornices, walls and woodwork.

To pair with the Architectural Colours are five shades of refreshing whites on the inside left, which complete the collection. These whites have been specifically created with the Architectural Colours in mind as they are made up of both warm and cool pigments. For example, Chaste is a warm white that makes the best of natural light, while Masque is the palest of greys, and can even display pink in some lights.

Adaptable for a variety of spaces, the Architectural Colours can be used either together or on their own. They work beautifully with other architectural hues, alongside wallpapers or to provide a sophisticated contrast to the stronger shades found in Paint & Paper Library's 'Original Colours' selection at the bottom of the colour card.

As creative director Ruth Mottershead explains: 'You should never feel that using neutrals and whites is unadventurous! In fact, working with the Architectural Colours and their subtle colour variations can create a highly sophisticated scheme. With the imagery, we wanted to demonstrate how versatile the palette could be: the colours can be used to produce the subtle variations that would normally be achieved by light, and we also wanted to show how effortlessly they provide a natural base to layer up – or, alternatively, frame bolder colours.'

As well as providing seamless and natural-looking transitions from room to room, the Architectural Colours is a highly flexible collection, and works equally well in light or dark spaces. In north facing rooms where there is an absence of sunlight, colours with either yellow or pink undertones compensate the coolness. An example of two colour families recommended in this instance are 'Sand' or 'Clay', both of which were created using a warmer pigment. On the other hand, in a south facing room where there is an abundance of natural light, cooler neutral families such as 'Lead' or 'Salt' will have a much more balanced neutral feel due to the yellowness of the light.

Using the colour families in combination can add a subtle depth to the room: it can trick the eye into thinking all the colours are the same shade, which in turn can expand the sense of space and make low ceilings appear higher than they are. Alternatively, layering small highlights of bolder tones from the Original Colours on top of the neutrals adds detail and interest to a room. The streamlined, easy-to-use palette of complementary colours, and the superb quality of the finishes (including Pure Flat Emulsion, the ultimate chalky flat finish) makes it the paint of choice for specifiers, interior designers, and architects alike.

> You should never feel that using neutrals and whites is unadventurous

PAINT & PAPER LIBRARY
LONDON

Explore the full collection of 'Architectural Colours' and order your complimentary colour card online at paintandpaperlibrary.com.

Housing & residential

Evolving needs demand housing adopts many guises

With housing high on everyone's agenda, PiP's webinar gathered expert views on issues such as Passivhaus, modular housing, multi-generational living and community-led self builds

Words: Michèle Woodger

'As safe as houses' goes the idiom, and, as if to prove it, the architecture profession can thank the housing sector for offering a safe haven in the coronavirus storm. With a buoyant outcome in the latest RIBA Future Trends survey and a marked increase in demand for RIBA contracts, (suggesting that architects are securing work in this sector consistently) the future of housing looks promising in an otherwise bleak market.

PiP's webinar showcased a wide range of projects and featured key architects in the field.

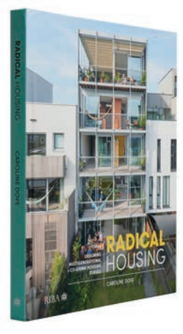
The speakers' diverse housing experience ranged from small-scale projects of 10 units, to larger developments of 200 and over; their talks were illustrated with case studies detailing collaborations with developers, clients and communities in pursuit of new housing models. Caroline Dove kicked off proceedings with an introduction to Radical Housing, her timely study of multi-generational housing solutions. The book's premise is all the more pertinent today, with the make-up, location and physical set-up of households hugely influencing people's experience of the pandemic lockdown.

'It is the nuclear family that is the recent phenomenon', argued Dove, and a fixation on accommodating small family units to the exclusion of other permutations results in unaffordability for young adults and isolation for the elderly.

Dove elaborated on three typologies: multi-generational family homes (purpose built or adapted homes); multi-generational communities; and co-living communities. Each has the potential to offer alternative ways of living which combat loneliness, provide independence, foster community, improve access, affordability and sustainability, and promote physical and mental wellbeing. Feedback from residents of several collective and community-led schemes (Hanham Hall by HTA and Mole Architects' Marmalade Lane in Cambridge, for instance) revealed how the sociability of multi-generational co-living arrangements helped people 'not only survive but thrive' in dire circumstances.

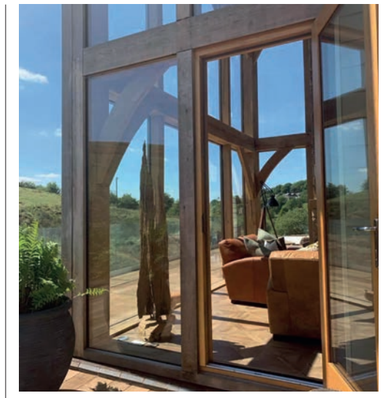
AHR

Moving on to the specific lockdown challenge of home working, Ben Hancock of Oscar Acoustics – experts in acoustic enclosures and sprays and soundproofing products – explained the principles of acoustics and vibration, and introduced Iso-Mount, a new isolating mount/acoustic floating ceiling. Crucially, this reduces impact vibrations without any need to access the floor above. Over the last year, the firm's enquiry rate for home soundproofing 'went through the roof', he quipped, with people increasingly (and understandably) intolerant of disturbance.



RIBA PUBLISHING

Above Wallis Fields by AHR. A 180-home, predominantly affordable scheme in Maidstone.
Left The cover of Caroline Dove's Radical Housing: Designing multi-generational and co-living housing for all.



TOM MANLEY

Above left Passivhoos, developed by John Gilbert Architects with Stewart & Shields, brings low energy costs to social housing.
Above right A home at Deramore Hutchcroft's Laureates Place self-build in Saddleworth.
Left Kristofer Adelaide Architecture's nine-unit infill scheme at St Mary's Court in Hanwell.

Matt Bridgestock of John Gilbert Architects discussed Passivhoos, a design-and-build initiative which applies international Passivhaus standards to social housing in Scotland. The scheme, shortlisted in this year's RIBAJ MacEwen Award, aims to encourage energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty, both urban and rural. Successful contributing factors include a knowledge transfer partnership (through Innovate UK), an R&D programme and dedicated supply chains.

Back down south, Kristofer Adelaide presented a new nine-unit infill scheme in Hanwell. The stepped scheme, which draws inspiration from Shepherdess Walk, sits on a narrow plot neighbouring a convent and listed churchyard. Adelaide detailed his material choices, in particular the light-coloured bricks and mortar essential for making the large volumes unobtrusive. He also introduced the AFRO concept – Architecture for the Reasonably Ordinary – KA–A's modular building concept shortlisted for Croydon developer Brick by Brick's 'Housing for a better world' competition 2020. In building a community, 'the front door should always be equal', he states.

VMZinc's Jonathan Lowy's presentation took us further afield – from 'Parisienne Boulevards to Shipyards on the Tyne' – tracing the journey of zinc: its material versatility is the key to its suitability in such diverse contexts. Lowy showcased several particular residential projects, including House Lessans by McGonigle McGrath (RIBA House of the Year 2019) – which made extensive use of pre-patinated quartz zinc cladding, and Bell Phillips Architects' housing scheme for older people in Greenwich – which uses zinc in its distinctive butterfly roofing.

From the rooftops of Paris to Yorkshire: next Deramore Hutchcroft discussed the process behind AKA community's sustainable, self-build scheme at Laureates Place, Saddleworth. The hamlet's inhabitants had been strangers to one another when the project began in 2014; working with landowners and the local council, the group acquired land and gained input into the design and management of their homes, leading to a thriving community.

Bricks and mortar are synonymous with housing, and Ibstock has been a leader in brick manufacture since the Industrial Revolution. Drawing on the company's rich past, Irina Hughes and Robert Saunders laid down the history of the use of this ubiquitous material from Victorian times to the present, taking in functionalism, minimalism and postmodernism en route. The evolution of the brick soffit, self-supporting brick arches, steel-backed systems and the material's fire safety credentials were discussed in reference to today's requirements.

Rounding off, David de Sousa told us about the Wallis Fields Regeneration – a site of 180 homes in Maidstone, 90% of which are for affordable rent, which replaced a deprived estate. The new development is the result of working alongside tenants and studying local vernacular. Using modern principles of good urban design, the streets were reclaimed for pedestrians and cyclists, while the homes themselves reference those of Kentish coastal towns, with the pitch of the roofs and characteristic weatherboard cladding. At the heart of the new development, a health centre and café provide amenities for residents. Surveillance has improved, crime has reduced and, in the words of one tenant, nowadays 'you always get a good morning'. This altogether lovelier environment – alongside the other projects discussed in this webinar – is testimony to residential architecture done right. ●

Watch this webinar: ribaj.com/pipresiwebinar

Mo-tel House, London

Why choose a high-carbon extension when some internal reconfiguring and exuberant paintwork do the job with more fun?

Words: Will Jennings Photographs: French + Tye

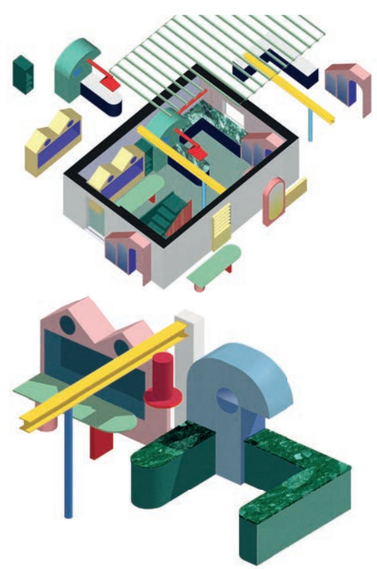
The grotto at Stowe Garden's was once embellished with thousands of shards of broken glass and multicoloured shells. Its dark vaulted chambers were lit by hanging oil lamps, so colours and surfaces flickered as guests dined and partied concealed behind the facade. This came to mind as the colours of Studio S&M's Mo-tel House danced into view when I descended into the colourfully reimagined lower-ground space of an unassuming terrace house.

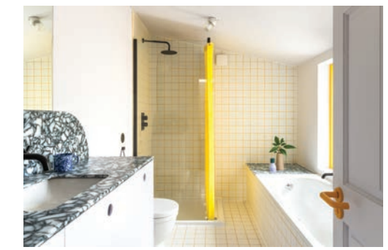
The practice's primary physical architectural act was to persuade the client that a carbon-heavy, garden-reducing extension was not required, and that instead simply ripping out a central wall dividing a badly lit kitchen from an even more badly lit bedroom, the space could provide all the clients' needs. This act of removal is now marked by a slender blue column supporting a Selfridges-yellow beam, together acting as gestural separation and framing.

'It's basically a box', says Catrina Stewart, one half of S&M (the other being RIBA Journal 2019 Rising Star Hugh McEwen) who talks of early conversations with the client around colour 'as a building material' to combat the boxiness and darkness of the space; this yellow and blue are just two of a broad palette liberally splashed over all surfaces above the diagonal floorboards. Bold and pastel, bright and muted, tones are carefully layered towards a colour-first design which runs as deep as the grouting and light switches. 'We are surprised how risky people think colour is', she adds, suggesting a cheap tin of paint can radically alter any domestic room, and with careful thought given to shades and variations, colour can give a 'three dimensionality to space'.

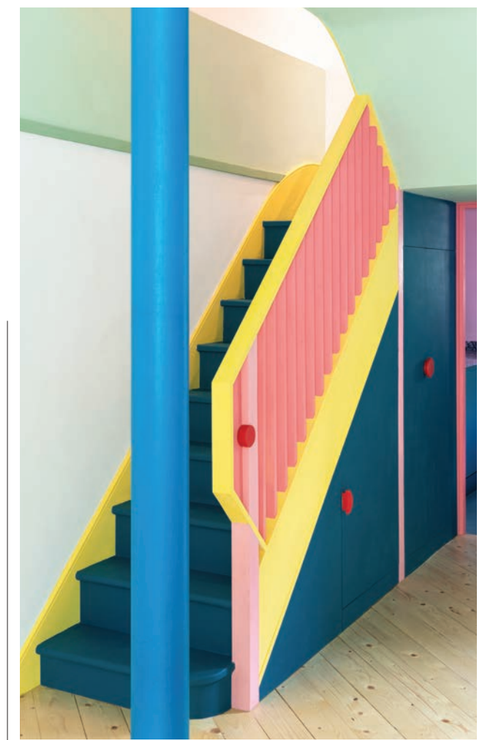
In other hands, such a lively approach could have become a cacophony, but through careful refinement of design, Studio S&M ensures no single element dominates. The large, pink, pitched-crown seating booth could have overwhelmed, but with a small shadow gap above and airspace to either side it has the right weight for the space. Similarly, the elephantine larder alongside, its nose providing bulky kitchen equipment storage within while shedding task light below, is comfortable despite its scale.

Some of these architectonic forms and colours may have been picked up from the nearby





Left A yellow-painted steel beam and blue- painted column celebrates where the old separating wall was removed.
Above With evident architectonic plays – here with the larder – the architects wanted to accentuate something other then prosaic domesticity.
Below left Axonometric describing the elements of the architects' intervention.



Left Candy store colours bring joy and life to this lower-level, gridded, family social space.
Above The bathroom, with just a shot of yellow, looks tame by comparison.
Below Simple paint finishes allow for constant makeovers if desired.

Kingsland Road Market as Catrina walked through en route to design meetings. If not the market, the general feeling of the space is quite other to an expected domesticity, a feeling the family has described as like 'going on holiday' – which in Covid lockdown we can only envy.

Altogether, it acts as an adaptable kit of parts. Using cheap Dulux paints means when surfaces are stained by spillage, or the family tires of the tones, any parts can be painted, the space evolving and growing as they are. And as funds allow, the visual approach can be adopted for floors above without fear of disrupting precious thresholds between old and new – in five or ten years' time ingredients from this lower-ground floor can simply be appropriated for the hall, living room, perhaps bedrooms – one splash of paint or geometric object at a time.

As I return to the cloudy street, the Hacienda-cum-Miami colours concealed behind the conservation area frontage, the holiday feels over; no evidence of the grotto can be seen. Except, perhaps, for a nighttime passer-by who might look down through the window and catch a shimmering glimpse of the colour within. ●

Specified

PiP specifieds are compiled from supplied company press releases

1
Solid wood grill ceiling panels
Hunter Douglas

'Norman Stanley Fletcher, you have pleaded guilty to the charges brought, and it is now my duty to pass sentence. You are an habitual criminal who accepts arrest as an occupational hazard, and presumably accepts imprisonment in the same casual manner. You will go to prison for five years. But before you go, take a last look at this magnificent acoustic-backed grill panel ceiling in 20mm by 68mm solid European oak slats secured at 120mm with aluminium dowels, because this old court house has just been re-done as a distiller's corporate HQ, and they're the best bars you'll be seeing for a while.'
hunterdouglas.co.uk

2
Recyclable steel enamel sanitaryware
Kaldewei

Ecowarrior and petrochemicals heiress Cognita V De Sonnance has had her knuckles rapped by the RSPCA for keeping a 'rescued' 15ft juvenile Orcinus Orca in the bath at her £15 million Park Lane apartment. RSPCA spokeswoman May d'Uppe said: 'Anyone using their home bathroom for marine conservation should simply choose enamelled steel appliances from Kaldewei. Not only do these recyclable tubs and basins use natural raw materials, Kaldewei partners with the WWF in ocean stewardship. We tried to get them, but they went with the big boys. Don't put that bit.'
kaldewei.co.uk/

3
Etoile Vergennes basin stand
Imperial

So, yah, this is it before, plumbed and so boring tucked away in the bathroom, but you know, the nickel-plated Vergennes stand was such an absolute work of art – *wasted* in the bathroom – so we moved it to the hall. I mean, 84% of people agree the most important thing about buying is that you get a good feeling when you walk through the door, and 76% say that first impressions are everything when viewing a house. So now we've moved the basin behind the front door – and what with all the handwashing we're having to do once indoors it's a wonder we haven't sold yet.
imperialbathrooms.com

4
Dekton Trilium surfaces
Cosentino

Oh, Iceland, Iceland. Trying to get in on Mexico's thing with your oh-so spectacular volcano footage! Just because Popocatépetl's 3000m plumes caught the headlines in January, and the Trilium worksurfaces at London's hottest new Mexican restaurant are causing a stir with their 80% recycled glass, quartz and porcelain composition and deliciously particoloured matt finish inspired by volcanic rock, you think your little burnt frankfurters are going to impress anyone? Try asparagus, sea lettuce and scarlet elf cup aguachile next time. Amateurs.
cosentino.com/en-gb/dekton/

Sign Up

Nick Baker Architects' **Nick Baker** gives three of his specification favourites

HAMISH PARK

SOLAR THERMAL PANELS

Solar thermal panels' circular form makes them harder to include in an inclined roof pane and they need connecting to fluid heat exchangers. The Kingspan Varisol panel, developed with Kingspan for our Solstice Point project in Camden, uses only one end of the evacuated heat tube for the transition of temperature to the fluid distributor , giving it great flexibility. We integrated the panel into the facade; placed vertically and orientated south/south west they use ambient and direct sunlight. Integrated into the building's M&E from design conception they can contribute up to 25% of space heating as well as conventional hot water provision.

LANSERRING

WESTERN RED CEDAR

When specified correctly western red cedar is a wonderfully charismatic material. When sheltered externally, the warm and vibrant red tones can be retained and transition comfortably internally to enable a powerful inside/outside experience – as at our Skywood House design. Its slow growth marine environment characteristic ensures western red cedar has good compatibility as an external cladding to the UK's relatively wet climate. Care is needed with detailing window sills and fascias to avoid staining but when understood the results can be visually as well as sustainably rewarding.

INTERIOR ID/LANSERRING

Interior fit-out is key to a complete architectural work, Gesamtkunstwerke. We ran into Bernd Radaschitz and his team when they arrived in London from Austria in 2007. Their attention to detail and understanding of craftsmanship comes from their almost 100 year history and is a delight to work with and to show clients. Interior ID concentrates on cabinetry while the recently launched Lanserring operation focuses on kitchen furniture. They combine finishes that compliment each other and have a keen eye for a contemporary design twist. It always feels like a genuinely joint design and craft solution when they are on board.

...Sign Off

Jan-Carlos Kucharek enjoys three stand-outs from the inbox

ISTOCKONFOKUS

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Volume housebuilder Barratt has teamed up with Mark Hempsell, past British Interplanetary Society president, to imagine a home on the Moon, and guess what – it's brick shaped! Using their own 'high-quality living standards', their prototype considers 'all necessary requirements to protect us from radiation and solar storms, while functioning as a relatively "normal" home.' Amazingly normal: apart from basalt bricks with aluminium foil as mortar and top floor living spaces to protect sleepers from space rays, it looks pretty much a Barratt home. No mention of workmanship, air pressure tests, or indeed gravity... how do you say 'land banking' in Klanger?

STARTER FOR TEN

Architects tired of trying to second guess the client's thinking when submitting their fee bid might envy Diego Faivre. His Eindhoven Design Academy graduation project was 'Minute Manufacture', offering complete transparency in design and production. 'For Faivre, time really is money; the number of minutes affects the quality and design of the outcome.' He charges €2 per minute, whatever he's applying it to. The result? His 'Stool made in 244 minutes', left, made of his own 'Diego Dough'. While might look a bit shonky, it's not as shonky as some of the PD office-to-resi conversions we've seen – which would have probably taken the same time.

JOHANNES SCHWARTZ

STAAR BUCKS

It took more than 244 minutes for De Stijl founder Theo van Doesburg to come up with his flat pack maquette for the seminal 1927 Café Aubette in Strasbourg – and a lot more than €488 for Holland's Het Nieuwe Instituut to acquire his sole surviving 1926 model of the design. All you need to do is fold up the model's sides and the erstwhile avant garde café appears in glorious 3D. To get it Het Nieuwe had to raise cash from the Rembrandt Association, Galerie Gmurzynska and the Mondriaan Fund. Former friends, Mondriaan curiously fell out big time with van Doesburg over his use of diagonal lines; does its buy-in here set the record straight?

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ROOM FOR IMAGINATION

RAK-DES

RAK-Des is a new concept bathroom suite that pays tribute to the Bauhaus school by which it is inspired, the collection includes bowls and freestanding washbasins with the essential minimalist lines. The rectangular washbasins can be installed suspended, individually, or combined with the RAK-Joy vanities.

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