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BM 15 - Invitation to submit

In order to create a context for the Symposium on 20 years of AAI Awards, the next issue of Building Material is to consist primarily of pages from architects' notebooks over the last 60 years of Irish architecture. Readers are therefore invited to submit scans or photocopies from their notebooks (sketches/notes/surveys/collages etc.), a selection of which will be published anonymously. The intention is to create a democratic historical document. Earlier work would be particularly welcome. All submissions to be dated (by year). All photocopies to be sent to: Building Material, Architectural Association of Ireland, Office No. 1, 43/44 Temple Bar, Dublin 2. All scans to be e-mailed to buildingmaterial@eircom.net and to be jpegs at 300 dpi. The closing date for submission is 1 December 2005.



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Alan Phelan (Curator / Editor)

Texts: Niamh O'Malley; Georgina Jackson; Steven Duval and René Zechlin; Anna Colin; Tim Davies, John Langan, Ann Mulrooney and Deirdre O'Mahony; Gavin Delahunty and Nevan Lahart; Gavin Murphy; Tim Stott; Ciarán Bennett; Jason L Bowman, Sarah Glennie, Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, Karen MacKinnon and Hugh Mulholland. Artworks: Alice Maher; Mark O'Kelly; Susan MacWilliam; Shane Cullen; Vanessa O'Reilly; Niamh McCann; Katie Holten.

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Regards,
The Committee

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building material

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Thanks once again to the editorial team and good luck to Brian W. Very special thanks to Anna H for intellectual, emotional and nutritional support.

Spine art by M. Ramboz.

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Editorial

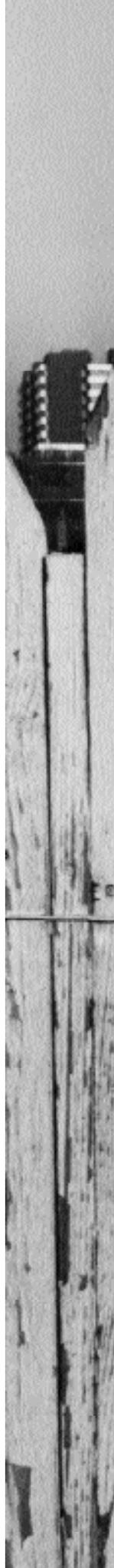
GARY BOYD

This edition of building material investigates the relationship between the economy and urban form and in particular how architecture and architects operate at the extremes of the economic cycle: boom and bust. These are periods where the presence or absence of finance within the built environment is at its most explicit.

In the rapid ebb and flow of economics, slowing-moving architecture is inevitably out of step. Indeed, the enduring qualities architects are trained to admire and promote – form, space, materiality, beauty – those qualities which shelter, accommodate provoke emotion and, which seem to lie within the very meaning of architecture itself, can become irrelevant in the anarchic context of finance. This is especially true in times of slump. Here, it is their very solidity and materiality that makes buildings vulnerable. Finance, immaterial, without quality or form can simply evaporate, slip through time zones and international boundaries to remerge elsewhere in some far off corner of the globe. For buildings rooted to the spot, unable to adapt to recent developments or located in some unprofitable zone, it can mean vacancy, obsolescence, dereliction and demolition, regardless of whether they are sound, beautiful or socially useful. In this world, all that is solid can and does melt into air. In recent times, this has been the experience of cities like Detroit whose wholesale erasure as a centre of automobile production is all the more bewildering in a world which consumes more motor cars than ever before.

It has also been the experience to some degree of many other cities in the last one hundred and fifty years, Dublin included. Sometimes, it is difficult to remember in the boom-town that is contemporary Dublin that until very recently the city had undergone a protracted economic stagnation. It is perhaps even more difficult to acknowledge that it is likely do so again. In what Neil Smith calls the 'see-saw effect of uneven development' global capital seeks and finds the places of most profit, places where it will get a maximum return on its investment. In this world, disinvestment, a dramatic fall in property prices and, at its extreme, the destruction of whole sectors of a city simply paves the way for future building and often means an opportunity for wholesale and immensely profitable redevelopment. For finance, therefore, bust segues seamlessly into boom with each dependent on the other. For slower moving entities like architecture and indeed, society and its communities, this neat turn around can be prefaced with hardship, uncertainty and social instability.

The hidden and intangible flow of finance is as much the site of architecture as physical location, topology and climate. This is something which, if architects want to remain relevant in the shaping of the city, has to be embraced in all its complexities.



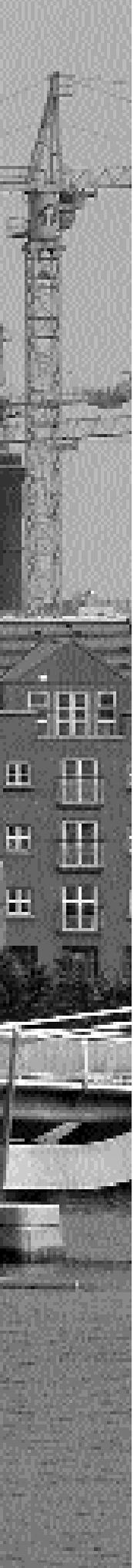


1

Boom and Slump on the Clyde and Liffey

JONATHAN CHARLEY





It is still boom time and the crane operators and scaffolders scurry between historic square and water's edge laying the foundations for glitzy offices and chic apartments in the race to boost the value of real estate. The capitalisation of culture or more precisely of eating, drinking, and caffeine-injected art galleries is a vital component of this process as the city is reborn as a post-modern metropolis serving duck instead of mutton. It isn't difficult to crack the veneer of prosperity that camouflages such urban development. The Liffey still funnels milk bottles, bus tickets, teabags, and surgical debris towards the sea. And, as in all 'regenerated' cities, a quick detour from the prescribed tourist route returns you to the reality of urban poverty.

But despite the fraudulent claims on the future that adorn the hoardings of overpriced flats, the construction boom over the last decade in Ireland is unusual in modern economic history. In most economies the construction sector accounts for anything from nine to thirteen per cent of GNP. Even in rapidly industrialising economies like that of the old Soviet Union it didn't surpass this mark. Statistics of course are as open to ideological manipulation as any other index of progress. However, when a construction industry, fuelled by speculative housing accounts for twenty two percent of GNP, higher than in any other developing economy, we are dealing with a fairly unique situation. But what is the real character of this construction boom? What are its social objectives and who has actually benefited from it? How long will it last or has it already come to an end? Being the public optimists that they are, land developers, speculative house builders and civic booster boys pretend it will continue indefinitely. As champions of neo-liberal economic policy they argue that everyone in society eventually benefits from an economic up turn. Prosperity trickles down they say. They point to the new roads, tunnels and civic improvements built 'not to circulate commodities' but 'to improve the quality of everyone's life'. They celebrate the expanding service sector that includes the tourist and retail industries, and which by the early 1990s was employing over sixty per cent of the Irish workforce, many of them in jobs notorious for low wages and insecurity. But this and other matters are of little concern to the fortune-tellers who, mesmerised by the speed of urban regeneration, see nothing but flashes of gold bullion.

2

Charles Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Popular Crowds* along with J.K.Galbraith's *The Great Crash 1929*, are a good place to start pondering the historical meaning of a boom. To my knowledge, worthless peat bogs are not being flogged to greedy investors in the same manner that impenetrable swathes of Florida swamp were once sold in the 1920s. Neither is there a gang of unscrupulous merchants beguiling the local population with tales of unlimited silver deposits on the slopes of the Wicklow Mountains. But there is a similar air of unreality, of a dreaming city in which too many people have indulged themselves in what Galbraith might have termed a 'vision of eternal hope and optimism'. There is only one thing you can be absolutely certain of with regards to an economic boom: it will be followed at some point by decline and stagnation. This might occur as a stage-managed slow burn, a grey Wednesday or a murky Thursday. In these scenarios stocks and shares are rescued at the last minute by the intervention of finance capital, or bankrupt firms and devalued property are hoovered up at a snip by capitalists determined to kick start the process of accumulation. But the spectre remains of a full-blown crisis in which the state trembles, capital flees, fingers get burnt, and the working class are left to sweep up the mess.

Inevitably, just as the renaissance cartographers re-imagined maps as a way of consolidating private property, so economists and politicians have endeavoured to model the economy in a vain attempt to control it. Compiling statistics and graphs, they try to understand the historical patterns of productivity and profitability and the relationships between different industries. They ask whether the construction industry mimics the rest of the economy, drives it, or lags behind in its own peculiar world. With concerned frowns they speculate on whether the peaks and troughs that dominate construction history are indicative of minor fluctuations, business cycles, or long waves of depression and expansion. Others doubt whether there is any discernible pattern to economic history at all, whilst the dozens of neo-liberal economic theory reply that if there ever was a 'ragged pattern', it has come to an end. After three centuries, they maintained, capitalism had shown itself to be the most fitting way of organising human society. It had developed into a well-oiled machine that required little more than occasional fine-tuning. For the construction industry this translated into the utopian idea that an unfettered market in building services could somehow satisfy all of our needs and desires with regards to urban development.

In contrast, more critically minded economists have suggested that the specifically capitalist production of the built environment makes the construction industry inherently unstable and unable to resolve many of the pressing construction challenges that all societies face. They argue that the very system itself is characterised by instability as a result of the long-term tendency for the rate of profit to fall. It is this, they suggest, that has historically driven construction firms to subordinate any concept of social need to the primary goal of finding new ways of maintaining profits. In time honoured fashion this is accomplished through takeovers, technological innovation, the forcing down of wages, or by shifting capital elsewhere in the search for cheaper labour power and as yet uncommodified spaces and services. The result is an historical pattern of profound social and spatial inequality that in extreme situations can result in the cessation of construction activity due to war, social revolution or environmental degradation.

3

What we do know is that if you plot the trajectory of output and profitability in the British construction industry over the last two hundred years, the result is a line of peaks and troughs that resemble a mountain range. The graph of Ireland's economic history is similar with valleys and ravines indicating decline, the advent of war or social unrest, and periods of relative peace and prosperity marked by gentle slopes and scrambling climbs.

Nobody particularly likes to dwell on the bad times, and if the odds are good, all memories of past penury are forgotten. To a large extent this myopic enthusiasm for the promise of a boom is understandable. There is always money to be made. The great canal and railway explosion of the nineteenth century continued for decades, not least because of the institutionalised corruption of politicians. Similarly the industrial revolution, though interrupted by Napoleonic wars, the Chartists, and the recession of the 1870s, was one of the most protracted booms in the history of building construction. Legendary profits were there to be made in everything from infrastructure and housing to the export of cast-iron buildings. But even this eventually came to an end, as did the post Second World War building boom, which at one point similarly appeared as if it would last forever.

The first things to tumble were the property markets that crashed in the midst of a global recession in the late nineteen seventies, not least because of the over production of office space. Almost simultaneously, the dismantling of the welfare state and the process of de-industrialisation gathered pace. Sometimes decline is a slow process, but it can also be frighteningly rapid. Towns and communities that had been organised around single industries like steel, coal or car production were decimated within a generation. And two decades was all it took for the certainties associated with secure employment, public housing, schools and hospitals to become memories. But despite the demolition, strikes and receiverships of the late nineteen seventies and early eighties the capitalist construction industry didn't panic. It simply moved towards management contracting, laid off workers and embraced the opportunities opened up by the privatisation of the built environment and public sector.

It rushed with open arms into a new regime of accumulation organised around speculative housing, retail parks and leisure buildings, and began to build them at a rate and in a manner that continues to defy architectural reason and economic wisdom. It is not difficult to imagine what will happen when the market for offices and housing becomes saturated, the circulation of credit spirals out of control and interest rates inevitably rise. We have been there many times before. What appears at one moment as a cast-iron guarantee of increased property values can quickly become a cul-de-sac of repossession and bankruptcy. The fact that over forty per cent of the new housing in Dublin is unlet and unsold should be warning enough that there are cracks in the foundations of this particular boom. The smart investors will have already cleared their desks and won't be taking the cleaning staff with them. Banks will try and off-load the debts, and more than likely it will be the working and middle class who will face 'restructuring' and tax increases to pay the bill.

4

Early in 2005, the Bank of Ireland reported that employment in construction had reached an 'unsustainable level', and that the role of the construction industry within the economy was 'above equilibrium'. They hope that even if this situation leads to a slowdown in housing, it will not result in widespread unemployment as sub contractors, casual labourers and small firms are soaked up by the expansion of 'other' areas of construction and 'other' sectors of the Irish economy. But if it is true that 132,000 workers (62% of the total construction workforce) are employed in the housing sector, it is wishful thinking to imagine how even fifty thousand will suddenly be absorbed into new employment. Housing and construction booms necessarily draw on what was once called the 'reserve army of labour'. This is the pool of the unemployed and casually employed rounded up by contractors when the order book is full and dispensed with as soon as the market contracts. Such has been the fate of every labourer and wandering craftsman from the speculative housing booms of nineteenth century Paris and Glasgow, to the construction jamboree of the late 1980s in London.

That the contemporary house builder should be primarily motivated by profits rather than an analysis of social need or the desire to address the disparities thrown up by uneven development, should hardly surprise us. It was precisely the increasing dominance of competitive tendering and the contracting system at the turn of the nineteenth century that gave birth to the speculative house builder. This said, it is still extraordinary that about sixty per-cent of the new housing in Ireland is being bought as a second home or holiday flat, purchases that come complete with tax break advantages. The rest is being consumed by what are termed 'inward migrants' and first-time buyers. You do not need to be an economist or a sociologist to see that this sort of market discriminates against all but the relatively affluent; you simply have to wander into an estate agent and survey the six figures. It is difficult to see how such an agenda for housing is going to benefit the large mass of working class Ireland. But developers have a solution. 'Social inclusion', 'some for rent', and 'affordable flats' are dangled as imaginary compensation in front of the public as developers continue to trade in wishful slogans and brave new worlds, wilfully ignoring the fashionable shibboleths on uncertainty and chaos. This is to be wholly expected; after all it is the business of estate agents to sell security and nostalgia. Other meaningless expressions like 'Luxury, Dream, Historic, Sustainable' and 'Family' form part of this specialised vocabulary used by marketing consultants and home builders to disguise the reality of daily social life in a city. Language is as much about mystification as explanation, which is why sun blinds, potted plants, lampshades and trinkets are strategically placed in the facades of empty flats, so as to persuade the would be customer of the intense and vibrant life to be had in waterfront homes. But there is no hiding the profusion of 'To Let' and 'For Sale' signs that jostle next to the lie, 'Only a few left'.



5

No one knows its precise location, but somewhere there is a factory or covert maternity hospital that is producing hundreds of thousands of identikit professional couples. These are people who think a two hundred and fifty thousand pound 'studio' flat with enough space to challenge Lilliputians is desirable and affordable. Over the next decade a hundred and ten thousand of these individuals are expected to arrive at the Leith docks in Edinburgh, specially ferried in from London, the Baltic or god knows where. About the same number it seems are anticipated in Glasgow as the city migrates westwards along the Clyde.

And so it goes on in Dublin. But who are the homebuyers? And more precisely where are they? If you walk west along Pearse Street facing north, you have a good chance of spotting one of them. There is no point looking to the other side of the street. They are unlikely to be drinking under the gaze of Widow Scallan's hunger strikers or admiring the customised crazy paving of the corporation flats. No, the residents of new Dublin are to be found in protected pockets, socially and spatially dislocated in a

panorama composed out of white render, timber cladding, concrete, glass and steel, the international language of the modern speculative flat. These are truly homogenous and unsettling places that lack the social diversity and messy noise that makes urban life urban. It couldn't be otherwise. Whatever it looks like, suburban baronial, faux Georgian, modernist glass palace, soft or heavily fortified, the condominium in is in effect a middle class prison, a self-contained world with managed vistas and closely observed rules of social conduct.

As yet there are no tollgates or border crossings into these zones. A few of the boys in shorts and wet suits jumping off O'Connell bridge have migrated down to the cleaned up dock basins that are great for swimming in, and for the time being no one is bothering them. One can only presume that their right to use a private pond is an example of what is meant by the trickle down effect.

Jonathan Charley is senior lecturer in architecture at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.



2

Southern Cross

MARK CURRAN

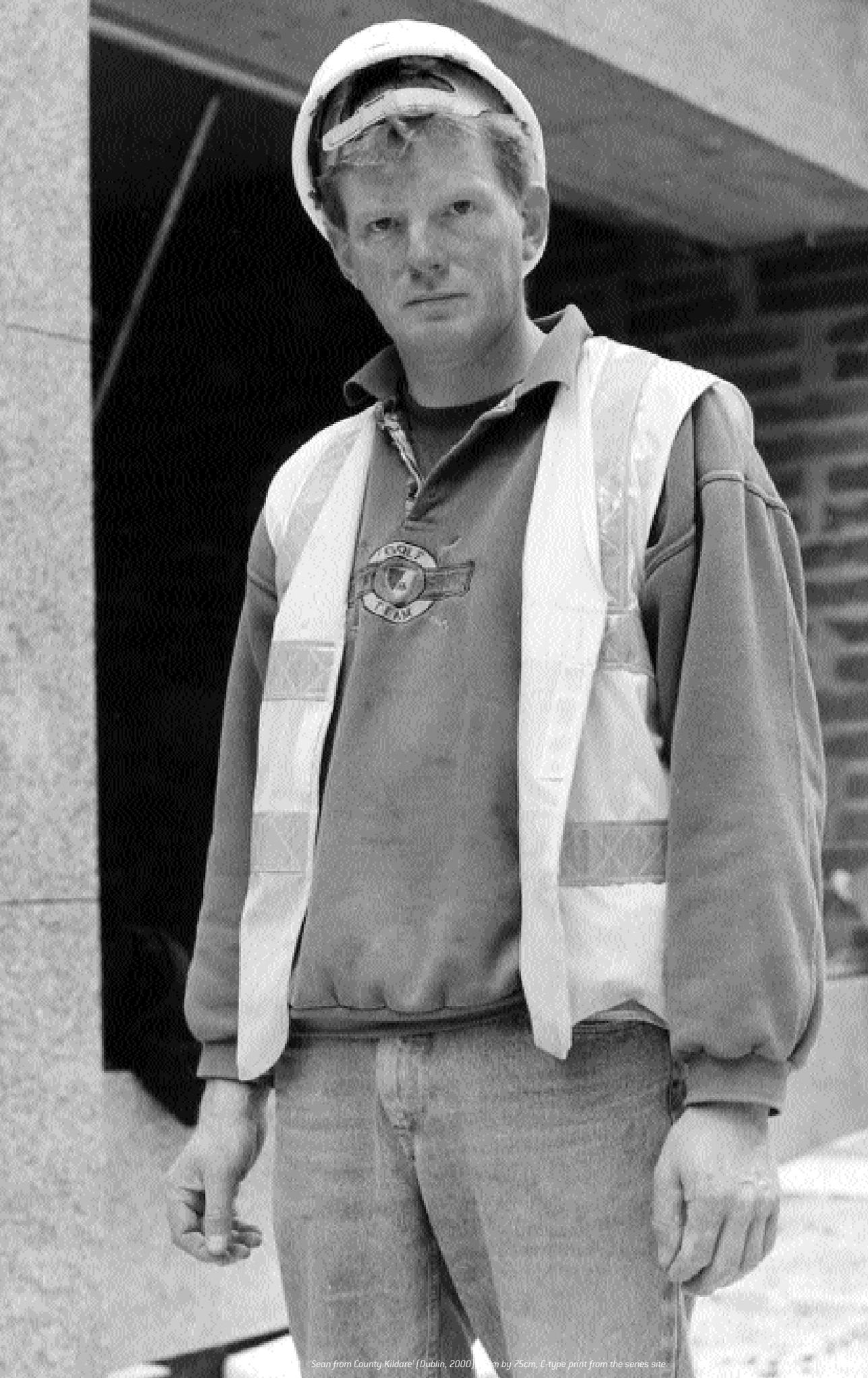
SOUTHERN CROSS is a critical response to the recent rapid development witnessed in Ireland. Foreign investment has brought about the largest economic transformation in the history of a country which never experienced the industrial revolution. The work maps, through the spaces of development and finance, the economic aspirations of a country on the western periphery of Europe. It presents the face and landscape, now described as the 'Celtic Tiger', being transformed in response to the migration of global capital.

Ireland is now defined as 'the most globalised economy in the world' (IDA 2004).

site explores the transitory spaces between 'what was' and 'what will be'. The construction sites are the birthing grounds of the 'new Ireland'. The images are allegorical references to the effect of the changing geography on society. Landscape images intersect with portraits of the workers, charged with the responsibility of transforming the landscape in the hope of fulfilling the desires of the society around them.

Mark Curran is an Assistant Lecturer in Photography and an M.Phil. candidate in Photography/Visual Media at the Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice, Dublin Institute of Technology. He lives in Berlin and is completing an audiovisual, practice-based research project into the role of labour and global capital in manufacturing and technology.

The award-winning Southern Cross was first commissioned by the Gallery of Photography, Dublin and was presented as an exhibition and publication in 2002.



'Sean from County Kildare' (Dublin, 2000). 100cm by 75cm, C-type print from the series site.











'Bill from County Cork' (County Dublin, 2001), 75cm by 75cm, C-type print from the series site

Property Ireland - economic statistics

DAVID DUFFY

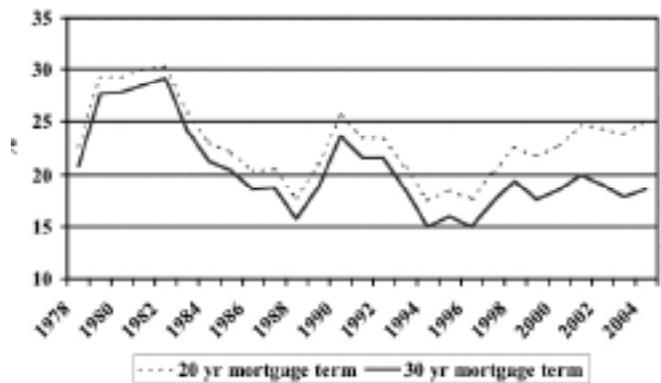
Any review of the changes in the Irish economy since the mid-1990s would not be complete without including the housing market. In line with the overall economy the Irish housing market experienced a major transformation. The price of houses has become a regular topic of conversation and an important area of study for analysts and policy makers. The latter half of the 1990s was also an exceptional period for the Irish economy, with rapid output and employment growth, with an associated sharp decline in the unemployment rate. The state of the public finances improved and the government enjoyed a number of years of growing surplus. A series of stimulatory budgets contributed to a substantial increase in aggregate disposable income and after-tax non-agricultural wages increased sharply. The overall economic growth of the economy has resulted in rising incomes and employment growth.

The most prominent display of change in the housing market has been the acceleration in house price inflation that occurred in the latter half of the 1990s. In 1995 the average price of a new house was €77,994, an increase of 7.2 per cent on the previous year. By 2004 the average price had risen to €249,191, an increase of 11 per cent year on year. However, the intervening years saw much higher rates of house price inflation with an annual average of 22.6 per cent in 1998. Dublin generally experienced much higher rates of inflation, peaking at 31.7 per cent in 1998.

The boom has not been confined to house prices. Every year since 1994 the number of housing completions has reached a new peak. By 2004 the number of new house completions had reached just under 77,000, equivalent to nearly 5 per cent of the 2004 housing stock. This compares to 26,863 completions in 1994. This means that between 1995 and 2004 an additional 524,748 units were built, equivalent to 33.2 per cent of the 2004 housing stock. This is an exceptionally high level of output, either by international or Irish standards.

The growth in house prices and housing output means that the residential sector has become an increasingly important component of the economy. Residential construction is an important driver of the economy and the construction sector. Residential building now accounts for around half of all construction output. The substantial increase in housing output means that investment in new house building now accounts for 30 per cent of overall investment volumes and has made a significant contribution to the volume of economic growth in recent years. In 2003 and 2004 it is estimated that investment in new housing contributed about one-fifth to Ireland's economic growth in each year. Construction employment, at over 204,000 in 2004, now accounts for around 11.7 per cent of total employment. Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Quarterly National Household Survey show that much of the increase in employment in 2004 is accounted for by the construction sector.

The drivers of demand for housing include demographic factors, personal disposable income and the interest rate. Demographic factors, such as the proportion of the population in the household forming age groups and net inflows of people into the country, are a key important determinant of the housing market. In contrast to many European countries Ireland has a young population age structure. Census data shows that headship rates (the proportion of the population who are heads of independent households) are highest in the 25-39 year old age groups. At the time of the 1996 census around 775,000 persons were in these age groups. Population estimates by the CSO for 2004 indicate that the number in these ages rose to 950,000 by 2004, 23.5 per cent of the population. At the same time, and contributing to the increase in population, have been the strong net inflows of people into Ireland. Analysis of the migration figures offers some explanation as to the potential impact on the housing market. The bulk of out-migration is from the 15-24 year age group, 53.5 per cent in 2004. This age group is younger than the main household formation age groups, so emigrants are either leaving the parental home or rented accommodation. The bulk of in-migration, 49.5 per cent, is in the 25-44 year age group, the key age group for independent household formation. Estimates in the ESRI's (Economic and Social Research Institute) Medium-Term Review show that having made no contribution to housing demand per annum between 1991 and 1996 migration contributed an annual average of 6,000 units between 1996 and 2002, although in reality this may well be higher. The sharp rise in house prices may now be having an influence on the decision to migrate to Ireland. Since many immigrants are in the household formation age group, and tend to be highly skilled, the boom in house prices in Ireland could reduce the attractiveness of Ireland for potential immigrants. This would, in turn, reduce potential labour supply in the medium-term and act as a brake on medium-term growth in output and employment in the Irish economy. Thus, housing has now become an important infrastructural constraint in the Irish labour market.



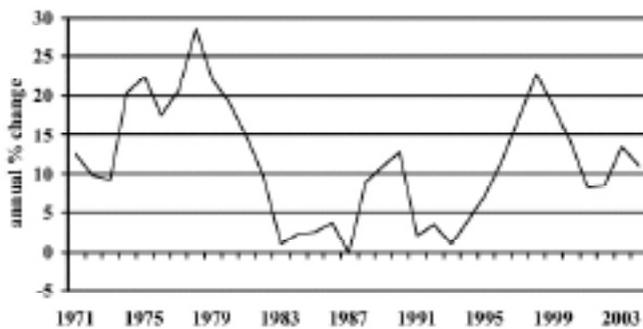
Nominal Price Inflation - New Homes

Despite the rapid house price inflation of recent years demand has remained strong in the housing market as rising prices provide capital gains, making owner-occupancy attractive. Those who are home owners have enjoyed a massive increase in housing wealth as a consequence of the boom. Of course the rise in house prices has also resulted in higher borrowing to access home-ownership. Overall, the ratio of personal debt to personal disposable income increased from 43 per cent in 1990 to over 110 per cent by 2004. Much of this increase has happened in recent years. Between 1990 and 1997 the ratio of personal debt increased by 9 percentage points. In the period between 1997 and 2004 the ratio more than doubled. The vast majority of this increase has been in borrowings for housing purposes. House mortgage finance and other housing finance amounted to just over 37 per cent of personal disposable income in 1996. By 2004 this had risen to 89.5 per cent. In contrast, other personal debt (finance for investment and other advances) has risen from 11 per cent of personal disposable income in 1996 to 21 per cent in 2004.

Irish interest rates declined as the economy moved towards membership of EMU (European Monetary Union). This regime shift – entry to EMU – resulted in domestic interest rates being reduced to converge with euro rates. It is now expected that interest rates will be lower and less volatile in the future than had historically been the case. The affordability of home purchase is obviously very important. This determines whether young adults set up independent households or remain at home, and, as outlined above, it can affect immigration flows. Although affordability is a relatively simple concept its measurement can be difficult as affordability is driven by house prices, mortgage amount, interest rates, after-tax household income and wealth. Home-ownership affordability measures can be broadly divided into those that measure the cost of repaying mortgage debt and those that measure the affordability of accessing the housing market. These different measures of affordability can provide a different picture of what is happening in the market. In terms of the cost of servicing a mortgage the reduction in Irish interest rates associated with EMU improved the affordability of home-ownership. The fall in interest rates helped offset the impact of rapid house price increases on affordability, although affordability has also been helped by the availability of longer-term mortgages.

In terms of access to the housing market, affordability measures show that the rise in house prices had resulted in a decline in affordability and access to the housing market remains difficult. The rise of house prices and the house price to income ratio suggests that saving for a deposit has become more difficult. In recent years the ratio of house prices to personal disposable income has been five-to-one. Given that the minimum deposit is around 10 per cent this implies that households need to accumulate 50 per cent of one year's disposable income as a deposit to purchase a house.

The rate of house price inflation raised concerns about the possibility of a house price fall with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Economist magazine expressing well-publicised warnings. However, a risk factor that has received little or no coverage is our exposure to a sharp fall in housing output. As the population is housed the growth in completions is not expected to be as strong and in time will moderate. If housing output were to suddenly revert to a level consistent with the demand from population growth and changing headship this would represent a sharp decline in housing output. Given how significant the housing sector has become for the Irish economy this would result in lower investment growth and lower economic growth, other things being equal. As a consequence unemployment would rise. Although housing completions have increased steadily in recent years, the annual change can be volatile, increasing or decreasing sharply as seen in the 1980s. It is evident that Ireland has become more exposed to a housing output shock as well as the more frequently mentioned exposure to house prices.



Annual Mortgage cost as % of personal disposable income

Rising standards of living have increased the demand for second dwellings i.e. holiday homes. It is estimated that one sixth of the dwellings constructed between Census 1996 and Census 2002 were second dwellings. The rapid growth in the number of second dwellings in recent years has been particularly striking in the counties on the Atlantic seaboard from Kerry to Donegal. Some of this growth has been the result of tax schemes encouraging the building of holiday home developments. Taken together these Atlantic seaboard counties had 19.4 per cent of dwellings vacant in 2002, suggesting that a substantial number of such dwellings are intended as holiday homes located in scenic areas. In these counties around 35 per cent of the net increase in the number of habitable dwellings was in the vacant or second dwellings category. The effect of higher demand for investment or holiday dwellings has had a very significant impact on the cost of housing in the affected regions, probably resulting in a rate of price increase greater than in the country as a whole.

Recent ESRI forecasts suggest that a sharp fall in employment leading to a fall in personal incomes or a sharp rise in interest rates is unlikely in the short run. Furthermore, the prospect of a sharp fall in Irish economic activity due to a world recession is unlikely in the immediate future. Currently affordability as measured by the proportion of income accounted for by mortgage repayments is only slightly above its long-run average. Although concerns have been expressed for some time now that the Irish housing market was heading for a crash the case now seems to be that the housing market appears to be correcting itself. House price growth is moderating and the expectation is that this moderation will continue. However, it is also the case that some households have become financially stretched in order to achieve home-ownership. If house prices were to rise rapidly or interest rates to increase sharply then this would give rise to serious affordability issues.

A comparison of headship rates between the two most recent censuses suggests that there exist a pool of buyers who have been unable to become home-owners. In the event of price moderation this pent-up demand may underpin demand for houses and house prices. Furthermore, the fact that headship rates remain low in Ireland relative to other EU countries indicates that there will be a continued need for significant new building in Ireland over the coming decade. This would imply that there is a floor on how far house prices could fall in the event of a shock.

“Excuse me Mr Dooley, are you an Archetek?”

NOEL DOWLEY

I began my Architectural Practice in Dublin, in 1965, a time of Economic “Bust” conditions in this country. It was a time when Ireland was perceived as an isolated, unspoilt, backward island, on the edge of Europe, offering no real prospects for young or old, except possibly emigration. This article will try to describe how an approach to Architecture evolved in my practice, while being surrounded by these frugal, negative conditions. The nature, scale, and expression of the projects are almost a barometer of the economic conditions, during the period from 1965 – 1992.

The evolutionary process I want to describe began in 1968 in quite an ordinary way. As I was sitting in my office sketching, our window cleaner at the office window suddenly said to me “Excuse me Mr Dooley, are you an 'Archetek?'”. He asked me to help him – it transpired that he was one of a group of 30 families who were living in squalid conditions, with no means, no money, and no houses. They aspired to the dignity of their own basic house, but had no idea of how to make this a reality. I agreed to help, and we started by forming the Ballybrack Co-Operative Housing Society. 30 three bedroom houses were the end result of this co-operative housing venture, one of the first in the country. The houses were my first exercise in the process of how to build with modest means, space standards and technology. The actual cost of a house to each of the members of the Society was £500.

The plea for help was a 'wake-up call' for me as an Architect. It inspired me to try and bring Architecture into an area where nothing existed, and where there was no attempt to do anything about it because of the financial situation. I asked myself, “what can I do as an Architect to make any contribution?”. That bothered me and set me off on work in a territory that you would not normally work in. To do it, you needed elements that would normally be disregarded. I just wanted to get something architectural into a kind of lower level, a deprived sector that would normally be excluded from the realm of Architecture. The process posed some basic questions for me: Where is the threshold of Architecture? How important are ordinary people in the realm of Architecture? Can ordinary people understand a work of Architecture? Or is it an elitist thing for critics? I began to see the process as a challenge, and an opportunity to clarify my ideas on Architecture from these very basic beginnings.

I believe that Architecture should be able to make an offering to people at all levels of society because it has the capacity to uplift the spirit and give people dignity – raising them to a poetic level if even just for a moment. If your work does not make even some modest contribution to enriching the 'human condition' then it has failed. People are the base to Architecture and the danger is that architects forget that, allow the 'tubes' to get clogged with architectural magazines, and imitate other architects without thinking about this base. Architecture without people is nonsense, at whatever level.



Ballybrack Housing Co-op (1968-1973) £3000 per unit (95 sq.m)

First exercise in process of building with modest means, space standards and technology. Split-level section using full volume of enclosure. Low-cost materials. 200 block walls, PCC floor units, insulated structural roof panels, timber purlins, stock windows, joinery (orig. PG), stud/plaster.



Kilrush Houses (1970) 6500 per unit (90 sq.m)

First exercise in exploring low-cost, 'flexible' housing. House adapts to user and offers variable layouts around a living room core of 'open' and 'closed' plans. External expansion possible. 200 block walls, insulated twin-skin, fibre-cement roof, stock joinery/windows incl. sliding flush doors on standard track.



Woodroffe Houses (1970-1971) £6500 per unit (90 sq.m)

Alternative exercise in flexibility, where roof area (section) is key. House can be doubled in size by roofing adjoining court. 200 block walls, insulated



St. Mary's Church, Cong [1972-1973] £50000
 A modest country church for 400 people. The fusion of new and old – 'historical continuity'. New church built on walls of the old, providing entry to ruins of abbey. Nave kept to 'living room' scale to enhance the sense of participation. Needlessly demolished in 2003. Existing masonry and concrete block walls, steel and timber insulated asphalt roof, fibre cement 'rain shield' cladding (first use in Ireland). PG glazing.



New Dock Office/Workshop [1976-1977]
 £10000 [147 sq.m]
 Small office/workshop building, 14m x 7m. Form influenced by main building element and indigenous Architecture. 300 cavity block walls, twin-skin self supporting roof, PCC pipes, twin-skin industrial translucent glazing, stock windows/doors/joinery.



Galway Telephone Exchange Extension [1976]
 £200000
 New extension gathers all existing parts of GPO building complex together on dense urban site. All new build on existing concrete block walls. Exchange section also houses new offices. Control of light, orientation and function expressed in form. 300 cavity block walls, RC floor/roof, PCC windows.

I thought of ordinary people's responses to great architecture all over the world – to shrines in Japan, to plazas in Europe, to the white architecture of Greece and to cities such as Rome and Paris. People can relate to architecture as complex as Piazza San Marco in Venice or to something like the Royal Chapel, St Chapelle, in Paris. I brought some students to the last example one day. You go from a dark basement into this 'jewel-like' space of stained glass, with the sun shining through it. One of the lads said, "Stand at the top of the stairs there and you can here people say 'Jesus Christ' in about twenty different languages". As you enter the chapel you are moved by the experience of the space. You have this response built into you, through your experience of living every day and so does everyone else. I am sure of it.

The history of Architecture can be used as a treasure house upon which to draw, not as a collection of styles but as things that touch you, that draw a response in this way. A 'style' is meaningless, it is a label. The 'essence' of a style though, may have some timeless elements which are useful to your own efforts as an Architect. For instance, I looked at a Baroque church the last time I was in Munich. It was incredible – a small church built by two craftsmen at the time of the Reformation as a celebration of the victory over Luther and Protestantism. It was about joy and light and poetry and you can sense that when you go into it. I also visited a kindergarten designed by Hans Zeidler, accompanied by his daughter Anna. When I entered it and saw how the children responded to the space – their delight in it – I said to Anna: "Hans was a very baroque architect." She replied "Oh no, he's not a baroque architect," thinking I meant 'out of date'. I responded, "No Anna, it's about the joy and the light that you see in this place all around you". The essence of the Baroque is 'built joy'.

Thinking of an architecture of modest means needn't necessarily curtail the design. As an Architect you never start with the lowest common denominator. You search for an idea that has something poetic in it. Einstein said "You ask a question and you get an answer; you ask another question and you get another answer and you keep on doing that until you get an answer that seems to be the clearest and that makes you nearer to God". The idea should not be curtailed by the budget or anything else to begin with, so that you can get to the essence of the thing [the whole Man being at the centre]. All of the projects shown below endeavoured to have this kind of 'ambition' in them, even though the budget and means often suggested otherwise. As Louis Kahn would say "never plan for small disappointments". While the program can be reduced to 20 sqm of function here and 50 sqm there, the Architect strives to create spaces that provide that function but have a quality in them that the client never dreamt of. The constant in my work is the striving, no matter what the scale of the project, for this poetry. The threshold of Architecture

The challenge set by my experience with the Ballybrack Housing Co-op, therefore, was how to bring something architectural to a deprived sector of society. The projects which grew out of this challenge can be split into 2 phases. The first phase took the form of a built body of Architectural Research over a ten year period. These projects were used as vehicles to understand how a vocabulary of modest space standards, technology and materials could be mastered such that some architectural content could survive despite the small budgets I was working with. In the later, nearly affluent years, I received commissions for larger public buildings. However, the budgets for this later work were still frugal, making the earlier research extremely relevant. There is an effort to collect the principles that had evolved and to create a more selective, inclusive vocabulary of 'wall, light and garden'. I have called all of this work an "Architecture of Modest Means".

Projects from the first phase of this work include Ballybrack Housing Co-Op, Dublin (1968-1973), Kilfrush Houses, Co. Limerick (1970), Woodroffe Houses, Co. Tipperary (1970-1971), St. Mary`s Church, Cong, Co. Mayo (1972-1973), and New Dock Office/ Workshop, Galway (1976-1977). In the later (nearly) affluent years, there is an effort to collect the principles that evolved, and to create a more selective, inclusive, vocabulary (while still without the degree of affluence that would complete the full potential of the architectural concepts). Projects from this second phase, include Rosleven Telephone Exchange, Athlone (1976-1977), Galway Telephone Exchange Extension (1976), Moneenagheisa Community School Extension, Galway (1976-1980), Dublin Airport Car Park (1991-), Ashbourne Community School, Co. Meath (1982-1994) phase 1 & 2, and Dolan House, Ballsbridge, Dublin (1996).



Rosleven Telephone Exchange (1976-1977)
£1000000

First digital exchange and training centre, with provision for expansion. Structure dictated by security issue. Main concern is with working environment – use and control of light and internal colour. Circulation areas used in positive/social way to animate plan. Pile foundations, RC Structure, cavity block walls (plastered and painted), PCC windows and balustrading.



Moneenagheisa Community School Extension (1976-1980) £1250000

Large deep plan extension to existing CS following contours of a confined site. Roof is 'high-tech' – prefab purpose made self finished GRP units which provide natural light and ventilation throughout. The base is DIY – concrete block load bearing walls and partitions supporting a steel grid. A strong street-type circulation has the possibility of open/closed configurations between classrooms/subjects/students. (demolished 2002). GRP roof, steel grid, conc block cavity walls/partitions.



Dublin Airport Car Park – Phase 1,2,3 (1991-)
£15000000

Car park 'type' used in positive way to create a core/backdrop to existing landside buildings, as well as a 'sense of place' for the airport. To be built in phases (6000 cars). Expression used to give a sense of continuity and order, and a language for the airport. 2 elements: RC and space/solid and void.



Ashbourne Community School (Phases 1&2) [1982-1994] £4000000

Building is an 'inhabited wall' with an Architecture of 'wall, light and garden'. Landscape is collected into the building in a series of courts to give each classroom an identity that breaks down the 'tyranny' of the classroom and still leaves the building as a strong interactive presence in the countryside. Fairface masonry block walls, insulated metal deck/RC roof, PVC windows.



Dolan House Ballsbridge [1996] £250000

A large house integrated into inner suburbia on a left over site. A domestic expression of Architecture of 'wall, light and garden'. RC screen/roof, 300 cavity block walls plastered, RC water garden, glass block.

Since that period those frugal times have passed us by, and Ireland and the Irish have been utterly transformed – the first phase of the Celtic Tiger economy having washed over us. Unfortunately, it has not been beneficial for everyone. It seems to have made the rich richer, and the middle-ground more greedy and self-centred. This follows the pattern of every other country in the world, which has been touched by a market-driven economy. It is bemusing that there are almost the same number of homeless people in the country now as there were in 1968 when, I first attempted as an Architect, to make a positive contribution to this cause.

Someone recently said "we have a good economy, but not such a good society!" I find this very strange, when there seems to be such a huge opportunity at all levels for positive things to happen. There seems to be no holistic overview of the situation, just piecemeal decisions which are reactive rather than proactive. Ireland is such a small, fragile, beautiful place. My greatest concern is that there are now forces and projects being built of a scale that is capable of destroying our total environment, possibly in the short term. What is Ireland's scale? Where must you 'draw the line'? You must surely draw it with the help of a framework prepared that might offer a 'balanced view' in advance. A starting point may be listing the unique and irreplaceable things that we have. Do we have a value on the Poetic Silence of our Landscapes, as an extension of ourselves and our way of life, and that of the generations to come, for whom we hold these landscapes in trust?

5

This is an adaptation of the classic American recipe, but with a distinctly Irish flavour and even higher profit levels. If the measures are correct it should yield the following breakdown:

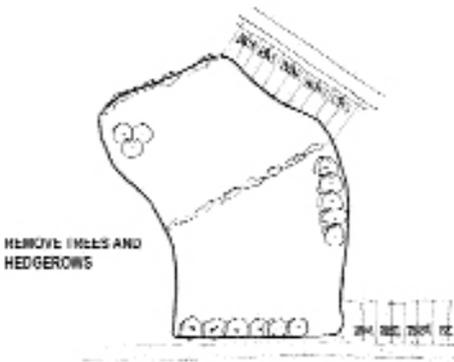
Site Cost	33.3%
Construction Cost	33.3%
Profit	33.3%

INGREDIENTS:

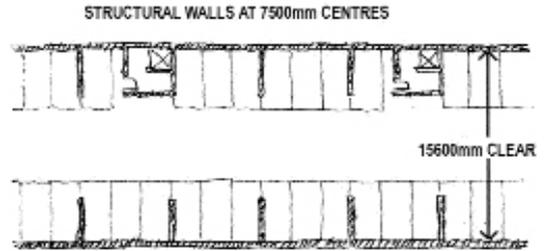
- 1 large site, preferably above 0.5 hectares.
- 4000 linear metres of precast concrete walls, 2775mm high.
- 300 precast concrete cladding panels, 7500mm x 2775mm.
- 1120 powder-coated aluminium windows.
- 7500 linear metres of plasterboard, 2500mm high.
- 1450 standard flush doors, 890mm wide.
- 480 bathroom pods, 1800mm x 1700mm internally.
- 300 kitchen pods, 1800mm x 2700mm internally.
- 1800 radiators.
- 6500 linear metres of metal fencing, 2400mm high.
- 1 set of electronic metal gates, 2400mm high x 4800mm wide.

PREPARATION TIME:

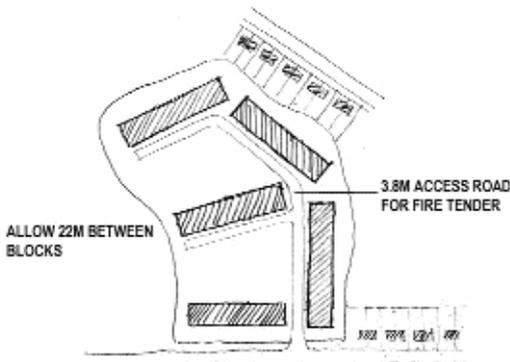
Design	2-3 weeks
Planning	12 months
Construction	10 months
Sale of Apartments	3-4 hours



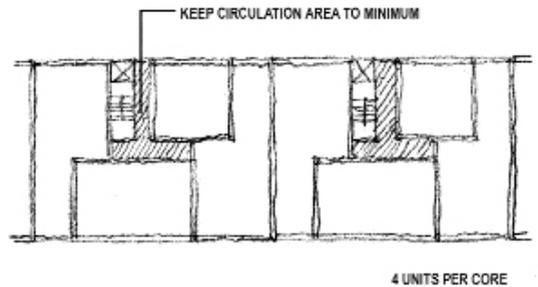
1. Assemble a large site, preferably greater than 0.5 hectares in order to take advantage of the higher densities allowable under the Residential Density Guidelines. Flatten out if necessary using large machinery and remove any trees or hedgerows.



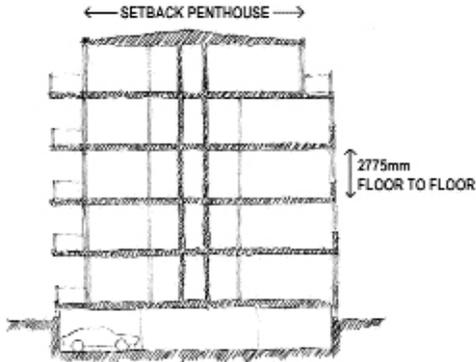
3. Set out the blocks using a structure of precast concrete walls at 7500mm centres to avoid the expense of a transfer structure to the basement car-park. Make the blocks 16200mm deep to maximise the efficiency of the car-park layout.



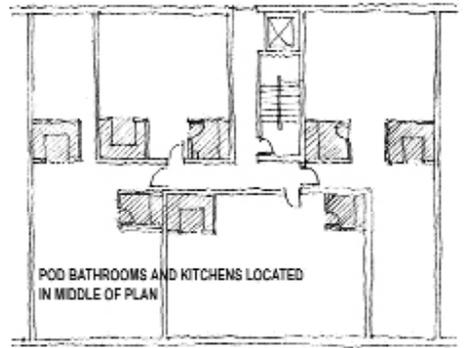
2. Arrange large free-standing blocks around the site to maximise the density. Step the blocks down to 3/4 storeys where close to neighbouring semi-detached houses in order to secure planning permission. Keep parallel blocks 22m apart. Provide 3800mm gap between blocks to allow for fire tender access to 50% of facade area.



4. Make at least 4 units per core in order to minimise the number of lifts at €60,000 each. This also helps to minimise the amount of non-sellable floor area.



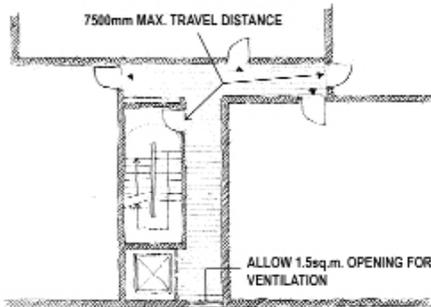
5. Work with a floor to floor height of 2775mm in to maximise the number of storeys achievable. This height also suits the standard dimensions of internal partitions, pods and door frames.



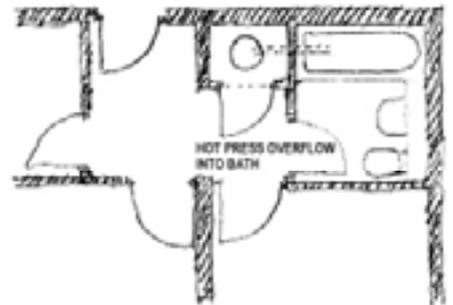
7. Use pod bathrooms and pod kitchens to speed up installation and to avoid employing tilers on site. Arrange these pods in the centre of the plan, because they obviously have no need for light or natural ventilation.

8. Attach clip-on balconies to the facades in order to satisfy the planners demands for private open space. These help to maximise the sellable floor area as well as making detailing straightforward.

9. Use large precast concrete facade panels, preferably 2775mm x 7500mm because the larger the panel the cheaper they are. Allow minimum of 450mm depth around all edges for ease of fabrication.



6. Keep the circulation to a minimum. An apartment entrance door should be no more than 7500mm from the stairwell door to avoid the need for additional fire doors. Unfortunately, hallways need to be provided with openable windows giving a minimum ventilation area of 1.5sq.m.



10. Locate the hot press beside the bathroom in all cases to allow for easy overflow into the bathtub.

11. Install radiators in all rooms to minimise up-front costs.

12. Surround the site with 2400mm high protective metal fencing. Allow 4800mm gap in fencing for 2400mm high electronic metal entrance gates.

13. Produce slick marketing brochure, naming the blocks after the trees that were removed at Step 1.

14. Reinvest the profits in even larger site and repeat.

Serves one hungry developer

Between Ethos and Expediency

GERRY CAHILL

Unique Opportunity: Development Potential; Subject to Planning Permission. The mantra by which modern Ireland lives and what [apparently] guides our Architectural lives. Such is the pressure on every piece of land within a fifty-mile radius of Dublin that it often feels that the word 'garden' is devalued. No longer does it imply a restful rus in urbis – flowers, trees, birds and all that – but instead says site: another house beside the existing perhaps? A block of apartments? Perhaps a change of use, subject to zoning of course? And so it goes. On and on.

Numbers are everything. The how many, how much questions are what matters and what determine project viability. Developments are even referred to as 'trophy sites' as if we were all engaged in a property Olympics, where those breasting the tape win the race and stand on the podium above all others. And so it goes. On and on. No one is spared in this world. If you don't participate you are out. Architects' reactions have to be quick – site assessments made, feasibilities prepared, planners contacted, zonings checked, costs prepared, potential profit calculated, timescales judged, the functions of the market assessed and prophesied. What return can be expected, how quickly can planning be achieved, will 'An Bord' uphold it, what are the third parties likely to do? And so it goes. On and on. Time is the last luxury and there is none of it.

In our world, where land values continue to rise and expediency rules, we owe it to ourselves, as Architects, as participators in the system, as citizens, to pause: to ask ourselves the why of what we do. We owe it to now and to the future to qualitatively assess the nature of the new environments we have a hand in making. Ultimately, I suppose we have little power in this process. We are agents not principals. The clients for whom we work are the financial risk takers. They fight for the development opportunities to which the design professions must respond to deliver quantitative returns. But what we do must also be highly qualitative. If we are to bother we must strive to ensure that when the boom bubble bursts what is left behind when the economic tide recedes is more than the flotsam of profit.

I know that much of what is built ticks the quality box but much does not. To explain why this matters so much to me, it is worth recounting the experience many Architects of my generation have had in arriving where we are now. In the 1970s, for those who did not want to join large practices, the lack of other job opportunities created polemical potentials. My peripatetic existence, on returning from England in 1978, led to a housing research

New Street Housing, Dublin: City frontage to a busy fast moving street.



fellowship at University College Dublin (UCD) and working with Combat Poverty in the Liberties area of Dublin. At the time in Dublin 8, there was 56 acres of derelict land between the River Liffey and the Grand Canal (one person's derelict sites was another person's surface car park). Involvement in this area with SCARP (the South City Area Resource Project) and SICCDA (the South Inner City Community Development Association) helped formulate non earth-shattering urban renewal proposals which suggested the creation of urban neighbourhoods in which people could live work and socialise, neighbourhoods equipped with affordable housing, employment opportunities and adequate amenities. This work saw the light of day in *Back to the Street* a book(let) which tried to both assess the decay of the Liberties and predict its potential as one of the capital's iconic neighbourhoods.

Lack of practice opportunities encouraged many of us to make something of little. I chose to stop commuting to London to be involved in the creation of a community building in Charlemont Street. This attempt to create a useful facility for those living at Tom Kelly House was built on a wing and a prayer using a FAS community training programme and a grant from Dublin Corporation. For me it was a continuing lesson in the economy of resources: how to employ relatively inexpensive building materials – portal frame, blocks and bricks, crinkly tin roof – to help create something the residents would like and use.

Living in a city then where there was so much dereliction – in the north, south and west inner city as well as the quays – created a challenge for all Architects who envisaged something better. Many of us worked in the context of the School of Architecture, UCD, where the opportunities offered by Professor Cathal O'Neill to teach and research also helped to sustain fledgling practices. Many of the design projects were urban based mixed-use schemes where living in the city was shown as a real option. The spirit of the work at that time is contained in *Dublin City Quays – Projects* by the School of Architecture, UCD (1986) which was supported by Dublin Corporation. The aim of this publication was to propose an achievable vision of what the Dublin Quays and their hinterlands could be with people living amongst, along and behind them. This work was done while many property and financial consultants were advising that, based on rental returns, the only sensible city was single storey and, given the history of the tenements, Dublin did not have a desirable tradition of inner city living. At that time, moreover, most of Dublin 6 was a smog-hidden flatland containing few family houses and a Victorian dwelling stock which attracted minimum interest. The place to live was the south-side suburbs and gridlock was something that existed in American cities. Even the newspapers considered some of the work 'pie in the sky' made up by unemployed Architects with little better to do. And yet now, to me, it seems even lacking in ambition. With 20:20 hindsight maybe the propositions could have been pushed further. Yet the polemical stance was of value. It created a vision. No matter if it was flawed – it showed a potential and a possibility that had largely been previously dismissed.

Meanwhile, new opportunities began to emerge. The Urban Renewal Act of 1988 gave tax incentives for rebuilding in designated city areas and the Housing Act of the same year provided a financial framework for Housing Associations and Co-Operatives to provide homes for those in need. These legislative instruments produced some good and some bad effects. The early

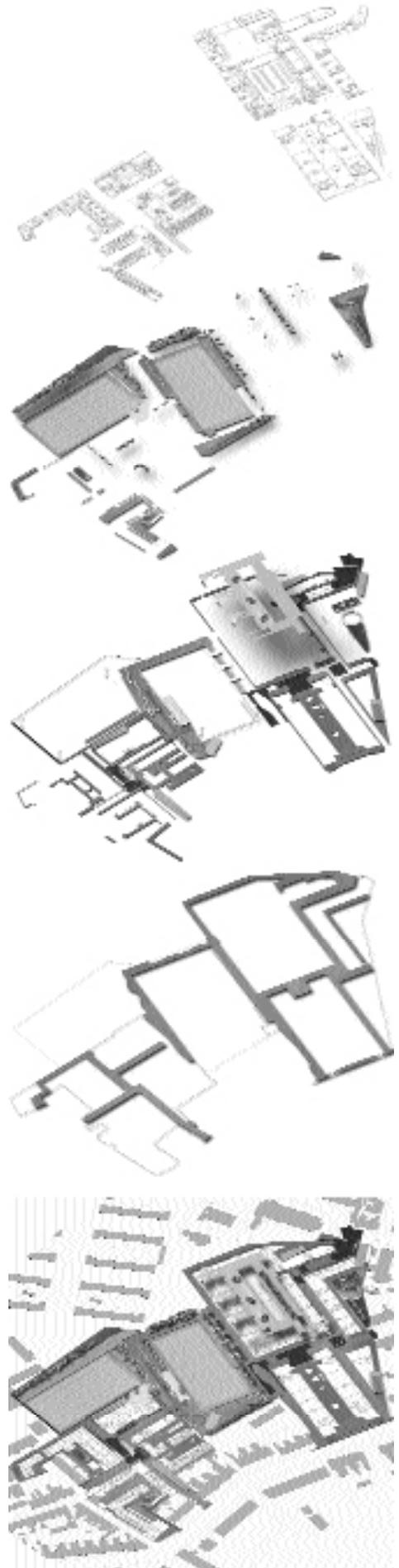
New Street Housing, Dublin: Calm, safe places within the city to relax and play.



inner-city apartments did not lend themselves to cat swinging. Produced in response to tax incentives their generally small area (30 metres square) attracted investors and not owner-occupiers – the seed, perhaps, of the attitude which now drives much of our current apartment output. More positively, the Acts gave a basis for the development of well-managed voluntary housing bodies. The money was not great (up to IR £20,000 per dwelling unit created), but it provided opportunities which were heretofore impossible dreams. The indomitable Sister Stanislaus Kennedy (founder of Focus Point) persuaded her order, the Religious Sisters of Charity, to donate a redundant and about to be demolished convent in Stanhope Green to Focus Housing Association. This led to our involvement in the creation of a development containing small apartments for single people (from 18 years to 90 years of age) and housing to help those in need of support. This transitional accommodation with in-house training programmes on how to run a home helped many marginalised families. Stanhope Green was and is not just about individual dwellings. It is also about creating a shared place where people can feel part of a community that provides support and respect for their lives.

About the same time, NABCo (the National Association of Building Co-Operatives, led by Bernard Thompson) began to benefit from sites provided by Dublin City Council. One of the projects made possible through this partnership was New Street, a development which, due to a mixture of site and title issues, planning appeals and funding availabilities, ultimately took twelve years to bring to completion. Always seen as a scheme that would provide dwellings of a variety of sizes for a variety of uses, New Street embodies for me, the essence of what makes urban living meaningful – double-aspect dwellings with light, space, air, view, useable terraces, access to open areas, and the suppression of the dominance of the motorcar. At New Street, the site became available due to the demolition of the existing fabric for road widening. Our response, to create a street-edge of four, five and six stories met with some resistance initially, a pattern of houses being preferred. The design of an edge ‘wrap’ to the site, however, ultimately allowed all the dwellings to look over a west facing communal garden which provides secure play facilities, a laundry and some parking. New Street's location, with shopping and amenities only a short walk away, means that not everyone needs, or wants, a car. Significantly, the tenant occupiers, as members of NABCo, manage the facilities themselves. Communal spaces, built at the same time as the apartments, provide childcare rooms and meeting areas. As a place it continues to work because people want to live there and actively engage in the maintenance and management of the common areas and circulation as well as their own homes.

A major aim of New Street was to provide not units or investment opportunities but homes, somewhere that an individual or family could live in a less isolated way than is often the urban condition. And therein lies our current challenge – the creation of residential mixed-use schemes that provide a positive alternative to potential urban alienation. It may be that the same economic drivers that now dictate site response will begin to appreciate and engage with the positive social drivers and communal forces that create long term value and sustainable communities. This implies a partnership between different interests, between those who wish to generate and maximise profit and those that see that a positive future for our towns and cities cannot be achieved by merely providing more of the same projects that currently litter our city: gated developments, divorced from their context and surrounding communities, have no future in 21st century. The idea that apartments can continue to be built solely as investment opportunities with no vision of what is about them, above them and below them is nonsense. Rents



Dolphins Barn, Dublin, Urban Renewal: Layering of route, surface, access and urban place.



Hazel Grove Housing, Donabate, Co. Dublin: Private rear areas



Hazel Grove Housing, Donabate, Co. Dublin: Integral children's nurturing centre and outside space.

currently falling, people are getting more selective and when they live in an apartment they want it to provide the space, facilities and utilities of a home.

Over many years of involvement in community consultations and presentations I have found that there remains, with few exceptions, a distrust of what apartment living means and a cynicism towards developers' motives. Many established communities see apartments as merely a 'numbers game' to cram as many 'boxes' as possible onto a site, an approach solely motivated by greed. Almost without exception 'we want houses' is the catch cry. And yet even within that response a grudging reality is becoming evident, a social reality created by the economic reality that within the canals land is now about €11 million an acre. Here, you might get 30 houses on an acre which makes each house plot when serviced cost about €400,000. Add the cost of developing this site with a house, add VAT and stamp duty and the market will tell you that each house will not exactly be affordable.

So now we come back to the vision thing. Our vision as Architects and as urban designers must show added value in every urban scheme proposed. As the market alters, apartment living for families as lifetime sustainable homes must become a viable future alternative. We must eschew gated developments where the traditional patterns of streets, squares and courts is avoided in favour of soulless car-filled parking lots with nominal bits of green and sparse planting. A living city demands 24 hour life where those with kids, or the childless, elderly, infirm or impaired, can know that they have community support all around. New developments will, and must, generate the economic framework to provide not only a variety of housing but also work and leisure options. Responsible developers and statutory requirements suggest that, if family apartments are built, crèches and schools are needed; shopping should be close by, there should be places to establish a business and create employment. Improved residential densities will support the local pizzeria, chipper, Chinese and Indian. More people give economic viability to the laundrette, the pharmacy, the supermarket. A varied age profile in the residential population demands the availability of medical facilities. Finally, the need to keep fit provides the economic basis for a gym and leisure centre. The closure of many municipally run swimming pools illustrate a lack and a need. If apartments fit for life are the way forward for families as a viable urban alternative to long distance commuting, our schemes must show how this can be achieved to deliver not only quantity but quality. This is not much of a step forward, but it is a significant one.

Successful European cities have one thing in common. People live in them. Stable urban communities support the generation of quality residential developments and all the back-up needed to sustain city life. As the investor market wanes and stumbles and investment property becomes more attractive in the expanded Europe, our way forward is to design and build what currently we have little of: lifetime apartments with bigger

floor areas; energy efficient; minimum two bedrooms; plenty of storage; compact services; usable terraces, decks and balconies; connected to street life where there are shops, cafes, offices, crèches, schools, doctors' surgeries, dentists, theatres and so on. It does and will work economically. The increased residential population will ensure that lifetime apartments will appeal to all – from the young families who do not want to waste their lives commuting, to the empty-nesters who no longer need big houses but do not wish to live in retirement in rural oblivion. As Architects we can bring a valued-added vision to future urban developments by making them places where people want to spend their lives – places that respond to social drivers and not just the narrow economic ones – places that mature with the occupants and respect the context from which they spring.

But why should we as Architects bother? We don't really have to engage with this do we? There are easier and possibly more rewarding ways to give ourselves ulcers. In our growth economy there is lots of attractive work – iconic one-off public buildings, the higher budget house renovation, these and the other projects that allow us to dress in black and stare myopically into the middle distance. But the history of our profession shows that there are times when we must, as Architects, engage. When I was at the Architectural Association in the middle 70s there were those teaching there who saw Architect as a dirty word. Being an Architect meant belonging to the oppressive capitalist class who merely exploited others for gain. Architect had to be replaced by enabler as if we were all bit players in some homogeneous socialist utopia. This woolly minded thinking put many off trying to find where Architecture could interface with a broader social context. Design was devalued, reduced by a lowest common denominator to building. This rubbish is thankfully past. Being an Architect is a skill which synthesises the best of art and science, a skill that allows the creation of a series of spatial and environmental 'what-ifs'.

But where do we get the time to bother. New Street was designed and planned at a time when there was more time. The scheme evolved through the input of a number of Architects working with me, and in consultation with NABCo as to what should and could be accomplished. It was also a real battle to achieve the urban scale of four and five storeys, which is ironic now given the scale of the adjoining site development currently under construction. The project, moreover, could not have happened without the site being made available by the local authority. This is much more difficult now in our changed economic times. Indeed, our society has altered drastically in recent years. Money has done that. Loads of money. Greed has driven the I, myself, mine, me agenda particularly in our Irish capital. Where we once were a city of *flâneurs* with time to talk, speculate and conjecture, speculation now means something entirely different.

If we are to avoid apologising to posterity we must consciously make time to engage with the broader context of culture and place. Precedents that occur to me include the lessons of CIAM, or Team X – where moments in time were marked by a review in values. As the criteria of the architectural award-giving bodies – the RIAI, AAI, Opus etc. – blur into similitude, I believe it is time to initiate conferences, competitions and debates that are idea and ideal driven, ones that move the focus from built projects that deal with the problems of today to instead predict how we address the problems and potentials of tomorrow. Schools of Architecture are perfectly placed to restate their relevance to society, that is, not just to produce members of a profession but, in partnership with communities, to embrace the potentials in our cities, towns and landscape. Debate emanating from an academic base can be freer and the value of the proposition argued, unencumbered by the need to 'build it yesterday' or immediately satisfy a profit margin.

We know how to design and build. We cannot limit ourselves to the lowest common denominator of what the market wants. Most property advisers will try and tell us what won't sell. Over the last number of years this view has variously predicted financial disaster if deck-access, no en-suites, larger apartments, too many two-beds, too much double aspect, too few apartments per core etc., were built. The prediction of such doom was unfounded. The quality and variety of Architects' response to urban living continues to evolve. Nothing is impossible. We can propose variety to respond to the needs of the single person, the young couple, the small one or two parent family, the childless, the mobility impaired, the retired, the couch potato, the obsessive jogger, anyone, in fact, who is a member of the population. Everyone. As Architects the challenge of our engagement is to deliver to communities not what they thought they wanted but what they never thought they could have.

Gerry Cahill is principal of Gerry Cahill Architects and teaches at University College Dublin.



Hazel Grove Housing, Donabate, Co. Dublin: High quality shared open spaces with an inherent sense of ownership by the occupier.

7

The IFSC, is the first banking district in the history of the state. With over 8,000 employees, located on a former dockland area of the north inner city of Dublin, it generates between 60 – 70% of the Republic's wealth.

Ireland is now defined as 'the most globalised

Construction employment stood at over 204,000 in 2004, 11.7% of total employment.

The construction industry accounts for 22% of Ireland's GNP.

In 1995 the average price of a new house in Ireland was €77,994. By 2004 it was €249,191.

By the early 1990s, 60% of the Irish workforce was working in the tourist and retail industries

House mortgage finance and other housing finance amounted to just over 37% of personable disposable income in 1996. By 2004 this had risen to 89.5 %.

The ratio of personal debt to personal income increased from 43% in 1990 to 110% in 2004.

In Ireland, the average house deposit is 50% of a household's annual disposable income.

economy in the world'.

132,000 construction workers are employed in the housing sector.

There are currently 1.3 million vacant flats in the cities of former East Germany. The prognosis for 2030 puts the figure at 2 million.

In Ireland it is estimated that one sixth of the dwellings constructed between 1996 and 2002 were second dwellings.

In 1978, 56 acres of land between the River Liffey and the Grand Canal were derelict.

In 1990, the city of Detroit spent \$25 million on the removal of abandoned houses and other structures.

Between 1978 and 1998 only 9,000 building permits for new homes in Detroit, while over 108,000 demolition permits were issued.

Goldfields and Ghosttowns

HUGH CAMPBELL

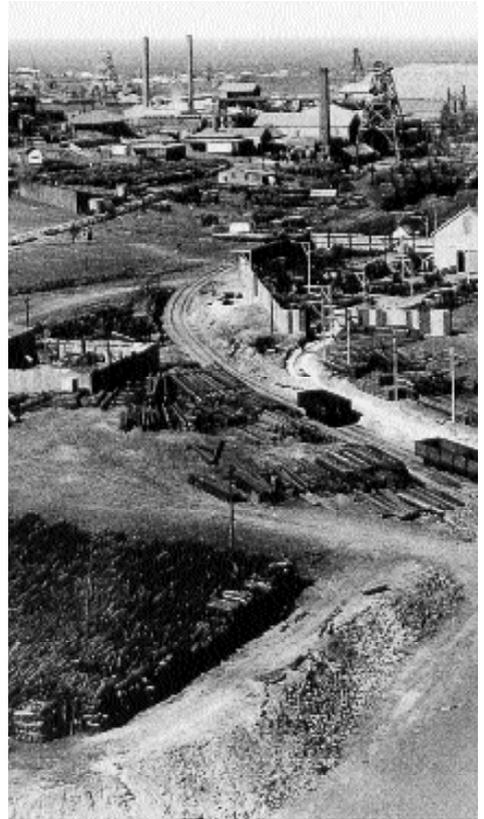


Western Australia is largely empty. 1.5 million people live in a state of 2.5 million sqkm, with 1.2 million of those living in the state capital, Perth. This vast, sparsely populated region seems to epitomise the enduring conception of Australia as the terra nullius – a blank land, free of the marks of settlement or development, a place which might be seen on the one hand as harsh, unforgiving, inimical to inhabitation and on the other, as a huge untapped resource with the potential to produce great wealth.

It was the challenge offered by the former interpretation, combined with the promise of the latter, which led explorers into the vast desert interior of Western Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. Early accounts of these adventures, like that of Ernest Giles in his classic *Australia Twice Traversed* tended to emphasise the extremity of the landscape and the hardships it induces... For several years previous to my taking the field, I had desired to be the first to penetrate into this unknown region where, for a thousand miles in a straight line, no white man's foot had ever wandered, or, if it had, its owner had never brought it back, nor told the tale... But towards the end of the century it became apparent that there was indeed a great resource which might make it worthwhile venturing into this inhospitable wilderness: gold.

Initial discoveries of gold were made in the Kimberleys in the north in 1885, then a few years later gold was found further south in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. On June 14th 1893, an Irishman, Paddy Hannan, pegged out the first claim in Kalgoorlie. What followed was an extraordinarily rapid period of speculation and development in the region. The population increased exponentially – from 35,000 in 1885 to 101,000 in 1895 and to 239,000 by the end of 1904 – as people from all over the world arrived to make their fortunes. An extensive network of gold-mining settlements quickly sprang up, and along with them, the infrastructure necessary to support the industry and transform this barren region into a profitable, inhabitable landscape. From the coast at Perth came the railway, followed by a water pipeline which ran more or less in a straight line for 350 miles from Mundaring reservoir near Perth as far as Kalgoorlie. The pipe still follows the path of the main road west from Perth. By 1903 the goldfields of Western Australia were producing 2 million ounces of gold a year – a total which has not been exceeded in the century since. Production was centred on Kalgoorlie, its so called 'Golden Mile' of poppet heads and cyanide treatment plants reputedly the most valuable land in the world.

Photographs from the period portray a society founded on the rapid growth of a precarious industry. While below ground a vast network of shafts and tunnels relentlessly expands, above ground great efforts are being made to sound a note of stability and permanence. Over the course of a decade Kalgoorlie moves from the makeshift character of a works camp to the solid certainties of brick buildings, verandahs, bicycles and afternoon tea. All the trappings of Edwardian civilisation have been translated directly into the Australian outback. Although Kalgoorlie is thought to be the first major Australian settlement created out of sight of any 'western' landscape feature, its architecture provides familiar reference points.



Goldenmile



Verandah



Gold-fields-miners club

WATER SUPPLY

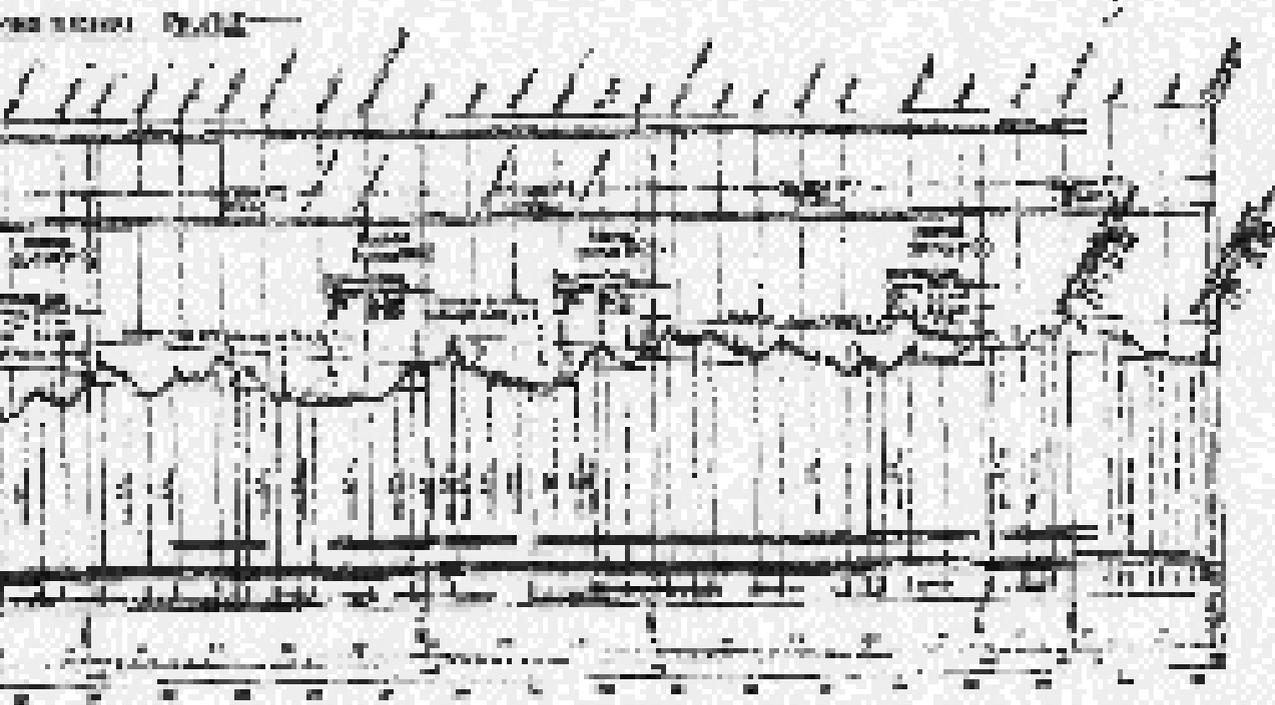
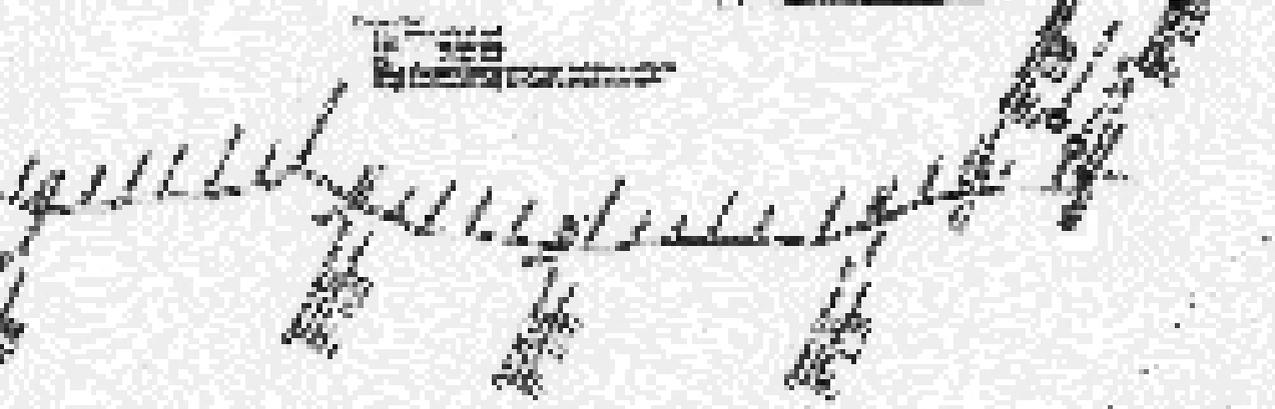
CONSTRUCTION, PLUMBING TO THE MAIN LINE.

Diagram of proposed installation showing of
 size of lines, distribution of pipe, & height,
 & routing operations etc.



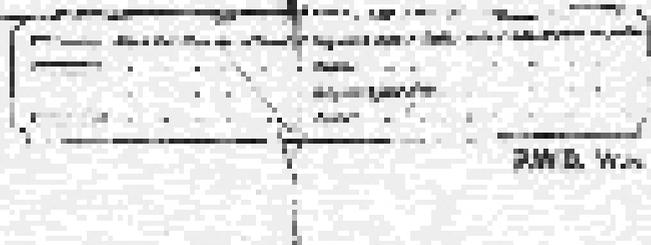
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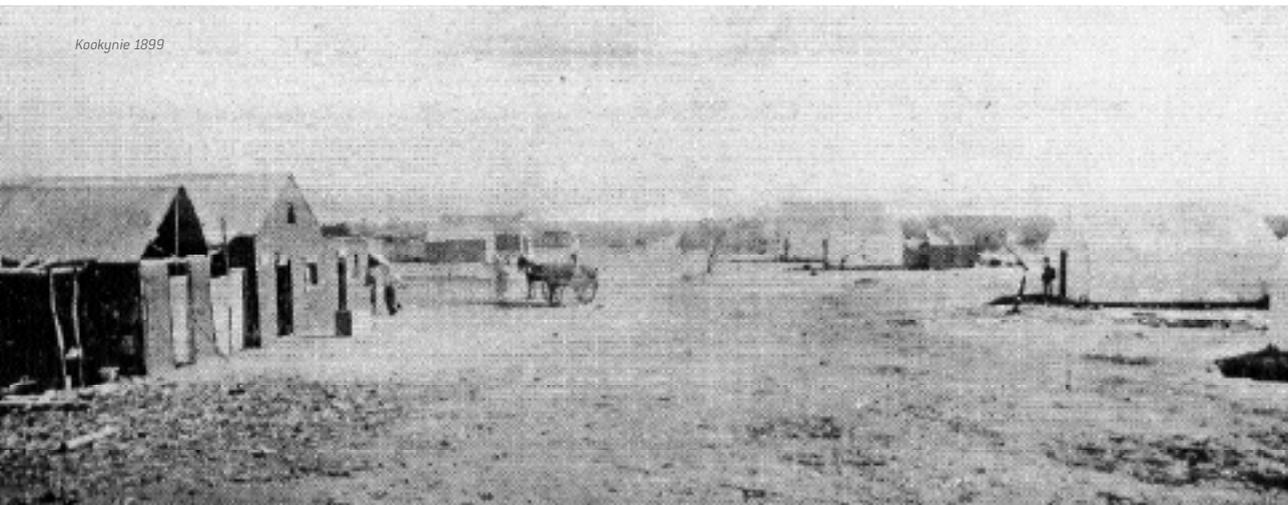


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The speed of development in the region is even more evident from a pair of photographs of a smaller settlement in the goldfields, Kookynie. Between 1899 and 1901, the place has been transformed from a basic encampment to a fully functioning town of 2500 people. The brick-built, tin-roofed buildings include hotels, post offices, town halls and clubs. And while the flatness and expansiveness of the landscape make the establishment of towns easy – they can go anywhere, extend in any direction – these same features tend to emphasise the very thinness of the veneer of civilisation that has been drawn across the land. Raw nature is only ever one layer away.

This thinness was soon confirmed as, as quickly as it had risen, the tide of development began to recede in the wake of falling gold prices and lessening yields. The industry became focussed on a few major seams – at Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, Leonora etc – and the scores of smaller mining towns were quickly abandoned. In most cases, the buildings were taken down and removed, so that almost no trace was left of the original settlement. This is certainly the case in Kookynie. By the early 1920s, almost everyone had left. Today the town has a population of ten, most of whom spend their evenings in the bar of the Grand Hotel, one of the few remaining buildings. It is difficult to get any sense that this remote outpost was once a thriving town. Besides piles of bricks and a fragment of building here and there, nothing remains. Former streets have reverted to bush, unpopulated apart from

Kookynie 1899



occasional kangaroo. The abandoned adit attests to the existence of another, equally abandoned realm of shafts and tunnels underground. There is still gold to be found here, and prospectors still come seeking their fortune.

Nowadays, the shafts have been replaced by open-cast mining. Most of these modern operations now operate like oil-rigs, with workers being flown in for two-week stints followed by a spell back in 'civilisation' on the coast. Kalgoorlie, though, continues to thrive, thanks to the existence of the so-called 'Superpit', a vast operation which has engulfed the whole territory of the Golden Mile. Wealth keeps coming out of the ground, but it is much more hard-won than a century ago and the profit margins on an average yield of a gram of gold per ton of rock are slim. Existence in this remote town is still precarious, reliant on supplies of water and produce from the coast. At the central crossroads, an LED monitor constantly displays the price of gold. If it dips too low, the whole settlement might yet disappear.

Hugh Campbell is currently on sabbatical from his position as senior lecturer of architecture at the School of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Landscape, University College Dublin Dublin. In 2002, he and a group of UCD students spent a month based in the University of Western Australia working on a mapping project for the goldfields region. Contemporary photographs by Hugh Campbell and Carl O'Mahony.

Kookynie 1901

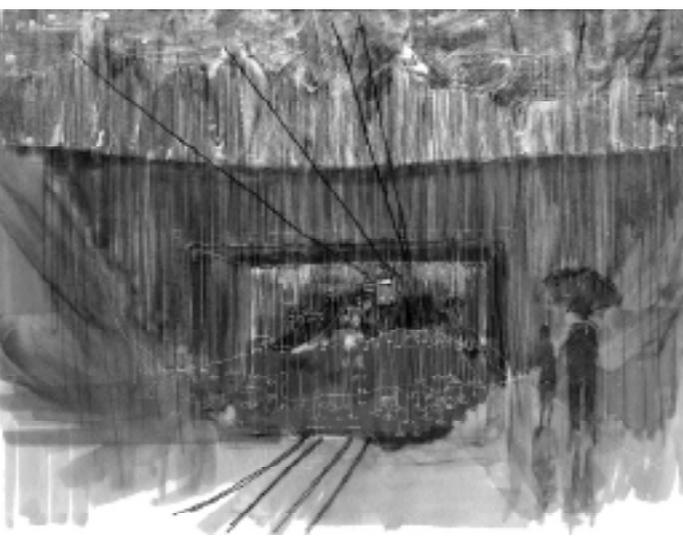




Elbevededig, the Venice of the Elbe, Dresden, August 2002.



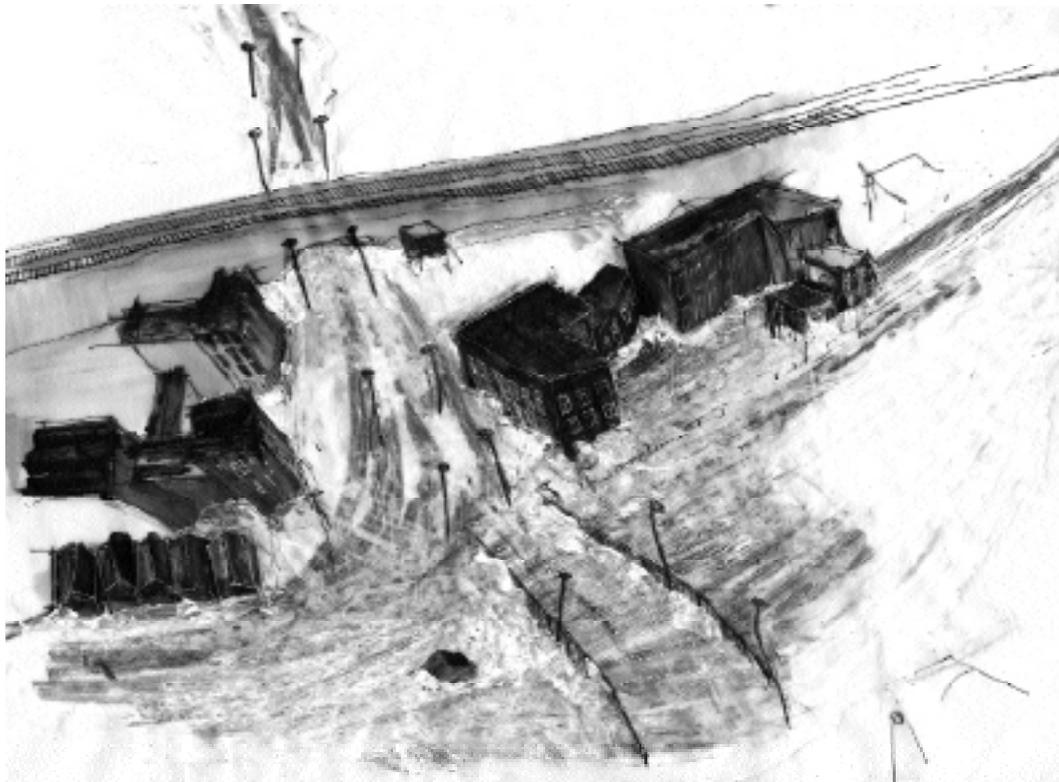
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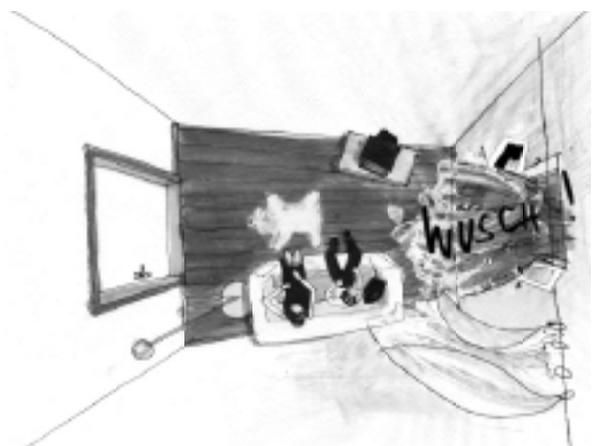
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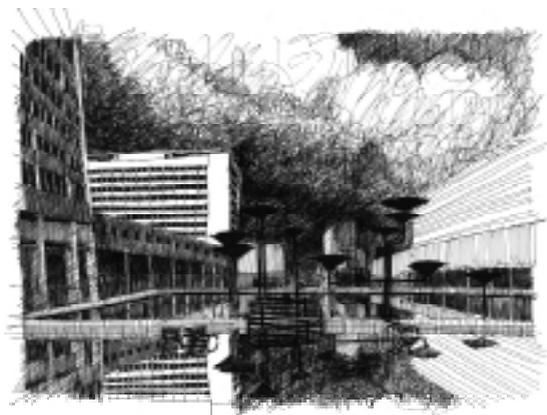
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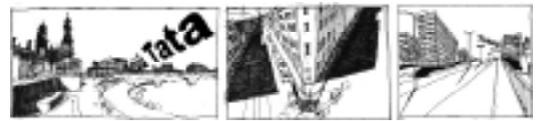
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Tuesday evening, August 13th 2002.

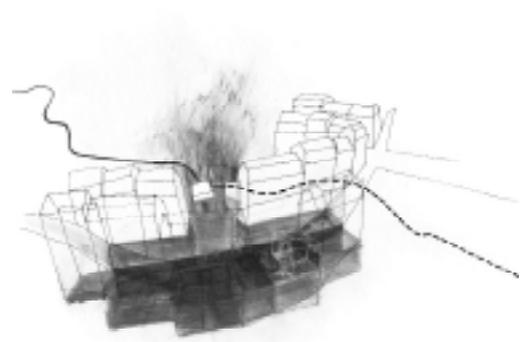


Tuesday night, August 13th 2002.





Saturday noon, August 17th 2002.



Saturday, August 31st 2002.

Emergency Urbanism

HILARY SAMPLE

The beginning of the 21st century city will be remembered for its urban traumas, from the events of 9/11 to the recent natural disasters of SARS and the Tsunami in Southeast Asia. States of trauma encompass disease as well as disaster, both natural and man-made. Although SARS and the recent Tsunami were each unique destructive events with their own particular form of trauma, all of these disasters created disturbances to their urban infrastructures both locally and globally. While 9/11 had specific urban targets, neither SARS nor the Tsunami observed urban boundaries, despite their strong urban repercussions. Trauma is the new urban phenomenon. In the 21st century city, emergency urbanism becomes the new operational paradigm, where organised, global, post-traumatic infrastructures help the city cope with the affects of disaster through new programmes and spaces.

The increase in the number of recent natural and technological disasters suggests that in the future, cities will constantly be under the threat of trauma. Not only the frequency of disasters but the magnitude of these events continues to escalate, from the cholera epidemics in London in the middle of the 19th century, to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, to the Tsunami of 2004. Cities seem to recover more quickly from accidental traumas than from malevolent ones, such as 9/11 and the Madrid, London and Bangladesh bombings, which effectively destroyed key urban infrastructures and instilled a debilitating fear of additional attacks, rendering the city temporarily paralysed and unsafe.¹

Disaster dominates the city with astonishing speed. And disasters seem to be expanding exponentially, and dominate multiple global cities simultaneously. Cities have to compete faster against trauma to survive. In times of trauma, the city's identity becomes synonymous with the event. The pathology of urban traumas occurs at rapid frequencies, and is nearly impossible to trace in real time. Urban pathology becomes part of a city's maintenance system for perpetuating urban health and newness. Especially during times of trauma, controlling fear and panic locally is essential for maintaining the health of the city. In the sick city, urban maintenance occurs through elastic measures of organisation and enables spaces and programmes to appear at each incident.

As the focus of the city decentralises in response to multiplying and spreading trauma, the city is instantaneously reorganised: sick spaces control and contaminate the city in an endless field of contagion. The siting of disaster can never be predicted, but once it appears, its containment depends on the city's public urban infrastructures, specifically its transit systems and public health care networks.

Radical reconfigurations of urban infrastructures and spaces result from this decentralization. Urban trauma imposes both temporary and permanent thinning of its context as effects of trauma manifest themselves as diminished crowds, curtailed activities, imposed quarantines, and abandoned spaces.

Trauma spaces are episodic. Trauma does not yield to any preconceived rules about the city. Within the city spaces are affected by and respond differently to trauma according to its population, programme, and location. These most extreme episodes occur in areas directly impacted by trauma or spaces that advance its effects, like hospitals during epidemics. Less extreme episodes would be seen as spaces not immediately connected to the trauma, but tangentially affected, for example, through urban infrastructures like the transit systems. Together, the episodes produce varying trauma densities throughout the city.

The post-trauma city is subsequently classified by degrees of erasure. As parts of the city become restricted to the general public and activities are eliminated, new limits of accessibility are imposed in areas where incidents occurred. Responses to trauma vary from physically restricting or minimising access to buildings like hospitals, to creating sites of isolation, to the most extreme condition of the quarantine, which temporarily erases part of the city. Gradations of accessibility define these erasures.

The events of 9/11 effectively erased a portion of the city. With the collapse of the towers, transit infrastructures were destroyed and the debris from the collapsed towers created a new boundary surrounding the site. This area became inaccessible to everyone except for emergency workers and maintenance crews. In order to restore the city around the site of the trauma, it was necessary to manipulate urban infrastructures that remained intact, such as subways, transit lines, and roadways. This condition differs greatly from SARS, where the city remained open to the public even in its most affected areas.

With SARS, the spread of disaster was exacerbated by global mobility; transmitted in a matter of days across several countries, through the interconnectedness of transit and public health care infrastructures. At the same time, these very infrastructures enabled the city's response and recovery. Unlike with 9/11 or Madrid and London, major urban infrastructures, such as transit systems, were not destroyed

under SARS, but remained operational. Urban trauma was evidenced in existing public health care systems, where known spaces battled to retain their domain and forced combinations of infrastructures generated new spaces and programs within the public health care system. Trauma spaces emerged randomly within the three dimensional matrix of the city; no institution, agency, or space was off limits—from health offices in skyscrapers to underground pedestrian concourses.

Like 9/11, the Tsunami destroyed critical urban infrastructures, especially transportation, but also life-sustaining and environmental infrastructures, such as public clinics, water treatment systems and communication networks. The Tsunami affected multiple areas of the region and triggered a global response. Because there were no flexible transit or public health infrastructures in place to respond to the disaster, new temporary infrastructures supported by global networks—from military boats to international monetary relief fund drives—replaced the infrastructures that were destroyed. These temporary measures responded to trauma, and demonstrated how malleable infrastructures can be more effective than permanent ones in providing connections quickly and flexibly.

Underpinning the health of a city is the coherent and rapid mobilisation of all of its urban public infrastructures, like transportation, health, and digital communication networks. In the post-traumatic city, governmental and medical agencies work together to alleviate urban anxiety and promote communication to the general public. Instrumental to an emergency urbanism are the over-agencies that have come into place: global bio-medical network and research organisations, such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations and the World Bank. These over-agencies supervise interaction with local governmental and public health care networks to track conditions of trauma in the city. This centralisation increases the ability to share information and monitor urban traumas, like the SARS outbreak, to develop of vaccines against viruses, and to organize disaster relief efforts like shipping aid to places affected by the Tsunami. The over-agency's composition changes based on the specifics of each trauma by adjusting to local conditions.

Over-agency is an infinitely malleable universal system that combines resources from the WHO, universities, and private laboratories with local monitoring stations and emergency operating centers during disasters, to engage with specific conditions of trauma. Spontaneous overlaps between the over-agency and local infrastructures thicken a weakened city structure by coming together as supple and productive programmes and spaces capable of reducing isolation. These monitoring stations constructed within other infrastructures, like metro stations that experience high density, could be extremely effective at gauging effects of trauma. The new Bio-Med City – a zone of buildings, laboratories and infrastructure devoted to scientific research – currently being constructed in Winnipeg, Canada reveals how this agency is used in the field. In times of trauma, the WHO and Bio-Med City perform research and serve as hubs to distribute information, personnel, and even equipment to impacted areas. Part of the city itself will be transportable through mobile kiosks to be deployed across Canada during any future trauma. Over-agency's most effective means is through its tools, rather than a plan.

Not all emergencies can be predicted; an urbanism that is elastic, however, can compensate for this limitation. A city like Winnipeg's Bio-Med City runs the risk of being all too permanent and not responsive enough. If spaces were pre-programmed for change during times of traumas, then they would have the option of returning to a pre-trauma state or remaining in the new changed condition. The ability for spaces to accommodate new programmes during traumatic conditions, especially in the public realm, demands an active effort to combat the trauma, whether or not the program is actually effective. This elasticity of a space or its programme provides an image of safety when it is maintained as in a state of pre trauma. If a place appears to be safe, it will most likely not be abandoned or isolated. For example, several international airports during SARS, using thermal scanning devices, checked millions of passengers for infection but found no cases of SARS. Urban maintenance relied on technology in this case to reassure individuals that they themselves and those around them were not contagious. In the post-traumatic city, an infrastructure of safety encompasses the merging of the local with the over-agency.

Temporary physical interventions, whether organised by over-agency or locally by city groups, instantaneously emerge to maintain the viability of a city during post-traumatic events. Emergency Urbanism would require that a percentage of the main core of a city be organised to move existing programs to the periphery and infill these voids with emergency programmes. Thus an emergency infrastructure would be introduced into the fabric of the city during post-traumatic events. These surplus spaces then could be segregated into categories of clean and dirty spines with spaces to distribute essential supplies, and to install health care centers for mental care, medical distribution points, quarantine chat rooms/video conferencing, scanning kiosks dispersed throughout the city, media broadcast lobbies embedded into public spaces, emergency operating centers inserted locally and connected to the over-agency's main hub located in an unaffected area. These programmes would occupy abandoned spaces in buildings or would become new structures temporarily entrenched in areas of trauma, all operating 24 hours a day.

By 2030, with approximately two-thirds of the world's populations living in cities located mostly in developing countries, the prospect of instability will increase exponentially. Disasters and urban traumas will become commonplace. Urban maintenance will become a routine practice [perhaps a new design discipline] and will materialise through rapidly constructed zones dispersed throughout the city, aimed at combating effects of trauma by avoiding isolating individuals. Design will be used to mitigate disasters and maintain urban health, generating scenarios of urban maintenance where programmes, spaces and infrastructures can fluidly and rapidly respond to local conditions. In the future city, healthy urbanism prevails over urban sickness through emergency urbanisms and elastic infrastructures.

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¹More and more people are being caught up in a growing number of natural disasters, a UN agency says. 254 million people were affected by natural hazards last year – nearly three times as many as in 1990. Events including earthquakes and volcanoes, floods and droughts, storms, fires and landslides killed about 83,000 people in 2003, up from about 53,000 deaths 13 years earlier. There were 337 natural disasters reported in 2003, up from 261 in 1990. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/in_depth/3666474.stm.

Form, Finance and the Manhattan Monolith

KEVIN WALSH



Rockefeller Plaza

As society evolves towards the agglomeration of larger and larger organizations such as institutions, corporations and government bodies, larger and larger portions of our cities are being taken up by what Alan Colquhoun terms 'superblocks'. These have a tendency to form closed blocks within the fabric of the city, akin to how James Joyce described Trinity College Dublin in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* 'set heavily in the city's ignorance like a dull stone in a cumbrous ring'. This tendency is even more evident in the advanced urban situation of cities like New York, the product of both a thriving economy, and a relatively young and expendable historic context. Examples of the Manhattan superblock range from the continued expansion, throughout its history, of Columbia University, the massive Lincoln Center and Javits Center projects of the sixties and seventies, the original World Trade Center project, to the newly completed Time Warner Center and the Museum of Modern Art. What these projects all have in common, from an urban and economic perspective, is that to a greater or lesser degree they all operate introspectively. Communication with the city is increasingly reduced, using methods such as blank facades, raised plazas and privately-controlled 'public' spaces. Colquhoun finishes his 1971 essay *The Superblock* with this:

The superblock, and with it the concepts of the 'designed whole', is a fact of the modern capitalist state. It has evolved from the representational building and has gradually superseded the system according to which small plots were designed within a metonymic set. It is not simply a new type to be added to the repertoire of the city but a type of types, whose presence is rapidly destroying the traditional city.

It is a reality of urban living that large organizations such as governments, institutions and corporations typically make decisions that affect large swathes of the city, making superblocks amount to a necessary evil in modern cities. However, while there are several examples of aesthetic successes (Chandigarh, Brasilia etc), few examples exist which are successful in a social and economic sense – Erskine's Byker complex in Newcastle, UK perhaps comes to mind, along with Sert's Peabody Terraces in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In Manhattan, the most successful superblock is the Rockefeller Center which, as shall be shown, operates in a slightly different way.

The Rockefeller Center sits on the east side of Midtown Manhattan in a curious condition of both object and field. It operates as a landmark for the surrounding area but also as a public space at its base – used both for events and as a type of public park. In a broader urban sense, along with the adjacent St Patrick's Cathedral, it anchors its area of midtown as a destination, extending its influence north through pedestrian corridors as far as MoMA, and connecting south through Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue to Grand Central Station. The Rockefeller Center, although a distinctly cohesive unit, does not fall into the trap of retreating into itself like other superblocks; it draws the city into its center, which is devoted to an urban space and its mass is carved up to offer extra streets, thereby creating new routes through it and relieving the long blocks of midtown. How is it that this development is so different from others in Manhattan, and other cities? To illustrate this in a city where monetary factors are so important, a model is necessary that analyses urban form economically as well as functionally and aesthetically.



Rockefeller Center



Rockefeller Center

is so different from others in Manhattan, and other cities? To illustrate this in a city where monetary factors are so important, a model is necessary that analyses urban form economically as well as functionally and aesthetically.

The writer Jane Jacobs, a Greenwich Village resident for thirty years, based much of her work on urbanism and economics on empirical observations of New York. Her conclusions describe a city in a free-market economic situation behaving, not just akin to ecologies and living organisms, but as an actual extension of biological and ecological development. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she put forth four basic requirements for functioning city neighborhoods, based on social integration and economic effectiveness: short street blocks, to allow irregularities and chance connections within the city; a diversity of uses, to ensure that the land is used efficiently at different periods of the day; a range of types of accommodation, to allow for different varieties of organisation to occupy them; and, sufficiently high concentrations of people to support niche and developing markets. These properties are present in most of the truly vibrant city neighborhoods one can think of: Greenwich Village in Manhattan, the Barri Gòtic in Barcelona, and Temple Bar in Dublin, perhaps. These neighborhoods function as dispersed, non-hierarchical systems, made up of small units – shops, small apartment buildings, light industrial factories, theaters, etc. – which allow it to respond and adapt to conditions as they change. This contrasts with larger designed systems, be they architectural, economic or otherwise, which tend to retreat from their environment and create an internal logic of their own as they expand.

In this respect, larger systems are at odds with Jacobs' biological model of the city as multiple interacting elements. However, an analysis of the design process for the Rockefeller Center reveals affinities with Jacobs' model which may explain its success.

The development of the Rockefeller Center was remarkable for three reasons: the number of minds from multiple disciplines which contributed to the project; the number of iterations and options the design was to go through; and the freedom the design enjoyed from all political regulation and forces. The Rockefeller Center began as a home for the Metropolitan Opera, incorporating a hotel and apartment building along with a plaza. After this initial scheme was presented, John D. Rockefeller Jr. assumed the responsibilities of coordinating the project. The brief was deceptively simple, 'all planning ... should be based upon a commercial center as beautiful as possible consistent with a maximum income that should be developed'. The various architectural personalities involved were required initially to submit their own individual schemes in competition in order to explore various options and approaches, then everyone involved was assembled into a conglomerate firm of Associated Architects. As Koolhaas notes in *Delirious New York*, the objective of the specification process was 'not the fastest possible determination of all the details of the center but ... the postponement of its final definition to the last possible moment so that the concept of the Center remains an open matrix that can absorb any idea that can increase its ultimate quality'.

Model of the Freedom Tower project for Ground Zero



Early schemes quickly established a tower at the center to take advantage of the area of the site with maximum allowable density, and subsequent schemes would all stick to this economic rationale. Multiple schemes were attempted, as Raymond Hood, the main architectural personality involved, noted, 'I would not attempt to guess how many ... solutions were made ... And, even after arriving at a definitive scheme, changes were continually being made to coincide with rental developments'. Schemes were chosen which adhered tightly to the zoning envelope and maximized the buildable area; roof gardens at the lower blocks were adopted to increase rents in apartments with views onto them; new streets were incorporated into the design to funnel customers towards the shops at the plaza; the plaza itself is multi-level to accommodate transition to shops in the basement; and the actual construction of the project took place in installments, with each reiteration incorporating changes to suit the particular tenants. As Hood notes, this deference to solely economic forces in the design process ensures 'whimsy, taste, fashion and vanity are brushed aside, and the architect finds himself face to face with the essentials and elements that make real architecture and real beauty'. This statement stands as a corollary to Louis Sullivan's 'form follows function', where 'function' is broadened to include fiscal accountability. As political commentator Andrew Sullivan recently noted, the genius of capitalism is that it harnesses 'human improvement to the always-reliable yoke of human greed'. The design process was permitted to operate without excessive interference from exterior institutions and governmental organizations through a relatively unique condition. The 1929 Wall Street Crash had not only made this the only large development in Manhattan, but also prevented external organizations from imposing conditions on the developers for fear of being denied the economic benefits which the construction would entail. In this respect the project came closer than other superblocs to the capitalist ideal of a free market – the lack of interference from regulation, protectionism and monopolies.

When analyzed with Jacobs' model of organic urbanism, the resultant complex stands up relatively well. The Manhattan invention of the skyscraper had already institutionalized the concept of multiple programmes on a single site, and the Center combines such diverse functions as residential, commercial, TV studios, a theatre, a subway station and a public space, thus satisfying the requirement for a varied set of uses. The skyscraper also meets the second requirement of a certain critical density while the integration of through ways and pedestrian routes satisfies the need for short city blocks. Indeed, Jacobs even references it to illustrate her point,

If the Center's buildings were continuous along each of its side streets all the way from Fifth to Sixth Avenue, it would no longer be a center of use ... It would be a group of self-isolated streets pooling only at fifth and sixth avenues. The most artful design in other respects could not tie it together, because it is fluidity of use, and the mixing of paths, not homogeneity of architecture, that ties together city neighborhoods into pools of city use.

Where the Centre begins to break away from her model is in the static nature of a large completed building, and the lack of availability of diverse accommodation to ensure a diverse collection of tenants. These twin problems, however, are ameliorated by the design process which both sought as much information as possible relating to existing conditions and, in its phased construction, allowed for a degree of customization by tenants. It can also be argued that because it was so successful in other respects, the surrounding city fabric satisfied this particular condition.

The Twin Towers project in Lower Manhattan was also a Rockefeller project – brought about by John D Rockefeller Jr's sons, Nelson and David. Where it differed from the original, however, was that several forces alien to free-market capitalism were allowed to eventually influence its development.

These included: a desire to raise real estate prices in lower Manhattan to increase the value of David Rockefeller's holdings; taxpayers credits which were used to underwrite bonds to finance construction; exemption from New York City building codes and taxes which placed neighboring economic enterprises at a disadvantage; and, the abuse of eminent domain, used to effectively 'steal' the land from the city. The resultant buildings – which have little to do with the actual requirements of the area and much more to do with the Rockefellers' ideas for it – were far larger than the real estate market in an economic slump required. Ultimately, government offices were relocated to provide tenants for the empty buildings. The gargantuan, featureless Twin Towers provided a perfect symbol for this bureaucratic mind, representing the state as omnipotent and the individual as insignificant.

And once again we see the same vagaries of government intervention interfering with the rebuilding process at Ground Zero. While there are several traits which the design process seems to have in common with the Rockefeller Center development, there are also many correlations with the development of the original World Trade Center. Although there have been an unprecedented number of minds involved in the process, architectural and otherwise, a critical level of communication seems to have been lacking; both with each other, and with the actual needs of the site and its context. The schemes produced number in the hundreds by now – if one includes the studies made by, what seems to be almost every major architectural firm critically active today. Each one, however, operates to a greater or lesser degree in independent aesthetic, political, or emotional vacuums, ignoring salient information, and especially economic information. The project from its inception has been abused as a political platform, with major economic, architectural and urban decisions being made for political and propaganda purposes. The comparisons with the original World Trade Center development are perhaps more disturbing. The same exemption from city regulations and taxes still exist on the site. A disconnection from the existing economy of Lower Manhattan is already obvious in the enormous amount of office space which has been a component of the brief from the outset: Lower Manhattan is in steady and obvious decline as a financial center. It is becoming, however, against the will of political forces, a growing residential area. Each plan proposed has failed to acknowledge this fact. And, in an echo of the original Twin Towers development, the governor and the Port Authority have announced that they will be moving their offices into the Freedom Tower upon completion. They are still the only tenants slated to move in.

When analysed through Jacobs' urban model both of these developments fail. Without residential programmes both miss out on a major generator of diversity and, while a certain density is assured, the creation of large monolithic blocks of accommodation eliminates a level of variety in the type of organization which can occupy them. It is likely that these failures, at their root, come from a disconnection between the design process and economic factors, a disconnection caused mainly by political pressures. The effectiveness of the intellectual wing of the architectural community has been in decline since the peak of Modernism, when it sought to align itself with the technology of mass-production to justify its purposes not just aesthetically but also economically. Contrast this with the present day, where one of contemporary architecture's most celebrated intellectuals has seen his ideas collapse spectacularly in the face of reality at lower Manhattan. Architecture today must re-align itself with economic principles to reclaim territory that does not exist within the purely aesthetic. With this regained territory, it will be able to further resist growing political pressures, and respond more precisely to functional requirements, just as Louis Sullivan intended.

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Some Pet Architectures

ATELIER BOW-WOW



Residence 3 (No.49)

A house that has the same width as a car, stands on the end of a narrow block between two streets. Together the houses on this block resemble a train. The white wall with the rounded corners, the gentle sloping roof and the tall proportion give the house a quiet atmosphere.



Rouen / French Restaurant (No.28)

This restaurant, too narrow to have a spacious passage inside, has canopied doors on two sides around the seating. An outdoor air conditioner unit is placed on the roof and hidden by the signboard on all sides.



Gohan-chan / Take-away Shop (No.64)

This shop is rather more a wall than a building. The double-decker signboard is much larger than the shop.



Aoyama Real Estate Agent (No.15)

A very narrow building of a real estate agency between two adjacent buildings. The frontage is no more than 3 feet and the facade consists of only a door and a signboard.



Bikebox Ikebukuro / Motorbike Shop [No.62]

A 39 meter long triangle-shaped shop on a triangular site between forked roads. The building is divided into an advertising wall, a showroom, an office and a repair shop, according to its depth which ranges from 20 cm to 4.5 m. In the showroom, motorcycles are displayed in ascending order (50cc to 750cc) according to the depth of the space.

Liber Charitatis - Re-Reading Detroit

JAMES ROSSA O'HARE

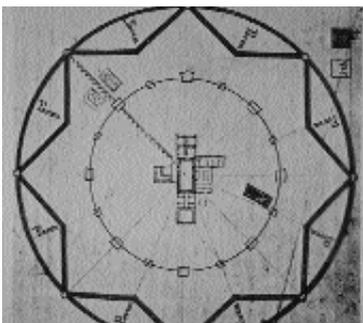
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James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*

When John Locke wrote in 1690 that 'in the beginning all the world was America', he expressed a worldview which saw the material world as being without value until its incorporation into a commodity exchange.¹ Meaning was not seen as an inherent property of matter but as something superimposed by man. This understanding is symptomatic of what Giovanni Battista Piranesi called 'the eclipse of Form'. No longer conceived as 'God's Book' or the unfolding of God's will, the phenomenal world came to provide a blank canvas on which the history of humanity could be inscribed. The ideal city designed as a unified entity by a unified subject was a fantasy perhaps first put forward by Alberti. Here, rational humanism would find its urban materialisation in a centralised, geometric arrangement. This dream of such a city was projected onto the terra incognita of the New World. Early European settlements in North America were defensive forts forming discrete islands of civilisation connected by trade routes across the howling wilderness.

The demand for beaver felt hats among fashionable European men increased rapidly in the early 1600s. Beavers were nearing extinction in the tired Old World but a limitless supply lay across the North Atlantic. There, in 1534, French explorer Jacques Cartier had initiated the trade of animal skins for knives and the vast Nova Francia was an empire founded on fur. A network of strategically located forts established a monopoly across the territory. The constriction of the waters connecting lakes Erie and St Clair provided the perfect point for control of passage through what the French were calling le d'etroit. The Fort Ponchartrain du Detroit was founded by Antoine Cadillac in 1701 and followed the geometric form of the bastide towns of southern France. Relations with the native people were good until the seizure of the town in 1760 by Robert Rogers, son of an Irish-born New Hampshire settler. Control over the network of forts had been handed over with the British capture of Montreal. Hostility with the Ottawa tribes grew until the failed attack led by Chief Pontiac. To the new puritan settlers, the native people were not a part of civilisation but of nature – of all that which existed in the fallen state before receipt of Grace.

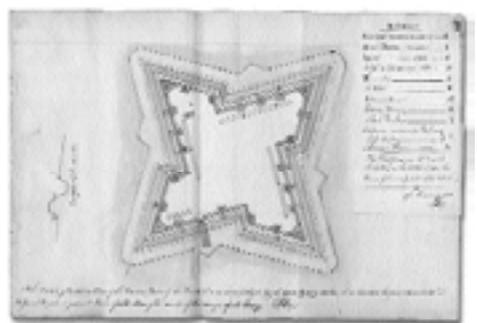
European Enlightenment architectural theory as laid out by Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier in his *Essai sur l'architecture* (1753) considered the city a natural phenomenon. The popular image of a humanity internally divided between a body and its mind – like a horse and its rider – was extended into urban design allowing the functionality of the city to be rationalised and 'tamed'. This was achieved using the formal principles of the picturesque, an aesthetic which involved the image of nature being superficially applied to a formulaic composition. Using the park or pleasure-garden as a precedent, an urban naturalism was selectively grafted onto the supra-structural aspects of the city. The town of Detroit and its 300 inhabitants changed hands again in 1796 when the newly independent Americans took control. The French and British settlements were destroyed in a fire in 1805, an event which coincided with a change in national governance. Michigan was designated as a separate territory with Detroit as its capital. These events provided a tabula rasa for the projection of a representative city



Ideal City



Beaver Hats



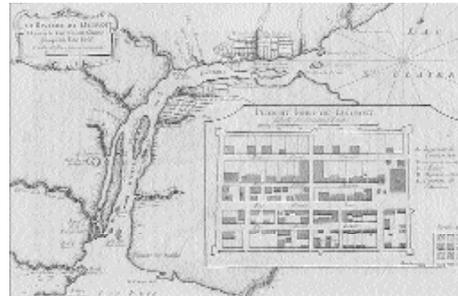
French fort

Thomas Jefferson's land ordinance survey of 1785 partitioned the new nation into square mile plots. This continental grid turned the territory into a dispersed megalopolis. At first the grid existed only virtually on maps but these abstract lines later materialised into roads and property boundaries as attention shifted from the coast to the interior. Jefferson's intention was to atomise the populace into family units 'with certain inalienable rights ... life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. His utopia was a self-regulating democracy in which the concentration of men, capital and industrial development was to be restrained. Having 'sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man', his fear was the formation of a critical mass of population which could be swayed by appeals to emotion and transform democracy into a new form of authoritarianism. The construction of his pastoral ideal took the built form of a neo-classicism integrated with technological innovations. Nature could now be made into an object of civic use while the city was conceived as an 'urban forest'. The diagonal lines of the European Baroque city pierced through the formless medieval fabric, inscribing a totalising network of axes. This geometrical configuration provided the model for both the cities of Washington and Detroit. But while Pierre L'Enfant's plan (1791) for Washington overlaid diagonals with a grid, the 1806 plan for Detroit was far more unusual.

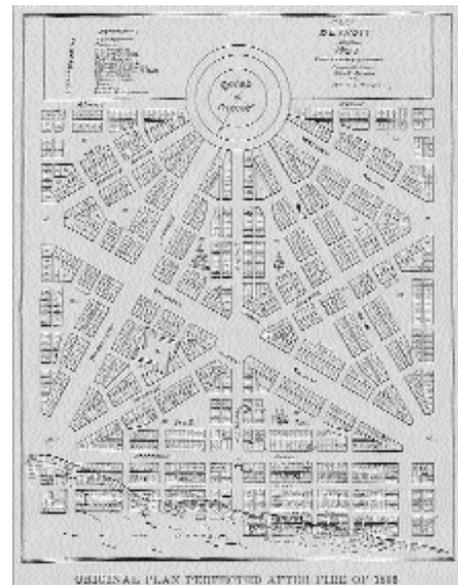
Jefferson appointed his friend Augustus B. Woodward to devise a plan for a city of 10,000 acres. Woodward shared the president's love of philosophy and science and in 1801 had published a booklet entitled *Considerations on the Substance of the Sun*. The basis of his plan was 'an equilateral triangle having every angle bisected by a perpendicular line on the opposite side'. This would form a honeycomb structure with centers and intersections reserved for public use. The central area of Grand Circus still partially retains this unique layout. City government soon became distrustful of the plan, however, and began the sale of regular orthogonal plots in 1817. It was thus a grid-iron plan cut through by primary axes which provided the infrastructure for a rush of expansion and land speculation in the city of Detroit. This was a period of very rapid growth – the overall U.S. population rose from 5 to 23 million between the years 1800 and 1850. The construction of the Erie Canal and the railway lines enabled the nation's 'Manifest Destiny'; to extend the boundaries of freedom, idealism and democracy into the west.

Comparable to the separation of structure and surface – planning and architecture had become distinct operations. The planner's role was the pragmatic control of what Manfredo Tafuri called the 'forces which provoke morphological change in the city'.¹¹ The goal was a flexible support for an open urban structure. The planner's infrastructural laws were rigidly upheld while absolute liberty was given to the individual architectural fragment. The response of the 19th century architect to the new technological 'universe of precisions' was eclecticism and a plurality of expression.

Detroit would come to exemplify exactly the concentration of capital and industry that Jefferson had sought to avoid. The 'pursuit of happiness'



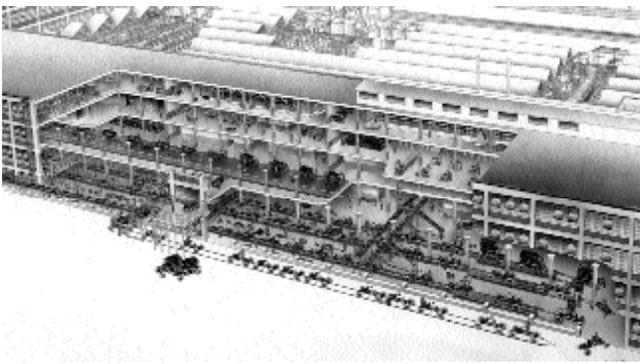
Detroit 1763



Plan of detroit 1807



Division of labour



Ford factory



became the driving force for unprecedented national growth of industry and population. Writing in 1831, visiting Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville observed that 'it is a strange thing to see with what sort of feverish ardour Americans pursue well-being and how they show themselves constantly tormented by a vague fear of not having chosen the shortest route leading to it'.ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout the nineteenth century a constant stream of immigrants found employment in Detroit's salt mines and factories. By 1850 the Irish, having left Ireland due to the Potato Famine, were the largest ethnic group among the city's newcomers. The central westside district they occupied came to be known as Corktown and is now the oldest surviving neighbourhood in the city. Among the Cork immigrants were a family from Ballinascarthy named Ford.

The Prime Meridian Conference was an international meeting held in Washington in 1884. Representatives from the 25 'railway nations' met to agree on a standard world time with Greenwich as the zero meridian. The standardisation of time occurred first on a national level and was crucial to the establishment of factories and mass production. This decision marked a crucial moment in a shifting of authority which had been taking place since the Renaissance. Time was no longer measured by local astronomical phenomena but by human convention.

For the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the condition of modernity, 'stands by the mark of the liberation of creative human powers, of spiritual decentralisation, the differentiation of all spheres of social and cultural life, when all domains of human culture become autonomous'.^{iv} One of the first of these differentiations was the separation of the life of the religious follower from the rest of an increasingly secularised society. The emergence of monasteries in the early Middle Ages has been recognised as crucial to the development of Western modernisation. The punctuation of the monastic day by a periodic system of bells formed a prototypical clock. Such a system of punctuation later entered the civic and individual's world through the advent of the mechanical clock, bringing with it a perception of 'homogenous, mechanical-numerical time'. According to Marshall McLuhan, the process of secularisation began with the invention of movable type – the printing press. As books brought solitary reading to the masses, they structured the Western world-view with an 'insistence on linearity, compartmentalisation, classification, detached observation and a fixed point of view'.^v This

perhaps reached its apotheosis in the standardisation, routinisation and worker-efficiency of the Fordist assembly line.

Henry Ford began mass production of the Model T in Detroit in 1913. His revolutionary system involved an intensified division of labour at an industrial scale: henceforth skilled labour was no longer necessary as workers on a production line would only perform simple repetitive tasks. Thus, increased mechanisation in large-scale manufacturing was allied with the human engineering and scientific management of F.W. Taylor, whose time and motion studies sought to derive the greatest organisational efficiency of a given workforce. Ford's success was achieved through a combination of force and persuasion; a socio-political regime in which trade unions were subdued while factory workers were offered a high salary and unprecedented standard of living.

The city continued to grow as ever more immigrants came to work in the motor industry. The arrival of the skyscraper enabled higher concentrations of population. New forms of mass entertainment arose including movie theatres and theme parks. New York's Coney Island was once termed a 'pyrotechnic sanatorium' – a name which could also have described Detroit's water-side Electric Park, one of the largest in the world – 'Rome with its seven hills will be a poor second to the rollercoaster. Any amount of hilarious fun may be derived within the enclosure'.^{vi} The American industrial city was turning into something between a pleasure-palace and a prison-house. A racially diverse and volatile immigrant populace coupled with increased pollution and worker unrest was making the city an ever-less desirable place to live. Ford recognised these problems very early and was the first to instigate the decentralisation of the city, relocating his production plant from Highland Park to River Rouge outside Detroit about 1915, stating that: 'we shall solve the problems of the city by leaving the city'.

Higher disposable income and cheaper cars meant that living downtown was no longer a necessity. The pastoral ideal which had been the national dream since Jefferson was no longer the reserve of the wealthy as it soon became affordable to live in that middle landscape between city and country. The weight of history and the social problems of the city could be left behind in the democratised automobile. The market for this newly accessible lifestyle was generated by the



National Highway system

new science of advertising based on behaviourist models which recognised the primary human desires for comfort and power.

Progress in transportation – the reduction of distance in terms of time and cost – is, in a larger sense, only a symbol of expanded horizons in every field of activity.

Thus, Norman Bel Geddes unveiled the future vision of American transportation in General Motor's Futurama pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. The proposed City of Tomorrow was green, airy, slum-free and interconnected with a network of fourteen-lane superhighways. Visitors to the pavilion left wearing a pin stating 'I have seen the future'.

Siegfried Kracauer proposed that spatial images can be seen as the 'dreams of society', hieroglyphs that can be deciphered to expose the 'basis of social reality'.^{vii} Such an undertaking would resonate with that of McLuhan in one of his earliest books, *The Mechanical Bride*. Subtitled 'the folklore of industrial man' the book examines the images and themes exploited by the advertising industry in the 40's and 50's. Central to McLuhan's thesis is that the influence of applied science on the popular imagination gave rise to the conception of the human body as a 'living machine'. The mechanistic vision of humanity is perhaps most darkly exemplified in the Frankenstein horror of a synthetic robot violently revenging his lack of a soul. Meanwhile, in post-WWII Detroit, factory workers' increasing dissatisfaction with the urban condition and the mechanisation of their lives was causing them to riot. The situation came to demand military techniques to render a suitably compliant workforce. The internal threat of an aggravated urban populace coupled with the increasing risk of Soviet nuclear attack on densely occupied cities, called for military-inspired counter-measures: an interstate highway system was called for as a matter of urgent national security.

President Eisenhower's Highway Act of 1956 turned the continent into a continuous field of fluid movement following a curving geometry determined by the speed of the automobile. The newly accessible suburbs became the destination of post-war 'white flight' which saw the majority of Detroit's white middle-class move beyond the '8 mile' distance from downtown's Grand Circus. The abandonment and resultant degeneration of the urban core made it the worst in the country. For the white-middle classes, downtown Detroit came to be experienced primarily tele-visually. A 1980's TV series called *Robocop*, set in Detroit, portrayed a dangerous and violent city requiring the 'future of law enforcement – part man, part machine, all cop'. Advertising projected an ideal of conservative homogeneity to the new educated consumer, employing techniques for exactly the swaying of emotion which Jefferson had feared would give rise to an authoritarian state. The family home became the site of observation and surveillance, a

PART MAN,
PART MACHINE,
ALL COP.

ORION

ROBOCOP

THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Since the 1960s, vast areas of the city center have either been systematically demolished by the authorities or set ablaze in the annual 'Devil's Night', when the disaffected urban populace torch buildings for sport. This urban erasure has returned tracts of inner city Detroit to a tabula rasa, clearing the way for various impoverished attempts to catalyze urban development such as John Portman's Renaissance Center. The most successful of these projects are monolithic venues for the staging of the spectacle. Baseball arenas, football stadia and concert halls sit in swathes of parked cars, providing bored suburbanites with intensely emotional, communal experience. Forming a ring outside the original city is a ring of low density edge-city clusters. This recent development comprises of shopping malls, office parks and educational facilities. Inside this ring is an area of lower density residential neighbourhoods which indicate that the old downtown may be at risk of becoming the suburb of its own suburbs. This may be counter-acted by a governmental document entitled 'Jumpstarting the Motor City' which identifies an inner-city 'Empowerment zone' – a large central area for tax reductions and development incentives.

The global franchise 'Domino's Pizza' was founded by Detroit-born Irish-American Tom Monaghan. He later bought the Detroit Tigers Baseball team. His most recent venture is 'Ave Maria' a city in Florida based around an ultra-conservative Catholic university. The retrogressive 'new urbanism' model will be employed to arrange neo-classical buildings around a glass cathedral with seating for up to 3,500 worshippers. It will be unequalled by any Catholic church in the United States and larger than Notre-Dame. A wave of neo-conservatism is currently causing the expansion of the 'gated community' to the modern day 'walled city'. The re-appearance of the Renaissance dream of centralised, self-contained cities with a unified 'theme' would seem to indicate a crisis in contemporary American identity. The city as representational surface once again reveals 'the circumflexuous wall of a single-minded men's asylum ...'

Piranesi once prophesised that the bourgeois city would become an 'absurd machine'. As provisional structures for the production and accumulation of wealth, American cities have always tended to be determined by Ronald Reagan's principle of 'letting the market decide'. The result is a continuously revised articulation of mobile capital and speculative development. The role of the architect in this self-organising process is highly limited. The spatial relations between capital, labour and material are generated by an economic dynamo which cannot be rationalised, founded as it is in sub-rational desires. As speculative development gives rise to ever more curious urban formations in the service of the ongoing 'pursuit of happiness', one wonders what Detroit's next incarnation will be. A recent renewal in the auto-industry and a surge of downtown gentrification by high-tech headquarters would suggest that the city is set for a new manifestation. As a locus for the American technological experience Detroit poses many questions, not least; what next? On receiving the news in 1812 that his honeycomb plan for the city would not be continued Augustus B. Woodward wrote that;

Nature has destined the city of Detroit to be a great interior Emporium, equal, if not superior to any other on the surface of the globe. In such a case the art of men should aid the benevolence of the Creator, and no restricted attachment to the present day or to present interests should induce a permanent sacrifice of ulterior and brilliant prospects.

James Rossa O'Hare spent a week wandering the Motor City last year and has since graduated from architecture at UCD.

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- ⁱⁱ Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia. Cambridge, Mass., 1976.
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- ^{iv} Nicolas Berdyaev, The Meaning of History. New York, 1916.
- ^v Herbert Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man. Toronto, 1962.
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1916



1950



1960



1994

Detroit Erasure

The Seven Surprises of Taichung

RAYMOND RYAN

An immediate surprise, in Taiwan, is the tropicity of the place. This is evident in the weather, occasional sprouts of lush vegetation (palm trees amid the concrete), and food that is almost Mediterranean (delicious clams cooked with garlic and basil). Of course, glancing at a map of South East Asia, I now see that Taiwan, a.k.a. the Republic of China, is there south of Okinawa and not that far north of the Philippines.

A second, very welcome surprise is the vibrant street life. Taiwanese cities are not especially beautiful but they are populous. Arteries are thronged with motor scooters and with urban markets that generate colour, aroma and noise during the day and into the night. The streets are lined by high-rises, their tightly stacked floors decorated in 24/7 electronic advertisements. At pavement level, café furniture colonises the avenues, thoroughfares that penetrate back into the buildings as small garages and workshops.

One politically delicate issue may be the legacy of Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalism versus, for instance, current business deals with the Communist mainland. There are moments of wondering—as, I imagine, in post-Treaty Ireland—about the political allegiance of this or that individual. Ditto the future of an aboriginal culture in Taiwan's rapid-growth, highly globalised economy. But the third surprise is a certain ambivalence towards Japan's colonisation of Taiwan from 1895 to 1945 with many Taiwanese seeming not to regard that experience as the evil one might have expected.

TADA, Taiwan Art Design Architecture, is a new institution intended to occupy a former winery built by the

Japanese in Taichung. Taichung is a major city near Taiwan's west coast, two hours or so south of Taipei. You may have heard of it, as the current mayor—not from the government party—had the ambition to erect a new Guggenheim here, a spectacular attraction designed by Zaha Hadid. That proposal, along with Nouvel's Guggenheim for Rio de Janeiro and Gehry's for Manhattan's Lower East Side, has now been shelved. Will TADA fare better?

In newer zones of Taichung, one can tour Tunghai University with its dramatic chapel designed by I.M. Pei in the 1950s; a neighbourhood called Vegas, with karaoke palaces and glitzy, tryst hotels; and avenues exhibiting an extraordinary local typology, the Taichung Show House. The Taichung Show House is in fact a fourth surprise: extremely flash Modernist villas worthy of a James Bond movie, erected as temporary 3D advertisements for residential projects or builders, and then summarily destroyed.

The Japanese winery is situated in the city centre, close to the train station, a neighbourhood exhibiting fewer signs of contemporaneity. Some sheds parallel to the train tracks, Stock 20, have been renovated as a temporary art gallery; but these may now be threatened. The winery occupies the equivalent of four urban blocks. It's a rectilinear compound with few access gates and a small retail outlet still functioning in one corner (bottles of alcohol daintily arranged on a pavement table, not unlike the offerings of fruit, fish, disembodied fowl and incense that appear elsewhere along the street). Public markets hustle and bustle outside the high, opaque walls. To the west, opposite an attractive if

rundown park where elderly folk exercise, the compound's bailiwick is less formidable, more fence-like and beginning to disintegrate. Although most of the compound is quite densely occupied with abandoned buildings, this area to the southwest is more open with only a few lightweight structures. From old plans, we discover that a river once flowed through this corner of the site.

The 'we' is an eclectic crew of architects invited to Taichung by the national government's Ministry of Culture. We are to work with teams of Taiwanese students and recent graduates who possess, it quickly transpires, a wide range of abilities and energy. Some are on secondment from military service. Before evening lectures, they perform brief drills to honour—we think—the speakers.

From Helsinki, Marco Casagrande quickly forms a group to investigate the roofs of the many one- to two-storey buildings. The more extensive flat roofs reveal themselves as splendid, empty terraces. Casagrande's idea is for footbridges to connect these rooftop strata and create a new terrain above the historical precinct (shades, perhaps, of Bernard Tschumi's work at Le Fresnoy in northern France, but formed empirically from small components). The Viennese artist and filmmaker Karl-Heinz Klopff takes another platoon and covers a blank outdoor wall with an idealised map of the entire site. On this occasion Klopff is excited by the notion of planting in the raw open spaces between buildings. To me, these spaces recall scenes from



Japanese Winery



Space in between



Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, where London's Beckton Gas Works represented the Vietnamese city of Hue. But they also remind me of creameries and other structures abandoned in the backlands of Irish country towns. Let's include that as Surprise Number 5: the conflation of Stanley Kubrick with An Bord Bainne.

The alluring Betel Nut Girls of Taichung are not exactly a surprise. Karl-Heinz Klopff has already made a movie about them and written about this transient, New Asian phenomenon for Architectural Design. Drive slowly round Taichung in the early evening and there they are, emerging from glazed kiosks beneath telltale radial, multicoloured lights. The girls wave and dance to entice motorists to buy the intoxicating nuts (you get a minor high, and really bad teeth if a long-term user).

Some of the kiosks roll back across the pavement when no longer in use. Some share the look of Case Study houses in Los Angeles. The sleeker glass ones are like the pavilions of American sculptor Dan Graham... but adorned with lights as found at amusement arcades from Blackpool to Atlantic City.

The other invitees are this writer, Sand Helsel from Melbourne, and Nicholas Boyarsky from London.

We're drawn to the qualities of the external spaces between the existing buildings (some of which have fine, high internal volumes and clerestory fenestration). Our advice is to not do too much.

Of course, if TADA is to be a museum and exhibition venue of international calibre, then it will need a number of highly serviced spaces. But is an archive, as at New York's MoMA or Rotterdam's NAI, a realistic goal? There are few seminal sketches by Mies or Le Corbusier, after all, on the market today. And the existing, almost empty spaces, both internal and external, seem ideal for temporary, experimental structures that might give TADA the profile its promoters seem to seek.

We also note the enigmatic texture of the ground surface and the many linear attachments to the more solid freestanding buildings: pipes, gutters, conduit. Helsel talks about 'Curating The Site'. Perhaps Taichung will take a good hard look at this place before calling in the surgeons.

Surprise Number 6 is Tea. It's indigenous of course, but refined and extrapolated so that one plant appears in many delicious variations—that's the surprise. High Mountain oolong tea. There's pearl tea that looks like tapioca and evokes, on hot Taichung afternoons,

sexual innuendo. There's a delicate drink of lemon and plum tea on ice. But the star is a green tea frappé with hints of orange rind.

We wait for the Culture Minister and local dignitaries to appear. This is Surprise Number 7. Instead of a few bureaucratic speeches and cardboard sandwiches, there's a very posh show with cameras, air-kissing Taiwan-style and, yes, speeches we foreigners don't exactly follow. In fact there's even a singer from the San Francisco Opera. Then the Minister arrives.

A globe is rolled out on stage. The Minister touches the globe and lights start to revolve inside (someone whispers 'Harry Potter!'). Then fog machines and noise, followed by fireworks inside the hall, and red piñatas exploding over the VIPs.

Surely we aren't all so tired and emotional that we're simply imagining this? It's time to escape to a waiting car and just catch the 23.00 flight out of Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport. After thirteen hours in the air, I arrive in Los Angeles. It's 8 o'clock the same evening, three hours earlier than our Taiwan departure.

Raymund Ryan is Curator at the Heinz Architectural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

Post-Fordist Public Works

CHARLES WALDHEIM

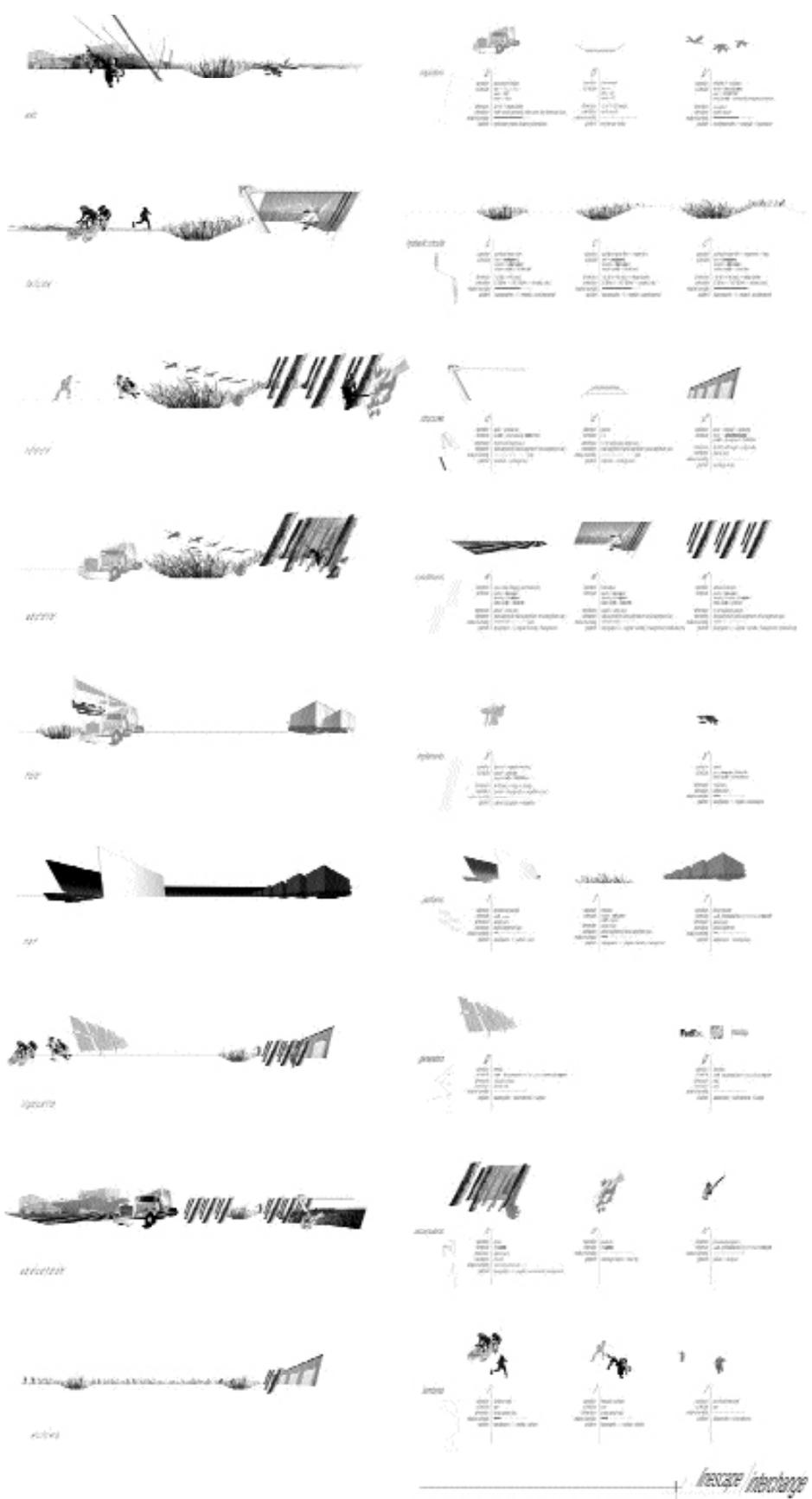
For many, across a range of design disciplines, landscape has recently emerged as both model and medium for the making of a contemporary public realm. This is particularly true in North American cities which continue to disperse as a result of industrial decentralization and the ongoing effects of economic transformations associated with globalization. Recently, economists have distinguished between three distinct historical configurations of industry in North America; concentrated, decentralized, and distributed. Each of these eras constructed a distinct spatial organization and shaped urban form in particular ways. The shifts between these modes of production are most evident as ruptures in the urban form that preceded them, leaving previous spatial modes obsolete and abandoned in their wake. The first of these shifts, from the dense concentrated industrial model to a decentralized model, took place in the middle of the twentieth century and is closely associated with the decentralization of urban form. The second shift, currently underway, is transforming industry from a nationally decentralized organization to an internationally distributed one. The first transition, from a dense urban industrial base to a suburban decentralized one, was characterized by the growth of national highway systems, suburbanization and the depopulation of many urban centers. The more recent transition to a globally distributed economy could be characterized by its reliance upon global networks of transportation, communication, and capital.

The impact of these transformations includes cheaper consumer goods and the entrance of many emerging labor markets into the global economy. They also include the abandonment of many industrial sites made redundant by these transformations and the construction of new industrial forms increasingly dependent upon global supply chains. The global automobile industry offers a legible example of these trends. The Tower Automotive site in Milwaukee, a now redundant remnant of the decentralized automobile industry in North America offers a useful case study. Tower Automotive currently owns a 148 acre site in northwest Milwaukee. Bisected by a central north-south rail line, the site sits across two distinct watersheds, each feeding tributaries that empty into Lake Michigan to the east. When originally developed it was at the periphery of metropolitan Milwaukee's urban expanse. The site has since been encircled by a fabric of middle-class workers' housing that continues to house a solidly lower middle-class African American community to this day. What had been the workplace and economic sustenance for hundreds of high-wage union employees has shed the majority of its workers in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Tower Automotive recently announced the closing of its Milwaukee lines, which, until this point, had still been producing truck frames for the Ford Ranger. These lines will be moved to northern Mexico, with parts being supplied from Asia. The abandonment of the Tower site offers an all too common case study for the future of post-Fordist distribution models and evolving conditions for the contemporary public realm in North America. The most likely future for the Tower Automotive site, however, is its ongoing abandonment and decay. Given the multi-million dollar costs and liabilities associated with the environmental remediation of the site, it remains unlikely that any single owner can manage it. Likewise, the market based economic climate in Milwaukee, its loss of population, tax base, and revenues suggest that the site's economic redevelopment may take decades. Equally, the City of Milwaukee would be hard pressed to fund its rehabilitation or redevelopment. Taken together, these conditions portend additional decades of abandonment and decay. They equally point to additional environmental, social, and psychological impacts on the adjacent community.

The projects shown here result from an examination of the Tower Automotive site as part of Option Studio offered at the Harvard Design School in the Spring 2004 and sponsored in part by the Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation. The studio examined multiple scenarios for the site's future redevelopment, and explored emergent understandings of the landscape medium as a constituent element of a newly conceived public realm. Any scenario for the redevelopment of the site, required the following minimum conditions:

- 1 be financially self-sufficient
- 2 depend on decreasing densities of population and capital
- 3 come to terms with the site's environmental contamination
- 4 shift perception of the site from one of loss and decay
- 5 put the site back into some form of productive public use

These challenges, equally evident on brownfield sites across the continent, recommend the landscape medium as uniquely capable of holding ground, buying time and cleaning the air and water. Our work in the studio examined a series of landscape based scenarios for the site's near term future. Each of them reconceived the site, while cleaning the ground, re-seeding it with potential as a site for post-Fordist public works.



3 Linescape Interchange

With the recent emergence of a globally distributed industrial economy, North American cities are increasingly shaped by the infrastructure of truck transport. This new form of urbanism is most visibly associated with increased volumes of truck freight on the highway system as well as the growth of distribution warehouses. This project explores the possibility of reprogramming the Tower Automotive site as a transit park and distribution node along a dedicated truck freightway replacing the now redundant rail lines bisecting the site. The programmatic transition of the Tower Automotive site from manufacturing and assembly to repackaging and distribution operates primarily through cleaning and arranging the ground for the staging of linear processes of distribution. Linear schedules of demolition, freight handling, storm water drainage, phyto-remediation, and horticulture align to form hybrid assemblies, conditioning the ground for the emergence of diverse ecological and recreational profiles. [Richard Kennedy, MLA, Harvard Design School].



1 Salt and Memory

This proposal deals with a fundamental dimension of public works for the city of Milwaukee, snow removal. The project anticipates that the most toxic portion of the Tower Automotive site, the eastern half, will be used by the City of Milwaukee as a snow removal and deposition. The snow will be trucked to the site, deposited, and allowed to melt through a landscape of deposition, sedimentation and evaporation. Through this process the sand and salt used to keep roadways passable are separated from the melted snow and harvested for re-use. The first phase of the strategy includes the construction of a central roadway infrastructure and series of small public recreational spaces. The existing contaminated soils are removed and deposited in a single capped pile, offering topographic relief while keeping all the toxins sealed on site. The existing foundation walls form a series of salt-water evaporation pools. These low, shallow pools contain a salt garden, with dried salt being farmed for re-use at the end of the season. Salt tolerant plants assist in this process and register the seasonal presence and absence of melted snow, salt, and sand. (Francesca Arici, MAUD, Harvard Design School).



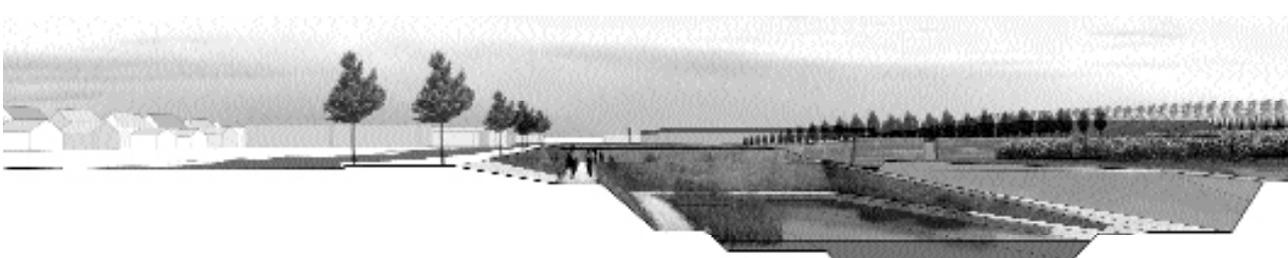
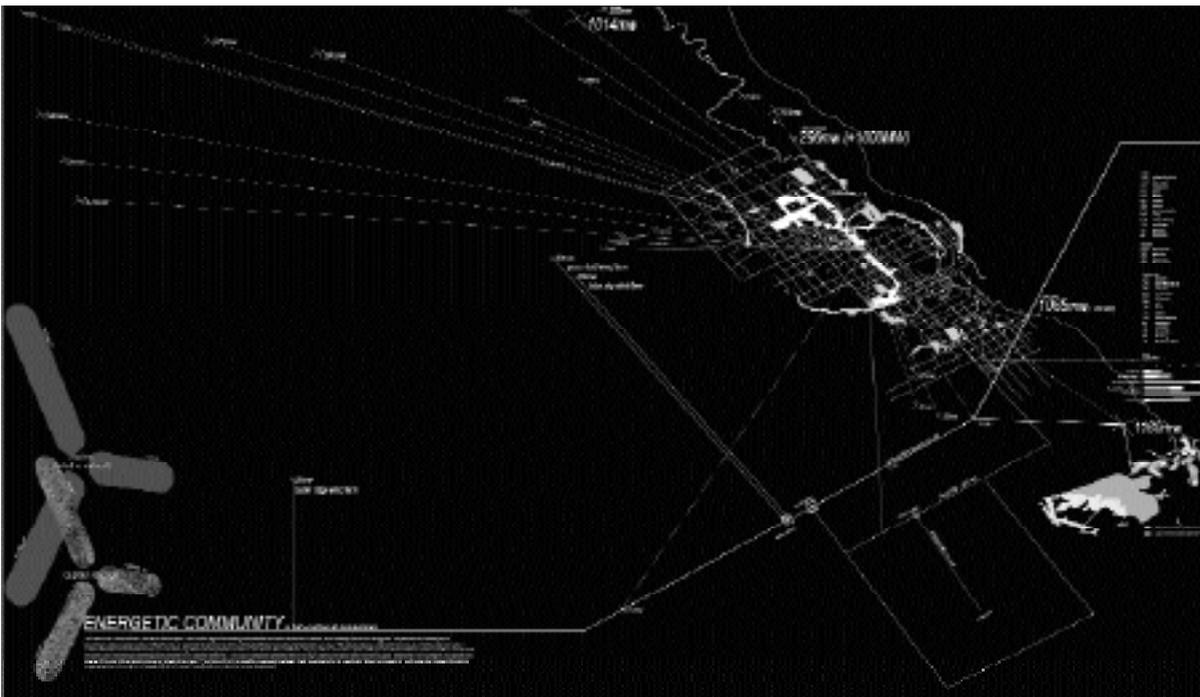
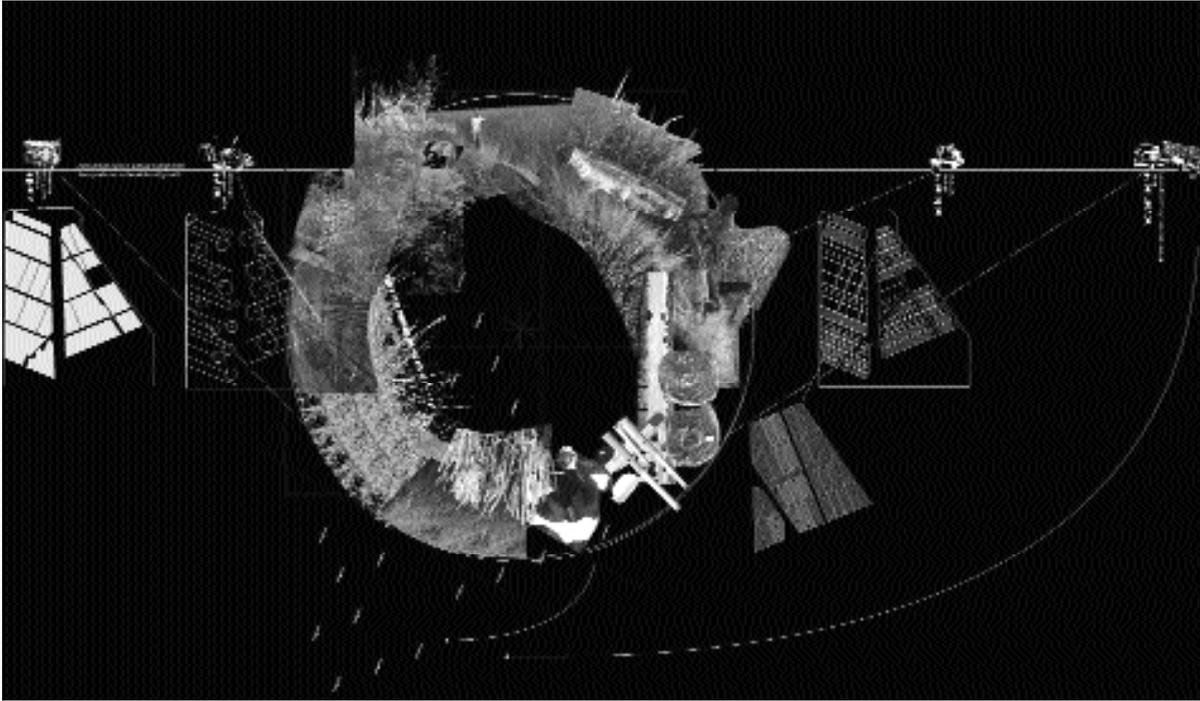
2 Salvaging Milwaukee

The next "growth industry" for the city of Milwaukee will involve neither the production nor consumption of material goods but rather the disassembly, recycling, and dispersal of the city's abandoned building fabric. The relative cost effectiveness of using recycled building materials in place of virgin materials has already resulted in an economic climate where the recycling and redistribution of building materials is a lucrative business venture. While offering cheap industrial space as the base for multi-stream recycling operations and a ready source of local unskilled labor, the Tower Automotive site is also itself a resource for recyclable building materials. Through the partnership of a national waste disposal corporation and local recycling and demolition firms, the material wealth of the site can be reaped while other recyclable waste streams of the city are tapped for day-to-day revenue. (Paul Lipchak, MAUD, Harvard Design School).



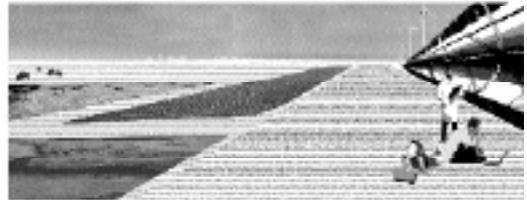
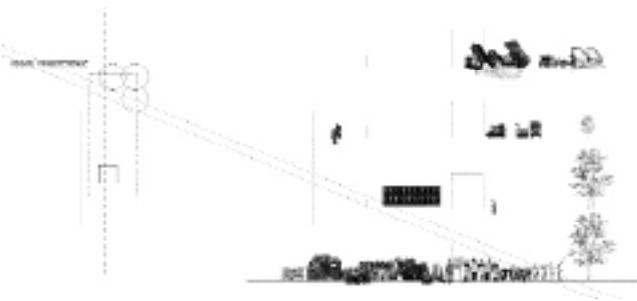
5 Energetic Community

This project proposes a framework to produce and distribute renewable energy while also addressing the inner city's undercapitalized social assets. While most of Milwaukee's economic sectors are experiencing minimal or negative growth, the regional electric industry is an exception, growing steadily at 3% per year. The State of Wisconsin has recently proposed to expand power generation by investing \$10 billion additional production capacity with 2% of this new investment dedicated to renewable energy sources. This project proposes a decentralized wind farming system along the 30 St. Industrial Corridor serving 2900 homes surrounding the former Tower Automotive site. Wind power offers a viable renewable option on this site as it sits in the midst of an excellent annual wind profile on the western edge of Lake Michigan, one of the nation's most consistently windy areas. Switchgrass farming is proposed under the wind turbines. This native grass requires little topsoil and no added water. It can be used as an additive to coal in coal fired power plants or as ethanol in gasoline, in both instances reducing pollutants from carbon based energy sources. (Kate Kennen, MLA, Harvard Design School).



6 Production Exchange: Yieldscales

This project proposes to re-task the 30th street corridor and the Canadian Pacific Railway right-of-way as an energy transmission corridor connecting the renewable energy wind farm facilities on the periphery of Milwaukee to communities in its interior. The proposal reuses the railway corridor as an energy transmission easement while the Tower Automotive site itself is rededicated to hydrogen fuel cell research and development. The hydrogen fuel cell programme ties into the existing automobile industry, while presenting the county of Milwaukee with a direct source of clean energy for public transit and a jobs training programme for community residents. Yieldscales illustrates the benefits of hydrogen fuel by using its waste products, most notably water, as the fundamental component of landscape remediation, soil purification, habitat regeneration, and social engagement. (Patrick Flynn, MLA, Harvard Design School).



A Year in China: reflections in retrospect

SARAH CREMIN



Jinhua

I travelled to China for the first time in August 2003 flying into Shanghai accompanied by two architect colleagues, a young Chinese woman who would act as interpreter and a Swiss detailing expert. We three had no common language beyond architecture and communicated in pigeon German, French and English. We were on a reconnaissance mission – our goal to return with an overview of the architecture and building culture of Jinhua city, Zhejiang province, located four hours drive southwest of Shanghai. My two colleagues travelled through villages and visited construction sites while I met with the client and consultants. This was the shortest of four trips made in a period of seven months – two-week immersions with no access to English language TV, radio or publications and even restricted internet access.

Connections

Herzog & de Meuron was introduced to the client by conceptual artist Ai Weiwei who was introduced to H&deM by Uli Sigg, former Swiss ambassador to China. Uli Sigg amassed a large collection of contemporary Chinese art over twenty five years in China. Ai Weiwei's best known works analyse present-day China through juxtapositions with objects from past dynasties. Jinhua was the birthplace of his father, Ai Qing, a renowned twentieth century poet celebrated once again after decades of neglect. Ai Qing lived in Jinhua until the Cultural Revolution banished him and his family to a village on the border with Siberia. Jinhua City invited Ai Weiwei to design Ai Qing Culture Park and sculpture in memory of his father.



Jinhua

Ai Weiwei was critical of the design for a new master plan south of the park and persuaded Jindong New District Management Committee to invite Herzog & de Meuron to redesign the centre of the new district. His sensitivity to both Chinese and Western cultures made him the perfect go-between. He was a mostly silent collaborator with a keen and intuitive sense of when his intervention was necessary to reassure client and architect.



Jindong, existing masterplan

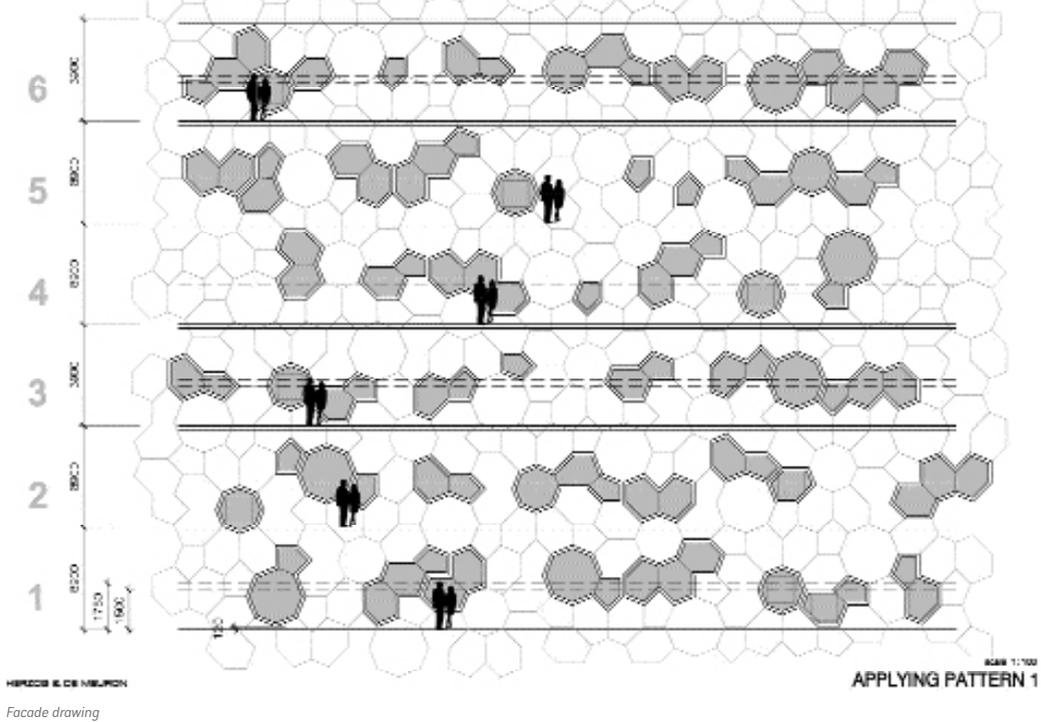
Jinhua

Jinhua, like many Chinese cities, has reinvented itself in recent years, destroying all traces of its architectural heritage and building eight-lane highways, shopping malls and almost identical high-rise apartment blocks in place of small, narrow streets and congested neighbourhoods. There is little to distinguish it from other cities. The population is a matter of conjecture – our research always yielded different counts, ranging from 300,000 to 1 million – due either to rapid expansion or projections into the future. The consensus was clear – the city was growing and everyone was rushing to fill future demand. Each of our young architect colleagues owned new apartments and drove new Volkswagen cars.



New and existing masterplans

The new district of Jindong is located on the outskirts of the city in a flat wasteland bordered to the north by Ai Qing Culture Park and the Yi Wu River with the outline of blue mountains in the distance. The original master plan was designed by a young Chinese architect educated in the West. The scale, density and international style buildings recall American suburbia. The wide open spaces of the new park, exposed without shelter to forty degree summer sunshine, seem wholly out of place. Only at night does the park come to life when the locals arrive en masse by bicycle to admire the coloured lights and fountains and sit at plastic folding tables sipping beer and playing mah-jong.



Field in the city; city in the field

The design approach was modest and took its cues from the context. We reacted against the rigorous homogeneity and uniform density of the existing master plan with its buildings grouped in zones according to programme. Suburban China. Our first move was to concentrate all buildings on one half of the site beside the river, resulting in greater density and leaving open space for a park to the south which forms a green link between Jinhua city to the west and newer developments to the east.

The programme was vague – 175,000sq.m consisting of retail, mixed-use, entertainment, hotel and office accommodation. We added residential to the mix to ensure a lively atmosphere day and night. We designed a system of buildings that would easily adapt to different programme use.

The map of existing rice fields on the site was used to define a grid which was named the Field. This pattern was distorted in two places where water once flowed into the Yi Wu River leaving traces in the landscape. These lines of ‘petrified nature’ define the outlines of the Village and Mountain typologies. These typologies with more fluid, organic outlines leading towards the river contrast with the orthogonal rigour of the Field grid. The traditional Chinese market town was located close to water and its main street often followed the natural curve of the river.

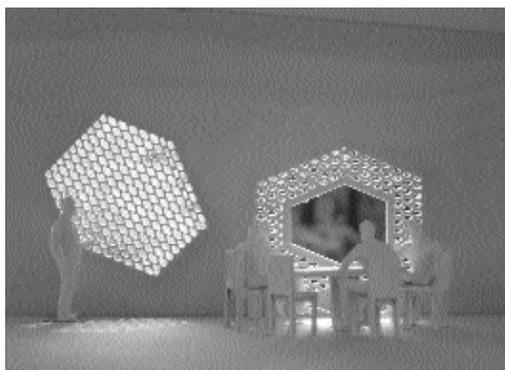
The Field is distinguished by its continuous, undulating roofscape, a contemporary interpretation of the traditional Chinese roofscape. Narrow, arcaded streets run in an East– West direction providing shelter for shoppers from the sun and heavy rains. The principal façades of the two to three storey buildings face North and South, the preferred orientation in Eastern China.

The Mountain, rising to twelve floors at its peak marks the west edge of the Jindong New District center and contains hotels, shops and apartments. It is expressed architecturally as horizontal bands of shadow and light created by alternating glass and solid stripes, reminiscent of the layering visible in a cliff face or sedimentary rock. The narrow, eroded canyon at its center leads towards the sculpture at Ai Qing Culture Park.

The Village is so called because of the character of its small lanes and public spaces that recall the scale of the traditional Chinese village. It is a collection of individual buildings more intimate in character. At its heart is a meandering ‘spine’ street linking together open spaces and leading to the river.

The Park retains the memory of the fields that previously covered the site. The structural grid of the Field typology, represented by trees whose density varies, creates areas of shade and light and activity. The block of the Field typology is retained as landscape – playing fields, rice fields, pools of water, pearl cultivation ponds, lily pools. The Park attempts to reflect the 24 solar seasons in its selection of trees and planting and growth. The streets are called after the 24 seasons.

The client was taken with the concept and drew beautiful Chinese characters which named the project ‘field in



facade model



facade detail

Shades of red

The façades of the Field and Village typologies are generated using a traditional Chinese screen pattern. The façade concept is inherently flexible, allowing addition or omission of openings where necessary, using the 'invisible' matrix to locate openings. Within any opening the detail can vary, from screen to operable window to fixed window. The aim was to define a specific character while also allowing great freedom and flexibility.

In recognition of the modest budget each typology works with straightforward concrete column and beam structure. Readily available materials are used and take advantage of skilled brick-layers and relatively cheap labour. The horizontal and angled surfaces of the Mountain have a plaster finish. The walls of the Field and Village use brick and render. Shades of red, inspired by the deep red colour of the local soil unify the typologies.

New buildings in Jinhua are dominated by poorly constructed glass curtain walling, mirror and coloured glass and reconstituted stone panelling. We wanted to create a more humane environment with tactile surfaces. We designed brick patterns with beautiful textures. The client was taken aback at our proposal to use brick. Brick has connotations of poverty and regression. (We learnt that the local government was handing out grants to encourage locals to plaster over unsightly brick facades.) The textured walls and streets avoid the shiny slickness favoured by other new buildings in Jinhua. It remains to be seen if the brick patterns will be realised as it is possible to lay brick in the normal fashion without affecting the construction in the least. Perhaps the design is too flexible.

Eastern Time

The pace was brisk. We completed deadlines with Swiss conscientiousness at Chinese speed. Drawings were sent back and forth daily. Written communication was concise with every e-mail requiring translation between Mandarin and English. We relied on the drawings to communicate. Our partners in Jinhua produced the official documents using our base drawings and were responsible for compliance with local building codes and regulations.

Schematic design was completed in three months. Preliminary design was completed in phases over the following six months. The final submission was made in April 2004.

The fee was significantly lower than for similar-sized projects in Europe. There was little time available so we were compelled to produce the minimum drawings necessary to explain the project efficiently. We worked at many scales simultaneously, developing full scale typical details while still modelling and testing the master plan at 1: 500.

During the Preliminary design phase we made full scale mock-ups to test the brick patterns, first in Switzerland and then in China. It was important to check our ideas early in the process when there was still time to assess and change. The outcome was very successful. These now stand like ruins in the middle of the new highway.

Rainy days

We spent long days meeting in damp rooms with coats on, drinking tea and sketching. Jinhua, like all places south of the Yangtze River, does not heat interiors in winter despite temperatures of 8 to 10 degrees combined with frequent rain. Our hospitable colleagues treated us to lunch and dinner daily and did their best to startle us with strange culinary experiences. I ate duck legs, ox feet, turtle, ox penis and sucked raw sugar cane. There was an avian flu alert and ban on chicken consumption yet chicken continued to appear under disguise in soups and sauces. It was impossible to drink in a social way as all present – and 12 fit comfortably at a 2m round table – would offer a toast that necessitated drinking a full glass of rice wine. The only option was abstinence.

We never knew what lay ahead each day. There were surprise meetings, unexpected presentations, unscheduled visits from unidentified politicians and journalists. We presented the project at a committee hearing upon completion of Schematic Design. It was criticised at length. A local politician said that the scale of the narrow streets did not address China's burgeoning population. The local mall owner and potential investor found the buildings too small. The Transport Minister thought the giant car park inadequate to accommodate the city's future car owners as people in China are abandoning their bicycles as soon as they can afford to. Meanwhile the highway outside was almost deserted. The meeting was adjourned and the director thanked everyone for approving the project.

The client was intelligent and excited about the project. He carried renderings in his briefcase alongside pictures of his wife and child. Certain aspects of the design questioned the very symbols of wealth and success that his constituents strived to achieve. His political career depended on the success of the project. The project was a risky venture for all involved.

I had read Rem Koolhaas' study of the rapid development of the Pearl River Delta, 'Great Leap Forward', and was intimidated by Chinese efficiency and speed. I did not find in Jinhua Rem's mythical 'Chinese architect' – who builds ten times the number of buildings with one tenth the salary of her European counterpart. The mythical Chinese speed lasted only through the early design phases. Speed motivated by impatience. Inefficient speed that requires revision and re-design at later phases due to rushed decisions and work. The local architects' speed was limited to copy/paste capabilities and did not translate easily into non-standard solutions (there was too much variation within our typologies). The initial enthusiasm and urgency of the client was mitigated with a change in Chinese government policy which reduced government funding in the project to just over 50%. The client was suddenly obliged to find investors.

An e-mail arrived from Jinhua in mid-July 2005, breaking a year-long silence. The director of Jindong New District has been promoted to chairman of Jinhua city and has found investors for the new centre. The project is up and running again. Ground-breaking is scheduled for December allowing four months to complete construction documents for at least a portion of the seventy seven buildings. Design at Herzog & de Meuron is a fluid process and undoubtedly this urban plan will continue to evolve and improve in response to the new conditions. A new team with new energy will soon embark on the next phase of the project.



Brick mockups of facade

Sarah Cremin is an architect with Herzog & de Meuron and is currently based in New York.

News from Nowhere : Franz Ackermann

MATTHEW BEATTIE

Since the disintegration of orthodox modernism, creative practices have expanded into new conceptual and aesthetic territories, seeking to transcend conventional, market-driven categories; to engage with a non-specialist public and participate in political, social, economic and cultural debates. Visual artists in particular have steadily prised open conceptual space between art and the built environment, appropriating techniques and materials, working methods and modes of representation traditionally associated with architecture and its related disciplines. But what potential exists for this traffic of ideas to become more reciprocal? Given the glacial pace of change in architecture, what can be learned from allied art practices arguably more agile and consequently better able to react to societal transformations and reflect contemporary realities?

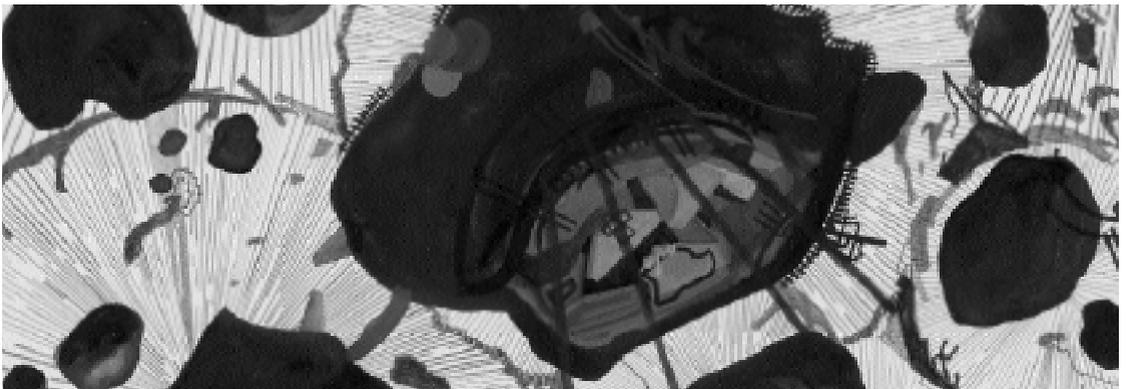
One visual artist with a growing reputation for exploring these boundary zones is Franz Ackermann, whose work is currently the subject of a solo exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA). Employing a range of techniques and procedures, Ackermann is best known for infiltrating and interrogating issues – globalisation, the sense of place, the individual and the collective, terrorism and security, media saturation – surrounding the uneasy relationship between tourism and contemporary urbanism. At IMMA, the Ackermann exhibition occupies four interconnected rooms on the east side of the central courtyard, each accommodating a distinct multi-part, mixed-media installation – *Faceland III* (2003), *The Landing Room* (2005), *Travelantittravel* (2004) and *The Staying Room* (2005). Collectively, these present a seamless blend of retrospective, re-mixed and wholly-new work.

Immediately overwhelming, the installation transforms every surface of a familiar, domestic-scaled enfilade to dramatic and bewildering effect. Ackermann has described his exhibitions as vehicles “to express my usual obsessions: light, painting, illusion and travel,

movement and time” (PANEK, 2005, p. 42). An itemised description of the works on show in the catalogue reads like a surrealist shopping list: steel grid, wall painting, bag with empty bottles, c-print, fire-proof hotel door, oil on canvas on metal tracks and door stopper, bullet proof barrier, photograph on forex, voice recording, travel accessories bought on e-bay. Punctuating this hectic proliferation of media, however, are neatly-framed, postcard-sized works in watercolour, pencil, felt-tip pen – examples, from a series stretching back to 1990, of Ackermann’s *Mental Maps* – that seem to hold the key to understanding the constellation of images and objects that surround them.

The *Mental Maps* – paradoxically both untitled and given suggestively talismanic names such as the birthday and values of the west - are finely-detailed compositions made up of free-floating elements of cartography, cloudbursts of colour, explosive shards of geometry and stylised allusions to velocity and frenetic activity, all imbued with a vague, dizzying sense of perspectival depth. Executed in the typical refuges of the besieged tourist – hotel rooms, cafes, airport lounges, railway waiting rooms – following intense urban explorations, they represent, in Ackermann’s words, “a retrospective recording of the dynamism and energy of a place... or its boredom and melancholy” (PANEK, 2005, p. 41) and “a kind of distillation of a journey, fuelled by memory and current experience” (STANGE, 2002, p. 99). To paraphrase Mallarme, the *Mental Maps* are a record not of the place itself, but of the effect the place produces. They are analogous to retinal afterimages or a superimposed, compressed series of flashbacks. By extension, the other elements of the installation can be interpreted as a re-concretisation of the space and vitality captured by the *Mental Maps*: a *mise en scene* suggesting the urban environments that inspired them, with the gallery-goer now cast in the role of the tourist.

detail from 1,2 fly from *Travelantittravel* (2004)





detail from untitled (mental map: values of the west) from Faceland III (2003)

The exhibition leaves a lingering impression, both compelling and unsettling, evoking a precarious stasis, a moment captured from a cycle of expansion and collapse. Looking closer, there seems to reside something more ambiguous, even cynical, beneath the gloss of giddy enthusiasm for the contemporary city and its manic energy. Viewed in this light, the Mental Maps begin to feel introverted and claustrophobic, ominously depopulated and lacking the reassuring solidity of recognisable places: the product of a great deal of looking and a calculated absence of seeing. The idea of the alienated – and consequently liberated – urban connoisseur has a long and provocative history, but in the Mental Maps one feels that Ackermann is consciously employing the eye of the tourist: grandchild of Isherwood's camera [now camcorder?] with its shutter always open, promiscuously taking everything in while avoiding any meaningful engagement.

In the current era of pre-packaged city breaks and low-cost air travel, this perspective on the city – superficial, stimulation-hungry, distraction-seeking – is arguably exerting a growing influence on the way cities are experienced, represented and even guiding the forces that shape them. The branding of cities is increasingly based not on physical characteristics or static elements of culture – monuments, museums, sites of historical significance – but on the commodification of urban ambience – by selling the consumer on the quality of shopping and nightlife, creating the impression of an exciting, fashionable lifestyle. This promotional exercise extends seamlessly into efforts to seduce the ultimate contemporary tourist – the multinational corporation. When the infrastructure required to conduct business – open-plan office space and a data connection point – exists almost anywhere, these same qualities are used to pitch a city as a desirable, employee-friendly base for global operations.

Ackermann himself has been described as a prime example of a related globalising trend, that of the “migratory artist,” a term coined by the critic and curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist to describe the fact that “today most artists lead a nomadic

existence... traveling from one exhibition to the next, spending most of their time in airports” (Panek, 2005, p. 39). In this context, “the operative definition of the site [is] transformed from a physical location – grounded, fixed, actual – to a discursive vector – ungrounded, fluid, virtual” (Kwon, 2002, p. 29) and the artist roams the globe, participating in themed exhibitions and biennales, often invited to pursue his or her personal fixations through “location-specific” installations.

Re-entering the contested frontier between creative disciplines at this point, the lines of influence and appropriation are more difficult to trace. Do these aspects of contemporary art practice offer a view into the future of architectural practice? Through international competitions and commissions, architectural biennales and with the increasingly rapid and widespread dissemination of architectural imagery through digital media, one could argue that a significant proportion of the most admired architectural practitioners are already working within the “site” of a framework of theoretical concerns and methodologies that are then “situated” in “location-specific” projects. In the contemporary global marketplace, is the architect increasingly operating in a similar mode to that of the “migratory artist”? If so, the implications – and the next trip to the gallery – provide interesting food for thought.

‘Franz Ackermann at the Irish Museum of Modern Art’, East Ground Galleries, 20 July to 23 October 2005.

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The re-gentrification of rural Ireland?

CONOR MOLONEY

In lively contributions to *Irish Review* and *Building Material*, architect Dominic Stevens recently made the case for a new approach to designing settlements in rural Ireland. Stevens himself is part of the latest wave of urbanites who are forging a rural livelihood with great imagination, commitment, and success. He proposes that this new population, in part liberated by advances in information and communication technology, can provide a critical mass for contemporary variants of the social institutions of *meitheal*, *clachan*, and *townland*. New social arrangements will accordingly require new spatial configurations and “neo-rural” architectural forms, and this he identifies as the key challenge for contemporary Irish architects.

Much of the discussion is evidently a working-through of Stevens’ own preconceptions about rural life, and of the very urban preoccupation with “what the country is for”. Yet it is no accident that the word ‘planning’ is not once mentioned. If one accepts that planning is by definition a collective approach to managing shared resources, its omission in this context is striking. Instead, it appears to be proposed that a “neo-rural” collectivity will emerge as a cumulative effect of the individual actions and personal choices of the new rural dwellers. What is elided in this argument is that it is precisely such incremental uncoordinated development that has left us with current patterns of rural development that – in Stevens’ own opinion – have made collective rural life barely viable. What rural Ireland needs is not less planning, but less of the sort of planning that simply conflates rural development policy with agricultural policy (McDonough).

Consider the following: why in recent years have rural areas become relatively more attractive to urban dwellers while at the same time urban areas have been steadily growing? Both phenomena are inextricably linked to economic restructuring. For many (most) people there is a compelling need to live in a location with access to the largest possible labour market (Dublin), in order to manage the periodic job and career changes which the new economy makes necessary. For the majority of households this involves making tough choices and managing multiple trade-offs between the ‘hard’ variables of living standards and the ‘soft’ variables of quality of life. It is principally those who can negotiate this labour market on their own terms who can afford (literally and metaphorically) to locate away from population centres. This “neo-rural” lifestyle can therefore be seen as an advanced form of suburbia. Or, more specifically, in an era where conventional suburban development has become less attractive due to hugely intensified competition for space in urban areas, the “neo-rural” lifestyle is the contemporary Irish expression of suburban secession (Cronin).

Why is this sort of development necessarily suburban? Because it is in key respects functionally dependent on urban areas. This can be demonstrated by examining a recurrent theme in Stevens’ articles: the liberating possibilities of infrastructure, particularly digital infrastructure. An accompanying drawing shows an irregular landscape overlaid with “an even field of multiple connection points” – a suggestion of universal and equal access to new technologies. The internet, however, far from dispensing with geography, in fact creates new and unexpected geographies of connection and disconnection, proximity and distance, digital literacy and illiteracy. New infrastructures not only create new opportunities, but also articulate existing conditions such as uneven distributions of skills, resources, and power. The constellation of techno-homesteads proposed in the “neo-rural” scenario is a case in point. It is necessary here to identify what is the nature of the work being undertaken in the so-called ‘electronic cottage’, and under what conditions it is being produced. There are two principal types of tele-working. Firstly, there is the low-value generic consumer and producer services conducted under highly supervised and controlled labour conditions, such as tele-sales and sales support. Secondly, there is the high-value professional services involving specialized information workers working in multi-disciplinary technical teams. It is those involved in the latter who, because of their

flexibility and relative power in the labour market, are most likely to adopt the “neo-rural” lifestyle. Yet it is precisely to this creative information-rich work that the direct contacts, synergies, and economies of scale offered by dense urban environments are most valuable. This explains the ostensible paradox of why, at the same time as information technology becomes more ubiquitous, the types of work that use it most intensively are those that are most concentrated spatially. We see this, for example, in urban clusters of highly-specialized services: finance, media, entertainment, design, software, technical translation, etc. Therefore, we should not be surprised that the “neo-rurals” in fact spend much of their time in urban locations, and create increased demands for improvements to transportation services and communications infrastructure of questionable viability in order to facilitate their “neo-rural” (in fact, suburban) lifestyle (Cronin, Graham & Marvin, Grimes).

Furthermore, the “neo-rural” scenario overlooks the impact of new infrastructures on existing rural communities, industries, and places. To talk of a purely ‘rural Ireland’ even in the twentieth century may have been something of a misnomer. The viability of rural life long depended on a network of social and economic institutions and services with key functions based in towns and villages, e.g. co-operatives, markets, factories, etc. The penetration of new transport and communication infrastructure fundamentally changes the scalar relationships between rural and urban areas as it alters and, in some cases, literally bypasses the usefulness of many intermediate urban centres and the social and economic structures they embody. In Ireland, this tends to further reinforce the dominance of the ‘primate city’ – Dublin and its orbit – while at the same time the upgraded infrastructure is presented as the stereotypical symbol of rural development. Similar patterns are evident in the development of devolved government and broadly-based governance in Ireland. At the national scale, bogus regions have been constructed to demonstrate the national policy of decentralization, while at the local scale a catalogue of community development initiatives over decades have largely served “as merely a spectacle for legitimising [central] government policies and proposals” (McDonough). How do the “neo-rurals” fit into this picture – will they be part of the solution or part of the problem? To what extent will they expand the possibilities of rural life for others apart from themselves? Or will they simply commission cutting-edge contemporary architecture? (Graham & Marvin, Grimes, McDonough).

To take up the challenge of designing for rural life, architects must engage with issues beyond the scale of individual incremental development. Many issues are of course systemic and outside the kind of expertise architects can offer. However, there are specific points of contact where architects could make the difference. Firstly, rural Ireland already has a range of complex civil institutions which could offer a starting point for thinking about rural social organization: rural small businesses and co-operatives; sporting and cultural associations; religious organizations; local economic trading systems; etc. Synergies between different organizations have been difficult to develop because of the highly fragmented development policies and initiatives of central government. In the absence of such coordination, architects are as well-placed as others to develop and integrate the spatial forward-thinking of these existing, overlapping, and interlocking communities of interest. Secondly, the environmental viability of small-scale rural development should not simply be presumed, but should be measured against social, economic, and ecological impacts. Local authorities and national agencies currently manage these issues through a range of legal and planning instruments, and service management regimes. What is often missing is a qualitative overview of the cumulative impacts of such decision-making processes in the built environment. These are the kinds of multi-disciplinary issues that architects are well-equipped to evaluate, mediate, and reconfigure – if they could position themselves within the policy and decision-making apparatus. Thirdly, while some might consider the rural-based architect a contradiction in terms, this is precisely what is needed if practice in the built environment is to improve and develop in rural areas. For Stevens, this standpoint is the source of his inspiration and authority. His “neo-rural” thinking demonstrates how the architectural imaginary can give striking expression to a social vision. But polemic should be tempered with analysis – there is a wealth of material experience and critical scholarship in and on contemporary rural Ireland. The spatial scales that shape the built environment traverse the boundaries not only of rural, urban, and national areas, but also of disciplinary outlooks and professional competences.

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CODA

GLASGOW, OCTOBER 1995

December morning and I stand with my back to the city; two concrete towers' reflections are caught on a glass window in front of me behind steel mesh. Running my hand along the flaking black and green paintwork I read, inscribed in gold above the door,

'Licensed to sell alcoholic drinks'

The thud of the pickaxe comes to me from above, the final tolls in the last moments of the Blarney Stone. When I look I see the labourer's blows beginning to reveal the roof beams, exposed like skeletal ribs against the grey sky above the gutted, dusty shell.

The Blarney Stone, standing at the corner of acres of nothing; a last headstone to a lost Gorbals, a landscape swept away in the delirium of the Sixties under the advancing roar of yellow bulldozers and swinging ball and chains. And the stones that once housed a cauldron of Glasgow humanity; thousands of workers and families shoulder to shoulder, were carted away in a line of tipper trucks, rumbling dusty through the streets. Asphalt roads and kerbstones formed a shadow on the ground in the line of where the streets had been.

The last empty silver kegs in the street, stacked in rows of two on four. Black Guinness sign on the green wall, its plastic stained with the decades, the light inside forever gone out, the last drop drunk, the glasses carried away in cardboard boxes. Two or three whisky gill dispensers lie scattered in leftover debris.

And after the bulldozers methodically razed the Gorbals, so that stooey rubble stretched as far as the developer's eye could see, the Blarney Stone and two or three other little buildings (a tiny raggle of pubs and betting shops) remained erect after the tide of demolition had washed over them. The flats and single ends above them, scene of so many personal histories and encounters, lopped off like the top of a boiled egg, leaving these odd-looking, daft wee buildings with hastily asphalted flat roofs and blank rendered walls.

The reasons for The Blarney Stone's exemption from this masonry pogrom are not clear. Maybe the prospect of some kind of continued commercial viability against a sea of desolation carried it through, or the obstinacy of a landlord who couldn't understand the concept of progress. And so it became a curious epitaph, a last awkward breath of history. No different from any of the other pubs in the area, and no different from many of the Glasgow bars made for men's drinking. It had nothing special to merit its survival. But the levelling of the rolling bulldozers had been diverted, and the Blarney Stone remained above ground, pulling punters out of the air to keep alive.

And I imagine them coming back then, the trickle of decanted and dispersed Gorbalese; clinging to lost dreams of their demised community, commuting from their new homes in the new peripheral estates to drink at The Blarney Stone again of a weekend. Communing with old friends and comrades shunted out with them to a prescribed new life at the four bleakest corners of the city; Castlemilk, Easterhouse, Drumchapel, Pollok, wherever. And the others, who did not make it back, thrown to the wildernesses of the central new towns, drinking their weekends amongst new folk, between the sterile concrete walls of a new town tavern, but dreaming of old connections.

My hands, blue with the cold, shakily hold the camera, record the pick-axeman's blows; the broken sign, revealing an older one behind it, the crumbling stonework, the wrought iron ventilation grates below the steel coloured windows.

I can see them now, staring from the windows of the Blarney Stone, fingers wrapped round muddy pints, the pale eyes of punters viewing the void that had once contained their whole lives. Those, who when looking through the emptiness could piece together in their thoughts - the phantom stones and masonry of the adjoining buildings, so that the street returned, and the people and the life returned and all the stories; the work, the football, brief encounters with transient girlfriends, those first kisses with the wife, the fights, Thursday's empty pay packets and Friday's empty glasses. I can hear their murmurs, see the swirling cigarette smoke, hear their lungs coughing.

A rusting fan turns loosely on its axle in the window, through the door, the floor has disappeared, rusty nails stick vertical from the battered joists. The hard-hatted silhouette of a workman crouches on the roof.

The grass grew over rubble untouched since the bulldozers left, tower blocks were erected and, tower blocks were erected and came down, the city perpetually changed and readjusted itself to its own hidden logic. And the Blarney Stone continued in life, through the thirty years towards more and more difficult times. Dwindling numbers of punters, some moving further away from the city, others slipping away to death, or to nursing homes, and still others, grasping at the future, went their own way. Unwilling to relive their past and make the journey down the road to drink in a pub that had nothing to offer but memories, a departed life in a landscape that no longer existed.

Around the back of the Blarney Stone, I piss in the cold morning where countless others pissed. The grey render wall stained with my flow. Bottles and cans cast there around my feet make a mosaic of faded colours and rusting steel.

And then daggers came out again for the Blarney Stone. Once more external eyes hovered over the Gorbals. It began again there, the developers dream, a full reinvention of the area; the Gorbals as a wonderful opportunity to experience inner city life, flats for sale or to let, supermarkets, car parking and two minutes from the city centre. Cheap brick buildings with ornamental iron and plastic pediments crept towards the Blarney Stone, their future inhabitants the young and the wealthy. And in this new vision, The Blarney Stone, the lonely anachronism became an assault to this image of a reinvented Gorbals, jarring sensitive dispositions, too ugly with too many memories of what came before, connotations of dirt and working classes.

I can hear the shouts from workmen, and the traffic on the road. Both come to me muffled by the walls. There's an empty shadow where the T.V. used to hover above the bar. More sounds, the footsteps of workmen, the splintering of joists, the rattling of broken deadening dropping to the floor, the rhythmic dripping of a broken pipe.

It will be erased now, its site taken by the latest private apartment block, to be consigned to the domain of ghosts. Perhaps a framed picture amongst others in a brick pub with a plastic pediment, Glasgow long ago where sooty faced urchins rummage through dirty middens, and half finished ocean liners stand erect in dry docks surrounded by toothy workers grinning their pride. A working class history reduced to a series of grainy images, behind glass, pinned to a wall.

And as I walk back northwards through Crown Street and Kwik Save, I think of The Blarney Stone, as a metaphor for Glasgow. As the city reinvents itself, it systematically destroys a collective memory and creates a new one. Struggles and contradictions become negated by their potential as a picturesque history, distanced from the present; neat, sanitised, manipulated memories.

The Blarney Stone then stands as lifelong antagonist; an obstinate cancer in the first clearing of the Gorbals and too ugly to be assimilated in its reinvention, it slips quietly beneath the waves of redevelopment, our memories wiped clean.



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