

the Architect

The official journal of the Kamra tal-Periti

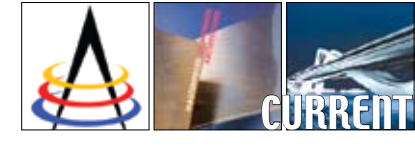


Issue no. 41 | June 2007

KAMRA TAL - PERITI

NEWSPAPER POST

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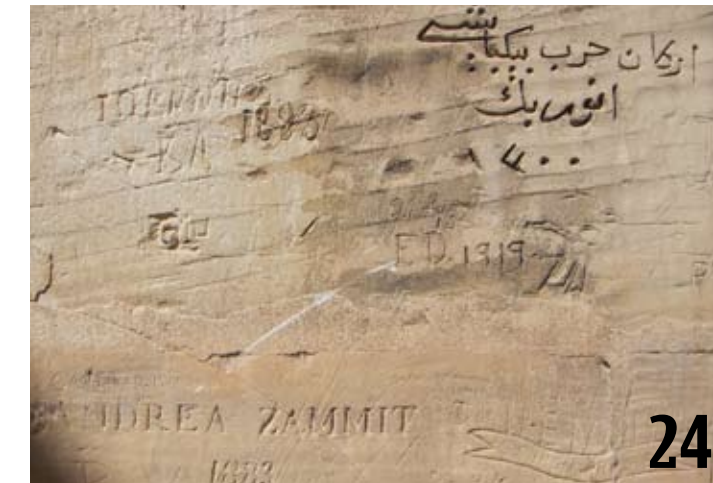
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“Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.”

Isaac Asimov (1920 – 1992)

One of the most discussed, criticised and debated projects to have been undertaken in Malta is finally about to open its doors to the general public. Over fifteen years after its inception, the Mater Dei Hospital transforms itself from a construction site into a state-of-the-art hospital, where patients, visitors and staff will be able to experience the already excellent local health care system within a setting and environment befitting the 21st century. In line with this, the editorial team felt that it should dedicate this issue of “the Architect” to health care buildings. How can the actual design of such a building contribute towards the well-being of the patients? Can the design influence the effectiveness of the care being provided, and the response of the patients to such care? Are there any specific design theories that can be followed when faced with a brief for such a project?

Well being within health care projects is certainly of the utmost importance. However, the quality of our buildings is not vital solely in certain types of projects. A debate that is currently ongoing with some vigour during the Kamra’s Council meetings is the state of the built environment. Andrew Calleja, Chairman of MEPA, wrote in the introduction to the program of an event co-organised between the MEPA and the Kamra, that “MEPA is indeed concerned that the vast majority of projects that reach it are quite mediocre in nature.” He further says that “It (MEPA) can only assess applications from a land-use point of view,” hence the implication that there is absolutely no, or little, vetting of the quality of design being presented to the public.

Cesare Casati, architect and critic, experienced his first visit to Malta last May, when he was invited to deliver a lecture as part of the Architecture Nights programme. Asked for his impressions of Malta and its architecture, he didn’t mince his words in stating that in his opinion we are stuck in a time warp. Stone structures are beautiful if carried out with skill and sensitive design, but why do you still have stone lions and statues in your modern buildings, especially residences, he asked? People do not need this ornamentation any more; they need clean, modern, simple yet efficient and versatile buildings, he concluded.

In his paper presented in this issue of tA, Sylvio Farrugia, Assistant Director Development Control in the Planning Directorate, questions whether it is the education system that is to blame: “Sadly, it seems that architecture, and especially the process of architectural training, largely, and sometimes completely, ignores the value of a grounding in traditional techniques that, until fairly recently, were considered to be the life blood of any designer’s learning.” He also questions the increased

interest in high rise building, where “the emphasis is on exploitation of land rather than beauty and uniqueness of design.” At a recent Real Estate Forum, Farrugia also hinted at the need for a structure similar to the British CABE, which would have the task of assessing the quality of architectural design, a task which MEPA personnel are not necessarily equipped to perform.

In the meantime, public outcry broke out on the project for the re-development of the Ulysses Lodge located on the site known as Ta’ Marin in the limits of Xagħra, Gozo. While it appears that there may be some misconceptions and misinformation, this case clearly indicates that the public at large does care about the environment in which we live, more so when anything affects the natural environment to any extent.

On the other hand, the news that MEPA has approved an application for the construction of three high-rise buildings, of 13, 33 and 27 storeys height, does not appear to have caused as much furore. These towers will dwarf the 23-storey Portomaso tower in St Julians, currently the tallest building in Malta. Does this imply that the Maltese are happy to accept high-rise, as opposed to the taking up of further sprawled development? Furthermore, no mention has been made in the press of the fact that this development will replace the Mira Motors building, described by Dr Conrad Thake and the late Prof Quentin Hughes in their book “Malta: War and Peace” as “one of the first pioneering examples of a modernist concrete frame structure building to be built on the island”. Designed by Prof Joseph Colombo, “the façade of the imposing building is a skilful composition whereby the main structural elements create a rhythmic division along both the horizontal and vertical dimensions.” For many years, it also held the record as the largest clear span building in Malta, making it a unique forward-looking construction especially since it was built in the late 1930s.

So, one must ask, where do we go from here? The Kamra tal-Periti is actively working on the draft of a National Policy for Architecture, as well as a position paper on its vision for the built environment. Quentin Hughes’ words echo strongly here: “Malta is a test case of whether our generation, with its increasing leisure, mobility and taste for foreign travel, is capable of dealing sensitively and intelligently with an environment it takes over as a playground, or whether it only knows how to exploit such an environment commercially until its charm and character have gone, and then move on to do the same elsewhere.”

Simone Vella Lenicker
Editor


THE PROFESSIONAL CENTRE
SLIEMA ROAD
GZIRA GZR 06 - MALTA
TEL./FAX. (+356) 2131 4265
EMAIL: kamratelperiti@nextgen.net.mt
WEBSITE: www.ktpmalta.com

KAMRA TAL-PERITI

To support members of the profession in achieving excellence in their practice of architecture and engineering in the interest of the community

The Council of the Kamra Tal-Periti for the year 2007 consists of David Felice (President), David Pace (Past - President) and Council members Keith Cole, Anthony Fenech Vella, Alberto Miceli Farrugia, Danica Mifsud, Antoine Zammit, Damian Vella Lenicker, Vincent Cassar, Malcolm Sullivan, Ruben Sciortino and Philip Grech.

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Editor: **Simone Vella Lenicker**
Consulting Editor: **Danica Mifsud**
Design: **Zvezdan Reljic**
Sales executive: **Joseph Zammit**

Published by:



Vjal ir-Riħan
San Gwann SGN 02
Malta
Tel: +356 21 382 741
Fax: +356 21 385 075
Email: admin@mediatoday.com.mt

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Cover: 3D model of Mater Dei Hospital. Courtesy SMJV

MEETING WITH THE MLP

Representatives of the KTP Council met with the Malta Labour Party on the 25 April to discuss the opposition’s proposals for the conservation of our Historical Environment as outlined in the party’s policy paper entitled “Abbozz ta’ Stqarrija ta’ Viżjoni Dwar il-Harsien ta’ l-Ambjent Storiku”, in which the MLP commits to the conservation of our cultural environment for the good of future generations. The document views conservation as an essential and integral part of any strategy for the sustainable development of the islands. In the presence of the deputy leader of the Malta Labour Party, Charles Mangion, Vincent Camilleri, and Roderick Galdes, the KTP expressed its appreciation that a political party was giving the matter some prominence and commented favourably about the general principles outlined in the policy paper.

The MLP’s proposed strategy seeks to rationalise the diverse agencies currently operating in the field into a single authority so as to address the inefficiencies and wastage of resources inherent in the current set-up. The document states that the MLP will be seeking to increase the effectiveness of legislation and enforcement without stifling economic development, and to introduce incentives to encourage conservation, preservation, and reuse as opposed to demolition and redevelopment. Regrettably, the document stops short of providing further details of these initiatives. In reaction the KTP suggested that “architecture” be included within the remit of the Ministry of Culture, as is the trend in the rest of Europe. It also requested that additional finances be dedicated towards fiscal incentives for the conservation of heritage as well as towards research into the built environment as a whole, including forward planning and sustainability. It further proposed that Special Purpose Vehicles are set-up as a public private partnership, to help catalyse the regeneration of our depressed historic urban centres.

ACE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

KTP President David Felice attended the General Assembly of the Architects’ Council of Europe (ACE) held in Brussels on 20-21 April. Typically, this was a highly informative event, thanks to the contribution of the ACE Executive Board, the Secretariat and the various experts appointed on the wide range of working groups created over the years. Of particular interest was the discussion on the conference the ACE intends organising, now planned for April 2008, under the patronage of the President of the EU, Jose’ Barroso. The programme of the event will be struc-

tured around the economic, social and environmental pillars. Presentations in the one day event will be given by leaders from the architectural, political and economical spheres.

Other items of particular interest were the initial results of a sector study being undertaken by the ACE, with feedback received from nineteen countries representing 547,000 architects. First indications demonstrate that the profession is much less mobile than the EU would wish it to be, with only 3% of architects registered outside their home country. The survey also shows that the profession is fast reaching parity at least in terms of gender distribution - 48% of all architects are women. The Assembly ended with a presentation by Astrid Piber of Wonderland, who presented results of surveys carried out among young practitioners throughout Europe. Wonderland, who also like calling themselves the “Easyjet generation”, is a loosely formed network of young practices that should be of special interest to young architects in Malta.

SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION

Following the tragic accident which took place on a construction site in Hamrun on the 17 April 2007, the KTP issued a press release in which it exhorted its partners in the Building Industry to persevere in a common drive of education of all the players at all levels in the field, for the implementation of proper and adequate safety measures at work. It also expressed its continued support of the need of the State to provide the Occupational Health and Safety Authority with the necessary resources to fully carry out its statutory duties. It is hoped that, in near future, it will not be necessary to resort to the rhetoric of such statements after an accident has occurred.

KTP MEETINGS WITH MEPA

A number of meetings have been held this year between the Built Environment Standing Committee of the Kamra and MEPA officials at managerial level. There has been one other executive meeting of officials from the KTP Council with the Mepa Board, including the heads of all the Development Control Commissions. The working group is

meeting approximately once every 4-6 weeks. The thrust of these meetings is to set in train a structured exchange so that the built environment is better off with improved policies and planning, resulting in a better quality of development. The importance of the need of a simplification of the rules, yet encouraging flexibility with intelligent and responsible action by both periti and their clients on one part and MEPA officials on the other, has been the leit-motiv.

QUALIFICATIONS DIRECTIVE

Members of the Council attended a meeting requested by the KTP with Mr Anthony DeGiovanni, Director (Further Studies & Adult Education) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. Present at the meeting were also Prof. Joseph Falzon (Dean, Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering), Mr Joe Caruana (MEYE) and Ms M. Johnson (MEYE). The aim of the meeting was to discuss the notification of the course of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the University of Malta, as required by the Qualifications Directive which will come into effect in October 2007. Malta, together with the other states that joined the EU in 2004, must re-notify its course content, thus opening it up for scrutiny by the relevant authorities, and hence the automatic recognition of courses commencing as of October 2007, at this stage, is not guaranteed, subject to the approval of the course content.

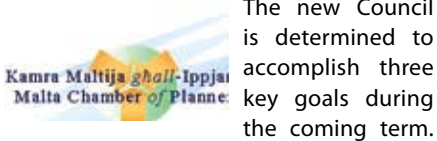
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

At the end of March, the KTP and the Anhalt University of Germany organised a one day seminar on the potentials of Landscape Architecture in Malta at the Chamber of Commerce, in Valletta. Hon. Minister Ninu Zammit and H.E. German Ambassador Karl Andreas Freiherr von Stenglin welcomed a packed hall of over 180 students, architects and members of the general public. Prof. Arno Schmid, the President of the German Architectural Board delivered a keynote speech about the potential role of landscape architecture in the design/build process of the restoration and conservation of the Maltese landscape. In addition, three landscape architects from Berlin and Milan presented current projects in Europe. In the afternoon, a panel discussion was held with all speakers, moderated by Robert Schäfer, the editor-in-chief of the two European journals for landscape architecture: TOPOS and Garten + Landschaft.



MALTA CHAMBER OF PLANNERS

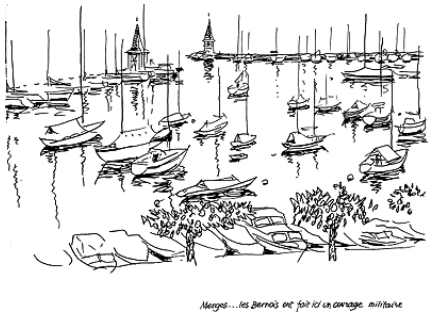
A new committee for the Malta Chamber of Planners (MaCP) was elected during the Chamber's last Annual General Meeting as follows: Bjorn Bonello (President), Paul Gauci (Vice-President), Anthony Ellul (General Secretary), Christopher Attard (PRO), René Attard (Treasurer) and Joe Zahra (member).



The new Council is determined to accomplish three key goals during the coming term. Firstly, it is determined to push further the issue of recognition of qualified planners, which still remains unsettled, despite efforts by the MaCP which have always been met by an apparent reluctance on Government's part. Secondly, the Chamber believes that planners should be at the forefront in promoting their own profession and conveying environmental and socio-economic principles which support vibrant communities and secure a future for future generations. The third and final goal is to bring forth a culture change with respect to the planning field. "There is a need to mature as a people and accept criticism without entrenching ourselves in defensive positions and often resorting to belligerent mudslinging or damaging feuds, which can have serious career repercussions. Notwithstanding, the MaCP is determined not to remain silent and passive but, through discussions with MEPA and Government, endeavour to help alleviate organisational shortcomings and simplify the planning process, in a way that future policies promote and not discourage investment, best practice and sustainable development. MaCP will seek to take a leading role in the review of emerging policy," Mr Bonello said when addressing the General Meeting. In the coming months, the Chamber will be undertaking an intense round of meetings with all the relevant entities and organisations to convey its policy objectives and promote the planning profession as a creative, inclusive and transparent tool, making sure there is an understanding of the planners' role.

JEAN-PIERRE VOUGA

The Swiss architect Jean-Pierre Vouga, in his one hundredth year, passed away in Lausanne. Born in Neuchâtel in 1907,



Mouges... les bernois ont fait ici le damage. miltouche

Jean-Pierre Vouga studied architecture at the Ecole des Beauxarts in Paris. In private practice in Lausanne, since 1937, he realised major projects in association with William Vetter. He played a very active role in international networks for the promotion of innovation in architecture and town planning. Renowned Swiss architect and town planner, he set up a veritable territorial planning service in the province of Vaud (1960-1972). He was also a columnist and essayist, a top-ranking civil servant and coordinator of enormous projects, was involved very early in the modernisation of cities and habitat process, in the protection of historic heritage, landscape and nature.

DC2007

MEPA has issued a revised Policy and Design Guidance for residential and other forms of development. The document contains a series of policy statements and performance standards that development should achieve. The main objective of this Guidance is to promote the creation of high quality development, which is visually attractive and appropriate to its surroundings. In this way, it is one of the implementation 'tools' that the Authority will use to improve and safeguard the environment, and to help achieve sustainable development. The document brings together 136 policies under 17 different chapters. The main changes involve not only the inclusion of amendments to policies, but also 2 new sections. In Section 16, DC2007 brings up to date policies in the light of the newly approved Local Plans. Section 17 can mainly be considered as a transition clause relative to applications submitted prior to



the approval of the Local Plans. This document replaces DC2005 and shall apply to all planning applications validated after the 16th April 2007 (date inclusive). All other applications validated prior to this date shall be assessed by the previous Development Control Policy and Design Guidance (April 2005).

AUSTRALIAN GOLD FOR TAGLIETTI

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) has awarded its Gold Medal for Architecture to Italian-born architect Enrico Taglietti. For 50 years, he has lived in Australia and influenced the course of regional architecture in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), most notably in



McKeown House No. 2, Watson, ACT, 1994, by Enrico Taglietti, recipient of the RAIA 2007 Gold Medal. Photo: Enrico Taglietti

the capital city of Canberra. Taglietti has designed houses, schools, motels, ambassadorial buildings, libraries, and memorials. In awarding the prize, RAIA President Carey Lyon said this body of work is "highly significant in Australian architecture, both for its individual character and for its regional base in and around Canberra - away from the large coastal cities of mainstream Australia." The awards jury observed that Taglietti's work "demonstrates the architectural story of an immigrant seeing a new country with clear vision." Lyon adds that Taglietti's influence on Canberra architecture has been to "stimulate the intellect and eyes of those who know and admire his work."

DNO

Legal Notice 115 of 2007, published on

the 24 April 2007, repeals previous Legal Notices concerned with Development Notification Orders. A new application form for DNOs has also been created and can be downloaded from www.mepa.org.mt, as can the Legal Notice itself. Fifteen Classes of Permitted Development under the Act are identified. The notice lists the types of works within each class that either do not require any form of notification, or are permitted within the DNO process.

SCOTTISH DESIGN AWARDS

Results of the tenth annual Scottish Design Awards were announced on 18 May 2007. Glasgow's Gareth Hoskins Architects came out top winning the Architecture Grand Prix for Easterhouse public building, The Bridge, which was also awarded Best Public Building. Sarah Murphy of the practice was also awarded Emerging Architect of the Year.



Also taking away three awards were NORD winning Best Commercial Building for East End Sawmills and Best Exhibition for Architecture in Scotland Defining Place. The practice was also awarded Architect of the Year. Edinburgh's Reiach and Hall Architects also received three awards with St Andrews New Faculty Building taking away an award for Public Building and the Tower and Terrace Housing at Upper Strand in Granton being awarded Best Residential Project. The company also received the Chairman's Award from Roger Stephenson of Stephen Bell Architects for the Heriot Toun private dwelling and artist studio. The company were awarded along with Elder & Cannon Architects for Upper Strand in the Regeneration category. Zaha Hadid also picked up an award for her first building in Scotland, The Maggie's Centre in Kirkcaldy (see page 16).

Other architecture practices receiving awards were Building Design Partnership, Cadell Wiszniewski Thomson Architects LLP, City Design Co-operative, GM+AD, Graven Images, Malcolm Fraser Architects and Page\ Park Architects.

NATURE AND HISTORY PARK

On 12 May 2007, Government announced its plans to establish a Nature and History Park in the North-West of Malta. This Park will be the first of its kind in Malta, and is to



be managed by Din I-Art Helwa together with Nature Trust, who have signed a Letter of Intent with Government. A Management Plan for the Park is being drawn up, and should be finalised within 3 months. The Park will cover 2.6 square kilometres of land (5 times the size of Valletta), and extends from Golden Bay to Anchor Bay. It includes the area known as Xaghra I-Hamra, which was previously earmarked for a golf course.

Martin Galea, Executive President of Din I-Art Helwa, said "This is a great step forward in protecting our natural heritage. It will ensure that the natural, historical and man-made monuments and vernacular heritage in this area are studied, protected from vandalism and creeping encroachment from development, and protected for all of us and for future generations. This is an area of beautiful countryside and breathtaking views, and contains rare and important flora and fauna which has long deserved such an initiative."

VILLA FRANCIA

Villa Francia in Lija is being restored by the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure. The villa was better known as Villa Preziosi, and research has shown that the structure was built gradually, with its original use being that of a hunting lodge. Building continued into the second half of the last century. It is a two-storey structure, with a front and back garden, the latter containing an irrigating water-wheel, a water reservoir and various small buildings that lead to the main structure.



MIES VAN DER ROHE PRIZE

The Mies van der Rohe Prize 2007 awarded the Contemporary Art Museum of Castilla (Spain) conceived by Luis M. Mansilla et Emilio Tunon. The seven works in the competition were: Pôle Universitaire de Sciences de Gestion of Bordeaux (France, Lacaton & Vassal), Centre Chorégraphique National d'Aix of Provence (France, Rudy Ricciotti), Phaeno Science Centre of Wolfsburg (Germany, Zaha Hadid), Mercedes Benz Museum in Stuttgart (Germany, Ben Van Berkel/UN Studio), Centro de Artes in Sines (Portugal, Manuel Aires Mateus, Francisco Aires Mateus), America's Cup Building in Valencia (Spain, David Chipperfield & Fermin Vazquez), and the Muséo de Arte Contemporaneo in Castlla (Spain, Luis M. Mansilla, Emilio Tunon).

RIBA AWARDS

63 buildings across the UK have been announced as RIBA Award-winners. The Awards are given for buildings that have high architectural standards and make a substantial contribution to the local environment. The awards are annual, and have been running continuously since 1966.



Bottom and above: Mews House, 10a Circus Lane, Edinburgh, Richard Murphy

Award winners include a private house in Edinburgh designed by Richard Murphy and the Marlowe Academy Ramsgate by Building Design Partnership.

UIA AND DOCOMOMO

On 19 March 2007, in Paris, Gaetan Siew, President of the International Union

Architects (UIA) and Maristella Casciato, President of the International working party for Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO) signed



an agreement of cooperation between the two organisations. UIA and DOCOMOMO hope to reinforce their collaboration by appointing representatives to the diverse events each organises on a regular basis, and mutually naming experts to participate in scientific working structures. In particular, DOCOMOMO will be associated with the development and enrichment of the UIA website dedicated to 20th century architectural heritage. Also, UIA will invite a representative of DOCOMOMO to participate in the Architectural Education Commission's thematic group on teaching preservation techniques for architectural heritage.

ONGOING RESTORATION

The Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure recently published a statement indicating that restoration works on a total of 25 chapels and churches has been underway in recent years. One such project is the Church of St Ubaldesca in Paola, which served as the Parish Church of this town until the construction of the Christ the King Parish Church in the last century following an increase in the population of the area. The facades of the church were in a bad state, with widespread deterioration and erosion of the stonework. The restoration works include consolidation of the masonry, cleaning and repointing of the facades and restoration of the roofing system and protection from the ingress of water. A study is also underway to determine the cause of the existing cracking in the façade and princi-



ple apse of the Church. These works are expected to be completed by summer.

DOCOMOMO CONFERENCE

The Dutch chapter of Docomomo will host the 10th International Docomomo Conference with the general theme "The Challenge of Change" in September 2008. This edition will mark the 20th anniversary of DOCOMOMO. The venue will be the Van Nelle factory in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. This renowned Modern Movement icon will accommodate the conference programme of Parallel Paper and Case Study



Presentations, Round-table Sessions, the 2nd edition of the International Docomomo Student Workshop and public evening lectures by distinguished invited speakers. Pre- and post-conference tours to Dutch MoMo buildings and other landmarks of Dutch architecture will also be part of the conference programme.

Architects, researchers, historians and other parties involved in the processes of preservation, conservation, renovation and transformation of modern buildings are invited to investigate the paradox of the modern monument and to reflect on the manifold challenges and dilemmas of change and continuity. Those interested in presenting a paper or case study should submit an abstract before 15 October 2007. Further details can be found on www.docomomo2008.nl.

EURO CHANGEOVER

Further to queries submitted by individual members of the Kamra tal-Periti, and following discussions between its Professional Practice Standing Committee and the National Euro Changeover Committee, the Kamra issued a memo to all Periti with guidelines on procedures to be implemented in view of the introduction of the Euro in January 2008. All agreements made between Periti and their clients, or agreements prepared by Periti for their clients with third parties, are eligible for dual display during the mandatory dual display period. If the agreement is handwritten, then the Perit would either need to insert the counter-value on specific request of the



client or alternatively attach an Lm-euro conversion table. For computer generated documents, dual display is eligible in all instances and both values need to be embedded into the agreement. The Lm value must be displayed more prominently than the Euro value prior to the adoption of the Euro. The reverse is true after the adoption of the Euro. For ongoing jobs, one does not need to change the agreement. On and after the Euro change over, all monetary commitments will be read in their euro equivalent value according to the Fixed Conversion Rate (1 Euro = Lm 0.4293).

EUROCODES

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) have launched an enhanced Eurocodes Expert website:

www.eurocodes.co.uk. The site aims to be the authoritative source of information on structural Eurocodes and is supported by an extensive range of content partners drawn from the professional bodies, trade associations and Government. The Eurocodes Expert website uses an innovative ‘traffic lights’ system to indicate the current UK status of each of the 58 Eurocodes parts. The site provides easy access to comprehensive support resources including publications, events and courses provided by the content partners.

MAGHTAB PARK

The Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment announced the results of the Maghtab Par International Design Competition earlier this year. The first prize was awarded to Melitopia (Germany). A joint Second Prize was awarded to Landscape Progetti of Italy and to Land Use Consultants of the United Kingdom. Three Honorary Mentions went to Arkitekt



Kristine Jensens Tegnestue(Denmark), Strootman Landschapsarchitecten (The Netherlands) and Sheils Flynn (United Kingdom). This project covers an area of approximately 59 hectares and is intended to gradually convert what is now



letters

Architectural Sacrilege at Manikata

Shambolic! There is no better word to describe the latest ‘embellishment’ project opposite the Manikata Parish Church. The construction of the public garden-cum-belevedere on once pristine garigue landscape is seriously compromising the visual integrity of one of Malta’s foremost architectural landmarks. The enclosure of high block boundary walls coupled with projecting stone pilasters has visually blocked the frontal view of the church as it originally stood. The project has irrevocably upset the unique setting of the church with its surrounding natural terrain. The Manikata church designed by local architect Richard England and constructed between 1962 and 1974, is widely recognised as one of the best examples of local post-war modern architecture. It had achieved iconic status as it dominated the skyline of the then compact farming hamlet of Manikata. Its architectural fame



reached beyond our shores as it has been the subject of two architectural monographs written by the architectural critics Charles Kneivitt and Chris Abel, besides featuring in a number of high-profile international architectural journals such as Progressive Architecture and Architecture Review. The modern church is also notable for being one of the first ecclesiastical buildings to respond to the liturgical reforms brought about by Vatican Council

II. Designed and constructed in the aftermath of Malta’s independence, it was a seminal project in the search for a modern architectural idiom that sought a symbiotic relation between the local vernacular and modernity. In more ways than one, it was the Maltese equivalent of Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp chapel. However, the recent spate of development has contributed indirectly to a visual impoverishment of the church. Buildings in close proximity have arisen that have considerably diminished the church’s visual prominence within the village’s skyline. The church, for many years a tangible manifestation of an architectural “labour of love”, built as it was by the villagers’ own hands is now poorly maintained. The surrounding gravel parvis is overtaken by wild weeds and shrubs,

the timber window frames of the church are in a dilapidated state and the artistic sculptural pieces on the church grounds have been the target of vandals. A few months ago, a planning application was submitted to install a telecommunications antenna to the church’s dome. Although thankfully, this intervention never materialised, worse was yet to come. The so called embellishment project being undertaken upon the initiative of the Mellieha Local Council demonstrates a total disrespect and insensitivity to the architectural value of the Manikata church and its setting. It creates a veritable eyre that detracts from the architectural integrity of the church. This misconceived project is not only an affront to one of the eminent landmarks of modern architecture on the island but to the collective memory of the local community in Manikata. This incident is testimony to the total lack of appreciation and disinterest in the preservation of one of the finest examples of twentieth century architecture in Malta.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Conrad Thake

Architecture and the Built Environment

As part of the events to mark Environment Week, the Kamra tal-Periti was invited to collaborate with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority on the organisation of an evening event with the theme “Architecture and the Environment.” Perit Sylvio Farrugia, Assistant Director, Development Control in the Planning Directorate, who for several years was in charge of the Major Projects Team, engaged in a question and answer session with Ms Sylvana Debono, MEPA’s Public Relations Officer. The debate focussed on a number of large-scale developments where the MEPA maintains that discussion and dialogue with the clients and architects was instrumental in achieving a final product manifesting good quality in design. He made the point that creativity in design must be encouraged and “allowed”, and that the MEPA has a responsibility not to stifle such creativity. Perit Keith Cole presented a paper on behalf of the KTP, wherein he referred extensively to the publication “Architecture and the Quality of Life” of the Architects’ Council of Europe. Perit Cole also referred to the Lisbon Agenda, “Environment 2010, Our Future Choice,” which sets out the environmental agenda for sustainable development whilst also aiming at a general improvement in the environment and in the quality of life in the European Union. “ In particular, the 6th EU Environment Action Programme aims at:



- Protecting and restoring landscape values, and urban and rural cultural heritage, and at ensuring a high level of protection, quality of life and social well-being for citizens;
 - Establishing a co-operation with enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, craft enterprises, and other organisations;
 - Promoting an integrated policy approach that will encourage the taking into account of environmental requirements through the life-cycle of products, and more widespread application of environmentally friendly processes and products;
 - Promoting green procurement, through clear and unambiguous guidance that environmental criteria may be taken into account in public purchasing;
 - Promoting environmentally responsible measures in building design, planning and techniques, including energy saving.” (Architecture & Quality of Life – ACE 2004)
- Furthermore, a specific feature of the works of architects is that they have a direct impact on the future environment. Indeed, every building deserves a specific quality approach. Architects engage in lateral thinking in which all of the parameters affecting the project are taken into account in devising an appropriate solution. In good architecture, consideration is given not only to the technical and economic features that are so important to the client,

but also to the aesthetic, cultural and social ones that impact on society at large. In achieving this quality in the built environment, as well as achieving overall sustainability of the living environment, Perit Cole emphasised that education is instrumental in increasing the awareness of the importance of the built environment for all. Environmental, including architectural education should be started at the earliest possible stage and continue throughout the full educational cycle of all stakeholders. In parallel, courses for those who are involved in the creation of the living environment and in the decision making process, whose education did not include such elements of appreciation, should be considered. In the meantime, he noted, the Architects’ Directive and the recent Qualifications Directive aim at ensuring the continued maintenance of quality in the education of architects. Furthermore, Continued Professional Development (CPD) is firmly encouraged, more so by self-regulated professional organisations. Perit Cole further stressed the importance placed by the Kamra on the use of design competitions, particularly for public sector commissions. These are a means of finding the best solution to the design problem. Indeed competitions very effectively recognise the particular conceptual skills that the architect possesses. In such cases the awarding of contracts for architectural serv-

ices must focus on the quality of the service and on the technical abilities available, and not on the cost of service. Furthermore, “the raising of the standards of quality in all aspects of the procurement and realisation of public projects will indirectly raise the expectations and demands of the public in relation to private projects..... Such stimulus to the achievement of quality should be fostered so as to become a beacon of good practice.” (Architecture & Quality of Life – ACE 2004)

Although there was not much time for discussion at the end of the event, the debate continued over drinks at the close of the evening. Examples of good local design were discussed, as was the fact that good design rarely makes it to our local media; generally it is bad design that gets “published.” This is of concern as the public may be getting the overall impression that the built environment is being marred by low quality projects, without being aware of the high number of well-designed projects. The Kamra’s concern with the state of the built environment will also be debated at another event, to be held in July. Organised by the Malta Economic Update in collaboration with the Kamra, this event will have the theme “The Architecture of Today – The Heritage of Tomorrow.” We are set in a context influenced by a strong content of heritage, but we need to take immediate measures that will enable the architecture of today to become the heritage of tomorrow. The impact of a whole new range of regulations could be exploited to catalyse a new standard for the industry and for an increased role of architecture as a major contributor to the economic and cultural landscape of our country. The Kamra tal-Periti is developing into both a political and a cultural organisation. Political in the wide sense of the term, where it has assumed a clear role as a consulting body on matters affecting our built environment; cultural because through its events the Kamra is promoting its ideals and its position on the range of issues that are affecting us and creating a balanced discussion, making architectural debate part of the national agenda. This programme effectively started three years ago and is now beginning to show clear results.

Mobility in the EU

By Perit Simone Vella Lenicker

The European Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC) came into effect in December 2006, and Member Countries have until the end of 2009 to transpose its provisions into National Law. The main objectives of this directive are to establish a legal framework that will make it easier for service providers to exercise freedom of establishment in other Member States and to facilitate freedom of movement of services between Member States. It is intended to eliminate a number of legal obstacles to the achievement of a genuine Internal Market for services and to guarantee legal certainty for service providers and recipients.

The Kamra tal-Periti had the honour of hosting a "Today Seminar" held on the 29 May 2007 with the theme "The Services Directive – the Implications on the Architectural Profession." Although it was aimed specifically at architects, the topics discussed during the event are applicable to all service providers, and are therefore of interest to the community at large.

The Seminar was opened by Minister Censu Galea, an architect by profession, who stated that as a small open economy, Malta fully subscribed to the Directive. He confirmed that Government has set up an inter-ministerial working group and is regularly taking part in the Expert Group's meetings specifically set up by the Commission. The first stage being embarked on by the relevant Ministries is the detailed screening and review of all Maltese laws and procedures relating to authorisations to check their compliance with the provisions of the Directive. This is a voluminous task, though it is encouraging to note that in a number of areas Malta is already compliant as a result of the changes made during the accession process or by work being undertaken under the Better Regulation and other initiatives. Minister Galea concluded by urging all professional representative bodies to take note of the new responsi-

bilities the Directive confers on them, and to work with the relevant authorities to make changes not just because they are required by the Directive, but because they are beneficial to the profession and society in general.

The main guest speaker at the Seminar was Mrs Evelyne Gerbhardt, Member of the European Parliament and Spokesperson for the Group of Social Democrats and Socialists of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection, as well as Rapporteur of the European Parliament for the Services Directive. She explained the general provisions of the Directive, including one of the main principles of the Directive which establishes that when providing a service in a Member State the service provider is to abide by the rules and regulations governing such service in that country, and not those in force in his country of origin. This means that only persons who obtain a warrant to practice as a Perit in Malta through the same procedures applicable to Maltese persons would be able to establish themselves here and practice the profession. Conversely, a Maltese architect moving to, for example, a seismic region in Italy would be expected to abide by the regulations governing the construction sector in this respect.

Mrs Gerbhardt emphasised the provision of the Directive for the establishment of "points of single contact." The number of points per Member State may vary according to regional or local competencies or according to the activities concerned, and have an important role to play in providing assistance to service providers either as the authority directly competent to issue the documents necessary to access a service activity or as an intermediary between the provider and the authorities which are directly competent.

Architect Adrian Joyce, Senior Advisor of the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE)

zoomed in on the various aspects of the Directive that directly affect the architecture profession, which is notably one of the most mobile professions, not only in terms of the physical movement of professionals between countries but also in terms of the drawing of inspiration from works by other architects and exporting such inspiration to works in one's own country. He pointed out the importance of Cost Information Systems whereby both the service providers and their clients would be able to understand what services to expect for the fee they would be paying.

One aspect of the Directive that will certainly alter the local profession is the fact that, upon implementation of the Directive, commercial communication would now be open. It is however restricted by two important notions: it cannot be dishonest, and cannot be comparative. Mr Joyce concluded by saying that the ACE is actively advising its member organisations, including the Kamra tal-Periti, on what measures need to be taken within the profession in order to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Directive. In particular, the ACE is recommending that its member organisations adopt common Codes of Professional Conduct in order to ensure a more level playing field within the profession.

These are but a few of the implications of the Directive on all service providers, and in particular on the architectural profession. It is encouraging to note that the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications is actively working towards the implementation of the Directive. The Kamra tal-Periti will, on its part, continue to liaise with the ACE and the Ministry in order to keep its members fully informed on developments in this respect.

Further information on the Directive can be found on:
- www.ec.europa.eu/internal_market
- www.ace-cae.org



Madam Evelyne Gerbhardt



Adrian Joyce



Audience

THESIS REVIEW EXHIBITION

The crucial final thesis review is the annual sought after event which fifth year students at the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering strive and prepare for with meticulous attention. As an examination which encapsulates five hard-earned years of study and dedication to the subject, each student takes great pride in the successful and well-merited completion of the Bachelor of Architecture and Civil Engineering course. This year, students from the Architectural Design Stream of the Department of Architecture and Urban Design have dedicated their two final semesters to a project for the regeneration of Floriana, mainly the Belt is-Sebh area and the underlying waterfront onto the Marsamxetto Harbour. A thorough investigation into the history of the area and an analysis of the present existing site functions and conditions have led to a well-married compromise between newly introduced functions on site and previously existing utilities available to the public.

By targeting both the existing residential population in Floriana in addition to the governmental employees on site, the students of the Faculty propose two resourceful and ingenious masterplans which are aimed at reclaiming Floriana's identity and establishing a more prominent title to this transition zone and unmaintained service area. The schemes and individual projects cover the design of governmental offices and institutions, residential and recreational areas making the Belt is-Sebh area so much more than just a collection of workplaces and more worthy of its name.

The main aim of the final year students was to promote the awareness of the preservation of our national heritage through a well balanced yet forward-looking intelligent design which gives prime importance to the architectural context of these projects, simultaneously incorporating a fresh aesthetic overview of the Floriana area, still addressing key issues such as sustainability, mobility, functionality and serviceability. The examination review was held on Thursday 21 June and was followed by a three day exhibition at the Michelangelo Hall of the Mediterranean Conference Centre in. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Hon. Ninu Zammit, Minister of Resources and Infrastructure, Professor Denis De Lucca, Head of the Department of Architecture and Urban Design and Perit David Felice, President of the Kamra tal-Periti.

Daniel Micallef Grimaud

NEW COMMITTEE, NEW COMMITMENTS

So it's the start of summer and of SACES' busiest time of year. Following last month's election, the resulting new Committee is a young one - five third year students, three second year students and one first year student. Only three members of these have had some previous experience on SACES, meaning that it will take a good team effort to ensure things turn out as well as they have in previous years. Not that they don't seem up to it, as the first committee meetings are bustling with ideas from these new contrasting characters. Our work is certainly cut out for us. The primary issue that needs to be tackled is the general feeling of low

morale which seems to be developing amongst students, over this last year in particular. The enthusiasm so evident when many of us first stepped into the Faculty appears to have dried up, and it is one of this SACES Committee's main goals to restore it. This lack of enthusiasm has resulted in the break down of the community-like feeling of being an Architecture student as opposed to being a student in any other Faculty of the University. Thus SACES (as well as the Kamra tal-Periti) need to organise activities, debates, events, social meetings, parties, and so on, which involve the majority of students with the aim of restoring what is so

evidently missing. Apart from this, a number of other issues are pending. There are our usual host of yearly events which need to be organised, including Sand Sculptures, Designs, and our popular Workshop of course. We also intend to launch the website that we've been promising our sponsors for years! The statute also needs to be amended and

we need to build up our virtually non-existent International section. Lastly, we need to get the Common Room we launched last year, up and running more effectively for the benefit of the students. Look out for the many upcoming SACES events this summer!

SACES Committee



The beginning of a new era

by Simone Vella Lenicker

My first ever work experience on a construction site was in 1996 when, as a student, I had spent the summer working at the New Hospital Project in Msida. Destiny had it that upon graduation, I found myself back on the project, and, for seven years, was part of the large team of people involved in the various phases of the construction of the hospital, from excavation, to structural detailing, to construction and finally to the finishing stages. Today, the Mater Dei Hospital, is being handed over officially to Government, and here starts a new era for this project. Over fifteen years after the first ideas were being developed, this behemoth falls into the public domain as a state of the art hospital that will surely be instrumental in maintaining Malta's impressive records in the health care industry.

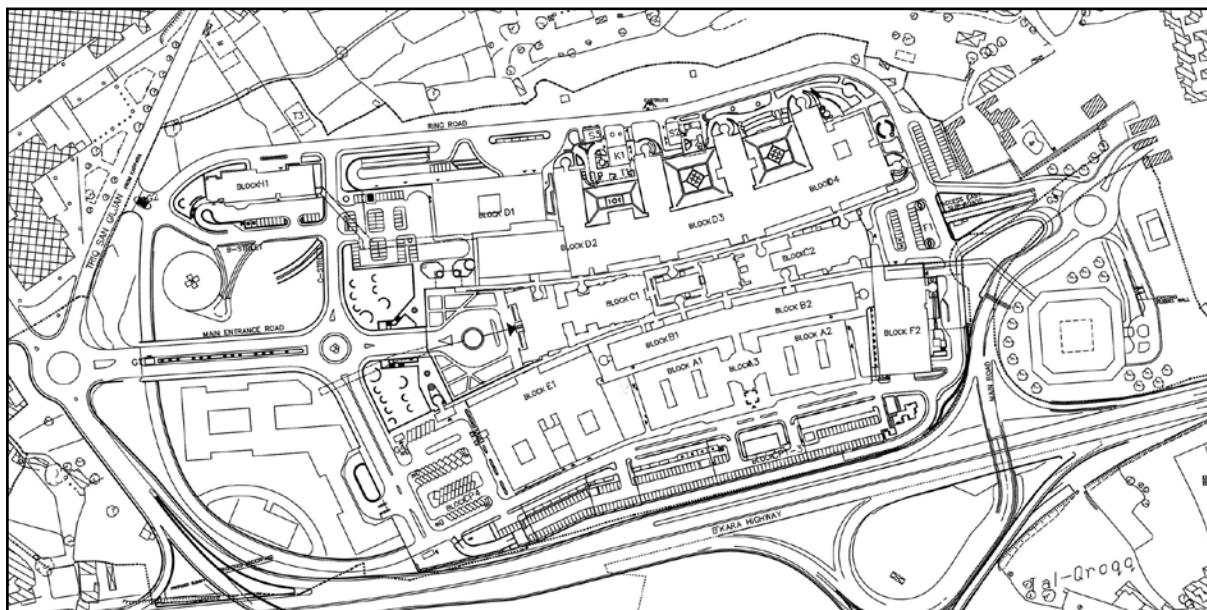
PROJECT HISTORY

The idea for a new hospital to meet the needs of the people of the Maltese Islands was already being discussed in the early 1990's. The intention was to build a centre of excellence to complement St Luke's General Acute Hospital which was to undergo an extensive programme of refurbishment.

The initial conceptual preparations for what was then called the San Raffaele Hospital began in the 1990's, with the concept layouts being designed by Architect Richard England. The first agreements between the Maltese Government and the Fondazione Centro S. Romanello Del Monte Tabor were entered into in December 1990. This agreement provided for the general expert assistance in the health planning of the new hospital, a 480-bed state of the art specialised hospital operating in the fields of diabetology, cardiology, degenerative diseases and other chronic illnesses prevalent in Malta and other Mediterranean countries. The Foundation for Medical Services (FMS) was also set up in 1990 (under the name of Foundation for Medical Science and Services – FMSS). Eventually, the design work by Ortesa Spa started in 1994, while construction started in 1995 by the contractor Skanska Malta JV (SMJV). At the time, the projected cost for the hospital was of Lm51 million.

In 1996, the feasibility of the project was reconsidered and a decision was taken to expand the project into an acute general hospital with a capacity of 1000 beds. The intention now was not to complement, but to replace St Luke's Hospital, and this decision demanded an increase in building volume to accommodate both the expansion of the scope and the doubling of the number of beds. Norman & Dawburn, a design firm, were engaged to execute the design services, while SMJV was assigned the responsibility for the completion of all the building extensions falling on the original footprint. The new estimate for the project rose to Lm100 million.

A re-evaluation process took place in 1998, and the Hospital



Development of the site



Auditorium



Auditorium steps under construction



Auditorium roof under construction



April 2007 - finishing stages

project was now re-dimensioned to an 825 bed hospital intended to cater for Malta's acute medical needs into the 21st century, whilst incorporating secondary and tertiary services including all major specialities. A Design and Build Contract on a Cost Plus basis was signed between FMS and SMJV in 2000. The cost was estimated at Lm83 million. This contract was renegotiated during 2004, with a final agreement being signed on the 12 April 2005. This contract replaced the Cost Plus agreement with a Design and Build one, and included the incorporation of some works originally planned to take place at a later stage, such as the Dental Department and Medical School. The agreed date for commissioning was the 01 July 2007.

BLOCKS AND DEPARTMENTS

The Hospital is divided into seven main blocks, which during the design and construction phases were referred to as Blocks A, B, etc. Each block has one or two underground levels, generally housing service areas and supporting facilities. Above ground, heights vary between one floor and five floors excluding plant rooms situated at roof level.

Block A is the foremost group of buildings one sees when driving along the B'Kara Bypass. It consists of three adjacent blocks. Two of these blocks are two storeys high and rectangular in plan, and house the Medical School, Library, Institute of Health Care Offices and Laboratories, and Clinical Offices. Between these blocks is a circular three-storey block which includes a 200 seat Auditorium.

Block B lies directly behind Block A, and consists of two rectangular blocks, each two storeys high, housing the Staff Changing Areas, Pathology Administration and Laboratories, Renal Unit and Rehabilitation Facilities.

Block C can be considered to be split horizontally. Below ground one finds the Radiology Department, CSSD, Medical Records, Dental Department and Blood Bank among others. Above ground one finds the Main Entrance block including the Visitors' Restaurant, the Chapel, Chaplain's Quarters, Multi Faith Room, Main Auditorium and Staff Restaurant. These latter spaces are more public-oriented and are intended to serve as the main community spaces of the hospital.

Block D, which overlooks the valley and faces San Gwann, houses all the Main Hospital Wards and twenty five Operating Theatres. It consists of four main finger buildings, interconnected by perpendicular blocks. Each Ward Block has a different colour coding, making it easier for visitors to locate the Ward they would like to visit.

The Outpatients Department and Pharmacy are housed in Block E, while Block F is the Utility Block and houses plant, boilers, transformers, generators, fuel storage areas, reverse-osmosis plant and hot water recovery units. Block H is somewhat separated from the main buildings of the



hospital, and houses the Mortuary. Around the site there are a total of 1,900 car parking spaces, some of which are located at ground level with the majority being situated below ground.

The whole hospital building is interconnected through two main internal walkways. Once inside the hospital, visitors

can move from one area to another without ever going outdoors. Full accessibility for disabled is in-built throughout the hospital, ensuring safe and comfortable access for patients, staff and the general public alike.

CONSTRUCTION PROCESSES

The vast majority of the hospital buildings consist of frame structures, with reinforced concrete columns supporting reinforced concrete beams, with external masonry skin cavity walls including insulation. For the first time in Malta and to such a large extent, predalles slabs were used to create the structural floors. This system is conceived to achieve a lightweight suspended slab where the underside and inner parts are plant-assembled whilst the outer casing is completed on site. The bottom crust is made of a thin (60mm)

Main Chapel



pre-cast concrete plank, which includes reinforcing steel rods and truss. Low-density polystyrene blocks are bound to the bottom crust, at modular spacing to form the ribs and the hollow cavities within the slab. Once the pre-cast crust has attained a suitable strength it is hoisted in its position on the structural frame, additional steel rods are placed to fulfill the design requirements, and finally the in situ concrete is poured to fill in the gaps between adjacent polystyrene blocks and to create the topping and the connections with the rest of the structure. The main advantages of this system are the need for only a minimal amount of formwork, easy and fast on site operations, plant quality to exposed surfaces, plant accuracy to fire-resistant reinforcement cover and accuracy of openings and placement of embedded items. Further, this system allowed the contractor to achieve the required fire rating of the building, while reducing the amount of concrete actually employed in the construction. Some parts of the project, notably the Utilities Block and one of the car parks, employ a steel frame structure supporting precast concrete planks, while in other areas such as the Radiology Department, a reinforced concrete flat slab system was adopted. In the two auditoria, the roofing structure consists of a timber frame clad in copper. The circular staircases spread around the site, and which for a while were the only structures standing on site, were built using a continuous slip-forming process.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SMJV was responsible for the Health and Safety of the workforce and in order to implement this task, a team was specially employed to constantly monitor the situation. The aim was to keep the accident rate as low as possible. In fact the average reported number of accidents per month on the project was of approximately 0.87 compared to the national average of 51. All companies and individuals, whether working on or visiting the Mater Dei Hospital Project, were obliged to observe the SMJV Health and Safety Procedures and Safety Policies as well as Maltese Legislation. SMJV strove for good quality, minimal negative impact on the environment and good working procedures in all their construction related activities. This was achieved through Health and Safety



One of the Safety Week meetings held yearly on site

introductory briefings to all personnel before starting working on site, clean worksites and good organisation. It was standard practice that workers not complying with the H&S rules would be first warned, and removed from site following a repeated offence. This ensured that workers were more careful in the observation of such rules, and helped towards achieving the high standards enjoyed by the project in this respect.

COMPLEXITY

Some of the statistics pertaining to this project are staggering. The site itself covers an area of approximately 197,300 square metres (approximately 175 tumoli), with a total built up area of approximately 250,000 square metres. The following list is but a sample of figures indicating the vastness of the project:

- 350,000 cubic metres of concrete
- 1,500,000 metres of cables
- 27,000 light fittings
- 20,000 sockets
- 7,156 rooms, of which 6,700 include medical equipment
- 52 lifts

The above figures give a clear indication of the complexity of the project. Co-ordination was certainly a key factor in the construction of this complex of buildings. The various disciplines, such as the architects, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers and hospital equipment installers were faced with the unenviable task of co-ordinating the various aspects of the project in order to achieve what is, effectively, a well-oiled and functioning medical machine. To further complicate the co-ordination efforts, there were probably over 30 nationalities of people involved in the design and construction phases, hailing from each of the continents and including people from Malta, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Latvia, Australia, Pakistan, Philippines, Egypt, America, Serbia, Hungary and Italy to name but a few. During the busiest periods, the number of workers on site, including top management, topped the 1,500 mark. While this had its drawbacks sometimes in terms of communication and ways of working, it was certainly an enriching working environment with each person contributing their experience to the whole project.

In a project such as this, each item to be designed was magnified hundredfold in terms of quantities. Access within the hospital is strictly controlled, with some areas being accessible to staff only, others to patients, and others open to the public though only within certain time periods. The access control design includes the use of 115 panic alarms, 54 intercoms, 10 video intercoms, 539 card readers, 101 door controllers and 56 cameras. All these are connected to a centralised access control system which can detect whether unauthorised persons have entered specific areas. In case of fire this system will also enter into operation in order to control the flow of people within the building, supplementing the various other fire-safety features which include 3500 sprinklers and 270 fire hose cabinets, not to mention the substantial amount of hand-held fire extinguishers to be installed.

The installation of the telephone and information technology systems was also a complex task, and incorporates



Operating Theatres Area



Staff Restaurant, finishing phase

1900 analogue extensions, 500 digital extensions, 29 hub rooms, about 400 data points and about 3000 telephone points.

FINISHES

The finishes throughout the hospital were carefully selected in order to meet durability, hygienic and appearance criteria. In the main public areas, flooring consists of marble or terrazzo tiling, while in the medical areas vinyl was opted for. This gives a clean jointless surface which makes cleaning much easier. Vinyl was also used to cover the walls in all wet areas such as patient bathrooms and toilets, again for the advantages in terms of hygiene it has over the traditional tiling systems.

External apertures are generally in aluminium, with double glazing throughout. In areas such as wards and offices, these windows also include integral blinds which can be operated by the user. Due to the number of services running through the hospital, frame and tile suspended ceiling systems were employed in order to allow easy access for maintenance and repair of services. Furniture specifications were also high, including that it be mounted on legs to facilitate cleaning underneath, and have smooth surfaces that are free from crevices and that are scratch- and water-resistant. Another requirement was that the furniture be free standing as much as possible. Most importantly, of course, is the medical equipment, which had to be taken into account at various stages of the construction process, including the design phase in terms of loading and services required, and especially during the finishing phase.

TESTING AND COMMISSIONING

The final stages of the construction phase include the testing and commissioning of all the hospital systems. The process was carried out in sections. Snag lists for all the trades involved were prepared and the snags attended to. All electrical and mechanical systems were tested in order to identify any faults, and once complete areas were handed over one at a time to the FMS.

PATIENTS AND STAFF

Ensuring patient and staff safety and comfort was always a top priority for the Mater Dei Hospital project. Besides the highest quality in medical facilities befit-

ting a 21st century healthcare system, patients will be able to benefit from a number of commodities including bedside TV, internet and radio, and private bathrooms, among oth-

ers. Meals will be provided by outsourced catering services, cooked and pre-plated according to the patient menu order and diet; bedside facilities include an overhead panel with oxygen supply, suction system, lighting control, socket outlets, and nurse call system with speech facility; CPR pull buttons are present in each patient area for activation when the cardio-pulmonary resuscitation team is needed; climate control in all hospital areas will maintain a comfortable ambient temperature; a pneumatic tube system allows a physical link between all relevant areas to enable a swift transportation of small items such as blood investigation bottles and pharmaceuticals between wards and various departments.

A number of other features have been included in the internal spaces of the hospital aimed at making one's stay as "pleasant" as possible. Five hundred works of art created by students of the MCAST have now found their place within the hospital, and are intended to help soothe the patients. The hospital also includes a main chapel, where both patients and visitors may find some moments of peace and hope, as well as a multi-faith room intended for use by people of all denominations. The landscaping around the site, including the planting of olive and carob trees, will slowly help to convert the hospital from a building site into a place of health and well-being.

These are just some of the many comforts that will be enjoyed by the patients. Furthermore the ambience within the hospital will also benefit the staff, who spend long hours within the wards and other areas of the hospital. Their comfort and well-being is also fundamental to the success of the hospital in delivering the excellent medical care that is expected from such a facility.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The hand-over date of the 29 June 2007 has been achieved. The next step is the transfer of medical services to their new location. The setting up of a migration program and staff training have been underway for the past months. Of course, this migration will entail a fine transition from St Luke's to Mater Dei. One cannot simply shut St Luke's down and commence operations at the new site the following day. Thus both hospitals will be working concurrently for a period of time until the full transfer is complete.

The migration also involves a change in the mind-set of the Maltese public. Patients will now find a welcoming atmosphere where, over and above the excellence of the medical service, they will be able to feel pampered simply by the quality of their surroundings. Staff have been trained in the use of the medical equipment installed in the hospital, and will be treated to a working environment that will certainly be the envy of many.

The road from inception to completion has been a long one, laced with its fair share of controversy and political innuendos. However the time has finally come for the change from a construction site to a fully functioning hospital to take place. Surely, all those involved in the project, in any way, will feel proud to have been a part of what has been the largest public project in Malta to date.

Images and data courtesy of FMS and SMJV.

MAGGIE CENTRES AND THE ARCHITECTURAL PLACEBO

by Charles Jencks

Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres are a network of day-care centres in the United Kingdom, which aim to help anyone who has, or has had cancer, as well as their family and friends. They are not intended as a replacement for conventional cancer therapy, but as a caring environment that can provide advice for a healthy body and mind. They are located nearby but separate from existing NHS hospitals. The charity which promotes, builds and runs the centres was founded by and named after the late Maggie Keswick Jencks, who died of cancer herself in 1995. Like her husband, architectural theorist Charles Jencks, she believed in the ability of buildings to uplift people. Consequently, the buildings have been designed by leading architects, including Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid. Here, Charles Jencks explains the concepts behind the centres and discussed the effects of the architecture on the healing process of the patients.

SURPRISE THERAPY

It is a truth universally acknowledged that one of the greatest pleasures in life is to be happily surprised. Pleasant surprise beats most forms of entertainment, particularly when it results in a positive change of mind. And what invariably happens when you scrap a stupid idea for a good one? Laughter, that clears out the mind. The benefits of spontaneous humour appear everywhere, now even in hospitals where laughter therapy works on many kinds of patients, though the jokes can't be too funny or, as the adage has it, "you will die laughing."

The point is you can only be really surprised by the unexpected, and often that means taking risks and intentionally travelling into unknown territory. One of my happiest, recent surprises has been the adventure of the Maggie Centres, the cancer care centres in Britain, initiated by my late wife Maggie. They surprised me because of their functional success and growth, beyond my wildest dreams and because of the inspired teamwork, led by the CEO, Laura Lee. And lastly, because of the way these centres cast light on one of the most unlikely ideas of our time: the effect of the built environment on health. It is this last revelation I want to explore, though the first two are no less important.



The story begins negatively. When starting off life as an architectural critic in the 1960s, I like others became sceptical of the exaggerated claims made by modern architects about the effects of good architecture on daily life. Good design, it was claimed, could bolster team spirit, increase the performance of workers, up the productivity and thereby not only transform society but make an institution more money. Such was the modernist ideology, and it was usually tied to two approaches: the International Style of clean and healthy design, and



The Maggie's Centre at Kirkcaldy, Fife, opened in November 2006 at the Victoria Hospital. The building was designed by Zaha Hadid, and is her first built work in the UK.

High-Tech architecture. However, the problems of this 'architectural determinism' were also well-aided in the 1960s. Sociologists, anthropologists and market researchers showed that social behaviour was much too complex and powerful to be modified by anything



The Maggie's Centre in Inverness, Highlands, is at Raigmore Hospital, and was designed by Page and Park. Landscape design and sculptures were again the work of Charles Jencks. The building opened in 2005, and won the 2006 RIAS Award for Architecture.

as passive as the background environment. Except in such extreme cases as a prison, human culture is much stronger as a formative influence than building. Furthermore, famous studies such as that at the Hawthorne Factory in America were gaining publicity. If I remember rightly, these showed that it was not the ambience that mattered in the workplace, but more, the feelings that the management cared about the workers' happiness. Every time the management improved the lighting, their performance went up, supposedly because of the better physical conditions. This was assumed until the researchers factored in the effects of the study itself, at which point the explanation changed. Since the workers had never been polled or consulted as



to their happiness – neglect is a polite word for their treatment – they responded positively to this new sign of caring. They naturally inferred: "the management likes us enough to investigate our well-being, therefore let's work harder." But, one can draw contradictory conclusions, and again this is a surprise. One lesson was that the investigation itself mattered much more than the change in lighting. This, the Hawthorne Effect, effectively dealt architectural determinism a severe blow and, scientifically speaking, the case that good architecture really improved behaviour had yet to be proved. At least that was true for those sceptics that count, those clients and developers who have to pay for the building. At the same time, the lesson also was that caring attitudes shown by an institution could make a difference, especially if they were perceived through an architectural form, in this case lighting. The ethos mattered perhaps the most, but so too did

the architecture, when it supported the ethos. In any case, my own scepticism on architectural determinism dragged on for thirty years. Until one day, because of Maggie Centres, I was invited by BBC Radio to debate with a doctor about the role of architecture in health. To people's surprise, I took the typical doctor's line – "architecture matters for cultural reasons, not because it affected patients that much" – while the doctor took my line – "architecture really does matter for health." Why? His answer surprised, even shocked, me. 'If the architecture of the National Health Service is bad,' he said with a glint, 'we don't even show up for work!' That's pretty good architectural determinism, of a negative kind. Perhaps it might even satisfy scientists, because the absenteeism of doctors, their staying away from bad buildings, can be statistically measured. Anyway, because I was focussed on the patients, I hadn't given much thought to the effect of architecture on the doctors and carers. So I missed the more radical notion that, in the first instance, the car-



The first Maggie's Centre opened in Edinburgh in 1996, and is located within the Western General Hospital at Crewe Road. The centre is housed in a converted stable block. The conversion, designed by Richard Murphy, was nominated for 1997 Stirling Prize. The centre was extended, again by Murphy, in 1999.

ers are more important than the patients because, for the now obvious reasons, if the former are not happy that will have many negative consequences, both physical and psychological on the patients. I had to laugh at this new thought – my surprise and change in mind. More surprise was to come as I began to understand the many ways the ambience can affect both carers and patients. Much of this was from the experience of Maggie Centres, but the philosophical key that unlocked my thought was reading books and articles about the role of the placebo in curing disease. As most people know, the placebo is a fake cure that works because it operates on the beliefs of patients. Since the 1950s and the work of Henry Beecher on phoney morphine injections, made with salt water, the scientific community has taken the placebo seriously and seen how it works very well, in a good many cases. These typically are to do with pain, inflammation and what are called psychogenic problems. Today's voluminous literature on the subject often quotes the figure of 33%. That number refers, variously, to



the amount of the total improvement in a patient's health, or the percentage of patients who show improvements. It may be a statistic too crude to be significant but it does beg some questions – how can phoney things work? How can we license certain effective witch doctors, at least those who reliably improve patients? Or to switch the discussion to architecture: how do we gauge the effect of a building on health if, like the placebo effect, it is partly in the mind? To put the question differently, is there an architectural placebo? If so, every architect in the world would like to know. Before answering, let me give some surprising, and laughable, examples from the scientific literature. Several books on the subject came out in 2002-3, and I quote from their review. These illuminate first that part of the placebo that could be called The Style Effect, and if you don't smile at this you should quickly consult a doctor. Daniel Moerman's book is a finely documented catalogue of surprises and misunderstandings about placebos. He shows, for example, that people who take their placebo diligently do better than people who take them only occasionally; that placebo injections work better than placebo pills; that brand name placebos relieve pain better than generic placebos; and that blue placebos are better sedatives than red ones – except for Italian men, for whom the opposite is true. The implications are fairly obvious for architecture. Style matters, brand image matters, and their effect may wear out, as with styles and brands generally. Secondly, patients who go to Maggie Centres diligently may do better than those who do not – we don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised if it were true.

Our reviewer then discusses a second type of causation, what could be called The Cultural Effect, again worth a chuckle or two. Psychologically minded clinicians believe that the placebo effect has something to do with what goes on in an individual patient's head. This view is not entirely wrong, but, Moerman suggests, it is too narrow. The placebo response is highly variable across cultures. Germans with ulcers, for example, respond to placebos at a rate twice that of people in the rest of the world. In fact, the placebo healing rate for ulcers in Germany is almost three times that of the Netherlands or Denmark. The obvious, serious point is that with such things as ulcers and blood pressure, it is the varying cultural influence on the person that matters, not just the individual's psychology.

The third type springs from this and may be the most important. It is what could be called the Doctor's Effect, or what I'll call for Maggie Centres, The Carer's Effect. Much better predictors of the placebo effect are the characteristics and qualities of individual doctors. The more convinced a doctor is that a drug or placebo will work, the more likely that it really will. The pioneering study here was conducted almost forty years ago...on the tranquilliser Miltown. As you will guess, the doctors' conviction and enthusiasm about the drug's effectiveness positively correlated with the results, and when they lost this belief so the effect of the tranquilliser declined to neutral. One could multiply amazing and funny examples of the Placebo Effect working, but there is no need to since it is scientifically accepted, in most quarters, and it really isn't disputed when it comes to reducing pain, inflammation and psychogenic problems. Furthermore, one might grant that it could be subdivided into the three aspects I have mentioned: The Style Effect, The Cultural Effect and the Carer's effect. These are all greater than the individual's belief though it is true they work only because they affect personal belief.

CANCER AND ARCHITECTURE

No doubt the placebo doesn't work as well, and as directly, in the case of cancer as in pain or heart problems. With cancer, other psychosomatic and physical aspects may also play a role, and it is hard to unscramble them. For instance, lowering stress may empower the immune system. Or also, as David Spiegel has shown in a famous study of women with breast cancer, group psychotherapy can help patients survive longer. That extension of life may be true because women in these groups help each other socially; they visit each other, co-operate more with doctors, and make better use of medical facilities. That is, their psychological changes soon transform into social and physical ones. It is their mind over matter, because changes in the mind lead to shifts in behaviour.



My argument will be that Maggie Centres, and their architecture, do make a difference in the quality of life and survival rates of patients, though we can't prove this yet, for such reasons as Spiegel's study shows. Furthermore, that the placebo effect also enters into this equation, with The Style Effect, The Cultural Effect and The Carer's Effect. Each Effect is effective, both for the negative reasons that the doctor spoke about in our BBC radio debate, and for positive reasons. Remember, in bad buildings, doctors and carers often don't show up; with a positive placebo, the patient's belief is important, but it works much better if the doctor strongly believes in its efficacy. On these grounds, we hire good architects, even brand names such as Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid: because they inspire our carers, and the cancer patients. Good architecture says to the team, 'we care, and to show it we have spent extra attention and money on you. Inspiration matters, and can change things. Don't give up.' But, following this argument, one can see that these Effects may work only for a limited time and under limited conditions. Fresh styles that become endlessly repeated lose their power, just as brands become obsolete when a new, effective one is introduced. Most important of all, it is the interaction between the carers and the patients, the ethos between them, the team spirit engendered, that has to be supported by the architecture. In other words, the potency of architecture is in conjunction with the effective ethos and the team's message, not a strong Effect in itself. Good architecture can make a difference when it underscores the style and approach of an institution. Put as a theory, I would say that when the style and content of an institution are mutually supporting, then they can produce the Architectural Placebo. This is one idea behind Maggie Centres, as its inception and brief history show.

MAGGIE CENTRES

In setting up the cancer caring centres in



the UK, Maggie was led both by her own experience and conviction. When her own cancer recurred in 1993, she was given three or four months to live but, partially because of her fighting spirit and our joint efforts, she managed to survive twenty-seven months, until July 1995. That experience and research in California taught us lessons, and these have been developed by a team led by Laura Lee. She was Maggie's oncologist nurse and now is the driving force of the organisation. The first Centre was built in an old stables right by Edinburgh's Western General Hospital, in 1996. The architect, Richard Murphy, here combines the mix of informality, domesticity and creative risk that we sought. It led to the open plan that compresses many activities in a small space, the ideas of intimacy, a friendly home-like atmosphere coupled with provocative architecture. Subsequent centres have extended these ideas. The second, by the Western Infirmary in Glasgow, 2002, was designed by David Page and the third, by Frank Gehry, opened in Dundee in September, 2003. The latest Maggie Centre to open was that at Kirkcaldy, Fife which opened in November 2006 at the Victoria Hospital. The building was designed by Zaha Hadid, and is her first built work in the UK. But it is the service, which the architecture and art enhance, that is the main focus. This has four main goals. - It aims to lower the stress level of a patient, through teaching various methods of coping and relaxation, and this not only makes a difficult time more bearable but it may enhance the immune system. - It provides psychological support, both individual and in groups, to deal with the loss of control that cancer brings. Learning from others with the same affliction is an essential part of therapy. - It helps patients navigate the information-explosion on cancer, understand the many potential therapies that are purveyed everyday through the media and Internet.



Today over-choice is itself a problem.

- It operates in a peaceful and striking environment with an important place for art and gardens to play a role. All of this supports the activity of the patients, staff and carers. Architecture can raise the spirits and amplify the positive mood and ethos of an institution. One in three people now get cancer and, as life expectancy goes up, the figure is set to rise to one in two. Furthermore, there are over 250 different types of cancer, a mind-numbing field of choices and problems. Coping with any particular type is a traumatic personal experience, as well as a family and social problem. When one is faced with this life-threatening disease the first question is "how long have I got?" or, "Will I live?" The aim is to transform this into "the will to live, or live better."

As one can see from this brief sketch, Maggie Centres are a strange hybrid, a building type that yokes together functions previously divided. Its mixture has elements of a day-care centre and hospice, as well as some functions already being absorbed into large hospitals – for instance, the therapeutic role of art and collective expression. But I think its mixture also typifies the mood of our time, the preference for an urban life of contradictory experience and spontaneous pleasure. When people go to a large hospital today they want the best in technology and applied skill, but they also don't want to be reminded, every minute, of an operation or threat to their life. This contradictory desire results in the great trend of our time toward the hospital that looks, more and more, like a domesticated landscape of heterogeneity. Part

urban square, part playpen, part library and bar, it is also bound to be a place for relatives and friends to wait, patiently, and also a place, perhaps, to die and mourn. Maggie Centres are also radically hybrid combining at least four building types. First, they are warm, friendly, familiar and domestic – a house that is not a home. Second, with art works and garden, an expressive architecture that in places goes beyond the expected, they are a museum that is not a museum. Patients who come to them may take risks, and look for support as well as meditation in creative work. Third, some of these people will be asking the ultimate questions – 'what is the meaning of my life?' – and so an appropriate space and atmosphere have to be provided, for a church that is not a church. Lastly, there are the many complementary therapies on offer, as well as the counselling, in this, the hospital that is not a hospital. If one asks why each Maggie Centre has the semi-open space of a nineteenth century house, looks in part like an art gallery and church, and functions like a day-care centre, it is fairly transparent. Because, when people face deep questions, they want to come to a place that can take on opposite roles. With the increase in cancer, and the complexity of an aging population, the need will grow.

The really strong case for creating more centres throughout Britain is obvious, but one that is hard to prove. It is the belief that, from a statistical viewpoint, they actually extend the life of patients. Several studies show the positive results of such groups, but they have not been from a large enough sample to convince sceptics.

Frank Gehry's first building in the United Kingdom was the Maggie's Centre at Dundee. The centre opened on 25 September 2003 at Ninewells Hospital. Gehry's design was named "Building of the Year" by the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland, and was also nominated for the 2004 RIAS Award for Architecture.

Furthermore, there are false claims about the effects of attitude, faith healing and alternative medicine, and such arguments muddy the waters. Scientists wait to be convinced that cancer caring centres really make a difference on the outcome, but from the patient's point of view this is the key question.

AN IDEA EXPERIMENT ON EXTENDING LIFE

Professor Alastair Munro of Dundee, who works with the Maggie Centre there, suggests that a Matched Pair Study might be started. Perhaps 1000 people from several centres could be followed over a few years, and a big enough sample taken to cut out the statistical noise. Factorial analysis could then factor out those aspects that would otherwise obscure the situation. For instance, it could take into account the self-selection process of those using the centres, the fact that certain ones in this sample were likely to do better than the average, others worse.

While we can't yet prove it, there are compelling reasons the centres are likely to extend life. Nevertheless, we can examine these reasons in a kind of 'thought experiment,' the model that Einstein suggested was helpful for speculating in the absence of a real experiment: that is, a plausible extension of those cases about which we know something. Here all those placebo and social effects I have been talking about become important, even though we don't know exactly how and to what extent.

First, and most obviously, cancer caring centres can alleviate the death sentence, and thereby negate the negative effect of receiving one. It is accepted science that death can be hastened by willing to die, by knowing that it is inevitable and imminent. Thus those patients so affected, as was Maggie herself, can be helped for a stay of execution. This would probably be a small, but statistically meaningful, number of patients.

It is also now standard science that excessive stress impairs the immune system. Since Maggie Centres alleviate negative stress by teaching patients how to navigate through the problems that come with cancer, these sufferers will on average do better than those who have no such training.

Transforming behaviour will inevitably play some role. The positive feelings and

complementary therapies that patients get at the centres encourage many of them to change their diet, exercise and relax. In short, effective physical action contributes to their longevity. Of course, they might have changed their life-style even if they didn't come to a centre. But it is much easier to do so in a guided way, with the urging and example of others. If many new therapies appear continuously, offering hope to a selected few, then it helps to know whether one is a possible member of this fortunate group. Maggie Centres help patients improve their understanding of these potential breakthroughs, and some of these will work, if only partially. Since cancer is often multipli-caused it can best be multipli-allayed.

Finally, as the books mentioned have shown, a certain percentage of patients will be helped by the Placebo Effect. Psychosomatic and attitudinal differences can really matter, as long as the therapies are believed in strongly by the doctor and patient. This effect remains somewhat controversial because its reverse has also been shown: i.e. those who take no interest whatsoever in their cancer tend to do better than those involved with therapy choices. Probably having no interest and a great interest are both beneficial. But it is not necessary to untangle the complex relationships between body, mind, belief and therapy to get statistically relevant samples. And that is the point. All five effects are bound to work on some patients, in some ways, so that on the average a significant number can be proven to have lived longer than those who did not attend the centres. There are many other good reasons for supporting such institutions, such as the way they improve the quality of life and help families cope with a stressful situation, but for me the prime motive for their existence is the belief that they make a real difference by extending life.

Sources

Quotes are from Carl Elliot, 'Scrivener's Palsy', London Review of Books, 8 January 2004, pp21-2. Important recent books on the Placebo Effect include Dylan Evans, Placebo, The Belief Effect, HarperCollins, London, 2003; Daniel Moerman, Meaning, Medicine and the 'Placebo Effect', Cambridge, 2002; David Peters, Ed. Understanding the Placebo Effect in Complementary Medicine, Churchill Livingstone, 2001.

Hospice

Simon Grech
June 2003, 3rd year project



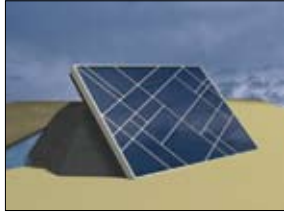
"Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome."
Isaac Asimov (1920 – 1992)

One of an architect's many roles in society is to attempt to manipulate space in order to give the user the illusion of the presence of emotions related to its function. The most difficult brief I ever had to tackle was that of designing a hospice for terminally ill patients. It is the kind of building which is seldom seen or experienced, and a space in which the feelings induced are almost too difficult to interpret.

I visited the children's oncology ward at our general hospital. I envisaged the need for peace, stillness and the need to respect privacy. Also of the utmost importance was the

availability of services which were placed out of the clinical setting, and this premise would ideally extend to the wards which would essentially be the patient's last home. Another notion was that persons supporting the ill would also ideally find the setting to be a haven, and that well designed facilities for anyone visiting or residing with them was essential.

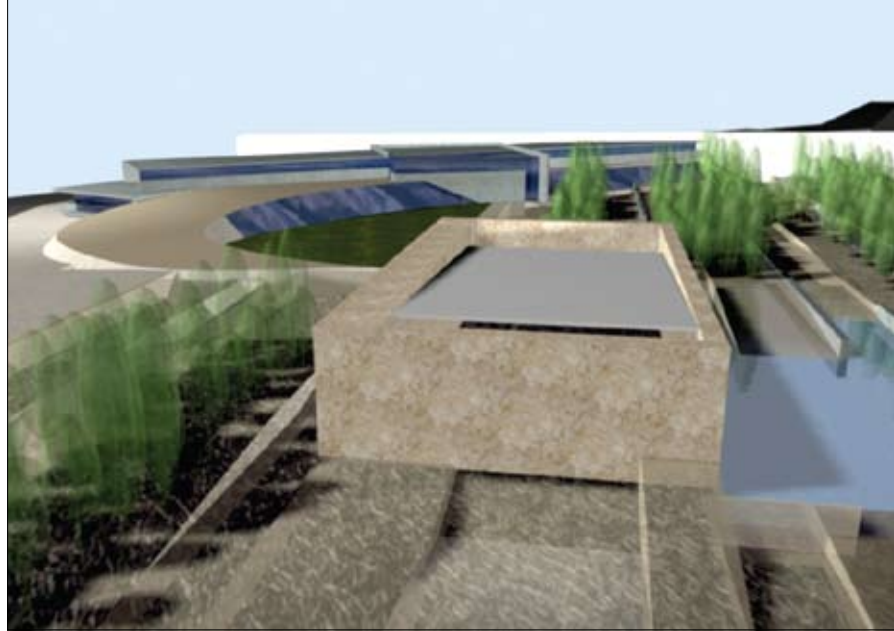
The compound was designed to be surrounded by a vague looking high double wall, behind which would be a garden encompassing all the facilities in a Kasbah-like setting. All would walk by this fragile, yet imposing angulated wall, pulled into the tunnel-like entrance of the hospice. The wall had the double function of serving as a monument for the departed as with time the bricks would



be engraved with their names. The passage was one of leaving the current world and entering a state of transition.

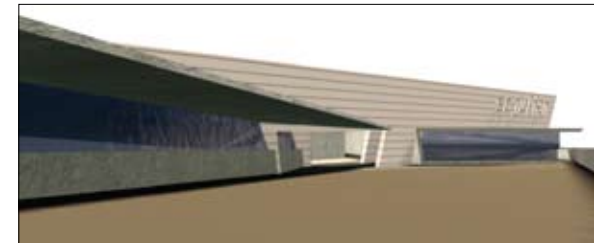
All the major facilities were envisaged to be located in three buildings connected by this double wall and its contained walkway. Large, well lit transparent atria allow one to see the gardens beyond and, to the sides and in a very commercial-like layout lay the clinics, examination rooms, laboratories, staff and teaching facilities and therapy rooms. This part of the project was to contain the admissions, administration and out-patients departments.

A multi-disciplinary team was envisaged to be managing this facility, and ample space for all to function was to be catered for. According to practice guide-



lines, radiotherapy rooms were located underground, while offices were located at the highest levels. Staff facilities would be a crucial component of the design since one must take into account the fact that the latter also suffer psychological distress in their daily routine of caring for the patients of such a facility. Ample day and night recreation and rest areas were catered for. Once through the main building, one finds himself in the landscaped gardens.

The original brief also mentioned a desire for the building to be as ecologically feasible and self sufficient as possible. The concept of the residential buildings was that each patient or small group of patients would have their own detached unit where all care would be administered. The unit would contain comfortable living areas, a well equipped bedroom for the patient, one or more bedrooms for any accompanying relatives, and another for a member of staff if this level of



care was desired. All bedrooms would have specialised en-suite bathrooms, communication facilities and ports for hospital equipment.

The form of each unit was a complex 'machine' – it would be built such that a flowing water source passed underneath it. The floor would be punctured to allow cool air to enter the space from beneath. The south facing wall would be a large slanting platform holding solar panels and photovoltaic cells. It would capture the heat, shade the entire building, and balance out the cool air creating a convection force. The panels would also serve to provide hot water and electricity in an attempt to make the building as

self-sufficient as possible. Needless to say the entire project would be entirely accessible by all with absolutely no hindering or time-consuming transport issues. The gardens would shelter and support the units both aesthetically and functionally. Tucked away in the landscape was a meditation or spiritual space – available for all to use yet hidden away to prevent unwanted thoughts by those patients who may not be feeling strong enough for spiritual healing. It would be open to the landscape, and to natural light – another monument perhaps to the future of the persons using it, and the loved ones who miss them.

Resounding success for Architecture Nights series



Over the past three months, the Kamra tal-Periti has organised a series of Architecture Nights, which have proved to be a resounding success. The theme for these events was "The Stuff of Architecture," and the speakers were asked to develop on the art of using appropriate materials in their right context, and to discuss the sensitive and responsive approach they have adopted in their architectural designs and their decisions in choosing the most suitable materials in the process.

The debates kicked off on 24 March with world-renowned Italian architect Manfredi Nicoletti, who delivered an enthralling presentation of his projects and theories to a packed house at the Aula Magna in Valletta. Nicoletti has been one of Italy's top architects since opening his office "Studio Manfredi Nicoletti" in 1960. With works throughout the world, and author of several books on architectural theory and history, Nicoletti has won an impressive amount of international competitions. The major built architectural and urban projects, some of which were presented during the debate, include the Scientific Greenhouse for Tropical Butterflies, Catania University, Cardiff Bay Opera House in the UK, the New Museum of Natural History in Rouen, France, the New Acropolis Museum in Athens, the New Biblioteca Alexandrina, the Great Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Towers of San Siro in Milan. Current developments under construction include the Opera House of Astana in the new capital City of Kazakhstan, the New Halls of Justice in Arezzo, Campobasso and Reggio Calabria in Italy and the Millennium Park and Cultural Centre of Nigeria, Abuja.

Manfredi Nicoletti is also a pioneer in bioclimatic eco-compatible urban and architectural design. His widely published 600m tall Helicoidal Skyscraper integrates the



suspension bridge's tension structures with aerodynamic form and ecosystemic behaviour. During the debate, Nicoletti also discussed how his most innovative technology structures derive from the study of nature.

Next in line was Swiss Architecture giant Mario Botta, who delivered an exciting presentation to a crowd of over 400 people at the Powerhouse, Valletta Waterfront on the 27 April. Botta has always been heavily involved in the educational aspect of architecture and has, in recent years, created and founded the Academy of Architecture at Mendrisio. Mario Botta's work has been granted numerous international awards, including the Merit Award for Excellence in Design for the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, the IAA Annual Prix 2005 for the Kyobo tower in Seoul, and the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage Europa Nostra for the restructuring of the La Scala Theatre in Milan. His most celebrated completed projects include the theatre and 'House of Culture' in Chambéry, the art gallery Watari-um in Tokyo, the

Mediatheque in Villeurbanne, the SFMOMA (Museum of Modern Art) in San Francisco and the MART Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rovereto. Projects currently underway include the University Library in Trento, the Bechtler Art Museum in Charlotte, the Art Gallery and Museum of the Tsinghua University in Beijing, the Leeum offices in Seoul, the Underground railway stations in Naples, the new Auditorium in Rimini and the Architecture Museum in Mendrisio.

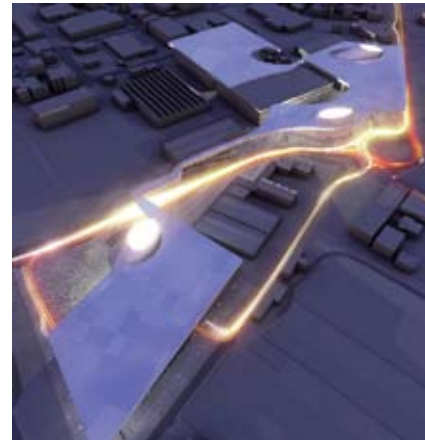
The first half of this series of debates came to a close on the 2 June with

yet another fascinating debate at the Aula Magna. The guest speaker this time round was Cesare Casati, a pioneering Italian architect who began his career working under the direction of the Italian master Gio Ponti, collaborating with him on a number of projects, notably the Hotel Parco dei Principi in Sorrento and Rome, the masterplan for Capo delle Perle at the Isola d'Elba, and the masterplan and design of the new Tessera residential quarter for 9000 small units in Milan. He later founded his architecture practice, Studio DA. The firm's major projects include the "Grifoncino" night club at the Hotel Grifone in Bolzano, the office complex of the Editoriale Domus in Milan, the Mille Miglia Città di Brescia museum in Brescia, the mixed-use Torres 3K in Lisbon, the Palaces for Prince Bin Faysal in Riyadh, a new residential quarter composed of 3000 prefabricated units in Algeria, the headquarters of the Middle East Bank in Dubai and regional offices in Abu Dhabi e Sharjah (UAE), and the restructuring of and additional alterations to the Casino de la Vallée at Saint Vincent and the Galeries Lafayette in Paris. Casati is furthermore internationally recognised for his significant contribution to the diffusion of architecture through media, including

both the written word and important exhibitions. He was the director of the renowned architectural journal "Domus" until 1979 and of "La Mia Casa" until 1985. In 1986 he founded the publishing house L'ARCA EDIZIONI spa, becoming the responsible Director of the major international architecture, design and visual communication journal "l'ARCA". Following an overview of his main works, Casati took the audience through a fascinating journey of architecture, from prehistoric caverns, through the main milestones in architectural history and concluding with the architecture of the year 2400, which he argued would be characterised by nanotechnology wherein genetic codes may be manipulated to permit the growth of natural plants and organisms into structural entities in themselves.

COMING UP

The efforts of the team of people who have been working on the organisation of these events do not stop here.



Work has already begun on the next series of Architecture Nights that will take off again on the 20 October with one of Austria's foremost architects Peter Lorenz of Peter Lorenz Ateliers as the guest speaker. Much work is also being done to bring down Wolf D. Prix, founding partner of Coop Himmelb(L)au together with Helmut Swiczinsky. Coop Himmelb(l)au, a leading architectural firm of international standing, was founded in 1968 in Vienna and has some fantastic world-renowned projects within the fields of architecture, urbanism, design and art, with

a second office opening in 1988 in Los Angeles, USA. Preparations are also under way for the 2007 edition of Time for Architecture, T4A3. This series of events is organised annually to mark World Architecture Day, which this year falls on the 1 October. The theme will be "Architecture embraces the Arts," and will aim to explore the relationship between architecture and the whole spectrum of the Arts. The program promises to be an exciting one, with events to suit all tastes and interests. Although the program is still tentative it is confirmed that the events will take place over the first three weeks of October. The organising committee is working to bring down Mario Pisani, a renowned Italian critic, to deliver a lecture during T4A3. As in past years, a workshop for children will also be held, together with a guided tour and two exhibitions. More details on the program itself will be forthcoming shortly, so keep your eyes open for information in the local press.

The Kamra tal-Periti thanks Professor Richard England as well as all its sponsors without whom none of these events could take place. In particular thanks go to HSBC, Auntie Lucy, Modern Elegance, Attard & Co, Steel Structures and HalMann Vella for their support of Architecture Nights.

MEPA and Development - From Organic to Genetically Modified?

by Perit Sylvio Farrugia

We are ALL affected by the places in which we live - by the buildings that surround us and the streets through which we walk. Our lives are shaped by the towns and cities we inhabit and by the beauty - or the ugliness - of our surroundings. From time to time, this powerful truth so touches young adults that they decide they must become an architect.

Architecture occupies a unique place in our sensibilities. Unlike other artistic activities, it is totally public in its manifestations. Whether consciously or not, buildings, and the places that they form, stand as reflections of the values of our society. The importance of 'place' can hardly be overstated, and it is therefore the responsibility - and privilege - of Authorities such as MEPA to help to create locations as places of true quality and appeal.

Sinan, the great Ottoman architect of the 16th century, said that "Architecture is the most difficult of professions, and he who would practise it must, above all things, be pious". Much of the very best of architecture has, of course, been inspired by, and in turn given expression to, the great belief systems of a time and place. Yet much good architecture has, far more often, been of a domestic and human scale; frequently a marriage of very localised needs and materials, such as the modest architecture and easy urban form of the historic village cores. For architecture at its best does not need to be grand or loud, but neither should it be mindless or soulless. Indeed, it is often the very modesty of well-crafted buildings that helps to create the best and most lasting sense of community well-being, urban order and vitality, as well as establishing and maintaining commercial value.

Good architecture is all about working with the grain of a place, rather than against it. Humility in architecture in no way needs to imply sameness, blandness or poor design. It is depressing that so much architecture has become what I would describe as "genetically modified" rather than "organic" - in other words, clinically functional rather than, growing out directly from the inner nature of the people.



What never ceases to amaze me is that a large number of fellow architects, developers and general practice clients choose to spend their holidays in historically and culturally rich areas. And yet, the designs submitted in development permit applications are almost always based on, may I say, somewhat different design principles.

It might be worthwhile here to refer to a lecture given by Professor Jeremy Boissevain at a business breakfast in 2005. The basic tenet of his speech was that the root of all evil in Malta was the concept of Amoral Familism – the "I'm all right, Jack" mentality extended to cover one's nearest and dearest and arguably developed over recent years. One can apply this concept directly to the changes that have occurred in Architecture over the past few decades. Up to the 1950's, the concept of having one's own house was a target reserved for one's middle age and possibly, middle class status. I was wont to describe this aspect, earlier on, as an organic growth. Houses built up to that time had distinctive style and functionality. A villa, such as one built in Ta' Xbiex, might look grand, indeed be grand. The elements which make it up however are delicately balanced to give a sense of harmony and charm that only proportion and certainly not sheer size

can give. Similarly, a modest house in the village core, would service all the needs of the family using it, in a less grand scale. Even today, however, these small houses are distinctive enough to be called houses of character.

Following the acquisition of Independence, a sense of affluence began to overtake the sensibilities of the population. This increased affluence, borne out by the official statistics, instigated what we know as the building boom of the 60's. Houses got larger, rooms got bigger, amenities such as bathrooms and washrooms were introduced as de rigeur. Swimming pools made their debut. We became nouveau riche and as such appreciated our newly found status in maintaining zoning areas to prove that we had made it. From the village core, the movement out towards the edges of the villages started, albeit at a slow pace. The change of national mood in the 70's and 80's too was directly reflected in the development taking place. Slowly but surely, families showed all the signs of getting smaller. The cost of living, which between 1945 and 1970 had doubled, now increased by four times between 1970 and 1985, partly also due to the onset of the oil crisis in the early 70's. This had two direct results for the architectural profession.

Houses and land cost more, so clients who could afford to build a house, often skimped on style. Like the Romans of yore, the Maltese who could, went for the conquest of space: big was beautiful. The conquest of space was translated even in terms of land area. The housing schemes wherein relatively large plots of land were given at a cheap price came at a huge cost. The cost was especially high when compared to the shrinking size of Maltese families: clearly the cost benefit analysis on environmental impact was still not part of the national formamentis.

Academics maintain that in this period, the land was indiscriminately raped. This also introduced the concept of long-term loans to finance the building of houses. It is not surprising therefore that, with these social pressures, less liquid cash, higher costs of living, an increasingly protectionist economy and

families becoming smaller, so too did the style of our architecture change. The large terraced houses became maisonettes, and three bedroom apartments became the norm. By the end of the 80's Malta was facing two realities: building was one of the main pillars of the economy and land was becoming increasingly limited. An incipient environmentalist movement started to point this out. The only way out of this vice seemed to be upwards.

I remember a time when the only high-rise building was the Preluna hotel. It was a landmark which epitomised the tourist attractions of Sliema. It did not take long for those with a house on the Sliema seafront to learn the mantra of Location, Location, Location – and to cash in on it. Soon the whole seafront became the precursor of a fashion that was to spread – the medium rise buildings. But, with families getting smaller and property getting dearer, the size of the apartments too shrunk not only in size, but also in the type of accommodation – nowadays, we are seeing a significant increase in one and two bedroom apartments. In a flurry of social adaptation, and realising that all property had increased considerably in price, we pulled down old houses and built blocks of apartments. We did this to the extent that

there is a glut of housing stock.

And still we wanted to build.

Ever since its inception, the MEPA's main raison d'être was the restraining and maximising of land use. This legal obligation was later made even more stringent through the merger of the environment and planning remits, previously under different ministries. This development had the advantage of bestowing on land-use, environmental sensibilities. And here it gets interesting.

A tug of war currently exists between the two cultures: of Amoral Familism, if one accepts this concept, and the Green Lobby which has increasingly taken root on the island. Marry this to a politically polarised community with restricted availability of land and the cocktail is a noxious one, especially for the regulatory Authority.

MEPA, has no economic or political remit. Its actions affect the economy and politics but these elements are not part of the process in which applications are assessed. Only land use planning is. The question it is obliged to answer is: does Malta need high-rise buildings?

To answer that, one needs to look into the nature and purpose of high-rise buildings. By their very nature these buildings increase population density. They also affect social

interaction and promote an increasingly individualistic, perhaps egoistic, lifestyle. With a surplus of housing stock and an already high density population, the only reason why MEPA considers such buildings to be acceptable in Malta is because they create landmarks. One would look forward to having creatively designed buildings such as the Gherkin of London, the Burj al-Arab Hotel of Dubai, the Petronas Towers of Malaysia and, why not, the Empire State Building. I ask, is this the direction we are heading to? I fear not.

The designs being submitted for the high-rise buildings in Malta are, to be polite, mediocre. The emphasis is on exploitation of land rather than beauty and uniqueness of design. In a sense one can understand that with land being so dear, an investor would seek to maximise profit. In a great sense, MEPA is helpless in front of this movement. It can only assess applications from a land use point of view. Only through dialogue can modifications to design happen and there is a point beyond which one cannot press on.

This drive to maximising profit, fuelled to a great extent by the demands and promotions of the real-estate agents, is leaving in its wake another casualty: the vast store of architectural and construction expertise

gathered through millennia of communion with the rocks which are our roots. This vast historical library of architectural style and technique is so huge and so important to our proper understanding of the modern world that it should at least form the foundation for the training of a new generation of practitioners in the building arts.

Sadly, it seems that architecture, and especially the process of architectural training, largely, and sometimes completely, ignores the value of a grounding in traditional techniques that, until fairly recently, were considered to be the life blood of any designer's learning. Such basic skills as measured drawing, drawing from life and classical geometry are now hardly ever in evidence in the applications of the vast majority of architects. This, to my mind, is a short-sighted tragedy and, I believe, serves to undermine the very integration of craftsmanship, art and building that is surely the ultimate ambition of architecture itself. I am convinced that the time has come for a rehabilitation of these techniques in the search for a more complete, organic and ultimately more sustainable architecture of the future.

Harry Potter looked into his desires for the future in the mirror of ERISED. If our politicians could but agree to look into their Mirror of ERISED for a moment, what Malta would they see in the coming, say, twenty years? This is how we should be branding Malta, together, with a vision for the future, with a message, a gambit that will fatten, not kill the proverbial golden-egged goose. This should not be a party-based approach. A Select Parliamentary Committee, possibly with the inclusion of established NGOs and extra-parliamentary parties, with specific terms of reference on land-use and quality architecture needs to be commissioned. In this way the investment in the land, which so many see as a sound and profitable one, will be channelled into what we, as citizens, desire and deserve. Gourmet architecture, if you will, not fast-food design.

This is not just a plea for beauty and harmony. It is inherently a social plea for, to paraphrase John Dryden, all empire is no more than power held in trust. We are living in a time when dwellings are getting smaller and costlier and family units are changing.

The two point four children unit is giving way to single parent families, singletons and elderly couples. As an Authority, we combat the threat of ghetto-ism with every major development. Changes in the social fabric are not necessarily 'social problems' – they will become problems if, as communities, we do not cater for their special needs. People are not numbers. People are not cases. People are individuals with dreams and needs. The focus needs to shift from markets to people otherwise we run the risk of creating speculative ghettos which will aggravate rather than address social situations.

I am not seeking a static and backward-looking architecture. I am rather looking towards a reassertion of the value of a living tradition as a vast reservoir of ideas and techniques to sustain a truly contemporary architecture that reflects the timeless nature of our human experience. Perhaps such an approach can be far easier to adopt, although sometimes all the more challenging for those involved, when communities are genuinely empowered to influence the course of urban planning, regeneration or local building. MEPA has always been a supporter of what is sometimes called 'community planning' or 'action planning' even if this approach still needs to be refined.

The criticism frequently levelled at MEPA shows a recognition that this process of public consultation, which it was the first of all government entities to pioneer in Malta, is recognised as a legitimate, even a welcome method of involving people in the planning of new development. In this way, the often arcane and alienating processes of town planning and building design became more accessible and accountable to those that are left to enjoy - or endure - the results.


This paper was presented by Perit Sylvio Farrugia at a Forum entitled "Real Estate - Opportunities and Challenges for the Future" held on the 28 March 2007 and is being reproduced here with his kind consent. Perit Farrugia is Assistant Director, Development Control in the Planning Directorate. For several years he has been in charge of the Major Projects Team.



NOW TO 18 AUGUST 2007; GALLERY 1, RIBA, LONDON, UK
ASMARA: AFRICA'S SECRET MODERNIST CITY
For the first time, the rich, modernist heritage of the Eritrean capital Asmara is introduced in an exhibition, which explores through four thematic units; the city as it is today and its historical social context, architecture and special culture, the problems and challenges resulting from its function as the capital and the increasing pressure to expand.
www.architecture.com

NOW TO 27 AUGUST 2007; TATE MODERN, LONDON, UK
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Global Cities looks at changes in the social and built forms of ten large, dynamic, international cities: Cairo, Istanbul, Johannesburg, London, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, Shanghai and Tokyo.
www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/globalcities

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www.newlondonarchitecture.org

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www.nai.nl

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www.sam-basel.org


NOW TO 7 OCTOBER 2007; GALLERY 3, NAI, NETHERLANDS
NEITHER TOWN NOR COUNTRY
The messy zone of transition zone where city and farmland meet has time and again evaded the customary orderliness of Dutch spatial planning. This exhibition uses maps, drawings and photographs to give viewers an image of the unpredictable ways these spaces tend to develop.
www.nai.nl

NOW TO 14 OCTOBER 2007; V&A MUSEUM, LONDON, UK
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This exhibition reveals how this landmark building has been painstakingly refocused to meet the demands of the next 50 years as a world-class concert venue and a vibrant public arena for the arts.
www.architecture.com

NOW TO 25 NOVEMBER 2007 ; DESIGN MUSEUM, LONDON, UK
ZAHA HADID : ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN
www.designmuseum.org

AUGUST 17 – SEPTEMBER 24, 2007; COPENHAGEN, DENMARK
INDEX: AWARD EXHIBITION
Divided into the five award categories BODY, HOME, WORK, PLAY and COMMUNITY, the exhibition will present designs relevant to all areas of human life and be equally inspiring for laymen and professionals, young and old.
www.indexaward.dk/2007

31 AUGUST – 1 SEPTEMBER 2007; JYVÄSKYLÄ UNIVERSITY, FINLAND
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY
A seminar on Today, Tomorrow and Design
<http://www.alvaraalto.fi/designseminar/>


6 SEPTEMBER - 3 OCTOBER 2007; GALLERY 1, RIBA, LONDON, UK
LANDMARKS OF NEW YORK
This exhibition of black and white photographs of New York landmarks addresses the cultural, historical and architectural significance of each location, spotlighting the most significant and unusual of the 22,100 protected properties and structures in the city.
www.architecture.com

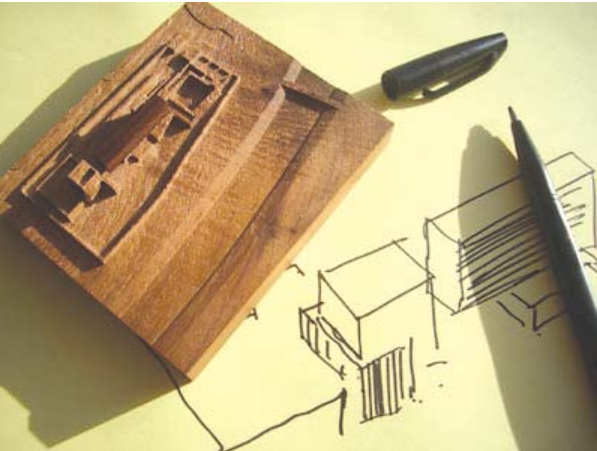
08-11 SEPTEMBER, 2007; UDINE, ITALY
2007 INTERNATIONAL CHAIR EXHIBITION
www.promosedia.it

10-21 SEPTEMBER 2007; SCHUMACHER COLLEGE, UK
Towards Urban Sustainability: Cities for the Future
www.schumachercollege.org.uk

12-14 SEPTEMBER 2007; MALMO, SWEDEN
SUSTAINABLE CITY DEVELOPMENT 2007
www.malmo.se/sustainablecity



15-18 SEPTEMBER 2007; AGIA PELAGIA, GREECE
2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PASSIVE AND LOW ENERGY COOLING FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT PALENC 2007
<http://palenc2007.conferences.gr/>



17-18 SEPTEMBER 2007; BEIJING, CHINA
5TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CURRENT AND FUTURE TRENDS IN BRIDGE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE
www.bridgemanagement2007.com

01 OCTOBER - 25 NOVEMBER 2007; THE LIGHTHOUSE, GLASGOW, SCOTLAND
SUTHERLAND HUSSEY ARCHITECTS MICROSTRUCTURES - "SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL"
www.thelighthouse.co.uk

07 OCTOBER 2007; MAK CENTRE, VIENNA, AUSTRIA
MAK ARCHITECTURE TOUR 2007
The MAK Centre's annual architecture tour to Modernist homes and buildings.
www.makcenter.org

16-18 OCTOBER 2007; STUTTGART, GERMANY
CIB W102 3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
"Information and Knowledge Management - Helping the Practitioner in Planning and Building"
<http://cib-w102.iconda.org/conference2007stuttgart>

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LONDON'S LEARNING
London is experiencing one of the biggest investments in education and skills infrastructure since the 1960s. Architecture and construction face several challenges in this respect.
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BATIMAT INTERNATIONAL BUILDING EXHIBITION 2007
www.batimat.com