



The Architecture Centre, Bristol Annual Review April 08-March 09



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Championing better buildings and places in the South West

The Architecture Centre's principal aims are to demonstrate the value of good design and, by increasing people's awareness and enjoyment of their built environment, to stimulate the demand for design excellence.

The Architecture Centre is the leading regional expert on engaging the public with the built environment and championing the creation of better quality neighbourhoods, buildings and public spaces. Based in Bristol and relating directly to that particular urban environment we respond equally to the needs of the wider South West region.

Aspiration + Inspiration

The Architecture Centre looks to the very best that contemporary architecture has to offer as its inspiration. We want to share our passion for the possibilities of great building: we champion better buildings and places for everyone.

Sustainability + Integrity

A cornerstone of The Architecture Centre's mission is to support sustainable approaches to architecture and design. It sits at the core of our work and informs all we do from programmes to procurement, combined with an uncompromising commitment to design quality.

Empowerment + Involvement

We wish to see architecture and design de-mystified, so that everyone feels they have the knowledge and confidence to demand better buildings. We work with communities and schools to make architecture accessible to all.

Information + Interpretation

We act as a conduit between the public and built environment professionals, giving an all-too-rare insight into how buildings are planned, designed and developed. Attracting a broad audience, we communicate complex or technical issues in straightforward and engaging ways.

Influence + Advocacy

The Architecture Centre acts as a champion for design excellence at both a local and a regional level. We broach issues with those who make and influence policy, provide support to Design Champions, and promote the use of local and regional design review panels.

The Centre's programme includes exhibitions, events, lectures, visits to inspiring buildings and critical debate. The learning programme provides engaging built environment education for children and young people in the South West. We promote the value of good design – to empower communities undergoing change to shape their environment for the better, and we work with built environment professionals, local authority officers and councillors to achieve design excellence.

Our value to the region

Architecture is a unique art form in its universal relevance; the comfort, effectiveness and aesthetic qualities of buildings and spaces have a powerful impact on us all.

In the 13 years since the Architecture Centre first opened, it has continuously delivered first class programmes dedicated to helping different audiences to a better understanding of architecture and the built environment.

The exhibitions and education programmes have been consistent from the beginning – other areas are growing, such as the work with, and for, communities, and the 'design action' programme which pulls together our work with local authorities and professionals.

We are an independent arts organisation with specific knowledge of architecture and design, and an excellent reputation both locally and nationally. Our existing programmes, together with our rigorous and self-analytical approach to what we do, have attracted increasing numbers of partners and collaborators. We intend to extend our capacity and reach through further collaboration in the future.

We hope you enjoy reading this annual review which is designed to give an overview of some of the highlights of our 2008/9 programme.

David Mellor
Chair





Aspiration+ Inspiration

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) – Stakeholder engagement

Building Schools for the Future, the government's £2 billion investment programme to rebuild and renew all of England's secondary schools, provides a unique opportunity for young people to have a say in the design of the buildings they use every day. The Architecture Centre is empowering school communities to confidently take part in the consultation process.

As part of the Centre's Young Design Champions programme, pupils, staff and parents from Hartcliffe in south Bristol explored issues such as sustainability and landscaping through a series of workshops, and applied what they had learnt when considering public art in the design. In 2008 the Centre helped establish a team of pupil ambassadors from six schools in Bridgwater, Somerset, who have since been actively involved in the consultation process of the design of their new school buildings.

Building on the ongoing success of the programme, the Architecture Centre continues to work with BSF schools, and is extending this work through the Primary Capital Programme.

Partners: RIO (Real Ideas Organisation), Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall

“The Architecture Centre provides a unique resource for both clients and architects, empowering students and teachers to play an active role in the design of their new schools and providing a forum for designers.”

John Waldron RIBA – member of the CABE schools enabling team and founder member of the RIBA Schools Client Forum



“Fantastic opportunity to see an emotive subject from a different perspective, one which I thought would conflict with my own. Thank you!”

Green Belt event attendee

Exhibitions, talks, debates and events

The Architecture Centre gives professionals, students and the public the opportunity to meet high-profile practitioners, to be inspired by their projects and to broaden their understanding of architecture.

Reflecting heightened interest in Le Corbusier during 2008, The Architecture Centre revisited the work of this architectural colossus. Secret Labour was based on an exhibition shown in Bristol in 1987 that celebrated Corbusier's work as a painter, sculptor, poet, polemicist, architect and planner. In re-staging the exhibition we asked architects, designers and others working today for their views on the persistent power of Le Corbusier's ideas, and brought together a programme that included film, debate and a talk exploring Le Corbusier and women.

Other highlights from last year's programme include talks by former RIBA president Sir Richard MacCormac on higher density sustainable suburbs; Louisa Hutton, the Berlin-based architect with a reputation for experimentation and exciting use of colour; Eelco Hooftman of GROSS.MAX, on innovative approaches to green urban contexts; and Katherine Clarke, artist partner at muf, on collaborating with communities and crossing boundaries between the disciplines of art and architecture.



Sustainability+ Integrity

Spring Green

This annual programme of exhibitions and events celebrates and showcases sustainable innovation in the built environment. Spring Green gives us the opportunity to explore key topics in depth; it has proved immensely popular since its launch in 2007 with a season on sustainable housing.

2009's programme focused on urban green networks, with a varied programme embracing issues such as urban food production, biodiversity in the built form and new landscape design. As well as hosting public debates and talks from leading landscape designers, the Centre commissioned four artists to respond to the programme's themes. The resulting exhibition, *New Growth*, used the Centre's gallery as project hub for thought-provoking work in a variety of media from artists Rebecca Beinart, Jenna Collins, Andrew Dodds and John Dummett, with contemporary archaeologist, James Dixon.

Partners (2009): Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Groundwork South West, ESRC Festival of Social Science

“A really useful exhibition to provide case studies that are encouraging more responsible development. Top marks.”

Comments book, Spring Green 2007, Sustainable Housing

A forum for debate

The Architecture Centre provides a forum for debating important and difficult design challenges, such as housing growth and green spaces. The debate 'Is the Green Belt sacred?', part of the Spring Green 2008 programme, brought together leading speakers from opposing camps – James Heartfield, author of *Let's Build!*, and Paul Miner of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England – to provoke a lively audience discussion around the need for more housing and whether it is time to rethink our protected green field areas.



Empowerment+ Involvement

Spaceshaper & Young Spaceshaper

Spaceshaper is a practical toolkit developed by CABE to 'measure the quality of a public space before investing time and money in improving it'. After a successful pilot using Spaceshaper in Bristol, the Architecture Centre is now involved in developing a version specifically for young people.

Young Spaceshaper is helping 9-12 year-olds get involved in improving the local spaces that have an impact on their lives. Young people are often overlooked in community consultation, and this project aims to demonstrate the meaningful role that they can play in regenerating their communities. The first year of this three-year national project involved young people assessing the quality of a variety of public spaces: from a streetscape in the Forest of Dean to an urban park in Hackney.

The Architecture Centre has facilitators trained in delivering Spaceshaper workshops for both adults and young people.

Partners: CABE Space, beam, make:good, Kent Architecture Centre

“I really enjoyed the session because I don't often get a say in anything important”

Year 6 pupil participant, Cinderford Young Spaceshaper workshop

Built environment summer school

Since 2004 the Architecture Centre has designed and delivered an exciting annual week-long summer school for primary school pupils from south Bristol. Pupils work with professionals, visit inspirational places and respond to a creative design challenge relating to design, landscaping and sustainability. The pupils work in teams with older peer mentors who help them develop creative and communication skills and increase their confidence.

Partners: Knowle West Media Centre, Bristol City Council



Information+ Interpretation

Suburban Futures: Designing sustainable neighbourhoods

How can we create neighbourhoods that are low-carbon, healthy and happy places to live? The twin challenges of climate change and housing growth make this question more pertinent than ever. This major exhibition, developed by the Architecture Centre, demonstrated a range of potential proposed solutions including innovative forms for denser housing, sustainable urban extensions and eco towns. Visitors had the chance to contribute via an 'interactive wall': hundreds voted for their favourite suburban features, and left comments about how we should design the suburbs of the future.

Partners: Barton Willmore, University of the West of England

A vital resource

The Architecture Centre is highly respected as a reliable source of information on all aspects of architecture and the built environment. Our shop stocks a wide range of books on architecture, landscape and design, while our dedicated resource room provides exhibition-themed case studies and publications.

A ground floor information point focuses attention on current issues or campaigns such as Streetwise, our year of awareness-raising and action on streets. This campaign is part of the Shaping Neighbourhoods programme, which looks at how we can make our neighbourhoods healthier and more sustainable.

We extend our impact by producing resources to support our activities and compiling case studies and information sheets to accompany exhibitions. For the Sweet History project, which explored the impact of the sugar and slave trade on Bristol's built environment, the Centre produced a dedicated web site and walking trail map.

Partners: CABE, Living Streets



Influence+ Advocacy

Sustainable Schools conference

The government's huge investment in improving school buildings gives us the chance to create truly sustainable schools that are an asset to communities and neighbourhoods. CABE is reviewing new school designs against minimum design standards – with sustainability a key criteria – in order to set a new, high standard for secondary school design. As part of our ongoing focus on school design, the Architecture Centre held a sell-out regional conference on the design of sustainable schools, bringing together national experts in the field of sustainable school design to demonstrate best practice, with a focus on the South West.

“Really good exhibition, nice to see the suggestion wall so people can contribute good ideas”.

Visitor comments

Building in Context

We offer support to elected members who act as Design Champions for their local or unitary authority. 'Building in Context' training is specially designed to help members and officers understand how to deal with contemporary design in historically sensitive areas.

This year, in partnership with the Architecture Centre for Devon and Cornwall, we ran Building in Context events in Gloucester and Totnes for councillors and planning officers from across the region. In Gloucester we used the masterplan for the Blackfriars area as a case study to explore ways of developing this city centre site, which contains hugely valuable historic buildings and offers a prime opportunity for a new public space.

The Architecture Centre can arrange bespoke training and professional development sessions, visits and study tours.

Partners: CABE, English Heritage, Architecture Centre for Devon and Cornwall

Staff

Gillian Fearnough, Director
Christine Davis, Regional Programme Manager
Amy Harrison, Education Manager
Lottie Storey, Programme & Marketing Manager
Alice Murdoch, Regional Programme
Co-ordinator (maternity cover Hannah Chiswell
from May 2008 to May 2009)
Jodie Marks, Programme Co-ordinator
Vickie Whitehead, Centre Administrator
Van Hill-Smith, Retail Buyer
Jean Dyte, Catering Assistant
Weekend staff: Lauren Jury, Holly Maries,
Ellie Mond, Zara Picken, Stephanie Sutton,
Kevin Woodward

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For further information about the Architecture Centre visit www.architecturecentre.co.uk

The Architecture Centre produces a fortnightly email newsletter – subscribe online via the website or email: info@architecturecentre.co.uk



The Architecture Centre

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2008-2009 Financial Information

The Architecture Centre is a registered charity and a company limited by shares. Our work is primarily grant aided – the Centre is an Arts Council England regularly funded organisation (RFO) and receives project funding from CABE and Creating Excellence. Income is also generated by consultancy and training, shop and ticket sales, our membership scheme and sponsorship. We welcome new members and offer attractive sponsorship opportunities.



Income: £260,559

- CABE: 18%
- Arts Council England: 19%
- Project grants: 29%
- Earned income: 24%
- Membership, sponsorship, donations: 3%
- Project income: 7%

Founded by the architectural community in 1996, we have developed a diverse programme for a wide audience. The Centre is part of a network of 23 architecture centres in the UK, and we were joined in the South West in 2006 by the Architecture Centre for Devon and Cornwall, with whom we collaborate regularly.

The Centre is based on Bristol's Harbourside and has an intimate and welcoming gallery, a shop specialising in books on architecture and design and well designed gifts, and a seminar room for hire.

This annual report is kindly sponsored by



ARUP



Expenditure: £289,016

- Overheads: 20%
- Staff: 62%
- Marketing: 4%
- Project costs: 13%

The Architecture Centre is a founding member of the Architecture Centre Network.

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CENTRE
NETWORK

The Architecture Centre is supported by Arts Council England, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), and Creating Excellence.

