



First Night
Opera North's ghostly
new *Turn of the Screw*
Page 46



times2arts

The Young Turks building a new future

As Zaha Hadid wins the Stirling Prize, Tom Dyckhoff hails the next generation of architects hoping to follow in her footsteps

Do you know the most peculiar thing about the shortlist for this year's Stirling Prize, the winner of which, Zaha Hadid's Maxxi Museum in Rome, was announced on Saturday night? Go on, take a look. See anything odd? First off, there was no building by Norman Foster or Richard Rogers on it. A significant miracle. Second, and not unrelated, half of it was made up of architects who have never been on the shortlist before and could reasonably be called "young" — which, in the queerly geriatric world of architecture, means under the age of 50. This, I think, is a watershed moment.

Part of it is demographics, the maturing of a new cohort of architects distant enough in age from those twin titans of British architecture who have dominated the profession since the 1970s. Until at least 2004 it was this old generation — your Fosters and Rogers, now in their late seventies, and, in their shadow, the huge generation of fifty and sixtiesome things the pair inspired, taught and trained — who hoovered up all the work. But, eventually, some scraps began to fall off the table, and this new generation gobbled them up.

They don't think of themselves as a cohesive group; generations rarely do. And these architects in their thirties and forties are, as a rule, more eclectic in approach and style than their largely modernist forebears. But they do have some common characteristics. One — and I can't stress the importance of this enough: they aren't in the shadow of Foster or Rogers. If they look up to anything in this country it's not "hi-tech", that building-as-machine aesthetic exported around the world by their grand forebears, but the warm, tactile Modernism of the likes of Sir David Chipperfield, with its embrace of tradition; or, at the opposite pole, the compu-

ter-generated Futurist forms of Zaha Hadid.

Or both. Because — characteristic number two — this generation sees nothing wrong with creating computer-generated, even flamboyant shapes, then covering them in brick, or larch, or pitched roofs. They have no hang-ups about being modern and traditional. They have learnt the lessons of Post-Modernism — people like buildings that connect with history and roots; that express something other than cold function — but don't see the point of ignoring the best lessons of Modernism, too.

Three, they look for their inspiration close to home: to the grounded, rootsy modernism of Portugal's Alvaro Siza, Switzerland's Herzog & de Meuron and Peter Zumthor, or the clever-clever irony of the Netherlands' Rem Koolhaas; they build buildings with wit and soul.

This is our pick of the best of the UK's new generation. We could easily have picked others, or more, but wanted to show just how eclectic British architecture is right now. This lot have flourished in the warm, fertile conditions of the boom years. Now the wind has changed, it'll be survival of the fittest.

DSDHA

If the husband-and-wife team Deborah Saunt and David Hills is committed to anything, it's restoring dignity to civic life. They studied at Cambridge, where the architecture faculty has long been training a certain branch of the new generation keen on making "proper" modern architecture, with gravitas and a sensitivity to place. DSDHA has won a staggering ten RIBA awards, largely for schools, nurseries and children's centres that create brilliant, stimulating environments that treat their users intelligently. But its Sure Start centre in Colchester is the most astonishing, turning an overlooked addition to a town's modern landscape into a civic monument. It's one thing building with loads of money; the real test is doing so in tougher environments, such as the 2012 Olympics (DSDHA is building a chunk of the Athletes' Village) or Waterloo (its design for a new city square is seeking funding). This year the practice comes of age, with its best work a runner-up for the Stirling: Christ's College secondary school, Guildford, a miracle of quality in a sector led by cost-cutting, looks as if it should have been built in Switzerland. That's a compliment.



Kingsdale School, London, is an eccentric triumph for the architects dRMM

Acme Space

Goodness this lot are ambitious. I haven't seen a firm of young architects so adept at marrying experimental shapes with commercial nous for yonks.

Acme has been going three years and already is working on massive projects in Bahrain, Damascus, Beirut and, er, Swansea. How come? Experience. Friedrich Ludwig, its co-founder, cut his teeth at Foreign Office Architects, managing projects such as the Highcross shopping centre in Leicester, with its lacy, filigree façade, before setting up Acme with Stefano Dal Piva in 2007.

This love of the "skin" of a building, spun like fabric into decorative patterns then twisted into all manner of forms, seems to be Acme's forte. Its first completed project, Hunsett Mill, a holiday home in the Norfolk Broads, won a RIBA award this year and is up for the Manser Medal for Britain's best new house.

It's stunningly confident for a first project: tripling the size of a 19th-century miller's cottage with a "shadow" of charred timber, folded, like origami, into angular shapes both modern yet, evoking the area's timber barns, traditional and cosy. Its next big British project is masterplanning and designing a chunk of central Leeds for the Eastgate development, stalled for a couple of years, but now back from the dead.

dRMM

Why build a house that moves? Silly question. Why ever not? dRMM — Alex de Rijke, Philip Marsh and Sadie Morgan — don't do the obvious. The exterior walls of its Sliding House in Suffolk glide over the inner shell of glass. This delight in the unexpected sets dRMM apart. Few firms would have the gall to collaborate with the Dutch art provocateurs Atelier Van Lieshout — famed for AVL-Ville, a free state declared in Rotterdam harbour — on a school. Yet the result, Kingsdale School, South London, is an eccentric triumph; a model for making do and not just mending a school building — in this case a once-failing secondary — but utterly transforming it. They repeated the trick at Clapham Manor primary, another Stirling contender, in a joyful, multicoloured building with a touch of DIY. Next are a primary school and academy in Birmingham, a block for the 2012 Athletes' Village, 122 apartments in Stavanger, built like treehouses, and a gold lamé wedding chapel on Blackpool's prom. The firm also plans to move its office to a cargo ship on the Thames. Why? Silly question.

Carmody Groarke

One of the highlights of an otherwise bleak year for architecture was one of the strangest, most exhilarating new buildings built in London, atop a dreary car park, sadly now nothing but a memory. Architects — es-

pecially the younger or more entrepreneurial sort — have taken advantage of the recession to build a legion of cheap, clever pop-up projects in peculiar or derelict spots for anyone from Selfridges to, here, Bistrottheque, the dining darling of East London's art bunch. Kevin Carmody and Andy Groarke's Studio East Dining was an architectural starfish, a view on each arm, built from materials borrowed from the 2012 Olympics site and then recycled. Carmody Groarke's designs for the artist Carsten Höller's Congolese-inspired Double Club in Islington in 2008, the Barbican's *Surreal House* exhibition this year and the V&A's Post-Modernism blockbuster next, show a skill for the temporary. Yet it's for an altogether more profound project that Carmody Groarke has become famous. Its memorial to the victims of the 7/7 London bombings at Hyde Park Corner danced with elegance and tact between competing, sometimes conflicting demands for popular meaning and gravitas, an approach the pair have to repeat for their forthcoming memorial to the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami victims at the Natural History Museum.

NORD

NORD's first public project might just be an electricity substation, but what an electricity substation! One that might turn out to be the best building at the 2012 Olympics. Dark bricks, subtly laid, in a handsome, abstract form, it recalls, in miniature, the best of Giles Gilbert Scott's infrastructural work, like the power stations at Battersea and Bankside, pre-Tate Modern. NORD, based in Glasgow, has heft. Its buildings are about what architects like to call materiality, where you can feel the sensory qualities of the materials of which they're made. I can't wait to see its new headquarters for Wexford County Council in Eire, a giant hulk of glass and stone, nor its Shingle House at Dungeness, Sussex, a holiday home made for Alain de Botton's Living Architecture project.



Explore the architects' work in our slideshow
thetimes.co.uk/architecture

