

Urban Alchemy – Tuesday 26th September 2006

Workshop Session – ‘Architecture for Cultural Use’

Gemma Tipton – The format for this workshop is 10 minutes for each speaker, with time for questions - and as with this morning, please identify yourself before your question.

This session is about Architecture for Cultural Use and particularly since the example of the Guggenheim in Bilbao, which is a gallery that I really hate and annoys me dreadfully, we’ve asked an awful lot of our cultural buildings – we want them to be inspirational, iconic, amazing, show stopping crowd pullers – and that’s just from the outside. But often what happens inside is less than inspirational and quite hard on the art and it’s a conundrum which I think is particularly germane to this discussion because it’s caught between what city planners and the people contributing money want and what the artists and performance might want. And then also touching on that idea of alchemy – there’s particularly in theatre spaces that idea of what happens between the audience and the stage. So I’ll shut up because it’s not actually about me and I’ll introduce the 2 speakers this afternoon.

First of all Barry Pritchard who’s actually got four theatre buildings on his books at the moment, one of which is the extension to the Opera House. He was also a stage technician back in another life and so brings a particular understanding to the creation of that alchemy.

After Barry, John Tuomey is going to speak – now John Tuomey’s biography in the conference handouts is incredibly modest - because not only has he done the small amount of things listed there, his Glucksmann Gallery was nominated for the Sterling Prize last year, the year before O’Donnell + Tuomey’s Furniture College represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale. He’s also working on the Lyric Theatre here and 2 other cultural buildings in Northern Ireland which he’s going to talk about.

But first welcome Barry Pritchard – Thank you.

(Applause)

Barry Pritchard –

Thank you Gemma. The project I’m talking about is called Act Two, Act One being the first 110 years of the Grand Opera House’s history which included the fantastic restoration of that theatre 25 years ago. Our project aims to extend the life of the Grand Opera House with a long term sustainable future. I can’t promise another 110 years, but it will give it a firm

foundation. It's also a very high profile project I'm realising in the City and it's giving a good cultural boost to the life of the city, the life of Belfast.

The image on the screen now was central to our competitive submission and our subsequent selection as the architects for the project. And it encapsulates our belief that architecture should be uncompromisingly modern, clarifying the distinction between the existing building and the extension and the new buildings. Accessible – not just in terms of physical – in physical terms, but intellectually accessible as well enabling those who would not normally be seen dead in a cultural building being inquisitive enough to cross the threshold. Legible so it's easily understood – minimal signage enabling people to move around, to relax, to be at their ease, to know where to find the lavatories, to know where their seats going to be. And loose fit – offering a range of spaces and experiences to the visitors; in fact future proofing the facilities and the building, making it adaptable for change as fashion and needs require.

The Grand Opera House is Arts Team's only project in Northern Ireland – what we lack in local knowledge hopefully we make up with an expertise in arts buildings. Arts Team designed and built over 65 arts projects – the first being the seminal Crucible Theatre in Sheffield and the projects range in scale from the 42 million pound Bridgewater Hall – Manchester's equivalent to the Waterfront Hall and built at exactly the same time. Down to a much more modest £900,000 headquarters for the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain. But common to all our projects is the realisation that theatres have many functions, both practical and symbolic – they're a focus for entertainment and the performing arts, they illustrate civic pride and responsibility and they're investments in the heritage and culture; they provide opportunities for leisure, for enjoyment and for learning and their architecture should add distinction to the public realm. The buildings ought also to generate revenue – we try and design ours to enable them to do exactly that and they're often a catalyst for local development and regeneration. This is the wider context in which the eventual success of the Grand Opera House extension should be defined.

But to understand the project you need to understand a little bit about the historical social and the physical context. The Grand Opera House was built in 1895 by the prodigious Victorian architect Frank Matcham, the Opera House is one of his few surviving examples – he had originally designed or converted over a 150 theatres in a 20 year span. It was built as a theatre for drama and circus originally, but within 5 years had become a palace of varieties and it was converted into a cinema in 1961 which required quite significant internal alterations and by 1974 it faced imminent demolition. However with foresight it was listed by the Government and then purchased by the Arts Council and in 1980 it was magnificently restored, as was said earlier today, and that was a real act of faith by the City given the time. The social context is important, the Grand is the province's number one touring venue, it has seating capacity for 1050 people, it offers a mixed programme of lyric theatre – opera, ballet,

drama, musicals from professional and amateur companies and of course the annual pantomime bringing new people into the theatre. During the troubles the centre of Belfast was certainly a place to be avoided at night and the theatre like so many other cultural activities suffered from reduced audiences, and sadly, occasional damage. But it survived and today to enhance its remit as a theatre for everyone there is a need for it to expand and to modernise to provide top quality production facilities attracting the very best shows to Northern Ireland to widen its appeal to the public.

The physical context is a very weak corner at the crossroads of Great Victoria Street and Grosvenor Street. It was originally the site of the Hippodrome Theatre – so there's always been a link with cultural and entertainment activities in that area and so it's a real opportunity to improve the ground and to repair the streetscape, to improve the general street scene – currently that junction is dominated by traffic and pedestrians do get a poor time of it, but adding some life onto that corner we will add a lot to the regeneration of that area. But it's also dependent on a commercial development happening immediately on the corner and hopefully that will follow on soon.

The shapes - the site is shaped like an 'L' wrapping round 2 sides of the existing Grand Theatre. The site has inherent difficulties – its deep, narrow plan form, there are minimal facades for actually getting daylight in to the building and to express the building and it does have very long blank party walls – with the existing building and the proposed development. It has limited access as a result but more importantly it has limited egress making means of escape difficult and between the 2 arms of the 'L' there's very restricted linkage between the backstage and the front of house and the new foyers located down one side of the auditorium which makes load the auditorium difficult.

But the essence of the project is to extend the Grand Theatre making major improvements to the front of house and to the backstage. The front of house with new foyers, bars, WCs and a new 150 seat theatre, studio theatre - half the size of this space – and that will be known as the 'Baby Grand'. And backstage, with a 100 new dressing room spaces, new scene dock and loading bay, workshops and administration facilities.

The exterior architecture – when the Grand Opera House opened, the local newspapers waxed lyrically over the splendours of the perfect eastern palace treating the elevations in a most artistic manner – quaint gables, balustrading, minarets, etc. giving quite a continental appearance to the building. Matcham took advantage of the important corner site he was given with Glengall Street to create a 3 dimensional form, building up from low corners to a high gable centre piece as can be seen in the historical picture there. The problem for us was how to extend this of course. There was the inevitable expectation from some quarters that the building should match the existing both in style and materials, but for us that was never

really an option. And it's not just one of style, but Matcham's façade was completely symmetrical, balanced and of its time. Our elevations hopefully will clarify the identity of the original building. Matcham subtly varied the architecture from Great Victoria Street's front elevation to Glengall Street with the backstage elevation. So do we try to reflect the difference between the public house and backstage activities with our new facades. The new facades are relatively small given the overall volume of the development allowing the original facades to maintain their dominance in the site. The style we've adopted we call modern free style. Matcham's own free use of classical elements was considered by many to be ill-mannered, improper, but it did create what has now become recognised as a definite theatrical architectural style. Similarly for us the strictures of modernism are cold, pompous and untheatrical. We're trying to create some unique and exciting elevations which convey openness and clarity in the foyers without the glass box predictability of so much modern architecture and a complimentary sense create the mystery backstage just hinting at the secrets that lie behind the stage door. And our choice of materials reflects this theatricality – coloured render, glass, metal trims highlighting the 3 dimensional forms that we've adopted and animated with coloured light and on occasions with video projection.

Our intent is to make the theatre a destination venue aiding commercial regeneration of the city centre so we have much more inviting entrances off Great Victoria Street. Once you've entered through the framed entrance doors the visitor is at a point of command, a bit like a performer on stage, it's in a large double height space and all the facilities are arranged before them – the box office, the merchandising kiosk, the bistro and the lavatories. Doors to the auditorium stalls and the stair that leads you to the upper levels of the auditorium and that whole – the balconies, the staircase animated with people moving around, the lighting and possible video clips.

We want to create a welcoming travel agent style box office which has become the hallmark of the Grand at present. That's the information point and it's the first point of contact which sets up the atmosphere for one's entire visit and it will be accessible, not just for those in wheelchairs, but those with sensory impairment as well and those excluded on socio-economic grounds.

This is in a distinct contrast to the low cramped confusing foyers of the existing theatre which do not open until 45 minutes before the show, our foyers will be open for as long as they can be commercially viable – 8 to 9 o'clock in the morning through to long after the show.

At circle level our intent is to dissolve the boundaries between performance the foyer. The studio and the foyer are seen as one space, flowing one from the other, with a large opening doorway between the studio and the foyer so they can share the production technology between both spaces – the lighting and the sound systems. Throughout the day we intend the

foyers to be a hub of activity serving young people of the city – they need to be catered for – schools visiting the building and using the facilities and the staff's expertise for projects. Touring companies playing at the theatre encouraged to participate in their outreach programmes. And it's a place where hectic parents, shoppers can meet and gossip while their children are involved in school, in after school clubs – youth theatre or dance classes. We want it to be used by local businesses and industry – they're part of the community and we can support them with a distinctive environment and provide excellent services, you know, theatres can provide unique spaces for conferences, meetings, trade shows, product launches, trading days all with a high quality of service and hospitality. This is a uniquely qualified to provide that expertise from their staff and the technical resources to cater for such events. And the diversity of our designs hopefully will attract interest from potential arts partners, residences and other arts providers across art forms so there's space to display work of local artists and craftsmen, from schools and colleges. And from our point of view to create an ever changing environment so something different for each of the regular users. And the first such event I understand is Belfast Fashion Week which is going to be staged in the theatre in 2007.

At balcony level we're exploring the re-thinking of the foyers and how they'll respond to the competition for other cultural and commercial organisations so we want to create foyers which are created for the evening and to the show – this is difficult in receiving houses, it's more common in repertory theatres, but we'll have the technology to do it and that same technology can be used to relate the show to the audiences and to promote sponsorship or just straight commercial advertising. The idea is to keep the building open for as long as possible, to keep the audience in the building for after show talks, informal jazz and comedy events and to attract new audiences to late night cabaret.

To achieve this exciting programme, the foyer's been designed to give a range of spaces and if you view the foyer in section you'll realise that a dynamic form is created that will provide a range of distinctive spaces with a central lit atrium surrounded by balconies with views across and views in and out of the building and views down into Victoria Street. The form allows theatrical views into the studio and the large doors opening up through the proscenium arch is an obvious focus for events in the foyers. But to add to this highly theatrical nature we've worked with 2 artists and this is a point I do want to make – the 2 pieces – 'Treading the Boards' by Kirsty Brookes is a series of screen printed glass balustrades located on opposite sides of the atrium – it represents the diverse and extensive performance history of the Grand Opera House – best seen from a distance, the upper half of the audience merges with the lower half of the performer depicted on the balustrade so you can be standing in front of Rula Lenska's legs at one moment or a pantomime artist the next. The art work is effectively changing with each new spectator. And the second piece is 'Thinly Veiled' by Julie Westerman which is a wire framed diagram of a curtain caught between opening or closing,

billowing out and flowing across the enormous architrave and studio doors and the focal point for the foyers. The thin lines of the computer generated image are engraved giving a very precise bright copper line on the green patinated surfaces and Julie says the curtain is an icon image of the theatre, it marks the line between the real world and the one we want to believe in and a perfect metaphor for the link between the foyers and the Baby Grand. Given time I'll skip discussion about the back stage and the facilities to be provided, but the artists and the visitors have been thought about as equal in importance.

But finally how do we define a cultural building? For Arts Team, the success of the project will be found in its reception by those who are directly affected by it. So for the audience it's observing their enjoyment of the event which is unfortunately too often articulated with comments on comfort of seats, air conditioning or queues at the lavatories. But for the visiting companies and the permanent staff, we want to provide safe and pleasant working conditions – giving a welcoming experience for the performer who remembers his week at the theatre and in Belfast and wants to return to it - so defining success for cultural buildings is not a calculation, it's an emotional response. Thank you.

(applause)

John Tuomey

Good afternoon. I was trying to think how to address the question of 'Urban Alchemy' and why the conference is called that - about transformation about making gold out of lead, about the alchemist's stone and I think I'm going to talk about context – and connection so if you can find some alchemy there, maybe that's all I can contribute today.

I think that in the pursuit of our work, the product that we have in mind and my partnership with Sheila O'Donnell, I think what we're looking for is the place making significance of form. We have an aspiration towards permanence and towards the lasting qualities that a building imparts which are over and above its physical form, but all to do with its place.

I think it's not a very difficult concept, all of us when we go to see foreign places, places we haven't been before; we immediately look at how they're built and what the buildings are like. We visit old temples, we visit old tombs, we walk the land, we see the marks on the ground and we interpret from that, we read the culture from the things we see. So objects are evidence and buildings are containers and all we're doing in our work is imparting some idea of intention into those artefacts.

So this slide is a slide of the yard in Coleraine that I'm going to come back to.

We started our practice in Dublin in 1988, myself and my partner Sheila O'Donnell, we started with no work except one vague commission from some of our student radical days – we had been involved with the Irish Film Institute and we came to find we had a commission for a product that had no money, that had no site, that had very nice people and that had no sense of time or deadline which is basically the way our career has mapped out ever since!

I think we discovered in the course of our work in Temple Bar, we spent 10 years working on this one block in Temple Bar, where we started with the Irish Film Centre, we worked through the National Photography Archive, we worked into the concept of Meeting House Square and we made the Gallery of Photography all indicated on this 1847 map of Dublin. The only interesting thing for me about that map is that there's no change whatsoever in that map until we made the change which makes you think about permanence I think.

Temple Bar was a very interesting place to work – at that time – and it was all about narrow passageways and discovering a sense of place and I think in the course of the development of those projects we learned something about; we discovered, uncovered, recovered something about what we call architecture.

And this is one of the best images of all of Temple Bar which is a collage made by Sean Hillen which he calls 'Sun, Sand and Cement' in Meeting House Square. It's a kind of ambitious idea about the west of Ireland I think and our vanity.

The outcome of that project in Temple Bar was the creation of something intangible, a something that seemed at the time like a dream come true that we could make an outdoor cinema, that we could make a public place for markets, that we could form a kind of crucible in which people could meet and find an identifiable place that they felt first before they thought about it as architecture.

So speeding right forward the last building that we have finished, and we finished it 2 years ago, was the Glucksmann Gallery in Cork and I'm not going to talk about the Glucksmann, but something about our journey or the cycle of our projects I think has been concerned with the same thing and in the case of the Glucksmann that sense of a building as a, when I say a container of ideas or a container of thought, may be I mean that a building has a sense of alertness, a sense of self awareness, may be an object can be alive with ideas that are in it and it can resonate out beyond its own domain, can resonate the initiation, the beginnings of those ideas – we can discuss this later may be.

So we're working on 3 projects in the North of Ireland at the moment and different time scales. The first one we won exactly 3 years ago - a competition, in September 2003, I should say that all the projects that we have in our office we've won at competition. We have

never had a commission except the first one that we started with. In the case of the Lyric Theatre it's an established theatre, it's on its own site, it kind of has this feeling of being anchored to the ground it stands in Ridgeway Street by the river and we intended very much to try to keep the intimacy and sense of belonging that is in that existing theatre. The truth of it is, and people in the audience that have been to the Lyric, is that it is a very nice place to build a theatre. The bad news from the theatre's point of view is that it is a very bad place to work in theatre because everything beyond what the public experience is so poor quality; they're working in temporary buildings, they've got rats in the basement, they've got open yarded sites and they have a very poorly resourced institution even though the Lyric has been a driving force in the culture of Belfast for a very long time. So our idea, which is expressed in the lower model is to take all the people who work in theatre, including the audience who work, who are part of the theatre, and to wrap them round the central rock of the auditorium. Think of the whole of the organisation and the building as a kind of scarf which is wrapped round the core activities of the auditorium and then think that when you enter the building that you can be aware of backstage, front of house, administration, rehearsal, changing rooms, all that – there's no distinction between what's back and what's front – it's a sort of wrap around scheme. And that when it comes just down by the river and you see it from the river between the trees that it has this feeling of at once being a kind of a rock, albeit of Belfast brick rock, and a kind of lantern for the permanent changing, here to stay dynamic theatre company.

The circular windows are for the laundry department who just begged us in the briefing sessions to give them a window so we gave them washer machine windows and may be when it opens it'll feel like this.

The second project I want to show you that we're working on, slightly moving forward in time to 2 years ago. We started working An Gaeleras in Great James' Street in Derry which is an Irish language cultural institute on a very narrow site in Derry. That's number 37 Great James' Street and although the site is very restricted and it's on a Georgian street, it has a very deep plot and what we're trying to do is bring people through from the street as if they still were on the street - until they find themselves right in the performance space buried deep inside the site.

So this is a site that can have no windows, so we're trying to pull light down into the site so all these studies are about making sure that every room in a windowless building has daylight.

One thing I wanted to say about the context is that I don't think it's a literal question about local connection, I think it's a deeper question of connection. So it's not about trying to match up to the building next door or take your lines from the building next door, it's about trying to make a building which feels like it's rooted permanently in the place it's made for and

represents a positive proposal – in this case courtyard and emerging energy of the dance and music contained inside.

So the last thing I want to show you is just this extraordinary situation. We won the competition just this summer for a site in Coleraine - and we had never been there before. Coleraine was a Plantation town, but on the edge of the town there's this basalt wall yard which was a Market Yard for cattle and pigs. There are no cattle or pigs there now, so we had to introduce our own cattle and pigs. But what an extraordinary frame it makes, this huge, empty concrete floored yard with a wall all round it. At this point just outside the centre of the town. So the idea is somehow that if the square or the Diamond at the middle of Coleraine can have a town hall market in the middle of it then the Market Yard, which is now to contain a museum and the town library, might also be able to be a frame in which we could insert an object. So if these lines, these kind of streaming ribbon lines, are wished for lines of movement that people will take a detour on their way to Tesco's by passing through the Market Yard, then we're trying to maintain the frame of the emptiness of the Market Yard while installing very animate buildings, very expressive building forms within it. What you're looking at here is a temporary exhibition space, a permanent exhibition space, a town library – all kind of standing around in the empty space of the old Market Yard and on the ground we're using hard ground works to inscribe the text of the some of the artefacts that are in the collection.

Talking about beginnings and connections – the very first thing we ever built was a temporary building, it lasted 6 weeks, and one of its manifestations was as an angry red shed. At the opening of the IMMA Museum in Dublin in 1991 we put this kind of tough little corrugated iron creature, like a kind of Trojan horse, parked at an ugly angle in the serene courtyard of IMMA. Well I think in Coleraine, it's funny now to think nearly 20, whatever, 15 years later that we might come to Coleraine and we might put just a slightly larger more permanent presence, but with the same idea of saying that the frame is there, the yard is there – think about the place and think about a way of introducing something into the place which brings the place back to a sense of itself.

Thank you for listening to me.

(Applause)

Gemma Tipton – Thank you both very much. To very quickly sum up two very interesting talks: Barry talked about cultural buildings as adding distinction to the public realm and acting as catalysts, but he also talked about an emotional way of assessing the success of a building. And John talked about buildings as containers of ideas and of intelligence and also beyond the practicalities of windows as a way of creating something intangible through

cement. And it would strike me that none of these propositions are unique to cultural buildings and actually they should be ways of addressing every kind of architecture whether it's a corporate head office or a house. But perhaps in the questions we could anchor it may be with some arguments about culture also. Does anyone have a question?

I suppose I could kick off with one which I suppose I raised in the introduction and that is the role of the cultural building as ticking your box for an iconic building on the skyline which planners often are very keen on – where would you stand on that Barry?

Barry Pritchard – not very supportive, generally iconic buildings have not been successful containers for ideas or containers for performance spaces in our experience. You occasionally hear of people saying we work in so and so but we much prefer to work in a smaller arts centre somewhere, better facilities, not designed by a big name flash architect but, Fosters or whatever of the world, but of a more modest type because they're more intimate; they perform better for that function.

Gemma Tipton – John?

John Tuomey - Well, I – we kind of made ourselves a promise that we just wouldn't use that word, that word that you've just used.

Gemma Tipton – The 'I' word?

John Tuomey – and I'd kind of like to stick with that foreswearing. But it's got absolutely nothing to do with the motivation for work and actually your summary comment that intentions can be applied to anything from the smallest bench in the park to the largest opera house in town is much closer to the truth I think. I mean the difference between what feels, what has quality and what doesn't is directly proportional to the amount of thought and the intention that goes into it. So architecture is not the preserve of particular projects; it's much more through going and it's much more about the elevated ordinary, I think, than it is about the spectacular.

Gemma Tipton – And do you think to use the hideous 'G' word, the Guggenheim, has changed that argument or do you have to make it more forcefully now?

John Tuomey – I don't know, Gemma and I have met before – but Frank Gehry is a very interesting person and even if he wasn't an interesting person it's a very interesting phenomenon and I think it's impossible to just completely resent him. (laughter) Because that's no way to treat the enemy somehow. I think what you need to benefit from is the slipstream that is opened up by his activities. I think he opens up in his own practice, I think he has opened up a space that allows others to move more quickly and more easily so I'll, I

think when we work we have to pay respect where respect is due. That there is a kind of awareness or an expectation, or even a possibility which becomes more possible because of the excessive behaviour of bombastic individuals like Frank Gehry. So I'm really interested in him but not particularly in what he does, but in what he has made possible by others.

Gemma Tipton – Question here in the audience.

Anne McReynolds from the Old Museum Arts Centre. We're in the process of building a new arts centre in the Cathedral Quarter and we are at the start of the process of appointing a design team. We're working with DCAL and the Arts Council and Laganside and the Central Procurement Directorate in terms of the procurement route through which that building will be built. We are being encouraged and advised that we need to go the Design and Build Procurement process which is advocated through the new government policy of achieving excellence. I wondered if the 2 panel members could give their thoughts on whether they have been involved in the design and build process, whether they think it is appropriate and if they have any other general comments about that and if they could keep their expletives to a minimum that would help.

Gemma Tipton – Who would like to take that first?

Barry Pritchard - In England the Arts Council won't fund the projects that go with design, or haven't been funding the projects that go the design and build route, they've been quite vociferous about that – 1 or 2 were mentioned to try that. But likewise they're not particularly keen on construction management forms; they have been favouring the traditional routes – either first, single stage or 2 stage tendering and certainly they probably have a bit more success in controlling quality and cost using those methods. I don't quite understand the desire here in Northern Ireland for design and build. Having said that, one of the most successful buildings we have done was using a design and build form of contract and that was for the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. It was, I said earlier, the equivalent to this building. It was certainly one of the best quality projects we've been involved with, but to participate in that route and it was something that the local authority wanted to do because they thought it would bring, build advice into the process earlier, that was their only justification for it; but the conditions we set down were that we would be given sufficient time to design it right the way through to the detailed design stage, that we would see it through all the production drawings and to supervise it on site and to be allowed to make an independent report to the employer once a month and that we did and as I say it turned out to be a successful project. Which you won't find, I think, that novation isn't necessarily accepted by the government here and I suspect many contractors would not want their architect, which you've then become their architect at that stage, giving an independent report on their

performance to the employer, but that was done in the mid 80s and contractors seemed to be accepting it at that point. Sorry mid 90s I should say.

Gemma Tipton – John?

John Tuomey – I guess that was a loaded question coming from your circumstance. I think you'd have difficulty finding an architect who would be proposing or advocating the design and build route because I think it closes the process of the architect's involvement down much earlier than most architects would want their involvement closed down, I think. I was sitting more or less in your seat here this morning and there was talk about craft and the importance of craft and the kind of developing quality that comes through in things that are craftily made and it seems to me, at least in our practice, that the outcome, the kind of condensed or deliberate of the end building is affected by the fact that we're on site so much and that we're making so many decisions on site and that we're involving the cooperation of the contractor so much with us as a part of the construction process so we've had some experiences on the opposite side of what people refer to as design and dump. In Holland where we've done 2 projects that went that route; the builder can come in and advise about all those kind of practical things that somehow clients worry about too much as if there were no buildings except the building the building the client is building, you know, it creates an artificial focus – builders build buildings every day, every building is buildable. But in the case of these Dutch projects I think that I witnessed powerlessly their diminishment during the process of construction and we found ourselves in a cold place, I think, in relation to the completion of those works.

Gemma Tipton – Another question? 2 questions then.

Joan McCoy, WhiteInk Architects, it's just another comment really on design and build. I've done quite a bit of design and build work and I think what's just been said about the architect being distanced from the process is completely true, but the most disconcerting thing, I think, about the design and build process is that the client gets pulled away from the process and the separation between the client and the architect is the biggest detrimental fact of the design and build process. Because if you want a building that works you've got to talk to your architect, you've got to take the project manager out of that system as well, they can manage the system, but the architect and the client have got to talk to each other and if you don't, you don't get a building that works.

Barry Pritchard - Sorry, I can just add to that – I think the procurement of architects is split between those who do the feasibility study and develop the brief and then the sudden need for an OJAC/OJU advertisement and then another architect also has the effect of divorcing the design process and the link with the client and the eventual architect. So I think it's more

that just design and build, it's the whole procurement of the professional team and the construction team has got to be looked at again.

Gemma Tipton – and the gentleman with the pink tie.

Arthur Acheson, architect in Belfast – Can I ask Barry is he disappointed that the (Grand Opera House) site didn't reach the corner?

Barry Pritchard - Yes, it's frustrating, but that was in place long before we were appointed. I understand, and I would imagine that the Board of Trustees of the Grand are very disappointed, the government was given opportunity to buy that whole site for a quarter of the price that they eventually bought have the site for.

Gemma Tipton - another question?

Hi, **Moya Hinds Conway Mill**, just interested in the sense I manage an old flax spinning mill in West Belfast which hopefully will shortly be going into a £5 million refurbishment. I thought it was very interesting about residents within buildings, you know, the whole situation there of hundreds of women and children working within the mills and the linen industry within Belfast and the exploitation that went within that. And at the moment we've quite a number of artists and craft producers based within the complex, about 20, and some small manufacturing businesses, some community organisations and education floor, etc. And I suppose one of the questions, I think it was a point – we've had an architect who has worked with us free gratis for a long, long, long time and who has actually brought us through the planning permission stage and beyond Heritage Lottery and one of my fears is that we have to go to tender we end up with another architect who doesn't know the building like our architect so you're again delayed another 3 to 5 months while they get to learn about the building and how that works, etc. And I also don't understand how if one architect has taken you through the planning permission, how somebody else then takes over what they've already done and how that gets paid and all of that sort of situation. And one of the questions I suppose is, I mean this is a building that is there, it's a listed building, there's nothing that can be done obviously majority to the exterior to the building – it's different whenever you're creating a new building but having to work on an old building there's certain restrictions on how you find transformations within the restrictions of the building.

Gemma Tipton – Who would like to take that?

Barry Pritchard - Very simple answer. I love working with existing buildings, the constraints they offer, the opportunities it seems just create the thinking of different solutions. I find it a very exciting part of the project. In a way that's just as exciting as starting with a plain piece

of paper. There's always a context you work with even for a green field site, the context is a bit tighter and a bit more constrained in an existing building. There are always clues in that existing building that will lead you on to the solutions that are appropriate. That's the second part. And I can only just say I agree with you entirely. I don't understand how architects can get satisfaction working up the planning stage and then losing the project and somebody else coming in, I don't see where the satisfaction is for the second architect either. We try and avoid that, we like to see our projects through from beginning to end.

Gemma Tipton – there's another question over there –

Hello, my name is **Emily Mark** and I'm from **UCD School of Art History and Cultural Policy** – it's a mouthful these days with all the name changes. And my question actually had to do with something that John brought up which is the issue of permanency. I think, in my work I deal with public sculpture and particularly looking at rates of decay of contemporary public sculpture. And what startles me about a lot of public art is it's very ephemeral nature; that many of the public art commissions even done 10, 15 years ago are now, at least in Ireland, in advance states of disrepair many of them, or have been removed. And so when you mention this term of solidity, permanency in terms of architecture I wondering if one or both of you might expand a little on how that concept might affect your processes, the idea that perhaps you are going into it with a vision that's perhaps a lot longer than may be even some of the projects which we saw this morning in terms of their lifespan.

John Tuomey - Yeah, I think, I mean, I think for me, because I suppose the first building I was directly involved with a principal in practice was an existing structure that we were reworking, and it does relate very closely to the last question, I think because of that we came across this sense of long lastingness of things implemented and built and then about adaptability. You know, I think some people think that let's call it economy, it's flowing, fluid, liquid and that structures rise in response to economy as if they are a graph and that it has to do with demand and supply and as, then there's a question of time over return - maybe 9 years on a property investment or 21 years on a mortgage or something like that and people can tend to think in those sorts of terms which is completely contradicted by real life when you look and see that a city is an object, a constructed object and most buildings long outlive their original programme – they ridiculously outlive their clients. And it's interesting talking about project management and so on because at this particular moment in, what's called a procurement process, there is an absurd focus on the client – a kind of a division about what the project is and who the client is and who owns the project. Because very often you find in the course of a project that your client might change 2 or 3 times in the course of the design of the project and each client somehow feels that their requirements are so particular that they can only be met in a particular way, if you know what I mean. The reality is, is that buildings last for a very, very long time even if they're not intended to and especially tragically

buildings that are built temporarily like low cost high-rise housing that was built for an emergency lasts 25 years longer than it was ever intended to. So I think the people who set about short term building with short term interests focussed internally on only the requirements of a specific client miss out the whole point of what a building is for and what its function is in the longer term. Every time you build a corner of a town or city street, you're building part of that town and in a way you're building part of the world, even if it falls down in 10 years time it is still, somehow, permanently in the fabric of the history - of the memory of the place. So I think of all the works that are going on architecture is just, yearns for permanence, you know? And then, the curious thing about it, if you don't mind, it's a topic you raised (referring to Gemma Tipton). The curious thing about it is that architecture is also the most fragile of the arts because literature survives a tempest, music survives in the air, bones are held in the memory, the most - films are held in a can and no one can cut your film once you've finished it, if you cut the end off the Third Man someone will find the piece of the film and put it back in and then there will be an amazing event where it's shown again. The most delicate, the most fragile and most easily bruised artwork is architecture and yet it is the one that sets out in the world to be long lasting and permanent. It's an extraordinary kind of paradox the situation of our work.

Gemma Tipton – you had a final comment there –

Barry Pritchard – it was only to pick up a point – John used the word architecture several times in that answer. And for the first time ever I'm working with a commercial developer, albeit for an arts building, and he keeps talking about our designs, our architecture as 'the product' and I hate it, it's not a product, we're not producing cars or dishwashers or washing machines; we're trying to build, as you say, something that is more permanent than that – it is not a product.

Gemma Tipton – So I want to thank both our panellists and all of you for your questions and I suppose to conclude with what I take to be a very positive note, which is that all the discussions we're having are not specific to cultural buildings, but the values that we ascribe to cultural activities feed into architecture across all ranges of building projects and I think that's certainly a positive note to end on. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Frank McDonald – Panel Discussion.

John Tuomey - While we were talking about arts buildings and culture buildings and how they're designed and what they're intended to do I think the outcome was a much more

general discussion about the long term value of carefully made, carefully thought about, well funded and well built buildings. Is that too short?

Frank McDonald – No, brief and to the point. Who is next? Will, you're next because you were dealing with workshop number 2 which was about the role of street theatre in revitalising the public realm.

Will Chamberlain – Indeed. Well I think we established in the context of today that art extends beyond the visual arts, the performing arts have a place in this transformative power of art and architecture. It was agreed that really, although, the streets are like a stage and obviously the better equipped a stage, the better it is for the street theatre performances; that the crucial thing about public spaces is its flexibility to afford a whole host of uses. I think it was accepted that street theatre can bring people and connect people with public spaces; can connect people with the architecture and built environment and also it was felt by some that perhaps the example of street theatre in Belfast could be promoted to some of the other local authorities in Northern Ireland as perhaps something they should consider in their cultural plans.

Frank McDonald – The third one, Heather, I think you did the third workshop which was about the 'Let's Get it Right Campaign' which I focused on the development of the Cathedral Quarter in Belfast.

Heather Floyd – It did indeed. We gave a short presentation about the process of opposing a retail scheme that was proposed for Cathedral Quarter and the lobby group called 'Let's Get it Right' based in Cathedral Quarter. We talked about how our campaign influenced government strategy, government policy and ultimately the developer's plans for the area. So in the discussion we looked at the importance of an integrated local and central government approach so that all the bodies with responsibility for the area are working together and in a sense that's where the 'Let's Get it Right' group grew out of the kind of vacuum that is there at the minute. There was talk about how to engage developers in the process and the different steps for entering into negotiation and consultation with developers. There were questions around the community's voice within that - we were talking about city centre development and there was a question about how that impacts on communities across the city. And how could communities across the city without maybe the expertise that we had at our disposal – we had heritage experts on our group, we had a lot of architects and we had arts organisations as well – and without that kind of knowledge within the group then how do community groups even start in the process of challenging any developments for their areas? How can they engage? We talked a bit about the opportunities under the Review of Public Administration as well and a hope was echoed throughout the group that there would be architectural officers or architects in place in each of the 7 councils across the North and certainly as a starting

point in at least 2 of them. And we talked about the importance of an urban mix that would include retail, cultural activities, cultural organisations, city centre living, and nightlife and within all that, very sensitive use of traffic within an urban area and very sensitive and joined-up approach to car parking within an area as well.

Frank McDonald – Good. Megan you dealt with workshop number 4 which was about the idea of engaging the public in the whole process.

Megan Johnston – What we did was we looked at 3 case studies. They were used just as a spark to get the discussion about what is accessibility? And do we need to engage with the public around the built environment about art and architecture? We looked at the Frank Gehry show that we organised on in Portadown; we looked at Yellow Space which was a kind of a roving exhibition and events of sorts that took on conceptual kind of issues around art and architecture. And we looked at Aisling O'Beim's practice which looked at mapping and different responses – she has a very strong practice that engages with the community. So I'm just going to raise points of interest. There wasn't a lot of agreement, just really important points that were raised.

I think most importantly we looked at how important the place or the venue is. Because the venue, whatever the place the dialogue or discussion, event, workshop or exhibition takes place is extremely important, because that will really dictate how conducive the engagement will be. So for example in looking at gallery space, I raised the idea of it being neutral.

Someone raised the idea that it's not neutral, it does have values and that what we need to do is have open spaces. All 3 of the presenters talked about a very similar kind of approach that is providing different avenues of access whether it be workshops or exhibitions or interventions in a supermarket. There are lots of different ways. We thought that it was important to note that venues are not neutral, that the activities really should be long term where people are engaged with over a period of time. That in a way it's good to have these kind of quick interventions and things like this, but really commitment needs to be given for resources and activities that are long term – one of the participants said a slower kind of softer approach and I thought that was quite useful. And overall we recognised through the different discussions, not only the presentations, but also the really good conversation that was happening within the workshop that there are basically 3 kind of approaches, or at least we identified 3 - there probably are more, approaches to accessibility which by the way is not negotiable. Accessibility and discussion and dialogue about the built environment, about art and architecture is not 'if we will do it', 'why should we do it' - now the question is 'how will we do it'? And we recognised that there are conceptual ways, discussion, dialogues, thinking – conceptual approaches. There are very grassroots approaches which we heard, earlier today, about really getting in and working with community groups, it's a very grassroots way. And then there are other mechanisms, like through a gallery, through artist's talks, through

discussions, through conferences – there are different mechanisms that can be used to approach it. You know it really depends on what kind of desired outcomes you want, if you want this beautiful piece of public art, it might be one kind of approach. If you really care more about the process, the specific engagement with a specific community or communities, then maybe the process would be more important. Perhaps with a different approach, maybe a grassroots way would be more important. So none of these are the ‘best’, none of them are the worst, they’re just different. But the fact is that we need to engage and it’s not really a question anymore.

Frank McDonald – Does anyone have any comment from the audience from what you’ve heard from the reports or anything to add to it, or any important point that has been neglected or forgotten. No?

John Tuomey - Well one important point Frank, I forgot to report which emerged at the end of our discussion, was the discussion of the choice of government to favour the route of design and build as a route for the realisation of cultural projects. And speaking of evaluating options and horses for courses, it seems a very blunt instrument to assume before you start that the best way to achieve and deliver any public funded project is to do it through the design and build mechanism. Because while the design and build mechanism might give short term certainties in relation to build ability and maybe even cost price, the longer term interests of the larger community might be left out in that process. The longer term quality of the building might be over-ridden in that process and the client is excluded from controls in that process, so I think there was quite a lot of concern at the end of our discussions about that particular policy.

Frank McDonald – But surely there is a conflict between the recently announced government policy on architecture and the notion that public buildings or public projects should be procured by design and build. Presumably most people in the audience know what we’re talking about here, that design and build essentially puts other issues first over the issue of quality and that could mean price, or build ability, or financing arrangements or whatever. And architecture takes second place and the architect is in a secondary role where the architect is in effect left to make representations to the contractor as to whether such and such a finish will be used or not as the case may be.

Could I, just as a matter of interest, take a show of hands among the audience given the government’s recently announced policy on architecture, do members of the audience feel that design and build is the right approach for the procurement of public projects? Those who do raise their hand.

That’s 2 – would you like to say why by the way?

Frank McDonald – Sorry, could you just say who you are and who you represent.

Joe Drew from Belfast City Centre Management – I'm the guy who likes arches and curves and circles as opposed to straight lines and hard edges.

I've been involved in committees in the government – I'm a retired civil servant as well as a civil engineer – and all I can say is that design and build concepts have produced better, more pleasing designs than the previous designs which were designed in house and put out to tender in the usual way. The whole concept of design and build is you involve the developer or the contractor early in the procedure and he can build in efficiencies, in other words cost reducing measures. If those cost reducing measures don't come out of the overall budget, you can use the saving to increase or enhance the appearance of the building so it depends entirely on your concept of design and build. And I can tell you that form of procurement is what is going to happen in the future, it's not going to change and I think what needs to happen is that the architect needs to be in at the start, not at the end, so he does put his imprint on the thing early on. But the problem really is that, you know, we need to avoid the situation where architects blame the clients and clients blame the architects when we get buildings which don't please we should actually say that it's a collective failure and what we need to do is make sure at the outset, at the planning of a concept, that it's built into the whole process that the quality is included. In fairness again, just in the government's defence, they have produced documents which highlight the need for functionality and build quality.

Nobody else has raised car parking and I think it's a very important point for consideration in urban development. Something perhaps which we haven't touched upon today. The whole idea of accessibility and transport, servicing arrangements for new buildings, customer access and so on.

Frank McDonald - And are you including commuters in that – just as a matter of interest.

Joe Drew – absolutely.

Frank McDonald – You do? You think the city centre space should be available for commuters to park in?

Joe Drew – I think commuters should come into the city centre, but not necessarily by private car, but I think you have to allow cars to come into the city centre to encourage visitors and tourists and I think the notion of precluding visitors and tourists from coming to the city centre will actually make a city centre die.

Frank McDonald – Well I don't know that that's on anybody's agenda, but I just wanted to clarify one thing with you? Surely it's not a choice simply between, you know, some dreary in house scheme and a design and build scheme. Surely the other alternative is to have an architectural competition for a major public project?

Joe Drew – Well you have to look at what's happened since the 1960s and judge for yourself what actually was the result of in-house designs and competitions for designs. I mean you have to ask how much of this stuff have you seen that you liked. In Belfast the most exciting design to come on stream in recent years has been Victoria Square and that's, if you like, all run by a developer; it's been ably assisted by government and it's an extremely good route. I think it's exciting, they've put up a glass dome, it's got stone facing, stone quality on the exterior walls, it's got a nice curved walkway through it, it's got all the features that I would like so it is possible ..

Frank McDonald - But do you not think it's the distilled essence of blandness?

Joe Drew – No I don't.

(Laughter and applause)

Joe Drew – No I don't.

Frank McDonald – Okay, Fair enough.

Joe Drew – But I think the distilled essence of blandness is a box.

Frank McDonald - It's a decorated box then. Sir Michael Hopkins wanted to make a point on design and build.

Sir Michael Hopkins – I was only going to say that it's here to stay. We have to, you might say, subvert the system, redirect and make it work. And you can do that and the easiest way to make it work is to design the building first by all sorts of means, maybe by completion, maybe selection – all sorts of things – and then when you've got your building you can then convert it, you've got your prime design, you can then convert it into something which is called design and build by another name, another route, i.e. the contractor has to take over responsibility for the design. That's what happens in the States and it's what's increasingly happening here. You've got to secure your design so tight that it can't be mucked about.

Frank McDonald – I think we've basically run out of time on that – it was an interesting discussion nonetheless. I just want to thank the various workshop presenters here for reporting back and we'll move on very quickly then – giving them a round of applause. Thank you.

(Applause)

And we're moving on to the final session where we have our keynote speaker Sir Michael Hopkins who is accompanied by one of his partners David Selby. Sir Michael is one of the leading international practitioners of, it says here, hi-tech architecture, but I think architecture would probably be sufficient. And I suppose he'll forever be associated in the public mind with the great tented stand at Lords cricket field in London. His practice is also involved in a major scheme for Belfast which is centred on the Royal Exchange. Thank you Sir Michael.

(Applause)

Sir Michael Hopkins –

(Referring to presentation)

You may wonder what that's doing up there, because it is really neither to do with cities, but it is do with our work and I'll explain why in a minute.

The theme of this conference has as its subtext – The Transforming Power of Art and Architecture and it sets this in the context of our cities. After 30 years, I'm not going to talk about design and build at all, but after 30 years in practice I continue to believe it is more than possible, it's essential – we, that's us architects can make the city a better place, more beautiful, more friendly and easier to use by the works that we do. Not only can we contribute to making the city a better place by adjustment, and this is important, we can extend and re-interpret the historic context to make new and viable places. It's this that I primarily want to talk about – place making. And I was interested – place keeps cropping up in that discussion over there. Place making and the extension of context through the design of buildings both without and within the building, I'm interested in that. And I'll do this as always through examples of how we've approached building in the city or indeed a wider environment.

But first, and that what's this is doing up here, 2 slides of our earlier work. These are primarily concerned with the building itself. Where I was a young architect it was quite difficult to look beyond the buildings, a hell of a job to do one building at a time and it get it reasonably right. It was difficult to get the job in the first place, so you primarily concentrate on the building and maybe the context and the way that it sits in the city may come slightly secondary. You

know, you're concerned initially with does it work, is it beautiful, does it reflect our own times, is it economical? And that's in every sense in the way that you plan the space as well as the cost of it. But above all for me it's the materiality and the construction of the building, the way that we're going to make the building should be seen in the finished building and that should be the architecture of the building.

These 3 samples are early ones, the top one is a house in London, it's actually – because it's a very light economical building it does happen to fit rather well into the light Regency street. And the next one down, this is a factory which followed on from our house in Bury St Edmunds – the factory was producing beer essentially and it sits in a water meadow outside the town; it has no other context other than that water meadow which floods regularly, 3 or 4 times a year and the water has to flow through under the building. It's a light and airy building, highly functional and elegant. And the third one at the bottom is a building system that we designed a number of years ago now. It's a closed building system with a frame and panels, with the panels – it's an architect's dream to make the stuff up the side, panels up the side go over the roof and keep the water out. Which is how you design a car and it would be nice to think that you could design a building to the same degree of accuracy. And over on the right these little buildings were used to make our own office in London where we still are some 20 years later.

Now this one is another early building, again you might say without context, but it is for me immensely contextual; it's an oil research centre in Cambridge set in the East Anglian countryside and its context is about fields, but above all about sky. It's also about place making, this plan was developed over a period of time with the client and myself. How did we bring together a community of scientists working on a common series of projects? And so we built a series of individual little groups – a village or 'willage' as he called it, because it was a French client, and it has this huge great workshop and then next door to it we built this social centre in the middle which is where everybody meets. It is a place within the building, immediately you come into the building you're confronted with this place. Which is not just a foyer, it's a working part of the building – everybody has to pass through that so the scientists have to talk to the engineers and the engineers have to talk to the mathematicians and that is very difficult to make happen in the science process. The point I'm just making there is its place inside the building as well as outside the building.

Frank mentioned a moment ago, this, I hated cricket at school, it was something I really didn't want to be involved with. But this was a competition a number of years ago now to rebuild the Mound Stand at Lords and I went to Lords for the first time and was absolutely knocked out by this view on the right which is the old 1887, about that, early Edwardian pavilion at Lords which really speaks of an English summer day very strongly to me. It's light, it's lacy, the white detailing is very important, the space underneath the roof here where you can see the

sky through beyond is all part of that sort of elegance and summer in it. So I thought that when we would do the new Mound Stand, which is to replace the one on the left here, we should try and do something similar. The stand on the left was built by the same architect who did the pavilion but they clearly run out of money at that point. They started a rather elaborate arcade on the back and really did run out of money and propped the rest of it off the boundary wall and that lasted them until the 1980s and then we won this competition. And the way that we dealt with it was – before Lords had always been a very sort of ‘keep out’ place, it was not part of the city, it was in the city but not part of the city – is we took the arcade that acted as the support on the boundary to the stand and we opened it up; we took the infill pieces out and we then extended it along, we built some new Victorian arches running the length of the stand and then we put this new light and lacy top on the building and it’s a nice place to watch cricket on a summer’s day.

This one, this is another one in the city, another competition we won. There’s St. Paul’s there and this is the rebuilding of the Financial Times building over here and Financial Times building – old Financial Times building up on the top left hand side up here, papers moved out of London, editorials stayed very close, near to the middle and all the printing went down to Docklands. Became a redundant building and that’s really rather diagrammatised here. It was the first post war building to be listed, designed by Albert Richardson, it’s actually a dog’s dinner of a building – this one up here – in these 3 wings there were, I think, 27 or 28 different floor levels. It had an atrocious plan but it did have 2 interesting architectural wings which, and that made it the first post war building to be listed. And I can remember as a young architectural student one used to march against this building because it was inappropriately old fashioned. Then it became my job to convert it years later. So we took the printing works out and we inserted a new middle and instead of entering the building round the corner here, I’m talking about the top left hand side now, we brought the entrance round to the front side on Friday Street and we made a completely new place and building out of it and it fits well back into the City of London and English Heritage are kind enough now to say it’s a much better building than it was when they listed it! So that’s a sort of happy ending to this thing.

I put this one in because it’s something that interests me that - top left slide is Grosvenor Square developed in about 1760, 1770 sometime in the 1760s I think and the 2 little hills behind are Hampstead and Highgate and Oxford Street is running just to the north of that square. Now when they designed that, they just set forth out into open countryside and they made an urban place out of it – no shilly-shallying, not making it an urban village or some folksy thing, they actually made a real good urban place out of it going out into the open countryside. Of course nobody thinks twice about it now because the city has followed it. We had a job to do a few years ago for IBM in some gravel pits just to the south of London Airport and it seemed to me that perhaps what we should do rather, to sort of emulate the urban form so that’s what we did as an early computer model up on the right there. So we built 2

squares, each about the size of Grosvenor Square and we put buildings around the periphery of it in a very formal way and there's car parking under all the middle of it and you got into the car parking through this little tented structure in the middle here. And it was a very low cost, economical scheme, it was a developers scheme done for IBM as a prelet. Careful attention to detail of exposed structural steelwork and inside it has again this, all our buildings have it, it has, it's around an atrium which is a public space in so far as anything is public in IBM where they meet their customers, where the staff eat and recreate and there's some photographs taken very early on when it was just about to be used for a James Bond film.

Completely different but done at the same time is this scheme in Nottingham for the Inland Revenue and new office for the Inland Revenue. And this is one of the schemes I've really enjoyed doing because you got – Nottingham Castle is in the background, top left hand photograph, and in the middle ground is the canal and in the immediate foreground is the remains of the railway line. And in between are the remains of the exchange yard that operated between the canal and the railway traffic and the only, the 2 only lasted together for about 20 years before the canal died out and everything went on the railway. So you were left very close into the middle of Nottingham, you were left with this site that had no specific character of its own. So we did 2 things – we broke the normal government programme of one building monolith – this was for tax inspectors, capital tax inspectors I think approaching 4000 of them – and we divided them up into separate buildings rather than having one great compound and we put a road through the site – you can drive cars on it – and then we put a series for roads here that all focussed – we had to make a place out of nothing – that focussed on the castle so that sort of became the idea. And then we built it out of Nottingham's great material which is an red engineering brick that many, many industrial buildings in Nottingham left over from the 19th century in this marvellous red brick - so we decided we would use that. But it had to be built very quickly so we built in load bearing brick work and pre-cast concrete and we pre-fabricated these brick piers - by the same people who made the pre-cast concrete about half a mile from the site, set up a factory and they made these brick piers repetitively, they're all hand made brick piers, made by hand within a workshop. Everything under control so if they weren't coming right you could see exactly where it was going wrong and you could put it right and it was put right before it came onto the site so nothing was ever pulled down. And then it was put together like a Lego kit of, the brick piers and spanning pre-cast concrete forms that span the 14 meters to one side or the other and then you get an architecture over on the left here which is made up out of the things the building is constructed of and you build up an interest in trying to do a building which doesn't require air conditioning and that was part of that sort of unsaid bit of this brief from the government. It was the first government building, I think, offices of this size, that wasn't air conditioned, so we did everything through natural ventilation and using the mass of the buildings to help with the cooling load and ventilation through these access stairs which

became ventilation shafts – these little lids prop up with a hydraulic ram that allowed a degree of ventilation to vary.

And there you see, the top 2 slides, it settles back into this old industrial environment of Nottingham, yet makes a new place and the bottom 2 slides are their recreational space which is a place their families used at the weekends and staff used during the week. And then this is Main Street Inland Revenue and you know if you can do that for tax inspectors, you know, you can do lots of things.

This is one is, this one followed on immediately afterwards which is the new parliamentary building and it's about providing accommodation for members who've never really had accommodation, lived in huts, literally in huts inside the old Palace of Westminster. Everybody was supposed to work in the corridors. And this about making a context from a new building so that it fits into the context and it's about skyline again, it's picking up the skyline of Westminster, the onshore buildings on the right, the old Scotland Yard buildings, the Palace of Westminster on the left. Making it different from the Palace of Westminster which had gone on quite long enough anyway – it goes for miles down that way and it really run out of steam by the time it got to Westminster Bridge so it was time to start with something slightly different. And this is what we did.

It's a donut building which you can see on the top left hand slide. This is an immensely complex building, because at the same time we did the underground station below it which involved going down 7 stories of underground to make the new Jubilee line - so the 2 buildings were designed with different clients to the same end. And the little diagram in the middle at the top there is showing how limited an amount of space you've got to get the foundations through the underground to firm land below. And then over on the top right you see it fitting in hopefully. And over on the left you see load bearing stone piers built in the same way as those brick ones were on the Inland Revenue and you can see the same thing over on the right here. And we use those stone elements, the bronze elements in the middle which all have some function to do with the moderating the environment, we get a texture on the surface that builds up light and shade and we begin to get some sort of architecture out of these components which isn't predetermined to look like some other sort of architecture. But in the middle of this building, the middle of that donut on the ground floor is this great new space. It's the first time that the House of Commons has ever had any social space, anywhere where it can meet its constituents, anywhere where they can meet each other. And it has actually been the most enormous success because it now joins up the rooms that they have in Scotland Yard – we have about 216, 220 members in this building, New Parliament Street they have about another 100 members and they all have to pass through our building and then can pass through an underground route which used to lead to the House of Commons – we re-opened that one and so everybody can get there in safely without having a

heart attack, without running out of breath or getting tomatoes thrown at them. So they can do all that in security and this place is now the main focus of Commons.

These are 2 buildings done in the Royal Parks. The bottom one is a ticket office for Buckingham Palace and it's a demonstration of, again British Summer Time, because the Palace is only open in the summer and a temporary building which gets put down every September and it feels light and summery and it's a nice place to stand and watch the bands march up and down and get a good feeling. And then there's another one above, nearby is a new one we've just done 'Inn on the Park', which is a café in the park. Again its theme is inside/outside, making a place that you can enjoy the park from; you can sit on a terrace, you can sit inside the building and they're all contiguous.

Much smaller place making, as architects, I think our generation of architects, we've got a number of universities working on the estates at the minute and I make the comment there. Our generation gets all the backyard sites, the ones that were left over. This is a little site in Emmanuel College in Cambridge which was literally its backyard and it was full of dustbins, fallen down garages, unloved and forgotten space and you can put into that, you can make a small building. In this case it's a stone building, load bearing stone piers and inside is a lecture theatre and a concert space for the film society and various other things and a number of common rooms and it overlooks the Fellow's garden on this side. Place making again with unpromising starts.

Manchester City Art Gallery – over on the left here this is 2 buildings by Charles Barry who'd done the original House of Commons building so we were working as it were with an old friend. And that's Manchester City Art Gallery built in the middle of the 19th century and this was the Anthenea, the first city club built adjoining it. City Art Gallery acquired this a number of years ago, a long time ago, probably before WW2 and they sort of colonised it over a period of time and they also had, they had here on this corner they had a spare site which had been rather a dump of a car park for a long time. And our job which we won as a competition, was to weld, sort of revive the Barry buildings, join them together sensibly and then to introduce a new wing in the corner so it's effectively a new wing of art galleries at the back, a major art handling space in the middle and then these, the Anthenea at the back and the City Art Gallery at the front. It still worked properly through the front. Art handling is amazingly important because if you're to receive an international art exhibition, you've got to have proper secure facilities for bringing it in. And in the middle at the top here is the link between the old City Art Gallery there and our new piece at the back. This is one of our new galleries and then very simply they're clad in, it's a concrete frame – beautifully made concrete frame – with sandstone panels infilling that and it somehow picks up the module and quality of the existing buildings and moves it forward it into our own times.

Maybe I'll stop on this one, this is another scheme in Nottingham – completely different client. This is for Nottingham University and I'll stop on this one I think then. And it's an example of important urban renewal. Nottingham used to make bicycles for the Empire, that business has now all gone to the Far East and you've got the Raleigh bicycle works and the Archer works became entirely redundant and you've got Nottingham University as it were just down here and they bought these sites and this site here. And when we designed the building you couldn't go onto the site to see what it was like, all you had to work on was a line of trees that divided it, mature trees that divided it from the suburban housing to the left. So what we did to make a new place was we started with the trees, put a quick lake in here, picking up the drainage from our own new development and the existing surrounding development; put a promenade along the front – all faculty buildings running off it at right angles and a road along the back. And two and a half years later there it was, it was all done and you had, again some 4000 students arriving at this end of the complex, coming from the Far East mainly, arriving at this end, pushing the builders out at the far end and you had a completely new place.

I'll stop there.

(Applause)

David Selby – I'm David Selby, by contrast on Michael's slides I'd like to take a brief high level review of the project at Royal Exchange Belfast Scheme which was the winning scheme in a competition organised by the Northern Ireland Office for Social Development which we're working on with William Ewart Properties and IMG Real Estate. For those that don't know where the Royal Exchange site is, it's in Belfast, it used to be indicated there and the slide also shows the sheer scale of the challenge and the opportunity really for place making within Belfast. Let's not forget that this project has the capacity to exceed the limits of that site in terms of its potential regenerative effects for Belfast. And this drawing indicates the boundaries again in plan and you, from the other way so North is up, and key elements of the City's physical and commercial are listed there to which I'd also add the Cathedral and Writer's Square to the north of our site and the library quarter also. Amongst all this sadly the Royal Exchange is currently what we describe as the weakest link.

Now Belfast as a city has a very strong heritage of fine buildings, good architecture, a rich variety of styles and materials within a relatively compact central core which is important I think for navigation and orientation. Many of these buildings are actually located within, or adjoin our site area. Sadly however there are signs of serious neglect and misuse. This creates a real challenge and opportunity for regeneration of this area. So a key part of that challenge will be to reintegrate those historic buildings into a new plan, a new scheme that responds to the 21st century needs and potential of Belfast.

So what we're proposing to do is create new links and anchors within the area so that the connections are more firmly made between our site and the adjacent areas, particularly the commercial anchors of Victoria Square shopping and Castle Court with a new anchor within the Royal Exchange area. In doing so we are taking the opportunity to redefine the existing public realm and the spaces and to create a cohesive master plan of high quality architecture, buildings and spaces. So literally trying to bind that area together creating a pivotal part of the City with new links to the adjacent quarters and creating a new cohesion to the central area. A vital part of this is obviously creating a strong mix of uses and I think this was mentioned by the lady from the 'Let's Get it Right' group. A strong mix of uses that form a sustainable basis for redevelopment. New high end shopping, apartments, offices, street cafes, bars, restaurants and a new cultural arts centre. The ingredients for a new place in Belfast, a new centre and a new vibrant setting for urban living and experience. This is a great opportunity so let's get it right – Thank you.

(Applause)

Frank McDonald – I don't know how many people have seen this scheme before, but it's certainly a very large site and a very interesting intervention in the centre of Belfast except that we did have this discussion earlier on and one of the points that I made to David and to Sir Michael was that the amount of residential that is included in that scheme is really very small, 200 units, seems to me to be remarkably un-ambitious for the City Centre. One of the points that I made was that in the case of Dublin the inner city population of Dublin was reduced, had been reduced down to 75,000 in 1991 and at that time developers didn't even think that there was a market for residential in the city and since then thousands of new apartments have been provided, literally, actually tens of thousands – I suppose it would be well over, it would be up to 30,000 new apartments have been provided in the city and the population has now gone up to 115,000 of the inner city area itself and I think that an act of faith is required in Belfast to re-populate the city, I think it's one of the most important things that needs to be done. The City Centre needs to be alive at night just as much as it is during the day, particularly alive of course with the commuters' cars from the suburbs and the car parking requirements of that has spun out.

We've had a fascinating day I think, it's been very, very useful in clarifying a lot of the issues involved. I'd like to thank Sir Michael and David as they make a beeline for the City Airport (applause). Now we talk about what we really think of their scheme! (Laughter) But, no there isn't time. We could have another half hour discussion with the 'Let's Get it Right' people about that I'm sure.

Anyway I suppose there are a few things that emerged from the discussion that we've had. One is the need to engage the public, though of course there are various ways and there may be disputes about how that can be done. It's very difficult in a way to engage a public that doesn't exist and in the centre of the Belfast as I've said we don't really have a very significant residential population – I'm talking about in the hard core, the commercial core of the city – there isn't really that many people to consult and that's something that needs to change number one. The other thing I'd say, if you walk around Belfast, I know that the Lagan Weir has been done and other things to improve the river, I mean, the river really had been ignored for a very long time indeed. But I think that one of the most dramatic interventions that one can make in a city is to build new bridges and the only major new bridge that's been built in recent years is the cross harbour expressway and I think that there is a need as, for example, Newcastle has shown for some beautifully made pedestrian bridges across the River Lagan to unite the city centre with the eastern part of the City – that's something that really should be done.

My own personal view of course, and I might as well say it, is that you know that the Lyric should have moved in from its bastion out at Stranmillis into the centre of Belfast, into the Cathedral Quarter. I think that opportunity was passed up on as a result of sheer suburban prejudice on the part of the people who run it. (Laughter and applause). And basically a lack of faith in the city, I mean, you know, where should major cultural facilities be located except in the city centre, you know, the city centre is the most accessible place, it's certainly much more accessible than any of the, even inner, suburban areas like Stranmillis and I know that O'Donnell + Tuomey have produced a marvellous design for the new Lyric, but it's just it seems to me a pity that it's not happening in the centre of Belfast.

There are probably lots of other things that one should say, but I just think it's very good to have discussions like this, it's very good to involve as many people as possible from as many different fields as possible. I mean not just architects and artists, and so on, talking shop among themselves, but also community leaders and others with an interest in what happens to the city. I think probably one of the most inspirational addresses was by Angus earlier on about what happened in Glasgow and you know it was an interesting case study really. That garden would never have happened if it hadn't been for him and the various other artists getting together and actually going out there and saying this is our vision, let's get the money to realise it, instead of just sitting in some garret or other waiting to be commissioned by somebody to do something and having all the ideas in the world, but not having the wherewith all to go about realising them. And I think that's an important lesson for artists perhaps even in Belfast where, you know, you can as it were seize the day or seize the time and actually go out and make proposals for new facilities and new public spaces, new things in the city.

There are a few housekeeping things that I really want to get through before finishing up. Basically the purpose of this conference was to highlight the whole issue of how the arts and good architecture and design of good public space can contribute to the quality of life in the city and those who were involved in organising it will now produce a report from today's discussions and will meet with Paul Sweeney, Permanent Secretary in the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to discuss the next steps and what should happen from here.

There's a quick reminder for those of you who've signed up for the City Walking Tours – Paul Harron and Morven McFadden will be leaving from PLACE which I presume you all know where it is and Rita Harkin and Declan Hill will be leaving from Belfast Exposed at 5 pm which reminds me that there is a follow up to today's conference tomorrow in case you didn't know at the Belfast Exposed gallery at 1 pm. It's a visiting arts seminar on International Public Art Practice and involves speakers such as Tony Stoddard.

..... but you're all very welcome to meet at the drinks reception at the City Hall at 7.30 pm and for those who booked to attend the Conference Dinner at City Hall, the speakers will be Jim Barrett, Dublin City Architect, who will not be doing a stand up comedian role he assures me - and Belfast novelist Glenn Patterson. It's informal - you don't have to dress up for it – I don't mean it's that informal – you don't have to put on one of those yokes, and you can also expect some entertainment from the Kabosh Theatre Company as well.

And that's about it – I would just like to thank everybody involved and to say that the most important thing really is, in all of these situations, is not to take everything too seriously and to retain a sense of humour and with that I would leave you with one final line which is from a film whose I certainly can't remember which I saw recently set in a sleazy New York night club where there's this rather jaded character - not at all like me - who says "well, you know, I used to want to save the world, but now I just want to leave the room with a little dignity". Thank you.

(Laughter and applause)