SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Newsletter

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2015
On 27 March 2015, Oxford Brookes Union hosted the third annual Students’ Union Teaching Awards. Created in partnership with the university, the awards are designed and managed by students from the ground up as a way to recognise, reward and celebrate the teaching and contribution that all staff have made to the student experience.

Over 200 members of staff were nominated by students over seven categories such as ‘Most Inspirational Lecturer’ and ‘Above and Beyond the Call of Duty’.

Nominations are a huge vote of confidence from Oxford Brookes students to all of the hard work and dedication of staff over the academic year. We are therefore delighted to announce that Angela Hatherell was awarded for ‘Brookes’ most outstanding single learning experience’. Ms Hatherell is a Research Assistant and Associate Director and Co-ordinator of the Oxford Human Rights Festival for the School of Architecture.

Students who nominated Angela commented: “An incredible learning experience, giving us a tremendous amount of trust in decision making, taking charge of the festival and making it what we would like it to be. And while this was happening, Angela was not far, always available for advice, checking in on us, and working really hard while being in the shadows and not taking any credit for it.”
You are very welcome to this newsletter, which gives you a flavour of the energy of the School of Architecture inside and out.

If you have not visited the school since the opening of the glorious JHB building I encourage you to do so. With the new building we have set a new standard in both teaching and the procurement of top class space. In the main you will not recognise the school on one hand and then feel the familiarity of the uplifting place that you know and love. Come and have a good look, current students would love to show you the new space and work they have completed.

This newsletter contains something for all, staff from past eons that are still at the cutting edge, alumni that are making an impression around the globe, current student projects that engage communities and work across disciplines and examples of staff making an impact.

Included in this issue is a celebration of the work produced by our students, showcased at our End of Year Show. If you missed out last year then be sure to come and celebrate with us in 2016, the exhibition is a brilliant way to stay in touch with the school and see what’s being explored on the course currently.

Have a great year and stay in touch.

Matt
All images are students’ submitted works.
Architecture End of Year Show 2015
Architecture students called upon to regenerate disused Portuguese convent

Oxford Brookes master’s students have been visiting the city of Evora in Portugal to develop proposals to reuse and regenerate a disused convent in Sao Bento de Castris.

Building upon their taught modules that develop the theoretical context of architectural regeneration in the first semester, the focus of the second is a real life regeneration project that provides students with the opportunity to put theory into practice. Each year a new international location representing different regeneration challenges is selected. This year the project site was the disused convent in Sao Bento de Castris on the outskirts of the World Heritage City of Evora in Portugal. The project was undertaken in collaboration with the Alentejo Regional Directorate for Culture and the University of Evora.

For the first stage working in groups the students develop a regeneration strategy masterplan for the convent and its surroundings, responding to the client brief and local community needs that they identified during the field study. This is followed by individual projects developing design proposals for the re-use of the convent buildings as well as their semi-rural context. Each project extends beyond being an architectural deliberation; they aim to generate solutions that will positively contribute to the re-use of buildings and the social and economic regeneration of a place.

With origins in the 15th century and numerous additions since, the convent has been redundant since 2005 and is under the protection of the Regional Directorate for Culture (DRCA Alentejo). The DRCA is actively seeking a feasible new use for the convent and has welcomed the Oxford Brookes students taking it up as a project.

At a public meeting held to discuss the future of the convent the desire to find a meaningful re-use for the building was also expressed by key community members: local councillor Carlos Pinto de Sa, Regional Director for Culture Ana Paulo Amendoeria and rector of Evora University Professor Ana Costa Freitas.

Speaking at the meeting, Dr Aylin Orbasli emphasised that proposals for the future of the convent also needed to recognise the historic, spiritual, social and personal associations of the place.

Matt Gaskin, Head of the School of Architecture said: “We look forward to working with the students as they develop regeneration projects for this significant and complex building and to exhibit some of the best projects in Evora later in the year.”

The collaboration with Evora University is being supported by a Santander Partnership Development grant.
STUDENT PROFILE

Nadhira Abdul Halim
BA (Hons) Architecture 2010-2013

What do you think of the course now you’re here?
It was certainly a challenge for me to adapt to how the course is run, especially coming from an American university. It was tough, but certainly a positive challenge. The areas of research (in particular the unit options) are very interesting and diverse. I feel that I’m encouraged to explore a lot by the tutors I’ve had, and to work outside my comfort zone, which is a really fun thing to challenge myself to. For one of the projects in my second year, I even had to learn all about pottery making!

What advice do you have for others?
To future students: I’d say, come to Brookes! There’s so much going on, and so much to get involved in. Oxford’s a great city to be living in. Plus, the new building is looking great! (I managed to convince a cousin to come to Brookes). Get involved as much as you can! Join societies, sports, travel with friends, attend additional talks, events… it’s all part of the experience, and part of the fun. And make the most out of the units you’re in. Stay positive, keep exploring, reach out to your tutors and choose the units based on your interest and gut feeling. You won’t go wrong.

What are your plans for when you’ve completed your course, for work or further study?
At the moment, it’s all still up in the air. I’m exploring my options of working in Europe for my year out before starting my Part 2. I’m interested sustainable and alternative design, so I’m thinking of going down that line. One that I have in mind, although not in Europe, is to work with Arkitrek, a Borneo-based architecture group that specialises in sustainable design, in particular tropical passive design and the integration of architecture with social infrastructure and the natural environment. I’ve been interested in their work, but their annual summer workshop is a bit too pricey for my budget. So being able to work with them would be fantastic!

“Stay positive, keep exploring, reach out to your tutors and choose the units based on your interest and gut feeling. You won’t go wrong.”
OB1 Live

Year 1 students designed and installed an interactive site hoarding around a residential development in Northway, Oxford. The project was made in collaboration with local residents, GreenSquare Group developers and Stepnell Construction. The hoarding remained in place throughout the spring to provide alternative facilities and recreation for local people while their Community Centre was enclosed by the construction site hoardings.

Fish Island

The Fish Island Office For transition project invites students to design and install kinetic interventions that demonstrate the longer-term intentions for a post-industrial site in Hackney, soon to be converted into a cultural quarter. This live project drew inspiration from MArchD Design Studios 2 & 7 preoccupation with theatre sets and scenic ‘spectacle’. The pop up installations reinvented the machinery of 16th century street theatres and 17th century Italian Opera such as the apotheoses, tempests and metamorphoses, with a view to providing an engaging interface with the site’s current and future identity.

Woodland Seating

Shortlisted for the 2015 Camden Design Awards this project is a result of Year Live projects on the Stage II module U30020, it links to Ilona Hay’s research in the live project Design-Build subject area.

Woodland Seating is a small community-led scheme, transforming a small corner of Camden, and improving a publicly accessible realm. It is a new anchor for a gathering space in the Mark Fitzpatrick Nature Reserve, a London Wildlife Trust. Woodland has adjacent to a historic railway. It has come out of exemplary collaboration between Ilona Hay, local residents, Team Woodpeckers (Oxford Brookes Architecture students) and Texere Studio.

In the autumn of 2014 it was designed, tested and built at the Oxford Brookes campus and then in spring 2015 it was installed on its final London site. Materials used for the bench are natural and 70% of the timber has been up-cycled, generously donated by Headington School Oxford and Elizabeth Turner of TRADA.
Each year TRADA and Timbmet sponsor a pavilion design competition for undergraduate Unit-B. This year, in keeping with the unit’s ‘architectural up-cycling’ and reusability themes, the brief was to design a pop-up, demountable pavilion from which to deliver a ‘Pecha kucha’; a short presentation of only 20 seconds x 20 slides.

The winner, Alice Howland, proposed a clever twist on this theme, with the ‘Secrets’ pavilion. The occupant enters the pavilion and can take a choice to read one of 20 ‘secrets’, written and then rolled up and hidden discreetly in perforations in one of the 20 timber panels tucked away by previous explorers of the pavilion. The catch is that they must leave one of their own behind in return.

The 20 panels are constructed of a range of planed and rough sawn timbers, each with its own character and the spiral form creates a natural structural rigidity. Unit-B conducted a trial build at Timbmet’s manufacturing facility, before taking a tour of the timber production headquarters. The pavilion was then transported to the Ecobuild design show and sited proudly on the TRADA stand.

The pavilion was displayed at the End of Year Show and is now touring other TRADA and Timbmet events through the summer. We are pleased to say that TRADA and Timbmet will be supporting us again next year so we look forward to another fantastic design coming to life.

OxArch has continued as Oxford Brookes University’s most successful society winning the Student Union’s Award for Best Society 2014/15.

This year the popular weekly lecture series was enhanced by introducing ‘after lecture open meals’ at a local restaurant, inviting staff to join students and guests for a robust discussion. Guest visitors included prominent industry figures such as CJ Lim, Phillipe Rahm, Christine Murray and Julia King.

This year the society continued to run workshops that included a graphics workshop from the art editor of the RIBA Journal, Patrick Myles and a photography workshop from renowned architectural photographer Andy Matthews. Competitions have run throughout the year with many members contributing photos for the photography competitions and designs for the ever popular, OxArch sweater.

The society expanded their contribution to the social-learning aspects of the school through a new collaboration with TU Delft University, where society members had the opportunity to take part in a field trip to 2015’s Venice Biennale with Delft students.

The society hosted a number of successful socials, including a Christmas party joining both staff and students and culminated with the Casablanca themed end-of-year Architecture Ball at Oxford Town Hall.
13th Annual Oxford Human Rights Festival

Oxford Brookes once again played host to the Oxford Human Rights Festival, a massive thank you to everyone who made it such a success. The centrepiece for 2015’s festival was The Insurgent Artist, a retrospective of the work of George McBean, former head of graphics for UNICEF.

The festival saw a four day programme of films, talks and workshops which tackled this year’s three themes: refugees, women’s rights and politics and revolution. Highlights included the hard hitting documentary on domestic abuse Private Violence, short films Gardens of St George and Bristol Bike Project about refugees in Bristol and the discussion and Q&A session held by George McBean on his life and work.

Founded in 2003 the festival is organised by Oxford Brookes students on the Development and Emergency Practice (DEP) and Applied Architectural Design master’s degree courses. It is open to the public to attend free of charge.

Nicoletta Idili, a current student involved in organising the festival said: “To be helping organise the Oxford Human Rights Festival is a special formative experience; working in a team to create different events so people don’t forget that even nowadays human rights are still continuously violated all over the world. The events promise to bring lively debate and raise controversial and hard hitting issues, both in developing countries and closer to home.”

Provisional dates for the 2016 festival are set for 8 to 13 February; the centrepiece of the festival will be Women in Adversity, an exhibition in the Glass Tank Gallery of crafts made by women facing daily situations of conflict, poverty and disease. This will include embroidered panels from the Palestinian History Tapestry, a project which tells the story of the life and heritage of the indigenous people of Palestine and supports the traditional craft of Palestinian needlewomen. There will also be a display from the Keiskamma History Tapestry, which illustrates the life of the people of the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

The website www.oxfordhumanrightsfestival.org also provides the full programme for the 2016 festival as well as videos, useful links and a history of the festival, be sure to keep an eye on their social media accounts for the most up to date information and news.

Above: George McBean visits his retrospective The Insurgent Artist (Photo: Angela Hatherell)
Tell us about your route to the PhD
I did my first degree in Architecture in Portugal. After working for a couple of years as an architect in Lisbon I decided to move to the UK to do an MSc in Energy Efficient and Sustainable Building at Oxford Brookes University. That was when I realised I was very interested in research so I decided to take the next step and enrol in a PhD programme in the same university.

How are you funding the PhD?
I was very fortunate to have had my research proposal accepted for funding by the Portuguese government under the Foundation for Science and Technology.

How was the transition to from a BA to PhD?
I had heard that the transition from a BA/master’s to PhD is not always smooth as it involves an adjustment from a taught course approach to a more independent way of working. In my case, this was made slightly easier by the fact that my MSc course had a strong research component. Moreover, the guidance and support provided by my supervisors was a great help.

Tell us more about your PhD
In a sentence, I would summarise my PhD with the title of my research which is: A ‘Dream-House’ for Luanda’s Low-Income Population: Analysing Perceptions, Aspirations and reality through a Participatory Post-Occupancy Assessment (PPOA) Framework. It combines the technical framework of a well-established building appraisal tool with a participatory approach and intends to provide an insight into residents’ satisfaction and performance of newly built low-cost housing in Luanda, Angola.

How are you finding the research aspect of the PhD?
As with all learning processes, it was challenging at the beginning but with time my goals have become clearer, as did the process. There is a great deal of support and a lot of resources available within the school (and the university generally) helping research students during the course of their work. Feeling well integrated in the wider research community and knowing that I can always turn to colleagues and supervisors for help and advice definitely plays a vital role in achieving a successful PhD.

What is the plan directly after your PhD?
My aim is to work in the development sector, possibly as part of an International NGO, to utilise my skills to contribute positively at any level towards the betterment of vulnerable communities and individuals around the world. I would also like to keep an active link to academia as I believe my research is valuable to address problems worldwide.

Feeling well integrated in the wider research community and knowing that I can always turn to colleagues and supervisors for help and advice definitely plays a vital role in achieving a successful PhD.
On 31 October 2014 the School of Architecture held a 20 year anniversary celebration for the master’s degree in Sustainable Building: Performance and Design. The event took place at Headington Hill Hall and was attended by over forty alumni, staff and current students.

The event began with an opening speech on the ‘Cutting Edge Approaches to Sustainability’ by Professor Sue Roaf, one of the original founders of the course. Mary Hancock, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Design at Oxford Brookes chaired the session and introduced the alumni speakers. The programme of events included a small exhibition of posters illustrating the wide scopes of work in which alumni are involved both locally and worldwide. Presentations covered topics ranging from the practice of sustainable design to research and wider issues.

The celebrations continued later that evening with a local dinner event, before concluding the following day with a walk and talk activity and a party in the evening. The closing remarks were given by Professor Rajat Gupta, Director of the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD) and 2001 graduate, and Dr Paola Sassi, Programme Leader and Senior Lecturer at Oxford Brookes.

The MSc Sustainable Building: Performance and Design course was originally established in 1994 with the title MSc Energy Efficient Building. Later adaptations saw the course retitled as Energy Efficient and Sustainable Building, before its final format change in 2008. It was one of the first master’s degrees in the UK to focus on energy efficient and sustainable design. Today it boasts over 400 alumni working worldwide in the fields of energy, building and education.

Speaking about the event Mary Hancock commented: “The success of the event reflects the close relationships developed between students and staff that is characterised by teaching, learning, field trips, crisis and camaraderie, and discussions about the future of sustainability, life, the universe and everything.”
Women in Architecture

Brookes alumni nominated for Architects’ Journal ‘Emerging Woman Architect of the Year’ Award

Two School of Architecture alumni were shortlisted for The Architects’ Journal’s prestigious ‘Emerging Woman Architect of the Year’ 2015 award. The award celebrates women working in the profession, recognising excellence in design and thought leadership as well as promoting role models for aspiring architects and young women in practice.

Sally Lewis, Director of Stitch, completed our MA Urban Design programme in 2000. She has since worked for various architecture firms including HTA Design LLP and Llewelyn Davies, before founding Stitch in 2012. The practice’s first project, 149 new-build homes in Dagenham, is nearing completion, grounded in the vision of ‘creating a new generation of streets for London’.

Laura Highton completed her RIBA Part 3 at Brookes in 2011 and currently runs the Nottingham branch of Purcell, which she founded in 2013. Since opening the studio, Laura has brought in 20 new projects and was recognised by Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce with the 2014 Rising Star Award for her work. Laura said: “I felt hugely privileged to be nominated for this award and to be amongst some great women architects in the shortlist. That was the prize for me, it wasn’t about winning really. I really enjoyed the interview day and meeting the high profile panel. I also had a fantastic time at the awards luncheon and was particularly excited and interested to hear Sheila O’Donnell’s talk.”

The award was announced at the annual Architects Journal Women in Architecture Luncheon on 27 February at Claridge’s in London, and was won by London-based practice vPPR. Judges on the 14-strong panel include Martha Thorne (Pritzker Prize chief executive), Norman Foster (of AJ100’s top practice Foster + Partners) and Patty Hopkins (co-founder of Hopkins Architects). Respected architects Phyllis Lambert and Sheila O’Donnell spoke at the event.

Dr Igea Troiani was interviewed by Wardululu Alsaffar, Anthony Andrews, Galina Borovikova and Adrian-Constantin Alexandrescu on Brookes Radio about ‘The Changing Roles of Women in Architecture’.

In the radio talk Dr Troiani discussed issues of gender discrimination and difference in both teaching and professional practice. She also elaborated on dealing with parenthood and professional life, as well as what it has been like being a woman in a male-dominated profession in the construction industry. The interview builds upon research undertaken by Troiani which has been published in Architectural Theory Review: ‘The Image of the Woman Architect’. The podcast of the radio interview is available through the Brookes website.
Dr Marcel Vellinga commissioned to be editor-in-chief of prestigious encyclopaedia

Dr Marcel Vellinga has been commissioned by Bloomsbury Publishing to be the Editor-in-Chief of a second, revised and updated version of the award winning Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World.

Dr Vellinga, Reader in Anthropology of Architecture and a member of the Place, Culture and Identity research group in the School of Architecture, said: ‘I am delighted and honoured to have been offered this opportunity. The Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World is a truly outstanding and monumental documentation of vernacular architecture of the world. The second edition provides not only an opportunity to revise, update and expand on the existing contents; it also allows this unique resource to be available online to students, scholars and professionals all around the world.’

The encyclopaedia is the unrivalled standard reference work in the field of vernacular architecture, comprising a comprehensive and in-depth overview of what is known about the traditional, popular and indigenous architectures of the world, both in terms of the documentation of culture and place-specific traditions and the academic approaches to its study in general. The first edition of the work was edited by Professor Paul Oliver, also of Oxford Brookes University, and published in 1997. It was awarded the prestigious Sir Banister Fletcher Award for Art and Architecture.

The second edition of the encyclopaedia will be published online as part of the Bloomsbury Architecture Library, as well as in six printed volumes. Dr Vellinga will lead a multidisciplinary editorial team of 15 internationally leading scholars from around the world. The work is estimated to contain contributions by over 900 authors from over 80 countries. It will comprise 2.1 million words and more than 3,000 illustrations, including state of the art 3D visualisations.

Estimated publication date: November 2018.

International award for architecture journal

An architecture journal established by Dr Igea Troiani from the School of Architecture has won the prestigious Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ) award for ‘Best New Journal’.

The award was announced at a ceremony held at the Vancouver Convention Centre on 8 January 2015. The journal, titled Architecture and Culture and published by Bloomsbury was created while Dr Troiani was Chair of the Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA), an organisation for which she remains a Steering group Member.

Architecture and Culture investigates the relationship between architecture and the culture that shapes and is shaped by it. More information can be found on the Bloomsbury website.

In her winning speech at the CELJ presentation, Dr Troiani said: “I am delighted and honoured to receive this award. The award is crucial not only to the work we do in AHRA but also in supporting my own research that I do in the Oxford Brookes research Place, Culture and Identity sub-group, Architecture and the Culture of Interdisciplinarity. Receiving this award shows that creative interdisciplinary architectural research is now an important part of the research culture and goes beyond the conventional limits of what has been done at many other national and international universities.”

The journal was launched in November 2013 at Oxford Brookes University, then at the University of the West of England in Bristol, with a launch at the Edinburgh College of Art the following April. Three issues are published per year: March, July and November. The latest issue ‘Urban Atmospheres’ (Volume 3, Issue 2), is edited by Amy Kulper and Diana Periton and seeks disparate forms of narrative constructions, whether visual, verbal or aural, that evoke cities and their attendant atmospheres.
Blueprint magazine recently published their list of exceptional art and design student projects and hailed Oxford Brookes as one of the best.

To choose which projects would feature, *Blueprint* brought in practitioners, designers and critics to judge and comment on each project. Hugh McEwen, Associate Lecturer for Architecture and Unit F tutor at Oxford Brookes School of Architecture, was among the judges. The chosen projects came from a wide range of subjects including communication design, product design, material futures and architecture.

Three projects from Oxford Brookes architecture students were selected for inclusion in the magazine. Dougal Sadler and Jack Clay’s project, which reimagined part of Jacques Tati’s *Playtime* with a chain-smoking cleaner, was praised for its ‘delicately coloured renders and sketches’. Praise was also given to Unit J, Sadler and Clay’s unit, which is run by Sara Shafiei and Aleksandrina Rizova.

Sally Taylor’s three-dimensional convention centre for Lanzarote was praised for ‘deft use of space frame and fire brick... constructing her own architecture around a programme-less space’. Georgina Hale’s depiction of cigarette smuggling on the coast between Spain and Gibraltar was also singled out. Comments on Hale’s work described her ‘beautiful hand-illustrated designs’, as a ‘fantastic exercise in contemporary architecture parlante’.

The recognition of these projects is a great tribute to the hard work and high quality of Oxford Brookes’ architecture students.

See the special issue of *Blueprint* magazine ‘Pick of the Graduate Shows’ for free online, students’ work features on pages 180-181, 188-189, and 202.

“...a fantastic exercise in contemporary architecture parlante.”

*Blueprint* magazine
on work by Brookes student Georgina Hale
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All information is correct at the time of going to press. Please refer to the University’s website for the most up-to-date details.