



Set Square And Hard Hat At The Ready? It's Architecture Week

By Penelope Parkin | 23 June 2003

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News



Photo: from the smallest dormer window to the tallest skyscraper, they all need architects you know. Image courtesy RIBA.

Penny Parkin dons a black polo-neck sweater to survey the scene as Architecture Week begins.

Grab your drawing boards, t-squares, set squares and angle poise lamps kids, it's architecture week!

From June 20 - 29 museums and galleries across the country will be staging over 300 events to celebrate some of Britain's greatest buildings. Make sure you don't miss out with the 24 Hour Museum guide to some of the highlights...

The action kicked off to an early start last Tuesday night at **Tate Modern** with 'Chroma 2003' a celebration of the interplay between music, art and architecture in the gallery's vast turbine hall.

Amongst the champagne and canapés, Rebecca Saunders' music composition 'Chroma' made an arresting display, drawing attention to the creative possibilities and problems of working across diverse media, the centrepiece being 60 music boxes winding down in sync throughout the half hour show.

Photo: from the ancient Tower of London, to the brand new Foster and Partners-built Swiss Re building, the capital is an architectural timeline.



On to Sir Norman Foster's 'Sky High: Vertical Architecture' at the **Royal Academy of Art**. The undisputed jewel in the crown out of the week's events, the show celebrates some of the world's tallest skyscrapers and is part of the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition (which runs until August 10).

Displayed across an artificial East-West divide, London monuments such as the gherkin (sorry, Swiss Re Tower) and the shard of glass (Tower 42) are crammed together with American monoliths such as the Empire State Building.

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Across the gap, Hong Kong's Rubik's-Snake like Bank of China and the ingenious sail-shaped Burj Al Arab hotel vie for attention alongside a feng-shui inspired model of the chisel-shaped World Financial Centre, due for completion in 2007.



Photo: an architect's model of the Canary Riverside South development at London's Docklands by Richard Rogers Partnership/Mike Fairbrass.

Drawn to the Eastern half of the display I notice the unbuilt 'Millennium Tower' designed to house 50,000 Tokyo residents. The building features a vertical metro system, a strengthened inner core and is designed to withstand earthquakes.

Unbuilt proposals for the redevelopment of Ground Zero after September 11 echo this theme, reinforced structures featuring strategically placed 'refuge centres', 2000 degrees Celsius proof fireproofing materials, clusters of linked towers and multiple escape routes.

Their inclusion highlights the modern conflict between the increasing demand for city workspace and housing and providing it safely.

Photo: shows the proposed tallest building in the capital, London Bridge Tower by architects, Renzo Piano Building Workshop.



I thought this was a terrific exhibition. My only concern is that in the quest to build up and up, modern architects don't allow man to lose touch with his roots on the ground. Experts are all very well but a dose of humanity, greenery, colour and fun in today's urban environment is desperately needed.

On to the **RIBA** headquarters at 66 Portland Place where 'Designs on Britain' takes up the gauntlet. Here students from London, Birmingham and Derbyshire and leading UK architectural firms such as Richard Rogers Partnership provide some much needed food for thought.

Amongst the fruits of this collaboration are a series of alternative designs for some of the UK's most high profile developments including the new Arsenal Stadium and a series of startlingly futuristic pod-like new age creations. The bright orange pyramid shaped skyscraper definitely gets my vote...

'Recreation by Design' (June 4-30) continues the excitement and illustrates some of the hippest new recreation projects RIBA London practices can conjure up from funky new bars to theatres, leisure centres and parks.



Photo: a design for Hyde Park Corner Opera House from the Great Art Deco Buildings exhibition at the RIBA Gallery.

Amongst the ingenious schemes are the Yo! Below Bar in Soho, Gaston's Restaurant, re-designed for Pizza Express, Ocean Terminal - a key part of the re-development of Edinburgh docks and Plymouth University's hyper modern student union.

'Great Art Deco Buildings' (June 9- September 1) is also worth a glance and runs throughout the RIBA's upper staircases. It includes a number of glamorous 30s buildings such as London's New Victoria Cinema, the J. Lyons Tea Room, Putney and Olympia's New Empire Hall.

DIY enthusiasts will also be keen to listen in to the RIBA's series of talks: 'Everything you wanted to know about working with an architect but were afraid to ask'.

Chaired by Evening Standard Homes & Property writer Fay Sweet they range from remodelling and extending the home to commissioning a new build house. There'll even be a chance to quiz architects on making home improvements. For more information call (0207) 307 3699.

Photo: Daniel Libeskind's famous spiral design for the Victoria & Albert Museum extension.



Not satisfied with 'architecture week', the **V&A** is running architecture month! The highlight of the remaining events is 'Sense and the City Too' on June 27 from 6.30pm - 10pm.

This event offers a rare opportunity to take a look inside the mind of Daniel Libeskind the winner of the World Trade Centre Competition and designer of the V&A Spiral and Imperial War Museum North.

What's more, top architects Eva and Eric Parry will offer guided tours around their favourite exhibits and St. Etienne will be DJing so go along and kick up your heels in the Friday late bar.

Other remaining V&A events include a series of free gallery talks, which range from Italian and Indian Sculpture and Architecture to eighteenth century London Housing Development.



Photo: artist Eve Dent will be installing herself into an architectural element at the V&A's Sense and the City Too event.

If you prefer to be on the move take an open top London bus trip with Janet Street Porter, Wayne Hemmingway, Richard Wentworth or Tom Dixon (Habitat's Creative Director) and discover 'Fantasy London', 'London's Most Hideous Buildings', 'London Bridges' or 'The Best of the Thames' respectively.

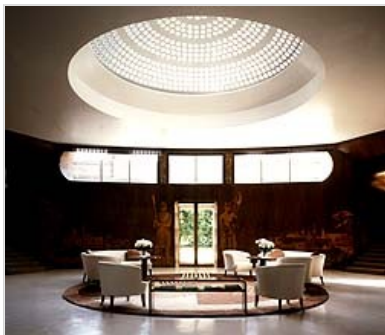
The trips are all designed to make you think about 'The Way We Live' and are organised by Channel Four in conjunction with Arts Council England and the creative agency 'Jam'. All tickets cost £10. To get hold of one call the bookings office on (0207) 942 2211.

Wondering how to make the most of that attic space? Why not get a RIBA trained architect to come to your house to discuss design solutions. A small donation of £20 will go to Shelter to support their work for those living in poor conditions.

To take up this opportunity register your details at

www.architectinthehouse.com. If you're successful you will be matched with a local participating architect during architecture week. The scheme works on a first come first served basis so again, get in early!

Photo: the glamorous and impressive entrance hall at Eltham Palace. © English Heritage Photo Library / Jonathan Bailey.



Finally, if you're looking for a more sedate and green day out I would also recommend the fabulous Art Deco Eltham Palace which is running a 2 for 1 offer in conjunction with the V&A until September 30.

And if you can't get out and about...tune into BBC Radio 3 for architecture related shows running throughout June.

Whatever you go and see during architecture week make sure you have fun. You never know, it could be the start of a lifelong passion...

To find out more about what's on in your area [click on this link](#) to visit the Architecture Week 2003 website.

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Referenced venues

[Victoria and Albert Museum](#)
London, SW7 2RL

[RIBA Trust](#)
London, W1B 1AD

[Tate Modern](#)
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