

## FOREWORD

by Prof Christopher Platt

*Times were curious. Extraordinary volumes of new construction faced unlet property; the gracious streets and squares of Blythswood fronted news so thickly spread with dung as to render them noisome as the High Street; improved tenements for the working classes made no impression upon the waves of what John Buchanan called the 'Irish Huns' settling in High Street, Gallowgate and Calton- at least a better fate than facing the 'Great Hunger' back home. Tentative steps toward smoke and sewage control were overwhelmed by pollution.<sup>1</sup>*

Words evoke. They evoke atmospheres, sounds, smells and places. They describe people, their character and feelings. They unlock our senses and our imagination. Words inform. They can be as memorably powerful in their individual state as when collectively grouped in sentences and phrases. "Stop!" "Help!" "Please", "Shalom" are brief and tiny utterances which are nevertheless pregnant with meaning. Words externalize our thoughts and are the vehicle we use to extend ourselves into the world beyond our private domain. They are the threshold to our understanding of that world; or perhaps, to many worlds. Like bricks in a wall, words can sometimes be dull and lifeless and sometimes exuberant and articulate. Words tell us who we are at the deepest level of our being, but are also our passport to the wider, public world; the world of the social, the world of others, the world of difference.

Words and the art of the wordsmith lie at the heart of the projects contained within these covers. Whilst paper and print may be the medium for communicating and making visible the output of the writer (including this writer), it is bricks and mortar which form the shelters that permits the writer to carry out her activities. The wordsmith and the master builder in other words, are inextricably linked, even if their paths never cross and they never encounter each another.

There is something of the masterbuilder/ writer in the role of the architect. The architect must also create narratives and atmospheres, but fashions them with walls and roofs, rather than with sentences and paragraphs. Like the writer, the architect also needs the public to occupy and use those narratives. For what meaning lies in an unread manuscript or a building that has never received people through its doors? What purpose can an empty building have if it languishes unoccupied like a shell on a beach? Is it still truly a building if it is not inhabited by people any more?

This is the third iteration of a unique collaboration involving a group of European Schools of Architecture. It developed from an idea to establish a common studio design project simultaneously involving students and their tutors from across Europe. The idea was to deepen and broaden the nature and purpose of the Erasmus Exchange experience for both staff and students. The shared focus for the collaborations was the challenges of designing contemporary architecture within the historic European City. Through this collaboration, a crucially-important contemporary architectural issue was given focus, energy and insight. In sharing a project brief and city setting, we hoped to discover each school's own architectural distinctiveness as well as whether there were different approaches to teaching and pedagogy within the design studio.

We also wished to learn about each city through others' insights. Learning from each other lies at the very heart of the international exchange ethos. The first two years of our collaboration involved design projects relating to archive and display, set in Naples and Berlin respectively. The chosen language has always been English; in some ways an easy and obvious choice (at least for the English-speaking participants), yet one that implicitly underlines the very heart of this whole experiment; namely the relationship between the general and the particular.

This third year of collaboration was jointly hosted and led by the two Glasgow-based architecture schools; The Mackintosh School of Architecture at the Glasgow School of Art and the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde. The chosen theme was 'Architecture, Literature and a City' with Glasgow being selected as the setting for the projects. Glasgow exhibits characteristics of both North American as well as European city morphology and as the UK's quintessential post-industrial city, provides a wealth of social, cultural and architectural stimuli to examine the long-standing relationship between words, buildings and the public realm. In comparison to previous years, further developments were made allowing each school some flexibility to suit individual academic needs and timescales. In some cases the project took place within one semester, whilst in others it extended over two. Otherwise, the structure that had been implemented two years previously continued again this year. This began with an introductory (and celebratory) three day symposium of talks, tours, information dissemination and formal and informal social gatherings for all participants. This was followed throughout the year by a series of cross-school visiting reviews concluding with a book and travelling exhibition. As in the previous two years, schools set the project for their students in year four or five.

Whether academic, writer, practitioner or matriculated student, we remain in some fundamental ways, students of architecture. We are after all, still trying to understand what architecture is or can be and we do this by building, writing and discussing. Our aspirations for this project therefore were to deepen that understanding of architecture, pedagogy and how to address the contemporary artifact within the historic city. We wished to enjoy a different pedagogical experience with our students to that which the curriculum usually demands of us. We also wished to expose our students to an international community which they were part of, but rarely met and to encourage them to see their own work through an international as well as a national lens.

We hope you enjoy the work which lies beyond this page. It is a fitting testament to the energy and creativity of the young authors who are architecture's next generation.

1. McKean, Charles, In Search of Purity Glasgow 1840-56, in 'Greek Thomson', ed. Gavin Stamp and Sam McKinsty, 1994, first published in paperback 1999, (p 9).