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Students grapple with life and death issues



The 2010 Architects for Health (AfH) Student Health Design Awards, presented recently at the RIBA's London headquarters, saw the highest number of entries – at nearly 100 – in the event's four-year history, with architecture and interior design students from all over the world demonstrating their talent, imagination, and creative skills, in the quest for the top prize. Jaime Bishop, a director of Fleet Architects, AfH Executive board member, and the competition's organiser, outlines the Awards' key aims, describes the shortlisted and winning entries, discusses how candidates addressed the brief, and explains how the judges selected this year's winner and two runners-up.

An evening in late August saw the presentation, at the RIBA's headquarters in London, of the fourth annual AfH Student Health Design Awards. The awards were conceived in 2007, with the goal of bridging a perceived schism between the practising architectural healthcare design community and academic teaching, and to encourage the investigation of healthcare architecture as a programme and function-driven design, and not simply an extruded plan or envelope.

As the chair of the judges, John Allan, acknowledged, it is currently a difficult climate for healthcare architecture, with "cuts all around us", and, as the awards were presented, heavy rain was lashing London outside. Inside though, there was a welcome chance to celebrate healthcare design, and a new generation of architects engaging with its challenges. The 10 shortlisted candidates this year each talked for four minutes about their work, before answering questions. As the chair noted, the "modesty, elegance, and assurance, of the presentations was exemplary". After the candidates' short presentations, the judges retired to an ante-room to debate and pick the winner, a process that Brookfield representative, and commercial director, Paul Serkis described as "extremely difficult". Finally, the results were announced.

The event was sponsored by Brookfield, the global asset management specialist whose ongoing support has been vital to growing the competition, and has demonstrated a real commitment to the development of the quality of healthcare-related design. Paul Serkis spoke of the importance of getting out the message that: "schemes are still getting built...there is still investment out there".



Prize winners Hayley Moreton, Ewan Cooper, and Frank Trautmann, with Paul Serkis.

The brief and judging criteria

The 2010 competition was open to all international architecture students. Entrants were asked to submit projects addressing healthcare topics completed during their studies, or to adopt a sample brief supplied by AfH. This year greater emphasis was placed on the sample brief, entitled: "Designing for Death: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise". Death was chosen as a theme because, despite the fact most of us will (statistically) die in hospitals, it is often poorly dealt within healthcare buildings. The students were asked: "Can we do more to address the process of dying with dignity in hospitals?"; "How can dying at home be assisted?"; "Is there a missing building typology to be defined?"

Entries were received from all over the world, with the eventual shortlist seeing student representation from the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Russia, and the UK.

Panel 'disregarded practicalities'

AfH deliberately developed the judging criteria in order to liberate architects from the demands of practical healthcare design, and enable more imaginative responses. For this reason, the panel was asked to disregard practicalities – from sluice rooms to regulation – unless the success of the idea hinged on them. Architects for Health encourages proposals that engage with the experiences of building users, asking: "What will it be like to use this building?"; and "How could this design influence healing or minimise pain?" An important criterion was therefore whether the candidates' designs were patient/staff-centred. The panel was also asked to judge on the basis of the students' creativity, the graphic quality of their submissions, and whether the proposals had a resolved aesthetic. Finally, the stage of the students' careers was taken into account.

The judging panel comprised a wide range of skilled professionals: medical practitioners, architects, architectural tutors, the sponsor, and the 2009 winner, Iseult O'Cleary. She said: "It was really interesting to be in that room this year and hear what was said; I was very impressed with how much the panel focused on the link between humanity and healthcare."



The Awards evening, at the RIBA's London headquarters, provided a good opportunity for student architects to get together with their peers, practising architectural professionals, and senior healthcare sector personnel.

Organiser and judges

Organiser

Jaime Bishop

AfH Executive board member, and director, Fleet Architects
Jaime Bishop is a director at Fleet Architects in London, and has sat on the Executive board of AfH since 2006. He has significant experience as the lead architect in major healthcare schemes, including developing innovative approaches in designing for paediatric environments. Educated at The Royal College of Art, Bath University, and the TU Delft, he has been elected as a governor at the Homerton University NHS Foundation Trust. He has also been a visiting tutor at various universities since 2002, including Nottingham, Cardiff, and London Metropolitan, and conceived and organises the AfH Annual Student Healthcare Design Awards, which launched in 2007.

The 2010 judging panel

John Allan (chair of judges)

Director, Avanti Architects

A director of Avanti Architects since 1983, John Allan has been involved in all sectors of Avanti's work over the past 25 years. He undertook Avanti's first health centre projects in the 1980s at Bethnal Green and Ilford, and was a member of the design team for the ACAD Centre at Central Middlesex Hospital. His biography of Berthold Lubetkin was published in 1992. He has recently been appointed visiting professor at the School of Architecture, the University of Sheffield.

Paul Serkis

Brookfield – sponsor

Paul Serkis has over 20 years' experience in the construction industry, having held senior project delivery positions, together with SPV director/ bid roles in PFI. He joined Brookfield in 2005 to focus initially on closing Peterborough hospitals. He is the company's commercial director, responsible for its PFI/Infrastructure business unit in both strategic positioning, and bidding for new opportunities.

Richard Henson

Director, Fleet Architects

Richard Henson trained as an architect at Cambridge University, the University of North London, and the Bartlett, UCL. He has over 10 years' experience in healthcare architecture, working first for MAAP on the celebrated Highcroft Hospital Mental Health Units and Kidderminster DTC. Prior to joining Fleet Architects, he was a senior design associate at Steffian Bradley Architects. Richard Henson founded Fleet Architects with Jaime Bishop in 2009 with the goal of pursuing high quality design in the public and social sectors.

Yuli Toh

AfH secretary, and director,

Toh Shimazaki Architecture
Yuli Toh is a director of Toh Shimazaki Architecture, a London-based architectural practice that has produced acclaimed houses including Osh House, and was nominated for *Building Design Architect* for the Year for Healthcare 2008 and 2009 for healthcare projects completed nationally. She founded Toh Architecture in 1996, after eight years at the Richard Rogers Partnership. She is active in T-sa Forum and T-sa Forum Mini, architecture schools for graduates, and children, respectively, founded by, and run alongside, the practice.

Iseult O'Cleary

2009 AfH Student Health Awards winner
Iseult O'Cleary graduated with an honours degree in Architecture from University College Dublin in 2010. She has worked in practice in both Dublin and Sydney, and also studied at KTH, Royal Institute of Technology, in Stockholm. She was the winner of the Architects for Health international student competition for healthcare design in 2009. She also won University College Dublin's "Opening Move" competition to design a new foyer for its School of Architecture. Last year's winner also enjoys furniture design, and has exhibited as part of the National Crafts Gallery of Ireland's "Generation" show, held in autumn 2009.

Patrick Casey

Homerton University Hospital

Patrick Casey is the lead nurse for cancer and palliative care, and leads palliative care clinical nurse specialists, and a team of cancer clinical nurse specialists, in lung, upper gastrointestinal, and breast cancers, at the Homerton University Hospital in Hackney, London. He has a special interest in developing local community links through the Homerton health and cancer information centre.

James Payne

Tutor, London Metropolitan University

School of Architecture, and co-founder,

Archipelago

James Payne studied architecture at the Glasgow School of Art, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, and Bath University. He has worked for practices in Switzerland and the UK, including four years at Caruso St John Architects working on Stirling Prize-shortlisted projects. A regular architecture critic for *Building Design* and *Architecture Today*, James Payne runs Undergraduate Studio 5 at London Metropolitan University with Nina Lundvall. His collaborative practice Archipelago Architects has completed projects in both the UK and Sweden.

Pamela J. Hibbs CBE

Chairman of St Joseph's Hospice,

Hackney

For the last 20 years Pam Hibbs has used her management skills to lead nursing, encouraging the nurses in her charge to advance their own practice. She has developed multidisciplinary and collaborative quality assurance and clinical audit programmes for health care. She retired from her role as chief nurse and director of Quality Assurance at the Royal Hospitals Trust in London in March 1997. She is still very active, and is chairman of St Joseph's Hospice, and of the charity Counsel and Care, which gives advice and information to older people, their relatives, and carers, across the UK.

The short-list

1st prize

Frank Trautmann (awarded £1,250)

Germany, Bauhaus University

in Weimar

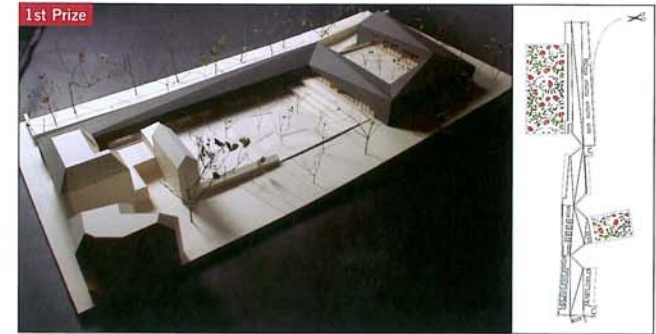
Hospice for advanced progressively ill children in Weimar

Frank Trautmann observed that, of the eight hospices for children in Germany, all are built outside the city, and, with this "outsourcing" of the ill and dying, the facilities disappear from public perception. Working against this disappearance, his hospice was planned in the urban context of Weimar.

The hospice integrated a public garden and kindergarten, to encourage interaction with the city's other children. These would open to the city and articulate the public address, while the hospice's rooms would be grouped around a private patio to protect the families from outside interest. The two outdoor spaces would be separated by the section of the building that hosts the common surgeries, such as rooms for therapies, a swimming pool, kitchens, rooms for massages, etc.

The judges noted that all three of the winners engaged with the interrelation of the community with the dying, and this particular project "burned with that humanity".

1st Prize



Frank Trautmann observed that, of Germany's eight hospices for children, all are built outside cities, and tend to "disappear from public perception". His hospice integrated a public garden and kindergarten, to encourage interaction with the city's other children. Rooms would be grouped around a private patio to "protect families from outside interest".

2nd Prize

Ewan Cooper (awarded £750)

UK, London Metropolitan

The Fleet river burial ground and city garden

Taking the Mount Pleasant site in Clerkenwell, situated on the course of the River Fleet, Ewan Cooper proposed a city garden. Within this a series of funeral chapels would sit among the reeds and bulrushes, on the eastern bank of the

restored Fleet. The space would be enclosed by a columbarium, which wrapped around the perimeter of the site, and a brick terrace, which housed chapels of rest, and accommodation for mourners.

On the subject of urban burial grounds, there have been recent calls from the Association of Burial Authorities for: "small intimate parks [...] in particular for ashes, within the urban environment".

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Sayan Skandarah and Niall Patterson: Tethering a vessel between land and sea.



Jan Giehler: Rehabilitation centre for paraplegic patients located in Potsdam.

was a capsule for the individual patient that constantly shifted – what used to be a floor became wall, a wall became a ceiling – with the patient having no choice but to continually readjust. The interior consisted of wooden blocks that could move in and out of the wall. These blocks would be modified by the user according to his or her needs, and the changing position of the capsule; they could act as furniture, or steps. At the final stage, after death, the capsule, with the body inside, would be burned, with the blocks becoming logs for the fire.



Svetlana Nesterushkina: Transformable interior space.

Behind the capsule there would be a box compartment for the family members. Svetlana Nesterushkina's hotel building would be formed by stacking the "boxes" on top of each other to form a vertical wall with an individual capsule attached to each. This was a fantastical brief which took a very different exploratory path about what it is to pass from life to death.

Sayan Skandarah and Niall Patterson UK, University of Edinburgh

The Alexandra Centre: Coma and neural trauma recovery

Sayan Skandarah and Niall Patterson proposed a centre for Coma and Neural Trauma on the site of the Alexandra pier, by the Prince of Wales docks, in Edinburgh. They were inspired by the concept of a dock, as the act of docking tethers a vessel temporarily between the land and sea. The design attempted to integrate this concept with regard to a state of temporary unconsciousness. The entrants' design aims pivoted around the concept of stimulation and contact. The centre would be open to the public, not only to make use of the public programmes such as medical facilities, physiotherapy gyms, and the café, but also to widen public understanding.

Richard Henson said that: "of all the schemes, this looked most closely at the environment within which a patient dwells".

Jan Giehler Germany, Technical University of Dresden
Lake experience: rehabilitation centre for paraplegic patients
Jan Giehler's site was located at the southern part of the peninsula, "Hermannswerder" in Potsdam in Germany.

The peninsula is developed by an avenue from the north-east, but is not well connected to the city of Potsdam, situated on the opposite lake shore; the best way to reach the site is by boat. Giehler's idea was to take the site out of its isolation and improve the connection to the city of Potsdam, in order to create a meeting place where patients and citizens of Potsdam could come together.

The concept was to preserve nature at the site, but make it accessible, with the connection of indoor and outdoor being key. The "rehab centre" would be divided into two parts – a public, transparent ground floor, and the more introverted area for the patients in the upper floors.

2011 awards

Architects for Health will be running the event again in 2011, with the competition due to be officially launched this autumn on the competition website (www.afhawards.org). Progress can also be followed on the AfH website (www.architectsforhealth.com).

If you are interested in exhibiting the works from the 2010 competition, or are an academic, and would like to involve healthcare within your curriculum, contact Jaime Bishop, at jaimeb@fleetarchitects.co.uk

The landscape and the existing hiking trail would pass through the lower floor, which would also contain the majority of the public functions, such as the bath, the entrance hall, and the rowing club.

In contrast to this floating landscape, the upper part – covered in perforated metal plates – would allow patients privacy, as well as views.

The judges felt that the siting of the paraplegic therapy centre in a woodland setting was very strong, as was the idea of creating new ferry routes to service it, but in the end the building took over from the concept.

Summary

AfH was pleased with the submissions this year, and particularly the diverse and imaginative responses to the brief – eight out of 10 of the shortlist engaged with the subject of death. Despite the theme, the awards evening was inspirational rather than sombre – as another of the judges, Pamela Hibbs, said: "It is wonderful to see such creativity from young people – it's amazing that they have the vision to see how it could be...there are so many starting points."

The winning project, Frank Trautmann's hospice for progressively ill children in Weimar, was a popular winner. One of the audience, Dr Patrick Hutt, noted: "It's about life and death, not just death. How dying is juxtaposed with everyday life." Pamela Hibbs, meanwhile, felt that "siblings of ill children suffer a lot. But this integrates the whole family and the siblings with healthy children".

In his summary, the judging panel's John Allan noted that "with the health service being dismantled around us, architects need to take a stand and articulate the importance of what they do", saying of AfH: "It has never been more important for an institution like this to exist." On this evening, at least, there was plenty of hope for the future of healthcare architecture.

Most successful competition yet

In fact, 2010 was the most successful year for the awards since their inception four years ago, both in volume and quality. Architects for Health owes continuing thanks to Brookfield at a time where support for such events is too often under threat. I was delighted to receive so many entries this year, and feel that we are really starting to make headway in our goal of attracting young, talented architects to turn their imaginations and criticism to the realm of healthcare design.

I will be presenting a retrospective on the role of the student competition in November for RIBA North East, and would be happy to speak to any academics or practitioners that would like to host an exhibition of the 2010 work, or would like to be involved in the 2011 competition. +

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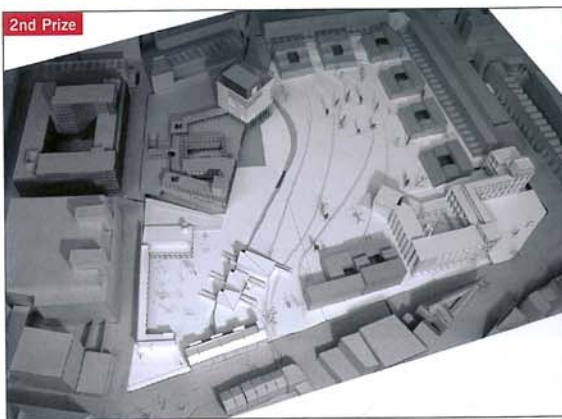
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2nd Prize



Taking the Mount Pleasant site in Clerkenwell, situated on the course of the River Fleet, second prize winner Ewan Cooper proposed a city garden, within which a series of funeral chapels would sit among the reeds and bulrushes, on the eastern bank of the restored river.

Proposing a new city structure that mixed civic and domestic buildings with accommodation for the living and the dead, Ewan Cooper suggested that his design could serve as an exemplar for new urban development that provides a place for both the sacred and profane aspects of life.

The panel felt this was extremely interesting as an interrogation of a site and its possibilities.

3rd Prize

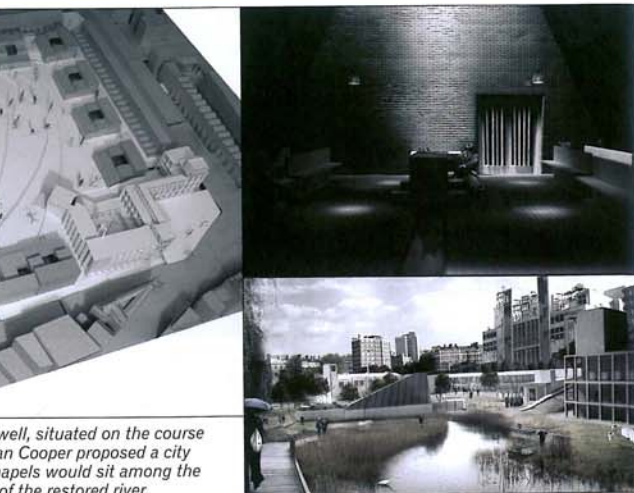
Hayley Moreton (awarded £500)
UK, Birmingham City University

The pub with additional principles applied

Taking the idea that "a hospice should not be a place, but a set of contexts which can be reproduced anywhere", Hayley Moreton tried to find common features among successful hospices. During her research she discovered that many hospices had been hit by the recession, and also began to think about how to create hospices with reduced capital, and little potential for brand new buildings.

With many pubs across the UK also standing empty, this year's third prize winner made the interesting leap of choosing a building that had once been a public house for her hospice proposal, finding it had many of the criteria identified in successful hospices. The chosen pub in Macclesfield was already at the heart of the local community – a place associated with comfort and celebrating life. In her design, the bar would be retained as a public space.

Although the project was not as developed as the judges would have liked at the competition stage, it seemed pregnant with possibilities. As a member of the audience said during questioning,



it stimulated thoughts about other buildings that would fit the set of contexts. Could it work in bingo halls or bowling alleys?

The other shortlisted entries

The other candidates and shortlisted entries were:

Tim Thikaj

Denmark, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture (Copenhagen)

The beginning and the end

Tim Thikaj's project consisted of three main areas – a birth clinic, a hospice, and a "pavilion of parting" for the bereaved – and explored the possibilities of a shared site for birth and death.

The birth clinic, sensual and full of light, consisted of three floors: the ground floor for pregnancy (operating theatre, examination facilities etc); the first floor for the patients and their families (private spaces with individual bathroom facilities, shared kitchen, dining space), and the second floor for physical therapy and birth preparation exercises.

The hospice consisted of a one-level solution, freedom of movement with minimum physical effort – a fan-like structure, maximising visual access to



Tim Thikaj: "Clearly the most poetic".

the surrounding landscape. The Pavilion of Parting, an attempt to make the process of parting as personal and intimate as possible, was a private space featuring diffused lighting to create a peaceful atmosphere, containing rooms for the deceased, washing rooms, and day rooms overlooking the green scenery.

Richard Henson, a director at Fleet Architects, and one of the judges this year, noted that: "Tim's complex ideas were not conveyed clearly enough. However, his graphical imagery was clearly the most poetic, and the cyclic nature of his programme, linking birth and death, was very engaging".

James Payne, also a judge, commented that "the pavilion of rest was the most accurate response to the sample brief. Although presented in a rather cryptic way, the project had the most confident and formally sophisticated architectural language, both poetic and pragmatic".



Andrew Thompson: Medieval monastery.

Andrew Thompson

Sweden, KTH Stockholm University

Addition recovery centre

Andrew Thompson began with the idea that those attempting to recover from addictions are in a fragile progression from distraction to focus – a "sensory re-awakening" – where they must shed their old self and re-emerge. Yet the high cost of treatment means such patients are often checked out too soon for proper consolidation, considered "recovered" in the sense that they are "over" their physical addiction, when their psychological treatment is incomplete. Relapses occur in two thirds of cases.

He proposed a "post-detox" residential recovery centre to deal with the issue at its most acute, asking: "What are the qualities that might nurture an optimally progressive treatment process?" Drawing inspiration from the archetype of a medieval monastery complex, he created a sort of retreat, with a sense of community fostered by physical enclosure, participation in daily ritual, shared contribution, and self-sufficiency. The chosen site was a rural island on Stockholm's Lake Mälaren, in proximity to agricultural areas on which patients could work as part of the recovery process – providing productive occupation and assisting with the high cost of treatment, with the resulting produce being used on-site (reducing costs), or sold to wholesalers.

Andrew Thompson came very close to the top three, as the panel felt the progression of sensory courtyards was very successful, although they would have liked to have seen how his scheme could have worked in a more urban setting.

Lauren Dutton

UK, The Royal College of Art
NecRomance... Cultivating Memento Mori

Lauren Dutton began her proposal by claiming that the demand for human bodies far surpasses the supply, and that corpses fetch between £7,000 and £65,000. Given this, she proposed a morbid but fascinating solution: "NecRomance", strategically located between two of the city's "biggest consumers of flesh" – Harley Street and University College Hospital – and providing a "new death process" through body donation in order to meet this demand.



Lauren Dutton: "Morbid but fascinating".



3rd Prize

With many UK pubs standing empty, this year's third prize winner, Hayley Moreton, chose a building that had once been a public house for her hospice proposal, finding it had many of the criteria identified in successful hospices.

Here, the corpse would be efficiently dissected before its components were sold to licensed medical institutions. In recompense for these anatomical gifts, NecRomance would provide complimentary funerary services. "Scientist-artists" would fashion mourning objects from cell cultures of the deceased, with the incubators in which they were grown also functioning as memorials.

Although this was a fantasy proposal, and the panel noted its "Disneyland" qualities, it also raised some interesting questions about contemporary mourning processes.

Steven Baumann

UK, The Bartlett, UCL
Cemetery for Unknown Citizens

Steven Baumann also tackled the idea of the cemetery, instead proposing one for London's unidentified citizens. There are



Steven Baumann: Unidentified citizens.

an estimated 1,000 unidentified bodies in the United Kingdom at any one time.

The project intentionally ignored conventional cemetery architecture that "acts as an agency for privacy". Although it retained the functional components – a mortuary, parlour, columbaria, ossuary, and an unmarked grave – the emphasis fell on the placement of bodies in relation to one another in the immediate context of the site, as well as the city. Steven Baumann was interested in creating a place in which to acknowledge the city's nameless.

The architecture expressed this through an assemblage of commonplace materials – chain link fencing, brick, steel, scaffolding, grates and hoarding – and attempted to construct a layering of boundaries and vistas, creating a labyrinth of intersections of negotiation between conditions of continuity and discontinuity, life, and death.

It was felt that the conceit was extremely powerful, and that such a cemetery should exist in reality as a signpost for relatives to find their lost; however the lack of representations of the unknown was a crucial omission.

Svetlana Nesterushkina
Russia, Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia

Edge Hotel

Socrates claimed that: "Death may be the greatest of all human blessings". Starting from this, Svetlana Nesterushkina asked: "Can we stop fearing and embrace this experience of dying?" Her project imagined a hotel where people could spend their final days, consciously living through the experience – "facing death instead of hiding from it".

The main component of the proposal