The brick architecture of Henley Halebrown Romison | Masonry masterpieces: 2014 Brick Awards
First person: Simon Tucker of Cottrell & Vermeulen | Uwe Schröder in Bonn; Studio Downie in London
Taka Architects in Dublin; LEVS in Mali | Fraser Brown MacKenna’s prefabricated masonry panels
For most architects issues of context are central to the design process. This is certainly true of Cottrell & Vermeulen (First Person) and Henley Halebrown Rorrison (Profile) – yet their approaches to the use of brick could not be more different; the former favouring ornamentation and pattern making, the latter a monolithic aesthetic rooted in the earth. Projects by Tony Fretton, Uwe Schröder and Fletcher Priest further attest to brick’s diversity and creative potential when it comes to realising high quality site-specific architecture.

The same but different

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Viviane Williams MA, FRSA, Design & Marketing Manager at the BDA

For details on bricks/pavers in featured projects, or to submit work, email brick@brick.org.uk or tel020 7323 7030.

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Executive editor: Viviane Williams MA, FRSA, Design & Marketing Manager at the BDA

The BDA represents manufacturers of clay brick and pavers in the UK and Ireland and promotes excellence in the architectural, structural and landscape applications of brick and pavers. The BDA provides practical, technical and aesthetic advice and information through its website www.brick.org.uk, in its numerous publications and over the phone.

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2014 Think Brick Award winners announced

The redevelopment of The Kensington Colleges at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, by Bates Smart (above, ph: Peter Bennetts) has won the Horbury Hunt commercial award at the 2014 Think Brick Awards, organised by Think Brick Australia. The external masonry walls are conceived as a contemporary interpretation of the college’s original clinker brick, while the inner courtyard facades employ glazed bricks for reasons of colour, light and reflectivity. The Horbury Hunt residential award went to Cox Rayner Architects and Twofold Studio for Aperture House in Brisbane, Queensland, (above, ph: Christopher Frederick Jones). The extension to a modest worker’s cottage uses perforated and patterned brickwork to create varied depths of field. Brick is also used to form plinths and flooring, the latter blurring the distinction between inside and out. Other winners included Clayfield House in Brisbane, Queensland, by Richards & Spence (masonry award); and Hansen Partnership’s Devonport Surf Life Saving Club Precinct in Tasmania (landscape award).

Michael Ankers appointed BDA chairman

Michael Ankers OBE has been appointed chairman of the Brick Development Association (BDA) following the retirement of Alan Baxter, who has served over 55 years in the industry. Ankers most recently held the position of chief executive of the Construction Products Association, and has over 40 years experience in various industry sectors. Commenting on his appointment he said, ‘I am honoured to have been invited to chair the association. The brick industry has an important part to play in the recovery of the construction industry, and particularly in the creation of the additional housing that politicians in all the major political parties recognise that this country urgently needs. These are exciting and challenging times for the brick industry, and the Brick Development Association has an important role to play. I am very much looking forward to playing my part in this.’

Masonry pavilion for London’s King’s Cross

Stanton Williams has obtained planning approval for a canal-side pavilion at King’s Cross in London. Conceived as a single sculptural form embedded into its context, the building will house cafes, bars and a restaurant. A grey linear brick has been chosen to complement the character and tonal palette of the surrounding buildings. Colour-matched mortar, thin recessed joints and flush perpends are intended to emphasise the horizontality of the composition. Precast concrete soft panels inlaid with the same grey brick provide a monolithic aesthetic.

FCB Studios’ Birmingham Conservatoire

Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios has unveiled its design for the new Birmingham Conservatoire at Birmingham City University. The project, which is due to start on site in the summer, will comprise five performance venues including a 450 seat concert hall. ‘Brick was selected for its mass, which contributes to acoustic separation – an important factor in designing an environment for music’, commented FCB Studios partner Tom Jarman. ‘We intend to source the brick from a local supplier and are creating vertical banding across the facades through the use of projecting headers.’
A combination of glazed and unglazed brick animates the facade, creating a strong composition in two contrasting textures. We are also interested in the craft of building with brick, which extends from drawing to construction. Innumerable facade studies are made at the design stage, with every brick meticulously set out. On site, we rely on the care and craftsmanship of the bricklayer. Our delight in brick construction is the ‘look many hands’ effect – the sense in which the effort and care taken throughout the process can be visibly appreciated and enjoyed in the end product. For us, brick is a traditional material that makes a simple, direct and phenomenal connection to a given context. It also offers versatility in form-making, allowing us to explore an architecture that combines both the familiar and unfamiliar in stimulating and thought-provoking ways.

Simon Tucker is a director at Cottrell & Vermeulen Architecture.

relief extends across the entire upper facade. The pattern becomes the facade, with a direct geometrical relationship between structure, form and ornament. With the Cunliffe Building and Bean Library, both of which are due to complete early this year, we have continued to use brick as part of a dynamic response to the surrounding context. Inspired by an adjacent arcade, Bean Library features a sequence of large masonry arches built as loadbearing structures, window openings, or patterns within the external skin. The brick arcade is a direct representation of structural expression, with the scale and weight of the arches emphasised by double- and triple-voussoir courses. The structure is designed to be only one brick thick, so as one moves through the space it becomes laminar and unexpectedly delicate. From inside the arcade, a series of cross-arches of varying radii frame views of the landscape beyond.

The upper facade features a second tier of arches using the same geometry. The openings wrap three sides of the reading room, creating a grand scale to the building’s principal space. From the garden, the whole library seems to be formed from a single modulated motif.

Sited adjacent to the library with the main facade facing a public space, the Cunliffe Building explores texture and elevational treatment. A combination of glazed and unglazed brick animates the facade, creating a strong composition in two contrasting textures. We are also interested in the craft of building with brick, which extends from drawing to construction. Innumerable facade studies are made at the design stage, with every brick meticulously set out. On site, we rely on the care and craftsmanship of the bricklayer. Our delight in brick construction is the ‘look many hands’ effect – the sense in which the effort and care taken throughout the process can be visibly appreciated and enjoyed in the end product. For us, brick is a traditional material that makes a simple, direct and phenomenal connection to a given context. It also offers versatility in form-making, allowing us to explore an architecture that combines both the familiar and unfamiliar in stimulating and thought-provoking ways.

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Above left. Due to complete in the spring, Bean Library at Brentwood School in Essex features a sequence of load-bearing arches constructed from double- and triple-voussoir brick courses.

Above right. Relief brickwork on Brentwood School assembly hall responds to the adjacent Victorian vicarage; a super-scaled, filigree diaper pattern is applied like continuous ‘wallpaper’ on the walls and roof of the classroom block (phc: Tom Cronin).
The Saw Swee Hock Student Centre at the London School of Economics by O'Donnell & Tuomey (1) was named the supreme winner of the 2014 Brick Awards, held at the Marriott Grosvenor Square Hotel in London on 12 November. Interpreting the urban context as a ‘city of bricks’, the architect has created a tilting folding masonry facade that is cut or ‘stretched’ thinly to admit light into the building. Eschewing the need for cut bricks, the design makes use of over 100 handmade specials and 46 standard bricks. The jury, which was chaired by Richard Lavington of Maccreanor Lavington Architects, described the building as a ‘masterpiece, which has created a new language for brickwork’. The project also won the best education building category and the innovative use of brick and clay products award.

Winner of the best housing development (1-5 units) category was a private house in Wapping, London, by Chris Dyson Architects (2). Constructed from nine-inch brickwork laid in Flemish bond to the front and side, and header bond on the semicircular bay, this finely-tuned extension to a late Georgian end-of-terrace house features extended cut-brick arches and slim profile sills framing bronze casement windows. Window and door openings relate to the rhythm of the brick module and coursing. The jury praised the house as ‘a finely crafted and constructed building of real architectural quality’.

Black Hawk Properties won the best housing development award (6-25 units) for the Quay, Waterside phase-one in Leicester (3). Described by the jury as a sophisticated and successful attempt to redefine estate housing, the project takes its inspiration from traditional nineteenth-century Dutch villages. The dwellings are characterised by masonry facades in a range of brick hues and renders, stepped gables, and eyebrow dormers atop deep overhanging eaves. Chosen for their colour and texture, the bricks were processed to create a weathered and aged appearance.

Best housing development (26 units
or more) was awarded to Abode in Cambridge by Proctor & Matthews (4). Comprising over 300 homes, the scheme makes extensive use of brick to accentuate entrances and elevations, as well as articulate scales and hierarchies. Brick is also placed alongside other materials to denote shifts in density and typology across the site. ‘An exemplary development with a well thought out layout that fits superbly into its surroundings’, was the jury’s assessment.

The volume housebuilding award went to Barratt for three developments: Bentley Priory, Middlesex, designed by Clague Architects (5); Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge, by Allies & 1. The Saw Swee Hock Student Centre at the London School of Economics; architect: O’Donnell & Tuomey; brickwork contractor: Swift Brickwork Contractors; brick: Coleford Brick & Tile – Bespoke Blend Saxon & Wessex Facings; mortar: CPI EuroMix.
Morrison; and Horizons, Allerton Bywater, West Yorkshire, by HTA Architects. The jury felt that all three projects showed distinctive architectural qualities in terms of their response to the brief and the surrounding context. It was particularly impressed by the use of pre-cast brick arches and contrasting brickwork at Bentley Priory.

Designed by HOK, Davies Street in London won the best commercial building award (6). Demonstrating the benefits of factory controlled off-site manufacture, the facade is constructed from large precast cladding panels combining a blend of handmade brick and Portland stone. Oviating the need for external scaffolding or wet trades, the panels were delivered to site and fixed in one operation by a small team of specially trained operatives. ‘Davies Street has all the architectural integrity and beauty of a hand-set masonry building built by craftsmen’, commented the jury.

Rick Mather Architects was the recipient of the best public building award for its Customer Service Centre and Library in London (7). Described by the jury as ‘beautifully put together and well executed’, the project makes use of large brick planes framed by expanses of glass and areas of terracotta dressing. A long thin brick module is employed in vertical and horizontal courses depending on the articulation of the facade. Vertical brick ribbing layered across some of the window openings adds further interest. Upgraded both internally and externally by Universal Design Studio, the Ace Hotel in London won the refurbishment and renovation category (8). A heavy yet highly articulated masonry plinth comprising areas of recessed brick, a range of different bonds, and both glazed and unglazed brick, ‘knits’ the building back into its urban context, while also providing a rich source of texture and materiality. Some 11,000 brick slips and pistols were installed on the soffits and upstands to reduce weight. The jury was highly impressed by the quality and craftsmanship of the scheme, as well as its ‘active’ street frontage and welcoming lobby.

The award for best outdoor space went to Reading Station in Berkshire by Grimshaw Architects (9). Forming part of a major upgrade and expansion scheme, both sawtooth glazed and smooth monochrome brick line an underpass and the lower levels of the facade, creating an aesthetically pleasing and hardwearing approach to the station. The judges praised the design for its accuracy, consistency and technical competence.

Recipient of the craftsmanship award was Bekynton Field at Eton College in Berkshire by John Simpson Architects (10). Specially designed wall ties connect the red brick external skin to the concrete frame, allowing the masonry to

6 Davies Street; architect: HOK; brickwork contractor: Thorp Precast; brick: Coleford Brick & Tile – brick faced cladding panels; mortar: Tarmac Building Products.
8 Ace Hotel; architect: Universal Design Studio; brickwork contractor: Windmore Brickwork; brick: Ketley Brick Company – Ketley Blue; mortar: Cemex.
9 Reading Station; architect: Grimshaw Architects; brickwork contractor: Lee Marley Brickwork; brick: Wimpernberger – Bespoke Profile Glazed Bricks, Ibstock Brick – Tap Smaooth; mortar: CPI EuroMix.
10 Bekynton Field, Eton College; architect: John Simpson Architects; brickwork contractor: Lee Marley Brickwork; brick: Ibstock Brick – Grosvenor Light Red Multi; mortar: Site Mix.
move independently of the structure. The brickwork arches and stone features were constructed off-site prior to delivery and installation in accordance with the building programme. The jury felt that the masonry had been executed with great care and skill resulting in a beautifully crafted building.

Berkshire-based Lee Marley Brickwork was named specialist brickwork contractor of the year for three projects: Bromley Road, London, by Leeds Studio; Reading Station by Grimshaw Architects; and Bekynton Field at Eton College by John Simpson Architects. The jury was highly impressed by accuracy of the work in all three projects. In particular, it felt that the technical demands of Eton College were met with great skill and ingenuity, while the attention to detail on Bromley Road was second to none.

The international category was won by De Blacam & Meagher Architects for Dalkey Avenue, a private house in Dublin, Ireland. Planned around two large brick fireplaces, this sculptural family home occupies a steeply sloping site overlooking Dublin Bay. Thick masonry walls with wide mortar beds and perpends emphasise the building's bold massing and solid appearance. A series of brick-lined terraces connect the interior with the surrounding landscape.

Parkstad Rotterdam in Holland by Geurst & Schulze won the worldwide brick award. Inspired by Dutch brick traditions, the scheme comprises five residential buildings accommodating 227 apartments and maisonettes. The buildings are subtly differentiated using three colours of brick arranged in various combinations. Recessed and projecting brickwork combined with horizontal concrete bands provides further surface modelling and visual interest. 'A winning building which demonstrates long-term durability and beauty', was how the jury described the project.

Last but not least, the architect’s choice award went to Robert and Jessica Barker for Rockbourne Mews, a sustainable residential scheme in London. The architect specified a facia-braced, light-coloured stock brick to complement the surrounding buildings and to reflect light into the courtyard around which the scheme is planned. Carefully set out to brick dimensions, but varied to create a dynamic rhythm, the two-storey, triple-glazed windows are framed by slender brick piers. Over 150 architects and students voted for this building.

For more information on the winning projects and finalists please visit www.brick.org.uk/brick-awards.
As a student residence in Bonn by Uwe Schröder is an exercise in enclosure and materials.

Rom.Hof is a four-storey student residence in Bonn, Germany, designed by local architect Uwe Schröder. The apartments are accessed via a series of loggias stacked vertically around a central courtyard. Bisecting the courtyard is a narrow two-storey structure housing a kitchen on the ground floor and washing facilities above. The solid-to-void ratio doubles between the courtyard and street facades, clearly delineating the public and private spaces. Brick is used to expressive effect not only around the vaulted window and door openings, but also on the facades, where it gradually changes from a rich red to a warm yellow as if the building is growing organically out of its site. The courtyard is also predominantly paved in red brick.

Space, form and order
A student residence in Bonn by Uwe Schröder is an exercise in enclosure and materials.

Photos Stefan Müller.
Community values

Brick is central to a high quality social housing scheme in east London by AHMM and Maccreanor Lavington.

Masterplanned and designed by Allford Hall Monaghan Morris and Maccreanor Lavington Architects, William Street Quarter in east London is believed to be the UK’s first fully privately-funded affordable social housing scheme. Three mews streets providing three- and four-bedroom terraced houses line and define the perimeter of the site, while a central 10-storey tower containing 76 one-bedroom apartments terminates a mansion block-lined boulevard. The mews houses and their garden walls are built of the same variegated brick – chosen for its robustness, quality and appropriateness for residential use. Parapets, deep reveals and generous timber-framed windows reinforce a sense of solidity and permanence. Recessed into the facade and lined with muted colour variations, the entrances provide shelter and privacy. Wrap-around kitchen corner windows allow residents to view their front doors.

Photos Rob Parrish (above), Tim Soar.
Old meets new
A brick-built primary school in Mali by LEVS Architecten marries traditional architecture with modern technology.

Tanouan Ibi primary school stands at the edge of a village in Mali’s Dogon region. Designed by LEVS Architecten, the building accommodates 180-pupils and includes three classrooms, an office, depot and sanitary block. It is planned around a central brick vault, which is braced on both sides by loggias running the length of the building. The latter double as circulation and informal meeting spaces, while also providing solar shading. Ceramic tubes set into the roof provide additional natural ventilation and daylighting. The school is constructed from non-fired bricks which were made on site. They are sustainable, provide good levels of thermal mass, and can withstand Mali’s extreme climate of high daytime temperatures and heavy rainfall. Used on the floors, walls and roof, the bricks allow the building to merge with the landscape in the manner of traditional Dogon architecture.

Photos LEVS Architecten.

How’s that?
Taka Architects has designed a new pavilion for Merrion Cricket Club in Dublin.

Situated near Dublin’s River Dodder, Merrion Cricket Club pavilion has replaced a flood-damaged structure dating from the 1980s. Designed by TAKA Architects, the building takes the form of a symmetrical pyramidal volume that has been seemingly cut to fit the irregular geometry of the site. Responding to the risk of flooding, the pavilion is raised off the ground and has a waterproof concrete ‘wainscot’ up to window sill level, followed by stretcher-bonded brickwork. A cream coloured brick was specified to complement the Dolphin’s Barn brickwork used on the houses behind the pavilion. In the areas where the building is accessed, such as the bar, tearoom or changing rooms, the brick is turned sideways to form a solid one-brick thick wall in header stack-bond. Ventilation – both mechanical and natural – is through perforated sections of brickwork in the rear elevations. A pre-patinated standing-seam zinc roof was chosen to withstand driving rain at low pitch, as well as the impact of high speed cricket balls.

Photos Alice Clancy.
On the waterfront

Brick unites a canal-side housing development by Tony Fretton Architects and Geurst & Schulze Architecten.

Located in the Dutch town of Den Helder, Molenplein phase one occupies a long site between two stretches of water (the Helderskanaal and the Werfkanaal) overlooking a fine Napoleonic naval yard. Masterplanned by West 8, the houses facing the dockyard were to be three-storeys high and imposing, while those situated along Helderskanaal were to be simpler and only two storeys high.

Buildings by Tony Fretton Architects and Geurst & Schulze Architecten are interspersed throughout the scheme, with brick forming a common facade material – albeit specified in different colours, types and finishes, including paint. The houses by Geurst & Schulze feature carefully crafted details and provide punctuation in the terrace. Those by Tony Fretton are simpler and rely on generously proportioned windows and entrance doors in facades of rose-coloured brick with white pointing. The practices are currently designing a third phase which will extend the parallel streets to the seafront.

Photos Christian Richers.
Digging down

A simple material palette is used to striking effect at Berlin's Archeological Centre by Harris & Kurrle.

Located adjacent to Berlin's central Museum Island, Harris & Kurrle's Archeological Centre serves a number of the city's museums, and includes offices, workshops, laboratories and storage facilities. The five-storey building is intended to blur the distinction between urban texture and monumentality, adaptation and individuality. A dark coloured brick facade complements the mainly rendered and stone-clad context while demonstrating material independence. Laid rearside up, the rough surface of the thin-format bricks combined with an earthy colour give the facade a 'modest rigour', says the architect. Deep brickwork reveals articulate the punched windows. The main entrance is signalled by a double-height curtain wall.

Photos: Werner Huthmacher
Conceived as a collage of old and new buildings, Mount Pleasant is a sheltered housing scheme in central London by Peter Barber Architects. A key move was to demolish the central linking part of the existing H-shaped hostel block that occupies the site. This created a protected courtyard that forms the social heart of the new scheme and provides access to a laundry, shared kitchen, consulting room and apartments. The development is entered from a narrow lane through the arched doors of the hostel building. Standing sentinel at the short east and west ends of the courtyard are two new apartment buildings clad in reclaimed London stock brick. The new central elevation (previously an internal wall) has been rebuilt in a cream-coloured brick with a white mortar to match the elevations on either side. A new building fronting Mount Pleasant reinstates the back of the pavement terrace.

Photos Morley von Sternberg.

Safe from harm

A sheltered housing scheme for homeless people by Peter Barber Architects makes use of new and reclaimed brick.
Fletcher Priest Architects’ redevelopment of 50 Victoria Embankment in London combines the restoration of grade-two listed Carmelite House with an adjacent river front extension that replaces an existing 1990s building. Both the six-storey river facade and adjacent Carmelite Street elevation are divided into three nine-metre bays. Infilled with brick and overlaid by a grid of vertical piers and horizontal string courses rendered in Portland stone, each structural bay – with the exception of that over the entrance – is subdivided into three window bays. The material palette is intended to relate closely to the adjacent buildings and to the listed facade on Carmelite Street. The differentiation of the entrance bay, both in material and form, is intended to respond to the rhythm of adjacent river frontages.

The red brick infill varies in detail and depth depending on its vertical position. At ground level, the brick provides an articulated appearance with every other course slightly recessed in reference to the rusticated bases of the adjoining buildings and to increase surface modelling. Above, the masonry has a less textured surface with long slim bricks set closer to the face of the stone string courses. The return of recessed brick coursing on the fourth floor acknowledges the horizontal datum set by the main cornice of the adjacent Audit House.

Designed by Pollard Thomas Edwards, Ceres CBT in Cambridge comprises four blocks housing 150 mixed-tenure apartments. A dark facing brick was chosen to stand out against the surrounding ‘sea of buff brick’, emphasising the buildings as pavilions in the park. Chamfered window surrounds enhance views to the west, while to the east, textured facades with punched openings provide privacy for the bedrooms. Flemish bond is combined with alternating triangular bay windows, and projecting snapped headers, to create playful shadows across the facade. An upper floor brick frame accentuates the tallest building setbacks, giving privacy to the penthouse apartments.

Photos Tim Crocker
Photo Peter Everard Smith.
Forming part of the southern gateway to London’s King’s Cross Central development, Seven Pancras Square is a serviced office by Studio Downie Architects. The plan wraps around the existing Stanley Building, creating a lightwell at its centre. A pair of brick planes extend north-south, curving around the existing structure and contrasting with vertical glazed walls to the east and west. Laid in a Flemish bond with a charcoal-coloured mortar, the dark brick walls comprise a pre-mixed blend of three closely-matched colours. Designed to address the route to St Pancras Station, a new brick gable wall is constructed from a sandfaced yellow stock in Flemish bond with a lime mortar.

Photos | John Sturrock.
Henley Halebrown Rorrison

Timothy Brittain-Catlin discusses HHbR's brick architecture with Simon Henley.
One of the most striking aspects of brickwork as it is deployed by Henley Halebrown Rorrison is the unusual way in which the architects express the monolithic nature of the material. Simon Henley explains that in some cases the intention is to draw upon brick as a unifying material: at the Akerman Health Centre in London (2006-12), for example, the only element in common with neighbouring buildings was the brick facings. The creation of a street front in ivory-coloured brick, with a closely-matching mortar that seems to draw upon Danish precedent, enables the building to establish a new coherence in the area. The slightly earlier health centre at Baldry Gardens, also in London (2004-10), had been the first of HHbR’s projects to experiment with monolithic brick walls, and at St Benedict’s School in Ealing, west London (2006-08), the scheme that for many established its reputation, new brickwork was designed to make the transition between older buildings and the large areas of GRC sheet in similar colour that clad the main part of the new building.

It was not however Scandinavian architecture that inspired Henley’s interest in the material, but the nineteenth-century industrial buildings of Liverpool where he studied architecture. Alongside the brick architecture of Kahn and Lewerentz, he developed an interest in the almost brutal use of brick for colour and texture employed by Jesse Hartley and Anthony Lyster in their dock buildings; the latter’s Stanley Dock tobacco warehouse, with its massive cliff of grey and pink, was the largest warehouse building in the world at its completion in 1901. And this cliff-like aspect of brick construction is something that still appeals to Henley, a fan of John Wellborn Root’s stupendous brick mountain face...
at the Monadnock Building in Chicago (1893); for him, the Akerman project provided an opportunity to suggest the Jurassic coast of Dorset, its layers of rough and smooth seams of rock littered with fossils. Other influences include the post-war Brutalist use of brickwork, and he cites Stirling and Gowan’s Ham Common flats as an example, and churches by Andy MacMillan and Isi Metzstein for Gillespie, Kidd & Coia.

It is interesting, then, that Henley sees the use of massive brickwork as a palette similar to that of monolithic concrete rather than associating it with decorative ‘bricky’ architecture of all periods and styles. It makes sense that he shares with some post-war British architects the idea that sculptural Brutalist architecture owes something to traditional and vernacular brickwork forms. That attitude, part of Henley’s view that brick is the substance of a building and not a cladding alternative, emerges strongly in The Yard.

Above right The health centre at Baldry Gardens in south London (2004-10) was one of the practice’s first projects to experiment with monolithic brick walls (phs: Nick Kane).

Middle opposite The brickwork at St Benedict’s School in Ealing, west London (2006-08), is designed to make the transition between the older buildings and the large areas of similar coloured GRC sheet that is used to clad much of the new building (phs: David Grandorge).
Contrasting brick paving and walling patterns weave together an irregular setting to create a timeless landscape. This project, says Henley, will also provide a test bed for future experiments by the practice. Downshire House, a current project also at Roehampton, takes the ‘anti-cladding’ approach almost to an extreme: if the reinforced concrete frames within the building were ever removed, the self-supporting brick and precast facades would remain standing as Kahnian ‘ruins’.

The use of brickwork enables HHbR to establish a conversation between the homogenous and the heterogeneous, and here another aspect of the essential nature of brickwork comes into play: the extent to which it appears to be ‘manufactured’, and the ways in which brick differs from other manufactured materials. One primary difference is the variation between individual bricks emerging from the same kiln. Very minor variations in colour and texture resulting from slight chemical differences across the raw material, and some deviations due to deformation during their removal from the mould whilst still wet and during firing, might be indetectable close up but create texture across a long wall. This can be important where a budget requires the use of the notoriously ‘untextured’ stretcher bond. The brick, says, Henley, retains something of the natural about it, carrying with it up into the wall ‘a strong sense of the source, the ground. It appears to be less manufactured; instead, it is “given” to us and “handled” (the latter no doubt supported by its comparative size to the hand). At Downshire House, ‘Downshire House takes the “anti-cladding” approach to an extreme: if the reinforced concrete frames within the building were ever removed, the self-supporting brick and precast facades would remain standing as Kahnian “ruins”.

Due to complete in the summer, Downshire House at the University of Roehampton features bold self-supporting brick and precast concrete facades, and also at King’s Crescent, near Clissold Park, for the London Borough of Hackney, the texture of the brickwork and mortar beds is designed to balance the large scale of the buildings.

A continuous story therefore emerges across the work of the practice as a whole. Much of the reputation of HHbR, and of its predecessor Buschow Henley, has been due to its ability to create a new coherent space within a fragmented context. It is Simon Henley’s attitude to brick, its geology as much as its stylistic and constructional role in different English architectural histories, that provides substance and textures that fuse even a large new building into an urban landscape.

Above Contrasting brick paving and walling patterns are woven together in The Yard, located at the heart of the University of Roehampton campus (2012, ph: Andrew Haslam).
Opposite above The texture of the brickwork and mortar beds at King’s Crescent, a residential development in London, are designed to mediate the large scale of the project. It is due to complete in 2017.
Opposite below Due to complete in the summer, Downshire House at the University of Roehampton features bold self-supporting brick and precast concrete facades.

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Kensington Place, London

A sculptural 1960s brick house by Tom Kay has stood the test of time.

Occupying a corner plot at the end of a stucco-fronted early Victorian terrace in central London, Tom Kay’s little known Kensington Place house is as striking today as when it was completed in 1967. Described by English Heritage as ‘tough yet elegant, slightly reminiscent of Dutch expressionism, and wholly of its time’, this uncompromising grade-two listed dwelling was designed for photographer Christopher Bailey and his opera-singer wife Angela Hickey. The brief was for a private, spatially dynamic and acoustically sound space that would allow the couple to pursue their respective careers and interests.

One of Kay’s most important moves was to place most of the circulation routes within a round tower that was partly disengaged from the main block. This not only increased the floor area, but also allowed much greater spatial freedom, including an uninterrupted living room that runs front to back of the narrow site. The stair tower, which was regarded as a bay in order to gain planning consent, extends above the building to provide access to a rooftop terrace. It also forms a distinctive external feature, neatly terminating the end flank wall and signalling the entrance to the house.

Raised slightly above street level and accessed via a short brick-paved ramp, the ground floor houses an entrance hall, two bedrooms and a bathroom. With access to a sunken garden at the rear, the lower ground floor contains a kitchen, dining room, spare bedroom and bathroom. The first floor is given over to double-height living room with a mezzanine gallery and study spanning diagonally across the northern end.

One of the house’s most distinguishing features is the use of Staffordshire blue-black engineering brick for both the internal and external walls. Laid with recessed black mortar joints, and combined with blue-black brick floor paviors, the brick surfaces give the design a sense of cohesion and unity. The material also marks a clean break with the surrounding Victorian architecture. The local planning department initially requested a stucco finish or soot-rubbed London stock bricks for the exterior walls, but Kay and his clients eventually persuaded them otherwise.
A student residence in London by Fraser Brown Mackenna is constructed from prefabricated masonry panels.

Designed by Fraser Brown MacKenna Architects, Ravenscourt House in west London comprises 234 self-contained student bedrooms, together with communal facilities and additional teaching space for an adjoining primary school. The site borders two conservation areas with the local context comprising mainly residential buildings with richly detailed brick and stucco facades.

The building comprises three separate volumes connected by landscaped courtyards. Each block is treated with a different brick, creating a clear sense of identity and responding to the adjoining buildings across the site. The largest block fronts Paddenswick Road and features a white-painted concrete plinth, above which are three floors of highly modelled brickwork, including projecting headers set within a Flemish bond. The fourth and fifth floors are less heavily modelled and are capped by a band of intricately detailed brickwork with the headers removed. This signals a material change on the top floor, which is clad in zinc and recessed from the main facade.

The original proposal featured traditional brick cavity walls and cast-in support rails and fixings, explains the

Opposite Some 253 prefabricated masonry facade panels were installed over a period of 16 weeks.

Below section; ground floor plan
But it was decided to employ a precast and pre-fabricated facade solution in order to meet the tight programme. Sample panels were commissioned amid concerns that the prefabricated brickwork could look overly engineered or appear too uniform. The final panels are constructed from half-bricks laid into CNC-cut plywood moulds and cast over with 200mm of concrete.

The lower storeys comprise fair-faced concrete panels, which are slightly narrower than the brick panels to ensure an adequate drip edge. The outer surface is finished with a factory-applied concrete mineral paint.

The inset render panels were also cast in plywood moulds, with a rubber form-liner inscribing the delicate patterned motif. Combining large areas of glazing with hit-and-miss brickwork, the nursery panels were among the most challenging to manufacture in structural terms. The solution provided by the panel fabricator was to resin-bond the bricks together (thereby avoiding vertical...
'The decision to move from traditional to prefabricated construction had no bearing on the initial detail design phase, and indeed it could be argued that this method enhanced the clarity of the junctions between the brickwork and concrete elements,' concludes the architect. 'There is a homogeneity within the elements that would have been difficult to achieve in any other way.'

dowelling) before de-moulding with temporary strong-backs.

On the facades, the panels are generally stack loaded one onto the next, with head restraints fixed back to the concrete frame and all vertical loads transferred to the pile cap beam. At shear wall locations, concrete corbel 'boots' are used to transfer structural loads to the floor slab. Located at the gable ends and incorporating a cantilevered parapet, the largest panels weigh approximately 14 tonnes.

Each panel was delivered to site with the insulation and fire stopping fixed. The units were not pre-glazed as the window manufacturer could not match the speed of panel production. One of the advantages of prefabrication was that it allowed the concrete frame to progress concurrently with panel manufacture. When the first panel was installed, approximately 75 per cent of the remaining facade units had been made already. All 253 panels were installed in a period of 16 weeks. The bathroom pods were prefabricated and installed prior to panel fitting, allowing the building to be made weathertight comparatively quickly.
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